

**THEMATIC HISTORY OF
NUNDLE, MANILLA AND BARRABA**

**TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMUNITY BASED HERITAGE STUDY**



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Cover photo: View from Hanging Rock, 2006. Courtesy EJE Group.

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INTRODUCTION

On 14 March 2004 a proclamation was published in the NSW Government Gazette dissolving the former councils of Barraba, Manilla, Nundle and Parry Shires and Tamworth City. In their place a new local government area and new local government entity, now known as Tamworth Regional Council, was created. The creation of the Regional Council brings together five council areas that each have distinctive environments, histories and attractions but which also have close community ties and historical associations. The expanded local government area provides all the facilities of a rural city surrounded by some of the richest agricultural country in the state, producing beef, sheep, poultry, fish, cotton, dairy products, eggs, fruit and vegetables and wine. The region also encompasses productive native and planted forests and remnants of native vegetation preserved as national parks or nature reserves.¹

A Heritage Study of the former Tamworth City Council area was completed in 1988 and a Community Based Heritage Study was completed for Parry Shire Council by the EJE Group in 2002. A draft Heritage Development Control Plan (DCP) was also prepared for the former Parry Shire Council area. In late 2005 Tamworth Regional Council commenced a Community Based Heritage study of the former local government areas of Nundle, Manilla and parts of Barraba. This study involves the communities in Barraba, Manilla and Nundle in the identification and assessment of significant European heritage places within their regions. Given that assessments have already been undertaken for the Tamworth and Parry regions, this study focuses on those areas where there have been no previous heritage assessments undertaken and where there are many unlisted items. Ultimately the study will result in a series of inventory listings and information sheets for each item which identify its history and significance and a series of management recommendations for each region. As the first stage in the project, Tamworth Regional Council commissioned a thematic history of the Nundle, Manilla and Barraba regions, to underpin the identification and assessment of heritage sites in the study areas.

This thematic history is based on the methodology recommended by the NSW Heritage Office, and as such it is not intended to be a comprehensive study of all aspects of the history of these regions. Rather the history is framed in terms of major themes or dynamic forces that have shaped the people and landscapes of the Nundle, Manilla and Barraba regions as we know them today. These historical themes, at national, state and local level, provide a useful framework and hierarchy for researching history in a systematic way. The themes also provide a context for evaluating and comparing the heritage significance of the items that have been identified for potential listing on the heritage inventory maintained by Tamworth Regional Council and the State Heritage Inventory and State Heritage Register maintained by the NSW Heritage Office. A table outlining the National and State themes developed by the Heritage Council of NSW is included as Appendix 1 to this study.

The introductory chapters of this study cover the major underlying themes that have shaped the history of the Tamworth region: the environment; Aboriginal prehistory and post-contact history; European exploration; and transport and communications. These are followed by regional histories of the Nundle, Manilla and Barraba districts. These histories cover similar themes, including European settlement, agriculture and industry, government and community services and arts, sport, entertainment and tourism. To ensure they are readable, I have not attempted to break these regional histories down into further subthemes. Preliminary lists of heritage items in each district identified from the thematic history are provided in Appendices 2 – 4.

¹ Barraba Shire Council 2004, *Barraba Shire Council State of the Environment Report 2003 - 2004*, p. 5.

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Joanna Boileau, January 2007

1. LANDSCAPES OF THE TAMWORTH REGION

The area of Tamworth Regional Council is centred on the rich agricultural land surrounding the city of Tamworth in northern New South Wales. To the east it extends to the rugged Moonbi Ranges, a spur of the Great Dividing Range. At the core of the region are the valleys of the Peel River and its major tributaries the Cockburn River, Dungowan Creek and Goonoo Goonoo Creek. The deep alluvial soils of the floodplains of these rivers support rich grasslands ideal for grazing sheep and cattle. The Peel River is in turn a tributary of the Namoi River, flowing west to join the Namoi north of Tamworth.

The Peel and Cockburn Rivers rise in the rugged Moonbi Ranges, flowing through narrow gorges. Just to the north-east of Tamworth the Moonbi Pass provides access to the New England Tableland. At the top of the range and within the Shire boundaries are the small highland villages of Niangala, Weabonga and Woolbrook. On the western side of the Peel Valley there is a range of lower hills, forming a spur of the Liverpool Range. This was named the Melville Range by the explorer John Oxley in honour of Lord Melville, Lord of the Admiralty. South of Tamworth the Liverpool Range forms the divide between the watersheds of the Hunter and Peel Rivers.

The Great Dividing Range or more correctly the eastern highlands, is not a true mountain range, but it dictates the drainage patterns and water availability of much of the central plains of eastern Australia. Australia's largest and most permanent river system, the Murray and Darling Rivers and their tributaries, has its headwaters in the highlands. These resource rich watercourses and their wetlands were a focus of Aboriginal settlement long before Europeans laid claim to the continent.¹

The small town of Nundle, 600 m above sea level, lies in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range near the headwaters of the Peel River, about 60 km south-east of Tamworth and forms a southern gateway to the Tamworth region. The scenic countryside around Nundle is dominated to the east by the massive treeless face of Hanging Rock, rising to 1,500 m above sea level. In contrast to the numerous steep sided gorges and gullies that cut through the landscape to the south and east, to the west of Nundle the Peel River flows through a lush green valley, now mostly cleared for pasture land.² The soils at higher elevations to the east are rocky and shallow, mainly used for large-scale timber production. The alluvial soils of the floodplains are deep and fertile, and are used extensively for agriculture, including cropping and grazing.³

The northern part of the Tamworth region is dominated by the Peel and Namoi rivers, and the Manilla River which flows into the Namoi from the north. The Peel River is also joined to the north by Attunga Creek and Moore Creek, both rising in the Moonbis. Manilla, at the junction of the Namoi River and the Manilla River, is 44km north of Tamworth. The nearby Warrabah National Park with its granite riverine landscapes is a drawcard for photographers and tourists. The Namoi rises on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, flowing rapidly through the mountainous country of the foothills of the New England plateau before it reaches Manilla. The gradient of the Namoi gradually decreases as it flows west of Manilla past Gunnedah, Narrabri and Wee Waa eventually joining the Barwon River near Walgett. Cotton is grown on the floodplains of the lower Namoi, and the massive Keepit Dam 36 km south-west of Manilla regulates the Namoi's flow and provides the large quantities of water required by the cotton industry. The topography of the Manilla district ranges from rugged terrain in the east and north-west, including Baldwin's Range, undulating to flat terrain in the south-west and relatively small areas of flat alluvial country adjacent to the Namoi and Manilla rivers and Hall's Creek.⁴



Figure 1: Thunderbolt's Bluff, north of Manilla, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Bingara-Barraba district encompasses two major and very different geological formations which are separated by the Peel Fault. This significant dislocation of the Earth's crust is exposed for 400 km from Forster on the coast, to Wialda north of Bingara and separates two ancient landmasses. The rocks west of the fault are known as the Tamworth Belt, whilst those on the eastern side are named the Central Block. The Peel Fault was formed during a major episode of deformation and uplift about 300 million years ago, when deep ocean sediments were thrust up against shallower sediments. The faulting and folding of the land was accompanied by intrusions of the first major granite of the region. During the Tertiary period two major episodes of volcanic activity occurred, 34-36 million and 18-20 million years ago. Volcanic ash and pumice erupted from fissures and small volcanoes, together with heavier flows of lava and mud. There was a major centre of volcanic activity at Kaputar west of Barraba, now Kaputar National Park. An island of wilderness, Mt Kaputar rises 1,200 m above the surrounding plains. The diverse vegetation ranges from semi-arid woodland to wet sclerophyll forest in sheltered gorges, to sub-alpine forest at higher altitudes. At Horton Falls the Horton River drops into a deep gorge which shelters the westernmost remnant of coastal rainforest in the State. Many rivers and lakes formed during the glacial period, and their waters dispersed gold and diamonds from their source rocks into the alluvial gravels.⁵ Ancient moraines, the legacy of past glacial ages, can also be seen in the Barraba district.

Barraba is located 90 km north of Tamworth, in a landscape of hills and open, undulating country, dominated by the Nandewar Range to the north-west. This range is the divide between the Namoi and Gwydir River Valleys and reaches its high point in the Mt Kaputar Plateau to the west. The Horton River flows from the hills into a gently rolling agricultural area, the Horton Valley. The lower hills and the floodplains of the Manilla River, once covered by Eucalyptus woodland together with tussocks and grasses, have been largely cleared for grazing and agriculture. Only scattered mature trees remain. Efforts have been made in recent years to restore the original vegetation cover, and in some of the hillier areas and along the old travelling stock routes, the forest has naturally regenerated. Vegetation varies according to soil type and moisture, ranging from remnant rainforest in the Horton gorge to mixed eucalyptus woodland and pasture land.⁶

Like the landscape surrounding Manilla, the lands in the Barraba district have been used extensively for agriculture and pastoralism since the 1830s, including grazing and intensive large-scale animal production.⁷

NOTES

¹ J. Mulvaney and J. Kaminga 1999, *Prehistory of Australia*, p. 54.

² W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, *Hills of Gold*, p. 1.

³ Nundle Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 10.

⁴ Manilla Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 10.

⁵ www.totaltravel.com.au/travel/nsw/bigsky/fossickers/guide/barraba Accessed 4 April 2006.

⁶ Visit Barraba, Geological Drives <http://users.northnet.com.au/~barrsc/Geological%20Drives> Accessed 4 April 2006.

⁷ Barraba Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 10.

2. GAMILAROI LANDS

2.1 PRE-EUROPEAN GAMILAROI SOCIETY

The diverse landscape of mountains, valleys, plains and rivers in the Tamworth region is the traditional country of the Gamilaroi¹ people. Anthropologists and ethnographers differ in their description of the traditional boundaries of Gamilaroi country, but it is clear that their territory covered a very large area. According to surveyor R. H. Mathews the boundaries of the Gamilaroi extended from Jerry's Plains in the Hunter River, north as far as Walgett, Mungindi and Boggabilla on the Barwon River and across the Queensland border, and taking in the basins of the Namoi and Gwydir Rivers.² Anthropologist Norman Tindale described the boundaries of the Gamilaroi in the Tamworth region as extending from Murrurundi north along the Great Dividing Range, through the foothills of the Moonbis just north-east of where the city of Tamworth now stands, then across to Manilla. Tindale argued that Gamilaroi territory did not extend into Queensland; he recorded that the territory of the Bigambul people of south-west Queensland extended into New South Wales as far as Boggabilla. Tindale also questioned Mathews' inclusion of Jerry's Plains in Gamilaroi territory, believing it belonged in part to the Wonnarua People and in part to the Geawagal People. In their recent Aboriginal/Archaeological Site Study of the Tamworth City Council area, Wilson and McAdam held discussions with members of the Wonnarua Tribal Council in the Upper Hunter Valley. They conclude that there is a narrow corridor of Gamilaroi land that does extend into the Hunter Valley, but perhaps not as far as Jerry's Plains.³

Throughout prehistory Aboriginal groups were linked by complex networks of trade and ceremony. The Gamilaroi had close links with the Darkinung, Wonnarua and Geawagal peoples of the Upper Hunter, in particular with the Geawagal. They formed alliances and maintained social relationships through large intertribal gatherings where groups exchanged marriage partners, goods, songs, stories and dances.⁴ There were also strong trading, ceremonial and resource sharing relationships between the Gamilaroi of the Nundle district and the Anaiwan people of the New England Tableland. While the core country of the Anaiwan extended from Guyra and Ben Lomond south to Uralla and the Moonbis, they also shared country with the Gamilaroi in the Nundle area.⁵

Within the Gamilaroi tribal group there were two major subdivisions. The 'Corbon Gamilaroi' or 'the people of the greater country of the Gamilaroi' were the major subgroup, with responsibility for the core country of the Gamilaroi, including the Liverpool Plains, the Peel River Valley and the valleys of the Namoi and Gwydir rivers. The territory of the 'Gammon Gamilaroi' or 'the people of the lesser country of the Gamilaroi' included the southern area from Murrurundi in a narrow finger south into the Hunter Valley.⁶

The term Gamilaroi refers to a broad language group, derived from the term *kamil* for the negative 'no'. Within this broad group there were a large number of 'tribes' or subgroups. The main groups in the Tamworth region were the Goonoo Goonoo, Gunnedah, Manilla (or Manellae) and Moonbi. These were the names that Europeans gave them. Aboriginal people in the region called themselves the *murri*, a term which has come to be used to describe Aboriginal people generally in New South Wales.

In 1977 Birdsell estimated that there were no more than 300,000 Aboriginal people living in Australia when the First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove in 1788. Today population numbers are estimated to have been far higher, in the vicinity of one million. In 1842 Edward Mayne, first

Commissioner of Crown Lands and Protector of Aborigines for the Liverpool Plains, estimated that there were about 4,000 Aborigines living between the Peel, Namoi and Gwydir Rivers.⁷ Taking into account the impact of over a decade of white settlement in the district, the Gamilaroi would have numbered far greater than the 4,000 estimated by Mayne in pre-contact times. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that by the early nineteenth century, the central and lower Murray River and the lower Darling and its tributaries were possibly the most densely populated areas of Aboriginal Australia. The impact of the introduced diseases which preceded European exploration and settlement was accordingly greater in these communities than in the more sparsely populated deserts of the inland.⁸

Recent archaeological evidence indicates that Aboriginal people have occupied the continent for at least 60,000 years. The earliest dates for human occupation in northern New South Wales range from 9,000 BP (before present) at Graman rock shelter near Inverell to 20,310 BP at Crazyman rock shelter near Coonabarabran. In the Tamworth region there are dates of 4,950 BP from Bendemeer rock shelter on Glendon Station and 3,600 BP from Moore Creek 4 rock shelter. In their archaeological study of the Tamworth City area, Wilson and McAdam suggest that in light of the dates for the wider region, it is likely that the Gamilaroi have occupied their country for at least 20,000 years, and these dates may be extended with further excavations in the area.⁹

In common with Aboriginal societies elsewhere, the Gamilaroi had a complex social system of moieties, sections and totemic clans. Responsibilities for caring for the land and the ongoing survival and increase of plant and animal resources were inherited through this system. As the Gamilaroi were a matrilineal society, children inherited their moiety and their totemic affiliation through their mother. The two moieties of the Gamilaroi were *Kupathin* and *Dilbai*. In 1866 missionary William Ridley recorded the totems of these moieties. The totems of the *Kupathin* were kangaroo, possum, bandicoot, black duck, pademelon, eaglehawk, scrub turkey, yellow fish, honey fish and bream. Those of the *Dilbai* were emu, carpet snake, black snake, red kangaroo, wallaroo, frog, goanna and cod fish.¹⁰

The Gamilaroi lived in small family groups, their movements determined by the seasonal availability of resources. Each group occupied defined hunting grounds within the tribal territory, the boundaries marked by watercourses, trees and other recognised landmarks. There were strict rules and protocols to be observed before entering or crossing the territory of a neighbouring group, and severe sanctions if these were not adhered to. The Gamilaroi utilised a wide variety of plant and animal foods, seasonally available in the rich riverine environment of the Namoi, Gwydir and Barwon river systems and in the uplands and ranges. The men hunted larger animals such as kangaroos and emus as well as smaller mammals. The women and children gathered grass seeds and other plant foods such as tubers, yams, berries, and fruit, and collected bird and reptile eggs. They also collected shellfish, trapped fish and hunted reptiles, small mammals and birds. Exploiting the widespread natural grasslands in their region, the Gamilaroi depended upon grass seeds for a major part of their subsistence. The seeds were ground and baked in small loaves.

The Gamilaroi utilised natural resources to manufacture tools and artefacts: grasses and reeds for making baskets and nets for trapping fish, birds and small mammals; stone for manufacturing axes, spearheads and grindstones; wood and resins for manufacturing digging sticks, spears, boomerangs and other weapons.

At times when resources were seasonally abundant, small extended family groups gathered in larger camps. These large-scale social gatherings were important for trade and exchange, maintaining relationships, and ensuring the long term viability of smaller clans through intermarriage. At these gatherings marriages were arranged, ceremonies held, alliances forged,

and disputes settled. Goods such as possum skin cloaks and stone axes were also exchanged. One of the most important ceremonies was the initiation ceremony or *bora*, held when there was a suitable number of young men whom the elders judged were eligible to receive the knowledge of traditional laws and customs of the Gamilaroi. This knowledge brought with it the responsibilities of custodianship of the land and providing food for the rest of the group. Women had their own ceremonial life, but because most of the early European observers who recorded Aboriginal culture were men who would not have been allowed to see women's ceremonies, little record of them survives.¹¹

Moore Creek (known to the Gamilaroi as 'Burkanbandean'), north of Tamworth was an important meeting place, where sacred initiation ceremonies were held as well as corroborees involving the wider group. As Gardner recorded in his journal in 1854:

At certain seasons of the year the various tribes of the interior met at appointed places, at the general rendezvous their disputes were adjusted and settled. In early times the most remarkable of these in the northern interior may be mentioned, as Burkanbandean near Tamworth on Peel River in the district of Liverpool Plains. ... Each tribe in addition to their Coraborahs or theatrical merry meetings hold quarterly meetings these are called Borrahs at these meetings no women or children are allowed to attend. At one of these Borrahs the young men of the tribe are passed and a mark is put upon him by breaking one of his front teeth, at this Borrah they are for the first time taken round the Boundaries of the tribe and shown the various marks of their District.¹²

William Telfer was one of the original employees of the Australian Agricultural Company (A. A. Company) and brought the first consignment of sheep to the Peel River holdings in 1836, pioneering the overland route from the A. A. Company land at Port Stephens. His son William Telfer Jr, was born in Tamworth in July 1841. The reminiscences of William Telfer Jr, known as the Wallabadah manuscript, provide one of the few contemporary accounts of the early years of European settlement in the Tamworth region. Although he was relatively uneducated, and at times prone to exaggeration, Telfer's accounts provide an insight into relations between Aborigines and Europeans on the frontier of white settlement and a unique picture of the vanishing lifeways of the Gamilaroi people. For example Telfer vividly describes a corroboree near Tamworth that he witnessed in his childhood:

... there was a tribe of Aborigines on Tamworth in those days about 1844 two hundred and fifty males and females there was a great corroboree or dance all male Aborigines were painted with white chalk or pipeclay the long lines of fires and the dark night amongst the white gum and apple trees with the figures of the blacks had a most striking appearance glyding from tree to tree flourishing their boomerangs. Some of them looked like demons whooping and shouting in their own language some with figures of Emus cut out of bark carrying in their hands also figures of Kangaroos made the same way astonished us Children. Some of the gentlemen said there were fully three hundred aboriginals in the performance ...¹³

Oral history from members of the local Aboriginal community in Tamworth refers to 'clever men' using the site at Moore Creek for ceremony. In their Aboriginal/Archaeological Site Study of Tamworth, Wilson and McAdam predict that archaeological investigations at Moore Creek may locate ritual and ceremonial sites, including art and engraving sites. Another important ceremonial site was located at Borah Crossing on the road from Borah Station to lower Rushes Creek and on to the Gunnedah Road, now covered by the waters of the Keepit Dam. According to information held by the Manilla Historical Society, an Aboriginal reserve was located on the rise overlooking the river crossing, in the area of the ancient ceremonial site.

Aboriginal groups in the deserts of central Australia covered large areas in their quest for food and could be described as 'nomadic'. But in parts of eastern Australia where food and water resources were more abundant their territories were smaller and they were able to be sedentary for at least part of the year. In some areas where resources were plentiful the Gamilaroi camped for extended periods and built substantial homes, forming a small village. In 1839 explorer Thomas Livingstone Mitchell described an Aboriginal settlement south of the present town of Moree:

*We passed among the huts of a native village. They were tastefully distributed amongst drooping acacias and casuarinas ... Each hut was semi-circular, or circular, the roof conical, and from one side a flat roof stood forward like a portico, supported by two sticks.*¹⁴

2.2 AFTER THE INVASION

The first European explorers to cross the territory of the Gamilaroi had limited contact with the traditional owners of the country. Relationships were ambivalent from the beginning. On the one hand Aboriginal and white people could be of use to each other. With their detailed knowledge of the land and its resources, Aboriginal people were indispensable guides to Europeans. They often acted as go-betweens and interpreters with local Aboriginal groups, and showed them the location of water and game. In turn the Gamilaroi came to value European axes, knives and items such as flour, tobacco and tea.

In his diary entry for 9 December 1831, Mitchell described camping at a deep waterhole named Carrabobila:

*The water, where we were encamped, was hot and muddy, but the blacks knew well how to obtain a cool and clean draught, by first scratching a hole in the soft sand beside the pool, thus making a filter, in which the water rose cool but muddy. They next threw into this some tufts of long grass, through which they sucked the cooler water thus purified also from the sand or gravel. I was very glad to follow the example, and I found the sweet fragrance of the grass an agreeable addition to the pleasure of drinking.*¹⁵

Two days later, on 11 December 1831 Mitchell reached the Peel River:

*After a journey of thirteen miles we reached the bank of the Peel at Wallamoul. I gave to 'Jemmy', our excellent guide, the promised tomahawk, also a knife to 'Monday', his brother, whom he met here. I met at this place some intelligent natives, from who I learnt that the spot where Mr Oxley crossed the Peel in his journey, was about two miles down.*¹⁶

On the other hand the Gamilaroi resented the intrusion of white men into their country, their disrespect of their sacred sites and traditional laws and customs and their appropriation of their women. In the early days there were few white women on the frontiers of settlement, and liaisons between white squatters and Aboriginal women were common.

While historians such as Henry Reynolds have documented the numbers of Aborigines killed by Europeans in frontier conflict since 1788, the evidence suggests that far more Aborigines died from the indirect effects of white invasion: malnutrition, disease and alcohol, than were killed by the muskets of squatters and police troopers. An unknown number of Aborigines, certainly in the thousands, died from the diseases that the colonists brought with them, including measles, smallpox, tuberculosis, influenza and venereal disease.¹⁷ Isolated for thousands of years from the diseases that had affected populations in Europe and Asia, Aboriginal people had little natural

immunity and the effect on them was devastating. Bruce Elder, in his book *Blood on the Wattle*, estimates that in less than a year of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, over half of the Aboriginal population of the Sydney basin had died from smallpox.¹⁸

Disease spread rapidly among Aboriginal people ahead of the European explorers. Between 1830 and 1832 a smallpox pandemic decimated the indigenous population of New South Wales. When Major Mitchell's party crossed the Murrurundi Pass from the Hunter Valley to the Liverpool Plains, they encountered Aborigines already affected by smallpox. Mitchell's diary entry for 5 December 1831 records:

*We reached at length a watercourse called 'Currungai' and encamped upon its bank, beside the natives from Dart Brook, who had crossed the range before us, apparently to join some of their tribe who lay at this place extremely ill, being affected with a virulent kind of small pox. We found the helpless creatures, stretched on their backs beside the water, under the shade of the wattle or mimosa trees to avoid the intense heat of the sun.*¹⁹

Squatters with their sheep and cattle rapidly followed in the wake of the early explorers, taking over the prime river flats, forcing the Gamilaroi from their camp sites near watercourses and depriving them of their best hunting grounds. For the most part the men who loaded their bullock drays with axes, picks and shovels and supplies of tea, flour and sugar were second generation white Australians, the sons of settlers in the Hawkesbury or Hunter Valleys, who knew the hardships of the bush. They fenced off land, built primitive clay floored slab huts, survived on damper and boiled meat, and bartered the occasional sheep or an axe for the sexual favours of an Aboriginal woman. By the late 1830s all the prime grazing land along the Namoi and Gwydir river systems had been occupied by squatters.²⁰ After the introduction of the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* and the Free Selection Acts in the 1860s white settlement intensified. The intrusion of white settlers into Gamilaroi country was typically followed by a short period of peaceful coexistence, that was soon broken by feuds over European access to Aboriginal women and the spearing of stock by Aboriginal hunters as game became scarce. A story passed down in the Bowman family, descendants of Thomas Bowman who settled in Upper Manilla, gives some idea of the state of siege that existed on the pastoral frontier. When Thomas Bowman and his wife Harriet first occupied their selection they worked through the night building fences by lamplight to secure their stock from Aboriginal hunters.²¹

One of the better documented reprisals against Aboriginal people in New South Wales was Major James Nunn's campaign in the north-west of the colony in 1838. During 1836 and 1837 the level of frontier skirmishes increased, as squatters constantly sought new runs and Aboriginal people resisted. For example in April 1836 Thomas Simpson Hall, who had already established runs at Barraba, decided to move his cattle further north to new pastures on the Gwydir River. Hall encountered strong resistance from the local Gamilaroi, who attacked his party, killing one stockman, rushing the cattle and wounding Hall. Forced to retreat, Hall retaliated by mounting a posse comprised of mounted police from Jerry's Plains in the Hunter Valley, local squatters and farmhands. The posse returned to the area in July 1836 and over two weeks hunted down and shot a large number of Aboriginal people, killing an estimated 80.²²

By the spring of 1837 tensions between the Gamilaroi and Europeans increased to a new level. Convinced they had quelled the Gamilaroi resistance, Hall and others had moved cattle and sheep over the Nandewar Range and established runs on the Gwydir plains, disrupting the seasonal cycle of the Gamilaroi. Usually during the winter the Gamilaroi moved into the mountains to hunt possum and wallaby, returning to the river valley in the spring where they harvested a rich variety of fish, shellfish, wildfowl and birds' eggs. The Gamilaroi returned to the Gwydir that spring to

find the delicate ecology of the valley destroyed, the banks of the river trampled by cattle, the reed beds where wildfowl nested flattened, and the water polluted. The Gamilaroi responded in the only way possible, moving down the Gwydir River and over the range to the lower Namoi, spearing sheep and cattle when they were able and intimidating isolated whites. A vicious cycle of reprisal and counter reprisal began. By November 1837 the settlers called on the government for assistance, demanding military protection. It happened that between 6 December 1837 and 23 February 1838 the colony was in an eleven-week interregnum between the departure of Governor Bourke and the arrival of his successor Governor Gipps. During this time the colony was under the administration of Acting Governor Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass, and as a landowner himself, he lent a sympathetic ear to the squatters' complaints. Snodgrass ordered the Commander of the NSW Mounted Police, Major James Nunn, to organise a force to quell the Aborigines. He gave Nunn virtually a free hand, commanding him to 'act according to your own judgement' and 'use your utmost exertion to suppress these outrages'. He added 'there are a thousand blacks there, and if they are not stopped, we may have them presently within the boundaries [of the nineteen counties]'.²³

Arriving at Fitzgerald's station Green Hatches, on the Upper Namoi south-west of Manilla, Nunn assembled a heavily armed posse of mounted police and local stockmen over forty strong. On his initial foray along the Namoi, Nunn arrested fifteen Aborigines for 'all manner of outrages', but released all except two. One was kept as a guide and the other shot while attempting to escape. The detachment then moved on to the Gwydir River, the centre of conflict. They travelled in a circuit north across the Nandewar Ranges through Archibald Bell's Barraba station, on to Thomas Hall's new station at Bingara, then to Snodgrass Lagoon on Waterloo Creek, midway between the Namoi and the Gwydir, where they massacred an estimated forty or fifty Aboriginal people who were camped there. On their return journey through the foothills the posse engaged in a typical frontier style 'mopping up' operation, hunting down and killing any Aborigine they encountered. Nunn had fulfilled his orders with murderous dispatch, and he received a hero's welcome in the towns on his return route.

It is ironic that if Governor Gipps had received the original letters from the landowners two months later, he would have ignored them. Gipps arrived in Sydney during Major Nunn's absence and viewed the reports of his 'campaign' as showing a vicious regard for the rule of law.²⁴ Governor Gipps appointed a judicial enquiry into the affair, conducted in April and May 1839 by a police magistrate and two Justices of the Peace. Sergeant John Lee testified at the enquiry, 'From what I saw myself, I should say that from forty to fifty blacks were killed, when the second firing took place.'²⁵ Historians such as Keith Windshuttle may debate the precise number of Aboriginal people killed at Waterloo Creek, but the evidence suggests that Major Nunn's campaign went well beyond a legitimate police operation, intended to apprehend people reasonably suspected of murder.

To put frontier violence into perspective, most violence between Aborigines and white settlers occurred at the level of feuds between Aborigines and individual settlers. State-sanctioned campaigns such as Major Nunn's were relatively uncommon. Ironically it is the campaigns such as Nunn's that are the best documented. Violence between individual settlers and Aborigines is generally poorly documented, so that it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of violence on the early grazing runs in the Tamworth region.

The 1837 – 1845 drought put more pressure on earlier settled areas such as the Hunter Valley and intensified the quest for more land to the west. The loss of their hunting grounds and the destruction of their communities by introduced diseases eventually forced the Gamilaroi to give up hunting and gathering as their main source of subsistence. In the space of one generation they

came to rely upon the more easily won wages and handouts of squatters, shepherds and stockmen. As early as 1855 the missionary William Ridley found the Gamilaroi of the Namoi 'much reduced' and dependent upon Europeans. During the 1850s and early 1860s the rush of Europeans to the goldfields created a labour shortage on pastoral stations throughout north-west New South Wales. The surviving Aborigines became an indispensable source of casual labour in the grazing economy. Those who survived smallpox and other introduced diseases came to 'sit down' on 'almost every station', retaining their association with their traditional country. For example on Keepit Station near Manilla there is an Aboriginal cemetery where the remains of many Aboriginal people who worked on the station lie.²⁶ It is not clear to what extent Aboriginal people still relied on traditional subsistence methods. However, it appears that by the late 1840s beef, mutton, sugar, flour and tea were already a more important part of their diet than traditional seed cakes, possums and fish in much of the central north of New South Wales.²⁷

By the 1880s the Gamilaroi were itinerants in their own country, reduced to working for white land owners or living on the fringes of white townships, and were dependent on handouts of food, clothing and blankets. They were also introduced to alcohol and tobacco. As population numbers decreased, their rich ceremonial and cultural life broke down.

In 1880 a private body, the Association for the Protection of Aborigines, was formed 'for the purpose of ameliorating the present deplorable condition of the remnants of the Aborigine tribes of this colony.' Following agitation by this body, in 1881 the Government appointed a Protector of Aborigines, Mr. George Thornton MLC, with the power to create reserves and to force Aboriginal people to live on them. A year later the Colonial Secretary and Premier Alexander Stuart established a Board for the Protection of Aborigines. The creation of the Board was ratified at a meeting of the Executive Council on 5 June 1883. The objectives of the Board were to 'provide asylum for the aged and sick, who are dependent on others for help and support; but also, and of at least equal importance to train and teach the young, to fit them to take their places amongst the rest of the community'. The first members of the Board comprised three Members of the Legislative Council (including George Thornton, the former Protector), one private citizen (a lawyer), and two public servants.²⁸

From 1883 the Aboriginal Protection Board established its own 'peculiar institution' of supervised estates or 'Aboriginal stations' at Walhallow (Caroona), Burra Dee Dee near Coonabarabran, Sevington near Inverell, Terri Hie Hie near Moree, and Angledool. Many of the Aborigines in the Manilla and Barraba districts were removed to Terri Hie Hie. The 'Aboriginal station' at Terri Hie Hie, registered on 3 June 1903, covered 102 acres.²⁹ The reserve at Walhallow on the Connadilly or Mooki River near Quirindi covered 230 acres, and was 'reserved from sale for the use of Aborigines' on 18 June 1895. A report on the reserve dated 3 July 1900 stated:

*116 Aborigines, all very comfortable. The men get work on Walhallow Station at good wages, the children attend the public school about a mile distant. The reserve is fenced around, excepting for a small part which will be completed shortly.*³⁰

People on these so called 'missions' came under the control of government officials who managed all aspects of their daily lives. Other groups camped on numerous old and new reserves which were small portions of land set aside for Aborigines on the fringes of white settlements. There were reserves on the Namoi at Borah Crossing near Manilla, at Bingara, Gunnedah and Narrabri, and also near towns on the Barwon and Macintyre Rivers, such as Boggabilla. The reserve at Borah Crossing, covering 20 acres, was gazetted on 9 November 1903 and revoked on 17 March 1961.³¹ Frank Royston Dowe, who was born at Milliwindi in 1901 and lived at Wongo Creek from 1907 to 1918, remembers Billy White and his wife Lily, who were among the few full

blood Aborigines left in the area. They lived in a tent at Borah Crossing, and Billy, who was well respected for his skill with an axe, worked on surrounding properties cutting firewood.³² The Gamilaroi living on reserves were free of supervision except for the irregular control exercised by police and any employers of casual labour.³³ In the Peel River area, most of the surviving Aborigines were living in a 'blacks' camp' at Calala by the late nineteenth century.³⁴

Most Aboriginal people today remember the reserves of the 1930s to the 1960s as places of unrelenting segregation, repression and assault on their culture by agents of the Government. But according to historian Heather Goodall, during the nineteenth century Aborigines used many strategies to secure or resecure the land of which they had been dispossessed. Armed resistance was just one response. She argues that during the earlier period from the 1860s to 1914 Aborigines in some parts of New South Wales and Victoria, particularly coastal areas and in the south, were able to exercise some degree of control over their lives in the reserves and saw them as a source of social and economic independence. From the 1860s there is evidence of sustained Aboriginal action over land. Responses ranged from direct demands to Government for land; demands through the intermediary of white officials such as missionaries and police; to direct action, reoccupying their own country, squatting, building homes and planting crops. In 1882 the New South Wales Government commissioned George Thornton as Protector to enquire into the conditions of Aborigines. A report from Nundle stated: 'where there are tribes such as are on the Richmond River and other places, it would be a source of great pleasure for them to have hunting grounds reserved for their purposes'.³⁵ Thornton made it clear in his preliminary report in August 1882 that he believed reserves to be a sensible tool to assist Aboriginal self-sufficiency. But rather than simply being a creation of government, designed to segregate and contain Aborigines, reserves were to a great extent an Aboriginal initiative to push the Government to recognise Aboriginal rights to some of their own land.³⁶ Aboriginal communities were well aware of the moves by the Government to encourage closer settlement and attempted to use the 'free selection' language and ideology to further their claims. Aboriginal demands were also compatible with the broad social aims pursued by Government. This strategy led to the creation of 74 reserves in New South Wales between 1861 and 1894, but many of the independently settled reserves were lost to 'closer settlement' or its successor, soldier settlement, between 1916 and 1927.³⁷ Particularly after World War I, a large number of reserves were revoked for soldier settler blocks.

After the *Aborigines Protection (NSW) Act 1909*, conditions on the reserves controlled by the Aborigines Protection Board steadily declined, with rations reduced, buildings left to become decrepit, and a host of regulations used to control the lives of the residents of the reserves. The general policy pursued by the New South Wales Government from around 1900 was one of dispersal: spreading Aboriginal people throughout the white community with the ultimate aim of dispensing with reserves altogether. This policy was pursued by expelling so called 'non-Aborigines' from reserves, closing thinly populated reserves, forcibly removing residents and bulldozing their houses. Children were removed from their parents and placed in institutions in the name of protection, to be raised as whites. At the same time town councils made efforts to rid their towns of any fringe camps or reserves. But during the Depression the populations of the reserves and fringe camps swelled dramatically, running counter to the general policy of dispersal pursued by the administration. The policy of assimilation pursued by the Government between 1940 and 1960 was a continuation of the earlier policy of dispersal, reinforced by a scheme to build houses for Aboriginal families in country towns. The housing scheme failed dismally; by 1961 only 39 new houses had been built in towns.³⁸

Tamworth had always been an important meeting place, where different Gamilaroi groups met for ceremony, trade and exchange. During the 1940s and 1950s Aboriginal families lived in the Aboriginal Reserve in North Tamworth, near the old abattoirs. Marie Carter, who grew up in the

camp, has strong memories of white people pulling down the framework as they tried to build their shanties. Conditions in the camp were spartan; there was no electricity and a dozen families shared a communal water tap and a single toilet. During the 1970s, at time when the Government policy of assimilation was at its height, many Aboriginal families from across northern New South Wales came to live in Tamworth. Most settled in the reserve in North Tamworth. Over the years Government promises of housing, education and employment were not delivered. Nevertheless, the Murri families in Tamworth today have strong cultural ties to the site and would like to see it preserved and a keeping place established there.³⁹

Identification of Aboriginal heritage sites is not within the scope of the current Community Based Heritage Study. However the Tamworth region is known for ornately carved trees, ceremonial bora grounds and art sites, indicative of the close spiritual and physical attachment of Aboriginal people to the landscape they inhabited. Information provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 2004 lists a number of Aboriginal sites in the former Shires of Nundle, Manilla and Barraba. There were 6 Aboriginal sites in Nundle Shire, including 3 artefacts, 1 rock art site and 2 axe grinding grooves.⁴⁰ In Manilla Shire there were 26 sites, including 10 artefacts, 4 rock art sites, 2 axe grinding grooves, 2 stone arrangements and 8 modified trees (carved or scarred).⁴¹ In Barraba Shire 16 sites were recorded, including 7 artefacts, 2 art sites, 2 burials, 1 axe grinding groove, 1 stone arrangement and 3 modified trees.⁴² Many sites in the Tamworth region which preserve the remains of historic or prehistoric Aboriginal occupation, or which are of significance to the contemporary Aboriginal community, have been destroyed by urban development and agricultural activity. Those sites that remain provide a direct link to the traditional culture of the Gamilaroi and need to be protected as far as possible. Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* (1974) a licence is required for any activities which could damage or destroy objects or places of Aboriginal heritage significance, and for conservation works or relocation of Aboriginal heritage objects.

NOTES

¹ The spelling 'Gamilaroi' is used here, rather than the more commonly used 'Kamilaroi', as this is the spelling and pronunciation preferred by the majority of the local Aboriginal community. There are many recorded spellings and pronunciations of *Gamilaroi*. Gaining currency is the phonetic spelling 'Gamilaraay'. Refer to J. Wilson and L. McAdam, 2000, *The Tamworth Aboriginal/Archaeological Site Study*.

² R. H. Mathews 1917, 'Description of two Bora grounds of the Kamilaroi tribe', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, Vol. L1, p. 423.

³ J. Wilson and L. McAdam 2000, *The Tamworth Aboriginal/Archaeological Site Study*, Report prepared for Tamworth City Council, p. 9.

⁴ D. Horton (ed) 1994, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, pp. 407, 1010.

⁵ Cheryl Kitchener, pers. comm., December 2006.

⁶ R. Milliss 1980, *City on the Peel*, A. H. and A.W. Reed, cited in J. Wilson and L. McAdam, 2000, op. cit., p. 10.

⁷ J. B. Birdsell 1977, The recalibration of a paradigm for the first peopling of Greater Australia, in J. Allen, J. Golson and R. Jones (eds), *Sunda and Sahul, Prehistoric Studies in South East Asia, Melanesia and Australia*, Academic Press, London; E. Mayne 1842, 'Report for 1841', in *Historical Records of Australia*. Cited in J. Wilson and L. McAdam, 2000, op. cit., p. 10.

⁸ J. Mulvaney and J. Kaminga 1999, *Prehistory of Australia*, p. 303.

⁹ J. Wilson and L. McAdam 2000, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰ W. Ridley 1866, *Kamilaroi, Dippil and Turrubul: Languages spoken by Australian Aborigines*, cited in J. Wilson and L. McAdam, 2000, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹ J. Wilson and L. McAdam 2000, op. cit., p. 14.

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- ¹² W. Gardner 1854, *The Productions and Resources of the Northern and Western Districts of NSW*, p. 88, quoted in J. Wilson and L. McAdam, 2000, op. cit., p. 43.
- ¹³ W. Telfer Jr in R. Milliss 1980, *The Wallabadah Manuscript: The early history of the northern districts of New South Wales, Recollections of the early days by William Telfer Jr*, p. 29.
- ¹⁴ T. L. Mitchell 1839, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Australia*, T & W Boone, London, pp.76 – 77.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 33.
- ¹⁷ M. J. O' Rourke 1995, *Raw Possum and Salted Pork*, p. 75.
- ¹⁸ B. Elder 2003, *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 7.
- ¹⁹ T. L. Mitchell 1839, op. cit., p. 26.
- ²⁰ B. Elder 2003, op. cit., p. 75.
- ²¹ Upper Manilla Recreation Reserve Trust 1991, p. 25.
- ²² B. Elder 2003, op. cit., p. 77.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 79.
- ²⁴ Ibid., pp. 81-82.
- ²⁵ K. Windshuttle 2000, 'The myths of frontier massacres in Australian history, Part I: The invention of massacre stories', *Quadrant*, October 2000.
- ²⁶ A.R. McLeod 1949, *The Transformation of Manellae*, p. 9.
- ²⁷ M. J. O' Rourke 1995, op. cit., p. 74.
- ²⁸ State Records Authority of New South Wales 1998. 'An Administrative History of Contact between the Government of New South Wales and Aboriginal people', p. 2.
- ²⁹ Register of Aboriginal Reserves 1875-1904, NSW State Archives 2/8349 SR Reel 2847.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² B. Dawe n.d., op. cit., p. 10.
- ³³ M. J. O' Rourke 1995, op. cit., p. 80.
- ³⁴ J. Hobden 1988, *From the Dreamtime to the Iron Horse: Tamworth a look at the past*, p. 7.
- ³⁵ H. Goodall 1996, 'Land in our own country: the Aboriginal land rights movement in southeastern Australia, 1860-1914' in Chapman, V. and Read, P. (eds), *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in Aboriginal History*, p.174.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 174.
- ³⁷ Ibid., pp. 197-198.
- ³⁸ P. Read 1996, 'A rape of the soul so profound': some reflections on the dispersal policy in New South Wales' in Chapman, V. and Read, P., (eds), *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in Aboriginal History*, pp. 204-207, 209.
- ³⁹ J. Wilson and L. McAdam 2000, op. cit, p. 36.
- ⁴⁰ Nundle Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 29.
- ⁴¹ Manilla Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 34.
- ⁴² Barraba Shire Council 2004, *State of the Environment Report 2003-2004*, p. 34.

3. EXPLORERS

The first Europeans to cross Gamilaroi lands were the members of John Oxley's party in 1818. Surveyor General John Oxley was on his second expedition in search of the great inland sea which it was thought must be the source of the major rivers in New South Wales. Oxley's first expedition in 1817 had ended in failure. Travelling west from Bathurst, his party followed the course of the Lachlan River for nineteen arduous weeks to Booligal, only to find it deteriorated into a series of muddy waterholes. Governor Macquarie was greatly disappointed at Oxley's report on the Lachlan, but he decided that the upper reaches of the Macquarie River may have better prospects.

On 28 May 1818 Oxley set out north from Bathurst, some of his party travelling by boat along the Macquarie River and the others travelling overland. Once again he had to admit defeat. By 30 June the river was becoming increasingly marshy, and its waters overflowed its banks, making it difficult to follow its true course. Most of the party turned back, but Oxley struggled on in one boat with four volunteer oarsmen, only to become lost in a vast featureless swamp, known now as the Macquarie Marshes. It took them four days to rejoin the main party. Oxley decided to travel east across the rugged Warrumbungle range to the coast, a decision which led to the discovery of valuable new lands. On 26 August 1818, near the site of the present town of Mullaley, the explorers climbed a low rise and saw spread out before them 'hills, dales and plains of the richest description'. Oxley named the fertile plains the Liverpool Plains, after Lord Liverpool, British Prime Minister. The next day they crossed the Mooki River, which joins the Namoi River near the present town of Gunnedah.¹

By 2 September Oxley and his party reached the present site of Tamworth on the Peel River, naming it after the Right Honorable Robert Peel, then Chief Secretary for Ireland in Lord Liverpool's Government. Peel, who later became Prime Minister, made his home in England at Tamworth Castle. Today a memorial incorporating the anchor of Oxley's ship stands at Wises Corner on the Tamworth-Manilla road, at the point nearest to where Oxley crossed the Peel River.

Oxley named the valley of the Peel Goulburn Vale, in honour of the Under Secretary for the Colonies, but this name was not adopted. In his journal, published in London in 1820, Oxley described the Peel Valley in glowing terms:

*'it would be impossible to find a finer or more luxuriant country than it [Peels River] waters: north and south, its extent is unknown, but it is certainly not less than sixty miles, whilst the breadth of the vale is on medium about twenty miles... This space between the bounding hills is not altogether level, but rises into gentle inequalities, and independently of the river is well watered; the grass was most luxuriant; the timber good and not thick: in short no place in the world can afford more advantages to the industrious settler, than this extensive vale.'*²

Over the next few days the explorers crossed the ranges to the east, discovering and naming the Cockburn and MacDonald Rivers. They followed the Hastings River eastwards, finally reaching the coast on 8 October 1818 at a fine harbour and estuary which they named Port Macquarie. Following the coast south, the party reached Newcastle on 5 November 1818. The inland sea remained an illusion, but Oxley's discoveries opened up the north coast of New South Wales for settlement. Although the lands of the Peel River Valley were not the main objective of Oxley's expedition, his reports of the rich country they passed through set the stage for future settlement. Travelling south from Port Macquarie on the last stage of his journey, Oxley commented on the

excellence of Port Stephens as a harbour, and this was to be of major significance in the later activities of the A. A. Company.

Before settlers could take advantage of the fertile lands that Oxley discovered in the Liverpool Plains and the Peel Valley, a more practical route to reach them needed to be found. Oxley had entered the region from the west, and the plains were hemmed in by rugged mountain ranges. Botanist Allan Cunningham had accompanied John Oxley's expedition to the Lachlan River in 1817. In 1823 he blazed an easier overland route from the settled area of Bathurst to the Liverpool Plains. Skirting the seemingly impenetrable Warrumbungle ranges, Cunningham followed a promising valley and came to a natural break in the mountain chain, where the Liverpool Ranges joined the Warrumbungle ranges. This was the only point where stock could easily cross the ranges; Cunningham optimistically named it Pandora's Pass. Within a year cattlemen were using this route to bring their stock into the Liverpool Plains and to the New England plateau beyond.

There had been a rapid influx of settlers with their sheep and cattle into the Hunter Valley after it was opened up to free settlement in 1822. Two years later there was already a need for more grazing land, but the spread of settlement to the west was impeded by the formidable barrier of the Liverpool Range. In October 1824 Government Surveyor Henry Dangar succeeded in finding a route over the Liverpool Plains from the Hunter Valley, following Darts Brook past the present Kars Springs. Descending from the Dart Brook Pass to the Liverpool Plains Dangar's party encountered a large group of Gamilaroi who attacked, seizing the packhorse carrying most of their provisions. The steep ascent over the Dart Brook Pass was difficult, but it was estimated that by 1827 over 10,000 cattle had made the crossing.³

On the instructions of John Oxley, Dangar made a second expedition across the Liverpool Range in August 1825, to investigate the potential of the land on the Liverpool Plains and the Peel Valley. On this journey Dangar found a much more accessible pass over the range, at the head of the Pages River. This is the route now followed by the New England Highway. Descending from the Liverpool Range, Dangar travelled east along the foothills of the Great Dividing Range until he reached the Peel River near the present town of Nundle. He then crossed the mountains via Hanging Rock and returned along the Barnard River. Endorsing Oxley's opinion of the Peel Valley, Dangar reported that it was 'beyond all doubt, the most extensive and fertile tract yet travelled in the colony'.⁴

Ever restless, Allan Cunningham's next goal was to find an overland route from New England to Moreton Bay. He had visited the new convict settlement with John Oxley in 1824 on his voyage north in the *Amity* to transport the first batch of convicts and soldiers there under the command of Lieutenant Henry Miller. With the support of a new Governor, Sir Ralph Darling, Cunningham set out from Segenhoe station in the Upper Hunter on 30 April 1827, with eleven horses, six convict servants, and sextant, chronometer and compass to chart their route. The party crossed the Liverpool Range and trekked northwards across the Liverpool Plains. Near the present town of Somerton, they descended timbered hills into 'a beautiful well watered valley' where the Peel River flowed west towards Lake Keepit. Continuing north the party followed roughly the route of the now disused rail line from Manilla to Barraba, to the eastern edge of the Nandewar Range.⁵ Travelling through heavily timbered but dry country, on 17 May 1827 the party came upon 'a stream running briskly over a rocky bed to the eastward, which in consequence of the general steepness of its banks, gave us some trouble to pass'. Cunningham named the watercourse Buddles Creek; the name was later changed to the Manilla River, presumably at a time when the district was better watered. At the time Cunningham's party passed through, the district was evidently in the grip of a severe drought; Cunningham is said to have estimated there had not

been any substantial rain for twelve months. It was at Buddles Creek that Cunningham briefly encountered a small group of the Gamilaroi who occupied the Barraba area. He later wrote:

*I called to the man who stood in front of the fire (and who had short spears or other missile weapons in his hands) and beckoned to him by every sign that would be considered, even by a savage, a pacific, friendly intention, but t'was all in vain. To every sign... he simply made a brief reply, at a distance, however too great to enable me to judge how far the dialect of the natives of this part might differ from the aborigines of the settled part of the colony: and then on seeing eleven horses descend in a line to the river's brink, he took to his heels, and, with the others (four natives and a young child, among whom were women) ran off to distant parts... up the river and disappeared.*⁶



Figure 3: View from Hanging Rock, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

In 1969 the Nandewar Historical Society erected a distinctive hexagonal rock memorial to Cunningham at the spot where he is presumed to have crossed the Manilla River, about 7 km west of Barraba on the Trevallyn Road. Cunningham's party traversed at least part of the Manilla River Valley on their way north to the Gwydir River.⁷ Cunningham's greatest achievement on his marathon three-month journey was his discovery of the richest country in south-east Queensland, which he named the Darling Downs, after the Governor.

Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell was Oxley's successor as Surveyor General of New South Wales. In 1831 he led an expedition from Sydney to investigate rumours begun by an escaped convict that a vast river flowed north from the interior of northern New South Wales. Mitchell's party left the Hunter River on 30 November 1831, and after crossing the Liverpool Range over Darts Brook Pass they reached the most distant stock station at Wallamoul, on the Peel River north of present day Tamworth. Here Mitchell recorded that the native name of the river was Callala (now spelled Calala). Five days later the party reached the Namoi River near where Boggabri now stands, and followed it north-west almost as far as present day Narrabri. From there they headed north into the rugged Nandewar Range. The party discovered a broad river which Mitchell at first thought might be the fabled northern river. But when they followed it further, it turned out to be the Gwydir River, already discovered by Allan Cunningham in 1827.

When the party reached the Macintyre River near the present town of Mungindi on 23 January 1832, Mitchell decided to abandon his quest and return to Sydney, retracing their route.⁸

Henry Dangar carried out further explorations of the Liverpool Plains country in 1831 and 1832, at the behest of Sir Edward Parry, Commissioner of the A. A. Company. On his second journey, which he began in Port Stephens in March 1832, Dangar was accompanied by Parry. Crossing the Liverpool Ranges from the Hunter Valley, Dangar and Parry's party traced the Peel from just downstream of Attunga to its junction with the Muluerindi, now the Namoi River, which they followed to the site of Manilla. On their return journey the party travelled overland to Attunga, followed the Peel River past the present site of Nundle, then crossed the ranges over the Crawney Pass to the Hunter Valley.⁹

NOTES

¹ C. Cannon 1987, *The Exploration of Australia*, pp. 69-73.

² J. Oxley 1820, *Journal of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales undertaken by order of the British Government in the years 1817 – 1818*, p. 284.

³ J. Hobden 1988, *From the Dreamtime to the Iron Horse: Tamworth, a look at the past*, pp. 10 – 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵ C. Cannon 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁶ Currell, M. 2006, *A Brief History of Barraba*, p. 1.

⁷ M. and L. Bignall 1980, *A History of Manilla 1853 – 1979*, p. 5.

⁸ C. Cannon 1987, *op. cit.*, pp. 144 - 145.

⁹ W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, *Hills of Gold*, p. 3.

4. TRAVELLING ACROSS THE LAND: TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 FROM BUSH TRACKS TO HIGHWAYS

For most of the nineteenth century all major transport routes in New South Wales emanated from the two major ports, Sydney and Newcastle. From these ports the wool, beef and minerals that constituted the wealth of the colony were shipped to England. The overland track from the Hunter Valley leading across the Liverpool Ranges and through the Peel River Valley was a major route for supplying the stations and scattered settlements of north-west New South Wales. Baker's Australian Atlas of 1848 shows a track following the eastern bank of the Peel River passing the site of the present town of Nundle, and meeting the Port Stephens track near the junction with the Peel and Ogunbil Creek. From that point the track evidently crossed the Liverpool Range over the Crawney Pass to the Hunter Valley, following the route of the early explorers.¹

During the early days of settlement all supplies for the Peel River Valley and further north were carried by horse or bullock teams from the Hunter Valley over the steep road across the Liverpool Ranges at Nowlands Gap. Goods were shipped from Sydney to Newcastle then up river to Morpeth in the lower Hunter Valley. This was the terminus for shipping, and from there goods were transported overland to Tamworth. Located at a strategic crossing of the Peel River, Tamworth developed as an important transport hub. From here bullock teams, travelling stock and later coaches could follow the course of the Namoi River west, north through Manilla and Barraba and Bingara, or north-east up the Moonbi Ranges to New England, the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay.²

From its beginnings Tamworth had a dual identity, as a company town and a 'government town'. After the A. A. Company moved sheep from Warrarah to its Peel river estates of Goonoo and Calala in June 1834, a settlement grew up on the western side of the Peel River to service the needs of the Company. The town was an exclusive preserve of the Company, which tolerated little interference in its affairs. Within a few years another township grew up on the eastern side of the river. It had its beginnings in the store established in 1835 near the river crossing by James Charles White, a former employee of the A. A. Company. Setting out from the Hunter Valley on a dray loaded with bush clothing, provisions, tinware, a keg of tobacco, a puncheon (about 365 litres) of rum and two kegs (less than 46 litres each) of brandy, White found a ready market for his goods with the teamsters who passed through on their way to the New England tablelands or the north-west. Over time the growth of the 'government town' outpaced that of the A. A. Company town on the opposite bank of the river. The government town of Tamworth was officially proclaimed in 1 January 1850 and the first sales of land blocks was held by auction in July 1850. Taking advantage of the demand for land, in 1851 the A. A. company auctioned fourteen blocks on the western side of the river. It was not until 1876 that the two towns formally merged, with the proclamation of Tamworth Borough Council.³

The discovery of gold at Hanging Rock in 1852 and subsequent discoveries at Rocky River near Armidale in 1856 and at Bingara and Bundarra in the 1860s greatly increased road traffic and prompted the Government to extend the Great North Road from the Hunter Valley to the New England Tablelands. One of the major challenges of the project was cutting a route up the notorious Moonbi Range, the mountain barrier between Tamworth and the New England Tablelands. It was a daunting climb for heavily laden bullock teams and coaches. As bullock drays had no brakes, on steep hills logs were dragged behind the vehicle to slow their progress.

