



It's been a great summer, plenty of crowded beach days, warm water and at times spectacular surf. Our beautiful beach seems more popular than ever. Holiday accommodation has been booked out and on several days finding a spot on the sand was a challenge. Hopefully the recent wet weather will clear up for Easter.

Uncertain times

While in many instances things are quietening down, spare a thought for those who normally get remarkably busy this time of year. The organisers of the 5 Lands Walk, a major event attracting many thousands to the Central Coast requires a major administrative operation from its dedicated volunteer organisers. When in full swing around 700 people contribute to this massive weekend, and Avoca Beach is the hub for much of it. Complicating things is the uncertainty Covid 19 brings to the picture. The success of this event requires a lot of early planning, yet at the time of writing permission has still not been granted and details are yet to be worked out.

A similar circumstance on a smaller scale is ANZAC Day. Recent years have seen large crowds down on our beachfront for a dawn service. Organisers are going ahead but waiting to see how much of our usual ceremony can take place. Uncertain times, but in comparison to the rest of the world we have no reason to complain.

Two Lifesavers

Recently early one morning the call came from around the rocks that a fisher had been swept into the sea and was in trouble. Fortunately, off duty lifeguard Stuart Paterson was on hand and was soon on a jet ski to render help. The other lifesaver in this story was the lifejacket the fisher was wearing. It kept him afloat until help arrived. Here was a perfect example of common sense paying off. Although perhaps not so sensible was the decision to fish when the waves were up. This fisher got away with a broken wrist and was later reported to have a fracture to his spine. Thanks to two lifesavers it was not a lot worse.

SF



We can all make a difference

I'm chatting with Melissa from Like Minds Café.

The cafe we all know and love, across from the fire station, now sporting a fresh lick of paint. Actually, it's a brilliant, vibrant mural called RADIANT LIFE painted by the talented Anastasia Gladushchenko with a little help from local artists Emily Ashley-Turner, Amy Haymes, Josephine Amber and Alex Krohn.

The old general store has become a great place for a morning coffee, but has also evolved into a community hub, filled with ideas, collaborations with artists, a native and an edible garden, produce swaps, minimising waste and aiming for a greener future.

Owners Melissa and Jimmy have a keen, hands on interest for supporting the planet.

Jimmy composts all the food waste at a local laneway garden, just up the road. Mel sources local produce and supports local growers, producers and artisans, from breads, veggies, micro herbs, and eggs. You'll always find fresh lemons from Mangrove Mountain or farm eggs to grab on your way out with your cuppa.

With this unmistakable passion, I've decided to ask Mel what she thinks we could all do to contribute to a greener community.

Avoca Beach is changing rapidly, new faces are appearing, eager to be part of the community. With the growing numbers now is a good time as any to think how we can come together and continue to make our little village flourish in a sustainable way.

Ten Tips for a Greener Avoca

1. Buy a good water filter for your home.

Fill up every day with a reusable bottle and say goodbye to buying water in single-use plastic bottles.

2. Buy local.

Instead of driving further away, head into town and support the great number of businesses in Avoca.

3. Support farmers

There's a good bunch of farmers on the Central Coast and you can meet a few of them every Wednesday out the front of our shop from 4 – 5.30pm. Grab veggies, meats, herbs, fruit, honey, eggs and more!

4. Educate yourself and your family.

Learn more about sustainability! Borrow some books from the library or jump onto

one of the free workshops that the council offer and/or check out the workshops that the SWAMP team are offering in Tuggerah.

5. Love thy neighbour.

We can't make a difference unless we work together. You might find your neighbour is great at composting and you're great at making jam, maybe you can share/swap skills.

6. Recycle and Upcycle.

Before you throw something in the bin ask yourself can it be recycled or re-used. Cardboard packaging gets turned into arts and crafts, food jars turn into drinking cups and storage containers. For all your pre-loved items have a garage sale, your trash could be someone's treasure!

7. Washing your car

Use a bucket, non-toxic cleaners and do it on the grass! We don't want harmful polluted water in the lake!

8. Catch water.

Get a water tank, or when it rains place buckets around the garden. It's free water and it's energised by Mother Nature! Fill a bucket in the shower while you're waiting for the warm water to come through.

