

# THE BLACKWALL BUGLE

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Issue # 54 June 2018

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## The Wardell Boardwalk

The Mayor of Ballina Shire, Councillor David Wright, welcomed residents and visitors to the opening of the Wardell Boardwalk. He thanked the Nyangbul people of the Bundjalung Nation, the original custodians of the



northern coastal areas of New South Wales, for caring for this lovely land. The Blackwall, or Wardell area was settled by timber-getters, fishermen and farmers but it was later divided by the Pacific Highway which made it difficult for pedestrian traffic to move from one side of the village to the other.

School children, kids with scooters and bikes, parents with prams, and invalids in strollers had, for years, to run the gauntlet of the traffic in Bridge Drive. Then Ballina Shire Council, working with the Wardell Progress Association's Pat Carney and Kerry Turpin, put aside the money to build a strong, and elegant all-weather boardwalk.

The boardwalk was officially opened by Elder Lewis Cook who, in the photo on the left, is seen with his daughter Lois, cutting the ceremonial ribbon at the very place where he welcomed the steamships of old.





The new floating pontoon at East Wardell beside the Wardell Bridge. The new boardwalk can be seen across the river.



Halden Boyd, the editor of The Evans Head News, quoted Pat Carney as saying, "The new pontoon is marvellous because of the steepness of the boat ramp on the eastern side of the river." The Wardell Progress Association applied for funding for the project in 2015.

The Boardwalk on the left is viewed from the site of the old ferry landing looking North towards Ballina and the Pacific Ocean. Great credit is due to those who pressed for it to be built, those who designed and engineered it and those who put aside funds in the budget to ensure that the village of Wardell has safe passage for its residents and its visitors to move between the western and eastern halves of the village.



The old ferry

# Looking Back

Ballina Shire Council hosts the Blackwall Bugle on its Website at:

<http://www.ballina.nsw.gov.au/blackwallbugle>  
Click on the above url and you can read all about the most interesting events that occurred in our community and some of the personalities that made this district so memorable.

1. The Wardell Ferry murder
3. Gallina Bogatiroff
4. Wardell Jetty
5. Yvonne Delsignore
6. Albert Hersche
7. Gloria Kelly
8. Laurie Clifford
9. Centenary of St Patrick's Church
10. Norm Parry, Bill Smith
11. Hugh Duthie
12. Harry Law
13. Bernadette Trotter (nee Kidd)
14. Trevor Monti
15. Lorna Dorey
16. Ron Mullens
17. Gary Carr
18. Vic Webber
19. Doris Johnston
20. Ivy Carter
21. Lester Lovett
22. John Felsch
23. Lois Cook
24. Pat Martin
25. Luke Watt, Brian Lumley
26. Betty Fernanace
27. David Judge, Harry Law
28. Ray & Ros Walsh
29. Marie Taylor
30. Tom Johnson – Ray Collyer
31. Nancye Walsh
32. Errol Leeson
33. Ray Robins
34. Rex Kemp
35. Pat Carney
36. Sue Felsch
37. Sue Wardrobe
38. Bill Partridge
39. Ken Threlfo
40. Ian & Helen Lockton
41. David Daley
42. Noel & Ann Wilson
43. Phill Read
44. Jack Elliott
45. Albert Biggs
46. Dez McDonald, Warren Barnes
47. Shirley & Arthur Felsch
48. Fay Daley
49. Betty Fernance
50. Athol & Catherine Sneesby
51. Mike Rushby
52. John Curran
53. Gayle & Peter Moore

If you know of someone who deserves to be here, please let Mike know by emailing:  
[blackwall-bugle@bigpond.com](mailto:blackwall-bugle@bigpond.com)



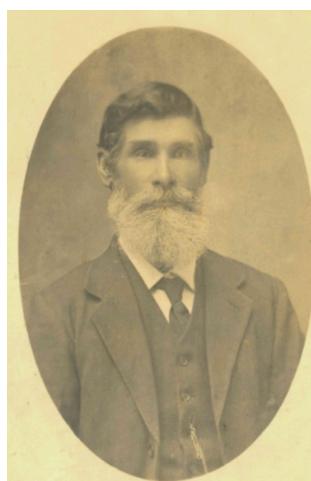
## A Letter to the Editor

From: Bernadette Trotter. Tasmania

In regard to the history of the Wardell Police station, I've read that the original 'station' was down on the river bank and beside it was a wooden lock up called the Tar Pot, so called because it was painted black. Here in Tasmania there is an example of a nineteenth Century portable lock up in the village of Franklin. I wonder if this is what the Tar Pot looked like? There were several in the Huon Valley, and two in the town of Franklin but this is the last one still standing. The cells are extremely small, a person of normal height could just about lie down in one. I'm attaching a photo of the Franklin lock up. It seems to be about one step removed from the public pillories & stocks in English villages.

