First People of the Brunswick

Background

This story has mainly been compiled from information available from our own library and archive resources, supplemented by newspapers via Trove and various reliable websites. So far only limited research has been carried out in the NSW State Records Office and State Library. It is a work in progress and will be updated as required.

Cautionary Note

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are advised that this account of local Indigenous history contains images and names of people who have died. Moreover, some of the quotes from the documents and newspapers of yesteryear express attitudes and beliefs held by Caucasian Australians towards Aboriginal Australians that may cause distress. But in the interests of historical veracity we have decided to leave such quotes unedited and without qualification or comment. Note also that this is whitefella history. No Brunswick/Durungbil descendants could be traced to help flesh-out the pre-Britannian history, or the aftermath of colonisation.

Disclaimer

The draft was researched and written by non-indigenous BVHS volunteers who have no specialist qualifications in Aboriginal history or culture. It was passed to the ‘Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council’ and the ‘Bundjalung of Byron Bay Aboriginal Corporation (Arakwal)’ for their advice of any corrections, deletions or amplifications deemed necessary to comply with their protocols and to ensure there were no unwitting transgressions into culturally sensitive areas.

TBLALC did not respond, while the Arakwal Board of Directors considered that it would be more appropriate for the Arakwal People themselves to present their own history, and to this end BVHS considerably reduced Arakwal references in the re-draft. But the Brunswick and Byron clans were too closely intertwined to entirely exclude the Arakwal from the story.

The Arakwal Corporation also pointed out that it has developed a Cultural Programs Strategy to arrest social disintegration and foster development of Aboriginal identity and culture, ensuring that all programs and actions are in accordance with our cultural values, customs and practices. The Corporation has reservations that the BVHS document helps achieve this aim and has requested that this preamble include the following disclaimer:

*The Bundjalung of Byron Bay Arakwal people do not endorse the information provided in the document titled ‘First People of the Brunswick’ as an accurate account of Arakwal or Bundjalung history from the early times of contact with Europeans on our lands.*

*People wishing to learn about the First People of this area, their history, their culture and their ongoing connection to Country are invited to explore our website: [http://arakwal.com.au/](http://arakwal.com.au/)*

BVHS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners of this land and pay our respects to their history, their living culture and to Elders past and present.
First People of the Brunswick

The Brunswick features as a significant landmark in a version of the creation legend of *The Three Brothers*, documented by the Rev Hugh Livingstone, Presbyterian Minister on the Richmond 1876-86.¹ He called the local dialect 'Minyug' (the users of which were dubbed the 'Minyangbal'), which is spoken at Byron Bay and on the Brunswick River.... He recorded that Long ago, Berrug, with his two brothers, Mommom and Yaburog, came to this land..., and after visiting the Tweed came back to the Brunswick River, where he made a fire, and showed the paigal how to make fire. He taught them the laws about the kippara, and about marriage and food..., and thus the Brunswick can lay claim to one of the first Bora Rings in the neighbourhood.

Although some authorities are still in territorial dispute, it is generally accepted that the Minyangbal/Minjungbal People, comprising a number of clans sharing a common dialect, policed a coastal domain from Broken Head to the Tweed River (coincidentally the bailiwick of the 'Police District of Tweed River,' formed in 1865).

The earliest newspaper account of their contact with the colonising Caucasians was given by Captain William Barkus via articles in *The Australian* of 11Jan1828 and the *Sydney Gazette* of 22Aug1829. He had been tasked with searching for a wreck reported by *some men who had been runaways from Moreton Bay*.... At midday on 5Sep1827 he took a whale boat ashore at the yet to be named Richmond River, but then *determined upon returning to Moreton Bay overland*..., making their first camp somewhere in the vicinity of Cape Byron. At one PM next day we fell in with a party of natives, who seemed not to be amicably inclined towards us.... 'We crossed the river yet to be branded Brunswick after travelling up the south bank' and *Upon reaching the opposite bank, we cut through the bush, to avoid the natives, who we suspected were inclined to disburthen us further of clothing...*, but after accompanying us for full three hours hard toiling over a soft sandy beach, dropped off entirely.... We eventually crossed the Tweed where *The natives’ huts were very numerous... and I suppose they were sufficient to hold a body of three hundred men*.... We reached the Logan River on the evening of 8Sep1827.

Between ~1824 and ~1840 a few of the bolters from the penal settlement at Moreton Bay made it to the colonial outpost at Port Macquarie, some passing through the Brunswick and leaving a lamentable legacy.² But apart from their ambiguous record, the next documented visit to the Brunswick was that of surveyor Robert Dixon and his

---

¹ Rev Livingstone's treatise was included in John Fraser's *A Short GRAMMAR and VOCABULARY of the DIALECT spoken by the MINYUG PEOPLE of the north-east coast of New South Wales*, which was carried as Appendix A in *An Australian Language as spoken by the AWABAKAL; The People of AWABA or LAKE MACQUARIE; Being an account of Their Languages, Traditions, and customs*, by L.E. Threlkeld, produced by the Government Printer, 1892. Viewable at https://archive.org/stream/australianlangua00therrich#page/n321/mode/2up.

(Interestingly, Rev Livingstone does not use the names Cavvanbah and Durungbil for 'Byron Bay' and 'Brunswick River'.)

² The Colonomist of 17Dec1835 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..., a couple of whom merely implied the existence of the un-named Brunswick.

As for the 'lamentable disease legacy', the SMH of 30Apr1832 reported that *In October 1831 the disease ('Eruptive Febrile Disease') was conveyed to Port Macquarie by means of a prisoner, who had absconded from Moreton Bay, and on his way met with a tribe of the Aborigines at Black Rock River (the Richmond), a great number of whom were labouring under symptoms of Small-pox.... The Trial Bay Blacks... also were attacked with the disease, and from them it spread generally through different tribes....*
team in 1840. However, whilst noting the presence of Aboriginals at Cape Byron (where we found a tribe of natives with their nets fishing..., who were fine looking men... and with the assistance of two natives we got to the top of the steep Broken Cliff...), and the Richmond (where The natives had come in such numbers...), he makes no reference to those of the Brunswick. Over the period of his two-week sojourn on the Brunswick he either deemed his encounters with the resident Aboriginal clan not worth recording or there were none to report, just as Captain Barkus noted no Brunswick ‘settlement’ (although it looks like the major Aboriginal camp in the neighbourhood was out around the Kings Creek / Saddle Road area.)

The first semi-permanent whitefella’s camp was established on the North Head by John and Thomas Boyd of the Tweed in ~1848. As best can be determined from the ‘shipping news’ in various newspapers their last consignment of cedar to Sydney was in April 1851, after which the place became a white ghost town until four ships appeared on the horizon in 1858. Then followed one in each of the years 1859/1861/1862 and none until 1867, by which time cedar-getters from Ballina and Tintenbar had become regular visitors, prompting Robert Marshall to establish a permanent base on the south side.

Traditional clan boundaries rapidly broke down in the face of the new paradigm wrought by white settlement. By the time Marshall turned up in 1866 the Aboriginals of the Brunswick could be found assisting the cedar-getters as far south as Ballina (home of the Nyangbal) and over the ridge line into Wiyabal territory, while at least one member of Byron’s Bumberlin Clan is known to have ventured into Goodjinburra country as an employee of James Bray in the Tweed district.

 Whilst ethnologist Archie Meston claimed the Brunswick was home to the ‘Minyahgo-Whallo tribe’ (probably his term for ‘Minjungbal People’), it is now generally accepted that the Du-rung-bil clan, a sub-group under the Minjungbal umbrella, was the Brunswick’s traditional custodian. The colonists acknowledged ‘Drumble Charlie’ as ‘King Dixon’s Field Notebooks at http://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/Image/DigitalImageDetails.aspx?ImageId=24326, Brunswick pages 22-38. A copy of his 5-page report to the Surveyor General 3Aug1840 (ref NSW State Archives Reel 3063, letter no. 40/54), available BVHS. Dixon initially arrived on the Brunswick by packhorse on 17Jun40 and returned to Point Danger 2 days later, prior to longer sojourn by boat 23Jun40. He also records Aboriginal presence on the Tweed. (His Field Books are the earliest references, so far sighted, that the name ‘Brunswick’ had been bestowed on the subject river).
of the Brunswick Blacks’ sometime pre 1871. He roamed a wide area and first comes to notice in Dec 1865 at Tintenbar in the employ of cedar-getter Dick Glascott.\(^4\) In Nov 1872 Glascott also records ‘Drumble Charley and his gin’ at Tyagarah, while the first evidence that the name of the Brunswick Clan was ‘Du-rung-nil’ came from Meston’s antagonist Ned Harper, a cedar-getter married to an Aboriginal and fluent in several dialects.\(^5\)

Conversely, linguist Dr 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.\(^6\) By-the-bye, Charlie Jarrett, a Ballina-based timber merchant, is said to have raised “Cheelong,” the well-known Byron Bay aboriginal.... He was in Mr Jarrett’s employ for many years... while an associate of Jarrett, the prominent Henry French, storekeeper and timber merchant of Tyagarah and Brunswick, had an Aboriginal axeman in his employ named Chillong Barlow.\(^7\) One or the other was probably Geelong, who appeared before the Mullum court in 1913, and the same Geelong Billy who died at the black’s camp, Broken Head, in 1917. ‘Kitty’ features 3 times in the Brunswick Police Register 1890-91 as a victim of assault. (Also featuring in the register were Aboriginals “Bob”, “George”, “May Marshall”, “Jack Cameron” and “Tommy Dodd”).

Joshua Bray, first Police Magistrate on the Brunswick whilst wearing many other hats, adds to the uncertainty of defining a ‘Brunswick Clan’, saying The Goodjungburry tribe inhabiting the coast between Tweed and Brunswick used to mix very much with the Ballina Richmond River Heads blacks....\(^8\) But sometimes it wasn’t amicable mixing says James Ainsworth, cedar-getter and teamster who settled at Ballina as a youngster in 1847, claiming that The Brunswick blacks, hostile to those of Ballina, would meet on the Seven Mile Beach as a battleground... to settle their differences.\(^9\)

[Note that Ian Fox and Kyle Slabb in their history of the First People of the Tweed,\(^10\) say The exact area occupied by the Goodjinburra is unclear, primarily because clan groups themselves can be further subdivided into local descent groups (or family groups) numbering around 10 to 30 people... And some researchers suggest there was a group division at Cudgera Creek (or possibly Mooball Creek) between people more connected to the Tweed in the north, and those with the Brunswick in the south..., as evidenced by the incident below.]

