

TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society

October 2013 Vol. 2 No. 2



Welcome

Welcome to the October 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 always most welcome.**

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- Our new Facebook page
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- Museum Redevelopment and Update (see insert)

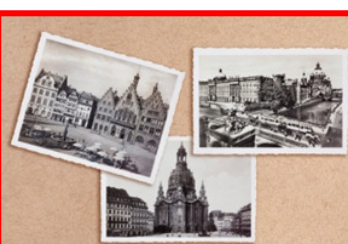
Interview with Kevin Dickson

Kevin is a Society Life Member and long-time supporter. Drawing on his professional involvement in the radio industry, he and Norm Smith established the Museum's old radio room. The article was written by Tony Clark from information supplied by Kevin and has been approved by Kevin.

Kevin Alexander Dickson was delivered by Matron Bowman on the 13 May 1926 at Sunnyside Hospital, Tumbulgum Road, Murwillumbah. He is the oldest of 5 children born to Thomas and Amy Dickson of Tumbulgum Rd, Murwillumbah. Thomas, a farm labourer, and Amy, a housemaid, both worked on Campbell's farm. By 1928 they



Kevin with Bob McKinnon in the Museum's old Radio Room (March 2012 photo courtesy of Geoff Wilkes)



WE WANT YOUR OLD PHOTOS!

If you have or come into possession of any old, family or historic photos please don't bin them; donate them instead. Please contact the Society (02) 6672 3337, email enquires@mhsresearch.org

became tenant farmers or MDK milkers (Mum, Dad & Kids) on Afflick's farm in Murwillumbah St, then through the years on various farms throughout Reserve Creek, Duranbah, Tygalah, Stott's Creek, Palmvale and Wardrop Valley.

This changing around of farms led to Kevin attending multiple primary schools. Between the years 1933-38, he attended Duranbah Primary, the Convent Primary, back to Duranbah then finally on to Fernvale. It was at Fernvale that Kevin first met Norm Smith; a teacher who nurtured Kevin's interest in amateur radio, a love of which he has carried on to today. In 1939, Kevin attended Murwillumbah High, gaining his intermediate certificate in 1943.



Kevin Dickson & Doug McTaggart in the RAAF in Ballarat, 1945 (photo courtesy of Kevin Dickson)

In 1942 with WW2 underway, he joined the Air Cadets Squadron, taking lessons on Tuesday nights in Maths, Science and RAAF regulations, then on weekends performing parades and competing in sporting competitions. One of his other duties every now and then was doing guard

duty on the Murwillumbah Bridge armed only with a wooden rifle. As Kevin finished High School but was still not old enough to join-up, he took a job at Hayes Garage in Prospero St, South Murwillumbah, pumping up the fuel into the gravity fed fuel pumps. In May 1944 Kevin turned 18 and joined the Air Force, starting Initial training school in Kingaroy then onto Ballarat where he was "marched out" as a Wireless Air Gunner in May 1945. He was told on his birthday that the war in Europe had ended and to go home. As the war was still underway in the Pacific he decided to be re-mustered down to Ground Wireless Operator and trained at Point Cook till September then once again as the war had ended he was told to go home or enlist for 8 years. Kevin was demobilised and took up a 15 month retraining course - International Wireless Operator.

In March 1947, Kevin obtained a job with Eric McIlree as a wireless operator on a £10 per week one way ticket ferry flight from Sydney to London for the sale of 4 AVRO ANSONS MK1 aircraft; a flight that took 35 days with 35 stops and 5 forced landings. He then obtained employment with the

Marconi International Marine Company in England as a ships wireless operator on passenger, cargo



Kevin Dickson, Ship Radio Officer 1947 (photo courtesy of Kevin Dickson)

and tramp ships, moving cargo such as wheat and coal all over the world including the Black Sea during the Cold War. In April 1950 he obtained a job with the Australian Whaling Commission as a Wireless operator on a delivery voyage from Glasgow to Fremantle, then as a Wireless Operator Helmsman on a whaling ship from Sharks Bay, Carnarvon WA, continuing there until November 1951.