**Bernadette**

## Robert Josiah Randle



"I was born near the city of Coventry in Warwickshire England. I came to the Richmond and landed on a ballast heap on the 4 September 1877 at East Wardell sawmill owned by the late J.E.James (known as Jimmy Jimmy). He was regarded as a hard man to work for but I put in two years with him and we were sorry to part. There was then over the river at what we call North Wardell, another mill, Mr Earnest Carters. Both mills were very busy places and Wardell was the most important centre on the river. I erected a sawmill at the foot of the big hill on the Wardell-Alstonville road where it remained for nearly 30 years. It was I who gave the name "Meerschaum Vale" to the locality

because of the deposits of Meerschaum clay there, though the late Siegfried Sohn, chemist, who selected there had named the locality, where now is the school and post office 'Kianacane'. When the school was built the government adopted my name. "The Meerschaum Vale mill was a large concern with a lot of machinery and shed room and the timber for many of Lismore's present buildings was cut there, but when the timber supply gave out this mill went the way of other well-known mills including James and Carters mills." **Blackwall Historical Society**



# From the Memoirs of the late AW Ford.

## The Blackwall Historical Society

My father once showed me a canal that was dug from Bingal Creek to a slaughterhouse on the property which was a quarter mile upstream from Bingal Creek Bridge. It was about twenty foot wide and two chains long through the mangroves to the higher land on which the slaughterhouse was built. It enabled the butchers' boats to load their meat directly into the boat for delivery as far as Burns Point down river and past Swan Bay upstream. The butchers' boats were specially built of cedar for this purpose and used skulls not paddles. My father rowed them for some time prior to going to the South African war. He said a chap named Jack McLean, who was later a World's Championship skulls contender, learned to row in a butcher's boat from Bingal Creek. At that time the roads were very poor, and most farm houses were situated on the banks of the river, thus the river was the main thoroughfare and butchers, bakers, store-keepers and hawkers and dealers plied the stream in their various trades. My father mentioned that on the upstream journey a diversion was made up the Broadwater to Bagotville where Bagot Bros. Sawmill was in operation and that Riley's Hill was a thriving community, because of the quarry and the dock.



### Wardell Waterfront

When I started school in 1912, bullock teams hauled logs from Meerschaum Vale to Bingal Creek where a log dump was situated down stream from the bridge. Bagot Bros. drogher loaded them there for transport to the mill at Fishery Creek Ballina. Later, cane from FJ Meaney's property was hauled by cane carts and shin-sticked into cane punts for transport to the CSR Mill at Broadwater from the same spot.

During my youth, Bingal Creek was the local swimming hole. Once a week during the summer the whole of the public school took swimming lessons. There were no dressing sheds. It was boys upstream and girls downstream in the bushes to change, then all in together. Most kids learned to swim in varying degrees, as there was no organised instruction. There were too many for one teacher to do more than keep an eye on all of them.

The whole area from the Police Station to Bingal Creek, was infested with prickly pear, growing among the tall Cyprus Pines and what scarpers we had around that area. There were quite a few headstones, most enclosed by iron railings, situated at random in the area and possibly many more unmarked. Evidently they belonged to an era before the Wardell Cemetery came into use.

The prickly pear was a very fleshy, very green leafed variety growing in clumps, sometimes 20 ft across and 8 ft high. The fruit were a very bright reddy-purple colour when ripe and about the size of a duck egg. We used to knock them off with a stick, rub them carefully in sand to remove the prickles and eat them. They were quite pleasant to eat, but great care had to be taken to get rid of all the prickles as there was nothing worse than prickles in your tongue. Later a wide campaign to eliminate prickly pear eradicated them all by poisoning. Poison was injected by pressure, through long brass spears into the trunks.

In those days before the advent of ice boxes and later electric refrigerators, it was difficult to keep meat fresh. One early means was by use of what was known as a bush safe. This was a wire mesh frame, which stood in a trough of water, which formed the base of the safe. The safe was suspended in a cool place and hessian or bagging covered the frame and hung into the water trough. An occasional dipper of water and capillary attraction through the hessian reduced the interior temperature to some extent.

Bartlett's Store was a landmark in Wardell from my earliest recollections. It stood on the riverside two hundred yards downstream from the present bridge.

