indigeco

24 August 2020

To: Keira Mears

Project Manager (Consultancy) Mace Australia Pty Ltd, Level 6, 200 Adelaide Street, Brisbane 4000, Australia

School Infrastructure NSW GPO Box 33 Sydney NSW 2001

Subject: Murwillumbah High School – Aboriginal Heritage Creek Investigation Report

Dear Keira,

In response to the additional investigations required to validate the origin of the creek line running along the southern border of the Murwillumbah High School, please refer to the below report completed by EMM and signed off by the heritage specialist Dr. Alan Williams.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Barnes Director

Indigeco

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21 August 2020

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Re: Murwillumbah High School, Murwillumbah, NSW -Aboriginal heritage - creek investigation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Schools Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) is investigating future development options for the Murwillumbah High School (hereafter 'the School') to create a Murwillumbah Education Precinct (MEP). The MEP would involve the co-location of Murwillumbah and Murwillumbah East Primary Schools and Wollumbin and Murwillumbah High Schools to the present Murwillumbah High School site at 86 Riverview Street, Murwillumbah (Lot 2 DP578679; Lots 5 and 6 DP820602). As part of the environmental investigations of the project, EMM Consulting Pty Limited (EMM) and Indigeco Pty Ltd (Indigeco) were engaged to advise on the potential Aboriginal heritage issues associated with the site. An Aboriginal heritage due diligence in accordance with Heritage NSW guidelines was recently completed (EMM 2020a), and identified that much of the site had low risk of cultural materials being present. However, there remained uncertainty in the report as to the history of a small unnamed creekline that runs along the southern edge of the site. Since proximity to creeks is a key threshold in the guidelines for further Aboriginal heritage assessment, determining whether the creek was both natural and/or in its original location was recommended.

This letter undertakes additional investigation and consideration of the creek's history to further inform the due diligence process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me; I can be reached on 0438 104 740 or awilliams@emmconsulting.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Dr Alan Williams FSA MAACAIAssociate Director

awilliams@emmconsulting.com.au

1 Rationale and approach

The Aboriginal due diligence assessment (EMM 2020a) noted that significant parts of a creek south of the School - an unnamed creek that runs inland, west from the banks of the Tweed River - appeared to be artificial (refer to EMM 2020a: Figure 1). The presence of well-established trees on some areas along the course of the waterway, however, possibly suggested modifications may have followed a natural alignment. Given this uncertainty, and that the presence of water as a critical threshold in the due diligence process, the report concluded that:

until validation of the artificial nature of the creekline running along the southern and western border can be determined [of the site], it should be considered as a natural watercourse and managed accordingly. As such, any activities that result in ground disturbance to previously undisturbed areas along the creek edge (~50 m buffer, see Appendix B) have some risk of harming Aboriginal objects.

This letter undertakes further validation of the creekline to determine its origins and history, and allow an update of the recommendation above. The validation included review of historical written and spatial documentation of the site, including parish maps, survey maps and plans, historical photographs, and historical aerial photography.

2 Results

2.1 Parish maps and other records

The study area is included within the maps of the Parish of Murwillumbah, although absent from historical maps of the town/village of Murwillumbah created by the Department of Lands, NSW. The parish maps have limitations in understanding the history of the creek, being primarily focussed on major tributaries and/or property boundaries. In addition, the Parish of Murwillumbah is large and, as such does not contain fine detail.

The 1903 parish map (Plate 1) indicates the School is located on the 100 acres (c.40.5 hectares (ha)) granted to John Fulford May (7 May 1902) and the 320 acres (c.129.5 ha) acres granted to Walter Lamb and Thomas Buckland.¹ A roadway, possibly Elizabeth Street, is north of the school site and notes indicate it was established by Dennis Hartigan. The school site was known as Hartigan's Estate, so it is likely the estate was established at this time. There are no waterways marked between the town of Murwillumbah and the small inlet near the bend in the river, which survives today. Murwillumbah Creek to the north of the school site is not marked. A swamp area is included west of the present school site. A photograph from around 1905 shows that the area was lightly wooded farmland.

An annotated version of the 1907 parish map (Plate 3) is the first plan that indicates the origins of the creek. The annotations on the map date between 1907 and c.1913. A red hand-drawn line marked "channel" maps the route of the Lavender Swamp drainage channel system, completed on the 18 December 1912 (Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales, 24 December 1912, p. 7531). The channel connects inland wetlands, including the swamp west of the current school site, to the Tweed River. The map shows the alignment of the creek differs from the present. It curves north to (unmarked) Murwillumbah Creek, whereas today the creek continues east to the river.

The creek channel is visible in the 1929 photograph of the completed Murwillumbah School building (Plate 4). The photograph was taken looking south east and the line of the creek can be seen passing the school on the right -hand side of the image.

The earliest digitised map of the Parish (1889) is heavily damaged around Murwillumbah township, and does not provide any relevant information.

Later parish maps include the land resumed for the school but do not depict the creek (for example Plate 5). A military map from 1942 confirms this early route of the creek may still have been present (Plate 6). It shows the creek/channel running along the south west border of the school before turning to the north and disappearing into the gridded streetscape of the growing township.

2.2 Historical Property and DP Search

A property and DP search was completed for Lot 2 DP 574278, which encompasses the portion of the creek nearest the present day school site (Appendix A). The 1903 survey plan of the area details the occupants and subdivision of the area (Plate 7). The plan does not show the wetlands or any natural creek around the future school site.

The 1929 plan of the High School Block illustrates an 'open earth drain' in the present alignment of the modern creek (Plate 8) -a terminology more indicative of a human made construction than a natural water feature. In 1969, however, the drain is not mapped (Plate 9). The 1975 plan depicts the modern alignment of the creek, where it is similarly labelled as an "open drain" (Appendix B).

