

TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society Inc

July 2016; Vol 5, No 1



Welcome

Welcome to the July 2016 edition of *Timelines*. In this edition we complete our story of the amazing organ at All Saints Anglican Church, provide another installment of the Harbison family story, and discover a relic of the old Sunnyside Hospital on Tumbulgum Road. Sir Eric Willis is the subject of our occasional *Did You Know?* series, Hartmann's Store in south Murwillumbah is the next in our series on historic local buildings and, in the continuing *Lest We Forget* series we meet the Rice brothers of Burringbar.

The aim of our newsletter is to introduce some of the rich historical heritage we share in and around Murwillumbah.

In closing we must profusely thank the previous editor David Taylor for his service over the last five years, in producing 16 editions of *Timelines*.

Max Willoughby, *Timelines* Editor

The contents of this edition are:

- *Lest We Forget* – the Rice brothers of Burringbar
- Sunnyside Hospital historical artefact
- The All Saints Organ [final]
- *Did you Know?* Sir Eric Willis
- The Harbison Family [Part 3]
- *Historic Buildings* - Hartmann's store [Part 1]
- Guided Town Walks
- Roll of Honour
- Museum Corner
- Society and Contact Information

Lest We Forget

To mark the centenary of World War One [1914-1918], each edition of *Timelines* until Oct 2018 will present a short article honouring the memory of our fallen. This edition reprints the 2016 Anzac Day address given by Ian Fox, Society member and Senior Vice President of Burringbar RSL Sub-branch, in honour of the Rice brothers of Burringbar.

Those present at our Anzac Day ceremony last year will recall that in recognition of 100 years since the landings at Gallipoli, students from Burringbar Primary School read out each of the 132 names of those from this district who served in the First World War. A poppy of remembrance was placed for each individual whose name appears on our memorial. During the reading of the names, it was apparent that five members of one family served their country and three of those five were killed in action.

This prompted our Sub-branch to find out as much as we could about the five Rice brothers who all came from Burringbar and the surrounding district. Records indicate that in fact there were seven brothers, five were known to have served and are recorded on this memorial. This is their story.

Sylvester Albert Rice, Henry Phillip Rice, Edward Charles Rice, David Joseph Rice, and Robert William Rice, were all sons of James and Elizabeth Rice of Burringbar.

From old land records we have been able to establish that in 1900 two of the brothers, Henry and Robert,



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

were the first selectors of two adjoining properties totalling 362 acres. The location of their farms extended over the ridgeline of what is now Dunloe Park and Taggarts Quarry, on the Mooball/Pottsville Road. In 1898, a WP Rice is listed as the first selector for 411 acres, and that farm's location was between Hulls Road and today's Cowell Park. It is likely that this was their elder brother Walter's property.

years of age and married to Ellen Teresa.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P09548.001

Sylvester Albert Rice (13th Batt) [AWM P09548.001]

Sylvester enlisted with the 13th Battalion of the AIF on 29 Oct 1914. He was 19 years of age and listed his mother Elizabeth as next of kin, but his last will and testament was made out to another brother, Harold Mathew Rice.

Henry also enlisted with the 13th Battalion a few weeks later on 16 Nov 1914. He was 33 years of age, married to Margaret Ellen, and had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Annie Veronica.

Edward, or 'Ned' as he was known, enlisted on 7 Sep 1915 and served with the 47th Battalion in France. He was 32 years of age, unmarried, and nominated his mother as next of kin.

David, also known as 'Joe', enlisted on 21 Mar 1916 and served with the 25th Battalion in France. His age is also listed as 32, and he was married to Elizabeth Ann.

Robert, or 'Bob', enlisted ten days later on 31 Mar, serving with the 26th Battalion in France. He was 36



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P09548.002

Henry (Harry) Phillip Rice (13th Batt) [AWM P09548.002]

Tragically, Sylvester and Henry were killed in action on Gallipoli on consecutive days, 9 and 10 Aug 1915. An account of the broader action in which Sylvester and Henry Rice were killed is given in the book *Gallipoli* by Les Carlyon [p425]. It describes an attack on the Turkish enemy at Alai Tepe, which is portrayed as 'doomed, because of poor staff work'. In one day's fighting there had been 765 casualties, and in one battalion of 850 men, only 280 survived. Senior officers were forced to order a withdrawal.

