



The Mousehole. Avoca's little business with a big heart

No one knows how it got the name, Mousehole, but it's quite well named considering that this little business is the smallest in Avoca Beach, being just 2.6 m wide.

Why so small? I found out that it used to be the storage room for the butcher shop next door. But the landlord of the time, Michael Hunter, walled it off, added the picture window, and made the Mousehole a new home. It had been round the corner in a dark place.

The Mousehole, going since 1972, was started by a group of local potters and crafts people. They are a co-operative which means that every year, the shop's profits are pooled and paid as a dividend. The first year the dividend for each co-op member, was just one dollar.

It's still a cooperative and you take your turn behind the counter according to the roster which is decided once



a month over dinner at the Bowling club. What's on sale is almost all handmade by the by co-op members but you don't need to be a member to sell in the shop. It seems that there are never more than 10 members.

If you would like to sell in the Mousehole, you make a presentation to co op members and they vote on whether to let you on the shelves or not.

I was very taken by Michelle Waddington's ceramic spotted dogs. Seems to me if you want a very low maintenance dog, these might do the trick.

"Any funny stories to tell?" I asked Michelle. "Well, a fellow came in recently who remembered being brought into the shop as a nine-year-old by his grandmother. He said that after the visit, his Gran got the nickname, Mouse which stuck forever, thanks to the shop.

Some people pass the Mousehole, without even noticing it. We hope that next time you go past, you'll pop in and say, Hello. You might just buy a house. *M.R.*





Message from the Vice President

A man in my street died last month. His family took the trouble to put a note in all of our letterboxes to say thanks for the care shown to their elderly father. You might have seen this same letter taped to a bench on the beach.

The family had been worried about their pop living alone but he had always told them how happy he was in Avoca. Everyone was so friendly and caring.

We were reminded about this when we talked to Dessa at the Welcome Mart while collecting stories for this newsletter. She told us that after her family lost everything in the tsunami that hit the Philippines two years ago, the people of Avoca made her "feel very loved" by generously providing money, clothes and emotional support.

People in Avoca care about each other and their special beach village. Of course we have our subgroups and tribes; the board riders, the artists, the surf club crowd, the lizards, the dog walkers.....But when people in Avoca are called on to support or protect their neighbours and their peaceful beachside village lifestyle they come together with great energy and commitment.

This was clearly shown when many in Avoca rallied to protest against things being dumped in the beautiful bay and to oppose overdevelopment on the beachfront. We have also come together in support of the Artists' Trail and to make the fabulous 5 Lands Walk famous across the State.

Galvanized into action by wonderful

local heroes like Quentin and Virginia, Steve and Mike, Con and Pauline, and many others, we Avocans have shown we are a force to be reckoned with.

We are blessed to live in such beautiful area within a committed, caring community. But there is still a lot that can be done to protect and enhance our great little place. The ABCA can be a big part of that. We hope you will join us.

*Angela Kennedy,
On behalf of the Committee*



Editorial Credits

Mike Rubbo: Articles and photos.

Angela Kennedy: Advertising.

Julie Pickett: Proof Liaison.

Please come to the next meeting:
Oct. 12th. 7.30 pm. at the Surf Club
or contact us with comment, story ideas, participatory interest, etc. at
PO Box 105 Avoca Beach, 2251.

We're taking back the old name. No longer the Avoca Beach review, we are again, The Avoca Beach News. This first issue is a tribute to businesses in Avoca. Future issues will carry more business stories, every business will get a turn, as well as a host of other topics. Suggestions welcome of course.

Hey, some pieces seem to be missing!



There are lots practical, projects we can promote. For example. the exciting idea for an eco path around the lake from the bridge to the bowlo and landcare initiatives, are you for those?

