

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

# MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER  
November 2017

Cnr Myokum & Stuart Streets MULLUMBIMBY 2482  
OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM  
MARKET DAYS (3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH) 9 AM-1 PM

## MUSEUM FACELIFT STAGE 1



### What Posters?

BVHS President Stephen Hall looks around for the startlingly new posters adorning the eastern wall of the Museum building, whilst Rollie casually looks the other way in disbelief. They're behind you Stephen!!

A big thank you the NORTEC Work Experience participants who visualised and undertook the printing project and to Troy Bunting for erecting the posters over our unused windows.

## Delivering the Mail

Museum volunteer John Thompson recounts a story about local identity and Mullum pub owner Bob Harkness as told to him by Bob and Harry Wraight

*During the war, the mail was delivered to Brunswick Heads by ship and as the bar was notoriously treacherous an unusual method was used to get the mail ashore. Bob would paddle his board beyond the breakers, collect the mail and paddle it back in to the waiting townsfolk.*

*On the day in question Bob set out as normal, watched by fellow surf club members. Suddenly, and to their amazement, Bob became a flurry of arms and legs as he swam desperately to shore, running like billi-o through the breakers, white as ghost and shaking from head to toe.*

*When he finally caught his breath among the gathering of residents and club members, he explained that while waiting by the mail ship, his legs dangling below his surfboard, he was circled by the biggest tiger shark he had seen in his life. When asked how big, he replied that it was so big he could count the stripes on its back, before he lost control and headed in. When asked by one concerned resident where the mail was, Bob replied "Bugger the Mail".*

## NEW DISPLAY

Continuing the Museum's policy of changing exhibits in a timely manner, BVHS has put together a colourful display celebrating Mullum Music Festival's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary featuring posters, photos etc of the event.



Thanks to Mullum Music Festival for the photos and ephemera

## The Meaning in Mullumbimby - Chapter Eleventy Seven

The first written record of 'Mullumbimby' in any spelling appeared in the NSW Government Gazette of 18Oct1872 with its reference to 'Mullumbimby Creek', viz *Reserved From Sale As A Site For Village.... County of Rous, at the head of Boat Navigation, at the confluence of Mullumbimby Creek with the Brunswick River, Middle Arm, containing 640 acres..., ~75% of which was on the west of the river/creek.*

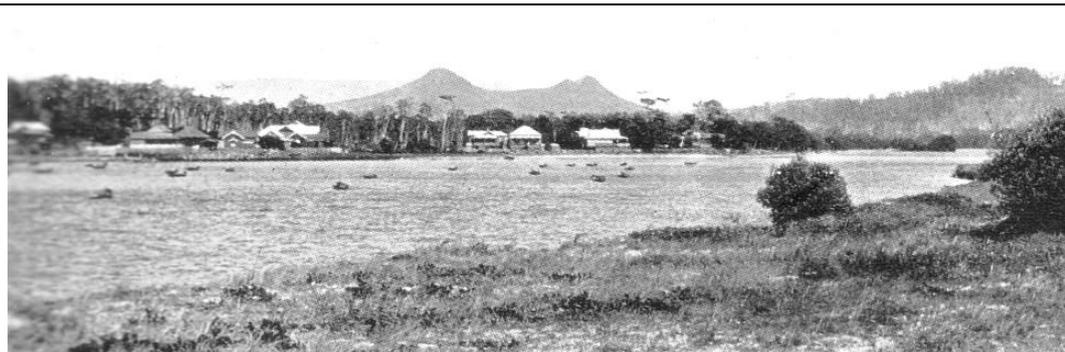
Casino-based surveyor **Richard Barling** had turned up to reserve this site because of fear of a land rush following **Robert Marshall's** application for Portion 1 along King's Creek in the yet to be named 'Parish of Brunswick'. **James Bray**, Crown Land Agent on the Tweed, had urged *that a proper officer be sent (or instructions issued to Surveyor Barling) to lay out village and other necessary reserves before the spots best adapted for such purposes are pounced upon by intending purchasers....*

