SECTION TWO

KEMPSEY SHIRE COMMUNITY BASED

HERITAGE STUDY

THEMATIC HISTORY
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Major Themes

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The objective of this report is to record the Thematic History of the Macleay Valley Region as an aid to assessing the Region’s Heritage Resource.

Kempsey Shire, on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, covers rich agricultural country on the river and creek flats as well as rugged country to the west of the Shire. The region is bounded by Port Macquarie and Wauchope in the south, Armidale in the west and Macksville-Nambucca in the north. To the east is the seaboard.

In September 2002, Kempsey Shire Council commissioned the Macleay River Historical Society Incorporated to co-ordinate a community-based heritage study of the Macleay Valley Region.

The purpose of the study is for Kempsey Shire Community to identify and interpret items within the region they consider to be of heritage significance. The community-based heritage study approach actively involves the community in researching and nominating items and in considering recommendations for future management.

In this approach it is intended to give the community much greater ownership of the study process and reduce the potential for conflict within the community regarding listing and future management of heritage. A community-based study recognises that the community themselves are a valuable source of information. The coordinators have utilised already existing skills and knowledge through community workshops.

The process has included the need to:
- Identify items of heritage which are valued by the community.
- Record local knowledge before it is lost.
- Involve the local community.
- Be prepared to listen to development proposals.
- Adjust to growth in the shire.

This survey attempts to outline the major Historic Themes principally as a record of European habitation. It could not possibly compile all the information within the time limit, but is a start which will identify a number of themes to provide a framework of the history of the local community. It is intended that Aboriginal Heritage would best be carried out as a separate comprehensive study.

The community-based study in coordination with this Thematic History puts in place a mechanism to identify items of Heritage value and make provision for its appropriate management.
The Kempsey Shire extends over rugged mountain country through foothills to undulating rich agricultural land then on to a coastline of 79.5 kilometres.

The Macleay River, the predominant feature of the shire, passes through scenery of natural beauty. The background of mountain ranges to the west, north and south add great charm to the scenery. The land is guarded on its western boundary by precipitous ravines forming the New England Range, part of the Great Dividing Range.

The Macleay River is tidal to Belgrave Falls, fifty-five kms from its mouth where it flows into the Pacific Ocean near South West Rocks. The river receives water from many creeks and brooks on the high country. Five Day, Stockyard, McKenzies and Nulla Nulla creeks are some of the tributaries until it meets Hickeys, Majors, Dungay and Mungay Creeks on undulating ground. The Belmore River, Christmas, Spencers and Kinchela Creeks join the course on the low plain before the river reaches the sea.

Kempsey, the commercial centre of the valley, has a population of 10,500 and is situated 35 kms upstream from the river’s mouth. The town is the dividing point for the upper and lower Macleay River districts with their contrasting scenery.

Downstream from Kempsey, the deltaic plain was formed by the Great Ice Age 800,000 to 20,000 years ago. The plain came into existence as the river changed its course several times in seeking new outlets to the sea through growing sand barriers. Great deposits of material were carried down and left inside the sand barriers, transforming the river estuary to the alluvial plains we know today.
Near the river’s end is the sunny resort of South West Rocks, once a maritime centre. Stuarts Point is a fast growing residential area. The camping grounds of Hat Head and Grassy Head are popular resorts. Away from the river is Crescent Head, another beautiful township, most of it perched on the side of a mountain overlooking Killick Creek and the ocean.

These geographic points became the centres for people and their activities. There are ghost towns and abandoned mining sites which are now only “sometime, long ago” names mentioned in old newspapers. Kempsey Shire is closely related to neighbouring shires. Early pastoralists became aware of the potential of the Macleay area whilst living at Port Macquarie. Some were serving members of the military detachment stationed at the penal settlement who sold their commissions to enable them to invest in land north of the Hastings River. The western boundary extends to the Dumaresq Shire where the towns of Hillgrove and Armidale in the steep New England Ranges became destinations on the mail route and then for produce. Later in the nineteenth century following the flood of 1864, settlers pushed further north to the Nambucca region to realise their dream of becoming landowners.

The object of this study is to link the historical sites with people and the built heritage and the reason for choosing this valley in which to live ...in short, a landscape of community heritage.

The whole of Kempsey Shire is home to the Dunghutti people. Dunghutti is now the official name of the language group although in the west of the region around Bellbrook and higher ground Aboriginal people prefer the T sound (Thunghutti).

Place names in the shire are borrowed from the Dunghutti language. Some of the beautiful sounds were interpreted by early Europeans as the ear heard them. It is not for us to explain the meaning but some words which have been loosely translated, easily signify the physical character of the country, i.e. Clybucca meaning crooked tallowood trees, bucca is often read as crooked as in Nambucca (crooked river).

In the Clybucca area are ancient camp sites with shell beds in the form of mounds which are up to two metres high. These are places where kitchen waste was placed in orderly fashion and the accumulation of these middens was started some 11,000 years ago and abandoned when the sea began to recede.

Food was plentiful especially in the lower Macleay. Climate accounted for movement. The people in the colder climes of the upper Macleay could easily move into warmer places on the floor of the valley during winter.

There are significant sites remaining in the Dunghutti land away from ground which has been cultivated. Stone implements have been found which give evidence of antiquity. Spears, boomerangs, shields, digging sticks, water and food carriers have been collected. In the colder areas cloaks were made from possum skins.

Sacred sites were marked with carved trees and stone arrangements. Gatherings took place to
celebrate ceremonies to mark special events in the lives of the people. The last great gathering took place towards the end of the nineteenth century. Other language groups from north and south of the Macleay gathered near Smoky Range not long before the last marked tree was cut down and taken to the Australian Museum for preservation. Did the people know this was their last ritual or did they meet in secret away from the watchful eyes of the settlers?

Such was the outward way of life for the first people. Aboriginal studies are making clearer some of the history of the groups. This is best explained by the Aboriginals themselves. It has been a hard task for the Dunghutti people to trace their culture. Some of the language is being recorded and hopefully enough of it will result in a comprehensive dictionary.

In 1826 a glowing report in The Sydney Gazette about the Macleay River was based on information by an Aboriginal man named Mooney. The Commandant at Port Macquarie sent a party to explore the so called New River. In recent years Kempsey has enjoyed the fame of artists Robert Campbell Jnr. and Milton Budge who tell their history in paintings.

The Macleay Shire has significant pre European history and a study of this heritage, preferably by Aboriginals should be considered.

2. Ibid. p.16
3. Ibid. p.17
On Sunday 13th May 1770 Captain James Cook recorded in his journal “at three in the morning the wind veered to westward when we tacked and stood to the northward. At noon our latitude, by observation was, 30 deg 43’S and our longitude 206 deg 45 W. At this time we were between three and four leagues from the shore, the north most part of which bore from us N 13 W and a point, or headland, on which we saw fires that produced a great quantity of smoke, bore W distant four leagues. To this Point, I gave the name Smoky Cape; it is of considerable height and over the pitch of the Point, is a round hillock; within are two others much higher and larger and within them the land is very low.”.

Captain James Cook was the first European to record a sighting of the east coast which is part of Kempsey Shire and this was the first European name bestowed on Dunghutti land.

Forty seven years later Europeans set foot on the same land four kms north of Smoky Cape. Trial Bay received the name from a tragedy when a party of convicts took over the brig Trial lying in Sydney Harbour. The crew sailed north only to
be wrecked on the coast. Part of the wreck was discovered by Commander White in the Lady Nelson in 1817 in what is known as Trial Bay. The next sighting took place in 1820 by John Oxley. He and Captain Allman were sent to make a survey of Port Macquarie and report on its suitability as a new settlement for convicts. Oxley was directed to examine inlets north of Smoky Cape. Sailing in the Prince Regent, Oxley entered the Macleay River but found only ten to twelve feet of water over the bar at high tide. Further explorations up the present Macleay River revealed only arms of the inlet, swamps, marshes and sandy infertile soil backed by remote hilly forest country. Oxley did not travel far enough up the river to recognise the great potential of the valley. “There is nothing in the local situation of this Inlet, or the quality of the surrounding country that can at present render it an object of any interest.” He did give faint praise to Trial Bay by suggesting, “vessels prevented by unfavourable winds and tides from entering Port Macquarie will find shelter, and I think it an eligible Station from whence to take advantage of a change in wind and weather.” In 1821 Governor Macquarie established a penal settlement at Port Macquarie. News of the surrounding district began to filter into the settlement including stories of a beautiful river about 35 kms to the north. In 1826 a glowing report was published in the Sydney Gazette based on information provided by an Aboriginal named Mooney. The Commandant at Port Macquarie decided to send an expedition to examine the area and the so-called New River. The party rowed up the Maria river then travelled overland with their boat and reached the river (Macleay) near the present Commandant Hill. They rowed downstream to Trial Bay, returned to their starting point and then further upstream until they reached the head of navigation at present Belgrave Falls.
It was now certain, contrary to Oxley’s belief, the river re-named Wrights River, was navigable for over 40 kms and that great stands of cedar were growing in the valley.

In 1826 Captain A.C. Innes was appointed Commandant at Port Macquarie and the following year he established a cedar party a little north of Euroka Creek on the bank of the river. The river was finally named Macleay in honour of Hon. Alexander Macleay, Colonial Secretary of the colony and father-in-law of now Major Innes.

Access west of the Macleay was not possible for some years. A route was travelled by Crown land Commissioner Robert Massie in 1842 who took a party to Armidale. In 1856 Lieutenant William Kemp, son of early settler Major Kemp surveyed a road to the New England. His route followed Nulla Nulla Creek north from its junction with the Macleay for about 13 kms, turned west along Kemps Range to Five Day Creek. From then it crossed to the high country at the head of Dykes River. For this he was rewarded by the government. Lieutenant Kemp set out again a few months later but was drowned in the Macleay River near Temagog.

Subsequently it was trade with the New England which led teamsters to find suitable tracks to the west. They built on these early expeditions over the rugged country and deep ravines between the coast and the settled areas west of the settlement.

3. Ibid. p.20,21 Ibid. p.5. Ibid. p.52.
4. Ibid. p.21
5. Ibid. p.52
Soon after the Port Macquarie penal settlement closed in 1830 it became possible for settlers to purchase Crown land in the northern section of the County of Macquarie. This county was the most northerly of the nineteen counties which had been gazetted in October 1829. The nineteen counties covered the area radiating out from Sydney which was bounded roughly by Batemans Bay to the south, Yass and Wellington to the west and the Manning River district to the north. With settlement legally restricted to the counties, those who purchased Crown land could be assured of police protection, while anyone who ventured further afield did so at their own risk.

The boundary line in the north continued on to the site of Kempsey and north along the Macleay River to the entrance at Grassy Head so that all land on the eastern side of the river was also located Crown land.

Up until 1830 the proximity of the penal settlement at Port Macquarie as well as the rugged nature of the country may have kept the grazing lands of the Macleay immune from trespassers.

The government took action in 1836 to check illegal squatters on Crown Land beyond the boundary on land west and north on the Macleay River. The leasing of grazing land was permitted on an annual payment of ten pounds.

The first applicants to depasture stock in the Macleay Valley were from Port Macquarie. The Act in Council which allowed this, established seven pastoral districts under the control of Crown Lands Commissioners. With penalties imposed for unauthorised occupation of the land, men from all stations in life now moving out beyond the boundaries, the word squatter became respectable.

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Drawing of the Sauer home at Nulla Nulla built about the 1880's almost entirely of cedar. Picture shows dairy and beef cattle, Bullock team with timber, horses, pigs, paddocks, gardens, fencing, mountains.
This was the start of the pastoral industry on the Maclay in the now Kempsey Shire. The unlocated land in the valley and further north was under the control of Crown Lands Commissioner Henry Oakes by 1837. His headquarters was in Port Macquarie and his territory was enormous, reaching from below his headquarters to the Clarence River and west to the New England.

