NEW MANAGEMENT AT GLENGUIN ESTATE

SINGLETON CELEBRATES
OFFICIAL OPENING OF RYAN AVENUE PROJECT
FROM THE EDITOR

OUR OWN CREATION STORY

If your personal political predilection tended to lack the support of most Australian voters over that first weekend in July, don’t feel lonely or abandoned; official statistics show that my cunningly clandestine advice in last month’s editorial to go for the FBI faction resulted in a mass turn-out for the opposing point of political view. But hey—Broke Fordwich (and Milbrodale and Bulga too) are still here, shining in the serenity of the current rain pattern, and my mob of upper paddock wallabies are munching away, relieved to know they don’t have to go to the polls for another three years. Well, I hope so.

On more immediate matters, our first issue of the new financial year weaves its spell (hopefully) with news of the glad and the sad—particularly for those of us more bulbs-bent. Look for the stories about the developments with the Wallaby Scrub Road, the uplifting account of one of our sub-region’s most impressive churching communities at St Marks Anglican and their restoration triumph, and—an article that will underline our links with the First Peoples—the first demonstration of Indigenous Fire management practice for hundreds of years.

Letter to the editor:

Thank you to all the Bulga residents who attended the Council meeting on 20th June... Three residents of Bulga and one from Broke took public access and spoke of the importance to the local residents of the heritage Wallaby Scrub Road.

The Council officers were recommending that the Wallaby Scrub Road be handed over to Rio Tinto. The effort of the residents was well worthwhile and Councillors went against the recommendation and unanimously voted not to close Wallaby Scrub Road!

We will wait and see what the State Government will do now.

John Krey (for the BMPA)

See page 8 for full story

My reason for highlighting the latter is very personal, concerning visits to Elizabeth Gates Nursing Home where a team of unsung carers look after my wife and many other victims of later-life conditions affecting or threatening the elderly. A section of the care /nursing squad at ‘Lizzie G’ involves Lifestyle staff (hi to Ruth, Cathy, and their marvellous mates and volunteers) who relieve what can be a very testing time for some with a selection of entertainment and educational interludes. No, not just Bingo (fun though it is); the Home Lifestyle staff ring the changes so that there’s always something new on offer. Back to that Indigenous link: only days after that Federal Election, Cathy approached me to show the remarkable array of Aboriginal program material that had been arranged for that Wednesday. Knowing about our little patch of the Hunter, and particularly the location of the Baiame depiction at Milbrodale, Cathy was a font of information about this sacred site.

I never realised that the Baiame creation story reflects Judeo-Christian theology. Certainly, the First Peoples knew several gods and goddesses instead of our monotheistic belief—but all traced back to creation of the earth. Number One deity was Wandjina, and Baiame was second, descending from the sky to create humans. They were warned not to eat animals but only plants. Being human, they disobeyed and so death and sin were brought into the world. Whenever I visit the Baiame site, I’m aware of this very spiritual connection—enhanced by the knowledge that its practitioners have observed it for some 40,000 years.

And one last word for ‘Lizzie Gates’ and their matchless management team of Carol, Di and Barbara: congratulations on the massive solar capacity update on the main building. On that note, look for the solar farm capacity approval story herein, and (no matter how you voted) be glad that renewables might be a big issue in decision-making by our Canberra masters over the next three years.

(Tom Jackson)
Phil Jones used to be a web design/ux guy - 16 years of big bucks but diminishing passion. A uni degree later and a fast moving involvement in all that is wine, sees Phil now fully involved in one of his great passions. Now in charge of one of Broke Fordwich’s premier vineyards, Phil is excited about bringing the Gleguin cellar door up to new standards.

Phil’s Story:

We came, we saw, we decided to move. From Canberra to the Hunter Valley and the realisation of something I had once considered just a pipe dream, only to then put everything I had into. It’s come a lot quicker than I expected.

The interesting part of all of this is how close I came to not applying for the job in the first place. Everything was against me – I was a guy who’d just done my first (albeit, haphazard) vintage of sorts, left a very comfortable life as a web developer and had little real wine industry experience.

I had gone into the retail side of things as I felt that was an important aspect to the wine industry I needed to learn, and in spite of all of that I felt I was the least likely candidate. So I very nearly didn’t put my hand up.

Think about it – there’s hundreds if not thousands of people in the Hunter already who are employed in the wine industry. Of those, a large percentage would have the skills needed to do this job, and would have been in the industry for years. And besides, I’m a cool-climate lackey, I’m not even sure if I want to move to the Hunter.

