

THE BLACKWALL BUGLE

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The Boardwalk



During pioneering days, the river front at Wardell was a hive of activity. The region's red cedar was shipped from here around the world. Later, sugar cane from Rous was shin-sticked onto punts to be towed to the mill at Broadwater. There was then no Pacific Highway and almost all provisions for the Wardell district; food, fuel, farm machinery, cattle and every-day essentials were delivered by the sailing ships and later steam ships that plied the east coast of Australia.

Just out of view on the left of the photo was the business centre of Wardell with Police Station, barber, and several stores including Bartlett's, McIntyre's, McMahon's, Troy's and Earnest Carter's that included the Post Office. They have all gone!

The main form of land transport was horseback or horse-drawn carriage. Traffic from Wardell Road and Bath Street led directly into Richmond Street and on to Ballina. But the new Richmond River Bridge and Pacific Highway severed that access leaving only the uncontrolled Carlisle/Fitzroy Street junction across the Pacific Highway and the pony track water-front to the Richmond River.

Bridge Drive leads into Bridge Street which had no footpath east of the highway, so that mothers with prams, school children on bicycles and invalids on scooters had to share the narrow winding road with cars, trucks and buses in order to get to school, the cafe, Post Office and business centre.

Pat Carney, with the backing of the Progress Association has long pushed the case for a secure boardwalk to join the East and West of Wardell, and Ballina Shire Council rose to the occasion and designed and built the answer to our prayers. Since Christmas the weather has been very unseasonal and Council staff and contractors are to be congratulated for working in difficult conditions to get the job done. They showed good humour, and dedication in trying times and we have a boardwalk to be proud of. Let us all look after it!



The new footpath/cycle-way leading from Byron Street to the Wardell Bridge

Wardell & District Progress Association Inc.

Pat Carney wrote a letter of appreciation to the Ballina Shire Council General Manager Paul Hickey. "The residents of Wardell are delighted at the completed work in our town by members of your staff who have been friendly and cooperative whilst these works have been in progress."

The General Manager responded, "I'll say thank you to the positive comments that I have passed on to John Truman and Paul Busmanis to share with our staff."

At the General Meeting of the Progress Association on 27 June, some of the matters discussed in detail included drainage in Wilson Street, a possible reduced fill height and height of dwellings in the village, a request for a flood height indicator or gauge to be installed at Wardell, the possible pruning of trees in Richmond Street and illegal camping at Patchs Beach.

The Annual General Meeting is to be held at the Wardell & District War Memorial Hall at 7.15 pm on Wednesday 9 August 2017. As only members can vote at meetings, you are encouraged to be at the Hall early to pay your annual membership of \$10 per family. You will be very welcome as a member of a caring community.



Boardwalk approach from the old ferry site opposite the fire station heading East.



Seated at the front are foundation members Ivy Carter and Rose Leeson. Then standing are Sue Cechner- Simmonds, Anne Gwynne, Lion Dawn Sword, Afra van Baarsen, Jeanette Rushby, Joan Grace, Judy Cocomozzo, Joan Chapman, Rhonda Barnes, Sue Steel and Lion Bob Sword.

Dawn was last year awarded Citizen of the Year by Ballina Shire Mayor Cr David Wright and Max Walker the former Australian Test Cricketer.

Dawn and Rob well know the problem. A few years ago they lost their own home and all their possessions in the Canberra Firestorm and were lucky to escape with their lives. Dawn was given a hand-knitted blanket when she had nothing else. She still has it.

Nowadays she and Bob care for the needy. Their concern is for all those who are destitute in Ballina Shire no matter what their background. Some of the rugs and baby blankets will be going to the Ballina Hope Haven Women's and Children's Refuge. Some will go to the homeless and to women with small children and babies camping out in cars this winter.

The Wardell Knit 'n Knat members feel there is a warm connection between themselves as creators of the blankets and those in need who receive them.

Wool is provided to members of the Knit n' Knat Group who meet every Thursday morning in the Digger's Room at the Wardell & District War Memorial Hall. Members can learn new skills and find new friends and know that

the fruits of their labour will be very much appreciated by those in need. There is no competition between members. Rather, the more experienced guide and help the beginners, but everyone is in awe of Afra who produced and donated twenty beautiful blankets this year.

