TIMELINES

Something NEW!

Welcome

Welcome to the latest edition of *Timelines*, the newsletter of Murwillumbah Historical Society.

This quarter, Henry James, a regular contributor, presents the results of fundamental research into the alienation of land in the Tweed Shire following the Robertson Land Acts. This is an important addition to evidence about the ownership of land, compiled from primary source documents. Just as importantly, it is an indictment of the privatisation of history as it disappears behind paywalls, into the hands of organisations who care about little but the return on their investment.

A new contributor (and Society member), Robert Budd, writes about his family's connection with the **Court House Hotel**, which celebrates its 125th anniversary this month. Having read the previous issue of *Timelines*, he quite rightly pointed out that the Hotel's history did not end with in the 1920s. He takes us through to the 1950s. His great-grandfather Frederick ('Fritz') Wilhelm Wulff was the owner and licensee until his death in 1945, after which Fritz's son Ernst continued his work. The Wulff family has widespread connections with ownership and management of hotels in Tweed valley, from Murwillumbah and South Murwillumbah to Chinderah, Cudgen, and Kingscliff, so there should be a few more stories coming our way.

The focus on the Court House Hotel brought to light a celebrity visit to Murwillumbah – albeit, in 1909. **Melba@Mur'bah** draws on newspaper reports to describe the diva's visit to Murwillumbah as part of her national 'Sentimental Tour'. She stayed at the Court House Hotel and performed at the newly rebuilt School of Arts (following the fire of 1907). Click on the links to the (near contemporary) recordings of the items she performed to experience the voice that 'aroused her audience to a perfect storm of applause'.

The final article in this edition is an example of the Society's research in action. Ian Batten answers a member's enquiry about the naming of **Bullamakanka Rest** on the Tweed Valley Way: 'I was wondering do you have any information that could help unravel the mystery of an unusual name for a park, especially considering the place of the word 'Bulamakanka' in the Australian lexicon'.

Enjoy this edition!

Early post-colonial privatisation of land in the Tweed

Henry James has undertaken fundamental research based on land records for the Tweed. He provides researchers a basis for telling the story of closer settlement following the Robertson Land Acts. He concludes his article with the observation that his work raises more questions than answers…

The subject of this story is the early post-colonial privatisation of land in the Tweed – land that was stolen from its first nation occupants. It is about where and when much of the land in the Tweed was privatised, not who took it. It describes part of the data assembled in a comprehensive research of land records.

The process of privatisation of land in the Tweed was unlike most of the rest of NSW, mainly because the Tweed was naturally unsuited to the raising of sheep. Tweed missed the massive land grab made by squatters, which was illegal even under British law at the time. That land grab was not regularised until 1836 by a British Parliament that included members of the squattocracy and its bankers.

The land grab in Tweed started relatively late, after the NSW Parliament passed legislation in 1861 that was supposed to favour agriculturalists on relatively small holdings and curtail the dominance of pastoralists on large holdings. Pastoralists generally leased their runs from the Crown. By contrast, under the 1861 legislation, government sought to sell freehold title to small holders in plots from 40 to 320 acres in size. The first sales of land in Tweed started in 1867. Up until the mid-1880s there were also a few large pastoral runs in the Tweed (leasehold lands), but their owners often lost interest and allowed their leases to lapse. In most cases, government had little success in finding new tenants. But that is another story.

The process of selling freehold title to land generally involved potential buyers staking out available land and then making an application to purchase. A government surveyor would measure the plot (called a "portion") and draw up a plan (called a "crown plan"). The plan would include dimensions of the subject plot, its position relative to existing neighbouring plots and road reserves and the species of marker trees at the corners. It would also have more or less detailed descriptions of the vegetation, water supply, topography, geology and "improvements", if there were any. Improvements could include clearing of forest. Finally, the plan would also include the date it was completed and the name of the surveyor. Notations were often later added to the plan. They could include changes to the person making the purchase or the opening and closing of roads reserves in and adjacent to the portion. Most of these plans still exist and most have been digitised. More than a few of them are works of art. An example is shown at Figure 1. Unfortunately, the Baird government sold the rights to digital copy of the plans to a consortium of First State Super, Hastings Fund Management and the Royal Bank of Scotland Group's pension fund. Fortunately, a condition of the sell-off provided that they can be viewed for free on dedicated computer screens at the State Archives Office but not photographed. Digital copy can of course be purchased. The price is about $20.00 a plan.

