

Wyong Shire-wide Heritage Review

THEMATIC HISTORY



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Branch

Wyong Thematic History

Wendy Thorpe, 1994.

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1. Introduction

The Wyong Shire has seen significant growth since the earliest settlement and development of the region as a holiday and leisure destination. In particular, significant development has occurred within the Shire since World War II. Improvements in transport infrastructure, including the electrification of the railway and construction of the freeway to Sydney, the affordability of land and housing, the coastal lifestyle and the expansion of metropolitan Sydney have all contributed to this urbanization and the associated population and social changes.

Created from the redistribution of the old Erina Shire boundaries, Wyong grew from about 10,000 people in 1947 to nearly 19,000 in 1961 and 33,000 in 1971. Rapid growth saw the population increase from 47,000 in 1976 to 82,000 in 1986. This level of growth was sustained by the new land releases and housing development in the 1990s. Since 2000 population increase has slowed with the number of people being 139 800 at the 2006 Census. Over half the population has been added to this primarily rural and holiday area in a little over a single generation.¹

The increased population has been primarily due to the arrival of people from other areas, particularly Sydney, for work and lifestyle purposes. The main localities from which new residents have come include Gosford, Blacktown, Lake Macquarie, Penrith and Warringah local government areas. Additional people come from other states and only a small number settle in the shire from overseas. Of the 25 821 people to move into the shire between 2001- 2006, only 1490 have been from other countries. It is also noted that in 2001, the Central Coast had a substantially lower proportion of people born in non-English speaking countries (4.5%) compared to NSW where 16.1% of the population is in this population group.² This reflects what appears to be an historical trend in the area where the most significant migrant population appears to have been Chinese fisherman at Tacoma and ...and around Canton Beach in the late nineteenth century.

The total number of people to move into the Wyong's population is expected to be larger than Gosford's by 2016. The population is expected to grow to over 200,000 by 2031, representing a further 50% growth in one generation. These

¹ Wyong Shire Council. „Who makes up our community.’ *Wyong Shire Council Community Plan*. Chapter 2, pp.28-35.; Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report, 2003-04*. p.22.

² Wyong Shire Council. „Who makes up our community.’ *Wyong Shire Council Community Plan*. Chapter 2. p28-35; *Wyong Shire Council Social Atlas*. Section 6.5.

people will be accommodated in new release areas such as Warnervale and Wadalba.³

³ Wyong Shire Council. „Who makes up our community.’ *Wyong Shire Council Community Plan*. Chapter 2. pp.28-35.; Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report, 2003-04*. p.22.

2. LANDSCAPE AND TOPOGRAPHY" A FRAMEWORK FOR HISTORY

The physical form of Wyong Shire, its creeks, beaches, hills and trees have had a critical role to play in the unique historical development that characterizes this area.

Two hundred and seventy million years ago the land south of the Hunter region began to sink and great quantities of eroded material washed into the depression. A wide shallow sea was formed in the Sydney Basin. As part of this process massive coal deposits were laid down and deep sand deposits formed in the area. The sea retreated about two hundred and fifty million years ago and more coal deposits were laid in the broad swampy area that encompassed Wyong.⁴

More eroded material came to the area by means of two large rivers emptying into the basin. The deposition of more sediment and its consolidation formed solid ground. A sandy coastline was developed as the basin was gradually closed from the sea by the advancing sediment. This sediment formed Narrabeen sandstone. Two hundred million years ago more erosion occurred and caused more sandstone to be laid down.⁵ The erosion of the various geological forms resulted in the creation of a variety of soil types. Silt deposits, in particular, produced fine agricultural soils.

Approximately thirty million years ago eucalypt and rainforest vegetation evolved in the area. The rainforest vegetation eventually retreated to the more shady gullies. Red cedar became particularly noticeable in the forests at this time.⁶ Other species that adapted were the blue gum, blackbutt, round-leafed gum, spotted gum and white mahogany amongst others.⁷

The shire is now characterised by sandy beaches and sand dune systems separated by varying lengths of rocky shoreline on the open, flat coastal region. Inland is more mountainous. The major streams, Ourimbah and Wyong Creeks, empty into the largest of coastal lagoons, Tuggerah Lake. The latter is the largest of the three coastal lagoons. A third stream, Jiliby Creek, is a tributary of Wyong Creek as is Cedar Brush Creek. Wallarah Creek is to the north. The district has developed three relatively narrow valleys.⁸ The topography that has resulted from the millions of years of geological formation has created constraints and possibilities for the people who came to settle the area.

Creeks provided navigational possibilities while features such as the Kangy Angy

⁴ B.C. Jones and A.C. Eyers. *Ourimbah - History of a NSW Timber Town to 1930*. p.1.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage*.p.6.

Range separating Ourimbah and Wyong Creeks presented difficulties and, in places, almost insuperable barriers.

One of the most outstanding features of the local environment, however, and one that probably had one of the most significant impacts on the history of the shire was the dense and in places almost impenetrable tree cover. Early survey maps, such as those of Sir Thomas Mitchell, recorded the large areas of dense bush and in places tea-tree swamp. One of the most vivid accounts of the untouched local environment was produced by Sarah Mathew, wife of the surveyor Felton Mathew who was sent to explore and map the area. In 1834 Sarah described the area just to the south of Wyong, emphasising as she did so the difficulty of passage, particularly because of sand and mud in the area of the creeks and lakes;

"... fine forest country, occasionally crossed by belts of dense brush absolutely impervious to the sun's rays... These brushes always border creeks and gullies and are composed of rank vegetation in every' shape; trees of gigantic height, the magnificent and graceful palms and the beautiful, feathery, fern tree are all collected here with vines of immense size twisting their snakelike branches to the tops of the smallest trees and hanging in grotesque forms from one to another; these vines... vary' in thickness from the size of the finger to that of a man's arm and twined in many places so firmly together that the aid of an axe is necessary to cut a patch through" .⁹

Later into the century descriptions stressed the dense tree cover of the region; it was to have become by that time, however, a resource to be exploited rather than a feature to be admired and wondered at.

Sarah Mathew also noted another outstanding feature of the area; its wildlife. She described,

"the occasional flight of screaming parrots or the solitary cry of the shy pheasant...innumerable Bell-birds... On the shore near Tuggerah Beach Creek (Ourimbah Creek) were hundreds of pelicans... in crossing we also raised an immense flight of black swans".¹⁰

Later travellers were also struck by the abundance of wild-life. John Mann described in 1842 how Tuggerah Lake,

"abounded with fish of all sorts; but what attracted my attention...were the black swans; their nests built in the water of sticks, were dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches of the lake... The several points of land which extended into the lake were black with ducks and water fowl; they were in thousands and covered acres of ground. The outlines of the sandflats were

⁹ Quoted in E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume Four., p.82ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

indicated by countless numbers of pelicans... " .¹¹

Even into the 1880s dingoes were still found in the district and travellers continued to notice the large flocks of birds and immense quantities of fish (9).¹² By the twentieth century the birds and fish had become a tourist attraction to be caught or shot and were featured as such in numerous tourist publications and advertisements. As much as the attractions and possibilities offered by the landscape and its resources, it presented difficulties, for navigation and access as described previously, and also active threats.

Floods have taken a toll of the area several times, particularly in 1893, 1905, 1927 and 1949 although not as severely as areas further inland from the shire. Erosion has been an increasing concern during the twentieth century. During the 1920s and 1930s Erina Shire Council (which included Wyong) prohibited any further depletion of rocks in its vicinity. At that time builders had indiscriminately removed rock for use after the creation of numerous subdivisions and even the Council had used them to form the main street of The Entrance.¹³ Their removal had weakened an important link in maintaining the stability of the landscape.

From the end of World War I land speculation became a significant element in the development of Wyong Shire. Sales stressed the use of the land for weekenders and holiday homes. The effect on the landscape of the land speculation was the clearing of areas for land subdivision including sections that had remained largely undeveloped, such as some of the farms. However, with this development came problems such as erosion, which have continued to be present. In 1967-68 a sea-wall was constructed at the beach at The Entrance to control erosion.¹⁴ The Wyong Landscape Group was formed in the early 1990s to help fight soil erosion on the upper Wyong River.¹⁵

The Tuggerah Lakes have also suffered from increasing urban development in the 1960s associated with high nutrient loads entering the lakes from septic systems from the 1960s to the 1980s, urban run off, reclamation of wetlands for industrial, recreational and housing developments, loss of riparian vegetation due to the housing developments and dredging and reclamation activities along the shoreline¹⁶ In more recent years attempts have been made to rectify these problems.

The landscape character that distinguished the period 1900-1945 was one of a "designed landscape", where tree planting as a scenic addition to the landscape was implemented. The planting of Norfolk Island Pines at The Entrance occurred

¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.* Volume 1., p.15.

¹² 'A Sketch of the Gosford District" Part III.' *Sydney Mail*. 21 March 1885.

¹³ AM. McClure. *The Entrance Long Ago* p.70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹⁵ *Wyong Heritage Study Stage 1:Landscape Report*. „Historical Background' Vol 3. No page numbering.

¹⁶ Anthony Scott, *Tuggerah lakes way back when...* Sainty & Assoc, 2002.p21

during this period and the line of palm trees along the Pacific Highway at Wyong. The natural landscape also came to the attention of the visitor and much was made of the natural features to encourage the tourism market, in particular the beaches and associated recreational activities

This popular theme of recreation led to the development of the The Entrance and the establishment of the bridge in 1934 joined both of the settlements. Despite these developments, the character of the areas remained informal with many of the areas on the sea front of The Entrance, for instance, being left in a natural to semi natural state. Formal elements were introduced in the planting of Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and Canary Island Pine (*Phoenix canariensis*) planted from circa 1900 to the beginning of World War II. These trees act as key landscape elements to the beach areas and remain the most visually significant exotic vegetation along the coastline. They coincide with the built up areas, both residential and commercial.

Recreation activities were concentrated on the coastal fringe with rural activities of market gardening, orchards and poultry farms located mainly in the western sections of the Shire. The development of the landscape was concurrent with beaches along the foreshore in the Sydney Metropolitan region and the Central and South Coast where the planting of Norfolk Island Pines in particular was widespread. This tree type, first established along the Manly Esplanade in formal rows, was imitated widely and become a characteristic of the plantings associated with surf beaches and recreation along a major section of the eastern seaboard.¹⁷

The establishment of the Wyong Shire in 1947, together with the end of World War II, saw growth become increasingly urban in character. This began to change the open, informal rural character of the landscape to one of closer settlement of mainly single storey housing.

The landscape of the 1950s and 60s in the newly developed areas had the typical character of new release areas with much of the existing vegetation being removed. Later subdivisions have retained more of the existing environment as the natural vegetation became more appreciated in the 1970s.

The 1970s saw a change of attitude to landscape and surroundings as there was a greater awareness of the natural environment and the general attributes of the area. This was accentuated by the building of power stations in the Shire which introduced a large industrial form to the area, more normally associated with industrial areas of cities.¹⁸

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the increasing development of the area has been matched by an increasing concern for the protection of environmental and

¹⁷ *Wyong Heritage Study Stage 1:Landscape Report. op.cit.*, no numbering.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

cultural qualities. Considerable numbers of studies have been carried out in this period to protect rivers and historic sites amongst others or to investigate the impact of works such as electricity supply, mining and flood works. A Draft Regional Environmental Plan was prepared for the Wyong Development Areas in 1987.



Kangy Angy Public School, 1884.
Source. Sydney Illustrated News, 15 March 1884. p.8.

3. OLD AND NEW INHABITANTS

Darkinjung country contains over 5000 registered Indigenous sites with new sites being identified regularly as a result of fires, excavation, building and clearing of the land. Evidence of human activity on Darkinjung lands prior to 1788 is most evident in the higher regions where rock engravings and axe-grinding grooves are numerous. Rock shelters with charcoal and ochre drawings are found throughout the district. Open middens of discarded crustacean shells often found at the junction between valley bottom and hill slope in a protected position near water probably attracted the first white residents to many parts of the Central Coast. The shells would become an important part of early Colonial society, as they were taken to kilns in Sydney where they were burnt to make lime, an ingredient of the mortar used in the building trade. Some shell burning also occurred locally.¹⁹

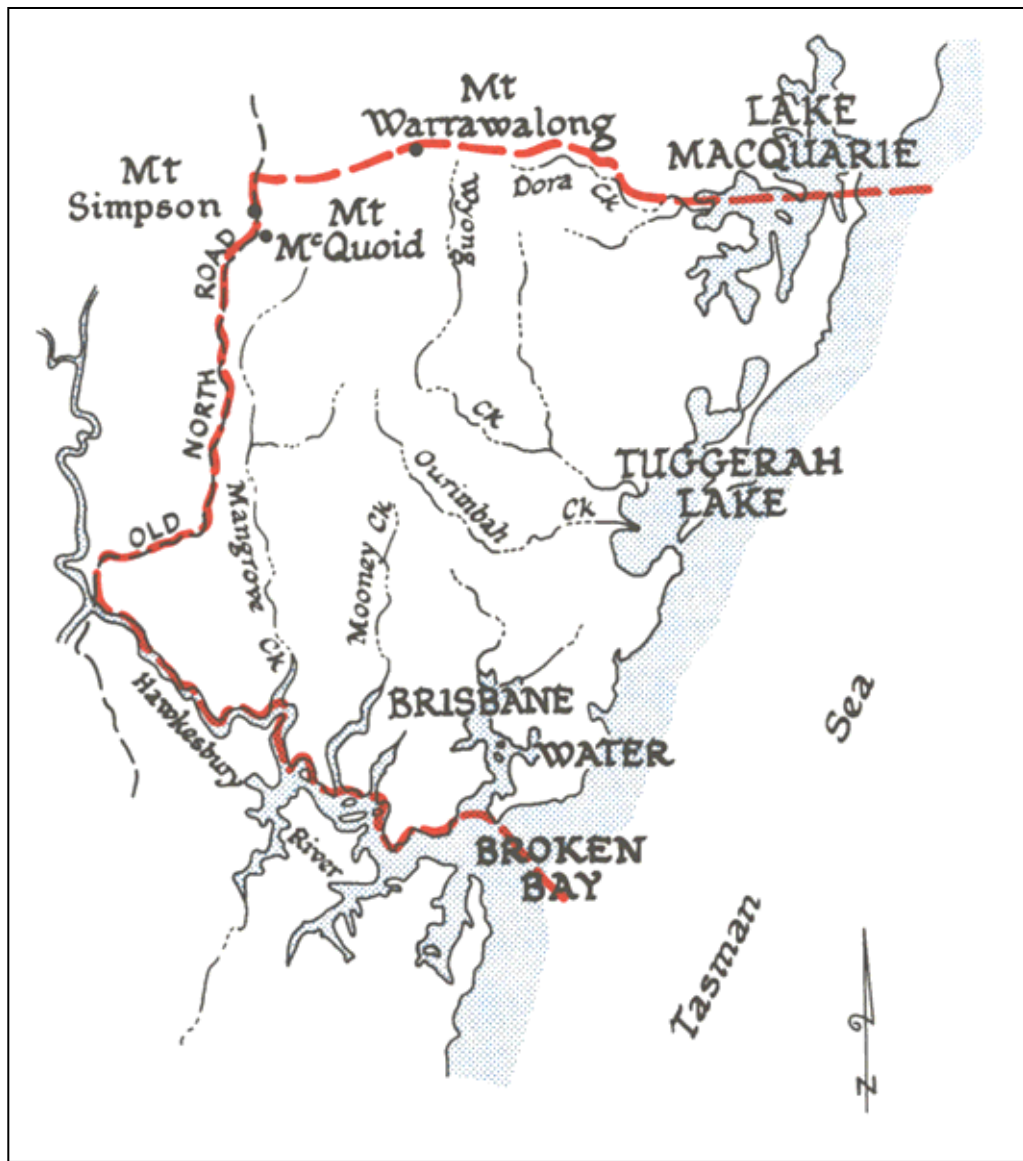
The large number of extant sites indicates many people lived with within the geographical area prior to the arrival of Europeans. Although Indigenous people defined, and continue to define the land to which they are connected by territories rather than boundaries, boundaries have been identified by the Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group in recent years for the purpose of understanding these territories. The group has described Darkinjung country as a fusion of that area designated and described by N.B. Tindale in 1974, the administration district of Brisbane Water which existed in official records from 1823 until the beginning of the 20th century; and the current geographical area known as the Central Coast of New South Wales, comprising Gosford and Wyong Local Government Areas. Dr John Fraser's map of 1892 provides another perspective of the various connections between the people living in the Colony of New South Wales. In this map, he draws a coastal nation that embraces the lands from the Macleay to the Hawkesbury, and he calls this group the „Kuring-Gai“²⁰

It is generally accepted that the geographical area described above was home to the Darkinjung Nation, consisting of 12 clans which have been divided into the following areas: Kincumber Peninsula, the Patonga area, Erina Wamberal and Terrigal, Gosford, Somersby, Ourimbah Creek Valley, Lower Wyong River and Jiliby Creek valleys, Upper Wyong River valley, Tuggerah Beach, and Norah

¹⁹ Dundon, Gwen, *The Shipbuilders of Brisbane Water NSW*, Gwen Dundon, 1997, East Gosford, p18. (See this volume for an extensive description of the local industry.) A small sample of this early soft lime mortar can be seen at Brisbane Water Historical Society's *Henry Kendall Cottage Museum*, the former home of Peter Fagan at West Gosford. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003

²⁰ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003; Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: March 2003.

