

TIMELINES

In fifteen minutes

Number 36

From the committee ...

It was a big month for our researchers. Thirteen enquiries were received. Committee Member Joan Cuthel works tirelessly to satisfy the needs of people looking into their family's history or seeking more information about the house in which they now live. While we do not levy a charge for research undertaken, we appreciate the generosity of those who avail themselves of our services and show their thanks with a donation.

The Tweed Regional Museum Street Party

The Street Party was a roaring success. With an attendance of 10,000 over the afternoon and evening, the music and the food drew the crowds to the Museum precinct and into the Museum itself. For many this was the first time they have visited the Museum, affording them the opportunity to find out about the many facets of the Tweed's culture and history. The Society had a stall, managed by our President, Bev Fairley, and Treasurer, Ian Batten. Henry James, our resident cartographer and font of knowledge about places and the changing face of the Tweed Valley had a busy afternoon answering questions from passers-by. More than a few people reached into their pockets and left with publications available from our bookshop.

The Murwillumbah show will be our next public appearance, but you can always ring us or send an email if you have an enquiry. Remember – the Show is early this year – October, not November!



Our next meeting

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

11:00 am on Monday, 19 October 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

The Great White Train

The Great White Train, an initiative of the “Australian-made” Preference League, rolled into Murwillumbah late on Thursday, 30 September 1926. It was open to visitors for the first two days of October. While its purpose was to encourage Australians to support home grown industries, it was not silent about its relationship to the imperatives of the time: ‘The public of the

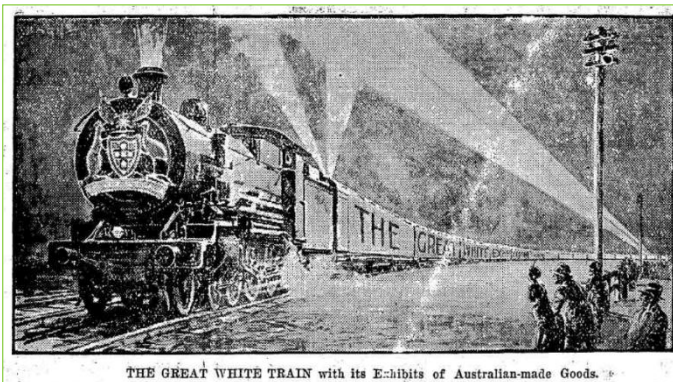
present day demand the rigid enforcement of a White Australia policy as applied to humans, to prevent the country being over-run with colored foreign races. The same policy should apply to foreign manufactures.’

Two articles that appear in the *Tweed Daily* at the time provide evidence that, notwithstanding the modernity of the project and its flagrant boosterism, its flaws were on show to all and there were people calling out its racism. In chronological order, the first was headlined ‘Cute Aborigines’. At Macksville, a trio of musicians were offered the opportunity to broadcast on the Train’s radio station, but the organisers refused to pay them for their performance. They then entertained the crowd and, writes the reporter, ‘judging by the way the hat was filled, there was nothing wrong with their business sense’. The article continued: ‘Another aged black suggested that he should be taken along and exhibited as “dinkum Australian.” A third addressed the train staff as “fellow Aussies.” “All Australians,” he declared—“black and white.”’ Their upending of the whole concept of the project was so acute that it had to be turned into a caricature by the newspaper.

The second article demonstrates both the needs and the fears of white people at the time. It was a form of reassurance for the people of Murwillumbah that the Train was honouring the principle of exclusion referred to in its description. The Train’s secretary wrote in the *Tweed Daily*: “Since leaving Sydney on a tour of the North Coast, several officials of the Great White Train have, at different towns, been assailed with a rumour ... that there was a Chinese cook on the train. While this suggestion is too absurd to hold sway with any sane minded person, it nevertheless causes a good deal of unpleasantness for the officials concerned, as it is hard to impress some people that there are no foreigners on board the Train.” Did the following closing line add insult to injury? “This statement is issued for the information of the Murwillumbah public, who may may heard the rumour.” Whether the people of Murwillumbah, the Tweed,

and the wider northern rivers were so naïve that they needed this assurance is moot.

The Train contained distractions galore and offered local merchants and school students a variety of prizes for their part in this merchandising carnival. The Train had twenty carriages and was a quarter of a mile long. There was a broadcasting station on board provided by AWA. and the speeches of ‘prominent men’, as well as a musical program, were broadcast every afternoon and evening on radio 2XT. Among the exhibitors were Kellogg’s, Nestle’s [sic], Wrigley’s, Bond’s, and Tooth’s. Locally, A S Loder and Co of Uki took the main prize in the window dressing competition. First prizes were won by Murwillumbah Intermediate High School’s John Bromhead in the secondary section and John Ryan from Mount St. Patrick’s Convent School in the primary section.



Tweed Daily, 1 October 1926, page 3.



A S Loder and Co window display.

Source: The Collection, Tweed Regional Museum.