

# Tabourie Memories: Surfing

It's not only fishing and swimming that make up Tabourie's water sports. Surfing became big back in the 70's when young surfers ventured away from the cities on weekends in search of better, less crowded waves. Many of these surfers eventually made Tabourie their home and are still living and surfing here today – some now in their 60's and 70's! Their stories vary: from travelling the world before settling in Tabourie; travelling Australia and discovering Tabourie serendipitously; or being lucky enough to grow up here with the surf! It's funny how many of our locals are here because of their love of, and connection to, nature, whether that be the ocean, the bush, the lake or just the beautiful pristine environment. Here are just a few of the stories from surfers living here today.

## JEFF DAVIS' STORY

### **Our Home is girt by ... World Class Waves!**

As a kid I spent 4 weeks of every summer holidaying in the caravan park. Before social media existed and as Christmas approached, we would all wonder "is the lake going to be open?" But as we became teenagers the bigger question soon became "will we get a cyclone swell?" By this age we had traded the safety of the island for the myriad of waves choices we had right outside our tent flaps. Later, as we got our P-plates, we would realise that within a 20km radius of the park we had access to spots that could handle just about any sized swell and wind direction. Tabourie is truly spoilt for choice when it comes to waves.

**North Beach:** At the far end of our "North Beach" is **Point Nor-East** which is great for getting out of those summer nor-easters and the associated bluebottles. At the entrance to the caravan park is **The Hook**. The Hook is one of the best and most consistent hollow beach breaks on the coast and it featured in the late 90's surf documentary "9 Lives" featuring Tom Curren, Occy, Rob Machado, Kalani Robb, Shane Dorian, Luke Eagan, Sunny Garcia and Taylor Knox. In front of the caravan park the sand deposits that form at the lake entrance will often create good banks. But in 40+ years of coming down here I have still never managed to surf a stationary wave when the lake opens!

**South Beach:** South of the island are our reef breaks. Depending on the amount of sand in the channel, **Dum-Dums (or Dummies)** offers a fun right-hand barrel. It was the first reef break I ever surfed, and also where I befriended the local Greenacre boys who were (and still are!) much better surfers than I but always shared the waves with their generous spirit. When the swell is big **Coffee-Grinders** offers a large almond barrel; if you're good enough and brave enough! But I will always remember it for the lefts which my dad and his friends would paddle into on their goat boats! The South Beach itself will pick up the faintest of south swell, but will also handle larger swells on its outside banks. Rights and lefts will run up and down the beach and be largely unaffected by the afternoon sea breeze.

**Further north & south:** A short drive to the north and you can discover waves like **Potholes, Ulladulla Bombie and Golf Course (Golfies)**. A short drive to the south you can discover waves like **Nuggan, Guillotines and No Toes**. I tend not to bother these days because it's amazing right here! But by all means go exploring. I quite like having the beach to myself! Jeff and his family traded their tent flaps for a place in the village back in 2012. His hope is to be considered a "local" by the year 2050!



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## **STEVE KORVIN'S STORY**

Steve joined the navy in WA at age 16 and started surfing while he was there. He transferred to Sydney when he was 17 or 18 to do an apprenticeship in specialised electronics, surfed Sydney breaks on weekends and introduced surfing to the base. He and a mate got sick of the navy and just wanted to surf. They went AWOL in Sydney, with state police and military police trying to track them down!

Steve and his mate spent a lot of time surfing the south coast, joining a growing group of surfers, that split into 2 “groups”, the Golfies guys and the Bawley guys. They were Bawley guys and all of them went to the Marlin on Saturday nights, often getting into fights and drinking way too much.

They both got jobs with a company that did similar work to what they were training for, even though they were overqualified. Fortunately, they had a good boss who guessed they were AWOL navy cadets but kept quiet about it. After a time, they realised they were wasted there and would never get their qualifications recognised outside of the navy or limited organisations like QANTAS. Consequently, they gave themselves up to the navy and ended up in a military prison, not knowing what would happen on the other side. They were ultimately released from the navy and went back to the company that employed them before.

They continued to surf the south coast, but split from the groups to “freelance”, driving around other breaks to surf the best of the day, instead of sticking to particular beaches. Steve and his mate were careful not to say too much to the other guys, enjoying having beaches to themselves, without the crowds. They often slept in cars at the beach and sometimes on verandas of empty houses. They occasionally rented a house in Beach St Tabourie on weekends, where much younger local “grommets” checked them out!

