

# TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society

April 2015 Vol. 3 No. 4



## Welcome

Welcome to the April 2015 edition of *Timelines*, the newsletter of the Murwillumbah Historical Society. This issue sees the first of our stories shining a spotlight on a selected new acquisition at the Museum, the first part of a new story on Robert Quirk, the completion of our Hanna and Edmed story and much more.

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 to keep improving - your feedback, input, corrections and contributions are always most welcome.**

This edition's contents:

- Lest We Forget - Bambery Brothers
- Historic Buildings of Murwillumbah - the Court House
- Robert Quirk and Acid Sulfate Soils
- Mystery Object and New Acquisition
- Hanna and Edmed, a great Tweed Enterprise - Part 4
- Vale Quentin Snow
- Roll of Honour
- Society and Contact Information

## Lest We Forget

To mark the centenary of World War One 1914-1918, Tony Clark is compiling a short article honouring the memory of our fallen for each *Timelines* until October 2018. In this edition we remember the story of the Bambery Brothers; Timothy Richard and George Sweetin. Thanks to the Bambery family for access to their memorabilia and information.



Private T.R. Bambery (left) and Private G.S. Bambery (right) (Photos: M. Bambery)

The Bambery brothers, George (1880) and Timothy (1882) were born in Warwick, Queensland. They were the second and third of 12 children born to Timothy (Snr.) and Margaret Bambery. In the early 1890's, the family moved to Crabbes Creek, before finally settling at Caves Point (Fingal Head) in 1897 where they started



## 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 Museum (02) 6670 2493, email [trm@tweed.nsw.gov.au](mailto:trm@tweed.nsw.gov.au)



oyster farming. By 1911, George had purchased land in South Cooloon, as well as at Caves Point and according to his war record at the time of his enlistment he was working as a labourer. Timothy had a farm at Midginbil and his enlistment papers state his occupation as a farmer. Both were unmarried.



George's war medals (Photo: Tony Clark)

They enlisted together on 19 Oct 1914 in Murwillumbah. Timothy receiving Regimental No. 725 and George No.



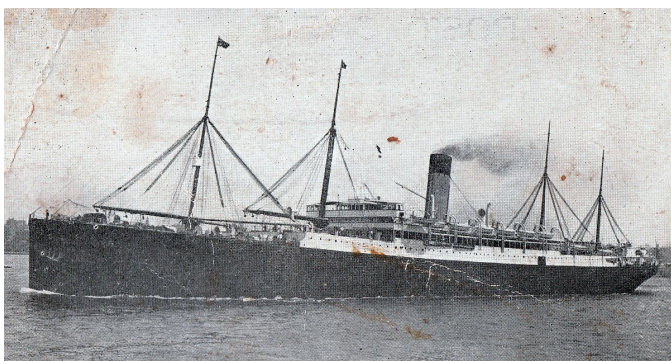
George's 1967 ANZAC Comm. Medal (Photo: Tony Clark)

726, and both were drafted to the 15th Battalion, E Company. Military records state that George was 32 years old stood 5ft 5¼ in (166cm) and weighed 143lb (65kg) with grey eyes and dark brown with speckled grey hair. Timothy was 29 years old stood 5ft 4½ (164cm) and weighed 136lbs (61.5kgs) with grey eyes and black hair. They travelled to Enoggera

on 26 Oct 1914, before being moved to Broadmeadows in Victoria for training. They embarked on 22 Dec 1914 on the SS Ceramic with a stopover in Albany, Western Australia, before disembarking at Alexandria, Egypt on 3 Feb 1915. They moved into camp at Heliopolis. Immediately the 8 companies of the 15th battalion were merged into 4 larger companies (A, B, C, D), with both brothers being moved to C Company under the command of Captain Hugh Quinn (later of Quinn's Post fame). After more training they were moved to Lemnos on 14/15 April.