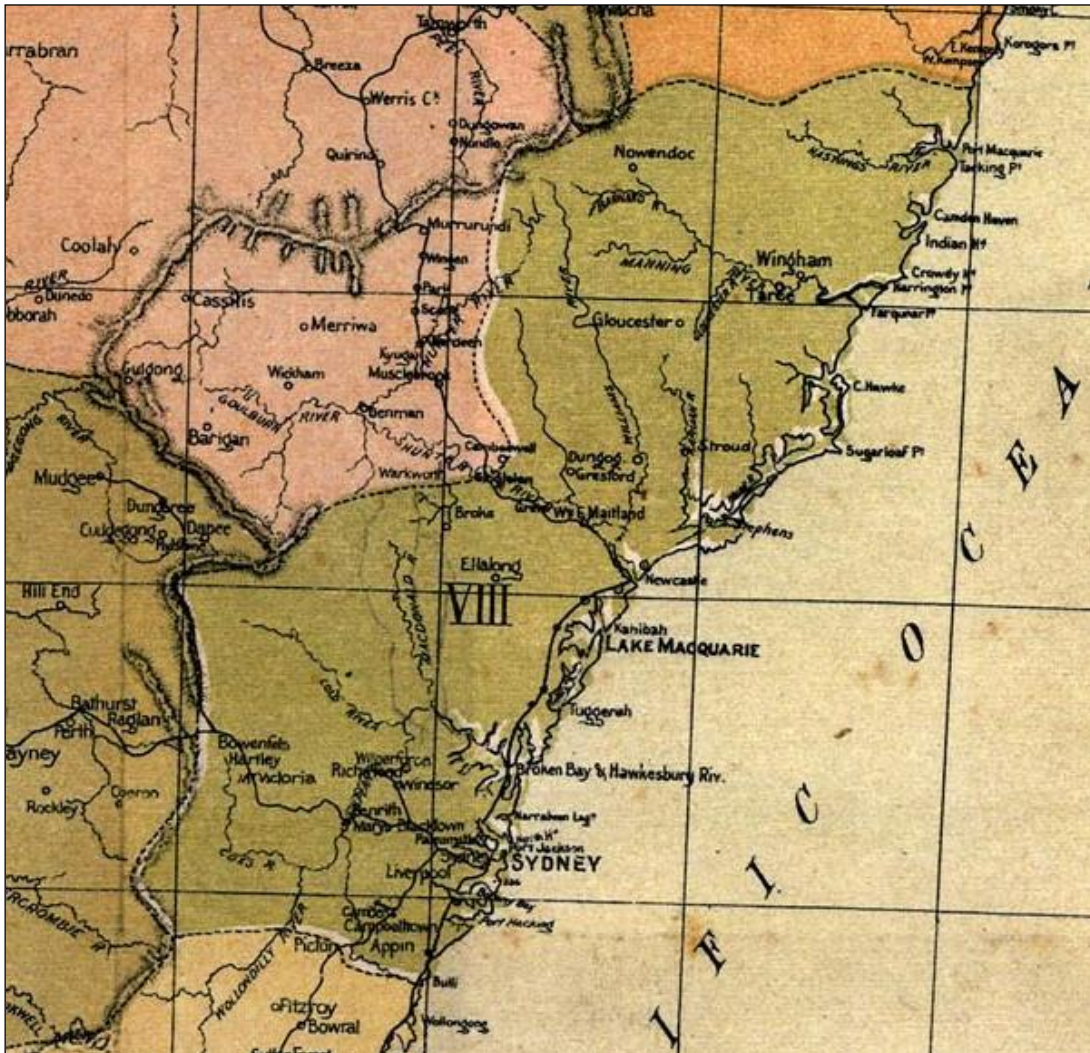
Head, Cooranbong, Mangrove Kulnurra.²¹ It is likely that these groups created their base camps at sources of freshwater such as the southern shore of Tuggerah Lake near Toowoan Bay and Norah Head and South Entrance.



Administration boundaries of the Brisbane Water District 1840

Source: Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung – Our People, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003

²¹ Henly Cox. *Heritage Assessment and Review for The Entrance North, The Entrance and Long Jetty* Vol1 p10.



Portion of Dr John Fraser's map of 1892 showing that the people living in the area he designates VIII appear to be connected or related.

Source: Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung – Our People, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003.²²

The language of the Darkinjung has not survived European arrival in the district. However, there are around 320 words that have been recorded by researcher R. H. Matthews in the nineteenth century. There is however no known record of

²² „Map of New South Wales as occupied by The Native Tribes. Prepared by Dr John Fraser', published in *An Australian language as spoken by the Awabakal, the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie (near Newcastle, New South Wales) being an account of their language, traditions and customs* by L E Threlkeld, available at <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/collections/archives/int/threlkeld/1892map.html>

grammar.²³ A number of these words are reflected in the place names of the Wyong Local Government Area today, including:

BUDGEWOI - Young grass
DOORALONG - Timber for making spears
GOROKAN - Dawn or early morning
GWANDALAN - Peace
JILLIBY - Where two creeks meet
KANWAL - Snakes indeed
OURIMBA - Sacred circle of the initiation for investing the 'ourn' or belt of manhood
TERRIGAL - Place of little birds
TOOWOON BAY - The mating call of the Wonga Pigeon
TOUKLEY - Many brambles
TUGGERAH - Savanah grasslands
TUMBI UMBI - Plenty of water
WATANOBBI - Hills surrounded by water
WYONG - An edible yam²⁴

Captain Cook recorded sighting smoke from fires in the area of the present Tuggerah Lakes Golf Links. The earliest exploration parties led by Phillip to the Brisbane Water district had friendly contact with the Aboriginal people and Aborigines from the central coast districts made several visits to the main settlement.²⁵ One of these trips, a few weeks after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, saw Governor Phillip left Sydney Cove with a small party of men to explore the land to the north of Port Jackson. There was an immediate need to find good land in the colony for producing crops. While there he entered a locality which was later named Brisbane Water. Further incursions north were not significant as the fertile flats of Windsor were discovered in 1789 and more easily developed. Occupation on the northern side of the Hawkesbury was also restricted as the government wanted a buffer zone between European settlement in the south and the penal settlement at Newcastle. This situation changed in the 1820s when the convict post was moved from Newcastle to Port Macquarie.²⁶

By 1825 when a newspaper report confirmed the naming of Brisbane Water in honour of Governor Brisbane there were already a handful of Europeans living in the area. The attitude of these settlers to the Darkinjung people varied greatly. Those in authority quite often expressed a deep concern for the Aborigines, while

²³ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003.

²⁴ http://www.users.bigpond.com/Rona_Richmond/Avoca/Central_Coast.htm

²⁵ F.C. Bennett. *The Story of the Aboriginal People of the Central Coast of NSW*. pp.5, 8. & 19

²⁶ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: March 2003. pp.22-23.

those in day to day contact with them did not always engage in positive relations.
27

In 1827 Police Magistrate Willoughby Bean reported to the Colonial Secretary that there were five family groups of Aboriginals in the district.

*„Sydney April 16th 1827..... There are Five Tribes – the Mial or Broken Bay Tribe – the Tuggera Beach Tribe – the Wyong Tribe and the Narara and “Erina” Tribes – The three first, as well as I am able to judge, consist of about Fifteen each and the two last about Ten each – being in all about Sixty-five men women and children’.*²⁸

The numbers mentioned by Bean do not correspond to another list generated by the Newcastle Magistrates Allman and Brooks in September 1826. The „Tugrah Beech Tribe’, number 200 strong, was listed with the Newcastle tribes, with „Chuge’ as „Chief’. Accepting the richness of natural resources to sustain a population, and the accuracy of Allman’s and Brooks’ numbers in just one group of Darkinjung people, the population of Aboriginal people in the Brisbane Water district would have been far in excess of Willoughby Bean’s estimate of 65 persons. Nor do the clans described represent the generally accepted version of the Darkinjung Nation being made up of 12 clans.²⁹

In 1828 one of the first reported disputes between Aborigines and Europeans took place between the local settler William Cape and local tribes people. Cape was incensed by their inroads on his crops, the Aborigines by his violence and assaults upon their kin. The local magistrate wrote in 1828,

"This District have within the last five or six months been greatly disturbed by the inroads of Strange Tribes of Aborigines, I believe from the Hunter’s River, the Wollombi, and the Sugar loaf – These tribes have frequently, during that period, assembled in great number (on one occasion upwards of 200 & on another 180) and in the parts the most retired; when they have disturbed the settlers’ crops, and on one occasion beat the Settler & his man, who made some resistance; and have decamped and disappeared, before the Settler could communicate with his neighbor or seek any assistance. Mr Henderson the District Constable during my absence from home, & on their last making their appearance,

²⁷ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.23.

²⁸ Colonial Secretary Letters received 1829 – Aborigines: Willoughby Bean to Colonial Secretary, Letter 27/3713, 16 April 1827, SRNSW 4/2045. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.23.

²⁹ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.23.

*deemed it prudent to arm fifteen men & go in pursuit of them. He overtook & drove them before him along the Coast to the Northwards till night came on, when they doubled upon him & returned. He took two of them, whom he released, after retaining some days – They however confessed, that is was their intention not only to rob the Settlers, but likewise to capture and burn a Gentleman of the name of Cape, who had formerly fired on them during the night when stealing his Corn. – Assistance was immediately sent to Mr Cape (who resides 12 miles from any other settler) by which means they were deterred from putting the purpose in execution. I am however confident that they really intended doing him some great injury they having already heaved a spear at one of his Men, when on horseback, and which struck in the saddle – They have now left the District; but will, I have no doubt, visit it again; and, unless some strong steps be taken to intimidate them, will be liable to so more mischief. – I therefore beg to know to what extremities I may go in repelling them; and if any be taken, whether I may use my own discretion in punishing them either by corporal punishment or confinement or other ways how they are to be disposed of. From Mr Cape's statement to me, I should imagine that he has been at a loss of upwards of £60 by their pilfering. – We can always repel them without any assistance at any time; only I wish to know how far I am justified in treating them with severity, in case of their making their appearance."*³⁰

This event needs to be understood in a broader context. Europeans had introduced Indian corn to the Aborigines and the people developed a liking for corn meal. As their normal food sources dwindled they began to help themselves to the corn. This quickly developed into conflict with the farmers and their servants. From the foregoing report it can be surmised that what may have begun as a misunderstanding between Cape and the Aborigines in May 1828 over taking/sharing corn escalated quickly into armed combat. Cape seems to have provoked the Aborigines into many acts of violence by his conduct. Further trouble ensued in the following months:

"... Not many days since, on receiving a letter from Mr Cape, stating that the Natives were again plundering him of Corn, I sent over to his assistance all the Constables in the district, and proceeded there myself, that I might by that means be enable to from a proper estimate of Mr Cape's loss, and likewise be enabled to adopt some plan of future protection to him. – Mr Cape then, as on former occasions, seemed little interested to give any information on the subject, and I am very doubtful whether his statement be properly

³⁰ Willoughby Bean to Alex McLeay, 25 April 1828, TLC, pp359-60 In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. pp.27-29.

correct:- even should the Blacks have robbed him to the extent he states, I have every reason to believe that his men have encouraged them to the deed. – Mr Cape however appears to set his face against any enquiring, and even his neighbours who have gone over to his assistance, have been treated rather as intruders than friends. – I have made every allowance for him, on account of his age, and, notwithstanding many insulting notes and abusive language, I have rendered him every assistance in my power, both in a public and private capacity indeed I am at a loss to what to attribute his conduct:- there is scarce a person in the District – either Black or White – with whom he is on good terms... He has provoked the Aborigines to many acts of violence by his conduct – menacing them almost on all occasions, with a loaded musket....

...I am fearful that there will be some trouble yet with the strange tribes, who, I have no doubt have been invited, from distant parts, by some of those, who have been ill treated by Mr Cape or others in the District, to retaliate upon their enemies, by pilfering them. – I have kept three of the worst Characters in the Watchhouse for some days, which has had a good effect on the rest and all is at present quiet. – Many of the Blacks in this District have conducted themselves very well; & should it be His Excellency's intention this winter of distributing Blankets & Clothing amongst them, I shall assemble the whole of them and give only to those who have been deserving from their late conduct." ³¹

Bean noted that a large portion of the blame rested with Cape:

"He has provoked the aborigines to many acts of violence by his conduct, menacing them almost on all occasions with a loaded musket... many of the blacks in this district have conducted themselves very well..." ³²

Reverend L.E.Threkold operated an Aboriginal Mission north of Lake Macquarie. A prolific writer about the events between Europeans and Aboriginal people in the region, he too noted that the violent activities were not unprovoked.

"The alarm of the Aborigines not only for the heads of their deceased friends and relations, but also for the personal safety of the living, was not without good reason. There were many stock-

³¹ Willoughby Bean to Colonial Secretary, 25 May 1828, Brisbane Water, Ticket of Leave, Quarterly & Other Returns, &c. 1826-1840, facsimile compiled by Gosford District Local History Study Group, pp365-66. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. pp.27-29.

³² Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. pp.11, 27-29.

holders who have suffered severely from the depredations of the Aborigines, and consequently were infuriated against the blacks... Not far from Newcastle, in one of the upper districts, a Settler saw a black stealing his growing corn in the open day, he caught the culprit, hung him by the neck, on the limb of a tree, stuffed a corn cob into his mouth, and left his body to putrefy as a scare-crow for the Aborigines to keep them away from his standing corn! My black tutor [Biraban] saw the suspended body and informed me of the circumstances as having recently occurred [late 1824].

...Numerous cases of a similar description occurred about this time, all calculated to drive the Aborigines to madness, who retaliated upon the unfortunate settlers, created a bitter animosity, which increased the mischief. Our house was surrounded by blacks as a place of safety. And about sixty of them belonging to two distinct tribes [Tuggerah Beach and Newcastle] were at this period [1826] employed by me in cutting down and burning off the timber of about five and twenty acres of land... The blacks assembled to fight, we employed them, and the waging of war was postponed."³³

He also described how abduction of Aboriginal women and children in the mid 1820s by runaway convicts, stockmen and Englishmen created much resentment and terror in the Darkinjung population:

*"There are now two government stockmen, that are every night annoying the Blacks by taking their little Girls, and I am now waiting to be informed, when they are in the native camp to get them apprehended, but then, as was the case once before, the evidence of the Black cannot be admitted, and indeed they are really terrified to speak. My wonder is, that more Whites are not speared than there are considering the gross provocation given."*³⁴

A further provocation was as follows:

"Often are the Aborigines most shamefully ill-used by those who pride themselves on the difference of complexion; and there are stubborn facts in existence, when the poor Aborigines have been forced to give up their hard obtained provisions to the more powerful white neighbours, or personal maltreatment would be the consequence of denial. Their girls and women have been taken

³³ L E Threlkeld, *Reminiscences 1825-26*, reprinted in Niel Gunson (ed), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L E Threlkeld Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p48-50. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

*from their camps at night, shrieking, and muskets have been presented to intimidate, and their heads have borne the marks of the butt-end in preventing interference of the males. It is not a matter of surprise that a few Europeans are yearly speared by the Aborigines, but it is wonderful that more of the English are not destroyed, considering the numerous aggravations given, and the many opportunities the Aborigines have of secretly taking vengeance on them."*³⁵

It is supposed that conflict continued at Brisbane Water, although there is little documentary evidence in the official correspondence to support this claim. Threlkeld noted how settlers generally felt about the Aborigines and there is little to indicate that Brisbane Water settlers were any different:

*"No man, who comes to this Colony and has ground and cattle and Corn, can dispassionately view the subject of the blacks, their interest says annihilate the race."*³⁶

These activities also highlighted the relationship between the clans and their neighbours. Not only were there a variety of social interactions, but it appeared contact with neighbouring groups also involved organizing a co-ordinated effort when faced with conflict with the white settlers. Threlkeld wrote in 1828

*"I am fearful that there will be some trouble yet with the strange tribes, who, I have no doubt have been invited, from distant parts, by some of those, who have been ill treated by Mr Cape or others in the District, to retaliate upon their enemies, by pilfering them."*³⁷

In 1834 he reported further instances of this activity.

³⁵ London Missionary Society Aboriginal Mission, New South Wales, December, 1852, *LMS Report [December 1825]*, reprinted in Niel Gunson (ed), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L E Threlkeld Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p189. Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.29.

³⁶ Letter to G Burder and W A Hankey from Threlkeld 10 August 1826, *LMS Australia Letters. Received 1 March 1827*, reprinted in Niel Gunson (ed), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L E Threlkeld Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p213. Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.30.

³⁷ Willoughby Bean to Colonial Secretary, 25 May 1828, Brisbane Water, Ticket of Leave, Quarterly & Other Returns, &c. 1826-1840, facsimile compiled by Gosford District Local History Study Group, pp365-66. Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.29.

*"Two young men who for months past have been supported at this establishment [Lake Macquarie]... were attacked by a party of Blacks consisting of about 30 males collected from Sydney, Brisbane water, and the neighbouring parts..."*³⁸

The 1830's and 1840's are described as a period of heightened conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the Brisbane Water. A number of Aboriginal men were tried before the NSW Supreme Court for stealing shirts and food, for 'putting in fear' and other similar offences.

Attacks on the European population were numerous. Many homes were robbed. One raid began with an attack at „Kurinbong' where Aborigines demanded tea and bread. Records state that it appears that the same group then moved to William Cape's farm at Wyong, taking food and clothing, and then stole tins of milk from Manning's dairy at „Kurinbong'. Next came a series of 'attacks' on farmers and assigned convicts. Poultry and livestock were eaten and a lame man was robbed five times in two months and threatened with death for having a musket. On the 25 October 1834 a large party of Aborigines robbed the home of one of the Brisbane Water settlers, Alfred Jaques.³⁹ Another incident was noted which took place on 5 November 1834.

The men carried guns, as well as the traditional spears and waddies. There were many threats to the settlers but very few spearings and no deaths. Nevertheless, resentment mounted. Magistrate Warner pursued the Brisbane Water Aborigines for several weeks but was unable to apprehend them. In October 1834 Magistrate Warner wrote to the Governor appealing for a party of mounted police to be sent to his district for about a month so that he might capture the ringleaders.

*"I trust His Excellency will be pleased to allow the mounted police and constables to remain at Brisbane Water about a month...I committed one black on the 22nd inst. At Brisbane Water for robbing Mr Manning's hut at Tuggerah beach, many of the small settlers at Brisbane Water are so much alarmed at the approach of the natives as they collect in large tribes, that they are fearful to make the least resistance and allow them to rob them as they please even those who have arms."*⁴⁰

³⁸ Threlkeld's 4th Report 7 Nov 1834, reprinted in Niel Gunson (ed), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L E Threlkeld Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p120. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Our Voices, Our Place*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: March 2003. p.21.

³⁹Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong*. Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle: May 2003. p.32.

⁴⁰ Magistrate Warner, reprinted in John Turner & Greg Blyton, *The Aborigines of Lake Macquarie*, Lake Macquarie City Council, Newcastle, 1995, p37

With the military at hand relative peace returned to the district but when they were withdrawn at the end of 1834 the raids began again. Following a series of robberies and other activities Warner drew up a list of 18 Aborigines, all of whom came from Wyong, Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Beach, and offered a reward for their capture. However, he did not manage to arrest any of them until early January 1835.

A reward of forty pounds was also offered for those responsible for the rape and robbery at the farm of John Lynch. By the middle of 1835 sixteen men had been committed for trial for robberies at Wyong, Brisbane Water and Lake Macquarie. Many of those tried received a sentence of „death recorded’. Death recorded meant a formal sentence of death, without the intention of the sentence being carried out.

The original intention was to send the eight Aborigines who had received the sentence of „death recorded’ to Van Diemen’s. Instead, they were confined on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour. As an act of mercy, the Governor commuted the sentence from „life’ to the lesser time of two years labour on Goat Island.