After marking-out a village reserve at the Brunswick Heads in Apr1872 it's likely Barling was pointed upstream past Marshall's place to an old settlement, where for some time past sectioned cedar logs had been rafted to the heads, apparently after being reworked into squared 'planks'. By the time Barling turned up this 'Myocum Depot' was a place of considerable cedar activity, conveniently established on one of the ubiquitous 'Grasses'\*, providing a smorgasbord for hungry bullocks as well as a focal point for the jinker tracks from Tyagarah, Coorabell, Montecollum and Wilson's Creek.

The most popular route for delivering the 'planks' to Bruns had become a track from this base camp to 'Mullumbimby Creek', thence along the right bank to somewhere in the vicinity of 'the confluence' where the final rafting phase of the logs' journey took place. (Except for the superseded 'planking' phase, this procedure was still in vogue in the early 1880s when teamster **William Grant Law** of Wilson's Creek was dropping his logs directly into Mullumbimby Creek near the future school site.) By this time too, logs would have been arriving along well-worn tracks from various places on the west side of the river, helping make 'the confluence' a hive of activity and justifying a public wharf in 1890. It was all over with arrival of the train in 1894 and freighting to the jetty at Byron Bay.

[Reminiscing to the Mullum Star on 2Jul1933, **Mr Anonymous** said *The timber was floated down the river from wharves near Mullumbimby. One wharf was where the public school now stands, another known as Chincogan near Federation bridge and another known as Red Crossing near the showground....* **George Houghton** of Mullum launched 100,000ft (~100 logs) of Wilson's Creek cedar from the 'Chincogan wharf' in Sep1892, while Irishman **William Parks** introduced a ferry punt from the wharf wef 1Jan1895. And all prompting a rethink on the meaning and origin of 'Chincogan'.]

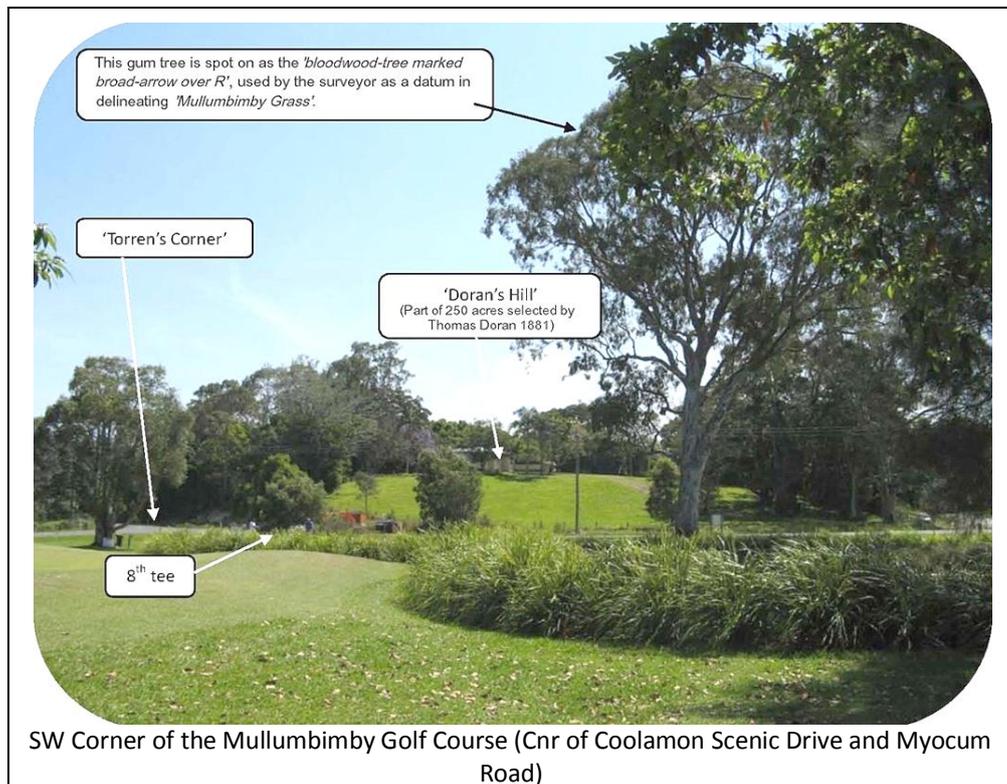
Presumably Marshall and crew had named various landmarks to assist navigation around the traps, one of which could have been the waterway forming that 'confluence with the Brunswick' that Barling transliterated into 'Mullumbimby'? Sixty six years later 80yr old **Bernard A. Jarrett** told the Northern Star that *He learned from one aboriginal that Mullumbimby meant "eel-tail catfish" and was so called because these fish were found in great quantities in Mullumbimby Creek.* But, like Einstein's 'biggest blunder' with his 'cosmological constant', *Mr Jarrett did not place much reliance on this explanation, as another native told him the name was symbolical of three hills...,* presumably a collective name for Chincogan, Tincogan and Mincogan. But the definitions are possibly interconnected, the waterway winning its name because it fell within the shadow of 'Mullumbimby'? (The plural 'Chincogan Mountains' appears on the earliest extant map of the 'Parish of Billinudgel' (edition 4 of Sep1893). The 1922 tourist booklet 'Pearl of the



