



## NEWSLETTER

June 2017

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

# MUSEUM

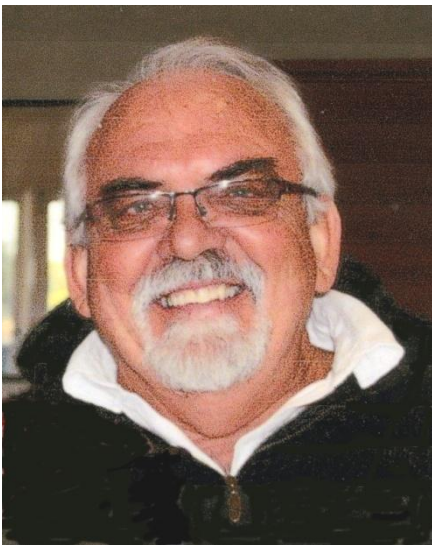
Cnr Myokum & Stuart Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482

OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM

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

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE

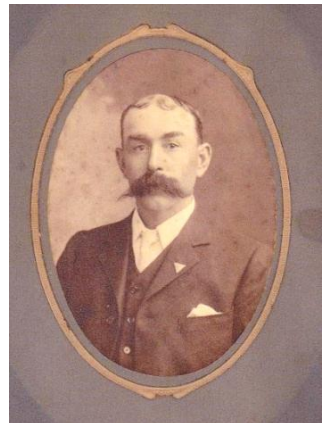
### Gordon Wright



I was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1942 at Hastings Hospital in Victoria where my father, who had a Naval career from 1923 to 1955, was a Warrant Officer Sick Bay for most of his career.

While he was shipped off to various conflicts my mother and I were moved back to Sydney to live with my Grandparents and Great Grandparents in a boatshed they owned at the Spit in Middle Harbour.

I had a lot of contact with my Great Grandfather, Chris Webb, who instilled in me the love of sailing. Chris lived from 1866 to 1948 and was the world open skiff champion for 21 years still sailing in his mid 70s.



My Great Grandfather  
Chris Webb

My love of being on the sea has not abated and recently the Sydney Flying Squadron offered me the chance to sail in a modern skiff. The experience was great, even with the aching muscles to follow.

My schooling to the Leaving Certificate was in Sydney until 1958 and then 3 years Uni at my father's insistence. After 3 jobs associated with the rag trade I decided to become more adventurous and entered the pharmaceutical industry as a lowly salesman.

After 22 years I left as Marketing Director for Australia and Pacific Region, for my sea change on the North Coast over Christmas 1982.

I was farming papaws, avocados and mangos and had a tractor doing broadacre farm maintenance. A tractor accident in 1984 put paid to that activity so I decided to open a Market Stall selling my produce. The Brunswick Market Manager became ill so I suddenly found my niche as a Market Manager, which led to my taking over the Mullum Market from Jenny and Gerard.

As my association with the Museum has been over 15 years I have happily filled a variety of roles, which have fortunately put me in contact with a wide number of community groups. Apart from managing the market my best experience is interacting with the various school groups, explaining the early history of the area and the machinery associated with early farming - I am old enough to know these things - and they show interest in the question and answer sessions. I also enjoy the vibrancy of the museum volunteers and the change it has brought about in the overall positivity and commitment.

And so to today, as a happy Retiree doing the things that please me.

## PLAYING HAPPY FAMILIES

On 5Mar1888 store keeper **Frederick Dougan Nixon** of Brunswick Heads forwarded 'A Petition Against the Appointment of Mr **H. French** as a JP' to The Hon The Minister for Justice, backed with the signatures of 18 like-minded souls.

His covering letter said *Sir, I wish to bring under your notice the glaringly unsuitability of a newly appointed Justice of Peace (viz) Mr **Henry French** of Brunswick River.*

*On the 3rd of this month I heard a disturbance and walked from my cottage to the verandah of the Post Office to see what it was.... I saw Mr French and said to him in a jovial manner 'I expect this will be a case before you', to which he angrily replied 'I'll make you pay for this', meaning my remark.... **Constable Andrews** led one of the yobbos towards the lock up... and French told Andrews to call on me to help carry him, which he did in the Queen's name... in the most peremptory manner...*

*I told Constable Andrews I would report him for singling me out in such a marked way, when there were several others far closer to him and that he had no occasion to call for any assistance, as the drunk man was a poor little harmless fellow and went without any trouble....*

*This incident has caused a good deal of talk amongst the settlers here for Mr French is unpopular and showing vindictiveness so glaringly in this instance what might he not do, should he have it in his power on the bench....*

The petition itself stated that **Mr French** has been in business as a Store Keeper &c for years on this River, which instead of gaining him esteem has made him universally unpopular.

