

# TIMELINES

In fifteen minutes

Number 11

## Around and about...

The Murwillumbah Historical Society's President, Beverley Fairley, is in demand as a speaker. She addressed the Phoenix Club, reviewing the history of the Tweed in twenty-five minutes (extended to forty-five)! She also represents the Society at a function for Volunteers Week, and another organised by the Aboriginal Language Trust. Then there is her *ex officio* attendance at the Tweed Regional Museum Advisory Committee Meeting. Busy, busy, busy...

Natasha Green has accepted the position of the Society's Secretary. This edition of *Timelines In fifteen minutes* is based on her comprehensive and concise record of the 20 May 2024 meeting of the Society's Committee.

We welcome four new Members - Don Dezentje, Brian Meldrum, Brad Patterson, and the Murwillumbah Rotary Club. It is heartening to see people supporting the Society's work.

## Timelines

*Timelines* [Volume 11, Number 4](#) is available now. It contains Henry James' article about naming the Durobby (or Coolamon) tree, Greg Fox's item on the poisoning of 'Tommy' Westwood in 1932, a collection of stereographic images showing a Christmas holiday in 1901, and finally 'The Back Page' – a poem, 'Funeral on the Tweed' from 1883.

## Local News

St Andrew's pipe organ celebrates 100 years. And the SS *Tyalgum*'s ship's bell has been found – and is bound for Tyalgum! Read about them in the 'History in a Box' section.

The 're-discovered' ship's bell of the SS *Tyalgum*, a 'rare and exciting find'.

[Courtesy of John Kavanagh].



Wreck of SS *Tyalgum*.  
[Tweed Regional Museum Collection, TH14-17].



## Our Next Meeting

**1:00 pm on Monday, 17 June 2024, at the Society's Tony Clark Research Room  
at the Tweed Regional Museum.**

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## History in a Box

Two local events provide an opportunity for revisiting moments in Tweed Valley history.

### St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Memorial Pipe Organ

The following *Tweed Daily* newspaper article was published on Monday, 16 June 1924. The new pipe organ's dedication was held on the previous day, 15 June 1924. This date had been tentatively postponed due to bad weather, but then the postponement was rescinded: 'The opening ceremony had been postponed owing to the rain, but as the weather appeared to have broken last night, this decision was reversed, and it was decided that the original programme be adhered to. This is conditional upon the rain holding off, and should it be wet on Sunday morning another postponement will be made.'

#### DEDICATION.

#### MEMORIAL PIPE ORGAN.

#### For St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

The ecclesiastical history- of Murwillumbah advanced a distinct step yesterday morning, when the first pipe organ to be installed in the town—at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church—was dedicated to the service of God.

As an inscription on the instrument states, the organ had been erected "to the Glory of God, and in memory of the young men who went forth from the congregation to serve in the great war of 1914-1918."

The large, reverential congregation occupied the full seating capacity of the church, and appreciated to the full the rich, mellow tones of the new instrument. An appeal for a liberal offertory, in order that the organ might be installed free of debt, met with a splendid response, the sum of £91/7/ being collected, achieving the committee's object, and leaving sufficient to pay the cost of structural alterations to the church. The cost of the organ was £750.

The instrument, draped with the Union Jack and Australian flags, was unveiled by Mrs. W. Wardrop.

The preacher (Rev. M. G. Hart) appropriately preached of song, taking his text from Isaiah 44, verse 23: "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."

Rev. Hart divided his discourse into two parts, dealing, firstly, with the great song of creation, and, secondly, with the great song of redemption. The Bible, he pointed out, was full of songs, and these should lead us all to praise God. He then showed how the whole creation is filled with song, every part praising God, from the tiny insect up to man.

Then there was the song of redemption. "The Lord hath done it," said Isaiah. The Lord had done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He gave His Son for us. The incarnation was the work of the Great Father. So we should sing aloud and praise Him.



Not only was all nature vocal with praise, but the- spiritual world also. The Seraphims and Cherubims, the elders, the little children of whom heaven is full, the martyrs, the glorious company of the Apostles and Prophets, all praised Him. So, when we think of these great and magnificent hosts that praise the Father, ought we not also to praise Him?

Mr. A. C. Breillat presided at the organ.

Musical items were rendered during the service by Miss Fairfax and the choir. At the conclusion of the benediction, the Last Post was sounded by Mr. J. Buchanan.

During the service, Mr. I. McIlrath, on behalf of the ladies of the congregation, presented Rev. Hart with a cloak and gown, as a token of their good wishes and esteem. Mrs. W. Wardrop invested Rev. Hart with the gown.

Tendering his thanks for the gift, Rev. Hart expressed surprise. By a singular coincidence, he that day celebrated the fourteenth year of his ministry in Murwillumbah. This fact had nothing to do with the installation of the pipe organ; or the presentation of the gown. It showed, however, that, as Shakespeare had said, "there is a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may."

### **THE ORGAN.**

The new organ is from the factory of Roberts, Ltd., North Adelaide, South Australia, and contains two manuals and a pedal clavier. There are 10 speaking stops, five on the great organ, four on the swell organ, and one on the pedal organ. There are three couples, coupling the various manuals and pedals together. The largest pipe has a 16ft. tone, and the smallest pipe is only ¼ in. in length. There are six stops of 8ft. tone, two stops of 4ft. tone, and one stop each of 2ft. and 16ft. tones. Altogether there are 414 pipes in the organ. The instrument contains every family of organ tones, diapasons, flutes, string and reed tones. The diapasons, the foundation tone of every organ, are full and mellow, and of a richness unequalled for an organ of this size. The organist has at his command a large number of solo and accompanied combinations, which for a small church, are unique features. There are the Clarabella, Dulciana, Gamba, and the four feet flute, while in the oboe, he has a stop of remarkable beauty. The case of the instrument, which consists of two towers and a bay, has been stained to harmonise with the church furniture, and the pipes are decorated a biscuit color with gold bands and lips. The organ decidedly enriches the interior of the building. The builders have spared no effort to make the organ the success that it has turned out to be, and deserve the congratulations of those who had the pleasure of hearing it.