9. Don't buy balloons.

Do I really have to say why! We live by the ocean, there's plenty of creative ways we can decorate a birthday party.

10. Compost!

Stop throwing your food scraps away. Not only will you reduce your own red bin waste, reduce landfill waste and be great to the environment but you can use your compost to start a vegetable garden.

Mel says she is only a beginner on the journey into sustainability and living simply. She shares this advice... accept you're not perfect, do your best, take small steps but with big intentions.

Ellen Rubbo



Editorial credits: Steve Fortey: Editor | Julie Pickett: Advertising

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Also if you'd like to contribute to the newsletter, get in touch.

President's Report

I think most would agree that this summer has been one of near record crowds and many have commented on the resulting traffic and parking dilemma. Has anybody other than me noticed how much busier Avoca Drive is getting? It's probably no worse than many beachside suburbs, but this is Avoca, where we like to keep things low key.

Has the population of Avoca reached capacity? Many would say yes, we're full! Maybe this is wishful thinking. It's probably down to the type of place we want Avoca to be, and how we see the future. To me, it's a question of how and what we develop. Anyone who has walked over the old Bangaloe Stud site will appreciate how beautiful it is and what a wildlife haven it is. 165 homes? In this issue we have explored the dilemma of future development on pages 6 and 7.

On the credit side, holiday bookings have been at capacity and local businesses must be seeing the benefits. On that note, I'd like to pay tribute to Michelle Harvey from George Brand Real Estate, who organised over 30 holiday homeowners to offer a week's respite to bush fire victims from the south coast. It's hard to realize that many who lost their homes in January 2020 are still in temporary accommodation, frustrated by red tape and in need of financial help. We still expect to see a few more south coasties over the coming months.

At the time of writing news of our outstanding successes at the NSW Surf Life Saving titles was filtering through. Congratulations to all Avoca competitors, pictured are Mia, Natalia and Bronte who were multiple medallists on the weekend. With more events to come and 'Aussies' not far away, we look forward to seeing more rewards for the hard work put in at training.

Our beach was also host to a major surf comp recently and did not disappoint. This World Surf League event saw massive waves provide an excellent spectacle. Congrats to the organisers and competitors. The final days saw large appreciative crowds. It was great to see locals perform well and watch former Avoca Board Rider Macy Callaghan win her way through to the final.

Autumn is here and winter is not far behind it. We look forward to those beautiful clear days with pristine surf conditions and a less crowded (after Easter) beach. For many it's the favourite time of year. Some actually look forward to the cold!

COVID 19. We are going ahead with the ANZAC Day dawn service, but it may be a little lower key with some restrictions in place. And good luck to the 5 Lands Walk organisers, trying to organise a major event in the uncertainty of the times.

Steve Fortey



Thank you to Michelle and Scott Harvey.



Winners are grinners at NSW Surf Life Saving titles



Macy Callaghan on her way to the final

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Colin Tipney

I bet there are very few houses in Avoca which have a Turkish threshing board standing next to the front door. As I looked at the ancient piece of wood about a metre tall embedded with white stones I learnt from my host, Colin Tipney, that traditionally in Turkey farmers would whip sheafs of wheat against the board, the seeds falling to the floor would be swept up.

It was a telling indicator that the man I was about to interview has had a colourful life full of travel. Before his marriage to Judy, sister of John Mitchell already featured in these pages, Colin was a keen rugby player. But then in 1975 a collapsed scrum ended his football career; he limped off the field with a broken neck. On his doctor's advice he gave up the game. Not long after this he and Judy went travelling, off to Kathmandu where they joined up with a group on a big red double decker London bus.

On the bus they had a fantastic and rather perilous trip down through Asia to London to arrive in time for their first snowy Christmas in 1978. The trip took them through India, Pakistan and into Afghanistan where they climbed the great sacred Buddhas, thousands of years of carving by devoted monks, which in recent years have been tragically destroyed by the Taliban. In India they were ordered to get vaccinations, but the doctor was using the same needle on all 15 of the bus travellers, so Colin and Judy snuck around the back, avoided the jab and saving themselves from getting hepatitis as it turned out. They felt little danger then as do the young, even the time on a house boat on a stunning Kashmiri lake, when the boat began to sink. Feasting on delicious roast duck and with the pot pipe passing around, it didn't seem to matter.