Legend has it that at the foot of the Moonbi Range was a great pile of logs, legacy of the slow and dangerous descent.⁴

The *Maitland Mercury* frequently published reports on the fortunes of the diggers on the goldfields in the Nundle district and the best routes to reach the diggings. One report published soon after the first discoveries of gold detailed the route from Maitland to Hanging Rock, stating that it could be completed on horseback in four days, but warning of the long steep pinches over the Crawney Pass. Two roads led over the pass; travellers were advised that the easiest ascent was the one which began furthest up the Isis River.⁵

In his reminiscences William Telfer Junior graphically describes the perils faced by travellers on the perilously steep road from Nundle to Hanging Rock in the early 1850s:

At that time there was a sheep station on the Company's side of the river also one on the other side which was the property of Dr Jenkins. Crossing the Peel River here saw the Hanging Rock mountain some two miles away proceeding along a very steep track almost perpendicular in appearance something like the roof of a house in appearance and a narrow road up the mountain the only traffic on this road was Nathan Burrows' bullock team which used to go to Tamworth about twice a year with a couple of loads of potatoes where he got a good market for them... some places you could scarcely discern any road and the mountain was very steep if you went a little off the track the cart would capsize and go down the mountain for hundreds of feet our horses began to jib from the very start and we had to push behind the cart and chock the wheels every few yards to keep it going we were nearly half a day going up the first pinch.⁶

The main road from Nundle to Tamworth lead across a ford over the Peel River upstream from the present bridge at the foot of Oakenville Street, then followed the western bank of the Peel River, at first through the A. A. Company's land. The ford at Nundle was a major barrier during times of flood. On 28 November 1863 the *Tamworth Examiner* reported:

During floods the crossing place is most dangerous... the other day... a teamster lost all his valuable team⁷

After much agitation by local residents, a bridge over the Peel River at Nundle was finally built in the early 1870s, leading from the foot of Oakenville Street.

Improvements were made to some of the major roads in the Nundle district during the 1870s. In 1879 a new road was surveyed along the eastern side of the Peel River from Nundle to Bowling Alley Point, cutting into the hills that rise steeply from the river. In December 1874 a new road was completed to Hanging Rock, climbing over 500 m from Nundle to Hanging Rock village in just over 8 km and 900 m to the highest part of Hanging Rock. This road is still in use today, and has one of the steepest grades of any road in the State. On 12 December 1874 *The Town and Country Journal* reported:

The splendid road leading from Happy Valley, Nundle, to the Hanging Rock is now complete as far as Mr Prisk's hotel... The gradients are such that you may drive a buggy up the whole distance at a good round trot whereas before by the old road it was hard work to ride up at a snail's pace to the great distress of your horse.⁸

Barraba and Manilla are located on one of the three roads branching west from the Great North Road which brought European settlers and stock into the New England region. It was the movement of people and stock along this route, skirting the A. A. Company lands to the east, that was responsible for the establishment of these towns, at strategic river crossing points. Manilla, 44 km north of Tamworth, grew up at the junction of the Namoi and Manilla Rivers, while

Barraba, 44 km further north, grew up on the Manilla River. The first European tracks in the Manilla and Barraba districts were blazed by the teamsters who followed the Peel River from Tamworth to Attunga then over the hills to Manilla and the Namoi. The routes tended to follow watercourses and in the early years they were tortuous in wet weather. During the 1860s when the goldfields at Bingara and Bundarra were at their peak the tracks were crowded with a stream of hopeful prospectors, and horse and bullock teams hauling wagons loaded with supplies for the diggings and the remote stations of the north-west. Following the passing of the Free Selection Acts in the 1860s, large numbers of land seekers followed in the footsteps of the explorers and the teamsters to New England, north-west New South Wales and to the Queensland border. The main route through north-west New South Wales to Queensland passed over black soil plains, through Manilla and Barraba. It was little more than a rough track, dry and dusty in summer and notoriously boggy in winter. In the early days there were no bridges and the frequent river crossings were often flooded and perilous. When major rivers such as the Namoi flooded teams could be held up for weeks at a time. Dead Horse Gully, (present day Klori) on the Tamworth Road, was named by a teamster who lost his horse while crossing the creek.

Some of the early carriers who carted supplies by horse or bullock teams to the Barraba district were William and Herman Garske, G. Cutmore, D. Kelaher, J. Jones and J. Brett. Many of the old drovers' trails, now known as travelling stock routes, can still be seen around Manilla and Barraba. Set aside from settlement before widespread vegetation changes had occurred, they form valuable reserves of tree cover and habitat for native flora and fauna. In addition to their high conservation values, the network of stock routes across New South Wales and extending into Queensland forms a unique part of Australia's pastoral heritage. They were informally developed by squatters from the earliest days of European settlement to move stock from their runs to markets in major cities or the goldfields. Many may have their origins in the trails of the original Aboriginal inhabitants, which linked water sources and led to creek crossings. Nineteenth century balladeers such as Banjo Paterson painted a romantic picture of the drover's life, but conflicts and confrontations between drovers and squatters were commonplace, their stock competing for available feed and water. Most of the stock routes that exist in New South Wales today were formally gazetted in the 1870s, the direct legacy of government land policy and the decisions made by early surveyors and administrators.⁹ They are currently managed by Rural Lands Protection Boards across the State.

Bullocks were the most reliable for hauling heavy goods, but horses made faster progress. For much of the nineteenth century mail and passengers were transported by horse drawn coach, the main means of travel before the railway reached Manilla in 1899. Before the advent of rail travel, the mail coach was the only public transport available, so the coach from Tamworth to Manilla was crowded on every journey. The first trip of Wilkinson's mail coach from Tamworth to Warialda was in 1872, and for over thirty years the coach made regular twice weekly journeys, passing through Manilla and Barraba en route. In January 1907 the *Warialda Standard* reported the last run of the Wilkinson's mail coach from Tamworth to Warialda on Saturday 30 December 1906. The stables in Tarpoly, which had been the home of the mail coach horses for forty years, burned down in January 1908.¹⁰ The fire marked the end of a colourful era of coach travel, enlivened by the discomforts of rutted roads that were either dusty or muddy depending on the season, and the perils of crossing flooded creeks, descending steep hills and attacks by bushrangers. George Wilkinson drove the coach between Tamworth and Warialda throughout its thirty year history, and his was a household name in the north-west.



**Figure 4: The mail coach at Manilla Post Office, early 1900s.
Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.**

The Namoi River at Manilla was one of the major obstacles to road traffic because it was so broad and deep. Local residents lobbied the Government for many years to construct a bridge over the Namoi at Manilla. Finally in 1877 Hanley Bennett, Member of Parliament for Liverpool Plains, persuaded the Government to build an all weather crossing over the Namoi River at Manilla. By March 1878 a low level causeway across the Namoi was completed. But the causeway was built during a drought period and it was swept away with the first floods in May 1879. There was a chorus of protest from local residents who variously dubbed the bridge 'Bennett's Folly' or 'Bennetts Waterfall', while Bennett denied having advocated the building of the causeway at all and blamed the building contractor, Joseph Conlon, for poor construction. In mid May 1879 the *Tamworth News* reported:

*All day long a line of Chinamen, on their way to northern mines, by means of a human chain, crossed the causeway. Although many got a good ducking, fortunately few were drowned.*¹¹

After this disaster, a boat guided by a wire rope was used to ferry passengers across the river. It was a dangerous crossing when the river was in flood and further drownings and near escapes occurred. The people of Manilla returned to their lobbying in earnest, holding public meetings, sending delegations and writing letters to their government representatives. In a telegram sent from Manilla to a public meeting in Tamworth, the people of Manilla moved:

*That whereas the general traffic on the main north-west road to the Queensland border passes through the towns and districts of Manilla, Barraba, Cobbadah, Bingara, Warialda and Inverell, and that this traffic is often impeded by the flooded condition of the Namoi River at Manilla, and that life and property of various descriptions are frequently lost in attempting to cross that river, it is highly necessary that a suitable bridge should be erected immediately across the Namoi River at Manilla.*¹²

Finally in January 1882 the Minister for Public Works advised that tenders had been called in England for the steelwork for a bridge at Manilla. Royce Brothers won the contract to build the bridge, and construction began in 1884. The new bridge was finally opened on 16 March 1886 with a gala ceremony. The *Town and Country Journal* described the scene:

The flat town of Manilla wears an appearance of gaiety never before seen here. Flags are flying from most of the buildings and the verandahs are decorated with

*green boughs and other ornamentations. The occasion is the opening of the Manilla Bridge, a magnificent iron structure which spans the Namoi River at a height of forty two feet above summer level.*¹³

That evening a banquet was held in the lavishly decorated School of Arts, followed by a ball held in George Veness's new store. The *Tamworth Observer* reported:

*The banquet closed at 11pm and then all adjourned to the ballroom in Mr George Veness's new and commodious store, just completed. Mr T. Bussell and son supplied the music and kept it going until 5.30 am in the morning. Many were present in fancy dress. It was voted the best ball ever held in Manilla.*¹⁴

At the welcoming reception held before the official opening ceremony, Charles Baldwin gave a welcoming address on behalf of the people of Manilla. He did not miss an opportunity to highlight the difficulties caused by the regular flooding of the Namoi River and to lobby the Minister for Public Works, the Hon William J. Lyne, to construct a railway to Manilla.

*This district is essentially agricultural and pastoral, and in favourable seasons is very rich... The traffic passing through this town of wool, wheat and other produce is very considerable... This traffic has in wet seasons been considerably inconvenienced in transit by the flooded state of the Namoi River... We hope that at some not distant date you may return to Manilla to perform the ceremony of opening a railway.*¹⁵

Over the years other road bridges were constructed in the Manilla district, improving communications. In 1908 a bridge across the Manilla River linking north and west Manilla was completed, and in the 1920s and 1930s bridges were built at Halls Creek, Borah Creek at Upper Manilla, Bog Hole on the lower Somerton Road, and Lower Halls Creek on the Manilla-Dunmore Road. A two span concrete bridge over Greenhatches Creek on the Tamworth – Manilla Road was completed in 1936. Isabel Rowsell, who grew up on Manilla station in Upper Manilla, describes the floods which could sweep so quickly down the Manilla River:

*About a mile up the river above the homestead, a low level bridge carried the traffic along the main road from Manilla to Barraba, replacing the old boat, 'the Platypus' which used to ferry passengers across the river in times of flood. Strangers would hardly believe that our gentle little river could turn into the raging torrent that heavy rain made it into. The news that 'the river's coming down' sent everyone flying to the bank to watch to see sticks and branches and then boughs and huge logs being swept along.*¹⁶

In the 1880s government spending and public attention was overwhelmingly directed to the expansion of the railways. However during the same period, roads in New South Wales gained more permanence, extending to the furthest boundaries of the colony and linking communities beyond the reach of rail. The development of the road network was spurred by the Government's policy of encouraging closer settlement of rural areas. This period of steady progress was slowed only by the twin disasters of Depression and drought in the early 1890s. The advent of the motor car increased the importance of roads. In 1925 the New South Wales Government assumed responsibility for roads, forming a Board to regulate them, and improvements were made to roads to meet the needs of cars.¹⁷

In the first decade of the twentieth century there were few cars in New South Wales, and travel by motor vehicle was a novelty. Grace Johnson, who was born in 1899 and lived in Woolomin, remembers the first motor car in the village and the terrible noise the iron wheels made as it clattered along the gravel road.¹⁸ The *Manilla Express* dated 13 April 1904 described an exhilarating motor car journey from Tamworth to Manilla:

Yesterday we had the pleasure of being whisked across the face of this portion of the Mundane Sphere at a rate of speed for an open vehicle previously realised in dreams only. We were aboard a motor car ... a De Dion 9h.p. and a ride on one of the comfortably padded red cushions, cutting through the air at 30 miles an hour is a novel experience, giving any amount of pleasure. The car cost £375 and its top speed is 32 miles an hour... At present there are 300 cars in NSW. The trip from Tamworth to Manilla occupied an hour and ten minutes.¹⁹

When the first privately owned motor vehicles appeared in Manilla in 1907 they provoked a wave of protest from local residents. They were concerned about the unheard of speed at which these vehicles travelled and imagined a spate of accidents. By 1911 several Manilla residents owned cars.²⁰ In 1917 the Trust Account book of the Methodist Church in Barraba records the change from the cost of maintaining a horse and sulky to the cost of a Douglas motorbike. By the late 1920s a single seater model T Ford was bought for the use of the Rev. Middleton Taylor on the church circuit. By all accounts the Reverend was not the best of drivers; he crashed the car into the back wall of the garage at Chadleigh twice.²¹



Figure 5: Manilla River road bridge, constructed in 1942. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

By the 1930s the volume of traffic on the state's roads was increasing and the State Government embarked on a major program of road improvements, realignments and bridge construction. Keeping pace with changing modes of transport, the Government set new standards of road and bridge design and safety. Many of the roads followed the routes of the old tracks blazed by the first settlers and carriers. The road bridge over Barraba Creek dates from the heyday of the Government public works of the 1930s. The reinforced concrete slab bridge was built by Clarke & Thwaites of Newcastle in 1937, providing farming communities with access to the rail head and service centre of Barraba. The bridge replaced the old low level bridge which had served the local community for decades. Members of the local historical society recall that the old wooden bridge was given to the adjacent landowner for timber in return for the temporary use of his land while the new bridge was being built. To demolish the old bridge, the landowner set fire to the pylons to burn them out and bring the decking down. But the plan was fatally flawed; inevitably the decking was mostly consumed by the fire. While they were building the new bridge the workers would wait until local school children were riding their horses through the creek on the way to school and then drop a piece of steel onto the concrete decking. The horses would take

fright and fly out of the creek. The remaining timber abutments of the first bridge can be seen downstream from the present bridge.²²

Negotiating the road over the Crawney Pass south of Nundle remained a perilous undertaking well into the twentieth century. Although local residents continually pressed the Government over the need for a good road over the Crawney gap, it was not until 1940 that the new Crawney Pass Road was dedicated as a public road. Well into the 1960s, two-thirds of main roads in New South Wales had yet to receive a bitumen surface, and there were still many unbridged streams and narrow, poorly aligned bridges.²³

In 1973 the road from Nundle just off the New England Highway to Glen Innes via Tamworth, Manilla, Barraba, Bingara and Warialda was named 'The Fossicker's Way', in a bid to promote tourism. From Bingara the route passes through Inverell on the Bruxner Highway, rejoining the New England Highway at Glen Innes. Designated State Route 95, the road winds along the western slopes of the New England plateau and passes through some of Australia's richest gem areas. In these parts, sapphires, zircon, jasper, prase (leek-green translucent quartz), rhodonite, crystals and even gold may be found.²⁴

4.2 THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY

The advent of the railway in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century revolutionised public transport and the economy. During the late 1850s the Australian colonies launched ambitious railway projects crossing vast distances and linking remote settlements that had only been founded a few decades before. In New South Wales three great standard gauge lines steadily spread across the State: the Great Southern Line to the Victorian border at Albury; the Great Western Line across the formidable barrier of the Blue Mountains, and the Great Northern Line over the New England Plateau to the Queensland border. There were many delays due to political wrangling, shortage of funds, and difficult terrain, but in the economic boom of the 1880s all three lines were completed.²⁵

The first section of the Great Northern Line between Newcastle and Maitland opened in 1857. Slowly the line made its way up the Hunter Valley, reaching Singleton, Muswellbrook, and then Scone. In April 1871 the line reached Murrurundi, where it came to a halt before the barrier of the Liverpool Ranges. After 1876 the line pushed on over the Liverpool Ranges and down onto the Liverpool plains. Passing through Quirindi and Werris Creek, the line finally reached Tamworth in February 1878.

Within a few years of the railway reaching Tamworth the townspeople of Nundle began to lobby for a light rail line to Nundle. A deputation was sent to the Minister for Works in October 1886, and in 1901 the Nundle Progress Committee instructed its Secretary to obtain statistics relating to the proposal. In the same year the Nundle Railway League was formed at a meeting in the School of Arts. Despite many years of lobbying the Nundle proposal failed to gain support from Government or from the residents of the Tamworth region.²⁶

Well before the railway reached Tamworth the Government had commissioned surveys of the country north of the city to determine the best route for a rail line extending to the Queensland border and ultimately to Brisbane. There were two alternative routes proposed, one over the Moonbi Range via Uralla, Armidale, Glen Innes and Tenterfield, and the other through Manilla, Barraba, Warialda and Inverell, to Tenterfield. There were not only the technical problems of

crossing the Moonbis to be surmounted, but also changes of government, political wrangling and lobbying by many interest groups over the best route to the Queensland border.

The residents of Manilla and Barraba lobbied long and hard for the railway to pass through their towns. They could clearly see the economic benefits of a rail line for transporting goods and services and shipping their produce to markets. But powerful political influences prevailed, and the Government made the decision to construct the Great Northern Line via Uralla, Armidale and Tenterfield. Once it had surmounted the barrier of the Moonbis, the line progressed rapidly, reaching Armidale in 1883, Tenterfield in 1886 and the Queensland border at Wallangarra in January 1888.

Despite this setback Manilla and Barraba residents kept political pressure to bear on their government representatives and the Minister for Public Works for the construction of a branch rail line from Tamworth. Their first meeting in the Junction Hotel in Manilla in 1877 was followed by many more public meetings and numerous delegations to meet with government representatives. In November 1889 a Tamworth to Manilla Railway League was formed at a public meeting in the Caledonian Hotel in Tamworth. The Manilla community had strong support in William Lyle, who had a keen interest in the development of the Manilla district. But there were many setbacks. In the winter of 1890, after years of agitation from the local community, the Government sent two representatives, Scarr and Price, to Manilla and Barraba to report on the prospects for a railway line to the district. Their report concluded that a railway line to Manilla and Barraba was not warranted, sparking a storm of protest. Soon afterwards the editor of the *Tamworth Observer* visited Manilla to assess the situation for himself. A. R. McLeod cites the editors' report in his 1949 history of Manilla:

*Manilla has only one opinion as regards the railway, states the report. It was promised to them years ago and now they believe that the politicians are trying to diddle them out of it. They are sick of 'hope so long deferred'. The only market for them is Tamworth. A railway would give them an open market.*²⁷

The efforts of the residents of Manilla finally bore fruit in October 1896 when the Bill to build the Tamworth to Manilla railway passed through Parliament. Construction of the 46 kilometres of track began in 1898 and in February 1899 a goods train arrived in Manilla with a consignment of salt and sugar for M.C. McKenzie, merchant of Manilla. On 11 March 1899 the first passenger train left Manilla, carrying 35 passengers to the Tamworth Show. The official opening of the railway was to be held on 16 September 1899, but it was a fiasco. At the last minute word reached the organisers of the event that the State Government had been defeated in Parliament the evening before and the Premier and his colleagues would not be attending. The official train arrived in Manilla 'unwelcomed, unhonoured and unsung', in the words of the *Manilla Express*. There were neither a Premier nor leading parliamentarians on board, and the local citizens enjoyed the prepared feast in their absence.²⁸

For decades Manilla Railway Station was the commercial hub of the town, through which the bountiful produce of the district was shipped to markets in Sydney. Between 30 June 1902 and 30 June 1903 8,320 bales of wool, 72,240 bags of wheat, 36,992 sheep and 2146 cattle were despatched from Manilla Station.²⁹

A Bill to build the Manilla to Barraba railway passed through Parliament in 1900, and two years later surveys of the route began. Before construction of the line could begin, a railway viaduct had to be built over the Namoi River. The viaduct was completed in 1905 and in 1906 work on the Manilla – Barraba rail line commenced. The railway reached Barraba in September 1908. As had happened in Manilla, the railway station quickly became the commercial heart of the town.

The publication produced by Barraba Shire Council in 1946 to commemorate the 'Back to Barraba' celebrations describes the railway station at Barraba in its heyday:

*As much of Bingara's passengers, goods and produce (especially wool) arrive or are despatched from Barraba, the station is a very busy one, with a passenger train daily except Sundays and a goods train three days per week, and in the wool and wheat season many extra trains have to run to cope with the business, considering that nearly 19,000 bales had to be conveyed in the seven months of the 1945 – 1946 wool season.*³⁰



Figure 6: Manilla railway viaduct, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The advent of the railway greatly reduced the cost of cartage of produce. The wheat industry in particular owed its expansion to the advent of rail transport, as it depended far more than wool on cheap cartage. In the early 1880s a ton of greasy wool was worth over £90, while a ton of wheat was worth one tenth of this amount. In areas such as Manilla and Barraba the arrival of the railway led to pastoral land being used for wheat growing and dairying, industries which would not have been possible on a large scale when bullock wagons were the only means of transport.³¹

From about 1913 proposals were considered for the extension of the railway north of Barraba. Three possible routes were investigated, one via Connors Creek and Piedmont, passing close to Gulf Creek, another via the Bullock Yoke west of Barraba, Bells Mountain, Piedmont and down Halls Creek to Bingara, and the third down the Bereen Mountain to Horton village and thence to Elcombe or Warialda Rail (Kelly's Gully). However after three years of discussion and lobbying by local residents, the Government shelved the whole plan in 1916.³²

On 8 May 1978 Manilla Railway Station Office closed, but passenger services continued to operate three days a week until the early 1980s, passengers purchasing tickets at Barraba or Tamworth. Asbestos from the Woodsreef mine and wheat from Barraba and Manilla were also carried by rail to Tamworth until the early 1980s.³³ When the single carriage railmotor serving the Barraba branch line failed in early 1983, it was not replaced and all passengers were transferred to the bus service linking Inverell and Tamworth. The tri-weekly railmotor service was briefly reinstated late in 1983, but again an engine failed. The end of the Tamworth to Barraba branch rail line finally came in November 1983, despite the fact that the government had only recently spent funds repairing two bridges on the line.³⁴ Today little remains of Barraba Station terminus.

The station name board is mounted at the south end of town near the site. The railway station at Manilla met a similar fate, when all services on the Tamworth to Barraba line ceased. The Manilla station sign is now displayed at Manilla Heritage Museum.

The railway was also a lifeline for smaller settlements such as Upper Manilla, carrying goods, mail, newspapers and parcels for the store as well as wheat, wool, cattle and sheep. When passengers wanted to catch the train from Upper Manilla at night they had to flag down the train by waving a lantern.³⁵ In July 1982 the State Rail Authority demolished and burnt the tiny one-room railway station building at Upper Manilla, salvaging only the station sign and telephone, much to the anger of the local historical society. In an article in *The Northern Daily Leader* dated 12 July 1982, Society President Mrs Nola Coote was quoted as saying 'if we had known the SRA simply intended to pull the building down, we would have sought to move it to town for display at the museum'.³⁶ The sign is now mounted on front of the old Upper Manilla school building, restored by the Tamworth branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association as their meeting room.³⁷

The railway played a vital role in the economic development of the Manilla and Barraba districts, but today it has been replaced by road and air transport. As a result of Government policy and government spending that have favoured the building of new freeways and airports rather than upgrading rail lines, the rail network in New South Wales has been progressively reduced as lines have closed. Rolling stock and rail lines have both been allowed to deteriorate due to lack of capital investment. The State Rail Commission adopted a strategy of concentrating freight in major regional centres, then distributing it by road to outlying centres. The first regional rail freight centre was established in Tamworth in 1974, signalling the ultimate closure of the Barraba branch line. In 2007 travellers from Manilla, Upper Manilla and Barraba catch a Countrylink bus to Tamworth to connect with the daily Xplorer rail service to Sydney. Xplorer railcars replaced the Tamworth XPT service in October 1993.

NOTES

¹ W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, *Hills of Gold*, p. 7.

² J. Ferry n.d, *Thematic History of Parry Shire*, p. 39.

³ J. Hobden 1988, *From the Dreamtime to the Iron Horse: Tamworth, a look at the past*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵ W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶ W. Telfer Jr, in R. Milliss 1980, *The Wallabadah Manuscript: The early history of the northern districts of New South Wales, Recollections of the early days by William Telfer Jr*, pp. 45 - 46.

⁷ W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.39-40.

⁹ Spooner, P. 2005, 'On Squatters, Settlers and Early Surveyors: historical development of country road reserves in southern New South Wales', *Australian Geographer*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 55-73, March 2005.

¹⁰ A.R. McLeod 1949, *The Transformation of Manillae*, p. 85.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 107

¹³ *Town and Country Journal* 16 March 1886, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *Tamworth Observer* 18 March 1886, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁵ *Tamworth Observer* 18 March 1886, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁶ E. Rowsell, Upper Manilla Recreation Reserve Trust 1991, *UMRRT Reunion 1991*, p. 53.

¹⁷ R. Broomham 2001, *Vital Connections: A history of NSW roads from 1788*, pp. 9, 70.

¹⁸ M. Cooper, S. Gambly, B. Miller (compilers) 1995, *Woolomin School Centenary 1885-1995*, p.67.

¹⁹ *Manilla Express*, 13 April 1904, quoted in M. and L. Bignall 1980, *A History of Manilla 1853 - 1979*, pp. 17-18.

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- ²⁰ M. and L. Bignall 1980, op. cit., p. 19.
- ²¹ D. Flynn n.d., *History of Barraba Uniting Church*, p. 4.
- ²² Barraba Creek Bridge is listed on the Heritage and Conservation Register of the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority. [www.rta.nsw.gov.au /environment/heritage/heritageconservreg/index.html](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/environment/heritage/heritageconservreg/index.html) Accessed 26 March 2006.
- ²³ R. Broomham 2001, Op. cit, p. 151.
- ²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fossickers_Way Accessed 15 April 2006.
- ²⁵ J. Ferry n.d, op. cit. p. 46.
- ²⁶ W.A. Bayley and I.R. Lobsey 1988, op. cit., p. 61.
- ²⁷ A.R. McLeod 1949, op. cit., p. 118.
- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 120 - 126.
- ²⁹ M. and L. Bignall 1980, op. cit., p. 73.
- ³⁰ W.T. Lockrey n.d., 'Early History of Barraba', *Back to Barraba Celebrations* c.1946.
- ³¹ G. Davison, J.W. McCarty, A. McLeary (eds) 1987, *Australians 1888*, p. 97.
- ³² Margaret Currell, pers. comm., November 2006.
- ³³ M. and L. Bignall 1980, op. cit., pp. 73 - 74.
- ³⁴ R. Preston 1985, *Standards in Steam: The 30 class*, p. 105.
- ³⁵ Upper Manilla Recreation Reserve Trust 1991, op. cit., p. 1.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 85.
- ³⁷ Ian Bignall, pers. comm, 21 June 2006.

5. THE GROWTH OF NUNDLE

5.1 SETTLERS AND SURVEYORS

The word Nundul was derived from 'nuntul' meaning 'mouth' in the dialect of the local Aboriginal inhabitants, and over time the name evolved into Nundle. One of the earliest European references to the word is in a survey of the area carried out in 1842 by Assistant Surveyor Burnett who showed it on a plan as Nundul.¹ The first record of white settlement in the vicinity of the present township of Nundle is in 1839, when Hamilton Collins Sempill took out a license to depasture stock at 'Nundul' Creek near its junction with the Peel River. A wealthy free settler, Sempill founded Belltrees Station near Scone in the Hunter Valley and with his brother-in-law he established a series of out-stations in the upper Hunter. Tamworth historian Syd Ware suggests that Sempill learnt of the good prospects for grazing on the Liverpool Plains from Sir Edward Parry, and followed his track over Crawney Pass where he set up a further series of stations in the newly-explored country beyond the range.²

In 1836 John Schofield settled in the area of the present Woolomin Station. According to the recollections of William Telfer Junior in the Wallabadah Manuscript, Woolomin Station was occupied by John Schofield who used it as a cattle run, then sold it to Mr Armitage, who in turn sold the property to Dr Jenkins at the time of the gold rushes. In the words of Telfer, Dr Jenkins:

*... made a fortune on the place working it in connection with Dungowan and Wombramurra stations running about twenty eight or thirty thousand sheep also fifteen hundred head of cattle also one hundred and fifty horses also carrying on a butchering establishment and store on the goldfields and having another business as a gold buyer on the field at Hanging Rock.*³

Today Woolomin Station is run as cattle property, and produces lucerne hay.

From the late 1820s, the Colonial Government had attempted to restrict settlement to the nineteen counties, established within roughly a 320 kilometre radius of Sydney. Officially no settlement beyond these limits was permitted, but the regulation was difficult to police. Many settlers moved beyond the 'limits of location', made claim to a tract of country and 'squatted' illegally with their sheep and cattle. The valley of the Peel River was well beyond the official limits of settlement, but the glowing reports of the rich grazing land made by explorers such as Oxley and Mitchell fired the imaginations of would-be squatters and drew many to the district. Governor Gipps introduced a regulation requiring squatters to pay a licence fee of £10 a year to squat on Crown land, but it was impossible to enforce in remote areas. It was not until 1837 that pasturage licences became compulsory.⁴

When the A. A. Company was granted a vast tract of land to the west of the Peel River in 1834, some twenty illegal squatters were already grazing sheep on the prime river flats. They were evicted, and some of them drove their flocks over the Moonbi Range to open up new pastures on the New England plateau south of Armidale⁵

In 1846 the *Waste Lands Act* was passed, requiring runs occupied by squatters to be leased. In 1841 Armitage and Company are recorded as holding Wombramurra Station in the vicinity of the present town of Nundle, under a pasturage licence. Covering approximately 25,000 acres, the boundaries of the run extended from the range at Crawney in the south, along Wombramurra Creek and the Peel River to the west and along spurs of the Great Dividing Range on the north and east. The township of Nundle was later laid out within the northern tip of Wombramurra run. In 1847 Dr Richard L. Jenkins acquired Wombramurra. He already owned extensive land holdings in the area, including Woolloomon (25,600 acres), Wollombol (12,000 acres) and Piallimore (6,400 acres).

Sempill, like many other land holders at the time, was severely affected by the combination of drought and economic Depression which struck the colony in 1842. He left for Scotland, ostensibly to recruit labour, but failed to return, and in 1844 he was declared bankrupt and his holdings in New South Wales were put up for sale. While William Gardener mentions 'Wombramurra' in the first of his 'Descriptions of Northern New South Wales,' published in 1846, 'Nundul' receives no mention, and there do not appear to be any further mentions of Nundul in any source as a separate property. When the boundaries of pastoral holdings were gazetted in 1848, those given for 'Wombramurra' indicate that Jenkins' run had absorbed the earlier 'Nundul'.

In 1848 ex-convict Nathan Burrows, who had gained his ticket of leave in 1832, was listed as a squatter holding a lease of 15,360 acres at Hanging Rock. He ran some 500 head of cattle on his lease, known as 'the Hanging Rock Run'.⁶ Other runs established in the Nundle area by this time included Peter Brodie's run at Swamp Oak Creek (20,480 hectares); and Isaac Haig's run at Dungowan Creek (10,240 hectares).⁷ In the same year the County of Parry was proclaimed taking in the Liverpool Plains around the Peel River and the limits of settlement were widened, encouraging squatters to search for land even further from the settled areas.

Nundle had its origins in the gold rushes. Before gold was discovered near Hanging Rock in 1851 it was merely a branching off point for the tracks followed by the bullock teams supplying nearby stations or the more remote properties further north. On 10 July 1852 Abraham Solomon made an application for allotments to be put up for sale in the locality of Woolomin Reserve. This prompted the Government to consider the best location for a township to serve the newly discovered Peel River diggings. The surveyor commissioned to investigate the matter recommended 'Nundle, ten miles distant from Woolomin' as the most suitable site for a village. Nundle was centrally located at the junction of the road from the diggings at Hanging Rock to Tamworth and the road from the Hunter Valley via the Crawney Pass. Approval for the layout of the village of Nundle was given on 18 October 1852. Assistant Surveyor J.V. Gorman completed the plan for the township in January 1853, laying out the principal street, Jenkins Street, parallel to the river. Jenkins Street was named after one of the earliest residents, Dr R. L. Jenkins, and two of the cross streets, Durbin and Innes Streets, were named in honour of the first two gold commissioners for the district. Nundle was gazetted as a township on 23 February 1854, its official description being 'Nundle on the Peel River in the pastoral district of Liverpool Plains'. The first auction of town allotments in Nundle was held in Tamworth on 9 February 1855. The maximum price set was £8 per acre. The purchasers of the first lots in Nundle included Lewis Cohen, William McIlveen, William McClelland, Alex McClelland, Thomas McClelland, James Greer and William Cohen.⁸

The holdings of the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, successor to the A. A. Company, extended to the west bank of the Peel River opposite Nundle. The Company attempted to establish a private township of its own across the river from the fledgling Government settlement, but the venture, like West Tamworth, never prospered. After the first lots of land on the government side of the river were auctioned in 1855, Nundle grew rapidly. By 1866 Nundle was a thriving township with a population of 500.⁹ It was located in the centre of a rich agricultural district, and was an important service centre for the nearby gold diggings. According to Baillier's New South Wales Gazetteer of 1866, the town boasted five hotels, a post and money order office, court house, police barracks and a steam flour mill.¹⁰ Settlement in Happy Valley, Oakenville Creek and Hanging Rock had already begun before Nundle was established, and Happy Valley and Oakenville soon became suburbs of Nundle.

After the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* and the *Crown Lands Occupation Act* (commonly known as the Robertson Land Acts after the Secretary for Lands) were passed in 1861, settlers were able to take up land under conditional purchase. This threatened the large land holders, who held their lands as leaseholds, and possessed no secure title. The only land excluded from selection apart from town lots and goldfield areas, was land where pastoral

lessees or licence holders had made improvements. Selectors could take up the best portions of the large runs, particularly those with access to water, reducing the value of the remainder of the property. The proprietors of the large runs moved to secure their own title over as much of their grazing lands as possible in order to safeguard their holdings against such loss. This was most commonly done by becoming selectors themselves, or by having selections taken up in the names of family members or trusted employees - a practice known as 'dummying'. Among the earliest free settlers in the Nundle district were brothers Thomas, Alexander and William McIlveen who selected land in 1863 and 1864, J. Portsmouth in 1878, P. Heyman in 1879 and W.J. Boydell in 1884. By the early 1870s the population of Nundle was estimated at 800, with a total district population of 2,067. Chinese outnumbered Europeans in Nundle township, a legacy of the gold rushes of the 1850s: there were 500 Chinese and only 300 Europeans.



Figure 7: Detail from map of Parish of Nundle, County of Parry, Land district of Tamworth, Third edition 30 August 1904. Parish Map Collection, State Library of NSW.

5.2 HARVESTING THE LAND: PASTORALISM AND AGRICULTURE

By the 1820s the reports reaching Britain from the remote convict colony of New South Wales were receiving close attention. One of these was Oxley's Journal of his expeditions into the interior of New South Wales, published in London in 1820, and avidly read both in Britain and in the colony. Oxley's effusive praise of the northern valleys and plains of New

South Wales, and the enthusiasm of John Macarthur, who was visiting England at the height of his successful wool growing experiments, caught the imagination of the mercantile and political elite in Britain. They clearly saw the potential of the colony for agriculture, and particularly for wool growing. In November 1824 a one million pound enterprise, the A. A. Company, was formed in Britain and incorporated by Royal Charter. The British Government granted the Company over one million acres or 400,000 hectares of land, to be selected anywhere in New South Wales, on the condition that it employed 1,400 transported convicts. The Company was also granted a range of other privileges and conditional powers in New South Wales.¹¹

In June 1825 two ships the *York* and the *Brothers*, set sail for the antipodes with 12 men and their families, breeding stock and supplies. Robert Dawson, Manager of Viscount Barrington's estates in Berkshire, and an old school friend of John Macarthur, was appointed the Australian agent for the A. A. Company. The vessels arrived in Australia in November 1825, safely landing their cargo of 720 French and Saxon breeding sheep, 12 cattle, 15 horses and a selection of plants.¹² The Surveyor General John Oxley initially suggested the Liverpool Plains as a suitable site for the Company's operations, but the Company's 'Colonial Committee', headed by Macarthur, decided in favour of a site on the coast. Dawson selected just over a million acres of land between the Manning River and Port Stephens, a sheltered anchorage discovered by James Cook in 1770. While there was some good pasture, the area included substantial tracts of scrubby coastal land and heavily timbered ranges. The sheep brought from England proved unsuited to Australian conditions, and many died. After some years of unsatisfactory progress, it was clear that the only way to salvage the Company's fortunes was to search for better land elsewhere. Dawson was dismissed as Company agent in 1828, and in the following year his position was taken over by Sir Edward Parry, a prominent naval officer and Arctic explorer. Before he left England to take up his appointment Parry engaged Henry Dangar, the young surveyor who had worked for a number of years under Oxley in the New South Wales Surveyor General's Department. Dangar, who had returned to England, had first hand knowledge of the Hunter Valley District. As surveyor of the road from Newcastle to Maitland he was one of the first Europeans to explore the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook districts.

Dangar's first task on returning to Australia was to search for better pastures for the A. A. Company's flocks. He recommended the Liverpool Plains, an area that had already been traversed by John Oxley and Allan Cunningham. In 1831 Dangar set out from Port Stephens and crossed the Great Dividing Range from the headwaters of the Manning River. He followed the Peel River from its headwaters to the fertile plains discovered by Oxley twelve years earlier. In March 1832 Dangar returned to the Peel River Valley with Parry, and readily convinced him of the grazing potential of the rich river flats along the Peel and the Liverpool Plains just north of the Liverpool Range. Crossing the Liverpool Range from the Hunter Valley, Dangar and Parry's party traced the Peel from just downstream of Attunga to its junction with the Muluerindi, now called the Namoi, which they followed to the site of Manilla. On their return journey the party travelled overland to Attunga, followed the Peel River past the present site of Nundle, then crossed the ranges over the Crawney Pass to the Hunter Valley. Parry pronounced himself well pleased by the *'much good country... admirably suited to the Company's principal object, the maintenance of fine woolled sheep'*. He hurriedly returned to Sydney to lay claim to two areas suggested by Dangar, which comprised some of the richest land in the Liverpool Plains.¹³

Following lengthy negotiations with Governor Bourke and the Colonial Office in London, in 1834 the A. A. Company was granted almost 250,000 hectares in the Peel River area in exchange for 200,000 hectares of coastal and mountainous lands in the Port Stephens district. The new holdings were divided into two vast estates, one rectangular block named Warrah near Quirindi on the Liverpool Plains and an irregular tract of land named Goonoo Goonoo on the Peel River. The Goonoo Goonoo Estate covered 126,480 hectares, taking in all the choice

alluvial land to the west of the river. It extended from the headwaters of the Peel above Nundle, past its junctions with the Cockburn River and Attunga Creek, to a point north of Mt Duri. From there the estate boundaries ran east then south from Mount Duri, to rejoin the Peel near its headwaters below the Crawney Pass.

In June 1834 Colonel Henry Dumaesq, Parry's successor as manager of the A. A. Company, visited the Peel Estate and selected a site for its headquarters at the junction of the Peel River and Forest Brook, now known as Goonoo Goonoo Creek. He proposed the site should be called Tamworth, linking the illustrious politician Sir Robert Peel and the Borough of Tamworth in Staffordshire where the Peel family had their estates.

Over 6,000 sheep were moved from Port Stephens to Warrah and then on to the Goonoo Goonoo estate. Some 200 of the 1,400 convicts assigned to the Company were scattered across the station as shepherds, labourers and hut keepers. Supplies were brought from Port Stephens along the bridle track pioneered by Henry Dangar, which led from Tamworth east to the Great Dividing Range then followed the Manning River to the coast near Tahlee north of the Port. Until 1841 the sheep were driven each year all the way to Port Stephens for shearing.¹⁴

In 1839 Phillip Parker King, son of the third Governor of New South Wales, took over as Commissioner of the A. A. Company. He was the first of a long line of commissioners who were direct descendants of Governor King, and under his management the Company flourished. The fame of Goonoo Goonoo's fine wool spread, and the stock on the station increased steadily. The heyday of wool at Goonoo Goonoo came under the leadership of Philip Gidley King who succeeded his father as superintendent in 1854. He held his position for 50 years and introduced efficiencies in running the estate, including fencing. Fencing meant that shepherds could be replaced with a much smaller number of boundary riders. P. G. King took a great interest in the development of Tamworth, and was the town's first Mayor from 1876 to 1880.

In 1847 the A. A. Company lost its status as a Chartered Company, becoming an ordinary business firm. In 1854 the Company was restructured, and renamed the Peel River Land and Mineral Company. Gold had been discovered two years before at Hanging Rock near Nundle and there was an opportunity for the company to mine for gold on the Goonoo Goonoo estate. Ultimately the Company made little profit from mining, but pastoralism remained highly lucrative during the long period of prosperity that followed the gold rushes.¹⁵ In the 1881 season 130,000 sheep were shorn on Goonoo Goonoo, and 80 hands were required to bring in the clip. Over 300 sheep a day passed through the shearing shed on the estate, which was among the largest in the colony, accommodating 47 shearers. In 1889 a new brick woolshed was built on Goonoo Goonoo equipped with the latest steam driven Wolseley shearing machine. At first hand-shearers and machine-shearers worked side by side, but the superiority of the machine shears was quickly proven. Shearing machines were used on Wombramurra station in the same year, and then came into general use on all the stations in the district.

The A. A. Company was the first major corporation to enter the wool industry and it had an association with the Peel River Valley that lasted 151 years, from 1834 to 1985. During the twentieth century the Company came under increasing pressure from closer settlement schemes and soldier settlement schemes, and its lands were progressively sold off or compulsorily acquired. After the Second World War large areas of Goonoo Goonoo were opened up for soldier settlement and the area of the estate was reduced dramatically. In 1985 the Company sold at auction its remaining 4,835 hectares.¹⁶

The recollections of Elsie Manuel in a publication marking the 125th anniversary of Nundle Public School give an insight into life on large pastoral stations such as Goonoo Goonoo and Wombramurra in the 1930s and 1940s. Elsie Thomas went to school in Nundle, and married

Rusty Manuel in Nundle in 1937, when she was 22. Her husband was a boundary rider on Goonoo Goonoo station and when they first married they lived in a little cottage and bought furniture on time payment. They then went to work on Wombramurra Station, living an isolated existence at the head of the Peel River, often cut off when the river flooded. Rusty was a stockman, mustering stock and repairing fences, while Elsie was the housekeeper. She remembers packing Rusty's lunch in a quart pot and saddle bag each day, and while he was away she would walk over to visit neighbours or take the children with her on horseback. She remembers:

*We went to town once a month, most rations were available on the station but clothes and linen were bought by catalogue.*¹⁷

While the vast Goonoo Goonoo estate took up most of the land west of the Peel River, on the east side of the Peel individual squatters and selectors occupied land and made their living raising sheep and cattle. The history of Wombramurra Station is central to the history of Nundle, and was typical of many other large stations in the district. We owe the earliest accounts of Wombramurra to John Freeman. Early in 1841 he was employed by Edward Mayne, the Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Pastoral District of Liverpool Plains, to conduct a census of the district. According to his records Wombramurra head station consisted of six huts on Wombramurra Creek occupied by 23 people, including one married couple with two children; 11 of the remaining 19 were shepherds. On the adjoining Nundul run there were two huts occupied by a married couple and five single men, presumably shepherds. In 1848, when the boundaries of pastoral runs were gazetted, Wombramurra was said to cover 25,600 acres and to have an estimated carrying capacity of 5,000 sheep.

Between 1848 and 1865 several large selections and the whole of the Peel River goldfield were excised from Wombramurra. Despite this, in 1865 the area of Wombramurra was estimated at 30,000 acres, significantly higher than the figure given in 1848. In about 1873, Wombramurra was bought by John Charles Bonarius, who had been a storekeeper at Hanging Rock in the early 1860s, before moving to Newcastle.

During the 1880s selectors continued to take up portions of Wombramurra. George Ignatius Moore and Matthew Keniff acquired land to the west of Wombramurra Creek, James Fogarty selected at the foot of Crawney, and James Tongue held 80 acres fronting the Peel. Other small selectors were David Nicol, near Wombramurra Creek, and John Portsmouth, the boundary rider, on the Peel. The family of William, Patrick and James Heyman also selected portions of the station, and had a long association with Wombramurra, working as shearers.

In a parallel development, J.C. Bonarius put considerable effort into buying out selectors in order to secure land titles on Wombramurra. Between 1875 and 1878 he purchased most of the lands held by the sons of William McIlveen on the upper Peel. The McIlveen lands secured for the station absolute freehold title over 750 acres, the largest single such acquisition made by any of its proprietors, along with a further 956 acres of conditional purchase land. Bonarius also bought up George Ignatius Moore's 100-acre selection, and selected 40 acres in his own name.

In 1880 Bonarius returned to Newcastle, and sold Wombramurra to Thomas McClelland, Alexander's brother and William McIlveen's brother-in-law, with finance provided by a mortgage to the Bank of New South Wales. Just over two years later, in January 1883, Thomas McClelland sold Wombramurra to brothers Frederick and Theophilus H. Cooper. Upon taking possession the Cooper brothers began energetically to build up the run, acquire selectors' titles and generally improve it. It was while the Coopers were on Wombramurra that the next major change in the law concerning land titles was made. The *Crown Lands Act* of 1884 divided all pastoral holdings into two portions: a 'Resumed Area', open to selection, leased to the holder of the run under an occupation licence renewed annually, and a 'Leasehold Area', not open to selection, but only returned to the lessee for a non-renewable

fixed term. Under the new legislation, the north-east portion of Wombramurra became Resumed Area No. 411, the south-west, Leasehold Area No. 411A, with the lease on this portion due to expire in August, 1890. The total area of both portions of Wombramurra under the new arrangements was reported as 43,200 acres.¹⁸

The sale of Wombramurra to Messrs S.J. Payne & Co. of Melbourne in 1886 began a new chapter in the history of the station. At the time of the sale the assets of the station included 1,057 acres freehold, 5,045 acres under conditional purchase, 10,548 sheep, 40 cattle and 15 horses. Frank Payne, son of the owner, was installed as manager of the station and he began to make improvements to the Wombramurra flock, making a series of purchases of rams from Boonoke, near Jerilderie from 1890 onwards. In 1891 he diversified into cattle, purchasing the original stock of the Wombramurra Devon herd. He went on to purchase 20 heifers and a bull from Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley and 13 cows and heifers at Mr Reginald Wyndham's dispersal sale at Leconfield station. This proved to be a propitious business decision; within five years Wombramurra Devons were winning prizes at the Tamworth Show. By this time the area of the former head station was no longer part of Wombramurra, but had become the centre of a cluster of farm selections. In 1958 the Land Board resumed a total area of about 2,936 acres from Wombramurra, paying compensation of £10 per acre.¹⁹ Today Wombramurra Station is owned by Peter and Judy Howarth; when they purchased the property in 1987 it covered approximately 20,000 acres. For many years the Howarths ran over 6,000 sheep on Wombramurra and bred Simmental cattle, employing a team of stockmen, station hands and shearers. In 2005 the couple sold most of the property, retaining the homestead. They now concentrate on their other business interests in the district.²⁰

During the height of the gold rushes small farmers found a ready market for their fruit and vegetables on the diggings, and the sheep and cattle raised on the grazing runs kept the miners supplied with meat. Many miners who were unsuccessful in making their fortune on the diggings, including Chinese, stayed in the district and also took up farming. The precise locations of Chinese market gardens in the Nundle district are not well known today. A record dated 21 March 1876 in the Register of Business Allotments held in the Nundle Museum states that Ah Chung had been in possession of a house and garden 'between the junction of Swamp Creek and the Peel River under the Moonlight Mountain' for two years.²¹ From the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries Chinese market gardeners are remembered throughout regional New South Wales for their contribution to the supply of fresh vegetables. Through their traditional horticultural skills and their capacity for hard work, they dominated the production and distribution of vegetables in New South Wales for over a generation, until the 1930s.²²

During the 1870s dairies were established along the river flats of the Peel. Although there was a move to build a dairy factory in Nundle in 1904, the proposal received little support and farmers continued to send their cream to the factory in Tamworth. Pig raising and ham and bacon curing were important supplements to the dairy farmers' incomes. Ham and bacon production in the Nundle district grew steadily, reaching a peak in the 1920s. Once they were established many dairy farmers were able to improve their properties and expand into raising sheep and fat cattle and growing wheat and lucerne. Maize was also grown along the Peel River, particularly between Nundle and Woolomin and Dungowan.

The dairy industry in New South Wales underwent major changes during the 1950s and 1960s. Small local factories closed and processing was centralised in large-scale plants with modern machinery and production methods. Bulk whole milk collection was introduced around 1970 and many farmers, unable to meet the capital costs of installing storage and chilling equipment on their properties, left the industry. At its peak there were around 80 dairies in the Nundle district; by the 1980s this had declined to less than 20.²³ One of the best known dairies operating in the Nundle district today is Peel Valley Milk at Woolomin, owned by independent dairy farmer Malcolm Rose. Mr Rose has shown that it is possible to go it

alone, without aligning with the large processors like Dairy Farmers and National Foods. Peel Valley Milk recently won a grant from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to process and market a new range of gourmet dairy products.²⁴

Chinese were also pioneers of tobacco growing in New South Wales. During the 1880s Chinese farmers in the Nundle district experimented with tobacco growing on the Peel river flats. Tobacco was grown extensively on the river flats around Woolomin between 1923 and 1926. The old brick school at Woolomin was used for curing the leaf, and a skillion roof was added to the side, together with steel fire boxes fitted with flues. Mr Joe Brady grew tobacco with his father and brother, and also had a carrying business.²⁵

The climate of the Nundle district with its reliable rainfall, warm summers and cold winters, was also ideal for fruit growing, although it is not a major industry today. English fruit such as black currants, gooseberries, apples, pears and peaches thrived, and in the 1880s farmers tried growing quinces, plums, figs, grapes and oranges.

Wheat was grown in the Nundle district from the early days of European settlement and a steam flour mill operated in Nundle by 1860. On 14 January 1860 William McIlveen advertised in the *Tamworth Examiner* that he was prepared to give the highest price for wheat in any quantity and 'to supply storekeepers, settlers and others with flour not to be surpassed by any in the colony'.²⁶ Wheat production declined after red rust was found in a crop at Woolomin in 1879. After the Goonoo Goonoo estate began to be subdivided production of wheat and oats increased again.

At higher altitudes around Hanging Rock the high rainfall and fertile soil proved ideal for potato growing. In his recollections William Telfer Junior relates how Nathan Burrows grew potatoes at Hanging Rock in the 1850s, taking loads to Tamworth to sell a few times a year.²⁷ According to local tradition Paul Prisk, George Chapman, James Bradshaw and the Wardens grew potatoes commercially at 'the Rock' around 1900. The heavily timbered country around Hanging Rock was labour intensive to clear, and it was not until the 1940s and 1950s that former mining lease areas were cleared for agriculture using heavy machinery. The Department of Agriculture conducted trials of new varieties of potatoes around this time. Potatoes are not grown in quantity in the district today.

In 1914 J.W. Newman, later Councilor Newman, painted a glowing picture of the agricultural wealth of the Nundle district, in a submission in support of a railway line to Nundle:

*The rich valleys of Dungowan Creek or Duncan's Creek on the east and all that valuable land just over the mountain on the west, owned by Peel River Land and Mineral Company... one acre of that rich soil would produce more loadings than five or six acres of wheat land... At Duncan's Creek it has been proved that lucerne can be profitably be grown on the higher ridge land...there is an almost inexhaustible supply of nearly all kind of hardwoods... If this line were built it would place thousands of acres of rich volcanic soil at Hanging Rock, and at the heads of Duncan's, Dungowan and Mullah Creeks within a workable distance where potatoes, turnips and all root crops could be grown to perfection. Oats also grow remarkably well and would pay on this high cold climate. Manitoba wheat grows and yields grain of a very superior quality.*²⁸

The heavily forested ranges to the east of Hanging Rock, at the head of the Barnard and Manning Rivers, contain good reserves of valuable timber, including stringybark, messmate, manna gum and ribbon gum. These resources were first exploited in 1874, when a zigzag road was completed up Hanging Rock Mountain. Logs could then be transported to Wilberforce Brothers Mill on the Peel River. Sawmills were established in Tamworth, Walcha and Nowendoc by 1875. The Nundle district may not have had much chance of a rail line of its

own, but much of the production of the Wilberforce Brothers Mill was used for railway sleepers for constructing the railway to Tamworth and beyond. Timber from Hanging Rock was also used in the construction of Tamworth Railway Station. On 11 May 1878 the *Tamworth Observer* reported from Nundle:

*Sammy, our forest ranger, has been playing havoc with the carriers and employees at the saw mill, he summoning them for cutting and drawing of timber from the forest reserve; and should he be given his cases, heaven help your railway station [in Tamworth], as all the timber comes from our mill that is now being used in its construction.*²⁹

The widespread clearing of forests in New South Wales for grazing and settlement accelerated during the 1890s and into the twentieth century, leaving little land for the ongoing production of timber. It was not until the *Forestry Act* of 1909 and the establishment of the Forestry Commission of New South Wales under the *Forestry Act* of 1916 that wholesale clearing of leasehold lands in central and eastern New South Wales was brought under some control through the declaration of State forests and timber reserves. The gazettal of land as State Forest was more secure than that of a timber reserve, requiring the passage of a resolution through both houses of parliament before it could be revoked. Although many leases have been converted to freehold over the years, this early legislation laid the foundation for the areas of State Forest and National Park that exist in New South Wales today.³⁰ The Nundle State Forest, covering 14,000 acres, was dedicated in 1917 and in the following year Hanging Rock State Forest, of 7,840 acres, was created.

Logging of hardwood forests in the Nundle district continued from the 1930s, with small local sawmills based at Walcha, Nundle, Nowendoc and Tamworth. However harvesting was sporadic due to the inaccessibility of the forests and difficulties in marketing timber. The intensity of logging increased in the 1940s to meet war time requirements, and again in the 1960s when exotic conifer plantations began to be established. The aim was to extract the maximum amount of hardwood timber prior to clearing. In the late 1970s it was decided that future establishment of *Pinus radiata* plantations should be limited to Hanging Rock and Nundle State Forests.³¹



Figure 8: Nundle Woollen Mill, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

Today the Nundle area's main agricultural and pastoral industries are wool, cattle, wheat and timber, together with dairying and poultry. There are a number of cattle studs producing high quality breeding stock. Farmers have diversified into new industries, farming deer for venison and antler production and breeding goats. Initially introduced to control blackberries and other weeds, goats have become the backbone of a new industry producing fine mohair and cashmere wool. This in turn has generated new secondary industries in Nundle, such as the successful Nundle Woollen Mill. Small-scale local craft workers now produce knitted woollen garments using wool sourced from the mill. One of the goals of the Nundle Woollen Mill is to develop special yarns blending wool with a variety of fibres such as mohair, cashmere, alpaca, cotton, linen, and angora.³²

Trout farming is another new industry in the Nundle district. The Arc-En-Ciel trout farm at Hanging Rock 1,220 m above sea level on the top of the Great Dividing Range is a successful example of agricultural diversification. In 1982 Ron and Ivy Bishop began experimenting with breeding rainbow trout for sale to restaurants in Tamworth, making use of the abundance of crystal clear spring water on their property. They explain what prompted them to start the venture:

*At the end of the drought in 1982 we were battling low commodity prices for our sheep and cattle enterprise, so we decided to look for another avenue to increase our earnings.*³³

The business went from strength to strength, so that in 1988 the Bishops sold the sheep and cattle grazing side of their property, to concentrate on the trout. They built a processing shed with a large cool room, ice machine, freezers and smoke room, and a hatchery which enables them to produce their own fingerlings. Arc en Ciel supplies fresh and smoked trout fillets and smoked trout pate to restaurants and outlets from Sydney to Brisbane, including top restaurants in the Hunter Valley vineyards. They also supply fingerlings for stocking farm dams.³⁴

5.3 MINING

According to local legend, in August 1851 Nathan Burrows, while riding near Swamp Oak Creek on his run at Hanging Rock, came across one of his stockmen washing for gold with a pint pot. The stockman, whose name remains unrecorded, glimpsed a few bright specks of gold left behind in his pannikin while washing it after a meal. Burrows reported the discovery of gold to William Cohen, the storekeeper in Tamworth, and the news quickly spread. This account of the first discovery of gold in the Nundle district had its origins in a story run in the *Tamworth Observer* of August 29th 1885.³⁵ However more recent research suggests that gold was not discovered at Hanging Rock until at least September 1851.

