

THE BLACKWALL BUGLE

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Wardell Public School

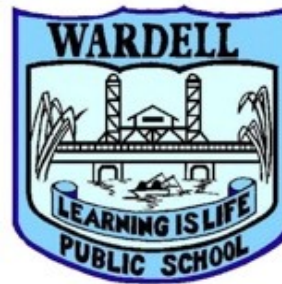
Contrary to other accounts of the history of education in Wardell, the establishment of the Wardell Provisional School in 1867 suggests a keen interest in the education of children among early European settlers. Compulsory schooling was not introduced in NSW until 1880 and any establishment of schools prior to this time required financial assistance from parents toward the School building and payment of the teacher's salary. Parents also had to get their children to school under difficult circumstances, including excessive wet weather and crossing the river in these conditions. When in 1871 the School was closed temporarily, it was due to lean times on the river which prevented parents from being able to afford school fees, rather than parental disinterest.

The School re-opened again in 1874 and for the next 25 years operated in a purpose built timber building, instead of a rented room. This building was replaced and repaired a number of times before the current 'old' School building was erected on an adjoining site in 1901. The School's status was also changed from a Provisional School to a Public School in October 1876. The Wardell Public School celebrated its centenary in 1967.

Over the past 150 years or so the Public School has operated in Wardell, it has served not only children's education needs but also it was often through the School, and at the School site, that community events were held. The most well known and well remembered were the Empire Day picnic and sports. As Ferry has noted of the establishment of small schools in other rural areas, Wardell School brought some degree of social cohesion to the area and a sense of community identity, particularly through the operation of an active P&C Association.

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Wardell Community Based Heritage Study
prepared by Consultant Historian, Dr Kate Gahan.



Joanne Cooper, who was a senior pupil in 1983, designed the school emblem which incorporates a drawing of the bridge, sugar cane and two people fishing from a rowboat as well as the school motto, 'learning is life'.

1867 - 2017 Sesquicentennial celebrations



The Principal of Wardell Public School, Mr David Owen, welcomed everyone to our Sesquicentennial Celebrations which were a huge success despite the rather damp weather which consisted of rain, rain and more rain on the day! We had a fabulous turn-up with about 150 people signing in officially although many more attended the event.

The updated book for the students past and present, along with local families and businesses in Wardell was a popular item for sale on the day, along with other items of memorabilia. We sold almost 200 copies of the new book and sold out completely of the Centenary book. Copies of the 150th book are available for purchase from the School or the Wardell Post Office at a cost of \$10 each.

For the Official Ceremony on the day, we had a jam-packed audience under the school COLA (covered outdoor learning area) and the proceedings were hosted by a much beloved previous School Principal, Mr. Brian Mooney. Brian was the Wardell Principal from 1992-2007. Ballina Mayor David Wright gave an address, also the Federal Member for Page, Kevin Hogan and the Director Public Schools NSW, Peter Campbell. Mr Hogan got a wonderful response to an anecdote regarding a politician friend who gave an address under similar circumstances (heavy rain on a tin roof and a large crowd straining to hear) - when he asked if all present could hear him, someone a couple of rows away put his hand up, saying: "I can hear you fine, sir, but I'm happy to swap places with someone who can't!

We heard from our P&C President, Prue Gray. She presented Life Membership of the P&C to Mr. Ron Rosolen, Ms. Fiona Lochrie and Mrs. Jodi Wilcox, as well as special acknowledgement to Ms. Janina Suffolk for her efforts on behalf of the School.

Next was a wonderful speech by our SRC President, Tanesha Nugent, followed by cutting of the cake by Mr Ian Lockton (the



P&C Life Members and appreciation award recipients with Peter Campbell, Dept of Education and Wardell School Principal David Owen.

oldest surviving School Principal, who served at Wardell from 1966 to 1983) and the youngest student enrolled at the School; Savannah Bell.

Our Principal, Mr. David Owen, expressed his appreciation and then we enjoyed the student performances, a recitation by the K/1/2 students and 2 songs performed by the 3/4/5/6 class. To finish the proceedings, all of the students sang the School Song and many comments were heard from the audience about the delightful quality of the children's voices.

Many people expressed their appreciation of the event and even though it rained constantly without letup the next day, we still had visitors who had to be encouraged to leave at the end of the day, so we are happy to report that the event was a huge success regardless of the wet weather!



Part of the extensive memorabilia display



Ballina Shire Council Mayor, Cnr David Wright, Kevin Hogan MP, the Federal Member for Page and Peter Campbell, Department of Education, enjoy being back at school!

