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COAST NEWS



KNITTING NANNAS

SAVING THE WORLD ONE STITCH AT A TIME

Clifton | Scarborough | Wombarra | Coledale | Austinmer | Thirroul

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Cover image by Anthony Warry Photography

MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



DR ROB BRANDER
 – aka 'Dr Rip' – is a coastal geomorphologist and Associate Professor at the University of New

South Wales in Sydney. A resident of Stanwell Park, he's been studying beaches for 25 years, starting in Canada where water temperatures convinced him to come to Australia to do his PhD. He is an international expert on rip currents and runs a beach safety education program called The Science of the Surf (www.scienceofthesurf.com). His column is on page 45.



JANICE CREENAUNE
 is a retired English teacher of 35 years, who has lived and worked in the Illawarra, and completed three

year-long overseas teacher exchanges. A wife and mother of three, she sees the life of a retiree as an evolution, something to be cherished, enjoyed. The Publicity Officer for Northern Illawarra University 3rd Age (U3A) her interests include travel, Letters-to-the Editor SMH, letterpress printing and film study. Janice writes the monthly 'Time to...' article – see page 32.



KIRK GILMORE
 was born in Coledale Hospital 10 minutes after twin brother David in September 1961. He had the best

times growing up in Austinmer. In 2005, Kirk returned to live in Austinmer with his wife, Angela, and two teenage daughters. An award-winning photographer, his career at Fairfax Media and News Corporation publications spanned over 39 years. He now works as a freelance photographer (you can find him via LinkedIn). Austinmer is still home. See page 48.



JODIE GIBBONS
 is an Interior Decorator and stylist living in Austinmer. Inspired by the design aesthetics of Scandinavian design,

she takes a holistic and organic approach to her work to create spaces that are in harmony with our family and working lives. Her business, Belljar Interiors, services the South Coast and Southern Highlands specialising in interior design, styling and colour consulting. Jodie has written about spring trends – Aztec is back! – read her article on page 16.

2515 COAST NEWS

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Author launches surf series

Mary van Reyk celebrated the launch of her first children's book – *Ava's Big Move* – at Thirroul's Black Gold Gallery last month. 2515 reports.

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

I grew up in the Blue Mountains, went to uni and started my career in Sydney, and now live in Austinmer with my husband, Chris, and our kelpie, Rusty.

Congratulations on your first book! How did you get your big break?

I actually took the very long way around to get published!

I worked in bookstores as a children's specialist, then worked with a publisher, wrote some sample chapters and sent them to an agent, who got me a publishing deal with Hachette. So it took about 10 years to get published.



What is the *Surf Riders Club* series about?

It's like *The Baby-Sitters Club* with surfing, aimed at ages 7-12. The series is about a group of girls who start surfing together, and form the Surf Riders Club.

Who inspired your main character, Ava?

Ava is a friend's daughter. She loves reading, which reminds me of my childhood. When I started writing I was thinking about what she would like to read.

Any other real-life sources of inspiration – should we look out for local beaches in the books?

I borrow a lot from real life! The town of Beachcrest is a combination of the 2515 area and Berrara, near Sussex Inlet. In the book the main surf beach is Perry's, which is really Sharkeys with Austi sea pools added at the south end.

Give us a sneak peak of book two, out next March.

Book two is called *Bronte's Big Sister Problem*. It's about her sister Carrie and how they don't get along as well as they used to now Bronte's in the Surf Riders Club. While that plays out, the girls are also getting ready to compete in the Beachcrest Junior Surf Comp.

The Surfing Australia logo appears on your book cover – please explain their involvement.

Surfing Australia have come on board to endorse the series, it's a real honour because they are such an important part of our surf culture. The girls on the book covers are all from their Surf Groms program. They will share the series with their members, and are also a great resource for all my technical surfing questions.

You also run writing workshops – what's up next?

I show how to use elements of your life to build stories, and also explain how books are made. I'm running a workshop in January for the Illawarra branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia's Kids Day Out in Dapto.

MARY'S TOP 3 SOUTH COAST BEACHES FOR BEGINNER SURFERS

1. Bellambi for the chilled-out longboard waves.
2. Port Kembla because it's so big you can always find a good spot and there are rarely crowds – plus great boreck (pastries) nearby!
3. McCauley's because you can see all the doggos cheering you on from the beach

■ *Ava's Big Move* is published by Hachette Australia. Visit maryvanreyk.com. 2515

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'Use the past to change the future'

No Australian had won first place in the 67-year history of the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair – until a teenage inventor from the Illawarra wowed the world with her SMART Armour project.

Last month 16-year-old Macinley Butson was the youngest presenter on a star-studded line-up at TEDxYouth@Sydney 2017, held on Wednesday, September 6 at Sydney Town Hall.

Macinley, a Year 11 student at The Illawarra Grammar School (TIGS), delivered an inspirational talk on her work as an inventor.

"We can use the past to change the future," said Macinley, explaining how she found solutions to modern-day health care and energy problems by looking back in time, specifically at the armour of Roman gladiators and ancient Egyptian clocks.

Macinley kindly took the time to answer 2515's questions.

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm 16 years old and am currently in year 11 at The Illawarra Grammar School. I have a passion for science and engineering which has lead to many projects since I was young. I have even been able to represent Australia at the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair, through the Science Teachers Association of NSW Young Scientist Competition.

But I don't just do science projects in my spare time, I love ballet and have been dancing since I was three, I also enjoy playing the drums, singing and acting.

What was your TEDxYouth@Sydney talk about?

My TEDx talk focused specifically on how we can use the past to change the future, taking materials and re-purposing them. In this day and age we are all being encouraged to come up with new, novel ideas which I think can be a little daunting for younger generations. I encourage my generation to experiment with a childlike curiosity which can be inspired by the past.

This is what I have done for two of my science projects: SMART Armour which used medieval 'scale maille' armour, and THE SOLAR SYSTEM which was inspired by ancient Egyptian water clocks.

Earlier this year, you became the first Australian ever to win first place at the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair for your "SMART Armour" project in the Translational Medical Science category. What inspired this invention?

One in eight women will develop breast cancer in their life, and it is the second most common form of cancer death among women. Radiotherapy is one of the leading treatments for breast cancer, however, unfortunately side-effects can occur. Most significantly, 1 in 14 women who undergo radiotherapy treatment will develop a second primary cancer in their non-treated breast later in life. I found these facts and thought that it was

continues on page 6

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TIGS GENERAL
INFORMATION
SESSION

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continued from page 4

absolutely devastating that women who undergo treatment may be subject to the same experience again later in their life.

I created a device to help women called the SMART Armour – which stands for Scale Maille Armour for Radiation Therapy. This device not only reduces doses to the non-treated breast by up to 80 percent, it is also easy to use for workers and inexpensive compared to current conventional methods.

The use of copper is a breakthrough in radiation therapy (lead is currently used), whilst the scale maille is a unique and novel touch to this field.

There is still a little work to do but my device has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration of Australia, I have a paper published in the *Journal of Applied Clinical Medical Physics*, which is based in North America, and the SMART Armour is currently undergoing clinical trials at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse in Sydney.

You also recently competed in the Stockholm Junior Water Prize in Sweden. How did that go?

I was honoured to be the sole Australian representative. It was an amazing experience, one of the best of my life. I met some absolutely amazing people from all around the world who all had an interest in water quality, people who I will keep in contact with for years to come. I presented my project entitled THE SOLAR SYSTEM, which was inspired by the past.

Many millions of dollars and thousands of research scientists are working on finding improvements in efficiency of solar panels and major breakthroughs can increase the output efficiency by 1 or 2 percent.

My idea was to apply the ancient technology of the water-drop technique to our modern-day solar panels to create a water-dripping system that mechanically rotates a solar panel to follow the sun. It's called THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

The water-drip system works by matching the storage tank weights on one side of the panel to the strength of the springs used on the other side of the solar panel rotator. This means that I can control the rate of rotation to match that of the path of the sun. The dripping water is then collected and passed through a water filtration system which provides clean potable drinking water.

The SOLAR SYSTEM could be an exciting tool for developing countries and communities as it provides both power as well as filtered potable water. This simple technology allows up to 72 percent more power to be easily collected from our current solar panel technology.



What first fuelled your interest in science and engineering?

I was always a curious child, constantly asking my parents questions like “why is the sky blue?”, wanting to know more about the world around me.

My parents fostered that interest and it began to grow, from asking the questions and receiving an answer to trying to find out the answer myself through experimentation. I have continued with this passion, applying it to areas which I believe it could be most helpful for the people of our world.

Who has helped you along the way?

None of this would have been possible without my parents, they have helped inspire me and encourage me along the way. I also wouldn't have been able to do any of this without the amazing work of the volunteers at the Science Teachers Association of NSW Young Scientist Competition. They are an amazing group of people who are responsible for sending me over to America to compete in the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair.

I would also like to thank the staff at TIGS, my science teacher and mentor teacher who have given me ongoing support in all my endeavours.

What advice would you give to teenagers with bright ideas?

Don't let anybody tell you that your age matters and don't let anybody tell you that your gender matters. Begin to experiment with a childlike imagination and explore with a curiosity which is inspired by the past.

When Thomas Edison was asked how it felt to fail countless times he replied, “I didn't fail 1000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1000 steps.” Failure does happen, but when it happens you need to pick yourself up, it means you have to try harder and try something different. Anyone can find simple answers to global issues, they are out there, someone just needs to rediscover them. **2515**

News BITES



Cath Hill tracks down the latest local hotspots.

CIN CIN PIZZA CUCINA BAR

384 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul

Do make a booking at Cin Cin Pizza Cucina Bar – it's already a hit! On the site of the old Samuel's Bar, this new Italian family restaurant is based on food the owner "grew up on at Nonna's house". This is nicely reflected in old family photos on the wall. Choose pasta, pizza and seafood dishes. There are all-you-can-eat set menus too. Cin Cin!



LOU AND BOBBY'S

368 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul

Lou and Bobby's operates as a small deli, cafe and now a licensed bar (open Wednesday through to Sunday evenings). We enjoyed a cheeky glass of wine with a delightful cheese platter with crackers, olives, quince paste and fruit chutney while the kids were

placated by pizza. Or you can pick up your nitro coffee and grab some delicious deli items and head to the beach for a picnic!