Timothy's Death Penny (Photo: Tony Clark)



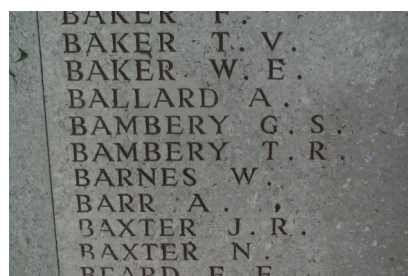
Postcard of SS Ceramic (Bambery Family)

George and Timothy were aboard HMS Seeang Bee with the rest of A and C Company when they left Lemnos early on the morning of 25 April. Companies B and D had left the day before on HMS Australind and were stationed off Anzac Cove by this time. The 15th Battalion was assigned as a follow-up wave for the landing at Gallipoli, and most of the Battalion had landed by the night of 25 April however, C Company didn't disembark until 9am on 26 April. They were ordered to support the right of the 3rd Brigade.



Medal presented to the Bambery Family by the residents of Billinudgel (Photo: Tony Clark)

During the fighting on this day, Private George Sweetin Bambery was killed. The following day (27



The Bamberys' Lone Pine memorial inscription (Photo: Lyn Lattimore)

April) his brother, Private Timothy Richard Bambery was also killed. Both brothers were lost within the first 48 hours of their arrival at Gallipoli. With the brothers having no known grave

their names are commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Australian War Memorial has memorialised their names on panel 74 of the Roll of Honour and on the Murwillumbah Cenotaph on Tumbulgum Road.

#### References:

1. Interview with Michael Bambery
2. Australian War Memorial <http://www.awm.gov.au/>
3. National Archives of Australia <http://www.naa.gov.au/>
4. Australian Military History of the Early 20th Century, Desert Column

## Murwillumbah Court House

Thanks to Nick Gouliaev for this story. To allow the maximum detail possible to be included, we will run this story in parts; this is Part 1 and outlines the early history of this historic Main Street icon.

#### Murwillumbah Court House (current building)

- Federation style
- Murwillumbah Street, Murwillumbah (opposite the Court House Hotel)
- Dates: Design 1908, Tenders Dec. 1908, Construction - 1908-09
- Developer/Owner: NSW Government
- Architect - Walter Liberty Vernon, NSW Gov.



- Builder - D.M. Mitchell, Redfern NSW
- Construction cost: £6,968
- Further development: 1957 additional toilets at rear, 1968 roofed open garage at rear of the 1957 toilets, 1998-2000 added public access ramp and steps with non slip nosing strips to all edges of stairs and ramps to front, 2002-2007 installation of metal security gates to driveway leading to carport at rear, 2012-2014 stainless steel grab rails added to all ramps and stairs, 2014 replacement of timber picket fence at front street boundary, new galvanized corrugated metal roofing, replacement of gutters, downpipes and storm water sumps, entire building repainting internally and externally with Federation colors



*The Court House as it was 1879-1899. Note staircase down to street (Photo: TRM Ref. M5-7)*

## THE EARLY COURT HOUSES

By the mid-1850s Murwillumbah was rapidly growing due to its thriving and developing primary industries. The NSW Government, reviewing the state's growth in 1869, issued instructions under Colonial Legislature to construct a building to establish a "Court of Petty Sessions" in Murwillumbah.

The first Court House was a timber slab hut 3.5m x 5.4m floor area with a pitched roof and timber shingle cladding on the banks of the Tweed near the original ferry crossing (corner Old Ferry & Tumbulgum Rds). It was administered by Justice of the Peace (JP) Joshua Bray (later promoted to Police Magistrate, a job held by him for about 20 years). Before this first official Court House was built, and probably during its existence, Joshua Bray also held court sessions called "Courts of Petty Sessions" at his residence at Kynumboon.

