



## NEWSLETTER

May 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

### **MARKET NEWS**

Unfortunately because of the incessant inclement weather we had to cancel the April market as the grounds were too wet to allow vehicle access. Hopefully the weather god for the remainder of the year will be kinder to us.

There will be a special attraction at the June Market. The Model T Ford club from Queensland are rallying in the Brunswick Valley area over that weekend and will have their cars on display at the market in the morning for a couple of hours.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER**

Thanks to those members who have renewed their membership. Membership is for the calendar year January to December. If you haven't yet subscribed for this year and wish to continue receiving the newsletter you need to renew your membership by the end of May.

### **"THE MULLUMBIMBY KID" (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)**

Edwin Wilson has donated a second edition of his book *The Mullumbimby Kid* to the museum. This volume contains new material after he found he had a long lost brother. His book can be viewed/downloaded for free on the internet (as well as his *New Selected Poems*) at [www.edwinwilson.com.au](http://www.edwinwilson.com.au) OR hard copies can be obtained from Woodbine Press, PO Box 32, Lane Cove, NSW 2066 for \$33 plus postage. Woodbine Press would appreciate copies of any reviews sent to the above address or to [woodbinepress@hotmail.com](mailto:woodbinepress@hotmail.com).

### **SCHOOL VISITS**

Lorrie, our education co-ordinator, has been very busy contacting the local schools and advising them of ways we can support the Human Studies and Its Environment syllabus. Shearwater's Grade 3 visited us last week and next week we are looking forward to 100 children from Ocean Shores Public School visiting us as a part of their educational trip to Mullumbimby. Many thanks to the members who are helping/have helped with these visits.

### **MULLUMBIMBY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Mullumbimby Chamber of Commerce is functioning again and BVHS Inc has become a member to help raise our profile. On Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April we hosted an evening for members to learn about the benefits of *community engine* – a web-based platform for businesses and community organisations.

### **OLD & GOLD**

BVHS Inc will be attending Old & Gold at Brunswick Heads on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June and look forward to seeing you at our stall where we will have our publications for sale, photos displayed on boards and running on a computer as well as DVD's playing. If you wish to come and help at the stall we would love to see you there.

### **FACEBOOK**

We now have a presence on *Facebook* as "Mullumbimby Museum" where you can make a comment and tick "Like" so that it will go viral. Thanks to Stephen for co-ordinating our page.

### **REMINDERS**



1. **Trash & Treasure Stall** – We are being well supported by members with goods for the stall. Many thanks but need donations to keep coming in to maintain an interesting stock level.
2. **2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month** – acquisition meeting  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month** – members monthly meeting

**Brunswick Valley  
Historical Society Inc.  
Newsletter**

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

Cnr Myocum & Stuart Sts  
Mullumbimby  
P.O. Box 378 Mullumbimby 2482  
bvhs84@yahoo.com.au  
www.mullumbimbymuseum.org.au  
**02 6684 4367**

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 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012  
9.00 am See you there!**

\*Deadline for agenda items  
Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

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

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



## Condons and Co-operation

The Catholic Condons first came to notice as perennial stirrers in 1911 when William Patrick Condon, a tenant farmer of Tyagarah/Ewingsdale, got carried away with nit picking the Norco balance sheet at the AGM and Director W.R. **Baker objected...** to him... *coming to meeting after meeting with insulting suggestions of fleecing....* Brother James David, a tenant farmer of Nashua, was just as outspoken, but a little more diplomatic.

At the next Norco half-yearly meeting in Jun1912 the Chairman wouldn't allow W.P. *to go on reading a rambling statement...*, after he implied the Directors were incompetent in persisting with the arrangement to sell butter through the Coastal Farmers Co-operative Society rather than establish their own selling floor. At the end of the year he turned up at the AGM of the Mullumbimby Co-operative Butchering Co Ltd and gave Chairman P.G. **Whittall** a hard time before Director R.W. **Bryen** moved that he *be no further heard...*, *carried, only one dissenting* of the 20 who tuned up out of the ~260 shareholders. Condon said *"I thought I came here to attend the Butchering Company's meeting, but I find that if one does not belong to the Agricultural Society he is not wanted here."* He then left. (The Dalley Street offices of the co-op were also home to the august Ag/Show Society, constituting Mullum's aristocracy.) The Butchering Co-op was formed in 1910 after Patrick **Walker** Snr and Thomas W. **Torrens** gave a favourable report on the prospects for such a venture, the Provisional Directors then buying Torrens' own butchering business for £322/10/- and negotiating £175pa rent for a 5yr lease, an arrangement that W.P., elected as a Foundation Director at the first AGM in Jun10, was never happy with. He resigned his directorship in Jun12 after a disaster with expansion into Byron Bay.

His next co-operative foray was into the 1913 half-yearly meeting of the Byron Bay Co-operative Canning and Freezing Co Ltd, which had finally gotten its act together to start slaughtering on 25Aug13. But, like the Butchering co-op, they found they weren't getting the loyal support of shareholders and local farmers.

