



Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

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OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM

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

NEWSLETTER

June 2022

MORE NEW EXHIBITIONS

Stewart's Menswear Window

Medical Matters featuring unusual items from our collection. Many thanks to Gerard and Sue for the use of their window. (Sorry about quality of photos – window reflections made them difficult to take.)



Left: Upper side view

Right: lower front view

Municipality of Mullumbimby 1908-1980

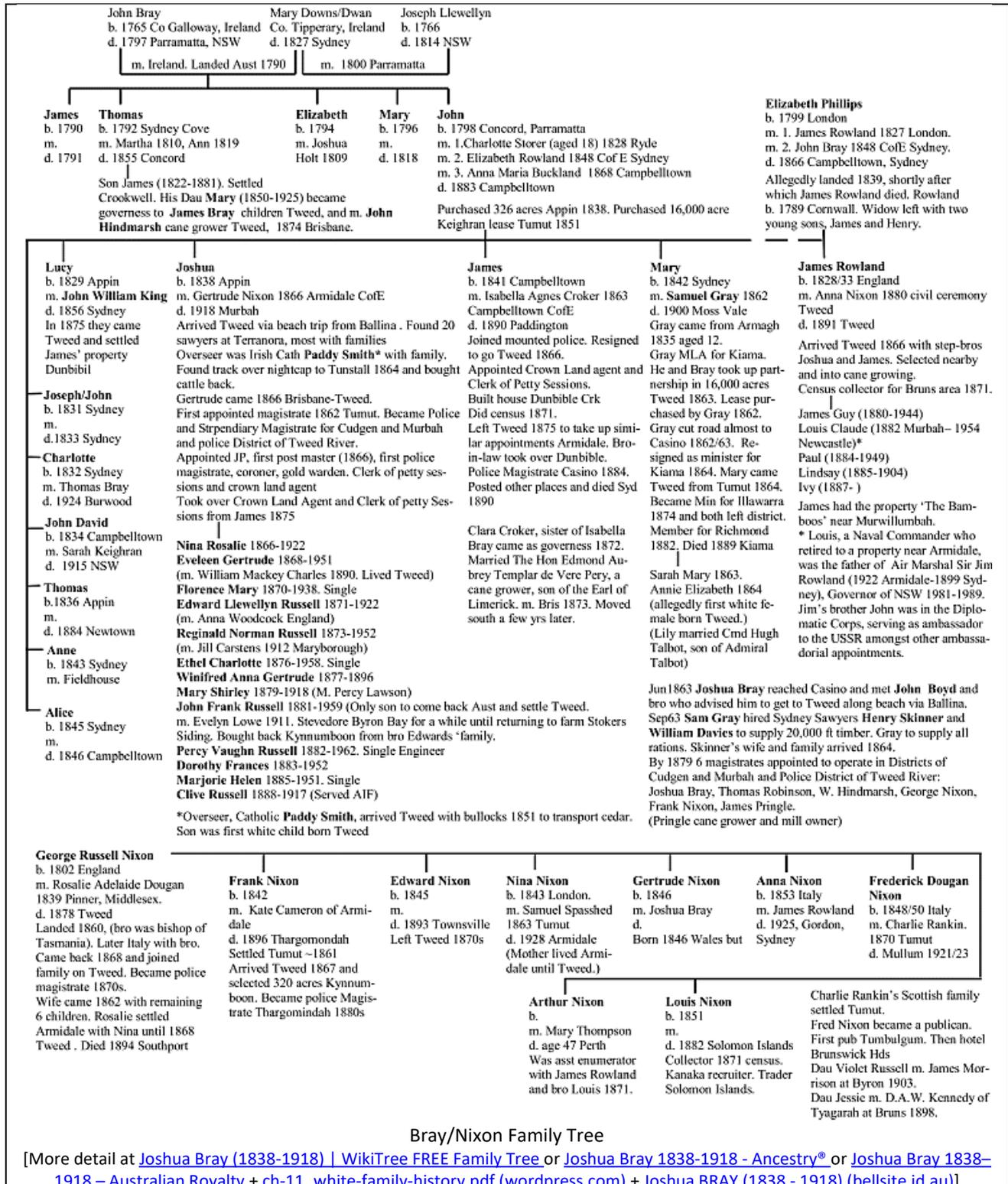
Telling the story of how the Mullumbimby Municipality developed within the Byron Shire and what led to their amalgamation.



