



NEWSLETTER
September 2013

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

Cnr Stuart & Myokum Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482

OPEN: FRIDAY 10 AM – 12 PM

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

MUSEUM NEWS

INVITATION:

Blackwall Historical Society Inc have organized a cruise from Ballina to Wardell and return on *M.V. Richmond Princess*, on Saturday **21st September, 2013**, departing Ballina about 9.30 and returning about 3pm.

Join the cruise and enjoy the Richmond River's pioneering history. Morning tea and light lunch provided.

Passengers may disembark for a short while at Wardell Wharf. This Cruise will be a combined effort by the Wardell Progress Association and Blackwall Historical Society.

Tickets \$55 p.p. from Wardell P.O. 66 834 101, or Ballina Visitor Information office 1800 777 666

For further information contact President Margaret Kennedy 66 860 027

See Attached flyer



The **Mullumbimby Community Gardens** hosted the **Living Earth Festival** on Sunday 1st September.

(<http://mullumbimbycommunitygardens.org/>) The day's festivities commenced with a parade moving from the Council carpark through town to the gardens. BVHS joined the fray by entering a float. Great to see a lot of members participate, some helping decorate the float, some in the float, some handing out leaflets – all had a good time.

Our thanks to Tom McHugh for lending his ute & time and for making it safe for our members to ride in the back – very much appreciated.

The T-shirts worn by members are available from the museum at \$20 each for members, \$25 each non-members. We only had a small number printed for the parade but will print more depending on demand.



Spaghetti Circus on the October long weekend is celebrating 21 years. (See <http://www.spaghetticircus.com/>)

The museum, in collaboration with Spaghetti Circus, is launching an exhibition of the history of the circus at the September market on 21st September.

Also at the market Spaghetti Circus will be the feature with acts, kids' activities, roving stilt walkers, and are charity of the month so will be rattling the donation buckets.

Come and check out the display – support your museum and Spaghetti Circus.



Thanks to Lisa Brennan and Yasmina-Michele de Gaye for the photographs of our float - preparing, waiting and participating in the parade.



Passing Depression

One of the last Unemployment Relief Grants in the district was for a footbridge at Brunswick Heads. This proposal had been on the wish list for yonks, first raised by Peter **Nelson** before WW1 and revisited often, but remaining unviable until the State Government started to more readily splash cash about after the Depression peak had passed. However, by the time the Shire's application for a £1000 grant hit the bureaucratic desks in early 1936 the purse strings were being tightened and they won just £300, the balance coming from a loan of £700 at 5%, which the Bruns ratepayers had to wear as a rate charge of 1½d in the £ on their UCV of £23,282.



President Joe Snow keeps an eye on the Byron Shire scissors as Mrs Leah **Banner** of Wilson's Creek, wife of Cr Jack Banner, officially launches the footbridge on 30Jan37.

Whilst the Government remained ready to offer loans to create employment, by Oct36 Byron Shire had to lay off workers because it again had exceeded its overdraft limit and couldn't service those loans. At the Council meeting on 19Oct36 Clerk Brownell advised that the only income on the horizon was money from the Main Roads Board, and *it was decided that all labour except that engaged on Main Road and subsidised work would be immediately dispensed with, which means that about 50 men will be thrown out of employment....* It got worse at the 'estimates meeting' in Dec36 when the Council learnt that Department of Local Government contributions would be cut by £4,000, giving a projected income of £26,969 for 1937.

The Council's financial plight had also put in jeopardy the plans of the Byron Bay and District Improvement Association to pressure the Shire to borrow £4000 for beautification of the much neglected industrial town, *in order that men at present unemployed might be re-instated as early as possible....* But whilst the Council was in trouble, things were looking up for the commercial operators. By Nov36 world prices for exotic beach sands had taken off and the Bay-based Zircon Rutile Ltd was working around the clock, taking on another 10 men in Apr37. (Sharing the wealth and the scorched earth policy was Metal Resources Ltd operating out of New Brighton).

