



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

NEWSLETTER

April 2012



## MUSEUM NEWS

### NOW AND THEN: SERIES 2

On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March ABC Open, Northern Rivers Writers' Centre and BVHS collaborated in a digital photography workshop held at the museum. It was a fantastic day with all participants learning how to: adjust their cameras to take the appropriate shots, write evocative stories, take a photograph lining up yesterday with today and then how to upload their efforts onto Flickr. It was a long day but how the time flew! Catherine from ABC Open had spent a day at the museum a couple of weeks prior to the workshop and made a video to advertise the project which can be found at this link.

<http://open.abc.net.au/openregions/nsw-north-coast-681q8Lr/posts/the-old-post-office-mystery-36pi9hb>



*Trying to find the angle to line up the old with the new*



Some of the photos taken on the day, with their imaginative stories were uploaded to Flickr. On the right are a couple taken on the day.

To view all photos together with their stories go to <http://www.flickr.com/> and in search box type "Mullumbimby Now and Then". On next page across from search select tab "People" and then click on [Mullumbimby Now and Then](#).



You too can upload to the stream on Flickr. Just contact us for the user name and password. The more the merrier. For tips on "How To", go to the Open ABC Projects website. Lots of fun was had by all the participants and our heartfelt thanks to Catherine and Nat from ABC Open and Alan from the Northern Rivers Writers' Centre for a great day.



### PHOTOCOPIER

The photocopier has been replaced under a "Pay for Print" plan which includes maintenance, toner, servicing costs. We still need your assistance to cover the monthly cost under the plan. Thanks to those who have made donations for the "Trash & Treasure Stall". Please keep them coming. Every bit helps.

### MARKET UPDATE

Welcome to Rustin Selvey, a new member, who is learning the ropes of Market Manager under Gordon's keen tutelage. Sometime throughout the year they will swap roles and Rusty will become the market manager. We are delighted to have him on board. We are indebted to Gordon for his nurturing of and commitment to our market.

**Brunswick Valley  
Historical Society Inc.  
Newsletter**

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

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President: Jennifer Elward

Vice Presidents:  
Gordon Wright  
Stephen Hall

Secretaries:  
Billie Harvey  
Bronwyn Crook

Treasurer: Susan Tsicalas

Assistant Treasurer:  
Sarah Newsome

Market Co-ordinator:  
Gordon Wright

Newsletter team:  
Susan Tsicalas, Liz Walton &  
Work Experience Participants

Patron: Frank Mills OAM.

**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**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

**9.00 am See you there!**

\*Deadline for agenda items

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

**MUSEUM HOURS**

**Friday 10am - 2pm**

**Market Saturday 9am - 1pm**

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



**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER**

Thanks to those members who have renewed their membership. Membership is for the calendar year January to December. Please fill in and mail the attached renewal form with your monies.



**DAIRY DELIGHTS**

Into the war years the reign of Her Majesty the Cow was being challenged by a number of upstarts: the Rural Serf's Union was revolting, the Necessary Commodities Commission was getting uppity, King Banana was on the rise and even the Weather God was turning against Her, while the forces of Apathy were deploying like the plague.

In May 1914 George **Cameron's** editorial pen predicted *that the rural worker's will be brought under the Arbitration Act this year. If Judge Heydon's view that 48/- a week is a living wage is taken (as no doubt it will), farmers will be up against something awkward. And while all this is going on the Dairymen's Association here seems to be as dead as a dodo..., but surely there is enough life in the dairymen here to resurrect their association and do something to fight for their welfare....* Six weeks later Jack **Banner** of Billinudgel, the Vice President of the Dairy Farmers' Association of NSW and the busy President of the Byron Shire, replied that *...The Association came into existence three years ago because it was needed... and the Fighting Fund raised was sufficient to keep RWU whingers at bay but... The Rural Workers' Union has now been absorbed by the Australian Workers Union, the total membership of which is now something like 100,000... and they are now determined to bring their case before the court..., so the DFA needs to be ready with a bigger baseball bat.*

Despite the efforts of Banner and his Sydney executive in temporarily thwarting the AWU, farmer apathy remained the go and in Apr 1915 when a new threat emerged George **Cameron** again had to stir up the *Dairymen's (or Deadmen's) Association. At every streetcorner every day, and more especially on Saturdays, you can hear denunciations, frequently free and generally pretty fiery, as to the (butter) price agreed upon by the Necessary Commodities Commission.... At one time in Mullumbimby there was a branch of the Dairymen's Association, but where is it now? Who failed to carry on the work? And who let it fall into its present state? ...Time after time meetings were called, and always the same lot turned up to do the work.... Get a move on now.* Two weeks later *The Mullumbimby dairyman is still dead and still grumbles at the street corners and at smoke concerts as to the regulation of the price of butter... In Billinudgel (all praise to them) it is different... They had written to the Attorney General, who administered the NCC, pointing out ...that out production has decreased fully 25 per cent during the last three weeks owing to drought conditions..., which are shaping up to be as bad as 1911 and 1912. ...Will Mullumbimby not take the hint?*

