

6.3 Pubs:

The Buxton Hotel is directly opposite the General Store. It used to be fronted with two huge acorn trees and bordered and backed by large pine trees. It was a weatherboard structure with a painted corrugated iron roof.

Old split wood shingles were covered by the corrugated iron, which overlaid the shingles to make the roof water tight. The wooden shingles dated back to the 1850s. Colin and I found a small mud shale quarry up behind the hotel towards the sandpits that we thought may have been used for the shingles but the shale was very soft and would have broken very easily and so was probably rejected in favour of the wooden ones. The quarry was no bigger than a small room and was probably a trial quarry only. The shale still peels off in flakes, just like it would have in those early days. However, like the mud shale the timber breaks easily and cracks, consequently the roof still leaked badly. As a consequence galvanised iron was placed directly over the wooden shingles and they were still there when the bar, lounge and kitchen section of the hotel burned down.



Nichols Buxton Hotel was built by William Burchall probably in the late 1870s. (Photo ex Joy Burchell)

The first owner, who also had land locally, was Frederick Nichols (1833-1904), a hard living, fearsome old man with a shaggy, grizzled head, red face with bushy grey whiskers, sitting on his chair near his log fire, with one gouty foot resting on a stool and swathed in a huge bundle of bandages (*Alexandra and District* by Dr Brian Lloyd, p143).



Nichol's Buxton Hotel, Easter 1904, the year Nichols died.

I do landscape oil paintings in my spare time and I painted the Buxton Hotel of the early 1950s from a small photograph lent to me by Jack Jones, my uncle. It shows the doors open, wooden beer barrels out the front and biscuit tins. They were probably a delivery that needed storing in the cellar. The cellar doors can be seen behind the barrels. The pub had a cellar beneath the floor of the bar entered from the road-side through a wooden gate entrance under the front veranda.



Although my painting does not represent it, snow covered the ground at the time the photograph was taken. Snow only covered the ground at Buxton about once every 5yrs, but this was a particularly heavy fall as the snow was quite thick on the ground. My painting shows the pub on fine day, so my memory came into play with the colours used. Jack said he did not remember the roof being the green colour I used in the painting. There used to be quite a large orchard out the back of the pub and a chicken coup. Huge acorn trees existed just to the left of this painting as well as in the back yard.



The photograph above is my attempt to photograph the framed and glass covered photo that exists inside the Buxton Hotel. This is the old hotel in the 1960s.

The Acorn Tree Possums:

In the mid 1960s there was a small band of local thirteen to fifteen year old teenagers that were always looking for something to do. Colin, Bob Redfern, Brian Worcester and I were walking down the road in front of the hotel, finding ways to spend our time when we decided to climb up one of the big old acorn trees that existed out the front of the pub. We were only in the tree for about a minute when the doors to the hotel burst open and a crowd of blokes came out the door and headed towards their cars. These were the days of 10 o'clock closing.

Predictably, one of these blokes had the urge to have a leak and so he relieved himself beside his car. In the process he looks down and noticed one of his tyres was flat. He started mumbling something about "someone's let my tyre down, who let my tyre down?" when I think it was Bob started making brush tailed bush possum noises in the tree. "N agh-agh-agh-agh-agh..... N agh-agh-agh-agh-agh..... N agh-agh-agh-agh-agh". It took him a few seconds to react and then realised it was not a possum, but that there was someone up the tree. He looked up the tree and called out "who's that". Without any pause Colin answered "we're possums". I was just as stunned as he was. After a second of stunned silence, and realising there were four of

us in the tree, he called out to his mates for help, because he believed we had let his tyre down.

Next thing we knew these five or six big blokes were dragging us down out of the tree. The aggrieved bloke was yelling out "*which one of you bastards let my tyre down*". None of us said anything until I was forced to say "*we didn't touch your tyre*", upon which I was grabbed by the shirt and cuffed across the chops. Brian Worcester was starting to realise the seriousness of this situation and strategically yelled out to us "*split, everyone go in different directions, split, quick*", while waving his hands in all the directions we should take. Bob and Colin went up the road towards the Igloo Roadhouse, Brian headed up the Marysville Road and I went down the highway towards Narbethong.

I was running as fast as I could, and I was a good runner, but my assailant was catching me. I had to do something quickly or be caught. Next to the Cathedral Guesthouse there was a vacant block that used to have pine trees in it. They were recently cut down and the grass had grown tall enough to cover the stumps. They were all about two feet high, but hidden in the grass. That's where I decided I had to go. I knew they were there so I was looking for them and dodging them. This bloke was getting real close when all of a sudden right behind me I heard thuuuummp, followed by "*aaaaaaaaahhhh*", followed by my assailant being horizontal and crashing to the ground groaning.

I just kept going and to get home I wove my way through the Cathedral Guesthouse buildings, then Grandpa's General Store storage rooms into the paddock beside the shop. I looked over towards the pub to see what I could see. My assailant had his arms over the shoulders of two of the blokes he was drinking with as they assisted him back to his car to deal with his flat tyre that we did not touch. Tyres do go flat for other reasons. Then I worked my way back home along the riverbank and through back yards. Colin and Bob were already home. I did not see Brian until several days later.

Rubbish Tips:

In the early 1970s a rubbish tip was discovered at Buxton behind the pub by some antique bottle hunters. They obtained permission from the hotel owner to dig out the tip. They dug at the site for about two weeks and found bottles dating back to the 1850s. Before they left the agreement was that they filled it all back in and returned the surface to its previous state. There would be other tips behind the General Store and Cathedral Guest House somewhere, probably covered in Blackberry bushes along the river bank. I found a torpedo soda bottle (circa 1860s) behind the store one day while wading in the Steavy at Grandpa's pump hole. There must have been old tips in there somewhere.



The current pub photograph shows that the acorn trees are still fronting the road in front of the pub and out the back, however the whole hotel has been rebuilt now. Those palm-looking trees out the front were never there. They must be from more recent landscaping. You can see some big deciduous trees at the back that were planted in the early days. I think they were also acorn trees. The owners living quarters part of the Buxton Hotel burnt in 1973 and a second fire in 1981 or 1982 burnt the remainder, the main bar, kitchen and client accommodation.

Publicans:

Frederick Nichols (1833-1904) operated the hotel after being built by William Burchall.

Thomas (Tom) David Robb 1886-1967, with his wife Alice May Evans, ran the Buxton Hotel for 25 years.

Eddie O'Brien 1940-50s

Brands 1950s. Buxton Hotel, Mr and Mrs Brand and their children Colin and Helen Brand.

Kings 1960s (related to my Nanna, nee Isabel Selina King).

Alan Henry 1960s

Ian & Iris McCrie 1970s, children Christine, Jackie, Marilyn, Dale (girl), Niven (now living in Darwin) and Andrew (Drew).

Bruce Moonie (Built new accommodation rooms)

John Anderson (Manager), owned by Max Finlay. 1981-2. Bar, Kitchen & Lounge burnt and rebuilt. The Pub burned down in 1973

Buxton Hotel – currently Eric & Annie Nottley

Although all the dates are not complete and I may have missed one or two of the publicans of the Buxton Hotel, the above is all the information I have.