

# THE PIONEER

THE BUDERIM HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Historical accounts  
Buderim – Mooloolaba area

Number 12. April 2023

### OUR LIFE IN THE FIFTIES

**Bev Lavarack (née Bell) and Lorelle Flanagan (née Ashby)**

*In 2010 Bev Lavarack and Lorelle Flanagan presented a History Talk to the Buderim Historical Society. This paper is compiled, with very few edits plus a few photographs, from the notes they prepared for that talk.*

We are both from pioneering families – the Bells and the Jones – who settled in Buderim in the early 1880s.

Bev and Lorelle with History Talk convenor the late Wilma Hiddins

**BEV** - Most of you would have heard Northa Burnett's talk about early Buderim a couple of months ago. Lorelle and I are going to talk about things half a century later. It's not a carefully researched history, just our memories of growing up in the Buderim of the 1950s. We have seen enormous changes in the last 50 years, probably more change than in the 50 years from 1900 to 1950.

My great grandfather (William Fawcett Bell Snr) and his family were sponsored by James Lindsay and arrived in Buderim from England in 1884. He first worked at Buderim Mountain Sugar Mill and



then for Ernest Burnett. He built a small cottage on a holding on the lower slopes near the present Crosby's Hill Road. My grandfather, Robert (know as Bob Bell), built a house on land in Bell Road in 1905 (on the left hand side just before the steep hill). Here he grew bananas for many years. My father and his brother also worked on the farm. The farm was sold in about 1950 when there was no money to be made out of growing bananas. My father, Eddie Bell, then worked at the ginger factory and we lived on Gloucester Rd where Manawee Nursery's shop is now.

**LORELLE** – In 1880 my great grandfather, Price Jones, bought land (70 acres) at Horseshoe Bend and another 69 acres at Lower Lindsay Road. This is how Jones Road got its name. He began growing sugar cane but soon joined the sugar mill which was situated where the old saw mill was (now the Post Office), as an engine driver. When that closed he returned to farming but later joined the sugar mill owned by Joseph Dixon. When this mill closed he returned to banana farming.

Buderim in the 1950s was a small country town where it was safe to leave doors and windows open. We knew almost every resident and all about them as well – such as their religion, where they worked, went to school, who they socialised with – that's just the way it was. There were a few well known scandals too, which everyone knew about.

**COMMUNITY** – This was chiefly a farming community. On a drive along Gloucester Road or King Street., you would see mostly farms with only a few houses. Change to the built-up area was not until about the mid 1960s. We believe the population during the 50s was not much more than 600. As a comparison: 1965 – 1068; 2006 – 34454.

Farmers grew ginger, bananas, strawberries and small crops.

#### GINGER FACTORY

**BEV** - Large number of employees. As well as ginger products, Merrybud strawberry jam was produced. Also rosella and pineapple products. My father was in charge of the steam/boiler at the factory which included the steam whistle. The blasts of the whistle at 8 am and 5 pm indicated the start and end of the working day at the factory. Further whistles at 12 noon and 1 pm informed employees of the lunch hour. Also short blasts at 10am to 10:10 and 3pm to 3:10 for the morning and afternoon breaks. It was also relied upon by many other townspeople. In 1978 the factory was closed and rebuilding commenced at Yandina. The new factory is a flourishing tourist attraction in Yandina today.



#### UNDERWOOD'S MUFFLER FACTORY

**LORELLE** - This also had a large workforce. Underwoods arrived on Buderim in 1950 and commenced building mufflers under their house which was situated at the upper end of Burnett Street. Then they progressed to the factory a year or two later.

#### SHOPS

**BEV** – **MIDDY'S** – The store was opened in 1915 by the Middleton Family (father, mother and son). Mr Ernest Middleton was fondly referred to as 'Old Middy'. His son, Glyn, carried on in the business for many years after his father died. Their slogan was 'Middy's for anything and everything' – groceries, fruit and vegetables, hardware, materials, haberdashery, school items, farming equipment and a lot of that equipment was hanging from the ceiling.

My mother opened an account there so I could buy 3 pence worth of biscuits after school on the afternoons when I played tennis on the courts opposite. Actually my mother still had that account at the time of her death in November 2007. By that stage there were only a handful of account holders in the book.

**LORELLE - TOP SHOP** (where the Gloucester Centre is now) – owned by Norman and May Fielding who lived in the house next to the shop. This house is still there today. There were large drawers containing sugar, rice, flour, etc. Monthly accounts were kept for regular customers. Back then groceries were delivered from the shops; a fruiterer from Maroochydore would drive around the streets; a fish man would sell fresh fish on Friday. Many of us sat down to haddock and white sauce on Friday night! The haddock which was in a wooden box sitting on the counter was sold at Fielding's shop every Friday. Mum and Dad helped run the business for four years.