2.3 Aerial photographs

The earliest aerial photograph for the area dates to 1962 (Appendix B). The image shows the creek follows the present alignment. Another waterway is visible running north/south through the sports fields east of the school. This waterway connects to Murwillumbah Creek in the north and the creek system near Commercial Road to the south. The north/south waterway appears to be artificial, but incorporates natural sections of Murwillumbah Creek. It must be noted, however, Murwillumbah Creek has a history of realignment itself. This waterway aligns with the north/south creek illustrated in the annotated 1907 Parish map and army topographic plan (Plate 3, Plate 6).

The north/south waterway is not visible on the 1971 aerial (Appendix B). It appears to have been infilled for the construction of the Stan Surcombe oval and sports field, and is not visible on later aerial photographs. It appears the unnamed creek south of the School became the primary drain for the area after this time.

3 Conclusion

The creek alignment south of the school site forms part of the history of water management of Murwillumbah. Specifically, we can find no evidence that it existed prior to the 20th Century in any of the documentation reviewed. It appears that the earliest evidence of the 'creek' was in 1912, with data suggesting its construction as part of a scheme to drain the inland wetland areas into the nearby Tweed River. Throughout the early 20th Century, documentation refers to the channel as an open earth drain, rather than a creek or natural water source. The alignment of this channel has deviated several times over the 20th Century until reaching the current state by 1929, and has encompassed parts of the playing fields east of the school.

Based on these documentary sources, it is considered likely that the creek running along the southern border of the school site has been artificially created, and the locale would have originally been characterised as gentle slopes and/or floodplains adjacent Tweed River. As such, the nearest pre-European water source that may trigger further assessment thresholds in the due diligence requirements would have been the swamp located in the west of the school site. This swamp has been drained by these works, and its exact location is now had to discern. Based on the earlier parish maps, it suggests the main swamp was situated ≥200 metres (m) from the established school structures. Although areas <200 m within the school site curtilage are mainly encompassed by the artificially created channel, and have likely been heavily affected by these past earthworks (which included multiple phases of re-alignment).

Based on above, it is considered that the recommendations of the due diligence assessment for the site (EMM 2020a) can be modified as follows:

- until validation of the artificial nature of the creekline running along the southern and western border can be determined, it should be considered as a natural watercourse and managed accordingly. As such, any activities that result in ground disturbance to previously undisturbed areas along the creek edge (~50 m buffer, see Appendix A) have some risk of harming Aboriginal objects. These areas should be subject to either further assessment in the form of an Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment (ACHA) in accordance with DPIE guidelines, and/or be subject to monitoring of earthworks within this buffer by a heritage professional and/or Aboriginal representative to avoid inadvertent impact to cultural materials. The proponent may wish to undertake further investigation to verify the origins of the creek prior to undertaking these activities, since they are likely to impact the timing and/or risks to the project once implemented;
- it is considered that there is a low risk of Aboriginal objects being present within the study area where project activities are proposed; and works may proceed with caution. However, the nature of disturbance does not preclude the potential for isolated finds, which is a common site type across the region, even in disturbed contexts. In the event of unexpected Aboriginal objects, sites or places (or potential Aboriginal objects, site or places) are discovered during construction, all works in the vicinity should cease and the proponent should determine the subsequent course of action in consultation with a heritage professional and/or the relevant State government agency as appropriate;
- this documentation may be summarised within and/or appended to a Development Application, Statement of Environmental Effects (SEE) or Review of Environment Factors (REF). If any Aboriginal objects are later identified within the proposed activity area, this report cannot be used to support an application for an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP). Such an application would require more detailed investigation involving a formal process of Aboriginal community consultation and the preparation of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA); and
- if human skeletal material less than 100 years old is discovered, the *Coroners Act 2009* requires that all works should cease, and the NSW Police and the NSW Coroner's Office should be contacted. Traditional Aboriginal burials (older than 100 years) are protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and should not be disturbed. Interpreting the age and nature of skeletal remains is a specialist field and an appropriately skilled archaeologist or physical anthropologist should therefore be contacted to inspect the find and recommend an appropriate course of action. Should the skeletal material prove to be archaeological Aboriginal remains, notification of DPC and the Local Aboriginal Land Council will be required. Notification should also be made to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, under the provisions of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*.

References

EMM 2020a, *Murwillumbah School Upgrade Aboriginal heritage due diligence assessment*, Report prepared for Schools Infrastructure NSW.

EMM 2020b, Murwillumbah School K-12 Upgrade Statement of heritage impact for proposed concept masterplan design, report prepared for Indigeco Pty Ltd on behalf of the NSW Department of Education.

Government Gazette of the State of New South Wales, 24 December 1912, Notification of The Completion of the Works of the "Lavender Swamp Drainage Trust, p. 7531.

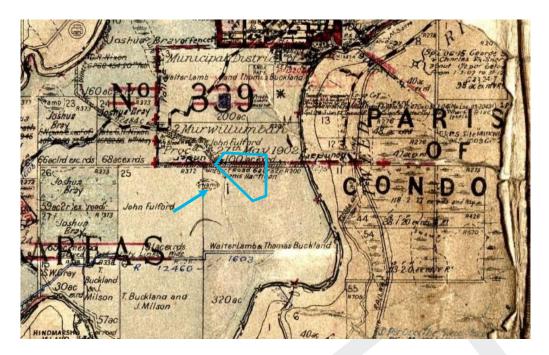


Plate 1 Detail, 1903, Parish of Murwillumbah, County of Rous, Land District of Murwillumbah.