Into 1915 both co-ops were in trouble and W.P. was on the warpath. The Butcher's AGM of Dec14 was postponed because they couldn't get a quorum, but eventually getting up with the usual 20 shareholders. Once again Chairman Whittall wouldn't allow him to see the books after £150 worth of bad debts was written off and maintenance of the Torrens property was proving to be a bigger burden than anticipated. While Whittall said *Shareholders dealing only partially with the Company cannot be said to be loyal, nor are they genuine exponents of the principle of co-operation...*, Condon whinged because he couldn't find a buyer for his shares. After the meeting he wrote to the Mullum Star saying *...I am perfectly satisfied now that the general public (outside the Agricultural Society), have long since seen through the game that is being played in connection with the business of this so-called Co-operative Butchering Co. ...*, while the Co-op started placing desperate adverts... *'Why not support us?'*

At the entertaining 10th half-yearly meeting in Jul15 W.P. went bananas upon learning that the 6 employees of the company were given unlimited free meat. After a long harangue on the giving of credit and the carrying of too many customers Chairman Whittall had to rein him

in and reckoned it was *a slur on the dairymen of the district...*, but he continued and *objected to the practice, which was not in vogue when he was on the board. The Chairman said... You should know how difficult it is to handle the labour question and how you have to smoothe and be pleasant to induce men to do their work properly....* The next agenda item was on supporting Australia Day and doing their bit towards contributing to the various patriotic funds. After Lawyer **Moriarty**, Officer Commanding Mullum's D Troop of the 4th Light Horse, moved that £50 should be given, *Mr Condon said they were now turning the company into a charitable institution. "I want my share money back," said Mr Condon, "and then you can do what you damn well like!" Continuing the speaker said as an individual he had given to every kind of fund that came along, but he objected to the company doing it.... Mr Condon then retired from the meeting in a dramatic manner, saying something that was not heard at the reporter's table....* Then followed a discussion on the amount, most agreeing that giving £10 now and more later was fair, but, knowing which guilt buttons to push, *Mr Moriarty said Any shareholders who have any guts in them will vote now and not wait for six months. The amendment was carried, there being only one dissident....*

A couple of weeks later W.P. was still on the warpath and wrote to the Bangalow Herald *...This charitable institution in addition to paying the award rates supply their numerous employees with meat gratis, no particular restrictions as to quantity...*, on the same day the Co-op announced it was colluding with the capitalist butchers Henrik **Nelson** and Cyril **Baker** (son of Albert who resigned as a director in Feb14) for some price fixing (Fillet 10d/lb, Leg of Mutton 10d/lb, Tripe 7d/lb). A week later butcher S.M. **Ball**, *the Model Butcher of Stuart Street*, countered with Fillet 9d/lb, Leg Mutton 8d/lb, Tripe 6d/lb. And 6wks after that (30Sep15) Ball had given up on Mullum and was chasing butchering debts, along with the **Hutley** Bros who moved to Lismore and appointed R.W. Simpson as their receiver.



James David, Ellen Mary Condon & Family ~1920

Standing from left: Frank (1904-1977), Mary (1906-1925), Jack (1903-1981), Imelda (1897-1973), Maurice (1902-1973), Nellie (1907-1989), James (1900-1975)  
Seated from Left: Patrick (1899-1973), Anthony (1910-2002), James David (1869-1951), Ellen Mary nee Daley (1872-1953), Marjorie (1909-1984), Michael (1896-1962)

In front from left: Gerard (1912-1986), Richard (1917-1980), Noel 1915-1957)

(Courtesy of Ray and David Condon)

Meanwhile, the smart Byron Cannery had surrendered, the astute ex-MLA Kelly of Tyagarah being amongst the Directors. At the beginning of the year Fred **Wareham** wrote to the Mullum Star *to draw the attention... to the fact that if they don't come to the rescue with more capital and more loyal support this co-operative enterprise will go to the wall... the Directors will and must, for their own protection, put the company into liquidation....* Two weeks later the directors advised that they were tired of carrying a guarantee of £6000 for the benefit of the whole district as well as the shareholders.... *It was a foregone conclusion that if these works were closed down and fell into proprietary hands they would get back to the old low prices for their cattle....* Many shareholders came to the party, including Matt **Dawson** of

Myocum who took his shareholding from 25 to 100, but they never got anywhere near selling the necessary 6000 new shares and in Jun15 had to lease the place to a Sydney capitalist, so *...killing operations will go on, the carcasses frozen and sent to Sydney. It is good news for the district that the Works will not be idle and unprofitable.* By mid 1917 capitalist lessees Reynolds & Co were shipping 900 boxes of tinned beef per week, at 90lb/box.