A journalist identified ‘King Charlie’ during a fracas at Wooyung in 1871\(^11\) and recorded that ...There were any number of kings (stark naked, with one exception, the king who advanced to meet us being heavily clad in an old bell-topper and puggaree); King Charlie informed us that the causus belli was this: his uncle had killed a man on the Tweed with an axe, and the man’s avengers were coming.... His two dozen sable warriors... shouted defiance... at the Tweed group. Then another King came along with a torch, and said, "No fight - too dark - plenty fight mobowarlow yanbelliah - Brunswick.... The phrase 'There were any number of kings' implies several family/clan groups making up King Charlie’s southern Minjungbal Coalition, but they are lost to history, the only other known local clan claiming group membership being the Bumberin/Bumberlin/Burrumbin... of Cape Byron\(^12\) under the sway of ‘King

---

5 The Queenslander of 1Sep1894; And Chapter 3, pgs 97, 138 – First People by Ian Fox and Kyle Slabb – within The Fragile Edge; A Natural History of the Tweed Coast, edited by Michael DeGood, Bogangar 2016. (Copy available BVHS).
6 Dictionary of Coastal Bundjalung, including Bandjalang, Wiyabal, Minyngbal and Ngahnduwal, 2002, updated as All Yugambeh-Bundjalung Dictionary with Gramma, Texts, etc, by Dr Margaret Sharpe, published as a CD May 2013, with Corrections to March 2015 (Copies of both available BVHS). Her source, the Science of Man journal of 21Mar1903 (ref nla.obj-525829330), does not mention Jalanggir in the lists of words presumably collected by police Sgt John Evans, based at Ballina and Casino 1886-1894. (Best uneducated guess is that it means ‘womanlike’?)
7 Mullumbimby Star of 300ct1913 and Tweed and Brunswick Advocate of 24Jun1891. (Chillong’ also recorded Lismore 16Jul1889, ref Northern Star).
8 SoM journal of 21Feb1901 at nla.obj-520992370.
9 Casino and Kyogle Courier of 7Oct1922.
10 Ch 3 within The Fragile Edge; A Natural History of the Tweed Coast, edited by Michael DeGood, Bogangar 2016, pg 96.
11 Australian Town and Country Journal of 17Jun1871
12 Dr Sharpe does not list ‘Bumberlin’ or variants in her dictionary (op.cit. note 6), but the SoM journal of 21Jun1900 says Bumerlin, of unstated origin, is a Camp for flying foxes? The 1954 manuscript ‘Aborigines at Byron Bay’ held in file B8-10 at RRHS, states that that There was a large flying fox camp a couple of miles out of town on the Palm Swamp up Skinner’s Road. It was the blacks main supply of food.... The blacks, though often shifting camp, seldom went very far away..., and when after a time they had fouled their camp, they would set fire to it and move to another site.... The Sharpe dictionary says the Gudjihningar/Coojingburra/Cudginberry... clan derives name from gudjin ‘red’...., the colour of the clay found at Cudgen.
Bobbie’. Presumably the ‘Tweed Avengers’ comprised a unit of the Goodjinburra Clan, also sheltering under the Minyangbal umbrella, suggesting tricky allegiances if the Clan’s domain still extended to the Brunswick at this time.

[The words ‘wobby’ (Tomorrow, To-day and Yesterday) and ‘warlo’ (Thou, Thee, You (two), You, Your) are in the vocabulary of the ‘Ch-long Kitty’ Clan, but are also general Tweed words, although not included in the list Used at Cudgen, by the blacks who are called “Cudgingberry”.][13]

(During the above skirmish one or the other or both antagonist groups likely carried turtleshell shields... bearing the double red cross on a white ground, the war mark of the old Minyaho-Wallo tribes... said Archie Meston in an address to the Royal Society of Queensland in 1892 during an exhibition of ethnological specimens recently collected by him..., noted The Queenslander of 18Jun1892.)

There was still a sizable group on the Brunswick in 1880 said another tourist, recording that A mob of blacks are camped here, and they are very useful as axemen, falling and squaring... On 10Jan1885 the Town and Country Journal carried the observations of a couple of commercial travellers who noted that Close to the hotel a number of blacks encamped.... It is not a very interesting camp, only a few married couples and about a dozen children.... There is, however, a half-caste woman, who has been brought up among Europeans, is fairly educated, and well domesticated..., with husband “Jack Jack” and three children.

“Jack Jack” earns good money at one of the mills..., probably the Cudgen Sugar Mill, to where he accompanies them next day. At John O’Neil’s timber camp at Wooyung is the abode of a half-caste about 30 years of age, and blessed with two olive branches — the fairest half-caste I have seen. She is white, and so is her daughter. She does not profess to keep an accommodation-house, but makes us comfortable for a short stay, providing tea, seed-cake, jam, and preserved milk..., while ‘Jack Jack’ points out the ancient fighting ground of the aboriginals....

By this time the selectors had almost completed carving up the Durungbil neighbourhood into freehold blocks, introducing a new paradigm and a new era in relations, while the 1884 sale of subdivided village lots at the Heads itself had prompted the upgrading of Marshall’s ‘Half-Way House’ into the Ocean View Hotel. Eleven days after the above 1885 report an anonymous Brunswick resident raised with the Northern Star[15] the possibility of removing one of the nuisances of the Brunswick River. Some six weeks ago our publican (Mr R. Marshall), gave notice to the

---

13 SoM journals of 21Nov1899 and 21Mar1903. And Dr Sharpe says ‘yanbolehla’ means ‘coming and going’.

15 Northern Star of 21Jan1885. (At this time the Brunswick came under the jurisdiction of the ‘Cudgen Police Patrol District’, which sheltered under the umbrella of the ‘Police District of Tweed River’. This Police District, extending from the NSW/Qld border down to Broken Head, had been carved off the ‘Police District of Richmond River’ in 1865. But it wasn’t until 1870 that a Court of Petty Sessions was established at Cudgen, at which time Courts were also opened at Casino, Ballina and Lismore. In 1874 another was established at Murwillumbah and 2yrs later Joshua Bray was appointed Police Magistrate at both Tweed Courts. A District Court was established at Lismore in 1880, superseding Casino. (Northern Irishman Charles Hugh Fawcett of Fairy Mount Station (Kyogle) became the district’s first Police Magistrate at Tabulam (Casino) in 1862.) In 1886 a bit was hived off the Cudgen Patrol District to create the Police Patrol District of Brunswick River, which enforced the law from Burringbar to Broken Head. The population continued to grow exponentially and in 1891 the Patrol Districts were again rearranged, the district south of Tyagarah becoming the Police Patrol District of Byron Bay, where a Court of Petty Sessions was opened in 1892, by which time Byron had been absorbed into the Police District of Richmond River, which also gobbled up Brunswick 1894. (But in 1899 Murwillumbah Police District boundary re-extended to Broken Head.)

Brunswick Court of Petty Sessions abolished 1897 and re-established in Mullumbimby, while the Brunswick Patrol District was rebranded as the Mullumbimby Police Patrol District, at which time the Police District of Tweed River became the Murwillumbah Police District. Mullum police patrolled the district from Tyagarah to Crabbes Creek and inland to Rosebank. The Patrol District of Bangalow was created when a bit was hived off Byron Bay in 1906.)
police, of two blacks of unsound mind, who were continually pilfering and making themselves generally obnoxious to the public at large. The police came and took them to the Tweed, and both Mr Marshall and Mr Nelson had to go also to prove the charge. From there they were sent to Lismore, and from the medical testimony, the gin was proved insane, but the blackfellow was discharged. On his way back to the Brunswick, he entered two different houses where there happened to be only women and children, and being in a nude condition... caused an attack of the vapours.... Since his return to the Brunswick he has been a continual nuisance.... It seems to me quite unreasonable, that in a civilized place where there is police protection, the public should be so much annoyed by a mad blackfellow. Yours, &c., A SETTLER. (The ‘gin who was proved insane’ is likely to be An aboriginal girl (named ‘Cranky’ who was brought up on a charge of being of unsound mind..., a month earlier.16 But the police argued that she had responded well to ‘medical treatment, and had much improved...’, after being confined in the Lock Up for 3 weeks..., and was discharged.)

By this time too, work for the Aboriginals was drying up. The cedar was playing out and the timber-getters were no longer needing assistance in locating, harvesting and road cutting, the Glascott diaries inferring this important latter task of getting logs to market was the major source of employment for the Indigenous Australians (although payment in rum was hardly putting white bread on the table.17) The first selectors also were nearing completion of their compulsory 5yrs residency and no longer needing assistance in scrub clearing, leaving the Aboriginals without another regular source of income. Moreover, the rapidly increasing white population was taking these jobs anyway, at least until ‘Hindoos’ and ‘Kanakas’ re-created a ‘black labour’ market.18 Between the censuses of 1871 and 1881 the white population of the ‘Tweed River’ (probably meaning the district stretching to Tyagarah, but possibly to Broken Head) increased by 80% (from 449 isolated woodcutters and assorted adventurers to 806 civilised souls more inclined to clearing for farming), thereafter growing exponentially.

16 Northern Star of 13, 20 and 31Dec1884. Her story continues in the Northern Star of 14Sep1887.
17 Glascott op.cit. note 4, pg 57. Diary entry of 8Nov1872 says sent (£3) Sydney for a keg of rum for to pay blacks... for road making work. (On 3Nov72 about half a mile from Tyagarah met some blacks who informed us that all the blacks about the Brunswick were employed... but saw the Black Drumble Charley at Wilsons Creek who agreed to come to us Monday week.) All roads led to Tyagarah during the cedar boom years.
18 In reporting ‘aid given to the aborigines’ in 1881, which included a ‘new boat &c’ to those of the ‘Brunswick River’, the Protector of Aborigines said I have... caused them to... understand that they are not to rely entirely upon a continuous support from the Government; they must be self-reliant, must work whenever they can get work.... (Ref SMH of 11Sep1882.) In his report for the 12mths to 31Dec1882 at https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/catalogue_resources/91912.pdf the Protector says I maintain the opinion I have always held with regard to the half-caste portion of the aborigines, viz., that they should be compelled to work in aid of their own requirements.... Brunswick and Byron presumably still included under the Police District of Tweed River, which recorded 97 Full-Blood and 12 Half-Caste Aboriginals, working on farms, and employed by timber-getters. (Lismore District, recorded 170FB and 15HC, principally employed by selectors to fall scrub.... Ballina Patrol District had 59FB and 2HC working for the sugar planters. Wardell recorded 36FB and 5HC, the greater portion mainly working sugar industry, but others are lazy, and seldom do anything other than catch fish (by hands) and live on animals of all kinds, killed by them on their travels. Woodburn had 21FB mainly in the sugar industry, and Women washing clothes and scrubbing floors for the residents. Coraki Patrol District had 18FB and 2HC employed ring-barking, farm-labouring, bullock-driving, &c., women sometimes perform domestic work....
In 1886 another Town and Country journalist said In close proximity to Marshall’s Hotel was a black’s camp, over which a sable patriarch rejoicing in the title of King Charlie of the Brunswick holds supreme sway. There were about twenty of these aborigines altogether. A few were full-blooded; but many were half-castes. A great deal of the rough housework in the hotel was done by these girls, and it was amusing to watch them scrubbing the floor, every now and then taking a rest to light their pipes, so that they could enjoy the pleasures of a comfortable smoke while engaged in their duties. On the Sunday the blacks smarten themselves up considerably, old Charlie coming out with an ancient pith helmet ornamented with a spotted crimson "puggaree" upon his head; while the women were nearly all attired in clean print dresses, gaudily set off with neckerchief of turkey red.