It took four days of looking at the job advert, and the wife calmly informing me that I was under no obligation to even accept the job should it get that far, that finally forced my to apply. It was not even 24 hours later that I’d spent half an hour on the phone with the vineyard owner and agreed to come up to the Hunter at the earliest convenience.

Less than a week later, I was up there having a look at the property, the set up, what the role would be, how it would evolve and grow. There was no talk of three month trial, or review after a year – it was apparent that this was a job for the long term. They wanted someone to commit to their ideas and plans. And I was hooked.

I would have signed then and there, but they were insistent that the wife and family needed to come up and see the place first. This was a package deal and if one element of the package didn’t work, the whole thing fell apart. The job also came with a three bedroom house on site so we needed to be sure every piece of the puzzle fit.

So a week later, I was back up there – this time with family in tow. The idea of it – the lifestyle, the fact that we don’t need a house, the schools are small and close, the community feel of the town – everything about it, the wife instantly fell for. And within hours, I had a formal job offer on the table.

So on July 1 I will find myself in the Hunter Valley, awaiting the family’s move a couple of months later, starting the next chapter as Cellar Door Manager with Glenguin Estate. The role will also see me play a bit of a role in the vineyards and a smaller role in the winery over vintage. It combines what I’ve learnt in retail, my former life in digital marketing, and my studies in oenology into the almost perfect role. I get to apply what I know, whilst learning my new trade and new skills. I get to work for a guy who I respect enormously, and whose enthusiasm and passion for what he wants to achieve is infectious. I still pinch myself when I think of what’s to come.

10 months ago, I was finishing a contract in web work that so frustrated me that it forced my hand. I never expected to be in this position so soon later. For me it just shows that if you’re willing to put yourself out there, take a few (calculated) risks and be passionate about what you want, things will open up. I’ve closed one chapter of my journey and am about to embark on something even more incredible. I used to think in terms of the next contract, the next 6 months, the next year. Now I’m thinking the next vintage, 5 years from now, 10 years, etc.

And I can’t wait to get started.
St Mark’s Church at Bulga is sporting a facelift and to celebrate and give thanks a Eucharist was held on 15th May, 2016.

Large cracks in the back wall of the building have been repaired with repointing as well as some repointing to the western wall.

The roof has been rust-proofed and painted and the inside walls have been resealed and painted along with the outside trimmings. Guttering, barge boards, fascia boards timber eaves and battens and external support timbers have been replaced where needed. New carpet has been laid and a new vestry built.

Red balloons and material strips adorned the Church and the Congregation as we celebrated the Day of Pentecost and St Mark’s Day. The very cheerful Church service was conducted by Reverends John Gilbert and Sandra Hulyer and was well attended by local people, ex-local people and other very welcome visitors.

Following the service we adjourned to the Recreation Ground Clubhouse for a delicious light luncheon consisting of lots of home-cooked goodies during which we drew our monster raffle where eleven lucky people claimed prizes as well as two lucky door prizes. The winners were: 1st – Groceries – John Tulloch, 2nd – Groceries – Tracey Swan, 3rd – Towels – Audrey Buckley, 4th – Movie Tickets – Christina Metlakovic, 5th – Small box of Groceries – Bruce Merrick, 6th – Foot Pampering Pack – Pat Hornfeldt, 7th – Basket of Fruit and Veges – Tanya Tlaskal, 8th – Brooch – Clemmie Tulloch, 9th – Bromiliad – Terri Kennedy, 10th – Bouquet of Flowers – Noeleen Partridge, 11th – Cooler Bag – Rev. Sandra Hulyer.

The Lucky Door winners were Debbie Gilbert and Gordon Grainger.

The Congregation of St Mark’s wish to thank the local Community as well as the people of Singleton and surrounding districts for their support in purchasing raffle tickets, all those who supplied food for the luncheon and also everyone who contributed in any way to the renovations which have made our lovely 128 year old St Mark’s look like new again.

WHAT TO DO WITH McNAMARA PARK?

The centre of Broke Village is dominated by McNamara Park: home to many thousands of campers and caravans during the year, and home also to the Broke Village Fair and other community events. In recent months the residents of Broke & Bulga have been asked by Singleton Council to come up with some ideas of what we would like Council to provide as civic amenities – due largely to a funding grant provided by Glencore Coal. This is probably a once in a generation opportunity for us to do something.

My suggestion: based on feedback from campers and caravan owners, the committee of the Broke Village Fair and some residents I would like to make four suggestions for the Park:

Upgrade the power supply. There is a limited amount of power available in the Park at the moment, and this restricts the Fair Committee in what they can do.