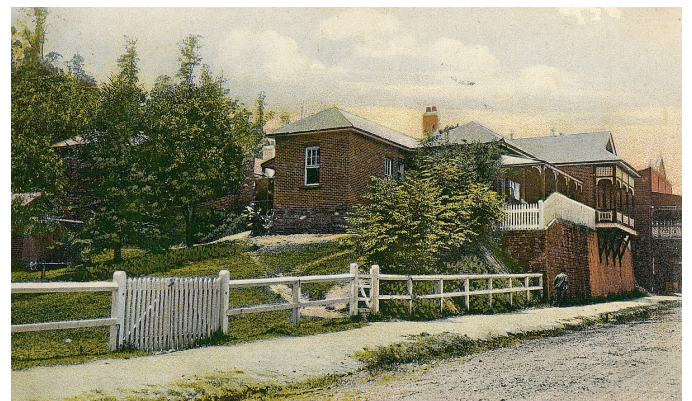
By 1878 the town was rapidly growing and the NSW Attorney General issued instructions to the Public Works and Justice Departments to engage an architect in the NSW Government Architects Office to design a new brick Court House and associated Police Quarters precinct to be constructed in the middle of Murwillumbah.

The selected location was "Reservoir Hill", later referred to as "Court House Hill". Unlike today, in 1878 the slope of Reservoir Hill extended all the way down to the level of the Main Street.

Access from street level was via a winding pedestrian path leading to the main entry, about where today's Police Station is situated. The position of the 1879 building is in line with today's building but 3.6 m above modern street level. At street level was a timber picket fence and gates. A staircase of 18 timber steps with handrails was added, cut into the hill leading up to the Court House entry.

1879 saw the completion of the Court House with a detached brick building housing the Police Station with lockup facilities and horse stables for Police horses and horse drawn vehicles. The Police precinct was at a lower ground level than the Court House; approx. 4.5m away and 1.2m to 1.5m lower than the finished floor level of the Court House and positioned to the left of it as viewed from the street below. The original "slab hut" Court House was demolished, leaving no known photos behind.

The architectural design style of the 1879 Court House was early Federation which emerged from the Georgian-Colonial style. Although Australian



*Lovely colour postcard of the Court House 1899-1907. Note staircase removal and added brick wall.*

Georgian belongs to the period 1788-1840 some buildings were designed in a style blending the beautiful simplicity of Georgian with the new emerging Federation architecture. The use of the adjective "Federation", describing a particular style of domestic or commercial construction in Australia, is for buildings constructed between 1890 and 1920. It is a comparatively recent term, coined in 1969 to fill a gap in the nomenclature of Australian houses and public buildings styles.

The Court House was constructed from double brick with timber frames and floors throughout. It was roofed with corrugated metal sheets featuring

a high pitched main roof, and a skillion roof with hipped ends to the street-facing veranda. Windows were timber; double hung, sliding, with typical small glazing panes. The veranda roof was supported by timber posts linked together with Federation Style timber fretwork. A brick chimney was the highest point above the main roof. The front boundary of the property was a timber picket fence as a safety barrier to the street below, wrapping itself back towards the building, on top of a stone wall which extended down to the street level below. This fine building was an indication of the town's growing importance.

The Police precinct was designed to match the Federation style of the Court House and was also constructed from brick with matching decorative details.

*To be continued next edition...*

## Robert Quirk - Growing Sugar Cane on Acid Sulfate Soil

*Research, analysis and story by Max Boyd. To allow the maximum detail possible to be included, we will run this story in parts; this is Part 1 and outlines the early history around identifying and dealing with this serious farming issue.*

After having extensively researched the achievements and successes of Robert Quirk, sugar cane grower of Duranbah in the Tweed Valley, I have concluded that he is no ordinary man of the land. In fact his record has stamped him as a world leader in the field of growing sugar cane on acid sulfate soils. Much of what follows has been taken as extracts from publications that cover his working life, but more particularly the last 20 years.

Robert was born in Murwillumbah on 9 Sep 1944 and attained his Intermediate Certificate at Murwillumbah High School.