Department of Lands, Sydney. School site marked in blue. Arrow shows swamp



Source: Tweed Regional Museum

Plate 2 View of Murwillumbah looking towards the high school location today, c.1905

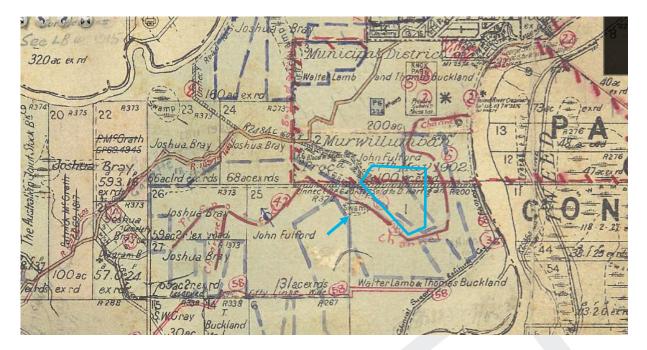


Plate 3 Detail, 1907 (annotated 1907 to c.1913), Parish of Murwillumbah, County of Rous, Land District of Murwillumbah. Department of Lands, Sydney. School site marked in blue. Arrow shows swamp.

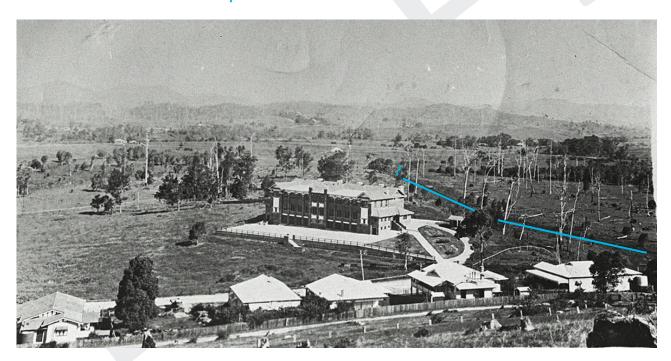


Plate 4 Completed school building in 1929 (Source: Tweed Regional Museum). Blue lines delineate visible sections of the drainage channel (dashed section marks its possible continuation)

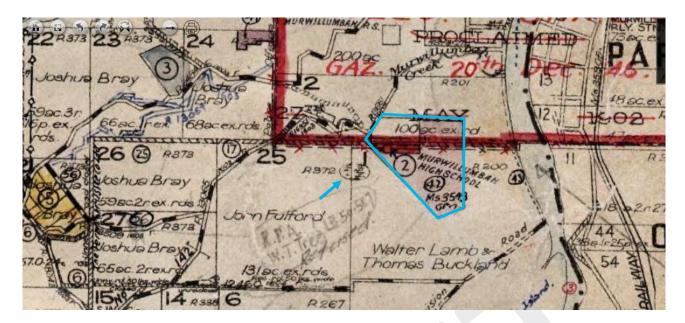
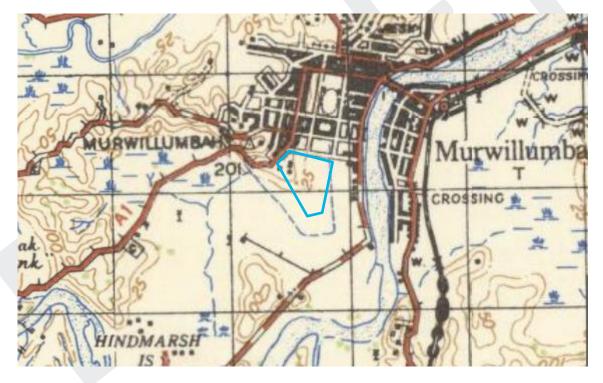


Plate 5 Parish of Murwillumbah, County of Rous, Land District of Murwillumbah, 1838. The school site is delineated in blue; the arrow shows the swamp discussed in text (Source: Department of Lands, Sydney)



Source: 2/1 Aust. Army Topo. Svy. Coy., Sept. 1942; National Library of Australia

Plate 6 A topographic map of the study area (approximate location shown in blue) showing the different alignment of the drainage channels, which currently runs along the edge of the study area

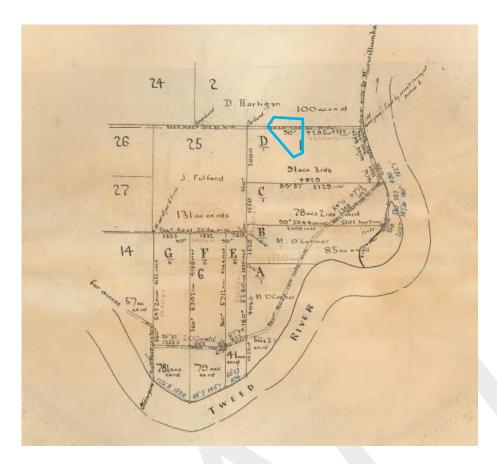


Plate 7 Plan of 5 blocks numbered C D E F G, being subdivisions of portions 1 and 6, County of Rous, Parish of Murwillumbah, Land District of Murwillumbah Land Board District of Grafton, 1903. The school site is delineated in blue

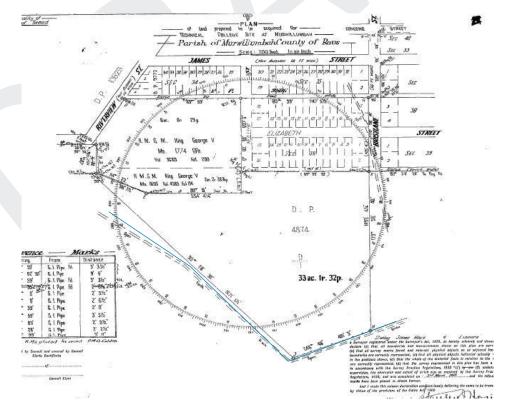


Plate 8 Plan of land proposed to be acquired for Technical College Site At Murwillumbah, Parish of Murwillumbah, County of Rous, 1929. The blue line shows the alignment of the drainage channel

