TIMELINES

The Quarterly Newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society Inc.

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Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of *Timelines*, the newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society. Hopefully, you will receive it before ANZAC Day, as the main story draws on items created during World War I that are part of the Tweed Regional Museum Collection.

The Thomson Brothers are the focus of this edition. Most of the issue presents postcards from the album of Frederick Raynor Thomson. With a few exceptions, these were sent to him by his brothers Alexander and George Leslie during their service with the Australian Imperial Force. Alexander (on the left in this picture) enlisted aged twenty-three and George (on the right) was nineteen. Frederick was eight when his brothers joined up in 1915. The postcards follow the brothers from Enoggera via Fremantle to Egypt and France. George, a prisoner of war, also sent images from Switzerland, where he was interned for a short while before being repatriated to the United Kingdom.

The postcards were donated to the Museum's Collection by Gail Brims, with acquisition attributed to Hazel Jeffery.

Kerry Stelling has also sent us a review of Max Boyd's book

Saving Paradise. She enjoyed his telling of the 'farcical parade of political and entrepreneurial rogues and their startling skullduggery' that is told in 'detailed but down to earth, matter-of-fact English'. Enjoy this edition!





LIE 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

World War I postcards from Enoggera, Egypt, France - and Switzerland!

The Thomson family of Chillingham had two sons who enlisted in the 1st Australian Imperial Force. They joined on 19 August 1915 and were part of the eighth reinforcements for the 26th Battalion. They were assigned consecutive numbers, 3547 for nineteen year old George and 3548 for twenty-three year old Alexander. After basic training at Enoggera, they left Australia for Egypt on 3 January 1916. In April they were transferred to the 31st Battalion, one of the units of the newly formed Fifth Division. From Egypt the Battalion was sent to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. They disembarked at Marseilles on 26 June 1916. On 19 and 20 July 1916 the Battalion took part in the battle of Fromelles (also called the battle of Fleurbaix). This engagement has been described as 'a bloody initiation for Australian soldiers to warfare on the Western Front'. It also separated the Thomson brothers. George was wounded, losing his left eye, and was captured by the Germans. Alexander went on to serve with distinction until the end of the war. He was twice recommended for the Military Medal (in 1917 and 1919), which was awarded on the second occasion.

The Tweed Regional Museum holds a collection of postcards, most sent to the youngest Thomson son, Frederick. He was seven when the war began. The postcards point to a lively correspondence over the war years, though only the postcards survive. The postcard messages have been transcribed and appear below, along with the postcard images. Where text is illegible, ellipses (...) have been used to show its omission.



The description of this photograph in the Tweed Regional Museum Collection is as follows: 'Family portrait taken just before Alex & George Thomson went to WW1 in 1914. Back row - Mrs. Ellis, Violet Black, Charlie Hudson, Ethel Ellis, George Thomson Jnr, Janey Thomson, Mrs. Leslighter. Middle row - Billy Black, Mr. Black snr, Grandfather Turner, George Thomson Snr, Alex Thomson, Jessie Thomson. Front row - Brick Ellis, Jack Black, Fred Thomson (7 years), Jack Ellis, Angie Thomson'. (The names in bold are Thomson family members mentioned in the postcards.)

Item 5271.

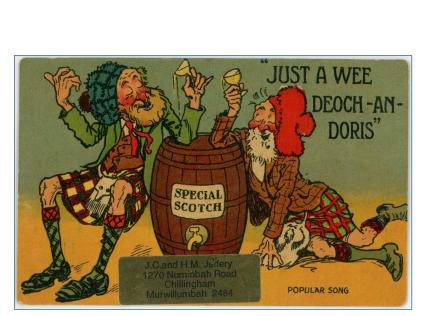
Enoggera - 1915

27-9-15

Enoggera

Dear Freddie

I hope you are doing plenty of milking We have no milking to do over here We are always drilling of a morning when you are milking. Write me a letter and let me know how Mary is getting along There is no nice girls over here like Ethel There is always a lot of girls in camp on Sundays This is all this time From your loving Brother G.L.T. xxxxxxxx Item 39853.







Enoggera

Friday Oct, 8th 1915
To Dear Freddy. xxxxx
xxxxxxxx I think we can drill better
now, than you can a school. You
better hurry up and write me a
letter, I am sending you plenty of
cards. This is you and Angus on
this card and you are both drunk
you naughty boys. It is time to go to
bed now so good night. From your
loving Brother Alex

Item 39847.

