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The Ferry at Nelligen, 1948. See story page 2.
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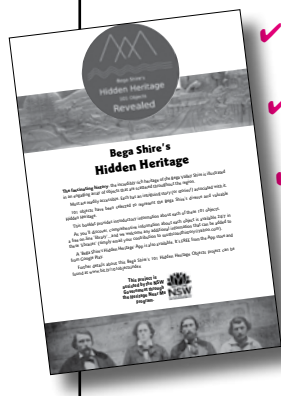
# Nelligen and the Steampacket Hotel

Nelligen is a pretty town, tucked into a fold of the land at the confluence of Nelligen Creek and the Clyde River, upstream from Batemans Bay.

Nelligen is officially a 'town', declared as such by government proclamation on 20th March 1882 – confirming its standing as a commercial centre on the river during the busy timber-felling and gold-rush days of the mid-1800s.

Mystery surrounds the origins of the town's name. Colonial government policy at the time was to adopt Aboriginal place names where possible. With no Indigenous written language, European translations of Aboriginal locality references was approximate at best. 'Nelligen' may well be a corruption of an Aboriginal term relating to the locality, its function, a person, or perhaps a dreamtime event. In its early days, the town and its fresh water creek were variously spelt Nellican and Nelliking. Stuart Magee, in his book '*The Rivers and the Sea*', supports the view that the town is pronounced using a hard 'g'.

I have heard a counter argument, apparently offered by Merv Innes, that a certain butcher apparently did away with his wife and threw her body in the river. From time to time the body would float to the surface, prompting locals to exclaim 'Here comes Nell again'!

The Clyde River, in the 1880s, was a busy shipping corridor for transporting the region's valuable hardwood timber that was demanded in great quantities for housing construction in Sydney and for railway sleepers. Coastal steamers from Sydney were docking twice a week at Nelligen, where several busy timber mills were situated.

When the Colonial Administration announced that the southern railway line to Goulburn was to be extended to Cooma, Nelligen was ideally placed to supply the 100,000 sleepers required.

Rich gold discoveries at Araluen and Mogo brought a steady supply of miners and supplies by ship from Sydney. Nelligen was referred to as the 'Head of Navigation' on the Clyde, and took on the title of 'Port of Nelligen'.

In the late 1800s, Braidwood and Nelligen grew in economic importance at a similar pace.

Commercial necessity required a more rapid and more secure road transport arrangement between the two towns. With the assistance of convict labour, the first rough wagon trail was cut through the ridges of the Clyde Mountain, enabling the exchange of produce and supplies between the two towns.

The 1860s were the boom years for Nelligen. The town's first school commenced and a police watchhouse was constructed, manned by two constables. The iconic Steampacket Hotel began trading, operated by the colourful Francis Guy (see accompanying article).

But over the next decade, as the goldfields began to dwindle, Nelligen slowly declined as a commercial centre. Farmers and graziers around Braidwood preferred the cheaper and quicker option of transporting their products to Sydney by rail, and the establishment of a ferry service across the Clyde River at Batemans Bay had the effect of diverting much of the southbound traffic away from Nelligen.

The strong local timber industry continued to be Nelligen's main focus, with six major milling operations active on the Clyde River. Oyster farming and wattlebark processing were also significant commercial operations.



Horse teams crossing Currowan Creek while carting goods from shipping at Nelligen to Braidwood, 1902. National Library of Australia nla-obj-137134933

### THE STEAMPACKET HOTEL

The history of the Steampacket Hotel, and of its various owners, closely tracks the history of Nelligen itself.

In its early days, Nelligen attracted many travellers requiring short-term shelter before moving on to local timber camps or to the gold fields at Mogo and Araluen. Supply and produce wagon drivers would also gather in the town, preparing for the long and difficult journey to

Braidwood or to wait for the arrival of the twice-weekly steamer from Sydney.

The resourceful Francis Guy was quick to open his hotel, or 'public house', which he named the Steampacket. The year was 1865.

Competition was provided by several other hotels, including two from local businessman Stephen Richardson.

But it was Guy's Steampacket that would survive and thrive.

Francis Guy was involved in a number of commercial interests in and around Nelligen. He owned a timber mill on the Clyde River and was an active and successful shipbuilder. (He would later move his mill to Batemans Bay where he had set up operations alongside the river in Beach Street, on the site now occupied by the Spinnaker Reach apartment complex.)

Guy owned a general store in Nelligen, and at one time was the licensee of the Nelligen Post Office.



The Steampacket Hotel, Nelligen

Guy eventually relocated to Batemans Bay, in controversial circumstances following the capture and hanging of the Clarke Brothers. It was rumoured at the time that Guy (birth name, Clarke) was related in some way to the bushrangers and had occasionally offered comfort and support to the gang.

Guy's hotel suffered a number of setbacks. His first Steampacket was erected partly below the flood level and suffered extensive water damage in 1898. A two-story hotel replaced the original, but it burnt down in 1925.

By then the Steampacket was in the hands of Mrs Adelaide Neate. Mrs Neate was a formidable lady, well-respected in Nelligen, with a well-earned reputation as a feisty

businessperson and property owner. She would eventually own several hotels in NSW and Queensland.

Following the 1925 fire, Adelaide Neate moved the Steampacket operations to an old cheese factory nearby. This building was then renovated and extended to become, over the next 40 years, one of the best-known country hotels in NSW.

Prior to 1964, road traffic was compelled to pause at the banks of the Clyde in Nelligen as motorists waited to be ferried across the river. Three-hour delays were common during busy holiday periods. A wily Canberra motorist could time his arrival at the riverside ramps moments after the ferry had departed, allowing time for at least one refreshing drink on the shaded hotel veranda before the ferry returned.

Enterprising locals would sell tea and scones directly to the long line of cars as the queue inched slowly forward towards the ferry ramp.

The Ferry Master was known to occasionally ensure the ferry was moored on the Steampacket side of the river at hotel closing-time. This allowed the Master to end his working day with an extra 'drink for the river' and ensured inquisitive police from Batemans Bay were detained on the opposite bank while late-night drinkers were ushered out of the hotel's back door.

The Neates recognized that the opening of the bridge at Nelligen over the Clyde in 1964 would lead to an overnight collapse in trade and probably closure of the riverside Steampacket. In 1967 Adelaide Neate opened the present Steampacket Hotel on the Kings Highway at the western end of town. Today, the Steampacket is a pleasant place for a traveller to break a long journey. The hotel walls are crowded with historic 'pubobilia' and period photos.

Between the old pub and the Nelligen jetty is a pretty strip of picnic-friendly parkland, un-signposted, and blandly referred to as the Nelligen Foreshore. The land was originally owned by Adelaide Neate and later donated to the people of Nelligen for their enjoyment. I rather like the idea of formally recognizing its history by signposting the area as 'Neate Park' – a rather fitting name for a normally tidy tourist rest area. R

## *Francis Guy*

Francis Guy was one of those influential larger-than-life characters typically found in pioneering communities.