'Chincogan Mountains' from the South Spit at Brunswick Heads 1921.

Pacific' says Mullumbimby shelters under the shadow of Chincogan, or Tuncogin, as the old blackfellows used to call this notable landmark with its three dominant peaks and graceful saddle back.]]

[All the 'presumablies' are because the State Archives has misplaced the 'Barling file', so we'll never know for certain why Barling chose to centre the village reserve on the 'confluence' (or get an inkling of why he chose 'Mullumbimby' for the name of that confluencing creek, where the expanded body of water would have enabled centre-board ships to turn around). Nevertheless, the location may simply be his subjective assessment that he'd reached *'the head of Boat Navigation'* and decided that 'this is the site for a village' (thank you dealmaker Batman). As well as being drawn to the spot by well-worn jinker tracks, he also may have been channelled along ancient aborigine paths. On 6Jun1961 74yr old **Jack Coghlan** told the Mullum Star that during the sojourn of the railway navvies 1892-94 a Bora Ring was still extant at the site of the newsagency on the corner of Burringbar and Stuart. His great niece **Shelly Hollis-Neath** also claims Jack's sister, Kate, witnessed corroborees where the car park next Byron Shire council chambers now lies, the ex-Hollingworth mill site. Kate was 5yrs old when the Coghlan/Coughlins settled Mullum and lived in a tent at the navvies camp. (Ref Shelly's hagiographic memoire 'Kate' held BVHS).]



