

# TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society

October 2012 Vol. 1 No. 2



## Welcome

Welcome to the October 2012 edition of *Timelines*, the newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society. The aim of these newsletters is to introduce some of the rich historical heritage we share here in Murwillumbah and environs.

Thanks to our readers for the feedback you provided about our first newsletter last quarter. **Please keep helping us improve this new newsletter - your feedback, input and contributions are most welcome.**

This edition's contents:

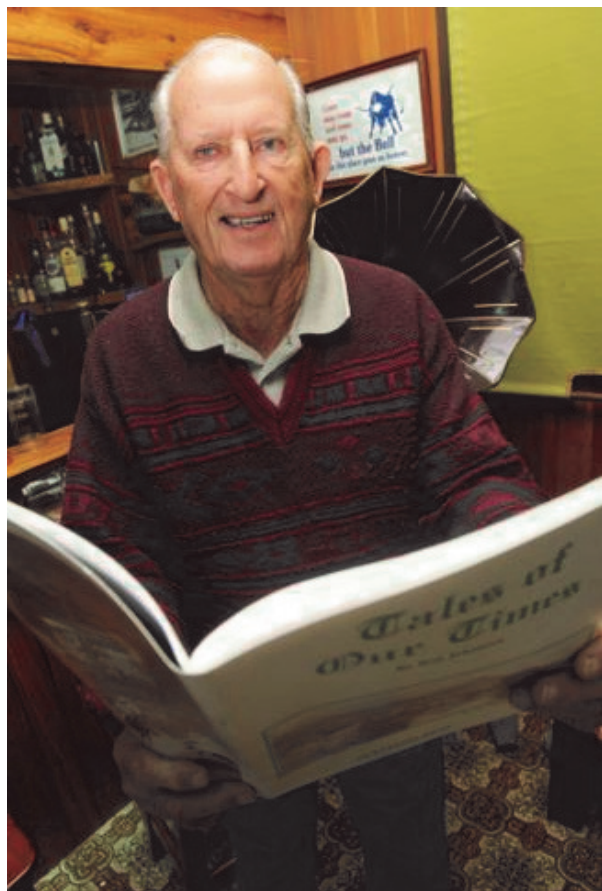
- Vale Ron Johansen OAM
- Art Deco in Murwillumbah - Intro and Main Street Medical Centre
- An interview with – Quentin Snow DFC
- The Mooball - Burringbar Feud
- Mystery Photos
- Famous Locals – Neville Bonner AO
- Society and Contact Information
- Museum Redevelopment Update (see insert)

## Vale Ron Johansen OAM

**PRESIDENT OF THE MURWILLUMBAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY FROM 1992 TO 2011**

*The Society expresses its sadness and sincere condolences on the recent passing of our long-serving member, past President and friend Ron Johansen. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and our thoughts are with his family at this time.*

*This article was written by Max Boyd and edited and approved by Ron's family.*



*Ron and part of his historical legacy*

Ron Johansen was born on 12/6/1923 in the Sunnyside Private Hospital. His parents were Erasmus and May Johansen who were farming at Cudgera, now 'Seabreeze Estate', at that time. In 1928 they purchased their own dairy farm at Fernvale which they named "Woodlands" and this farm is still owned in the family name.

His Father died when he was eight forcing the family to move to Stokers Siding and putting a sharefarmer on to manage the farm. Ron attended the local Primary School and continued on to Murwillumbah High School leaving at the age of 13 to take up his first job in his Uncle's general store at Stokers Siding.

In 1941, aged 18, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and spent his time driving bulldozers, building airfields around Bachelor and Gove in the Northern Territory.

He married Norma Edwards in 1950 and they had their four children, Robert; Garry; Debra and Brett.

For a period he and his brother Len jointly ran the property extending its size by buying a couple of neighbouring farms. As well as dairying they grew bananas, raised pigs,

sold insurance and even dealt in scrap metal to make ends meet. Another venture they undertook was the relocation of several houses from Murwillumbah to the farm, renovating and selling them on. During the 1960s they ran a piggery of some 250 animals.