Opportunistic, manipulative and often operating on the edge of the law, Francis Guy was our earliest colourful entrepreneur. Outwardly a model citizen, the crafty Francis saw Batemans Bay as his chance to live the capitalist dream. Never far from a potential big profit, Francis dabbled in silver mines, hotels, timber, shipping and real estate.

Francis was born in England in 1804, the illegitimate son of John Clarke. He adopted the surname of his mother, Deborah Guy. John Clarke would later be transported to Australia to serve seven years for petty theft.

At the age of 37, Francis and his family migrated to Australia under a passage-paid sponsorship. He initially worked as a boot repairer in George Street, Sydney, where he bided his time absorbing valuable information from many of his clients and assembling a list of useful business and government contacts.

Within 10 years, Francis had left Sydney and settled with his family in Nelligen. Here he was described as 'a well-respected gentleman, holding many important positions in the community.'

He opened Nelligen's first general store and successfully applied for a postmaster's license.

Francis was quick to realise Sydney's growing demand for hardwood timber and began a long career in the timber industry, establishing his own sawmills. He also anticipated the huge profits to be made by transporting and marketing the timber, so commenced building his own boats and established purchasing agents in Sydney. He now controlled the entire chain from felling the timber to final sale.

Nelligen in the 1870s was the region's main port and commercial centre. Again, Francis was quick to satisfy an emerging need for accommodation and the public sale of alcohol by opening the town's iconic hotel – The Steampacket.



FRANCIS and RITA GUY WITH JACK THE DOG. THE HOUSE FRANCIS BUILT IN MAIN STREET NEAR THOMPSONS SHOP. Image courtesy and © Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society Inc.

It was illegal in those days for a post office to be associated with a public house, but somehow Francis found his own unique way around the problem. As Postmaster, Francis Guy had continuous access to valuable information that he was quickly able to turn to his profit. He would, for example, be able to anticipate arriving steamships and stagecoaches and then arrange to satisfy accommodation and supply needs.

Meanwhile, a recently-emancipated Irish convict, John Clarke (not Francis' father) had settled on a small property outside Braidwood. John's main occupation was cattle

rustling and selling sly-grog. His sons Tom and John were heavily into bushranging and had even taken up with the legendary Ben Hall in an attempt to rob the Araluen gold stagecoach. After an abortive attempt to intercept an Araluen gold shipment at Nerrigundah, near Bodalla, the bushranging Clarke brothers were captured and eventually hanged.

Coincidentally, Francis Guy chose this moment to hastily leave Nelligen and resettle his family in Batemans Bay. Opportunistic, as always, Francis Guy's fortunes now began to seriously take off. He quickly bought up much of the good land in Batemans Bay and built a general store, part of which still remains. Much of the brickwork was taken from the ballast of arriving ships.

He recommenced shipbuilding and produced many ships that transported people and cargo to and from ports all along the eastern coastline. The ships also went as far as California, where his eldest son Francis Jnr settled and married.

(Francis Jnr eventually returned to Batemans Bay and built a thriving timber mill and wharves on the shores of the Clyde River. The timber mill was sold to the Perry family in 1901.)

Francis Guy was one of Batemans Bay's more colourful early characters. I like the idea that the early pioneering town of Batemans Bay was partly built on the edgy business career of such a man!

—*Kim Odgers*

## Nelligen's History in Brief

| | |
|---|---|
| Before 1800 | Area inhabited by the Walbanga, Murrinjari and Bergalia Aboriginal clans |
| 1828 | Surveyor Robert Hoddle was surveying in the area |
| 1829 | Hoddle laid out 640 acres of 'good forest land at Nellica Creek' for absentee landowner, Francis Moylan |
| 1830s | Timber cutters arrived |
| 1851 | Gold discovered at Araluen, Majors Creek and Braidwood. Nelligen became busy port of arrival |
| 1854 | Village of Nelligen gazetted |
| 1856 | Road to Braidwood completed |
| 1858 | First Post Office |
| 1865 | Steampacket Hotel opened |
| 1892 | Population exceeded 500 |
| 1895 | Punt service commenced across Clyde River |
| 1905 | Cheese factory opened by Clyde River Dairy Farmers Co-op |
| 1925 | Steampacket Hotel burnt to the ground |
| 1934 | Population 350 |
| 1940 | Police Station closed permanently |
| 1961 | Electricity connected to the town |
| 1964 | Nelligen Bridge opened |
| 1969 | Local school closed |
| 2016 | Population 332, including surrounding area ℞ |

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## The Ayrdale Estate

There were three major rural 'estates' in the South Coast area in the 19th and early 20th centuries – the Mort Estate at Bodalla, and the Kameruka and Ayrdale Estates near Candelo and Wolumla.

While Kameruka Estate was bigger than Ayrdale, Ayrdale was widely praised as a 'model' dairy and its owner, John Marshall Black, was both a producer of cheese and a reliable supplier of cheese-making materials to other cheese-making factories. (For details about the Kameruka Estate, see *Recollections* 10, available on-line at www.bit.ly/Recollections10-)

John Marshall Black was born in Scotland and emigrated to Australia as a teenager with his family in 1860. By 1864, J.M.'s father, William, owned 160 acres of land that had previously been owned by the Twofold Bay Pastoral Association and J.M. had (or ostensibly had) purchased about 305 acres.

Unfortunately, William died accidentally in 1867 leaving the 22-year old John to support his 28-year old stepmother, Mary Ann, and her four children under the age of 8. He had some difficulty in obtaining his inheritance and subsequently had to buy the family land back at auction in 1868.

J.M. had been a storekeeper on the Kiandra goldfields, and in 1867 started dealing in wattle-bark (used in the tanning process). In July 1868 he opened the Ayrdale General Stores 'selling at Sydney prices for cash: saddles, boots, calicos, Crimean shirts, and other varieties of goods of very superior quality' (*Bega Gazette*, 8th Aug 1868). The 'other varieties of goods' soon diversified to include cheese-making equipment: cheese hoops, bleached bandage cloth, calico, rennet – an enzyme that separates milk into the solid curds used in cheesemaking, and liquid whey; rennet is traditionally produced from the stomach linings of young calves – and annatto, a yellow food-colouring.

He used the profits from these ventures to continually extend the Ayrdale estate. In 1885 he had 937 acres at Ayrdale and 981 acres elsewhere. By 1903 he was reported to have 1,272 acres at Ayrdale, 620 acres in the same area, seven miles away, and another operation of 2,500 acres at Tiptree, near Bibbenluke on the Monaro.

