



## NEWSLETTER

February 2015

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

# MUSEUM

Cnr Myokum & Stuart Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482

OPEN: FRIDAY 10 AM – 12 PM

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

## MUSEUM NEWS



### Reminders

Membership subscriptions for 2015 are due. See form at the end of the newsletter.

We will be finalising our **Disaster Plan** prior to our next meeting on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March** and any members who would like to be involved in this important planning document are asked to come at 1pm.

### SALES

Sales of Peter Tsicalas's books have been excellent. His books popped up in many a Christmas stocking for which BVHS Inc is very gratified.

Another success story has been thanks to Vince Devine, our local butcher. Vince requested a DVD of local historical photos to run in his shop to entertain his customers. It has generated many requests for copies so now Vince sells them for us – our thanks to Vince and his staff.

The DVDs are available at the museum for \$20 each. Thanks to the guys on the Nortec project for putting it together. Well done Sean and Zac.

### CONSERVATION

Our team that has been looking after the objects in the shed has been attacking the rusty items using molasses baths – very effective but very smelly and very messy. Also they have tracked down some great grease with which to treat the objects to protect them. Excellent work! Thanks Roland, Dave, Glen & Brian.

### STOCKTAKE

With the assistance of Nortec participants, an overdue stocktake is underway with every object being photographed. A huge task which is unveiling some mislaid items and unearthing ones that have not been accessioned.

### EXHIBITIONS

To mark the centenary of Gallipoli we are putting together an exhibition featuring the local lads who participated in this momentous event.

We are seeking any old uniforms and/or other artifacts from this period that you may be prepared to loan us for the exhibition or you may know of someone who has items that they may lend us. Please let us know if you can assist.

*Private Joseph Sydney Laverty a member of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment.*



### Tolerance thrives in the hills

*By Carole Dunn*

(From Brisbane's Sunday Mail of 1Apr1973)

*Captain Paranoia, 15 years old and with a growth of fresh-hatched beard, sat strumming his guitar on the steps of the Mullumbimby Post Office last week...*

*The son of a Sydney University lecturer, he had dropped out of high school to "find" himself, and was waiting for money from Dad.*

*Like most of the hippie crowd living at Mullumbimby, he had taken a colorful pseudonym. Others called themselves Rainbow, White Cloud, Virtue, and so on.*

*"I've been living up at one of the Main Arm communes", the Captain explained, "but I can't digest the vegetarian food they have there. I haven't any money left, but the cafe proprietor has given me \$4 credit until my money comes."* (probably Theo Psaltis at the Popular Cafe.)

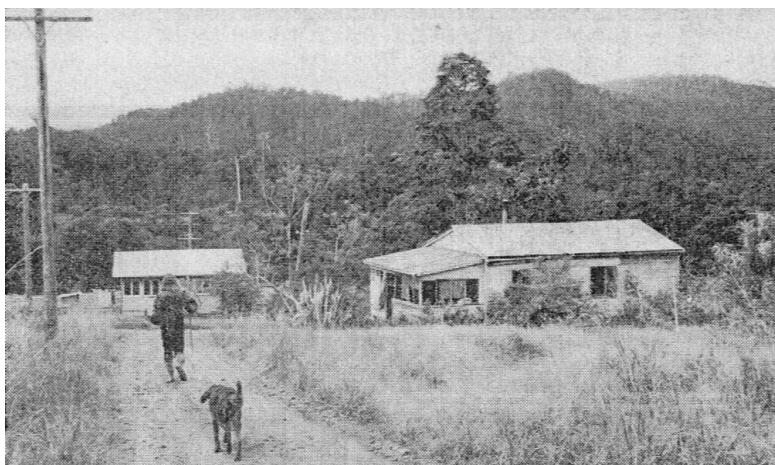
*It's doubtful whether the Captain, or anyone like him, could have found any credit in the town a year ago. But of late there's been a growing feeling of tolerance, sometimes admiration between the townspeople of Mullumbimby and the population of hippies and nature dwellers living in the surrounding hills. And if it's not really bridging the generation gap, it's certainly laying down solid foundations for peaceful co-existence. It wasn't easy for Mullumbimby, northern New South Wales, when clans of hippies and drop-outs from the cities discovered its lush pastures and picturesque bush a couple of years ago. The community of conservative banana growers and dairy farmers stood up in suspicious defence of their town when the flowing-haired incense burners began to camp on the outskirts. Even then there was little real hostility and the farmers in the district who had dealings with the intruders reported favourably on them.*

