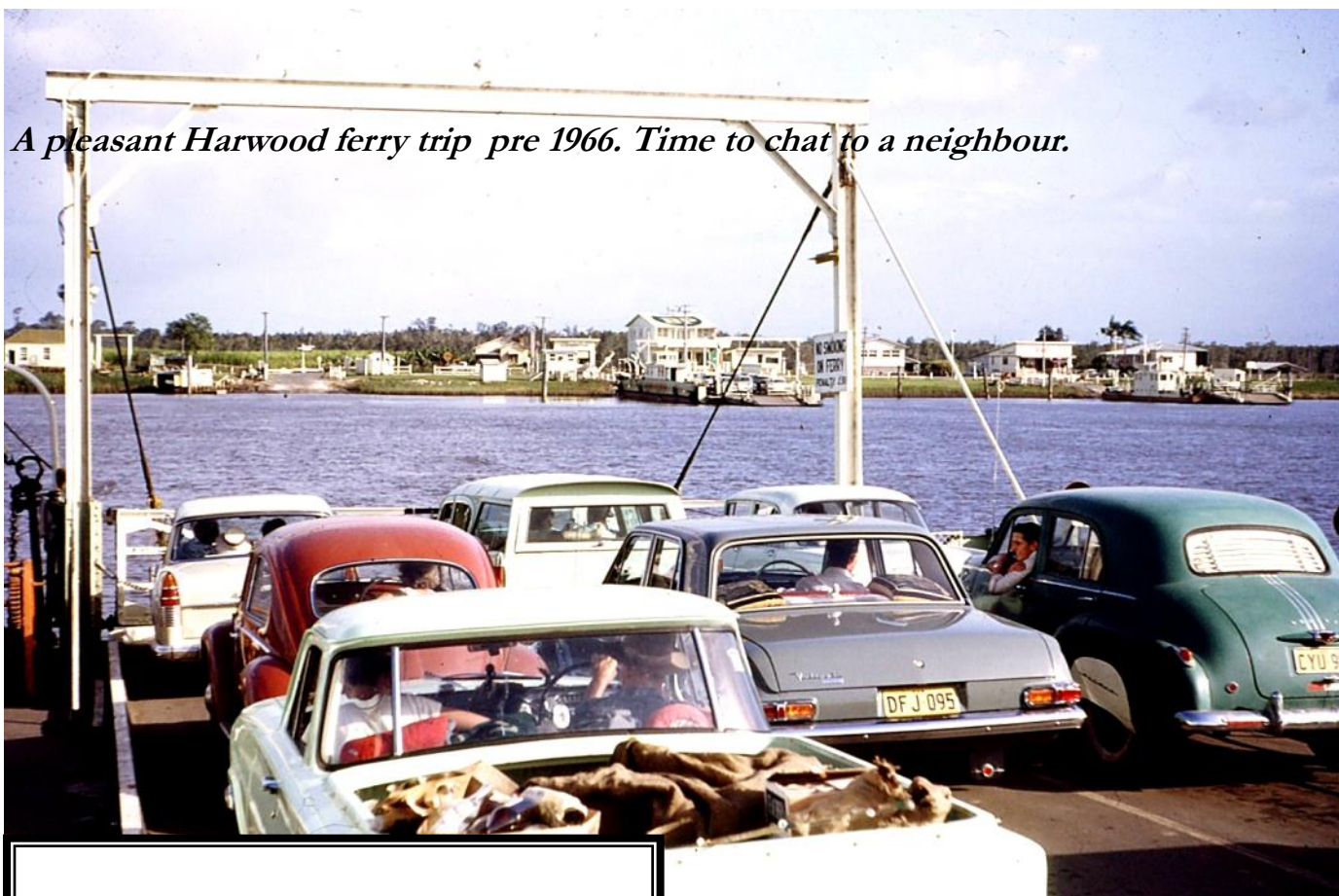


CLARENCE RIVER ADVOACTE

JUNE 2016

VOLUME 17 No. 2



A pleasant Harwood ferry trip pre 1966. Time to chat to a neighbour.

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

THE EARLY FERRIES

FERRY MAP

THE VISIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH 2ND

THE TROUBLE WITH FERRIES

FUNNY THINGS HAPPEN ON FERRIES

AND THEN CAME THE BRIDGES

SELF- HELP

WHAT'S IN A NICKNAME?

THE HARWOOD BRIDGE

100 YEARS AGO

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

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EDITORIAL

It is soon to be 50 years since the opening of the Harwood Bridge when one of the last ferry services in NSW was removed. The Lower Clarence has relied on ferry traffic over many years.

The ferries that took traffic across the river from the mainland to the Harwood side of the Pacific Highway were often very crowded particularly towards the end of their service, when many travellers experienced long delays and major frustration and inconvenience.

With the duplication of the 50 year old bridge and a major upgrade of the highway just starting in 2016, we wonder what another 50 years will bring!

