



NEWSLETTER
March 2026

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

17 Myokum Street MULLUMBIMBY 2482

Email: admin@mullumbimbymuseum.org.au Phone: 02 6684 4367

OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM

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

THE MANN MILL

On 10Apr1935 *The Mullumbimby Star* was into morale building, perceiving that the worst of the Great Depression was behind them and highlighting the local timber industry as *a notable feature in the reconstruction of the Brunswick district's wealth...*, summarising the industry's history thus: *From records available it appears that the first mill was established at Crabbe's Creek by a Mr Oakes* (more likely **W.E. Oxenford**, born 1862 Ipswich, died 1927 Sydney). *Later the mill was removed to Lismore. Mr Glasgow* (1836 Camden-1920 Byron) *built the mill in Mullumbimby, now conducted by Hollingworth Ltd (J.N. Hollingworth 1864 Lismore-1919 Sydney), over 40yrs ago. Another mill of importance was one established by Mr King* (Thomas, 1843 England-1909 Mullumbimby) *at Main Arm. A mill was also commenced by Mr Morrish* (Bernard, 1855 Emigrant Creek-1928 Windsor) *on the Billinudgel Road, and one by Mr K.J. Back* (1878 Finland-1962 Mullum) *at Wilson's Creek. Mr Mann* (Ted, 1893 Bega-1967 Mullum) *started and still maintains a mill at Mullumbimby on the Brunswick Road...*, now on Mann's Road into the Industrial Estate.

There are only two steam mills of importance operating in the district at present..., Hollingworth Ltd and the Mann family mill, but *There were about six small mills cutting case timber* (for the banana industry) *at various parts of the district...* *We understand that at present most of the trade with the Mullumbimby mills is for local use. No less than 40 men are engaged in the industry here at the present time...*

The Glasgow story can be found at [89.-Newsletter-October-2019.pdf](#), the Hollingworth business at [137.-Newsletter-March-2024.pdf](#) and the King Family at [136.-Newsletter-February-2024.pdf](#). And to complete Mullum's mill scene, herewith the history of the Manns, beginning with **Samuel Mann** (1806 Ballymena, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland – 1876 Woolloomooloo), a bootmaker who landed as a convict 1834, followed later in the year by his wife Elizabeth (nee Beggs) and children William (aged 5), Margaret (3) and Jane (1). At Cobbitty on 23Feb1847 **William Mann** (1829 Ballymena - 1903 Thirlmere, NSW) married **Jane Staggs** (1829 Kent, England - 1915 Picton), with whom he begat 14 children. Around 1888/89 they settled on a farm at Brownlow Hill, Camden. (Jane was buried with Presbyterian rites by staunch Orangeman **Rev Richard Dill Macky**, earlier of Mullum.)

Their progeny were fated thus: William (1848 Sydney-1892 Picton), Joseph (1851 Camden-1931 Picton), John (1853 Thirlmere-1930 Thirlmere), Elizabeth (1855-1855 Parramatta), Samuel (1855 Camden-1877 Picton), James (1857 Mulgoa -1937 Moss Vale), **Robert** (1859 Camden - 1941 Mullum, Anglican rites), **David** (1861 Camden - 1922 Myocum, Anglican rites), Elizabeth (1863 Camden-1940 Auburn), George (1866 Camden-1956 Lismore), Edwin (**Ned**) (1868 Camden–1959 Lismore), Abraham (1870-1870 Picton), Isaac (1870-1870 Picton), Unnamed Male (1874-1874 Picton).

At Bega in 1889 **Robert Mann** married **Mary Jane McCloy** (1856 Kiama-1938 Mullum, Anglican rites) and begat two Bega-born sons - **Robert William** (known as **William** 1890-1954) and **David Edwin** (known as **Ted** 1893-1967). At Eden in 1898 Robert snr's brother, **David Mann snr**, married Mary's sister, **Catherine McCloy** (1858 Kiama-1926 Mullum, Catholic rites), and adopted **Mary Melville Crummer**, born 1896 Candelo to parents Arthur John Crummer and Annie Isabell McKay. She was the youngest of 6 children and was ~11 when her mother died.