*He is known to be a man who would and has used his power to satisfy his prejudices....*

*He has had various cases in Court, most of which he has lost; one in particular, Viz **A. Lucas v. H. French** "disputed timber".... French lost the case for the full amount of costs and had his name roughly handled by the lawyers, proving him to be a man, to say the least of it, of poor judgement capabilities.*

*We therefore humbly pray that this gentleman may be struck off the JPship..., as we would sooner wait for the fortnightly trips of our PM from the Tweed than have recourse to the above named gentleman....*

Signed: **Hector McInnes, Alfred Lucas, James Neish, Edward Dwan, Robert Healy, William Duke, George Sydney Tiernan, Adam J. Hanna, S.G. Woodrow, Samuel Hanna, Edward Grindley, J.B. Restall, Thomas Torrens, John Torrens, D. Haines, Fred D. Nixon, Richard Webber, Henry Burke, John McCulloch.**

The Minister for Justice dumped it all in the lap of the Colonial Secretary with reference to previous papers re this matter on 7May1888. On 29May1888 Col Sec decreed that Mr Henry French be asked for an explanation. At this time a school house had just been erected by Delaney Haines next to his store, the District Inspector recording that the population of the Brunswick township cannot be more than 25; that of the school district about 40. There are about 16 children of all ages in the locality.

**Henry French** responded on 9Jun1888. *Sir..., I beg to deny having made use of the words complained of by **F.D. Nixon**..., who, with four other young men, was standing on the Post Office verandah and his conduct was more likely to make further disturbance than quell it, so I requested the Constable to call him to assist in taking the man, but Mr Nixon refused to assist till he was almost forced to do so....*

*Referring to the Petition, considering that there is a population of 350 on the river and that the petition was taken round for a fortnight with the result that only nineteen (19) names could be obtained, I fail to see how it is the wish of the settlers that my name should be struck off the list.*

*I am of opinion that several of the names have been obtained by false representations, as I have been reliably informed... that the petition was to endeavour to get Mullumbimby Creek (one of the tributaries of this river and Woodrow's fiefdom) snagged, and it is quite possible that others have also been mislead in the same manner.*

*I would also bring under your notice that Messrs **McInnes, Neish, Dwan, O'Leary, Duke, Tiernan, Hanna, Woodrow, Hanna, Grindley, Burke, McCulloch** and **Torrens**, are all single and young and it is therefore needless for me to point out to you the influence aged acute men would have over the youth of the District who have signed the petition.*

***Alfred Lucas**... has now left the district.*

***James Neish, Edward Dwan, and Robert O'Leary** were employees of Lucas, and Dwan has left the District, in fact he was only on the river for three months.*

***Mr Duke** is a recent arrival and is a labouring man.*

***A.J. Hanna** is of opinion no Store Keeper should be a JP.*

***S.G. Woodrow** is a carpenter and was an unsuccessful tenderer for the erection of a Store and Dwelling House which I am having erected, and he has expressed himself in very strong terms against me since he did not receive the*

contract....

**Edward Grindley** is rather eccentric.

**John Brook Restall** is bitter against me as I was obliged to sue him for a two years debt. He is a married man but living away from his wife.

**Thomas Torrens** is bitter against me as I had also to sue him for a long standing debt.

**D. Hains** is an opposition Store Keeper and can have no just reason for signing....

**Richard Webber** is an Hotel Keeper, married but living with another woman who is also a married person.

**Henry Burke** an employee of Webber states he was under the influence of drink when he signed and that he has nothing whatever against me.

**John McCulloch** an employee of Webber and is at present out on bail on a charge of felony.

**John Torrens** is a mere youth and states he did not sign the petition, neither did he authorize anyone to sign for him, is a son of widower **Thomas Torrens**....