His duties were to issue licences and to police the depasturing of stock. As well he had to prevent any maltreatment of the Aboriginals. He was required to make two itineraries of his district each year.

On his first visit in March 1837 Oakes travelled from his headquarters by boat up the Maria River to the head of navigation at Mariaville and then on horseback to various stations. He visited and commented on nine squating stations. By October the same year he visited twelve stations.

The squatters were now recognised and left no time in acquiring large runs. The Maclay River and its tributaries from Christmas Creek to McKenzies Creek in the upper Maclay watered large runs ranging in size from two square miles to twenty square miles. The large stations were those of Robert McKenzies at Glenelg on McKenzies Creek (later known as Wabra) then twenty square miles in extent, Major A.C. Innes Moparraba or Innes Creek on Innes Creek which was ten square miles and Lieutenant Charles Steele at Yarraval which also covered ten square miles. These properties and others were running sheep numbering in thousands.

Smaller stations ran cattle such as those held by John Henry Sullivan and Benjamin Robert Sullivan at Callitini and Cooorongongini and Henry St. John Cahuac at Euroka and Yarrabandinni and Mrs Ann Watt at Glenrock Plains. Richard Henry Oakes also ran cattle at Campania (Seven Oaks) as did Magnus Mcleod at Dondinalong and Captain W.H. Gray at Dungee.

The runs were uncleared country. Most were managed by overseers with shepherds at out stations and for the first ten years convicts were assigned to work but it was only on large stations that many men were employed.

As the licences could only be held on a yearly basis the first homes were generally single roomed slab huts. Some of the isolated stations had a store. Travellers often stopped at these stations for an overnight rest.

The boundaries of the runs were natural features such as tracks or marked trees. These boundaries often became the cause of disputes which had to be settled by the Commissioner for Crown Lands. The lessees took up as much land as they could stock. The stocking of a big run was expensive. Quite a number of the Maclay squatters financed their places by selling their army commissions. Others were business men or well to do immigrants.

These tracts of land were leased for grazing. Any agriculture such as crop growing had to be for local purposes only.

One result of the Act of 1836 which permitted occupation of unlocated land was a running battle which developed between illegal cedar cutters and the Commissioner. This lasted from 1837 to 1839 when cedar cutting was once more legalised on payment of a licence fee. During this time residents suffered a period of lawlessness and disorder.

Major Oakes found he had to deal with problems of lawlessness quite unconnected with his routine work and this was a time when he did not have the assistance of an established police force. He spent much time seeking out and ordering sawyers to leave the district. In 1837 a fresh in the river brought together sawyers recently employed in shearing and harvesting, for the rise permitted them to get the cedar, which they had left in the scrub, into the river and float the rafts down over the falls.

When licence fees were introduced cedar getters flocked to the Maclay. To regulate the situation Major Oakes established an office opposite the
private town of Kempsey. This was the first centre of administration. By 1841 the names of many new squatters had become part of Macleay history. Some of the station names are still retained today in 2002.

### SQUATTING STATIONS
### AND THEIR OWNERS ..1841

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Callatini</td>
<td>Captain P. Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euroka</td>
<td>Henry St John Cahuac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dondingalong</td>
<td>Magnus McLeod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Plains</td>
<td>William Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yessaba</td>
<td>Lt. Andrew Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Dungee</td>
<td>Capt. W.H. Geary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Dungee</td>
<td>Major Wm. Kemp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Boonanghii)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combertine</td>
<td>W.N. Gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarrawal</td>
<td>Lt. Charles Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood</td>
<td>Capt. Wm. Briggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonaba</td>
<td>William Ducat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrungala</td>
<td>Major Henry Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Corangula)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toorooka</td>
<td>George Hitchcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innes Creek</td>
<td>Major A.C.Innes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Moparrah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsineur</td>
<td>Lt. John Henderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wabbra</td>
<td>Robert McKenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Glenelg)</td>
<td>then related families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Panton Betts &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campbell-Kerr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nulla Nulla</td>
<td>Wm. McKenzie &amp; Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Day Creek</td>
<td>H. Tozer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; Dr. Fattorini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenrock</td>
<td>Ann Salmon nee Watt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Oaks</td>
<td>Richard Henry Oakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarrabandinni</td>
<td>W.H. Chapman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klybuca</td>
<td>Hebden &amp; Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushey Park or</td>
<td>Major Rb. Mudie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klybuca Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commissioner Oakes retired in 1842 and was followed by Robert Massie who immediately set about moving the headquarters from a place described as ‘being in the middle of a large scrub surrounded by a swamp which renders it unhealthy for the men and there is no feed for the horses’. Massie moved the headquarters to a more central place at Yarraval at the head of navigation and beside a crossing used by travellers from Port Macquarie. He was succeeded in 1848 by Edward Merewether.

The squatting stations in the valley continued to increase. In 1839 an act provided for a small detachment of border police to be attached to the
Commissioner. This force was to be financed by an annual levy on the stock depastured by the squatters. The Land Act of 1846 was to provide for a longer tenure of fourteen years and the pre-emptive right to purchase the leases or part of them. Whilst this act meant more permanency for the pastoralists it was not introduced until 1851. Commissioner Edward Merewether wrote letters to the Colonial Secretary asking for certification of the right to buy land.

With a fixity of tenure, permanent improvements were made and squatters exercised their right to purchase part of their run. Prices were fixed at £1 an acre. However vast acreages were still held under licences.

Years of rural depression during the 1840s saw many pastoralists boiling down the stock to produce tallow for the London market. In 1845 Lieutenant John Henderson of Elsineur (now Elsinore near Bellbrook) wrote how beasts were slaughtered, skinned and cut into four then thrown into cauldrons. The fat was skimmed off and placed into casks. The carcase was thrown away and the skins cured.

Sheep grazing gradually gave way to cattle, proving that the country was not suited to sheep. The Australian Handbook for 1888 showed 12,808 head of cattle contrasted with 672 sheep in the district.

In some ways the industries of pastoralism and timber went hand in hand. As landholders opened up the country in the higher reaches timber was brought out by teams of horses and bullocks and rough tracks were made.

Nulla Nulla Station of 15,000 hectares was first taken up by lease in 1841 by William McKenzie and Robert Graham later by Jacob Hinchcliffe and in 1865 by Henry Sauer who first leased and then purchased part of the land.

Sauer was an engineer and the contractor for several sections of the road up Big Hill to Armidale. He built a home from cedar timber which grew on his land.

Later the bulldozer and the chain saw replaced the axe and the cross cut saw and quantities of beautiful cedar were milled from the forests in the upper Macleay.

On the low hilly country at Moparrabah the story went full circle. First called Innes Creek this large tract of land was taken up by Major A.C. Innes former Commandant of Port Macquarie who became a free settler. Oakes itinerary lists it as ten sq. miles.

Some of this country passed to various lessees including Ann Chapman, the Farrell family and then a company known as Bradley Flats until Colinas Pty Ltd purchased it in 1974. It was noted in the Macleay Argus Newspaper as being the biggest sale of rural property ever known on the Macleay.

Moparrabah was bought to plant poplar timber and to combine this industry with cattle raising. The company bought up other land in the lower parts of the Macleay around Euroka on the old Callitini.
and Euroka Stations and further down on Seven Oaks once owned by the Oakes family. Major Oakes was the first Commissioner for Crown Lands in this district.

By 1865 when Henry Sauer was taking up his lease at Nulla Nulla, Fussells Squatting Directory gave extra properties such as Pee Dee, (J. McMaugh) Towal Creek (J. Warne) Tanban (J. Warne) Taits Station (Ann Chapman). By this time many of the squatters had exercised their right to purchase portions of their runs. Homes were built of fine timber and most have not survived the ravages of bushfires, floods or time. One that has, on the upper-Macleay, is at Stony Flat.

This gem is a few kilometres west of Bellbrook. It was built by Timothy Tyne in 1876 and still stands on its original piers of white mahogany and is covered by the original roofing iron. The single-gabled Tyne homestead was a slab and brace place built of red mahogany in walls and panelled doors with tallowood floors and red cedar ceilings.

On the lower-Macleay there are two fine buildings which were built for property owners Alexander and Mary Dorman at Pola Creek and Charles and Ann Ball at Longreach. Ann Ball was Alexander's sister and the houses were very similar. Built in 1890 both houses were built of timber and feature tallowood, cedar and mahogany.11

2. Ibid. p22
3. Ibid. p27
5. Ibid. October 1837, State Records.
8. Crown Land Commissioner Oakes to Colonial Secretary, December 1, 1837, State Records.
Transport from Sydney was by sea to the Macleay River but an unpredictable bar at the mouth of the river occasioned many travellers to disembark at Port Macquarie and take a smaller craft up the Maria River to Boat Harbour or Mariaville and then travel across country by horseback or bullock team to Kempsey.

Shipping provided the only means of transport for goods in the early days of Macleay history and therefore played a vital part in the settlement of the Kempsey Shire, the river was the highway. The usual cargoes were timber maize and livestock as well as passengers. Small schooners and ketches were the first vessels on the river and the usual charge was half the value of the cargo. These iniquitous freights caused some settlers to invest in vessels of their own.

This led to a large shipbuilding industry in the 1840s. Yards were established by Messrs Newton, Ferrier and Malcolm at “Scotchtown” near Kempsey, John Stuart at Grassy Head, Lawsons at Frederickton and Callaghan, Cochrane and W. Marshall on the river. J. Gillies was at Klywooticka near Frederickton until 1843 when he sold his shipbuilding yard to Christopher Lawson.

To gain access to the upper-Macleay, Port Macquarie was mostly the chosen port and then travel went by Rollands Plain across the Marlo Merikan Range and the Hastings Range coming out by Dungay Creek where the crossing was at Wittitrin. From there a bridle track led past Dondingalong to Kempsey. The main track or dray road continued to Wabbra on the upper-Macleay.

In 1837 an outcry from the Wilson River landholders that their crops and farm improvements were being destroyed by herds passing through on the way to the Macleay
resulted in the surveying of a line of road which left Ballengarra, followed the road north, crossed Pipers Creek and Maria River and came out at Commandant Hill.

A road into the valley from the west and north was not possible for many years. Stock had been brought down from the New England tablelands along routes unsuitable for vehicular traffic. The present road to Armidale from Kempsey did not come into use until the end of the nineteenth century being used by horse and bullock teams until 1890s.3

William Darke in 1854 surveyed a road from Kempsey to Frederickton. From there a track led to Grassy Head, the outlet of the Macleay and then on to Nambucca and Bellinger Rivers.4

Skirting the ocean which gives it its name, the Pacific Highway connects the cities of Sydney and Brisbane via the north coast of New South Wales and links the coastal towns which serve the agricultural, timber, cattle and other industries of the northern rivers districts and other northern coastal areas. The route from Sydney to the Queensland border at Tweed Heads was named the “Pacific Highway” in 1931, Queensland having previously adopted the name from the border to Brisbane. That part of the route between Sydney and Hexham (Newcastle) had previously been known as The Great Northern Highway, and the part between Hexham and Tweed Heads as the North Coast Highway. (Kempsey Shire is part of the latter.)

Many of the routes of the State Highways of today followed a similar pattern of development, first exploration and then expansion of settlement. The late development of a coastal road was due to a number of factors, the most important of which were the proximity to the sea and the consequent use of a quicker mode of sea transport; the official limitation placed on the expansion of settlement during the early colonial era and the difficulties associated with the establishment of a through road owing to the nature of the terrain with its many rivers separated by rugged country.5

River crossings were one of the problems of early Kempsey town and a punt was brought into service in 1842 to cross the river from Rudder’s town of East Kempsey to central Kempsey as the town grew on both sides of the river.6 In subsequent years ferries and punts crossed the river at various points. In turn wharves were built and villages sprang up around these river crossings. At Kempsey the first bridge was built in 1900 and replaced in 1959.7

River boats, the droghers, met the ocean going ships inside the river and conveyed cargo and passengers to Kempsey. At first only vessels with a shallow draft could reach the town.

