

THE BLACKWALL BUGLE

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A Glorious Celebration for Sister Grace.

On 15 November this year, Sister Grace Laverty, who lives with her sibling Sister Larelle at the Wardell Convent, left for England to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Mercy in Bermondsey, England.

The Sisters of Mercy were formed originally in Ireland by Catherine McAuley who worked with the poorest people in Dublin. Using her own inheritance she built the House of Mercy and she encouraged others to join her in caring for the destitute and in providing education and meaningful employment to those who had nothing. The Dublin Sisters then began to spread their message and established other convents in Ireland and England including one at Bermondsey in South London.

In 1883 Bishop Torreggiani, who was the Bishop of Armidale in New South Wales, wrote to the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Mercy in Bermondsey asking for a Community of Sisters for Grafton. Mother Superior Stanislaus Simson, five Sisters, a Novice and a Postulant set sail for Sydney on the steam sailing ship 'The Orient'. The ship survived a violent storm at sea and arrived in Sydney on 18 January 1884.



The Orient

Two days later the nuns transferred to the paddle steamer 'City of Grafton' and arrived in Grafton to a tremendous welcome from the citizens. Their first accommodation was a little stone cottage and conditions were somewhat primitive in that the nuns were restricted to one jam-tin of hot water a day for their personal use!



Sister Grace

They established Saint Mary's Convent on the banks of the Clarence River and developed a tradition of education and caring for the sick. The Mercy Centre at Wardell is one of many Foundations established throughout Australia and New Guinea by St Mary's Convent. Music and physical education have always been important features of the Grafton convent and Sister Larelle, Grace's sister, was for some years Principal of St Mary's College Grafton and St Mary High School Casino.

What a great adventure now unfolds! Sister Grace and Sister Margaret Bannon of Port Macquarie were originally from the Grafton congregation and their names were picked from a barrel to represent the convent at the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy in Bermondsey. They flew to Sydney and then to Heathrow. We hope they have a wild time and return home safely.

Lorna's Baby

Lorna Dorey will be 95 years old in January 2015. Speaking last month she said, "Tim and I raised ten children and I will always remember the birth of my ninth baby. Dad (husband Tim) went to Lismore on this particular day in 1957 to get some seed and fertiliser. He said he wouldn't be long. He was also getting some for Fred Day his brother-in-law. When he returned, I said to him, "I think I've got to go!" He said, "Can't you wait? I've just got to deliver this stuff to Fred. I won't be long."

"It seemed ages before he got back. He had two of our kids in the car - Marion and Ken. We headed off to Ballina from our Boundary Creek farm. When we got to the Wardell ferry there was another car or two at the ferry and there was Shepherd's three-ton fruit and vegetable truck. Jimmy Bonser was the Ferry Master. He put the big truck on first then the two cars and us. When we got over to the other side and the truck was moving off, the loading ramp collapsed and the water was coming in. So they got the truck to go half on and half off the ferry to hold the ferry to the bank. They had to take the sides off the truck to make a gangplank for me to go down. All the Wardell convent school kids were waiting there to take the ferry back to East Wardell.

"There I was up to my knees in water with my skirt rolled up. My brother George was in the shire at the time and he was not far from the ferry on the Wardell side with a truck and a load of shale. They got him to come down and tie his truck to the ferry to stop it floating out into the current. Jimmy Bonser was panicking a bit. Someone ran up to the Police Station or the Post Office to call the ambulance for me. Waiting for the ferry was the Cane Inspector whose name I don't remember. He said, "I'll take Mrs Dorey in my ute, if it's not too rough and I'll meet the ambulance!" The main highway was the Pimlico Road. We met the ambulance more than half way into Ballina. The driver said, "Don't lie down!" and he gave me the roughest ride ever into town - even rougher than in the old sugarcane ute.

"At the hospital the ambulance driver took me into a room and I got onto the bed and the baby arrived before the first nurse came into the ward. The nurse on duty happened to be my next-door neighbour Mary Baker. She said, "I didn't know you were here Lorna!" I said, "Nobody else does either!"

