



Warrumbungle Shire

Thematic History



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The image of the Warrumbungles Ranges on the cover page comes from of a series of images, dating from 1936-1969, used by in NSW Country Trains. Courtesy of Trove.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this area. The Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri and Wayilwan and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders; past, present and future.

Introduction

This thematic history was undertaken as part of the Community Heritage Study for the Warrumbungle Shire in 2017-2018.

The aim of a thematic history is not to focus on individuals or events but places as we aim to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the heritage that has survived into the present era. The Guidelines for Community Based Heritage Studies says the following: 'A heritage study investigates the history of a local government area. It identifies then assesses items and places of heritage significance that demonstrate this history. The study explains why the items are significant and recommends ways to manage and conserve this significance.' A thematic history provides a context in which heritage can be better understood.

This is the second generation of this kind of study, the first Community Heritage study was undertaken in 2007-2008. Where appropriate the first generation of thematic history has been incorporated into this one to enable the focus of this study to amalgamating the three shires that form the basis of the Warrumbungle Shire.

The three previous shires which now comprise Warrumbungle Shire historically were Coonabarabran Shire, Coolah Shire, Cobborah Shire and part of Ulan Shire. The Warrumbungle Shire is made up of a series of towns all of which have their own individual identities and characteristics. Unlike many other shires this area is not one large regional town surrounded by a series of satellite towns. It is a series of towns all of which were originally based around pastoralism and agriculture. Many of the towns in the area, due to the marginal nature of farming in the area broadly, had to develop other economies existing alongside farming to enable the survival of the town into the modern era.

A number of these economies were based around different industries such as the railway for example, as in the case of Binnaway, forestry as with Baradine and transport networks such as Coonabarabran. Some towns did not survive as viable towns into the modern era and there are a number of reasons for this. Sometimes infrastructure, such as the railway, was introduced and effectively re-landscaped the economies of the region. Dunedoo, originally a pastoral run, did not become an economic viability until the arrival of the railway in 1910. The impact of this on nearby Cobbora, then the administrative centre of the southern parts of the shire, was significant with the township diminishing in the following decades.

There are two leading factors that can be seen almost as characters in the story of Warrumbungle Shire. Water and the way it moves across the landscape is one such character and a critical element in this story. The other main character, influenced by water, is that of transport. These two features are critical to the story of the shire.

Authorship

This study was undertaken by Dr Ruth Longdin BAppSc MA PhD MPHA, principal of Monitor Heritage Consultants. She is both a professional historian and a registered heritage consultant with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

Methodology

This study has been undertaken in accordance with the processes established by the NSW Heritage Office as defined in:

- *NSW Heritage Manual*, 1999
- *The Burra Charter*, 1999
- *Community Heritage Studies: A Guide* 2013

The methodology for this study has included the following:

- Examination of documentary evidence pertaining to the area
- Examination of bibliographic resources pertaining to the area
- Meetings with the Warrumbungles Community Based Heritage Study Working group
- Meetings with Warrumbungle Shire Council staff and Councillors Kodi Brady and Ray Lewis
- Meetings with the Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Lands Council
- Six field visits over 2017-2018
- Consultations with the Coonabarabran Dead Person Society and Family History Society

Limitations

This is the first heritage study of this nature to include the three original shire areas that now comprise the Warrumbungle Shire. Subsequently the aim of this particular study has been to get all of the town's histories to the same level of detail. This has meant a considerable amount of original research for 7 towns in the area. It has also meant undertaking consultation and gaining permission to write elements of the Aboriginal history for the region.

The Coonabarabran element of the Aboriginal history was undertaken with the permission of the community as represented by Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council. Sadly no permission has been given to write the Coolah element of this important story as no community in Coolah survived into the 21st century. It is hoped that this issue can be resolved in the future particularly with the imminent introduction of the Aboriginal Heritage Legislation due to be brought in in NSW by 2020. An attempt has been made to broadly outline the history of the Aboriginal people's story in Coolah but recognises its limitations in not being able to seek permission from the community.

The decision was taken in this project to provide as transparent a study as possible ensuring that all information is referenced for the benefit of future studies. It focussed on providing as much information regarding the history, the provision of infrastructure and development of the towns in the region as it could. For this reason the focus has not been on people or on the private properties throughout the shire. Recommendations regarding areas for future research are included below.

Acknowledgements

A study such as this is undertaken collaboratively and many people have contributed to this one. They include:

Peter Duggan	Ray Christison	John Horne
Merv Sutherland	Joy Pickette	Roy Cameron OAM
John Whitehead	Liz Cutts	Kelly Dewar

Warrumbungle Community Based Heritage Study Working Group:

Peter Morissey	David Raynor	Noel Gilbert	John Horne
Troy Rosenberg	Roslyn Kildey	John Mercer	Marg Haley
Cr Ray Lewis	Cr Kodi Brady	Helen Naef	Ernest Fetch

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that Aboriginal heritage listed as part of this Community Based Heritage Study be jointly managed by the Aboriginal community and Warrumbungle Shire Council. It is recommended the Aboriginal community be consulted about any work being undertaken by Warrumbungle Shire Council, impacting on listed Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Shire. With the imminent introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation all Aboriginal cultural heritage will be managed this way starting in 2020. It is therefore recommended that this approach be adopted now in preparation for this.

Both Warrumbungle Shire Council and the Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council were consulted with regarding this recommendation. Both parties have concurred that this method of managing Aboriginal cultural heritage is appropriate and are happy to proceed with this approach.

- The Aboriginal history of the Coolah area is in need of further work. Because of the sensitive nature of some of this work, specifically regarding the violent deaths and dispossession of Aboriginal people in this area, it is a complex issue that can only be resolved appropriately by Aboriginal people. It is anticipated that the introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation, currently in its fourth round of consultation, will bring about change in the way that Aboriginal history and heritage is undertaken and managed. It is hoped that in time this history will be resolved.
- There was insufficient time in this study for work on further research on the stations and smaller private agriculture and pastoral properties and holdings in the Shire. It is therefore recommended that this be addressed as a matter of priority in the next Community Based Heritage Study.
- There are a number of towns that existed in the Warrumbungle Shire that did not survive into the twenty-first century. It is recommended that research into the history of these towns be undertaken as part of the next Community Based Heritage Study. The influence that these towns would have had historically needs to be understood better.

- Because the scope of this particular study was to bring most of the towns in the area to the same level of historical understanding it was not possible to undertake the necessary research to write about the people from the 7 towns in the area as well. Subsequently the *Section 9.2* was not undertaken. It is recommended that this be addressed in the next study and that the community be involved in this process. The choosing of 5 people throughout a town's history is a decision that is best made by the community whom they represent.

1. Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment

1.1 Environment: Naturally evolved

The natural landscape of the shire is an ancient one with recent elements, in the form of volcanoes approximately 13-17 million years old, dotted upon the landscape. The entire Warrumbungle Shire, containing the former Coonabarabran, Cobar and Coolah Shires, sits within the Darling Plains Heritage Region. This region was defined in 1993 and the Heritage Office briefly defined the Darling Plains region as follows:

Broken country separates New England from the level Darling Plain to the west. Defined by aridity on its western boundary, signified by the shift from woodland to scrub and bushland, it extends over the plains draining rivers to the Darling, including subregions such as Liverpool Plains and the Pilliga Scrub.¹

This area is included in the Brigalow Belt South Biodiversity Region.² The geology and biodiversity of the region have been described in the Brigalow Belt South, NSW Bioregional Conservation Assessment Scoping Report. The geology of the Warrumbungles and Pilliga State Forest has also been described by Whitehead in his work on the paths of explorers Oxley and Evans.

The Warrumbungle Range is described by John Whitehead as follows: 'The spectacular landscape of the Warrumbungle Range now consists of spires, domes, plugs and dykes that represent some of the best examples of exposed volcanic landforms along the north-south volcanic line of eastern Australia'.³ The Warrumbungle Range is incorporated into the Warrumbungle National Park and in 2006 the park was added to the National Heritage List on the basis of its extensive natural values.

A report from Coolah Shire regarding mineral resources in the Shire sheds light upon the geomorphology of that region:

Coolah Shire is located on the north-western slopes, along the southern boundary of the Great Artesian Basin. The area is underlain mainly by flat bedded, Jurassic, Pilliga sandstone. This sandstone is underlain by

¹ Heritage Office *Regional Histories* p13

² Brigalow Belt South, *NSW Bioregional Conservation Assessment Scoping Report*. pp9-13

³ Whitehead, John *The Warrumbungles, Dead Volcanoes, National Parks, Telescopes and Scrub* p15-25

older Paleozoic sediments and granite which crop out in the south-west. Permian sediments containing coal seam, correlatable with Upper Coal Measures occur in the Dunedoo area. Tertiary gravels are present along the rivers and creeks while widespread tertiary basalts occur as outliers of the extensive Warrumbungle Ranges ...

... The basalts in the Coolah Tops are known as the Liverpool Range Beds and are thought to have originated, not from volcanoes, but by lengthy ruptures through the sandstone during the tertiary period. Interesting features of the basalts in the Coolah Tops are several lava caves, examples of columnar basalt formations and a specimen of 'onion weathering'.⁴

The Shire, however, is no longer an exclusively natural landscape, it is also a cultural one. Once Aboriginal people arrived in the area, estimated at approximately 20 000+ years ago, they began to change the landscape through various activities including fire management. The arrival of European settlers in the area, over one hundred and fifty years ago, lead to what is described as a transformation of the Pilliga as described by Ray Christison:

The first European explorers described an open, slightly wooded landscape. This landscape had been created by Aboriginal land management practices and the presence of seed eating kangaroo rats. Early European settlers had a saying that one could gallop a horse through the Pilliga on a moonlit night. Changes in land management practice brought in by these settlers eventually led to the dramatic re-forestation of the area in the late 19th century.⁵

⁴ Cameron, R *Coolah Shire Thematic History Final Report 2004* p4

⁵ Christison, R *Thematic History of the Coonabarabran Shire* p7

2. Peopling Australia

2.1 Aboriginal History - Coonabarabran Area

2.1.1 Traditional Aboriginal culture –

Traditional Aboriginal society was egalitarian by nature. ‘No adult man regarded himself as subordinate, because all had their Dreaming and Country. It was a classless, unstratified society, without any formal government. No chiefs or headmen.’⁶ The economy was a co-operative one where most things, including food, were shared. Josephine Flood explores Aboriginal culture and the history of Aboriginal and white Australian history in her work *The Original Australians* and describes the relationship between food, spirituality and the interconnectedness of everything:

*Ceremonies were performed for the maintenance of food, plants and animals but Aboriginal beliefs strictly opposed the concept of actual food production. Taboos and totemism (spiritual linkages between people and the natural universe) forbid modification of the environment, for there is a strong belief in the interrelatedness of all living things. Likewise, storage of food for future private consumption is incompatible with the ubiquitous practice of sharing, and the use of food surpluses to support large ceremonial gatherings.*⁷

The Dreaming is not a place that exists in the past or the present but through all time and it is from this place that everything comes. Josephine Flood again:

*The Dreaming is a complex network of faith, knowledge and ritual that dominates all spiritual and practical aspects of Aboriginal life. The Dreaming lays down the structures of society, rules for social behaviour and ceremonies to maintain and increase the land’s fertility.... The Dreaming comes from the land; it is a powerful living force that must be nurtured and maintained.*⁸

The area covered by the Warrumbungle Shire sits at the convergence of the territories of three Aboriginal language groups, the Gamilaraay to the northeast, the Wiradjuri to the south and the Wayilwan to the west.⁹ Archaeological

⁶ Flood J *The Original Australians* P 159

⁷ Ibid P24

⁸ Flood J *The Original Australians* 2006 P138

⁹ Somerville, M et al, *The Sun Dancin’, People and Place in Coonabarabran*. pp46-47

evidence suggests that Aboriginal people have occupied the land to the east of Coonabarabran for up to 25,000 years and in the Warrumbungle Ranges for up to 17,000 years.¹⁰ It has been estimated that in the early 1800s about 7000 Gamilaraay lived in the region.¹¹ Numerous cultural sites demonstrate the complexity of Aboriginal culture and the people's relationship with the land in this region. The following comes from Peter Fox's book *Warrumbungles National Park*:

*The inextricable bond between life and land is a fundamental premise of Aboriginal existence. All features of the landscape, and all life within it, was created during a creation period by ancestral creatures; some human, some animal, some neither. This period ... is present in the landscape itself, and the stories and relationships form an integral part of the traditional law that guides all life. This relationship to the land extends to an in-depth knowledge of the incredible wealth of resources available in the local area, including foodstuffs and raw materials for tool and implement manufacture.*¹²

Josephine Flood has noted that "if a time scale of human occupation of Australia were represented by one hour on a clock, Aboriginal society would occupy over fifty-nine and a half minutes, European society less than half a minute".¹³ Despite the fact that the story of the Aboriginal people is 'the longest continual cultural history in the world'¹⁴ Somerville notes that 'the threads of the story have been broken'.¹⁵ Fragments of the past must be drawn together in order to understand the history of the first people of this region.

There are a few resources that speak to the time prior to European settlement in the Warrumbungles region. One of these is *Sun Dancin' – People and Place in Coonabarabran* by Margaret Somerville. This book, based on oral history with four Aboriginal women from Coonabarabran, traces the history of Aboriginal people in Coonabarabran focusing on the Burra Bee Dee Mission.

Another valuable bibliographic resource for Aboriginal cultural and historical information for this area is known as *The Ewing Documents*. These are a series of documents recording the memories of "old" Joe Bungaree, who was an

¹⁰ Fox, P *Warrumbungle National Park* p52

¹¹ Fairley, A A *Complete Guide to the Warrumbungles National Park* p83

¹² Fox, P *Warrumbungle National Park* p48

¹³ Flood, J *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* p15

¹⁴ Flood, J *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* p15

¹⁵ Somerville, M. et al *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran* p25

Aboriginal Elder who acted as a tracker for the police service in Coonabarabran in the 1890s. Patrick Ewing had originally worked for the police at the gold fields until after the gold rush when he went to Coonabarabran and then, finally, to Gunnedah where he acted as the police sergeant.

During the 1980s Michael O'Rourke, whose family had farmed in Gunnedah, began to work with the Ewing documents and eventually published: *Sung for Generations Tales of Red Kangaroo, War Leader of Gunnedah – Old Joe Bungaree's Tales about Red Kangaroo, an Eighteenth Century 'Big Man' of the central Namoi River NSW: 'Red Chief' of Ion Idriess with a Synoptic Account of the Traditional Culture and a Summary of the "White Invasion" 1826-1926* in 2005. He has examined the documents closely, along with various archaeological, anthropological and historic documents in order to provide a context for the papers. What has come from this process is a rigorous analysis of the indigenous cultural and history of the region based on the resources available at that time.

Much of the information about pre-contact Aboriginal culture comes from archaeology. The majority of archaeology that has been undertaken in the Warrumbungles region has been focussed around the National Park which is centred around the Warrumbungles Range. It is noted that '... it is likely that the area had special religious significance, sites included numerous camps, axe-grinding grooves, rock engravings, ceremonial stone circles, burial sites of caves containing ochre.'¹⁶ Oral history also suggests that this area was where groups from the wider region would come together to meet for various ceremonial and cultural reasons.¹⁷ It is regarded as having been a big meeting place in the area.

Some of the dates that have been found, in the National Park, date as far back as 25 000 years. One such example, found in the area around Tambar Springs, where deposits of stone artefacts and pieces of giant marsupial bone were radio carbon dated to 25 000 years ago.¹⁸ It is important to note that the majority of sites found in the area date from around 5000 years.¹⁹ The late dates of over 20 000 years do tend to occur in high places. For many Aboriginal cultures high places are spiritual places and are subsequently where spiritual activity occurs. The 5000 year old places tend to be on the flat or in the valleys. Currently there has been little archaeology undertaken in the fertile valleys as this was taken up

¹⁶ Fairley, A *A Complete Guide to the Warrumbungles National Park* NPWS p83

¹⁷ Pers. Comm. with Maureen Sulter regarding information provided by Paul Orden.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

early by settlers for pastoral or agricultural activities and remain on private property.

Specific Aboriginal sites around Coonabarabran that have been identified and studied include Kawambarai Cave, Crazy Man Cave, the cave containing the 'girl with the dilly bag'²⁰, Tara Cave and many other rock shelters, open campsites and scarred trees.²¹ Some caves in the Warrumbungle Ranges contain hand stencils and engravings²² and bora grounds are also located in a number of places. Grinding grooves are also evident on the rocks of the Castlereagh River at Willow Vale, close to the centre of Coonabarabran.

There are two examples, amongst others, of sites of significance to Aboriginal people in the Coonabarabran area that have been studied and listed as Aboriginal places. They are both sites that fall outside of the national park and are on large flat, relatively fertile areas. The first is the Ukerbarley site and the second, is Nandi Common.

2.1.1 Ukerbarley Aboriginal Place – Coonabarabran Area

Ukerbarley is an Aboriginal Area that has recently been studied in order to record and assess its Aboriginal traditional and post contact history and occupation. Colin Roberts posited that 'Aboriginal utilisation of the area dates back 5000 years. He concluded that human occupation of the area beyond that timeframe is possible.'²³ The report illustrates the significance of the site as a complex of occupation, ceremonial and learning sites and that connections between Ukerbarley, Burra Bee Dee Mission and the Nandi Hill Bora Ground existed from the traditional into the modern era.

The Ukerbarley site contains an extensive cave system, a largely permanent water supply, wide fertile creeks with plenty of wildlife, large deposits of ochre and had a cooler microclimate in summer.²⁴ It is thought that the valley was probably a dreaming or ceremonial route as there is evidence of large populations using the valley.²⁵ It has many of the attributes attractive to humans and whilst there have been no archaeological studies undertaken, as yet, a number of sites have been recorded.

²⁰ Somerville, M. et al *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran*. pp28-43

²¹ Fox, P *Warrumbungle National Park* pp50-51

²² Ibid

²³ Christison, R *Ukerbarley Aboriginal Area Aboriginal History and Occupation Report* p11

²⁴ Whitehead, J *The Geology of the Warrumbungles* p92

²⁵ Ibid p94

These sites include a concentration of art and occupation sites, ochre pits and even ground ovens, thought to be used for large gatherings.²⁶ There are also axe grinding grooves and it is believed that the presence of these ground grooves indicate that the place is located on traditional trade or hunting routes.²⁷ There are rock shelters and art sites, and many signs indicating occupation including: quartz fragments, stone ‘palettes’ for working ochre, grindstones and stored firesticks.²⁸

Anecdotal and physical information indicates that Ukerbarley was the site of Aboriginal occupation as late as the 1880s.²⁹ Maps from this period illustrate a number of tracks that passed through Ukerbarley. Given the age of these maps, it is highly likely that the marked track followed a traditional route. This may have been the route used by Gamilaraay people passing between the Castlereagh River and Ukerbarley Creek, and between the Nandi Hill Bora Ground and the learning sites of Ukerbarley.³⁰



View from the southwest at Ukerbarley in January 2018 (Ray Christison 2018)

Evidence from the local Gamilaraay community indicates that Aboriginal people continued to choose travel routes that ran through Ukerbarley well into the 20th century.³¹ Members of the Aboriginal community recall it as a meeting place, ‘a very special place’ and it was recalled that people would travel from Burra Bee

²⁶ Ibid p14

²⁷ Ibid p14

²⁸ Ibid p15

²⁹ Christison, R *Ukerbarley Aboriginal Area Aboriginal History and Occupation Report* p16

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

Dee to Coonabarabran via Ukerbarley.³² It seems likely that use of this indirect route suggests that traditional pathways were focused on Ukerbarley.³³ Oral history also validates this with a dreaming trail connecting Nandi Common to Ukerbarley.³⁴

Fifteen phosphine sites have been recorded around the world and these are defined as ‘...subconscious images that have been associated with “altered states of consciousness”.’ It has been hypothesised that, within the Australian context, such work of art may be associated with ceremonial activities. Two rock shelters were found at Ukerbarley, both with phosphine images.³⁵

The conclusion to the study of Ukerbarley is as follows:

The community believe the site to be a ‘pivotal place in traditional culture’. Oral history evidence and the presence of white ochre artworks in rock shelters indicate that traditional practices were being observed at Ukerbarley well into the nineteenth century. Community memory also indicates that the importance of the place was still being observed by Gamilaraay people in the twentieth century.³⁶



Phosphine images at Ukerbarley. Lozenge shapes with a lattice pattern. This style of artwork, found around the world, is either attributed to children or ceremonial activities. (Ray Christison 2018)

2.1.2 Nandi Common

Ukerbarley is believed to have been linked to Nandi Common, an Aboriginal Place near Coonabarabran. This place is listed as an Aboriginal Place and is

³² Christison, R *Ukerbarley Aboriginal Area Aboriginal History and Occupation Report* p13

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Pers. Comm. from Maureen Sulter regarding information provided by Paul Orden, NPWS, December 2018

³⁵ Ibid p19

³⁶ Ibid p24

considered to be a place of importance as a link to past cultural practices.³⁷ The following comes from the listing of the site as an Aboriginal Place:

Nandi Common is considered an extremely important part of the Aboriginal cultural landscape. Local Aboriginal people have a strong spiritual and emotional attachment to the area. ... Nandi Common, and its various elements, are valued for their tangible link between Aboriginal people and culture today and Aboriginal people and their past cultural activities. ... The values associated with the special significance of Nandi Common include, but are not limited to, regionally rare examples of recorded traditional occupation and customs including that of a Borah ground attracting large numbers of men, numerous stone formations, grinding grooves, rock formations, a burial ground and site of initiations and battles. Nandi Common provides a valuable and tangible link for many Aboriginal people with their communities past and with their cultural activities and traditions.

John Whitehead approached Julie Robinson, Uncle Bill Robinson's mother, when she was in her 70's and discussed the Ukerbarley site with her:

She told me that the men performed important ceremonies at the site and that women weren't permitted to attend. She said that they never occurred in her lifetime and that her mother Queenie had told her about them. She thought that some burials or rites for burials had taken place on the site.³⁸

The possibility Nandi Common of this being a men's site seems likely. The archaeology on site suggests that it was used as a large scale ceremonial site and oral history supports this theory.

Whitehead also includes the following account of a ceremony attended by Europeans in 1848 at Nandi:

A correspondent from Young, H Armitage Smith, wrote about him in 1898 in the old Bligh Watchman newspaper. He tells that in about 1848 he '... went to a Borah (ceremony) with Mr Sims who was the owner of Nandi Station opposite Coonabarabran ... They stayed only for the first dance. Then their "own blacks" advised them that it was not safe to remain any longer. He estimated that there were about 1 200 at the ceremony.³⁹

³⁷ State Heritage Inventory Form for Nandi Hill Bora Ground p1

³⁸ Whitehead, J *The Geology of the Warrumbungles* p94

³⁹ *Ibid* p95

These two examples of sites of significance to Aboriginal people in the Coonabarabran area are important in terms of informing our understanding of how Aboriginal cultural traditions existed prior to European settlement in the area. As time passes our understanding of Aboriginal culture is becoming more accurate as more studies are done and our understanding of other cultures becomes more comprehensive. It is anticipated that the process that has been developed regarding the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage will be further advanced with the introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation that is currently under construction in NSW in 2018.

2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History

2.2.1 Contact

The first contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the Warrumbungles region would have been when the explorers started to come through the area after 1818. It is said that 'John Oxley, in 1818, reported that native bark huts were to be seen in every direction along the Castlereagh River and with mussel shells in the fireplaces but that the natives stayed away from the explorers.'⁴⁰ Other accounts indicate that the Aboriginal people showed no interest Oxley and his party.⁴¹

There are indications that prior to European occupation the numbers of Aboriginal people living in parts of the Shire were considerable. As previously mentioned it has been estimated that in the early 1800s about 7000 Gamilaraay lived in the region.⁴² The above mentioned description of a corroboree attended by 1200 Aboriginal people in the 1840s suggests that a substantial number of Aboriginal people were still in the area and continued to practice traditional culture.

The first Europeans to visit the Warrumbungle Ranges are thought to have been convict workmen from William Lawson's holding on the Talbragar River.⁴³ By the 1830s squatters had made their way into the area and were taking up pastoral land. The initial impact of this varies from place to place and ultimately came down to the individuals involved. Michael O'Rourke makes the following point:

⁴⁰ Fairley, A *A Complete Guide to the Warrumbungles National Park* p83

⁴¹ Whitehead J *Tracking and Mapping the Explorers Vol 2* p184

⁴² Fairley, A *A Complete Guide to the Warrumbungles National Park* p83

⁴³ O'Rourke M *Sung for Generations Tales of Red Kangaroo, War Leader of Gunnedah...* p61

Conflict between the colonists and the Aborigines broke out in each newly penetrated district, typically a year or so after the first sheep or cattle were brought in. This is sometimes called “war”. It is better to see it as a process of feuds conducted between aggrieved individuals on either side. They knew each other by name, or nick-name. Thus it was not stranger killing stranger but acquaintance killing acquaintance.⁴⁴

With the benefit of hindsight the above may be an apt description, it is unlikely that that is how people experienced that struggle at the time. O’Rourke:

...in any one district there was a brief period - a year or so - when the white workers never ventured away from their huts unarmed, and briefer moments when the whole population on both sides, the blacks and the whites, may have felt fearful of being killed.⁴⁵

It should also be noted that violence led to further violence as news spread of such incidents. O’Rourke goes on to make the point that ‘Most fatal clashes involved the killing of one or two on either side. Nevertheless, feuds between individual whites and blacks did sometimes flare into generalised and large-scale battles or massacres.’⁴⁶ In some areas, close to the Shire, there were significant violent clashes and the impact of these events on all people involved and in the surrounds would have been considerable.

Whilst both the physical and psychological impact of the violent clashes that occurred during this period was substantial the effect that diseases had on the population during this period was devastating. O’Rourke again:

An unknown, but very large, number of Aborigines - certainly thousands - died from the diseases that the colonists brought with them, such as tuberculosis, measles and venereal diseases. Smallpox, in contrast, had arrived from the interior of the continent, having perhaps originated in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies). The smallpox pandemic of 1830-32 swept away at least a third (probably more than that) of the whole native population of inland NSW. I will repeat the point for emphasis: at least a whole third, perhaps half, perished from smallpox in the early 1830s.⁴⁷

It is evident that exotic diseases killed many more Aboriginal people than violent conflict did. This was quickly followed by a significant impact on the ecosystems, transport networks and access to food so important to the Aboriginal people in

⁴⁴ Ibid p53

⁴⁵ Ibid p66

⁴⁶ O’Rourke M *Sung for Generations Tales of Red Kangaroo, War Leader of Gunnedah...* p54

⁴⁷ Ibid p67

the area. The squatters took the best land with the best access to food and water and the effect of pastoralism, agriculture and wood cutting on waterways, vegetation and animals was such that access to food became difficult. Many Aboriginal people died from malnutrition and this also corresponded to an unsustainably low birth rate.⁴⁸ This pattern is recorded in the reports of the Commissioner for Lands during the early period of European settlement.⁴⁹

Despite this we still have the previously mentioned reference, coming from 1848, in Coonabarabran, of a gathering of over 1200 Aboriginal people at Nandi Hill well after the initial contact period and the outbreaks of disease. We know also, from a variety of sources, that Aboriginal people were also working with European settlers on their properties from the 1850s onwards.

We don't know a great deal yet regarding the number of Aboriginal people that were in the Coonabarabran area during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many would have worked on the stations in the outlying area. The following comes from 1869:

Aboriginal shepherds: It is painful to witness such a number of travelling bushman in this quarter carrying their 'swags' through mud and mire and 'camping' on the cold, wet ground at night, in search of work. And well the poor fellows may look for work, for I am informed that on the Bogan there are 2 stations one carrying 22 000 the other 25 000 sheep, with black fellows only to shepherd them. On the stations to which I am alluding, there is no European – no white man – either shepherd or stockman. The blacks are employed even at sheep washing.⁵⁰

Working on properties in the region meant that Aboriginal people could stay on Country, near family. They were also evidently accomplished at the work and maintained the properties without supervision for some years in the absence of their employers. These are stories that are absent from mainstream history.

There are also stories that illustrate the cross cultural connection that occurred during the early days of settlement. The son of John and Louisa Knight was born at Belar in 1855. For some of the Aborigines of the area, it was the first white child they had seen and a Corroborree was held in honour of his. They

⁴⁸ Ibid p58

⁴⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p109

⁵⁰ *Empire* 03.08.1869 p2

brought him gifts, fat grubs, small wriggling snakes, things which an Aboriginal family would have been proud to accept.⁵¹

No records have been found indicating the nature of first contact in this area. There would have been a mixture of contacts depending on the nature of the individuals encountered and the timings of the meeting. Aboriginal people remained, in the area of the town at least, continuing traditional culture for some time into the latter decades of the nineteenth century. We know that many Aboriginal people worked on properties in the area and some of them may have lived where they worked. However, for many Aboriginal people it was necessary to find accommodation in this new European society in which they found themselves. Without means and a basic living wage renting or buying a house or land was not an option.

For many Aboriginal people in the Coonabarabran area it meant creating and living in what is often referred to as 'fringe camps'. Among others, there are many camps that have been recorded in the area and one of these is listed as an Aboriginal place. 'Happy Valley Fringe Camp' also known as The Showground Camp was listed in 2015 and whilst there is some discussion in the community about the name 'Happy Valley' it was known to many of its inhabitants by that name.⁵² The following comes from the listing of the site as an Aboriginal place and refers to the reasons why the camp is significant to Aboriginal people in the area:

*The fringe camp was deliberately located where other significant places in the surrounding landscape are visible, thus continuing the spiritual connection with these features. The area is also value because during the depression years of the 1930's both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people lived and raised their families together as equals and in harmony. Happy Valley also has traditional sites such as an ochre quarry, and a range of bush tucker and bush medicine. It is used by the local community to connect with and pass on knowledge about their history and culture. Elders also use it to teach local school children about Aboriginal history and culture.*⁵³

⁵¹ Pickette J *As It Was in the Beginning* p78

⁵² Pers. Comm Merv Sutherland October 2018

⁵³ From listing for Happy Valley Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place 2015 p1

The camp, as was often the case, was inclusive and non-Aboriginal people, such as some Chinese and German people also lived in the camps at different times, particularly during depression years possibly both the 1890s and the 1930s.⁵⁴

Whilst relations during the middle of the nineteenth century may appear to have been relatively calm in the area generally events and sensibilities regarding Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations began to change, particularly after the 1870s. It is important to note here that this would have been influenced by the rise of 'racial thinking' that had begun to rise initially in Germany and Central Europe and then throughout the world by the end of that century. Darwin's Theory of Evolution took a turn, perhaps unanticipated by its author, when race began to be interpreted in evolutionary terms. The impact of this way of thinking and its influence on world events during the first half of the twentieth century should not be underestimated.

Australia also has its own history regarding race relations. The relationship between white Australia and Aboriginal people as well as Chinese and other non-white people deteriorated towards the end of the nineteenth century. This is illustrated, possibly best, with the introduction of the White Australia Policy in 1901 and then the various bits of legislation that were introduced designed to segregate and then assimilate Aboriginal people into the dominant society after that. The later that first contact occurred the more violent it tended to be as fear increased, no doubt on both sides. There can be no doubt also that the way that Aboriginal people felt at their mistreatment - over generations - would have influenced the level of trust and faith that they had in Western society and more specifically in the British government.

During the 1850s 35 small Aboriginal reserves were created in the 'squattling districts' and were located near sites known to and used by Aboriginal people, such as the Brewarrina fish traps.⁵⁵ This was the first move towards a reserve system and whilst there were further reserves created in the 1870s the system did not officially start until 1881 under the auspices of the Protector of Aborigines. This was a system of parcels of land dedicated for Aboriginal people to live on. They were not managed by the government or any government officials. In 1883 the system changed with the introduction of the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) who provided the reserves with rations and blankets but people were responsible for their own housing and education.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Pers. Comms. Coonabarabran LALC Board October 2018

⁵⁵ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website : *Living on Aboriginal Reserves and Stations*

⁵⁶ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website : *Living on Aboriginal Reserves and Stations*

2.2.2 Missions

Missions, by strict definition, were created by churches or religious people and were on land that was dedicated for this purpose. Many of these were established on reserves initiated and run by Aboriginal people. The term 'mission' however is also used broadly to refer to reserves or fringe camps.⁵⁷ The missions found thus far in the Warrumbungle Shire appear to fit this model of Aboriginal initiated missions.

Stations or 'managed reserves' were created from 1883 by the APB and were managed by government or appointed officials. Aboriginal people were provided with rations, education and housing but the stations managers tightly controlled who could and could not live there.⁵⁸ These decisions were made exclusively by the station manager and were based on the specific 'colour' of the individual.

Reserves were established for a number of reasons. The first missions were established as a result of the reaction to large camps that had established themselves at Circular Quay and at La Parouse.⁵⁹ It was not unusual for missions to result from the complaints of local white residents and be placed in between towns with the aim of removing Aboriginal people from white settlements.

The other way that missions were set up was on the initiation of Aboriginal people. The following statistic is provided by the NSW Department of Environment and Heritage website: 'In 1911, at the height of the Aboriginal Reserve system, 75 of the 115 reserves in NSW had been created at the request of Aboriginal people.'⁶⁰ Burra Bee Dee Mission is one such mission that was established by the community for the community during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Mary Jane Cain was born at Toorawandi in 1844 and went on to become a significant member of the Aboriginal community living in Coonabarabran in the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries.⁶¹ She is best known for being instrumental in the development of the Burra Bee Dee Mission near Coonabarabran.

The remarkable feature of this particular undertaking is that Mary Cain actually wrote, repeatedly, to the government requesting that she be given what

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website : *Living on Aboriginal Reserves and Stations*

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage website : *Living on Aboriginal Reserves and Stations*

⁶¹ Somerville, M et al, *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran* p51

began as a 400 acre parcel, growing to over 600 acres of land, which was the beginning of the Burra Bee Dee Mission.

