

## **The History of Green Hills – Bonny Hills**

(from March 1933)

Written by **Arthur G Bartlett (1991)**

In Easter of 1933 my late father, Thomas R. Bartlett, in company of his working partner, the late Ted Hungerford, went to the then called, “green Hills” for a few days over the Easter period. The roads were two wheel bullock tracks from the Pacific Highway, crossing several swamps where you selected your own track on each crossing. My late father, Tom, as he was known, took such a liking at the first view of the area, that he immediately purchased 20 acres of land off A.D. Suters, commonly know as “A.D.” who owned all the land from where Rainbow Pacific has developed the streets to the south of the hills past Short Beach and in the west to within approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of Queens Lake.

The 20 acres that Tom selected is where the post office now stands. Our front, or the northern boundary went from the Laurieton Road or Ocean Drive, as it is now known, and in an easterly direction fronting Jordan Avenue to a point approximately 300 yards past the post office. The easterly went from Jordan Avenue to the back boundary of the blocks on the southern side of Third Avenue. This boundary passed the back boundaries of Banksia Street, west across the backs of the blocks in Third Avenue till it met Ocean Drive with the western boundary following down the eastern side of Ocean Drive. Three quarters of this 20 acres was very heavily growthed in oak, honeysuckle, tea tree and thick lantana and other vines nearly too thick for stray cattle or kangaroos to get through.

Each weekend we travelled from Wauchope, this with my late mother, Cis, my elder brother, Hugh, Dad and his partner, Ted, and of course, myself, where we cleared the boundaries. Tom then purchased 162 acres off A.D. on the northern side, five chain or 100m from the high water mark, on the sea side of Vinegar Creek. The southern boundary crossed Vinegar Creek through the middle to the United Youth Centre and up into the tea tree swamp. Both properties cost ten shillings, or \$1 per acre at this period of time. This latter property was referred to as the “bush” paddock and we were able to cut the bloodwood trees for splitting all the fence posts, which was done with axes, cross cut saws, sledge hammers and wedges, no chainsaws in those days.

The home block was then fenced and a five plain wire fence erected around the boundaries to keep out straying stock. An area was cleared for the house, which was erected of a temporary nature where Mr Claude Radley’s house now stands. This home was finished on about December 28<sup>th</sup> 1933, when we shifted from Wauchope to Green Hills permanently.

My brother, Hugh, and myself cleared small trees at the time, by hand, using a mattock, axes and a pole for a lever to grub the trees out by the roots. We then purchased a second hand 1923 Fordson tractor with steel wheels and run by power kerosene, also a mouldboard plough, which weighed approximately three hundred weight, also an all steel bull harrows of two leaves. This was the limit of our machinery for quite some years.

My father, Tom, carried on his trade in Wauchope through the week as a builder, staying town all week, as it was an ordeal to travel the roads, especially in wet weather when the highway was only a corrugated gravel road. The trip each way took one hour, if you didn't get bogged.

Our working week was from daylight to after dark at times, seven days a week till such times as we got more land cleared and ploughed. We planted three acres of passionfruit, one and a half acres each side of the present day post office. These did well until in their second crop in 1938 when we had a black north east wind, which blew non-stop for three days. The strong blast spray killed all the vines. Except about a dozen vines beside where the post office now stands. These were protected by tea trees in front. These vines supplied all the campers, plus about six cases a day, which we sent to the Sydney markets. They were sold to campers for one penny or one cent a dozen. A pillow case or large sugar bag held 12 dozen and were sold for one shilling or ten cents per 12 dozen. We also planted our first bananas, mostly of the River or Plantain variety, as they were known, as these plants were procured from Port Macquarie, also 2000 pineapple plants. These plants or suckers came from Mr Alf Ostler in North Haven. North Haven, then only having two permanent residents in the early 1930's, namely Alf Ostler and his family and the Eames family at the big fig trees.

There were only four other houses or weekenders at Green Hills at this time. A.D. Suters was the only permanent and weekenders owned by Eddie and Jack Suter, A.D's brothers.

Colin Bain had a weekender directly behind the Rainbow View shop. In 1937 A.D. cut up a row of blocks fronting Ocean Drive from the shop I just spoke of to Panorama Drive. Jack Parker bought a couple of blocks above the present surf club. He had a house shifted from Wauchope, which we erected for Jack and it was completed for Christmas 1937. This house has since been demolished and Jack's son, Ian, has built a new home on the same block.

In approximately 1935, Jack Suters took up land on the eastern side of us and cleared and built a house for himself and his daughters for holidays. His two sons, Doug and Charlie, also built a weekender each along side.