Sue Steel is the person to contact regarding the Knit n' Knat. Sue Wardrobe at the Post Office can put you in touch with her. The handmade blankets are beautifully crafted and the East Ballina Lions Club ensures they go to warm the bodies and souls of the lonely and disadvantaged.

A letter to the editor.

Just letting you know I have sold the house and will be leaving on the 25th. I will miss everyone so much, friends, Red Cross, some family, Patches and the Richmond but I will have the Murray haha. My daughter and her family live in Mildura and I have just been given a great grand son so it's time to move on. Mildura is a beautiful city. I don't mind the cold but might have trouble bearing the heat. Thank you for sending me all the news - I have always loved it.
Best wishes to you for the future. Monica Vomiero.

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 email distribution agent.

The Simple Game of Cricket

Back in 1951 when he was 15 years old, Keith Mullens finished school at Bagotville and began working for the Wardell Bank which later became a branch of the Ballina National Bank.

In his spare time, he and his brother Ron Mullens were avid cricket players. Ron and Keith are seen on the right with Keith's Vauxhall Velox motor car. Their Mother, Jean Mullens, wrote this note:

What is Cricket?

"Cricket is quite simple. You have 2 sides, ours and theirs — one out in the field and one in. Each man in the field that is in, goes out and when he is out, he comes in and the next man goes out until he is out. Then when they have been all in and are all out, the other side that has been in the field comes in and the side that has been in goes out and tries to get out those

coming in. Sometimes you get men still in and not out. Then when both sides have been in and out including not out — that's the end of the game. It's really a very simple game to follow."



The Volunteers

Kerry Turpin retired with her husband to Wardell after running several successful businesses in Sydney. Not content to sit on the back verandah and admire the magnificent view of the Richmond River from her patio, Kerry has become a key player in our community. She is the very busy Secretary of the Wardell & District Progress Association, the Secretary of the Wardell Memorial Hall Committee and she is an active member of the Evans Head Marine Rescue who dedicate their time to saving lives at

sea. Kerry, who is qualified to handle the marine rescue boat, recently undertook training in cooperation with the Westpac Rescue helicopter in the Richmond River. See:-

<https://www.facebook.com/MarineRescue/videos/10154995902671259/>

A great deal of satisfaction comes from making a difference to people in your local community. Volunteering offers many other rewards too. You can learn new skills and gain valuable experience in a wide range of areas that may or may not be related to your regular lifestyle. It is also a great way to meet new people who share your interests.



The Mayor of Ballina Shire, Cr David Wright was seen at the recent 'Biggest Morning Tea' in the Wardell Memorial Hall. He had been seen in the hall only two days earlier attending a presentation to the Wardell people of the Council draft Delivery Programme and Operational Plan for the future. When asked, he said, "I like coming to Wardell because here you have such a strong community spirit!"

It is people like Kerry and Ros who make that community spirit work for everyone. In this photo Kerry is seen on the right with Ros Walsh, the President of the Wardell Branch of the Australian Red Cross who organised this year's 'Biggest Morning Tea' that raised a handsome donation to the Cancer Council Australia. Also helping were the ladies of the Knit n' Knat Group.

Take a look around and you will find plenty of opportunities to help your community and we will all benefit.

