

TIMELINES

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Welcome

Welcome to the January 2018 edition of *Timelines*, Volume 6 No 3.

The contents of this edition are:

- Lest We Forget – John Henry Baker
- Guided town walks [advertisement]
- The Johnsons of Johnson's Creek [Pt 2]
- Continuing the McCabe story
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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 whose names are engraved on the Murwillumbah War Memorial. This edition focuses on John Henry Baker of Murwillumbah.

The story has been researched and written by Society members Sandra Jones and Marie Fletcher.

Born on 3 Jul 1897 at Bilambil Creek, John Henry Baker was the youngest of George and Hannah Baker's (nee Butcher) four sons.

John's parents George and Hannah were married in 1888 and throughout their married life several children were born in and around the Lower Clarence. From these birthplaces it is inferred that George left the family property and struck out on his own taking work where he could.

The Clarence River Advocate, dated Tuesday 8 Nov 1898 stated that George was struck by a falling tree at Terranora and sustained injuries to the spine and three broken ribs. He was treated at Lismore then underwent six years of hospitalisation at Rookwood and Liverpool State hospitals in Sydney before dying on 2 Feb 1904, aged 43 years and 11 months, and leaving a widow and several children to mourn his loss.

John was the last of the Baker boys to enlist with the same unit, the 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion, which embarked from Sydney on the ship HMAT Demosthenes (A64) on 17 May 1916. The battalion disembarked at Devonport, England in July 1916. After training, he marched in from the 41st Battalion, Larkhill and was taken on strength with the Pioneer Battalion. He proceeded overseas to France in November 1916.



By June he was fighting in Belgium, leading up to the Battle of Messines. The primary objective was to secure the strategically important Wyscheate-Messines Ridge, the high ground south of Ypres

which in turn would benefit the allies to launch a larger campaign east of Ypres. The Australian involvement came under Lieutenant General Sir. Alexander Godley's II Anzac Corps, which included the 3rd Australian Division. This Battle was launched on 7 Jun 1917 and exemplified tactical success through careful planning and firepower. Service No. 1002, Private John Baker, aged 20 years, was killed in the field on 27 Jun 1917 and buried in Kandahar Farm Cemetery, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium.



Australian War Memorial
E00482
Australian field dressing station at Kandahar Farm during the Battle of Messines

Private John Henry Baker was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal for his service on the Western Front and his name is inscribed on the Murwillumbah Cenotaph and the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, on panel 173. His name will be projected onto the exterior of the AWM Hall of Memory on 6 Mar 2018 at 3.24am and 1.03pm, and on 25 Apr 2018 at 10.45pm.

Sources

The Clarence River Advocate 1898; RSL Virtual War Memorial; Australian War Memorial; Kandahar Farm Cemetery, Belgium; The Battle of Messines 1917.

We want to copy your old photos

If you have come into possession of any old family or historic photos, please lend them to us to copy! Please contact the museum on 02 6670 2493 or email us at trm@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Guided town walk

Don't forget our guided town centre historical walk, which leaves from Tweed Regional Museum (2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah) at 1pm on the first Saturday of every month.

It takes only an hour or so, 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.

Johnsons of Johnson's Creek

- the long journey to the Tweed

Johnson's Creek drains the cane fields to the east of Condong on the Tweed Valley Way, and runs into the Tweed River approximately 2km north and east of Condong. It was in this area that the Johnson family settled in 1883 after their long trek from Somerset in England. Family member and Society member Ross Johnson describes their eventful journey and subsequent contributions to the community. This is the second part of the story. [All photographs courtesy Ross Johnson]

Tweed River

In 1866, early settler John McLeod had purchased land on the Tweed in the Condong district. Little of this land had been developed and in 1877 the CSR Coy purchased a mill site and a further 2,400 acres. Under the chairmanship of Edward Knox, the company was achieving success with its concept of creating large centralised mills supplied by many growers, some on relatively small holdings. It had proved successful on the Clarence and Richmond Rivers and was now happening on the Tweed. The new Condong Mill commenced crushing on 16 Aug 1880. Portions of this mill remain today as one of the oldest structures on the Tweed. (It is interesting to



