

Newsletter

June/July 2023

CROSSING THE WATER

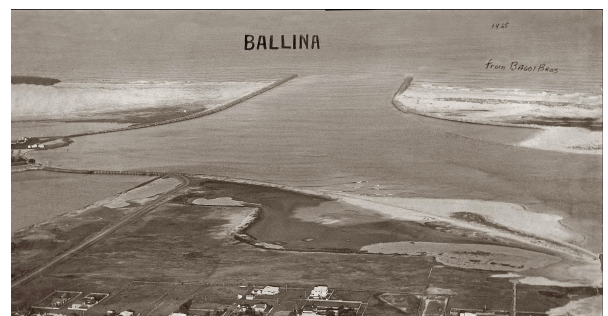
We live on a very large island. People have been coming here across the water for around 70,000 years. Not only are we surrounded by water, practically the whole country is criss-crossed with rivers, streams, gullies, and drains. Even the dry 'red centre' is covered, periodically, by water. If we ever did need reminding, the last two or three years have provided the evidence.

When our ancestors arrived here, to what we now call Ballina, they were immediately faced by the big question, 'How can we move around this place?' Fortunately, at that time, boats were common and familiar to them. They chose to settle on the hills on the eastern side of North Creek, that seemed to roll away to the north. Ships were moving further up the Richmond River and settlers were choosing land along the banks and river flats.

The Robertson Land Act was passed in 1861 giving settlers an opportunity to set down more permanent roots. The blocks along the banks of, what was then West Ballina, were a favourite. Boats and rafts were crossing North Creek and it was not long before a wharf was built at the northern end of Norton Street. This made transport much safer as larger boats could be used. Wharves were also being built along the banks of the Richmond River as the number and size of villages increased.

The estuary was often a great challenge for shipping and it was decided that training walls were necessary. The work commenced using Riley's Hill rock for the South Wall, and rock from the quarry in Shaws Bay for the north wall. The local rock was not strong enough to resist rough seas and it was decided that better rock was needed. The idea was to bring the rock down from Riley's Hill.

The plan was described as follows. A 'railway (will be built) from the wharf near the foot of Martin Street, where the stone is unloaded from the punts, round the front of Ballina to Pilot Point, having been completed, this will enable the work of running out the stone on to the breakwater by the aid of a locomotive to be carried on with expedition and without further interruption. Mr. Kerle got authority to construct the line and the wall both affords a protection to the town and carries the line across. The bridge over North Creek was an expensive item, costing upwards of £2000.'



The plan was achieved and the first bridge over North Creek was built. In 1894 a footbridge was added to the side of the Rail Bridge. You can see the bridge and part of the rail line still visible. A car bridge had yet to come.

Missingham Bridge

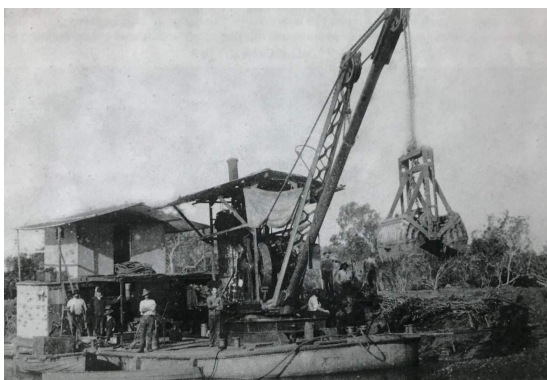
The 2nd bridge (right), which was higher above the water, could carry cars and had a foot bridge on one side. It was not opened until 1935, so the car drivers had been waiting for quite a while. It was approached on the western side by driving along Bentinck St with a curve onto the bridge. This photo was taken in the 40s. Those who made the crossing of this bridge had to be swift of foot as, in rough weather, waves would crash right over the bridge and you.



The new bridge, Missingham 3, left, was opened in 1985 and, hopefully it will last longer than the 2nd one. Those of you who frequent that area would know that, recently, it has undergone a lengthy renovation. Well, it is almost 40 years old and has had a much greater volume of traffic both in number and weight.

If you are interested in the juxtaposition of Bridges 2 and 3, you can clearly see the old concrete on both sides.

Before we move on to the next bridge, it seems important to note that, when discussions were being undertaken with the Minister for Works, Mr Lyne, about the problems that Council was having completing the North Wall, a group of farmers, mainly cane growers from Teven and Upper North Creek, approached Mr Lyne. They needed a canal built from North Creek to Fishery Creek to expedite the transport of their crops being taken to Broadwater Sugar Mill for crushing. He clearly agreed, as the dredging works proceeded. Here are two photos of the dredges at work.



THE CANAL BRIDGE

This canal (more water to cross) necessitated the building of another bridge. Before the canal was dredged, the main road north was across the land about where the bridge now stands. After the canal went through, there must have been a period of time when all traffic north had to find an alternative route. An article in the Trove collection might give us a clue.

