

TAMWORTH AND DISTRICTS

EARLY HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The following material is an historical account of selected aspects of the regional New South Wales city of Tamworth and the wider area now encompassed by Tamworth Regional Council.

The account concentrates on the period from the visit of explorer John Oxley to the area in 1818 through to around the 1880s.

Two points are emphasised.

Firstly, none of what follows purports to be original. It is a “blend”, put together by Tamworth Regional Council’s Public Affairs Officer, of coverage from various sources. A bibliography acknowledging the major source material is provided at the end.

Secondly, it is envisaged that this material is to be added to over time – with particular concentration on coverage of the development of early settlements in the “non-Tamworth” areas now encompassed by Tamworth Regional Council.

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INDEX OF SUBJECT HEADINGS

BACKGROUND TO EARLY NSW EXPLORATION	4
THE PRIOR INDIGENEOUS PRESENCE.....	5
THE ROLE OF JOHN OXLEY.....	8
ENTRY TO THE LIVERPOOL PLAINS.....	10
POLICY RESTRAINTS ON LAND SETTLEMENT	11
FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY.....	12
ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL SETTLEMENTS BY THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY.....	15
THE ORIGINAL AND THE NEW TAMWORTH.....	17
A.A. COMPANY EARLY CONSOLIDATION	19
AA COMPANY'S FINANCIAL CRISIS	22
THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY – AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	24
TAMWORTH EAST OF THE PEEL	26
ATTEMPTS AT REGULATION	31
VICTORY FOR THE SQUATTERS	33
MEDICAL SERVICES	35
DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN THE LOCAL AREA	37
DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN NUNDLE	40
THE NUNDLE LOCALE – A RETROSPECTIVE	41
THE LAND ACTS	42
EARLY COMMUNICATIONS	45
TAMWORTH'S EARLY FLOODS AND BRIDGES	48
EARLY SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES	52
HOTELS	57
EARLY LAW AND ORDER.....	62
DEVELOPMENT OF ROADS AND COACH TRANSPORT	65
THUNDERBOLT	67
THE EARLY FLOUR MILLS.....	68
TAMWORTH IN 1866 – A PERSPECTIVE.....	70
THE CREATION OF TAMWORTH CITY COUNCIL.....	71
START OF AMBULANCE AND FIRE BRIGADE SERVICES	73
THE QUEST FOR A PERMANENT PUBLIC HOSPITAL IN TAMWORTH.....	75
THE COMMISSIONER COMES TO TOWN.....	76
EXTENSION OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY TO THE AREA	78
STREET LIGHTING IN TAMWORTH.....	80
NEW TAMWORTH POST OFFICE	82
PARADISE GARDENS	84
THE TAMWORTH SHOW	85
FARNELL ACT	86
MANILLA EARLY DATELINE	87
BARRABA EARLY DATELINE.....	89
SOME OTHER EARLY POINTS OF NOTE.....	90
TAMWORTH HISTORICAL MARKERS	92
SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	94

BACKGROUND TO EARLY NSW EXPLORATION

In the early 1800s, the white settlers in Australia remained close to the Sydney area. Settler occupation was confined largely to an area bordered by the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers. Two of the reasons for the confinement were safety and access to basic provisions. Another major reason was the barrier that the Blue Mountains presented.

However, as the population grew, it quickly became apparent that more and more areas were needed for growing food and developing new settlements.

The crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson opened the way to the grassy plains of western NSW. Governor Macquarie dispatched surveyor George Evans to continue exploration further west of where the trio had reached. In turn, Evans discovered the Macquarie and Lachlan rivers.

The existence of these rivers led to increasing speculation about an even larger channel to the ocean, or even an inland sea into which rivers emptied. This provided one of the major motives for increasing exploration of the colony of New South Wales. Another key factor was the settlement of Newcastle and the opening up of the Hunter Valley after the establishment of a route between Windsor and a point near the present town of Singleton.

THE PRIOR INDIGENEOUS PRESENCE

The Kamilaroi people had a prior presence in the New England area for many thousands of years. They formed part of a wider indigenous nation which extended from around Singleton in the Hunter Valley to the Warrumbungle Mountains in the west and up through Narrabri, Walgett, Moree and Mungindi in NSW to Nindigully in south-western Queensland. Other contemporary urban settlements that are on land once occupied by the Kamilaroi include Tamworth, Werris Creek, Quirindi, Manilla, Barraba, Bingara, Gunnedah, Wee Waa, Coolah, Cassilis, Coonabarabran, Baradine, Pilliga, Walgett, Collarenebri and Moree.

The various Kamilaroi communities were loosely bound by a common language spoken in different dialects throughout the whole area. Two of the subgroups of the Kamilaroi people in the immediate area of what was to become Tamworth were the Moonbi people, from the area at the foot of the Moonbi Ranges, and the Goonoo Goonoo people, from the flat lands beside the Peel River. There was an extensive trade both amongst the Kamilaroi and with other indigenous groups. An example of trade within was that from stone quarries situated at locations such as Moore Creek to other parts of Kamilaroi lands where there was a paucity of stone suitable for axe heads, knives and spearheads.

Thus, Kamilaroi people were well established in the lands soon to be entered by white settlers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Estimates of the numbers of their prior occupation vary, but by the late 1820s there were probably around 10,000 to 12,000 indigenous occupants of in the area from the Peel River to the Barwon.

The Kamilaroi had a complex and elaborate social system, and an elaborate language known as Gamilaraay. The many words which were to enter the English language from local indigenous descriptions include the following: 'Barraba' - place of plenty of yellow jacket or box trees; 'Barwon' - wide or winding river; 'Biligha' (Pilliga) - place to go to obtain wood for spears; 'Calala' or 'Caloola' (or 'Killala' or 'Kalahlar') - place of battle or of winding river (name given to the section of the Peel River near Tamworth); 'Coopolly' (Quipolly) - waterholes containing fish; 'Daruka' - rocky mountain; 'Duri' - snake crawling through grass or water weed; 'Goonoo Goonoo' or 'Guna Guna' - a term literally meaning 'dung heap' in the context of reference to the laxative qualities of running water over rocks in time of drought; 'Kootingal' - star; 'Manilla' (Manellae) - winding river, particularly the section that is almost circular; 'Moonbi' - ashes or pigeon; 'Moree' - spring or water hole; 'Murrurundi' (formerly 'Murrurundooranai') - five fingers (early white settlers claimed there was a feature resembling this shape in the area); 'Namoi' - species of acacia or curving river; 'Niangala' - eclipse of the moon; 'Tangaratta' (formerly 'Tangara') - pelican journeys or water rat; 'Wallabadah' - place of stones, snakes or young kangaroos; 'Warrah' - falling rain.

The region also contains many examples of rock art that have been located and preserved. Much of it is by red ochre on granite and consists of human figures accompanied by grid tracks, direction signs, circles, lines and dots.

Warren Newman and Lyall Green commented in *Tamworth A Pictorial History* (1998):

It is a sad reflection on our history that as settlement expanded, the Kamilaroi people dwindled. The killings played a part in this, but were not nearly as important a factor as the diseases which the settlers brought with them. It is estimated that a smallpox pandemic from 1830 to 1832 killed one third of the native population of inland New South Wales. Other introduced diseases such as tuberculosis, measles and venereal disease, combined with the effects of alcohol abuse added to take their added toll.

Perhaps above all else, however, the Aboriginal people suffered from the environmental impact of white settlement. Favoured river sites and fishing holes were no longer available to them, grasslands were put under cultivation and lost forever, and sheep and cattle took over the land where kangaroos and other game had wandered freely.

On occasions, they resisted the perceived plundering of their former lands – with disastrous consequences. Spears and boomerangs were no answer to guns, and the consequential loss of the best warriors also meant the loss of the best hunters. In a few short decades, their former world shattered, local indigenous communities were largely reduced to living in humpies and subsisting on the scraps of the settlers' lifestyle. The proud Kamilaroi nation was thus virtually obliterated.

Jim Hobden's *History of Tamworth* described the demise, from the time of Oxley's visit onwards in this way:

The natives in the valley had lived a somewhat idyllic existence, endeavouring to live with nature, being part of the land and the environment, living off its bounty but changing nothing. They believed they were part of the world around them, that a great spirit being had created everything, and that the land and what it produced was sacred and to be shared by all.....

The spiritual life of the natives was intricately woven in the hills, the valleys, the trees and all living things around them.

Tribal discipline was strong. The law was meticulously obeyed by all.

The native people's needs were for the immediate future only and there was therefore no necessity to store for a later occasion. They did not pollute the landscape, poison the air or upset the balance of nature. They could have gone on loving nature forever, but then the white man came and completely shattered their world.

A few years after Oxley's cavalcade had passed through the valley, land seekers with herds and flocks began spilling over the Liverpool Range and onto the lush pastures.... To the natives these usurpers had a code of living which was based on greed. The natural game was driven away, the waterholes patrolled and the Aborigines given to

understand they would not be tolerated. If natives protested or speared a beast because their usual game had been frightened away they were accused of being cheeky or treacherous and that meant that the white men would disperse them, which in other words meant, kill them.

THE ROLE OF JOHN OXLEY

John Oxley was born in Yorkshire in 1783. He joined the Royal Navy at the age of 16. It was during his naval service that he visited the colony of NSW in 1802 and again in 1808. He was appointed Surveyor General of NSW on 1 January 1812.

In two major expeditions of 1817 and 1818, Oxley attempted to answer the question as to the ultimate destination of the inland rivers. His first expedition took him down the Lachlan from the point where Evans had reached two years earlier.

His second expedition, commenced from Bathurst on 2 June 1818 with Oxley leading a team of 16 men, including George Evans as his second-in-command. He followed the Lachlan northwest until it disappeared into an expanse of swamp. In August, he changed course and crossed a chain of mountains which he named the Arbuthnot Range (Warrambungles) and headed eastward. After four days of struggling in the thick scrub of the Pilliga, on 26 August Oxley saw what he was to name the Liverpool Plains (after Lord Liverpool, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain – who, in his capacity as Secretary of State for the Colonies, had appointed Oxley Surveyor General of NSW).

Oxley's recorded journal observation of the Liverpool Plains was that of a "great valley.....of hills, dales and plains beyond description.....well-watered, thinly timbered and richly grassed."

On 1 September 1818, Oxley had his first glimpse of what he was to name the Peel Valley (the origin of the name being Robert Peel, the Secretary of State for Ireland and later Prime Minister). The following day he reached the Peel River, which he described as "the largest interior river we have seen except for the Macquarie and Castlereagh".

His entry continued:

It would be impossible to find a finer more luxuriant country than it waters; north and south its extent is unknown, but it is certainly not less than sixty miles, while the breadth of the valley is on a medium of about twenty miles.....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.

After crossing the river some 10 kilometres downstream from where Tamworth now stands, he passed through the Kootingal area and named the Cockburn River (probably after Admiral Sir George Cockburn who had fought under Lord Nelson, captured Washington D.C. in the War of 1812-1814 and conveyed Napoleon to his exile at St Helena). Oxley then continued south to the site of what is now the town of Walcha, and reached the coast at Port Macquarie early in October 1818.

On 31 October 1821, Oxley married Emma Norton at St. Philip's Church in Sydney. He then bought a house in Hunter's Hill. In 1823, he explored the Brisbane River

and selected the site of the future city of Brisbane. His last years were spent as a not particularly successful grazier in the Bowral area, where he died on 26 May 1828 at the age of 42.

The Government Gazette of 27 May 1828 paid the following tribute to John Oxley:

Oxley eminently assisted in unfolding the advantages of this highly favoured colony from an early stage of its existence and his name will forever be associated with the dawn of its advancement.

He was buried in the Devonshire Street Cemetery. However, when the various remains there were moved to make way for Central Railway Station, Oxley's grave could not be identified – his tombstone apparently having been stolen.

In September 1918, six direct descendants of John Oxley attended a centenary celebration of the discovery of the Peel Valley and a commemorative plaque was unveiled by the State Premier, W.A. Holman. A further memorial stands at the side of the Manilla Road in the form of a ship's anchor – 10 kilometres to the north of Tamworth and at the approximate point of his crossing of the district. The anchor was originally part of the H.M.R.N. survey ship Sealark and was donated by the Naval Board in Melbourne.

In 1928, a ship was named "S.S. Oxley" to mark the centenary of his death. While details as to what use this vessel was put is scanty, it took part in the official opening of the Sydney Opera House under the flag of the Sydney Maritime Museum.

ENTRY TO THE LIVERPOOL PLAINS

The need for new land, coupled with the completion of a convict-built road from Windsor to Singleton in 1823, caused settlers to pour into the Hunter Valley. However, the Liverpool Ranges presented a serious obstacle to further expansion. Difficulty in accessing the area was primary reason why Oxley's enthusiastic reports about the rich pastures on the other side of the ranges had not been acted upon.

In that same year, Governor Brisbane commissioned botanist Alan Cunningham, who had accompanied Oxley on his 1817 expedition down the Lachlan, to find a practicable route over the Liverpool Ranges. Cunningham headed north from Bathurst up the Cudgegong River to the headwaters of the Goulburn and across to what would become the Cassilis/Coolah road.

Blocked by the seemingly impenetrable Warrumbungle Mountains and with his stores running low, he turned back and came across a valley which he followed until it led to a natural break in the mountain chain (about 30kms west of where the Warrambungles joined the Liverpool Range). From a peak on the eastern side Cunningham had an extensive view of the Liverpool Plains. However, it was to be almost two years more before he finally negotiated a practicable route to the country on the other side – by approaching it from Patrick's Plains on the Hunter via the northern tributaries of the Goulburn River and passing through a gap to as far as Boggabri.

Later, Cunningham was also responsible for the discovery of the Darling Downs and a way into south-eastern Queensland, and is usually credited with establishing the first overland route to the north. Two other routes into the Liverpool Plains were also discovered by Henry Dangar, who had been appointed assistant surveyor to Oxley in 1821 and was posted to the Hunter Valley in 1822.

In 1827, Alan Cunningham used Dangar's original track to push northward, passing west of the Peel Valley and moving to explore the Namoi, Gwydir and Dumaresq rivers to the north. In same year, William Nowland drove a dray loaded with stores up the Hunter Valley and over the ranges between Murrurundi and Doughboy Hollow (now Ardglen) – pioneering a track which was later to become the Great North Road. Nowland's dray left clear marks which made its route easy to follow, opening the way for squatters to take up land if they followed them

POLICY RESTRAINTS ON LAND SETTLEMENT

By the late 1820s, Governor Sir Ralph Darling became concerned about the unregulated spread of the early NSW colony away from Sydney. Thus, the Limits of Location Act of October 1829 was passed to limit settlement to what was known as the “Nineteen Counties”. In effect, this meant that anybody settling north of the Liverpool Range was trespassing or “squatting” on the King’s land.

The formal reason for the passing of this Act was that sufficient protection could not be given to expanding settlers from Aboriginal attacks. The tacit reason was that there simply not enough surveyors to do the work required to open up the land for sale. The Act was widely breached as settlers took the risk of subsequent dispossession of land they settled on without notice or compensation.

The Nineteen Counties had a northern boundary of the Manning River from the coastline west to the chain of mountains at the head of that river (a boundary that ran slightly to the south of the Liverpool Ranges), then southward to Wellington along the Lachlan west of Bathurst to Yass and the Murrumbidgee, and then eastward across to the coast around Moruya.

In fact, even while the Liverpool Plains was still officially “off limits”, white settlement had begun there. After the crossings of the coastal mountains, stockholders were initially permitted to short-term possession of their land by so-called “tickets of occupation”. These proved too vague and were replaced in 1826 by a system of annual licences in return for a yearly rental of one pound per acre. But this procedure only applied to areas under actual government control and supervision – beyond which sheepmen and their flocks continued to spread. Without legal tenure, these settlers became known as “squatters”.

So, by the late 1820s, there were three classes of graziers: those operating legitimately within the Nineteen Counties with a yearly licence, those illicitly occupying land in those counties, and a growing number of “trespassers” beyond the limits of the Counties.

FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY

The early history of white settlement in Tamworth and nearby areas is inextricably bound to the ambitions and activities of the Australian Agricultural Company - often known by the simpler title of the A.A. Company.

Part of the momentum for its formation can be attributed to the findings of Commissioner J.T. Bigge who, in 1819, conducted a detailed investigation into conditions in the NSW colony. Bigge's inquiries (three comprehensive reports in total) were set against the background of needs such as that of moving the colony out of its convict phase and the wool industry's importance to the British economy. He recommended that, as a matter of urgency, joint stock ventures should be established to develop fine-wool growing, and that settlers be given economic incentives to open up and settle new areas. In suggesting these directions, Bigge's had been particularly impressed by the example of John Macarthur's application of capital to breeding merino sheep.

The company was formed in London in December 1824, and incorporated by Royal Charter for the "cultivation and improvement of wastelands in the colony of New South Wales and other purposes amongst which was the production of fine merino wool as an article of export to Great Britain". With a capital of one million pounds composed of 10,000 shares of 100 pounds each, the original purpose was also to provide opportunities for the development of new crops not readily available in England, such as olives, grapes and flax.

The Royal Charter was received very quickly – an accomplishment not unconnected to the fact that many of its original 365 shareholders were members of the British Parliament. A court of directors was appointed and a colonial committee to advise. This committee had control of expenditure and an appointed agent was to answer to it.

The AA Company was given an initial land grant of one million acres (405,000 hectares) in an unsettled area of its choice – subject to certain conditions. In return for the land grant, the company was to be responsible for the health, education, public worship, maintenance of law and order and general administration in its area. It was also required to allow for public through-roads and to provide gainful employment to a number of the Colony's convicts.

One of the shareholders was John Oxley from whom advice was also sought as to where to take up land. Oxley's suggestions were either the Liverpool Plains or the head of the Hastings River. However, the company's Colonial Committee deemed these suggestions to be unsuitable because of their distance from the coast.

A decision on location was eventually deferred until the Company's agent, Robert Dawson, arrived in Sydney. Dawson set sail from the Isle of Wight on 26 June 1825 with two ships, York and Brothers, carrying 79 men, women and children, 720 specially selected French and Saxon sheep, 12 cattle and 15 horses. Other members

of the party included William and Andrew Telfer, Charles Hall and George Jenkins. After the ships arrived in Sydney near the end of that year, Dawson, influenced by the proximity of a good harbour, set up headquarters at Port Stephens. He took up the first land for the settlement in an area north towards Taree and west towards the Williams River. The stock was taken there in early 1826.

It was soon apparent that the land chosen was not good for sheep grazing. Additionally, the Company struggled under Dawson's leadership. He was dismissed in early 1828. The local committee, which had thus far managed the AA's affairs in the colony, was disbanded and replaced by a single Commissioner – the first of whom was Sir Edward Parry who commenced his tenure at Port Stephens on 9 January 1830.

Parry had entered the Royal Navy in 1803 and became a Captain in 1821 (he was to be promoted to Rear Admiral in 1852). He had also secured a level of fame through voyages to the Arctic and exploration there between 1818 and 1828.

Straight away, Parry decided that the land that had been occupied at Port Stephens was unsuitable for growing fine wool, and he communicated that opinion to the Company superiors in London.

The AA Company then made representations to Sir George Murray (Secretary for Colonies) who responded with an instruction that Parry was to be permitted to select 400,000 to 500,000 acres "in the interior" in lieu of an equivalent area of its Port Stephens site. In a consequential search for more suitable land, Parry sent Henry Dangar to inspect the Peel River area. Dangar confirmed Oxley's earlier views and recommended the Peel River area.

In early 1832, Parry, in the company of Henry Dangar, Charles Hall and William Telfer, six other white men and two Aborigines inspected land in the Peel Valley with a view to exchanging it for part of the Port Stephens holding. The party proceeded to the Peel Valley through Maitland, Glendon, Ravensworth and Segenhoe and then crossed the Liverpool Range to Warrah, Goonoo Goonoo Quirindi and Currabubula (entering the Peel Valley through the Currabubula Gap) before exploring up the Namoi River past Manilla. They chose two parcels of land – one of 240,000 acres (97,128 hectares) near the present Willow Tree, and another of 313,298 acres (121,410 hectares) which extended from the southern bank of Peel River at what was to become Tamworth as far as Nundle, Attunga and Duri.

Governor Burke was reluctant to permit the Willow Tree portion of the exchange grant as he believed that a settlement in that area would have too much control over the water needed for the rest of the Liverpool Plains. Instead, he wanted the Company to take all of the land between the Peel and Moonbi ranges. This counter offer was opposed by Parry on the basis of the amount of granite country in the Moonbi area. As a consequence, a deadlock developed between the Governor (who was supported by the Surveyor General Major Thomas Mitchell) and Parry.

