

HISTORY

Tweed River - named after the Tweed River which divides England and Scotland, was first explored by John Oxley, Surveyor General of Colony of NSW, in 1823. In 1828 Captain Rous, after whom the north arm of the Tweed is named, explored the river to the extent of its tidal influence at Byangum. Further development of the Tweed occurred with the arrival of the cedar cutters in 1844. All 3 arms of the Tweed River rise in the Caldera surrounding the Tweed.

Flooding of the Tweed River

One of the most devastating floods to hit this area was during the February 1954 cyclone, when the river recorded its highest level. In this flood a cyclone coincided with high tide and a 4-6ft wave of water hit the town. Cyclones since the 50's have not been so devastating. Back then, the area was almost certain to get a cyclone every January, February or March. On 13th February 1954, the wind had increased to 113km an hour with driving rain, and the cyclone which had headed out to sea, turned back over the land. Without much warning the river broke its banks, houses and shops were flooded. Before much stock could be shifted, workers were driven out by the rising flood waters. Electric light and power were no more, telephones were out, radio 2MW was off the air and Murwillumbah was isolated. People were caught in ceilings, houses washed away, stock and crop losses were heavy.

The cyclone dumped 850mm (34") on the area, and 300 tons of debris was shifted from the streets. Much help was received from other towns and Murwillumbah was gradually brought back to normal. In the outlying districts, it took months to replace railway lines, bridges and remove landslips. In later years, houses were raised, the levee bank wall built, and again later raised even higher. It is

now estimated that one flood in 100 years will enter the business area. Major floods, which entered the town, occurred in May 1917, May 1918, July 1921, May and June 1954, February, May and July 1974, May 1987 & April 1989.

Levee Wall - running along the north side of the river bank of the township, this levee was originally made of earth but was replaced by a cement wall in the 1960's, after the disastrous 1954 flood.

Timber on the Tweed

Red cedar or 'red gold' had been discovered in the south of the state. When cedar became scarcer in the south, the cedar getters moved north and the first trees were felled in 1844. The cedar getters rafted cedar down creeks and rivers to be loaded onto small schooners, where the timber was taken to Sydney and overseas. Some trees were 1.8m-3.6m at their base and over 30 metres tall. Cedar getters in those times made a small fortune. When the first bridge across the Tweed River was opened in 1901, the lifting span enabled ships to sail up river as far as Byangum.

Murwillumbah began its existence in the 1870's, and with the opening of the railway in 1894, it became established as the commercial centre of the Tweed. Dairying and sugar cane production took over from cedar as the main industries.

The river is currently used for rowing, water skiing, fishing and sight seeing tours.

Ref: Johansen, Ron "Tales of Our Times, Murwillumbah Print Spot Vol 1, p36.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained herein is correct. In the case of any errors noted please contact 02 6674 9500

