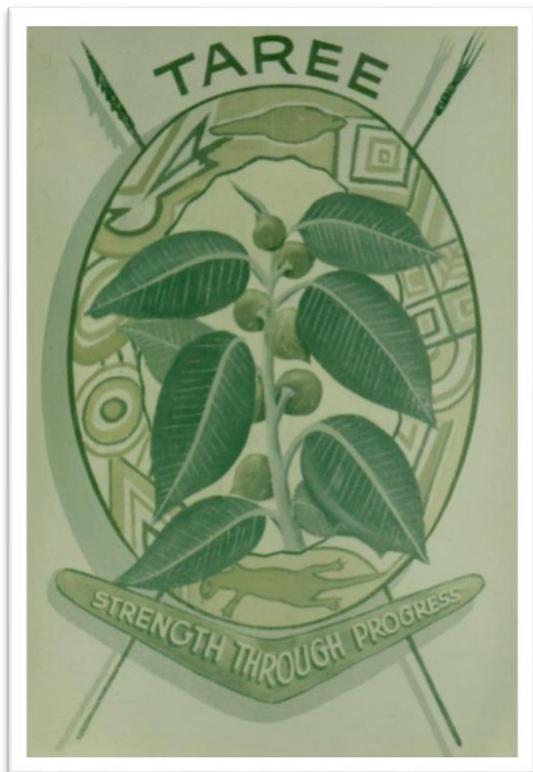


Taree Municipal Council Rate and Valuation Books 1885 - 1950



Taree Municipal Council crest

Don't be misled by the title – Rate and Valuation Books are much more than lists of names and amounts payable. Using the search facility, the data provides much information of interest to family historians and provides evidence to approximately date the construction of many buildings.

These books also contain a wealth of local social history.

First entry

Consider the very first entry in the 1885 Taree Municipal Council Rate Book (the year of incorporation). It shows a Mr Avery as the owner of a mill and dwelling with an assessed annual value of £52. It is largely forgotten that in the early years of European settlement wheat was grown in the local area and consequently mills were required to process the grain.

Mill Creek provided the water to power the steam driven mill. Although now piped and hidden from view, Mill Creek still exists and discharges into the Manning River, as it ever did, opposite Fotheringham Park. In 1916 it provided a reliable source of water to enable Mr Henry Alcorn to establish his steam laundry at the junction of its two arms, just to the south of Albert Lane. Even today it asserts its presence in periods of heavy rainfall, being a major contributor to the flooding of the Chapman Place Car Park and other low lying areas in the vicinity of Victoria and Pulteney Street.

Occupations

Some of Taree's early Rate Books show the occupation of ratepayers and occupiers and it is interesting to trace the transformation of a town initially dominated by rural pursuits, river and horse based transport systems and support services (farmers, blacksmiths, liverymen, stables and paddocks) into one where the railway (which arrived in Taree in 1913) dominates employment. Saw millers and carpenters also make a strong showing as would be expected in a town defined by timber buildings.

Of course there are some wild cards – Saxby's Cordial Factory is mentioned in the first, 1885, Rate Book and this company still trades today. More unexpected, though short-lived, businesses crop up in the early years, such as a "Photo Gallery" run by Mr St. Clair in 1888.

By the 1920s a greater variety of occupations are listed, many of which are still familiar to us today, including jobs related to motor vehicle transport such as motor mechanic, car proprietor and simply, motorist.

All the above occupations refer only to the men of the town: women, in the main, are recorded only by their marital status – spinster, wife of, widow, or more simply DD (domestic duties). Nurses operating private hospitals prove a general exception to this rule, with Cummins, Trotter and Henderson identified.

In more recent volumes, owners' occupations are no longer recorded, but much can be deduced from a review of the types of buildings recorded and their relative values and ownership.

Subdivisions

An adjustment of the municipal boundary took place in 1922 and a period of economic growth is denoted by the number of new land subdivisions shown in the property listings.

However, by the 1930s the Great Depression was having an effect as is made clear by the rate arrears and, in some cases, foreclosures evident in the records.

Lost streets

Of interest too are the "lost streets" – those shown in the books which no longer exist or have been renamed. For example Preston Street is now part of Flett Street (north of High Street); Hooke Street is not the one we know today, but is now part of Wynter Street, (west of Flett Street).

Surname origins

Surnames in the early books reflect the United Kingdom and Southern Ireland origins of the majority of European settlers. While German settlers are also evident, this situation does not change significantly until the 1930s when Lebanese migrants make an appearance.

Caution

One word of caution in the use of this database – the transcriptions reflect not only the skill of the volunteers interpreting the handwriting, but also the level of literacy of the original clerk (or their informant).

Penny Teerman