When his brother Len suffered declining health in 1971, Ron and Norma decided to purchase his share of the farm. This was a big decision considering dairying on the Tweed was in rapid decline. In 1973, he decided to quit dairying and raise beef cattle just about the time the beef market collapsed. Life on the land was financially difficult so Ron sought additional work and was successful in obtaining a part time job as Agricultural Assistant at the Murwillumbah High School where he worked happily for many years.

He sold all his pigs in the late 1980s which allowed him some time for bowls and other interests. Eventually he 'retired' from cattle production in 2002 and leased the farm but was always active in the up-keeping and maintenance of the family farm for as long as he was able.

Aside from farming, Ron found time to involve himself in the local Parents & Citizens



*Ron and one of his gramophones*



Association; the Murwillumbah and District Tourist Association; the NSW Rural Fire Service; the local Camera Club; the Agricultural Show Society; the Showground Trust and in 1991 he joined and became the President of the Murwillumbah Historical Society a position he filled with great distinction until failing health forced his retirement in 2011.

Over his 20 years in the Society, he earned the greatest respect from all who shared his interest. He left behind a remarkable legacy of achievements including the 12 volumes he wrote and published entitled "Tales of our Times"; the wording on the plaques around the town that relate interesting snippets of its history; the many town walks he conducted in which he gave an enthralling discourse on the various shops and people he knew about; the part he played in getting the "Robey" steam engine out of the bush at Smiths Creek and having it moved to its present location beside the museum; the various displays that he helped to produce that covered pictorially various aspects of the Tweed, the last one being on bridges; and his contribution to the excellent display in the Bray Park Water Filtration Plant of which he was particularly proud.

He had a wonderful collection of gramophones in his home and also had a special interest in the 1931 Dennis Fire Engine presently located at Burringbar. A shed on his farm still holds a large quantity of the museum collection because it was not possible to display it all in the museum.

Ron fully deserved the OAM he was awarded in 2009; the Royal Australian Historical Society Certificate of Achievement in 2007 and the 2011 Heritage Volunteer Award from the Heritage Council of NSW.

He was intensely interested in the renovations and extensions to the Museum. It is sad that he was not able to see it completed.

He was an outstanding citizen and his fund of knowledge and bright cheery personality will be sorely missed.

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*A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots*  
- Marcus Garvey

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## New Series - Art Deco in Murwillumbah

*Research and story by Nick Gouliaev. The Society is fortunate to have Nick Gouliaev, a practicing architect, as an active Committee member. Thanks to Nick for this story, the first in an upcoming series by Nick exploring Murwillumbah's fabulous heritage of Art Deco buildings. We look forward to future instalments.*

### Historical Background to the Art Deco Historical Style 1925 – 1940.

Art Deco style takes its name from the "Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes" held in Paris France in 1925 as a showcase for new inspirations in Architecture, furnishings, textiles, graphics and sculptures.

The style was derived from Cubism, based generally on geometric shapes with essentially applied decorations. Buildings were richly decorated with hard edged, low relief designs of geometric shapes e.g. chevrons, ziggurats, florals and sunrise patterns. These were either hand-crafted or machine-made and to keep costs down were applied to most visible parts of buildings. This encouraged dynamic collaboration between architects, artists and sculptors.

What we now call Art Deco was often called Moderne, or Art Moderne, a term used to describe most advanced design ideas of the 1930s through to the end of World War 2. Art Deco and Art Moderne are close geometric relatives in form design, but Art Moderne had a horizontal rather than vertical emphasis, rounded corners rather than angular corners and with minimal if any surface ornamentation.

Art Deco was firstly applied to commercial and public buildings in the 1920's, later to domestic houses and was adapted with gusto to apartment buildings.

Art Deco was highly practical. For projects on a tight Budget the simple box decorated with motifs and embellished with appendages made the simple basic box/cube structure appear as up to date and fashionable.