School photos
contributed by
Wardell Public
School

Our local Pie Shop sold piping hot pies for the discerning buyer and our own School faithful P&C Members, along with teachers and helpers who manned the BBQ, Canteen, Second-Hand Stall, Prue's Cupcakes and Jodi's home-made Goodies and Orbeez Stress Balls. A huge thank you to all of the people whose commitment and hard work, donations and interest made this event possible – what an achievement for our local area!

Typically, the very next day was bright sunshine and we were somewhat deflated by that after all the effort expended, but here's hoping the day will be kinder for the organising committee in 25 years' time!

Jodi Wilcox



The future is in their hands!



Just one small corner of a well-filled Wardell Sports and Recreation Club listening to Father Max giving thanks to Sisters Larelle and Grace for their massive contribution to society.

Larelle and Grace

by Pat Carney

On the Wednesday before their farewell luncheon, I had a chat with Larelle and Grace so that I could give everyone a little insight into these two special ladies.

In their early days, Larelle and Grace were sent to boarding school at the age of six and seven as they had been bullied on their way home from school. They remained at boarding school until their parents moved to another location and they then attended the catholic school at Bowraville.

When Larelle was in year nine at high school, she once again went to boarding school at Saint Mary's Grafton and then completed the leaving-certificate. Grace followed in Larelle's footsteps and attended boarding school in her final two years.

Larelle joined the convent in 1956 and Grace was not far behind in 1957. Grace trained at a teacher's college before being released into the wilds of teaching. On speaking with Grace, I felt I was listening to the 'Lucky Stars' song, "I've been everywhere Man!" Over the ensuing years, Grace taught at Maclean, Yamba, Kyogle, Grafton and Macksville. Then she was off to Victoria to study Theology Psychology then back to Macksville again and Sawtell where she was the School Principal. Apart from teaching duties, Grace was the cook at Yamba boarding school, the home school liaison officer and she did reading recovery.

Unfortunately Grace became unwell in 1990 and fortunately big sister Larelle asked her to join her at the Wardell Mercy Centre.

Let us now go back to the dynamo Larelle!

Unlike Grace, Larelle did not shoot all over the countryside. She studied externally at the University of New England where she gained a BA DipEd. Her accomodation, whilst in Armidale for one year, was in an orphanage. Larelle progressed up the teaching ladder and became principal at Grafton, Kempsey and St Mary's Casino.

As principal, Larelle noticed a need for stressed and hurting students who, for various reasons, needed a place for time-out from school and from parents so that they could build their self worth and self esteem.

Larelle had pestered the hierarchy for some time for her dream to become a reality. The Bishop of Lismore, Bishop Satherthwaite relented and suggested that the old convent in Wardell could be a suitable place. It had not been lived in for 25 years and was considered by some of the local kids to be a ghost house. Father McEvoy, the relieving priest, had the final say and gave the OK.

Larelle, under Fr Mac's instructions was not to view her new residence. She obeyed and lived for a time in a caravan in Norma Atherton's back yard and then in the Presbytery which at the time was semi-dilapidated. At the Presbytery, Larelle said she slept in a bed with a huge gap in the middle which she filled with pillows. It was probably Father Smith's old bed.

The opening of the Mercy Centre had been a dream of Larelle's and at the ceremony she thanked many people including her fellow Mercy nuns, the parishioners of Wardell and the wider community

who all chipped in to rejuvenate the old building. Most of these were not catholic and included Don Gibson, John Winkler, Gavin Preston, Tom Cunningham, Robbie Murdock, David Daley, Eddie Harden and Rex Kemp.



In March 1991 the Mercy Centre became a reality. Many students could not afford to pay, so Larelle's next project was a town fete or market day. These proved very successful once again with the support of the community.

In 2006 the Mercy Centre closed but Larelle, during those fifteen years, had not only taken children in but had assisted local children with tutoring. Larelle and Grace (when available) during the next ten years were involved in Pastoral Care and parish work. They were part of our community over 26 years. They took part in town activities, they were members of the Progress Association and Larelle was a nomination for Ballina Shire Senior Citizen of the year.

Thank you Larelle and Grace for all you have done for the many students you have mentored, for the parishioners you have helped in various ways and for your contribution to Saint Patrick's Wardell.

I know that you would like me to thank in particular Wal and Sue Felsch, Steve and Jo Flatley and Dick Tyler who were always there when you needed them. Larelle and Grace, you both have really been the glue which has held our Parish together.

I know that you are sad to be leaving this little town that you once didn't know much about, but it is time to slow down and enjoy your lovely unit in Ballina. Selina and Di have been busy over the last few weeks making sure you have moved into your new home successfully and are happy.

We wish you both all the best and many visitors.

