

LARRIKIN TALES OF THE BRISBANE VALLEY VOLUME I



Prepared by E. DeLacy on behalf of
Brisbane Valley Heritage Trails Inc, 2005



These tales are dedicated to the late Kevin Allery, an enthusiastic Brisbane Valley Heritage Trails committee member, Nanango Councillor, sportsman and larrikin to the end.



BVHT's members at Linville Railway Station, Kevin Allery second from right

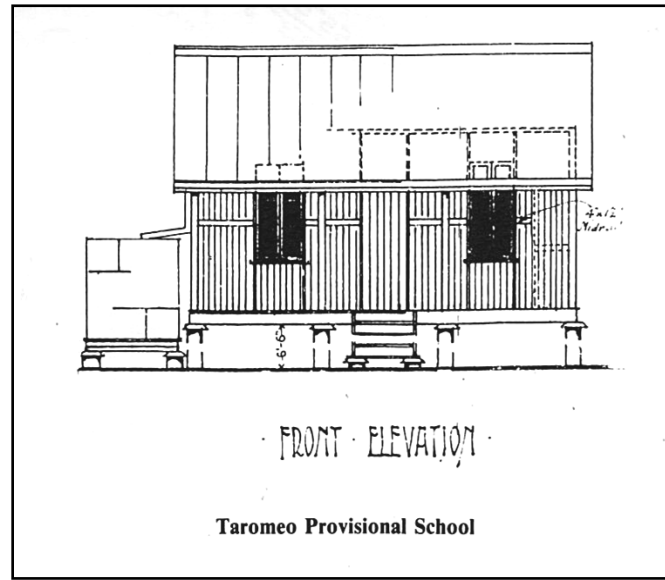
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Usual suspects + sheep, Toogoolawah

1. Snakes and Schoolboys. The late Kevin Allery, Nanango Councillor, seems to have had a larrikin streak in him since his school days, if the stories told at his funeral and wake are anything to go by. On his way to school one day, Kev came across a big black snake on the path so he killed it and threw its body in the bushes. Just then he heard some of the girls coming down the track behind him and Kev changed places with the snake that he left lying artistically on the path again. When the girls screamed in fright, Kev leaped out of the bushes and gallantly killed the snake again and again until all the girls were safely in class.



Plans of a typical country school in Brisbane River Valley

2. Giving him the Bird. Kev didn't suffer fools gladly but he liked bullies even less. As a young boy at school he had been bullied by an older boy with a passion for cockatoos. As luck would have it, Kev was to change school at the end of the year and he planned his revenge. On the last day of school he found the softest and smelliest cow pat and put his hat over it. Then he trotted off to school and announced to the bully that he had caught a cockatoo under his hat in the paddock near the school. But the trouble was that Kev would lose the bird if he tried to reclaim his hat. Did the bully think he could help him out? The bully could have the cockatoo if Kev could get his hat back. The deal was that Kev would lift the hat quickly and the bully would need to make a very rapid grab for his prize before it flew away. The plan worked a treat and the bully ended up with his greedy hands (and his wounded pride) covered in cow poo. There is no record of how fast Kevin ran home from school on that last day.

3. Made to Last. Ted Ellis was an old timber cutter who drove an old 1926 Chev. Loy Brothers were timber carters who carted from Ted's area. Ted said that on one occasion Loy's new white truck could not make it up a steep hill, so Ted hooked his old Chev on to the truck. He said that the old Chev was pulling the loaded truck easy, and when he reached the top of the hill and looked behind, he had pulled the front axle and front wheels clean from under the truck.
4. A Big Tree. Ted also claimed that he felled a big tree at Marble Top. He cut the scarf in to direct the direction of the fall. He had to weld three cross cut saws together to reach through the tree, and after a week's continuous work the tree fell. To celebrate, they held a dance on the tree stump and the orchestra played in the scarf.
5. An exhibition of tree felling. Jock Campbell from Blackbutt told of his tree felling ability. The idea was to leave a couple of big trees at one end of the block, then cut all the other trees about three parts through. Jock did that on a 20 acre block, felled the last two big trees right through and then there would be a domino effect to fell the lot. He went to the Exhibition when he felled the two big ones, came back in ten day's time and the last two cracked and hit the ground. There was not one tree left standing.
6. Over the Moon. Jock also claimed to be a good buck jump rider. A few rums in the Blackbutt Pub and Jock went and got a horse no-one could ride. It was a full moon and ten o'clock at night when Jock climbed on the horse in the back yard of the pub. The horse was bucking so high the blokes on the ground could see the moon under his belly. Jock rode him to a standstill.
7. Meat for Breakfast. A well known bushman was known never to kill his own cattle for beef. A suspicious neighbour heard that he had killed a beast and reported it to the Nanango Police. The police went out at daylight next morning and asked to see the hide. The bushman replied, "Sorry, we cooked it and ate it for breakfast". He had done the usual and burned it the night before.
8. The Trots. An old bloke by the name of Harry Schultie was proud of his very fast trotter for his sulky. He was going home one evening in an eastern direction when a vicious hail storm came in from the west. Harry reckons that his mare was trotting so fast, the tray at the back of the sulky got full of hail, and the front of his shirt and his boots never got wet.
9. The Great One Shoe Run! One night in a Toogoolawah pub a local gentleman came into the bar and after he had consumed a couple of sherbets he bet a local lad that he couldn't walk across to the other side of the road with one shoe on. The local lad, appropriately primed with the usual dose of Dutch courage, indicated that he could perform the task and was prepared to take up the bet. The princely sum of \$5 was duly placed on the bar and as the local lad

took one of his shoes off, the gentleman then asked again if he could walk across the road with one shoe on. "Of course I can" was the reply so the gentleman then said that the local lad should only have one shoe on, nothing else! The local lad was at first a bit reluctant but the \$5 was a reasonable sum in those days so he agreed to take up the bet. At the time the publican's daughter was serving in the bar. As she was only 16 years old, she was told to go to her room before the clothes came off. She still recalls how miffed she was at not being able to remain in the bar. Off came the rest of the clothes etc. until he was left with one shoe on. He then slowly walked to the front door, checked out that no cars were coming along the street and then walked, hurriedly, across the street. Just at this time the local Police came around the bottom corner of the street. The local lad, luckily, had to duck behind a shrub which was growing on the footpath. The local law did not see him so after they had passed, he quickly walked back across the street, into the bar, got dressed and won the bet. The local gentleman, who was known to enjoy these funny little jokes, was laughing but paid up and agreed it was a great effort!