The sleeper-cutting industry was also going from strength to strength. In early Aug36 the Star reported that the axemen have *been working at added pressure to make up the consignment which consists of 17,000 sleepers which are for an order of the New Zealand Government.... At Mullumbimby sleeper cutters from Goonengerry area have been particularly busy....* And 10 days later *The James Cook loaded 27,000 sleepers, in addition to other timber, at Byron bay.... Most of the timber was cut in the Whian Whian forest, near the Nightcap Range National Park, and some from Laverty's Gap and Goonengerry. Between 60 and 70 men were occupied in the Byron Bay loading operation....*

In Dec36 the Star brought some Christmas cheer in asserting that *The depression is passing. Of that there are definite signs. Prospects are brighter, so that for this season festivities will be more genuine. Clouds are rolling away, and we are looking hopefully with a fuller confidence than for years past that the rising sun of prosperity will dispel mists of gloom, and that the day will dawn more brightly for all. The past few years have been times of stress. There is no gainsaying that.... It is pleasant to look back and think that the worst has passed, that hope assuredly is ahead....*

Government Funded Prosperity

At the opening ceremony of the Bruns footbridge, President W.J. **Peoples** of the Progress Association said it was *another spoke in Brunswick Heads' wheel of progress. Five years ago electric light was installed, and now the footbridge represented a further big improvement.... Within three years Brunswick Heads had had over £10,000 spent on bridges, which he thought very fair going* (for a town which contributes ~£200pa in rates), and our shopping list now includes bitumenised roads, new dressing sheds and a water supply. But they lost the argument to host the highway, which continued to run through Mullum, while Billinudgel got bypassed.

Money continued to flow to the State Highway upgrade, the overall project involving *some 5000 single men in relief camps scattered up and down the State. They are under canvas. They are there under compulsion. Their wages, when they have constant fine weather, are a little more than half the basic wage....*

In Sep37 *Burying the hatchet, symbolical of previous differences and criticisms*, Minister Spooner of the Department of Works and Local Government, *listened to several requests for special allocations for grants for works programmes. All requests received sympathetic hearings and in Byron Shire particularly, the Minister was in generous mood and contributed 'handsomely' to a £15,000 programme. At Mullumbimby he was faced by only one request for monetary assistance, that being for the re-construction of Chinbible Bridge. The estimated cost was slightly in excess of £600 and*



the Minister made a grant of £500 towards the work...

There must be an election coming on said the wits, and sure enough Mr Spooner said he was glad to hear the aldermen speak in such appreciative terms of Mr Budd, who was held in high esteem by the members of the Government and his constituents.... The Bruns ratepayers were also jubilant because the £15,000 Byron package included provision for an £800 surf club pavilion, assorted road works and even a water supply was whispered about. As for Byron's proposed £37,800 water scheme, upon return to Sydney Minister Spooner wrote *that the Government is prepared to grant £10,100 towards the cost...*, but reduced the amount 12mths later after Byron signed up for the Rocky Creek scheme, by which time all the promises had bought the 'handsome' return of Mr Budd at the Mar38 election.

By Dec37 Byron Shire had exceeded its overdraft yet again, *with another month's business to transact with little chance of any incoming revenue.... The building figures for the year were £18,754, as compared with £11,364 in 1935 and £26,404 in 1936....* Conversely, 1937 presented Mullum with a big turn around in construction activity, registering £14,804's worth of new buildings, alterations and additions, including Foley Bros £5100 investment, the refurbishment of the Simpson and Mallam buildings and the construction of the BGF Shed, a big jump on the slump of 1934 when building activity had fallen to £1370. And during 1937 property to the value of £15,117 changed hands in the Municipality. Defaulting ratepayers had also cleaned up their act, as outstanding rates only amounted to £636, representing 12.7% of total income.

The local economy continued to recover and in May38 it was reported that *Practically all the unemployed in the Byron Shire have been absorbed in works financed on the half grant-half loan basis.* And work is about to start on the Byron Bay Lifesaving Pavilion and dressing sheds, which were the recipient of another top-up from Minister Spooner in Oct38 when he also favoured Mullum with more 50/50 grants.

A sure sign that the bad times were over was the emergence of the shopkeepers from hibernation at a *well-attended meeting* on 1Nov38, when it was *unanimously decided to form a Businessmen's Association to consider, among other things, ways and means of boosting the Brunswick District in an effort to counteract the advertising propaganda of Lismore and Murwillumbah....* Mr H. **Hungerford**, President of the defunct Mullumbimby Chamber..., pointed out that there was a general apathy in Mullumbimby towards such organisations.... Messrs C.J. **Latter**, W.G. **Farrar**, J.P. **Walker**, G. **Mallam**, G.D. **Bridgland** and F.W. **Kimpton** were appointed as a committee....

They maintained the momentum and organised a Community Concert at the Empire Theatre on 22Nov38, involving a Disc Jockey from 2LM in Lismore MCing the event. A fortnight later *Over 2000 people thronged the main street of Mullumbimby and revelled in the carnival spirit which prevailed.... The crowd was one of the largest seen in Mullumbimby for a long time and was exceeded probably only by the Jubilee Celebrations in 1933.* Mayor **Latter** stated that the town had a fine future. He extolled the formation of the Businessmen's Association, which was responsible for the organisation....