The Bray Family Papers

The 'Bray Family Papers' are 'Primary Source Documents' from which the early history of the Tweed is derived. And we are the happy holders of a digital copy, comprising 800 pages of scanned letters, diary extracts and assorted documents, mostly from the quill of **Joshua Bray** (1838 Appin – 1918 Murwillumbah), covering the period 1853-1898, but unfortunately with no significant mentions of the Brunswick. Joshua Bray was pioneer royalty and started carving out his property from the virgin scrub in the early 1860s, creating 'Kynnumboon' near Murwillumbah.

His literary legacy enabled **Mary Kinsman** to put together the Bray family history, published in 2007 as '*Joshua Bray; A Tweed Valley Pioneer*'. But for the time-poor a shorter summary can be found at [Joshua Bray \(1838-1918\) | Tweed Regional Museum \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://JoshuaBray(1838-1918)|TweedRegionalMuseum(nsw.gov.au)), supplemented by Joshua Bray's Obituary at [Obituary - Joshua Bray - Obituaries Australia \(anu.edu.au\)](http://Obituary-JoshuaBray-ObituariesAustralia(anu.edu.au)). And complementing this review is the story of Joshua's in-laws, the Nixons, at [90-Newsletter-November-2019.pdf \(mullumbimbymuseum.org.au\)](http://90-Newsletter-November-2019.pdf(mullumbimbymuseum.org.au)).



Bray/Nixon Family Tree

[More detail at [Joshua Bray \(1838-1918\) | WikiTree FREE Family Tree](http://JoshuaBray(1838-1918)|WikiTreeFREEFamilyTree) or [Joshua Bray 1838-1918 - Ancestry®](http://JoshuaBray1838-1918-AustralianRoyalty+ch-11.white-family-history.pdf(wordpress.com)) or [Joshua BRAY \(1838 - 1918\) \(bellsite.id.au\)](http://JoshuaBray1838-1918-AustralianRoyalty+ch-11.white-family-history.pdf(wordpress.com))]

The Bray archive reinforces the contention that Joshua and his partner, brother-in-law **Samuel Gray**, owed much of their success to their large Indigenous workforce. (Ditto for the cedar-getters). In his second letter to fiancée **Gertrude Nixon** on 29Jul1863 he said *I get all my work done by the blacks.... Their camp is about 100 yards from the house (ie **Samuel Gray's** house 'Coolamon', a little further along the Rous River from where **Joshua Bray** built 'Kynnumboon'.) There are about eighty or so of them at this camp.... This would put you very much in mind of a slave establishment....* Many Aboriginals are listed by (nick)name, one of the more prominent being '**Grasshopper**', purportedly the same lad who adopted the eponym **Harry Bray** and took up residence at Byron Bay (and features at [First-People-of-the-Brunswick-Part-1.pdf \(mullumbimbymuseum.org.au\)](http://mullumbimbymuseum.org.au)). His father, King Bobby of Bumberbin, aka **Bobby Bray**, could be one of the 'Bobs' listed in Bray diaries.)