The roadway separated it from the riverbank. Directly in front of the store was the wharf onto which the ocean steamers discharged the stores for the shop. I think this wharf was owned by E. Bartlett. The goods were taken across the road into the bulk store. Anything from a needle to an anchor was sold there. The weekly orders were delivered around the countryside by spring carts.

I recall Jimmy Bartlett building a very fine fish trap in his bulk store at the rear of his shop. It was greatly admired, but when completed would not go through any of the doors and one had to be greatly enlarged to get it out. As quite a crowd were present one Saturday morning for the official launching, the event proved quite hilarious.

In 1915, when I was about 10 years old, we used to send to McIlwraith's, who were then a big retail store in Sydney, for a big order. This occurred once a year before Christmas – probably when the cane cheque came - and was a great event, when the dray had to be taken to Wardell and the large crate slung directly from the ship to the dray then to be taken home and opened with great procedure and excitement for we kids.

AW Ford



**Australian  
Red Cross**  
THE POWER OF HUMANITY

The Wardell Branch was formed  
in 1914 and has unbroken  
service of well over 100 years.

**President Ros Walsh**



**Above - Daisy Brice, Ros  
Walsh and Ruth Partridge.  
Left - Nancy Rudgley, Ivy  
Carter and Ros Walsh**



On Saturday 30 June, there  
is to be a **Country Music  
Night** at the **Wardell  
Sports and Recreation  
Club**. The club opens at 4  
pm with the music from  
6.00 pm to 10.30 pm. The  
cost is Adults \$15 Students  
\$10. The price includes  
supper. The Bistro will be  
open for dinner. Tickets at  
the Post Office.

For details and bookings,  
telephone **Ros Walsh** at  
**6683 4111**

The Wardell Branch of the Red Cross held a presentation of awards and morning tea at the Wardell Memorial Hall on Thursday 17 May at 10 a.m. A nice little group attended to see two members, Daisy Bryce and Ruth Partridge, receive their badges for over 50 years service with the Red Cross. Ivy Carter was awarded a badge for 40 years and Nancy Rudgley for 25 years Service. Two other members who were unable to attend also received 25 year awards, Monica Vomiero, now living in Mildura, and the late Doris Campbell. It was a wonderful day and an honour to award these great ladies for all their work over so many years. Wardell Red Cross is always happy to have new members join and help raise money for many great causes.

#### **A Tale From the Cane Derrick**

When a storm builds up on a rising tide, the storm  
is usually a banger. When it builds on an ebb tide,  
it's a fizzer. *Trevor Monti*

*The Blackwall Bugle is produced by a voluntary  
community working group. Ballina Shire Council takes  
no responsibility for the accuracy of the content and  
acts only as copy editor and printing agent.*



# The Wardell & District Progress Association Inc.

President Pat Carney. Secretary Kerry Turpin.

Meetings of the Wardell And District Progress Association are always interesting. Mayor David Wright and Councillors Ben Smith and Eoin Johnston attend most meetings to give their support and to answer questions raised by the public.

President Pat Carney expressed the appreciation of the meeting to Warren Barnes for his unsolicited support of the community by maintaining the grounds of the Wardell and District War Memorial Hall in his own time and at his expense. There were many ideas put forward to the meeting for future consideration, including covers over the seats on the river front and for a covered seat at the East Wardell pontoon. There is a need for an accessible toilet in the Fitzroy Street park and for an improvement in car parking outside the Wardell shops.

There has been some concern expressed at meetings about the dangers posed by recreational vehicle drivers on Patchs Beach. The land is not controlled by Council but is Crown Land, so Vice President of the Progress Association, Paola Rickard, will follow through.

There was much discussion about the impact on the community of the traffic generated by construction of the highway. The project team will be hosting a community information session to provide an update on progress, heavy vehicle movements and material hauling. Everyone is welcome to attend. The information session will be on Thursday 7 June from 9.00am until 1.00pm in the War Memorial Hall.

The next meeting of the Wardell & District Progress Association will be in the Wardell Hall on Wednesday 20 June at 7.00 pm.



Over the past twelve months, the volunteers of the **Wardell Brigade of the Rural Fire Service** have responded to 84 callouts and have given 1200 man hours of service. They live or work around the area but the moment the call to action comes in, they get dressed in their firefighting gear and move to the fire station. To get a fire truck on the way takes about seven minutes from the initial call.

Every incident is different and requires a different response. But new members are provided with the personal protection equipment and the tools to do the job. They also attend courses to prepare them for any situation and they are always accompanied by an experienced firefighter.