Provide a RV dump station. This requires an upgrade to the existing septic system and some additional infrastructure, but it is the top of the list of the things the camper-van people ask for. It would probably involve an upgrade to the toilets too, and that is a good thing.

Build ‘Australia’s Longest Picnic Table’: for use by both locals and visitors. This idea has been floated many times, now we have the funds to do something about it.

Erect a shade over the picnic table: to make it more use year round as the sun can get pretty fierce in summer.

None of these things are the sort of thing we can do with volunteer labour. They all require specialists and that means funding. At the moment the funding is available, but I feel we need to act sooner rather than later if we are to achieve any of these outcomes. I do not imagine my ideas are the only ones, so if anybody would like to contribute any further ideas or to lend a hand getting these things over the line, please get in touch. I would welcome any support.

Mike Wilson: 0419 244785, 15 Singleton Street Broke, belarna@bigpond.com

A temporary long table in an California US in 2011
The Baird government has granted planning approval for four new large-scale solar plants, potentially more than doubling the existing capacity in the state.

The four plants approved for construction have a combined capacity of 175 megawatts (MW), and would generate another electricity for 56,000 homes if built.

“NSW is Australia’s large-scale solar leader, with the country’s three largest solar farms and hundreds of megawatts of solar electricity capacity online and in the pipeline,” planning minister Rob Stokes said.

“We want to make people’s lives better through good planning, and these projects will increase electricity capacity, cut greenhouse emissions and create jobs for local communities”.

Building the plants would generate more than 330 new construction jobs, save 342,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas annually, and include more than a half a million solar panels between them, Mr Stokes’ office said.

NSW is already home to AGL’s two solar plants at Broken Hill and Nyngan, which are operating with a combined capacity of 135 megawatts. Also under construction is the 56 MW Moree solar farm, the largest now being built in Australia.

Solar energy is the one bright spot for renewables in NSW. Compared with other states, NSW has the second lowest share of clean energy as a total of its electricity, ahead of only Queensland.

So far this year, NSW has sourced 8.8 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources including rooftop solar - barely half Victoria’s 15.8 per cent and a quarter of South Australia’s 36 per cent, according to energy consultants Pitt & Sherry.

“The issuing of planning approvals is a positive development, but it does not automatically equate to more investment,” Kobad Bhavnagri, head of Bloomberg New Energy Finance’s Australian office.

“There are nearly 2000 MW of renewable energy projects with planning approval in NSW, yet in the last year only 175 MW have been financed and committed to construction.”

Closing the gap

However, the state has the potential to close the gap, given a wind resource second only to South Australia’s, sun-drenched inland regions and proximity to major markets and existing infrastructure.

“Solar is a key part of NSW’s energy mix and will become even more important into the future. I’m delighted to see these projects getting the green light,” Anthony Roberts, the energy minister, said.

The four new solar farms are the White Rock project with 20-megawatt capacity, one in Griffith for 60 MW, the Yoogali farm, also near Griffith, with 30 MW and a 65-MW plant for Parkes.

Most of the new plants would be among Australia’s largest. Apart from the Moree plant, the next largest under construction now is a 25-MW plant at Barcaldine in Queensland, according to the Clean Energy Council.

Two other solar farms have had state approval since 2011: the Capital Solar plant in Bungendore with a capacity of 50MW and Manildra Solar Farm with a capacity of 42MW.

Joint Regional Planning Panels have also given approval for three other plants totaling 63 MW at Wagga Wagga, Temora and Dubbo.

Kane Thornton, chief executive of the Clean Energy Council, welcomed the latest proof that large-scale solar was “really cementing its place in Australia’s electricity mix”.

“The potential for large-scale solar right across Australia is massive, and these projects would help ensure NSW remains in the race for each state’s share of renewable energy jobs and investment,” Mr Thornton said.

That race is hotting up, with Daniel Andrews, Victoria’s Labor premier, earlier this month announcing plans for his state to aim for 40 per cent renewable energy in its electricity sector by 2025.

South Australia’s target is 50 per cent renewable energy in its electricity sector by 2025, while Queensland is aiming for that ratio by 2030. NSW’s target is 20 per cent by 2020-21.

Federally, the Turnbull government has made no announcement about its post-2020 renewable energy target, while a Shorten government has promised to aim for 50 per cent by 2030.
The business associates and 1300 dependants of Mr & Mrs R Tinto who come from a palatial establishment in London are invited to attend the funeral of their 185 year old adopted child, Wallaby Scrub Road sometimes known as Great North Road who is to be put to death in 2017 for simply being in the way of family plans.

The service will differ in that the child will be dug up and the ashes scattered in the air above Bulga to drift onto the roof-tops of the houses as a constant reminder of this much loved and respected local citizen who over many years has given help to weary travellers.