10. The Big Tie Cutting Afternoon. The same local lad enjoyed the company of the local graziers at the pub, especially after a cattle sale in the hot summer months. As usual, the cattle sales bring all types to the bar to quench their thirst after a dusty day at the sale. One local identity who came to the sales from the other side of Esk was known to have a few cold drinks and enjoy a good laugh. The grazier would always be dressed in a short sleeve shirt and always wore a tie to town. On other occasions, the local lad had jokingly indicated that he would like to cut the grazier's tie off. So, on this particular day, again after consuming a reasonable number of frothy drinks, he again joked about cutting the graziers tie off. After a few bouts of laughter out came the pair of scissors and the tie was duly cut off, leaving about 3 – 4 inches hanging. If my memory serves me correctly, the grazier did not see the real funny side of the joke and was unimpressed with the local lad. I'm not sure of the outcome but time mended everything and the pair often had cold drinks together again.
11. The Brick Stories. In the same pub, two local lads would regularly get onto the grog together. They would become loud and rather pissed but would continue to try and outdo each other with some very different acts of bravado. At the back door of the pub was a brick used to keep the door open during the day. This brick was the target of the pair of lads who used it for various methods of competition. One was to see how far they could kick the brick along the bar room floor barefoot. One of the lads sometimes went by the nickname of Barefoot so he would regularly win this event. Due to the lack of feeling in the feet after a long session, this exercise did not appear to harm either lad. The next event was somewhat sobering to those who witnessed it. The idea was to see how much either lad could chew off the brick with his teeth. Again, this rarely resulted in any known harm to the lads.

12. The Obedient Dog Stories. Another local identity was well known for his ability to train dogs to a very high level of obedience. He was also known to enjoy a cold drink on a hot day or, for that matter, any day. His favourite trick was to wait for a stranger to come into the bar and start talking about dogs. Of course, this was also the signal for the locals and the publican to enjoy a bit of fun. The identity would tell the stranger he could ring up his dog and get it to come to the pub. This was usually met with the "I don't believe you" reply so the action would begin. The local identity would be given the phone and he would ring home and ask his wife to put the dog on the phone. He would then ask the dog to come to the bar to see the stranger. After about five or so minutes, the dog would come trotting into the bar, much to the surprise of the stranger. This would then lead to other tricks. The favourite was to get the dog to find the paper money amongst a pile of screwed up newspaper. The stranger was asked to take the money out of his pocket to ensure no scent of the owner was on the note, screw up the note and put it amongst the newspaper. The dog never got it wrong and always come up with the note. Again, a much surprised stranger.



Lionel Lindsey's Dog & Swag

13. The Great Mini Chase. Another local lad was a very proud owner of the new Mini - a bit of a sporty model and a little noisy. Into the town comes the new policeman who, of course, is keen to make his mark on the locals. On this particular night, the Mini driving local lad had nothing else to do but to drive around town making a bit of noise. This got up the nose of the new copper who set out to chase the Mini and book the driver. The policeman, being new to town,

didn't know all the back streets and shortcuts. The policeman set out chasing the Mini and the local lad took the policeman on a long drive around town. After a while the local lad got sick of the chase, decided to go home, hid the Mini behind the house and let the policeman continue for about another half an hour looking for the lad. As usual, the long arm of the law caught up with the local lad but not until a few days later.

14. The False Fire Alarms. The local PMG lads were doing some cable rearrangements in the town area. To ensure that no businesses suffered service interruptions, the local cable jointer started early one morning to complete the work before the shops opened for the day. Around opening time, the town fire alarm sounded. In small rural communities, the fire alarm was usually mounted on a pole and was similar to an air raid siren. All the town usually turned out to see where the fire was and all the volunteer firemen were ready for action. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a false alarm. The method to start the siren was for people to call the local telephone exchange and report a fire and the operators would ring the fire station number which in turn would trigger the siren. No one had called the operators so it was a bit of a mystery as to how the alarm was set off. After all the volunteers had returned to work, the alarm went off again. Again, all the volunteers raced to the fire station but it was another false alarm. About this time, the local PMG foreman began to think what may have been causing the alarm to go off so he approached the cable jointer as he was the only person who was working on the cables that carried the wires to the fire station. Again, about the same time, the fire siren went off again. The cable jointer began checking out his work and it was discovered that he had jointed the cable wrongly and had joined a local business number to the fire station number. Every time the local business turned the handle of the phone to contact the telephone operators, the small electrical current would trigger the fire alarm. After much frantic rearrangement, the problem was solved much to the embarrassment of the local jointer, especially after the siren went off about a dozen times.
15. The Night Shift Telephone Operators' Alarms. One of the local telephone exchanges was manned at night by the Junior Postal Officers who worked a roster of one week in the Post Office by day and one week on the telephone exchange at night. The telephone exchange was classed as a sleeping shift exchange whereby the operator had a bed in front of the switchboard and alarms would be set if someone wanted to make a phone call. You have to remember that all connections were made manually before the advent of dial telephones in the country. Sometimes the operators had worked through the day and were very tired at night and didn't like the thought of being woken up to connect phone calls. The alarms were set to commence operating at approximately 9.00pm and turned off at 6.00am the next morning. Being typical inquisitive lads, it didn't take long to work out how to turn the alarms off to have a more

restful night. There was, however, a big bell in the ceiling which could not be overridden and eventually calls had to be answered. Some of the more adventurous night shift operators eventually worked out how to minimise the big bell's operations. This was achieved by removing the panel in the ceiling which covered the bell and stuffing newspaper between the gong and the bell mechanism. This worked fine until someone really needed to make a call and had to go to the exchange and bash on the door to wake the operator up to put the call through. Needless to say, that spelt the end of being able to doctor the alarms.