It appears that „peace’ returned to the Brisbane Water and Lake Macquarie regions for some years following the events of 1835. However, the Aboriginal people did not prosper as the removal of these men from the local family groups had a devastating effect on the groups’ survival. In addition, an outbreak of measles in 1835 was responsible for a number of Aboriginal deaths.⁴¹ Several settlers reported this apparent decline during this period, including Sarah Mathew, who in 1834, described in considerable detail her encounters with the local tribes.

"Our camp is surrounded by a number of the natives...an interesting set of people, and those who have only seen the poor degraded, wretched creatures about Sydney can form no idea of the aborigines of Australia;...they are so happy, too, it is a pleasure to see them... they are fond of ornamenting themselves with anything they can get... They are rapidly diminishing in number; and most probably another generation will see their entire extinction in at least this part of the colony".⁴²

However, the numbers of recorded Aborigines at Brisbane Water seemed to slowly increase between 1838 and 1840. The numbers for 1838 were 34 men, 12 women, 6 boys and 3 girls, totaling 55. In 1839 the numbers were 35 men, 12

⁴¹ U Mulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003. pp.32-40.

⁴² E, Stinson., *op.cit.*, Volume Four., p.83.

women, 7 boys and 3 girls, totaling 57, and 1840 numbers were 35 men, 12 women, 9 boys and 4 girls, totaling 60.⁴³

Two years later this increase in population appears to have faltered. John Mann in 1842, after describing his witnessing of a corroboree at Wyong Creek, described the impact of the white settlers on the Aborigines.

*"At present it is difficult to meet with a bonafide native. Few now remain of the once powerful tribes; one has to travel into the far distant back country to find what might be termed a 'full blooded native.'"*⁴⁴

This appears to be supported by the 1845 Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines for Brisbane Water it was noted that:

1. *There are about forty-seven of the Aborigines in this district; comprising twenty-seven males and thirteen female adults; four male and three female children.*
2. *Their numbers have diminished during the last five years, to the extent of one-fourth of their original number; in the previous five years the deaths were more numerous.*
3. *The decrease has been principally confined to the adults.*

The 1845 Report also states:

*The decrease may be attributed, 1st., to immoral habits and disease; 2nd., to the use of intoxicating liquors, and exposure to the night dews; 3rd., to the general intercourse subsisting between the aboriginal females, and the males of the white population, may be considered as the primary cause of there being no increase in their numbers...*⁴⁵

The 1848 Census records only forty seven to fifty Aborigines within the entire Brisbane Water district.⁴⁶

⁴³ Letter to E Deas Thomson from L E Threlkeld, 29 October 1840, *Archives, C.S.I.I., Re blankets issued to Aborigines 1838-43 (4/1133-3), 4/011054*, reprinted in Niel Gunson (ed), *Australian Reminiscences & Papers of L E Threlkeld Missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974, p282. In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003. p.47.

⁴⁴ E.Stinson, *op.cit.*, Volume One., pp.14-16

⁴⁵ Government Reports on the condition of the Aboriginal Peoples, M.L. ZML Q572.9/PAI: MAV/FM4/9857A, p31. . In Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003. p.48.

⁴⁶ E.Stinson. *op.cit.*, *Volime One* p.13. Local historian E. Stinson stated that his grandfather claimed to have known of only two aborigines left in the district in c. 1856.

However, some Aborigines met more violent ends. Shootings of Aborigines took place on the Cape properties in the 1850s. It was reported by Yarramalong pioneer, Allan Waters, that „In the early days a man named [William] Turner lived in a log cabin built by the Government near Jilliby bridge ... and from this cabin he used to shoot the blacks.⁴⁷

The last of the original tribes people is claimed to have died during the last decades of the nineteenth century. A news report of one incident in 1875 provided a sad eulogy for the demise of an entire people:

"Old Billy Fawkner, the last of the Brisbane Water Blackfellows, was drowned in Tuggerah Beach Lake about six months ago. He supported himself for many years by means of a small garden and faithfully adhered to the habits, vicious or otherwise, of his white brethren".⁴⁸

The survival of the Darkinjung people into the 21st century suggests that this 1875 report mourns a last member known to the Europeans, but not the last of the Darkinjung people.

While conflict between the Darkinjung and the local white settlers have recently become the subject of study, there is also a lesser known Aboriginal history that has yet to be fully uncovered or understood. This history suggests that some people moved to other settlements or outside of the areas of contact with white settlers generally and continued with their lives as best as they could. Others worked on settler's farms, while some married settlers. They quietly became part of the local community and their stories are yet to be fully told or understood.

Today archaeological sites are visible reminders of the original settlers of the Wyong Shire. These include axe grinding grooves, open middens, open camp sites, scarred trees, quarries, ceremonial grounds, shelter sites, art and engraving sites. There is an active local Aboriginal Land Council, the Darkinjung LALC and an active Local Aboriginal Descendant Group, the Guringai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corp. In the twentyfirst century the Aboriginal people in Wyong come from all over the Country. There is representation of probably about, 100 different Aboriginal language groups living in the Wyong shire today.⁴⁹

The Central Coast of NSW is the fastest growing area of NSW with one of the fastest growing Indigenous populations. The 21st century now boasts many significant and dynamic Indigenous organisations and peoples within the Wyong community and the broader Darkinjung community. The Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC) has a membership of over 700 people. The Eleanor Duncan Medical Centre and Nunyara service Indigenous health in the region while local groups such as the Kurriwa Aboriginal Education Consultative

⁴⁷ Edward Stinson, Vol 1, p11

⁴⁸ *Town and Country Journal*. 6 March 1875.

⁴⁹ Pers comm., 19/2/2010. - T.Howie

Group (AECG) facilitate and enhance education in the region for our kids as well as Non-Indigenous kids.⁵⁰ In addition, a local Aboriginal Descendant Group, the Guringai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corp are also active in the community. There is also a broader Aboriginal community in Wyong who have come from many other places. Today all of these groups, together with many non-Indigenous people and organisations are working collaboratively to increase understanding and promotion of Indigenous cultures, particularly within the Wyong Local Government area.

⁵⁰ Umulliko Darkinjung Research Working Group. *Darkinjung : Standing Strong* . Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Education and Arts , University of Newcastle: May 2003.

4. SLOW BEGINNINGS

As early as 1788 Governor Phillip and a party of his men commenced exploration of the area around Broken Bay. Some efforts were made to investigate the area of Brisbane Water but the difficult terrain, later so graphically described by the Mathews, formed a formidable obstacle particularly the sandy channels that made progress in boats so difficult.⁵¹

In the following year another exploration party reached as far as the site of the future Gosford. From here exploration branched west, towards the site of the later Wisemans Ferry. Another exploration party later in the same year discovered the fertile land around Windsor. The attractions of this site, its land and water, meaning viable agricultural ventures, and relatively easy access, led to most efforts at new settlement being centred on this site.⁵²

With this rich site at their disposal the government evinced little interest in the area further to the north where that early exploration had revealed at Brisbane Water swamps, limited good soil, heavy timber and steep slopes none of which were conducive to agriculture the principal concern of the time. Tuggerah Lakes was not discovered until 1797, an accidental outcome of soldiers searching for escaped convicts.⁵³

It was not to be until the 1820s that the heavily timbered land to the north came to be actively settled, the relatively late start due to several external factors. It was, in fact, government policy to prohibit settlement beyond the immediate environs of the County 'of Cumberland, in this instance north of the Hawkesbury River. This measure provided a means of maintaining strict government control over the rapidly expanding settlement. It also allowed government establishments created in this period to take advantage of prime land, particularly the government farming establishments and, secondly, it separated places of secondary punishment such as Newcastle, from the main body of settlement around Sydney. The combination of the relaxation of this policy and the removal of the convict establishment at Newcastle to Port Macquarie permitted land in the future Wyong Shire to be granted to and developed by new settlers.

During the 1820s and 1830s the land encompassed by the later Wyong Shire was progressively divided between several land holders in properties of varying size. It appears to have been a fairly common occurrence, however, that the earliest grants were not developed by their owners and, in some cases, not even seen by them. Robert Holl (or Holt) for example, who applied for 2000 acres in the area of Ourimbah in c.1823, appears to have been in this position.⁵⁴

⁵¹ B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage*. p.6.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume One. p.137.

⁵⁴ B.C. Jones and A.C. Eyers. *Ourimbah - History of a NSW Timber Town to 1930*.

Timber-getters, however, are likely to have visited portions of the district well before formal settlement was made, particularly in the area of Wyong and Jilliby. The first holders in the Wyong Shire acquired their land in the 1820s. For example, Jeremiah Walters selected 1920 acres at Upper Tuggerah Lakes in 1825.⁵⁵ Walters was later to transfer his grant to the Lake Macquarie district leaving behind on his land at Wyong several improvements including buildings and fences.

Frederick Hely, who was to amass one of the largest land holdings on the Central Coast, acquired land in this year. This was in the area of Kangy Angy. Eventually he came to own all the land near Wyong Creek downstream to Tuggerah Lake and as far south as Tuggerah. He concentrated his activities, however, at his main property. This was "Wyoming" and was located to the south of the study area.⁵⁶ Hely lived in the Sydney suburb of Paddington.

In 1825-6 the first grants were made in the northern section of the Central Coast to members of the Cape family, at Wyong, and to Percy Simpson at Cooranbong.⁵⁷ Other early land owners included Jeremy Slade at Budgewoi and Tomas McQuoid at Ourimbah. Even by 1827 the future of the district could be discerned; it was reported in the press that,

*"Wyong, a district so called by the natives, about twelve miles from Brisbane Water, is destined for small fifty acre farms".*⁵⁸

The pace of alienation escalated during the later 1820s. In 1828 John Slade selected 640 acres with frontages to Lake Munmorah and Lake Budgewoi (9)⁵⁹ and Henry Holden selected 640 acres at The Entrance. In the same year the district constable, Robert Henderson, rented 1920 acres at Tuggerah Lakes.⁶⁰ In the following year he rented another 2000 acres at Norah Head.⁶¹ Slade sold his grant to Henderson in 1831.⁶² This pattern of land alienation and occupation was being repeated in a wider area than that of the study area. For example, in 1838, Robert Cox was granted over 1000 acres in the area of Lisarow and Ourimbah⁶³ although he had been in residence there since at least 1832.

Despite the several land parcels alienated during the 1820s the district remained largely unknown, and even unexplored in the 1830s. Felton Mathew was sent to chart the land in 1830 and in doing so described several prominent features

⁵⁵ E. Stinson. *Op. Cit.* Volume Four., pp.114-6.

⁵⁶ B. C. Jones and A.C. Eyers., *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.

⁵⁷ E. Stinson. *Loc. Cit.*

⁵⁸ *The Australian* 1 August, 1827.

⁵⁹ E. Stinson. *Loc. Cit.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.115.

⁶¹ *Ibid*

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ B.C. Jones and A.C. Eyers., *Op. Cit.*, p.11.

including Ourimbah Creek. His journal, like that of his wife's diary, described the extreme difficulty of the terrain and movement through it. He recorded being lost several times.⁶⁴

A survey of the area in 1834 provides the best evidence of settlement at that time. Frederick Hely and William Macdonald held large grants extending from the foreshores of the lake to what is now the lower Wyong Creek area. Charles Farrell held a grant in the Jilliby area and George Bloodsworth had created a station at Little Jilliby. William Cape's grant of "Treelands" extended east from the junction of Jilliby Creek and Little Jilliby Creek. A second later grant of 640 acres ensured that Cape was to own most of the land that was to encompass Wyong. Cape's son William Timothy received 500 acres known as Wyong Place.⁶⁵ By the later 1830s there was as a sufficient population in the district to warrant itinerant clergy to pass through it.⁶⁶

The farms established during this first period of occupancy of the Wyong district were similar to many found throughout the colony at this time. With the assistance of assigned convict servants and freemen the occupants cleared land, commenced cultivation, ran herds and constructed buildings to accommodate both residential and farm needs. John Slade's improvements to his property serve as a typical example of the more ambitious settler. During the later 1820s he and his assigned convicts cleared and constructed various improvements so that, by 1830, he had fifteen acres under cultivation, thirty-five acres were fenced and he had acquired sixty-five head of cattle. In addition to this he had erected stockyards and huts, built piggeries, a cornhouse and a cottage for his own use.⁶⁷

At the other end of the scale Henderson's station at Norahville in 1844 was recorded as having fences and huts and some cleared land.⁶⁸ Blue Gum Flat, in 1841, had five timber houses.

Throughout this period a considerable degree of lawlessness characterized the area. There were clashes with the Aboriginal people and considerable unrest was caused by bushrangers and absconding felons particularly from the Newcastle area. In 1827 soldiers had to be sent to protect the district from a feared onslaught of eight bushrangers. In 1836 the police force was doubled and later tripled. It was not until the 1850s that some degree of stability returned to the district (19).⁶⁹

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁶⁵ E. Stinson. *Op.Cit.*, Volume Three.,p.14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume Four., p.52.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.115.

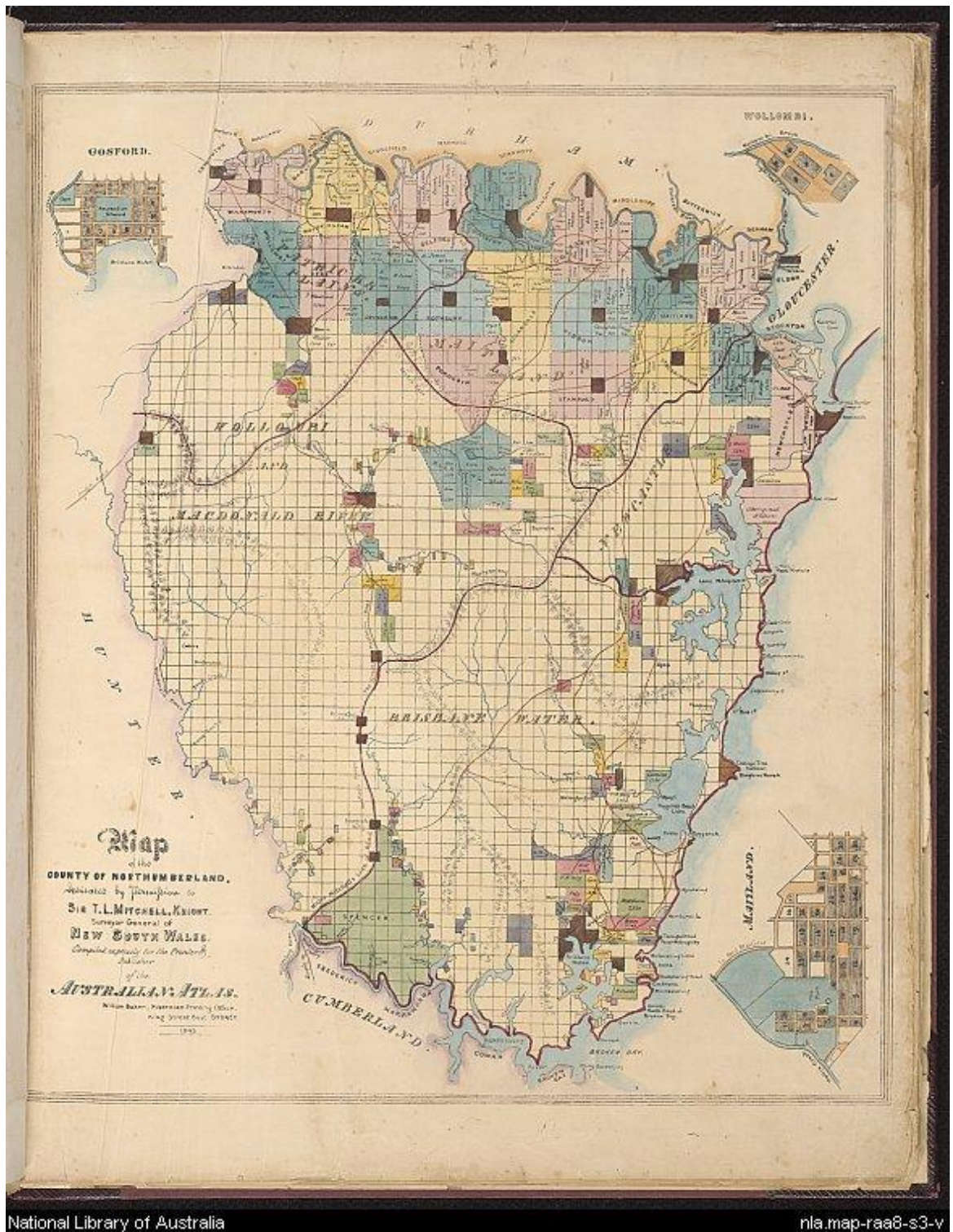
⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ F.E. Brennan. *A History of Gosford.*, p.22.

During this period, also, the administrative and judicial framework underwent significant changes. Until 1843, and the establishment of the District Council of Brisbane Water, administration of this vast area extending from Lake Macquarie to the Hawkesbury River and from Wiseman's Ferry to the ocean was in the hands of the presiding magistrate and police officers acting on his orders. The Brisbane Water District Council established in 1843 (and in operation until 1859) was the forerunner of later shire councils. From 1859 law and justice became the responsibility of a police magistrate.

In the 1840s Australia was sunk into a severe economic recession. Its effects reached to the relatively newly settled district of Wyong although perhaps not as adversely as other areas of the country. Land sales, however, diminished and the burgeoning timber industry slowed its pace. Land grants made in the 1840s, for example those at Yarramalong and Lemon Tree appear not to have been occupied by the original owner (20).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ B. Strom. *Op.Cit.*, p.16.



Principle land grants of the 1840s.

Source: William Baker. Map of the County of Northumberland. National Library of Australia online <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-raa8-s3>

5. SUBDIVISION: A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

After the terrible Depression years of the early 1840s the Australian economy began to revive in the later part of that decade. At the same time policy with respect to free settlers of limited means was changing; they were encouraged to establish themselves on the land by means of incentive schemes. Even greater economic good news came during the 1850s as word of gold discoveries in New South Wales circulated throughout the country and overseas. Another factor in the growing interest in the area was the disastrous floods on both the Hunter and Hawkesbury Rivers during the 1850s. Many settlers were encouraged to new homes after being wiped out by these natural disasters. A significant spread of settlement occurred in this decade.

