



BALLINA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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Welcome to the first official newsletter of the Ballina and District Historical Society. Our newsletter is planned to be a bi-monthly paper that keeps you up to date on the Museum and other activities of the Society. It will also feature reminiscences and forgotten stories of life in Ballina in the last 170 years of white settlement.

We acknowledge that this does not accommodate the thousands of years when this land was the residence of the original settlers. Their stories can only be told by their descendants.

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

Our home is the heritage listed Pimlico Hall and it is generously supported by Ballina Shire Council. It is staffed entirely by volunteers who are determined to keep our local history alive and available to all residents and visitors to the area.

First, a basic description. It is a traditional country hall with a large dance floor, a stage at one end and a supper room along the side. There are two modern toilets, and a quaint example of how a toilet was in the days when the hall was built in 1937.



The main body of the hall holds donated items of household furniture which are laid out to represent the rooms of a family home in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Models display clothing and there are many examples of tableware, bed coverings etc. If you are old enough, you will see many items that were once a part of your life. There is even a pianola. The stage holds laundry equipment which, thankfully, we no longer have to use.

INFORMATION

Open Friday and Sunday from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

Entry fee \$3.00

Coffee/tea & slice \$4.00

Group visits can be arranged.

Donations welcome.

Meetings 3rd Friday 2:30pm at the Museum.

Displayed in every available space are enlarged prints of Ballina in the first fifty years of settlement. These prints are amazing, many have relevant information, and more data is still being gathered. Perhaps you can help.

The front section of the supper room holds a focus exhibition which will change every two or three months. At the far end is a small kitchen.

FOCUS EXHIBITION



The first focus has been on the Life Saving Movement in Ballina which has been a strong volunteer service in Ballina since 1908. Older residents viewing the enlarged photographs have been keen to search for themselves or friends of their youth. Stories, collected from SLSC members are displayed and a wonderful old surf reel was loaned by the present surf club members.

Bathing Beauty contests were always a feature of a Surf Carnival with many glamorous 'Esther Williams lookalikes' taking part. Now the women are busy working with the men as fully-fledged lifesavers with no time for beauty pageants.

MEMORIES FROM THE EDITOR

"In the museum are several prints of old car ferries which were located strategically along the the river between Ballina and Lismore. I remember a vague story involving my Great Aunt Sarah and her family, the Croziers, from Empire Vale. There was something about the ferry tipping up and someone had drowned.

I sought assistance from my clever researcher friend, Lyn Pramana, who soon found the full story in an article in The Northern Star of November 1942 which tells the correct tale. Four members of the Crozier family, Leslie, Robert, Isabel and Sarah, returning from races at Dungarubba, stopped at the Broadwater Ferry, and Robert left the car to walk onto the ferry. It is unclear exactly how the car went into the river, which was about 12 feet deep, but that is what happened. Sarah crawled through a window and was rescued by a man in a boat, who had heard their screams. Isobel, however, was in the water and unable to swim. Her brother Leslie managed to get her into the reeds near the bank from where she was saved by others in a boat. Leslie, sadly, disappeared, his body being recovered the next day."



I am sure there are many stories such as this, and urge people to share them with us. They are all part of Ballina's history. You may send them to me via the email address of the Society, marked 'Attention Patricia'.

It would also be appreciated if anyone is prepared to write a short, informal article which could have a photo attached. You should know that I may need to edit your work but will always check with you before publishing. The text and the picture need to be sent as two separate attachments.

MAKING HISTORY

The disastrous flooding of our beautiful valleys in March this year has impacted dramatically on hundreds of our friends and neighbours. Many people have been taking photographs and passing emails to each other when that was possible. Newspapers will tell stories. As a Historical Society, we will collect information to store for the future in the hope that future generations can learn from our experience.

For our records, we will focus on Ballina district and gather photographs and stories from our Shire. Lyn Pramana has already been at work contacting those who have been loading photos onto social media sites and has gained permission to use them in our museum. These will be the records that are relevant to us and will add to the specialty of our history.



As the torrents of brown water, carrying masses of debris, rounded the bend at Woodburn, they failed to soften in any way and surged onwards to Broadwater. This small, but lengthy riverside town was expecting some water, but there is little resistance in this very flat and level area, and the volume of water bearing down on them had never before been experienced by the residents. Inundation was swift and

merciless, leaving metres of mud, rubbish and rancid water in every building in its path.

Above: This busy town, which was originally built to support the Sugar Mill and surrounding cane farms, was not spared by the flood.

Right: How sad to see this beautiful old church, lovingly restored, being filled with fetid brown mud and rubbish.



The Broadwater Hotel/Motel has recently changed hands and the new owner was probably enthusiastic and excited about his new acquisition. I feel sure the support and friendliness of the community will encourage him to stay.

[Photographs of Broadwater by Andy Coleman](#)

As the fertile Richmond River plains spread out in its path, the river swept past Wardell, Pimlico, Empire Vale, Keith Hall and South Ballina in a massive wave of destruction. Residents of homes and businesses, that had never seen water enter their buildings, were evacuated. There was little chance of staying to fight.



The iconic 'Big Prawn' leaps out of the water once again.

Gathering the waters of Emigrant and Fishery Creeks that were coming down from the north, it swept around the bend at Burns Point into Ballina. It spread swiftly across the lowest areas of the town, flooding homes and businesses in West Ballina.



Above:
On the southern end of Kerr Street on 'Ballina island', the water flowed over the banks of the river and entered several homes and businesses. It is ironic to see the water in this photo looking so beautifully blue. It was not. It was brown, filled with dead fish, and the smell was almost unbearable.

Above:
Drains that normally keep the township dry, are filled from the surging water and soon covered the lowest areas of 'the island', which is the main business centre of Ballina. This photo is taken in River Street between Moon and Grant Streets and is representative of other areas near the river.
[Photos of Ballina by Anne Keenan, Mark Ross & Jack Fitzsummons.](#)

At the edge of the town, close to the entrance of the Richmond River, it is joined by North Creek, which carries water from the low-lying areas north to Lennox Head and slightly beyond. All creeks I have mentioned, as well as Teven Creek, are tidal, as are many of the wetlands and waterholes surrounding Ballina.

Patricia Wilson
Editor