MOORE STREET GENERAL

38 Moore Street, Austinmer

Locals are raving about this charming addition to Moore Street. The cafe does all the right things by supporting sustainability and the decor is welcoming with wildflowers in vases and an old record player on hand. The single origin coffee is amazing. And there are appealing options for vegans and pastry goods from Wollongong's celebrated Sandy Goodwich cafe. It's proving popular on weekends so kick back and bring your patience.

In other local dining news, **South Sailor** (216 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul) will open this month, replacing Bergies. South Sailor will offer traditional fish and chip beach fare as well as an in-house sushi bar, house smoked fish and South Coast oysters. And **Franks Wild Years** record store now operates as a small bar, with food and tunes on Wednesday to Sunday nights. **2515**



South Sailor photo: From the Illawarra Cookbook @quicksand




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This photo: Our cover stars and members of Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed (IKNAG) (clockwise from left): Cherry Hardaker, Shirley Gadding, Joan Krzysik, Annie Marlow and Ann Gadd.



COVER
FEATURE

Knitting Nannas

They've made a YouTube hit video called *Stop CSG Nanna Rap*, they've staged knit-ins and been moved along by police – all in the name of fighting the good fight against companies and politicians they reckon are in the wrong. 2515 meets the Knitting Nannas protest group.

They're a cheery bunch of ladies this Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed (IKNAG), but beneath the friendly demeanour and infectious cheekiness lies a dogged determination to tackle serious issues.

Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG) was established in the New South Wales' Northern Rivers in 2012, "in response to a growing awareness of the exploration for unconventionally mined gas in our prime agricultural land", according to KNAG. The Illawarra branch was formed in 2013, but changed the "G" in its name earlier this year to mean "Greed" not "Gas".

IKNAG has fought coal seam gas, among many other things, but some of IKNAG's latest actions include protesting against the proposed Adani mine in Queensland and the threat it poses to the Great Barrier Reef – and, closer to home, they've rallied against Wollongong Coal's proposed coal washery at its Russell Vale mine. The Nannas claim that if the washery goes ahead it will have "a big impact on the northern suburbs", resulting in a "huge increase of coal trucks on Memorial Drive, which is already congested".

IKNAG's Annie Marlow told 2515: "The concept of nannas knitting really appealed to me as it is peaceful, non-threatening and can be very funny, but because we are tenacious it's amazing how effective it is. Politicians know we will not go away until we are assured that our grandchildren will inherit a clean planet."

On Saturday, October 7, the National Day of Action to #StopAdani!, IKNAG will be part of a family-friendly fun and "peaceful-protest picnicking" event at North Wollongong Beach. It will be held from 11am to 1pm.

Annie kindly took the time to answer 2515's questions.

How big is IKNAG and what's its chief aim?

Our email membership is just under 100; there are up to 10 nannas involved at any one action.

Early this year we changed our name to Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed instead of just against gas. This allowed us to widen our brief and include coal mining, or any corporate or political greed for that matter. Our aims are: to bring attention to the issues surrounding mining and exploration; to show our opposition just how far from "radical" we are; to entertain and inform the public; and to lobby politicians and bring new supporters to the movement.

What have been some major milestones for IKNAG?

Our first knit-in in 2013 at (Heathcote MP) Lee Evans's office, attracted four supportive police and three police cars. Because we received a lot of publicity, we realised what an effective vehicle/tool our knit-ins were, not only to inform the public but also to make politicians aware of CSG and the community's concerns with it. After that knit-in and the publicity, Lee Evans became aware of the problems associated with CSG.

In the months leading up to the 2015 NSW State Election we held knit-ins outside the offices of around 20 politicians. We concentrated on the Illawarra, South Coast and Sydney polities but travelled as far as Goulburn, Southern Highlands, Blue Mountains and even Yass.

We had a set three questions for the polities and a petition for the public. It was a "learning-on-the-job" exercise, we were much more organised by the end. Very soon Cherry (Hardaker) and I realised that the polities' staffers, when we called to tell them we were coming, knew exactly who we were.

The highlight of that time perhaps was seeing a local MP running down Crown Street, shortly before a by-election, to our knit-in to tell us she wanted to answer 'Yes' to each of our three questions. Some weeks before she had told us there was no way any politician could do that! This reinforced what we knew – polities are fickle and they will do what they think will gain them votes, and also, informing members of the community about the hazards of CSG enables them to act. Ballina was won by the Greens in that state election and the Northern Rivers have been assured there will be no more threats from CSG mining there.

What's next for the Nannas?

Most recently we have been part of Stop Adani Illawarra actions to encourage the Commonwealth Bank not to finance the Adani coal mine in Queensland. We also visited local Federal politicians to establish their stance on Adani in the

Galilee, and inform them of the public's abhorrence that the government could even consider supporting such a potentially disastrous project.

There are so many issues with this mine, on a worldwide scale it is so large; it will mine such poor-quality coal and threaten the viability of better quality coal mines in Australia including the Illawarra; not to mention the threats to the Great Barrier Reef. On top of that at a time of unprecedented low coal prices the Federal and Queensland state governments are risking an outrageous amount of taxpayer funds on a company that has a record of environmental devastation, impacting communities in India and Africa, and is under investigation for tax evasion; why do our governments want them here?

We support the Mothers Against Gas in Camden. Residents there have gas wells as close as 40 metres to houses. AGL's gasfield has another seven years to run, so the government says, and there is strong evidence of health impacts already, particularly in children and older people. There are usually a few of us at the monthly rally outside AGL offices in Sydney. We also support the weekly one in Martin Place with the Sydney Nannas.

We eagerly await the government's reaction to Santos' proposal in the Pilliga. There have been a record number of objections to this gasfield.

We record the people of the Southern Highlands against the Hume coal mine proposal threatening farmland.

We support the Thirlmere Lakes Undermined group. This coal operation is close to the World Heritage-listed Thirlmere Lakes that are quickly disappearing, coincidentally since longwall mining started under them in the 80s.

Here in the Illawarra we have the Russell Vale mine. This is a controversial mine, too close to suburbia with a slag heap problem and a coal-to-port transport problem. Their expansion proposal including a coal washery, will increase the number of coal trucks travelling between the mine and Port Kembla on Memorial Drive to 16 an hour; count the return trips and it means a truck along this road in a bit under every two minutes. An enormous impact on noise and air pollution, traffic congestion and road maintenance.

There is a lot to do for the Knitting Nannas but we do not let that faze us because we see it as our responsibility to protect our planet for our children and grandchildren.

■ IKNAG will be part of the National Day of Action to #StopAdani! from 11am to 1pm on Saturday, October 7, at North Wollongong Beach.

For more details, visit [f](#) Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed. 2515



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A still from surf film *Enigma*, shot in Indo and starring Wombarra's Darcy DeClouett.

Making of Enigma

This is part two of our Q&A with Wombarra-based filmmaker Hayden Griffith about his new surf film.

During the 2016/17 New Year period, Hayden and water cinematographer Samuel Connelly headed to Bali, Indonesia to film the wet season. The result is a short film, *Enigma*, starring Wombarra's star free surfer, Darcy DeClouett. This month, Hayden shares some of the challenges of filming in Bali.

Tell us about the logistics of shooting *Enigma*.

We're a pretty light film crew – two shooters (myself and Sam) – plus Darcy and his parents who helped produced the shoot, arrange logistics, provide local knowledge etc. Sam and I were managing about \$50k worth of camera gear during a wet season and I was managing Bali belly.

We made our way through Customs – carrying crates full of film equipment – with a smile and assurances we were simply mad camera hobbyists.

Sam copped a beating from some of the Indian Ocean swells, as did the \$20,000 camera in a \$5k locally made water-housing he was shooting with.

The biggest challenge of the shoot was one that nearly went undocumented. We wanted to open the film with Darcy – wearing his Adelio vest and carrying his DP board – walking along one of the black volcanic ridge-lines of the island's highest point: the 10,000-foot-high dormant volcano, Mt Agung. At sunrise.

Mt Agung is well-known for being shrouded in cloud and, in the wet season, visits are not recommended due to the poor conditions. When we arrived at the car park our guide thought we were nuts. But it was 2am, we'd been driving for

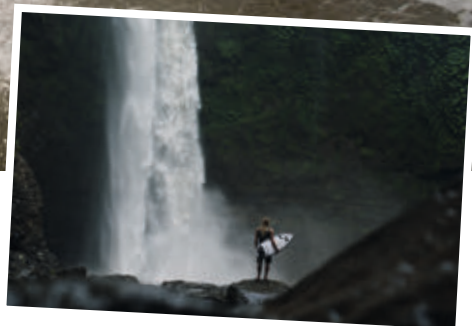
hours, and it was our last chance to film on the mountain. We chose to head up.

The hike started with good vibes. We were lugging heavy packs full of gear, but we were OK. The rain was light, as was the wind, but when we emerged from the tree-line, conditions started to deteriorate. The wind was so strong that Darcy could hardly hold onto the board; the rain was even stronger, soaking through our wet-weather clothes and into our bags. I had no idea how the \$9000 drone, tied to my pack, was travelling. We'd also hiked too fast and would have to wait an hour or more in the dark at the top, in 5°C, soaking wet.

Shivering, we accepted defeat and headed down. The track had become a slippery, muddy stream. Sam broke his fresh pair of Indo street market Nikes and our guide offered to swap shoes to make sure Sam was as safe as possible. Our guide was also now carrying Darcy's surfboard. Soon after, I slipped and broke a motor on my drone.

We eventually made it back to the car park, said our thanks and returned to the east coast where we sat in a cafe, sulking about the biggest failure of our trip, looking up at Mt Agung, which was, by now, bathed in sunshine and framed by a cloudless sky.

■ For more, visit www.haydengriffith.com. 2515



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Spring style trends

It's time to shake off that heavy winter feel and lighten up on the home front, writes Thirroul interior designer Jodie Gibbons.

The spotlight is now on outdoor/indoor living. And there is a real focus on great design, with pieces that will look good inside or out, sofas upholstered in Sunbrella water-resistant fabrics, occasional tables and homewares all in new-season colours to match the interior of the house. Stores such as Eco Outdoor have created a whole lifestyle concept around outdoor living.

The slow living movement, or as the Scandinavians call it 'Hygge', has started to influence what we are seeing in interior design trends this summer. Dulux have put out their new colours for 2018 with palette names like 'balance', 'kinship' and 'reflect'. Soft earthy colours, Spanish olive and clay inspire a more harmonious and relaxed way of living.