We know that a number of attempts were made at establishing a mission in Coonabarabran before there was success. There are two references in the newspapers from 1891 that indicate this:

*The Aborigines, or more properly speaking the half-castes, of this district, numbering over forty, are desirous of having a mission station established on portion of the large area of the vacant land available. As marsupials are numerous in the district, combined with agriculture, &c, the institution should be almost self-supporting, and certainly deserves the consideration of "the Powers that be."*⁶²

The response to this first attempt would appear to have been brief. In a published report of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines was held in December of that year and includes the following: *'An application by GW Cain (half caste) for a grant of 40 acres at Coonabarabran was not entertained.'*⁶³ No further detail or explanation for the decision is provided. It is interesting that this letter is written, or at least signed, by GW Cain and not his wife Mary. Later, it is noted, she signed her own name, not that of her husband.

The letter that was successful in gaining 400 acres, rather than the 40 originally asked for, was written in 1893. The original letter was found by Margaret Somerville at the State Archive and a photograph of it appears in her book. It is a fascinating document and the penmanship is quite remarkable; a testament to the education that Mary must have received, presumably from her family. The letter, dated June 16 1893, starts with 'Dear Sir' and proceeds with a request for the land itself but also for help in the measuring and fencing of the land, in order to stop other people's stock from entering their property.⁶⁴ The following concludes the 2 page letter:

We want help very much. After a while we might get along. I hope you will try to get it measured and fenced in as soon as possible. I spoke to the sergeant here but he seemed to take no notice. There was a lot of Montgomery's sheep here the last few weeks and his dog has taken them home. [do you can] we want our deeds and some writing for it so I may draw this to a close. Trusting that I will have good news.

⁶² Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser 30.07. 1891 p3

⁶³ Sydney Morning Herald 21.12.1891 p5

⁶⁴ Somerville, M et al *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran*. P72

Yours sincere

As a [regent] servant

Mary Cain

It is significant that Mary Cain asks for the deeds for the land as well as the land itself. It indicates an understanding of the land holding system and the need to have proof in writing of land ownership. There are a number of similar examples of Aboriginal people in other areas asking for deeds to land, as early as the 1870s.⁶⁵ This indicates an understanding of capitalism that was perhaps not recognised at the time.

Recent research indicates that the Burra Bee Dee Mission was gazetted in 1893.⁶⁶ The current site of the mission appears to have been made up of three different land grants that comprise the now 628 acres. This has led to a number of different 'start and operating' dates for Burra Bee Dee. However, as it was gazetted in 1893, we can take this as the beginning date for the mission there.

The following description comes from *The Sun Dancin People and Place in Coonabarabran*:

Mary Cain's first hut on the mission was '... a boarded house with twine and bark, whatever they could afford at the time, dirt floors.' The people's dwellings ranged from 'bag' houses made of hessian bags, tents and bark and kerosene-tin shacks. To the two-roomed fibro houses built during the peak of the manager's days. The shacks grew in clusters, added to as needed. The clusters were known by the women who ran them – Granny Cain, Queenie's place, Granny Fuller's. The only houses built in rows facing the road were the five or six fibro houses that the government built in later times.⁶⁷

Somerville's book relays many fond memories that people had living at Burra Bee Dee Mission. There are many happy accounts of time spent there and this is a vital part of the Burra Bee Dee story. It is important to note, however, that whilst Burra Bee Dee provided a place of security for many Aboriginal people in the area it was a system designed to segregate Aboriginal people from the

⁶⁵ Gundungurra people in both the Burragorang Valley and near Boorowa made similar requests in the early 1870s.

⁶⁶ The NSW Aborigines Protection/Welfare Board 1883-1969 Map - AWB NSW map - data.gov.au

⁶⁷ Somerverville, M et al *The Sun Dancin – People and Place in Coonabarabran* Somerville M 1994 p90

dominant society. It reinforced to Aboriginal people that they were second class citizens in the new world imposed upon them.

Until the introduction of the NSW Aborigines Protection Act there had been no legislative backing for the reserve system. In 1909 the government was empowered to take direct control of Burra Bee Dee Mission under the provisions of the NSW Aborigines Protection Act that had been passed by the NSW Parliament. According to Faith Bandler this legislation:

... was an Act that denied equality to the Aboriginal people, that made them second-class citizens. It meant that their lives could be dominated by station managers, that their homes could be entered by police, that if a friend asked them to share a quiet drink they could be arrested and gaoled.⁶⁸

The provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act included a ban on the supply or consumption of alcohol. This ban was one of many small injustices that created resentment among the Aboriginal community. Other platforms for segregation included entrances into movie theatres and swimming pools. All of these activities remained segregated into the 1960s all continuing to reinforce Aboriginal people's position as second class citizens in the white dominant society.

An article appears in the *Evening News* in 1909 regarding the education of Aboriginal children at Burra Bee Dee. A report was made by a Mr Blumer who was an inspector for the education department and it was sent on to the 'Aborigines Board':

Five acres of land round the school have been fenced by the adults in the camp. The teacher (Mr. J. N. Baker) and the boys had wire-netted a good garden plot. It is stated that in a few years the school grounds should be a beauty spot. . . . Physical training was taught, and cleanliness was insisted on. A few pictures were provided at the school. Illustrated newspapers were filed and studied and discussed by the children with keen interest. Bee farming had been commenced, and the children were taught to make frames.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Bandler, F & Fox, L (eds) *The Time was Ripe*.

⁶⁹ *Evening News* (Sydney, NSW : 1869 - 1931), Tuesday 17 August 1909, page 2

The education of the children was a key priority for the women of Burra Bee Dee.⁷⁰ The above mentioned development of the school was all undertaken by the women of the mission prior to the arrival of official missionaries. In 1924 two women came to Burra Bee Dee as missionaries.⁷¹ They lived and worked with the people there for 30 years and were very much an institution in Burra Bee Dee life. Mr Marney, one of the Burra Bee Dee residents, built the church for the missionaries to live on the mission.⁷² The church played an important role in the community and provided both church services and Sunday school for its residents. The community had established itself with a school and a church and 600 acres of land.



Old Managers Residence at Burra Bee Dee (Burra Bee Dee Elders Group)

Burra Bee Dee School would appear to have been a relatively standard early 20th century rural school building.⁷³ It was constructed of timber and clad in rusticated weatherboard with a galvanised iron roof and a fireplace and chimney located at one end of the building.⁷⁴ The school was officially known as Forked Mountain Public School in August 1908 and closed in 1953.⁷⁵ When the mission was closed the school building was sold and relocated, along with the new manager's house and some other government built houses, to a property known as Wokla on the Oxley Highway.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Pers. Comm. Maureen Sulter December 2018

⁷¹ NSW State Heritage Listing for Burra Bee Dee

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Christison, R *Burra Bee Dee Mission Conservation Management Strategy* 2015 p13

⁷⁴ Christison, R *Burra Bee Dee Mission Conservation Management Strategy* 2015 p13

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

Interestingly, former students also recall a concrete map of Australia at the school.⁷⁷ These were popular during the early 1930s and some of these have been state heritage listed in recent years. A number of these were constructed in public schools during the first half of the 1930s and many were surrounded by water, to allow children to play in the water whilst having a geography lesson. A brief newspaper search reveals examples of these all over NSW including those in Armidale, Camperdown, Lawson, Portland and Uralla.

Funding for the maps came from school parents and citizens groups and fund raising generally, there is one example of a council, in the Blue Mountains, paying to construct one but this is unusual. Funding for the map came from fundraising undertaken by the women of Burra Bee Dee through running athletic races for Aboriginal people all over the region, including Wiradjuri people amongst others.⁷⁸ It cost 3 or 6p to enter the races and the funds from this went towards the school and the map specifically.⁷⁹ The funds for this were raised by the Aboriginal community from Aboriginal people.

This tells us quite a lot about the Burra Bee Dee community during this period. It tells us that, in the early 1930s, when many communities were suffering economically, they had enough money to dedicate to this purpose. It also tells us that they were tapped into education tools that were being used in the mainstream education system. Finally, it tells us that their priority was the education of children as it had been since before their first requests for a school for the children of Burra Bee Dee.



Forked Mountain Public School. (Burra Bee Dee Elders Group)

⁷⁷ Christison, R *Burra Bee Dee Mission Conservation Management Strategy* 2015 p13

⁷⁸ Pers. Comm. Maureen Sulter December 2018

⁷⁹ Ibid

*Interior of the school.
Pictured is former Matron
Joy Barrington with her
son. James and Joy
Barrington managed the
mission from January 1949
to January 1952.
(BurraBee Dee Elders
Group)*



Inside School House on Burra Bee Dee. Manager's wife Mrs Barrington and her son.

The Aborigines Protection Board took over the management of Burra Bee Dee Mission.⁸⁰ As a result of this a number of houses were built on the settlement. However it appears that administration and maintenance were chronically under-resourced. Living conditions on many Aboriginal reserves administered by the Board were described as 'very low indeed'.⁸¹ During the 1940s the Coonabarabran Shire Council had cause on more than one occasion to formally express its concern to the Aborigines Protection Board about the poor condition of the houses at Burra Bee Dee and request that the Board invest resources into maintenance.⁸²

The recollections of the people of Burra Bee Dee indicate that living conditions were better than on many Aboriginal missions.⁸³ The people maintained livestock, grew fruit and vegetables and gathered bush tucker to ensure a balanced diet. Houses were kept neat and tidy and the strength of community can be recognised in the many gatherings and celebrations that were held there. The strength of Burra Bee Dee Mission lay in the fact that those who lived there had chosen it as their place of residence and they maintained a strong sense of ownership despite the restrictions placed on them by the Aborigines Protection Act.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Bandler, F & Fox, L (eds) *The Time was Ripe*

⁸² Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* P12 from Minutes of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 1942

⁸³ Christison, R *Burra Bee Dee Mission Conservation Management Strategy* 2015 p16

During the 1950s government policy of governments changed from protection to assimilation. Changes in administration encouraged the residents of Burra Bee Dee to move into Coonabarabran. In 1954 the school at Burra Bee Dee Mission closed down and over succeeding years the settlement was gradually dismantled by the government. An 'Aborigines Reserve' was set aside in Portion 47 of the Town of Coonabarabran between North, Namoi and White Streets.⁸⁴ The church from Burra Bee Dee Mission was relocated to the new Aboriginal housing project in Coonabarabran known as Gunnedah Hill.⁸⁵

Currently the Burra Bee Dee site covers around 628 hectares of land but has no physical buildings or remains of the dwellings originally on the site. The only remains of the settlement into the present day are those at the cemetery site. The church, the housing and finally the school were all removed from the site. It has been state heritage listed.

The Aboriginal community consider Burra Bee Dee as a site of significance and ongoing management of the site includes opportunities for traditional cultural practice such as its use as a meeting place, ongoing use of the cemetery into the future and the opportunities to utilise the site as a cultural interpretation point.

There are a number of other 'missions' (this term was used loosely) in the Warrumbungle Shire during the first half of the twentieth century. These include the Minnom Mission in the Pilliga (about 4 miles from Pilliga on Etoo Creek) which was gazetted in 1902 and operated into the late 1950s.⁸⁶ This site is not officially in the current Warrumbungle Shire Council area but the Pilliga area is significant to the region and to the Aboriginal community and for this reason it has been included here. It also forms part of a pattern of missions in this area.

This mission was well established and also included a school. A number of accounts of the mission and its community appear in the local newspapers from the 1890s onwards. Whilst the date of gazetting of the mission is 1902 Aboriginal people were receiving rations in the Pilliga from the early 1890s.⁸⁷ A newspaper account from 1899 from the Wee Waa Progress Association displayed concern for the welfare of Aboriginal people in the Pilliga describing them as being '...in a state of semi-starvation.'⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Local Government, Dept. (undated). Town of Coonabarabran – map

⁸⁵ Somerville, M et al, *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran* pp188-193

⁸⁶ The NSW Aborigines Protection/Welfare Board 1883-1969 Map - AWB NSW map - data.gov.au

⁸⁷ Tenders for the supply of rations received for Pilliga as early as 1892 *Evening News* 07.05.1892

⁸⁸ *Evening News* 22.09.1899 p7

It is from this period that a number of articles appear in the newspapers, reporting the news of the APB, discussing the dedication of land for a mission in the Pilliga. The Department of Land suggested a parcel of land of 60 acres but ‘... the Board considered that the area of 300 acres previously asked for by them would be required or the purpose intended.’⁸⁹

In 1913 a ceremony took place at the mission in Pilliga described as ‘...the investiture of Colin Mackenzie with a plate present by the APB recognising him as a King of the Pilliga Tribe.’⁹⁰ A speech was then given by the local Church of England ‘Reader’ ‘...laying particular stress on the duties of kingship, especially regarding vices...’.⁹¹ This latter sentence illuminates the purpose of the role as ‘king’ well.

This was once a relatively common occurrence but this event seems to have taken place quite late in the history of the breast plates in Australia. These were given to Aboriginal people and often came with the title ‘king’ or ‘queen’. It is hard to know what the impact of this title had on the Aboriginal communities that they were given to. Often they were given to Aboriginal people who had an ongoing relationship with the white community and not necessarily people who had a similar standing in their traditional communities. There can be no doubt that the intention here was, to some extent, to destabilise the community and to use this individual to progress the objectives of the white community.

In 1934 we know that there were 80 people living at the mission and that a provisional school had been established sometime around the beginning of WWI.⁹² New buildings were being constructed and the design of these buildings, by the son of the local police sergeant, was ‘such a splendid one that the Board of Protection of Aborigines had decided to standardize it through the state’.⁹³ A Church of England Reverend visited the mission in that year and described the following: ‘Not only do they keep their home neat and tidy within but also in front of the houses are found growing flowers, fruit trees and vegies.’⁹⁴

In the newspaper articles there are a number of accounts of concerts given by the mission for the local white community. They were largely done by the children

⁸⁹ Evening News 11.08.1900 p7

⁹⁰ Ibid 17.07.1913 p17

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid 8.01.1934 p2

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

and involve songs and the reciting of poems.⁹⁵ They were received very well. Interestingly all of these shows seemed to end with an Aboriginal song and corroboree performed by Aboriginal men.⁹⁶ It would seem that at least here there is contact with Culture that is not prohibited but celebrated and applauded, even paid for, in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is noted also that the 'orchestra' that accompanied the concert was Aboriginal and include traditional instruments with European ones.⁹⁷

The mission was closed around 1953.

A mission has also been recorded near Binnaway. It is recorded as 'Bungabah'⁹⁸ locally but as 'Yarrowin' on The NSW Aborigines Protection/Welfare Board 1883-1969 Map and operated between the years of 1902-1954. Very little is known about this site but it is close to a meatworks that operated in the area around the same time and it has been suggested that they may have been connected.

Very little appears in the local papers about this mission with the exception, in 1929, of a court case where a white woman is accused of being in contravention of the Aborigines Act by living on the reserve with a 'half caste'.⁹⁹ The case was dismissed on the basis that the 'half caste' was in fact an African American fellow and was therefore not in contravention of the Aborigines Act.¹⁰⁰

Oral history indicates that there are stories about missionaries riding bicycles 'between a mission in Binnaway and Burra Bee Dee in the early 1900's'.¹⁰¹ Currently at the Coonabarabran Keeping Place, at the Coonabarabran Visitor's Centre, there is displayed a breastplate connected to the Bungebah/Yarrowin site. The breastplate reads 'Tommy of Bungebar' and it is on loan from Museum Victoria. It would seem likely that 'Tommy' would have received his breast plate in a similar ceremony, perhaps on the mission, to Colin Mackenzie at the Pilliga detailed above.

Whilst a considerable number of people did live on missions many did not. By 1908 it is estimated that that there were around 14 Aboriginal camps in the

⁹⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 03.01.1918

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 8.01.1934 p2 'The orchestra included leaves, concertina, clappers and violin ...'

⁹⁸ This is the name it is listed locally as, possibly coming from a nearby or older established property.

⁹⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 27.09.1929 p22

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹ Pers. Comm Merv Sutherland 30.10.2018

district and Happy Valley Fringe Camp or the Showground camp, as it was known, was the closest one to town.¹⁰² The following comes from a Memorandum of Understanding for the site:

*Until the late 1960s the [older people] had lived all their lives at the Showground Camp. They harvested bush tucker and medicines from the flora growing around the camp. They and their families were moved off during the implementation of the 'Housing for Aborigines' programme. The last families had been forcibly removed by the end of the 1960s. They recall that their homes were bulldozed after they were removed to prevent their return.*¹⁰³

Once the mission era was over Aboriginal people were dispersed and dedicated Aboriginal housing was established in a number of places in the Warrumbungle Shire from the 1940s onwards. The Burra Bee Dee Mission was closed, the school was relocated and the community found accommodation in various places in Coonabarabran. One of those places was Gunnedah Hill. Set aside as an 'Aboriginal reserve' this site, located off Queenie St in Coonabarabran became a dedicated Aboriginal housing area.¹⁰⁴ The church from Burra Bee Dee was relocated here and was eventually dismantled for firewood by the community.¹⁰⁵

There are a number of other areas in Coonabarabran, dating from the 1960s, that were dedicated Aboriginal housing areas. One is in Dalgarno St, Coonabarabran and another one near White and North Streets.

2.2.3 War

Many Aboriginal men enlisted for service during WWI and a history of this has been published, in 2017, by Joy Pickette and the Coonabarabran DPS Local and Family History Group. It records the enlisting of a significant number of Aboriginal men from the Coonabarabran district. This reveals a deep connection that these men had to Australia and to the broader society in which they lived. They defended white Australia despite the fact that the Defence Act of 1903 states that '...all males aged from 12-25 would receive military training; as Aboriginal Australians were not of European Descent, they were exempt from military service'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² From *Memorandum of Understanding re: Showground Camp/Happy Valley Fringe Camp* 30.04.04

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Heritage Inventory Form for Gunnedah Hill p3

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Australian War Memorial website *Aboriginal Service During the First World War*

Despite their exemption from the legislation many Aboriginal men signed up to go to war. The Australian War Memorial records the following:

At the outbreak of the war large numbers of Australians came forward to enlist, and Aboriginal Australians also answered the call. Best current estimates are that about 1,000 Indigenous Australians – out of an estimated population of 93,000 in 1901 – fought in the First World War (though the real number is probably higher). It is not known what motivated Indigenous Australians to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), but loyalty and patriotism doubtless played a part. There was also the incentive of a receiving a wage. Indigenous soldiers were paid the same rate as non-Indigenous soldiers. In general, indigenous soldiers served under the same conditions of service as other members of the AIF, with many experiencing in the army equal treatment for the first time in their lives. There may have also been the hope that having served would deliver greater equality after the war. In reality, however, upon their return to civilian life they were treated with the same prejudice and discrimination as before.¹⁰⁷

Joy Pickette's book records almost 70 Aboriginal men from the Coonabarabran district enlisting for the WWI. Most of the enlistments appear either during 1916 or later suggesting that perhaps the conscription referendum, held on October 28, 1916 may have played a role in motivating people to enlist even if they were not eligible for conscription. The pressure from the surrounding society may also have played a role here. In August 1914 The Order of the White Feather was established in Britain in order to encourage women to pressure their family and friends into enlisting.¹⁰⁸ White feathers were given, in both Britain and Australia, to young, fit men who did not enlist as a sign of cowardice. It is not known how widespread this practice was in this area generally or among Aboriginal people in this area specifically.

The contribution that these men made to the defence of the empire was significant, made all the more so by the way that they had been treated by white society for over 100 years previously. The dominant society had done little to protect Aboriginal people but these men risked their lives to protect Australia.

¹⁰⁷ Australian War Memorial website *Aboriginal Service During the First World War*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid White Feather*

In the last few decades Aboriginal cultural heritage and history has started to be interpreted differently reflecting a more comprehensive cross cultural understanding of the past. Sites of significance to Aboriginal people, illustrating both traditional culture and post contact history, have begun to be acknowledged and listed and the Aboriginal management of these sites is imminent. In 2018 the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation is in its fourth stage of consultation and, upon completion of this process, will lead to Aboriginal management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW.

It is recommended that the Aboriginal cultural sites, proposed as part of this community heritage project process, be managed by Aboriginal people.

2.3 Aboriginal History - Coolah

It has not been possible to write the history of this area with the permission of Aboriginal people. This is because the Aboriginal community in this area was dispossessed through disease, violence and finally removal in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. This has made this ethically difficult. There is not much information pertaining to the traditional Aboriginal culture or history of the Coolah area. After discussions with Aboriginal people broadly the decision was taken to write what history does exist in the record to help inform any future research into this subject.

2.3.1 Traditional Aboriginal Culture - Coolah

There are few records of traditional Aboriginal culture in the Coolah area. Whilst we do know that there were Aboriginal people in the region there are very few records of early Aboriginal culture or history. This reflects the nature of the Aboriginal history in this area. What has been written by white people has to be treated with some care. It is likely that some cultural information provided by locals in the area in the past has resulted from an amalgamation of various different Aboriginal cultures from all over Australia. An example here is an article appearing in the *Sydney Mail* on 17 September 1913. Whilst elements of this do come from Coolah it is mixed with stories coming from Northern Queensland and other areas outside the Coolah region. It is critical to note that Aboriginal culture is not one homogenous culture but, as with people from all over the world, they varied in language and cultural practices from region to region. Subsequently some of the stories have to be treated with some care to ensure that they are stories from this place.

Roy Cameron recorded the memories of James Patrick Tuckey who was born at *Turill* and worked generally in the rural community around Coolah. He had the most retentive memory. Regarding the Aboriginal culture of this period and area he wrote:

Prior to white settlement the natives existed on fish in the Coolaburragundy River, fauna and bird life from the valleys and the seeds of the Coolah grass which grew on the flats. These seeds were ground into a powder by a kind of stone and mortar mill.

Grinding beds where the warriors made and sharpened their tomahawks may still be seen on sandstone in several streams that lead into the Coolaburragundy River. Hands on rocks, within the Coolah area, are few and few between. An interesting native made water trap in a small sandstone cliff exists north of Coolah, no doubt once used by members of the Butherroe tribe. A well preserved 'native hide' exists in the Uarby area.¹⁰⁹

He also records the memories of Mr Bruce Wilson who lived on *Mumbedah*:

It is my understanding that the Aboriginals from the further West and North West use to travel to the coast to trade and used the Mumbedah springs as a resting place before crossing the Great Dividing Range and going down the Hunter Valley to the coast for the purpose of trading their tomahawks and spear heads for fish. Between old Mumbedah house and the springs in front of it there used to be slabs of bare sandstone rock which was fairly deeply grooved. I was brought up to believe Aborigines sharpened pieces of basaltic rock into axe heads.

Roy Cameron has written about the traditional burials as practised by the Aboriginal people in this area. Whilst we do need to treat some of this information carefully the history recorded of the Aboriginal people in this region does suggest that these burial practices were relevant to this area. The concern is here that other Aboriginal culture's practices have been interpreted as being universal. This was not the case with Aboriginal culture – groups often had different languages and different cultural practices.

Roy Cameron records that immediately after burying the dead bodies the tribal people deserted the area, this was the procedure in all such cases, as they believed that the spirit of the departed would haunt them.¹¹⁰ Around the burial

¹⁰⁹ Cameron R *Aborigines of the Coolah Area* (available through Dubbo Library RLH 994.44)

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

grounds they were entering another's country along with warning off people from tribal burial grounds. Some of these markings can be seen on 'Butheroe' between Mudgee and Coolah Roads.¹¹¹

Warwick Pearson, in 1993, undertook archaeology in the area previously known as the Coolah Shire in the Coolah Tops National Park previously the Bundella and Warung state Forest. Extracts read:

*The parts of the forests where sites were most common were flat grounds along streams and around swamps. These areas were also where we found the largest sites, with the most flakes found on them. This is why we think that, when the Aboriginal people still visited the forests, they spend most of their time close to the creeks and swamps, where there was fresh water and plenty of food. However, we found a very small number of stone flakes all over the forest indicating that the Aboriginal people had visited all parts of the forest. The possible art site and the bora ring tells us that the forest was important to the Aboriginal people not just for food, but also as a place for ceremonies and ritual.*¹¹²

This pattern of occupation in valleys and flat areas near water supplies is a common one for human beings everywhere. The art and bora sites are probably focused in the higher areas rather than the forest, per se, as higher regions are often sacred. It is important to note that oral history suggests a dreaming trail that links the Coolah Tops with the Nandi Common and Ukerbarley sites.¹¹³

2.3.2 Aboriginal Settlement History – Coolah Area

As previously mentioned Coolah was the headquarters of the Crown Land Commission and the Border Police from 1839 to 1851. As mentioned in *Section 7.2 Government and Administration* the history of this region in the earliest days of settlement reveals the largely unregulated, somewhat unlawful culture that predominated beyond the limits of location. We know that the majority of people in this area during this era were largely servants of landowners and they were left in charge of the properties on the behalf of their employer (Refer to *Section 7.3 Law and Order*). The fear that developed between both white settlers, or more specifically their servants, and Aboriginal people led to incidence of violence which, in tandem with other factors, led to a dispossession of the Aboriginal people in Coolah.

¹¹¹ Cameron R *Aborigines of the Coolah Area*

¹¹² Ibid p6

¹¹³ Pers. Comm. from Maureen Sulter regarding information provided by Paul Orden, NPWS, December 2018

The Commissioner of Lands, Graham D Hunter was raised in *Section 7.2 Government and Administration* and his permissive role in the culture that predominated in the Bligh District. In many ways his reports reflected the history of the impact of white settlement on Aboriginal people in the central west broadly. He records the increase in hostility from Aboriginal people towards the white settlers in the first year when moving into new country and then the return to peace in the year that followed.¹¹⁴ He also records a reduction in the general population of Aboriginal people in the area and an almost complete halt in their fertility in the mid 1840s.¹¹⁵ This illustrates the early mentioned pattern of the impact of white settlement on Aboriginal people as outlined by Michael O'Rourke in *Section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History*.

Hunter also recorded the increasing numbers of Aboriginal people working on properties as time passed. He makes the point that towards the end of his time there were almost no properties without some Aboriginal people employed on them.¹¹⁶ The terms and conditions that these Aboriginal employees were working under are not known. Roy Cameron wrote the following regarding King Togie, regarded as a powerful Aboriginal warrior, who was one of many Aboriginal men working on properties in this area:

King Togie of the Butheroe Tribe was from the Butheroe Creek area. Early settlers James Vincent and John Nevell befriended the tribe. Togie was entrusted with the driving of the station cattle to another property they held near Rylstone. James Vincent passed away suddenly on the Turon Ranges when returning from a business trip to Bathurst. When news of the death reached Butheroe there were great lamentations by the Aborigines who went into mourning, plastering their faces and bodies with pipe clay. Next morning the whole tribe had disappeared and did not return to the Station for three years – they were still in mourning.¹¹⁷

This is a powerful story. This tells us that there were Aboriginal people, a significant tribe in terms of its size, living in the Coolah area during the mid-nineteenth century. It also tells us of the powerful connections and relationships between some of these people. It is a story that is an important one when considering the history of Aboriginal people over the nineteenth century. This pattern of Aboriginal people and white settlers having relationships and working together is something that existed prior to the rise of racial thinking that

¹¹⁴ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p109

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Cameron R *Aborigines of the Coolah Area* (available through Dubbo Library RLH 994.44)

occurred in the latter decades of the nineteenth century (*refer to section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History*). As the century went on so the relationships between white settlers and Aboriginal deteriorated finally leading to the introduction of the Aborigines Protection Act in 1909.

The *Section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History* discusses the king - breast plate practice that the British Government used to negotiate with Aboriginal communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. 'King' Togee is most likely to have been 'crowned' in the same ways as others in the area were.

Togee was a big and powerful man, regarded as a great leader who lived with the Gamilaraay people at Butheroe during the 19th century. Roy Cameron describes a fatal incident between Togee and Cuttabush, a warrior of a nearby Gamilaraay group:

A conflict between Togee and Cuttabush fatally speared Togee in Butheroe Creek not far from the old Vincent-Nevell homestead which was situated near the junction of the present Coolah-Neilrex and Dog-ana-bug-ana-ram road. His body was taken to a nearby shed and when he expired and was buried beneath a tree on the southern side of the Coolah Neilrex Road about 100 metres from where his headstone stands today. Upon his death the tribe left Butheroe and legend has it that they never returned. It is thought that King Togee died in the late 1850s. However Cuttabush lived a long life dying in 1910 at the age of 85 years (he was a young man when the incident occurred).¹¹⁸

The Nevell family, for whom he was working at the time, employed George Weatherly Junior, then a boundary rider, to carve a headstone to memorialise the grave.¹¹⁹ This fell into disrepair and in 1948 the Coolah Shire Council arranged for its restoration, re-erection with a protection fence and a descriptive tablet was either not attached or had been stolen over the years.¹²⁰

In 2004 the Shire Council the Dept of Env and Cons (NSW) and the Gilgandra Aboriginal Land Council, in a joint effort, carried out improvements at the site of King Togee's headstone including the erection over the headstone of a shelter and an information board.

¹¹⁸ Cameron R *Aborigines of the Coolah Area* (available through Dubbo Library RLH 994.44)

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

¹²⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative* (NSW), 22 April 1948

The above record tells us that the local people left after Togee's death and never returned. Oral history suggests however that they did return, in smaller numbers, from around 3 months after the event but that they then left again.¹²¹ There can be no doubt that the death of such a powerful leader would have led to this departure. In some areas, not far from Coolah, the death of a significant leader, pre European contact, led to the departure of a group from a significant site used for many thousands of years. The length of the departure depends on the person who has passed away - the more significant the person the longer the period of departure.

The settlement history for Aboriginal people in the Coolah district started out much as it did elsewhere. Indeed there are suggestions throughout the record that during the early period of contact Aboriginal people not only worked on many, if not all, the properties in the area but they had good relationships with some of the white settlers. What happened over the next twenty years is difficult to ascertain.

The previously mentioned James Tuckey wrote about the Aboriginal community during the 1870s in Coolah:

In the 1870s there were a lot of semi-civilised Aborigines living in bush humpys in the scrub [near] the present Charles Street, Coolah. They held their corroborees on what today is the Coolah Golf Links ground. The poor unfortunates were starving and died by the dozens during the winter. They were buried in mass graves between the now Convent School playground and the Coolah Cemetery. The surviving natives were sent to a camp at Turill, later to Wollar and finally to Warren.¹²²

Oral history tells us that there were what has been referred to as 'Aboriginal graves' but are in actual fact graves created during the post settlement period. It also tells us of 3 graves of Aboriginal people found in the sports field of the Catholic School, killed by gunshots.¹²³ Oral history suggests that there could be other examples of violence towards Aboriginal people in this area.

This issue is a significant one in this area. Whilst there can be no doubt that much of the dispossession that the Aboriginal people of this area experienced can be attributed to disease, lack of food and a corresponding loss of fertility there can be no doubt that violence also played a role here. It is difficult to know what

¹²¹ Pers. Comm. Roy Cameron April 2018

¹²² Cameron R *Aborigines of the Coolah Area* (available through Dubbo Library RLH 994.44)

¹²³ Pers. Comm. Noel Gilbert April 2018

occurred during the period that this area was beyond the 'limits of location'. The complete removal of Aboriginal people from this area suggests that a fairly comprehensive dispossession transpired and violence, or the threat of it, most likely played a role here.

Letter from Alexander Busby to James Busby in 1838 regarding a conversation with their brother William sheds some light:

William was right. There was too much leniency towards the whites and their wanton murder of Aborigines. Often they did not take the time to let the blacks know in what they had offended, even if they had offended at all; and little trouble was taken should reprisals be really justified (as they sometimes were) to find out if the right culprit was the one to be punished. Hundreds of Aborigines were slaughtered by merely trying to exist on what was after all their own land.

The above letter was discussing the Cassilis district but it is important to note that during this period Cassilis was the administrative centre for this region. At this point the culture predominated throughout the whole area as there were relatively few people residing in the district. This reference to slaughter is a significant one.

It is anticipated that, with the introduction of the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation, further work might be undertaken regarding the Aboriginal traditional culture and history of the Coolah area. It is likely that there is a dreaming trail connection between Coolah Tops and the Nandi Common – Ukerbarley sites as oral history indicates.¹²⁴ It is likely also that there was violence towards Aboriginal people in the early days of settlement in this area particularly in the years that it was 'beyond the nineteen counties' in the 'limits of location'.

2.4 Exploration

The northern reaches of Warrumbungle region were initially explored by John Oxley in the years 1817-1818. He originally named the ranges the 'Arbuthnot's Range' and his objective in this journey was to trace the Macquarie River and to ascertain whether it emptied into an inland sea or joined another water course.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Pers. Comm. from Maureen Sulter regarding information provided by Paul Orden, NPWS, December 2018

¹²⁵ Whitehead, J *Tracking & Mapping the Explorers Vol 2* pp 176-177 2004

Eric Rolls, regarding this initial expedition, makes the point that the area was in flood at the time and this is what guided the route through the area.¹²⁶ It would seem that this initial trip into the Warrumbungle Shire highlighted what could be described as one of the main characters in the history of the area – water. At the time, as Rolls writes ‘Between the Macquarie and the Castlereagh rivers there was a barrier of reed and water a hundred kilometres long and a hundred wide.’¹²⁷

John Whitehead has written that Oxley was not impressed with the general appearance of the land or soils and that as a consequence he did not recommend the area for occupation or future development.¹²⁸ He goes on to say that it was for this reason land development occurred later here than in other regions which were reported to be more conducive to settlement and agriculture.¹²⁹

George and Henry Cox, sons of William Cox along with William Lawson, were amongst those to also conduct early expeditions into the area. Indeed it was them, and their descendants, who were amongst those to first establish runs and pastoral interests throughout the area from the 1830s onwards.

