

CHAPTER III

Twentieth Century

The Old Public Hall

Andrew Lord

The Old Public Hall was a very well known landmark on the Browns River Road at Taroona. It stood at the northern corner of Taroona Crescent and today's Channel Highway. A description of the land is set out in an Indenture dated the 27th May, 1902, File No. 10/5285:

All that piece or parcel of land situated in the Parish of Queenborough, County of Buckingham, in Tasmania, containing 12 perches and 3/10ths of a perch or thereabouts and bounded as follows (that is to say) on the north west by a north easterly line in two bearings of 102 links and 9/10ths of a link or thereabouts along the main road from Kingston to Hobart commencing at a point on that road and extending to land belonging to George James. On the north east by a south easterly line of 100 links and 1/5th of a link or thereabouts along land belonging to George James and extending to land belonging to the said Clarendon James Cox Lord. On the south west by a north westerly line of 57 links and 9/10ths of a link or thereabouts along the last mentioned land to the point of commencement.

This land was given to the people of Taroona on the 27th May, 1902, by Clarendon James Cox Lord of "Taroona House", and vested in trustees, on which to build a hall for religious and social purposes.

The original trustees were Clarendon James Cox Lord, Harry Augustus Page of Browns River Road, Eugene Davington Harrison of Browns River Road, Orchardist, George James of Browns River Road, Manufacturing Stationer, and Eleanor Horne Harrison of Browns River Road, Widow.

Certain of the residents of the lower Queenborough District had contributed money and the hall was built in 1902. However, not enough money was given, so to raise money to pay the contractor, Mr Flett, the trustees asked James Geath of Launceston, an engineer, to lend them £70 on a mortgage of the hall. The money was repayable on the 16th November, 1904.

Some indication of the concern that the trustees had for the good management of the hall, for the solemnity of Sunday and for the safety of those using it, can be gauged from the set of "Rules for the management and care of the Hall". These were typewritten and securely enclosed in a glassed-in display case and prominently displayed on the left hand wall of the hall as one entered the front door.

The hall was a cream-painted, weatherboard building 40 feet in length and 20 feet in width, consisting of one main room with a raised platform at the northern end and a skillion on the eastern side which was 10 feet wide and used as a kitchen. Many wooden forms for seating were stored at the southern end.

It was the centre for much activity, being used for school classes, which in cold weather retired to the warmth of a fire in the kitchen annexe. Lighting was by means of an acetylene gas generator, until the hall was eventually wired and connected to the town electricity supply. In the evenings and on Saturdays there were occasional visits from conjurers and magicians and, at regular intervals, the touring film unit, the Racaphone Talkies, which charged one shilling entrance fee. The R.A.O.B. Lodge (Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes), held meetings in the hall and it was the venue for any public gathering to discuss items of community interest.

There were two stables situated between the hall and the roadway and screened among the cherry plum trees at the back were two 'out-houses', completing the hall's amenities.

Church services were on a monthly roster basis. The Church of England services were held on the first and third Sunday afternoons and the Methodist services on the second and fourth Sunday afternoons. About 1940 the Baptist Church commenced services on Sunday evenings. In later years the Roman Catholic Church also used the hall. Mr Roy James played the organ for many services, and Mrs F. Escott played for the Baptist Church. Sunday School classes also used the hall.

In the 1940s and up until 1964 the hall was used for many community groups, such as the Country Women's Association, the Taroona

Twentieth Century

Theatre Guild, the local Scout Group and the Youth Group. Children's films were also shown every Saturday afternoon.

The highlights of many weekends were the local dances held on Saturday nights. Quite often at these dances the pianist was Mr Kevin Richards, who was blind. After supper it was the custom for Mr Tommy Briggs to pass around a large tin washing-up dish for donations to help pay the costs of the evening. Many of the dances were held to farewell servicemen going to the war, or to welcome them home, and also to raise money for the Comforts Fund. The Ex-Servicemen's Association met there until it built its own hall in Jenkins Street.