Towards the end of the depression in 1935, dad having now work in the building trade, because of money shortage was forced to go on relief, which was the same as our present day dole, except you had to work for your pay. Your pay depended on your family status. The amount of days work you were granted and you were paid according to your working days. A single man worked one and a half days. A married man worked only two days and a man with one or more children as dependents worked three and a half days. Dad worked 3 ½ days each week and was paid every second Thursday at Laurieton, but not money in the hand, as it is today, but with chits, one for the baker, for an amount of bread over the two weeks, the same for the butcher and the grocer. They were given five shillings to ten shillings cash each pay for personal spending, such as tobacco, clothes etc. There were up to about 12 men working at any time in the Green Hills area. The hours worked were from 7:00 am to 4:00pm. For each time they were allowed to work, their work consisted of forming the

road at Green Hills from the northern end of Panorama Drive to the quarry at the foot of the hills, south of Short Beach.

This roadwork was carried out using shovels, picks, mattocks and axes. The area where the surf club pavilion and parking area at the present time was in the early 1940's a corn paddock, fenced with the eastern and northern sides being of lantana 10ft high, shielding the crops from the sea breezes. In fact when the paddock went back to grass, I used to shoot rabbits there in my young days as a lad.

In 1938 a syndicate was formed comprising Jack and Chris Parker, Colin Bain and his brother-in-law, Bob Curruthers and my father, Tom Bartlett, to have a boat built by Mr Claude Sheather. It was made of Beech timber, 20ft long by 5ft 6in beams. A double ender like a surf boat with four paddles if needed. A boat shed was built on top of high rocks 600 yards east of Bartlett's Beach. The concrete pier that supported the ramp from the shed to the sand was built by Alex Bain and myself taking all day to mix the concrete by hand, from gravel beside where we mixed, and water direct from the sea. The construction of the shed by dad, my brother Hugh, Jack Parker, Alex Bain and myself. The boat was named the Grey Hounds, that being the colour. It was sold in the early 1950's to professional fishermen at Port Macquarie and was operated from the Town Beach below Flagstaff Hill. A small motor was fitted for professional work that they used it for.

The war started in September 1939 and everything went along steadily for the next few years till October, 1941, when my brother, Hugh, joined the army and in December, 1941, I did likewise, being only 18. We were able to always say one thing for "Green Hill" (Bonny Hills) that it had 100 percent enlistment as there was only the two of us living there in that era of the age bracket. My brother, Hugh, was discharged in March 1946, after serving in New Guinea and New Britain. I was discharged in September, 1946, after serving in New Guinea.

On my return, we planted six acres of bananas from the back boundary, where Third Avenue is today, on the eastern side of Third Avenue and down the hill northwards for about 200 yards. These bananas remained there until 1955 when I dug them out and ploughed the area back into grass. A quarter of this patch was Sugar or Ladyfingers as well as the remainder being plantations or River bananas.

During the war years of 1944, dad built on his own a dam of concrete with walls 3 ft thick at the bottom and 1ft 6in at the top and 8ft high, which held 40,000 gallons of clear spring water. This wall is reinforced with a discarded punt rope from the punt that plied between Laurieton and Dunbogan. He cut the rope with a cold chisel and hammer and carted it back to the dam on the back of the car. He erected a jib on the bank above to lower the concrete mixer and cement down to the beach. The mixer was powered by a 2½ hp petrol motor engine. This water was piped to two 1000 gallon tanks at the back boundary fence (backs of blocks south side of Third Avenue) and gravitated to give sufficient pressure to operate a hose or small irrigation spray for garden purposes. These tanks were 120 ft higher than the pump or dam. The water was laid onto our house and later to the post office and other private homes in Hills Street. A line was laid on the camping reserve across to past the surf club pavilion with about seven taps set at convenient places for the public to use. This was reimbursed by the Hastings Shire Council for the sum of 20 pounds per year. This

remained until the council brought the supply through from Port Macquarie. This dam has tried to be demolished by blowing it with gelignite, but this only fractured the bottom, which I was very disappointed to see. I would've liked to see a plaque erected on it in recognition of a terrific one man feat and also in appreciation to all he done for this lovely place that everybody now enjoys.

In 1946 the population grew by three permanents, namely, Cyril Prout, his wife, Joyce, and daughter, Helen, Cyril buying a small farmlet of A.D Suters off Ocean Drive, opposite Rodley Street, to which he started a market garden and a poultry run.

In December 1946, we were approached by several Adamson brothers, representing E. Adamson and Sons of Kempsey, Bob Adamson being the spokesman wishing to purchase a block of land to erect a Post Office and telephone exchange. The block they requested is where the PO now stands. At this stage we had nothing, no roads, only mud tracks which we maintained ourselves, also power or any other amenities. In 1947 when the Adamsons had made an application for the offices, they received a letter from the Postal Department stating that until the name was changed they couldn't have a PO etc as there were other places called "Green Hills". At this time we had a Progress Association formed. A special meeting was called and all interested or landowners were invited to attend. There were six permanent residences, plus a fair number of land owners or regular visitors. The name we submitted was "Grants Head" as it was on all maps and still is on some maps today. A woman visitor suggested Bonny Hills and this was adopted by the majority of the meeting, we were outvoted. This was the name submitted to the Postal Department and accepted, so the name Bonny Hills it was called. I won't outline all discussed at the meeting, but should anyone be interested I would endeavour to outline the facts to the best of my ability.

