

TIMELINES

In fifteen minutes

Number 32

Looking for members to expand the work of the Society

The Murwillumbah Historical Society is a research organisation, partnering with the Tweed Regional Museum. It's research room at the Tweed Regional Museum, the Tony Clarke Research Room, is the place where we meet with members of the public who bring their enquiries about family and homes in the wider Tweed Valley. The Society has also published monographs about settler history and aspires to keep this undertaking into the future.

The May committee meeting addressed these issues. The most pressing need is to have members in the research room to receive members of the public with their research enquiries. The appeal is to ask members if they can spare time to attend the rooms on Tuesdays and Thursdays for at least a couple of hours between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm to perform these duties. Volunteers would have to complete the Museum's induction process prior to carrying out the work of the Society.

If you feel that you can help, please contact the Society by ringing us on the number below or writing to secretary@murwillumbahhistoricalsociety.org.au.

The Museum takes the colourful caravan on a road trip!

Connected is a hands-on travelling exhibition visiting more than 20 primary schools across inland Northern New South Wales in Term 2, 2026. So far they have (to 29 May) visited Woodenbong Central School, Bonalbo Central School, Tabulam Public School, Tenterfield Public School, Ashford Central School, Warialda Public School (with Gravesend and Delungra Public Schools students also present), Moree East Public School (image, right), Bullarah Public School, and Garah Public School (with Boomi Public School students also present). Get into Google Maps and recreate the road trip!

Connected was developed by Nathan Firth and is presented by Natalie and Paul Barrett, sharing their professional and personal experience as an educational partnership. The travelling exhibition is part of the Tweed Regional Museum's Museum on Wheels program, exploring the history of communication, from early signalling and postal systems to modern digital media, through hands-on objects, immersive storytelling, and interactive displays designed specifically for primary school students.



Icing on the cake - the entire project is funded through a \$96,000 Create NSW Cultural Access Grant with no cost to Tweed ratepayers!

Our next meeting

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

11:00 am on Monday, 15 June 2026, at the President's residence.
(Please call to confirm attendance and for the 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

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

History in a box

John Rabjones, successful local Murwillumbah cricketer



Casey McCarron Carr contributes an article on a prominent Tweed Valley sportsman for this issue of Timelines In fifteen minutes.

John Rabjones, after whom a cricket field in Murwillumbah remains named, was a talented cricketer in and around Murwillumbah in the 1930s and 1940s. His name first surfaces in local reporting in the late 1930s, identifying him as a talented young batsman. In a match recorded in the *Tweed Daily* on 13 November 1939, his 'snicked' ball was dropped by the opposing wicketkeeper, an early moment of good fortune that allowed him and his batting partner to compile a rapid 61-run stand. This detail, though small, highlights an attribute that would define Rabjones' career, being the ability to seize opportunities and convert moments of chance into sustained advantage for his team. By early 1940, Rabjones was already exhibiting the characteristics of a mature batsman. In January of that year, after the resumption of play, he and his partner carried the score to 185, Rabjones batting 'with plenty of spirit' and contributing 'attractively' to a partnership of 36 with another batsman following his partner's dismissal. The description of his batting as spirited and attractive recurs throughout his career, with local observers frequently noting his capacity to combine aggression with control, an especially valued trait on the varied pitches of regional cricket.

The 1940s would prove transformative for Rabjones. In October 1940, he delivered what the Tweed District Cricket Association deemed the standout performance of the round when he hit 125 runs against Cudgera. This achievement marked the beginning of a remarkable period of dominance in district cricket, cementing his status as one of the region's leading batsmen. Four years later, in 1944, he recorded innings of 158 and 112 in consecutive matches, feats that confirmed his consistency and leadership within local cricketing circles. By 1945 and 1946, Rabjones was an indispensable all-rounder. Reports described him as an 'excellent opening bat' and a 'good safe field,' capable of both defensive and aggressive play. He was also an effective bowler when required, illustrating the versatility expected of regional cricketers who often carried multiple roles in their teams. His unbeaten 75 in a trial match in December 1945 and his 120 not out in December 1946 continued to elevate his status. In the same 1946 match, he also claimed a wicket for just four runs, further demonstrating his well-rounded skill set. By 1947, selectors regarded him as the 'logical selection' as captain of the Far North Coast representative side. He had impressed at Country Week the previous year and had recently captained the district team to a notable victory over Queensland Country. His all-rounder credentials, including strong batting, medium-pace bowling, and reliable leadership, made him one of the most respected cricketers in regional New South Wales.