By 1964 the trustees had decided to sell the hall and in the *Mercury* of the 23rd February 1965 they advertised that it was their intention to sell and called for objections to the sale. Just under two years later, on the 7th February 1967, this historic hall, which had been the centre of so much activity in Taroona, was completely destroyed in the bushfires.

Acknowledgements

Mrs Joan Cripps,
Mr Reg Escott,
Mr and Mrs J. George,
Mr Ken James,
James Lord (c.1757-1824) Family Collection,
in the possession of Richard Lord.

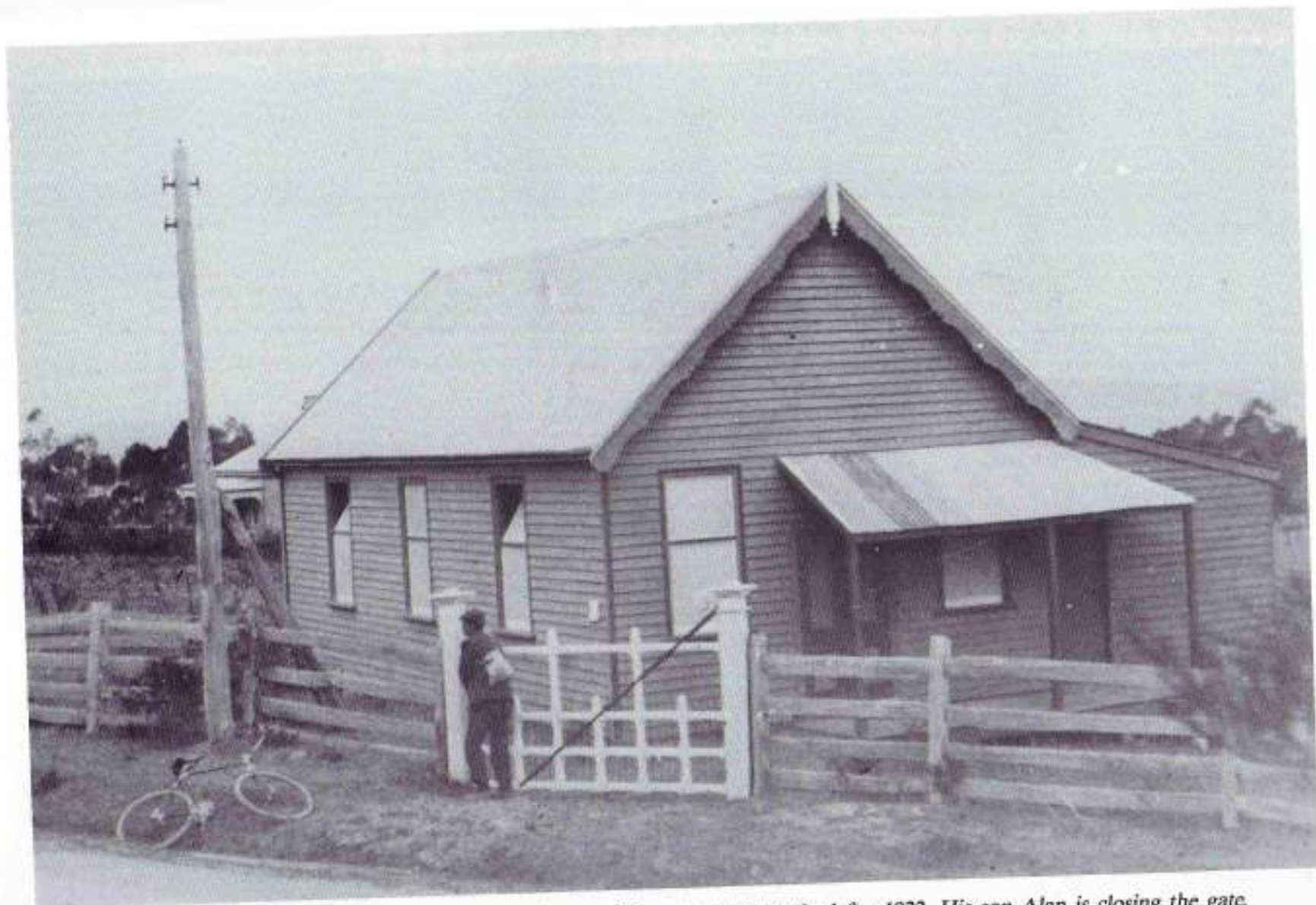
Rules for the Management and Care of the Hall

Built on the site given to Trustees for religious and social improvement purposes for residents of Taroona, by Clarendon James Cox Lord, Esq.