Kevin Dickson Whaling in 1950-51 in WA (photo courtesy of Kevin Dickson)

In Kevin's words "After making the mistake of all seamen of staying ashore too long, I was captured by a wingless bird and spent the next 30 years in one place raising a family in Brisbane". Kevin married Joyce Noffke, a shop assistant from Laidley, Lockyer Valley on 12 January 1952, setting up home in Everton Park in the northern suburbs of Brisbane. All three of their children were born there; Gary (1953), Peter (1955), and Debbie (1961) and they have gone on to give Kevin and Joyce six Grandchildren.

In 1951 Kevin began work with 4BK in Brisbane as a Radio Station Technician, working there until 1959. It was during this time that he went into partnership with his mother (Amy) and brother

(Tom) buying and renting properties, doing so until his retirement in 1983. In 1956 Kevin joined the Everton Park ALP in the Electorate of Kedron; rising to President and running for selection for the electorate in 1972, but was defeated by a paid Member of the Labour Party.

In 1959, Kevin joined Channel 7 as a Television Technician and was present at the beginning of broadcasting of the station. He continued working here until his retirement in 1983. In 2003 he had his time in television recorded for The Film and Sound Archives of Australia (History of the Beginning of Television in Australia – Brisbane 1959). In 2013 he was also invited to switch off the Channel 7 analogue system for the switch to digital.

Kevin obtained his pilot's licence in 1976 at Archerfield in Brisbane and has flown all around Australia. He is still currently flying at Coolangatta to keep his hand in. During married life he also became qualified in Amateur Radio which after his retirement led to catching up with his old school teacher Norm Smith who "put the hard word on me" to help start a Radio Room at the Murwillumbah Historical Society. Between these 2 men, a collection of great significance has been put together. Kevin is a Life Member of both the Amateur Radio Club and The Murwillumbah Historical Society.

Upon retirement in 1983, Kevin and Joyce moved to Rutledge St Coolangatta, where they still currently reside. On behalf of the Murwillumbah Historical Society I would like to thank them for their contributions of time, knowledge and energy and wish them all the best in the future.

The Imperial Hotel - Part 1

Research and story by Nick Gouliarov. In this edition's article Nick researches the architecture and amazing history of this beloved Murwillumbah landmark.

So that we can provide the maximum historical detail possible, we will run the story in two parts; Part 1 will provide an overview and will outline the history leading up to the construction of the current building while Part 2 will analyse the current building; our famous "Pink Pub".

- **The Imperial Hotel**
- Main Street, Murwillumbah
- Construction - 1930-31
- Leased - June 1935
- Developer - Toohey's Brewery Pty Ltd, Sydney NSW
- Architect - Toohey's Brewery Architects: Messrs E. and E.R. Justilins
- Builder - Toohey's Brewery Architects

- Internal Plaster Ceiling Finishes - Ray Granger's Plaster Works of Lismore, NSW

Owners & Licencees:

- Taphouse Group Corp. (current)
- Tony and Kim Foran (2011 – 2013)
- Receivers trading under Clarity Management (2009-2011)
- Colin Power (2006-2009)
- Taphouse Group Corp. (Carl Salter/Peter Mattick/Philip Salter)(2003 – 2006)
- Lewis Family (2001 – 2003)
- John and Laurie Bortolli (1994 – 2001) (These are the owners who completed most major refurbishments to the hotel)
- Paul Watson (1988 – 1994)(Purchased the property and the hotel licence from Toohey's Brewery Pty. Ltd. Prior to this, all licencees only leased the hotel and could only sell Toohey's brand beer)

The Imperial Hotel is considered to be the most memorable historical building in Murwillumbah CBD, primarily because of its striking pink paintwork and its architectural style of Art Deco and Spanish Mission flavour, blending in with the Neo Georgian details of certain aspects of the doors, windows and brickwork, especially at the sides and rear. However, all four sides of this building engender a certain historic wonderment and mystery as one walks around it.