Condong sugar mill in 1880

note that prior to 1885, one hundred and two sugar mills existed in the Northern Rivers region, but by 1890 this had reduced to thirty three, and with the success of the large CSR Coy's mills, there are now only three which still exist at Harwood, Broadwater and Condong. These large mills can crush up to 1,000 tonnes a day, compared with the old, small privately owned mills crushing only two to three tonnes a day.)



Condong store centre foreground, Johnson farm left background

Frederick George and Sarah's family at the original house at Johnson's



children were settled at Condong in a humble residence built alongside Johnson's Creek. The children were: Alice Sophia [Phillips], b1865; William, b1867; George, b1870; Joseph Alexander, b1872, Frederick Thomas, b1874; Elizabeth Ann [Fowler] b1876; John Matthew, b1878; Daniel Henry b1880; and Ellen Mae [Davis] b1882. A further four children were born on the Tweed: Peter, b1884, died age 7; Gertrude Sarah [Dunsdon], b1885; Clarence Leonard, b1886; and Lillian [Clark], b1888.



The Johnson family at the new home, 1915

was the expansion and success of the CSR Coy's entry to this district that attracted the Johnson family. In what was a very wise decision, in 1883 Frederick George Johnson, commenced farming on the Tweed on 320 acres of prime river front land stretching northward from the boundary of the sugar mill, along behind the village of Condong, to an area that became known as Johnson's Creek.

Johnson's Creek

By 1884, Frederick George, Sarah and their nine

Frederick George and granddaughter Hazel Dunsdon



Prior to their retirement, Frederick George and Sarah divided the 320 acres into five holdings for their sons Joseph Alexander, Frederick Thomas, John Matthew, Daniel Henry and Clarence Leonard.



Sarah [nee Bradfield] and Frederick George, 1915

Until the mid-1950s these five farms and nine houses in Condong village were occupied by members of the family, making them the most numerous family in Condong. The village was often referred to as **Johnsonville**. Another pioneering Tweed family, with close associations and friendships with the Johnsons through farming and family interests, were the Boyds, who were just as numerous, but spread out mainly along Clothier's Creek Road in an area referred to, in those days, as **Boydsville**. It was often said that if you weren't a Boyd, or a Johnson, or a Conaghan whose families ran the general store and post office, you must have been involved with the CSR.

Frederick's brother William and his wife Flora remained at Palmer's Island until the 1890's. They then ventured north to Condong to assist their relatives in their farming ventures, before purchasing land of their own in Dry Dock Road Tweed Heads, where he took up dairying. This property adjoined the Sullivan's and occupied the area now surrounding the Tweed by-pass (Pacific Motorway) and bridge over Terranora Inlet. William died on 4^h Jul 1934 and is buried in the Tweed Heads cemetery.



Bill Johnson and family farming at Condong

This branch of the family forms another large chapter

in the Johnson story across the Tweed, but one son, Hector, remained in Condong all his life and made enormous contributions to the community through the school, as foundation President of Condong Bowling Club and as a supporter of the Anglican Church.



Bill and Flora's home at Dry Dock Road



Frederick George Johnson's funeral procession at Tweed Heads, 3 Feb 1919



Frederick's funeral procession arriving at the Florence Street cemetery Tweed Heads