Grasshopper had an interim holiday in Sydney, the diary entry of 25Oct1865 recording that **James and Grass** started for Sydney..., and returned 18Dec1865, at which time **Harry Bray** would have been 15yrs old. **Florrie Bray's** memoir 'My Mother Told Me; Memories of a Pioneer family', posthumously published 1997 by Noella Elworthy (nee Bray), recounts that *They rode to the Clarence and caught the steamer from there. My uncle (**James Bray**) expected Grasshopper to be alarmed or at least surprised at the ship and the size and sights of Sydney, but Grasshopper kept a still, grave face and took everything as if he had been used to such things all his life. He was given a new suit of clothes and hat and boots, and then my uncle took him to the train to visit relatives at Concord....*

What follows are some extracts to give a flavour of Bray penmanship, mostly abbreviated quotes of various Aboriginal goings-on gleaned from these 'Family Papers':

Pg22: Letter to **Gertrude Nixon** of Avenex, Tumut, from **Joshua Bray** at Cassino, Richmond River, Friday 26Jun1863:
My beloved Gertrude, I arrived here safely this morning....

Pg23: *I left Sydney on Monday last in the Agnes Irving and was as usual very sick all the way up, and could not eat anything, my horse was sick too, he is scarcely well yet – I landed at the Elbow (now Lawrence) on Wednesday morning.... It is a lonesome place to travel, all thick black looking forest, and no houses.... I camped about ten miles from here last night..., made a fire and rolled myself in my horsecloth.... This is quite a little town a few houses scattered here and there.... **Mr Fawcett**, the Police Magistrate was very kind, he has sent to*

Pg24: *see if any of the **Tweed blacks** are anywhere about, to get one to show me the short way over to the Tweed. The "short way" is a road that **Mr Gray** cut through the scrub from the upper Tweed.... but it is utterly impossible for even a footman to go through the jungle, it is a mass of vines like ropes.... There are two men here **Mr Boyd** and his brother (of Cudgen), they know our family at Sydney. **Mr Boyd** also advises me to go round the beach, he says he will come with me to Lismore eighteen miles down this river, and see if any of **the blacks** are there....*

Pg26: To **Gertrude Nixon** from **Joshua Bray**, Walumban, Tweed River, Wednesday 29Jul1863:
*My Dearest Gertrude.... I sent a message for the post about a fortnight ago – my messenger is a **black fellow**, I sent him on foot to Ballina, where I have all my letters sent – about 70 miles from here – I waited ten days and then got impatient. So I got in the boat and went after him, or rather to meet him. I found him at Coogeen, about 20 miles down this river, where there is a tribe of **blacks** camped – he had only got back that far the day before....*

Pg30: *I have a man and his wife here (**Paddy Smith**)... and another old man – with the exception of them, I get all my work done by **the blacks**. I have 16 or 17 blacks at work every day.... they dug a drain a mile long, eight feet wide, and three feet deep – in fact they do nearly all my work, but I have a great deal of trouble looking after them. **Mr Gray** got a good many of them here, he had two or three and twenty at work one time, but they keep going and coming. Their camp is about 100 yards from the house. There are about eighty or so of them at this camp – old men, women and children. This would put you very much in mind of a slave establishment – but I always have to carry my revolver loaded with me..., and always having the pistol they know they are bound to do as I order them.... I have one very big fellow called **Midshipman**, he is a nasty looking fellow but a good workman....*

Pg32: *I always keep my eye on him – he has killed whites before now – all the others are **Walumban blacks** (Grasshopper/Harry Bray was born ~1850 Qld, probably Nerang?) – but this fellow – he is from the Logan or somewhere there – he has been at all the murders that have been committed about this part – his name is **Mischiefman**– he is a rascal, but... I always have my pistol....*

Pg37: *There are about 20 cedar cutters living on the river..., they live at a place called Terranora about 25 miles from here.... They all have little huts there and most of them have wives and families – their families are brought up pretty much the same as **the blacks** – without any education and very little knowledge of a Supreme Being....*

Pg41: *I teach **Paddy Smith's** children for two hours three times a week – a boy and two girls – they can just read and write.... On Sunday I teach them their Catechism, and make them read the Testament for an hour - they are Catholics, so I have to teach them the Catholic Catechism.... When **Mary** (his sister Mrs Gray) comes up we will have prayers....*

Pg42: *When I get up I go and shout out and call all **my blacks** together and count them – and tell **Mrs Smith** how many pints of flour to give them. I allow a pint each for meal....*

Pg43: I then regulate them, send some to split with **Paddy Smith**.... and some more to draw timber with the other old man.... I send more at all sorts of other work – it takes me generally until dinner time to travel from one party to another to see that they are going on properly – and show them how to do anything that they do not know....

