

Newsletter

November/December
2022

I have been reading Peter Fitzsimons' book, Burke and Wills. He uses at least ten research assistants and has listed over 20 pages of references from which he has gathered information. He has chosen, however, which items to use and which to omit. That is how authors approach the writing of a history book. And that is how I, humbly, approach the writing of this newsletter. Other people assist me in finding information and I choose what to write. I attempt to cover different subjects in each paper and cannot include large amounts of detail. That is where you can help. If you have additional information about a topic, please send it to me as I may be able to use it later. If not, it will become part of the records we are gathering at the museum. (I recommend the book I mentioned above. It is a great story.)

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

Recently we have received memorabilia and interesting records from some of Ballina's elderly residents. These people are a wonderful resource for us and for future generations. One large collection from Mrs Young holds documents telling about her husband, George, and his widespread involvement in Ballina during his lifetime. Her gift arrived just after the last newsletter was sent to you and it includes many documents about Ballina Hospital where he was Chairman of the Board for many years. This is now available in our research section.

NORTON STREET

'Brundah'

If you love to admire old buildings and see them lovingly restored, then a walk along Norton Street in Ballina is a must. Sadly, some have been replaced by new houses, and some dramatically changed, while others remain well preserved. One of these is

'**Brundah**' which was built in 1908 for Mr Roy Lang who was a Stock and Station agent in the area. As it was a private home, little is known about the early years, but later, in the 1940s and 50s, Mrs Lang frequently held Garden Parties, sometimes including fashion parades. 'Brundah' was sold after the death of Mrs Charlotte Lang in 1980. This recent photo demonstrates how both garden and house have been so well maintained. At one time, it became a B & B, but is now a private home once again. It is located on the north east corner of Norton and Swift Street.



'Marine View Hotel'

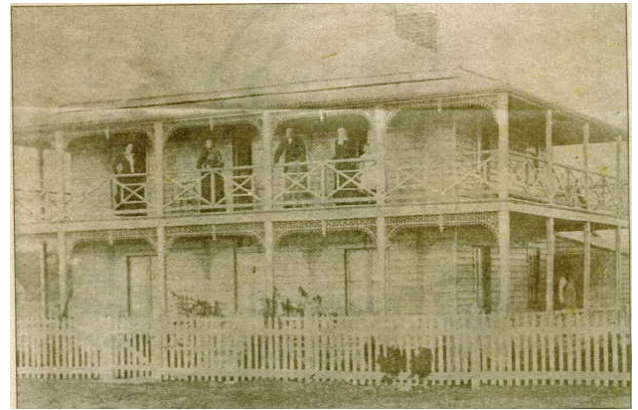


Some of this information was taken from a leaflet written by Diana Parker which is available from the Ballina Visitor Centre. This delightful portrayal at left, of what is now a private residence, was erected in 1884 on the corner of Fox and Norton Street, as a splendid two story hotel called **'The Marine View'**. At that time, there would have been a clear view of the confluence of North Creek and the Richmond River where it meets the ocean. A 'For Sale' item in the Northern Star of

May 1921, states that 'it has 26 rooms including a spirit room' and that it had the best view in Ballina. By this time the name had been changed to Tattersall's Hotel and was the property of Thomas Durrington. Some time after WWI, the top floor was removed and now sits in Fox Street at the rear of the ground floor residence.

'Coral House'

This two story house, reputedly the first such private dwelling in Ballina, was built in 1876 for, or by, Charles Jarrett, a cedar cutter. He grew in popularity in the small community and served as a councillor from 1883, becoming Mayor in 1888. Jarrett owned several other blocks of land in Norton Street. As with the hotel described above, Jarrett's house had the top floor removed and laid next door to the ground floor due to the building material shortage after WWI.



An early image of Coral House



The two separate dwellings have been beautifully restored. This photo (left) shows the top floor with a small glimpse of the ground floor at far left. It is worth noting the remnants of some early garden plants, two of which are the frangipani trees in front of the house, They are still valiantly sending out new leaves and flowers in both spring and summer, freshening the air with their delicate perfume.

