



NEWSLETTER

August 2012

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

Cnr Stuart & Myocum Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482

OPEN: FRIDAY 10 AM – 2 PM

MARKET DAY (3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH) 9 AM-1 PM

MUSEUM NEWS

APOLOGY

Due to unforeseen circumstances the July newsletter could not be published. Procedures have been put in place to cover future emergencies.

MEETING TIMES

Please note the meeting times

Monthly Meeting: 1st Thursday of the month @ 1.00pm

Acquisition Meeting: 2nd Thursday of the month 1.00pm

Members are welcome at both.

AGM

The AGM was held on Thursday 2nd August. After the annual reports were presented our Patron, Frank Mills, thanked the previous committee for a great job. He also informed us of the sad news of Dr Suresh's passing and the surprising news that BVHS Inc has been made a generous legacy in Dr Suresh's will. We are planning appropriate recognition of Dr Suresh in the museum.

Your new committee consists of Stephen Hall, president; Gordon Wright, vice-president; Janelle Barram, secretary; Susan Tsicalas, treasurer; Sarah Newsome, assistant treasurer; Sadie Mudge, David Roupell and Jennifer Elward, committee members. Thanks to all for generously offering their time to the museum.

We thank Jennifer for two very successful terms as president; particularly for ensuring the completion, review and updates of the strategic plan. It has set us on the path to achieving 'best practice' in all areas of the museum. We look forward to her following her passion - the conservation etc of our fabric collection.

Attached is the annual financial report for members.

REMINDERS

WEBSITE: Don't forget to keep checking it out as new additions are made regularly especially to 'Pot Pourri'.

FACEBOOK: Join the conversations generated by the photos on our facebook page - 'Mullumbimby Museum'.

OPENING TIMES

From Friday 7th September the museum will be open on Fridays 10am to 12pm until we can get more custodians. Other times can be arranged by appointment.

NEW EXHIBITIONS

We have 2 new exhibitions that we invite you to discover and enjoy:

Firstly, the cutlery set that belonged to Sir Walter Massy-Greene has been beautifully displayed by Jacqui, one of the Work Experience participants. This attractive set was presented to Massy-Greene when he married and has been donated to the museum by his son.



The second display acknowledges the important role that bullocks and their teamsters had in the development of the area.



WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

The work of the museum has continued apace with special thanks to the participants of the Work Experience Program e.g. 1. At the end of last year we received a grant from [Northern Rivers Community Foundation](#) to work in collaboration with Byron Bay Historical Society to scan the Eric Wright Collection. This project is now well under way. 2. The photos, artwork and text of our displays in the museum and in the shed are excellent. 3. Participants have also painted tables and cupboards, made stands and generally helped wherever necessary.

Butter Bliss

Into 1916 the dairyfarmer's dirge, 'We'll all be Roon'd', coupled with a joyful dairymaid's chorus, could be heard all over the region when it looked like the record low rainfall of 1915 was set to continue. The Labor Government was doling out drought relief, but realising that bending over for the farmers was no win/win situation and that the Northern Rivers' seats were a lost cause. (And as it turned out they couldn't match an Act of God, which doubled rainfall to 50 ins for the year, although still below the long-term average of 58 ins.)

The cow worshippers got serious at a meeting sponsored by the Northern Rivers Branch of the Dairy Factories' Association in Lismore in Jan16, when over 500 farmers turned up to hear Massy Greene MHR and Nesbitt MLA offer solutions, finally resolving *"That in the opinion of the meeting the time is opportune for the organisation of all primary producers in the district and throughout the State... and that a union be now formed accordingly."*... *It now comes to the old argument as to whether the people are to elect representatives of one of the City parties or go on their own and elect those who will represent the country. This paper (Mullum Star) has supported the Country Party for a long time, and is glad that the primary producers now look to be breaking up that policy....* The Dairyfarmers' Association had proven to be ineffectual lobbyists, so the farmers took a leaf from the Condon's book and went the Union route. Unlike all its predecessors, the Primary Producers Union turned out to have longevity, evolving into a very powerful lobby group and outwardly professing it was 'non-political'.

Reinforcing the dairy desperation, in Apr16 George **Cameron** reckoned that *An exodus from dairying on a scale hitherto unknown is apparent on the Richmond and Tweed Rivers. Auction sales of dairy herds are taking place with unusual frequency. It is estimated that on the Tweed alone, during the last month, forty dairymen have sold their herds and taken up some other occupation. The reason for this appears to be the recent interference of the Government in matters concerning the industry. Farmers deeply resent the treatment they have received in fixing of the price of butter.... On the Tweed especially there are new industries, such as banana growing, which give returns equal to and better than dairying. The labor connected with these is, on the whole, not nearly so laborious as milking cows and similar dairy work....* At the same time the demand for cheese was rising, but Norco passed up the golden opportunity to diversify and allowed the proprietary companies to fill the demand. *Foley Bros' Bangalow cheese factory made its first pay on Thursday 13Apr16.... The cheese pay, compared with butter, works out at 2d a gallon better. It takes one gallon of milk to make a lb. of butter. Milk for cheese works out at 7d a gallon roughly and milk for butter at 5d....*