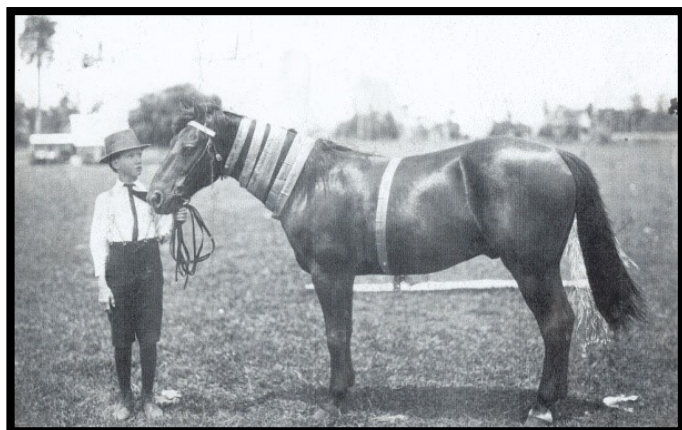
Frederick George and Sarah remained at Condong until their deaths, supporting their large family in its farming pursuits and assisting other family members. Frederick died aged 74 on 1 Feb 1919. His very large funeral procession was led through the streets of

Tweed Heads by the town band and members of the various organizations to which he belonged. J M Holston of Murwillumbah organised the funeral and provided the horse drawn hearse. His wife Sarah died 24 days later on 25 Feb 1919 at the age of 72. Both are buried in the Florence Street cemetery at Tweed Heads.

Following the passing of this pioneering couple, who permanently settled on the Tweed with their young family some one-hundred and twenty-nine years ago, subsequent generations, now with seventh generation members resident on the Tweed, continue to make their contributions to life in this valley.

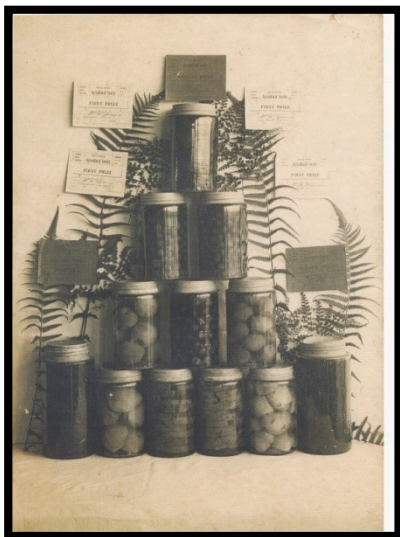
Contributions to farming

After Joseph Alexander Johnson's early death at age 42 in 1915, William and Flora assisted in running the farm until Joseph's son Clarence returned in 1929 to take over. He ran dairy AIS cattle until 1950 when he placed the whole farm under cane. Like on all of the family farms, he retained a small acreage of rainforest in the belief that something had to be kept for the birds and farm animals to shelter under. Sadly, these rainforest remnants have all been cleared in recent years.



Clarence Jr with his horse **General** at the Tweed show

Clarrie was a successful exhibitor at Tweed shows as a young lad with his horse General, as was his mother Nellie with her prize preserves and jams.



Nellie Johnson's preserves at the Show

Clarrie's son-in-law Don Curtis was one of the first to use a

Toft Loader and because of its height he had to drive it from Bundaberg to the Tweed. By 1975 all cane was mechanically harvested and loaded.



Don Curtis and his Toft loader

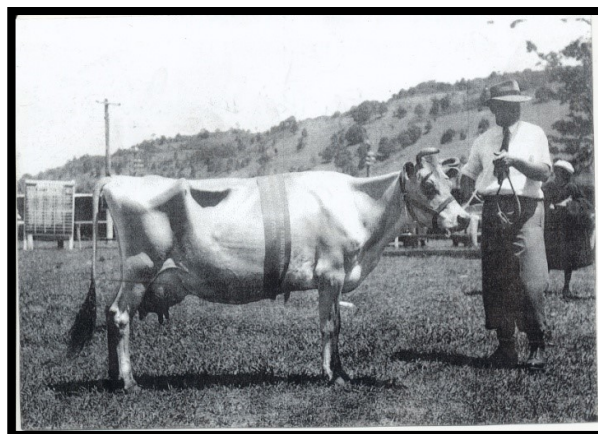
A great granddaughter, Paula Anthony, with her horse Midnight Cassius, achieved success as the Supreme Led Gelding across the Northern Rivers and Southern Queensland. She also won the Supreme Led Gelding class at the Tweed Show on four occasions in the 1990's.



