



NEWSLETTER
February 2026

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc.

MUSEUM

17 Myokum Street MULLUMBIMBY 2482

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OPEN: TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS 10 AM – 12 PM

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

The Evolution of Mullumbimby's Wellness Industry

For many years Mullumbimby has preached the therapeutic benefits of cannabis (particularly of the home-grown variety patented as 'Mullum Madness') which, together with its righteous reputation as the anti-vaxxer capital of Australia, gives the place a certain cachet amongst fringe groups of the health industry and license to claim primacy in the current 'wellness' boom. Riding this boom is the 3yr old *Banya Bathhouse* in Burringbar Street advertising as a 'wellness complex', superseding the 25yr old 'Kiva Spa' in McGougan's Lane; 'Santos Organics', Mullum's pioneer health food store, promoting *health and wellness* (and medicinal mushrooms), is also home to 'Santos Apothecary', a *naturopathic dispensary* offering *holistic remedies...*, *wellness and vitality...*, but its old stablemate, 'Community Acupuncture'..., a *cornerstone of holistic health...*, *healing and wellness...*, has a new home and new prices in the expanded two-storey 'Mullumbimby Comprehensive Health Centre' in Stuart Street, which offers *all facets of wellbeing and holistic support*; Montecollum's Crystal Castle, long-dominating the 'crystal wellness' category, has had to share a slice of the pie with 'Mullum Mandala' in Stuart Street, until recently supplementing the healing power of crystals with its famous energy-focusing 'crystal chair'; and a smorgasbord of 'wellness centres' catalogued in the latest edition of 'Byron Healing' (Vol 8 of 30pgs), distributed with *The Echo* of 17Dec2025, most listees demonstrating their services and products in Bangalow's A&I Hall during the latest *Starlight Festival*, a 'wellbeing market' that has grown year by year since 1995.

Not to forget BVHS's contribution with its 2017 video story on Mullumbimby's 'alternative healing culture', its hippie beginnings and subsequent bewitching of a much wider audience. *The alternatives/hippies brought new awareness to all aspects of living, and the plethora of choices around food and healing still available today are a direct result of that pioneering time.... Alternative medicine is probably the most prominent feature in our shire today...* said the reviewing *Echo*, which also makes an entertaining contribution to the community's wellbeing through its weekly Stars column. (See our web pages at mullumbimbys-magic-the-culture-of-the-70s-80s/.)

Wellness has continued to grow into big business, having a significant impact on Byron's economic wellbeing and increasingly underpinning the tourism sector, now including holistic health retreats dispensing 'spiritual wellness' for the nurturing of the soul along with body and mind (as does 'Kinesiology therapy', available everywhere from many passionate practitioners). And providing fodder for the wellness monster is the Mullum Campus of the Byron Community College, offering 'health and wellbeing courses' covering a number of holistic mindfulness subjects, including Tarot Reading and Astrological Divination.

The leading pioneer in this era of the New Age, and the likely first to start practicing 'Ayurvedic Medicine', was **Dr Surendranath (Suresh) Ranavare** (1941 India – 2012 Tugun), a 1966 graduate of Grant Medical College, Bombay University, who was attracted to Australia in 1971 and called to Mullumbimby in 1976 with a new menu of services to cater for the tastes of the game-changing hippies. As well as Nutritional and Ayurvedic Medicine, his repertoire included hypnotherapy, aroma therapy, acupuncture and spinal manipulation. Netta

Health and Wellbeing, courtesy BVHS.
(The Video is yours for \$20 or view all 4 DVDs in the series on a USB for a bargain \$50.)



MacKinnon's book *'Fetch the Nurse, and Call the Doctor, Quick'*, published by BVHS in 1994, says *Dr Suresh's practice is perhaps one of the oldest in the shire, as it is directly descended from the first Mullumbimby practice, through the Gibson line.* He had acquired the practice of the elusive **Dr Madhukar Eknathrao Wable** (aka Wable Madhukar Eknathrao and Madhukar Wable Eknath Rao), a graduate of Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, and Edinburgh University, Scotland, who had only lasted a year after taking over from **Dr Peter James Angus Rich** who, in 1973, had acquired the practice in the rooms once occupied by the Gibson partnership in the Simpson Building at 24 Burringbar Street. [**Dr Rich's** surgery was the contact point for the registration of *All persons interested in attending Yoga Classes in Mullumbimby... in Judo Hall, Mcgougan's Lane.... The classes are being sponsored by a group led by Mr Adrian Rawlins of Main Arm....* (See [Newsletter-Dec-2014-Jan-2015.pdf.](#))]

In Aug1983 **Dr Suresh** chaired the *Family Medicine Seminar held by Mullumbimby Community Aid Council* (of which **Colin Scattergood**, a leading light in the Main Arm hippie commune, was a board member).... *It was well attended and participants were informed about yoga and stress management by swamis from the Satyananda Ashram at Lillian Rock, including Swami Ramanda Mauryananda. A delicious supper was prepared by the hari-Krishnas....* (A week later "Doc" Suresh entertained a large party of friends to a sumptuous Indian dinner... cooked in clay pots specially imported from India... at Rajah Mataj... his new business venture on the Gold Coast.)

