

TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society Inc.

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Welcome

Welcome to the April 2022 edition of *Timelines*, the newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society.

This edition's contents:

- 1872 Barling Plan for Murwillumbah
- Lines out of Time
 - * Hec Robertson of Cudgen Pt 5
 - * The Fossilised Crab
- Section 4, Deposited Plan 2087 - the Evolution of our Town, Part 2

The 1872 Barling Plan for Murwillumbah

Greg Wightman continues to unearth more fascinating historical information on our town, this time with what he believes to be the first showing of this 1872, earliest known (but rejected in 1875), town plan.

EARLIEST PLAN OF MURWILLUMBAH

Late in 1868, Casino-based Licensed Surveyor John Barling went to the Tweed River to survey some early land selections in the area called Murwillumbah. He also surveyed a water reserve on a hill in that area (today's Reservoir or Hospital Hill). This reserve was originally squarish in shape, but soon was extended to the west to

create an area of 161 acres. There is a tradition that it was John Barling who, around 1865, was the first to apply the Aboriginal name "Murwillumbah" to the parish that bears that name, and perhaps also to the proposed village (though there are other contenders for that honour). Today, the boundaries of this reserve (Fig. 2) are preserved in Tweed Street (and part of Boscabel Ave) on the east, George Street on the north, and Murwillumbah Street on the south (though, properly speaking, no provision was made for this latter street on Barling's plan); on the west, the boundary is reflected in the northern end of Wentworth Street and in the western road within the Showgrounds precinct. The southeastern half of the reserve was mostly a thickly-forested and craggy hill, whereas much of the northwestern half was tea-tree swamp. In the southeast corner, the line of the village reserve followed the course of Murwillumbah (or Lavender) Creek.

Early in 1872, John's younger brother Richard, who became a Licensed Surveyor in 1869, was tasked with drawing up a plan for a village on the reserve. Figure 1 shows what he came up with. Even a cursory glance will reveal why his plan was rejected (in 1875). Barling simply overlaid a grid of streets on the rectangular reserve, with no allowance made for the topography. Aptly enough, he named one of the western streets