A **BAKERY** was built on the side of Fielding's shop and it supplied the whole town with freshly baked bread. The baker was Ivor Ede (a descendant of Price Jones) whose family had lived on Buderim for many years. Ivor was Mum's cousin and Bev's Dad's cousin. Bread was baked in twin tins. Quite a few of us 'kids' had to collect bread on the way home from school and many of us were guilty on many, many occasions of eating the middle out of one of the half loaves.

**BOTTOM SHOP** (just near the corner of Ballinger Road) – Also owned by Norman Fielding. This was a somewhat lesser shop, more like a convenience for people living at that end of the town. My Dad worked in this shop. It was a gathering place for younger single men after work – they would call in for a soft drink and gossip. We had never heard of restaurants. There was a café in Nambour. No takeaways on Buderim, but there was fish and chips at Maroochydore. It was a treat to have an ice cream in a cone.

**BEV – BUTCHER SHOP** (opposite the old Post Office, where the Hub shops are now) – owned by Weakleys. Customers could always get the news of the town on a visit to the butcher shop. A large tree stump was used as a chopping block and there was sawdust on the floor. Carcasses were hanging on large meat hooks. There was a cold room and a brine vat. The Weakleys slaughtered much of their meat at slaughter yards opposite the nursery at the bottom of Crosby's Hill.



**LORELLE - CHEMIST** – situated just up from the old Post Office. Mr Chapman was the chemist. Later a larger shop was built nearby.

**BEV - DRAPER** – In the same building as the chemist (two very small shops). Mrs Hepburn who was an excellent dressmaker had a drapery. Here I might also mention Bayards in Nambour where our mothers purchased material. The very small ES&A Bank – was situated next to the Bottom Shop. Customers would enter one by one, while others stood outside respecting people's privacy

**POST OFFICE** – Mr Walsh was the postmaster, a real gentleman, and his wife was a lovely lady, always well dressed and wearing gloves. Mail was delivered by a postman on a pushbike. He would blow his whistle to alert the householder that there was mail in the letter box. The post office was open on Saturday mornings. There were telegrams in those days and they would be delivered to the door by the postman and sometimes advised by phone, but few households had landlines in those days.



We all listened to the wireless (Blue Hills), no television till the end of the 50s/early 60s.

**LORELLE – THE DEPOT** – the building was opposite the Hall across Church Street. This was where the produce was brought in from the farms and then transported to Brisbane (Buderim Transport). Two of the most memorable characters to bring their produce to the depot were Henry Iscak (beans and citrus) and his draft horse ‘Tarzan’ pulling a cart; the other Frank Wise in an old truck (which has been restored and features in parades in Buderim these days). Frank Wise was known as ‘The Honey Man’. Apart from his farm produce, he had lots of bee hives. On return journey from the Brisbane markets, the trucks would bring back products from Peters and Pauls in green chippers containing dry ice. The transport would leave Buderim late at night and return early the next morning.

**BEV - PERKINS’ GARAGE** - (later became Vandy’s), the only garage on Buderim, but petrol was also available at Fielding’s Top Shop from a pump bowser. There was another pump bowser at Charles Sorensen’s backyard garage in Tindale avenue.



**SAWMILL** - McCowan’s sawmill was where the new Post Office complex now stands.

#### SCHOOL OF ARTS OR ‘THE HALL’

The Library in the School of Arts was open Saturday afternoons and Wednesday night. The Librarian was Mrs Walker, then Evelyn Dickman. There was a billiards room. Dances, flower shows and fetes were regularly held in the hall. ‘Pictures’ (not ‘movies’ as they are called today) were a weekly event on Saturday night, and occasionally a matinee on Saturday afternoon. Stand for the national anthem ‘God Save the Queen’. Good value for money then – Movietone News, cartoons, a feature film and a support film. There was an interval when patrons would go over to Fielding’s Top Shop to buy a drink, ice cream or lollies. Concerts were occasionally held in the hall and people from surrounding areas would attend. ANZAC Day services were held there.

#### SCHOOL

**LORELLE** - Number of students: According to the school roll 182 in 1952; and 191 in 1955). There were five teachers. We were in combined classes, every second year Bev and Lorelle in same classroom. The majority of the children lived on Buderim but a few came from Tanawha on ‘the transport’ as the old bus was called.

Our first headmaster was Mr Ott – fondly known as ‘Bull Ott’ (1941-1953) and was frequently wielding the cane. His wife would play the piano. We were taught Australian and Irish songs. They had a small, dirty dog, a silky terrier. The second headmaster we had was Matthew Toohey – he always wore a safari jacket (or dust



1953 grades 3 and 4. Lorelle holding slate, Bev behind her.

jacket) to keep the chalk dust off his clothes. When in year 7 and 8 (which he taught) he made sure we knew all about the War, particularly Milne Bay where he had served in the Air Force.

