Rumour Has it Trail
St George

These are stories passed down through generations - stories that linger in whispers, half-forgotten, but always intriguing. Some say they are mere rumours, the kind of tales that are stretched by time and retold with a bit of exaggeration. Others swear they are the truth, strange and unbelievable events that have shaped the land and its people. Whether these tales are rooted in fact or fantasy, one thing is certain - they have a way of capturing the imagination.

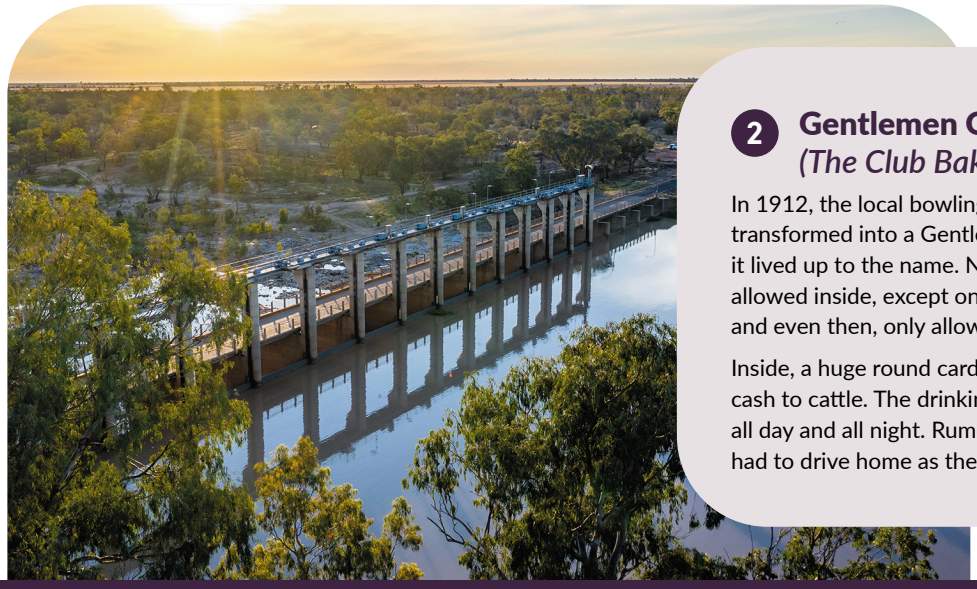
Welcome to the Rumour Has It trail - where the lines between truth and legend blur and a yarn never gets in the way of a good story!

1 Muttagurra the River Guardian *(Balonne River Canoe launch)*

The story of Muttagurra is recited often by local primary school boys. A colossal serpent who slithers through the Balonne River, so vast that he's said to be four cars wide and as long as the entire river. His home lies in a deep, winding hole in the water, a place where the river almost feels like a hidden lake. Muttagurra has lived in these waters for nearly 400 years, a timeless being woven into the fabric of Dreamtime stories, his presence a living legend.

Though he's a protector of the land, Muttagurra has one important rule: he doesn't like when people swim alone. If you wish to swim by yourself, you must throw a rock into the river to wake him from his slumber. The sound of the rock landing stirs him, alerting him that you're entering his domain. But if two or more people swim together, Muttagurra won't harm you, knowing that you're not alone in the river.

It's said that Muttagurra created the rivers himself, slithering through the earth and leaving deep tracks behind him. These tracks allowed the water to rise and form the rivers, shaping the landscape we see today. His movements are a quiet reminder of the land's ancient power, and he watches over the people who respect the country they're on.



2 Gentlemen Only *(The Club Bakehouse)*

In 1912, the local bowling green transformed into a Gentlemen's Club and it lived up to the name. No women were allowed inside, except on special occasions, and even then, only allowed through the back door.

Inside, a huge round card table saw bets on everything from cash to cattle. The drinking was so enthusiastic it could go on all day and all night. Rumour has it the full spirited men then had to drive home as they were too drunk to walk.

Mr Nixon and Ned Kelly

Mr Nixon, one of St George's pioneering settlers, had a resume like no other: blacksmith, station owner, and (allegedly) farrier to bushranger royalty.

Before moving north, he ran a blacksmith shop in Jerilderie - and family records claim he shoed horses for none other than the Kelly Gang. He even described Ned as "a nice fellow to talk to."

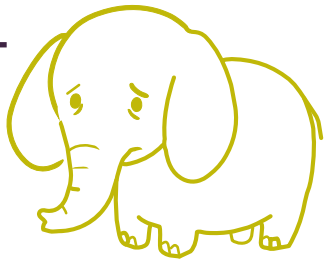
Just two days later, the same gang robbed the local bank. The takeaway? In frontier Australia, watch who you compliment - especially if they've got iron on their boots and a plan in their back pocket.