This expansion of both population and development encompassed places such as Tuggerah Lakes and Wyong Creek where "country lots" were offered for sale by the government on Crown lands in areas that were unlikely to attract wealthy pastoralists.⁷¹ These lots were located at intervals along Wyong Creek as far as its junction with Cedar Brush Creek and up to Jilliby Creek and Little Jilliby. There were some purchasers from Sydney but most came from the regions of the Hunter, Hawkesbury and Macdonald Rivers.⁷²

One new landowner in the district, in fact, was Edward Hargraves the official discoverer of payable gold in Australia. He purchased seventy-five acres of land on the coast near Norah Head as well as several other properties in the district including one at Budgewoi and another at Toukley.⁷³ The Stinson family, prominent in the district for several generations, acquired land at Yarramalong in this period.⁷⁴ In 1859 William and Edward Walmsley came to the Ourimbah area and purchased Manning's grant and, later, Holl's land.⁷⁵

In addition to new landowners, however, the 1850s were characterized by changes in ownership or occupancy of several of the existing properties. Sometimes this was a case of an original selection being granted to a different person, in other cases it was resale or rental. J.L. Travers, for example, leased McQuoid's grant at Ourimbah during this period and established a saw mill on the property.⁷⁶ Richard Hill sold his 843 acre property at Yarramalong to John Lette in 1854⁷⁷ and in the same year the Taylor family acquired properties at The Entrance and promptly leased them to Joseph Frost and his sons.⁷⁸ The latter, in fact, is a particularly good example of this process. Originally, this had been

⁷¹ B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage.*, p14.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁷⁴ E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume Three., p.70.

⁷⁵ B. Strom., *Ibid.*, p.13., p.16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.16

⁷⁸ E. Stinson., *Op Cit.* Volume Four., p.17.

Holden's grant of 1828. It passed to John Manning in 1833, Thomas Battley in 1836, William Foster in 1842 and finally the Taylors in 1854.

The opening up and expansion of the district during the 1850s was further encouraged by the Robertson Land Act of 1861. This legislation encouraged small settlers by means of special incentives for those buying small blocks of land, forty acres or more. Burgeoning industry, as well, provided encouragement and incentive for settlement.

In this decade settlement spread up Wyong Creek into Ravensdale, the Cedar Brush Creek areas and Palmdale. In the 1870s land alienation extended to Warnervale, Kanwal and the Gorokan areas.

With more people and families coming to live in the district it was inevitable that isolated farms and small industries would require and support the growth of communities. These communities in the course of time evolved into small towns and villages. The latter half of the nineteenth century is characterized in the district by this nascent urban growth and the sense of community associated with it.

Perhaps the earliest move in this direction may be observed at Travers' saw-mill at Ourimbah. Here, by the later 1850s, were sheds, various shops for tradesmen, two weatherboard houses, twenty-three slab huts, stables and other buildings for animals and a school house.⁷⁹

In 1870 William Walmsley, who with his brother bought the land adjoining the saw mill in 1859, purchased approximately one hundred acres of the land adjoining his property. This encompassed the Travers' saw mill. He and his brother then created a settlement known as Blue Gum Flat which extended as far south as the current border of the Wyong Shire and Gosford City.⁸⁰ By the mid 1870s Blue Gum Flat was the most important settlement in the district. In 1875 it was reported that,

*"the settlement called Blue Gum Flat is next to Gosford in point of local importance. There, as at other places, things are kept going by the spirited efforts of two or three men... Blue Gum Flat is (a) busy little place... There is a considerable population here and it contains a church, a public school and a post-office".*⁸¹

The establishment of services, such as schools, churches and post offices, is a feature of growing town life and descriptive of community identity. It becomes more prominent throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century. The earliest start, of course, had been made by 1856 with the school house built at

⁷⁹ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁸¹ *Town and Country Journal*. 6 March 1875.

the saw-mill at Ourimbah. A four acre property was bought for a public school site at Blue Gum Flat in 1873.⁸² The Kangy Angy school was opened in 1878.⁸³

Other services were also provided to assist travelers and locals, for example, Woodbury's Inn was opened on the Maitland Road in 1866⁸⁴ and the Travellers Rest Inn commenced operations during the 1870s.⁸⁵ The opening of the Blue Gum Flat racecourse in the same period served as a focus for sporting and social life for several years.⁸⁶



Remains of Woodbury's Inn, 1972

Source: Gwen Dundon, Gosford City Council Library picture collection online - file 221

Town or village development, although well under way by the 1870s (a plan, for example, was prepared for the Village of Norah subdivision in 1878,⁸⁷ was to most prominently surface in the following decades. It was from the 1880s onwards that subdivision greatly escalated producing closer settlement and town life. The interest in the district and the improvements made because of it may be

⁸² B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.16.

⁸³ 13. E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume One, p.132.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Volume Four, p.52.

⁸⁵ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Four, p.117

directly related to, at first, the news of and, later, the actual introduction of the railway to the district.

The opening of the Great Northern Railway in the period 1887-89 made fast and reliable communication between Sydney and the central coast a reality. It had implications for, not only the passenger trade, but commercial, industrial and tourism aspects. It was, perhaps, the single most important factor in the evolution of the district. In addition the Crown Land Act of 1884, much as the Robertson Land Act of 1861, had a significant impact on the large estates.

The Act made available small portions of Crown land (from forty acres) for purchase on easy terms over a number of years. This incentive for settlement in conjunction with the promised railway encouraged the subdivision of large portions of land for speculative development and sale, particularly during the later half of the 1880s. Palmdale, for example, had its beginnings in the selections made by George Anderson in the 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁸

Thomas Deasey, also, bought one half of the old Blue Gum School land and subdivided it to create the Township of Beckford in 1886. The town subdivision was in easy reach of Ourimbah station⁸⁹ however it never went beyond being surveyed and registered. Earlier, in 1885, one news account noted the number of selectors in the Ourimbah area and had described how, at Fountaindale,

"it was easy to imagine, considering that the railway will soon nm through it, the value of such a magnificent freehold, with its patches of rich flat, its slopes suitable for fruit growing and above all its great supply of timber, the latter being found on even waste ground" .⁹⁰

Elsewhere, Richard and Gertrude Taylor purchased all the land at The Entrance; subsequently a guest house was established there.⁹¹ Charles Alison (whose family had come to the district in the 1870s) created a private township at Wyong⁹² in 1885 although it was not registered until 1893.

As the time of the actual opening of the line approached even more emphasis was placed upon speculative investment and sales. Advertisements for the sale of the Wyong Estate, the property of the Gosford Land, Building and Investment Company, stated that in 1886 it was,

"The Richest Land in the District. You can grow anything you try there. Coal has been found at Wyong. Creek runs through Wyong Estate. Farms all around

⁸⁸B.C. Jones and A.C. Eyers. *Ourimbah History of a NSW Timber Town to 1930.*,p.42.

⁸⁹ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.16.

⁹⁰ 'A Sketch of the Gosford District" Part III.' *Sydney Mail*. 21 March 1885.

⁹¹ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.25.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.23.

*Wyong Estate. Town Lots...Suburban Blocks and Farms, Orchard Blocks, Poultry Farms, Homesteads of five acres each... " .*⁹³

Despite these incentives the estate was never developed to its maximum potential.

The line of the railway followed fairly closely the Maitland Road between Gosford and Wyong. Land along it was divided into small fanning blocks and that nearer the railway stations was formed into town or residential lots. This was a pattern occurring along other sections of the railway line. For example, close to Wyong, there was subdivision for farms at Green Point and Erina. The Green Point Estate was formed exclusively into farm blocks as were estates near Erina. Erina Township was to service these farms and other subdivisions.⁹⁴ In 1889 McQuoid's grant was subdivided into sixty eight farming blocks along Ourimbah Creek and several township allotments along Maitland Road.⁹⁵

Ironically however, while the construction of the railway meant new beginnings and profits for so many, in a few cases this development had precisely the opposite impact. In particular Cooranbong, which prior to this time had developed quite a thriving township servicing the timber industry via a wharf, declined after the commencement of rail operations. The timber was more economically and quickly dispatched from the station at Morisset which then took over in importance from the earlier community. Cooranbong and Morisset were part of the Wyong district until Lake Macquarie Shire was formed in 1906.

As the earlier period of settlement encouraged the growth of services and institutions so too did this expansive period of settlement in the later years of the nineteenth century. For example, a school was built at Ourimbah in 1884 (replacing the earlier Blue Gum Flat school.⁹⁶ William Waters built an inn at Yarramalong in 1885. There was, by this date, quite a developing village at that place with already two stores, a church and a school.⁹⁷ The church was St Barnabas's, the oldest church in the district although services had been heard in the district from the 1830s by means of itinerant clergy. There are two nineteenth century cemeteries in the district, both at Yarramalong. Wyong Public School was built on land offered by Charles Alison in 1889⁹⁸ and a school was opened at Jilliby in the same year. Parks began to appear at this time; the public park at Ourimbah railway station, for example, was opened in 1898.

Despite the enormous interest and actual improvements and subdivisions made in the district during this period it is clear from contemporary accounts that actual

⁹³ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume Six, p.35.

⁹⁴ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*,p. 21.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.23.

settlement was relatively sparse and quite spread out. When the railway line was opened several reporters described the journey to Newcastle. Their comments on the Wyong shire provide a vivid testimony of the still "pioneer" quality of the district. The reporter of the Maitland Mercury stated that,

"there are few signs of habitation between Cockle Creek and Blue Gum Flat and one naturally wonders why so many platforms have been erected. It seems, however, that a goodly proportion, though very much scattered, is settled on the land" (29).⁹⁹

The reporter from the Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate was impressed by the small pockets of settlements around each station.

"Cooranbong, or as it has since been termed, Morisset Station... This is the station referred to in the great Scarborough land sale a short time since... Five miles further brings us to Norahville Station, called after a small township of that name on the coast... Onwards we go till we reach the Alison Estate... Wyong Station. ..Here we behold for the first time since leaving Newcastle, the inevitable 'pub '... Ourimbah Creek .. here several neat little homesteads catch the eye... A little further we reach Blue Gum township which title has been altered by the authorities to that of Ourimbah" .¹⁰⁰

The process of subdivision and town development continued throughout the 1890s and first decades of the twentieth century, although the nationwide economic depression of the 1890s had a somewhat sobering effect on the intensive efforts of the previous years. The 1890 subdivision of Mannering Park, for example, did not sell.¹⁰¹ An 1893 subdivision at Wyong was more successful and the Fountaindale Estate sold well during the later 1890s and early 1900s. Several significant subdivisions were made and sold during the early years of the twentieth century. In 1903 Albert Warner bought most of the property at Wyong still in private ownership, subdivided it and offered the enormous Warner Estate for sale. This included the township of Warnervale.¹⁰² A second subdivision on this estate was made in 1905 at which time the "fishing village of Rockleigh" (Rocky Point) was offered for sale.¹⁰³ Earlier, in 1903, Hill's grant at Yarramalong had been subdivided into sixteen farms.¹⁰⁴

Despite the trend towards closer settlement, however, a few large private sales were still made in this period; in particular, the Vale family purchased 640 acres at what would be Mannering Park in 1911. Thirteen acres of the Hargreaves Estate at Budgewoi was subdivided in 1914 and, after an unsuccessful sale

⁹⁹ Quoted in E. Stinson *Op Cit.*, Volume Two, p.123.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Two, p.118.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

¹⁰² 32. B. Strom., *Op Cit.*, p.23.

¹⁰³ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume Two,p. 65.

¹⁰⁴ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*,p.16.

period, was resubmitted in 1925. A subdivision for different purposes was formed in 1917 at Berkely Estate. This was to provide allotments for returned soldiers. A contemporary view of this trend at Wyong described how,

*"up to twelve or fourteen years ago (from 1906) there was in Wyong proper... very little settlement. The greater portion of the land there was locked up in the hands of one owner who showed very little disposition to part with it. Various influences, however, including the indirect effect of the land value tax induced the change of ownership and now there are many settlers and a very large portion of the remainder has been systematically cut up into blocks and can be acquired at fairly reasonable prices".*¹⁰⁵

One new incentive for settlement in the district that emerged, particularly in the twentieth century, was the trend towards agriculture and dairying. It was noted in 1906 that,

*"on Monday (Eight Hour Day) quite a number of Sydney visitors were in town, either on pleasure or looking for farming areas. The prospects of a butter factory, is an attraction to settlers".*¹⁰⁶

More town and community services continued to be established in the same period. Ravensdale school, for example, opened in 1892¹⁰⁷ as did Tuggerah School¹⁰⁸ and the first post office at Wyong.¹⁰⁹ A School of Arts was opened at Wyong in 1898¹¹⁰ and a new lock up was nearing completion in 1900.¹¹¹ The first School opened at Cedar Brush Creek in 1900 and at Wanda in 1902.¹¹² In 1906 the first store was opened at The Entrance¹¹³ and Kanwal School in 1911¹¹⁴ as was the first post office at The Entrance.¹¹⁵ The Entrance Public School was built in 1915.¹¹⁶ The first banks opened at Wyong in 1906 and 1907.

The best indicators of the emerging townships and settlement of the district, the emerging sense of community evidenced in them, during the later years of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century are the formation of Progress Associations or other community groups. Wyong Progress Association was formed in 1902,¹¹⁷ for example, The Entrance Progress Association in 1920 and the Budgewoi Progress Association in 1937.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Three, p.87.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p.21.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* Volume One, p.75.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.136

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume Two, p.113.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume Three, p.20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹¹³ AM. McClure. *The Entrance Long Ago.* p.13.

¹¹⁴ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Two, p.72.

¹¹⁵ AM. McClure. *Op Cit.*, p.18.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹¹⁷ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume One, p.35.



The building claimed to be the suburb of Wyong's first Post Office c1900. No address given.

Source: National Archives of Australia online. Item No: C4076/1 Box 604 Image No HN298

Several churches, also, were established primarily through great efforts of the communities involved or individuals. Mr Warner, for example, presented a block of ground each to the Church of England and Catholic communities for the purpose of building churches.¹¹⁸ By 1906 it could be reported in Wyong that,

*"so far there has been no church building in Wyong, but an Anglican Church is now in the course of erection. At present Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist services are held periodically in the local School Of Arts. Steps are being taken for the erection of Roman Catholic and Methodist churches..."*¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Volume Four, p.54.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.54.

Commercial development in villages is a particular feature of this period. The progress made at Jilliby and reported in the local press in 1904 best sums up the rapid development of the district during this period of its settlement:

*"To review our village during the outgoing twelve months, considerable headway is manifested...evidence of improvements can be seen all along the road. That pretty little spot of Jilliby, which only a couple of years ago was mere bush, is now studded with daily farms and orchards... Upper Jilliby has considerably improved....A School of Arts was erected during the year, and if rumour runs true, steps will soon be taken to have an Anglican Church erected".*¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.* Four, p.54.

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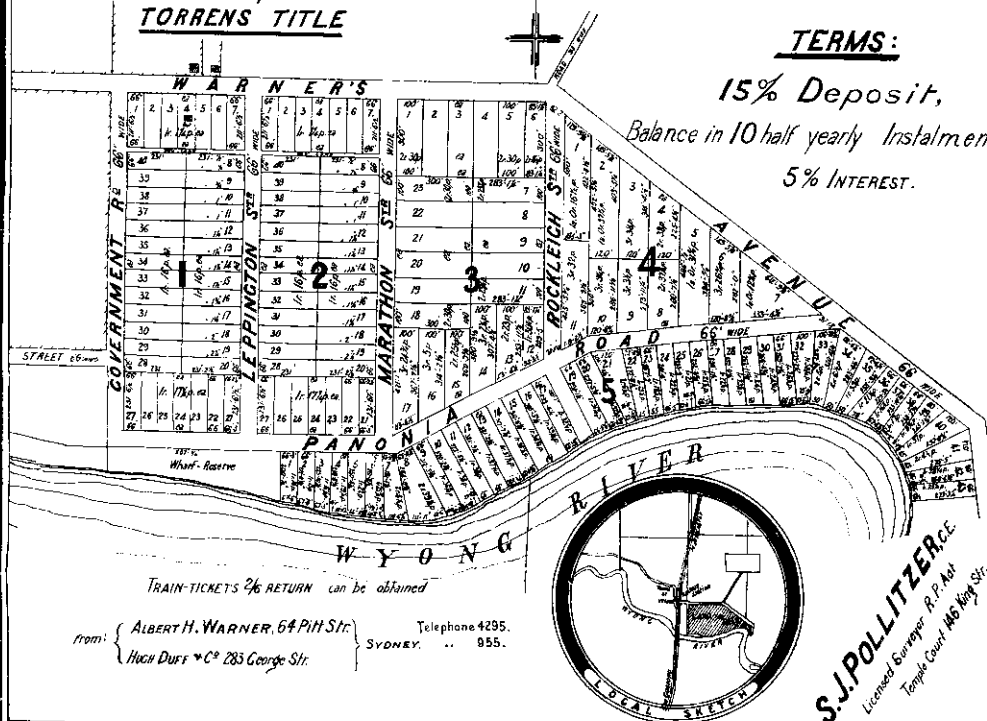
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Wyong Subdivision Plan, 1904

Source: Mitchell Library Subdivision Plans - Wyong TP36/3

6. TOWN GROWTH

Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century the central coast evolved as a favourite holiday destination, the timber industry was at its peak and new industries provided economic promise and stimulation to a growing resident and tourist population. In response to this activity the townships established during the later years of the nineteenth century grew and provided more services and features for the population.

As early as 1917 tourism brochures highlighted Tuggerah, The Entrance and Norahville as highlights of the Central Coast.¹²¹ By 1920 subdivisions were being made at The Entrance with a high proportion of the lots devoted to future holiday home accommodation.¹²² Two hundred allotments alone were sold in the first auction.¹²³ A second subdivision at The Entrance was made in 1922¹²⁴ and another in 1924.¹²⁵ The interest in this particular area underscores the importance of the potential holiday market. However, other residential or farm subdivisions were also being made, for example, Mannering Park was subdivided into eighteen lots of 6-100 acres in 1926 (6).¹²⁶ Other Subdivisions around the lakes included Rocky Point, Wyong, Budgewoi and Gorokan.¹²⁷

Real estate brochures for the period underscore the principal features and growing diversity of life in the Wyong district:

*"Wilkinson Brothers Estate Agents, Auctioneers, Valuators... For Sale Week End Cottages, Water Fronts, Sea Side Lots. Country Homes, Orchards, Farms, Dairies" (7).*¹²⁸

The Warner Estate was offering,

*"Small Farms... Week-end Lots... Shops and Cottages... Complete Farms .cleared by us fenced and cottages built" (8)*¹²⁹

The services and community places required by the various townships, commenced in the later nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, continued with more emphasis on services attuned to growing urban needs and to provide for the tourist trade. Wyong was described in the later 1920s as having made,

¹²¹ NSW Tourist Bureau. *The Tourist Hotel and Boarding House Directory for NSW.*

¹²² B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage.*, p.25

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ AM. McClure. *The Entrance Long Ago.*, p.42.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹²⁶ E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* .Volume Two, p.84.