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

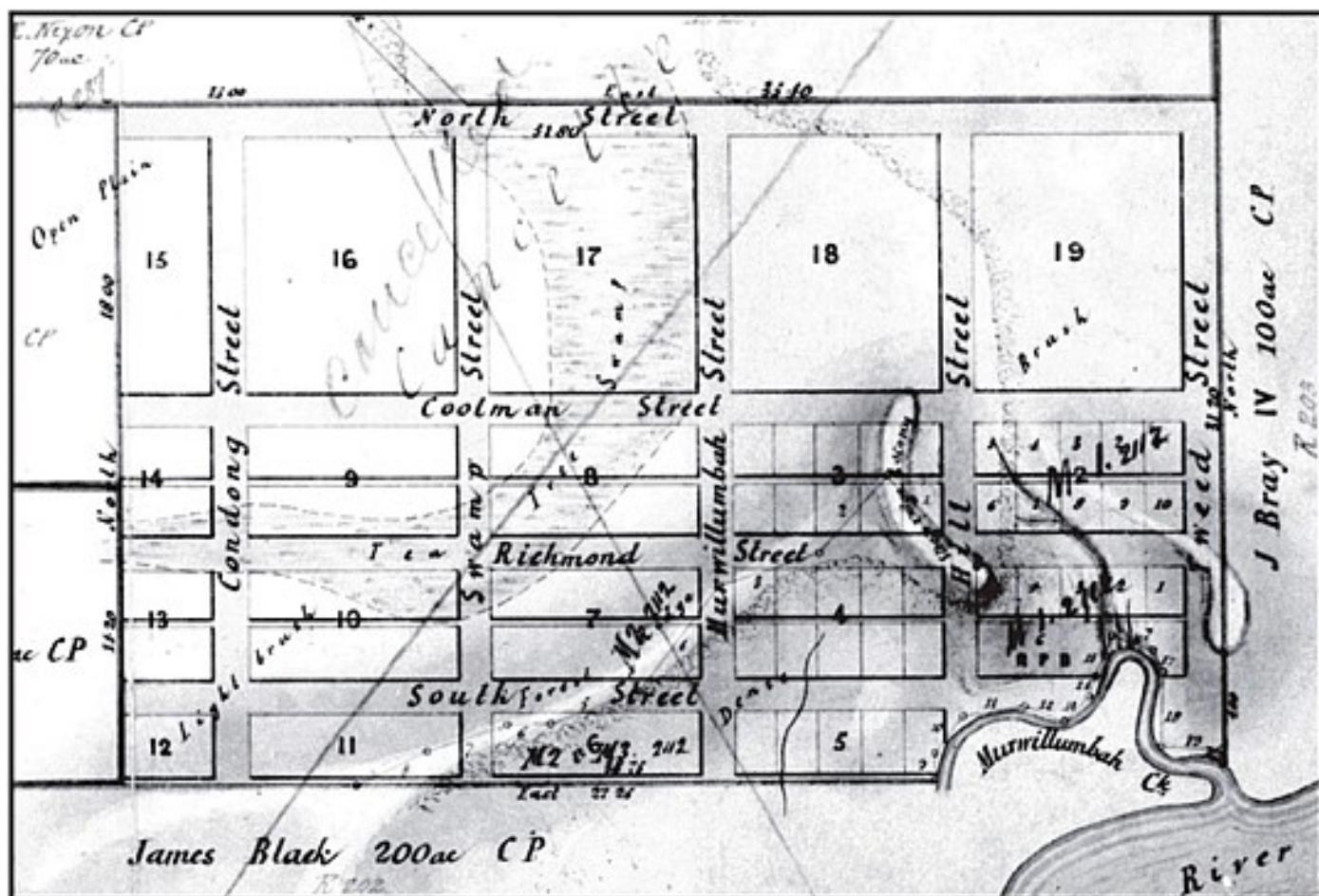


Fig. 1 The 1872 Barling Plan for Murwillumbah (Detail of Crown Plan No. 4336, NSW State Archives)