Paula and **Midnight Cassius**

Clarrie was the last to farm at Johnson's Creek, retiring in 1974 and moving to Kingscliff with his wife Edna.

Frederick Thomas Johnson's farm was taken over by his son Eric George (Pat) who devoted his time to the extensive and successful Ashfield Jersey Stud of dairy cattle he established in the 1930's, whilst still retaining a cane consignment. During the war years, in an



Pat Johnson and a prize Ashfield jersey

era of horses, Pat had the only Howard rotary hoe and large tractor in Condong. His desire was to breed cattle

with high butterfat production and his prize Jerseys were exhibited at shows across the Northern Rivers. Pat also had a large piggery on his property. His wife Dorothy gave over 35 years to the Junior Farmers (Rural Youth) organization. Both were made life members of the Tweed River Agricultural Society and the former Junior Farmers' Pavilion was named the Johnson Pavilion after her dedicated work.

John Matthew Johnson's farm was taken over by his son Wally and for some years a second farm was run by another son Frederick George Jr. Wally was regarded as the family's most successful farmer and was well regarded for the high sugar content of his crops. Wally believed that, by fertilising at night, crops achieved a higher absorption rate. He also paid great attention to levelling his fields and the provision of adequate drainage. (With the advent of laser levelling, this practice is now widespread!). Wally was a successful exhibitor in the cane sections of the show.



Wally Johnson and team

Daniel Henry Johnson's farm was the first sold, in 1953 due to his ill health. His only child Fred was a carpenter, sugar boiler and shift supervisor for the CSR at Condong where he worked for over forty years.

During World War II, Dan served as the district warden for the National Emergency Services. This necessitated an air raid shelter being built on the farm. Son Fred, who was denied service due to essential industry exclusions, became an honorary officer of St John's Ambulance.

Dan dedicated many years of service to the Canegrowers Association, having become foundation president on 6 Jun 1923. In 1950 this role passed to Harold Lundberg and more recently to John Martin and Robert Quirk. During Dan's time he served as delegate to the NSW Canegrowers Association. The organization worked hard for improvements in the industry, with continuing negotiations between workers, growers and millers. During his presidency, the concept of providing more suitable accommodation within the fields, in preference to the tents then in common usage, was adopted. This led to the construction of six sets of cane-cutters' barracks in 1948, one on Dan's farm. They provided accommodation for eight cutters and a cook. Many of those to occupy them were displaced Europeans who had immigrated after World War II. These people contributed greatly to our society within

the valley and their descendants are much respected community members. Many of them became close family friends and I remember my father Fred loading them into the family car to take them to the movies at the Regent Theatre, one of the few regular outings they experienced.

Dan was a successful exhibitor at the Tweed show with his horses and cane. His son Fred, reputed for his expansive gardens at the home in Condong, was a successful exhibitor in the floral section, and his grandson Ross exhibited many photos and craft items during the 1950's and 1960's.

Clarence Leonard Johnson's farm became a trust farm for the family and was under the executorship of Clarence Jnr. The property was farmed by George McCrone and later, his son Harold for many years.

In his wisdom, Frederick George's selection of 320 acres adjoining the mill created fewer problems with the transport of cut cane to the mill!

Continuing the McCabe story

The story of William Patrick [Dick] McCabe and his livery stables he purchased in Murwillumbah in 1922, has been well recorded by Ron Johansen in V4 of his *Tales of our Times*.

However, it was not recorded what year he arrived in Murwillumbah, but it is said that he liked the town so much, he decided not to go to Sydney as planned.

This personal story by Society member and Vice President Max Boyd provides some further anecdotal information on the life and times of Dick McCabe and his family in Murwillumbah.

