

TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society Inc.

ISSN 2208-1909 July 2021 Vol. 10 No. 1



Welcome

Welcome to the July 2021 *Timelines*, the newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society.

This edition's contents:

- Camelot to Greenhills
- Lines out of Time compilation
 - * The Tumbulgum UFO
 - * The Public Innoculation Depot
 - * Travel Restrictions Extended
 - * Queensland Border Closed
- Robert Hope, Deputy Engineer 1960-63
- The Wollumbin Stamp
- Mystery Wedding Photo

Camelot to Greenhills

We welcome new Society member and contributor Dr Greg Wightman and his thorough research and analysis on the fascinating history of this Murwillumbah landmark. Greg's full version of the report is extremely comprehensive and may soon be printed as a Society publication.

For many local residents, the Greenhills On Tweed function centre in River Street, South Murwillumbah, has been a familiar institution for the last fifty years, associated with generations of wedding receptions, birthday parties, family reunions and other large functions. Until recently, little was known about the early history of the house. Recently, Dr Greg Wightman, an

archaeologist and architectural historian currently working with the MHS, undertook a thorough investigation of the property. His research has



Filigree pendant rosette ceiling (Photo: Greg Wightman 2021)



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 by email at trm@tweed.nsw.gov.au



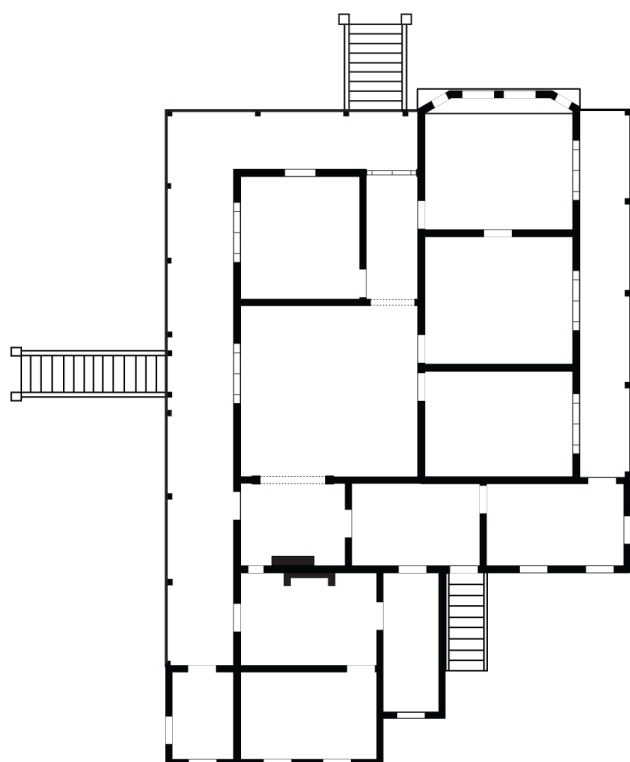
Camelot in the 1920s (west view) (Photo supplied by Greg Wightman)

gone a long way toward clarifying its early history.

The house was built for Edwin Johnson and his family. Johnson was an important figure in the Tweed region in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, having been in charge of surveying the township of Coolom (later Tweed Heads) as well as other localities in the area. Johnson married into the pioneering Bray family, moved to Murwillumbah and, in June 1909, purchased a

large block of land which had been part of the Greenhills Estate. Later in 1909, Johnson engaged the services of a local architect, either W A Edds or Thomas Hoyle, to design an upmarket villa-residence suitable for a gentleman of his position. The house was probably built by Alf Modini with the assistance of building materials supplier Fred McTackett, both of whom shared offices at the time in South Murwillumbah. The house was completed in 1910, and christened Camelot. There is a story, perhaps true, that an unusual motif in the twin gables of the house might represent the Lady of Shallott made famous in Tennyson's poem. In a move that prefigured the house's later history, the Johnsons held the wedding reception for their eldest daughter at Camelot early in 1911.