There is a growing trend towards using warmer materials in architecture with timbers such as plywood featured on ceilings, wall panelling and kitchen and bathroom joinery. A small northern suburbs apartment I worked on this year called for lots of storage, we designed an entire wall of

shelving hidden behind American oak panelling without encroaching on the living space.

If you thought cork flooring and terracotta tiles would never come back, well, you'd be wrong. Again, it's about creating a softer look – if you are not sure about cork, try a ceiling pendant or terracotta decorative pieces before you rush out and tile the kitchen floor.

In homewares, modern boho is still a big coastal look this season, but with the re-emergence of colours like ochre, terracotta, olive and denim, there is a hint of Santa Fe creeping in. Yes, after a 25-year hiatus Aztec is back, the colours are softer for summer, add potted plants, lots of crushed linen, geometrics and mixed metals like copper and brass.

So, dress your outdoor table with a crushed linen tablecloth, add a mix of local handcrafted ceramics, put a slow roast on and enjoy the warmer weather.

■ Jodie runs Belljar Interiors, 0414 672129
Belljarinteriors@gmail.com. **2515**





THE HOME FRONT

5 TIPS FOR FIRST-HOME BUYERS

It has been well publicised across the media that Australia's housing market has never been further out of reach for first-home buyers. This is not simply due to Gen Y's love of avocado on toast and gourmet coffee, the fact is the ratio of mortgage debt to income is at an all-time high. This does not mean the dream of home ownership is dead. Here's how to give yourself an edge in this increasingly competitive market.

1. Do your research

Look beyond recent sale prices and average time on the market. Also investigate trends, development and infrastructure in the area. This gives you an advantage in negotiations and ensures you won't buy your dream home only to see a new highway being built next door.

2. Looks aren't everything

Don't get distracted by styling. Often the best buys have the least visual appeal. It is amazing what a coat of fresh paint and new flooring can do for an older house.

3. Ensure you have the best deal on finance

It is not always best to simply rely on your current bank

for a loan. The market is very competitive and a good broker can save you thousands of dollars. Shop around.

4. Consider all costs

On top of the purchase price are plenty of costs, such as Stamp Duty, conveyancing, building and pest inspections, and moving. It is important to consider all costs when setting your budget. Calculators available online can provide you with exact stamp duty totals.

5. Be prepared to move fast

Understandably, appealing, well-priced properties sell quickly. It is not uncommon for a property to be sold after the first open house inspection. I strongly recommend that before starting your house hunt, you have finance approval, easy access to a deposit and a plan for moving in the next six weeks (standard settlement period). If you find a home you like, don't waste time as someone else may just beat you to it.

If you're interested in real estate or are considering buying or selling, call your local real-estate professional Mattias on 0466 627 226 for a free consultation.

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Centenary of Interbane

The historic house opposite Bald Hill turns 100 this year, owner Heather Smith reports.



Heather Smith at Interbane, the 'House on the Hill'.
Photo: Justine Forrest

The House on the Hill, Old Brothel, Witch's house, magnificent mansion, beguiling beauty, architectural abnormality ... Interbane has been called all sorts of things in its 100 years but certainly never dull.

As the old girl celebrates her centenary, voices past and present clamour to be heard. Interbane's history is imbued in its fabric; the walls do indeed talk for those willing to listen.

When we bought the house 15 years ago from Michael Higgins, the former publican-turned-head hunter, we knew it would have a colourful history well ahead of tales of ghosts and girls. It seems each of the house's occupants had a plan for the place, from garden nursery to restaurant, from guest house to massage parlour.

Numerous renovations started and stalled as plans chopped and changed. The roof has been replaced a few times, with the turret at least 2m shorter than it was when Interbane was first built by the shoe merchant and Boer War veteran, Walter Goodman.

In 1956, he sold it to former nurse Tootie Harvey who had been helping the Goodmans' housekeeper and chauffeur, Gertrude and Gordon Fleming, run Interbane as a guest house.

Tootie had become good friends with the Flemings, caring for them as their health started to fail. When Tootie became the Madame of the house, her four children moved in with her: son Alan Carrick, also known as Katingal for his numerous stints in that prison, and daughters Heather, Isobel and Betty.

While the late Mr Carrick denied Interbane was

ever a brothel, it is generally accepted that his sisters had numerous male visitors. He reckons Interbane got an undeserved reputation due to his association with Sydney brothel queen Tilly Devine as her driver. They would drive from Sydney on weekends to have an out-of-town (legal) drink at the Scarborough or Clifton hotels and sometimes pop in for a cuppa with Mrs Harvey. And sometimes be in the company of Pretty Dulcie, known as the Angel of Death for her tendency of leaving behind dead boyfriends. Interbane's underworld connections fuelled the rumour mill.

Before our extensive, two-year renovations banged the bejesus out of the spirits – friendly and otherwise – sounds and sightings were infrequent but unnerving.

My late father, not one for fanciful imaginings, saw a lady in a red dress floating above the floor at the intersection of the hallways. And he heard a piano. We don't own a piano.

Years later, when friends were looking after the place, the house reacted angrily to their argument by opening and slamming a door right next to them. The door was deadlocked and double-bolted.

Interbane has a personality and a variety of moods, often reflecting the tenor of its guests. It can be cold and unwelcoming when silence descends yet joyous when love and laughter warm her cockles.

And, as circumstances change yet again, she could soon be reliving her glory days as a guest house.

■ Search for "Interbane Centenary" on Facebook and contribute your stories. **2515**



Clean up!

There's nothing like decluttering to feel lighter and happier, writes Cath Hill. Sell, swap, donate, clean up and give your place a good spring spruce!

SELL

Join the Garage Sale Trail! The Garage Sale Trail is a coordinated trash and treasure sale across the country to encourage sustainability, reuse and community building over the weekend of October 21 and 22. Visit: www.garagesaletrail.com.au

Local organisations participating include Otford Public School (9am-1pm both days) and Bulli Woonona Men's Shed, 455 Princes Highway, Woonona (9am-3pm both days).

SWAP

"Take a blessing and leave a blessing" at the Stanwell Park Preschool community swap shop.

Contribute items like canned food, toiletries, clothes and toys and feel free to take something too. Accessible at all times - 24/7! You can also find a Wollongong City Library Book Box at the preschool. 22-26 Stanwell Ave, Stanwell Park

DONATE

Take any good quality clothing, furniture and homewares to these charities. Helensburgh Salvos and Mission Australia, Thirroul. The Dandelion Support Network accept baby and children's clothes and equipment. Visit dandelionsupport.org.au.

HOUSEHOLD SPRUCE

Get your house, gardens, gutters, windows, fabric, carpets, pool cleaned, tidied and sorted! See page 41 for a list of the best local tradies in town.

SPRING CLEANING TIPS

By local cleaning whiz Kristy Klean

- Don't look at the whole house – it will seem very overwhelming. Do a room at a time.
- Write a check list and mark off as you go.
- Use trusty, reliable products.
- A good time to chuck out unused items – be ruthless.
- A good way to control flies in the warmer months is to mop with hot water and Dettol.
- After a good day of cleaning reward yourself with a nice cold beverage.

Call Kristy Klean on 0402 96 2222. 2515



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Robyn Misios at her studio in Thirroul

Framing the future

Robyn Misios worked at Beach Art in Thirroul and Bulli for almost two decades. Now, Robyn reports, she has started a framing workshop in her own home.

Beach Framing is the fresh new face of one of the longest-running picture-framing studios in the Illawarra's northern suburbs. Formerly known as Beach Art, the business was run by Tony and Rose Marshall for more than 20 years; originally trading in Thirroul (from the shopfront where Finbox Boardstore now resides) and more recently from Stockbank House in Bulli for the past nine years.

For 18 years, I worked closely with Tony and Rose as their head framer in both locations. After a strong yet brief battle with cancer, sadly our Rose passed away in January this year. Understandably, Tony decided to retire soon afterwards.

With our clients in mind, I made the decision to bring the Framing Studio back to Thirroul, where it operates as Beach Framing from our home in George Street, near Ryans Hotel. We re-fitted a section of our house to make way for the studio, and re-opened for business in April 2017.

The beauty of a long-established business is you really do get to know your customers well. I'm happy to say our regular customers are continuing to support me, and I love catching up with them! Over the past two decades I have seen countless holidays, weddings, graduations, exhibitions and celebrations. The framing process is a subjective thing. I really enjoy this process: connecting with the customer, helping them to work out what they are after, expanding on that expectation and then

delivering a hand-made item, custom-suited to the client – and of excellent industry standard. All the products we use are archival and acid-free, ensuring these treasured memories are safe in their frames for years to come.

We are so lucky to have so many wonderful artists in our neck of the woods. Over the years, creative types have flocked to this area because of the inspiration found in our fantastic light, the rugged coastline and the untamed bushlands of our escarpment. The projects I get to work on as part of my daily practice are becoming more diverse as the community continues to broaden its support for both emerging and established artists. I am proud to support local small businesses, events and artists that are part of my community in order to strengthen the creative and professional development of artists in our local area.

It's a rather special role that I am honoured to play as I help emerging artists to launch their first exhibition piece, then group show, then solo exhibition – and suddenly their name is as synonymous with the Northern Illawarra as Paul Ryan, John Bokor and Tanya Stubbles! It's so humbling to be able to be a part of assisting such artists achieve their vision for the professional presentation of their artworks; a role I look forward to playing long into the future.

■ Call Robyn on 0422 865 648. **2515**



Save energy and money

Chief energy advisor at the Energy Experts, Thirroul's Carolyn Lee presents her top 5 energy-saving tips.



Here are five tips to help you stay cool without spending big bucks.

1. 22°C

For every degree you deviate from 22°C, you raise your bill by about 6 percent. It's best to set your air-conditioning thermostat to 22°C

year-round. Better still, use a fan instead of air-conditioning where you can.

2. CHANGE YOUR FILTERS

To save money on your electricity bills, check and replace air-conditioner filters every six months.

3. HOW MANY FRIDGES?

Have a think about how many fridges you need in your home. Consider replacing older fridge/freezers with an energy-efficient model, which is likely to use two to three times less energy than an old inefficient model.