In addition to the installation of the organ, structural alterations have been effected to the pulpit, where a number of symbolical tablets have been erected

### ***SS Tyalgum***

The Tyalgum District Community Association writes 'We have recently acquired what we believe to be the original ship's bell from the *SS Tyalgum*, owned by the Northern Rivers Steamship Navigation Company. She was wrecked at the mouth of the Tweed Bar in August 1939 (Duranbah), on the eve of



A photograph of Reverend Hart in the pulpit of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Photograph by George Doniger. The Tweed Regional Museum dates this photograph 'circa 1900'. [Tweed Regional Museum Collection].

WW2. Being a ship named after our Village, we are pretty excited to have the Bell, and we are looking to display it securely as part of our local Memorial Park Cenotaph as the Merchant Navy memorial.'

The *Tyalgum* had a short career. The following *Tweed Daily* articles (or excerpts) provide some insight into the life and times of this ill-fated coastal steamer.

**On 12 October 1925:** 'The N.S.C.N. Cos. New steamer, *Tyalgum*, specially built by Lithgow's Ltd., Port Glasgow, for the Tweed River trade, left Sydney on Saturday, is expected to cross in at Tweed Heads this afternoon, and arrive at Murwillumbah to-night. The vessel has a total length of 1600 feet, with a beam of about 34 feet. The- depth of hold is nine feet, and the gross tonnage measurement is 544, while the net tonnage is 197. The *Tyalgum* is capable of attaining a speed of nine and three-quarter knots, and she carries a crew of 16. The draught is 5 feet ¼ inches light, and 8 feet 4 inches loaded. The forward hold capacity equals 14,000 cubic feet, whilst on the deck level there is butter storage provision for 1106 boxes, and in the hold 1588 boxes. She also has two molasses tanks, with a total capacity of 177 tons, and a coal bunker which will accommodate 65 tons.'

**On 20 October 1925:** 'The *Tyalgum* also crossed out on Sunday with a cargo of 190 tons of molasses, 15,000 feet of sawn hardwood, 1131 sacks of sugar, and 12 tons of sundries. It was the *Tyalgum's* maiden trip to the Tweed, and great interest was taken in her movements.' She passed up and down the river with her loadings on low tides, and proved her suitability for the Tweed River trade.'

While the *Tyalgum's* operations could be 'slick', the Tweed River was not short of challenges.

**On 1 October 1932:** 'S.S. TYALGUM IS SLICK There are no "go-slow" methods associated with the North Coast Steam Navigation Company's *Tyalgum*. Reaching Murwillumbah at 8.30 on Thursday night the vessel discharged [unclear] tons of general cargo and then took aboard 20 tons of sundries. Proceeding to Condong, 72 tons of coal were discharged for the C.S.R. Company and 17,000 gallons of molasses, and 1800 sacks of sugar taken aboard. She crossed the bar at Tweed Heads on the outward trip at 8 o'clock yesterday morning.'

**On 5 February 1926:** 'The N.C.S.N. Co. Ltd., report that the steamer *Tyalgum* is still unable to leave the river owing to the bad state of the bar. She has been delayed a fortnight. The water is very calm but the bar has sanded up and a dredge is urgently needed.'

**On 15 January 1936:** 'Another thrill was provided for a large crowd of spectators at Tweed Heads yesterday morning when the steamer *Tyalgum* grounded on the sandbank the *Melinda* struck on Monday. The *Tyalgum* steamed down the river at about 10 o'clock and was expected to cross out with the full tide, about mid-day. When opposite the spur wall just above the crane wharf, however, she grounded on the spit and remained fast for a couple of hours.'

The end came in 1939, though salvage was still being attempted more than a year later, and the wreck was to be seen at Duranbah for many more years.

**On 26 August 1939:** 'The North Coast Steam Navigation Company's cargo steamship, *Tyalgum*, of 544 tons gross, commanded by Captain W. Tolmie, with a crew of 17 and 200 tons of cargo aboard, became stranded on a rocky point about a quarter of a mile north of the mouth of the Tweed River, about 6 a.m. yesterday. At low tide, the *Tyalgum* was only a few yards from the water's edge. She was canted slightly to port, and there were several feet of water in the hold. The beach nearby is studded with rocks, and fishermen who are familiar with the vicinity stated that the ship was stranded directly on top of a large bed of rock.'

**On 19 September 1943:** 'TYALGUM SALVAGE. A message from Sydney states that a coastal steamer will leave Sydney to salvage the 544-ton ship *Tyalgum*, ashore near the entrance to the Tweed River. The *Tyalgum* was sold for £240 on Friday to R. J. White and Co. (Sydney) Pty. Ltd.'

**On 30 July 1946:** 'The former North Coast Co. steamer, *Tyalgum*, which was wrecked on Duranbah beach some years ago, has now broken completely in halves and the stem has been washed right up on to the beach. When attempts to refloat the vessel were unsuccessful the engines and all other parts considered worthwhile were removed but the wreck has proved of great interest to thousands of visitors and was often used as a fishing stage.'