

The Old Bakery, Comboyne

On 5 May 1926 at The Old Bakery in Comboyne, it was not the bread that was cooking but the bakery itself! Thick clouds of smoke issued from the doorway and roof. Constable Wilson forced open the doors and with the help of onlookers extinguished the fire. The bakery belonged to Albert Augustus Smith who was then residing in Gloucester. Although Smith was not present when the fire started he was the main suspect.¹

The bakery probably began operation in 1921 by Murdoch Parker who then sold the business to Smith in 1922. By 1926, the bakery had been unused for two years and Smith was in the process of selling it to William Edward Taylor, a motor car proprietor and his wife.² The Taylors paid a large deposit to Smith and were to pay off the balance in the coming months.

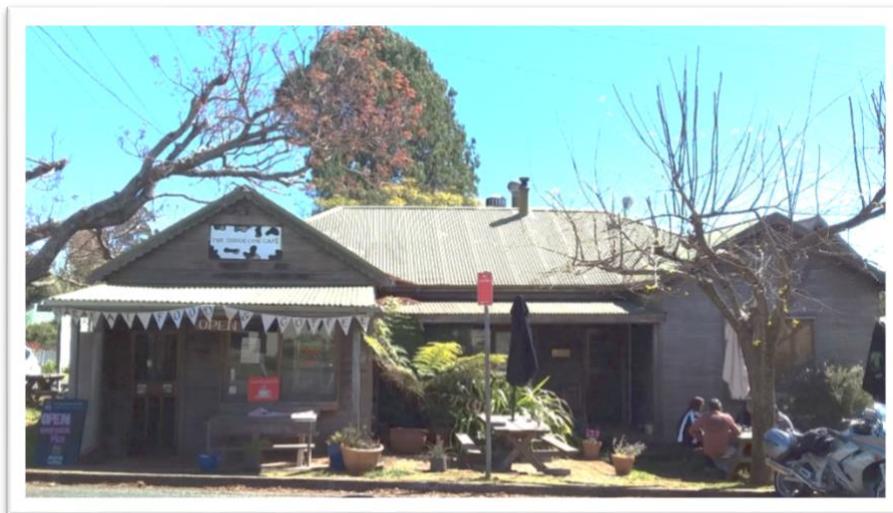


There was no further reason for Smith to return to Comboyne on account of his property interests, but on Good Friday 1926, he was seen walking around the premises of the Old Bakery and even climbing out of the window.³

Smith was suspected of insurance fraud. Phosphorous was the fuel which started the fire. Smith admitted to putting this chemical in the ceiling believing the toxic fumes would kill rats, but he claimed he did not know that phosphorous could catch fire. The coroner was unable to determine if the fire was accidental or not.⁴

After the inquiry, the Taylors ran the bakery for over 15 years before leasing it out. Today it operates as a café.⁵

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The Udder Cow Café, Comboyne. Photos by J Roberts 2017.

¹ *Northern Champion*, 14 Jul 1926.

² Land & Property Information, Vol-Fol: 3237-182.

³ *Manning River Times and Advocate for the Northern Coast Districts of NSW*, 10 Jul 1926.

⁴ *Northern Champion*, 14 Jul 1926.

⁵ Land & Property Information, Vol-Fol: 3237-182.