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Finn Village 1964. (Axel Ostring's house left)

(In 1948 Tom Mott leased portion of his property to a group of Finn migrants - at the top end of Mott's Road, about as far as you could get from civilisation.)



Finn Village Mar73 (Tony, the dulcimer maker in velvet mediaeval suit and silver-topped cane..., with his red setter.)



Harry Nyland's old house is the only one left in 2015.

*He's been elected fire chief of the Main Arm Division 5 Fire Brigade, complete with boots and a helmet. The other men*

*The groups began to organise into working communes, taking over deserted farm houses along the Main Arm Road, a mile out of town.*

*Some returned to the cities to earn money to buy land.*

*Pooling their cash, the groups bought land at prices that soared once the villagers realised the offers were genuine.*

*A three-acre block with run-down farmhouse that would have gone for \$6000 two years ago, now fetches \$12,000, no trouble.*

*The townspeople have divided the newcomers into two categories:*

*There are the young drifters, University or college students on holidays, hippies bent on reaching the North Queensland communes or travelling farther into the Northern Territory. These youngsters come with only their ideals, a guitar, little money - and a lean and hungry look.*

*"But they get bored from just hanging around all the time," said the Postmaster (Mr Tom Prudence) last week, "and they soon move on."*

*He said few of the kids had much money and many of the girls were pregnant.*

*Then there were the settlers, older people, some married with children, who had taken land up in the hills.*

*Their aim in coming had been to escape the city rat-race. Most were talented, highly-trained people who would do well in a place of traffic lights and milling crowds.*

*This group was doing its darnedest to fit into the scheme of rural living.*

*Out along the Main Arm Road, Col Scattergood is unofficial leader of a group of five families that have taken over the deserted hillside cottages of a group of Finnish banana growers.*

*"Finn Village" it's called by the folks in town and out there now they're making everything from perfume oil and incense to candles, woven fabrics, electronic sound equipment and those long-forgotten mediaeval instruments, dulcimers.*

*Col, with two children attending the Main Arm school, had joined the Parent' and Friends' Association of the school.*

are fire officers.

"The fact is we were given a fire truck," the dulcimer-maker, Tony, told me, "but the brigade in town is using it. What we'd do if a fire really happened I don't know."

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Tony, a trained chef from Sydney in his early 20's has been father for a week of a 7lb boy Tristan. His wife, Bronwyn, is the candle-maker and weaver. She has decorated the old Finnish cottage with wall hangings, carpets and cushions spread out on the floors....

Roland is the Dutch-born electronics engineer who migrated to Australia 12 months ago and has been at Finn village ever since. All he knows of Australia is the wharf where his ship docked in Sydney and the hills around Mullumbimby.

"A beautiful country - I'll never leave," he says - although his actress wife, Vera, has returned to the bright lights to join the new production of "Hair" in Sydney.

Allan is from North Queensland. He helps with the dulcimer making and carves wooden toys for sale in town. The group says their cottage industries are now established and should soon bring them in a sufficient income.

Unlike the youthful groups living in the communes, they don't pool their resources in financial or material things. But together they have bought a few acres of land down in the valley where they are helping each other build houses.

Getting things done for the Main Arm area is one of their aims. Most of the permanents have joined the locals in the (re)founding of the Main Arm Progress Association and that's where the farmers and newcomers have found much common ground.

