

Welcome to everybody present here today, whether you are a local, or from away.

Today, we are celebrating **four significant anniversaries**, which all, coincidentally, have something to do with the number “6” in one way or the other, although I should stress that there is nothing at all **satanic** in that association.

1. The former West End Hotel

Firstly, the two-storeyed main museum building, the former West End Hotel, is **170 years old** in 2026. Few changes have been made to the structure of the building since it was built in 1856. Additions were made at the rear in the 1930s and 1980s, but most floors and ceilings are intact, and the original timber shingles are still in situ under the new gal roof which was installed through a generous donation a few years ago.

Big changes are being implemented upstairs currently, with the long room at the front, once divided into three bedrooms and a corridor to the balcony, being refreshed. A display bedroom will soon be installed in the north-western corner room.

2. Museum 60 years on site

In 2026 the Mudgee Museum has been **on site for 60 years**. The Mudgee Historical Society was formed in 1964 and acquired the former West End Hotel building in 1966 for \$3,600. In 1969 an additional portion of land on the west was acquired for additional display space. All buildings behind the main museum building to the north therefore date post-1966. We are grateful for the many organizations and government grants which have facilitated the construction of the various buildings which you can see here today.

3. The former Dungaree Catholic Church

In 1906 the Catholic community at Dungaree, a village near Lue, between Mudgee and Rylstone, constructed a gal church. In the mid-1930s a new brick church in Lue supplanted it and the gal church was relocated to Mudgee South where it served a variety of denominations. **In 2026 the church is 120 years old.**

4. Relocation to Mudgee Museum site

30 years ago, in 1996, Mudgee Museum acquired the former Dungaree Catholic church and relocated it to the museum site for extra display purposes, particularly for our extensive doll collection. The roof had to be removed to clear overhead wires around town. A few years ago the former sacristy and confessional were converted into the re-creation of a vintage school room by the indoor curating team, Elick and Polly.

The New Big Shed

Finally, to conclude, I would like to officially open our latest structure on site: the New Big Shed, at the northern rear of the museum site, not to be confused with the Old Big Shed, built in the 1970s.

I would like to acknowledge Vice-President Sue England for compiling the following brief summary of this project, which occurred before I came back on the committee in 2024:

“The journey of the New Shed started in September 2022 with a Stronger Country Communities grant application provided by the Dept. of Regional NSW.

The main objective was to provide housing for our wonderful transport vehicles from sulkies, drays, wagons, to our Packard ambulance and Austin ute.

A local company was engaged to construct the new shed and negotiations with Council and various contractors began.

Our application was not only for the shed itself, but it also initially incorporated the construction of new pathways connecting the shed to our other buildings to improve visitor access, particularly for those with mobility issues, and the addition of security cameras.

We were also able to extend that to include extensive plumbing, a motorised shed door, skylights instead of electrical lighting, fencing and much needed upgrades to our electricals.

A great team of volunteers were involved in bringing the New Shed into being.

Thank you to our former Secretary, Heather, Lynda who took on the role as Grants Officer, and Sue who eventually took over the reins from Heather as Secretary. This team managed a large amount of administrative work (eg development approvals, obtaining quotes, managing tradespeople, on site meetings, publicity etc) and guided the project through to completion.

Much thanks also go to Thelma, our then Treasurer, who managed the huge budget, Elick who was involved in the extensive plumbing work, and of course to Bob and John, ably assisted by other volunteers, (like Wendy our signage expert), who managed to create the amazing display in the shed. A lot of heavy lifting and manoeuvring took place!

I would also like to thank local State parliamentarian and member for the electorate of Dubbo Dugald Saunders for his support of our grant application and all others who assisted in progressing the grant application.

If you haven't had a chance to see the new display, head on down 😊”

I therefore would like to officially declare the New Big Shed **OPEN**

Now, I invite you to join us for morning tea and enjoy the rest of the Museum during the day.

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