

TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society

April 2013 Vol. 1 No. 4



Welcome

Welcome to the April 2013 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 have provided. **Please keep helping us improve this newsletter - your feedback, input, corrections and contributions are most welcome.**

This edition's contents:

- An Interview with Les Edwards
- Historic Buildings of Murwillumbah - The Credit Union Building
- Local Government in the Tweed
- Vale Jack Knight
- Mystery Photo
- Tales of our Times - California Milk Bar
- Society and Contact Information
- Museum Redevelopment and Update (see insert)

Interview with Les Edwards

Les is a Society Life Member and long-time stalwart, and is still a regular participant in Society activities.

This article was written by Tony Clark and approved by Les Edwards.



Les & Ruth Edwards (photo courtesy of Les Edwards)

Leslie Henry Edwards (Les) was born at the Newbray Hospital in George St, East Murwillumbah on 16 June 1928, and was the 3rd child (of 8) to Ernest and Alice Edwards. At the



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time they were living with Ernest's parents on the farm at Kynnumboon. Not long after Les' birth the family moved to West End Street. Ernest worked for the Tweed Shire Council as a Powder Monkey at Morey's Quarry. He continued employment with the council, eventually being in charge of all outside crews up until his retirement. Ernest was also a prominent footballer, playing for New South Wales.



Les & Ruth Edwards on their Wedding Day (photo courtesy of Les Edwards)

Les was educated at Murwillumbah Primary then Murwillumbah High School where he completed his Intermediate Certificate in 1943. He left school and gained employment at Wilkinson's where his brother Aub also worked. Les gained experience in the hardware department which became handy in the years to come. During 1944-45 he was also a member of the A.T.C (Air Training Corp). Training consisted of 2 nights a week learning Air Craft Recognition and Morse code; the latter being held in the old Fire Station building which had been removed from Newell Park and re-situated in front of the old Power Station (now Tweed Shire Council Building) in Tumbulgum Rd. However the War finished before he reached the age of 18, so he never got to enlist. Outside of work Les enjoyed many recreational activities including joining his

brothers in playing football for Old Boys, keeping the Edwards name going.

He finished working for Wilkinson's in 1955 and started with a sand mining company called Cudgen Rutile. It was at this time that he also married a Stokers Siding girl, Ruth Birch. They were married on Christmas Eve 1955 in the Murwillumbah Anglican Church and settled at Stokers Siding for the first 18 months while they built a house in Mayal St, Murwillumbah. Les and Ruth have two children David (1959) and Sandra (1965), and 5 grand-children.

In 1957 an opportunity to buy Ces Parkers Plumbing business arose. Les and his brother Bill bought the business which was situated in a little shed at the back of Hayes. They stayed there for 3-4 years before moving to Prospero Street where Edwards Plumbing remains to this day. Another brother, Alan, was apprenticed and later went to Mullumbimby to open a branch there. Both businesses are still run by family members, Murwillumbah by Bill's two sons' Mark & Graham and Mullumbimby by Alan's son Peter. Les retired in 1989.

Les and Ruth moved to their current residence in Hall Drive in 1984. Les joined the Murwillumbah Historical Society in 1992 and helped with many different projects including the Roby Steam Engine (on display at side of Tweed River Regional Museum in Murwillumbah) and is a Life Member of the Society. The Society would like to thank him for his wonderful help and support over the years and look forward to working with him in the future.

The Credit Union Building

Research and story by Nick Gouliaev. Taking a short break from exploring Murwillumbah's fabulous heritage of Art Deco buildings, in this edition Nick examines another historic Murwillumbah landmark constructed in a different architectural style.

- **Southern Cross Credit Union Building**
- Corner of Wharf St and Commercial Rd Murwillumbah
- Construction began - 1923
- Construction completed and opened - 1924

This landmark building is currently the Head Office of Southern Cross Credit Union but originally was designed and constructed for Commercial Bank of Australia Limited (CBA).



The superbly maintained Credit Union Building in March 2013 (photo: Nick Gouliarov)

Years later the CBA property was sold to C.W. Beer and Partners-Accountants. In 1966 the Banana Growers Federation Credit Union was commenced and due to expansion in 1973 it purchased the property from C.W. Beer and Partners and moved from Wollumbin Street, to this building and renaming to Tweed BGF Credit Union. The building was renamed Credit Union House at that time.