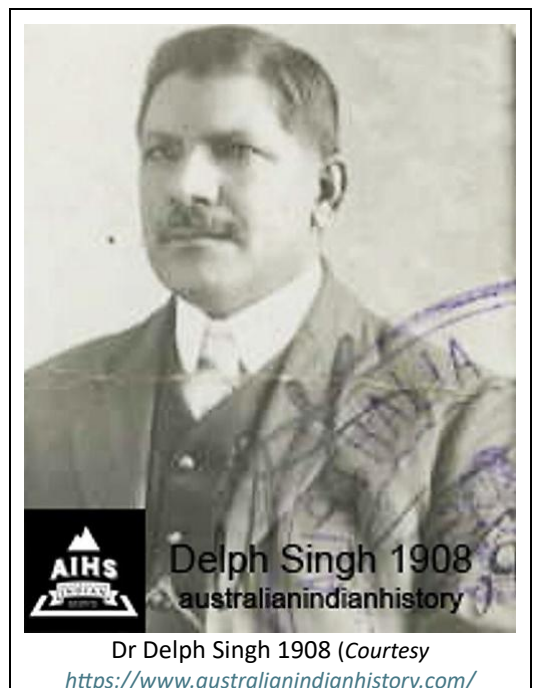
Dr Suresh features in articles in the *Medical Observer Journals* of 1997 and 2000, which record that *he practices conventional medicine along with complementary medical practices...*, the man himself adding that *I feel very fortunate to have ended up in Mullumbimby because it has given me the opportunity to practice medicine the way I wanted. I've witnessed massive cultural changes in the time I've been here..., seeing conservative farmers give way to counter-cultural people... searching for peace and happiness.... He earnestly recommends that his colleagues explore some of the concepts of mind/body health....* (And apropos of something or other: As a card-carrying member of the ALP, and president of the Mullum branch of the party, he was politically aligned with the left-leaning hippies, disciples of St Gough.)

Dr Suresh was still seeing patients three days before his death of a heart attack 22Jul2012, aged 71, having served Mullum for 36yrs all up. [Ref <https://www.echo.net.au/2012/07/vale-dr-suresh-our-longest-serving-vmo/> (*The Echo* 30Jul2012); [Doctor continues to support community, even in death | Daily Telegraph](#) (*Northern Star* 27Feb2014); and [29.-Newsletter-May-2014.pdf](#) (BVHS, which holds a number of artefacts from Dr Suresh's surgery).]

It was a long and winding road to the Suresh era from the track pioneered by his fellow countryman, the dodgy **Dr Delph Singh** (1872 Marg, Punjab, India – 1925 Rydalmere, Sydney), the first disciple to bring wellness to Mullum in 1901. He had come to the region from Sydney in 1899, shortly after marriage to a lass of Chinese extraction, **Edith Rose Tanko** (1878 Murrurundi -1917 Arncliffe), initially basing himself at Grafton and advertising as a *Herbalist and Masseur*, boasting that *Cases given up as incurable by others specially undertaken...*, and shortly afterwards awarding himself a doctorate. He arrived in Lismore under a cloud in Nov1900, begging to *inform the public that he is not a Registered Medical Doctor under the N.S. Wales laws, but he is qualified to carry on business as an Indian Medical Doctor under British law...*, from his rooms in Magellan Lane, from where he conducted consulting trips around the traps and retailed snake oil in various sized bottles. By Nov1901 he was based at Bangalow, continuing to service Mullum with a guarantee that *Diseases pronounced incurable treated with success.* In 1901 he also joined the gold rush to Mullumbimby Creek, as well as purchasing two thirds of the area of land in town bounded by Saltwater Creek and Acacia, Myocum and Dalley Streets, upon which a pukka residence/consultancy in his wife's name was erected by Feb1904. (In bankruptcy proceedings throughout 1904/05, he was



