

NEWSLETTER
October 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

ROBBY WRIGHT

BHVS Research Officer



'Mano et Mano' by Robby

Born in the Hunter Valley, I went to primary school there before my family moved to Sydney when I was twelve years old. I completed high school (Sir Joseph Banks Public) Revesby, a horrible place in those days but a wonderful school with happy memories.

Attending the National Art School in Darlinghurst, I completed three years of a four year degree before deciding that theory was great, but I wanted to see and discover first-hand the history of Europe.

I stayed in England for eight years, living in Godalming, Surrey, an hour south west of London. During that time I worked in a country club and travelled extensively throughout the Continent and the Middle East, even venturing as far as India.

My husband and I met in the UK where we married and had two children, a boy and a girl. I jokingly refer to our marriage as one of convenience, as without tying the knot I would have been rounded up and shipped back home earlier that I would have liked.

I eventually returned to Oz in 1976 and settled in Brunswick Heads. Thought we'd settle in Queensland but didn't see anything we liked further north so came back to Bruns where my husband and I set up a cabinet making business at home, where I worked part time polishing, lifting, packing and stacking. In 1978 I returned to university graduating with a BA in Ancient History and English. During this time I worked with the Disadvantaged Schools Program designed to assist those schools in need of additional funds so as to encourage positive outcomes for students in rural and inner city areas. Many of the small schools in the Brunswick valley qualified for this assistance. Immediately on graduating with a Dip Ed I was employed at Byron Bay High School as an Ancient History and English teacher.

Unfortunately, I fell for the old prank and slipped on a banana skin (literally) in the playground. After 16 happy years at BBHS I was medically retired.

Since retirement I have been working with textiles, drawing, printing and writing. I have also had the opportunity to travel extensively outside school holidays. I still study and have now achieved two further Masters and a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in writing.

Having been to the Louvre, the British Museum, the Vatican and many more famous museums through Europe, I believe we have the best museum here in Mullum. I have been undertaking research at the museum for around 8 years and love working with the great team of volunteers. So, come see the greatest little museum in the world. You will be amazed.

First People of the Brunswick

In 1891 ornithologist **Archibald James Campbell** of Melbourne did a tour of 'The Big Scrub', his adventures recorded in the Northern Star on 13Feb, 12Mar, 26Mar, 23Apr, 14May and 11Jun1892. He took a number of photos, 45 of which he used in a series of lectures back in Melbourne, and four of which have been down-loaded from the website of the *State Library of Victoria* to illustrate the Brunswick portion of his narrative below.

He took the train to Tenterfield and came down the range via coach, stopping at Tabulam to *quickly arrange an impromptu group of the natives, consisting of three men, a woman, and a girl. How incongruous they appear in European dress, in lieu of the opossum rug or blanket, but there is no time to make them throw off superfluous attire....*

*About half-past 10 we say farewell to Lismore, leaving by **Jarvis and Son's** coach, bound for the Tweed. Our course, trending north-easterly, lies right through the Big Scrub. Crossing Wilson's Creek we admire the river's reach, overhung with garlands from tree to tree, and vines suspended over the water, forming ideal scenes of real tropical magnificence. Shortly a halt is made at Bexhill, a place consisting of a store, public-house, and a dozen other houses. Before entering is a line of navvies' tents, the white canvas looking picturesque, backed up by the scrub along Wilson's Creek and overshadowed by tall fig-trees. Many of the men have their wives and families, but some of the tents*

seem rather temporary, and would scarcely satisfy field naturalists on a camping-out exhibition. The navvies are employed in the construction of a railway which is eventually to connect the Tweed district with Lismore. At Bexhill a deep cutting through exceedingly hard solid rock is being excavated. This stone appears to underlie the whole of the scrub area, and is pronounced by a competent geological friend to whom I submitted a sample to be a dark augitic basalt, containing detached crystals of hornblende.