During the day on the bus, they bounced along in the lower seats while at night the bunks above were busy. It may have sounded like the possums in our roof, all the goings on up there. Colin was happily married already, but his brother Peter found a wife among the passengers.

The Middle East was very unsettled. Whilst they were in Afghanistan Russian helicopters buzzed the capital Kabul, warning of a forthcoming invasion. Going into Israel, they later tore out the page of their passport which showed they'd been there, such were tensions. Many border crossings were tricky. But they had a stash of Johnny Walker Black label which proved a great bribe. Then to Iran where the Shah was still in power, but violence was in the air with demonstrations in the streets and a revolution imminent.

When they got to London it was great going to the Aussie frequented pubs in Earls Court. Some fun was had when Judy came into a pub wearing a fox fur she had picked up on the trip. In England you can take your dogs into the pub. The hounds smelt fox and chased Judy around the pub as drinkers shouted, "Tally ho."

Back in Australia Colin had plenty of work in his field of engineering. Power stations were going up all over the place and he worked on those being built at Vales Point, Lake Munmorah and many others. His travels recommenced too when he got sent to Southeast Asia to build power stations in Vietnam and Thailand.

Meanwhile he was missing team sports and through a mate, got to sail first on the harbour and then on a Sydney to Hobart race on the yacht, Gretel. The boat belonged Bernard Lewis, wealthy through real estate. Bernard, not a sailor himself, was always along for the ride and the copious rum and cokes afterward. His deep pockets made much possible.

Gretel's skipper was David Kellett, a fantastic sailor with a way of winning, with whom Colin sailed for many decades. On Gretel they got a second in the race to Hobart in 79. Bernard was delighted but wanted better. He bought a promising boat in Perth which he renamed the Vengeance, and which won line honours to Hobart in 81 with Colin onboard and Kellett at the helm.

Still restless, Barnard and Kellett along with David Pedrick, a fabulous designer, next built the Sovereign from scratch, an 81-foot Maxi. It paid off in '87 when, with Colin aboard,



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Sovereign took both line and handicap honours, the first Australian boat to get the double.

What's it like on the big boats in a heavy sea, I asked ? Well, they have a crew of 25, said Colin, everyone busy every waking moment. The watches are four hours on and four off during the day, and three hours on and off at night. Night's when you hot bunk. As soon as you're out of the bunk somebody else's in it, bone weary and asleep in seconds. " Colin was often on the grinders, the winches that pull in or let out sail.

It's not just hard work on deck, but also below, where you are dealing with mountains of sail which must be continuously packed and unpacked since it can't be left on the deck. They call it flaking as they fold sail into huge bags. When the boat is pounding into a heavy sea, it's easy for even seasoned sailors to get queasy down there which is when, according to Colin, you go have a "spit" over the rail. Sometimes they had a cook who made delicious jam and cream scones, unspillable food in rough seas and something to dream about on a rough watch

In the disastrous 1998 race when several boats sank and six lives were lost, Colin's boat developed problems. Fearing they might drop a rudder they pulled into Eden perhaps saving them from a worse fate. That was the worst year ever for the Sydney to Hobart .

For the last 10 years, Colin has sailed on the radio relay boat which sits in the middle of the fleet, keeping track of everybody's position. Now boats have GPS of course so they know exactly where they are. But still the radio relay boat still keeps track.

These days the racers get down to Hobart in a day with speeds of 30 knots which is 45 km an hour if you can believe it. "That's nothing," says Colin. "In the Americas cup these days the massive single hulls are completely out of the water, riding on a fin and reaching speeds of 100 km an hour, flying in effect. So it's no surprise that the guy at the computer controls is called the flight director." Colin laments that it's all about big money these days. Australia can't afford such boats and the irony is that Aussies are constantly crewing other people's multi-million dollar boats .

On the work front, there couldn't be a greater contrast to those races. As deputy director of construction on a new mine, Colin was off to land locked Mongolia in 2007, a place of vast steppes, of a herding people living in circular huts called Gers , and no sniff of the briny to be had. He'd gone from sailing in our temperate climate to temperatures which ranged from 40 degrees below to 40 C above.