1. The Trustees shall be responsible for the proper management, maintenance and repair of Hall and furniture.
2. The Hall shall be used on Sundays exclusively for the purposes of divine worship, Sunday Schools, Bible classes or educational lectures.
3. No alcoholic liquor shall be brought or used on the premises.
4. Inflammable cinema film shall not be brought to or exhibited in the Hall, unless regulations under the Public Health Act for the safety of the public resorting to the Hall are strictly observed.
5. The Trustees reserve the right to close the Hall at any time if in their opinion an entertainment or meeting therein is likely to result in disorder, or to cause annoyance, or a nuisance to the residents of Taroona.
6. In any question or matter of dispute concerning the policy to be observed in the management of the Hall, or in the interpretation of these rules, the decision of the Trustees thereon shall be final.
7. Any person or committee to whom the Trustees might delegate the management of the Hall shall give an undertaking to abide by these trusts, or any rules there under made by the Trustees.

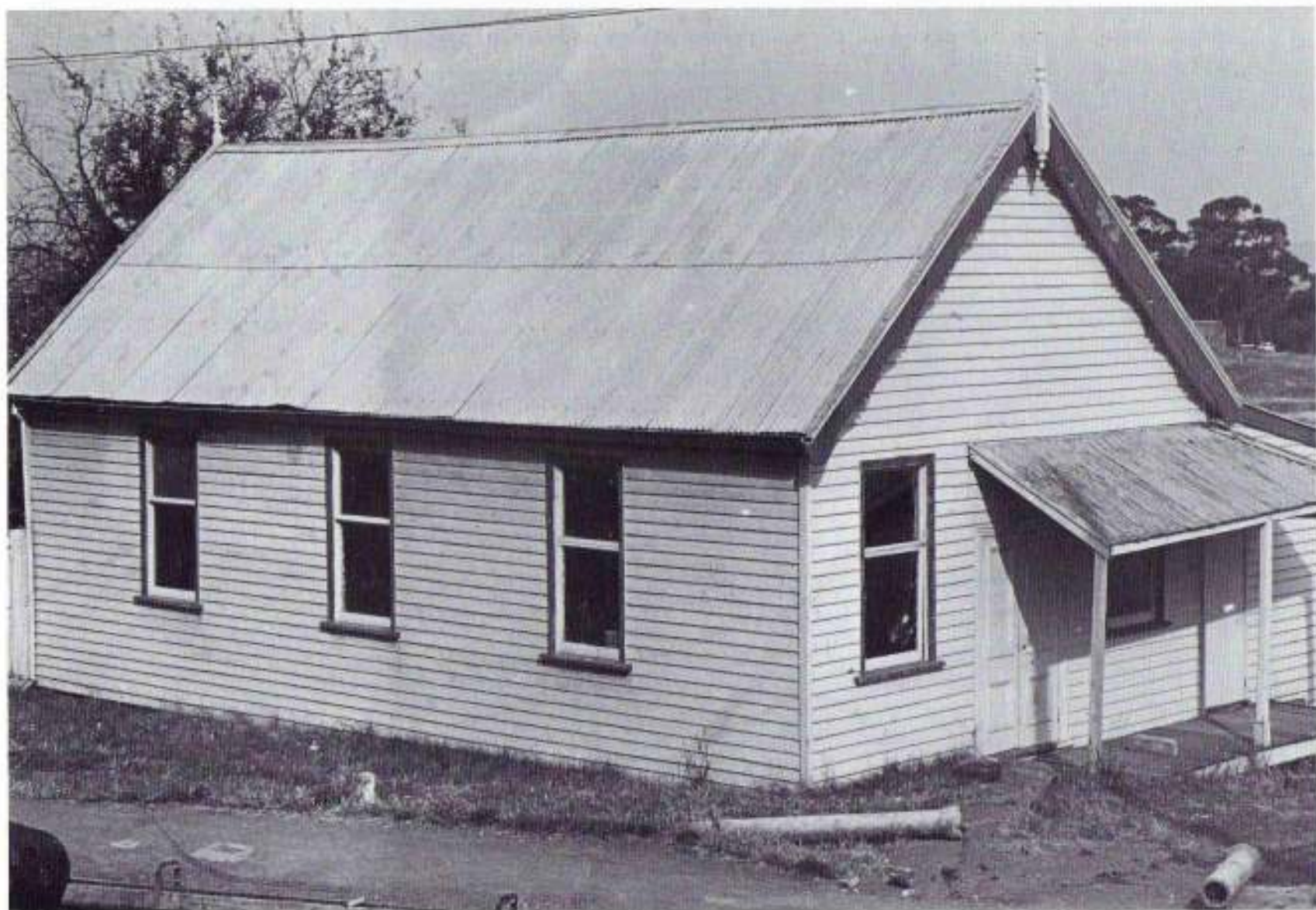
Trustees

C.J.C. Lord.
E.D. Harrison.
E.H. Harrison.
G.James.
H.A. Page.



The Old Public Hall with "Kendalville", the home of George James to the left, c1922. His son Alan is closing the gate.

ARCHIVES OFFICE OF TASMANIA.



The Old Public Hall, 29th January 1967.

Light Interludes at the Old Public Hall

Ken James

The Old Public Hall, by and large, fulfilled the needs of Taroona residents, but not without the occasional hiccup.