4. GET A BIGGER DISCOUNT

Electricity has become a competitive market, so it pays to shop around. We've seen customers receive discounts of up to 28 percent. If you have solar, the feed-in tariff has recently increased and you can get around 15.5c/kWh.

5. STORE SUNLIGHT

With electricity prices continuing to rise and solar power and battery storage systems continuing to drop in price, there's never been a better time to buy a solar +/- battery storage system that can reduce your reliance on the grid by up to 95%.

SOLAR AND STORAGE SIMPLIFIED

If you're keen to learn more about the latest in solar power and battery storage, there are two info sessions being held on Wednesday, October 18 in Coledale. Bookings are essential, so go to theenergyexperts.com.au or call 1300 516 474. **2515**

INTERESTED IN SOLAR +/-OR BATTERIES?

Solar + storage info sessions:

Coledale Community Hall

Wednesday 18 October

11:00am-12:30pm &

7:00pm-8:30pm

Bookings



eventbrite.com.au (search for solar) or call 1300 516 474

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See spring flowers

Discover which native plants are in blooming beautiful in October, writes Narelle Happ, of A Garden for Life.



ACTINOTUS HELIANTHI – FLANNEL FLOWER

Flannel flowers are herbaceous or shrubby plants which grow to approx. 50cm, though sometimes taller.

The leaves are grey and velvety in nature, hence their common name.

Flowering occurs in spring to early summer (September to December) and is followed by fluffy seeds in a globular head. The seeds are dispersed by the wind.

A. helianthi is relatively easy to cultivate in sandy soils or in raised beds. Plants may not be long lived but, once established, will often “self-sow”.

ALLOXYLON FLAMMEUM – QUEENSLAND WARATAH TREE

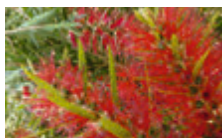
An evergreen tree up to 10 metres in height though can be kept smaller with pruning.

The flower colour is bright red and flowers are seen in spring and early summer. The Tree Waratah is tolerant of a range of soils, provided they are not waterlogged. It will even survive extended dry periods once established and will survive moderate frosts.

Stunning flowers occur for several months and are very attractive to birds.

PROSTANTHERA INCISA – ‘NATIVE SAGE’

Often called the native sage, this plant is local to the area and now flowering prolifically through the bush. Its aromatic foliage can be used for tea and in cooking. Likes part shade. Grows 1m x1m.



Callistemon 'Hannah Ray'



Leptospermum 'Pink Cascade'



Prostanthera incisa



Scarvola 'Mauve Carpet'

OTHER PLANTS FLOWERING IN OCTOBER

- *Scaevola* spp. – Fan Flower – groundcover with a spread of 1m.
- *Scaevola* ‘Purple Fanfare’
- *Callistemon* spp. – Bottlebrush – spring flowering, attractive to birds and come in a range of colours such as red, pink, purple, yellow and green
- *Callistemon* ‘Hannah Ray’
- *Lechenaultia* spp. – groundcover from WA. Loves a dry spot, can be grown in pots and in rockeries.
- *Lechenaultia biloba*
- *Leptospermum* spp. – Tea Tree – in full bloom at present. Groundcovers, shrubs and tree varieties.
- *Leptospermum* ‘Pink Cascade’ – cascading groundcover. **2515**



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Photo: Kate Holmes NORPA 2017



Join a flash mob

Cath Hill asks dancer Emma Saunders to please explain what's happening on New Year's Day at Austinmer Beach.

Kick off 2018 with a dance on the beach! Local dance artist Emma Saunders is seeking fun loving participants for the Austinmer Beach Flash Mob Project.

It's all happening on New Year's Day at 2pm.

Introduce yourself.

I'm Emma Saunders – an artist, choreographer, 80s aerobics master and dance revolutionary. I also create, teach (University of Wollongong, Keira High) and perform dance.

What is a flash mob?

It's a short, en masse community performance that can involve a large cross-section of the community performing the same super-easy actions at the same time to a rocking soundtrack! It is like a punctuation mark in the day and is often highly memorable and fun to be a part of. It appears out of nowhere and is gone in a flash – hence the name flash mob. They occur in public places such as a train station, mall or, in our case, the beach!

How has this all come about?

Last year I applied to the Wollongong City Council's Cultural Grants program to create and deliver a flash mob on Austinmer Beach and I was successful!

Who can participate?

Everyone of all ages and experience levels are welcome and encouraged to participate. The Austinmer Otters are already in!

What is the motivation behind the project?

I am doing this because I would like to celebrate and re-position the art form of dance as a central tool for community transformation and as a means to bring us all together and share a moment in time dedicated to love, peace, happiness and joy. To discover how movement can be a creative pursuit and can transform the way we experience ourselves, each other, our lives, our community and our environment. And for fun!

How do we get involved?

You only need to come to ONE rehearsal to get the idea. Otherwise just rock up, and follow me on the day!

■ For rehearsal details and for more information call Emma on 0455 413 746 or search for Austinmer Beach Flash Mob on Facebook. **2515**

Ask Bohmer



With arborist Clive Woodnutt (aka Bohmer, his climbing name). I bought a new home with a large gum tree in the yard about 10m from my house. Are the roots going to impact my house?

Most foundations are able to withstand the odd tree root. In fact it's quite rare for the roots of a tree to cause direct damage to house footings.

However, it has been known for tree roots to be indirectly responsible for damage caused by subsidence.

Subsidence happens when soil shrinks or expands, depending on water content.

For example, if your home is built on clay soil the soil will shrink in summer and swell during prolonged rainy periods.

A tree's roots may exasperate shrinkage by sucking moisture from the soil near a building. In my 40 years' experience (showing my age!), nearly all the trees that were found to be partially responsible for soil shrinkage issues affecting footings were within 6m of the building. So for now just give your tree some TLC – and enjoy the benefits of its shade in summer. **2515**

ART4REFUGEES IS BACK!

SCARF is excited to be presenting Art4Refugees again in 2017. Madeleine Burkitt reports.

Glen Preece, Paul Ryan, Nikki Main, Constance Farquharson, Pamela King and Moira Kirkwood are some of the artists taking part in the annual Art4refugees charity art exhibition. This is a major fundraising event for Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families (SCARF), the volunteer-based community organisation supporting refugees starting over in the Illawarra.

Artists donate their works for public purchase with 100 percent of sales going to SCARF. In the past, Art4Refugees has exhibited artists such as Archibald Prize short-listed Blak Douglas, George Gittoes, India Mark, Paul Ryan, Auguste Blackman and Sallie Moffatt.

This year's exhibition is shaping up to be an exciting celebration of community, art and culture. The show will be held at iAccelerate, UOW Innovation Campus from Oct 28 until November 12.

Opening Night will be on Friday, October 27, and a there'll be Family Day on Sunday, October 29. Come along to browse or buy, and support a good cause.

■ Visit www.art4refugees.org. 2515





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OCTOBER 2515

25

Gold for Darkes cider!

Glenbernie Orchard's cider has been judged one of the world's best, Jo Fahey reports.



Just four years after producing our first cider, everyone here at Darkes Glenbernie Orchard is on top of the world having won a gold medal at the World Cider Awards in London.

Howler, an alcoholic cider with just the right amount of sweetness and a 'little bit of bite', impressed the judging panel, from the UK, Canada and US, taking out its gold medal in the Sparkling Medium category.

The award caps a strong period for our four-generation, family-run orchard. Local pubs and restaurants serving our cider have long told us how good they think it is but this award validates what they have been saying!

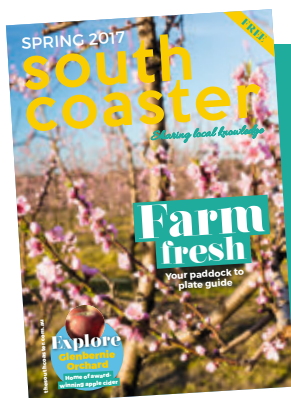
The Helensburgh Hotel, who have supported us right from the beginning selling the first ever schooner to locals in a hotly contested auction, have dedicated a tap in their new bar system to Howler. It is lovely on tap and several new venues have taken it on including a bar as far south as Nowra, The Dog and Monocle! We are beginning

to get some traction in the industry, the accolades are wonderful and we thank our children for convincing us to branch out into the cider business.

Our first commercial apple crop was in 1952 but it wasn't until our children pushed us that we jumped into cider production, releasing our first batch of Howler in 2013. It has proved to be an amazing decision and is taking us in such exciting directions.

We have always been determined to use 100 percent freshly crushed apples drawn from our own farm to deliver a robust all-rounder that can be teamed with all styles of food. Our family has taken control of every aspect of the production process. Using our own fresh crushed apple juice sets us apart from larger brands and local people know us and our farm. We have a connection!

There's a good reason four generations of the family have been involved in this orchard. We love what we do and we love to share. We know our gold medal at the World Cider Awards is just the beginning. **2515**



SPRING COVER STAR!

Look out for the Spring 2017 *South Coaster* visitors guide. Jo Fahey's cover feature, *Seasons in the Orchard*, walks readers through a year in the life at Glenbernie, from spring blossoms to the autumn apple harvest. And there's a produce guide to cut out and keep! The *South Coaster* is 2515's sister magazine, a free seasonal supplement that celebrates local knowledge and all the amazing attractions along our coast. You can find copies at the AppleShack, Tradies Helensburgh, Symbio Wildlife Park, Cocoon in Thirroul, newsagencies in Thirroul and Austinmer, and Articles Fine Art Gallery in Stanwell Park. Visit www.thesouthcoaster.com.au to read the mag online.



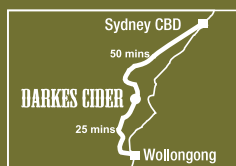
Real food with Steph



Four generations of our family have worked on the farm and three generations are still growing apples for eating and for cider! Our ciders are only made from our fresh crushed apples. This is what makes them so crisp in flavour and refreshing to drink.

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Little Blue is ZERO ALC/OH

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www.darkes.com.au



Stephanie Meades whips up a springtime smoothie.

As a mum and nutritionist, I am a huge fan of the humble smoothie as it is super-easy way of getting

raw vegetables into our cherubs without the typical "green food" fight, and it is an instant "one-dish" wonder, so it takes next to no time to make or clean up afterwards. Total winner!