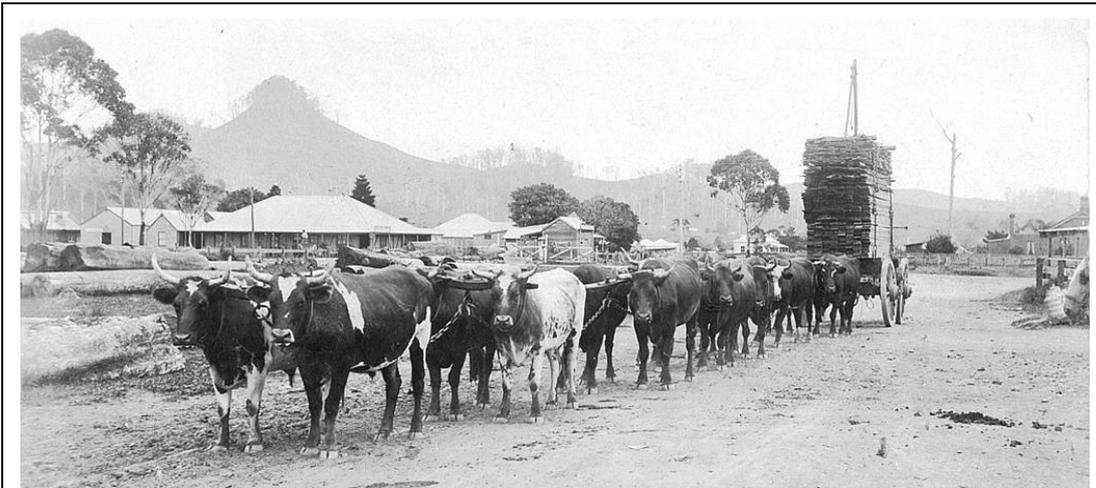
It took another 9yrs after Barling introduced 'Mullumbimby' to the world before the word again appeared in print, the Gazette of 3Aug1881 advising of the creation of the 240 acre reserve at *'Mullumbimby Grass'*, encompassing the original 'Myocum Depot' (by which time the tracks to, from and through Barling's 'Village Reserve' to the river highway had been further defined). Thereafter phonetics took over and such names as Molebunbie, Mullembenbe, Milembembie appeared in print until fading away in 1894 upon the Railway Department's erection of a ginormous sign at the station, shouting 'MULLUMBIMBY' for the comfort of the pedantic.

Despite this daily reminder however, 6yrs later contrarians **Henry French** and **James Anderson** were still maintaining that *'Mooloobinby'* was "a name given a small ridge (Dorans Hill)" at the old 'Myocum Depot' campsite, which had been temporarily recycled as the main centre of activities for the new farming community, at least until ~1891 when development finally started on Barling's village reserve, by then designated the *'Village of Mullumbimby'*. It could be that the French/Anderson definition was subsequent wisdom, the axemen adopting a corruption of Barling's 'Mullumbimby' as the name for their campsite? (Notwithstanding the possibility that in 1882-83 'Molebunbie', the home of the *Smith & Webber* butchery, could have been somewhere in the vicinity of **Robert Marshall's** King's Creek selection, by then in the hands of **James Mills**, all references to 'Mullumbimby' and its variants through to 1888 refer to the 'Dorans Hill' location, the school pedants taking the pukka spelling with them when they shifted into town in 1892.)

[French and Anderson, with an input from **Charlie Jarrett** (the uncle of irresolute Bernard), had made their claim in 1900 via a letter to *The Anthropological Society of Australasia*, while 8mths earlier politically correct **Constable Boyd** had told the same organisation that 'Mullumbimby' means "A small round hill, from which Township takes its name". See <http://transcripts.sl.nsw.gov.au/page/368877/view>. And note that the 'Myocum Depot' could have been a neighbourhood fixture since 1847 if celebrated cedar-getter and teamster **Dan Withers** is to be believed. On 16May1891 he told the Northern Star that *in 1847 I went there from the Tweed with a team of bullocks to draw cedar for James and Thomas Boyd, which was sawn in the scrub now occupied by Thomas Torrens* (ie near 'Doran's Hill'). *I was there again in '63 drawing for Mr Yabsley....* But in a senior's moment 14mths earlier he had told the Mining Warden he was *in California in '48; that was four years before I came to the district....* (Ref NS of 26Mar1890). He was granted a timber license 8Aug1851 and married Catherine Crowley 2Apr1852 Ballina.]

There's no identifiable date for the baptism of Barling's unnamed 'Village Reserve' as 'Mullumbimby', but certainly by

23Dec1887 when the Gazette referred to the 'Village of Mullumbimby' in reserving an area around Chinbible Creek for a water supply. In the meantime 'Mullumbimby' had been popularised by lending its name to the new parish hived off the 'Parish of Brunswick', first notified in the Gazette of 13Feb1882 (and 7mths after that was deemed a suitable adornment for a street sign in the *Village of Brunswick*).