The establishment of a pilot station by 1862 at Grassy Head had lessened the dangers associated with entering the river but demands were increasing for improved facilities for sea going ships.8

The Macleay River, Central Kempsey and part of East Kempsey. The paddle steamer "FireKing" is at anchor on the western side of river. Rudder's ferry is mid-way across the river, an unnamed sailing ship is heading downriver.1866
A lighthouse at Smoky Cape had been recommended as early as 1873 but nothing was done about it until Alexander Kethel, Member of Parliament for West Sydney, convinced the Legislative Assembly in 1886 that a light should be established there in the interests of safe navigation. Colonial Architect, James Barnett surveyed the site and prepared the necessary specifications.

Major changes occurred during the building of the lighthouse and Barnett was dismissed in 1890 and the office of Colonial Architect abolished. The task was handed over to Cecil Darley, the Engineer in Chief for Harbours and Rivers. The light was first exhibited in 1891 and lit by a kerosene burning pressure lamp. This method was improved in 1912 and then in 1962 converted to electricity generated by an electric motor.

The approval of a plan for a harbour at Trial Bay stimulated local agitation for a branch railway line from Armidale and in 1882 surveyors tried to find a suitable route from Kempsey. They were unsuccessful and reported that if one could be found it would be too costly to construct and operate.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century work was continuous on making the New Entrance a safer bar crossing. The Pilot Station moved from Grassy Head to near South West Rocks. Work on a harbour of refuge at Trial Bay was not a success but remnants still remain of the breakwater, which was being built as a haven for ships in bad weather. This work was undertaken by inmates of the prison at Laggers Point and was in accordance with the improved prison system then under consideration. In 1903 the work stopped. It was stated in Parliament that the breakwater could be constructed more readily and efficiently by free labour. Work did not resume on the breakwater which had only reached about one fifth of the designed length.

Construction of breakwalls at the New Entrance and the fact that a better class of vessel was operating along the coast led to regular shipping services from Sydney. At first privately owned ships operated from Kempsey to Sydney. During the 1890s the ships of The North Coast Steam and Navigation Company started regular visits to the Macleay river. This Company ended the service in 1954. M. Bern Shipping Company purchased several of the ships and continued to carry freight from Nestles in Smithtown until 1959 when Nestles decided rail transport was more reliable.

On 14th of November 1858 the first steamship “The New Moon” built by William Marshall sailed along the Macleay River. German Verge, son of John Verge of Austral Eden, recorded the event on the fly leaf of his bible.

Official direction had been given in 1834 for a road to be constructed from the Hastings River to the limestone quarry near Pipers Creek south of what was to be the town of Kempsey. The road was never built and the lime was pulled in handcarts by convicts to a wharf on Pipers Creek and taken downriver by barges to Port Macquarie.

As mentioned Lieutenant William Kemp found a trafficable route to the New England in 1856. The route was surveyed by Surveyor William Darke and forwarded to the Surveyor General. The present road to Armidale and Hillgrove did not come into use until the end of the nineteenth century and was still being used by horse and bullock teams. In 1902 improvements were made for general traffic.
Postal deliveries necessitated the improvements of roads and rapid changes occurred in little more than half a century. Mail arrived at Port Macquarie and was delivered by contractors on horseback. In 1848 a continuous mail service was carried out by Horatio Tozer for 120 pounds a year. This route went via the Border Police Station at Belgrave Falls. By 1856 mail was coming direct to Kempsey by sea and there left for up-river stations and Armidale by packhorse. Contractors William Ducat and O.O. Dangar carried out this service for 73 pounds a year. Until 1890s all up-river mail was carried this way. By 1900 the road had improved sufficiently to permit the use of a horse drawn vehicle and the contract was for delivery to Comara. From 1904 – 1913 contractors drove four wheeled covered coaches drawn by two-four horses along a route which included Greenhill, Skillion Flat, Temagog, Willawarrin, Toorooka, Hickey’s Creek, Uralgurra, Bellbrook and Pee Dee. Dan Davis made history in June 1913 by establishing the first motor service on the route driving a Brasier open tourer. The contract for the down mail from Armidale to Comara was held by Patrick Ryan who with his driver J.J. Cannon pioneered motor mail service in Armidale.

In an article in the Open Road of October 1971 it was reported that Mr. Cannon drove his 8 cylinder Cadillac in the through run from Armidale to Kempsey in 1916, the trip took nine hours. 

Towns and hamlets rose beside the mail runs and regular stopping places became small commercial centres.

In 1906 a Kempsey Borough Council minute recorded that the Premier J.H. Carruthers sent a telegram to the Mayor, John Small, informing Council that a second reading was passed in the Legislative Council regarding confirmation of a north coast railway line.

The railway line was built in sections. Work on the Wauchope-Kempsey sections was commenced on 18th November 1913 and the Kempsey to Macksville section on 27th November 1913. Work in these stages was interrupted during the early years of the World War. 

The nearest town became the centre of commerce. Bridges were built and Kempsey itself became a “railway town”. An engine shed housed twelve engines for
simultaneous cleaning or repair. A fine station was built with a refreshment room and buildings for staff.\textsuperscript{16}

Shipping was still a favourite method of transport but the railway gained momentum. Before the opening of the railway in Kempsey in 1917 people were conveyed by car to Wauchepe as evidenced by the enlistment of soldiers who were farewelled in Kempsey before catching the train in Wauchepe to a recruiting centre in Maitland or Sydney. (WW1) Children living south of Kempsey, travelled by train to Kempsey for high school education often starting out from their homes before daylight to catch the train. The train picked up from Wauchepe and sidings on the way. These students were known as “The Train Kids”.\textsuperscript{17}

Motor transport became popular between towns. George Robinson began a service in 1910. Twice a week he carried passengers between Kempsey and Taree. Service cars in the early years were far from comfortable with solid rubber tyres, little protection from the weather and no windscreen or springs. They were driven over roads of earth formation which were usually dusty in dry weather and quagmires in the wet.\textsuperscript{18}

Livestock was driven on designated routes but often had to pass through town streets. These travelling stock routes as they were named were established and essential for the movement of stock before road and rail transport. These routes are deserving of a heritage listing.

Small ships and droghers continued to provide transport along the river during the early years of the twentieth century. Some of the droghers were locally built. The small craft designed for sheltered waters were an important part of transport for produce on the Macleay. On the south bank of the river a little up-stream of the present railway bridge, Richard Avery built his paddle wheel vessels of shallow draught.\textsuperscript{19} Launches conveyed children to school from downriver towns and farms. Schools in the villages provided for education up to the end of primary schooling and higher education was at Kempsey. These students travelling to high school were fondly known as “The Boat Kids”.\textsuperscript{20}

Post war years (WW11) brought a new method of travel in and out of the valley with the opening of the aerodrome at Aldavilla. On 24th September 1946 New England Airways commenced carrying freight between Sydney and Casino via Old Bar, Kempsey and Coffs harbour. Butler Air Transport commenced a service to Kempsey in 1948. With a direct service from Sydney six days a week this airline carried 2829 passengers during the first year. The Department of Civil Aviation employed a staff of ten to man the Air Radio and Radio Range Station at Kempsey.\textsuperscript{21}

1937 saw the commencement of the Commercial Broadcasting Station 2KM opened in Kempsey. The Australian Broadcasting Commission 2KP/TR followed in 1954.\textsuperscript{22}

A telegraph office was built at West Kempsey in 1876 and an additional telegraph office in Central Kempsey in 1878. The first telephone service was a private line from the hospital in River Street to a Doctor’s surgery on Belgrave Street. This service was provided by erecting a single wire on the pole route of the telegraph line between Kempsey and Armidale and operated as an earth return circuit. (1902)

A telephone exchange opened in 1908 and twenty-two services were connected. This service was for Kempsey subscribers. There is
no record to disclose when a trunk line service was installed.


5. Historic Roads of N.S.W., *Pacific Highway*, Department of Main Roads, N.S.W., p.41.


AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURE

The lower-Macleay area is noted for its fertile river flats where in earlier days vast acreages of maize were cultivated. In more recent times dairying was predominant as a means of livelihood. The butter, cheese and milk processing factories won many awards for their fine products.

As settlement increased, timber, tallow, hides, wheat and maize were shipped from the district on small sailing ships.

In 1870 a map was prepared of County Dudley which included those parishes on the north bank of the river which had formerly been included in the unlocated lands beyond County Macquarie. It showed extensive settlement along the banks of Clybucca Creek, Christmas Creek and nearby swamp land and along the banks of the Macleay River from Shark Island to the upper Macleay River at Mungay Creek. The settlement consisted generally of 40, 60 and 80 acre farms.

The staple crop taken from the farms was maize. Potatoes, pumpkins, oranges and sugar were grown and pigs and poultry raised. Early plantings of wheat were not successful. Samuel Redgate’s flour mill at West Kempsey was soon converted to a sawmill. Rice was an experimental crop in 1841 at Seven Oaks near Smithtown.

The maize growers on the river suffered severe losses in the 1864 flood. In 1867 there was a depression in the Sydney maize market and many farmers tried a new type of production. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company suggested the district was suited to sugar cane growing and that company (1868) sent an experienced planter to advise the farmers on suitable types of cane to grow. The company also established a central mill to which growers could supply their cane. The big Darkwater Mill was built at the junction of the Belmore and Macleay Rivers. To ensure a continuous supply throughout the season the company gave the small growers advances on their crops, and interest free loans when approved varieties of cane were planted. Incentives were offered to produce cane according to their requirements.

With the desire for independence the small farmers wished to be beyond the control of the “capitalist” and established their own mills. The prospect of owning a small mill appealed to men with a moderate capital.

Sydney Verge, son of architect John Verge, was one. His West Kempsey Sugar Works was located where 2KP (ABC) radio station is in Kemp Street and was one of the largest independent steam mills. The Macleay River Sugar Company at Frederickton was another large mill. There were also small one horse powered mills which could turn out half a ton of sugar a week getting through from five to ten acres of cane annually.

Many of the farmers who had experimented with this form of agriculture lost heavily. Because of heavy timber clearing, frosts were severe and affected the quality of the cane. Colonial Sugar Refining Company moved its mill to Harwood on the Clarence River in 1873. Some families who had combined the growing of cane with maize and potatoes weathered the difficult times. The figures in the Australian Handbook for 1888 show the
importance of the return to maize growing and for that year the district ranked second highest in the returns of maize growing districts. In 2002 maize is not grown as a traditional grain crop rather it is grown as fodder for stock and the whole plant is consumed. Some farmers make silage but to produce this method of fodder preservation, farmers require expensive machinery.

Wine was also being produced locally. The valley now settled down to a pattern of agriculture and livestock.

An interesting development of the 1880s was the establishment of Drainage Unions by farmers whose lower Macleay farms were affected by swamps. The farmers decided to form unions to drain the land. In all, thirteen unions were formed. An agreement signed by thirty-three farmers at Seven Oaks and Bellimbopinni in 1884 was a typical one. Farmers agreed to contribute five shillings (50 cents) per acre towards the drainage of their land, under the trusteeship of Sydney Verge, Charles Sutherland Jnr., John Knauer and Henry Christian. The main drain and sub-drains ran through the properties of these thirty-three farmers who held areas from twenty to one thousand acres in need of drainage.

The 1890s saw the commencement of a new industry in the valley which not only survived but prospered. This was the dairy industry which began to develop during a period of economic depression when there was a downturn in the price of maize and beef.