You'll not doubt think of other initiatives the Association might take on to improve life at Avoca. So, come along to our next meeting and get that bee out of your bonnet.
Monday, 12th October 7.30 @ The Surf club

Presidential Election

Now that the team who have led the ABCA for the last 10 years have resigned, the Association needs committed, community-minded people to step up to the vacant positions of **President** and **Secretary**. Can you help? Do you know someone who'd be good in a leadership role? **Come to our next meeting on October 12th @ 7.30 @ the Surf Club.**

Thank you Team

Thank you to the team who have kept the ABCA going for the past many years. Ian, Ken, Sandi, Robyn and John have made a great contribution to the community of Avoca by liaising with council on projects such as the Foreshore Master Plan. They've also provided a bipartisan forum for debate on contentious issues facing Avoca. We thank them and we wish them well in the future.
A.K.

The Avoca Beach Community Association Has been around for a long time but it has often struggled to attract support and its meetings have been sparsely attended. **Are you one of the missing?**

Our Community Association needs a strong voice which represents all the residents of Avoca. To be of real value it needs to be a forum where local issues can be discussed and consensus achieved on what is in the best interests for the community as a whole.

The Association has been around a long time. This gives it the clout to talk to Local, State and even Federal Governments, as well as other groups. The Association can deal with vital issues such as beach erosion, and the Council's Foreshore Master Plan and residential zoning.

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How very convenient!

Eric Fletcher bought the Welcome Mart business in 2000. There's been a grocery shop on the site since 1952, making it one of the oldest businesses in Avoca. Before getting into food retail, Eric was the general manager of a Ford dealership at Castle Hill, I'm surprised to discover.

"Selling cars was a lot more stressful," he says. "If someone brings back a loaf of bread, it's no big deal. They bring back a car and it can be very big deal!"

He attributes the success of the Welcome Mart to the friendliness of Dessa Cook who's been with him almost since the beginning. "Everybody in Avoca likes Dessa, he says, "I couldn't appreciate her more than I do."



"Radio stationa 2GO runs a competition every year for the best shop assistant on the Central Coast. I can't understand why she's never won". "Maybe she was never nominated." I suggest, "perhaps after this comes out, somebody will". In the picture, Dessa's holding milk because one of the ways that Eric stays alive with Coles at Kincumber so close, is to keep the price of staples down. The milk Dessa's holding is just \$2.40, only \$.40 more than Coles which is quite a feat.

It's mostly the staples which the locals drop in for, the milk, the bread, the butter, the eggs. But Eric

tries to carry a bit of everything, more than the average convenience store. "I keep some lines going even if they don't sell that well," he says, "Spices for instance and cordials." I tell him I've been nicely surprised to be able to buy ground coffee in the store and Turkish bread.

Eric has some big news to impart. "I can announce to your newspaper that the **Welcome Mart** will soon become **The Friendly Grocer**." It turns out that Eric is part of IGA grocers. They are his supplier. **Welcome Mart** is an IGA name. But he's been selling so well, that they are upgrading him to another of their names, **The Friendly Grocer**.

This means lots of good things. He'll have his store refitted, repainted, and have access to a lot more specials with cheaper prices which he can pass on. Did he seek this change? No, it's a reward for doing well, apparently, and it should all be in place by March next year.

That's one reason I've taken a photograph of how the place is right now so we can compare. Eric is also proud that the St George's ATM has been recently upgraded, "a real state-of-the-art machine," he says. So, with a reminder that Dessa has to go front and centre in this story, I take my leave, remarking that he's lucky to have a healthy Tuckerloo in front of his store, one of the few on his side of the street. *M.R.*



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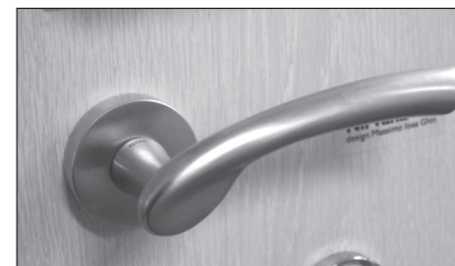
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Derek Walter and his two apprentices

The keys to the Coast

I guess I've often wondered how a little hardware store like Derek's can survive with Mitre 10 and Bunnings quite close by. It turns out that Derek Walter is one of the most sophisticated locksmiths on the whole Central Coast. He can make copies of virtually anything, even those complex new keys which cars now have. Such copies don't come cheap, but if you can do without the buttons, he can make you a spare that is worth keeping in the drawer. He also has the codes for restricted keys, house keys which can't be copied by normal locksmiths. Derek does house calls too, changing and repairing locks. Dr lock, I presume?