Attached to Henry's letter was a deposition by **Constable Andrews** in police talk. *The Constable beckoned to some men who were standing on the Post Office verandah to come to his assistance, but none of them appeared to take any notice, but were laughing, and having (as the Constable thought) considerable fun, he then beckoned to Mr French who was still further off, who came to the Constable's assistance and offered to remain with the prisoner whilst the Constable went for assistance, at the same time saying "Call on Nixon, he is making a deal of fun of it".... But Nixon requested the Constable to call on some one more fitted for the work, this the Constable did not do, but requested Mr Nixon in the Queen's name to assist him, which he very reluctantly did.... On the 5th March last Mr Nixon reported Constable Andrews conduct to the Inspector of Police, Grafton. The little man alluded to in Mr Nixon's letter is quite capable of holding his own against all but a very few men on the Brunswick River.*

**Mr Nixon** has recently been carrying on a small butchering business on the Brunswick River, but at one time held a Publican's Licence on the Tweed, but on account of his being unable to conduct his house properly, his licence was cancelled, and the Constable has been informed by the Murwillumbah Police, that he otherwise gave them considerable trouble....

**Alfred Lucas** is a married man, and... has on several occasions been convicted of Petty Offences, both at Brunswick and at Tweed River....

**Robert O'Leary** is a single man and has only been resident on Brunswick a short time, and has several times been convicted of Petty Offences.....

**Richard Webber.** A married man, Hotel Keeper, employs a woman as housekeeper, supposed to be in partnership with Nixon.

**Henry Burke** a single man of intemperate habits, an employee of Webber.

**John McCulloch** a single man of intemperate habits now under 'Committed for Trial' at Quarter Sessions Lismore. On Bail charged with malicious destruction of property in the night and is also an employee of Webbers....

The Colonial Secretary noted that *Mr French's explanation appears satisfactory. He may be so informed.* And there the matter ended at the Sydney end.

The Northern Star reported on 26May1888 that **Alfred Lucas** was charged with having, on or about the 10th April last, stolen certain goods and chattels, the property of **Adam John Hanna**..., who stated the accused had been living in his house.... Mrs Lucas (wife of accused) stated the articles were her property, that some of them were given to her by Hanna. **Edward Dwan** also identified one of the articles.... The accused was sentenced to one month's hard labour in Casino gaol.

**H. French**, JP, here took a seat on the Bench.

The next case involved Police v. **Rachel Webber** - Serving Blacks with drink....

**John McCulloch** was then charged with having, on the night of the 25th March last, maliciously cast adrift and destroyed a punt, the property of **Robert Marshall**....

The Government Gazette of 24Aug1888 reported that bankrupt **Alfred Frederick Lucas** of Brunswick River, timber-getter.... was to hold a meeting of creditors 19Sep1888.... (He also was involved in a convoluted case featuring a few of the above names in June 1891: John **Lund**, ex-Brunswick storekeeper, purchased 'Lucas's Big Tree' on the Main Arm from James **Neish** via Richard **Webber**, and alleged Henry **French's** aboriginal employee **Chillong Barlow** worked the thing in his absence....)

Constable **William Caleb Andrews** became the Brunswick's first resident policeman as a result of the lobbying by **John Lund**, turning up with his family in May1886. He was promoted to Senior Constable and transferred to Byron Bay in

Jan1892, but demoted and given a disciplinary posting to Lawrence in Jul1893 after getting on the wrong side of **Garvin MLA** of Possum Shoot, although subsequently given a clean bill of health after suing Garvin for libel.

*He was a very popular officer, and much regret is expressed at his removal...,* said the Byronians in extending a fond farewell. He scored the Imperial Service Medal upon retirement at Grafton in 1916 after 37yrs service, and upon his death in 1926, aged 70, it was said that *He located the largest whisky still ever found in NSW during the building of the Tweed-Byron Bay railway, and several wagon loads of whisky and beer....*

Colonial-born **Henry French** was pioneer royalty. He was appointed a JP in Sep1887, completed his two-storey store and residence in early 1888, and then declared bankrupt Jul1893 after losing a court case to ship owner and timber merchant, **Alexander Kethel** MLA. In Sep 1895 he settled in Mullum, where he died Nov1913, aged 76, the eulogist saying *he was of an upright nature – physically and mentally - and was held in great respect by all classes in town....*