THE EARLY FERRIES

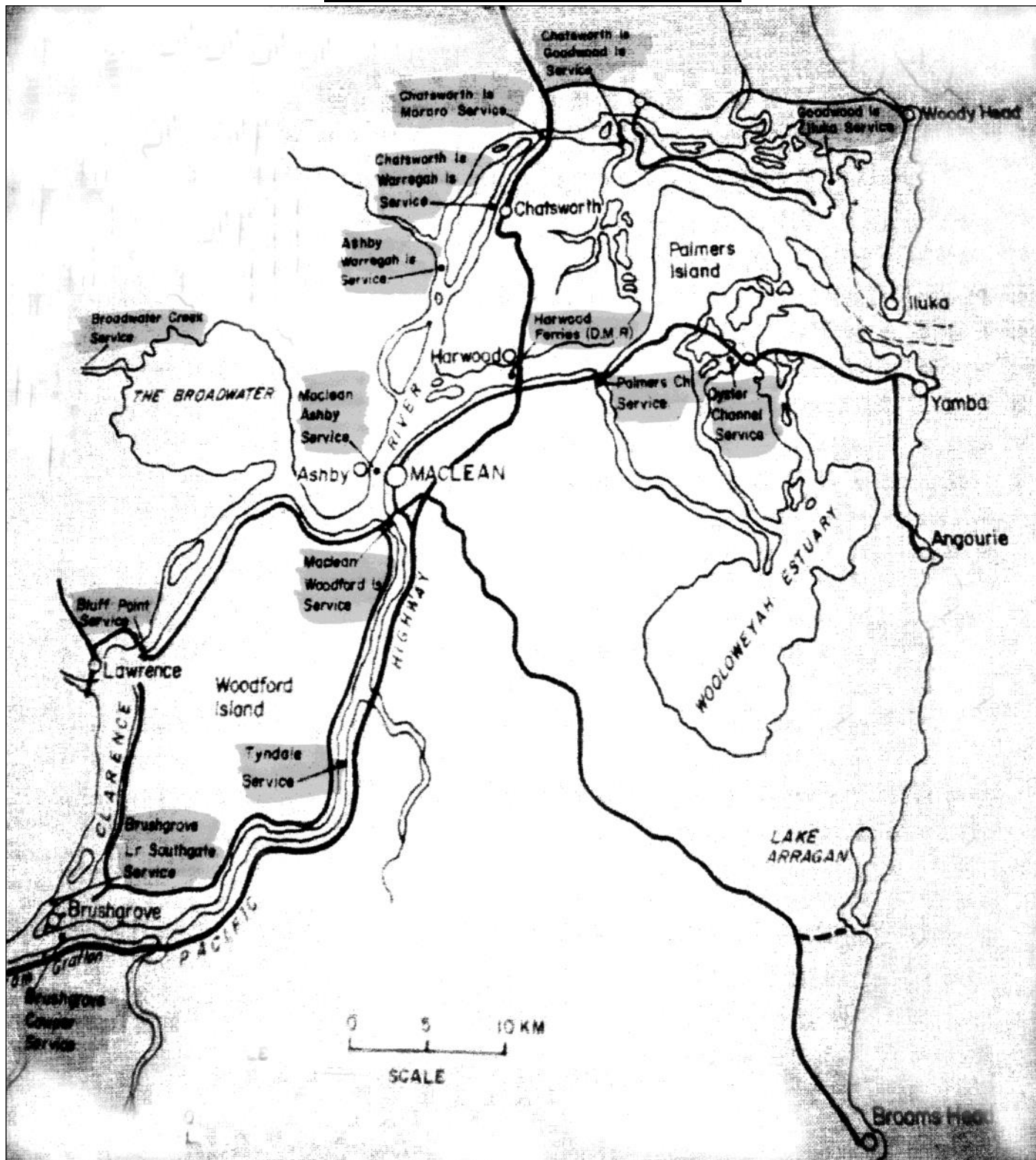
The earliest ferries or punts on the lower end of the Clarence were mostly privately owned at first and hand operated. It was a necessity to be able to get from the often remote islands and farms selected in the early 1860's to the mainland or to the primitive tracks that took them to the major settlements by horseback.

To show the complexity of travelling, the diagram on the next page shows that at one time it took three ferries to get from Maclean to Iluka: one at Harwood, Chatsworth to Goodwood, then Goodwood to Iluka.

Even in the 1960's people had to cross three ferries to get to Iluka from Maclean or Yamba by road. The advent of bridges came as need became imperative and money was made available.

ARE YOUR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES INTERESTED IN OUR LOCAL HISTORY AND OLD "GOSS"?? Extra copies of this newsletter may be obtained from the Museum during opening times or at the Maclean Markets (for a small fee.)

MDHS- CLARENCE RIVER ADVOACTE



This shows the number of ferries connecting areas on the Lower Clarence in early times. (from a drawing by Rhonda Gibson)

There were 15 river crossing which were either replaced quite early on or continued until the second last one- the Harwood crossing- was replaced by a bridge in August 1966. The crossing at Lawrence is still by ferry.

NO MAN STEPS INTO THE SAME RIVER TWICE, BECAUSE IT IS NEVER THE SAME RIVER AND HE IS NOT THE SAME MAN. (HERACLITUS)

THE VISIT OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH 2nd in 1954

This was one time the ferry service failed the population. The Queen visited the North Coast, staying at Lismore and visiting Casino. Of course everyone wanted to see the new Queen, so traffic was very heavy. To compound the problem, a flood was in the offing and heavy rain fell over the few days of her visit. *The*

Daily Examiner 12th February 1954 reported it thus: ***“HARWOOD TRAFFIC JAM CLEARS AT 6.30 AM:***

After the worst traffic jam in the history of the North Coast motor transport, Harwood ferry cleared the last of the cars at 6.30 am. Unprecedented scenes occurred during Wednesday night in the six-mile long line-up of cars returning from the Richmond River after the visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Longest delays encountered by drivers approached 12 hours.”

Police patrolled the line of cars, offering assistance, keeping order and directing traffic. Most people were quite happy to wait, although there were some who were critical of the delay and sometimes drivers who fell asleep while waiting lost their position in the long line. Several cases of sickness occurred and these were given priority on the ferry; some people left their vehicles at Harwood and doubled up with others in order to get home faster. These cars were retrieved the following day. The delay tested facilities to the maximum; toilet facilities were stretched, shops in Harwood and Chatsworth had supplies exhausted as hungry travellers visited their stores. It is believed that over 2000 cars crossed the ferry that day.