Aboriginal names were used for topographical features as provided by Aboriginal guides as directed by Surveyor General Mitchell. Eric Rolls write the following on this subject:

Mitchell ... had a rule he too often broke that places should retain their original names. ‘New names are of no use’ he wrote ‘especially when given to rivers or water causes by travellers who have merely crossed them ... we derive from such maps little more information than we had before ... So long as any of the aborigines [sic] can be found in the neighbourhood ... future travellers may verify my map.’¹³⁰

John Whitehead’s research concludes that, regarding the name of the Warrumbungles Ranges, the correct interpretation of this Aboriginal name is ‘short stumpy mountains’, not ‘crooked mountains’ as referred to in some tourism information.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Rolls, E A Million Wild Acres p2

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Whitehead, John *The Warrumbungles, Dead Volcanoes, National Parks, Telescopes and Scrub* p4 &107

¹³⁰ Rolls, E A Million Wild Acres p98

¹³¹ Ibid p155

2.5 Convicts

The establishment of the convict system, in essence, solved a number of issues for the British Government. It resolved the overcrowding of the British prison system and it created a free work force. Whilst not slavery in the strict sense that people could be bought and traded as property they could be in effect leased during the period of their sentence. The other similarity between the convict system and slavery was the flagrant use of violence to control the labour force. It was not unusual for a convict to receive up to 300 lashes should he have made an escape and be deemed a troublemaker.¹³²

Indeed when Aboriginal people first witnessed the lashing of a convict, in the earliest days of settlement, they left the area distraught unable to conceive of such violence towards someone unable to defend themselves.¹³³ In many traditional Aboriginal societies punishment most often involved the guilty party being speared once when they were not captive and the matter was then resolved. To witness the repeated lashing of a defenceless individual was beyond the imagining of Aboriginal people at that time. Throughout the convict era there are numerous examples of where Aboriginal people helped convicts to escape and survive in the then alien landscape.¹³⁴

Assignment created a cheap labour force that assisted many early free settlers to prosper. Convicts were sent with flocks of sheep beyond the limits of the colony to become the vanguard of European settlement in areas such as the Warrumbungles. The Colonial government encouraged assignment of convicts as it was a far cheaper method of keeping them than maintaining them in penitentiaries or on road gangs. In 1837 it cost seventeen pounds to keep a convict on a chain gang and only four when they were on assignment.¹³⁵ Landholders reaped the benefit of the cheap labour force provided by assigned convicts to build up their fortunes.

The normal fate of the well-behaved convict was assignment to private service. The British Government encouraged it, for it saved money by taking the prisoner off the government's hands. It scattered men throughout the colony, which broke up their 'evil associations', it taught the convicts those 'habits of labour' whose absence had so often started them on

¹³² Frost, L Maxwell-Stewart, H *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives* 2001 p34

¹³³ Flood J *The Original Australians* p35

¹³⁴ Frost, L Maxwell-Stewart, H *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives* 2001 p34

¹³⁵ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p13

*their criminal career, and it gave them experience, which would make it easier for them to gain useful employment when their sentence expired.*¹³⁶

Writing in 1839 Charles Campbell indicated that the shepherd's life was excellent for reforming the behaviour of criminals:

*He who leads it has constant but not laborious employment, enjoys the light of heaven and is secluded from the company of the drunken and dissolute.*¹³⁷

The convicts that were assigned to these positions were not convicted of violent crimes and were more likely to have been guilty of stealing or of politically based crimes.¹³⁸ Of the female convicts population 15% (25000) of the total number during the period 1788-1852, 'almost all' were identified as domestic servants. Approximately half of these women were assigned as domestic servants with the remainder of them doing manual labour. Indeed there was considerably more supply than demand of domestic servants in the cities in the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹³⁹

In terms of the Warrumbungles region the later development date, after the 1830s, means that there was not a lot of convict activity in the area but there were convicts working on properties during the early settlement period. On his return on 2 June 1839 Lands Commissioner Graham Hunter stated that 115 free men and 10 convicts were working on Bomera station. The 1841 Census recorded 21 single males living at Bomera. All had arrived in the colony as convicts. At the time of the census 10 were free, two had tickets of leave and nine were privately assigned. 10 of these men were working as shepherds. Of these men four nominated their denomination as Church of England, one as Church of Scotland and 16 as Roman Catholic.¹⁴⁰ Political unrest in Ireland and the desire of English courts to clear criminals from the areas around London ensured that many convicts came from these areas.

Eric Rolls includes in his work this quote from Charles Darwin who visited Wallerawang Station in 1836:

¹³⁶ Shaw, *A Convicts and the Colonies* P217

¹³⁷ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p13

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Higman BW *Domestic Service in Australia* Melbourne University Press 2002 P71

¹⁴⁰ Cameron, R *The Village Town with the Big Heart* p97

The sunset of a fine day will generally cast an air of happy contentment on any scene: but here, at this retired farmhouse, the brightest tints on the surrounding woods could not make me forget that 40 hardened, profligate men were ceasing from their daily labours, like the slaves of Africa, yet without their just claim for compassion.¹⁴¹

The end of the convict era ended in 1846 in NSW, and this would have seen an end to what was essentially free labour for the pastoralists. For those that had served out their time and been issued with a Ticket of Leave, they would have had the option of remaining in the area or to move on to another. Many convicts went on to achieve considerable success in the colony, doing better than they would have had they remained in England.

2.6 Ethnic influences

After Aboriginal people moved into the area, some tens of thousands of years ago, the next wave of immigrants to the Warrumbungles region hailed from the British Isles. There were many waves of immigration from these areas, all of whom would have been represented, at one time or another in the region. It is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of the different waves of immigration that entered into the Warrumbungles Region and when they arrived. However we do know that the vast majority of the new settlers arriving into the area would have largely originated from that part of the world.

It is important to note, at this juncture, what was occurring in Britain regarding religion and the population. The Church of England, the official religion of the United Kingdom has often been described as ‘The Tory Party at Prayer’ and was essentially a largely middle class, southern English and rural organisation.¹⁴² In 1851 the only religious census to be taken in England revealed that Methodism had often replaced Anglicanism as the denomination in the North of England.¹⁴³ Jupp asserts that this occurred due to the resentment at the indifference of the Church of England to industrial and rural workers.¹⁴⁴

By the 1850s, after the initial influxes due to the gold rushes, at least half of the population in Australia were Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians and Cornish Methodists, no doubt reflecting, in part at least, the immigration of miners into

¹⁴¹ Rolls, R A *Million Wild Acres* p120

¹⁴² Rolls, R A *Million Wild Acres* p22

¹⁴³ Ibid p19

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

the country in search of gold.¹⁴⁵ The increase in immigration of people from mining areas no doubt accounts for the significant numbers of Methodists in the population figures during these years. Methodism came to Australia from Scotland, Cornwall and Wales, the English mining districts. Immigration from the North of England was not as significant in terms of population until the latter decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁶

A number of the early settlers in the district were Methodists. The role that networks play throughout history is now being thought about more seriously and one of the thoughts being posited is that perhaps what we have is less 'great men' and more 'great networks'.¹⁴⁷ This principal applies at all levels. Without good networks, particularly in a settlement situation such as this, which at times was perilous, people simply could not have survived without each other. This applies at every level from the basic survival to the thriving of a business or a local economy. One of the first networks during the early Australian colonial period was based around religion. Many towns in central western NSW were initially settled by people of one faith or another. This was reflective of the religious – cultural tensions surrounding the Protestant – Catholic conflict that was brought over from Britain by convicts, settlers, soldiers and aristocracy alike. Indeed the first race riot in Australia was in Melbourne in 1846 and involved Catholics and Protestants.¹⁴⁸

In the Warrumbungle Shire the predominant faiths shared by the early settlers would appear to have been Protestant and for many towns it was the specific faith of Scottish Methodism that predominated. This is not to say that these towns were Methodist or Protestant by nature but that the network that led to the initial settlement of these towns began with this particular kind of basis. The predominance of one religion did not last long in any town and none of it is evident into the twentieth century.

The next people to arrive in the shire were Indian, Afghan and Chinese workers who were employed in a variety of different capacities in the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Many Chinese people, predominantly men, came out to Australia on assisted passage to the gold fields in the 1850s. For many, like many non-Chinese people on the gold fields, they did not make their

¹⁴⁵ Ibid p22

¹⁴⁶ Ibid p23

¹⁴⁷ This theory has at present been applied to large, worldwide networks by Ferguson, N in *The Square and The Tower: Networks, Hierarchies and the Struggle for Global Power*. Allen Lane 2017

¹⁴⁸ *The Melbourne Argus* 14 July 1846 p2

fortunes and were stuck in Australia until they could not only pay the initial passage off but could then afford passage back to China. It was therefore necessary for them to work and for many market gardens were a demand that they could meet. Chinese people were considered masters of irrigation and many towns in rural NSW could not meet the need for fresh vegetables, it was a natural fit and many towns had market gardens run by Chinese people in the nineteenth century. Eric Rolls wrote about the Chinese market gardens in the shire and also makes the point that some pastoral properties also employed Chinese people to help with growing food but also with irrigation.¹⁴⁹ Market gardens were being operated by Chinese people in Coonabarabran into the 1960s.¹⁵⁰

There are examples of Chinese technology specifically designed to deal with water in the Warrumbungle Shire. One example of this is a water irrigation system that was constructed at “Bullinda” Station. John Horne provided information about what is described as a ‘water race’. Ironbark was used and those trees that grew on poor or shallower soils become ‘piped’ (where the centre dies out and rots). It is thought that these were chosen as they would require less work than healthier trees, which would have needed to have their centres removed.¹⁵¹ It is not known whether the trees used for this system were naturally hollowed out or whether tools were utilised. A further examination of the remains could reveal this.



*Remnants of the Chinese ‘water race’ (irrigation system) at Bullinda Station.
(Photographs courtesy of John Horne 2018)*

¹⁴⁹ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p298

¹⁵⁰ Pers. Comm. John Whitehead October 2018

¹⁵¹ Pers. Comm. John Horne February 2018

These hollowed out logs were joined together and formed a continuous system enabling water to travel from a spring high on a hill down to where a vegetable garden, possible quite a substantial one by modern domestic standards, would have provided fresh vegetables to the station. Twenty years ago the race remained largely intact, with the logs still joined, but a recent trip revealed that it has since collapsed and the remains are fragmented. Elements of it remain on the site at this stage. There may have been other examples of this elsewhere in the shire and whilst it is not possible to preserve these vernacular examples of farming and irrigation technology it is important to record them as part of the history of the shire.

Whilst there are no records of the numbers of Chinese people in the shire it would seem that there was a considerable community of Chinese people in the region generally, many of whom were engaged in retail businesses in the first decades of the twentieth century as well as agriculture. Chinese people were living in the fringe camps with Aboriginal people in Coonabarabran (*refer to Section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History*), they were operating retail businesses in Coolah, Leadville and Dunedoo and were part of a larger community of Chinese people living in the north and central west of NSW.

Newspapers give details of a number of weddings involving Chinese people from Coolah. The below provides a good description of such an event from 1919:

A wedding at Mudgee recently presented some unusual features, because both the bride and the bridegroom were of Chinese ancestry, and chose to follow "old country" custom in one or two important particulars. The reception was held before the wedding instead of after it, a large party assembling at the house of the bride's parents to offer congratulations and to drink health [sic]. After the reception the bride groom and his friends motored off to the church, followed by some four hundred relatives and friends. The ceremony, as arranged by the bridegroom, was performed with the church doors open. The bride, who arrived last, was gowned in white China silk, and wore the usual wreath and veil. As she entered the church the organist played Handel's Sarabande. The bridegroom was Mr. George Kum, of Coolah, and the bride Miss L. Sing, of Mudgee.¹⁵²

This description of what is essentially a cross cultural ceremony is fascinating. It tells us that there was more cross cultural contact and relationships than have

¹⁵² Ibid 08.05.1919 p16

been recorded previously. It also illustrates the networks that the Chinese people developed in the broader outlying region. There are also a significant number of marriages between Chinese people and white Australians, one for example is recorded in Leadville during the 1930s. As in other areas of the Central West Chinese people stayed on for longer here than elsewhere. There were Chinese market gardens operating as late as the 1960s in Coonabarabran.¹⁵³

Chinese, Afghan and Indian hawkers traded in the shire prior to the advent of commercial centres. They are referred to by name in the histories and in the press suggesting that they were in the area for some time and had become, if perhaps transient, members of the community. According to Rolls 'up to eight Indian Hawkers camped regularly on the creek at Bugaldie. They brought fowl for a communal meal ... cooked chapatis over an open fire in folding gridirons ...Then all dipped into the same big pot of curried chicken'.¹⁵⁴

Roy Cameron writes the following about hawkers in the Coolah area:

*Coolah has its share of Indian, Afghan and Syrian hawkers. Generally they travelled in a horse drawn can, but not 'Syrian Mary', she carried her wares in three baskets, one on her head and one in each hand. Later she pushed her wares in a covered pram. Twice each year she travelled from Lithgow, through Mudgee and Gulgong to Coolah and back. Even at the age of 60 years she walked and held herself as straight as a ramrod.*¹⁵⁵

*Indian hawkers included 'Tarpot' Ubadeen, Shimahom, Ashmatali, Collamon, Creambox, and the Almond Brothers, who travelled in 2, 3 or 4 horse wagons. They camped yearly at Triangle Park, Coolah, whilst applying to the Local Court for their annual Hawker's licence.*¹⁵⁶

Coonabarabran and Binnaway have also hosted Chinese general traders, the Woo family in the former and Charley Ah Nim and Sun On in the latter.¹⁵⁷ Charley Ah Nim is also recorded as having lived in Leadville prior to his move to Coonabarabran.¹⁵⁸ He clearly played a significant role in terms of retail in the

¹⁵³ Pers. Comm John Whitehead October 2018

¹⁵⁴ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres*. p.295

¹⁵⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump* p132

¹⁵⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump* p131

¹⁵⁷ Binnaway Centenary Committee *A History of Binnaway* p55

¹⁵⁸ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump* p312

area but also in the towns in which he lived. In Leadville it is said that he acted as the village doctor when minor ailments required treatment.¹⁵⁹ German migrants are known to have cultivated vineyards in the area. In the 19th century it was common for immigrants from Germany seek out opportunities for the establishment of vineyards to supply the local wine trade.¹⁶⁰ It is also recorded that Germans people lived in the fringe camps in Coonabarabran (refer to *Section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement*). Rolls notes that a syndicate of Jewish businessmen held runs in the Pilliga from the 1840s to the 1860s, running around 6,500 sheep on four runs. These people were absentee owners who employed resident overseers.¹⁶¹ Both of these groups would have been affected by the revolutions that were spreading throughout Europe at this time and this might explain their presence in the colonies.

The most tangible forms of cultural heritage reflecting ethnic influences exist in the form of churches and the headstones of cemeteries. The various sections of the cemeteries contain headstones that stand as a testament to the ethnic origins of the occupants of the graves.

The Golden Sea Dragon Chinese Restaurant is the most outstanding example of ethnic influence in modern Coonabarabran. This building on John Street is a strong statement of Chinese identity and contains a spectacularly carved wooden interior.

Another ethnic group to have come into the Warrumbungle Shire is a group of Italian soldiers during the Second World War. Following the spectacular military successes of British Empire forces in North Africa in 1940 British authorities were saddled with responsibility for 130,000 Italian prisoners of war. The majority of these prisoners were transported to camps in Australia, India, South Africa and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Initially Italian prisoners sent to Australia were housed in large prisoner of war camps. Soldiers below the rank of officer were given farming and construction tasks in various areas. By 1943 Australia was experiencing a deteriorating supply of manpower. At this time British authorities in India requested that Australia consider taking an additional 20,000 prisoners of war to assist in overcoming this problem. The Australian government considered this matter and in April 1943 gave approval for small groups of Italian prisoners of war to be

¹⁵⁹ Cameron, R ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump* p312

¹⁶⁰ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p15

¹⁶¹ Ibid

employed on individual farms. The prisoners were to be paid by the employing farmers and provided with accommodation and food.

To administer this program Prisoner of War Control Centres were established in regional centres. Each Control Centre was operated by:

... an army complement of seven whose task was to supply prisoners with their needs, maintain supervision and deal with employers' complaints and liaise with police in the event of a POW running away. Up to 200 Italians were to be placed with private employers on farms within a radius of 40 kilometres from each Control Centre.¹⁶²

Initial Prisoner of War Control Centres were established at Parkes, Coonabarabran and Orange in June 1943 with the first of these being established at Coonabarabran. The Coonabarabran Control Centre operated until January 1946. It was in operation longer than any other centre in Australia.¹⁶³ Dalgarno Street, Coonabarabran was used to house this Control Centre administering the allocation of 100 prisoners of war.¹⁶⁴ These prisoners worked on farms throughout the Coonabarabran district, including the vicinities of Baradine, Purlewaugh and the Timor Valley.

In his study of the Italian farming soldiers Fitzgerald recounted the experiences of two men who were allocated to a farm near Purlewaugh. They worked on the farm during the week and travelled into Coonabarabran on Saturday afternoons for shopping, at which time they reported to the Control Centre. Each Sunday they attended mass at St Michael's Catholic Church in the village of Purlewaugh.¹⁶⁵ The Lighezello family of Coonabarabran provided hospitality to Italian prisoners of war when they came to town at weekends.¹⁶⁶

Italian prisoners are credited with building stone huts and other features on various farms. One member of a group housed in the shearers' quarters at Moxham's property Melrose near Baradine painted 'pin-up' and glamour art pictures of women that have been donated to the Cowra Fun Museum. Bob Moxham believed that the painter worked as a cartoonist with the Women's Weekly after the war.¹⁶⁷ Prisoners were also allocated to Glenmore in the Timor Valley.¹⁶⁸ Italian prisoners of war also worked at some of the charcoal burning

¹⁶² Fitzgerald, A *The Italian Farming Soldiers* p33

¹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁶⁴ Coonabarabran Senior Citizens Inc, 2003. Easy Walks in Coonabarabran p4

¹⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, A *The Italian Farming Soldiers* p173

¹⁶⁶ Pasquale Dagao - papers, 1942-1947, State Library of New South Wales

¹⁶⁷ Coonabarabran DPS Archives PDF Files, Coonabarabran - Italian POWs

¹⁶⁸ Carmichael, D *Timor Valley*. p77

kilns established around the region to provide fuel for vehicle-mounted charcoal burners.¹⁶⁹

Ted Morrissey, who lived at Bugaldie during World War II, recalled that Italian soldiers Emmanuel Nicosia, Salvatore Vedda, Domenico Pulgleisi and Natalino Massimi worked for his father Jack. They built a road on the property.¹⁷⁰ The prisoners of war developed close relationships with their employers and their families. In many cases links were maintained well after World War II ended.



*St Michael's Catholic Church, Purlawaugh was used as a place of worship by Italian prisoners of war.
(Picture courtesy Ray Christison.)*

2.7 Migration

The first migrants to the area came from the British Isles. They were the squatters and their parties who from the 1830s onwards moved cattle through the area from the Liverpool Plains to the Bowenfels – Bathurst Region. These people would have represented many of those in the colony generally; convicts, soldiers and squatters.

Between the years 1788 and 1868 the numbers of English people transported to Australia was 156 000, of whom 80 000 came to NSW comprised of 71% men.¹⁷¹ There was a significant number of Irish people in these figures, reflecting the large numbers of people who had fled famines and civil disorder from the 1830s onwards, heading towards London and the industrial cities of England.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p90

¹⁷⁰ Coonabarabran DPS Archives PDF Files, Coonabarabran - Italian POWs.

¹⁷¹ Jupp, J *The English in Australia* p28

¹⁷² Ibid

James Jupp provides us with a breakdown of the waves of immigrants to arrive on Australian shores. By far the greatest numbers were those that were assisted and that came from England essentially in three major waves;

- 1830s – 1860s - Predominantly rural labourers, given some assistance for passage and further support from their parish or Poor Law Union. They were encouraged to come in family units.
- 1880s - Another large intake came with passage paid for and organised by the colonial governments and included miners and railway workers some agricultural workers. Often trade unionists and enrolled to vote.
- Post WWII - This was the largest of all and lasted from 1947-1983.¹⁷³

It is said that the first trade with the Chinese occurred with the First Fleet.¹⁷⁴ Chinese workers were present in the colony as early as the 1830s. The cessation of transportation of convicts in the 1840s created a shortage of cheap labour in New South Wales. This led to an increase in the ‘number of Chinese people arriving as indentured labourers to work as shepherds and irrigation experts.’ It appears that all of these workers came from Fujian Province. Some may have been kidnapped.¹⁷⁵

The gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s led to increased immigration from many parts of the world with many coming from Southern China in organised groups. As with the British immigrants many of the Chinese had assisted passage. Most of the Chinese that immigrated to Australia during the nineteenth century did so from one particular region in the South of China known as the Pearl River Delta. The reason for this is because ‘The family, and particularly the parents, were the focus of life in traditional Chinese culture and so the majority of those coming to NSW did so not as individuals seeking their fortune but as family representatives entrusted with the role of providing supplementary and possibly essential income.’¹⁷⁶ They travelled alone, those who were married left their wives behind to look after the old and the young.

Most of those who came would have come from poor rural backgrounds and in order to get to NSW ‘...it was necessary to form themselves into “co-operative bonds” or “individually to enter into unwritten bonds with a labour agent” or a

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Williams, M *Chinese Settlement in NSW a Thematic History* P4

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Williams, M *Chinese Settlement in NSW a Thematic History* p12

relative who had sufficient money after their own sojourn. Most who arrived did so with a debt.¹⁷⁷

Many of the Chinese who came to Australia in search of gold would not have been successful and would have been unable to get themselves home with an already existing debt. They would have had to find work on the route to the capital cities from the goldfields. Subsequently many rural towns in the latter decades of the nineteenth century through to the early decades of the twentieth had market gardens that were operated by such Chinese people. Known to be masters of irrigation it is a task that they would have been well suited to in such a climate.

The return of Chinese people's remain to China after their death is a significant issue for Chinese people as returning remains to their place of origin is an intrinsic component of their traditional belief systems. For the Chinese it is crucial to return bones and remains to their ancestral home. As a consequence of this between the years 1875-1930 many Chinese burials were exhumed and their bones returned to China. Rookwood Cemetery had up to 75% of the Chinese burials exhumed during this period.¹⁷⁸

One of the cornerstones of Chinese settlement during this period was the existence of regional associations known as Tongxian or 'same place' societies.¹⁷⁹ They were benevolent associations dedicated to supporting the Chinese Diaspora and one of these main forms of support was returning old men and the bones and remains of the deceased to China.¹⁸⁰ After 1930 these associations became less regionally focussed and more nationally oriented. The practice was to bury the body for a number of years and then to collect the bones of a larger groups of people and return them all together to China.¹⁸¹

A grave was marked in such a way that would enable an association such as the regional benevolent societies mentioned above to return his remains to his ancestral home. It is therefore not unusual to find in rural Australian cemeteries either broken grave markers with Chinese inscriptions or no marker at all. In the latter case this may be because the bones have already been retrieved.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Williams, M *Chinese Settlement in NSW A Thematic History* p43

¹⁷⁹ Ibid p17

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Ibid p18



*Chinese grave markers - Baradine Cemetery
(Photographs courtesy of David Raynor)*



Chinese Grave Markers – Baradine Cemetery

A number of authors have also noted attempts to bring Indian workers into the area. Attempts were made from the 1840s to supplement a shortage of convict and free labour with workers brought in from India. By all accounts this experiment failed. Chinese workers were found to be more adaptable.¹⁸² Andrew Brown continued to engage Chinese shepherds and hutkeepers during the labour shortages of the 1850s gold rushes.¹⁸³ Rolls records how Charles Taylor of Dinby used Chinese labourers in the 1880s to build a dam on Dinby Creek, 'using picks, shovels and wheelbarrows'.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Cain, M *Coonabarabran in the 'Sixties'* p370

¹⁸³ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p155

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid* p195

The next wave of immigration coming through rural NSW it way into rural Australia was Greek. Greek immigrants created another long held tradition in regional commerce. In 1916 there were reputed to be 625 Greek shops in Australia.¹⁸⁵ Greek cafes and fish shops are a legendary phenomenon throughout regional New South Wales.

The former Boronia and Sunshine Cafes in Coonabarabran are remembered locally as two remnants of this phenomenon. In Dunedoo the White Rose Cafe in Bolaro St was established by Con Butsikalas and run for many years by Nick Feros. It is believed he also established his brother, Peter, in a café in Coolah although no further information has come to light so far regarding this particular business.¹⁸⁶

The mid 19th century saw an exodus of people from German states affected by the revolutions making their way through Europe during the 1840s and 1850s. A number of these immigrants came to Australia, many seeking out opportunities to establish vineyards and small farms. Jacob and Anna Veronica Halter established their property *Winegarden* at Gundi in the Timor Valley in 1873. Their grape growing efforts were apparently futile, yielding only sour wine.¹⁸⁷ Wilhelm Opferkuch, stonemason, and his wife Christina selected land in the Binnaway district in the early 1870s. Opferkuch had come to the district to cut stone for David Innes Watt's homestead at *Ulinda* and worked on the construction of the Coonabarabran Court House.¹⁸⁸

Swiss born builder Albert Zimmerli arrived in the Binnaway district in the early 1920s, having lived in Australia since 1884. It is believed that before moving to Binnaway he was involved in the construction of retail buildings in Bolaro St in Dunedoo and also the former picture theatre there.¹⁸⁹ After arriving in Binnaway he was responsible for the construction of many buildings in the town and organised relief work for unemployed men during the Great Depression.¹⁹⁰

The Anglo-Celtic population of the area grew after certainty was applied to land titles from the late 1830s and station owners began to move into the district with their families. As development and trade increased people moved from other parts of New South Wales. Moves towards closer settlement ensured that this

¹⁸⁵ Turnbull, C & Valiotis, C *Beyond the Rolling Wave: A thematic history of Greek settlement in New South Wales*. p19

¹⁸⁶ Pers. Comm John Horne Feb 2018

¹⁸⁷ Carmichael, D *Timor Valley* pp34-35

¹⁸⁸ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p14

¹⁸⁹ Pers.Comm John Horne Feb2018

¹⁹⁰ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p68

inward movement of population continued well into the 1950s. Free selection and later soldier settlement saw people moving into the area from other farming areas that were undergoing rural restructuring.

The period after World War II saw new patterns of migration. Newly settled migrants from Europe moved into many regional areas and made their mark. Former Forest Foreman Buster Davies recalled European migrants who worked in the Pilliga forests after the war:

Many of these migrants were told, when they arrived in Sydney, that there was work in the forests out west. So they immediately caught a train and arrived in the Pilliga to begin work as soon as possible. They were good workers, but found the heat difficult to bear. People were tolerant and accepting of these migrants, especially the Poles, and Yugoslavs. Buster, however, found the Ukrainians were hard to get along with.¹⁹¹

Peter and Tryn Zordrager are notable among post-war migrants who made an impact on the region. They emigrated from the Netherlands in 1950, moving to Ulamambri and later Coonabarabran. After purchasing 40 acres of the W. E. Conn estate in the Timor Valley in 1970 the Zordragers established the Miniland tourism complex. Opened in 1972 this attraction received a number of national tourism awards ‘in recognition of outstanding achievement in the development and promotion of tourism in NSW’.¹⁹²

The post-war era also saw dramatic population movements within New South Wales. New infrastructure projects encouraged the movement of workers and established employers such as the railway complex at Binnaway ensured that trainees and other workers seeking career progression moved into the area. The demise of steam locomotion on the New South Wales railways and the gradual decline of rail services have been accompanied by reduced economic activity in the rail centre of Binnaway. Similarly ongoing downturns in the levels of labour required in the agricultural, pastoral and forestry industries have led to slow but inevitable reductions in the population of many outlying areas.

¹⁹¹ Curby, P & Humphreys, A *Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Study*

¹⁹² Carmichael, D *Timor Valley* pp64-67

3. Developing local Economies

3.1 Agriculture

Much debate has occurred in recent years regarding the nature of Aboriginal agriculture. Indeed until recently it was thought that Aboriginal people did not practice any kind of agriculture and were solely Hunters and Gatherers. Works undertaken in recent years by Bruce Pascoe suggests that this was far from the case. He lists many examples of clear evidence of agriculture and irrigation undertaken by Aboriginal people all over Australia. Some of which comes from nearby locations.

Near Walgett it would appear that baking developed alongside seed harvest and that people from this region were baking bread over 30 000 years ago, around 17 000 BC, making them the earliest bakers on the planet by 15 000 years.¹⁹³ Kate Lagloh Parker wrote about the Ualarai people when she was living around Walgett in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. She describes harvests of barley grass as late as 1905: 'The barley grass was cut and thrown into a brush-fenced compound, and then set alight and stoked continuously so grain fell from the stems into a collection pit prior to threshing.'¹⁹⁴

Information regarding Aboriginal agriculture does not come solely from the description of the white settlers. Science tells us that when plants become "domesticated" they change in form and structure to such an extent that they can become like new species.¹⁹⁵ As humans grow plants the plants being to change and become increasingly depended on humans for their reproduction. They start to ripen simultaneously enabling larger quantities to be harvested at the same time and tough rachis forms around the seed to inhibit germination, unless artificially germinated.¹⁹⁶ These changes occur after 20-30 years of cropping activities. Rupert Gerritsen concludes the following: 'Australian grains became dependent on the interventions of Aboriginal peoples and the wide grasslands, monocultures of grain, were the result of this deliberate manipulation.'¹⁹⁷

At Ukerbarley there are large ovens designed to feed large groups of people (refer to *Section 2.1 Traditional Aboriginal Culture*) that would have required large quantities of grain in order to make bread. There are detailed accounts in

¹⁹³ Pascoe, B *Dark Emu* p30

¹⁹⁴ Ibid p36

¹⁹⁵ Ibid p39

¹⁹⁶ Ibid

¹⁹⁷ Ibid

nearby areas that illustrate the existence of large scale Aboriginal agriculture. It is likely that, in time, similar stories may come to light in this region also.

Aboriginal people throughout the shire also worked on many properties and some, including Lands Commissioner Hunter, who believed that there were very few properties where Aboriginal people were not 'employed'. It is important to note that the terms 'employment' is used loosely here. It is most likely that Aboriginal people were not paid but instead were given rations and a place to camp in lieu of wages putting them in a position more as servants than employees. They were clearly adept at agriculture work and with working with stock.

The region, in its formative stages, was predominantly used for stock, initially cattle and horses, and for travelling stock through the state north and south. Agriculture was slower to take off and the role that water and the way that it moves across the landscape played a significant contributing factor in this story.

James Weston is said to be the first person to introduce commercial agriculture in the area. He took over the Coolabarbyan run in 1843 and, amongst other things, started cultivating wheat, around 20 acres, on the southern banks of the Castlereagh River in the area presently known as Neilson Park.¹⁹⁸ One of the other areas to grow wheat in the formative stages, it is said was at Bolaro Creek: 'It was cut with reaping hooks and threshed by hand. For many years it was taken to Maitland for sale.'¹⁹⁹

Prior to the uptake of commercial wheat growing in the area it is understood that it was quite common for families to grow a small amount of wheat on their properties for their own use.²⁰⁰ It too was cut with a reaping hook, threshed and taken to a flour mill although it is not known where, it is thought, perhaps Gulgong or Mudgee would have been accessible. This would have provided the family with enough flour for the year.

Wheat growing was slow generally in NSW until the railways reached the western slopes and closer settlement became a reality.²⁰¹ The cost of wheat production was extremely high due to transport costs. Indeed a select committee was told in 1854 that it cost more to transport goods from Bathurst to Sydney

¹⁹⁸ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p21

¹⁹⁹ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p71

²⁰⁰ Pers. Comm John Horne Feb 2018

²⁰¹ Henzell, T *Australian Agriculture: It's History and Challenges* CSIRO p22

that in did to ship them to London.²⁰² However, by the end of the nineteenth century the railway was able to transport goods for less than one fifth of the cost of horse teams.²⁰³ Wheat growing collapsed in coastal regions of NSW between 1860 -1880 and it never returned to those areas. An outbreak of stem rust is believed to have been the final straw for coastal farmers at that time.²⁰⁴

Once wheat growing was established it was often the case that this was the driver to the development of more sophisticated transport networks and secondary industries such as flour mills and silos. Indeed, the issue of transport, of getting the product to the market, no doubt influenced the nature of the development of this industry in any area. The late arrival of the railway into the region influenced the profitability of agriculture like wheat and for many areas in the shire the development of this kind of agriculture improved significantly after the arrival of the railroad.

As the wheat growing area expanded into drier, more marginal areas the amount of gluten increased, improving the quality of the grain.²⁰⁵ The change in method of refining too had an impact on the quality. In the 1870s steel roller mill technology replaced the old stone grinding technology and there was a significant difference between the two. Essentially the difference between the two is that steel roller mills enabled both the bran and pollard to be removed from the wheat grain. This made a much more cost effective product as the pollard, containing both the protein and the oils, could be sold as stock feed, leaving the white flour to be sold for people. The removal of the oil in particular meant that the flour lasted much longer as it is the wheat germ oil that turns rancid first.²⁰⁶ What was left, after the removal of both pollard and bran, was a much whiter, higher gluten flour which appealed to the market more. The introduction of a flour mill into a town significantly reduced costs for farmers thereby increasing their profits significantly. A mill lead to substantial increases in the amount of land dedicated to wheat growing. (*For further information refer to Section 3.9 Industry.*)

One of the other significant changes in the production of wheat was the creation of the Grain elevators Board in 1918 which was dedicated to constructing silos for the safe storage of grains, often near railway stations. Up until this point wheat was often stored in bags near railways stations subject to infestations and

²⁰² Ibid

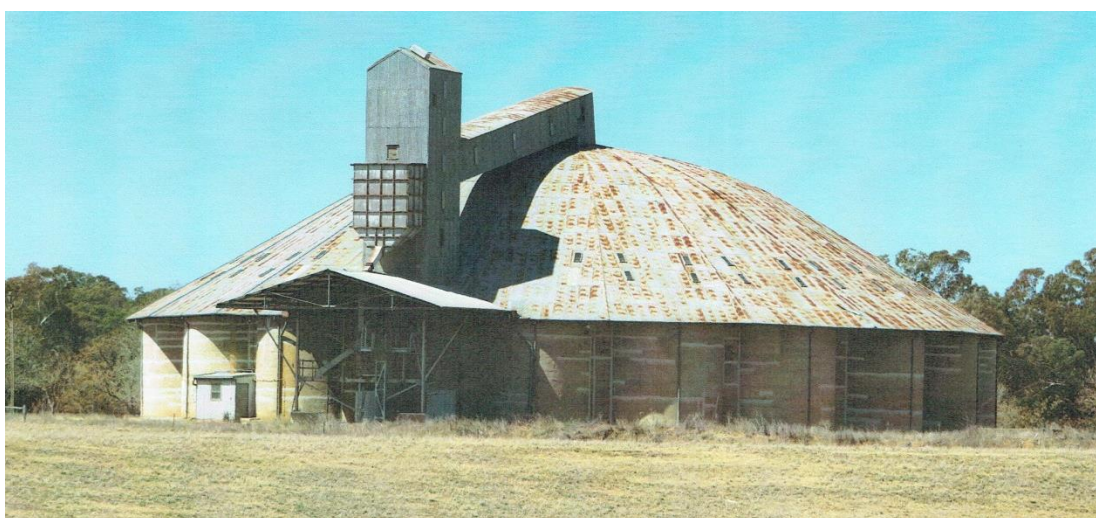
²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ Ibid

²⁰⁵ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* p21

²⁰⁶ Starss, C *Gold Drop The Centennial History of the Young Roller Flour Mill 1888 – 1988* p30

weather. Grain elevators were constructed along the railway lines of New South Wales from 1928.²⁰⁷ These structures facilitated the storage and transport of bulk quantities of cereals, gradually replacing the tedious and labour intensive processes of bagging wheat and other crops for transport. Despite this some farmers continued to bag wheat well into the 1960s.²⁰⁸ Concrete silos remain at Merrygoen, Mendooran, Binnaway, Dunedoo and Baradine.