At the Norco half-yearly meeting in Jun16, J.D. **Condon** entertained 200 shareholders when they segued into discussion of the PPU and he argued for a straight out membership fee of 1 guinea per year, but lost the fiery debate when the meeting voted to allow Norco to collect a levy from its suppliers and effectively underwrite the new Primary Producer's Union; this despite an earlier circular to suppliers that got an apathetic response. J.W. **Banner** said *they wanted a good strong union to fight the other man...*, while another bloke said *they would not get any good result until they pit class against class....* Three weeks later Mr John **Macgregor** has replied in various district newspapers to the charge of "hooliganism" that was laid to the meeting of the shareholders of the N.C. Co-op Co. *He denied that there was any attempt to cry down any class and says that all suppliers are on an equal footing and that there are no class distinctions at these meetings.*

At the end of Jun16 Jack **Banner**, secretary of *The Dairy Farmers' Association of New South Wales* (and on the Provisional Executive of the PPU), advised that the DFA had gone into mothballs and placed its funds in trust. *The council was prompted to take this step owing to the increasing difficulty under existing conditions of maintaining interest in the main object of the association. The Rural Workers' Union is keeping to its announced intention*



Jack Banner, Man of the Hour, 1907. (Born 1866 Yorkshire; initially blacksmith and coach builder at the Bay, where he was Vicar's Warden and treasurer of the first Anglican Parochial Council and on whose land the first vicarage was built in 1900. Around 1903 he took up farming at Billinudgel, thence Wilson's Creek, and at the time of his death in 1939 had represented 'A Riding' on the Shire Council for 33yrs and served as Shire President for 8 different terms.)

not to force an issue on their claim during the war, and the publicity given to this together with slackening of enthusiasm in decreasing income from subscriptions, have largely contributed to the present decision.... The organisation had been in existence 5yrs and was successful in blocking ...*The various efforts made by the union to bring a case before the Arbitration Court....* A week later Mr Banner formed the first branch of the PPU in the Brunswick Valley at Billinudgel, the meeting electing J.M. **Sharpe** as president, J. **Torrens** and M. **Petcovitch** as vice-presidents, T.B. **Torrens** as treasurer and J.W. Banner as secretary and delegate to the District Council.

Ironically, it was the banana growers, through their recently formed Fruitgrowers' Association, that initiated the formation of the Mullum branch of the PPU, which due apathy didn't get off the ground until late Jul16 after George Cameron editorialised that *Mullumbimby dairymen are generally moribund to anything that is for their own good. Sometimes something or other starts with a big blare and after two or three meetings the work is left to a few and they tire and whatever it is it dies a natural death. With the Primary Producers' Union nothing whatever had been done while other centres were organising...,* and a week later his admonition got the desired result.

Jack **Banner** was voted to the chair by 50 to 60 farmers and *In his opening remarks the chairman said he could not congratulate them on attendance.... They all knew what had forced their hands, but still he had met farmers who had stated that they did not believe in unionism. But to-day they were facing the foe, and what was 15 years ago was not the same to-day. They must organise to defend themselves....* Mr Whittall's idea would be for everyone to decrease his output by say 5lbs of butter per week. This would mean 100,000lbs of butter per week. This would not hurt the individual farmer, but it would starve the city man. They would then have to pay our price to get it... or turn to margarine. We are in this position - it is a fight between the city and country.... J.C. **Morrison** was elected President, Messrs J.H. **Johnson** and W.G. **Cochrane** vice presidents, P.G. **Whittall** secretary, W.J. **Reilly** treasurer and John **McPaul** and W.A. **Sheaffe** delegates to the district council. Secretary **Whittall** followed-up with a letter saying, *...Our sorry experience of the past two years has surely demonstrated that the man on the land is to be continually sacrificed for the benefit of the man in the cities....*

The following week (7Sep16) they managed to muster 40 to hear an address by C.J. McRae (President of the Northern Rivers Associated Butter Factories and President of the Northern District Council of the PPU) and C.E.D. Meares (Manager of the marketing organisation, the Coastal Farmers Co-op Society). McRae said *...Labor is to oppose the capitalist and before the air was cleared there would be bloodshed. Of the butter produced in this State 75 per cent of it came from this corner, and he asked all to join and help....* Mr Meares said... *The dairymen of the State had been organised before. That was when the Trades' Hall proposed that they should come under the eight hour provisions. To combat that the Dairy Farmers' Association had been formed....* In reply to a question by Mr R.W. **Thompson**, Mr McRae said an effort was being made to have the Farmers and Settlers' merged into one body, and a scheme was being discussed at the present time.... Mr P.G. **Whittall** said the branch had 61 members and there were 30 or 40 more who had paid through the factory and he had not got their names yet. They would have 300 members before the finish.... By Nov16 the Mullum leadership team of President Morrison and Secretary Whittall was boasting a branch membership of 140.