Sylvester is buried in the Norfolk Cemetery at Kailak Dere, two and a quarter miles NNE of Anzac Cove. Henry's body was never identified, but a plaque for his memory is also located in the Norfolk Cemetery.

In a terrible twist of fate, a third brother Edward was seriously wounded and died on 9 Aug 1916 in a battlefield hospital five miles from the town of Albert on the Western Front. This was exactly a year to the day after his younger brother.

Edward is buried at the Warloy Communal Cemetery, Plot 7, Row B, Grave 15.

In accordance with the practice of the day, the *Tweed Daily* newspaper on 13 Sep 1916 published the following acknowledgement of Edward's death. It was headed "Burringbar. Private Edward Rice – Killed in Action", and reads:

“How they fought and fell, the cables daily tell is vividly brought home to us, for on Monday a cable imparted the sad news that another Burringbar soldier had gone. Private Edward Rice killed in action, August 9.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P09548.003
Edward Charles Rice (47th Batt) (left) & brother Walter
[AWM P09548.003]

Ned, or Bendy, as he was familiarly known, was a brother of the two Rice boys who fell on Gallipoli on 9 and 10 August 1915. He died fighting for his country on 9 August 1916, twelve months to the day that his brother Henry was sniped on Gallipoli. Two other brothers, Joe and Bob, sailed last week to fight for the just cause. Three out of the five brothers have been killed. Surely this is an example that the stay-at-home shirkers might well follow. There are families who have not given even one volunteer, and the Rice boys, who left property and prosperous farms, could have put forward the excuse that they had too much at stake to go to war, but to their credit five of the family volunteered, and now three have gone – honourably killed in action”.

The Tweed Daily went on to say “The deepest sympathy is felt for Mrs Rice and family in their sad bereavement and expressions of sorrow are to be heard on all sides for Ned, a well-known and popular figure through the Tweed district in the football field and at all sport”.

Of the two remaining brothers, Joe was wounded in action and was medically discharged some six months later in Dec 1917. Bob was the only brother to

see out the end of the War and was discharged in Jul 1919. Sadly, their mother Elizabeth died in early 1918 and would never have known the fate of all her sons.

Sourced from the records of the Australian War Memorial, a photograph of Sylvester Rice, Henry Rice, and Edward Rice has been placed on our memorial for our service here today.

They were local men from Burringbar and it is fitting that now, one hundred years on, we remember them and tell their stories. At the completion of the service I encourage you to view their photographs and reflect on their sacrifice which provides a local part to an important chapter in our nation’s history.

Postscript: On 20 Apr 2016 a public notice was placed in the Tweed Link by the Tweed Regional Museum who have prepared a video presentation about the Rice brothers, based on this address. The Museum Director was subsequently contacted by the daughter of Robert Rice who now lives at Ocean Shores and we are pleased to acknowledge that family’s endorsement for the telling of this story. Thank you.

Sunnyside Hospital steps

Recently the Society received an anonymous and unsolicited handwritten manuscript detailing the history of these steps. After some further research by the Society to verify the details, we are delighted to publish the manuscript which ‘solves the mystery of these long forgotten and rather dilapidated concrete steps which in the past played such an important part in the lives of so many past and present Tweed Valley residents’.

Anyone walking north along the narrow footpath on the left side of Tumbulgum Road, no more than 50m north of Sunnyside Lane, and opposite Murwillumbah YHA, may wonder about the history of the isolated concrete ‘steps to nowhere’ that are exposed in the soil embankment next to the footpath.