The following week (6May15) George was able to report that *At last the local Branch ...will hold a meeting, and it is to be hoped the moribund state will be dropped forever...,* after J.H. **Johnston**, S. **Walker**, P.G. **Whittall**, R.W. **Bryen** placed an advert *To Dairymen....* George also

published a thank you note from Banner who was grateful for the publicity and advocated taking of a leaf from the Union tactics manual: *...The very classes we are called upon to find cheap butter for are the very classes ...who, when the Wages Award Board do not give them all they desire, simply say they will not comply, and as a result, strike!... So What is wrong with the farmer going on strike? ...but it must be remembered that the war has absolutely nothing to do with the question....* John **Macgregor**, Chairman of Norco, had also separately advised that the fixing of a low butter price had nothing to do with the war and was all about the Government caving in to Union pressure.

On 8May15 ~80 farmers met at the School of Arts and backed up W.G. **Cochrane's** motion *That this meeting of representative dairymen of the Brunswick, Richmond and Tweed districts respectfully protests against the unjust attitude of the Necessary Commodities Control Commission..., thereby sacrificing the interests of the producer to that*

*of the consumer, and we wish ...to give evidence before the NCCC ...to ask for an increase of 3d per lb....* He was supported by Messrs **Macgregor** (who said they should ask for 6d), **Whittall**, **Baker**, **Banner** and **Sheaffe**. Jack Banner was still obsessed with a strike to drive the point home: *...We would be justified in stopping our supplies for a month and giving the milk to the pigs....* W.R. **Baker** couldn't resist a political point and moved that *"this meeting of people on the land further protests against the unjust action of the*

*Government in penalising the man on the land in the interests of their supporters - the labor unions - ....*



*Enthusiasm for Their Majesties, aka The Goddesses, at the First Mullumbimby Show 1907*

Their actions brought the insulting result of a token rise of 1d/lb, prompting another meeting of conspiracy theorists in the rooms of auctioneer Sylvester Walker where *The first motion to be dealt with was by Mr G.V. O'Connor, seconded by Mr P.G. Whittall, "That the Brunswick Branch be re-organised."* This was carried unanimously, and 26 joined and paid their subscription, and elected W.G. **Cochrane** as President, J. **McPaul** and J.H. **Johnson** vice-presidents, Syl **Walker** secretary, P.G. **Whittall** treasurer, and Whittall and Macgregor elected as delegates to the District Council. Macgregor also gave a report on the deputation's submission to the NCCC in Sydney.

On 3Jun15 George ran an editorial on the *Brunswick Branch of the Dairyfarmers' Association* which will meet to discuss the question of the penny rise per lb that has been granted by the Necessary Commodities Commission. *At the meeting last Saturday strong sentiments were expressed as to the uselessness of a rise of that fraction and the rise was generally termed a farce.... At yesterday's meeting of the committee of the Mullumbimby Agricultural Society..., Mr John Macgregor moved the following resolution which was carried unanimously:- "That this meeting of the committee M'bimby Agricultural Society views with extreme dissatisfaction,... and we respectfully submit that the price of butter be raised to 160/- per cwt."* He also said that the board of Norco had protested, and believed the Judge and the Commission were in favour of a substantial increase, but the PLL (Political Labor League) was behind the whole and had carried the day....

At the DFA's public protest meeting at the School of Arts, attended by representatives from the Richmond and Tweed, Percy **Whittall** kicked things off with a demand for an increase to 160s/cwt, asserting that some farmers were *unable to make a living wage.... The tenant farmers more especially were contending against fearful difficulties, and it was imperative that landowners and tenant farmers should join together and fight this insane step that had been taken by the Government in aid of the Sydney Unions... for unless it was stopped rents and prices of land would come down, wages would have to come down, and, furthermore, the land which had been keeping dairymen in comparative comfort though not luxury would have to be turned into sheep walks, or cattle fattening runs....* He urged an increase of at least 6d/lb and a return to market forces, finishing up with the assertion that *he had made up his mind to give up dairying unless they could get fairplay. He could not pay his rent under present conditions....* Then followed disagreement on the details of the demands, prompting W.R. **Baker** to say *the dairyman had never been unanimous and he was sorry to see the discordant note.... the Government had no control over the Necessary Prices Commission, and he (the speaker) would go still further and say the Government had no control over anything....*

Contrary to promises, increased wages were now being granted, and the next thing they would have to contend with would be the raising of the rural workers' wages.... If the request was not complied with they must strike. (Applause). The tenant farmer's case was no worse and perhaps not so bad as that of the landowners. The farmer could walk off but the owner would lose his hard-earned capital.... The speaker criticised the Dairy Farmers' Association for not taking the matter up vigorously.