The newly re-re-constructed Imperial Hotel in the 1930s (photo courtesy of Tony Clark)

Constructed in 1930–31, the building is a 2-storey structure, retaining that wonderful 1930's charm internally and externally, with stucco rendered/painted brick walls facing Main Street and a Loggia/Gallery, roofed over at the first floor, creating cool, shady, charming mystery to the building due to its Spanish Mission features.

The hotel has a turbulent history of fires, reconstruction, arson attacks and a mysterious legend of a resident ghost walking the upstairs



Charming 1906 view along Brisbane Street to the original Imperial Hotel with a group of school children proceeding past in remarkably good order (photo The State Library of Queensland)

corridors of the accommodation suites; the legend says that a lady cook employed by the hotel died of natural causes and is still there. Another legend is that the robbers responsible for the famous 24 November 1978 robbery of the Bank of NSW in Murwillumbah (now the Westpac Bank) stayed at the hotel. The robbery was particularly successful, taking \$1.7 million, with the Daily News newspaper's front page headlines blaring "They Took the Lot". This was Australia's biggest bank robbery at the time and the robbers were never found, however, some enterprising locals made money from the event by producing and selling printed tee shirts featuring the robbery - great for tourism!

The original Hotel, called Higgins Imperial Hotel, was constructed prior to 1906 as a 2-storey timber structure with external timber wall cladding. At street level were drinking lounges and food serving areas while upstairs was accommodation with a veranda/gallery extending out from the front of the building over a sidewalk below. This building burnt down in the great fire of Murwillumbah on 15 September 1907 which raged for 24 hours and destroyed 66 buildings.

The Imperial Hotel was re-constructed and open for business in 1908 as a building of timber frame

and timber external wall cladding similar to the one which burnt down. On 10 December 1916 and 22 November 1926 a series of small arson events/fires occurred at the hotel but only resulted in minor damage. However, on 7 November 1929, a second disastrous Murwillumbah town fire occurred; this time completely destroying 5 shops and, again, the Imperial Hotel. All the destroyed buildings were of timber construction and were owned by Toohey's Brewery. The estimated damage was £15,000; insured for £11,000. The Manager of the hotel, Mrs. Osborne, did not save any of her property but the licensee Mr. F. W. Wulff did save his personal belongings.

Once again, as after the 1906 fire, in a few days a temporary bar was set up on site of the hotel amongst the ashes. In 1930 the NSW District Coroner and NSW Attorney-General had 2 Chinese persons charged with arson but these charges were quickly dismissed.

To be continued next edition....

A Scout Hall in One Day Part 2

In an amazing display of community commitment, a motivated group of volunteers built the Murwillumbah

Scout Hall in just one day back on Saturday 26 September 1953. We are privileged to have access to this charming story, and original photos, courtesy of Quentin Snow, son of Cecil Snow, the organiser and planner of the event and the writer of the story. This is Part 2 of the story.



The first roof truss goes up (photo courtesy of Quentin Snow)

Originally, owing to lack of funds, it had not been intended to completely line and ceil the building. Mr. Snow told the Lions Club (who were calling for donations throughout the day) that the lining and ceilings would be completed if the Club raised £300. When it became evident that this objective would be reached the hardboard for linings and ceilings was brought on to the job and the builders continued their efforts.



Windows in! Cecil Snow in his "signature braces" with his "AIDE" Ted Farrell (photo courtesy of Quentin Snow)

Owing to failing light and the necessity for allowing the electricians to complete their task, the carpenters concluded work at 5.30 p.m.