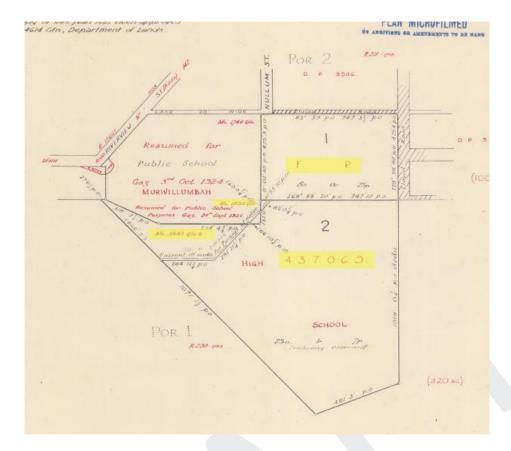


Plate 9 1969 plan of subdivision of Land contained in cert. title. Vol 6698, Fol 170. At Murwillumbah, Parish of Murwillumbah, County of Rous

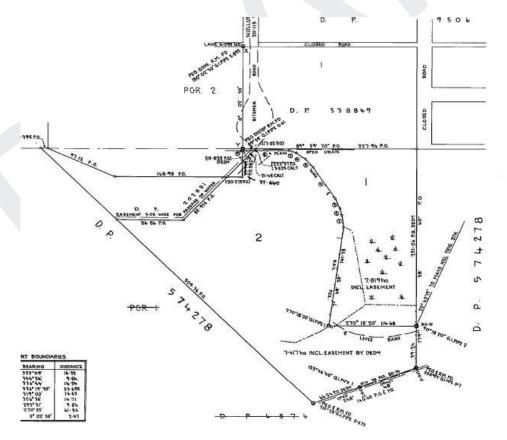


Plate 10 1975 plan of subdivision of Lot 2 DP 5742785 being land in C.T. Vol 11225 Fol. 124, County of Rous, Parish of Murwillumbah