The house was, for a regional town such as Murwillumbah, an upper-end example of an Edwardian (i.e. Federation) villa-residence which retained echoes of the late Victorian era. Particularly Edwardian are the Tudoresque gables, the flying gable on the north and casemate windows in the north gable bay, the use of coloured glasses in the surrounds of the French doors, the sunrise motifs in the gables (so common in Federation-era houses, symbolizing the dawn of a new nation), the archway inside the house, and the pressed metal ceilings, of which the filigree pendant rosette in what may originally have been the drawing room is truly a masterwork. The somewhat unusual north/south orientation of the house owes itself to the spaciousness of the grounds and the desire to maintain the broad views across town toward Mt Warning/Wollumbin from the open west verandah.



The original house plan (simplified) (Drawn by and courtesy of Greg Wightman 2021)



The north gable and bay window (Photo: Greg Wightman 2021)

In 1914 Johnson sold Camelot to an old Tweed pioneer, Denis Hartigan, though they continued living there until 1915. Hartigan then sold (or, more likely, gifted) the property to his daughter Mary, who had married a man named Bert Eyles. Eyles was a law clerk who worked for Peter Street before taking over Frank Chambers' (who was the first president of Tweed Shire) Land Agent business. From 1917 and throughout the 1920s, Eyles served as an alderman on the Murwillumbah Council, becoming mayor in 1931. He was also very active on the Tweed Hospital committee, and his wife Mary is said to have been the first trained nurse in Murwillumbah.

After Bert Eyles passed away in 1935, his widow Mary continued to live at Camelot. Their two eldest daughters held their wedding receptions at the house, while in 1938 there was a family reunion there. This must have been something of a "last hurrah" for Camelot. Mary Eyles probably went to live with one of her children; the formerly open verandahs of the house were boxed in; the house was divided into flats (two at first, then in later years four), and became known as the Eyles Flats. The name Camelot was gradually lost, even more so when the Johnson and Eyles families moved out of the district.

When Mary Eyles passed away in 1944, the property was sold to Arthur Giovanelli, whose well-

known jewellery business is still remembered by most older residents of Murwillumbah. Giovanelli continued to lease the house as flats, and in 1954 he built a house for his family just to the north. In 1961 the property was purchased by Paul Belmont, a local motor mechanic. He returned the house to a single residence, and the Belmont family lived there throughout the 1960s. At this stage the interior of the house was still much the same as originally, though the verandahs remained boxed in and the main staircases outside had been replaced or repositioned. In 1969 the property was purchased by the Salmon family, who ran a catering business. They converted the house into a wedding reception centre known as Greenhills Reception Lounge, and began the process of removing interior walls to create a broad space and also expanding the back kitchen area. This process was continued by later owners, who changed the name to Greenhills On Tweed; they created a large deck along the west side, overlooking the river.

Despite the many changes wrought over the last fifty years, echoes of the old Camelot resound throughout the house: in the north gable and bay window, in the pressed metal ceilings, in the original chimney, fireplace and archway of the "library", and in the French-doors with their coloured-glass surrounds. It is good to know that the property will continue to play a significant role in the Murwillumbah community.

Lines out of Time

Our former title for this regular segment was "100 Years Ago", now renamed Lines out of Time to broaden its offering. Maris Bruzgulis entertains us with a 1950 story of UFO sightings all over the region and some surprising newspaper stories from the 1919 Spanish 'Flu on the Tweed—the more things change, the more they stay the same!