Oyu Tolgoi is a massive mine, copper and gold the prize. They were starting from scratch in the middle of the Gobi Desert, having to build a mine, airport, roads, and connections to China for power . The mine camp of 15,000 at peak construction was so large it became the country's second largest city, a town of demountables and Gers.

They had a mess hall serving both local and foreign food for 4000 thousand people at a time. Mongolian laws stipulated that two locals had to be employed for every foreigner. Men and women, it was a mixed camp, and often the local Mongolian women were better truck drivers than the men, Colin says.

The search for copper and gold was both open cut and block cave mining, which created the vast caverns a kilometre and a half underground, with miles of roads for the trucks ferrying the ore to the elevators. Colin loved the remote life but missed the regular sailing. Even so, he's somehow managed 36 Sydney to Hobarts. He stayed with the Mongolian project till 2015.

He sends me a photo of a herder on horseback, a hunting with an eagle. Did he try that I wonder? It's been a great journey, he says, which now comes down to more time on the water and stretch classes with Gary on the lawn near the surf club three times a week. He's also an award-winning beekeeper. If he's ever at a loose end, he can always thresh wheat at the front door, I guess.

Mike Rubbo March 2021.



Eagle hunting Mongolia



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Opinion Piece – How do we approach development in Avoca?

The ABCA has recently sent substantial submissions into Council objecting to some proposed DAs in the local area. This does not mean we oppose all development, but rather we object to those large-scale projects that have the potential to change the character of our much-loved beachside suburb.

We already have creeping high rise in the form of unit blocks in Cape Three Points Rd. Certainly we welcome the new residents in those buildings but are wary of further such development. In this case, Council's guidelines are that such development is permissible, within 500m of the village centre. The block on the corner of Cape Three Points and Yodalla Place is next to go. I'm told a DA has been approved for twin towers of 5 storeys with shops underneath, despite opposition from nearby residents. We hope this is the last multi storey unit block and have yet to see work begin on our beachfront at Avoca Beach Theatre (plans for 4 theatres and accompanying units).

So, what have we opposed?

Two DA's awaiting approval from the Council are the old Bowtell's Caravan Park site on the Round Drive and the Bangaloe Stud site on the edge of Avoca. In both cases Zoning issues have been contentious. The Bowtell's site is in the middle of a low density, mainly single storey residential area. Bangaloe is in a semi-rural area on a large 24-hectare block of beautiful land. A common problem with both proposals is the plans for rows of two storey homes, connected terrace like to each other. 165 homes in the case of Bangaloe. Our main roundabout could be 400 to 500 cars busier each day. This type of large-scale development has the potential to change the face of Avoca if a precedent is set, let alone place more unwanted stress on existing amenities. Both proposals are testing the boundaries of what is acceptable. We await a decision on both DAs.



Bangaloe. Two of three dams to go.

How do we cater for the growing population then? Especially in over 50s?

Good government planning would be a start, providing infrastructure. We continue to grow higgelty piggelty. Paying a lot of money for a parcel of land should not entitle you to change, ignore or challenge its zoning. Ian Carruthers' article on the page opposite shows just how confusing the myriad of Council's strategic plans can be. Council needs to be more consistent in, and accountable for its zoning. The impact of developments on tree loss and the water quality of the catchment area around Avoca Lake should be a priority in decision making. Council's inflexibility and lack of vision regarding Bob Pickett's desire to donate a substantial parcel of land to the community remains a disappointment.

The Kincumber area is awash with aged care facilities, many feel we have reached saturation point. Traffic and parking are increasingly problematic. Yes, we could use some more low-density affordable accommodation for young families, but the primary school is full, with little room for expansion. Our local high school does an excellent job, but it was built for 850 students. It is now over well 1,000 and growing.

Is the answer more high rise? The only way is up? I look at congested Terrigal with its associated social problems, or the mass of units at DeeWhy on the northern beaches and shudder. A major concern now is the financial woes of Council. Will this make it more susceptible to temptations from developers with deep pockets?

What we have at Avoca is precious, so why not preserve what we can? Maintain the low key 'village atmosphere' Council describes in its character statement of Avoca Beach in DCP 159?