Concrete steps today, Apr 2016. [Photograph by Max Willoughby]

They are the only remaining ‘concrete’ [sic] evidence of a fascinating story of significant historical importance which involves around 6,000 people born on the Tweed between the early 1900s and 1947. In fact, they are the steps which led from Tumbulgum Road to the Sunnyside Maternity Hospital which was established in 1918, and subsequently incorporated

into a General Hospital in 1921. Once mother and baby were both well enough to be discharged, it was the hospital tradition for the hospital matron to carry every newly born baby down these hospital steps, to be placed gently on the mother's lap as she sat in the sulky, or later on, the motor car, for the journey home. Between 1918 and 1947 the legendary Matron Bowman, initially as Nurse Annie Isobel Bowman, then shortly after 1918 as Matron Bowman, would generally see each baby off at the foot of the steps with the words "another one safely landed".



Matron Bowman 1932 [TRM M27.2]

It was not unusual for three generations of the same family to have passed through the hospital. Matron Bowman had her own private living quarters attached to the hospital; so as to be on call for an emergency. She was, of course, supported by many sisters and nurses, most of whom lived in close-by quarters. There is no doubt she was well liked and adored by the women who spent about a fortnight in hospital for the birth of a child, among the masses of flowers that decorated the wards and private rooms of one of the most modern hospitals of its time.

There were two Sunnyside Hospitals – as with most private hospitals at the time, the first was a converted house near the corner of Wardrop and Stafford streets at South Murwillumbah. When it opened in 1903 the hospital was run by Nurse Hicks, Matron Bowman's mother.

Although the population was small, a second 'cottage hospital' was opened in 1904 on the site of the

present Murwillumbah Hospital.

As the population grew, Sunnyside at South Murwillumbah looked for larger premises and it was eventually decided to build out of the flood liable area, above Tumbulgum Road on the north side of the Tweed River. The new hospital opened in 1918 and by 1921 an attached general hospital, built by Mr W Bray, was completed. It boasted the most modern operating theatre of the time, attracting specialist doctors from as far away as Brisbane, who would cross the rivers by ferry, before finally arriving to carry out the most complicated operations of the day.



Nurse standing on front verandah of Sunnyside Hospital 1935 [TRM MUS 2015.49.297]

But there were difficulties. At a Murwillumbah Municipal Council meeting in Aug 1933, Mayor Nichol commented that the entrance to the hospital from Tumbulgum Road was the 'most dangerous spot in the municipality'. He was supporting Alderman Winterbon's successful resolution to eliminate the danger by construction of a three foot wide footpath with associated kerb and gutter along Tumbulgum Road in front of the Sunnyside Private Hospital.

Although the general part of Sunnyside Hospital was closed for most of the 2nd World War due to staff shortages, the maternity section remained open throughout the war.

On her retirement in 1947, it is said that Matron Bowman celebrated with a small glass of the only alcohol she touched, stout. The hospital was leased to Sister [Mrs] P Moran and Matron Bowman left the Tweed and took up residence at Ettalong. However, the lure of the Tweed and her many friends in the area was strong and, although in poor health, she returned to stay with her sister Edna Fletcher [née Hicks] at Palmvale, where she passed away in 1961, at 81 years of age.

The Sunnyside Private Hospital closed in 1949, morphing into the Sunnyside Guest House until 1987, when it was demolished to make way for the home unit blocks which exist on the site today. All that remains of the second Sunnyside Private Maternity and General Hospital today are the concrete steps exposed in the Tumbulgum Road cutting, which used to lead up to the hospital.

The All Saints Organ

This is the third and final part of local historian and valued Timelines contributor Ross Johnson's illustrated history written in 2014 to celebrate the 88th anniversary of the All Saints Organ.

On the departure of Worley and Fellows from Murwillumbah, due to the humid climate, they moved to Bowral to a climate more like they were used to in England. Here Victor Worley, with Leggo's advice and assistance, set out to build what was to become one of the largest residential pipe organs in the state.

On the death of Worley in 1953 the instrument was offered to All Saints as plans to ship it to his home town in England proved too expensive.

Unfortunately the parish was involved in the selection of a new site to build a new church. There was also discussion as to whether to retain the existing pipe organ or go to an electronic instrument.