In a later newsletter, I will show you other very old trees that can be found around town. When you consider the regular doses of salty air that they breathe, it is easy to conclude that they are tough.

Time is not always kind to wooden buildings and some, unfortunately, fell into disrepair. One was the **Foster house**, right, on the corner of Norton and Crane Streets which languished for some time before a new buyer saw its beauty and potential.



With some 'tweaking', and a lot of tenderness and clever carpentry, the new owner gave us the beauty at left.



Another building with a long and complex history is what is now called 'Ballina Manor'. It was built in 1923/24 on the site of the first Methodist Church (which was moved to Cherry Street) and was established as a **Methodist boarding school for girls**. There were lofty objectives for the school and, although it operated successfully, it was, alas, only a few short years before it closed in December 1929.



Methodist Girls School



The Ballina and District Museum on Pimlico Road has memorabilia and more information about the school including models wearing the uniforms. The current owners have been most generous in providing these items for public information.

The next life of this old building was as holiday accommodation and thus it remained for many years, gradually being transformed by changes of colour (I remember it being yellow). On the right bottom edge, hiding behind the Norfolk Island Pine, is a small Phoenix Canariensis (Canary Island Date Palm) which is much easier to identify today as you will see on the next page.



Sunny Haven



It is clearly impossible to unfold seventy years of history in this newsletter. Suffice it to say that by the end of the last century the building deteriorated, with peeling paint and rusted roof. In 1999, the building was sold to Geoff Champion who, it is reported, spent over \$2m refurbishing the site, including beautiful antique furniture and exquisite fittings. It now has a new owner who welcomes visitors who seek out quality accommodation.

Ballina Manor November 2022

'Rossleigh' brings us a romantic story. It was built around 1890 by (or for) Charles Ainsworth who was born in Ballina in 1869, the son of early settlers, James and Christina Ainsworth. He married Harriet Ross and named the house in her honour. They raised eight children there, who were born between 1889 and 1906. Harriet died in 1924 and Charles lived on in the house until his death in 1945. Rossleigh can be found at 46 Norton Street and is a credit to the current owner who loves this old building and garden.