THE BRIDGES THAT YOU CROSS BEFORE YOU COME TO THEM, ARE OVER RIVERS THAT
AREN'T THERE

THE TROUBLE WITH FERRIES

Ferries were a godsend to the residents of the Lower Clarence who had in the early days travelled everywhere by boat. The ferries supplied an almost uninterrupted means of travel, connecting areas by way of the newly formed roads (although at the time these were still no more than tracks).

However the ferries presented their own problems.

Most were hand operated at first; indeed the Iluka ferry was still hand operated until 1940. They did not operate at all times; at night when the ferry driver went home, a bell or light was used to attract his attention so a trip (often urgent) could be completed; floods meant they were taken out of service until water receded (*as still happens to the few ferries in service on the river today. Travellers to Lawrence from Maclean, have to drive the long way round via Grafton as both the Bluff Point ferry and the Southgate ferry are still out of service after floods subside elsewhere.*)

After floods, water hyacinth presented problems, making movement through the thicket of the plant difficult, fouling ropes and often having the ferrymen cut the hyacinth from the ferry wires using brush hooks or the like, as the ferry inched forward.

Tolls were also demanded until the end of 1907 when they were abolished and ferries became largely free.

Ferries often sank. In 1954, the Iluka ferry sank and the township was isolated by road for some days. Ropes broke and ferries would drift until repairs could be made. Accidents with vehicles were plentiful— a cream truck went into the river at Brushgrove in 1944 while trying to drive onto the ferry; a truck laden with gravel pushed the Warregah ferry under water in 1953. The truck was pulled back

from the ferry, but the ferry took a few days to salvage. The Lawrence Ferry (Bluff Point) was the scene of several accidents and fatalities over the years.

Recovery of vehicle in river at Bluff Point Ferry, Lawrence



Whenever a ferry needed servicing it was towed to Ashby dock for repair/overhaul and either a smaller ferry was put into service or the service was suspended until repairs were completed.

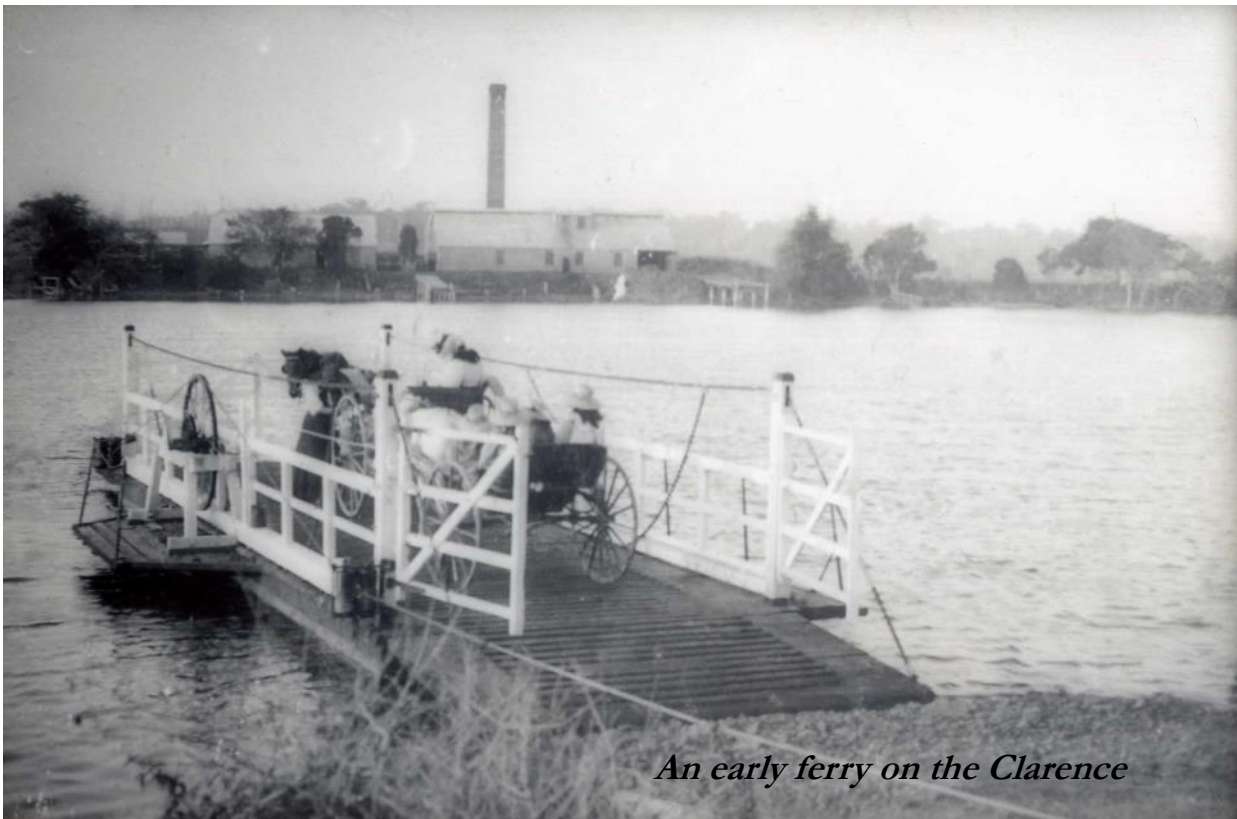
Many drownings or near drownings occurred on or near the ferries. In 1904 a man drowned when he fell from the Ashby ferry; the ferryman on the Oyster Channel ferry was reported missing in 1898, later found drowned and in 1900 H. Bushnell ferryman on the Harwood ferry saved a passenger who fell into the river while crossing and was awarded a bravery medal for his action.

WHILE THE RIVER OF LIFE GLIDES ALONG SMOOTHLY, IT REMAINS THE SAME RIVER; ONLY THE LANDSCAPE ON EITHER BANK SEEMS TO CHANGE. MAX MULLER

Ferries presented other more mundane problems such as interrupting a regatta at Harwood, when scullers became bunched together and had to take evasive action to avoid colliding with the ferry which was making a crossing in the middle of a race.