Separator stations were built. Farmers took their milk to these new establishments to have the cream separated. Kinchela, Smithtown, Clybucca, Turners Flat, Frederickton, Warneton, Belmore River and West Kempsey all had separator stations or creameries. By 1898 there were twenty-nine in the valley. The West Kempsey station established by R.A.H. Kemp at North Street, was operated by a turbine driven Sharples machine, the water for the boiler being drawn from a well on the property. The machine handled four hundred gallons an hour. Farmers from Glenrock and Tennessee carted their milk daily to this station. The milk cans were hoisted to a landing on the top floor of the building, the milk was weighed and tested for butter fat content. The return to the farmer was three and a half pence per gallon. The separated cream was taken by horse and sulky to the Smithtown Butter Factory.

About 1897 household separators came into use and the need ceased for daily carting of milk to a separator station. Some of the owners replaced their churns and established butter factories. Both butter and cheese factories sprang up in Kempsey and the villages and in centres such as Toorooka and Clybucca. Arthur Jackson’s Separator Station was taken over by the Smithtown Co-operative Dairying Company and a refrigeration plant established. The Bacchus Marsh Company later acquired the business followed by Nestles Company (Australia) Ltd. in 1921.

Butter factories were also established at Frederickton and Warneton. Foley Bros. opened the Kempsey Butter Factory in 1897 operating it until the Macleay River Co-operative Dairying Company took it over in 1905. This company later acquired the Debenham Butter Factory at Frederickton, using it for cheese making. When the Kempsey factory ceased to make butter, the Co-Operative Company made butter as well as cheese at their Frederickton factory.

The upper-Macleay Co-Operative Dairying Company established their factory at Toorooka in 1906. Its principal output was butter, although for a short period after 1927, a bacon factory was added to the premises.

The dairy industry in the valley was to prosper for over sixty years. By 1916 there were 1200 registered dairies in the Kempsey district, two co-operative butter factories, two proprietary butter factories and four cheese factories. By 1982 there were 160 dairies registered and twenty years later there are thirty-nine dairies in the Macleay Valley. No less milk is produced in these twenty years but modern technology and improved methods of agriculture and management skills has changed the industry. Nevertheless twenty million litres of milk are produced on these thirty-nine
farms. The local factories have closed and milk is transported to Wauchope and Newcastle.

Pig raising was a valuable side line for dairy farmers. Poultry and eggs were sold on the Sydney market, transported by ship to agents in the city.

The fishing industry was stimulated by the formation of the Macleay River District Fishermen’s Co-operative. Professional fishermen then found assured markets for prawns, lobsters and fish brought back from their ocean going trips. By 1960 there were sixty licensed fishermen and fifty licensed fishing boats belonging to the Co-operative.

Oysters became a thriving industry.

Banana growing began in a small way in the 1920s at Yarrahappini and then began to flourish when Charles Lane, a Kempsey Pharmacist introduced a hardy William hybrid.

The first settler on the east bank of the Macleay River was merchant Enoch William Rudder. An interest in the cedar trade first brought Rudder to the river in 1835. He took over Samuel Onions’ grant of 812 acres at five shillings an acre. The homestead was built on a hilltop overlooking the river. A garden was laid out and fruit trees planted. Rudder subdivided the holding into residential blocks and the private town of East Kempsey was born.

In 1853 Rudder farmed fifty acres of his Woodfield lease and had twenty acres of maize, tobacco and vines under cultivation with his son Julius John as superintendent. Later Julius and his brother Enoch occupied land for purely agricultural purposes. Woodfield lease was 3808 acres. The property was at the junction of Euroka Creek and the Macleay River and extended to the Maria River. The property passed to Julius and Enoch. They divided the rich heavy brush into two properties and both holdings were cleared of all timber and the land turned into profitable farming.

Enoch Jnr. sold his farm after the 1861 Land Act and bought 700 acres above Belgrave Falls, cleared the land, built a house and named the place Oaklands. Today the land has reverted to grazing.

One large station devoted to agriculture was Austral Eden taken up as a grant by John Verge. This land was within the bounds of location.

A London architect who had decided to practice in Sydney, Verge first took up a land grant on the Williams River in 1829 under the 1827 regulations. Ten years later offers were made that an additional grant would be given to any settler who had taken up land under the 1827 regulations and had spent five times the amount of its estimated value on improvements and had sufficient capital to develop another grant.

Verge lodged an application and in 1839 he chose land at the junction of the Darkwater Creek (Belmore River) and the Macleay River with six miles of water frontage and an immense quantity of cedar on it. In 1839 his boundary stones were set in position and Austral Eden established. He let out his land on clearing leases to tenant farmers. He made purchases of additional land in the valley as it became available.

Crown land on the other side of the river was still being taken up in leases. Agitation was increasing for the unlocking of land held by squatters. In 1861 Sir John Robertson’s Crown Land Act threw open vacant land to unrestricted application except for land reserved for towns and villages. The Act allowed any person on Crown Land to select 130 hectares to form a small farm. Enormous areas were sold but the actual increase in acreage cropped was small. In the first ten years financial depression, and credit difficulties slowed down land purchase. From 1870 the act was used by so called selectors to victimise land holders and landholders to “dummy” principalities for themselves out of the wilderness.

A newspaper of the period wrote ‘farming like every other business requires capital and when the settler has paid the price of the land (one pound per acre) the cost of clearing fencing and
maintenance until he can sell his crop, his capital is exhausted’. The Act was criticized as having too many loopholes.12

Unoccupied land watered by creeks and rivers was rapidly taken up by selectors. Homes too were built close to the water, a danger which was demonstrated in 1864 when the first of many major floods washed away ninety-six homes as well as stock and crops.13

The poverty of many of this class of settler was observed by a Catholic Priest in 1871.14 School teachers in some of the village schools also wrote reports to their inspectors evidencing the poverty of some of the farmers who could not pay the school fees.

The good climate and richly productive soil brought an ever increasing flow of farmers to the district. For the more prosperous farmer, life on the farms followed a quiet and orderly pattern. Some of the homes built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century are standing today but most have been subjected to alterations.

In following the pattern of farming the word clearing is used repeatedly. Great stands of timber were cleared. First timber was ruthlessly cut out. In 1835 a licence system was introduced. Later in the same year felling of cedar was prohibited. This caused great animosity towards the Commissioner for Crown Lands who had to police the Act. The timber merchants put pressure on the government to permit legal cutting and in isolated areas continued illegal cutting. Commissioner Oakes spent much of his time seeking out and prosecuting illegal sawyers. Reports of runaway convicts among the cutters and of murders and riotous behaviour alarmed the settlers in the Macleay valley and caused agitation for more police in the area.

Clement Hodgkinson was working on the lower Macleay as a contract surveyor for the Surveyor-General when he reported that a wall of scrub was between two miles and a quarter of a mile in width from Kempsey to Pelican Island and the river completely shut in. When the timber was cleared the first settlers were able to take two crops a year from the rich alluvial soil.15
AGRICULTURE

Small farmers earned a living in the twentieth century cutting railway sleepers as the railway line edged its way north. Generally this was combined with a family dairy where each member of the family helped with the milking. In 1971 the British Tobacco Company (Aust) Ltd., known locally as Farm Pro, experimented with the growing of asparagus and vegetables suitable for frozen food manufacturing. These trials were at Stuarts Point and the sandy soil was dressed with trace elements and agricultural lime and irrigated. The venture lapsed after ten years and the company sold the land in twenty-five acre lots.16

3. Town and Country Journal, 14 January, 1871, ML.
6. RAH Kemp Papers, information from Felix Kemp, in MRHS files.
7. Records in MRHS files.
11. Government Gazette, 28 June, 1837, ML.
14. Father J. O’Sullivan to his parents in Cork, Ireland, 7 June, 1861, files.
16. A history of Yarrahapinni and Stuarts Point 1984
The history of the timber industry in the Kempsey Shire is linked to the Macleay River. The River in the 1830s was bordered by forests, huge stands of cedar and rosewood and majestic eucalypts. The river then was perfect. Access was easily gained to the prized red cedar and it could be floated down the river to the coast to be picked up by ocean going vessels and shipped to timber merchants in the city.

Gradually timber getters were forced further inland and today it is not the river that is used but giant semi-trailers taking logs to mills in Kempsey and out of the area. Backyard mills and tiny hamlets housing colonies of timber getters are a thing of the past. Settlements at Carrai, Daisy Plains and Five Day Creek are marked by rusting shells of mill machinery.

In December 1826 Captain A.C. Innes was appointed Commandant at Port Macquarie. In April 1827 he established a cedar party on the bank of the newly discovered river a little north of Euroka Creek. This is the earliest European settlement recorded in the Macleay Valley.

Red cedar fast became a much sought after prize in early Australia as adventurous men looking to make their fortune "went bush" with cross cut saws and broad axes. The government's position and attitude towards the cedar getters was inconsistent for years. Early attempts to regulate the trade were not successful and as a result in 1836 cedar cutting on unlocated land was prohibited. This caused great animosity towards the Commissioner for Crown Lands who had to police the law. The timber merchants put pressure on the government to permit legal cutting and in isolated areas illegal cutting continued.

Commissioner Oakes spent much of his time seeking out and prosecuting illegal sawyers. Reports of runaway convicts among the cutters
and of murders and riotous behaviour alarmed the settlers in the Macleay Valley and caused agitation for more police to be assigned to the area.

Clement Hodgkinson, a contract surveyor in 1840, described the virgin land on the lower Macleay in his report to the Surveyor-General, 'From Kempsey down to beyond Pelican Island the river was completely shut in by gigantic trees matted and interwoven together almost to their summits by wild vines and creepers and often presenting the appearance of an enormous wall covered from top to bottom with ivy and forming an impenetrable barrier for a man to pass unless he were to hew his way through; it would puzzle a bird to pass through.'

Not much is known about the early cedar getters except for names of men applying for licences and these are recorded in the Crown Commissioners’ journals i.e. Major Oakes 1837-1842, Robert Massie 1842-1848 and Edward Merewether 1848-1854 and briefly again in 1856.

The Dew brothers George, Fred, Alf and Tom came into the area about 1870 looking for cedar. After cutting for some time all became graziers and settled on the upper-Macleay.

The name Ben Supple is one name which stands out. He was a cedar getter, pit sawyer, builder, fencer and yard builder. Up to about 1890 there was not much call for hardwood timber as the dwellings were all split slabs or pit sawn cedar slabs. Of course the two rail using hardwood morticed posts and split rails. Stock yards were built the same way using three rails and a post of round timber. With the coming of the road to Armidale, hardwood timber, mostly ironbark, was required for the many bridges. This was handhewn timber and delivered to the sites by bullock teams. The contract for the supply of timber to Five Day, Lower Creek and Styx bridges (late nineteenth century) was held by Eardley Scott.

The remnants of Five Day Creek Mill are still at the site beside the creek. The mill was started in 1947 and operated for some years under different ownerships. A steam engine stands at Daisy Plains. Most of the early timber getters used bullock teams to draw timber from the forests. Hudson, Ellem and Mainey are names which were associated with bullocks. Billy Mayhew brought logs out around Kempsey with bullocks and Stan Lewthwaite used the same method around the Maria River. Christy and Frank Supple were the exception they had horse teams. Nearer to town Arthur Gill also hauled with a horse team.

Into the twentieth century bullock and horse teams still passed through the towns hauling logs to the four long established mills, Thomas Hennessy and his three sons at River Street West Kempsey and Stuarts point, Dangar and Watt at South Kempsey and H.J. Moses at Greenhill.

Local hardwoods such as ironbark, grey and red gum, and red and white mahogany, brush box, turpentine and tallowwood and soft woods such as cedar, rosewood and beech were all shipped from the Macleay. There was still plenty of cedar growing in the upper-Macleay although not
of the immensity of the tree which was felled in 1882 on Henry Sauer’s property on Nulla Nulla Creek by Henry Davis and his three sons George, Alfred and Daniel of Uralgurra.