On 24 April 1973 Murwillumbah suffered a devastating fire in Wollumbin St which burned down Tweed BGF Credit Union's former building.

In 1976 Tweed BGF Credit Union merged with Lismore Community Credit Union and renamed to Tweed Byron Credit Union Ltd. In 1999 the name changed to Southern Cross Credit Union and website was created. A new computer system and generator were installed in preparation for the year 2000 and the name on the building changed to Southern Cross Credit Union Ltd.

The site of the building has a long history of different owners. Prior to the existing building, in 1880 the site was occupied by a house designed and constructed to house the Commercial Bank of Sydney (CBS). CBS serviced the sugar industry, operated by the Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) in the Murwillumbah area and surrounding districts. CSR was the biggest land owner in the area owning about 70% of the district's land.

CBS was the first bank in Murwillumbah. It later moved elsewhere in town to a newly constructed building and remained there until it merged with National Australia Bank Ltd (NAB) in 1982-1983. NAB still operates in Murwillumbah in the same building today and with this heritage has been trading in the area continuously since 1880.

The former CBS premises was occupied by Dr H.T.S. Bell as a residence and a surgery. On 10 October 1918 the building was sold for removal and was demolished. The land was also put up for auction but failed to bring the reserve price.

In 1919 CBA opened a new branch in Murwillumbah and due to business growth purchased the vacant land at the corner of Wharf St and Commercial Rd. In 1923 construction began on a new 2 storey brick building, with completion in 1924. The bank opened for business on 25 August 1924. This landmark building is extremely well maintained both internally and externally.

The architectural Style of the design is ENGLISH GEORGIAN, pleasantly fused with ENGLISH PALLADIAN; an imaginative mixture creating a timeless, pleasant commercial building style. The ground floor was the Bank business area and the first floor was a residence for the Manager. The two floors are connected by an internal timber staircase. The upstairs area had a balcony

opening out to the corner of the building which has its corner sliced off at 45 degrees to form a main entry precisely at the corner of the two flanking streets.



A historic moment for our historic building in the 1930s (Photo Acc. No. M23-35)

The external walls are of brick cavity construction with applied smooth cement render and painted. The internal walls are also of brick and are smooth cement rendered and painted. The wall facades have round arched windows at ground level and flat top windows at the first floor level. The windows are in the English Georgian style glazing and all windows are horizontally interconnected with decorative wall mouldings as well as above the windows of the top floor. The walls at the corners of the building also have decorative mouldings but in the vertical fashion, creating solidity in accordance with the Palladio style.

The tops of the walls are neatly finished with corbelling blocks jutting out, with deep decorative horizontal mouldings wrapping the length of the street elevations. Above that is an Italianate Palladio roof parapet balustrade gently hiding the pitched roof behind. The bases of the walls are thickened all around the street façades in a neat geometric pattern of Georgian style.

The ground floor bank area was designed to be 900mm above street sidewalk level, avoiding frequent local flooding, particularly in this part of the town (the lowest street level of the business area in town). The floors are timber framed and timber clad both downstairs and upstairs. There are high ceilings throughout, typical of that era, clad with either smooth plaster sheets or, for the bank area, possibly pressed metal ceiling sheets with decorative surface motifs and wide decorative cornices. However, today, it is hard to detect the original finishes due to contemporary refurbishments to the interior of the building.

The roof is timber framed and clad with corrugated galvanized roofing sheets. The roof pitch is quite low so as to hide roof from street level and be well behind the decorative roof parapet

The symmetry of facades creates a timeless, romantic, pleasing, classical, superbly restrained style.

The cost in 1923 was £5,500 to construct the original building on the corner of the 2 streets. The building has been later extended along both Wharf Street and Commercial Road in exactly the same architectural style so as to fully blend in with the original part of the building. At the rear of the building are newer extensions in unrendered brick with a new fire escape stair added to connect to the ground floor street level car park.



