

# TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society Inc.

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## Welcome

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

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## Kynnumboon 1939-1943

*Thanks to Society member Bev Fairley, one of Tweed pioneer Joshua Bray's many great grandchildren, for this lovely glimpse into an idyllic family life at their property "Kynnumboon", on the banks of the (now) Rous River. Thanks particularly for sharing many private family photos which so enrich our visit to "back then".*

Those years between 1939 and 1943 must have been idyllic for the younger members of the Bray family. There were eight children altogether but Betty was recently married and David had taken on the farm at Stokers Siding. This interlude was packed with fun and adventure. They had moved from the Stokers farm back to the family home at Kynnumboon.

Peter and Rodney were teenagers who embraced

the outdoor life. They built canoes, a barge and a little boat they called the "Cutty Sark". Tablecloths made great sails until Barbara, the older sister,



*The barge (top) and the Cutty Sark (bottom). Note the forest on the river bank. It had never been cut down (photos Bev Fairley).*



## 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](mailto:trm@tweed.nsw.gov.au)

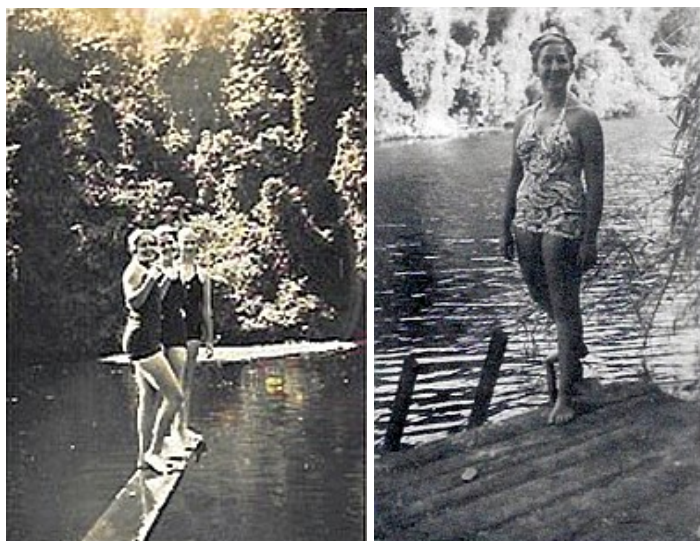




*Messing around in boats (photo Bev Fairley).*

put a stop to that.

The river, known then as the North Arm [now the Rous River], was fresh and clean and several generations had learned to swim from the two wharves built for this purpose. The taller deck had a large tree stump in the centre. A long smooth



*The diving board and wharf (photo Bev Fairley).*

plank rested on it with one end rammed into the river bank and the other end hanging invitingly



*The diving apparatus (photo Bev Fairley).*

over the river. The diving board had a wonderful spring to it.

The other part of the wharf was a little lower and rougher. It supported the ladder. The boys made cement steps down the steep bank to the wharves. Sadly all this is gone now.

The boys' greatest creation was the "diving apparatus". They cleaned out a kerosene tin and took it to a friend who worked at the sugar mill. He

cut out a section and replaced it with Perspex and sealed it well. This was the diver's window. He then cut shapes for shoulders and padded the edges so that the tin didn't cut. Then a hole was made in the top for the air hose to go through. This air was supplied by the eight year old little sister on the pump. There was also a string attached for signaling. When Frank, their father, discovered this dangerous activity, he put a stop to it with dark thoughts of drowned children.

There were also visits to beaches and rivers for



fishing and swimming. This is the family at Cudgen Creek.

There was (and still is) an artist's studio on the way to the swimming place. Joshua Bray presided over a family of thirteen. The studio was built for a very talented daughter so she could work in peace. The old house was a large and spreading affair. It is said that as each new child was born another room was added. Sometimes visitors, when the house was crowded, were put in the studio to sleep. The boys would set up a portable gramophone under one of the beds. A hole was drilled in the floor and a string fed through which was set to release the turntable with a gentle tug from beneath the floor. They drilled another hole in the record just off centre so that when released Amelita Galli-Curci was in full flight with the flute in the mad scene from Lucia di Lammermoor, but

now, instead of being magical, she produced a blood curdling sound. There were screams and panicked exits from the studio in the small hours of the morning. So cruel to Amelita, so rewarding for the children.