Henry Sauer was an engineer and the contractor for several sections of the road up Big Hill to Armidale. He built a home from cedar timber which grew on his land. It was on this property that the mightiest cedar tree in the Macleay was felled. The girth of the tree three metres from the ground was twelve metres round and required two men on each side with two welded cross cut saws to cut it through.(1882). The diameter of the first limb was such that it would not fit on to a bullock dray. This monarch of the forest yielded 84,000 super feet of timber. One flitch was displayed in the Paris Exhibition of 1885.

Later the bulldozer and chain saw replaced the axe and cross cut saw and quantities of beautiful timber were milled from the forests in the upper-Macleay.

On the low hilly country at Moparrah the story went full circle. First called Innes Creek this large tract of land was taken up by Major A.C. Innes, former Commandant of Port Macquarie who became a free settler. Oakes Itinerary lists it as ten square miles. Various lessees and owners cleared the country for grazing purposes. However in 1974 Colinas Pty. Ltd. purchased the land to plant trees. This time an introduced species of poplar trees mainly for the match and paddle pop industry. The trees after growing to a certain height were compatible with cattle grazing.

Timber played an important part in both world wars. In WW1 England was becoming perilously short of steel so Prime Minister W.M. Hughes offered to send ironbark, split and free from sap for rifle butts and stocks. In WW2 after the bombing of Darwin, three piles were cut and drawn from Kundabung. Paddy Mayhew who was a railway officer at Kundabung Railway Station remembered they were selected by Jack Farrawell. The piles were destined for Darwin wharf. There was not a limb on them at ninety feet.

Bill Haydon was known locally as "The Cedar King" because of his fascination with the beautiful timber. He spent years building roads and trestle bridges up into formerly inaccessible country on the Carrai Plateau. Trucks and tractors replaced teams. He built his first mill on land he owned at Carrai. A second mill was started at Kookaburra in 1946 and a third at Daisy Plains. The plywood mill built by Haydon at Greenhill in the late 1940s was the first of its kind in the area and was recognised nationally as an important part of the industry.

One cedar giant felled in 1958 by Bill Haydon’s team produced 15,000 super feet of timber, one limb being over 28 feet or 8 metres long. One of the slabs was presented to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney. A plank measuring almost 4 metres long and 2 metres wide and 101 mm thick was cut by W&H. Kyle. This timber was used as a table for Mr.J. Lawson, Country Party member for Murray. The remainder was put on display at Parliament House.

Haydon disappeared in the Washpool State Forest, north west of Grafton in 1965 whilst searching for cedar. His body was never found and it is believed he may have fallen down a disused mine shaft in the rugged country.

In the 1950s the timber industry was running at an all time high and in 1957 the mills in operation were considerable in the valley. In that year the number of private mills outnumbered the crown mills and many of the names are familiar in the valley today.
THE CROWN MILLS
working in 1957 were:-

- R.J. Jamieson at Frederickton
- T. Hennessy, River Street, Kempsey.
- Daisy Plains Sawmills Ply and peeler mill in Kempsey
- Kookaburra Sawmills which had a brushwood quota of sawn timber for merchants in Sydney.
- S. McIlwain worked a private mill in South Kempsey but with a crown licence.

THE FAMILIES
The families connected with the private mills were very much part of the economy in the shire then too.

From Forestry records the private mills were-
- S. McIlwain (biggest of the P.P.mills)
- T.A. Miles South Kempsey.
- E.W. Bourne, Crescent Head Road and Glenrock.
- Kundabung Trading Co. (O'Leary Brothers)
- J. Slater, Kundabung.
- L. Everson, Kundabung
- J.E. Thompson, Scrubby Creek.
- Tom Lawrence, Willawarrin.
- Watkins and Watkins, Hickeys Creek.
- Jim Swan, Clybucca.
- H. Tessier, Stuarts Point.
- Milton Baker, Maria Road.
- Parrisotto's Mill, Stuarts Point.
- Combatine Timber Co. North Street Kempsey.
- Kempsey Brick and Pottery Co.
- G.F. Brest, Jubilee Lane, Kempsey.
- Joe Seam, Burnt Bridge Road.
- J.R. Coverdale & Son, Five Day Creek.
- L. Crispin, South Kempsey.
- George Worthing, Gill Street, Kempsey.
- S.W. Baker, Maria River.
- Allen Taylor and Company were purchasers of hewn and round timber in the 1930s and operated a mill at Stuarts Point. Their main business...
in the Macleay was in poles and girders shipped from East Kempsey wharf.

In 1968 the company purchased McIlwains Mill on the Crescent Head Road. Boral Group took over Allen Taylor and Company until the mill closed in the 1990s.


8. Ibid, p 25


10. Macleay River Historical Society, Timber Tales, Kempsey, 1984, p 50
Major Theme 6

TOWNS

*Including themes... commerce, education, mining, transport & communication, defence, law and order, social institutions, sport, religion, death, housing, and health*

Because of the geographical nature of the Kempsey Shire, towns emerged in places determined by transport routes. Sea and river transport gave rise to wharves along the river and around these sites townships began with business houses and accommodation places offering services to travellers and settlers. Stuarts Point, Jerseyville, Frederickton, Kinchela Smithtown and Gladstone fall into this category. The same may be said later for townships and villages which began beside the roads, strategic places for changing horses and camping grounds for teamsters. Willawarrin, Bellbrook and Kundabung are representative of that era. There were also hamlets such as Skillion Flat, Comara, Millbank and Uralgurra.

South West Rocks, Hat Head, Crescent Head and Stuarts Point are associated with holiday venues and tourism.

Kempsey is the main town in the Shire. Part, East Kempsey, is situated on land once owned by Enoch William Rudder who is credited with being the first resident and founder of the town. Rudder who was born in England, was a partner in his father’s business in Birmingham known as Handasyd and Rudder (Cockfounder and Warming Pan Makers). He was born at a time when the Rudder family had reached the pinnacle of success which allowed their son to enjoy a well rounded education at Hill Top School which seemed to have been a somewhat exclusive establishment in the Edgbaston area of Birmingham. Rudder had long set his heart on emigrating to the Colony of New South Wales with the prospect of owning free land.
Unfortunately for Rudder the policy of free grants was abolished and in 1831 land was put up for auction, the returns from the sales used to fund a free immigration scheme. In spite of his many attempts to secure a free grant before he left England, he was unable to persuade the Colonial Office to change its policy about such grants. Despite all this and his father’s opposition, he sailed from Liverpool in 1833 aboard the Princess Victoria with his wife Emma and their seven children.

On arrival in Sydney Rudder was soon lured to the Macleay River by the forest wealth in the nature of cedar timber. He purchased 812 acres from Samuel Onions, an ironmonger of Sydney whose grant was surveyed in 1835. Rudder paid five shillings an acre for this parcel of land. He named his estate Kempsey after the town on the Severn River in Worcestershire because of the similarities which evoked this comment, “Rising above the Severn, like Kempsey over the Macleay, it overlooks the rich vale through which that river passes till the Malvern Hills meet the eye and bound the view. Rich as the soil bordering the Severn is, that of the Macleay is still richer.”

He travelled from Sydney to Port Macquarie on the little steamship William IV (the first ocean going steamship to be built in Australia). He acquired a boat and with six Europeans and two Aboriginals sailed up the Maria River to Boat Harbour (Mariaville), made camp and began the task of hacking a track through the forest to take the boat to the Macleay. This track was to be used for many years as the link between Port Macquarie and the Macleay. His home was built on a hill overlooking the river with a view of distant ranges. The house consisted of seven rooms and was built of cedar, according to family records.

It is thought to have been burnt down in the 1880s. A second house was built but this too has not survived. The site is marked by an historical marker placed there by the Macleay River Historical Society. The hill is known as Rudder’s Hill an open space landscaped by the Apex Club of Kempsey.

So firm was Rudder’s ambition that he engaged Henry Fancourt White, district surveyor at Port Macquarie, to subdivide part of his 812 acres (324 hectares). His auction sale was advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald Nov. 14th 1836 at £25 an acre ($50). It is recorded that thirteen lots were sold.

Kempsey was the pulse in the first commercial enterprises. East Kempsey (Rudder’s Town) as we know it now was originally the town but it developed slowly. A hotel was built by James Thompson and William Gard’s Store catered for the small community. A Post Office opened in 1843 at the Bush Inn.
By 1848 sale of unlocated Crown land increased and all the land across the river in Central Kempsey was purchased by John Verge and William Smith. John Verge had taken up earlier, the grant of Austral Eden. His purchases across the river were Commissioner Oakes’ Old Police Station and the shipbuilding station Scotchtown (140 acres) leased by Malcolm, Newton and Ferrier. Smith had arrived in Australia in 1831 in a ship carrying mechanics brought from Scotland by Dr. John Dunmore Lang. He took up land reaching from West Kempsey to the river embracing parts of Smith Street named in his honour. The Smith estate was known as Leamington.

John Verge was an architect who had already benefitted from a grant on the Williams River. Because he had fulfilled certain conditions attached to the original grant he was entitled to select more land. The rich soil downstream on the Macleay attracted his notice and instead of subdividing he opened up the property to tenant farmers. He purchased land on the opposite side of the river as it became available. These were to be town lots as the town developed.

The subdivision of Verge and Smith lands did not take place for many years but the settlement on the riverbank proved a threat to any major development in Rudder’s Kempsey.

Kempsey was destined to become the important town in the valley. Ships were able to come as far as the town and a large wharf was built on the Central Kempsey side at which ocean going ships were able to berth. As well a wharf to slip logs and a government wharf were built on the opposite bank. By 1878 Kempsey had grown to a large trading centre which exported maize, tallow, timber, hides, livestock and other produce. A local Chamber of Commerce was formed.

Kempsey is the centre of local government. The Borough Council was formed in 1886 which became the Municipal Council in 1907 serving within the town limits and the same year the Macleay Shire Council was formed. A third body, the Macleay River County Council was formed in 1947 and given powers concerning local electricity supplies, aviation and later flood mitigation. In 1975 the amalgamation of the three was achieved and the official title is now Kempsey Shire Council.
COMMERCE

The towns along the lower river and adjacent rivers were for the most part associated with shipping. Towns became the centre of commerce. The towns of Gladstone, Frederickton, Smithtown, Jerseyville, South West Rocks, Kinchela and Stuarts Point have all had a connection with shipping. Up-river Greenhill had a similar history becoming a point to load livestock and timber and produce on to the river boats known as droghers to be transhipped to the ocean going vessels further downstream.

The Shire has a rich maritime history starting with the shipbuilding industry and then the importance of shipping linked to commerce. South West Rocks could be declared an historical maritime village if the significance were to be highlighted. The rich history of the shipping trade and the ships, both ocean going and the droghers which plied the river is well worth a theme of its own.

Towns which grew up beside the road were Bellbrook, Willawarrin, Clybucca. Uralgurra was a private town built on the property by the owner Henry Davis. Kundabung and Collombatti Rail were railway towns. Crescent Head was in the beginning a holiday centre, always renown as a seaside village. There were hamlets which sprang up as convenient stops for teamsters and travellers. An accommodation house was usually followed by a small shop and later a Post Office

South West Rocks was also regarded as a holiday village but had an added advantage in that the construction works at New Entrance attracted engineers and workers who contributed to the economy of the district. Small businesses and accommodation houses sprang up. Close by at Arakoon families connected with the Trial Bay Gaol had built homes.