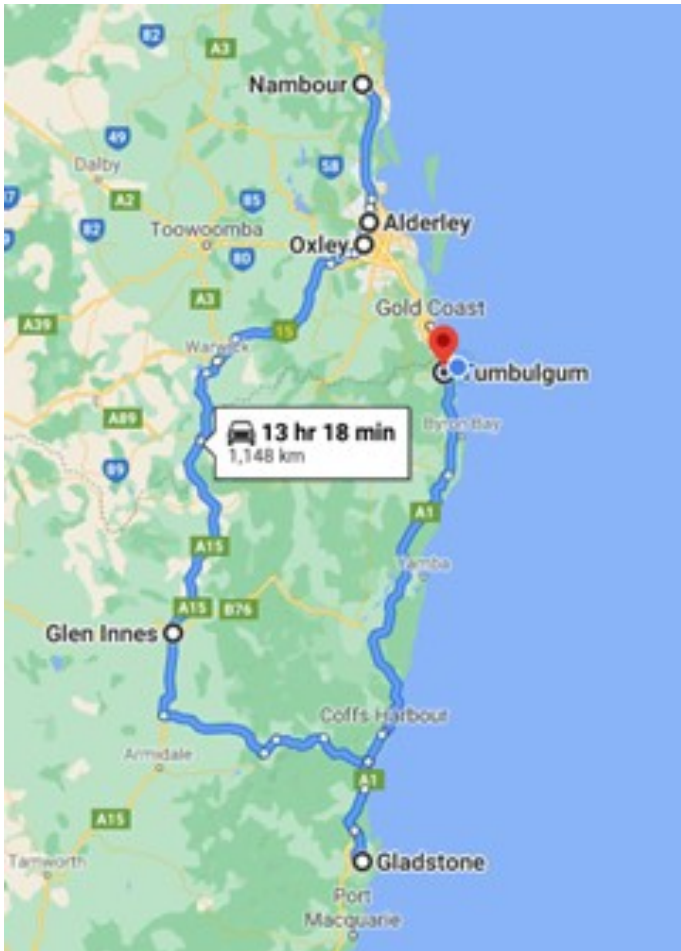
#####

Unidentified flying objects never lose their attraction for the general public. Our researchers, undertaking a family research request, came across a report of a flying saucer seen on the Tweed in November 1950.

The Brisbane *Courier-Mail* reported that 'Mr. and Mrs. Noel Holmes, of North Tumbulghum, claimed to-night [Wednesday, 29 November 1950] that just after 7 p.m. they saw a round object with a tail, streaking at high speed across the sky in an east to west direction'. The *Northern Star* amplified this by quoting Mrs Holmes: "It seemed to be fairly high", said Mrs. Holmes, "and it travelled at high speed, on a straight course". Noel Holmes added the object was moon-shaped and had a tail, and took three seconds to disappear behind a neighbouring hill. Their visitor Arthur Smith said he

had never seen anything like it before.

This news item was also carried by the *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney. There had been fifteen sightings across New South Wales and Queensland. It was seen by Queensland Airlines flight crew, a man in Alderley, another at Oxley, two fishermen at Glen Innes, a family of four and their neighbours at Gladstone, NSW, and of course the Holmes at 'Pumblegum' (the city journalists evidently didn't have a good sub-editor). The Google map below shows the Holmes position at the centre of the sightings.



A Google map of the sightings (Courtesy Maris Bruzgulis)

To give this sighting context, it must be remembered that the first artificial satellite – Sputnik 1 – would only be launched seven years later. While H G Wells' *The War of the Worlds* was serialised in 1897 and published as a book in 1898, it was present in more recent memory because of Orson Welles' 1938 radio dramatisation. Perhaps more notable is that among the new books at the Murwillumbah School of Arts Library in 1948 was Bernard Newman's *The Flying Saucer*. Sadly, the last word is probably that of an unnamed Sydney meteorologist who stated that 'the phenomenon was a comet closer than usual to the earth.'

Editor's comment: this story reminds me of an incident from my time in the RAAF when I was the Intelligence Officer at RAAF Base Townsville in the early 1990s.

A mature couple from a rural area west of Townsville had phoned in a sighting one day detailing their experience the previous night. When I interviewed them by telephone I was struck by their apparent sobriety and lucid description of what they had seen. They spoke of a bright light they saw hovering in silence over part of their property, its apparently deliberate movements and then its sudden extremely rapid departure and disappearance from view. I spoke to the local meteorological experts and they were unable suggest any moon or weather related explanation and there was no military flying in their area that night.

I signalled everything I had to my higher HQ (Air Headquarters Aust.) but unsurprisingly I never heard anything back. They probably wondered what I had been drinking!