Then it was all over. War came. The boys and their sister Joan joined up. Frank enlisted again in 1942 in reconnaissance but he had to leave in the same year as his wife became severely ill and died. He had an older daughter, Barbara, to help him rear his two younger children. Barbara and



*Friends, family and Americans (photo Bev Fairley).*

Frank did their shifts at the plane spotters' shed on Hospital Hill.

The old home still had a part to play. If Frank saw anyone in uniform wandering about the town he would send them out to Kynnumboon. There they could relax swimming, talking, eating or even sleeping. In the evening they would gather in the



*An American soldier hired a horse.... (photo Bev Fairley).*

lounge room with its big open fire and tell lies and stories until everyone went home at ten.

An American soldier hired a horse from town once but found he had no authority over it. The horse took him to Kynnumboon through force of habit. The soldier was made very welcome.

Old Kynnumboon has gone but I grew up within that wonderful old building and loved every moment. I live on the same piece of land and the

history is still with me.

## Lines out of Time

*"Lines" is a regular section featuring personal, news and other items highlighting our engaging past.*

*Firstly, Betty Hamill continues with Part 8 of the story of the life and times of her father Hec Robertson, as transcribed from family tape recordings. Secondly, regular Timelines contributor Maris Bruzgulis brings us a quirky and many faceted, and very human, story of the Ormes.*

### Hec Robertson Part 8 - Marriage

My mother was always keen to get me married. She was a great lady and mother, never more happy than when she had a house full of visitors. She was always disappointed that she had only one child and badly wanted a daughter-in-law and grandchildren. She never missed an opportunity to tell me what a lovely girl someone was etc.

As I used to tell her she was a good cook and looked after me well. I was quite happy. I would see some of my friends get madly in love. Next thing marriage then kids ----- struggling financially. The more they struggled the more love seemed to go out the window.

One of the main occupations in those days was to work a dairy on the shares, or for eight or ten pounds per month, for the two of them, seven days a week.

Anyhow by the time I was twenty six the sad truth began to dawn on me. Nothing remains constant. I would go to a dance and look around the hall and see very few people my age. All those nice fun loving girls had married and disappeared. They were replaced by a lot of giggling teenagers. The boys were a lot of pimple faced youths. Makes you begin to feel lonely.

By that time I had about twelve acres of bananas and they were doing reasonably well. I could now afford to keep a wife and build a small house on the farm at home.

I knew a little girl whom I was very fond of, but she was too young. She was only about eighteen. We were very good friends. I used to tease her about her boyfriends etc.

I had never taken her out and if I had not decided to marry her I would never have taken her out. I had always tried not to become involved with local girls. I much preferred to get friendly with girls out of the district. Then if you wanted out you just didn't go back.

After a lot of deep thought I decided this was the time, the place and the girl. So I asked her to go to a Light Horse Dance in the Drill Hall at Murwillumbah. After a bit of consideration she said yes. So it was then on.





*A brilliantly-preserved photo from Hec Robertson and Ena Gapes big day, 6 March 1937 (photo Betty Hamill).*



Well later, after I had wormed myself into her affections, I tried to make her think I was a great catch and she shouldn't miss me. I asked her if she would consider taking an old bloke off the shelf. She was always a game little creature. So after a while she said she would.

I think she may have been a bit disappointed with my manner of proposal. It was nothing like I have since read of in books. It was the first time I had proposed to a girl so I hadn't any experience.

When Ena Frances Gapes said yes, that would have been the luckiest day in my life. She never dreamed that she would have to put up with me for fifty years.

We then had to decide on where we would live. I suggested two alternatives. One, we could build a small house on my parents' farm or wait until the opportunity turned up where we could buy a farm with a house on it.

In the meantime we could live with my parents. They were very easy to get on with and living with them suited them fine. Mum would have her long awaited daughter.