The empty grave-site will be expanded to become a massive void to be known as Lake Rio Toxin and is to be protected in perpetuity under a Ministerial Deed of Agreement as a reminder of the great need to destroy the environment.

The executioner and undertaker will be the NSW State Government and pall bearers will be the Planning Assessment Commission.

The beneficiaries of the death benefits are thought to be the Convict Trail Project which as appointed guardian has abandoned the child, and Singleton Shire Council as legal owners who will be forced to accept compensation regardless of its enduring refusal to accept the death penalty judgement.

RIP Wallaby Scrub Road
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Council Reaffirms support for Bulga Residents and opposes road closure

Council received a request from Coal and Allied (Warkworth Mining Ltd) for Council, as the roads authority for Wallaby Scrub Road, to apply to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to close Wallaby Scrub Road.

On June 20th Council met to debate the report prepared by Council Officers, recommending the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road to facilitate the expansion of Rio Tinto’s Warkworth mine.

The recommendation read;
1. Council apply to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to close Wallaby Scrub Road under s.34 (1)(b) of the Roads Act, 1993.
2. A further report be brought back to Council at the completion of the consultation process related to the road closure for the Council to consider whether to consent to the closure of the road under s.37(2)(b) of the Roads Act, 1993.

The Council meeting was attended by many concerned Bulga residents. John Krey, Robert McLaughlin and Stewart Mitchell were granted public access and spoke of Bulga residents’ hope that Council would not reverse the previous Council support for Bulga when they have denied this proposition on five previous occasions. Kevin Taggart spoke movingly for himself and his people, his connection to the land proposed to be destroyed and the heartbreak of seeing the desecration already visited on the land mined by Rio. A lively debate ensued led by Tony McNamara and enthusiastically supported by Val Scott and Sue Moore.

At the end of that exchange, Mayor John Martin added his thoughts on the matter. Initially residents thought he may be ready to reverse his support in the light of the Council Officers’ report. However, as he continued speaking it became evident that he, like those other Councillors who have seen this saga unfold over the past six and a half years, pronounced his ongoing support for the motion.

Applause is considered inappropriate for Council meetings but the “Bulga Battalion” were happy to show their appreciation.

RESOLVED “that Council continue to oppose the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road.”

(McNamara/Scott)

Of course, Bulgarians know that the collusion evident from NSW government actions throughout this epic saga may mean the RMS resume this road and take Council’s authority from them.

This possibility in no way diminishes the gratitude we feel for the ongoing support of Council.

Judith Leslie

BULGA COAL
GLENCORE

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You can also view our approvals, management plans and environmental monitoring data on the website. Go to www.bulgacoal.com.au and click on the Publications tab on the menu.
Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen today officially opened the $2.9 million Ryan Avenue project funded by the NSW Government’s Resources for Regions program.

Mr Johnsen says the Resources for Regions program supports infrastructure projects that improve the social amenity, economic growth and productivity in mining related communities across regional NSW.

“The Ryan Avenue project is an example of the benefits of the Resources for Regions, and one in which the people of Singleton can be proud,” Mr Johnsen said.

“I am also delighted by the news that last week, the NSW Government included Stage 2 of the Town Centre project in those projects shortlisted by the NSW Minister for Regional Development.”

Site works were carried out by civil contractor KCE and commenced in January, with partial road closures and heavy vehicle detours in place.

The project was undertaken in three stages starting at the southern end of Ryan Avenue and was re-opened to two-way traffic on Friday 27 May, five weeks ahead of schedule.

The project included:
• Rehabilitation and replacement of pavement
• New asphalt wearing course
• Line marking and signage
• Road and pedestrian street lights
• Provision of long vehicle parking
• Wayfinding signage
• New footpaths, kerb and guttering.

Singleton Mayor John Martin says the project was a priority due to the high number of heavy vehicles using the route and the conflicts this created with local traffic and pedestrians.

“Ryan Avenue provides a necessary bypass for heavy traffic away from John Street and has important benefits to the community in terms of travel times, pedestrian and road safety,” Cr Martin said.

“The upgrade compliments the new town centre with our unique red street lights, a similar landscaping palette to that of John Street, six new banner poles, as well as seating and bins for waste and recycling.

“Council was fortunate to obtain $2.93 million for this project from the NSW Government’s Resources for Regions fund. The upgrade will benefit the community well into the future.”

For full details and construction photos from the project visit www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/majorprojects

Singleton Council has launched an exciting project called Singleton in 2027. It’s focused on having conversations with our community about their 10-year vision and aspirations for Singleton. Your feedback will help determine Council’s priorities for the next four years.