But they find they want the same things - peace above all else, better roads, a share of effort to bring the best out of the Mullumbimby hills.

"There are some really fine old farmers in this area," Tony said. "Some hacked out their own roads and built their own dwellings long before we came along."

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And the farmers - while they keep their distance from the offbeat groups - say the settlers are really pulling their weight in the community.

"A fine bunch of young people, most of them, we have nothing against them," they say.

That's praise indeed from a tight-knit community that doesn't accept intruders too readily.

## The Golden Years

Part of that perceived tolerance may be due to what the hippies brought. By the early 1970s the district was a basket case, but a miracle was wrought when Saint Gough sent his disciples to convert the farmers. Huge sums were offered for the establishment of alternate lifestyle monasteries, with the local economy subsequently benefiting by an injection of pharmaceutically enhanced income from the cultivation of a new cash crop, coupled with that cunning government subsidy to business, the dole. Added to the mix (and Mullum's gold rush) were the less radical 'sea and tree changers' also seeking an alternative to the rat race. They were catered for by astute local entrepreneurs who'd quickly sensed the paradigm shift and created a rash of new subdivisions in and around town, in addition to the many small acreage lots in the countryside (thank you Lord).

According to the local dairy officer in Jun73, the traditional owners were also grateful, "*Increasing demand for land for development is causing higher land prices.... Because of rising rates and increasing production costs some primary producers must sell out, but, fortunately, high land values mean that farmers can move out of agriculture with a substantial capital gain.... He said hobby farmers and week-end producers could afford to pay more for the land than farmers.... The losers were sharefarmers, tenant farmers and rural labourers.*

[By 1966 Main Arm had lost a staggering 79% of its citizens - from a post war peak of 547 in the heyday of the banana industry to 113 subsistence survivors. Thereafter the place didn't register on the census taker's radar. Byron Shire peaked in 1954, shedding 12% of its population over the next 17yrs, the growth centres of the Bay and the Heads hiding the fact that the rural countryside declined by ~30%, the young waving goodbye to an aging group of stubborn farmers. Mullum's loss was less dramatic, suffering a 6% slide from the peak of 2017 conservative souls in 1954 to a congregation of 1891 praying for deliverance in 1971.]

By 1973 Mullum Council had about 200 allotments now involved in development plans with the municipality..., but thankfully the grand plan for a canal development at the northern end of Prince Street was never pursued. At the end of the year the Advocate crowed that *The land boom has brought increasing prices for residential blocks..., which in turn have encouraged local land owners to seek approval for the development of farm land.... Smaller developments have already attracted many new residents and building activities have been intense....*

Over the 5yrs 1971-75 111 new homes (*almost all of brick-veneer*) were built in Mullum..., probably mostly for cashed-up farmers retiring into town. "This building rate has been unique in view of the fact that several building slumps during the five-year period have not been felt at Mullumbimby, although apparent in the region.... In the five-year period, 109 new building lots were created with a peak of 56 in 1974....

Coupled with this was the Shire Council's approval in Mar74 of *the subdivision of a total of 72 one-acre blocks on areas adjoining the Municipal boundary....* At the end of 1976 developer Trevor **Martin** opened the champagne after finally winning approval for 100 residential blocks on his 10 hectares off Left bank Road. He immediately put the place on the market for \$250,000, with '*potential for further development*' of two adjoining blocks of 109 and 90 acres at \$100,000 each.