Well the wedding arrangements went ahead. On 6 Feb 1937 we were married in the Presbyterian Church in Murwillumbah and later our three daughters were married there too.

Ena had her sister Hilda for her bridesmaid and I had Ena's uncle Lynton Gardiner for my best man.

We went on a touring honeymoon, took a tent and camped. We travelled to Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Moree, Texas, Warwick, Toowoomba and Brisbane. We stayed in a hotel in Brisbane for a few days. I remember one of the pictures we saw was Bing Crosby in "Pennies from Heaven".

One day we also went to the aerodrome and saw the ill fated Stinson take off for Sydney. It just disappeared. Searches were conducted from Brisbane to Sydney. A lot of the search was carried out in the Hawkesbury area.



**MISS ELIZABETH a'DARE,**  
*Australian girl whose effort saved  
the life of Tawny, the Caldew cat.*

*There is no known photo of Hilda, but Elizabeth (along with Ilma and Tawny) is pictured in the Women's Weekly article of 1941.*

A week or so later a chap by the name of Bernard O'Reilly from Lamington Plateau found the wreck with two people still alive. The remainder had perished in the MacPherson Ranges north of Tyalgum. They took them out via Canungra.

After our honeymoon we lived with my parents for about a year. Ena helped milk the cows and I went off to my banana plantation each morning.

*More of Hec's frank reflections to come....*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Ormes, Cats and Etc.**

Hilda Orme died in 1940. The Tweed Daily headlined the announcement of her death as 'A full life ends'. According to the reporter she was the daughter of a 'Czechoslovak' father and a Canadian mother. Her father owned oil wells in Poland. Hilda grew up in 'beautiful pleasure-loving' Vienna.

She was well known in literary circles there, wrote books and held lectures in big halls holding as many as 3,000 people. She was a well-known figure in winter sports and mountain climbing, and won an international tennis tournament in Switzerland. She was a good shot with gun, rifle and pistol. Being able to speak many languages, perfect English, French, German, and to a lesser degree, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and Russian, she was during the world war in charge of a department for the welfare of prisoners of war, for which activity she received the Order of the Red Cross.



**MISS ILMA BARNES,** *who with  
fellow Australian Miss Elizabeth  
a'Dare appealed to the authori-  
ties on behalf of Tawny.*

As if this was not enough, she also 'took up motor racing and won three first prizes for [the Delahaye] factory'. After the Great War she had 'made a hairbreadth escape from Hungary, whose then Bolshevik Government had a death sentence for her, and once she escaped from Germany where several years of prison were threatened her for having acted against Nazism at the time of its very first rise.'

On 27 February 1928 she married Fedor Orme. They arrived in Australia on 15 July 1928. Fedor bought a property on the New South Wales side of the border at Tomewin. He took up poultry farming and from 1936 wrote a regular column for the Tweed Daily called 'Poultry notes'. As the international situation worsened, he added articles on European politics to his repertoire. For her part Hilda addressed local women's organisations. She spoke about Austria before the Great War to the Tweed Trained Nurses' Club in May 1939 and about "Austria's Womenfolk" to the Girls' Friendly Society in August. In December she lectured on her experiences in Germany to raise money for the Tweed District Hospital. As the newspaper wrote: 'Once Nazism reared its ugly head Mrs. Orme did all she could to warn of its coming danger, which she recognised sooner than most people'. Sadly, she died on 23 July 1940. She was buried on 'the farm she loved so much'. The Tweed Daily eulogized:

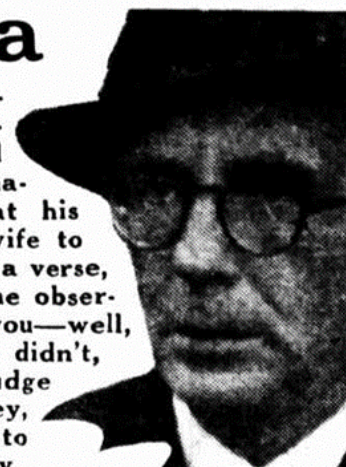
*Mrs. Orme loved the life on the land and its work. Not only did she handle brush hook, pick and hoe, and used the scuffler, but to plough with a 9-inch plough and a good pair of horses in rough country was what she liked best of all.*

