



Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

17 Myokum Street MULLUMBIMBY 2482

Email: admin@mullumbimbymuseum.org.au Phone: 02 6684 4367

OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM

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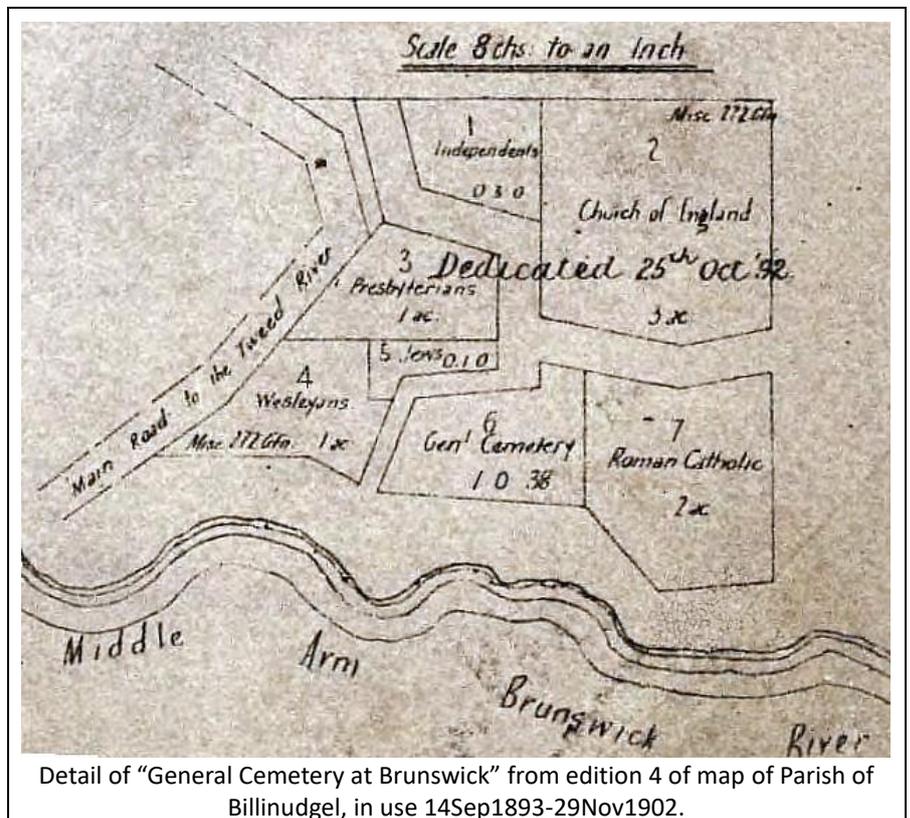
NEWSLETTER

May 2022

The Brunswick Necropoli

The reserve for the “General Cemetery at Brunswick” was deemed to have been created by proclamation of the 5¼ sq mile Brunswick Reserve, stretching 1½ miles each side of the river entrance, in the NSW Govt Gazette of 24Dec1861, page 2756. And there it sat, out of sight, out of mind, until the Gazette of 25Oct1892 got more specific by mysteriously and formally dedicating an area of ‘11 acres 0 roods 18 perches’ as a cemetery near the ferry terminal on the northern bank of the Brunswick, of which site all editions of the Billinudgel parish maps through to the 1920s continued to refer to as the ‘General Cemetery at Brunswick’.

But dedication of the Brunswick ‘village cemetery’ predates this ‘ferry cemetery’, presupposing that the latter was meant to service the wider Billinudgel district. No trustees were ever appointed to the place, nor any evident Billinudgelites ever interred in the inconvenient spot. Even **Gerald O’Connor**, credited as the founder of ‘Billinudgel’ (the spot known as ‘The Pocket’ until the railway commissioners re-christened the place in 1894) chose Mullum Cemetery for his final resting place 4Apr1910. It seems the funerary business was another ‘out of sight, out of mind’ matter until brought to light in a Government review in 1911, at which time the site was befittingly re-birthed as the Billinudgel Cemetery. In Feb1912 Byron Shire Council received a letter from the Lands Department in reference to the trusteeship of the cemeteries at the Brunswick and Billinudgel. With regard to the latter **Cr Banner** said that the present place marked out was not suitable, and he was of the opinion that a better position could be obtained nearer the township. He would move that, while the Council was willing to act as trustees to the two cemeteries..., the Department could select a more suitable site for the Billinudgel Cemetery, than the present one....