John does not seem to have had any farming experience. However, perhaps after seeing the success being enjoyed by more affluent neighbours in the area like the Kameruka Estate, he embraced the potential that his land had for grazing dairy cattle.
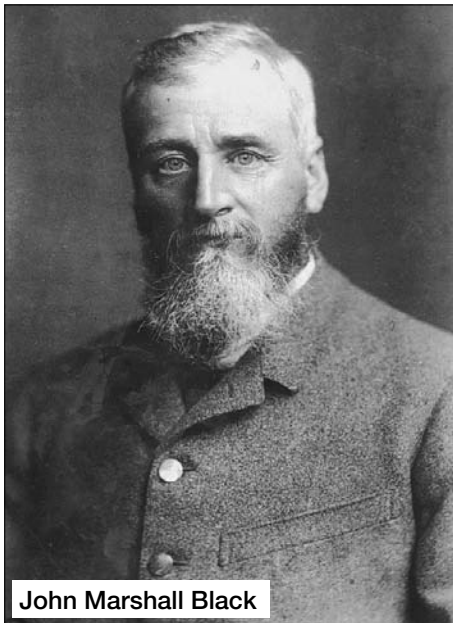

John Marshall Black

He opened his first dairy in 1869, making cheese for local consumption. By 1878, Ayrdale was selling cheese in Sydney and J. M. Black was importing machinery for cheese-making. By 1880 the estate was producing 24 tons of cheese annually.

J.M. also became a major supplier of rennet to other local cheesemakers.

In the early days much of the heavy work at Ayrdale was carried out by Chinese men, who lived on a nearby reserve or, later, on the Ayrdale property itself.

John Marshall Black's family, however, did most of the work: his stepmother, Mary Anne, is credited for stocking the Ayrdale General Store and therefore for much of its financial success; by 1880, his family included seven children, with four girls of working age and two boys, the older boy, Edward George, having been sent off to manage Tiptree farm (children usually began to help in the milking yard when about 9 years old; they bailed up cows, gathered in the calves, and did other light jobs. Milking, separating, washing milk cans and feeding the calves was usually the work of women, while men and boys undertook heavier work such as churning the cream into butter); and, as the *Sydney Mail and NSW South Wales Advertiser* noted '*Mr. Black and his son Charles are born mechanics, the latter having charge of the machinery and blacksmith's department, where all the latest and best tools are to be found.*'

J.M. employed others as required. For example, in 1887 (when up to 180 cows were being milked at Ayrdale), he hired the Macdonald family with '5 milkers' for £140 a year which was paid to them on a quarterly basis.

And, when necessary, he purchased the most up-to-date equipment. In December 1915 – at a time when many local men had gone to war and, of his family, only 43-year old Charles and 34-year old Millicent remained at home – he invested the huge amount of £286 in a Ganes milking machine, which was capable of milking six cows at a time.

The Ayrdale estate attracted much admiration and publicity, typified by these reports in the *Sydney Mail and NSW South Wales Advertiser*:

'*Mr. Black is an example of what may be done by energy*
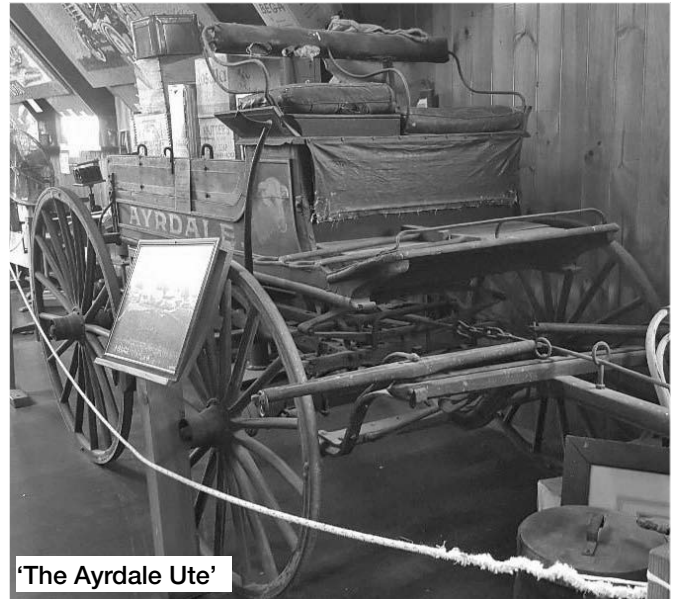

'The Ayrdale Ute'

*and intelligence rightly directed. He began life at Ayrdale, poor and heavily in debt, and was embarrassed by many circumstances of an adverse nature. By dint of patient industry and application he has succeeded in establishing himself, and his future prosperity is now certain. Nearly all the erections and appliances upon his farm are the work of his own hands, and he is a staunch believer in punctuality and systematic management to ensure success in cheesemaking.*' (25th March 1882)

'*The property of John Marshall Black is one of the best and most profitably worked dairying estates on the coast and a fine example of what can be done with good land and cattle managed on business principles. Mr. Black has everything on his estate in the pink of order. On the top bar of the road gate is a nice brass plate bearing "J. M. Black, Ayrdale," and the gate opens to a well-kept road, with its cuttings and bridges, making a drive equal to the best macadamized roads in the State. On either side are undulating ridges well-timbered with red gum, box, and appletree which add greatly to the appearance of the country and also to the comfort of the fat cattle basking in the shade. On arrival at Ayrdale homestead a mile or so from the entrance gate, I found Mr Black in his office. After discussing the prospects we looked through the extensive premises. Milking was in full swing, and Mr. Black led the way to the yards. Passing through the exquisitely kept cheese rooms we came to the lads and lassies at work,*


Ayrdale in 1912

some bailing up the cows, others milking, and some carrying buckets to and fro. The taps and dishes in the milking yard attracted my attention at once. The smallest boy on the job had just finished his cow and he stepped to the nearest dish, where he turned on the tap, and out rushed the clear water on to his hands. I soon saw that cleanliness is the watchword of this establishment. The milk is poured into a large vessel with a strainer as each bucket is filled, and flows thence in a nice stream that reminds one of a miniature brook, on to the large vat for cheese-making. Here again the milk passes through a special strainer, the sieve being on the side, so that any sediment falls to the bottom and does not interfere with the strainer. At the time of my visit all the milk is being used for cheese, by the very latest appliances imported direct from America, and some of Mr. Blacks' own improvements added. Mr. Black and his son Charles are born mechanics, the latter having charge of the machinery and blacksmith's department, where all the latest and best tools are to be found. If a tire comes off, or a mowing machine breaks down, it can be righted on the premises, and save a trip to town for that purpose. On this estate everything has its place, and there is a place for everything. All vessels in the factory are cleaned with condensed hot water, and the cheese when made is put into calico bags of fine quality, which avoids any possibility of contamination by handling. Each cheese weighs exactly 18lb., and they are branded "J.M. Black, Ayrdale" with a bull's head stamped. The cheese is all shipped at Merimbula port to …



An Ayrdale Milk Wagon

Sydney.' (21st January 1903)

On John Marshall Black's death in 1917 the property passed equally to his only unmarried daughter, Millicent, and son, Charles. Despite the farm having demonstrated that it was a good investment, Charles (who was more interested in breeding horses for show jumping) closed the dairy almost immediately.

In 1923 Millicent transferred her share of the property to Charles, but re-inherited it on his death in 1938. She and her husband moved back to Ayrdale shortly thereafter, and she lived there until she died in 1956.

In many respects the property remained a 19th- and early 20th-century 'time capsule' until a clearing sale was held at the property in August 2010.