16. This Little Piggy Went to the Town's Christmas Tree A local well known farmer who just happened to be the local electrician had some pigs on his farm. Because the pigs were treated somewhat like pets, they would follow the family around the farm, especially a rather large saddle back sow. It was Saturday night and the town Christmas tree was being held, so all the family went to town to join the celebrations. This obviously upset the sow somewhat and she decided to follow the car into town. You can imagine the scenario; family enjoying the celebrations being sought out by a jealous rather large sow in the town. Much hilarity followed with the family trying to chase and catch the pig to take her back home. Eventually, they caught the pig near the Apostolic Church and put her into the back of the car and returned her home to the pen.

17. Miners' Rights. In April 1949 I obtained employment at the Acland Colliery. My first position was assistant road layer and my mentor, Jack, was a jovial man many years my senior. The method of underground coal extraction was for miners to drive parallel tunnels; known as boards, to the boundary of the lease. As they progressed, it was the road-layer's job to lay the rails on which the wagons or skips of coal were wheeled, as and when required by the miners. At that time the rails consisted of lengths of two-by-two inch hardwood, nailed to sleepers.

When there was a cave-in as sometimes occurred, the loss of these rails was of little consequence. However at the time of my employ steel rails were being introduced and their cost called for their removal before a fall buried them forever. I have never really come to grips with the logic of sending us in to salvage rails when it was too dangerous for miners to continue. We were armed with pinch-bars and a low table top wagon called a molly on which we loaded the rails. Putting my faith in Jack's experience I followed him faithfully but as a new chum in underground mining it was with some trepidation.

Jack's first instruction was "If I say GO, you GO!"

When the order came I didn't need a second call: even pushing the molly loaded with rails, I think I reached the bottom of the shaft and had time for a quick snack before Jack caught up. In the days before

the unions succeeded in convincing the management of the need to supply hot tea in urns to the underground workers, we carried two tin billys. One contained our lunch, known as crib; and the other, cold tea, water or whatever was desired. At lunch time the miners, working in pairs, usually ate their crib at the work face but Jack and I together with other labourers would meet in an area underground known as the crib room. One worker I shall call Bill always drank sweet cocoa, which was very tasty when cold. This fact was not lost on another labourer I shall call Paul, who only carried water and often claimed to have left his billy elsewhere and requested a swig of Bill's cocoa. Eventually Bill's generous nature fractured and as we sat down to lunch Bill calmly fished his false teeth out of his billy of cocoa. When questioned, he informed all and sundry that he always left them in there! I think Paul immediately lost his taste for cocoa! *(Courtesy of Laurie Wenham & Rosalie Shire Council)*

18. The Cooyar Lutheran Ladies Guild At Public Halls prior to the introduction of electric boilers or urns, the water for tea and coffee was heated in a copper in the backyard.

In 1964 the Cooyar Lutheran Ladies Guild members were catering for a wedding breakfast at the old Cooyar Memorial Hall. This hall was a large wooden building situated in McDougall Street, Cooyar and during the night of February 12, 1988 the township of Cooyar was struck by a devastating flash flood and the hall was washed away.



Cooyar Creek Crossing

To enable the busy ladies to continue working, an eight year old male who had always put wood in the wood stove was told to put a piece of wood in the copper. After thirty minutes or so it was noticed that the copper fire was very low. Looking into the matter it was discovered that no wood had been added to the fire. The boy in question was adamant that he had put wood in the copper.

On further investigation a piece of steaming split ironbark wood was removed from the hot water in the copper. As the time to serve the wedding guests with tea or coffee was fast approaching there was insufficient time to empty the copper, refill with water and heat to boiling point. So the existing water was hurriedly brought to the boil with some pine kindling and the tea was made, brewed and served just in time. Mother of the groom was a city person and commented to the male waiter, "The tea is darker in colour and has an unusual flavour".

"Country water, wood heated in the open air, Ma'am," replied the waiter. With a nod of approval the mother of the groom remarked, "Different, but very palatable". (*Courtesy of Jocelyn Hansen & Rosalie Shire Council*)

19. Sleeping on the Job. When Poppa Hansen selected his land in what is now known as Malling, he had some young blokes working for him felling scrub. One night they got on the grog. Next morning the others were cutting scrub and Poppa asked "Where is John?" "He is over there sleeping", they answered. "Shall we wake him up, Mr Hansen?" His reply was "No, while he is asleep he's still got a job!" (*Courtesy of Stella Weedon & Rosalie Shire Council*)
20. Piggy in the Middle. When I was about ten years old, it was my job to go down the scrub and shoot turkeys and pigeons for meat for the week. To earn money, I used to catch carpet snakes and skin them – instead of using ashes to stretch the skin I used sand, the sand being heavier, the skin would stretch, so I got a ten foot skin from a six foot snake. We picked the corn crops by hand; we had two horses to pull the wagons, they kept the wagons alongside us all the time. We grew a lot of cattle pumpkins and carted them home for pig feed. The young pigs would eat a hole in the pumpkin to go to the seeds, then get inside to get the last of the seeds; us kids would roll the pumpkin over on the hole and lock the pigs inside. Dad would have to roll the pumpkins over to let the pigs out. (*Courtesy of Bill Hobbs & Rosalie Shire Council*)
21. Dante's Inferno. Not long after I shifted to Nukku the fettlers were working on the rail line near Cooyar Creek on the Blackbutt side of Pidna. They were doing a routine control burn one day when the wind changed and their fire turned into a raging inferno. It went through several properties burning acres grass and a paddock of corn. Cattle, horses and wild animals were all caught up in it. (*Courtesy of Myrtle Thacker & Rosalie Shire Council*)
22. Tennis Pro. Also when I was living at Nukku my late mother and I used to go over to the school in the lunch hour to play tennis with

the Head Master and one of his pupils, Roy Emerson (Sonny), who went on to be a Wimbledon champion. *(Courtesy of Myrtle Thacker & Rosalie Shire Council)*