Flood time was one time the ferries were out of action and often were so for many days after the floodwaters had receded. Their absence was a nuisance and meant people were isolated and goods and food, as well as patients in need of hospitalisation, had to be transported by motor boat (in later times) or had to be very self-reliant, especially in the early days.

It must have been a joyous day to residents when one, by one, the ferries were replaced with bridges and roads were opened to traffic at all times.



An early ferry on the Clarence

THE RIVER IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE METAPHORS, THE SYMBOL OF THE GREAT FLOW OF LIFE ITSELF. THE RIVER BEGINS AT SOURCE, AND RETURNS TO SOURCE, UNERRINGLY. (JEFFREY R. AN-

FUNNY THINGS HAPPEN ON A FERRY

Many travellers have tales of troubles, but just as many have comic tales to relate. Our ferries are no different.

There was a night when service was gladly given by one Harwood ferryman. It was past the hour of the usual finish to the run, the ferry was on the Maclean bank and three young girls arrived and approached the constable, who was standing near, in obvious distress. They did not want to wait till dawn, so he promised them a trip. They were very grateful and waved to all as they left the ferry at Harwood on their way north. No doubt the fact that they were young and female helped.

Again a constable helped out when he noticed an elderly couple missing several trips. He asked if there was a reason for their delaying their trip across. It seemed they were worried that the wires of the two ferries in operation would become entangled. He was able to set them right, and they crossed safely.

Column 8 of *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the sign on the Goodwood Island Ferry “*Ring twice for night service .Then keep your shirt on while I get my pants on.*”

Again on the Harwood ferry, a motorist asked for the road to Ballina and was told to drive onto the ferry. He drove on and halted at the gates, then reversed and left the ferry. Asked for a reason, he said “The road was blocked by gates!”

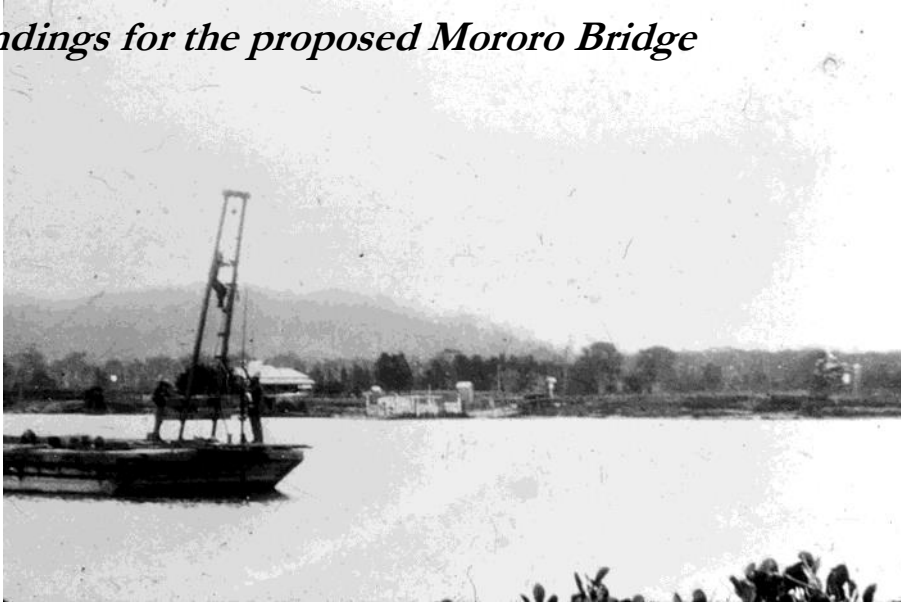
Ferry drivers were treated to some strange and wonderful things, but the best would have to have been the personal recital given to a ferry driver by Dame Nellie Melba.

WHAT DID THE IRISHMAN DO WHEN HE TRIED TO DO RIVERDANCE? HE DROWNED.

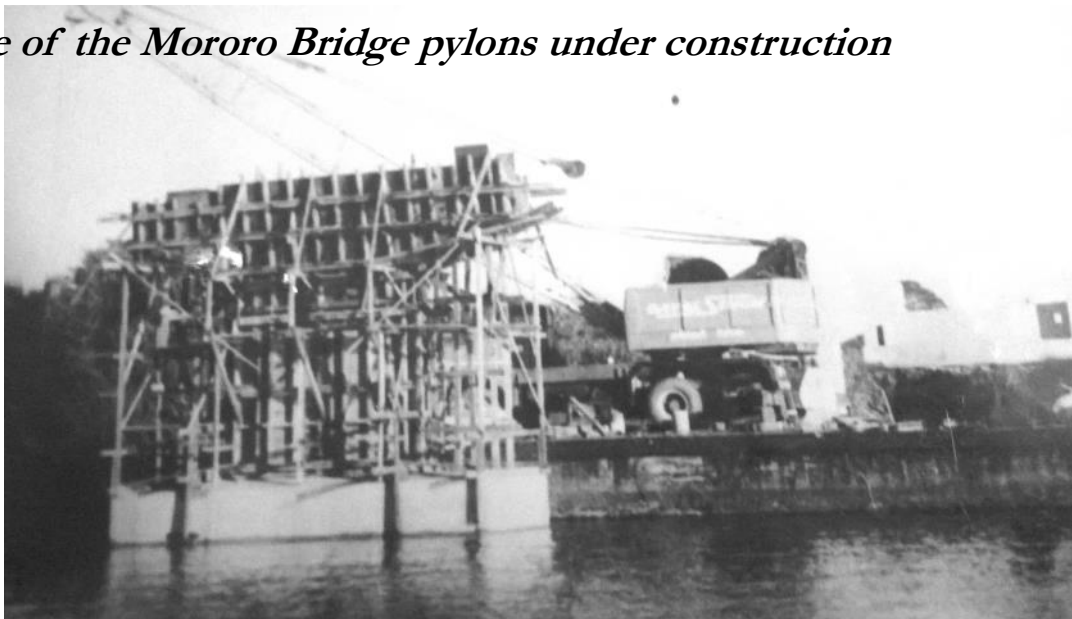
She had sung the previous night at Maclean, and while traveling on the Chatsworth to Mororo ferry, she chatted to the ferryman who was lamenting that he missed the concert. Dame Nellie obliged with an impromptu song “Wearing the Green”. The ferry driver was delighted (as no doubt were fellow passengers.)