**Frederick Dougan Nixon** was born 1848 *Florence, Italy, 3rd son of George Russell Nixon MA, Trinity College, Cambridge, and nephew of the late Bishop Nixon, first Anglican Bishop of Tasmania...,* and the brother-in-law of Joshua Bray, 'King of the Tweed'. He was the first pub owner at Tumbulgum and came to the Brunswick to acquire or lease **John Lund**'s butchery in late 1884. In late 1889 he superseded **Richard Webber** as licensee of the Court House Hotel, handing over to **A. Clarke** in late 1893 but apparently remaining in the district until returning to Queensland in late 1898. He came back to NSW a few years later to become lessee of most of Tallow Beach and Suffolk Park. He died Jul1921, aged 73, his Northern Star eulogist stating that *he came to the Tweed River 45 years ago, where his liberality and fair dealing earned for him the respect he deserved,* the second bit left out of the same wording published in the Tweed Daily.

Forty four year old Fred suffered a further blow to his social standing in 1892 when he won 40yr old **Hugh Campbell** as a son-in-law. The unsavoury Hugh, brother of the illustrious Robert of Bangalow, married 17/18yr old Anna Nixon and 3yrs later whisked her off to Perth, where the citizens were entertained by titillating divorce proceedings in 1901. In the meantime Fred's 16/17yr old daughter Florence fell pregnant to a cad and a bounder, who turned out to be the 23yr old school teacher **Charles Bennett**. By then Peyton Place was on the skids, the school closing 2yrs later due to *the removal of families from the Brunswick.*

**Richard Webber** was found to be of 'unsound mind' in 1896 and remanded to Gladesville Mental Asylum, where he died in 1924 aged 65. His defacto **Rachael Radford** married John Lund and died at Byangum in 1919 aged 60. **John Lund** had landed in Sydney from Denmark via Nevada, USA, in 1871 and 6yrs later came to the Brunswick as a timber merchant. By the late 1890s he was a successful farmer at Byangum, earning the sobriquet *the cane king of the South Arm of the Tweed*. He sold up in 1920 and bought a farm at Mount Mort near Ipswich, where he died 1937 aged 85.

French, Woodrow and Torrens can be counted amongst the candidates qualifying for the short list as founding fathers of Mullumbimby. The faction led by Woodrow and his neighbour Hugh Campbell, gained the early ascendancy over the group backed by French and Torrens (and led by John Macgregor, the Brunswick Correspondent for the Northern Star, who often reported ructions in the fabric of community harmony, and at times was fingered as the instigator of such entertaining rabble rousing.).

Submitted by Peter Tsicalas

## Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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Patrons: Frank Mills OAM  
Basil Cameron

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Cor. Secretary: Susan Tsicalas

Treasurer: Susan Tsicalas

Assistant Treasurer:

Sarah Newsome

Committee Members:

Sadie Mudge

Jennifer Elward

Roland Sjoberg

Market Managers:

Sarah Newsome

Newsletter team:

John Davis & Work

Experience Participants

Public Officer: Susan Tsicalas

## All members are invited to contribute to this newsletter

\*Please leave material with Sarah or Liz

Wed Thur 10 am - 2 pm.

Or email to:

bvhs@tridentcommunications.com.au

## NEXT MEETING

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**2.00pm**

**See you there!**

\*Deadline for agenda items

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

## MUSEUM HOURS

**Tuesdays & Fridays**

**10am - 12pm**

**Market Saturdays 9am - 1pm**

BVHS Newsletter is produced by NORTEC Work Experience Participants and BVHS Inc.





## UNTIMELY ARRIVALS

From Neta MacKinnon's book 'Fetch the Nurse, and Call the Doctor, Quick', *the Story of Medical and Health Services in the Brunswick Valley 1900-1994*, comes the following article, describing the difficulties arising from the flooding of tributaries of the Brunswick River and the dedication of local medical staff.