Those interested in finding out more about the Brigade should attend the monthly meeting at the Fire Station at 7.00 pm on the first Tuesday of each month or contact Captain Ray Collyer 0437 895 572

# Margaret Howes



(photo: [www.tecnamqld.com.au](http://www.tecnamqld.com.au))

I was born eleven months before World War II started. My baby book says Daddy was in London when the war broke out. We lived near Wisley aerodrome in Surrey. I can remember very little of the war, but do remember seeing aluminium strips raining down from the heavens and many barrage balloons. I also remember when all the windows in our house were blown out by a doodle bug. We had an air raid shelter in the garden and it contained slatted wooden bunks and a lot of apples and pickled eggs. Nothing tasted very nice if kept in that air raid shelter as it was dark and damp. When the war was just about over, I remember the Americans throwing chewing gum to us kids as they passed in their jeeps. There were tank traps everywhere (concrete blocks with star posts and barbed wire) and these took a long time to clear after the war ended. We used to ride our bikes to Wisley aerodrome and look through the fence at all the warbirds, despite signs everywhere saying that looking was prohibited.

My father did not have to serve in the forces as he had a factory which made coffins, among other things. He was in the fire watch. My mother was a very good housewife who cooked the most delicious chocolate iced buns. We used to run in the back door and out the front door grabbing a handful as we went. Something I really liked was the kangaroo tail soup which was imported from Australia. Everything was rationed in those days – petrol, food, etc. My mother's father was killed in the trenches in the First World War and a big artillery shell was used as our kitchen door stop.

My father founded his business on the back of a horse. When he was relatively young he went to the horse races and placed an accumulator bet on the first five races. When it came to the sixth race, the bookie said, "What will it be this time son?" He declined to bet and the horse he was going to back in the sixth race lost. He adopted the philosophy, "Go home before the last race," after winning two thousand pounds for sixpence!

That was a lot of money in the 1920s. My father's uncle was an antique dealer in Penang and we seemed to get a lot of nice pieces passed to us.

My father used to ride a motorcycle with sidecar for recreation and he won a high speed trial at Brooklands. I have his cup. He also competed at the Isle of Man on the TT track. He cashed his silver cups in to start his business. My father was a hard task master, and if I wanted anything I had to work for it. This included painting the barn roof with four coats of paint to get a new saddle. My mother followed close behind and I had to do the ironing for two shillings and sixpence a week. My father occasionally gave me a beating with the horse whip. I

was given several strokes of the whip when I swapped my sister's brand new bike for a canoe! Then I paid my next door neighbour's cousin two shillings and sixpence to get rid of the whip. I could take you to the rabbit hole where the whip was broken into a dozen pieces and hidden!

I was sent to Miss Chittenden's nursery school when I was three and a half. I was not impressed with school, but I did like those lemon curd tarts cooked in the old paraffin stove. The first day, I decided school was not for me, and walked to the bus stop and caught the bus home!

Petrol was scarce during the war and we had three horses: Tombo (a little Shetland pony), Silver and Star (driving ponies). Star thought as little of being in a trap, as I did of school, and he jumped a five bar gate one day with the trap on the back! Silver was generally hitched up to the trap and there was always a fight for the reins. Mother absolutely freaked when Silver took off at a gallop down the A3 on an icy winter's day.

That was the end of the horses. My mother had an Austin 7 which she drove to take her driving test. My father reckoned I was meant to be a boy, but he said the bits fell off me after my mother drove the car with a flat tyre just before I was born!

When we were kids, we used to go off on our bikes with our strawberry jam sandwiches. We would climb the oak trees and eat the sandwiches. We went through a stage of putting a penny in the slot for Wills Woodbine cigarettes and smoking them up willow trees and racing our bikes around. My childhood friends are still my best friends. It was a good life in rural England.

Later on we competed in local horse shows and gymkhanas with our horses. It was always enjoyable riding bareback in the snow in winter and letting the horses roll.

I progressed through school in England and was very sports orientated. My first job when I left school was working for the landed gentry in Scotland running a pony

trekking centre in Perthshire for five quid a week. I enjoyed the job as we used to swim the horses in the River Tay. In Scotland there was only 3 hours of darkness in summer, and it was strange to see the sun at such odd hours. Her Ladyship had a host of foreign paying guests about my same age. One was the Sheikh of Kuwait's son who invited me to go to the cinema with him. I declined. He said, "You very funny girl, you!" Chihuahuas were everywhere and I recall a banker's daughter saying, "Chihuahuas and champagne for dinner tonight!" That upset Her Ladyship!