We started school in Prep 1, then Prep 2 and then grades finishing with Grade 8 when we sat for the State Scholarship Exam. In that year we did extra studies after school till 5pm leading up to that final lot of exams. In all we spent nine years at primary school.

**BEV** – ‘Learn to swim’ was introduced when we were in the higher grades. This involved a trip down to the Mooloolah River in ‘Nomies Bus’ which was a rather horrifying experience. An old truck with canvas sides and board seating in the back. At the river the older boys would fence off the swim area with star pickets and rope. The swim instructor was Mrs May Fielding. The small change shed for boys and girls had a hole in the wall which was always shielded on the girls’ side while changing into togs.

One of the highlights of the year was the Fancy Dress Ball – an annual event held in the School of Arts. We had to learn old time dances – it was wonderful night. There was a ‘Grand Parade’ which Olive Ashby would help to organise.



Fancy Dress Ball. Bev holding the goose, Lorelle’s mother (Olive Ashby) to the right

Last day of school was Breakup Day/Sports Day. This was when the House Cup was awarded. Most mothers helped on the day. At the end of the day we were all given slices of watermelon and a bag of boiled lollies. After consuming a bag of these lollies many of us suffered from a sore mouth.

1953 – For Coronation celebrations the students formed a ‘E crown R’ display on the oval (see right).

Years 7 and 8 attended Rural School at Nambour High on Tuesday: the girls, sewing and cooking and laundry; boys, woodwork/metal and trade drawing and a little agriculture. School milk was delivered to the school each morning and just left outside. The top layer was warm while the bottom layer still cool, so pupils would try to be at the back of the queue. Teachers soon became aware of this. The Plot – the tall pine trees where the ANZAC Day ceremony is held was out of bound for students. (NOTE – advised by earlier student that the plot had been used as a garden plot, hence the name).



**LORELLE** - Bullying by the big boys was accepted – a big boy thing! A few fist fights, tying up to tree, scaring little kids but it did not affect us in any way. Students were divided into two Houses – Eyre and Kennedy and there was great rivalry. Bev and Lorelle both captains of Eyre in their respective 8<sup>th</sup> years. Daily parades before school were very important. When God Save the Queen was played and we saluted the flag. There was another parade before going into school after big

lunch. Strict procedure, and we marched a lot, marching was of great importance. We were marked on marching ability for competition between Houses.

**BEV** - Majority of students continued on to Nambour High School. It took one hour by bus, detouring through Woombye to the Post Office and the Station. We travelled through flooded roads each February. We walked from the bottom of Somerville's Hill (now known as Jones Rd - the top part was known as Shaw's Hill) until mothers' pick up in later years.

#### SPORT

**BEV** - Tennis fixtures in winter, travelling all over the district (Palmwoods, Montville, Mooloolaba, Landers Shute). Children were encouraged to play with the adults. Cricket in summer for the boys. Again, travelling around the district. Croquet ground next to the tennis courts (where the pool and grassed area is now). Bowls established in 1952, Golf club established in 1954.

#### ASSOCIATIONS

##### **LORELLE**

Red Cross – Mrs May Fielding; Girl Guides , Mrs Farrow – bob a job;  
Boy Scouts – Mr Park

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

**LORELLE** -Music – Mrs Chadwick was the main organiser. There was a recital every year with lot of children. It was an exciting/special occasion. I learnt to play the piano as did a lot of children. I practised the piano (playing duets) with Dianne Ecuyer in Pioneer Cottage. Dianne lived there with her family.

**BEV** - Sinns back yard playground - there were seven Sinn children who brought their friends home to play. I remember mandarins to eat. Similar play times at Iscaaks – mangoes to eat.



#### CHURCHES

**BEV** - Methodist – present Uniting church hall was the church, with entrance right on the corner.

Church of England (Anglican) – present church hall was the church.

Presbyterian – in a hall behind the butcher shop.

Catholic – Local Catholics travelled first to Nambour then to Maroochydore, no Buderim church at that time.

A great percentage of people attended church and most children at the school attended Sunday School. In a small community, as Buderim was back then, everyone knew what religion people were. Hats and gloves were always worn by women and girls when attending church or Sunday school.

#### WAY OF LIFE

**LORELLE** - Modest houses, water tanks, outside dunnies (which our dads had to empty weekly). There was no sanitary cart, maybe it started in the 60s. The outside dunny – we used cut up newspaper or green tissue paper from apples (Dad was a fruiterer). Later we had septic tanks before sewerage.

Milk came from neighbours with cows. Food scraps were buried, or given to chooks or dogs. Paper was burnt in the backyard.

**BEV** - Unsealed roads, the grader usually preceded rain falling! There were no bitumen roads [the first was in 1951 and stretched from Crosby Hill Road to Gloucester Road]. The school hill was red



soil with a large rock protruding in the middle of the road. Chains had to be used on tyres during wet weather as the red soil was so slippery. A couple of very large rocks had to be blasted out to make way for the road construction.