23. Thumbs Up! Practical jokes were the order of the day in the 1960s and one of the Toogoolawah locals had acquired a very realistic “damaged thumb” that slipped over the real thumb like the finger of a rubber glove. When he had finished tricking his friends and workmates into sympathy for his ‘injury’, he handed it on to the local butcher. This butcher was something of a showman, and he always made a big production of chopping the ribs off the backbone of a sheep. The cleaver came down with an almighty crash and always right beside his thumb. One of the local matrons, who was not given to hysterics, came into the shop to order her meat while the ‘show’ was on. Without missing a beat in the rhythm of his chopping, the butcher chopped the bones, removed the mutilated thumb and threw it onto the counter in front of his patient customer. Her scream did nothing to support her reputation for being imperturbable but her continued patronage did wonders for her reputation of being a very good sport.
24. Exhibitionism. A well known tradesman also acquired a very gruesome but believable face mask from the Exhibition. On one occasion he sat beside an old mate who was not entirely sober at the bar, and tried unsuccessfully to cadge a drink from him while wearing this mask. His virtuoso performance, however, involved the two female passengers of a service car parked outside one of the local cafes. He wandered around the car, poking his particularly ugly nose in at each window, until the passengers were driven to alight in terror for the protection of their driver.
25. A Policeman’s Lot is Not a Happy One. There was a determined attempt by local police to stop young revellers leaving the dances and drinking in their cars alongside the local dance Halls. On one occasion a young man was sprung by two of the constabulary at a Mt. Kilcoy dance and prudently took to the hills. His pursuers followed calling “Stop!” “Stop!” “Stop!” and the fugitive tried to resolve the problem with a persuasive appeal to logic. He turned around briefly and called over his shoulder, “Your Stop! You haven’t got two big blokes chasing you!”
26. Market Fluctuations. Inflation has always been seasonal in the Brisbane Valley, especially in relation to entertainment. In summer it cost a young lad 10/- in the pre-decimal years before 1966 to attend one of the local dances alone. This covered the hire of the Hall and the Band and Supper. In winter the cost of a “Ball” was 30/-; held in the same Hall with the same Band and the same Supper. The Ball gowns made the only difference and they were usually worn by their previous summer dance partners anyway.



Toogoolawah Show Ball, 1948

27. The Labour Market. Recruiting a work force for hay making at night took stamina and ingenuity in the Brisbane Valley after WWII. A local forestry man performed this task for one of the local farmers by joining the drinkers in the pub at night and inciting them to stay there until it would have seemed ungrateful for them to refuse to work. Not surprisingly the quality of the work was pretty variable. The farmer drove the tractor at a fairly even, fast pace while the drinkers battled to keep up. Once when a young footballer of about 10 ½ stone fell from the tractor, he was picked up by the old timber man and carried to safety as if he had been a three year old child.

28. The Pen is Mightier than the Sword. The same timber man was reputed to take SP bets in the 1950s, and used his daughter as his 'runner'. On Sunday after Church the same daughter would deliver the winnings and accounts in beautiful script, and everyone knew the names of the only three people in the district capable of such handwriting. They were two Railway employees and a book keeper, and the book keeper remained the odds-on favourite.

The Under Secretary for Lands
Brisbane

Sir, I beg to enquire if the
unsurveyed land on the resumed
part of Holinton run is avail-
-able or to be available for
selection before survey.

I have made enquiries about
the matter before, but failed to get
a satisfactory answer from what
I thought was the proper quarter &
thus I take the liberty of applying
to you direct.

I have the Honor to be Sir
your most obedient servt.

Penmanship, 12 May 1886

29. The Loaded Fag. There is seldom any love lost between footballers from opposing teams, and boarding in the same Guest House only adds insult to injury. The player for Esk never lost an opportunity to pay out on the Gatton player who smoked other people's cigarettes more often than he smoked his own. One evening the Esk player carefully removed the tobacco from one of his cigarettes and replaced it with a tiny Tom Thumb fire cracker. He left his loaded cigarette on an ashtray and thought that the bait would be too tempting for his nemesis to avoid. And it might have been too, if a more senior member of the Guest House had not been in need and found the cigarette first. To this day he does not know who made the thing explode in his face, nor why the next contest between Esk and Gatton was especially physical.

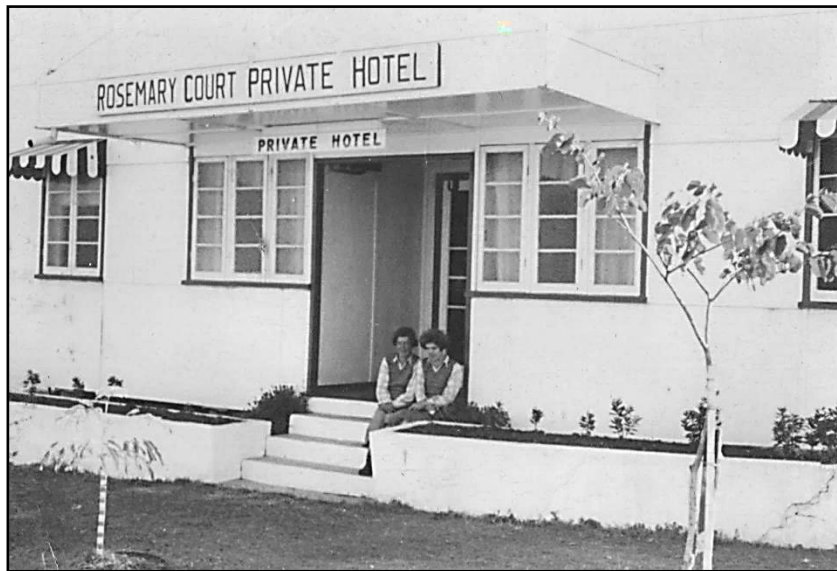
30. Three beatings in 24 hours. In the days when the 'bif' was an accepted part of all football codes, footballers from opposing teams often had good reason to dislike each other. One player was punished in a scrum and he knew instantly who must have been responsible. After the game and a significant amount of Dutch courage he determined on revenge, and called his tormentor out. He was soundly beaten and went home to a disapproving wife. But he brooded on the situation and decided that he had only lost the

