

TIMELINES

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MARGARET AND CHARLES WOOTTON

This headstone commemorates Margaret Wootton and Charles Wootton; the latter was connected to the loss of the cutter Mary Jane during a voyage between the Tweed River and Sydney in 1861.

Little is known about the vessel or the victims, and surviving records contain conflicting details. Like many small coastal craft of the period, the *Mary Jane* disappeared into history with few answers.

Headstone donated by R. Dunn & Sons.

Welcome

This issue begins with Henry James' article dealing with a small part of the vexed and still unresolved issue of our forests. Forestry, agriculture, and the reservation of forests – for for exploitation or preservation – weave a such a complex web that it is not clear what is the best interest in the matter. Henry's article is the story of Clarence Forest Reserve No.10, and what happened to the part of it within the Tweed valley after its creation in 1871.

The 'Back Page ...' begins on page 14! The article deals with the Wootton headstone (pictured above), one of the highlights of the current Tweed Regional Museum exhibition, 'Ritual'. It delves into the life of Delia Wootton, who erected the memorial not only to her husband, who died when the ship *Mary Jane* was lost, but also to his first wife, who died some five years earlier.

Enjoy your reading!

MURWILLUMBAH SHOW

Friday the 30th and Saturday the 31st of October 2026

WE 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

Clarence Forest Reserve No.10

Henry James writes about policy that finds it difficult to deal with the time scales of trees. The here and now of harvesting timber and clearing forests for agriculture is easier than reservation to prevent over-exploitations, let alone preserve flora and fauna.

Introduction

This is the story of Clarence Forest Reserve No.10, and what happened to the part of it within the Tweed valley after its creation in 1871. It is the epitome of the fate of heavily forested land on the east coast of NSW after colonisation – the tussle between those who wished to clear it for agriculture and those who sought to reserve at least some of it – with the result that only the most mountainous parts were belatedly given secure reservation status.

The origins of forest reserves in NSW

It was not until 1871 that any significant forest reserves were created in colonial NSW. They were located along the lower Murray River (where the objective was to conserve River Red Gum forests) and in the Clarence, Richmond and Tweed catchments of the north coast. Fourteen forest reserves were gazetted on the north coast of NSW in 1871, and six more in 1872. They were collectively known as the Clarence Forest Reserves and ranged in size from 125 square miles (32,375 hectares) to 71 acres (29 hectares).

In theory the level of protection accorded to the reserves was quite high because they were ‘specially exempted from the operation of timber licenses’. The main objective of this provision was to save some forest from gross over-harvesting of red cedar. In a sense, it resulted in reserves more like present-day National Parks than State Forests, though enforcement of the prohibition on harvesting of timber was close to non-existent and grazing could occur on native grasslands within the reserves to the extent that they overlapped existing pastoral leases. The main effective outcome arose from the provision that the reserves were ‘exempted from sale’, which precluded the mass clearing of forest and waste of timber of all varieties that accompanied the sale of crown land.

The boundaries of most of the north coast reserves were determined by botanist William Carron and district surveyor for Grafton, P. R. Donaldson. Carron also prepared descriptions and made lists of species of trees for each reserve. He prepared reports for his boss, Charles Moore, the director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, who passed them on to the Under Secretary for Lands. They were in turn put on the parliamentary record.

Four of the reserves were in the Tweed. See Table 1 below for details of the reserves in the Tweed and Figure 1 on the next page for their location.

Table 1: Details of forest reserves in the Tweed declared in 1871-2.

Clarence Forest Reserve Number	Name	Area (hectares)	Parliamentary Reports Numbers	Date of notice in Government Gazette
9	Tweed River	9,065	13	15-09-1871
10	Macpherson Range	22,792	12	15-09-1871
	Cudgen	259	17	30-04-1872
	Chindera	160	18	30-04-1872

See Appendix A for an extract of Carron’s field notes for what was to become Clarence Forest Reserve No.10 and Figure 2 for a more detailed depiction of its location. Clarence Forest Reserve No.10 was also known as F.R.10 (and was labelled accordingly on early parish maps). It was called Forest Reserve No.12 in the report to the NSW parliament and later it was sometimes called Forest Reserve 251.

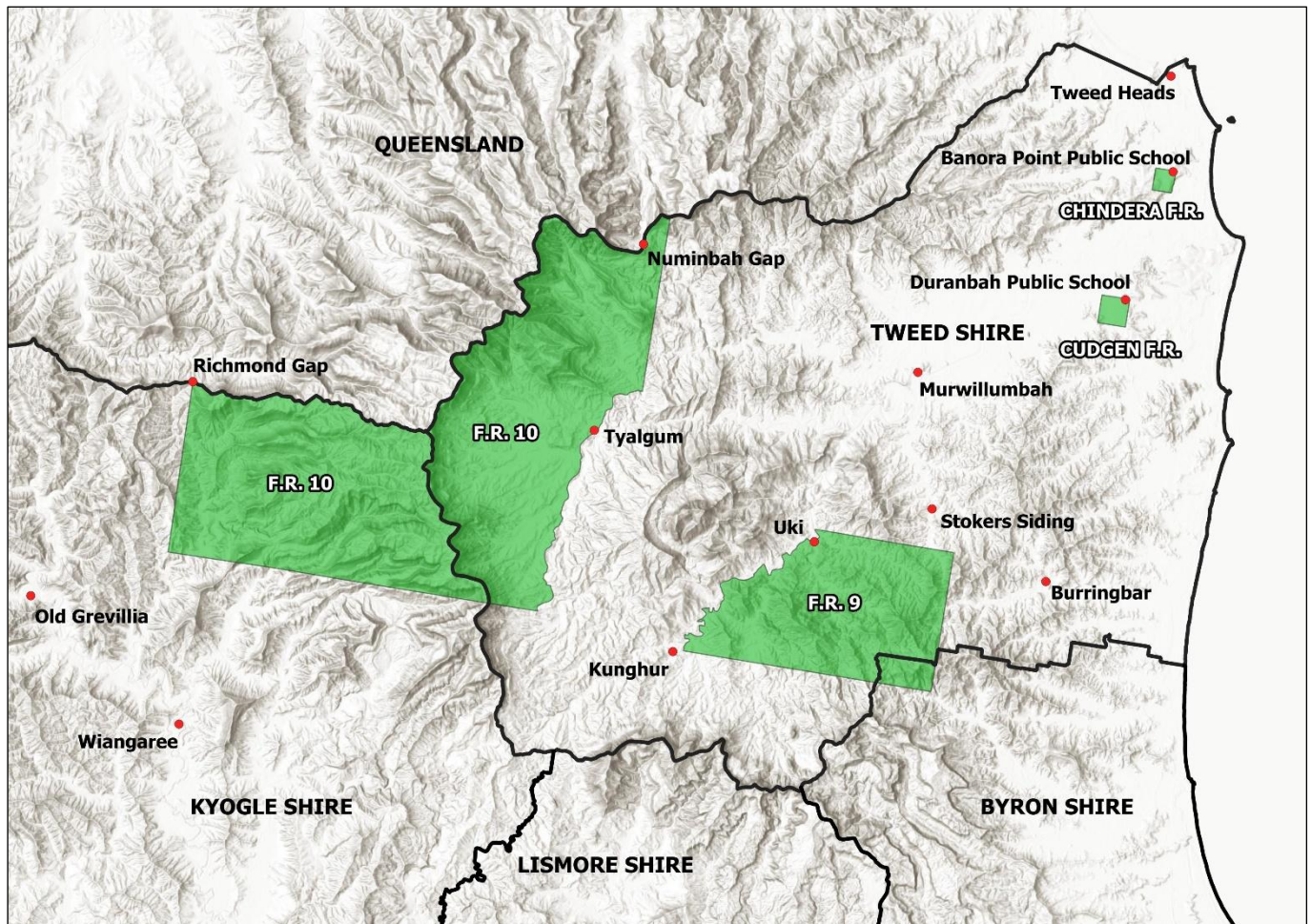


Figure 1: Location of the four forest reserves declared in Tweed Shire in 1871-2.

Source: Author.