While the individual portions were being surveyed, government cartographers assembled maps of the newly divided landscape, generally at the scale of the parish. These parish maps went through a number of editions. Many of them have survived, have been digitised and are available for viewing for free online. An example is shown at Figure 2. Tweed consists of 17 parishes, plus a small part of Billinudgel parish.

I have reconstructed the original subdivision of the landscape in digital spatial format and have attached much of the information from the crown plans for each of the originally surveyed portions. The task is large but is nearing completion. There are over 2,000 portions. The database is now sufficiently complete to undertake useful analyses. There are many ways to analyse and portray the data. One is to depict where and when land was "taken up" (see Graph 1 and Map 1 below). The graph illustrates that the take-up was a far-from-steady process, that it was largely complete by 1913 and that a very large proportion occurred as late as a short period between 1903 and 1911. The map illustrates the location of land privatised at the time of surges and the lulls in between. A task for the relentless researcher is to explain the surges and lulls.
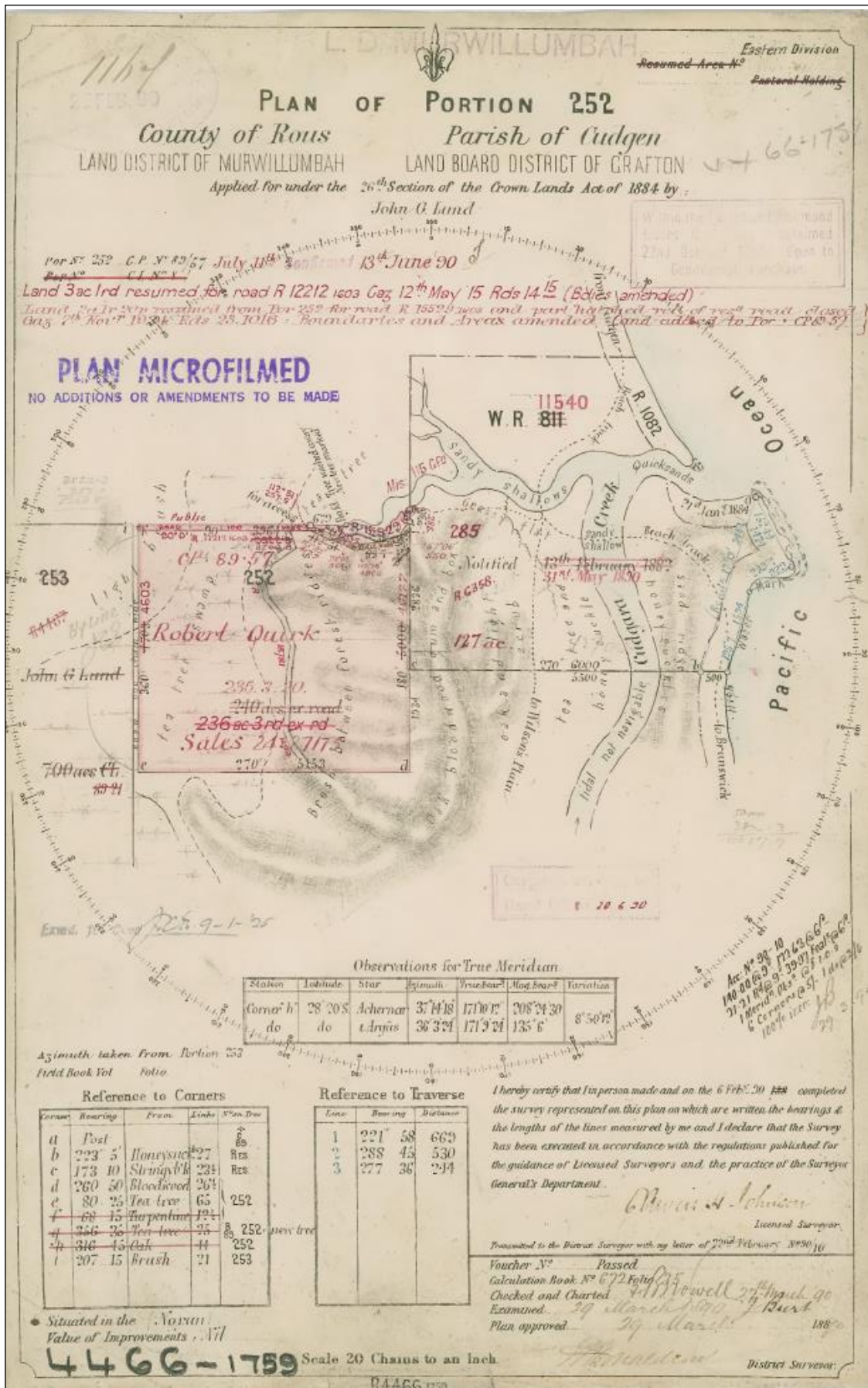