The bullocks managed to find MULLUMBIMBY Station in 1908 after following the signs from King Bros Main Arm mill. (Railway Hotel on cnr Burringbar and Station Streets; W.R. Baker's Real Estate Office across the road at the Railway gates; Station Master's residence with chimney right).

The *Tweed Times and Brunswick Advocate* had two bob's worth on 11Apr1906, saying *It is not generally known that 'mullumbimby' is the name of the couch grass indigenous to these parts. Did 'Mullumbimby Grass', the site of the first white settlement in the neighbourhood, take its name from the native grass growing at the golf course, or was the name bestowed on the grass because of its proximity to 'mullumbimby'? ('mullumbimby couch', aka 'poverty grass' and 'worthless native sedge', became a curse as it spread throughout the region.)*

The experts entered the debate on 2May1910 when the *Science of Man* Journal proclaimed that the *correct native aboriginal name* for 'Mullumbimby' is *Mullibumbi*, but upon reflection on 1Mar1911 said *Mullumbimby is a small round hill called by this name....* These definitions are endorsed by linguist **Dr Margaret Sharpe** of UNE, who says *malibambay* is a location name for *Mullumbimby*; also *malambimbay*; *Mullumbimby (a small round hill called by this name)...*, and *mullibumbi*.)

The *Science of Man* Journal of 23Apr1900 published "*Linguistic Information. Aboriginal Names of Places*," supplied by the Under-Secretary for Mines, which, according to **James Sprott Ryan** of the Department of English, UNE, says 'Mullumbimby' has no meaning. (This reference is not listed by Dr Sharpe in her *All Yugambah-Bundjalung Dictionary*, copy available BVHS.) The Mines Department was possibly the source for the helpful *Tweed Daily* article of 28Jun1938 saying *Kynnumboon, Joshua Bray's residence from 1865, was known as Kuinumbun, a word which like Murwillumbah and Mullumbimby had no meaning....*

On 24Jul1914 the *Tweed Daily* reckoned *Mullumbimby was named after a native fern which grew in the locality and was called by the blacks "mulubinba" a name which is sweeter and more euphonious by far than its corrupted name...*, but unrecorded by Dr Sharpe. The Daily's source in this case was *Nomenclature of New South Wales*, by Mrs William King Symonds (nee Elsie Blanche Read), serialised in the literary magazine '*The Lone Hand*' through 1914. And she probably got it from *An Australian Language as spoken by the AWABAKAL; The People of AWABA or LAKE MACQUARIE; Being an account of Their Languages, Traditions, and customs*, by L.E. Threlkeld, 1892, viewable at <https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/cultural%20collections/pdf/al1892whole.pdf>. Part 1, Ch IV, 'The Vocabulary', Pg51, says *Mulubinba, the name of the site of Newcastle, from an indigenous 'fern' named mulubin*. And <http://www.muloobinba.org.au/> says *The word "Muloobinba" comes from the Awabakal language and means "Newcastle" and "Place of Sea Fern" ).*