7/11/1915 Enoggera Dear Freddy

Item 39829.



13th/12/15. Enoggera My dear Freddy, This is a photo of myself doing a jump with the pole The photographer snapped the ... as it was getting over. You can see I am almost standing on my head well Fred I came down on my head. but I did not get hurt all the same. I did not win the jump but I would have one easy only the pole was to big. I gave the fellow a great go for it that won. My word the crowd did cheer us. I was so hot when I finished I could hardly stand up. Alex is standing among the crowd Fred see if you can pick him out it will be a puzzle for you. We had all the watermelons & cakes we could eat that day. I can tell you we had a fine feast. It was nearly eleven oclock when we got home that night we made a big fire & had a concert. We had our rifles & all our packs with us I can tell you Fred by the time we marched back to camp I was wet with sweat but we had a fine day all the same. I have been peeling potatoes for the old Cook

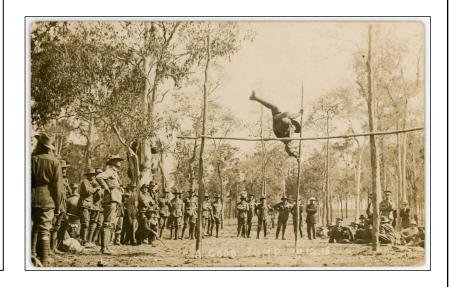
today & so was Alex but it is a very good job. A lot better than drilling

I look like a big frog Fred.

Item 39870.

Don't forget to write me another good letter soon Jessie. Enoggera 13/12/15 My Dear Sister Jessie, I got your very nice letter today & I was very pleased with it. I hope you are all well at home, we are alright over here & keeping nice and fat. Jessie we had a real good days sports last saturday & we had plenty of fun, I wish you had been here to go to it. This is a picture of the soldiers leaving our camp for the sports it is a nice picture. I hope we can get home to see you all at home again before we sail, but I think we will be sailing before Xmas, but we are not sure yet. Jessie, next time you write don't forget to tell me how Jessie Brooks is getting on. Well Jesse I must knock off now & take my blankets in then write a letter to Freddy. wishing you a very happy Xmas I remain your loving Brother Alex.xxxxxxxxxxxx

Item 39865.



you know.

This photo is the fellow that beat me his name is Warfield he is a great big fellow big enough to eat me & me boots I hope you got that little handkerchief I sent you Fred. The song on it is Tiperary We will be going away very soon now Fred We are expecting any time to hear when we will be going away, The sooner the better we will be able to kill all the more Turks. & perhaps the Kaiser to the old dog I hope you got some rain over there the cows will pick up & give plenty of milk. Our arms are just about better now from vaccination I hope you are all well at home because we are just the thing here Well Fred I must close now with best love to all from your Loving Bro George Write soon You know the other card is me with xxxxxxxxx my legs stuck up in the air xxx

XXXXXXXXXX

Item 39867.



13/12/15 My Dear

My Dear Brother Freddie xxxx xxxxx I was very pleased to get your very nice letter to day, & I hope you will soon write again. Freddy, this is a picture that was taken at the sports we had on Saturday, what do you think of them things leaning against the tree. We had fine fun at the sports, I went for the potatoe race, I came second but I slipped & sprained my thumb so that was all I won. Dear Freddy, we might come home to see you at Xmas or new year, but don't be disappointed if we dont come. Are you going to hang up your stocking this Xmas Freddy, I won't hang mine up for I think I would only get it full of dust. From your ever loving Brother Alex. Xxx

Item 39863.





29/12/1915 My dear Freddy This is the card of the Bomb throwing See all the smoke. It made the ground shake. We got back to camp last night & tomorrow we have got to go on a long march We are going to start at 3 oclock in the morning We will not be back till Saturday so we will be marching for 3 days & I suppose we will get no sleep It was about 12 oclock when Alex got into camp last night Marching for 3 days a fellow will get enough if is carrying full pack won't we I can go to sleep any where today I went to sleep 3 times coming down on the boat & twice in the train but I got woke up everytime by some one. I think we are going away on Monday for certain that will be the 3rd I hope we do On the boat will be better than marching about all day for

miles. The march tomorrow will be a solid one I wish we did not have to do it I don't like the thought of it

Enoggera



Item 39869.

