

Birth of the Brunswick

The first colonial settlement in what became the Byron Shire took place in the late 1840s when the Boyd family of timber merchants came from the Tweed to establish a cedar camp on the North Head of the Brunswick River.

Prior to this event colonial contact had been limited to transient explorers, shipwrecked sailors and escaped convicts. The first documented visit was made by **Captain William Barkus** of *HM colonial schooner Alligator*, while in search of a wreck, in the month of September, 1827... said the Sydney Gazette of 22Aug1829. He was the first who discovered the Rivers between Soletarre Isles and the River Tweed..., despite history awarding the prize to **Captain Henry Rous** in *His Majesty's ship Rainbow*, who had sailed past in Aug1828.

And folklore has it that Rous won naming rights, bestowing the name Brunswick upon the river he simply described as *Another river about eight miles NW from Cape Byron, running in a WNW direction, with a narrow and deep channel, a rocky bar at the entrance, and a shallow north and south arm...*, and delineated with a squiggle annotated as 'a small river' on the subsequent map. The story goes that sometime later he named this anonymous wriggly waterway after **Queen Caroline** of Brunswick (1768 Germany-1821 England), the estranged wife of the unpopular George IV. However, no record can be found of how and when the naming took place.

In the meantime, the name 'Pine River' was a credible alias, first bestowed by escaped convict **John Ellis**. On 17Dec1835 *The Colonist* published *Copies of Statements made at different times before the resident Police Magistrate, Port Macquarie, by runaway Prisoners of the Crown from the Penal Settlement at Moreton Bay...*, Ellis stating that *he came to another river, which from the vast quantity of pine trees in its neighbourhood is called Pine River....* And the 4th page of Part 1 of surveyor **Robert Dixon's** 1840 Field Books states that "(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 came to survey the area in Jul1840 and his Field Books are the earliest references, so far sighted, that the river had been christened 'Brunswick' at some stage. (And he 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.) But the first time the wider public got to see this name in print was via the SMH on Tuesday 23Apr1849, advising of the departure of the *Midas* with 'sundries' for Boyd's cedar camp at 'Brunswick'.

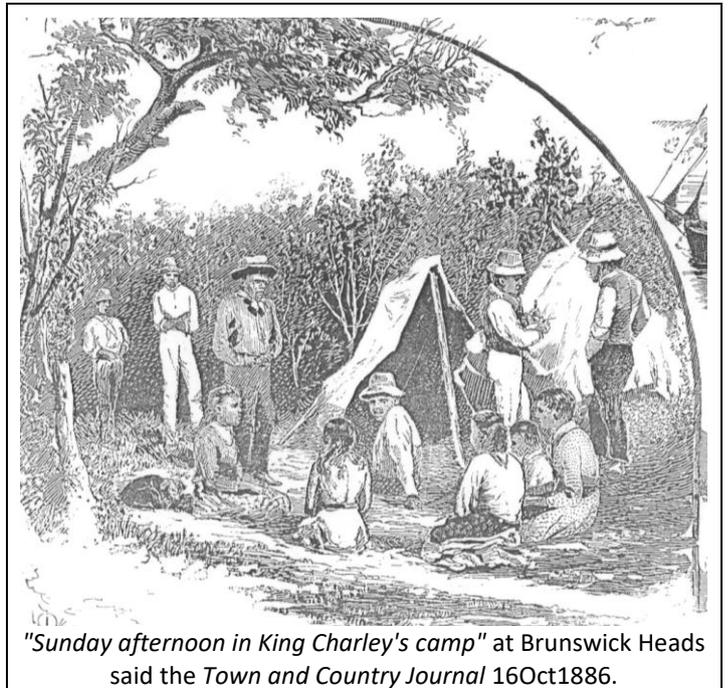
Native Australians

Nor is there any agreement on the original aboriginal name for the place, the home of the Du-rung-bil clan said cedar-getter **Ned Harper** in *The Queenslander* of 1Sep1894, superseding 'Minyahgo-Whallo tribe', the name proposed by his antagonist, ethnologist **Archie Meston**. But linguist Dr **Margaret Sharpe** of UNE says that 'Jalanggir' was the name of the 'Brunswick clan', the name the *Brunswick blacks who call themselves "Ch-Long Kitty"* have adopted, while 'jurangbil (possibly durabil or dirambul)' is the name of the Brunswick River. (Reference her *All Yugambeh-Bundjalung Dictionary with Gramma, Texts, etc*, published as a CD May2013, with *Corrections to March 2015*.) For a more comprehensive coverage of the 'First People of the Brunswick' go to 'Miscellaneous Historical' at <https://www.mullumbimbymuseum.org.au/pioneer-articles/>

In 1901 **James Anderson** (selector of 'Anderson's Hill' / 'Uncle Tom's'), **Henry French** (his neighbour who selected 'Nubhoygum' at Tyagarah in 1882) and **Charles Jarrett** (a prominent cedar merchant) said 'Durumbil' means 'That Round Hill inside Brunswick Heads' (Reference <http://transcripts.sl.nsw.gov.au/page/368877/view>), while others say 'Durrumbul' is 'Said to derive from Durangbil, a name for a reach of the Brunswick River' (Reference *PLACE NAMES of the TWEED, BRUNSWICK and UPPER RICHMOND REGIONS* by Richmond-Tweed Regional Library, 1984.) And in 1938 80yr old **Bernard Jarrett** of Mullumbimby said *The aboriginal name for Brunswick Heads is durring (Mr Jarrett is not certain of the spelling), and is said to mean "bush rat."* Apparently, the name is derived from the shape of the North Head. (Ref the *Northern Star* of 5Jan1938.)