In the early 1900s these two Mann families, accompanied by McCloy in-laws, moved to the North Coast to farm at Myocum, the announcement of arrival appearing in 1911, viz **Mr & Mrs R. McCloy & family of Wangrabelle have moved to Myocum to dairy**, followed by another *Mullumbimby Star* reference in 1912 giving notice that **Messrs Mann and McCloy** (of Myocum) *intend to take a trip to Queensland very shortly. No doubt they will keep a look-out for suitable blocks of land*. Also in that year **Mr D. Mann**, presumably David, was elected onto the Myocum Hall Committee. In 1913 Manns and McCloys were recorded at a Convent Ball in Mullumbimby. Thereafter they were deemed locals and generated many references.

In Sep1913 An accident, which might have been very serious, happened here on Sunday. While the two Miss Tanners and **Miss Crummer** were driving home from Mass in a sulky, and coming down the Red Hill, the horse suddenly fell heavily to the ground, throwing the occupants out.... The ladies started cooeeing which was heard by **Mr. R. McCloy** who made for the road and got there in time to catch the bolting horse. The occupants escaped unhurt with only a bit of shock, and were shortly after driven to their home by **Miss McCloy**.

David Mann Snr., who was leasing the property of **Ray King** (1886 Broadwater-1961 Mullum), died 1922 Myocum. In 1917 **Robert McCloy's** Myocum lease expired and the family moved to Limpinwood near Murwillumbah, seemingly with an interim sojourn at Wilson's Creek where **R.W. (William) Mann** (Son of Robert Snr) was growing bananas on the Newberry property. In 1917 William married **Maria Elsie Vera Binnie** (1890-1959) in Queensland and in Aug1920 took over Johnston's timber mill at Billinudgel. William and Maria had 3 children, all born in Mullumbimby – **Robert Edwin Carson** (1921-1985 Qld), **Joseph Arthur Lloyd** (1923-2011 Qld) and **Mary Ann Bell** (1925 - 1985 Nth Qld).

At Lismore in 1919 William's brother, **David Edwin (Ted)**, married the above **Mary Melville Crummer** (1896-1994) and begat 4 Mullum-born children – **Sidney Alva Edwin (Sid, 1921-2010)**, **Henry Robert (Bob, 1925-2013)**, **William Albert Joseph (Bill, 1928-2003 Qld)** and **Mavis Vera (1934-2018)**. (In a 1920 Crown Land auction **Ted** won a block at Myrtle near Casino, but a £3 debt forced forfeited in 1922.)

At Billinudgel in 1922 **Mann Bros** (William and Ted) installed an up-to-date breaking-down saw in their sawmill, to enable them to supply building materials in any quantity. (Confusingly, *Sands Directory* of 1922 & 1923 records **Ted** as a farmer on Brunswick Rd., Mullumbimby, while their father, **Robert Snr.**, was also listed as a 'farmer of Mullumbimby'.)

The **Mann Bros** partnership was dissolved Feb1924, with Ted and Mary starting the sawmill on the Brunswick Road, Mullumbimby, by at least Jan1925, while William continued on at Billinudgel for a few more years. **William Mann** was still noted as sawmiller at Billinudgel in 1927, but by at least Apr1929 had taken over the firewood depot of **Sid Parrish** (1898 Kiama – 1978 Ballina) in Stuart St., Mullumbimby.



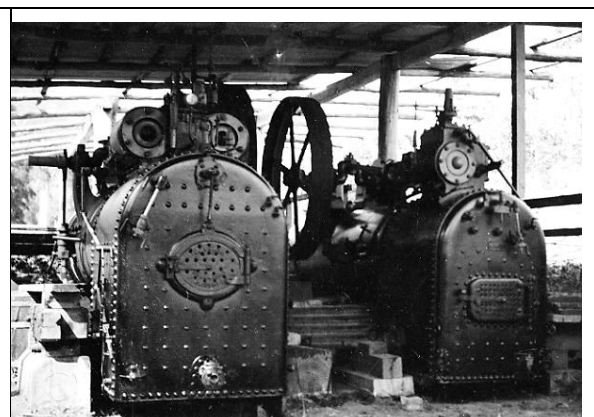
Map of Parish of Billinudgel, Edition 6, in use 1902-1914. Portion 285 of 20acres was selected by S.H. Jones 1910 and acquired by **R.W. Mann** 1920/21 and dubbed 'Mascot'. In 1921 **R.W.** and **D.E. Mann (William and Ted)**, trading as **Mann Bros**, applied for a permit to erect a sawmill on 3 acres within Recreation Reserve No 39938, originally 200acres and rich in pine trees. How this tied-in with R.W.'s purchase of Johnston's mill in Aug1920 is a mystery.