Most of the towns had prominently placed hotels. The West Kempsey Hotel in West Kempsey boasts a continuous licence since 1860s. The Railway Hotel and the Great Northern Hotel are still operating from the 1880s. The three hotels in West Kempsey have undergone slight changes but for the most part retain the early external appearances. The Kempsey Hotel in Central Kempsey is still on the same site but has undergone changes. The name Tattersalls applied to many Australian towns and Kempsey was no exception. This hotel in Belgrave Street was originally The Commercial and built in 1886 when Mary Smith removed her premises to make

Gladstone Hotel
way for the Post Office. In 1898 the hotel was renamed Tattersalls. The hotel is still the original building but now known as The Pearl Perch.

Gladstone was a thriving river town and ran two hotels one of which is still standing. The Gladstone Hotel was completed in 1889 and was described as ‘a great ornament’ to the town.8

The hotel at Smithtown has had a turbulent history. Built in 1870 it was named the Forester’s Arms. In 1887 it was reduced to a heap of ashes. It rose again to be called the Centennial in 1888. Fire again in 1952 caused the building to be demolished. It was rebuilt in 1957, renovated in 1998 and is now called the Riverview.9

South West Rocks and Crescent Head also had an hotel in each centre. At South West Rocks The Jubilee Guest House was famous for its hospitality and has been described as ‘one of the North Coast’s top accommodation houses’. It was built in 1887 and opened by William Arthur who met the steamers at Robinson’s wharf at Jerseyville and conveyed guests to the guest house. Later it became known as The Pacific Guest House and is still standing as a private residence.

Bellbrook’s hotel built in 1913 is still run as an hotel. The front exterior has been retained in its original form. Willawarrin and Frederickton each have an hotel from late nineteenth century and the ruins may still be seen of the Travellers Rest at Barraganyatti.10

Banks were another early commercial enterprise. Most banking companies were represented in Kempsey. The Australian Joint Stock Bank was built in 1891 and was designed by John Sulman. Another early bank was The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney which operated in Gladstone and Kempsey. The English Scottish and Australian Chartered Bank built in 1889 is still standing in West Kempsey and is recognised as an outstanding building. Late years it has been restored to its original splendour and now houses Government Offices.

All the villages depended for much of their economy on the surrounding farmlands. Stores grew up largely to provide for locals. Still intact in the main town, Kempsey, is the firm of William Harvey and Son who have been trading for one hundred and twenty years with only three changes of venue. Harveys have always been associated with furniture. Barsby’s of Kempsey opened for business in 1908 when John Barsby purchased a shop on the eastern side of Smith Street Kempsey and then moved opposite to the present site in 1911.

General stores and Emporiums were in every town. Some of these structures were large. Still standing is one such building at Smithtown now a “Collectables” shop. In all three sections of Kempsey, East, Central and West Kempsey all services were offered such as butchers, bakers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths. As the villages grew they boasted a butcher, baker and Post Office. The “Smithy” was part of essential service of the day. Two old bakeries still stand but not to bake bread. One is in Belgrave Street Kempsey the other in Kinchela.

Butter factories took on an important role both in the economy and also as employment opportunities. As well as the Macleay River Co-operative Dairy Factory in Kempsey there were butter factories at Frederickton, Warneton, Smithtown and at Toorooka. The factories opened in the later part of the nineteenth century. Cheese was an important industry from the early days of settlement.11
LAW AND ORDER

The first form of policing was in 1839 when Crown Land Commissioner Major Henry Oakes was provided with a small contingent of Border Police to help maintain order in his district.

From a site in Kempsey roughly from the showground to the river, the Border Police Station was housed in primitive buildings. In 1842 the second Commissioner, Robert Massie decided to move the station to Belgrave Falls, west of Kempsey. It was envisaged that a village would be formed there. It was close to a crossing where settlers travelled from Port Macquarie to the Macleay River district. A Court House was established and a Bench of Magistrates was appointed. (The village never happened but the site of the Border Police Station is marked by an historical plaque.)

The Border Police was a small detachment which was financed by a small annual levy on the stock depastured by the squatters. The duties of the Commissioner consisted of control over the grazing establishments, prevention of collision between settlers and Aborigines, and settlements between settlers, the collection of fees (both livestock and stock taxes) and the inspection of sawyers’ licences.

The Court House was moved to West Kempsey in 1859. Two other Court Houses were set up later, one at Bellbrook and another at Gladstone. Both Kempsey and Gladstone Courthouses are still imposing structures. The present Police Station in Kempsey was the second Court House. It became the lock-up keeper’s residence, then the Inspector’s residence and later the police station. The shell of the 1864 building is still intact. The Court House now standing was built in 1876 and has had several internal alterations in fits of modernisation.
The complex includes the police residence in Belgrave Street built in 1906. The ventilators in the wall are visible from the street and still show the distinct crown design in the ironwork indicating it was a government building.

At Gladstone a fine building still stands which was built as the Court House in 1885. A Police residence built in 1897 stands next door. Both are striking buildings. A police presence was in Gladstone in the latter part of the nineteenth century and on the other side of the river at Frederickton and Smithtown. Both stations closed and are now private residences. A Policeman was stationed at Arakoon (South West Rocks) in 1878.

The Court House at Bellbrook closed officially in 1975. It was set up in 1900 west of the present police station. The last Magistrate to sit at Bellbrook was Mr. Rex Meehan in 1972. After that Justices of the Peace dealt with minor infringements until 1975.

In 1875, Harold Maclean, Comptroller General of Prisons reported on a project to establish a prison at Trial Bay. This was in accordance with an improved prison system. The Trial Bay Gaol opened in 1886. Prisoners would be required to work on the breakwater to provide a safe harbour for ships. Unexpectedly in 1903 all work stopped. It was stated in parliament that the prison system at Trial Bay did not fit in with modern ideas of penology. The prison was disestablished in 1903 leaving empty a massive building until the war years when it housed German Internees (1915). The building was to be demolished but although many of the residences have been removed, the main building has been partially restored and is now a main tourist attraction in the Kempsey Shire.

Because of the word “cop” it may be fitting to include three items of heritage in the Law and Order theme. Kempsey boasts three SILENT COPS. These have been superseded by roundabouts in other places but one Cop is intact at the intersection of Polwood and Tozer Streets, one at the corner of Lachlan and Nicholson Streets and yet another at Sullivan and Rudder Streets.

MINING

The first evidence of mining was that of limestone. In 1831 Surveyor Ralfe had discovered an extensive stratum of limestone about six miles from the head of navigation at Maria River. In 1834 the police Magistrate at Port Macquarie was directed to provide a road from the Hastings River to a quarry near Pipers Creek and to construct a kiln for the making of lime. The end product was to produce a mortar to be used in the building trade.

The site is in Kumbatine National Park.

At Moparrabah, in the upper Macleay an outcrop was mined for marble in 1901. Some of the stone was used in the columns of the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney.
Whilst gold was found in the upper-Macleay area, Landers Ridge, it was not in sufficient quantities to create a “rush”. Silver, tin, copper and antimony were obtainable.

Antimony mining near Mungay Creek in 1970 gave hope that mining could provide economic stability to the district. Munga Creek Mines NL spent over four million dollars developing the site which included the old Corangula mine opened in 1879. The last figures available for this period are those of 1893 when 866 tons were produced from the Corangula Mines.18

A new chapter in local mining grew with the development of beach sand mining. In 1975 Mineral Deposits Limited commenced its highly profitable mining of high-grade mineral bearing sands on the coastal beaches around Crescent Head. Rutile, ilmenite, zircon and monazite were all recovered from the beaches in great quantities. All these minerals were important in post war technology, particularly rutile which was used in the manufacture of paint pigment, plastics, synthetic fibres and welding rods. It was also important in the manufacture of metal titanium so valuable in the aeronautics industry.19

Kaolin deposits are known to be at South West Rocks but the fears that the natural beauty of the area could be spoilt and pollution occur lessened the enthusiasm of the local residents for such mining.20

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

A progress committee was an important part of communities. Most towns saw the need for a public hall where entertainment could be held. These buildings took the place of the barn on a property and became the hub of social life. Balls and dances, bazaars and fairs were part of the community life. Travelling picture shows in the first quarter of the twentieth century were popular and films and slides were shown regularly. Most halls were built by voluntary labour. Some churches saw an adjacent hall as a need to hold gatherings outside divine services. Practically every Lodge or Friendly Society built a meeting hall.

Whilst Kempsey had many halls put up by organisations, a town hall was never erected. The formation of the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Association in 1881 meant the holding of an annual “show”. The first show was held on Leamington Estate now Services Park and in 1887 this event moved to the present site in Sea Street. Some of the pavilions are still on the showground.

Some halls were opened by Vice-regal personnel such as the one at Frederickton in 1903 by the State Governor Sir Harry Rawson. Most towns called the hall “The School of Arts” but Smithtown had a Literary Institute. Mostly a lending library was incorporated in a corner of the building and employed a part time librarian.

Some of the surviving halls are listed with the date of construction.

Bellbrook
• Mechanics Institute 1892 then School of Arts 1922.

Willawarrin
• School of Arts 1946 Country Womens’ Association Room 1958.

Millbank
• Millbank Hall 1932
**Kempsey**
- Grand United Order Of Odd Fellows **1884**
- Presbyterian Church Hall restored but part of 1861 structure retained
- Showground Pavilion **1887**
- Catholic Church Hall **1880**
- Anglican Church Hall
- Country Women’s Association Hall **1970**
- Band Box Theatre remodelled 1970
  built as Band Hall **1959**
- Scout Hall (3rd hall) **1960**
- Guide Hall **1946**
- Uniting Church Hall **1959**
- Masonic Hall **1969**
- Christian Israelite Hall **1977**

**Gladstone**
- School Of Arts **1893**
- Masonic Lodge now a craft gallery **1921**

**Frederickton**
- School of Arts **1903**

**Smithtown**
- Literary Institute (site 1900) School of Arts **1926**

**Collombatti**
- Collombatti Hall **1911**
- Kundabung **1953**
- Belmore River **1911**
- Burnt Bridge **1938**
- Sherwood **1911**

**South West Rocks**
- School of Arts **1927**
Another sign of a community’s history and heritage is its housing. Local history can often be read from different eras. In Bellbrook and Gladstone some of the houses reflect a lifestyle of the late nineteenth century, cottage type but with the graceful verandahs which brings to mind evenings spent there after “tea”. In Kempsey houses built just prior to Federation and after, both in brick and timber and quite prestigious also had wide verandahs under “bull-nosed” iron and it would be easy to imagine afternoon tea “on the verandah”. Other housing is more timeless with the bungalow influence of the 1920s.

As the towns and valley grew so did its culture and its social attitudes. Unfortunately not a great deal remains of the buildings of pioneering days on the land.

At Smithtown is a single gable construction of weatherboard. The steeply pitched roof was most likely an English custom, a requisite of cold country weather. This cottage was built between 1870 and 1880 by Henry Croad. He came from Portsmouth in 1850. Smithtown boasts other homes and cottages built a little later but showing the beautiful woodwork in the ornate barge boards and the use of timber which was in plentiful supply.

Hat Head, another seaside village which nestles between Korogoro Creek and the ocean still has examples of holiday cottages from the 1920s, sturdily built timber cottages with a verandah and a yard large enough to have kept a horse and sulky which would have been the means of conveyance at that time. The fact that there was a provisional school at the village for only a few years 1950-54 suggests it was truly a holiday place where farmers came to spend a break.

In short Kempsey and the surrounding towns are an architectural paradise so representative of late nineteenth and early twentieth century structures. Except for garages being added to the garden area many of the houses are in the original form.
DEATH

Ten locations in the shire commemorate the dead. Local cemeteries usually dedicated not long after the towns were proclaimed, have served the community for many years. There is one private cemetery on family land and the usual lonely graves in the bush and on properties which are no longer in the ownership of the original family. Some of the latter are well preserved, others have suffered the ravages of time and development.