Swami with devotees, Main Arm ~1975. (A number of Swamis and Gurus came and went from Main Arm, including *Indian Missioner Mahatma Padarthanand* and *Shri Bal Bhagwan Ji*, brother of world Divine Light leader *Guru Maharaj Ji*.... Australian secretary of the Divine Light Mission was the enlightened Englishman **David Lovejoy** of *The Echo*.)



referred to as *'Delph Singh, of Mullumbimby, Indian Doctor'*, while the silver-tongued judge, *in the course of his summing up, remarked that Delph Singh belonged to a race which had shown that their veracity could not be relied upon....)*

In Sep1904 he leased his house and paddocks in Mullum to **Dr Leighton Kesteven** (1852 London – 1924 Sydney) and went walkabout, finally ending up in Cooma, in the meantime having a falling-out with Kesteven over rent, a case settled in Lismore where Delph was represented by Lawyer Holman, later Labor Premier of NSW, and Kesteven's witness was Mullum real estate agent **W.R. Baker**, a staunch Liberal and earlier 'Free Trade' election candidate. In early 1907 there seems to have been some pressure put on him, *in absentia*, to sell out of the Mullum town blocks, or at least the one with the house, to Dr Kesteven, who allegedly named the place 'Philadelphia'. And on 7Dec1908 Magistrate Kesteven JP got the last laugh when he instigated Delph's 3rd bankruptcy.



The home of Dr Leighton Kesteven, 1906. (Built by James Barnsley of Ballina for £400, including coach house and stables that mysteriously burnt down Oct1904.) (House still there on Jubilee Ave opposite the Swimming Pool)

Delph's associate was the Chinaman **Willi Young**, the manager of his Mullumbimby Creek properties until Willi, like Delph (and New Agers many years later), figured there was a quid in practicing alternate medicine at the Bay. (The next 'Celestial' in Mullum was **Charlie Man Wha** who opened a fruiterer's business somewhere around town in 1903, his healing herbs supplied by **Sam Lee**, a market gardener at *'The Botanical Gardens', Mullumbimby Showground.*) During Delph's sojourn at Byron Bay 1905/06 his midwife was **Louisa Marshall**, proprietress of *'The Nursing and Maternity Institute'* next to his 'surgery', on the corner of Fletcher and Lawson, and his coachman was Brunswick pioneer **Robert Marshall** who, on at least one known occasion, chauffeured Delph around the Tweed. Perhaps stealing a leaf from Delph's medicinal recipe book, in 1910 Mrs Marshall started flogging her *Magnetic Embrocation Wonder Cure*, later repurposed by Robert to *Cure Horses and Dogs of Mange, Sore Backs, and all Sprains....*) (Refresh on Marshall story at [76-Newsletter-August-2018.pdf](#).)

Prior to the arrival of **Dr Kesteven**, 'conventional medicine' was ministered by Druggist **Frederick George Turnbull** (1880 Windsor – 1941 Hornsby) from *The Brunswick Pharmacy* in Burringbar St., established Sep1903 on or near the current site of Craig Watson's Pharmacy. While dispensing concoctions for various ailments, including a potion for the treatment of snake bites, Turnbull, who learnt his alchemy through the apprentice system, mainly retailed stationery supplies and a host of 'fancy goods'. In Sep1904 he was relieved of the doctoring duties by Kesteven, who was followed 2mths later by the mysterious **Dr Buchanan** of Byron Bay who opened a part-time consultancy near Allan Cameron's new Dalley store, and in Oct1905 by **Dr Francis Gillies Connor** of Lismore to initially start a practice in **J.G. Locke's** ex-house a couple of doors from the original Bank of NSW, opposite which dentist **Percy Warner Gaggin** of Lismore opened a pain chamber in Jul1905, taking in **Herbert F. Virgin** as a junior partner. (In Apr1906 Gaggin passed the practice to **Percy S. Poolman** of Picton, who decided to build a new persecution complex next the Presbyterian Church, adjacent to where **Dr Duncan David Gibson** commenced practice in Aug1909 and went on to become Mullum's longest serving medico.)



Dr Leighton Kesteven ~1887 Brisbane
(Courtesy NSW State Archives)

Over at the Bay **Willi Young**, aka **Willie Yung Lee**, was trading as a fruiterer, grocer and general storekeeper from at least 1905 until he morphed into a 'doctor', becoming a well-known local identity as he travelled around delivering his alternate medicine. By early 1914 his reputation as *'the healer'* had spread all over the north coast, with pilgrims arriving by the wagon load to be administered with the strange herbs and veggies he grew himself, likely dispensed with an accompaniment of New Age manipulations and/or incantations. He was also *credited with hypnotic or clairvoyant propensities* - at 2/6d per consultation. (The newspaper reports offer no description of procedures to judge whether his treatments were analogous to the current wellness catalogue of cranial-sacro and chakra balancing, colonic irrigation, reiki massaging... etc.)