Pg45: **My blacks** never go away without asking for my permission. I often give three or four of them a day to hunt.... I never let any but the working men come near the house, I intend to put a paling fence round the house before my sister comes and never allow them inside of it....

Pg55: To **Rosalie Adelaide Nixon** from **Joshua Bray**, Walumban Plain 2Sep1863:

Pg56: A few days ago I made an attempt to go to the top of Walumban.... – I took a black boy of mine (**Grasshopper**) and went up the river on the boat eight or nine miles and then walked to the mountain....

Pg61: To **Gertrude Nixon** from **Joshua Bray**, Walumbin, Tweed River 1Jan1864:

Pg62: When I had mail last time I took it 25 miles and then after hunting about for a day for **Grassman's Camp**....

Pg68: I want you to tell me where you think **the blacks** go to after they die.... They would not be sent to Heaven to associate with us – at least I think not.... Perhaps they are taken to other planets – perhaps each planet is a little Heaven where the different classes of people are sent....

Pg 75: I sent **Paddy Smith** for a team of bullocks, which he had at a place about 30 miles from here. I sent two **black boys** with him, when they were about half way home, **Paddy** fell in with a cedar cutters encampment and when he got drunk the boys came home with the bullocks. They watched them out in the bush all night, they had no means of making a fire and nothing to eat, but they took care of the bullocks. One of the boys was only given to me a short time previous by his father. I call him **Dulcimen**..., they can be relied on....

[Some letters appear to be missing. At pg39 of **Mary Kinsman's** book is a reference to letters from **Joshua Bray** to **Gertrude Nixon** in Jul1864 in which he recounts his trip to Tunstal Station near Lismore to buy cattle. Portion of one letter quoted at pg40 says ...I brought **two black boys** with me and we had three horses, no packhorse, we carried our things on the horses we rode. I had a small boy, **Grasshopper**, so I put most of the things on his horse....

My two black boys had never been away from the Tweed in this direction before and were frightened – they always kept close to me. When those **blacks** go into a strange place they are frightened of the other **blacks** – whenever blacks see a strange **black** they always kill him, so you may guess how close they stuck to me....

At pg41 of her book Kinsman quotes a Bray letter of 30Aug1864 in which he reports being stranded for 5 days on the return trip and running out of food ...**Grasshopper** caught a very large snake one day. I eat part of him, and was glad to get him. He was a large scrub snake about 9 feet long and as thick as my arm....]

Pg 287: To **Joshua Bray** from **Edward Nixon**, Casino 25Nov1872:

Pg 288: I was obliged to (??) little **Grasshopper's** colt - he knocked up on the road. The horse that I got for him is one that went melancholy and mad years ago.... (This is the last reference to '**Grasshopper**' on the Tweed. On 10Sep1873 diarist and cedar-getter **Dick Glascott** records '**Grassman**' at Possum Creek in the Brunswick district.)

Pg316: To **Gertrude Nixon** from **Joshua Bray**, scattered pages unknown date ???

Pg327: I went down to the Diman (blacks camp) at twelve o'clock, there I found two of the cedar choppers (white people) with rum making **the blacks** drink, doubtless with the intention of coaxing some of them away..., you may depend I astonished them, and started them off pretty quickly, they live twenty five miles from here..., they are the worst degraded set of men I ever saw having come I have no doubt from the lowest walks of life....