James Rowland, the 1871 census collector, found a total of 70 aboriginals resident on the ill-defined 'Brunswick', such places as Burringbar and Mooball probably being included in the count during his trek south from Dunbible. But it's estimated that a shocking 90% of the Tweed and Brunswick aboriginals had died within two generations of European contact, mainly due to the ravages of smallpox, presupposing that prior to the arrival of the Caucasians the indigenous population could have numbered around 700 on 'the Brunswick'.

The year 1871 marked another boom in cedar's cycle, by which time the surviving Brunswick aborigines were heavily involved in the industry. **Dick Glascott** of Tintenbar left a record of the life of a cedar-getter, recording that he first encountered '**Drumble Charlie**' of the Brunswick in 1865, subsequently relying on him to organise work parties. (Reference *The Glascott Diaries; The Diaries and Account Books of Richard Donovan Glascott, A Timber-getter on the Richmond River in the 1860s and 1870s*. By Marlene Lester, Ballina 2001.) The Europeans probably awarded 'Charlie' his breastplate, proclaiming him '*King of the Brunswick Blacks*', sometime in the 1870s, but he seems to have been recognised as a significant figure within the Brunswick/Du-rung-bil clan from at least 1871 when he was recorded as a 'King' at Wooyung (Ref the *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 17Jun1871). Given less prominence is '**Drumble Bob**', recorded at Tintenbar by Glascott in 1866, who is probably **Bob Marshall's faithful old blackfellow, Bobby Faucett**, (who) was made king..., at some stage, said **James Jarrett** in a letter to the Mullumbimby Star on 11Jun1908.



"Sunday afternoon in King Charley's camp" at Brunswick Heads said the *Town and Country Journal* 16Oct1886.

The NSW census of Apr1891 found 9 aborigines (3 males and 6 females) living in a bark hut at Brunswick Heads, probably in the vicinity of Marshall's *Ocean View Hotel*, with '**Kitty**' nominated as the 'Head of Household', perhaps implying King Charlie's demise. But on 10Oct1891 the NSW Government Gazette promulgated an 'Aborigine Reserve' just west of what is now the Ferry Reserve Caravan Park, possibly the home of the 9 'full

blood' aborigines (and no 'half castes') found at the 'Brunswick River Heads' by the police census of Oct1894. However, by the time of the NSW census of Mar1901 there were no aboriginals listed at Brunswick Heads. Presumably there were still none there wef 29Nov1911 when the reserve was leased to **Michael George Currie** and formally revoked via the Gazette of 22Dec1915. By 1914 there were no aboriginals recorded in the Mullumbimby Police Patrol District, covering Burringbar to Tyagarah.

In 1926 the Bora Ring on the Brunswick cricket ground was '*still discernible... where the natives of old went through their spectacular and weird ceremonies....*' This site is the ex-police paddock, ~ ¼ mile north of 'Dodds Grass', where cedar-getter **Dick Dodds**, son-in-law and partner of **Thomas Boyd**, established a base.