Before opening his own business, Derek spent 8 1/2 years in Papua New Guinea, teaching the locals various engineering skills. He loved it but he also had a holiday place at Copacabana and in 1983, he said goodbye to Papua New Guinea, and bought the business he's now in. As well as locks, he's made himself into a door handle specialist and supplies a lot of high-end doorhandles to architects, luxury boatbuilders, as well as home renovators who want a better product.

Derek was a supplier to Dave Warren when Dave had his luxury boatbuilding business at Kincumber. That business moved to Queensland, but Derek still supplies doorhandles for luxury boats to various builders up there. He's training two apprentices, Jason Meech and Aaron Ross. He also has three websites, Architectural Hardware, Avoca Locksmiths and the most aptly named, Get a Handle. *M.R.*



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“What’s the history of the business?” I ask Brett Hunter in his office. “Well, it began in 1951, making it one of the oldest businesses in the village.

It was started by two brothers, from Emu plains, Norman and Mervyn Hunter . Then it was taken over by my father, Michael Hunter, my Uncle, Terry, and then by Michael’s sons, Garth and me. We’re running it now.

First, it was called the Avoca Estate Agency. Then, The Hunters. Next, the Professionals and now its Raine & Horne.

Things were very different in the early days. It was only open a couple of days a week. No photos, no paper adverts. Just handwritten signs in the window. The main difference today is that, through the internet, our customers are now so well informed . They’ve an idea what their property is worth if selling and what to expect to pay if buying.

In the old days, our grandfathers would put somebody in the car and just drive them around till they found a property that they liked.

There’s a great story of Mervyn Hunter, my grandfather, selling Ron Leckie his land. That’s Ron Leckie who used to be the president of the community association and did so much to beautify the village”



Brett Hunter

destination to rival Medlow Bath. And then, land for farming. This was a big growing area, especially for beans and bananas. “

“That’s where the name, Plantation Place comes from off Cabbage Tree. That was a banana plantation.”

“How is the market these days?” I asked. “Very interesting,” Brett said. “We’re in a fifteen year low of properties on offer.” “Why? Properties are selling very quickly. Even though prices are very high, people seemed to be holding out for more even though Avoca prices are well above the Central Coast average.” “And how are they selling when they do, private sale or by auction?” “The auction rate is over 85%, here in Avoca” said Brett.



Ron Leckie

“One day before he moved here, Ron met Mervyn on the beach. Do you have anything for sale? asks Ron. Mervyn points up at the hill. “That land up there”, he says. “I’ll buy it,” says Ron and they shook hands. It was all done on a handshake, sight unseen from the beach or so the story goes.

“What were people after in those days?” “Blocks for holiday houses. Norman and Mervyn were very big on making Avoca a prime Holiday

“Just to give you an idea of how things are changing, We recently sold our first property via Facebook, a town house off the plan. We advertised on FB. Got interest, supplied documents and accepted their offer, all through FB. We never met the clients till they came to sign the contract.”

“They never went to look at the site?” “No, photos from the air were sufficient and Google earth”

“What’s your funniest sale, Brett?” I ask. “Well, not mine but I know of a guy who came into the agency in the early years, wearing just a pair of sluggos, no shoes, no shirt, straight off the beach. This guy says, “What have you got for such and such an amount?” He didn’t look too promising but he was shown 3 properties in his Sluggos and bought the third, producing a check book from somewhere. That was a funny story round the office at the time”

“What do you say to people who worry that Avoca is going to become like Terrigal?” I ask“

“I don’t think that will happen. Avoca is on a no-through-road. Also, it’s not as commercially zoned as Terrigal. The corporates are not going to move in. I would expect the seafront businesses in Terrigal to go to 5 stories in coming years, but that won’t happen to Avoca. There are enough active people who care

about Avoca. Look at the “No ship” campaign. People care in Avoca. “It’s reassuring that you feel like that.” I said as I prepared to leave.

