



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

NEWSLETTER

Dec 2016/ Jan 2017

At a monastery high in the mountains, the monks have a rigid vow of silence. Only at Christmas, and only by one monk, and only with one sentence, is the vow allowed to be broken.

One Christmas, Brother Thomas is allowed to speak and he says, "I like the mashed potatoes we have with the Christmas turkey!" and he sits down. Silence ensues for 365 days.

The next Christmas, Brother Michael gets his turn, and he says "I think the mashed potatoes are lumpy and I hate them!" Once again, silence for 366 days (it's leap year). The following Christmas, Brother Paul rises and says, "I am fed up with this constant bickering!"

A Merry Christmas and wonderful 2017 to all our members and volunteers



A reminder that there will be **no meeting in January 2017 and no newsletter.**

Next meeting Thursday 2 February 2017

Museum will be closed from Friday 23 December 2016 to re-open on Friday 13 January 2017.

The first market of 2017 will be held 21 January. On that day the museum will be open from 9am to 1pm.

Volunteer Profile

SUSAN TSICALAS (Our hard working slave driver)

My interest in history was sparked by a cousin who was investigating part of my ancestry. At my mother's request, I started to follow other family lines. I particularly enjoyed trying to confirm odd family stories. The hunt to uncover the real story sent me on many a wild goose chase.



Susan holidaying hard in Madrid, Spain

We purchased our property locally in 1977 and moved onto it in the early 1980s.

After settling in, I returned to teaching and was eventually appointed to Wilsons Creek Public School part-time as the librarian, computer, craft and dance teacher. It is a great school and I thoroughly enjoyed my 13 years there.

After over 30 years of teaching, I retired and offered to compile a book for the school's centenary to be held in 2008. While collecting information, stories etc discovered that there had been another school further up the valley. I met and interviewed a lot of very helpful people who were only too willing to share their stories, photos etc. The book developed into the history of the Wilsons Creek and Huonbrook valleys, their schools and residents. It was while writing this book that I became a member of the historical society so as to use the terrific resources available, especially the local newspapers.

After I had completed the centenary project I heard that the society needed a treasurer and so I offered. Phew I did not know what I was letting myself in for! It has been a huge learning curve becoming au fait with the collection, markets etc etc, but I have enjoyed it immensely and have particularly enjoyed working with the great crew at the museum. Thank you to those volunteers for your enthusiasm and support. It is much appreciated.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our members. Come and visit us soon.

How the Matthew Devine Bridge at Brunswick Heads Got Its Name

Introduction:

From time to time we get queries such as 'Who was Matthew Devine'? and 'Why was a bridge named after him'? etc. 'Explanation One' was compiled from information held in our archives, while 'Explanation Two' is the view from a Devine family perspective, courtesy of Ms Susan Devine.

Explanation One:

On 13Jul2005 the secretary of BVHS, **Mrs Robyn Gray**, wrote to Mr Peter Borrelli of the RTA (now the RMS) recommending '**Durrung**' for the name of the new highway bridge currently under construction across the Brunswick. As for the new local bridge, *many worthy contenders suggested by our members...* included 'Henry Rous' and 'Robert Dixon' but with a strong preference for '**Maria Hains**'. There was no acknowledgement of receipt of the letter.

On 7Dec2005 Mr Borrelli wrote to Byron Shire Council stating that after community consultation *the RTA has finalised its assessment of the submissions received and in summary proposes to adopt the following and is seeking Byron Shire Council's endorsement of this:-*

* *The name of the Brunswick River Bridges (Pacific Highway): "**Matthew Devine Bridge**"*

* *The name of the Brunswick River Bridge (Local Service Road): "**Durungbil Bridge**"*

Community Consultation also involved a three-question 'feedback form', Question 3 asking *Do you support the suggested naming of the new Brunswick River Bridge after the original Brunswick River ferry operator, Matthew Devine?...* In summarising the responses the RTA said *A very large number of petitions were received in support.... This included letters of support from the previous Federal member for Richmond (Larry Anthony), and Rotary Club of Mullumbimby....*

At a Byron Shire Council meeting on 7Mar2006 the councillors voted not to endorse the RTA's recommendations (Resolutions 3 and 4), and instead resolved:

That Council recommend the RTA consider the names:

a) *the '**Brunswick River Bridge**' for the 'Old Pacific Highway (Brunswick Valley Way) Bridge';*

b) *the name **Durrung Bridge** (noting the spelling of the name should be Durrung, not 'Durungbil') for the Pacific Highway bridge over the Brunswick River.*

The minutes of the meeting only record the jury's decisions, giving no indication of whether there was a debate or reasons for the resolutions. Presumably a councillor swayed his colleagues to overrule the staff endorsement of the RTA recommendations.