The latter wrote to the Company's London principals who lobbied the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Goodrich. A despatch to Governor Burke soon arrived ending the dispute in no uncertain terms:

You will, therefore, with as little delay as possible, after the receipt of this despatch place Sir Edward Parry in possession of the two locations in question.....I have only to observe that the delays in the final settlement have occasioned serious injury to their interests and it is my hope that the explicit instructions of my predecessor, together with those now conveyed to you, will prevent any further difficulties to the final and immediate settlement to their land as agreed upon between them and the Secretary of State.

In short, the Company's influence in London had put short thrift to both the authority of the colonial government and the official Whitehall policy of restraining expansion within the Nineteen Counties.

There were also broader strategic policy considerations involved. In the decade 1810-1820, the number of sheep in the NSW colony had increased from 120,000 to 536,000, and the exported wool clip from 173,000 pounds (78,500 kilograms) to 1.3 million pounds (590,000 kilograms). The colonial flock reached five million by 1843 and 15 million by 1850 with associated rapid rises in wool exports to Britain.

Initially, the British wool industry regarded short and fine colonial wool as a supplement to its own long-hair lines. However, after the lifting of restrictions on European commerce following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, British wool growers found themselves at a disadvantage against cheap, fine fleeces from Saxony and Silesia. Freight rates between the colony and England also fell dramatically in the 1820s. Thus, whereas in 1834 Germany provided almost half of the 136,000 bales Britain imported and Australia less than one-eighth, within 10 years Australia had hit the front and by 1850 was supplying more than half of Britain's needs.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL SETTLEMENTS BY THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY

As early as 1827, there were settlers on the Liverpool Plains. Indeed, after his 1832 journey with Dangar, Parry listed 17 squatters on Warrah running 8,200 cattle and 1,200 sheep, and six on the more distant Peel with 3,600 cattle and 1,700 sheep. The presence of these squatters even delayed the AA Company taking full possession of the land areas it was soon to occupy, and commence a presence that was to last till the middle 1980s.

During the middle months of 1833, William Telfer and a team of shepherds moved 6,000 breeding ewes from the Port Stephens estate up the Hunter Valley, over the Liverpool Ranges and onto the Warrah holding. Despite almost no loss of sheep in this difficult transfer, problems began immediately upon arrival. Many of the flocks of the squatters that had arrived before the AA animals were badly infested with a scab disease, and these flocks were encroaching upon the Warrah land. To avoid a disaster, Superintendent Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Dumaresq ordered that all sheep be moved from Warrah to the Peel Estate, leaving only cattle and horses at Warrah.

Dumaresq had succeeded Parry as Commissioner when the latter was due to return to Navy service. During their transition period, Parry and Dumaresq worked closely together on planning the Company's initial move to the Peel. Dumaresq was appointed by the AA directors to a second five-year term to commence from March 1839. However, Dumaresq's sudden death in 1838 (attributed to war wounds received at the Battle of Waterloo) precluded him ever taking up this further appointment. He was temporarily replaced by James Ebsworth, the company's bookkeeper, who served as Acting Commissioner until April 1839 when Captain Philip Parker King took up the position.

Dumaresq decided upon a elevated ground sloping down towards the western side of the Peel River, both upstream and downstream of its confluence with the Cockburn River, as the first Tamworth settlement site, which was begun in July 1834 when buildings were erected on gently sloping land. Soon, the A.A. Company's Peel Estate occupied the left bank of the Peel River from above Nundle to below Attunga.

The north western slope was reserved as a general living area for the Company's free employees and the convicts as well as stores and sheds. The first buildings to house the AA officials and the Company's 200 assigned convicts were constructed there on ground relatively close to the Peel River's water. An early track developed there which would eventually become known as Ebsworth Street (after the Company's long-time bookkeeper James Ebsworth). A later track over the hill became known as 'Peel Street' – a name it retained until it was rechristened Bridge Street in 1938 to distinguish it from the main street on the eastern side of the river.

This fledgling area of occupancy formed the basis of what is West Tamworth. Essentially, it was to remain a private “company town” until its absorption into the Tamworth municipality in 1876. Its existence was primarily for its own benefit and it, catered for its own needs, and tolerated little intrusion from the settlement that was to develop on the east of the river. In its early years, the company provided all essential community services – including a doctor, hospital, matron, school, teacher, policeman, magistrate and even a cemetery. Only much later did the first signs of other private enterprises appear in the initial form of shops and hotels along Ebsworth Street.

The usage of the name “Calala” in the early settlement has various strands to it – most of them derived from variations in spelling.

In the first and fundamental instance, the part of the Peel River where the first settlement commenced had the Aboriginal name “Calala”. However, the white settlers were apparently a little hazy on an appropriate English spelling of the word. Hence, it was variously shown as “Kalala”, “Kilala”, “Kallala”, “Callala” and a few others.

Charles Hall, who had previously been in charge of the Company’s sheep at Carrington, and was then appointed “Superintendent of Flocks on the Peel”. He named his residence, a slab-sided building with brick floors at the south eastern end of the settlement, “Killala” (yet another spelling) - which was eventually to become “Calala”) upon its construction in 1834. As well, the tract of land which is now occupied by the Tamworth Racecourse and Taminda became known as “Calala Flat”.

THE ORIGINAL AND THE NEW TAMWORTH

In central England, not far from the Roman East-West Road, a ‘worthe’ (settlement) developed on the banks of the River Thames that can be dated back to around 600 AD. It became know as ‘Tame worth’ and, over time, this contracted to ‘Tamworth’.

While it was first a Saxon village, it assumed importance during the reign of King Offa of Mercia -a Saxon kingdom that was roughly akin to the English Midlands. He reigned from 755 to 796 and built a palace at Tamworth. This palace was burned by the Danes in 874, only to be rebuilt in 913 by Ethelfleada (a sister of the then king) as a fortified settlement or ‘burh’ surrounded by a ditch and ramparts.

A little town grew up around the fortification, only to be attacked again by the Danes in 943. Thereafter, the Normans built a castle at Tamworth which has stood guard over the town ever since.

In the Middle Ages, Tamworth was a small market town with a king’s charter conferring upon its residents certain rights – including the holding of two annual fairs.

In 1345, much of the town’s wooden and thatched structure was razed by fire.

However, it was granted another charter by Queen Elizabeth in 1560, and by the early 19th century had a population over 3,000. Today, that population is over 75,000.

In 1834, Robert Peel wrote was to become known as the ‘Tamworth Manifesto’ before a by-election in Tamworth. That manifesto was to be printed subsequently in the national press – laying out the principles of what was to become the Conservative Party. Sir Robert Peel, twice Prime Minister of Great Britain was deeply involved in, among many other political achievements, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Metropolitan Police Force. Peel made his historic announcement of the repeal of the Corn Laws from an upstairs window of the town hall in Tamworth, England and a statue of him remains in front of that building in recognition of the occasion.

The Peel family had had a long association with the English Tamworth. To some extent the fortunes of the town and the family had been interwoven - literally from the year of first white settlement in Australia (which was also the year of the future statesman’s birth). In 1788, Robert Peel’s father bought the cotton mill near the town. Thereafter, the family established itself at Drayton Manor and acquired much of both the parish and town of Tamworth. Robert Peel Senior was elected as the parliamentary representative for Tamworth in 1790 and became a baronet in 1800. The younger Peel graduated from Oxford in 1806 and entered also entered Parliament in 1809, initially as the representative for Cashel in Ireland, and, after

his father's death, he became the second baronet and also the representative for Tamworth in the House of Commons.

Initially, the AA Company seems to have used the word "Tamworth" to designate the area occupied by workmen's cottages centred on the present Ebsworth Street. However, when settlement grew on the other side of the Peel River, it was also known as Tamworth. Yet, in the early stages of urban growth of both sides of the river, distinguishing local reference was more usually to West Tamworth as the "Company Side" and East Tamworth as the "Government Side".

Formal use of the name "Tamworth" is regarded as having been stemmed from a letter Lieutenant-Colonel Dumaresq wrote the AA's London directors in December 1835, in which he stated:

I perceive that I have hitherto omitted to propose that, your principal station The Peel, should be named Tamworth. I need scarcely mention that the name was suggested by the connection which has long subsisted between the illustrious statesman after whom the river is called and the Borough of Tamworth in Staffordshire, England the family home of the Peel family.

The first official recognition of Tamworth's existence came in 1837 via the publication in London of what was considered the first "authentic" map of New South Wales by Robert Dixon. Tamworth appeared on it, connected to Port Stephens and Newcastle by two "roads".

A.A. COMPANY EARLY CONSOLIDATION

Within 18 months of occupation, three district stations existed. Besides Killala, the others were an outpost first known as “Robinsons” (later Goonoo Goonoo) and the third was at Cann’s Plains. Other stations were added almost continuously as the Company began to utilise more and more of its vast holding. Ultimately, the Company’s Peel Valley land was ultimately divided into 34 sheep grazing stations.

During 1841, the Superintendent’s headquarters were relocated from Calala to Goonoo Goonoo (after the name of the nearby creek and at a distance of about 25kms from Tamworth) as it was considered more central to both the Peel and Warrah holdings. There were several other factors involved in this decision made by Commissioner Phillip Barker King (son of the third Governor of NSW and a member of the original AA Colonial Committee) who had been appointed Commissioner to succeed Dumaresq in April 1839. Among them was the amount of traffic crossing the Peel River at Tamworth and the reach of the flood of 1840. The new headquarters at Goonoo Goonoo (near the creek of that name at a point 11 kilometres above Mount Dumaresq) was single-storeyed, with a second storey being added during the 1880s. The building still contains many of the original exterior and interior walls.

The Goonoo Goonoo site soon developed as the centre of operations and quickly became a settlement in its own right with a network of buildings for staff and rural operations.

The first sheep shepherds of the AA Company were convicts or ticket-of-leave men. Beyond this labour source, finding suitable people to work as shepherds and farm labourers proved a problem from the start. With regard to the former, it must be remembered that there were no fences at this time – all sheep had to be shepherded. Locations, generally known as stations, were established where a shepherds’ bark hut was built, with two shepherds and a hut keeper to cover the area. Each shepherd was responsible for a flock of sheep ranging in number from 400 to 1200, but usually of a number above 500. Staple supplies such as meat, flour, sugar, tobacco and jam, were brought out from the head station.

About sunrise each morning, the shepherds would move their flock out from the folds or yards and control their movement to a defined area know as a “run”. In the afternoon, the shepherd would time the movement of the flock to return it to the safety of the yards around sunset. During the night, when the sheep were penned, their ongoing safety from attacks from wild animals was usually the responsibility of the hut keeper. As well, dogs were tied at appropriate places around the yards and one dog allowed to run free. Any restlessness on the part of the dogs tended to alert the hut keeper. During the day, the hut keeper would undertake cleaning the hut and cooking. The hut keeper also had the job of regularly moving the hurdles which formed the yards so that such an area would not become contaminated, thus reducing the dangers of footrot.

Shepherding peaked on Goonoo Goonoo Station when the number of outstations reached 34, spread over in excess of 300,000 acres. Unsurprisingly, a regular complaint of shepherds was the monotony and isolation of their work routine. There was often difficulty in securing and keeping people for this type of work on a voluntary basis. In the early 1840s, the AA Company brought out Irishmen, Welsh miners and, when these efforts proved relative failures, recruited men from various mainland European countries. Shortages were, rather naturally, exacerbated by the gold discoveries in the Peel Valley in the early 1850s.

Shepherding did not come to an end until the early 1880s. The primary cause of the cessation was the erection of fences. By 1884, Goonoo Goonoo had fenced perimeter boundaries and 50 enclosed paddocks.

Many generational families in the local area can trace their initial presence back to the shepherds. Surnames of shepherds of the 1850s include: Abra (England), Chillingworth (England), Fisher (Ireland), Hausfeld (Germany), Honess (England), Langenbaker (Germany), Lucerne (Switzerland), Nash (England), Peters (Germany), Rok (Germany), Sippel (France), Spinks (Germany), Studte (Germany), Taverner (Germany), Zartmann (Germany).

In the formative stages of AA settlement, supplementing food supplies was a problem in spite of both wheat and maize being planted as early as 1834. The only regular track connecting Tamworth with the coast led through the bush to Currabubula and Doughboy Hollow, before crossing the Liverpool Range and through the Hunter Valley. However, it could be cut for months either by drought (lack of feed for the draught animals) or floods (impassable from flood damage after the waters had receded). It was not uncommon for a six month interval to occur between deliveries of alternative food supplies to the settlement.

Initial attempts to grow wheat and maize along the river flats in the early years were hampered – first by a succession of dry years, and then by the 1840 flood. The first useful yields did not really occur until 1841 (in an area where Tamworth racecourse was later situated) and 1845 (proximate to what is now the West Tamworth Primary School site).

Under these circumstances, the AA Company was keen to develop new transport routes. The Company also had a second major reason for doing so as soon as possible. When the first sheep arrived on the Peel there were no facilities for shearing and handling wool. As well, the year 1835 was one of severe drought and there was insufficient water in the local creeks and rivers to satisfactorily wash sheep to remove debris and dirt from their fleece in preparation for shearing. Company officials were forced to drive the sheep to the coast.

The AA Company thus had an immediate imperative to develop a shorter route between the Peel estates and the headquarters at Port Stephens. An initial track was worked out by James Ralfe in 1835. This was used to take the first ever wool from the Peel Valley to the coast. However, as this route was very rugged, the search continued for a superior alternative.

In 1836, William Telfer developed a more immediate passage over the mountains to the coast. The newly marked track, that gave the Peel Estate relatively quick access to the Port Stephens headquarters, was designated “The Peel Line”. Along the new trail, permanent yards were erected at regular intervals for containing sheep at night being moved back and forth.

However, there were still limitations. As much of the way was still through mountainous country horses were of limited use for carrying, and pack bullocks developed foot soreness on the also prevalent stony ground. The situation did not really improve until 30 mules and 12 handlers of them were brought from South America in the late 1830s. Each mule could transport over 100 kg, and a whole mule train was able to move three tonnes of flour from Port Stephens to Tamworth in less than five weeks.

The practice of sending sheep, with the exception of breeding ewes, to the coast for shearing continued for several further years. This pattern was partially caused by the by the fact that no provision had as yet been made for transporting the clip back through the Hunter Valley for shipment.

As late as 1852, Surveyor G.B. White declared in a report referenced in the NSW Legislative Council that “there is no system observed in the Road-making of the Northern Districts”. In fact, it was to be the discovery of gold that provided the spur for proper transport infrastructure. The huge new flow of traffic forced the Government to extend the Great Northern Road from the Hunter Valley to the New England tablelands (the name of the Great Northern Road was, much later, changed to the New England Highway).

The name ‘Telfer’ also has prominence in the early history of the area in a different context. William Telfer’s son, William Telfer Jnr, maintained a written record of his experiences and information provided to him. When he finished working at Wallabadah, he left his notes in the loft of one of the station buildings. The document, which became known as the “Wallabadah Manuscript” is retained in the archives of the University of New England.

AA COMPANY'S FINANCIAL CRISIS

The 1840s were a financially difficult time for the AA Company.

The Company's activities were hit by recurring drought, the abolition of convict transportation and the consequential loss of cheap labour. There were also a series of specific problems. While an earlier outbreak of catarrh in the sheep (in 1835) had been eliminated by quick movement of the flocks over vast areas, a disease known as Scab in 1843 proved far more difficult to combat. Treatment involved immersing an infected animal in a tub of corrosive sublimate and then placing it on a sheet of bark and scraping the sheep with an iron hoop.

Another problem was the deterioration of the initial sheep stock through inbreeding – to the extent that French merino ewes had to be imported in 1846 and 1847 to improve the flock quality.

A series of savings measures were ordered, ranging from staff reductions to the boiling down of sheep in vats to produce candle tallow for subsequent sale.

The financial problems also abounded on a wider scale in the colony. At the end of 1841, the NSW colony had been plunged into a profound depression from which it took several years to recover. The price of wool plummeted, banks crashed and some of the biggest commercial trading houses in Sydney collapsed. Sheep prices, which had peaked at three pounds, sunk to as low as sixpence. Locally, the AA Company found that the amount of tallow each sheep contained (around six shillings worth) could be more profitably utilised at times than through normal sales. In partnership with Robert Pringle of "Bubbogullion" Station, a works was set up to boil down unsaleable animals. Then, the breaking of the 1847-1848 drought and a return to lush pasture produced another surplus of unsaleable stock and led to the creation of a second boiling down works by Lewis W. Levy along the Cockburn River about five kilometres out of Tamworth.

One of the major causes of the economic decline was a flood of surplus capital into the colony as British financial institutions attempted to become a part of what was perceived as an unending expansion of the wool industry and associated enterprises. Another major cause was property speculation financed by easy credit.

In an A.A. Company context, by 1845, Commissioner King was in a position to report economic improvement. In the same year, the Colonial Office agreed to the alienating of 300,000 acres of A.A. land in recognition of the improvements that had been made to the land occupied, as well as a further 200,000 acres in line with the terms of the 1824 Charter. However, it was held necessary that a new Act of Parliament would be required to waive the conditions of the original Charter restricting the Company's right of alienation.

At the same time, the Company became a centre of controversy over a thirty-year monopoly on coal mining in NSW in 1830 (which public opinion was now very much

against). A “compromise deal” was agreed to whereby legislation to formalise the land grants was passed and the Company renounced its coal rights. A deed was finally issued in December 1847 defining the A.A. Company’s land holdings as 313,298 acres on the Peel, 249,640 acres at Warrah, and 464,640 acres at Port Stephens (where it had retained the choicest inland areas of the Manning around Gloucester and Stroud with a narrow channel to harbour facilities), and 2,000 acres of coal concessions at Newcastle – an overall total of in excess of one million acres.

But, the profit-hungry directors of the A.A. were not easily satisfied. Commissioner King was summoned to London in 1849, whereupon he was relieved of the role he had undertaken for almost 10 years, and the position of Commissioner was abolished. King’s successor with the lesser title of General Superintendent was Captain R.M. Westmacott. He sailed from England in October 1850, along with the Company’s Deputy Governor, Archibald Blane (the latter with authority to reorganise the NSW operations).

Philip Gidley King, the son of the former A.A. Commissioner Philip Parker King and a grandson of Captain Arthur Philip Gidley King, became the General Superintendent of the by then renamed Peel River Land and Mineral Company on 31 December 1854.

His home alternated between Goonoo Goonoo Station and a town house in Dennison Street (named “Calala”). King was to become Tamworth’s first Mayor in 1876.

THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY – AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The following extract, written by Professor Alan Atkinson of the University of New England, is taken from the Preface to the Australian National University's publications of the letters of Sir Edward Parry:

The Australian Agricultural Company occupies a strange, half-way position in the story of Australian settlement. On the one hand it was just another large sample of free enterprise, similar to any number of others which have characterised Australia since the 1820s. On the other hand the Company's early aspirations and experience cast a distinctive, sideways light on the whole business of colonisation.....

.....Founded by an Act of the British Parliament in 1824 the Company followed very deliberately in the steps of those great chartered enterprises which had sent English capital and labour to several parts of North America – to Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Georgia – when that continent was, from an English perspective, a “wilderness”. But the A.A. Company itself set a precedent. It was one of several such enterprises designed for the frontier of settlement in Europe's antipodes. The Van Diemen's Land Company followed almost immediately. Both the A.A. Company and V.D.L. Company took very large grants of land and their acreage made it hard for them to position themselves anywhere but a distance from the colonial capitals. But there was a virtue also in isolation. Both were to be mini-colonies in their own right, subject to the governors in Sydney and in Hobart but ruled as well from the board-rooms in London.

Some of the founders of the settlement at Swan River, Western Australia, hoped to use the same model. This scheme came unstuck, but its failure did not prevent the foundation of the South Australian Company as an essential part of the project at St Vincent Gulf in the mid 1830s – the “province” of South Australia. There too there was a peculiar tension, for a time, between the company's little principality on Kangaroo Island and the governor in Adelaide. Finally, across the Tasman, the New Zealand Company was profoundly important in the settlement of New Zealand during the 1840s.

In each case the tug of war was not only of rival authorities. It was also a matter of varying idealism. It would be wrong to be starry-eyed about the altruistic hopes of the Australian Agricultural Company. As with all enterprises the main point was to make money. To some extent high-mindedness was a disguise, taken up in order to win friends in Parliament and to put as much pressure as possible on the Colonial Office in the argument for Crown land and convict labour. But there certainly was an understanding that the Company represented something unprecedented in the colonisation of the Australian mainland. It was designed to create a new kind of population – moral, orderly and intelligent. It was a striking symptom of the kind of ambition which was now focussed on this part of the world. This was a chartered company backed by large official promises. It represented one aspect of a powerful

combination of free trade and state enterprise, a combination characteristic of the period which followed the Napoleonic wars and one which may be too little understood in Australian history.....

