

Whian Whian Falls ... Ahhh ... How's the Serenity?

Paula asked me to write something about the Falls from the perspective of a nearby resident, particularly in the light of last weekend's noisy kerfuffle of sirens and choppers. It may surprise you that this isn't exactly going to be a big tantrum about the state of affairs.

I'm probably one of the few North Coast residents who has mostly thoroughly welcomed the past few wet summers we've had. You know why? Because rain means no hooligans at the Falls! And it's very considerate of you, Mother Nature, providing this latest spell of rain right on Schoolies-o'clock, the timely intervention is much appreciated!

When I first moved back to Whian Whian about four years ago, I was freshly shocked by the level of visitation the Falls receives, particularly from tourists and young people from Lismore & surrounds.

For the first couple of summers I was pretty on edge. It's stressful and violating to be woken from deep sleep in the middle of the night by the squawks and shrieks of teenagers stumbling around the bank right below your home, or by the revving of hotted-up vehicles and the deliberate screech of tyres in the car-park, or the letting-off of firecrackers at about 2 am.

It's worrying, wondering how much alcohol they've consumed and whether they're going to hurt themselves or others. It's also worrying when a busload full of tourists arrives right at peak hour in the hottest part of the afternoon, to join the throngs already there, bodies leaping from every available ledge often with no visibility of the crowded and—let's face it—pretty small, though deep pool below.

It's also worrying when issues of territoriality seem to spring up—the sporadic bursts of violence between locals and tourists or between different sections of the local population. Some people have told me they think that's what the felling of the famous Tree was about last year, some sort of act of territorial vandalism. I don't know. The imagination can get a little overwrought.

And this is where I've come to in the past year or so: I'm kind of over the drama of it all. I don't get as het up about it as I did when I first moved back. Maybe it's because of the series of wet summers; I haven't been as provoked as I was those first couple of hot seasons. Or maybe I'm getting used to it.

I certainly wasn't at all freaked out by the scene that unfolded the other day with three ambulances, at least two police vehicles and I think two different helicopters. I shrugged and thought, I've seen it all before. Although I don't think I've seen quite such a big emergency response previously and from what I can gather it

does seem to have been a bit of overkill.

I don't know. I haven't heard what actually happened, I've only heard a bunch of hearsay that I won't bother repeating here. I think it's beside the point. The point being: It's Nothing New!

Serious accidents have been happening at the Falls for years. Crime has been happening there for years with car break-ins and theft, acts of violence and the disgusting littering that goes on. The amount of times I (and other local residents) have had to deal with items such as dirty disposable nappies and broken glass is countless. I have even witnessed the car of a friend deliberately set alight and go up in flames in the car-park.

Every Xmas and Boxing Day we brace ourselves for the arrival of a distraught stranger requesting help for someone who has badly hurt themselves—the accident often involving copious amounts of alcohol, of course. There was also a deliberately lit bushfire there a couple of years ago that unchecked may well have spread onto the neighbours' property and endangered their home.

As I say: It's Nothing New. And no one does anything about it because frankly, no one is really directly affected by any of it enough of the time to be bothered. Apart from those of us who live so close as for it to be unavoidable—and there aren't that many of us—it's complicated. How, in fact, can we deal with it?

The land the visitors pass through to access the Falls is owned by Rous Water. Even if Rous were to cut off this access I'm sure people would still find a way to get to the waterhole, it's not that far from the bridge or road. Would it be ideal for them to restrict access, anyway? As I've come to understand over the years, there is a lot of social good that goes along with the bad that happens at the Falls.

One of the things I have come to appreciate about the Falls is its role as a place of community gathering, community amenity. It is a social place. I have spent some lovely afternoons there, swimming and chatting with friendly people, familiar faces. Kids and families get to play together, explore and connect with nature. In the quieter moments it is a place of peace and spiritual connection for some of us. I love knowing that I share this with others, that there are other people who feel the same level of respect and love for this beautiful place. The Falls is a place of equity. It doesn't cost anything to go there. It is free for anyone to enjoy. I don't think it would be right to exclude other locals from accessing it so that only a very select, privileged few could have the pleasure of it.