William Mann delivering firewood in his 'tip-up' truck (Courtesy Derek Goodwin)



The Mann Mill, Brunswick Rd., Mullumbimby



The steam engines

By 1930 Ted was firmly ensconced at the ~10ac Brunswick Road property, which boasted a sawmill and blacksmith's shop, but the electoral roll of that year lists him as a farmer, suggesting he gave preference to using the property for peanut cropping as his main day job, although that same year he also supplied all the timber for the new School of Arts. **Ian James**, later proprietor of 'The Old Mill Timberyard' on Mann's Road in the Mullum Industrial Estate, said Ted was very versatile and adept at many things.

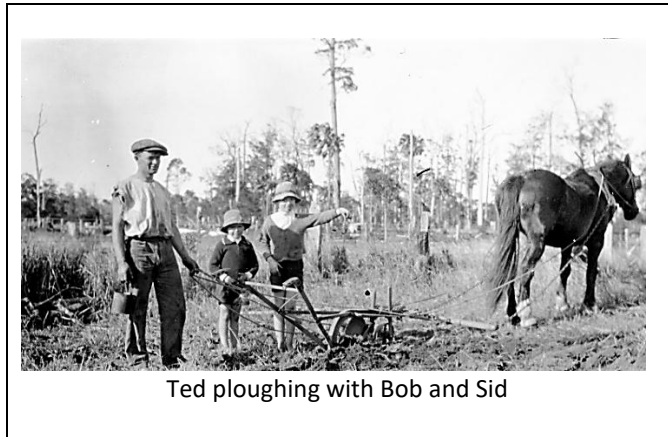
In 1932 William's entrepreneurial wife, **Maria Elsie Vera Mann** (nee Binnie), erected a 'filling station' down the road at Everitt's Hill. (See story at [History of Uncle Tom's](#)). She sold the service station in Feb 1937 at much the same time as William ended a firewood partnership with the King's Main Arm Mill, the family then moving into Queensland to make a new home at Loganholme. By at least 1938 William, Maria and son Robert Edwin Carson were living at "Bell Brae" Victoria Point, Redland Bay.

David Edwin (Ted) and Family

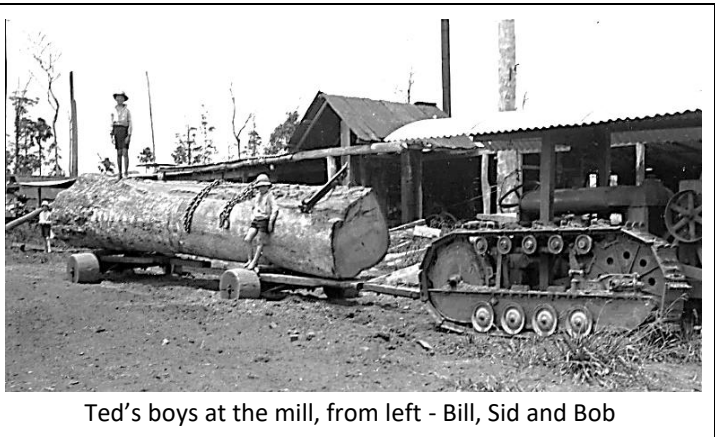
In early 1936 Ted took on 42yr old sawmill **George Wright** as a partner, a married man of Byron Bay who had previously been timber-getting in the Goonengerry district. He daily rode his bike to and from the Bay to the mill, but on his way home in the evening of 30Mar1936, after just 6wks into his new career, he was fatally injured in a collision with a bus near King's Creek. Thereafter the management circumstances are a mystery, although father **Robert Mann** (1859-1941) was said to have taken *an active part in the firm of Mann and Mann, timber millers*.