fight because he was drunk. After a good night's sleep and completely sober, he liked his chances rather better, so he sought out his sparring partner of the previous evening and was soundly beaten once again. Arriving home in a sorry state for the second time, his wife asked for some wood and he felt he was in no position to refuse. So he loaded his arms up with an enormous pile of wood and was met at the top of the stairs by an angry and unforgiving wife who grabbed the top piece and attacked him with it. He was soundly beaten once again for the third time in 24 hours.



Toogoolawah Football Team, 1922

31. They Didn't Die Wondering! Larrikin stories about Publicans in the Brisbane Valley are legion but the Proprietors of Guest Houses and Boarding Houses also rate honourable mention. Many of them kept an excellent table and took the place of an absent Mum. Others kept the table set 24 hours a day to satisfy government regulations but they expected their boarders to eat out three times a day. One pair of landladies who fell into the latter category was also desperately inquisitive. One of their newer boarders received many letter from an old girlfriend and these were becoming embarrassing as he commenced the courtship of a local girl and his future wife. To protect himself he tore up his most recent letter and threw it in the bin on the way to work. As luck would have it he had forgotten something important and had to return home during working hours to get it. Imagine his surprise at finding his two landladies sitting up at the kitchen table painstakingly piecing the torn bits of his letter together. What made the situation even more distressing was that his landladies were also the local reporters with an eye for a good story. To date there has been no exposé of his private life in the local rag and his former landladies are long since dead.



Rosemary Court Private Hotel, Toogoolawah

32. Hastening Slowly. Before technology gave us instant access to everything two local reporters fervently believed that “News that had to be posted wasn’t news” and they devised some novel and cost effective ways of getting copy to their editor quickly. Their most common ploy was to stop their car on the Brisbane Valley highway with its bonnet up and wait for a Good Samaritan to present himself. He was then pressed into service as a courier to the offices of the Courier Mail (Brisbane) or the Queensland Times (Ipswich). One editor recalls that one man made a delivery from “two mad women broken down outside Esk”. Sometimes the car was genuinely disabled, and then a call would be made to the local garage. Usually the old hands would send the apprentice, and when there was a news story to be delivered, the instructions from the customers were always the same, “Send help, but not quickly.” The ‘hastening slowly’ apprentice is now an elder of the Baptist Church and he has told this story for 40 years without lightning strikes. No one in the district doubts that it is true.

33. Dracula & the Blood Bank. It was customary until fairly recently for all the young men of the Brisbane Valley to give blood to the Blood Bank on a regular basis. It was taken by the local doctor and he was assisted by his receptionist who had the reputation of a dragon lady that failed to conceal her heart of gold. Nevertheless she tolerated no nonsense and had an uncompromising approach to backsliding of any sort. One day the doctor found himself short by one donor, and made it clear that this role was to be filled on this occasion by his receptionist. She accepted her fate, and in a totally uncharacteristic response to a crisis situation she fainted clean away. Her reputation was in no way tarnished by this apparent weakness and she continued to manage the practice with a grip of steel until her retirement.

34. Women of the World Unite: A well known lady mayor in the Brisbane Valley was admired for her grace and dignity, although the following story suggests she may have worked hard to keep her larrikin streak out of sight during her long term of office. She had been invited to a Breakfast for Business Women at the southern end of the shire and colluded with the wife of another musical Shire Councillor so that the said musician should attend the breakfast as well. He was a little surprised that he was needed a full half hour before the other invited guests. He was even more surprised when his Lady Mayor expected him to dress up like a French waitress in frilly cap and apron and serve the breakfast. There were several other men similarly employed and history is silent on the inevitable repercussions of this escapade.
35. Boys Will be Boys: An old time dairy farmer grew melons on the banks of Cressbrook Creek close by the most popular swimming hole for Toogoolawah youngsters in the 1920s. A scion of a very reputable merchant family was tempted to steal these melons on a very regular basis and eventually he was caught. The dairy farmer was a hard man who wore a frightening hook in the place of his amputated hand and the young man in a state of undress anticipated some serious unpleasantness. The old man may have recalled his own youth when he put his two good hands to similar use and instead of meting out the expected punishment he only demanded that the next time the young man was in need of melons he should ASK for one instead of stealing it.
36. War Games: During WWII it was a common practice to keep workers in essential service jobs on their toes by simulated enemy attacks. On one occasion such a mock attack was planned for the telephone exchange at the small rural township of Toogoolawah but the Postmaster forgot the usual protocol of advising his staff beforehand. In the middle of the night, and right on cue, an armed man pushed a rifle through the little window used by residents to book a trunk line call and terrified the tiny lady at the telephone exchange who certainly had no strategies to counter such an attack. Now in her 82nd year, widowed and still a local, she recalls this as one of her horror stories of the War.
37. Last Drinks! Fred and his mates were riding home one evening after a camp draft and they arrived in Toogoolawah just on 10 o'clock at night. As the pair passed the Commercial Hotel at the top of town it was closing up for the night and Fred expressed his concern that they were not even going to get a drink at the end of a hard day. The Club Hotel, however, was not yet shut and Fred suggested a certain way of getting his drink. So just on closing time two weary riders rode right up to the bar and demanded their turn at the watering hole. Report has it that mine host Ray McCallum was happy to oblige.