I gave Brett a copy of the CES Tindall water colour done in 1911 to advertise the Guest House, then above the oval. A relative of his,

Sara Powter, found it on a brochure for the Guest House. I explained we were hoping to sell copies to finance a free standing village notice board near the Welcome Mart, something we very much lack here in Avoca. More of that in the next newsletter *M.R.*



Aerial view of Avoca painted by C.E.S Tindall in 1911. A commission for the luxurious guest house above the Oval.

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Our combined Post Office and Newsagent

It was in 2002 that Rick and Lorraine Miller purchased the Avoca Beach Post Office. Then, in 2007, they bought the newsagency as well and joined the two together into one family business.. Lorraine says that coming here was like, "ending up in Heaven." Why so good? "because people are so relaxed here."



Rick and Lorraine Miller

We talked about the fact that the post office is now also a bank. You can do personal banking, deposits and withdrawals with most banks. You can also certify passport photos, do the passport interview, get travel money and be on your way in every way.

Lorraine would like you to know that you can pick up parcels from 6 am to 6pm, five days a week and until 1pm on Saturday. Come Xmas, the parcels can really pile up.

The Post office itself, with all the services of Australia Post, is open from 9 am till 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Long hours but there's nowhere else they'd rather be, says Lorraine.

Have they ever sold a winning lottery ticket? There's a plaque on the wall celebrating a rather large win, a first division prize won by a syndicate of 15 lucky locals.

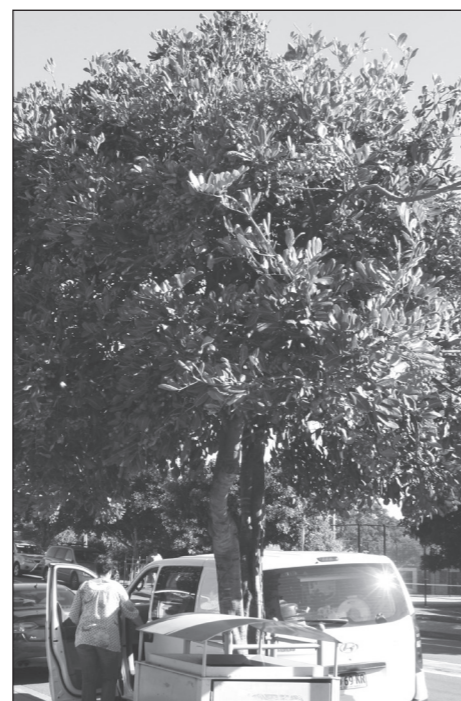


What do you do with a sick Tuckeroo?

There is a mystery afoot in the Avoca village. About 15 years ago, Tuckeroo trees were planted on each side of Avoca Drive as part of the village upgrade, along with wider foot paths and street furniture. Now, for some unknown reason, the Tuckeroos on the northern side are generally thriving whilst those on the southern side, struggle to grow.

A few of the southerners are OK but those in front of the pharmacy and Welcome Mart are approximately a quarter of the size of the healthy ones opposite. One Tuckeroo near a bench in front of the pharmacy, is such a wispy pathetic thing, that its ailing trees have bothered me for years, and so, resolved to be passive no longer in the face of this blight on our street, I've rung the tree experts at Gosford Council.

Mystery and, hopefully, bring the struggling Tuckeroos back to health. M.R.



Their diagnosis over the phone is that it might have something to do with the pH in the soil, varying from spot to spot.. To get something done about the problem, they've invited us to send in a report along with photographs. which I'm going to do.

The **Avoca Beach News**, as it will henceforth be called. promises to get to the bottom of this **Great Tree**



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Precious Pets

Karen Norkett has been grooming pets on a Round Drive for 16 years and she still loves it. She started in the grooming business when she was 14 and then, 16 years ago, got up the courage to open her own business on the theory that a leap of faith with what you need.