History of land use prior to declaration

Cedar getting had been underway in the part of F.R.10 in the Tweed since at least as early as the 1850s and by the time of its declaration part of it was within the Tyalgum pastoral lease (see *Timelines* Vol. 13 No. 3 January 2026). Most of the section in the Kyogle Shire had been under pastoral lease since the early 1840s – part of the Wiangerie run. Cedar getting had also almost certainly taken place in this part well before 1871. Clearing of forest to make pasture was very limited under the terms of pastoral leases, and though the rules were not well supervised, it is likely that clearing within F.R.10 had been limited to the harvest of cedar prior to its declaration because the colonial population of the district was very low and native grasslands sufficed for its pastoral endeavours up until then.

The boundaries of the reserves were chosen to avoid freehold selections that had been made after the change to land laws in 1861-2. F.R.10 was no exception in this regard.

Determining the boundaries

Donaldson did not survey the reserve boundaries and no plans were produced. Instead, they were defined very much like pastoral leases had been for three decades prior - their boundaries were linked to the few existing surveyed points or lines and then further defined by watercourses, other prominent landscape features or lines with bearings based on magnetic north and approximate distances. In the case of F.R.10, the northern boundary was defined by the border between Queensland and NSW which had been surveyed in 1863-5 by F. E. Roberts (for Queensland) and Isaiah Rowland (for NSW). Part of its eastern boundary consisted of part of a road from Casino to near Murwillumbah surveyed in 1865-6 by Isaiah Rowland. (See *Timelines* Vol. 13 No 2 November 2025.) See Figure 2 on the next page for a depiction of features used for F.R.10 and Figure 3 for its description in the Government Gazette.

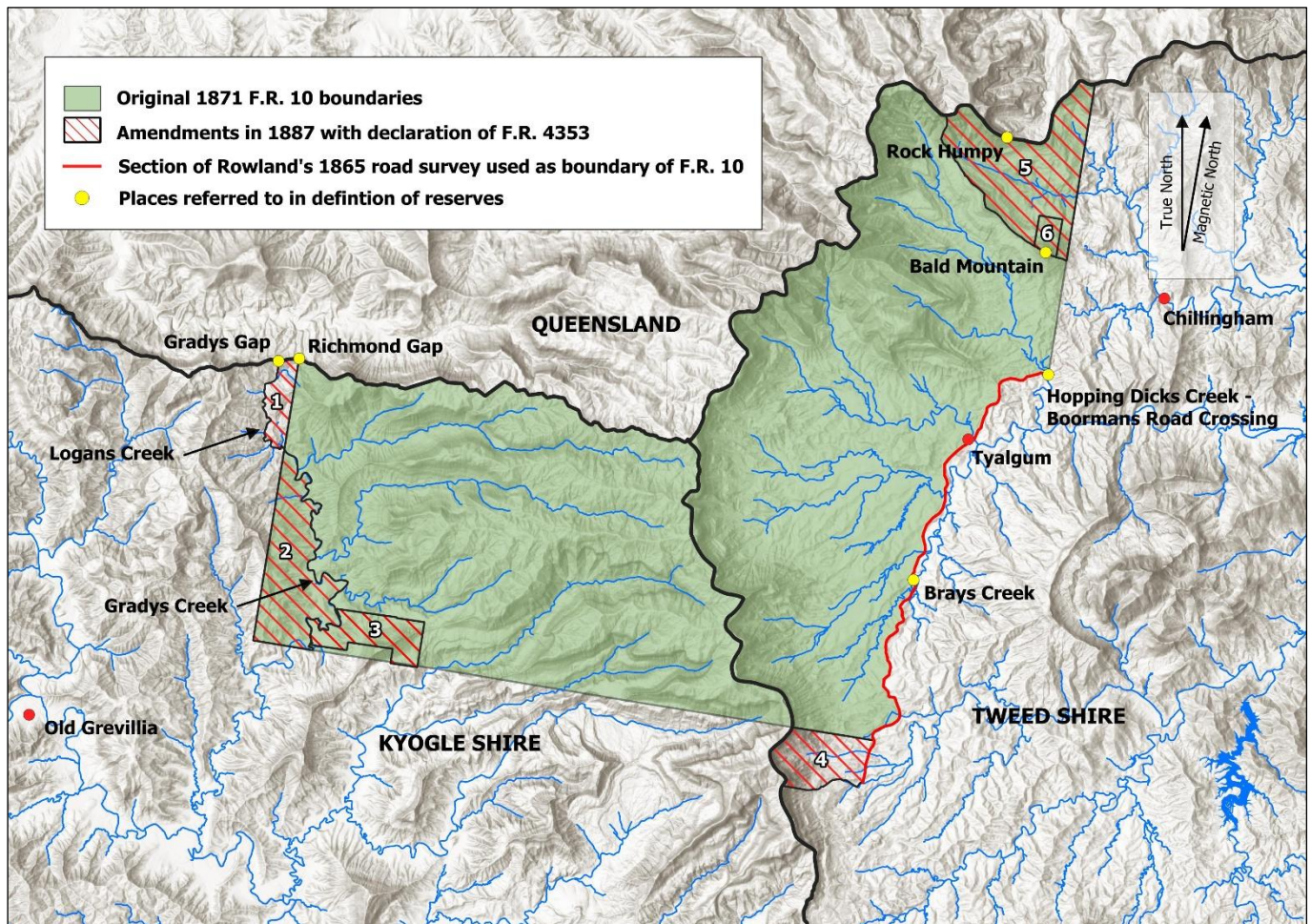


Figure 2: Features used to define F.R.10 and F.R.4353.

Depiction of amendments made to F.R.10 in 1887 with the declaration of F.R.4353:

1. Area possibly added as a result of using Gradys and Logan Creeks as the western boundary.
2. Area lost as a result of using Gradys and Logan Creeks as the western boundary.
3. Area lost as a result of Bundock's and Carroll's conditional purchases and lease in approximately 1887.
4. Area added as a result of using Somerville's survey Crown Plan 6-3050 to define southern boundary.
5. Area lost as a result of using Somerville's survey Crown Plan 7-3050 to define the north-eastern boundary.
6. Area lost as a result of using Somerville's survey Crown Plan 7-3050 to define the north-eastern boundary but instead declared a reserve for camping.

Source: Author.

MACPHERSON RANGE.
Estimated area, 88 square miles.
No. 10. County of Rous, under the Macpherson Range,
between the Richmond Gap and Rock Humpy. The Crown
Lands within the following boundaries : Commencing at a point
on Macpherson's Range, known as the Richmond Gap ; and
bounded on the west by a line bearing south 5 miles ; on the
south by a line bearing east about 12 miles to the track from
the Richmond River to the Tweed River, surveyed by Mr.
Rowland ; on the east by that track northerly about 9
miles to Hopping Dick's Creek, and a line from thence bearing
north about 5 miles to Macpherson's Range at Rock Humpy ;
and on the north, north-west, and again on the north by that
range westerly, south-westerly, and again westerly, to the point
of commencement.

Figure 3: Definition of land within F.R.10 published in the Government Gazette 15 September 1871.

Source: TROVE (National Library of Australia).

The refinement and adjustment of boundaries

After its initial declaration, no attempt to refine the reserve boundaries was made until John Barling was set the task of surveying and mapping the area near the south west corner of the reserve in Kyogle Shire. His plans of the mid section of Gradys and Lynchs Creeks and the lower section of Warrazambil Creek were completed in 1883-4 and included a depiction of the 'approximate position' of the southern and western boundaries of F.R.10. (Crown Plans 389-3039 and 392-3039).

Barling's depiction of the southern boundary of F.R.10 was reproduced in the first edition of the parish map of Worendo, published in 1884. His depiction of other parts of the southern and western boundaries was probably also depicted in the first editions of the maps for the adjacent Loadstone and Cougal parishes. Though the latter two plans have apparently not survived, Barling's estimates of the boundaries are to be found in a plan for the Wiangerie pastoral run submitted to the government in 1885 by land agents commissioned by the lessee, W. C. Bundock. The plan of the pastoral run also included an alternative estimate of the southern and western boundaries of the reserve which appear to have been a more accurate depiction of the original description. See Figure 4 for an extract of the plan of the Wiangerie pastoral run.