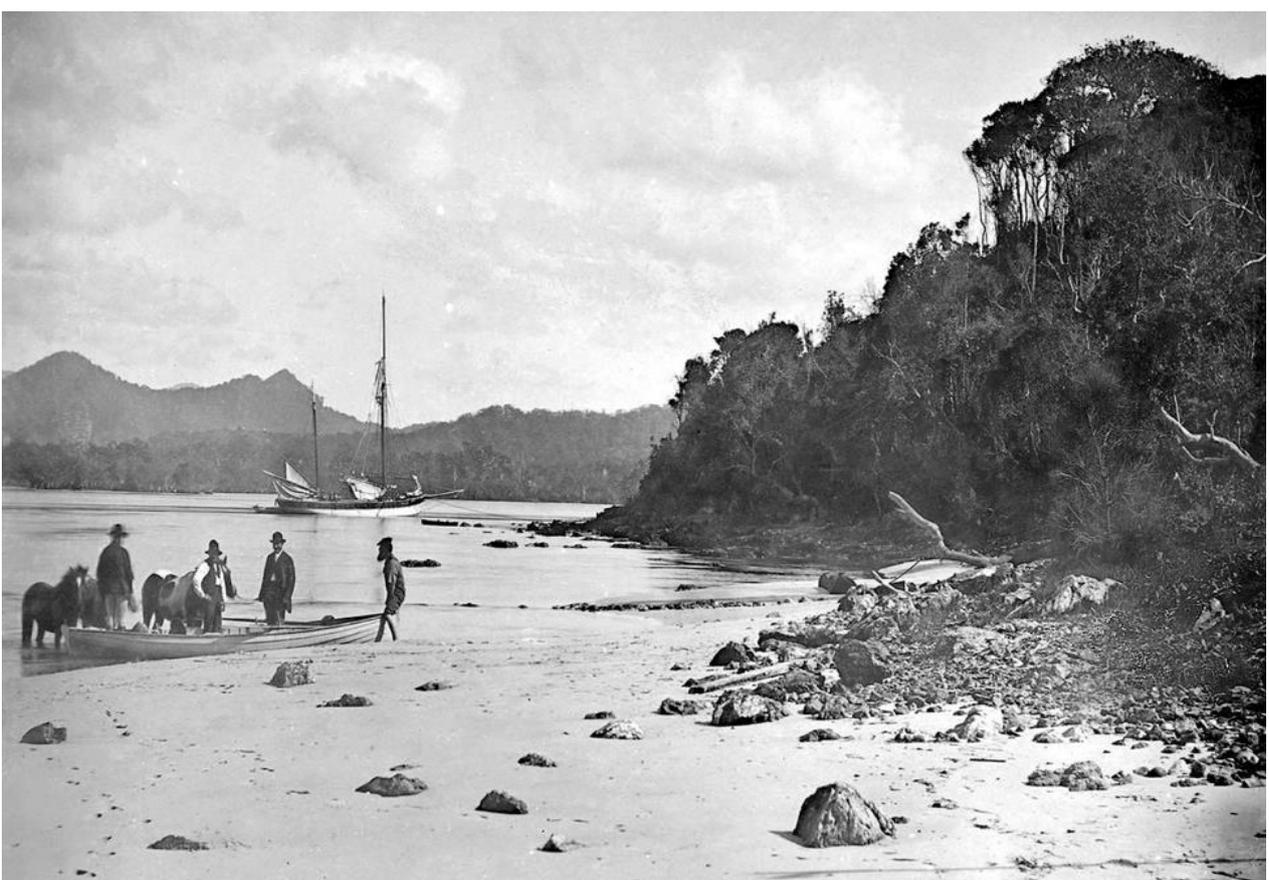
These Brunswick women were induced to go semi-native by photographer A.J. Campbell in late 1891. (Courtesy State Library of Victoria.)

Caucasian Australians

Aboriginal depopulation accelerated after the selectors turned up in 1881, the new concept of land tenure displacing the surviving family groups, many drifting to the mouth of the Brunswick and a new way of life. In the meantime the Caucasians exploiting the cedar resource had become well-entrenched at the Heads, so much so that the Government Gazette of 24Dec1861 *reserved from sale until surveyed... 5¼ square miles surrounding the Brunswick entrance.*

But there's no record of a survey of this quarantined area until Surveyor **Richard Barling** turned up from Casino on 20Apr1872 and figured *a reserve for village being left at the entrance of the River (where vessels can come as far as the ballast wharf. There are also a few cedar cutters living there at present who have six or seven huts erected) would be sufficient till the place becomes more settled....* By this time the most prominent resident was **Robert Marshall**, a cedar-getter running a boarding house as his day job. Englishman Robert and his wife Elizabeth (nee Malone) are reckoned to be the first permanent white settlers, turning up in ~1866, 3yrs after the Bray/Gray families claimed this distinction on the Tweed.

Known Brunswick residents **Henry Stone** (1869), **James Smith** (1871), **John Thomas Johnson** (aka 'Cudgery Jack' resident Tyagarah 1871) and **James Mills** (1872) may have been members of Marshall's chopping crew, while **George Simpson** (possibly ~1857, but definitely ~1871), the only other confirmed Bruns resident, assisted by guiding the ships from a makeshift pilot station. **Charlie Jarrett**, a Ballina-based timber merchant, probably either contracted Marshall and his crew or acted as Marshall's agent, although Marshall is known to have shipped his own stuff at various times. (In reminiscing to the 'Tweed Daily' in Sep1934, 81yr old **Charles Skinner** said *"The king of the cedar-getters on the Richmond – Charlie Jarrett – had at times 100 men employed.... Even as late as 1871 there were over fifty cedar-getters employed on the Brunswick.... Immense quantities of cedar were obtained on the Brunswick in the sixties...."*)



This is the earliest photo of Brunswick Heads held in the BVHS collection, taken ~mid 1886 by a group of explorers from the *Town and Country Journal*, and showing Ketch *White Cloud* (or possibly Ketch *Dolphin*) anchored at the entrance to Reading's Bay near the 'ballast wharf', off the point of 'Harry's Hill'. (The bearded bloke in the cap is likely to be ferryman **H. Rogers**, who won the job in 1885, collecting a toll of 3d per foot passenger and 6d per horseman.)