That year was a big one for Brunswick Heads. A court house and police station had been completed and Constable W.C. Andrews posted in to take charge of the new Brunswick Patrol District, while Joshua Bray, Police Magistrate on the Tweed, was hearing cases at the new Court of Petty Sessions by the end of the year. Also completed by year-end was the 2-storey Court House Hotel, erected behind Marshall’s Ocean View in Fingal Street, which street also housed Henry French’s recently opened 2-storey store and residence. And passengers travelling via the Lismore-Brunswick coach service, introduced in mid1885, got an easier ride with a Government ferry service (a row boat) to meet the Murbah coach on the beach at North Head. (The advent of a new up-river ‘McCurdy’s Wharf Ferry’ in 1887 and upgrading of the bridle track to Burringbar, enabled a straight thru Lismore-Murbah coach service by 1888.)

In 1887 Constable Andrews compiled his first population return for the Police Patrol District of Brunswick, reporting an Aboriginal population of 38 within his bailiwick, presumably distributed over the area from Byron Bay to Burringbar, but whether ‘full-blood’ or ‘half-caste’ is unstated.19

However, by the arrival of the 1890s Depression things were on the slide and in 1891 ornithologist Archibald James Campbell found the Brunswick settlement to be a primitive and out-of-the-world place... where he heard blackfellows wrangling in high voices during the night in the hotel yard.... I succeed in finding a blackfellow’s humpy where an ugly chap is cooking a bandoict by placing it on the fire intact.... He appears surly, so I betake myself to another humpy, where I fine three "gins" asleep (one of whom was 'Kitty'), and a fine blackfellow outside... whose name is "Mobal," of the Burringbah tribe.... (Ref Northern Star of 11Jun1892).

(Despite Campbell’s ‘primitive’ assessment, by the census of Apr1891 Brunswick Heads was still the largest village in the neighbourhood, boasting between 73 and 84 residents, depending on interpretation of Matthew Chisler’s Collector’s Sheets, or 87 souls according to the Northern Star of 16May1894. On the other hand David Jarman’s Collector’s Sheets show the population of the Bay was only 69 by Apr1891, despite the advent of the jetty and growth in the import-export trade. Conversely, the Clarence and Richmond Examiner of 30May1891 reckoned Cavanba... contained a population close upon 50 souls, and this did not include four travellers.)

In 1926 the Bora Ring on the Brunswick cricket ground, (the ex-police paddock, ~ ¾ mile north of ‘Dodds Grass’), was ‘still discernible... where the natives of old went through their spectacular and weird ceremonies....20 In 1939 Fred Fordham, Brunswick Heads Public School Headmaster 1928-48, brought to public attention the existence of a 35ft long x 15ft high mound on Kings Creek, suggesting an important Aboriginal cultural centre.21 The ceremonial mound wasittered with sandstone rocks supposedly bearing carved markings, but thanks to vandals and souvenir hunters most of the rocks have disappeared, while most of the mound has been bulldozed. Fred also accumulated a substantial number of Aboriginal artifacts during his tenure, displayed in glass cases in an annex to the original school building. Tragically this collection has also gone walkabout.

19 Richmond River Herald 1Jul1887: The returns recently compiled show the number of aborigines... as follows: Casino 325 (largest by far of the 23 patrol districts from Grafton to Tweed), Lismore 114, Coraki 36, Wardell 12, Ballina 35, Woodburn 14, Broadwater 21, Murwillumbah 84, Tumbulgum 9, Cudgen 12, Brunswick 38... Total 1075. (Numbers continued in rapid decline, not helped along by such things as the outbreak of loathsome, infectious disorder in Lismore, reported via the Northern Star 14Sep87 (featuring ‘Cranky’), 25Jan88, 11Feb88, Clarence Examiner 13Mar88, 25Aug88, Telegraph 21Jul88, Maitland Mercury 18Aug88).

20 The Brisbane Courier 2Dec1926. Also asserts that When the natives gathered for their annual corroboree, the whites assisted them in procuring their “tucker” by shooting the game... beaten out of the scrub by the natives....

21 Mullumbimby Star of 28Jul1939. [Over the period 1964-1999 Dave Marrinon (ex-Mullumbimby High School Teacher) collected voluminous documents on the saga during his own research of the mound, including original diaries, sketches and correspondence between Fordham, eccentric Frederic Slater (of the Archaeological and Educational Research Society), Fred McCarthy (Curator of Anthropology at the Australian Museum who allegedly coined the phrase ‘Fordham’s Folly’) and various other authorities. Accredited researchers may view the documents at BVHS. Visiting the site requires the permission of the NSW Office of Heritage and Environment as well as the land owner.]
The most likely source of the sandstone rocks is Broken Head, perhaps indicating a co-operative arrangement between the Durungbil and Bumberlin Clans. Also noteworthy is that the mound was next door to Robert Marshall’s 1872 selection, the first ‘Conditional Purchase’ in what became the Byron Shire, upon which Marshal established a timber camp, store, wharf and boat shed, presupposing that it was already a conveniently cleared site, presenting him with a relative oasis amongst the dense forest. And about a third of a mile north of the mound the discovery of the mysterious ‘boat and anchor rocks’ alluded to The Three Brothers creation legend.)

Bora rings were also found at Tyagarah and Mullumbimby, the latter still extant during the sojourn of the railway navvies 1892-94.22 Glascott’s diaries also suggest a fair Aboriginal presence at Tyagarah during the 1870s. This seems to be still the case in 1884 when the Town and Country Journal recorded that a couple of commercial travellers visited Henry French’s store at Tyagarah / Nubhoygum then left for Byron Bay and after passing the native camps we made for the crossing at the creek…, the plural ‘camps’ possibly implying a largish interrelated community?

Unfortunately, the original family group around Mullumbimby remains a mystery, but as happened to other local family units, if not clans, they were probably displaced to Brunswick Heads upon arrival of the Caucasians, as befell the small family group at "Gingongong" (Chinaman’s Hill, Yelgun) which, after the coming of the selectors and imposition of the new concept of land tenure, drifted to the mouth of the Brunswick, probably via a sojourn at New Brighton.23

So a large contingent of mixed family groups, most under the Minjungbal umbrella if not the Durungbil, developed at Brunswick Heads under the sway of ‘Drumble Charlie’, although by this time the accelerating disintegration of traditional clan structures and boundaries had seen Aboriginals from further afield taking up residence or transiting through.24 They congregated

---

22 74yr old Jack Coghlan, reminiscing to the Mullumbimby Star 6Jun1961, said the Bora Ring was on the corner of Burringbar and Stuart Streets, now occupied by the newsagency. (His great niece Shelly Hollis-Neath also claims Jack’s sister, Kate, witnessed corroborees where the car park next Byron Shire council chambers now lies. Kate was 5yrs old when the Coghlan/Coughlins settled Mullum 1894. Ref Shelly’s memoire ‘Kate’ held BVHS.)

23 An Aboriginal Heritage Study of a traditional Pathway, Linking Coastal and Upland Resources, Northern New South Wales, by Ian Fox 2003, pg 34. This study also records numerous Aboriginal camp sites within the Billinudgel Nature Reserve, in addition to a Bora Ring considered of great importance as the place where the Three Brothers first made the Lore.

24 In the Northern Star of 20Nov1889 Constable Andrews, oic Brunswick Police Patrol District, states that a 17yr old Aboriginal named ‘George’ was a New England boy; three years ago he came to the Brunswick....
in the vicinity of Robert Marshall’s Hotel until John Perry MLA wrote to the Minister for Lands on 14Mar1890 advising that The aboriginals of the Brunswick River are desirous of having a piece of land reserved as a home...

‘Temporary Salaried Surveyor R.N. Somerville’, of the Lismore Land District, eventually was tasked with finding a suitable spot. On 9Mar1891 he reported that There are about 10 or 12 blacks now remaining in the neighbourhood, for whom it would appear to be desirable to reserve an area on which they may possibly be induced to settle and to which the police can always direct them when necessary. None of the blacks are vouched for as being very intelligent, and good workers.

The site applied for is their own request and choice and consists of Suburban Portion 84, Village of Brunswick. The points in favour of this site are that it is the one they are most likely to stop on, it is in the immediate vicinity of the principal fishing ground on the River, and is quite apart from village settlement though not more than 90 to 100 chains away.

Notwithstanding the rapid strides the district generally is making..., Brunswick Heads itself is moribund and it is an open question whether the blacks will not have died out altogether before this site for a camp would become objectionable.... In want of Suburban portion 84 being granted I would suggest 85 being given as well....

On 30May1891 ‘Licensed Surveyor H. Johnson’ of the Murwillumbah Land District mapped out a portion of land containing 37 acres numbered 43 (the renumbered 84) in the Parish of Brunswick..., which was duly promulgated in the Gazette of 10Oct1891, giving the remaining Brunswick Aboriginals a homeland west of what is now the Ferry Reserve Caravan Park. Six months earlier the NSW census of Apr1891 had found 9 Aboriginals living in a bark hut next the pub at Brunswick Heads, while none were recorded at Byron Bay.26

The police census of Oct1894 found 9 ‘full blood’ Aboriginals (and no ‘half castes’) at the ‘Brunswick River Heads’, but still none listed at Byron Bay, despite, paradoxically, one issued with clothing. (The Tweed recorded 38FB and 21HC, plus 30 at Coolangatta.)27 (Note that the period 1892-94 was one of great disruption in the Byron/Bruns area with an influx of up to 500 uncouth navvies involved in construction of the Richmond-Tweed railway, giving temporary relief to the 1890s Depression). No Brunswick Aboriginals were listed at the NSW census of Mar1901.