His grandfather bought a farm, a portion of which is now Robert's, in 1905, when it was just open swampy country and only half a metre above sea level. The tides used to come into the fields twice a day from a tributary of the Tweed River.

His father was running two dairy farms on it that weren't doing too well. The cattle had to be moved every time it flooded. Over the next 30 years, his father and brothers dug 10 kilometres of drains by hand with shovels. This reduced the inundation time after floods from around 100 days to a week and allowed for the start to be made on cane farming.

His mother intervened on behalf of Robert and his brother Allan and suggested that the dairying should cease and convinced her husband to allow their sons to grow sugar cane instead. By the time Robert left school in 1959, the family had 16ha of cane growing and the sons had built that up to about 243ha when it was decided to split the farm between them.



Robert with his Carbon Cocky 2014 Award (Photo: Robert Quirk)

Robert has embraced the science of climate change and believes that the Tweed is one area in the world that will benefit from rising temperatures with warmer winters and hotter summers. He believes that will be a plus because sugar cane needs heat and sunshine to grow. Conversely, this could place the Tweed in a cyclone impact zone and with an increase of 2.5C leading to a sea level increase of 1 cm per year, this would present a problem for the farm which is but 50cm above sea level.

He has observed changes in the climate. In 1959, he claimed that no-one cut ratoon cane before early September (after being cut, sugar cane grows from the same stems the following year. This is ratoon cane). Now, ratoon cane is cut in June or July; at least six weeks earlier. No one ever planted before the first week in September. Now a start can be made in early August as long as the weather and temperature (17C for ratoon and 19C for plant cane) are right. Those temperatures are coming much earlier.

### DRAINAGE, PUMPS AND THE THREAT OF SEA LEVEL RISE

Sea level rise is a major threat for his farm. Projections are for about 1cm a year rise. As previously described, the farm is just 50cm above sea level, so in 50 years he would not have any drainage at all.



Flood gates were built at the outflow site of the drain into the river in 1964 and that was the start of the drainage system that he has built upon. He pumps water out every day. The pumps, from being manually operated, are now automatic and start as soon as there is a 10cm rise in the level of the drainage system. That has made a real difference and some 4.5ML/hour are pumped into the river. However, if the forecast rise in sea levels does eventuate, he could be unable to continue with cane growing.

## FISH KILLS

In 1987 there was a massive fish kill in the Tweed River. As a result, Tweed Shire Council initiated and convened meetings of people who were considered to have some expertise and or experience with such a problem. By co-incidence one of these people was Professor Mike Melville from the University of NSW who subsequently played a significant part in identifying the problem and who gave valued advice to Robert in many aspects of his ongoing treatments and practices in his cane farming techniques.

Other people who played roles in identifying the root cause of this long running natural phenomenon were Council President, Councilor Max Boyd AM, Don Buckley, Director Environment and Community Services, Mark Tunks, Clive Easton (all Tweed Shire staff), Dr Ian Willett and Professor Mike Melville. Professor Ian White of CSIRO also played a significant part in ongoing research.

The outcome of these meetings and subsequent research was that the basic cause of the fish kills was the acid sulfate soils that, under the right conditions, and mixed with water, formed sulphuric acid.

In 1992, Tweed Shire Council developed and published guidelines for the management of Acid Sulfate Soils and became the first government body in the world to do so.

*To be continued next edition...*

## Mystery Photo

*Whenever space in the newsletter allows we intend to publish historical photos or historical items where we hope readers will help us "fill in the gaps" around the photos' details - please write in if you can help or would like to be sent a larger version of this image.*

The Museum recently had a visitor ask where Cobaki Creek Falls is located.

The Museum has this photograph, taken in 1935 by Charles Simpson, in the collection, but wonders if anyone knows of the location of these waterfalls?



## Recent Acquisition

*We will include photos and information of interesting new items the Museum has acquired recently. Come and see the real thing at the Museum!*

The upcoming exhibition; *Fragments: words of war* at the Museum in Murwillumbah has initiated a raft of extraordinary object donations relating to WWI. This watch belonged to local cabinet maker Richard Eilola, and was donated to the Museum by his descendant Barbara Buckley.