They enjoyed the hospitality and food at “Julies Corner” and were always well behaved for Lia and Paul, as Lia treated them very well. They might have been wild outside but polite inside the shop!

Steve bought land in Oak Avenue in the 70's, having fallen in love with the surf at Tabourie. He married Chris (Mouse) and built their current home in the early 80's. Steve has his own electrical business, and his two sons have followed suit.

## **MURRAY SULIS' STORY**

When Murray got his licence in 1975, he headed down the coast on weekends – exploring the south coast surfing spots that he'd heard about from older surfers. Being a keen overseas traveller, he loved exploring new frontiers and spent more and more time on the south coast.

During his weekend forays Murray surfed all over the area – at Sandmines, Bawley, Green Island and Bendalong. Tabourie was somewhere in the middle and usually had waves at either the north or south beach. He liked the area and in 1978, at the ripe old age of 21, he bought a block of land in Lyra Drive. A local builder, Les Moss, built Murray's house to lock up stage, and Murray progressed from sleeping at the beach in his car to “camping” in his new house. The house had no internal walls at that stage but did have a roof, and Murray and his mates would sleep there on their surfing weekends.

Murray completed his house and has lived in Tabourie ever since, and like many of the surfers that came down from Sydney to surf, he became a “tradie”. Murray has a son, Matt, who like his father has taken up surfing – with the sons and daughters of other local surfers.

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## **BILL BARKER'S STORY**

Bill moved from Sydney to Tabourie in 1987, after coming to the caravan park every year with his family since the early 70's. After progressing from a rubber surf mat, Bill still recalls the thrill of catching his first unbroken wave on a coolite surfboard on the north beach at age 8. This started his love of surfing and Tabourie.

The sand hills also hold many fond memories and add to the Tabourie attraction. Many 'firsts' were experienced in those sacred hills while on holidays as an adventurous adolescent. First drink, first smoke, first kiss .... As a teenager Bill started coming down to Tabourie every weekend, from the family home in Sydney. If the surf was still good on a Sunday, he didn't make it home for work on the Monday ... or Tuesday ... or Friday. Consequently he was sacked from his diesel mechanic apprenticeship, which became a blessing in disguise, sending his life in a different direction.

When he first moved to Tabourie he lived in a converted garage in Lyra Drive and got a job as a brickies labourer with a group of older surfers. If the surf was good, work would halt and surfing began – as it should!

Bill and his partner Natasha bought a house in Oak Avenue in 2006, and have no plans to leave the area. Bill regularly surfs anywhere between Narrawallee and Kioloa, but most often, he and Natasha are chasing the variety of great waves on offer at the beaches and reefs closest to Tabourie. He says that the surrounding area covers all wind and swell conditions and if there is no surf between these beaches there is none anywhere!