Visual interest was further enhanced by stretching linear forms horizontally as well as

vertically throughout the most visible parts of the building. This was frequently done with bands of brickwork, canopies and copings.

The classic characteristics of Art Deco were always boxy forms arranged geometrically with the monolithic appearance broken up by curved decorative elements and applied motifs.



*Murwillumbah's Main Street Medical Centre*

Materials used were stucco, concrete, smooth face stone and terracotta. Steel and aluminium were often also used along with glass blocks and decorative plate glass (vitrolite).

Roofs were always flat, adorned with parapets (hiding the flat roofs), spires and tower like structures designed to accentuate a corner or entrance. Decorative additives such as chimneys were also used.

Windows appear as punctured openings, either square or round. To maintain the streamlined appearance of the building, they were often arranged in continuous horizontal bands of glass, sometimes filled with decorative glass or glass blocks. This created the effect of contrast of solid and voids, sometimes decorated with embossed spandrel panels placed below windows.

Entrances were sometimes surrounded with ornamental pilasters and pediments and doorways embellished with either a convex or concave decoration.

#### Research References

- A History of Architecture on the comparative method by Banister Fletcher. Publisher: The Athlone Press
- An Outline of European Architecture by Nikolaus Pevsner. Publisher: Pelican.
- Great Architecture of the World - General Editor; John Julius Norwich. Publisher: Mitchell Beazley Publishers limited London.
- Webster' New Twentieth Century Dictionary (unabridged). Publisher: Collins

#### Architectural Review - Main Street Medical Centre.

- 140 Main Street, Murwillumbah
- Approximate date of construction - 1938
- Built for - Dr. Broughton
- Designed and constructed by Mr Erickson (Swedish) (Mr Erickson went on to design and construct a number of buildings, both commercial and domestic, in the Murwillumbah area).

The original building was designed to be used as a doctor's surgery on the ground floor and the first floor to be a residence for the doctor.

In 1946, the first floor was occupied by Optometrist Mr. Dick Allen, accessing his residence through right-hand door (information obtained by Tony Clark from Quentin Snow who worked as an apprentice on the concrete footings and the first floor but not the second floor of the building).

Dr. Murray moved in to the ground floor and set up his surgery around the early 1950s. The practice taken over by Dr Stanton-Cook who remained there from the mid-1950s through to the 1970s approximately. Dr Murray sold the practice to the current consortium of doctors who are still using the building as a medical centre.

The building faces the main street. The original entry (on the right-hand side of the building) served as access to the original entry foyer/tower with a stairwell to first floor and roof area - this door is no longer used. The left-hand side of the front elevation has a secondary entry door which is used by visiting patients to access the ground floor surgery.

At roof level there is a low masonry wall with

metal handrail on top and parapet wall to the balance of the perimeter of the flat metal roof. External walls are stucco/smooth cement rendered and painted with corners rounded as per Art Deco Style. Windows are metal framed casement style/ hinged to open outwards with clear glazing throughout, wrapping around and following the shape of the curved walls and adding horizontality to the wall-facade. Natural light to the internal stairwell/foyer tower is provided by a glass block corner window 2 storeys high. This original entry foyer is now internally modified and is still used as stairwell access by patients to upper level doctors' rooms and also the roof. The balcony facing the street on the first floor has metal handrails adding horizontality to the simple cube facade of the Art Deco design. The rear of the original building has a new addition constructed to extend the floor area of the building with car-parking underneath.

*This article would not have been possible but for the extraordinary generosity and incredible memory of a large number of people in Murwillumbah who lived here at that time and are still living in this town, to share their historical knowledge with me and the Murwillumbah Historical Society. I thank them all and extend my special thanks to; Tony Clark, Quentin Snow, Ross Vlismas, Bill and Joan Campbell, Jennifer Hibbard and the staff of The Main Street Medical Centre. Jennifer Hibbard also mentioned that an optometrist occupied the first floor for a period of time. Nick Gouliaev*

## Interview with Quentin Snow DFC

*(Interview and story by Tony Clark)*

Quentin Francis Snow was born in Bangalow, NSW on 1 July 1922. The eldest son of Cecil James and Amy Amelia Snow. The family moved to Murwillumbah in 1922 when Cecil took a position as manager of the Tyalgum Sawmilling Co, indulged in Christian and civic affairs, becoming an alderman and the last mayor of the Municipality of Murwillumbah, 1946.