"The ambulance, on its way to the hospital, went down Tamar Street where my mother and her neighbour were sitting on the front verandah. As the ambulance drove past my mother said, "There goes

some poor bugger in trouble!" The next thing her phone rang and it was the hospital telling her a little granddaughter had just arrived! We didn't know what to call her so we named her Lorna after me! She was born on the 28th of May so we called her Lorna May.



Ninety-four year old Lorna Dorey, whose family owns extensive farming property at Boundary Creek, Wardell and at Newrybar, proudly holds the trophy, awarded to the family by The Australian Macadamia Society, engraved 'Large Grower of the Year Award 2014.'

Blackwall

What's in a name?

Wardell used to be called 'Blackwall'. It may have been named after Mr Gordon Blackwall who was a timber cutter in the area in the 1850s, or it most probably was named after the wall of black rock extending from Bingal Creek down the river for about a quarter of a mile. This black wall of rock dropped sharply into very deep water, allowing large boats to unload straight onto the land without need of a wharf. The name lives on in the Blackwall Range.

An interested correspondent living in England, Mr John Head, wrote, "Blackwall Bugle sounds an unlikely name for an Australian newspaper, so we thought it may have been from some district or street originally named by a settler from Thames-side Woolwich where the Blackwall Railway Company of old ran its trains to transport ordnance from the Royal Arsenal to the Royal Navy and Army. Later, the Blackwall Tunnel under the Thames connected to Woolwich too. It is now London's busiest Thames crossing for vehicles. It originally had Scotch granite walls for entrance walls but black tarmac for all under water walls so, was it named after the railway, or the tunnel walls?"



Are you part of the T.E.A.M?

Wardell Public School's Parents and Citizens Association has grown in both strength and numbers throughout 2014 as enthusiastic parent volunteers have joined the T.E.A.M.

You may have seen them proudly wearing their TEAM Member shirts - selling raffle tickets at the Wardell On the River Hotel, at the Preschool during pick up or drop off, asking for donations from local businesses and services or banking the proceeds at the Post Office each week. All team members are hardworking, dedicated and committed to making a difference at their local public primary school any way they can!

T.E.A.M. stands for Together Everyone Achieves More. The P&C is about bringing community together where the main beneficiaries are the students. The recent fete held on 25th October was an example of how successful this was with the fete raising over \$3800. Coupled with Bunnings BBQs, festive raffles running throughout the year and a creative and fresh new canteen open every fortnight, the P&C is bathing in successful fundraising ideas and reaping the benefits.

The strengths of individuals within the group are what makes this TEAM work; there are those who are great on computers, fabulous bargain shoppers, wheelers and dealers, financiers, botanists and gofers. We can't have one without the others and, despite the ups and downs and tribulations of being on another committee, it works!

The P&C has a long list of items that the supportive staff at Wardell P.S. have requested to help them deliver better educational outcomes and programs to the students. Already, the funds raised throughout the year have subsidised the costs of excursions and funded the cost of the bus trips for the annual swimming scheme.



TEAM players Kirsty Shepherd, Prue Gray, Tanya Vidler, Fiona Cremin and Cheryl Wilson.

The Parents and Citizens Association is currently producing a four hundred percent increase in profit on last year's fundraising efforts which, for a small community, is outstanding and a true reflection of this year's committee members' dedication and prowess! But, it couldn't be done without your support - the residents, friends and neighbours of Wardell and surrounding communities. One hundred percent of all money raised by the P&C is spent on the children K-6 or on purchasing equipment or providing services for the students and teachers.

Thank you for supporting us as we work together to support our kids!

P&C TEAM members for 2014 are Russell Krampe, Prue Gray, Kirsty Shepherd, Fiona Lochrie, Tanya Vidler, Cheryl Wilson, Jodi Wilcox and Deb Crealy. Principal David Owen.

Deb Crealy. Wardell PS

Pimlico News

Telephone 6683 4384

It is always great to welcome guests from other districts. Our locals are happy people and we have great times together but, on our monthly hoy afternoon, we get visitors from Ballina, Evans Head, Alstonville and far afield. They all enjoy themselves and enrich our coffers to enable us to support so many charities.