AND THEN CAME THE BRIDGES

Taking soundings for the proposed Mororo Bridge



One of the Mororo Bridge pylons under construction



The Official Opening of Mororo Bridge 1935



The opening of the Mororo Bridge was performed by the then Deputy Premier of NSW, Col. Bruxner in the presence of Acting Prime Minister, Dr Earle Page along with the President of Harwood Shire, Cr D. K. Beckman. At the opening, one of the men *“who had worked right loyally for the bridge”* Cr J. Wiblen, said with pride that he was glad the name *“Mororo”* had been retained for the bridge. He then told the assembled crowd of his belief that the name was a local aboriginal one meaning *“blood”* (1963-McCarthy has the meaning as *“fighting ground”*). This stemmed from the fact that it was the area of tribal judgement and punishment. He said that originally there were two rings– the smaller one was a place of judgement and the larger a place where punishment was carried out– either by being cut or having to fight a member of another tribe. *“Much blood was spilled in the area”*, Cr Wiblen said.

THE REWARDS OF THE JOURNEY FAR OUTWEIGH THE RISK OF LEAVING THE HARBOUR (UNKNOWN)

Cr Wiblen had been part of the team lobbying for the bridge, lobbying which began much earlier in 1907.

Older residents remembered the crossing before the first ferry was put into service. This was at first a private punt for foot passengers and horsemen conducted by Donald Fraser from 1876, who charged 1/- for horses and 6d for pedestrians. A government ferry replaced this.

The Mororo Bridge was *“another link connecting the highways of Australia”* (*The Daily Examiner June 1935*) and it was hoped that before long there would be a bridge at Harwood. *“We live in an age of speed,”* said one speaker at the opening of the bridge.

WHILE EARLIER ON THE ROUTE TO YAMBA

The Opening of the Oyster Channel Bridge 1908



IN A MOMENT OF CRISIS, THE WISE BUILD BRIDGES, THE FOOLISH BUILD DAMS.

Replacing the first Palmers Channel Bridge (see article below re first bridge) This one built 1948 to replace first built 1925. First bridge on left.



SELF- HELP

(The Sydney Morning Herald 9/12/1924)

“Residents of Palmers Island and Palmers Channel are now engaged in a fine piece of self-help work in erecting a bridge over Palmers Channel. The structure will consist of five spans and have a total bridge length of 165ft.. The movement has had many ups and downs but finally the Harwood Shire has agreed to expend £500 on the self-help principle.” The work was carried out by residents who agreed to do the approaches and others to give money to the project. The building work was carried out by Mr H. Walsh.

“The whole structure will represent in the vicinity of £1000 to the shire.” Timber was donated and one farmer gave up an eighth of an acre for the structure, which was planned to be used by local farmers to hold cattle in flood times.

WHEN THE WELL'S DRY, WE KNOW THE WORTH OF WATER. (BEN FRANKLIN)

WHAT'S IN A NICKNAME?

The word “nickname” comes from Old English ekenamē– meaning an additional name.

They could refer to a job (“Sparky” for electrician) or a physical characteristic (“Bluey” for a red– head). They could also refer to personality (“Sad Sack” for a pessimist). Many refer to a surname– all Clarks or Clarkes are called “Nobby”; all Millers are called “Dusty” and all Fowlers are called “Chook”.

Maclean seems to be an area where nicknames abound– usually affectionate. They grow with the person, often so that some people no longer know the real name. No surnames will be given here, but the following are a few of the names given in the local area.

Grub, Huck, Hindu, Gunner, Matey, Black Jack, Clipper, Moe, Horror, Spurs, Funno, Bones, Cucumber, Beaky, Donkey, Bandy, Spud (no doubt all Murphys were called Spud), Spec, Yogi, Snow (again hair colour no doubt), Bunny, Possum, Ferret, Barney, Nugget, Sherriff, Specs, Bronc, Buster, Plover, Porky, Aspro, Dubbo, Happy, Pommy, Scotchy, Coolie, Podgy.

School children are often known to give their teachers a name (of course only used out of the teacher’s hearing.) One name given to me was that of one “Beaky” Johnson, who taught in Maclean about 80 years ago. The children also used to make a jingle about him, using the rhyme for remembering the parsing of a word in grammar - the ditty ran “ Common noun, parse him up, parse him down. neuter gender, hopeless case, governed by his ugly face.”

I am sure not much has changed in 80 years.

Q: DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE FRENCHMAN WHO JUMPED INTO THE RIVER IN PARIS?

A: HE WAS DECLARED TO BE IN SEINE.

THE HARWOOD BRIDGE

One of the first requests for a bridge at Harwood was made in 1934 and was supported by many local organisations. However, long delays from the 1950's onwards, sometimes because one of the ferries was taken out of service for repair, sometimes because of the large holiday traffic made it obvious that the "unplugging" of a bottleneck on the highway was due.

In 1957, Maclean Shire called a meeting of locals to put a case to local members for a bridge. The move snowballed over the next few years with added pressure from canegrowers and many other petitioners.