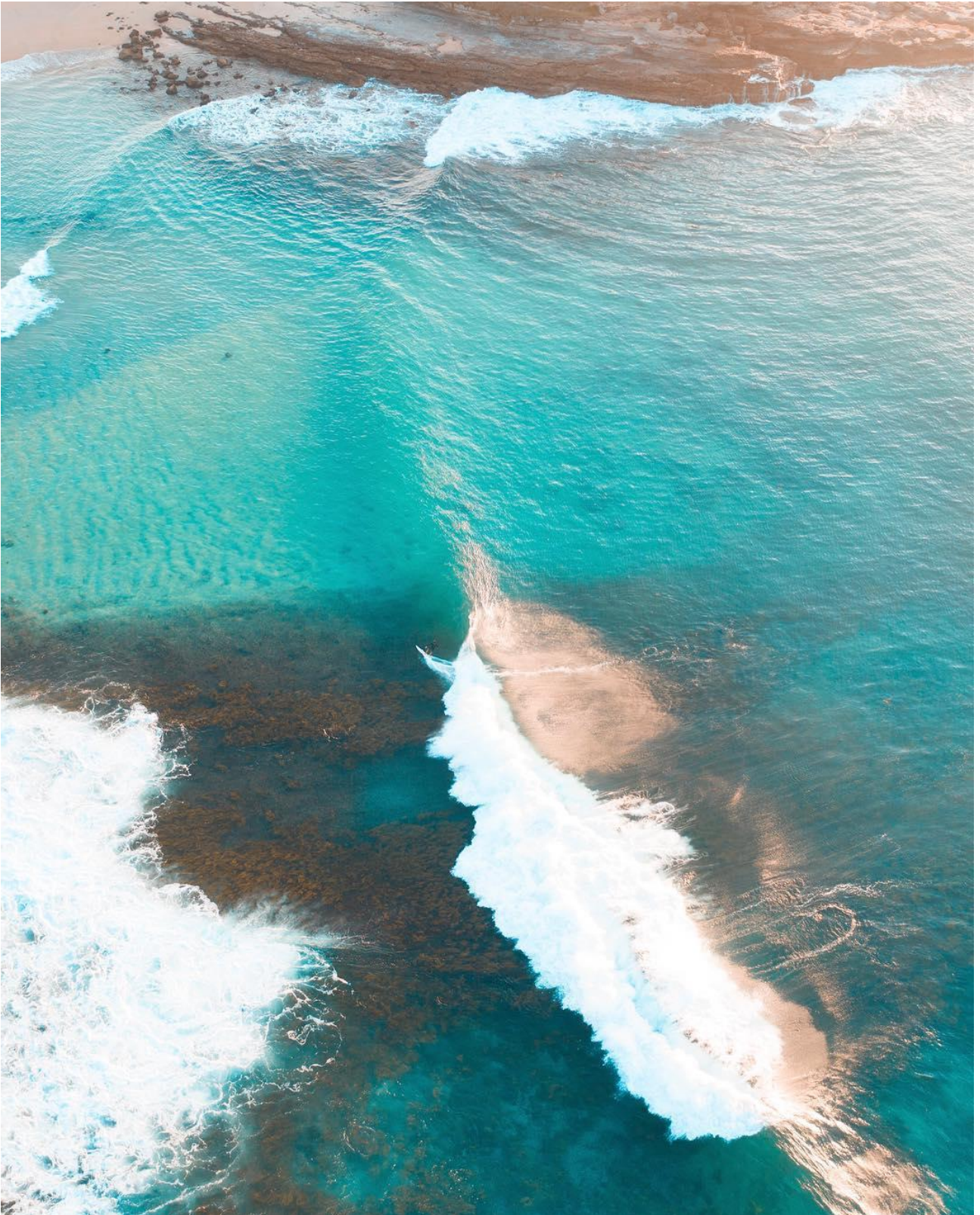
Bill and Natasha spend their winters managing the ski patrol at Mt Hotham, Victoria. They also run a backcountry skiing business and spend a portion of the year guiding in the spectacular Kashmiri Himalaya and Antarctic Peninsula... however their favourite place on the planet is right here at home. 50 years and 4 generations later, his extended family are still camping on the unpowered sites in the back of the caravan park every Xmas. Just a short paddle across the lake for Bill and Natasha to easily join them for wine and cheese hour!

## **DEAN DAMPNEY'S STORY**

I first started coming 'down the coast' from Sydney's northern beaches back when I was fifteen or sixteen. The older guys would drive us for those couple of years before we were old enough to be on our P-plates. It was such an awesome experience to be in the thick of the Aussie bush with so many quality waves and pristine water. For us there were rarely any other guys surfing. We used to head to Pretty Beach and explore Murramarang National Park to the north and south back then, before we discovered Bawley had epic burgers at the takeaway store, and a couple of quality reef breaks for us to cut our teeth on. We'd always drive past the Tabourie Beach turnoff - it was just another deviation from what we considered to be a destination that had it all. That was until someone said there were a couple of really good waves in there and figured we could take the extra ten minutes to suss it out. I don't remember surfing Tabourie for the first time, but I remember when I moved down in my late twenties that every surf felt like the best surf of my life. I surfed Wairo a fair bit and really enjoyed surfing Dummies and later Coffees. It was always an awesome option to avoid the crowds of "town".

Since those days my three sons have grown up learning to surf here and going on to relish in the surf quality of their "own back yard". Apart from the lake opening up out to Dummies, which I haven't seen before, and the beach erosion, nothing's really changed. The surfing equipment has obviously changed, but the waves are still good, and the experience just as chilled. The older guys aren't surfing as much, but always unreal to have a chat to still. Unfortunately, most of us figure we can't surf forever. Being here in Tabourie, whether we're surfing or not, just feels like such an incredible gift. It's a natural paradise.

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Crampton Island: Jeff Davis