The Australian Agricultural Company thus offered an unusual challenge to the government in Sydney. The local committee which managed in the first years was the most powerful body which had ever existed in the colony outside government. The commissioners which took over from the committee from 1829 were also important men, though as the colony expanded they became gradually less obvious in the overall scheme of things.....

This was government in the bush. The Company's ambivalent character is frequently obvious.....the official records of the Company not only say something about the early possibilities of government in Australia but also about the early possibilities of capitalism.

It is interesting also to note something of what happened to the original "local" shareholdings in the A.A. Company. Of the original 10,000 shares (each to a nominal value of 100 pounds) amongst 365 shareholders, 200 shares had been reserved for offer to colonial shareholders. As additional capital was needed, calls were made on the shareholders. By 1832, a total of thirteen such calls, totalling 23 pounds per 100 pound share, had been made.

By mid 1832, several of the original colonial shareholders had died - including John Oxley, John Piper and Robert Campbell. Others, such as Alexander Berry, Thomas Icely, Mathew Hindson, William Walker and the Macarthurs, had transferred responsibility for calls to their English agents. Most of the remainder forfeited their shares through non-payment in 1834.

TAMWORTH EAST OF THE PEEL

Given the role of the A.A. through its station stores in providing for the basic needs of its employees, there was little demand for early private business ventures.

Development on the eastern side of the Peel River did not begin until November 1835 when James White established what is considered the first permanent residence on that side of the river by opening a combined store and public house on high ground between the river and what was to become Peel Street (more or less opposite the present Maguire's Hotel). White, who had originally come to the area as an AA Company clerk and lost his job, opened the first store on the Peel. Upon regaining his position with the Company, and about 18 months after setting up business, White sold out to Richard Stubbs who went into partnership with a former lieutenant from the 28th Regiment, J. Irving. At around the same time, George Draggett became East Tamworth's second business when he opened a blacksmith's shop close to one of the then optimum natural river crossings (near the bottom end of Darling Street).

A second trader commenced operations in early 1840. He was Thomas Byrnes who had arrived in Tamworth the previous year, and whose son George was the first white child known to have been born on the Peel (in November 1839). As well, Mrs Byrnes and her sister (the latter being the wife of James Johnston) were probably the first white women to cross the Liverpool Range. Thomas Byrnes also became the town's first postmaster – using a building which served both as a store and accommodation house. However, only a few months later, Byrnes sold both the store and postal service to P.G. Scholfield and departed for Canada.

Schofield sold out, in turn, to Carden Terence Williams. Besides the postal business, a store and an unlicensed hotel, Williams also had "Tuckerman" Station (which extended along the Peel River as far as Nemingha and Tintinhull and included much of what was later to become North and East Tamworth). In financial difficulty, he mortgaged both his business and station assets to the Maitland wholesale suppliers David Cohen & Co in 1845. David Cohen gained Tuckerman in 1846 and his cousin, Louis Wolfe Levy, took over the store after a seizure of assets legal action. This signalled the beginning of the company of Cohen & Levy which was to have a role in the financial development of Tamworth for many years.

Early development on the eastern side of the Peel River could be categorised as having been both haphazard and spasmodic. The settlement centred on two-ford crossings of the river. One was at approximately the site of the present main bridge, and the other at the foot of what is now Darling Street where teamsters camped overnight on the long hauls to or from the area. Tamworth quickly became a regular stopover point for travellers and a staging point for mail coaches. It began to assume a compliment of characteristics of a town – including accommodation houses (the first one being the Peel Inn) and the establishment of the first racecourse in 1840 (the same year as the first major flood).

In 1847, the then Australian Agricultural Company Commissioner, Philip Parker King, advised the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Roderick Mitchell, that Tamworth should be laid out as a town. Mitchell originally formed a view that the Nemingha area might provide a better site for the proposed town, but he eventually accepted King's suggestion. The Surveyor-General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, who happened to also be the father of the Commissioner for Crown Lands, accepted the final recommendation.

A survey of the town boundary was undertaken by undertaken by John V. Gorman and a plan, titled "Plan of the Reserve at Tamworth" was sent by him to the Surveyor-General in July 1849. The proclamation notifying the town, consisting of East Tamworth bound by the Peel River, East Street, North Street and Swan Street appeared in the Government Gazette of 1 January 1850. In the original planning, the principal crossing of the Peel River was to be the one near the bottom of Darling Street and it was intended that (for reasons rather obvious in times of flood)) that Marius Street was to be the principal street. Hence, Marius and Darling Street were laid out two chains wide, while the others were set and one and a half.

Peel Street was to become the main street by popular demand rather than official planning. This process was aided by the initial placement of important buildings over time, such as the National School, the court house, a new post office, a new hospital, the gas works, and the first electricity generation station.

The "official town" was still a small settlement. There were only about 20 buildings on the eastern side of the Peel River. The design adhered to the rectangular grid of streets which was popular with colonial administrators at the time. Seven streets leading towards the river were soon named after governors of the colony: Fitzroy, Brisbane, Bourke, Darling, Macquarie, O'Connell and Bligh. Others received their names for a variety of reasons: White Street after the surveyor G.B. White; Hill Street because of the rise across it; Roderick Street after the son of the Commissioner for Crown Lands; Murray Street after Sir George Murray of the Colonial Office; Jewry Street to mark the town's early development with prominent Jewish families (such as the Cohens and the Levys); Marius Street after the Roman general and Carthage after his main enemy. In naming "contrast", the last street parallel to the river was Lower Street (renamed Kable Avenue in 1957 in honour of the Tamworth City Council Town Clerk from 1912 to 1947). The land below this street was officially reserved "for Access to Water and Public Recreation".

The A.A. Company also conducted a sale of allotments on the "Company side" of town in an area bounded by Ebsworth, Gipps, Church and Bridge Streets on 22 August 1851. Andrew Telfer purchased in Ebsworth Street at the Gipps Street corner from where he was later to conduct a store. Another block in Ebsworth Street (opposite the Tamworth Towers Motel) was bought by Sydney merchant John Waller. The Sir Robert Peel Inn was built on this site.

Something of the "natural setting" of early urban Tamworth can be understood from the written descriptions of John Crawford, the first teacher at the National School, in 1855. He mentioned possums the screams of possums and the gaze of native bears from trees, proliferations of Bathurst burrs growing as tall as men after rain, and stumps everywhere (even the location of some buildings being referenced

by their proximity to well-known stumps). Crawford cited one particular lantern-lit search for a girl lost amongst the burrs at night, with rescuing her proving as difficult as locating her.

The stumps became such a problem, particularly in Peel Street, that, in November 1863, it was considered necessary to call tenders to have them removed from the section between the intersections with Roderick and White streets.

Stray animals were another obstacle for the early Peel Street pedestrian. Goats were a particular problem with as many as 200 at a time roaming the busiest parts Peel Street in the 1850s. When startled or wishing to take refuge from rain, they had a habit of running as a pack along the street to shelter on the veranda of the National School. Other hazards in the street were cattle being driven to the nearby saleyards, bullock teams, runaway horses and straying pigs.

Peel Street was often derisively labelled “Mud Street” – unsurprisingly as it spanned elements of a flood plain, swamps, lagoons and alluvial soil. In wet weather, Peel Street became so boggy that vehicles were often unable to use it. Deep gutters were dug, with consequential footpaths so high that some business houses had to provide footbridge access from the street and stairs to the actual buildings. One particularly bad spot was around the junction of Peel and Brisbane Streets. South and west from the corner, lagoons or swamps often formed. The site of the Central Hotel was initially used as a market garden and had no buildings on it until 1876. The land diagonally opposite was also so unappealing that there was no permanent structure there until five years later.

In April 1857, a well-attended public meeting was convened by Thomas Hobbs to discuss the drainage problems. However, the first record of any substantial work to ameliorate the situation was not until 1860. In that year, during the first month of which Peel Street was cut by heavy rain, the lagoon at the intersection of Peel and Brisbane streets was drained by a channel to the river and the channel was then filled with gravel coated with river sand.

Conversely, in longer periods of dry weather, dust became a problem in Peel Street as iron-tired vehicles cut the surface into fine particles. Initial efforts, in early 1880, to utilise a water cart were unsuccessful – the spray was too high and actually caused more dust to be sent into buildings. However, the use by Tamworth Council of an alternative version, a 400 gallon tank mounted on a dray with its sprays close to the surface proved a success.

Progress in street improvement from that time forward was not, however, a steady upward curve. Indeed, a motion moved by Ald. William Dowel at a Council meeting on 18 January 1881 that 250 pounds be devoted to asphaltting footpaths in Peel Street, was defeated. It was not until 1912 that enduring improvement was achieved when quantities of limestone were brought from the North Tamworth quarry and tipped in Peel Street.

Wet and dry spells aside, access to water was a key factor in the location of early dwellings, with the early residents of Tamworth wanting to live close to the banks of the Peel River – close to a reliable water supply. As houses assumed a more

permanent nature and extended further from the river, sleds were often used to haul water. These sleds were usually cut from the fork of a tree, with a water cask being attached to the arms of the “Y” and pulled by a horses or bullocks. The floodplain was also utilised to sink wells. Residents on higher ground not proximate to the river created a demand for water carriers. A flourishing business soon developed with the early carriers using two-wheeled carts carrying water drawn from the river to residences. The initial carters were private contractors who bought the water from Council at a flat fee, and then retailed it around town. There were 12 carriers, each of whom had a tank fitted to horse-drawn cart or dray. The carters were also required to drive home each night with a full tank in case the water was needed to put out a fire that evening.

In response to ever increasing urban water demand, in 1880, Tamworth Borough Council decided to sink its own well and supply water directly to the public. The site chosen was at the corner of Brisbane and Lower (now Kable Avenue) streets. By 26 March 1881, a 20 feet deep brick well was completed. Water was pumped to a large overhead tank with two outlet pipes through the utilisation of a pump driven by a steam engine. The system had a delivery capacity of 5,000 gallons per hour. Water carts were filled from the outlet pipes. Council’s initial prices for the water ranged from one penny for 25 to 150 gallons to threepence for 300 to 400 gallons. By 1890, Council had begun charging general water rates. A family of five paid about two pounds ten shillings for an entitlement of three gallons per day each for twelve months.

However, Council had regarded the town pump installation as only a stopgap measure. More particularly, two concerns had to be dealt with. The first was the inadequacy of the scheme. The second was growing community concern about threats of an outbreak of diphtheria or typhoid. Thus, a civic engineer, Frederick Gipps, was engaged to make recommendations. His resultant proposal of a reservoir on Swamp Oak Creek with an open conduit to Tamworth was rejected as a health hazard. Finally, the NSW Parliament approved a recommendation from its Public Works Department for a dam at the head of Moore Creek (950 feet elevation above Tamworth) with a seven-inch diameter pipe line to bring water to town via gravitation to a reservoir near the hospital. The Moore Creek Dam with a concrete wall 61 feet high and 22 feet thick at the base, a catchment of 20 square miles, and a capacity of fifty million gallons, was completed in March 1898.

In July 1850 the first auction sale of town lots at Tamworth took place. The land offered had frontages to Peel, Bourke, Darling, Brisbane, Bligh and Lower streets. At total of 29 lots were offered, realising prices ranging between five pounds nine shillings to 31 pounds five shillings. The first purchasers included James Bailey, Lewis Wolfe Levy, Thomas Hobbs, and George Bevege. The following year the first sale of parts of West Tamworth, in the Ebsworth/Bridge streets area, were held by the Australian Agricultural Company. More land on the eastern side for houses and businesses were sold in batches in 1851 and 1853.

The Tamworth Permanent Common was dedicated on 2 October 1866. It consisted of 480 hectares and was situated north of the present Base Hospital. Stock holders could apply to the trustees appointed to administer it to be registered as

“Commoners”. This registration gave them the right, for a nominal fee, to depasture stock on agistment. As well, drovers often rested stock there over night.

In the original plan of Tamworth, land between Lower Street (Kable Avenue) and the river upstream of Brisbane Street, had been set aside as a “Reserve for Access to Water and Public Recreation”. This was confirmed on 14 December 1861. However, shortly thereafter, 3.2 hectares was set aside specifically for the playing of cricket in an area currently covered by parts of Number One Oval and Bicentennial Park. Subsequently, this area was revised down to 2.2 hectares (May 1865) with the residue reverting to its original designation.

The A.A. Company’s surveyor also laid out the streets of West Tamworth in 1855. Names such as Ebsworth, Gipps, Church and Denne were chosen, as well as a Fitzroy and a Peel Street. The consolidation of two separate Tamworth townships was given a new ‘formality’. However, some things changed extremely slowly. It was not until 1938 that West Tamworth’s “Fitzroy Street” was renamed Crown Street and its “Peel Street” became Bridge Street.

ATTEMPTS AT REGULATION

In 1836, Governor Bourke introduced into the NSW Legislative Council legislation to recognise and encourage squatting. Via this legislation, squatters beyond the Nineteen Counties were granted annually renewable licences. In effect, this meant that they could occupy as much unsettled land as they could on payment of a yearly fee of 10 pounds.

The following year the vast area outside the Nineteen Counties was divided into seven districts – each under the control of a Commissioner of Crown Lands whose responsibility it was to issue licences, collect fees and prosecute offenders. The Liverpool Plains, including the Peel Valley, came into District No 6 under Commissioner Alexander Patterson whose headquarters were at Jerry's Plains near Singleton.

Because of his earlier failures to prevent indigenous massacres, such as those at Myall Creek and Waterloo Creek, Patterson was soon replaced by Edward Mayne.

The powers of Commissioners were further strengthened in 1839 by Bourke's successor, Governor George Gipps, when stock returns were made compulsory and levied on annual assessment at a rate of a halfpenny per sheep, a penny per head of cattle, and threepence per horse depastured beyond the Nineteen Counties. In a further administrative alteration under the 1839 legislation, the Peel Valley came into the Liverpool Plains (No 3) district, bounded by the Liverpool Ranges in the south and east but with "infinite" borders to the north and west.

Mayne moved his headquarters to near Somerton and established a command post at Tamworth. However, he also lost favour with the Governor and lesser authorities for a raft of reasons from property ownership of a nature prohibited by his appointment to failure to remit some of the fees he had collected from squatters. He was dismissed by Governor Gipps in 1843. Frances Allmann was next, but he also was another unsatisfactory Commissioner - with his appointment also rescinded in 1846.

Roderick Mitchell (a son of Surveyor-General) was the third appointment as Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Liverpool District on 1 July 1846. Recognising the development of Tamworth on the north eastern side of the Peel River, Mitchell opted to base himself there. He established a police barracks and residence near the junction of Peel and Roderick streets, and proved to be an effective commissioner – ably assisted by one Richard Bligh (a grandson of the former Governor Bligh) who developed a second base of operations at Warialda.

During the 1830s, the development of the A.A. holdings was accompanied by that of a number of private stations as colonial authorities recognised the virtual impossibility of containing their proliferation. The first statistics filed by Commissioner Mayne gave a clear indication of how rapid the growth of land acquisition had been in the 1830s. The 1840 return showed that the 23 squatters on

Warrah and Peel in 1832 had become 1,155 whites living on 130 stations under his Liverpool Plains administration - 1,078 males and 77 females (including 507 male and six female convicts).

The 1840 Census put the figures at 1,589 – including 174 females (indigenous Australians were not counted for such statistical purposes). The 1846 Census indicated a steady but slow population rise with the number of inhabitants of the Liverpool Plains reaching 2,110 people occupying 233 dwellings. Of these, 996 were given as ‘born in the colony or arriving free’, 845 as ‘other free persons’, 264 as holders of tickets-of-leave, six convicts in government employment and 29 in private assignment. There were, by now, 332 females, all but four of them non-convicts.

Of greater density were the 1846 demographics for the local stock: 331,588 sheep; 177,720 cattle, 3,155 horses, 500 pigs; plus 600 acres of wheat and 200 of maize.

VICTORY FOR THE SQUATTERS

After a prolonged and often bitter struggle against the growing power of the squatters and their associated pastoral interests, Governor Gipps' attempts to control the former were curbed by passing of Imperial Waste Lands Act by the UK Parliament in 1847. Gipps' position had been based on the premise that, while further land settlement should be encouraged, squatters should only be granted *use* of the land they occupied because of the very low rentals they were paying.

A year after he was somewhat ignominiously replaced, Orders-in-Council came down squarely in the squatters' favour. The already moribund concept of the Nineteen Counties, the Limits of Location and the more recent squatting districts were scrapped, and replaced by three new geographical categories of land in NSW:

- 1) *Settled Districts* – comprising the coastal and town areas roughly but not completely equivalent to the old Nineteen Counties, where pastoral leases were issued on a year-to-year basis.
- 2) *Intermediate Districts* – embracing the more populated pastoral regions, where land was held on eight-year leases but could be offered for public auction at the end of each year on 60 days' notice from the government.
- 3) *Unsettled Districts* – consisting of the 'outback' grazing lands held on 14-year leases during which the lessee could purchase his run, meanwhile no longer paying a fixed rental but rather an annual amount which varied with the number of stock carried.

Following the repeal of the *Limits of Location Act*, licences to "depasture" stock were periodically issued in the local area. For example, licences issued on 1 July 1845 included William Nowland, Dr Isaac Haig, John Bossley, Peter Brodie, David Cohen, George Jenkin, Robert Pringle, Samuel Cook, Dr John Maunder Gill, John Freeman, Charles Hal and Henry Dangar.

In the first proclamation of new administrative divisions in the Peel area at the end of 1848, only County Parry (on the southern side of a line formed by the Peel and Cockburn rivers) and County Buckland (further south and stretching down to the Liverpool Ranges) were classified as intermediate districts. County Inglis (on the north side of the Cockburn and Peel and extending into New England) and those of the Darling (further to the north), Nandewar and Pottinger (to the west) were classified as Unsettled Districts. Overall, the new system had many flaws. One was that while the new classifications gave squatters a security of tenure far beyond the previous situation, rents and assessments for various categories of land were so minute in their variation that it was calculated that for the Liverpool Plains the average annual payment was less than one-sixth of a penny per acre.

In August 1848, the Government Gazette provided the first comprehensive list of rural holdings in the Peel Valley, detailing runs held by licensees ranging in size

from the six square miles (3,480 acres) of Tuckeramien (around the government side of Tamworth and later mostly absorbed by the town) to the 147,200 acres of Bubbogullion around the future projected village of Bective. This latter holding was to expand in the next decade or so to a colossal 425,000 acres. In a similar vein, John Eales accumulated four different runs totalling 127,000 acres, and John Gill was also amassing vast tracts of land.

A list of late 1840s holdings by name and their size in hectares is as follows:

Attunga 16,578; Bective 32,370; Bendemeer 6,640; Breeza 19,427; Bobbogullian 58,880; Carroll 8,095; Colley Creek 16,190; Congi 6,640; Cuerindie 20,460; Currabubula 7,600; Dungowan 14,973; Durham Court 12,949; Goonoo Goonoo 123,138; Hanging Rock 3,389; Haning 3,480; Keepit 6,070; Kiori 3,327; Longford 8,000; Looanga 14,000; Menedebrie 16,319; Mooki Springs 7,252; Moonbi 20,124; Nemingha 5,364; Pialloway 6,296; Piallmore 2,560; Retreat 13,280; Rimbanda 15,360; Quirindi Creek 12,949; Ranger's Valley 5,666; Summer Hill 4,000; Surveyor's Creek 16,000; Swamp Oak Creek 20,715; Summer Hill 3,885; Tuckerman 1,813; Walhallow 56,676; Wallabadah 17,614; Warrah 101,015; Weia Weia Creek 13,280; Woolomin 4,025; Woolomol 4,662; Wombramurra 8,095.

The runs were typically open range country with a head station that often included as station store, butcher, gardener, dairyman and farrier. The runs were managed by an overseer who supervised the work of the stockmen and shepherds scattered across the holding, and often strategically located close to water. The head stations were often stopping points that provided hospitality for travellers, and many were soon on their way to becoming towns or villages in their own right.

Urban Tamworth was surrounded large land holdings. It would be decades before the 'stranglehold' of the squatters of much of the land around Tamworth would be broken. Whenever land came on the market, the buyer was usually an existing pastoralist who could afford to expend far more on the purchase than the small prospective farmer.

MEDICAL SERVICES

As part of their “wider” community responsibility in exchange for their land, the AA Company was required to pay for the provision of early medical services. The Post Office Directory of 1839 mentions a Dr Rogers at Peel’s River as the first known doctor to have practiced in Tamworth. The Company then recruited and employed, in 1840 a Doctor Jay, from England as the resident medical officer in Tamworth.