Presumably there were still no Aboriginals on the Brunswick reserve wef 29Nov1911 when the place was leased to Michael George Currie and formally revoked via the Gazette of 22Dec1915. The Mullumbimby Star of 15Jan1914 and 13Jan1916 published the censuses of the Mullumbimby Police Patrol District (the rebranded Brunswick Patrol District covering Tyagarah to Burringbar), showing 6 Aboriginals in 1911 (4 of whom lived in the Municipality), 9 in 1912 (none in Municipality), 1 in 1913 and none thereafter (although in 1914 the ‘Board for the Protection of

25 The sequence of events in the whole saga of the reserve is preserved in State Records Office Box 20/7290, Item No 1891/7931. (Copies of the folios available BVHS).
26 https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Australia,_New_South_Wales,_1891_Census_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records), Parishes of Brunswick and Mullumbimby at pgs 274-288. Collector David Jarman recorded no Aboriginals at Byron Bay. In fact there were only 10 over the whole area of what became the Byron Shire - one male living with G. Johnson at Tyagarah and the other 9 (3 males and 6 females) at Brunswick Heads where ‘Kitty’ was nominated as the ‘Head of Household’, presumably meaning ‘King Charlie’ had moved on.
27 Report of the Aboriginal Protection Board to Parliament wef 1Mar1895, with suspect police figures pg 4, viewable at http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/236604890. While there were still no Aboriginals listed in the ‘locality’ of Byron, 1 adult Aboriginal of Byron Bay was provided with clothing. (During the sojourn of the railway navvies Byron Bay boasts of the largest number of camp followers, doing a good deal of business....) Ballina recorded 2 ‘Full Blood’ and 2 ‘Half-Caste’. Conversely, the reports for the years 1907/08 at https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-53849807 show up to 6FB and 2HC at Byron, none at Brunswick Heads or Mullumbimby, but an increase on the Tweed (encompassing the Police districts of Murwillumbah, Tumbulgum and Cudgen). (Ballina 1FB, 1HC, and similar decreases for districts of Wardell, Woodburn, Coraki, Lismore).
28 Collector Charles Simpson listed no Aboriginals in the Parishes of Brunswick or Mullumbimby. Collector David Jarman found 10 (6m and 4f) Aboriginals at Byron Bay, apparently living with Owen Bishop Wareham. These were the only Aboriginals listed in the whole of what became the Byron Shire. (Census on microfiche available Richmond-Tweed Library).
Aborigines’ reported one elderly ‘Full Blood’ male living in ‘Mullumbimby’. It’s understood most local Aboriginals drifted to the Fingal Mission Camp, where 70 were residing at the time of the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1919. (A land claim on the original Brunswick Reserve was refused in 1995, but resubmitted by TBLALC in 2005).

Wef 15Oct1901 There are 9 full-blood aborigines at Mullumbimby. The men all earn their livelihood at scrub-cutting, clearing, and general farm work. The women are employed as domestic servants, earning sufficient to support themselves... said the Aboriginal Protection Board. By 'Mullumbimby' the Board probably means the Patrol District, which embraced the 'Brunswick River Heads', a hamlet still in a moribund state after being eclipsed by Mullumbimby with the coming of the railway. On 15Sep1910 the Mullumbimby Star said Aboriginals are rarely seen now in Mullumbimby.

29 https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/catalogue_resources/23707.pdf Report published 6Jul1915 also records 4FB and 4HC at Byron Bay (inclusive of 2 attending school and 3 adults and 1 child receiving rations), 17FB/39HC at Cudgen, 10HC Tumbulgum, 14FB/24HC Murwillumbah. (Ballina 1FB/1HC, Cabbage Tree 4FB/76HC, Coraki 28FB/20HC, Lismore 34FB/42HC.)

30 Northern Star of 5Feb1902.
Byron Jarrett

James Jarrett, an ex-Brunswick storekeeper, claimed in a letter to the Mullumbimby Star on 11Jun1908 that Bob Marshall’s faithful old blackfellow, Bobby Faucett (probably Fawcett) was made king… at some stage. He could be ‘Drumble Bob’, encountered at Tintenbar by Dick Glascott in Nov1866. He also could be the Bobby Fossett, an old but intelligent aboriginal, who died on the Brunswick not very long ago…, said the Gosford Times 5Jun1919. And at a stretch he could be ‘Bobby, King of Bumberbin’, who, as far as is known, was born in the vicinity of Cape Byron… and ascended the throne of Bumberbin… about the late 1850s. He died 1907 Broken Head, his death certificate recording his name as Bobby Bray. (In Glascott’s encounter ‘Drumble Bob’ was accompanied by ‘Dot Eye’, alias ‘David Brown’, conjectured as an Arakwal clansman.)

Bobby Bray’s son, Harry, was also a Brunswick Heads identity in the early years of white settlement claimed the Tweed Daily in an article on 28Jun1933, recording that In 1880 Brunswick Heads, the district’s centre, was a rude hamlet of a few slab shanties, which were outnumbered by aboriginal gunyahs, occupied by a peaceful tribe. Several of these, Harry Bray and Unora, were magnificent specimens of men…, but no mention of Drumble Charlie, who is rumoured to have died at North Stradbroke Island. Unara died 1903 Ballina, aged 59. Harry Bray died 1922 Broken Head, aged 72.

The Byron/Bray descendants called themselves the ‘Arakwal Bumberlin People’. The first public use of the name ‘Arakwal’ to identify the cohort of the Bay area was made by anthropologist and entomologist Norman Tindale in 1938. He recognised them as a separate dialect group and defined their domain as the huge area stretching from Ballina to Byron Bay and inland to Casino, his great mate Fred McCarthy at the Australian Museum in Sydney endorsing the definitions in 1952. However, it has been suggested that Tindale may have misunderstood his interviewees or later misinterpreted his notes, while the Ngarakbal/Ngarartbul/Knarkaul/…, centred on Murwillumbah/Wollumbin, claim that they are the real Arakwal… (Nor did Tindale acknowledge the existence of the ‘Nyangbal’ of Ballina/Lower Richmond.)

“King Bobby,” of Bumberin…, a native of Byron Bay, is buried alongside his father, near the beach…, said the SMH 28Mar1907, amplified by The Evening News on the same day, saying Only two of his tribe remain on the North Coast, which once had a tribe of 132…. The Northern Star was slower to pick up on the story, adding on 8Apr1907 that King Bobby, of Burrumbin… was a native of between Tathro (Tallow) Creek and Cape Byron… and is credited with commanding a tribe of dusty heroes numbering between 130 and 150…. His 50yr old son Harry Bray was the last of his tribe who buried his father near Tallow Beach…, while the Tweed Herald obituary of 4Apr1907 said Harry is not quite the last of his tribe, as he has a son about 14 years of age, who periodically deserts the parental mia-

---

31 Tweed Herald obituary 4Apr1907 and ‘History of the Cape Lightstation Precinct’ by Dr Brett Stubbs 2008, in which he quotes that In recognition of Bobby’s seniority, he was issued in about 1890 with a breast-plate inscribed with the words ‘Bobby, King of Bumberbin’…, referencing the minutes of the Aborigines Protectorate Board Meeting of 11Dec1890. He also notes that this is the first reference to the existence of a ‘Bumberbin Clan’. See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268632029 Note that on 28Apr1899 the Tweed Herald and Brunswick Chronicle recorded that King Harry (sic) of Bumberbin was in Mullumbimby on Wednesday, but there was no royal reception….

32 Robyn Howell, Goonellabah, correspondence with Marlene Lester, cited in Glascott op.cit. note 4, pg 204. (At pg 205 Howell says ‘Humpy Billy’, a Glascott employee at Tyagarah, was an Arakwal elder. He is probably the same ‘Humphrey Billy’ also mentioned along with ‘Durrumbull Charlie’, ‘Bobby Faucett’ and ‘Long William’ in Jarrett’s letter.)

33 Fox op.cit., note 23, pg 16.


35 New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names and Euphonious Words, with their Meanings, compiled by Frederick D. McCarthy and published by the Australian Museum 1952 and viewable at http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-5736012/, the accompanying map showing Arakwal country occupying most of the Byron Shire as per Tindale’s contention.

36 Fox op.cit., note 23, pg 16. (Note that Tindale’s classifications are now being challenged elsewhere around the country.)

On 25Sep1888 Owen B. Wareham, long-serving secretary of the Byron Bay Progress Association and selector of 'Tulawney' at Skinner's Shoot, wrote to the Colonial Secretary on behalf of three Aboriginal employees, Harry Bray, Tommy Dodd and George McCurdy, for a grant of forty acres of land... being an "Island" of brush in a large ti-tree swamp, between the Coast range, and Byron Bay, originally selected by one Taylor, who, owing to the land becoming surrounded by water during heavy rain, abandoned his CP, and it became forfeited. I might state that the applicants are hard working intelligent men, and desire to possess this portion of land for the purpose of clearing, and converting it into a farm....

Portion 6 of 40 acres on what later became Ewingsdale Road was duly promulgated as an Aborigine Reserve in the Government Gazette of 9Feb1889.

[By-the-bye, it was Owen Wareham and his committee who successfully lobbied to have the Bay rebirthed as ‘Byron Bay’ in 1894, after the Government Gazette of 19Dec1885 had bestowed the name ‘Cavanbah’. The place had been mapped and named by Englishman Fred Poate, a Sydney-based surveyor on the ‘Field Staff’ of the Surveyor-General’s Office. Whether he picked up ‘Cavvanbah’ locally is a mystery, but Archie Meston said Cape Byron was ‘Gurimmbie’ (ref Brisbane Courier on 9Feb1924), while Thomas Hewitt, proprietor of the Northern Star 1889-1915, said that Cape Byron [local dialect] is Kar-ran-bay... and “Karrahnbay”. Dr Sharpe’s dictionary gives gabanbah as a ‘location name’ for Cavanbah; no meaning given; possibly ‘place of scrub’. (Meston’s article also suggests the Minjunba dialect area ranges from Currumbin to Cape Byron).