During the latter half of 1851 enterprising businessmen in Maitland offered a reward for the discovery of payable gold in the Hunter Valley and the northern districts of New South Wales. The discovery of gold near Bathurst in February that year had consolidated the town's economic position in the west, as hundreds flocked to the area to seek their fortunes. Businessmen of Maitland hoped that new gold finds in the north-west would do the same for their town, and the reward they offered was the catalyst for the search for gold in the region. Under the terms of the reward, agreed at a meeting held at the Australian Inn in West Maitland on 2 June 1851, two thirds of the total subscription of almost £270 less current expenses would go to the discoverer of the first payable field and one third to the discoverer of the second field, provided that the second claim was made within three months of the first, and was located more than ten miles from the first. If no second claim was made the first claimant would receive the full reward.

By the close of the claim period on 1 December 1851 the Maitland Gold Reward Committee had received nine claims, including finds at Foot's Corner 12 miles from Barraba and a find made by Messrs Buchanan and Lucas on the Cockburn River (Swamp Oak Creek) on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range. Buchanan and Lucas's claim, made in September 1851, extended from the Cockburn River, over the Moonbi Range into New England along the McDonald River and other streams to the Rocky River 20 miles from Armidale. However on investigation none of the claims were determined to be workable, and the Committee formally dissolved the reward. Prospectors made their way to the Cockburn River following the news of Buchanan and Lucas's find, but they met with little success and most moved on to the richer fields of the Bathurst district.

During the period that the Maitland Gold Reward was offered the Committee received a report via Messrs D. Cohen and Co that a James Zuill had discovered gold in a creek off the Cockburn River. However Zuill made no formal claim for the reward, and the Committee determined that it fell within the area of the claim made by Messrs Buchanan and Lucas. It was Zuill's find that may have led to the story of the discovery of gold at Hanging Rock in August 1851, enshrined in local lore.³⁶

On 24 January 1852 The *Maitland Mercury* announced that gold had been found at the Hanging Rock, bringing a fresh wave of eager prospectors to the district. Before the end of February, gold from Swamp Oak Creek and Hanging Rock was reaching Maitland. Twenty seven cradles were operating at Hanging Rock and the number of diggers was increasing daily.³⁷

The first strikes at Hanging Rock were followed by an even richer find at Bowling Alley Point on the Peel River about six miles away and by the end of March 1852 the main body of miners had moved their operations there. They set up shanty towns of tents and crude bark shelters. At first gold was found in creeks, in river banks and on ridges throughout the Nundle district and was easily won by washing by hand. Prospectors who surveyed the Peel for ten miles from its source reported that they found gold in abundance, 'in almost every dishful we washed'. In May 1852 223 gold miner's licences were issued. The miners paid the licence fees with great reluctance; within a year they were demanding their abolition. Miners evaded paying licence fees in every way they could. When the mining commissioner made his rounds, warning cries passed from claim to claim, so that those who had not paid their license fees could get away. Eventually the Government reduced licence fees from one pound ten shillings per month to ten shillings per year.³⁸

Tiny settlements quickly sprang up to provide for the needs of the prospectors who flocked to the Nundle district. On Oakenville Creek west of the foot of Hanging Rock, stores and public houses appeared and by June 1852 there were 300 diggers and their families camped along the valley in tents and bark huts. In Happy Valley, north of Oakenville Creek, two stores and a public house were operating by 1855. Within two months of the discovery of gold at Hanging Rock a sly grog seller was reported to be operating there and public houses sprang up soon afterwards.³⁹

Shepherds and general hands on the A. A. Company's Goonoo Goonoo estate and surrounding properties hastily gathered up stores and tools and left to seek their fortunes. The demand for equipment was so great that Mr Levy, store keeper at Tamworth, wrote to a friend:

*I have sold every tin dish, pot and kettle and in fact have not now a bit of tinware. To give you some idea of how the men want to be off to the diggings I have sold them all the tea boards I had.*⁴⁰

By 1854 better equipped miners were arriving from as far afield as China, Europe, California and Jamaica to try their luck on the goldfields. The diggers' dreams of untold wealth were

reflected in the names of the shanty settlements that sprang up along the Peel River and the creeks that flowed into it: Happy Valley, Nuggety Creek, Golden Point, Diamond Creek. The rush in Happy Valley began in 1854, but by 1859 most of the best alluvial gold had been taken out. According to local legend, the more esoteric Bowling Alley Point was named after a saloon set up by two enterprising Americans who introduced the popular game of skittles to the goldfields. Americans, many of whom were veterans of the Californian gold rushes of 1849, dominated the polyglot community that gathered on the diggings in the Nundle district, to the extent that some visitors commented that it was like being in 'Yankee land'.⁴¹ On 13 July 1859 the *Tamworth Examiner* reported on the 4th of July celebrations held at Bowling Alley Point, commenting:

*... this goldfield owes much to American enterprise for past and present... more than half the gold ever obtained from this field has been from the supply of water brought by Yankee ditches, which are laid out with no little engineering skill, and well deserve the attention of the 'powers that be'.*⁴²

Tensions on the goldfields mounted when hundreds of Chinese arrived. They were derided by the European miners as 'inexplicable and outlandish visitants', and resented for their great industry. However in reports made by the Gold Commissioner they were described as being 'an industrious, hard working set, very orderly and quiet'.⁴³ All ethnic groups competed to lay claim to the best mining locations, and claim jumping was rife. On 4 July 1852 15 Chinese jumped the claim of a group of Californian miners while they were away celebrating Independence Day. When the Californians returned a pitched battle ensued, with drawn knives on both sides. Eventually the Californians regained their claim and the Chinese fled.⁴⁴ While most Chinese came in search of gold, others established market gardens and stores to supply the diggers. When the gold ran out or new fields beckoned, the majority left. Some stayed on to become a permanent part of the history of the Nundle district.

Illness and accident took the lives of many Chinese miners. The ideal for Chinese was to be buried in their homeland, but the friends and relatives of the deceased generally could not afford to send their remains back to China. The cemeteries at Bowling Alley Point and Nundle had allocated burial grounds for Chinese people and became final resting places for most. In some cases bones were exhumed and shipped back for burial in China. In 1988, a farmer at Hanging Rock uncovered a Chinese headstone 30 cm by 20 by 10 cm in size while ploughing. This monument remains the only existing evidence of a Chinese burial taking place in the vicinity of the Hanging Rock goldfields. The inscription can still be clearly read: 'Chuang Yuk Hong who died in September 1874 born in the village of Lam Ling Shang-on District, Guangdong.'⁴⁵

The Superintendent of the A. A. Company hoped to persuade most of the Company's employees to remain at their posts by 'some reasonable concessions in wages and rations', but this was insufficient inducement. All hands joined the rush to the diggings, many equipped with no more than a frying pan, a calabash and a pair of shearing blades, the rudiments necessary for panning for gold.⁴⁶ The Company soon found that its lands on the western side of the Peel River were also rich in gold, and attempted to prevent miners from digging for it. But it was difficult to police their activities. Hundreds of miners crossed the river under cover of darkness and worked all night digging for gold, returning to their camps by daylight. In 1852 the A. A. Company's station at Goonoo Goonoo was taken over by the newly formed Peel River Land and Mineral Company for £500,000, including stock of over 44,000 sheep and 270 cattle. In February 1855 the Company opened its lands on the Peel River to the public, charging a licence fee of ten shillings per month.

In 1863 a wrought iron footbridge across the Peel River at Bowling Alley Point was erected. According to local history six hotel keepers jointly financed the bridge. It was in their commercial interests, as the majority of miners were working on the A. A. Company side of the river, where it was forbidden to erect a public house. One of the earliest examples of

Bessemer steel construction in the colony, the bridge was prefabricated at the steel works in Newcastle, shipped up the Hunter River to Morpeth, then transported by bullock dray over the formidable Crawney Pass. In 1958 Nundle Shire Council decided that the footbridge was dangerous and called for tenders for its disposal. After numerous calls for its preservation, Council recognised the historical value of the bridge and in 1963 allocated an estimated £150 to upgrade and repair it. The bridge was completely washed away by floodwaters in 1984. The remains of the bridge lay in the riverbed for three years until the Bicentennial Authority made \$30,000 available to restore it. In late 1987 the bridge was relocated to the eastern bank of Chaffey Dam and rebuilt in time for the Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988.⁴⁷



**Figure 9: Bowling Alley Point footbridge in its original location, 1977.
Photograph courtesy EJE Group.**

Although high hopes were held for the Peel diggings, they never rivalled the finds at Turon or Burragorang, let alone the major Victorian strikes at Bendigo and Ballarat. But they were lucrative enough to support hundreds of miners until the mid-1860s when the easily won alluvial gold began to run out, first in one valley, then another.⁴⁸ As early as 1861, Happy Valley, which had been populated by hundreds of prospectors from all corners of the globe, was almost deserted, as miners moved on to richer fields. Many Chinese continued to mine the alluvial claims abandoned by Europeans as unprofitable and managed to scrape a living for a few more years. By 1872 there was little activity at the once bustling settlement at Hanging Rock. In August 1872 a reporter from the *Sydney Mail* wrote:

*The Hanging Rock is now a mere relic of its departed greatness, and viewed from the height where I stood, where all the old workings could be seen, it seemed like a monster basin... surrounded by hills from top to base, turned over, where rich patches were first worked, and in after years 're-returned' again, and still gold procured. Two public houses stand in the valley, their signs, 'golden ones' now only serve to remind one of what was when diggers were plentiful and cash abounding. But little business is done there now – a few old hands remain.*⁴⁹

During the early 1860s a new era of mining began, focusing on the quartz reefs. Steam quartz crushing machines largely replaced the laborious work of panning for gold by hand, and the hills and valleys around Nundle were honeycombed with shafts and tunnels. Miners gave their claims and reefs names that expressed their hopes and aspirations: Golden Hole, the Golden Chance, the Golden Gate, Hidden Treasure, Golden Point, Diamond Point; or reflected the polyglot community in which they lived and worked, such as Blackfellow's and Kanaka. Sally Grey's mine at Hanging Rock was one of the few mines owned and mined by a

woman. In January 1860 the *Tamworth Examiner* described the hive of industry on the goldfields:

*Every description of mining and gold washing is practised on these diggings, from the powerful steam and water power dredging machine to the primitive cradle and tin dish, puddling machines, toms, sluices, the Californian water jet, and, indeed, every known means of procuring and separating the precious metal, is here to be seen in full operation, and each seems to pay.*⁵⁰

The miners transformed the landscape. As the *Tamworth Observer* recalled in 1885:

*These men were the great captains of the days gone by... They dug up the valleys, turned the river courses, pierced the great mountains and obtained thousands of ounces of gold for their labour...*⁵¹

In 1864 631 miners' licences were issued at Nundle, and the district produced 8,476 ounces of gold, valued at £32,000. At that time Chinese miners outnumbered Europeans. They were skilled at constructing waterworks and continued to work the alluvial gold claims abandoned by less patient European prospectors. A constant supply of water was needed to wash the crushings and water races or channels were cut to divert water from creeks and streams to where it was needed. One of the major engineering works undertaken on the Hanging Rock fields was the construction of a water race from the waters of the Barnard on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range to Mount Ephraim on the west, through eight miles of rugged country. Built by a party led by Radley and Grenfell in 1884, the race provided a reliable supply of water even during times of drought.

Water supplies were a constant problem on the goldfields and drought conditions often halted production. In 1862 all the water rights of the western slopes of the Liverpool Range were granted to the American Company. Twenty years later Paul Prisk and Isaac Watts bought the rights from the American Company, and the Mount Sheba Company subsequently leased the rights from them. In 1888 the Mount Sheba Company built the two Sheba dams on Swamp Creek at Hanging Rock. The dams were built by hand in only three weeks. From them, water was directed to the miners by means of water races, which can still be seen cutting across the landscape around Hanging Rock today. Miners paid a fee for use of the water, which was regulated by a caretaker. Part of the caretaker's slab cottage still stands near the upper Sheba dam. Control of access to water was a powerful means of limiting the activities of Chinese miners on the goldfields. In one incident reported by the *Tamworth Observer* in December 1889, miners on Hanging Rock mountain dammed the water for cradling, preventing it from reaching the claims of Chinese miners below, who had paid for their supply from the Sheba dams. The parties failed to reach agreement and after a bitter fight the Chinese miners abandoned their claims.⁵² After the death of Paul Prisk's widow in 1947 her executors failed to renew the mining tenements and they lapsed. Nundle Shire Council took over control of the dams, and today they are popular recreation reserves.

The increased mechanisation of mining and infrastructure works such as dams required large amounts of capital investment, so that few small miners remained by the 1880s. During the 1880s mines were operating at Mount Ephraim and Mount Pleasant, and towards the end of the decade the Mount Sheba Company opened a mine at the head of Yahoo Gully 1,500 feet above Nundle. Using water from the Sheba dams, hydrants directed jets of water against the wash dirt which flowed down the dump shafts, depositing the gold into sluice boxes below. Harrison and Whiffen, contractors for the Tamworth electricity plant, installed electric light in the underground section of the mine. They used a water driven dynamo, possibly the first used in the colony. During the 1880s and early 1890s Nundle was at the peak of its prosperity. The hills and valleys around the town rang with the sound of batteries and crushing machines.⁵³



Figure 10: Sheba dam, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The building of the Sheba dams provided a reliable supply of water and inspired confidence, so that new mining companies were floated and additional machinery installed in older mines. But within a few years the peak of the gold rushes was past. The Mount Ephraim Mine closed in 1890 and its heavy machinery was moved to Queensland, and one by one mines at Bowling Alley Point, Hanging Rock and Nundle ceased working. There were later attempts to win gold from the diggings, but they were unsuccessful. The Tamworth Gold Mining Company began operations on the Nundle goldfields in 1897 but failed to make a profit and after only a year was reduced to crushing ore for other companies. The Company folded in the early 1890s. Between 1905 and 1917 the Nundle Gold Dredging Syndicate undertook dredging operations in the Peel River and Oakenville and Happy Valley creeks to extract the remaining alluvial gold, but it met with limited success. Rock bars and boulders often damaged the dredge.

During the Depression of the 1890s large numbers of alluvial miners returned to the goldfields to try to make a living, and surprisingly in 1895 the Peel River goldfields produced the largest quantity of gold in its history. According to Department of Mines records 5,770 ounces was produced, valued at £20,224. However once prosperity returned the numbers of miners dropped sharply and production decreased. A similar revival of mining of the old alluvial claims occurred during the Depression of the 1930s, but the mining era was essentially over by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

One of the oldest surviving mines in the Nundle area is the Black Snake Mine near Hanging Rock, which is still in operation. Joseph Clark opened the mine in 1876, and he worked it with another miner, George Cairns, until 1926. Using primitive equipment limited to hammers, picks and gunpowder the two miners constructed 112 metres of tunnels by hand. The main tunnel, winding 80 metres into the hillside, was built in the 1880s. They named the mine Black Snake because of the way the main reef of gold twisted and turned, although it generally trended north-south.⁵⁵

The rugged landscape around Nundle contains a wealth of minerals other than gold, that may one day be recovered. Scheelite (used in hardening metals) was located in 1907 and worked until the 1980s, and at Bowling Alley Point there are lodes of chrome and iron ore.⁵⁶

5.4 SERVICING COMMUNITIES

5.4.1 Schools

Around April 1853 the residents of Hanging Rock erected a building to serve the dual purpose of church and school, and asked the Bishop of Newcastle to appoint a school master as there were at least 30 children living in the area. On 14 May 1853 the *Maitland Mercury* reported that a ‘strong bark building’ had been erected at Hanging Rock to serve as a church and a school, and four days later published the following:

It will be perhaps of some satisfaction to those who have families who are about to try the Hanging Rock that a school has recently been erected and that Mr Richards, a gentleman recently from England, has been appointed schoolmaster.⁵⁷

The school at Hanging Rock operated in the original building for over twenty years. In 1878 the residents of Hanging Rock petitioned the Council of Education to open a permanent public school. Their request was granted, even though by that time the population of the goldfields had dwindled and there were only 15 pupils enrolled. A public school opened at Hanging Rock in September 1878. Two years later the Department of Public Instruction took over and erected a new weatherboard school with a teacher’s residence attached on a two acre site. A small enclosed porch kept out the winter snows and biting winds which swept down from ‘the Rock’. Mr M. Connors was appointed as teacher.⁵⁸ During the 1890s a second classroom and two small rooms serving as a detached kitchen were added to the school. The thirty pine trees planted when the school was opened still shelter the site today. In September 1952 a modern two-roomed weatherboard school was opened, replacing the original building. The school at Hanging Rock finally closed in December 1970, ending over 120 years of education in the village.

The first school in Nundle was a Church of England denominational school which began in 1861 in a simple bark building in Charles Street. In March 1867 this school was certified under the *Public Schools Act* 1866, by which time there were 33 children enrolled. Unfortunately the school was not successful, and attendance was poor. The first teacher Mr W. H. Porter, who taught at the school until it closed in 1870, was criticised by a visiting inspector:

He practises the rote mode of teaching hence intelligent answers cannot be gained from his pupils. His order and arrangement are defective.⁵⁹

While negotiations were going on for the establishment of a public school the Rev. Whinfield offered the Council of Education the use of a building for a school, but it was too small for the numbers expected to attend. Local residents made an official application for a public school in Nundle on 20 September 1869. In 1870 two acres of land at the corner of Jenkins and Oakenville Streets in the centre of Nundle was reserved for the purpose. A new brick school with a shingle roof was built on the site, opening in January 1872 with an enrolment of 58 children. The building comprised a single long room to accommodate 60 pupils with an entry porch, verandah, and a teacher’s residence of three rooms and kitchen attached to one side. A report made by the local inspector in May 1874 noted that the total enrolment was 75. The inspector reported favourably on the teacher, George Hill, and his pupils:

...the course of instruction is complete and well regulated and the methods as a whole are of very fair merit. The teaching is earnest, painstaking and effective. The pupils are attentive and self reliant under examination and their proficiency in reading and grammar is equal to that of any school in the district...⁶⁰

As the population of Nundle and the surrounding district grew, additional classrooms were added, an extension to the classroom in 1877 and another larger room to accommodate 40

children in 1884. The pupils sat at long desks with backless forms arranged in tiers from front to rear. By 1884 there were 96 pupils attending Nundle School.

During the 1890s there were complaints about the condition of the Nundle school building from local residents and the teacher Henry Fraser. The list of defects included leaking roof and walls, and floor joists that were so ant eaten it was unsafe to place heavy furniture on them. In 1899 Inspector Parkins also commented on the age of the school buildings, noting that they did not meet modern requirements.⁶¹ The new Nundle Public School building was opened on 20 April 1907. The weatherboard building consisted of two classrooms and in 1915 a third room was added at the rear. A three-bedroom teacher's residence was built on another part of the site. Nundle School was classified as a central school from January 1959. Following the closure of Hanging Rock and Bowling Alley Point Schools in 1970, pupils from these districts travel by bus to Nundle, and Nundle Public School has become the centre of learning for a large area. In 1972 when the school celebrated its centenary, enrolments reached 135. After the centenary, falling population in the Nundle district brought a reduction in enrolments, and in 1989 Nundle School was reclassified as a primary school. The Nundle community continues to provide strong support to the school and with the recent revitalisation of Nundle as a tourist destination, there are good prospects for increasing prosperity and population growth in the district.⁶²

A weatherboard school at Bowling Alley Point opened in March 1869 with an enrolment of 73 pupils. A teacher's residence was incorporated into the building. The first teacher was John Goold, who served at the school until 1877. He was assisted by his wife, who was employed by the Council of Education as an assistant teacher from 1869 to 1871. The pupils were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, grammar, geography, scripture, and 'object lessons'. The population of Bowling Alley Point dwindled towards the end of the nineteenth century and in 1912 the original school was replaced by a one-room weatherboard school with a separate teacher's residence.⁶³ Bowling Alley Point Public School finally closed in December 1970.

The Peel River district was relatively late in obtaining schools, partly because the vast grant of land to the A. A. Company to the west of the Peel retarded settlement. By the 1870s many farmers were settled on the east of the Peel River and its tributaries, Dungowan Creek and Duncan's Creek. This resulted in the opening of provisional schools at Dungowan Upper in 1874 and Dungowan Lower in 1876. Generally staffed by untrained or the lowest qualified teachers, provisional schools could be established in areas where at least 15 children were expected to attend, less than the 25 children required for a public school.⁶⁴ Once enrolments increased both schools were upgraded to primary schools, Dungowan Lower in 1880 and Dungowan Upper in 1881. Dungowan Upper School closed in 1921, while the school at Dungowan Lower, now simply known as Dungowan School, remains open. Further up Dungowan Creek, schools operated at Wooloban between 1886 and 1906 and at Oakvale between 1905 and 1921 and 1944 and 1947.

A provisional school at Duncan's Creek Lower opened in August 1883, in a small building of pit sawn pine slabs with a shingle roof. Between 1892 and 1895 it operated as a half-time school with Woolomin. Half-time schools were introduced in 1867 to cater for children living in areas of scattered population, individual teachers being in charge of up to seven 'stations'.⁶⁵ The school was upgraded to a primary school between 1895 and 1905, when it closed due to falling attendance. From 1924 it operated as a provisional school, finally closing in 1949. A provisional school opened at Duncan's Creek Upper in 1903, becoming a primary school the following year. It remained a primary school until December 1926. Duncan's Creek Upper operated as a provisional school between 1927 and 1929 and 1943 and 1949, when it finally closed.

The residents of Woolomin first requested a school in 1877 but their application to the Council of Education was unsuccessful. There were not enough children, and there were already schools at Dungowan Upper and Dungowan Lower only five miles away. A provisional public school was finally established at Woolomin in May 1885, catering for 30 pupils. Attendance grew rapidly, increasing to 42 by the end of the year, and Woolomin was upgraded to a primary school. The first school building soon proved inadequate; by departmental standards it was originally intended to cater for only 21 pupils.⁶⁶ On November 22 1889 the *Tamworth News* described Woolomin School as ‘a mockery to call a school... a hut built of slabs and roofed with iron’. The school became a half-time school with Dungowan Upper between 1892 and 1896. By 1890 a new brick school had been built on the Tamworth side of Woolomin. Opened in January 1891, it was large enough to accommodate 50 pupils. From July 1896 enrolment at Woolomin School was consistently over 20, and its status was raised to a primary school in April 1899. As the new century began the growth of the village of Woolomin brought demands for a larger school. After years of lobbying and several petitions by the Nundle and District Progress Committee, the Minister for Education finally approved the building of a new school in a more central location. A third school building near the church in the centre of the village was completed in 1907. The old schoolhouse can still be seen from the Tamworth road; it has been used over the years as a barn and tobacco store.⁶⁷ Enrolment at Woolomin School has fluctuated over the years, peaking at 50 in the mid-1960s.



Figure 11: Woolomin School, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

During the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century there were a number of other small schools in outlying settlements in the Nundle district. Schools operated at Wombramurra between 1879 and 1897, and at Goonoo Goonoo from 1869 to 1871 and 1876 to 1915. The school at Goonoo Goonoo reopened again in 1930, finally closing in 1966. In their history of Nundle, *Hills of Gold*, William Bayley and Ian Lobsey also refer to schools at Craigview and Ben Hall’s Creek during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁶⁸

5.4.2 Religious services

Men of religion were not far behind the miners who flocked to the diggings in the Nundle district, and visits by Anglican and Roman Catholic priests became a regular feature of goldfields life. The Rev W. B. Clarke happened to be an authority on gold as well as on more spiritual matters. He apparently advised the Governor of the existence of gold in the colony

some years before it was officially discovered by Hargreaves. Towards the end of 1852 Clarke travelled to the new fields in a 'light covered wagon' containing prospecting tools and supplies as well as bibles. He carried out a geological survey of the district and held services in the shanty towns that lined the valleys around Nundle.⁶⁹

In the absence of churches, visiting clergymen held religious services in the open air or in any available space in inns or stores. Rev. E. Williams, Vicar of Tamworth, preached on 'the Rock' in June 1852, and from that time he held services at Hanging Rock once a month. During his travels through his diocese the Rev. William Tyrrell, the first Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, conducted divine service on the verandah of 'Mr Gibbons Inn' at Hanging Rock in October 1852. There are records of the Rev. Ridley holding a service 'opposite Mr Warland's store' in Hanging Rock early in 1853, and baptising two children at 'Richmond's store'. In February 1853 the Rev. E. Williams preached 'at Warland's store in Nuggety Gully'. On 9 November 1859 the *Tamworth Examiner* published the following notice of the forthcoming visit of the Bishop of Newcastle to Nundle:

*The Lord Bishop of Newcastle accompanied by the Rev Mr Williams will visit Nundle and the Hanging Rock on Wed 15 inst. For the purpose of having divine service at the courthouse at the former place and at Mr Pugh's at the latter. "The public are urgently invited to attend."*⁷⁰

It was not long before regular places of worship were erected on the goldfields. The 'strong bark building' erected at Hanging Rock in 1853 served as a Church of England for over fifty years. For most of this time church services and religious instruction in Nundle and Hanging Rock were provided by the successive Vicars of Liverpool Plains or Tamworth when they visited the townships. A public cemetery at Hanging Rock was dedicated in 1873, but it appears there were burials there before this date. The dedication of the cemetery was subsequently revoked but it was officially rededicated in 1896. The cemetery was in use until 1964, when its use for all denominations except the general denomination was revoked. Perhaps the most well known person buried in the cemetery is the miner Yankee Jack, who died at the age of 86 on 25 July 1925.⁷¹

During the 1890s the Church of England used the School of Arts hall in Nundle for services. The minutes of the School of Arts Committee of Management for 1897 record that they agreed that the Church of England could continue to use the hall 'free of charge'.⁷² It was not until 1900 that the new parochial district of Nundle was created and Nundle's first resident Anglican clergyman, the Rev. C. Lumsden, was appointed. At that time there was only one Anglican church in the district, at Woolomin. Towards the end of 1907 a new All Saints Church of England was completed in Jenkins Street. The dedication of the new church on 18 November 1907 was cause for celebration; the Anglican community had been agitating for a new building to replace the old church in Oakenville Street for more than two decades. It appears that the original bark building had not been used for some time, for the *Diocesan News* of 16 March 1901 reported:

*[Nundle] possesses neither church nor residence but it is hoped the former want will soon be supplied... Since the demolition of the old place of worship across the River Peel the congregation has met fortnightly in the School of Arts. Sunday Schools are working successfully at Nundle and Woolomin and both these places boast of good choirs.*⁷³

No further details of 'the place of worship across the Peel' have survived. For some time the Anglican clergyman's residence in Nundle was an old brick building which was formerly a store, but the building fell into disrepair and was sold. A new weatherboard vicarage was built beside the church in 1952.

A plan of Nundle from about 1882 shows sites set aside for a Wesleyan Methodist church on the corner of Jenkins and Oakenville Streets; a Presbyterian church, manse and school further

up Oakenville Street, and a Roman Catholic church, school and presbytery on the corner of Charles and Hall streets. The Presbyterian church, built of weatherboard with a shingle roof, was opened by Rev. Johnstone of Armidale on 30 September 1860. Residents of all denominations subscribed towards its cost, and it could hold 130 people. It was described in the *Tamworth Examiner* as ‘*an unpretending but neat wooden structure, the first of its kind here*’.⁷⁴ A more substantial brick church was built by a local contractor on the site of the former church in 1891-1892, and the old building was dismantled. This church was sold in 2005 for use as a private residence.⁷⁵

The Methodist Church was opened on 9 April 1882 by the wife of the Rev. C. Waters of Morpeth. A substantial brick and stone building, the church stands in Nundle’s main street. The words ‘Primitive Methodist Church 1882’ can still be deciphered in the oval above the door. The former Methodist Church was purchased by Nundle Shire Council in 1966. After much public debate over whether the building should be demolished, it was finally decided to preserve it. During the debate over the future of the Church the Nundle and District Historical Society was formed. Until 1984 the former Methodist Church was the home of the Historical Society, but it proved too small to display adequately the Society’s collections. Today it has found a new use as a second hand clothing shop, the Old Church Boutique.



Figure 12: Primitive Methodist Church, Nundle, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

There was a Roman Catholic Church in Nundle in the 1870s, but in August 1885 a new brick church was completed on the western side of the river on land donated by the Peel River Company. By the 1920s the church no longer met the needs of the congregation and the diocese acquired land in a more central location in Innes Street in the heart of Nundle. In July 1938 a new weatherboard church was dedicated by the Rev. J. Coleman. Today there are two churches in Nundle, All Saints Anglican church, and St Peter’s Roman Catholic church.

Churches were also established in outlying settlements. A Union church catering for all denominations and used by visiting clergy was built in Bowling Alley Point in the early days of the gold rushes, and it served the community until a new brick church was built in 1906. In Woolomin St Mary's Church of England was built in 1900. It was replaced by a new, larger church, built of local bricks, dedicated in April 1934. Methodist services were held in the home of James Newman and later in Woolomin Hall. In the 1970s arrangements were made to hold services in St Mary's, alternating with the Anglican service. A Union Church was built of timber in 1905. Presbyterian services were held at Mr Swain's home, Pine Vale.

Nundle cemetery was officially dedicated on 16 July 1863. The headstones in the cemetery reflect the diverse community that evolved in Nundle, the legacy of the gold rushes. These include the grave site of Isabella Loowung, Scottish-born wife of Samuel Loowung and the headstones of Eliza Jane Phoo who died at the age of 86 in 1944 and Mary Phoo, aged 83, who died in 1978.⁷⁶ The Chinese section of the cemetery is overgrown today and generally all that remains are stones that appear to mark graves. Nundle Shire Council took over control of the cemetery from the trustees in 1966. Bowling Alley Point cemetery was first surveyed as a general cemetery in October 1874; it was not officially dedicated as the general cemetery of Dungowan Parish until 1877. It contained separate sections for Roman Catholic, Church of England, Jewish, Presbyterian and Wesleyan denominations, as well as a section for Chinese.⁷⁷ The cemetery at Hanging Rock was surveyed in August 1869 and dedicated on 14 February 1873. It contained five sections, for Roman Catholic, Church of England, Jewish and Wesleyan denominations, and a general section. All denominations apart from the general section were revoked in July 1864, and in 1896 the grounds were rededicated as a general cemetery.⁷⁸ Hanging Rock cemetery remained in use until 1964. It was the final resting place of many of the early miners at Hanging Rock, but few of the original headstones remain today.

5.4.3 Hotels

Sly grog shops were among the first businesses established in the flourishing tent cities that sprang up on the gold diggings, to satisfy the prodigious thirsts of the miners. Within two months of the discovery of gold at Hanging Rock a sly grog seller was reported to be operating there and licensed public houses were established soon afterwards. Dr Richard. L. Jenkins opened an inn in Nundle at the end of 1852, and John Gibbons opened the Golden Nugget Inn (otherwise known as 'Gibbons' Inn') at Hanging Rock in the same year. In 1860 Paul Prisk was registered as the licensee of the 'Our House Inn' in Hanging Rock. Richard L. Jenkins purchased about 14 acres of land at Hanging Rock in 1857, on which were erected the Gibbons Inn, a store and other buildings. McIlveen built one of the first hotels at Oakenville Creek, The Diggers Arms, in the early 1850s. By the end of 1854 there were three inns in Oakenville. In Happy Valley, the valley to the north of Oakenville Creek, two stores and a public house were operating by 1855.⁷⁹

The original Jenkins Inn in Nundle passed into the ownership of Alexander McClelland some time before 1871 and was renamed the Digger's Arms. A front verandah was added in 1885, and later two small rooms projecting from each side of the rear of the building were built. The inn finally closed in 1892, after which a cottage for D. G. Crichton was built on the site. The cottage still stands today.

The sandstock brick Peel Inn at the corner of Jenkins and Oakenville Streets in Nundle was built by a Mr McIlveen in 1861. The original hotel was a single storey building with shingle roof and attic rooms with dormer windows. John Schofield became the owner of the inn within a few years, and has been in the Schofield family ever since, apart from a period between the First and Second World Wars. According to one story, John Schofield won the inn in a card game. Schofield transformed the hotel in the 1890s by raising the roof and adding a second storey. In about 1912 the ground floor and first floor verandahs were

extended to a width of over 6 m. John Schofield sold the Peel Inn in about 1914 and the Schofields did not buy it back until the 1940's. The Peel Inn was the focus of social life in Nundle. The large assembly room was the scene of many public meetings, dances, and balls, and was also the venue for billiards and even skating. The historic Peel Inn has been preserved as a central tourist facility in Nundle. The second storey is built entirely of Wunderlich tin, and the original decorative pressed metal finishes lining the wide verandah and many of the attic-style rooms have been retained. Inside is a beautiful cedar staircase and there are extensive gardens including a shady courtyard leading off the restaurant.

By the 1870s hotels abounded in the Nundle district. The *New South Wales Government Gazette* of 1871 listed no less than 12. There were four hotels in Nundle: the Spread Eagle (licensee Michael Gallagher); Queen's (Samuel Lambert); the Digger's Arms (Alexander McClelland) and the Royal (Thomas Rice). Nearby there was the Harp of Erin in Oakenville Creek (licensee Sarah Wetherall) and the Sailor's Home (Isadore Leger) in Happy Valley. The surrounding mining settlements were also well provided for. There were four hotels in Bowling Alley Point: the Galatea Hotel (licensee Joseph Bowlais); the Peel River Inn (William D. Bourke); the White Horse Inn (Susan B. Davies) and the Jenny Lind (James Lindsay). In Hanging Rock there were two hotels, the Our House Inn (licensee Paul Prisk) and the Golden Nugget (Mary Ann Robinson).⁸⁰

By the early 1880s the population of Bowling Alley Point was declining and two hotels remained. The NSW Government Gazette of 1881 lists the White Horse Inn owned by Thomas James McClelland, and a bagatelle license held by Tattersall's Hotel.⁸¹ In Woolomin the Woolomin Inn was open from 1870 to 1882, under licence to Mr Francis Cruse and later his wife.⁸² The Imperial Hotel in Nundle was still operating in 1910, when it is mentioned in the Nundle Police charge book. The Royal Hotel in Nundle operated until at least 1920, when the licensee was granted a billiard saloon licence.⁸³

5.4.4 Law and order

The first miners who worked the diggings at Hanging Rock found it difficult to sell their gold on the fields, because of the risks involved in safely transporting it to the settled areas. By July 1852, at the urging of the miners, the Government established an escort from Hanging Rock to Maitland. The escort travelled weekly, averaging 400 to 500 ounces of gold. In October 1852 it was reported that the escort carried 806 ounces of gold, valued at over £3,000, and £214 in licence fees.

Drinking, gambling, fighting and robberies were part and parcel of life on the goldfields, where men of many nations competed to strike it rich. As the numbers of diggers increased and grog shops multiplied the diggings took on 'the frightful moods of intemperance'. When heavy rains or winter snows fell enforced idleness led the miners to frequent the grog shops, parting with their hard earned cash. Intoxicated drinkers were easy prey for gamblers and thieves. In October 1852 a reporter from the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote of Hanging Rock in the *Maitland Mercury* :

*...500 diggers at the Rock and sly grog shops are numerous, a public house lately opened and another being built, there is some disposition to lawlessness and crime here, robbery, fighting and gambling, considerable inconvenience is experienced from want of a post office, gold police also wanted...*⁸⁴

It was clear that a permanent police presence was needed at the diggings to maintain law and order. A police force was stationed at Hanging Rock by May 1853 under Major Innis. In February 1853 'Nundle in the district of Liverpool Plains' was declared a place for Petty Sessions, and a police barracks and court house were built near a bend in the Peel River just upstream from its junction with Oakenville Creek on land reserved for police purposes. At that time the name Hanging Rock was used to refer to a wide area extending from the head of

the Peel River almost to Bowling Alley Point. George Douglas was appointed the first Police Magistrate at Nundle in August 1857. The work of the police increased as mining activity expanded and more and more people flocked to the district. Measures were taken to close down sly grog shops and introduce licensed public houses on the diggings. Licensing imposed a measure of responsibility on publicans to ensure the safety of their patrons, and reduced the number of robberies. Bushrangers were an ever-present danger. In April 1854 it was reported that a bushranger with a handkerchief tied over his face held up a meat carrier only five minutes walk from Jenkins' store and stole thirteen shillings and a saddle and bridle.⁸⁵

The police and courts were also kept busy dealing with disputes between miners over mining claims and water rights. A report made by the Assistant Commissioner for Crown Lands in Nundle in 1857 detailed a dispute over a water claim between some English and German miners:

*A dispute arose at the latter end of the month on the flat belonging to P. R. L. and M. Company relating to a water claim, between a party of English and some Germans - which ending in a fight, five of the latter were fined at this Police Office Court for the assault.*⁸⁶

A slab and bark police barracks and a brick court house were erected in Nundle in the early 1850s. The exact date of their construction is uncertain. According to an account written in 1887, the court house was a small building, simply furnished:

*We went down to view the house that Nundle justice lies in. The temple has its peculiarities. There was a table, a couple of chairs and two forms ranged around as many sides. About eight feet square we guessed the room to be.*⁸⁷

George Douglas was appointed the first police magistrate in Nundle in August 1857. A police lockup was located some distance from the court house, and it appears that it was put to good use. In 1878 a traveller visiting Nundle commented:

*Nundle also has its lockup, an institution seldom untenanted, and this speaks volumes for the activity of the police and the retiring disposition of some of the residents.*⁸⁸



Figure 13: Nundle court house, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

By the late 1870s the old court house and its police barracks had outlived their usefulness. The buildings were sold at auction by the Police Department in November for the princely sum of £5. In 1880 a new red brick court house was built in Nundle on a site opposite the original Jenkins Inn, by then known as 'Alex McClelland's Hotel'. Built by local contractor George Davidson, the building was described as 'a most imposing structure for a small village like Nundle'. The court house was formally opened in June 1880 by the first resident Clerk of Petty Sessions, Wyman Brown.

Since 1984 the court house has been occupied by the Nundle and District Historical Society. Listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1975, the court house is one of the few examples of nineteenth century colonial architecture in the north-west of the State. It features rendered round-headed window arches, hipped roof and shady verandah.

5.4.5 Health services

In the Nundle district the early European settlers on their isolated properties were far from the nearest medical services, and had to rely on home remedies and the assistance of family and friends when accidents or illness befell them. Medical supplies and medical knowledge were also limited on the goldfields. Gold mining was a dangerous occupation, and accidents and injuries were commonplace. In 1876 the *Tamworth Observer* published a popular home remedy for snake bite:

*Take one tablespoon of gunpowder and salt, and the yoke of an egg and mix them so as to form a paste. Place upon a cloth and apply to the part, letting it extend an inch on all sides of the wound. As the poison is drawn the plaster will lose its adhesive qualities, and when full, will fall off. Apply fresh plasters till all the poison has been absorbed. This will cure a snake bite upon either man or beast.*⁸⁹

Despite his substantial pastoral and business interests, Dr R. L. Jenkins kept up his medical practice and he was associated with the Tamworth Hospital. During the months of February - June 1850 the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* carried several reports of Dr Jenkins, attending an accidental shooting at Goonoo Goonoo, attending a man seriously injured in a fall from a horse, and giving evidence at the inquest of Franz Gehrig. On 2 February 1850 Dr Jenkins placed a notice in the newspaper advising that he was moving from his station 'Wooloonan' to Tamworth to take over the practice of Dr Haig and that he was establishing 'an hospital'. He signed the notice 'Richard Lewis Jenkins L.A.C and Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, Peel's River Jan 10 1850'. On 3 April 1850 Dr Jenkins reported that he had obtained a suitable building for the hospital and that it was 'open for the reception of patients'.⁹⁰ This was presumably a private hospital. A plaque with the inscription 'Mr Jenkins Surgeon' was recently unearthed by a farmer near Woolomin, and is now held by the Tamworth Historical Society. The first public hospital in Tamworth, a simple slab building with bark roof, was established some time in the 1840s, serving the several hundred employees of the A. A. Company working in the Calala and West Tamworth areas. During the early 1850s the influx of people into the Peel Valley highlighted the inadequacy of the first hospital. In 1854 the leading citizens of Tamworth formed the Tamworth Hospital and Benevolent Society, to raise funds for a modern hospital. The foundation stone of the new brick hospital was laid in September 1855.⁹¹

Dr Jenkins was the first doctor in Nundle, but it is uncertain how much time he spent in Nundle and how much time at his practice in Tamworth. Urgent medical cases were usually transported to Tamworth hospital for treatment. Greville's Post Office Directory for 1872 lists the following persons as M. D. resident in Nundle: Fredrick Homan, Elijah James Pring and George Taddy.⁹² In the late 1870s Dr Hector McQueen practised in Nundle for four years, and during the 1880s Dr Wilkinson of Tamworth visited fortnightly. In 1894 the *Australian*

Handbook noted in its description of Nundle that ‘a medical man is now resident in the town’, but his name is not recorded.⁹³

Local women assisted with caring for the sick and women in childbirth. Grace Johnson, who was born in 1899 and lived in Woolomin, recalls that Mrs Peachey was well remembered as the midwife of the Woolomin district. When a birth was imminent she would always be in attendance, often walking miles to the scattered properties as few conveyances were available. Local nurse Mrs Mills was also well known, assisting families whenever there was sickness.⁹⁴

In 1908 the Nundle community began raising funds for a hospital and ambulance service for the district. A site for a hospital was set aside on the hill north of Oakenville Creek and subscriptions were sought from land holders across the district. But two years later insufficient money had been raised, and it became clear that the cost of building and maintaining a hospital was beyond the community’s means. It was decided to use the money raised to build a doctor’s surgery instead. With the advent of motor transport it became feasible for Nundle residents to use the Tamworth hospital and ambulance service. The local community supported the Tamworth medical services, holding many balls and other fund raising events. In 1948 Nundle Hospital Auxiliary was formed to raise funds for equipment for Tamworth Base Hospital. The active members of the Auxiliary raised almost £200 in its first year, through rodeos, stalls, race meetings and dances.⁹⁵

In 1912 the Shire Council voted to subsidise a medical officer in the town, forming the Nundle Medical Fund and issuing debentures to underwrite an annual subsidy of £150. There were some fierce arguments over the imposition of local rates to fund the subsidy, but in May 1913 Dr Ryan from Hill End opened a practice in Nundle.

Victor Fermor, who attended Nundle Primary School in the 1920s, recalls that there was no doctor in Nundle at that time, the nearest were in Tamworth. However he remembers George Marney acting as dentist in Hanging Rock:

At the little old shed with the chimney, near Hanging Rock opposite the bottom dam, George Marney acted as dentist and pulled teeth with no chloroform or anything. Lots of families used string to pull out teeth. Bruce Campbell acted as taxi if anyone got hurt, he’d run them into town. He had the only car in Hanging Rock.⁹⁶

Home remedies were still widely used in an era when doctors were a long distance away and few people owned cars. Victor Fermor describes some of the most popular:

Some of the home remedies used were mustard plaster made out of castor oil, mustard for a cold and castor oil or Epsom salts on Saturday morning. There wasn’t as much tooth decay as there wasn’t as much sugar. The food stuff was more wholesome and people didn’t overeat. Most people grew their own vegetables and everyone kept a cow. There were market gardens in Nundle. George Phoo had a market garden where the water treatment plant is now.⁹⁷

Dr Catherine P. Schofield, known as ‘Dr Jill’ to all her patients, was the local doctor in Nundle for many years. Today the only full-time health professional in the area is nurse practitioner Sue Denison, who is employed by the Hunter New England Area Health Service. Ms Denison is a trailblazer in the world of nursing and community health. She has developed a range of innovative community health programs, including combating obesity and community cinema.⁹⁸

5.4.6 Post and telecommunications

The post office at Nundle was among the earliest established in north-west New South Wales, largely in response to the influx of diggers to the nearby goldfields in 1852. At that time the nearest post office was at Tamworth, almost 40 miles away. A post office opened in Nundle under the name 'Hanging Rock' on 1 January 1853, and the first postmaster, George Halmbourg, was paid a salary of £25 per year. Information on the early postal services to Nundle is sketchy. Records show that in 1855 troopers conveyed the mails from Goonoo Goonoo but in 1858 the report of the Postmaster General noted that this route had been abandoned in favour of the route via Bowling Alley Point. In 1861 William McClelland of Nundle held the mail contract, delivering mail by horseback twice weekly from Goonoo Goonoo and Nundle via Bowling Alley Point, for £175 per annum. By 1862 the mail was delivered three times a week, and John Maney of Bowling Alley Point held the contract.

In a submission to G. Douglas, Chief Commissioner Goldfields North, written in May 1863 John Maney tendered for the continuation of his contract. He noted 'the laborious mountain track to be travelled over and the great fatigue it would be to horses' in carrying Her Majesty's mail to and from Nundle and Hanging Rock, and outlined his record of punctuality:

*Sir, if diligence and punctuality is a recommendation I think I can appeal to you confidently as to my possession of both, in carrying the mail to and from Goonoo Goonoo, Bowling Alley Point and Nundle three times a week for the last 17 months as mail contractor and for one year and nine months previous to that time, riding it for Mr Bourke once per week, in the whole of that time I have been but once, 25 minutes behind time...*⁹⁹

The position of postmaster was a particularly responsible one on the goldfields where the post office handled large volumes of valuable mail. In 1856 the former postmaster at Nundle, A. W. Hayles, wrote to the Commissioner for Crown Lands at Liverpool Plains, G. Douglas, recommending Mr Alexander McClelland senior as postmaster. In making the appointment the Commissioner considered the suitability of McClelland as postmaster:

*There is always considerable difficulty in procuring a suitable person to hold so important and responsible an office as postmaster, especially on the diggings, where large amounts of gold and money pass through the post office. I have not known Mr A. McClelland long, but he is the father of a large family located here – two sons being publicans and another a pound keeper at Nundle – and several of his daughters are respectably married. Under the circumstances I believe him to be as fit and suitable a person as could at present be found...*¹⁰⁰

Until October 1863 the Nundle post office operated from William McIlveen's store at Happy Valley, which was regarded as the most central location. Following a petition from the residents of Nundle, the post office was moved to the main street in the centre of the town, about 2 miles from Happy Valley. William McIlveen initially complained about the removal of the post office, but he subsequently built a new house in Nundle only 300 yards from the new post office.

There could be some rivalry for the position of postmaster, particularly from store keepers who gained substantial business advantage from providing the additional service. In 1874 Samuel Lambert, a hotel keeper who had been postmaster at Nundle since 1864, resigned and moved to Tamworth. Among the applicants for the position were Julius Falch, store keeper and resident of Nundle, and Samuel Kermode, store keeper, forest ranger, miner then mining registrar. Julius Falch was the successful applicant and commenced duties on 1 July 1874, at a salary of £20 a year. He ran the office for the next ten years. By 1889 a weekly mail service between Nundle and Timor over the Crawney Pass was operating, and by 1891 a mail service between Nundle and Tamworth ran three times a week.

In 1880 the telegraph line from Tamworth to Nundle was completed, and on 21 January 1881 William G. Drew was appointed telegraph master in Nundle. A telegraph office opened in Nundle a few weeks later, in separate premises from the post office. The post office and telegraph office were amalgamated in 1884 under the charge of William Drew. In February 1904 a new weatherboard post office was completed on land reserved from part of the public school site on Oakenville Street. The Nundle Progress Committee had made representations to the NSW Parliament for a new post office as early as February 1900.¹⁰¹ Among the facilities provided were a soundproof cabinet for the telephone, counter and writing slopes in the public area and a horse rail in front of the building. On the evidence of the volume of business transactions, in 1913 the Nundle Post Office was reinstated as an official post office. It had been downgraded to a non-official office some time before 1904.¹⁰²



Figure 14: Nundle Post Office, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The date when private telephone services were available in Nundle is not known, but records show that the telephone was being used to transmit and receive telegrams in the town by 1904. A telephone exchange opened in Nundle in 1910. The village of Woolomin received its first telephone connection on 8 January 1903, and a telephone exchange was established there in 1926, with three subscribers. Telephone exchanges were vital information centres for the community. Mrs. Mavis Cooper, whose father Colin Mills operated the telephone exchange in Woolomin, remembers how her father always made sure that members of the family were in hearing after hours in case of an emergency. The alarm bell could be heard as far as the cow bails a few hundred yards away from the house. An automatic exchange was not introduced in Woolomin until December 1971.¹⁰³

The residents of the mining settlements that grew up around Nundle were soon lobbying for their own post offices. In October 1856 the residents of ‘the Peel River Diggings’ (later known as Bowling Alley Point) wrote to the Postmaster General to request a branch post office in their fledgling township. Despite the argument that the mail from Goonoo Goonoo to Nundle passed within two miles of the Peel River diggings, their first request was rejected, considering the small population then in that part of the goldfields. After two years of correspondence, during which time the population of Bowling Alley Point grew to several hundred, a post office was finally established. John Davies was appointed the first postmaster in May 1858. His position was taken over by Henry Still, a store keeper, in February 1860. The postmasters who succeeded Still over the next two decades included John Graham, James Lindsay, Thomas Leavy and Samuel Pyrke. Pyrke managed the post office for over 30 years, from 1874 until his death in 1911. His son S. H. Pyrke was appointed to replace him, holding

the position until 1920. In July 1898 a telephone was installed at the post office, making it possible to send and receive telegrams. A telephone line was erected from Duncan's Creek to Bowling Alley Point in about 1911, and a telephone exchange opened there in March 1921.¹⁰⁴ Bertha Sage was postmistress at Bowling Alley Point from August 1936 until September 1949, when she handed over to her son Eric. Eric Sage and his wife ran the Bowling Alley Point post office for almost 30 years until it finally closed its doors in June 1976. When construction of the Chaffey Dam commenced in the 1970s, the post office building and a number of other houses in Bowling Alley Point had to be moved to make way for the dam.

In April 1863 the residents of 'Hanging Rock Goldfields, Nundle' petitioned the Postmaster General to establish a post office there, arguing that the population of the neighbourhood, which amounted to nearly 500, were obliged 'at great loss and inconvenience' to go to Nundle to post and receive letters, and noting the difficulties of the mountainous road they had to travel. Their request was granted and in August that year George Bond was appointed postmaster, with a salary of £12 per annum. Bond won the position over two other residents of Hanging Rock, Paul Prisk, publican and store keeper, and John Bonarius, store keeper. Bond held the position for 26 years, assisted by his wife Elizabeth. After her husband's death Mrs Bond was appointed postmistress. She ran the post office for another 12 years from May 1889 to October 1901, when she resigned at the age of 86. A telephone exchange opened at Hanging Rock on 17 September 1920, with two subscribers. In April 1945 postal facilities at Hanging Rock were permanently withdrawn and the office operated solely as a telephone office.¹⁰⁵

The residents of Woolomin formally requested a post office in November 1876, after holding a public meeting. Charles Woodward was the first postmaster, holding the position from March 1877 until his resignation in 1881. The post office remained closed until October 1899 when Mark Mills assumed duties as postmaster. His son William Mills then took over as postmaster until his retirement in June 1942. Colin Mills ran the Woolomin post office from July 1942 until it finally closed in February 1974. The Mills family had been associated with the post office for more than 70 years.¹⁰⁶

Nundle retained an official post office until 1982. By the early 1980s business at the office had been declining for a number of years and the workload was insufficient to justify employment of one person full time. Australia Post therefore planned to downgrade the post office to a non-official status. Hearing of the proposal, Nundle Shire Council and residents were concerned that the move would result in a cutback to mail delivery services, but the Communications Minister Ian Sinclair assured them that there would be no loss of services. In April 1982 Australia Post reduced the post office to a non-official operation.¹⁰⁷

5.4.7 Government services

The forerunner of municipal government in Nundle was the Nundle Progress Committee, formed in April 1891. The elections for the 16 seats on the Committee generated great interest and excitement, with 23 candidates nominated. The ballot also generated excellent trade for inn keeper Alex Schofield, as the ballot was held in his Peel Inn.¹⁰⁸ In 1899 a new Progress Committee was formed at a public meeting in the School of Arts, and J. McNamara was elected Chairman. Donald Crichton was elected Secretary in February 1901. The Committee set out an ambitious program of public works including upgrading roads, bridges and buildings in the town. Three months after the commencement of the *Local Government Act* on 6 March 1906, elections were held for the Shire of Nundle. Six councillors were elected with F. T. Payne being elected President. One of his first duties was the welcoming of the official party attending the opening of the new Nundle Public School building on 20 April 1907. For the first few years the Council used two rooms in the old school, rented from the Department of Education. The new Nundle Shire Office building was officially opened on 25 January

1913, on the corner of Jenkins and Innes Streets. At the suggestion of the then president, Donald Crichton, the motto 'Candore et Prudentia' ('with sincerity and discretion') was engraved on a marble tablet on the new building.



Figure 15: Former Nundle Shire Office, now occupied by Nundle office of Tamworth Regional Council, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

During its first years Nundle Shire Council devoted much time to discussing the proposed extension of the railway line from Quirindi to Nundle. The Council did much to improve road conditions throughout the Shire, including surfacing the main Nundle to Tamworth road. Council also planted a row of Queensland silky oak trees in Jenkins Street, which graced the centre of Nundle until the 1970s. The horses and drays of the early years were replaced by modern machinery including motor lorries, graders and bulldozers. In 1924 a bridge over the Peel River was constructed, greatly improving communication between Nundle and the railway at Quirindi and Tamworth. Kerbing and guttering and footpaths were completed in Oakenville and Jenkins Streets in 1959.

In November 1888 Tamworth became the first town in the southern hemisphere to have electric street lights powered by a plant owned by a municipal council. Optimists in Nundle predicted that electric light and power would be installed in Nundle 'in due time no doubt'. But until 1941 gas, kerosene and acetylene lamps remained the only lighting available for domestic and public use in Nundle. In 1936 Nundle Shire Council began several years of negotiations with Tamworth Municipal Council to provide electricity to Nundle. The first electric light and power in Nundle was ceremonially switched on in the Nundle Shire Office in March 1941, and six electric street lights were installed in July that year. Tamworth Municipal Council supplied electricity under franchise to Nundle via a power line passing through Dungowan on the Nundle Shire boundary. The long awaited electricity was a boon to farmers, providing power for milking machines and separators in the dairy farms along the Peel River, and for general farm machinery.

Electricity did not reach the isolated village of Hanging Rock until March 1967. Overnight the lives of the residents were transformed, and they had access to a whole array of labour saving appliances. Electric fridges replaced kerosene, electric washing machines replaced iron coppers with a fire lit underneath, and instant electric hot water heaters replaced the old chip burners. Children could sit at the table under an electric light to read or do their homework instead of straining their eyes under the dim light of a Tilley lamp. The advent of electricity

also brought television to Hanging Rock, opening up a whole new world of information and entertainment for adults and children alike. The teacher at Hanging Rock School, Les Mayley immediately saw the potential of television as a teaching tool, and set out to raise funds to purchase a television for the school.¹⁰⁹

In 1903 the New South Wales Government granted £10 to Nundle Progress Association to sink a well and install a pump for public use. Plans for the installation of a town water supply and sewerage system in Nundle were made after World War II. There were delays during the post-war period, largely due to government funding constraints, but in 1960 a reservoir site was acquired on the hill above the town. The town water supply was finally completed in late 1969.

The construction of Chaffey Dam on the Peel River near Bowling Alley Point was the major public work undertaken in Nundle Shire. The then Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission (now State Water Corporation) began construction in August 1976 of the 430 metre long dam, with its distinctive morning glory shaped spillway, and it was completed in 1979. At full capacity the dam holds 62 megalitres of water and covers 542 hectares. The dam regulates the flow of the Peel River, providing reliable water supplies for irrigation and stock rearing, and has encouraged the diversification of agriculture in the Peel River Valley. The dam also augments Tamworth's water supply, and provides recreation facilities for local residents and visitors.¹¹⁰

As one of the smallest Shires in New South Wales, Nundle Shire came under the shadow of amalgamation with neighbouring Shires several times during its history. As early as 1921 Nundle Shire Council itself proposed the amalgamation of Nundle, Peel and Cockburn Shires. However there was far from unanimous support for the proposal among the councillors of Nundle Shire, and Cockburn Shire opposed the amalgamation as being too unwieldy to administer and of little economic benefit. The plan was shelved.