Council staff informed the RTA of this resolution on 20Mar2006 and the RTA finally responded on 27Mar2007, repeating that the *RTA undertook extensive community consultation... and The name "**Matthew Devine Bridge**" was strongly supported by the community, with the RTA receiving numerous letters of support, a substantial number of signatories to a petition, and letters of support / recommendation from a member of parliament. In addition, RTA has received numerous representations with supporting details of substantial heritage significance from **Ms Susan Devine**, the great-grand daughter of Matthew Devine....*

*The RTA has also consulted well-known and respected local historian **Mr Frank Mills** of the Brunswick Valley Historical Society regarding this matter. Mr Mills has also confirmed the appropriateness of the naming, particularly given the strong link with the well-known European heritage of this location, with **Mr Matthew Devine** having been responsible for instigating and operating the first ferry / punt crossing of the Brunswick River in the 1890s, which was an essential service to the growing settlements of Brunswick Heads and Billinudgel at the time....*

There the matter rested until the *Byron Shire News* announced on 3May2007 that the new bridge was *to be named after Matthew Devine, the man who pioneered ferry and punt services across the waterway in the 1890s.* On 10May2007 **Michele Grant** of Ocean Shores wrote a letter-to-the-editor pointing out that *It's disappointing the RTA has decided to ignore the Brunswick Valley Historical Society and local community organisations (including the Brunswick Heads Progress Association, Ocean Shores Community Association, Tweed/Byron Aboriginal Land Council and the RTA's own community liaison group)....* On 17May2007 **Dave Marrinon** of Brunswick Heads (ex-Mullum High School and amateur historian) wrote supporting Ms Grant and pointing out that the Devine family has already been memorialised by 'Devine's Hill' (also colloquially known as 'Reilly's Hill', 'Richardson's Lookout' and 'Lion's Lookout'). On 24May2007 **Robyn Gray** wrote that *At a society meeting last weekend, members asked that the record be set straight..., repeating the same recommendations as in her original 2005 submission to the RTA.*

On 8Jul2007 State and Federal Road Ministers, Eric Roozendaal and Jim Lloyd, christened the new 'Matthew Devine Bridge' during a ribbon-cutting ceremony, at which Minister *Roozendaal took the opportunity to pose with Susan Devine...* whose great grandfather *ran the first punt across the river in 1890* (sic).

BVHS records indicate that a public punt for 'McCurdy's Crossing' was gazetted in 1885, but no actual vessel provided until 1887. The first identifiable lessee for 'McCurdy's Wharf Ferry' was **John Lund**, granted the job wef 1Jan1889 but handing over to the stayer **Bill Hunter** about 12mths later. (Lund also was awarded the license to row the 'Brunswick Ferry' down at the Heads, taking over from **H. Rogers** and on-passing it to **Harry Houghton**). **Matthew Devine** turned up to select his property on the northern bank of the Brunswick near the future highway bridge site in 1901, and whilst no record can be found to confirm his connection to the public ferry, it's possible he was a relief operator from time to time or was generous with his own boat/punt when stranded travellers couldn't raise Bill Hunter from his slumber in his 'Ferry Reserve' shack.

Bill steered the thing until retiring in 1909, passing the tiller through **Tom Allen, A. White** and **Bob Gundlach** until the bridge was built in 1934. In 1906 he had been the last operator to be awarded the Government license to drive 'McCurdy's Wharf Ferry', after which it was rebranded as the 'Brunswick Ferry' and lease renewal became a function of Byron Shire Council. (The original 'Brunswick Ferry' at the Heads, a row-boat, was privatised around 1900). Pioneer cedar-getter **Boyd McCurdy** died in 1911, but his legacy remained extant, at least until Nov24 when the Government *informed the council that no funds were available for renewal of McCurdy's wharf.*

The obituary for 79yr old **Matthew Devine** of the Brunswick was published in the *Northern Star* 30Jun1932, stating that he settled at Howard's Grass, Lismore, in ~1889 and ~3yrs later moved to Corndale, thence to Mullumbimby Creek ~1898 to acquire a farm on **W.G. Law's** selection. "*Later he selected land near Brunswick Heads and established a farm there which he sold 11 years ago. He then devoted the whole of his time to veterinary work, which he had been doing as a side line for many years previously....*"

Parish Maps show that the first selector of what is now gazetted as 'Devine's Hill' (ie Portion 186 in the Parish of Billinudgel) was **C. Smith** 6Jun1901. **Matthew** and **Thomas Devine** had their selections of portions 185 and 187 confirmed on 1Aug1901 and 8Aug1901 respectively. Presumably Smith defaulted at some stage, as portion 186 was confirmed as a 'Homestead Selection' in the possession of Matthew's son, **John Francis Devine**, on 24Jul1911 and converted to a 'Conditional Purchase' on 15Sep1911.