He set up a hospital at the Bay in mid1914 by buying up *a terrace of cottages on the same block as his humpy. In appearance he is just a common chow, smaller and thinner than the average John, with the usual flat face and receding chin. There is nothing about him to indicate the clairvoyant.* The council wasn't happy with the state of the place and tried to close him down, but he had a loyal following and wasn't to be intimidated – *A glance in* (by the Bangalow Herald reporter) *showed it to be crammed with people, old, young, and middle-aged, all herded together in semi-darkness. It was understood that these people had received tickets of admission on the previous Monday and their turn had only come on Saturday...*, but his premises are *not fit to accommodate the number of people whose faith in Mongolian Allopathy prompts them to resort to the chow for relief...* He seems to have opened consulting rooms at Tweed Heads and Casino in 1916, but was still firmly ensconced at the Bay in mid1917 when his workload was such that he was in urgent need of a housekeeper. At some stage he moved to Grafton where he dispensed concoctions until late 1929 when he was high on something and crashed his lorry, after which he became a market gardener '*on an extensive scale*'. (At which time **Tommy Young**, an ex-hotel cook, was offering '*guaranteed permanent cures for indigestion... and all other ailments treated*' at his herbarium opposite the railway station at the Bay.)

Chinese herbalists were operating all over the place through to the 1930s offering cures for a wide range of ailments from diarrhea to leaking brains. **George Sun** turned up at Bangalow in 1907 and remained for 23yrs until moving to Lismore, passing the Bangalow business to his partner **George Sue**, aka **Sue Sing Lee** and **J. Sue Lee**, who was burnt out in 1931 and moved to Casino to operate from the shop of **Charlie See Tong**. **George G. Young**, also Bangalow based but with a travelling sideshow, turned up in the early war years and advertised with many citations from satisfied customers throughout the Tweed-Brunswick region, before disappearing around 1920. **Wong Yuen**, **George Yin Lee**, **George Young Fong**, **George Dow** and **P.G. See & Tong** serviced the district from Lismore, while **Yee Wah Hong** and **W. Ah Quee** regularly toured around the Brunswick district from their base in Murbah. **George Lau On Lee**, nominally based in Sydney, was a regular visitor to towns all over the region. From the mid1930s the Murbah-based **Wing Yuen Lee** also started peddling his concoctions around the neighbourhood. **Abdeen Ferris**, a Syrian Herbalist, was a strong competitor, along with **Abdullah**, an Indian and Oriental Herbalist, also both Murbah based, although the former was based in North Lismore to the mid1920s. Earlier, the 'Hindoo' Herbalists had ruled the roost, with the Casino-based **Esur** and **Nurain Singh** having the highest profile as they regularly toured around Bangalow, Mullum and Murbah. In 1907 they were in business in Sydney with none other than **Dr Delph Singh**, but came to the Northern Rivers shortly afterwards. (See <https://www.australianindianhistory.com/post/sikhs-foundation-members-of-the-r-s-l-esur-nurain-singh>.)

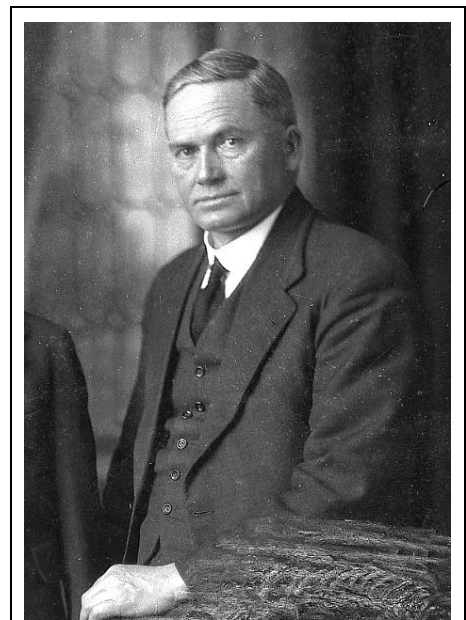
In 1907 Lismore-based 'Homoeopathist', **Petrus Paulus Etinene Joseph van Epen**, began visiting Mullum, the first such practitioner seen in the region. He died 1915 Sydney, aged 70, his obit recording that he was a school teacher of Woodburn until coming to Lismore in 1905 to *practice the art of healing... and obtained a wide reputation for his skill in this direction...* His son Theo (1880-1940) graduated from Sydney Uni as a pukka doctor in 1913.