Cemeteries maintained by the Council are at Kempsey (2) Frederickton (1) Kinki/Stuarts Point (1) Bellbrook (1) South West Rocks/Arakoon, one is a disused cemetery (2) Crescent Head, disused, (1) Euroka (1) Toms Gully (1). There is a private cemetery at Nulla maintained by the descendants of the early settlers.

However there are memorials scattered throughout the shire which commemorate the deaths of people through accident and ship wrecks. As well the war memorials and honour boards represent a symbol of mourning. These too are important places for community ceremonies and reflect expressions of community values. Some of the monuments are superb sculptures others are lists of names usually inscribed on a select piece of timber and placed in a public building.

There were also tree plantings as a tribute to the war service personnel. These avenues were planted in Frederickton and extended across the river to East Frederickton. Some of these trees are standing but the plaques which were attached have been lost. Eight Norfolk Island Pines were planted in South West Rocks in 1927 as a memorial to local men who gave their lives in World War 1. Only four of these pines have survived. The others were replaced with New Zealand Christmas Trees because their height threatened power lines.

In Gladstone Memorial Tablets were placed in Memorial Avenue to commemorate the servicemen who lost their lives in WW2.

Mention should be made of the early undertakers who were at Kempsey and Frederickton. Where deaths occurred in homes situated on the rivers a boat often became the hearse and a cortege of mourners in boats often followed the hearse to a cemetery. This was referred to as a “boat funeral”.

Funeral Rev. Father McCambridge 1900
RELIGION

The first churches in the valley were associated with the earliest schools. The little denominational school buildings became places for divine worship when visiting preachers arrived to hold services.

As early as 1841 E.W. Rudder had tried to have an Anglican church erected in his township by opening a subscription list for the purpose. No doubt the difficult times which followed, delayed his plans for the record of regular church services in the community appears in the history of the Methodist Church.

The late development of church buildings in the district was due partly to the fact that from 1833 the main churches in the colony received Government aid. In 1863 State aid was abolished. The Macleay dwellers had to wait until their numbers grew and times were more prosperous before they could replace the tiny churches which had been used for church purposes when there was no resident clergyman.

When more substantial churches were built they were located in West Kempsey and Central Kempsey. The first brick church erected for the Wesleyans was established in Smith Street in 1875 followed by a new Church of England (Anglican) in Frederickton in 1878. In 1880 a brick church which is now the parish hall was built in Kemp Street West Kempsey as the Catholic Church. In 1884 the little Presbyterian Schoolhouse in Central Kempsey was converted into a church until a new one was built in 1890. Until a permanent church was built for the Anglicans in West Kempsey, services were held in the Court House, the Good Templars Hall and a temporary building which later became the Rectory. In 1882 the foundation stone was laid for All Saints Church by Mrs Sydney Verge. It is interesting to note that this church and the Catholic Church which stand as neighbours in Kemp Street are both known as “ALL SAINTS”.

The Salvation Army came to Kempsey in 1889. The “Sallies” had to fight their way through strong opposition but in 1918 they erected the citadel in Belgrave Street.

The history of Churches in the Macleay Valley would not be complete without mention of the dedicated work of the Wesleyan lay preachers who, from the earliest days of settlement held regular services and conducted Sunday Schools for all creeds in isolated communities. Silas Gill was a colourful character who stood out as a preacher when settlers were flocking to the valley to take up small farms. He came to the Macleay in 1859. It was no uncommon thing for Mr. Gill and his sons and helpers to be occupied for eighteen to twenty hours on a Sunday, pulling a boat twenty to thirty miles and conducting three services.

An historical marker near Gills Creek is a tribute to this man.
A small group of Anglican Sisters belonging to the Community of The Sisters of the Church opened a house at Dondingalong in March 1978. This is an Anglican Religious Order. The Sisters set up a small farm of 44 acres. Solomon Island members of the community were accommodated to experience community life and to study English, Biblical Studies and Mathematics. The house was also shared with many who wished for a quiet time out to think over a problem, to recover from a hurtful experience or to be quiet and reflect on their lives. Owing to fewer Sisters entering the Order, the farm was given up in 1999 and the Sisters bought a house on 0.405 of a hectare and they continue to serve the local community in the Kempsey parish.

The Christian Israelite religion was practised in Kempsey from a very early time. Walter Gray was travelling as a piano tuner in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and brought this faith to the town. The Gray family came to live in Kempsey and set up a music store. They were well respected citizens and the Christian Israelite faith commanded a sound congregation for over a hundred years. The members built a church in Kempsey in 1977 which is one of only four in the world.

Over the years new churches were built in outlying areas and older ones replaced. A new church was erected for the Catholics in 1923 and a Baptist church was established in 1950. The Seventh Day Adventist Church acquired permanent premises in Yaelwood Street. New premises are now on Crescent Head Road.

Other churches were moved to address changing needs. With declining numbers in the villages the church buildings were sold and became popular as private residences.

Churches in the Shire and their dates of construction are listed below.

**South West Rocks**

Holy Trinity Anglican 1916  
*Removed now private residence out of town.*  
*New church 1992.*

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic 1926.  
Uniting Church 1915.  
*Removed 1988 now private residence.*

**Kinchela**

Uniting 1913 - *now private residence.*  
St Andrews Anglican 1899.

**Frderickton**

St Johns Catholic 1905 - *now private residence.*  
St Peters Anglican 1874 - *now private residence.*  
Uniting Church 1882 - *now replaced.*  
Presbyterian Church 1886 - *private residence.*  
Christian New Life Centre have erected a church in Frederickton in recent years.

**Kempsey**

All Saints Catholic 1880 - *now parish hall.* New church 1925.  
All Saints Anglican 1885.  
St Andrews Presbyterian Church 1890 - *now commercial premises.*  
Uniting Church 1953 built when former church destroyed 1950.  
Uniting Church Commandant Hill 1940 - *Church and hall now private residence.*  
Baptist Church 1950.  
Seventh Day Adventist Church 1950 new church erected 2002.  
Christian Israelite Church 1977.  
Salvation Army Citadel First Belgrave St., then Yaelwood St - *now in Leith Street.*

**Smidtown**

St.Patricks Catholic 1886 - *rebuilt 1974.*  
Uniting Church 1910 - *now a private home.*
TOWNS

St. John The Devine 1901 - moved to second site, now residence.

Gladstone
St Barnabas Anglican 1921
Uniting Church 1921

Hat Head
Christ Church Anglican dedicated 1965.
Built 1905 Belmore River.

Bellbrook
St Patricks Catholic 1899
St James Anglican 1906

Willawarrin
St Johns Catholic 1896
St Thomas Anglican

Hickeys Creek
Uniting Church 1913

Crescent Head
Uniting Church and Anglican Church 1925
The Star of the Sea Catholic 1968

Dondingalong
Uniting Church 1892

Sherwood
Sacred Heart Catholic Church 1911
St Johns Anglican Church 1903

Euroka
Uniting Church 1940

EDUCATION

It was not only in the isolated areas of the valley that the problem of providing education for children had to be faced. Some of the settlers employed tutors. Others went away for their schooling. It was not until 1846 that Kempsey acquired a school. In that year the Wesleyan Day School opened with Mr And Mrs Fowler in charge, but it closed within two years.

In 1848 a Board of National Education was established. The Board was prepared to provide up to two thirds of the cost of erecting a school and to appoint a teacher wherever an attendance of thirty pupils could be guaranteed. One of the conditions was that local patrons were to be appointed to supervise the administration of the school and to correspond with the Board of Commissioners on all subjects connected with the school. Dr.J. Gilbert took the initiative in having a National School established, one of the first four in New South Wales. It opened in September 1848 in Gard’s Store in East Kempsey with Henry Fowler as first teacher. He was followed by Henry McSwiney in 1849 until the school closed in December 1850.
In 1859 Thomas Greenwood Hird arrived in West Kempsey to open a store and conduct a private school in the growing township. In August of the following year the residents made an application for a National School to be established at West Kempsey with Mr and Mrs Hird as teachers. As a result the West Kempsey National School opened on 2nd October 1860. In 1863 a new weatherboard shingle roofed school was erected on the present site of the West Kempsey school. It was replaced in 1877 by a new school which cost £1,700. This school building survived until 1971 when it was demolished to make way for a dental clinic.

In nearby Frederickton another school associated with a store opened in 1860. This was established by A. Taylor, a young Londoner who opened the school to cater for those children whose parents did not wish them to attend a local denominational school. The Frederickton residents applied for a National School to be established in Mr. Taylor's schoolroom. This was opened in 1861 but the Board of Education did not approve of the school being under the same roof as the store, so Mr. Taylor sold his interest in the store. Although it had opened with forty-six pupils this school closed in 1863. From about 1867 John Lancaster, an untrained teacher, taught the Frederickton children at a Church of England school. The Denominational Schools Board had been abolished in 1866 so that both State and Independent schools were now controlled by the new Council of Education. By 1868 eighty-one pupils were being taught in the small weatherboard building which was used on Sundays as a church. This continued until 1877 when the building became so dilapidated a new one was necessary. As the Church was unable to provide this, the residents applied to the Council of Education to make the school a public one. In 1885 a new Frederickton Public School was completed on its present site to the design of the eminent Sydney architect J. Horbury Hunt.

The educational needs of other early settlements were met by the establishment of schools at Summerland or Summer Island (opposite Kinchela) in 1862, Euroka in 1863, Seven Oaks in 1865 Dondingalong 1865, Darkwater 1867, Aldavilla 1871 and Kinchela Creek in 1873. There was a school at Sherwood, part time with Dondingalong in 1872.

Schools were established at Greenhill on the outskirts of Kempsey and at Uralgurra, Willawarrin, Bellbrook, Comara, Millbank and Hickeys Creek. As industry increased such as the mines at Corangula and the timber mill at Kookaburra a school would be established. Schools were erected at localities other than in towns. On the Belmore River there were two schools one on each side of the river.

The pilot at Grassy Head applied for a school as early as 1891. This became a half-time school with Warrell Creek. Half-time schools existed where not even provisional schools were available. This meant that a teacher spent two days at one centre and three at another, alternating the following week. Millbank school was combined with Uralgurra until 1895 and then joined forces with Hickeys Creek until 1912. In 1893 Millbank was declared a Public School and is still operating today.

Many of the schools have had a turbulent history in that of survival. A number of schools reflect the extent of small farming in the valley and small scale industry. Files record that small communities fought hard to get schools and once obtained they were cherished. Many people still regret the passing of small schools but better roads and transport have seen the demise of small schools in favour of pupils being moved by school buses to bigger schools in the main towns.

Many social events were centred on the little schools. Enrolments in these schools fluctuated with the seasons particularly in the areas where maize and potatoes were grown. Children were kept home to help with planting and harvesting.

In 1884 a school was opened by the Sisters of St. Joseph at West Kempsey. They were succeeded by a group of Presentation Nuns before the Sisters of Mercy arrived to take over Catholic Education in 1900. A Convent was set up for girls in Kempsey and a boarding establishment for boys in Smithtown.
St. Paul’s College for boys opened in 1965 in Kempsey.

Students of both sexes now attend this college and the curriculum extends to Year 12 and the H.S.C.

A Presbyterian School was started in 1861 in Kempsey. Part of the old building still remains in Smith Street.

With the closure of the bush schools the buildings became popular as residences. The distinctive departmental architecture can still be seen in many country settings.

The following list comprises the schools which have endured over the years.