Richard was killed in action in Belgium in 1917, this damaged watch was on his wrist when he died and was returned to his mother along with other belongings. As part of the exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, in conjunction with the Murwillumbah RSL, is holding a "WWI Memorabilia Day" on Saturday 2 May, 10am-4pm. People are encouraged to bring their family medals, photographs, uniforms or ephemera to the Museum and receive advice on how to look after



and preserve these precious objects. Museum staff will be on hand to digitise, photograph, and offer conservation advice, while the RSL will be gathering information on local involvement in WWI and showing people how they can research war service records.

The *Fragments: words of war* exhibition will be on display at TRM Murwillumbah from Anzac Day 2015.

## Hanna and Edmed, a Great Tweed Enterprise - Part 4

*Our thanks to Ross Johnson, the coordinator of this interesting history, for permission to publish the story on another iconic Tweed enterprise, Hanna and Edmed. This is Part 4, the final part of the story.*

[The story continues from a summary of the company's track record of major building projects....]

### RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENTS:



The Company's objective was to strive for excellence in construction and no doubt was the reason for the companies winning Fourteen Awards at a State or National Level for Excellence in Construction.

The company was widely recognised for its ethical approach to business, empathy for its staff and doing the job properly.

A major legacy of the firm is the literally, hundreds of apprentices, trained across all spectrums of the building trades, sharing their skills achieved in the trades in the building industry, today. A high proportion of the staff of over 350 was the young people apprenticed to one of the five companies in the group.

### CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES:

By the mid 1990s, times, as being currently experienced in the building trades, were moving in on the industry. The concept of large companies employing permanent staff was a model changing. With the increasing and many regulations on employment, companies were finding it less complicated to employ sub-contractors willing to compete for the decreasing amount of work in the region. The concept of a permanent team was becoming less viable. There was a lack of

contracts from the company's traditional sources and major public works on the north coast were deferred when Sydney won the right to hold the Olympic Games. The introduction of poker machines into Queensland Clubs put on hold many major developments in the NSW registered clubs. (Many of these have since gone into liquidation whilst others are struggling to maintain survival.) As well, with the uncertain economic times, two major developments the company had construction letters of intent for, were put on hold.

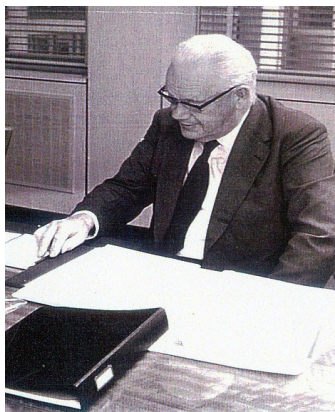


*Southport RSL, one of the last contracts (Photo: Hanna Family)*

Regretfully, in mid-1997, the directors of Hanna and Edmed Holdings decided to close the doors on all companies.

After 66 years of service to NSW and Queensland, people can look back with pride on a name that provided an incredible amount of work for thousands of people.

### GEORGE HANNA SR AND GEORGE HANNA JR



*George Snr at an Ambulance Board Meeting (Photo: Hanna Family)*

This father and son team was the driving force behind the Hanna and Edmed Group of Companies, from its formation in 1959.