*The rest of the stage the horses find a stiff pull uphill, and we reach an elevation of about 500ft at Clunes, 10 miles from Lismore. Clunes possesses the usual clearings (displaying the same rich, reddish soil), and is a second edition of Bexhill, but perhaps a trifle more insignificant. Here we have dinner and change coaches – or rather divide passengers and luggage – one coach going to Byron Bay, the other (ours) to Brunswick, about nine miles above Byron Bay. The country still maintains its undulatory character – a distinctive feature of the big scrub. The clearings become fewer, the ever-present wall of vegetation on either side more continuous. Rifle-birds and regent-birds with striking golden-splashed wings are numerous, crossing the track, and large-tailed brown pigeons retain their perch, perfectly fearless of the coach and team. A dip occurs, and by this fording we cross Wilson's Creek for the last time. Midstream the horses are allowed to remain awhile to cool their burning hoofs. The banks were well torn by many a flood, and so polished are the bed-rocks that the horses cannot find foothold, and flounder ere they reach the opposite bank. After passing **Freeman's**, a dairy farm of some importance, we travel up what is locally known as Possum Shoot, reaching our greatest elevation at about 800ft. Once over the watershed the vegetation changes slightly; pines are seen for instance. The wayside scrub and logs are gaily covered with pretty bunches of flowers of the familiar climbing *Tecoma*. But hold here, while we feast our vision through an opening in the dark-whorled pine trees. Yonder we see -*

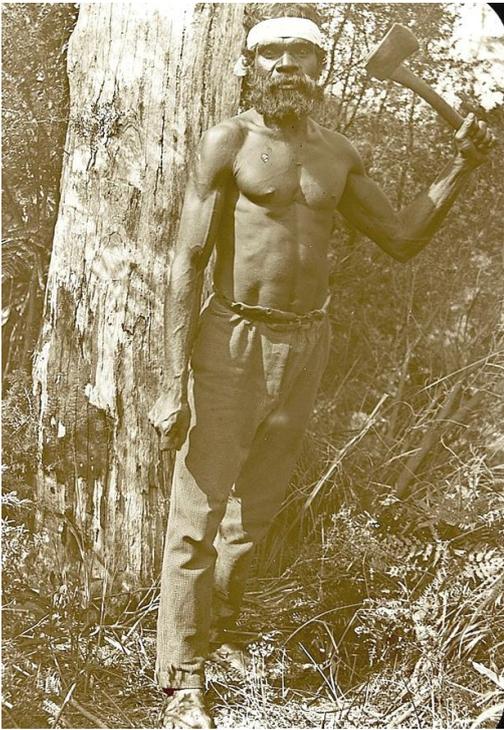
*"Far, far below us the wide Pacific,
Slumbering in azure from sky to sky."*

*And there Cape Byron, the most easterly point of the Australian continent, pierces the ocean. The cape is between 300 and 400 feet high, protecting a little bay which offers a secure retreat to vessels in most weathers. On May 15, 1770, Captain Cook discovered and named the headland in honour of Commodore Byron, of the discovery ship *Dolphin*.*

Getting down and out of the ranges, we come to a strip of forest on a flat. Oh, how delightful to see once again the gum trees. How nobly they carry themselves, and how refreshing the native scent the evening air is distilling from flowering



Representatives of the Wahluwal People, centred on Tabulam



Campbell captioned this photo 'The Last of His Tribe' (probably uninitiated 'Mobal' below), maybe implying Brunswick identities 'Drumble Charlie' and 'Drumble Bob' had moved on.

melaleuca scrub! We pass a caravan of navvies, en route for Byron Bay, preparing for the night's camp. We notice the shorter duration of the twilight here. Already from the zenith stars begin to peep, while cicadas shrilly chant aloud their vesper song. About 7 o'clock a sandy track finishes our day's journey, and we wheel into Brunswick, a primitive and out-of-the-world place, 33 miles from Lismore.