In Jul1912 the Minister for Lands withdrew his request for the shire to take over the trusteeship, at which time the *Billinudgel Progress Association* indicated a cemeterial affiliation with Mullumbimby in taking the initiative to request the Municipal Council to appoint a caretaker for the Mullumbimby cemetery.... And in Sep1912 the Lands Department followed-up with a decision that a cemetery at Billinudgel was not warranted, and that the one at Mullumbimby, 6½ miles distant, was considered sufficient for present requirements....

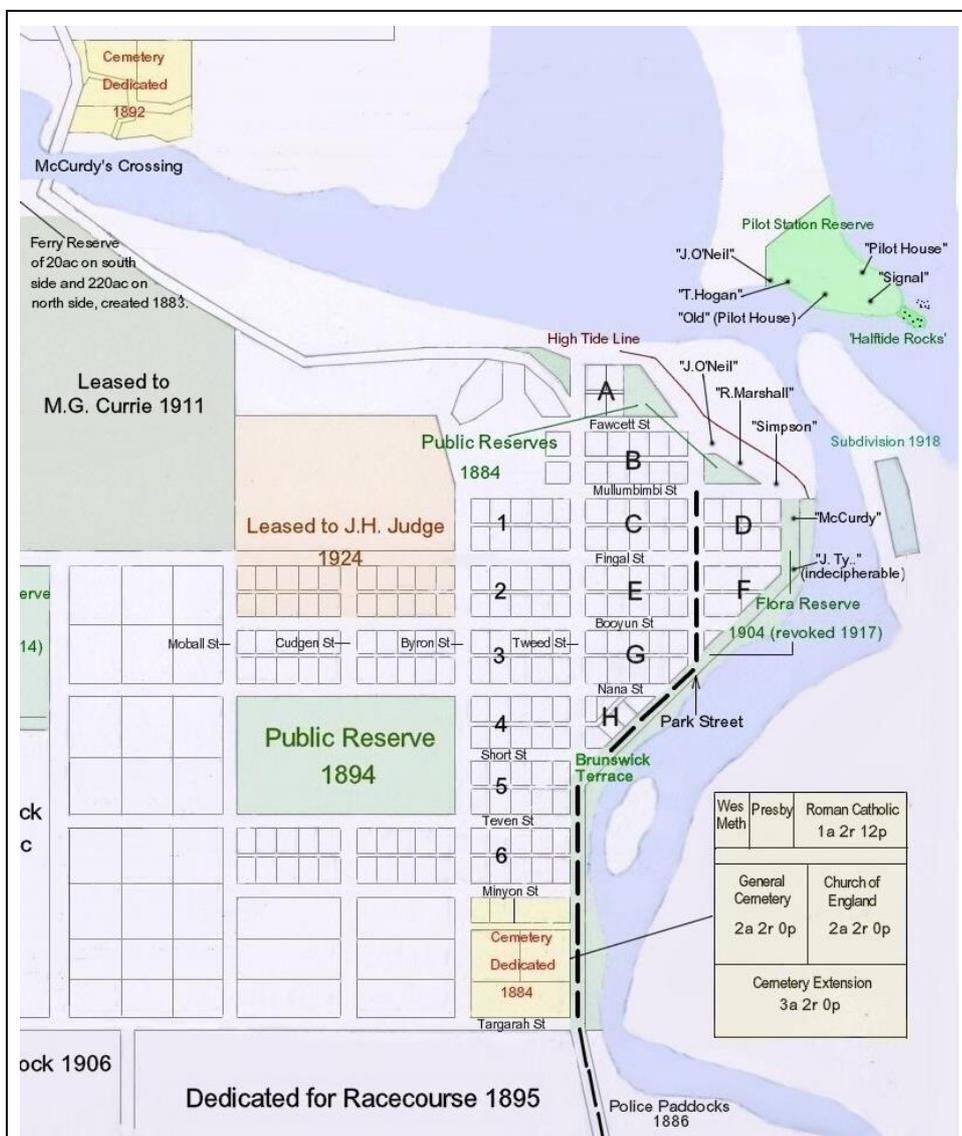
The matter bounced around in the bureaucracy until the Gazettes of 14Sep1923 and 6Aug1926 administered the *coup de grâce*, declaring the ‘ferry cemetery’ a reserve for the ‘Preservation of Native Flora’, of which Byron Shire Council was

appointed trustee. (Bureaucratic confusion continued when the mysterious annotation 'Dedication revoked Gaz 14/9/1926' appeared on edition 9 of the Billinudgel parish map, in use from 25Aug1921.)