Subsequently the Bowral organ was dismantled and stored at S T Noad and Sons' workshop in Sydney.

In December 1963, the church commissioned H W Jarrott to travel to Sydney and assess what was available. By this time there was great discrepancy in the specification and what remained in storage. As some had been sold off to defray costs, the remaining ranks of pipes considered to be of use were brought to Murwillumbah and stored under the current church until used by Jarrott in other instruments.

Worley and Fellows were great benefactors of this parish and their bequest included a property in the main street, Tweed House, which was sold to make early payment on the current building's debt.



All Saints Anglican Church Murwillumbah

The current church was designed by Conrad and Gargett of Brisbane and built by George Hanna at a cost of \$110,000 and dedicated on All Saints' Day, 1 Nov 1960. One of the last churches in the Diocese of Grafton to be built in traditional cruciform shape, much of its beauty is attributed to its simplicity, natural lighting and the beauty of its cedar furnishings. The cedar and teak floor were the last major orders of this timber to be supplied in the district. Links with 140 years of worship in this district are the Bishop's Chair, Altar and Stained Glass windows in the chapel, and

the 1926 pipe organ.

The church's clean lines and traditional west-gallery choir provide excellent acoustics for the many community outreach concerts held apart from regular worship.

Did You Know?

This series of stories, selected and edited by Max Boyd, highlights the famous people, clubs, institutions and more who have had a connection with Murwillumbah. This latest instalment features Sir Eric Willis

Sir Eric Archibald Willis KBE CMG, as he became, was born on 15 Jan 1922 in Murwillumbah, the first son of Archibald Clarence Willis (1893–1975), a butter factory hand and WW I veteran, and his wife Vida Mabel Buttenshaw (1894–1984). He was educated at Tyalgum Public School and then at Murwillumbah High School, where he was Dux of his year and won a scholarship to study Arts at the University of Sydney, where he received a BA [Hons] in Modern History and Geography in 1942.

He served in the 2nd AIF from 1941 in Army Intelligence in New Guinea and The Philippines. He was discharged from the regular military with the rank of Sergeant in Jun 1946 but continued to serve in the CMF until retiring in 1958 as a Major. He married Norma Dorothy Thompson on 11 May 1951 and they had a daughter and two sons. Willis was employed as a senior geographer and investigation officer for Cumberland County Council.



Source: Wikipedia

Eric Willis was elected in 1950 to the NSW Legislative Assembly as the Liberal member for Earlwood and, at 28 years of age, the youngest member of the Parliament. He soon gained a reputation as a rebel, always attacking the Labor speakers, and was frequently ejected from the Chamber. He rose to become the longest serving deputy leader of the NSW

Parliamentary Liberal Party under Sir Robert Askin.

When the coalition won the 1965 election he was made a Minister of the Crown as Chief Secretary, and then as Minister for Labour and Industry, Tourism and Sport, but it was as Minister for Education from 1972 to 1976 when he rose to prominence.

Willis failed in his attempt to succeed Askin when the latter retired in 1975 and it was not until Askin's successor, Tom Lewis was ousted by the party that Willis was elected as Parliamentary Leader and subsequently became Premier. However, after only four months in office his Liberal/National Party coalition was defeated at the 1976 election by the Labor Party under Neville Wran. Willis continued as Leader of the Opposition until he resigned in 1977 and retired from politics a year later. His younger brother was NSW Legislative Council Member and President, Max Willis.

His proudest achievement, he would claim, was the introduction of Daylight Saving to NSW. Willis left his first wife Norma and their residence in Bardwell Park in Sydney and moved to Neutral Bay, where he divorced Norma and married his second wife Lyn. He died on 10 May 1999.

The Harbison Family

Interviews, research and story by Max Boyd. This is the third part of a fascinating human story which will span several parts. The story of Mr SC Steel, as recorded by him.

