

NEWSLETTER

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11th June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

No. 5 October 2024

45

Vale Colin Bruce James

4 February 1935 – 1 October 2024

It is with great sadness we report the passing of another of our long serving life members.

Bruce James was the youngest child of Osman St Clare James and Annie Maude (nee Purvis) and siblings Kevin and twins Noel and Norma. Bruce grew up in this very close family and hearing all the stories of the James Bakery and his mother's Purvis and Gageler connections over the Hollydeen, Denman and Muswellbrook areas.

Bruce carried out his National Service which lasted for eleven weeks at that time. He became a school teacher and was teaching at Emmerville when his father died suddenly at the time of the 1955 flood. To assist his mother he applied for a transfer to Muswellbrook. So he commenced his teaching in his home town and earned the name 'Jesse James' after the American outlaw.

He had many friends and enjoyed playing tennis and milk shakes after at Serhan's Market Street café. There were record parties and dancing to the music, also family parties on the James' front verandah. Bruce's first car was a Morris Minor, sometimes with six squeezed in.

Then Bruce joined the Apex Club and loved the activities and so much work done for the community. Some people asked him to help with tracing family histories, particularly for the first big Budden reunion. He joined the Historical Society. He became a keen member and over the years produced a number of books, particularly a comprehensive directory of street names and a subsequent update. He served as President and in August 2018 awarded Life Membership.

For many years he was involved in the Meals on Wheels organisation. He also became involved in Local Government. He served as councillor and was named Muswellbrook Citizen of the Year. It was at his instigation that the Muswellbrook Hall of Fame was established.

He had been interested in collecting Wedgewood commemorative items and eventually donated the impressive collection to the Muswellbrook Library. In retirement he enjoyed his Probus Club membership.

More recently indifferent health caused him to leave his beloved family home 'Cosy Camp' and go into Calvary Retirement care. This well loved and former teacher's passing will be mourned by many.

By Helen Ellis



DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

Meetings

The Society meets on the third Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting.

Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email mei2@bigpond.com The Society also has a web presence thanks to Darrin Khan and Lionel Ahearn at <http://www.mbkhistorical.org>

Dartmouth



Photo of abandoned Dartmouth homestead by editor

The first is a sale poster from 1926 which is shown on the right.

It is apparent from the poster that before the sale the Dartmouth property was quite large with a 9 mile (Approx. 16km) frontage to the Hunter River. The homestead noted on Lot 4 stands on the highest point of the hill also known as Dartmouth. However, further research revealed that the hill at one time had a different name according to the newspaper article below.

The second is the story below.

How the Hill got its name

Only some of the older generation of Muswellbrook and other Upper Hunter areas would know the locality if someone was to mention the location as 'Barney Allen's Hill'.

Residents of Aberdeen, Scone and beyond who commute to the coal mines or power stations south of Muswellbrook pass over the area twice daily yet have never heard of 'Barney Allen's Hill'.

Situated on the New England Highway Barney Allen's Hill is the first hill encountered when travelling north from Muswellbrook, about eight kilometres from the township.

The property on the crest of the hill is known as Dartmouth, and the present homestead features a Dutch windmill on the front lawn.

Dartmouth is now owned by the Daniels family who migrated to Australia from Holland.

However there have been several owners and the property greatly reduced in size in more recent years.

Whilst there may be many who remember the name 'Barney Allen's Hill' there are probably very few who could recall how it got its name.

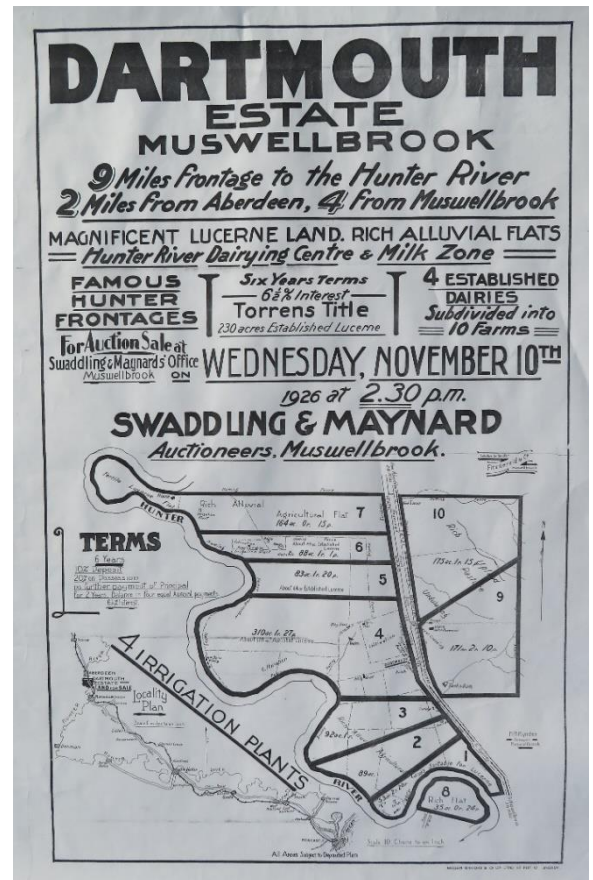
Biggest Owner

A story in last Sunday's Sun Herald recalled the colourful life of Barney Allen, a mammoth bookmaker and punter. Barney Allen became one of the nation's biggest racehorse owners with stables in Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle. He also established the Dartmouth and Redhills (now Bunyarra) Studs at Muswellbrook and earned a handsome income from the colliery on the Dartmouth property.

Barney Allen was born in 1862 in Melbourne, and at 15 years of age decided he wanted to see the world. A bookmaker friend arranged his passage to San Francisco and gave him five pounds (10 dollars) for pocket money. But young Barney, a born gambler, lost the money in a poker game within half an hour of boarding the ship.