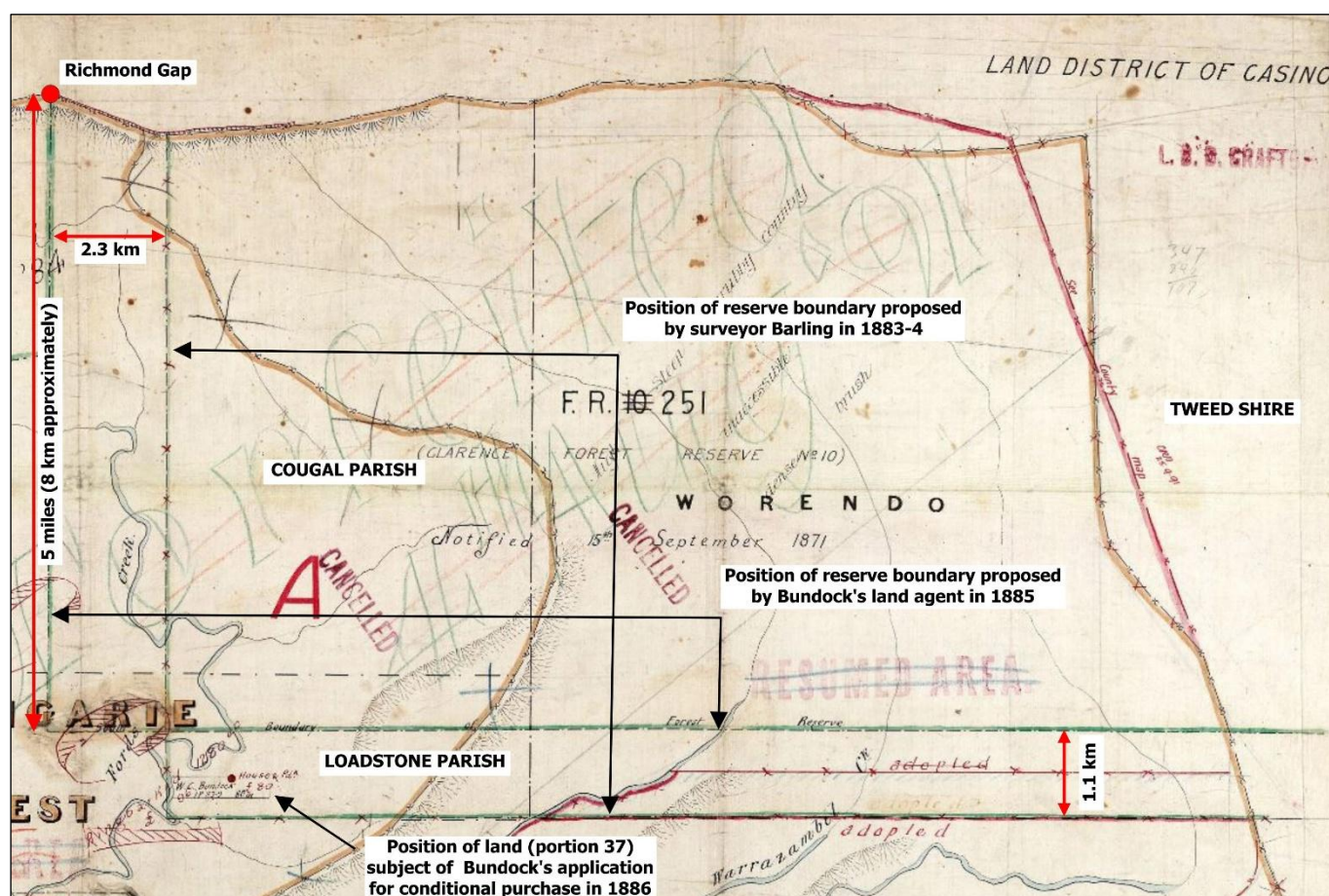


Figure 4: Extract from plan for the Wiangerie pastoral run. The plan depicts two sets of western and southern boundaries for F.R. 10 (the green lines). The set proposed by Bundock's land agent is probably more faithful to the original description, in part because its western boundary is close to five miles long. Estimates of the distances between the two sets of boundaries are depicted.

Source: Land Records Service of NSW.

The disagreement over the position of the boundaries in Kyogle Shire was important to Bundock because he had a hut and yards at a location that was within the boundaries of the reserve as defined by Barling and in 1886 made an application for a conditional purchase of 80 acres at that location. An application for a conditional purchase and to lease a further area was also made around that time by a W. R. Carroll.

In 1887-8 three surveyors were commissioned to more accurately map various parts of the reserve's boundaries, lay the foundations for the sale of crown land around its edges and to presumably sort out the

confusion that had emerged at Gradys Creek. The survey work was used to not only more clearly define the reserve's boundaries, but also to define significant adjustments which were formalised by F.R.10's revocation late in 1887 and declaration of its replacement - F.R.4353.

R. H. Somerville surveyed the southern and part of the eastern boundaries in 1887 (Crown Plans 6-3050 and 7-3050). He adopted the position for the southern boundary identified by Barling, even though it had the potential to thwart the freehold purchases sought by Bundock and Carroll. The conflict with their applications for purchase or lease of portions 37, 43 and 44 was solved by excising them from the reserve with the declaration of F.R.4353.

Somerville's survey of the southern boundary traversed extremely mountainous country eastwards from Gradys Creek to the top of the cliffs overlooking the Tweed. Then, for reasons that are not clear, he did not continue in a straight line to Rowland's Road as in the original description of F.R.10. Instead, he turned south along the edge of the Tweed Range for 2.5 km before shooting a line to the east down to a location on the upper reaches of Byrrill Creek which had been surveyed in 1882 by J. B. Kelly (Crown Plan 366-3039). The traverse of Somerville's Crown Plan 6-3050 then followed Byrrill Creek downwards to where it crossed Rowland's Road. Given the southern part of the boundary within the Tweed was about 2.5 km south of the original in F.R.10, this amounted to an increase in the area of the reserve. (See Figure 2.)

However, there was also a significant reduction which was the result of the second survey made by Somerville in 1887 – Crown Plan 7–3050. This survey commenced where Rowland's survey of 1865 crossed Hopping Dick Creek, near the end of present-day Boorman's Road. Somerville at first followed the course in the original declaration – due (magnetic) north. However, he did not follow this course all the way to the Queensland border but turned north-westwards in the vicinity of Bald Mountain and then followed the narrow spur between the Limpinwood and Hopkins Creek catchments until it attained the Queensland border. The line of survey in Crown Plan 7–3050 became the north-eastern boundary of F.R.4353. See Figure 2 for a depiction of the consequent reduction in area.

A significant excision of F.R.10 also occurred along the western boundary in Kyogle Shire with the declaration of F.R.4353. The western boundary adopted for F.R.4353 was Gradys and then Logan Creeks to a tree on the Queensland border marked in a survey of these creeks undertaken in 1887 by Cecil Pennefather (Crown Plan 33-3050). In the Gazette notice of F.R.4353, this location on the border was said to be the 'Richmond Gap' but the nominated tree is actually at a location that is now called Gradys Gap, which is about 0.8 km to the west of what is now called the Richmond Gap. The 1885 plan of the Wiangerie run appears to locate the Richmond Gap at its present day position (see Figure 4). Bundock and others made conditional purchases of land on the western bank of Gradys Creek soon after 1887, i.e. across the creek from F.R.4353. It seems likely that Gradys and Logan Creeks were chosen as a boundary for F.R.4353 because interest had already been expressed in these purchases before 1887.

One other relatively minor adjustment occurred to the eastern boundary of F.R.10 with its replacement by F.R.4353. Instead of following Rowland's road all the way from the southern boundary to Hopping Dicks Creek, a section starting at Rowland's road crossing of Brays Creek and then northwards to Tyalgum was defined by Brays and then Pumpenbil Creeks. This represented a small addition of reserve. The position of this boundary was not surveyed until 1888 when E. H. Johnson prepared a plan for Pumpenbil, Brays and Back Creeks (Crown Plan 106-3050).

A small part of the area in the northeast lost to the reserve in 1887 with the declaration of F.R.4353 was declared a crown reserve for camping in the same year. Most of the rest of the area in the northeast lost in 1887 reattained reserve status in 1904 with the declaration of F.R.37010.

