

# TIMELINES

In fifteen minutes

Number 22

## Business as usual

The Murwillumbah Historical Society committee met on Monday , 19 May 2025.

After the formalities of attendance, apologies, and so on, the first item on the agenda was the President's report. Bev Fairley said it was short. Nevertheless, there were quite a few matters that were addressed. Framed photos of early Murwillumbah and the ruins of the Imperial Hotel after the fire of 1907 (Red Sunday) donated by Stacks Law Firm have found new homes at the Court House and Imperial Hotels. On Saturday, 17 May, Bev attended the 'terrific' Proudfoots Lane Party - '[t]he vibrant transformation of Proudfoots Lane [that] is part of the Murwillumbah Community Improvement Pilot Project'. Research and maps to inform the attendees about the Lane's history were provided by Joan Cuthel and Henry James. And dinosaurs were seen in the river! Bev told us that this was a light show installation installed by the Tweed Regional Museum as part of the 'How to Draw a Dinosaur' exhibition running through to 19 July. The dinosaurs can be seen nightly from 5:30 to 8:30 pm.

The various reports – treasurer, membership, research, IT/digital, and bookshop – were dealt with in the accustomed orderly manner. Research is the Society's bread and butter. Family history enquiries, which include requests for the location of the graves of ancestors and information about residences and land holdings make up the bulk of work of the research team. Nine enquiries were addressed in April/May, five relating to families who lived and worked in and around Murwillumbah.

[An aside. The effectiveness of the Society's research depends on the holdings of the Tweed Regional Museum's Collection. The Collection should keep on growing, from the present to the future. Don't consign your family history to the skip; consider donating it to the Collection, if only in a digital format.]

## Our publications

Ron Johansen, President of the Society from 1992 to 2011, published his research in twelve volumes of *Tales of our Times*. Purchasing a set will provide the reader with a varied and diverse portrait of Murwillumbah and district before and during Ron's lifetime. Call us to put in your order.

## Our Next Meeting

The Society warmly welcomes new members. We meet on the third Monday of every month.

**1:00 pm on Monday, 16 June 2025, at the President's residence.**  
(Please call to confirm attendance and for venue location.)

CONTACT US: Phone: (02) 6670 2273

**At the Museum: Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm and Wednesday and Friday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm**

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

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

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

Mail: c/- Tweed Regional Museum, 2 Queensland Rd, Murwillumbah NSW 2484 or PO Box 373, Murwillumbah NSW 2484

# History in a Box

## The Australian Hotel Fire in 1981– an eyewitness remembers

The Society has received six photographs of the 1981 Australian Hotel fire. They were taken by Dave Nonen, a Canadian backpacker who was visiting Australia at the time.



He writes: According to my notes I stayed at the YHA hostel in Murwillumbah on June 26-28, 1981 making my way down to Sydney. The hostel was on the river so Sunday, an acquaintance and I took the hostel canoe out for a bit of a paddle. My notes say it was 'quite warm and sunny'. While out on the river 'we could hear fire engines and then we saw smoke ... We paddled like crazy to reach town. We beached the canoe on the bank and scampered up the side.' It was so disheartening to see that piece of Aussie history seemingly destroyed—but I understand it was resurrected! I've not looked at my smattering of memorabilia of that trip for over 40 years and my notes are near impossible to read. Anyways here for what it's worth is my Aussie YHA guide cover and the page on the hostel. If and when I find other photos of the area I will get back to you. In the meantime I hope this provides a little background on that day.

11 Tumbulgum Rd., Murwillumbah, opposite Council buildings. From railway, cross bridge, turn 1st right, turn right on next intersection, hostel 300 m. on river bank. Greyhound go to river, turn left just before bridge, follow road to hostel. Kirklands, proceed to river turn left, hostel 300 m on right. \$3.30 Senior, \$3.00 Junior, 15. 12. Meals available. 1 min. walk. 13. Hot. 14. Sailboats, fishing, canoes for hire at hostel. Mt. Warning near Park 15k. Lamington near Park 35k. Gold Coast 29k. 15 min. walk. 16. 5 min. walk. 17. Nimbin 30 km SW; Byron Bay 60 km SE; Southport 60 km NE.