Concrete Silo – Baradine

(Photograph courtesy of the Warrumbungles Community Heritage Study Working Group)

All farming was affected by the development of many technologies pertaining to farming particularly towards the latter decades at the end of the nineteenth century with the introduction of chemical fertilisers, mechanised farming equipment and the railway. Prior to the advent of tractors and trucks bullocks and horses did the bulk of the heavy moving of produce around the farms. Bullocks were replaced in many areas around the 1850s with larger working horses which also provided a secondary industry in the form of studs who provided farms with these important tool. This was an important industry in many farming districts as was horse racing which no doubt influenced the market for horses also.

Ray Christison has written about farming in the north western districts and the apparent slow uptake of agricultural practice. The distance from commercial markets, difficulties with transport and the unavailability of suitable strains of wheat possibly worked as a disincentive to large-scale cultivation. Into the early 20th century farmers persisted with the ancient and difficult Scottish plough

²⁰⁷ Ryan, K 1990. Storing the Golden Grain.

²⁰⁸ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p220

designs, crops were generally sown and harvested by hand, and wheat winnowed and threshed by teams of labourers.²⁰⁹

New technology was gradually introduced from other areas. American built McCormick horse-drawn harvesters were available in the late 19th century. A contractor at Binnaway had two of these and travelled the northwest working crops at harvest time. New, rust resistant varieties of wheat such as Federation were introduced at the beginning of the 20th century. These made farming more viable in the inland areas. Around 1908 the Australian built H. V. McKay & Co harvester was first demonstrated in Coonabarabran.²¹⁰

Market gardens were an important source of food to towns in the Central West in the latter decades of the nineteenth and even into the twentieth centuries. They were often located on the banks of rivers and creeks or near regular supplies of water. Ray Christison wrote about two Scotsmen who grew vegetables near the Aloes in the Pilliga Forest and vegetables were also grown commercially at Bugaldie. Market gardens were also established for a brief period at Merebene. Chinese market gardens were established in most towns in the Warrumbungles region and on private properties (*Refer to Section: 2.3 Ethnic Influences*). The operators of these gardens drew water from the Castlereagh River by means of: ... *a horse driven device of their own making... A wide endless belt of greased canvas with wooden slats nailed on at intervals ran under the water and up through a wooden channel.*²¹¹

Conditions in a number of the river and creek valleys of the district proved to be quite suitable for vegetable growing and many selectors grew vegetables to supplement their incomes from other farming activities. Ted Morrissey recalled his father, Robert Morrissey's decision to commence vegetable growing:

*The moment of truth came for Dad in early 1923 when he was in the Australian Bank of Commerce to deposit two weeks' rabbiting cheque for £10 when Bill Young, the Chinese market gardener came in to bank his takings for the week. He and Dad were friends. He told Dad he had £25 in cash to bank. Dad decided on the spot to try growing vegetables on the land his sister, Kathleen, had left to him.*²¹²

²⁰⁹ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* pp211-213

²¹⁰ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres*. pp.213-215

²¹¹ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres*.p298

²¹² Ibid

Robert Morrissey obtained seed from the Herbert J. Rumsey seed company²¹³ and by 1939 he signed a seed-growing contract with the company.²¹⁴ During World War II the company formed a 'vegetable seed committee' with other seed merchants in Sydney to help overcome a vegetable seed shortage. Ted Morrissey recalled that in 1942 'the army came up and button-holed dad and told him to increase seed production. The army offered land army women to supplement his labour force. Instead he accepted an offer of Italian Prisoners of War 'because of the lifting of a bushel and a half cases onto trucks.'²¹⁵

As in many other areas of Australia viticulture was first practiced in the Coonabarabran district by German immigrants. Frederick Liebenritt and his wife owned a vineyard on the Timor Road in the 1870s.²¹⁶

There were other agricultural endeavours in the area. We know there were attempts at orchards and apiaries have been in the area since before the turn of the twentieth century. In Coonabarabran in the late 1890s we know that 2 tons of tobacco leaf were grown at Mr Tailby's farm by Chinese gardeners and it was said to be 'a very fine sample'.²¹⁷

3.2 Commerce

The earliest commercial undertakings in the region would have been inns and hostelries. These were established at suitable points close to river crossings or on specific transport routes. On popular transport routes these inns were often combined with general stores, blacksmiths and post offices. In the days of horse transport facilities for blacksmiths, farriers and the repair of livery were as important as inns and general stores. As towns grew many commercial opportunities opened to those with an eye for business.

Retailing in central commercial districts of towns, a phenomenon of the industrial revolution, has undergone major changes since the beginning of the nineteenth century.²¹⁸ In New South Wales regional towns the earliest retailers appear to have been 'general providers', stores selling almost all the necessities of a growing community, operated by local owners.²¹⁹ The shopping and commercial precincts of regional centres have served as gathering and meeting

²¹³ Ibid

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ Morrissey, Memories of Coonabarabran

²¹⁶ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning* p101

²¹⁷ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate* 24 August 1896 p4

²¹⁸ Webber, K and Hoskins, I *What's in Store* pp10-11

²¹⁹ Ibid p118

places as people have come to town to stock up on supplies and to transact business.

Over time the general provider became less common as retailers began to specialise or to establish department stores. Regional retailers have faced ongoing change in the marketplace and the nature of delivery of retail services. From the 1870s Sydney based stores such as Anthony Horderns mailed illustrated catalogues to customers across New South Wales 'to instruct people dwelling in the country in the theory and practice of shopping by post.'²²⁰ Catalogue shopping remained a significant means of retailing well into the twentieth century for people living in rural areas. The Dunedoo Historical Museum has a Farmer's Hat Box, a remnant from this period of mail order shopping that was so important in rural and regional Australia.

Chain stores such as Woolworths, established in Sydney in 1924, provided the next challenge to local retailers.²²¹ Many country-based businesses sought to emulate the model of the chain store by opening branches across a region. The latest challenge to retailers in regional centres comes from the development of shopping malls in regional centres. As the number of independent retailers declines, and as the populations of regional areas become more mobile larger towns are exerting more influence to the detriment of the retailers of smaller towns.

One of the cornerstones of a successful business in this era was the ability to diversify enabling a business to focus on different activities depending on the conditions. An example of this in this region is the McWhirter family business:

The McWhirter family of Binnaway are one example of the diversity of engagement of many local businesses. The family had been in the district since at least 1876 when John McWhirter was recommended as postmaster for the village. John McWhirter is recognised as 'the first businessman in Binnaway, conducting a store, Post Office and butcher's shop, as well as the' Binnaway Inn, which had been purchased from Charles Naseby. In 1902 a sale of the estate of John McWhirter was held. This included hundreds of acres of land under various titles, 'the Exchange Hotel, ... 3 private residences, Post Office, Telephone Office, store, blacksmith shop etc.'. John's widow Harriet had managed the Exchange Hotel since John's

²²⁰ Webber and Hoskins Ibid

²²¹ Webber, K & Hoskins, I *What's in Store* p10

death in 1891.²²² Their son John carried out the business of the Post and Telephone Offices and later took over the Exchange Hotel.²²³

Les McWhirter conducted a carrying business in the district from the late nineteenth century moving wheat, chaff and other products including diatomaceous earth from Bugaldie.²²⁴ He moved to Binnaway in 1925, starting a car-hire service, later commencing a carrying business and agency for International Harvester. By 1935 he was operating a fleet of trucks.²²⁵

Gilbert McWhirter built the Five Ways Café in Binnaway in the 1920s. 'The café was a popular meeting place. Besides the usual café lines, it was the newsagency and sold a variety of goods.'²²⁶ Bert also owned the Empire Pictures in Binnaway.²²⁷ Gilbert Victor McWhirter (son of Gilbert and Matilda McWhirter) commenced business as a motor dealer and general engineer in 1929. 'At one time he was the longest-serving dealer for BMC in New South Wales and was the oldest agency holder for Manufacturers Mutual Insurance.'²²⁸ This business expanded into Coonabarabran and the McWhirter name is still associated with various businesses within the district.

The cycles of boom and recession in regional areas can often be read in the architecture of their business districts. The commercial cores of Baradine and Binnaway contain many buildings that date from the 1920s and 1930s, periods in which these towns were undergoing major growth. These include Baradine's former CBC banking chambers and former Embassy theatre. Coonabarabran's central business district contains many commercial buildings that were constructed from the 1940s to the 1960s. Coolah too experienced short term boom during the early 1920s owing to the development of the Soldier Settlement Schemes near there.

For details regarding specific commercial enterprises in the townships please refer to *Section 4.3 Towns, Suburbs and Villages*.

²²² Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p18

²²³ Ibid

²²⁴ Ibid p19

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ Ibid

²²⁷ Ibidp20

²²⁸ Ibid

3.3 Communication

The development of communication related services in the Warrumbungles region reflects the broader development in communications technology throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prior to the development of this technology the only form of communication for the settlers throughout the Central West was a postal service. In many places the development of a postal service was the first official agency to be made available in a settlement.²²⁹ It is thought that the earliest post offices in the Central West were established in the 1830s but in the Warrumbungle Shire they did not arrive until the late 1840s early 1850s as people moved into the area.²³⁰

3.3.1 Postal Services

3.3.1.2 Baradine

The post office opened in Baradine in 1867 although no information has yet come to light as to its location. It is possible that it operated out of a hotel in the town at that time.

In 1876 the *Evening News* published the following: 'The telegraph office opened here today to the great satisfaction of the residents.'²³¹ This is the only reference to this event in the press and it does suggest the opening of a purpose built post office. It is said to have been constructed from '...sawn slabs through which the wind and rain would enter and the office measured just 10ft x 12 ft, with a smaller additional space allocated for the telephone exchange.'²³²

Two fires in the business district of Baradine during the early 1930s threatened the post office but both times it was saved. The first fire was in 1931 in what are described as 'suspicious circumstances'.²³³ The second was in 1934 and the fire was attended by 200 volunteers who were successful in preventing the fire spreading too far but nonetheless cost four thousand pounds in damages.²³⁴ The current post office opened in 1961.

3.3.1.3 Coonabarabran

The first post office was in the Weston Hotel and was officially opened in 1849.²³⁵

²²⁹ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* p22

²³⁰ Ibid

²³¹ *Evening News* 17.08.1876 p2

²³² Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* p45

²³³ *Newcastle Herald* 6 .05.1934 p4

²³⁴ *National Advocate* 7.11.1934 p3

²³⁵ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By Coonabarabran DPS Local and Family History Group*

In 1861 the post office was run by David Cockburn out of his house at the river crossing.²³⁶ The present post office was built in 1879 and it has been used continuously since.²³⁷



*Coonabarabran Post Office -1910
(Trove)*

3.3.1.4 Mendooran

The first Post Office in Mendooran was established in 1851.²³⁸ There are no further details as to where this first post office was located but these facilities were most likely operating out of an established hotel.

The next reference to the post office in Mendooran comes from ‘extracts from information supplied by the NSW Historical Section of Australia Post’. This tells us that another post office was established on 1 January 1856.²³⁹ There are no references to where this post office was located either but again the presumption can be made that it operated out of an already existing business.

It would appear that, by 1881, both the post and the telegraph office were operating out of the Royal Hotel. As of December 1 of that year the two offices were amalgamated²⁴⁰ and presumably continued to operate out of the Royal Hotel until a building was constructed for the specific purpose of housing the postal and telegraph offices. The building of the new post office occurred around

²³⁶ Ibid p61

²³⁷ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By Coonabarabran DPS Local and Family History Group* p27

²³⁸ *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 2 April 1851 p3

²³⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p186

²⁴⁰ Ibid p188

5 September 1900 and it was occupied 3 days later.²⁴¹ It remains in the town centre today.



Mendooran Post Office
(Trove)

In July 1907 a condenser-type telephone was installed between Mendooran and Gulgong Post Office and the telegram instruments were removed from Mendooran.²⁴² Telegrams were then sent and received by means of the telephone it is also noted that at this time a private telephone line connected Mendooran and Triamble.²⁴³

3.3.1.5 Binnaway

The first post office in Binnaway was ‘to be established’ as of April 1876 as listed in the Government Gazette in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.²⁴⁴ The location of this first post office is not known but the existence of a photograph dated 1875 entitled ‘new location for the post office in Binnaway’ suggests that a purpose built post office existed in Binnaway from around this time.

Whilst we don’t have details as to the nature of the original post office that was constructed we know it was in existence in 1920 and was a simple timber structure owned by Mr Charles Ah Nim and was comprised of two good rooms and four residential rooms located in Binnaway Street.²⁴⁵ There is a photograph of an old post office dating from 1933 taken by Australia Post suggesting that it was still in existence at this time (Refer to *Section 4.3.3 Binnaway* for this

²⁴¹ Ibid p189

²⁴² Ibid p188

²⁴³ Ibid

²⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 14.04.1876 p5

²⁴⁵ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p76

picture).²⁴⁶ It is likely that the post office that is pictured in 1933 is the same one that was constructed around 1876. In 1938 the Binnaway post office was converted to an official post office and a new post office was constructed somewhere between 1939-1945 and has since been converted to a private residence.²⁴⁷ It is pictured below.



*Binnaway Post Office – built 1939-1945
(National Archives)*

3.3.1.6 Coolah

From 1835 – 1848 Coolah settlers relied on the postal facilities at Cassilis.²⁴⁸ On Jan 1 1849 a Post Office was opened at The Squatters Home Hotel and James McCubbin, the owner of the hotel, was Postmaster. The opening of the PO at the hotel coincided with the appointment of Patrick Ward as the conveyancer of Post Office mails for Cassilis and Coolah.²⁴⁹ The service remained in the hotel for some time until it operated out of the schoolhouse in 1868.²⁵⁰

Whilst details remain elusive it would appear that a post office continued to run out of rented accommodations until around 1914 when a tender was accepted for the establishment of a post office in Coolah.²⁵¹ This building still operates in the commercial district of Coolah as a private business.

²⁴⁶ Ibid p76

²⁴⁷ Ibid p92

²⁴⁸ Ibid p23

²⁴⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald* 03/01/1849 p2

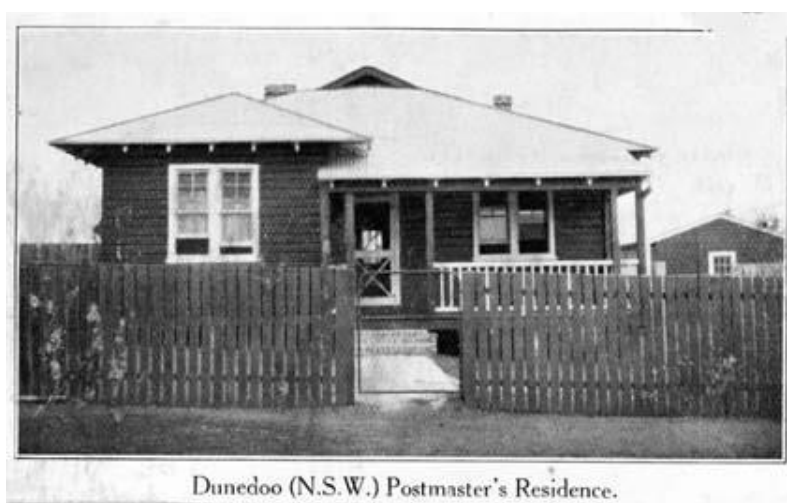
²⁵⁰ Ibid

²⁵¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* p3

3.3.1.7 Dunedoo

The Dunedoo Post Office began as a non-official receiving office on 1 November 1876.²⁵² The Johnstone Family arrived in Dunedoo in 1874 and leased part of the Bolaro Run, the original run in the area.²⁵³ They built a cottage on this site, near where the current silos sit adjacent to the railway station.²⁵⁴ Mrs Johnston operated the early post office out of this cottage, which is thought to also have operated as a retail business.²⁵⁵ The postal office then changed it from a receiving office to a non-official post office in 1901 and the name was changed from Bolaro to Dunedoo in 1909 just after having moved to allow for the railway.²⁵⁶

It became a telegraph exchange from 19 August 1910 and was initially used principally for sending and receiving telegrams.²⁵⁷ It became an official post office from November 1912.²⁵⁸ Whilst the early post office was not constructed until 1912 a photograph exists from 1901. The Photograph is of the postmasters residence which still stands behind the 1925 post office in Tallawang Street. Most likely it was built at the same time as the 1925 building. The photo caption says date range 1901-1983.



Dunedoo Postmaster's Residence 1901 (Trove)

²⁵² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p232

²⁵³ *Freeman's Journal* from article detailing Mrs Johnston's passing 29/01/1914 p13

²⁵⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*

²⁵⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p232

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*

In 1912 a specifically designed post office was constructed in Dunedoo and it was described in the newspapers: ‘The new building, which is centrally situated, is a rather imposing one compared with the general run of small country post offices.’²⁵⁹ The exact location of this early post office is not yet known.

Within a year a number of calls for a new post office began.²⁶⁰ By 1924 the following appeared in the newspapers:

*The agitation for a new post office and residence at Dunedoo has continued intermittently and apparently hopeless for several years. However the matter has assumed a new phase by the calling of tenders for the erection of post office, residence and outbuildings.*²⁶¹

It would appear that a new post office and postmasters residence was approved and a tender was accepted and it was constructed by the end of that year.



Dunedoo Post Office 1930 (Trove)

3.3.1.8 Cobbora

A petition was signed by the local residents of the Cobbora area in 1859 with the purpose of lobbying for a post office for the town.²⁶² A new Post Office was announced in the press for Cobbora as of September 30, 1859.²⁶³ It has been established that there was an official post office for Cobbora from sometime prior to 1875. Before this time we know that it operated out of hotels, such as the Martin’s Inn mentioned above.

²⁵⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 5/02/1912 p2

²⁶⁰ *Ibid* 23/10/1913 p4

²⁶¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 12/06/1924 p23

²⁶² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p232

²⁶³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 4 October 1959 p14

In 1908 there is a call ‘for suitable premises or a “semi-official” post office and telegraph office at Cobbora.’²⁶⁴ We do not know the outcome of this. We know that in 1920 there was a big flood in Cobbora and as a result of this ‘the contents of the Cobbora Post Office, 9 miles from Dunedoo, are being moved to higher ground, owing to flood water invading the building.’²⁶⁵ This suggests that the post office at this stage was an independent single purpose building and it was still operating in that year. A search of various records and resources has not uncovered the opening date or any details of the post office in Cobbora. It was officially closed on 1 August 1985.²⁶⁶

3.3.2 Newspapers

Newspapers played a vital role in the development of towns throughout Australia throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The press is a central cornerstone of a liberal democracy and the creation of newspapers was tied as much to enabling people to access news of the world as it was to advertising local businesses and services. Newspapers, and later the telegraph and telephone systems, were the first steps towards globalisation and connected the colonies to the rest of the world.

As with many newspapers in this area few copies of the original newspapers have survived into the modern age. There are a number of reasons for this. Fire is a significant contributing factor to the survival of collections in newspaper offices and originally the use of hot lead in the production process would have presented a considerable fire risk factor into mix. Newspapers were often on the margins of commercial operation and so often did not have had money to spend on substantial buildings, this too would not have helped in the long terms survival of newspapers.

Richard Henry Evans started publishing Coonabarabran’s first newspaper, the *Bligh Watchman* in 1877. The newspaper was later sold to Kenneth Murchison, local auctioneer and commission agent.²⁶⁷ In 1910 Maurice Hennessy retired from teaching and established a second newspaper, the *Clarion*. He used the nom de plume of ‘Old Ned’ In 1927 the *Bligh Watchman* and *Clarion* were amalgamated to form the *Coonabarabran Times*.²⁶⁸ The newspaper maintains premises in Dalgarno Street.

²⁶⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 13 August 1908 p14

²⁶⁵ *Evening News* 2 July 1920 p5

²⁶⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p232

²⁶⁷ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning* p107

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*

The first newspaper in the Coolah district was the *Coolah Advocate*, Peter Giles Hart published and printed over 500 issues from 1907-1918.²⁶⁹ Of this collection of papers only 2 are known to have survived. The paper then went on to operate from 1920-1933 when it was amalgamated with the *Mudgee Guardian and District Representative*. It is as yet unconfirmed but it is thought that around the year 1938 Donald Hargan published the *Coolah Advocate* in the old butter premises at the corner of Binnia and Butheroo Streets.²⁷⁰

Dunedoo had its own newspaper, the *Dunedoo Chronicle* for some years. Research so far suggests that the *Dunedoo Chronicle* existed as part of the *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* for a minimum period of between 1914 -1940. Two copies of this paper, from 1917 and 1924, are kept at the Dunedoo Historical museum.

3.4 Environment - Cultural landscapes

A cultural landscape is a landscape that has been modified by human beings. They demonstrate the ability of human beings to change the environment in order to suit their needs. Cultural landscapes include modifications made for industry and mining, farming, public parks and memorials, streetscapes, private and public gardens and modifications made to waterways. Town and streetscapes are also cultural landscapes and water management also impacts on the landscape with the erection of dams and weirs.

Aboriginal people impacted on the landscape through the practice of fire management by managing the bush through very controlled slow burning. There is considerable debate as to the reasons for the burning. Some archaeologists argue that it was solely for the purpose of hunting, although this view is less popular now than it was in the past. Others believe that the introduction of the practice around the time that the megafauna died out suggests that Aboriginal people noticed that the shrubs that the megafauna had survived on were no longer being controlled. They believe that the practice was introduced as much for safety as for hunting. Aboriginal cultural landscapes also included examples like the elaborate fish traps at Brewarrina, some of which remained for many hundreds of years after they were originally built.

²⁶⁹ Cameron, R Around the Black Stump p165

²⁷⁰ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning* p107

The environment of the area is described in *Section 1.1 Environment – naturally evolved*. The volcanic outcroppings of the Warrumbungle Mountains are one of the principal features impacting on the development of the cultural landscape of the former Coonabarabran Shire. This range and its extending ridges are the source of the Castlereagh River and many creeks whose presence have influenced the pattern of Aboriginal interactions with the land and European settlement. River and creek geography has influenced the placement and growth of the area's principal towns and has also had a major impact on the density of settlement. The Warrumbungle ranges continue to impact on the economy of the region through the presence of the Warrumbungle National Park and the Siding Spring Observatory.

Former volcanic activity has created unique places that have influenced the pattern of development of the region. Chalk mountain at Bugadlie is one of many unique natural features in the regional landscape. A large deposit of diatomaceous earth, or chalk, present near the top of the mountain was mined from the 1920s by Davis Gelatine. This deposit contains many fossilised fish and other marine creatures:

The site is the type locality for the fossil MACCULLOCHELLA MACQUARIENSIS (the Murray cod) which is known from only one other site in New South Wales (and there less abundantly). Sediments associated with the diatomite exhibit large scale sheared recumbent folds, believed to result from loading by subsequent lava flows.²⁷¹

The unique nature of this place has led to its listing on the Register of the National Estate.

The Pilliga forest is also a most prominent and influential feature of the cultural landscape of the Warrumbungles region. It is a landscape which represents the impact of various methods of human land management over thousands of years. *Section 3.8 Forestry* deals with the changes that have occurred in this forest since the coming of Europeans in the 1820s.

Within the forest are cultural landscape features that have had their own impacts on life and behaviour in the region. These include the Salt Caves near Baradine which were described by Rolls as follows:

²⁷¹ Register of the National Estate Listing Place ID 451

One could walk thirty metres into the old caves. The salt hung in columns like stalactites from the roof. Wild horses, wild cattle, and kangaroos went there to lick it. Women from the Rocky Creek sawmill pulled off columns and took them away in bags for curing meat. Picnic parties began driving in by car in 1926. There was no road. They picked their way through the open forest. The caves collapsed during the 1930s and left no sign of salt.²⁷²

In other parts of the shire forestry, land clearing, pastoralism and agriculture have created landscapes of open pasture broken by ribbons of remnant bushland along waterways, roads and the ridges and rocky places.

The impact on the landscape upon the arrival of white settlers was significant. The first activity engaged in was the clearing of the bush so as to plant crops and encourage the growth of grass to feed stock. Ringbarking and sucker bashing, to ensure that new growth did not occur, was undertaken on a significant scale. This not only created a cultural landscape but it limited biodiversity and thereby impacted on the entire ecosystem.²⁷³ It also made a significant impact on the way that water moved across the landscape impacting on both regular water supply in certain places but also transport networks as floods affected roads.

3.5 Events

There are a number of different memorials in the Warrumbungle Shire that remember events considered important to the people of the area. Currently there are few memorials to the Aboriginal people of the area. There is King Togee's grave which has been memorialised since his death but more recently was restored in 2004. In 2017, a book was published entitled *Footprints in the Sands of Time* by Joy Pickette. It details the stories of Aboriginal soldiers who had a connection to Coonabarabran and who enlisted in the WWI World War. The book contains many photos and an index of soldiers included. It is estimated that around 70 Aboriginal men fought in the war from the area.

The impact that the WWI had on the Australian people was significant, arguably in some ways its impact was greater on Australia than the Second World War. Over 60 000 Australian men died and 156 000 were wounded or taken prisoner in the WWI ²⁷⁴ and considerably less died during the WWII with only 27 073 soldiers dying and 23 477 wounded. Part of the significance of these numbers lies not only in the actual number, which is considerable, but it must also be

²⁷² Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p315

²⁷³ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p28

²⁷⁴ From the Australian War Memorial website: www.awm.gov.au

remembered that the population had increased from approximately 5 million to 7.5 million.²⁷⁵ Australia had lost a generation of young men and the impact that this had on rural Australia was extensive. This loss was felt immediately and from before the time the war had ended people all over Australia were looking for ways to memorialise their loss.

Government regulations limited fundraising for the construction of memorials until after the end of hostilities in 1918. During and after the war there was much debate about the role of memorials. Public opinion was divided between the desirability of pure monument and the creation of memorials that served a civic purpose.²⁷⁶ The utilitarian point of view seems to have prevailed in the Warrumbungles district, as it did in many, with the erection of a memorial hall in Baradine in 1925 and a clock tower in Coonabarabran in 1926. The Baradine Memorial Hall was dedicated as the 'Baradine and district Soldiers Memorial' and the Coonabarabran memorial to 'Perpetuate the memory of the men of the Coonabarabran District who served the Empire in the Great War'.

The cessation of World War II saw the establishment of government incentives that encouraged fundraising for utilitarian memorials. The post World War II period saw the extension of the Baradine Memorial Hall in 1953, 'In memory of the men and women of this town and district who served in the Second World War', and construction of swimming pool at Coonabarabran in the same year. The Coonabarabran swimming pool is dedicated to 'those who served in war'. A memorial swimming pool was also constructed at Baradine 'in memory of the men and women of Baradine district who paid the supreme sacrifice'.

Honour rolls remembering those who served in both wars hang on the walls of community halls throughout the district. Other expressions of memory and gratitude exist in the form of memorial plantings, including the Kurrajong tree and flagpole planted by the children of the Rocky Glen School as a memorial to former student Peter John Keay who was killed in action in 1943 while serving with the RAAF.

After World War II memorials throughout the country more readily acknowledged the service of women than had been the case after World War I. The memorials of the Warrumbungles district reflect this trend. More inclusive expressions of recognition of service are also present. The World War II honour roll from the former Long Ridge School, now located in the Purlewaugh

²⁷⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics website

²⁷⁶ From the National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au

Mechanics Institute Hall, includes the name of one local who served in the munitions industry.

The Leadville Memorial Hall was constructed in 1935 and was opened on 29 March of that year after 3 years of agitation by the local community, many of whom were soldier settlers.²⁷⁷ It operated for some time as a public hall until it fell into disrepair between the post World War II period and the 1980s. In 1987 the hall was renovated and new facilities included two new stoves and a refrigerator.²⁷⁸

The Dunedoo War Memorial Committee was formed during the WWI and undertook work focused on the welfare of returned soldiers and dependents of loved ones who did not return.²⁷⁹ By the early 1920s it had focused its energy on the development and construction of a war memorial hospital and this continued for 31 years in total. The Dunedoo War Memorial Hospital was eventually opened in 1945 with Dr Crossing as the first medical officer.²⁸⁰ A multi-purpose health centre opened in 2007. The hospital was demolished in 2016.

The swimming pool and a memorial hall in Dunedoo were also embarked upon by the community in memoriam to those that were lost in the war. The call for a community swimming pool was made a number of times throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Newspaper articles written at the time indicate that in the 1940s residents of Dunedoo went to Coolah on the weekends to swim.²⁸¹ Requests were made by the Chamber of Commerce for a variety of things in the post war period which suggests that the war years had had an impact on the town. These requests included a swimming pool, an ambulance service, a fire station, a school bus, work on many of the roads in the town and to other towns and a sewerage treatment plant for the town.²⁸²

In 1953 tenders for a memorial hall, including a dance hall space, to be known as the Dunedoo Jubilee Memorial Hall, were called for in the Sydney newspapers. The actual opening date of the hall is as yet unknown, as is the opening date for the memorial swimming baths, but we do know they were both constructed after 1953.

²⁷⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p316

²⁷⁸ *Ibid* p317

²⁷⁹ *Ibid* p255

²⁸⁰ *Ibid* p256

²⁸¹ *Mudgee Guardian and Mid-Western Representative* 18 February 1940.

²⁸² *Ibid* 26/07/1951 p19

More recent war memorials include the Roll of Honour on the memorial column in Len Guy Park, Binnaway recognising the service of local residents in two World Wars and the 1993-94 United Nations peacekeeping action in Somalia.

A memorial wall was built at the Coonabarabran cemetery initiated by the Coonabarabran DPS and Local Family History it aimed to 'create a permanent visual of people buried in "unknown" grave sites at Coonabarabran. The project result in recording 767 names and these have all been recorded at the cemetery on a memorial wall.



T

The Memorial Wall – listing 767 names of people whose remains were interred in unknown graves.

The first School of Arts building in Coolah was a war memorial and was officially opened on 5 August 1905 near the present School Teachers Accommodation Units in Binnia Street. The foundation stone for the present School of Arts building at the corner of Binnia and Booyamurra Streets was laid by JM Allison of 'Oakey Creek' on 26 December 1918. He also donated the land.²⁸³

Numerous smaller memorials throughout the district recognise the lives and service of people who have worked for the community. These include the fence erected at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Coonabarabran in memory of Reginald George Nash.

The passage of Oxley and Evans' party in 1818 is memorialised in a roadside monument at Rocky Glen dedicated in 1984. Various other memorials commemorate the completion of road works in various parts of the shire.

²⁸³ Cameron, R ed Job, K *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p169

A unique monument outside the Shire Hall in John Street, Coonabarabran memorialises the visit of Japanese students to view Halley's Comet in the 1980s.

Oral histories and memoirs contain many accounts of floods, droughts and bushfires that have been features of the pattern of human interaction with the region over centuries.

3.6 Fishing

Fishing has played a minor role in the story of the former Coonabarabran Shire.

3.7 Forestry

The introduction of sheep and cattle into the Pilliga region in the 1830s, combined with accompanying disruption of the patterns of traditional Aboriginal land management, led to remarkable and unforeseen consequences. When John Oxley moved through the Pilliga in 1818 he noted:

*The appearance of the country passed over the most desolate and forbidding, but quite open, interspersed with miserable rocky crags, on which grew the cypress and eucalyptus. On the more level portions of the country a new and large species of eucalyptus and another of its genus (the iron bark) were the principal if not the only trees.*²⁸⁴

Rolls described how sheep and cattle quickly ate out many grasses, changed the soil structure and soil chemistry. This, combined with the cessation of regular burning of the area by Aboriginal people and the displacement of the seed eating kangaroo rats, created the conditions for the re-colonisation of the savannah woodland by cypress and eucalyptus. Previous land management practices had confined these varieties to the shaggy ridges. 'By the 1880s the Pilliga was a vast forest of pine, with ironbark coming through, and grazing was driven out. When rabbits arrived in 1891, the remaining settlers moved away.'²⁸⁵ Over a generation grazing country had turned to forest. The Aloes stands as a reminder of pastoral activity driven out by the growth of the forest.

Forest industries had begun well before this. As early settlers had cleared native trees they used suitable timbers in the construction of dwellings and sheds (*refer to Section 4.1 Accommodation*). Commercial timber getting began in the Pilliga as early as 1870s. Initial milling was done using pit-sawing techniques. Over time pit sawing was replaced by steam-powered sawmills that operated within

²⁸⁴ Whitehead, J *Tracking and Mapping the Explorers*, Volume 2 p191

²⁸⁵ Heritage Office *Regional Histories* p82

the forest and on its fringes. Saw pits can be found within the forest and on some farming properties. The Pilliga Scrub was dedicated to forestry in 1907 as Pilliga East Block and Pilliga West Block. Small communities developed around sawmilling operations and declined as these mills moved to different parts of the forest. Baradine became a centre for forestry and a Forestry Office was established there in 1937.²⁸⁶

The establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1916 had a profound impact on the development of the forestry industry in the Pilliga.²⁸⁷ The Commission played a strongly influential role as managers of the forest. Wilfred de Beuzeville, the first officially appointed Forest Assessor, conducted a forest survey in 1915 with his assistant Ivan Krippner. At this time E.H.F. Swain was the District Forester with a headquarters in Pilliga. Later, as Commissioner of Forests, he established the Forestry Commission's Division of Wood Technology.²⁸⁸ Swain was influential in the design of the Baradine Forestry Office, naming the 'neo-sylvic' style of the office furniture that was especially constructed for this office by the Wood Technology Division.