Item 39864.



Dear Fred

This is a photo of the kit inspection All these are only taken from different places Ive got no time to write on them all We are going in about an hour now your Loving Bro George

Item 39873 and Items 39868, 39871 and 39874 below.









To Fred from George with Love Item 39877.

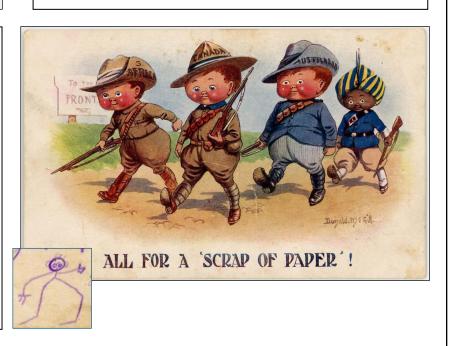


Dear Freddie

Item 39840.

To Dear Brother Freddie, xxxxxxx
This is the sort of soldiers I will
make of all you kids when I come
home so look out. What do you
think of Georgie and Billy with their
mouthes open waiting for a grub or
a blow-fly or something. Tell Angus
I will write to him to-morrow night or
the next, I haven't got time to
tonight. Tell Grandfather we are
getting on alright & I will write to
him soon. xxxx
From Brother Alex
This is Freddy drilling

Item 39843.





Dear Brother Freddy, xxxxxx

I suppose you will be glad when we come home, I will be glad to come home and see you. Freddy, what do you think of your photo on this card, it is just like you isn't it. Write me as many letters as you like I like to get a letter from you. From your Brother Alex.

XXXXXX

Item 39856.

I broke one of my fake teeth off eating a biscuit & two of my own teeth I will soon have none left don't you think Look after Frisco while I am away & old Speck too I suppose you have got a photo of your self that Mr Todd took they are real good ones I have not got mine yet I suppose I might not get them now we are sailing unless they send them after us Well Fred I must close now with best love from your Loving Brother George xxxxxxxxxxxx

Item 39855.





This is another nice card Freddy for your album.

Sunday. Enoggera 2/1/16

Xxxxxxxxxxxx

My dear Brother Freddy,

I hope you are getting on alright & that you had a good time on new years day.

We just came back last night from a long march and it was very hard work & made us sweat. Well Freddy, we are going to leave Australia to morrow to sail away over the sea & we have been very busy to day getting our things ready. Well Dear Freddy I must say good-bye now.

From your loving Brother Alex. xxxx

Item 39841.



Enoggera 31/12/15

Sister Janey, xxxxxxxxxxx

This is not a good photo

I suppose you know who it is. I am glad we are ... to fight for our country ... the dear ... behind. It will be a long trip & I suppose plenty of perils & temptations but I am pleased ... can resist the latter. I feel quite ... that we are going away, I am not expect ... pleasure but so long ... know you all keep ... & safe at home J.B. included, I don't care for ... Wishing all a bright & happy ... always, your loving Brother Alex

Item 39875.

Dear Freddy

This is one of my photos I am sitting down. The fellow standing up is Fred Squires You want to put this one away & look after it,

From your Loving Brother George xxxxxxxxxx

Item 39881.





14/1/1916

Freemantle

Dear Fred

XXXXX

We are in Freemantle today We have had a splendid sail on the sea we will be sailing for five more weeks yet before we get to Egypt The Kyarra is a big boat bigger than you think Fred The sea was fairly rough for a few days coming across the Great bight Angus will show you the Bight on the map I never got sea sick some of the men got awfully sick but I was lucky Well Fred I must close now with best Love from George and Alex

Item 39849.

Egypt - 1916

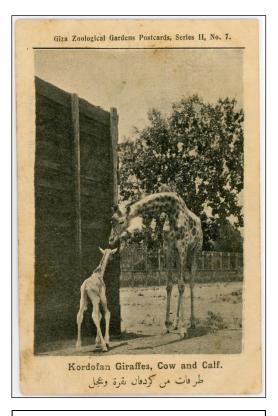


Egypt March 1st 1916 My Dear Bro Freddy,

We are a long way from Australia now but I am often thinking of you & I hope you are getting on alright. I suppose you have plenty of milking to do now and plenty of other work. We see lots of nice things & lots of funny things here in Egypt. I will be glad when I get a letter from you. I have got the photo of you & Theo and you and Speck that Mr Todd took at Xmas time. We see plenty fellows like what you see in the picture on this card. From your loving Bro Alex

Item 39832.