In theory, the main change to the status of F.R.10 with its re-declaration as F.R.4353 in 1887 was that it was no longer 'specially exempted from the operation of timber licenses'. In effect it may have made little difference, because as already observed, supervision up to 1887 had been almost non-existent. Late in 1887 F.R.4353 was declared a 'Class C' forest which meant that in theory royalty fees applied in addition to licence fees.

The sell-off begins

The sale of crown land within what had been the part of F.R.10 within the Tweed commenced in 1891, upstream of Tyalgum and north of the Middle Arm of the Tweed River and Tyalgum Creek. It continued rapidly thereafter. Most of the land within the Tweed part of F.R.10 that was to be sold off was alienated by 1915. Part of the sell-off of the top of the Pumpenbil Creek catchment was not completed until 1930. After that, only a handful of the most rugged blocks were sold, the last in 1940. See Figure 8 which depicts the part of F.R.10 sold off by 1940.

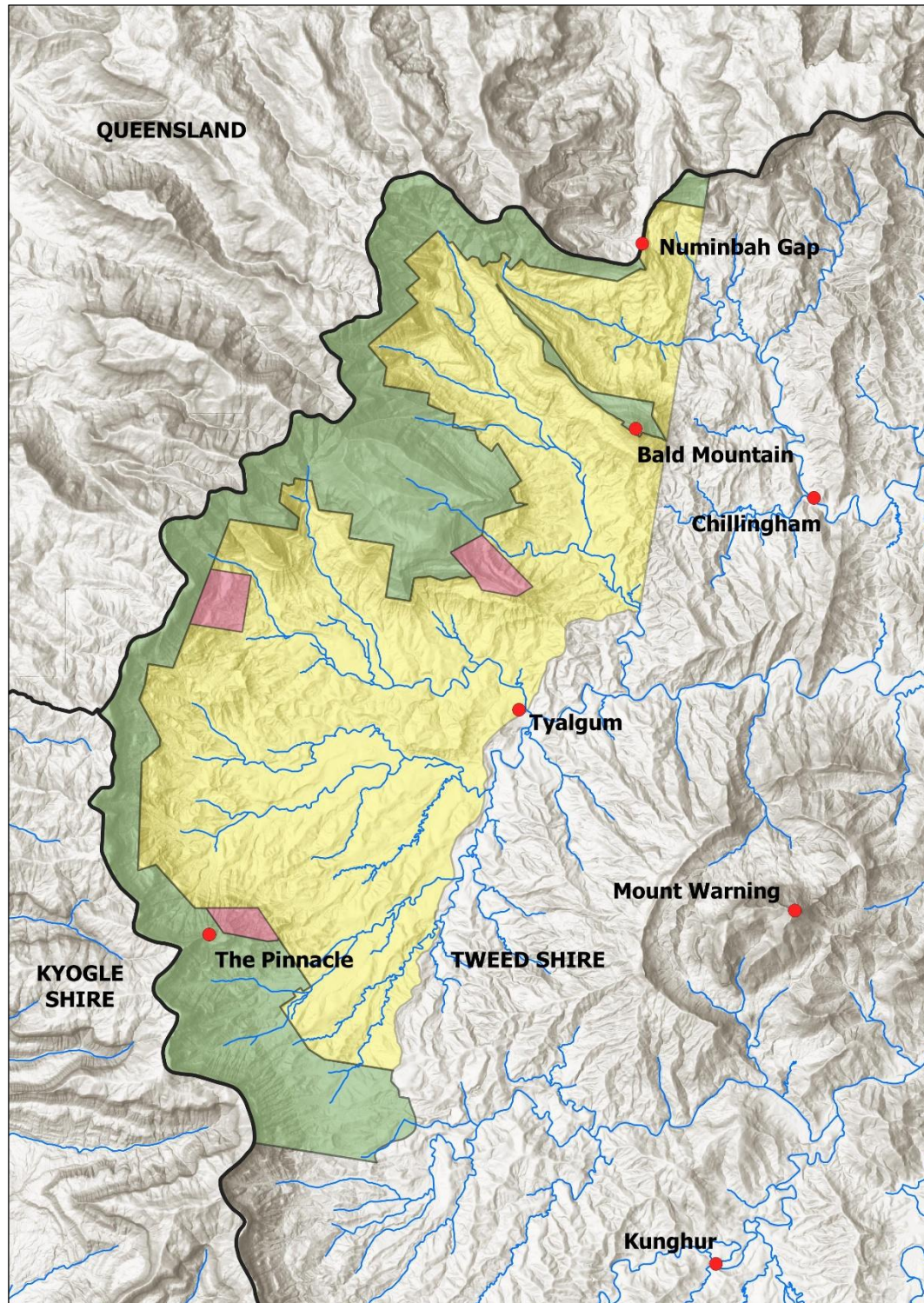


Figure 8: Crown land in F.R.10 within Tweed that had not been sold off by 1940 (green shading), including crown land held under lease (pink shading). Small areas of crown land such as the site of public schools, halls, etc. are not depicted.

Source: Author.

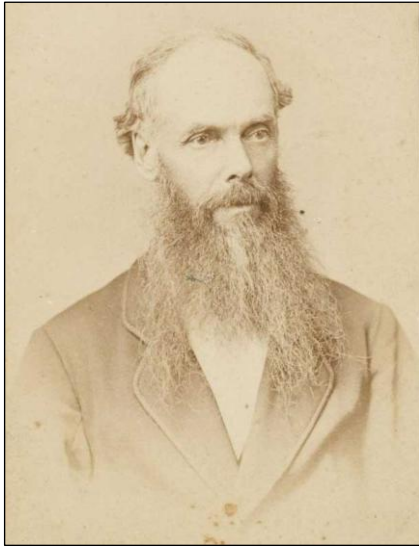


Figure 5: Portrait of William Carron.

Source: State Library of NSW.

Even in 1871 the reservation of land to conserve timber resources was far from universally supported. In his report to Moore and the NSW parliament, Carron noted that there were already local shortages of timber because of over-exploitation and there was a need for forest reservation to arrest future widespread shortages. However, he was clearly aware of the opposing forces, emphasising that much of the country chosen for the reserves was mountainous, that less mountainous parts of the reserves could be excised in future if need be, and that much forested land remained outside of the proposed reserves and so was available for sale, exploitation of its timber and clearing for agriculture. See Appendix B for his carefully chosen words.

His concern about the whittling away of the reserves was of course well founded. In the Tweed for instance, even by the time that all but the steepest and most remote parts of F.R.10 had been sold off, there was continuing pressure to sell or lease still more. A hand-written note dated 1920 on the sixth edition of the parish plan for Chillingham reads: '(F.R.4353) to be revoked when marketable timber is cut out', presumably

so that the land could be sold. (See Figure 6.) On the same plan there is another note - in different hand writing - inscribed below the cliffs along the Queensland border which reads: 'Revision officers recommend reservation along range for protection of watershed'. (The same note appears below the cliffs of the Tweed Range on the Tyalgum parish map published in 1912). The tussle continued.