Depression Wind Down

The huge 5yr undertaking to reshape the 13 miles of the Pacific Highway from the Burringbar Range to Billinudgel was completed by late 1938 *at a cost of £200,000..., and a commencement will be made on a new deviation to Brunswick Heads early in 1939. The Billinudgel deviation which was commenced early in 1938 is now open....* During this time as many as 400 men have been employed. This was when the work was proceeding under employment relief conditions. Some 150 men have been permanently employed during 1938, and the average weekly pay has been in the vicinity of £1000... circulating around the district. The main camp for the last nine months has been in the vicinity of Billinudgel and will in all probability remain there until the section to the Brunswick Heads road is completed....

Oddly, in Dec38 72 blokes from the Billinudgel camp were dismissed, but in early Jan39 48 men were selected from about 80 applicants at Lismore police station to continue the work under rationed relief conditions. Most of the men selected were married and there were about seven returned soldiers. It was stated that 110 men, including those from Lismore, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Ballina, started on the work this week. The men will work every alternate

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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 - AGM
Thursday 3rd October
2013 1.00 pm
See you there!

*Deadline for agenda items
Wednesday 2nd September
2013.

MUSEUM HOURS
Friday 10am - 12pm
Market Saturday 9am - 1pm

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Participants and BVHS Inc.



fortnight at full wage rates of pay. There will be another call-up at Lismore police station on Saturday January 21, when it is expected that about another 25 men will be engaged.

Labour and Industry in Mullumbimby were advised yesterday (16Mar39) that relief workers engaged on road construction between Billinudgel and Brunswick Heads would be dismissed in batches after Easter. About 220 men, many of whom are married, will be affected by the decision... The Director of Government Relief has issued instructions that food relief is to be issued to relief workers... single men will receive one week's issue of 7/6d and married men a fortnight's issue depending on number of children....

The job restarted in early Jun39 when 260 were re-engaged, but in the meantime *In the presence of a gathering of local citizens and visitors from Mullumbimby, Murwillumbah and Lismore, the connecting roadway from Billinudgel to the State Highway was officially opened by Cr James Bower, President of the Byron Shire Council at a banquet (at the New Brighton Hotel) on Wednesday night (30May39) and named the "Walker Highway" (as a tribute to J.A. Walker). Cr J.W. Banner was also honoured for his hand in getting the access road and for his persistent lobbying on behalf of the Billinudgelites.*

Two weeks later the workers *held a meeting at the (Billinudgel) camp and formed an Unemployed and Relief Workers' Association....* At the same time work started on the 3 mile section of the road from the Brun's Bridge to Everitt's/Anderson's Hill (Uncle Tom's), despite the Mullumites again winning the argument for the Pacific Highway to continue running through Mullum. *The whole work is being done under rationed relief conditions and an average of about 120 men are being engaged each week. The total number of men taking part in the construction is about 260.* In late Jul39 80 men were engaged for the section of the highway from Mullum to Hainsville (Ocean Shores), 20 already at work at the Mullum quarry creating metal for the project. By the end of 1939 bitumenising was underway on both sections, and by early 1940 the Mullumites had a posh new road to Bruns.

Then the war intervened and money dried up, but thanks to the Depression and aftermath things got done that may never have got off the 'round tuit' list in pre-Keynesian times. Into 1939 even the businessmen freed the moths from their wallets and by mid year another £3000 had been spent on refurbishing the Mallam and Simpson edifices, while the Council could boast of £10,000 worth of building approvals. And *The following shows the consequent reduction in unemployment according to the Mullumbimby Labour Agent records: January 35, February 25, March 29, April 17, May 1, and for June there has been a further reduction (sic)....* Upon completion of re-modelling of the Richard's building in Oct39 the Star reckoned that the *main street has undergone its greatest transformation since the township was originally built..., which displays that local businessmen have faith in the town and district....*

At a Mullum Council meeting in Feb40, after the Government returned to meal tickets as its main assistance for the unemployed, *It was contended that there was ample work available in most centres and the provision of food relief encouraged men to idle habits. Ald Walker considered that the principle of giving food for no return was unsatisfactory. Ald W. Arnold said that when the work was carried out on the basis of wages from relief money and material from Council funds there was a definite benefit and productive works carried out.*

And 12mths later, when the war had solved the unemployment problem, the NSW Government reported the lowest rate for 10yrs and finally abolished (or changed the name of) the much loved Unemployment Relief Tax. *The percentage of registered unemployed to the number of persons employed is today just over 3%, the lowest in the history of the State...*

By Peter Tsicalas