Fedor Orme – now Fedor Emil Ferdinand Moriz Maria Orme, and soon to change his surname to Gerenyi-Orme – remarried on 17 January 1942. His second wife was Elizabeth Illingworth. Elizabeth had been a member of a 'verse motion choir' organised by Ilma Barnes in Sydney in 1933. By the time of her marriage to Fedor she was known as Elizabeth A'Dare. The marriage did not last, but the divorce proceedings in 1945 were picked up by the yellow press because of Orme's 'pathetic poetic plea' to persuade Elizabeth to return to him. The poem

# Pathetic Poetic

**THE method of approach to his absent wife chosen by Fedor Emil Ferdinand and Moriz Marie Gerenyi-Orme was about as unusual as his name. For when Vienna-born Gerehyi-Orme found that his letters failed to persuade his wife to return to him he penned to her a verse, of his own composition, with the observation, "If not even this moves you—well, then, nothing ever will . . ." It didn't, so Gerenyi-Orme asked the Judge in Divorce, Mr. Justice Bonney, last week to order her back to him. His Honor accordingly made the order.**

(GERENYI-ORME, who came



FEDOR GERENYI-ORME.

Fedor's picture graces the 1962 Sydney Truth article about his divorce proceedings.

ended:

*Other people now live in my flat.  
I hear them laugh, I hear them chat.  
They love my home which is now theirs  
Because I am dead and they are my heirs.  
They have my home, gone is my wife,  
Who I had believed to be mine for life.  
If not even this moves you--- well, then nothing  
ever will. For God's sake, Liza, be sensible.  
I can't stand it any longer.  
I have begged enough by now.*

Published in Brisbane and Sydney, this article went viral in Western Australia where it was picked up in seventeen newspapers. Notwithstanding, Elizabeth did not wish to continue the marriage. The decree nisi was granted in May 1946 and in November 1947 Fedor's plant and tools were sold by auction. The land was finally transferred to Henry and Irene Short in 1962.

This little note is not complete without a cat story – in this case two of them. What Hilda and Elizabeth had in common was their concern for felines. The Tweed Daily's eulogy for Hilda recalled the following story: 'Once to save a favorite kitten of

hers, she did not hesitate a moment to tackle a big carpet snake with her bare hands and saved the kitten.' Elizabeth (and her mentor and friend Ilma Barnes) had an even greater claim



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to fame.

In 1939, at the beginning of the war, they were stranded in Sweden. They found employment with the British consulate at Gothenburg. The trawler Caldew had recently been sunk, and while the crew was taken to be interned in Germany, the ship's cat, rescued by a crew member at the time of the sinking, was taken to Sweden. The consulate staff were going to drown the cat when the two Australians intervened. The cat, Tawny, was saved. All three became a newspaper sensation. Their story was retold 'in the august London "Times," the New York "Times," in Scottish, American, and Belgian newspapers'.

*If readers have something to add, all correspondence will be gratefully received.*

## The Early Establishment of Tweed River Historical Society

*Society researcher Joan Cuthel has unearthed an interesting, yellowed original document recording the early foundation and history of Tweed River Historical Society (later to become Murwillumbah Historical Society). The document is annotated 'Taken from extract of Miss J Martyn, typed by Bryan Fairley'. The text is presented here unedited, to best preserve its historical flavour.*

Tweed River Historical Society was formed at a Public Meeting called by Cr C H Lundberg, President of the Tweed Shire Council, at the request of the Murwillumbah Rotary Club (on Monday 16 Mar 1959). More than 50 people attended. Mr R C Whittle was elected president and Dr J K Marks vice president.