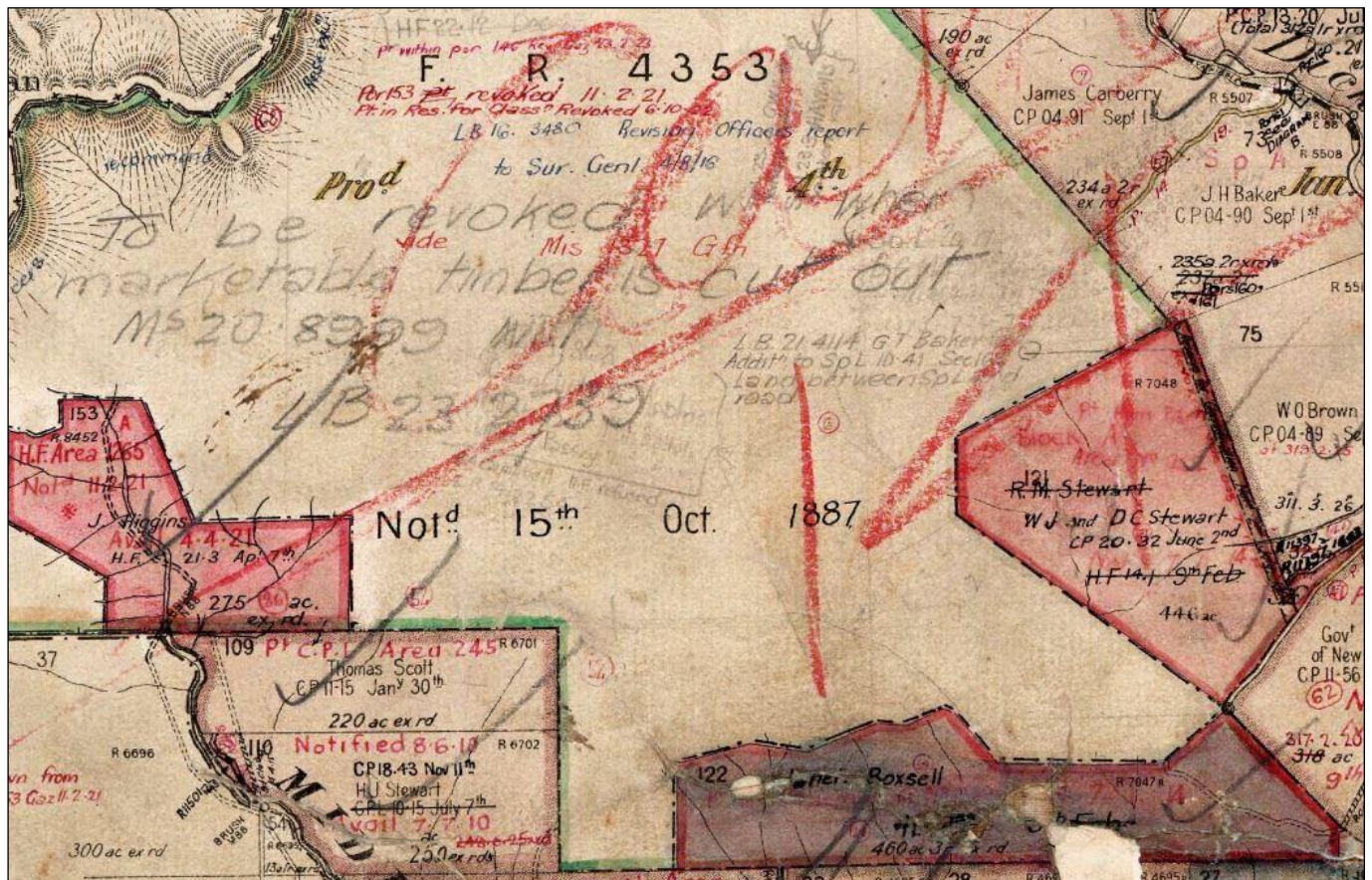


Figure 6: Note (in pencil) on the 1913 Chillingham parish plan foreshadowing final harvest of timber and then the sale of the reserve.

Source: Land Records Service of NSW.

The slow process of permanent reservation begins

On the seventh edition of the parish plan for Chillingham there is a record of the creation of a 'reserve from sale and lease for the preservation of native flora and fauna', proclaimed on 21 August 1925. It was said to be about 800 acres and was located where the text of the 1920 proposal to revoke was written, the catchment of what is now known as Hidden Creek. This was the core of what was to become Limpinwood Nature Reserve. See Figure 7 for an extract from the parish plan and Figure 9a for a depiction of the location of the flora and fauna reserve.

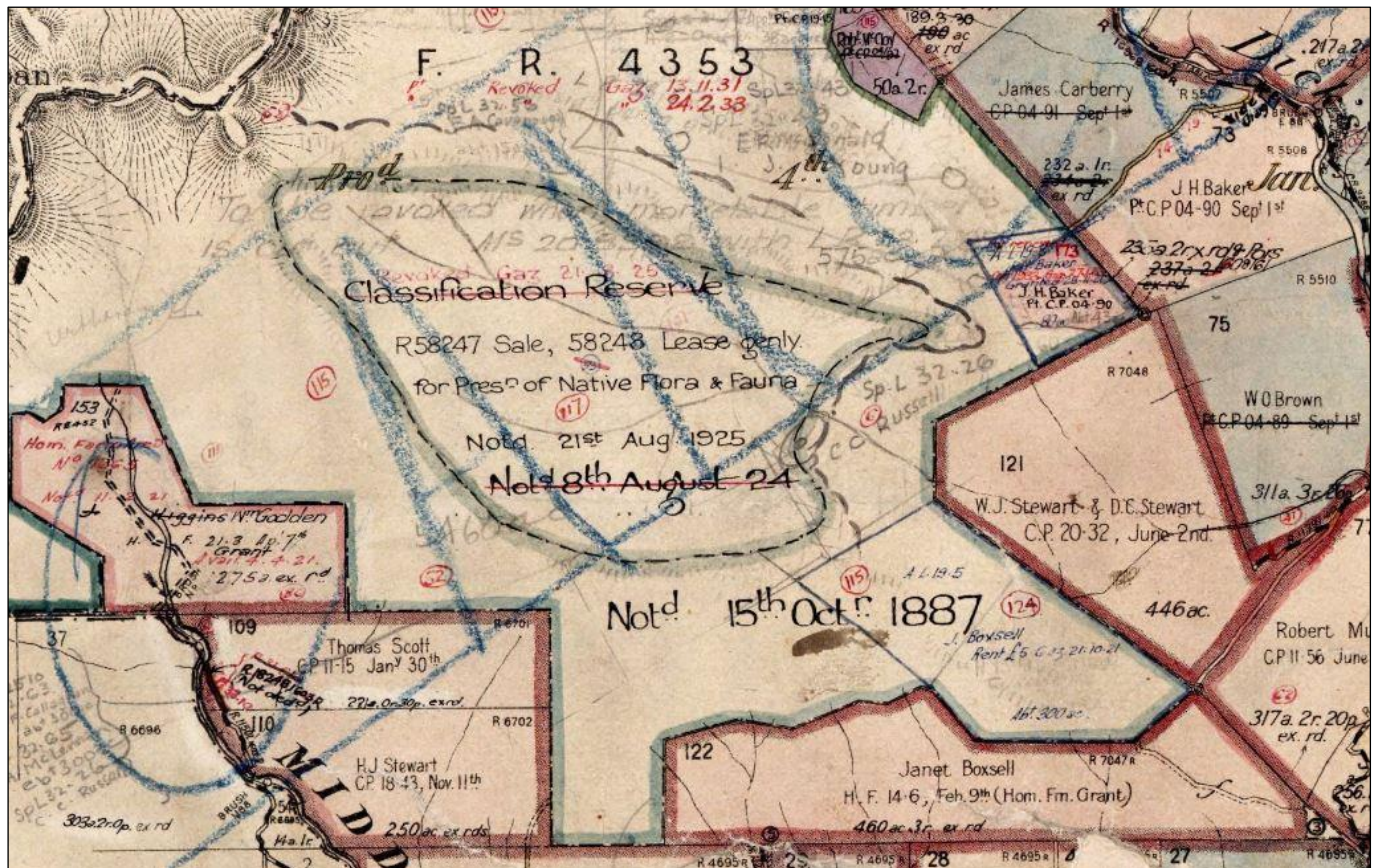


Figure 7: Declaration of flora and fauna reserve noted on Chillingham parish plan.

Source: Land Records Service of NSW.

The task of permanently reserving what remained of F.R.10 had commenced but it was far from over. Worryingly, there were still leases in F.R.4353, one of which was issued as late as 1950, with the result that the land in question was not added to Limpinwood Faunal Reserve until 1967, four years after the reserve's initial declaration. (See unit 5 in Figure 9a and Table 2.)

The parts of F.R.10 within the Tweed that are now in national parks tenure are made up of Limpinwood Nature Reserve, parts of Mebbin and Border Ranges National Parks and a small part of Numinbah Nature Reserve. (See Figures 9a and 9b.) It was a slow and piecemeal process from the first declaration of a reserve for the preservation of native flora and fauna in 1925 to the present. The details are set out in Figures 9a and 9b and in Table 2.

The creation of the current national parks reserves included the buy-back of three portions and the resumption of a lease still active in 1988 – areas 6 and 9 in Figures 9a and 9b.

A sizable area of crown land on the spur between Limpinwood and Hopkins Creek has for some reason not been included in the national parks reserve system. (See Figure 9a.)