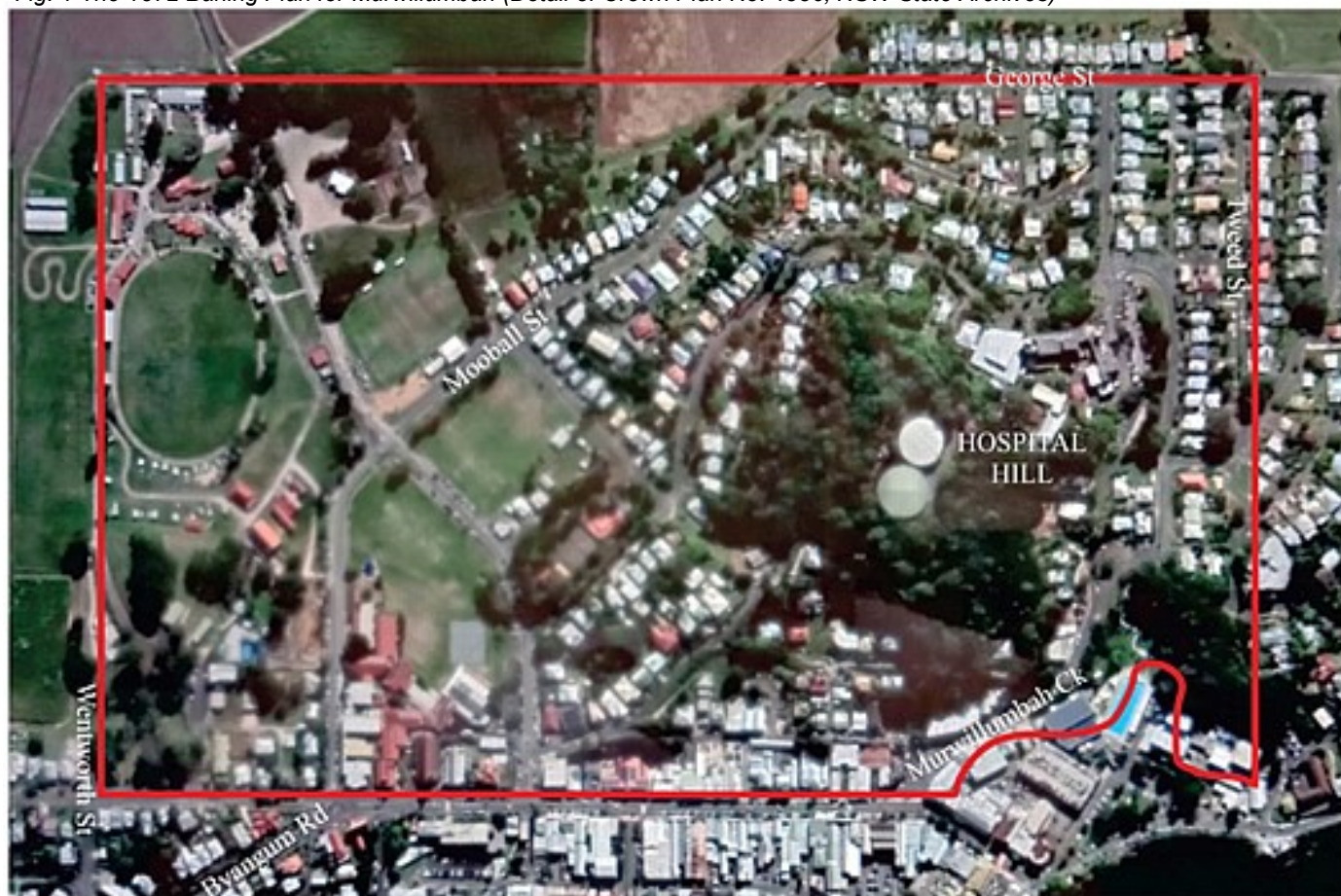


Fig. 2 Satellite image showing the area covered in the Barling plan map above (Image compliments of Greg Wightman)

Swamp Street and one of the eastern streets Hill Street. Whether he was being tongue-in-cheek or just plain unimaginative is impossible to say. The only original street name to have survived, and in its original position, is Tweed Street. It appears the main street was to be named Murwillumbah Street, but it ran north/south rather than (as from about 1880) east/west, climbing up over the steep southern side of the hill; the street was never built, thankfully, though its line is roughly preserved in the northern stretch of Bent Street. The southeastern corner of the proposed village ran along the winding course of Murwillumbah (aka Lavender) Creek, the sole connection of the village with the Tweed's South Arm (another deficit of Barling's plan).

A final point of interest on the 1872 plan is a surveyed track that leads up to the summit of the hill from the southwest. This track was not named or defined by Barling, and is quite at odds with his street grid. Indeed, its course would later be reflected in the southern half of Bent Street. The existence of this surveyed track to the summit of the hill is important, however, as we will see in the next issue, which discusses surveyor P R Donaldson's "new and improved" 1878 plan for the village.

Lines out of Time

A regular section featuring personal, old news stories and other interesting and quirky items highlighting our past.

Betty Hamill continues with Part 5 of the story of the life and times of her father Hec Robertson, as transcribed from family tape recordings. Things have changed somewhat since Hec's time! We also hear of the discovery of a time traveller!

Hec Robertson's story continues from last edition.

Early Pottsville

Pottsville was originally called Mooball Creek, then Potts Point and finally Pottsville after Snowy Potts.

When we first went to Cudgera every day was the same. Dad was a very keen worker and we had a lot to do. That meant Saturdays and Sundays were the same as the weekdays. Mum said to Dad "We've got to get you out of this place one day a week to give you a bit of rest". So we started to go to the beach every Sunday.