In 2006 a heritage assessment of Ayrdale was undertaken. It concluded '*Ayrdale is important in the course of NSW's rural history: it was created by an emigrant Scottish family who built up a large property from small parcels of land, through entrepreneurship and hard work*' and it noted that '*three generations of the family have scrupulously maintained their heritage, both physical and documentary*' and that '*nothing has been removed or even substantially displaced within the property*'.



The Ayrdale 'Big Wagon' which transported cheese to Merimbula. Made by Henry Goodwin Valentine Lane of Sydney in May 1901. Its cost: £61 including £3 freight, less £2.18.00 discount.

Included on the property were '*a completely preserved set of buildings and implements from 70 years of farming by the one family, with most equipment still in situ*'. It,

therefore, provided '*a textbook example of a well-run 19th – 20th century dairy farm*' and, because '*significant items of industrial equipment (steam and petrol engines, cheese-presses, vehicles etc.), all still within their working context … it demonstrates the workings of the 19th – 20th century cheese-making industry in an historically important centre of food production.*'

It would have been interesting to have seen the property in that condition … and it is to our, and to future generations, detriment that it was then not preserved.

What has survived, though, is a full set of family papers covering the creation and maintenance of the property from the 1860s through to the 1920s. These papers were described in the heritage assessment as being especially important because '*the personal and commercial records throw light on the emigrant experience, on opening new industries and on contributing to the growth of settlements. A particularly important record is the set of accounts dealing with payments to and from named Chinese workers.*' These are now in the Bega Valley Genealogical Society's documents collection.

Apart from these farm and family records, the most accessible relics from this historically important Ayrdale estate are currently to be found in the Bega Cheese Heritage Centre. Two wagons and a buggy ('the farm ute'), alongside assorted other objects from the Ayrdale estate, are the main pieces in the Centre's dairying display. ℝ

Sources: www.bit.ly/begahh21 and references therein.

# White Settlement Between the Two Rivers

The white settlement of the Moruya area and the pattern of its development have been driven by a number of factors:–

- the push for land by farmers and speculators;
- the availability of some reasonable agricultural land, particularly south of Moruya;
- the convenient assumption by Colonial administration that the land was not owned by the Aboriginal people;
- agriculture – dairy, beef, pork, and some crops – together with timber, for about the first 100 years but tailing off after that;
- the remoteness of Moruya from the markets of Sydney, and the difficulty of transporting goods to and from Sydney;
- gold, for the period 1840 to 1920;
- granite, for the period 1924 to 1931;
- tourism, from a trickle in the 1920s to a torrent by 2000.

White settlement along the coast south of Wollongong was fairly slow and sporadic by comparison with the areas north, west and south-west of Sydney, i.e.: the Hunter River Valley, Bathurst and beyond, and Goulburn. The search for good land for farming or investment was vigorous and kept moving ahead of the resources of the Colony's surveyors.

By 1823 all available land in the strip bounded by Sydney, Penrith, Windsor and Appin had been taken up and the push outwards was well under way. Within the Limits of Location title to land could be obtained, usually in lots of 640 acres or one square mile, to a limit of four square miles. Beyond the Limits of Location, a licence to squat could be obtained but not title to the land. Up until 1828 the southernmost limit to settlement was the north bank of the Clyde River. However, in 1827 and 1828 surveyors were sent to map out the area further south.

Moruya was approached from two directions. Settlers moving south from Goulburn to Braidwood were looking for further opportunity and in 1827 H.S. Badgery and Henry Burnell took up a position in the Araluen Valley. Part of the brief to surveyor Robert Hoddle was to continue on from that point and follow the Deua/Moruya River to its mouth. He did that and then moved north to the Buckenbowra River where W and G Thompson had established a squat on four square miles and Burnell had another place of 1920 acres further downstream.

In 1828 another surveyor, Thomas Florance, was sent down the coast to Batemans Bay, on to Broulee and to the Moruya River. It was he who adopted the Aboriginal names for Broulee, Tomakin, Candlagan Creek and Moruya, though his spelling of those names was subsequently modified.

Thus, in 1828 the southern boundary of the Limits of Location was moved to the north bank of the Moruya River. The same administrative action established the County of St. Vincent which ran from the Shoalhaven to the Moruya
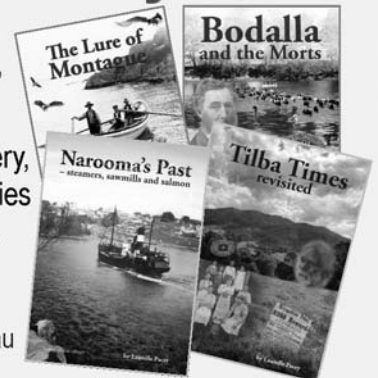
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River. Surveyor Hoddle offered his opinion on the future prospects for the County. "It is very barren," he said, "at least nine tenths of it will be suitable for no purpose whatsoever."

The first man to obtain a grant of land on the north bank of the Moruya was B.G. Raye. It is doubtful if he ever saw the block and he did not settle on it. The first settler was Francis Flanagan, an Irish tailor with a little capital, plenty of gumption, but a habit of getting at cross purposes with his neighbours and the Colonial administration. Nevertheless, he performed duty over a number of years as a local magistrate, census taker and distributor of government blankets to the Aboriginal people.

In 1829 he was granted title to four square miles on the north bank of the river. It extended on either side of today's Princes Highway along the flats. The area was referred to by him variously as Nullandarie – today's Mullenderee – or Pergoga, a name he spelled at least three ways and which appeared on the maps of the time but has since disappeared. His property and homestead he called Shannon View. By 1838 he claimed to be running 800 cattle, 12 horses and 200 pigs.

Flanagan was followed by John Hawdon. Hawdon had arrived from England in 1828. He had property at Sydney and in 1830 set up a squat at Bergalia but, being beyond the limits, could not gain title to the land. In 1831 he was granted land on the north bank of the river, upstream from Flanagan. He called the property Kiora and it too occupied 2560 acres or four square miles.

By 1840 the rest of the river flats land running along the

north bank had all been claimed. Lt Col Phelps bought 940 acres on the eastern side of Flanagan. However, Phelps died within the year and the property was sold to James Staunton. James Ellis, a naval surgeon, bought 1100 acres on the eastern side of Phelps, and the remaining land, 980 acres between Ellis and the north head, was bought by James Garland. He, however, had it subdivided into a group of blocks marketed as Garland Town. The project failed but the name stuck to the area. In 1838 John Maclean bought Raye's block and added a further



Broulee Island Sub-division (roads were never made and the Island was declared a Nature Reserve in 1972)
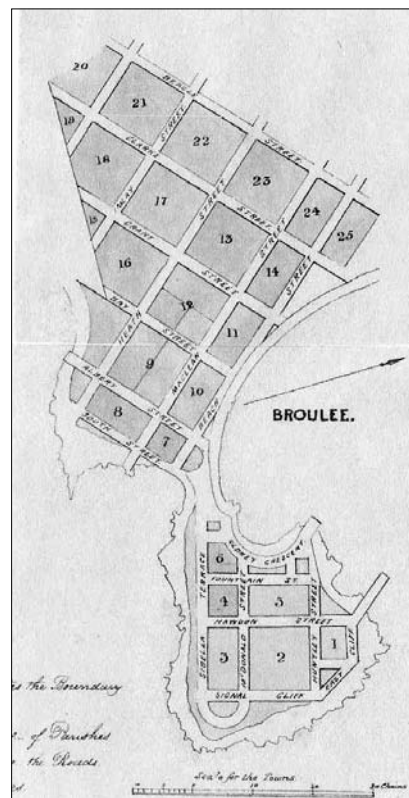
890 acres to it forming the third largest run on the north bank. He called it Glenduart.