Figure 1. Crown Plan for Portion 252 Parish of Cudgen. Survey completed on 6 February 1890 by Edwin Johnson, towards the end of the second surge. This land has come back into the possession of government (Tweed Council and the NSW government) and is part of the conservation reserve created with the Koala Beach development.
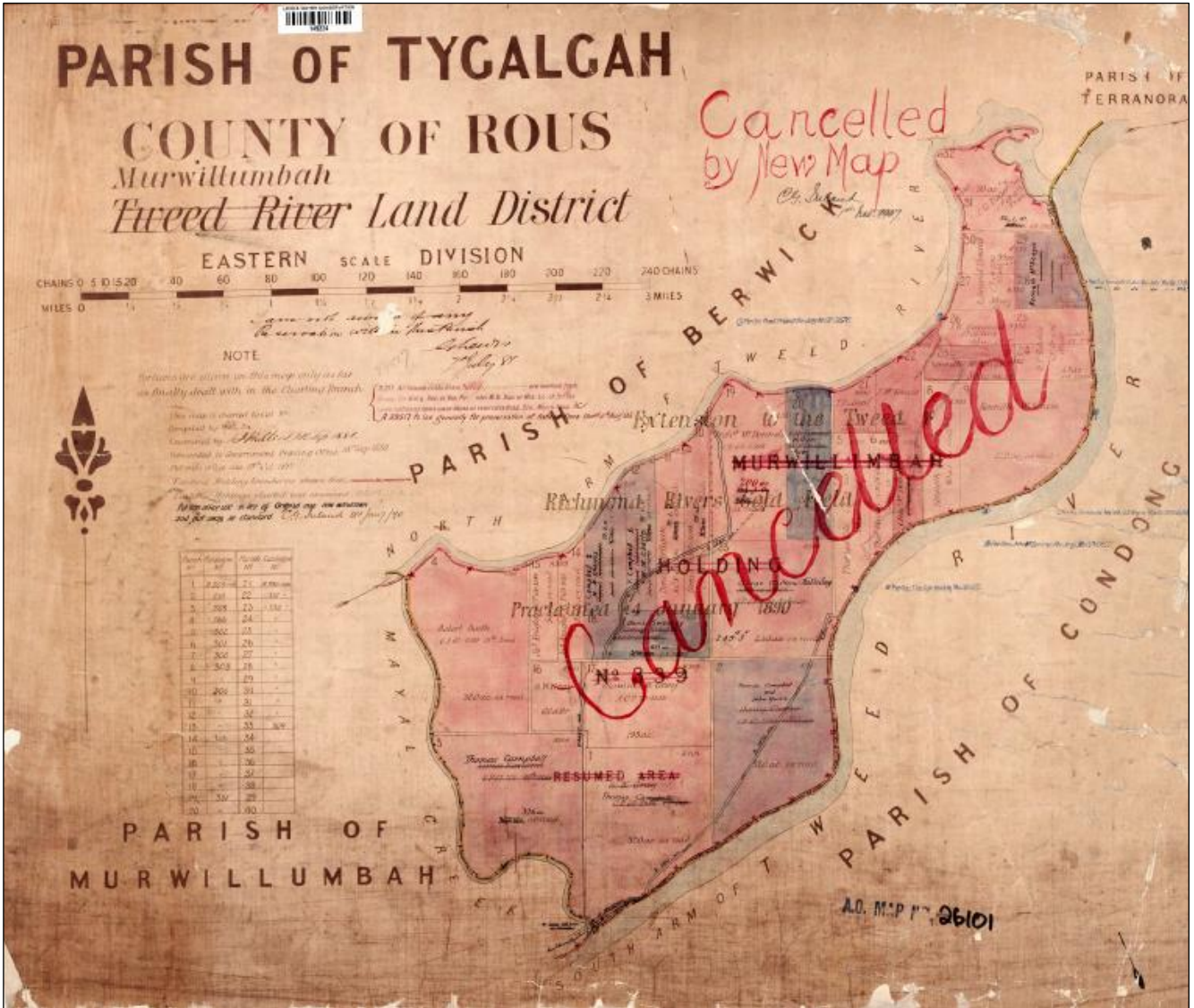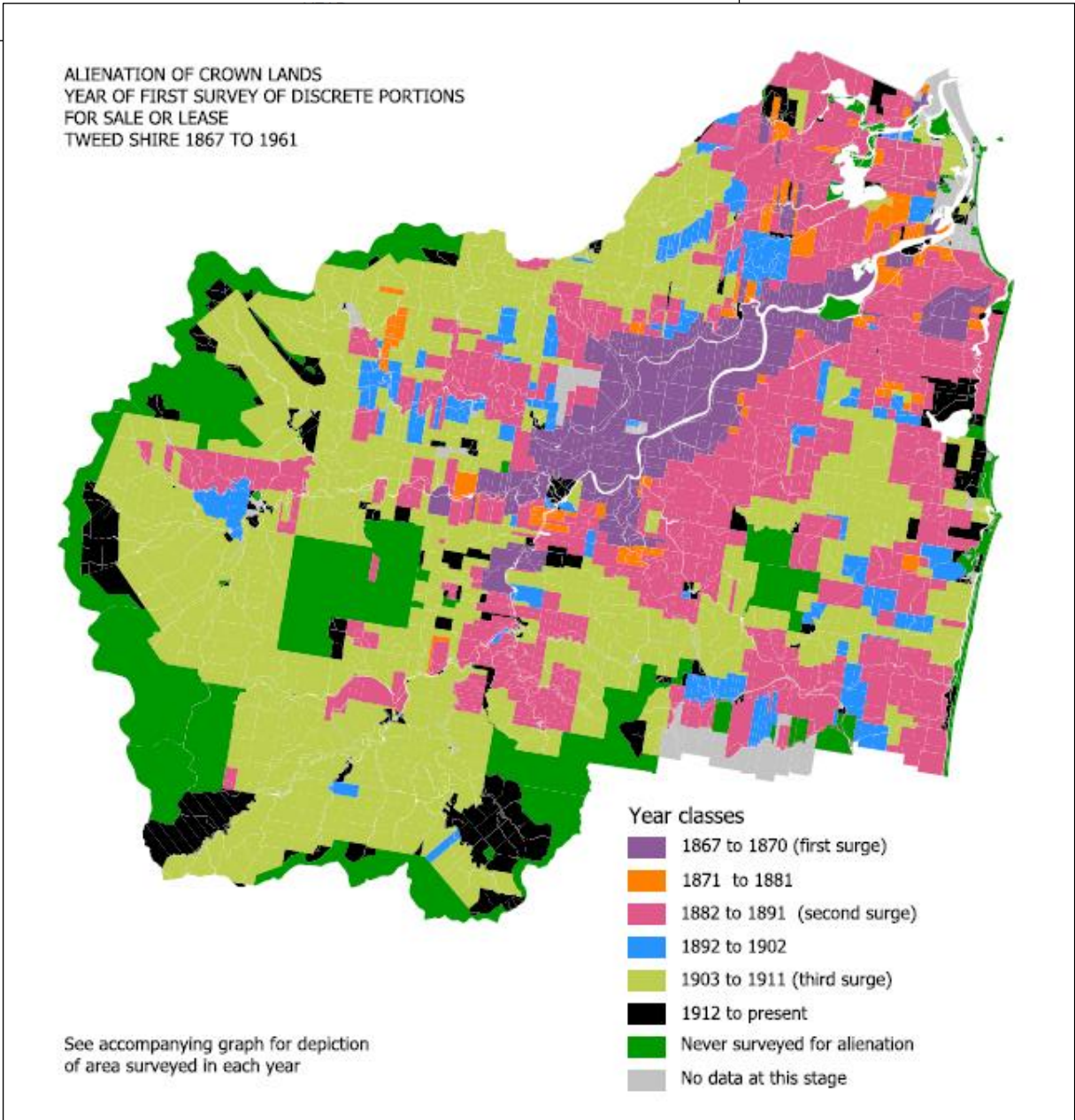
Figure 2. Parish Plan for Tygalgah from 1881. This plan is a very early example of its type by the standards of the Tweed. It is a first edition. Very few first editions survive. For example, the earliest surviving plan for Murwillumbah parish is edition 2 from 1889. The earliest surviving plan for Condong parish is edition 3 from 1889.