At 6 p.m. the electricians switched on the light from the power mains. The building was completed, except for a few sheets of hardboard in the ceiling and the hanging of some of the doors, in 12 hours. External walls had been painted and trimming colors applied. The kitchen had been supplied with a laminex covered bench and cupboards with double bowl plastic sink. The Scouts photographic darkroom had been equipped



Ceiling started (photo courtesy of Quentin Snow)

with a 10 foot lead covered bench and sink. Water, waste pipes and drainage had been fixed all within the time limit.



Jim Palmer & Quentin Snow (overalls & hat) assembling kitchen cupboards while the "Fox" Newsreel photographer passes (photo courtesy of Quentin Snow)

Throughout the day the Lions Club raised well over £400 by direct appeal to the visiting public and by appeal over the air in cooperation with Radio 2MW.



Finito! (photo courtesy of Quentin Snow)

The Tweed Camera Club took photos of work in progress with a view to donating them to the Scouts. The Scouts sold vouchers which could be exchanged for the actual photos at a later date.

Did You Know?

This series of stories, selected and edited by Max Boyd, highlights the famous people, clubs, institutions and more who have called Murwillumbah home. This latest instalment features the career of Larry Corowa.

Larry Corowa MBE was born on 5 August 1957 in Murwillumbah, NSW. Larry is an indigenous Australian former professional rugby league footballer of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

He represented Australia as a winger in the Australian team of 1978-79 and also represented NSW the same year on five occasions.



Presenting the Larry Corowa Shield to Scott Prince of the Titans 3 Sep 2010 (Photo source: Matt Roberts/Getty Images AsiaPac)

In the biography written by Alan Whitticker about Larry he says quote “the career of electrifying winger, the “black flash”, was almost over before it had started. Injuries suffered in a car accident following a game for Tweed Heads/Gold Coast

in Brisbane kept the 16 year old out of the game for two years. Corowa linked with close friend Percy Knight with the Queanbeyan Kangaroos in the Canberra competition before coming to prominence when he scored five tries for Monaro against the Great Britain visiting side in 1977.

The 19 year old signed with Balmain the following year and stamped his claim for Kangaroo selection with a series of blistering performances which yielded 24 tries for the season (incredibly Corowa was top-scorer for the tigers that year with 72 points from tries alone).

In September 1978 he confirmed that he was the fastest man in the game when he defeated Stawell Gift winner Steve Proudfoot in a 100 metre challenge race at Wentworth Park.

On tour with the Kangaroos, Corowa played in just 7 matches but made his test debut against great Britain the following year, scoring a try in the first match of the 1979 ashes series.

Corowa played in two tests in 1979 and was awarded the MBE for services to the game.

A burst appendix in 1981, coupled with further injury problems and the game’s growing emphasis on defence, resulted in the decline of his career

and he returned home to Tweed Heads at the end of 1984.

His career looked to have finished when he led South Tweed to an upset win in the Group 18 competition in 1987 but four years later, while working with Wally Lewis at the Gold Coast, he made a comeback to first grade after an absence of seven years.

Reference: [Wikipedia](#) and the biography written by Alan Whitticker

The JJ Richards Story Part 2

Thanks to Idwall Richards, son of JJ Richards, for permission to feature this fascinating story recounting the history of the man, the family and the company. This is Part 2 of the story, written by Idwall on 4 April 2006.



JJ in 1912 outside the home he was born in (1894) doing the washing. The address was (and remains): “Dan Y Graig” – Burry Port, South Wales (Photo: courtesy Idwall Richards)

I do not have the privilege of being born on the Tweed, although I am credited with having been brought to the Tweed during the first year of my life (on 7 April 1931) and having never left.

Dad was never happy with working in the mines, obviously always looking for alternatives, which led him to a job in the cement works at Kandos. It was here that he met fellow

Welshman Arthur Webb, who at the time was a builder who happened to be working on two projects in Murwillumbah. The Murwillumbah High School and the Imperial Hotel recently burned to the ground.