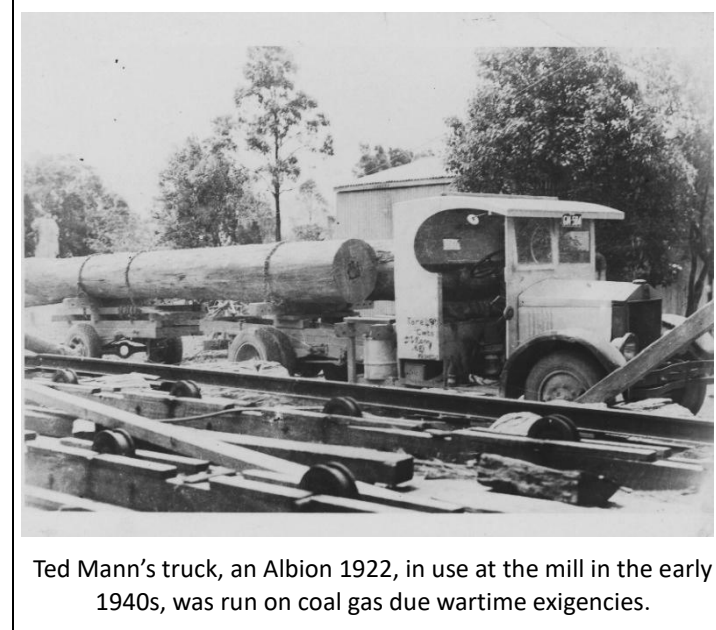
Mann's Filling Station at Everitt's Hill 1932
 From left: Robert Snr, u/k, u/k, possibly R.W. Mann, children Carson, Lloyd and Bell in front of Maria, and Robert Snr's wife, Mary Jane (nee McCloy).



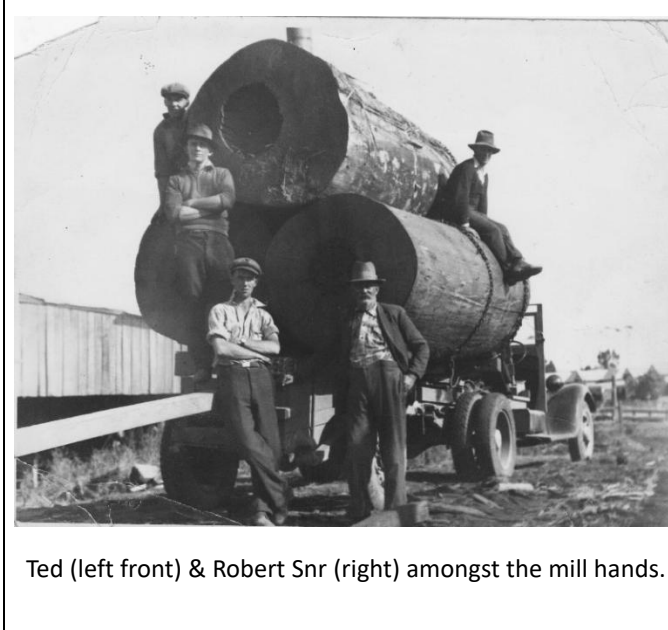
Ted ploughing with Bob and Sid



Ted's boys at the mill, from left - Bill, Sid and Bob



Ted Mann's truck, an Albion 1922, in use at the mill in the early 1940s, was run on coal gas due wartime exigencies.

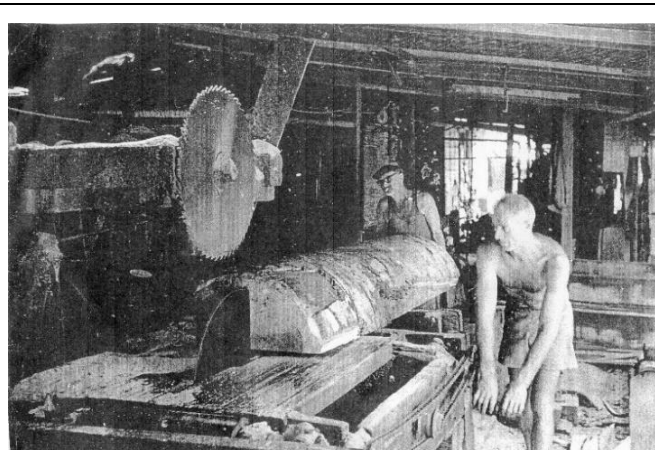


Ted (left front) & Robert Snr (right) amongst the mill hands.



Robert Mann Snr on the 30 cwt Ford truck used for hauling logs to the mill. They bought the truck in 1930, the first tyred truck in the area to haul logs, leading to improved production and more reliable timber supply.

(Courtesy Derek Goodwin)



Ted and son Sid working in the mill.