AREA OF LAND SURVEYED FOR ALIENATION BY YEAR
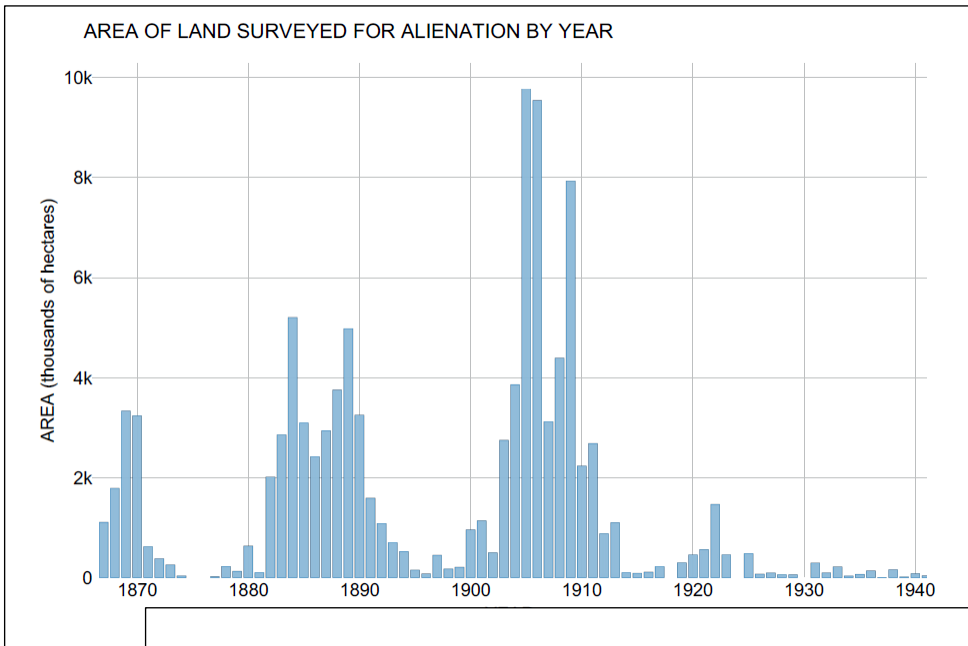
Graph 1. A graph of the area of land surveyed for alienation each year, starting in 1867. In most cases the land was surveyed for sale. In a small number of cases it was surveyed for lease and then often sold soon after. For convenience, the graph has been truncated at the year 1941. Very little alienation occurred after that date.