Green smoothies are my favourite. They are a great source of non-dairy calcium, magnesium, Vitamin C, carotenoids and chlorophyll, all of which make for a happier, healthier body. This smoothie is brimming with fresh ingredients to speed up your body's natural detoxification process, and provides a heap of energy without placing a load on the digestive system. Result: increased energy and vitality. Enjoy!

SPRINGTIME SMOOTHIE: SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup of almond milk (or milk of your choice)
- 3/4 cup of ice
- 1 cup kale or spinach (roughly chopped)
- 2 stalks of celery (roughly chopped)
- 1 green apple (cored and chopped)
- 1 tbsp flaxseed (ground)
- 1 tsp raw honey

METHOD

Simply put all ingredients in a blender or food processor and blitz until smooth and creamy. For extra fibre, add half an avocado or a tablespoon of chia seeds.

■ For more recipes, visit www.lifewellnessco.com and download a copy of our Super Food Smoothies eBook. 2515

Festival of Wood

Meet Stuart Montague, one of the people behind the Inaugural Illawarra Festival of Wood this October.

Look out for everything spoon carving to chainsaw sculpture when the first Festival of Wood comes to Bulli Showgrounds on October 6 and 7.

Created by Stuart and Suzanne Montague of the Illawarra Woodwork School and Christian and Tomiko Timbs of Japanese Tools, the festival “will showcase local and regional wood artisans as well as celebrating a variety of wood-related crafts and forest industries”, the organisers say.

“Each stall will have a wood artisan demonstrating their craft. The public will be able to learn, reconnect, discover and discuss woodwork with these skilled makers.”

“The festival is returning woodworking back to its grassroots where people can enjoy hands-on experience and learn about the tools, the skills and the craft of wood artisans.”

A variety of workshops will also be held.

Stuart, a Coledale resident, third-generation fine furniture cabinetmaker and teacher at the Illawarra Woodwork School, kindly took the time to answer questions from 2515.

What's the appeal of working with wood?

I just love working with timber and I love making objects. It is such a joy to see what you have created at the end of the day. Having spent nearly 40 years working with timber I am still amazed by what I don't know about my craft, timber is such a unique material. Each species of tree has its own special characteristics some timber you can bury in the ground for 30 years and it won't rot. While some timbers will rot before the weekend comes.

Timber can be so light it can float through the sky, other timber is more like steel. It is just an absolutely beautiful material it has touch, smell and visual appeal.

What is most rewarding about your teaching role?

I think I have the best job in the world, teaching people woodwork, the school has a strong emphasis on using hand tools and it is a great delight when new students say to me I really love using a hand plane. Most people do not live in a three-dimensional world it is easy for me too forgot that most people don't make objects. That is a really

Photos: Anthony Warry Photography





important part of teaching woodworking allowing people to make furniture and objects.

Why should people attend the Festival of Wood?

The festival is really about sharing this great world with the community. There are so many people around in the Illawarra and South Coast making such amazing things. The world of wood has been very good to me, my family has been working in wood for 100 years and it is continuing on with one of my sons. So it is really about sharing this wonderful world and hopefully inspiring people to start making things. Come along and meet Adam from Scarborough he makes beautiful timber spear guns; Graham from Bulli who makes North American native flutes; Brett from Coledale, you can turn your bowl and work out how to build yourself a tree house; Sarah from Tahra who combines wood and silver to create jewellery.

The festival has workshops so people can carve a spoon, make a stool or learn to use power tools.

In this age of mass production, tell us about the joy of crafting a single piece of furniture.

"Whatever I'm working on, I get excited. It does not matter whether I have done the same piece many times. I still can't wait to get out to the shop in the morning." I think this quote by Sam Maloof, the famous American woodworker, sums up for me the joy of making a hand-crafted piece of furniture.

Timber is a beautiful material to work with. An intimate relationship is built between the woodworker, tools and timber. It is a unique experience to be able to use your hands, head and heart to create a piece of furniture.



■ The 2017 Illawarra Festival of Wood will be held from 10am to 5pm on Friday, October 6 and Saturday, October 7, at Bulli Showgrounds, Princes Highway. Entry fee is \$15 (adult), \$12 (concession) and under 18 years free.

Visit illawarrafestivalofwood.com. 2515



"Every tree has a story"

**Friday 6th & Saturday 7th
October 2017**

10am - 5pm Bulli Showgrounds

Reconnect, Learn & Discover

#Spoon carving
#Traditional tool makers
#Jewellery
#Timber milling

#Knife makers
#Floristry
#Chainsaw Sculpture
#Timber surfboard maker

**Workshops available
for adults & children
Book online**

www.illawarrafestivalofwood.com



Destination
WOLLONGONG





From right to left: Ron Witton, Cookie Lloyd and Olly the dog at Austi Book Exchange.

Austi book exchange opens

Austi Book Exchange is now operating from two donated old book shelves at Austi Scout Hall Verandah. The book exchange is part of a global movement to foster an interest in reading and books, to get local folk talking about books and to provide a small public space for locals to swap books. Cookie Lloyd reports.

The Austinmer Scouts voted to house the book exchange after being prompted by several parents. The Scout Hall is a focus in Austinmer, particularly for young people. The comings and goings of the people who use the Scout Hall provide a great opportunity to promote reading and books. We particularly hope young people will be encouraged and supported to continue their reading.

You choose a book or books, take it home, read it and come back with a book to swap – simple.

There are about 50+ books there at present. Titles at the moment include Kate Grenville's *The Lieutenant*, Annie Proulx's *Bad Dirt*, plays by Samuel Johnson, kids' books and some non-fiction.

We will monitor the shelves for a few weeks making sure they in reasonable order and nothing unsuitable is placed there. In time, the idea is that the exchange will be self-sustaining and that folk will weed out old books and replace them. Every

user will take some ownership of the exchange and ensure its success.

Wollongong Library supports the creation of book exchanges and will supply books if requested.

The ultimate goal is to encourage and practically support people to read... and read... and read.

■ Austi Book Exchange is available 24/7 on the Austi Scout Hall Verandah. Wollongong City Libraries also operates Book Boxes – aka Outdoor Libraries or Little Libraries, at nine locations, as part of a worldwide movement to increase access to literature and re-use books. You can find Book Boxes at: Beaton Park Leisure Centre, Gwynneville; Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre; Bulli Senior Citizens Centre/Bulli Preschool; Cringilla Community Halls; Crown Street Mall – lower Mall; Koonawarra Community Centre; Port Kembla Community Centre; Stanwell Park Children's Centre and Warrawong Community Centre. **2515**

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SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Wed 4 Oct, 1-2pm – Hip Hop Dance Party, bookings essential

Fri 6 Oct, 10.30-11.30am – Drop In Craft.

No bookings required. Activities for ages 5+.

For a full list of school holiday fun, visit www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library

MUSIC IN THE LIBRARY

Sat 7 Oct, 11am-12 noon – Featuring musicians from the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music. No bookings required

AUTHOR TALK – KIM HODGES

Tue 10 Oct, 5pm. As part of Mental Health Month, Kim Hodges, author of the memoir *Girl on the Edge*, shares her story. Bookings essential.

KIDZ CONNECT

Weds 11, 18 and 25 October from 3.30pm. Drop in and create stuff, play games, meet new friends. For years K-6.

TWEENS

Thu 19 Oct from 3.30pm. An informal get-together to share books, movies, magazines, apps, craft and food. For 8-13 years. **2515**



My career in real estate started at the age of 19. I can't say exactly what it was that drew me to this industry, however, I knew I liked people and the highly charged nature of real estate seemed rather exciting at the time. So I

Fast-forward 12 years, a business degree and three different jobs later, I find myself back where it all started, albeit in a slightly different role as a Director at Ray White Helensburgh. My team and I have been working hard over the past 12 months to move away from the traditional (and somewhat outdated) real estate business model, and put our focus back on the local community. It is only through the support of our community that we have become one of the most successful real estate offices in the Ray White NSW network.

Being involved with the Chamber of Commerce has introduced me to a lot of great people and has benefited me on both a personal level as well as a professional level.

Before I had actually attended an NICC meeting I was unsure of exactly how it could benefit our business, however, being able to converse with

On a more direct level, I've had the chance during the networking meetings to develop some mutually beneficial business relationships ranging from direct client referrals to local promotional activities. I'm hoping as the chamber expands its network, even more opportunities will become available.

■ Well done to NICC! It's a finalist in the 'Local Chamber of Commerce' category in the 2017 Illawarra Business Awards. Winners will be announced at a gala presentation night on Friday, October 20. NICC's next meeting is for members only, on Tuesday, October 3, at Tradies Helensburgh. Visit nicc.net.au or like the chamber on Facebook. 2515



Time to turn wood

Janice Creenaune meets Mal Stewart,
a retired miner and carpenter from the
Illawarra, now a prize-winning
wood turner.



At 69, Mal Stewart is an unassuming man with a major talent – working with wood. He is the manager of the Thirroul Men's Shed.

After spending almost his entire working career within the mines, Mal entered the carpentry trade, renovating homes, doing house additions and making furniture. In retirement, his skills seemingly effortlessly transferred to wood-turning.

"I focus on the detail and other issues seem to fall into place," Mal said.

"I was initially taught a few basics in wood-turning by Ken Smith, local wood-turner, but the development of my skills is fundamentally self-taught. I just practised on the lathe to perfect my skills."

This year Mal won second prize at the Royal Easter Show 2017 in the wood-turning division, with a magnificent candelabra.

"I needed to use the inside/outside technique to produce my piece. It is difficult to perfect and there are few who can use the technique.

"I use four pieces of timber and turn the inside shape and then split them apart, turn them 180 degrees and turn the outside shape."

To complete this design, Mal worked in wood for about three to four hours a day over about eight weeks.

"I need to take my time. There can be no rush or you can muck up a pattern very easily. The detail is important and you must work at that. I have to keep my mind solely on the job at hand and though I may have a few jobs going at once I need total concentration on the item at hand."

Mal aims for perfection with each piece.

"It is how I improve I suppose, but there is a

feeling of great satisfaction when I get it right."

He makes practical items such as salt and pepper grinders, rolling pins inlaid with a decorative Celtic knot and inside/outside turned handles, a magnificent dove-tailed box for his wife Wendy's crochet hooks and a cabinet for wool storage. All are of outstanding quality.

"I mainly work in cedar, jarrah and kauri pine, but a friend recently found me some wonderful antique table legs. The possibilities are endless, but I do like turning some woods more than others," he said.