Another thing I love about the Falls is that it isn't touristified, that there isn't a boardwalk or

concrete path or signs and toilets. I love the natural informality of it. But this informality has a pricenand that is - we as a community need to take care of the place informally, but regularly. And we do. The nearest residents regularly pick up rubbish and regularly bear the brunt of any unfolding drama there. What would be lovely would be if EVERYONE who used the Falls treated it with the same level of love and care as we do, if everyone showed their respect for the place by taking personal responsibility for their rubbish and behaviour.

I personally can't understand why you'd be attracted to come to a lovely place like the Falls only to trash it. My feeling is that sometimes people from town come out and go a bit wild here because they feel like they can and they need to. They feel like they're away from the usual rules and conventions—kind of free—I guess when you're not used to it, you could go a bit feral.

It's my belief that things started to get worse at the Falls when Lismore Council decided to expand the car-park area a few years ago. That is the closest thing the Falls has to any form of tourist amenity and I think it has only invited more inappropriate usage. It also invites hoons to come out from town and do donuts on it and wreck the tyres of their parents' cars!

I would like to see an end to the tourist buses visiting this place, at the very least in the high usage summer months. I don't feel it is an appropriate tourist destination because of the informality of the space. It is not set up for tourists and I don't think any of us in the local community, nor Rous Water, wish it to be so.

Various members of Whian Whian community have tried to communicate our wishes and concerns to the tour operators involved, to no avail. I wonder if we were to organise some sort of petition, or even some kind of reverse protest where we all went and visited the tour operator's back yard every afternoon, whether that would produce some results? (Ha, I just heard the bus pulling up right then. How appropriate.) I do think we as a community could stand together on this.

Of course, if I could wave a magic wand I'd get rid of all the yahoos and hoons who like to come and rev their cars and play loud music and wake me up in the middle of the night etc. But I don't really see how that could be stopped. I guess I'll just have to keep up good communications with Mother Nature about the rain.

Sally Newham

Vale Ian Bisset



Left to right Marie Matthews, Ian Bisset, Marcia Mullins, Dennis Matthews, Carol Donnelly and Beth Dudley

This week we said farewell to Ian Bisset, a long term resident of Dorroughby where he lived with his partner Marcia Mullens at their property 'Niu Era'. Ian was very involved with the formative years of Dunoon Club, he was part of the "Buy a Brick" campaign where people purchased a brick to raise funds to establish the club. The shield on display in the foyer of the club is testament to his efforts.

Ian was a fantastic mentor to many people in the Dunoon/Dorroughby area as well as his other efforts including the Dorroughby Community Centre.

Farewell Ian, you'll be missed.

Ian Murray

Dunoon Store News

Shane and Kristin Bradford took over the Dunoon Store almost two years ago. During that time they have made some changes to the range of groceries available to their customers.

Having a young family of their own, Shane and Kristin are only too well aware of trying to control the rising costs of living and the importance of sourcing fresh food. They now have a fantastic selection of locally grown coffee and fresh fruit and veggies including tomatoes, sweet potatoes and avocados. Gluten free and vegetarian grocery lines are also available.

Milkshakes and sandwiches are sold at the store. Ham, chicken, salad, egg and lettuce sandwiches, foccacia or rolls are all made

fresh daily on the premises and are very reasonably priced..They still have pies and sausage rolls and hot local coffee for sale too.

It's all about looking after your customers when you run a small business. Busy mums and dads can drop off their shopping list before they pick the kids up from school and Kristin, Shane or Fran will have your order ready for you by the time you get back. Phone orders are always welcome too. You don't get service like that at Woolies do you?

Shane has expanded the Bottle Shop —there is now a wider selection of beer, spirits and wines available at various price levels to suit everyone.



During the week leading up to Christmas (from Mon 19th Dec) the shop will be open later in the evenings, including Christmas Eve. Christmas Day is the only day of the year that the shop is closed and Sunday 26th, Boxing Day, will be open public holiday hours; 8am - 6pm.

So keep it local, reduce your food miles and support your village store!

Dunoon Village Store: 6689 5225

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