Across the river, opposite Flanagan, William Morris, in 1835, squatted a block he called Gundary. William Campbell took up as manager and bought the place himself in 1845.

These people were raising stock and growing crops but they had a significant problem in getting their produce to the Sydney markets. The Moruya River, while it offered a fine means of punting goods and chattels between the properties on the river bank, had a bad bar at the mouth and was chancy for boats big enough to ship goods to and from Sydney. As a result, in 1836, John Hawdon wrote to the Governor pointing out that the local farmers were dependent on Broulee Bay as their local port and its use as such was handicapped until Broulee was surveyed. In the meantime goods would continue to be moved between ship and shore by small boats but he himself was keen to build a wharf and store on Broulee beach as soon as he could obtain suitable land.

Surveyor Larmer was set to the task and in 1837 his lay-out of the Village of Broulee was Gazetted. On the Island it included eight streets and 55 blocks. On the mainland it laid out the area bounded approximately by Clarke to Albert streets and by Massey Street to Harbour Drive.

The first wave of settlers and speculators, following the surveys of the land between the Clyde and the Moruya Rivers, was largely complete by 1841. It was to be a while before further moves of any consequence took place for the investors of Sydney town were awash with tracts of land unsaleable at any price.

Once more the prognosis offered by the surveyor was not encouraging. In writing to the Colonial Secretary the Surveyor-General advised: "Browlee, which may be called East and West Browlee, being divided in two parts by a narrow neck of sand subject to be overflowed by very high tides, appears not to possess any favourable features for the formation of a town. The harbour is too open and the space for laying out streets is limited – the place seems too unimportant for any considerable expenditure on the erection of public buildings and without them a town would never be formed."

That, however, was not the way the speculators saw the prospects for Broulee, though neither John Hawdon nor anybody else ever pressed ahead with the notion of building a jetty and store, other than a very minor jetty for shell grit in the 1920s.

First in was the firm of Hughes and Hosking. John Hughes and John Hosking were both related to Samuel Terry, one of the biggest money men in Sydney, and their partnership was the biggest land holder both in NSW and the settlement of Port Phillip. They picked up a 1,170 acre block at the north end of Broulee beach including all of Mossy Point as it stands today. In addition, they had two 640 acre blocks to the west of the Village, and when the Village lots went on sale in 1840 they took 12 of the blocks on the Island. However, neither Hughes nor Hosking made any move to settle in the area and, when the economic collapse of 1841 to 1844 arrived, they featured as the Colony's most catastrophic bankruptcy.

The other big mover into Broulee was Captain William Oldrey. In four lots of up to 1,110 acres he acquired 4,010 acres butting up to the Village along the whole of its southern and western boundaries. In the auction of the Village sites he picked up three blocks on the Island.

Oldrey had been pensioned off from the navy. He was keen to speculate on Broulee and was not averse to putting his efforts into the development of the place. He built his home, Mt Oldrey Estate, on the western slopes of Broulee, running on both sides of today's Broulee Road down to the beach, but put it on the market within the year.

His lengthy advertisement in the Australian, in its description of the homestead, the infrastructure of Broulee and the boom that was about to arrive, was, to put it as kindly as possible, 'enthusiastic'.

The collapse of 1841 on its own would probably have been enough to take out the over-stretched Captain, but it coincided with another event which took its toll on Broulee. In 1841 heavy rain and the consequential flood of the Moruya River washed out the bar at the mouth, opening it up to coastal shipping. The farmers on the river were delighted at the prospect of avoiding the trek to and from Broulee Bay by way of rough bush tracks. It was the beginning of the end for Broulee.

The map on the next page from Baker's Atlas of 1843–46, published with the kind permission of The National Library of Australia, shows the main holdings between the rivers at the time. The grid on the map is in square miles based on

magnetic north – the basic building block of the Colonial surveying and granting of land.

It was a frail settlement, clinging to hope, battling with the Australian bush, with a lack of support from Sydney, and floods and fires the likes of which were unknown to people from Britain. Nevertheless, some of the early settlers were determined to make something of the place. Hawdon and Oldrey were particularly busy and badgered the Colonial Secretary to have Broulee set up as the centre of a Police District, the place for a Court of Petty Sessions and the centre for convict administration. They were successful and in 1839, at Broulee, the Police Station was established with three constables and the Court was set up with Oldrey and Hawdon as its magistrates. Later, Francis Flanagan, William Campbell and others were added to the Bench. There was a Clerk to the Court, a Scourger and a Pound Keeper/

Postmaster. On the Island the Erin-go Bragh hotel was built.

But, for all the beating of drums, it was not a significant place. The census of 1841 recorded that Broulee contained 6 buildings and 46 people, 40 of whom, including convicts, were working for Oldrey. In 1848 Broulee contained four buildings and 22 inhabitants.

Up the Moruya River, the 1841 census recorded 40 people on Hawdon's place, 39 on Flanagan's and 34 at Maclean's. Hawdon had 35 convicts working for him and Flanagan had 19, but the assignment of convicts ceased in 1840 and there was no transportation from the following year. ℝ

Reprinted from *'Moruya; A Short History'* by Stuart Magee, with kind permission of the Author. More of *'Moruya: A Short History'* is available at Moruya and District Historical Society's website.

## *Readers' Feedback*

We welcome all feedback about articles in Recollections. Recently we've been advised:

The 'Swimwear from the early 1960s' picture in Recollections 13 must have been taken in an earlier era – the girls' hair-dos are the give-away!

The information that there were two fish canneries on the NSW South Coast is incorrect. There were at least three because, for a short period, a fish cannery also operated on the steamer wharf at Bermagui.

And from a past employee of Adastra Airways, relating to the article in Recollections 12: 'The photo on page 12 is not a D.H. 90 Dragonfly, but a D.H. 84 Dragon. Adastra did not own a Dragon until 1956. They sold it after two years of operation. Perhaps the Dragon may have been chartered by Adastra if their aircraft was out of service, or it may belong to Butler Air Transport when they took over the run. And Adastra's Wako is awaiting rebadging (new fabric) at Gawler airport, S.A.' ℝ

# Interested in Local History?

If you enjoy reading *Recollections*, you might be interested in visiting some of our interesting local museums:

**Batemans Bay Heritage Museum**, 3 Museum Place, Batemans Bay. Open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10 am – 3 pm.