December 1947 marked a significant milestone, as Rabjones was selected for the Combined Country side to compete against Sydney at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Such recognition was rare for players from remote districts and reflected both his outstanding form and the growing tendency for metropolitan cricket bodies to look to regional areas for talent. Throughout the 1947–48 season, he continued to excel, becoming the most impressive player from the Far North Coast and proving himself a particularly strong batsman in representative fixtures. His performances at the Queensland Country Week carnival in Brisbane in early 1948 further cemented his reputation. As captain, he emerged as the 'outstanding batsman of the carnival,' with some observers suggesting that, had he resided in Queensland, he would almost certainly have been selected for the State side. This evaluation highlights a central theme in the history of regional sport, being the structural barriers that limited pathways to higher-level competition for rural athletes. Rabjones' talent was widely acknowledged, yet the geographic and economic realities of regional life often curtailed his opportunities for advancement. Despite these challenges, Rabjones

sustained a level of excellence rarely matched in country cricket. By late 1949, he had again been selected to captain the Far North Coast team at Country Week in Sydney and boasted a staggering average of 452 across five innings, with scores of 153*, 101*, seven wickets for 46, 66*, 37, and 95*. These statistics reflect not only individual excellence but also the competitive strength of cricketing culture in Murwillumbah and its surrounding areas.

An interesting and significant moment in his career, reflecting both his ambition and the challenges he faced as a regional cricketer, was documented in the Brisbane Times in December 1949, when Rabjones, then 28, announced his willingness to relocate to Brisbane to pursue his long-held ambition of playing Sheffield Shield cricket. Despite operating a banana farm with his brothers at Uki, he expressed readiness to move for the sake of elite-level opportunity. The commentary around this statement is revealing. Administrators lamented that “too much country talent has slipped through our fingers,” implicitly recognising the systemic neglect of regional players. Rabjones’ situation exemplified how rural sporting aspiration often collided with economic constraints and limited metropolitan engagement. Throughout the early 1950s, Rabjones remained at the centre of Far North Coast cricket, regularly captaining representative sides, was a prolific scorer over many seasons, and leading the team to multiple victories in the Queensland Country Week Eager Shield. By 1953, even as his career matured, Rabjones continued to demonstrate tactical boldness and cricketing astuteness. In a Far North Coast inter-district competition match, he declared Tweed’s innings with a narrow three-run lead, an uncommonly daring move in regional



1947i. Left to right, rear: John Rabjones, Frank Burley, Henry Smith, Ron Parland, Mick Aboud, Frank Douglas; front: Cec Vardy, Norm Douglas, Reg Dalton, Andy Walls, Len Mitchell. (Photographer unknown.)

Source: Tweed Regional Museum Collection.

cricket. The gamble paid off, securing an outright victory. Rabjones contributed significantly, scoring 57 while opening the innings, demonstrating that his strategic intuition matched his technical skill.

Across nearly two decades, John Rabjones came to embody the aspirations, resilience, and communal pride of Murwillumbah and the broader Tweed region. His achievements reflected the richness of regional cricketing culture, where strong community networks, local rivalries, and volunteer-driven institutions nurtured exceptional talent despite structural barriers. Rabjones was not just a successful sportsman. He was a figure through whom a regional community celebrated its accomplishments and negotiated its relationship with the broader world of Australian cricket. His story illustrates the important and often underappreciated role of regional athletes in shaping the sporting landscapes of their communities, reinforcing the social and cultural significance of sport within rural Australia.

Foundation Members - 1959!

The Society's Treasurer, Ian Batten, was fossicking in the archives and found this gem. The 'Foundation Members' list for the Tweed River Historical Society from 1959. Do you recognise the names/signatures? If so, send us your transcription!

47 Foundation members

Mrs. E. Jacques PAID.
 Mrs. G. W. W. W. PAID
 Mrs. B. B. PAID
 Barbara August PAID
 Caroline Mous PAID
 Ambrose McConnell PAID
 W. B. L. L. L. PAID
 J. Saunders. PAID
 J. B. B. PAID
 C. B. B. PAID PAID
 J. R. R. PAID
 G. G. G. PAID
 Kathleen G. G. PAID
 J. G. G. PAID
 A. H. H. PAID
 W. N. KITCHER. PAID
 D. J. DUNBAR. PAID
 R. G. G. PAID
 D. M. M. PAID
 B. D. D. PAID
 Kathleen Lucas PAID
 L. M. M. PAID
 K. K. K. PAID
 L. H. H. PAID
 F. H. H. PAID
 G. G. G. PAID
 E. H. H. PAID
 Judy Saunders PAID
 Mrs. Stuart
 Flora Stuart

- Soapy Loas PAID
 W. H. H. PAID
 C. J. Dean
 H. M. M. PAID
 W. J. J. PAID
 L. M. M. PAID
 J. G. G. PAID
 J. F. F. PAID
 E. G. G.
 J. G. G. PAID
 W. J. J.
 W. D. D. PAID
 C. B. B. PAID
 W. M. M.
 C. B. B. PAID
 R. G. G. PAID
 R. G. G. PAID
 C. G. G. PAID
 C. G. G. PAID
 Mrs. Kelly PAID
 J. G. G. PAID
 B. J. J. PAID
 Mrs. Taylor PAID