38. One More For the Road: Old traditions die hard in the bush and the stories are legion of cattle men riding their horses into the bar to get a last drink before closing time. Recently a kind of urban myth has been perpetuated that this practice was discontinued after the war years as cars and motor bikes replaced the horse. Toogoolawah locals have been harder to convince of this than their city cousins because they have all seen an old black and white photo of two well known Appaloosa breeders on horseback being served in one of their local watering holes. And the date of the photo? Not 1940, or 1950 or even 1960. The photo was taken in 1980 and not even the keenest punters are betting that this is the last example of an old bush tradition.



Courtesy of Danny Baldwin

39. The Runaway Train. Ray McCallum was not backward in telling his own stories and has provided the only printed version of this story, which is reproduced here. Back in 1947, the publican of the Club Hotel in Toogoolawah in the Brisbane Valley happened to travel to the nearest large town, Esk, about 12 miles away, to do some business. As was normal after his business was completed, he paid his respects to his fellow publicans and finally ended up at the Hotel Metropole about 6:30 p.m. While he was there, the driver, fireman and guard of a goods train called in for a few beers while they waited for the passenger railmotor to pass their train which had been shunted on to a siding because the line was only single track. A few hours passed as the railmotor was running late. Eventually, the train crew made ready to rejoin the train for the next section up the Brisbane Valley to Toogoolawah and instead of travelling in the passenger car, the driver and fireman invited the publican to travel up in the steam engine as the night was quite cold. He offered a bottle of Blue Jacket rum as his token for this privilege and this was

gladly accepted by the two crew of the steam engine. Once the trio was settled into the warm engine compartment, the publican, in a moment of light heartedness looked out of the side of the engine and called, "Take her away", which the driver promptly did. Half a bottle of rum later, the happy trio and train rolled up to the level crossing just outside of Toogoolawah and were met by the local police patrol waiting beside the road. The stern faced police sergeant told them he had had a call from his counterpart in Esk with a message that during the shunting process somebody had forgotten to attach the guard's van to the end of the train and all the information the guard had been able to offer was that he had heard some silly bugger call out, "Take her away" and the rest of the train had left without him. Red faced, the publican offered the rest of his rum to the driver and fireman who were then faced with the task of shunting back to Esk to collect the guard's van. There is a persistent rumour that it was three members of the Esk Bowls Club who deliberately uncoupled the guard's van, one of whom had a formidable reputation for larrikinism.

40. Overtime Further to the previous story, one of the participants recalls that the men were fined 22/- for the incident. A bit more than a slap on the wrist in those days. But he also recalls that the men put in a claim for overtime of 27/6 and this was duly paid by an unsuspecting wages clerk far from the scene of the crime.

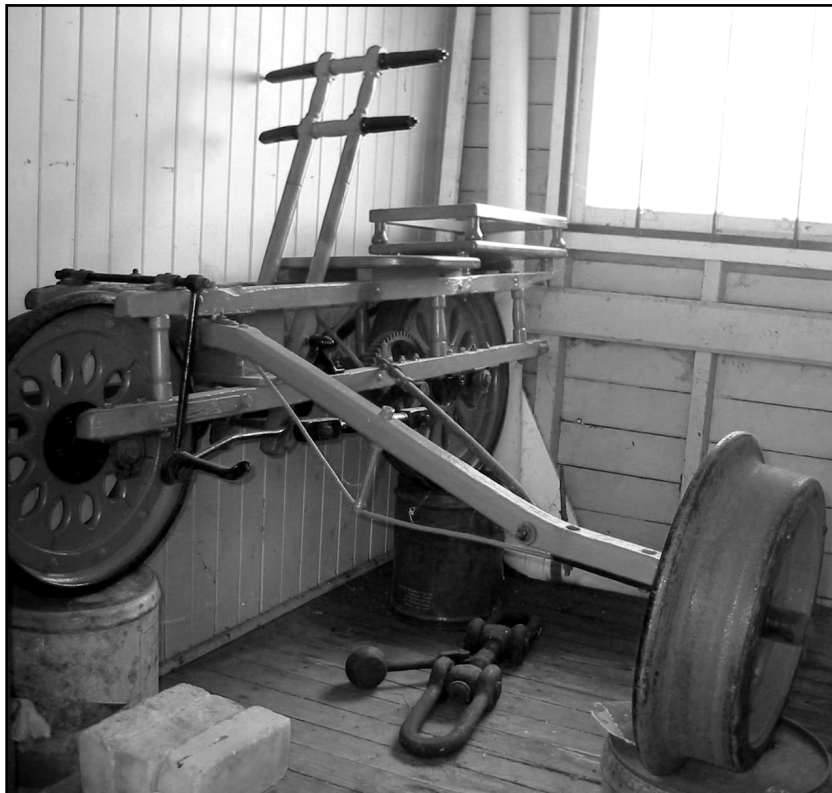


Steam train in Esk

41. Another runaway train in Esk. Railway employees probably had little time for extracurricular activities on the Brisbane Valley Line. Three likely lads had been drinking very steadily in the Esk hotels all night and finally moved on to the wet canteen at the Railway Station. At about this time an old steam train arrived at the station and the driver, guard and fireman alighted for a break. The three drinkers were, by this time, getting a little bit above themselves and reckoned that it couldn't be that hard to drive a train. Immediately putting their theory to the test, they commandeered the abandoned train and drove it from the station into town and 'parked it'

somewhere near the Lyceum Hall. Given their legless state, this was probably a safer alternative than walking home.

42. Bathing Beauties. At Linville fifty years ago, all the Railway families knew that the ganger had a sleep on Sunday afternoon leaving his trike unprotected against adolescent larrikins. Three daughters of one of the fettlers 'borrowed' the trike during the long, hot summer and set off to the Greenhide with their dog for a swim. When they arrived they parked the trike on the line for the return journey. All went well for our bathing beauties as they cooled off at the creek until they heard the whistle of an unexpected "special" travelling via Linville. Imagine the wild scramble to pull the trike off the line to avoid a disaster! And imagine, if you will, the looks on the faces of the passengers watching this manoeuvre by "railway workers" in a state of blatant undress in broad daylight.