Australian Rice Farming



The Monti's header harvesting rice on their Bagotville farm

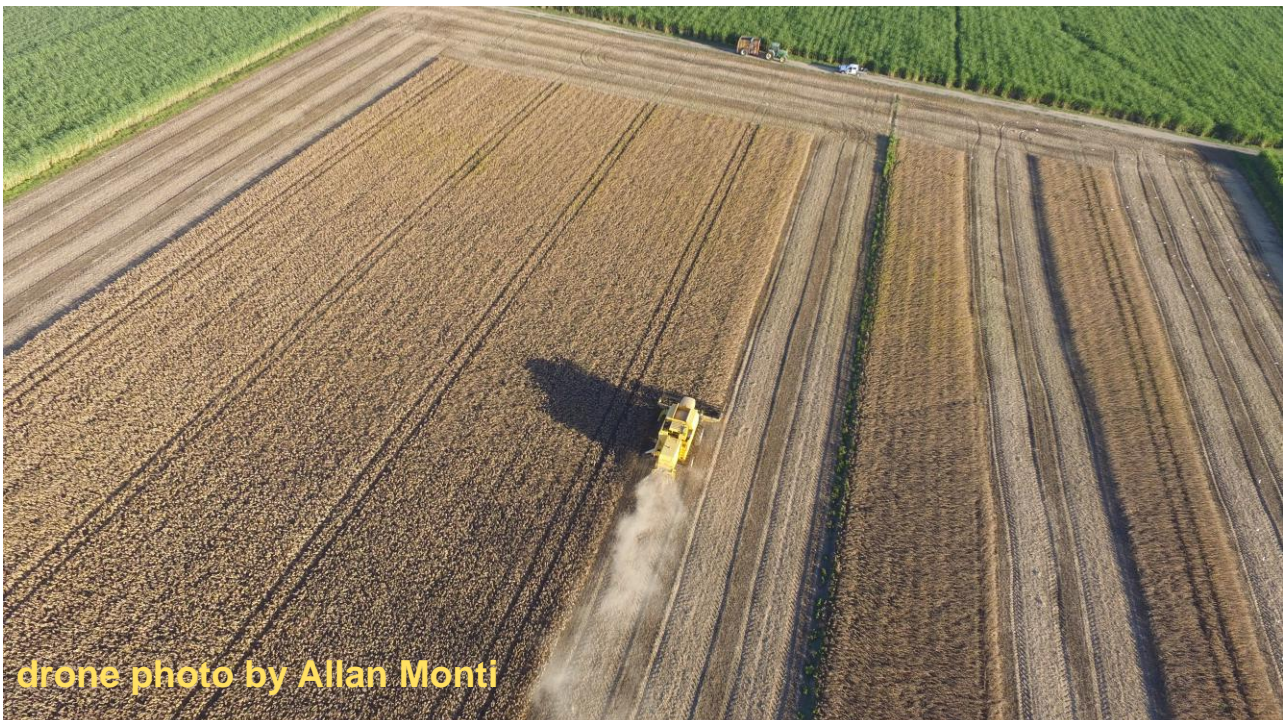
Sugar cane farmers have traditionally grown soybeans as an alternative crop. Short term legume breaks lift cane productivity through better balanced biology and fixed nitrogen in the soil.

This year the Monti family experimented with rice as an alternative crop on their Bagotville and Empire Vale farms. In Australia we grow 11 varieties of rice bred to suit our climate. It is of the highest quality, similar to Mediterranean and Californian varieties. Australian growers have the lowest chemical use in the developed world. Our growers use a unique crop

rotation system, which takes advantage of natural biological controls, to ensure our growing areas remain free of the serious pests and diseases that affect rice crops in other parts of the world.

The Monti header is a *New Holland TX65 plus* with a 21 feet front, seen above at work at Bagotville. Despite the very dry weather in February and May, the rice crop was a success.

Below, the same header harvesting soybeans on one of the Monti's Empire Vale farms.



drone photo by Allan Monti



Before Captain Henry John Rous of the Royal Navy discovered and named the Richmond River in August 1828, the Blackwall area had been occupied for over eight thousand years by the Bundjalung People who are the original custodians of northern coastal areas of New South Wales.

The first Europeans to settle on the Richmond were cedar cutters and their families who arrived from the Clarence on board the 'Sally' in 1842. Wardell was surveyed in 1856 and recognised as a town on 20 March 1885

Dr Kate Gahan, editor of *Ballina Shire Council Wardell Community Based Heritage Study*, wrote that, "Contrary to other accounts of the history of education in Wardell, the establishment of the Wardell Provisional School in 1867 suggests a keen interest in the education of children among early European settlers. Compulsory schooling was not introduced in NSW until 1880 and any establishment of schools prior to this time required financial assistance from parents toward the school building and payment of the teacher's salary. Parents also had to get their children to school under difficult circumstances, including excessive wet weather and crossing the river in these conditions. When in 1871 the school was closed temporarily, it was due to lean times on the river which prevented parents from

being able to afford school fees, rather than parental disinterest.