In the meantime the Gazette of 18Sep1882 had 'Reserved From Sale For cemetery... in the village of Brunswick, an area about 12 acres...', bounded by the proposed Tweed, Minyon, Byron and Targarah streets, followed by the site's formal 'Dedication as a Cemetery' on 11Jul1884. (J.B. Kelly, a resident Catholic surveyor of Tyagarah, had completed his detailed marking-out of the cemetery on 15Dec1882 and forwarded his map to the Surveyor-General 6Mar1883). The 'Wesleyan Burial Ground' was the first to have trustees appointed, the Sydney-based Reverends George Hurst, William Clarke, William Kelynack, George Woolnought and George Lane taking on the duties. (At the same time the same ministers were appointed trustees of cemeteries at Ballina, Bolivia and Bokbara). Locals made it to the Wesleyan trusteeship on 2Aug1893 when The Rev Alfred Palmer (the Wesleyan Home Missionary of Murwillumbah), Messrs **Frederick Spann** (Brunswick), **William John Brag Ball** (Myocum), **Peter Olson** (Presbyterian Norwegian of Main Arm) and **Frank Grape** (a Swede of Mullumbimby, later prominent in the Salvation Army) were appointed. On 6Mar1885 The Right Rev Elzear Torreggiani, D.D. (Catholic Bishop of Armidale), the Very Rev Jeremiah Joseph Doyle (Dean of Lismore), Messrs **Joseph Bede Kelly** (Tyagarah), **Edward Boyle** (St Helena) and **Robert Campbell** (Bangalow) were appointed trustees of the Catholic Burial Ground. On 30Dec1892 Bishop Doyle of Lismore became chairman of the Catholic Trustee Board, supported by The Rev John Donegan Walsh (Lismore), Messrs Joseph Bede Kelly, Edward Boyle and **James McGettigan** (St Helena).

On 3Jun1892 the Gazette appointed The Right Rev James Francis Turner (Anglican Bishop of Grafton and Armidale), Messrs **Henry French** (Brunswick), **Frederick Dougan Nixon** (Brunswick), **William Grant Law** (Mullumbimby Creek) and **Charles Hough** (Billinudgel) to the trusteeship of the Church of England portion. And on 21Jun1895 Messrs Frederick Dougan Nixon, **Robert Marshall** (Brunswick) and **Peter Nelson** (Brunswick) were appointed trustees of the General Burial Ground. Apparently the Wesleyan Methodists were defacto trustees of the (shared) Presbyterian plots. Brunswick serviced the wider district until cemeteries at Cavanba, Mullumbimby and Bangalow were dedicated on 8Aug1890, 15Jan1892 and 1905 respectively. (At Bangalow all remains and headstones were relocated from the Catholic church graveyard, earliest being **Mrs Robert Campbell** who died 22Mar1896.)

The list of people interred in the Brunswick Cemetery at [Bruns-burials-deaths-Mullum-pre1900.pdf](https://mullumbimbymuseum.org.au/bruns-burials-deaths-Mullum-pre1900.pdf) (mullumbimbymuseum.org.au) was compiled from best available evidence. But it remains a mystery where those who died prior to proclamation of the necropolis were buried. The death certificate for **Captain Brown**, Master of the Schooner 'Star of the Sea', simply says he was buried 'at Brunswick River Heads' on 24Apr1877, perhaps referring to the North Head. At this time Kelly's future cemetery site was still thick virgin scrub with no road access, although there was probably a track along Brunswick Terrace. **William Jenkins**, who drowned 12Mar1870, had an obituary



Brunswick Heads Plan (Annotated Parish Map of 1906)
 (At this time the road from Mullum came via Saddle Road, meeting 'The Avenue' near the Police Paddock, thence along Brunswick Terrace and down Park Street as per the dashed line. The ~mile long 'Avenue' was formed ~1890 through a grove of Coastal Cypress Pines (and/or She-oak trees?), extending the whole way to Park Street.)

published in a number of Sydney newspapers in Jun1870, but no death certificate was ever issued and no record of whether the body was actually recovered. Ditto seamen **William Bassage, William Leverington, Peter Coleman** and **Samuel Kennedy** who drowned in a lifeboat capsized at the Brunswick entrance 14May1849.