#####

THE BORDER RESTRICTIONS.

Although the Government Medical Officer at Murwillumbah is issuing, under official instructions, the necessary permits required to enter Queensland, the Coolangatta police, in reply to a telephone inquiry yesterday, are stated to have said the border was still closed. The inquirers were a number of men who, on hearing the border was being opened, came up from centres along the line, to cross into Queensland. Yesterday afternoon they sent a wire to the Queensland Chief Secretary, outlining the position, and stating that the confusion was causing great dissatisfaction.

It is understood that the muddle in connection with the opening of the border is due to a conflict of authority between the Federal and Queensland State Governments, the latter objecting to the Federal authorities' action with respect to the border restrictions.

Tweed Daily (Murwillumbah, NSW: 1914 - 1949) Wednesday 21 May 1919, Page 2)

#####

PUBLIC INOCULATION DEPOT.

244 Persons Treated.

In the three hours for which the public inoculation depot was open at the Municipal Council Chambers yesterday 244 persons were treated. Included amongst the number was his Worship the Mayor (Ald. Connor). The inoculations were carried out by the Government Medical Officer (Dr. Goldsmid), and he was assisted by Nurse Meaney, of the District Hospital. A steady stream of persons to and from the room was kept up throughout the whole period, and all were expeditiously dealt with. A number of children, who were amongst the treated, as a rule displayed no nervousness, and with many the operation, which is practically painless, was over before they knew anything. The serum, to look at, resembles nothing so much as water, being perfectly colorless, although appearing to be somewhat thicker in consistency. All the afternoon the precincts of the Council Chambers presented a busy appearance, and there was the continually exchanged question: "Have you been done yet?" One little girl came back and asked if she should be inoculated again as her father said she had "been done on the wrong arm." At closing time there was still a small quantity of serum left over. The re-opening of the depot will be notified in the press, but all those persons treated yesterday have, of course, to receive their second injection a week hence.

*Above: Tweed Daily (Murwillumbah, NSW: 1914 - 1949)
Tuesday 4 February 1919, Page 3)*

#####

*Right: Tweed Daily (Murwillumbah, NSW: 1914 - 1949)
Wednesday 30 April 1919, Page 3)*

RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL.

Extension to Country.

As already reported in the "Tweed Daily," the State Cabinet has decided to apply restrictions on travelling to the infected country districts.

It was decided that the restrictions on travel which are at present applied to the residents of the County of Cumberland and the Newcastle area be applied also to the residents of country areas which are declared by proclamation to be infected area, and to which the other restrictions applied in the County of Cumberland, such as masking, closure of entertainments, and so on, have been applied at the request of the local administrative committees, supported by the Government medical officer in such areas.

Thus, the person who desires to travel from an infected area by train, car, or other vehicle for a destination ten miles or more beyond the boundary of such area must secure a certificate from the Government Medical Officer in that area, showing that—(1) He has not knowingly during the previous two days been in contact with any person infected with pneumonic influenza; (2) He has been duly inoculated during the previous three months, in accordance with the requirements of the Government to that effect. He must also produce a certificate from a duly certified medical practitioner, on the prescribed form, that such practitioner has carefully examined him at the time of giving the certificate, and that he shows no signs of being infected with pneumonic influenza, which certificate must show that it was issued not more than 24 hours before the date of such production.

A proclamation was subsequently issued to cover this decision of the Cabinet. The stipulation that travellers should pass through an inhalation chamber has been eliminated.

Robert Hope, Tweed's Deputy Engineer 1960-1963

Thanks very much to Robert Hope for sharing the story of his time as Deputy Engineer for the Tweed in the early 1960s. He

originally wrote it as part of a larger project for his family and it's great to have it in Timelines. The story will be run in about three parts over coming editions.