Your Society needs you!

We're looking for new members to support us simply by joining or by helping us in areas of activity including research or to look after specific aspects such as managing our membership, our social activities, our social media presence and more. Come join our happy team!
Call us on (02) 6670 2273 to find out more.

We used to harness up the old horse to the sulky. Dad Mum and Aunty used to sit on the seat while I sat on the floor. Aunty was Mum's sister, Mary Rundle (later Graham), who became postmistress at Cudgera.

After milking we'd choof off to Pottsville and we'd catch a lot of little whiting. When we first came there the mouth of the creek was blocked and it was just a series of holes up to where the bridge is now. The big tides would wash in and bring the little fish into these holes and go out again so you could catch them easily.

Later other people used to join us and come down for a picnic until eventually we would have quite a gathering every Sunday. At 3.30 everyone would harness their horses to get home to milk. Later on when a few more were coming we had to brush down the lantana (with brush hooks), to make an area big enough for all of them.

Snowy Potts used to come in the early times. Later he owned land on the hill towards the mouth of the creek. He'd always come down on a Sunday and have a yarn. He put in the first pump there (hand pump), so we could use the water. He divined the stream.

Eventually Snowy and a few of us built the kiosk which was there until recent years. We used public money which was subscribed. Then we used to run functions in it to pay it off.

At one stage I used to keep bees, mainly through the influence of Snowy Potts. Snowy was a Jack of all trades. Anything that came along he could handle -- building, plumbing etc. When he got a motor car he could fix motor cars. He also kept bees. He gave me a bit of gear to get me started with the bees. At one time I had about eight hives.

I had a cousin, Tom Rundle, who used to stay with us when he was out of a job. He would come back to our place as his home. When we were young we would chop down trees. Once we cut down a big tree. It took us nearly all day to cut it down. It was a big old flooded gum. It was partly rotten with no top on it which meant there was nothing to pull it over with. So we had to chop it right off. It fell and smashed in a great heap. We saw only one

bee and we didn't find where the hive was! Eventually the bee stings started to affect me and I'd swell up, so I got rid of the bees.

Originally the track coming to Pottsville didn't



Memories from Hec Robertson's time: George Rogan's ice cream van (Photo courtesy of Betty Hamill)



Memories from Hec Robertson's time: Ena Robertson (née Gapes) on motoring honeymoon with Hec. (Photo Betty Hamill)

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Tweed Daily (Murwillumbah, NSW: 1914-1949),
Thurs 24 July 1930, page 2

Tweed Daily (Murwillumbah, NSW : 1914 - 1949),

A FOSSILISED CRAB

Many freaks and curiosities wend their way into newspaper offices, but the strangest to call on the "Tweed Daily" for a long while is a fossilised crab. The body is about two and a half inches across, while the measurement from tip to tip of the legs is about 6½ inches. It was discovered by Mr. J. F. Boyd while sinking a well at Condong and was about eight feet below the surface of the ground. The claws are a little damaged. In appearance it is just like its brethren to be found along the sea beaches at the present day. How long it has taken for eight feet of soil to be deposited above the crab is a matter for conjecture, but the find lends support to the theory that the valley of the Tweed as far as Murwillumbah at one time was an arm of the sea. The digging up of sea shells on the Condong plain is quite a common occurrence.

National Library of Australia

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Hec Robertson's story continues from Page 3....

come straight in but you went around to the south. It was swampy at the edges and you went right around the rubbish. There was also a lot of thick rainforest there and eventually they cleared along where the survey lines were. They had a working bee. Tom Griffin lived up on the mountain. He had a horse and dray and camped there for about a fortnight. Other people would go as they had the time.

Tom Griffin was one of the people who did a lot for the district. Any working bees, he was always there, especially if it meant working with a horse. He was a very keen horse man. He had draught horses with his dray and eventually had a little carrying business. He carried bananas in from the top end of Burringbar. He was a great one for working for the public benefit and the good of the district.