During his lifetime in the area, he became famous for his remarkable knowledge and care of horses; his skills in dealing with the wide range of horse ailments; his great ability to 'break in' horses; his ability to supply horses and carriages for visitors wanting to move around the tweed and for his renowned wit and humour.

It is said that about the start of World War 1, he and his brother John, bought 640 acres at Doon Doon.

In 1924, he purchased the livery stables from Alf Luton and his fame soon grew through his uncanny abilities to handle horses and for his talents as an unofficial town vet. Thankfully this early history of a notable citizen has been recorded but little has been written about his family.

This article is being written to tell the story of one of his sons – Neville who was born in 1911 and died aged 67 on 26 Mar 1978.

An article written as an obituary by an unknown member of his many friends is reproduced as follows:

When Prince Charles pinned a life membership badge on Mr Neville McCabe's shirt, the act signified official recognition by a great number of tweed valley people of Mr McCabe's great contribution to rural life in the Tweed Valley.

At 62, Mr McCabe was honoured for more than 50 years association with the Tweed River agricultural

society.at the time of his death, he had been the society's chief ring steward for 12 years was also the society's vice president.

Mr McCabe was regarded as the "Bill Roycroft of the tweed" with his vast store of knowledge and experience in the breeding and riding of horses whether on the race track, in the showground or in the cattle paddocks.



Clint on pony, Neville, Max at Murwillumbah show c1975
'over 50 years ago, I cantered two ponies through Main Street, Murwillumbah to the show and I have taken an interest in shows ever since" said Mr McCabe.

He was born in the Tweed valley. His father had bought the livery stables and the family operated a livestock transporting business before the main north-south railway line went through.

Mr McCabe tells many stories about droving sheep and cattle along the pacific highway in northern new south wales. Horses and cattle had been his life. He had been associated with some of the best working horses in the tweed valley.

The mare "flight" stands out amongst them. Mr McCabe bred her and every foal she had went on to make an outstanding campdrafter.



Neville with stallion **Feltros** at Tygalgah racecourse

The two blood stallions 'Feltros and Monaltrie' which Neville cherished the most had been bought as racehorses that had passed their prime but which Neville regarded highly, because with his well trained eye, he knew they were still very valuable.

Jimmy Walsh trained Feltros for Neville and the stallion had won many races.

Neville bred Feltros to many mares and their progeny, in many cases, went on to become very good camp drafters

Mr McCabe was one of the instigators of the pony club movement in Murwillumbah and district. He helped form the club about 1953 and served as its president for 11 years. It recognised his efforts with life membership.

Competitive work for Mr McCabe by then was in the past but he had 20 blood mares on his Crystal Creek property to keep him busy. Mr McCabe was head of the Murwillumbah rodeo committee and a vice president of the jockey club which has struck a purple patch in recent years.



Max, Clint on mare Robyn c1974

Looking back over 50 years in the horse world, Mr McCabe says "they have been worth it for all the friends I have made."

Max, Neville's only son, said that his father just loved horses, but, if the price was right, he would sell anything. He recounted one occasion when Neville sold his horse, saddle and bridle and had to ask the new owner to give him a lift home.

Neville started riding horses at a very young age. Early in his life he built a butcher's shop on Mr Joe Sweetnem's farm at Dungay.

He must have been reasonably successful because the tweed butchering company bought him out on condition that he didn't start again and offered him the job of being their cattle buyer. Neville agreed on both counts and so began a very long career that took him to all parts of the tweed shire buying stock for the company.

This was an era before horse floats, so he rode his horse everywhere and this daily contact with his horse made him an exceptionally fine horseman and a wonderful judge of a good horse. His working horses were cared for and fed as if they were members of his family.

Neville bought a farm at crystal creek quite close to the crystal creek school on which he ran his horses and cattle. The actor John Jarrett lived in one of the homes on this farm for a period before buying it.