Dad’s penchant to have a go is exemplified by his actions when Arthur Webb said to him, “If you want a job, take that truck to Murwillumbah”. The truck of course was a 1929130 REO. Most people would have not experienced travelling in, let alone driving, a 1930 model truck - a daunting experience, I can assure you. The catch is Dad had never driven a truck, nor did he have a licence, but that didn’t stop him from getting

himself and the truck to Murwillumbah. Another adage fits comfortably in this situation; "Fortune favours the brave". I have no idea how long it took for Dad to get to Murwillumbah, as the logbook is nowhere to be found.

Dad's subsequent job was to pick up the bricks from the train at Murwillumbah station and deliver them to the respective building sites.



In 1962 when JJR successfully tendered for the Toowoomba Sanitary & Garbage Contract, the most up-to-date garbage collection vehicles, all steel, with sliding covers were manufactured at Chinderah (Photo: courtesy Idwall Richards)

Manual loading and off-loading was the order of the day.

Dad decided that the Tweed was the place to live and in 1930 he brought his family from Thirroul to live in a house immediately above the Murwillumbah Power Station - both now passed into antiquity. We later moved to a lovely old home in Byangum Rd,



JJ in 1952 - In 'Trafalgar Square' whilst visiting Wales (Photo: courtesy Idwall Richards)

opposite the only brick home in Murwillumbah at the time, owned by Whirly & Fellows. The house was situated at the top of the hill just before the still remaining, very sharp bend. The house on this site is now numbered 74-78 Byangum Rd. It was here that Thomas Barry was born.

I have fond memories of this lovely old home,



It wasn't until 1968 that the first garbage compactor collection vehicle was designed & built (Photo: courtesy Idwall Richards)

which had many fruit trees in the back yard extending right down to Spring Street. (verandah right around). Mum obviously wanted a new home (don't all women), so in 1938 Dad engaged Jack Fisher to build us a new home in Myrtle Street, which still stands today. A testimony to the trade skills of the well reputed Jack Fisher. It too was a lovely home even by today's standards, but as fate would have it, Mum and the kids were not to enjoy this pleasure for long, for as this story unfolds we were shortly once more to change our place of abode.

To be continued next edition...

Mystery Photo

Thanks to Kirsty from the Museum for this month's mystery photo. It's part of a recent donation by Doug Anthony of photographs from the 1956 flood in Murwillumbah and shows a group of ladies outside the Woolworths store in Main Street. Can anyone assist with identification of the ladies shown (a larger version of the photo is available on request)?



Mystery photo (Photo: courtesy Tweed River Regional Museum)

Corrections

Thanks to Nick Gouliaev for providing the following corrections to some over-enthusiastic editing to the Austral Building story in the July 2013 Timelines edition:

- On page 3 to read as follows: During their tenure the business expanded to include the neighboring retail area which was recently occupied by "Curves", but now vacated and leased to a new tenant.
- On page 5 to read as follows: The doors to the shops have been replaced with contemporary timber design and the fire escape replaced with new metal stairs.
- On page 2 to read as follows:there was

no Proudfoots Lane direct connection into Commercial Road, at that time.

New Facebook Page

Yes, indeed! The Society is joining the digital age with the launch of our new Facebook page. Over time the new page will be a conduit for updates on Society news and upcoming events, links to the Timelines archive and much more!

Please visit and “like” our new page to be automatically kept informed when new information is posted:

<https://www.facebook.com/MurwillumbahHistory>



Visit the new page often for the latest news on new events coming up, such as the Society's Christmas Party, the current status of our exciting museum redevelopment, announcements about meetings, activities, upcoming AGM dates etc.



History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.

Winston Churchill

The past is always a rebuke to the present.

Robert Penn

Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that man can never learn anything from history.

George Bernard Shaw



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 2013 - the temporary office 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 - Beverley Lee, Martin King, Geoff Wilkes, Don Beck, Lynne Beck, Bob Gerdes, Penelope Williams. **NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** David Taylor