The value of development applications approved by the Shire Council was rising exponentially, from \$620,381 in 1969 (inclusive of 41 dwellings) to an astonishing \$5,150,233 for 1976 (133 dwellings). Building inspector Jim **Fanning** said *It is interesting that as recently as 1974 the ratio of dwellings constructed in urban areas against rural areas was almost exactly two to one.... But in the space of 18 months, this ratio has reversed with 1976 showing twice as many dwellings being constructed in rural areas as the towns....*

In the 12mths to 31Dec80 *Building applications totalling \$18.11 million were approved by the Shire of Byron Council. This represented 690 building applications...*, inclusive of 399 dwellings, but whether these figures included Mullum's contribution prior to the 1Oct80 amalgamation is unclear. The 30Jun81 census revealed that in the 5yrs since 1976 the Shire's housing stock had increased by 34% (from 3927 to 5254 dwellings, exclusive of the numerous cow bails and banana packing sheds given an 'accommodation' makeover). Nevertheless, Byron was overshadowed by its coastal companions Ballina (45%) and Tweed (40%), but ahead of Lismore (19%) and Kyogle (10%).

The good times for the speculators came to an end when the recession hit in 1982, but the optimistic North Coast Industry Board reckoned in May82 that *There is no reason at all why the North Coast should get caught up in the present gloom and despair running through other sections of State and national commercial and industrial sectors.... While building activity generally was recognised as being down across the region, other industries, including tourism all reported high levels of activity....*

## **Mullum**

Mullum was heading to the intensive care ward by the close of the 1960s. Development applications approved in 1967 were valued at \$190,791 (inclusive of 8 new dwellings); \$171,153 in 1968 (5 dwellings); \$95,255 in 1969 (7 dwellings). But by 1976 it was off life support when *the rise to \$798,684 was against the national trend...*, although *the number of new dwellings was three less than 1975*, reflecting the new inflationary era.

And the multiplying real estate agents were making a motza. There were 50 land sales in 1967 valued at \$184,505, and *104 transactions involving \$2,234,545 in 1974*, giving 482% inflation in the average transfer (from \$3690 to \$21,486). In Dec76 Town Clerk **Sheldon** delivered the startling news that the municipality's ucv was now \$4,765,850, a 700% increase on the 1970 figure of \$592,725 (which was a mere 25% growth on the value of \$476,430 in 1965). *The average town residential block had increased by 400 per cent. In some areas, however, there had been increases as high as 1200 per cent....*

*Total unimproved values in Byron Shire have risen from \$6,029,831 in 1967 to \$16,298,387 by late 1972, an increase of 168 per cent... due mainly to the Ocean Shores subdivision.... In Dec75 the huge increase in property values in Byron Shire... from \$22 million to \$51 million... will mean a general rate increase on some properties up to 28%.*

Through 1975 Mullum's real estate agents reported continuing high demand despite the economic slump and rising unemployment. In particular they carried on advertising *for farms and farmlets for unsuited buyers*, the same adverts also coming from city-based real estate agents who had tree-change customers on their books seeking '*acreage blocks*'. By the end of 1975 Cr Frank **Mills** was advertising his *PINDARI PARK, the newest type of Rural Residential subdivision... 1 acre blocks... near Mullumbimby... priced \$8000 to \$9500.*

In Dec76 the Advocate delivered a merry Christmas with the hype that *A spectacular growth in the building rate in both Byron Shire and Mullumbimby Municipality during the past year has highlighted a shift of population to the Brunswick*

## Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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Market Managers:  
Kim Pedersen  
Sarah Newsome  
Newsletter team:  
Susan Tsicalas & Work Experience Participants  
Public Officer: Susan Tsicalas

### 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](mailto:bvhs@tridentcommunications.com.au)

**NEXT MEETING  
N.B. Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March  
2015 2.00pm  
See you there!**

\*Deadline for agenda items  
Wednesday 4th Mar 2015

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

BVHS Newsletter is produced by NORTEC Work Experience Participants and BVHS Inc.



Valley.... Added emphasis is also laid on the increasing demand for country dwellings on areas ranging from 0.5 hectares to 50 hectares..., with 63% of dwellings being approved for erection in areas zoned non-urban....