The *Wallabadah Manuscript* provides an interesting insight into early community health issues:

The old hands in the Tamworth district died off very quickly, particularly the assigned servants, as the climate was warm and tropical. The want of vegetables [because] Tamworth would not grow a head of cabbage in the early days, had a good deal to do with the state of things. Only salt tucker and damper were the diet of these people and their blood got out of order and Dr Rogers the Company’s Medical Officer had no easy task at the Company’s hospital having to look after as many as fifteen patients at a time.

Mrs Sarah Ann Willis, who had trained originally at Guy’s Hospital in London, became, towards the end of 1840, the first matron of Tamworth’s first hospital. The hospital building, with slab sides, a bark roof and earthen floor had beds for 10 patients. It was situated in Ebsworth Street, between Gipps and Mathews Streets (at about the position of the present Cadman Motor Inn). A house was also built for the matron beside the hospital and it stood until 1915. Matron Willis’ assistant in her work was her husband.

Given the comments in the *Wallabadah Manuscript* as to the local ‘state of health’, it is perhaps not surprising that the first cemetery was proximate to the first hospital. Nor, that it was “officially full” by 1850. The cemetery was situated on half an acre near the bank of Goonoo Goonoo Creek (at the back of what is now the motel extending from the junction of Bridge and Ebsworth Streets). Despite the “no vacancies sign”, burials were to continue at the site for a further thirteen years as it was not until 16 July 1863 that a new cemetery site was dedicated.

Because of the general unsuitability of the first cemetery site, including the pattern of persistent flooding, the original headstones were subsequently removed to more suitable locations. However, for many decades after its closure, the site was still identifiable by nearby clumps of bamboos.

In 1845, Dr Isaac Haigh established a surgery in Tamworth close to the hospital. Dr Richard Jenkins came to Australia in 1846 and was living in Tamworth by 1848. Apart from his medical practice, he acquired several major land holdings (including Piallmore, Woolomin and Wombramurra stations).

Another prominent early practitioner in Tamworth was Dr Joshua Dowe who arrived in the colony of NSW in 1840 and established a practice at Windsor. In 1860, he purchased Woolomol Station for his sons and returned to Windsor. However, by 1864, he was living permanently in Tamworth. He served as the Government Medical Officer and involved himself in numerous community activities until his death in 1875.

DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN THE LOCAL AREA

Immediately following the discovery of gold by Edmund Hargraves at Summer Hill in February 1851, gold fever swept the colonies. Further substantial finds were made at other localities such as Ballarat, the Turon and Golden Gully. The bush roads were soon swarming with would be prospectors. In the local area, people began seeking their prospective fortune in every creek, gully and hill.

Gold was discovered on Swamp Oak Creek station late in 1851. Prospectors rushing to the immediate area met with little further success. However, wider prospecting soon revealed that gold existed in the rivers and creeks on both sides of the range.

The major discoveries commenced in August 1851 when Nathan Burrows, a squatter occupying the Hanging Rock country as part of his run, discovered a man in the act of washing for gold with a pint pot at Swamp Oak Creek, which rises at the top of Hanging Rock. He showed Burrows the gold that that he had already obtained, after first noticing a few yellow specks at the bottom of his pannikin when washing it after a meal. Burrows went to Tamworth and informed William Cohen who ran the Commercial Store of the discovery. Two days later, Cohen went to Hanging Rock with two other men (Charles Parsons and William Blackburn). In the company of Burrows, they made a close inspection of the area and quickly obtained several ounces of gold. When they returned to Tamworth with the news, the gold rush began immediately.

Mining parties were swiftly organised, and men abandoned their jobs to clamber into carts heading towards Hanging Rock.

The discovery at Hanging Rock was quickly followed the further finds at Bowling Alley point. The name was derived from the fact that a hotel, named the “Jenny Lind”, which featured both a bowling alley and billiard table, was quickly built on a “point” (bend) of the river. When experienced prospectors arrived in the area, they concentrated on a little oak-lined creek (hence the name Oakenville Creek) which stretched for four miles from near the Rock to the Peel River.

During February 1852 gold from Swamp Oak Creek and Hanging Rock was reported to be reaching Maitland. There were already 27 cradles working at Hanging Rock, and the number was growing daily.

At the end of February, Lawrie and Renwick from Port Stephens, two men who had been in the Californian prospecting of 1849, discovered gold in what was soon to become known as the Peel Diggings when they picked out small nuggets from rock crevices in the riverbed pocket knives.

Before the end of March, the *Maitland Mercury* reported:

Few persons are now at work on the original Hanging Rock diggings. The main body of diggers, some 200 in number, are gathered on the Peel, six or seven miles from

Hanging Rock and twenty-seven miles from Tamworth and about a day's walking distance from the head station at Goonoo Goonoo. The present digging space at the Peel is about a mile in length, extending from the point where Messrs Laurie and Renwick found their gold (and where they are now at work) to another point about a mile off.

Alluvial gold tended to be found close to the surface and required few tools, meaning that miners could carry dug earth on the backs or horseback to the nearest water course for washing. A number of local people soon established themselves as gold buyers. They included Dr R. L. Jenkins, who had Woolomin Station and had also built Nundle's first hotel, Lewis W. Levy and members of the Cohen family. Meanwhile, local farming and other enterprises had to continue short handed as many abandoned their prior activities to seek their fortune. As well, once the rush got underway, locals were joined by former Californian diggers, Europeans, and large number of Chinese.

In the early stages the mining life was particularly harsh. Food and suitable tools were relatively scarce. A 'staple' diet could sometimes be kangaroo and wallaby meat.

On 24 July 1852, accompanied by the Crown Commissioner for Lands and an armed escort, the first gold from the local fields arrived in Maitland. In the next two months a further 10,591 ounces followed, carried either privately or by escort - valued at 36,614 pounds.

At first, the mining population was a shifting population – their concentration tending to correlate with the location of the latest find. Eventually, attention turned to settling down in a particular spot and setting to work washing out the creeks and turning over the gullies. As well as the miners, an additional population quickly appeared near the gold sites consisting of various merchants. In particular, there was a proliferation of stores and inns close to where prospecting was occurring.

With the discovery of gold in the area, the Australian Agricultural Company formed itself into the Peel River Land & Mineral Company in order to allow it to become involved in goldmining and to collect fees for goldminers' licences – neither of which activities were covered by its original charter. A Bill for its formation was passed by the UK Parliament and the Company was registered under the Joint Stock Companies Act.

The new company took over the AA station at Goonoo Goonoo (including its 44,114 sheep, 270 horned cattle, 171 horses and ponies and station improvements) in late December 1853 and engaged a German mineralogist to import German miners and machinery. The A.A.'s hopes of wealth through gold were based on the assumption that the side of the river it occupied at Nundle would contain gold in the sorts of quantities that were appearing on the other side of the river.

Initially, the Company, which now held the land free of all reservations, forbade miners to dig on its land. To protect against poachers, a private police force was established which camped in special barracks at Nundle and made regular patrols.

Miners countered by establishing a watch over the police camp and their patrols. When the “coast was clear” at night in a particular area desired for prospecting, there would be an influx of miners.

It soon became apparent to the company that it was impossible to prevent mining encroachment onto its land. Hence, in July 1854, the Company stated the terms on which miners could work on its land, and, in February 1855, opened its side of the Peel River to the public for a fee of ten shillings per month per miner.

While gold was discovered on the Peel Estate in March 1852, gold mining on the “A.A. side of the river” was a comparative failure. The “mineral” side of the new company did not reach the early optimistic expectations.

On a wider basis, gold discoveries had a big impact on the colony. Not only did it reverse the exodus to the Californian goldfields, but it brought to NSW an influx of new people. After the separation of Victoria in 1851, the population of NSW was 187,000. By 1860, it had nearly doubled to 348,000, despite the fact that the new colony of Queensland was also separated in 1859. Many of the gold seekers stayed on in the colonies. There was newly generated capital to fund fledgling industrialisation and further urbanisation as miners left the fields.

Labour shortages had developed in the cities during the gold rushes. In turn, this led to a rapid improvement in working wages and conditions, as well as an increasing demand to “unlock” land for smaller holdings by breaking up the vast squatter runs.

Locally, the alluvial gold gave out after about four years. Some prospectors stayed on to become reef miners of the hills and valleys. However, most were replaced in the 1860s by quartz-crushing machines. While many diggers moved on to other fields, some stayed in the area and set up businesses.

DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN NUNDLE

The gold rush of the first half of 1852 was a key factor for urban development in an area where previously there had been only scattered settlement. Before the village was laid out, settlement was already underway in Happy Valley and Oakenville Creek in the form particularly of stores and inns. These areas were eventually to form suburbs of Nundle.

What was to become Nundle was situated beside a fertile valley at the cross roads of the routes connecting Tamworth, Hanging Rock and New England with the Hunter via Crawney Pass. The site was also at the centre of the goldfields.

Approval for the layout of a village was given on 18 October 1852 and completed early the next year by Surveyor Gorman. The site was officially notified in the *Government Gazette* of 23 February 1854 as “Nundle on the Peel River in the Pastoral District of Liverpool Plains”. The site was on a slope to the eastern side of the Peel River, between the junction with it of Oakenville Creek and Nundle Creek, only about 10 miles from the river’s source. The name is believed to have been derived from the indigenous word “nuntal” or mouth in probable reference to the junction of Nundle Creek with the Peel River.

In the same year as the site of the town approval was given, the Peel River Land and Mineral Company also laid out a township on the western side of the river (at the southern end of its holdings and proximate to the gold fields) and offered the first sale of quarter acre blocks on 1 July 1854. This area was designated “West Nundle”. Although some original buildings were placed there - such as the Catholic and New England churches and the Denominational School - the “other” Nundle did not readily gain popular appeal as a growth area.

As with Tamworth, some of the early street names were linked with locals. The principal street was Jenkins Street (after Dr R.L. Jenkins who was one of the earliest residents of the area and holder of the Swamp Oak Creek run). The same principle applied to Gill Street (John Gill). Charles and Hall streets carried the names of the prominent AA employee. Inness and Durban streets were named after the first two gold commissioners for the area.

The only existing buildings on the site of the government township when the initial layout was completed were an inn on six acres reserved for Dr Jenkins’ improvements on the north-west corner of Jenkins and Durbin streets, and the police barracks on a bend in the river below its junction with Oakenville Creek. The first auction of allotments in Nundle village was held at Tamworth on 9 February 1855. Prominent purchasers at the sale included William and Lewis Cohen, Thomas and William McClelland, Lewis Palmer, John Andrews, James Greer and William Settatree. The highest price paid was for a lot at the corner of Inness and Herring Streets.

THE NUNDLE LOCALE – A RETROSPECTIVE

The following extract is taken from William Bayley's publication, *Hills of Gold* – written at the time at the time of Nundle's 1953 centenary:

Romantically spread along the foot of a low line of hills and skirted at the western edge by the glittering waters of the upper reaches of the Peel River is the tablelands town of Nundle.....

Rising behind the town, only a few short miles to the east, majestically stretch the high hills of the Great Dividing Range, broken by countless steep-sided gorges and gullies, the scene of the feverish activity and excitement of Nundle's former glorious golden days. High above the settlement, as the eye views it from the west, towers that awe-inspiring landmark and sentinel of its early days, the Hanging Rock.

The vast mountainside with its massive treeless rock face overhangs the chasm at its base and rises hundreds of feet to the plateau above. The enormous rock precipice, guiding beacon of a hundred years, will remain to time eternal a reminder of the days of gold which gave the town of Nundle its birth. But life is quiet around the Hanging Rock today – the silence broken only by the calls of bush birds and the rustle of the 'roo.

Southwards a few miles to the source of the Peel in the Liverpool Ranges peacefully stretches a smooth and verdant valley where squatters had begun their toil before the rural silence was broken, ere a few short years of settlement had passed, by thronging gold seekers.

THE LAND ACTS

The 1850s was a time of great prosperity for landholders. Domestic demand kept the price of meat high, while wool prices in England were also good. However, most of the local land was still held in large tracts owned and occupied by a small number on extremely favourable terms. The Census of 1861 indicated that the Liverpool Plains district (which included the Tamworth area) now had a total population of about 5,500. Of the district's two million or so hectares of land, there were only 107 pastoral holdings. There was also a comparative lack of divergence outside of sheep and cattle with, for example, less than 500 hectares under cultivation.

The big property owners were reluctant to downsize and was difficult for small farmers to establish themselves. The growth of urban Tamworth was similarly slow (despite the gold discoveries). It had only reached about 600 by 1860. There was an undoubted link to the land ownership issue, with most of the farming land along the Peel River from upstream of Nundle to downstream of Somerton locked up. As well, local urban business was, to a large extent, dependent on bullock teams hauling goods and supplies to and from the area that used the town as a stopover point.

Even in situations where pastoralists were prepared to release some of their land holdings, or when tracts of government land became occasionally available, it was still difficult for potential small farmers to acquire it. The minimum auction rate was around one pound per acre. Very few could afford such a price without borrowing heavily.

The issue of access to land was set against the background of emerging political developments.

In 1823, the British Parliament passed an Act "for the better administration of Justice in New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land, and for the effectual Government thereof", in line with a general colonial policy development of allowing controlled legislatures in colonies. The Act, more usually referenced as "The New South Wales Act" provided for the appointment of the first five-person council to advise the Governor. They had, however, no law-making power as only the Governor could initiate legislation.

In 1842, the British Parliament passed the first NSW Constitution Act. Consequent thereupon, an enlarged NSW Legislative Council took office the following year. Of the 36 members, 24 were now elected (all of the members of the prior, smaller Council had all been appointed by the Governor) at the first elections ever to take place for a parliament in Australia. However, this first step towards representative government was a relatively small one. Membership of the Council was restricted to those who owned property to the value of 2,000 pounds or more. Voting was restricted to men who owned property to the value of 200 pounds or paid an annual rental of at least 20 pounds. As well, the Governor still had more power than the Council. For example, if the Council passed a bill with which he disagreed, the

Council could be dissolved and the proposed legislation referred to the British Government.

In 1850, the Australian Colonies Government Act was passed by the British Parliament. It again expanded the NSW Legislative Council to 54 members – with two-thirds elected. By this time, convict transportation had ceased, and agitation against unrepresentative government was growing.

NSW was no longer a convict colony. No convicts had been sent from Britain since 1840. Indeed, convicts and former convicts were very much a minority of the population. However, some of the landowners advocated resumption of transportation as a means of providing a cheap solution to their labour problems. In June 1849, their attempts seemed successful with the convict transport Hashemy's arrival in Sydney. This event provoked large demonstrations. Consequent thereupon, the Legislative Council, in what was probably its first statement of political "independence" from Britain and an indication that the power of the "squattocracy" was beginning to wane.

Large pastoral estates had also come under increasing political scrutiny. Many colonists, and especially those of Irish descent with fresh memories of landlordism in their former homeland, were hostile to the growth of large estates. By the 1850s, a specific political campaign had developed against the 200 families regarded as dominating rural settlement with their vast pastoral runs held on lease from the crown.

In 1853, a select committee, chaired by William Charles Wentworth, began drafting a constitution for self-government for NSW. Wentworth hoped to transplant much of the English franchise model of the time – in which voting was linked to property and privilege. The Committee proposed a Lower House composed of electorates in a form that would heavily favour country and squatting interests, and an Upper House of Hereditary Peers (dubbed the "bunyip aristocracy" by its opponents) like the English House of Lords. A revised Constitution Act was not finally passed by the British Parliament until July 1855.

The issue of land reform continued to dominate NSW politics in the 1860s. It was central to the 1860 election of the NSW Legislative Assembly for Tamworth voters as part of the electorate of the Liverpool Plains. The choice was between two candidates (both Sydney men). One of them, Alexander Dick, favoured land reform and was strongly supported by townspeople. The other, Charles Kemp, favoured the status quo and was supported by the squatters. Dick won by an overwhelming vote ratio of six to one (by 133 votes to 12 in Tamworth and 392 to 62 in the total electorate). A similar trend occurred state wide.

In May 1861, the Crown Lands Alienation Act, often referenced as the Robertson Land Act, was passed by the Legislative Assembly. It was the work of the Premier of New South Wales, John Robertson, who was determined to break up the land-holding monopolies of the squatter-pastoralists. This legislation was the first of two Acts opening up free selection of unreserved Crown land. It permitted any person to select from 40 to 320 acres, including land already held under pastoral leases, on the conditions of paying a deposit of one-quarter of the purchase price after survey

with a five per cent fixed interest to be paid on the remainder. Selection had to be made before survey; the land had to be lived on for three years after purchase and improved on an annual basis.

The Robertson Land Act and its subsequent legislative adjustments did not achieve much of its core land reform aim in the short term. The squatters were the ones with most of the capital, and they were also given a pre-emptive right to select the choicest areas from their leases. Many of the settlers who actually managed to take up land were thus denied the choicest area or struggled financially irrespective of the quality of their selection.

Another consequence of the Robertson reforms was the further marginalisation of Aboriginal people by the enablement of close settlement of pastoral lands which had hitherto still been available for indigenous usage.

Despite these inherent difficulties, land was taken up in all the pastoral leases around Tamworth. The most sought after were in the Dungowan and Cockburn valleys.

EARLY COMMUNICATIONS

The arrival of a mail coach was an event of great importance for early inland settlers. It brought letters from distant relatives and friends, news, new arrivals and was often something of a social occasion.

In September 1839, as part of an extended network of postal services approved at that time, the Colonial Secretary approved tenders called for the conveyance of mails to and from Tamworth which was to become a distribution point for much of the north west. At that time, letters to Sydney went to Morpeth by pack horse and then by boat to Sydney. Postage from Tamworth to Sydney was 14 pence – an amount calculated on the distance the letter had to be carried.

The role of first postmaster fell to storekeeper Thomas Byrnes, who commenced his official duties on 1 January 1840 from his slab and bark hut store near the Peel River. When Byrnes sold his store, four months later, to George Schofield, the latter also took over the postal role. Then, in 1844, Carden Williams bought the store and became postmaster. He was soon in financial difficulties as a storekeeper and creditors took over his premises (he vacated only reluctantly – after the roof was removed). Williams took the rudimentary post office equipment with him and resumed his role as postmaster on the Company side of the river (i.e. West Tamworth) using a blanket tent for a premises until he could obtain more suitable premises (a cottage in Ebsworth Street).

At the time of first postmaster (i.e. Byrnes) the Postmaster, under arrangements with the Colonial Secretary, received 20 per cent of all postage remuneration for postal duties. Mails from Sydney reached Tamworth by boat to Morpeth, and then by horse via Maitland, Patrick's Plains and Muswellbrook. Similarly, they were so conveyed to Sydney once a week. It was not until the introduction of trains and later, the opening of the Hawkesbury Bridge in 1889, that there was a substantial "speed up" in delivery times.

By 1850, William Cohen, another storekeeper operating from Ebsworth Street, had become postmaster with business similarly transacted from his store. The location of the post office went back across to its original side of the river in the following year when what had become Cohen & Levy opened a new store in Peel Street and one of its principals, Lewis Levy, became the postmaster. Thereafter, the mail operations remained in a room of Cohen & Levy's store for over a decade.

During the early 1850s, a Post Office was also established at Goonoo Goonoo. Originally, it was situated in old station store building, but later, it was relocated to a stone building which still stands. The first Postmaster was Samuel Haig who, immediately previously, had been storekeeper with the A.A. Company. Postal work at the Goonoo Goonoo office was hectic. Mail coming from the south had to be sorted into two lots – one for Tamworth and the other for Nundle. Mail also arrived from the north between 1am and 2am three times a week, and it had to be sorted by 4am. The Post Office at Goonoo Goonoo did not close until 1952.

As a result of an ever growing volume of business, in 1862 the Government decided there was a need not only for a full-time postmaster in Tamworth but also for the establishment of a specific purpose building for the conduct of postal services. George Denshire came from Muswellbrook to fill the full-time position, commencing duty on 1 September, with his wife Mary as his assistant. As an interim measure, it was decided that a specific building would be temporarily used pending the building of the permanent post office. Denshire, under instructions from Sydney, commenced a search for a suitable building for the temporary post office. After some difficulty, and through the requested assistance of police magistrate D.W. Denning, a small cottage in Peel Street was procured.

Around the end of 1865, a single-storey building was completed and ready for use as a post office at the corner of Peel and Fitzroy streets (with the building facing Fitzroy Street). By the time Denshire retired as Postmaster in 1867, Tamworth was processing in excess of 700 letters a week (this volume was to rise to 4,000). He was replaced by Tamworth's first postmistress, Sarah Beckett.

The telegraph had reached NSW in 1858, and the line reached Tamworth on 1 October 1861. Tamworth's call sign was "AH". By early 1864, Tamworth had become an important telegraph station in that it served as a feeder point for lines to locations such as Gunnedah, Narrabri, Boggabri, Wee Waa and Walgett.