**Moruya Museum**, 85 Campbell St, Moruya. Open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10 am – 12 noon. Open every day in January from 11 am – 2pm, public holidays excepted.

**Narooma Lighthouse Museum**, Narooma Visitor Information Centre, Princes Hwy, Narooma. Open Monday to Friday 9.30 am – 4.30 pm, Saturday & Sunday 9.30am – 1.30 pm.

**Montreal Goldfield**, 769 Wallaga Lake Rd, Bermagui. Open daily 2 pm.

**Bermagui Museum**, Bermagui Community Centre, Bunga St, Bermagui. Open Fri and Sat 10 am – 2 pm.

**Cobargo Museum**, Princes Hwy, Cobargo, Open Tuesday – Friday 10 am – 2 pm, Sat 10am – 1 pm.

**Tathra Wharf Museum**, Wharf Rd, Tathra. Open Friday – Monday, 10 am – 4 pm.

**Bega Cheese Heritage Centre**, Lagoon St, North Bega. Open Daily 9 am – 5 pm.

**Bega Pioneers' Museum**, 87 Bega St, Bega. Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10 am – 4 pm, Saturday 10 am – 2 pm.

**Bega Valley Genealogical Society**, Old Pambula Courthouse & Museum, 42 Toalla St, Pambula. Open Tuesdays 1 pm – 4 pm, Thursdays 9.30 am – 12.30 pm, Saturdays 1 – 4 pm.

**Old School Museum**, Main St, Merimbula. Open Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday 1.30 – 4 pm.

**Mary MacKillop Hall and Museum**, Cnr Chandos and Calle Calle Sts, Eden. Open Daily 10 am – 4 pm.

**Eden Killer Whale Museum**, 184 Imlay St, Eden. Open Monday – Saturday 9.15 am – 3.45 pm, Sunday 11.15 am – 3.45 pm.

Online: **Museum of the South East** at https://southeastarts.org.au/mose-museum-of-the-south-east/

**Library branches** in the Bega Valley & Eurobodalla Shires also have valuable collections of newspapers, books and photographs.

Friendly, usually well-informed volunteers at museums should be able to answer your questions or, at the least, point you in the right direction to get any information you require.

**HISTORIES**

# *The Squatters: The Story of Australia's Pastoral Pioneers*
by Barry Stone

Squatters played a crucial role in Australia's development. Squatters also became part of Australian folklore:

> '*Up rode the squatter, mounted on his thoroughbred,*
> *Up rode the troopers, one, two, three, …*'
> – '*Waltzing Matilda*'

But I'd never really thought who these squatters were, exactly why they squatted, and what really is their legacy, until reading Barry Stone's '*The Squatters*'.

'*Eventually the dry savannah-like interior, so different to the rock-encrusted humid environment of Sydney Cove, was found and opened up, and to those early settlers – both squatters and moneyed-up pastoralists – it must have seemed extraordinary. They had left England, where lands had been passed down through generations of landowners, and now found themselves in a new world that was so vast and fertile that all you needed to do to start a new life was to pack your belongings onto a bullock dray, journey beyond the reach of Sydney's meddlesome authorities, mark out a parcel of land, claim it for yourself and your descendants, populate it with sheep or cattle, and forge a future. Little could they have known that within a few decades they would not only be building a life for themselves, but collectively they would be providing the foundation for a nation's prosperity.*

*Through hard work and enterprise these early pastoralists – a mix of free settlers and penniless and moneyed-up squatters – would create a rural equivalent of the English aristocracy, a 'squattocracy', a new ruling elite, a pioneering migration to the land that would, in just a few generations, provide for many an enviable lifestyle.*'
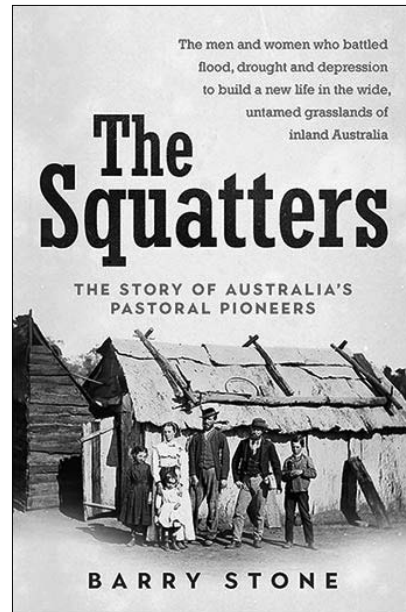
Vast tracts of grazing land were simply 'available'. These appeared (incorrectly, in reality) to be unused and unoccupied. The government did little – or, in practice, could do little – to stop would-be settlers simply moving on to this 'vacant' land … but then provided them with free (apart from the cost of their keep) labourers, in the form of convicts, to work the land they had just appropriated!

It's little wonder some squatters prospered.

But most of those who were attracted by free land and became squatters were, as Barry Stone points out, unsuccessful. A relatively small number of financially well-resourced squatters, however, were outstandingly successful and became Australia's 'scrub aristocrats', as Henry Lawson disparagingly called them, establishing remarkably influential rural dynasties that continue to this day.

The book starts (and ends) examining squatting in Australia and the effects it had on the development of the country and the nation. And the challenges faced by these early squatters are detailed.

But it also recounts, state by state, the 'how, where and why' the cattle and sheep industries developed – highlighting the different challenges faced by pastoralists in different areas of Australia.

It's an easy-to-read book and is extremely interesting.

But it also dispels many of the romantic myths associated with squatters in Australia – at least about those that became successful pastoralists.

By and large they were not 'Aussie battlers' – they were audacious, opportunistic, well-connected, moneyed, clever, calculating, businessmen '*buying land where they could, or where they were unable to buy it, simply claiming it.*'

And these squatters '*didn't much care for paperwork at all. An opportunistic squatter considered 'proof of ownership' to be the fact he was there*'.

As Stone suggests, '*there was nothing altruistic about the squatter. He was in it for the money … He was there to make a profit*' – until after the government passed the *Squatting Act* in 1836 (which imposed fees on squatters and, unintentionally, transformed squatting into a legitimate pursuit), at which point many squatters became socially-acceptable, socially-respectable (and influential) 'Gentlemen-Squatters' … and eventually '*aging patriarchs who sat over vast swathes of our nation*'.

So, when 'up rode the squatter' to confront *Waltzing Matilda*'s hapless swagman, one would have expected nothing other than him to be 'mounted on a thoroughbred'… and to be accompanied by 'troopers, one, two, three'!

But how ironic it was for them to then confront the swagman – accusing him of helping himself to the jumbuck that just happened to be there, opportunistically 'available' for the taking by someone who was, after all, just another bush pioneer!!

*Peter Lacey*

*The Squatters* is published in paperback by Allen & Unwin and is available from around $23.75.

You don't have to wait until the next copy of *Recollections* to get your next fix of local history. It's available to you right now, and 24/7, on the internet.