Occasionally I get accused of NIMBYism, my response is wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone looked after their own backyards?

Steve Fortey

President ABCA

PS The last thing Avoca residents seem to want is to become another Terrigal (I'm told this is where the bluebottles come from).

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Central Coast Council – So many Plans!

The myriad Plans and Strategies of Local Government – dealing with infrastructure delivery, planning, the environment and climate change, disaster management etc. - have significant implications for the lives and experiences of residents in the area. This is especially the case in the field of land use planning and controls on housing, commercial activity and infrastructure development.

Since the election of Central Coast Council 3 years ago (and for now with the Administrator), it has been proceeding apace to develop new plans, to consolidate and address inconsistencies of approaches by the former Gosford and Wyong Councils, and to respond to evolving State Government planning requirements.

Council does provide mechanisms, such as submissions and public forums (the latter suspended in COVID times), through which residents can express views about draft proposals. Our Community Association continues to be busy making representations on directions that seem to best meet the interests of Avocans and the future form of Avoca Beach.

All this activity can be hard to understand and follow, given the many other things happening in our individual lives. And sometimes these Council initiatives seem not to follow an orderly sequence, making it harder to figure how it all fits together.

So, as someone not an expert in planning matters but having taken an interest in what it all means for Avoca Beach, I thought to set down how I understand the unfolding planning scene.

Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

This instrument is a new requirement upon Council from the State Government. The LSPS was adopted by Council in June 2020. It forms the top tier planning document for the Central Coast. It will be pivotal in shaping other local statutory planning instruments and development controls.

It provides a 20-year vision for land use on the Central Coast; and in broad terms signals the special characteristics attaching to local areas. For example, the core of Avoca Beach is defined as being a Village in character and Picketts Valley is signalled to possibly become urban development land.

Urban Spatial Plan

In 2019, Council issued a draft of this Plan. It presents a 20-year vision of land use on the Central Coast – for example, with growth concentrating in a Somersby-Erina corridor and a northern corridor. The timing for its finalization is unclear.

Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP)

In 2019, Central Coast Council issued a draft Consolidated LEP and DCP which combined the former Gosford and Wyong Councils planning documents. Where there were differences, in some instances Council proposed choosing one of those approaches – leading to a concern by ABCA (and many others) that it was proposed to introduce in the southern region the Wyong standard allowing creation of a smaller residential blocks.

The final version of the Central Coast Council LEP/DCP was adopted (by the Administrator) in December 2020. Pleasingly, the earlier proposal for smaller residential lots did not proceed in the final version.

Development Applications lodged before the date of adoption of the new LEP/DCP are able to utilize the provisions of the former Gosford Council LEP/DCP. It is this mechanism which enables the current major, contentious development proposals to be advanced for the Bowtells and Bangaloe Stud sites. (The ABCA has submitted objections to both).

Community Strategic Plan (CSP)

The CSP is not directly a planning instrument but it does inform how the set of planning instruments are shaped. It encapsulates the aspirations expressed by the community (through consultations) on the future qualities (to 2028) of the Central Coast.

Its central themes are: Belonging – community spirit and local identity; Smart – competitive region and opportunities; Green – sustainable environmental resources and protected natural beauty; Responsible – governance, infrastructure delivery, sustainable development; and Livable – transport and healthy lifestyles.

Other Planning Developments

- **Regional Strategic Plan:** The State Government's Central Coast Regional Strategic Plan (which, for example, provides population projections) will be revised in 2021, drawing upon the LSPS (see above).
- **Coastal Zone Management:** In 2021, Council will develop a plan for preparing a Central Coast coastal management program which will include long-term strategies (replacing the 2017 Gosford CZMP). This will have important implications for future development in the foreshore zone and protection of properties and infrastructure from increasing ocean impacts.

Ian Carruthers



Is this the future for Avoca?

Our Feathered Friends

With ocean, lake and land habitats, Avoca boasts a wide variety of bird species to be found, some migratory coming and going with the seasons, others permanent residents. Get yourself a pair of binoculars and a Bird Field Guide, and you're off and running. See what you can find.