Marshall, Simpson, Smith and Johnson were the only ones to do their civic duty in 1871 and enrol to vote. That year the census found a total of 447 people in the Tweed River Police District, which had been carved off from Richmond ~1867 and covered the area from the border down to Cape Byron, but it's doubtful Collector Rowland looked much beyond the Brunswick.

The next clearly identifiable Brunswick resident was **John O'Neill** who had a hut on the North Head, but probably spent most of his time at his cedar camp at Wooyung, established by at least 1870. On 22Sep70 his niece, **Sarah Ann Powditch**, had the honour of being the first child baptised with Anglican rites at 'Brunswick River' when the Rev Winterbotham made a stop-over during a trip from Ballina to Tweed. (And O'Neill folklore has it that John built the first hotel at Brunswick Heads and later passed it to Marshall?)

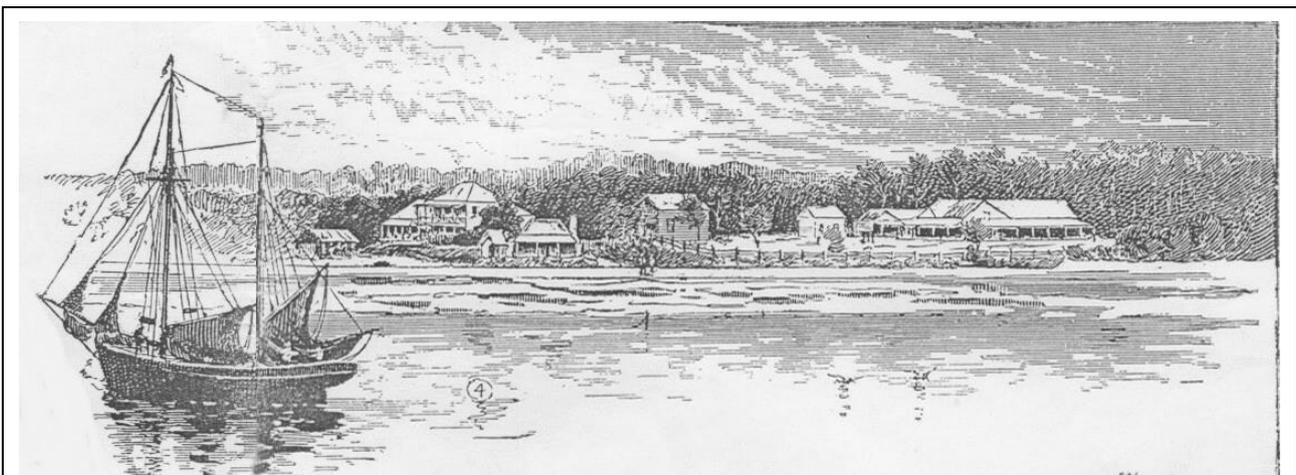
In May1871 a 'Town and Country' journalist passed through and commented that *The Brunswick is now the chief seat of the cedar trade, from fifty to sixty men being employed at it. The dwellings are on the south bank, just inside the Heads, where are also to be found a store and a comfortable accommodation-house kept by Mr Marshall....*

Robert Marshall's boarding house (the 'Halfway House') morphed into the Ocean View Hotel in 1884, a few months after the successful sale of the subdivided village lots. Surveyor **Thomas Ewing** had set things in motion when he drew up his first plan for the 'Village of Brunswick' in 1880, superseded by a more detailed plan in 1882 and promulgated as 'Site of the Village of Brunswick' in the NSW Government Gazette of 18Sep1882. 48 lots went under the auctioneer's hammer on 19Oct1883 with an average reserve price of £4, but double that for the 8 lots that now form the CBD block.

Simpson Town

Robert Marshall had built a store by at least 1871, probably managed by **George Simpson** as his day job. Folklore has it that 63yr old George established a Pilot Station / Signaller's Post / Flagstaff/.... on the North Head in 1872. If so, he was probably in the employ of a private consortium of ship owners and/or timber-merchants, but whether he continued with a day job, probably as a timber merchant or shipping agent, if not Marshall's store, is uncertain.

Presumably the Brunswick wreckage rate was deemed acceptable by Government, 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 Brunswick settlement as 'Simpson Town on the Brunswick River' and 'Simpson's Town at the Brunswick Heads' in the late 1870s.