Simply visit www.bit.ly/101objectsbooklet and you'll have a key to 101 interesting local histories.

With assistance from an enthusiastic group of local historians, local heritage advisors, local museums and historical societies, we're gradually compiling comprehensive libraries about each of 101 different objects from the Bega Valley Shire that reflect the history of the area. Not all are there yet, but many are – and, for the ones that will be added in coming months, there's already an enticing 'sample' of what to expect.

Collectively, these 101 objects and their associated stories provide a fascinating – and fairly representative – insight into the colourful history of the area. So, they are well-worth reading.

Again, in this issue of Recollections, we've taken bits and pieces from several of these Bega Shire's Hidden Heritage libraries, hopefully encouraging you to want to learn more and to visit what are truly on-line treasure-troves.
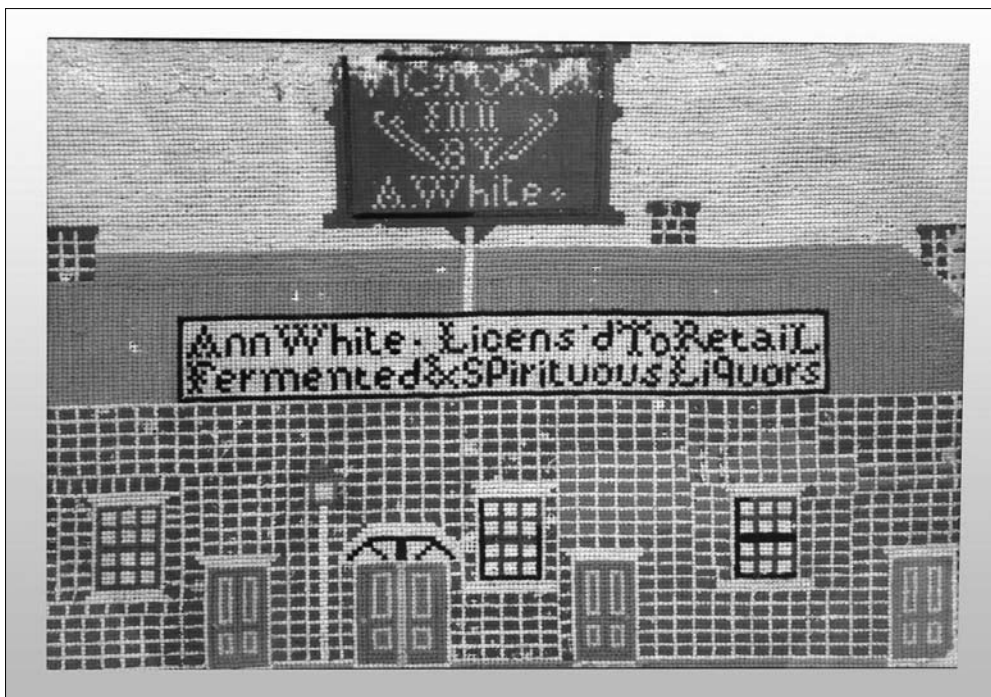
## A Simple Sampler ... A Sensational Story

How ironic! The courts twice refused to give Ann White a liquor licence for her Victoria Inn…but then used her Victoria Inn as their courthouse.

But that story shortly – because first it must be said that this small cross-stitch 'sampler' [samplers are designed to display the skill and creativity of their embroiderer/maker] is a superb example of the 101 objects that have been included in the Bega Shire's Hidden Heritage listing: within its 'home' (the Bega Pioneers' Museum) it could easily be missed or its significance not fully appreciated; it has direct links to an important part of the area's history and to one of the area's influential pioneers;



there are interesting stories that are associated with it; it has value because of its rarity; it has cultural significance; and it is somewhat unusual.

Ann White's association with the Bega area starts in the early 1850s, but her history before that is interesting.

In February 1829, at age 21, Ann Stevenson married Isaac White in Bath, England. Two years later, Isaac was sentenced to life imprisonment and was transported to

N.S.W., arriving in 1832, and leaving Ann and their two children in England. Ann and the two children subsequently travelled to NSW, arriving on Christmas Eve, 1846.

Isaac was granted Tickets of Leave in 1842, 1846 and 1847, and received a Conditional Pardon in 1848.

By the early 1850s, Ann and Isaac were operating 'a roughly built inn' near the Brogo River at Yarranung. Theirs was, according to a Government Gazette of 1851, 'the first public house between Moruya and Pambula' and, reputedly, it was there that 'the first glass of liquor in Bega' was legally sold.

By 1853 they had moved to present-day Bega, operating their business as the Victoria Inn.

However, in March 1855, '*while standing in the Bar of his Inn, with two of his children in his company and another child which he was supporting … lightning came through the jamb of the door and knocked the head out of a cask of spirits, without breaking any other particle of the cask and knocked down the whole of the four persons, and killed Mr White on the spot*'. '*The spirits caught alight, and the blaze threatened to destroy the primitive hotel, until "Scrammy-handed Ned" extinguished it by the use of blankets and bedding.*'

Ann continued running the Victoria Inn business until 1857 when a Bench of Magistrates refused to renew her license 'on the grounds of having supplied Aboriginal natives with rum.' The application for her license was refused a second time later that year because of 'the absence of police protection', but it was reinstated in September 1857.

In 1858 she had her own premises built (the Victoria Inn building is, today, believed to be the oldest surviving building in Bega; the Family Inn, which now houses the Bega Pioneers' Museum, was later built next door): '*very substantially built of brick and contains three parlours, five bedrooms and servants' rooms, tap-room and spacious bar, store room and pantry, with kitchen*'.

'With few public buildings then located in Bega, the Victoria Inn effectively became the town's civic centre. Public meetings, gatherings, church services, auctions and other community events were all held there. When Bega's original court house became too small, cases were heard at the Victoria Inn; and a room was utilised by the Commercial Bank while their new building was being constructed.'

Around 1876 the property was sold, and by 1879 Ann White was operating a hotel in Tathra (which later burnt down, and she was charged with arson – but that's another story!).

Ann died from 'inflammation of the lungs' in August 1888, age 81.

This embroidery 'sampler' depicts the Victoria Inn. It was created by Ann White, probably around 1858 and, as Angela George and Pat Raymond (who compiled the details relating to this object) note, it is particularly '*valuable for its associations with successful early local business woman Ann White … is evocative of (her) triumph and success, and tends to indicate the pride that Ann White must have felt at the construction and opening of her own purpose-built hotel premises so early in Bega's history … is indicative of the female skills and traditions brought to New South Wales by European settlers in the early- to mid-19th century, and of the role that needlework played in the lives of colonial Australian women … and is a rare surviving example of colonial era needlework depicting a contemporary building (with) only one other extant example in a NSW public cultural collection having been identified to date*' [it depicts the Carcoar Court House, and is in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney].' Ⓡ

—Largely compiled from information at bit.ly/begahh28

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# A Lifejacket from the *William Dawes*

A report in the West Australian on 2nd November 1945 reports that '*during the [World War II] years Australians had very little idea of the extent of enemy attacks upon merchant and other shipping around our coasts. Outstanding disasters, such as the loss of the hospital ship Centaur were published soon after they occurred, but security considerations precluded the admitting of the great majority of the losses.*

*Following the sinking of six merchant vessels in Darwin Harbour by Japanese planes on February 19, 1942, the Japanese made a determined effort to disrupt completely shipping communications on the east coast. During these attacks 17 vessels were sunk by submarines.*'

Four of the largest ships that were lost were American 'Liberty ships' – rapidly assembled, mass produced, almost identical vessels that were built during World War II to provide much-needed replacements to British merchant shipping that had been sunk by German submarines, mines and aircraft. They were designed to have a life of just five years.