Quentin was educated at Murwillumbah High School and on leaving followed all aspects of

the building and construction trade, as a supervisor, divisional manager and construction foreman, with companies such as Kern Bros, Hornibrook and Citra Constructions, in many varied places ... Darwin, New Guinea, Sydney, Mary Kathleen, Mount Isa, North and Central Queensland.

He enlisted in the RAAF in July 1941 and was called up a few months later. After some preliminary studies at Murwillumbah High School, he trained in Australia for 12 months at Sandgate, Maryborough; Evan's Head and then was posted overseas to Great Britain to serve as an Air Gunner in RAF Bomber Command. He completed his first tour on 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron. When hostilities ceased in Europe he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, as a Warrant Officer on 44 Squadron, commissioned in January 1944, and was completing his second tour of operation on 49 RAF Squadron when the war finished, having flown 36 sorties in Lancasters over Germany.

He returned to Australia in December 1945 and was discharged 28 January 1946, his English Bride "Kelly" and baby daughter, Christine, followed in June 1946. Second daughter Robin and sons Terry and Robert were born in Murwillumbah. He followed the building and joinery trade up to his retirement, settling in Murwillumbah.

Quentin joined the Murwillumbah Historical Society on 1 February 1994, serving on the



Quentin Snow

committee between 2006 and 2009 and has been a very knowledgeable asset to the Historical Society, working with others such as Les Edwards, Jack Holston, Terry Twohill, Ernie Cobb and Ron Johansen on Exhibitions and displays and general

upkeep of the collection. We'd like to take this time to thank Quentin for his help in the past and look forward to working with him in the future.





Quentin Snow and his crew after completing their final operational mission over Berlin on 28 January 1944 . Left to right: FSGT Alf Holden DFM Navigator, SGT Vic Laker DFM Wireless Operator, SGT Freddy Garrett DFM Air Gunner, WOFF Quentin Snow DFC Air Gunner, PLTOFF Bernie Soper DFC Bomb Aimer, FLTLT Bert Wright DFC Pilot, SGT Bob Bateman DFM Flight Engineer.

## Burringbar-Mooball Feud

Once upon a time in the Tweed Valley there were two sleepy hamlets and one pub...

In 1931 the pub (in Burringbar) burned down and the owner, Mr Jack Watterson, decided to rebuild on the main road in Mooball. The people of Burringbar were very angry and started a petition to keep the pub in their town; funds were raised, barristers engaged and legal proceedings commenced. Mr Watterson won the case and after an unsuccessful appeal by the Burringbar side the new Victory Hotel opened in Mooball in 1932.



The Victory Hotel, December 2007

Burringbar was outraged, claimed the case was fixed, boycotted the new pub and obtained a licence to serve beer in a room at the back of Alex Phillip's garage. The community was split. Mooball withdrew all players from combined sporting teams, formed their own teams and when Burringbar met Mooball it was a clash with a vengeance. Although the popular Burringbar policeman Sergeant Wilde was able to keep the peace some of the old timers never set foot in the pub.

As time healeth all things, 20 years later the two villages again combined to form a hockey club. Now 60 years later the pub story is part of local history, the houses have nearly joined between the villages and people are back on neighbourly terms.

See you in the bar!

*Condensed from the story originally published by Ron Johansen in Tales of our Times Volume 1, November 1992*





Photo 1



Photo 2

## Mystery Photos

*Whenever space in the newsletter allows we intend to publish historical photos where we hope readers will help us "fill in the gaps" around the photos' details— please write in to [david@highwayone.net.au](mailto:david@highwayone.net.au) if you can help.*

Photo 1: we would love to know when and where this photo was taken and the identities and stories of any of the soldiers pictured.

