



Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

Cnr Myokum & Stuart Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482

OPEN: FRIDAY 10 AM – 12 PM

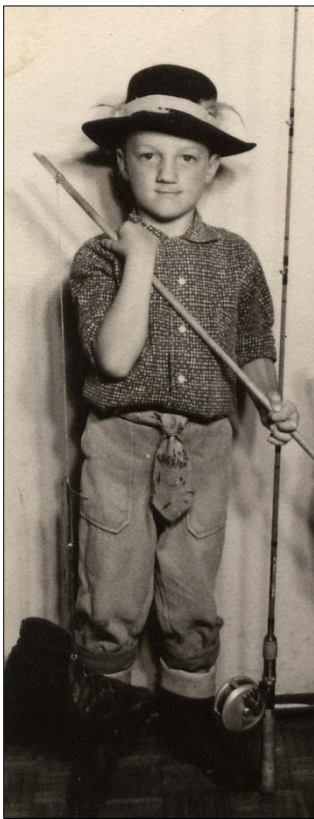
MARKET DAY (3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH) 9 AM-1 PM

NEWSLETTER

November 2016

Volunteer Profile

STEPHEN HALL



Like a lot of collectors I started small. Toys marbles, stamps, match boxes, pennies etc. As I got older an overwhelming desire for records, books, art, bric-a-brac, exotica.

After leaving home in Melbourne I lived for a decade and a crumbling Victorian mansion that was eventually bought by the national trust. There I developed a love for the rare and unique, the broken and obsolete. I'm now involved in the social history of that building, its inhabitants and the ongoing restoration.

Before moving here I worked for a decade at the regional gallery in Townsville as well as Umbrella Studio which is an artist run space. There, I partially satisfied by lust for collecting art. My greatest pleasure there was opening touring crates and seeing and unpacking each new exhibition. Just like Christmas.

I hoped that when I settled here 15 years ago that I would connect and propagate exotic plants and flowers but was handicapped by drought, tics, and impatience.

I've now been a volunteer at the museum for over 10 years and have tried numerous tasks with varied success. Objects, people and their stories are almost always interesting and colourful.

The Museum has saved me, giving me freedom to look, touch, be familiar with, without having to own or possess.

Storage and display becomes imperative for any true collector. There is a fine line between collecting and hoarding. Pleasure and pain in space restrictions can be overwhelming. I've carted questionable stuff from one end of this country to the other.

Now in the computer age where so much is available online I can rationalize my own remaining collection and although this is only the shadow of the real object, it allows me to pay some bills and sometimes acquire new art materials.

I continue to be pursued by a passion for making art, and although reasonably prolific in production the paintings have become considerably smaller in size.

Watching the antique roadshow on TV, I was brought to a sobering revelation one afternoon. Someone had bought in a felt hat worn by Michael Jackson during his "I'm Bad" tour to Britain. Thousands of hours and numerous solo and group shows added up to only a fraction of what that old felt hat was valued at.

Not one to shy away from pretentiousness, I would like to finish with something enigmatic from Marcel Proust. *'Even when one is no longer attached to things it is still something to have been attached to them, because it was always for reasons which other people didn't grasp.'*

The Elusive George Simpson and the Mystery of the Brunswick River Pilotage

Folklore has it that 63yr old **George Simpson** established a Pilot Station / Signaller's Post / Flagstaff /.... on the North Head of the Brunswick in 1872. If so, he was probably in the employ of a consortium of ship owners and/or timber-merchants who were tired of losing ships and timber to the hazard of the north rocks and south spit. His salary package probably included a shack, flags, boat and a duty statement that involved taking regular depth soundings at the entrance and hoisting appropriate flags to signal 'stand-off' or 'safe to cross'. He likely continued with a day job, probably as a timber or shipping agent.

Pukka pilot stations were established on the Richmond and Tweed by the Harbours and Rivers branch of the Marine Board of NSW in 1855 and 1870 respectively, presumably after the board was pressured to reduce the carnage on the dangerous river bars. Captain George Easton was appointed to the Richmond (on a salary of £125pa) and Captain William McGregor to the Tweed, both accompanied by a four-man boat crew. Folklore has it that George Simpson was also an ex-ship's captain.

Presumably government bureaucracy deemed the Brunswick wreckage rate acceptable, at least until 1Sep1880 when the Telegraph Office of the Newcastle branch of the Marine Board created a new position of '*Signal-man, Brunswick River*' and appointed **George Simpson** to the job on a salary of £52pa, perhaps simply transitioning his existing duties from the private to the public purse. That he was already a significant figure on the Brunswick is implied by the Northern Star, which referred to the Bruns settlement as '*Simpson Town on the Brunswick River*' and '*Simpson's Town at the Brunswick Heads*' in the late 1870s. (In 1871 George was one of only four residents of the Brunswick enrolled in the Electorate of Clarence.)

