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Newsletter



Opening hours: Every Sunday 10am – 2pm
Or by appointment.

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Committee formed June 2001; Incorporated November 2001;
Dedication and official opening 9 October 2004

President's Patter

Hello everyone

Well, the year is nearly half over and it has been a busy few months with school visits. Thank you to everyone involved.

We have had a visit from the Robina View Club for morning tea. We attended the Mudgeeraba Street Party. Thank you to all the helpers on the day.

We will be attending the Mudgeeraba Show at the end of June. We will be in our usual site near the woodchoppers.

Maintenance wise we are in the process of painting Franklin House. We repaired the steps and fence of Okey House. Thank you Lloyd for all your hard work.

Thank you to all our hard-working volunteers for your tireless efforts.

Neil



Congratulations to Lloyd and Sue for being awarded a Division 9 Community Hero award for 25 years volunteering at the Museum.



On Mother's Day mothers got free entry into the Museum as well as a free morning tea.

MUDGEERABA STREET PARTY

Thanks to Pam, Neil, Carol, Peter, Warren and two of Pam and Neils grandsons for representing the Museum at the Mudgeeraba Street Party.





S.S. Walrus

The SS Walrus was built at Cleveland and originally operated as a schooner. In 1869, it was taken over by the Pioneer Floating Sugar Company and fitted up for the economical production of sugar and rum. It travelled up and down the Albert and Logan Rivers Anchoring at Wharves near the cane-fields. Its mill was made at the Queensland Foundry by Smellie and Company and was capable of crushing two tons of sugar a day and could make rum out of molasses. The Walrus ceased working as a distillery in 1871 because it



was difficult to police and the Chief Inspector of Distilleries was not in favour of continuing its licence. In 1873 it was retired completely because of the high cost of its operation.

SS Walrus, travelling sugar mill and rum distillery, on the banks of the Albert River, 1872. [City of Gold Coast Local Studies Library Collection]

From Mosquito Fleet Days – A History of the Cutters & Steamers of the Logan & Albert Rivers, p. 41

The SS 'Walrus' was originally built as a wooden sailing vessel in 1864 for Taylor Winship, at Cleveland, Moreton Bay, measuring 64 tons gross. She was sold in 1868 and was converted into a stern-wheel steamer in 1869. Her registered length at this time was 96 feet 1 inch, having two masts, schooner rigged and a gross of 68 tons. She was powered by an 8 hp engine. Her new owners were the Pioneer Floating Sugar Mill Co., the registered shareholders including Messrs J C Moffatt (chemist), John Falconer (engineer), A P Hamilton (surveyor), G K Jopp (farmer) and R A Ranking (sugar planter). The 'Walrus' began its contact with the sugar industry as a mobile crushing plant, working on the Doboy Creek, and also on the Albert and Logan Rivers. According to an article in The Australian Sugar Journal, '...The cane was crushed in a small set of three rollers, the megass was jettisoned into the river and the juice was boiled in steam heated pans to the graining point, then casked and the resulting massecuite shared with those who supplied the cane.' The resulting juice was then taken to Brisbane for refining.

The 'Walrus' was sold to R M Stewart in 1870 and converted to screw propulsion and a new 20 hp engine fitted. Her dimensions were then; 62 tons gross, length 87 feet 2 inches, Breadth 17 feet 4 inches, depth 6 feet. She was also fitted with a 500 gallon still and began operating as a floating licensed rum distillery. The licence was granted in 1869, but it was deregistered in 1872, because the Customs Inspectors found it impossible to keep track of how much rum the Walrus was producing. During this period from 1869 to 1871 the 'Walrus' produced an official 18,621 gallons of spirits.

The 'Walrus' was sold to S. Hodgson in 1873 and to J Hodgson in 1876. She was involved in the timber trade in the northern part of Moreton Bay until she was broken up in 1897.