GEORGE HANNA SNR's service to the Tweed through the building industry and community work was immeasurable. His achievements for the benefit of this district included:

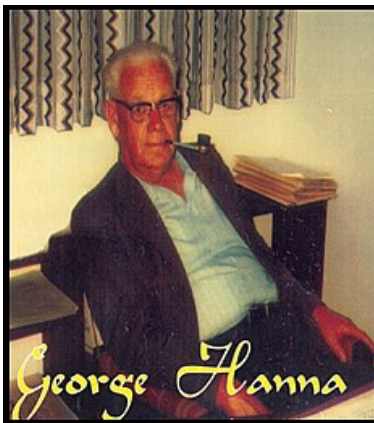
- Establishing the site and construction of Murwillumbah TAFE
- Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Murwillumbah TAFE for 27 years
- He served on the Parochial Council of the Murwillumbah Anglican Parish and was a Licensed Lay Minister of the Parish
- Assisted with his building team in the re-occupation of many homes in South Murwillumbah after the disastrous 1954 flood



- Established the Tweed Division of the Master Builders' Association
- A member of the MBA of NSW
- North Coast representative on the NSW Ambulance Board
- Member of the Richmond Tweed Development Committee

A man not to seek recognition for services to community, he became:

- A Life Member of the Tweed District Ambulance (1970)
- An Honorary Fellow of the Sydney Technical College. (1971)
- A Paul Harris Rotary Fellowship. (1978)
- A Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). (1980)
- Murwillumbah Citizen of the Year. (2001)



George Hanna Snr (Photo: Hanna Family)



*"George Hanna is the sort of bloke everyone would like to be. He's a genuinely and gifted tribune of the people, who you get the impression of a huge volcano right there in front of you, bubbling with things to say."*

*~ Bryan Styeman ~*

In 1957, GEORGE HANNA JNR, entered studies at the University of New South Wales, Sydney.



University of New England (Photo: Hanna Family)

Following four years of study in Architecture and Building, he graduated with Honours in a Bachelor of Building degree in 1962. Forgoing the opportunity to further his studies at MIT in

Massachusetts, USA, or remaining in Sydney, he chose to return to the Tweed and join the family company. Inspired by the projects Hanna and Edmed were undertaking, and the growth in the

area, he was full of ideas and energy to harness the Tweed and Gold Coast building boom to see the company expand and prosper. As well as managing the Hanna and Edmed Group of companies following the retirement of his father, he transferred his construction skills to a younger generation of builders as a teacher at the Murwillumbah and Kingscliff TAFE colleges.

George Jnr, had a huge commitment to education. At various times he served on numerous educational boards including:

- Murwillumbah TAFE.
- The North Coast Council of TAFE.
- The University of New England.
- Southern Cross University.
- The Tweed Tertiary Education Association.
- Deputy Chairperson of the Master Builders Association of NSW.
- Chairperson, North Coast Master Builders Association.
- In 1990 he was presented with the TAFE award for outstanding services to Technical and Further Education.
- In 1995 he received an Alumni Award from the University of New South Wales for outstanding social and professional contributions.
- George Jnr was awarded a Paul Harris Rotary Fellowship in 1983.

Both George Snr and George Jnr were passionate about music. George Snr, untrained, but with a great voice, and George Jnr, Conservatorium trained, loved to entertain at family and company functions with their signature song "Old Man River".



George Hanna Snr & George Hanna Jnr in 1990 (Photo: Hanna Family)