Mainstream Medicine

Whilst carrying out his day job duties **Dr Kesteven** found time to indulge in civic matters, playing a leading role in formation of the Municipality, ably assisted by auctioneer **W.R. Baker**. At the AGM of the Progress Association in Jan1909 Dr Kesteven, *having been chairman of all public meetings in connection with the creation of the municipality of Mullumbimby...*, was re-elected president. But it seems he wasn't happy with what he'd wrought, as upon taking the chair Kesteven *seized the opportunity for an attack on the Town Council on the lines of his previously recorded utterances...*, although not hanging around to pursue his grievances, moving to Sydney 2mths later. (For a brief story on Dr Kesteven's Mullum sojourn see [110.-Newsletter-September-2021.pdf](#). His biographer, great granddaughter **June Hall**, published her book '*Barts, Brisbane and Beyond; The Peripatetic Life of Dr Leighton Kesteven*' in 2024. And by-the-bye, Leighton's great, great grandson, the prominent **Dr Nathan Kesteven** of Dunoon, has an open-minded view of wellness, accepting that conventional and alternative practices can complement each other. Like Leighton, he is also active in community affairs and currently chair of the *Northern Rivers Medical Network*.) (And for brief biographies of 29 doctors who passed through Mullumbimby (including **Dr Delph Singh**) see the epic research of **Dr Neil Thompson** in his book '*Sawbones, Saddle Sores and Soothing Balms; Medical Practitioners in the Richmond Valley 1866-1986*', published 2014. **Netta MacKinnon**'s 1994 book '*Fetch the Nurse, and Call the Doctor, Quick*' also ignores the entertaining quackery in giving an overview of Mullum's licensed medical practitioners.)

In Aug1909 came the stayer, **Dr Duncan David Gibson**, who arrived from Lismore to replace **Dr Kesteven**, initially opening his surgery next the Presbyterian Church in Stuart Street and dying in Mullum 56yrs later. His obit notes that his *recent death... in Mullumbimby Hospital at the age of 85 years ended the career of a man whose life was typical of the family doctor of the "old school"....* After graduation from Sydney Uni he spent time in London until returning in 1908 to join the medical staff of an insurance company, which brought him to Mullum where he was *the guest of his uncle, the late Mr Tom Gibson, then a farmer at Mullumbimby Creek...*, and subsequently received a call from the Mullumbimby Friendly

Societies to become their resident Mullum medical officer, and so *began a family doctor career which lasted until his final serious illness began four years ago.... With the coming of motor transport, Dr Gibson rested his horses and acquired the first motor car to be owned in Mullumbimby. The car was of the "Flanders" make, now seemingly unknown.... Forty-two years ago, Dr Gibson, who had in 1918 married Miss **Edith Maud Webb**, daughter of Mr and Mrs T.H. Webb, then proprietors of the Commercial Hotel, moved to 'Cedarholm', Dalley Street, where he lived until admitted to the Mullumbimby Memorial Hospital three years ago....* (For a more detailed picture of the Gibson family see **Netta MacKinnon's** 1998 book *What They Did; Families of the Brunswick 1880-1950.*)



Dr Duncan David Gibson ~1932
(11May1880 Dingo Creek, Manning River – 14Sep1965 Mullumbimby)

Dr Gibson's son, **Dr Lloyd Cameron Gibson** (1919 Mullum – 2016 Bonnells Bay), graduated in medicine from Sydney Uni 1943 and came to Mullum 2yrs later to join his father in partnership in a Burringbar Street practice. From ~1950 he lived at 28 Dalley St., the site of the original private hospital established by his father 1933/34. Gibson snr retired in 1957, at which time the Gibson practice, now at 110 Dalley Street (the old Town Clerk's Office), amalgamated with **Dr Alderman's** practice at 24 Burringbar Street to form the '*Mullumbimby Clinic*', supplemented in 1958 by partner **Dr Ronald Leslie Thomson** consulting out of Dr Gibson's rooms. Lloyd sold out of the partnership in 1959 and moved to Hurstville, followed by Thompson to Seven Hills, Sydney, in 1961, leaving Alderman and new partner **Dr Keith Regional Barnes** to carry on, at least until 1965 when the partnership expanded to include **Dr David Johnston Stephen** to man the trio's new practice at 123 Dalley St., leaving Alderman at the Burringbar branch until 1972/73 when he semi-retired and passed his practice and bespoke examination table to **Dr Rich**, the table ultimately ending up on display in the BVHS museum after the passing of **Dr Suresh**. (And for the trivia buffs: In 2011, a year before Dr Suresh's reincarnation, his landlord sold the Simpson Building and adjacent Empire Building for \$2,775,000. This property portfolio had been in the hands of **Dr Brenda Young/Laws**, the daughter of **Charlie Simpson**, until sold to **Tony Peters/Pizimolas** for £10,000 in 1947.)