Restored railway trike/beach buggy at Linville Station

43. Redback on the Toilet Seat? I can well remember my Father, Jim Bowdon going out west with some mates and coming home and telling us of his adventures there. You see, my Dad never drank and smoked before I was born. Never ever did I see him enter a hotel! Quite something for a man of his age! He told of the adventure of sitting by the camp fire out west, and having a lovely time, with the other fellows drinking, smoking and having fun. The wood was burning down on the fire a bit, (it must have been winter) and they

asked Dad to get up and put the log on which he had been sitting on the fire. To the amazement of everyone not far from where Dad's bottom was, lay a death adder. That was one of Dad's close brushes with death. *(Courtesy of Christine Aitken of Biarra)*

44. A Country Practice Dad was the bush vet for all the local community. I can well remember having to get up early to help him with the 'bleeding of the bullock'. This bullock had been purchased from the now DPI at Yeerongpilly and treated so that his blood was suitable to be injected into other cattle for immunity from tick fever. Dad would go out to the respective properties and inject this blood into the owner's cattle. One day we went to a farm which was owned by some Dutch people. When Dad has finished vaccinating the cattle and he was cleaning up his syringes and tubes, he jokingly squirted some of the blood onto the foot or leg of one of the adolescent male children. It is etched in my mind how Dad told of this story and how the young Dutch fellow retaliated with his broken English saying, "You Apostolic Basor" as he could not get his English around the right word. Every time I drive past that particular farm I still think of that incident, and it was years ago. *(Courtesy of Christine Aitken of Biarra)*
45. Your Shout One thing that sticks in my mind is when the cattle sales were on, Don Andrews from Crow's Nest would come down to them and on the way home he would call and see Dad. He would bring a bottle of rum for himself and a bottle of sarsaparilla for Dad and they would sit on the front steps until the sars and rum were finished. Never did Dad partake of one drop of alcohol. Don was a great fellow, and I can remember how he used to rub it into Dad for not drinking. *(Courtesy of Christine Aitken of Biarra)*
46. Definitely Last Drinks. There are thousands of stories of strong men in the Brisbane Valley, and all of them seem to have been larrikins. XXXXX Ryan was a legendary sportsman in the _____ District. He was a dual rugby International. He was also Queensland Boxing Champion and got as far as a national Championship fight. He was known to lift a 44 gallon drum of petrol onto a truck single handed, and he was not a man to be underestimated. One night XXXXX had been drinking pretty heavily at Toogoolawah and when he had worn out his welcome there he moved on to the Royal Mail Hotel at Moore. The publican there very sensibly refused him service to which XXXX responded by lifting the top entirely off the whole of the public bar.



Royal Mail Hotel, Moore

47. Lawful Seizure. Banking has changed dramatically over the years, although some of the traditions maintained by junior officers are surprisingly resilient. A sometime resident of Linville found employment with the ANZ Bank. After a particularly hectic week at work, he and several other employees (all under the legal drinking age of 21 in those days) bought a 5 gallon keg and set about making a night of it in the bush. Sadly the local police sergeant and constable discovered them, and played out the Good Cop-Bad Cop routine many years before it became commonplace on our T.V. screens. The Constable was in favour of arrest while the Sergeant leaned towards leniency. Authority won the day and the miscreants escaped after forfeiting the keg to the wily and perhaps not quite so lenient Sergeant of Police.
48. Security Guards. Collecting deposits from bank agencies around the Colinton area was usually the responsibility of senior banking staff, but on at least one occasion illness provided relatively junior employees with this opportunity. In hindsight it was perhaps unwise to ask one of them to check the firearm and certainly beyond the call of duty to discharge all but two of the bullets in target practice at the Greenhide. History is silent on the explanation offered to senior officers when a later audit of ammunition identified a major shortfall in this department.



49. Francie Zink & the Zebra Crossing

Francis Zink or “Francie” as he was known was a frugal old German man who lived alone in a cottage in Moore. Francie could make almost anything; he could fashion a pannikin from an old jam tin and he was always inventing simple tools for tedious jobs. For 20c and a kiss on the cheek he would mend an old shoe or replace the handle on your saucepan. Later in life, when Francie was getting a little age weary, the local law enforcement officer decided to install a “Zebra Crossing” so that

Francie could make his daily excursion to the shops. Francie was tutored in the basics of crossing the sometimes busy highway. He should step up to the crossing, hold up a hand motioning a stop signal, and when the car had stopped he should cross the road. All went well. The only problem Francie had was that occasionally he had to wait for up to half an hour for a car to come!

50. Stop Thief Horse thief Tommy Donn was a reputable character until he started work on Baramba Station in the 1870’s and decided to acquire the most valuable horse flesh in the Brisbane Valley and South Burnett. His most daring adventure was stealing a horse from the Police paddock at Wivenhoe, despite the fact that the horse was guarded by two troopers. This incident caused the Police to take a very keen interest in Tommy Donn’s capture. But despite their best efforts it did not happen.

51. Robin Hood of the South Burnett Alpin Macpherson was a Bushranger with good manners. Macpherson only stole from the affluent and was widely thought to be in cahoots with Patrick McCallum, because this local mailman was robbed three times by Macpherson. Each time Macpherson ambushed McCallum, he would steal a horse or a saddle, only to return the stolen item sometime later at a nearby station. It would often be accompanied by a note that said, “This is Pat McCallum’s saddle, See he gets it back” On one occasion Macpherson requested the mailman deliver a packet to the Police Magistrate at Gayndah. Opening this packet disclosed a bundle of papers taken in a previous robbery but of no use to Macpherson. Macpherson was captured by a group of civilians and on 13th September 1866 was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. He served 8 years when the Rev. B.G. Wilson &

Mr. J.H. McConnel of Cressbrook intervened on Macpherson's behalf and he was released on 22nd December 1874. A fall from a horse in the Burketown area caused his death in 1895.