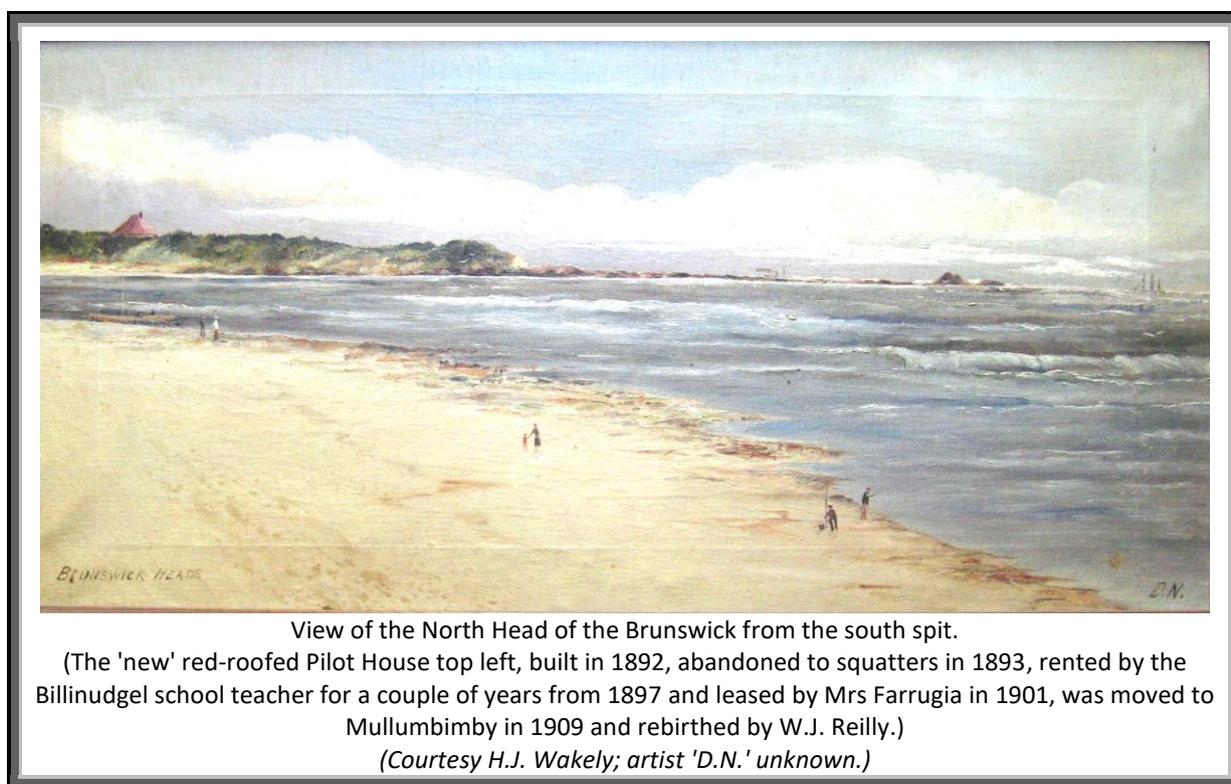
Mullumbimbi Street 1886, with Ketch *White Cloud* or *Dolphin* anchored in the South Arm.

(In ~mid 1886 a Town and Country Journalist said *The look-out station and a store kept by Mr Haines formed nearly the whole of the buildings on the Northern Headland.... On the southern side we found the township to consist of Marshall's Hotel (far right), a little wooden post and telegraph office, a store, the new courthouse which had only just been finished, and another hotel in the course of construction.... A sawpit was occupied, and men were busily engaged in sawing the huge logs of timber into suitable sized planks....*)

Nevertheless, using salaries as a guide, the Brunswick was still deemed an insignificant port and the insurance of its produce not worth the expenditure of a full pilot service. At the time of George's appointment Captains **Easton** and **McGregor**, pilots on the Richmond and Tweed respectively, were drawing a salary of £175pa and employing a total of 11 boatmen, each on a salary of £108pa and each provided with 'quarters'.

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 vehicular bridge to Torakina now spans. Presumably this was the location of George's living quarters, from where he travelled to work on the North Head as required. In May 1884 **John Patrick O'Meally** was posted in from Casino to become '*Telegraph Station-Master*', taking up residence in George's 'Pilot House' on the North Head, where he *leads a lonely and uneventful life within view of the ocean highway from Sydney to Brisbane*. But George regained possession in Sep 1885 when *the post and telegraph office... shifted from a ramshackle old building... to a new one on the opposite or south side of the river...*

George died in 1887, aged 78, and his replacement, Captain **John Greenlees**, was appointed with an unchanged salary of £52pa on 1 Jul 1887, at which time Captain McGregor of the Tweed was drawing £195pa and his 5 boatmen £118pa each. Signalman Greenlees won new digs after tenders were called *for erection of cottage and flagstaff at the Signal Station* in Sep 1891. But he wasn't replaced upon retirement in Oct 1893 and his 4-room mansion on the North Head seems to have been abandoned.