Dr Lawrence William Alderman (1920 Hobart – 2008 Byron Bay) graduated from the University of Queensland in 1944 with Honours and placed 2nd in the State. He came from Broken Hill as a full-time Flying Doctor in 1954 to acquire the Stuart Street practice of **Dr Bruce Austin Frith** (1924 Lismore – 2006 Cremorne). In 1956 he was a foundation member of the *Pacific Players* Drama Group; in 1959 he was elected as vice-president of Rotary and the following year as president; and in 1964 joined the *Rotary Good-Will Working Mission* to Indonesia. He became foundation vice-president of the *Brunswick River Historical Society* in Mar1961, elected as Alderman Alderman on the Municipal Council in Dec1962, deputy mayor Dec1965, and endorsed candidate for the Australia Party for the seat of Richmond in 1972. In the meantime, from about 1960, he also had a branch surgery at Brunswick Heads next the pub in Mullumbimbi St.

In Oct1965 the new purpose-built consulting rooms of the Alderman/Barnes/Stephen partnership, the *Mullumbimby Medical Centre* at 123 Dalley Street next the Masonic Hall, became operational, manned by the property owners, **Dr Stephen** and **Dr Barnes**, who had acquired the freehold from the Masonic Lodge Trustees for £6300 12mths earlier. The partnership was dissolved Dec1967, Stephen carrying on until retiring 1979/80 (and dying in Mullum 24Mar1990), Barnes moving to Canberra Jan1968 (after selling his property share to Stephen for \$8000), and Alderman semi-retiring to Brunswick Heads ~1972, thence Byron Bay ~1980. In the early 1970s Dr Stephen also opened a branch practice at Brunswick Heads, in the same building as Dr Alderman, ending the association upon retirement in 1979, which included the sale of No 123 to **Dr Robert Shedden Adam** for \$50,000. Dr Adam seems to have hung on until the Pelmore/Taylor partnership turned up in 1987 to give the place a makeover and create *Meadows Medical Centre*, which now advertises as *a one stop shop for your medical needs....*, without any reference to wellness, wellbeing or holistic healing, and incorporates the repurposed Masonic Temple as a Pathology Centre.



Opening of Stuart Street Autumn Club 31Mar1960.
Rear: Russ Maslen (late Rotary Club President) and Dr Lawrence Alderman (new Rotary President)
Front: Mrs Margaret McLeod, Ernest Hollis-Neath, Mrs Alice Frost

[And for the record, in 1976 the ex-Stephen/Barnes rooms at 110 Dalley were re-occupied by **Dr David Douglas Miller**, who found that *My new rooms were in an old office which had not been occupied for ten years. It was full of old rubbish and spiderwebs. The front window was broken and the roof leaked, but the walls were lined with cedar panels taken from the wreck of... the Wollongbar...*, said Dr Miller's 1990 book *'Birth at Home; Twenty-one women and their doctor share their experiences of birth'*. Later in 1976 he was joined in partnership by **Dr Michael Hugh Pelmore**, who was united with an old friend from London student days, **Dr Giles Crispin Taylor**, in 1980 after Dr Miller moved to McGougan's Lane, at which time Dr Pelmore scored \$35,000 for the freehold, previously owned by **Sydney Webb QC**, uncle of **Lloyd Gibson**. Pelmore and Taylor moved out in 1987 to revamp the old practice at 123 Dalley, leaving 110 Dalley in the hands of a succession of 'wellness' operatives, currently the *'Apothera'*, an *Alternative & holistic health service offering Wellness for Body, Mind & Spirit....* (Incidentally, the *book by Dr David Miller will make the Byron Shire of northern New South Wales a focal point for the new consciousness about childbirth...*, said the Foreword. *By 1985, 25 per cent of births in the Byron Shire were at home, compared with the national figure of less than 1 per cent (0.4%)....* Dr Miller's bespoke Birthing Stool is now in the collection of BVHS. And see *The Echo* at [2016/12/bruns-doctor-honoured-35-years-service/.](#))