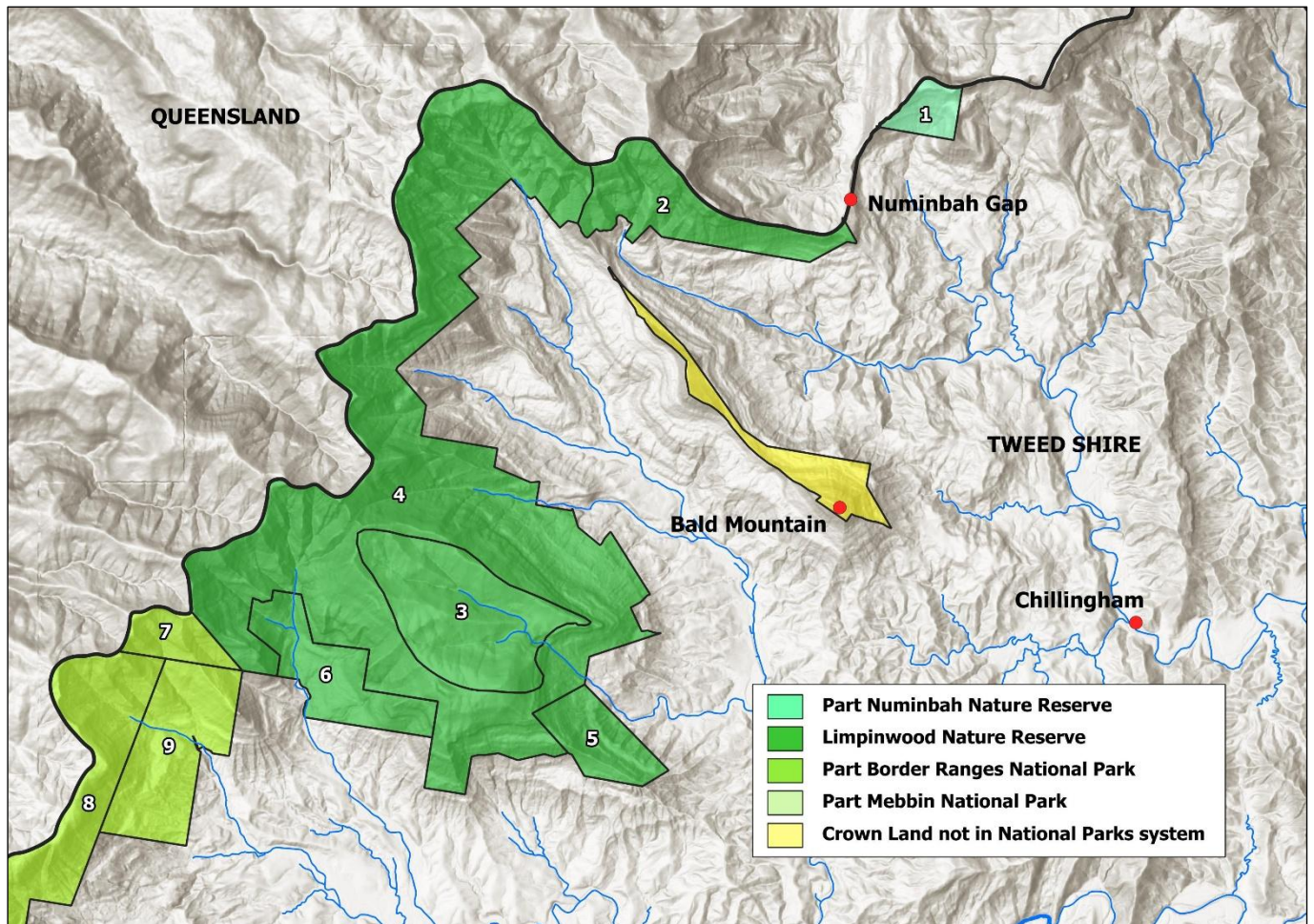


Figure 9a: Plan of changes to the reserve status of the lands now in National Parks tenure in the Tweed Shire and originally in F.R.10 (see Table 2 for more information).

Source: Author.



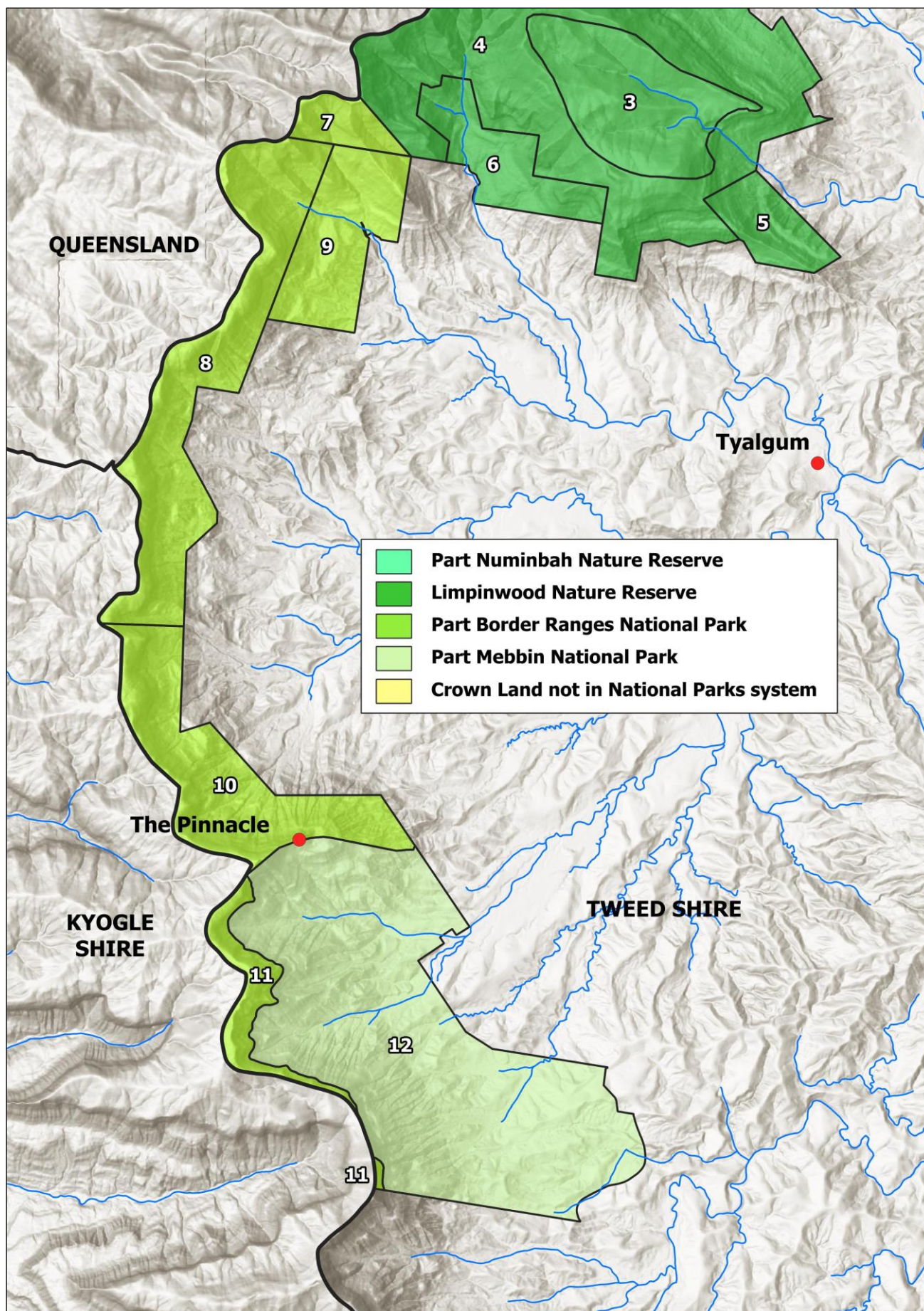


Figure 9b: Plan of changes to the reserve status of the lands now in National Parks tenure in the Tweed Shire and originally in F.R.10 (see Table 2 for more information).

Source: Author.

Table 2: Summary of the history of changes to the reserve status of the lands now in National Parks tenure in the Tweed Shire and originally in F.R.10 (see Figures 9a and 9b for locations).