We've all been hassled by 'seagulls' after our spare chips, but look further out to sea, and Terns and Gannets diving and Shearwaters ('mutton-birds') skimming the surface may be seen, and even Albatross after a southerly blow. This summer our ocean swimmers have had the pleasure of swimming alongside a Fairy Penguin or two. Check out Captain Cook Lookout for a better view, and a spot to see Peregrine Falcons which nest on the cliff ledges there. Patrolling overhead Sea Eagles and Ospreys may be seen.

Around the lagoon look for Cormorants, Darters, Black Ducks and Chestnut Teal, and Pelicans of course. Sometimes Stilts, Grebes, Coot and rarely Crakes put in an appearance, though many birds have headed inland since widespread rainfall across the state has replenished waterways. Azure Kingfishers are up Saltwater Creek, Egrets and Moorhens like the shallows, and Swans nest amongst the reeds.

Summer migrants include Orioles, those rowdy Channel-billed Cuckoos and Koels down from New Guinea, Dollarbirds and Wood swallows. In the winter come the Currawongs with their curious call. Kookaburras and Magpies are in all our gardens, and 'Cockies' and Lorikeets are everywhere.

And we've barely scratched the surface, the list of possibilities goes on and on. In fact, there have been over 380 bird species seen on the Central Coast over the years, so get out and about and have fun identifying all the birds you see. It'll have you finding secret spots around 'the coast' you didn't know existed. Don't think it's 'daggy' to be a 'twitcher'!



The pictures show an interesting sequence of events on the lake near the entrance to Saltwater creek. A pair of swans were happily nesting in the shallow reeds in February, when the lake level rose with the rains we had then until the nest was 'swamped' and the swans gave up in disgust and deserted it, eggs and all. Shortly after I paddled past again, and lo and behold, someone had resurrected the nest, complete with eggs, and stuck it on a sturdy platform at that spot! I wonder who the ever-hopeful good Samaritan was, and whether the Swans could possibly get back on the nest if so inclined. They've resisted the urge so far, but who knows. Happy birding!

Michael Scobie



Musk Lorikeets



Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoo



Tawny Frogmouths

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Beach Worms by Kristy McQueen



Budding beach wormer. Photograph courtesy of Megan Lawler (beach wormer extraordinaire!)

Beach worms are not a riveting subject for all, but for traditional fishers who like to collect their own bait, beach worms are highly prized and a topic of enormous fascination. The reasons they are so sought after are twofold. 1. they are excellent bait; and 2. they are hard to catch, hence the satisfaction of catching a beach worm is equal to that of catching a dinner plate sized bream. To be successful at beach worming requires a specific skill set that seemingly can only be learned as a young child, the knowledge passed down by a very knowing and wise one.

Fishers targeting beach worms are easy to spot at the beach. They stand fully clothed on the water's edge while sweeping a rope attached to a stinky fish head in a stocking (or pipi or pilchards or something 'stinky') across the sand as the wave recedes. They will chat to you if you persevere, but their eyes do not leave the sand. And when a small bubble of movement or 'v' shaped pattern is spotted in the sand in the receding waters, the beach worm predator will slowly bend, holding the 'stinky' about 1 cm above the spot on the sand.

Now this is the exciting part - when the worm pokes its head up, the skill is knowing when to strike. Some say it is when the worm bites on to the 'stinky' while others say it is when the worm's attention is fully on the 'stinky' and it is not looking at the human predator. Patience and timing are essential. When instinct kicks in, the predator slides either plastic pliers around the worm's head or pinches it between their finger and thumb, and quickly grabs the worm, lifting it from the sand like a trophy. The predator's pride is palpable. The next day, they appear back at the beach in front of a rip, with a pouch full of hard-earned beach worms and a fishing rod. One fisher enthusiastically told me that if you push the worm around the hook and right up the line, it is a guarantee way to catch a jewfish.

Beach worms can reach up to 2 meters and are part of the phylum Annelida, which is the same category as earthworms. They are large and very strong marine worms that occur at beaches between the low and high tide mark, where they sit in an 'L' shape which makes them hard to pull out of the sand. Beach worms start off as larvae and form part of the zooplankton, feeding on phytoplankton. When they reach about 3 cm, they settle in the sand where they grow into adult worms.