The proceeds of the December hoy afternoon always go towards the cost of running the hall - including insurance. But the income from every other meeting goes to support a different charity. The last meeting was in aid of the Ex-Servicemen's Home in Ballina

and the February meeting will support the Westpac Lifesaver Helicopter.

We started off our group over fifty years ago and we are most fortunate to have amongst us our President Gwenda, our Treasurer Jill and Colleen our Secretary. We live in a district where there are people who are always ready to lend a hand when needed. Our hoy afternoons are held at the Pimlico Hall on the first Monday of every month except January and everyone is welcome - especially new arrivals to the Pimlico district.

Rainfall for October has been well below average for the last three years. Local farmers have just finished planting their cane and we could do with some moisture in the ground before Christmas to ensure a good crop.

Betty Fernance.

Stronger, Smarter!



The New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association Championships were held at the Sydney Athletic Centre on 15 and 16 October 2014. Cabbage Tree Island Public School entered a team in the 4x100 metres boys' relay. They knew they would achieve a result because they had already won their district and area championships, but this was the big one.

Brothers Desmond and Malaki Ferguson and Brett and Izaha James train in Ballina four days a week with athletics coach Peter Stephenson. To do this they need and they get the cooperation and support of their school and their parents.

Golden Boys



In front and holding the Norman and Elizabeth Austin trophy, Malaki Ferguson and Izaha James. Behind them Desmond Ferguson and Brett James.

During their few months together, the team has never come second in all of its races. Peter Stephenson was quoted in the *Ballina Shire Advocate* as saying, "They did sprint training on the beach, stair work and time trials. They never questioned anything, they never missed training and they completed each task."

In the final of the 4x100 metres relay they came into the finish line fifteen metres ahead of the nearest competition. The team that came second wrote to Cabbage Tree Island School saying they could not have been beaten by a better team and they were happy to come second!

School Principal Dyonne Anderson said, "Our school is a supportive school that is a part of our community. Our students have worked hard to be winners and their families have supported them. We are all extremely proud of their efforts, they are true champions and they deserve to be celebrated. This win motivates our boys to continue to strive for excellence and to know we are winners when we give our best. It's not every day that you come first in the state!!!"

The Wardell and district community congratulates the Cabbage Tree Island School on its outstanding achievement!



Errol Leeson's annual memorial volunteer trophy

The Ballina Seagulls Rugby League Club is pleased to accept a trophy from the Leeson family in honour of the late Errol Leeson. Errol had been a devoted supporter of the club for all his adult life and his family thought it fitting that the trophy be awarded to the volunteer of the year.

Steve Leeson made the trophy in the shape of a football with a red cedar base, red cedar inserts in the football and laces on the back.

The presentation was made on 19 October at Pop Denison Park. The Football Club chose Ron and Robin Baird as the first recipients of the trophy. Ron had been the Ballina Shire Council's Gardner until he retired and he and Robin have given tireless support to the club over many years.



At our recent Annual General Meeting, a new club committee was elected with Charles Burns - President, Rod Durheim - Vice President, Vicki Hopkins - Treasurer and Terry Messenger the Secretary. Board committee members elected are Sue Steel, Russell Clifford, Kerry Storton, Col Rixon, Bobby Taylor, and David Janissen. So there are a lot of new members of the community supporting our club!

Our Melbourne Cup raffle results were:

1st J. Hurst - 2nd Mitch Dutton - 3rd Simone Paterson.

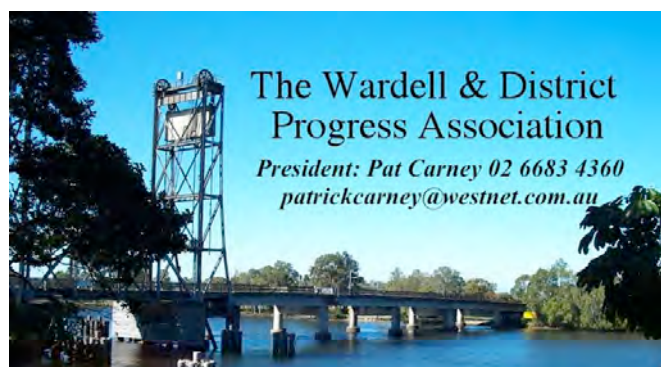
We have had several BBQ nights and a few Indonesian nights which have all gone well. We are still interviewing people to take over our kitchen and we will let you know what progress we are making.

