



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023

Those who travel across our northern border seem to be complaining about the time it takes to get to Brisbane because of all the roadwork. Perhaps it's time to go back to the 50s when there were only two lines of traffic, one up and one down and much of the road did not have white lines along the edge or a line down the middle. A very quick trip took 3 hours and that was considered to have been with a lot of speeding and, possibly, dangerous driving. Remember buying new shoes for your children when they outgrew the old ones. The children kept growing. We have the same problem with population. It keeps growing and the old roads cannot cope. So new ones it has to be.

This has sent my thoughts back to the past here in Ballina. In the 1940s the population was about 2000. The streets, roads, bridges and buildings were very good and suited both the people and their needs. So, in this newsletter, we are looking at what we had and is not here now.

THE TRAIN

The fact that Ballina once had a train seems to generate great interest in those hearing this for the first time. As many would know, it opened in 1930, mainly to carry goods between Ballina and Booyong, where the train met with the line from Casino to Murwillumbah. Trains entered and left Ballina on a bridge across the canal, the remains of which can be seen along Canal Road.

This photograph shows the Railway Station which stood somewhere in, what is now called, Saunders Park. Canal Road, from the Scout Hall to Tweed Street, runs close to the old railway line. Passengers were also able to travel in the train. There is an interesting and informative book by Ian Kirkland, which tells the story.





SHAWS BAY

This fascinating photo, taken early in the 1890s, holds a very big story. You will recall from the last Newsletter that in 1893 the NSW Minister for Works came to inspect progress on the walls and obtained approval for a railway line to be constructed from the river end of Martim Street to Shaws Bay and out along the north wall. Here we have the abandoned quarry in Shaws Bay, the first Pilot House in the middle of the photo and the first bridge across North Creek reaching the halfway mark. In the background we can also see the first cemetery, now gathered into a complex of walls and called the Pioneer Cemetery. You can also see, sailing on North Creek, what was one of the last ships to have that opportunity, as the remaining section of railway bridge effectively blocked the entrance to shipping.

NOW CHANGED DRAMATICALLY!

THE BOAT SHEDS

On the western side of the cemetery hill, there was another interesting group of buildings which were called the Boat Sheds. They were all built early in the 20th century and there is a plaque near the bridge end of The Serpentine which shows the names of the owners. To save you a walk, here they are:
1. Galloway, 2. Gibson-Geraghty, 3. Abbot- Kennedy, 4. Jones, 5. Holt and 6. Robinson



There is only one shed now, The Oyster Shed and they sell oysters and other seafood. Many people had small personal oyster leases along the rock walls and the leases were sold to people who would protect the walls and report any problems. The Government ceased renting those small leases in the early 1980s.
GONE!

GARR HOUSE

If you stand at the Gallery and Cafe and look across Crane Street, you see a large vacant block which is used as a carpark of sorts. Once that block held a rather magnificent home called Garr House. You will note from the caption, that the gathering that day in 1907, was because the Governor was staying there. Why was the Governor visiting Ballina? It seems to have been a grand occasion as a parade was held in River Street and there was also a gathering in Clement Park.



The building was still called Garr House in the 1940s but ,by then, it was a Private Hotel. Later it was sold to Mr Cavill and was know variously as Cavill's Hotel, then Guest House and lastly B&B.

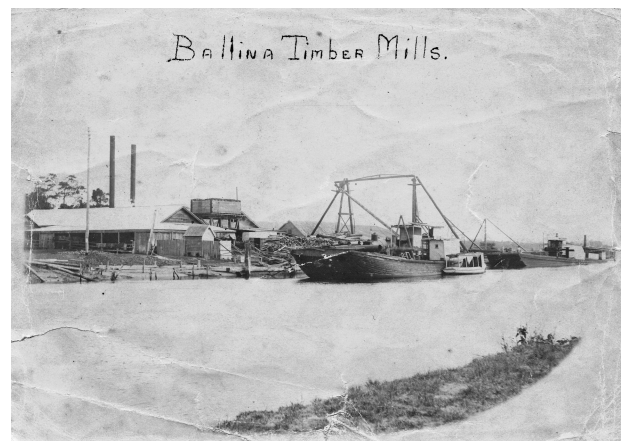


Sadly is was removed and the block was used for some years by Kirklands Buses. I believe it is owned by the Catholic Church and it would make a beautiful little park to soften that area of town. ALL GONE!

