

# TIMELINES

In fifteen minutes

Number 26

## Raise high the banner!

The Murwillumbah Historical Society's display banner suffered water damage. It has now been replaced and displays the composite photo of Murwillumbah that was a centrepiece of the Tweed Regional Museum's twentieth anniversary exhibition [\*Omnia: all and everything\*](#). The Society's thanks are extended to Molly Green, the Museum Director, for organising the use of the image and arranging the printing of the banner.

## The Street Party

The Street Party literally shook the old Tweed Shire Council chambers building to its foundations. At one point windows were taped lest the glass panes shatter! While quiet reflection about the vagaries of history was not on the agenda, the Museum and surrounding streets were occupied by throngs of people, the crowds enjoying the music, the food, and the general atmosphere of festivity. It is wonderful to see the Museum at the centre of such a popular community event.

## Town talks

The Society's president, Bev Fairley, presents talks about Murwillumbah. She recently spoke to a bus tour group, her knowledge of the town impressing these visitors to the district. A future venue will be the old Murwillumbah railway station. A video trailer to advertise this talk is in preparation and will be available on the Tweed Shire Council webpage when ready.

## Other activities

Society members are actively helping the Tweed Regional Museum preserve Murwillumbah and the Tweed Valley's historical heritage. A recent example - a large number of photos were left out the front of the museum. Ian Batten, in addition to his work as the Society's treasurer, has been sorting through them, identifying locations and people. Two photos are old tintype photos. A large number of the photos are of Cudgen and members of the Cudgen tennis club. Once all the names and locations have been identified, they will be scanned in preparation to being added to the Museum's Collection.

Belinda Neilson's 'Research Training Course' was well received by the first group of participants. She has proposed holding this course three or four times a year and is investigating the logistics of presenting it on Saturdays.

## Our next meeting

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

**11:00 am on Monday, 20 October 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

By Henry James.

The Tweed Regional Museum has a large collection of digitised photos of the Tweed Valley. The museum owns the originals of some, and others have been loaned by their owners for the museum to digitise. New images are regularly added to the physical and digital collections.

Recent additions to the digital collection are the result of a loan of yet another box of photos from descendants of the Solomons family, and include photos taken between about 1910 and 1916 by Douglas Solomons. A large batch of stereoscopic photos taken mainly by Louis Solomons (Douglas' father) was digitised in 2023. These two batches of photos added to an already considerable collection of Solomons' photos previously gathered by the Tweed Heads Historical Society, the Murwillumbah (formerly Tweed River) Historical Society, the Uki and South Arm Historical Society and many other local groups and individuals. Louis' and Douglas' photos form a very significant part of the Museum's digital collection of pre-1920 photos.

The Solomons were not professional photographers, but the quality of their work was very high, and relatively careful storage of the prints has contributed to the value of the collection. The collection's contribution to the record is all the more significant because, unlike most remaining high quality photos from the era, many were taken in rural areas, not in Murwillumbah or Tweed Heads, and often include a record of the location and year they were taken.

It hardly needs to be said that photos are a valuable resource for researchers, especially for those inquiring into the early years of colonisation. For instance, three of Douglas Solomons' photos were published in a doctoral thesis by Lionel Gilbert as long ago as 1971. All three were taken in 1912 – 1913 from the one location at Kunghurloo, south of Byrrill Creek, and depict forest immediately before and after brushing, ring-barking and burning. Gilbert attributed the three photos to the Tweed River Historical Society, but until recently only one appears to have survived as part of the Museum's digital collection - the "before" photo of the set of three. With the recent loan, one of the lost "after" photos has now been restored to the collection.

[Pages three and four of this *Timelines In fifteen minutes* show copies of the relevant pages from Gilbert's work, with Henry James commentary.]



One of the Douglas Solomons' photos recently added to the collection. It shows another view of recently cleared forest in the vicinity of what was then called Bridge Creek and that is now the part of the Kunghurloo estate that drains northwards to Byrrill Creek. This photo demonstrates the quality of many of the recently digitised collection and the best preserved of previously acquired photos.



CLEARING RAINFOREST



CLEARING RAINFOREST: Upper: Scrub-clearers' camp in rain-forest, McPherson Ranges, September 1912.

Lower: The same area of rainforest after cutting and burning operations. Note the same Hoop Pine stump in middle ground. The ashes are sown with Rhodes Grass, Chloris gayana, 10 Dec. 1912.

Photos.: Tweed River Historical Society.



The image on the previous page shows page 244 from the thesis of Lionel A. Gilbert titled *A Botanical Investigation of New South Wales 1811 – 1880*. The lower photo has recently been 'rediscovered' and, along with the upper photo, has become part of the digital collection of the Tweed Regional Museum. (Note: the quality of the digital copies of the above images held by the Museum is much higher. The images above are from a relatively low quality scan of the thesis paper.)

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CLEARING RAINFOREST



**CLEARING RAINFOREST:** The same view at "Miss Johnson's, Bridge Ck." McPherson Ranges, 31 March 1913, "3 months after the fire." The Hoop Pine stump remains, while the slope in the background is now well covered with Rhodes Grass to provide fodder for a dairy herd. Although taken just prior to World War I, this series of photographs shows clearly the traditional way of dealing with rainforests. Some years before 1898, for example, brothers M. and J. O'Shannessy "selected two areas in the brush on opposite sides of the Thone River" (a southern tributary of the Hastings). "After the first burn-off grass-seed was sown amongst the logs and stumps." Of these grasses, (Perennial Rye, Lolium perenne, Cocksfoot Dactylis glomerata and Prairie, Bromus unioloides), Cocksfoot was the most satisfactory. (W. S. Campbell in Ag.Gaz.NSW, 1898, p.49). A tremendous amount of valuable softwood timber was lost during such operations.

Photo.: Tweed River Historical Society.

Above. Page 245 from Lionel Gilbert's thesis. The whereabouts of the original of this print remains a mystery. Though it was part of the collection of the Tweed River Historical Society in the early 1970's, it was lost before it could be digitised. It may yet turn up.