Although the local cemetery continued to be used for burials of deceased Bruns residents through to 1942, popularity for a Mullum internment had begun to increase from before WW1. (Typical was the prominent **Henry Chisholm**, President of the *Brunswick Heads Improvement Committee*, who died 26Nov1926 and was buried in the Methodist portion of Mullumbimby cemetery). It's likely the Brunswick Cemetery started to suffer a lack of trustee oversight in the wake of the town's slow recovery from the 1890s Depression. It had lost viability as a port town after Mullum became the district's railway centre, but was back on a growth path from about 1905 after an entrepreneurial Progress Association began promoting the place as a 'health resort'. Nevertheless, by this time most trustees had disappeared into the woodwork, with new appointments few and far between, the place probably then left in nature's hands, which perhaps alienated prospective customers?

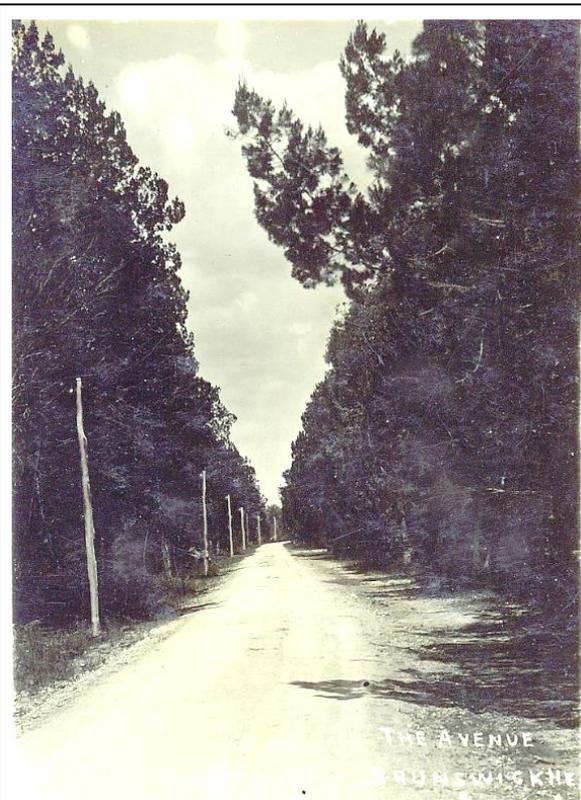
[On 11Sep1912 **Nathaniel Stephen Powell Moriarty** Esq (Anglican lawyer of Mullum who never returned to town after WW1 service) was appointed as a trustee of Brunswick's '*Unsectarian Burial Ground*'. On 12Mar1913 *The Corporate Trustees of the Diocese of Grafton and Armidale* became trustees of the Anglican portion. On 30May1919 Right Rev **John Carroll** DD (Bishop of Lismore), Rev **Terence McGuire** (Lismore), Rev **Richard Williams** (Mullumbimby), and **Thomas McDermott** Esq (Lismore) became trustees of the Catholic portion. (They progressively fell by the wayside until 2Jul1943 when *The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Lismore* were appointed to oversee Brunswick). The Methodists were still taking their responsibilities seriously when Messrs **Herbert Henry Williams** (Billinudgel, aged 62), **George Russ** (Mullumbimby, retired Kyogle 1923), **Casper Stock** (Brunswick, retired Lismore 1921) and the *Resident Methodist Minister in charge of the Brunswick Circuit...* were appointed 10Oct1919, which date was the penultimate Gazette reference to trustees of any persuasion to the Brunswick Cemetery.]