ALIENATION OF CROWN LANDS
YEAR OF FIRST SURVEY OF DISCRETE PORTIONS
FOR SALE OR LEASE
TWEED SHIRE 1867 TO 1961

See accompanying graph for depiction
of area surveyed in each year

Year classes

- 1867 to 1870 (first surge)
- 1871 to 1881
- 1882 to 1891 (second surge)
- 1892 to 1902
- 1903 to 1911 (third surge)
- 1912 to present
- Never surveyed for alienation
- No data at this stage

Map 1. A map depicting when each portion was surveyed for sale. The portions have been grouped into age classes that coincide with the surges and lulls in sales.

The pub that George built

A tale of two Tweed pioneer families and a lot of pubs!

New Society member Robert Budd joins us, providing more information about the Court House Hotel that was managed and later owned by his great-grandfather, Frederick (Fritz) Wulff.

Have you ever strolled down Main Street Murwillumbah, looking at the older buildings and wondering who built them, and what stories they could tell?

his father worked as a sawyer, cutting timber for pastoralist Joshua Bray.

Not only was George among the first non-Indigenous people of the Tweed, he, like so many others of the time, was a very enterprising man. He built one of the first sugar mills in the Tweed Valley, a cordial and soft drink company (Skinner and Lowes), a fleet of river steamboats serving as the main form of transport between Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads for many years, and he was Tweed Shire Alderman from 1904 to 1910. He also built a

Undated photo of George Skinner (back row left) and Benjamin Skinner (back row right) with other Murwillumbah notables.

Tweed Regional Museum.

The original Court House Hotel was built in 1899, being completed in 1900. Its history is a strong link to the early pioneers of the Tweed Valley. Their stories are easily lost and forgotten but their legacy in the buildings of the Tweed remain. This is a short history of one pub and two pioneering families who helped build a town.

The Robertson Land Acts of 1861 cleared the way for land ownership across New South Wales. George Skinner was born in 1859 at Hartley, in the Blue Mountains. In 1863 at the age of four, he travelled with his parents to the Tweed Valley where

pub in 1900, the Court House Hotel Murwillumbah. Today, you might visit the Tweed Regional Museum to see examples of the Skinner legacy. However, on Main Street Murwillumbah, the pub that George built is still standing, although looking somewhat different from the original . The pub is still serving patrons drinks and meals, much as it has for the past 125 years.

George's younger brother, Benjamin Frederick Skinner, was born on the Tweed River in 1867. He obtained a license to serve liquor and was licensee

of the Court House Hotel for 18 years. It is easy to see why the pub was also known as Skinner's Hotel.

On 15 September 1907, a great fire swept through the town of Murwillumbah. 'When Skinner's Court House Hotel and Jay's store were burning the sight was an awing one. The huge flames shot high in the air and falling timbers dispersed sparks in all directions, albeit the wind carried most of them across the street.'

In the early days of European settlement, the newly formed Queensland government was actively recruiting industrious families from Germany as a way to populate and build the new colony. The Wulff family responded to the call arriving in Brisbane from Kiel via Hamburg, Germany in August 1863 aboard the La Rochelle .

Frederick "Fritz" Wilhelm Wulff was born in Beenleigh Queensland. The family settled in the Tweed in 1891 and named their farm Kielvale. It

Murwillumbah Court House Hotel before and after the 1907 fire.

Tweed Regional Museum.

George rebuilt by May 1908 at a cost of £4,000 with plans by architect Alexander Stewart Jolly. Benjamin continued as licensee until his retirement in 1919. George remained the owner of the hotel.

After Benjamin's retirement a long list of people held the liquor license in the following years. Some lasted less than a year in the role. The licensed publicans at this time included Bert McClymont, Buck Anderson, Arthur Horseman, W L Gorman, H R Barry, and M Priestley. In November 1928 Fritz Wulff purchased the Court House Hotel from George Skinner.

was managing hotels where the Wulff family really made a name for themselves on the Tweed. At one time or another, the Wulff family owned or were licensees of seven hotels in the Tweed: the Royal

COURT HOUSE HOTEL SOLD.

A big deal in hotel property at Murwillumbah was finalised yesterday when the sale of the freehold of the Court House Hotel was completed, the property passing from Mr. G. Skinner, senr. to Mr. F. W. Wulff, licensee of the Imperial Hotel. The amount paid was not disclosed, but it was stated that both parties are quite satisfied with the deal. The present lease has about three years to run.

Tweed Daily, *Tuesday, 6 November 1928, page 2.*

Frederick 'Fritz' Wilhelm Wulff.

Robert Budd Family collection.

Hotel, Terminus Hotel, Imperial Hotel, Chinderah Hotel, Cudgen Hotel, Kingscliff Hotel and the Court House Hotel.

When Fritz purchased the Court House Hotel freehold, he was the licensee at the Imperial Hotel and his family were living at the Imperial Hotel . The Court House Hotel licensee held a lease for another three years.