Norco continued to battle on to become the exception proving the rule that Co-operatives rarely work in the long term, but the conservative farmers, always suspicious of being conned by the middleman and distrustful of capitalist companies, kept the faith (as they watched Foley Bros out-manoeuvre Norco.) The Norco half-yearly of Jun15 gave W.P. another opportunity to take the stage (sounding off about the directors *nonsensical optional proposal* for handling diseased pigs), but more entertaining was the appearance of both brothers at the December meeting when J.D. sought election to the board. By this time J.D. had achieved a high profile in the dairy industry, taking a leading role in the monster meeting of Richmond-Tweed farmers at Bangalow in May15 to protest the actions of the

Necessary Commodities Control Commission. Future Country Party star W.T. **Missingham** was in the chair complaining that *The reward that the dairy farmers had got in this State for their adherence to liberalism for so many years came in that they had blindly...*, while J.D. **Condon**, a future leading Laborite, *said that the party in power was simply the Trades Hall, men who knew nothing about dairy farming whatever...* His mate, G.B. **Wells**, a director of the Binna Burra Co-op, *...was a tenant farmer. I do not wish to say anything detrimental to the landlord...*, the Dreaded Landlord being the bloke who created the conditions for J.D.'s rise to prominence.



W. P. Condon, a member of the rifle club whilst resident of Mullum Crk 1902-1910  
Courtesy of Carmel Apps

The Richmond-Tweed Tenant Farmers' Union, apparently the first of its kind in NSW, started to gain a high profile in Sep15 with a meeting attracting delegates from all over the Northern Rivers, organised by secretary J.D. **Condon**. They met to discuss the Fair Rents Bill, Tenant's Rights Bill, the parlous state of butter and the nasty NCC, amongst other things, but gave prominence to child slavery, which drew the attention of parliament *...at present a great deal of sweating was carried on the North Coast. Men took advantage of the bad straights into which some families were reduced. They put them on dairy farms and gave them as small as possible a wage as they could arrange. The land-grabbers rented someone else's farms, put families on them, and so made their profits. It was agreed to insert the clause CHILD SLAVERY... Every effort should be made to help the Minister for Education to fathom the evils of child slavery. Much of it was caused by the landowners with their sweating of families....* In Oct15 the meeting was at Bangalow where W.P. **Condon** and A.P. **Shepherd** were the Byron Bay delegates and J.D. gave the eulogy for resigning President A.W. Pass of Murbah who *had disposed of his lease and purchased a farm of his own...* (because members must be bona fide tenant or share farmers) but *...There was no hope of him becoming a bloated landlord.... Mr J.D. Condon said that it augured well for the Union that its President had already gone up a step....*

For the Nov15 meeting they ventured into Mullum which was conspicuous by the absence of any delegates and any representation on the executive. They were informed that because *there was no arbitration for dairy-workers, the Union would be unable to take any litigious action for the betterment of the condition of the workers.... It was agreed that the members of the Union find out those who were underpaid and forward the names to the Attorney-General...*, but despite this sympathy, they agreed that

*families working for wages* weren't eligible for membership. Due to the drought and the NCC *...There was not a farmer on the other side of Bangalow who was making a living, unless the landowners who had rented their places....* Nevertheless, J.P. asserted that it was their Union's efforts that had extracted any price rises from the NCC *...The last time the Union asked for it they had got it after other associations had tried and failed....* (And again in Jan16 George **Cameron** said that *...Mr J.D. Condon... claims that his letter to the NCC had a good effect in stopping a further decrease in the price of butter. So far what the Mullumbimby and other Dairymen's Associations did has not been heard.*) Gazumping was also an agenda item, 3 cases being cited where at lease renewal time the landlord had been a touch mercenary. Another whinge was the state of housing provided by the landlord - *Some of them were only hovels and not fit for pigs...* and resolved to bring in the Board of Health. Finally, it was decided to try and get representation on the Norco Board of Directors.

At the Norco AGM in Dec15 **J.D. Condon**, A.W. Pass and P.A. Shepherd stood for election but bombed-out, along with the great capitalist Spencer Cottee who had again railed against the extortionist commission being charged by the Coastal Farmer's Society. He was supported by **W.P. Condon** who *said the shareholders had been allured into the C.F.S. connection. All the drudgery of producing the commodities rested with them, and the product was then handed to others to make profit on....* They won the meeting but when the Directors voted their proxies they lost the argument 132 to 96. Another agenda item was to exclude the press from all future meetings, General Manager Clifford arguing that the fourth estate was the reason *the Necessary Commodities Commission knew too much of their business.* J.D. and W.P. opposed the motion, arguing that the shareholders were already kept in the dark, but *The motion was carried. Mr W.P. Condon: "I will exercise my right at the next meeting as a shareholder and sit at that table as a reporter."*

J.D. **Condon** became a Main Arm tenant farmer in Jan/Feb1916 and rose to prominence in Mullum community affairs, but for the next 30yrs he and W.P. continued to be irritating burrs under Norco's saddle, while testing the humour of most other venerable institutions.