



A new cross-generational idea.

# Millennials of Binna Burra (MoBBs)



**Inspirational context:**

Like today's millennial generation, Arthur Groom, came into a new century with hope and vision. Born on 11 December 1904, Arthur was one of the founders of Binna Burra Lodge, along with Romeo Lahey (1887–1968).



Romeo Lahey and Arthur Groom

Arthur Groom passed away at the age of 49 years on 14 November 1953. He was a thought-leader for his era – someone who had significant impact on social change to appreciate, protect and present the natural environment. In today's business theory, we would call him a '**disruptive innovator**',<sup>1</sup> challenging existing hotels and coastal resorts to target new 'nature-seeking' markets attracted to the Lamington National Park and able to '**value network**', connecting interactions that represent both tangible (e.g. land in the rainforest) and intangible deliverables (e.g. what has become known as 'the spirit of Binna Burra').

The vision was to offer access to Queensland's national parks for all, irrespective of their social status or wealth.

As a 'twenty-something' of his era, Arthur showed individualism, passion and contentment in being connected to nature. At 18 years of age, he was a jackeroo at

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<sup>1</sup> <http://claytonchristensen.com/>

Lake Nash cattle-station on the Northern Territory border (1922-25). He then went to Brisbane in 1926 to write for the *Sunday Mail*. He won second prize in a *Bulletin* story competition in the late 1920s and in 1930 published his first book, *A Merry Christmas*, in London. The story was set in Brisbane and far western Queensland. From the age of 23, Arthur worked as a salesman (1927-32), first for the Engineering Supply Co. of Australia Ltd in Brisbane and then for Underhill, Day & Co. Ltd, engineers.

At week-ends and on holiday, he headed with pack and camera into the rain forest from O'Reilly's guest-house on the edge of Lamington National Park.<sup>2</sup> At age 26, Arthur was a founder and for four years Honorary Secretary of the National Parks Association of Queensland (commenced in May 1930).



*'Groom was a remarkable walker. About 1930 he walked across country by moonlight from O'Reilly's to Mount Barney, selected a camp-site, talked to landowners and returned, covering seventy miles (113 km), midnight to midnight.'* (Jarrott 1983).<sup>3</sup>

At age 29, he was instrumental in forming Queensland Holiday Resorts Ltd establishing Binna Burra guest-house on the north-east border of Lamington Park. It was a company with a value system and a principles-based approach to doing business – what we now call **'corporate sustainability'**.

It is evident from historical records that in the early decades Binna Burra was a business that supported a precautionary approach to environmental challenges and undertook initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility. Such principles are now enshrined in the **United Nations Global Compact**, the world's largest corporate social responsibility initiative.<sup>4</sup>

The young Arthur Groom and his network of colleagues were probably the first **'crowdfunded'**<sup>5</sup> **tourism enterprise** in Australia. They raised capital through the collective effort of their friends, family and individual investors. They tapped into the pool of like-minded individuals who could see the benefit of nature conservation and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/groom-arthur-6496>

<sup>3</sup> <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/groom-arthur-6496>

<sup>4</sup> See Principles 7 and 8 of the UN Global Compact. <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles>

<sup>5</sup> <https://asic.gov.au/regulatory-resources/financial-services/crowd-sourced-funding/>

enabling people to access the new concept of National Parks in Queensland. Of course, they did not have social media and sophisticated crowdfunding tools, but they knew how to connect with and leverage their networks for greater reach and exposure.

*'Like Arthur Groom, today's millennial generation represent ambitious, and creative young people capable of rethinking the world with their approaches to corporate social responsibility. We have especially seen this emerge since the bushfire on 8 September 2019 which destroyed the heart of the heritage buildings at Binna Burra Lodge'. Steve Noakes, Chair of the Board of Binna Burra Lodge, 2019.*

*He added: 'For his time, Arthur Groom represented Australian hospitality, appreciation of nature, innovation and entrepreneurship. Now as we lay the foundations of the next 86 years of Binna Burra, we would be wise to engage the inputs of the millennial generation to encourage new and bold conversations with people who have the enthusiasm, energy and skills to initiate technological, social and environmental change for the betterment of Binna Burra and the Lamington National Park.'*

### **The future will look different:**

In a survey of shareholders undertaken at the 17 November 2019 Annual General Meeting of Binna Burra Lodge, 66 shareholders complete the questionnaire. This is considered a reasonable sample of shareholder views. Of the 66 who responded, 86% were over the age of 50, 74% over the age of 60 and 50% over the age of 70.

8% were less than 50 years old (6% did not indicate an age).

So, it is likely that more than half of the shareholders who responded to the survey will not be with us in just 20 years time. They may pass their shares onto younger generations of their family. Is it time for a new share issue to the families of current shareholders and others to bring in younger generations as new capital is sourced to rebuild that which was lost in the September 2019 bushfire at Binna Burra?

Such issues raise the question of what type of 'new Binna Burra Lodge' is developed to make it a viable business venture for new generations who can continue on with the 'spirit of Binna Burra'.

*'One of the largest generations in history is about to move into its prime spending years. Millennials are poised to reshape the economy; their unique experiences will change the ways we buy and sell, forcing companies to examine how they do business for decades to come' (Goldman Sachs).*

<https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/archive/millennials/>

**The idea of MoBBs** is to provide a forum (mostly online) for younger generations connected to, or passionate about the spirit of Binna Burra to provide input to shape the new Binna Burra. To rethink the way we have done, or still do ‘stuff’ and help to solve tomorrow’s challenges and problem today.

They will be ‘millennials’ with a social and environmental conscience. They’ll be informed about the **UN Global Compact**, noting that Binna Burra Lodge became (pre fire in 2019) the first hotel/resort/ecolodge in Australia to be accepted into the world’s largest corporate social responsibility initiative.

**How MoBBs will work.**

1. Initially, MoBBs will be directed by Steve Noakes, Chairperson of Binna Burra Lodge
2. It will mostly be an online forum of volunteers (e.g. a closed Facebook page, Whatsap or whatever)
3. Once it is set up, an appropriate ‘millennials’ will be asked to take leadership/coordination positions
4. At this stage, we need to continue to identify suitable millennials to invite into the group – and/or have interested millennials send their expression of interest to be in the MoBBs network.
5. Discussion is being held with Griffith University to see how MoBBs could be integrated into the new MOU between Griffith University and Binna Burra Lodge – e.g. Griffith Uni might host/support the launch MoBBs, we could look at collaborations with the Griffith Business School in areas of innovation, entrepreneurship, environmental management, sustainable tourism etc.

**For anyone interested Millennials, please send an email & CV to:**

[steve@binnaaburrallodge.com.au](mailto:steve@binnaaburrallodge.com.au)



### Innovation – 1930's style!



*'After the 1933 Christmas camp and before Easter 1934, the flying fox was built. It was the first and most important major infrastructure of the fledgling Binna Burra. The vital link between the outside world and the untamed mountain top. This simple one horse power windlass reduced to a manageable level the almost overwhelming task of conveying freight and luggage up the steep western side of Mt Roberts.'*

Richard Groom, 21 November 2019

#### Rescued!

The Flying Fox 'Whim' was installed at Binna Burra in 1934.

Prior to the road being constructed to the Lodge, guests luggage was brought up from 'the dump' (near the present day QPWS Visitor Information Centre) via horse-powered flying fox.



Retrieving the wheel on Thursday 21 November 2019