One of many floods, this time in the 1920s. Notice that the building hadn't been extended yet. (Photo Acc. No. M17-14)

The reference to English Palladian style is due to the Italian Architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), the most influential architect of the Renaissance period in architecture. He was the first architect to design totally symmetrical buildings, constructed from brick, and always smooth cement rendered over and painted. His books have been published in every country in Europe and he has had a great influence on architecture, especially in England where Palladio had an ardent disciple in a great English architect of that time Inigo Jones (1573-1652), plus others since.

The style embraced in Europe eventually was transplanted to the New World and mutated to combine with the Georgian style to become a very desirable architectural style for many years in the USA, Australia, Canada, South Africa, and other countries in the new world. Many notable and world famous buildings have been constructed over many years in this style.

Research References and Acknowledgements:

- Murwillumbah Historical Society Research Team; Tony Clark, Joan Cuthel, Max Boyd, Joan Campbell, Ann Robinson, Quinton Snow
- Staff of NAB Bank
- Staff of Southern Cross Credit Union
- Newspaper Extracts of Northern Star Lismore, NSW, 10 October 1918, 21 August 1924, 10 June 1924
- Newspaper extracts of The Brisbane Courier, Queensland, 15 August 1924, 2 July 1953
- Newspaper Extracts of The Daily News, NSW, 11 April 1973, 24 April 1973, 25 April 1973
- A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method. Author: Sir Banister Fletcher, revised by R.A. Cordingley, The Athlone Press, 1961, London, England
- An Outline of European Architecture. Author: Nikolaus Pevsner, Pelican

Thank you all for your wonderful cooperation.

Nick Gouliaev, Architect UNSW, 27 March 2013

Local Government in the Tweed since 1915

Written and researched by Max Boyd with additional research by Di Millar, Bev Lee, Tony Clark and David Taylor. Local Government in Tweed Shire has certainly had its share of twists, in-fighting and changes over the years! Thanks to Max Boyd for leading the push to uncover some fascinating insights into its architectural and organisational history.

Timeline

- 1885** March 20 Murwillumbah is proclaimed as a village.
- 1902** May 25 Municipality of Murwillumbah was proclaimed by Government Gazette No 346 of 25 May 1902, with the alterations by proclamation in Gazette No 3 of 6 Feb 1922. It covered approximately 700 acres. This occurred after it had reached a population of 1200.
- 1902** August 22 The first meeting of this Council was held in the School of

1906 March 7

1906 Dec. 6

1946 Dec.

1947 April 1

1947 April 6

1947 Dec. 18

1975 May 24

1975 August 29

Arts and Alderman Peter Street was elected as the first mayor.

Tweed Shire Council was proclaimed in Government Gazette No 121 of 7 March 1906 with the alterations to Government Gazette No 144 of 23 December 1908; No 3 of 6 January 1922 and No 69 of 15 June 1923.

The first meeting of this Council was held when Councillor F.P. Chambers was elected as its President.

Last meeting of Murwillumbah Municipal Council. Last mayor of Murwillumbah was Alderman C.J. Snow.

Amalgamation of Municipality of Murwillumbah and Tweed Shire Council.

The first meeting of the Provisional Council after the Municipality of Murwillumbah was amalgamated with Tweed Shire Council, following which the Municipality ceased to exist. Councillor C.E. Cox was elected President of the Provisional Council.

First meeting after general election. Councillor C.E. Cox elected as President. Tweed Shire Council moved out of its Chambers and relocated into the former Municipal Council Chambers.

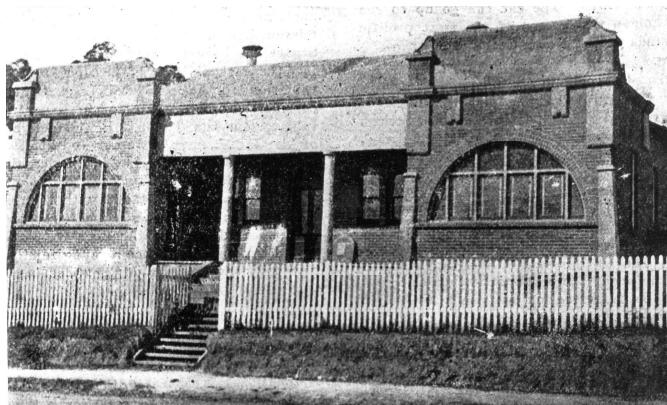
Tweed Heads Civic & Cultural Centre opened by Premier of NSW, the Hon. Tom Lewis.