The spectre of amalgamation arose again with the publication of the Barnett Report on Local Government in December 1973. The report recommended reducing the 223 shire and municipal councils in New South Wales to 97 district councils. The residents of Nundle Shire were unanimously opposed to amalgamation, and joined their voices to a storm of public protest across the State. In April 1974 State Cabinet decided against large-scale compulsory amalgamations, recommending instead voluntary amalgamations and more limited amalgamations on a case by case basis. On investigation of the position of Nundle Shire, the head of the State Boundaries Commission, Councillor Ferris, recommended that Nundle Shire become part of an expanded shire created through its amalgamation with parts of Peel and Cockburn Shires. The balance of the latter Shires were to be incorporated into an enlarged Tamworth City Council. Nundle Shire Council and residents strongly valued their independence and separate identity. They successfully petitioned the Government to abandon the proposal, and by October 1975 the matter appeared to be settled.

Two years later a new State Government was in power and the threat of amalgamation revived. This time the Department of Local Government's proposal was to amalgamate Nundle Shire with part of Parry Shire and the remainder of Parry Shire with Manilla Shire. At a packed meeting in the local hall in May 1977, Councillor R. J. Burr vowed 'we will fight all the way for retention of the Shire and the way of life we have built up over the years'. In August 1977 Nundle Shire was granted a temporary reprieve, but in June 1980 sweeping changes in legislation aimed at merging New South Wales Councils were introduced. The Government was frustrated at lack of progress in achieving its goals of reducing costs and increasing efficiency. There was strong reaction to the Government's move from shires across the state and on 14 July 1980 two bus loads of protestors from Nundle Shire travelled to Sydney where they took to the streets, joining a mass meeting in Sydney Town Hall and a march on Parliament House. One evocative placard read 'Nundle is us, we are Nundle'.

Nundle Shire stood firm in its defiance, refusing to hold elections of the amalgamated council as instructed in December, and even threatening to secede from the Commonwealth. Protestors in adjoining Murrurundi Shire symbolically blocked the New England Highway. After meeting with protestors Premier Neville Wran granted a last minute reprieve, exempting Nundle and Murrurundi Shires from the legislation within 24 hours of it being pushed through Parliament. On 10 September 1980 Shire residents packed the Peel Inn Hotel to celebrate this 'victory for democracy'. The celebrations held to mark the 75th anniversary of Nundle Shire Council in 1981 had special meaning in the wake of its struggle for survival. Residents celebrated in traditional country style, with a bush race meeting, bush bands, street processions in period costume and historical displays in the court house.¹¹¹

In his history of Nundle Shire Council published in 1981, *Gold and Grit*, Ian Lobsey posed the question 'will the bogey stay away to let one hundred candles grace the government cake?' Ultimately Nundle Shire did not survive to celebrate its centenary. In early 2004 the New South Wales Government embarked on a major program of rationalisation and amalgamation of local government areas. In 2003 there were 111 local councils and shires in regional, rural and remote NSW; following the round of amalgamations in March 2004, the number was reduced to 98.¹¹² In discussions with the State Government in the lead up to the amalgamations, the Local Government Association expressed particular concern about the financial situation of some rural councils, known as 'doughnut' councils because they surround a town with its own council. The rates bases of these areas had dwindled and their finances had crumbled over the previous decade. Nundle Shire was quoted as an example, with only 1,342 residents and a mere 400 to 500 ratepayers.¹¹³

Four new local government areas were created in the north-west, including Tamworth Regional Council, incorporating all of Tamworth City Council and Manilla Shire Councils, most of Nundle Shire and parts of Barraba and Parry Shire Councils. The three other councils created in this major reorganisation were the Gwydir Shire Council incorporating Bingara and Yallaroi Shire Councils and part of the Barraba Shire Council; Liverpool Plains Shire Council, incorporating Quirindi Shire and parts of Murrurundi and Parry Shires, and the Upper Hunter Shire Council incorporating Scone Shire and part of Murrurundi Council.

Following the recommendations made in the Vardon report, these amalgamations were expected to result in significant savings for local government. The Minister for Local Government, Tony Kelly, estimated that the creation of the new Peel Regional Council, for example, would deliver annual savings of \$1.8 million.¹¹⁴ However many Shires across the State, including Nundle, Barraba and Manilla, were strongly opposed to having their councils dissolved and just days before the decision affecting Shires in north-western New South Wales was announced on 17 March 2004, they met with the New South Wales Shires Association to consider possible legal action over the way the Boundaries Commission and the State Government had handled the amalgamation issue.¹¹⁵ Ultimately this was not pursued. Tamworth Regional Council was originally gazetted as Peel Regional Council. The name was changed after the nine elected councillors of the new council petitioned the government, arguing that the effort that had been put into branding Tamworth as the country music capital of Australia should not be lost.

Amalgamation has long been the preferred instrument of local government structural reform in Australia. The stated aims of such reforms are improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government, but there has been increasing disillusionment with the poor economic outcomes of amalgamation and its divisive nature. Recent research undertaken at the University of New England in Armidale indicates that there is little evidence of significant economies of scale in municipal operations or substantial economic benefits, and that it should not always be presumed that 'bigger is better'. In a paper published in a Working Paper Series in Economics in 2005, Brian Dollery, Shane Burns and Andrew Johnson of the

University of New England proposed an alternative model of Strategic Alliances between neighbouring Councils.¹¹⁶

5.4.8 Commercial Services

Along with inns and sly grog shops, stores were quickly established on the goldfields to supply the everyday needs of the miners. Warland and Haydon opened stores at Hanging Rock in 1852 and by 1854 there were two stores and a public house in Happy Valley. Records in the Register of Business Allotments held in the Nundle Museum show that many Chinese established businesses on the Peel River goldfields. Among the applications for business licenses listed in 1868 and 1873 were:

10 June 1868. Sin Chong, Bowling Alley Point. Business licence and store 22 x 55 ft frontage to Street.

10 June 1868 Sam Fon Happy Valley Nundle. Business licence and store 22 x 55 ft frontage to roadway.

10 July 1869. Ah Sie Happy Valley Nundle. Business license butcher 22 x 55 ft frontage to roadway.

14 March 1873. Su Chong Bowling Alley Point. Cha Foo's old store opposite the footbridge. In accordance with goldfields regulations. Business allotment at Bowling Alley Point.¹¹⁷

According to a notice in the *Tamworth Examiner* published in February 1860 there were three butchers shops on the Peel River diggings. In the notice, dated 3 February 1869, A. Stewart Bourke of Bowling Alley Point informed inhabitants that he was going to dispose of a butchering business on the Peel River diggings which was doing a trade of seven head of cattle weekly. Included were slaughtering yards, steelyards, weights, scales, butchering tools, one patent sausage filler, spring cart and harness, three serviceable horses and 40 pigs in first rate condition. In the same issue Mr Bourke published a second notice advising that he had purchased the Hit or Miss Hotel from Mr H. Butler and would be carrying on the business. He added:

The table at the hotel will be as well supplied as at any other house on the diggings. An ample supply of hay, oats and corn always on hand and an experienced groom in attendance at the stable.¹¹⁸

By the 1880s Nundle had two general stores, run by Isaacson (formerly Falck and Isaacson) and Kermode, two blacksmiths and two butchers shops run by Webster and Howard. Odgers & McClelland Exchange Stores in Nundle began trading in the early 1890s, selling everything necessary for the surrounding farming community and acting as an exchange for gold and produce. The store was the hub of Nundle's commercial life for over 80 years. It closed in 1979, when Nundle's population and businesses were in decline. The store reopened in 1999, symptomatic of a revival of Nundle's fortunes as a tourist centre. The historic weather board and iron building with its display windows, timber verandah and cantilevered awning remains largely unchanged. Inside, the store retains its pre-war ambience, including gas lights, packing case shelves and employee graffiti on the walls. Visitors can now once again enjoy the experience of shopping in a pre-war rural general merchant's store, stocking traditional mercantile items of every description including millet brooms, buckets and tubs, enamelware, kitchenware, loose teas, soap slabs, shaving requisites and wickerware.¹¹⁹

Peter and Judy Howarth, owners of Wombramurra Station, have spearheaded the economic revival of Nundle. During the early 1990s they realised the potential of the scenic country town, and became determined not to let it die. When Nundle's only bank closed in 1994 they bought the building and transformed it into an elegant five room guest house, the Jenkins Street Guest House. In 2000 they established the successful Nundle Woollen Mill, generating further employment opportunities for local residents.¹²⁰



**Figure 16: Odgers & McClelland Exchange Store, Nundle, 2006.
Photograph courtesy EJE Group.**

5.4.9 Banks

The forerunners of the banks on the goldfields were the gold buyers who bought the miners' gold. The gold buyers often ran other businesses such as stores or inns. Paul Prisk was a well known gold buyer, hotel owner and miner at Hanging Rock in the 1850s and 1860s. Dr R. L. Jenkins was the first local buyer in the Nundle district. As early as March 1852 it was reported that Dr Jenkins purchased £25 worth of gold from two men named Panton, who had won the gold in a week's work.¹²¹ In a letter to the Government Savings Bank in Sydney dated 8 August 1852, Dr Jenkins requested that accounts be opened in the following names: George Elliot, John Murrey, John Cox, Michael Murray, Charles Nichols, Duncan Clark, Charles Hough, James Brady and John Lees. The nearest banking facilities were in Tamworth, and escorts ensured the safe passage of gold and money. At a later date Dr Jenkins set up a banking agency on the goldfields.¹²²

A branch of the Government Savings Bank of New South Wales opened at the post office in Nundle on 1 September 1874. The Savings Bank agency was removed from the post office on 7 September 1912. In June 1929 the Bank of New South Wales opened a sub-branch in Nundle, and six years later it became a full branch. A modern bank building in Jenkins Street opened for business in November 1938. The Bank of New South Wales was Nundle's only bank for many years. It finally closed in 1994, by which time it had become Westpac. The Bank of New South Wales merged with the Victorian based Commercial Bank of Australia (CBA) to become Westpac Banking Corporation in October 1982, consolidating its position as Australia's largest banking group. After 1994 an agency of the National Australia Bank (NAB) operated from the Bank of New South Wales building, opening every Friday. The NAB later moved into a shop next to the bank, which burnt down in around 2000.¹²³ Today the old Bank of New South Wales building has been transformed into the Jenkins Street Guest House. Banking agency services for the Commonwealth Bank, NAB and St George Bank are provided at Nundle post office.

5.4.10 Community Services

As settled communities grew up in the Nundle district after the initial fever of the gold rushes, local residents banded together to form community organisations and other voluntary associations. In rural areas with scattered populations the pool of potential members was small. There was close interaction between voluntary associations and many people were members of several organisations. In small communities everyone knew each other and people banded together to help the needy, for example families who had lost a husband or father, or who had lost their homes and possessions to fire or flood. Friendly societies, benevolent societies, church groups and sporting groups were a focus for local pride and solidarity.¹²⁴ These organisations developed services and facilities, such as schools, churches, community halls and health services. Community members donated a lot of their time, money and often land, to establish services and lobbied governments to support them.

Community halls were important social centres. The Woolomin community hall was first erected on the property of Mr and Mrs Gardiner in 1900. Until 1915 it was the venue for many dances, which often lasted until sunrise, when the dairy farmers had to leave to start the day's milking. The next hall was a hay shed belonging to Mr Prisk. A grand new hall opened in Woolomin in May 1932, boasting a cloakroom and ladies powder room, and a tallow wood floor – reputedly the best dance floor in the district. Local musicians such as the Hannafords, and Jack Broadbeck, and other hired bands regularly played there. The hall was also used to farewell local lads going off to war, and to welcome them home. Once again the hall was needed for storing hay and the last social was held there in November 1941. The tallow wood flooring was carefully stored and locals began raising funds to build a new hall. The new hall was completed in November 1954, but only a few months later it was washed off its piers by floods. Residents rallied to repair the hall and it was officially opened in November 1955. The hall survives today to be enjoyed by the whole community.¹²⁵

Voluntary organisations continue to supplement services provided by governments, as the gap between the services needed by the community and those provided by governments has widened, and the expectations of government on the community to fill this gap have increased. A range of community organisations play a vital role in the Nundle community today.

The Country Women's Association of New South Wales (CWA) was founded in 1922 to meet the needs of women in rural areas, who coped with isolation, a lack of medical facilities and life in a male dominated society. The organisation grew quickly, women working tirelessly to establish rural health care facilities including bush nurses, maternity wards in hospitals, baby health care centres and rest homes for the elderly. The CWA is now part of the largest women's voluntary organisation in Australia, engaging in a wide range of activities including fund raising, craft work, cultural activities, lobbying all levels of government and debating current social issues.¹²⁶ In 1951 the Nundle Branch of the CWA made a request to Nundle Shire Council to assist them to find a site for a baby health centre and restroom. Land was finally purchased in 1955, and the CWA Hall and Baby Health Centre opened in May 1962. The CWA building also houses the town's community nurse and visiting doctors' rooms. Today the CWA has branches in Nundle and Woolomin, and also runs a preschool in Nundle.

Bush fires are a regular feature of life in rural Australia. During the nineteenth century no organised fire fighting services existed and it was up to individual families and their neighbours to tackle bush fires as best they could. Severe bush fires in New South Wales and Victoria in 1896 were a catalyst for the formation of bush fire brigades in both these States in the early years of the twentieth century. The 1906 *Local Government Act* in New South Wales authorised local government councils to form bush fire brigades throughout the state. The

name of the New South Wales Bush Fire Brigades was changed to the New South Wales Bush Fire Service in 1990. The Rural Fire Service, established in 1997 under the *Rural Fire Brigades Act*, was the successor of the New South Wales Bush Fire Service.¹²⁷ There is an active rural fire service in Nundle; the local members are among 96,000 volunteers providing emergency services to over 95 per cent of New South Wales.

The Nundle District Lions Club plays an important role in the local community, distributing firewood to the needy in winter, hosting a seniors' Christmas party every year and catering for the annual 'Go for Gold' festival. The Lion's Club are also caretakers of the old Nundle court house building where they operate a museum.

Friendly societies, mutual self-help organisations, had their origins in the industrial revolution in England when factory workers, tradesmen and labourers banded together and contributed part of their hard-earned wages to a common fund to support the families of fellow workers who suffered hardship such as illness, loss of a job, injury at work or even death. The steam-driven factories of nineteenth century industrial England were dangerous places, and accidents and injuries were common. In Australia friendly society 'lodges' were formed in cities, towns and in the most isolated settlements, and were the forerunners of our current welfare and social security system. They were also responsible for bringing medicines and health services to isolated communities throughout the colonies, well before governments took up this role. Among the earliest societies in Australia was the Manchester United Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), established in Melbourne in 1840. As well as providing members with financial support and medical assistance in hard times, the Manchester Unity Lodges held a variety of social and fraternal activities. The Loyal Heart and Hand MUIOOF Lodge was established in Nundle in 1867, and the lists of members from the 1860s to the 1880s reveal that they included a broad cross section of society, with varied occupations. The MUIOOF was still active in the 1980s, but by this time its role had changed significantly. After Federation many of the social and financial roles played by friendly societies were taken up by Commonwealth social welfare policies, and by the early 1950s the friendly society movement was losing its momentum.¹²⁸

5.5 EVOLVING COMMUNITIES

5.5.1 War memorials

During the First World War 160 local men served in the conflict, and 17 gave their lives for their country. Their names are recorded on a marble tablet on the wall of the Nundle Shire Offices, now the offices of Tamworth Regional Council. The tablet, headed 'To those who have answered their country's call' was presented by F. T. (Frank) Payne in 1918. In 1947, in accordance with the wishes of Frank Payne, his family erected a similar tablet to honour those who served in the Second World War. The tablet records the names of 200 service men and women from the Nundle District, ten of whom gave their lives. The Nundle Memorial Hall was erected in honour of the memory of those who served their country in the First World War. Adjoining the former School of Arts building in Jenkins Street, the hall was officially opened by Frank Chaffey, MLA in October 1930.¹²⁹ It was the venue for the annual Anzac Day ceremony, in which the whole community participated. F. J. Hicks, who taught at Nundle Primary School from 1934 to 1938, recounts the event:

*The whole school participated in Anzac Day. We all learned to sing a song called 'The Toast is Anzac'. Mr Harvey played for us. The ceremony was held in the memorial hall and then we all marched down to the memorial at the Shire office concluding with the last post and reveille.*¹³⁰

Even the tiny community of Hanging Rock contributed its share to the war effort. A total of 27 men from Hanging Rock served in the Second World War, and their names were recorded

on the Honour Roll in the local memorial hall. Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War Nundle Shire Council set up a local patriotic fund to assist service men and women. An honour roll was erected in Woolomin-Duncan's Creek Memorial Hall. Another honour roll was placed on the eastern wall inside the Union Church at Bowling Alley Point.

Marion Hardy was a 10 year-old school girl attending Nundle Primary School when war broke out in 1939. She describes her memories of young men going off to war, and the emotional farewell functions:

Young soldiers, many of whom had been at school the year before, would come home on final leave, travelling on the bus with kit bag and all they owned in the world. By on the bus, I mean right up on top with all the luggage. We'd put our head out the window and talk to them as we rode from school. ... There would always be a dance in the hall at Bowling Alley Point. Everyone turned out and the Shire president of the day would present the boys with a watch with a leather cover over the face. The President of the Red Cross, Mrs Swain, would then give each one a parcel usually containing socks and tobacco. At the end of the evening we would stand in a circle and while 'Now is the Hour' was sung the boys would go around in a circle and say goodbye to all. I always get a lump in my throat when I hear that song and remember all those lovely young men who cheerfully said goodbye to us all, some never to return, others who did changed forever.¹³¹

During the Second World War local residents, adults and children alike, worked together to dig shelter trenches in the grounds of local schools and children were taught first aid and air raid drills. Clare Roser (nee Mills) attended Woolomin Public School in the 1940s. She recalls a mock air raid:

In one of the mock air raids all the residents took part. The children were the victims and the adults rendered first aid. The stretcher bearers took the patients to the school which was the headquarters. I remember them being one short in the count, but found this one just close to the school. The pupils dug the shelter trenches in the grounds.¹³²

5.5.2 Entertainment

Life in the shanty towns of the goldfields was rough and ready. Most miners filled their limited leisure hours with drinking and gambling. As the population grew and more settled communities developed, more genteel entertainments were available. Concerts, picnics and dances were regularly held in Nundle and Bowling Alley Point. Bowling Alley Point had a dramatic club and a Mechanics Institute as early as 1872, and there was a School of Arts at Mount Pleasant four miles from Nundle. The Oddfellows Hall in Nundle was the venue for dances and balls, and in the 1860s and 1870s people travelled from miles around to go to the Oddfellows Annual Ball. It is uncertain when the Oddfellows Hall was built, or where it was located. Attendance at the ball dwindled over the years as the fever of the gold rush era passed. A report in 1877 nostalgically recalled:

Eighty or ninety couples took the floor... The glory of the ball must have gone away with the theatre, the gold and the dead people.¹³³

In the mid 1880s a dramatic club and debating club were formed in Nundle. Skating was also a popular pastime, held in the Oddfellows Hall and the assembly room of the Peel Inn.

The daily toil of life on the goldfields was brightened by the regular visits of Ashton's Circus, which was founded by James Ashton in Tasmania in 1848. From the 1850s the discovery of gold, the movement of people to the diggings and the subsequent growth of inland townships prompted early Australian circuses to travel beyond the coastal cities and perform in the isolated settlements under canvas. During the circuses' travels Aborigines quickly became

regarded as a source of new and exotic talent, performing as equestrians and tightrope artists. One of these was Mongo Mongo, a native of Tamworth who joined Ashton's Royal Olympic Circus in 1853. Under Ashton's tutelage Mongo Mongo quickly developed as a star circus rider.

The first recorded visit of Ashton's circus to the Hanging Rock diggings was in 1852 or 1853, and it became an annual event. The circus was transported to the goldfields by a huge caravan of bullock wagons and 100 pack horses. It took the combined effort of all the teams to haul the wagons one by one up the steep pinch to Hanging Rock; on the return journey block and tackles and logs tied behind the wagons slowed their descent. The *Illustrated Sydney News* dated 6 May 1854 reported a visit of the circus to Hanging Rock. The troupe included the expert bare back rider Miss Irvine and the young Aboriginal Mongo Mongo, whose skills were given special mention. According to the report Mongo Mongo's 'peculiar prowess' had to be seen to be believed, for 'the beauty of his riding reminded the spectator of other lands'.¹³⁴



Figure 17. A scene at Ashton's Circus, Hanging Rock diggings. Sketch published in *Illustrated Sydney News*, 6 May 1854.

An undated report in the *Maitland Mercury* vividly describes the carnival atmosphere of the circus at Hanging Rock in the 1850s:

*The golden roaring fifties, when red shirted, sun baked diggers, 'lucky diggers', lounged in the dress circle, smoked their pipes, called out to their acquaintances in other parts of the house, pelted their favourites on the stage with gold nuggets and drank champagne at fabulous prices, ate and drank, and sang and danced as if the good times were never to come to an end.*¹³⁵

Before the days of radio and later television, entertainment centred on family and friends in the home. Music was a part of life and singing and playing the violin and the accordion were popular pastimes. The more wealthy land owners could afford a piano. Grace Johnson, who was born in 1899 and lived in Woolomin, recalls a neighbour Mr Galpen who had the only

gramophone in the village, and was happy to share his love of music with the whole community:

*None of us had ever seen one before or heard one. He had quite a good collection of records, at least one night a week when weather was suitable he would take his gramophone out to his front verandah and start to play. Immediately the whole village would down with their rugs and cushions and sit on the nice grassy plot at his front gate to listen to the music. . . he was a wonderful citizen.*¹³⁶

As village centres developed in the Nundle district, the community hall provided a place for social gatherings. In August 1924 the Chief Secretary's department approved the construction of a public hall at Hanging Rock; the specifications called for a timber building 40 feet by 20 feet with galvanised iron roof, capable of accommodating 150 people. A veranda was added in the 1930s. Victor Fermor, who grew up at Hanging Rock, remembers the keen competition between couples at the Saturday night dances held in the hall and the children being put to sleep under the tables in the kitchen as the night wore on.¹³⁷

Travelling picture shows visited Nundle through the first decades of the twentieth century. Victor Fermor recalls the visits of Penn's Travelling Picture Show in the 1920s:

*Our main source of enjoyment was when Penn's Travelling Picture Show came to Nundle about once every six weeks. It was mostly silent pictures and the hall would be packed. We kids would trap rabbits and clean up yards to get money to go. We got 2/6 to clean up a fowl yard. It cost a shilling to go to the pictures and we would maybe have a penny ice cream after.*¹³⁸

From 1948 films were screened in the Nundle Memorial Hall, next to the School of Arts building. The hall was also used for dances, balls and dinners. Dances were regular social events in the Nundle district from the turn of the century, as Victor Fermor recalls:

*There were dances every Saturday night in Nundle, Bowling Alley or at Hanging Rock School. ... The music was supplied by locals. We'd nearly always see the sun rise. There would be a kerosene bucket of tea outside. The ladies brought supper and there would be a bed for the kiddies under the kitchen table. The men used to drink but alcohol wasn't allowed near the hall. The policeman, Sergeant Taylor or Constable Martin, would see to that.*¹³⁹

Grace Johnson of Woolomin remembers the balls held to raise funds for Tamworth Hospital and the Tamworth ambulance, and the dances for the cricket, football and tennis clubs. It could take up to a week to prepare the tallow wood floor of the Woolomin hall for a ball, and the children were given the job of polishing it. The floor was waxed with candles, then the boys pulled the girls around on sacks to polish it until it shone like glass.¹⁴⁰

Despite the advent of television, home videos and DVDs, going to the cinema remains a popular social outing, bringing people together and building communities. But for people living in small country towns, the nearest cinema may be 100 kilometres away. In 1999 the NSW Film and Television Office launched an innovative program to support regional communities to develop local cinema initiatives such as country film societies, outdoor film festivals and volunteer community cinemas.

In April 2000 the first 'Flicks in the Sticks' Regional Cinema Forum was held in Nundle. Organised by Nundle Arts Council with assistance from the NSW Film and Television Office, it was a locally-focused event to encourage cinema activities in north-western New South Wales and included practical self-help sessions such as a 16 mm projection workshop. As a result of the forum eight local communities have established regular screenings. Local community nurse Sue Denison was the driving force in the establishment of the community cinema in the supper room of Nundle Memorial Hall, with the assistance of a small amount of seed funding to hold the first screenings, and programming assistance from film distributors.

Ms Denison received additional funding to purchase new seating for the hall, and 16 mm film projection equipment was provided by her employer, the New England Area Health Service.

In addition to the social benefits of cinema activities in small towns where there are limited entertainment and social activities for young people, cinema can also have an indirect health benefit, in improving quality of life. Sue Denison was inspired to establish the fortnightly film screenings as a way of improving community health in a small community experiencing isolation, drought, industrial decline, high youth unemployment and Depression and limited public entertainment. The cinema draws different elements of the community away from the isolation of television, and brings people of all ages together to socialise and enjoy movies. The real payoff is psychological.¹⁴¹ As Sue Denison explained in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* published in 2003:

*We [the Nundle Arts Council] are not out to make a profit, just enough to cover the rental of the next movie, and the cost of tea, coffee and biscuits... We're living with young people whose lives have been dominated by television, with the consequent breakdown in communication. Instead of just grabbing the remote at home and tuning out, they have to make an effort to go to the cinema, and when they get there they have to talk - at interval anyway... From my perspective - of health - anything that we can do to stimulate, and motivate, people ... to create a sense of a secure community in Nundle ... the better off things will be.*¹⁴²

5.5.3 Sport

Records of sport on the goldfields are scanty. Among the sports played were cricket and the favourite old English game of bowls, which was taken up in America with great zeal and brought to the fields by the American miners. Most mining settlements had bowling alleys, long narrow chutes for hurling the ball towards the pins, and it was from this game that the name of the settlement of Bowling Alley Point, at the centre of the diggings, was probably derived. The earliest recorded use of the name for the Peel River diggings was probably in the *Maitland Mercury* in August 1858. Another explanation for the origin of the name is that to the miners, the long narrow valley at Bowling Alley Point resembled a bowling alley.¹⁴³

Cricket was played from the earliest days on the goldfields. There was a cricket club in existence at Bowling Alley Point by May 1863, when the *Tamworth Examiner* reported that the club celebrated its anniversary. Nundle, Woolomin and Goonoo Goonoo also fielded teams, and they competed enthusiastically with each other.¹⁴⁴

Horse racing was a popular event, attracting many keen punters. There is a report of what was probably the first race meeting held in the Nundle district in 1855. Called the Nundle Subscription Races, the meeting was held on a course near the Diggers Arms at Oakenville Creek.¹⁴⁵ From the 1860s annual races were held at Nundle and Bowling Alley Point, with local publicans contributing purses for particular events. On 7 January 1860 the *Tamworth Examiner* reported on the new year races on Cann's Plains race course at Nundle:

*Our holidays finish with the old year, and for the last week balls and races have been all the rage. Mr Single took the majority of the prizes on Cann's Plains. The first race between his Pilot and Mr J. D. Davies' Bay Humpy was well contested, the latter losing by a neck. The heavy showers made the course very disagreeable; there was, however, a large concourse of people in attendance.*¹⁴⁶

Athletics was popular, and foot races between the best athletes in the district also attracted punters with money to spare. In 1890 a race between John Ware of Nundle and J. Morris of Hanging Rock was run in Nundle for the high stake of £100. Over 600 spectators crowded the field to watch the race.¹⁴⁷

During the 1960s cricket was still strong in Nundle, the local team travelling around the district to play in regional competitions. Hanging Rock also fielded a cricket team. Grade tennis competitions were played, including night tennis, even on cold winter nights. Nundle Swimming Pool was officially opened in April 1966, and an active swimming club was established, coached by Bill Taylor and Maurie Boland.¹⁴⁸ The club held its 30 year anniversary celebrations in 1996, and to mark the occasion a tree was planted together with a time capsule.

Today Nundle has excellent sporting facilities for such a small town. They include the swimming pool, and a park and recreation ground dedicated in 1901. The oval beside the Peel River provides a picturesque venue for cricket and football. There are four tennis courts in the town, the first built in the early 1900s and the second two added in 1945. Across the river in West Nundle a bowling green was laid out and opened in March 1952, and a club house was built beside it, now the Nundle Sport and Recreation Club. Sporting clubs in Nundle include the Campdraft Committee, Amateur Swimming Club, Fishing Club, Pony Club, and Nundle Women's Bowlers. The Nundle Bushwalking Committee organises walks on the first Saturday of each month.



Figure 18: Nundle swimming pool, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

A more unusual event on the Nundle sporting calendar is 'The Great Nundle Dog Race'. The event began in 1979 as a community fund raiser for Nundle Primary School, with a race for working dogs through the streets of Nundle. It became so popular that it is now held annually at Nundle Recreation ground each May. Run by the Nundle Parents and Citizens Association and Nundle Public School, over the years the event has raised thousands of dollars for Nundle School. 'The Great Nundle Dog Race' now includes not only races for dogs, but a variety of events for their owners, such as sack races and foot races.

5.5.4 Arts and Culture

Mechanics Institutes or Schools of Art were established in the cities of Australia in the mid-nineteenth century to improve the education of the working classes. They had their origins in the industrial revolution in Scotland and England in the early nineteenth century, but in the Australian colonies they were adapted to meet the needs of a frontier society. Many working families did not have the opportunity to gain a 'superior' education, because through economic necessity they had to join the workforce at a young age. As settlement expanded during the 1870s and 1880s Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts were established in

country districts, where they played an important role in social life. City dwellers had access to a range of specialised cultural organisations such as musical societies, libraries and literary and debating societies, but in country towns and villages the School of Arts or Mechanics Institutes combined them all. They housed libraries, and provided a venue for arts and crafts classes, lectures, debates and concerts.¹⁴⁹

The area around Hanging Rock experienced a population explosion during the gold rush era, and a Mechanics Institute was established there in the late 1850s or early 1860s. Nothing remains of the building today, and there are no known photographs of it. However oral history reports of older residents highlight that it was an important social and community centre for the district. There was another School of Arts building at nearby Mount Pleasant, a simple wooden structure that also served as a venue for church services and social functions. Later the building was used as a shed on the property of George McEwen, until it was destroyed by fire.¹⁵⁰

Interest in the formation of a School of Arts came relatively late to Nundle, even though it was a centre for the goldfields. In the late 1880s the residents of Nundle began a subscription list for a School of Arts, and by 1890 they had raised £50. A year later the government reserved a portion of the Recreation Reserve on Jenkins Street for the School of Arts. Encouraged by the Government's support, the community redoubled their fundraising efforts and they raised almost half of the cost of the new building, which was £235. The School of Arts was officially opened on 6 August 1892 by the Minister for Agriculture and Mines, the Hon. T. M. Slattery, who travelled with his party by waggonette from Tamworth, accompanied by two troopers. The ceremony was followed by a gala concert and an evening banquet at the Royal Hotel. The Constitution of the Nundle School of Arts, agreed in September 1897, set out its objects:

*The object of the Nundle School of Arts shall be the intellectual improvement of its members, and the cultivation of literature, science and art which shall be promoted by the maintenance of a library and reading room, the delivery of lectures, the formation of classes, the encouragement of social, intellectual and physical recreation and by such other means as the committee may from time to time deem advisable.*¹⁵¹

The School of Arts quickly became the centre of social and intellectual life in the town, incorporating a lending library which served the needs of Nundle residents for fifty years. Apart from the library, little is known of the uses to which the School of Arts Building was put. Like similar institutions in the region, it would have undoubtedly been the venue for public meetings, concerts, visiting entertainments and family gatherings. When the Nundle Memorial Hall was built next to the original building in 1930, the two buildings were linked. The stage in the original School of Arts building was removed, kitchen facilities added, and it became known as 'the supper room'. After the Second World War the front room of the School of Arts Building, believed to be the original library, was made available on permanent loan to the Nundle RSL and has for many years served as their local headquarters. Since the early 1990s, the remainder of the building has returned to its original function as a library.¹⁵²

5.5.5 Tourism

Organised tourism in its modern sense only emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the well to do with time and money on their hands sought relaxation or a change of climate. The bracing climate and spectacular mountain scenery of the Nundle district made it a popular tourist resort as early as the close of the nineteenth century. A report in 1899 noted the tourist potential of Hanging Rock, with its elevated position, extensive panoramas and invigorating breezes, comparing it favourably to the more famous Blue Mountains west of Sydney. In 1902 it was suggested that residents of Tamworth and Quirindi might build

summer residences at Nundle, 'away from the depressing heat, dust and turmoil of the town'. Hanging Rock has been referred to as 'Tamworth's Katoomba', and many people did build weekend cottages there.

In 2006 tourism has generated new life and energy in the small town of Nundle, while preserving its country village atmosphere. Making the most of its rich gold mining heritage, many of the buildings of the main street have been transformed into galleries, shops and tourist accommodation. The Jenkins Street Guest House, formerly the town's bank, has been elegantly restored and offers luxurious accommodation and a popular restaurant. Visitors can stroll down the main street browsing in antique shops, craft shops and stores selling hand-made country furniture. 'The Cottage on the Hill' Patchwork Studio, operated for many years by Kerry Swain, offers patchwork classes as well as supplies. It is an important Nundle tourist attraction, making a significant contribution to the local economy. In Oakenville Street the Golden Hills Art Gallery incorporates the studios of artists Howard Ireland and Nadia O'Loughlin. The building housing the gallery has had a colourful history. Originally a coffin factory, it was for some years the home of the Mount Misery Underground Gold Mine and Gold Museum.



Figure 19: Jenkins Street Guest House, Nundle, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

In 2001 the opening of Nundle Woollen Mill brought more jobs to the once declining village. As well as a tourist attraction, it is also an educational facility for the local TAFE, schools and university. The working mill uses spinning and weaving machinery originally from a mill at J. L. McGregor Ltd in Geelong, some built in England and Germany as early as 1914. The restored equipment includes an English-made carding machine from 1914, a 1950s spinning frame from the United States and cone winding and ball winding machines. From an elevated walkway in the working section of the mill visitors watch the various stages of wool processing from 'opening' or 'picking' the scoured wool fleece to carding, spinning, twisting

and dyeing the finished yarn. The retail showroom is a riot of colour, tempting customers with a brilliant range of yarns, ready-made garments and accessories.¹⁵³

The Nundle Woollen Mill has inspired other local business enterprises, particularly the production of hand-knitted woollen garments. In 2000 Amanda Ducker left a journalism career in the city to explore creative options and establish a more peaceful country life with her eight-year-old daughter, Zia. She established Minx Handknits, a successful creative hand knitwear business using wool spun and dyed at Nundle Woollen Mill. The business provides extra income for a team of up to 20 local knitters based around the village. Amanda describes the many different roles she juggles:

*Living in the country you tend to have to be more creative with the way in which you earn a living, so along with being a mother, I work as a journalist, photographer and knitwear designer. I am also writing a novel at the moment, but there's no money in that!*¹⁵⁴

Another local woman with a passion for knitting is Megan Carberry, who established Nutmeg Knits. Formerly a nurse, Megan has always loved knitting, and found it was an ideal way of generating income while at home caring for her two young daughters. The name Nutmeg Knits originated when a friend called Megan the nutty knitter, because she was always knitting something for someone when not nursing. Megan produces a range of stylish jumpers and other garments using wool from the Nundle mill, as well as handbags, hats and scarves. She now has her own store in Tamworth.¹⁵⁵

Every Easter Nundle celebrates the Chinese contribution to its history at the Nundle Go For Gold Chinese Festival with two days of traditional dance, music and food. A highlight of the 2005 festival was the amazing Ancient Bianzhong Chime Bells, Gong and Drum Show. In 1978, the excavation of the 2,400 year old early Warring States tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng in Hubei Province uncovered a large musical instrument consisting of bronze bells which had hung on a rack, one of the oldest musical assemblages surviving in any culture. The original bells remained in the Hubei Provincial Museum, but a set of handcrafted replica bells cast to the precise pitch of the originals was brought to Australia through the assistance of the Australian Government's Cultural Exchange Program and Festivals Australia. Performances of the bells were held in the Nundle Memorial Hall. The streets of the town were decked in red and gold, and festooned with colourful Chinese lanterns, while the pupils of Nundle school made Chinese masks to wear in the street parade.¹⁵⁶ At the 2006 festival Australia's longest Chinese dragon made an appearance, a traditional symbol of good luck and prosperity for the year to come. The expanded festival program included five bands performing over two days, ranging from traditional bush bands to jazz. Over 100 market stalls lining the main street and in the school grounds sold food with a Chinese emphasis, local produce and arts and crafts. Gold panning demonstrations were an essential part of the festival. John Wilson of Nundle helped aspiring fossickers hone their panning skills from a claw foot iron bath filled with gravel straight from the Peel River. According to John, the creeks still carry gold from the hills to the river, and he could guarantee that visitors would find a few specks glittering in the bottom of their pan.

The star attractions of Nundle are its gold rush history and spectacular mountain setting. There are several fossicking sites around the town, mainly on the flats of the Peel River, which winds its way through the valley from Nundle to Tamworth. At Bowling Alley Point, visitors may be rewarded with finds of zircon, sapphires, green jasper, precious serpentine, crystals or other semi precious stones. Gold panning is popular at Bowling Alley Point, the nearby village of Woolomin and at Chaffey Dam.

About 5 km east of Nundle is an old road leading off Happy Valley Road known as Two-Mile Walk. The old road winds through a valley rich in history. On all sides are the relics of an old mining settlement abandoned more than a century ago: disused mine shafts, mullock heaps,

diggings and mining equipment. At Dead Horse Mine John Blackwell operates a working gold mine where visitors can see the tunnel which cuts through an ancient river bed that proved inaccessible to the early miners, watch a demonstration of the washing process, and try their luck at panning for gold.

At Hanging Rock the Sheba dams provide scenic locations for picnicking, swimming, fishing and bushwalking. Picnic and barbeque facilities are available in a bush setting, abundant with birds and other wildlife including lizards, wallabies and pademelons. The Chaffey Dam on the Peel River is a drawcard for fishing and sailing enthusiasts. Anglers may be rewarded with catfish, yellow-belly and trout. There are picnic and barbeque facilities and opportunities for camping, walking, power-boating, sailing and windsurfing. A wide variety of water birds flock to the dam, including pelicans, plovers, cormorants, ibis and wild duck. The Hanging Rock and Nundle State Forests also provide opportunities for camping and bushwalking.

At Arc en Ciel Trout Farm visitors can take conducted tours of the ponds and hatchery, and purchase fresh and smoked trout and smoked trout pate. They can also hire fishing equipment and catch their own trout, leaving with their catch cleaned and packed. At Nundle Yabbie Farm on Happy Valley Road just north of Nundle visitors can buy freshwater crayfish, or catch their own.

A major factor in the dramatic turn around in the fortunes of Nundle has been its success in tapping the lucrative backpacker tourism market. At a tourism conference in Sydney in 2000 it was estimated that Nundle had turned its economy around from near-demise, to an annual \$1.8 million trade. Ross Howatson from the backpacker tour company Oz Experience gave an inspiring account of how local entrepreneurs Peter and Judy Howarth, keen to turn around the economic decline of Nundle, lobbied the company to travel through Nundle on the Sydney to Cairns route. The company worked with the local community to develop accommodation and visitor experiences, and for a number of years made Nundle a stopover on the route. In the first year 17,000 travellers were taken to Nundle, generating about \$686,000 in revenue; by 2000 the company carried 42,000 travellers on the route, all staying in Nundle for at least one night.¹⁵⁷ Leading the backpacker tourism market was Wombramurra Station, located south of Nundle on the road to Murrurundi. The Howarths, who have spearheaded the renaissance of Nundle with their local business enterprises, purchased the historic property in 1987. Together with their son, from 1996 they developed the station as a farm tourism experience which offered accommodation and quintessential Australian outback activities on a working sheep and cattle property, including sheep shearing, horse riding, mountain biking and traditional camp oven cooking. The predominantly young travellers stayed in the shearers' quarters, part of the shearing complex affectionately known as 'The Dag'.¹⁵⁸

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6. THE GROWTH OF MANILLA

6.1 SETTLERS AND SURVEYORS

The Geographic Names Board of New South Wales notes the name Manilla comes from the Aboriginal word 'manilla', 'muneela', 'maneela' or 'munila' meaning 'winding river' or 'round about'.¹ Aborigines who had their traditional hunting grounds on the banks of the Manilla River were originally named the Manellae. Over time the name became Manilla. The first European settlers to arrive in the Manilla district followed closely in the footsteps of the European explorers. In 1828 squatters Harvest Baldwin and his son Otto travelled overland from Singleton in the Hunter Valley and occupied land on the Namoi River about ten kilometres downstream from its junction with the Manellae River. Harvest and Otto Baldwin applied for a joint license for Dinnawirindi Station in 1837; the station covered 32,000 acres west of the hills dividing the watersheds of the Peel and Namoi rivers at Klori, and extended east to include the site of the present town of Manilla. After the death of Harvest Baldwin in 1843 the property passed to Otto Baldwin, who established a famous shorthorn cattle stud, Durham. When Otto Baldwin died in 1853 the title to Dinnawirindi was transferred to his nephew Charles Baldwin, who had been assisting him on the station for a number of years. By 1874 Durham Court Station was famous throughout Australia as a thoroughbred stud. In 1885 the property was registered as Durham Court Pastoral Holding. Charles Baldwin managed the property for 60 years through floods, droughts and fluctuating stock prices. He continued to develop the cattle stud founded by his uncle and to enhance the reputation of Durham Court as a premier thoroughbred horse stud. Charles imported Arab stallions and over almost a century Durham Court produced a string of successful race horses.²

A number of other large land holdings surrounded Dinnawirindi Station. In the 1830s Thomas Hall, son of Charles Hall, stock superintendent for the A. A. Company at Calala Station, Tamworth, occupied Moore Creek Station, on the southern bank of the Namoi River. It appears that Thomas Hall named Hall's Creek, a tributary of the Namoi. George Hall, unrelated to Thomas Hall, was a major landholder in the Hunter Valley and north-west New South Wales. He and his wife Mary Smith had their origins in Northumberland, England and arrived in Sydney in 1802. George Hall obtained a grant of 100 acres in the Hawkesbury district and as he followed the expanding frontier of European settlement, he went on to acquire extensive land holdings in the Hunter Valley and the north-west, as far as Surat in Queensland. His sons and grandsons managed these properties. It was said that the Hall family could drive cattle from the Darling Downs to Sydney, and camp on their own land every night. In 1848 the returns of the Liverpool Plains Lands Commission list Matthew Hall, aged 19, a grandson of George Hall, as managing the Cuerindi Run on the northern bank of the Namoi. Young Mathew would have been among the first patrons of the store and wineshop set up by George Veness in 1853 at the junction of the Manilla and Namoi Rivers, only a few miles from the Cuerindi run. By 1860 the Cuerindi run covered 51,000 acres (20,639 hectares). Mathew spent most of his life on the Cuerindi run. After Cuerindi was sold in 1873 he acquired a number of neighbouring selections, forming the property he called 'Highlandale'.³

Another Hall family had connections with the Halls Creek district. In 1877 John Hall, eldest son of William Hall, a veteran of the battle of Waterloo who was given a grant of land at West Maitland in the Hunter Valley, settled with his wife and family on a property they named 'Hallsville' on the Tamworth – Manilla road. John Hall donated land opposite his home for a Methodist church, built in 1894. He and his wife Jane are buried in the graveyard behind the church, now the Hallsville Uniting Church.⁴

In 1846 William Simms Bell held Keepit Station on the Namoi River a few kilometres from its junction with the Peel River. He first acquired the run, originally named Keypet, from a squatter named White in 1836 or 1837 and added more land. The name Keypet came from the Gamilaroi word meaning 'many bends in the river'. By 1861 Keepit Station covered 32,643 acres (13,209 hectares). Bell eventually sold the property to the Blaxland family in 1872. Today most of the grazing lands of Keepit Station lie beneath the waters of the Keepit Dam. The Pringle family took up land around Somerton and Bective on the Peel River in about 1839, naming the station Summer Hill. They worked the station using convict labour and it was managed by James Muggleton. By 1848 the property had passed out of the hands of the Pringle family, and was renamed Somerton.

E. and G. Rouse became squatters in the Upper Manilla Valley in the 1850s and established Upper Manilla Station. In 1861 this station covered 32,000 acres (12,950 hectares). The *Gazeteer* of 1861 lists numerous other stations in the district including Lower Manilla Station, Bendemeer Station, Attunga Station, Retreat Station, Longford Station and Mundowey Creek Station. Thomas Caddell owned Mendebri Station, of 18,560 acres (7,511 hectares), while Lower Manilla Station, which covered 16,000 acres (6,475 hectares), was owned by A. H. Richardson.⁵

George Veness is known as the founder of Manilla, and named the town. Born in Kent, he arrived in Port Jackson in 1849 on the ship *Harbinger* with his wife and son. After working at Barraba for the storekeeper W. McKid for two years, he decided to start his own business and sought a suitable location. He selected land at the junction of the Namoi and Peel Rivers, popularly known as The Junction by the teamsters who travelled from the Hunter Valley to the remote towns and mining communities of the north-west with station supplies, including the goldfields of Bingara and Bundarra.

The river crossing was a well known halt for the teamsters and an ideal location for the growth of a town. While Veness was still working in Barraba, the teamsters he met often told him how they could be held up there for days or even weeks when the Namoi was in flood and they were unable to cross. In 1853 Veness built a slab store, wine shop and residence at The Junction and in time he became the post master. In the early 1850s a horseback mail service was being established to settlements in north-western New South Wales. Manilla received its official name in 1856. In response to a request from the Postmaster General, Veness named the town after the river that flowed from Barraba to The Junction. Veness's store was washed away by floods in 1864, which were the highest ever known on the Namoi River. According to the diary of Surveyor Arthur Dewhurst dated 13 February 1864, the river rose ten feet higher than the floods in 1840.⁶ Veness managed to get his family to high ground but lost all his possessions.

In 1860 the Legislative Council of New South Wales instructed Charles Flide, the Government Surveyor based in Tamworth, to resume land and draw up plans for the town of Manilla. Surveyor Arthur Dewhurst began his work the following year, planning the township and naming the streets. Dewhurst named Charles and Lloyd Streets after Charles Lloyd, then Member of Parliament for Liverpool Plains. He did not hesitate to immortalise himself and his family, naming Arthur and Dewhurst Streets, and Florence Street after his wife.⁷ Dewhurst's draft plan was approved by the Executive Council, and the town formally gazetted, on 28 April 1863. The first sales of town allotments in Manilla were held in Tamworth on 28 May 1863. In 1866 the NSW *Gazeteer* described Manilla as follows:

Postal town in the electorate of Liverpool Plains and Police District of Tamworth; situated on the Namoi River near the junction of the Manilla River. District: pastoral and quartz mining. There is no conveyance between Tamworth and Barraba. Mail

*arrives twice a week and is carried on horseback. One hotel and one inn. Population of settlement and district: 50 persons.*⁸

By 1865 there were a number of settlers established in the Upper Manilla valley including the Nixons, Bowmans, and Barlings. Other names that were prominent in Upper Manilla for generations were the Costelloes, Camerons, Iliffes and Byrnes. Brothers Edward and Thomas Bowman, whose father William had selected land in the Hunter Valley in the 1840s, worked as carters, leading bullock teams on their slow journeys over the ranges and across the black soil plains between Maitland, Barraba, Bingara and Armidale, and as far afield as Moree, Narrabri and St George in Queensland. They carried supplies to the remote stations of north-west New South Wales and southern Queensland, returning to the Hunter River port of Morpeth heavily laden with bales of wool. On their lengthy journeys the brothers came to know the back country well, and in 1863 Thomas Bowman selected 1,868 acres of land in Upper Manilla at Woodville. Over the years Thomas steadily increased his holdings to over 12,000 acres, purchasing 1,280 acres from North Cuerindi Station and 1,400 acres from Manilla Station. He also acquired the Borah Farm, Springfield and Wimbourne properties and runs at Tarpoly Creek and Tarpoly. Thomas became a well known breeder of merino sheep and shorthorn cattle and was one of the first in the district to grow wheat.⁹ Thomas's brother Edward selected 'Buena Vista' in 1870, moving his wife Emma (nee Collins) and young family from the Hunter Valley after he had established a home. Buena Vista remained in the Bowman family for almost a century until it was sold in 1964.¹⁰

John Nixon and his brother George settled in Upper Manilla in 1870. Like the Bowmans, they had travelled widely through north-western New South Wales with their bullock teams and noted the fine country of the Upper Manilla Valley. John selected a block of 70 acres at Upper Manilla, at the junction of Oakey Creek and the Manilla River, which he named Oakhampton, while George selected land at the mouth of Borah Creek, where he built 'The Pines' homestead. John Nixon ran the store at Upper Manilla for many years with the help of his sister Mary Ann. His son Adam went on to develop the family property, Oakhampton, enlarging his land holdings, establishing a well known Hereford stud, and breeding Clydesdale horses for show and for use on the property. Adam Nixon had diverse interests, involving himself in many community activities. During his time at Oakhampton he was President of the Farmers and Settlers Association, a member of the Manilla Show Committee from its inception, a member of the Graziers Association and the North-West Irrigation League and a Councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society. He strongly supported the development of medical services in Manilla, furnishing the children's ward in Manilla Hospital when it opened in 1937. John Nixon's descendants continue to reside on the property he selected, although its size was significantly reduced when the Water Resources Commission resumed 7,500 acres for the construction of Split Rock Dam, completed in 1988.¹¹

James Costelloe came to Glen Riddle Station in Upper Manilla in 1862, where he worked for seven years before selecting land in the area. His son Thomas Costelloe was one of the first to occupy land in the New Mexico district. Patrick Byrnes, a native of County Galway, Ireland, settled in Upper Manilla in 1868 on a property he named 'Moss Vale'. A number of other selectors first came to the Manilla district as station hands on large stations such as Durham Court, Keepit, Manilla and Glen Riddle, then selected land. For example Richard Cummins, who was employed at Durham Court from 1851, and William Smith, who was employed there from 1865, both went on to acquire their own properties in the district.¹²

A sale of Crown land in Manilla sub-division was held in 1876 in the Tamworth Court house. Charles Baldwin of Durham Court purchased 339 acres to the west of Manilla at the price of £1

an acre, while at the same sale several acres of land within the surveyed boundary at North Manilla sold for £8 an acre.¹³ Manilla was officially proclaimed a town on March 20 1885. From the 1860s to the turn of the century Manilla grew apace - its population increased from 50 in 1866 to 780 by 1901.

The Robertson Land Acts passed in 1861 remained in force until 1884, and the pattern of growth which they established continued. The large pastoral runs of the inland, which had remained locked up until after 1866 when their fourteen-year leases expired, were opened up to free selection. Part of these large holdings were resumed to allow small farmers to take up land, and encourage closer settlement.¹⁴ During the 1870s and 1880s the Manilla district was opened up to free selection. Land seekers flocked to the north-west and there was keen competition. For every man who occupied land there were many others keenly watching for any breach of the lease conditions, which would give them the opportunity to jump the selection.¹⁵ During the 1880s large-scale selection of land around Halls Creek, Upper Manilla and the Namoi River transformed Manilla from an area of large cattle stations to closer settlement. Many of the larger properties were subdivided, such as Durham Court in 1898, when 17 blocks were sold at New Mexico. Keepit Station was progressively split up from the 1870s to 1910, including for soldier settler blocks after the Boer War.¹⁶



Figure 20: Detail from map of Parish of Manilla, County of Darling, Tamworth Land District, Fourth edition 7 May 1903. Parish Map Collection, State Library of NSW.

In 1890 the editor of the *Tamworth Observer* visited Manilla and Upper Manilla, providing a portrait of life in the district. He described Manilla as a town which promised a prosperous future, and commented on the imposing bridge crossing the river, the stately court house, the well kept orchards and pretty flower gardens. He reported that there were two stores, two blacksmith shops,

a branch of the Commercial bank, two butchers shops, a saddlers shop, several carpenters and a brick yard in Manilla.¹⁷

6.2 HARVESTING THE LAND: PASTORALISM AND AGRICULTURE

Between 1830 and 1870 most the land in the Manilla district was occupied by six large pastoral holdings. The first was Dinnawirindi Station, followed by Attunga, Manilla, Keypet, Cuerindi, and Mundowey. These stations were predominantly cattle stations. An issue of the *NSW Gazetteer* published in 1865 listed Dinnawirindi Station as having a carrying capacity of 1,600 cattle, Manilla Station 1,150 cattle and Attunga Station 1,250 cattle.¹⁸

Over time the large stations were split into smaller holdings, particularly after the passage of the Robertson Land Acts in 1861. In 1862 many of the pastoral leases in the Manilla district were renewed on terms of ten or fifteen years. This process accelerated after 1872 when the first of these leasehold grants came up for review and there was a rush for selection. Many new settlers occupied land in the Upper Manilla and Upper Namoi Valleys. There was another wave of selection of station leases in 1885, followed by subdivision of station freeholds in the 1890s.¹⁹ Sheep production increased with closer settlement, and by 1880 wool was the major industry of the Manilla district. By 1896 a regular stream of horse and bullock teams loaded with wool bales passed through Manilla on their way to the rail head in Tamworth. When the editor of the *Tamworth Observer* visited Manilla and Upper Manilla in 1890, he called on John Nixon at Oakhampton station where the shearing season was in full swing. There were over 9,000 sheep to be shorn, and Nixon was short of shearers. But Nixon told his visitor that the shearing at nearby Glen Riddle Station was due to cut out in a few days time and he expected to soon have a full board. The editor described how the country on the Upper Namoi River was being opened up and land seekers were flocking in. They were industrious men, he reported, and were busy improving their land and already producing wheat.²⁰ One of the larger stations in the Manilla district was Bective Station; in the 1900 season 100,000 sheep were shorn there. In 1907 over 13,000 bales of wool passed through Manilla railway station, much of it coming from the Barraba district, and in the same year Manilla topped the prices at the Sydney wool sales, selling at 14 3/4 shillings per pound.²¹



Figure 21: Wool bales leaving Everton Station. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

During the 1920s and 1930s the merino flock sheep ewe competitions conducted by the Upper Manilla Agricultural Bureau, the Manilla agricultural show and the Manilla ram sales all encouraged local farmers to develop more scientific breeding programs. Wool from Manilla continued to command high prices, and during the boom period of the early 1950s sold for as much as 300 pence per pound. Garnott and Pearl Bowman built the current homestead at Buena Vista in Upper Manilla on their marriage in 1915. Their grand daughter, who grew up on 'Buena Vista', recalls:

Shearing continued at Buena Vista until the very early fifties. The shearers' quarters were near the workman's cottage, then occupied by the Bennett family. With the wool boom of the fifties during the Korean war and union demands these smaller sheds were rationalised and the 3 – 4,000 sheep trailed up to the 'Oakhampton' shed with its eight stands and Amby Dark's team of shearers.²²

Graziers had to contend with wild horses, dingoes, and later, rabbits, which all competed with stock. The Bowman's grand daughter remembers:

I wonder how many people remember the rabbits, the constant fence patrolling, the trapping and always looking for warrens when riding. Buena Vista at one time employed two full time men for their control. I remember the fence line on Fernbank along the Oakhampton Road strung for miles with pairs of bunnies awaiting collection. I have no idea who bought them or what they did with them, perhaps it is better not to know.²³

Droughts and floods are a regular feature of life on the land in Australia, a continent of climatic extremes. There was a major national drought between 1895 and 1903, often referred to as 'the 1902 drought'. In New South Wales the worst affected areas were in the central west and south of the State. Stock losses in the Manilla district were so high, approaching 50 per cent, that in 1902 sheep were brought in by train from the Riverina for restocking.²⁴ Another major drought occurred in 1946, when the Manilla district received its lowest annual recorded rainfall. There was a total crop failure that year, although stock losses were not as severe as in the 1902 drought.