One group of people, amongst other things, felt a need to quench its thirst, and arranged for a barrel of amber liquid to be delivered to the Hall where it was stored in a rear room. At around 8 p.m. thirsty patrons started to arrive and shortly afterwards it was decided that the time had come for the bung to be removed. Alas, the barrel was not to be found.

Panic and rage were obvious on the faces of the official Keepers of the Barrel, and an immediate investigation was put into effect to ascertain its whereabouts.

When the interior of the Hall had been turned inside out without any positive sighting, attention was turned to the exterior, and it was here that a glimmer of hope arose for beneath the window of the storage area, a very distinct imprint of a barrel could be seen in the damp soil.

Furthermore, with the aid of lighted matches, there was evidence of a trail leading away from the imprint. This trail was hotly pursued to its conclusion in the middle of an adjoining paddock where anxious eyes alighted upon the lost barrel. It is not certain if its contents were intact, but one thing is known; the fingers of the Barrel Keepers were to be seen pointing in an accusing manner towards a northerly direction.

On another occasion the same group of people went through a similar procedure to alleviate a like problem. It was arranged for a barrel to be delivered and stored in the rear room, but this time all were fully of the opinion that the culprit responsible for the previous fiasco would not repeat his or her prior performance.

However, even the best thoughts of mice and men can go astray. It just so happened that the necessity arose for a hole to be bored through the barrel storage area from the underside of the floor, and you wouldn't believe it, but the site for the hole just happened to coincide with the underside of the barrel. The devastating results of this exercise go without saying.