¹²⁷ Scott. *Op.cit.*, p.17.

¹²⁸ E Stinson. *Op.cit.*, Volume Three, p.9.

¹²⁹ Erina Shire Development League. *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide* 1928. p.144.

"phenomenal progress, especially of recent years, and this prosperity is reflected in the appearance of the business portion of the town which includes many handsome new structures..."¹³⁰



The main commercial strip of Wyong along the Pacific Highway, 1930.
Source: Gosford Shire Council Image Collection

Churches continued to be a feature of life. An Anglican church was opened at Kanwal in 1924 and the first Roman Catholic church was opened at The Entrance in 1926 on land presented by R.B. Taylor.¹³¹ The first police station at The Entrance was established in 1926.¹³² Electricity came to the area in 1929¹³³ and work commenced on the town water supply in the same year.

As part of the attractions being offered to increasing numbers of tourists the first Wyong golf course was opened in 1926; the site has changed location on several occasions since that time.¹³⁴ Several picture theatres, also, opened at this time; one at The Entrance, for example, in 1934 and another at Wyong in 1936.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.147.

¹³¹ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume Four, p.94.

¹³² AM. McClure. *Op Cit.*, p.110

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.101.

¹³⁴ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume Three, p.41.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11

By this time, with the improved communications now available, the area was being promoted as a healthy environment in which to bring up children:

*"Easily and quickly accessible by road and rail it is in an ideal location for the businessman's home, away from the drawbacks of a city in the midst of all that makes for the healthy upbringing of a strong family..."*¹³⁶

The district was said in 1928 *"to present great possibilities for subdivision"*.¹³⁷

The Depression years quickly followed by the commencement of hostilities during World War II slowed and virtually stopped all development in Wyong. However, throughout its duration, a hospital opened in the former Bowenfel's Guest House in 1942,¹³⁸ the Lakes Hotel and The Entrance Surf Club were also established in this period.

The formation of a municipal identity in the post war years has contributed to the increasing prosperity of the district. The Wyong district had originally been incorporated as part of the Erina Shire which was proclaimed in 1906. The Shire of Wyong was proclaimed in 1947.¹³⁹ Council Chambers were built in the following year; these were replaced in 1959.¹⁴⁰

The increasingly urban character of the district impacted to a certain degree on the perception of it as a holiday destination, however, to compensate it became increasingly popular as a retirement centre. More subdivisions occurred for this reason. It has been described how, in the post-war years,

"the coastline also attracted retired people from both city and country and already there were those who used the tourist areas as dormitories... The growing population of commuters, the new urban settlements, a spin-off from an advancing commercial establishment in Gosford and Wyong".¹⁴¹

By the early 1960s improvements to both road and rail connections between Sydney and the central coast made it viable to commute between the two for business although this was far more common for the Gosford district. Wyong was perceived as being too far for viable daily journeys. However, the 1960s is seen as a watershed for development in the district. One local historian has commented that, at this time,

¹³⁶ Erina Shire Development League. *Op Cit.*, p.15.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹³⁸ B. Strom. *Loc Cit.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*,p. 23.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴¹ A Strom. *Environmental Education for the Community A Case Study or Model Covered by an Investigation of the Wyong Valleys, Central Coast, New South Wales*.p.13.

*"power generation with its attendant coal-mining invaded the previously sparsely used areas of the north of the Wyong Shire...The social structure of the coastal communities was no longer a passing parade of holiday-makers, but rather urban concentrations invaded by the tourist vainly seeking to flee from some urban community elsewhere".*¹⁴²

By 1961 both The Entrance and Wyong were considered to be two of the four principal towns of the central coast. It was stated at the time that both had seen marked population growth and large scale building projects during the previous decade.¹⁴³ Electricity had been extended throughout the entire shire by that time except for the more remote areas although reticulated water was only available to Wyong. Plans were already afoot, though, at that time to extend the service.¹⁴⁴ Work commenced in 1963. In 1966 Wyong Shire was awarded the A.R. Bluett award for the best performance in New South Wales for the progress and development it had achieved in the previous year.

Wyong remained undeniably the major township of the district but several other centres were prominent by the 1960s and 1970s. The Entrance, along with Long Jetty, remained a principal town described as,

*"a large area of residential and holiday cottages... There is a fairly large shopping centre... The area is closely settled and there are only a few roads that are not sealed".*¹⁴⁵

However, these townships were eventually extended with the creation of Berkeley Vale and Killarney.¹⁴⁶

Elsewhere,

*"On the northern side of the Tuggerah Lakes are the townships of Toukley, Gorokan, Budgewoi, Norahville and Buff Point all of which are developing fast there being many subdivisions of land in recent years. A shopping centre at Toukley provides most requirements".*¹⁴⁷

In the 1970s the Central Coast became the fastest growing urban district in south-eastern Australia. The Wyong district was an important contributor to this growth. From the 1970s to the 1980s the population here rose by 70%. To accommodate this upsurge in new inhabitants Council approved numerous applications for residential, commercial and service developments.¹⁴⁸ The scale

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Real Estate Institute of NSW. *Settling of the Central Coast of NSW.* p.1.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,p.15.

¹⁴⁶ *Wyong Heritage Study Stage 1:Landscape Report. op.cit.*, no numbering.

¹⁴⁷ Real Estate Institute of NSW, *op.cit.* p.14; Swancott, C. *Blue Gum Flat to Budgewoi: The Story of Wyong Shire's Wonderful Valleys, Lakes and Beaches.*,p. 151.

¹⁴⁸ *Introducing Wyong Shire: A Development Opportunity.*

of this development may be appreciated by a simple comparison; in 1947, 367 new building projects were approved, in 1950 there were 634 and in 1960 a total of 1005. Services were also significantly improved in the same period including major developments in sewerage works in the 1960s and the water supply in the 1980s.

The trend to subdivision has continued in the 1990s. In 1993 Wyong was said to be on the "verge of a development boom" with new land releases to be offered at North Wyong, Tuggerah and Wadalba.¹⁴⁹

By 1990 the population was 102 000. Growth continued throughout the 1990s with new residential areas developed around the western shores of Budgewoi Lake (Lake Haven), the southern shores of Tuggerah Lake (Chittaway Bay, Berkley Vale and further south at Ourimbah) and westward through Warnervale, Wyong and Tuggerah.¹⁵⁰ A shift in the urban development from the southern areas of the shire to the northern and central areas of the shire from 1996 have resulted in the highest population increase in areas such as Blue Haven, Hamlyn Terrace and Mardi.¹⁵¹ Today, the Wyong shire can be divided into four major areas where the population lives, The Entrance-Southern Lakes, Central Lakes-Warnervale, Wyong-Tuggerah, Northern lakes (Munmorah-Lake Macquarie with approximately two thirds of the population living on the coastal plain south and west of the lakes.¹⁵² Current subdivision and growth is taking place at Blue Haven, Mardi, North Wyong, Tumbi Valley, Warnervale East and Wadalba East.

The establishment of large shopping centres in the region reflected not only the need to cater to the expectations of the many new residents in the shire, but brought with the employment and new business opportunities. Unfortunately they also brought with them the downgrading of importance in the village centres as people and businesses moved to these new "one stop shop" centres.

The first of the major centres was Erina Fair. Opened as Central Coast Fair in 1987, it has undergone expansions in 1994 and 2003, and 2008/09 It is believed to be the largest non-metropolitan shopping centre in Australia and the largest single-storey shopping centre in the Southern Hemisphere, with over 330 stores, 108,464m² of gross lettable area, and 12.7 million customers per annum.^[2] It is the biggest shopping centre on the Central Coast, significantly larger than its closest competitor, Westfield Tuggerah.¹⁵³

Westfield Tuggerah is the most recent centre, occupying a once vacant paddock. It is the second largest shopping centre on the central coast after Erina Fair. The

¹⁴⁹ „Wyong on Verge of Development Boom’ *Central Coast Express*. 15 October 1993.

¹⁵⁰ Scott, A. *op.cit.*, p.21.

¹⁵¹ Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report, 2003-04*. p.25.

¹⁵² Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report. 2001-02*.p.15. Mapping information from Wyong Shire Council.

¹⁵³ *Lend Lease and Erina Fair – The Facts* 15/11/2007.

http://www.lendlease.com.au/llweb/llc/main.nsf/all/news_20071115_llc01

new centre opened as a single-story complex on 19 October 1995 and has been credited with commencing the commercial redevelopment of the Tuggerah area, including Tuggerah Business Park and other similar commercial zones. A second level was added in 2006.¹⁵⁴

While numerous schools of varying sizes existed or were in the planning stage, the central coast generally did not have significant tertiary education opportunities. The establishment and growth of the central campus of the University of Newcastle at Ourimbah was an important factor in recognising this gap and the needs of the anticipated future populations. The Gosford/Wyong Structure Plan of the early 1970s discussed future education needs, recommending a tertiary education facility that was a part of a joint facility project providing high quality libraries, sporting facilities, theatres and other recreational spaces that would service the whole community. Ourimbah was one of the alternative locations suggested. The Commonwealth Government purchased land at Ourimbah for the project in the late 1970s. However it was not until the mid 1980s, in response to a report on the need for higher education in the central coast and pre-existing discussions by the NSW Higher Education Board, that further action was taken. The campus opened in 1989 with 60 students across a very limited range of courses. In 2009 more than 7,000 people are enrolled in the University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE and Central Coast Community College programs at the campus. The campus has provided the opportunity for the local population to access high quality tertiary education, particularly in those areas which will allow them to also remain in the region for work purposes, as well as bringing new people to the area.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ "Many changes as Westfield turns 10". *Central Coast Express*. 19 October 2006

¹⁵⁵ NSW Planning and Environment Commission, *Gosford Wyong Structure Plan*. 1975. p.88; *Ourimbah Recollections*. Ourimbah Public School, c1995. pp126-130. Website: University of Newcastle. 20th Anniversary of the Central Coast Campus. <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/location/central-coast/events/20-years.html>

7. MINING AND UTILITIES

The construction of two power stations in the region in the 1960s has had a significant impact on the development of coal mining in the area, as well as being significant in their own right.

In 1966 the Electricity built the first of two power stations at Vales Point on the southern tip of Lake Macquarie. Known as the A station, it was the first to be designed and built by the Electricity commission and incorporated the new philosophy of siting power stations close to their fuel source and away from population centres. It was designed to draw coal by conveyor directly from satellite coal mines, thus creating the impetus for the ongoing presence for coal mines in the region. Addition of the B station in 1978/79 made it the largest power station in Australia.¹⁵⁶

A power station was also constructed at Lake Munmorah. Opening in 1967 (and extended in 1968/69, it was the largest thermal power station in NSW and also followed the philosophy of power stations being located close to coal resources. Two new collieries, Newvale 2 Colliery and Munmorah State Mine were constructed in association with the station, whilst water requirements were met through utilization of Lake Munmorah and lake Budgewoi, both part of the Tuggerah Lakes System. Like Vales Point, Electricity Commission staff were responsible for design, as well as site supervision during construction.¹⁵⁷

Vales Point in the north of the shire became the site for a major power station built by the Electricity Commission and a much larger station was subsequently built at Doyalson (26). Coal mines were established near Vales Point to service the stations. These were Newvale Colliery, Wyee State Coal Mine and Chain Valley Colliery. Coal mining has never been a significant factor in the economic profile of the district. Budgewoi, for example, particularly benefited from this development. In 1978 there were 560 employees at Munmorah and, of these, 22% lived in the Budgewoi district.

Rutile mining near Lake Munmorah emerged in the post war years as an export industry (27) and gravel has been extracted for road and cement works from Soldiers Point and the lighthouse area. Sand mining, also, has had a significant impact on the landscape.

In the mid 1990s mining continued to be an important part of the development of the shire with coal, sand, rock and clay supplying local demand for building materials and fill. A clay extraction and tile plant was located at Bushells Ridge south of Wyee while quality sandstone was also found in the shire. Although only one sand stone quality was operational, in the northern part of the shire, several

¹⁵⁶ Vales Point Power Station (brochure) Wyong Shire Council Library Local Studies Vertical File

¹⁵⁷ Munmorah Power Station Official Opening Souvenir Booklet, October 1969. WSC Library.;
The Power Maker. The History of the Central Coast and Hunter Valley Power Generating Stations.
Mark Fetscher n.d

others were in the process of rehabilitation. Mining was still a major industry with five operation underground coalmines within the local government area and the state government in the process of calling expressions of interest for the exploration of coal resources in the Wyong Valleys and under Tuggerah Lake.¹⁵⁸

In 2000 clay mining was still a going concern with CSR Monier PGH Ltd proposing an open cut clay mine in St Johns Road Jilliby to make bricks and pavers for the next 20 years¹⁵⁹

In 2008 the state government released a report advocating coal mining in the Wyong valleys, including Wallarah 2 which identified several billion dollars worth of coal in the area¹⁶⁰



Lake Munmorah Power Station c1966-70
Source: Wyong Shire Council Image Collection

¹⁵⁸ Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report, 1996-97* p.21.

¹⁵⁹ *Central Coast Express Advocate* 13/12/2000 p11 (WSC Vert studies – clay mining

¹⁶⁰ „Wyong Lobbyists say coal report has got it wrong.’ *Central Coast Express Advocate* 19 December 2008, p.4.



Vales Point Power Station, 1961.

Source: Hunter Photobank. Newcastle City Council Cultural Collections Database. Registration No 003002127

8. LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The earliest surveyors and visitors to the district of Brisbane Water regularly commented upon the difficulty of moving about and through the terrain. Felton Mathew became lost several times for this reason. The creation of fast and reliable means of communication with the district was to be a critical factor in its successful development. The relatively slow progress of roads and rail connections impeded intensive early settlement.

For the first half century of occupation in Wyong the only means of access were via several difficult roads or a lengthy boat journey. This limited communication with the district and its distance from Sydney was a principal factor in its relatively late and slow progress in comparison to other closer and more accessible districts. The coming of the railway to Wyong was to be one of the most critical factors in the development of the region.

An early route in the district was known as Simpson's Track. It linked Wiseman's Ferry to Yarramalong and Doralong, and then proceeded on to Mandalong and Cooranbong. Percy Simpson had land at Cooranbong and suggested that the Great North Road should follow his track. He was unsuccessful in this attempt and the road was formed along a more direct line slightly west of the study area.¹⁶¹

The Great North Road was opened in 1832 principally as a means of providing direct and reliable access to the Hunter district from Sydney. There was a branch of this road to the Brisbane Water/Gosford district and two branches into Wyong. One followed Simpson's Track and another descended down Cedar Brush Creek from Mt McQuoid near Bucketty. The two branches met at Yarramalong. Neither branch was a surveyed road at the time.¹⁶²

An important route through the Wyong area was the Maitland Road. This commenced at Gosford and followed the route of the present Pacific Highway as far as Kangy Angy Mountain.¹⁶³ In 1856 the Maitland Road was reported to be in a very bad condition. Some attempt had been made to improve the treacherous crossing at Kangy Angy by means of walling and culverts but it remained, at best, an uncertain line of access (4).¹⁶⁴

By 1864, however, the Government Surveyor was able to observe that the roads along the northern side of Ourimbah Creek were "well marked" (5).¹⁶⁵ One road ran from East Gosford to Wamberal Lagoon and a second from Wyong to

¹⁶¹ F. C. Bennett. *An Historical Tour of Wyong and District.*, p.18.

¹⁶² B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage.*, p.12.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.16.

Mangrove Creek (6).¹⁶⁶ The latter was actually pioneered some years earlier. There was access via ridges to both Sydney and the Hunter districts. A road was completed in 1868. The progress made in the 1860s with respect to roads may be attributed directly to the demands of an increasing population and burgeoning industry.

Further improvements were made in the 1870s. A section of Maitland Road, for example, was surveyed around Kangy Angy Mountain to provide access to the Alison property at Tuggerah. This was later used for the Pacific Highway (7).¹⁶⁷

In the earlier years of settlement, and for many decades afterwards, water provided the alternative means of transport particularly for timber. Cabbage Tree Harbour provided an early shipping point for cedar and Gosford was another such departure point. Mangrove Creek provided an entry point for early settlers in the Wyong Valley. To accommodate this means of travel works have been undertaken over the years to improve natural features, to lessen existing hazards, drain wetlands or improve water quality. The channel at The Entrance, for example, has been dredged and cleared on several occasions, river banks have been rebuilt or reinforced and low-lying areas have been drained. To facilitate travel punts were built in some places but they were not common.

Relatively limited access to the district for approximately fifty years hindered substantial industrial, commercial and residential growth. The coming of the railway, as it did in all districts affected by it caused massive changes not the least being the growth of small towns. It also allowed substantial improvements to be made to existing industries, particularly timber, and made possible the establishment of others that required reliable and quick access to Sydney markets. Dairying and fishing were particularly needful of this.

In 1883 tender notices were called for the construction of that section of the Great Northern Railway that would pass through Wyong, with a station to be built there and a bridge across the river. A large railway camp came to be established at Wyong as a direct result of this construction activity (8).¹⁶⁸ The influx of population, the employment opportunities and the demand for local timber afforded by the construction phase of the railway were nearly as significant for local development as the railway was to be on its completion.

The presence of the railway, even before it was opened, was used as a selling point by the speculative land developers attracted to the area. One notice described how,

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume Two., p.102.

"The railway... will be opened in a few months and the Wyong Station will be close to this splendid estate. Buy at once before the railway opens. Buy now and make a big profit... ".¹⁶⁹

Trains came to Wyong in 1887 but there remained a delay in its fully functioning because the section further south, including the Hawkesbury River Bridge, was not completed at that stage.¹⁷⁰ When it was fully operational several reporters took the trip to Newcastle to describe the experience. Morisset station was mentioned, as well as that at Norahville, Wyong (where a large yard was laid out to service the timber trade) and Ourimbah where a "very fine" station had been constructed which was, next to the two terminal stations, the largest on the contract.¹⁷¹



Wyong Railway Station

Source: Wyong Shire Council image collection, no date.

A secondary advantage of the railway construction was the presence of telegraphic communication at the stations which offered an alternative to the relatively slow mail. Requests for a regular mail service to the district had been made as early as 1835 and a Post Master was established at Brisbane Water in that year. It was not until 1838, however, that a regular weekly overland service commenced by way of Windsor and Wiseman's Ferry. The first local post offices were established during the later years of the nineteenth century. One at Blue Gum Flat (actually Ourimbah) was opened in 1871, at Wyong in 1888, Norahville

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Six., p.35.