The late 1970s were Mullum's golden years, with commercial development keeping pace with the exponential residential growth. In Dec76 Mrs Elva **Bashforth** retired after 22yrs making pies from her Devon Cake Shop in Stuart Street and said "*The coming demolition of Nelson's Building and its replacement with a grand new shopping complex will be a great advancement for Mullumbimby...*, as will the two motels planned for Stuart Street. Alas, only a modest block eventually replaced her ex-home and a heap of other grandiose plans never made it off the drawing board.

In Dec77 Noel **James**, president of the Businessmen's Association, said the Shire's *new developments, at first rather restricted to beach resorts, spread quickly into rural areas. People from many cities came to realise the pleasant living that could be enjoyed in the valleys and high places and along the creeks of Main Arm, Wilsons Creek, Mullumbimby Creek and in the Billinudgel area. More and more hectares of land were subdivided from the larger holdings and given over to rural residential purposes.... The new commercial development at Mullumbimby began when local shopkeepers and companies found themselves faced with the need to expand their premises to meet the demand.*

First off the blocks was Bridgland's expansion, followed by Mallams IG Supermarket, then Clifford's Pharmacy and his new Cut Price supermarket next door. With the completion of the Hungerford suite of shops and offices on the corner of Burringbar and Station in Sep77 there were no more vacant blocks on 'Main Street'. And at the opening of the new James Hardware store in Stuart Street in Apr78 Jack Boyd MLA said "*It has been suggested by a high authority that Mullumbimby would stagnate, but, it is obvious that the district is getting more than a fair share of growth.... The Advocate commented that It must also cast a cloud over beliefs in the astuteness of experts in economic and other fields, particularly in view of the fact that Byron Electorate has recently been rated one of the greatest country growth areas in the State....*

*The percentage increase in valuations in 1980 as compared with 1979 was 17 per cent on a shire-wide basis. In Dec82 when the Councillors sat to set the rates for 1983, they chose to adopt the new valuations issued by the Valuer-General 12mths earlier, despite property values well on the wane, resulting in an increase of 220 per cent on the valuations used for the 1982 estimates, but in certain areas values have jumped more than 400 per cent. These include areas of Byron Bay and Suffolk Park. A property at popular Wategos Beach has been valued at \$100,000 - a rise of \$80,000 from the 1978 valuation. Valuations in Ocean Shores and Brunswick Heads have nearly doubled, while valuations in Mullumbimby have trebled.... Rural land values also have risen dramatically. The value of a 70ha property at The Pocket has risen 378 per cent from \$21,000 to \$140,000....*

But all this good news for property investors was coupled with rising unemployment for the dispossessed. In Jan81 Cr Mike Watterson, deputy chairman of *The North Coast Industry Development Board*, said the board is *concerned that despite Government assistance to industry of more than \$2.3 million last year, unemployment in the region is as high as three times the national average.... The number of people coming to live on the North Coast is surpassing the number of jobs being created. "A CSIRO survey found that the North Coast was the second most desirable place to live in the State.... And the Murbah CES office, which included Byron Shire in its bailiwick, recorded the highest unemployment in the Richmond-Tweed region of 16.1%. It came to pass*

that NSW unemployment increased from 5.2% in 1981 to a peak of 9.4% in 1984.

By Peter Tsicalas



Mallam's Building 1958. (They joined the Independent Grocers (IG) chain in 1966, extended self-service in 1971 and in May 75 completed the second major renovation.)



Mallam's Dec 81 after the expenditure of another \$100,000 on renovations (and decorative signage).

BRUNSWICK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



# MUSEUM

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## RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP 2015

Annual Membership Fees	Payment Options	
Adults \$15 Students \$5 Printed mailed copy of newsletter \$5 p.a.	<i>Cheque/postal order payable to:</i> Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc PO Box 378 Mullumbimby 2482	<i>Direct deposit</i> Bank: Westpac Byron Bay BSB: 032 583 Account No.: 201192 Reference: Your name

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