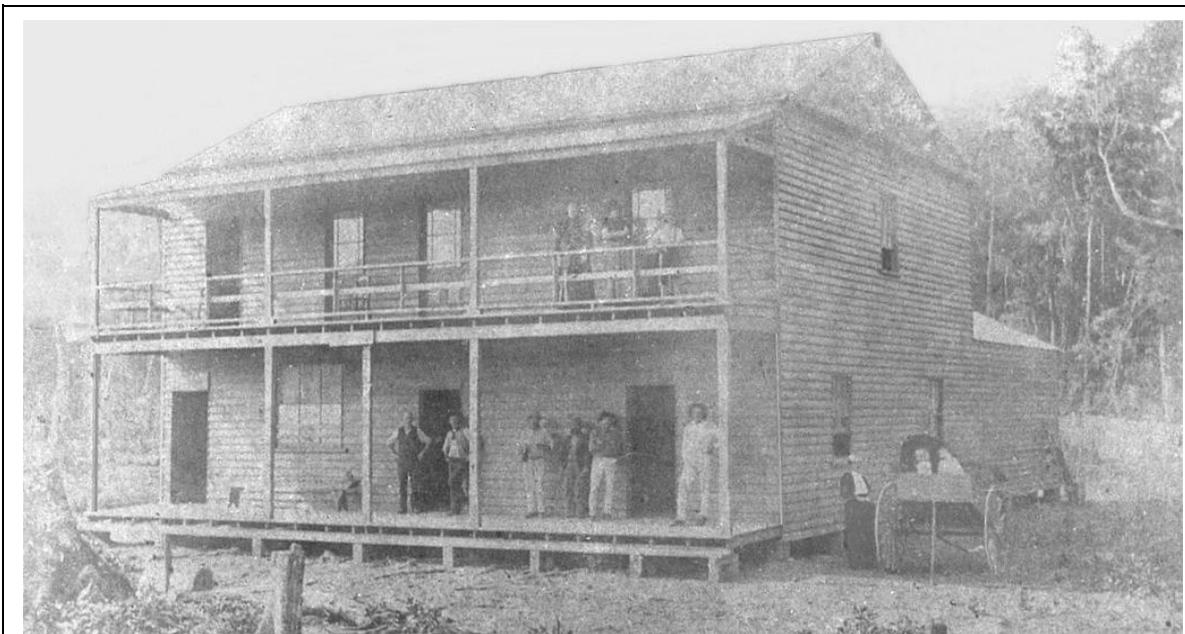
C.A. Irish's 1927 paper for the RAHS '*Names of Railway Stations in NSW, with their meaning and origin*' (viewable at [http://www.nswrail.net/library/station\\_names.php](http://www.nswrail.net/library/station_names.php)), goes with the fans of 'small round hill'. And this definition was given the imprimatur of **A.E. Budd** MLA (and his parliamentary researchers) whilst reciting the fact in Mullum on Anzac Day 1930. Every journalist/historian thereafter, particularly the prominent **Norm Hewitt**, reinforced the definition through repetition. Carrying on the tradition was the oft quoted *Australian Women's Weekly* of 27Apr1966, giving the

meaning of various place names throughout Australia, quoting 6 different authorities, stating Mullumbimby means 'small, round hill', but probably copied from a similar list in the Aug1963 edition of 'Dawn' - A Magazine for the Aboriginal People of NSW'.

J.S. Ryan above cites C.A. Irish as well as A.E. Martin ('One Thousand and More Place Names in New South Wales', 1943), James R. Tyrrell (*Australian Aboriginal Place-Names and their Meanings*, 1953), and F.D. McCarthy (*New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names and Euphonious Words, with their Meanings*', 1959) for his listing of 'Mullumbimby' as a place name with a 'geographic etymology', with the interesting qualifier *if it means "a small round hill"*, but also acknowledges Symonds under place names with a 'water weeds and grasses' origin, also with the qualifier *'if this is correct etymology'*.

[Ryan delivered his paper, 'Some Aboriginal Place-Names in the Richmond-Tweed Area', at the 27May1963 AGM of the Richmond River Historical Society. It was also published in *Oceania*, Sep1963, Vol XXXIV, No. 1, copy available BVHS, in which he uses 'Mullumbimby' as an example of *Some names that could not be explained by the natives living in the areas, because, as they said, the names came from earlier tribes.*]

Sceptics continue blowing raspberries while etymologists persist in dwelling on 'Muli' and its 'small hill' connotations, avoiding the cluster headache generated by the suffix 'umbimby'. In the meantime **Bernard Jarrett** awaits resurrection.