3 Caught Out
(Amber's Hair Parlor)

Before it was a hair salon, this building was the local National Australia Bank (NAB) and the site of an unforgettable robbery. Armed with a .303 rifle, a local fired a warning shot over the teller's head and made off with £283. What did he do next? Bought booze at the pub next door and drank it down by the river.

The police didn't have far to look. In classic small-town fashion, they headed straight to his house on Henry Street and made the arrest. It is rumoured a local even beat them to it with a citizen's arrest.

Bank staff claimed that, years later in the 1980s, bullet holes were still visible in the wall - a quiet reminder of the day crime met country convenience.



4 Elephant Races and Circus Tragedy
(St George Hotel)

In 1965, the Sole Brothers Circus arrived in town and with it came one of the most bizarre events in St George history: an elephant race.

The race kicked off at the St George Hotel and thundered toward The Australian Hotel, with a local doctor riding to victory. Another rider found himself swimming back to the muddy bank when his elephant had other plans and headed straight into the Balonne River.

Soon after, tragedy struck. The vehicle towing the elephants' caravan rolled near Goondiwindi and caught fire. The three elderly elephants involved in the race were lost in the blaze.

Some say they were too old for the stunts. Others believe it was just a heartbreaking twist of fate. Either way, the elephant race is remembered as both a wild highlight and a sombre footnote.

5 Pub Brawl to Boxing Ring
(Cobb & Co Hotel)

What started as a classic pub argument - a couple of shearers, full of beer and bluster, squared off in a midday brawl at the Cobb & Co Hotel.

Punches flew, locals gathered, and just as the dust settled, a man walked in - a scout from the travelling Bell Boxing Tent. Impressed by the raw talent, he offered them a spot on the boxing circuit.

Rumour has it they took him up on his offer and went from barroom brawlers to bona fide boxing stars. They became local legends in the boxing ring, remembered for their tough fights both in the pub and the ring.

6 The Bandaged Taxi
(Cobb & Co Hotel)

Locals still remember the old black Valiant taxi; not for its smooth ride, but for its scars.

One night, it was shot at with a .303 rifle out the front of the Cobb & Co Hotel (known back then as The Metro). The reason? No one knows. But the bullet holes stayed.

Instead of fixing them, the owner slapped on band-aids and left them there. Passengers climbed in past patched bullet wounds, laughing or quietly wondering about the car's past. It became a sort of quirky badge of honour, with locals joking that the car had lived through more than any of them had.

7 The Flying Tooth
(Qld Health Dental)

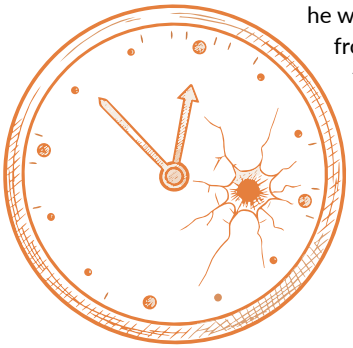
Dr J.C. Barth, a dentist who visited St George from Brisbane, was mid-appointment when a tooth flew out of a patient's mouth and hit him square in the eye.

He cut the trip short and hightailed it back to Brisbane. Rumour has it, he never saw St George again!

8 Shot Clock
(Corner of Grey & Victoria St)

Hickory, dickery dock; a local shot the clock!

One day at the old Royal Pub, a local lad was bragging about his shooting skills. To prove his point, he stepped outside and fired at the town clock. Some say he hit it clean from the pub's doorstep.



Another version says he shot it because he was late getting back to work from his lunch break. Whatever the truth, the clock was never quite the same. It ran slow, fast, or not at all. Locals reckon that's where the phrase "Running on St George time" was born.

9 Thirsty Cocks
(Royal Hotel, corner of State School)

Rumour has it, after a long day of footy, a bunch of thirsty lads would head to the Royal Hotel for a cold one. But if the doors were locked tight, they had a clever trick up their sleeves. They'd sneak off to nearby houses and "borrow" their roosters, the cheeky birds would somehow end up flying down the chimney, straight into the publican's bedroom! Woken by the noisy intruders, he'd have no choice but to open the pub and serve the thirsty fullas.

10 Beer-Loving Horses
(Australian Hotel)

You know the saying: "You can lead a horse to water..."

In these parts of the St George Region, you can apparently lead a horse straight into the pub. Rumour has it, on more than one occasion, local cowboys rode their horses into the pub and right up to the bar, for a beer after a dusty day.