Do any of you have a Gold Phone?

BAGGOTS MILL

All across the Northern Rivers, from the first white settlement, there grew a massive timber industry with sawmills springing up everywhere. It is not surprising that we also had a big sawmill which was owned by the Baggot Brothers and was located on the north east bank of Fishery Creek and the Richmond River. The photograph at right is rather crumpled and worn but clearly shows the mill in its early days.





PUB2-27. Bagot Bros. Sawmill, Ballina, established in 1890s.

This was situated where Fishery Creek enters the Richmond River and was built by the Bagot brothers after their mill at Bagotville was destroyed by fire. The mill continued to operate until the 1950s. Photographer unknown. Hewitt Collection. (Sawmills 2)

John Sharpe was already operating a sawmill as an adjunct to his sugar mill at East Ballina, but the growth of Ballina soon required a bigger operation. This photograph, with caption, tells another part of the story and demonstrates the growth of the industry as it tries to keep up with the demands of new dwellings and businesses.

GONE!

SPENCERS CORDIALS

From an article in a Pioneer Magazine, I have discovered that there have been several cordial factories on the plateau and in Ballina from the 1880s until about 1966. Most did not operate for very long and were small operations. The locations were scattered in towns and even some very small places such as Rous Mill.

Charles Henry Ashwood is believed to be the first manufacturer of aerated waters and cordials in Wardell around 1894. He had married and moved to Ballina by 1900. He actually operated in Ballina right through until about 1934 on the corner of Moon Street and Bentinck Street.

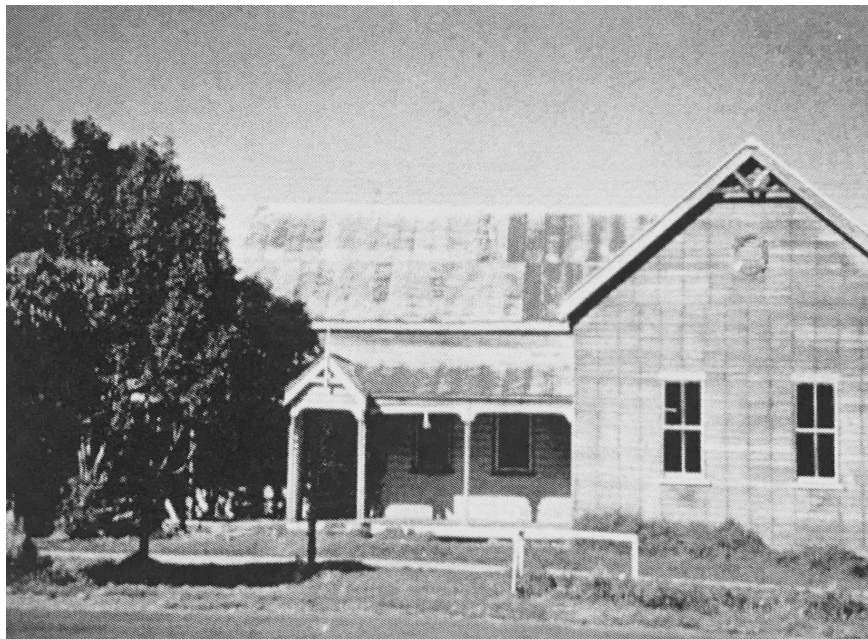
McDonalds, which had been operating in River Street was taken over by Alfred Ernest and Arthur George Phipps, father and son. After the Phipps left they sold out to Johnson Brothers—John Eric and Charles Gordon. They had the cordial factory moved onto the corner of Grant Street and River Street but the partnership failed.