The first commercial building in Barling's Mullumbimby was the 2-storey, 16 room *Mullumbimby Hotel*, opened by **Donald McGougan** of Lismore on 30Oct1891 on the northern corner of Tincogan and Dalley, the ex-property of **John Torrens**. It was built from logs supplied by **W.G. Law** and pit-sawn by **James Watterson** and **Allan McFarland** from a sawpit in the middle of what became Tincogan St. It was converted into a store and residence by **Alan Cameron** after McGougan acquired the Railway Hotel from **Joe Yates** in Dec94.

\*[For an insight into those mysterious and fascinating places called 'Grasses' visit BVHS and read "*The 'Grasses' of the Big Scrub District, North-eastern New South Wales: Their recent history, spatial distribution and origins*" by Dr Brett J. Stubbs, 2001. He identified 56 all up (10 in the Brunswick district), each with its own name, most used as timber-getters camps and most associated with aboriginal Bora Rings. And one of those names is the puzzling '*Dodds Grass*' somewhere near the Gulgang Road overpass to Brunswick Heads, but possibly the Brunswick Cricket Ground (ex-police paddock) where in 1926 a Bora Ring was '*still discernible... where the natives of old went through their spectacular and weird ceremonies....*'

The 'Grass' was probably named for **Nicholas Dodds** and/or his son **Richard**. Cedar-getter Dick, born 1845 Sydney, married Elizabeth Ross 1864 QLD, harvested timber around Pimpama through the early to late 1860s, married Sarah Lally (aka Boyd) 1871 Casino and settled Cudgen 1872. Around 1877 he pensioned off his axe and branched out into other activities at Cudgen/Chinderah, where he had become a well-known identity along with his step-father-in-law **Thomas Boyd** (1826-1884). The *Daily Examiner* of 6Dec1935 says *Boyd and Dodds, (were) cedargetters of the Tweed and Brunswick in the very early days*. Nick died 1890 'Tweed River' and Dick 1907 Tweed Heads. One or the other lent his name to *Dodds Island* at Chinderah, bound by the *Tweed River* and *Boyd's Channel*.] Thanks to Peter Tsicalas

## MULLUM MOVIES – The Next Offering

### MULLUMBIMBY'S MAGIC – The Culture of the 70s-80s Part 1 – Health & Wellbeing

The second in our fantastic series of films on the evolution of Mullumbimby's alternative culture will be screened in November/December at the following venues and times.

**WARNING**  
drugs nudity  
and strong  
language

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. presents

# Mullumbimby's

A SHARON SHOSTAK FILM

# Magic

Intimate interviews and more

**Part 1**

## The Culture of 70s-80s HEALTH and WELLBEING

**World Premiere**  
Mullumbimby Civic Centre  
Saturday 25th November 2017  
Food/Drinks 6.30 Screening 7.30  
Music by: Broadfoot playing live

The Byron Theatre  
Friday 1st December  
Food/Drinks 6.30 Screening 7.30

Drill Hall Mullumbimby  
Saturday 2nd December  
Food/Drinks 4pm and 6.30  
Matinee 5.00pm Evening 7.30pm

Community Gardens selling tea, coffee, cake etc at Mullumbimby events

Cost \$15 adults \$10 cons. Mullum Tickets: Bookshop Mullumbimby | Byron Tickets: The Byron Theatre [www.byroncentre.com.au](http://www.byroncentre.com.au)

**World Premiere**  
Mullumbimby Civic Centre  
Saturday 25th November  
2017.

Doors open 6.30pm,  
Screening 7.30pm  
Live music by Broadfoot.