Governance

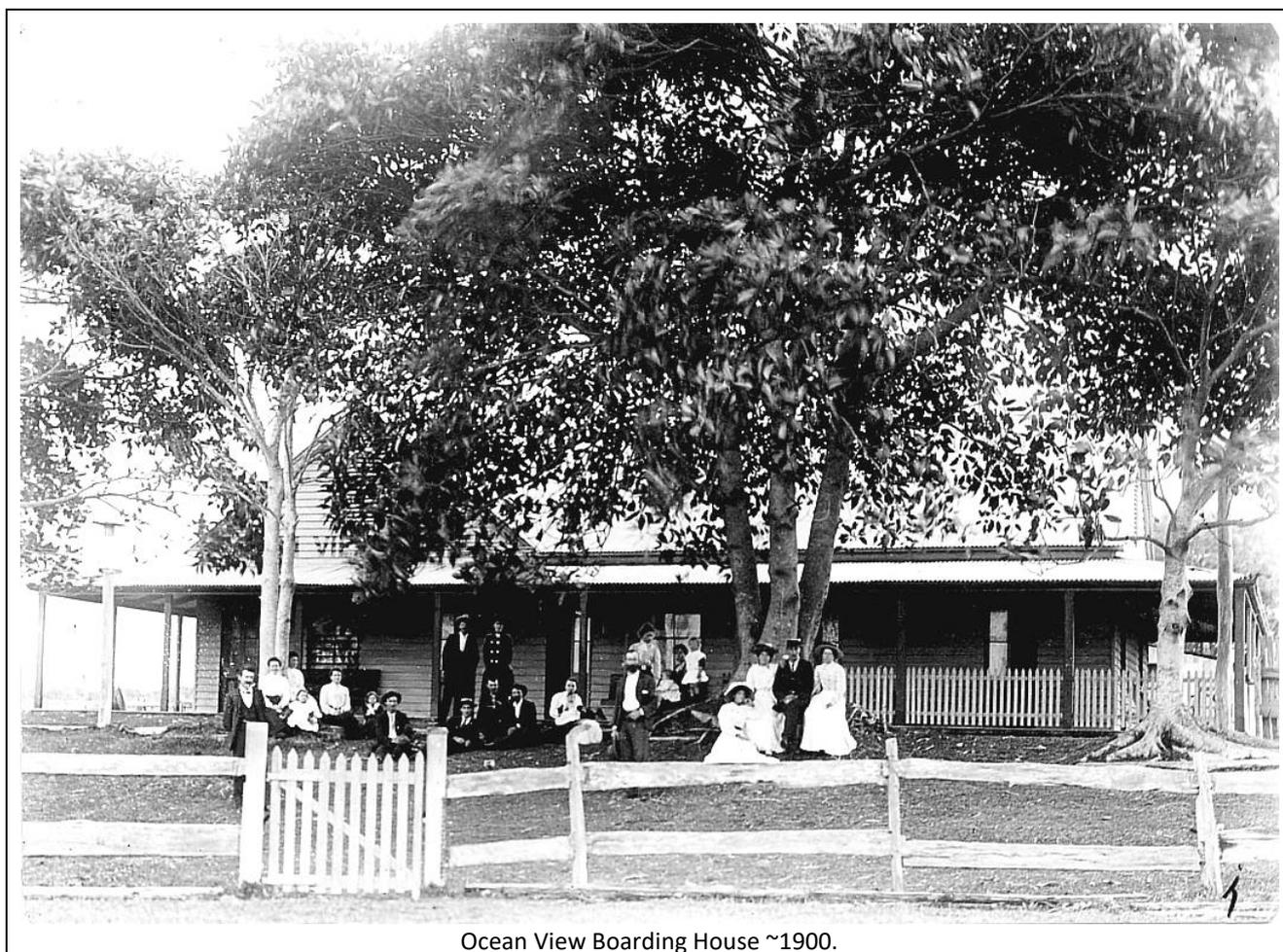
Under the colonists 'The Brunswick' included the area around Cape Byron and was administered from Murwillumbah, while the remainder of what became the Byron Shire was governed from Lismore, an interesting geographical division that roughly mirrored the old Bundjalung territories. Brunswick Heads remained the Bruns/Byron epicentre for many years, but after the Parishes of Billinudgel, Mullumbimby and Byron were created by being carved off the Parish of Brunswick in 1881, the Bay and environs looked to Lismore for certain functions, including the important road superintendence, although policing remained a Tweed/Brunswick function until 1892.

The roll for the Electorate of Clarence was published in Oct 75, showing 130 eligible punters in the Tweed-Brunswick Division out of an estimated population of 520. At the next election in Nov 77 none of the four eligible voters enrolled at 'The Brunswick', amongst the 141 registered in the Tweed Division, bothered to vote, as it was too much of a hassle to travel to Murbah, Kynnumboon or Terranora, the only polling places between the border and Ballina. And **Samuel Gray** MLA, pioneer Tweed squatter and a Bray brother-in-law, whinged to parliament that *In regard to the Brunswick... the returning-officer must have known that there were 30 to 40 timber-getters,*

who were thus excluded from registering their votes unless they travelled 30 to 40 miles.... Brunswick won a polling place guernsey with formation of the Richmond Electorate in 1882, 26 of the 30 grateful selectors there giving the nod to Protestant Irishman Gray's Irish Catholic opponent. Booths at Byron, Eureka and Tintenbar (an older village than Brunswick) arrived on the scene in 1885, 92 voting at Brunswick, 82 Byron, 67 Eureka and 204 Tintenbar.