Nor is there any agreement on the original Aboriginal name for Brunswick Heads. Dr Sharpe says ‘jurangbil’ is a location name for the Brunswick River; possibly durangbil or dirambul, while in 1901 Henry French and Charlie

38 The whole ‘reserves saga’ is preserved in State Records Office Box 20/7230, Item 90.7340. The documents quoted above can be found by wading through the 44 folios therein. (Copies available BVHS).
39 NSW Government Gazettes of 9Feb1889, 31Aug1889, 3May1890, 25Jul1896, 10Aug1910, and 10Mar1916 promulgate changes in location and reserve status. (Note that Parish Maps of the Parish of Byron initially show the new 40 acre reserve within portion 142 below Cooper’s Shoot, thence portion 46 reduced to about 8 acres closer to Tallow Creek wef 9Sep1908, and revoked 11Apr1924.)
Jarrett said ‘Durumbil’ means ‘That Round Hill inside Brunswick Heads’. In the Northern Star of 30Jan1938 Charlie’s nephew, Bernard Jarrett, 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.

But 3mths after Wareham’s letter Thomas Ewing MLA alerted the Department of Lands to the fact that the place was needed as a quarry for supply of road base gravel. ‘Temporary Salaried Surveyor R.N. Somerville’ of the Lismore Land District Office reported on 31May1889 that the Road referred to is a proposed main thoroughfare leading from Mullumbimby to Byron Bay and has been laid out by the Works Department ready for construction at an early date. It is the only stone near this portion of the proposed road and if not granted to the Roads Department will by increasing haulage considerably increase the cost of construction and maintenance.

The Aborigines have done nothing as yet on the land and Mr Wareham informs me the leader or prime mover of the three – Harry Bray – is now at work on the Tweed 40 miles distant. Without the proposed road the land would be as useless to the aborigines as to Taylor who selected it originally.... Should the idea of farming remain permanent with the aborigines and not proved one of their passing whims I have no doubt equally suitable land could be found for their occupation in the same neighbourhood.

Constable Andrews of Brunswick Heads reported on 20Aug1889 that he visited the Aborigines Reserve at Byron Bay and found on it two Aboriginals named “Berring” and “Tommy”. They were engaged felling scrub and had then felled about 6 acres. “Berring” stated to the Constable that the three Aborigines for whom the portion was reserved are going to pay him for his labor. The Constable also saw Mr O.B. Wareham J.P. at Byron Bay (who employed the three Aborigines) and he suggested that if the Government wanted any of the earth or rubble for road purposes that only a small portion of the reserve be resumed, and that he thought that the Aborigines would not object to the Government taking what they required for roads purposes. The Reserve is situated close to the Byron Bay – Mullumbimby Road, and is surrounded by a very wet swamp, and the only good land on the Reserve is a cone shaped hill of about 15 acres, and is very stony. In the event of the Government deciding to cancel this reserve, the Constable would recommend at Cape Byron a site which was once leased to David Jarman for hotel purposes. It is situated about half a mile from the eastern boundary of the village of Cavanba. There is fairly good soil there, well sheltered, and plenty of fresh water. The aborigines would also be in a far better position to obtain fish. An area of about 20 acres would be sufficient....

---

42 Time and Tide Again; A History of Byron Bay by Maurice Ryan and Robert Smith, Northern Rivers Press 2001, pg 80, states that the Fred Wareham diaries of 1890 record ‘Harry, Tommy, Boydie and George brushing on Owen’s flats.’ Boydie and George are likely to be the brothers McCurdy, and ‘Boydie’ is likely to be the ‘Brodie McCurdy’ who features in the Northern Star of 13Feb1905, and is possibly aka ‘Berring’? The ‘Wareham Diaries’ imply Harry Bray was the only semi-permanent employee, while most others were transients or part-timers. (And Tommy Dodd features at Brunswick, Byron and Ballina over the period 1886-97, mostly ‘unsound mind’ charges. He is possibly the Tommy Dodd who died 1912 Gosford, aged 55.)
Surveyor Somerville was then tasked with finding another spot and, ignoring Const Andrews’ recommendation, reported on 20Feb1890 that his new 40 acre site below Coopers Shoot (present Golf Course) is well watered, is of easy access by the drawing road shown on tracing and embraces a low hardwood spur for building on, and good flat for cultivation. It is situated 2¼ miles from Byron Bay township, where is also the nearest public house – I would think this far enough, and yet not too far, for the blacks must live to a certain extent on the assistance of the whites.

From enquiries on the spot it would appear there are no blacks really resident in the locality, they are frequently away camping or working on the Richmond or Tweed Rivers. Twelve seems to be the outside number of adults that may be said to frequent the neighbourhood, and it is unnecessary to provide for more.... The only objection that I heard of is the additional drainage into Tallow Creek, and this is a very slight one for it is more than probable the blacks will have died out before these waters are ever used for supply purposes. This site is also about ½ mile from a possible future Railway Station, but the Railway Station is far enough distant.... The new site was promulgated by the Gazette of 3May1890.

However, the 1954 manuscript Aborigines at Byron Bay states that at this time King Bobbie’s large camp at Byron Bay was not far from the site of the present Council Chambers. It is about where Beasley’s Bake Shop now stands. About 1896 there were 70 blacks of the Bumberbin tribe camped there....

(A different slant on the reserve saga was taken 28yrs later when Byron Shire Council opened the 'Island Quarry' on Ewingsdale Road, which was formerly set apart for aboriginals’..., but they never took kindly to it, and eventually abandoned it altogether for a site on the heath near Broken Head, which is their present headquarters, said the Northern Star of 10Jul1918. In the meantime, the place had been leased temporarily to Harry Everitt.)

The reserve site had been reduced to about 8 acres nearer Tallow Creek by 1908, at which time tenders were called for a two-storied cottage with brick chimneys and verandah, for the last of an aboriginal tribe, Harry Bray and his family, near Tallow Beach. Lately a small reserve had been set apart at that place for aborigines. Twelve years ago, when they were much more numerous, a place called the Island, on the Tyagarah Bay swamps, was set apart....

Conversely, Archie Meston, reminiscing to the Richmond River Herald on 19May1922 upon the death of John Perry MLC, said last week there was a record of the death of an aboriginal woman (Clara Bray, aged 58) said to be “the

---

43 One page document by unknown author, but probably Marjorie Oakes, is held in RRHS file BB-10.  
44 Northern Star 10Jun1908, 27Jun1908 and SMH 29Jun1908. (In 1908 the Board for the Protection of Aborigines said of the 6FB and 2HC at Byron Bay, 2 adults and 2 children were receiving aid, consisting of 'rations and hut'. Reference https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-53849807)
last of the Cape Byron tribe”; but there was no Cape Byron tribe, as all that area belonged to the Brunswick River blacks, the “Minyahgo-wollah” tribe..., although it’s possibly just semantic confusion, he meaning the collective 'Minjungbal People' centred on the Brunswick and embracing both Durungbil and Bumberin/Arakwal clans. About 60 of that tribe were there in a temporary hunting and fishing camp when I passed the cape in 1874, the year of my first interview with John Perry....

Also reminiscing in 1922 was 80yr old James Ainsworth,45 cedar-getter and teamster who settled at Ballina in 1847, who said The hunting ground of the Ballina tribes extended north to Broken Head and back from the beaches to the Big Scrub.... King Bobby also took part in several tribal fights with Richmond and Tweed blacks..., and ascended the throne of Bumberbin... after his father died in a clash against a tribe from Wilson’s Creek, known as Burahs... about the mid 1850s. Bobby’s son Harry Bray inherits the estate, which extends from Broken Head to Cape Byron, and bounded on the west by the South Arm of the Brunswick River..., which peters out around Ewingsdale? 46

The fate of the luxurious ‘cottage’ (a weatherboard three-roomed hut) is a mystery, but on 15May1919 Missionary Leslie G. Ogilvie of Fingal told the Northern Star that old Harry Bray, the last of his tribe, lives in a Government-erected, unlined hovel, similar to those already described, which is situated on the edge of a swamp..., and that Harry had been ‘converted’ along with the small camp... containing about 20 natives, mainly from the Richmond.

In 1915 it was reported that the camp at Broken Head accommodated about 9 residents, but only Harry Bray and his family and old Geebung (sic) continually occupy the site.47 In the 1860s and 70s ‘Geelong’ was an employee of cedar merchant Charlie Jarrett, the uncle of brothers James and Bernard above, also spending many years at the

45 Casino and Kyogle Courier of 7Oct1922. (Note: Ainsworth wrote 7 ‘reminiscing articles’, serialised over the period 2Sep-11Nov1922.)
46 Brisbane Telegraph of 12Apr1907, repeating King Bobby’s obituary in the Tweed Herald of 4Apr1907.
47 Northern Star of 18Sep1915.
Tyagarah cedar-getters’ camp in the employ of George Johnson, the brother of ‘Cudgery Jack’ Johnson, the only whitefella of Tyagarah (aka Targourah/Tagara) to enrol to vote in 1871. The old darkie had been failing this last year or two and died at his camp near Harry Bray’s, the next oldest aboriginal...,48 his name registered as Billy Geelong, Geelong Billy and Geelongbilly on the death certificate.

At Byron Bay on Australia Day in 1917 Harry Bray played host to quite a gathering of the dusky race, approximately 100, including piccaninnies and half-casts... from all over the region.49 He died Oct1922 at his Broken Head camp, leaving a daughter and son. It’s understood he adopted the name of his charge, Harry Bray, the son of his employer, James Bray of the Tweed, in the 1860s or 70s.50

Harry was back in the Byron Bay area by at least 1890 as an employee of Fred Wareham, selector of ‘Koreelah’ at Skinners Shoot, who formally recorded his name as Harry Bray.51 He had been 13yrs old and known as ‘Grasshopper’ when starting work with Joshua Bray at Kynnumboon on the Tweed in 1863,52 afterwards spending many years in the employ of Joshua's brother James at Dunbible, his duties including acting as carer for James' son, Harry Granville Bray, born 1869 Tweed River. He possibly returned to the Brunswick/Byron district in 1875 when 6yr old Harry Granville left the Tweed upon his father's acceptance of a position as Government Land Agent and Clerk of Petty Sessions at Armidale. (Note that As a child, King Harry had been educated by Mrs Joshua Bray (nee Gertrude Nixon, brother of Fred of Brunswick) with her own children at 'Kynnumboon' and spoke perfect English....53 Gertrude's first child was born 1866 when Grasshopper was 16yrs old.)