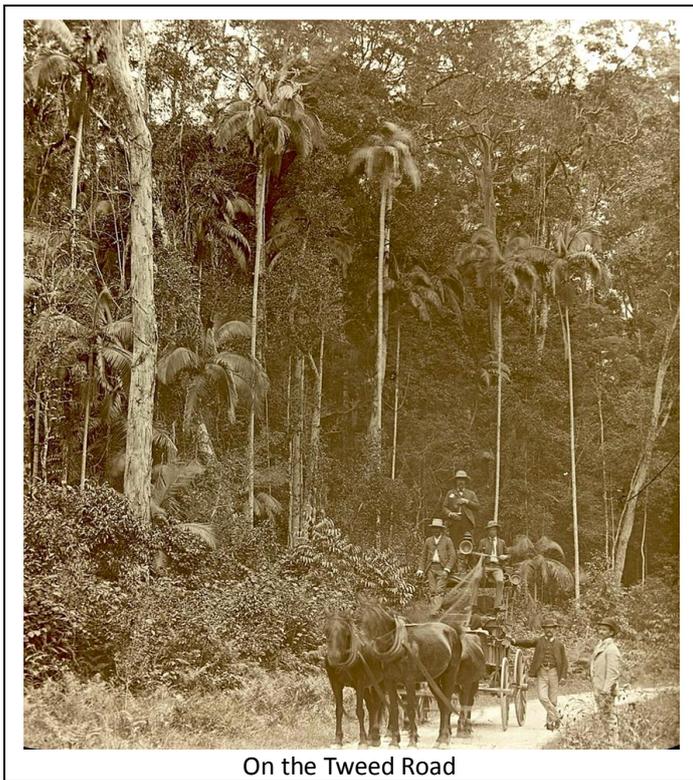
I retire to bed soon, but hear blackfellows wrangling in high voices during the night in the hotel yard. (He would have been pleased to know that that same year the 37 acre 'Aboriginal Reserve' was established just west of 'McCurdy's Wharf Ferry'). I astir early, to see if I can arrange one or two portraits. The morn is fresh and serene. I find Brunswick to consist of about half a dozen wooden houses on a sandy flat, protected from the beach by the usual coastal scrub, and near the mouth of a river of the same name. The river is lined with mangroves, where black swans are following its course on high, seaward. There are a few fine banksia trees in front of the houses, where brush wattle-birds are gurgling, while behind, from thicker timber, arises the musical interludes of a butcher-bird, and where I detect the louder whistling calls of Flinders' cuckoo. I watched a brood of three young white-rumped wood-swallows near. How attentive are the parent birds, every moment diving gracefully down and hawking along the river's bank for food, each time returning with an insect and transferring it to the extended gape of one of the youngsters which sit closely side by side.

I succeed in finding a blackfellow's humpy where an ugly chap is cooking a bandicoot by placing it on the fire intact. Now and then he turns it by the tail or lifts it to rub the singed fur off quickly with his hand. Then an incision is made along the abdomen with a sharp stick, entrails removed, and the body placed on the embers again to finish cooking. Probably I ask too many inquisitive questions about the breakfast, for the blackfellow appears surly, so I betake myself to another humpy, where I find three "gins" asleep, and a fine blackfellow outside cracking open a conglomerate of rock oysters with the shin bone of a bullock. He tells me his name is "Mobal," of the Burringbah tribe. I remonstrate with him for being "boozed," as he called it, during the night. His reply was unanswerable, and in the most perfectly pronounced English, "What can you expect of blackfellow, if whitefellow gets drunk?" After breakfast, I take his photograph, and that of a group of three woman and a child. Mobal says the charge will only be half-a-crown each, but when I explain that with white people the sitter generally has to pay the artist, and not the artist the



Campbell overrode years of Christianisation to induce these Brunswick women to revert to semi-native for the photo he titled 'Sun Tanned Australians'. (Regarding the missing bit of finger on the woman at right, the *Town and Country Journal* of 10Jan1885 recorded the visit of a couple of travellers who observed *Close to the hotel a number of blacks encamped.... It is not a very interesting camp, only a few married couples and about a dozen children.... We were told that the females had the little finger cut off at the second joint when merging into womanhood....*)

sitter, he consents to reduce the charge to a shilling, while I am to give the women sixpence each.



On the Tweed Road

At 10 o'clock, with five passengers, our coach is ready, and shortly afterwards the Brunswick River is crossed by punt. Bearing inland and north-easterly, we get into a mixture of forest and scrub country, with colonies of elegant "bangalow" palms (Archontophoenix)... Burringbah is the half way stopping place for luncheon. Continuing, the road is narrow and circuitous, leading over low, heavily timbered ranges. Ironbarks increase in stature.... The scenery certainly excels anything I have seen throughout this trip. I mentioned the road was very narrow, more noticeable at turns on hill sidings. Bye or passing places are required. Had we overtaken a bullock team we would have had to crawl behind it for half an hour or more before we could have passed. Here is another evil of the inconvenience: we met a mob of travelling horses. There being no room to pass our coach and team, the untamed animals take fright and leap down hill.... The rest, wheeling, bolt past their drover, who is unduly pressing them, and are last seen scattered, careening wildly along a flat to our right.