Fires seem commonplace with pubs in Murwillumbah at the time. On 7 November 1929, a fire destroyed the Imperial Hotel and the Wulff family moved to the Court House Hotel while Fritz operated a temporary bar beside the burnt remains. In 1930 Fritz applied for and was granted approval

for the Spanish Mission styled construction of the new Imperial Hotel as it stands today.

In 1931 Fritz became the licensee of the Court House Hotel. He invested £2,000 in making changes, including converting the dining room into a shop. He managed the hotel until his death in 1945. His son, Ernst Christian Wulff became the licensee until it was sold in 1952.

Fritz was my great grandfather. A family story that I recall was set during the war. On one occasion some locals took the war to the streets of Murwillumbah to burn down Fritz's pub. Quick thinking saved the day (and the pub) by throwing the doors open and offering free drinks for all.

Who Owned and Operated the Court House Hotel from 1900

A preliminary listing of owners and licensees of the Court House compiled by Robert Budd in writing the article above.

George Skinner – builder of the Court House Hotel in 1899-1900 and owner from 1900 to 1928.

• George Skinner licensee from 1900 to 1901.

• Benjamin Frederick Skinner licensee from 1901 to 1919.

• George Bertram McClymont licensee from 1919 to 1920.

• Arthur Edward Anderson licensee from 1920 to 1925 or 1926.

• Arthur Horsman licensee from 1925 or1926 to unknown year.

• William J Gorman licensee from unknown year to 1929.

Frederick Wilhelm Wulff - owner of the Court House Hotel from 1928 until his death in 1945.

• H R Barry licensee from 1929 to unknown year.

• A Harvey from unknown year to 1931.

• Clement Montague Priestley licence in 1931.

• Frederick Wilhelm Wulff licensee from 1931 to 1946.

• Ernst Christian Wulff licensee from 1946 to 1952 (the transfer was granted on 28 February 1946 '[w]ith the approval of the executors of the estate of the late Fritz William Wulff'.

The Court House Hotel was sold 'on behalf of the estate of the late Fritz Wulff to a syndicate comprising Mr. M. F. Staunton and others' in 1952 for £50,000.

Images of hotels managed by the Wulffs (Author provided and Tooth and Company yellow cards)

The Royal Hotel (later Tweed Tavern) in 1924. (Tooth and Company yellow cards).

The Terminus (later Riverview) Hotel. (Robert Budd Family collection).
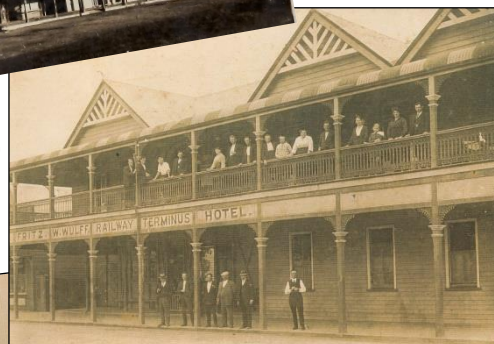
The Chinderah Hotel. (Robert Budd Family collection).

The Cudgen (later Kingscliff) Hotel in 1924. (Tooth and Company yellow cards).

The Imperial Hotel in 1931. (Tooth and Company yellow cards).

The Court House Hotel – 125 years

Melba@Mur'bah – 1909!

On 26 July 1909 Dame Nellie Melba, the 'talked of and famous singer', 'in the noon-day glory of her fame, fresh from scenes of her great triumphs in Europe and America, where she reigns gloriously: The Queen of Song', arrived at Murwillumbah on the northern rivers leg of a 'Sentimental Tour'. Her performance date had been announced back in January, and now 'between 500 to 600 persons' were waiting for her arrival on the river steamer *Booyung* from Tweed Heads. The Federal Brass Band was playing and the Mayor and Mayoress, Mr and Mrs Street, and the Police Magistrate, Mr W S Arnott, went on board to welcome her on behalf of the townspeople. A car had been arranged to take her to her lodgings at the Court House Hotel, but 'at the request of Madame the party walked, followed by most of the crowd'. Tired from her journey, she retired to her rooms, 'excus[ing] herself from receiving callers'. 'During the evening the Federal Band serenaded Madame from the balcony of the School of Arts', with Melba 'very pleased with their performance'.