Appendix A

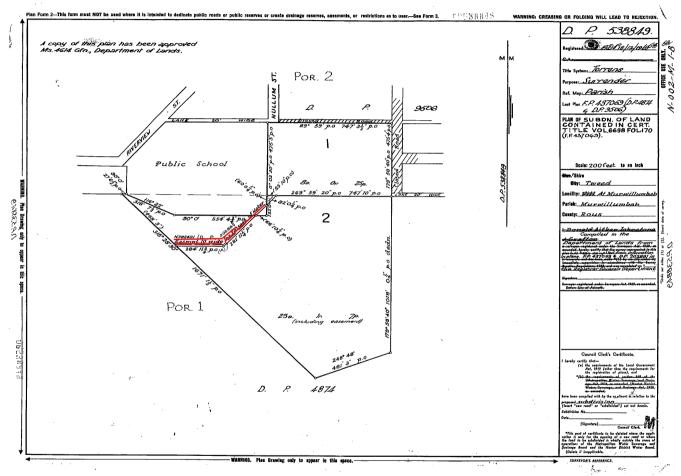
Historical property and DP search







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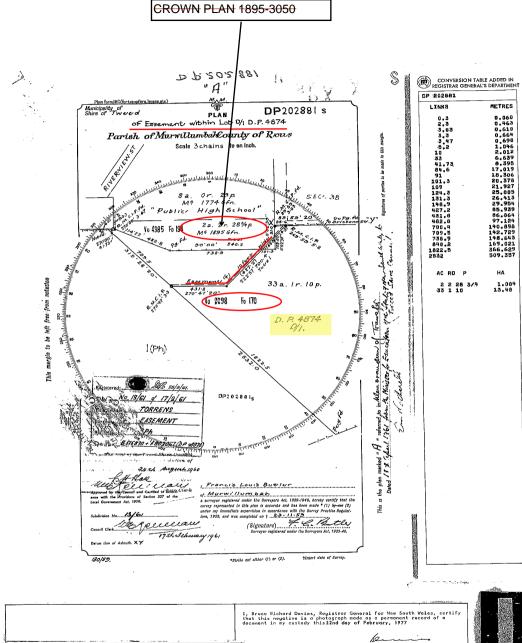
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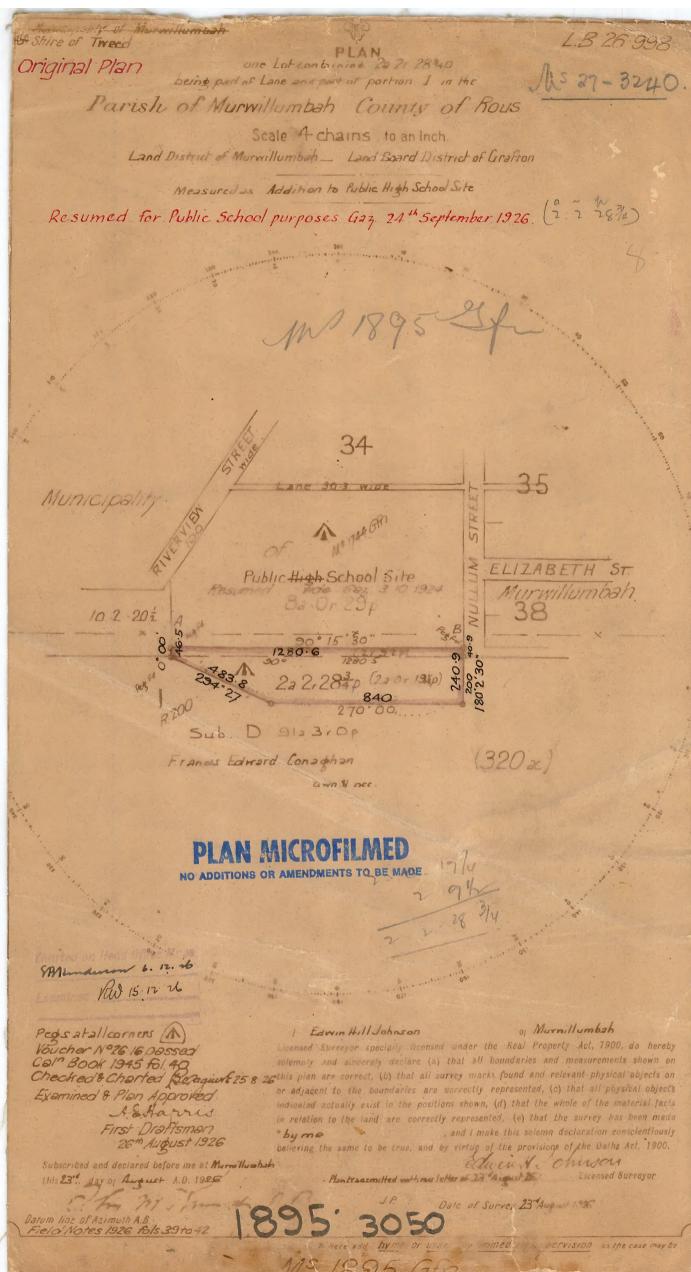
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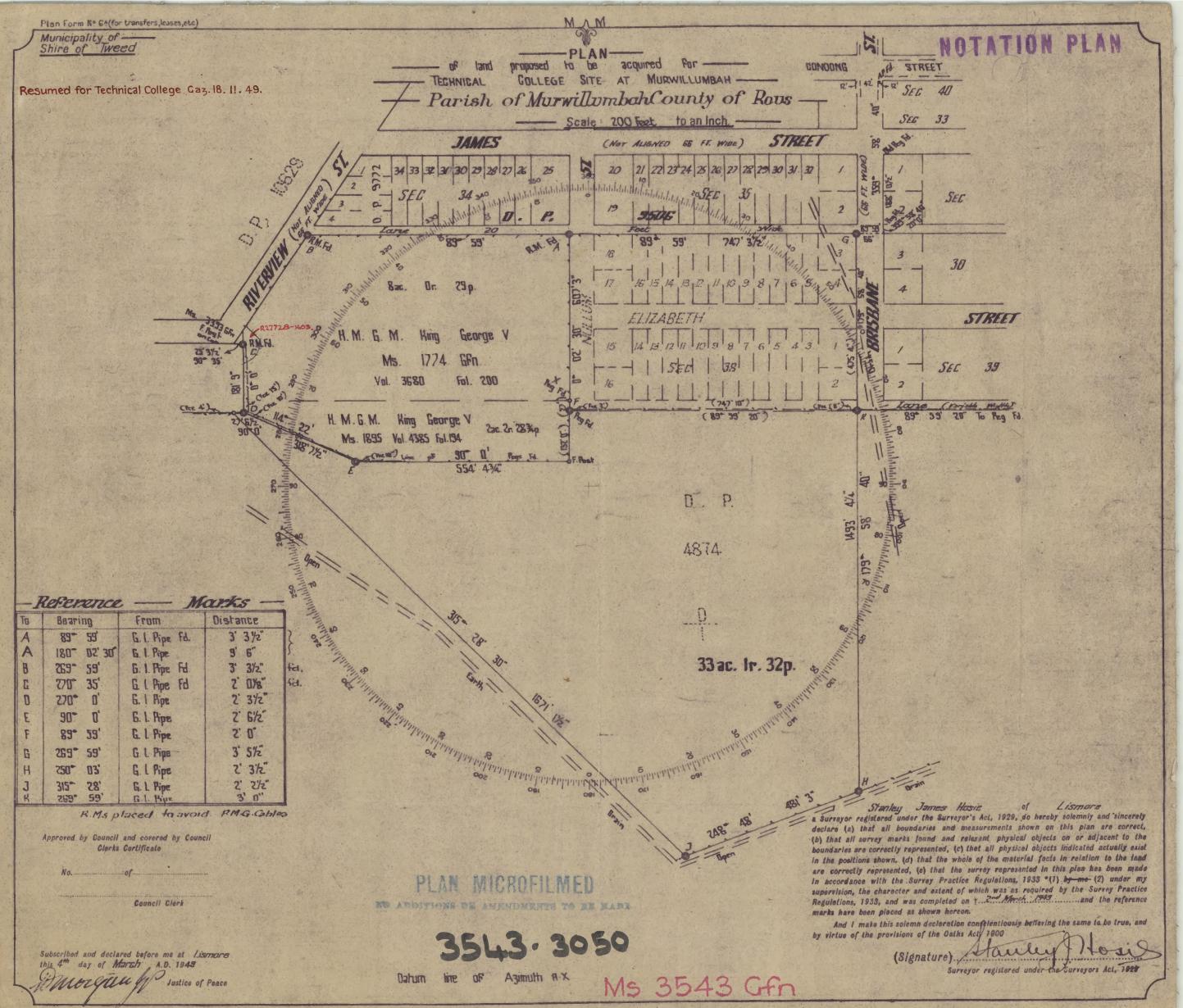