When Sarah Beckett died in October 1871, her husband Thomas Beckett (already the Telegraph Master) replaced her. From then on, the positions of Postmaster and Telegraph Master were merged – under a policy for such mergers that had been introduced.

The first letter box (cleared twice daily) in Tamworth was erected in 1870 outside the Woolpack Inn at the corner of Bridge and Church streets in West Tamworth. A second followed in 1873 at the junction of Peel and Jewry streets. These first two were then followed by boxes at the corner of Marius and East streets (1876), Bridge and Belmore (1879), and Peel and Darling (1884).

From early 1870, there was lobbying for a postman to serve Tamworth (i.e. deliver letters to each residence). Despite initial resistance from the Postmaster General, on the basis that the volume of mail did not justify the appointment, but local persistence resulted in the appointment of James Johnston to do the job via horseback.

By 1877, further agitation was underway for a second carrier. The PMG responded that there was too much work for one, but not enough for two postmen. A compromise ensued, by which Charles Chandler was appointed as a second but part-time carrier (he had to finish his work by midday). It was not until 1883 that two full-time postmen delivered letters.

The early postmen were rather conspicuous – their summer uniform consisted of corduroy trousers, red coats and white helmets.

The first issue of Tamworth's first newspaper, the *Tamworth Examiner*, was published on 13 April 1859. It was established by John Hollings and James Gallagher and operated from Fitzroy Street. However, much of the early advertising was still actually by Maitland businesses - that centre still being a major service centre of the north and north west at this time. Prior to 1859, the *Maitland Mercury* (published from 1843) was the 'local' paper for residents of Tamworth and surrounding areas.

TAMWORTH'S EARLY FLOODS AND BRIDGES

The problems with traversing the Peel River in and around Tamworth actually commenced with Oxley's visit in 1818. He and his exploration party crossed it at a point about 10 kilometres downstream of the future urban site. His journal recorded:

.....finding it too deep to be forded we constructed a bridge across a narrow part of it, by felling such large trees as we could meet, by which the baggage was taken over: the horses were swum across. One of the men, foolishly attempting to swim over on a horse, nearly paid for his imprudence with his life; as he could not swim, he was carried down stream near a quarter of a mile, and was several minutes under water. His body being providentially washed across a log was the means of his preservation.

During the early years of settlement, there was no bridge across the Peel River in Tamworth. Residents and travellers had to ford the river. Three main ford points were favoured. The most popular was just upstream of where the Jewry Street bridge was later located, with the other points being at the back of what was to become No 3 Oval, above the junction of the Cockburn and Peel rivers, and in the vicinity of the caravan park.

Thus, pedestrians crossing the river used “temporary bridges” – usually in the form of felled trees, which only remained available until the next rise in the river. Gradually, the number of trees readily available at major crossing points became less and less, and those wishing to fell a tree for river crossing purposes had to move further and further away from where they wanted to cross. Efforts were then made to construct wooden foot bridges, which tended to be flimsy and sometimes unsafe. The last of the wooden foot bridges was lost in the flood of 1857.

During the flood of 1852, some 300 men on their way to the Bingara diggings were stranded near the area that was to become West Tamworth Railway Station. When William Cohen's Commercial Store ran out of food supplies for the men, a large gum tree was felled across the river to serve as a footbridge with a rope alongside to transfer 500 kilograms of flour from the Cohen & Levy store on the east of the river.

An 1853 A.A. Company map shows a footbridge across Goonoo Goonoo Creek. However, by 1856, not only had this footbridge been washed away, but two replacement ones had met a similar fate. On 22 April 1856, an advertisement appeared in the *Maitland Mercury* announcing tenders for “the erection of a footbridge over the Peel River and for the erection of a substantial bridge over Goonoo Goonoo [sic] Creek”. Consequently, a bridge was built over the Peel River, somewhere between Bourke and Darling streets. It, too, was washed away in the flood of June 1857.

The first relatively enduring solution to prevent Tamworth being cut in half by floods was provided by William S. Dowel. His father was an English building contractor whose constructions had included a suspension bridge across the Thames

in London. William Dowel came to Australia in 1851, and to the local area under the influence of the gold finds. His initial work was on George Cohen's two-storeyed Tamworth Hotel. Ultimately, his name was to be linked to some of the most important of Tamworth's nineteenth century constructions – including the first and second St Nicholas's churches, St John's Church, the Dominican Convent, the West Tamworth Primary School, the Royal Standard Brewery, the Tamworth Watch House, the new Court House at the corner of Peel and Darling streets and Munro's Mill.

In 1857, William Dowel also built a suspension bridge over the Peel River. It was also probably the first bridge of this type to be built in Australia. A local blacksmith fashioned the ironwork out of metal purchased from local merchants, while the suspension chains actually came from the salvage of a ship which had been wrecked at Port Stephens. Dowel's suspension bridge was also a source of controversy when he initially attempted to charge a toll for using it.

Tenders to build a "permanent" wooden bridge over the Peel in Tamworth were called in April 1859 at a contract price of three thousand pounds. When no offers were received, the price was increased to 3,300 pounds and an offer was made by W. Chowne which was accepted. This new bridge, located just upstream of the site of Dowel's bridge, was completed in March 1861. The northern approaches to it were washed away in the floods of 1864 and 1874.

The following account of the impact of the February 1864 flood was given in the *Sydney Mail*:

The inhabitants of Tamworth were aroused by water coming into their houses throughout the whole length of Peel Street – upwards of a mile. They immediately set to work to elevate their goods and chattels above the reach of all former floods.

While thus employed, the water rose still higher, till at last they were obliged to fly to save their lives and let the worst befall their property. On Friday morning, when the water had gone down sufficiently to allow an inspection, the scene of devastation could hardly be described. Wherever the eyes rested, great destruction had taken place; the streets were torn up as if by an army of navvies; bridges and portions others were swept away; fences completely destroyed – in fact there was not a fence standing in the main street which the water had not touched – not only fencing but large fruit trees – have been torn up by the roots and carried off.

Damage in the 1864 flood was by no means confined to Tamworth. Damage was widespread in both the Peel and Namoi Valleys with homesteads destroyed and stock losses substantial (2,600 on sheep drowned on one station alone).

The flood led to changes of location for a number of Tamworth businesses to less flood prone positions. Those that chose a new site wisely had their precaution vindicated only two years later when another major flood hit the Tamworth urban area. Again, an account in the *Sydney Mail* of 21 July 1866 described the impact:

On Wednesday night it began to rain, and with slight intermissions it continued to fall steadily, but on Thursday morning a steady volume commenced and poured down the whole day without the slightest abatement....

The river, however, on Thursday evening had not risen above a few feet, so hardly anyone anticipated a flood. By Friday morning, however, it was up to the bank, and at the lower points had broken over and was making its way into the main street opposite the hospital and Court House.....

.....as the day wore on, the volume increased until it spread over the whole street and into nearly all the houses on both sides....About noon the waters of the Goonoo Goonoo Creek added considerably to those of the Peel and Cockburn, and shortly after the main street was wholly covered, the water having escaped over the banks in several places, and a strong current running down either side.....

.....The whole of Nemingha [sic] Flat is, more or less, covered with water, very deep in parts, the Peel and Cockburn rivers having formed a junction, and a strong current running down the centre. A good deal of injury will, we are afraid, be done to the crops in this locality, and higher up the Peel towards Nundle.

During the 1850s, there was also agitation for a bridge across the Cockburn River proximate to the “Nemingha Flat”, and by 1859 the Government had promised to half the estimated 200 pounds needed to build it. After some disputes over whether the bridge should be located at the end of Peel Street or two miles out of town on the Armidale Road, this bridge was completed in 1861. The fact that the government grant was for a Peel Street bridge and that its location there would have greater usage, eventually won the day. This bridge was initially known as the Cockburn Bridge, but was later to be more popularly referred to as the Paradise Bridge. When Dowel’s suspension bridge over the Peel River was replaced, it was relocated to the Armidale Road “Two-Mile” site.

There was also a fairly early need for bridges over Goonoo Goonoo Creek and Barnes Gully, as both waterways hindered access to and from Tamworth. The first bridge over the former was built in 1859 and the latter in 1863. However, the flood of 1864 completely destroyed the Goonoo Goonoo construction and washed away the approaches to the one spanning Barnes Gully. Then, in the flood of 1874, the water broke through the alluvial soil and carved a new and earlier main channel for the entry of Goonoo Goonoo Creek into the Peel River.

The origins of one local bridge are most interesting. By the early 1860s, most of the mining at Bowling Alley Point was being done (much of it without licence) on the Peel River Land and Mineral Company side of the Peel River. However, the Company would not allow the construction of any hotels on its side – in stark contrast to establishments such as the “Jenny Lind”, the “Specimen Inn”, the “Hit-or-Miss”, the “Peel River”, the “Bird-in-Hand” and “Mulray’s” (as well as numerous sly grog shops) on the other side of the river. Miners working on the “wrong side of the river” used to wade across it to patronise the pubs. However, the publicans’ business suffered badly whenever the current was too strong.

A group of publicans jointly financed the fabrication in England of an iron footbridge. Weighing some 14 tonnes, it was shipped to New South Wales in pieces in 1863. It was then transported on bullock wagons to Bowling Alley Point to provide a crossing for the thirsty. Rather appropriately, it became known as the “Publican’s Bridge”.

Tamworth was hit by yet another serious flood in July 1874. Showers fell from the middle of a week until Sunday, when the rain became heavy. By the Monday, morning the Peel River had broken its banks. Goonoo Goonoo Creek also broke its banks and joined the Peel near where it currently does (although this did not become the main convergence channel until the after the 1890s).

While the level of the flood was calculated as being 57 centimetres below the height reached in the flood of 1864, it was over a metre deep in the lowest buildings in Peel Street. The northern approach to the Peel Bridge was also washed away once more, and water running down from the hills around Tamworth created gullies in White, Macquarie, Fitzroy and Blight Streets.

EARLY SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

Under the terms of its charter, the A.A. Company was required to provide for the spiritual needs of its Peel and Warrah settlers. Early on, the Rev. William Cowper, based at Stroud, was appointed as Company Chaplin. From 1836 to 1848, he undertook a regular monthly visit by horseback to his new parishioners (a round trip of 320kms). The Rev. Cowper was to later to become Dean of Sydney, and the significance of his contribution to early spiritual life in this area was revived via the naming of the William R. Cowper Anglican School after him.

The extraordinary distances travelled in inland Australia by the early religious practitioners tended to be the norm, not the exception. Another local example was that of the Catholic Priest Father James Hardy who celebrated Mass in Tamworth in 1854 on his way from Ipswich to Sydney by horseback.

Tamworth's first school was established by English-born William Henry Porter who came to Australia in 1838 at the age of 20. It is probable that the impetus for the school, opened in 1847, came from the AA Company's Charter obligations. Porter, the son of a British army officer, had been born in Calcutta, had been educated in England. He qualified as a barrister there, but did not practice. After coming to the colonies, he worked on a Queensland cattle station and as journalist prior to taking up the teaching appointment in Tamworth.

The school consisted two-roomed bark hut on a hill in West Tamworth. The following insight into school life appeared in the *Wallabadah Manuscript*:

Mr Porter was a strict man over scholars. He had only to look at them. They were afraid of telling a lie to him. If they did, they were severely punished and would not tell any more untruths again to him.....The writer was in the bark school one day; there was a stockyard about fifty yards away. They were firing at a bullock. They missed him and the bullets came through the walls of the place passing between me and a girl about six inches off our heads and going through the other wall – a narrow escape! I heard the noise of it quite close to my ear. Mr Porter ran out and spoke to them. They ceased firing, taking the beast away to some other place to kill him.

A new and larger school was completed on the corner of what is now Bridge and Ebsworth streets in West Tamworth (opened in 1857). It also had a four-room teacher near the school. This building was used for school classes until August 1883, and it subsequently served as the Retreat Theatre.

Nearby, a residence had also been constructed for the Rev E.W. Williams. The latter had been appointed by Bishop Tyrell of Newcastle as Vicar of the Parish of Liverpool Plains in 1847 with Tamworth as his home base. Far flung as his parish was, it paled in comparison with the size of the Bishop of Newcastle's domain. At that time, the Diocese of Newcastle extended from the Hawkesbury River to Rockhampton. Rev Williams was a popular figure in the area who, in addition to his church duties, became Secretary of the Benevolent Society for ten years and

foundation secretary of the Mechanics Institute. He was given a public farewell prior to his departure from the area in 1860 for Port Macquarie to sail for England.

The difficulty of accessing the school on the “Company side” of the river was one of the reasons advanced for the seeking of a National School (public school) in Tamworth. In 1851, residents petitioned the Board of National Education for a school in East Tamworth. Bishop Tyrell’s response, however, was to convene a public meeting in Tamworth to urge people not to seek a “Godless system of education”. At the end of that year, the Board of National Education announced the sanctioning of a school by the Government, although construction was to be delayed by the scarcity of labour as a result of the local gold discoveries. The original site was at the junction of Peel and Darling streets. The school remained at that site until 1877, when it was replaced by a new educational facility in Upper Street.

The first teacher at the National School was John Crawford (from 1855). When he arrived, there were no books or desks. Four seat benches were provided from the court across the river (when not required for use at that facility). Children took turns at writing on a tub turned upside in lieu of desks. Many years later, his son, John Crawford Jnr, described the early days of the surrounding environment:

At the back of the school about sixty yards away were the public pound yards, through which were passed thousands of animals; horses, cattle, sheep and even pigs. There being no fences in those days, the number of straying stock was immense.....The butchers used to kill at the pound and hang their carcasses on a gallows situated at the corner nearest the school. The blood ran down a gutter towards us.....

The opening of the National School, prompted the AA Company directors to announce that almost 8,000 pounds would be made available to endow churches and schools throughout its land which was to be augmented by donations from other locals. With regard to the Denominational School, the initial proposal was to renovate the existing facilities. However, in April 1857, Bishop Tyrell announced that, instead, a new school and residence would be built at a cost of 600 pounds, adding that it would it “must remain heavily in debt unless Government aid be granted”.

The new building was of two storeys with the school below the residence, constructed of stone, pit-sawn beams, lath and plaster ceilings and shingles. Its initial use as a place of learning was delayed while the search for a suitable teacher was undertaken (during which time it was leased as a dwelling). At the end of its time as a school, the building was to become the Retreat Theatre.

Crawford was to resign as a teacher at the National School in 1860 to take up an appointment at the Denominational School across the river in West Tamworth. He taught there for another ten years. A major factor in the Crawford move was the dilapidated state of the National School, prompting its Board to recruit new members and arrange for the repair and whitewash of the residence and school, fence the school grounds, and even purchase a blackboard and easel.

The provision of education in Tamworth underwent substantial changes (as it did throughout the State) after the passing of the *Public Instruction Act* in 1880. The new legislative requirements included:

- Education was to be compulsory for ages six to 14.
- There were to be five classes of schools – Public, Superior Public, Evening Public, Boys’ High and Girls’ High.
- A certificate was to be issued to each child who attained the satisfactory Standard of Education.
- All aid to church schools was to cease by the end of 1882.

As an almost direct consequence of the impact of the legislation, a new school public school was opened at West Tamworth, but the denominational school (with an enrolment of over 200) was forced to close when its annual grant was terminated.

In December 1849, the “Plan of the Reserve of Tamworth” was amended to show a grant to the Catholic Church of four allotments extending, extending from Marius to Peel streets and fronting the north-western side of White Street. The following year, four allotments were granted to the Wesleyan Church adjacent to the Catholic grant and fronting the south-western side of Marius Street. At this time, no land was set aside for the Church of England, presumably on the basis that the AA Company was looking after its property needs.

The foundation stone for the first St Nicholas’s Catholic Church, on the 1849 land grant, was laid in February 1858. The building was largely a timber construction, with some additional brickwork by William S. Dowel, at a total cost of 575 pounds. Its dedication in January of the following year made it the first completed church in Tamworth. However, it had not been the first church building commenced. The foundation stone for the St Paul’s Church of England had been laid in July 1857. However, although used in an unfinished state, it was not actually completed until May 1860. It took longer to complete mainly because it was a primarily a stone structure.

By 1864, the original St Nicholas’s Catholic Church was considered too small, and a second one was built. The new building was constructed of brick further up the hill from the original (side on to White Street).

The foundation stone for the original St Paul’s Church in West Tamworth was laid by P.G. King on 2 July 1857. The construction, using local stone, was by a Maitland builder at a cost of 1200 pounds. It was consecrated by Bishop Tyrell in November 1859 and finished in May 1860.

In 1863, the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches also received grants of three allotments each fronting Marius Street. The foundation stone for a Presbyterian Church was laid at around that time. However, the Wesleyan services continued to be held for the immediate future in the Court House and then the Mechanics' Institute with no tangible attempt made to erect a church on their land grant. Tamworth's first appointed Wesleyan minister was the Rev. Joseph Hopkins who arrived in Tamworth in April 1868.

A wonderful insight into the logistics of travel of a substantial distance in this period is provided by the Rev. Hopkins' own written record of his journey to Tamworth:

I was at Adelong and started for Tamworth 20 miles on horseback to Gundagai; to Mittagong by coach; to Sydney by train; to Newcastle by steamer; to Singleton by train; and to Tamworth by coach (20 hours), arriving here 10 a.m., Sunday 19th April (Easter Sunday) and taking the Sunday School Anniversary in the Mechanics' Institute at 3 and 7 p.m., after having had a comfortable bed only one night on the trip.

Only a few months after his arrival, Rev Hopkins performed a ceremony of some "note". In the lounge room of Griffin's Inn at Carroll on 31 August, he baptised one Frederick Wordsworth Ward – son of Fredrick Ward (the bushranger Thunderbolt).

In May 1865, the Presbyterian Building Committee with the Rev. Thomas Craig, who had recently arrived to be Tamworth's first Presbyterian minister. It was decided that the first church would be named St. Andrew's and tenders were called for its construction. This initial construction, at a price of 625 pounds, was quite basic as it included neither a vestry nor seats (which were hired from the Mechanics' Institute at a quarterly rate of two shillings "with backs" and one shilling "without backs").

A meeting of members of the Church of England in Nundle in May 1853 reached a decision to erect a bark building to serve as both a church and school. It fronted the Hanging Rock Road, two blocks up from the main street. In November of the same year, a collection was commenced to build a more permanent church. It was constructed in West Nundle and remained in use until destruction by fire towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1854, the Hanging Rock Denominational School opened with some 60 pupils. By 1874 it had ceased operation. However, the building was taken over by the Council of Education, and a new school began with 18 pupils.

The Tamworth Mechanics' Institute was inaugurated on 17 November 1856 at a function held at the National School. There were 31 foundation members (who paid an annual membership fee of 10 shillings) and 28 honorary members (who paid one pound). The inaugural President was Philip Gidley King and Rev. E. Williams was the first Secretary. The Institute organised reading and library activities, lectures and evening entertainment.

Through a combination of matching Government and local donors the Institute acquired a block of land and had its own building, designed by W.S. Dowel, erected

in Brisbane Street (between Peel and Marius Street). The official opening took place on 24 May 1866.

Originally, the building was a rectangular shape approximately eight metres wide and 20 metres deep. It consisted of one big room (often rented for church services) and behind it one or two smaller rooms. The building gradually underwent a name change to the School of Arts.

The Council of Education, pioneered by Henry Parkes, replaced the Board of Education at the end of 1866 and Denominational Schools came under the control of the Council on 1 January 1867. With the formation of the Council, minimum enrolments were introduced for the establishment of new schools (25 for public schools and 30 for denominational schools).

HOTELS

The following are brief comments on some of the early hotels established in the area. Some of the “musical chairs” of licenses and ownership is fascinating in itself.

On 18 April 1848, the four members of the first Court of Petty Sessions met as Licensing Court and granted nine initial hotel licences for the local area. The applicants and the names of the hotels were:

- Lewis Wolfe Levy - Tamworth Inn
- William Telfer – Squatter’s Home (Quirindi)
- John Martin Davis – Donnybrook Inn (Currabubula)
- John Lowe – Sir Thomas Mitchell (Manilla River)
- Henry Butler – The Help a Lambe Dog Over a Stile (Doughboy Hollow)
- William Conroy – Pig and Tinder Box (Breeza)
- John MacKid – Barraba Inn (Barraba)
- John Freeman – The Liverpool Plains Arms (Summer Hill)
- Carden Terry Williams – Sir Robert Peel Inn (Tamworth).

The Sir Robert Peel Inn, located west of the Peel River, was soon known as “Gannon’s Hotel” or “Harvey’s Hotel” when its licence was transferred to two men of these surnames not long after its opening. These latter names continued to be often used, even after its renaming as the “Daniel O’Connell Inn” during the 1850s. After being unlicensed for twelve years, it was bought by a farmer from Hanging Rock in 1875, John Robinson. He renamed it “The Union Inn” and ran the hotel for three years before selling it. The site was never re-licensed and was eventually demolished to make way for a private home (85 Ebsworth Street). That location is now part of the site of the Ashby House Motel.