The first people to take over the operation of the switchboard and Post Office in 1947 were Bob and Tara Adamson and family. Bob also started a school children's bus from Bonny Hills to Laurieton School; before there was a school at North haven. In 1949 the ownership changed hands to Bert and Violet Berrigan and family, one daughter, Betty, still resides at Bonny Hills. Bert carried on to about 1953 when once again the PO changed hands to Eric and Dot Lalor and family and they were still in attendance at the time of our leaving Bonny Hills in February, 1956.

Other names mentioned concerning the area, starting in the north are Catti, or Cathie. These were two of the ways it was spelt in the early days and coming southward along Cathie Beach to Middle Rock, then onto Cunjevoi Rock, then down Big Beach (now Rainbow Beach) passing Vinegar Creek running up to the youth centre, then crossing over the rocks onto Spooneys Bays, below the Council Caravan Park. This derived the name of Spooneys Bays after Sammy Systers, who lived on the eastern end of the council caravan park, having his own fowl pens etc. Sammy's nickname was "Spoooney" as he was known throughout the district, also being a bachelor and a brother of A.D Suters. The fresh water creek was known as Greenhill's Creek and the flat beside the creek across the road from the present tennis courts was known as Greenhill's Gully, the top half of this gully to Ocean Drive was the horse paddock, fenced by two sliprail fence for holiday campers' horses in the days of carts and sulkies before cars.

At one time, in the 1930's, where the tennis courts are, was an aboriginals' camp while doing mustering for A.D Suters. There were about six families of Aborigines, so the story goes that Davey Combo was their local king. Davey moved between Rosewood, Wauchope and "Green Hills", mostly working for the Suters families.

One other loyal person was "Cookie" Moore, who enjoyed his surfing. Tom Peifkie started a bus run every Sunday from Wauchope, except in very wet weather and later this bus service was undertaken by Arthur Wenman, which he carried out until his retirement.

The next beach was Little Beach, now called Bartlett Beach, after we left in 1956, which was named after us, which we deem a great honour, carrying on past the dam around the rocks to the boat shed, then to Shelley Beach, then onto the start of the headlands to Groper Rock, just past this is Bummers Rock, so named after a chap by the nickname of Bummer, who was supposedly washed off and washed back again by the next wave.

Across the bay to Snapper Rock under Grant's Head, then to Pulpit Rock, so named by a visitor we took there in 1935. It was then called Flat Rock, but after our visitor name it Pulpit Rock.

The next rock was then known as Flat Rock, continuing onto Short Beach, then over the rocks to Waterlily Rocks to the commencement of North Haven Beach to the break-wall at the mouth of the Camden Haven River. The rutiline sandmining had their central mining plant there, getting their water from the seepage that comes out of Waterlily Rocks. Some of the cement slabs are still there where the vehicles are parked of the fishermen.

Where the water used to cross the road to North Haven, just past the quarry south of Short Beach, was called "Goodes Crossing", named after a regular visitor from Sydney, who, with voluntary gangs of people, corduroyed a small area that was very boggy through the continuous water passing over the road.

The road, or two wheeled track, from the Pacific Highway to Green Hills, was called the Green Hills Road and later called the Bonny Hills Road, also called the Ghost Road by most locals until it was renamed the Mitchell Houston Drive in later years. How this name was thought up, I do not know, there was no one living or owning any part along this three mile stretch of road, no one of this name to my knowledge.

In the early 1940's we cut up the first subdivision, which was named Bartlett Street, running from Hill Street to now Ocean Drive. The top priced block was 40 pounds or \$80. The rates on each block was four pounds, or \$8. In 1947, we cut up the second subdivision, this being Elizabeth Street and continuation of Hills Street. The top priced block reached was 45 pounds or \$90. The rates went up later to seven pounds, or \$14, and was still at this rate when we left in 1957.

We sold the property near Rainbow Caravan Park in 1956, to Mr Bill Welsh, for a very low price of 18 pounds ten shillings, or \$37 per acre. In 1957 we sold the remaining 14 acres left of the homestead property to a syndicate controlled by Mr Bob Adamson, to which they subdivided into streets and blocks to which each block was

valued at more than we received for the 14 acres at \$428.50 per acre. It was towards the end of the 1950's that the power, roads and council water supplies arrived and the value of the land rose and Bonny Hills progressed to what it is today.

The first home built in Seaview Street was by Mr and Mrs Ron Burrows in approximately the early 1960's. They built on the north side of Seaview Street, not a great way from Ocean Drive. The Suters family later subdivided this area up as far as the water tower overlooking Short Beach.

This is the end of this brief account of the history of Bonny Hills. One very important matter that I have overlooked is that, when A.D. Suters sold out in the 1950's, the land owned by him was bought by Mr Mc Gilvray from Laurieton, who, with his son, Dudley, cut up subdivisions which incorporated Panorama Drive, which they were responsible for the Drive and all the streets in between.

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