¹⁷⁰ B. Strom. *Op. Cit.*, p.23.

¹⁷¹ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate* 16 August 1887.

in 1891 and Tuggerah in 1892. Several others, such as that at The Entrance opened in 1911, commenced operation prior to World War One.

By 1900 the advantages of the railway had become abundantly clear so much so that local agitation had commenced at Yarramalong for a branch line from Wyong to there, Wollombi and Singleton. After official investigation and more local agitation, however, nothing more came of the plan.¹⁷²

In the early years of the twentieth century several important improvements were made to both road and water transport. In 1901 a stone jetty was built at Tuggerah Lake to facilitate the despatch of fish to Tuggerah Railway Station.¹⁷³ A long jetty was built at the settlement that would come to be named after it in 1915. In 1903-4 a light house was built at Norah Head.¹⁷⁴ This followed many years of local campaigning and publicity by the local community from the late nineteenth century. By the 1890s 35 ships had already been wrecked in the vicinity of the future lighthouse site.¹⁷⁵ In 1908 the snags in Wyong Creek were claimed finally making it navigable to Tuggerah Lake. Earlier, in 1906, the first direct road link had been formed between Wyong and The Entrance via the Ourimbah Creek Bridge which was built in that year.¹⁷⁶ This had been constructed originally to provide a means of access for timber-getters. A bridge was built over the Wallarah Creek in 1916.

The increasing tourist trade to the area during the early years of the twentieth century also necessitated several improvements. 'Wharves, for example, were constructed at Wyong in approximately 1912 to help service this trade¹⁷⁷ and additions were required to the ferry fleet at The Entrance for the same reason in 1917.¹⁷⁸ The availability and reliability of water services to the holiday centres featured as major promotional attractions in tourism publications of the time. The duplication of the rail track to Wyong was completed in the same year.¹⁷⁹ The railway line was electrified in the 1980s.

The increasing availability and popularity of the motor vehicle from the 1920s onwards refocused attention onto roads. The introduction of bus services, the first from The Entrance to Gosford in 1923 as well as that from The Entrance to Wyong,¹⁸⁰ eventually led to the cessation of the ferry service in 1929.¹⁸¹ The first taxi service at The Entrance commenced in 1924.¹⁸²

¹⁷² E. Stinson. *Op. Cit.*, Volume Two, pp.126-8.

¹⁷³ AM. McClure. *The Entrance Long Ago.*, p.201.

¹⁷⁴ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume One., p.123.

¹⁷⁵ Chicas, Christy. *Norah Head lighthouse, celebrating 100 years.* 2003. pp.3-4.

¹⁷⁶ AM. McClure. *Op. Cit.*, p.30.

¹⁷⁷ B. Strom. *Op.Cit.*,p. 25.

¹⁷⁸ AM. McClure. *Op. Cit.*, p.34.

¹⁷⁹ E.Stinson. *Op. Cit.* Volume Two., p.104.

¹⁸⁰ AM. McClure. *Op.Cit.*, p.93.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.94.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.114.



Long Jetty, 1946.

Source: Murray Views. Wyong Shire Council Library Picture Collection

The increasing interest in the Erina Shire and its own very active Council and Development League led to active campaigning in the 1920s for a more direct route from Sydney than that offered by the Great Northern Road. The new line, the future Pacific Highway, was approved and work upon it commenced in 1925. Several improvements were made to it during the 1930s using depression relief work forces who were also responsible for several other road works throughout the district. Unemployment Relief Committee funds, for example, were used to part finance the construction of the North Entrance Bridge.

In 1934 settlements on each side of The Entrance channel were joined by a road traffic bridge. This was The Entrance North Bridge, a single lane wooden bridge that was ultimately replaced by a concrete bridge.¹⁸³ A bridge was constructed over the Toukley Channel in 1939. This was the Wallarah Point Bridge.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ B. Strom., *Op.Cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁸⁴ E. Stinson. *Op.Cit.*, Volume Six., p.16.



The Entrance channel timber bridge, c1940s
Source: Wyong Shire Council Library Picture Collection

The outbreak of war caused a cessation of major building activities but in the post war years several significant improvements were made to both rail and roads beginning in 1957/8 with the construction of a new railway bridge across the river at Wyong.¹⁸⁵ In 1962 construction commenced on the road between The Entrance and Toukley;¹⁸⁶ it opened in 1965. In the following year the former railway bridge was modified across the river at Wyong.¹⁸⁷

The F3 freeway was constructed in the early 1980s. The opening of the Wyong Bypass in 1983 was greeted with much enthusiasm as motorists anticipated the end of one of the worst bottlenecks on the Sydney-Newcastle freeway. These road works have had significant implications for the urban development around Wyong. In particular, the Wyong Urban area can be described as having developed in a "T" form rather than a linear pattern, running north and south as well as westward from the intersection of Allison Road and the Pacific Highway near the railway. Allison Road had originally provided an access route to the upper Wyong Valley on which timber could be transported to the railhead at Wyong resulting in development along this transport artery. The establishment of

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume Two.,p.104

¹⁸⁶ AM.McClure., *Op.Cit.*, p.137

¹⁸⁷ E.Stinson. *Op.Cit.*, Volume Two., p.104.

the freeway, together with the Tuggerah shopping centre has reduced and changed the way urban development had spread by the mid 1990s.¹⁸⁸

Despite the development of freeway facilities, transportation has continued to be difficult. The population has increased, requiring additional carriageways and works associated with delays, crashes and freeway speed. Drivers have continued to petition the government for road widening. Petitions in 2000 resulted in the addition of emergency median crossings and exits north of Ourimbah to allow traffic to be diverted around crash scenes and generate faster response times by police, tow trucks and rescue vehicles. By 2008 further pressure was placed on the government to upgrade sections of the F3 through Wyong due to growing traffic congestion.¹⁸⁹

Airstrips have also been a small but important and sometimes controversial form of transportation in the area. A strip at The Entrance was located at the site of The Entrance High School/Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College Campus and offered visitors an unusual way of sightseeing. Believed to have commenced operating in the 1920s, it was originally known as The Wamberal Airstrip and later, The Entrance Airstrip. During World War Two it saw aircraft land for repairs and in the 1950s it was used for joy flights. Day trippers from Sydney also landed there. It has been suggested that Sir Charles Kingsford Smith landed at the airstrip in the 1930s and offered scenic joy flights. As yet, this is unconfirmed.

Other airstrips in the Wyong Shire have included one at Tuggerah off Church Road, Parry's Airstrip off Warner Avenue and Warnervale Aerodrome¹⁹⁰ Warnervale has perhaps been the most controversial. As early as the 1970s it was identified by the NSW State Government as the potential site for development of a major airport. Local Council planning allowed for the aerodrome to develop- as a regional airport. However, community action against this plan resulted in the Warnervale Aerodrome Restriction Act in 1996 which prevented use of the aerodrome beyond a more general aviation role.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ D.Fisher. *op.cit.*, p.65.

¹⁸⁹ „New Freeway opened.’ *Newcastle Morning Herald* 17 December 1983; „Frustrated drivers urge f3 widening’ *Central Coast Express Advocate* 1 December 2000. P.6. New f3 exits’ *The Sun*. ’15 December 2000; „F3 interchanges not coping.’ *Central Coast Express Advocate* 9 May 2008.

¹⁹⁰ R.Stewart & L.Webster. *op.cit.*,pp.191-92.

¹⁹¹ Airservices Australia Review. *Warnervale Aerodrome Australian Noise Exposure Forecast – 2025*, July 2006. p.3.



Inn and Bridge Over Wyong Creek, 1884.
Source: *Illustrated Sydney News*, 15 March 1884. p.8.

9. TIMBER

The heavily timbered terrain that encompassed much of the Wyong district was one of the principal features recorded by the early explorers and settlers. Felton Mathews and his wife Sarah, for example, independently recorded their impressions during the 1830s of near impenetrable forests and early survey maps recorded areas of "dense scrub". Mathews noted the district to have supplies of palm, cabbage tree, blue gum, cedar, turpentine, forest oak and rosewood. Because of the presence of marketable timbers such as these the heavily timbered nature of the area which was, at first, a deterrent to settlement soon came to be seen as an asset.

With the completion of the Great North Road a small settlement was established at Wollombi and from there, in the early 1830s, timber-getters came to the Wyong area mainly seeking forest oak and cedar.¹⁹² As early as 1832 the NSW Post Office Directory could report that,

*"From Wallarah, about two miles east is a remarkable point on the coast known as Bungary North to the north of which there is a boat harbour called Cabbage Tree Harbour from which large quantities of cedar, cut in the mountains to the west, is embarked for Sydney".*¹⁹³

George Bloodsworth was one of the earliest to exploit this embarkation point using it to ship logs that he had rafted across the Tuggerah Lakes.¹⁹⁴ Felton Mathews informed the Surveyor General in 1831 that Bloodsworth had been for some time felling timber in the district and conveying it to the Sydney markets. By 1832 it was reported that the cedar-getters were causing devastation to the area through the vast quantities of timber they were removing from it.

In 1835 a timber licencing system was introduced to regulate the logging industry and to deter illegal logging of vacant Crown lands. Frederick Hely was the first in the district to apply for such a lease on his lands at Yarramalong on Wyong Creek and also at the head of Tuggerah Beach Creek (Ourimbah Creek).¹⁹⁵

Despite the 1840s depression having severe consequences elsewhere for the timber industry, locally the effects were relatively slight although demand for the product fell as the Sydney trade began to suffer. By the end of the 1840s, however, timber-getting had recovered to such a degree that local authorities were becoming concerned at the quantity of timber that had been cut from the entire Brisbane Water district.

¹⁹² E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume Three, p.76.

¹⁹³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p.123.

¹⁹⁴ B. Strom. *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage.*, p.9.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*

This situation, in turn, produced its own anxieties. In 1849 the local magistrate wrote to the Colonial Secretary to express the fear that, if the timber licencing system was not reintroduced, unemployment would rise.¹⁹⁶ In 1850 two licenced cedar cutters from Maitland were ordered to cease their activities at Brisbane Water because the shortage of viable timber was then felt to be so acute that it would adversely affect the value of Crown land.¹⁹⁷

The first important centre for the timber industry in the Wyong district evolved in the Ourimbah Valley. Its resources were more easily exploited and, more particularly, it was relatively close to a navigable watercourse to enable the logs to be shipped from the district. Here, during the early 1850s, J.L. Travers leased McQuoid's grant of 2580 acres which extended south and west from the Maitland Road crossing Ourimbah Creek near Kangy Angy.¹⁹⁸ By 1855 Travers Steam Saw Mills were said to be "in full operation and capable of cutting 20,000 feet of timber per week".¹⁹⁹ In the later 1850s Travers' lease was renewed by William Jolly and the saw mill became the centre of an extensive milling and domestic settlement that even included a school house.²⁰⁰

During the 1860s more settlers, who had been attracted by these early timber-getters at Ourimbah, moved into the area north of Ourimbah Creek and across to the Palmdale area. The Wyong Creek area, during this time, was still covered in dense scrub and didn't lend itself to massive exploitation although some minor cutting was carried out in the area.²⁰¹ The first saw mill at Wyong Creek, owned by James Waters, was not to open until approximately 1880.²⁰²

By 1868 there were eight teams of bullocks at work in the Ourimbah and Palmdale areas taking logs to the Ourimbah mill.²⁰³ However, in this decade, the industry experienced a sharp decline in the price of timber and this essentially slowed the impetus of development until after the introduction of rail. Prior to this event all logs had been shipped to the Sydney markets by water with several wharves constructed at places specifically to service this need. Cooranbong, for example, developed around a timber wharf. It also went into decline when the railway at Morriset took away this function.

During the later 1880s timber getting was experiencing a revival again. By the later 1880s the Ourimbah Saw Mill had closed down but A.S. Jaques had established a new mill a few miles upstream of the old site. The new mill became an important source of timber for a number of years and provided the impetus for settlement further up the valley. Jaques' mill and house were established on a

¹⁹⁶ B.C. Jones and AC. Eyers. *ibid.*,p.25.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁸ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.14.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.18.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

property now known as "Hidden Valley".²⁰⁴ In c.1886 Charles Alison established a saw mill at Wyong. It was later known as the Flood and Wilson Sawmill (later O'Neill and Goldsmith saw mill); it became one of the largest in the district and was not to close until c.1930.²⁰⁵

Even before the introduction of the railway, and certainly due to the speculative interest caused by its introduction, the timber industry was the most significant contributor to the local industry. The construction phase of that railway also provided impetus for local trade requiring, as it did, huge quantities of sleepers and other timber products. In 1887 a reporter for the Maitland Mercury described the relatively sparse settlement but noted that "the timber trade finds profitable employment for people".²⁰⁶

Contemporary descriptions of this period stressed the resources of the timber country and the mills servicing it. For example, from 1887;

*"Morriset...here the country greatly improves and some splendid views are obtained; better timber is prevalent, the soil is richer...onward we go till we reach the Alison Estate...Here the country changes as if by magic. Although a small swampy area is still seen, yet splendid ironbark and other timber surrounds us and grass is in profusion. Traversing four miles of this we reach Wyong Station. Here a large station yard is laid out to provide for a very heavy timber trade in the district. A very large saw mill... is in full operation".*²⁰⁷

During the 1890s the timber trade continued to escalate. In 1892 the reporter for the Sydney Mail was able to state that,

*"the timber getters of Wyong have been busily employed of late".*²⁰⁸ In 1898 the Gosford Times reported that, *"the Wyong sawmills are kept busy with the large orders for timber that keep coming in daily".*²⁰⁹

In the following year,

*"The timber trade is very busy which fact is made clear by Messrs O'Neill and Goldsmith having started to build a new mill at Jilliby".*²¹⁰

By the turn of the century it was estimated that four hundred sleeper cutters were employed in the district. In addition to sleepers the men were cutting timber for

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*

²⁰⁵ E. Stinson., *Op Cit.* Volume Three, p.100.

²⁰⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Two, p.123.

²⁰⁷ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate* 16 August 1887 quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Two, p.18.

²⁰⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Five, p.82.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, *Ibid.*, Volume Three, p.77.

²¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*,.

planks, tramway poles and girders.²¹¹ More saw mills were established to cater for the brisk business. An engineer's report of the time identified the principal timbers being cut as blue gum, stringybark, white and red mahogany, some oak and red cedar and ironbark.²¹²

The peak of the timber industry occurred during the early years of the twentieth century approximately to the period of the First World War The profitability of the trade was such that it was reported in 1902 that,

*"in consequence of the demand for sleepers, farming has been neglected to a certain extent".*²¹³

Elsewhere,

*"The timber industry also serves as a fall back by those whose crops fail... This has without a doubt formed the staple industry of the people ever since it has been a village (Jilliby). The old saying 'the timber is about done' is proved an erroneous idea every' day of our lives, for timber of all kinds of the very best quality is now hewn... "*²¹⁴

Some mills were said to be so busy at this time that they could barely cope with the orders. A large quantity of the cut timber was being used by the Sydney Harbour Trust in their redevelopment and reconstruction of the Sydney Harbour wharves.²¹⁵

The importance of the industry to the district was recognized by several contemporary commentators. In 1906 it was stated that,

*"The Wyong district has been, and still is, primarily a timber-getting country... over thirty varieties of useful timber grow in the neighbourhood... Possibly it (the industry) was at its height some five or six years ago when millions of sleepers were sent to New Zealand but the trade is still very brisk and some large contracts are in hand at the present time for China and the East... many timbergetters... are nomadic... as demand for their labour occurs, while a number of farmers put in a great deal of their time at this work, sometimes, we fear to the neglect of their farms..."*²¹⁶

It was also observed at this time that at the upper end of the valley, with the exception of the Olney Reserve, the timber was almost cut out although timber

²¹¹ *Ibid.*,

²¹² *Ibid.*, Volume Two, p.127.

²¹³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Three, p.79.

²¹⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p.79.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*. Volume Three, p.83.

²¹⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Three, pp.86-7.

still remained plentiful in the Wyong and Jilliby Creek areas and around the neighbourhood of Tuggerah.²¹⁷

By 1914, however, timber was becoming an even more diminishing resource. The Olney State Forest was proclaimed in this year and, in 1916, the Ourimbah State Forest. The latter included 17,400 acres encompassing what had been Forest Reserves proclaimed in 1882, 1891 and 1909.²¹⁸ In 1917 it was reported that,

*"the local situation insofar as timber supply is concerned is rather acute. Good mature timber is scarce and difficult of access and forests which have been considered to be cut out years ago are still being gone over again and again and more inferior timber taken out at each succeeding time" (28).*²¹⁹

By 1929 low market prices and the inaccessibility of the resources ensured the demise of the industry. The local timber industry continued throughout the remainder of this century although on a considerably different basis to that which had operated during its heyday. It had a short revival during the war years and post-war years with heavy demands for supply but afterwards it suffered an inevitable decline. In 1961 it was stated that,

*"The Forestry Commission has an established office at Wyong and controls some 100, 000 acres of forests in the two shires. The forests are of Australian hardwoods. Much of the timber is sold on Royalty basis to local timber mills for building purposes and for piles, mining props and fencing" (29).*²²⁰

In the 1980s timber getting was still going on but on a much reduced scale. In c.1980 approximately six hundred piles were cut and 2500 sleepers (30).²²¹

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ B.C. Jones and AE.Eyres., *Op Cit.*,p.53.

²¹⁹ Quoted in p. p.54

²²⁰ Real Estate Institute of NSW. *ibid.*, p.17.

²²¹ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Three, p.93.