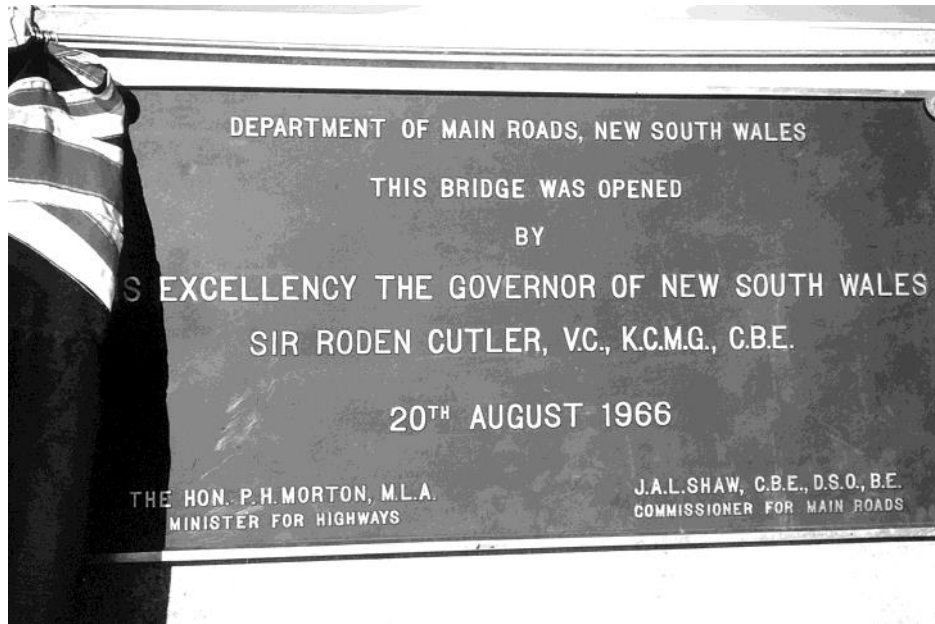
Plans were drawn up in 1961, tenders called in 1962. The bypass of Maclean was for a while considered a problem by councillors as it was thought that Maclean might suffer by being bypassed. However in spite of the complaints, final tenders were called and contracts let in 1963, with provision for water pipes to be carried and a lift span to be incorporated for shipping to pass.

In 1965 record numbers of vehicles crossing on the now 3 ferries working stood at over 3,700 vehicles a day.

By the end of 1965 the lift span was finished and in place and the final gap in the bridge was closed in March 1966. A crowd of about 5000 attended the official opening by the State Governor Sir Roden Cutler on Saturday August 20, 1966. The first cars crossed the bridge at 4pm that afternoon.

The ferry-free Pacific Highway was now ready for business.

THE OPENING of HARWOOD BRIDGE 50 YEARS AGO- and RIDING the LAST FERRIES



Walkers first cross the bridge after the official opening.

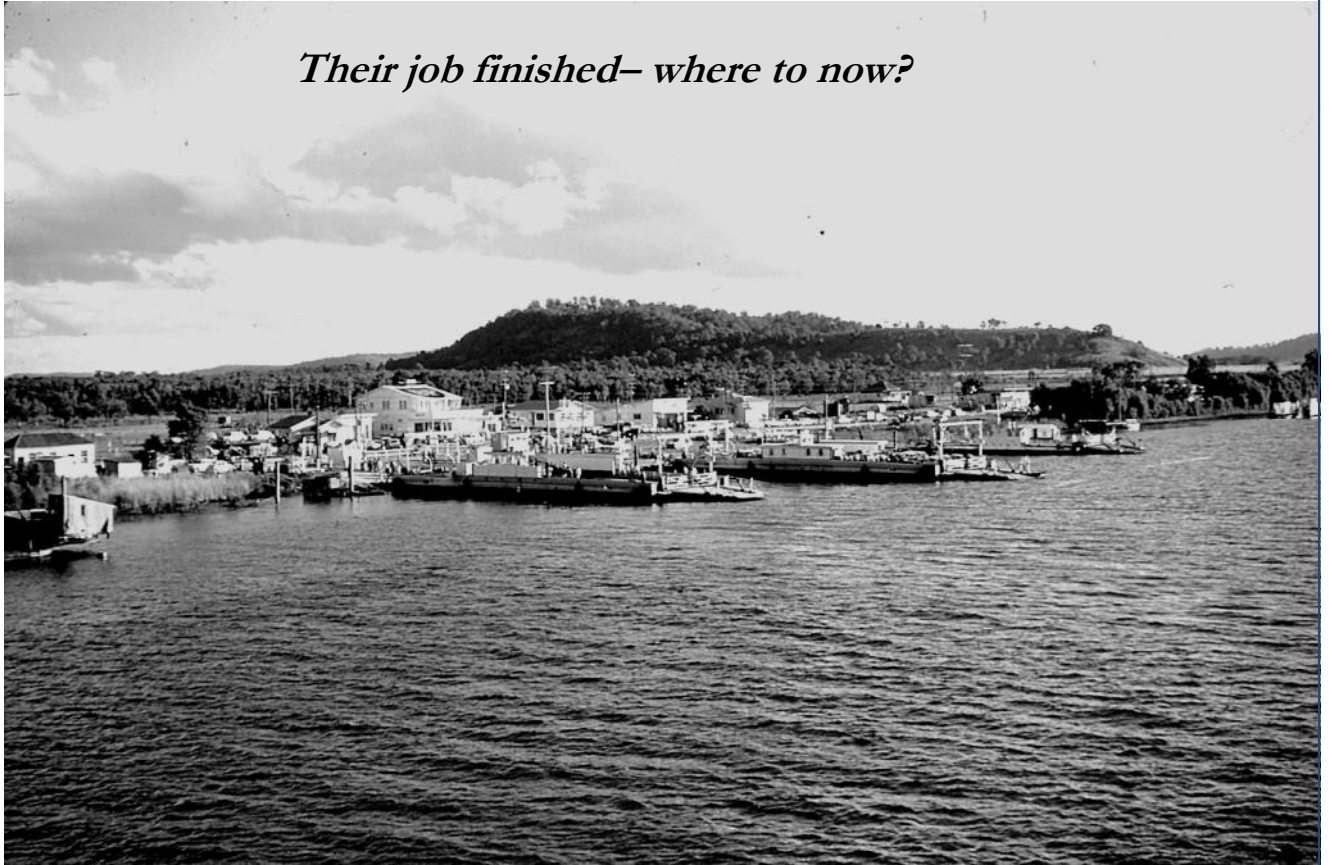
A CAR IS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT CAN BE RECALLED BY ITS MAKER- (UNKNOWN)