Our Kids Christmas Party is on Saturday 6 December which is about the time this 'Bugle' will be published, so we will report on the party in the next issue. We invited our local schools, posted information and invited Santa so we know it will be a fun time for all!

The Wardell Sporting Recreation Club would like to wish all the community a very safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thanking you all for your support and hoping to catch up with you all at the club sometime,

Terry Messenger, Secretary



If ever you are looking for a forum in which to voice your opinion on matters relating to this place, or to catch up on the latest news on future plans, you are encouraged to come to the bimonthly meetings of the Wardell & District Progress Association. The last meeting was attended by regular visitor Cr David Wright the Mayor of Ballina Shire and Paul Hickey the General Manager. The meeting, chaired by Pat Carney, dealt with many issues. Here are some of them.

A pontoon is needed for the new boat ramp to facilitate boarding and disembarking. The provision of a footpath for Carlisle Street is becoming more urgent.

The description of the proposed boardwalk should be changed to "Disabled Persons Cross Town Access." Get printed copies of the 'Blackwall Bugle' to the elderly who do not use electronic communication. Erect shades over waterfront picnic tables. Public liability insurance is required for the hall, but event users need their own insurance cover. The village garage sale went well!

A discussion was held about the future use of village land for housing development and about the erection of 'granny flats' on existing properties. Should Ballina and Alstonville swimming pools be upgraded with help from a rate increase? Should there be a speed limit of 80 kph on the Pimlico Road? What is the latest update on fluoridation of Wardell's water?

A question was raised about the slow progress of the repairs to the War Memorial adjacent to the hall. The meeting ended with a promise that the "Lite up the Hall for Christmas" would be bigger and better than ever with a BBQ and entertainment at the hall on 3 December. **BE THERE!**

The next meeting of the Progress Association will be at the hall on Wednesday 17 December at 7.00 pm.

WARDELL PUBLIC SCHOOL

"Learning is Life"

Glorious weather, and a safe environment filled with happy kids! What more could you want? The school fête that was held on Saturday 25 October in the school grounds certainly drew a crowd.

Parents and citizens donated their time and expertise to produce delicious homemade cakes, slices, biscuits, sweets and breads to be sold to the public. Many people donated toys to be passed on to excited new owners. There was a happy family village atmosphere about the place. Principal, David Owen, his staff and his aids including Kirsty Shepherd and Deb Crealy are to be congratulated.



Some of the side shows, like the popular jumping castle and the paint-ball gallery, were business orientated, but all contributed to the school funds and to the village fair atmosphere.



The Ballina Taekwon-do gave an impressive display of martial arts to inform visitors to the fête of the benefits to young people of a healthy sport that engenders confidence, respect, leadership and a sense of responsibility in members - several of whom were from Wardell. <http://www.ballinataekwondo.com/>

< Senior Deputy Captain Ron Rosolen was at times overrun with volunteers for the Wardell Fire Brigade. They will have to keep coming back for ten years until they fit the yellow overalls (and they will!). Everyone agreed it was all the fun of the fair!

South Ballina School 1944. Ray Robins is 2nd from right middle row. His story starts on the next page.



Nancye Walsh kindly provided the names of many of the students. If you know the others, please contact the 'Bugle' Teacher Bill Irons. Back row from left: 3 - Dorothy McGuire, 4 - Alisa Newport, 5 - Doris Wolnaugh, 6 - Myron Eaton 7 - Jim Bailey. Middle row from left: 1 - Kathleen Cumiskey, 2 - Marie Carney, 3 - Yvonne Newport, 4 - Margaret Fuller, 7 - Ray Robins: Front left - Chesla Read, centre - Florence Manning holding the cup for winning the Combined Ballina Schools march past!