Bullock team crossing corduroy log bridge, Wyong District, c1903 – 1910
Source: Gosford City Council Library picture collection online – file 001\001568

WARNER ESTATE

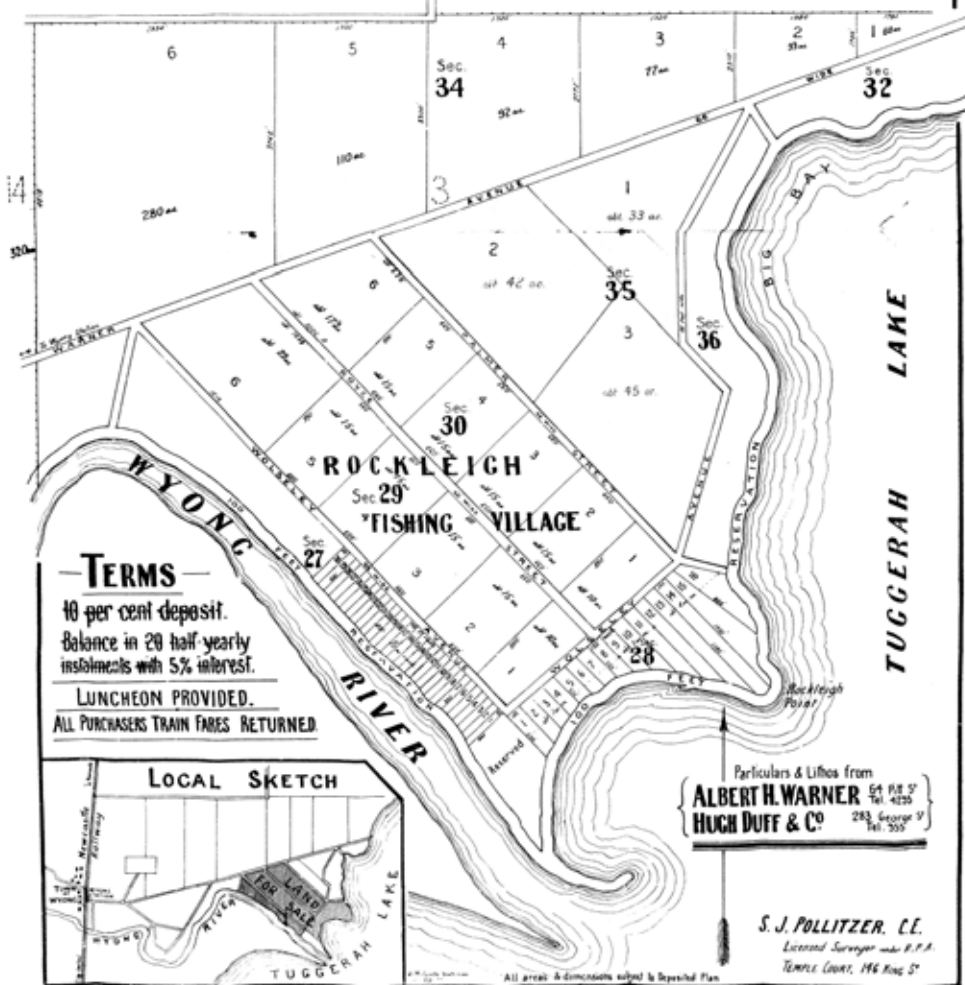
3rd Subdivision **WYONG** From 1/2^{ac} to 280^{ac} Blocks

FRONTING WYONG RIVER & TUGGERAH LAKES
AND INCLUDING THE FISHING VILLAGE OF ROCKLEIGH

For Auction Sale on the Ground by

HUGH DUFF & C^o Auctioneers
283 GEORGE ST^o opp HUNTER ST

ON MONDAY NEW YEARS DAY
2ND JANUARY 1905 AT 1:30 P.M. — **TOPPENS TITLE** —



Rockleigh Fishing Village Subdivision Notice, 1905
Source: Mitchell Library Subdivision Plans – Wyong: TPW36/12

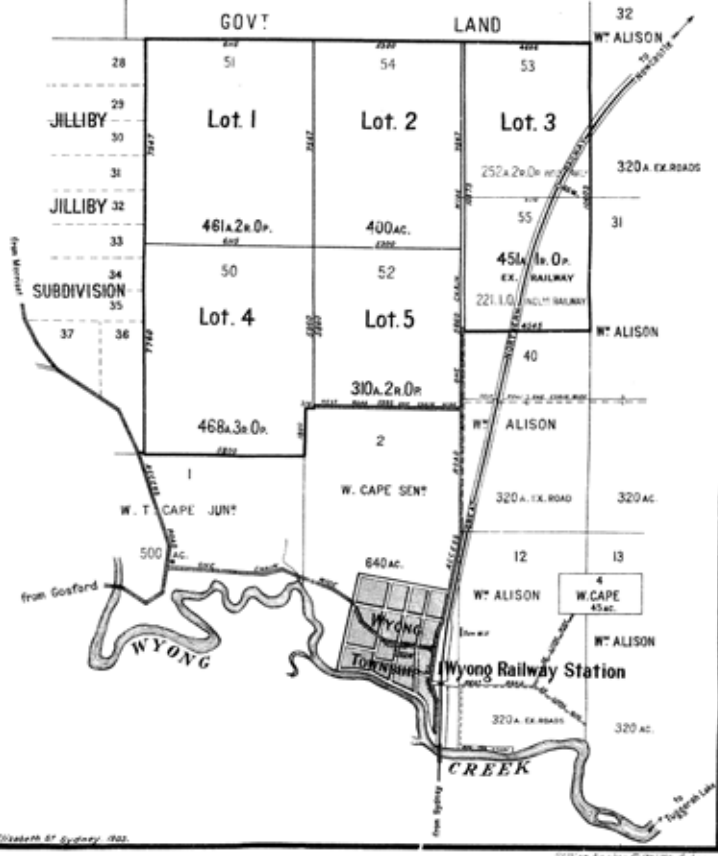
WYONG DAIRY FARMS

ALISON ESTATE

aggregating about 2000 acres
FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
AT ROYAL HOTEL WYONG
on Saturday 28th November at 2.30.p.m.

BY RAINÉ & HORNE IN CONJUNCTION WITH **BYRON BALY**
 86 PITT ST. SYDNEY. (AUCTIONEERS) WYONG.

TORRENS TITLE
LIBERAL TERMS



H. E. C. Robinson, Lth. West. Court, Elizabeth St. Sydney. 1903.

Des. by Valuer-General
 28 Nov. 1903

Auction of dairy farm lots at Wyong, 1903.
 Source: Mitchell Library Subdivision Plans – Wyong TP36/7

10. PRIMARY INDUSTRY

Farming

The term "primary" industry is used in this sense to describe several agricultural, dairying and extractive processes that have had significance for the development and economy of Wyong Shire.

The quality of the cleared land and availability of water has long been recognized and utilized in the Wyong district for both commercial and self sufficiency purposes. In 1825 one Brisbane Water settler described how, at the northern extremity of that district, the land

*"becomes really available for huge agricultural establishments and in that direction will be found land of a quality equal to any in New Holland and superior to most for tillage of every description, consisting of thick brush and forest land, all heavily timbered".*²²²

The earliest settlers practised mixed farming. William Cape, for example, had forty-five head of cattle on his property in 1825,²²³ John Slade had thirty cattle at his Budgewoi property in 1828²²⁴ and by 1829 William Cape had increased his herds to include 250 head of cattle, 250 sheep and fifty pigs.²²⁵ Significant stockyards had been constructed at Wyee by 1835. These became the focus of a large cattle doffing operation and figured in a notorious law case.

Cape grew wheat, corn and potatoes²²⁶ and others were likewise similarly cropping their land. The future of the area was being accurately predicted as early as 1827 when it was stated in *The Australian* that,

*"Wyong...about twelve miles from Brisbane Water is destined for small fifty acre farms".*²²⁷

Another indicator of the future economic direction of the district was established in the 1830s. Henry Holden was operating, by this time, a commercial dairy on his Tuggerah Beach (The Entrance) property. The products of this enterprise were taken by boat to Sydney.²²⁸

The depression of the 1840s had a particularly severe impact on stock, many being rendered down for tallow, but the recovery after those years encouraged

²²² Quoted in Swancott, C. *Blue Gum Flat to Budgewoi: The Story of Wyong Shire's Wonderful Valleys, Lakes and Beaches.*, p.150.

²²³ E.Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volume Four, p.17.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *The Australian*. 1 August 1827.

²²⁸ E. Stinson. *Loc. Cit.*

the spread of settlement beyond the previously established limits of occupation including those in the Wyong district. Here "country lots" were offered for sale and small scale farming was encouraged by the government.²²⁹

In this period of the 1850s the first citrus farming is recorded in the Brisbane Water district but this was an industry that was not to become common or commercially viable until the later nineteenth century after the introduction of the railway. A second commercial dairy was established in this period when The Entrance properties were leased from Jane Taylor by Joseph Frost and his sons in 1854. Their products, principally butter and cheese, were also shipped to Sydney by water.²³⁰

Despite these few early successful commercial ventures, the examples of several large mixed farms and the incentives offered by the Robertson Land Act of 1861, agriculture and pastoralism as principal assets of the local economy did not truly come to the fore until the later decades of the nineteenth century. The speculative developments offered by the construction of the railway encouraged the subdivision of large estates into farm blocks and, during this time, the area evolved into a predominantly agrarian district with several varieties of farms and orchards. This development was further encouraged by the Crown Lands Act of 1884.

Visitors to the district in the later 1880s noted that the majority of the scattered population in the district was devoted to farming occupations as well as timber-getting (10).²³¹ The quality of the district for these occupations was particularly noteworthy and was used as a selling point in sales brochures for land. For example, in 1886, subdivisions in Wyong were advertised as,

"The Richest Land in the District. You can grow anything you try there Farms all around Wyong Estate... Farms, Orchard Blocks, Poultry Farms It is a well known fact that some of the best soil in the colony is in the Gosford district... the very pick of the district is in and close to Wyong Creek".²³²

At Fountaindale it was said that,

"the soil being of the best quality the growing of fruit and vegetables will doubtless in the future constitute the leading industry of the region...".²³³

During the 1880s and 1890s, in addition to crop farming, citrus orcharding began to assume a higher profile. In this period citrus farming began to spread from Somersby into Kulnura where timber-getters had paved the way by clearing the

²²⁹ B. Strom. *Op.cit.*,p.14.

²³⁰E. Stinson. *Loc.Cit.*

²³¹ *Maitland Mercury* 1887 quoted in *Ibid.* Volume Two, p.123.

²³² *Sydney Morning Herald* 1886 quoted in *Ibid.* Volume Six, p.35.

²³³ 'A Sketch of the Gosford District' Part III.' *Sydney Mail*. 21 March 1885.

area in earlier years.²³⁴ By 1900 it could be reported that, "citron trees (are) flourishing in the valleys of Wyong and Cedar Brush Creek".²³⁵

Citrus growing became particularly important in the Yarramalong and Dooralong Valleys.

Dairying, also, gained a much stronger hold in the district during the same period. The farm of Anders Christenson, established at Brush Creek in 1890, provides a good example of the products offered, cheese, hams, bacon and fruits, and the mixed farming practices that were becoming more common.²³⁶ In 1904 it was reported that,

*"The settlers now, instead of depending upon grain as the only product, have taken a lesson from other places and have gone in for mixed farming - dairying, pig and poultry rearing, passion fruit growing and orchard work... That pretty little spot of Jilliby... is now studded with dairy farms and orchards. Another industry which is occupying the attention of four settlers is bee culture".*²³⁷

It was also anticipated at this time that agriculture and pastoralism would surpass timber as the principal local industry:

*"the close observer cannot shut his eyes to the agricultural possibility of this small thriving district. The soil is surely capable of growing most crops in equal profusion... it is probable that agriculture in general and dairying in particular will surpass it (timber) in importance at no distant date".*²³⁸

This is all estimation that underlines the growing importance of those occupations when it is considered that it was made at a period when the timber industry was at its zenith.

Probably the most influential operation of the type, however, was the Pioneer Dairy at Wyong which commenced operations in 1897. Established by William Chapman it became one of the largest in the district and its success encouraged many others to try this form of farming. It was also one of the longest running of the local dairies; it closed during the 1980s.²³⁹

The Chapman family, in fact, were the principal instigators of the most significant development in the local dairy industry; the construction of a co-operative butter factory. In 1903 it was reported that,

²³⁴ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.21.

²³⁵ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume Two. p.27.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* Volume Four, 17.

²³⁷ *Gosford Times* quoted in *Ibid.* Volume Four, p.19.

²³⁸ *Town and Country Journal* 1906 quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Three, p. 87.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* Volume Four, 18 and Volume Six, p.63.

*"Messrs Chapman and Sons propose building a butter factory at no distant date. This will be a boon to the district and will no doubt encourage many to go into dairying who have hitherto not thought of such a payable occupation".*²⁴⁰

A prospectus for the factory was issued and "received with great enthusiasm and favour"²⁴¹ and it was noted in the local press, in 1906, that the proposed butter factory was attracting potential new settlers to the area.²⁴² By 1907,

*"The farmers here are anxiously waiting for the butter factory to be a going concern. The number of suppliers from about here will be much greater than at first thought".*²⁴³

The factory was finally opened, with much ceremony and enthusiasm, later in that year. It had the capacity to produce six tons of butter per week. The first factory was destroyed by fire on 1921 and was almost immediately replaced by a second co-operative.²⁴⁴ By 1926 it was supplying milk to Sydney and nearly two hundred suppliers were forwarding their milk to the factory for processing.

As the timber industry began to wane leading up to the 1920s it was already recognised that the future of the district lay in mixed farming pursuits. The Wyong Agricultural Association Show commenced in 1905 and in this period several reports described and commented upon the importance of this agricultural future. For example, in 1907 it was stated that,

"Wyong has a larger and more important industry before it than the timber trade, viz, agriculture. Patchy as it is some of the land... will bear favourable comparisons with much land in the state which is being assiduously cultivated... The lowest hillsides are, in most places, suitable for fruit growing and there are some thriving orchards in the district, though others have been sadly neglected and some have disappeared... On the cultivated land, maize is the chief crop and some excellent results are obtained even where the land has been continually cultivated without change. On the dairy farms sorghum, farmer's fried, millet, rape, oats, pumpkins, grammas and cowpeas are all grown successfully....

*"Dairying is the common industry and attracting outside capital. The oldest and largest daily is that of Messrs Chapman and Sons who milk at Yarramalong and Wyong...Among others are some experienced daily farmers from the South Coast who have settled at Jilliby. Clearing the land is the chief expense..".*²⁴⁵

In 1910 the Wyong district was described as,

²⁴⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p.19.

²⁴¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume p.21.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Gosford Times quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p.21.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²⁴⁵ *Town and Country Journal* 1906 quoted in *Ibid.*, Volume One, pp.34-5.

"admirably adapted for pastoral and agricultural purposes and is being rapidly brought under cultivation. Gardens and orchards are numerous, fruit being of excellent quality".²⁴⁶

Throughout this period, up to the 1920s, several other commercial ventures were commenced including a dairy at The Entrance and advertisements for properties for sale in the district stressed the agricultural opportunities afforded those settling there.²⁴⁷

In 1928 it could be said that the Erina Shire (which included the Wyong district),

*"is well and very favourably known, particularly in regard to citrus fruit... passionfruit and many varieties of other fruits are grown extensively. Vegetable growing is a profitable exercise... The timber industry is still a solid factor in the shire's prosperity. Dairying and agriculture are carried out in considerable volume. Poultry farming is practised in most parts of the shire but particularly at Warnervale and Kanwal... Flowers are cultivated widely for market and wildflowers grow prolifically..."*²⁴⁸

Several other related industries or businesses found a profitable market in the district because of the success of the agricultural and pastoral concerns. Juice factories, for example, took advantage of the citrus crops.

Fruit growing had gained in prominence, particularly during the early years of the twentieth century. In 1907 it was reported that,

"instead of never ending cornfields of old one now meets acres of beautiful orchards bending beneath their load of delicious fruit proclaiming this to be one of the finest fruit producing districts in NSW".²⁴⁹

The 1930s depression initiated a decline in both the citrus and dairy industries although it was not until the 1950s and, more especially, 1960s that this became particularly evident. Despite this, the Jusfrute processing factory at West Gosford continued to grow from its humble beginnings in the 1920s until the early 1980s, suggesting citrus farming for juicing continued to thrive. When the factory closed in 1982 it was because of the decreased availability of local fruit due to urban encroachment or rural lands and the subsequent migration westward of the citrus industry.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ W.E. Phegan. *The Great Northern Line Tourist Guide 1910.*,p.89

²⁴⁷ For example see E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Two, p.15.

²⁴⁸ Erina Shire Development League. *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide 1928*,p.12

²⁴⁹ 'Pioneers of Yarramalong'. *Gosford Times.* " 10 July 1907

²⁵⁰ D.Fisher. *op.cit.*, p49.

In 1954 nearly a million gallons of milk were still being processed at the Wyong factory.²⁵¹ However, as the increasingly urban growth of the area continued widespread farming became less economically viable. Egg production came to the fore at this time. It was stated in 1961 that,

*"Throughout the central coast poultry is a main industry, producing about eight million dozen eggs annually... Poultry meat production has steadily grown".*²⁵²

Wyong was noted to be one of the largest egg producers in the state although dairying was still maintaining a good output and citrus and bean growing were still viable. The principal fruits grown then were apples, oranges, mandarins, lemons, grapefruit, peaches, nectarines, passionfruit and several berry crops including strawberries. The Burbank Seed Farm was established to the south of Wyong in the 1950s.

Several Co-Operatives established in the district echoed the principal concerns; those of the Associated Poultry Farmers, Citrus Packing House, Dairy Society Ltd, Fruit Growers Rural Co-Operative Society and the Bulk Loading Co-Operative.²⁵³

In 1960 a milk depot was established at Toukley to service that and the Morisset area. In 1964 two million gallons of milk were processed at the Wyong factory.²⁵⁴ In that year the Erina Milk Distribution District was proclaimed and Wyong Co-Operative Dairy Society Ltd became its agent in the area. By 1974 the co-operative had closed having amalgamated with United Dairies Ltd.²⁵⁵ The Wyong Butter Factory also amalgamated with this company in the same year.

The erosion of farming, citrus growing and pastoralism from the 1960s onwards has had consequences for the social fabric of the district. This change in economic circumstances, it has been claimed, has caused,

*"the disintegration of the valley workforce, the dissipation, to a large extent, of the co-operative sense of the past, the selling of traditional family properties and the gradual influx of the new settler. A long history of people associated with working the lands, the bonds between those people and the soil was to end. Far superior wages were available for less working hours outside the farming areas, so the children of the farmers drifted to the provincial centres or to the power stations and new industrial complexes that were beginning to emerge.. "*²⁵⁶

By the 1980s it was stated that,

²⁵¹ Stinson, *Ibid.*, Volume Four, p. 27

²⁵² Real Estate Institute of NSW. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Four, p. 27.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ A. Strom. *Environmental Education for the Community A Case Study or Model Covered by an Investigation of the Wyong Valleys, Central Coast, New South Wales.*, p. 17.