The newly elected President said "the Society's objectives were to encourage a study of the history of Australia, and particularly of the Tweed District and to secure and preserve relevant historical documents and objects, and to preserve historical buildings and places. (Daily News 17/3/1959)

The main speaker was Mr C Ebert, Regional Director of Education at Lismore and President of the Richmond River Historical Society. He emphasised the enormous amount of work to be done in establishing such a Society and the need for a suitable place to house historical items and catalog them. In answer to a question, Mr Lundberg said that Tweed Shire Council proposed extending the Council Chambers and possibly room could be provided for the Society.

Other officers elected were as follows:

- General Secretary Mr J Boyd
- Treasurer Mr G Ind
- Committee Mr J McCarthy, Miss K McIlrath,

Miss J Martyn, Mr Theo Flynn, Mr Frank Julius, Cr W D Taylor

The new Society received its first historical exhibit when a 100-year-old rattle, an instrument used by farmers to frighten crows off farms, was handed in by Mr Rogan on behalf of Mr Charles Malpress of Kunghur.

For a time, the Society had a small room and exhibition in the School of Arts but moved to a pleasant room in the Municipal Council Chambers, now the [State] Government Offices.

But a need for a Tourist Office soon put an end to this arrangement and the Society's possessions were first moved to a small back room and finally to the Council storage shed and private homes.

It is therefore a grand feeling to be able to bring out and restore the remaining possessions, not reclaimed by their owners and donors during the last sad and hurried move.

During its time of activity, the Society performed many useful functions by providing replies to requests for Information for a wide range of enquirers, being among the prime movements in such events as:

- Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Celebrations in 1970 which included greeting guests on



Flight Lieutenant (later Squadron Leader) R C Whittle during WW2 (Photo: Tweed Regional Museum M713)



Whittle's Pharmacy was a Main Street fixture in 1953 and the building still stands. Bob Whittle on right (photo Tweed Regional Museum MUS2015.65)

Minister Mr J D Anthony, at a ceremony attended by the Minister for Shipping and Transport, Mr Peter Nixon, the Secretary of the Department of Shipping and Transport Mr Malcolm Summers, Gold Coast officials, local dignitaries and citizens.

The light, set on a platform supported by 4 columns, is 145 feet above sea level, has a range of 22 miles and was a joint Tweed Shire - Gold Coast City - Department of Shipping and Transport Project.

arrival at Murwillumbah on the Vintage Train and being part of the festival of 29 April 1970,

- The Captain Cook Memorial and Lighthouse built to commemorate the Bicentenary of Captain Cook's discovery of the East Coast of Australia. The world's first Lazer [sic] beam Navigational Aide, located at Point Danger on the Queensland/New South Wales border, the Lighthouse was officially turned-on 18 April 1971 by the Deputy Prime

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](mailto:editor@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au)

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**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.

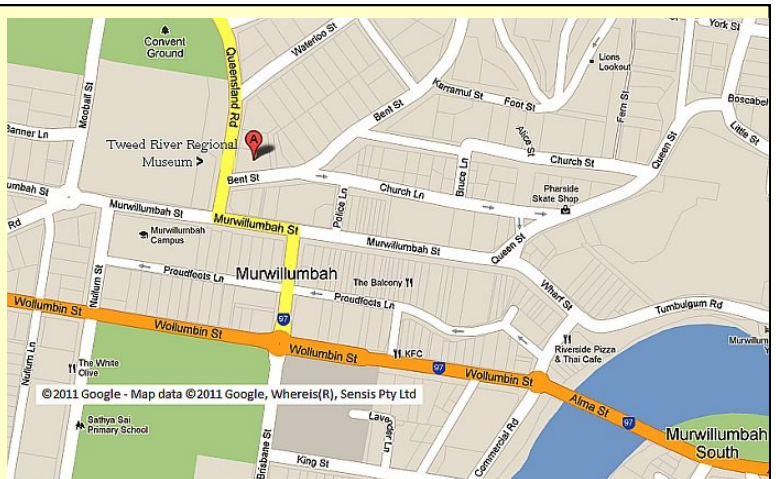
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**ABOUT THE MUSEUM:** The Tweed Regional Museum is a Tweed Shire Council community facility, established in 2004, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Tweed Shire Council and the Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki and South Arm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