The Liberty Ships that were sunk along the NSW coast were the 7,176 ton *Lydia M Childs* which was sunk by a Japanese submarine off Port Stephens on April 27th 1943, the 7,176 ton *Starr King* which was sunk off Sydney on 10th February 1943 by a Japanese submarine, the 7,177 ton *William Dawes* which was sunk by a Japanese submarine off Gabo island on July 22nd 1942, and the 7,180 ton *Robert J Walker* which was torpedoed off Gabo Island on 25th December 1944 by a German U-boat (the U-862, the *Heinrich Timm* – the only U-boat to sink a ship in the Pacific Ocean).

The sinking of the *William Dawes* is particularly interesting because it was witnessed by several people onshore.

The *William Dawes* was travelling from Adelaide to Brisbane with a cargo of military vehicles and ammunition. It did not have a protective escort because it was believed that the Japanese were not operating in the area at the time.

However, when it became apparent that information was wrong, the *William Dawes* was ordered into Twofold Bay – but the Captain made a fateful decision to circle slowly off-shore until daybreak – providing a nearby Japanese submarine with a 'sitting duck' target.

Around 5.30 a.m. on 22nd July 1942, when about 12 miles offshore and between Merimbula and Tathra, a torpedo was fired at the *William Dawes*, hitting her stern section. Four Naval Armed Guards and a soldier were killed in the resulting explosion. Four others were wounded, one seriously. The ship sank about 11 hours later.

17-year-old "Chappie" Munn was delivering milk in the Short Point area (to the east of Merimbula) when he heard the explosion and saw the submarine surface. He immediately reported the incident to the local coast watch.

Meanwhile, further up the coast at Tathra, the drama was being witnessed by members of the Volunteer Air Observers' Corp (VAOC). A night observer forwarded news of the explosion to VAOC headquarters in Moruya, and when Kalaru resident Lorna Stafford took over duty early that morning, she was able to watch subsequent events through her binoculars and she recorded these in a series of pencil drawings which are now reproduced on a commemorative plaque in the Memorial Gardens on Tathra headland, the site of the VAOC observation post.

The 58 survivors from the *William Dawes* took to four lifeboats, only to witness a second torpedo hit the vessel and the Japanese submarine surface to survey the scene – one of the crew members later reporting 'It was huge! ... almost as long as the ship she had just torpedoed'.

The *William Dawes* crew were eventually towed to Merimbula by a fishing vessel. The wounded were treated in Pambula Hospital and the other crew members were accommodated in private homes in Merimbula.



This life jacket from the *William Dawes*, now in the Old School Museum in Merimbula, is a reminder of just how much enemy action occurred during World War II off the NSW South Coast. (A map in the Tathra Wharf Museum, which attracts much interest from visitors, shows the locations of all ships that were sunk in the area during World War II and also highlights the extent of and effects that Japanese naval activity had on local coastal shipping during the War.)

Wartime censorship restrictions resulted in virtually no news of the sinking of the *William Dawes* being provided at the time.

The wreck of the *William Dawes* was located in October 2004 at a depth of 135 metres. Of the four American Liberty Ships sunk along the NSW coast during WWII, it is the only one to have been located.

The *William Dawes* has been declared a 'historical shipwreck' and it is now protected under the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. Ⓡ

—Largely compiled from information at bit.ly/begahh72

# Postmans Track and the
# Tathra-Merimbula Bullock Track

We are fortunate that development in the area has not completely obliterated all signs of Aboriginal and early European settlement. This is evidenced by surviving remnants of two early 'roads' through the area.

Postmans Track was one of the early routes down the escarpment from the Monaro to the coastal plains. It was used by postal contractors to transport mail between the Bemboka/Cathcart area and the Candelo/Kameruka area from around 1850 to around 1875 and, as the presence of Aboriginal scarred trees still indicates, this track probably originally followed one of numerous Aboriginal pathways in that area that were used by the Monaroo and Djiringanj clan groups.

Postmans Track was considered, at the time, to be one of the toughest mail routes in the State. In 1851 a government geologist described it as 'extremely rugged'.

Over time, bush tracks such as this were upgraded to enable drays and coaches to access them, and an elaborate network of trails evolved. These also then became part of a network of local stock routes.

The Heffernan, Keys, Jennings and Robinson families all owned or leased land in this area. They regularly moved or grazed stock throughout the area and used these



Scarred Tree adjacent to Postmans Track, evidence that it was once an Aboriginal pathway.

stock routes to move cattle to and from summer pastures on the tablelands.

Small stone and bark huts were also built nearby by these pioneering graziers. Ruins of Heffernan's Hut can still be found near Postmans Camp on a bend of the Tantawangalo River; Alexander Robinson's Hut (now known as Alexander's Hut) was/is not far from the adjacent Cattlemans Track, and Keys Hut and Bill Robinson's Hut were nearby.

Postmans Track is steep. In contrast, the Tathra to Merimbula bullock track traverses relatively flat country, although the most accessible part that remains today – a pinch up from a sand spit at the southern end of Bournda Lagoon – was one of the more challenging and most dangerous sections of the track.

Again, this original bullock track likely followed Aboriginal pathways.

The Tathra to Bournda track basically provided a 'life line' to settlers along the Bega River. Merimbula was then the closest major port of call for shipping (some goods were taken to or from Kianinny Bay, just south of Tathra, but this involved transferring goods on small lighters – a slow and inefficient undertaking). So, a serviceable coastal track was essential if goods, produce and passengers were to be efficiently transported from Merimbula to Bega.

Even after Tathra Wharf had been built in the early 1860s and coastal steamers started to call at the wharf, this coastal 'road' remained a necessity. Not infrequently, weather conditions prevented steamers from docking at the north-facing Tathra Wharf and so they would by-pass this stop and proceed to the south-facing Merimbula Wharf. There would then be a race to transfer goods and passengers along this coastal road to meet the steamer at Merimbula.

The remains of this track today provide a stark reminder of the challenges that were faced by early European settlers and visitors to the area.

—Largely compiled from comprehensive libraries of information at bit.ly/begahh63 and bit.ly/begahh56

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## and finally...

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► **And did we mention** back Issues of *Recollections* are available, free, in PDF format at www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX where X is the issue number (1 to 13, except for Issue 3 which is 3- and Issue 10 which is 10-).