

- The museum is formally referred to as the Hunter Valley Museum of Rural Life (HVMRL or “Museum”)
- The Lake Glenbawn Trust opened the Museum in 1966, was closed to all but special appointment in 1986, and closed entirely to the public in 2009. There are no immediate plans to open the museum to the public unless by special arrangement with the Lake Glenbawn State Park Trust (R1001337).
- The HVMRL enjoyed popularity in its heyday when thousands of Park and special interest visitors stopped at the Oak kiosk and Museum for a short break before traversing the Glenbawn Dam wall to reach the eastern shore. Visitor numbers to the Oak kiosk and Museum declined after 1986 when the height of the dam wall increased and public could no longer cross it.
- A local group based in Aberdeen, formed in 2004 to explore the possibilities of moving the collection into Aberdeen, as they felt the township of Aberdeen needed to increase its profile and encourage growth and community spirit within the town.
- This group incorporated as the Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life Inc in November 2006 and communicated with the Trust on a number of occasions. Aberdeen community members retain photographs of the Museum and its collection from this period including items since removed or stolen.
- In 2007, the Trust attempted to engage Upper Hunter Shire Council and the community by way of a public forum and media campaign, hoping to resolve the need for professional input, financial resourcing, and a suitable building.
- At the urging of the Trust, and fuelled by the media and community response (Scone Advocate May 2007 “Glenbawn museum pieces in desperate need of care, LEFT TO ROT”) Council formed a NSW *Local Government Act 1993* S355 consultative committee. The Committee comprised community members (primarily from Aberdeen), historical societies, historians, Councillors, and Council staff to advise the Trust in the care of the Museum. The Trust (Chair John Jobling) originally chaired this Committee.
- The Aberdeen Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life Inc affiliated with the S355 Committee and had representation on this Council committee.
- By 2008, the Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life Inc with the assistance of a NSW State and Regional Development grant, engaged the Australia Street Company to draft a Business Plan and feasibility study for the removal of the Glenbawn-based collection to Campbells Store in Aberdeen, a highly significant historic building in private ownership.
- The Aberdeen group planned a campaign to raise funds to buy the building or have the government acquire it, to refurbish it as a museum, and to bring cultural pride and tourism back to Aberdeen.
- By July 2009, LPMA seconded a Maitland staff member (Sue Effenberger) with appropriate museum qualifications and experience to conduct a Significance Assessment of the collection so that the S355 Committee could seek grant funding from the National Library of Australia under its programs such as Preservation Needs.
- LPMA used existing feasibility work by the Aberdeen group and document referencing of volunteer historian Lesley Gent (Paterson Historical Society, University of Newcastle) to establish the basis for an electronic collection management system.
- During the Significance Assessment, LPMA staff found the museum to be in dire need of basic museum collection management, conservation and electronic tools- database acquisition register, loan/gift contract material, object records, archival storage, and a cleaning and maintenance schedule. Above all, it lacked a stream of trained and ready personnel from Park staff and community volunteers.

- The Significance Assessment in draft form has found the collection to be significant at a National level because, while showing signs of distress and deterioration, it generally demonstrates a high degree of quality, comprehensiveness and representativeness, as well as provenance to well known local people, places, towns and homesteads. It also demonstrates links to Sydney public life and development of the fledgling colonial economy. In particular, it is a faithful depiction of family and pastoral life in the Upper Hunter and other parts of the River, predating the impacts of coal exploration and mining in the Hunter Valley during the second half of the 20th Century.
- Based on the draft Significance Assessment, LPMA and the Trust have been able to submit a \$15,000 grant application to the National Library of Australia for Preservation Needs. At the time of writing, the result of the application has not yet been determined.
- Well into 2010, LPMA and Trust continued to liaise with the S355 Committee, establish connections and support from professional networks, engage community interest and generally promote the existence of the museum and its need for community support through attendance at community events, LPMA media liaison, and input into TAFE training for museum volunteers.
- LPMA advised the Upper Hunter TAFE Outreach Coordinator about the appropriate museum content for the “Introduction to Working in Museums” volunteer course in May 2010, conducted at the Aberdeen Information Centre. On 31 May, the Trust invited students from the course to inspect the Museum and to receive practical instruction in the handling, cleaning, conservation, and pest control of museum objects.
- LPMA and Park staff had cleaned and organised the Museum in preparation for the 31 May instruction.
- Because LPMA and Trust wish to retain the collection and manage it effectively *in situ*, the student gathering of 31 May expressed a desire to have regular access to the museum for care and documentation. LPMA has since actioned this under the regular “Volunteer Days” planned to occur once a month.
- In July 2010, LPMA and Trust initiated a cleaning and maintenance schedule at the museum grounds and public campaigns to improve the documentation and increase the volunteer base for museum care.
- The media campaign managed through LPMA Communication Solutions Group resulted in the Newcastle Herald, Scone Advocate, and ABC regional radio picking up the story with positive results for the image of the Museum as it moves into repair phase, attracts volunteers, and identifies critical historical information. The journalists expressed an interest in future stories.
- Regards professional and community input, the Museum currently enjoys support and *pro bono* services from the University of Newcastle, Powerhouse Museum, Museums & Galleries NSW, TAFE, and the Scone and Muswellbrook historical societies. The University of New England and Newcastle Regional Museum have recently expressed an interest to assist and become part of the network to develop the Museum.
- LPMA, Trust, and partners will continue to seek actively any government grant funding, *pro bono* services and private sponsorship to care for this significant national collection.
- The next significant step is to establish formal tenure and “care control and management of the Museum through the Lake Glenbawn State Park Trust.

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