George Fisher, better known as Pop Fisher, was also a great asset to the district. He was a great organiser. They kept the Post Office for many

years at Cudgera. They did a terrific job. He had eight daughters and one son -- four daughters, a son and then four more daughters.

In country areas in those days, the post office was the centre of the area. If anything happened you rang the P.O. and they spread the news around. If you had to contact anyone they would find them. They did a marvellous job.

When the wireless first came out the Fishers were among the earliest to own one. When the cricket was on in England a system had been worked out in Sydney to help the radio announcer. He would say someone came in and bowled and then tap a pencil for the sound effect of the ball on the bat. In this way he would give a running description of play, when really only receiving cables from England and no details. The announcer made up the story to make it sound as if he was watching.

I've seen us sit until after midnight listening on the phone. Fishers would be on the other end with the wireless going to keep the information up to us. They did a terrific job.

Most people worked together pretty well in those days.

Section 4, Deposited Plan 2087—the Evolution of our Town, Part 2 (final)

We continue with Maris Bruzgulis' account of the development, over time, of a key part of our town.

The new post office opened in 1910, and served the district until the 1950s. Laying the foundation stone of its replacement in 1953, the then Postmaster-General and local federal parliamentarian, Hubert Lawrence Anthony, stated the new post office would cost nearly £130,000, with another £45,000 for engineering and installations. Political opponents said "[t]axpayers will have to find £175,000 to "provide Mr. Anthony with a monument in his own town". It did match the hospital in scale – and definitely exceeded that of the Council chambers – the Municipal ones opposite, and those of the Shire down on Queensland Road (though by then both Councils had been amalgamated). In the words of Elizabeth Rich, an Australia Post employee, "The building was of cutting-edge design, inspired by popular architectural styles of the time," she said. "It had a modern glass frontage and polished surfaces inside that were installed because of their durability and ease of care."

[photos next page]



The Post Office: as purchased from Charlotte Moore...



... and nearly destroyed in 1907 – the post office is visible in the distance on the right).



...the Post Office in 1949...

The third building along the Brisbane Street frontage of the block – between the Regent and Proudfoots Lane - is Partridge and Walker's showroom. It was built in a style sympathetic to its neighbours. This trio of buildings even features on a Murray Views postcard – 'No 26. Brisbane Street, Murwillumbah, N.S.W.' [see photos below]

The Wollumbin Street lots facing Knox Park were up until the forties for the greater part given over to Patrick Smith's stockyard. As this holding was broken up after coming into the hands of Frederick Ernest Nicholl, it became the site of Sunrise



Partridge & Walker Pty Ltd...



... and in 1955. (Photos: National Archives of Australia and Tweed Regional Museum)

Motors and J. J. Williams Joinery. The Tweed Shire Council acquired the three most westerly lots for Sewerage Ejector Site No. 1. The two Wollumbin and Nullum Streets corner lots, 31 and 32, were the site of a bakehouse and dwelling (though these are only mentioned as such on the title deeds of the property in June 1962). From 1922, the land was either owned by, or leased to, a succession of bakers - Arthur Henry Newlyn,



... snuggled in between the Regent and the post office. (Photos: Tweed Regional Museum)

Edward Myles Schipp, Francis Eugene Kelly, Frederick Robert Dillon and Eric Arthur Dillon in partnership, John William Leslie Hannon, Ralph Edward Hornidge, Raymond Michael Molloy, and Selwyn Vernol Wright and his wife Joy Clarice Wright. The expiry of this last lease 'by effluxion of time' was recorded on 12 August 1965.

Ownership of the lower (southwestern) part of the corner lot passed into the proprietorship Wallace Eichmann in 1946, and a couple of years later in 1948 to Rupert John Dormer, engineer, of Murwillumbah in 1948. Dormer's career has been described by Ron Johansen in a story in his *Tales of Our Times* series. In 1973 this lot became the property of United Pacific Fibreglass Manufacturers and Distributors Pty Ltd. Some ten years later, in 1982, it became the property of Partridge and Walker Pty Limited in 1982.