Unknown portion of 'The Avenue' 1905

A traveller from Byron Bay in Mar1907 commented that *A mile from the Brunswick Heads the road from Mullumbimby joins the Byron Bay-Brunswick road, and the run from this point on to the Brunswick is simply delightful. The road is through a grove of oak trees from 15 to 30 feet high.... A cemetery is passed, embowered with trees and bushes..., thence on to Park Street where We pass a small school, and the great township of Brunswick bursts on our view..., and the post-office, connected with Mullumbimby by telephone, is kept by Mrs Wakely....*

In Mar1951 the *Brunswick Heads Progress Association* started agitating to have the cemetery closed, at a time when there was a growing demand for building blocks (concomitant with the "*don't care a damn*" attitude of the *Byron Shire Council...*, reckoned the Brunswickians.) In May1952 the Lands Department joined the chorus during attempts to open up more Crown Land along the recently surveyed Minyon Street, where three graves had been found. And in



The Avenue 1906-1918.

(The telephone line from Mullum, constructed late 1906, ran alongside the Police Paddock until it was shifted during the construction of a divided road in Jan/Feb1919.

This is possibly the view looking south along 'The Avenue' towards the turn to Saddle Road. If so, the cemetery lies lower right alongside the road and off the page. (In 1971 it was determined *that all burials are located in two rows fronting Tweed Street.*)

Sep1952, in advising that *it was not proposed at present to open Crown land west of Byron Street...*, the Department again complained that the cemetery had encroached onto Minyon Street, presumably implying that street/cemetery boundaries were a moveable feast for the undertakers of the 1880s and 90s. (The 'paper roads' west of Tweed Street weren't formed until 1946/47.) Nevertheless, the Progress Association argued that *the expansion of Brunswick Heads was being retarded...* and wrote to the Minister in Oct1952 urging that *steps be taken to make the closed cemetery available for home building blocks...*, that the old Police Paddock be turned into a camping ground and *That Minyon Street be declared a public road...* Presumably the cemetery question was all too hard, as there was a deafening bureaucratic silence on the matter for the next 10yrs or so.

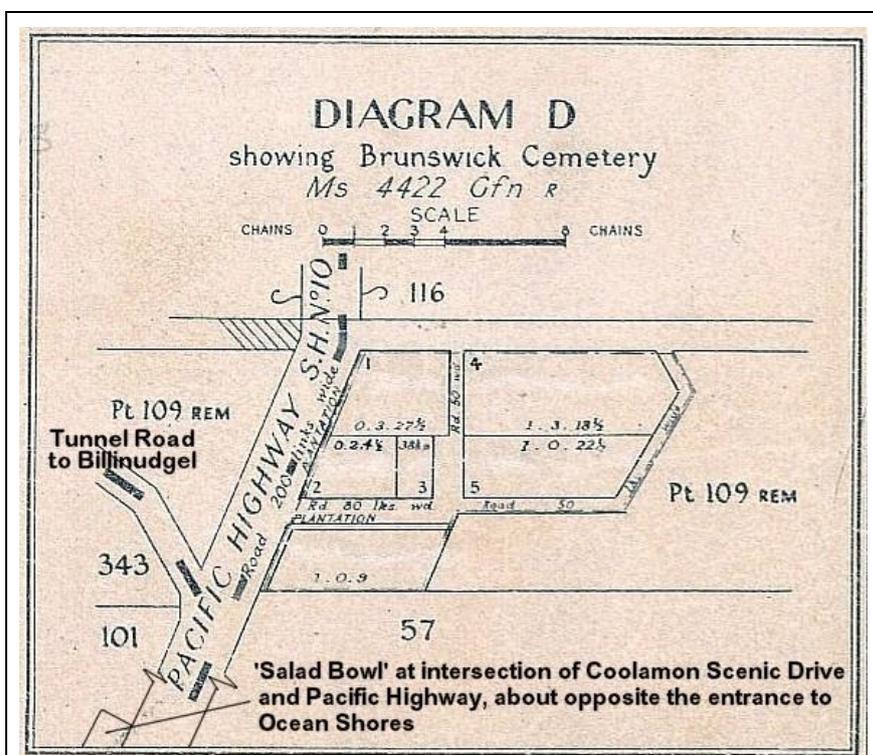
Control and management of the cemetery became the responsibility of Byron Shire with promulgation of *The Local Government (Control of Cemeteries) Amendment Act of 1966*. The Lands Department remained silent until Apr1967 when it submitted plans to the Shire Council for the creation of a new residential subdivision of 53 blocks as an extension to the southern end of Brunswick Heads. *The subdivision area embraces the old Brunswick Heads Cemetery containing 11 graves and extends southward along the Pacific Highway to a point almost opposite the Bowling Club. The plan provides for headstones from the cemetery to be built into a wall fronted by a rockery at the rear of a park area at the north-eastern corner of the subdivision. Two other strip park areas will also be provided. To reduce traffic hazards at highway intersections the subdivision will have only one approach street of access. This will be Minyon Street along the northern side, which will give access to a central square....*

After Council approved the Government plan Shire clerk **Mr R.T. Brownell** advised that *an area of land fronting the Pacific Highway opposite the "Salad Bowl", about three miles north of Brunswick Heads was to be set aside for a cemetery...*, which had been proposed by the Lands Department back in May1964.