Settlers living along the Namoi River developed a healthy respect for its dangers. Before the construction of the Keepit Dam the waters of the Namoi could rise to flood levels extremely rapidly and just as quickly recede. The Namoi drains a vast area of mountain country on the slopes of the Great Dividing Range and its gradient is still steep by the time it reaches the Manilla district. One of the worst floods in Manilla's history was in 1864, when George Veness's store was swept away and four of the town's 12 residents drowned. The flood occurred at night when residents were asleep, and the river rose so suddenly that the few people living in the township were caught unaware. Other floods occurred in 1840, 1910 and again in 1955. In January 1964, another major flood hit Manilla, following torrential rain in the catchment areas of both the Namoi and Manilla Rivers. Billed as the worst flood in Manilla's history, it left behind a trail of devastation. A third of the population of Manilla had to be evacuated. Houses were seen floating down the streets of Manilla, bogged trucks loaded with furniture and possessions and had to be abandoned, and in outlying areas thousands of sheep and cattle drowned. There were many stories of close escapes and aircraft were used to spot families stranded on the roofs of their houses and alert rescue parties.²⁵

Like the sheep industry, the cattle industry also benefited from the development of more scientific breeding programs. Manilla became a major centre for stock sales, and the best known stock and station agent in town was V. J. Byrnes, who began as a 'pocket book' agent in 1913. In 1935 Byrnes established his own sale yards in Manilla and built up one of the largest one-man

businesses in Australia. In 1939 Manilla was described as ‘the premier stock selling centre in the north of New South Wales’ and Byrne’s sale yards as ‘the largest and most up-to-date set of stock yards north of Sydney’. Three-quarters of a million sheep were sold there between March and December 1939, a record for any one office in Australia, outside the capital cities. Over 100,000 head of sheep were sold in Queensland and total sales averaged over 3,200 per day. During the same period, 21,000 cattle were sold.²⁶

In April 1973 V. J. Byrnes Pty Ltd introduced live weight cattle selling at the Manilla sale yards. Giant metric scales were installed, together with a weighbridge, redesigned yards and a new system of pens, at an estimated cost of \$15,000.²⁷ The cattle industry boomed in the early 1970s. It was during this period that entrepreneur Harry M. Miller established a large herd of pure-bred German Simmental cattle on his property Dunmore, importing pedigreed heifers and bulls from New Zealand. But the bonanza was relatively short lived. When the slump came many farmers who had shifted completely from sheep to cattle were financially ruined. Many professional tradesmen who had bought properties at high prices during the boom had to find employment off the farm to support their families, for example at the asbestos mine at Woodsreef.

Until 1965, when all meat was brought from Tamworth, local butchers had their stock processed at the Manilla Abattoir, known as the slaughter yards, about 3 km east of the town. The yards are now private property. In 2004 the holding yard, the concrete floored shed with overhead rails for chains and the meat room with its large overhanging roof and screened windows were still standing.²⁸

The wheat industry has been central to the prosperity and growth of Manilla. The first wheat grown in the Manilla district for commercial purposes was in 1872, when a number of selectors planted small areas of wheat along the river flats. They included D. A. Benyon, John Donnelly, W. Iliffe, Edmund Annis-Brown, John Byrnes, Donald McDonald, Edward Hill and John Wheeler. The wheat produced in Manilla proved to be of high quality. In 1874 the following appeared in a report in the *Tamworth News*:

*In the year 1872, a first class miller who had arrived in Tamworth from England, said that he had found in Tamworth ‘a lot of very indifferent machinery’. But he had also found many bushels of very excellent locally grown wheat, some of which had come from Manilla. The grain was so good that no amount of rough milling could destroy its superior quality and the flour produced would make a loaf as white and as strong as the most fastidious baker could desire to serve his most particular customer.*²⁹

The establishment of a flour mill in Tamworth encouraged local growers, who shipped their wheat to Tamworth by dray. A proposal to establish a flour mill in Manilla was shelved in the early 1890s due to a downturn in the economy, and local farmers decided instead to concentrate on lobbying for a railway link from Tamworth to Manilla. The coming of the railway in 1899, together with increased rural settlement, gave a great boost to the local economy. The wheat industry depended far more than wool on cheap cartage, because farmers earned so much less for wheat per ton, and transporting wheat by rail was far quicker and cheaper than the slow, creaking bullock drays. In the early 1880s a ton of greasy wool was worth £90, while a ton of wheat was worth one tenth of that. Indeed, the inland wheat growing areas of New South Wales would not have prospered without the advent of the railway, and it was due to the railway that Australia was able to become a major supplier of wheat to British and European markets.³⁰ The wheat industry boomed, and in February 1905 more than 100 horse drawn wheat teams assembled at Manilla station to deliver a bumper harvest.³¹ A grain shed had been built at the station in 1900, leased by the Farmers and Settlers Association. In 1899 two Queensland millers built a flour mill in Manilla

at the river end of Arthur Street. The mill was sold in 1902 to Wilson Bros and Oram, who ran it for a few years until they sold the business. A new mill was later built just south of the railway station. The Manilla Milling Company operated the mill until 1920 when it was taken over by M. C. Mackenzies and Sons. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1929.

With the turn of the century, times were changing in the pastoral industry. In 1905 a demonstration of the Manilla-made six furrow stump-jump plough was given on Jas Thom's farm. It was the product of Baker's Foundry, and was hailed as the perfect implement for farm work. In 1906 the *Manilla Express* reported on the latest farm machinery in use in the district:

*Chaff cutting is now going on at Michael Costelloe's at Upper Manilla. He is cutting on a large scale and the regular whistle of his splendid up-to-date steam chaff cutting plant makes the place seem quite town like.*³²

The jobs of the bag sewers, who stitched closed the sacks of wheat, and of the carriers or lumpers who did the backbreaking work of loading the four bushel bags onto and off the drays, were soon to become redundant with the advent of mechanisation and bulk handling. Four bushel bags of wheat weighed over 108 kilograms each, and they were appropriately known as 'gut busters'.³³ In 1908 the weight of bags was limited to 90.6 kilograms.³⁴



Figure 22: Harvesting at North Cuerindi, 1930. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

Mechanisation of ploughing and harvesting during the 1920s and the development of improved wheat varieties by the Department of Agriculture contributed to the rapid growth of the wheat industry. An officer of the Department of Agriculture, W. R. Fry, had planted experimental plots near Manilla as early as 1909, to compare the yields of different varieties of wheat. In 1924 Manilla Farmers and Settlers Association introduced wheat crop competitions to encourage farmers to improve their yields, and from 1932 their work was continued by the Agricultural Society. After the Manilla flour mill burnt down in 1929, local farmers pressured the government to build a wheat silo at Manilla station. In 1933 a silo with a capacity of 150,000 bushels was built at Manilla.³⁵

During the late 1950s and early 1960s good grain prices and relatively low prices for wool encouraged farmers in the Manilla district to turn to wheat growing. Farmers also diversified to

produce other grain crops such as sorghum, oats, barley and sunflowers. With assistance from government research facilities, farmers introduced higher yielding strains of wheat, improved farming techniques and switched from kerosene powered tractors to more powerful diesel powered units. Large tilling machinery and harvesters equipped with large grain tanks greatly increased the efficiency of farming operations. Wheat was transferred directly from the harvesters to large semitrailers fitted with bulk bins and transported to bulk storage facilities at the railhead. In 1970 the NSW Grain Elevator Board constructed a new 500,000 bushel wheat silo at Manilla railway station. In 1975 the wheat harvest in the Manilla district was over one million bushels.³⁶

Through organisations such as the United Farmers and Woolgrowers Association (UFWA) and the Graziers Association and with the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, local farmers and graziers worked to improve their farming techniques and knowledge of environmental issues. In 1951 'Man Against Erosion', a locally made film funded by the Rural Bank, was shown at the Soil Conservation offices in Manilla. It featured soil conservation work on the properties of Clarendon and Marathon and in other parts of the Manilla district. In 1974 71 properties in the Manilla District were involved in the Keepit soil conservation project to reduce siltation in the Namoi River and Keepit Dam.

Many Chinese who followed the gold rushes to north-west New South Wales remained and established market gardens. According to local history there were many Chinese market gardens in and around Manilla towards the end of the nineteenth century, for example to the south-west on the river flats, but little physical evidence of them remains. The precise locations of these market gardens have not been mapped, although one of the first may have been located at the corner of Court and Manilla Streets.³⁷ Chinese farmers were also pioneers of tobacco growing. By 1891 there were 464 growers in New South Wales and Victoria, a number that fell to 89 only ten years later. Manilla was a centre of tobacco growing in its short heyday during the early years of the twentieth century, and tobacco was also grown at Nundle and Albury.³⁸

An experimental plot of tobacco grown by a Chinese farmer at Halls Creek in 1896 produced some good quality leaf. This encouraged others to experiment and it was established that tobacco grew best on the sandy loams on the banks of the Namoi River above its junction with the Manilla River. Tobacco was first grown commercially along the Namoi and Manilla Rivers in 1899. The first commercial grower was Donald McDonald who share-farmed a plantation on the Manilla River with Chinese farmers. The production of tobacco and also vegetable crops was made possible by the installation of the first irrigation plants on Manilla River properties in 1902. On 8 December 1919 the *Manilla Express* reported the findings of an inquest into the death of Charlie Hunt, native of Canton, who had an interest in the tobacco crop on Brady's farm, on the Namoi River about 12 miles from Manilla. Hunt created a disturbance at the farm one night, during which he shot one of his countrymen Ley Chin and set fire to a number of buildings including the house occupied by the Bradys, the woolshed and the shed housing the irrigation plant. Hunt fled, but he was captured by police several days later, under the influence of an overdose of opium. He subsequently died in custody at the Manilla lockup and the inquest found that Charlie Hunt died on 28 November 1919 from the effects of opium poisoning, self-administered.³⁹

At the peak of the tobacco industry in 1923 there were 17 plantations in the Manilla district, covering about 530 acres. The industry survived until the 1940s, when it declined due to lack of markets and buyer resistance to local product. In December 1943 the Minister for Agriculture W. J. Scully held a conference in Canberra with the aim of establishing a tobacco marketing board and a scheme which would assure growers of a market before they grew their crop. However the delegates at the conference, who included a large number of tobacco buyers, failed to reach

agreement. The proposal was dropped, marking the death knell of the tobacco industry in northern New South Wales. The conference was decades too late, and by the time it was held many experienced growers had left the industry.⁴⁰ By 1949 there were few tobacco growers left in the Manilla district. Italians grew some tobacco at Moore Creek north east of Tamworth into the 1970s, and there were also barns and drying sheds around Ashford and up to the Queensland border.⁴¹



Figure 23: Tobacco drying at Manilla, 1930. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

Dairying was an important local industry by the turn of the century, made possible by the installation of irrigation plants. There were two dairies in Upper Manilla in 1903, run by J. T. Byrnes and John Barling. By 1906 they were each milking 100 cows. In the same year there was an attempt to establish a butter factory in Manilla, but the enterprise failed to raise sufficient capital to start up.⁴² The dairy industry underwent major changes during the 1950s and 1960s with mechanisation and centralisation of production. There was a minor renaissance in Upper Manilla in the 1980s when in 1983 the McAdam family took over Buena Vista, home of a well known Friesian stud. The McAdams improved their 3,400 acres and established a modern dairy with the latest equipment, with a capacity for milking 2,000 cows.⁴³ Since the Split Rock Dam was completed in 1988 the area between Split Rock and Keepit is one of most secure irrigation areas in the district, with farmers receiving a high proportion of their water allocation. There are now two large dairies in the district and significant areas under lucerne.⁴⁴

During the Second World War many properties became neglected and required a lot of labour to redevelop during the 1950s. Mrs McDuff of Upper Manilla, who came to her property 'Mostyn Vale' in 1945, describes a ramshackle house, fallen fences and paddocks overrun with rabbits. Over the years the McDuffs repaired fences, eradicated the rabbits, improved the pastures and restocked.⁴⁵ During the 1960s and 1970s the river flats were developed for spray irrigation farming.

In recent years many newcomers have fallen in love with the tranquil Upper Manilla Valley and established hobby farms, revitalising the well known properties selected by the first settlers. They

are mainly mixed farms, running cattle, sheep, or goats, and growing crops such as lucerne and oats for feed. Ray and Karen Howard describe their first sight of their property, Dilkusha:

*We drove over the hill and saw the beautiful lush green valley, over the bridge and looked left up the hill. There it was, Dilkusha, which was Irish for 'my heart's desire', named I believe by the Byrnes family. The moment I laid eyes on her I knew it was the home for me. Lovely old Australian home, with verandahs all round, built in 1925. ... from the top of the hill Upper Manilla is one of the most picturesque places in the north west. We love it, it's home.*⁴⁶

Many properties in the Manilla district changed hands frequently between the 1960s and 1980s and became run down. Like their post-war predecessors the new arrivals worked hard to rehabilitate their properties. When the Carolyn family bought Moss Vale, a small property in Upper Manilla in 1983, they could see its potential, even though it was run down. There were dilapidated outbuildings and the paddocks were full of thistles, and scattered with rotting sheep carcasses and the bones of long dead sheep and cattle. The original homestead built by the Byrnes family was still standing, but in urgent need of repairs. The Carolyns decided to demolish it as it was a fire risk.⁴⁷

Local farmers are also diversifying into niche markets and exploring other ways of generating income, for example through farm-based tourism and adding value to their produce through further processing. A successful example of local farm-based tourism is the award winning Bed and Breakfast at historic Oakhampton homestead, owned and operated by the direct descendant of the founder of the property, John Nixon. Manilla is one of only two places in New South Wales that produces mead from local honey. The Meadery is located just north of the town and visitors can sample different varieties of mead before they purchase.

6.3 MINING

Mining was not a major industry in the Manilla district. Most mining activity was centred on Barraba and further north around Bingara and Bundarra. But over the last 70 years residents of Manilla have benefited from the mining industry in these areas. When the asbestos mine and mill at Woodsreef near Barraba reopened in 1972, it was a major local employer. Many people from Manilla worked at the mine, and former farm workers could triple their income. In the heyday of the mine in the mid 1970s this new-found wealth was exhibited by all the new cars in the town. Ian Bignall of Manilla was one person who worked at Woodsreef. He recalls that 'we breathed asbestos dust, we ate it, it was dusty and dirty'. However 30 years later, there appear to be few problems with asbestosis among former mine workers in Manilla.

The limestone mine in Attunga, south of Manilla has been operating since the 1920s. A large seam of limestone occurs in the ridge east of the township. In its first decade the mine was a large operation, producing as much as 119,000 tons per annum. From the early 1950s the mine was known as Sulcor, after the owners Sulphide Corporation. By this time it was a much smaller operation, producing 20,000 to 25,000 tons per annum and employing around 15 people. The row of identical miner's cottages built in the 1950s can still be seen facing the mine, at a diagonal from the main Tamworth – Manilla road. Some Manilla residents worked at the limestone mine in the 1950s, and a spur rail line from the main Barraba line was built to serve the Sulcor mine. J. H. Scarfe joined Sulphide Corporation in July 1950. He worked with Andrew Thomson as an engineer, designing crushing and screening plant. He remembers the large tip trucks introduced in 1951 to improve efficiency and putting up the garages to house them. He also remembers going on a fruitless search for rabbits in their time off, armed with rifles leant to them by the quarry

foreman. The mine passed into the ownership of Newcastle Lime and Cement Company and then in 2001 the enterprise was purchased by Unimin Australia Ltd. Unimin Australia operate modern vertical lime kilns, producing quicklime and hydrated lime, with an annual output of 200,000 tonnes per annum.⁴⁸ During the 1980s there were plans to open another limestone mine closer to Tamworth but the project did not proceed because of the concerns of local residents about the environmental impacts and the amount of heavy traffic the mine would generate.⁴⁹

6.4 SERVICING COMMUNITIES

6.4.1 Schools

By the early 1870s a number of pioneer families had settled in Keepit, forming a nucleus of settlement that rivaled Manilla. So it was that the first school in the Manilla district was not in Manilla, but in Keepit where a full time school was built in 1875, at about the same time a school was built at Upper Manilla. The school operated as a provisional school until 1880, then was upgraded to a primary school. When pupil numbers fell at various periods during the 1890s, between 1903 and 1910, and in the 1920s the school became either a half-time school or a provisional school. Keepit School retained its status as a primary school from 1948 to 1973, when it finally closed. Pupil numbers were boosted by the building of the Keepit Dam during the 1950s, when many construction workers and their families came to live in the district.

The first school classes in Manilla were held at a private school on the corner of Rowan and Stafford Streets. A small Union Church was built in 1875 at North Manilla, and in support of their application to the Council of Education for a government school in their town, the residents of Manilla offered the use of the Church. Classes were held there from September 1877. There were about 30 children enrolled; they were under the charge of John Marshall, appointed to Manilla as the first public school teacher. In 1879 a brick school to accommodate 50 pupils and a teacher's residence was built on the hill at North Manilla. In a far sighted gesture, a glass time capsule was placed in the foundations of the building, dated 26 February 1879 and containing the builder's contract, a description of the laying of the foundation stone of the building in the forty-second year of the reign of her most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, and copies of four newspapers: the *Tamworth News*, the *Tamworth Observer*, the *Maitland Mercury* and the *Maitland Evening News*. The capsule was discovered when the building was demolished in 1939. At the opening celebrations the hotel keeper at North Manilla, J. T. Flynn, organised a basket picnic for every child in the town and in the evening 150 people attended a lantern lecture given by the postmaster E. Done. Pupil numbers increased steadily and five years later another classroom was added to the school.⁵⁰

By 1890 Manilla Public School had an enrolment of 112 pupils, with an average attendance of 87.⁵¹ Classes were held there for 21 years, until the building could no longer accommodate the growing number of pupils. The population of Manilla had grown to 650 by 1896, and the majority lived on the south side of the river, so the location of the school was no longer central. Local residents lobbied for several years for the removal of the school, proposing that the pound yard land on the corner of Court and Arthur Streets be resumed for the site of a new school. The Department of Education finally agreed to the proposal and construction began in 1900. On 26 January 1901 Manilla Public School, with accommodation for 200 pupils, opened in its new central location. The Premier of New South Wales had been invited to open the school but Queen Victoria died four days before the event, and a period of national mourning was declared. All Government functions were cancelled, so the school was never officially opened. The old school building continued as the school master's residence until 1938 when it was sold and removed.

The bricks were used to build a new home on Crow Mountain road. The school continued to grow as the town of Manilla prospered. From January 1923 its status was upgraded to a district school, catering for both primary and secondary school age students. In 1926 additions were made to accommodate 400 pupils, and in 1933 a domestic science and manual training block was built.⁵²

By 1958 enrolments at Manilla Public School totalled 542, the highest on record, and approaches were made to the Department of Education to build a high school at Manilla. In November 1966 the new secondary school in Manilla opened, with an initial enrolment of 167 pupils. In September 1977 a week long program of celebrations was held to mark the centenary of public education in Manilla, attended by many former pupils and teachers. The program opened with a procession through the town watched by over 3,000 people, and throughout the week a variety of events were held including fetes, concerts, a combined church service, a bush picnic, open days at the school, and a centenary ball. The Yarambully bush school was officially handed over to Manilla Historical Society as a museum of education.⁵³



Figure 24: Manilla Central School, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Sisters of the Roman Catholic St Joseph's Convent made an important contribution to education in Manilla. The Convent was founded in 1905 in a residence on Railway Hill, and the Sisters held classes there, quickly gaining a reputation for their musical tuition. In 1914 the present convent was built on a block of land adjoining the Church. After the new Church of St Michael was opened in 1938 the old church building was converted into a school hall.

In 1876 a concert was held in Manilla to raise funds to build a school in Upper Manilla, and in the following year two acres of land was dedicated for the purpose. An additional five acres was later dedicated for a public school paddock. By 1878 there were 33 children in Upper Manilla of school age, sufficient numbers for the Council of Education to approve the residents' application for a provisional school. The first government school in Upper Manilla opened in February 1879 in a simple slab building with bark roof and ceiling. From 1880 it operated as a primary school. Children from the surrounding properties walked to school or rode their horses along the rough bush tracks. By 1883 the condition of the building had deteriorated badly; the roof leaked and there were large gaps in the walls where the slabs had fallen out. Angry that their request to build a new school had been turned down, local residents staged a strike and when the new school year

began in 1884, there were no pupils to greet the teacher. The Council of Education finally agreed to fund a new school after local parliamentary representative Henry Levien submitted a report to Parliament describing the poor state of the existing building. He wrote:

*The school building at Upper Manilla is constructed of split sleepers and is 13 by 26 feet in size. It has a bark roof and bark ceiling. Many of the slabs have fallen out of the walls, leaving large holes through which wind, sun and rain penetrate. These holes are noticeable in three places.*⁵⁴

The first teacher at the school, from 1879 to 1886, was the well loved Emily Hely Sampson (nee Hutchinson). She was a remarkable woman for her time, an era when few married women worked. Her sister Harriet died in 1876 of puerperal sepsis after the birth of her eighth child, and two years later Emily married her brother-in-law Horatio Sampson. While her husband studied law, Emily prepared lessons and taught over 30 children of varying ages and abilities, ran the household, and cared for seven stepchildren in addition to her own three young children, who were born between 1879 and 1885.⁵⁵ A new school was built in Upper Manilla in 1903, on land purchased from Thomas, John and James Barling. Murray Bowman, whose family lived at Wimbourne, about three miles from the Manilla River, remembers riding to school with his older brother Tom in the 1920s. On some days they had the luxury of being driven in a four-wheeled phaeton, a light buggy drawn by a single horse.⁵⁶ Everyone lent a hand with the chores on the farm. Agnes Bell, who grew up in Upper Manilla on the banks of the Manilla River, recalls:

*When school was over we stayed at home helping with all the chores that had to be done – milking cows, washing and ironing, and scrubbing floors. We never had time to be bored.*⁵⁷

Over the years the school functioned as an important social centre for the Upper Manilla community, bringing adults and children together. Joan Ryan, who lived in Upper Manilla from 1962 to 1968, remembers the fireworks nights in June each year and the end of year concerts when the school verandah was used as a stage.⁵⁸ The school was the venue for meetings of the Parents and Citizens Association, bush fire brigade, agricultural bureau, the art and colour photography group and at election time it served as the polling booth. Upper Manilla school finally closed its doors in March 1968, and local children now travel by bus to school in Manilla.

During the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century a number of other schools operated in the small settlements in the Manilla district. Schools operated at Milliwindi between 1886 and 1888, at Hawarden from 1889 to 1933, New Mexico from 1893 to 1938, and at Borah from 1893 to 1896. There were also schools at Wongan Creek (1885 to 1925), Head Vale (1906 to 1936), Ukolan (1888 to 1928), Tarpoly (1902 to 1903 and 1942 to 1954), Newry Park (1905 to 1916), Lake Keepit (1875 to 1973), Baldwin (1900 to 1928 and 1935 to 1942) and Giants Den (1885 to 1886). The first teacher at Wongan Creek School was Mr Sampson and he lived in the school house, cooking over an open fire.⁵⁹ Head Vale school was known as Corella until October 1925. The one-room weatherboard school, with verandahs on both sides, was built on a two acre block. It adjoined a similar sized block on which there were two dirt tennis courts and a galvanised iron clubhouse. Most children rode ponies to school; they grazed them in the tennis court paddock. Austin Kirk recalls that the tennis courts were out of bounds to the pupils; presumably the adults thought they would ruin the surface for their social competition weekends. The school had one water tank outside, and a fireplace for which the older boys were rostered to cut wood in winter.⁶⁰

Some settlements such as Hawarden, New Mexico, Ukolan and Wongan Creek maintained sufficient populations to support schools for several decades. As was often the case in areas with

scattered populations, some schools operated half-time, sharing teachers with neighbouring schools. Hawarden School, for example, operated half-time with Wongan Creek school between 1896 and 1897 and half-time with New Mexico school between 1898 and 1901. The school at Lake Keepit was closed or operated half time with Baldwin School for various periods between 1890 and 1946, but enrolments stabilised when construction of Keepit Dam commenced, bringing many new families into the area.⁶¹

6.4.2 Religious services

During the early years of settlement there were no resident clergy in the Manilla district and they travelled long distances by buggy and on horseback visiting their widely scattered parishioners. The first religious services were held in the homes of local landowners. In 1876 the Roman Catholic Bishop of Maitland, Bishop Murray, travelled from the Hunter Valley to hold a service in the home of John Fitzgerald at 'Huntsgrove', Keepit, and from May 1882 Mass was celebrated regularly at the home of the Byrnes family at 'Moss Vale' in Upper Manilla.

The first Church in Manilla was a Union Church, built on the northern side of the river in 1877. The church was used by clergy of different denominations on their periodic visits to Manilla. Rev. Gough, Church of England vicar at Gunnedah, held the first divine service there towards the end of 1877 soon after the church was completed, and from November 1878 Rev. Armstrong, Presbyterian Minister in Tamworth, conducted services in Manilla every three months. From the end of 1878 the Wesleyan Minister in Tamworth held monthly services at the Union Church in Manilla, while Rev. Dunkin of Tamworth held regular Church of England Services there from August 1885.⁶²

As the population of Manilla and the surrounding townships grew, local residents were able to build their own churches and attract resident ministers. A Roman Catholic Church was built at Keepit on land donated by John Fitzgerald of Huntsgrove Station. The church was officially opened by Bishop Murray in March 1877. Until 1894 Manilla Roman Catholics travelled to Upper Manilla to attend Mass. The first Roman Catholic Church in Upper Manilla was a small chapel erected on the Byrne's property, 'Moss Vale'. It was moved several times, first across the Manilla river to Wimbourne Road and finally in 1923 to the Barraba Road. It still stood there in 1949.⁶³

By the early 1890s Manilla had become the major district centre and had its own Roman Catholic church, so there was no longer need for a church at Upper Manilla. St Michael's Roman Catholic church in Manilla was built on a block of land on the corner of Rowan and Court Streets purchased by the church trustees in 1893. The plans, supplied by the Bishop of Armidale, the Rev. Torregiani, were based on a building in the Armidale district. Bishop Torregiani officially opened the church in a colourful ceremony on 25 November 1894. Over 400 people attended, and a large cavalcade came out from Manilla to meet the Bishop and escort him to the Church. The *Tamworth News* reported that after he had celebrated Mass, the Bishop congratulated the Roman Catholics of Manilla on their enterprise in building such a fine edifice, and acknowledged the generous assistance received from people belonging to other denominations.

In 1937 an imposing new St Michaels Church was built on land adjacent to the old church. It was officially opened in May 1938, and the original church was converted into a school hall. A presbytery was built in 1948. The trustees of the Roman Catholic Church added to their original land purchase over the years, so that there was ample land available for a church, convent, presbytery and school hall.⁶⁴ St Michael's Church stood until August 1971, when it was gutted by fire, believed to have been caused by an electrical fault. The Roman Catholic community

immediately made plans to replace the church, and a modern church on the site was officially opened by the Rev. H. J. Kennedy, Bishop of Armidale, on 28 May 1972.

The Methodists were the first to build their own church in Manilla. A brick building in Rowan Street, it opened in June 1889. In 1893 the Rev. Alex Stephen was appointed the first resident Minister in Manilla, and a circuit was established covering Ukolan, Halls Creek, Upper Manilla, Cobbadah and Barraba. Over the next few decades churches were built in Halls Creek (1892), Upper Manilla (1892), Borah (1904) and New Mexico (1908). None of these churches survive today. Some details of the church in Upper Manilla are contained in a brief report in *The Methodist* dated 13 August 1892. It states that the church, measuring 20 feet by 30 feet by 8 feet (6m by 9m) was opened 'last week', and cost £200. A very successful concert was held, and the Rev. C. W. Graham was to preach the first sermon, on the Sunday following the date of the report.⁶⁵ The church was built on land donated by John Barling of Manilla Station. Before it opened, services, Sunday School, tea meetings and concerts were held in the woolshed on the station. Isabel Rowsell, who grew up on Manilla Station, vividly recalls attending services in the tiny galvanised iron church in the heat of summer: the melting varnish of the wooden seats sticking to her hair, and the mice and lizards emerging from the carved wooden panel that ornamented the front of the harmonium. She also remembers the local farmers bringing samples of their wheat crops in their pockets to compare with their neighbours:

*Whenever a handkerchief was withdrawn to sop a perspiring brow during the sermon, there was a rattle of little grains as they showered on the floor.*⁶⁶

The present Methodist church in Manilla was officially opened on 9 April 1911 by the President of the Methodist Conference, Dr Bromilow. The building was designed by Sydney architect I. F. Rowse. By 1914 the Manilla Circuit covered Manilla, Upper Manilla and New Mexico, where weekly services were held. More infrequent services, less than once a month, were held in Ukolan and Springmount. In 1920 the Wesleyans officially became part of the Methodist Church. In 1977 the Uniting Church in Australia was formed, uniting the Methodists, Congregationalists and some Presbyterians. The Methodist Church became known as Manilla Uniting Church. In November the following year celebrations were held to celebrate the centenary of the first Wesleyan service held in Manilla, presided over by the Rev. J. S. Austen on 28 December 1878 at the Union church in North Manilla. A centenary thanksgiving service was held, attended by over 200 people, followed by a celebratory luncheon. The service was led by the Minister Rev. Noel Mansfield, with a guest preacher, Rev. Les Wakem, who was minister in Manilla in the 1950s.⁶⁷

The first Anglican church in Manilla, located at the corner of Namoi and Strafford Streets on a block of land donated by William Hill, opened in April 1893. Until the parochial district of Manilla was formed in April 1898, services in Manilla were conducted by visiting clergy from Tamworth, the Rev. W. J. Kellick Piddington and the Rev. W. H. Webber. A vicarage in Manilla was completed in September 1898 to accommodate Manilla's first resident Vicar, Rev. Arthur Johnstone. In the years that followed, Anglican churches were built in surrounding villages: in Halls Creek (1903), Somerton (1903), and Milliwindi (1905). Today only the church in Halls Creek survives. It is regularly used by different denominations such as the Church of England and Roman Catholics for services. The centenary of Halls Creek Church was celebrated in 2003. There is an Anglican church still in use in Somerton, but it is uncertain whether this is the original building. St Matthews Church in Milliwindi was moved to a new site to make way for the Keepit Dam and rededicated in 1951.⁶⁸

In 1913 plans for a new Anglican church and vicarage on land in Hill Street, Manilla were prepared by Sydney architect Rosenthal. The vicarage was completed in 1913, but the church, named Holy Trinity, did not open until October 1914. Due to a shortage of funds only a section of

the church was built. A parish hall was built in 1926. Thanks to a gift from the Allen family of North Cuerindi, the church was finally completed in 1938. The Cuerindi memorial tower commemorates the generosity of the Allen family.⁶⁹

After decades of services held by the visiting minister from Tamworth, in March 1904 the Presbyterian community in Manilla celebrated the opening of their own Church, St Andrew's, built on land purchased on the corner of Court and Rowan Streets. The first resident Presbyterian Minister in Manilla, the Rev. A. M. Ogilvie, was appointed on 11 November 1905. The Presbyterian Ladies Guild, founded in 1905, was for many years renowned for its annual flower show, a colourful social event which raised substantial funds for the church. In 1906 the Rev. Ogilvie opened a Presbyterian church at Namoi River on land donated by J. O. and T. W. Roberts. Thanks to the liberal donations of local residents, the building opened free of debt.⁷⁰

On 29 June 1968 over 600 people attended the opening and dedication of the new St Andrew's Church in Manilla. Designed by architect Ian McKay, the modern church seats 160. The ceiling steps down from the crown of the church to focus attention on the centre of worship, the altar, and together with the skylight forms a lofty yet intimate space for worship. Plywood was used to construct the roof and encase the roof trusses, creating a light, flexible structure that would tolerate the movements of the deep alluvial black soil of the site.⁷¹ When the Uniting Church was formed in 1977, the Presbyterian congregation of Manilla chose to remain as an independent Presbyterian Church and combined with West Tamworth Presbyterian Church.⁷²



Figure 25: St Andrew's Church, Manilla, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The burial of the dead with appropriate religious ceremony was one of the first requirements once settlements of any size grew up in the Manilla district. The government set aside an area north-east of Manilla for a cemetery in 1875, and in 1882 the Trustees of the cemetery spent £65 on fencing and clearing the area. For many years the Manilla cemetery was managed by a trust made up of representatives of the Churches and the Shire and Municipal councils. Manilla Shire Council then took over control of the cemetery. The remains of another smaller cemetery can still be seen not far from the Manilla River at North Manilla. Dedicated in 1881, it was the resting place of some of Manilla's early settlers. There was a Chinese cemetery in south-west Manilla on

the river flats where Chinese farmers had market gardens and share-farmed tobacco. The surviving headstones have been relocated to the Manilla Heritage Museum.

Many pioneering families buried their loved ones on private cemeteries on their properties. Brothers Thomas and Edward Bowman buried their parents Ann Bowman (died 1886) and William Bowman, (died 1899) in the family cemetery at Buena Vista, then known as Rockvilla. Theirs were not the first burials in the cemetery; the remains of Francis John Collins, who died in 1872 also lie there. Collins was the father of Ellen and Emma Collins, who both married into the Bowman family.⁷³

The cemeteries on pastoral stations in New South Wales where Aboriginal people are buried are testaments to the fact that they had a shared history with white pastoralists, living and working on the stations in many capacities. There is an Aboriginal cemetery on Keepit Station, where Mrs Boothe, a Gamilaroi woman, is buried. She lived on the station, in her traditional country, all her long life and her son Fred worked as a stockman on the station for many years.⁷⁴

6.4.3 Hotels

In the early days of settlement licensed accommodation houses and stores were the first buildings to grow up at strategic points along the route followed by teamsters and cattle drovers from Tamworth to north-western New South Wales. By 1874 there were wayside inns at regular intervals along the road between Manilla and Tamworth. Hearn's Hotel was at Dead Horse Gully, and there were hotels at Attunga Springs, Moore Creek and another just through Attunga. There were several other wine shops and vineyards along the road closer to Tamworth, including Gunnett's and Kearns' wine shops and Charlie Ah's vineyard.⁷⁵ Charles Norris established the Carriers Arms Hotel at Klori in 1875, and in 1880 Mrs Corrigan was running a wine shop on the Carroll Gap Road near Borah Crossing. The original Carriers Arms hotel building still stands in Klori. Closer to Manilla, Granny Short ran a wine shop on the Tamworth road opposite the present wireless station, about three miles south of the town. In the 1950s the land owner discovered the cellar of the wine shop while digging a dam on his property, and pepper trees mark the site today.⁷⁶

George Veness conducted a wine shop from his store at the site of the future town of Manilla at the junction of the Namoi and Manilla rivers from 1853. He was still in business in March 1877, when a court of inquiry under the *Lands Amendment Act* of 1876 was held 'at Veness Inn, Manilla'.⁷⁷ A few months after Veness built his store and wine shop, a Mr Rideout built an accommodation house on the river bank at North Manilla. Thomas Connor subsequently bought the accommodation house and in 1863 he opened the first hotel on the banks of the Namoi, the Australian Arms. The hotel was not located at a safe distance from the fast rising waters of the Namoi River and was inundated in the 1864 floods. Connor only saved his family by climbing with them onto the roof. In January 1867 Connor sold the hotel to William Hill, for £1,100. Hill ran the business until 1875, when J. T. Flynn, a keen cricketer, took over the hotel from him. For over thirty years the hotel was a popular social centre where meetings were held and cricket matches played; it was demolished some time in the 1890s.

In 1882 Stephen Veness built the first hotel on the south side of the Namoi River, the Junction Hotel on the corner of Strafford and Manilla streets. The original single storied building burnt down in 1902 and was immediately re-built. A second storey was added in 1906. When A. G. Windsor took over the licence in 1913 he changed the name to the Post Office Hotel. By the turn of the century there were three more hotels in Manilla: the Royal Hotel, opened by M. C. McKenzie in July 1891, the Imperial Hotel, opened in June 1900, and the court house Hotel,

opened in December 1900. Visiting Manilla in 1890, the editor of the *Tamworth Observer* reported that construction of the Royal Hotel was underway, describing it as a 'fine edifice with seventeen rooms, including eight bedrooms... being built of brick'.⁷⁸ The lounge room of the Royal Hotel was often used for public meetings, although there was sometimes argument among members of organisations such as the Farmers and Settlers Association as to which hotel should be the venue, some favouring one publican over another. Other members were opposed to any public meetings being held in hotels, claiming that there was a hall in town where meetings could be held without the people attending being under any obligation.⁷⁹ The hotel at North Manilla seems to have been demolished some time after the opening of the Royal Hotel. Legend has it that the court house Hotel was named at the suggestion of the Magistrate who granted the original licence to build it. He was encouraged in his decision when the applicant pointed out that the hotel would be under close police supervision, as it would be located opposite the court house.⁸⁰

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, large numbers of farm workers came to town during the wheat harvest season to quench their thirst and trade was brisk in the hotels of Manilla. The Manilla Police Station was also kept busy making arrests for public drunkenness. In the four weeks to 20 December 1900, over 100 charges were laid, the majority for drunkenness, and as many as fourteen harvesters were consigned to the lockup in one evening.⁸¹

Today three hotels operate in Manilla: the Royal Hotel, the Post Office Hotel and the Imperial Hotel. The court house Hotel closed in 2000. The Post Office Hotel is the longest running hotel in Manilla. The Royal Hotel suffered two major fires, in 1913 and in 1978. After the second fire the business was carried on in the old Namoi Café under the name Hard Rock Café, until the Royal Hotel reopened in 1979.⁸² There are also three licensed clubs in Manilla: the Bowling Club, the Golf Club, and the RSL.



Figure 26: Imperial Hotel, Manilla, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Upper Manilla Hotel, better known as the Blazing Stump, was built in 1894. The hotel was partially destroyed by fire on the night of 3 February 1921, but was rebuilt on a site nearby. The Upper Manilla store was erected on the site of the first hotel and the original cellar remains beneath the store. The store is still a local landmark today. It is a private home, and the owners operate an antiques and collectibles store, called Dingley Dell. The old storage shed nearby

gained a new lease of life during the 1980s as the Tin Shed restaurant.⁸³

6.4.4 Law and order

Prior to 1875 the police depot in Manilla was a slab humpy with a bark roof adjoining a horse yard, where police from Tamworth and Barraba camped on their irregular visits to Manilla. When Surveyor Arthur Dewhurst drew up the plans for the township of Manilla in 1864, he reserved a site at the corner of Manilla and Court Streets for a court house, police station and residence for the officer in charge. A policeman's lodge and lockup were built on the site in 1875, and a police officer, Constable Palmer, was permanently resident in Manilla in 1876. In November 1878 Manilla was gazetted as a place where Courts of Petty Sessions would be held, and Thomas Johnston, police constable in charge of Manilla Police Station, was appointed acting Clerk of Petty Sessions.⁸⁴

The Manilla court house was completed in 1886. It was built by T. J. Bowen, who first came to Manilla in 1884 to assist G. H. Royce in the building of the Namoi Bridge. Bowen went on to construct many of the town's large buildings and served as an Alderman on the first Manilla Municipal Council. A larger enclosed porch on the court house was built to replace the first in 1957-1958. A police station, also built by T. J. Bowen, was completed in 1909. Comprising a single room with small attached porch, the building served Manilla until a new police station was built in 1979. Royce Cottage, which Royce built as his family home in 1884, was extended by the Stewart family to house a bakery and shop in 1908 and is now home to the Manilla Historical Society and Heritage Museum.



Figure 27: Manilla court house, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

Bushrangers were a constant threat during the 1860s. Fred Ward, otherwise known as Thunderbolt, was one of the most infamous in north-western New South Wales. First arrested for stealing cattle in the north of the state, from 1864 Ward was active in the Hunter Valley and the north-west. During the second half of the 1860s he regularly held up individual travellers and the mail coach from Tamworth to Warialda, and stole horses from stations in the Tamworth district. Thunderbolt also held up George Veness's inn at Manilla and William Hill's hotel at North Manilla on several occasions. In 1867 he held up the mailman in Manilla and visited the hotel and

store, where he robbed the patrons. Although the police were called, Thunderbolt escaped, leaving behind his packhorse and some of his ill-gotten gains. The elusive bushranger was reputed to have a hideout in a cave at the Bluff, New Mexico, from where he had a good view of the road between Manilla and Barraba. Thunderbolt consistently managed to elude police, until his luck finally ran out and his career came to an end near Uralla in May 1870. He was shot by Constable Walker and a large headstone marks his last resting place in Uralla Cemetery.⁸⁵

During the 1880s the police in Manilla spent much of their time dealing with horse and cattle stealing. Armed holdups on the road north from Tamworth were also a danger, and the mail coach was a prime target. In February 1886 Wilkinson's mail coach was held up at gunpoint on the road between Upper Manilla and Manilla and the highwayman escaped with all the mailbags. During the course of the robbery the highwayman admitted that he had been hunted by the police for seven years. He was finally arrested and charged for an earlier robbery of a mail coach in 1883.⁸⁶ Disputes over land were also common, with claimants disputing ownership of land or boundaries determined by the Land Board, and were dealt with by the Land Court. The first session of the Land Court in Manilla was held in September 1885.⁸⁷

An incident that occurred in Manilla Police Court at the turn of the twentieth century was an unusual example of religious tolerance, at a time when public opinion in the Australian colonies ran strongly against non-Europeans. Only a year or so later the new Federal Government enacted restrictive legislation prohibiting permanent settlement by non-Europeans, the so-called 'White Australia' policy. This consolidated the restrictive policies that had already been pursued by the former colonies. In January 1900 two Mohammedans were asked to give evidence in a case in Manilla Police Court, and both requested that they be allowed to swear on the Koran. 'Bring in a Koran' ordered the Presiding Magistrate, Mr Jones. But Senior Police Constable Sewell was in a quandary; he had never heard of the Koran. The Magistrate explained that the Koran was the sacred book of the Mohammedans and that they had every right to ask for one to be sworn on. He duly adjourned the case for a month so that a copy of the Koran could be procured. The Koran was kept in a box at Manilla Court for many years, unused except for that first occasion.⁸⁸

6.4.5 Health services

In June 1900 the Manilla Progress Committee approved a motion to establish a district hospital in Manilla, and in the following year a Hospital Committee was established to locate a suitable site and raise funds. After a site on Northbrook Hill on the Tamworth Road was endorsed by the Survey Department, the Committee embarked on a concerted fund raising drive, holding balls and many other functions. The foundation stone of the hospital was laid on 19 November 1904, and Manilla District Hospital was officially opened on 10 May 1905 by the State Governor Sir Harry Rawson. The celebrations lasted late into the evening with a procession through the town, a dinner and a ball.

The opening of Manilla Hospital paved the way for resident doctors to settle in Manilla. Dr E. Ellis was the first medical officer, followed between the wars by Doctors Clarke, Thomas, Rayson and Waterhouse. Doctors who cared for the people of Manilla after the Second World War included Doctors Johnson, Windeyer, Henderson and White.

Manilla Hospital has undergone many alterations and additions over the years. Facilities for patients and staff have been steadily improved, due in large part to the dedicated fundraising efforts of the Hospital Auxiliary and the generosity of the local community. A new operating theatre opened in November 1922, named the Hill Operating Theatre in honour of the main

benefactor Mrs Susan Hill. Two new wards were built in 1935, and in 1937 James McIlrath donated £500 for a new children's ward. A modernised operating theatre opened in 1952, and in September 1956 a new nurses home opened, replacing the old nurses quarters which had been partially destroyed by fire in 1948. More recent additions to the facilities at the hospital are an administration block, built in 1962, and a new maternity ward, opened in November 1967.⁸⁹



Figure 28. Manilla Hospital, c.1910. The nurses' home is on the left.
Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

An ambulance station opened in Manilla in 1958 and this was replaced by a new building in Arthur Street in May 1965. The ambulance station was extended in 1971 and a self-contained flat was provided for a relieving ambulance officer between Manilla and Barraba.⁹⁰

Today Manilla Health Service incorporates a 29 bed hospital providing medical, obstetric, paediatric, long stay, respite and palliative care and a 24-hour emergency/outpatient service. A range of community health services are provided including community nursing, asthma and diabetes education, cardiac rehabilitation and other support services. Overnight accommodation is available for out of town nurses and on-call doctors. The United Hospital Auxiliary meets once a month and raises funds for equipment for the hospital. Manilla Health Service is assisted by over 80 volunteers providing support to Meals on Wheels, day programs and other non-clinical services.⁹¹ Some of these services, for example obstetrics, have been reduced following the recent merger of New England Area Health with Hunter Health, to form the Hunter - New England Health Service.

6.4.6 Post and telecommunications

Soon after George Veness established his store at Manilla in 1853 he became the first acting postmaster for the district. It is possible that his appointment followed the closure of the Barraba post office in March 1854 after Alfred Adams, the postmaster there, resigned. George Veness carried out the dual role of postmaster and storekeeper for the next 25 years. A regular twice-weekly mail coach run from Tamworth to Warialda via Manilla, Barraba and Bingara began in 1872. The contract was awarded to George Wilkinson and A. L. Bowden, for £745 per year. Until

that time the mail was carried by horseback. In July 1878 the *Tamworth News* reported that the telegraph line had been completed as far as Manilla and the poles were erected almost to Barraba. The opening of a telegraph office in Manilla required a resident telegraph operator and postmaster, and Edward Done was appointed as the first official postmaster in August 1878. He conducted post and telegraph business in a weatherboard shop between the School of Arts and Mackenzies Store in Manilla Street. A post and telegraph office was built on the corner of Manilla and Stafford Streets in 1889, with further additions in 1898, 1908 and 1923.⁹²

In 1876 a post office was established in Upper Manilla, with Mary Ann Nixon as postmistress. The post office operated from the store, run by John Nixon and his sister Jemima, and over the next two years official complaints were made that spirits were being sold from the post office. The charges were eventually dismissed, but the Postal Inspector lost confidence in Mary Ann Nixon and appointed Mrs Mary Johnston as the new postmistress in November 1878. During the court case in Barraba it emerged that Mr Harden, who had made the original complaints against the Nixons, was not well disposed towards them because they were free selectors on land he had occupied as a squatter's run. The post office closed in June 1883 after Mrs Johnston resigned, but reopened again shortly afterwards. After a telephone line was constructed between Tamworth and Attunga in 1894, the residents of Upper Manilla were keen to adopt the new technology and petitioned the Postmaster General, asking that a telephone link be established between Manilla and Upper Manilla. In 1898 tenders were called to complete the line. The residents of Manilla were less enterprising. It took until 1904 to gather the required twenty subscribers necessary to establish an exchange there. The telephone line between Attunga and Manilla was completed, and the first phone numbers in Manilla allocated, in September 1906. The first number allocated went to A. Wilshire, who was a strong advocate for the telephone exchange.⁹³

In 1951 a rural automatic telephone exchange was installed at Upper Manilla. Before that time callers were connected by the operator through a manual exchange, and subscribers in Manilla, Barraba and Banoon were on party lines. An automatic telephone exchange was installed in Manilla in 1974, with full subscriber trunk dialing facilities. Today all exchanges are computerised. Upper Manilla suffered the fate of many small country townships in New South Wales when in 1990 Telstra removed the single public phone.

The postmaster or postmistress was very much a part of the community and came to know virtually everyone in the district. In 1907 Thomas Brophy was postmaster at Upper Manilla, at a salary of £46 per annum. After he died in 1914 his wife Amy carried on as postmistress, in between caring for her four young children. Among the well known postmasters (and often storekeepers) at Upper Manilla over the years were Thomas Roberts, Robert Gardner, Thomas MacWhinney, William Lee, Norman Wells and more recently, Pam Aylett, who took up the position in November 1989. Upper Manilla post office finally closed in 1991, after 115 years. Many locals bemoaned the loss of such personal service. Older residents could recall the more leisurely days of the 1920s when roadside mail was delivered by horseback or sulky, together with supplies of fresh bread carried in chaff bags, at the rate of a penny a loaf cartage.

In 1899 the proprietors of the *Glen Innes Examiner* established Manilla's first newspaper, the *Manilla Express*. The first issue was published on 14 January 1899. Much of Manilla's history is documented in the pages of the *Express*, which has been going to press on a continuous basis for over a century. The paper was published weekly until 1906, and then twice weekly for over fifty years. The front page featured advertisements for local businesses, and the rest of the newspaper included news of the comings and goings of local townfolk, sport, rural news, and homilies and advice for the householder. For news of the wider world the editor drew on items published in Sydney and London newspapers. In 1960 the paper reverted to a weekly publication.⁹⁴ The

newspaper changed hands many times through its history, and is currently owned by the Martin family. The *Manilla Express* is one of the last remaining independent family owned newspapers in Australia.

6.4.7 Government services

From 1895 the public affairs of Manilla were managed by the Manilla Progress Association, which was made up of key business people and land owners in the town. The first attempt at local administration, the Progress Association paved the way for the establishment of a Municipal Council, mapping the town boundaries in preparation for the incorporation of Manilla as a Municipality. During its brief existence the Association undertook some major civic projects, including the building of a bridge over the Manilla River at Upper Manilla, surveying the road to Boggabri, building the road between Manilla and Keepit, clearing the Manilla cemetery and removing prickly pear from within the town boundaries.⁹⁵

In 1900 J. D. Kennedy presented a petition sponsored by the Manilla Progress Association asking the Governor of New South Wales to declare Manilla a Municipality. On 1 May 1901 the Governor approved the incorporation of the Manilla Municipal Council, and on 3 September 1901 elections were held for the first Council. When the results of the election were announced the six successful aldermen were paraded around the town in a drag drawn by four horses, while the town band played 'See the Conquering Heroes Come'. At the first meeting of the Council Daniel E. Veness, brother of George Veness, was elected Mayor, and his nephew Alfred C. Veness was appointed as Town Clerk. After the meeting the new Council adjourned to the Royal Hotel for a celebratory dinner, the first civic function held in Manilla.⁹⁶ With the commencement of the *Local Government Act* on 6 March 1906, elections were called for Mandowah Shire, the district surrounding Manilla. Six councillors were elected, G. A. Higgins serving as the first Shire President. The Shire Council undertook many road and bridge building projects across the Shire, particularly after 1924. A major project completed in 1937 was tar paving the Manilla – Tamworth road.⁹⁷ From late 1918 the offices of the Manilla Municipal Council and Mandowah Shire Council were located in a building constructed in Stafford Street.



**Figure 29: Opening of Manilla Shire Council building, 13 November 1918.
Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.**

Manilla Municipal Council embarked on many projects to improve the amenity of the town. In its first few years it established a sanitary depot, formed and kerbed and guttered streets, started a tree planting scheme and built a bridge over the gully in Church Street. By 1922 the footpaths in Manilla Street were concrete paved. Public health was also a priority, as evidenced by the appointment of William Sly as Inspector of Nuisances in 1905. Infectious diseases such as diphtheria, cholera, scarlet fever, typhoid and gastrointestinal complaints were common in an era when pure water supplies and sanitation were not available. The role of the Inspector of Nuisances was to maintain public health by inspecting butchers' shops and other food outlets, testing the quality of fresh milk, and rounding up wandering stock. Records compiled in 1916 show that 204 cases of infectious diseases were reported to Council between 1901 and 1915: 48 cases of typhoid fever, 91 cases of scarlet fever, and 65 cases of diphtheria.⁹⁸ The rates of infectious disease declined over the first few decades of the twentieth century as sanitation and health services improved.

Electric light was first used in Manilla by Wilson and Oram in their flour mill in 1905, and a year later the Council installed lights on the bridge over the Namoi. Electric light to homes and business premises was available by 1913. Town electricity supply came to Manilla in 1915, generated by a powerhouse located in Arthur Street. However after 1921 there were regular breakdowns at the plant and electricity supplies were unreliable. In 1924 the Australian Electric Light Company took over the plant and under the management of L. J. Smithers began negotiations with Tamworth Municipal Council to supply bulk electricity to Manilla. In November 1927 a 33,000 volt transmission line from Tamworth to Manilla was completed. Smithers was appointed engineer, and held the position until 1946. During the 1950s rural power lines were extended to Upper Manilla, Halls Creek, West Manilla, Wongo Creek and Klori. In 1956 the Peel Valley County Council was formed for the distribution of electricity in the Tamworth district, covering the Municipality of Manilla and the Shires of Peel, Cockburn, Mandowa, Nundle and Barraba. The Cunningham County Council later joined the county council which was renamed the Peel Cunningham County Council.⁹⁹

Despite the lobbying efforts of local citizens, Manilla did not have a town water supply until 1933. Government funds were scarce during the height of the Depression and it was not until 1932 that the newly elected Stevens Government approved the Manilla water scheme as an urgent work for the relief of the unemployed, on the basis of a half grant and half loan. Water supplies were extended to North Manilla in May 1953, and at the same time a sewerage scheme for Manilla was completed. The establishment of public parks added to the amenities of the town. Chaffey Park, a popular picnic area on the banks of the Namoi River near the weir, was founded in 1933 and Rotary Park, on the corner of Manilla and Court streets, was completed as a joint project with the Rotary Club in 1957.

The amalgamation of the municipality of Manilla and the shire of Mandowa was gazetted in October 1959. This move was supported by both the Shire and Municipal councils as a more efficient means of carrying out the functions and administration of local government. The first President of the new Manilla Shire Council was Councillor F. R. (Roy) Heywood, who had served the former Mandowa Shire for many years. He was followed by Councillor B. V. Byrnes in 1960. Local residents valued Manilla's independence. The proposal in 1976 to amalgamate Manilla Shire Council with Bingara and Barraba Shire Councils prompted vociferous protests and one of the largest public meetings ever held in Manilla.