Mostly she does dogs though cats are welcome too. For dogs, the usual treatment is a flea wash, a nail trim, the ears washed out, and then a nice blow-dry. Sometimes dogs come out looking so good their owners don't recognise them. How much does all that cost? From \$25 and up, depending on the size of the dog. Some customers bring their dogs every week, others intermittently

If you just want nails clipped, she doesn't charge, asking only that you make a donation to the **Central Coast Kids in Need** organisation, dropping your money right there into the box she has. How do dogs like the treatment? Generally, they love coming and they socialise well, she says. Sometimes an anxious dog can set the others yapping but that's rare.

To one owner who had a nervous dog, Karen suggested that she leave the dog without charge just to get him used to the place. The lady took her up on the offer and now the dog loves **Precious Pets**. She grooms cats too but prefers dogs because they're so much more expressive.



Karen Norkett

She likens dogs to preschoolers in terms of the amount of emotional interaction you have with them.

Why did she choose Avoca? The off leash exercise areas on the beach make it a great location for dog lovers and good for those who look after them too. The job is full on. Karen only takes two weeks of holidays a year, a week in June and a week at Christmas. For those times she closes up, not trusting the business to anyone else. *M.R.*



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The Super Shaper

Rob Allen, who owns and runs **Three Points Surf** with his wife Kerry, has been making surf boards all his life although he started out doing an apprenticeship as a builder. He explained that the art, the skill of board making, is in shaping, that you start with a block of polyurethane, and then you plane to it the shape you want.

Rob shaped boards for the greats like Midget Farrelly and Nat Young in Sydney, and then moved up here to work for Geoff McCoy who had a board making business next to where the service station on Cape Three Points used to be. Geoff's business became hugely successful exporting to Japan, and soon, right here in Avoca, we had Australia's top surfboard maker.

After leaving Geoff McCoy, Rob started shaping his own boards at shops he opened at Wamberal and Erina.

Finally, twelve year ago with Kerry who is also a midwife and registered nurse, he opened the present shop in Avoca.

The surf board side of the business has now dwindled. These days, boards are shaped by computer programmed machines, not by hand. Rob still shapes but pretty much as a hobby, and board sales now only a small part of his business

Meanwhile, **Three Points Surf** survives and thrives selling clothing and accessories. The name is soon to be changed and at some point, Rob says he'll take out an ad in this newsletter to announce that henceforth the business will be called **Avoca Surf co.**

Was he ever champion himself? As a schoolboy, he was pretty good but he left it at that.

His other claim to fame is that he played bass for 12 years in Ian Charlton's group, The Rhythm Method. We're glad to hear that of course, us being great fans of our local doctor, Ian Charlton *M.R.*



Rob Allen



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The Wise Food Cafe

The Wise Food Cafe has been open just under a year. It's most famous for its raw cakes, says owner, Kate Marchant. She runs the cafe with partner, Tony Blefari,

Those raw cakes have quickly created something of a local craving and a real point of difference. So successful are they, that three companies want to wholesale them nationally, but they've said no.

The secret of the raw cake is that the flour and eggs are replaced by ground cashew nuts, giving a creamy consistency.

Being different is a way of not treading on the toes of other cafes, Kate believes. As well as the cakes, they offer vegan meals, have gluten free and run a wellness centre.

How did they come to choose Avoca? One weekend they came to our famous markets and fell in love with the town, the colour, the friendliness, and decided they wanted to live here.

Kate had very clear ideas what the place should look like. She loves the colour turquoise, especially if paired with natural wood, and so there's lots of that. Tony made the tables for more of the woody look.



Their chair choice is interesting. Suppliers of chairs told them that most cafes want uncomfortable chairs so that you can quickly move people in and out. Kate was horrified by that idea and insisted on getting the very comfortable plastic web chairs they now have.

They also put in a bookcase and have newspapers, further indications that you're welcome to stay. Athletic mums park racing strollers and settle in, mid mornings, there being room for toddlers to roam and no pressure to move.

Getting up to go, I notice the ornate antique bell on the counter. "Tony has had that bell for 20 years," says Kate, and his family's been saying, "all you need now is a cafe to put around the bell, and that's what they now have."

"People love to come and bang our bell," says Kate, either to get our attention or just for the fun of it. So, it's officially Ding Ding time at **The Wise Food Cafe.** *M.R.*



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