(Sid sustained a painful injury to his thigh when a pony reared and fell on him in 194; the same year he was a pall bearer at the funeral of his grandfather, Robert Mann Snr.)

By 1949 Sid was recorded as 'sawmiller Brunswick Rd.,' joining brother **Bob** as a mill hand, while **Bill** was serving in the RAAF. And father Ted was listed as a labourer even though acknowledged as the mill proprietor. (That year was marked by the sawmiller's removal of three big pines from the rear of the Bank of NSW in Mullumbimby.)

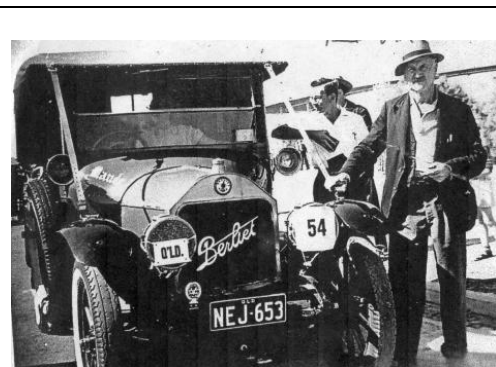
Sid married **Ivy May Le Clere** (1924-2013) in a Methodist ceremony at Mullum in Jul1952. Ivy, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. **Eric Leclere**, of Park Farm, Mullumbimby, was supported by Betty Leclere as bridesmaid and Yvonne Rodda as flower girl. Martin Wallwork was best man. *After the wedding reception held at the bride's home, the couple left for a Grafton honeymoon. Their future home is at Mullumbimby.* The following year **Betty LeClere** (1930-1980) married **Martin Wallwork** (1916-2005).

Sid and **Ivy** begat 5 children. After his father Ted's death in 1967 Sid made a break from sawmilling and took the family on various ventures around the traps. In 1972 they were recorded on the electoral rolls at Hogan St., Harrington, NSW, where Sid worked as a crane driver. They later divorced and he married **Joan Montgomery** nee Dawson (1928-2023). In 1977 storeman Sid and Joan were living at Richmond Rd, Morningside, Qld., and in 1980 at Old Cleveland Road, Belmont. But Sid came full circle in dying 31Dec2010 Mullum.

Both Sid and Bob played in the Mullumbimby Band, Sid on the cornet with Bob on both cornet and tenor horn. On each Anzac Day the band played at the dawn service at Brunswick Heads, followed by a march from the railway gates to the School of Arts at Mullumbimby.



Ted 1958 Mullumbimby



Ted at the Mullumbimby Show
Date unknown



The Mann men ~1940

From left standing: Uncle Ned (Edwin, 1868 Camden-1959 Lismore, brother of Robert Snr). (Ned is likely to be he who married Harriet Isabel Bullard in Sydney in 1899. He moved to the North Coast after his wife died in 1947.)
Ted, R.W., Robert Snr, Carson Squatting: Sid, Lloyd, Bill

The Aftermath

Out of the blue in 1963 the NSW Forestry Commission slashed log quotas, making the sawmill business unviable, just as Ted and his sons had purchased a 50hp Crossley Diesel stationary engine from Foley's Butter Factory with the intention of converting the mill from steam to diesel. It never got operational and the mill closed in 1965, following the Hollingworth mill, which had shut down in Jun1964 putting 36 men on the dole.



Ivy May Le Clere



Mullumbimby Band 1960. Sid top left. Bob missing

Capitalism's free market machinations must have riled **Ted** (or 'Red Ted' as he was known locally), a member of the local Communist Party, which held regular meetings in a shed on his property. The mill's closure compounded the problems facing the region, pointed out by the ALP candidate for Richmond in an address to the Mullum faithful on 22Nov1963, commenting that *In recent years more than 1200 dairy farms had gone out of production in the district and of those which remain, about 80 per cent were operated by aged or elderly couples... as there was no incentive for young people to stay on the farms and so there had been a constant drift to the cities.... The very unhappy position in the banana industry was well-known.... Over-production, rising costs and low returns were causing banana growers grave concern.... He said a matter of vital interest to the people of Mullumbimby and district was the decline in the timber industry.... He said more than 130 mills (sic) had closed down in the district, which left the timber workers and their families no alternative but to move away.... Apart from the unemployment angle, the loss of these families was having a very undesirable effect on the social life of the communities....*



Bob, Sid with tenor horn and Bill



Bob in band uniform

In 1936 the only band Bob could recall was the school band. They had a uniform which was a straw hat painted black and had one side turned up like a digger's hat. They wore navy trousers with a yellow stripe down the side and a royal blue cape with gold lining.