S. S. The Maid of Sker, p. 43.

The 'Maid of Sker' was built by J W Sutton Foundry of Kangaroo Point and launched in 1884. She was built of iron, and measured 52 tons gross, being 74 feet 8 inches long, breadth 17 feet and depth 5 feet 2 inches.

She was powered by a 16 hp engine and propelled by a paddle wheel on each side. The 'Maid of Sker' was built for C H Philpott of Nerang River to transport timber from Philpott's Mill to Brisbane. In 1893 the 'Maid of Sker' was bought by Mr F W Lemke, who sold her in 1897 to Mr F W L Kleinschmidt and his brother-in-law Mr T Gentner, for 700 pounds. Mr Kleinschmidt served as a deckhand on the boat for two years before gaining his master's certificate.

The boat was later registered to the firm Kleinschmidt Bros, who continued to run The 'Maid of Sker' on weekly trips carrying passengers, sugar and general cargo from Southport and Nerang and the Logan Rivers to Brisbane.

On one occasion The Maid of Sker ran onto rocks at Pott's Point of MacLeay Island. Fortunately, the forward bulkhead held and after her cargo had been unloaded, she was refloated and taken back to Peter's Slip for repairs. Although 'The Maid of Sker' was registered until 1950, she was replaced by the 'Florant' in 1925. Her engine was removed and the hull was used as a sand and gravel lighter on the Brisbane River until 1974. At that time her rusting hulk came to the attention of concerned individuals and the 'Maid of Sker' was donated to the Gold Coast City Council by the Kleinschmidts. A project to restore her was undertaken by a group of combined service clubs, who relocated her to Bischoff Park, Nerang.



The 'Maid of Sker' at Nerang Wharf, ca 1900. [City of Gold Coast Local Studies collection]

The 'Maid of Sker' played an important part in the early development of Nerang and surrounding areas providing a fast cargo service between Nerang, Southport and Brisbane. Between 1893 and 1930 the 'Maid of Sker' made a weekly trip carrying cargo between Brisbane, Southport and Nerang. Once loaded in Brisbane it was necessary to wait for the tide to sail to Southport. Occasionally the 'Maid of Sker' would become stranded on a sandbank until the next tide. From Southport once there was sufficient water over the shallows the 'Maid of Sker' would sail upstream to the Nerang township, a trip of two hours. She had to complete the round trip on the same tide so they could afford only one and a half hours unloading and loading produce and goods.

From 'An Illustrated guide to traditional domestic skills Forgotten Household Crafts'

Professional chimney sweeps have always been objects of, if not awe, certainly superstition: seeing one is supposed to bring good luck. In some countries, particularly Germanic ones, the sweep used to be an extremely dignified figure. He wore a black frock coat and a top hat and, of course, his face tended to be black, too. Riding solemnly along on his sit-up-and-beg bicycle, with his rods and brushes strapped to the cross bar, he was a noble sight.

The chimneys in prosperous houses, where many fires were burned, had to be swept at least once every three months, otherwise some of the soot was bound to fall down of its own accord, making a huge mess on the probably just whitened hearth below. For all that, even when the chimney was being cleaned regularly by a professional sweep and the housewife was prepared for the descent of the soot it was impossible to contain it all in the fireplace. Soot particles wasted our into the room and settled on every surface, creating an enormous cleaning task for the housewife after the sweep had left.

Those households that did not or could not employ chimney sweeps devised other, somewhat unorthodox, methods of cleaning their chimneys. One way was to throw a live hen or goose down the chimney; its flapping wings dislodged all the soot! People with more respect for their poultry lowered a cord down the chimney and tied a bundle of holly twigs halfway along it. Then, man and wife, one at the top, the other at the bottom of the chimney, worked the cord up and down, so that the twigs scraped the sides of the chimney. Eventually it was clear of soot.

Numinbah Valley School of Arts

Celebrating One Hundred Years 1925 – 2025 Numinbah Valley School of Arts – Recollections and Recipes of Yesteryear; June French; Edition 2 – October 2025.