52. Modernisation, 2006

The saleyards, when they're busy
Can be dusty, packed & hot,
And the men who do the buying
Reckon tea is just the shot
To keep truckies and the working men
Right up upon their mettle,
So the ladies of the Church Guild
Are kept busy with the kettle

But the saleyards have been modernised:
Their lights turn night to day,
The pens have been extended
And the fences stop the stray;
The loading ramp is safer
There's an office there as well.
It's a pleasure now to come and buy
And more so if you sell.

And the ladies of the Church Guild,
They are not forgotten – quite,
As they labour in their tin shed
Serving tea from dawn to night.
Their facilities are better
They are moving now apace:
Soon their first refrigerator
Will be taking pride of place.



Toogoolawah Sale Yards, 2005

53. Emergency Rations. One of the early owners of Springbrook was considered to be a 'mean coot', and the following story supports the claim. The Weather Bureau had predicted floods, and like everyone else, he put a phone call through to Well's Store at Linville to order emergency supplies to tide him over for a week or more until the flood waters subsided. And his total order to cover such an emergency? One loaf of bread and one tin of plum jam!
54. Rhyming Children. The children from one family of the Mt. Stanley region in the early part of the 20th century were called Jimmy, Jacky, Joey, Eddie, Weddie, Freddy and Frank.

55. The Ballad of the Runaway Train

They were shunting at Benarkin,
The heat was taking its toll.
The engine driver wiped his brow,
The fireman shovelled coal.

The train reversed along the line,
Right up to the top of the range,
Then rolled back down to the starting point,
And reversed back up again.

The driver was very experienced,
He watched the marker pole,
He knew at just what speed to go;
And the fireman shovelled coal.

The guard was relaxing in his van
As the train backed up the hill,
He felt the train roll to a stop,
He admired the driver's skill.

Then once again they shunted back,
But just towards the top,
A fly crawled in the driver's ear,
And the train forgot to stop.

The guard's van crept slowly over the crest
And began to roll down the range,
One by one the carriages went too,
And the guard felt the frightening change.

The driver applied his air brakes,
But they were not connected;
He'd got blasé about shunting,
For trouble he'd not expected.

The driver and fireman jumped to the ground
When they realised their danger,
But the guard was paralysed by fear,
And to courage was a stranger.

As the train gathered momentum
On its awful downhill lunge,
The guard held on for dear sweet life
And waited for the plunge.

The train sped backwards round the bends,
It seemed it must de-rail,
But the third rail held it on the tracks;
The guard was sick and pale.

When the train reached Linville Station,
It was travelling at speed;
The level crossing gates were closed,
But the train paid them no heed.

Miss Mackintosh, the station mistress,
Was standing on the platform,
When the train raced through and roughly blew
Her sideways, like a windstorm.
She tore inside and grabbed the phone
And rang Toogoolawah,
She asked for the engineer in charge,
She shook, she wrung her hands, she swore.

"Oh Mr Goodman, Mr Goodman,
A train has just gone through;
It smashed the gates and didn't stop,
Oh, what am I to do?"

"Now calm down please, Miss Mackintosh,
What sort of train went past?"
"I couldn't see if it was passenger
Or goods - it went too fast!"

"Did you see if there was anyone
On board as it went past?"
"Oh, Mr Goodman, I've told you
It just went by too fast!"

"Well thank you for your phone call,
Just leave it all with me;
Now please don't worry, Miss Mackintosh,
Go and make a cup of tea."

Frank Goodman rounded up his men
And quickly calculated

Where the train would likely be,
If its flight was unabated.
They heaved some sleepers on a trolley,
And set off up the line;
Four men pumped that trolley hard,
As they skimmed those rails of iron.
The men questioned not Frank's judgment,
They trusted he would know;
They raced towards a certain place
Where Frank said the train would slow.

They had to beat the train there,
It was a race against time;
But they got there first and heard the train
Coming down the line.

They quickly laid some sleepers
Across the quivering track,
And just as the train came into view,
They finished and stood back.

The train's speed had been diminished
By a series of inclines,
Just before it reached the men,
Waiting by the lines.

So as it approached the sleepers,
It gradually slowed down,
And came to a stop with a little bump,
A few miles north of town.

Frank ran down to the engine,
And up the side he spurted,
But there was no-one there to rescue,
The engine was deserted.

Meanwhile some of the men had gone
To look inside the guard's van;
They shouted when they found the guard,
They thought they'd found a dead man.
His body was stiff, he was barely conscious,
His face was white as a sheet,
He was completely and utterly rigid
From his head down to his feet.

He was lying prostrate on the floor
With his brake band wound up tight;
They had to lever his hands away,
Paralytic he was, with fright.
They carefully carried him from the van
And laid him on the ground,

They produced a bottle of brandy
To try to bring him round.

But his teeth were tightly clamped together,
So with a slightly trembling heart,
Frank got out his Bowie knife
And prised the teeth apart.

They poured the brandy in then
And waited for a reaction;
Eventually he recovered
And was hospitalised in traction.

Well, Frank went back to his office
In Toogoolawah again,
But he was a hero when they told the tale
Of the renegade railway train

And new gates were installed in Linville,
But each time she heard a train,
Miss Mackintosh made tea and sobbed,
For it all came back again.

And from that day on at Benarkin,
Before shunting up the line,
They carefully checked the air brakes
To make sure all was fine.

But the guard resigned from the railway
And never set foot again,
In any way, on any day,
In a bloomin' railway train.

Judith Goodman, 2002



**Frank Goodman, assistant engineer
BVLine at Linville**

The editors would like to thank the many people and organisations who contributed to the first collection of larrikin tales by Brisbane Valley Heritage Trails Inc., especially the late Esk, Nanango and Rosalie Shire Councils whose support we valued.



Except where the stories have been published previously, the story tellers have not been identified, and these tales have been printed in the certain knowledge that no larrikin allows the truth to get in the road of a good story.

May we take this opportunity to wish our readers a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year?