In defending the Dairy Farmers' Association, Jack **Banner** said the executive... was not backed-up by the apathetic members... If they gave the Dairy Farmers' Association their unstinted support, that body would be able to move and see that something was done. Had it not been for that Association the rural workers' claims would have been granted long ago.... John **Macgregor** reckoned that ...if they did not get rid of the Commission the whole industry would be ruined. Tenant Farmer Mr J.D. **Condon** ...was not sure that with organisation the primary producers would not find themselves in a majority and could oust the Labor Party. Tenant and land owning farmers must work together....

In reporting the meeting on 10Jun15 George Cameron took the opportunity to work in the political angle. ...At the protest meeting held on Saturday, Mr W.R. Baker held that the Government head was wagged by the caucus tail... Well, ...the Liberals ...like John Perry, who so far as this paper has heard has never raised his voice on the Butter question..., weren't much better. Mullumbimby has given the first kick against the unfair attitude of the Necessary Commodities Commission (dubbed the Unnecessary Oddities Commission) and another kick will be given by Billinudgel on Friday and still another at the Bay on Tuesday..., generating more hot air.

At Norco's Half-Yearly meeting a week later Chairman Macgregor dwelt on the same subject, pointing out that the current drought was shaping up to be the worse since 1902 and that the Directors had separately forwarded a submission to the NCC for a 6d/lb increase. The General Managers of NSW's three major butter co-ops, Coastal Farmers (Meares), Berrima (Throsby) and Norco (Clifford), also made a submission for an immediate increase, and Perry MLA raised the matter in parliament. The result of all the lobbying was a 1½d/lb advance on 21Jun15, increasing the perception that the NCC was a stooge of a Government which figured there were no Labor votes in Northern NSW. (In Jan16 during a tour through the Northern Rivers, George Cann MLA, The Minister for Works, gave the perennial politicians view of farmers, complaining that they'd been given drought relief, cheap loans, subsidised rail transport for cream, subsidised whinging courses..., and in many other ways helped them, only to be abused and voted down for the good done.) Over the remaining months of 1915 the price was adjusted up and down and finished the year at 135s/cwt (~1½d/lb), an increase of 13s/cwt (~1½d/lb) on the beginning of the year, while costs went up and supply continued to decrease due to the drought (and margarine filled the gap.)

The Dairy Farmers/Dairy Farmers' Association went quiet and held its last meeting on 10Jul15, with no agenda other than to bleat about the ineffectual central executive in Sydney and a need to demonstrate solidarity, Chairman

Cochrane stating *The Association had lapsed before owing to no meetings.* Like the eleventy seven dairy organisations before it, the Association faded away and the Primary Producers' Union eventually rose from the ashes. Other features of 1915 making life interesting for the dairy farmer were the charges of child slavery in the milking shed, the rise of the Tenant Farmers' Association and Norco's rejection of cheese as a diversifying product, not to forget Déjà vu all over again when the NCC got its fingers into bacon.



Miss Fanny Cumpstay, relieving Her Majesty of 14.4lbs of milk in 2½mins to retain the title of undefeated champion milker of the Brunswick Valley ~1935

Meanwhile the farmers were deserting the game in droves, either selling up and moving into Queensland, where the new Labor Government introduced a smarter NCC, or diversifying into other produce, notably bananas. But, paradoxically, certain people cried all the way to the bank; on 9Dec15 real estate agent W.A. **Back** announced he'd sold 6 farms for £18,200 within the last few weeks, and over at New Brighton the highly successful sale of beach lots in the Gaggin Subdivision led to the real estate agents clamouring for the release of similar sea and river frontage crown land between the Heads and the Bay. In Feb16 300 people attended the auction of the Barnes estate at Tyagarah (586 acres subdivided into 12 blocks), paying £20,163 with the top block achieving £40/acre. The competition for blocks was all over in 45mins, 7 of the buyers forced to up their bids being the current tenants, now proud landlords and about to become enthusiastic banana and cane growers. And it turned out that the removal of butter from free market forces was a blessing in disguise, while bananas were taking Mullum into its most prosperous period ever.

By Peter Tsicalas