**Kempsey East** 1881

**Kempsey West** ps 1860-86; sps 1886-1905; ds 1906-12. ihs1920-29 ps 1930-

**Kempsey High** 1930-

**Kempsey South** 1960-

**Melville High** 1983 -

**St. Joseph’s Convent** 1884-

**St. Paul’s Regional Catholic High** 1965

**Technical And Further Education** 1955

**Crescent Head** 1921

**Bellimbopinni** ps (Seven Oakes) 1865

**South West Rocks** ps 1897 Macleay Entrance until 1910

**Frederickton** ps 1861-92; 1877-

**Gladstone** ps 1877

**Smithtown** ps 1891

**Willawarrin** prov.1901-02 ps 1902-05 ht w

**Hickeys Creek** 1905-1910; prov.1920-27; ps 1928

**Millbank** prov.1891-92; ps 1893- (Uralgurra until 1895 Hickeys Creek until 1912)

**Bellbrook** prov.1883-87; ht w Pee Dee 1887-90 ht w Nulla

**Nulla** 1910-11; prov 1911-13; ps 1913-

**Aldavilla** ps 1871-1963 closed. New site 1992-

**Collombatti Rail** prov.1909-27; ps 1928-38; prov.1948-53; ps

**Yarrabandinni** until 1927

**Stuarts Point** ps 1891- Macleay Heads until 1899

*ps - Public school*  
*sps - Superior Public School*  
*ds - District School*  
*prov - Provisional School*
SPORTS

In small communities sport was an integral part of social life. Horse racing was one of the earliest organised sports. The race course at Gladstone was established in 1866. The bell is now in the grounds of the Gladstone Hotel and originally came from Trial Bay Gaol after its closure in 1903. Warwick Park Racecourse in Kempsey was gazetted in 1894 and races are still held there.

Foot races were popular with gaslight meetings set up in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Tennis courts were a part of town life and some of the clay courts survive today (Catholic School tennis courts and South Kempsey). Team sports were part of social life and after the coming of the railway a special train could be arranged to transport players to foot-ball and cricket matches in neighbouring towns.

As much of the Kempsey Shire borders on the seaboard, surfing was a sport which has seen many a local excel at state and national level in surf and surf lifesaving events. Swimming has had a place in the history of Kempsey. Before the first baths were built in the town, swimming was organised in the Macleay River. A popular place was “The Stones” in West Kempsey. The Municipal Council was divided on the issue of bathing sheds for the areas set aside for swimming but several places in the river were designated for the pleasure and strict rules were set for behaviour, dress and the hours of swimming for individual sexes.

Kempsey Baths are now a fine complex with an olympic standard pool added in recent years. The baths were built in 1938 and named The McElhone Pool. Dr. McElhone, a medical practitioner in Kempsey was a keen advocate for this facility and argued that even if it saved one life from drowning in the river it would be a rewarding venture. The baths were substantially funded by the community.

At South West Rocks bathing machines were advertised as early as 1885 and ‘Competent Lady Attendants would supervise’. South West Rocks was described as ‘The Manly Of The North’. Sculling was a regular event on the river and regattas were held at each of the river towns. Gladstone, Frederickton and Kinchela all held annual regattas.

Not much remains of these important social sites. Sheds and grandstands were often primitive structures but that does not reduce the importance of sport in small rural communities.
Horse Sports have been part of the sporting scene in the Kempsey Shire and at present time remain a strong sport. A special arena has been set up for camp drafting and bullock riding at Kundabung.

Golf has been played formally from 1930 and has seen a number of sites. Bowls was well established by 1950.

Boxing was an early sport with bouts held in one of the early theatres. The renown boxer Dave Sands and his brothers all received their early training in Kempsey. They reached their professional heights in late 1940s.

HEALTH

Skilled medical care was of necessity centred in Kempsey. In isolated areas women had to be midwives and dispensers of remedies in times of illness.

In 1880 a public meeting was held in Kempsey School of Arts to consider building a hospital. Voluntary subscriptions were called for and before the end of the year the foundation stone was laid. The hospital opened in 1881 to serve the community until a new hospital replaced it in 1914. This hospital still stands.

Standing in the hospital grounds is an obelisk, a memorial to the work of Dr. Brabazon Casement who provided valuable medical services in the early days of the hospital and who encouraged local midwife Mary Kirkpatrick to study and train as a registered midwife (1903).

The first maternity hospital opened in River Street in 1905. Before this women were attended in their own homes or that of the midwife. Some maternity hospitals still stand in Kempsey and Smithtown and are private residences. Private hospitals which took in general health cases also operated in Smithtown and Kempsey.
1907 saw a devastating epidemic of pneumonic plague reach Kempsey. Matron Gulliford’s devotion to her calling caused her to be personally responsible for the nursing of these victims with the result that she died after contracting the disease. She is commemorated by a plaque in the foyer of the hospital.10

In June 1945 the accommodation for the nursing staff was so obsolete it reached a crisis point. The staff was housed in a building in Polwood Street described as a hovel. After negotiations broke down between the Hospital Commission and the Health department, the nurses went “on strike”...an event without precedent in a country town. Nurses went to Sydney and carried placards to demonstrate the plight of the staff. The strike action resulted in one sister being dismissed and escorted from the hospital. Sister Swift was president of the nurses’ council. The staff met the following day and threatened to resign if she were not reinstated. In an ensuing court case, the judge in the arbitration court made trenchant criticism of conditions at the hospital, saying they should be remedied immediately.11

An ambulance wagon was put into service in 1934. The present building in Belgrave Street was completed in 1948 and replaced a timber structure opposite the medical centre in the business part of town.

Recognition should be given to “baby health”. So named this service scheme began in Sydney in 1903. In 1936 the service was begun in Kempsey and run by a health worker in a room in the Municipal Library. A purpose built centre was opened in 1949 solely through the efforts of a small group of women who campaigned for the service and raised funds by donations. This building still stands in Memorial Avenue. In 1964 3,734 babies attended the clinic.12

A special building in Smithtown for the same service was built in 1973.

At Greenhill on the western outskirts of Kempsey, a small building was erected to house the first Aboriginal Health service in 1977. Growing concern over the health of the Aboriginal people who had a fear of approaching the medical clinic or the hospital led the health authority to trial a centre staffed by a doctor.13

The centre grew in popularity and was a success. The centre has now moved to the centre of the town.

DEFENCE

Trial Bay gaol closed since 1903 opened its gates as an internment camp during World War 1. In 1915 all German subjects in Australia were interned. Men were detained at Trial Bay. The first internees arrived at Jerseyville on the steamer Yulgilbar. Their number grew to over five hundred and included men who came...
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from Ceylon, Singapore, Hong Kong, and British and German Islands in the Pacific, Borneo, New Caledonia, Fiji, New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. The gaol accommodated rubber planters, ship’s officers, military officers and even some Buddhist priests from Ceylon who wore yellow and brown robes and took little part in the activities shared by other internees. Those who died in the centre were buried on the hill above the gaol. Their fellow country men erected an elaborate granite memorial above the graves.34

During World War II gun batteries were put in place along the coast at Crescent Head and South West Rocks.35

A submarine net was placed in the Macleay River near Jerseyville.36

In 1942 Kempsey prepared for invasion. Plans to evacuate the coastal areas were outlined and arrangements were made to evacuate cattle and foodstuffs. A scheme evolved to remove or destroy produce in milk and butter factories. Crops would have to be harvested or destroyed. Men from the ‘top of the river’ had offered to guide mobs of cattle over recognised routes into the hills.37

Slit trenches were dug at Kempsey schools and in Elbow, Belgrave and Smith Streets. All signs of these places and precautions have now disappeared. Local people are still able to identify the lookouts which provided vantage points for spotters who were on duty to watch for enemy aircraft.

At the Aldavilla Aerodrome an Airforce Cadet Training Corp was formed. This was known as the 123 Squadron and lasted from 1942-1945.

endnotes


2 Ibid.pp 4-5.

3 Ibid.p 10.

4 Ibid.p 13

5 Ibid.p 15

6 Ibid.p 13.


10 M.R.H.S.Files, (Hotels).

11 Ibid.Dairying.


15 Macleay Argus Newspaper, 7 October, 1975.


20 Ibid.p 86.

21 MRHS.Files.


24 Ibid p 71.
25 M.R.H.S Files for individual locations. An overview of material regarding religion.


30 Patricia Riggs, A Century of Caring and Beyond, Kempsey District Hospital, 1981, p 18.


32 Macleay Argus Newspaper, 30th June, 1964.

33 Interview, Dr. Dick Copeman, Durri Medical Centre, Greenhill, 1979.


35 Australian War Memorial, Series no AWM 54.

36 Ibid, AWM, 61.

37 Macleay Argus Newspaper, 27th Feb., 1942.
The increasing awareness of Tourism is evidenced in numbers of people seeing the Kempsey Shire as a destination. Tourism is an industry which generates a large slice of the economy in the shire. Although larger towns are a threat to the developing area of tourism, visitors are keen to find a calmer alternative from the high profile upmarket centres either side of the Kempsey Shire coastline.

The coastal towns and villages are the main centres where tourists congregate. The sea side attracts family groups. Photographers and bush walkers find the hinterland a paradise for their activities.

The strengths of local tourism are diversity and quality of natural attractions, unspoilt and protected coastline and a climate which is conducive to holiday activities.

Two Visitor Information Centres operate in the Shire, one at Kempsey, the other at South West Rocks.

The first official information centre was set up in 1969 and Mrs Val Melville was appointed manager. In the early 1970s a purpose built centre was constructed in the town beside the Post Office. 1983 saw a move to the cultural centre adjacent to the Museum in South Kempsey Park.

Tourism goes back a long way in Kempsey Shire. In 1906 the Government Tourism Bureau organised a trip for seventeen tourists to visit the Macleay.

At South West Rocks in 1889 this quiet place took on a busy appearance. There were three hundred people visiting and fifty to sixty tents were erected there.
George Lawson was building six cottages and there was a whisper that a ladies swimming baths would be built. Land was selling for two pounds a foot.

The Jubilee Guest House was described as 'one of North Coast's top accommodation houses'. It was built in 1887 and opened by William Arthur who met the steamers at Robinson's Wharf at Jerseyville and conveyed guests to the Guest House. Later it became known as the Pacific Guest House and is still standing to-day as a private residence.

Bathing machines were advertised as early as 1885 and 'competent lady attendants would supervise.' South West Rocks was described as 'The Manly of the North.'

Crescent Head has had an association with leisure and tourism from an early time. It was proclaimed as a village 3rd March 1894, according to a notice in the Government Gazette of that year.

A raconteur writing in the Macleay Argus 1938 was to note that in 1841 Enoch William Rudder and a small party of friends and attended by two serving men and gun carriers, made a hazardous day's journey to a sea beach at a point on the coast chart marked Crescent Head where they spent a week wild game hunting, exploring, fishing and taking the waters.
The village was a popular place for country people to spend Boxing Day. Farmers packed up early and made the long trip with horse and sulky. Jack Jeffery remembered everyone drove there from Euroka, a farming settlement west of Kempsey. His humorous comment was that ‘you could have taken Euroka with a catapult’.

Holiday camping at Christmas and Easter brought to the village whole families from all parts of the valley for the summer period. The camping and caravan area is now strictly monitored by State Government regulations. The village has had a surf club in one guise or another since 1910.

Hat Head was a seaside retreat for many years. It has a sheltered beach and caravan park. Bush walking in the national park leads through coastal rainforest and affords spectacular views up the track to the trig.

Stuarts Point and Grassy Head are side by side and boast a holiday atmosphere away from the rush and bustle of the highway. Boating and associated leisure activities for residents and holiday makers is a far cry from the first Pilot Station at Grassy head and the ship building industry at Stuarts Point in earlytimes.

1 Macleay Argus Newspaper, 3rd November, 1906.
2 MRHS files, Pacific Guest House.
3 Macleay Argus Newspaper, adv. 14th November, 1885
4 Macleay Chronicle Newspaper, adv., 20 December, 1916.
5 Patricia Riggs, A Short History of Crescent Head, 1992, p3.