***A tribute from their family, November 2012***



## Vale Quentin Snow

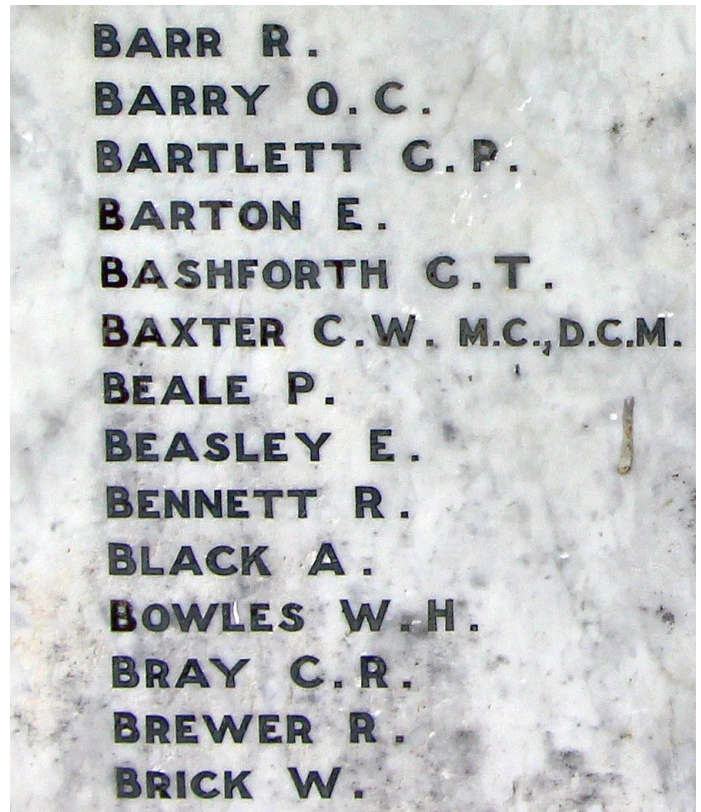


The Society was saddened to hear of the passing last month of our long term member and stalwart supporter Quentin Snow. Our thoughts and sincere condolences go out to Quentin's family and loved ones. Quentin was interviewed in our second Timelines edition, back in October 2012.



## Roll of Honour

The Murwillumbah Cenotaph lists 218 local fallen from World War One. We will publish the names of a group of them in each Timelines until the October 2018 edition. Here are the second fourteen names listed.



*Lest we forget.*

**ABOUT THE SOCIETY:** Formed 16 March 1959, the Society's aim is to research, preserve and promote the rich and unique history of the town of Murwillumbah and its surrounds in the picturesque Tweed River Valley of far northern New South Wales. The Society operates out of our Research Centre in the Tweed Regional Museum's historic Murwillumbah facility and acknowledges the ongoing, generous support of Tweed Shire Council.

**CONTACT US: Phone:** (02) 6670 2273

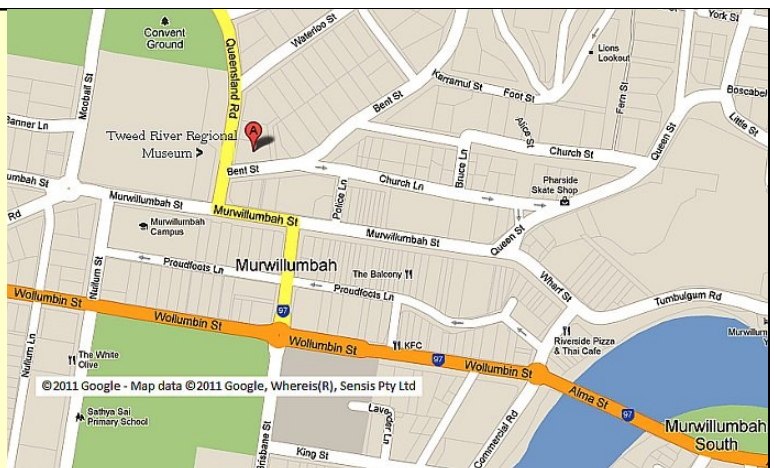
**Web:** <http://www.murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au/>

**FB:** <http://www.facebook.com/murwillumbahhistory>

**Email:** [enquiries@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:enquiries@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au)

**Street:** C/- Tweed Regional Museum, 2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah NSW 2484

**Street:** PO Box 373, Murwillumbah NSW 2484



**ABOUT THE MUSEUM:** The Tweed Regional Museum is a Tweed Shire Council community facility, established in 2004, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Tweed Shire Council and the Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki and South Arm Historical Societies. It is one museum that operates across three branch locations; Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki, and in association with these three local Historical Societies. The three locations connect the Tweed Shire from the coast to the mountains, providing a unique journey into the history, people and places of the majestic Tweed Valley.

For information about the Tweed Regional Museum please visit: <http://museum.tweed.nsw.gov.au/> or phone on (02) 6670 2493.