Epilogue

The census of 1871 had recorded a total of 70 Aboriginals resident on the ill-defined ‘Brunswick’. The head counter, James Rowland, took an inland route through the trackless bush from James Bray's Dunbible property and his tally possibly included the Indigenous encountered along the way at such places as Burringbar and Mooball.54 A total of 135 Aboriginals were found across the whole census area, exclusive of an estimated 50 who were on 'walkabout' in Qld. The ‘Brunswick’ contingent of 70 therefore represents a big ~40% of the total. The census of 1876 revealed

48 Northern Star 24Mar1917.  
49 Northern Star 30Jan1917.  
50 ‘Time and Tide; a history of Byron Bay’ by Maurice Ryan, 1984, pg 100. (Copy available BVHS). The Warehams were major employers at the Bay, implied the SMH on 29Dec1891, recording that At Byron Bay the chief timber sent away is pine, of which there yet remain large quantities in the district. Wareham Bros are among the largest exporters....  
53 Mary Kinsman in her 2007 book Joshua Bray; A Tweed Valley Pioneer, says the census was conducted between the Qld border and Brunswick Heads, but it’s possible Rowland ventured onto Tyagarah and Byron if his charter was to poll the Police District of Tweed River.
149 Aboriginals, presumably over the same area and none on walkabout. On 4 Jun 1890 the *Northern Star* published figures supplied by Bishop Doyle of Lismore, revealing 100 ‘Full-Blood’ and 28 ‘Half-Caste’ Aboriginals on ‘The Tweed’ (presumably police figures and taking in the area down to Broken Head).

In an article on *The Tweed and its Surrounding Districts* on 29 Dec 1891, the SMH said *The last census returns (Apr 1891) show that there are in the district 2460 Europeans, 140 kanakas, and 93 aboriginals, and the majority of them get their living by clearing or cultivating the land....* In this case ‘The Tweed’ probably excludes the 10 recorded on the Brunswick. (Collector’s Records for the various Parishes of the Tweed show 91 Aboriginals, inclusive of 15 ‘Half Castes’ separately recorded in the Parish of Murwillumbah.) On the other hand the Northern Star of 25 Jun 1892 said *The report for 1891 of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines... shows the Number of aborigines in the (Tweed River) District (Patrol Districts of Cudgen, Murwillumbah, Tumbulgum) is 125 – 93 full-blood, and 32 half-castes.... Eight old aborigines and one child are being supported by the Board.... No children are receiving instruction, five only of school age live within a radius of five miles of a school. All aboriginals are supplied annually with blankets by the Government.... The majority are addicted to habits of intemperance. The liquor, as a rule, is supplied at night by Europeans of low character and Kanakas.... When ill, the aborigines generally attend to one another....* (On the Richmond, which possibly included Brunswick, there were 365 FB and 129 HC.)

Using these and other figures, Ian Fox and Kyle Slabb reached the horrifying conclusion *that within 50 years of European settlement more than 90% of Aboriginal people may have perished in the Tweed and Brunswick..., mainly due to the ravages of smallpox. The scale of this tragedy very nearly defies comprehension.... At a rough guesstimate, it’s possible that the combined Brunswick group, if not specifically the Du-rung-bil Clan, could have mustered around 700 on that fateful day the first Caucasian turned up to herald a new way-of-life for the Brunswick.*

And that’s about the extent of whtelfella knowledge of the First People of the Brunswick. Unfortunately, no Durungbil descendant could be traced to help flesh-out the pre and post colonisation story. Nor is there any public information on archaeological digs or carbon dating carried out on significant sites to add factual detail to the story. Such information is deemed confidential and not available to BVHS.

*In October 1998, Byron Shire Council became the first Council in New South Wales to establish a formal relationship with... the Arakwal People.* On 28 May 2012 the Council signed a 'Statement of Commitment' *recognising the Bundjalung of Byron Bay Aboriginal-Arakwal People as traditional owners and custodians within this local Government area.... And on 30 Apr 2019 Judge Robertson granted native title rights to the Bundjalung of Byron Bay Aboriginal Corporation (Arakwal) over the area up to and including the Brunswick River as per the adjacent map, leaving some ambiguity on the status of the Durungbil and Minjungbal.*

---

55 Fox and Slabb op. cit note 10, pg 108.
57 http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/cases/cth/FCA/2019/527.html (Judge Robertson heard evidence from various affidavits, mostly from descendants of Harry Bray, and anthropological reports from various experts as listed under ‘REASONS FOR JUDGEMENT’).
Whilst Judge Robertson noted that There are no overlapping or competing native title applications covering any part of the land or waters covered by the application and no Indigenous or other respondents opposing the application..., the following is recorded for historical purposes:

The Aftermath

In a letter-to-the-editor of the Byron Shire Echo on 16Jul2002 Shaun Backo of Billinudgel said I am a member of the local Durrumbil People and as such I am within my rights to inform you of a few facts. Firstly, there are two (yes, two!) tribes in the Byron Shire, being the Durrumbil, whose grounds run from Wooyung to Tyagarah, and the Arakwal whose grounds run from Byron Bay to near Ballina....

Shaun came to prominence upon formation of the Brunswick Valley Reconciliation Group in 2001, becoming joint chairperson along with his uncle Darren Ivey and Darren’s partner Marie Hamilton, granddaughter of Hannah of New Brighton, the last ‘full-blood’ Aboriginal in the Brunswick Valley.58 (Also active on the committee was Lauren Jarrett, another granddaughter of Hannah Hamilton and interconnected with the Iveys). Shaun quickly identified himself as spokesman for the ‘Durrumbul People’ and together with Uncle Darren occupied the Roundhouse site at Ocean Shores, declaring it a sacred mens’ site and proposing that a community cultural centre be built there rather than the Shire Council’s intention to sell it for an eleven-lot residential subdivision.

Thanks to another BVRG committee member, well-known local historian and BVHS Patron, Frank Mills OAM, we now learn that remnants of the Durungbil Clan may have been hiding under the umbrella of the ‘South Sea Islanders’. (Ian Fox and Kyle Slabb also make the point that Aboriginal people and South Sea Islander people were connected with a common purpose through the employment opportunities of that time. It must also be said that both groups were united, too, in bearing the brunt of any racial prejudice and segregation. Through the generations, shared bonds were strengthened by way of tight-knit friendships, shared community and intermarriage....59 And Dr Margaret Sharp says many people of Kanaka descent... came across the border to New South Wales and intermarried with people in the Nganduwal and Minyangbal areas, which contributed to loss of the language.60)

The South Sea Islanders (loosely grouped as ‘Kanakas’) began to appear in the Brunswick district around 1889 after drifting down from multicultural Cudgen, where on 7Nov1885 a journalist with The Sydney Mail had commented that Perhaps the most extraordinary mixture of tongues, peoples, and nations is to be found among the 110 men employed at the Cudgen mill. Interspersed with a small proportion of whites, there are kanakas (time-expired boys from Queensland), Cingalese, Indian coolies, Arabs, Maltese, Manilla boys, Spaniards, Creoles, West Indians, Maoris, and natives of Madagascar, Singapore, and Mauritius....

58 Hannah Hamilton (nee Williams/Brady) was born on Bribie Island in Gubbi Gubbi Country in 1879. Around 1910 she made her way to New Brighton where she resided in a humpy at what became known as Hannah’s Hill, a secondary sand dune on the southern side of Redgate Road, just south of the South Golden Beach Community Centre, supporting herself and family as a cleaner at Ma Ring’s pub at Billinudgel over many years. She died in a Coolangatta Nursing Home 1972, aged 93.

59 Fox and Slabb op.cit note 10, pg 124.

[Two weeks later a journalist with *The Daily Telegraph* added Zulus, American Blacks, Chinese and Malays to the mix, in addition to 50 to 60 aborigines, inclusive of “Jacky, King of Taboo and Teranora”, his ‘Queen Charlotte’ and “Jacky Merrylegs, King of Nullum and Bunno.” On 25Oct1890 a journalist with the *Illustrated Sydney News* said the once numerous tribe (on the Tweed) is now represented by King “Wollumbin Johnnie” and Queen Charlotte, with a few miserable attendants. Queen Charlotte was last spotted at Murbah 1Dec1903 without any attendant Kings.]

Billinudgel became the main ‘Kanaka’ enclave in the Brunswick Valley, where the *Mullumbimby Star* recognised Dick Sickett as ‘the uncrowned king of the south sea islanders’...61 The Slockees, Noters, Marlows, Iveys, Changatos, Corowas and Wategos were also prominent families, most of these names making up the All Blacks Rugby Team that dominated the Tweed/Brunswick competition through the 1950s.

Billinudgel and Tyagarah became the leading cane growing areas in the Brunswick district. But sugar prices fell dramatically during the 1890s Depression and accelerated the swit

ch to dairying, leaving the Islanders to search for other means of earning a quid, mainly with the dairy farmers around Billinudgel who snapped them up for scrub clearing, the *Brunswick Chronicle* reporter counting 42 clearing a 200acre Billinudgel farm in Apr1905.62 At least five tried to escape the drudgery by attempting to enlist at Byron Bay during WW1.63

New Hebridian Jacob Ivey Snr and his Aboriginal partner begat Jacob Ivey Jnr on 21Dec1911, the earliest identifiable ‘Kanaka’ birth at Tyagarah. In turn, Jacob Jnr was the progenitor of six New Brighton-born children, one

---

61 Mullumbimby Star of 4Apr1949
62 Tweed Herald and Brunswick Chronicle 9May05: 42 Kanakas scrub felling - This is a double crested pink shame, and should stir the bile of our Member (White Labour Perry MLA). (The Town and Country Journal of 28Jun1905 said Forty Kanakas, previously engaged in the sugar industry, are now scrub clearing in the Mullumbimby district. They are considered good workmen, and on one contract have been given a shilling an acre more than the white men’s tender..., while The Tweed Times and Brunswick Advocate of 8Jul1905 reckoned That the Kanakas who are felling timber at Mullumbimby find the work a bit harder than cane cutting...)  
63 Northern Star 22Jul16, under ‘Byron Bay Court Chronicles’: Some five Kanakas... from Billinudgel... have enlisted for the war.
of whom was Darren/Delton Ivey. Jacob and family eventually settled on Tunnel Road where they became market gardeners. This property also became home to the next generation of Iveys where Delton and his partner Maria Hamilton reared their family of six children. Jacob Ivy Snr died 1941 New Brighton, aged 80 or 97.