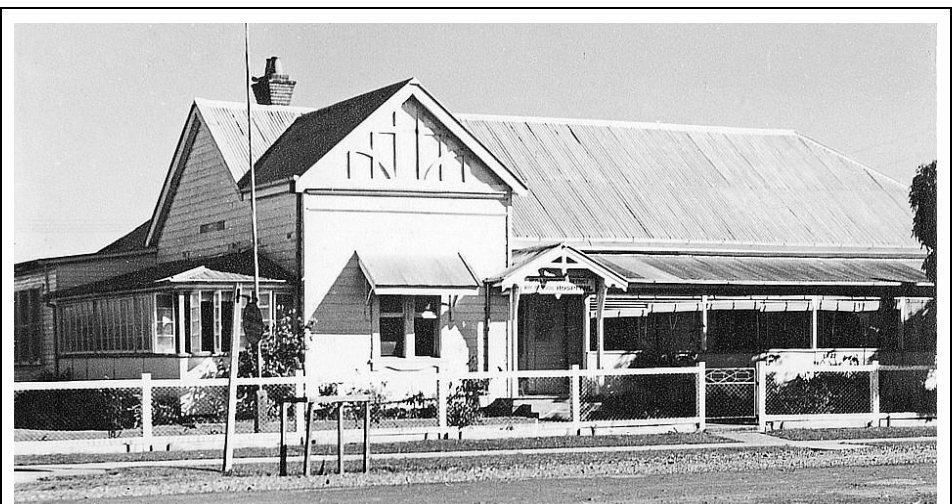
The other major practice in town, now the revamped and expanded two-storey *'Mullumbimby Comprehensive Health Centre'* at 60 Stuart Street, providing *all facets of wellbeing and holistic support*, was the initiative of **Dr B.A. Frith**, who'd graduated in 1946 and come to town to acquire the vacant practice of **Dr Thomas Frank Tonkin** (1909 Canbelego near Cobar - 1949 Mullum), living and practicing down the road opposite the Anglican Church until his new double storey residence/surgery was completed on the block he had acquired for £500 in 1950. He moved into his new home in 1953 but the next year passed the practice to **Dr Alderman**, followed by the freehold in 1956 for £4740. Dr Alderman relocated the practice to Burringbar Street ~1960, seemingly continuing to live in the Stuart premises for a period, and possibly also providing housing for partners/assistants, but ultimately leased to a succession of non-medical renters through to 1987 when he sold to **Dr Norbert Weber**, who gave the place an extensive makeover and introduced holistic wellness.

Dr Tonkin had arrived from Townsville to become a locum for **Dr Archie Sheridan Cockburn** MC (1893 Bowral - 1944 Mullum), taking over the Stuart practice upon Archie's death, a blow to Mullum's management team as *The late gentleman, who possessed an exceedingly bright and happy disposition... was a member of the Bowling Club, Masonic fraternity, the Parents and Citizens' Association, the Agricultural Society, the School of Arts Committee, the Parochial Council of St. Martin's Church, the R.S.L., of which he was a past President...*, and long-serving president of the Mullum branch of the Country Party. He enlisted upon graduation in 1916 and shortly afterwards was awarded the MC as a Captain Medical Officer in France.



Dr Archie Cockburn became Dr Coburn in 1934.

Dr Cockburn had come to Mullum in 1921 to acquire the practice of **Dr Francis Patrick Quirk**, which had been established opposite the Anglican Church by **Dr F.G. Conner** and passed through the hands of **Dr James Reiach** and **Dr John Ward**, the latter becoming Mullum's first victim of the Spanish Flu on 23Jun1919, aged 35. In Dr Quirk's hands the residence/surgery built by Dr Connor in 1906 was converted into a private hospital that he sold to **Nurse A.M. Daly** for £450 in 1940.



Memorial Hospital, 33 Stuart Street, opposite Anglican Church, 1958. (By 1949 the place boasted a total staff of 14, including 7 nurses, with accommodation for 10 patients.) It went up in flames on Sunday 2Jan1969, at which time plans were in place to turn it into an Anglican Aged Care facility.

Nurse Daly rebranded the place *Kurraba Private Hospital*, then sold to **Sister Constance Isobel Bultitude** for £550 in 1941. Matron Bultitude on-sold to **Mrs A.E. Coburn** 6mths later for £400, likely excluding all the furniture, fixtures and fittings. Just prior to the Matron's death in Oct1947 the Hospitals Commission leased the place as a public hospital, dubbed *The Mullumbimby and District War Memorial Hospital*, ultimately acquiring it from Mrs Coburn in 1951 for £5500, the package probably including 31 Stuart Street, aka 'Botany

House', which had been the residence of the Coburns and subsequently the consulting rooms and residence of **Dr Tonkin** and **Dr Frith** until used to accommodate the hospital's nursing staff upon the latter's move into his new two-storey residence/surgery down the road in Aug1953.