Brian Harbison's grandfather Sydney Cowell Steel arrived in Murwillumbah in Oct 1903 to open a branch of the Bank of Australasia. What follows is information which Brian had retained and which had been written by his grandfather, so we must keep in mind that his description of locations and names of buildings will not be in accord with what we know in this year of 2016.

He opened his business in a one room portion of Mr Vining's chemist shop until a portion became available in an old wooden two storey building built by Mr William Wardrop for the joint stock bank. This bank, and leased premises, were subsequently taken over by the Bank of NSW until 1904 when they moved to their new premises opposite the post office. Mr Wardrop then leased portions of his building to his son-in-law Ernest Trivett and to Peter Street solicitor, and two rooms on the ground floor and one bedroom on the top floor to the Bank of Australasia. The whole building was burned down in the fire of Sep 1907.

He recorded as follows:

We managed to get the money and books away before the fire reached the end of the street from the Imperial Hotel down to our premises.

I was fortunate to secure a portion of an auctioneer's mart from Mr Fritz Johnson opposite the present Murwillumbah Hotel in Wharf St, and the next morning we moved in. We were the only bank

that opened for several days. In passing, I might mention that the Commercial Banking Company's wooden building was directed by the mayor to be set on fire from the eastern side to avoid further fire destruction, the wind being from the west, and there was vacant space between Solomon's store and the bank to assist in preventing the fire from spreading. The bank subsequently bought this land from Mr Wardrop and had erected the brick premises now known as the ANZ Bank.

I was married on 29 Apr 1904 to Miss Euphemia Nicol, the third daughter of James and Euphemia Nicol of Monaltry in South Gippsland, Vic.

In 1904 the Tweed District Hospital had just been erected and I was persuaded to join the committee. The Hon Secretary was Mr Robert Campbell, who was also Town Clerk and Secretary of the butter factory that was subsequently taken over by Norco.

The committee chosen for the coming year asked me to take Mr Campbell's place, which I held for over two years and organised collection centres. The government allowed hospitals a pound for pound subsidy – hence individual collecting was important.

I remained a member of this committee until my transfer to Maitland in 1922, and during those 18 years I was President for several years. On my leaving I donated some of my presentation money to become a Life Member of the hospital.

After 44 years service to the Bank of Australasia, he retired in Apr 1931 at age 60 and he and his wife toured Tasmania. On returning to Murwillumbah they stayed at the Australian Hotel for several months and were able to supervise the erection of the Cowell Park homestead and office. When the latter was completed they lived in it while carpenter Bill Potts completed their home.

Hartmann's general store

Murwillumbah Historic Building, Architectural Review No 10 Society member Nick Goulliaev has been contributing a continuing series on the historic buildings of Murwillumbah. This is the first part of the 10th in the series, describing Hartmann's Building in Prospero Street.

- Location: Prospero St South Murwillumbah [opposite South Murwillumbah PO]
- Architectural style: Art Deco Commercial Building
- Construction: commenced c1932; completed 1932
- Original developer: Hulbert Emile Hartmann
- Original property owner: Hulbert Emile Hartmann
- Architect: unknown
- Builder: unknown
- Construction cost: £1,600 [approximately \$520,000 today based on average weekly earnings]

Hulbert Emile Hartmann arrived in Murwillumbah in 1907 with his bride Alice May Wilson who he had married in Mullumbimby the previous year. He first worked for W A Proudfoot & Son in Main Street and, being an astute business minded person, noticed the

potential of the town with so many different businesses opening up, providing a variety of services to the public. In 1909 he decided to open his own business and, so as to be in the midst of the town's busy commercial district, purchased an empty allotment in Prospero St close to the bridge and next to the biggest business and largest building, J M Holston's Furniture Emporium selling furniture, general hardware and other household products, as well as a factory designing and manufacturing furniture.

Prospero Street was the main street entry to Murwillumbah via the first bridge across the Tweed River. The timber bridge, constructed in 1901, spanned the river from the end of Prospero St to where the Murwillumbah Services Club now stands. With the construction of the bridge allowing vehicular and pedestrian traffic to flow freely between the different sections of the town, Prospero St became the main town artery and many businesses developed along its length.