Murwillumbah Civic & Cultural Centre opened by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Gough Whitlam QC.

First headquarters for Tweed Shire Council (corner of Queensland Road and Bent Street)

Tweed Shire Council was the first of the two Councils to construct its headquarter building. The foundation stone for it was laid by Councillor W.L. Brasnett on 8 July 1915. The cost of the building was £1418. The architect was Mr E. Edds and the builder was Mr A. Modini. The building remained as the Tweed Shire Council Headquarters until December 1946, after the Municipality of Murwillumbah and the Shire of Tweed were

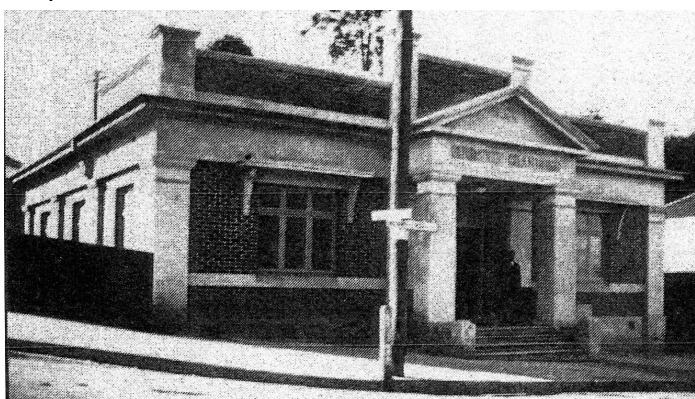
amalgamated. It is now the Murwillumbah component of the Tweed River Regional Museum and the home of the Murwillumbah Historical Society.



An early photo of the 1915 Tweed Shire Council Chambers. (photo Ron Johansen, Tales of our Times)

First and only Headquarters for Murwillumbah Municipal Council (corner of Queensland Road and Murwillumbah Street)

Aldermen of the Municipality resolved to give priority to rebuilding Murwillumbah after the disastrous fire of 1907 which destroyed 66 buildings. They also chose to construct other major infrastructure such as building the Mt Warning dam, concreting the major thoroughfares through Murwillumbah, establishing its own electricity power house and a reservoir on Hospital Hill to hold water for fire fighting before spending money on erecting the first stage of their Municipal Chambers, the foundation stone for which was laid by the Mayor, Alderman A.E. Budd on 17 September 1924.



The Municipal Council offices during the single story period 1924-1931 (photo Ron Johansen, Tales of our Times)

Research by Society volunteers of the Municipal minute books led to the discovery by Mrs Di Millar that tenders were let on 13 May 1931 for the construction of a second storey to the building. The architect was Mr A.F. Webb and the cost was £1435. Much greater detail around this contentious

issue has been supplied by Mrs Di Millar from the pages of the Tweed Daily newspaper. The last Mayor of the Murwillumbah Municipal Council was Alderman C.J. Snow.

Second Headquarters for Tweed Shire Council

After amalgamation in 1946 when the Murwillumbah Municipal Council ceased to exist, Tweed Shire Council moved into the Municipal Council Building in January 1948. Due to growth, the building later had to be enlarged. The additions were carried out by Hanna & Edmed, taking great care to preserve the original design and appearance. These additions, costing £17,000 pounds, were opened by the Hon. Pat Hills MLA, Minister for Local Government and Highways on 25 May 1960. The Shire Council Chambers occupied a section of the building towards the back right hand side. So this building became the second headquarters site for Tweed Shire Council for some 28 years. When Council vacated this building in 1975, it was discovered that the site was owned by the Crown and Council was unable to sell it. Subsequently it became the State Government office block as it is in 2013.



The former Municipal Council Headquarters in two-storey form (17 Dec 2007) (Photo David Taylor)

Third headquarters for Tweed Shire Council

Rapid growth of the Shire in staff and population, together with the decline in the town's major Entertainment Centre in the School of Arts, called for urgent action to be taken to replace both with a combined Civic and Cultural Centre on the site of the former Power House once operated by the Murwillumbah Municipal Council. This site had been retained for this purpose when the power house was demolished in 1969. The Brisbane-based City Electric Light Company (CEL) took over the supply of electricity to Tweed Shire on 14 April 1948. The Southern Electricity Authority of Queensland (SEAQ) took over supply from CEL in 1955 and the powerhouse, which had begun operations in 1919, was demolished during

January and February 1969 after its closure on 7 May 1960.