A survey was undertaken to facilitate access to the resources of the forest. 'A surveyor named Pennyfather pegged the Pilliga West Forest, where the best pine was.' In this survey he established a series of grids about four kilometres square. The axes of these grids were named for the letters of the alphabet and roads were developed along each line.²⁸⁹ The road lines of many of these grids and many of their markers survive in the West Pilliga and serve as a reminder of the once active forestry enterprises which operated in this area.

Ben Harris was District Forester during the 1930s. He directed many improvements in forest management. These improvements included the construction of ground tanks to provide water for working animals and the erection of lookout towers at Lucky Flat, Yarrigan and the Salt Caves. A high tower was also built in the yard of the Forestry Office in Baradine in 1937. These towers were used to spot fires in the forest, men being posted at each during the summer months. The first towers were constructed of wood and were later replaced by steel towers.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Heritage Office *Regional Histories*.p82

²⁸⁷ Curby, P & Humphreys, *Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage Study* p23

²⁸⁸ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* pp273-274

²⁸⁹ Ibid

²⁹⁰ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* pp273-274

Cypress was cut and milled for house frames, weatherboard cladding and floorboards whilst hardwoods were logged for railway sleepers, fence posts and bridge components. Products were railed out of Gwabegar, Kenebri, Baradine, Coonabarabran and Ulamambri. Sawmills established in the forest supported small but thriving communities. Wooleybah Sawmill sits within a village of houses built for its mill workers.

The coming of the railway to the district in the early 20th century encouraged the development of sleeper cutting as a local industry. It was possible to make 12/- a day sleeper cutting at a time when farm labourers were receiving 6/- per day.²⁹¹ Sleeper cutters lived a more transient existence, moving camps to access the hardwoods from which railway sleepers were fashioned. May Mead recalled the working conditions of members of her family who cut sleepers in the forest:

The men were sleeper cutters in those times and they used to cut sleepers up in the mountains and forest... They had to walk to find the ironbark trees so you were doin' a lot of walkin'... They didn't have much, the men, because sleeper cutters only get paid once a month. You had flour, sugar, tea, then you'd catch your own rabbits or goats or whatever for the meat part of it, and buy onions and potatoes which weren't as dear as they are today. They'd set traps.²⁹²

The nature of sawmills and the transport of logs within the forest meant that these enterprises tended to relocate at various times. The machinery of Underwood's large Rocky Creek sawmill moved closer to Kenebri to become the foundation of what is now known as Underwood's mill, and the Milawindi Mill was moved by the Pinchams to Baradine. A series of severe bush fires finally drove many of the sawmills out of the forest in 1951. From that time logs were milled at sites on the fringes of the forest.²⁹³

Baradine, Kenebri and Gwabegar thrived on the trade generated by the forest industries. The railway to Gwabegar created a transport corridor through which supplies came into the forest communities and timber was transported out. General merchants in these places received a lot of business from the people who drew their living from the forest.

²⁹¹ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p58

²⁹² Somerville, M et al *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran*. pp 131-132

²⁹³ Heritage Office *Regional Histories* p82

There is little trace in the forest of the Rocky Creek mill and Euligal mill. Little remains of the Ceelnoy Mill on Ceelnoy Road, now in the Coonamble Shire. Surviving sawmill sites within the former Coonabarabran Shire include Pincham's Mill at Baradine, Underwood's Mill at Kenebri, Wooleybah Mill and Ceelnoy Mill. The log dump of Wangmann's Mill near Kenebri is the only surviving evidence of the Wangmann family's logging legacy. The magnificent interior of the Baradine Forestry Office testifies to the richness and quality of the timbers of the Pilliga Forests.

Forestry was also present at the Coolah Tops. The area, now part of National Parks, formed part of the northern boundary of the limits of location as devised in 1829 and several early runs included land on the Coolah Tops.²⁹⁴

Roy Cameron quotes the botanist and explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, as he described what appears to have been one of the first workmen's hut in the area:

*We left Rotherwood (station on the Upper Talbragar River) late on 21 March 1843 and went up Norfolk Creek. We could not find the path over the Western Ranges (Warrumbungles Range) and bivouacked at a hut with 2 sawyers with a herd of sheep, that Mr Lawson (of Booyamurra at Coolah) was taking over to the Liverpool Plains. It began to rain and I went into the roomy and cosey [sic] hut, in which one of the sawyers, a former forester, told me about the coal mines of Staffordshire. The sawyers obtained their water from a nearby strong.*²⁹⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century the larger properties were initially subdivided into smaller blocks, as a result of the Robertson Land Act of 1861, until all of the land was absorbed into State Forest at between the 1880s and the beginning of the 20th Century.²⁹⁶

A small mobile sawmill operated in the Warung State Forest in the late 1930s and a timber mill was established in Coolah itself in 1943 to take the timber being brought out of the forest.²⁹⁷ During the 1930s a number of huts were constructed, some of which remain into the modern age. These include the Brackens Herdsman Hut (1937) Joes Potato Hut (1936) and Snows hut (1956).²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Coolah Tops Plan of Management p22

²⁹⁵ Cameron, R *The Coolah Tops and its Heritage Huts* p1

²⁹⁶ Ibid

²⁹⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁸ IBid

They have all been restored and maintained by NPWS.

In 1952 a sawmill began operation in the Bundella State Forest adjacent to Coxs Creek and was known as the Bone Creek Sawmill and timber cottages were constructed nearby for the workers.²⁹⁹ It burnt down in 1959.³⁰⁰

In 1949, near the sawmill, a wooden hut was constructed for use by the forest supervisor and a men's barracks was constructed on the site.³⁰¹ The barracks was typical of Forestry accommodation was made from a relocated army building and the hut consisted of a 3 room timber and fibro structure.³⁰² The accommodation didn't receive much use however and the building was eventually sold to the Coolah Sawmill Pty Ltd in 1953 as employee accommodation.³⁰³ The sawmill itself burnt down in 1959 and in the 1960s the barracks was dismantled for use on an adjoining property and the forester's hut was sold to a nearby property in 1971.³⁰⁴

The land was eventually absorbed into the NPWS estate in 1996.³⁰⁵

3.8 Health

In the early days of settlement most healthcare would have taken the form of what we now think of as folk or home remedies. Aboriginal people in the area would have relied on the bush for medicines and remedies.

Prior to the development of antibiotics minor ailments such as cuts or infected teeth could lead to premature death. A quick perusal of nineteenth century newspapers finds remedies for many things ranging from doctors and dentists to herbalists and homeopaths. Pharmaceuticals made their arrival in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and many archaeological sites reveal the popularity of these medicines with a plethora of small glass medicine bottles, much of which would have been the opiate based liquid so popular at the time; laudanum.

In the early stages of a town's establishment doctors and dentists would rent rooms, often in hotels, one day per week in order to provide medical services. As

²⁹⁹ Ibid p23

³⁰⁰ Ibid

³⁰¹ Ibid

³⁰² Ibid

³⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁴ Ibid

³⁰⁵ Ibid p21

towns developed doctors would reside in the town and take on the role on the town's general practitioner. These people would often go on to play important roles in the town.

Prior to the advent of a public health system, including hospitals and a regular medical practitioner, healthcare was often privately funded, by the patient, often provided by private nursing homes. A number of private hospitals existed in each of the towns in the Warrumbungle Shire, some of which are listed below.

Towards the end of nineteenth century many scientific breakthroughs regarding health occurred. These included the abandoning of the 'miasma' theory, that sickness was caused by air, excessive sunlight and foul odours.³⁰⁶ This theory began to be replaced by much more scientific theories and practice, in particular attempts were made by various bodies to improve public hygiene. McQueen:

According to the Inter-Colonial Medical Congress there was 'apathy in all matters of public hygiene'. This want of interest struck in 1889 when more than 400 people died in Melbourne's worst Typhoid epidemic. In response, a Royal Commission examined the Sanitary Condition of Melbourne, the public health act was amended, a DOH was established and the first full time public health officer was employed. Most importantly, a system of underground sewerage was begun.³⁰⁷

Prior to the development of a state based Departments of Health local councils were the government authority responsible for the implementation of these public health campaigns. One such example of this was in 1884 when a campaign began to educate people on the basic levels of hygiene including the washing of hands. In 1894 the Department of Health introduced the first Public Health Act in NSW which involved regular inspection of all producers of meat and animal based products.

During these decades numerous epidemics made their way through the population and as time went on, increasingly, governments, including local councils, had to prepare for these events. These epidemics included diphtheria, typhoid, cholera, various influenzas, measles, small pox and scarlet fever amongst many other diseases we may consider to be relatively minor ailments today but could kill people prior to the advent of antibiotics and vaccinations. Between 1900 and 1906 Bubonic plague hit Sydney and made its way into regional Australia.

³⁰⁶ McQueen, H *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001* P19

³⁰⁷ McQueen, H *Social Sketches of Australia 1888 – 2001* P19

In 1918 pneumonic influenza devastated the populations of Europe and arrived in Sydney. It hit in three separate waves in the years 1918-1919 and 50 Million people are thought to have died from it worldwide, more than had died in the First World War. It is thought that over 25% of the world's population had been infected.³⁰⁸ The relatively recently formed Department of Health contact local councils in order to urge them to prepare for the outbreak of what was then being called Spanish Flu.

In most country towns the funding and then establishment of a local hospital was initiated by the local community and charitable organisations or individuals. The raising of funds for the hospital remained an issue through its history and in the earliest days people would donate all manner of things to enable to hospital to run. These donations included produce such as eggs, poultry, cakes, fruit, vegetables, firewood and old linen for bandages.³⁰⁹

3.8.1 Baradine

The foundation stone for the CWA Hospital in Baradine was laid on 6 November 1936 and was opened on 10 December 1937.³¹⁰ The Country Women's Association raised the funds, the Lands Department donated an acre of land and local farmers and timber getters volunteered their labour and by 1939 the hospital was free of debt.³¹¹

By 1939 Baradine Hospital had 4 beds with 1 large cot and 1 small cot and a bassinette.³¹² The following account of the hospital comes from former nurse Esme Rice:

The nurses had to share their bathroom with the patients. We didn't have a hot water system; all the hot water had to be heated on a wood stove in the kitchen and bucketed to the bathroom. We had various primitive methods of sterilization. There were two pan lavatories away down the backyard screened by a trellis; one for gents and one for ladies. The nurses worked 13 hours or more a day and were supposed to have one day off a week but were lucky to get that. ... It was a wonderful relief for the people of Baradine to have a hospital and it was always well supported by country people who supplied meat, milk, eggs, jams and pickles.³¹³

³⁰⁸ Australian Government Department of Health Web Page 'Pandemics'

³⁰⁹ Ibid

³¹⁰ Cutts, L Kildey, R Baradine – A Town Full of History p106

³¹¹ Ibid

³¹² Ibid

³¹³ Cutts, L Kildey, R Baradine – A Town Full of History p107

Additions were made in 1969 with an ambulance bay and meals on wheels.³¹⁴ In June 1996 the new Baradine Multi-purpose Health Service Centre was opened and the old hospital was removed to become a private residence.³¹⁵

3.8.2 Coonabarabran

Prior to the advent of public hospitals most towns had private hospitals dedicated to providing medical service during a recovery and some were dedicated maternity hospitals. Langley was such a hospital and it is said that 3000 babies were born there.³¹⁶ Other private hospitals included Burnside Private Hospital (on the corner of Cassilis and Horsley Sts) and the Gunyah Private Hospital (now the site of the Country Gardens Motel).³¹⁷

The arrival of a public hospital in Coonabarabran was early by country standards, many country towns did not get a community hospital until well into the twentieth century. The Foundation Stone for the Coonabarabran hospital was laid in 1891 but the contractor engaged to undertake the construction of building, John Isaac Neale, died before starting the job.³¹⁸ The Kennard Brothers were then engaged to commence the building which was completed and opened in April 1893.³¹⁹

3.8.3 Mendooran Hospital

When the Mendooran Branch of the Country Women's Association was formed in 1926 one of the first aims was the formation of a hospital.³²⁰ The nearest hospital was a long distance from Mendooran and with community support the CWA was opened in 1932.



*Mendooran Emergency Hospital
(From Sydney Mail 28.09.1932
p22)*

³¹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By* Coonabarabran DPS Local and Family History Group p45

³¹⁷ Ibid

³¹⁸ Ibid p41

³¹⁹ Ibid

³²⁰ Ibid

*Mendooran Emergency Hospital
(From Sydney Mail 28.09.1932 p22)*

Two blocks of land were purchased in Abbott St and with the efforts of the CWA opened the hospital doors in 1932.³²¹ The hospital had 3 wards, one a maternity ward and these all opened out onto a central hall and also to large verandahs.³²² Each room is described as being ‘artistically coloured’ and the interior of the hospital was fibro plaster and the exterior was fibro cement.³²³ Like many small hospitals it struggled to sustain itself and by 1961 it had closed.³²⁴

3.8.5 Coolah Hospital

The need for a local hospital in country towns would have been significant prior to the advent of cars and helicopters. Travelling distances to medical services could make a considerable difference in the health outcomes for many particularly in the event of an accident. There were several private hospitals in Coolah. Currently, however, the names and locations of the hospitals remain unknown but we do know who they were run by: RA Laverty (1929-30), R Scott (1931-33) E Binstead (1934-35) and Helen Boulton (1936-40).³²⁵

By the turn of the twentieth century calls for a local hospital were being made. The local community had raised several hundred pounds by 1907 and this was added to by a special grant of six hundred pounds by the Chief Secretary.³²⁶ The foundation stone was laid on 5 December 1908 and the hospital was opened on 28 April 1909.³²⁷ As with many small hospitals it had little money and subsequently took donations of cash, vegetables, eggs, poultry and firewood and the staff, in its early days. Staff consisted of a matron, sister, cook-laundress, handyman and wardman and the following account comes from an account of Marjorie Bowles in the Coolah District Hospital Board’s Commemorative Book, as provided by Roy Cameron.³²⁸

I was employed at the Coolah District Hospital as a Cook-Laundress in 1931.

³²¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p215

³²² From *Sydney Mail* 28.09.1932 p22 opening of Mendooran Emergency Hospital

³²³ Ibid

³²⁴ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas*

³²⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p162

³²⁶ Ibid

³²⁷ Ibid

³²⁸ Ibid p163

It was necessary to commence the day about 2.30 am to 3 am in order to light the fire under the copper for the washing. While the water was heating I would then clean the office, which included cleaning the fireplace and emptying the ashes. Breakfast would then be served. I had to launder matron and sisters uniforms which were made from fuji silk. Sometimes it was necessary to do some ironing at night.

On Wednesdays after I had cooked and served the dinners and washed up and set the trays for the evening meal I was allowed the remainder of the day off. I worked all weekend. I received 19/4 per week. Marjorie Bowles.³²⁹

3.8.6 Dunedoo

There were a number of private hospitals in Dunedoo including one run by Dr T Thompson in 1919 and also one conducted by Sister Irene Hargreaves in Cobbora St in 1933, it closed ten years later.³³⁰ Sister ES Lewis carried out a private nursing service in the district and Nurse L Brennan specialised in maternity cases.³³¹ Nursing homes included one run by Sister Maxwell in Diligah Street, another one also in Diligah Street run by Nurse K Dover and Hannah Atkins was a well-known midwife in the area of Cobbora and Lahey's Creek.³³²

Efforts towards a hospital began during the WWI with the formation of a War Memorial Committee and by the end of the war it had collected over one thousand two hundred pounds towards a war memorial hospital.³³³ It was some time before the hospital had gained sufficient public support to get the backing of the Chamber of Commerce and the Hospital Commission.³³⁴ Eventually it did and it was opened in 1945 with Dr Crossin as the first medical officer.³³⁵ A multi-purpose health centre opened in 2007. The hospital was demolished in 2016.

³²⁹ Ibid p164

³³⁰ Cameron, R ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p254

³³¹ Ibid

³³² Ibid

³³³ Ibid p255

³³⁴ Ibid

³³⁵ Ibid p256

3.9 Industry

Industry is a broad term that includes every enterprise that is engaged in by human beings in the production of goods for use and the processing of raw materials. It ranges from small artisan based activities to large factories.

Aboriginal people produced all of their own tools and technologies used in hunting, food processing, clothing and housing. Some of these technologies were substantial and include the creation of nets designed for catching large quantities of ducks. Mitchell wrote the following about such nets:

*The meshes were about two inches wide, and the net hung down to within five feet of the surface of the stream... Among the few specimens of art manufactured by the primitive inhabitants of these wilds, none come so near our own as the net, which even in quality, as well as the mode of the knotting, can scarcely be distinguished from those made in Europe.*³³⁶

The industries that did evolve in the Warrumbungle Shire have largely been linked to pastoral and agricultural pursuits. James Weston's water powered flourmill is thought to have been the first industrial activity in the area. It is said that it was constructed sometime in the 1840s in order to mill the wheat from Weston's fields.³³⁷

The *Town and Country Journal* described the mill as follows:

*... a prosaic square edifice with wall of weatherboard and roof of iron, with mysterious automats, named elevators; a grimy engineer, and a sad faced individual in spectacles, who calls himself 'the miller' ... Within the roomy walls of the mill were stored large quantities of miscellaneous merchandise – chiefly ironmongery – the overflow of the general store of the firm. All and every newest invention connected with the machinery of the mills has been availed of, and the way in which these marvellous automats, the elevators, pick up, transfer, shake, silk dress, sift, separate, and finally lodge in the ultimate flour-bag of commerce, the imprisoned and perhaps passively astonished wheat, makes one think of a benevolent Troll or strange enchanter lost from Arabian Night-land.*³³⁸

³³⁶ Pascoe, B *Dark Emu* p51

³³⁷ Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* p36

³³⁸ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning* p94

Robert Neilson's first mill would appear to have been quite successful and in 1882 the following report appeared in *Australian Town and Country*:

*Our mill has ground all last year's wheat and we are now importing flour from Tamworth, which by the way, is not nearly so well liked as the locally manufactured article.*³³⁹

This mill, based on the dates of operation, would have been a steam or water operated stone ground mill, this being the predominant technology before the introduction of the steel roller mill. There are a number of differences in the product made by these two mills. Stone mill technology meant that they whole grain was ground and it was this that made up the flour. As previously mentioned steel roller mills enabled the grain to be separated thereby enabling the centre of the grain, known as the pollard, to be removed from the rest. This pollard contains the oils in the grain and it was discovered that when they removed it the flour didn't go off as quickly. It was also able to be given to animals as animal feed thereby creating two saleable products from the one grain increasing profits and the use by date of the final product.

In February 1891 the *Maitland Mercury ad Hunter River General Advertiser* report that 'Mr Neilson intends turning this mill into a roller one next season.'³⁴⁰ The paper, in March 1892, then goes on to report that Neilson's roller flour mill is now in full working order.'³⁴¹

The *Maitland Daily Mercury* in 1894 states that 'Mr Nielson's mill is busy grinding the new wheat which is pronounced to be of very superior quality and is turning out remarkably good flour'.³⁴² It is interesting to note that as farmers started to grow wheat in more marginal areas they found that wheat became higher in gluten and was therefore found to be a better product. This might account for the reports of the local product seeming to be of higher quality than that from other areas.

At this time there was a second flour mill under construction. This one was a Co-operative Roller Mill and its shareholders were the local farmers interested in protecting as much of their profits as they could. The benefit of the co-operative system was that it would have cost less for the farmers to use the mill and

³³⁹ *Australian Town and Country* 26 August 1882 p14

³⁴⁰ *Maitland Mercury ad Hunter River General Advertiser* 12 February 1891 p3

³⁴¹ *Ibid* 17 March 1892 p3

³⁴² *Ibid* 31 December 1894 p4

therefore increased their profits on their own wheat production but they were also shareholders in the mill so would have benefitted from any profits made by the mill itself. It opened in August 1892: 'The new co-operative flour mill has been completed and handed over to the directors. ... The building is of corrugated iron and is fitted with Simon's system of machinery which was erected by Rhodes and Co. ... The mill appears to be in good working order.'³⁴³ The Simon's system referred to is the steel roller technology that was succeeding the stone milling technology of the previous centuries. It is difficult to ascertain what happened but by 1894 'The Co-operative mill has not commenced operations up to date, but next week probably see the beginning of the season's milling in this mill.'³⁴⁴

A newspaper reported in May 1900 'Coonabarabran has once more a co-operative flour mill, the now plant having been opened last week by Mrs. J. McMaster. We hope the fire fiend will leave this one alone.'³⁴⁵

The significance of the flour mills lies, partly, in the impact that they had on the agriculture being undertaken in Coonabarabran around the turn of the twentieth century. The *Daily Telegraph* reported the following in 1893: 'More than twice as much wheat is in this year than in any previous year. The co-operative flour mill has given a marked impetus to wheat growing here.'³⁴⁶

This mill's opening was announced in the papers at the same time as the Neilson's new roller mill and so, for a number of decades, Coonabarabran had two operating steel roller flour mills in the town. In November 1898 the Co-operative Flour Mill burnt down but by the turn of the twentieth century it had rebuilt and it was this mill that the Messrs McIntyre Brothers bought in 1921.³⁴⁷ The McIntyre brothers then pulled down the old mill, remodelled and re-erected it closer to the railway line and intended erecting a siding and by November 1921 they had 'started work at the new mill and have been doing good business ever since.'³⁴⁸

A flour mill was also constructed in Mendooran in 1887 although little is known about it.³⁴⁹ We do know that George Marsh left Gilgandra, sometime in the

³⁴³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 18 August 1892 p7

³⁴⁴ *Ibid* 31 December 1894 p4

³⁴⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 11 May 1900 p18

³⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph* 4 August 1893

³⁴⁷ *Gilgandra Weekly* 28 November 1921 p28

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*

³⁴⁹ *Evening News* 17 September 1887 p6

nineteenth century, to move to Mendooran to open a store and a flour mill.³⁵⁰ We also know that it was renovated by Messrs Marchant and Pykes as an extra shop in which to carry out their business until their new premises are erected.³⁵¹ In 1914 it was reported that ‘no less than 7000 acres of land are under wheat in Mendooran district this year. This is a big increase on last years; area under wheat.’³⁵² The following comes from the newspapers of the time:

*Notwithstanding that this district is excluded at present from the operations of the Free Selection Act, nearly every landholder in the neighbourhood cultivates a few acres of ground and just now we are all busy ploughing and sowing wheat, which is the principle kind of grain grown up here.*³⁵³

Other industries were undertaken in the region. P. J. Garland operated a cordial factory in Coonabarabran until 1899 when it was sold.³⁵⁴ The buildings of a Clare’s cordial factory are evident in King Street, between Charles and Cowper Streets. Cordial factories also existed in Leadville and Coolah.³⁵⁵

A brickworks, owned by Mr L Aspinall existed in Coolah with the first kiln of bricks made in December 1919.³⁵⁶ It is not known how long it operated for but we do know that the salinity of the locally made bricks made for bricks that erode over time.³⁵⁷ The brickworks appear to have not lasted long in Coolah.

Butter factories were an important industry and many towns had their own butter factory often based on a co-operative business model. Coolah had a butter factory that was originally established by the NSW government in 1919 as a way of stimulating dairy in the area generally but more specifically for the Oban Soldiers Settlement.³⁵⁸ It was located on a 2 acre lot of land near the trucking yards at the railway station and operated for a number of years but was closed only a year or two later due to financial difficulties.³⁵⁹ On two different occasions it was re-opened by the local community as a co-operative business. The first time it was re-opened in 1922 and it operated again for a year or two until it was

³⁵⁰ *Mudgee Guardian* 14 November 1912 p16

³⁵¹ *Ibid* 14 November 1912 p16

³⁵² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 6.08.1914 p25

³⁵³ *The Newcastle Chronicle and Hunter District News* 25.06.1962 p2

³⁵⁴ Pickette, J. & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. p.150

³⁵⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas*

³⁵⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative*

³⁵⁷ Pers. Comm Noel Gilbert

³⁵⁸ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 06.05.1943 p10

³⁵⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 06.05.1943 p10

closed. Another attempt was made again in the early 1930s, possibly in an attempt to mitigate the impacts of the Depression. It was again unsuccessful and closed permanently in 1936 the buildings were sold for demolition and were removed some time prior to the land being sold in 1943.³⁶⁰

A series of pushes towards getting a butter factory in Coonabarabran began in 1892 when A Mr R Read spoke at a meeting, held at the Mechanics Hall in June of that year.³⁶¹ There is no further mention of it until 1899 when Dr Failes, the town GP, became interested in forming a co-operative butter factory.³⁶² The issue was not raised again, in a published form, until 1930 when initial steps were taken to explore the possibility of establishing a factory in Coonabarabran.³⁶³

Momentum grew during the early years of the 1930s, the early years of which coincided with the Great Depression. A cooperative was formed not long afterwards and by 1933 2930 shares in the cooperative had been sold.³⁶⁴ An article from 1934 indicates that negotiation had been underway for some time regarding the merger of the Coolah Valley Co-operative Dairy Society Ltd and the Coonabarabran Dairy Society.³⁶⁵ By 1936 however, neither was in existence. The Government Gazette published the findings on the matter of the Castlereagh Butter Factory in that year ‘...that the company be wound up voluntarily’.³⁶⁶

The arrival of the railway also had a positive impact on the development of industry in the region. In 1859 24 wild rabbits were released onto a property in Victoria and by 1890 there were plagues of rabbits throughout Australia. By the 1920s their numbers are estimated to have reached ten million.³⁶⁷ The impact that this had on the landscape and on agriculture and pastoralism was significant and a battle commenced against the rabbit that led to the development of a multi-generational effort to reclaim the land from this invader. There were at least four freezing works that developed in the shire during this period, most of whom were focussed on rabbits which were frozen and often sent to England for sale.

³⁶⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 06.05.1943 p10

³⁶¹ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 25.06.1892 p5

³⁶² *Ibid* 24/09/1899 p7

³⁶³ *Daily Pictorial* 24/09/1930 p16

³⁶⁴ *Mudgee and Great North Western Representative* 16.01.1933 p4

³⁶⁵ *Ibid* 31/05/1934 p8

³⁶⁶ *Government Gazette* 30/10/1936 p4554

³⁶⁷ *Quealy, J Great Australian Rabbit Stories* ABC Books 2010

During the 1920s a freezing works was established in Coonabarabran by the Lachlan Ltd. Freezing Co.³⁶⁸ This was located on land at the corner of Essex and Cowper Streets serviced by a siding from the railway yards and was used for at least part of its operational life to freeze rabbits. A turkey freezing works was also established near the railway at Coonabarabran by Bill Hadfield who had a turkey farm at Willarene.³⁶⁹

Binnaway Freezing Works, a branch of Curtis and Curtis, 'could handle at least 3,000 pairs of rabbits'. This complex operated until 1946. Freezing works such as this also supplied ice for residential and commercial use.³⁷⁰

There were also freezing works at both Dunedoo and Mendooran. In Dunedoo, the freezing works commenced in September 1910 with ten hands and 60 men trapping.³⁷¹ It is said that it was recognised in the industry that their produce with its trade name 'Bunnydoo' occupied probably the foremost place on the English Market.³⁷²

In Mendooran the freezing works appears to have opened sometime around the end of 1916.³⁷³ It would seem to have operated for a couple of years but would appear to have had a series of issues that prevented it from running smoothly as it opened and closed a number of times during this period. Eventually it was liquidated sometime in January 1918.³⁷⁴ Given the date it is likely that the lack of labour due to the war played a role in the closure of this undertaking.

Other industries of the district have included the substantial timber milling industries of the Baradine and Kenebri districts. The story of these undertakings is covered in *Section 3.8 Forestry*.

The timber industry established itself in the Coolah Tops area, now a part of the National Park.

Cordial factories were very popular during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and most towns had at least one during their lifetime. Coonabarabran

³⁶⁸ Wallace, I *To Coonabarabran & Return* pp 30 & 51

³⁶⁹ Information provided by Coonabarabran DPS

³⁷⁰ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.78

³⁷¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p265

³⁷² Ibid

³⁷³ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 23.06.1916 p6

³⁷⁴ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent* 12.02.1918 p1

had one in 1900 owned by PJ Carland.³⁷⁵ Coolah and other towns too ran similar business throughout their history.

3.10 Mining

Aboriginal people were engaged in mining for centuries before the European occupation of Australia. Minerals were extracted to make stone tools and in some places ochres and clays were also mined. Minerals commonly used for toolmaking were quartz, silcrete, flint, obsidian, chalcedony and quartzite.³⁷⁶ Many of these minerals were traded long distances. The presence of silcrete deposits in the Warrumbungle Ranges was noted by geologist G. H Dury in his 1969 study of volcanic crusts.³⁷⁷ Given the geology of the region it is anticipated that mining of siliceous materials would have occurred in a number of places.

The Coonabarabran area has experienced very little mining activity since European settlement. One quite unusual mining enterprise was established in the 1920s by Davis Gelatine.³⁷⁸ This company reclaimed diatomaceous earth from a site near the top of Rundle Mountain near Bugaldie. Diatomaceous earth 'is the remaining deposit of algae and water animals that lived in a hot warm body of water such as a lake which existed during the volcanic activities in the creation of the Warrumbungle Volcanic Shield'. It was used in the chemical industry and in swimming pool filters.³⁷⁹

Some quarrying activity has been undertaken around Coonabarabran with quarries operating at various times at the western end of Dalgarno Street, on the riverbank near the northern end of Cowper Street and in other parts of the town.³⁸⁰ Silica was mined at Merrygoen.³⁸¹

The area generally was frequently surveyed by the government geologist and his reports were printed in the local newspapers of the day on a semi regular basis during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.³⁸² This was particularly the case in the decades after the gold rush.

³⁷⁵ Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative 06.04.1900 p9

³⁷⁶ Mulvaney, J & Kamminga, J *Prehistory of Australia* pp213-214

³⁷⁷ Langford-Smith, T *Silcrete in Australia*, p9

³⁷⁸ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p332

³⁷⁹ Whitehead, J *Tracking & Mapping the Explorers Vol.2*. p186

³⁸⁰ Local Government Dept of, (undated). Town of Coonabarabran – map

³⁸¹ Pers. Comms. John Horne January 2018

³⁸² An example of this is in *Australian Town and Country* 21 October 1882 p22

3.1.1 Leadville

Silver at Leadville was discovered by Tommy Governor, an Aboriginal man who spotted a shiny rock from some distance. The following comes from an article published in the local papers in 1923. It comes from a letter said to have been written in 1884-85 but is more likely that it was written after 1887. It would appear that Tommy asked a local white neighbour, whom he had known for some time, to write to the mine owners regarding a promised reward:

He wishes to return to the Paterson, and says you promised to reward him for his discovery at Mount Stewart. I told him if you promised you would be gentleman enough to keep your word, but he seems to think a "word in his favor" will do him good. My husband always trusted him, and we ever found him and his poor old mate, "Old Henry," who was our shepherd, very faithful. E.V.L.³⁸³

It is said that Tommy was given 10 acres at Wyaldra Creek no doubt after the above letter was written on Tommy's behalf. The initial find was made in 1887 and this is the year the following year the Leadville mines were opened as a silver-lead mine.³⁸⁴ The township of Leadville was created in 1891.

The fortunes of the Leadville mine waxed and waned throughout the entire period that it operated from 1888-1962. The year in which the find was made was only 2 years after the Broken Hill mine was founded and it is thought that the impact of this event on the operations at Leadville was significant. The ore was very similar in richness – 10%lead, 200g silver/ton. However Mount Stewart was only a fissure, not massive, lode.³⁸⁵

In the first 14 months of operation 15000 tons of ore was smelted yielding 292 093 ounces of silver and 1 539 tons of lead.³⁸⁶ The ore was transported by bullock the 50 miles to Mudgee to connect with the railway and the cost of this was high.³⁸⁷ The price of silver fell significantly in 1893 and this led to a closure of the Mt Stewart Mine for some time.³⁸⁸ During this first phase of operations it is said that they over-capitalised.³⁸⁹ It re-opened briefly for around

³⁸³ *The Sun* 04.06.1923

³⁸⁴ Innovative Heritage Solutions *Statement of Heritage Impact – Mt Stewart Mine* p 24

³⁸⁵ Pers Comm John Horne January 2018

³⁸⁶ Cameron, R *Around the Black Stump* p301

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*

³⁸⁹ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

two months the following year but then closed again and went into voluntary liquidation in 1894.³⁹⁰

In 1898 Mt Stewart mine was bought by Mr CL Garland and M J Channon at auction but the mine does not operate again until 1921 at which point it only operates sporadically until 1926.³⁹¹ During 1926-27 the mine is reopened for a short time but it is not for another 5 years that it is reopened by the Mount Stewart Syndicate.³⁹² In 1932 the mine recommences for 3 years after which it is operated by Australia Fertilisers Ltd for sulphide ore.³⁹³

During this period they mined for iron pyrites which they railed to Port Kembla and this was used to make sulphuric acid which was then used to make superphosphate.³⁹⁴ It is said that there were good examples of pyrite crystals that came from this period of mining.³⁹⁵ On the next page is an image of examples of pyrite crystals taken from the former Geological and Mining Museum in Sydney. The photograph comes courtesy of the Warrumbungle Community Heritage Study Working Group.



Images of Pyrites Mined from Leadville

3.11 Pastoralism

Indigenous bush skills and local knowledge have always been highly valued, and Aboriginal stockmen formed the back bone of the vast new pastoral society that

³⁹⁰ Innovative Heritage Solutions *Statement of Heritage Impact – Mt Stewart Mine* p 24

³⁹¹ *Ibid*

³⁹² *Ibid*

³⁹³ *Ibid*

³⁹⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*

developed between 1820 and 1900. Aboriginal men outnumbered white stockmen by five or six to one on the cattle and sheep properties or ranches known as stations, and aboriginal women worked in homesteads and tended vegetables gardens, goats and chickens.³⁹⁶

The general pattern of the early European incursions into the region appears to have involved the identification of suitable pastures and the movement of cattle or sheep into the areas identified. Convict labourers, indentured servants or employees were left in small groups in isolated situations to tend the herds and flocks. By all accounts they generally lived in miserable circumstances deprived of decent food and in constant fear of attacks by Aboriginal groups or bushrangers who had moved beyond the reach of the law.