"In more recent years most of the dairy farms have sold their properties to wealthy investors and others so that the industry has suffered a decline from which it will most probably never recover; however; it is expected that the factory will continue as a processing plant depending on milk brought in from outside sources... Modern times have seen the successful establishment of deer farms, donkey farms and goat farms within the shire".²⁵⁷

In 1982 there were only twelve local dairy farms remaining in the shire. By 1990 the northern river valleys (Wyang and Jiliby Valleys, Ourimbah Creek and Palmdale) which were historically used for grazing had only six dairy farms still in existence.²⁵⁸

One other area of produce has always been associated with the Wyong district although it derived not from the land but from its lakes. The abundance and variety of fish has been marked since the earliest surveyors and settlers recorded their impressions of the place. John Mann, for example, noted in 1842 the abundance and variety of fish in the Tuggerah Lakes. Commercial exploitation of the resource, however, did not occur until the later half of the nineteenth century.

The earliest traders in fish appear to have been Chinese who came to Australia in response to the gold rushes of the 1850s. In the 1860s a group settled at The Entrance and one at Canton Beach, Toukley and commenced a considerable trade in dried, smoked and pickled fish for both export and local trade. Another group of Chinese engaged in the same trade were located at Toowoan Bay. Later, professional fishermen from the south coast of New South Wales settled in the same district. They trawled the lakes with considerable success and later transferred their activities to Salt Water Creek Reserve (37).²⁵⁹ In the early 1880s they settled at Canton Beach. With the completion of the railway line in 1887 they moved across the Lake to Tacoma and South Tacoma. At south Tacoma a wharf was built on the side of the river where the fisherman packed their catch and the steamer would take the load to the Wyong Wharves where the catch would be transferred to the train to Sydney.²⁶⁰

The variety and abundance of the schools were described by one visitor in 1885, who said that,

"fish fairly swarm in the Ourimbah Creek...Mullet, schnapper and bream are to be found of great size and Jewfish have been caught up to 3 1/2 feet in length and nearly 45lb weight".²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.28.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.27; Darrell Fisher. *The Central Coast of NSW. Environment and People*. Hobbs & Hobbs Publishing, 1997. pp41-42.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume Three, p.140.

²⁶⁰ P Dewberry & P Irwin. *On Flows The River*. 2005. (no page or chapter numbering)

²⁶¹ 'A Sketch of the Gosford District' Part III.' *Sydney Mail*. 21 March 1885.

In 1898 a Fisheries Inspector took up residence at The Entrance. Prior to that, in 1889, after the opening of the railway, a new village based on the local fishing industry came to be established on the banks of Tuggerah Lake. This was Tacoma. A wharf was built here and Tacoma became a centre for unloading fish which were then shipped to Sydney.²⁶² It became the headquarters of the fishermen's co-operative in the 1960s.



Tacoma Fishing Village in the Wyong River, N.D
Source: Government Printing Office Image 1-02637, State Library of NSW

In 1904 the fisheries annual report reported on the first year of commercial prawning, a new industry on the lakes that met with some significant success.²⁶³ In 1905 a second subdivision of the Warner Estate at Wyong advertised the "fishing village of Rockleigh" (Rocky Point). By 1906 it could be reported that,

²⁶² E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume One, p.108

²⁶³ A.Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 117.

*"The lake, or rather, series of lakes... are broad expanses of water, forming an excellent fishing ground, some thirty boats, fully equipped with gear operating fro, the mouth of the river (are trading) ... The lakes are celebrated for their fish. ..."*²⁶⁴

Numerous tourism guides of the 1920s and 1930s refer to the excellent fishing of the district. In 1928 it was reported that the fishing industry,

*"is an important one...large quantities of fresh fish are exported...prawning is also extensively followed and oysters are cultivated over very large leases..."*²⁶⁵

Fishing remains one of the attractions of the district. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that fish populations have declined. Some say this is due to human activity and events such as the establishment of the Munmorah power station as well as the popularity of a certain fish and the resultant overfishing a that type, while others consider natural cycles of the fish or the size of the entrance to the lakes based on whether there has been natural or human sand movement which blocks the lake.

The association of the district with primary industry remains strong although, in recent years, diversification has commenced into new types of farming. In 1992 it was stated that,

*'while suburban areas are rapidly expanding it is heartening to see that there is still a strong band of workers plying their trade through living and working on the land. Hobby farming too is blossoming especially in our valleys where a variety of activities are taking place from deer nut and worm farming to cattle and horse breeding" (42).*²⁶⁶

By mid 1993 agricultural land use was located on approximately 9846 hectares within the shire of Wyong were dedicated to industries such as fruit and vegetable growing, beef cattle production, poultry, turf farms and forestry uses. The table below shows a breakdown of agricultural land use c1993.

| Agricultural Land Use | Proportion (%) |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Pasture | 88.1 |
| Orchards | 6.2 |
| Turf Farms | 2.7 |
| Nurseries | .3 |
| Poultry | .2 |
| Hydroponics | 0.2 |
| Other | .94 |

Source: Wyong Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2003-04 p71

²⁶⁴ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume One, p.35

²⁶⁵Erina Shire Development League. *Op Cit.*, p.13

²⁶⁶ *The Advocate* .9 April 1992.

Industrial Activity

Industrial and manufacturing activity also had a firm place in the shire. In April 1990 the Berkley Vale Business Park was announced with companies such as Masterfoods and Procter & Gamble planning to open manufacturing facilities in the park.²⁶⁷ In 1997 sealants, metal fabrication, food products, steel building frames, electrical components were being manufactured locally for export. Secondary industry and retail had also seen substantial growth, thus not only creating employment, but the need to provide infrastructure to support the industrial growth.²⁶⁸ In 2002 it was noted that migration of residents from Sydney to the Central Coast had also brought many new commercial and industrial businesses to the area, thus creating an expansion of business parks, the biggest being the Tuggerah Business Park. Companies included ING Direct's call centre, Murdoch Magazines, the NSW Police call centre, GIO, NBN Television, Sanitarium and Allen & Unwin.²⁶⁹ The construction of the F3 freeway has been a significant factor in the development of these areas.

²⁶⁷ „Berkley Vale’. *Tuggerah Lakes News*. 18 April 1990 p12 WSC Vertical file – Berkley Vale

²⁶⁸ Wyong Shire Council. *State of the Environment Report, 1996-97*. p.6.

²⁶⁹ „Tuggerah wins as firms move out of city.’ *Sydney Morning Herald Online*. 6 April 2002.

11. "THE SCENERY IS PICTURESQUE AND THE CLIMATE QUITE REMARKABLY HEALTHY" - SYDNEY'S PLAYGROUND

From the first views of the Wyong district by European settlers there has been an appreciation of the unique qualities presented by the environment, topography, climate and other natural features. From the later years of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century and peaking in the first few decades of that time the Wyong shire has become the focus of a holiday and tourist trade keen to exploit those various natural advantages. Its exploitation has coincided with a developing interest in health and leisure and a movement towards shorter working hours, free weekends and holidays for all workers.

Distance from Sydney was the principal factor in the slow development of the district for this purpose although it was already being visited by the 1880s. In 1885 one report described,

*"Lake Tuggerah. .. constitutes a regular camping ground for picnic parties and those few visitors from the metropolis, who, being of a sporting turn of mind go to some trouble to find out the locality where wildfowl 'most do congregate' and where fish can be obtained in plenty... When the railway to Gosford is finished I shall expect to see the Tuggerah and Wamberal Lakes become favourite resorts for visitors from the metropolis. At present, letting alone the fact of the locality being so little known, the four hours sea journey...is quite sufficient to delay the great bulk of excursionists from attempting the trip".*²⁷⁰

The establishment of the railway made trips to the Gosford/Wyong region a more viable option, it brought the region within a two or three hour trip from Sydney. Initially, however, tourism to the district focused on Gosford and Woy Woy; the extra distance to Wyong required overnight accommodation which was not generally available until the very last years of the 1890s.²⁷¹ The construction of the railway, apart from creating a relatively quick means of reaching the district, provided opportunities to make more people aware of the natural beauties of the region although opinions on those beauties differed, at times, quite markedly. In 1887 one reporter commenting on the scenery outside his train window said,

*"Beauty of scenery is by no means a characteristic feature of the country for the greater portion of the distance. Indeed generally the landscape is uninteresting... Here and there, however the forest has a picturesque aspect by reason of the delicate tints of leaf and numerous ferns and shrubs... "*²⁷²

Another reporter, though, on the same journey described,

²⁷⁰ 'A Sketch of the Gosford District' Part III.' *Sydney Mail*. 21 March 1885.

²⁷¹ B. Strom. *Op.cit.*, p. 23.

²⁷² Quoted in E. Stinson. *A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire* Volumes Two, p.123.

"...splendid views are obtained..Wyong Creek...presents a very attractive appearance. Large forests of timber stretch down towards the waters edge. The water is salt but beautifully clear...Ourimbah Creek...here several neat little homesteads catch the eye and form a pleasing feature in the view which, for the next four miles is, indeed, charming. Ferns, lofty timber and immense grass trees, together with creepy plants of every description are abundant. Many picturesque tiny streams of fresh water are crossed by neat bridges... " ²⁷³

The increasing trade to the area inevitably meant the necessity of accommodation. The first guest house in the district was Dunleith opened at North Entrance in 1895. Soon after another guest house was opened on the northern side of the channel at The Entrance.²⁷⁴

By 1901 it could be reported of Tuggerah that,

*"this is one of the coming holiday resorts. Every year at this season can be seen between 400 and 500 people camped at The Entrance".*²⁷⁵

A third guest house was opened at The Entrance in 1903.²⁷⁶ The establishment of the Erina Shire Council in 1906 (of which Wyong was a part) created a body devoted to the successful marketing and capitalisation of the area. Tourism was the immediate answer and the spread of facilities and active promotion. Attention was increasingly turned to the attractions of the northern portion of the shire.

By 1910 tourist guides were featuring Upper Tuggerah Lakes, Tuggerah and Wyong and principal attractions of the district.²⁷⁷ Two year later five guest houses had been erected at The Entrance (four by the same family). One of these, "Bayview", became the largest holiday house in the district. Taylors Ferry Service (the same family that owned the guest houses) operated to the newly constructed Wyong Wharves to service the trade.²⁷⁸

With the close of the Victorian period recreational activity changed and with the advent of surfing and promotion of the healthy aspects of the sun, the Shire had an increasing number of visitors for recreational purposes, with bathing beaches becoming one of the main reasons for visitation of the area²⁷⁹

By 1917 several towns were identified as principal attractions. Wamberal, Tuggerah, The Entrance, Norahville, Wyong and Morisset were all claimed to be

²⁷³ Quoted in *Ibid*.

²⁷⁴ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, pp.23-5.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.* Volume One, p.139.

²⁷⁶ A.M. McClure. *Op.cit.*, p. 23.

²⁷⁷ W.E. Phegan. *The Great Northern Line Tourist Guide 1910*.

²⁷⁸ B. Strom. *Op Cit.*, p.25.

²⁷⁹ *Wyong Heritage Study Stage 1:Landscape Report. op.cit.*, no numbering.

principal destinations and there were, by that time, numerous boarding houses.²⁸⁰

The 1920s and 1930s were, perhaps, the heyday of the tourism market. It was also a period of increased effort to market land in the area as potential holiday house or weekender properties. In 1920, for example, one such subdivision was made at The Entrance for this purpose. Advertisements described potential "week-end cottages, water fronts, sea-side lots, country houses".²⁸¹ By this time there were fifteen boarding houses in this township alone.²⁸² The Entrance Hotel is the only surviving example. The commitment to tourism as a marketable commodity is highlighted by the development of associations such as the Erina Shire Development League and the publications produced by them to promote the locality.²⁸³

The council and the Development League were major agitators for the construction of new and better road access to the area in this period. The Pacific Highway was constructed in large part due to the efforts of these and similar groups. The introduction of this new road had a similar reaction to that produced by the introduction of the railway in the 1880s.

*"It is difficult to realize the extent of the tourist trade which will hasten to make use of a well-made, top-gear highway which passes through the finest scenery in Australia. This wonder road commands panoramas, varying and increasing in beauty with every mile... "*²⁸⁴

Natural beauties, of course, were heavily promoted:

*"the shaded ease of ferny gullies and wooded valleys or the rich reward of the wonderful horizon bounded panoramas from the mountain heights; the wild beauty of virgin bushland or the cultivated loveliness of richly productive orchard and garden hill sides and flats; the bracing breezes of the plateau, the glory of the wildflowers, the wondrous grace of the waterfalls; a thousand ferns in palm sheltered gullies..."*²⁸⁵

Interestingly, marketing for some subdivisions played on the concept of the local landscape being a domestic version of more exotic locations. The Halekulani Estate at Budgewoi, for example, was obviously drawing a comparison with the beach fronts of Hawaii.

²⁸⁰ NSW Tourist Bureau. *The Tourist Hotel and Boarding I-house Directory for NSW 1917*

²⁸¹ Quoted in E. Stinson. *Op Cit.*, Volume Two, p.15.

²⁸² B. Strom. *Loc Cit*

²⁸³ Erina Shire Development League. *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide. 1928.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.31.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.91

In addition to these natural attractions the community developed many features designed to provide more interest for the visitor. Several picture theatres were constructed at Wyong and The Entrance. Golf courses were built at Wyong in 1926, Killarney Vale in 1929 and Shelley Beach in 1954. A bowling club was opened at The Entrance in 1939.

Numerous sporting activities were offered including surfing, fishing, walks, boating, golf, tennis, cricket, horse racing, bowling and game shooting of which the "feathered game" included black swans, ducks, pelicans, curlew, snipe, pigeons and gillbirds. "Culture" also was not ignored; there were performances by dramatic and operatic societies, concerts, picture shows and dances.

Some of the earliest horse races in the district were held around the turn of the century in a paddock south of Woodbury Inn, as well as at Ourimbah and Tuggerah on Lake Road. The first racecourse in the town of Wyong was build c1912 by sawmiller and timber merchant George Goldsmith and John O'Neill on the present course (is it still) on the swamp east of Goldsmith's mill that had been filled with the mill's sawdust. John Robley, a local district pioneer wrote in 1922.²⁸⁶

"The sports of the district were well catered for in cricket and race meetings.....Many horses came overland from Sydney to Windsor to compete for the principal event which was a handicap of 20 pounds".²⁸⁷

The first picture shows were usually shown in public halls, and were followed by the establishment of purpose built cinemas. Pictures were first shown in Wyong on 7 July 1897 as part of an entertainment troupe's performance that included a series of living colour pictures in cinematograph, a few days after they were held in Gosford and Ourimbah. These were the first showing of motion pictures on the Central Coast. Travelling showman HVK Paslow screened silent movies at Ourimbah and other central coast towns, first bringing his equipment on horse and sulky, and the later by car. The coast's first cinemas were located at Wyong, Yarralong and Ourimbah Schools of Arts as well as the Gosford School of Arts and were regular venues for the traveling picture show men. The first purpose built cinema to open in what is now the Wyong Shire is believed to have been at The Entrance in 1921. Known as the Wintergarden, it doubled as a picture theatre and dance hall. It was located next to The Entrance Hotel on what later became the carpark. The 1934 Prince Edward, also at The Entrance, brought to the district theatre amenities usually only found in Sydney and prestigious suburban cinemas. The owner, Edward Brennan later opened The Astra in Wyong in 1936. It too was one of the finest outside Sydney. Other cinemas to open within the existing shire boundaries have included: Halekulani

²⁸⁶ Wyong Turf HistoryThe Advocate 23/4/1974Wyong Flashbacks The Advocate 19/2/1975 In Edward Stinson Wyong Flashbacks Vol 1 Oct 1973 - May 1975

²⁸⁷ The Advocate 19/2/1975 In Edward Stinson Wyong Flashbacks Vol 1 Oct 1973 - May 1975

(1968), Budgewoi Public Hall (1938), Kanwal Public hall (1954), Killarney Vale (1926), Long Jetty 1956 and Toukley 1962.²⁸⁸

Carnivals at The Entrance has been well known, long time attractions at the Entrance with processions, lights, races, parades and carnival rides from the 1930s. The landmark historic carousel at The Entrance dates from this time. By the 1950s penny arcades, sideshows, chocolate wheels, showmen, rides and crowds of people could be found there almost any night of the week, but particularly during the school holidays. Circus supplemented that action.²⁸⁹ A modern version of the carnival continues to operate at The Entrance during peak seasons.

By 1961 the district was claimed to be mainly composed of holiday resorts and to be "the playground" of two cities.²⁹⁰

*"The northern side of the Tuggerah Lakes are the townships of Toukley, Gorokan, Budgewoi, Norahville and Buff Point... the beaches fronting the lake provide ideal holiday resorts for families ...For the boating enthusiast there are many miles of water ways of the Tuggerah Lakes... The upper lakes provide excellent sport for the motor boat and ski enthusiast. The beaches in the area provide excellent surfing and sea fishing..."*²⁹¹ Wyong and The Entrance were singled out for commendation.

*"The Wyong Golf Links are well known throughout the state being the venue of many important competitions. Other sporting activities include horse racing, trotting and greyhound racing, bowling, horse riding and guest houses are situated at vantage points and provide excellent accommodation and sporting features for their guests".*²⁹²

"The Entrance combines with Long Jetty to make a large area of residential and holiday cottages with the shark free Tuggerah Lakes on one side and the ocean on the other; the district provides the Mecca of holiday resorts for thousands of city people. The Tuggerah Lakes provide sport for the many fishermen and there are ample boats for hire. In recent years The Entrance has been the centre for the Ampol Fishing Contest... The area contains many sporting facilities: golf, bowls, surf clubs, riding and is well supported with caravan parks. Holiday cottages for letting purposes provide a considerable income for the district.

²⁸⁸ B.Connelly & L.Todd. *Paddocks, Palaces and Picture Shows.The clourful History of the cinemas of the Central Coast of NSW*. Australian Cinema and Theatre Society Inc, 1996. Chapter 3.

²⁸⁹ R.Stewart & L.Webster. *Down Memory Lane. An Oral History of The Entrance and surrounding Districts*. R.Stewart & L.Webster: 2007. p p.122-27.

²⁹⁰ Real Estate Institute of NSW. *op.cit*.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.14.

*Fishing and prawning in the lakes is a major sporting activity. Surf clubs are well supported".*²⁹³

The town features a racecourse which is the venue for the Central Coast Amateur Radio Club's annual Central Coast Field Day, held each February. It is claimed that this is the largest such Amateur radio event in the Southern Hemisphere.²⁹⁴ The club was formed in Gosford in 1957 and now operates out of Kariong

In the late twentieth century large scale resorts were developed to cater to a different type of holiday maker, complete with restaurants, day spas, conference facilities, retail outlets and other facilities. Among these were The Pacific International Waterfront Resort at The Entrance in 2000

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

²⁹⁴ <http://www.ccarc.org.au/fieldday/behind/behind.html>

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