11/3/1916

Egypt

Dear Freddie,

This is a photo of a giraffe I saw in the zoo with a young one He has got great long legs & neck which makes him look very funny but he is very pretty to look at all the same I have seen a lot of nice animals in the zoo here the Lynx leopard Lions Fox deers monkeys and all sorts of birds & crockadiles too many to name them all. I suppose you are getting quite a man now. I wont know you when I see you again. I got those Photos. McTodd took of You and old Speck sitting on that chair.

Item 39850.

(2)

Write soon

This is some wild donkeys on this card. I had a ride on a donkey the other day but he was not wild enough for my liking. I was on a camel too they are queer animals to ride They lay down for you to get on & then up they jump & stalk along like a big crane. I will close now Fred with best Love from your Loving Brother George. xxxxxxxx

Item 39831.

One day we went to the zoo & saw lots of animals & other great things. This is a picture of one of the Giraffes we saw but it is only a young one we saw one that was a monster they are funny big animals. Don't forget to write me a letter Freddie, & tell me how you are all getting on at home. From your ever loving Brother Alex

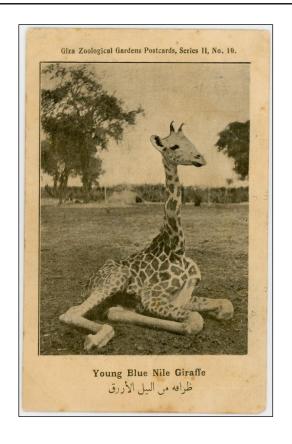
Item 39858.

France - 1916



March 12th 1916
My Dear Bro Fred,
This is a card I bought for you the other night & I think you will like it. I hope it will find you well. I suppose you are a bit lonely now Jessie is away. George & I are getting on alright. We have been to see the great Pyramids & had rides on donkey and camels but I would sooner ride Sunflower than a camel. We got our photos taken on the camels, but we have. Not got them yet.

Item 39842.



Alexander and George were transferred to the 31st Battalion on 8 April 1916 (though their service records state that they were taken on strength from 6 April).

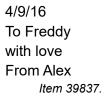




August 16th 1916 Dear Bro. Fred xxxxxxxxxxxx

I hope you are still alive & kicking I have been on my leave & up to Scotland where I got this card for you. I will bet a bob this picture is like you & your tart. Don't forget to write soon. I hope there is a letter from you waiting for me when I get back to France. Best love from Alex xxxxxx

Item 39857.







6/11/16

To Dear Brother Fred.
Wishing you a merry Christmas
From Alex

I am quite well & I hope this card will find you the same Don't forget to write to me I haven't had a letter from you for a long time It is very cold weather & the days are very short there was a heavy frost this morning.

Item 39839.

Switzerland - 1917



27-1 17 Dear Fred.

I hope you will like this photo I guess you think it is terrible cold among all the snow but it is not as cold as you think. We have great fun on the ski's but I am a very good hand at sitting down when I dont want to Well Fred I hope you are getting along well and the other boys too. Well I must close now with best love to all from your Brother George Write soon

Item 39861.



Goolmangar March 31st My Dear Fredd

I am sending you this these two cards which George sent me to send home You will be able to pick George out I think He is looking real well isnt he .When you write to him tell him that you got them safely Every letter he writes to me he always asks how you are, You want to look out on Sunday Fredd and dont let them make a fool of you as it is April fools day you want to catch Angie and John. Well I must conclude now Baby Sends his best love and a big kiss. I am going to send you one of his photoes soon. Best love from your loving sister

xx Janny xxx

Item 39862.



30-10-17 Best love to Fred from George Item 39878.





France - 1917 and 1918



30/5/17 My Dear Bro Freddy

I received your letter to the other day just as I came out of the front line of trenches & I was more than pleased with it I am always thinking of you & I ought to be ashamed of myself for not writing oftener you will have to roar me up a bit. I got your other letter alright that you say I must have mist. I must try & write to you more often after this as I know you like to get a letter I have not got a better card to sent you but I think you will like this one. I hope your arm is better now. Don't let the trolly buck you off any more Dear Fred I think I have to John all I can think of just now but you must read it. I would like you to send me your photo. I must go to bed now Fred now so I will have to say goodnight.