The foundation stone for the third Headquarters was laid by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Roden Cutler VC AK KCMG KCVO CBE on 30 October 1973. The large complex was officially opened by the Prime Minister the Hon Gough Whitlam QC on 29 August 1975. The building as it stood then cost \$2.2 million, \$500,000 of which was paid for in cash from the profits made by council from sales of land. No money in grants from other government sources was provided for this project.



Tweed Shire Council's Offices and Chambers in Murwillumbah (Nov 2012) (Photo Bob Harris)

This complex included a new Council Chamber on the 2nd floor, a large administration section, a kitchen and dining area adjoining the large auditorium on the 1st floor and a public Library on the ground floor. The Architect for the building was Mr David Bell and the builder was Hanna & Edmed. At the rear, the building had another three levels of staff accommodation added in 1997 at a cost of \$2 million and a lift was installed to service all levels.

Tweed Heads Branch Office



Tweed Shire Council's Tweed Heads Branch Office (Nov 2012) (Photo Bob Harris)

Concurrent with the decision to build the third headquarters building in Murwillumbah, council also resolved to build a new Civic and Cultural Centre in Tweed Heads due to the growth that had occurred following Council's development of Greenbank Island. This building provided an Administration Office, a Library and an Auditorium. It was designed by Mr L. Nyerges and built by Hanna & Edmed. It cost \$948,000 which council paid in cash and opened on 24 May 1975 by the Premier of New South Wales the Hon. Tom Lewis. The site on which it stands was set aside for the people of Tweed Heads and surrounding areas.

Vale Jack Knight

The Society was saddened to hear of the passing in December 2012 of our long time member and supporter Jack Knight. Our best wishes and sincere condolences go out to Jack's family and loved ones. It is intended to feature a story on Jack in our next edition.

Mystery Photo

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 taylordg.54@gmail.com if you can help or would like to be sent a larger version of the image.



Can you help with when this photo was taken, who is shown and the background story? We believe the location is Murwillumbah Station. (Photo Acc. No. M5-23)

Thanks to readers Margot Loder and Mary Lee Connery who identified our last mystery photo as WW1 Durambah Red Cross and even identified some of the people involved.

California Milk Bar

Edited by David Taylor from the story originally published by Ron Johansen in Tales of our Times Volume 1, November 1992. (All twelve volumes in Ron's iconic series are available from the Society)

Do you remember the milk shake boom of the 1930s and 1940s? In those days the shops were open for business on Friday nights. The streets were crowded and everyone was looking for a night out as well as shopping.

Of course the milk bars in those days were a hive of activity, a place to meet friends, a place to spend your sixpence (5c). The milk bar was on every corner in every street, and as you passed by you would hear the last "slurrrkkk" coming through the straw as somebody tried to get the last thick dregs. One such place was the California Milk Bar in Commercial Road, sadly gone now. The California was done out in green with black trimmings, the girls in uniforms the same colour.

Remember the milk shake ritual? First the aluminium container, put in the ice cold milk, then the powdered malt mixture, then the flavouring and last of all a blob of ice cream. Then came the click as the container was put up onto the mixer and listen to the tuneful whirr. Select a straw and the taste buds would be drooling. Then the big moment would arrive. With a polished flourish the milk would be poured from container to glass, finishing sometimes an arm's length apart and not a drop would be spilt. Many a customer would be lured inside by this performance.

Milk Bars in those days were big business and everyone had their favourite haunt, but somehow



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*California Milk Bar, Austral Building, Commercial Rd 1938
(photo from Ron Johansen's Tales of our Times Vol. 1)*

today's milk shakes don't taste the same, and the "slurrrkks" don't last as long. Maybe it's the ingredients, maybe it's ...

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 or contact the Museum Director on (02) 6670 2400.

CONTACTING THE SOCIETY: Phone: (02) 6672 3337, email 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