Green shading identifies first date of secure reservation under either the Fauna Protection Act or the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

Identifier in Figures 9a and 9b	Year	Change of status
1, 2	1887	Unreserved (not included in Forest Reserve 4353)
3 - 12	1887	Forest Reserve 4353
8 - 12	1901	Reservation 32289 from annual lease
1, 2	1904	Forest Reserve 37010
8 - 12	1905	Revocation of Reservation 32289 from annual lease
1, 2	1913	State Forest No. 5
11, 12	1920	Mebbin State Forest Extension No. 1
3	1925	Reserve 48247 & 48248 for Preservation of Native Flora and Fauna
1, 2	1929	Reserve for Public Utility
1, 2	1935	Reserve for Catchment Area
7, 8, 10	1938	Reserve 67755 for Public Recreation and Preservation of Native Flora
2, 3, 4	1963	Limpinwood Faunal Reserve No. 28
5	1967	Limpinwood Faunal Reserve Extension No. 1
8	1979	Border Ranges National Park (part)
1	1981	Numinbah Nature Reserve (part)
7	1983	Border Ranges National Park (extension)
10	1984	Border Ranges National Park (extension)
9	1988-89	Border Ranges National Park (extension by purchase or cancellation of lease)
6	1989	Limpinwood Nature Reserve (extension by purchase)
11	1996	Border Ranges National Park (extension)
12	1999	Mebbin National Park (part)



Move beyond nostalgia.

Play a part in researching and promoting the rich and unique history of the town of Murwillumbah and its surrounds in the Tweed River Valley of Tweed Shire in the Northern Rivers District of far northern New South Wales.

Join the Murwillumbah Historical Society.

The sell-off in Kyogle Shire

The sell-off of the part of F.R.10 in Kyogle Shire was relatively limited, mainly because a large proportion is so rugged it is unsuitable for agriculture. The parts not sold off were reserved mainly for forestry for many years until they became part of the Border Ranges National Park in 1983. See Figure 10 for a depiction of the part of F.R.10 now in national park tenure.

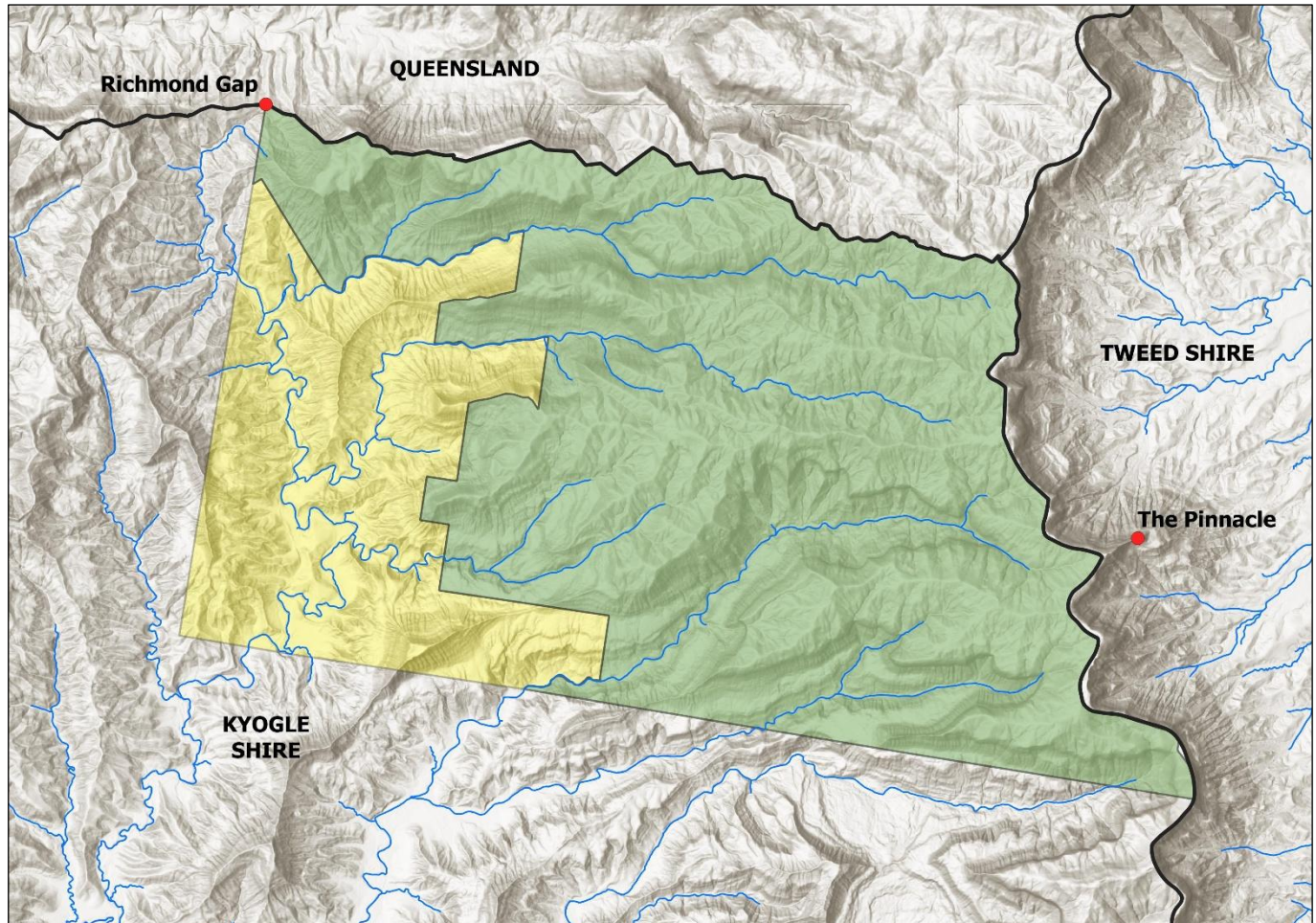


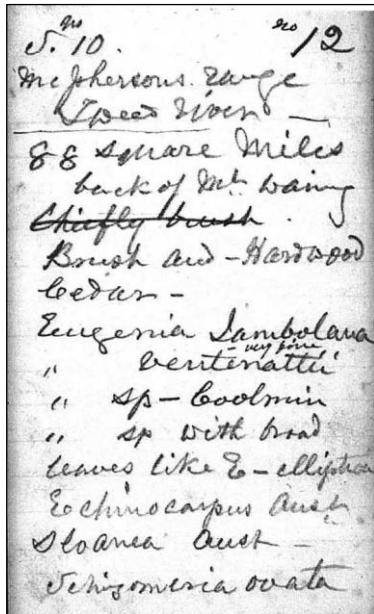
Figure 10: Crown land in F.R.10 within Kyogle Shire that was not sold off (green shading) and is now part of the Border Ranges National Park.

Source: Author.



APPENDIX A

Extract from William Carron's field notes for survey of Forest Reserve 10.



McPhersons Range
Tweed River —
88 square miles
back of Mt Warning
Chiefly brush
Brush and — Hardwood
Cedar —
Eugenia Jambolana
" *ventenattii*
" sp — Coolmin
" sp with broad
leaves like *E-elliptica*
Echinocarpus Aust
Sloanea Aust —
Schizomeria ovata

Source: State Library of NSW.

APPENDIX B

Extract from the second of William Carron's reports to the director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, Charles Moore regarding the Clarence Forest Reserves:

'The area of some of the reserves may appear large, but it has been thought advisable to make them so in the localities where it has been done to meet future requirements; and, if considered necessary, they may be reduced at some future time, although it is hardly likely they will be found too extensive in any case, when the rapid destruction of timber during the last eight or ten years is taken into consideration.

'The District Surveyor, Mr. P. B. Donaldson, has been careful, as far as possible, not to check the operation of free selection, either by making the reserves, where practicable, on poor stony ridges, or in other localities where there is a great deal more unalienated land of the same description in the neighbourhood than is likely to be required for some time.'

Source: *Timber Reserves, Report on, in Clarence, Richmond, and Tweed River Districts*), Legislative Assembly, New South Wales. Votes and Proceedings. Session 1872-1873, Volume II.