For the Wardell Community: **Pat Carney**



Early morning photo of St Patrick's Church and the Convent taken on 26 October by Kerry Storton.



Beach Lover!

Peter Lacey and his wife Kath are leaving Patches Beach. They bought a block of land there forty-two years ago as a holiday retreat from their Sydney home where Peter was a Project Manager with Country Energy but, once they had built their home in 1997, they just had to move in.

Peter continued working with Country Energy in the Northern Rivers but devoted much of his considerable energy and talent to running the Patches Beach Dune Care Group. He took the group over from his next-door neighbour Monica Vomiero.

What Peter enjoyed most about his situation was the tranquility of Patches Beach, the waking up to the sound of the surf and the walk along the beach before breakfast. What Kath enjoyed most was the making of morning tea for the dedicated volunteers who turned up on the first Sunday of the month to plant trees and remove weeds. Kath's hot scones with jam and cream were the draw-card of the day!

There comes a time in the lives of many when, for health or family reasons, they have to move on. But Peter says, "We are not leaving our home. We are just leaving the house that our home is in and wherever we go our home will move with us. And

moving with us will be some very good memories."

Peter and Kath have left a permanent and developing mark upon the environment of Patches Beach and the lives of those who are part of the Dune Care Group.

The Patches Beach Dune Care Group lives on under the guidance of Vicki McCarty, the daughter of the late Ted Patch. She has just returned with her husband to Patches Beach from North Queensland.

If you would like to take part in this rewarding community activity, contact Vicki at:

kjandvmccarty@yahoo.com.au or 6683 4471

Blessing of the Animals

St. Barnabas Anglican Church Wardell

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Cecil Frances Alexander

On Sunday 29 October the beautiful Anglican Church of St Barnabas in Wardell was filled to capacity with a congregation of people, dogs, and birds — some in cages and others free-walking. Even a goldfish in a bowl was to be seen. Yet there was not a growl, snarl or whimper to be heard. All creatures accepted one another and blended into the service that was held in remembrance of Saint Francis of Assisi's love for all creatures.

The Reverend Cathy Ridd said that the love we give to a pet, and receive from a pet, can draw us more deeply into the larger community. No wonder people enjoy the opportunity to take their animal companions to church for a special blessing. Church is the place where the bond of creation is celebrated.



Mike Rushby

Early in 2009, Ballina Shire Council Strategic and Community Services Group Manager, Steve Barnier, suggested that it would be a good idea for the Wardell and District community to put out a bi-monthly newsletter. I put my hand up to edit the publication and since then, over 50 issues of "The Blackwall Bugle" have been produced, encouraged by Ballina Shire Council who host the newsletter on their website.

Because I usually write the stories that other people generously share with me, I have been asked by several community members to let them know who I am. Here is my attempt to let you know!

My father, George Gilman Rushby was born in England in 1900. An Electrician, he migrated to Africa as a young man to hunt and to prospect for gold. He met Eleanor Dunbar Leslie who was a high school teacher in Cape Town. They later married in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika.

I was the second child and first son and was born in a mud hut in Tanganyika in 1933. I spent my first years on a coffee plantation. When four years old, and with parents and elder sister on a remote goldfield, I caught typhoid fever. I was seriously ill and had no access to proper medical facilities. My paternal grandmother sailed out to Africa from England on a steam ship and took me back to England for medical treatment. My sister Ann came too. Then Adolf Hitler started WWII and Ann and I were separated from our parents for 9 years.



'Farewell to Dad.'

Sister Ann and I were not to see him or our mother for nine years because of the war. Dad served as a Captain in the King's African Rifles operating in the North African desert, while our Mum managed the coffee plantation at home in Tanganyika.

Ann and I lived with our Grandmother and went to school in Nottingham England. In 1946 the family was reunited. We lived in Mbeya in Southern Tanganyika where my father was then the District Manager of the National Parks and Wildlife Authority. There was no high school in Tanganyika so I had to go to school in Nairobi, Kenya. It took five days travelling each way by train and bus including two days on a steamer crossing Lake Victoria.

However, the school year was only two terms with long holidays in between.

When I was seventeen, I left high school. There was then no university in East Africa. There was no work around as Tanganyika was about to become independent of the British Empire and become Tanzania. Consequently jobs were reserved for Africans.

A war had broken out in Korea. I took a day off from high school and visited the British Army headquarters in Nairobi. I signed up for military service intending to go to Korea. The army flew me to England. During Army basic training I was nicknamed 'Mike' and have been called Mike ever since. I never got to Korea!