Prospero Street also had many other businesses, including four barber shops, the Terminus Hotel, Trevan's [later to become Partridge and Walker], Hays, Worley and Fellows newsagency, a doctor and chemist, Gapes Café, baker shops, the Regent Theatre, a police station, a second-hand shop, a boarding house, two furniture shops, a fruit shop, Wright's dry cleaners, Fred Nolan's candy shop, plumbers, a bike store and others. [Some of these will be the subject of further Timelines editions.]



Prospero St leading to bridge c1910 [TRM M22.35]

There are no detailed photographs extant of Hartmann's original building erected in 1910, which was extensively, although not completely, demolished in 1933. Consequently, the description of the building which follows is to a large extent based on deduction and hypothesis.

Designed and constructed by a local architect and builder, now unknown, we know it was a single storey, timber framed building, with party brick walls constructed using local bricks, and timber framed internal floors lined with local timber floorboards, a timber framed roof clad with corrugated galvanized metal roof sheets, and tongue and grooved weather

board external wall cladding, remnants of which still remain today at the rear wall of the building. Internally, the shop floor area was constructed as a split level floor, the retail area at street level with a floor to ceiling height of around 5.5m, and with a rear area 0.9m above the general shop level. At the rear of the shop there was a loading dock facilitating delivery of goods from the service lane behind the shop. The street shop front had a metal roof awning over the footpath supported by timber posts and hitching posts for horses.



Prospero St today looking towards Tweed River with Hartmann's 1933 store in left foreground [Photograph by Max Willoughby]

H E Hartmann retired to his home in Wardrop Street Murwillumbah in 1950 and died in 1954, after which his business was operated by his son Harvey until the late 1950's. The building was then rented to various trades people as workshops. In 1968 the husband and wife partnership of GL & GB Smith commenced a vehicle panel beating and auto spray business at the premises, initially renting the building for two years from Veema, a daughter of the Hartmann family, before purchasing it in 1970-71.

In the next issue we describe Hartmann's new building constructed in 1933.

Guided Town Walks

Don't forget our guided town centre historical walks, led by Tony Clark, leave Tweed Regional Museum Murwillumbah (2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah) at 1pm on the first Saturday of every month.



It takes only an hour, covers a bit over 1km and is interesting, good exercise, and great value at just a gold coin donation to help the Society in its work. Please pass this notice around and tell your friends - see you there!

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 is the seventh set of 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 our 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. The Society is proudly supported by the Tweed Regional Museum, a community facility of Tweed Shire Council.

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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.

Museum corner

Exhibitions at the Museum

Wrecked! [until Sat 13 Aug]

The earliest vessels active in the Tweed area were a variety of ships which connected early settlers with the outside world. Coastal shipping was irregular, at the mercy of the weather, and often dangerous. The Tweed River bar was a notorious place for shipping disasters. The model ships and artefacts featured in **Wrecked!** are from the Museum collection and relate specifically to vessels associated with the Tweed.

What's New? [5 Jul to 1 Oct]

This final display in the series focuses on the regalia of the Masonic, Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, and Order of the Eastern Star friendly societies. A teapot and certificate awarded to Laura McKell, winner of the Tweed Hospital and Patriotic Queen Carnival in 1940, are also on display.

Fit for a Queen: Clair's story [19 Jul to 29 Oct]

Presented to coincide with the 2016 Tweed Valley Banana Festival. After winning the Tweed Valley Banana Festival Queen title in 1976 and enjoying the prize of a luxurious trip to Singapore, Clair Richards went on to chaperone subsequent Festival Queens in 1988, 1989 and 1990. This display showcases the original dresses and other regalia worn by Clair.

Aboriginal breastplates of the Northern Rivers

[From 23 Aug]

An exhibition of breastplates associated with Aboriginal individuals from the Northern Rivers region, drawn from national and local collections. The exhibition will focus on the people to whom these poignant and controversial objects were given, and includes the stories of eight of them from the Tweed region.