The Numinbah Valley School of Arts is a significant local landmark that has served as a centre for community life for a century. Constructed in 1925 and added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 7 December 2007, the hall stands at the entrance of the Numinbah village, a prominent and enduring feature of the landscape.

Its origins date back to 1915, when Lillian Mary Yaun approached the Lands Department to secure land for a community hall. Following community discussion and agreement to fund a land survey, a site adjacent to a road and timber reserve was selected. On 8 December 1916, just over 2,100 square metres of heavily timbered land was gazetted as a School of Arts reserve.

By 1923, Lil Yaun again appealed to the Lands Department, highlighting the need for a dedicated space for gatherings, learning and recreational activities. The community responded by raising funds through subscriptions and events. Local families contributed timber, milled free of charge at the Yaun Bros. sawmill. Cyril Duncan was contracted in 1925 to construct the building, completing it for approximately £100. Charlie Lentz recalled 'only the nails and roofing iron had to be bought'.

The School of Arts hall officially opened in September 1925 – debt free. The single-storey weatherboard structure, measuring 50 by 25 feet (15.2 by 7.6 m), featured a corrugated iron

gable roof, a ten-foot stage, side rooms, and crow's ash flooring. It quickly became a key venue for local events.

In 1926, local parents requested the building also be used as a provisional school. At the time, access to education in smaller communities was limited. On 7 February 1927 the Provisional Numinbah School opened with 16 students – 13 boys and 3 girls. While government support included only a teacher's salary and textbooks, the community provided the rest, including the building and accommodation for the teacher. This arrangement continued until 8 October 1934, when a purpose-built State School was opened.

The hall expanded in response to the valley's growth. In 1937, it was extended by 25 feet to accommodate larger events such as dances and concerts. A new front entrance was added, incorporating cloakrooms and changing facilities. The 1960s brought infrastructure upgrades. Electric lighting replaced kerosene lamps, a kitchen was built in 1962 and a verandah was added to the southern side. Fundraising efforts led by the Queensland Country Women's Association (QCWA) supported many of these improvements, which also included ticket and mother's rooms near the entrance. Since its opening in 1925, the School of Arts has hosted a broad range of activities – from school lessons and dances to movies, fitness classes, fundraisers and meetings for groups such as the QCWA and the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade. Today the Numinbah Valley School of Arts stands as a cherished and essential part of community life – a place at the heart of the valley's culture where generations of locals have gathered, celebrated and stayed connected.



Extensions to the
Numinbah Valley
School of Arts,
1937.

SONS OF MATTHEW

Numinbah Valley – A Social and Natural History 1840s – 1988 compiled by Pamela Hall, Donna Yaun & Noela Gilbert on behalf of the Numinbah Valley Bicentennial Committee. p. 173

One event to enliven the quiet atmosphere of the Valley occurred during May, June and July 1947. This was when Charles Chauvel brought his film crew to Numinbah Valley to film scenes for his movie 'Sons of Matthew'. The cast and crew were accommodated in the two guest houses 'Chigigum' and 'Pop-Inn' and at the local Hall. Scenes were filmed at Natural Bridge, the current prison Farm and in the since-named Bithongabel paddock on Yaun's property (Section 12V). The day's rushes were viewed nightly in the Hall. Many of the locals were involved with the behind-the-scenes production or appeared in the film in minor parts or as extras. Hugh Guinea was also featured with his bullock team.

'Sons of Matthew' was based on the real-life adventures of the O'Reilly family as told by Bernard O'Reilly in his book 'Green Mountains'. It starred Michael Pate, Wendy Gibb, John O'Malley, Thelma Scott, and the then Australian welterweight boxing champion, Tommy Burns. One scene for the movie was filmed at the bottom of a three-hundred-foot gorge at Natural Bridge. It took Chauvel twelve days to take the necessary equipment down to the gorge and took forty-five people three weeks to film. Many locals went along to the site to observe the crew engineer an artificial cyclone and to sympathise with the stars Wendy Gibb and Michael Pate, who had to undergo daily dunking in the icy cold waters of the Cave Creek. During filming, a real cyclone interrupted the operations for two days. The finished scene screened for only three minutes.