Over the next six months, we’ll be inviting people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in various consultation activities – both online and in person – and it’s important you get involved.

Register now on Engagement Hub at singleton.engagementhub.com.au to join the conversation.
Hunter Local Land Services is supporting Local Aboriginal Land Councils and land managers to develop firefighting skills and traditional burning techniques to manage their land and implement hazard reduction burns.

Ten Aboriginal land management team members from the Hunter region received TAFE certificates for basic firefighting training they completed with the Rural Fire Service in April.

This was followed by an Indigenous fire management workshop in May, attended by 150 people, including Local Aboriginal Land Councils, community and government representatives. The forum was led by Indigenous fire practitioner, Victor Steffensen, who conducted a cultural burn on day two, a practice which participants said had not been seen in the Hunter for hundreds of years.

The training and the forum are part of a five-year plan to assist Local Aboriginal Land Councils and not for profits develop bushfire management plans, incorporating Aboriginal firestick knowledge, while creating employment opportunities for Aboriginal land management teams in our region.

For more information contact Toby Whaleboat on 4930 1030.
Mystery of the missing Grange: $5 million wine collection feared stolen

It’s the mystery of the missing Grange - how $5 million worth of Australia’s prestige wines has vanished without a trace amid the wreckage of a liquidated Hunter wine empire.

It’s the question former James Estate Wines boss David James can’t answer as the ANZ Bank chases him for more than $11 million.

And collectors who trusted him with their Granges, Henschkes and Torbrecks ask where their wine has gone.

The NSW Police Force’s Fraud and Cybercrime Squad has appealed to the public after launching Strike Force Farrington in March to find the missing wine collections.

They fear the wine, with up to 300 owners, may have been stolen.

The collections were held under agreement by Wine Investment Services, one of a number of companies controlled or owned by Mr James until the collapse of his empire in 2013.

As early as October 2013, liquidators McGrathNicol warned that collectors’ wine was held at facilities at Denman and Homebush, with wine owned by four James companies, and “determining the ownership of the wine will be a complex matter”.

In a statement on Wednesday, Fraud and Cybercrime Squad commander Detective acting Superintendent Matt Craft said that, while business assets were seized in 2013, a number of wine collections were not surrendered.

“Despite numerous further inquiries by owners, liquidators and local police, the wine was not located,” he said.

A NSW Police spokeswoman said the value of the missing wine was estimated at $5 million.

Farrington investigators seized documents and electronic storage devices during a search of a Newcastle storage unit on March 31.

Acting Superintendent Craft appealed to anyone who bought, or had been approached to buy, collectable or vintage wines including Penfolds Grange and varieties of Henschke, Torbreck, and Chris Ringland/Three Rivers.

In the NSW Supreme Court last week, Mr James suffered the latest in a long list of losses after abandoning a case against the ANZ Bank and receivers over disputed wine sales following the business collapse.

Mr James abandoned his case after the ANZ and receivers mounted a case to show the allegations “did not have a serious foundation”, Justice Ball said.

He ordered Mr James to pay the bank’s and receivers’ $210,000 legal costs but noted he was unlikely to be in a position to pay, and he still owed the ANZ $11.75 million.

Mr James was once the Hunter’s rising star of wine who picked up regional exporter of the year in 2005 with James Estate Wines in 25 countries.

In 2013, his wine and print empire collapsed and both the ANZ and Commonwealth banks pursued bankruptcy action.

James Estate Wines, on 43.6 hectares at Pokolbin, was sold in December 2014.

In February, Justice Ball rejected Mr James’ attempt for a stay on a 2014 judgment against him over his ANZ debt.

Joanne McCarthy
Sydney Morning Herald
Peaceful Dove. (Geopelia placida) 19 – 21 cm.

The forehead, throat and breast of this dove are blue-grey. The back, crown and wings are grey-brown with black bars and streaks. The belly is pinkish. They are usually seen in pairs or small groups, they roost in trees and shrubs, forage on the ground and sunbathe on dusty ground with one wing raised. Large groups congregate around water holes and feeding sites. They bob their head when running and take off with whirring wings, usually flying only short distances. Males bow, fan their tail and coo in display to females, rise in a steep, clapping display flight. They breed year round and lay 2 eggs in a frail stick nest on a horizontal limb of a tree or shrub about 1-2 m high. Both parents share incubation of around 14 days. The young fledge in about 16 days. They have a high pitched “Goola-goo” call and soft cooing. Diet is seeds and they live in woodlands, rain forest margins.

Elizabeth

Joyeys Retreat

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