Keith Hall Lamp Lighter Became Electronics Engineering Wizard

Ray Robins
speaks with Mike Rushby

"My paternal grandfather was Cr Duncan Albert Robins who represented C Riding of Tintenbar Shire for 26 years and was President of the Shire Council for 21 years. My maternal grandfather was James Cumiskey who was an Irish immigrant and marine engineer who played an active part in building the North and South Ballina walls. My parents were Merve and Kate Robins who were dairy and cane farmers at Empire Vale.

"I was born in Ballina in 1933 and named Raymond Robins. I lived in the family house at Keith Hall until I was seven years old and started my schooling at the South Ballina School. When war broke out the family moved to Empire Vale to settle there and run the dairy and cane farm as part of the war effort to produce more at home. I spent the wartime years at Empire Vale. The house was situated between the old Robins homestead and the sand dunes. The house isn't there now and Margaret Howes owns part of what was my father's farm.

"I was at the Empire Vale School during the war years and in 1944 and 1945 I attended Wardell Convent School. There was no school transport then so we rode horses to school. Because it was wartime, petrol was very scarce for the operation of the ferry and, more often than not, we crossed the river in a rowing boat. How no one ever drowned is beyond me. In the afternoon the waves were higher than the boat and it was a rocky row across the river. The boat was rowed by the Ferry Master or sometimes by volunteer oarsmen who were big strong men. We would have four or five school kids in the boat each crossing. There was a vacant paddock beside Alec and Rose Fischer's Store on the Eastern side of the river for our

horses. When the war finished we moved back to the cane farm at Keith Hall and I started at Ballina High School second year.

"I attended Ballina High until the year after the intermediate certificate. I was fortunate enough to secure a five year indentured apprenticeship with the electricity council operating out of Ballina. I was amongst several applicants for the position but the County Clerk at the time was a guy called Tom Pearce. He handed me a paper and asked, "Ray, can you solve this simultaneous equation?" We had just completed that exercise at school a couple of weeks previous and I breezed through it! He was astonished and said, "You are the only applicant able to solve it let alone attempt it! You've got the job!"

"I was only four feet ten and a half inches tall. I was a little bugger and I was quite shocked when he said, "We'll have to strap a butter box to your arse so you can reach the meter box!" But they never did. I had to attend Lismore Technical College because there was no other facility around this district. Once a week I had to travel by bus to Lismore for half a day at the technical college but I wanted to learn the piano at that stage so I took the full day and travelled to Lismore in the morning where I attended the house where Mrs Ricks of Ricks' Orchestra lived. She taught me to play the piano in the mornings. In the afternoons I attended Tech. But, because I took the full day off work, I had to work back in the power station at night one day a week. I used to finish work at eight o'clock in the evening then get on my bike and ride it home to Keith Hall across the old Burns Point ferry, which was a steam-engined ferry. Many a night riding



Ray Robins in Singapore 1997

home in a southerly wind it was cold and wet and the wind was so strong, I had to get off my bike and walk because bikes in those days didn't have gears like they do today. They were all high geared and you couldn't push against the wind.

"Mum and Dad bought a piano and people would come from all around the district and we would have singsongs at home. My Mother and Father really enjoyed those occasions. I played old-time music that everybody knew from their younger years and I also enjoyed sneaking in some of the popular tunes of the day. I read music and couldn't have played without it.

"After my apprenticeship, I wanted to go further with my studies but there was no opportunity around here so I opted for Sydney and lived there for many years. I completed at night school the Electrical Engineer's Certificate. I attended The Australian Radio School at Broadway and passed my exams in radio and television. I applied for a job with a company called "Aircraft Marine Products" who were specialising in electrical component supplies. I was hired and whisked off to America on the first Boeing 707 that Qantas bought. It was called "The City of Canberra." I spent six weeks in-house training in Harrisburg, then I was sent up to Canada and Japan to be indoctrinated.