In 1972 the building that had served the needs of the Council since 1919 was condemned as unsafe. The old building was partly demolished and later re-modelled as a Scout Hall. The hall retains the original brick fence and stone pillars of the first Council building. In 1973 work began

on the construction of new Manilla Shire Council chambers and administration offices in the main street near the Imperial Hotel. The offices opened for business on 4 March 1974 and later that month Councillors held their first meeting in the new chambers. In 1974 Manilla Shire won the prestigious A. R. Bluett Award, made each year for the top local Government Council in New South Wales. Manilla was recognised for its successful housing scheme, which had revitalised the small country town. The scheme included land subsidies, housing loans and units for the aged and was financed from revenue.¹⁰⁰

The year 2001 marked both the centenary of Federation and the centenary of Manilla's Local Government. A special function was held in Manilla, incorporating a re-enactment of the first Municipal Council Election held on 3 September 1901. Two years later, on 8-9 August 2003, the Manilla community held a spectacular weekend of events to celebrate the 150th birthday of the settlement of Manilla. The direct descendants of George and Sarah Veness unveiled a commemorative plaque near the junction of the Manilla and Namoi Rivers to mark their building of a store and inn there, and the founding of Manilla. A sesquicentennial ball at the Town Hall on Saturday evening attracted a capacity crowd of 200. On Sunday over 2,000 people lined the main street of Manilla to watch a colourful parade of over 50 floats, an eclectic mix of horse-drawn vehicles including a Cobb and Co coach, horse riders, vintage cars and machinery, trikes and motor bikes. A host of local clubs and organisations marched in the parade along with the Manilla Pipe Band. A full day of events at the showground followed, highlighted by the perfect landing of a lone paraglider in the centre of the ring.¹⁰¹

In 2004 Manilla Shire Council was absorbed into Tamworth Regional Council, as part of the New South Wales Government's major program of rationalisation and amalgamation of local government areas. Tamworth Regional Council incorporates all of Tamworth City Council and Manilla Shire Councils, most of Nundle Shire and parts of Barraba and Parry Shire Councils.¹⁰²

Many Shires across the State, including Barraba and Manilla, were strongly opposed to their councils being dissolved and just days before the decision affecting Shires in north-western New South Wales was announced on 17 March 2004, they met with the New South Wales Shires Association to consider possible legal action over the way the Boundaries Commission and the State Government had handled the amalgamation issue.¹⁰³ Public opinion in Manilla on the amalgamation issue has been divided, but Manilla is starting to see the benefits of being part of a larger and better resourced Council. For example the Tamworth Regional Council has matched dollar for dollar the refurbishing and repainting of business premises as part of the main street program. Through the Australian Government's Roads to Recovery program the Council has made significant improvements to Manilla streets, including the construction of kerbing and guttering in Strafford Street, replacement of footpaths and kerbing and guttering in Court Street and resealing of a section of Manilla Street.¹⁰⁴

A proposal for a dam at Keepit on the Namoi River was first mooted in 1896, when irrigation schemes in the Riverina were being considered. Local land holder John Perry of Breeza persuaded a government officer to visit north-west New South Wales to investigate possible sites for a dam on the Namoi River, and the officer located an ideal site at Keepit, only a few kilometres upstream from Carroll. The severe drought of 1902, when the Peel and Namoi Rivers were reduced to a chain of waterholes, saw renewed local agitation for a dam. In 1906 the Department of Agriculture reported that it was considering the possibility of storing the floodwaters of the Namoi River at Keepit, but it was many decades before the scheme was finally realised. An alternative site at the Blue Hole, 20 km above Manilla, was proposed in the 1920s and survey work was carried out on both sites. Debate on the merits of the two sites continued into the 1930s. Work began at the chosen site at Keepit in April 1938, but was delayed during the

Second World War. In 1958 the waters of the Namoi River were diverted at the Keepit Dam site and construction entered its final phase. The construction of the dam had a dramatic impact on the lives of local residents. Large areas of pastoral land were resumed, sheds and farm buildings went under water, and roads, telephone lines and school bus and mail runs had to be rerouted. Keepit dam was officially opened on 28 October 1960 by the NSW Premier the Hon R. J. Heffron, who addressed a large crowd gathered below the massive 53 metre high dam wall. He pointed out that the dam had cost £12 million, but this was a modest cost when measured against the benefits that this water storage would bring for future generations, regulating the flow of the Namoi and providing irrigation water for agriculture.¹⁰⁵ Today the Manilla end of the Keepit dam is a popular recreation area, used for fishing, boating and water skiing. The park has an area of 32.3 hectares and includes facilities for camping and caravans.

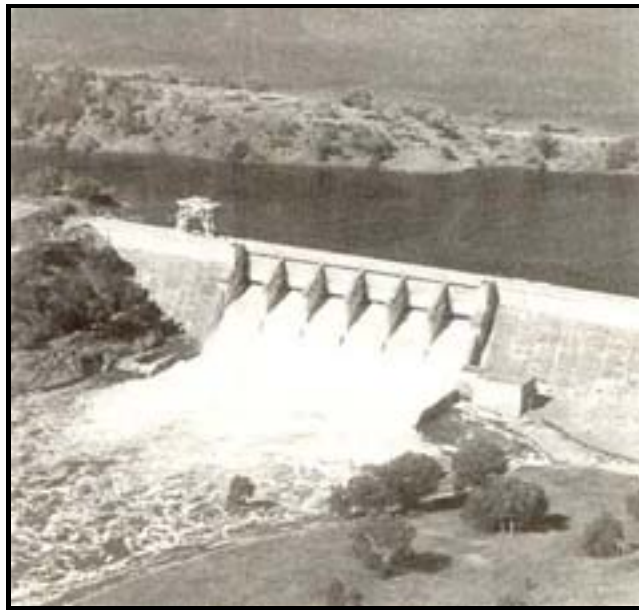


Figure 30: The gates of Keepit Dam open, 1960s. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

By the late 1960s the growing population of the Manilla district and the expanding irrigation needs of agriculture spurred proposals for the building of a second dam. Test drillings were carried out on two possible sites, Blue Hole on the Namoi River and Split Rock on the Manilla River. In 1969 the Minister for Conservation and Irrigation, Mr Beale, announced that a second dam would be built at Split Rock, but construction did not begin until 1984. The long awaited dam, which can store 397,000 megalitres of water, or three quarters the volume of Sydney Harbour, was officially opened on 15 April 1988 by the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development Mr Wal Murray.¹⁰⁶ Split Rock Dam flooded many hectares of valuable pastoral land, where stock and native flora and fauna once flourished, but it brings irrigation water to properties downstream and regulates the flows of the Manilla and Namoi Rivers. Like the Keepit Dam, Split Rock Dam provides camping and recreation facilities, including boat ramps, barbeques and picnic areas. It is a popular location for fishing, boating, swimming and water skiing.

A great deal of vegetation cover was removed during the construction of Split Rock Dam, leaving the lake margins denuded of vegetation. Plantings were made at various sites around the lake, but there is still a lot more work to be done. In 2001 Hurstville City Council, which has a friendly

town relationship with Manilla and Barraba, initiated a major revegetation project at Split Rock Dam in association with the former Barraba and Manilla Shire Councils and Landcare. This relationship began in the mid 1990s when Hurstville City Council raised funds for the people of Manilla and Barraba, devastated by drought. Drought conditions delayed the commencement of the project, but in May 2003 the Mayor of Hurstville Vince Badalati joined with Councillor Joanne Morris and the mayors of Barraba and Manilla, Shirley Close and Cheryl Randall, to plant the first trees at Split Rock Dam. Over four years the Green Hands Project will establish three islands of trees native to the area, such as white box, at two sites nominated by Manilla and Barraba Shires - the boat ramp at the southern end of the lake and Glen Riddle Reserve at the northern end of the lake. In the final stage of the project a corridor of trees will be planted linking the three islands at each site. This will create a nature corridor for the movement of wildlife, enhancing the biodiversity of the area. The project links well with the bird tourism initiatives developed by Manilla and Barraba Shire Councils and will also promote soil conservation and enhance the water quality of the lake.¹⁰⁷ Further plantings were undertaken in Autumn 2005 at a site beside the Namoi River behind the Manilla Showground, adjacent to previous rehabilitation work along the riverbank.

6.4.8 Commercial services

The first store in Manilla was established by George Veness in March 1853. It was a simple slab building on the banks of the Namoi river opposite the junction with the Manilla River. In 1864 floodwaters swept away Veness' store and all its contents. Undaunted, Veness built a new store at the corner of Market and Namoi streets, on the main route travelled by the teamsters as they carried goods north. When the bridge over the Namoi was completed in 1886 Veness moved with the times and built another store in a more central location at the corner of Market and Manilla Streets. Veness died in 1895, and his store passed into other hands. It operated as a fruit and vegetable market, before being demolished. However the business that Veness established continued to serve the residents of Manilla, business people and travellers for sixty years, until 1913.¹⁰⁸

In 1876 Murdo Cameron Mackenzie opened a timber store and residence in Manilla on the corner of Namoi and Market Streets opposite George Veness's shop, with his brother Francis as manager. An enterprising Scotsman, Mackenzie had operated a store in Aberdeen in the Hunter Valley since 1863 and often supplied goods to teamsters travelling through Manilla to supply the townships of north-west New South Wales. Hearing about the rich grazing country of the Manilla district and the commercial opportunities there, Mackenzie founded a family business that has been a household name in Manilla for over a century. After the bridge over the Namoi River opened in 1886, Mackenzie moved his business to a galvanised iron shop in Manilla Street north of the Royal Hotel. Around the turn of the century he replaced this with a third store on the same site, a large one storey wooden building that was destroyed by fire in 1913. Young Frank Mackenzie, the son of Murdo Mackenzie, was by then manager of the firm. He immediately rebuilt the store, but it too was destroyed by fire in 1927. Within 24 hours of the fire the Company was in business again in the Memorial Hall, in a gesture of support and confidence from the municipal authorities. The large department store that replaced the former building was known as 'Mackenzies The Family Store', and operated until 1982. The Mackenzie family were astute business people who over the years established branches of the firm in Glen Innes and later in Barraba, Deepwater and Upper Horton, and for some time they traded in wheat and ran a flour mill.¹⁰⁹ The original Mackenzies building is still a major store in Manilla, occupied by a number of individual retailers.

A guide to the northern districts of New South Wales published in 1907 described the thriving town of Manilla:

*There are many flourishing businesses in Manilla notably those of Messrs M. C. McKenzie and Sons Ltd and Messrs. Stoddart and Co, both leading merchants and storekeepers. The magnitude of Messrs M. C. McKenzie and Sons transactions entitles the firm to the distinction of being recognised as the Universal Providing Store in the Tamworth-Manilla district. There is no end to the various branches of trade involved in this vast emporium: its grocery, drapery, millinery, clothing and machinery departments each make displays worthy of metropolitan comparison. Another industry of note is Mr H. Baker's coach and wagon factory, which from 'early morn to dewy eve' sends forth hammer and anvil sounds, which proclaim the busy work that is going on. Mr W. W. J. Whiting's galvanized iron and plumbing works are also identified with the rise and progress of the town.*¹¹⁰

In December 1898 Jas Blayney, formerly a hotel keeper in Tamworth, opened a store in Manilla at the corner of Court and Arthur streets, that he named 'the Court Street Store'. The store has been extensively remodelled over the years and has seen many owners. The business continues to serve the public after 108 years of continuous operation in Manilla.¹¹¹

Other early businesses in Manilla were Treloar and Co of Tamworth who opened a store on the corner of Manilla and Court streets in April 1901; Bluett's blacksmith's shop established in 1901; J. T. Robinson Carriers who began business in 1903; and Harry Burrell's Bazaar at the corner of Manilla and Market Streets. Burrell's Bazaar with its splendid façade, was a busy enterprise in the first decades of the 1900s. Several of these businesses were long running. Treloar and Co, popularly known as the Corner Store, traded under various partnerships for over seventy years. In 1927 the firm became Stoddart and Hayward Pty Ltd. The store was damaged by fire in 1972 and finally closed in 1975. J. T. Robinson's was in business until the 1990s. The Robinson's building was then occupied by Manilla Farm and Irrigation, and in 2001 it was taken over by Landmark.



Figure 31: Burrell's Bazaar, Manilla, 1910s. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

Levy and Cohen opened a store on the corner of Market and Manilla Streets in 1903; soon afterwards the business was taken over and became Cansdell's Store. Mr A. Adie conducted the business from 1911 to 1946, when he sold it to D. Swinton. The store closed and was partly demolished in the 1950s. A. E. Bailey, who served his apprenticeship in Tamworth as a wheelwright, established a coach building works in Manilla in 1893. He conducted the business until 1933, when he sold it to A. C. Blanch. Blanch moved with the times and successfully ran the business well into the 1950s.¹¹²

In 1906 H. M. Baker built a large workshop and foundry in Manilla, on the site now occupied by Rotary Park. Prior to 1902 the land was occupied by a stock yard. By 1910 Baker's Coach and Wagon factory was one of the largest of its kind in the State, employing up to 40 men manufacturing wagons, sulkies and farm equipment and machinery. As motor cars replaced horse-drawn vehicles, the factory became a garage. The building was demolished in 1943. Clifton's motor mechanics and agents for motor vehicles opened for business in 1921, and was still trading after the Second World War. W. H. O'Dell established a cordial factory in Manilla in 1894. He sold the factory to Harry North in 1907, who built up a successful business.

Other successful businesses in Manilla were Sing's fruit and vegetables, Dengate's Hardware and F. Coorey and Co men's and women's clothing. These were all established in the 1920s and operated for well over 20 years.¹¹³ Greeks played an important role in the Manilla business community, as they did in many New South Wales country towns. During the First World War John Calocherinos, otherwise known as Jack Smiles, came to Manilla as a café proprietor. His new surname came from the nickname 'Smiley' bestowed on him by a one of his fellow workers at the café in Walgett where he worked before moving to Manilla. A few years later Smiles was joined by a cousin, Phillip Feros, and they became business partners, operating two cafes in Manilla, the Canberra Café, known as the top shop, and the York Café, known as the bottom shop. When Phillip Feros arrived in Manilla he found a thriving town with a wide main street lined with Federation style buildings built during the boom period of the early 1900s, the service centre for a rich farming district. Phillip Feros returned to Greece in 1921 and his brother Panagiotes took his place running the cafe. Known in Australia as Peter Feros, Panagiotes worked in the restaurant trade for the rest of his life. Jack Smiles renovated the top shop in 1927, naming it the Canberra Café in honour of the opening of Parliament House in Canberra that year. Each week he placed advertisements on the front page of the *Manilla Express* exhorting the townspeople to patronise his up to date restaurant and 'eat, drink and be merry'.¹¹⁴ Smiles returned to Greece with his family during the Second World War and the Canberra Café was run by a new partner, W. Glitsos. Today the Canberra Café is still popular in Manilla, and the proprietor, Paul Calocherinos, has operated the business for nearly 50 years. Several years ago Calocherinos opened a successful restaurant next door to the café, the Skylight Restaurant. Another Greek restauranteur A. Detsikas established a restaurant in Manilla before the Second World War.

In smaller settlements such as Upper Manilla the single store and post office was at the centre of the community. In October 1870 John Nixon and his sister Mary Anne opened a store in Upper Manilla in a building that had been built as a public house, about one hundred yards north of the present Upper Manilla store.¹¹⁵ The business changed hands many times over the years. After the Blazing Stump Hotel burnt down in 1921 W. C. Woolaston took over the store from Mrs Boland who had managed the business for several years after the death of her husband, and built a new store on the site of the old hotel. Nance Maughan and her husband bought the store and post office in Upper Manilla in August 1964. She recalls arriving to bare shelves in the shop, broken fences all over their 17 acre property and a house in urgent need of repair. The store was also in need of repair. Nance recalls:

The front verandah collapsed next, requiring a new lot of timber because there was a six-foot drop underneath. There's a cellar under the shop from the days this building was the 'Blazing Stump', a pub of some renown. You name it, one disaster after another and I can assure you our nest egg was squashed. But, we carried on, stocked the shelves and hoped for the best.¹¹⁶

The Maughans ran the store for 21 years, experiencing all the ups and downs of business. Trade at the store and post office thrived during the construction of Split Rock Dam when many workers came to live in the district, and again during the years the Woodsreef asbestos mine was operating.

6.4.9 Banks

The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney (CBC) opened a branch in Manilla in 1890 in the front rooms of what is now Manilla Heritage Museum, housing the Royce Cottage collection. The banking crash in 1893 severely shook the banking world, and in 1894 it was decided to close the Manilla branch because the volume of business transacted was not sufficient to make it economic. Four years later the branch reopened under the management of W. M. Trenerry in premises in the southern section of Manilla Street. This building later became the offices of V. J. Byrnes Stock and Station Agent. As the prosperity of Manilla grew, the business of the bank expanded and larger premises were needed. A new building was constructed in 1922 on the site of A. E. Bailey's coach building factory a few doors further down Manilla Street. In January 1983 the CBC Bank merged with the National Bank of Australasia Ltd to become the National Australia Bank (NAB). The NAB operated a part-time branch in Manilla, open two days a week, until 2002.

A branch of the Bank of New South Wales opened in Manilla in 1900, in premises near the Memorial Hall. The Bank of New South Wales purchased a block of land on the corner of Manilla and Strafford Streets in October 1905, where the shop of J. T. Smith, saddle and harness maker, once stood. A fine new bank building opened for business on the site in February 1911. The period after the Second World War was marked by steady economic growth and industrial development, underpinned by the labour of an influx of European migrants. The Bank of New South Wales embarked on a major expansion, taking its services wherever it saw a need. In 1956 the Bank of New South Wales Savings Bank was established, primarily to provide housing loans to individuals and cooperative building societies, an area the bank had pioneered in 1936. In 1983 the Bank of New South Wales acquired the Victorian-based Commercial Bank of Australasia Ltd and became Westpac Corporation.¹¹⁷ Throughout these expansions and mergers the bank maintained a branch in Manilla, demonstrating its commitment to rural customers.

The Government Savings Bank of NSW opened in Manilla in September 1914, and by 1921 the bank shared premises with the Rural Bank in a building next to the post office. In 1931 the Commonwealth Bank of Australia merged with the Government Savings Bank of NSW to become the Commonwealth Bank. The following year the Commonwealth Bank took over the premises of the former Government Savings Bank and Rural Bank, and built more modern offices and a residence on the site.¹¹⁸ The Commonwealth Bank closed its branch in Manilla in the early 1990s.

Today banking services in Manilla include a Branch of Westpac Bank and an agency of the Commonwealth Bank at the post office. A branch of the Peel Valley Credit Union operated in

Manilla from 2001 in the former Commonwealth Bank building. In 2005 the Peel Valley Credit Union merged with the New England Credit Union.



Figure 32: Bank of NSW, Manilla, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

6.4.10 Community services

The formation of community organisations and other voluntary associations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the evolving society in the Manilla district. Organisations such as the Farmers and Settlers Association, established in 1899, and the Graziers Association, formed in 1917, provided an opportunity for local farmers and graziers to exchange experiences and ideas, cooperate in handling, transporting and marketing their produce and collectively present their interests and concerns to Government. The Farmers and Settlers Association and the Wheatgrowers Association joined forces in 1962, to be known as the United Farmers and Woolgrowers Association (UFWA). In 1977 the UFWA and the Graziers Association amalgamated to become the Livestock and Grain Producers Association.

The Farmers and Settlers Association organised annual farmers' carnivals, from 1907 to 1915 and again from 1929. The first farmers' carnival, held in June 1907, attracted a crowd of 1,500 to watch the ring events and view the displays of horses, sheep and cattle and fruit, vegetables, grains and other farm produce. After the Manilla Agricultural Society was founded in 1930, an annual Agricultural Show was established, with exhibits of produce and stock, and a host of events such as horse racing, trotting, camp drafting and sheep dog trials. The first Show was held in March 1932 with over 5,000 people attending on the first day. After the success of the first event, the Agricultural Society built a pavilion and a number of other buildings and yards at the Showground. The Agricultural Show continues to be a major event in the Manilla social calendar. In addition to the annual show the Agricultural Society has organised regular field wheat and fodder conservation competitions. The fortieth Manilla Show held in 1974 was opened by the member for Tamworth, Mr E. N. Park (the show was suspended for several years during the Second World War). Highlights of the show were the Horticultural Society's floral display in the

pavilion, and the Historical Society's display of photographs, ribbons, trophies and other memorabilia from past shows dating back to the early farmers' carnivals.¹¹⁹



Figure 33: Farmers' Carnival parade, 1929. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

The Country Women's Association (CWA) was established in Manilla in March 1927, providing support and friendship for women living in remote rural areas and a forum for action on the issues affecting their lives, particularly the lack of health services. The CWA opened a meeting room and rest area in a large room at the back of the Mechanics Institute in June 1928. The room was also used as a baby health centre until 1960, when the CWA opened its own facilities on the site of the first Anglican church in Manilla on the corner of Strafford and Namoi Streets. For a number of years there was a branch of the CWA at Wongo Creek, and in 1935 the Namoi Group of the CWA held their conference at the Wongo Creek Hall. Manilla resident Marion Bignall, who was working for the local newspaper, the *Manilla Express* at the time, recalls that she was invited to attend the conference and report on its activities.¹²⁰ The Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF) was an active voluntary organisation in Manilla from its early days, and its members were particularly involved in the development of medical services. The MUIOOF took part in the celebration of the opening of Manilla Hospital on 10 May 1905.

A host of other voluntary organisations have played a vital role in the community life of Manilla. These include the Manilla Horticultural Society, founded in 1961, the Red Cross Society, the Ambulance and Hospital Auxiliaries and services clubs such as the Rotary, Apex and Lions Clubs.¹²¹ The Manilla Volunteer Rescue Association and the Rural Fire Brigade also provide important community services. There were also active volunteer fire brigades in many outlying communities. The Wongo Creek Bush Fire Brigade included members from almost every household in the area. As an outreach service for Manilla, fire brigade members have for several years provided a bus service to take elderly folk around town to see the annual Christmas lights. Many Manilla residents and business people enter into the spirit of Christmas each year, decorating their homes and business premises with garlands of light.

6.5 EVOLVING COMMUNITIES

6.5.1 War memorials

The citizens of Manilla went through the experience of seeing husbands, fathers and sons go off to war on several occasions. Twenty-five young men from Manilla enlisted for service in the Boer War in South Africa, and during the First World War over 300 local men served in the trenches of Europe. Every man who enlisted from Manilla was given a public send off and a wrist watch, and those who returned were greeted with a public welcome and presentation. The patriotic efforts of the citizens of Manilla raised more than £10,000 to support the troops overseas over the four years of the war, a huge sum for a small country town. When news reached Manilla on the night of 11 November 1918 that the Great War was over, the whole town erupted into two days and nights of celebrations. At a public meeting held in 1921, it was agreed to build a war memorial to honour those who had died, and there was much discussion about the merits of memorial parks, memorial clocks, fountains and statues. The majority voted in favour of a memorial hall. The Mechanics Institute hall was reconstructed and converted to a war memorial hall. The Federal Treasurer Dr Earl Page laid the foundations of the new building on 3 May 1924. In 1942 the Manilla Municipal Council took charge of the building and in 1959 agreed to share the cost of renovations with Mandowla Shire Council. Another honour roll commemorating local men and women who served in both World Wars was erected in Baldwin School. It is now on display in Manilla Heritage Museum.

During the Second World War men and women from Manilla served in all the frontiers of war, including Italy, North Africa, Greece, Syria and later in South East Asia and the Pacific. At home, wartime restrictions became more stringent in 1941 as Japan began its southwards advance and the Pacific war came dangerously close to Australia's shores. Staples such as tea, sugar, butter, meat and clothing were strictly rationed, and petrol rationing severely limited travel by private vehicle. Preparations were made for a possible attack. Shelter trenches were dug in the grounds of local schools and children were taught first aid and participated in air raid drills. Citizens across the country were urged to contribute to the war effort by buying War Savings Certificates and subscribing to Victory Loans.

6.5.2 Entertainment

As the population of the Manilla district grew and village centres developed, the community hall which in the early days often doubled as school and church, provided a place for social gatherings. There were community halls in the small settlements of Wongo Creek, Rushes Creek and Halls Creek, mostly built between the wars. They were important social centres, and venues for balls, dances and community celebrations. Bruce Dawe, who grew up at Wongo Creek, remembers Father Christmas arriving at the hall in a Model T Ford.¹²² As roads improved after the Second World War and private car ownership increased, people living in remote rural areas were able to travel more easily to larger centres such as Manilla for entertainment and social activities. The use of local community halls declined. The introduction of fire safety regulations and other Council ordinances increased the cost of maintaining community halls. The Wongo Creek community could not afford to upgrade their hall and it was converted to a woolshed. Today only the hall at Halls Creek is still standing.¹²³ Manilla Memorial Hall was the major venue for social events in town. There was also a community hall in North Manilla, but the building was demolished in the 1970s.¹²⁴

During the late nineteenth century concerts and dances were important social events and when teamsters came to town special shows were staged. J. T. Flynn, the proprietor of the hotel at North Manilla, was one of the principal organisers. In 1885 the Tamworth Minstrels hired a coach and presented a performance in Manilla to raise funds for Tamworth hospital, raising £30. Manilla Dramatic society was formed in 1896 and staged many successful productions until 1914, ranging from plays and vaudeville to Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Between 1918 and 1923 the Manilla Merry Makers provided varied entertainments for the residents of Manilla. During the 1930s Mr and Mrs C. N. Scott presented a popular series of dramatic and musical productions in the Palais Theatre, including 'The Whole Town's Talking'. After the Second World War there was a resurgence of interest in amateur dramatics. A workshop held by Colin Kenny of the University of New England in Manilla in 1956 encouraged keen thespians to form the Manilla Theatre Group. Over the next few years the group raised substantial funds for local charities through its performances.¹²⁵ In 1974 the Manilla Amateur Dramatic Society (MADS) was formed, presenting a range of plays and entertainments.

The many social and sporting events held to raise funds for facilities such as schools, churches and hospitals reflected the developing community spirit in Manilla. On 29 March 1904 the *Manilla Express* reported:

*Great preparations are being made for the New Mexico races, to take place on Easter Monday. The racing track, we hear, is in good order and all that is needed to make a record financial day is fine weather. The Hospital Fund should benefit to the extent of a good sum of money as a result of the outing. A ball will be held at night and the ladies are determined to make this a most enjoyable and successful function.*¹²⁶

The visits of travelling circuses to Manilla were always welcome entertainment. Before the era of rail circuses criss-crossed the State in horse-drawn wagons, performing in country towns. The successor of the horse-drawn circus was shows transported by special rail carriages, or from the 1920s, by trucks and motor cars. Brenda Cummins, who lived in Manilla all her life, remembers the great excitement caused by the arrival of Wirth's Circus train at Manilla station, bringing lions, monkeys, elephants and other exotic animals. Then there was the anticipation as the big top was erected during the day in readiness for the show that night.¹²⁷

In the 1920s open air picture shows were held at the Mechanics Institute, until an indoor cinema opened. As early as 1912 the Mechanics Institute hosted the Warren family's travelling picture show. In their advertising the Warrens promised:

*Although we have been touring this state for six years we have never been to Manilla. We trust on this trip to place before you absolutely the best Picture Show travelling the State. Clear, brilliant light – no flicker. We carry a patent light equal in brilliance to the Electric Light and we have miles of photo plays.*¹²⁸

The Palais Theatre was the centre of a hive of activity in Manilla for 40 years. It was officially opened on 20 October 1928 by the Mayor, Alderman J. Wearne, who ceremonially cut the ribbon joining the stage curtains with a pair of silver scissors. Reporting on the opening on 23 October 1928, the *Manilla Express* commented on the most up to date features of the theatre:

*The house lighting is controlled by a set of dimmers which permit the perfect blending of colours for the Proscenium Arch and stage settings ... the cinema machinery is of the latest model ... a Bi-Unal Arc is also installed for the purpose of correct presentation of slides and illusion effect ... the theatre is fully equipped in every way to accommodate musical comedy and drama etc., and the floor has been specially constructed for dancing requirements.*¹²⁹

One of the proprietors of the Palais was W. P. Harrison, and his cinema became popularly known as 'Bill's Bug House'. The cinema brought the world to Manilla. The serials screened before the main features always ended on a knife edge and kept patrons coming back to see what would happen in the next exciting episode. David Ridgewell, who grew up in Manilla, remembers the romances that began and ended at the cinema:

*The young ladies of the district, dressed in their very best, every Saturday night sat on the left hand side of the projection box, hoping with great anticipation that the young men, equally well attired, hair shining with Brylcream or California Poppy, would make that courageous move from their territory, namely the right hand side of the projection box, and select one of the young ladies as their partner for the night's program.*¹³⁰



Figure 34: The Palais Theatre, Manilla, c. 1929. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

After television came to Manilla in 1965, cinema audiences declined. The Palais Theatre closed in 1968 and was later redeveloped as an indoor sports centre. The building was demolished in September 1999, following more than two years of speculation and controversy.

The Manilla Agricultural Show, held since the 1930s, is still an important event on the social calendar. A more recent event is the Manilla Vintage Machinery Rally, held over the June long weekend each year since the 1980s. Visitors come to the Manilla Showground from all over north-western New South Wales to see the displays of painstakingly restored working farm machinery, steam engines and domestic machinery from yesteryear.

6.5.3 Sport

With the presence of keen horse breeders such as Charles Baldwin of Durham Court among the first settlers, horse racing was a favourite sport in Manilla from its earliest days. A band of keen racing enthusiasts formed the Manilla Race Club in the 1860s. Records of race meetings held prior to 1871 are sketchy, but from January 1871 annual races were held, initially at Durham Court race course. Newspaper reports describe a race meeting held in Manilla on 26 January 1874; the main event was the Manilla Plate over two miles. The Manilla Race Club fell into

abeyance from 1920 until 1944, when it was reformed and membership quickly grew to over 100. The club held regular race meetings until 1958, at the race course 2 km north of Manilla. Manilla Shire Council purchased the grandstand at the race course and re-erected it at Manilla Showground in the 1930s. The race course is now private property, but some reminders of the heyday of horse racing in Manilla remain. The finishing post, race caller's box, judges' stand and saddling enclosure can still be seen.¹³¹

On Boxing Day 1886 the citizens of Manilla held a sports carnival with a variety of athletic events including the 150 yard foot race, the Manilla handicap of 130 yards, the three legged race, and throwing at wickets. Punters were not averse to laying bets on some races. G. Bignall of Manilla and O'Neill of Somerton competed in a foot race for £10 a side, O'Neill crossing the line first and winning the prize. Swimming carnivals were also popular, and raised funds for community facilities. In January 1905 a swimming carnival was held at the Railway pump house and raised £20 for the Mechanics Institute. The carnival became an annual event and was a valuable source of revenue for the Institute well into the 1920s.¹³²

Game shooting was popular in Manilla's early days. In the days before breech loading guns, shooters used muzzle loading guns, laboriously ramming the charge home with paper plugs and priming the gun with explosive caps before each shot. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century wild duck abounded on the river and the paddocks and hillsides were full of hares, rabbits and quail.¹³³ Shooting rabbits was more of a necessity than a sport, as they increased to plague proportions and competed with stock for grass. Charles Baldwin of Durham Court was a keen shooter, and ran a private shooting club on his property. In 1880 he won an open event at Gunnedah. In 1898 Manilla had an active coursing club, at a time when hares abounded and chasing them with dogs was popular. A rifle club was formed in Manilla in 1906. The first shoot was held in August that year, on a rifle range that had been established on land on the Manilla-Barraba road resumed by the Commonwealth Government. During the first two decades of the twentieth century inter-district matches were played with Barraba, Tamworth, Armidale, Gunnedah, Quirindi and Newcastle, and shooters from Manilla also competed in state level competitions in Sydney. The Manilla club reformed after the Second World War, and members continued to perform well in regional competitions.¹³⁴

The very British game of cricket was played in the Manilla district from the early 1870s. The first recorded match was held at Cuerindi in 1872. J. T. Flynn, licensee of the Manilla Hotel in North Manilla, was instrumental in promoting cricket. He formed the Manilla Cricket Club in 1877, one of the oldest cricket clubs in northern New South Wales. In March 1877 the *Tamworth News* advertised the new club:

*Manilla Cricket Club. A scratch match will be played on the grounds in front of Flynn's Hotel at Manilla on March 17, 1877. Wickets will be pitched at 10am sharp. Residents of Manilla desirous of joining the new club may do so by paying their subscriptions to Francis Mackenzie, secretary and treasurer.*¹³⁵

The Manilla Cricket Club held its first annual meeting at Flynn's Hotel in November 1877. During the 1880s and 1890s the small settlements of Keepit, Upper Manilla, Attunga, Klori and Wongo Creek all fielded cricket teams, and rivalry was keen. The teams played on the river flats at North Manilla. Both sides pitched their tents near the field and the victorious team would celebrate their victory with a keg of beer rolled onto the field, courtesy of J. T. Flynn. The local teams also played regularly with teams from Tamworth and Barraba. The Keepit Cricket Club was dominated by the Brady family, with no less than five members on the team. It was one of the first cricket clubs formed in the district, celebrating its thirtieth anniversary with a dinner in 1905.¹³⁶ In 1895 the Government granted an area of land on the banks of the Namoi River at

Manilla for a cricket ground. After the Manilla Municipal Council was established the Council took over management of the ground as a recreation reserve. Under their agreement with the trustees of the cricket ground, the rights and privileges of Manilla cricketers to use the ground were preserved for all time.

The Manilla Cricket Club became the Manilla Cricket Association in 1901. The Association has been active for over a century, fielding teams against Tamworth, Barraba, Upper Manilla, Wongo Creek and Halls Creek and participating in interclub matches as far afield as Newcastle, Uralla, Armidale, Inverell and Guyra. Cricket was not just the preserve of men. Manilla, Halls Creek and Wongo Creek fielded women's teams as early as 1914. The Manilla women's team even travelled to Sydney to play against Bexley Ladies Club and a representative team from Parliament. They were accompanied by two chaperones to protect them from the vices of the city.¹³⁷



**Figure 35: Manilla Ladies Cricket Team off to play NSW Parliament, 1914.
Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.**

Tennis, a less male dominated sport, was popular by the end of the nineteenth century. A tennis club was formed in Manilla by 1899, but families played more leisurely social games on private courts on their properties well before this date. By 1903 there were seven teams in the local competition, four teams from Manilla and teams from Milliwindi, Klori and Durham Court. During the early 1900s local teams also played against teams from Barraba, Tamworth, Armidale and Walcha. Manilla Tennis Association was formed in 1908. Manilla's first tennis courts were located on land where the fire station and Scout Hall now stand, and in 1936 the Municipal Council erected six tennis courts in Manilla Street for the use of the Manilla Tennis Association. The Association was disbanded after the Second World War, and then reformed as the Manilla Tennis Club.¹³⁸

Manilla's first rugby football club was established in 1899, but the first recorded football match was played in August 1896 between Keepit and Crow Mountain, then a thriving gold mining community. There is also record of a football match being played between teams from Wongo Creek and Namoi River at Manilla in July 1898. By 1905 five football teams took part in the local competition, including teams from Upper Manilla, New Mexico and Barraba. Football in Manilla was given a major boost when in 1917 Dally Messenger, one of the greatest footballers of his day, took over the Royal Hotel and introduced the League code to Manilla. There was initial resistance from local players who clung to the Union code, but by the mid 1920s League became the only code played in Manilla. It was not until 1966 that a Rugby Union game was again played in Manilla.¹³⁹

Located close to two major rivers, each with large dams, Manilla is at the centre of an excellent fishing area. Fishing has always been part of the history of Manilla. In November 1890 newspaper reports recounted how a fishing party from Tamworth caught a 'huge cargo' of large Murray cod in the Namoi River at Manilla, while three Barraba men returned from Manilla with three corn sacks full of fish.¹⁴⁰ In 1904 a cod weighing 24 kilograms was caught in the Namoi River at Namoi Park.¹⁴¹ The grand daughter of Garnott and Pearl Bowman, who grew up on the Bowman family property, Buena Vista, at Upper Manilla between the wars, remembers the feasts of fish they enjoyed:

*In those days the fish in the inland rivers were in abundance and I remember many a delicious fish meal. They used to catch cod, yellowbelly, jew, bream and black bream. I don't think many of these fish are caught in the Manilla River any more.*¹⁴²

In 1961 a National Fitness Camp opened at Keepit, primarily funded by the Apex movement. In 1971 this became Lake Keepit Sport and Recreation Centre, managed by the Department of Sport, Recreation and Racing. In 1965 an Olympic Pool opened in Manilla. Today the sporting activities offered in Manilla are as varied as in any country town in New South Wales, ranging from soccer, football, tennis, golf and bowls to basketball, netball, table tennis, pistol shooting and swimming. Sporting clubs include Australian Rules, cricket and tennis. The junior sports league takes part in Tamworth competitions.

Manilla is an international centre for paragliding and hang gliding, two of the fastest growing air sports in the world. Multiple record holder Godfrey Wenness, operator and chief flying instructor of Manilla Paragliding, and 2002 Australian Champion Rhett Rockman are both Manilla locals. The launch site at Mount Borah, at an elevation of 880 m, provides excellent flying conditions and facilities, with four launching pads to suit nearly every wind direction. Mount Borah is the venue for the annual Big Sky Manilla Paragliding Competition and the NSW State Hang Gliding Titles. In March 2003 Manilla hosted the Australian Paragliding Open and the New Zealand Paragliding Nationals. The double event attracted competitors from around the world. From 24 February to 10 March 2007 Manilla will host the 2007 Paragliding World Championships. This is a major international event for Manilla and Tamworth, that will bring competitors from 130 countries and thousands of spectators to the region.

6.5.4 Arts and Culture

In 1880 the citizens of Manilla held a public meeting and resolved to request the Government to set aside half an acre of land in Manilla Street for a School of Arts. In June 1882, the Government advised that it had allocated a block of land in Manilla Street for this purpose and the Committee set out to raise funds for building a School of Arts on the site. It was a major task; the Government agreed to subsidise the building at the rate of £1 for every £2 raised by the local community. The School of Arts building was completed in December 1885, and was officially opened by the Mayor of Tamworth, Alderman W. Tribe. The hall quickly became the centre of social life in the town; it was the venue for a host of social and educational activities, including billiards, cards, lectures, concerts and dances. The lending library was a key asset of the School of Arts. At the annual meeting of the School of Arts held in January 1899 it was reported that the library holdings had increased by 135 books, to a total of 500. Members could also read a wide selection of local and Sydney newspapers. However, the Mechanics Institute provided limited space for public functions. In 1899 the School of Arts Committee held a ball in Mackenzie's new store, which offered the largest space available in the town, 60 feet by 30 feet. The Committee resolved to raise funds for a new, larger School of Arts building and a separate hall. The new School of Arts building, built at a cost of over £1,000, and a hall adjoining it were officially

opened in September 1900 under the organisation's new title, the Mechanics Institute. The licensee of the Royal Hotel, G. M. Oliphant, was instrumental in raising money for the new building, and after the opening ceremony a dinner was held at his hotel. The Mechanics Institute also served as a venue for Municipal Council meetings before the Council Chambers were built in 1919.

In addition to public meetings, bazaars, concerts, dances and balls, the Mechanics Institute was an ideal venue for the Manilla Dramatic Society to stage productions. Land auctions were held there, and as some early wedding certificates show, weddings were also celebrated in the building. The Mechanics Institute burnt down in 1913 and was replaced by a more substantial brick building which was opened in January 1914. In 1923 the war memorial committee took over the original hall, which had survived the fire, and converted it into a memorial hall. From 1923 to 1929 open air picture shows were held at the rear of the Mechanics Institute. The Municipal Council took over control of the hall in 1942.¹⁴³ After the Mandowa Shire Council and Manilla Municipal Council amalgamated in late 1959, the hall was renovated. The new library, the renovated memorial hall and a small town hall were officially opened in April 1960.¹⁴⁴ For thirty years from 1965 the memorial hall was the venue for the annual Festival of Spring Flowers presented by the Manilla Horticultural Society. With a different theme each year, the festival attracted many visitors.



Figure 36: Manilla orchestra, early 1900s. Photograph courtesy Manilla Heritage Museum.

The Manilla Art and Craft Society was formed in 1973, and in November 1977 the Art and Craft stable workshop opened in the grounds of Royce Cottage. Over the years craftspeople in Manilla have maintained links with other craft workers in the region, particularly members of the Barraba Potters and Craft Guild. Geoff Walker, an early tutor for the Barraba Potters Guild and his partner Frances West, were both foundation members of the Manilla Art and Craft Society. In the 1980s Linda Geddes of Wilshome, Manilla gave introductory spinning lessons to members of the Barraba Potters and Crafts Guild.¹⁴⁵ The Manilla Art and Craft Society is still active in 2006.

The first Manilla Music and Arts Festival was held in 2005. The focus of the festival is the Stan Coster Song Contest, established in honour of the late Stan Coster, a well known local musician. The inaugural winner of the Stan Coster Song Contest was Col Taylor from Kootingal.¹⁴⁶ The second Manilla Music and Arts Festival was held from 29 September to 2 October 2006, and the expanded program attracted even greater numbers. The 2006 program featured an expanded art

show, performances of live jazz, gospel and country music, dance showcase spectacular and line dance ball, a black and white ball and a performance of songs and stories of Australia.

6.5.5 Tourism

Following the success of Barraba's Bird Routes of Barraba initiative, Manilla Shire sought the assistance of Barraba Shire to apply for funding from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources to develop a similar project. Their project was called Bird Routes of the North West Slopes of New South Wales, involving the former Shires of Tamworth, Parry, Manilla, Barraba, Bingara and Yallaroi. Included in the Manilla bird routes is Adams Travelling Stock Reserve, a popular bird watching site near Manilla, and Warrabah National Park, where the turquoise parrot has been observed. The Manilla bird routes are now incorporated into the Bird Routes of Tamworth Regional Council.

The success of ecotourism initiatives such as the bird routes of Barraba and Manilla has encouraged local pastoralists to develop farm-based tourism. Belinda Nixon and family, sixth generation owners of the historic beef and sheep property Oakhampton, operate award winning Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Nixon family specialise in traditional farm stays and they offer a variety of educational and recreational activities including sheep shearing demonstrations, demonstrations of working dogs, horse riding and fishing. Located between Manilla and Barraba and close to Split Rock Dam, Oakhampton is ideally placed for visitors interested in exploring the bird routes and other attractions in the district. The beautiful homestead garden and the white box woodlands on the 1,700 ha property also attract a wide variety of bird species.¹⁴⁷ Belinda Nixon is on the New England/North West Regional Tourism Commission Board, actively promoting tourism to the Manilla district.

The Namoi and the Manilla Rivers remain a favoured habitat for the platypus. Harry Burrell, who owned a property named Yarranbool on the Namoi River about four miles from Manilla, was a vaudeville comedian turned naturalist and wildlife photographer. He devoted his life to the study of the platypus and gained an international reputation for his scientific research. In 1910 he succeeded in keeping an adult platypus alive in captivity for six weeks, and developed his knowledge of these unique mammals to the extent that in 1921 he was able to send a live platypus to London as a gift to Lord Northcliffe.¹⁴⁸ In 1927 Burrell published *The Platypus*, an authoritative work which remained the primary reference on the platypus until 1980. In 1927 he published *The Wild Animals of Australasia*, which he co-authored with A. S. Le Souef, then Director of Sydney's Taronga Zoological Park. An expert on the habitat, behaviour and life cycle of the platypus, Burrell built up an extensive collection of specimens at all stages of their development. He later donated his collection of specimens to the Academy of Science in Canberra. A replica of Burrell's platypusary, a habitat for keeping platypus in captivity, is held by the Manilla Heritage Museum together with documents, photographs and correspondence.¹⁴⁹

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7. THE GROWTH OF BARRABA

7.1 SETTLERS AND SURVEYORS

Barraba is an Aboriginal word meaning 'place of the yellow-jacket trees'¹ or 'camp by the riverbank'. The first Europeans to occupy the Barraba area were squatters grazing their cattle and sheep. Many came from the Hunter Valley, where between 1822 and 1825 thousands of acres of rich grazing land had been occupied, mainly by the more prosperous, such as ex-army officers and the sons of landed gentry. Settler and stock numbers in the Hunter Valley grew rapidly, and it was not long before additional pastoral land was sought, particularly during droughts. Stockmen trekked north over the Great Dividing Range to the Liverpool plains, and in later years ranged throughout the New England and Gwydir districts. They followed the routes that Oxley and Dangar had pioneered across the Liverpool Range from the Hunter Valley.

During the 1830s Barraba was well beyond the 'limits of location' - the nineteen counties within about 320 km of Sydney where occupation of land was legally permitted. But this did not deter the keen land seekers who spread beyond the settled districts. In 1836 licences were granted to these settlers on the payment of ten pounds. On 18 January 1837 a list of individuals who had obtained licences was published in the Government Gazette. The list included the name of John Hoskisson, of 'Barraba Plains'. A later list published in 1840 gives simply Barraba as the name of John Hoskisson's run. Other names listed included Pringle (Rocky Creek) and William Cox (Burindi). The names of Foot, Bell, Hughes, Eaton and Threlkeld are listed without the names of the properties they acquired.²

Among the first stations to be established in the Barraba district was Barraba Station, near Bells Mountain, occupied by J. T. Armitage in around 1838. Alfred A. Adams managed the station from 1845 to 1850, then bought the property from Armitage. The original homestead block of Barraba Station is still owned by the descendants of Alfred Adams, although the remainder has been subdivided. Adams Lookout, 5 km north-east of Barraba, is named after Alfred Adams.

Piedmont Station, covering most of the eastern watershed of Cobbadah Creek, was occupied in the 1830s. Records show that Frederick Foot occupied the run in 1840. In March 1847 Daniel Capel took over Piedmont; he held the property for over 100 years. Adjoining Piedmont was Cobbadah Station, extending from the summit of the escarpment known as Fagan's Mountain at the head of the Horton Valley to the present day village of Cobbadah. Archibald Bell occupied this run in the 1830s; in 1836 he sold it to the Eaton brothers. The Eatons' nephew William Crowley settled on Cobbadah station in 1847. The entire station remained in the family for about 60 years. The original Cobbadah homestead was replaced by the present brick homestead in 1909 - 1910. A station known as Barraba Detached adjoined Piedmont Station to the east. By 1840 this land was in the hands of Esther Hughes, and by 1848 it was owned by Joseph Thomas Threlkeld. The station was more commonly known by local residents as the Woolshed.³

The village of Cobbadah at the Upper Horton Road junction on what is now known as Fossickers Way was surveyed to be a town the size of Barraba today. There was a post office at Cobbadah for over 100 years but this disappeared together with the local Waltzing Matilda Hotel. The Church of the Annunciation, built in 1908 and dedicated in 1909, is still used by Cobbadah district residents.

In the 1848 Government Gazette Barraba Station was described as the station of John Hoskisson, in the district of Liverpool Plains. In the same publication there were two other properties listed

with the name of Barraba: J. T. Armitage's Barraba Station covering 45 square miles on the Manilla River and two lots of 20,480 acres and 37,760 acres on the Manilla River owned by Esther Hughes. One of Esther Hughes' properties was known locally as 'Barraba Detached'. Also listed were William Cox's Burindi; Ironbark Station owned by Messrs Spencer, covering 35,000 acres; and Terula or Tareela owned by William Ogilvie, covering 23,040 acres. Ironbark Station, which extended south from Piedmont to the Manilla River, was first occupied by John Keele and purchased by William Spencer in 1845. In Greville's Post Office Directory dated 1872, Arthur S. Darby, squatter and Henry Morris, overseer were listed as resident on Burindi. Darby was also the owner of Campo Santo Station.

A number of other properties in the vicinity of Barraba were listed in the Gwydir area in the 1848 Gazette: Cobbadah, Piedmont, Lindsay and Rocky Creek.⁴ Covering 52,000 acres, Lindsay Station was leased by Francis Rusden in the late 1850s to run 2,000 cattle. Rusden stayed at Lindsay until about 1880 when Messrs. Sawyers and Wilson took over the station. In the early 1900s Sawyers and Wilson bought Mayvale Station from Blagdon Chambers, adding a further 11,000 acres to their estate. They generally called their holding Mayvale/Lindsay. Chambers had acquired Mayvale Station in the 1890s.



Figure 37: Detail from map of Parish of Barraba, County of Darling, Tamworth Land District, Fourth edition 17 June 1910. Parish Map Collection, State Library of NSW.

The future township of Barraba was surveyed in July 1852 by the Assistant Surveyor J. T. Gorman. The street plan that Gorman laid out in his map of the town reserve is much the same as it is today, apart from some realignments. In 1866 the NSW Government Gazette described Barraba as a postal township in the Shire of Barraba, Electoral District of Liverpool Plains and

Police District of Tamworth. Communication with Woodsreef, Cobbadah and Manilla was by horse and dray only and mail was conveyed by horseback twice a week. Settlers wishing to travel to Sydney went to Tamworth by horse or private conveyance and thence by coach to Singleton, rail to Newcastle and steamer to Sydney. The town of Barraba had the services of a post office (first opened in 1851), and two hotels – the Stockmans Arms (John Cameron) and the Barraba Inn (James Sinclair). A Court of Petty Sessions was held once a month. The population numbered about 80 persons.⁵

The gold rushes of the 1850s brought an influx of miners to the Barraba district, setting the stage for the growth of the town. Many miners failed to find the riches they sought but stayed in the district and secured selections under the Robertson Land Acts in the 1860s. They included the Saunders, Garske, McKid, Jackson, Lillis, Williams, Taylor, Johnson, James, Thompson and Berry families. Some of their descendants still occupy the original properties selected by their forbears.

An auction of crown lands in Barraba was held in Tamworth on 29 September 1876. Among the buyers was Mr A. Darby who purchased a five acre lot in the township. He later donated this land to the people of Barraba for the site of a hospital. Barraba was proclaimed a town on 20 March 1885; by then its population had grown from about 80 in 1866 to around 500.⁶

Land holdings in the district remained relatively stable until the post-war period when many stations were subdivided for soldier settler blocks. One example was Piedmont Station, which covered most of upper Cobbadah Creek until it was cut up for soldier settler blocks in the 1950s. In the late 1970s the head station was sold, ending 130 years of continuous Capel family ownership.⁷

7.2 HARVESTING THE LAND: PASTORALISM AND AGRICULTURE

While the mining fortunes of Barraba have waxed and waned, agriculture and pastoralism have provided a more stable economic base. The first European settlers relied mainly on cattle rearing, but the country around Barraba proved ideal for sheep raising. Wool production soon became the most prominent industry and fine merino wool from Barraba realised prices equal to that of any in the State. The heyday of wool lasted well into the twentieth century, but by the end of the century wool production was 80 per cent less than it had been 50 years before.

Mayvale Station is a well known wool producing property. Sawyers and Wilson, who took over Lindsay Station in the 1880s, added the neighbouring Mayvale Station to their holdings in 1904. The Wilson family lived at Mayvale for over sixty years and the brand 'SW Mayvale' was a familiar sight on the wool bales loaded onto the train at Barraba station. In its heyday up to 40,000 pure bred merinos were shorn in a season at the 16 stand woolshed at Mayvale. Today there are many separate holdings covering the area of the original Lindsay Station but the area is still generally known as Lindsay. Mayvale is again a separate entity, and in 2007 runs cattle. Woolsheds were important centres of life on the large stations. During the shearing season they were hives of activity, accommodating large numbers of workers marshalling and shearing sheep, and sorting, grading and packing the wool clip. During the off season dances and social functions were held in the woolshed. The woolshed on Barraba Station, built in the 1880s or 1890s, still stands today.⁸ The 12,000 acre Plumthorpe Station was another well known grazing property in the Barraba district, the centre of a major sheep dynasty. During the early part of the twentieth century up to 100 Chinese labourers worked on the property, clearing land and felling timber.⁹



Figure 38: Mayvale, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

Wheat growing in the Barraba district began on a relatively small scale in the late 1870s and 1880s. The areas under wheat cultivation increased in the 1890s as government legislation encouraged the subdivision of the large estates and closer settlement. In October 1899 the *Barraba and Manilla News* reported:

*Mr J. Myers, of this town, has finished cutting his wheat crop for hay. The crop is fully twice as heavy as that of previous seasons. About wheat growing it is a matter of congratulations that both the area under crop and the yield will considerably exceed the most sanguine expectations this season. It speaks well for the industry and earnestness of those who have started to make new homes for themselves under the provisions of the present Land Act.*¹⁰

With the long awaited opening of the railway from Tamworth to Barraba in 1908, the town reached the peak of its prosperity. Barraba became the railhead for a large area of north-western New South Wales. After the First World War, wheat and oat farming was taken up on a large scale, particularly in the Horton Valley. The expansion of wheat growing was encouraged by the owners of large grazing properties who opened up large areas of their holdings to share farming.¹¹ At the peak of the wheat industry, lines of trucks queued to deliver grain to the three huge silos that dominate the southern skyline of Barraba. Built in 1965, the silos are a significant architectural feature, a symbol of Barraba's identity as a strongly agricultural based community.¹² The year the silos were built was marked by severe drought and not a single grain of wheat was stored in the new facility. Wheat prices fell in the late 1960s and quotas were introduced in 1969. The silos, with a capacity of 100,000 bushels each, stored wheat until the early 1980s, when the rail line closed. Wheat is still grown by some farmers, but is now transported by road.¹³

Barraba has produced fine beef cattle from the earliest days of white settlement, mainly descended from British breeds such as Herefords, Aberdeen Angus and Shorthorns. Cattle numbers have multiplied many times over the past 30 years and selective breeding programs have greatly improved the quality of stock. According to local knowledge the high mineral content of the soil and water in the Barraba area has contributed to the strong bone growth of the cattle raised there. Today the Barraba district produces quality meat and breeding stock. There are a

number of well known cattle studs in the area including Ironbark and Pipersleigh (breeding Herefords); Dunbeacon and Lopast (breeding Shorthorns); Kildare (South Devons); Bowen, Tycolah and The Cottage (Poll Herefords); and Appledore, Cobbadah Creek, Wooroonga and Bowen (Aberdeen Angus). Bowen and Tycolah have sold top priced bulls at the National Show. The well known Wiranya Poll Stud established by Bruce and Robert Etheridge in the 1970s was dispersed some years ago. The Double B Beef Promotion Organisation, otherwise known as the Barraba-Bingara Better Beef Association, has established itself as a major regional producers' organisation at the top end of the market.¹⁴

Conda Thoroughbred Stud was established in the 1920s by Henry Capel. He employed young Ernie Smith to train and care for his stallions. Ernie Smith worked at the stud for over 50 years until his retirement in 1975, and produced many champion race horses. One of the most famous race horses trained on the track staked out in a paddock at Conda was Wollun. In 1933 he won the Armidale Cup in only his second race start, and went on to win the inaugural Doomben Ten Thousand on the opening day of Doomben race track in Brisbane. Many horses racing in north-west New South Wales today carry the blood of Conda horses in their veins.¹⁵

Employment in the agricultural sector has declined dramatically with farm mechanisation. However in 2007 the Barraba district has around 400 farming properties which provide the main source of the area's wealth. The Horton Valley, with its mild climate and generally frost-free winters, is an ideal area for mixed farming and agriculture. It is mainly a cropping area together with lucerne production and sheep and cattle grazing, but early tomatoes, bougainvillea, jacarandas as well as mangoes can be grown successfully here.¹⁶ Although recent attempts at agricultural diversification have been made, and a vineyard has been established just outside the town, cattle production remains the area's major income earner. Some farmers are adopting new, sustainable methods of production, such as cell grazing, and there are at least two rural Landcare groups in the region, as well as one in Barraba itself. The Landcare group in Barraba instigated a tree planting project at the south end of the town, and has begun to rehabilitate the banks of the Manilla river.¹⁷

Local farmers are also diversifying into niche markets and exploring other ways of generating income, for example through farm-based tourism and adding value to their produce through further processing. A successful example of local farm-based tourism is Elembee Fine Fibre Farm on the road to Horton River Falls about 30 km from Barraba. Elembee Farm is a goat stud set amidst 500 ha of bushland with bushwalks and barbeque and picnic areas and sales of cashmere products made on the farm, open to groups.¹⁸ Three kilometres north of Barraba is Millie Park Vineyard, owned by William and Barbara Rumsby. They have gained a reputation for their wines and liqueurs, particularly their cabinet sauvignon. Visitors to the vineyard can sample and purchase wines, liqueurs and local produce, explore the wildlife and nature walk and enjoy a barbeque at the picnic area.

7.3 MINING

Located on the Peel fault that separates two very different geological formations, the Barraba district is rich in minerals. Gold, copper, asbestos, magnesium, fireclay and diatomaceous earth have all contributed to the economy of Barraba at various times, as mining fortunes rose and fell. During the 1850s gold was discovered at Woodsreef, Ironbark Creek, Barrack Creek and Crow Mountain. Hundreds of people took to the roads of the north-west in search of riches, travelling on foot, in carts, drays or on horseback.