The advertisement for her concert promised she would perform the valse song, 'Se Saran Rose' (Rosebuds) by Arditi, 'Good-Bye' by Tosti, and the mad scene from 'Lucia de Lammermoor' by Donizetti. She did, and, as encores, gave the audience 'Comin' Thro' the Rye' (to which she had 'a lifelong attachment', first singing it in public as a child, according to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*) and 'Believe me, if all those endearing young charms'. Her director John Lemmone performed a flute obligato, 'Il Vento' (Wind Amongst the Trees) by Briccialdi.

The links above will provide the reader with an idea of what the 'packed audience in the School of Arts' heard on Tuesday, 27 July 1909. (Sadly, work by Frederick Ranalow, Una Bourne and Harold Whittle, her assistants, has not been found at present).

What was 'probably the largest audience that ever assembled' in the town, and 'a particularly well-dressed one, most of the ladies and gentlemen present being in evening attire', expected '[great wonders'. They were not disappointed, at least in the telling of the *Tweed Herald and Brunswick Chronicle* reporter. The 'wonderful quality of her voice', 'her clear sweet notes of pure music', 'the masterful range of her magnificent voice', enchanting in its 'lovely purity', her ability to sing 'only as the great Melba knows how to interpret song – divine, ecstatic' all 'aroused her audience to a perfect storm of applause'.

She left Murwillumbah to continue her 'Tour' to Lismore, Casino and Grafton. She had promised to perform again in Lismore, but the travelling party became ill and had to return to Brisbane. The return trip required a second, overnight, stay at Murwillumbah from 6 to 7 August. And so ended the diva's visit and stay in Murwillumbah.

SCHOOL OF ARTS, MURWILLUMBAH.

Under the Direction of John Lemmone.

MELBA.

Tuesday, July 27

Madame Melba

Is coming in the noon-day glory of her fame, fresh from the scenes of her great triumphs in Europe and America, where she reigns gloriously: The Queen of Song.

Madame Melba

WILL SING

Valse Song, "Se Saran Rose" (Rosebuds) ... ... Arditi
"Good-Bye" ... ... Tosti
Mad Scene from "Lucia di Lammermoor" ... ... Donizetti
Flute Obligato Mr. John Lemmone.

Assisted by

MR. FREDERICK RANALOW (famous young Irish Baritone).
MISS UNA BOURNE, Solo Pianist.
MR. JOHN LEMMONE, Solo Flautist.
MR. HAROLD WHITTLE, Accompanist.
Prices of Admission: 10/6 reserved.
Box Plan at H. A. Solomons and Co.

Tweed Herald and Brunswick Chronicle, *Monday, July 26, 1909, page 1.*

Bullamakanka Rest

An article written by researcher Ian Batten in response to an enquiry from Carol Chandler.

Bullamakanka Rest is located on the Tweed Valley Way, between Murwillumbah and Condong.

It is named for the local band, Bullamakanka; a country trio formed in 1978, comprising Dave Ovenden, Rex Radonich and Ray Young. They are probably best known for their version of "Home Amongst the Gum Trees", which was the well-known theme song of the television Show "Burke's Backyard". In 1982 this song won them the "Vocal Group of the Year" Award at the Country Music Awards of Australia (Golden Guitar Awards) at the Tamworth Country Music Festival.

The song was first written in 1974 by Wally Johnson and Bob Brown (aka Captain Rock) as an entry to the Australian Government's competition to find a replacement for God Save the Queen. It was satirical and the Bullamakanka version watered down the original. John Williamson later recorded the song.

The group's success at the Country Music Festival as Vocal Group of the Year was repeated in 1984 with "Gaylene", in 1985 with "G'day", in 1990 with "Ride these Roads", and again in 1991 with "Dust"; plus they won "Instrumental of the Year" with "Bullabounce" in 1989.

Rex was killed in a car accident in 1986, and Rod McCormack joined the band. Ray Young died in 2004 from liver cancer. (Some readers may remember Ray Young as the singer/guitarist at Ernie's Restaurant in Coolangatta.)

The naming of Bullamakanka Rest was a recommendation submitted to Tweed Shire Council, which resolved that the area be named 'the Bulamakanka Park [*sic*] on the 29th October 1987. The park was officially opened on 19th September 1990.'