The progenitor of a distinguished family was William Moore Bellear (Fugui), born 1871 in Surainia, on the Island of Malaita in the Solomons. At Mullum in 1918 he and his bride, Jessie King, from the Noonoocul people of Stradbroke Island, begat Solomon David Bellear who married Sadie Corowa (Karuhu) in 1943, just after enlisting from Fingal, and produced a remarkable family of nine, the most notable of whom was His Honour, Judge Robert William Bellear, Australia’s first indigenous judge. Robert was raised at New Brighton, doing his schooling at Billinudgel Primary and Mullum High, before enlisting in the navy from Tyagarah in 1961, serving for 12yrs and becoming the first Aboriginal to attain the rank of Chief Petty Officer. He co-founded the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern in 1972, was a director of the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service through most of the 1970s, gaining his law degree in 1978. He was given a State Funeral upon his early death, age 60, in 2005.

[The 1921 census recorded 1 ‘Full-Blood’ Polynesian male and 1 ‘Half-Caste’ Polynesian male in the Municipality of Mullumbimby, and 16FB Polynesian males, 4FB Polynesian females, 3HC Polynesian males, and 1HC Polynesian female in the Byron Shire. The shire also recorded 11 males and 12 females who identified as ‘Half-Caste Australian Aboriginal’. At the 1933 census 12FB Polynesian males, 6FB Polynesian females and no ‘Half-Caste’ Polynesians bothered to register as such in the Byron Shire, while there were 13 males and 11 females in the shire who chose to identify as ‘Half-Caste Australian Aboriginal’.]

Also resident in the Billinudgel precinct was the much respected Ngarakwal Githabal Elder, Aunty Millie Boyd, born ~1899 at Stoney Gully near Kyogle, the daughter of Euston Williams (Githabal) and Charlotte Brown (Ngarakwal). Charlotte was the daughter of Billy and Mary (nee Michulty/Mitchell) Brown of the Tweed’s Ngarakwal Clan and the brother of Henry, born ~1885 Kyogle and given the totemic name of ‘Dumbul’ (meaning snake? - and drawing attention to the resonance with ‘Drumble Charlie’ and ‘Durrumbul’).

In 2010 Archaeologist Jacqueline Collins noted that according to information provided by Harry Boyd, Roy Williams and Doug Williams..., ‘Granny Charlotte’ was raised in the Byron Bay town area, her mother reportedly born at a traditional birthing site at Suffolk Park (Collins 1995:46). Following her marriage to Euston Williams at Woodenbong and the birth of at least one child (Millie Boyd) at Kyogle, Charlotte and family frequently moved..., living for a time at Middle Pocket, Mullumbimby. Between c.1925-1930, ‘Queen Charlotte’ (believed to be Charlotte Williams) performed domestic duties at homes between Skinners Shoot and Tyagarah closer to Byron Bay....64 Collins describes Roy Williams as an ‘Ngaraakbul Elder’.

In the 1950s Charlotte related the story of The Fairy Emus songline to Roland Robinson.65 The songline originates at Julian Rocks (aka Gillama-beljin, Killa-mah-gan, Sulaama Billigen....), which were created by Nguthungulli, the Father of the whole world, who came ashore at Belongil and proceeded inland through Woodenbong (Nguthumbung) and out into the desert, towards the sunset....]

Millie married Ng’Arakwal man Chris Boyd of Tweed Heads, allegedly a descendant of King Billy Andrews of Murwillumbah. They spent many years at Middle Pocket, where their youngest daughter, Marlene Shanka Boyd, born 1945 and given the totemic name ‘Ellemarni’, did her schooling and went on to become a highly regarded keeper of Aboriginal Lore. Millie died in Lismore in 1994, aged 96, and was eulogised by Aboriginal activist Lorraine Mafi-Williams, born 1940 Taree and transient Suffolk Park resident, saying she was my aunt through marriage.... She was... sent with her aunt to work as domestic help at Grevillia Station when she was 12. She later met and married Uncle Chris Boyd, who lived at Middle Pocket, near Billinudgel, and died in the 1970s....66

---


Eustan Williams relates the story of Durrangun at Tooloom, on the creation of the Clarence River.)

Harry Boyd (Duran) defends his grandmother’s story and takes a swipe at the Arakwal in the Tweed Shire Echo of 2Apr2009, ref https://issuu.com/echopublications/docs/tweedecho0130

Marlene died in 2007, but her brother, Harry Boyd, continues to lob hand grenades into local Aboriginal affairs with his controversial claims on the legitimacy of the Bundjalung and Arakwal, addressing Byron Shire Council to this effect in May 2010.67 His claims even reached the ears of Germaine Greer,68 who said *He and his supporters denounced the ‘Bundjalung nation’ as a white fiction...* She summarises that *Chief among the peoples now claiming their birthright are the Githabul, some of whom accuse the Bundjalung of cultural genocide, claiming that the ‘[Ngarakwal/Githabul] and the other distinct peoples of the Northern New South Wales, South East Queensland region are being subject to forced assimilation as Bundjalung...’*

Harry’s claims have also got the anthropologists talking,69 noting that *Harry Boyd, who identifies as a Ngarakwal/Githabul elder... suggests that the term ‘Bundjalung’ was ‘created from’ linguistic texts and the work of local historians... Another dispute in this region concerns use of the name ‘Arakwal’... Harry’s Ngarakwal (Ngarakbal / Nganduwal/ Knarkbau/...) claim that they are the real Arakwal..., implying that Anthropologist Norman Tindale made a monumental blunder in his ethnographic mapping exercise of the region in 1938. (Ngara:Ngbal / Ngarahgwal /..., was the dialect spoken between the Tweed and Logan, with a 75% overlap with Nganduwal, which was the dialect spoken in the Tweed district. Nganduwal shares ~90% of its words with Minyungbal of the Brunswick and Byron Bay. Tindale said Nganduwal/Arakwal was a separate dialect group south of Byron Bay, ignoring Rev Livingstone’s Nyangbal of Ballina.)

Notwithstanding Harry’s contention and the ‘Kanaka’ connection, there is also a possibility that Fraser Island became a refuge for the Durungbil survivors or their progeny. During the publicity given the purported Ceremonial Mound in 1939 (see pg7), Fred Fordham remarked that A Fraser Island black, when told of the discovery of the mound, stated that his tribe had been looking for it for years.... Fordham’s disciple, Dave Marrinon, recorded in 1980 that As a young man, Edward Black, whose parents acquired the Mound site in 1904/05, talked to a native from Fraser Island..., who said he had heard the old men at Fraser talk of this ground.... And further, a team from the Richmond River Historical Society visiting the Mound in 1955 was told by Black that About 12 years ago... some aborigines from Fraser Island and Northern Territory... asked him to promise never to disturb it as it had great significance to the aborigines all over Australia..., which is a big call. Nevertheless, it’s possible the visiting Fraserians were Durungbil descendants with handed-down knowledge of the Mound.

[It is also conjectured that one of Charlotte Brown’s uncles, allegedly a son of ‘King Wollumbin Johnny’, is the same ‘King Brown Woolumba’ of the Gubbi Gubbi People.70 King Brown, aka John Brown (tribal name Undumbi),71 lived primarily at Tewantin, from where he was rounded up... and taken away in living memory to Cherbourg.72 If ‘King

---

71 http://www.gubbigubbi.com/discography.html
Brown’ is Charlotte’s uncle then he is a possible source of the Fraser Islanders’ knowledge of the Brunswick Mound, and possibly has some connection to Gubbian expatriate Hannah Hamilton of New Brighton. (Then again, it’s also suggested that ‘Drumble Charlie’ could be the ‘Charlie Drumple’ of Fraser Island who was sent to Cherbourg in 1904 and still recorded there in 1938.]

Fraser Island was home to the Butchulla People (‘the sea people’) whose numbers fell dramatically post 1874 due mainly to diseases brought by a quarantine station established near the Anglican Church Mission. The station was closed in 1896 and the place reverted to a Government-run Mission camp. Thereafter numbers rebuilt as a new Mission site at Bogimbah Creek became a dumping ground for ‘unproductive Aboriginals’ from all over the place.

Wikipedia says The Queensland Government ran the Bogimbah site under the direction of Archibald Meston’s son and wife until February 1900, when control was handed over to the Anglican Board of Missions. By this time, Bogimbah had become an incarceration facility for Aboriginals from around the state. At the end of 1899 there were 137 Aboriginals present from 25 different locations..., some of whom could have been ex-Durungbil. In 1904 the Government shut Bogimbah, and Of the 145 Aboriginals accounted for at the time of the closure, most were transferred far afield, while 9 were kept local and another 9 escaped or were sent elsewhere....

The havoc generated by retreating coastlines affected Fraserian and Bundjalung settlement patterns in different ways, generating different creation myths. In the latter case it forced the migration of The Three Brothers... out of the centre part of the world ... to arrive on the Brunswick from an island across the sea. Fraser Island, created when Yendingie transmogrified goddess K’Gari, was settled by people created by Beiral.

As with the Bundjalung, great seasonal migration by neighbours was a feature of the local Butchulla lifestyle. An estimated Aboriginal population of 2,000-3,000 used Fraser Island during the mullet season.... And they probably mingled with the Bundjalung at nearby Blackall Range during the bunya nut season.73

73 Butchulla seasonal migration: http://fido.org.au/education/AboriginalHistory.html

Bundjalung migration: Bundjalung Jugun; Bundjalung Country, by Jennifer Hoff, RRHS 2006, pg9, viz, Every two or three years, all the tribes of southern Queensland and northern NSW gathered at the Blackall Range to celebrate the sacred Bon-ye Bon-ye gathering when large quantities of ripe bunya nuts were harvested and eaten as part of a cycle of corroborees, ritual combats, trade exchanges and meetings that lasted about six to twelve weeks....
Outsider’s Observations

In 1891 ornithologist Archibald James Campbell of Melbourne did a tour of ‘The Big Scrub’, his adventures recorded in the *Northern Star* on 13Feb, 12Mar, 26Mar, 23Apr, 14May and 11Jun1892. He took a number of photos, 45 of which he used in a series of lectures back in Melbourne, and five of which have been downloaded from the website of the *State Library of Victoria* to illustrate the Brunswick portion of his narrative below.

Campbell took the train to Tenterfield and came down the range via coach, stopping at Tabulam to quickly arrange an impromptu group of the natives, consisting of three men, a woman, and a girl. How incongruous they appear in European dress, in lieu of the opossum rug or blanket, but there is no time to make them throw off superfluous attire....

