



R&R PROPERTY'S

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Empire Day



This article will discuss some memories of Empire Day in the local area.

Empire Day was first celebrated in Australia on 24 May 1905 to celebrate 'the birthday of the late Queen Victoria to reassure those who feared that Federation would weaken the ties' of Australia to Great Britain¹.

Celebrations of Empire Day in the Nabiac region on 23 May 1924 included speeches 'on the Significance of Empire Day' among other topics, sports day demonstrations by local children, social gatherings during the evening in local halls, with refreshments provided by local ladies².

At Bulahdelah on 23 May 1940 Empire Day involved presentations by local children for their parents and members of the community. Importantly, the day started with 'the pledge and flag saluting'. The connection to the Mother Country was strengthened through song, speeches, and prayer. One of the last items of the morning was the staging of the "'Pageant of Empire"' by the senior children'. An afternoon of sports followed and, on dusk, a huge bonfire was enjoyed by the children³.

Thanks to Malcolm Carrall for providing this photograph from his private collection. It is undated.

Please contact R & R Bulahdelah to share your memories of times past.

¹Google search answer to When Was Empire Day first celebrated in Australia? accessed on 4/6/17.

²www.nabiac.com/publications/atf/atf1607.pdf accessed on 4/6/17.

³*The Maitland Mercury*, 31 May 1940, accessed on www.trove.nla.gov.au on 4/6/17.

A Song of Empire Day

Are there those whose affectations
Say we sing the song too often?
Who would soothe and smoothe and soften,
Sink and modulate the tone

Of the nation's jubilations
At recurrent celebrations
Of the glory of the Empire,
whose achievements stand alone?

If there are, we do not heed them,
Nor their idle reprobations
Of the world-wide acclamations
T'which, they say, we're overprone!

If they join the song, God speed them!
And, if not, we shall not need them
When we sing in celebration of the Empire and the Throne!

Is it but commemoration
Of the Empire's ancient glory?
Is it to the olden story
Of our fathers that we cling?

That we hold in veneration
But we have in contemplation
Wondrous vistas of the future of the Empire as we sing!

Sing the world-encircling chorus
To the future generation
With a depth of intonation
That shall make the welkin ring!

Of the flag that hovers o'er us,
And the destiny before us,
Of Australia, and the Empire, and his Majesty the King!

---W. T. GOODGE.⁴

⁴*The Sunday Times* dated 24 May 1908, accessed on www.trove.nla.gov.au on 4/6/17.

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