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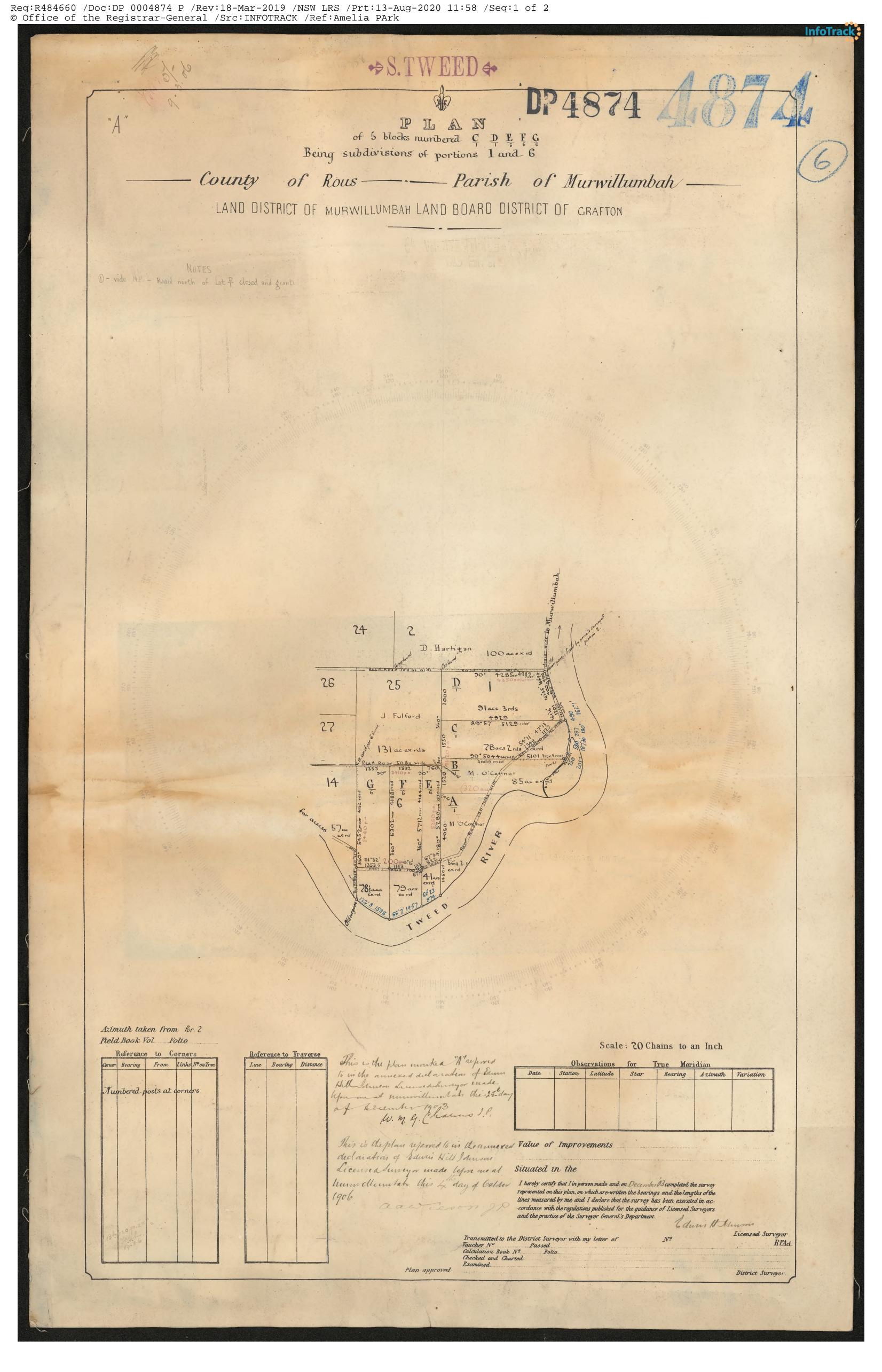
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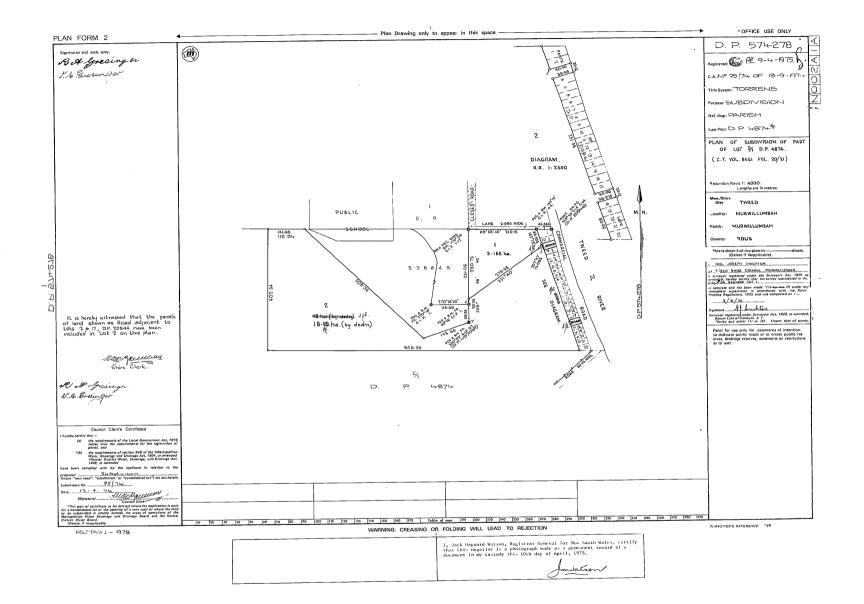
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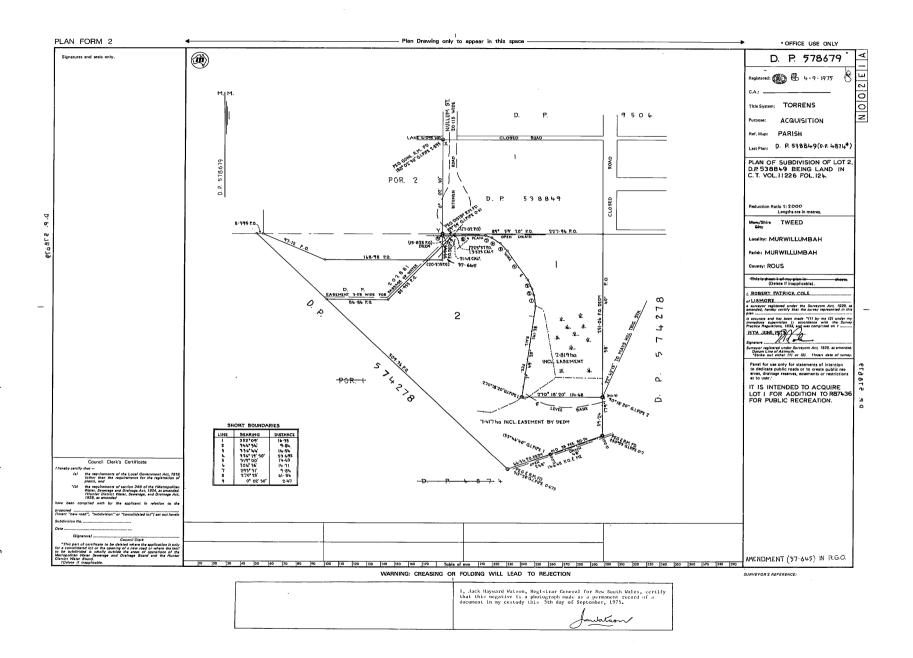