Their coiled castings can be seen on the beach at low tide however the worms themselves are rarely seen by beachgoers. Beach worms are scavengers, and feed on dead animals washed ashore such as fish and birds. They also eat shellfish, crustaceans and seaweed. They are blind but have an excellent sense of touch and smell to detect food, and move horizontally through the sand to find it, using two fangs to grab and tear their meal.

The art of beach worming is alive and well and I am assured that they occur on every Central Coast beach, however abundance between beaches varies considerably, and like any good thing, the best locations are closely guarded.



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Why do we live in Avoca?

Many of us have similar stories. Here's one from Scott Fortey:

I try to imagine what it was like for Mr John Moore, the Irish army officer given 640 acres of what is now prime Avoca land in 1830. That's 2.5 square kilometres. He built a house opposite Avoca Lake (Bulbararing) where he planted vines, fruit trees and cereals. Then in 1857 he put it all up for sale at three pound an acre and left for the Victorian goldfields – clearly not a surfer.

Fast forward to today and I'd say three quarters of us were not born here. I'd guess that more than half of us had holidays here as kids, staying in the Avoca of the 1960's, 70's, 80's and 90's. Back when houses and holidays were affordable. It was these holiday memories that went on to make this place a home.



I found this receipt for a rental property behind the Pines in 1966 – BARGAIN! A family holiday for \$37 a week at 129 Avoca Rd! A single storey house, a path in the middle of the lawn, a gate in the middle of a picket fence opening on to the grass, the pines and the beach, a bucket and a spade. It was my introduction to Avoca as a 3 – 6year-old.

A little later a highlight was wandering down with coins to play “Housie” with brother, mum and dad. I seem to remember that every holiday up and down the coast had some version of Housie that kids could play. It was fun and if you won \$7 was a fortune at the lolly shop. Cobbers and caramel butters were 5 for a cent. A sausage roll was 5c, a pie 10c. My interpretation of inflation is through comparing food prices. A pie today is 500c (\$5) – and they still don't taste as good.

The Avoca Beach shop (where the Sands café is today). Wooden floor, sand, everyone went in. Left side hot food, the back bench lollies and on the right toys, beach things. Rats. That's my memory.

As 16- 17year-olds we ‘camped’ at Bowtell's end of the lake with school mates from Sydney. Paddling across the lake to the bakery for a fresh, warm white bread roll and a cold bottle of milk before walking down to the beach for a surf. When we could drive it was stopping in at the Bowlo to get a takeaway carton of beer (no pub then) or having a drink at Mike Willesee's pub at Kincumber.



But to get to Avoca you had to conquer the Pacific Highway. The single lane, the bends and curves and hour-long holdups coming down through Kariong. The excitement of the Mount White bypass and finally the Mooney Mooney Bridge development

– what a bridge. Then the long wait to complete the motorway from Berowra to Wahroonga and finally get rid of the toll gates leading onto the ‘free’ way.

I thought Avoca was cliquy. Even though lots of our friends lived here, I thought it had a kind of snobbery.

I soon found this ‘snobbery’ to be misplaced. Sure, a lot of locals think it's the best – fair enough – but what I really found was a true sense of community. It's what separates the Coast from Sydney. The Sydney of the 60's and 70's had a sense of suburban community. It was pretty standard for us kids to know everyone, every house, lane, short cut, bushland, pathway, cranky old bastard, shop, school, hideout, escape route, bike track, waterway. But it all collapsed with the easy money of the 80's and the property booms. Houses were built with large walls around them, people who'd lived there for years sold out because the money was good. The character changed forever. The school closed. The Cockatoo island workers stopped. The Mobil oil depot closed and was redeveloped as a Mediterranean style mariner. Yuck.

Avoca has it, like most of the CC villages do, a beautiful community feel. There are lots of locals involved with the multiple successful voluntary groups– the rugby club/ tennis courts, the SLSC, the Board Riders. And many characters that light up the place– it doesn't take long before lives cross and weave a lifelong bond of friendship (or dare I say, mateship). Everyone looks out for the other and others look out for you. That's a community. That's one big reason why we live here.



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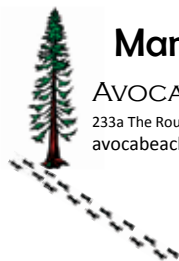
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