In the early days Governor Brisbane's mounted police kept some order, although often squatters and their servants took the law into their own hands. A few punitive military expeditions had been mounted on the fringes of the region to establish the rule of British law. Policing of the frontier was taken over in the 1830s by the feared and hated Border Police.

In 1836 Governor Bourke established regulations which legalised squatting beyond the limits of the Nineteen Counties.³⁹⁷ The ensuing period, which coincided with the height of the economic boom of the 1830s, saw the consolidation of many landholdings, including those around the Castlereagh and the Pilliga. The economic downturn of the early 1840s impacted hard on pastoral runs at the fringes of settlement. Many squatters suffered severe losses and the pastoral industry was generally saved by the wholesale slaughter and boiling down of livestock. Their reduced fats were sold to Britain at a higher value than that of the animals' meat, hides or fleeces.

During 1836-1837 the Coxes established a station, *Cooleburebarun*, on the Castlereagh. This later became Coonabarabran. Sydney merchant J.B. Bettington expanded his holdings down Teridgerie Creek on the northern side of the Warrumbungles. Here he established *Teredgere*. Andrew Brown extended his and James Walker's holdings, finding a long waterhole on Baradine Creek he established *Barradean* and also *Curianawa* in the Gorianawa valley. They had previously established properties between the Warrumbungles and the site of Mendooran. These were *Biambil* and *Cuigan*. From 1834, with the assistance of James Walker's nephew David Archer, and the guidance of the local Aboriginal

³⁹⁶ Flood J *The Original Australians* p210

³⁹⁷ Morrisey S *The Pastoral Economy 1821-1830* p59

people, Andrew Brown explored around and beyond the Warrumbungles, establishing stations on the watering points of *Yarragrין*, *Gundy*, *Bidden*, *Mogie Melon*, *Wallumburawang*, *Tooraweenah* and *Nullen*.³⁹⁸

The first property in Coolah, called 'Gotta Rock', was owned by Nelson Simmons Lawson in the 1840s and was comprised of 16000 acres. Other older properties in the area include *Tongy*, *Oakey Creek*, *Oban*, *Turee*, and *Rotherwood*.

Rotherwood is described by Roy Cameron "The 18" wide slabs of the homestead and the old convict cells of ironbark slabs are as solid as when erected over 160 years ago. It's fine loose-stone wall, common in England, is rare in Australia."³⁹⁹

Bolaro was the original run in the Dunedoo area.

Increases in the price of wool in the late 1840s led to changes in land use and an increasing rise to dominance by sheep farming in the west of New South Wales. The fortunes of pastoralists were given an additional boost by the gold rushes of the early 1850s, which created an increase in demand for meat, and the American Civil War (1860-1864), which increased the English textile mills demand for wool. The gold rushes also led to shortages of labour on pastoral runs.

The development of the sheep industry led to the eventual construction of shearing sheds although prior to this point shearing was conducted in the open. When sheds were constructed they were of primitive slab construction with bark roofs and earthen floors. Due to the nature of this construction many of these early sheds were lost to the elements.⁴⁰⁰ Here too the introduction of modern technology changed the nature of the work on the land. It was not until the early 1890s, coinciding with a significant economic depression, that machine based shearing technology was introduced.

Dairies were also a feature of parts of the area and, initially, sent considerable amounts of produce to Sydney. For farmers one of the most beneficial factors was that it provided a regular, monthly pay check.⁴⁰¹ However, the distance between the dairy and the Sydney market and the competition with dairies closer to that market, meant that dairies scaled back their operations from their initial plans.⁴⁰² In the years prior to the arrival of refrigeration, the production of dairy products would have been highly problematic. By the late nineteenth century regulation tightened regarding food hygiene, particularly dairy and meat

³⁹⁸ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* pp116-119

³⁹⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p27

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid

⁴⁰¹ Pers. Comms. John Horne January 2018

⁴⁰² Ibid p36

production. This too would have made the task that more onerous and therefore less marketable.

The development of the dairy industry was clearly in the NSW government's mind when they developed the butter factory at Oban near Coolah. The establishment of such a facility was designed to stimulate the dairy industry in the area. However the topography of the Coolah area, along with other climatic factors, made dairying difficult in that area. The establishment of flour mills too acted to stimulate the development of wheat growing in parts of the shire.

During the 19th century a network of Travelling Stock Routes (TSRs) was established to facilitate the movement of stock around the colony. In many places stock routes traversed pastoral holdings. As stock was moved along these routes landholders had to be warned 24 hours in advance that stock would cross their boundaries. This notice had to be given by hand, so that he could have time to shift his stock off the route and avoid getting them mixed up with the travelling mob. This was known as 'boxing up.' If this happened, the stock would have to be taken to the nearest yards and drafted out, and this might take several days. If the fault was with the drover he would have to pay the cost of drafting.⁴⁰³

Travelling Stock Routes, as with other road networks, have now become areas with significant native remnant vegetation and can also be areas that may have archaeological potential. These are an important part of the transport network and were critical to the development of pastoral interests not only in this shire but in other areas as they moved their stock to market. This role in the transport of stock is an important one in this area throughout its history.

The 20th century saw substantial changes in land management practices and pastoralism. The wool boom of the 1950s saw substantial investment in many rural properties with homesteads and woolsheds being modernised, modified or replaced. Closer settlement reduced the viability of many of the larger homestead and woolshed complexes.⁴⁰⁴

The economic downturn of the early 1840s impacted hard on pastoral runs at the fringes of settlement. Many squatters suffered severe losses and the pastoral industry was generally saved by the wholesale slaughter and boiling down of livestock. Their reduced fats were sold to Britain at a higher value than that of the animals' meat, hides or fleeces.

⁴⁰³ Tritton HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* p26

⁴⁰⁴ Sowden H *Australian Woolsheds* p29

Increases in the price of wool in the late 1840s led to changes in land use and an increasing rise to dominance by sheep farming in the west of New South Wales. The fortunes of pastoralists were given an additional boost by the gold rushes of the early 1850s, which created an increase in demand for meat, and the American Civil War (1860-1864), which increased the English textile mills demand for wool. The gold rushes also led to shortages of labour on pastoral runs.

Despite attempts to establish closer settlement in the late 19th century much of the region around the Warrumbungles continued to be characterised by large cattle and sheep runs. Droughts, floods and adverse market conditions combined to drive many smaller and more marginal property holders off the land.

The second half of the 19th Century was also characterised by the encroachment of the Pilliga Forest into lands which had previously been used for grazing. By 1870 the acacia and cypress trees of the Pilliga had begun to invade land which had been used for grazing since the 1830s.

The last two decades of the 19th century saw the movement of settlers into country that had been ignored by the earlier pastoralists. Allan Young noted that large stations were formed on the black soil plains of the Curlewis region to run sheep and cattle. The early settlers ignored the heavily timbered red soil country. Eventually farmers from Victoria and southern New South Wales bought blocks of previously unimproved land 'very cheap'. Some of the land around Purllewaugh was subdivided for soldier settlers after World War I.⁴⁰⁵ Ned Doel's *Ulan* and Mary Rogers' *Napier* were sold for soldier settler development around 1921 and *Ulamamabri* station was subdivided in 1926.⁴⁰⁶

The 20th century saw substantial changes in land management practices and pastoralism. The wool boom of the 1950s saw substantial investment in many rural properties with homesteads and woolsheds being modernised, modified or replaced. Closer settlement reduced the viability of many of the larger homestead and woolshed complexes.⁴⁰⁷ The wool crisis of the 1970s and subsequent problems in the wool industry led to the abandonment of wool growing on many properties and a re-emergence of cattle raising as the principal pastoral industry of the region. Woolsheds such as *Uliman* and *Bomera* have not seen shearing since the 1970s.

⁴⁰⁵ Young, A From the Top of the Hill p8

⁴⁰⁶ Young, A From the Top of the Hill p17

⁴⁰⁷ Sowden, H *Australian Woolsheds* p29

The farming of sheep and cattle continue to be major contributors to the economy of the region. Many stations contain the infrastructure of a pastoral industry that has developed over a period of 180 years. These include *Bomera, Uliman, Oakleigh, Goorianawa, Rotherwood* and the shearing shed at *Pilton*.

3.12 NSW Historical Theme: Science &

3.13 NSW Historical Theme: Technology

The establishment of the Siding Spring observatory in the 1960s has ensured Coonabarabran's place as a major international centre for astronomy. From the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 the Commonwealth Government adopted a constitutional responsibility for 'astronomical and meteorological observations'.⁴⁰⁸ In 1910 the government appointed a board to identify suitable sites for an observatory within the Australian Capital Territory and by 1923 plans were put in place to establish a Commonwealth Solar Observatory on Mount Stromlo. To test its suitability a temporary observatory had been established on this site in 1911.⁴⁰⁹

By the late 1950s the growing city of Canberra was beginning to encroach upon the capability of the Mount Stromlo Observatory. The Australian National University, who by that time controlled the observatory, commenced an active program to find a suitable alternate site. At the same time the United States Yale-Columbia group was looking to locate a '20 inch astrograph on a good Australian site'.⁴¹⁰ A series of sites in Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales was assessed. Following some disagreement regarding the relative merits of various sites for different types of research Siding Spring in the Warrumbungles was nominated as the preferred site. On 12 May 1962 ANU Vice-Chancellor Leonard Huxley announced that Siding Spring would become the observatory's (Mount Stromlo's) permanent field station.⁴¹¹

Frame and Faulkner summarised the development of Siding Spring as follows:

At the time it was not apparent just how important this decision would become in the development of Australian astronomy. It was expected that, although Siding Spring was to serve the ANU's field station needs, continued Australia-wide testing would probably locate a better site for the eventual development of a very large reflector. In the event it was decided to

⁴⁰⁸ Frame, T. & Faulkner, D., 2003. *Stromlo: An Australian Observatory*. p.17

⁴⁰⁹ Frame, T. & Faulkner, D., 2003. *Stromlo: An Australian Observatory*. pp.23-33

⁴¹⁰ Ibid p140

⁴¹¹ Frame, T. & Faulkner, D., 2003. *Stromlo: An Australian Observatory*. pp.141-143

build an Anglo-Australian 150-inch reflector at Siding Spring, followed by a British 48-inch Schmidt camera. With the further construction there of the ANU's 2.3-metre Advanced Technology Telescope, and the transfer of the Uppsala Schmidt, Siding Spring Observatory has become one of the foremost international optical observatories in the world.⁴¹²

The Anglo Australian Telescope is one of the most precise telescopes in the world, and astronomers use it to study the faintest and most distant objects in the Universe. The AAT has a mirror 3.9 m in diameter, the largest in Australia. Its excellent optics, combined with its state-of-the-art instrumentation and detectors puts it in the forefront of astronomical research.⁴¹³

The Anglo Australian Observatory is one of the foremost observatories in the world and has been responsible for a number of advances in modern astronomy. It is used by scientists from all over the world. 'Competition for time on the telescope is intense, and only the projects with the most valuable scientific content are allocated time.'⁴¹⁴

Following the destruction of the Mount Stromlo Observatory in the January 2003 bushfires Siding Spring became the ANU's principal centre of astronomical research.⁴¹⁵

3.14 Transport

The history of the Warrumbungle Shire roads reflect both the broader history of the colony and also the shire's own experience with water. Speaking broadly, many of the earliest transport networks in NSW would have followed traditional Aboriginal routes. These would have followed the easiest route through an area, often following creeks or ridgelines. Many of the roads that developed early in the colony were formed around transport networks that had existed for perhaps many thousands of years. Many of the routes used today were formed by these old routes as the original settlers made their way through the bush to their outstations.

European settlers brought the horse and bullock drays or horse drawn wagons for heavy transport. As settlement developed in the area horse tracks developed. Some of these later developed into roads for heavier vehicles. Early road routes

⁴¹² Frame, T & Faulkner, D Stromlo: An Australian Observatory p144

⁴¹³ Anglo Australian Observatory 1999

⁴¹⁴ Anglo Australian Observatory 1999.

⁴¹⁵ Frame, T & Faulkner, D Stromlo: An Australian Observatory p275

tended to follow the lines of creeks and rivers, and the easier passes over ridgelines. By the 1860s a series of wool roads and tracks connected Coonabarabran to Coonamble, Mendooran, Maitland, Quirindi, Mullaley and Wee Waa.⁴¹⁶

Prior to the development of the local municipal council system the roads fell under the jurisdiction of initially Road Trusts, formed as a result of the Parish roads Act in 1840 and then, The Public Works Department until 1906 when the maintenance of local country roads passed from the Department of Public Works to the newly formed Municipal Councils. It was only the main roads that remained under the jurisdiction of Public Works.⁴¹⁷

In his memoir, *Time Means Tucker*, Duke Tritton, renowned swaggie, shearer and bush balladist, described the work of the bullocky. He noted two Coonabarabran region bullockies who were working in the early 20th century. Ned Inglis of Baradine, aged almost 70 in 1905, had been driving bullocks all of his adult life. Before the railway was constructed over the Blue Mountains in the 1860s he had carted 'wool from Tondeburine to Circular Quay. His father had two teams and Ned at fifteen was driving one'.⁴¹⁸ While fencing the boundary between Gumin and Gorianawa Tritton met Billy Harlow, 'a professor in the art of bullock driving'.⁴¹⁹ He described how Harlow cared for his bullocks and how he drove his teams.

*He never used a whip though he had one tied under the dray, and seldom spoke to his team above a normal voice. If he got into a tight place he would say in a reproving manner, "Well, what a useless lot of cows a man's stuck with," straighten them up and say, "Now then, you blanky blankards, show us what you can do." And I never saw them let him down.*⁴²⁰

Tritton noted that 'poor, patient bullocks ... played a mighty part in making Australia a good place to live in.'⁴²¹ Bullock teams handled bulk transportation around the country well into the 20th century.

The history of the roads and their creation and maintenance has been a major factor in the development of the shire. The nature of the geography, geology and topography of the shire and the way that water moves through the landscape has

⁴¹⁶ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. pp 42-43

⁴¹⁷ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* p49

⁴¹⁸ Tritton, HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* p68

⁴¹⁹ Tritton, HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* p55

⁴²⁰ Tritton, HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* p55

⁴²¹ Ibid

significantly influenced the development of transport networks and the effects of this flowed on into the areas of commerce, agriculture, pastoralism and industry.

The first form of transport for people into the region was privately owned horses and horse drawn vehicles. The arrival of the Cobb & Co coaches, from the 1870s onwards, opened up travel into towns in the central western NSW. The following account is of such a journey taken by Jessie Lloyd, in the mid 1870s, from Walgett via Mendooran to the railhead at Wallerawang:

Coach travelling is not the most delightful mode of conveyance, especially in the state that many of the roads are in – namely almost a state of nature, - and the construction of the coaches, built with such a singular disregard for comfort; but there is something about it that makes people more friendly than any other means of locomotion. A number of people are packed together, irrespective of station or sex; there is no first or second class to set up the barrier of caste, and after you have been splashed with the same mud, have swallowed the same dust, have been jolted on the same seats, to say nothing of having your heads knocked together on the same coach roof for several days, dining at the same table off the same goat or stagy beef, there is a bond of sympathy and union amongst you all that no other association gives. ⁴²²

Coaches would mostly have been used for longer distance travel, between larger towns for example. Local travel would have either been on horse and wagon, if you owned a horse and wagon or buggy or by walking.

The problems with the transport network and with roads specifically is possibly best illustrated in the creation of an old paved road near Baradine. It has been referred to recently as ‘a Chinese market garden road’ and previously as a convict built road. It is unusual in that it is partially constructed of rock that is not readily available in the local area. There have been two reports undertaken on this road. The first by Gaynor Wilson Archaeology in 2000 and the second by Ray Christison in 2008.

The initial report, instigated by the concerns of the local community, said the following:

According to Ron Cutts, this section of the road was very boggy there. According to local knowledge handed down over the years, the rocks for the road were carted from Goorianawa (about 30 km to SW) and laid by

⁴²² From a website – The Castlereagh, Stories and Images from the Castlereagh Highway in NSW
<http://thecastlereagh.blogspot.com.au/2012/07/hundred-miles-will-see-tonight-lights.html>

*convicts. It is locally known as the convict road. It is not known how old the road is.*⁴²³

In 2008 Ray Christison undertook a study of the road for the Council. Unfortunately no copy of this report has been found. He concluded that the road was actually more recent than had been previously thought. Discussions with both Professor Ian Jack, well known authority of heritage in the region and former Shire Engineer John Whitehead led Ray to conclude that it was not a convict road and may well have been constructed after the creation of the Coonabarabran Shire in 1908.⁴²⁴



The Baradine road – part of the road is still visible today (to the left of the dirt road, 2018)

Christison describes the road as ‘... a classic early macadamised road consistent with other macadamised roads in the west of the state.’⁴²⁵ The following definition of macadamised roads appeared in the Advocate in 1935:

A Macadamised Road is made on a plan devised by John McAdam, a Scottish engineer, born in 1756. The top soil is removed, coarse broken stone is laid on and the spaces between the fragment are filled up with fine

⁴²³ *Baradine Convict Road* Gaynor Wilson Archaeology 8 February 2000

⁴²⁴ Pers. Comm. with Ray Christison 30 October 2017

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*

*cracked stone. Then over the whole is placed a layer of broken granite and stone dust, which is rolled in.*⁴²⁶

Christison goes on to point out that the road sits within a travelling stock route and appears to conform with the alignment of a track that followed Milchomi Creek north from Baradine to Pilliga and that this alignment was still in use in the early 20th century.⁴²⁷ It was a public road and connected a number of homesteads that were established along Milchomi Creek.⁴²⁸

The road is in need of both recording and further research. It is a significant element of cultural heritage and is in a condition requiring attention. The significance of this road, amongst other things, is how it illustrates the pressures on transport networks in the area and the attempts that were taken to mitigate the geographical and climatic conditions. It tells an important story about the Warrumbungle Shire.

As late as the 1870s the roads of the district were still being referred to as 'bush tracks'. A programme of government road building resulted in improvements in the condition of roads and the creation of new road routes. These included the new road to Gunnedah referred to above and a road via Warkton and Merrygoen to Mendooran. A road bridge, constructed over the Castlereagh River in 1885, created an all weather crossing. The main route to Coolah was via Purlewaugh Road. The road gangs employed to construct and maintain these roads helped to expand the population of the district.⁴²⁹

Roy Cameron has written about the coaching days in Coolah:

*During the early days for coaches using the Coolah – Mullaley Road there were no bridges erected at the crossing of Binna Creek, Oakey Creek, Bomera Creek, Cox's Creek and other streams subject to flooding. Some of the creeks beds were not even stoned. The first timber bridge was erected at Coxs Creek in 1890, eliminating the deep and unsafe crossing. ... All of the early constructed timber bridges on the Coolah to Mullaley Road were replaced in the 1930s. Replacement of these structures with reinforced concrete bridges did not commence until the 1950s.*⁴³⁰

3.1.5.1 Railway

⁴²⁶ *Advocate* 26.03.1935 p7

⁴²⁷ Pers. Comm. With Ray Christison 30.10.2017

⁴²⁸ *Ibid*

⁴²⁹ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning* pp115-116

⁴³⁰ Cameron R *Coaching on Roads from Mudgee through Coolah to Gunnedah*

The development of the railway was a significant development in transport not only once it arrived in the Warrumbungle Shire but prior to that. Interestingly Humphrey Macqueen makes the following point about the arrival of railways in country towns and its impact:

Railways both weakened and strengthened country towns. The trains that helped farmers send their produce to market also let city businesses take trade away from local firms. ... Because so many farms were too small to split up amongst all the sons boys moved to the city to work in unskilled jobs with the railways and tramways. Country girls took jobs as shop assistants in the suburbs; their bush manners kept them out of the larger stores.⁴³¹

The impact of the railway in some towns was significant and it is argued that without it some of the towns in the region would not have developed. Dunedoo is such a town; its development is said to have stalled until the railway arrived in 1910. It was not until that point that agriculture in that area was taken up in a significant way. Binnaway too was boosted by the arrival of the railway and went on to become the railway town of the area and still provides accommodation for railway workers working in the Shire.

Prior to the actual arrival of the railway in the Shire its impact was felt as transport began to run between railway stations. So for example the above mentioned coach trip was made to a railway station at Wallerawang. Coach lines began adapting routes and timetables to accommodate the new rail system.

The arrival of the railway in the colony generally, from the 1850s onwards, was not without considerable discussion amongst local communities and railway committees regarding the route that the railway should take. The railway arrived in Wellington in mid 1880 and coaches would meet the train and travel to towns where they would meet connecting services on to other areas of the shire. A connecting service, for example, from the train at Wellington to Mendooran would then meet up with another connecting service to Mudgee.⁴³²

The railway finally arrived in the Shire via Dunedoo after much debate regarding its route. Originally there was to be a line from Wellington to Werris Creek but the committee, after some years of debate:

⁴³¹ MacQueen H *Social Sketches of Australia 1888 – 2001* p54

⁴³² Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* 2007 p45

*...have arrived at the conclusion that it is not expedient the proposed railway should be constructed ... the country is very sparsely populated and though the construction of the line would probably increase the amount of agricultural production and perhaps settlement, in the district, it does not appear that the extent of the increase would be very material.*⁴³³

It was concluded that the land, outside of the existing large stations, in the area was not suitable for significant agricultural undertakings and it was decided that that a new route should be explored. The new proposal would favour the Warrumbungle Shire:

*Much of the country through which the proposed line would pass, including the mining district of Leadville, would, the committee considered, be better served by a railway suggested in their report upon the railway from Dubbo to Coonamble and regarded favourably in the district viz. from Mudgee to the country east of Cobbora in the direction of Dunedoo, and on towards Caigan, eventually continuing northwards in the direction of Coonabarabran.*⁴³⁴

The committee also drew attention to the poor condition of the roads in the shire and were concerned that if a railway was introduced into the area then the roads might not get the attention they needed.⁴³⁵ The first mention of the desire to connect the northern and western rail lines is mentioned in the press in 1897.⁴³⁶ The debate continued for some time. Meetings were held in Cobbora, Dunedoo and Tallerawang in December 1905 and were well attended: 'Large landholders in the district ... stated that where they were cultivating 500 acres they would increase the cultivation to 4000 acres or 5000 acres.'⁴³⁷

The public works committee eventually, in August 1906, decided in favour of the Mudgee to Dunedoo railway route and it was announced in the press on 11 August 1906.⁴³⁸

The official opening of the Gulgong to Dunedoo extension was held on Saturday 26 November 1910.⁴³⁹ However, the impact of the WWI on the railway's development in the region was soon felt. People were moved off the railway and

⁴³³ *The Daily Telegraph* 30.08.1900 p5

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*

⁴³⁵ *Ibid*

⁴³⁶ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 23.10.1892 p2

⁴³⁷ *The Maitland Daily Mercury* 6.12.1905 p4

⁴³⁸ *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* 11.08.1906 p12

⁴³⁹ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent* 3.12.1910 p3

retrenchments were made in terms of both labour and management and work proceeded slowly from that point.

Work commenced on the Dubbo end of the Dubbo-Mendooran Werris Creek Railway on 17 November 1913 by the Public Works Department. By April 1918 the line had extended to Merrygoen, the junction point on the Mudgee - Binnaway Line and the station buildings at Mendooran were finished by 10 August 1918.⁴⁴⁰

The railway reached Binnaway on April 2 1917 and was a part of the branch line that travelled north from Wallerawang to Gwabegar, reached in 1923.⁴⁴¹

Binnaway went on to become the railway town of the shire. An additional railway line connecting Dubbo to Werris Creek via Binnaway was opened in April 1923 providing rail transport to Weetalaliba and Bomera.⁴⁴² The Craboon-Coolah branch line opened on 20 March 1920.⁴⁴³

The railway arrived in Baradine on 15 December 1923 and a monster public picnic was held attended by an estimated number of between 600 – 800 people.⁴⁴⁴

The impact of the arrival of the railway on the timber industry was significant. When the timber industry was in its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s hundreds of sleeper cutters worked in the forests and in the 1950s thousands of sleepers were railed out of Gwabegar, Kenebri and Baradine each month. Max Clare, formerly of Gwabegar recalled the railway bringing the circus to towns along the line and the railmotor which, during the years of World War II, ran a special service to carry people from as far away as Gwabegar into Coonabarabran to attend the annual Masonic Ball. 'The Clares remember the rail motor, driven by well-known Binnaway driver Ben Wakeling, stopping along the line to pick up people and pick flowers alongside the line.'⁴⁴⁵

The railway was used extensively throughout the first half of the twentieth century but started to decline from the 1960s. The mass introduction of the family motor car would have played a role here. Coonabarabran and Binnaway stations were closed in 1990 and by 1997 very little railway infrastructure

⁴⁴⁰ Cameron, R *Thematic History – Coolah Shire Area* 2004 p 28

⁴⁴¹ From website *Historic NSW Railway Stations*

⁴⁴² Christison, R *Thematic History of the former Coonabarabran Shire* 2007 p45

⁴⁴³ Cameron

⁴⁴⁴ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p61

⁴⁴⁵ Christison, R *Thematic History of the Former Coonabarabran Shire* 2007 p45

remained on the Gwabegar line past Binnaway and in 2005 the line was closed beyond Coonabarabran.⁴⁴⁶

3.1.5.2 Air Travel

In 1929 the Department of Defence advised that it would provide assistance in identifying the site of an aerodrome. At this time Council moved to reserve a block of land on the western side of the racecourse for this purpose.⁴⁴⁷ In 1932 Coonabarabran Council commenced development of an aerodrome on the outskirts of the town of Coonabarabran. Development of this project was progressed as an unemployment relief scheme in the Great Depression and subsequent Commonwealth funding allowed for its upgrade.⁴⁴⁸

In the late 1950s Coonabarabran Council considered expanding its aerodrome to accommodate commercial airlines. The development of a new airport on the Nandi Plateau was considered and approaches made to Ansett Airlines and Airlines of New South Wales regarding the possibility of establishing a regular airline service. In February 1960 Airlines of New South Wales advised that they would be interested in commencing a five-day per week service if a suitable airport was developed.⁴⁴⁹ Parallel representations were made to the Department of Civil Aviation regarding the selection of a suitable site and the Shire Engineer also prepared estimates for the construction of an airstrip capable of carrying commercial aircraft.⁴⁵⁰ It is now one of the most significant pieces of transport infrastructure in the area.

In Coolah steps were taken by Coolah Council to provide land suitable for use as a landing ground in 1951.⁴⁵¹ ‘Queensborough’ was chosen, was approved in 1952 and construction started in 1954 and from that year flights from Sydney were made twice weekly until 1955 when this was increased to three times per week.⁴⁵² This service was cancelled in 1967 and replaced with a car service from the airfield and Mudgee.

The aerodrome in Mendooran was located approximately 4km out of town on a property known as *Closeburn*.⁴⁵³ It was cleared by volunteer labour and Butler

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid p47

⁴⁴⁷ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 8 February 1929

⁴⁴⁸ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 9 November 1937

⁴⁴⁹ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 16 February 1960

⁴⁵⁰ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 21 July 1959 & 21 June 1960

⁴⁵¹ Cameron, R *Around the Black Stump* p169

⁴⁵² Ibid

⁴⁵³ Cameron, R *Around the Black Stump* p215

transport began flights from there on 10 December 1934.⁴⁵⁴ In 1943-44 Mendooran dropped from the flight schedule and the service then operated from Sydney to Tooraweenah.⁴⁵⁵

Baradine also had an aerodrome that was constructed by the residents of the town and ran a twice weekly feeder service from Tooraweenah to Baradine in 1951. ⁴⁵⁶ It is not known how long this service operated for.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid

⁴⁵⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 13.01.1951 p15

4. Building settlements, towns and cities

4.1 Accommodation

Aboriginal people, prior to white settlement, had been constructing shelters from a variety of materials sourced from the bush. Bruce Pascoe's recent work reveals many different kinds of housing built by Aboriginal people throughout Australia. These include dome structures built out of grass or paperbark and palm leaves.⁴⁵⁷ In colder climates other examples include the following;

*Stone was sometimes used as an alternative to clay daubing... The interstices between stones being mortared with mud ... Occasionally, domes dwellings had a small veranda attached over the doorway, with a single wall in the weather side to provide protection for a fire lit in the doorway for the comfort of anyone sitting outside the house.*⁴⁵⁸

No such examples have been found in the Warrumbungles region but this research indicates that in all likelihood some constructions would have been erected to provide comfort in cold or hot weather. However Aboriginal people would have been adept at stripping bark off trees used by the first settlers in creating the initial accommodation for white people in this area. Stripping bark not only provided materials for the construction of shelters but was also a sought after, highly marketable skill upon the arrival of white settlement.⁴⁵⁹

Upon the arrival of white settlement to the Warrumbungle Shire the new arrivals created rough first shelters having few resources to dedicate to the construction of more substantial accommodation. Canvas tents and barks shelters were often used in the early days of settlement.⁴⁶⁰ The focus, during these early years of the Colony, was the production of food and, more specifically, cash crops. As settlement became more established and squatters began to amass wealth they often erected more substantial houses. These properties would often have not only a homestead but also residences for staff, accommodation for seasonal workers and barns and sheds for storing produce and equipment.⁴⁶¹

Many of the early settlers built huts of bark and shingle, split slabs or wattle and daub. Rolls described the process of curing bark and setting it as roofing material:

⁴⁵⁷ Pascoe, B *Dark Emu* p120

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid

⁴⁵⁹ Jackson Nakano A, G *The Pajong and Wallaballoo* p113

⁴⁶⁰ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* p47

⁴⁶¹ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* p48

When the sheet of bark was lifted off (the tree) it immediately rolled up. Two men straightened it and held it to soften over a low fire. Then they spread it flat and weighted it to dry. The overlapped sheets were held on the roof by crossed saplings known as 'outriggers' or 'over purlins' lashed to the purlins... On earlier roofs they were lashed with greenhide. Sometimes they were pegged down with wooden pegs. Ironbark pegs, round or square, dried slowly over a fire were almost as long lasting as nails.⁴⁶²

Many early houses were roofed or clad in shingles. The development of corrugated galvanised iron in 1847 revolutionised building design and construction in Australia. Cash constrained selectors, however continued to build houses of traditional materials well into the 20th century.

In some communities materials for houses were scrounged from the refuse of the developing industrial economies of Britain and Australia. Packaging materials such as wooden crates and kerosene tins were used to build the houses of the poorest well into the 20th century. Marie Dundas described the house her family built behind the showground after they left Burra Bee Dee and moved to Coonabarabran:

We built the house of whatever we could find ... If we had a piece of good tin, we'd think we was the best kids in the scrub. Cardboard – we built it out of tin first – then they'd go chop the poles... then the tin on the roof, then we'd go down to Billy Neilson's at the goods shed and get every cardboard box 'e 'ad, then buy a packet of tacks, that's our walls, cardboard walls ... if it rained too much we had to throw the walls away and go down the goods shed and get more walls.⁴⁶³

As the post industrial revolution world impacted increasingly on the Warrumbungle Shire housing styles grew to reflect national and international trends. The towns in the area tend to reflect the patterns of house construction that have prevailed across Australia at various times, although regional variations are quite strong. Baradine contains many houses built and lined with the fine timber products of the Pilliga. Coonabarabran and Binnaway contain many examples of a distinctly regional style of timber house. These houses of Edwardian style are characterised by walls clad in rusticated weatherboards that are set as drop panels. Many have narrow bay windows surmounted by a flying gable. Commercial and civic examples of this style of construction include the West End Bakery in Dalgarno Street, the former Bugaldie Catholic Church and the Warkton School of Arts.

⁴⁶² Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p292

⁴⁶³ Somerville, M et al *The Sun Dancin', People and Place in Coonabarabran*. pp151-152

Much housing in Binnaway reflects the impact of the development of the railway and locomotive depot. Streets of similar, railway pattern cottages characterise many parts of that town.

Published histories contain many accounts of the types and standard of accommodation in the district. Elva Shumack's history of soldier settlement at Goolhi describes the settlers originally making-do in the group accommodation afforded by the old Goolhi homestead, later moving into sheds, caravans, tents or rough shelters and eventually building houses on their selected blocks. Many of the settlers purchased pre-cut homes.⁴⁶⁴

The Southern end of Leadville was known as 'Tin Town' during the earlier half of the twentieth century, referring to the tin that the housing in that part of the town was made out of.⁴⁶⁵

The style of housing in Coolah, like the other towns in the shire, is predominantly characterised by early Twentieth Century period timber weatherboard cottages, which reflects both a period of growth within the town and that timber was the most readily obtainable building material in the district. A number of more substantial brick dwellings do exist in the township in the Federation and California bungalow styles reflecting the building material of choice for more affluent citizens who also sought to be keeping apace with the most current building styles.

Housing in Dunedoo is similarly characterised by early to Mid-Twentieth Century timber weatherboard cottages, often later reclad in fibre cement sheets or imitation weatherboards. Some of the finer, and more substantial homes are constructed of brick in the Inter-War California Bungalow Style.