NOTE – compare the number of roads up the mountain then and now. Roads up the mountain were Crosby’s Hill, Somerville’s Hill, Shaw’s Hill (these two hills now called Jones Road), Mooloolaba Road and Mons Road. No other roads up the mountain. Lindsay Road, Dixon Road, Cogill Road, Ballinger Road didn’t go right through at that time.

**LORELLE** – In the early 50s there were no washing machines. Everyone had an outside copper boiler with a stick and a long single clothes line propped up in the centre with a clothes prop. Later we had washing machines with a wringer between rinsing tubs. The Hills Hoist was a joy to us kids when they arrived.

Electricity – many did not have electricity in the earlier times. Those without used kerosene lights/lanterns. There was no refrigeration, and no hot water systems. Water was boiled on wooden stoves, there was always a kettle on the stove for cup of tea. Some stoves had water tanks attached. Bath time, lick and a promise or cat lick. Whole family used one lot of bath water. We all had an ice chest, blocks of ice came once a week or we just had a safe for keeping food. Some people heated their irons on top of stove and removed them with a special handle.

**BEV** - Walking home from school we would eat guavas, wild raspberries, gooseberries which were growing along the side of the roads. Most of us didn’t wear shoes to school, but had a pair of good shoes for other occasions. We wore sandshoes (Volleys) when playing tennis. Poinciana trees surrounded by wooden guard rails for protection against cows, were planted the length of Gloucester Road.

**LORELLE** - Garden Parties were a great social occasion. They were held at Buderim House, Clithero, and Abt’s house with little attic on top (King Street). These large homes were surrounded by beautiful gardens. Mrs Hancock provided the clothes for the fashion parades ‘Fashion of 1920s’. Raised money for newly developed Bowls Club.

**BEV** - Children of our era were well behaved, very well mannered, had respect for elders. Adults referred to as ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’ – very formal compared to today’s standards. Our mothers made all our clothes, and made them very well. We remember the excitement when nylon first came on the scene – every girl had to have a new nylon dress.

#### MEDICAL

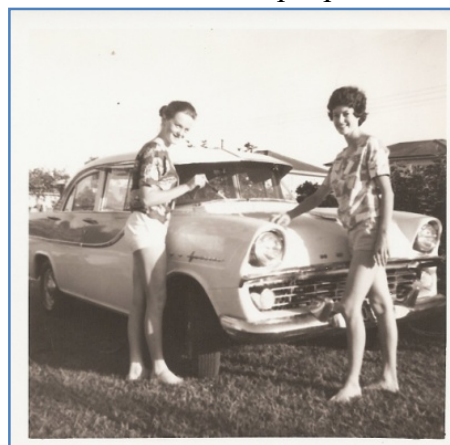
**LORELLE** - Dr Shaw was the only doctor on Buderim for many years. (Bev told the story of a cure for lump on ankle advised by Dr Shaw... a penny was placed on the lump and bandaged for quite some time and the lump disappeared!). Later Dr Savill arrived and later still, people went to doctors at Maroochydore and Nambour.

#### CYCLONES

**LORELLE** - There were a few cyclones causing little damage to property which demonstrated the solid structure of homes on Buderim. However there was bad damage to crops and banana plants were flattened.

#### CONCLUSION

**LORELLE** - Looking back over these years we were fortunate to have experienced this simple lifestyle. They were



great times. Bev and I have been best of friends since our childhood. Actually it goes back a little further as my great aunt, Elizabeth Jones, married Bev's great uncle, Ben Ede, whose sister married Bob Bell (Bev's grandfather). We have always remained in touch even though sometimes we were thousands of miles apart. We have enjoyed reliving the fifties over many cups of coffee at Bev and Bill's home and trust you have enjoyed our memories.

ooo000ooo



**Buderim Central – an area Bev and Lorelle knew well in the 1950s**

Aerial photograph of Buderim Central in 1955. Note: School oval with cricket pitch, two tennis courts to left of the oval and the croquet green (now a round-a-bout) to left of tennis courts. Below the school oval and across the road is Middleton's store. The Buderim Mountain School buildings are to the right of the oval. To the right of the image is the intersection of Main Street and Gloucester Road, with the War Memorial Hall and Church of England on the lower side. The Post Office (now the 'Old Post Office') is across the Lindsay Road/Main Street intersection from the Croquet Lawn. Weakley's Butcher Shop is across the road from the Croquet Lawn. On the lower part of the image is Pioneer Cottage (then still owned by Sybil Vise), off Ballinger Road and enclosed by the 'D' - shaped Pioneer Crescent.

ooo000ooo

**PHOTOGRAPH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** Photographs are from the Bev Lavarack collection and from the Buderim Historical Society collection.