Nevertheless, using the implication of relative salaries as a guide, the Brunswick was still deemed an insignificant port and the insurance of its exports not worth the expenditure of a full pilot service. At the time of George's appointment in 1880 Captains Easton and McGregor were drawing a salary of £175pa and employing six and five boatmen respectively, each on a salary of £108pa and each entitled to 'quarters'.

According to Alexander Ross of the Clarence, George may have been here since 1857, probably in the timber business. Ross visited the Brunswick in 1877 with a *letter of introduction to Mr Simpson*, and *steered towards a few cottages on a height* (presumably the North Head). *There we found the old Scot... alone here these last 20 years..., as his wife, family and all were lost coming out in an English ship. But though now very old he is going home to inherit considerable property..., but never made it.*

Surveyor Thomas Ewing's 1882 map of the proposed 'Village of Brunswick' has an annotation "*Simpson*" at the end of Mullumbimbi Street, about where the traffic bridge to Torakina now spans. Perhaps this was the location of George's living quarters, from where he rowed to work on the north head as required. The map also delineates the 'Pilot Station Reserve' on the north head, with the annotation "*Signal*" (presumably the flagstaff) near the 'Halftide Rocks', just north of which is "*Pilot House*" and the mysterious "*Old*" just west.

In May1884 **John Patrick O'Meally** was posted in from Casino to become '*Telegraph Station-Master*', taking up residence in George's 'Pilot House'. But George got his privacy back in early 1885, the *Sydney Mail* advising that *the post and telegraph office... is to be shifted this week from a ramshackle old building, which also acts as the pilot station, to a new one on the opposite or south side of the river... on the corner of Mullumbimbi Street and The Terrace, built by John Lund* and probably leased from him.

George died in 1887, aged 78, and left his entire estate of £317/10/- to his namesake nephew in Carnoustie, County Forfar, Scotland. A debt owed to George by one of his executors, cedar merchant and pub owner **Henry Stone**, made up almost one third of this amount, while his other executor, **Robert Crabbe** of Crabbes Creek, owed the estate £2/10/-. Stone's debt perhaps implies George continued his day job, maybe as Stone's partner in the timber business, an activity that may have drawn him here in 1857 after giving up seafaring? His replacement, Captain **John Greenlees**, was appointed with an unchanged salary of £52pa on 1Jul1887, at which time Captain McGregor of the Tweed was drawing £195pa and his 5 boatmen £118pa each.

On 11Jan1888 **John Macgregor**, the 'Brunswick Correspondent' for the Northern Star, said *There should be another attempt to have a pilot appointed at Brunswick Heads.... Other rivers of no greater importance have their Pilot and crew.... We have a Signal Master, but he can do no more than stand on the Heads and wave to the vessel, there not being even a boat provided for him. Several petitions have gone....* On 24Mar1888 Macgregor recorded the AGM of the *Brunswick Progress Association, held at Mr Webber's Hotel* (ex-Stone).... *It was resolved to again jog the memory of the Minister for Works and the state of the Bar, the appointment of a Pilot, a boat and crew...,* at which time the Brunswick's tide was on the wane.

And a comedian who wouldn't have supported the appointment was a visiting journalist with the *Illustrated Sydney News* in March 1890, who reckoned *there is only one regular trading vessel that attempts the passage, and that is the 'White Cloud.'* *The pilot, then, has an uncommonly easy time of it, and has plenty of time for self-improvement....*

Signalman **Greenlees** won new digs after tenders were called for *erection of cottage and flagstaff at the Signal Station* in Sep1891. But he wasn't replaced upon retirement in Oct1893 and his 4-room mansion on the North Head seems to have been abandoned to squatters until leased in 1901, probably by Mrs **Farrugia**, thence acquired by W.J. **Reilly** for rebirthing in Mullum in 1909.

George is a significant figure in the early history of the Brunswick and it would be nice to flesh-out his story. Does anybody have a clue where to start?

With thanks to Peter Tsicalas

Tall Tale or True?

Overgrown Vegetables

Outsize vegetables were always worth a mention in a country newspaper and in 1915, there came a spate of such things to Editor George Cameron of the 'Mullumbimby Star'.

There were outsize turnips, spuds, corn cobs, carrots and cabbages, but top of the list, believe it or not, was the story that came from the outer fringe of the Main Arm belt.



It told of an overgrown pumpkin said to have fed a family of six, two cows and a pig for a whole month before the inside had all been scraped out through the hole in the top.

After that, filled with water from the creek, the shell provided Saturday baths for the whole family. But although they were all genuine animal lovers, they steadfastly refused to allow the two cows and the pig in with them.

Anyhow, that's how Editor Cameron told the story.