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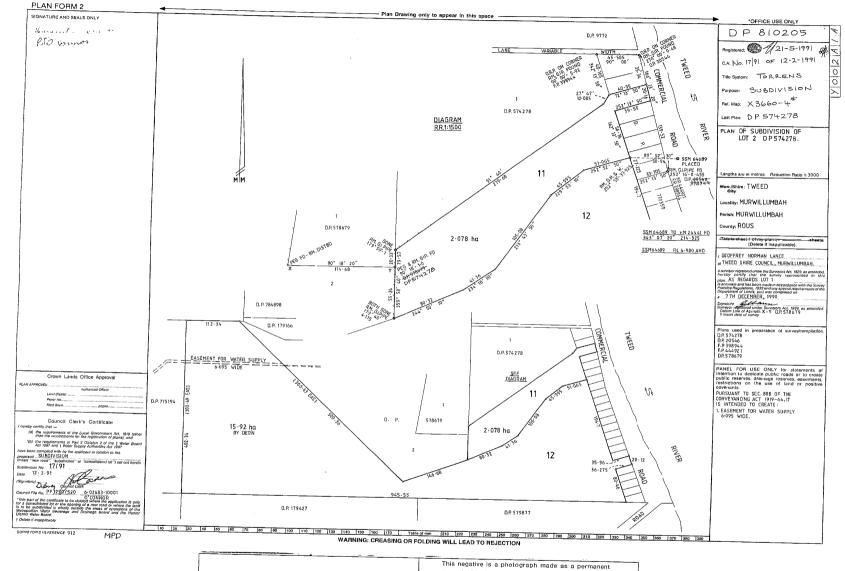