After closure of the Hollingworth mill Mayor Uren convened a special public meeting in the Council Chambers... to consider the formation of an industries committee to endeavour to attract or sponsor the establishment of other industries at Mullumbimby....

By 1973 the remaining primary producers were struggling to the same degree as in the Great Depression, observed by **Ted** from his proletarian utopia in the sky, to where he shifted in 1967, counting his blessings in being spared the rural recession and its impact on Mullum. Son **Bob** remained a true believer in the socialist cause, retained his Communist Party membership, continued to live at the property, never marrying and dying locally in 2013. (And even though the mill was closed, **Doug Beer** recalls that Bob was still supplying timber to the Mullumbimby Municipal Council, mainly logs and cross beams for power installations.) The third son, **Bill**, had moved to Queensland where he married **Gloria Dawn Zeitsch** in 1950. He started a very profitable transport business that supplied the Brisbane markets. Both died at Redland Bay – Gloria 2001 and Bill 2003, leaving 2 offspring.

In 1977 Ted's wife, **Mary Melville Crummer**, attended the Mullumbimby Rotary Club's 'pioneer' luncheon, boasting 68yrs residence in the area, having arrived at Myocum in 1909 with **David** and **Catherine Mann** and marrying Ted 10yrs later. After Ted's death she lived with son **Bob** at the mill property, but progressive blindness brought problems. Mary's boarder, **Michael Collis**, helped look after her when he wasn't tied up with his acupuncture course in Brisbane.

Her daughter, **Mavis**, who was living and working in Sydney then took responsibility and brought her mother to Sydney, initially to live with her but subsequently to a nursing home at West Ryde, where she died in 1994.

In the 1980s **Helen** and **Ian James** together with **Bob**, kicked the *Old Mill Timberyard* into life on the original site, the mill occupying half an acre of the ~10ac property. In 1991 the *Towers Industrial Estate* was opened in Mann's Lane which allowed further expansion of the original site. Mann's Lane was a gravel track that led down to the mill. A track also led on to the football grounds. The Towers combined both tracks, widening and tarring the new road that was renamed Manns Road.

The Mann property was not connected to the electrical grid. Power for the mill came via a 'hot air engine' (aka 'air engine' or 'caloric engine') in conjunction with the steam engines. In the 1930s the Manns bought a portable Marshall 20hp steam engine from the Railway Department in Casino, shepherding the engine pulled by a Model A truck with two men walking behind it all the way to Mullum. The trip took at least two days.

They used a combustion stove, kerosene fridges and a chip heater for the bath. In the 1980s solar and batteries were installed making life easier. And over that period a water tank was installed to supply running water to the house so that it did not have to be collected by bucket each day from the bore.

The family enjoyed going to dances, balls and concerts. Mavis made her debut with brother Bob as her partner at a Highland Ball, possibly at Casino.

Mavis retired from her work in Sydney and returned to live with Bob on the property. A brief biography at <https://hsi.org.au/sanctuary/mavis-refuge/>, dated

2025, says **Mavis Mann** is the owner of semi-rural property located in Mullumbimby, approximately 15km North of Byron Bay. The property is a home and dedicated wildlife sanctuary currently being rehabilitated by Mavis, and has been in the family for some 86 years after being bought by her father. The saw mill operating on the property was closed in 1965 with natural habitat being allowed to regenerate for native fauna ever since, and it is Mavis' intent for this regeneration to continue to provide permanent habitat for wildlife. The sanctuary covers approximately 4.86 hectares predominantly comprised of a wide variety of native vegetation species, examples of which include tallowwood, woolly butt, box woods, sally wattle, cypress pines, cedars, silky oaks and lily pillies. The property also features a range of fruit trees such as mangoes, pears, peaches and cherries....

After **Bob** died in 2013 **Mavis** moved into a flat in town and received Meals on Wheels, while **Mike Collis's** son remained on the property as caretaker. As she got frailer, she went into a nursing home at Pottsville and then into hospital where she died in 2018. Mavis bequeathed generous legacies to a variety of charities, both local and national, upon the sale of the property. The Brunswick Valley Historical Society was very grateful to be one of the recipients.