Ground Giants: Brunswick Wholesale Plants owner John Mills with his Atlantic giant pumpkins which weigh up to 570kg.

Photo and caption from newsmail.com.au

Speeches and Toasts for all Occasions by J.P. Munro, B.A.

From *A Collection of Clever Sayings*

Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way.

All men are homeless, but some are home less than others.

Any woman can keep a secret if she is given enough chloroform.

Don't give up! It's usually the last key in the bunch that opens the lock.

When money talks it usually says "Goodbye!"

Look before you lip.

Next Market: Saturday 19 November 2016. Museum open 9-1.

Member submissions to the Newsletter warmly accepted

VALE

Neta McKinnon & Nicholson Hollingworth

Two stalwart members whose valuable contributions to the Society will live on.

Although Neta had not been a member for the last few years her research and contribution in identifying old photographs was appreciated. Neta's 2 books, *What They Did, Families of the Brunswick 1880-1950* and *Fetch the Nurse, Call the Doctor, Quick* are still in print and much enjoyed. Neta died 20th April, aged 97.

Nick, a tireless current member, encouraged many locals to join the Society. He had also spent many hours perusing *the Mullumbimby Star* for articles concerning the Mullumbimby Municipal Council as well as collecting interesting articles for the newsletters. He compiled, *The Mullumbimby Sawmill*, about his family's involvement with the mill. He particularly enjoyed tracing his family history and compiled an amazing extensive 64GB family tree. Nick died 24th October, aged 92.

Our condolences to the families of Neta and Nick. Members of BVHS will continue to value their amazing contributions.



Southern Cross Credit Union

Celebrating 50 years of service
Tuesday 8th November 2016
5.30pm



A chronological expose with references from *The Mullumbimby Star*

6Sep72: *To keep pace with continuing growth in the Brunswick area, Tweed BGF Credit Union will open an office in Mullum's BGF building next to the Commonwealth bank.... Although the credit union was originally formed to assist banana growers, membership was open to all shareholders of the BGF.*

4Jul73: *The Tweed BGF Members Credit Union, serving the Tweed and Brunswick area, will open a Mullumbimby office at 10am tomorrow... at 59 Burringbar St. Manager Noel Robinson... previous only a receiving office.*

31Oct73: *BGF Credit Union at 59 Burringbar, next to the TAB*

13Nov74: *Tweed BGF Members' Credit Union Dinner Dance at the Mullum Ex-servicemen's club wed 27Nov74 with Entertainer Miss Hazel Phillips and the Chincogan band...*

19Nov75: *BGF Credit Union to sever connection with BGF and merge with Lismore Community Credit Union to become Tweed-Byron Credit Union said Chairman of Directors Ted Navin. Membership has grown to 3450 and assets of \$2.42 mill. Lismore has 1400 members and \$600,000 assets. He said runaway costs of recent times had made it advisable to pool resources to reduce overheads...*

11Aug76: *The Byron Shire President, Cr Bob Mules, has become the 1000th Brunswick Valley member of Tweed-Byron Credit Union. The credit union this month also celebrates the 10th anniversary of its formation and the third anniversary of the opening of the Mullumbimby branch. Tweed-Byron Credit Union is now the largest of its type outside the major city areas of NSW.... The credit union has experienced its most rapid growth during the past two months with a growth rate in assets equivalent to 60 per cent a year.... The gross turnover of funds within the Brunswick Valley is now more than \$2 million a year.*

3Aug77: *Tweed-Byron Credit Union expands to occupy whole building, manager Geoff Whalan.*

30May79: *The appointment of Mr Ross Edmonds as the Mullumbimby branch manager of the Tweed-Byron Credit Union has been announced..... More than 20yrs experience finance industry. GM said the Credit Union had completed 1978-79 financial year with an operating profit of \$118,000 and a 43 per cent growth rate in deposits. Total loans advanced for the year were \$4.25 million, an increase of 23 per cent from the previous year.*

16Apr80: *Loans advanced by Tweed-Byron Credit Union during the 1979-1980 financial year totalled a record of almost \$6 million. .. an increase of 40% on last year.*

7May80: *Tweed-Byron Credit Union 59 Burringbar (next Hang It, Pot it at 55, i.e. current bakery)*

16Jul80: *14th annual report of the Tweed-Byron Credit Union boasted assets of \$10 mill. Loans for 1979-80 exceeded \$5 million for the first time. The report revealed an operating profit of \$50,179, compared with \$97,101 for the previous 12 months,, attributed to the slump in motor vehicle sales in 1979. . Entered housing loan market in Sep79 and \$1.75 mil loaned in first 6mths. .. membership of 8742.*

17Jun81: *The largest geographic credit union in NSW based outside the Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong area, the Tweed-Byron Credit Union, has reported an operating profit of almost \$61,000 for the financial year ending March 31. The credit union now employs a total of 32 people, and has assets of \$13 million said general manager, Mr G.D. Whalan. He said that the \$6 million in loans advanced this year was a record for the organisation.*