Pg 433: To **Frank Nixon** from **Joshua Bray**, Walumban 15Nov1863:

Pg 435: ... sometimes I have to go from home for two or three days, to take delivery of goods from the vessels at the heads, and whilst I am away on such journeys as that **Paddy** (my man) cannot manage the **blacks** – They rebel. I have complete sway over them myself.... sometimes I make them conform to certain strict regulations....

Pg720: Foolscape book used for the **Gray-Bray Diaries**. Starts 1Jan1865:

Pg721: 29Jan1865: **Grasshopper** and **Hopping Bob** started for Tyalgum.... 5Feb65: **Abraham, Peter** and **Grasshopper** left for a spell. 15Feb65: **Mr Bray** started up for Tyalgum about 10AM, **Antony** and **Broken Nose** packing and riding, he had with him **Jack, Ching** and **Nelson, Johnny** and **Midshipman** went along....

Pg722: 17Feb65: **Johnny** from Tyalgum with a letter.... 20Feb65: Let the **gins** dig out the last of the potatoes....

Pg723: 28Feb1865: **Jemmy, Sandy** and **Kitty** helping to get some cane trenched.... 1Mar65: **Jemmy, Sandy** and **Polly** digging cane trenches.... 2Mar65: **Sandy** left to look for news of the surveyor's camp.... **gins** sorting potatoes....

Pg724: 13Mar65: **Sandy** and **Nelson** brought the news that **Ching** and **Jack** had run away....

Pg725: 7Apr1865: **Jemmy** killed two cockatoos at one shot, he had only just begun to use a gun....

8Apr1865: **Jackey Bandash** returned and reported **Peter, Grasshopper** and **Abraham** to be on their way....

Pg728: 19May1865: **Abraham, Grasshopper** and **Midshipman** came about noon.... 25May1865: **Old Wamp** and **Nora** came this evening and took a box of honey.

Pg729: 13Jun65: **6 blacks** worked from dinner time at the drain, **Bungary** and **Johnny** came down from Tyalgum....

Pg732: 28Jul65: **Grasshopper** went to meet (Isaiah) **Rowland** the surveyor who is surveying a road from the Richmond over to the Tweed.... 4Aug65: **Abraham** and **Grass** made a road up at the pit.

8Aug65: **Old Sandy** came fetching a letter from **Mr Gray**....

Pg733: 19Aug65: **Long Bob** and **Johnny** went away.... 22Aug65: **Nelson, Abram** and **Grass** went away, gave them 11 shillings.

Pg734: 10Sep1865: Scolded **Pat Hays** and **Jemmy** for going to the River when **Mr/Mrs Gray** was bathing....

Pg736: 18Oct1865: **Sergeant Thompson** and **Old Abraham** came up from Terranora.... 25Oct65: **James** and **Grass** started for **Sydney**.... (Bray's underlining).

Pg737: 9Nov1865: **Bungary** and **Betty** got more Tamarinds for jam.... **Russian Bill** proposed to **Ellen** – asked **Mr Gray** for her....

Pg739: 18Dec1865: **Thompson** came up reported that the Liberty came in on Saturday night. **Sarah Boyd** came down in the vessel and **Grasshopper** (returned with her from Sydney?) Received a letter from **James** sent by **Grass**.... 21Dec65: **Betty** and **Polly** carting water.... 23Dec65: **Grasshopper** came home with mail – having been 3½ days away....

Pg741: 12Mar1866: **Ching** and **Long Bob** have bolted.

Pg742: 27Apr1866: **Liza** (?) got blind drunk, I put a chain and lock on the door.

Pg743: 21May66: **Old Sandy, Abraham, Grass** and **Young Jack** came up from Terranora....

Pg744: 29May1866: **Old Bob** came from Tyalgum. **Callaghan** came up from Terranora to get blankets for **blacks**..., gave out 3 to **Flat Nose, his gin** and **little girl**.... 1Jun66: **Nelson, Long Bob** and **Ching**... came up for blankets....