*There are many stories of the arrival of babies in the bush, at times and in places where there was little or no help for either mother or baby. Mrs Bertha Reilly, one of the legendary pioneering women of the Brunswick, had most of her children – she had 13- with only her other children and maybe an aboriginal woman to help, in the scrub at Main Arm in the early days of settlement.*

*For those able to do it, a trip to Sydney by steamer for the birth of a child provided some comfort, but not everyone was able to do this. For many women living in the remotest part of the valley, pioneering conditions have prevailed until relatively recently, if a baby's arrival was untimely and the weather conditions unfavourable. Here is a story from the early 1940s which tells in graphic detail of how things used to be. It was reported in the Mullumbimby Star.*

***"When Lachlan Bruce Graham, 5 day old infant son of Mr. And Mrs. John Graham of Upper Main Arm, is old enough to understand, he will learn with more than passing interest the exciting story of his entry into the world.***

***Before Lachlan saw the light of day there was much organisation and not a little strife on his behalf. His mother, a former Sydney girl, lives right back in the forest at Upper Main Arm, two miles from the home of Mr. And Mrs. T.G. James.***

***Late on Thursday afternoon - a particularly wet and rough day – Mrs. Graham was taken to the home of Mr. and Mrs. James and shortly after six o'clock, Dr. T.F. Tonkin and young nurse, Sister Gregory, started out from Mullumbimby in a taxi, in response to a telephone message.***



***Nurse Gregory and Nurse Mitchell***

***Due to the torrential rain, which was still falling heavily, the taxi was unable to ford Sherry's Crossing, the first of a number of creeks on Main Arm Road.***

***From then on the story behind young Lachlan's birth was quite exciting and rather uncomfortable for the characters concerned.***

***Mr Bob Appleby, of Mullumbimby, guided the Doctor and Sister from Sherry's Crossing around the hill through the scrub and the party was met by Mr. George Williams and Mr. Harold Barnes. With a deep swollen creek to cross at Matheson's farm, the difficulties increased, but although the water was almost above their heads, they crossed safely.***

***Continuing on around the hill, the party was assisted over Blindmouth Creek by Mr. Williams and Mr. Barnes, and at Mrs. Baileys they were given welcome light refreshments before resuming their unpleasant journey in the rain and darkness.***

***About a mile further on they were met with horses by the Graham Bros. and Staff Bros, and on horseback, covered six hazardous miles crossing several creeks. At the crossing it was only the timely action of the Graham Bros. which prevented the doctor's kit from being swept away by the current.***

***During that stage of the 11-mile journey covered by foot, Sister Gregory had to use her umbrella as a walking stick. Torches helped light the way.***

***Soaked and exhausted the party reached the home of Mr. and Mrs. James at midnight. At 4am on Friday, young Lachlan was born.***

***Somewhat refreshed after a few hours sleep and breakfast, the Doctor and Nurse made the return journey at midday on Friday on horseback to Sherry's Crossing.***

***Yesterday morning, Mrs Graham and Lachlan were admitted to Sister Bultitude's Hospital....both doing well.***



***Of interest is the fact that Mrs. Taylor, of Upper Main Arm, who followed the nursing profession prior to the marriage, rode a horse through two flooded creeks to assist before the arrival of the doctor.***

***Left: Sister Bultitude's Kurraba Private Hospital, which became Mullumbimby War Memorial Hospital in 1947 following her untimely passing.***

## KOOKABURRA CARAVAN CLUB

The Kookaburra Caravan Club, an adventurous group, camped at the Mullumbimby Showgrounds for a long weekend in June 2-5. The club travelled from Queensland and while here celebrated the birthday of one of their members, Evelyn Gray, who was born in Mullumbimby in 1935. We were delighted to host about 35 members of the club on Saturday afternoon.

Evelyn (nee O'Neil) was joined by her sister for the occasion. They enjoyed seeing many references to several of their extended family in the museum. Evelyn is in the centre of the front row holding the black handbag. Her sister is in light blue beside her. They had many interesting stories of their early years in Mullumbimby.



## AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

The Brunswick Valley Cancer Action Group featured "Olden Times on the Brunswick". BVHS ran a slide show of old photos of the Brunswick Valley as well as having photos on display together with items recently donated by the Rice family of Goongengerry. Excellent advertising for the museum.



## REMINDERS

**Next Meeting:** Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at 2.00pm    **Annual General Meeting:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017  
**Accessions Meeting:** Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2.00pm

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

**Old & Gold at Brunswick Heads:** Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June. Come and visit the Society's stall in the hall. Our theme this year is "All Things Fishy"

**Mullumbimby's Magic – The Culture of the 70s & 80s** – Our new DVD on the Alternate Culture is well underway. We will be launching a crowdfunding plea for assistance at the market. A link to our enticer will be forwarded so you can check it out and book your copy of the DVD, your seat at the screening, poster etc.