Explanation Two:

*Matthew Devine, the son of an Irish convict who had been transported to Australia in 1826, settled on the northern bank of the Brunswick River in 1898-1899, selecting crown land Grant Lot 185. Son **Daniel was born 4th January 1901 @ Brunswick Heads, 'on the farm'**. There wasn't a ferry across the river at this location at that time.*

*Jim Brokenshire's book "**Another River and It's People**", gives an excellent account of the early history of **Matthew Devine's punt/ferry service** of the river crossing at the "**Matthew Devine Bridge**". This history has been reiterated down over the years by older locals for decades.*

His sons, Frank Devine and Thomas Devine, who had selected Lots 186 (Devine's Hill) and Lot 187 adjacent to Matthew's farm, also helped out operating the punt/ferry. Frank continued on assisting Mr Gundlach (ferryman in 1925) in later years of 1925 onwards.

Matthew Devine had for years worked as a veterinary Surgeon, and after retiring from the punt/ferry, worked fulltime as a Vet, and often doubled as the local dentist, (there wasn't one in the district). Locals have told me, if you had a toothache, you went to "Dr Devine" as he was affectionately known by locals, and he'd happily pull out the aching tooth.

*In 1998 Susan Devine, great granddaughter of Matthew Devine, wrote to the RTA with a naming submission of "**MATTHEW DEVINE BRIDGE**" for one of the new bridges to be constructed across the Brunswick River. Later, I collected many signed petitions from locals who grew up knowing this history, and various letters of support for this naming proposal, and photos pertaining to such, including a wonderful old original photo of Devine in his punt, (1900).*

*On 8/7/2007, at the RTA's official opening of the new highway Bridge, the Minister for Roads named that bridge 'MATTHEW DEVINE BRIDGE', while retaining the name Brunswick River for the crossing (as per signage). **Susan Devine took part in the "cutting of the ribbon" ceremony.***

2016. There seems to be confusion, as there were clearly two separate ferry locations on the Brunswick River in the 1800s. Mr White took over from Matthew Devine, then Mr Gundlach. McCurdy's wharf/ferry as mentioned is news to us, and to Frank Mills. McCurdy's wharf/ferry is closer to Brunswick Heads more in the vicinity of the boat ramp / trawler harbour, crossing over to Readings Bay (not to be confused with Harry's Hill).

As for "DEVINES HILL", it can be found in published reference as far back as 1922. In "**Pearl of Pacific**" book, first published 1922, then republished 1995.

Devines Hill, Lot 186 formed part of the family farm dating back to 1908 (old title) 1911, new Title, where my family and I grew up, was sold to American developers Wendell West Co in 1968 and 1969. **One condition of sale was THAT Wendell West would formally name Devines Hill. This was not done.** About 1975 Kevin Devine spoke in person to Stan Robinson, the then mayor of BSC re: naming Devines Hill. It wasn't followed through as Mr Robinson retired from council soon after that time. This is documented in a letter of support for Devines Hill co-signed by both men in 1996. In 1996 at the request of older family members, Susan Devine submitted to Byron Shire Council the name for gazetting.

Susan organised many signed petitions in support of the naming, along with letters of support from past and present members of Parliament, familiar with this history. Also support letters from Rotary, BVHS, Aboriginal leaders and supporting articles published stating Devines Hill etc.

DEVINES HILL was formally gazetted June 1st, 2001. A plaque of the local family history was placed on Devines Hill. Unfortunately, someone maliciously, meticulously defaced it in November 1998, but it is now repaired.

In 1935 Reillys became our neighbours on Lot 183 (previously Pratts), on a much smaller hill to the north of Devines property. This farm was at the northern end of Tongara Drive cul-de-sac, over to Nelshaby Crt., Ocean Shores.

Nowadays, some people are misled as to the factual location/name of these two separate properties. Reilly family were signatories to "Devines Hill" petition.



TALL TALES OR TRUE

Another Snaky Encounter

Jenny Rogers writes for the 'Mullumbimby Star' in February 1996 the following tale:

A Mullumbimby man was left wishing he had never gone fishing after a scare with a brown snake cost him his car. It started when Darren Blake left the door of his Holden Commodore open so he could hear the radio while he was fishing in the Brunswick River near the boat ramp last Friday night.