North Bank Levee River Walk



**"MURWILLUMBAH
ON THE MOVE"**

**STAY TRIM & KEEP FIT
WITH EASY EXERCISE**

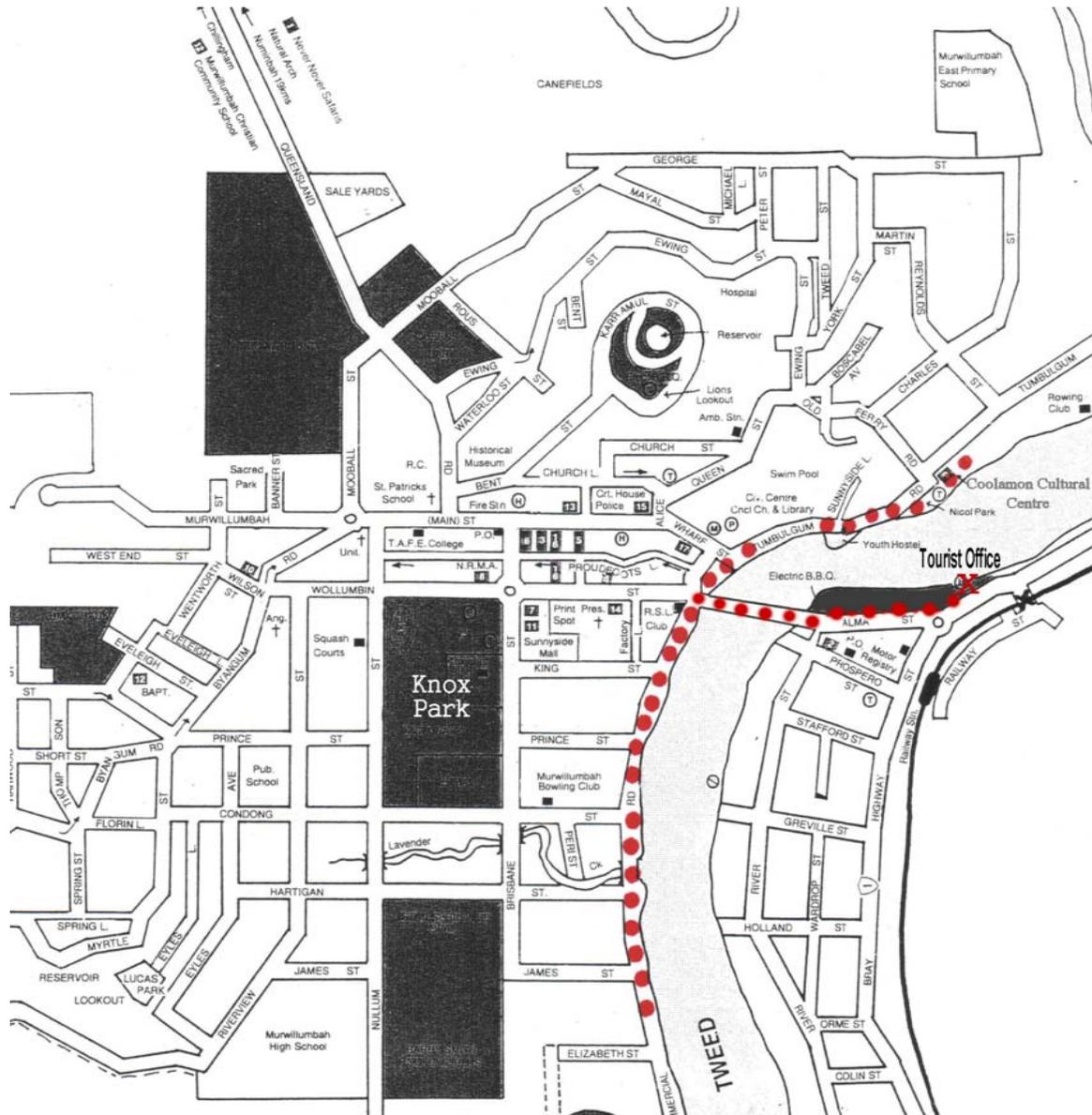
The series of brochures on Historic Walks of Tweed Shire are for information purposes only. Please consult your doctor or health professional before undertaking any historical walk to ensure the activity is appropriate for you.

DIRECTIONS

NORTH BANK RIVER LEVEE WALK

Grade: flat & easy - Distance: approx. 2km

(If walking inside the levee wall, walk during daylight and not alone)



1. Start at the **World Heritage Rainforest Centre** (Tourist Information Centre) in Budd Park and continue along **Alma Street** and across **Murwillumbah Bridge**.
2. Turn right along the levee bank parallel to **Tumbulgum Road**.
3. Continue past the colourful **Riverside Backpackers Youth Hostel** and along path to wooden walkway.
4. Cut in through park on the right. Note **Skinner Lowes Wharf** and **Coolamon Cultural Centre**.
5. Return via same route to **Murwillumbah Bridge**.
6. At bridge, walk down steps and pass under bridge (rather than crossing road).
7. Walk through **McIlrath Park** alongside river bank, keeping the levee bank cement wall on your right.
8. Walk up as far as you like, (path becomes rougher further up). There are **several main openings**, cutting into the levee wall allowing access back to town by an alternative route. The openings are located:
 - a) Either side of Murwillumbah Bridge at **Newell Park** and at **Mc Ilrath Park**.
 - b) Opposite **King Street**.
 - c) Between **Hartigan** and **Condong Streets** (stairs, up and over the levee).
 - d) Between **Elizabeth** and **James Streets**.
9. Turn around and walk back the same way along the river bank or walk through one of the levee cuttings and along **Commercial Road**.
10. Turn right across bridge back to **World Heritage Rainforest Centre**.
11. From the bridge enjoy the scenery in both directions.