Mal is a firm believer in keeping busy in retirement. "The Men's Shed in Thirroul is a great benefit to many of us in the area. It builds our skills, builds camaraderie and certainly builds friendships for us all."

Metalwork, woodworking and computer groups are all held in the Thirroul Men's Shed. "We have a 'door open' policy but the numbers have to be restricted to those in the 2515 area. We are open Monday to Thursday for a very reasonable rate of \$50 a year and \$3 a visit.

"All the tutorage is voluntary from those in the group and the men talk to each other, even about their health at times. Some come along to learn, others to work and some just come for a chat. All are welcome."

■ Writer Janice Creenaune is also the publicity officer for the Northern Illawarra University of the Third Age, which holds talks on Wednesdays in the Excelsior Room of Thirroul Community Centre, 9.30-noon. For more NIU3A info, contact janicecreenaune@gmail.com. **2515**

STARS IN EARNEST

Cameron Campbell, communications officer at Stanwell Park Arts Theatre (SPAT), introduces some new faces appearing in October's production, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

ROBERT ROBINSON

This is my first acting role, since playing Nancy in *Oliver Twist* as a teenager in the 1960s. A Stanwell Park resident for the past 17 years, I have many friends in SPAT, and my daughter Rebecca has taken SPAT's acting workshops for children. Having recently retired from a science leadership role at ANSTO, when SPAT put out an appeal for elderly gentlemen to play a couple of walk-on roles in the current production, I thought this might be fun and I am keen to put something back into the local community. I also enjoy bushwalking, soccer, photography, history and science, and I am writing a book.

INGA SILFR JON

Working with SPAT for the first time on such a well-known show as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* has been amazing. All of the cast and crew involved are incredibly friendly and made me feel accepted as part of the team. Combining an exquisite script with a group of talented and warm-hearted people has made bringing the role to life a great experience so far and I am excited to see how the rest of the rehearsals and production turn out.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The play is one of the most loved plays in the English language. It was first performed on Valentine's Day in 1895 at a time when people were obsessed with love, marriage and appearances — so unlike our present-day obsessions with love, marriage and appearances!

Lady Bracknell is one of the best characters ever written, the potential mother-in-law from hell, a woman who will make sure everything is perfect at whatever cost. And, as Algernon says, "all women become like their mothers, that is their tragedy. No man does. That's his."

The play is a truly great comedy which satirises the social requirements not just of the late Victorian age but of all time. As Lady Bracknell herself says, "Never speak disrespectfully of Society. Only people who can't get into it do that."

SPAT's production promises to transport you back in time. Come down, relax, and enjoy the elegant, beautiful, and comedic genius of Oscar Wilde's most famous work.

Once again, we are delighted to collaborate with 16 Feet Espresso Cafe of Stanwell Park who will be offering a pre-theatre dinner discount of 10% on food items for the Friday night performances. Please book directly with 16 feet on 4294 1425, mentioning the SPAT show.

■ Check out the new and improved SPAT website to book your tickets: www.spat.org.au. Performances are on October 13, 14, 20 and 21 at the CWA Hall, Stanwell Park. 2515



SPAT 2017 SCHEDULE

- *The Importance of Being Earnest* – Fri Oct 13 & Sat Oct 14; Fri Oct 20 & Sat Oct 21
- SPAT Film Society Screening – *Dunkirk*, Sat, Nov 4
- Christmas Pantomime – Sat & Sun, Dec 9 & 10; Fri, Sat, Sun, Dec 15, 16 & 17
- Book tickets online at www.spat.org.au

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Lifeology



With Terri Ayliffe.

A wonderful psychologist once said to me there are two types of people, Club A and Club B individuals.

Club A people have a need for control; they are highly self-critical. They are driven to achieve for self-affirming reasons and they will suffer self-imposed humiliation because they cannot be seen in a negative light.

Club B individuals accept they will get themselves into trouble occasionally and are able to let go of difficult circumstances and don't suffer from humiliation. They have no need for perfection because they understand life is messy and we all get it wrong.

I was a Club A member once. Perfection was my driving force. I was not able to see myself in an imperfect light and, if I did, the damage I did to myself was epic. No one on this planet could have been more cruel to me than I was.

So how did things change?

I found acceptance and I began to flow with my circumstances and I found an appreciation for myself. I understood that no matter what I do for my family, for our community, it is all wasted if I come back to myself and tear my own house apart.

Anxiety is at the core of being a Club A member. Anxiety is about living in the future and being driven to ensure the future is perfect. It is an unachievable goal and once I realised that I let go and my anxiety took a nap in a back room somewhere.

All you get to control in life is your attitude to living; we have to accept control cannot be exhorted over anything else. Life is chaos, a beautiful chaos and acceptance allows us to enjoy it as it is. **2515**

■ Terri Ayliffe (BA Psych, Grad Dip Psych) is an artist, writer, life coach, philosopher, humanist and lover of all things. Have a question? Email terriayliffe@gmail.com. Or read Terri's blog: <https://lifeology.blog>



Tony Armstrong and Ausilia Cristiano of HangglideOz with their rescued greyhound, Zoumi. Photo: Chris Pearce (Project Hound)

Greyhound Rescue

An animal charity with a growing local crew of hard-working volunteers is helping to save greyhounds.

Chances are you may have already met a few rescued greyhounds in the northern Illawarra. If so, it's likely these dogs were re-homed thanks to Greyhound Rescue, a not-for-profit organisation set up in the late noughties to "find homes for the many greyhounds surplus to requirements of the Racing Industry".

Greyhound Rescue describes this breed as "gentle and affectionate". They generally get on well with other dogs and animals; they don't need a lot of exercise; they rarely bark; and require very little grooming.

Ausilia Cristiano runs HangglideOz with her husband, Tony Armstrong, and is a Greyhound Rescue volunteer. She kindly took the time to answer 2515's questions.

Give us some background about Greyhound Rescue.

The first rescue took place during an RSPCA case involving around 30 greyhounds due to be euthanised.

Killarney Heights resident Janet Flann had been involved in dog rescue for many years and used networks to help place these dogs into other rescues and homes. Janet and Peter Flann, the founders, began Greyhound Rescue in 2009.

Today the rescue group has over 60 volunteers throughout Sydney and the Illawarra and has helped home about 1000 greyhounds.

How did you and your husband get involved?

All the team at HangglideOz are strong advocates for rescue animals. After learning more about the industry and the unnecessary wastage of healthy dogs, we were keen to become involved and help spread the word about this wonderful breed of dog. They really do make amazing pets.

Whenever possible, Zoumi, our very own greyhound, joins the team on Bald Hill. She is always happy to meet customers and loves watching the instructors fly.

How can people help Greyhound Rescue?

The rescue relies solely on donations, which are tax deductible. To donate, please visit the website at www.greyhoundrescue.com.au.

Another "grey" way to help is to sponsor a greyhound. Greyhound Rescue provides all medical care for the animals in our rescue, as well as their toys, coats, bowls, treats, collars and leashes. The cost to care for an animal in our kennels can add up quickly. By sponsoring a greyhound, you can make a real difference.

(HangglideOz also donates hang gliding vouchers to help raise funds for the rescue.)

We are happy to have placed many greyhounds in the Illawarra over the past 12 months and are keen to see the community of greyhounds continue to grow in the Illawarra.

Greyhound Rescue will attend North Gong Dog Day in Wollongong on Sunday, October 28. Come and meet some volunteers and greyhounds. **2515**

A photograph of a man, Cal Champagne, standing in a field of green crops. He is holding a hose and spraying water onto the plants. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and dark pants. The background is a dense line of trees.

Farm manager Cal Champagne. Photo: Paul Jones, University of Wollongong

Growing 'fair food'

Green Connect is doing amazing work in the Illawarra. And all you have to do to support this social enterprise is order a veggie box. Farm manager Cal Champagne told 2515 more.

Please tell us about Green Connect and its work.

Green Connect is a social enterprise; a not-for-profit that uses a business model to create social change. We create jobs and employment pathways for young people and former refugees and we do this in sustainable industries. We work in waste recovery, labour hire, and growing fair food.

Last year we kept 1990 tonnes of waste out of landfill, grew and distributed 13,754kg of chemical-free food, and employed 114 former refugees and young people.

How did you come to be farm manager at Green Connect's farm in Warrawong?

I grew up on a permaculture demonstration property on the far south coast of NSW. I moved to Wollongong to study environmental sciences at the University of Wollongong, followed by a masters in sustainability science (food and water security specialisation) at the University of Sydney. After moving up here, I got involved in local fair food networks, volunteering at the North Wollongong Community Garden and Warrawong High School's living classroom garden.

I was helping out during Elemental Permaculture's first-ever Permaculture Design Certificate when I met Jess Moore, Green

Connect's general manager. Given the success of Warrawong High School's living classroom program, the high school was offering for a 12-acre piece of land adjacent to the school to be developed as a social enterprise farm at the time that I met Jess. Together with a group of committed volunteers, we took the land on under Green Connect's management, and we turned it into what it is today.

Please tell us more about the urban farm - what challenges have you faced? What successes have you had?

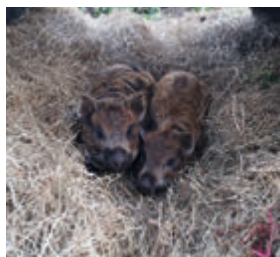
It is a 12-acre piece of land that has been left idle for decades, due to it being considered useless. Using permaculture design, we have terraced the site to make it easily accessible, and to catch and store the water that falls on the land. We have developed 4000 square metres of market garden, planted over 200 fruit trees, and over 1000 native plants along our riparian zone (creek line). We also keep saddleback pigs, and chickens for eggs.

The farm has become a real community hub, evident through our seasonal community days where we have a working bee and a big shared lunch. It's great to see our refugee and youth staff mixing with our veg box customers and our wider community supporters. The last day attracted over 200 people to the farm. The next day is on the 28th of October.

Most significantly, the farm is a supportive worksite for many of our former refugee and youth staff. It's great to see many of our staff taking real ownership of the space. A recent achievement was



Clockwise, from top left: Su Meh and Shay Ray; native planting with Cal and Jamie; 'our mini-pigs' Antonio and Elizabeth, Su Meh and Peter; late winter sun in the market garden.



us being able to offer Su Meh and Shay Ray (above) permanent contacts, as, although Green Connect employs so many people, it is still predominantly on a casual basis. But we will change that!