9Jun1866: **Old Bobby** came up from Coogen with letter from **Fawcett**....

Pg745: 25Jun1866: Had **Abraham** and **Grass** helping me to deepen drain.... Dug out a **black woman's** skull, it was quite rotten...

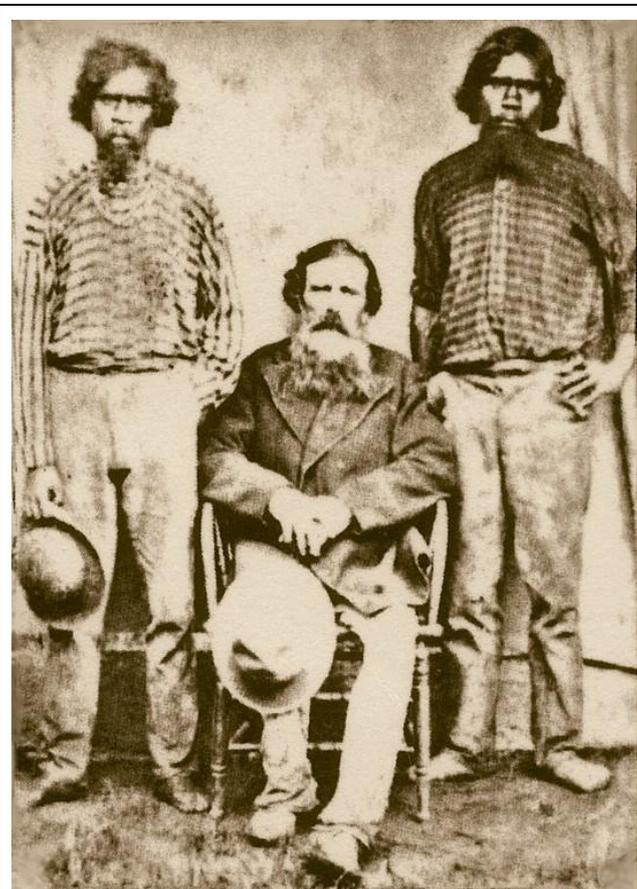
Pg747: 12Aug1866: **Eliza** was saucy – gave her a scolding.... 19Aug66: Found **Old Mary Ann** stealing corn... (Wife of Bungaree was Mary Ann Mitchell).... 20Aug66: Found **two gins** had bolted last night.... 21Aug66: **Walumban Johnny** and **Cranky Jimmy** came... to help with corn.... 24Aug66: **Pat Smith** and **Merrylegs** came for me to go to the chain.... 4Sep66: **James** sent **Little Johnny** (aka 'Young Johnny'?)

Pg748: 12Sep1866: Shelling corn. **Bob the blackfellow** came home from Tyalgum.

16Sep1866: James' blacks causing trouble. **James Bray** came over after dark (having left Dunbible at sundown).... After he had some tea our suspicions were aroused through a communication with **Clarke** about the blacks. **James** made up his mind to return home immediately.... So after getting the firearms, they went to the camp for James' blacks (**Boney** and **Jemmy**) but they ran to the river and swam over. **Bray** and **Clarke** ran up to the **Skinners**..., and succeeded in getting to the other arm, where the boat was, before the **blacks** got there, they then pulled up to Dunbible secured some **blacks** – chained up **Walumban Johnny** until morning, but let them all go again.

17Sep1866: The **blacks** all cleared away from Dunbible this morning. There were ten of the Tyalgum (Richmond) blacks camped close to **James Bray's** place last night. It is our opinion that they intended to attack the place at daylight this morning.... **James Bray** came over at dinner time with **little Johnny**....