4.2 Land Tenure

Prior to European settlement land tenure across Australia 'was based upon birth and kinship rights subtly melded into a complete cosmology of life, birth, death and existence, which did not depend on separating land from person'.⁴⁶⁶

European settlers envisaged a totally different relationship to the land. They came with doctrines that saw land as a resource to be used for profit. The first pastoralists moved sheep and cattle into the area, beyond the boundaries of the

⁴⁶⁴ Shumack, E *Going Bush to Goolhi* pp46-63

⁴⁶⁵ Pers.Comm. John Horne Janury 2018

⁴⁶⁶ Kass T *Thematic History of the Central West* P52

colony, to supplement the pastures of their landholdings in other areas. Some of these people never saw the land on which their stock were pastured. In 1836 Governor Brisbane legalised squatting beyond the limits of the 19 Counties.⁴⁶⁷

The largest stations in NSW ran like small villages providing housing for workers and even a chapel, with attendance compulsory by convicts.⁴⁶⁸ Even smaller stations were extremely self-sufficient having 'stores' on site holding sufficient supplies to enable the property to run for up to 6 months.⁴⁶⁹ A description of such a property was published in the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 10 July 1873 p4:

Weetalibah looks like a little township as you approach it ... The house is a large one, two stories, with store and detached schoolhouse and gardens front and back. There are besides the residences of Mrs McMaster and Mr McPherson the superindendent, houses for stockmen, carpenters and fencers, blacksmith's forge and a large woolshed with huts for shearers. [there are also 5 dams and a creek]⁴⁷⁰

The following decades saw a transition in the economy and governance of New South Wales. The first steps to responsible government were taken under the Constitution Act of 1842, transportation of convicts ceased and land ownership laws were amended to allow for the purchase of improved crown lands. These and subsequent changes saw an increase in the occupation of smaller landholdings and a gradual increase in the number of pastoral properties owned and occupied by families. An Act 'for regulating the Waste Lands belonging to the Crown in the Australian Colonies' was passed by the British Parliament in 1846 and brought into effect in 1847 through Orders in Council. These Orders in Council divided New South Wales into three districts:

- Settled Districts – the original 19 counties plus the counties of Macquarie and Stanley.
- Intermediate Districts – runs of up to 1600 acres could be leased for eight years with additional fees for larger holdings.
- Unsettled Districts – comprising much of New South Wales. Leases of 14 years could be granted for each run of 3,200 acres.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ Morrisey, S *The Pastoral Economy 1821-1850* P59

⁴⁶⁸ Jupp J *The English in Australia* p22

⁴⁶⁹ Lloyd H *Boorowa – One Hundred and Sixty Years of White Settlement* p6

⁴⁷⁰ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 10 July 1873 p4

⁴⁷¹ Stuart I *The Surveyor's Lot: Making Landscapes in NSW* p43

During the term of these leases the lessee 'had the right to make a pre-emptive purchase'. By the 1840s most of south-eastern Australia had been leased under these arrangements and the squatters were quickly perceived as having 'locked up' the land.⁴⁷²

Various legislative actions by the New South Wales Parliament during the late 19th century attempted to break the hegemony of the squatters over pastoral land and break the large landholdings of this group. The Robertson Land Acts of 1861 allowed for the selection of blocks of land from 40 to 320 acres. This legislation was intended to encourage immigration and create a class of landed yeomanry similar to that which existed in England. Many squatters used dummy purchasers to secure parts of properties over which they already held leases.

The free selection system allowed people with very little capital to take up landholdings at a cost of £1 per acre with a deposit of only 5 shillings per acre being required. They had the option of completing the purchase after three years or of paying five percent interest more or less indefinitely on the balance. ... In the short term, free selectors were tenants of the Crown on very favourable terms. At least in theory but, in practice, selectors often had little capital beyond the deposit.⁴⁷³

The Crown Lands Resumption Act of 1884 was another government sponsored attempt to break up large landholdings. It required the halving of large properties leased from the Crown. Many large runs were broken up and portions subdivided for sale. Selection of land continued into the 20th century. This was supplemented after World War I and World War II by the soldier settlement schemes that continued the process of closer settlement.⁴⁷⁴

4.2.1 Soldier Settlements

Part of the strategy for absorbing the larger estates in the first half of the twentieth century was the establishment of soldier settlements after WWI. This strategy was developed to enable returning soldiers to make a living upon their return. In the framework of the strategy it is clear that the basis of the plan had the welfare of the soldiers at heart. Unfortunately, for many however, it was to prove at best unworkable and for some hopeless.

⁴⁷² Ibid p44

⁴⁷³ Townsend N *Living on the Land: an Enterprising Selector* P176

⁴⁷⁴ Robinson C *One of these Days ...* p41

In the Warrumbungle Shire there were a number of soldier settlements that were established after WWI and interest again surfaced, for a short period, after the WWII. The settlements included Oban near Coolah, and Pine Ridge, Lawson Park near Leadville and The Folly at Hannah's Bridge. There were also individual holdings in the area and another soldier settlement in Goolhi.

4.2.1.1 Oban

Oban was originally a property held by William Lawson and it was held in that family until it was sold to Duncan McMaster in 1902.⁴⁷⁵ It remained in that family until it was sold in 1910 to PH Morton who subdivided it and resold parts of the property in 440 acre lots.⁴⁷⁶ At this stage the property had a 'very fine' homestead, parts of which dated back to the time of William Lawson. It also had gardens, orchards, a 'very fine supply of water (from elevated tanks into which the water had been pumped from a well) and a woolshed constructed of wood and iron containing 14 Wolseley shearing machines driven by a 4 hp steam engine.⁴⁷⁷

In 1917 the government acquired 8 800 of the best acres of the Oban Estate for Closer Settlement. The annual report of the Lands Department for 1919 stated that the Oban Settlement had been subdivided into 41 blocks of which 25 were occupied by settlers with the blocks varying from 135 to 690 acres.⁴⁷⁸

Oban was one of the first soldier settlement areas to be developed in NSW and by 1917 it already had returned soldiers working on holdings in the area. *The Sunday Times* reported that returned soldiers were allowed to begin work from Monday the 29th of October 1917 at the Oban Soldiers' Settlement.⁴⁷⁹ Problems had already begun to arise. The soldiers had been told that water was obtainable at '30 ft all over'.⁴⁸⁰ This was not the case and the government was forced to provide a bore for use by the settlers.⁴⁸¹ At this stage soldiers were being given a year's 'apprenticeship' on the land at Oban in order to prove that they were capable of taking on a holding. Of this the local papers published the following: 'If all the settlers hereabouts, or in the State for that matter, only got a year to in which to make good they would have all been rejected.'⁴⁸² It goes on to say:

⁴⁷⁵ Cameron, R Job, K *Around the Black Stump* p170

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid

⁴⁷⁸ *The Farmer and Settler* 16.11.1923

⁴⁷⁹ *Sunday Times* 14 October 1917 p2

⁴⁸⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 24.05 1917 p12

⁴⁸¹ Ibid

⁴⁸² Ibid

*The returned soldiers on Oban are a sorry plight. The government is going to make every soldier serve a year's apprenticeship on the land before they will give him any land. If the soldier does not display all the virtues said to be possessed by the original pioneers of this country, they will get the order of the boot.*⁴⁸³

The experience of the Oban Settlement varies considerably from the Lands Department reports and the newspaper reports of the same period. A Departmental report for 1919 stated:

*Oban is admirably suitable for dairying and tenders are being called for the erection of a butter factory. When this is established, provided the seasons are all favourable the success of the settlement is assured.*⁴⁸⁴

The introduction of both the railway and the Soldier Settlement Scheme led to plans of developing the dairy industry in the region generally. Oban Butter Factory was one of the results of this and was originally stimulated by government but was eventually taken over by the local community (*refer to Section 3.9 Industry*).

An enquiry into the Soldier Settlement Scheme in 1920 raised questions about Oban and specifically regarding the development of the butter factory.⁴⁸⁵ It would appear that the manager of the butter factory had been appointed 2 years prior to it opening and questions were asked about this and the grounds and basis for the employment of the manager.⁴⁸⁶



Oban Soldier Settlement – 'A Typical View' (Government Printing Office, State Library, undated)

⁴⁸³ Ibid

⁴⁸⁴ Cameron, R Job, K *Around the Black Stump* p173

⁴⁸⁵ *The Daily Telegraph* 6.20.1920 p11

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid

Within three years of the above mentioned enquiry both the butter factory and the soldier settlement had failed. Part of this failure was a result of the blocks being too small to farm productively given the nature of the local conditions, specifically the topography and the local water. However there were a number of other factors, to do with the way that the settlement operated that also contributed to its demise.

Even prior to the above mentioned inquiry into the Oban Butter Factory there had been a previous, more general, inquiry into the running of the Oban Soldier Settlement. This enquiry is detailed in an article titled *The Callousness of Red Tape* in June 1920.⁴⁸⁷ There are a series of complaints about the mistreatment of the soldiers upon their arrival at the settlement. These issues were largely focused on the economic difficulty that the soldiers were experiencing and the manner in which the government was responding to both these issues and the complaints that they were receiving.

When the soldiers arrived there were already 10 000 sheep on the property and 3 of the farms had lucerne crops on them. Once it was realised how much money was to be made from the sheep by the government the soldiers were promised that the profits would be credited against their accounts.⁴⁸⁸ They were credited for the sheep but then charged 3s per chain for the work they were then doing on fences.⁴⁸⁹

The soldiers enquired about the lucerne but they were not permitted to use or sell it. On 3 farms the lucerne was cut and when sufficiently dry it was 'deliberately destroyed' by fire:

Altogether the crops were on about 150 acres, averaging half a tone to the acre were wantonly destroyed. The remainder was put into 4 stacks, averaging about 40 tons in each stack and left on one of the farms. In the following winter, when grass was short, some of the settlers asked an inspector for permission to use some of the hay for their horses, and were refused. Later however, they were permitted to take some and quantities were given away to outsiders. But before one stack was exhausted someone set fire to the lot and burnt it. The result was that while this good feed was

⁴⁸⁷ *The Farmer and Settler* 4.11.1919 p3

⁴⁸⁸ *The Farmer and Settler* 4.11.1919 p3

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*

destroyed for absolutely no known reason, the men were forced to purchase fodder for their horses. ⁴⁹⁰

This economic question was one that was to remain an issue for the soldiers throughout the scheme. Many soldiers ended up with more debt than the land was worth with the loan for the land, loans for stock and plant and some were also given an advance to enable them to live and work the holdings.⁴⁹¹ As the *Daily Telegraph* stated in 1922 ‘if the overburden of debt is too heavy even competent settlers cannot make good.’⁴⁹²

The following year, 1923, the Oban Soldier Settlement was closed and the blocks, were resurveyed and thrown open for general settlement.



*Oban Soldier Settlement – Married Men Quarters
(Government Printing Office, State Library, undated)*

4.2.1.2 Leadville and Hannah’s Bridge

There were two soldier settlements near Leadville; Pine Ridge and Lawson Park and a third one ‘The Folly’ at Hannah’s Bridge. Lawson Park Estate and The Folly at Hannah’s Bridge were both advertised for applications from returned soldiers in November 1918.⁴⁹³ Pine Ridge was north-west of the town, then comprised of 16000 acres it was purchased from Mr Buckland by the state

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid

⁴⁹¹ *Daily Telegraph* 25.08.1922 p3

⁴⁹² Ibid

⁴⁹³ *The Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 07.11.1918 p26

government in 1919.⁴⁹⁴ This was divided into 30 blocks and the second, Lawson Park with 12 blocks was located to the west.⁴⁹⁵

Pine Ridge had been previously owned by MR JA Buckland and his patriotism is commented in articles appearing in newspapers at the time. He kept the property well maintained until the soldiers arrived 'keeping things good for the soldiers':

*The fruit yard and vineyard are being properly pruned and the flower and vegetable gardens planted with new plants. Carpentering and blacksmiths work is being effectively done. The destruction of rabbits still proceeds and it is understood the station hands are being kept on until the last. ... The owner's motto is "Carry On" to the very last. The government will make one of their best purchases when they take possession of this property, which they will receive in excellent order.*⁴⁹⁶

All of these soldier settlements were in operation in 1920 which was, by all accounts, a great season and harvest. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that 'The crops are the best for years' in 1920 and that '...it is estimated that the quantity of wheat to be shipped by the railway from this district will approximate 70 000 bushells.'⁴⁹⁷

It is said that the soldiers were influential in the town of Leadville, which has been described as 'their town'.⁴⁹⁸ In 1920 the following appeared in the local newspaper:

*On Thursday night Leadville was treated to a very musical treat by the Gallipoli Strollers, who gave a most interesting programme. The company are all returned soldiers. Their performance is good, clean through and free from all vulgarity.*⁴⁹⁹

It is in the above that we get a glimpse of what the soldier settlements could have been for the returned soldiers. Providing support and income that many of the soldiers would have needed upon their return, many of whom would have suffered what we now understand to be post-traumatic stress disorders,

⁴⁹⁴ *The Sydney Stock and Station Journal* 11.04.1919 p20

⁴⁹⁵ Pers.Comm. John Horne January 2018

⁴⁹⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 19.06.1919 p1

⁴⁹⁷ *Daily Telegraph* 07.12.1920 p7

⁴⁹⁸ Pers. Comm John Horne January 2018

⁴⁹⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 11.11.1920 p24

something that remained undiagnosed throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century, if not longer.

By 1922 however the soldiers' luck had turned and the *Farmer and Settler* reports that soldier settlers on Pine Ridge are 'having a rather hard time' and by the following year the Minister agreed to visit both Pine Ridge and Lawson Park in order to respond to deep concerns regarding the ongoing survival of the settlements. There had been a drought since 1920 and the heat of that summer was described by long time locals as 'the worst ever' getting approximately 12 inches of rain in the prior twelve months rather than the usual annual rainfall of 27 inches.⁵⁰⁰

The minister arrived in Leadville in October 1924 and a variety of requests were made designed to make the lot of the soldier easier. These requests included a suspension of loan repayments until January 1926 and that payments be made in ten equal instalments to be made after the term now allotted for completion of payment for land amongst other requests.⁵⁰¹ In essence the response they got was a political one. They were told that all of the loans had to be paid back to the Commonwealth by 1950 'It was largely dependent upon the improvements made to the holdings. He could not give a definite answer at present but he would put it before the Cabinet at an early date.'⁵⁰²

In 1924 a correspondent from Leadville wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*: 'After nearly 5 years' experience on the land in the Leadville district one is reluctantly forced to the conclusion that larger areas are an absolute necessity if soldier settlements are to be successful.'⁵⁰³ He goes on to describe the blocks located at The Folly, Lawson Park and the Pine Ridge group settlements. 'On the first 2 the acres originally allotted approximated 280 acres whilst on the last the holdings vary from 300 to 1000 acres and 1 block of mountainous thickly timbered country amounts to 2800 acres.'⁵⁰⁴

Size of the blocks and the marginal nature of a lot of the land that these soldier settlements was on played a significant role in the degree of success that was attained. Another factor in the success of these settlements pertained to the degree of familiarity with the rural lifestyle. In NSW by the time the

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid

⁵⁰¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 23.10.1924 p27

⁵⁰² Ibid

⁵⁰³ Ibid 01.09.1924 p8

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid

settlements were operating there was no other criteria required other than the being a returned soldier in order to successfully attain land in these settlements. Victoria, conversely, ensured that the returned soldiers 'hold a special certificate that he has some practical knowledge of the land.'⁵⁰⁵ The percentage of failures in Victoria, it is said, were significantly lower than in NSW as a result of this.⁵⁰⁶ There is one soldier settler, from Pine Ridge, who survived until the late 1930s and further. In many ways he illustrates the previous points made regarding land size and experience. Mr Stewart Wright of Enfield was one of the original 30 blockholders on the Pine Ridge Estate and he was still there, and winning agricultural competitions in 1936.⁵⁰⁷ He himself had 'been a native of Mudgee', and so had a familiarity with agricultural life but had also increased the size of his holdings considerably over the years that followed his original purchase.⁵⁰⁸

His original block was 883 acres and he added a further 240 acres and grew lucerne, wool, fat lambs and grew wheat. An account of him and the soldier settlements follows:

*Mr Wright struck lean years when he first took up Enfield in 1920, but he stuck to the place until the seasons favoured him and is now well established. He is a young man, with plenty of initiative, energy and enthusiasm and is one of the band of stalwarts who have made the Pine Ridge and Lawson's Creek soldier settlements two of the few successful ventured of this kind in the state.*⁵⁰⁹

In 1936 a new school was opened at Pine Ridge indicating that the settlement had indeed succeeded.

'The Folly' at Hannah's Bridge opened at the same time as the Lawson Park Settlement but little is known about it to date. It was said to have had the advantage of having established lucerne crops in the area.⁵¹⁰ A reference from 1928 says the following 'A number of returned soldiers have repatriation blocks on 'The Folly' a well-known district property and from all appearances they are doing well.'⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁵ *Daily Telegraph* 25.08.1922 p5

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁰⁷ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 14.05.1936 p3

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁰⁹ *The Farmer and Settler* 09.05.1935 p3

⁵¹⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 14.05.1936 p3

⁵¹¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 23.08.1928 p3



Oban Soldier Settlement – erecting gates.
(Government Printing Office –Trove)

4.2.1.3 Coonabarabran

Soldier settlement schemes in the Coonabarabran district included the post World War I schemes at Ulamambri, Purlawaugh and Rocky Glen and the post World War II scheme at Goolhi. The difficulties experienced by many of the post World War I soldier settlers is revealed in the ongoing saga of rates arrears brought before the Coonabarabran Shire Council. A report of February 1929 noted arrears owed on 53 soldier settler properties across the shire. These arrears totalled £2,100.⁵¹² The situation was worsened by the Great Depression with ongoing representations being made by returned soldiers' organisations on behalf of these persons during the 1930s.

It is noted that there were some successful soldier settlement in the LGA. The settlement at Goolhi remains a sustainable farming area and there are individual farms through the LGA, separate from settlement communities, that also continued operating into the present day.

4.3 Towns, suburbs and villages

The earliest buildings to be constructed in the area were built of slab, pise and had bark rooves. Indeed much of this bark would have been provided by the Aboriginal people in the area as settlers often procured bark from Aboriginal people at this time.⁵¹³ The construction of building from brick occurred later in the town's history when bricks were more readily available but would have been a more expensive option due to the need to transport them.

⁵¹² From *Minutes of Finance Committee Coonabarabran Shire Council 8/02/1929*

⁵¹³ Jackson Nakano A, *The Pajong and Wallabaloo* p113

There were many towns in the Warrumbungle Shire throughout its history, many of which did not survive into the latter half of the twentieth century. The survival of towns in the area depended on a variety of different, often uncontrollable, factors. The main factors included climatic issues such as droughts and floods but arguably more important to the ongoing survival of towns was changes to transport and transport networks. Some towns were able to find alternative industries to agriculture and pastoralism, both of which were influenced significantly by climate and transport. Baradine became a forestry based town and Binnaway based itself around the railway.

Other factors came into play in terms of the historical development of towns in the area. The establishment of towns whose role it was to administrate also played a role in the way that a town operated as part of a larger network. Cassilis, not a part of the Warrumbungle Shire, was an important administrative centre in the early days of the colony, it had police barracks and courts, and so early in the Shire's history Cassilis was an important town to the region. This changed as other towns were given resources that enabled them to manage and administrate. Arguably the most important in the early days was the police and court facilities that enabled prisoners to be managed appropriately. As other towns gained these resources then the role of Cassilis changed in the region and so it is as if energy flowed throughout a network of small towns and fluctuated depending on a range of factors.

It is important to note that the size and nature of towns changed over time depending on their commercial viability which was influenced significantly by changes to transport networks. The arrival of the railway could make or break a town and this is reflected in the numerous railway leagues that were formed during this period, including the Cobbora Railway League and the Mendooran Railway League, which were created in order to lobby for the railway to come through the various towns. The impact of the railway when it came was significant.

Possibly the best example of this is the Cobbora – Dunedoo change. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century Cobbora was the main town in the southern parts of the shire and Geurie was the base for Cobbora Shire Council which was the local government body in the area. Prior to 1910 Dunedoo was struggling as a town but was advantaged by having the railway arrive. The shift in energy between the town towns can be isolated to this point in time. Over the next few decades the energy moves and with it Cobbora Shire Council who then started to conduct their meetings in Dunedoo. The Cobbora community still

survives into the 21st century but as a much smaller populations. Similar stories exist for many of the small towns that did not survive in the region.

4.3.1 Baradine

When Oxley travelled through the Pilliga Forest area in 1818, near where Baradine sits today, the expedition encountered severe rains that led to the whole party becoming bogged in the mud. Bogs, a bit like quicksand, caught the expedition, the horses were stuck in the mud up to their bellies and:

*For 5 kms the weakened horses ploughed furrows through the soupy mud till they came out on to firmer ground. When their drastic loads were taken off they lay down they were, panting like dogs. ... Oxley concluded 'The Forest must at all times be impassable' he wrote 'In wet season it is a bog; in dry one there is no water.'*⁵¹⁴

The next Europeans to come through this area would have been private exploratory journeys by pastoralists and their agents.⁵¹⁵ The area was settled later than some of the other towns although people and stock would have been moving through the area north from the Liverpool Plains through either to Maitland and Newcastle to access transport or through to Sydney for sale.

The first people to be given a pasturage licence in the area were James Walker and Andrew Brown.⁵¹⁶ In 1837 Walker was issued a licence for a station called 'Barradean' it is believed to have been run by Walker but actually owned by Andrew Brown, who was one of the most successful graziers in colonial NSW.⁵¹⁷ Walker ran Baradean and Goorianawa for 28 years, until he died and then in 1846, after the introduction of the Waste Lands Act of that year, both runs were leased.⁵¹⁸

The 40 acres land that made up the historic town of Baradine was originally a part of the Baradean Run and it was gazetted for the purpose of a town on 17 April 1862.⁵¹⁹ The town itself is said to have evolved around an intersection of roads branching out to Coonabarabran, Walgett and Coonamble.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁴ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acres* p8

⁵¹⁵ Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* p 15

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid* p14

⁵¹⁷ Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* Sunnlyland Publishing 2015 p14

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid*

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid* p16

⁵²⁰ *Ibid*

The sale of land both as small farms, suburban and town lots began from 1859 and continued throughout the early 1860s.⁵²¹ In 1864 the town was surveyed.⁵²² Surveyor RJ Campbell wrote a report in July of that year which contained the following: 'The only sign of habitation was Walker's old hut, which stood on Section 1 of the town, four chains from the creek.'⁵²³

Development of the town appears to have been slow in the nineteenth century. Conditions, the climate and the geology of the area made it very hard going for any agricultural or pastoral undertaking. Early settlers in the area, taking up land, included Henry Davis, Robert Head, George Matthews, Charles Bargstaedt, Charles Colwell and Solomon Blakewell.⁵²⁴ A description of one of the early houses in the district, built by Charles Bargstaedt, was originally published in the Baradine Centenary Souvenir booklet:

*The steep roof was made of wooden shingles, split locally. The walls were split pine slabs, one and a half inches thick, faced with the adze on both sides till they were smooth and fitted into grooves in the wall plate and ground plate, which were also squared with the adze. Some of the slabs were 14 inches wide and the walls of the main room were nine feet high. The floor boards and doors were sawn with the pit saw; the door being only six inches above ground level. This building stood till the year 1940 when it was demolished.*⁵²⁵

By 1891 the town of Baradine had a population of 80 with a further 250 people in the district and was comprised of a courthouse and police station, 2 stores, 2 hotels and a church.⁵²⁶ In the early 1900s it is said that Permewans Store was originally at the corner of Narren and Walker Streets and Flynns Refreshment Room and the post office was located at the corner of Wellington and Narren Streets with the public school on the east side.⁵²⁷ Further along Narren Street there was a store, a butcher's shop, Crean Box's store and on the corner of Narren and Macquarie Streets the old Union Church.⁵²⁸

⁵²¹ *Empire* 5 February 1861, *Ibid* 21 November 1861 and *Ibid* 18 September 1862.

⁵²² Cutts, L Kildey, *R Baradine – A Town Full of History* p16

⁵²³ *Ibid*

⁵²⁴ *Ibid* p25

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid* p27

⁵²⁷ Cutts, L Kildey, *R Baradine – A Town Full of History* p27

⁵²⁸ *Ibid*

Pastoral interests were amongst the first activities that the settlers undertook however towards the end of the nineteenth century this gave way to agriculture. Initially throughout the region cattle and horses were the main activity, as in the early days of settlement dingoes were perceived to be too great a threat to sheep. However, as time went on and the conditions changed dingoes became less of a threat and sheep were introduced into most areas. Sheep were brought into the area in 1875 and the impact that they had economically was considerable as it was said to have been worth ten times as much per ton as wheat but also generated a lot of work in the shearing, baling and general maintenance required with flocks of sheep.⁵²⁹ However, the economic benefits were far outweighed, ultimately, by the impact that the sheep had on land so ecologically sensitive.⁵³⁰

As a result of the impact of the sheep, and of the fluctuating rain and drought cycles in Baradine, by the 1880s many of the large holdings in the area were abandoned. So many properties were eventually abandoned that the government attempted to mediate the impact of this by offering to lease land at an annual rent of one pound per thousand acres.⁵³¹ It was not taken up.

Agriculture took over for a period of time and had some success, depending on the rain fall. The economic activity in the town was enough to enable Baradine to develop and 1885 it was gazetted a town.⁵³² In 1911 the census revealed 411 residents and 80 dwellings.⁵³³

As with other towns by the turn of the twentieth century other avenues of economic activity were being explored. For many it was the ability to diversify and to develop other streams of commerce that enabled their survival. In the case of Baradine it was the development of the timber industry that led to the town not only surviving but thriving into the twentieth century.

The Forestry Act was passed in NSW in 1917 and this led to the development of the Forestry Commission.⁵³⁴ Areas of the Pilliga forest were dedicated as state forests at this time and sawmilling villages emerged throughout.⁵³⁵ Sawmilling villages existed throughout NSW in the latter decades of the nineteenth century

⁵²⁹ Ibid

⁵³⁰ Ibid p22

⁵³¹ Cutts, L Kildey, *R Baradine – A Town Full of History* p22

⁵³² Ibid 16

⁵³³ Ibid p30

⁵³⁴ Ibid

⁵³⁵ Ibid p49

and into the twentieth. The following account of a sawmilling village in the Pilliga Forest during the 1920s and 1930s comes from Tom Underwood who was brought up at the steam driven Wooleybah Sawmill:

*Sawmills in the forest were virtually self-contained villages. The Wooleybah Sawmill, owned by my father, had its own school and mail was delivered three times a week. Commercial travellers used to come out to the mill selling clothes, food and meat. We even had tennis courts and were quite self-sufficient except for those things you had to go to town for. There used to be 14 houses at Wolleybah, including accommodation for 2 school teachers. At one stage there were 43 students attending the school.*⁵³⁶

The economic impact that forestry generally had and the establishment of the Forestry Commission administrative building in Baradine was significant. It was after this point that many of the town's buildings and infrastructure were developed. The CBC Bank in Baradine is described as 'Inter-war Georgian Revival style commercial building whose design was heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement.'⁵³⁷ It is also said to be a strong physical expression of the mid-century prosperity and growth of Baradine.⁵³⁸

4.3.2 Coonabarabran

Coonabarabran evolved around a point in the Castlereagh River that was easy to cross and so, since its inception, it has been a part of a larger transport network. It is said that by 1848 Coonabarabran had become quite an important centre as it lay along the route that both travellers and teamsters took travelling north and south and through from inland NSW to the transport networks nearer the coast.⁵³⁹ Over time it also developed into an administrative centre for the outlying region.

The first European people to settle in the Coonabarabran area were squatters. William Lawson, George Stevens, Andrew Brown, Richard Rouse and James Walker were amongst the first people to take up runs in the Coonabarabran area.⁵⁴⁰ Some of the early runs in the district include Coolabarabran, Dandry and Yarrigan.

⁵³⁶ Ibid p50

⁵³⁷ Cutts, L Kildey, R Baradine – A Town Full of History p105

⁵³⁸ Ibid

⁵³⁹ Pickette, J. Campbell, M. Coonabarabran as it was in the Beginning p18

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid p33

As the area was evolving as a transport hub two men saw this as an opportunity to develop their businesses. James Weston and William Field both developed inns during the early phase of the town's development. These early inns provided not only accommodation but many other facilities including stores, ironmongery and stockyards for the stock moving through the state. William Field based his business north of the river, near what is now known as the Nandi Flat and Weston to the South.⁵⁴¹ As Joy Pickette points out the role that these hotels played was vital:

*They held about 6 month's supply of the necessities, pots and pans, tools and implements, flour, sugar, tea and of course alcohol. Both stores ran out of pre-existing homesteads owned by the gentlemen.*⁵⁴²

The township itself began to develop during the 1850s. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain exactly where and when the township emerged we do know that one of the first signs of settlement was on what we now know as the corner of Dalgarno and Robertson Streets where the forge of a blacksmith, Benjamin Plant, was located.⁵⁴³ The forge serviced the Weston Inn and it is said that remnants of the old forge can still be found.⁵⁴⁴ The role that these businesses played in the time of livery should not be underestimated. As previously mentioned inns most often had a blacksmith and any business that was on a major transport network would have benefitted significantly from accommodating such an enterprise. Indeed many inn owners had similar skills themselves.

Coonabarabran was proclaimed a village in the Government Gazette on May 2 1860 and a public pound was declared.⁵⁴⁵ The dedication of a public pound and the appointment of a pound keeper was often the first task of a town as valuable stock would wander off properties due to the lack of fences in the early days of a settlement.

An account of Coonabarabran from this time in history is provided to us by Mary Cain. She describes James Weston's Hotel as a:

⁵⁴¹ Ibid p49

⁵⁴² Ibid p49

⁵⁴³ Pickette, J. Campbell, M. *Coonabarabran as it was in the Beginning* p52

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid p61

*... very rough building, was owned by James Weston, who also had vast herds of cattle and horses, and a water-mill on the river in which he ground his own wheat.*⁵⁴⁶

She goes on to say that the Weston Inn was later sold to Alfred Croxon, then to John and William Kerr and after that to Robert Neilson . Neilson made great alterations to the buildings and added a large flour mill that was located near the police station.⁵⁴⁷ It has since been demolished. Robert Neilson went on to replace the old stone grinding technology with steel roller mill technology, in March 1892 and it was this mill that stood near the police station into the 1930s.⁵⁴⁸ (For further information on flour mills refer to *Section 3.9 Industry*.)

By the 1870s the town began to thrive and the population doubled to 400 as settlers began to move in numbers into the district.⁵⁴⁹ There were two licensed hotels - the Castlereagh Inn and the Courthouse Hotel in the town itself and the Traveller's Inn at Nandi and the Sportsman's Arms on the River Road, The Bush Inn at Rocky Glen, The Box Ridge Hotel and Border's Hotel at Baradine in the area.⁵⁵⁰ It is said that this period were 'roaring days' for Coonabarabran and the inns in particular.⁵⁵¹

In 1877 the town constructed a Mechanics Institute this was the first of two such facilities built in the town.⁵⁵² Joy Pickette discusses the building:

*The Old Mechanics Institute, built in 1877, can be seen beyond the Commonwealth Bank. Many decisions concerning the town's future were made at meeting in this hall. Concerts, balls and musical entertainment of all descriptions were held in the large room with a stage. Next to it is the new Mechanics Institute, which was acquired by the RSL and later sold to Council. Council rented the front part for the library and Dramatics Hall.*⁵⁵³

The 1880s saw a consolidation of the town with the construction of more substantial brick commercial buildings such as shops and the Australian Joint

⁵⁴⁶ *Coonabarabran in the '60's Mary Cain* from Official Souvenir *Back to Coonabarabran Week* March 1934

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁴⁸ *Maitland Mercury* 17.03.1892 p3

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid* p83

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid* p86

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵⁵² *Ibid* p111

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*

Stock Bank came to town.⁵⁵⁴ The first Agricultural show was held in 1881 and this period also saw the introduction of the public school system. The community came together to lobby for the construction of a new school and this was completed in August 1889.⁵⁵⁵

The 1890s brought with it initially, a disastrous flood that wiped out much of the work that the settlers and farmers had undertaken and there was little time to recover before an economic depression occurred whose effects were far reaching.⁵⁵⁶ By the middle of the decade things began to improve but by the end of that decade another drought hit the region and this led to a pause in the development of the town which is reflected in lower student numbers for the schools in the area.⁵⁵⁷ By this decade the town was comprised of:

*... five hotels, four stores and a branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank. The courthouse, gaol, police barracks, post and telegraph office, Public school, and Mechanics' Institute are amongst the most prominent buildings. There are three churches. Courts of Quarter sessions and Land Board sittings are held periodically. The hospital is probably one of the most useful and certainly amongst the best regulated of our institutions, and deserves all the patronage that can be bestowed upon it. The Bligh Watchman is the local paper, issued on Tuesday evening.*⁵⁵⁸

The creation of the Pastoral and Agricultural Association in Coonabarabran occurred on Saturday 27 November 1880 and the first show was held the following year on the property of Mr Colwell who was paid Five pounds for the rent of the ground.⁵⁵⁹ Although there does appear to be some debate about the exact location of the first agricultural show it is thought that the show was held somewhere west of then school grounds in 1880.⁵⁶⁰ By 1884 10 acres had been permanently dedicated for the purposes of a showground.⁵⁶¹

Hotels in the town included James Weston's Castlereagh Inn, which was the earliest in the town and was home to the original post office. The Travellers Home ran from the 1840s run by William Field and the Imperial Hotel (known as the Old Royal) was

⁵⁵⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 17.08.1880 p9

⁵⁵⁵ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p124

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid* p129

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid* p130

⁵⁵⁸ *The Sydney Mail and the NSW Advertiser* 18 January 1890 p139

⁵⁵⁹ Raynor, David *The Old Coona Show* 1988 Self published p1

⁵⁶⁰ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p7

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*

run by his son William Field Jr. The Castlereagh Inn originally owned by James Weston began operating in 1847 but burnt down in 1923 and the Royal Hotel originally known as The Courthouse Hotel also had a small store and began operations in the 1860.⁵⁶²

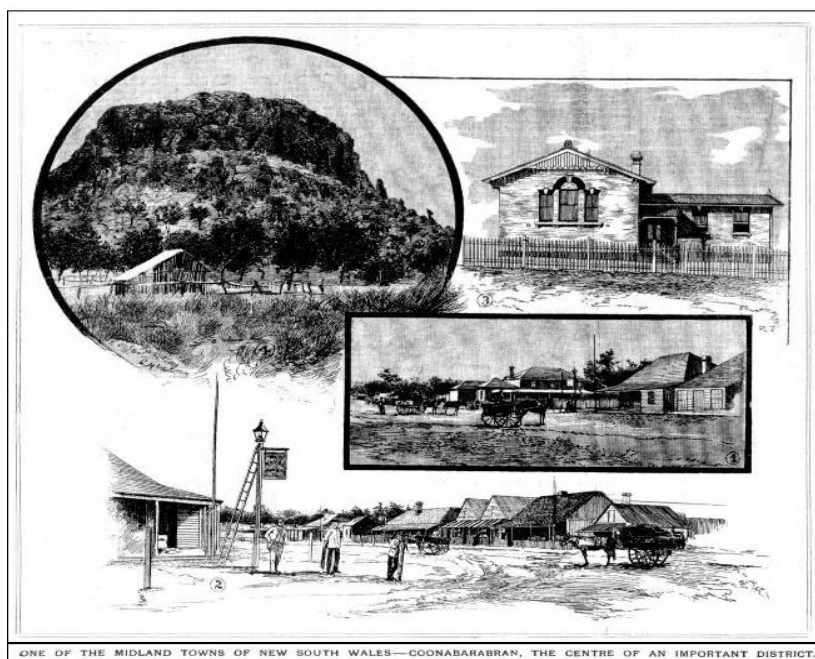
The initial optimism felt in rural Australia in the lead up to the turn of the twentieth century, no doubt influenced by Victorian notions of progress, would not be felt again. A number of powerful historical forces played themselves out in the first half of the twentieth century that would have a significant impact on all rural economies and these included the First World War, The Great Depression, the Second World War and then the decline of rural economies in the post war period. Rural Australia's 'roaring days' had passed.