My wife Maureen and I were married in March 1957 and immediately departed for a three-year

The Daily News

Incorporating TWEED AND SOUTH COAST DAILY

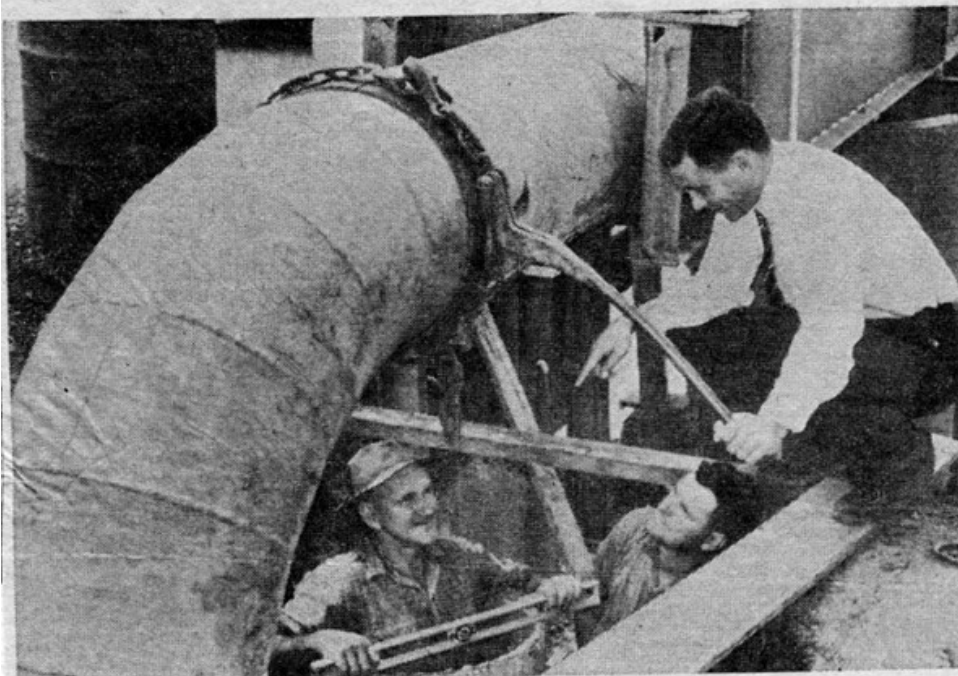
MURWILLUMBAH, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1961

Vol. XLVII., No. 314.

PRICE: 5d.

Registered at the G.P.O. Sydney, for transmission by post as a newspaper

BRIDGE PIERS CARRY PIPE'S WEIGHT



Mr R. Hope, Tweed Shire deputy engineer, supervising council workmen as they fitted the closing link of the water main across the Murwillumbah bridge. The overall length of the main is 550ft. It is carried in steel corbels, which transmit the weight directly to the piers of the bridge; no weight is taken by any part of the superstructure of the bridge. The weight of the steelwork supporting the pipe is approximately 20 tons and the pipeline itself weighs 25 tons. When filled, the main will hold 32 tons of water, giving a total weight of 77 tons. The pipe is 20in. in diameter. H. T. Reading Pty. Ltd., of Lismore, carried out the fabrication of the steel corbels at a contract price of £4571 and the pipes were supplied by Humes Ltd., of Brisbane, at a cost of £3163. The cost of erecting the pipeline across the bridge was about £400.

working honeymoon overseas. Our journey had us working and staying in Kitimat British Columbia, Los Angeles and London.

We returned home on Australia Day 1960 bringing with us our firstborn, son Phelps. We settled briefly in Sydney when I took up a position as Deputy Engineer of Mosman Municipality. However, a few months later, the position at Tweed Shire Council as Deputy Engineer presented itself and after applying and being successfully interviewed, I happily accepted the position.

And so our family of three moved away again, this time from our home city to a country town hundreds of miles north. This occurred much to the disappointment of our two sets of parents however it was a particularly good move for my small family, with Murwillumbah and the Shire providing both challenging work for me and a wonderful environment for the three of us. My time with the Council commenced on 1st September 1960. We were blessed with two daughters joining our family whilst living in Murwillumbah, and Phelps, taking his first steps in transitioning from baby to toddler.