"By this time I was married to the daughter of a local cane farmer in the Wardell district. Her name was Lorraine Carney who was the daughter of Bede and Clair Carney. My Dad

thought, "This will surely entice him back to the farm!" But I didn't return to the farm. I wasn't a farmer. I liked the excitement and the challenge of working in electricity and electronics. Over the years, I was with that company almost seventeen years and was happy with them. Then I was recruited by a Swiss company named Huber+Suhner as an engineer who would expand their operation in Australia.

"I went to Switzerland and undertook their training. They are a worldwide organisation specialising in components for radio and cellphone transmission. They sent me all around the world and around and around, training their various agents and distributors in radio transmission products that they manufactured. I had the opportunity of travelling and spending time throughout Europe and England, back to America and Canada. I settled in Singapore and travelled extensively. By that time I was divorced. From Singapore I went regularly to Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Djakarta as well as other places in South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand. I was set up in a unit on the 16th floor in the Orchard Hotel in Singapore. It was a lovely suite but it was a somewhat lonely life because I was never in the same place long enough to make lasting friends.

"In my childhood at Keith Hall, we had an old-fashioned dedicated landline telephone fed by wires on poles down the lane to our house. I always had a leaning towards radio and electrics. When I was growing up I used to build radio sets. They were little ones in a matchbox and I had to listen with headphones. Other sets I built virtually on the kitchen table, operated by a dry battery. Those radios were powered by valves and operated a small loud speaker.

"When we shifted back to Keith Hall we didn't have electricity and we used kerosene lamps. I persuaded my Dad that we should have a home lighting system. We bought a two horsepower Villiers petrol engine from EJ Eggins Farm Supplies in Lismore. We got a generator or dynamo through a

disposal store in Sydney and two deep-cycle twelve-volt batteries. We shipped them up from Sydney to Ballina on the North Coast Steamship. My father built a cement block to house the motor and generator which we coupled to the batteries. Then presto! We had electric lights all through the house. It was a 24-volt system and it was the talk of the district. "How can you have electric lights when there isn't electricity here?" But we did and it was great!

"Probably the happiest time of my life would have been the occasion of my marriage. But it didn't last long because we had really nothing in common. I think my wife thought I might have returned to the farm. She was the daughter of a farming family and I was the son of a four-generation farming family and it was a quite natural assumption that I would follow in the Robins footsteps. My Dad was terribly disappointed that I didn't and he took very little interest in my electrical career. The scariest part of my life was when my Mother, who couldn't drive at all, took me to Lismore for my final exams. When we eventually arrived in Lismore, I was a nervous wreck. My father had said that he was too busy to take me to Lismore. Anyhow, I am proud to say that I topped the exam! I have a book endorsed, "Awarded to Raymond Robins – First Prize in the Final Exam." I was quite proud of myself for that and so was my Mother. I don't remember if my father ever picked the book up. He was very disappointed that I wasn't resigned to spending the major part of my life on a farm.

"I had a brother who sadly lost his life in a road accident. It is ironical that my father also had a brother who lost his life in a road accident. My Dad farmed until he had a heart attack and had to retire. My Mother sent for me to come up and wind up the farm, which I did. I had it surveyed into two equal portions. My neighbours were anxious to expand their cane farming. I sold one half of the farm on the northern side to Jack Elliot and the other half on the southern side to neighbour Patrick Carney. Both farmers continue to be successful operators

and Jack Elliot only visited me two weeks ago! It was great to catch up with him and talk of days of yore.



Ray and his bride Lorraine Carney at St Patrick's Church, Wardell.

"I was happy in my retirement here in Ballina until just four months ago when I was felled by a stroke. It flattened me right on the lounge room floor. I couldn't talk. It robbed me of my speech. I was alone and the phone was ringing. It was my son calling me for his weekly call from Port Macquarie. I picked the phone up and all I could do was gaggle. I couldn't talk! My son said, "Don't do anything crazy, but unlock your front door and there will be an ambulance there in a matter of minutes." The ambulance arrived and I was quickly transported to the Base Hospital in Lismore then later to the new rehab centre at Ballina Hospital where I spent the next five weeks doing one on one speech therapy. I feel like a three year old child just learning to talk again. That's about where I am today!"

Ray Robins

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