"I'd packed up to go home about 11.30pm, started the car and put it in gear" he said.

Then I felt something touch my foot, turned the interior light on, looked down and saw a brown snake."

The snake lay curled up near Mr Blake's left foot.

I panicked, jumped, twisted sideways and planted my foot on the accelerator", he said.

The car (and Mr Blake) flew up and over the bank, dropping about 10 metres into the river.

"Then it floated out to the middle and just took off in the current," he said.

At this stage, more worried about the snake than the car, Mr Blake frantically climbed out the driver's side window and on to the bonnet.

Battling a strong current, he managed to swim to the shore.

"I had left the interior light on in the car, so I could see it floating down the river," he said.

"By the time I had got out it had floated a good 130 metres from where it went in before I lost sight of it in the dark. I was amazed how well it floated."

Mr Blake called Brunswick Heads police from the nearest telephone box.

They drove to a bridge near where Mr Blake had last seen his vehicle, but there was no sign of it.

The Brunswick Valley Air-Sea rescue boat found the vehicle the next day and towed it to shore.

"It had floated at least 300 metres from where it first went in near the boat ramp," he said.

The car, which he had won in an Art Union prize, will probably be written off.

"The rust will beat it after all that salt water," he said.

And the brown snake?

"I've no idea where it went, and I wasn't going back to look for it," Mr Blake said.

POCKET SCHOOL VISIT 16 NOVEMBER 2016



Historical Society volunteers Susan, Stephen and Brenda welcomed Kindy and Year 1 students and teachers to a wonderful journey of exploration at the Mullumbimby Museum.



Right: Postmaster Stephen asks the children to write and post a letter to a friend.



Left: Dave explains the finer points of cattle branding

Below: A Pocket School Mayor takes questions from his fellow councillors.

Below: Boys will be boys!



Right: Susan enjoys teaching students the finer points of some golden olden games.



ALSO WORKING HARD

As our post and rail fence around the museum grounds was becoming unstable and needed replacing, a new fence was designed so that it was compatible with the market, particularly for access to the stalls on Myokum Street.

It has involved a great community effort with generous donations from Byron Bay Bunnings and James Hardware Mitre 10 Mullumbimby for the posts, chain and fittings for which we are extremely grateful. Members prepared the poles.



On Monday 28th November museum volunteers took the opportunity to watch fencing contractors Alan Creighton and Kyle Anderson install the posts.



Alan and Kyle put in a solid effort to complete the installation of barrier posts



Rollie gives his early OK to the installation, declaring "That'll do."

Special thanks to Dave for organizing the project.

STOP PRESS!! LATEST NEWS!!

BVHS has partnered with COREM (Community Owned Renewable Energy Mullumbimby) to install solar panels on the roof. To help fundraise below is a copy of the offset card (front and back) which members can buy from us or through the chuffed site (www.chuffed.org/project/corem-renewable-community-power)

COREM will be setting up a page just for the historical society. We would get the lion's share of the monies raised and use that contribution toward offsetting the cost of the solar installation/panels. If you are willing to donate to help offset your carbon footprint and help with our panels please let the society know and we can give you the website. (It is being set up as this newsletter goes to print.) This will enable us to consider air-conditioning in some of the public part of the building for a more enjoyable museum visit. Please help!

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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Newsletter team:
John Davis & 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

NEXT MEETING
Thursday 2nd
February 2017 at 2.00pm
See you there!

*Deadline for agenda items
Wednesday 1st Feb 2017

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

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





COREM is returning our "biggest little town" back to its renewable energy roots.
 The 100 year old Drill Hall went solar in 2016.
 The 110 year old Post Office to go solar in 2017.

Offset Card

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Money raised supports COREM's 100% renewable energy goal by funding community-owned roof top solar PV systems.

Your contribution of \$ _____ will avoid the production of about _____ kg of greenhouse gases over the PV system's lifetime.

Approximate Offsets (from carbonneutral.com.au)

- 400 kg of CO2 is produced by driving a large car from Mullumbimby to Sydney & back.
- 500 kg of CO2 is produced by running one large fridge for a year.
- 600 kg of CO2 is produced by flying return from Gold Coast to Sydney
- 1,000 kg of CO2 is produced by driving a large car from Sydney to Perth
- 1,500 kg of CO2 is produced by a medium car being used for 6 months (7,500 km)
- 2,000 kg of CO2 is produced by flying return from Gold Coast to Bali

TO:

Community Owned Renewable Energy Mullumbimby Inc.
www.corem.org.au | contact@corem.org.au
 Join Us: **COREM.Australia**