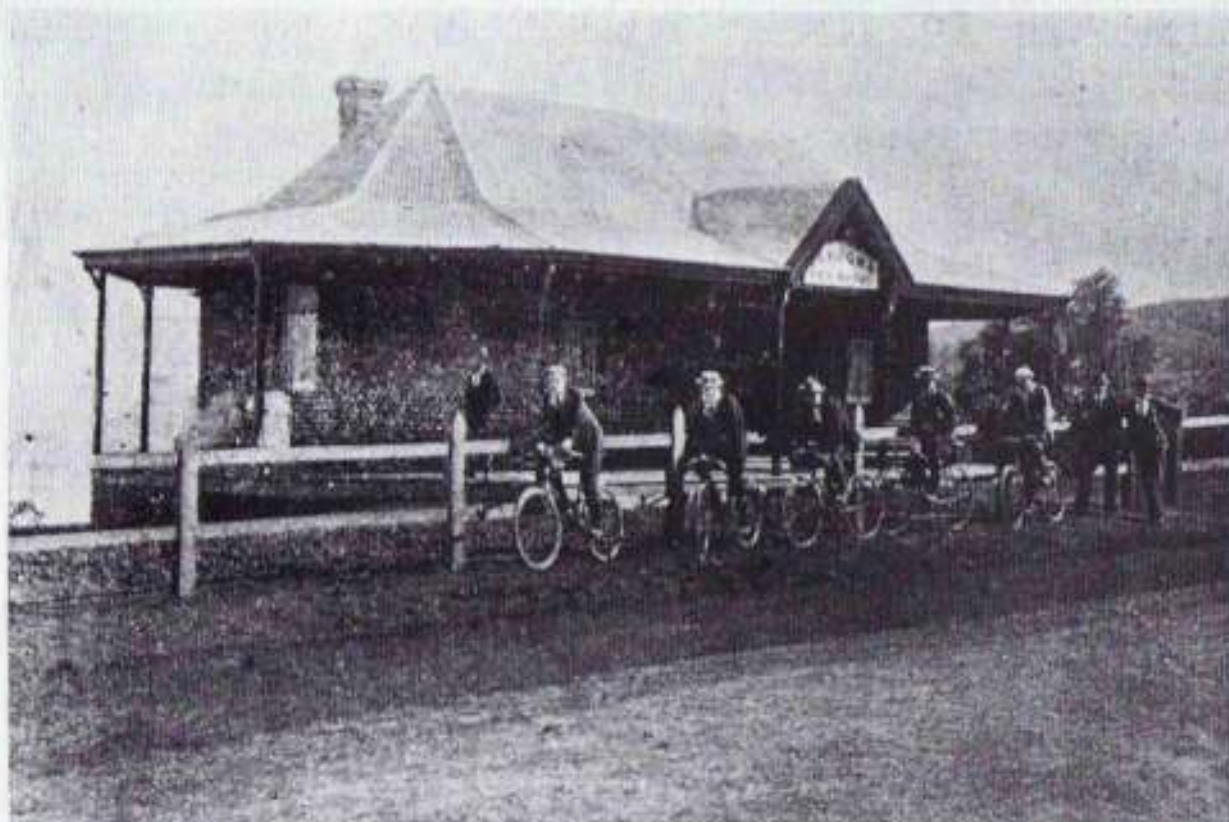
Now the owners of braces and bits in Taroona were well known at that time. The problem was to find a bit with a hop odour at its end.

One character hit upon a good idea by displaying a notice at the Hall to the effect that he would "fight the one wot damaged the barrel" but there were no takers for this challenge. The phenomenon of pointing fingers again took place but it was concluded that it was something to do with the "Northern Lights".

Even in the days of the Old Public Hall fine print was in vogue and a perusal of the terms under which the Hall could be hired showed that, amongst other things, no intoxicating liquor was permitted in or around the Hall site. This prohibition remained until the demise of the Hall in 1967.



TAROONA TEA HOUSE



F. H. Vine, photo., Sandy Bay.

TAROONA TEA HOUSE, BROWN'S RIVER ROAD.