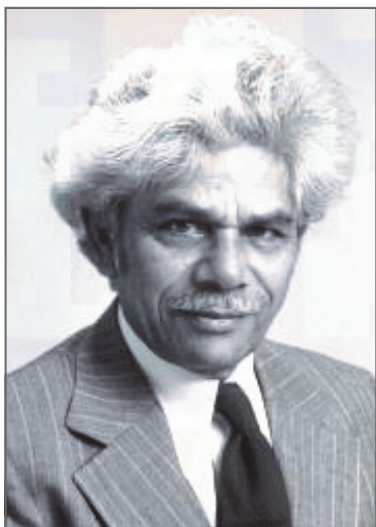
Photo 2: continuing the military theme, do you know where and when this photo was taken and who is shown?

## Famous Local - Neville Bonner AO

Born at Ukerebagh Island, a small settlement on the Tweed River, he never knew his father and had almost no formal education. He worked as a farm labourer before settling on Palm Island, near Townsville, Queensland in 1946, where he rose to the position of Assistant Settlement Overseer.

In 1960 he moved to Ipswich, where he joined the board of directors of the One Peo-

ple of Australia League (OPAL), a moderate indigenous rights organization. He became its Queensland president in 1970. He joined the Liberal Party in 1967 and held local office in the party. Following the resignation of Liberal Senator Dame Annabelle Rankin in 1971, He was chosen to fill the casual vacancy and thus became the first indigenous Australian to sit in the



Neville Bonner AO

Australian Parliament. He was elected in his own right in 1972, 1974, 1975 and 1980.

While in the Senate he served on a number of committees but rebelled against the Liberal Party line on some issues. Partly as a result of this, and partly due to pressure from younger candidates, he was dropped from the Liberal Senate ticket at the 1983 election. He stood as an independent and was nearly successful. The Hawke government then appointed him to the board of directors

of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Bonner was almost unique in being an indigenous activist and a political conservative:



Meeting electors, 1979

in fact he owed his political career to this combination. In the face of often savage personal criticism from radical left-wing indigenous activists, he often

denied being a "token" in the Liberal Party.

In 1979 Bonner was jointly named Australian of the Year. In 1984 he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia. From 1992 to 1996 he was member of the Griffith University Council. The university awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1993. In 1998 he was elected to the Constitutional Convention as a candidate of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy. He died at Ipswich in 1999, aged 76.

Edited from the article at Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neville\\_Bonner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neville_Bonner)

**ABOUT THE MUSEUM:** Established in 2004 by the three local Historical Societies, and the Tweed Shire Council, the Tweed River Regional Museum is one collection and one museum in three special locations; Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki. In 2012 The Tweed River Regional Museum at Murwillumbah is entering an exciting period of development involving construction of a new addition. For further information about the Tweed River Regional Museum please visit Council's website [www.tweed.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au) or contact the Museum Director on (02) 6670 2400.

**CONTACTING THE SOCIETY: Phone:** (02) 6672 3337, email [enquires@mhsresearch.org](mailto:enquires@mhsresearch.org). The Murwillumbah Museum is located in the historic 1915 Shire Council Chambers at 2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah NSW 2484 (the Museum is closed for extension and renovation during 2012 - the temporary address is 33-35 Kyogle Rd, Bray Park NSW 2484). The Museum's other branches at Tweed Heads and Uki will remain open as usual during this period.

**COMMITTEE:** President - Max Boyd, Vice-Pres. - Tony Clark, Secretary - Carol Piggott, Treasurer - Ernie Cobb, Members - Beveley Lee, Martin King, Geoff Wilkes, Don Beck, Lynne Beck, Bob Gerdes, Penelope Williams. **NEWSLETTER CONTACT:** David Taylor [david@highwayone.net.au](mailto:david@highwayone.net.au)