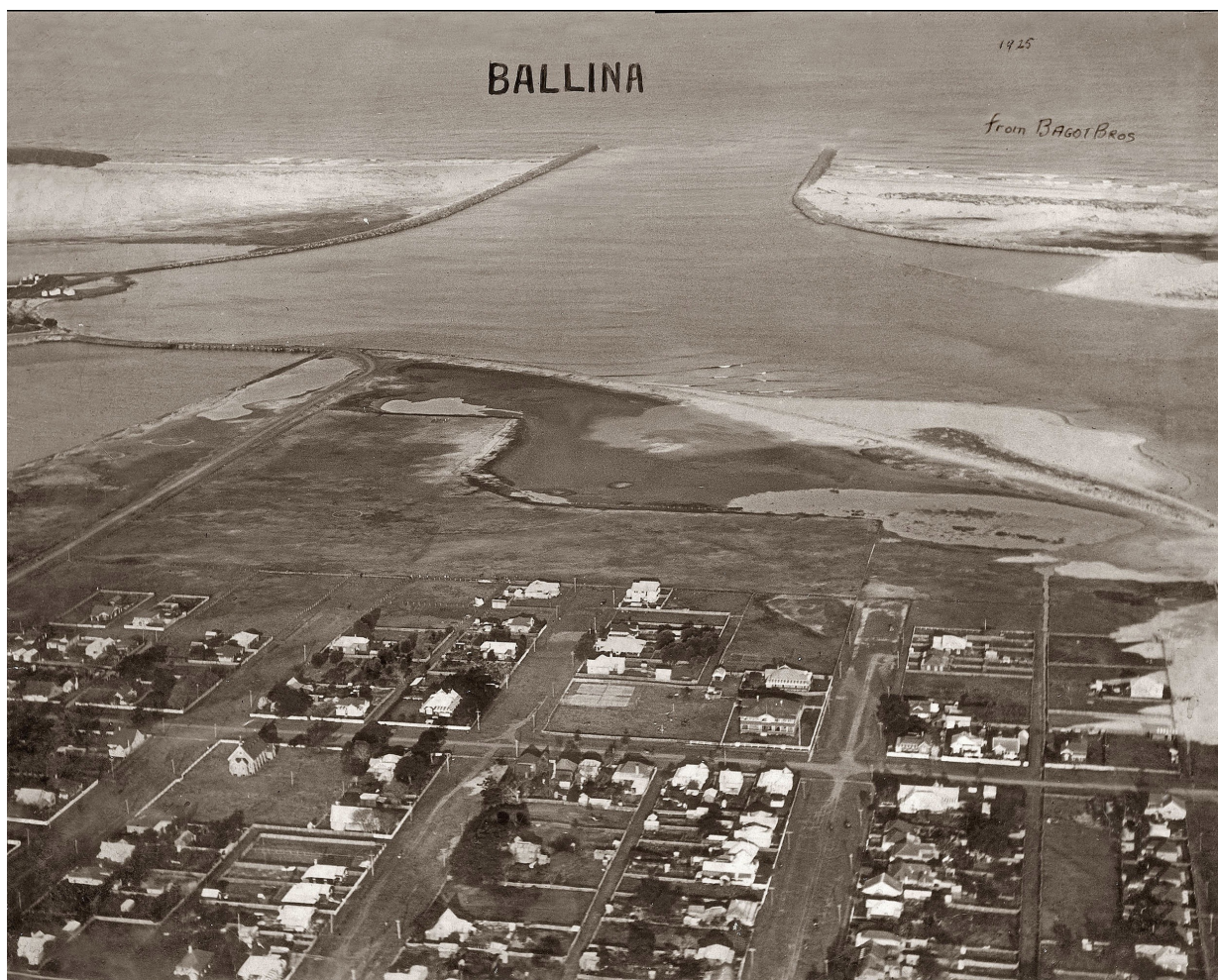
Rossleigh



McCurdy's shop, at 52 Norton Street, is just one of the small shops that could be found in the residential areas of Ballina. McCurdy was already a successful businessman with a boarding house in River Street. This was truly a general store which sold most items you would need without venturing down to River Street. In 1946 the store was sold to Ray O'Neill who not only ran the store, but served for many years as an alderman on Ballina Council, eventually becoming Mayor.

More recently the shop was a boutique selling women's clothing and is now a residence with potential to have other diverse lives.

Much earlier, there was a store on the corner of Norton and Tamar Streets closer to Rivers Street. On page 5 I have included a 1925 aerial photo of part of Norton Street looking east towards the mouth of the river.



This photograph, taken in 1925, was given by Bagot Bros. who had a large timber mill on the bank of Fishery Creek.

You can see five streets laid from east to west. Bentinck St can be seen to run east and across Missingham Bridge, second is Burnett St where you can see the original wooden Anglican Church on a large allotment. On Swift St is Brundah and then Crane St shows the Methodist Girls School. Tamar Street is the last on the right. Running through the centre from left to right is Norton Street, at that time, the most easterly street on 'the island'. Between the streets run lanes where the sanitary carts came at night. Now there are many lanes which have names and there are two houses on each old block.

It is a fascinating view of the river mouth which, before white settlers arrived, would have been an excellent example of shifting sands. Of course, as this year's weather has proved, we have not, and never will, tame this beautiful estuary.

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At the museum we now have some wonderful maps, donated by John Larsson, which can be found in our research area. We also have an enlarged selection of photographs which can be accessed on the computer in that area. I will write more about the constantly growing bank of information which can be accessed free by members of our Society. I hope your festive season is joyful.

Once again, a big thank you to Lyn and the team. I hope you enjoy our efforts.

Patricia Wilson
Editor