In 1851, the A.A. Company undertook its first sale of allotments in west of the river. One of these land parcels, situated very close to the Sir Robert Peel Inn, was purchased by John Barnes, who built and opened the Royal Oak Hotel there at the end of that year. This establishment was taken over by a former policeman, Tom King (Senior Sergeant, Gunnedah at the time of his retirement). King proved to be a “colourful licensee” noted for his “innovative advertising”. For example, the following add appeared in the *Tamworth Observer* of 20 April 1878:

CHALLENGE: Tom King, not the late champion of England, is running the Royal Oak Hotel, Company side, Tamworth. Tom knows something of the anatomy of the human form and that the internal organs of man occasionally require to be lubricated. Therefore, he is now dispensing ‘long sleeves’ of excellent beer that convert the jaded old man into a sparkling youthful figure by the peculiar process known only to himself, T.K., by which he is enabled to keep the temperature of his cellars down almost to freezing point, the advantage of which must be apparent to all sufferers of that fever which is the offspring of the long drought. There is no puff and one trial will convince

the sufferer that he can do no better than place himself under the special care of Mine Host of the Royal Oak, when, as if by magic, the constitution will become strengthened and health restored. Every convenience, excellent tables, loose boxes, well-watered horses, buggies etc.

The aforementioned Sir Robert Peel Inn was an entirely separate hotel from the Peel Inn at Nundle. The latter was built in 1861 by William McIlveen, who had moved there after the gold finds and established in the liquor trade. McIlveen sold the inn to John Schofield in 1864.

George Bevege purchased two allotments on the Peel-Brisbane streets western corner and opened the Travellers' Rest Inn in 1853. William Lawrence succeeded Bevege as licensee in 1858. Thereafter, the hotel was often referred to as "Lawrence's". With its strategic location, it became a popular venue for dinners and meetings. When Lawrence died in 1864, his wife continued to run the hotel until around the end of the decade. The license was then taken by Samuel Russ Chaffey (who had previously been the licensee of the Somerset Inn). Upon Chaffey's death in 1872 his wife (the former Elizabeth Best) continued on as licensee until her remarriage in 1874 to G.T. Brooks (who assumed the licence). When the couple moved to Sydney in 1877, the hotel was leased to Peter Shannon. The hotel was then bought by James Goodyer (a prior licensee of the Somerset Inn) in 1880, who renamed it the Globe Hotel.

The Caledonian Hotel was erected in Peel Street, Tamworth in early 1854 on the site now occupied by Coles Supermarket with William Sutherland as the initial owner and licensee. In the absence of a public hall at this time, the hotel lounge was often used both by visiting entertainers and clergy.

Later the same year, George Cohen built Tamworth's first two-storeyed building in Peel Street, which was the first Tamworth Hotel. However, this enterprise was not a success financially, and Cohen surrendered the licence in 1859. The hotel was leased by James Brackenreg (whose previous West Maitland Hotel had been flooded in 1857). His tenure was also short lived. This Tamworth Hotel was auctioned in September 1860.

William Young converted a stone building in Peel Street (where the Commonwealth Bank is now located) that had initially been the residence of the Commissioner for Crown Lands to the Harp of Erin Hotel and became the licensee. After the death of his wife in 1862, Young retained the freehold, but sold the goodwill of the hotel to Samuel Russ Chaffey. The latter renamed the hotel the Somerset Inn. Thereafter, the license was assumed by Albert Janison (who, after coming to the area as a miner, had been the licensee of hotels at Moonbi and Nundle). The Somerset Inn continued to be licensed until about 1880.

In 1867, Thomas Chad built the Union Inn on the Armidale Road (between Crawford and Dayal Streets). The land on which the hotel was situated was owned by his son-in-law, Thomas Fitzpatrick. Subsequent licensees of the Union Inn included another of Chad's son-in-laws, William Lye, and Joseph Chaffey (from 1882 to 1885).

Among the more notable “new” hotels outside of the immediate Tamworth urban area, William McClelland and his wife Sarah established the Coach and Horses Inn at Moonbi in 1856. The McClellands left this hotel around 1870 and then conducted the Wheat Sheaf Inn (also called the Golden Sheaf Hotel) on the Nundle Road between Nemingha and Piallamore. And a former police constable, Charles Norris, opened the Carriers’ Arms Hotel and General Store at Dead Horse Gully (about 10 kms from Manilla) in 1868.

The second hotel to be called the Tamworth Hotel was opened in 1870 with James Thompson as licensee. It was a two-storey building located on the western corner of Peel and White streets. A year after opening, this hotel was taken over by Patrick Doherty, who remained there until 1875. Immediately thereafter, there were a number of successive licensees.

The first Tattersall’s Hotel stood at the corner of Brisbane and Peel streets (the site of the Westpac Bank) and it was opened in late 1873 by William Stephens on what had previously been the workshop of the saddlers B. and G. Moses. Around a year later, the Great Northern Hotel was also opened at the corner of Peel and Fitzroy streets (diagonally opposite the current National Bank site) following the modification of a prior residential site.

The years 1875 to 1878 were major ones for the hotel business in Tamworth. It can be safely assumed the amazing sudden spurt of new hotels and license changes was connected with the pending railway connection to Tamworth.

In 1875:

- The Great Northern Hotel was opened by a person surnamed Cleary. It was situated at the southern corner of Peel and Fitzroy streets.
- James Bryant bought and demolished the double office building which had been built in 1863 for the solicitor William Smith. As well, he acquired all the land from that site through to Brisbane Street. He erected the Exchange Hotel on the Fitzroy Street side of this land. When his wife became seriously ill, Bryant leased the hotel to Elizabeth Lye who remained in charge of the establishment for several years.
- Patrick Doherty left the second Tamworth Hotel to open the first Royal Hotel. It was located on the northern corner of the Peel and Brisbane streets intersection (the site of the current Central Hotel). After Doherty’s departure, the Tamworth Hotel underwent frequent changes of licensees for a number of years.
- Edward Lumbley opened the Club House Hotel in a two storey building in Brisbane Street.
- Henry Heyman (who had arrived from Germany in 1854 and become a successful miner at Bowling Alley Point) and his wife Louise opened the Gold Diggers’ Arms in Marius Street. Following Heyman’s death two years later, his widow married Joseph Smith (who had previously been one of the

proprietors of the *Tamworth Observer*). When Smith left for Queensland, Louise briefly assumed the licence prior to passing it to her son, George Heyman.

In 1876:

- **Lumbley also became the first licensee of the Court House Hotel (so named because of its proximity to that building at the time). Also in 1876, R.B. Taylor became the licensee of a single-storeyed brick building on the Armidale Road (near White Street) which traded as the Queen's Hotel. By 1882, this enterprise, renamed the Tradesmen's Arms was in the hands of Andrew Cross. However, he advertised it for lease the following year. When no applicants took up the leasehold, the hotel closed. It eventually became a two-unit dwelling –with the cellar still underneath the units.**
- **The Town and Country Hotel, situated on the corner of Peel and Bourke streets (later 262 Peel Street) was opened. The first licensee was Thomas Leggett, who stayed there for two years before moving to the Club House Hotel. One of the subsequent licensees was Alfred Bevege (formerly of the Cricketers' Arms Hotel).**
- **Two brothers named Carroll built a two-storeyed brick building on the site of the present 411-413 Peel Street (opposite the Commonwealth Bank). In 1877, they left town heavily in debt. In 1878, Daniel Duff, formerly of Narrabri, remodelled the Carroll Bros building and opened the Criterion Hotel there.**
- **The Prince of Wales Hotel a two-storeyed brick establishment built for Henry Lye opened at the corner of Peel and Murray streets with Thomas Fitzpatrick as its initial licensee.**
- **There is no accurate record of when the Royal Exchange Hotel (situated on the corner of Denne Street and the original William Street –diagonally opposite the current location of West Tamworth Public School). What is recorded is that the licence passed from Eli Thomas to Thomas Y. Gill of Doughboy Hollow in December 1876. However, the hotel closed soon after the extension of the Great Northern Railway across the Peel River.**

In 1877:

- **Thomas Stratton and Apollon Abrihat opened what was originally designated as a “mineral baths” in Peel Street (between Hill and Roderick streets). The initial structure was soon extended beyond a mineral baths, and by July 1878, Stratton was using most of it as a hotel – which he named the Marquis of Lorne (after the gold mine from which he had made his money).**
- **The Imperial Hotel was opened in October 1877 by Eleanor Hughes. In June 1881, Andrew Cross became the licensee. In 1887, while the plumber Charles Bissaker was the licensee, the hotel was entirely rebuilt. Following these**

changes, it had a frontage of 25 metres to Brisbane Street and 13.7 metres to Marius Street and included 60 accommodation rooms.

- In late 1877 or early 1878, James Dwyer (son of the former Chief Constable) opened the Coach & Horses Hotel at what is now 148 Peel Street (between Bligh and Dean Streets). The name of this hotel was changed to Tattersall's Hotel in 1882 – after the original Tatterall's had ceased trading the previous year.

In 1878:

- The Great Northern Railway Hotel (in Bridge Street, between Denne and Crown Streets) was opened by Margaret Smith in June 1878. She was the only recorded licensee during its five- year existence.
- The Star Hotel (also known as the White Star Hotel) was constructed by Eli Allen, and licensed to his wife. By 1880, it was owned by Patrick Doherty. The third and final licensee was Abel Whitehead. By the time the building was sold again, in April 1882, to solicitor Charles W. Bedwell, it was no longer licensed.
- The Carriers' Arms Hotel was opened by Thomas Curley in William Street in West Tamworth (proximate to the rail goods shed). Curley departed after less than a year (to open a hotel about six miles from Nundle). He was followed, in quick succession by several licensees, including Bernard McCaffery and William Budge.
- Also in West Tamworth (at the eastern corner of Bridge and Crown Streets), the Railway Hotel was opened by Henry Worrell. Within a few months, he was insolvent, and immediate subsequent licensees were also unsuccessful. When the license was acquired by James McCaffery, he decided that the railway crossing meant little future for the hotel. He transferred the license across the river to Peel Street (between Bourke and Darling Streets), and the original site became a general store.

EARLY LAW AND ORDER

Initially, responsibility for law enforcement had rested with the AA Company, and there was something of an overlap between its early efforts to “keep the peace” and the work of the Commissioners.

In June 1844, after the capture by the Company’s police of two bushrangers, Bradish and Branigan, who had been operating across the region for three years and had eluded Commissioner Mayne’s men, provided the Company with a rather substantial reason for building both a lock up and a Court House. Early maps indicate that the original West Tamworth Court House building was near the bottom of Gipps Street (near the junction with Ebsworth Street).

Roderick Mitchell, a son of the Surveyor-General, was the third appointment as Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Liverpool District on 1 July 1846. In recognition of development of Tamworth to the north and east of the Peel River, Mitchell opted to base himself there. He established a police barracks and residence near the junction of Peel and Roderick streets, and proved to be an effective Commissioner – ably assisted by Richard Bligh (a grandson of the former Governor Bligh) who developed a second police base of operations at Warialda. Mitchell proved to be a great improvement on his predecessors (Mayne and Alman).

An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1849 to bring all New South Wales police under unified control, and the Commissioners for Crown Lands remained largely in charge of police until 1862. However, in 1851, a single officer, although still answerable to the Commissioner of Lands, was placed in charge of all local police. This person, with the title of Chief Constable for the Liverpool Plains Crown Lands District, was James Dwyer (who was recruited from Cork in Ireland for the job).

Dwyer quickly developed a highly favourable reputation and it was recorded in the *Wallabadah Manuscript*:

The police were a very good class of men in the Fifties. Mr Dwyer was the Chief Constable at Tamworth with only two police. They were well acquainted with the bush and many a chase they had after horse stealers and other criminals and, making great captures. Mr Dwyer was a clever bush detective. He was always on the lookout for wrongdoers. His name was a terror to them.....

He never spared himself or his horse when on duty and was a very zealous officer having such a large district to look after.....

.....the public was never afraid while Mr Dwyer was in charge for the police as he always did his duty.

NSW policing was finally divided into districts under the Police Regulation Act of 1862 (modelled on the London Metropolitan Police Service). The Northern Police District was established in the same year with its headquarters in Tamworth. The

first superintendent was James Garland who had formerly been an army officer and a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly. He was to hold the position for the next two decades. The Government also purchased the former Cohen's Tamworth Hotel to serve as both as police headquarters and residence for the superintendent and his family. The creation of the Northern Police District also led to the abolition of the position of Chief Constable, with the Tamworth local police coming under the command of a sergeant (the first appointee being Sergeant Horniman).

It was not until 1872 that the police moved from their "hotel" headquarters (it actually became a renamed hotel again) to four allotments of resumed land bounded by Rawson Avenue, Fitzroy and Carthage Streets, and St John's Anglican Church. Stables and police barracks for single men were also built at the same location.

John Bateman-Smith was appointed as Tamworth's first Clerk of Petty Sessions on 15 February 1847. The first Court of Petty Sessions was held on 5 July 1847 with its other three members (i.e. in addition to the Clerk) being Roderick Mitchell (the Commissioner for Crown Lands), Dr Isaac Haig and George Jenkin (who had already been appointed by the AA Company as its magistrate).

A Court of Petty Sessions was established at Nundle at the start of February 1853, and a slate and brick police barracks and a brick court house were also erected there at this time.

Also by 1853, the Colonial Clerk of Works had drawn up plans for a Court House to replace the original Gipps Street facility, but that was as far as the project had got. Instead, in 1856, William Dowel was paid 120 pounds for repairs to the Gipps Street structure that included the replacement of some floorboards, patching the plaster ceiling and some of the wooden roof shingles. Rather naturally, the locals took this to mean that the provision of the planned new facilities had been put on hold indefinitely.

The first Justices of the Peace were notified on 1 September 1854. Locals were Richard Lewis Jenkins of and Charles Hall of Liverpool Plains, John Croker of Peel's River, Isaac Haig of Tamworth, and Francis Price (an A.A. Company employee at Goonoo Goonoo).

In the early decades of settlement, the closest District or Circuit Court hearings (also referred to as Assizes or Quarter Sessions) were at Maitland. The same location applied to sittings of the Supreme Court. Attendance put local residents at considerable loss of time and relatively large expenses to attend, and resulted in petitioning for the establishment of a District Court in Tamworth.

This was achieved when Mr Justice Robert Owen presided over Tamworth's first District Court on 24 June 1859. The Court was opened in the AA court house, but, as a result of its lack of size, the sitting was adjourned to larger premises in the vacant "Harvey's" Hotel.

In June 1859, Dr R. Jenkins, in his capacity as the local Member of Parliament, announced that the Government had finally allocated funding for a Court House (2,000 pounds), a Watch House/Lock up (400 pounds), and a future gaol (4,000

pounds). Less than a month later, the Controller of Prisons called tenders for the building of the Watch House.

After Dr Jenkins had announced the Government's intention to build a new court house for Tamworth, the Peel River Land & Mineral Company offered land for its location in West Tamworth. However, the reaction this offer provoked made it very apparent that it would be built on the "government side" of the Peel River. The successful tenderer was William Dowel, and the building was constructed in Darling Street (not far from the junction with Peel Street). It was ready for use by late September 1859 – with two cells (later increased to five) and a keeper's residence.

The original entrance to the Court House was actually from Peel Street. However, the entrance was changed to the higher ground of Darling Street after a visiting judge got his feet wet during the flood of 1864. More fundamentally, the new facility was soon under intense criticism as being inadequate. Within a year, there had been two breakouts and the timber in the cells had rotted.

The first legal practice in Tamworth was established in 1858 by Messrs Mullens and Smith from Maitland on part of the site currently occupied by the Tudor Hotel. Five years later, the partnership was amicably dissolved with Mullens returning to Maitland. William Smith was also a key participant in many community activities during his years of practice. Among many significant milestones, he drew up the petition to have Tamworth established as a borough, was a foundation committee member of the Liverpool Plains Jockey Club, was prominent in community collections for the St Paul's church building, and laid the foundation stone for Munro's Flour Mill.

Over the years, Smith's health and fortunes declined. The last local reference to him was in 1900 when he asked to extend a welcome to a visiting judge. He died in the Rookwood Asylum in 1910 of a "chronic brain disorder".

DEVELOPMENT OF ROADS AND COACH TRANSPORT

According to the *Sydney Gazette*, the first recorded coach trip in Australia was along Parramatta Road on 10 March 1821.

Coaches performed many vital functions in inland Australia for much of nineteenth century – to the point that the arrival of a coach in any settlement was regarded as an important event. Not only did the arrival of a coach herald people, but also letters and newspapers – the latest “news of the world” came to town.

John Gill was the first major coachman in the Tamworth district. Gill established his headquarters near Peel and Bligh streets in Tamworth. In 1848, he entered into an agreement to conduct a fortnightly mail service between Armidale, Warwick and Brisbane. The same year, he also took over the coaching services of David Cohen and Company, which operated between Maitland and Tamworth, and proceeded to expand his operations (at their peak in the early 1860s) to the point where he had a virtual operational monopoly from the Hunter Valley to the Queensland border and north-west to Walgett. Gill’s main business interests gradually moved to the land as he acquired successively Piallamore, Head, Tuckerman, Moore Creek and Swamp Oak stations.

In 1871, Cobb & Co took over the Muswellbrook-Armidale run, and their colours of gold, yellow and red soon became as well known in the local region as they in many other areas. By 1883, Cobb & Co were operating runs from Tamworth to Murrurundi, Tamworth to Armidale, and Tamworth to Inverell. Other early local coach operators included Joseph Chaffey, Enterprise Coaches, and the Magnet Coach Line.

Coach horses were changed at regular intervals with the distance covered between changes usually determined by the speed of travel and the nature of terrain covered. The first coaches used in Australia were English-style. As they had been designed for the comparatively smooth English roads, they proved unsuitable for the local conditions as they were too heavy and their steel springs and joints broke too easily. The English coaches were supplanted by an American design known as the Concord. These coaches had no springs. Instead, they were mounted on two long leather straps known as “thoroughbraces” that reduced road shock for passengers. As well, when the wheels made contact with a ridge or rut the flexibility of the suspension allowed the coach body to go forward and upward, easing the weight on the wheels and the strain on the horses also.

Primarily as a consequence of the local gold discoveries and the increasing volumes of traffic that accompanied them, the Great Northern Road was extended from the Hunter Valley to the New England tablelands. At a more local level, tenders were called for clearance and blasting of a road from Tamworth to Moonbi in 1859, and by 1863 the road from Tamworth to Bendemeer had been cleared and metalled and was heading on towards Armidale.

Roads in the area became the formal responsibility of Department of Public Works Great Northern Road District Number 2 when it was created as a section of the Department on 6 May 1859. Headquartered in Tamworth, its area extended from “The Gap” (where the Werris Creek-Gunnedah Road forded Werris Creek) to Armidale. Its first recorded local work was the draining of the lagoon near the Peel – Brisbane Street corner and those other early projects included culverts along the Tamworth to Bendemeer road and the removal of stumps in Peel Street.

Most of the early roads were fairly primitive. However, they commenced to improve with the introduction of systematic metalling in the 1860s. Via a process known as “knapping”, blue metal was broken down with hammers to a small size, spread and overlaid with a binding stone.

The District structure was to continue until a new one was put in place around 1880. By this time, the Great Northern Road had been rerouted and no longer passed through Quirindi and Currabubula. Rather, from Ardglen, it went via Wallabadah Station and then across the Peel Range via the route of the present Wallabadah-Nundle Road (along Goonoo Goonoo Creek and past the Goonoo Goonoo homestead).

THUNDERBOLT

The immediate preceding sections on “law and order” and transport provide an appropriate prelude to the mention of one Frederick Ward, or Thunderbolt as he is remembered.

Ward was born around 1835 at Windsor, with his family later moving to Maitland. He worked as a stockman before his conviction on a horse stealing charge landed him at Cockatoo Island – the supposedly escape-proof prison in Sydney Harbour.

After his escape, he operated as a bushranger over a large area of central and northern NSW usually in his “uniform” of cabbage tree hat, long boots, striped moleskins and Crimean shirt. His accomplice then became Mary Ann Bugg, whom he had met in the Mudgee district between brushes with the law. The daughter of a European shepherd and an Aboriginal woman, Mary Ann taught Ward to read and introduced him to singing and opera.

On 1 June 1870, Thunderbolt was shot dead by Constable Alexander Walker while trying to cross Kentucky Creek after holding up Blanche’s Inn at Uralla. A bronze statue of the bushranger is situated in the main street of Uralla.