According to local legend a young man Charles Muggleton was one of the first to find gold at Crow Mountain, but he was unaware of his discovery for many years. In the early 1860s he picked up an unusual stone while out mustering cattle on Glen Riddle Station, put it in his saddlebag and thought no more of it. Years later he showed the stone to an old Miner, John Crowley. Crowley sank a shaft near the spot Muggleton had found the stone, and found a rich seam of gold. The 'Dodger' mine produced a wealth of gold.¹⁹ In 1899 the leading mine at Crow Mountain, 'The Princess', was reported to be crushing fifty tons of ore a day, which yielded one ounce of gold to the ton.²⁰

Gold was discovered at Barrack Creek near Bingara in 1851. The gravel beds of the creek yielded alluvial gold, and there were rich reefs of gold within narrow fractures and oxide-rich zones in the serpentine rocks on either side of the valley and exposed in the creek bed. The Ballarat and Lady Morgan mines were rich producers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the 1850s and 1860s, miners moved frequently from field to field following the lure of gold, living in tents or rough shelters. John Fletcher, who married Hannah Singleton in Bingara in about 1860, was one. The couple's first child was born at Ironbark Creek in 1861, their second child at the Rocky River field three years later. Drought struck the Rocky River field in the mid-1860s, causing great hardship to miners, and the Fletchers moved on. By 1867 the family were back in the Woodsreef area, and when the youngest surviving child was born in 1877 they were living at Crow Mountain.²¹

Many Chinese joined the search for gold in the north-west. In the 1870s the post office directory for Cobbadah, the nearest post office to the gold diggings, listed many Chinese names. Chinese were buried in the cemetery in Barraba, but when they could afford it, their relatives often returned their remains to China for reburial.²² After the gold ran out some Chinese stayed on in the district, establishing market gardens and working on properties clearing the land, scrub cutting, ringbarking and fencing. Hand-made wire fences attributed to Chinese labour, constructed with elaborate vertical latticing instead of commercial wire netting, have been recorded on properties in the Barraba district and on the slopes of Mount Kaputar.

In its heyday Woodsreef, located 15 km east of Barraba on the south-west slopes of the New England tableland, was a thriving village. When the mine battery and stamper were set in motion in 1861 to crush a load of rock from Fletcher's mine, a fine dinner was held at Fletcher's Reef Inn, and many toasts were drunk to all and sundry. By the late 1860s gold was exhausted, and Woodsreef became a virtual ghost town. But finds of gold could still be made there in later years. In 1899 George Allen, an ex-sea captain, unearthed a rich seam at Woodsreef, taking 20 ounces of gold in one day.²³ During the 1920s about 30 families lived in Woodsreef, the men working at the gold and asbestos mines. Today there are few reminders of the various phases of Woodsreef village's history. The old copper and gold workings can be seen along Ironbark creek. The only remaining building is the small wooden St Johns Anglican church, built in 1923. Scattered through the open, grassy slopes are signs marking the sites of the tennis courts, sawmill, school, the wine shanty run by Mrs Browning, Granny Stein's post office, William Saunders' general store, the hall, butchers shop and the homes of some of the families who lived in the village.²⁴

In 1889 copper was discovered at Gulf Creek, about 25 km north of Barraba. The first mine was established there in February 1892, when G. Lindsay, W. Arnold and A McGregor took up Mining Lease 17. In the early days copper was mined on a small scale, and the processing was done with the simplest of equipment. After it was brought to the surface the ore was heaped onto a pile of firewood and set alight, so that the sulphur in the ore caught fire and burned through the ore. The burnt ore was then bagged and transported to Newcastle for further treatment. In 1895 the Cornish Copper Mine Company took over the mine. A thriving village quickly developed: a

cluster of slab huts roofed with bark, stores, a school, hotel and post office. Conditions were primitive. One visitor to Gulf Creek in January 1897 described the housing there in disparaging terms:

*The huts (they cannot be called houses) are the poorest I have seen and most of them are tumbling down, thus being more like blackfellows camps than the homes of white men. The furniture is also scanty, in most cases it consists of a table or two, chairs and a few stools. ... The huts are built wholly of box and stringy bark and with two exceptions have the bare ground for a floor.*²⁵

The population of Gulf Creek grew from only a few families to 40 in April 1896, and 160 just a year later. By 1899 the population numbered about 320. The Cornish Copper Mine Company was plagued by financial problems, and ceased operations in October 1898. The Mining and Financial Trust Syndicate of London took over the mine in June 1899 and the following year floated the Gulf Creek Mining Company. Mining forged ahead at three prospective lodes, named Big, Little and Cornish. At its peak in 1901, the mine was one of the largest in the State, employing 200 men. About 110 were employed as miners and another 90 as carters, timber getters and general hands. During that year Gulf Creek produced 9,400 tons of ore, yielding 560 tons of copper valued at over £36,000. The mine came at a heavy cost to the environment. The hungry furnaces required a continual supply of fuel and the hills around the village were soon denuded of timber. Then a cable was erected across the valley to a nearby mountain known as the Beacon, and loads of wood were carried across to the furnaces by flying fox. Today the tree cover has returned to the hills around Gulf Creek, but the great majority are young trees. The water jacket furnaces and steam engines also required a reliable supply of water. The mine was closed for most of 1902, mainly due to drought and the lack of water in the dam.

The drought eased in 1903 and the mine recommenced operations, but the yields of copper began to decline. High operating and transport costs were also a problem, reducing profit margins. The mine managers hoped that the proposed extension of the railway to Barraba would improve the financial situation. But the high operating costs of the mine could not be sustained, and the Gulf Creek Mining Company ceased operations in October 1904. A syndicate of local miners continued operations until 1907, when they sold to the London Metal Banking Company. Over the next few years copper yields continued to decline. The opening of the railway to Barraba in 1908 did not improve the company's financial situation, because of the high cost of carting ore by horse team to Barraba over poor roads. Mining operations were suspended in December 1911, then the mine remained idle for several years. There was an exodus of miners and their families from the village, and local businesses followed.

By 1915 Gulf Creek village consisted of a collection of houses including a boarding house, one store, a school and a hall in addition to the mine buildings. The goats used for milk and carting wood went wild. Mining continued for some years with a handful of employees, and a few individual miners extracted copper using a precipitation method. The death knell for large-scale mining at Gulf Creek came in 1916 when the New South Wales Government rejected the proposed extension of the railway from Barraba to Bingara via Connors Creek and Piedmont. Of the three proposed routes north of Barraba, this route passed closest to Gulf Creek, but after three years of discussion and some surveys, the whole plan was shelved. London Metal Company finally left Gulf Creek in 1917. For some hardy miners and their families Gulf Creek was their home, and they remained, keeping the small community alive. Gulf Creek survived as a small rural village serving the surrounding grazing and agricultural properties. The school eventually closed in 1957 and the post office in 1965. All that remain today of Gulf Creek are the old school building, dating from 1896, and a poppet head.²⁶

In 1872 diamonds were discovered near Bingara north of Barraba, in deposits extending in a band over a distance of about 15 kilometres. In 1884 the Bingara diamond mine was producing 198 carats a month.²⁷ The deposits were worked intermittently until about 1904, but mining operations were continually hampered by lack of water. However the group of mines at the Bingara field proved to be one of the richest in the region, producing over 28,500 carats of diamonds, and an unknown amount of gold. Today the field is Australia's third highest diamond producer after the Western Australian deposits and Copeton (near Inverell).²⁸

Asbestos was first mined on a small scale at Woodsreef, a short distance east of the old gold mine on Ironbark Creek, from 1918 to 1923. The presence of asbestos was noted in the 1880s when the gold deposits at Ironbark Creek were being exploited, but no attempt was made to mine it for over 30 years. In about 1917 two companies acquired adjacent leases at Woodsreef: James Hardie Pty Ltd, through an entity called Asbestos Mining Company of Australia, and their major competitor Wunderlich Pty Ltd. But the local product could not compete with imported fibre, and both companies were beset by industrial problems. By 1923 the mines closed. James Hardie, one of Australia's oldest corporations, built its fortunes on asbestos. Throughout its history the company was vulnerable to fluctuations in supplies of raw materials, and sourced asbestos from as far afield as South Africa and Canada as well as mines like Wittenoom in Western Australia. During the 1920s James Hardie established fibre cement, or fibro, as its core business. Fibro, a cheap, light-weight alternative to timber or brick, was marketed as the building material of the future. It was used across the nation, in new housing estates, railway stations, churches and in the first permanent building in Canberra, the new Duntroon Military Training Academy.²⁹ Fibro reached its height of popularity in the post-war building boom of the 1950s, when as many as six out of ten new houses were being clad in fibro. Fibro knew no class distinctions; it was just as suitable for comfortable suburban Californian bungalows as more humble working men's cottages.³⁰

The Australian building boom continued into the 1960s, and by 1969 plans were being made to reopen the Woodsreef mine, this time with a sizeable workforce. The decision followed a two-year feasibility study of the quantity, quality and value of the asbestos deposits at Woodsreef. Chrysotile Corporation of Australia, a subsidiary of a Canadian firm, opened a large open-cut asbestos mine at Woodsreef in April 1972, generating much local employment and rejuvenating local businesses. At its peak the mine employed 400 men. The reopening of the mine prompted a building boom in Barraba. A new housing estate was created and many other new houses were built throughout the town. The population of Barraba reached a peak of 1,947 in 1976, clearly related to the activity of the Woodsreef mine.³¹

Barraba had great hopes that the asbestos mine would bring long-term prosperity to the town, but it did not realise its potential. The asbestos fibres that occurred in the Woodsreef deposits proved difficult to recover, and during the early years of operation, as much as 50 per cent were not being extracted during the milling process. Later modifications to the milling machinery increased the rate of recovery of asbestos and production increased, but large quantities of fibre remained in the tailings. The viability of the mine was also affected by the strengthening of the Australian dollar against the Canadian dollar, increasing the cost of Australian asbestos in overseas markets.³² From 1973 the mine operated under the management of receivers. The mine had a planned lifespan of 20 years but by the early 1980s it was in major financial difficulties. Woodsreef Mine closed in 1983 after only ten years of operation, despite assistance from both State and Federal governments.



Figure 39: Woodsreef asbestos mine site, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

By this time the health hazards of asbestos were well publicised, and between 1980 and 1984 consumption of asbestos in Australia fell from 70,000 to 10,000 tonnes.³³ During the 1970s James Hardie Industries had already been reducing the asbestos content of its building and insulation products and developing alternatives. Working conditions at the Woodsreef mine were extremely poor and very high dust counts prevailed, because the mine had been designed for the sub-zero temperatures of the northern hemisphere. Workers were transported to the mine from dormitories twelve miles away in buses that were later used to take their children to school, and little dust monitoring took place. In his book *Asbestos House*, charting the rise and fall of James Hardie Industries, Gordon Haigh quotes the vivid portrait of Woodsreef painted by journalist Matt Peacock:

Even to a casual observer, there were serious safety hazards. There were vast quantities of asbestos dust throughout the floor of the mill, which were being swept up, shovelled into wheelbarrows and tipped down a chute by men who - with one exception - were not wearing respirators. Dust from the tailings was blowing into the mill, on a comparatively windless day, so strongly that it was impossible to look into the face of the breeze.³⁴

The Departments of Mineral Resources, Land and Water Conservation and the Environment Protection Authority regularly monitored the site during its operation and have continued to do so since its closure in 1983. In 1986, the government commissioned a report on the options for site rehabilitation. Cost estimates were as high as \$80.7 million, with a preferred option costed at \$8.1 million. At the time, the Government was considering reprocessing the tailings and rehabilitation was deferred. During 1992 and 1993 funding from the Derelict Mined Lands Rehabilitation Program, managed by the Department of Mineral Resources, was used to establish sediment control and water management structures. In 1996 the Derelict Mined Lands Rehabilitation Program commissioned an independent report on the risks posed by the derelict mine to human and animal health and safety and to the wider environment. In conjunction with the risk assessment, the Department investigated the potential for reopening the mine. The study showed that this is unlikely in the foreseeable future.³⁵ No attempts have been made to restore the landscape of the mine site since it closed. A steel fence encloses the site, and from the top of the cutting there is a clear view of the vast pit from which the asbestos was dug, the rock dumps and the huge heaps of tailings. According to some Barraba residents, few people who worked at the

mine have suffered health problems. The white asbestos at Woodsreef was not as hazardous as the blue asbestos at Wittenoom.³⁶

Diatomite occurs at Bells Mountain on the highest point of the Nandewar Range north of Barraba. About 35 million years ago nutrient-rich freshwater lakes formed in the Barraba region during a period of volcanic activity, and millions of diatoms thrived in their still waters. Formed from the skeletons of these microscopic aquatic creatures, diatomite is a soft, lightweight and highly porous rock, an ideal absorbent and delicate polishing medium. The first mining lease at Bells Mountain was granted in 1923, and from the 1930s to the late 1950s the diatomite was carted from underground tunnels on a small railway. The present diatomite mine at Bells Mountain was opened in 1982 by the Australian Diatomite Mining Company. At that time the company was Australia's largest producer of diatomite products for domestic and commercial applications. In June 1999 the Western Australian based company Supersorb Environmental NL took over the mine and processing plant at Barraba. The company distributes diatomite throughout Australia as pet litter and industrial absorbents.³⁷ The present mining operations are open cut, but the earlier underground workings can be seen. The tunnels are now filled in.

Today the diatomite mine at Bells Mountain is the only commercial mining operation in the Barraba district. However the colourful mining history of Barraba remains a major contributor to the local economy through tourism.. Visitors have ample opportunities to fossick for gold, other minerals and precious stones at sites such as Woodsreef Recreation Area, Ironbark Creek and Ruby Hill. Ruby Hill was misnamed when miners mistook the red garnet found there for rubies. In 1899, ten diamonds were allegedly obtained from a shaft sunk through gravels and breccia on the northern flank of Ruby Hill, but there is considerable doubt as to the authenticity of this claim.³⁸ At Three Creeks Gold Mine off the Barraba-Bingara road visitors can spend as much time as they wish trying their hand at gold panning with the equipment provided. This was the site of the rich Ballarat and Lady Morgan mines that yielded so much gold in the nineteenth century.³⁹

There is potential for Barraba's mineral wealth to be tapped commercially once again. It is feasible that the mountain of tailings left behind when the Woodsreef asbestos mine closed could be reprocessed, but even if this eventuated, it would be unlikely to contribute greatly to the local economy. The material would be shipped out to the Hunter Valley for processing, with the loaded trucks bypassing Barraba. There are rumours of diamond mine between Barraba and Bingara, and of potential diamond-bearing fields north of Barraba.⁴⁰

7.4 SERVICING COMMUNITIES

7.4.1 Schools

On 2 April 1860, the residents of Barraba earnestly petitioned the Government for assistance to establish a school. As they could only guarantee an attendance of 15 children, the Board of National Education refused their application. At that time the Board required a minimum attendance of 30 children. Late in 1860 the residents set up a private school as an interim measure. The first public school in Barraba opened in October 1861 in rented premises, consisting of a single room measuring 15 feet by 14 feet, furnished with one long desk for the pupils, three forms, and a teacher's table. However the promised numbers of pupils were not sustained. Enrolments declined, and the school closed in March 1863 after less than two years. In December that year two acres of land at the intersection of Cherry and Edward Streets were acquired by Government grant for a school, but it did not reopen until 1865.⁴¹

Many small one-teacher schools in outlying areas brought education to remote farming districts. A school opened at Upper Horton in 1883, and it is said that lessons were first held in a farm shed. By September that year James Smith, a local parent, had hastily erected a slab building lined with canvas as a school. A new school building was erected in 1892. By 1907 this building was in poor condition and too small for the numbers of pupils attending; it was replaced by a new building in 1909. The 1909 building was enlarged and remodelled in 1929 – 1930, and in 1939 the Cobbadah school building, which had closed the year before, was relocated to Upper Horton. There was sufficient population in the Upper Horton Valley to sustain the school until 1988.⁴² Among the other schools, Crow Mountain operated from 1895 to 1926, Bells Mountain from 1888 to 1891, Rockmore from 1885 to 1902, Crebra (Ironbark) from 1901 to 1912, and Bereen from 1893 to 1907. There were schools serving the families who settled along the tributaries of the Manilla River west of Manilla: at Hawkins Creek from 1884 to 1934, Upper Hawkins Creek from 1902 to 1912 and Little Creek from 1878 to 1884. There was also a school on Woolshed station between 1884 and 1891.⁴³

A house-to-house school operated at Woodsreef from 1884 to 1889, the teacher conducting lessons in family homes. This was followed by a half-time school, shared with the school at Rockmore. As the population of Woodsreef grew, the school was upgraded to a provisional school in 1895 and then to a primary school in 1897. Bill Woodhouse was the teacher at the school by 1900, and his wife ran the post office and a small store. The school at Woodsreef remained open until December 1965. A provisional school opened at Gulf Creek in June 1896, on two acres of land that the Government had dedicated for the purpose. By 1900, the start of the boom years for copper mining at Gulf Creek, enrolments at the school had grown to 60 and the original school building was very overcrowded. A new wooden school was completed in December 1900. Even though the population of Gulf Creek village itself dwindled after the copper boom passed, the surrounding rural population continued to increase, and Gulf Creek school remained to serve the children living on these properties. Many teachers came and went at the school, as they found living conditions in the isolated village primitive and the cost of living high. One exception was Joseph Bailey, who arrived at Gulf Creek in 1912. He stayed for nine years and made many improvements to the school, including lining and painting the building for the first time since it was built and constructing a tennis court. The school finally closed in 1957, and the remaining pupils transferred to the nearby Macintyre School, which operated from January 1957 to May 1968. After Macintyre School closed, the children travelled by bus to Barraba Central School each day, along with pupils from other country schools which had closed.⁴⁴

After many appeals by local residents, in 1872 the Government accepted Mr Michael Burke's tender to build a new brick school in Barraba on the site at the corner of Cherry and Edward Streets. The plans provided for a building 25 feet by 17 feet to accommodate 42 pupils, furnished with six desks each ten feet six inches long. After considerable delays, this public school and residence were eventually completed in early 1874. Classes commenced in May 1874. Barraba school remained in Cherry Street for thirty years, but the location on the black soil of the river flats was not ideal. The school grounds turned into a quagmire when it rained and white ants attacked the school building and teacher's residence. After many appeals, a new school building was completed and occupied in March 1882. But the problem of the boggy grounds remained; the playground regularly flooded after heavy rains. The slabs of the timber teacher's residence began to shrink, making the house cold and draughty in winter. The teacher complained 'I am supposed to have a house worth £80 a year, instead of which I'm living in one worth not more than £25'. A new school site was purchased on the hill in Gotha Street and in December 1890 a new teacher's residence was completed there. It was a four-roomed brick residence with iron roof and detached kitchen. Many of the trees planted around the teacher's residence when it was built still survive

today, gnarled sentinels that have withstood the elements for over a century. After a report by the Government Medical Officer described the existing school building as ‘decidedly prejudicial to the health of School Children’, the Government approved the recommendation to move the school. In August 1895 a new primary school was completed on the Gotha Street site.⁴⁵ The old brick school building on the original Cherry Street site was incorporated into a new private residence and still stands in 2006.⁴⁶

Enrolments at Barraba school grew steadily; by 1899 attendance reached 107 on some days, while there was only accommodation for 75 pupils in the two classrooms. Additional accommodation for 50 pupils was built in December 1899. When construction began on the railway from Manilla to Barraba the population of Barraba grew rapidly, swelled by construction workers and their families. By the time the railway opened in 1908 254 pupils were enrolled at Barraba School and it was very overcrowded. New classrooms and toilet facilities were built to accommodate the additional students in 1909. Mr Lockrey was the headmaster of Barraba School for over 22 years, retiring in 1930. During his tenure, Mr Lockrey encouraged the involvement of parents in their children’s schooling. The Parents and Teachers Association appears in school records for the first time in 1919. The school continued to expand as the population of Barraba grew, with additional classrooms being built in 1918 and 1924-1925. In 1934 additional land to the west of the existing school site was purchased from the RSL for £70, and in the following year the school was connected to the newly constructed town water supply.⁴⁷ Barraba school became a Central School in 1944, providing secondary education to children from its own primary section and from surrounding primary schools. By 1946 Barraba Central School had an enrolment of over 300 and a staff of eight, under headmaster R. T. Thomas. The fine gardens surrounding the school, maintained by the students and teachers, were an attractive feature.⁴⁸

St Joseph’s Convent School in Barraba opened in March 1910. By 1914 it accommodated 14 boarders, but soon afterwards only day pupils were accepted. The new St Joseph’s School building was officially opened on 30 March 1969 by the Bishop of Armidale the Rev J. Freeman. A preschool was opened in St Laurence’s Church Hall in 1965. After years of community fundraising and hard work a new preschool was built on the corner of Savoy and Queen Streets, and enrolled its first pupils in April 1972.⁴⁹

The Primary and Infants Departments at Barraba Central School expanded during the 1960s and 1970s, as schools in outlying areas closed and pupils were transferred to Barraba. The one-teacher school at Woodsreef, built in 1907, closed in 1965 and the building was moved to Barraba Central School to provide accommodation for the additional pupils. In March 1966 the school at Banoon soldiers settlement, built in 1954, also closed and the building was moved to the Central School site in Barraba. Two years later the Macintyre School, built in 1957, closed and the building moved to Barraba. These buildings are now used in the Infants Department.⁵⁰ With the closing of the small schools at Banoon, Macintyre, Plumthorpe, Woodsreef and Cobbadah, and the provision of buses to bring pupils in to Barraba Central School, the educational aims of Barraba school broadened and a wider range of courses was made available. While this marked the growing reputation of Barraba School, it also put increasing pressure on accommodation. The opening of the asbestos mine at Woodsreef in 1972 led to a rapid increase in enrolments and further overcrowding.⁵¹

A new high school building at Barraba Central School was completed in May 1973, catering for over 300 students. The new classrooms were immediately put into use, although the building was not officially opened until October 1975. The Parents and Citizens Association, strongly supported by the headmaster Mr Ron Heatherington, actively campaigned for a secondary school in Barraba, writing many letters to the Education Department and local members of Parliament. It

was largely through the efforts of Bill Ingles, Secretary of the P & C Association for 13 years, that the school was finally built. The Association also held many events to raise funds to purchase equipment for the new secondary school. Unfortunately Mr Heatherington, after working so hard to make the Barraba Secondary School one of the best in the State, was transferred before the official opening.

In 2007 there are three schools in Barraba, two primary and one secondary. Barraba Central School has a primary campus catering for kindergarten to year 6 and a secondary campus for years 7-12. For children whose parents prefer them to have a Roman Catholic education, St Joseph's School, located next to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, offers classes from kindergarten to year 6. Barraba Central is one of the first schools in Australia to be equipped with solar powered computers, and is developing its own website.⁵²



Figure 40: Barraba Central School, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

In December 2002 a number of children from Barraba Central School received official recognition for their entries in the National 2002 Weedbuster Week competitions. Weedbuster Week, a national event sponsored by the Weeds Society of New South Wales, encourages all levels of the community, from primary and high school students to Landcare groups and council weed control authorities, to come up with ideas to promote weeds awareness. Ninety children from Barraba Central Schools participated in the poster and colouring-in competitions. Four students received prizes or high commendations, and Barraba Central School received a special award for an outstanding success.⁵³

7.4.2 Religious services

During the latter part of the nineteenth century Barraba was included in the Anglican Diocese of Armidale. The first Anglican church in Barraba, St Laurence's Church of England, was built in 1874-1875 on the corner of Alice and Queen Streets. It was designed by the notable colonial

architect John Horbury Hunt, who was responsible for five country churches in the Diocese of Armidale, (in Barraba, Bundarra, Inverell, Ollera and Tingha), in addition to buildings such as St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale and Booloominbah and Trevenna at the University of New England. St Laurence's Church in Barraba was demolished in 1906, apparently because it was regarded as unsafe due to flood damage. However according to Horbury Hunt's biographer J. M. Freeland, there is evidence that the building was the victim of economics. It stood on a commercially valuable town site and for social reasons the congregation preferred to build a brighter, more modern church.⁵⁴

The church was rebuilt on a site in Maude Street. The parishioners went on to build a new, larger church of locally-made bricks next to the rebuilt church, on the corner of Maude and Fitzroy Streets. The building was consecrated on 22 March 1909. Once the new church was completed, the old building became the church hall.⁵⁵ St Laurence's Church of England is one of the town's more notable buildings, with a fine nineteenth century pipe organ, recently completely restored. On 6 August 1950 the Anglican Bishop, the Rev J. S. Moyes laid the foundation stone of a new vestry, a memorial to all those who had served in the two World Wars. The vestry was finally completed and dedicated in June 1955.

St Laurence's Family and Youth Centre, built in 1956-57 with funds gifted to the church by Mrs Marjorie Burdekin, includes a hall and stage, games rooms, kitchen and library. It was regularly used by the Young Anglican Fellowship, which at its peak in the 1960s had a membership of over 200. The young players made good use of the stage, presenting concerts and plays, and holding regular dances. The Mothers Union and Women's Guild also used the Centre.⁵⁶

In 1842 the Roman Catholic Church divided the colony of New South Wales, which then incorporated the whole of Queensland and Victoria, into ten districts, each of which was, where possible, in the care of two priests. During the second half of the nineteenth century the Roman Catholic congregations of Barraba and Upper Horton received visits from the priest in Bingara. The vast Parish of Bingara, established in 1882, extended from Tarpoly Creek to the Queensland border, taking in Barraba, Upper Horton, Bingara, Manilla, Gravesend, Warialda, Coolatai, Wallangara, Gramen, Yetman and Moree. Many of the early Roman Catholic priests in Australia were Italian; the first priest in the Parish of Bingara was Father Salvador, and the Bishop of Armidale, Bishop Torregiani, was also Italian.

St John's Roman Catholic Church Barraba was built in 1905-1906 at the corner of Fitzroy and Savoy Streets. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop O'Connor on 26 November 1905. At that time the visiting parish priest was Father J. T. Clancy, who was famous for his eloquent sermons and his skill as a horseman. Each fortnight Father Clancy and his successor Father John Collender travelled from Bingara to Barraba in a buggy drawn by a pair of ponies. Attached to the back of the old church building was a small room, furnished with a bed, dressing table, washstand and one chair. To the rear of this building was an open weather shed adjoining a closed shed for storing the vehicle and a small harness and tack room. St Joseph's Roman Catholic Convent was built in 1910, and a Convent school was established in the same year. The Roman Catholic community of Barraba did not have a resident parish priest until August 1918, when Barraba was made a separate parish and Father Patrick Condon was appointed. Initially Father Condon boarded at the Central Hotel. A cottage adjoining the church yard was later purchased as a presbytery. The parish was short of funds, with monies still owed for the building of the church and the convent, and the cost of purchasing, renovating and furnishing the presbytery. The Roman Catholic congregation embarked on an intensive fundraising campaign, holding dances and card parties in the Mechanics Hall, and running sweet stalls. Father Condon raffled his pair of taffy buggy ponies and people rushed to buy tickets.

The genial and well-loved Father Condon served the Barraba community until April 1935, when he transferred to Uralla. The Rev. Laurence Mahoney took his place. These were still the Depression years. Although the economy was beginning to improve, and Rev. Mahoney found much poverty in his new parish. After five years of unemployment many of his parishioners were short of food and warm clothing. The 'dole' which consisted of vouchers for a few shillings worth of food per person per week, was barely enough for families to live on. Appalled by these conditions, Rev. Mahoney campaigned to establish a branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Barraba. The Society received official recognition on 22 July 1943. During the war, Rev. Mahoney earned the nickname of 'Dr Spencer's Ambulance Driver'. With no ambulance then in Barraba, and strict petrol rationing for ordinary citizens, the doctor often called upon the priest to assist in getting seriously ill country people to hospital.⁵⁷

After the war St John's Church and the presbytery were badly in need of repair. The church was enlarged in 1950, when Father Tuttle was parish priest and later a new presbytery was built beside the church in Savoy Street. The timber and roofing iron salvaged from the old presbytery were used to build temporary accommodation for Father Tuttle while the new presbytery was being constructed. This building later became known as 'the Shack' and was used for 'Housie' games and also to store the clothes and household goods collected by St Vincent de Paul.⁵⁸

There are records of Methodist services being held in Barraba as early as 1868, when Barraba was part of the Tamworth Circuit which extended from Tamworth to the Queensland border. At that time Rev. Joseph Hopkins was Minister. He travelled throughout the north-west to serve the needs of his parishioners. Many years later, in 1928, he wrote of his experiences on the Tamworth circuit in the late 1860s:

*At this time there were but a dozen houses on the road between Tamworth and Barraba... for hospitality I was indebted to Mr and Mrs Newton at Barraba.*⁵⁹

In about 1883 Barraba became part of a smaller circuit based on Bingara. The Minister at that time was Rev. T. Nance; he reported that the Barraba congregation then numbered 80. In 1895 Barraba became a Home Mission Station. The Methodist Church was granted 1 3/4 acres of land in Barraba in 1871 but more than two decades passed before a church was built on the site. The Methodist Church (known as the Wesleyan Church) at the corner of Edward Street and Queen Streets was erected in 1898-1899; it was built by popular local builder Joseph 'Brickie' Taylor, who also made his own bricks. The first recorded marriage celebrated there was between John Allen Gibson and Elizabeth Emma Pearce on 19 December 1899. For many years the church was known as Chad's Church, after William Chad the local blacksmith and his wife Mary, who were among the main instigators of the church.

Before the Methodist church was built in Barraba services were held by visiting preachers at private properties such as Cobbadah, Turneston, Ladysmith, and Iventure, and also at Upper Horton Hall. The infrequent visits of ministers were a welcome opportunity for socialising. Grace Crowley, who was born in 1890 and lived at Glen Oak station, recalled in her memoirs:

*We still 'came to church' at Cobbadah station whilst our family was at Glen Oak... Our family possessed a huge and weighty bible known to me as the family bible. This was produced on the Sundays when the preacher happened to call ... and he would read the lesson or text from that Book and my mother would contribute her part by playing the harmonium. After this ordeal (for kids were required to be very quiet) I was allowed to pore over the pictures in the book – but only on Sundays.*⁶⁰

In 1907 Barraba became part of the Barraba-Bingara circuit in the charge of probationers, most of whom had recently completed their theological studies and who were posted to rural parishes for

a year at a time. Young, single, and burdened with few possessions, the probationers were given lodgings in the home of William and Mary Chad. The Barraba Circuit was combined with Manilla in 1930.

A church hall was built in the grounds of the Wesleyan Church in 1966, reusing the roofing iron from the old church that had been moved from Upper Manilla. In 1974 a new porch running the full width of the church was added, replacing the original tiny space. Working bees were held to demolish the old porch, dig the foundations and cart and clean the bricks that Geoff Williams had donated from the old Mount Erin homestead.⁶¹ For many years the church was used for both Methodist and Presbyterian services, and in 1973 the two congregations combined. In 1977 the Uniting Church in Australia was formed, uniting the Methodists, Congregationalists and some Presbyterians. The Union came easily to Barraba, as Presbyterians and Methodists had already shared the church for their services.⁶²

The Salvation Army has been active in Barraba since 1881, when it was an outpost of the Tingha Corps. Barraba Corps was formally established on 2 April 1891 under the Command of Captain E. Sincock, and operated from rented premises in the town until their own hall was built in 1922. For some time the Salvation Army used the hall on the corner of Savoy and Queen Streets, now the site of the preschool. The Salvation Army Hall in Barraba was officially opened in December 1922 by Commissioner Whatmore.⁶³ Over the years the Salvation Army has been an integral part of the Barraba community, providing assistance in times of flood and drought. The Salvation Army celebrated 100 years in Barraba in April 1991, the same year as the hospital celebrated its centenary.

Over the years St Laurence's Church of England has played an active role in the Barraba community, developing outreach programs for senior citizens and children and young people. Club programs for primary and secondary school age children were developed in place of Sunday School, and a monthly magazine for infants and primary children, with stories, puzzles and competitions was produced. The Frost Over Barraba art exhibition, first held in 1974, remains an important source of funds for the Anglican Church. It has grown into a major annual cultural event in Barraba.⁶⁴



Figure 41: St John's Church, Woodsreef, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The small weatherboard Anglican Church of St Mark stands near the Bereen Bridge in the Horton Valley. The church was consecrated on 25 April 1913 and is still used by the local community. The Church of the Annunciation at Cobbadah was built in 1908 and dedicated in 1909 and is still in use. Services are still held at the small churches in Upper Horton and Woodsreef.⁶⁵ There have been other active religious groups in Barraba in addition to Christian groups. Until recently followers of the ecumenical Indian teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, met regularly in the converted Scout Hall in Barraba, now renamed the 'Unity Hall'.

7.4.3 Hotels

Wayside inns invariably sprang up along the main routes that the bullock and horse teams, and later coaches, followed from Tamworth to the north-west. They often stood where tracks converged to cross a creek or river or to climb a mountain pass. Most of these wayside inns have long disappeared, but sometimes their sites can be identified by the trees that were planted there, and still survive today. In the 1880s a wine shop stood at Bells Mountain on the road from Barraba to Bingara. These days just a few pepper trees and an underground tank mark the site.⁶⁶

Hotels were one of the first buildings to be established in the settlements that grew up along the major transport routes, and these were more likely to survive than the wayside inns which often fell victim to road widening and other improvements. The first two hotels to be established in Barraba were the Stockman's Arms, owned by John Cameron, and the Barraba Inn, operated by James Sinclair. John Cameron held the licence for the Stockman's Arms by 1865; he may have visited the Bingara goldfields before settling in Barraba. After Cameron died in 1868 his wife Jessie carried on the hotel for over 20 years with the help of her children until going out of business in the early 1890s when Jessie did not renew her license.⁶⁷ It is likely that James Sinclair ran the Barraba Inn with the assistance of his aunt Catherine McKid.

By the 1880s there were four hotels in Barraba. The Stockman's Arms and the Barraba Inn now competed for trade with Markham's Hotel and the court house Hotel. As it changed owners the court house Hotel became first Wilkinson's Hotel and then in about 1908, the Central Hotel. At this time the original single storey hotel was rebuilt, with a two-storey cast iron verandah and ornate brick parapet. The hotel licence was sold in around 2003 and the building is now being redeveloped. Richard Thame bought Markham's Hotel in the late 1880s and renamed it the Commercial Hotel. It had functioned as the Cobb and Co changing station. A second floor was added in about 1903. The hotel retains its name today. The Barraba Inn became Tattersalls Hotel. It traded until 1898, when it burnt down and was rebuilt as the Royal Hotel.⁶⁸ The Royal Hotel burnt down in April 1935. It was feared that the fire would spread to all the shops along the eastern side of Queen Street, but police and local residents managed to control the blaze using hoses owned by the Shire, until the Manilla Fire Brigade arrived. It was this fire which prompted the formation of a local fire brigade in Barraba. The hotel was not rebuilt, and this important corner site is now occupied by the Commonwealth bank and a single-storey shop building, dating from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Victoria Hotel opened for business in 1899 in a building formerly occupied by the Commercial Bank for their commercial premises and residence. The first licensee was Mrs Carmody. In Arthur Witten's diary (unpublished) the entry for 4 July 1899 records: 'Granted Mrs Carmody her licence for a Pub in old bank.'⁶⁹ A second storey was added in about 1905. The hotel is still trading today in this building, which has retained much of its original form.

Hotels in outlying villages were important social centres, particularly before the era of the motor car. During the heyday of copper mining at Gulf Creek between 1900 and 1904 miners spent their leisure hours drinking and gambling at the hotel and billiard hall, and they could become rowdy, particularly on paydays. On one occasion some patrons refused to leave the bar when closing time came and the publican had to resort to subterfuge. He got a couple of men to pick a fight and when all the drinkers moved outside to see the dispute settled, he firmly closed the doors behind them. In December 1899 the Gulf Creek Progress Committee asked for a police officer to be stationed at Gulf Creek to maintain law and order.⁷⁰ At Upper Horton John Gainen was operating the 'My Venture' hotel by the 1880s. The teacher at Horton Upper School, from 1891 to 1894, Mary White, lodged at the hotel, which was within sight of the school, as did many of her predecessors. Normally the Education Department frowned on teachers living in hotels, particularly young women. But by all accounts the hotel was a well run affair, suitable for the lodging of single women, and the publican was a patron of the school.⁷¹ Today the life of the village centres around the Upper Horton Sports Club.



Figure 42: Victoria Hotel, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

7.4.4 Law and order

A. R. McLeod's comprehensive history of Manilla published in 1949 records that Sergeant C. Norris was in charge of Barraba Police Station in 1865 and had at least one brush with the bushranger Thunderbolt.⁷² At that time Manilla boasted only a police depot, visited irregularly by police from Barraba and Tamworth. The exact location of the first police station in Barraba is not known. Records show that a site on the corner of Maude and Cherry Streets was reserved for police purposes on 17 June 1897. The date on which a building was erected there is not certain but departmental records show that the original cost was £1,180, including a four-stall stable and forage room. A police paddock covering 28.5 acres on the banks of the Manilla River, known as Apple Tree Flat, was surveyed in 1883 and approved in 1884.⁷³

The existing building on the corner of Maude and Cherry Streets, now used as a sergeant's residence, was built in 1904. It was a police station until 1956, when the police station was

transferred to the lockup building in Queen Street behind the court house which had been erected in 1881 with additions in 1907 and 1936. Arthur Witten, who had the contract to cart the bricks to the court house, noted in his diary on 28 May 1881: 'finished the bricks for court house'.⁷⁴ On March 5 1898 the *Barraba and Manilla News* observed:

The Barraba Courthouse is unique in that it does not possess either a witness box nor a prisoners dock. Witnesses have to stand on the floor of the Court while giving their evidence, being denied the privilege of having an enclosure'.⁷⁵

The court house remained in use until 1980; in 1992 the building was being used as a senior citizen's centre. A modern police station in Maude Street was built in 1979. The building was officially opened in October 1980 by the Minister for Police and Minister for Services, the Hon. W. F. Crabtree.⁷⁶



Figure 43: Barraba court house, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

7.4.5 Health services

For the first Europeans who settled in the Barraba district, trained medical assistance was unavailable. They were in an isolated region several day's travel from the nearest sizable township, and had little interest in or awareness of the detailed knowledge of native medicinal plants that was held by Aboriginal people, traditional custodians of the country. In the face of accidents or illness the settlers, stockmen or carriers, family and friends did what they could with their scant medical knowledge and limited medical supplies. In the nineteenth century childbirth in country Australia could be a risky business, and there are many stories of women assisting their neighbours to deliver their babies. There were few midwives working in more remote country districts. In isolated Gulf Creek around the turn of the twentieth century, Catherine Geary, wife of miner John Geary, was the only midwife in the district.⁷⁷ It was not until the early years of the twentieth century that there are records of professional midwives practising in Barraba. They included Nurses Tobin, Freeman, Morish, Doring and Parrish.

Henry Williams, who later became postmaster, was living in Barraba by 1854. He had some medical training, and gave assistance when required. Records of early doctors in the Barraba district are scanty. During the 1880s a number of doctors travelled to the area to treat patients.

They included Dr Eustace Pratt, Dr White and Dr Harris. There is a record of Dr Harris visiting two patients in Barraba in September 1888, Mrs Garske and Ella Witten.⁷⁸

By the 1880s the town of Barraba was growing and the local community saw that a public hospital was urgently needed to provide health services for people of the district. In August 1889 Mr Arthur Swift Darby, owner of Campo Santo Station, donated five acres of land and £1,500 towards the building of a hospital on condition that the Barraba community raised £500 over the next six months. Several public meetings were held and the movement for a hospital gathered momentum. By December 1889 over £572 had been raised, and a hospital for Barraba was assured. Mrs Frances Simpson, the wife of John Simpson of Burindi Station, laid the foundation stone for the hospital on 2 May 1891. The building was constructed by local contractors Lock and Jack McKechnie, and completed in 1892. The exact date of the opening of the hospital is uncertain, but it was functioning by April 1892. There is a record of a patient dying in the hospital on 29 April 1892. The first resident doctor in Barraba, Dr Wade, was appointed in March 1890, but he remained for little more than a year. Dr Purcell was appointed as his replacement in October 1891 and was the first of several doctors to practice briefly in Barraba. Dr John Hart, who was the doctor in Barraba from 1895 to 1897, practised from his house in Queen Street. Well respected by the people of Barraba, Dr Hart took a great interest in the progress of the town. He participated in many community activities, especially tennis and cricket.⁷⁹ Another well-loved doctor in Barraba was Dr Poggioli, who practiced from 1897 to 1908. He would walk through the streets of Barraba to tend his patients at any time of the day or night. If his patients lived further out of town he would use his own light buggy, or hire a horse trap and driver from Mrs Banfield's Livery Stable at the Commercial Hotel. Dr Poggioli was actively involved in the local community; he was on the committee of the Mechanics Institute and encouraged residents to establish a golf course in 1899.⁸⁰

During the early years Barraba Hospital was run by an elected committee of twelve, and day-to-day management was generally carried out by a married couple who lived on the premises. The wife was the matron and her husband the wardsman. For many years an annual Hospital Ball was held in Barraba to raise funds. Fundraising balls and dances were also held in the shearing sheds on the pastoral properties around Barraba, such as Mayvale, Campo Santo and Piedmont. In 1898 a reporter on the local newspaper reported favourably on conditions in the eight bed hospital, remarking on the 'most perfect cleanliness and orderliness' of the wards. A tent was erected in the hospital grounds for fever cases when required, but it soon became clear this was not suitable, and in July 1899 a request was made to the government for funds to build a permanent fever ward. This was built some time between 1900 and 1907.

Until the 1920s most women had their babies at home, attended by a midwife. In 1912 Nurse Parrish rented a house in Barraba, and established it as a private maternity hospital. She practised in Barraba until 1925, by which time she had moved to a larger house in Edward Street. By 1929 Nurse Hannah had set up St Helen's Private Hospital in Alice Street. The hospital operated until the mid 1930s. At about the same time Sister McKeown set up a maternity hospital in the next block in Alice Street.⁸¹

Barraba Hospital was extended between 1910 and 1911, with a new operating theatre, general ward and private wards. The private wards proved very popular with out of town patients and with few alterations, were still in use in the 1950s. By the 1930s facilities were severely taxed at the hospital, but the Board decided to investigate remodelling the hospital rather than replacing it. In 1946 Barraba Hospital took over the private maternity hospital established by Sister McKeown in the 1930s. The Hospital Board now found itself running two hospitals on separate sites, not an ideal situation. However it was not until about 24 years later that the hospital facilities were

relocated on a single site. After the Second World War numerous improvements were made to the hospital including rebuilding the verandahs, refurbishing the children's ward and modernising the mortuary. During the 1960s, a new administration building was built, the outpatients area was renovated and the maternity unit was finally brought into the complex.⁸²

During the early 1970s the Barraba community faced some difficulties in retaining a resident doctor, and there were times when there was no doctor at all in the town. The situation improved in 1976 when Doctors Nat Subbiah and Cameron Henderson began general practice in Barraba. Dr Subbiah was still practicing in Barraba in 1991, and over his years of service gained the admiration and respect of the Barraba community. During the 1970s further renovations to the outpatients and casualty areas of the hospital were made, and in March 1987 a new Community Health wing was opened by the Premier of New South Wales, Barry Unsworth. By the 1980s the hospital and community health services provided at Barraba were already fully integrated. Additional services were added during the 1980s including a Home Health Service, mental health counselling, speech pathology, occupational therapy and a day care centre for the elderly. Meals on wheels and baby health services were also introduced. In 1986 a residential centre for the developmentally disabled was purchased in Queen Street, named Tangara.⁸³

In 1991 Barraba celebrated the centenary of the Barraba and District Hospital and a history of the institution was published to mark the occasion. Through the 1990s the local community devoted much time and effort to raising funds and lobbying government to undertake much needed renovations and upgrading of facilities to bring the hospital into the twenty-first century. A major donor was Les Garvin. In 2002–2003 substantial renovations and upgrading of the hospital were carried out, 110 years after it was first built. The modernised hospital was opened in November 2004, providing a 24-hour emergency service. The acute medical section of the hospital provides general nursing care for acutely ill people and patients recovering from major operations at nearby larger centres such as Tamworth Base Hospital. The Nat Subbiah Unit (named after Barraba's well known doctor) is a self-contained unit allowing families and friends to stay with their ill relatives in comfortable surroundings for extended periods. Postnatal care is provided for Barraba women who deliver their babies in nearby Manilla, Tamworth or other centres, and Garvin House provides long-term care for the aged.⁸⁴

In 2007 Barraba is well provided with health services. This is due in large part to the efforts of the local community which has supported its health services from their earliest beginnings, making significant financial contributions over many years. Major donations from the Simpson, Allen and Foster families and recently the Garvin Estate have enabled high quality community health facilities to be established. Barraba also has a history of community involvement in the planning and development of health services, for example through active membership of community boards and committees such as the Garvin Estate Planning Committee. The long list of support organisations in Barraba includes the Cancer Support Group, Disability Support Services, Home Care of NSW, the Hospital Auxiliary, Hospital Support Group - 'Aileel', and the Nursing Mothers' Group.⁸⁵

The Barraba population includes a high proportion of elderly people, and in recent years much effort has been put into planning and developing aged care services that are integrated with existing health and aged care services.⁸⁶ The redeveloped multipurpose Barraba Community Health Service is a major employer in Barraba and a definite focal point for the town and district. Activities and services at the facility include a day care centre where craft, music, outings and other social activities for seniors are conducted. The Service provides information and practical assistance in as many health related areas as possible, including general community nursing, child and family health, home visiting services, diabetic education and assistance, cardiac rehabilitation

and cancer support services. In 2002 a third-year nursing student from the University of Newcastle spoke warmly about her experience at Barraba Community Health Service:

*A most professional service, with friendly staff and a strong commitment. This is the best place to learn what nursing and health care is all about - I learnt more here than on any of my pracs. in major hospitals.*⁸⁷



Figure 44: Barraba Hospital, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Senior Citizens' Association in Barraba is very active, and has its own centre on Fitzroy Street where a wide variety of social activities are held. There are regular shopping bus trips to Tamworth, and other outings. There is an aged care home, Richardson House, with first rate amenities.⁸⁸

7.4.6 Post and telecommunications

The early settlers in the British colonies attached great importance to mail, bringing news of family and friends from the land they still thought of as 'Home'. In the days of sail, mail took months to reach Australia from Britain, and the long voyages were subject to the vagaries of winds, currents and storms. With the advent of steam, shipping was more reliable and a monthly sea mail service to England by steamship began in 1856. From the major ports mail was carried on horseback and later by coach to the scattered settlements in the interior. The extensive coach network that grew up across the country could not have survived without the financial support of mail contracts. Early post office records show that a post office was opened in Barraba on 1 July 1851, although the name of the first postmaster is uncertain. Mail was delivered on horseback from Tamworth. Alfred A. Adams was appointed postmaster in Barraba on 1 April 1853, at a salary of £15 per annum. Abraham Cohen is recorded as being a postmaster before this, but the date of his appointment is not known. Alfred Adams resigned in March 1854 after his business partner died, and the post office in Barraba was closed. It would appear that a post office in Manilla was established in place of the Barraba office, although it is not certain whether the

appointment of the store keeper at Manilla, George Veness, as postmaster predates the closure of the Barraba post office.

In November 1855 the residents of Barraba petitioned for the reopening of the post office, pointing out that all mail to and from the interior had to pass through the township. A Barraba storekeeper, Henry Edwin Williams, was appointed postmaster on 1 April 1856, but because of ill health he was forced to sell his business, and left the district at the end of the year. Running a post office in a small country town in the mid-nineteenth century was often a family affair. Daniel Sinclair was postmaster from 1 April 1857 to 1 April 1858, when he left the district. His position was taken over by his younger brother James Sinclair, but six months later he too left the district to go droving cattle. His aunt Mrs Catherine McKid, a widow who kept a store and inn at Barraba, took care of the post office until Daniel Sinclair returned to Barraba and resumed duty as postmaster. By 1866 mail was conveyed from Tamworth to Barraba by horseback twice a week. When Daniel Sinclair resigned in August 1871, he nominated James Sinclair as his successor, and James was officially appointed on 1 September 1871. Following the death of James Sinclair in February 1875, his widow Jane Elizabeth Sinclair was appointed postmistress.⁸⁹

In 1878 a telegraph office opened in Barraba in rented premises adjoining Markham's Hotel. The first telegraph master was William Harris, appointed on 10 September 1878, but he was quickly succeeded by John Banfield on 24 November 1878. Banfield proposed the amalgamation of the post office and the telegraph office but a large number of residents petitioned to keep the offices separate. The petitioners noted that Mrs Sinclair's sole income was her postal salary, and she was a widow with a large family to support. Finally on 20 April 1880, John Banfield was appointed post and telegraph master of the combined offices. The post office still operated in premises rented from Richard Thame, proprietor of Markham's Hotel, at a cost of £20 per year. In May 1881 the postmaster reported:

*The following mails are exchanged with this office, Tamworth, Upper Manilla and Manilla three times a week; Moree twice a week; Cobbadah four times a week and Boggabri once a week.*⁹⁰

In 1880 a block of land adjoining the court house and facing Maude Street was selected as a site for a post and telegraph office. The post office building was completed in 1882, and opened on 18 November that year. Together with the court house, it was one of the first major civic buildings in Barraba. Both the court house and the post office were designed by the colonial architect James Barnett.⁹¹ Various alterations and extensions to the post office were made over the years, including the building of an additional room for a telephone exchange in 1909 and major renovations in 1926 or 1927, when a large gable at the front and the front verandah were replaced by an enclosed porch with columns and a hipped roof. The post office was demolished in 1972 and a new building took its place, constructed by Thorby Brothers of Coonabarabran. The new post office was officially opened on 25 September 1972. The post office staff then consisted of the postmaster Mr Hoskisson and six staff, serving some 500 businesses and households in the town. Six roadside mail contractors delivered mail to over 300 rural properties.⁹²

The first record of a telephone in Barraba was the installation of a condenser type public telephone at the post office in January 1906. In November 1908 a telephone exchange was established and by the end of the year 24 subscribers were connected to the exchange. The advent of the telephone opened up a new field of employment for women, working on telephone exchanges. In April 1973 most of the staff of the Barraba telephone exchange were made redundant with the introduction of the automatic telephone exchange. By 1983 there were only three manual exchanges remaining in the Barraba area, at Caroda, Horton and Cobbadah. Mrs Dolly Firth worked on the Barraba exchange in the 1920s and in 1983 she was still helping her

daughter, Mrs Barbara Akers, at the Horton exchange. Mrs Firth could recall the names of many of the girls she used to work with on the telephone exchange in about 1924, including Elva Perry, Maggie Eckert, Isabel Haynes, Sybil Elliot, Mary Anne Chad and Mavis Hancock.⁹³



Figure 45. Mail coach outside Barraba Post Office, 1903.
Photograph courtesy Nandewar Historical Society, Barraba.

After the Commonwealth Bank closed in 1996, the post office moved to the bank building, opening there in 1997.⁹⁴ Many Federal and State government utilities have been privatised in Australia over the past two decades (such as the various energy authorities and the Commonwealth Bank), but Australia Post has remained government-owned. While retaining a monopoly over standard letter delivery, the organisation has become steadily more entrepreneurial, establishing post shops under franchise and introducing a bill payment service. A large number of financial institutions, insurance companies, government departments, utility companies, and others provide services to rural communities through Australia Post's extensive branch network.

Local newspapers have played an important role in the Barraba district. C. Smart and J. Melville published the first newspaper in the district, *The Barraba and Manilla News*, on 24 April 1897. Two months later, Melville appears to have left the partnership and Smart became the sole proprietor. From late June 1897 'printed and published by C. Smart, sole proprietor, at the General Machine Printing House, Queen Street, Barraba' was printed on the back page. In the early 1900s William Smart began publishing for Caroline Smart. By 1915 Harry Newling was the editor, although the *News* was still published by the Smart family.⁹⁵

The *Barraba Gazette*, established by H. Cheesborough and first published in 1900, was later taken over by J. Giddens. In about 1920 Harry Newling bought the *Gazette* from Mrs Giddens. He combined the *Barraba and Manilla News* and the *Barraba Gazette* into a single newspaper, naming it the *Barraba and Horton Chronicle*. Manilla had its own newspaper from about 1899. Harry Newling died in 1922 and his wife Jessie Newling carried on the newspaper for about nine years. She then sold it to Charles Blackall, brother of the local chemist, who had been running a Bundarra paper. Blackall moved to Barraba, and he edited the *Chronicle* until his death in 1940. Towards the end of that year Blackall's wife sold the newspaper to George Greaves. Greaves

published his first edition in January 1941, and over the next few years he installed modern Linotype printing machinery and other equipment. Greaves ran the paper for 20 years. After he sold the newspaper it struggled to survive under a number of owners and ceased publication in 1973. The present day *Barraba Gazette* was launched in January 1969 by Mr and Mrs Noel Garske. Steven Hawkins, who worked on the newspaper with Mr and Mrs Garske, later bought the business from them. He now publishes the newspaper with his wife Kerry.⁹⁶

7.4.7 Government services

Prior to 1906 the civic affairs of the town were managed by the Barraba Progress Association, formed in 1897. Members of the Association included prominent businessmen, land owners and other civic minded citizens. The first committee of the Association included land owner and store owner S. J. Lillis, store owner W. Morrow and the medical practitioner Dr John Hart.⁹⁷ Following the passage of the *Local Government Act* on 23 May 1906 Barraba Municipal Council and Barraba Shire Council were both gazetted. The first election of aldermen for Barraba Municipal Council was held on 20 August 1906, with 12 candidates for six seats. S. J. Lillis was elected the first Mayor of Barraba and R. J. Farrell was appointed Town Clerk. The inaugural meeting of Barraba Shire Council was held on 7 December 1906 with six councillors, two in each of three ridings. Cr John Morrow was elected the first Shire President and Cr Charles Gordon Williams was elected Deputy President.

The first priorities of the new councils were improving roads in the wider shire and forming and kerbing and guttering the streets of Barraba township. In 1911 all the road plant acquired by the Municipal Council was displayed outside the Victoria Hotel for citizens to admire. The plant included a stone crusher, gravel hoppers, and ploughs drawn by a steam tractor engine and other smaller vehicles.



Figure 46: Parade in Queen Street Barraba in June 1916 to celebrate the work carried out by the Shire Council to kerb and gutter the main street and improve the road surface. Photograph courtesy of the Nandewar Historical Society, Barraba.

By the early 1920s the amenity of Barraba was greatly improved. Footpaths were formed and kerbed and paved with concrete, and the main street, Queen Street, was tar paved. After the First

World War, pepper trees were planted down the centre of Queen Street to commemorate the fallen soldiers. The trees were planted on Arbor Day in 1920, 1921 and 1922 and grew rapidly in the care of Mr A. P. Williams, providing welcome shade and colour.⁹⁸

For many years the streets of Barraba were lit by kerosene lamps. In 1915 Clifton's Pty Ltd installed three suction gas engines to generate electricity for street lighting and domestic use. In 1927 the gas engines were moved to Bingara to supply electricity, while in Barraba they were replaced with the latest diesel engines. With the addition of a third engine, this plant served Barraba until after the Second World War. A 33,000 volt power transmission line from Tamworth to Manilla was completed in 1927. However it was not until after the Second World War that the power line reached Barraba. In 1946 Barraba Municipal Council signed an agreement with the Municipality of Tamworth for the supply of bulk electricity.