About half-past 10 we say farewell to Lismore, leaving by Jarvis and Son’s coach, bound for the Tweed. Our course, trending north-easterly, lies right through the Big Scrub. Crossing Wilson’s Creek we admire the river’s reach, overhung with garlands from tree to tree, and vines suspended over the water, forming ideal scenes of real tropical magnificence. Shortly a halt is made at Bexhill, a place consisting of a store, public-house, and a dozen other houses. Before entering is a line of navvies’ tents, the white canvas looking picturesque, backed up by the scrub along Wilson’s Creek and overshadowed by tall fig-trees. Many of the men have their wives and families, but some of the tents seem rather temporary, and would scarcely satisfy field naturalists on a camping-out exhibition. The navvies...
are employed in the construction of a railway which is eventually to connect the Tweed district with Lismore. At Bexhill a deep cutting through exceedingly hard solid rock is being excavated. This stone appears to underlie the whole of the scrub area, and is pronounced by a competent geological friend to whom I submitted a sample to be a dark augitic basalt, containing detached crystals of hornblende.

The rest of the stage the horses find a stiff pull uphill, and we reach an elevation of about 500ft at Clunes, 10 miles from Lismore. Clunes possesses the usual clearings (displaying the same rich, reddish soil), and is a second edition of Bexhill, but perhaps a trifle more insignificant. Here we have dinner and change coaches—or rather divide passengers and luggage—one coach going to Byron Bay, the other (ours) to Brunswick, about nine miles above Byron Bay. The country still maintains its undulatory character—a distinctive feature of the big scrub. The clearings become fewer, the ever-present wall of vegetation on either side more continuous. Rifle-birds and regent-birds with striking golden-splashed wings are numerous, crossing the track, and large-tailed brown pigeons retain their perch, perfectly fearless of the coach and team. A dip occurs, and by this fording we cross Wilson’s Creek for the last time. Midstream the horses are allowed to remain awhile to cool their burning hoofs. The banks were well torn by many a flood, and so polished are the bed-rocks that the horses cannot find foothold, and flounder ere they reach the opposite bank. After passing Freeman’s, a dairy farm of some importance, we travel up what is locally known as Possum Shoot, reaching our greatest elevation at about 800ft. Once over the watershed the vegetation changes slightly; pines are seen for instance. The wayside scrub and logs are gaily covered with pretty bunches of flowers of the familiar climbing Tecoma. But hold here, while we feast our vision through an opening in the dark-whorled pine trees. Yonder we see -

“Far, far below us the wide Pacific,
Slumbering in azure from sky to sky.”

And there Cape Byron, the most easterly point of the Australian continent, pierces the ocean. The cape is between 300 and 400 feet high, protecting a little bay which offers a secure retreat to vessels in most weathers. On May 15, 1770, Captain Cook discovered and named the headland in honour of Commodore Byron, of the discovery ship Dolphin.
Getting down and out of the ranges, we come to a strip of forest on a flat. Oh, how delightful to see once again the gum trees. How nobly they carry themselves, and how refreshing the native scent the evening air is distilling from flowering melaleuca scrub! We pass a caravan of navvies, en route for Byron Bay, preparing for the night’s camp. We notice the shorter duration of the twilight here. Already from the zenith stars begin to peep, while cicadas shrilly chant aloud their vesper song. 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. Astir early, to see if I can arrange one or two portraits. The morn is fresh and serene. 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, and near the mouth of a river of the same name. The river is lined with mangroves, where black swans are following its course on high, seaward. There are a few fine banksia trees in front of the houses, where brush wattle-birds are gurgling, while behind, from thicker timber, arises the musical interludes of a butcher-bird, and where I detect the louder whistling calls of Flinders’ cuckoo. I watched a brood of three young white-rumped wood-swallows near. How attentive are the parent birds, every moment diving gracefully down and hawking along the river’s bank for food, each time returning with an insect and transferring it to the extended gape of one of the youngsters which sit closely side by side.

I succeed in finding a blackfellow’s humpy where an ugly chap is cooking a bandicoot by placing it on the fire intact. Now and then he turns it by the tail or lifts it to rub the singed fur off quickly with his hand. Then an incision is made along the abdomen with a sharp stick, entrails removed, and the body placed on the embers again to finish cooking. Probably I ask too many inquisitive questions about the breakfast, for the blackfellow appears surly, so I betake myself to another humpy, where I fine three "gins" asleep, and a fine blackfellow outside cracking open a conglomerate of rock oysters with the shin bone of a bullock. He tells me his name is "Mobal," of the Burringbah tribe. I remonstrate with him for being "boozed," as he called it, during the night. His reply was unanswerable, and in the most perfectly pronounced English, "What can you expect of blackfellow, if whitefellow gets drunk?" After breakfast, I take his photograph, and that of a group of three woman and a child. Mobal says the charge will only be half-a-crown each, but when I explain that with white people the sitter generally has to pay the
artist, and not the artist the sitter, he consents to reduce the charge to a shilling, while I am to give the women sixpence each.

At 10 o’clock, with five passengers, our coach is ready, and shortly afterwards the Brunswick River is crossed by punt. Bearing inland and north-easterly, we get into a mixture of forest and scrub country, with colonies of elegant “bangalow” palms (Archontophoenix).... Burringbah is the half way stopping place for luncheon. Continuing, the road is narrow and circuitous, leading over low, heavily timbered ranges. Ironbarks increase in stature.... The scenery certainly excels anything I have seen throughout this trip. I mentioned the road was very narrow, more noticeable at turns on hill sidings. Bye or passing places are required. Had we overtaken a bullock team we would have had to crawl behind it for half an hour or more before we could have passed. Here is another evil of the inconvenience: we met a mob of travelling horses. There being no room to pass our coach and team, the untamed animals take fright

Campbell titled this Brunswick photo ‘Sun Tanned Australians’, who he induced to go semi-native. One of the women is likely to be ‘Kitty’, identified in the Apr1891 Census as ‘Head of Household’ of 3 males and 6 females. (Regarding the missing bit of finger on the woman at right, the Town and Country Journal of 10Jan1885 recorded the visit of a couple of travellers who observed Close to the hotel a number of blacks encamped.... It is not a very interesting camp, only a few married couples and about a dozen children.... We were told that the females had the little finger cut off at the second joint when merging into womanhood.... But see the fishing theory at https://www.artery.com.au/information/item/aboriginal-sydney-part-1 and other google sites.)
and leap down hill.... The rest, wheeling, bolt past their drover, who is unduly pressing them, and are last seen scattered, careening wildly along a flat to our right.

Three times we cross Dunbible Creek.... On the last pinch before reaching the Tweed a glorious sight breaks upon our view of mountains away to our left – range upon range ending in the conspicuous peak of Mount Warning.... or Wollumbin of the blacks.... Bowling down to a flat, we are punt ed across the broad bosom of the River Tweed, and arrive about 5 o’clock at Murwillumbah, thus finishing a most enjoyable day.

Murwillumbah, (pronounced by the aboriginals very rapidly, with the accent on the second syllable) is the most northerly township of any importance in New South Wales.... Many blacks wander about the district.... Next stop Southport, via Tumbulgum, Cudgen, Tweed Heads, Coolangatta, Burleigh Heads....
The BVHS Collection of Aboriginal Artefacts.

Unfortunately there is very little remaining physical evidence that testifies to the Durungbil's long occupation of the Brunswick Valley. Most of the items displayed in our 'Aboriginal Room' are from outside Bundjalung country, some of the generic items even originating in the NT. Nevertheless, we hope to correct this exiguous position by appealing for local artifacts in private hands. Additionally, we are developing a comprehensive library on local aborigine lore, language, customs and traditions, awaiting a researcher to write the definitive history of our first settlers.

Stone Ground Axehead found near Mullumbimby. (12cm x 9cm).
(Other local stone axeheads in the BVHS collection come from Eureka and Cooper’s Lane at Main Arm.)
Grinding Stone found within vicinity of Mullumbimby (52cm x 45 cm x 19cm) (And weighs a hefty 56kg)

The grinding stone depicted here was used by Aboriginal women to grind seeds from grasses, trees, shrubs, succulents and ferns to release the starch for cooking purposes... and probably for the preparation of baby food. The flour produced was mixed with water and eaten as a paste, or cooked in the coals of a camp fire and eaten as cakes or loaves.... Large grinding stones such as this one were designed to be left at a camp site for use the next time the group moved there..., says the Australian Museum.

But the Durungbil were not nomadic in the traditional sense of the seasonal walkabout; there was always abundant local flora to gather, fauna to hunt and fish to catch in this benign environment. However, they were ‘semi-nomadic’ within their own territory, while negotiating the trespass laws in transiting along established pathways through their neighbour’s domain for attendance at ceremonial and other events further afield. (Hoff op.cit., note 50, chapters 7 and 8 on ceremonial gatherings and way-of-life).

The six large grinding bowls discovered in 2008 near the Gulgan Road overpass, at the end of the Aboriginal Pathway from the Big Scrub plateau, suggests a large semi-permanent camp.

Nevertheless, the grinding stone was probably redundant by the 1870s. By this time there had been a dramatic change in diet as the labour-intensive gathering, hunting and preparation of fresh local produce gave way to the convenience of the whitefella’s flour, biscuits, sugar, rum, tobacco.... Post 1881 saw the rapid destruction of habitat and conversion to monocultural cropping, thence pasture for Her Majesty the Cow. (By 1900 99% of the 75,000ha ‘Big Scrub’ was gone).

Jabir, a heavy hardwood truncheon-like fighting club found on Mount Chincogan. (The markings on the head are the only example of the ‘style’ of local Minjungbal art held by BVHS).

Bullroarer found on Koonyum Range. 25cm long
Stone Axehead found in Stewart Park, Mullumbimby, near the junction of Saltwater and Mullumbimby Creeks, ~1972. It is 21.5cm long, has an average width of 12cm, and is 5cm thick at the blunt end. It weighs 2.5kg and its colour lies somewhere between light grey and light brown. (The modern long-handled axe with iron head, below, weighs 2.3kg). It is the largest by far of the various axeheads held in the collection of BVHS, and the only one found within the town boundaries. All the other smaller axeheads come from further afield, the closest being Main Arm. They are all manufactured from various types of unidentified stone, making it hard to know whether they were made locally or acquired by trade. The subject item was likely be used for heavy duty work, requiring a two-handed operation because of its weight and the necessity for a hefty handle - if used as an axe at all. It may have been a hand-held digging tool or heavy duty cutting tool. The two symmetrically ground indentations may have been aids for the cracking of hard-shelled nuts. The sharp edge appears 'hammer-shaped' on the side shown, but ground on the observe side.

Comparison with similar sized axehead in the collection of the Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, left, and modern axe, right. The Richmond item, slightly larger and heavier, is a genuine axehead, found at Konorigan in 1964. Its cutting edge is blunter than the Mullumbimby tool, albeit ground on both sides.