In Mar1968 *Advice from the Minister for Housing and Co-operative Societies, Mr S.T. Stephens*, indicated that the Department of Lands had abandoned a proposal to develop the old Brunswick Heads cemetery for housing.... And in May1968 the Department of Lands has suggested that the area be converted to a reserve for passive recreation by Byron Shire Council... and suggests the removal of all headstones to one part of the land, possibly to be incorporated in a memorial garden, or installed around the perimeter of the area.... **Cr R.D. Mules**, who is a member of Brunswick Heads Reserves Committee, said that the committee did not want any more recreation areas. Shire Engineer **Mr H. Cook** suggested that all names of people known to have been buried there be incorporated on a plaque and the area cleaned up and kept mown. He said two of the headstones were actually across Minyon Street from the cemetery area.... With

its letter, the department forwarded a list of 68 names of persons registered as having been buried in the cemetery. Of these, it was stated, only 11 graves had been located, but four other graves, of which there was no record had been found. This left a record of 57 burials of which no trace could be found. The earliest recorded burial in the cemetery was that of E. Torrens (June 15, 1883) and the most recent that of William Parks (August 20, 1942). Of the 68 burials registered, 44 were made prior to 1900.

The NSW Government Gazette of 1Apr1977 declared the 4.6 hectare site a 'Public Park' in accordance with the provisions of section 10 (1) of the Conversion of Cemeteries Act, 1974. And while the Brunswick Heads Progress Association continued to press for the release of more land for residential housing, the Lands Department wouldn't budge on the cemetery site



Detail of Proposed 'Brunswick Cemetery' as depicted on 13th edition of Parish Map of Billinudgel with annotation 'Not Proceeded With'.

(The proposed cemetery of 6 denomination sections totalling 7ac 1r 16p, was carved off Portion 109, originally selected in 1887 by Donald Munro, who established the 'Kiora Hotel' there during the period of the railway navvies. In the 'Salad Bowl' area was the village of Hainsville.)

In Sep1968 the Ocean Shores developers started agitating to acquire this new 'Salad Bowl' cemetery site for residential housing and offered a 'land swap' as part of the deal. But in Sep1969 the Lands Dept decided to sell it outright.

and reiterated to an Association meeting in Jul1971 that *the area would not be made available for home sites in the future and its only possible use would be for a rest park. The chairman, Cr R.F. Mules told the meeting Byron Shire Council was currently considering a proposal to convert the cemetery into a memorial park.... And due to difficulties being experienced through the low-lying nature of areas suitable for subdivision, early release of blocks could not be expected....*

While the subdivision of Crown Land went ahead in the surrounding low-lying areas, on 23Dec1971 the Lands Department

was advised that *Council's Health Surveyor has established beyond any reasonable doubt that all burials are located in two rows fronting Tweed Street. Council therefore requests that an area one chain deep along the Pacific Highway frontage be declared a public recreation area and that the rest of the area be subdivided into building blocks and made available to the public. Whatever the interim Council machinations, in May1973 Council adopted a recommendation for an exercise to establish the location of all graves in the old Brunswick Heads cemetery.... The engineer, Mr A. Brandon, said it seemed unlikely that the area could be declared as anything other than a rest park or sacred park unless council could prove the location of all 68 graves. He said Mullumbimby Rotary Club was anxious to re-erect the existing gravestones in some form of memorial wall.... By Jun1973 All headstones have been removed from the now disused Brunswick Heads Cemetery. Mr R.D. Mules told the Brunswick Heads Progress Association that the headstones had been stored at Brunswick Heads treatment works pending their placement as a memorial on portion of the old cemetery area.... Mr Mules said it was possible portion of the old cemetery could be developed for residential purposes.... In Nov1974 the Shire Council finally went ahead with transformation of the cemetery site into a form of park.*