Tickets available:  
The Bookshop  
Mullumbimby &  
Mullumbimby Museum

**The Byron Theatre**  
Friday 1st December.  
Doors open 6.30pm,  
Screening 7.30pm.

Byron Tickets available  
online from  
The Byron Theatre  
[www.byroncentre.com.au](http://www.byroncentre.com.au)

**Drill Hall Mullumbimby,**  
Saturday 2nd December.  
MATINEE: Doors open 4.00  
screening at 5pm.  
EVENING: Doors open  
6.30pm, screening at  
7.30pm.

Tickets: \$15 adults, \$10  
concession.

The Community Gardens will be selling tea, coffee, cakes etc at all the Mullumbimby screenings.

From "The Brunswick Notebook 1991-1997" Edited by Chris Gray are the following amusing stories.

### **MINOR MISHAPS – Tales of Floods, Wooden Legs, Charging Cows and Race Horses.**

*Life is full of mishaps, fortunately mostly of a minor nature. Some, in retrospect, are even amusing when one looks back, like the occasion in February 1925, when Fred Armstrong was driving to town from Wilson's Creek. Heavy rains had fallen the previous day and night, causing the creek to rise considerably, making it dangerous to cross.*

*Mr Armstrong was unfamiliar with the creek in such conditions and unaware of any danger as he entered the crossing, only to find both horse and sulky disappearing. He jumped clear of the sulky and swam some distance before he got clear of the rushing water. The drowned horse and sulky were found further down the creek later on in the day. As the newspaper put it at the time: "While returning to the farm at Wilson's Creek, it is not to be wondered at that Mr Armstrong disdained all offers of the loan of a horse and preferred to walk."*

*A wooden leg is generally considered to be a great disadvantage, but as was reported in February 1932, "Sometimes it acts as a life saver. A week or two ago on a North Coast farm, a couple of friends were looking over the place. One was minus a leg which was lost during the war. He had the bad luck to tread on a death-adder with his sound foot, but by good luck, the angry, flustered adder fastened onto the wooden leg and hung there until it was despatched by his friend. Many a time and oft had the one-legged man deplored the loss of the member, but now he sings a different tune."*



*A charging cow, coming at one at full pace in the main street would unnerve most people, but Mr Mick Stapleton, senior, showed great presence of mind when this happened to him in February 1915. "A man was driving a couple of cows to Central yards and turning the Commercial Hotel corner, one cow got up at full pace.*

*'Mick' was walking up the road, and the cow, evidently thought he had no right there, for it made a terrific charge at him. 'Mick' had not much time to think but he simply fell flat on the ground and the cow passed over the top of him,*

*only missing him by inches.*

*Driving with no lights was no less dangerous in 1922 than it was now, as Mr F Mudge with a companion was to find out. "He was driving the trotting stallion 'Young Pitch' purchased by him only about a fortnight before at a fancy price, along the Goonengerry Road and ran into another vehicle at a bend in the road, coming from the opposite direction. The impact was so severe, that the shaft of the sulky penetrated the chest of 'Young Pitch', went under the shoulder blade and came out about 15 inches along the rib. The shaft snapped off about 4 inches inside the flesh, the length of the shaft broken off measuring 2ft 8 inches. Mr Shepherd performed a clever piece of veterinary surgery in the way of removing the shaft from the horse, which is progressing favourably."*

*How 'Young Pitch' fared on the race track after such an experience, we have no idea.*

### **Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter**

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

Cnr Myokum & Stuart Sts  
Mullumbimby  
P.O. Box 378 Mullumbimby 2482  
**02 6684 4367**

bvhs84@yahoo.com.au  
[www.mullumbimbymuseum.org.au](http://www.mullumbimbymuseum.org.au)

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[www.facebook.com/MullumbimbyMuseum](http://www.facebook.com/MullumbimbyMuseum)

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Experience Participants  
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### **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 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017**  
**2.00pm**

**See you there!**

\*Deadline for agenda items  
Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2017

**MUSEUM HOURS**  
**Tuesdays & Fridays**  
**10am - 12pm**  
**Market Saturdays 9am - 1pm**

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