The school re-opened again in 1874 and for the next 25 years operated in a purpose built timber building, instead of a rented room. This building was replaced and repaired a number of times before the current 'old' school building was erected on an adjoining site in 1901. The school's status was also changed from a Provisional School to a Public School in October 1876. The Wardell Public School celebrated its centenary in 1967.

Over the past 130 years or so the Public School has operated in Wardell, it has served not only children's education needs but also it was often through the school, and at the school site, that community events were held. The most well known and well remembered were the Empire Day picnic and sports. Wardell School brought some degree of social cohesion to the area and a sense of community identity, particularly through the operation of an active P&C Association."

This year marks the Sesquicentenary Celebrations for Wardell Public School - it has been open for 150 years. The official celebrations for this wonderful occasion will be held at the Wardell Public School this year on Saturday 21 October when we also hold our fete. The night before, on Friday 20 October, we will hold a formal dinner.

We are looking to locate and talk to all past students, families, teachers and locals who have photos, memorabilia and stories to tell about the school that can be used in a book to be published to coincide with our celebrations this October. If you have any information that may prove useful to us, or you are interested in attending the celebrations-

Email: bmooney@westnet.com.au

Telephone: 0428 881 798 (Jodi)



The oldest known photo of Wardell Public School pupils. Taken in the 1890s. Provided by Rose Leeson.

Betty Fernance

2 Jan 1924 - 21 Nov 2016

Last November, Pimlico Ladies Charitable Organisation (PLCO) lost one of its hardest working and long serving members. Betty Fernance was known to the older residents of Pimlico as the *Northern Star's* Pimlico news correspondent and the local rainfall historian and recorder. To everyone who travelled along Pimlico Road she was known as 'the flag lady'.

Betty was born in Lismore. Growing up on farms around Wollongbar, Betty and her sisters Gwen, Jean, Nance and brother Ken soon learnt a variety of trades; her father proudly telling one and all that his daughters were better workers than any men.

Even as a young girl Betty could ride horses, harvest crops, milk cows and in her words, "plough with a disc plough behind a horse". She was also reportedly a good shot, disposing of several goannas who had enjoyed the bounty of the henhouse.

Many years ago Betty requested that she be called Betty or Bets by her family, and as obedient children, they obliged. Many were horrified and loudly proclaimed, "You can't call your mother Betty". However, Betty it was, and this was how it was with this feisty lady. As anyone who knew her will attest, Betty was a person who called a spade a spade. There were no grey areas, just black and white, and you had to accept her as she was. She did however, have quite a sense of fun: one example was the time she was breathalysed by an RBT policeman and when asked, she told him, "Yes, I have had a drink". When the test showed no alcohol present and she was queried, she said, "I had a drink of water".

Once asked if she could change anything about her life, what it would be, she immediately said, "I wish I was a boy". Maybe this thinking originated in 1931, when Betty was just six years old. During her childhood days, the *Northern Star* had a column called 'Aunt Kath', and children would write in. In Betty's first letter, at the age of six and under the pen name of 'Princess Betty', she proudly declared to Aunt Kath that she could milk 12 cows and that she was her daddy's "man". This may have been the very beginning of Betty's association with the paper.

Betty married Eric Fernance on 17 May 1945 in the Wollongbar Methodist Church. An item in the *Northern Star* stated the bride wore a long white gown of silk jersey, featuring a fully flared skirt with train. After honeymooning in Sydney and Newcastle, she and Eric set up home at Pimlico. At this time Eric was a cane cutter and that was a dirty job, so it must have been fun heating water in a copper and washing his sooty work clothes by hand. Betty loved living alongside the river, as they always had plenty of fish, crabs and oysters. Both she and Eric were excellent anglers.