Memorial Wall as at 21Jan2022

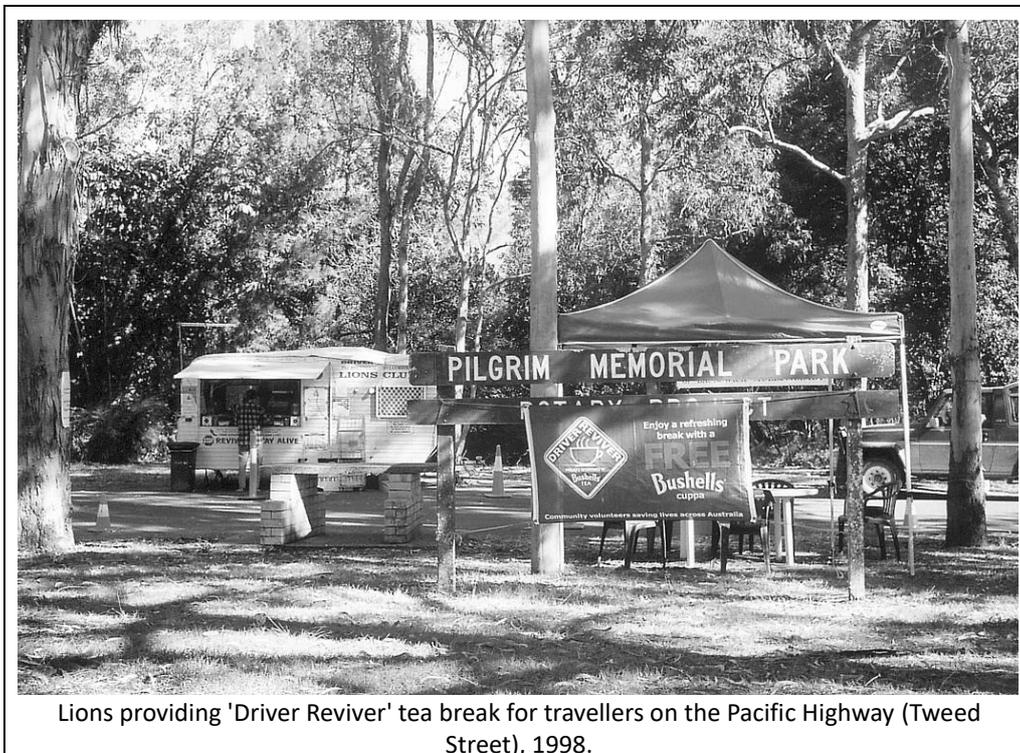
A severe bush-fire in Nov1915 destroyed all wooden crosses at the cemetery and left gravestones blackened and iron railings scarred..., but not much damage to the famous avenue of pines..., after which cemetery maintenance probably became an irregular event. As far as is known no bodies were ever exhumed and relocated in the process of transforming the cemetery into a park. Nor is it likely that next-of-kin were ever consulted. (A survey with Ground Penetrating Radar should be able to identify the exact number and location of each grave.)

At Mullumbimby's Annual Rotary Changeover Night in Jul1977, in the presence of 90yr old Foundation President **Bob Pilgrim**, outgoing president **Jim Fanning** said *Service activities during the year included the development of Rotary Park on the site of the old cemetery at Brunswick Heads.... Mr Pilgrim died Dec1977 and The day after his death, the family was informed that the application of the Mullumbimby Rotary Club to have the newly formed Rotary Park at Brunswick Heads named the Bob Pilgrim Park had been approved by Byron Shire Council....*

*Celebration of its 30th anniversary with a dinner in the Mullumbimby Ex-servicemen's Club was a highlight of the year for Mullumbimby Rotary Club... in Jul1979. At the annual changeover night Retiring president **Bernie Talbot** said major projects completed during the year included the construction of the toilet block in the Bob Pilgrim Memorial Park at Brunswick Heads.... (The Echo of 24Feb2015 reported that The Pilgrim Park toilets usage has significantly dropped since the Pacific Highway bypass of Brunswick Heads. Given the very poor state of these facilities and the absence of funds to upgrade them*

a decision was made to close the toilets pending a broader review..., which resulted in their demolition. Another victim of the highway bypass was the 'Driver Reviver' caravan operated from the park by Lions. And in 1983 the site almost became home to 'a historic museum and information centre.')