Connor's Creek dam, about 5 km from Barraba, was constructed in 1933 to provide town water. The water supply from the dam was turned on in 1934. Before the dam was completed, the water supply for Barraba was pumped directly from the river into a large overhead tank and piped to the business centre in Queen Street.⁹⁹ Once reticulated water was available throughout the town, the Municipal Council requested the Board of Fire Commissioners to establish a fire brigade in Barraba. The brigade was established in October 1935. A site for a fire station adjoining the Mechanics Institute in Maude Street was reserved in 1940, but construction of the building was delayed because of the war and shortage of funds for public works in the post-war period. Following further representations from the Municipal Council, tenders for the construction of a permanent fire station were finally called in 1955 and the new fire station was officially opened on 26 May 1956. Over the years the volunteers who form the backbone of the fire brigade have provided a valuable community service. They have assisted many charitable organisations, participated in many community events and raised funds for essential facilities such as the hospital.¹⁰⁰

After the Second World War scarcity of materials, high costs and manpower shortages hampered the works programs planned by Barraba Shire and Municipal Councils. An application for displaced persons to augment the labour force was made. Continued improvements were made to Barraba's amenity through public works schemes between 1950 and 1982. Extensive kerbing and guttering and paving works were carried out, street lighting was converted to fluorescent and new streets and housing subdivisions were established. The town was fully seweraged and water and sewerage was extended to the new subdivisions. In 1981 public meeting rooms, a headquarters for the State Emergency Services and a new public library were established in refurbished buildings in the commercial centre. Within the wider Shire major roads were upgraded, and many new bridges built, including on Horton, Woodsreef, Glen Riddle and Crow Mountain Creek roads.

In 1953 Barraba Municipality and Barraba Shire amalgamated. The first meeting of the new Barraba Shire Council was held on 9 October 1953. The three original ridings of the Shire were retained, and two additional ridings were created, dividing the town of Barraba into two sections. Each riding elected two representatives. New council administration offices and chambers were built on the corner of Alice and Fitzroy Streets in 1975, at a cost of \$168,000. The premises were opened by the Hon. L. A. Punch on 21 November 1975.¹⁰¹

Barraba's dam had almost silted up by 1980 and a supplementary supply was being pumped from the river. The 1980-1981 drought further diminished water levels and in 1982 an additional pump was placed in Barraba Creek. After a treatment plant was built a few years later the water quality improved, but supply has continued to be unreliable, particularly in dry periods. In 1988 a new

dam, Split Rock dam, was opened on the Manilla River. The dam is a major irrigation reservoir and water recreation resource for the district, well used by residents of Manilla and Barraba and visitors.

In early 2004 the New South Wales Government embarked on a major program of rationalisation and amalgamation of local government areas. Four new local government areas were created in the north-west, including Tamworth Regional Council, incorporating all of Tamworth City Council and Manilla Shire Councils, most of Nundle Shire and parts of Barraba and Parry Shire Councils. The remainder of Barraba Shire was included in the newly formed Gwydir Shire Council together with Bingara and Yallaroi Shire Councils.¹⁰²

Many Shires across the State, including Barraba and Manilla, were strongly opposed to having their councils dissolved and just days before the decision affecting Shires in north-western New South Wales was announced on 17 March 2004, they met with the New South Wales Shires Association to consider possible legal action over the way the Boundaries Commission and the State Government had handled the amalgamation issue.¹⁰³ The people of Barraba, like the people of Manilla, are divided over the benefits of amalgamation. While considerable improvements have been made to roads, residents' rates have increased significantly.¹⁰⁴

7.4.8 Commercial services

In the early 1840s Scotsman John McKid brought his wife Louisa and young daughter Jane to the Barraba district. He opened the first store on the future townsite of Barraba, and it was here in 1844 that his second daughter Louisa was born. After McKid's first wife died he married Catherine Sinclair in Goulburn in August 1851. They returned to Barraba where they raised a large family, John McKid's four young children from his first marriage and four adopted children, Catherine Sinclair's orphaned nephews and nieces Daniel, James Jr, Peter and Christina. John McKid died in 1854, and Catherine continued running the store and the Barraba Inn as well as caring for nine children.¹⁰⁵

Mr C. G. Williams opened a stock and station agency in Barraba in about 1890. Williams died suddenly in 1930, but his family carried on the business for many years. They moved to new premises and the original building was used as an office and store room. This building is now part of the Nandewar Historical Society Museum. Another important stock and station agency in Barraba was W. H. McKid and Co., founded by W. H. McKid in 1905. In 1946 his nephew Jim McKid joined the firm, and in 1962 took over the business. It became known as McKid and Co. In the late 1950s Winchcombe and Carson purchased C. G. Williams and Co. from the then proprietor Mr Lowcock, operating in a shop opposite the court house. The two firms of McKid and Co and Winchcombe and Carson merged in November 1980, becoming McKid Dalgety Winchcombe and set up business in a building opposite the Commercial Hotel.

The original shop building next to the National Australia Bank, built for Pearce in 1890, had a varied history. In 1895 it became Morrow's Menswear, owned by William Morrow. During the Second World War it was a Red Cross Tea Rooms and later used by Mackenzies as a furniture shop. In recent years it was an antique shop and video shop, before being demolished.¹⁰⁶ In Savoy Street is the Morrow Row, originally eight identical drop-slab houses built of timber from the forests around Narrabri in 1895 for the employees of William Morrow. Most have been modified over the years, but retain their basic structure. William Morrow ran a store in Queen Street Barraba, known as Morrow's Emporium, which he built in around 1900. He also built an adjoining residence of weatherboard with a galvanised iron roof.¹⁰⁷

In 1900 Messrs Dean and Smith of Armidale bought the general store known as Excell and Malcom. Dean and Smith's was an institution in Barraba for over 30 years. Part of the current site of the store was originally occupied by the Otto Rabe, tobacconist, and A. J. Doring, saddler. In 1905 Dean and Smith replaced these shops, building commercial premises with ornate art deco parapets and gables. Between 1909 and 1910 Dean and Smith rebuilt the store, extending it to its present length. In 1936 the store was taken over by M. C. Mackenzies Ltd of Glen Innes. It was the main store in Barraba and a major employer in the town, employing up to 58 people. Many local families had a father and son or a mother and daughter working in the store, and many married couples met their future partners there.¹⁰⁸ Mackenzies store was sold in November 1982 and the original building is now occupied by a supermarket. Despite the fact that the original gabled façade has been substantially modified and the verandah along the street frontage replaced, it is one of the landmark buildings in Barraba's history.



Figure 47: Otto Rabe, tobacconist and hairdresser, 1890s.
Photograph courtesy Nandewar Historical Society, Barraba.

Another early store in Barraba was Lillis and Treloars, which opened in Queen Street in 1907 on the site of the original St Laurence's Church of England, which was demolished in 1906. In about 1909 Lillis and Treloar extended their store to the corner of Alice and Queen Streets.¹⁰⁹ The building is still used for retail purposes, although the original verandah and façade have been modified. The Goldman's Buildings, built in 1908, were also important commercial premises in Queen Street. The buildings originally contained a shop and Clifton's motor garage; they later became known as Jacobs Buildings. Clifton's Garage moved to other premises in Queen Street in 1915. Today the building is occupied by the Barraba Information Centre. These commercial buildings date from the heyday of Barraba when the railway reached the town and it enjoyed an economic boom.

Greek Australian families have played an important part in the social and business life of Barraba, establishing successful cafes. Charlie Cassim became part owner of the Golden Bell café with Henry Flaskas in 1916, and his younger brother Kerry Cassim later bought out Henry Flaskas's share. The Cassim brothers left Barraba in 1928, but the café continued in Greek Australian

ownership until well into the 1940s. It was owned first by Mr Koumoulis and then by Mr Jack Feros and his wife Alexandria, who were joined in the business by George Psaties in 1939. They finally sold the business in 1947.



Figure 48: Treloar's Buildings, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Sofis family are also well remembered in Barraba. Jim Sofis arrived in Barraba in 1929 and with Jack Conomos he opened a café in Gilles shop. They later moved to the Empire Café next to the picture theatre. In 1935 Sofis and Conomos bought property across the street from the Empire Café and built the Monterey Café. Jack Conomos left the partnership in 1941, but in 1947 the brother of Jim Sofis's wife Electra, Jim Sarikas, came out to Australia from Greece and joined them in the business. The Monterey café was a popular meeting place in Barraba for thirty years. Jim Sofis died in 1950, but Electra, her brother Jim and her three daughters continued in the business until 1965.¹¹⁰

7.4.9 Banks

In response to the 'gold fever' following the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851, banks underwent a major period of expansion. Long established banks such as the Bank of New South Wales grasped every opportunity to extend their networks, setting up agencies and gold-buying agents on every new diggings to cater to the needs of miners and merchants. As settlement spread in the wake of the gold rushes many new banks opened their doors, establishing branches in rural areas. In the heady days of the gold rushes bank officers needed the same pioneering spirit as prospectors. Encouraged to be the first to set up a branch or gold-buying agency at a new shanty settlement, bank employees often operated from premises as basic as a tent or bark and hessian hut. Even these primitive premises lent some stability to the rough-and-ready goldfields, and gained the respect of the diggers, as one observer noted:

*'...rough and rowdy as a new diggings may appear to those who have visited a new rush for the first time, a most remarkable confidence and trust is reposed in the banking establishment by men who would not trust even their mates with their hard-earned gold.'*¹¹¹

In many country towns, slab and bark huts eventually gave way to substantial, architecturally designed premises, presenting an image of solid respectability. The Commercial Banking Company (CBC) opened its doors in Barraba in a store near the present-day Victoria Hotel on 18 December 1876. A new hotel built in 1890 became the CBC for a few years. On 18 April 1894 the Commercial Bank was the scene of the town's most daring robbery, which made headlines across the State. Around noon, when the manager William McKay was having lunch with his wife in the dining room, two masked and armed men, later identified as Alex Lee and John Cummings, burst into the banking chamber. The manager confronted the two men. He refused their orders to bail up and grappled with one of them for the gun. In the course of the struggle he was shot in the head. When his wife screamed, the robbers fired two shots through the door leading into the dining room. The bullet holes can still be seen in the door that divides the lounge and bar of the hotel. The culprits fled on their horses to the west. After a manhunt involving police from as far afield as Tamworth and Boggabri, they were apprehended and hanged in Tamworth Gaol in July 1894.¹¹² The bank building became the Victoria Hotel in 1899.

The CBC bought a block of land adjoining the court house for £150 and in 1898 erected new premises. This was a brick building with gabled extension to the street. The manager Mr C. H. Dawson had a residence adjoining the bank. In 1925 the CBC demolished the building and built a new bank on the same site, designed by Kent and Massie Architects of Sydney. The building was extensively renovated in 1955. In January 1983 the CBC Bank merged with the National Bank of Australasia Ltd to become the National Australia Bank (NAB). The NAB operates today in the original 1925 building.

The Commonwealth Savings Bank was established in 1912 as the savings bank department of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, which had been founded under Commonwealth legislation in 1911. The *Commonwealth Bank Act* of 1911 empowered the Bank to conduct both savings and general (trading) bank business, under a Federal Government guarantee. At this time no other institution in Australia was involved in both of these traditionally separate areas of banking, nor did other banks have the security of a Federal Government guarantee.¹¹³ In its former guise as the Government Savings Bank of NSW (established in 1871) the Commonwealth Bank has links with Barraba dating back to 1881. In September that year the Government Savings Bank of NSW established an agency at the local post office. In 1913 the Commonwealth Bank expanded from its base in Melbourne, opening branches in other capital cities and in Canberra, Townsville and London. The bank also established post office agencies across the country, in an agreement with Australia Post that exists to this day. The Commonwealth Bank opened an agency at the post office in Barraba on 13 January 1913, the same day the bank opened for business across New South Wales. In 1931 the Commonwealth Bank of Australia merged with the Government Savings Bank of NSW to become the Commonwealth Bank.

During the post-war period the bank continued to expand its branches, although Government restrictions on the building industry and shortages of building materials meant that many banks opened in prefabricated buildings or in rented premises. As Australia's population boomed in the 1950s and migrants settled across the country, the bank opened hundreds of agencies and branches. In 1956 the Commonwealth Bank opened a branch in Barraba in a small shop in Queen Street south of the Central Hotel, providing both commercial and savings bank facilities. It was not until 1969 that a new bank building was constructed on the site of the old Royal Hotel on the opposite side of Queen Street.¹¹⁴ On 17 January 1969 the *Barraba Chronicle* reported that during excavations for the new bank building a local prospector washed a small amount of river gravel. He found a small quantity of gold, estimated to be about one ounce per ton. The building operations proceeded and the newspaper concluded that 'we will never know whether the bank sits on a mountain of gold or not'.¹¹⁵ In July 1996, as part of a general rationalisation of banking

services, the Commonwealth Bank closed its branch in Barraba. The post office now operates an agency of the Commonwealth Bank.

The Bank of New South Wales opened in Barraba on 8 September 1902, in a small weatherboard building north of the Commercial Hotel in Queen Street. The first manager was Mr J. A. G. Hadley. Three years later more substantial premises, an Edwardian style two-storey brick building with a slate roof, were completed on the corner of Queen and Maude Streets. The banking chambers were located on the ground floor and a residence on the second floor. This building was demolished in 1966 and replaced in 1967 with a modern single-storey brick building with iron roof and detached manager's residence. Some observers prefer the dignity and solidity of earlier architectural styles. In his Barraba Street Study undertaken in 1990 –1991, architect Tim Shellshear describes the new bank premises as a 'functional box'.¹¹⁶ The Bank of New South Wales merged with the Commercial Bank of Australia (CBA) to become Westpac Banking Corporation in October 1982. In June 1994 the Westpac Branch in Barraba closed its doors. Since 1995 the building has been occupied by the Accounting firm D. J. Kelly and Co.¹¹⁷

Deregulation of the banking industry and the subsequent entry of foreign banks into Australia in the mid 1980s posed significant challenges to the established banks. These were met initially with restructuring and the development of new products, many targeted to meet the requirements of specific groups within the community. Computerisation and technological developments such as automatic tellers and internet banking revolutionised the banking industry, setting the stage for drastic restructuring, staff cuts and closures of branches in rural areas. Like many rural centres in New South Wales, Barraba has been affected by the withdrawal of banking and financial services by the established retail banks.



Figure 49: National Australia Bank, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

In 2007 Barraba is serviced by only one traditional bank, the NAB, and a credit union, the New England Credit Union, formerly the Peel Valley Credit Union. The New England Credit Union occupies the building vacated by the post office after privatisation.¹¹⁸ The post office operates a

Commonwealth Bank agency. An in-store banking facility is provided by Westpac Banking Corporation and there are four ATMs, including in a store, a service station and the RSL. In 2002 Barraba Shire Council made a submission to the Senate enquiry into the level of banking and financial services in rural, regional and remote areas in Australia. In its submission the Council highlighted the impact that the withdrawal of banking and financial services has had on Barraba. While financial institutions have provided the community with a range of banking options, such as EFTPOS and electronic and internet banking, there are times when customers require face-to-face service, especially by decision makers. An example is during times of drought. At a time when they are struggling to make a living from their properties, farmers and pastoralists must travel 90 km to Tamworth, the nearest regional centre, to make an application for benefits under the drought relief program. The lack of the full range of banking facilities also deters business people from setting up businesses in rural towns or expanding existing businesses.¹¹⁹

7.4.10 Community services

The formation of community organisations and other voluntary organisations in Barraba during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a mark of the evolving society in the north-west. In small rural communities people helped each other in times of need, and organisations such as benevolent societies and church and sporting associations built a sense of solidarity. In the 1890s the Barraba Ethiopian and Dramatic Club was formed to raise funds in aid of charitable and public institutions. On 1 May 1897 the *Barraba and Manilla News* reported that the Club gave their first performance in the Mechanics Institute in aid of the local hospital. According to the correspondent, 'the comic songs and choruses, and also the more sentimental rendering of others in the company were well received and appreciated'.¹²⁰

The Barraba Rotary Club was formally chartered in August 1955 in a function held in the Memorial Hall. Rotary has been responsible for many community projects over the years, often in cooperation with other service organisations, and has supported many charitable organisations. The Barraba Chapter has also been involved in Rotary projects internationally, hosting exchange students from around the world. In 1967 Barraba Rotary Club won the District Community Service award when they provided Barraba with a much needed doctor. The Barraba Apex Club, established in 1966, carried out thousands of hours of community service, on projects such as the hospital gardens, a new ambulance for Barraba, the preschool playground and community facilities such as Apex Park and Adam's Lookout. The Barraba Rotoract Club, founded in February 1978, also accomplished many community projects, including raising funds for a power unit and humidicrib for the ambulance, talking books for the blind, and the establishment of a library at the hospital. There are a range of active community organisations in Barraba including the Barraba and District Hospital Auxiliary and the Home and Community Care Service. The Red Cross Society, established in Barraba in 1914, was particularly active during and immediately after the two world wars. The Society continues to assist during times of disaster and in community projects.¹²¹

7.5 EVOLVING COMMUNITIES

7.5.1 War memorials

The prominent memorial clock tower at the junction of Queen and Maude Streets was erected by the Barraba branch of the Returned Servicemen's League in 1924 in memory of local men killed in the First World War. Of the 186 local men who enlisted in the First World War, 40 were killed

in action. Officially unveiled on 11 November 1924, the memorial is the focus for the annual Anzac Day celebrations.

During both world wars men from surrounding villages joined the recruiting drive, and local residents held functions to support their boys at the front. Socials, sports days, euchre parties and stalls were held to raise funds for the war effort. Honour boards were erected in country halls, churches and schools to honour those who served their country. For example at Gulf Creek a Roll of Honour board was attached to the wall of the school house, which in the 1980s was being used as the tennis club house.¹²² In January 1941 the *Barraba Gazette* reported a function held to farewell 24 Barraba men who were leaving to serve in the armed forces. The Citizens Welfare Committee presented each man with a suede leather belt inscribed with their name, and a two pound note from the Lord Mayor's Fund. The Greek Community presented the departing soldiers with cigarettes, and following the formalities the large crowd danced to the music of the Barraba Town and District Band.¹²³



Figure 50: Memorial clock tower, Queen Street, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

During the latter stages of the Second World War the threat of enemy attack was imminent. Slit trenches were dug in the grounds of Barraba Central School to protect the children, air raid drills were held, and first aid posts were established. Members of the volunteer fire brigade received special instruction in case of incendiary bomb attack, and training with other local and national emergency services organisations. In 1942 local businesses were forced to turn customers away because of a strict quota on sales; the Government regulations decreed that sales should not

exceed 75 per cent of average weekly turnover for 1941. Barraba stores were unable to open every day, staff worked reduced hours and country people were advised to ring up beforehand to ascertain if the shops were open to avoid disappointment. Citizens were warned against hoarding food, and grocers were asked to keep records of customers who purchased more than their usual requirements.¹²⁴

When the Second World War was over at last, Barraba celebrated the return of the men and women from the district who had served their country with a week of festivities from 18 to 25 April 1946. Returned service men and women reunited with old friends at a get together cabaret in Clifton Hall, and later in the week a civic reception was held to formally welcome them home. Thanksgiving services were held at St Lawrence's Church of England, St John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church and a grand parade of floats and decorated vehicles headed by the Barraba Town Band and the Tamworth Pipe Band was held, followed by an all day gymkhana at the showground. The week was filled with a host of equestrian and sporting events and children's events, including novelty sports events and a fancy dress parade. The Back to Barraba celebrations culminated in the dawn service and parade on Anzac Day.¹²⁵

After the Second World War a soldier settlement was established at Banoon under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme, and a school operated there from 1954 to 1966. After both world wars soldier settlement schemes were established to settle ex-servicemen on the land. The aims of the *Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act and Regulations of 1917* were to place 'willing and suitable settlers on the land', and to provide employment and assistance to the thousands of discharged soldiers after the war. Soldier settlers took up dairying, intensive cropping and fruit growing. But there was a high failure rate in the scheme after the First World War. The allotments were often too small to be economic, the land was often of poor quality and most returned soldiers lacked any farming experience or training. During the Depression many remained on subsistence programs. The soldier settlements established after the Second World War were more successful. They were on a smaller scale and more closely managed, and many men were retrained under the Commonwealth Retraining Scheme.¹²⁶

7.5.2 Entertainment

In the days before the gramophone and radio, families made their own music at home. Balls, dances and social gatherings were held in the homesteads and shearing sheds of the large properties in the Barraba district. Mr Plumton Wilson, owner of Plumthorpe station, hosted the first ball at his homestead in 1888, and this was the scene of many other balls over the years. The Plumthorpe Ball and picnic races were a major social event, guests attending from all over the district. The original Plumthorpe homestead was rebuilt in 1932 by Norman Burdekin. Sadly it suffered major fire damage in January 1990. The owners Bruce and Charleyne McHugh rebuilt and repaired Plumthorpe after the fire.¹²⁷

As the Barraba community grew, many entertainments were held to raise funds for community facilities such as the hospital and school. The annual hospital ball was a key event in the social calendar, and balls were also held in shearing sheds on large properties in the district. Other fund raising events included a benefit race meeting held by Barraba District Trotting Club in 1916 and in 1917 Barraba Cinema and Amusement Company gave a benefit performance. Cliftons Ltd also held benefit picture shows at Clifton Hall.¹²⁸

As rural populations grew with closer settlement and village centres developed, the community hall, which in the early days often doubled as school and church, provided a place for social

gatherings. At the isolated mining village of Gulf Creek, Cook's Hall, built in the 1890s, was the social centre for many years. It was used for dances, church services and school concerts. The original hall was rebuilt on another site and was still in use in the 1940s.¹²⁹ On 29 May 1897 the *Barraba and Manilla News* reported on a ball held at Gulf Creek:

*The plain and fancy dress ball held at Gulf Creek attracted about 30 couples. Some very pretty dresses were worn by the ladies, notably that of Miss V. Spinks, as a bride and Miss Ada Kirk as a school-girl. Dancing was kept up til five in the morning.*¹³⁰

The old school building is now used as a hall, and the nearby tennis court is also well used by the community. The corrugated iron hall at Woodsreef was used for church services and many other social functions. The community at Upper Horton is raising money to renovate their local hall, which is an important venue at the annual New Year rodeo.¹³¹

Amateur dramatics were popular entertainments. The Barraba Ethiopian and Dramatic Club was formed as early as the 1890s. Barraba Amateur Dramatic Society was formed in March 1965 and gave performances up until the late 1970s in the youth centre. There was also an active Anglican Dramatic Society in Barraba.

Clifton Hall was the major entertainment venue in Barraba for many years. The hall was built in about 1915, although the date on the façade is 1921. The exact date of construction is hard to pinpoint because few building records have been preserved. It is possible that the façade was added in 1921. The building was extended in the late 1920s to accommodate an open air theatre at the rear. The hall was the venue for concerts, dances as well as live theatre productions and films. It was also known as the Empire Theatre. According to local memory the dance floor at Clifton Hall was not as good as the one at the Mechanics Institute.¹³²



Figure 51: Clifton Hall, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

In 2003 local residents led by Andy Wright initiated a project to restore Clifton Hall and reopen it as a cinema, but it proved difficult to implement. All the interior seating and fixtures have been removed, and the building currently houses the printing works for the local newspaper. As an

alternative Andrew Sharp, owner of the former Central Hotel, is redeveloping the building as a small cinema, café and accommodation complex. In 2005 Tamworth Regional Council awarded Mr Sharp a grant through the Tamworth Regional Heritage Assistance Fund to repaint the façade in heritage colours.¹³³

7.5.3 Sport

Cricket was played in the Barraba district as early as the 1870s. The Haydon family of Springfield on the Tarpoly - Barraba road were all keen cricketers and often played in matches around Barraba and Upper Manilla.¹³⁴ Cricket clubs were formed in surrounding villages, and communities banded together to establish and maintain cricket grounds. In April 1906 the *Barraba and Manilla News* reported on a cricket match between the mining villages of Gulf Creek and Woodsreef, held on the Gulf Creek common. The cricket ground appears to have been rather rough, as the report noted: 'the wicket was a very treacherous one, despite the efforts of the local men to make it otherwise'. Gulf Creek emerged victorious, but they treated the visitors to 'a most sumptuous lunch' which was most appreciated.¹³⁵

Tennis was widely played in the Barraba district, on courts on private properties, and in small villages. A tennis court was built in Gulf Creek some time after 1912 at the instigation of the teacher Joseph Bayley, and was used by both adults and children. During the Second World War the tennis court was revived and residents played matches against surrounding villages, such as Cobbadah.¹³⁶

Football was a popular sport by the end of the nineteenth century. In 1894 a team of footballers from Armidale visited Tamworth and played the first game of football in the town. The game aroused great interest and not long afterwards a team was formed in Tamworth. Teams were soon formed in smaller townships, including Keepit, Crow Mountain, Gulf Creek and Namoi River in the Manilla district. Football was also played in Barraba by this time. The first recorded game of football played in Manilla in August 1896, between Keepit and Crow Mountain, was refereed by J. Munro of Barraba.¹³⁷ Golf was a popular sport in Barraba as early as 1900. By the late 1920s a Women's Golf Club had formed and there were large links in the 1930s.

In 2007 Barraba is well endowed with sports facilities for such a small town. The Bicentennial Community Centre, opened in 1988, is the venue for indoor netball, basketball, cricket and soccer. Barraba also boasts a bowls club, a tennis complex with five all-weather courts and a 33 metre swimming pool with a water slide and hydrotherapy pool which is open year round. Outdoor sports are played on the two playing fields in the centre of town. On the outskirts of town there is an 18 hole golf course, small aerodrome and rifle range. Sporting groups in Barraba include the Rugby Union Club, Rugby League Touch Football and Soccer clubs, gun and rifle clubs, and fishing, cricket, bowls, netball, basketball and tennis clubs. In keeping with Barraba's horseracing heritage, there are a number of equestrian clubs, including the Campdraft and Rodeo Association, Jockey Club and Pony Club. The aero club is also active.

One of the major sporting and cultural events on the Barraba Calendar is the Barraba Show, which has a history of over 100 years. The show has been held in early March every year since 1904, apart from the war years. The first Barraba Show was opened in Barraba on 15 April 1904, by the Governor of New South Wales Sir Harry Rawson. It was a red letter day for Barraba. The Governor's party travelled by train to Manilla, then the terminus of the railway, and was driven to Barraba in a four-in-hand coach, where Queen Street was gaily decorated with bunting and flags.¹³⁸ The Barraba Show continues to celebrate all the great things about living in a rural area,

with sporting events, displays of produce, arts and crafts and photographs. Events include cattle and sheep judging, sheep dog trials, wood chopping competitions, show jumping, and a range of equestrian events. A rodeo is also on the program. Another popular sporting event is the Horton Rodeo, a two-day carnival over the New Year featuring a wide variety of rodeo and equestrian events. On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day the Horton Sports Ground is filled with competitors and spectators from all over the State. In June Upper Horton hosts the annual sheep dog trials, the Horton Valley Championship Yard Dog and Arena Trials. In September the Barraba Jockey Club Spring Cup is held at Barraba Show Ground. This is a six-race event featuring the Barraba Poll Hereford District Breeders' Cup over 1,400 metres.¹³⁹

7.5.4 Arts and Culture

The Barraba School of Arts, known in its early days as the Barraba Mechanics Institute, was built in the 1880s. The exact date of its construction is uncertain, but it is mentioned in the Statistical Register of New South Wales for 1885. In May 1897 a successful three-day bazaar was held in aid of the Mechanics Institute. *The Barraba and Manilla News* reported on 29 May 1897 that the proceeds of the bazaar would be devoted to building a new library and reading room, and commented that 'the three stalls ... presented a most fascinating appearance, being appropriately draped and tastefully arranged'.¹⁴⁰ The building was enlarged in 1899, adding a new wing to house a reading room, a larger library and probably a games room. A lending library was in operation at the Institute by 1897, and by 1904 it contained a thousand volumes. The library was still in use in the 1940s, and there is mention of the 'regular addition of new volumes' in 1940. A Mr Rowland is recorded as the librarian in 1941.

Like other similar institutions in the region, Barraba School of Arts served as a venue for public meetings, dances, balls and socials and functioned as an important community centre. The hall was known for its excellent dance floor. Local resident Mrs Jesser Crowley recalls the Saturday night dances held there in the 1930s. The dancing would go on uninterrupted throughout the evening, and supper would not be served until midnight. After Clifton Hall was built around 1915 the School of Arts was used for smaller dances and functions as space was more limited. From the 1950s to the 1970s the School of Arts Building was used as a scout hall, and during this time the present brick façade was added. Until recently it was used by the Barraba Sathya Sai Baba religious group.¹⁴¹

During the 1930s the Barraba Town and District Band played at social events in outlying villages such as Gulf Creek, as well as at important civic functions. The Barraba Town Band was re-established in 1991, and performs regularly at parades, fetes and at Anzac Day and Remembrance day services. The *a capella* choir Barrapella, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2006, has already made two CDs and is in demand at community celebrations. Despite the fact that Barraba no longer has a theatre or cinema, the town has an active cultural and social life. There are plans to reopen a cinema in the former Central Hotel. There are a number of clubs and societies including the Nandewar Historical Society, the Wine Club, the Chess Club, the Line Dancing Club, and yoga and tai chi groups.

Barraba has active arts and cultural organisations including Barraba Potters and Craft Guild and the Clay Pan and Fuller Galleries. The Barraba Potters Guild was formed in May 1970 by a group of enterprising women who wanted to learn to pot. They engaged a tutor and their first lessons were held at Barraba Central School, with the support of the headmaster Mr Ken Mitchell and his wife Fay. As the group expanded they needed a larger meeting place, and in 1971 they moved to the local Scout Hall, which they used in return for an annual donation. The group applied for

funding from Government sources such as the Australia Council and the NSW Premiers Department, and in 1975 they moved into their own premises, the Clay Pan. The official opening was held in September 1975, combined with an exhibition of works by local artist Rupert Richardson, the Guild's new patron. Three years later the Guild joined with a local craft group which had been formed in Barraba in 1976, and became known as the Barraba Potters and Craft Guild. The amalgamation generated new energy, and the craft group branched out into a wide range of activities including spinning, dyeing and weaving, needlework and tapestry, quilting and batik. The Clay Pan, operated by the Barraba Potters and Craft Guild, includes a workroom and pottery shop with several potters wheels and two kilns. It is also the venue for pottery and craft classes and Garden Club meetings. The Guild's Fuller Gallery opened in April 1983 in premises adjacent to the Clay Pan. This provides additional workshop space for spinning and weaving, as well as a gallery where regular exhibitions featuring the arts and craft of local artists are held.¹⁴² The Barraba Potters and Craft Guild holds an exhibition in November each year showcasing local artworks.

Barraba hosts a full calendar of cultural events. The 'Frost over Barraba' art exhibition, inaugurated in 1974, has become a major annual event in Barraba and one of the most popular art shows in the region. The name was inspired by David Frost's TV show, 'Frost Over Australia', and was chosen to be a reminder of the festival's winter roots. Held in the grounds of St Laurence's Anglican Church in July each year, the exhibition showcases the high quality work produced by the many talented artists in the region and includes paintings and ceramics. In 2004 the Frost Over Barraba Art Exhibition celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. The event has come a long way from the first 'Frost' which was a one-day fete with a cake competition. The 2004 festival attracted many previous exhibitors such as Sydney artist Pamela Thalben-Ball, as well as first time exhibitors. The festivities began with the traditional Preview Dinner, and the full weekend of activities included food, plant and variety stalls, art and craft demonstrations, performances by the Barraba Band, a barbeque lunch, and a recital on the organ of St Laurence's Church. Visitors to the art exhibition had the opportunity to vote for the Peoples' Choice Award.¹⁴³



Figure 52: The Clay Pan and Fuller Gallery, Barraba, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The Barrabarbor Festival of Barraba, held on the first weekend in November, is a major annual event. In a celebration of music, trees and gardens, the festival attracts many visitors to Barraba to

enjoy the town's country hospitality. The festivities include the Clay Pan Gallery's annual exhibition, concerts, music recitals, and jazz in the garden at Andy's Backpackers. On the Saturday Barraba's tree-lined main street is closed to traffic for a colourful street parade and markets. After dark there is an open-air concert, celebrating music from a different culture each year; and the music and dancing go on well into the night. Further afield, the town and country gardens for which Barraba is famous are open to visitors. In 2006 the festival was renamed the Barraba International Festival, and had a Chinese theme. The diverse program included performances by the Australian Chinese Music ensemble, an exhibition of works by photographer and performance artist William Yang, a noodle eating contest, tai chi classes and a Chinese banquet at the Central Hotel.

Barraba hosts some major music festivals. In mid-January each year, just before the Tamworth Country Music Festival, 'Australia's Smallest Country Music Festival' is held in Barraba. Sponsored by the Tamworth Country Music Festival and the RSL Club, the town resounds to two days of country music with visiting artists. The festival has been running for twelve years and each year the smallest festival gets bigger. In an interview on ABC radio on 20 January 2006, the festival producer, Joe McManamon described the buzz that the festival brings to Barraba:

We start at four o'clock in the afternoon, there's usually 50 or 60 there, by six o'clock we usually have a couple of hundred people. It reaches a peak, then from nine o'clock then to midnight when we have several hundred visitors from the Tamworth festival come out to have a look as well as lots of locals it's their big country music shot of the year and they make the most of it. [sic]¹⁴⁴

The festival now organises a second event in Barraba at Easter each year, 'Australia's Smallest Jazz and Blues Festival'.

7.5.5 Tourism

Today tourism is the main wealth earner for Barraba apart from agriculture. The former Shire council, through its Tourism Sub-committee, actively publicised the diverse natural assets of the area. In the words of Barraba Shire Council General Manager Tom O'Connor in his address to the National Parks Association (NPA) Council when it met in Barraba in March 2002:

The closure of the town's major industry, the asbestos mine at nearby Woodsreef, severe drought, low commodity prices and the withdrawal of banks and government services have affected every one of the 2,200 people in the Barraba district in the last decade... community awareness of the environment has become the basis of a maturing tourist product.¹⁴⁵

The meeting of the NPA Council in Barraba showcased the close working partnership between local government and community environmental groups forged in Barraba Shire. The initiatives of Barraba Shire Council were commended as a role model for all local councils. Highlighted at the meeting was the innovative 'Bird Routes of the Barraba District' project, coordinated by local bird enthusiast, Russ Watts. The project involved signposting key bird habitats along the old drovers' trails, now known as travelling stock routes, complemented by route maps and district bird lists. In New South Wales decades of forest clearance has destroyed much of the woodland habitat essential for many native birds. Remnants of the white box woodland that once stretched from Victoria to the Queensland border remain in the Barraba district, particularly along the old travelling stock routes which surround Barraba.¹⁴⁶ In the words of Russ Watts:

This new approach was a way to draw attention to the pitiful state of the environment, was introduced to Council through a plan called 'How to make

Barraba the Most Attractive Small Town in Australia'. During the 50's and 60's I was a stock and station agent and travelled many parts of NSW. Forty years later... my wife and I drove to Melbourne, via Dubbo, West Wyalong; we returned through Tumut, Young and Cowra.

The loss of habitat astonished me. The skyline along distant hills often consisted of a line of dead trees. Most paddocks had little vegetation, sometimes an old tree standing alone. Environmentalists describe these trees as 'the living dead'. ... Within my lifetime the bush I once knew has disappeared. When we returned home I realised this area along the North West slopes of NSW was one of the few places where birds of the once vast grassy White Box woodlands, which previously stretched from Victoria to the Queensland border, might survive. ... My knowledge of travelling stock routes gained in my years as a livestock agent tied my thoughts together. There is a way to protect these vital remnants, to identify the public access to these Crown Lands and through overseas and Australian bird watchers let the whole community know these places exist by drawing attention to them. There are these ecological niches almost everywhere, begin to let the nation know this is a challenge, a way to save what is left.¹⁴⁷



Figure 53: Woodsreef Reserve, 2006. Photograph courtesy EJE Group.

The bird routes project has established Barraba as a premier location for bird watching. Keen birdwatchers now travel to Barraba from around the globe for the chance of sighting rare and endangered species such as the Regent Honeyeater. A brochure available at the Visitor Information Centre provides a map of the bird watching routes, together with a list of the 161 bird species seen in the region. Popular bird watching sites include the 500 ha Woodsreef Reserve and

the Nangarah bird route east of Barraba, the Borah and Tarpoly Travelling Stock Reserves to the south-west and the Bells Mountain and Cobbadah to Upper Horton bird routes to the north. Ecotourism has brought additional benefits to the community with birdwatchers reporting sightings to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The project won the 2000 National Award for Innovation in Local Government, in the rural award category of the Environment. Sponsored by the Australian Greenhouse Office, this award recognises innovative contributions to preserving and maintaining a sustainable environment.¹⁴⁸ Following the success of the Barraba project, the former Manilla Shire and a number of other shires in New South Wales and Queensland have adopted this concept. The bird routes of Tamworth Regional Council now include sites in the Nundle, Tamworth, Manilla and Barraba districts. Recognition of the need to protect what is left of our natural landscape and soils is spreading.

The nexus between the environment and ecotourism is not limited to bird watchers. Barraba Shire Council developed the geological drives of Manilla, Barraba and Bingara and Russ Watts has developed a Native Flora Trail at Woodsreef, featuring the rare *Boronia ruppia*. Such projects attract visitors and income to the town through ecotourism.¹⁴⁹ New mineral fossicking areas have been opened up and there are many possibilities for bush walking, for example in Mount Kaputar National Park. Split Rock dam provides opportunities for camping, boating, fishing and swimming.

The Barraba district has rich heritage assets, particularly arising from its colourful mining history. In April 2003 Nandewar Historical Society opened a history trail at Woodsreef village with markers identifying the sites of the major buildings in the village. The project was completed with funding from the former Barraba Shire Council.

Barraba won the 1998 Award for Excellence in Environmental Tourism and in February 2000 it was selected as a special area for potential tourism development in a submission by the Australian Heritage Commission.¹⁵⁰

NOTES

¹ A. W. Reed 1967, *Aboriginal Place Names*, pp. 11, 75. T. D. Stanley and E. M. Ross 2002, *Flora of south-eastern Queensland Vol II*, give *Eucalyptus melliodora* as yellow box (p. 161) and *Eucalyptus bloxsomea* as yellow jacket (p. 196).

² M. Currell 2006, *A Brief History of Barraba*, p. 1.

³ M. Crowley c.1986, *They Came for Copper: A history of Gulf Creek*, p. 6.

⁴ M. Currell, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷ Visiting Barraba, Tourist Drive no. 2. <http://www.users.northnet.com> Accessed 1 April 2006.

⁸ Margaret Currell, pers. comm., 22 June 2006.

⁹ *North West Magazine* (associated with *Manilla Express*) 22 January 1990.

¹⁰ Barraba Bicentennial Committee 1988, op. cit., p. 16.

¹¹ W. T. Lockrey 1946, 'Early History of Barraba', in *Back to Barraba Celebrations, Barraba Chronicle*, unpaginated.

¹² T. Shellshear 1991, *Barraba NSW Main Street Study*, p. 63.

¹³ Margaret Currell, pers. comm., November 2006.

¹⁴ Barraba Shire Council. www.barraba.org Accessed 27 March 2006.

¹⁵ Barraba Shire Council 1983, *Back to Barraba Celebrations 31 March to 4 April 1983*, pp. 37 - 38.

¹⁶ Visiting Barraba Tourist Drive no. 2. <http://www.users.northnet.com> Accessed 1 April 2006.

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- ¹⁷ Barraba Shire Council. www.barraba.org Accessed 27 March 2006.
- ¹⁸ *The Age* <http://www.theage.com.au/news/NSW/Barraba/2005>. Accessed 29 March 2006.
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- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- ²¹ M. Crowley 1979, *Early Settlers in the Nandewars*, p. 17.
- ²² Margaret Currell, pers. comm., 25 July 2006.
- ²³ M. Crowley 1979, op. cit., p. 99.
- ²⁴ Barraba Visitors Centre n.d., Woodsreef Historic Village – brochure [2006]
- ²⁵ M. Crowley c.1986., op. cit., p. 14.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 28, 32 - 39.
- ²⁷ A. R. McLeod 1949, op. cit., p. 98.
- ²⁸ Barraba Shire Council, Barraba Geological Drives, site 15.
- ²⁹ G. Haigh 2006, *Asbestos House*, pp. 16 - 17.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ³¹ Barraba Shire Council. www.barraba.org Accessed 27 March 2006.
- ³² Barraba Shire Council 1983, op. cit., pp. 38 - 39.
- ³³ G. Haigh 2006, op. cit., p. 132.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.108.
- ³⁵ Department of Primary Industry, 'Woodsreef: A study of risk'. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au>. Accessed 27 March 2006.
- ³⁶ Margaret Currell, pers. comm. 22 June 2006.
- ³⁷ Supersorb Environmental NL. <http://www.supersorb.com.au/diatomite.html#origin> Accessed 3 April 2006.
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- ³⁹ Visiting Barraba Tourist Drive no. 4. <http://www.users.northnet.com> Accessed 1 April 2006.
- ⁴⁰ Barraba Shire Council. www.barraba.org Accessed 27 March 2006.
- ⁴¹ C. Faint 1995, *The Centenary of the Barraba Primary School Building 1895 – 1995*, p. 5.
- ⁴² J. Fletcher 1983, Op. cit, pp. 3-12.
- ⁴³ NSW Department of Education and Training 2003, *Government Schools of New South Wales 1848-2003*.
- ⁴⁴ M. Crowley c.1986., Op. cit, pp. 22-24, 42-43.
- ⁴⁵ C. Faint 1995, op. cit., pp. 5 - 8.
- ⁴⁶ M. Currell 2006, op. cit., p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ Barraba Shire Council 1983, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
- ⁴⁸ W. T. Lockrey 1946, op. cit.
- ⁴⁹ M. Currell 2006, op. cit., p. 8.
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**APPENDIX 1
NATIONAL AND STATE HISTORICAL THEMES**

AUSTRALIAN THEMES	NSW THEMES
1 Tracing the natural evolution of Australia	Environment – naturally evolved
2 Peopling Australia	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures Convicts Ethnic influences Migration
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Agriculture Commerce Communication Environment - cultural landscape Events Exploration Fishing Forestry Health Industry Mining Pastoralism Science Technology Transport
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Towns, suburbs and villages Land tenure Utilities Accommodation
5 Working	Labour
6 Educating	Education
7 Governing	Defence Government and administration Law and order Welfare
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Creative endeavour Domestic life Leisure Religion Social institutions Sport
9 Marking the phases of life	Birth and Death Persons

Heritage Council of NSW, 4 October 2001

APPENDIX 2
NUNDLE: PRELIMINARY LIST OF HERITAGE ITEMS IDENTIFIED FROM
THE THEMATIC HISTORY

Nundul Station	Ben Hall's Creek School
Woolomin Station	St Mary's Anglican Church, Woolomin
Wombramurra Station	All Saints Church of England, Nundle
Wollombol Station	All Saints Vicarage, Nundle
Piallimore Station	Presbyterian Church, Nundle
Hanging Rock Run, Hanging Rock	Methodist Church, Nundle
Swamp Oak Creek Run, Swamp Oak Creek	St Peters Catholic Church, Nundle
Dungowan Creek Station	Union Church, Bowling Alley Point
Goonoo Goonoo Station, Australian Agricultural Company	Union Church, Woolomin
Goonoo Goonoo station headquarters, present day	Bowling Alley Point Cemetery
West Tamworth	Nundle Cemetery
Chinese market gardens, Nundle, various locations	Hanging Rock Cemetery
Chinese tobacco farming, Woolomin	Peel Inn Hotel, Nundle
Steam flour mill, Nundle	Woolomin Inn, Woolomin
Wilberforce Bros sawmill, Peel River	Golden Nugget Inn, Hanging Rock
Nundle State Forest	Our House Inn, Hanging Rock
Hanging Rock State Forest	The Diggers Arms, Nundle
Nundle Woollen Mill, Nundle	Harp of Erin Hotel, Oakenville Creek
Arc en Ciel Trout Farm, Hanging Rock	Spread Eagle Hotel, Nundle
Mining activity, Bowling Alley Point: mine shafts, tunnels, water races	Queen's Hotel, Nundle
Iron Footbridge, Chaffey Dam; original location	Royal Hotel, Nundle
Bowling Alley Point	Hit or Miss Inn, Bowling Alley Point
Water race built by Radley and Grenfell, Hanging Rock	Specimen Inn, Bowling Alley Point
Sheba dams, Hanging Rock	Jenny Lind Hotel, Bowling Alley Point
Caretaker's slab cottage, Sheba dam	Peel River Hotel, Bowling Alley Point
Mining activity, Hanging Rock: mine shafts, tunnels, water races	Galatea Hotel, Bowling Alley Point
Black Snake Mine, Hanging Rock	White Horse Inn, Bowling Alley Point
Hanging Rock School, Hanging Rock	Wetherell's Hotel, Nundle
Site of Church of England denominational school, Nundle	Leggar's Hotel, Nundle
Nundle Public School, Nundle	Lambert's Hotel, Nundle
Bowling Alley Point School, Bowling Alley Point	Nundle police barracks
Dungowan Upper School	Nundle lock up
Dungowan Lower School	Nundle court house
Oakvale School	Nundle Post Office
Wooloban School	Bowling Alley Point Post Office
Duncan's Creek Upper School	Hanging Rock Post Office
Duncan's Creek Lower School	Woolomin Post Office
Woolomin School	Former Nundle Shire Offices, Nundle
Wombramurra School, Wombramurra Station	Chaffey Dam, Bowling Alley Point
Goonoo Goonoo School, Goonoo Goonoo Station	Nundle Memorial Hall
Craigview School	Warland's Store, Hanging Rock
	Haydon's Store, Hanging Rock
	Odgers and McClelland Exchange Stores, Nundle
	Falk and Isaacson General Store, Nundle
	Kermode General Store, Nundle
	Webster's Butcher Shop, Nundle

Howard's Butchers Shop, Nundle
Jenkins St Guest House, Nundle (former Bank of
New South Wales)
Woolomin Community Hall
CWA Hall and Baby Health Centre, Nundle
Hanging Rock Memorial Hall
Oddfellows Hall, Nundle
Mechanics Institute, Bowling Alley Point
Nundle School of Arts, Nundle
Mechanics Institute, Hanging Rock
School of Arts, Mt Pleasant
Cann's Plains Race Course, West Nundle
Nundle swimming pool, Nundle
Nundle Recreation Reserve, Nundle
Oakenville Creek race course
Nundle tennis courts, Nundle

Nundle Bowling Club, West Nundle
Two Mile Walk mining area, Happy Valley
Dead Horse mine, Happy Valley
Road bridge over Peel River, Nundle
Nundle reservoir
Road from Nundle to Hanging Rock
Crawney pass road
Crawney's Travelling Stock Route

APPENDIX 3
MANILLA: PRELIMINARY LIST OF HERITAGE ITEMS IDENTIFIED FROM THE
THEMATIC HISTORY

Durham Court Station and cattle stud (formerly Dinnawirindi Station)	Methodist Church, Halls Creek
Moore Creek Station	Methodist Church, Borah
Keepit Station	Methodist Church, New Mexico
Cuerindi Station	Uniting Church, Manilla
North Cuerindi Station	Anglican Church and vicarage, Manilla
Summer Hill Station, Somerton	Anglican Church, Somerton
Upper Manilla Station	St Matthews Anglican Church Milliwindi
Lower Manilla Station	Anglican Church, Halls Creek
Bendemeer Station	Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Manilla
Attunga Station	St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Manilla
Retreat Station	Presbyterian Church, Namoi River
Longford Station	Manilla cemetery
Mundowey Creek Station	Bowman family cemetery, Buena Vista
Mendebri Station	Aboriginal cemetery, Keepit Station
Woodville Station, Upper Manilla	Hearn's Hotel, Dead Horse Gully
Buena Vista (formerly Rockvilla), Upper Manilla	Australian Arms Hotel, Moore Creek
Glen Riddle Station	Charlie Ah's Vineyard, Tamworth – Manilla Road
Oakhampton Station, Upper Manilla	Gunnetts and Kearns wine shop, Tamworth – Manilla Road
The Pines, Upper Manilla	Carriers Arms Hotel, Klori
Moss Vale, Upper Manilla	Mrs Corrigan's Wineshop, Carroll Gap Road
Bective Station, Upper Manilla	Australian Arms Hotel, north Manilla
Dilkusha, Upper Manilla	Post Office Hotel, Manilla (formerly Junction Hotel)
Yarranbool Station	Royal Hotel, Manilla
Site of George Veness' slab store, wine shop and residence	Imperial Hotel, Manilla
Manilla Saleyard	court house Hotel, Manilla
Manilla railway station and yard	Upper Manilla Hotel (Blazing Stump)
Flour mill, Manilla	Upper Manilla Store
Baker's Foundry, Manilla	Manilla court house
Chinese market gardens, various locations, Manilla	Manilla Police Station
Tobacco plot, Halls Creek	Royce Cottage, Manilla
Attunga limestone mine	Thunderbolt's hideout, The Bluff, New Mexico
Keepit School	Manilla District Hospital
Hawarden School	Manilla Post Office
St Joseph's Convent, Manilla	Upper Manilla Post Office
Manilla Central School	Manilla Express office, Manilla
Upper Manilla School	Road bridge over Manilla River, Manilla
Newry Park School	Rail bridge over Namoi River, Manilla
Milliwindi School	Split Rock Dam
New Mexico School	Scout Hall, Manilla
Wongan Creek School	Arthur Street Powerhouse, Manilla
Head Vale School	Former Manilla Shire Council Chambers
Ukolan School	Chaffey Park, Manilla
Union Church, Manilla	Rotary Park, Manilla
Roman Catholic Church, Keepit	Mackenzies Store, Manilla
Roman Catholic Church, Upper Manilla	Treloar and Co, Manilla
St Michael's Church and presbytery, Manilla	Bluett's Blacksmiths Shop, Manilla
Methodist Church, Manilla	J. T. Robinson Carriers, Manilla

Burrell's Bazaar, Manilla
Cansdell's Store, Manilla (formerly Levy and Cohen)
H. M. Baker Workshop and Foundry, Manilla
Clifton's Motor Mechanics, Manilla
O'Dell's Cordial Factory, Manilla
Sing's Fruit and Vegetables, Manilla
Glitsos' Restaurant, Manilla
Canberra Café, Manilla
York Café, Manilla
Skylight Restaurant, Manilla
National Australia Bank, Manilla (formerly Commercial Bank)
Westpac Bank, Manilla (formerly Bank of New South Wales)
Commonwealth Bank, Manilla
New England Credit Union, Manilla (formerly site of Commonwealth Bank)

Manilla Agricultural Society Pavilion, Manilla
Showground
Country Women's Association Hall, Manilla
War Memorial Hall, Manilla (former Mechanics Institute Hall)
Manilla School of Arts
Site of Palais Theatre, Manilla
Manilla Race course
Manilla Cricket Ground
Manilla Tennis Club and courts
Lake Keepit Sport and Recreation Centre
Manilla Memorial Hall and Library
Adam's Travelling Stock Reserve, north of Borah Crossing
Borah Crossing Travelling Stock Reserve
Spring Creek Travelling Stock Route

APPENDIX 4
BARRABA: PRELIMINARY LIST OF HERITAGE ITEMS IDENTIFIED FROM
THE THEMATIC HISTORY

Barraba Station (and woolshed)	Barraba Railway Station and yards
Piedmont Station	St Laurence's Church of England, Barraba
Cobbadah Station	St Laurence's Family and Youth Centre, Barraba
Barraba Detached Station (Woolshed)	St John's Catholic Church and presbytery, Barraba
Ironbark Station	Methodist (Wesleyan) Church, Barraba
Mayvale Station	Methodist Church Hall, Barraba
Burindi Station	Salvation Army Hall, Barraba
Campo Santo Station	St Mark's Church, Upper Horton
Lindsay Station	Church of the Annunciation, Cobbadah
Mayvale Station	St John's Anglican Church, Woodsreef
Plumthorpe station	Unity Hall (former Scout Hall), Barraba
Rocky Creek Station	Site of wineshop, Bells Mountain
Barraba Post Office	Stockman's Arms Hotel, Barraba
Barraba Hospital	Barraba Hotel, Barraba
Wheat silos, Barraba	Royal Hotel, Barraba (formerly Barraba Inn)
Cattle studs: Ironbark, Pipersleigh, Dunbeacon, Lopust, Wooroonga, Bowen, Kildare, The Glades, Appleclare	Central Hotel, Barraba (formerly court house Hotel)
Conda Thoroughbred Stud	Commercial Hotel, Barraba (formerly Markham's Hotel)
Woodsreef village site	Victoria Hotel, Barraba
Woodsreef asbestos mine site	Site of My Venture Hotel, Upper Horton
Copper and gold workings, Woodsreef	Site of hotel, Woodsreef
Barrack Creek near Bingara, mining remains	Site of hotel, Gulf Creek
Three Creeks Gold Mine (formerly Ballarat and Lady Morgan Mines) off Barraba – Bingara road	Waltzing Matilda Hotel, Cobbadah
Ironbark Creek, mining remains	Former Barraba Police Station (now Sergeant's residence)
Gulf Creek: mining remains, village	Barraba Police Station
Diatomite mine, Bells Mountain	Police lock up, Barraba
Barraba Central School	Police paddock, Barraba
Upper Horton School	Barraba District Hospital
Woodsreef School	St Helen's Private Hospital, Barraba
Crow Mountain School	Sister McKeown's maternity hospital, Barraba
Bells Mountain School	Site of former Barraba Post and Telegraph Office
Rockmore School	Barraba Post Office
Crebra School	Barraba Telephone Exchange
Bereen School	Caroda Telephone Exchange
Woolshed Station School	Horton Telephone Exchange
Gulf Creek School	Cobbadah Telephone Exchange
Macintyre School	Cobbadah Post Office
Hawkins Creek School	Woodsreef Post Office
Hawkins Creek Upper School	Barraba Gazette Offices, Barraba
Little Creek School	Former Barraba Shire Council Chambers
Banoon School, Banoon Soldier Settlement	
Banoon Soldier Settlement	
St Joseph's Convent School, Barraba	

Barraba Fire Station
Connors Creek Dam
Barraba Public Library
Site of Mckid's store, first store on future town site of Barraba
McKid & Co General Store, Barraba
Williams Stock and Station Agents, Barraba
McKid's Stock and Station Agents, Barraba
Morrow Row, Savoy St, Barraba
Mackenzies Store Barraba, (formerly Excell and Malcolm)
Lillis and Treloar's Store, Barraba
Jacob's Buildings, Barraba
(formerly Goldman's Buildings)
Clifton's Motor Garage, Barraba
D.J. Coote and Sons, Barraba
Morrow's Emporium, Barraba
Monterey Café, Barraba
Empire Café, Barraba
Golden Bell Café, Barraba
National Australia Bank, Barraba (formerly Commercial Banking Company
CBC Managers Residence
Commonwealth Bank, Barraba
Westpac Bank, Barraba (formerly Bank of New South Wales)

Memorial Clock Tower, Barraba
Clifton Hall, Barraba (formerly Empire Theatre)
Barraba Showground
Cook's Hall, Gulf Creek
Woodsreef Hall
Community Hall, Upper Horton
Barraba School of Arts (formerly Mechanics Institute)
Bicentennial Community Centre, Barraba
Barraba Tennis Centre
Fuller Gallery, Barraba
The Clay Pan, Barraba
Black Springs Travelling Stock Reserve
Woodsreef Reserve (former town common)
Plumthorpe Travelling Stock Reserve
Little Creek Travelling Stock Reserve
Tarpoly Creek Travelling Stock Reserve
Garibaldi Travelling Stock Reserve
Cobbadah to Upper Horton Travelling Stock Reserve
Ironbark Creek Travelling Stock Reserve
Borah Creek Reserve
Bells Mountain Reserve
Barraba cemetery
Woodsreef cemetery