Then I got the ski bug. I decided to learn German and Italian and got work as a ski representative for a travel agent in Austria. That job lasted four seasons and I really enjoyed skiing down the best black runs in the Alps. I got free ski lifts, free ski school and got paid for being there.

After the ski-ing experiences came the fun in the sun. I became a travel representative in San Remo, Cattolica, and Rimini, and had a month as a wildflower guide in Arosa. There was plenty of fun at the beach and night clubs. We made a bit on the side by chartering a 50ft boat from a local fisherman and filling it up with tourists. All went well until the rough weather came with seasick people leaning over the side and wanting their money back!

I had met some Australians in Austria, and they invited me to join them back in Australia. I made a snap decision to go. I gave immediate notice to my boss in London and I was on the ship and on my way the next day. I spent 15 months in Australia and had 19 jobs in 6 months.

After my summer and winter exploits, I returned to England and decided I wanted to fly an aeroplane! I took lessons at an old wartime aerodrome and got my pilot's licence. I invited my parents to come and watch me. My mother remarked "Look at my little Margaret up there in the sky. She looks so at peace with the world." To which my father replied "Quick, pass round the hat to keep her there"!

Then it was back to Australia again. I worked for a publisher in Sydney then decided it was time to start my own business. I rented a factory for \$23 per week and started a sign business using dies in an ancient letter press machine. This was followed by a screen printing business. I went down to Vinnies and bought a second hand dining table for \$15 and a vacuum cleaner for \$10, drilled holes in the table and put a paint tin under each leg to make work less back breaking. That screen-print set-up was upgraded after the \$25 investment had made \$250,000 worth of screen printed posters and signs!

I rented, then bought a house in the Northern Suburbs. I also bought a farm with a beautiful clear creek on the edge of the Blue Mountains. It was a good place to ride horses, but the summer heat was quite unbearable. One day the local real estate agent phoned me with a good offer, so I took it.

During this time I was into sailing. I had a variety of small boats and competed in regattas all over Australia. Sailing became my life! However finding a good crew for the boats was a pain in the proverbial with one crew even

jumping overboard in Sydney Harbour after telling me to get stuffed!

Then flying followed again. I bought my first aeroplane and flew it up to the Great Barrier Reef. It was amazing seeing all those fabulous islands from the air. Later on, I competed in the CSR Round Queensland Air Race, the Round Australia Air Race, Southern Cross Air Race, and a host of other smaller races. The atmosphere at Archerfield was amazing when we were flagged off by Lores Bonney in her bath chair as the band played Glen Miller music.

Now I was on the lookout for another farm. I ended up buying the 307 acre farm at Lennox Head where I lived for 16 years and ran beef cattle. Lennox was great when I first moved there, but it became very noisy.

Then late one night I got a phone call from an Irish man. He wanted to buy my farm. I told him to get off the phone and ring again at a respectable hour! He ended up buying the Lennox property, so I was on the lookout for another farm and a place to live again.

My focus was now on beachfront land, and I went door knocking. I ended up buying 115 acres with 1.25kms of beach frontage on the south side of the Richmond River. I was told the vendor had won it on a hand of poker! I bought 91 acres which abutted this to the west where I now run cattle and a couple of old horses.

I had wanted to buy degraded land and make it beautiful and environmental, so I bought an earthmoving business and promptly shut it down as I wanted all the equipment for my projects. This allowed me to clean up the properties and build an airstrip.

There was another instalment on its way for the sale of the Lennox property, so I bought a farm at the tip of Palmers Island on Lake Wooloweyah, and the following year I bought the Goodwood Island property. Both these farms were very degraded and needed a lot of work. The Palmers Island property proved to be a mistake as it was quite flood prone. In fact in the May 2009 flood I almost needed a submarine to find it! Luckily a Gold Coast buyer appeared, so that was the end of that one!

The Goodwood property is one of the best I have ever owned. It is not flood affected, as it is so close to the river mouth. It was in a dreadful mess when I bought it, but the earthmoving equipment soon got it into shape and a network of roads was constructed for all weather access. I built an airstrip on both properties, so now I had three properties with airstrips and could commute by air. The two cottages on Goodwood have been restored to pristine condition with magnificent river views. There is a lake with an island and mullet which the pelicans fly in to feed on. It is almost time to start thinking of scaling down and selling off Goodwood, but where are the buyers? When Goodwood goes, I suppose I will be off on another project! When you have led an active life, it is hard to sit still. I don't think I am the type to sit with my back to the wall waiting for Old Nick to come and get me!

I've lived in Australia for 50 years, and have spent 14 of those in the Blackwall Bugle area.

**Margaret Howes Empire Vale**