Three times we cross Dunbible Creek.... On the last pinch before reaching the Tweed a glorious sight breaks upon our view of mountains away to our left – range upon range

ending in the conspicuous peak of Mount Warning.... or Wollumbin of the blacks.... Bowling down to a flat, we are punted across the broad bosom of the River Tweed, and arrive about 5 o'clock at Murwillumbah, thus finishing a most enjoyable day.

Murwillumbah, (pronounced by the aboriginals very rapidly, with the accent on the second syllable) is the most northerly township of any importance in New South Wales.... Many blacks wander about the district.... Next stop Southport, via Tumbulgam, Cudgen, Tweed Heads, Coolangatta, Burleigh Heads....

With thanks to Peter Tscalas

NEW ADDITION TO SNAKE EXHIBIT

Thanks to our member, John Davis who donated a 2.1 metre brown snake skin, found at his property at Billinudgel. His wife Brenda (pictured with the skin) claims to have wrestled the snake out of its skin in a life and death struggle. The RSPCA declined to comment.



CHINCOGAN CHARGE

Volunteers Susan and Rollie set up an historical display of past Chincogan Fiestas and Charges at the Mullum Ex-Services Club.

Susan and Stephen worked the display late into the evening of the event.

The Mullumbimby Ex-Services Club was a major sponsor for the Charge and after the event many competitors and visitors attended the club, enjoying the BVHS display which brought back memories for participants in previous races and parades.

CROWDFUNDING UPDATE

We successfully raised \$9850 towards the production of our new DVD series on the Culture of the Hippies 70s-80s. The first DVD on health and well-being is nearing completion and in the next newsletter we will inform you of the screenings times. Thanks to all who supported the crowdfunding. You are legends!

From the booklet "Tall Tales and True" being prepared to compliment the Brunswick River display comes the following :

Stacked Parking (With deference to Byron Shire Council's parking policy review)

The tale is told of three locals who chanced the flooded Lacks Creek crossing on the Pocket Road following a late night session at the New Brighton pub. The crossing at that time boasted a sharp right hand in the middle of the creek to avoid a deep hole on the southern side.

The first fearless and guileless laddie ploughed into Lacks Creek and promptly forgot to turn right. His vehicle plunged into the hole. Some minutes later his journey was mirrored by his mate and then, unbelievably the third, somewhat disoriented driver, joined his drinking pals in the drink.

All three somehow survived their folly and quickly disappeared into the night. The eerie glow of their car headlights visible to nearby landowners who came out to see what all the noise was about.

Come daylight the tide had turned and the flood waters receded revealing three cars, stacked neatly, one atop another at the bottom of Lacks Creek.



Photo at left is from CBC-British Columbia website and is part of a sculpture Trans-am Totem, merging consumer culture with nature by North Vancouver artist Marcus Bowcott.

Regarding the New Brighton, Jim Brokenshire in "The Brunswick – Another River and It's People" reported:

Before the end of 1916, the New Brighton Hotel had a new proprietor, a Mr Parker, and became probably the first "pub with no beer". Being new to the game, Mr Parker forgot to renew his licence and was not able to get supplies of grog. Editor Cameron commented on the situation in the 'Mullumbimby Star'.

"The hotel has been closed and Mr Parker may not get his licence back until the Licensing court sits in January. With the Christmas rush coming soon and big orders for demijohns and caskets in the offing, Mr Parkers situation is a sad one and the hills between Billinudgel and Mullumbimby may be trampled flat by January."



Photo from You Tube

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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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 2nd Nov 2017

2.00pm

See you there!

*Deadline for agenda items
Wednesday 1st Nov 2017

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesdays & Fridays

10am - 12pm

Market Saturdays 9am - 1pm

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