Things had started to move along in early 1883 when 50 people turned up at the Heads to form a Progress Association for the purpose of memorialising the Government in regard to effecting the improvements required by the place.... They kept up the momentum and formed the 'The Selectors and Settlers Association of the Brunswick River', 3mths after which their rivals formed 'The Byron Bay Association' to compete for the public purse, **Joseph B. Kelly** of Tyagarah resigning from the Brunswick Association to become president of the Byron Association.

A visitor from the *Sydney Mail* discovered the place in early 1885, remarking that *A township is slowly but surely being formed at the Heads. At present there is one hotel, two stores, the ferryman's residence, and the post and telegraph office... in the pilot station on the North Head. However, Nothing but the opening of the channel will save the district from going steadily down hill. There is no market for produce but Sydney, and this is shut out by the want of proper means of communication.... So a breakwater is urgently required, and/or a jetty at Byron Bay. The tracks (roads would be a misnomer) into the interior are simply execrable.... The common phrase of "living in hope" will very shortly and truthfully describe the condition of the selectors on the Brunswick and surrounding country. Farming does not pay....*



Ocean View Boarding House ~1900.

The Byronites won the jetty in 1886, leaving no hope for the Brunswick Harbour Scheme, but awarded a consolation prize with a courthouse and police station following formation of the Brunswick Police Patrol District. It was carved off the Cudgen Patrol District and extended from Byron Bay to Burringbar, embracing over half the area planned as the aborted *Shire of Brunswick* in 1895 and again in 1898. In 1886 Constable **William Caleb Andrews** was posted in, saving Constable Taylor a trip from Cudgen whenever someone went berserk with an axe. **Joshua Bray**, Police Magistrate of the Tweed and the man most responsible for administration of the Brunswick, also began hearing cases at the new Brunswick Court of Petty sessions in 1886, but most of his time was spent sentencing drunks and adjudicating land/timber disputes. (He was also Coroner and Registrar for

Births, Deaths and Marriages on 'the Brunswick', as well as relieving brother **James Bray** as Crown Land Agent and Clerk of Petty Sessions in 1875.)

Bray's brother-in-law, **Frederick Dougan Nixon**, the first pub owner at Tumbulgum, had become a prominent Brunswick resident in 1884, in which year a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist found the district to be a *picture of desolation*. *On the northern headland is a group of dilapidated houses, with a poverty-stricken pig or two.... On the opposite side of the river is a public house, with the usual up-country group of loafers holding up the verandah posts....* Nixon became licensee of the shanty town's second pub, the Court House Hotel in Fingal Street, in 1889.

In late 1887 the District School Inspector said 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*. The census of Apr1891 found 70 people (43m and 27f) living in 11 dwellings in the Village of Brunswick, the jail and 2 pubs housing 63% of them, while the schoolteacher was *'camped in tent'*. In May1891 the School Inspector was optimistic that the railway would bring an increased population, and *the development of the farm lands in the neighbourhood together with the trade now being done in timber, should ensure the establishment of a small town at the mouth of the Brunswick. At present there are a post and telegraph office, two or three stores, two hotels, a police station, and other houses erected upon portion of the village reserve.*

Great Depression

In early 1890 an impecunious journalist with the *Illustrated Sydney News* said *Brunswick is not a huge place; three stores, two public houses, and a police station form the township..., and the only redeeming point about the Brunswick is that you can get the most splendid whiting that can be obtained in the colony.... Brunswick is patronised by commercials chiefly, who are passing through. Few people come to Brunswick, by way of a spell or visit.... The three identities of Brunswick are the 'White Cloud,' the 'Whiting,' and 'Marshall' – remove these and the township is wiped off the face of the earth....*

In late 1891 ornithologist **Archibald James Campbell** did a tour of 'The Big Scrub': *About half-past 10 we say farewell to Lismore, leaving by Jarvis and Son's coach.... 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.... 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....*



Waiting for the Ferry opposite the cnr of Park and Fawcett Sts., ~1900.

Tony Farrugia took over the ferry business of Englishman **Arthur Irlam (aka Harry) Houghton** shortly after the turn of century. Harry, now immortalised by 'Harry's Hill' on the northern headland, had been operating the 'ferry' (a row boat) since at least 1891 when he was based on the North side, at which time most traffic was still using the beach route to and from the Tweed. He died 1915 Qld, aged 69.