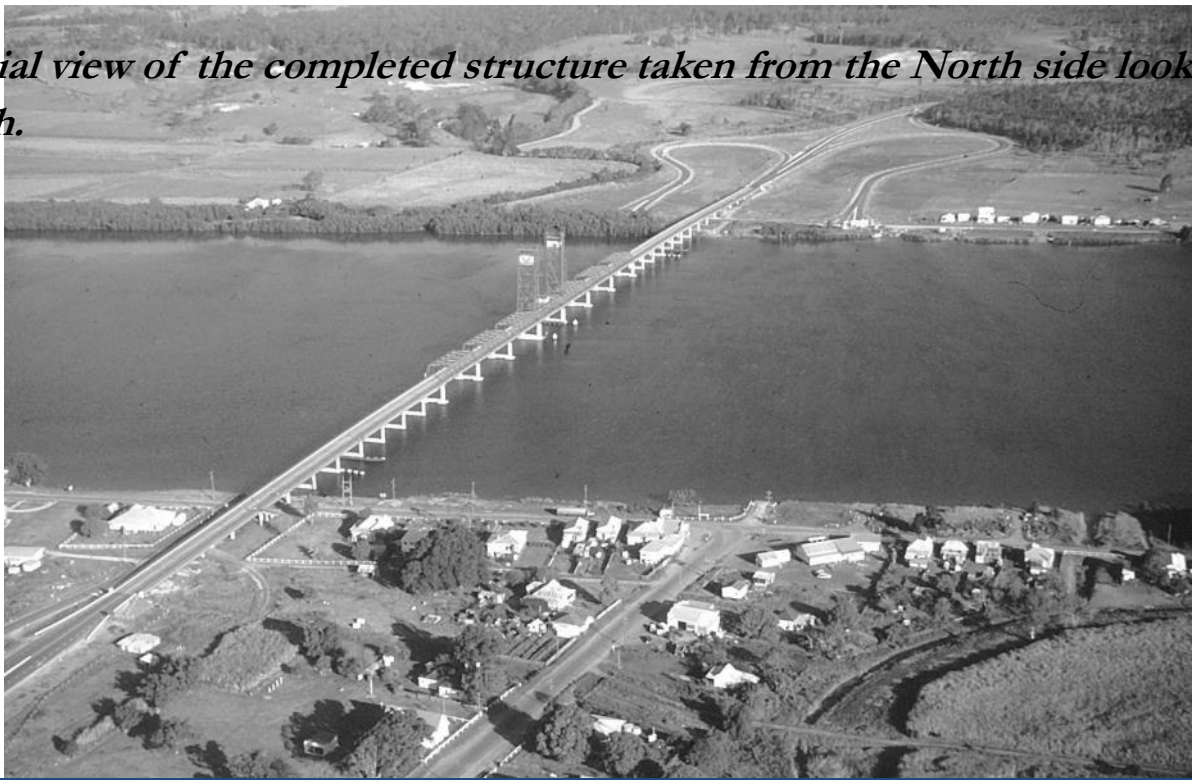
One of the last ferries to cross the river at Harwood

NINE-YEAR-OLD JOEY WAS ASKED BY HIS MOTHER WHAT HE HAD LEARNED IN SUNDAY SCHOOL. (CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

Their job finished- where to now?



Aerial view of the completed structure taken from the North side looking south.



"WELL, MOM, OUR TEACHER TOLD US HOW GOD SENT MOSES BEHIND ENEMY LINES ON A RESCUE MISSION TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES OUT OF EGYPT. (CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

100 YEARS AGO

This period has newspapers full of war– battles on land and sea, as well as casualty lists. We also learn of Shackleton’s voyage and troubles, the Irish rebellion, the Conscription debate and the fight for early hotel closing; but life in the local area still continued as before and was very busy.

APRIL

- Tyndale reports that the mosquito pest this season has been the worst experienced. The advent of these insects in such large numbers after such a severe drought and when the district has been swept by fires, causes much speculation as to the advisability of applying kerosene to the swamps as a sure preventative.
- High Street Yamba is in a most disgraceful state– large pieces of metal are lying everywhere. The Harwood Shire Engineer should be approached on this matter.
- Alban, the son of Mr D. Anderson, of Chatsworth, had the misfortune to break his arm through a fall from a horse. He has been treated locally, but his father has now taken him to Sydney for further treatment.
- At Maclean Licencing Court, the inspector submitted a report showing that minor improvements were needed at Palmers Island Hotel. The improvements required at North Head Hotel, Iluka had not been effected. Mr J. T. McKittrick (owner) gave his assurance that they would be carried out, along with the erection of a second storey , next summer. The improvements required at the Yamba Hotel had also not been complied with. It was intimated that if these were not carried out by the time that the next application for licence renewal was made, then

WHEN HE GOT TO THE RED SEA, HE HAD HIS ARMY BUILD A PONTOON BRIDGE AND ALL THE PEOPLE WALKED ACROSS SAFELY. (CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

An objection to its granting would be made.