In 1950 the factory was bought by Lorraine and Charles Spencer and their sons. Charles Spencer died in a car accident in Queensland in 1951 and his two sons, Charles and Gordon Spencer, then operated the factory through until about 1966.



SCHOOL OF ARTS

In 1886 approval was given to build a School of Arts at a cost not exceeding 300 Pounds. It was constructed by William Clements on the south east corner of Martin and Crane Streets. It held a small library and reading room. My Great Grandfather, James Gould, went there often to read and, as a small child, I thought he lived there.

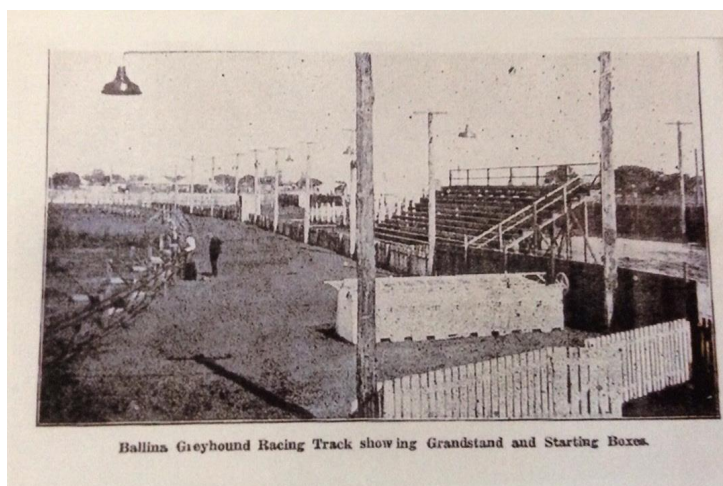


In August 1948 the Ballina Municipal Council took over the Library from the School of Arts Committee.

As Ballina Public School grew in pupil numbers, land near the existing school was required and in 1966 a new brick section of the school replaced the School of Arts.

The Library was moved to the building near the current Gallery which was then the Council Chambers. It now houses Paradise FM.

GREYHOUND RACETRACK



It seems to have been some sort of 'Coming-of-age' when a town created a dog track and you can see by this small photo that the Ballina track was well equipped with grandstands and fences. An article in the Northern Star of July 1936, indicated that the track had been upgraded with a mechanical hare. My heart cannot allow me to speculate on what had happened before that time. Like most sporting events, there are both positive and negative aspects.

The track was on land that was bounded by Kerr Street, Burnett Street and Swift Street which would have been very close to some private dwellings. With the electrification of the hare, came increased lighting of "75,000 candlepower". You can see by driving down any of those streets that the track has now.....

GONE !

AT THE MUSEUM

Miss Beatrice Drewe and the wreck of the Tomki:

One of the very best things about being 'on roster' at the museum, is the people who drop in for a visit or to give us a donation. Today, we had the pleasure of meeting Ainslie Bootes from Wollongbar, whose son has been researching the wreck of The Tomki in 1907. While this is a very interesting topic, another story lies at the back of his visit. Many years ago a very skilled artist named Beatrice Drewe completed a beautiful oil painting of the wreck and Ainslie had very good photographs of the painting. He will donate a copy to the museum.



Miss Drewe, who had not married, left her estate to the Presbyterian Church and that is story for another time.

The Highchair:

This item was recently passed to us from The Plateau Museum in Alstonville.



This spindle back highchair, formally painted black, was donated by Shirley Bailey (formally Reedman). She came to Meerschaum Vale from Mackay (date unknown) when she was 13 months old.

The highchair has been in the Reedman family since the 1880s

It came to Meerschaum Vale with the family.

And last but not least,

.....a very big thank you to Lynne for her amazing research and to Brian, Allan, Diana, Rae and quite a few others who have assisted me in my search through Ballina's past. I am having a fabulous time discovering connections and searching for proof of, what can sometimes be, unreliable memories.

If you wish to contact me about this newsletter, please email the Museum email and write ATTENTION PATRICIA on your note.

Editor
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