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Appendix B

Historical aerial photography





























HISTORIC AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH - 1987















HISTORIC AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH - 1997



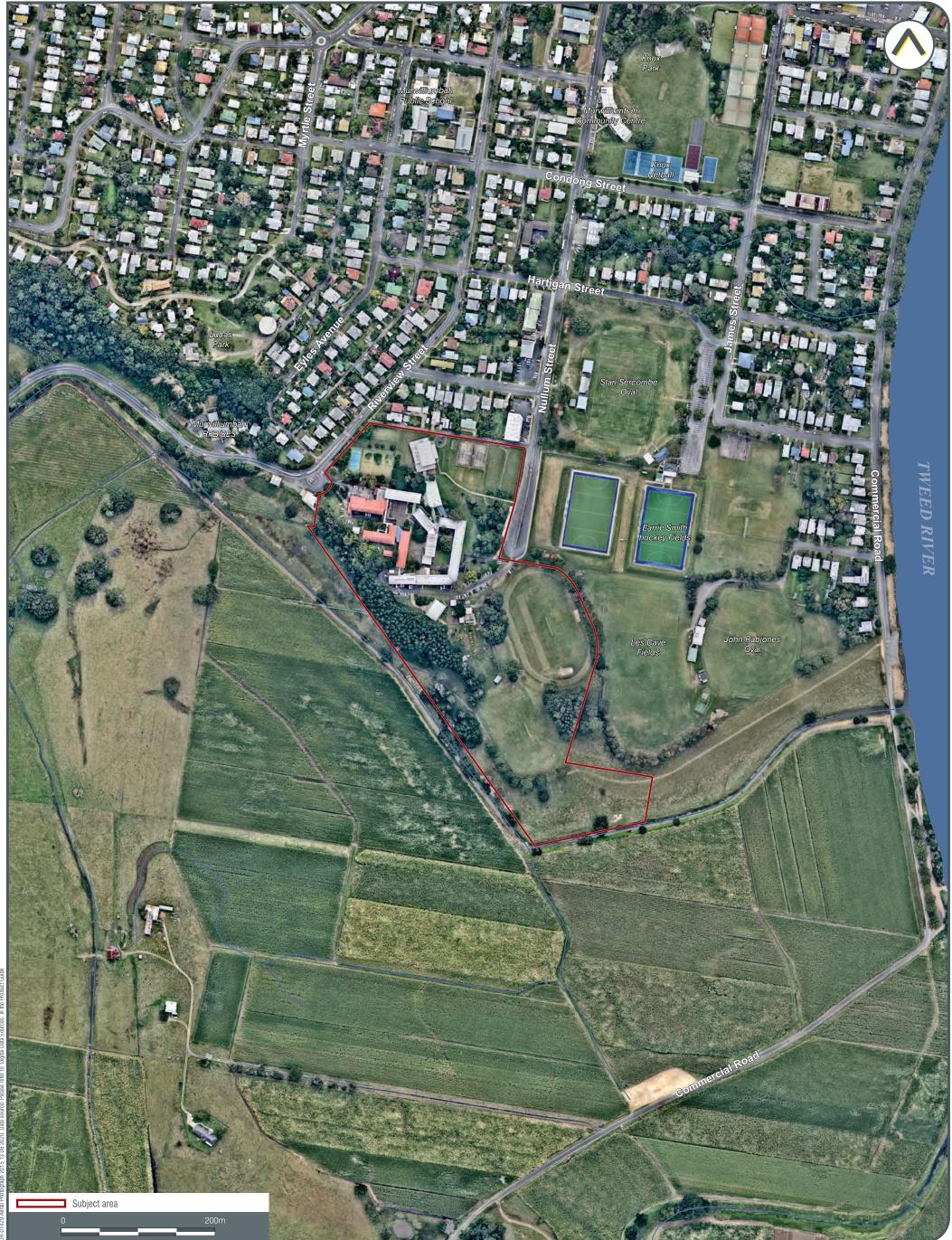
































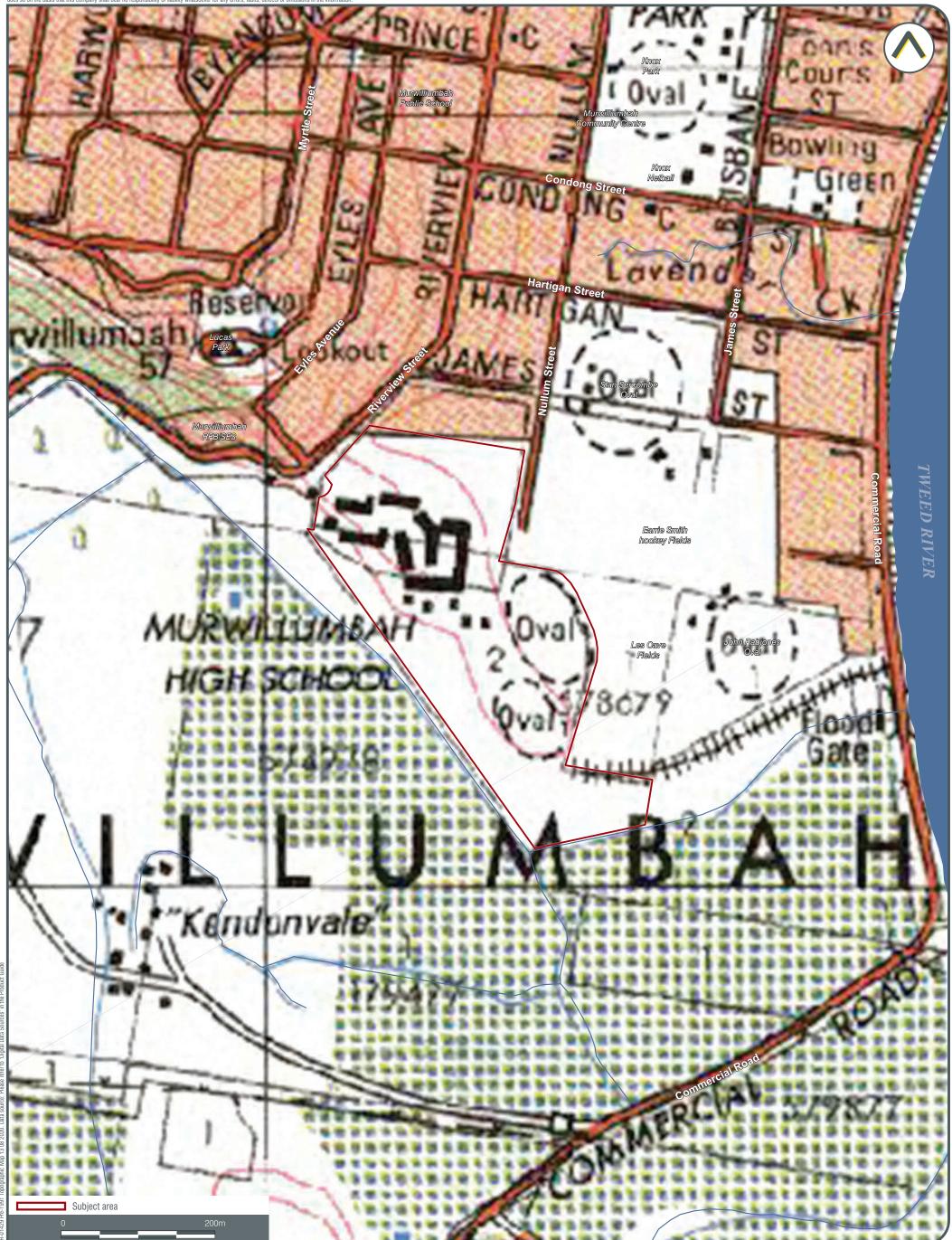




HISTORIC AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH - 2020







1969-1991 1:25,000 TOPOGRAPHIC MAP (MURWILLUMBAH 9541-2N)





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