'The dredging works in connection with the North Creek canal has reached the bridge over Fishery Creek, on the Ballina-Lismore Road, at the southern end, and the bridge is to be removed and a punt put on.'

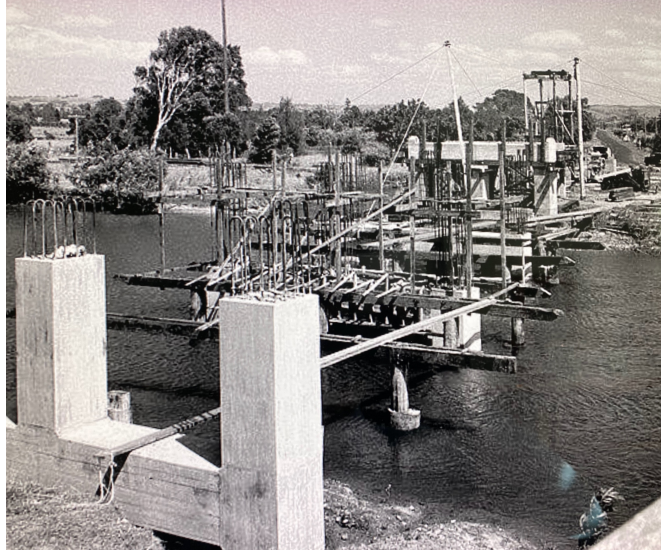
This may be what happened at the northern end as well although there was not any bridge there before the dredging started. Perhaps there is someone out there who knows.

Lynne has unearthed some more information about the canal and the dredges. They had names, which is common with any water vehicle. The Alcides operated from the Fishery Creek end and the Zeta from the North Creek end. *'It may be mentioned that over the canal, at the Lismore and the Tintenbar roads, there are being built two new high level bridges, allowing canal traffic at all stages of the tide.'*

This information was in an article in the Northern Star on Saturday 23 May 1896 and had been rewritten as "The Sydney Mail last issue gives illustrations in connection with the Fishery Creek canal, now being carried out under the general supervision of Mr. Thomas W. Keele, District Engineer of the Harbours and Rivers Department." There are many interesting statistics included in that article and I would be happy to send a copy to anyone who would like more information.



The first Canal bridge - all wooden structure.



The current Canal Bridge under construction - all steel and concrete

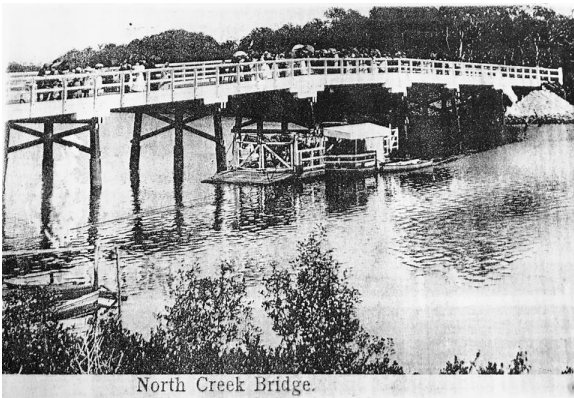
The wooden bridges constructed throughout the area have almost disappeared. The construction itself was pictorially elegant and they held the history of the rapid growth of the area and the strengthening need for more roads and river crossings. Percy Allan's association with timber bridges is marked by his redesign of one beam and timber trusses. Many of the bridges around Ballina were excellent examples of his work. All we have now, are photographs.

NORTH CREEK BRIDGE

Thanks to Lynne's searching, we have found articles from the Northern Star which tell us about this bridge. It was built to replace an old ferry and connected Ballina to Lennox Head along North Creek Road. It was opened in April 1907 and was 328 feet long with breadth 45 feet. The contract which included embanked approaches at either end and cost 1473 pounds. The timber was purchased from Bagot Bros., who had a large timber mill on the banks of Fishery Creek.



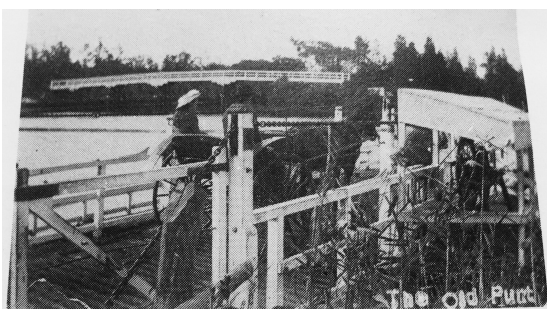
This is the type of ferry that was used for the narrow, deep creeks that proliferated along the coast



North Creek Bridge.

The bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in August 1970 due to rotting wooden piles near the waterline. The bridge was never replaced and was abandoned as dangerous in 1970. Ballina Council does indicate that a new bridge will be built in the future and this would certainly expedite traffic from Byron and Lennox to the airport.

THE DOUBLE BRIDGES

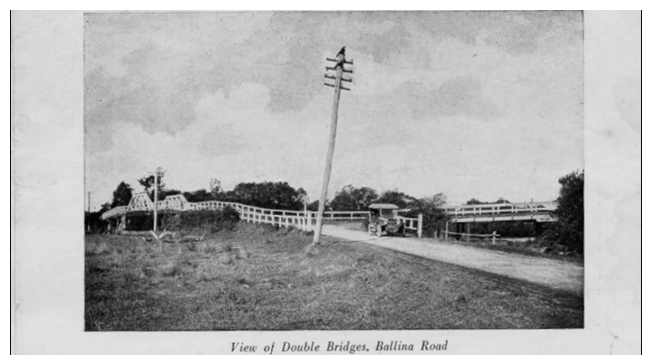


The old punt used to cross Teven and Emigrant Creeks with one of the new bridges in the background.
Photograph supplied by Ballina Tourist and Information Office.

As the land further north west from Ballina was being settled (Teven and Tintenbar in particular), more creeks had to be crossed. Two that were most significant of these were Teven Creek and Emigrant Creek at the confluence of which a ferry was put in place.

As you can see in this photo, a bridge was almost completed and the ferry would soon be moved on to other duties.

The bridges were built in 1908-1909 and, speaking at the opening on Friday August 6th 1909, President Whipps, stated that, 'credit was due to Mr Perry for getting them and he trusted, that Teven would support Mr Perry next election'. Others who attended thought, however, 'that any indebtedness was 20 years too late'.



View of Double Bridges, Ballina Road



The two bridges lasted over 100 years until, in November 2010, an article appeared in the Northern Star headlined 'Seven Bridges Falling Down'. The bridges, which had been dubbed 'the terrible twins' had given good service to the Teven community and would be replaced by concrete structures.

This photo shows one new and one old, one ready to leave and the other almost ready to take up the role.

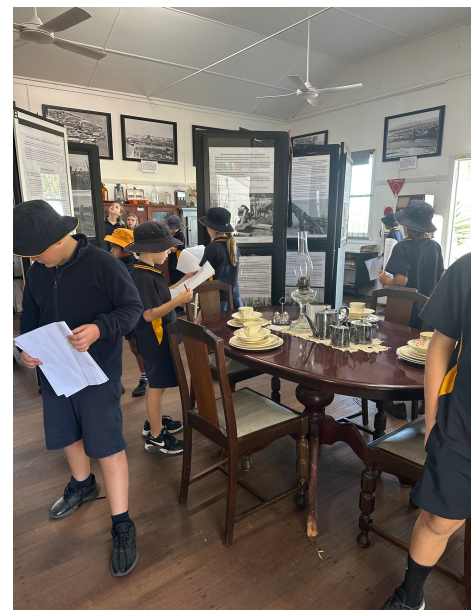
SCHOOLS

The Australian Curriculum for schools, has a section for Years 3 and 4 which focuses on Local History. What a great idea!

Both Ballina Public School and Southern Cross Public School contacted the Historical Society for assistance, which pleased us very much and we jumped at the chance. Each school was sent a memory stick holding brief articles about some of Ballina's history and each used that in their own way. For Ballina Public the request was for a guided walk down Norton Street with appropriate information. Eighty children, with six teachers, Patricia, a member of the Society, and a friend, Diana, accomplished the walk on June 6th which was an absolutely perfect day. Sadly, there are no photos.

Southern Cross chose to visit the museum and 92 students and teachers visited on Friday June 16th. Armed with a set of questions they searched high and low with three of our members, Ann, Jill and Elvin, guiding them around. I know our members had a great day and, reportedly, so did the children and teachers.

We received these photos from the school.



One of our members, Elvin (Hanna), has spent a great deal of his time improving this outdoor area which is now an inviting place to spend some time when you next visit our museum.

The school curriculum will remain in place next year, so we will let other schools know that we can help and spread our history even further.

AT THE MUSEUM

On Wednesday 21st June we had a visit from a small bus load of men from Lismore who enjoyed morning tea, a short talk from member Alan and a browse around the museum. Thanks to members Brian and Patricia and a special thank you to non-member friend, Diana, who helped with morning tea and transport.

In May, of course, we had our big Open Day and I hope you were able to open the special newsletter with photos of the event. It was a great success.

Once again I owe enormous thanks to Lynne for her research skills which produces mountains of articles to be scrutinised, sometimes questioned, but lead to information that is as close to the truth as we can make it. Thanks also, to the several members and friends who patiently puzzled through the events described in this newsletter.

Patricia Wilson
Editor