Many of our staff are from farming backgrounds, so it's great that they get to enter the Australian workforce in an area that they feel comfortable in, and generally excel at!

The farm is also a supporting space for many community volunteers.

The farm feeds over 75 veg box customers per week – but we need more this spring!

What is "Fair Food"?

We define fair food as: Food that is good for those who grow it, good for those who eat it, and good for the environment.

Our social enterprise is truly holistically as it ticks all of these boxes.

Good for those who grow it: We provide jobs and employment pathways for former refugees and young people – two groups of people who are typically isolated from the workforce. We pay award wages and provide a supportive work environment for our staff to transition into work in Australia.

Good for those who eat it: Our food is chemical-free, locally grown, and harvested the morning of delivery – ensuring that it's fresh and healthy for our customers. We also help improve food literacy among our customers and the wider community by providing weekly cooking tips and recipes, and hosting seasonal farm days to help community

members deepen their connection with the food they eat.

Good for the environment: Our farming practices not only avoid the use of harmful chemicals, but the way we farm improves the soil, water and biodiversity where we work. Furthermore, by selling through a Community Supported Agriculture model, based on subscription customers, we avoid the negative impacts of pre-retail food waste, and selling local avoids the impacts of food miles.

What's in season?

October sees a big transition between cool season veg and spring veg.

Veg we will be growing includes: broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kohlrabi, silver beet, rainbow chard, kale, lettuce, snow peas, broad beans, turnips, celery, celeriac, beetroot, radish, carrot, potato, onion, garlic, fennel bulb, leek, spring onion, bok choy, joi choi and amaranth leaf.

How can readers support Green Connect?

The best way is to subscribe to a veg box via www.green-connect.com.au. We do a small box (\$24) and a regular box (\$40), which contain a selection of seasonally available veggies and herbs.

There are a number of pick-up hubs, including the Flame Tree Co-op in Thirroul, or it can be delivered to your door for a small fee.

If you aren't a veg eater, referring a friend, or sharing our social media posts is a great way to help. **2515**



From left: Sonia, Amanda and Siria will do the Bridge Walk for Babies on Sunday, October 15.

In memory of Jude

It takes great courage to share personal grief for the greater good. 2515 meets some of the women involved in the annual Remember Me Bridge Walk for Babies.

Amanda Jennings will be walking across the Sea Cliff Bridge on Sunday, October 15, in memory of her "beautiful boy", Jude Marlowe Gaskell.

Jude was stillborn at 38 weeks on June 16, 2017.

Amanda's grief is all too fresh but her courage and determination to aid others have driven her to help promote the annual Remember Me Bridge Walk. Unshed tears sparkle in all our eyes when 2515 meets Amanda, her mother, Sonia Jennings, and Bridge Walk facilitator Siria Thomas at Clifton.

With Amanda are poignant keepsakes – a print of tiny feet, with the words "I held you every second of your life"; a copy of Jude's funeral service; a box of baby clothes; and a beautiful book of sympathy messages, including children's drawings, collected by Amanda's UOW colleagues.

People often don't know what to say to bereaved parents, Amanda says, but it's better to say something than nothing. "Speak the baby's name – people are afraid to say their name. That's a big one. Just to acknowledge that they existed."

Amanda is here today to raise awareness of miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death, and the support available to mums in the Illawarra. In particular, the annual Bridge Walk, which is open to all those affected by the loss of a child.

"My mum and dad who were waiting on their first grandchild... it affects so many people."

Sonia discovered the group behind the Bridge Walk, Illawarra Baby & Child Loss Support, while Amanda was struggling to cope with her grief,

compounded by the trauma of a drawn-out birthing process. Joining the group helped a lot, Amanda says. "Just being able to talk to people who know how you feel is really helpful."

The Illawarra Baby and Child Loss Support is not only an online support group, it also holds meetings at Corrimal Community Centre every two months. Attending meetings with Sonia has been good too, Amanda says. "That helped Mum understand where I was coming from."

Several other family members will be walking with the mother and daughter on October 15.

"This year's walk is in conjunction with International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day," says Siria. "This year we'll be wearing white, instead of red, and the walk will be starting from Clifton and ending in Coalcliff, in other years we've walked the other way."

"Our aim for the walk is really to raise awareness on loss – pregnancy loss, baby and infant loss, and child loss. To really bring families together and make them aware of the support that is available in the Illawarra, and just to support each other."

It's important for grieving mothers to know they are not alone, says Siria, who will be walking in memory of her daughter, Skyia. "It is a very lonely experience until you realise that there is a community of us."

■ The Remember Me walk across Sea Cliff Bridge will be on Sunday, October 15. See opposite page for more details. **2515**



REMEMBER ME

A BRIDGE WALK FOR BABIES



SUNDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2017

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Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra's conductor and musical director, Dr Anthony Clarke

Ovation for New Conductor

Residents of post code 2515 have easy access to cultural events. Besides the local theatre companies like So Popera and the Arcadians who regularly present

professional quality shows at the IPAC,

often to sold-out houses, 2515 is only a 35-minute drive or train ride to Sutherland where the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra resides.

In May, the orchestra welcomed their new conductor and musical director, Dr Anthony Clarke. His infectious passion for music and zest for life has launched the orchestra into an exciting artistic future with audiences already thrilled by the newly styled concerts and pre-concert talks.

Dr Clarke's credentials as an international conductor and performer are too extensive to include here. One of his main aims is to nurture high-quality music within all levels of the community. His natural ability to lead a community orchestra proves his passion for extending his knowledge and expertise to help all musicians grapple with demanding programs and achieve exhilarating performances.



SHELBY NEEDS A HOME!

Shelby, a three-year-old Border Collie, was left at a country pound, so we don't know much about her. She seems to get on fine with male dogs, but she doesn't really get on well with other female dogs. Shelby does have basic training and loves the company of people. Going for nice long walks with a quick dip in a pool at the end of it is one of her favourite activities. She is vaccinated, desexed, microchipped and life-time registered. Want to adopt or foster? Email Julie-ann on ccarpetrehoming@tpg.com.au or [f Helensburgh's Country Companion Animal Rescue. 2515](https://www.facebook.com/Helensburghs-Country-Companion-Animal-Rescue-2515)

WHAT'S ON IN OCTOBER

TUE-THU, OCT 3-5 NIDA is heading to Wollongong Art Gallery, bringing their acting courses to high school students. There's an 'Acting Boot Camp' for students in year 7 to year 10, and, for year 11 and 12 students, 'Auditions and Screens Tests'. See www.open.nida.edu.au or call the gallery on (02) 4227 8500.

SUN, OCT 22 Coledale Markets, 9am-3pm. At Coledale Public School. Browse a wide selection of arts, crafts, bric-a-brac and vintage goods, kick back on the lawn, listen to music, plus feast on delicious food. A new stall is by Green Connect, selling 'fair food' from its urban farm in Warrawong.

FRI, OCT 27 *Sons of Sun* is a rock'n'roll play about Sun Records, Memphis, and the famous artists that started their careers there. It stars Murray Cook of Wiggles fame. 8pm at Anita's Theatre, Thirroul, sonsofsun.com.au.

Residents of 2515 are among the orchestra's players with additional musicians always welcomed. Interested players of sufficient standard are invited to contact the orchestra via their website and music lovers are strongly encouraged to attend the concerts. The diverse repertoire includes opera arias, various concerti as well as the more demanding symphonic classics.

At the first concert with Dr Clarke at the helm, on August 27, featuring Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and coloratura soprano Juliet Moon, the audience was treated to four virtuoso songs any one of which would be considered a bonus on a concert program. The audience was so appreciative Juliet sang an encore of a particularly difficult aria. It is unlikely that anyone will be privileged to hear Mozart's *Queen of the Night* aria sung twice, live, in concert, anywhere, let alone in Sutherland. Thrills like this will feature in future SSSO concerts; the next is on December 10, featuring internationally recognised piano soloist, Terry Lam, performing Beethoven's second piano concerto.

Under the direction of the orchestra's new maestro, Sutherland becomes a symphonic and cultural destination well worth the drive.

– Lori Lebow, Austinmer

THANKS TO THE BOWLO

Thank you to the Wombarra Bowling Club which was the venue for a recent event. The management and staff were very approachable and went out of their way to accommodate our every need. This club is such a good example of local community support. – Penelope Wood and Kate Brown, Stanwell Park 2515

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Dr Rip's Science of the Surf



Are sand dunes friend or foe, asks Dr Rob Brander.

I've written about Coalcliff Beach the last few issues and am still getting sent fascinating information, which I'll

eventually discuss, but it's time to change the topic to something another reader got me thinking about. Over recent years there has been some controversy over the coastal sand dunes along the Illawarra beaches. The standard thinking is that dunes are good for beaches as they provide natural protection against storm waves for land and structures situated behind them. Conversely, others think the dunes can actually have a detrimental effect on the beach. It's definitely a complicated issue. Years ago I wrote an article that was pro-dune. This one is a bit anti-dune.

Any beach exposed to a lot of onshore waves and wind that has an abundance of reasonably fine sand will have a sand dune form behind it. So it's safe to assume that before humans arrived, most of our beaches probably had natural sand dunes. Unfortunately, we'll probably never know what they looked like, or how big they were, because in the 1800s many of the sand dunes were cleared away by early settlers who were encouraged to do so to create room for cattle grazing and other uses. As more development occurred, wind-blown sand started to become a problem and after some big storms and significant coastal erosion and damage

in the 1970s, the council, like most coastal NSW councils, started a program of dune revegetation in order to re-establish healthy dune systems. This, of course, would reduce the amount of sand blowing inland and, more importantly, provide much needed coastal protection.

There is no doubt that revegetating coastal dunes is the easiest, cheapest and most natural solution for coastal protection. The problem is: how big should the dunes be? Dunes receive sand from the beach so when it's tied up in the dune, it's not available for the beach. On natural beaches, big waves and storms erode the dunes and over time a balance is maintained. However, if we create bigger dune systems than were there before, we risk taking too much sand from the beach at the expense of a nice, wide healthy beach.