On 10 May 1950, their son Barry was born. By this time Eric was working on the demolition of the Booyong to Ballina railway line and he was summoned by bicycle



Photo Contributed

courier to get to the hospital pronto to see his son. The next stage in their lives was a banana plantation at Coolgardie, where, to supplement their income, they ran about 20 head of Hereford cattle. The family expanded when daughter, Leigh, was born on 18 December 1959. After years of struggling with bananas, in the early 1960s Eric decided to get out of bananas and go into sugar. Betty's life would change again. Instead of walking up and down rocky slopes and packing cases of bananas, she would be planting cane.

Sadly, in 1969, after their son Barry left home for a traineeship with BHP in Newcastle, Eric suddenly died. This brought a huge change of life for Betty, as overnight she became the sole breadwinner and parent, with ten year old Leigh to support.

She went to Victoria for a while, where she could get well paid work at the SPC factory, then returned to Ballina the following year and got a job at Ballina District Hospital. Working on the domestic staff at Ballina Hospital was a job she dearly loved, and where she made many lifelong friends.

In 1977, after diligently saving all her pennies, she built a new home for herself and Leigh. That home was built on a small parcel of land that was subdivided off his farm by Berlton Hancock, the owner of 'Old Avondale', which was celebrating its 100th birthday. The 'New Avondale', built next door and always called 'the farm' by the family, was Betty's pride and joy, all bought and paid for by her hard work.

Nearing the end of the decade, it was Leigh's time to leave the nest when she went to Armidale Teachers' College. Then, after almost 20 years of working at Ballina Hospital, Betty retired and devoted even more of her time to her gardens and the daily ritual of selecting and raising one of her many flags on her newly installed flagpole.



During WWII, Betty assisted the war effort by raising money for the War Services Fund and the Red Cross. She was also involved with the CWA for many years and this led to her years with the Pimlico Ladies Charitable Organisation. Betty was one of the founding members of the PLCO in 1962. During her 54 years of membership

she operated the trading table at the monthly Hoi days, providing much of the produce — vegetables and flowers — from her own garden. When it came to baking, Betty's caramel tarts were famous ... except for the infamous tart, in which she accidentally used salt instead of sugar.

PLCO nominated Betty for a Citizen of the Year Award last year in recognition of her many years of serving the Ballina community and she received a certificate of commendation.

Betty played tennis for 78 years, another activity she started when she was just six years old. She also played cards - euchre and 500 - for many years. Visits from family members were always keenly anticipated.

When they were first married, Betty and Eric rented a house from Frank and Mary Curran and Eric worked on Saturdays for Frank. Betty babysat the Curran children, Declan, John and Frank, and when Mary died she became the unofficial matriarch of the Curran family. The boys called her Auntie Betty and their fondness for each other continued throughout Betty's life. John had a ritual of taking Betty out for breakfast each Sunday and Frank visited whenever he was up from Sydney. During Betty's time in Crowley Village Frank always brought her half a dozen oysters, a treat she greatly enjoyed. Betty's children and grandchildren have always visited the Curran farm to feed carrots to the horses whenever they came to see Betty.

After seven decades of living in Pimlico, Betty passed away peacefully and thus ended 150 years of the Fernance family in Pimlico. The family found a fitting way to honour Betty's fondest wishes when they scattered some of her ashes, and some of Eric's, in her garden at Avondale.

In his eulogy, Betty's son read the following poem, 'Her Heart's Desire', which he found in one of her scrapbooks.

*Upon a certain day, a woman died,
And stood at Heaven's gate, and saw inside
St Peter writing in his book of gold,
All the dreary lies, that people told.
The woman waited, with averted head
Until St Peter looked at her and said;
"Tell me oh traveller with pilgrim pack,
what loves, and hates, you carry on your back."
"I loved my garden Sir," the woman said.
"I loved my flowers and now that I am dead,
I only ask that someone will be kind,
To that dear garden I have left behind."
The golden key was turned, the gate swung wide,
St Peter and the woman walked inside;
And there within the sunlight of the throne
She saw the little garden she had grown.*

Above this, Betty had written in blue biro:
"I'm going to give this a go. "

Contributed by the Pimlico Ladies Charitable Organisation.

Adapted from the Eulogy of Barry Fernance.