Contemporary times, do not allow the outlaw to “rest in peace”. The following extract appeared as an ABC net news item on 28 July 2006:

A researcher from Uralla, in north-west New South Wales, is attempting to rewrite a key piece of New England history by suggesting that the bushranger “Thunderbolt” died in Canada an old man.

A legend has been built around the story of Frederick Ward, who was killed by police in Uralla after opening fire on civilians.

However, local historian Barry Sinclair says he has evidence suggesting it was Fred Ward’s brother Harry who was shot and buried at Uralla.

Mr Sinclair says he is a distant blood relative and the records need to be set straight.

“I have proof from America that Fred Ward and my grandmother Sarah Shepherd arrived in America in 1870 from Australia, stayed in parts of America and later moved to Canada,” he said.

“Frederick Wordsworth Ward died in Canada in 1903, and not in Australia in 1870.”

THE EARLY FLOUR MILLS

While flour was a key ingredient in the diet of early Tamworth area settlers, its supply depended upon the long haul by bullock dray from Maitland – and the associated delays caused by bad weather and tracks. Further, the flour that arrived could become rancid, was subject to weevil attacks, and tended to be run out before the next lot arrived.

Unsurprisingly therefore, as the population grew, the erection of a local flour mill in the Peel Valley became an imperative and Charles Armstrong was the first to respond to the need. Armstrong's Flour Mill, the first Tamworth flour mill, was built in Marius Street (near Hill Street) in 1859. Milling was done by a pair of stones, 60 centimetres in diameter, powered by a treadmill or by horse works. Although the enterprise enjoyed initial popularity it ceased to operate after little more than a year.

Shortly thereafter, Donald Munro decided to erect a new, larger flour mill on 0.4 hectares of land bounded by Peel and Blight Streets and the Peel River (on the high bank of the river just above where the Jewry Street bridge was to be later located). The foundation stone was laid by solicitor William Smith on 25 November 1863 with the work (carried out by William Dowel) completed by February 1864. The three-story high construction featured brick walls (around 50 centimetres thick and concreted over), beams six metres long and 38 centimetres square, and arched doorways and windows. This is the mill that was to generally become known over the years as "Munro's Mill". It was also commencement time for a form of "musical chairs with flour mills".

In 1865, "Munro's Mill was leased by William Cohen (who later purchased it). He engaged Frederick Sawkins as his flour miller. At a proximate time, the firm of Cohen & Levy bought additional land fronting Fitzroy Street and extending back to a common boundary with its new (post-1864 flood) business premises. They also built a flour mill on this land which commenced operations in March 1867 with George Fielder as the miller. The mill was strategically sited for deliveries to and from the Cohen & Levy store, and the firm's new letterhead reflected the intermingling and spread of business interests i.e. "Wholesale and Retail Storekeepers and Flour Factors, Wine, Spirits and also Porter".

Some farmers soon began to decide that the two operational flour mills (i.e. Munro's and Cohen & Levy's) had a monopoly on flour milling which was not in their interests. As a consequence, Patrick J. Coghlan sought to break the monopoly by building a further mill on land he owned near the southern corner of the junction of Peel and White Streets. However, the mill was too small to have any initial significant impact on the other existing operations.

Upon the death of William Cohen in 1871 at a relatively young age, his nephew Nathan Cohen, as part of the process of winding up his uncle's estate, leased the Munro's Mill to Cohen & Levy. The latter firm promptly closed the operation to

prevent competition. Yet, in the same year, the brothers Edward, James and Henry Lewis, who had bought Coghlan's store in 1866, bought his flour mill and, with the promise of farmers' support, upgraded it. Increased in size to four storeys, it became the Phoenix Flour Mill.

Munro's Mill resumed operations in January 1877, after W and C Hayes installed new machinery. Then, around the middle of the same year, it was purchased by Aiken Bros. Leaving Cohen & Levy, (to be replaced by Lewis Hyman) George Fielder joined Henry Aiken in November 1884 in a new partnership which traded as Aiken and Fielder. This partnership continued until 1890, when it was altered by the departure of Aiken and the inclusion of D.J. Maxwell. It then became Fielder and Son at the end of 1898.

George Fielder spent a total of 45 years working as a miller at one of the three major mills in Tamworth: 18 years at Cohen & Levy; 16 years at Munro's Mill; and the last 11 at the Phoenix Mill. Another enduring identity was Charles Britten, who first came to Tamworth as a miller for the Lewis Bros in 1872. When the brothers decided to return their focus exclusively to their store business in 1879, they sold their mill to Britten. He went into partnership with Albert Bolton, a former Goonoo Goonoo overseer, and they traded as Britten & Bolton.

TAMWORTH IN 1866 – A PERSPECTIVE

The official *New South Wales Gazette* of 1866, gave the following description of Tamworth:

Tamworth.....a postal township in the electoral district of Liverpool plains and police district of Tamworth. It is situated on the Peel and Cockburn Rivers, in an undulating, pastoral and agricultural district. There is one steam flour mill (D. Munro's) in the township.

Tamworth lies on the main N. road. The nearest places are Goonoo Goonoo, 15 miles S; Moonbi, 15 miles N; Manila [sic], 30 miles N.W.; and Carroll, 35 miles W. There is communication with all places on the N. line of road by coach, and with other places in the neighbourhood by horse, dray or hired vehicle. With Sydney, 251 miles S.E., the communication is by Gill's daily mail coach, or by occasional express wagon, to Singleton, thence by rail to Newcastle, and thence by steamer.

Tamworth has a hospital or benevolent asylum, a mechanics' institute, a post and money order office, a telegraph station, a police station, and a handsome court house with gaol attached. Petty and quarter sessions and the district court are held in the court house. There are two churches, an English and Roman Catholic one, and a Denominational and a National school.

There is one weekly newspaper, the Tamworth Examiner, published in the town and there is an Old Fellows' Lodge (the True Friendship lodge).

The hotels are the Caledonian, Somerset Arms, Travellers' Home, Royal Oak, and Woolpack Inn; and there is one booking office for passengers and parcels (Cohen & Levy's). Tamworth has branches of the City and New South Wales banks and of the Victorian, Sydney, Liverpool and London and Globe, and Australian Mutual Insurance companies.

Tamworth is surrounded by large tracts of excellent agricultural land, and since the new land act has come into operation, has progressed rapidly in every respect. Were it not that this magnificent country, for many miles on the S. bank of the Peel, is shut from private enterprise, being a grant from the Crown to the Australian Agricultural Company (since transferred to the Peel River Land and Mineral Company), Tamworth would hold a most important agricultural position.

The town is tolerably well built, containing several excellent stores, and numerous good dwelling houses. The surrounding country is undulating, and hemmed in by mountain ranges at some distance.....

THE CREATION OF TAMWORTH CITY COUNCIL

On 9 August 1869, a group of citizens met in Albert Janison's Somerset Inn with the intention of commencing the process of having Tamworth established as a Borough Council. The petition in favour was drawn up by solicitor William Smith and his law clerk William Frederick Tribe. John Denning (proprietor of the saddlery business) and Michael Burke (son of Thomas Burke the builder of "Killala") canvassed the town in quest for the requisite 50 support signatures. They had no difficulty with this minimum number - acquiring 312.

However, there was also some opposition to the establishment of a borough council. A counter petition was circulated, claiming that the council incorporation was premature, would be too costly and lead to higher taxation. Although the counter petition received only minimal support, government authorities seemingly agreed with its sentiment. No move was made to grant local government status, and it was to be five years before locals seriously revived the call. This culminated in the proclamation of Tamworth as a borough council on 17 March 1876. The new borough encompassed an area of 2,110 hectares with an estimated population of 3,000.

The election for the first Council was held in May 1876 – with 33 candidates nominating for the nine aldermanic positions available. The polling was headed by a farmer, Henry Lye, and he was offered the position of Mayor. However, he declined on the grounds of ill health, and the first person to hold the office became P.G. King (the superintendent of Goonoo Goonoo Station). King was to hold the position until 1880.

Other successful candidates were builder and local identity Michael Burke, storekeepers Abraham Cohen and E.G. Lewis, W.S. Dowe, blacksmith Joseph Chaffey, and the last two elected were saddler John Denning and a third storekeeper (Daniel Regan).

Two of the principal figures behind the drive to establish the Council, Nathan Cohen and W.F. Tribe failed to get elected to this first council. However, not only were both subsequently successful, but they also served as Mayors in the 1880s (and, in Tribe's case, again 1906 and 1907).

Ralph Bamford was appointed as the first Town Clerk on a part-time basis of three days per week at a salary of 52 pounds per year. He remained in office for only a year, and committed suicide in 1885 by taking an overdose of laudanum. The first full-time Town Clerk was Daniel F.W. Veness - appointed on 7 May 1877 at an annual salary of 100 pounds. He remained in the position until 1891 when he took up the same position with Bathurst Council.

Apart from the first meeting (which was held in the Court House), meetings of Council were held in the Mechanics Institute, and space was also rented there for the first Council office. As the name suggests, the Mechanics Institute, now one of

Tamworth's oldest buildings had been opened on 24 May 1866 as a hall and two small meeting rooms for mechanics. It also quickly became a location for lectures, library services, community meetings, and evening entertainment.

In 1877, when a new public school was opened in Upper Street, the fledgling Council took over the National School building in Darling Street as its first permanent headquarters. Council purchased the building for 100 pounds, and spent a further 211 pounds renovating it to serve as a Town Hall and Council Chambers. The building also accommodated Tamworth's first free public library from August 1881.

Council headquarters then moved to a newly built multi-purpose centre in 1896. This building, in a restored form, now serves as the Tamworth Community Centre.

START OF AMBULANCE AND FIRE BRIGADE SERVICES

For those outside the early urban environment, speedy access to medical services was near impossible. To bring an ill person to town meant horse or cart transport of the patient – a process that was not only slow but also potentially further injurious. To fetch a doctor in an emergency meant a long ride in two directions.

Within Tamworth, a “stretcher system” was eventually established to cater for emergencies. The stretcher was under the control of the local police. When a request was received by the police, the policeman on duty went into the street and conscripted the first suitable man he saw to assist in transporting the patient to a doctor or the hospital.

“Progress” came via the acquisition of two-wheeled carts equipped with a bed and a canvas cover. The first of these was stationed on the verandah of the Lands Board Office in Fitzroy Street. Access to the cart was via an “honour” system – anyone needing it could collect it and use it, provided they also then promptly returned it to the verandah for others to access.

Tamworth had its first major fire in September 1860 when John Barnes’ Union store in Ebsworth Street was destroyed – with the efforts of citizens with buckets of water to extinguish the fire (suspected to be caused by arson) proving ineffectual.

In September 1876, a large Tamworth public meeting passed a motion that a local fire brigade be formed. The following year, Tamworth Borough Council allocated 100 pounds to procure fire-fighting equipment. As the Mayor, Philip Gidley King, was about to make a trip to Sydney, it was agreed that he should make enquiries as to how best expend the funds. Also in 1877, Mr C.H. Veness was appointed to receive public donations towards the purchase of a fire engine. Only one donation was received, initially the sum of 25 pounds from Alderman Abraham Cohen. Subsequently, Cohen increased his donation to 100 pounds.

Storekeepers Cohen and Levy rented a site opposite the then Commercial Hotel to house the new fire equipment. The first fire station constructed on the site was a four metre by four metre corrugated iron hut.

The first fire “engine” purchased arrived in Tamworth in July 1878. It actually had no engine at all. Rather, it was a cart (nicknamed “The Little Squirt”) with two big red wheels that required four men to pull it around when it was loaded with a manually operated pump and hoses. An alarm bell for the station was not acquired until January 1879. It was initially placed at the back of the tin shed, and virtually cut off from public access by a high corrugated iron fence as a consequence (from such a place it was virtually inaudible and inaccessible) before finally being moved to front of the building.

The first call out for the station and its equipment was a disaster. It was recently recalled in the “Days Gone By” retrospective of *The Northern Daily Leader* (27 March 2006):

The first call to the Tamworth Fire Brigade was in September 1880 when there was a fire a short distance from the town. What followed could only be described as a fiasco.

Fifteen minutes elapsed before the fire-bell could be rung, and even then few people could hear it.

At the fire station there was utter confusion and another fifteen minutes were to pass before the fire-fighting equipment could be assembled and start on its journey to the fire.

When the brigade reached the scene the building had already been destroyed but the fire fighters decided it would be a good opportunity to test their equipment by spraying water on the ashes.

More difficulties were then encountered for the only water was at the bottom of a 10 metre well.

To further complicate the position there was not one piece of hose long enough to reach the water because the original had been used to water a cricket pitch and had perished to such a degree that it had broken in a number of places.

Someone then remembered that the pump was not capable of lifting water from a depth of 10 metres so the only alternative was to draw the water in buckets and tip it into a tub.

The hand-pump was then used and the ashes duly saturated.

“Disaster planning” improved when the town pump was installed in 1881. Thereafter, all water carters were requested to take a full tank of water when they returned to their place of residence at the end of each day, as a water supply precaution in the event of a fire starting during the night.

THE QUEST FOR A PERMANENT PUBLIC HOSPITAL IN TAMWORTH

By the early 1850s, as a consequence of both population growth and the abating community service role of the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, local agitation grew strong for the establishment of a larger and better-equipped public hospital. Key figures in the initial moves included L.W. Levy MLA, Rev. Edward Williams and Doctor John Maunder Gill, and their efforts culminated the formation of the Tamworth Hospital and Benevolent Society on 21 January 1854 to press the case.

An approach was made to the Government to help finance the project, resulting in the receipt of 300 pounds from that source in March 1854. Five months later a site had been chosen towards the then bottom end of Peel Street. The new hospital built was a timber structure, close to the street frontage, with a shingle roof and four small wards. The building was soon being subjected to a range of criticisms; including patients complaining that there was too much noise coming from the nearby area and a wide belief that it was too large and extravagant.

Thus, by the 1870s, debate centred on whether to extend the existing building or to erect a new hospital at another location. A building committee, consisting of Messrs P.G King, D.Regan, C. Grace, N.Cohen and Rev. J. Whitfield was established to examine the options. As consequence of the committee's deliberations, in January 1881, an application was made to the NSW Government requesting a grant of 10 acres of land opposite the Tamworth gaol. After the grant was approved, plans for a new hospital were finalised on 4 August 1883, with the new building, the funding of which was assisted by community subscriptions and donations, being completed on 9 October 1884. The completion was not without financial difficulties. At one stage, the contractors threatened legal proceedings against the members of the committee that had signed the contract.

THE COMMISSIONER COMES TO TOWN

Philip Gidley King, son of the former A.A. Commissioner Philip Parker King and a grandson of the former Governor King became the General Superintendent of the Peel River Land and Mineral Company at the end of 1854 – a position he was to occupy for almost 50 years.

In November 1874, Commissioner King wrote to the Chairmen of Directors in London with the following proposition:

I think I should fix my residence in town..... For some time, I have felt an increasing necessity to have some place in Tamworth from which to obtain some knowledge of what is going on; the place is growing largely in importance and, abutting so closely to it, it becomes necessary that the Company should have a point of observation. With this view, I have just purchased a block of two acres on a fairly elevated site commanding a view of the whole town and adjacent country.....I now propose to ask the company to take this purchase off my hands and to build on it a cottage residence.....

I believe the residence of the Company's manager in town might be agreeable to townspeople. It would be agreeable to myself I believe and very conducive to the Company's interests. My son George will remain with his family at Goonoo Goonoo where I will spend part of my time.

When the Directors approved the proposal, the Gothic-style building that was to become known as “Calala Cottage” was erected on the crest of the hill overlooking Tamworth and the Peel Valley. The initial building was completed in 1875. However, as the official ceremonies associated with the opening of the rail line to Tamworth approached, King (by then Mayor of Tamworth) added a ballroom on the south side using timber cut on Goonoo Goonoo Station and transported to the site in wagons.

On 9 November 1880, the first election for the separate State Electorate of Tamworth in the NSW Legislative Assembly was held. The electorate was created when the electorate of Liverpool Plains and Gwydir was divided into three separate electorates – Tamworth, Gunnedah, and Gwydir. In each case, the electorate was entitled to return two MPs. One person who wanted to be a candidate for the 1880 election was P.G. King. However, the now Peel River Land & Mineral Company refused him permission to contest the Legislative Assembly. He was, however, appointed to the Legislative Council for life on 10 December the month after the Legislative Assembly election.

After P.G. King's death in 1904, the property was left to his son, who sold it to Arthur Vernon of Attunga in 1916. Mr Vernon's daughters turn the building into a private hospital in 1931. The Tamworth City Council resumed the property in 1946, initially to house historical papers.

While the grounds of the residence were later to become homes fronting Crown Street, the residence itself (situated in Dennison Street in West Tamworth) is occupied by the Tamworth Historical Society – which holds it in trust for the Tamworth Regional Council.

EXTENSION OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY TO THE AREA

The Great Northern Railway had reached East Maitland in 1857, Singleton in 1863, Muswellbrook in 1869 and Murrurundi in April 1871. Coaches ran from there to Tamworth and other New England areas.

At Murrurundi, the extension of the line effectively came to a standstill. Though further construction had been authorised by the NSW Parliament, the enabling legislation reflected the loose, non-Party, political blocs of the time. Specifically, in a local context, the wool growers/squatters grouping and the wheat growers/selectors had opposing interests (particularly with regard to the effect on land values of a nearby railway line) as to the direction of the line.

There was also the engineering problem of actually constructing a line across the Liverpool Range. Initially, the Government favoured the building of a narrow, unventilated tunnel close to the surface of the range. Under this proposal, passengers would leave the train at Murrurundi and travel through the range to Ardglen in narrow gauge horse-drawn trams, at which point they would be returned to a standard gauge line to continue their journey.

However, the Chief Engineer, John Whitton, was a strong advocate of a deep, ventilated tunnel which would accommodate standard gauge trains. Two years of exhaustive parliamentary debate followed on the competing options. Finally, a compromise was agreed to, by which approval was given for a tunnel of standard gauge that was unventilated and close to the surface. Tenders were called on 8 January 1874 for the extension of the railway from Murrurundi to Tamworth on this basis, and on 4 March, the successful tender was announced as being Mr William Wakeford, at a price of 216,844 pounds, for completion by 31 March 1876.

Wakeford's work made slower than anticipated progress. As a result, he was forced to apply for an 18-month extension, citing the shortage and cost of labour as the primary reason. The opening of the Quirindi section took place on 13 August 1877, and the line did not reach Tamworth until 1878. The official opening of the railway platform at West Tamworth was performed by the NSW Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson on Tuesday, 15 October 1878 before a crowd estimated to be 6,000. Three special trains brought 2,000 people to Tamworth from Maitland for the occasion.

The opening was a truly momentous time, and events related to it covered three days. The official opening was followed by a grand procession from the railway station to East Tamworth – of a length sufficient for those that were the first to leave arriving before the last ones had started the journey. On the Tuesday evening a banquet for 300 people was held in the new railway goods shed. The next day there was a carnival, and on the Wednesday night there was a pyrotechnic display.

The precise route of the extension had involved great controversy – primarily because landowners were acutely aware that owning land along the rail route could lead to profitable subdivision. Initially, those “with influence” persuaded the

Government to develop the line from Willow Tree to Tamworth via Wallabadah, and many land transactions along the proposed route ensued. However, a change of government, followed by further lobbying led to a decision to take the line via Quirindi.

Further lobbying and frequent changes of government (this was a time before formalised political parties provided stability of government)) led to further route change consideration. At one point, after heavy lobbying by Manilla interests, it seemed likely that the line may possibly bypass Tamworth – going instead via Moore Creek, Attunga, Manilla and Barraba to Inverell.

Predictably, it was Tamworth’s turn to react. However, in Tamworth itself, there was also a profit-vested division of opinion. Those on the south-western side of the Peel River wanted the line to terminate in West Tamworth or, if it continued, to go via Manilla, Barraba and Inverell. Those on the north-eastern side of the Peel most definitely wanted it to cross the river in Tamworth. For the period of time it had seemed unlikely that the railway line would be built across the Peel River in Tamworth, there was a proliferation of hotel licences in West Tamworth and demonstrations in East Tamworth.

The railway was finally extended across the river to East Tamworth in 1882. This extension necessitated the construction of a steel rail bridge with wooden viaducts over the Peel River. The bridge was prefabricated in England shipped to Australia, and then transported to Tamworth for erection. The adjoining viaduct was originally built of timber. After structural weakening by the floods of 1908 and 1910, the viaduct was rebuilt with steel from 1917 to 1929.

The present Tamworth station opened on 9 January 1882. It was built on land that had originally been set aside to establish a market square. The building was designed, in an Italianate- style by the chief engineer of the NSW Government Railways, John Whitton. After this station’s opening, the original station was formally renamed West Tamworth.