In Nov16 the PPU was perturbed that *The latest A.W.U. log of claims for adult dairy hands was 39s for a week of 48 hours, with keep, and £2/17/- without keep; while for youths under 18 years the demand is for 25s, with keep and £2/2/- without keep. This is not the limit.,* so brace yourselves for more demands. The Government had tried a bit of social engineering in Oct17 by increasing the rate for dairy hands working on State farms (like Wollongbar) to 9s/day, without keep for a 7 day week, or £3/3/- weekly... *Supposing such rates to represent a living wage nowadays, the producer has also the right to expect living wage prices for his product, and this is an aspect of price-fixing that must not be lost sight of.* The farmers were protesting that with escalating production costs price fixing wasn't giving them the same 'living wage'. But the big dilemma in pushing for price increases was the fear of driving consumers to margarine. Nevertheless, by the end of the year it was turning out that the war was very lucrative for some, the landlords achieving record sales at auction, in some cases up to £25/cow, at the same their standard advert for dairy hands was an offer of 30/- per unlimited week, presumably with board.

Then into 1917 the cosy price-fixing arrangement between the various co-operative butter factories broke down after the Tweed refused to fall into line with the pay to farmers decreed by the Richmond-Tweed Factories Association, Norco accusing the Tweedies of being more of a proprietary company than a co-op. They later kissed and made up, but in the meantime butter was continuing its comeback. While the exodus to the banana industry continued, those remaining in the milking shed were granted immunity from the law of the market by a generous government guarantee. At Norco's midyear AGM Chairman **Macgregor** explained that *All States were advised by the Federal*

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This newsletter is written by and
for the members of the BVHS

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All members are invited to contribute to this newsletter

*Please leave material with Sarah
or Liz
Tues Wed Thur 10 am - 2 pm.
Or email to:
bvhs@tridentcommunications.com.au

NEXT MEETING
Thursday 6th September
2012 1.00 pm
See you there!

*Deadline for agenda items
Wednesday 5th September 2012.

MUSEUM HOURS
Friday 10am - 2pm
Market Saturday 9am - 1pm

BVHS Newsletter is produced
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Participants and BVHS Inc.



Government that provision would have to be made for sufficient butter to be kept for winter requirements throughout the Commonwealth: This was done by the formation of what is called the Winter Pool Committee, which had to see butter was placed in cold storage on a percentage basis by all factories sending butter to Sydney.... The percentage of butter placed in the pool was paid for by the Government at market rates, and the proportion taken from export allowed to be sold on the local market at the increased rates.... Norco's shareholders were so happy with their lucrative industry that they voted to donate £500 to the YMCA.

After a couple of attempts to get a quorum Mullum's PPU eventually got a meeting up, given editorial prominence a week later (19Jul17) when George highlighted the lack of cold storage to meet their increasing output (mainly due to an extra 5 ins of rain for the year): *At a meeting of producers with the Acting-Premier (Mr Fuller) Mr McKenzie, Secretary of the Primary Producers Union... said ...From July, 1916, to April, 1917, butter to the value of one and a half million pounds had been exported...*, but it could've been greater due insufficient cold storage accommodation and lack of cargo ships. Even so *The dairyman has had a record year, with butter selling the whole year round at 149/4d (£7/9/4 per cwt, thanks to stabilising effect of price fixing, now to be helped by pooling) he has simply coined money* (but, argued the farmers, that's misleading because it doesn't factor in the extraordinary rise in the costs of production.)

In the meantime the Northern District Council of the PPU had split into separate Tweed and Richmond Districts, with Jack **Banner** elected President of the Tweed Council. The first meeting of the Tweed group in late Jul17 was addressed by C.J. McRae, now also President of the Sydney-based Central Executive, with Mullum delegates Messrs **Rollo, Condon, McPaul, Cochrane** and **Johnson** making up the biggest branch contingent. Mr McRae informed them that *Cold storage accommodation was practically taken up with beef, mutton and rabbits and freight was almost impossible to obtain....* He intends to meet with PM Hughes to discuss the matter but *he was entirely in the hands of the Imperial authorities who controlled all the shipping...*, which was suffering heavily from U-boats. *That being so, it seemed only fair to ask Mr Hughes to allow the men owning the butter to handle their own produce...*, and he had a scheme *details of which it would not be wise to divulge at this juncture....* The following week representatives from all Australian States met to discuss the shortage of ships and refrigerated storage space, anticipating that under current production rates the Government would be sitting on £6 million worth of butter and cheese within 12mths. They wanted the *Federal Ministry to request the Imperial Government to purchase the lot outright, or failing this, that the Federal Ministry make an advance on all butter and cheese held in cool stores.* Prime Minister Hughes sidestepped the second bit but said *There was no difficulty about Great Britain purchasing the butter, provided they could get it to her.* So they went on adding to the mountain of butter until the Royal Navy again ruled the waves.

The end of the year was rounded off with the cunning butter negotiators extracting another record price from the Brits, at the same time the Mullum PPU discussed the latest AWU outrage *of 50s a week and tucker on dairy farms and the preference to soldiers in land ballots, etc....* And despite the apathy at branch level, Premier Fuller recognised that the non-political PPU was a powerful political lobby group when he elevated Mr McRae to the Legislative Council in 1923. by Peter Tsicalas