MAY

- **Elsie Eggins of Harwood Island has won a prestigious music award- the Trinity College of Music (London) prize. In this instance, the prize winner is no more than eleven years of age, hence (notwithstanding she is a member of a musical family and probably assisted by her heredity) her success is in a large part due to the ability and devotion of her teacher Miss I. Fawcett.**
- **The Palmers Island Patriotic League has every right to feel satisfied with their first welcome home to a returned soldier, that in honour of Private W. Burns being considered the brightest and most demonstrative gathering ever held at Palmers island.**
- **The twenty- sixth Annual exhibition of the Lower Clarence Agricultural Society was held in perfect weather. The attendance was well up on the average of most days. Interest was centred largely on the middle of the ring with a spill or two adding vim to this phase of the proceedings. The pavilion display could stand a lot of improvement.**
- **Maclean Council is dealing stringently with straying stock**
- **An important meeting of canegrowers was held in the Maclean Literary Institute recently to discuss ongoing problems,**
- **The important work of connecting Stanley Street, Maclean with River Street will commence at an early date.**

THEN HE RADIOED HEADQUARTERS FOR REINFORCEMENTS. THEY SENT BOMBERS TO BLOW UP THE BRIDGE AND ALL THE ISRAELITES WERE SAVED." (CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

JUNE

- A sitting of the local (Maclean) Lands Board was held on Monday last. The following were dealt with: Mr F. Schwonberg was granted an extension of term of his special lease for 10 years— rent £5 per annum; Jas. Connolly was granted a special lease of half an acre parish of Woodford for a factory for a period of 10 years, rent £5 per annum; Cooper Wallace, special lease of Crab Island (10 acres) parish of Ashby, for grazing and agriculture for 15 years £1 per acre for the first 3 years, then £7/10/- for the balance of term; G. A. Garrett was granted a special lease of Yungum Island containing 2.5 acres. Parish of Harwood for vegetable garden. Approved for 10 years, rent £2 an acre.
- **MACLEAN/ASHBY FERRY**— A special meeting of the Maclean Municipal Council was held recently to deal with the mode of placing motor power on the above ferry. After several motions, it was decided to offer the Harwood Shire £30 towards installation and £52 per annum for upkeep.
- The Iluka Crossing is cause for some concern. We are informed that the *Kyogle* (*had difficulty crossing the bar*). The bar was perfectly smooth, but the crossing carried only 9ft 6in. at low water, She crossed at 7.45 and took the ground (*hit bottom*) on crossing, where she remained for half an hour. Last week the *Pulganbar* was off the bar at 8am, but could not cross until 4 pm owing to there being insufficient water on the crossing.

"GOODNESS! JOEY, IS THAT REALLY WHAT THE TEACHER TAUGHT YOU?" HIS MOTHER ASKED.

MDHS– CLARENCE RIVER ADVOACTE

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No.13 Church St. Maclean-history.• Florence May Matthews m. Denis or Denny (no information).• Henry Gillett (Came on “Susan” with John Small)- location of Small house and South Arm Public School, Woodford Island.• Contact number of relative of E. H. McSwan (for family history).• Charles Bathgate, farmer of Ashby, and family.• Information re service station, Pacific Highway built by Cliff and Marge Arnott and opened in 1966. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Hayward, farmer of Brushgrove and family circa 1870’s on.• Watson, Gregor, Lee families of Lower Clarence..• James Duncan Stuart, farmer of South Arm, Tyndale– requested precise location of the farm and James’ life span.• Jim F (or H) Burns, employee of Harwood Sugar Mill circa 1940/47, when aged 22 years of age– no information.• Donation of medals of Trooper William Thomas Rayner and full service details from nephew Kenneth William Rayner• Gravesite of Katherine/ Kathleen Egan m. Francis Arthur Ellem. |
|--|--|

“NO, MUM, BUT IF I TOLD YOU WHAT SHE REALLY SAID, YOU WOULD NEVER BELIEVE ME!”



Maclean District Historical Society Inc.

Publications for Sale

<i>Maclean, The First Fifty Years 1862-1912</i> by E.H.McSwan.....	\$20.00
<i>Maclean and the Scottish Connection</i> by E.H.McSwan.....	\$20.00
<i>Discovery and Settlement of the Lower Clarence</i> by E.H.McSwan..	\$6.00
<i>Lower Clarence Cemetery List</i>	\$15.00
<i>History of Education on the Lower Clarence</i>	
<i>Maclean</i> by E.H.McSwan.....	\$15.00
(This book is the history of Early Maclean - Primary, District Rural and Intermediate High School to 1961)	
<i>Past Schools</i> by M.Switzer.....	\$15.00
(Schools in the district that are now closed)	
<i>High School</i> by E.H.McSwan.....	\$20.00
(From 1961 onwards)	
<i>Clarence River Sugar Industry- A Tour among the Mills</i> compiled by Ruth McAulay.....	\$15.00
<i>The Fishing Industry, Lower Clarence-The Early Years</i> by Yvonne Johnson.....	\$20.00
<i>Ferries of the Lower Clarence</i> by D Towner and E.H.McSwan-	
book.....	\$10.00
CD.....	\$10.00
Book and CD.....	\$15.00
<i>Shark Creek Tales</i>	\$7.00
<i>Champions in Sport</i>	\$5.00
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<i>Maclean Brass Band</i> by Yvonne Johnson.....	\$15

(POSTAGE EXTRA)

MACLEAN DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



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Our Society meets on the first Tuesday of every month in our meeting room at the Museum at 9.30 am.

The Harwood Ferry no 3 on the Clarence River - 1963.