On 26Jun1980 About 70 people, including many members of the Pilgrim family, were present at Brunswick Heads when the Minister for Lands, **Mr Gordon**, dedicated the Bob Pilgrim Memorial Park. The late Mr Pilgrim was described as a true Australian pioneer by Mr Gordon.... Speakers also thanked



Lions providing 'Driver Reviver' tea break for travellers on the Pacific Highway (Tweed Street), 1998.

the Lands Department for providing \$1000 towards the cost of amenities at the park. The balance of the cost was shared by the shire and the Rotary Club. At the conclusion of the ceremony Mr Gordon handed over a further \$500 for additional amenities.

Pilgrim Memorial Park is now looking a bit rundown, which doesn't deter feral chooks and illegal campers from making themselves at home, despite the place possessing no amenities other than a dilapidated B-B-Que. Peter Tscicalas

Please note:

2022 Membership now overdue!

Please pay by the end of May if you wish to continue to receive the newsletter

**BRUNSWICK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. MUSEUM
RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP 2022**

Membership Fees	Payment Options	
Adults \$15	Cheque/postal order payable Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc PO Box 3678 Mullumbimby 2482	Direct Deposit
Concession \$10		Bank: Westpac
Students \$5		BSB: 032 583
Printed mailed copy of Newsletters add \$5 extra		A/c No 201192 Reference: Your name

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I wish to receive the newsletter by: email / post/ pick up at the museum

NEW EXHIBITION OBSESSIONS



Mrs Violet Frisby lived in Stuart St., Mullumbimby, from about 1986 to 2009 and during that period created many paintings about her life, experiences and memories, as well as making outfits for dolls that her family obtained for her from Op shops. Each outfit has a crocheted dress over a full slip and knickers. Some have crocheted shoes, some a hat; each is different in its detail.

Mrs Frisby created hundreds of paintings and dressed over 900 dolls. This display is but a fraction of her output.

In 2011 local Mullumbimby based artist Robyn Sweaney painted her portrait which was a finalist in the Doug Moran Portrait prize and again on display in the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) exhibition *The Popular Pet Show* in Canberra in 2016. Also that year her story was published in the NPG magazine 'Portrait'. In 2013 her work was exhibited along with Sweaney's work in two exhibitions, *A quiet obsession* in Sydney at Sheffer Gallery and then *Finding Mrs Frisby* at the Art Piece Gallery in Mullumbimby.



Our thanks to Robyn for sharing her story, a biography of Mrs Frisby and some of her paintings.

Mrs Violet Frisby b. 1917 d.2011
Untitled (self portrait with black bow)
date unknown, acrylic on board 16 x 41 cm



Mrs Violet Frisby, 2011 by Robyn Sweaney

CHART GRANT

Supported by the Australian Government's Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) program"



BVHS applied for and received a grant offered through Australian Museums & Galleries to purchase a defibrillator (which is now located in its special case on the front porch and available to all to use), 2 wireless security cameras with their own solar panels, one camera to monitor the defibrillator and the other for the back of the shed yet to be installed, a 'Square Terminal' so that we now have EFPTOS facilities in the museum and at the market, and lastly an oil spills kit (a new requirement for operating a market in the Byron Shire). How good is that!!



Australian Government
Culture, Heritage and Arts
Regional Tourism Program

ANOTHER EXHIBITION

Recently we received some delightful sleepwear for ladies and children. They are displayed in the glass cabinet.



Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

17 Myokum St, Mullumbimby
P.O. Box 378 Mullumbimby 2482

02 6684 4367

admin@mullumbimbymuseum.org.au
www.mullumbimbymuseum.org.au

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Newsletter: Members

WFD Supervisor:

Dr Frederick Theiss

Public Officer: S. Tsicalas.

All members are invited to contribute to this newsletter

Please email contributions for the newsletter to

admin@mullumbimbymuseum.org.au

*Deadline for newsletter items
LAST FRIDAY of the month

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12th May

@10.30am

**MUSEUM HOURS – Tuesdays
and Fridays 10.00-12.00**

Market Saturdays 9.00 - 1.00

**MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY
MARKET**

Next Market- Saturday May 21

mullumbimbycommunitymarket.com.au