The Back Page ... (a little earlier than usual)

The Wootton headstone and the ship Mary Jane

The Tweed Regional Museum's exhibition, 'Ritual', displays the Wootton headstone. The exhibition's description of the item reads:

This headstone commemorates Margaret Wootton and Charles Wootton; the latter was connected to the loss of the cutter *Mary Jane* during a voyage between the Tweed River and Sydney in 1861.

Little is known about the vessel or the victims, and surviving records contain conflicting details. Like many small coastal craft of the period, the *Mary Jane* disappeared into history with few answers.

This description should also include the information that the headstone was erected by Charles' wife, Delia. The Museum's conclusion 'disappeared into history' is understandable, nevertheless it is a little precipitate.

There is some information available about the Woottons. In early 1927 Elizabeth Fowler wrote to the *Brisbane Courier* in response to an article published late in 1926 headlined 'Lonely Graves', about the Wootton headstone (and others) being swallowed up by 'Terranora Creek'. Along with other deaths, she remembered those of Margaret and Charles Wootton. She identified Delia as Charles' second wife and provided details of the death of his first wife, Margaret.

She was greatly worried over the loss of a bag of money, and most anxious to find it before the return of her husband who was away getting cedar. She fell sick and sent an orphan girl who lived with her to my mother for help. By the time my mother got to her she was speechless and died. Curiously, the bag of money was found, some few days after the funeral, in Wootton's house just about where Mrs Wootton thought she had put it.

The credibility of this memory is strengthened by the availability of both marriage registrations. Margaret and Charles married on 3 July 1843 at St Mary's Church, Sydney. After Margaret's death on 3 August 1856, Charles married Delia on 9 June 1857 at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Delia's marriage certificate is more comprehensive than Margaret's. She was 32, a spinster, born in County Galway Ireland, working as a servant, and her father was Anthony Meacle, a farmer, her mother Bridget Madden. The witnesses were Richard Meacle and Mary Hutchinson. Charles' death is dated by the headstone as 26 July 1961. (The absence of official death certificates for Margaret and Charles is in part because official registration was in its infancy in New South Wales, as well as the isolation and circumstances of their deaths.)

What is known of Delia's life after Charles' death is that she remarried on 9 August 1862, again at St Marys Cathedral. Her husband was Gilbert Slythe Hannah, a 28 year old shipwright born in Liverpool, England. She was 37, working as a housekeeper. The witnesses were James Meacle and Mary Anne Meacle. Her last appearance in the public record is when her death was recorded in the Sydney newspapers in 1890:

The body of the old woman who was found drowned at M'Mahon's Point on Monday morning last has been identified as that of Delia Hannah, aged 64 years, a widow, and a native of Ireland. She had been residing with Mrs. Newton, at No. 20, Lower Fort-street. The deceased was very much addicted to intemperance and was last seen alive by Mrs. Newton on Friday last, when she left the house with the intention of seeking admission to the Little Bay Hospital. Deceased was suffering from chronic rheumatism, and had frequently been heard to say that she would drown herself.

Her death certificate shows she died on or about 7 September, though the jury at the Coroner's Inquest was unable to say 'how or by what means she came to be drowned'. The registrar's informant was Richard Charles Meacle, her nephew. According to him, she had been in the colony for 35 years – probably correct. Her age at her two marriages, – about 40 and 55 respectively – was incorrect. And her burial at the Church of England Cemetery, Necropolis, seems out of place, given her own Roman Catholicism and the fact that her nephew was a pillar of the Church in Sydney. Another anomaly is that the witnesses and informants of her life events did not use the name with which she arrived in the colony – Bridget. Richard Meacle, a convicted felon sentenced to transportation for life (he stole a horse), after obtaining his conditional pardon in 1849 and establishing himself in business (he was a stonemason and he died from 'Extensive disease of lungs'), sponsored his brother James and his wife, Joseph Pilkington, a labourer, and Bridget Meacle, all arriving on the *Cressy* on 15 January 1856. Richard, James and Delia had the same father, Anthony, though the identity of their mother was variously Bridget Madden, 'Ch. N. not known Meahan', or not recorded or known on the death certificates of James and Delia respectively.

Elizabeth Fowler continues:

Charles Wootton was a passenger on the *Mary Jane* on her first (and last) trip from the Tweed to Sydney. She was owned by my father William Bozier who took her as part payment of cash owing to him by a Sydney agent named Brennan. She was brought to the Tweed and loaded with cedar for Sydney. She turned turtle and all hands were lost. There were three or four passengers-Wootton, Beach, Overend and I think the other was named Oliver, but I am not sure. I was in Brisbane with my mother and the rest of the family at the time. My father came to Brisbane to take us back to the Tweed and while there he heard of the loss of the *Mary Jane*. We returned to the Tweed from Brisbane in the schooner *Frances George*. It took us three

weeks to get there. We were up and down the coast anywhere between Newcastle and Moreton Island waiting for a chance to get over the Tweed bar, the weather being bad.

While there are no death registration records for these men, the details of the *Mary Jane* can be found in the 'Registers of British Ships, Port of Sydney'. The sailing ship was built on the Bellinger River in 1861 by Thomas Salter. It had one deck, two masts, was schooner rigged, had a square stern, carvel build, no galley, a scroll head, and a wood framework. The recorded measurements of the ship were a length of 61.6 feet, width of 15.9 feet, and depth of 6.4 feet, and its register tonnage was 46.08 tons. Its official number was 36865, port number 24 of 1861, with the registration dated 20 May 1861. The record of ownership shows that on 25 June 1861 ownership passed to William Boazer [sic] of a half share; Robert Chadwick a quarter share; and Richard May of the balance. The final notation on this document reads: 'Lost some years ago @ the Tweed River N. S. Wales Certificate of Reg. lost with the ship. 31 Decr 1872' The fact that this statement was made well over eleven years after the loss of the *Mary Jane* is puzzling. The *Sydney Morning Herald* had reported on 30 August 1861 as follows: 'The schooner *Mary Jane*, which sailed from the Tweed River for Sydney, on the 24th ultimo, has not arrived, and fears are entertained for her safety. She was a new vessel of fifty tons register.' A note the following day reads: 'The Francis George, for the Tweed, has on board Mr. Smith (and family) the owner of the *Mary Jane*, which is supposed to be lost - *Moreton Bay Courier*, August 25.' The identity of Smith is also a puzzle, given the ownership details recorded a little over two months earlier.

'Ritual' is on display until 21 November 2026. Take some time out to visit the Wootton and Boyd headstones. Who knows, you may feel inclined to reflect on the life of Bridget Meacle, a 32 year old literate nurse and lady's maid sponsored by her ex-convict brother to come to New South Wales in 1856; who changed her name to Delia when she married Charles Wootton, a sawyer, in 1857; who suffered bereavement when he died in 1861, and remarried in 1862; and died twenty-eight years later, an inebriate, suffering chronic rheumatism, and subject to thoughts of self-harm. She carried out the ritual of erecting a memorial to her deceased husband. She also infused this ritual with a wonderful kindness, giving a woman she had never met the remembrance she believed she deserved. Of course, if you are of a more practical turn of mind, you could consider researching the passengers of the *Mary Jane*: Beach, Overend and the man who may have been named Oliver.

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.

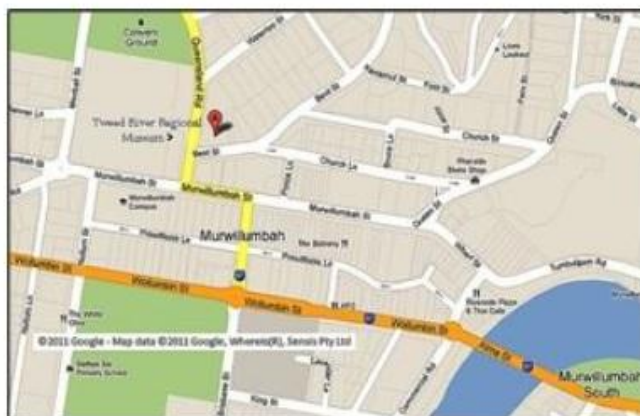
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ABOUT THE MUSEUM: The Tweed Regional Museum is a Tweed Shire Council community facility, established in 2004, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Tweed Shire Council and the Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki and South Arm Historical 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.

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