The Council provided us with a sparsely furnished

two bedroom home which they spruced up pending our arrival. Council had the wooden floors sanded, exposing beautiful old timber which provided a wonderful platform for crawling toddlers. Due to our lack of furniture we had to scramble to make the house into a home. Our Uncle Jack kindly sent us a lounge suite that he no longer needed and that provided us some comfort in the lounge room. We had two large crates, one that we had used to transport our possessions and another in which our refrigerator was delivered. So these were stood on end side-by-side in the bedroom and served as our first wardrobe. Maureen went to the local store and purchased the least expensive material she could find. It had red and white stripes and Maureen sewed it into nice curtains for the open front of the crate, and a bedspread and curtains for the spare bedroom. Another piece of 'special' furniture was a set of bookshelves made from planks and house bricks, an old student trick. The house was the last on the left of Murwillumbah Street above the town and next to a large paddock where not only cows grazed but at the bottom of the paddock was the local sewage works. Sounds awful but the treatment plant and its large smelly pond were far

enough away not to create a problem.

Duties as Deputy Shire Engineer

The Shire Engineer at the time was Keith Curran. Fortunately for me Keith was a forward-thinking and extremely capable engineer. Keith developed a high level of confidence in my abilities and gave me a large amount of freedom to carry out my tasks with a minimum of oversight. Many years later, I learned that Keith had become a consulting engineer in Tweed Heads after resigning from the council, and that he was so highly thought of that a park had been named after him there. A richly deserved recognition.

When we first arrived in Murwillumbah, the town was supplied by water that had an intake in a small tributary of the Murwillumbah River. This was pumped to a large water tank on the top of the hill above the town, and from there it was fed to the distribution system by gravity pressure. There was no treatment of any sort despite the catchment area being full of grazing cattle. When I inspected the tank, I found a number of dead birds floating on the surface.

Keith had engaged the NSW Public Works Department to design a new system that would not only supply Murwillumbah but would be pumped down to Tweed Heads and include all the town and communities along the way. This became perhaps my most important task as the pipeline system was being carried out by Council labour which I needed to supervise. The weir, intake and treatment plant at Bray Park were carried out by contractors.

Strangely enough once the clean and chlorinated water was distributed to the town, all sorts of illnesses were being blamed on the chlorine in the water. Ever thus!

Not nearly such a big responsibility as the water scheme, but a long ongoing saga since the late 1940s was a plan to fill in the creek between Greenbank Island and the mainland at Tweed Heads. This had a good deal of opposition as the creek was a favourite recreational and swimming area. However, once the channel was filled in it would provide the space to enable Tweed Heads to grow and also enable upgrading the two lane highway that led into Tweed Heads into at least a divided four-lane. The problem in the latter regard, was that there was a long stand of tall pine trees in the way. Under Keith's direction I drew up a plan and a report showing how it could be developed after the creek was filled. There was a good deal of opposition to the proposed reclamation and protests were the order of the day, even sabotaging the dredge once reclamation had started. Removing the trees publicly would have likely presented public confrontation and physical protests so Keith decided to send the chainsaw

gang in at two o'clock in the morning. Mission accomplished, trees down and too late for objections. The development has proved highly significant and beneficial to the growth of Tweed Heads.

Other works included planning and supervising the construction of an Olympic size swimming pool in Murwillumbah. As it sometimes happens in local government work, this occurred after a dispute between the Shire Engineer and the Health Inspector as to who would take charge of providing the pool. Fortunately, the engineer won that debate. Also supervised was the construction of timber bridges built the old-fashioned way by cutting down suitable trees. If the bridge piles were going into salt water, then turpentine trees were used as they were resistant to saltwater borers. Then the highly experienced and capable workers would use adzes and saws to trim the logs into piles and beams and make planks for the bridge deck. But modernisation was overtaking that technique and I had several concrete bridges to design and get constructed. One of these was at Hastings Point near Cabarita, a rapidly developing area on the coast at that time. Subsequently in addition to the above responsibilities, the Council also appointed me to the following ancillary positions:

Civil Defence Controller

This was the time of the Cold War and nations were deeply concerned about the possibility of nuclear warfare. Governments raced to form civil defence organisations and people started creating life-saving bunkers stocked with food and other essentials. Council appointed me civil defence controller and I was fortunate to recruit a former Air Force officer as my deputy and set up headquarters in the building owned by the council next to the council chambers.