From Your Loving Brother Alex

Item 39833.



My Dear Bro Fred, xxxxxx Just a little card to greet you hoping it will find you quite well, as I am at present. Last Thursday I had a days leave to a certain town & I had a real good time, and that is where I got this card for you. To-day I received a parcel from Blighty from on of my old pals, with tobacco cigarettes & matches & it was very acceptable as we were out of matches., I haven't had a letter from George lately I suppose his letters have been delayed. I am watching for some mail from you. Don't forget to drop a line as often as you can. Best Love From

Brother Alex.

Item 39838.



15/7/17 My Dear Brother xxxxxxxxxxxx

I hope this card will find you all at home doing well as I am myself at present. Having bosker weather just now & everything nice. I had not been getting any mail from any of you lately. I got two letter & another Photo from George the other day he is well & having a good time & getting plenty of schooling. Quite recently we had two lots of sports & they were pretty good & on the second occasion the King was there. Well Fred, I hope it is not long before I hear from you I am always watching the mail to hear from home. I think a lot of the mail goes astray. I must close now. Good night Fondest Love from your Brother

Alex xxxxxxxx

Item 39844.

France Sunday 9-9-17 My Dear Brother, xxx

I am watching for a letter from you any day as I have not heard from you for a good while I hope you are all well at home I am quite well & in good nick at present. This is a card I brought from Scotland with me what do you think of it. I think George will be exchanged to Blighty shortly If he does you will perhaps have him home later on, but I wouldn't build on too higher hopes. I would like to be able to see him when he gets to England I had a letter from Mr Todd & he tells me there was to be a picnic on June 27th. I hope you had a good time at the picnic don't forget to tell me all about it. I suppose you took your mademoiselle to the picnic I am very glad Sunflower is getting along alright as Brick told me in a letter I got from him. I must ring off now Dear Fred. Good-bye. xxx From your loving Brother Alex xxxxxx

Item 39846.





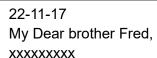
5.10-17

To

My Dear Bro Fred, xxxxxxx

I got your letter with Angus's & I was very pleased with it. This is a card I brought with me from Scotland. I suppose you are great chums with those McGregor girls you tell me of in your letter. The weather is getting cold here again now, when you are having nice warm weather at home we are nearly perishing here with cold. I suppose if it will be about Xmas time when you get this card I would like to send you all something for Xmas but I don't think I can manage it, so keep your pecker up. xxxxx Fondest Love from x Alex xxxx

Item 39830.



Just a little card to wish you a Merry Xmas. I have had a few letters from you lately & that is just what I like. I am glad you got the other card I sent you &that you are taking care of them. I hope this one will fit your album. I am quite well at present, & so is George & he may be in Blighty for some time yet. I guess you must be some class on the bike I suppose you can travel like the wind. John must have looked a trick rolling on the ground with Sunflower. She must have been doing some nice fancy capers. Don't forget to write & tell me all about the time you have at Xmas. Heaps of Love and Kisses. From your xxxxxxxxxxx Loving Brother Alex xxxxx

Item 39852.





22-11-17

Dear Freddy

This is another card for your album. I got this one in Scotland when I was on leave. Au revoir mon Frère. xxxxxx

Your Loving Brother Alex

Item 39851.

29-3-18 Dear Fred,

I hope you will get this card alright & that it will find you well This is a photo of you trying to be a soldier. This leave me in London I have been on leave but go back to France to-morrow morning to carry on again. We are having nice weather here now & the leaves are beginning to come on the trees again I must close now hoping to hear from you soon. Au Revoir Your Loving Brother Alex xxx xxxxxxxxx

Item 39848.





29 3-18
To Fred
With Love
From Alex
(A card for a Tabbie)

Item 39836.



Item 39834.

In conclusion...

George Thomson returned to Australia and was discharged on 24 May 1918. Initially he had been reported as missing, next a prisoner of war and wounded in Germany, then transferred to Switzerland, and finally repatriated to the United Kingdom.