I think it's clear that in some cases, dune revegetation programs have probably gone too far (albeit with good intentions), adding vegetation that probably wasn't there in the first place and creating unnaturally wide dune systems. The council certainly thinks so, acting on concerns from local lobby groups by reducing the amount of vegetated dunes at beaches like Woonona. The result has been an improved beach amenity. Which gets me thinking about the dunes at Stanwell Park, the biggest dunes in our region – do we really need them? I'll talk about that next month.

Have a question for Dr Rip about the Science of the Surf?
Email rbrander@unsw.edu.au. 2515

Port Kembla Tidal Chart

OCTOBER 2017

TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M	TIME	M
1 0601 1.16 1137 0.61 SU 1801 1.44		10 0005 1.39 0559 0.38 TU 1223 1.68 1900 0.28		19 0233 0.27 0846 1.56 TH 1457 0.31 2100 1.51		28 0315 1.09 0837 0.72 SA 1505 1.36 ● 2209 0.50	
2 0043 0.40 0647 1.24 MO 1229 0.54 1848 1.51		11 0105 1.29 0651 0.47 WE 1319 1.63 2008 0.33		20 0307 0.30 0923 1.59 FR 1539 0.31 ● 2141 1.45		29 0423 1.12 0951 0.71 SU 1613 1.36 2305 0.46	
3 0122 0.33 0727 1.33 TU 1314 0.45 1930 1.57		12 0213 1.20 0753 0.54 TH 1423 1.58 ● 2121 0.35		21 0339 0.34 0959 1.60 SA 1619 0.32 2219 1.38		30 0521 1.19 1059 0.66 MO 1714 1.39 2353 0.39	
4 0158 0.27 0803 1.42 WE 1358 0.37 2011 1.62		13 0330 1.17 0905 0.59 FR 1534 1.55 2233 0.34		22 0411 0.40 1032 1.60 SU 1659 0.34 2259 1.31		31 0609 1.29 1157 0.57 TU 1806 1.44	
5 0233 0.22 0841 1.51 TH 1441 0.29 2052 1.64		14 0446 1.20 1021 0.58 SA 1646 1.55 2336 0.31		23 0442 0.46 1107 1.58 MO 1740 0.38 2339 1.24			
6 0310 0.19 0920 1.59 FR 1527 0.23 ○ 2136 1.63		15 0549 1.27 1131 0.52 SU 1750 1.56		24 0515 0.52 1144 1.55 TU 1823 0.42			
7 0348 0.19 1001 1.66 SA 1614 0.20 2222 1.58		16 0030 0.28 0642 1.35 MO 1232 0.45 1845 1.58		25 0022 1.18 0552 0.58 WE 1223 1.50 1911 0.47			
8 0429 0.23 1045 1.70 SU 1705 0.20 2312 1.50		17 0115 0.26 0727 1.44 TU 1325 0.38 1934 1.58		26 0111 1.13 0636 0.64 TH 1308 1.44 2005 0.50			
9 0512 0.29 1132 1.70 MO 1800 0.23		18 0156 0.25 0808 1.51 WE 1413 0.34 2019 1.55		27 0208 1.09 0730 0.69 FR 1401 1.39 2107 0.52			

TIMES AND
HEIGHTS OF HIGH
AND LOW WATERS
LAT 34° 29'
LONG 150° 55'

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Datum of Predictions is Lowest Astronomical Tide

Times are in local standard time (UTC +10:00) or daylight savings time (UTC +11:00) when in effect

Moon Phase Symbols

● New Moon

○ First Quarter

○ Full Moon

● Last Quarter

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there too. I'm hopeless at maths so I turn to chat with Frank, John Mac and Cookie when I see a very late John Mercer walking, head held particularly high, with sons Darren, Dean and granddaughter Jordan in tow.

Darren and Dean have flown down from Queensland with their families for their grandmother Jessie Mercer's funeral. Jessie – the family matriarch – had passed away aged 94. A fine innings by anyone's standard.

As Johnny steps into the sheds to change into Speedos and swimming cap I walk over to say hello to the Mercer boys and Jordan. In a former life as a newspaper man I photographed these revered local lads many times as they forged themselves into Ironmen, and into Australian household names in the process.

Darren introduces me to his daughter, Jordan, who is carving her own winning ways into the water. Like father, like daughter, like uncle. And like granddad. It's in the veins – these Mercers are definitely more than 70 per cent H₂O.

John Mercer walks onto the pool deck beckoning his family to join him in the water. I inquire about the sea temperature in Queensland.

"It's 20 degrees in Noosa," Darren beams, as the big, smiling Dean nods in agreement.

"Well, it's probably around 14 degrees in there," I respond, nodding towards the pools. The brothers' faces contort in that way people do when they know they're in for a bit of a sting.

Jordan is fidgeting with her phone. I ask her if she'd like me to take a photo of them all in the pool with Johnny and she happily hands it over. The boys share a grin, knowing my employment history.

We wander down the path to the pools and I'm happy to remind them they're not in balmy Queensland anymore. Dean's wearing board shorts, and the look on his face when he jumps in is priceless. There's a thermometer tied to the pool ladder and he shudders over to check the reading.

"Shit, it's 13.8 degrees!" he gasps. "F@#k!"

I can't stop laughing. Ironmen? Bah.

We take a family snap or two, or three, or four ... maybe more. I can't help myself; old habits and all that. I check the photos and I tell Jordan I'll put the phone back in her bag. I wave goodbye and start thinking about coffee as three generations of Mercers swim away at speed and turn the Austinmer pool into a washing machine.

MONDAY

It's August 28. Just before noon my brother-in-law, Billy, calls to tell me the horrible news that's sweeping the nation: Dean Mercer has died. I'm so

stunned I can hardly speak. News alerts start beeping on my phone heralding the tragic passing of one of Australian sport's most beloved sons. Time stands still but the rolodex of my memories of Dean gets stuck on Friday – just three days ago – when I last saw him; super fit, freezing his nuts off in the Austi pool but still cracking that awesome smile and laughing with his cherished loved ones.

The day drags shocked and sombre into the nightly TV bulletins. Most stations lead with news of the Mercer family's unthinkable loss – and the hole now left forever in Australian sport. I retreat to a default safety zone – what I'd always done as a newsman – and spend all afternoon trawling through the major news websites in Queensland and NSW, and calling old workmates who'd also met and photographed Darren and Dean over the years. Like me just hours before, one mate has no idea of the tragedy. He's shattered.

We are all shattered ...

TUESDAY

In that Groundhog Day way I wake up early on August 29, slip silently out of the house and wander down to the beach. In the southern pool – my pool of choice – I can see only two heads bobbing in the pre-dawn: only two sets of arms are cleaving the H₂O today. As they near the shallow water Ross Taylor stands first and looks up at me, sadness enveloping his wet face that glistens in the pool-side floodlights. The white-capped swimmer is only seconds behind him. He also stops and stands in the shallows. It's Johnny Mercer.

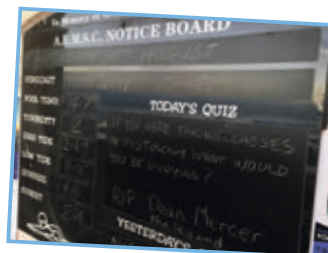
Johnny asks me if I could forward the photos I took on Friday to him – the ones of him with the boys and Jordan. My voice cracks and I struggle for the words to tell him what's in my heart. I inform Johnny I shot the photos using his granddaughter's phone.


"Jordan's got them, John," I almost whisper. "I'm so sorry for your loss, mate".

The three of us stand there in silence for a while at the shallow end of Austi pool. Finally, the grief-stricken dad speaks. "I had to come for a swim," Johnny says gently. "This is where Dean was."

He turns to his long-time swimming buddy, Rosco. "One more lap, Ross," Johnny declares. And with that, the two men swim together back into the darkness.

Vale Dean Mercer.
You legend. **2515**





Left to right: Darren Mercer, John Mercer, Jordan Mercer and Dean Mercer in the southern Austinmer pool. Photo taken by Kirk Gilmour using Jordan Mercer's iPhone on Friday, August 25 about 6.30am.

Vale Dean Mercer

Last month Australia mourned the loss of one of its greatest Ironmen, Dean Mercer, who died after a cardiac arrest and car crash on the Gold Coast on August 28. He was 47.

Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club, where Dean was a Life Member, was to host a 'Paddle Out for Dean' at 10am on September 23, with club president Jeff Body inviting "friends, family and those that have been touched by our champion" to attend.

Here Austinmer's Kirk Gilmour – the former *Illawarra Mercury* picture editor and a Walkley award-winning photographer who has taken many shots at the pools over the years – shares a personal account of a meeting with the Mercer family at Austinmer pool on Friday, August 25.

FRIDAY

It's August 25, early down at Austinmer Beach. It's a little different than most mornings as I arrive for my habitual swim in the pool. I'm used to seeing John Mercer and his mates churning through the water in the pre-dawn darkness all year round. Week in, week out – as regular as the tide.

Johnny, Rosco, Damo, Leo and Minchy are usually climbing out as I'm climbing into the Austinmer big pool. There are no lines marked in either of the sandy bottomed ocean baths but it's fair to say when these gents are in and thrashing about at speed it's a good idea to wait until they vacate. I observe the custom.

Other locals swim in the larger of the two pools that are separated by a concrete pathway; a giant finger that points towards the rising sun. Most days the ever-cautious Frank, Bernie and Hussain hug the pool walls in order to keep clear of John and his pals.

Those blokes go hard and they have a bit of a ritual happening. They're in the drink by 5.30am and, starting in the shallow water, they walk downhill, chatting away as the annexed rectangle of the Tasman Sea rises up their torsos to their chests. Then they go horizontal and swim like destroyers for 10 laps. They go even faster in winter – to accelerate warming the body's core. So I'm told ...

But on Friday, 45 minutes before the sun spills over the horizon, there's no Johnny and no Damien in the pool. Gary Minch is overseas. Only Ross and Leo are going hard as I jump into the icy brine to start my constitutional. Straight away I'm swimming hard too – teeth chattering underwater. Twelve laps later I'm out and legging it across the sandy concrete for a cold shower before shivering my way into layers of clothing to commence the process of defrosting my nervous system.

It's a true winter's morning as the dedicated swimmers mooch around the pavilion shower block. All are members of the Austinmer Early Morning Swimming Club. Brian Cummins gets busy at the noticeboard, chalking in updated info on the tides, sunrise and sunset times and the date. There's a mathematical quiz question scratched on

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