At <https://www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-lifestyle-nsw-mullumbimby-7997574> in late 2018 the Real Estate Agents said: *Time has stood still on the Mann family property for many a decade. This incredible 11 acre parcel was once one of the district's largest sawmills and all the impressive historic remnants of this facility are sitting in place today from when the machines went silent for the final time. Along with the old homestead you will find an additional smaller home and several machinery sheds all in various states of disrepair although the dwellings do look repairable. The land is level, mainly forested and hidden amongst some magnificent native trees which you can discover as you wonder the tracks within. Very private and basically hidden from the outside world yet here you are literally still within town itself*



Mann Mill Mullumbimby with a young Mavis on the vehicle, ~1937 (Courtesy Derek Goodwin)



Believed to be Mary & Ted



Mavis, Bob and their mother, Mary



Bob & Mavis with the rescued truck, 2012. (Courtesy of R. Trevan)

and just a short drive to the beach.... This truly is a one-of-a-kind property and quite possibly the only time this property has ever been available to the public.



1920 Australian Six Tourer



The Manns were collectors of many old cars & trucks, the adjacent one built in Sydney 1920 by Australian Motors Ltd., which was the first mass production in Australia. Less than 500 cars were made by Australian Motors. This vehicle is the 2nd oldest car at number 110 built at the then new Ashfield plant. It is believed to be one of only 7 complete vehicles remaining. This vehicle

was in Murwillumbah owned by McCloy family 1927 to 1930 (Robert McCloy was a brother-in-law to Robert & David Mann).

It then appeared at the Mann sawmill Mullumbimby (where this photo was taken) in the 50s to 60s and was used around town as a delivery and pickup ute until acquired by Gilltraps Auto Museum, Gold Coast.

<https://club.shannons.com.au/club/enthusiasts/aussisix/garage/1920-australian-six-tourer/>

The old sawmill property was a treasure trove of historical machinery and bibs and bobs, but unfortunately after the collection was picked over there was nothing suitable for the BVHS museum to display.

Thanks to the generosity of **Mick Collis**, we now hold 220 photos of the Mann family, their sawmills and associated equipment, together with various miscellaneous photos of locations throughout the Brunswick.

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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All members are invited to contribute to this newsletter

Please email contributions for the newsletter to

admin@mullumbimbymuseum.org.au

*Deadline for newsletter items
LAST FRIDAY of the month

NEXT MEETING:

Tues 10th Mar @ 10.30

**MUSEUM HOURS – Tuesdays
and Fridays 10.00-12.00**

Market Saturdays 9.00 - 1.00

Other times by appointment

**MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY
MARKET (8.00am – 2.00pm)**

Next Market - Saturday 21st Mar

mullumbimbycommunitymarket.com.au



BRUNSWICK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc

MEMBERSHIP 2026

Membership Fees	Payment Options	
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**NOW DUE for 2026 **		
I wish to receive the newsletter by email/post/pick up at the museum		

Mullumbimby Hydro-Electric Power Station - Centenary

On 6th March 1926 power was turned on in Mullumbimby with Byron Bay and Bangalow following later that year, staking a claim as the third power station on the Australian mainland. Brunswick Heads flicked the switch in 1934 and rural areas received the blessing after World War II.

In 1915 **William Selwood**, a Shire councillor and later a Mayor of the Mullumbimby municipality, had suggested that with the erection of a weir across Wilsons Creek, cutting of a race and then a tunnel, water could be taken to a power house by pipeline. The first responses were “impossible”, “couldn’t be done”, “cost would be enormous” but by 1920 the council concluded that it was the best viable proposition for lighting the town compared to coal or wood. Hence in 1922 council voted in favour of a Hydro Electric Power Station at Laverty’s Gap using the waters of Wilson’s Creek.

For more historical information see our current display at the museum and in Stewart’s Menswear Window. Also see **Robin Gray’s** book, *The Struggle for Power*, which follows the story from woe to go.

Upon closure of the station in 1988 **Robin Gray** and others applied for [State Heritage listing](#) of the site, ultimately successful in 2014. The paradox is that while it is preserved for the future, nobody is permitted access to soak up the history. Essential Energy, which is in charge of the site, claims that it is unsafe for the community to visit, negating a benefit of the heritage listing.



Power plant exterior



The full weir



Head race to Tunnel



Tunnel



Pipeline