Betting Shop

Years later back in Australia a successful stint as a bookmaker and punter in the 1880s allowed him to build up a bank of more than 50 000 pounds (\$100 000), a lot of money in those days. He opened his own SP betting shop (legal then) in Bourke Street, Melbourne. Business boomed and Barney open similar betting shops in other states. Soon Barney had an official turnover of a million pounds (\$2m) a year. It was then that he became Australia's biggest racehorse owner.



Deposit on Carbine

Barney paid more than 500 pounds deposit on the purchase price of 3 000 pounds for the now legendary racehorse Carbine. However, his trainer and friends persuaded him not to outlay such a large amount of money for a horse of then 'mere potential'. Another prominent owner, Donald Wallace, agreed to take over the sale and repaid Barney his 500 pound deposit.

Much to Barney Allen's disappointment, a few years later Carbine went on to win the 1890 Melbourne Cup in record time carrying 10st 5lb. Carbine was later sold to the Duke of Portland for 13 000 guineas (about \$28 600) for stud duties in England.

In 1904 Barney Allen took a team of racehorses to India where he planned to dominate the racing scene with his horses and punting weight. However, at the time racing was practically controlled by a millionaire who splurged heavily on Barney's horse Camira on two occasions and the horse lost both times.

The millionaire was certain Barney had plotted against him and behind the scenes arranged for him to be called before the stewards, and consequently for no apparent reason, Barney was warned off. He sold his horses and returned to Australia. Back in Australia Allen landed many betting plunges, including 100 000 pounds on his jumper Bribery. He also lost heavily, but his winnings far outweighed his losses and he died a rich man aged 76 in 1939.

Muswellbrook Chronicle 26/7/1985

MARQUETTE SIX. - On View To-day.



The photo above was given to the Society by Helen Ellis. By enlarging the photo she was able to see the word Marquette on one of the posters on the front wall. I was unsure where this photo was taken.

It is thanks to Bill Spicer who directed me to the following in the description of M Campbell and Co new machinery store which later became Campbells Motor Vehicle Showroom.

The new warehouse has a frontage of 38ft 6in to Bridge St and a depth of 77ft over all. The walls are 14ft high. *Muswellbrook Chronicle* Saturday 15 April 1899.¹

¹ *Campbells Corner - A Muswellbrook Landmark* page 23 Published by Muswellbrook Shire Council

I am almost certain that this is the setting for the photo. Other points of interest in this photo is the absence of any women and the formal dress of all those attending. Also noted is what appears to be grease marks on the cement floor. Also the screen on left possibly hides the special display.²

Further research led to the article below in the *Muswellbrook Chronicle* on Friday 6 September 1929.

Produced by Buick factory, but bearing little external resemblance to the Buick car, the Marquette Six will make its first official appearance in Muswellbrook today, when the local dealers, M. Campbell and Co. Ltd. will arrange a special display.

The new aristocrat was displayed in a superb setting, with a rural scene for a background and a huge frame in the foreground. In the middle distance the Marquette Six stands out, concealed lights playing on the car to show up every detail of its graceful lines. The display has been carried out, on a scale not hitherto attempted in Muswellbrook, and the effect of the display can only be equalled by the undoubted beauty of the car itself. Mr. A. G. Coughlan, the firm's artist, was responsible for the arrangement of the display, and he was assisted by Mr. H. A. Duffin, of the motor sales staff. A large number of people interested in the new car visited the firm's showroom today, and doubtless the growing public interest in the new arrival will be even more pronounced tonight, when the beauty of the car and the general display will attract the notice of hundreds of people.

Full particulars of the new car will be supplied to those interested by the sales staff of the motor department, which is under the management of Mr. R.M. Woodruff.

Later the same year Campbells arranged a further display of the vehicles for which they were agents.

Cars outside Campbells vehicle showroom 52 Bridge Street, formerly used as a machinery store, in November 1929. The car convoy organised by the motor sales division of M Campbell and Co and sent round the district for demonstration purposes. The convoy visited Moonan Flat, Scone, Muswellbrook, Denman and Merriwa. (*Muswellbrook Chronicle* 1st November 1929). Cars – Oakland, Vauxhall, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Buick. Drivers – Greaves, Bachelor, Duffin, Brown and Woodruff.³

Society photo 0223



Muswellbrook – Developing or declining

An interesting news item supplied by Bill Spicer. I leave it to the reader to decide in which direction Muswellbrook is heading today using the criteria used by the writer in 1895.

The glory of Muswellbrook is waning fast. It was a severe blow when it lost its Court of Quarter Sessions. The gloom deepened when it was deprived of its resident magistrate. And now that its gaol is closed through the failure of a supply of occupants, it is felt that but one more misfortune can befall — the removal of its solitary policeman. Should that happen, life there will lose all the interest it once possessed. It is not often that such a series of calamities falls on a once-busy town. But the worst sign about a hamlet is the absence of a gaol. When a place becomes too hopeless or dispirited to raise a local crop of offenders, or even supply an occasional drunkard, it is on the high road to merited obscurity. To be sure, it still has its local paper; but what the unfortunate editor can find to talk about now the gaol has collapsed and the constable's blue peter is flying, it would be hard to say. I had hopes of Muswellbrook till this the prison closed its doors and locked the citizens out.

The Sydney Mail. Saturday 15 June 1895

New Members

Two new members were welcomed to the Society – Emma Knowles and Bianca Whitehead – both from Muswellbrook.

² Comments thanks to Rob Tickle

³ *Campbells Corner – A Muswellbrook landmark* page 25 Published by Muswellbrook Shire Council