The horses, unfazed, waited patiently as their riders quenched their thirst. Around here, it's not just the cowboys who know where to get a cold one.

11 Supernatural Boat Rescue
(Balonne River Boat Ramp)

On the mighty Balonne there was a comical mishap involving a ski boat named Supernatural and an elusive tree stump on the river's western side. Identifying the culprit stump was as likely as finding a needle in a haystack, given the murky waters. Rumours have it, Supernatural wasn't the only victim, making it a stump vendetta of sorts.

A local bloke valiantly attempted to coax Supernatural home to the waters edge after an unfortunate collision. A week later, armed with a plan concocted over beers, a group of locals set out to rescue the sunken boat. Before they even arrived, a young fellow stumbled upon a floating ski rope giving up Supernatural's secret hiding place deep in the water - luckier than finding a mate at a singles bar.

Among the group was a diver who dusted off his mysteriously shrunken wetsuit from retirement and bravely volunteered for the role.

In the darkness of the river, akin to navigating a haunted house blindfolded, the diver struggled to wrangle an old truck tube into Supernatural's nose cone. After a comedic struggle involving tangled equipment and a brief panic as the boat threatened to capsize, they managed to inflate the tube and buoy Supernatural back to the surface.

With a team effort involving ropes, straps, and a Toyota, they guided the boat to shore, where it stubbornly attempted to return to the scene of the crime. Despite its persistence, with a bit of TLC and therapy, the owner assured them Supernatural will soon be back to her old self, ready to brave the waters once more.

12 Jack Taylor Weir Dares
(Andrew Nixon Bridge)

In the heat of summer, the Jack Taylor Weir became the ultimate playground. Some say a test of courage others say pure stupidity.

Rumour has it local kids would leap from the top into the cool water below, but the real challenge was swimming through the dark tunnels beneath the weir gates. Narrow, eerie, and completely underwater, it was like an invitation for the bravest... or the dumbest.

Those who dared to swim through the tunnels would emerge soaked but triumphant, their laughter echoing in the air as they relished the rush of their adventure. Over the years, as the weir became less of a swimming spot, the stories of those fearless jumps and swims were passed down.

13 The Day Engineering Took a Turn
(Andrew Nixon Bridge)

As a wide-eyed student at St Patricks Primary School, a local girl once asked the graceful Sisters of St Joseph why the bridge was called the Andrew Nixon Bridge.

One of the beautiful nuns answered with complete sincerity.

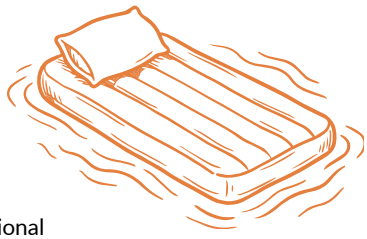
During construction, she explained, the workers discovered they didn't have any spanners large enough to tighten the enormous bolts holding the bridge together.

Thankfully, Andrew Nixon stepped forward! He placed his mouth over each bolt, while the other workers spun his legs around - tightening the bridge one bolt at a time.

And that, the Sister declared, is how the bridge earned its name.

The young girl believed the story entirely. Until the tender age of fifteen, when someone kindly enlightened her to the fact that bridge-building does not, in fact, involve human-powered socket sets.

14 Floating Teachers
(Lower Side of the Bridge)



Rumour has it a group of teachers decided to take a rather unconventional route back to Dirranbandi - by floating down the Balonne River leaving from St George. With some free time on their hands and looking for a break from the usual road trip, they inflated their choice of watercraft and set off.

The journey was slow but peaceful, it was an adventure unlike any other also resulting in sunburn, dehydration and a call out for rescue services.

15 Lining Up the Vines
(Corner of Victoria & Bowen Streets)

Long before GPS' or laser levels, rumours say one St George couple had a more... ballistic method for planting grapes in straight rows. The husband stood at one end of the field with his rifle, aiming down the proposed row. His wife stood at the other, pegging out the line.

It worked like a charm - but caused a few raised eyebrows (and phone calls to check she was okay) from concerned locals driving by.

Washtub Crossings – Mary or Ellen?

Rumour has it the first woman to cross the Balonne River into St George did so in a washing tub. Her name? Mary Cavanough - determined, fearless, and not afraid to let two men tow her across unfamiliar waters in a makeshift boat.

But wait. Another story says it wasn't Mary at all - it was Ellen Meacle, floating across the Moonie River in, you guessed it, a washtub. Two rivers. Two women. Two tubs. One impossible coincidence?

Are these stories of separate frontier heroines, or have decades blurred two tales into one? We may never know for sure, but the debate lives on in local lore.