Perhaps our most notable achievement was setting up a field test that simulated a crowd of refugees coming along the highway to Murwillumbah. Locals were organised and set up as a crowd on the highway, and as they marched into town, we allocated them to make-believe carers. A huge success in which the local populace readily played their part. The organisation was recognised at the time by state Headquarters as one of the most active and efficient Civil Defence Sections in the State of New South Wales.

Town Planning Advisor

It was a somewhat similar situation to the civil defence organisation in that regional town planning was just coming in to vogue. The State Government required all councils to appoint a town planner to develop and approve town plans. The

position of town planning advisor was added to my responsibilities and as I had some experience and training it was not a significant additional responsibility. Essentially, I mapped the town as it existed and used that as a basis for setting up zones on which to approve development applications. It seemed to work okay whilst I was there.

To be continued.

The Wollumbin Stamp

Thanks to Maris Bruzgulis for this story about the new Australia Post stamp series featuring our own Wollumbin Mount Warning.

Is an interest in history a predictor of the impulse to be a collector? Is someone with a historical bent



likely to be a stamp collector? If so, such members of the Society will be interested to know that Wollumbin features on a stamp that is part of a forthcoming Australia

Post release – Australia's Volcanic Past – as well as coverage in Stamp Bulletin number 372 of 2021.

'Wollumbin Mount Warning, in the Tweed River Valley of New South Wales, is the remnant plug of the central vent of a huge shield volcano that last erupted some 23 million years ago. It is estimated that the cone of this now-extinct volcano was 2,000 metres high, with a diameter of 100 kilometres. Erosion has since reduced the mountain to around half the original height.'

See more at [this web address](#).

Mystery Photo



If you can help identify this charming photo please contact us:

"... some years ago we had a photo of our grandparents copied. On removing the photo to copy, another photo was discovered. It is a very old, beautiful photo, and we would like to reunite it with the family it would belong to. It has the name Roslyn

and then Murwillumbah under that."

To preserve maximum space in Timelines for content, sources and references will not usually be listed. These are available upon request to:

editor@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au

While every effort is made to provide accurate and complete information in our Timelines newsletters and research, Murwillumbah Historical Society cannot guarantee that there will be no errors. The Society makes no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of our newsletters and research and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions. The views and opinions expressed therein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

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.

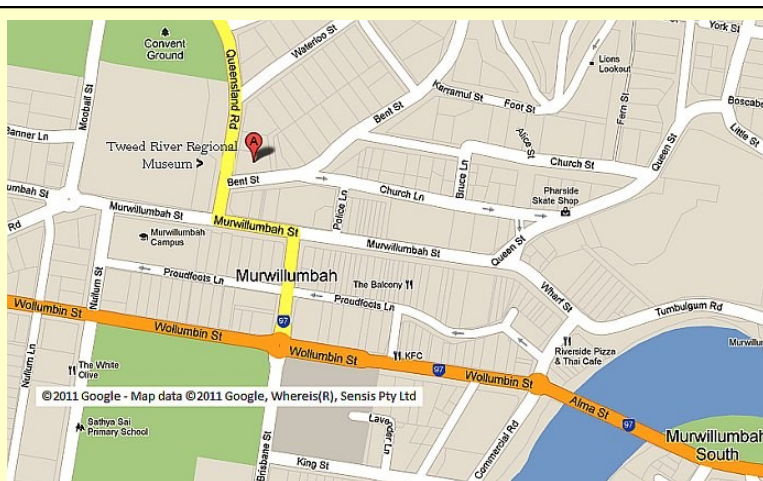
CONTACT US: Phone: (02) 6670 2273

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

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

Email: editor@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au

Mail: C/- Tweed Regional Museum, 2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah NSW 2484 or 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.