Alexander also returned to Australia and was discharged on 19 August 1919. In 1917 his first recommendation for the Military Medal resulted in receiving the 'appreciation of [his] gallant services' from the Army Corps Commander. The specific services were as follows: 'At POLYGON WOOD on 26/28 September 1917, this man performed brilliant work with the bayonet, and assisted in the capture of at leasst five pill boxes. His courage was of the highest, and his cheerful spirit remained undaunted through the heaviest shelling.' On 29 August 1918 near Villers Carbonnel he was one of the three men who 'succeeded in bringing the whole of the wounded to place of safety and showed greaourage in passing through heavy fire'. It was this action that resulted in the award of the Military Medal.





Find a Grave – photos by Lucas.

Alex Thomson died on 17 August 1996 and George on 10 May 1945. Both were buried in the Murwillumbah General Cemetery. Fred died on 2 September 1993 and was buried in the Murwillumbah Lawn Cemetery. Their siblings: Ann Jane (Bienke, earlier Vidler) died on 22 December 1968 and was buried in the East Lismore General Cemetery; John died on 7 September 1981 and was buried in the Murwillumbah Lawn Cemetery; Angus died on 15 December 1959 and was cremated and his ashes rest at the Mount Thompson Memorial Gardens and Crematorium; and Jessie (Brown, earlier Lever) died on 9 July 1991 and was buried in the Murwillumbah Lawn Cemetery.

An editorial note: The Editor of Timelines and Timelines In fifteen minutes endeavours to ensure the accuracy of information in published articles. Where possible, families are contacted to avoid errors with names and relationships. As the Society's President has pointed out: "Talking to families is not difficult and they do appreciate it.".

Saving Paradise

Kerry Stelling's review of Max Boyd's recently published book, subtitled 'The Tweed under siege'. Its declarative cover: 'Former longstanding TWEED SHIRE mayor Max Boyd's life, legacy and fight to stop corruption as the shire became a honey pot for rapacious developers.'

(Contact the Society if you wish to purchase a copy.)

Former Tweed Shire Mayor Max Boyd launched his memoir *Saving Paradise* at The Murwillumbah Services Club last Valentine's Day. Written in richly detailed but down to earth, matter-of-fact English, it's a most engaging read. Ultimately he was the linchpin who, with help including community support, saved the vulnerable Tweed coast from becoming an extension of the Gold Coast. Chapters 6 to12 chronicle the land boom decades that start with the '80s and read like a farcical parade of political and entrepreneurial rogues and their startling skullduggery, leading ultimately to the sad sacking in 2005 of the Tweed Shire Council loaded with heavily developer-funded players.

Max Boyd, now in his nineties, is a fifth generation descendant of the Tweed's Boyd family involved in timber getting in the mid 1800s, then animal agriculture industries. Max Boyd became a Country Party member at an early age and served on Tweed Shire Council from 1964 into the new millennium. In the earlier chapters he describes his family history, life as a youngster and young councillor, his early achievements and tributes to other achievers at the time including mass tree planter, Bruce Chick. Among a commendable number of shire assets established through his momentum, he highlights securing of the shire's own water supply, the Greenbank development, and the memorable Rainforest Information Centre, which was sadly lost to flooding.

In a recent interview Boyd candidly observed that "...there is an optimal number of people you can put in the Tweed without ruining it." Retired since 2008, Boyd can now style himself as 'the longest Standing Tweed Councillor on one leg' (the other lost to Buerger's disease) The two longest serving mayors so far since 2008 have been the Greens Katie Milne from 2015 to 2020, and presently Chris Cherry, now facing the dilemma of accommodating ever increasing human numbers and traffic in the Tweed, while preserving natural habitat.



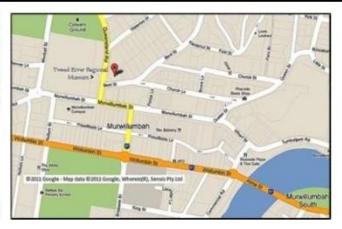
ABOUT THE SOCIETY: Formed on 16 March 1959, the Society's aim is to research, preserve and promote the rich and unique history of our town of Murwillumbah and its surrounds in the picturesque Tweed River Valley of far northern New South Wales. The Society operates out of our Research Centre in the Tweed 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.

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 of guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of our newsletters and research and expressly disclaims liability for errors or omissions. The views and opinions expressed therein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society.

To preserve maximum space for content, sources and references will not usually be listed. These are available from the Editor upon request.