The film crew also travelled to the Albert and Canungra Valleys, the Lamington National Park and the Blue Mountains in NSW to shoot scenes for the movie.

After nearly four years of planning and filming, 'Sons of Matthew' had its premiere at the Tivoli theatre in Brisbane in 1949. It became a box-office smash in Australia and despite mixed success overseas, finally showed a good profit.

Nancy Yaun had some of the 'Sons of Matthew' cast staying at Chigigum and she, with small daughter June, were asked to take a minor part in the picture, as was her brother-in-law Les Yaun.

Clothes brought up from Sydney by the Chauvels for this special part exactly fitted Nancy, also the large 1908 period hat that she wore.

At one part of her rehearsing, Spen Yaun was on a hill in the Yaun brothers' property where a lot of the film was made, and the bullocks were to sweep down the hill, just as his wife passed with her flouncing skirt, blowing in the wind.

Before he started the bullocks off, with a tractor behind the wagon, Spen called out that the animals would shy, and bolt possibly when they saw the flying skirt.

'Oh, yes,' said Charlie Chauvel, 'you walk the other way please Nancy'.

This caused Nancy's back to be facing the camera, and as she thought she was looking so good in this special outfit, rather annoyed her.

That night at home, she said to her husband, 'You spoilt my big act today, I was going to simply have to get a close-up, as I was walking right towards the camera.'

Spenn. Replied by saying, 'Nancy, when you see the picture, and what you looked like in that awful hat, you'll be damned glad no-one could see your face.'



Some of the actors involved in a scene from the movie 'Sons of Matthew'. This scene set in Numinbah Valley. [Image courtesy of City of Gold Coast Local Studies collection]



Left: Michael Pate and Wendy Gibb filming a scene from 'Sons of Matthew' at Natural Arch. [Image courtesy of City of Gold Coast Local Studies Collection]

Management Committee 2025

Joan Rudd [Patron], Neil Sands [President], Anne Panitz [Secretary]. Sue Mills [Treasurer, Registrar, Newsletter] Jack Rudd, Brian Cox, Lenore Crouch, Pam Sands, Peter Jones, Carol Jones, Warren Davis, Tom Cowper, Lloyd Mills, Odette Dalton.

Meetings held 3rd Sunday of the month.

Our aim is to collect and preserve historical and heritage material illustrating the growth and development of the Hinterland Region of the Gold Coast from the original pioneering days until today. We plan to arrange and describe these materials and make them accessible to the general public on a regular basis as well as providing educational programs where possible to increase public awareness and appreciation of the Gold Coast Hinterland region's history and development. Members of the Management Committee have connections with pioneering families in the district.

"Friends of the Museum" is for anyone who shares our same interest in preserving the history of our region and is interested in assisting with the set-up and operation of the museum.

Further details including an application form may be obtained from the secretary.

Diary Dates - subject to change without notice

MAY 2026

3 - Museum open 10am-2pm
6 - Coomera Anglican College
7 - Coomera Anglican College
10 - Museum open 10am-2pm
11 - Caningeraba SS
12 - Caningeraba SS
14 - Caningeraba SS
17 - Museum open 10am-2pm
17 - Mudgeeraba Street Party
19 - Marymount College
20 - Robina View Club
21 - Marymount College
24 - Museum open 10am-2pm
25 - Mudgeeraba SS
26 - Mudgeeraba SS
29 - Estia Health

JUNE 2026

3 - Josiah College
7 - Museum open 10am-2pm
14 - Museum open 10am-2pm
21 - Museum open 10am-2pm
21 - Museum meeting 2pm
27 - Mudgeeraba Show
28 - Museum open 10am-2pm
28 - Mudgeeraba Show

The Museum Committee would like to thank the Council of the City of Gold Coast for their continued support of the Museum through Whole of City Funding and rate reduction.