Neville and Max also bought the old Harry property at Crystal Creek between them.

Max's son, Clint, his wife Maria and their children Cooper, Kiana and Ava live in the home on this property. With Max's properties, he and Clint run about 500 breeders.

Clint is carrying on the McCabe tradition so well established by his father Max and grandfather Neville. Max initiated the McCabe family trophy for the supreme champion award for the best thoroughbred exhibit at the Murwillumbah show, in recognition of his forebears.

Neville had four brothers and two sisters – Bill the oldest worked for most of his life at the Daily News when it was printed in Murwillumbah; Pat who was a butcher with the Tweed Butchering Company and who later became their slaughter man at the boat harbor slaughterhouse for tweed butchery; Dick who was the mechanic of the family; Kevin also worked as a butcher with the company before he, Bill and Dick all enlisted in the army in World War II. Neville had two sisters – Olive and Mary.

As i write this extension to the McCabe history, I well remember when I was about 18, Neville came out to buy some cattle from my dad.

When he had dismounted, he said to my dad, 'Mr Boyd what price have you got on them,' dad told him his price where upon Neville said MMMM and walked around closely examining each beast. When he had finished he came back and said "Mr Boyd none of

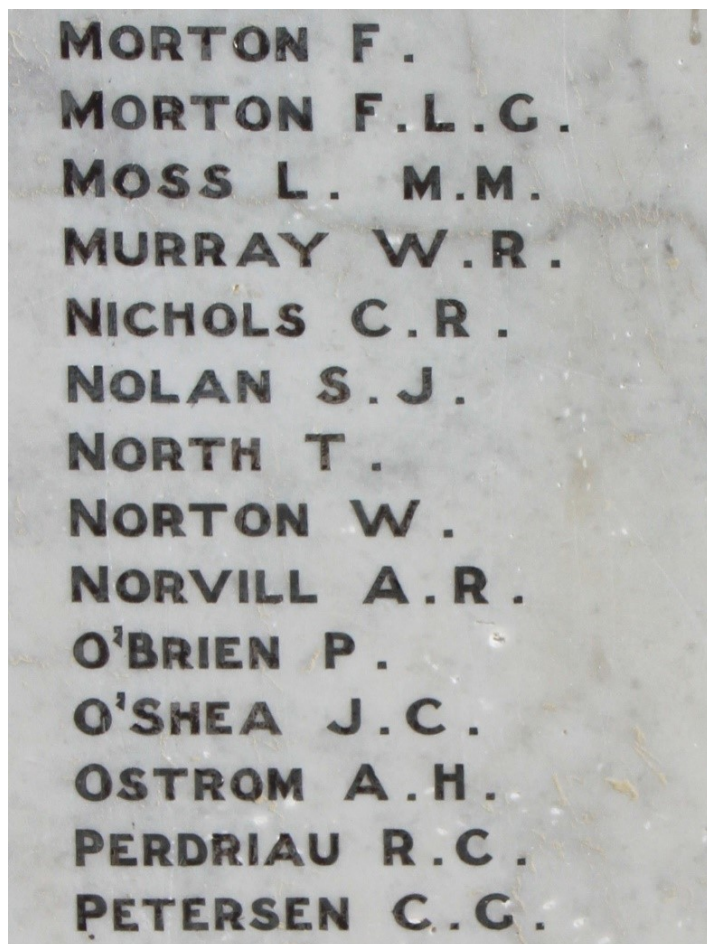
them appear to have gold teeth'. So they then bartered on the price.

All of the McCabe men had a great sense of humour and were all liked and respected by all who knew them.

All photographs courtesy Max McCabe

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 twelfth set of fourteen names listed.



Lest We Forget

ABOUT THE SOCIETY: Formed on 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.

CONTACT US

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Email: editor@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au **Street:** C/- Tweed Regional Museum, 2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah NSW 2484
Postal: 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.