In early 1892 a *Town and Country* journalist coming from the Tweed said *along the road in the direction of the Brunswick River it is pitiable to look upon deserted homes..., where 9 selections out of every 10 have been abandoned by the struggling pioneers.... Here and there can be found a selector struggling along by the aid of road work..., and these strugglers exist by the sale of maize to the navvies now engaged on the railway works between Byron Bay and Mullumbimby.... There is a small township at the Heads on the southern side, which rejoices in bearing the distinction of being larger in population than Mullumbimby....*

The influx of 1000 or so railway navvies brought a massive increase in the police workload. The population of the Brunswick Police Patrol District, which stretched from Burringbar to Byron, housed 800 residents wef 1Jan1892, an increase of 180 in 12mths. As numbers continued to grow a new Patrol District of Byron was created by hiving off bits of the Brunswick, Ballina and Lismore Districts. By 1Jan1893 it accommodated 1200 residents, while Brunswick was now home to 1164, despite its southern boundary retreating to Tyagarah. But the benefit to Brunswick Heads was minimal after it lost its place on the original planned railway route. By the mid 1890s the Brunswick had sailed into the doldrums, while its stolen train had arrived at Mullumbimby station to signal a new capital of the northern district, so much so that in 1897 the Brunswick Police Patrol District was rebranded as the Mullumbimby District.)

The *Ocean View* went into mothballs in 1897 until resurrected as a boarding house 2yrs later by Mrs Marshall's nephew-in-law, **Robert Smith** of Billinudgel. The *Court House Hotel* was purchased by **W.J. Reilly** in 1899 and moved to his block opposite the School of Arts in Mullum. The Bruns School of Arts in Fingal Street was carted off in 1898 to fulfil the same function at Billinudgel. And the school took a long sabbatical in 1896 until reopened in 1903. The obituary for 'old Bruns' was finally written in late 1909 by W.J. Reilly when he purchased the Signal Station for re-erection in Mullum.



Frolicking on the river's northern beach 1905

The NSW census of Mar1901 only listed 4 identifiable householders at Brunswick Heads; **William Hunter** operating 'McCurdy's Wharf Ferry' on the Brunswick-Murbah Road, **Arthur Houghton** operating the privatised

ferry from the village to the North Head, Sgt **J.S. Boyd** occupying the police quarters, **James Reddacliffe** and **Gerard Wheat**. (In 1902 Wheat relicensed the *Ocean View* and the Reddacliffs reopened their boarding house.)

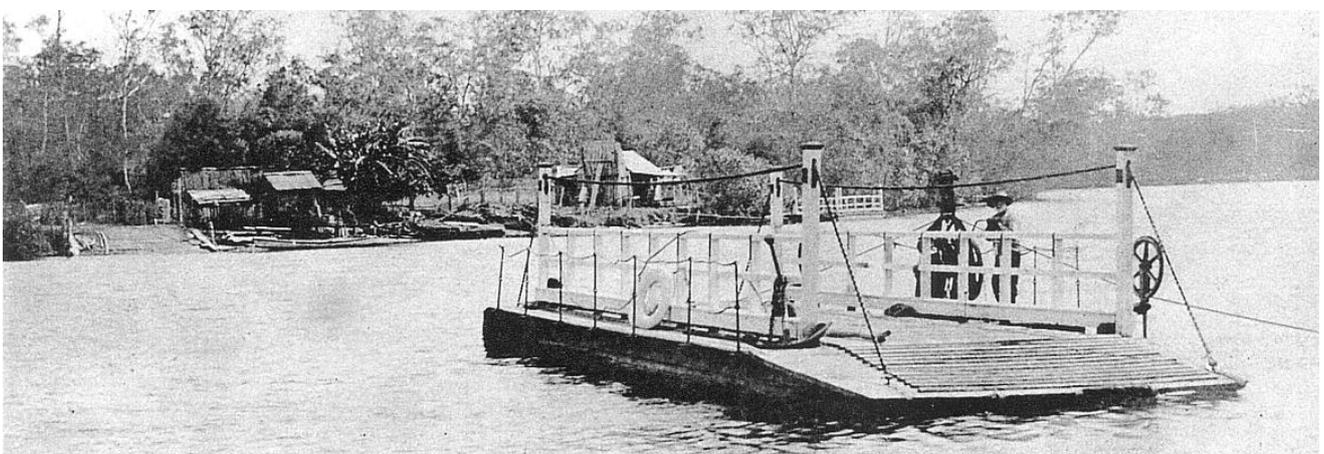
Elizabeth Marshall's funeral at Mullumbimby in 1899 was reported as the largest ever seen in the district. Her husband Robert went bankrupt trying to build the Court House Hotel in Mullum from materials salvaged from the Brunswick store and residence of bankrupt **Henry French**. Robert died in obscurity at the Bay in 1921, the only paper to mention the fact being the *Byron Bay Record*, giving no details other than *...He was between 84 and 85 years of age and was a native of England...*



The road into Brunswick Heads 1905



Anniversary Day Sports Carnival, Corner of Fingal Street and The Terrace, 26Jan1907, by which time Brunswick Heads was well on the road to recovery and promoting itself as a health resort.



McCurdy's Crossing ~1910 (with south bank background)

[**William Hunter** won the 'McCurdy's Ferry' lease in ~1890 with a tender of £75. In 1906 Byron Shire Council took command and re-employed him on a wage of £60/yr. He was forced to resign in 1910, retiring to the Old Mens' Asylum at Parramatta 2yrs later, aged 80, at which time his old shack was demolished and a new six-room mansion erected for his replacement (Thomas Allen).