

JOY AND JUBILATION FOR KANDOS

This article by Colleen O'Sullivan appeared in the *Mudgee Guardian* on 25 August 2014.

When Kandos celebrated half a centenary in 1966 it was called a jubilee. That word is so much more fitting than centenary. It is full of vibrancy suggesting joy, jubilation and rejoicing; festivity and fanfare.

You might wonder why 1966 was the year chosen for the jubilee when we are celebrating Kandos centenary in 2014. In fact our celebrations could have been in any of five years between 2012 and 2016.

In 1912 some well-healed entrepreneurs acquired mining leases in the Coomber area and in 1913 they formed the Cement Lime and Coal Company Limited in order to establish a cement industry and town. In 1914 the 'town' was christened Candos and much of the industrial infrastructure built. In 1915 the town was re-named Kandos and the first land auction held. The following year the first cement was produced and the first permanent building, the Kandos Hotel, completed. As you can see there is plenty of choice for future anniversaries.

The man behind the Kandos Jubilee in 1966 was Rylstone Shire Clerk Dennis G White. He wrote the letters, organised the program and researched a lot of the history, though he was also assisted by an organising committee chaired by Councillor Williamson.

And what a show it was. Festivities began on Friday 14 October with a civic reception at the Kandos Community Hall to welcome the Governor Sir Roden Cutler and Lady Cutler – a public function with a large attendance “to underline the warmth of the greeting”, with speeches by Shire President Evans, District Inspector Middleton, local MP Nott and of course the Governor.

Following this, eight hundred children were assembled in the hall for the Governor's words of wisdom (after heavy rain had forced the cancellation of a massed rally at the sports ground). “If you accept mental and physical discipline,” he told them, “you'll be able to accept the responsibilities of adulthood.”

It was a full program: afternoon tea while mingling with the hoi polloi, a quick trip to Rylstone District Hospital for an informal chat with patients, the opening of the Flower Show at the CWA rooms by Lady Cutler and the laying of a wreath at the Memorial Gates.

Jubilee Celebrations were officially launched by the Governor that night when he unveiled a commemorative plaque at the Anniversary Ball in the Community Hall organised by the Rylstone-Kandos Apex Club, tickets \$3 each. Others could attend, on the same evening, a Folk Festival held at the Methodist Church Hall with group, solo and community songs led by Kelly Folk of Mudgee, the Gondoliers from Gulgong and the Wanderers from Sydney.

No doubt it was Saturday that drew the biggest crowds for that was a day of fun, entertainment and more ceremony. There was a colourful and varied procession through the main streets, followed by a street carnival with stalls and novelties. And for a bit of street action in this cement-producing town there was a cement-bag-carrying marathon (cement

bags weighed 90 pound), a sand-shovelling contest and a wheelbarrow competition, with trophies as prizes.

Formalities included a civic reception for the Minister for Decentralisation and a Naturalisation Ceremony to confer citizenship on Mrs B Psarianos, Mr M Kajganic, Mr C Keller, Mr R W Stazecki, Mr A Szewczyk, Mr K E W Brandes and Mrs M I E Brandes (that would have taken some pronunciation practice).

At night there was a grand variety concert in the hall. And finally, as a crowning point, Miss Kandos was announced and presented to the Minister.

But was that the highlight? Or was it a 34 year old storekeeper's run from Mudgee to Kandos via Lue? He carried a message from Mayor Moufarrige, on behalf of the people of Mudgee, to Shire President Evans, congratulating Kandos on its fiftieth anniversary. According to a news report on the Friday before, Laurie Williams had been a cross-country and long-distance runner in the RAAF and had been training solidly for weeks. He would be running in black silks and escorted by police motor cyclists out of Mudgee and into Kandos.

As you might imagine in those days when religion was a serious commitment, Sunday festivities began with services in the churches around the town and ended with a combined service held in the Community Hall. A band festival on the Sunday included eight brass bands, a Scottish band and four teams of marching girls. There was also a bowls tournament for 200 players, a tennis tournament and a 27-hole golf championship at Henbury.

The Shire President R K Evans was the public face of Kandos in 1966. He was the one to meet and greet, and sing Kandos's praises. He reminded listeners and readers that Kandos, at that time with a population of 2,200, was entirely supported by a cement industry which produced 450,000 tons of cement per annum, half of that produced in the state. "We rightly claim to have played an important part in the development of this state," he said.

He listed the town's impressive facilities which reflected the strong community spirit existing in the town, where employers, employees and the Shire Council co-operated to build the amenities. These included an Olympic pool, grand hall, an architecturally designed golf course, bitumen surfaced roads, a reliable water supply and the recently opened Hartley County Council electricity sub-station.

He gave a history of the area, once an inland lake and a scene of volcanic eruptions, which produced the natural ingredients to service a cement industry: coal and limestone. Early European settlement was sketched, though in keeping with attitudes of the time, there was no mention of the original inhabitants, the Wiradjuri nation.

"The future of Kandos is assured by the increasing demand for cement throughout Australia...there can be nothing but optimism for the future", the Shire President told the *Daily Telegraph* in their feature on Kandos.

And so the town said farewell to another Governor, one of four to visit Kandos in its century of existence. In May 1921 Dame Margaret Davidson stood in for her husband Sir Walter Davidson when he became ill on tour and was laid up at Havilah. She astounded residents with her knowledge of the cement industry. "She showed a remarkable grasp of the technicalities of a highly technical subject...Her Excellency was loudly applauded [for] her

interesting and spirited speech.” An illuminated address was prepared and presented to Dame Margaret.

Many Kandos residents will remember Sir Laurence Street’s visit for the 70th Anniversary Celebrations in 1985. This year, in October, Kandos will once again be honoured by a governor’s visit. His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC, Governor of New South Wales, accompanied by Mrs Hurley, will make Kandos their first official visit after being sworn in on 2 October. They will attend the Gala Ball on Saturday and Pioneer cake-cutting ceremony on Sunday and possibly other events.

Well, cement did not carry Kandos into the Centenary. And in the future that might be seen as a good thing. Kandos has other things to offer. A writer to the *Mudgee Guardian* as early as 1934 praised the tourist potential of Kandos, despite the industry and resultant dust at that time: “Tourists will find Kandos well worthy of a week’s visit both in winter and summer,” he concluded.

Like many small towns in Australia which have lost their industries, Kandos displays its tourism potential. Now a pristine town beneath an awe-inspiring mountain range, a gateway to the Wollemi National Park, Dunns Swamp Ganguddy and the Capertee and Bylong Valleys, Kandos attracts artists, cyclists and star-gazers, as well as an ever-increasing number of city-dwellers yearning for a country experience.

Tree-changers too are realising the advantage of cheap housing in a beautiful locale, with a friendly and welcoming community, only three hours from Sydney and within an hour of three large central west towns.

Yes, 1966 was a celebration to remember. I hope the Centenary celebrations on the October long weekend will be twice as good and that people from around the region will come and celebrate with us. Perhaps the Queen will send a telegram.

Photo below: Sir Roden Cutler and Mrs Cutler at Kandos in 1966.