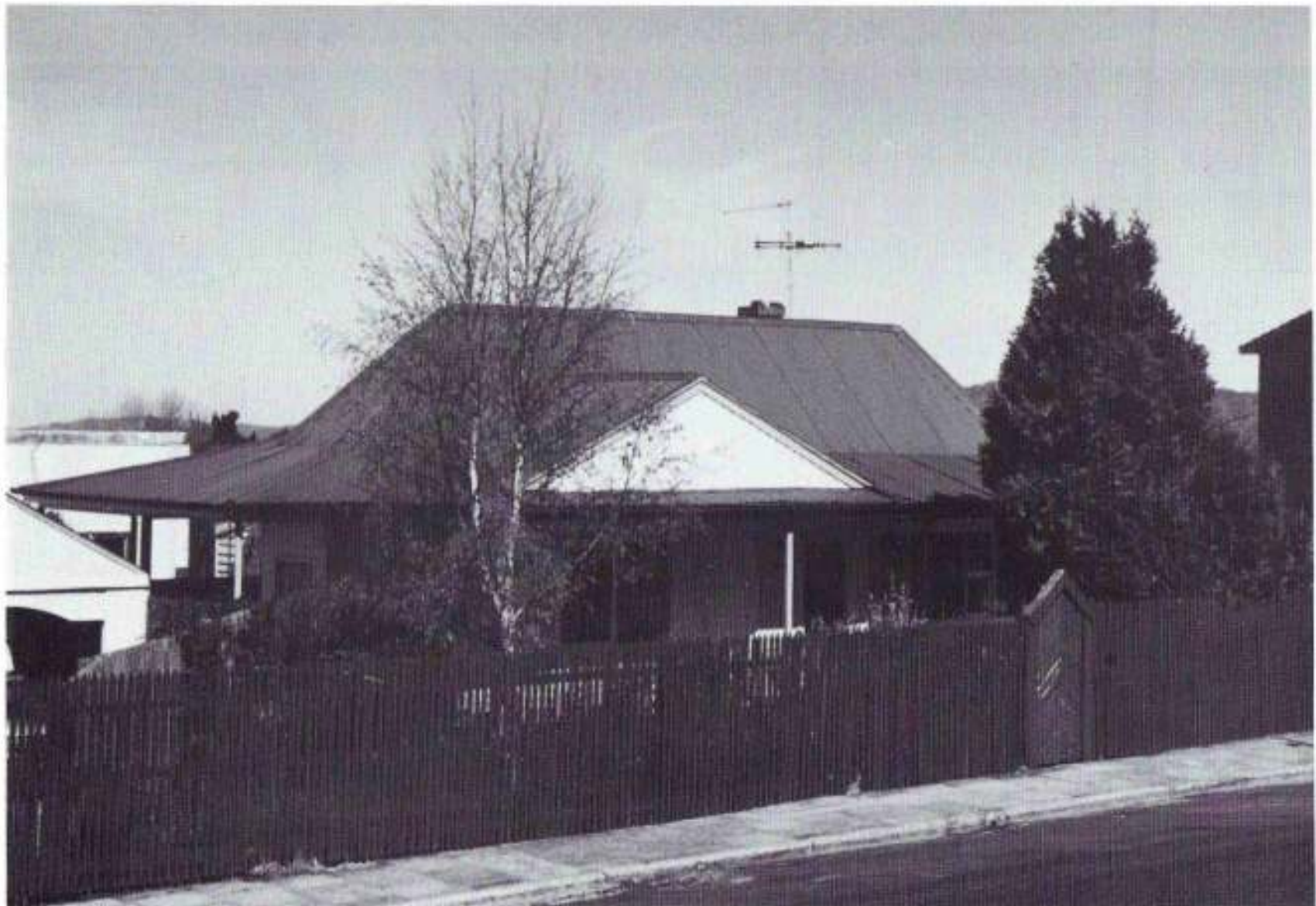
A new place of public entertainment opened by Mr. Lord at the half-way point on the Brown's River-road. There is good accommodation for visitors, ample provision for light refreshment, and a beach at the foot of the property with rustic summer houses and a commodious bathing house for amusement afterwards.

From the "Tasmanian Mail", 29th January 1898. (This is now number 162 Channel Highway).



The Taroona Tea House being used as a Post and Telegraph Office, 30th January 1947.

POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS MUSEUM.



The Taroona Tea House as a private residence, now number 162 Channel Highway, 1986.

PHOTO ANDREW LORD.