After my basic training I volunteered for the Parachute Regiment and the army sent me to Egypt where the Suez Canal was under threat. I carried out parachute operations in the Sinai Desert and in Cyprus and Jordan. I was then selected for officer training and was sent to England to the Eaton Hall Officer Cadet School in Cheshire. Whilst in Cheshire, I met my future wife Jeanette. I graduated as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment and was posted to West Berlin, which was then one hundred miles behind the Iron Curtain. My duties included patrolling the demarcation line that separated the allies from the Russian forces. The Berlin Wall was yet to be built. I also did occasional duty as guard commander of the guard at Spandau Prison where Adolf Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess was the only prisoner.

From Berlin, my Regiment was sent to Malaya to undertake deep jungle operations against communist terrorists that were attempting to overthrow the Malayan Government. I was then a Lieutenant in command of a platoon of about 40 men which would go into the jungle for three weeks to a month with only air re-supply to keep us going. On completion of my jungle service, I returned to England and married Jeanette. I had to stand up throughout the church wedding ceremony because I had damaged my right knee in a competitive cross-country motorcycle race and wore a splint and restrictive bandage for the occasion!

At this point I took a career change and transferred from the infantry to the Royal Military Police. I was in charge of the security of British, French and American troops using the autobahn link from West Germany to the isolated Berlin. Whilst in Germany and Austria I took up snow skiing as a sport.

Jeanette and I seemed to attract unusual little adventures along the way — each adventure trivial in itself but adding up to give us a 'different' path through life. Having climbed Mount Snowdon up the 'easy way' we were witness to a serious climbing accident where a member of the staff of a Cunard Shipping Line expedition fell and suffered serious injury. It was Sunday a long time ago. The funicular railway was closed. There was no telephone. So I ran all the way down Mount Snowdon to raise the alarm.

On a road trip from Verden in Germany to Berlin with our old Opel Kapitän motor car stacked to the roof with all our worldly possessions, we broke down on the ice and snow covered autobahn. We still had a hundred kilometres to go.



A motorcycle patrolman flagged down a B-Double tanker. He hooked us to the tanker with a very short tow cable and off we went. The truck driver couldn't see us because we were too close and his truck threw up a constant deluge of ice and snow so we couldn't see anyway. We survived the hundred kilometre 'sleigh ride!'

I then went back to the other side of the world where I carried out military police duties in Singapore and Malaya for three years. I took up scuba diving and loved the ocean. Jeanette and I, with our two little daughters, took a holiday to South Africa to see my parents. We sailed on a ship of the Holland-Afrika Line. It broke down for four days and drifted uncontrollably in dangerous waters off the Skeleton Coast of Namibia until the crew could get the ship's motor running again.

Then, in Cape Town, we were walking the beach near Hermanus with my youngest brother and my parents, when we found the dead body of a man who had thrown himself off a cliff. The police came and secured the site.

Back with the army, I was promoted to Major and appointed Provost Marshal of the ACE Mobile Force (Allied Command Europe) with dual headquarters in Salisbury, England and Heidelberg, Germany. The cold war was at its height and I was on operations in Greece, Denmark and Norway including the Arctic. I had Norwegian, Danish, Italian and American troops in my unit and I was then also the Winter Warfare Instructor for the British contingent to the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force that operated north of the Arctic Circle.

The reason for being in the Arctic Circle? From there our special forces could look down into northern Russia.

I was not seeing much of my two young daughters. A desk job was looming my way and I decided to leave the army and migrate to Australia. Why Australia? Well, I didn't want to go back to Africa, which seemed politically unstable and the people I most liked working with in the army, were the Australian troops I had met in Malaya.

I migrated to Brisbane, Australia in 1970 and started working for Woolworths. After management training, I worked at Garden City and Brookside then became the manager in turn of Woolworths stores at Paddington, George Street and Redcliff. I was also the first Director of FAUI Queensland (The Federation of Underwater Diving Instructors) and spent my spare time on the Great Barrier Reef. After 8 years with Woollies, I opted for a sea change.

I moved with my family to Evans Head where I converted a convenience store into a mini supermarket. When IGA moved into town, I decided to take up beef cattle farming and bought a cattle property at Collins Creek Kyogle in 1990. I loved everything about the farm — the Charolais cattle, my horses, my kelpie dogs, the open air, fresh water creek, the freedom, the lifestyle. I also became a volunteer fire fighter with the Green Pigeon Brigade. In 2004 I sold our farm and moved to Wardell.

My wife Jeanette and I have been married for 60 years and are now retired. We have two lovely married daughters and three fine grandchildren. We live in the greatest part of the world where we have been warmly welcomed by the Wardell community and by the Wardell Brigade of the Rural Fire Service. We are very happy here.

Mike Rushby



Asleep on the job!!