The Murwillumbah and Nullum Streets corner was the site of the Anglican Church and a number of doctors' residences-with-surgeries. These were successively transferred to the Minister for Education from the 1950s and became the site of the Murwillumbah Technical College and its extensions. The title for the consolidation of the relevant lots was issued in 1987.



The Anglican Church under construction about 1909 (above) and completed with rectory)below) (Photos: Tweed Regional Museum)

The Murwillumbah Street frontage of the block appears to have escaped damage during the conflagration of 1907. The progress of the inferno was arrested at the post office. Its onset, however, was such that Doctor Goldsmid had to evacuate patients from his residence-cum-surgery. Goldsmid and his wife Martha were at the time the proprietors of lots 4, 5 and 6 along Murwillumbah Street.

Fire remained a threat. In 1931 West's garage opposite Queensland Road (then Brisbane Road) was burnt out. The reading of the article describing the fire once again depicts in dramatic terms the success of arresting the fire's progress up Church Hill. This lot was subsequently used for the building of Doctor Broughton's surgery, a building today typifying Murwillumbah's 'Art Deco' heritage. At the time of the fire, the property had been held since 1915 by Elizabeth Nash, wife of Frederick Alfred Nash of Murwillumbah, Grazier. Since 1925 it had been leased to Edward Grace Tindale and Edison Wilson, both of Murwillumbah, motor and general engineers. In 1937 it was transferred to John Walter Broughton of Murwillumbah, medical practitioner.



Dr Broughton's surgery in 2007, now Main Street Medical Centre (Photo: Nick Gouliaev)

[more photos next page]



These photographs show what was then Dunn and Smellie's Garage in the mid-1920s. (Photos: Tweed Regional Museum)



The garage and boarding house after the 1931 fire from the gate of the Catholic presbytery.

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

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We are sure our readers will be able to add to this short overview. Most of the photos used to illustrate this article are sourced from the collection held on behalf of the Tweed Valley Historical Societies – those of Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads, and Uki. If our readers have documents or photos that can be added to this collection, the Murwillumbah Historical Society would love to hear from you.

[Extensive reference available upon request]

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, the Society's historic Murwillumbah facility. The Society is proudly supported by the Tweed Regional Museum, a community facility of Tweed Shire Council.

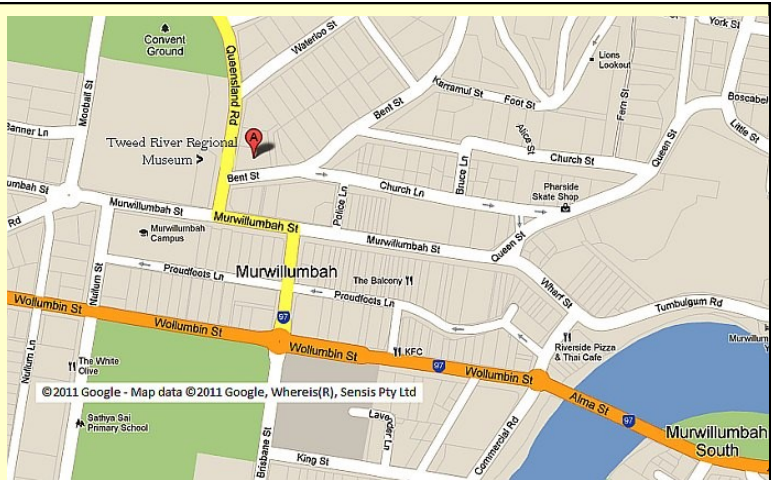
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ABOUT THE MUSEUM: The Tweed Regional Museum is a Tweed Shire Council community facility, established in 2004, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Tweed Shire Council and the Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki and South Arm Historical 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.