[According to **Mary Kinsman**, the **James Bray** diary for 16Sep1866 (pg72) records that I got **Bony & Jimmy** to accompany me to the Coolamon.... Timber-getter **Henry Clarke** said my place was not safe as the Tyalgum blacks had left their gins up there and that meant mischief.... When we got to the camp the **Blacks** immediately ran away and swam the river – We then made all haste at **Skinners** and made our way through the brush on the middle arm. We succeeded "Thank God" in reaching the boat before the blacks – made our way home to Dunbible and surprised the camp – making **Wollumbin Johnny** a prisoner – and... the following grim warriors – **Jacky Bundash** – **Big Jimmy** – **Jimmy Kelly** or **Scrammy Jimmy** – **Wigam** – **Monday** – **Big Billy** – **Dickin** – **Charley** – and two of three names unknown – the names of my own blacks that were implicated in the plot were **Jacky Merrylegs** – **Bony** – **Pointer** – **Jimmy Crow** – **Jimmy** – or **Talgemma** – **Bob** and **Wallumbin**



'James Rowland and Tweed Aborigines' was the caption to this photo from Mary Kinsman's book. (Rowland died on his property, 'The Bamboos', across the Rous River from Kynnumboon, in 1891) (Isaiah Rowland, apparently unrelated, surveyed the NSW/Qld border, and died 1878)

Johnny – I kept Wallumbin chained up until Monday morning and then threatened to shoot him – he then revealed a portion of the plot that they intended Murder but it was a Black to be the victim - so then I let him go – tho’ I was convinced that he was telling a lie. I feel thankful to Thee! Oh God! That thou didst frustrate the designs of these wicked men and didst cause my beloved wife and children to rest securely under the shadow of Thy Wings in repose....]

Pg748: 2Oct1866: Abraham and Bucking Jack came for news of Dunbible affair.
Pg749: 3Dec1866: James B went home. Johnny bolted and took the boat....
4Dec66: James B came here and went to Cudgen after Johnny.... 8Dec66: **Constable Parker** came up with **Little Johnny**. We have chained him to **Jimmy** for tonight.... **Mrs Gray** found out last night that **Maria** had been taking the currants....

1871 census: Kinsman pg 73 says **James Bray** was the Enumerator of the census and appointed 4 collectors.... **Mr Rowland** takes the Brunswick district about 30 miles from here. He has to take a guide (**a black**) and go across the mountains, a great part of the distance being dense scrub through which they must cut their road... said James Bray’s letter to the Registrar General. James Rowland registered 70 of the total 135, which did not include 50 who belonged to the district but at the time of the census were across the border. (Rowland probably included the Indigenous encountered along the way at such places as Burringbar and Mooball. And he may have ventured onto Tyagarah and Byron if his charter was to poll the *Police District of Tweed River*.)

In 1876, 149 Aboriginals were registered as resident in the same area.

By 1887 the number had decreased to 97, 15 of whom were ‘half-castes’.

(In Dec1885 Joshua Bray’s correspondence book has a total of 101 – 14 men, 20 women, 10 boys and 16 girls, all ‘full-bloods’, and 6 men, 15 women, 8 boys and 12 girls who were ‘half-castes’.)

Peter Tsicalas

MARKET UPDATE

Over the last year owing to Covid and the amount of rain we have had, our markets have really suffered. We had to cancel the August, November, March and May markets, and some that we did hold had a very small attendance of stallholders and visitors.

Hopefully the weather will improve and the grounds will dry out. It is not only the low flat area above the creek and the higher area next to the museum steps but also the road verges. Some aggregate has been spread on Stuart St but lots more may be needed on Myokum St. and near the steps. Thanks to Mullum Hire for sharing the cost and to Mark for spreading the aggregate. Hoping for good drying winds.

June 1st update: even though we are getting some good drying winds, Barry Lomath, our stalwart on the ride-on, is still getting bogged in places. Thanks Barry for keeping our grounds looking so neat.

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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Newsletter: Members

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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 14th June

@10.30am

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

Market Saturdays 9.00 - 1.00

MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY MARKET

Next Market- Saturday June 18

mullumbimbycommunitymarket.com.au