The coming of the railway to the Tamworth area did not, however, represent an immediate direct transport link with Sydney. It was not until 1889 that a bridge was built across the Hawkesbury River for trains. Thus, for the early years of train travel from the Tamworth area, one caught an early morning train (at around 7am) which arrived in Newcastle at about 6pm. The second leg of the trip was by boat from Newcastle (leaving around an hour later) to Sydney (arrival around 3am the next morning). This represented a total journey of almost 24 hours.

STREET LIGHTING IN TAMWORTH

Because of the poor state of the Fitzroy Street surface, Tamworth got its first street light in August 1876 when an oil lamp was hung outside the post office to assist people who used its facilities at night.

This initial public lighting was followed by Tamworth Borough Council spending 10 pounds in September 1877 to provide two oil lamps – one for each end of the Peel River Bridge. Council followed with a general effort to light the streets of the busiest parts of the town with oil lamps set on posts and the employment of a lamp lighter.

In 1881, the Mayor, Ald. Edwin Hunt, sought a decision from Council between the continuing use of gas or the provision of electricity for street lighting. Gas was the option taken on the basis, not only that little was then known about electricity use for street lighting, but also because a guaranteed supply of gas was readily available via the creation of local gasworks after the issuing of a prospectus for the Tamworth Gas and Coke Company with an initial capital of 6,000 pounds in one pound shares and the aim of lighting private homes as well.

The cost of purchasing a two-acre site, plant construction purchase, and laying some 1,150 mains was estimated at the initial capital issue amount, and the scheme was envisaged as being ready for operation nine months from tender.

By the end of 1882, Tamworth had 25 gas lights in its major streets. By 1888, after further extensions, seven miles of streets were partially illuminated by 52 lights. A lamplighter on horseback and carrying a “pole lighter” went around the town each evening and early morning (the first occupant of the position being William Godbold) to start and end the artificial illumination. Yet, there was an underlying feeling of dissatisfaction. News of the rapid utilisation of electricity in urban areas of Europe and the United States provoked a concern that, on a comparative basis, the quality of light provided did little more than “make the darkness visible”.

One particular alderman of Tamworth Borough Council, William Joseph Smith, developed a great interest in electricity – to the point that he even named one of his sons ‘Faraday’. In May 1877, Alderman Smith persuaded Council to form a “lighting committee” to examine all aspects of the issue of street lighting. The committee concluded that electricity was far superior to gas for street lighting purposes, and that a conversion should quickly be undertaken from the one to the other. The going was not, however, “one way”. Community opinion on the conversion was divided, and many dubbed the move “Smith’s Folly”.

Nevertheless, there was an almost immediate decision to call tenders for the provision of a generating plant and associated lighting equipment. The successful tenderers were Messrs Harrison and Whitten, Australian representatives for Crompton And Company of Birmingham. Their price was 3,000 pounds for the installation, and an additional cost of 642 pounds for a year’s maintenance.

Mayoress Elizabeth Piper officially opened the first power station situated in Peel Street, on 9 November 1888 by turning a gold key which completed the circuit and lit 13.5 miles of Tamworth streets. The initial generators ran at 750 rpm and produced an output of 90 amperes at 240 volts. Wood fuel was used for the boilers and water for the plant was drawn from the Peel River. The main street was lit by four 3,000 candlepower arc lamps and the rest of the town by 85 lights (of 16 candlepower illumination) in groups of two or three.

Tamworth had become the first town in the Southern Hemisphere to have its streets lit by a Council-owned generating plant.

From a humble beginning, Tamworth Power Station went on to provide electric power to Murrurundi, Werris Creek, Manilla, Barraba Armidale, Inverell and even parts of southern Queensland.

NEW TAMWORTH POST OFFICE

During the 1870s, there had been a community push for a new post office in Tamworth.

Initially, this led only to provision of funding from the NSW Government for an extra room on the old building as a “stop gap” measure.

However, in August 1881, the Postmaster-General approved the purchase of an additional strip of land at the eastern corner of the junction of Peel and Fitzroy Streets for a cost of 400 pounds. Together with the area of the original post office on this corner (facing Fitzroy Street), the extra land (a 4.6 metre strip, fronting Peel Street, that had previously been part of the land on which the Harp of Erin Hotel was situated) gave the post office a 15.2 metre frontage to Peel Street.

On 10 November 1883, the Government accepted a tender for the construction of a new building at a cost of 4,845 pounds. However, the proposal was considered inadequate for future requirements by many, and a community “impasse” developed. Local doubt turned to outright hostility when it was suggested that if the community did not accept what had been offered they would get nothing.

Eventually, “the people won”. Following the visit of postal officials to the site, it was decided that a larger building was required, and that it should include a colonnade to both Peel and Fitzroy Streets and a residential section for the Postmaster. These recommendations were accepted by the Postmaster-General and the plans were altered accordingly. To this end, the Postmaster-General resumed the remainder of the land that had been occupied by the Harp of Erin Hotel. This meant that there was now available frontage of 41 metres to Peel Street and 102 metres to Fitzroy Street.

The building specifications provided for an Italian Medieval style of the Renaissance period – featuring promenade columns of the Doric order of architecture with a balcony of the Corinthian order. As well, the Government accepted a suggestion by the pharmacist E.C. Hunt, that a clock should be included.

The foundation stone for the Post Office was laid on 23 January 1885. To enhance the ceremony copies of the Sydney Morning Herald, Evening News, the Tamworth Observer and the Tamworth News were placed in a bottle on the site, along with some coinage and the names of members of parliament and councillors.

The building was officially opened on 31 May 1886 by the Postmaster General, the Hon. F.B. Suttor – minus the clock. Suttor did, however, state in his official opening speech that a tender had been accepted for the installation of an illuminated clock at a cost of 490 pounds, and that work would soon commence on its installation. He kept his word. The clock, at the time considered the finest in country NSW, was officially commissioned by the then Mayor of Tamworth, Ald. F.W. Tribe, on 8 July 1886. The installation of the clock prompted the *Tamworth Observer* to caution:

Henceforth erring husbands will have no excuse for returning home late to their wives because the clock is clearly visible and will strike the hours.

This main Tamworth Post Office is still in use and remains an impressive building. It is classified by the National Trust.

PARADISE GARDENS

Paradise Gardens (originally named Little Paradise Gardens) were developed by Carl Zartmann from his purchase of 2.3 hectares of land that was generally considered to be useless swamp, for 150 pounds. The land was situated in Tamworth - near the river and just beyond the bridge which now spans the Cockburn at the end of Peel Street.

Zartmann was a German immigrant who had originally come to Nundle seeking his fortune in the gold rush, and later worked as a shepherd on Goonoo Goonoo Station. On the land he had purchased, he initially built a slab hut and began to clear and drain the area. Then, he planted grape vines and began to grow vegetables. Eventually, these gardens were to consist of a vineyard and orchard, together with shrubs, flowers, ornamental trees, arbours, summer houses and specially designed walks. The area was also often used for band concerts.

The book *Tamworth A Pictorial History* (Warren Newman and Lyall Green 1998) contains the following description of Paradise Gardens in the 1880s:

By far the single greatest attraction in the town, however, was Zartmann's Paradise Gardens, the pleasure park developed beside the Cockburn River at the end of Peel Street. Here visitors could wander through avenues of fruit trees and vines, observe an aviary of birds or a small zoo of monkeys and other animals, visit a cool riverside cellar and taste some of Mr Zartmann's home-grown wines, or visit the Casino, a pavilion where couples could attend a Tea dance and enjoy themselves to their hearts' content to the music of local performers.

Two major buildings were added to the development. The first came in 1878 when a two storey structure featuring an underground wine hall and a "dancing casino" was constructed. Then, commenced in 1885, a second building contained a meal and refreshment service room, caretaker's quarters, with the roof of the roof serving as a "promenade area".

In 1886, Zartmann sold what had by then become known as the "Paradise Pleasure Gardens" to Tamworth cordial manufacturer James Bryant for almost five thousand pounds. The latter's tenure was short, as he died the year after his purchase. However, the business was carried on by his sons – trading as the Bryant Brothers. In 1893, Jochim Wilhelm Bielefeld, who had come to the Tamworth district in 1854 as a shepherd at Goonoo Goonoo Station and was by then in his sixties, took over.

Unfortunately, Paradise Pleasure Gardens came to an abrupt end early in the twentieth century. The flood of 1908, which did tremendous damage to the Gardens' features, was followed by the flood of 1910. The latter flood destroyed the landmark almost completely.

THE TAMWORTH SHOW

In the late 1860s, there was wide discussion of the possibility of holding a Tamworth show. However, it was not until 1872 that the Liverpool Plains Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association was actually formed and definite planning commenced. The inaugural President was Doctor Joshua Dowe, who was a medical practitioner and owner of Woolomol Station, and the first Secretary was local businessman Nathan Cohen. The first Committee formed had 25 members, drawn from wide area from north of Barraba to beyond Quirindi.

The first major obstacle faced was obtaining a suitable location for the show. This problem was solved when Abraham Cohen, a committeeman, offered the free use of an extensive portion of land he owned. The block of land was bounded by Peel, Hill, White and Lower (now Kable Avenue) streets.

The first Tamworth Show was held on Thursday and Friday, 27 and 28 February 1873 and was a great success. However, in the immediate following years, problems with wet weather made it obvious that the site was too low and damp in such conditions.

In 1874, the Minister for Lands had approved the temporary use of approximately five acres bounded by White, Carthage and Fitzroy Streets and Rawson Avenue. It is believed that that area was first used in as the show location in 1876.

Unfavourable weather conditions forced the abandoning of the 1877 and 1894 shows. However, in these years, the unfavourable conditions were drought not excessive rain. Problems were soon apparent with the new site as well, and moves soon commenced to obtain yet another site. Eventually, the show was moved to what was then known as the Town Pump Reserve site (actually Johnston Park and later to become No 1 Oval).

FARNELL ACT

The Robertson Land Act of 1861 and its subsequent amendments had not done as much as hoped to alter the overall balance of pastoral and agricultural land use, nor for the ready availability of land for new settlers.

These failures were clearly documented in the findings of a Royal Commission on land use conducted by Augustus Morris and George Rankin in 1883. And, as a direct consequence, a new land act was passed for New South Wales in 1884. Known as the Farnell Act (after the politician who introduced it in Parliament), it was designed to break the squatter monopoly of landholdings.

The Farnell Act produced some positive results in the Tamworth area. In 1890, a number of leases expired in areas to the north, south and west of Tamworth. This made a relatively large areas of choice farming land available for selection, and produced a local “land rush” in August of that year.

The Farnell Act was actually only the real beginning of the breaking of the large land monopolies. More substantial progress commenced in 1895 when the government introduced a tax on unimproved pastoral land. This had a direct effect of forcing some of the large landholders, including the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, to dramatically reduce their holdings.

MANILLA EARLY DATELINE

1832: Dinnawirindi Station (Durham Court) established as the first of six pastoral holdings that covered most of the land of the Manilla district through to 1870. The other stations were Attunga, Manilla, Keyput, Cuerindi and Mundowey. All six stations were initially established as cattle producing ventures for “boiling down” to produce tallow.

1843: Mathew Hall establishes cattle stations at Hall’s Creek and Upper Namoi River.

1853: George Veness builds a store on the banks of the Namoi River directly opposite where the Manilla River joins it. The fledgling village is named “The Junction” by teamsters who use the site as a camping ground on the trek from the Hunter Rive to supply the north; W. Simms Bell founds Keyput Station on the lower Namoi.

1856: Manilla is given its official name (after the river) when George Veness founds the first Post Office.

1860: The Government Surveyor stationed at Tamworth, Charles Flide, is instructed to resume land and lay out the town of Manilla.

1861: Arthur Dewhurst surveys and names Manilla’s streets.

1863: Thomas Connor builds the first hotel – North Manilla.

1864: Flood sweeps away Veness’s store and other buildings on the river, with four locals drowned.

1865: An issue of the Government Gazette states the cattle carrying capacity of the major local stations – Dinnawirindi (1600); Manilla (1150); Talcumba (800); Longford (3000); Attunga (1250). As well, it indicated that Keyput had a grazing capacity for 10 000 sheep, Mundowey 18 00, Retreat 7500 and Menedebri 10 000.

1869: First lands selected at Manilla by settlers Benyon, Hill, Coulton, Byrnes and Iliffe.

1872: First wheat grown in Manilla for commercial purposes and sold to mills in Tamworth; Wilkinson and Bowden commence the first mail coach run to Manilla.

1874: Durham Court becomes famous as a thoroughbred stud; local police station established.

1876: First land sale of Manilla subdivision; first Court of Petty Sessions held in Manilla; first public school teacher, John Marshall, appointed to teach in the Union Church at North Manilla; M.C. Mackenzie establishes a store.

1878: Telegraph line to Manilla completed; Edward Done appointed first Postmaster.

1879: First brick school for 50 pupils and teacher's residence built on the hill at North Manilla.

1880: Large scale selection of land around Manilla, Halls Creek, Upper Manilla and Namoi River; wheat and wool become the main local industries as a result of closer settlement.

1885: Manilla proclaimed a town on 20 March.

BARRABA EARLY DATELINE

1837: First squatter takes up land in the district, naming his holding “Barraba” (indigenous for “camping place on the bank of the river” or “place of many yellow box trees”).

1840: Other squatters arrive to take up land in the area and stores begin to open. The property name “Barraba” is registered.

1851: First horseback mail service commences.

1852: The town is surveyed, and the population of the district is recorded as 80.

1861: The first school classes commence in Cherry Street.

1866: The district is becoming known as an agricultural and pastoral area. Gold prospecting commences at Crow Mountain and Woodsreef.

1872: Coach service from Tamworth to Warialda commences.

1876: Auction of crown lands in the district.

1878: Commercial Hotel opens.

1881: Barraba Court House built.

1882: First brick post office erected.

1885: Barraba proclaimed a town on 20 March.

SOME OTHER EARLY POINTS OF NOTE

- **Goats were brought to the Tamworth area by the early residents. Soon, they multiplied greatly in number and many became feral. They would “gather” on the high ground along Carthage Street between O’Connell and Macquarie Streets, and the area was often referred to as “Goat Hill”.**
- **When the AA Company began its operations in the area, it had no shearing facilities. The sheep, except for breeding ewes, were taken down to Gloucester for shearing.**
- **In August 1842, teenager Nathaniel Buchanan became the first recorded victim of a bushranger in the Tamworth district. He was nearing the bottom of the Moonbi Range on horseback when held up by an outlaw named Wilson. The thief took his horse and boots. What Wilson did not know was that Buchanan was carrying a significant sum of money to Tamworth for his father (in a belt strapped under his shirt).**
- **On 30 December 1848, the County of Parry was proclaimed as an area south of the Cockburn and Peel rivers. It is probable that the County of Inglis (north of these rivers) was created at the same time.**
- **In 1854, the original the Tamworth “Cohen and Levy” store partnership commenced to undergo a change when David Cohen returned to England and Lewis Wolfe Levy went back to the Cohen & Levy headquarters in Maitland. The store then came under the control of a “new” Cohen and a “new” Levy when Abraham Cohen took over from his brother David and Louis Levy replaced his brother Lewis.**
- **In 1857, Dickson and Company, general storekeepers of Maitland, who had been bringing merchandise to Tamworth, Hanging Rock, Rocky River and Bundarra, opened as store in Peel Street with Daniel Regan as its manager. During the following year, Regan became the store owner and in 1860 he purchased a larger allotment in Peel Street. On this site (which extended through to Marius Street) he built a new two-story building from which operated as a wholesaler and retailer for a wide range of goods including groceries, hardware, drapery, crockery, sheep shears and wool bales.**
- **In late 1854, another Cohen brother (George B.) built Tamworth’s first two-storeyed structure in Peel Street. Initially, it was the first Tamworth Hotel. The venture was not a commercial success either for him or his immediate successor when he leased it. George B. Cohen moved from his hotel venture to open a store in Gunnedah. The building became the headquarters of the Northern Police District from 1862 to 1874 before becoming a hotel again.**
- **Tamworth’s first cemetery was situated in about a half acre area near the bank of Goonoo Goonoo Creek(between that creek and Barnes (Ebsworth)**

- Gully at the back of the Tamworth Towers Motel). Within 15 years (i.e. by 1850) it was full – although burials continued there for another 13 years. In 1863, a new site was dedicated in an eight acre area near Wallamore Road. Some of the bodies in the old cemetery were re-interred in the new cemetery, and the few sandstone tombstones transferred to near St Paul’s Anglican Church. There are now only a few bamboo plants behind the Tamworth Towers motel as a reminder of the site and its location.**
- **A branch of the Bank of New South Wales was opened in Tamworth on 15 December 1856 (at what is now 292 Peel Street). It was only the sixth branch of that bank opened, with Shepherd Smith as its manager. The first depositor was William McClelland, a Moonbi Inn keeper and gold buyer, who banked 182 pounds.**
 - **The quality of local limestone in the Tamworth area, known as “Moore Creek Limestone”, was very good. Given that limestone was quarried and burnt to make the mortar used to build brick houses in the middle of the nineteenth century, local demand was high and sourced mainly from sites around Spring Gully and Forest Road areas. The first person to establish production, in the 1850s, was William Haydon. Others involved included Joseph Chaffey, William Russ and Thomas Pullman.**
 - **The first saddlers and harness makers to establish in Tamworth were B and G Moses (in 1860 – a few doors from the present Central Hotel). Many horses had to be shod and saddled in a fashion that allowed them to travel long distances regularly or harnessed to pull equipment subject to specific local conditions. Hence, “specialist requirements” were high.**
 - **The village of Somerton was divided into streets and town allotments in 1858.**
 - **Plans were drawn up by Surveyor B.C. Flide in 1863 for the development of Attunga as relatively large urban centre - including an initial street layout and reserved areas for infrastructure such as schools, churches and a market place. He had already prepared plans for and named the streets for the “Town of Dungowan” (in 1860). No real attempt was made to implement the plan per se until 1914 when an area was offered for allotment sale. However, there was little interest and the project languished.**
 - **Tamworth’s first newspaper, *The Tamworth Examiner*, established by James Gallagher and John Hollings, published its first issue on 13 April 1859.**

TAMWORTH HISTORICAL MARKERS

Tamworth Historical Society, in association with the former Tamworth City Council, has erected a number of markers in and around certain sites in and around Tamworth to signify particular places of geographical significance.

They include:

No. 1 **Killala**: On the outskirts of the Tamworth suburb of Calala. It marks the headquarters first used by the A.A. Company superintendent Charles Hall. The buildings were on a rise between the Peel River and Goonoo Goonoo Creek. These headquarters were moved to Goonoo Goonoo in 1841.

No. 2 **The Oxley Anchor**: On the Manilla Road about six miles from Tamworth. The spot marks the approximate path taken by John Oxley in 1818.

No. 3 **Joseph Brown's Hut**: On the river end of Bowler's Lane. Marks the spot where Joseph Brown, the first squatter to occupy land, erected his hut.

No. 4 **The 1834 Cemetery**: A small rectangular plot on the western side of the old Goonoo Goonoo Creek channel (behind the Tamworth Towers Motel).

No. 5 **James White's Store**: The first store opened in East Tamworth (late 1835). It was situated on the higher ground between the river and Maguire's Hotel.

No. 6 **George Draggett's Blacksmith Shop**: Opened in June 1835 at the foot of Darling Street near one of the then river crossing spots.

No. 7 **First Hospital**: Opened in 1840 proximate to 99 Ebsworth Street.

No. 8 **First Court House**: Built near the intersection of Ebsworth and Gipps streets.

No. 9 **Crown Land Office**: Located about 50 metres east of the intersection of Peel and Roderick streets.

No. 10 **Sir Robert Peel Inn**: Erected in 1848 corresponding to 83-85 Ebsworth Street.

No. 11 **First Police Barracks**: Built prior to 1849 near the junction of Marius and Roderick streets (the site now occupied by McDonalds).

No. 12 **William Cohen's Store**: Opened circa 1850. Situated at what is now 75-77 Ebsworth Street.

No. 13 Andrew Telfer's Store: Also opened around 1850 at what is now 89-93 Ebsworth Street.

No. 14 First Tamworth School: In Ebsworth Street ((proximate to the Retreat Theatre).

No. 15 First School Residence: Situated near the Ebsworth Street school.

No. 16 James Bailey's Butchery: Erected about 1851 at what is now 271-283 Peel Street.

No. 17 Cohen & Levy's Store: Built by Louis Levy in 1851. Later owned and operated by his brother Lewis and cousin Abraham Cohen.

No. 18 First Tamworth Government School: Opened in 1855 at the corner of Peel and Darling streets.

No. 19 Peel Street Hospital: Situated in Peel Street between the gas works and the Police Boys' Club.

No. 20 Royal Oak Hotel: Built in the early 1850s in Ebsworth Street. Site later occupied by Thibault's car park.

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