A new \$600,000, 22-bed hospital was opened on 3Feb1968, the financial injection helping Mullum sail through the economic doldrums. It was made redundant by the \$88mil *Byron Central Hospital*, opened on Ewingsdale Road in early 2016. (The Mullum buildings were demolished in early 2019, the vacant site generating controversy ever since, a story covered in **Jeannette Martin's** Dec2023 book *History of the Mullumbimby Hospital 1888-2023*.)



Courtesy of *Byron Shire News* Jan 2024

Coinciding with the closure of Mullumbimby Hospital comes the retirement of well known Mullumbimby doctor and activist **Liz Elliott...**, said the *Northern Star* of 24Mar2016. "I have decided not to go to the new hospital because the sort of medicine older doctors enjoyed; compassionate, autonomous, intuitive with varied modalities, may not be so valued in a bigger institution...." After studying medicine at Melbourne, she has worked as a journalist, started yoga centres in Washington DC and New York, painted and cartooned for a living before returning to medicine... in 2005 Mullum.



Mullum's Licensed Wellness Practitioners 2003.

[L to R: Dr Peter Dobie, Dr Marc Heyning, Dr David Miller, Dr Annette Beisenherz, Dr Michael Pelmore (with Mandolin), Dr Fiona McCormick, Dr Giles Taylor, Dr Norbert Weber, Dr Phil Aitken. Front Dr Suresh. Patient Colin survived the ordeal.]

(Courtesy 2003 calendar 'The Full Mullum')

Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc. Newsletter

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

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Roland Sjoberg

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Heritage Representative

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Susan Tsicalas

Alison McMahon

Newsletter: Members

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:

Tues 10th Feb @ 10.30

MUSEUM HOURS – Tuesdays

and Fridays 10.00-12.00

Market Saturdays 9.00 - 1.00

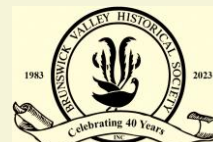
Other times by appointment

MULLUMBIMBY COMMUNITY

MARKET (8.00am – 2.00pm)

Next Market - Saturday 21st Feb

mullumbimbycommunitymarket.com.au



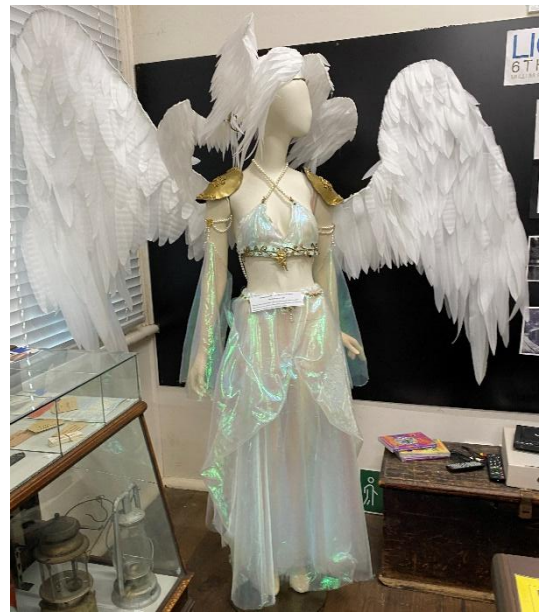
CURRENT DISPLAY

On display are costumes from 2025 Shearwater Steiner's **Wearable Arts** in **Visual Education**.

Hurry to catch sight of these fantastic costumes that have won prizes for their imagination, creativity, finesse and in the use of materials. Finishing early February. Don't forget to check out the amazing one in Stuart's Menswear window.



The overall winner made these three garments from recycled plastics, including local milk bottles etc



Thanks Shearwater. We love having the costumes in the museum!

BRUNSWICK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc MEMBERSHIP 2026

Membership Fees	Payment Options	
Adults \$15 Concession \$10 Students \$5 Printed mailed copy of newsletter add \$10	Cheque payable to Brunswick Valley Historical Society Inc PO Box 378 Mullumbimby 2482	Direct Deposit BSB: 032582 Westpac Account No: 201192 Reference: Your name

Name:.....
 Address:.....
 Email:..... Phone.....
 I wish to receive the newsletter by email/post/pick up at the museum

****NOW DUE for 2026 ****