10Feb82: *Tweed-Byron Credit union offering rates of 14.5% for \$5000 or more for 3-12mths.*

25May83: *The Tweed-Byron Credit Union, which operated five branches between Casino and Tweed Heads, had recorded another highly successful year the Mullumbimby branch manager, Mr Greg Foster said. Now serves 10,000 members with combined savings and investments of more than \$22 million. During 1982/83 the credit union loaned more than \$9 million, of which almost \$7 million was for real estate and motor vehicles... Mr Foster said that despite the generally depressed economic climate, the credit union had managed to achieve a growth rate of more than 30 per cent during the year. Mr Foster said that more than 2900 people had opened new accounts during the year, an all-time record.*

30Nov88: *The Mullumbimby branch of the Tweed-Byron Credit Union has moved across the road into more spacious premises at 56 Burringbar Street (formerly Barry Hammond's hair Salon). Chris Flower's firm, Mullumbimby Joinery, has fitted out the new premises. Tweed-Byron has been operating in Mullumbimby for 15 years, starting out as an agency behind Bedford and Vardy Real Estate before expanding to take over the whole premises.... Branch manager Greg Foster.*

1997 Tweed-Byron Credit Union changed its name to Southern Cross Credit Union.



New exhibition – Summer Coolies

A big Thank you
to Joanne at
Taylor's Props for
loan of some
swimwear and the
umbrella

Brunswick River Hypotheses

Further to last newsletter's speculation that 'Pine River' could be a credible alias for the Brunswick River is this mysteriously isolated statement on the 4th page of Part 1 of surveyor Robert Dixon's 1840 Field Books: "(There lay?) a Pine Tree on the beach 126 feet long near the Brunswick", implying prominent pine growth as a local feature and hence a convenient label for the river? Dixon and his band are credited with being the first Europeans to enjoy a prolonged holiday on the Brunswick, courtesy of their boat becoming the first victim of the north rocks.

Masochists with extraordinary eyesight can attempt to make sense of it all at <http://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/Search/ItemDetails.aspx?ItemId=291088> .

Alternatively, you can try decoding the blurry BVHS copy of Dixon's five page report of his escapade to the Surveyor-General. But you can make life easier for yourself by reading N.C. Keats summary of the expedition in his 1988 book *Wollumbin*, or Ms Doris Gray-Woods' abbreviated account of the adventure in her 2009 book *With Compass, Chain and Courage*, both also available at BVHS. She did the hard yards because *this survey was such an important one that an attempt has been made to decipher the relevant pages of the journal...*

Conversely, no newspaper deemed the survey important enough to report, nor did Dixon rate a mention in Louise Daley's seminal work (and hagiography of Captain Rous) *Men and a River; Richmond River District 1828-1895*, first published 1966 and likewise accessible on the BVHS book shelf.

Nevertheless, Dixon's two Field Books are the earliest references, so far sighted, of the existence of a 'Brunswick River'. In this regard, anyone who can spare the time to trawl through the Mitchell Library and/or NSW Records Office at Kingswood to discover how and when the Brunswick got its name will score an extra biscuit at the next working bee. And for further light reading and a bonus biscuit, there's a photocopy of the *Log of HMS Rainbow* in Henry Rous's handwriting at the UNE library at Armidale. (Not to forget various Dixon documents in the Queensland State Library.)

[Dixon's 1842 map has the annotation *'Brunswick River, only suitable for boats'*, while his report states that its *principle stream rises under Mount Warning*, implying he didn't explore upriver from his camp on the North Head to verify his headwaters guess. Cudgen, Cudgera and Mooball Creeks aren't named, although Sutherland Point (Kingscliff), Norries Head (Cabarita) and Hastings Point are annotated, while the two Wollumbingill Rocks at Pottsville are simply noted as '3 rocks' (and the two mysteriously named Julian Rocks as 'rocks'.)]

--oOo--

Anna Korsgaard, an archaeologist and cultural heritage researcher is presenting a free lecture at the Lismore City Library on Thursday 24th November at 6.30pm. See the following flyer for all the information.

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

This newsletter is written by
and for the members of the
BVHS Inc

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**All members are invited
to contribute to this
newsletter**

*Please leave material with Sarah
or Liz

Tues Wed Thur 10 am - 2 pm.

Or email to:

bvhs@tridentcommunications.com.au

NEXT MEETING

**Thursday 1st
December 2016 at
2.00pm**

See you there!

*Deadline for agenda items
Wednesday 30th Nov 2016

MUSEUM HOURS

**Friday 10am - 12pm
Market Saturday 9am - 1pm**

BVHS Newsletter is produced
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Participants and BVHS Inc.