Coonabarabran's built environment in many ways reflects both broader, national influences and the economic booms that occurred there from the 1900s onwards. Like many country towns much of the commercial centre reflects the inter-war period and periods of boom that enabled the infilling of already existing towns.

Buildings such as the Hotel Royal and McDonagh's Store testify to the confidence of the post Federation era and the strong economic conditions of the 1920s are represented by buildings such as Neilson's in Dalgarno Street, the Boronia Café and the former Union Bank (now The Jolly Cauli café). The former Bank of New South Wales (now the Coonabarabran Community Centre) and Savoy Theatre (now Hi Fi Fashions), and the reconstructed Imperial Hotel provide a record of the improving business confidence of the late 1930s. The commercial activity of the late 1930s also has expression in the imposing banking chambers set on opposite corners of John and Dalgarno Streets. The post-war building boom is evident in the reconstructed Coonabarabran Hotel and various smaller retail buildings.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² All information for this section came from Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By Coonabarabran DPS Local and Family History Group* p53

⁵⁶³ Christison, R *Thematic History of the form Coonabarabran Shire* p52



From Australian Town and Country - 12 October 1889

The domestic architecture reflects styles that are present throughout Australian history representing Victorian, Federation and interwar architectural fashions. There are a wide variety of twentieth century housing styles throughout the town ranging from regionally adapted Federation styles to Californian bungalows and post war Austerity style houses. Modernism is also present in some of the houses in the town.⁵⁶⁴

4.3.3 Binnaway

Binnaway is said to have been established close to one of the crossing places of the Castlereagh between two properties *Greenbah* and *Ulindah*.⁵⁶⁵ *Mowalba* was originally a 16000 acre run owned or managed in the 1840s by Mr WA DeBacker.⁵⁶⁶ Binnaway is located on land that made up part of that original run.⁵⁶⁷

What we know about *Mowabla* at this stage is that William Lawson Senior is listed as the owner of the property in 1848, along with other runs in the area *Binnia*, *Bungebar*, *Greenbah Creek*, *Cookerbingle* or *Corabingle* and *Lagoons Talbragar*.⁵⁶⁸ In 1847 the depasturing licences for *Mowabla*, *Ulomogo*, *Taridgere*

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid

⁵⁶⁵ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 10 July 1873 p4

⁵⁶⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 February 1840 p7

⁵⁶⁷ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p7

⁵⁶⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald* 28 September 1848 p3

and *Tarrawondi* properties were all issued to JB Bettington.⁵⁶⁹ Bettington is known to be a son in law of William Lawson Sr.⁵⁷⁰

Free settlers began to move into the area from 1869 after the introduction of the Robertson Land Acts.⁵⁷¹ These people went on to form the town of Binnaway. Charles Naseby bought 50 acres of land in the area in 1869 and another 50 acres in 1876 and one of the first activities he undertook was the construction of a store.⁵⁷² The following year he lodged a plan 'for the Private Village of Binnaway' which included streets and building blocks. It would seem that the original Mowabla run was subdivided into smaller properties for selectors and in 1877 William Hodges selected 100 acres north of Ulindah Street and it was this that was surrendered by DI Watt in 1904 for the purposes of creating the town of Binnaway.⁵⁷³ By 1877 a sufficient community was in existence to begin to lobby for a school for the district.⁵⁷⁴

A *Sydney Morning Herald* article described the village in February 1887:

*The place is situated on the Castlereagh River, and is worthy of notice as being the centre of a most fertile country ... The population of Binnaway is rather scattered, but boasts a store, post office, accommodation house and a most prolific orchard, the property of Mr McWhirter. The chief obstacle to the prosperity of the place appears to consist in the difficulty of getting there. When one arrives within three miles of the post town there are only two ways of reaching Binnaway: one is through a black sticky bog of considerable depth; the other down and up dangerous precipitous tracks ... The public school has been erected in a central position, but stands isolated at a distance from the township. A few hundreds of pounds spent judiciously in improving the roads and fords would increase the prosperity of Binnaway.*⁵⁷⁵

The issue of transport, highlighted above, may have slowed the early development of Binnaway. The development of the town itself picked up pace after the turn of the twentieth century.

The town itself began to develop with the Post Office arriving in 1876 and the school in 1879. The below photograph is of the proposed site for the new post

⁵⁶⁹ *The Australian* 17 June 1847 p4

⁵⁷⁰ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p7

⁵⁷¹ Christison, R *Thematic History of the Former Coonabarabran Shire* p53

⁵⁷² Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p7

⁵⁷³ *Ibid* p5

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid* p6

office and was taken in 1875. This suggests that there was a purpose built post office from around 1876 but what is most revealing about this picture is that it illustrates what the centre of Binnaway looked like at this time.



*The proposed Post Office site – the main streets of Binnaway in 1875
(courtesy of the National Archives)*

In 1904 David Innes Watt surrendered 100 acres of his property Ulindah, adjoining Naseby's subdivision, for the establishment of a village. The village boundaries of Binnaway were proclaimed on 10 June 1909 and 42 allotments sold in November of that year.⁵⁷⁶

The first bank to arrive in Binnaway was the Australian Banks of Commerce in June of 1914. It operated out of leased premises in its early days but in 1922 it moved into newly built premises which were described as '...a worthy addition to the town.'⁵⁷⁷ Originally the retail centre is said to have been on the site of the school and comprised of a general storekeeper and, at one stage, the ABC bank.⁵⁷⁸

One of the most significant occurrences for Binnaway was the arrival of the railway. The construction of the railway line from Mudgee in 1917 was a major catalyst for the development of the town. Commercial establishments sprang up in the town in anticipation of the coming of the railway and the railway also encouraged the development of wheat growing in the area. With the completion of a cross-country railway line from Dubbo to Werris Creek in 1923 Binnaway was established as an important railway junction. A locomotive barracks was built in the town in 1925 and is pictured below.⁵⁷⁹ Much of the current built

⁵⁷⁶ Bull, R., 1986. *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.36

⁵⁷⁷ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 9 March 1922 p19

⁵⁷⁸ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p 41

⁵⁷⁹ Wallace, I., 1992. *To Coonabarabran & Return*. pp.8&33

heritage of the town relates to the development created by the expansion of the railway.



Binnaway Railway Barracks (2018)

The railway barracks was constructed in order to provide accommodation for railway workers who have travelled to the area. It is in very good condition and still retains many of its original features such as the range in the kitchen.



The renovated range at the Binnaway Railway Barracks (2018)

Considerable infrastructure was established at Binnaway including what was referred to as 'the roundhouse' which was the site used for servicing and maintaining trains.⁵⁸⁰ Known as 'the loco' this structure had four tracks going in and could house six engines.⁵⁸¹ This is no longer extant. What remains are the

⁵⁸⁰ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p 51

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid*

passenger and goods platforms, water tanks and gantry crane. The significance of this development, apart from the considerable built heritage that remains, is the amount of work that this brought into the area.

The population of Binnaway in 1928 was 750 which was an increase of almost 400 in 5 years.⁵⁸² Twenty houses were built in 1927 and a further 30 were built the following year.⁵⁸³ At that stage there were 130 000 sheep and approximately 13 000 acres under wheat cultivation.⁵⁸⁴

4.3.4 Mendooran

Richard Rouse was one of the first people in the area to be granted pasturage license in 1836 when the first annual licences to occupy Crown Lands beyond the limits of location were granted.⁵⁸⁵ Rouse's property was named 'Mundooren' and it is thought that the name was indigenous to the area. It was after his property, a little further west of the current town, that its name was officially taken some twenty years later.⁵⁸⁶ Mendooran is thought to be the oldest town in the shire.

After the initial land grant Rouse was granted further licences for properties including those for Mangranby, Bourbeen, Breelong and others.⁵⁸⁷ Other people granted licenses during the early period in the area included James Walker and Andrew Brown and later on RM Richardson, T Digges and JA Cameron, amongst other early settlers.⁵⁸⁸

Mendooran was originally known as Mundooran and this was officially changed towards the beginning of the twentieth century. However for much of the latter half of the nineteenth century the name Mundooran persisted and it is possible that this initial pronunciation and spelling reflected the accent of the initial settlers. Had they come from the North of England the initial pronouncing of the letter 'u' has a long sound to it, not unlike the sound it makes in the word 'put'. As the Australian accent developed, toward the twentieth century, the 'u' sound would have softened and lengthened, changing the way that the word sounded ending up with something that sounded more like Mendooran than the original Mundooran. The spelling could well reflect the change in the Australian accent

⁵⁸² Ibid p67

⁵⁸³ Ibid

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid

⁵⁸⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 6 April 1933 p9

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

⁵⁸⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p183

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid

during this period as well as the well-established inconsistencies in spelling caused by varying degrees of literacy.

It was not until April 1918, when the Department of Lands, wrote to the Postmaster General and advised that a railway station was being established at *Mendooran* and pointed out that this was the correct spelling, not *Mundooran* as used by the Postal Department that the name of the town officially became the modern spelling.⁵⁸⁹

Mendooran was one of the first towns in the area to be gazetted in the area.⁵⁹⁰ The first land auction was held on 9 February 1853 and another on 21 July of the same year. Neither of these auctions was successful but in October of that year the first allotments were sold and included approximately 12 lots in what is now Brambil, Bandulla and Conlin Streets.⁵⁹¹

By 1865 Mendooran was a postal town with a population of approximately 30 people.⁵⁹² A post office was originally established in 1851, prior to the official gazetting of the town itself.⁵⁹³ Although no information remains of this initial post office it is likely that it was operating out of a hotel.

Progress was slow over the following fifteen years and during this period the town did not develop beyond one building which operated as a school house, chapel, police station, store and a further four houses.⁵⁹⁴

Information regarding hotels is gleaned from licensing records. It is known that many hotels operated without a licence for some years, often in the early days of settlement. It is therefore possible, and even likely, that there was at least one hotel that was operating prior to the earliest registered licensed hotel, in 1851, due to the establishment of the previously mentioned post office in 1851.

The Mount Gramby Inn is thought to have been constructed in 1852, approximately 2 kms west of Mendooran.⁵⁹⁵ It is possible that it was near to where Rouse's original land grant was and that this influenced the location of

⁵⁸⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p190

⁵⁹⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 6 April 1933 p9

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁵⁹² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p183

⁵⁹³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 2 April 1951 p1

⁵⁹⁴ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p183

⁵⁹⁵ Cameron, R *Coolah Area Shire Thematic History* 2004 p27

this business. It was constructed and owned by Thomas Digges and John Cameron and is described as being:

...in two sections, is built of thick pit sawn slabs and heavy battens with round backed slabs on the back wall. The roof was shingles. Attractive diagonal varnished ceilings were a feature of the bar and separate kitchen dining rooms.⁵⁹⁶

Other hotels included the Royal Hotel, thought to date from 1865, it is possible that, as Roy Cameron suggests that it was the forerunner of the current Royal Hotel.⁵⁹⁷ The current Royal Hotel was established in 1927. The Mendooran Hotel opened in 1882 and closed in 1962.⁵⁹⁸ There is no other information about this building or its construction. Rocky Waterhole Inn was another early wayside inn was the Rocky Waterhole Inn on the old Hoblingah property off the Dunedoo Mendooran Rd.⁵⁹⁹

Whilst pastoral activities would seem to have predominated wheat was also grown in the region generally and also in Mendooran from early on in the town's history:

Notwithstanding that this district is excluded at present from the operations of the Free Selection Act, nearly every landholder in the neighbourhood cultivates a few acres of ground and just now we are all busy ploughing and sowing wheat, which is the principle kind of grain grown up here.⁶⁰⁰

The growth of wheat in the area would have been at least temporarily stimulated by the construction of a flour mill in Mendooran around 1887 (please refer to *Section 3.9 Industry* for further information).

The previously mentioned early published history of the town provides us with some statistics regarding the population and the agricultural-pastoral production through parts of its history:

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid

⁵⁹⁸ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p183

⁵⁹⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p183

⁶⁰⁰ *The Newcastle Chronicle and Hunter District News* 25 June 1962 p2

*The population at this time (1866) was not above 30 persons. At the last Census 1921 55 years later, the occupied dwellings were 98 and the population 462, with an additional 45 occupied dwellings and 182 persons near the township. In 1908, the approximate acres under wheat in the Mendooran Police Patrol District was under 3,000 acres and the production about 20,000 bushels of wheat. For the same year the number of sheep was about 167,000. In 1932, the area under wheat was said to be about 27,000 acres, while the number of sheep was about 117,000.*⁶⁰¹

There was a Chinese market garden on the southern side of Merrygoen creek.⁶⁰²

The Australian Bank of Commerce, originally known as the Australian Joint Stock Bank opened in Mendooran in 1910 and the following year a new building was constructed for the purpose of accommodating the bank.⁶⁰³ The building was a weatherboard cottage and in 1914 the following additions were made: a ‘... verandah on the eastern and western sides ... alteration[s] to guttering and supply of two extra tanks, venetian shutters and a sign board in front.’⁶⁰⁴ In 1931 the Bank of Commerce was amalgamated with the Bank of NSW and subsequently the bank in Mendooran became the Bank of NSW and then Westpac.⁶⁰⁵

The Mechanics Institute remains an important building in the streetscape of the town and to the community. Originally a Mechanics Institute Hall was built on the current site prior to the construction of the current building. The original hall was built of weatherboard and iron and is thought to have been constructed sometime around 1900-1903 prior to the land being dedicated as a ‘literary institute’ in 1915.⁶⁰⁶

When the new hall came to be constructed, in 1935, budget concerns led to the retention of the old hall, including the kitchen and the toilets.⁶⁰⁷ The community remembers the old hall being lifted from its foundations and moved further back on the property where it remained, operating as a kitchen for the hall and the community during crises, until it was demolished in 1987.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 6 April 1933 p9

⁶⁰² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p201

⁶⁰³ *Ibid*

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid* p210

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁰⁶ *Rose Deco Planning and Design Mendooran Mechanics Institute* CMP Aug 2008 p17

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid* p18

Prior to the gazetting of the showground site, which occurred in the 1890s, it was used as a racecourse.⁶⁰⁹ How long it had been used for this purpose is difficult to ascertain. The first documented horse race appears in the newspaper in August 1857 and took place over a two day period on the 5 & 6th of that month.⁶¹⁰ Whether this site had been used for this purpose throughout that forty year period is impossible to determine. It is noted however, that in country areas often racecourses and showgrounds did operate on the same ground, no doubt the needs of both activities had similar requirements.

The local agricultural show, held at the showground, was known as a carnival and it was around 1915 that TJ Digges, through the lands department, was successful in obtaining the present showground under a trusteeship.⁶¹¹ Whilst it is difficult to establish exactly when they started to hold the annual show at the site the following appeared in the newspapers in 1914: 'The first show promoted by the Mendooran P., A. and H. Association will be held on Friday, February 20th.'⁶¹² The event was well attended and a success by all accounts. The show continued to be held at the showground until after the WWII.⁶¹³

Mendooran appears to have had a number of attempts at agriculture that speak to both the marginal nature of surrounding country but also a creativity amongst the local community. Trove lists Mendooran as the location of an ostrich farm, where the birds were bred for racing. Further research indicates however that in fact this was Hannah's Bridge.

In 1872 Town and Country published the following:

*Mr W Dean, late storekeeper of Mendooran, in conjunction with another party has taken up 80 acres of land with a view to sugar growing. They have commenced clearing the ground and will soon have it ready for planting.*⁶¹⁴

4.3.5 Coolah

Some of the earliest settlers to the Coolah district included the explorer William Lawson and his sons and, later, the grandson of William Cox. They took up 11 runs around the Coolah Shire, most of which was located between Dunedoo past

⁶⁰⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p202

⁶¹⁰ *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer* 29 August 1857 p6

⁶¹¹ *Ibid* p212

⁶¹² *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 30 January 1914 p6

⁶¹³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p212

⁶¹⁴ *Australian Town and Country Journal* 14.09.1872 p13

Coolah to near the junction of the Coolah Creek and the Waring Rd.⁶¹⁵ Other early runs in the area included Booyamurra Station, Coolaburragundy River and Weetaliba Creek.⁶¹⁶

Early freeholders included Henry Clarke who was granted 1920 acres in January 1829 and Joseph Myers who was granted 2560 acres north – north west of the Talbragar.⁶¹⁷ Another early station included Turee Station which in 1837 had 19 assigned servants and had lodged a request for four additional convicts, a cook, coachman, footman and groom.⁶¹⁸ Other stations included Tongy Station which in 1838 had 41 convicts assigned to it and Rotherwood Station which is thought to be one of the oldest in the area and in 2004 the original building still stood over 160 years old and with a loose stone wall, thought to be rare in Australia.⁶¹⁹ It remains today.

Some early houses appear to have been constructed from sandstone. In 1877 St Andrews Church of England was built from local sandstone and it is thought that ‘two or three’ houses were built in the town of the same materials.⁶²⁰ Some early houses were thought to have been constructed from wattle and daub and Roy Cameron’s history tells us that a number of houses were constructed this way but that only one or two remained in 1949 when the account relied upon was published.⁶²¹

When settlers first arrived it was not unusual to make housing out of the materials available in the area. Once time had passed and infrastructure developed, including sawmills and transport, other materials, perhaps cheaper and more reliable, became available enabling people to build out of materials more familiar to us such as timber and pressed and corrugated iron.

Ludwig Leichardt came through the Shire in 1843 and describes some early workmen’s Huts in the Coolah Tops, now part of the National Park. He described what is thought to be possibly one of the first workmen’s huts in the Coolah Tops as a ‘... roomy and cosey [sic] hut’.⁶²² These huts are thought have serviced the needs of timber getters working in that area. They would have been

⁶¹⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p60

⁶¹⁶ Cameron, R *Thematic History of Coolah* p12

⁶¹⁷ Ibid

⁶¹⁸ Ibid

⁶¹⁹ IBid

⁶²⁰ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p7

⁶²¹ Ibid

⁶²² Cameron, R *The Coolah Tops and its Heritage Huts*

timber and were most likely what we would now describe as a ‘slab hut’, constructed of split and sawn timber.

In the early days of European settlement the area now referred to as the Coolah Tops was the northern part of the ‘limits of location’ and was initially taken up by graziers on the surrounding slopes and valleys during the 1830s-40s.⁶²³ Other, smaller blocks were developed after the 1860 Robertson’s Land Act but eventually these were mostly absorbed into state forests between the 1880s - early 1900s.⁶²⁴ As the State Forests developed sawmills were established and included: a mobile sawmill in the Warung State Forest in the late 1930s and then a sawmill in Coolah from 1943.⁶²⁵ In 1949 a subsidiary to the Coolah sawmill was established in the Bundella State Forest where timber cottages were constructed nearby for employees but this sawmill burnt down in 1959.⁶²⁶

In 1949 a hut constructed of wood was provided for the forest supervisor and a men’s barracks, of timber and fibro, was also constructed for use by the timber workers.⁶²⁷ The Plan of Management for Coolah Tops provides the following information regarding this site:

The buildings were typical of accommodation provided by the Forestry Commission in the late 1940s but were poorly sited and received little use. The barracks building was sold to Coolah Sawmill Pty Ltd in 1953 for employee accommodation and in the 1960s dismantled for use on an adjoining property. The foresters hut was sold to a nearby private property in 1971.⁶²⁸

Two plots of pine plantations were trialled during the 1950s and these remain in two locations – at The Barracks and The Pines.⁶²⁹ The plan was revisited again in 1965 when there was pressure to establish a pine plantation at Coolah Tops but it was considered to be economically not viable and was not pursued.⁶³⁰

Hotels in Coolah included The Squatters Home (1848-C1896), Tattersalls (1894-1909) (Cnr Martin-Binnia Sts), The New Central Hotel (1909-1925) Tattersalls

⁶²³ NPWS Coolah Tops Plan of Management 2002 p15

⁶²⁴ Ibid

⁶²⁵ Ibid

⁶²⁶ Ibid

⁶²⁷ Ibid p16

⁶²⁸ Ibid p23

⁶²⁹ NPWS Coolah Plan of Management 2002 p23

⁶³⁰ Ibid

was renovated and renamed, The Coolah Hotel (1926 -) and The Coolah Valley Hotel opened in 1929 and is still operating.⁶³¹

A brief description of one of the town's early developers James McCubbin's *The Squatters Home* appears in a newspaper during the 1920s. It resulted from a visit from a Mr Charles Wilson who had live in Coolah around 1850-1860 and 'He knew the late John [sic] McCubbin who kept the hotel in Coolah before the late Mr Archie Henderson. The hotel was a slab building and it stood on the same spot where the present Central Hotel is.'⁶³²

Another account exists of the earliest days in Coolah and it comes from the early history of the area Coolah – Valley of the Winds:

*I remember Coolah when there were only three or four cottages, a blacksmith's shop, and a hotel here. I was born here. Back in 1864 that was – and my father was the blacksmith. The hotel was called 'The Squatter Home' and it stood where the Hotel Coolah is today. We lived in one of the cottages, and shepherds were in the others. Then came a little store – where McMaster Park is now. Stock for it was brought by bullock from Murrurundi and Muswellbrook. Buildings were of slab in those days, with shingle roofs. All of split and Adzed ironbark.*⁶³³

In its early days the Chinese were present in Coolah and contributing in significant ways. The following comes from *Early Coolah History* by JH Randall: 'A Chinamen who had a garden from the creek up to where the railway trucking yards are now – he had a pumping frame on the banks of the creek and used a horse to draw the water from this stream. His hut was up where the trucking yards are now []. Below the hut the water course, a little lower than the garden.'⁶³⁴ Chinese people were also retailers and market gardeners in the area. No doubt the above description of water pumping was devised in order to irrigate a market garden established to provide the local town with fresh produce.

Whilst we don't know a great deal about the Chinese people in Coolah there are a few suggestions that they stayed up until after the twentieth century, relatively late for the region. Ah Foon was a well-known storekeeper in Coolah towards the end of the nineteenth century and in 1899 he married a local girl

⁶³¹ Ibid p137-142

⁶³² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 26.04.1923 p23

⁶³³ Keane, E *Coolah – Valley of the Winds* p6

⁶³⁴ JH Randall *Early Coolah History* 1971

from Leadville. Unfortunately the newspaper clipping which details the wedding cuts off many of the details. Subsequently we don't know whom he married except that she was known as Miss Dolly [something] and was from Leadville. The newspaper account details a sumptuous feast followed by a dance afterwards. It goes on to say 'Ah Foon celebrated his marriage in Coolah by shouting for all and sundry. He also gave a cracker demonstration, making enough row as the battle of Waterloo.'⁶³⁵

Newspapers give details of a number of weddings involving Chinese people from Coolah. The *Section 2.6 Ethnic Influences* provides a good description of such an event from 1919.

Whilst the Chinese would have operated market gardens in the area they also ran retail premises in Coolah for many decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They appear to not only have had relationships with the local European population, evidenced in the marriage detailed above, but they clearly also formed relationships with the many Chinese living the other towns in the Central West. The contribution made by the Chinese in the provision of both fresh food and retail services would have been vital in the development of Coolah, as elsewhere.

The Commercial Banking Co of Sydney opened in Coolah in January 1876, in Binnia St near McMaster Park and closed in 1880.⁶³⁶ The Bank of NSW (Westpac) opened in March 1907 near the corner of Binnia and Booyamurra Streets.⁶³⁷ The Australian Bank of Commerce opened 7 August 1928 and ANZ opened 24 September 1953, opposite the Coolah Hotel.⁶³⁸

The first, privately owned, school of arts was officially opened on 5 August 1905 near the present School Teachers Accommodation Units in Binnia Street. The foundation stone for the present School of Arts building at the corner of Binnia and Booyamurra Streets was laid by JM Allison of 'Oakey Creek on 26 December 1918. He also donated the land. The building was completed ... on 6 January 1921. It was a war memorial:

First and foremost the building is a literary institute: secondly it is a social club. There is a library and reading room, a billiard room, a games and smoke room, and not least a soldiers' club room, which will contain a

⁶³⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 25.08.1899 p15

⁶³⁶ *Ibid* p151

⁶³⁷ *Ibid*

⁶³⁸ *Ibid*

billiard table, games tables, gymnastics etc. No gambling is to be permitted on the premises. The building belongs to no particular type; it was designed by Mr Gildes, himself a soldier settler on the Oban Estate, who secured distinction for his plan (entered under the name of 'Jaz') in open competition. ⁶³⁹

The 1920s would appear to have been a heyday for Coolah and this is evidenced in articles such as *Coolah Valley 'A Wonderful District'* published in 1927. Similar sentiments are evident in the article detailed above about the visit to Coolah by Mr Charles Wilson:

Mr Wilson expressed great surprise at the progress the town and district has made since he left here. He was delighted with the scene of prosperous lucerne farms and dairies, between Coolah and Leadville and he thinks this is one of the coming districts. ⁶⁴⁰

The timing of these articles, it must be noted, coincides with the introduction of the soldier settlement schemes in the area between Coolah and Leadville. The scale of these settlements and the impact that they had on the towns around them was significant. It led to the decision to base a government butter factory in Coolah which opened in 1921. It was established in order to service Oban Soldier Settlement which, it was hoped, would develop into a dairy area. This would also have influenced the development of the brickworks in Coolah at this time.

In 1921 there was an increase in dairies in the region from 9-25 and then quickly declined and by 1926 there were four.⁶⁴¹ In the time that it operated it was run as a co-operative and was designed to make 10 tons of butter per week.⁶⁴² The Oban Soldier Settlement featured in the 1921 Report of the Royal Commission of Enquiry by Justice Street into the administration of the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch. It was claimed that the construction of the butter factory at Coolah was politically motivated and dairying was unsuitable for the area.⁶⁴³

The arrival of the soldiers clearly had an impact on the local economy and stimulated industry that could not be sustained without it. Another business to

⁶³⁹ Ibid p162

⁶⁴⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 26.04.1923 p23

⁶⁴¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p157

⁶⁴² Ibid

⁶⁴³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p157

start and end in this period was the Coolah Freezing Works which was constructed in 1921 and was destroyed by fire in May 1923.⁶⁴⁴ Industry would also have been affected by the lack of electricity and water supply until the middle of the twentieth century.

The Coolah Shire Hall in Binnia Street, which later became the Regent Theatre was officially opened on Wednesday 31 July 1935. ... The opening of the hall coincided with the turning on of the town electricity supply, generated by Tucker's garage. The street lights were turned on for the first time the following night.⁶⁴⁵

Coolah CWA formed on 3 12 1927 and early meetings were held in a little room at the rear of Potter's Store.⁶⁴⁶ They set about helping the School of Arts, then struggling, running the organisation by paying shire rates, sanitary fees and the insurance on the building, its fittings and furniture. The Branch restocked the library with new books, and rebound all the existing books, which involved 36 yards of binding. In addition the branch established a reading room and kept it supplied with daily newspapers. The premises were then fitted up with a rest room. Eventually the debt on the premises was paid and the branch passed the running of the centre back to the Coolah School Arts Committee.⁶⁴⁷

The attention of the CWA then went on to a maternity hospital. It was opened in 1938 and was established in a cottage owned by Miss Bostock situated next to the CWA rest room in the old Chinese store.⁶⁴⁸ Sister Helen Boulton who had operated a private hospital in Coolah from 1936 was placed in charge. All this work was done during the later depression years, when there were many called to assist needy folk. The CWA operated it until 1941 when it was closed due to the demise of Miss Boulton and the difficulty of raising funds during the war.

During its early years the Branch had a very strong and active Younger Set, who raised sufficient funds for a piano to be placed for use in the CWA rest room.⁶⁴⁹

4.3.6 Dunedoo

The 'Bolaro' Run was the original site of the current town of Dunedoo. Whilst there were a few small holdings in the general area it was not until the introduction of the Crown Lands Alienation Act in 1861 that land started to be

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid p173

⁶⁴⁶ Cameron, R *Paper on the CWA Coolah*

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid

bought up in the area.⁶⁵⁰ The Redbank settlement, as it was originally known, was first surveyed in 1868 and the first allotments were put up for auction, unsuccessfully, in May 1870 and it was not for another 5 years that a second sale was held and ten lots were sold.⁶⁵¹

It is interesting to note the activity that was occurring regarding Dunedoo during this period. On 4 December 1869 212 acres of land was reserved as Crown Land for the creation of a city, town or village and 194 acres were dedicated for suburbs.⁶⁵² Then, not quite two weeks later, the town's design was approved and the plans deposited with the Surveyor General.⁶⁵³

It is said that Dunedoo was known as Redbank until it was renamed in 1909 as postal records indicate.⁶⁵⁴ However Government and Lands Department Records have the town's name as Dunedoo from as early as the mid 1870s.

Within two years of the Crown Land being reserved it was sold off in regular increments until the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵⁵ In 1885 a supplement to the Government Gazette declared that 'the following places are deemed cities under the provision of the Crown Lands Act of 1884 ... Cobbora ... Coonabarabran ... Dunedoo...'.⁶⁵⁶ It is possible that the regular sale of Crown land in the area may have stimulated growth and perhaps suggests, in the record at least, a town larger than it actually was. It is possible too that whilst it was known as Redbank in the community that it was referred to as Dunedoo in government records.

Roy Cameron records the town in its early days:

*Charles Craft opened the first general store where Sullivan's Store and the Café is today. Thomas Chapman had mixed farm at Cobbora where he grew oaten and wheaten hay. He supplied chaff to teamsters which in those days was big business. Later he opened a produce store at the corner of Bolaro and Caigan Streets, Dunedoo.*⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid p249

⁶⁵¹ Ibid

⁶⁵² *Sydney Mail* 4 December 1869 p5

⁶⁵³ *Empire* 15 December 1869

⁶⁵⁴ Cameron, R Thematic History – Coolah Shire Area p26

⁶⁵⁵ Examples of this include sales in August 1872 and December 1873.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid 28 March 1885 p21

⁶⁵⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p250

It is said that the town's development stalled at this stage until the arrival of the railway.⁶⁵⁸ The arrival of the railway was a long time coming and much debate occurred regarding the route of the railway through the Shire. Refer to *Section 3.14 Transport* for further information.

The railway provided a cheaper, more accessible transport which in effect opened up Dunedoo for further agricultural activities and development of both the town and the broader area. The activity in the town definitely gained momentum in the years after the railway and there are many indications of this in the newspapers of the day. *The Dubbo and Liberal Advertiser* published this in 1914:

*The progress this town is making is close on a record: Six years ago there wasn't even a boundary riders hut to attract attention to a site in which it was decided to build a town.*⁶⁵⁹

The first butcher's shop is thought to have been in Bolaro Street and three butcher's carts also catered to the town.⁶⁶⁰

The first bakery is also thought to have been in Bolaro Street near Milling and Cale's Office was situated next to 'Mrs Johnstone's Store'.⁶⁶¹ Mrs Johnstone was a well-known figure in Dunedoo during its early years. It is thought that, prior to the arrival of the railway, that Mrs Johnstone's store was one of a few buildings in the town and she became known as 'Stayput Granny Johnstone' when she refused to move when the railway came in 1910.⁶⁶²

A large produce stall was located near the current NRMA building sometime prior to 1910 and it was here that the first full length silent movie was screened and it went on to become a roller skating rink.⁶⁶³ The first Dunedoo carnival or exhibition took place on 30 April 1913 and was held on private property. The present showground was opened in 1913.⁶⁶⁴

The first two banks to open in Dunedoo did so upon the arrival of the railway in 1910 and they both set up in the only hotel in town:

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid

⁶⁵⁹ *The Dubbo Liberal Advocate* 30 October 1914 p6

⁶⁶⁰ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p260

⁶⁶¹ Ibid

⁶⁶² From Pers. Comm with John Horne (Jan. 2018)

⁶⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid p261

*The men of finance have gathered in force at Dunedoo, and as a result that promising little town which has only just been hewn out of the wilderness, is giving itself airs. There is only one hotel in the place, and just at present the fortunate licensee is entertaining the four men of finance abovementioned. The offices of the two newly-opened banks are in the hotel, and for the past fortnight four banks ... have dined and supped together and arranged the nimble overdraft, and cast up the interest, and spied out the land generally.*⁶⁶⁵

The Bank of NSW moved from the hotel into premises leased from Charles Edward Paine in August of that year.⁶⁶⁶ Then, in 1914, new premises were constructed and remain in the town today.⁶⁶⁷ The architect was Alfred Allen and the interior was renovated in 1938 and then further altered in 1955-56.⁶⁶⁸

The Bank of Commerce purchased a half acre block on the corner of Bolaro and Merrygoen Streets where a banking chamber, a manager's room, a residence of 9 rooms with a closed verandah, plus and wood and iron stable, feed room and coach house was constructed.⁶⁶⁹ In 1914 additions were made to this building but the details are, as yet, unknown.⁶⁷⁰ It was sold in 1932.⁶⁷¹

Thomas New constructed the first inn at Redbank in about 1860 near the present site of the Dunedoo Hospital. It was initially called the Redbank Hotel but the name was later changed to the Sportsman's Arms.⁶⁷² Around 1850 the Four Mile Inn, off the Dunedoo-Mendooran Road near the Liamena Rail Crossing, was constructed.⁶⁷³ The Royal Hotel has its first records around 1911 but it burnt down in 1935 along with the newsagency, barber shop, the billiard saloon, baker and Campbells Stock and Station agency and Noy's Confectionery shop in 1935.⁶⁷⁴ The Dunedoo Hotel was opened in 1912 although the license was applied for in 1909, most likely in anticipation of the arrival of the railway.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North West Representative* 19 May 1910 p16

⁶⁶⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p251

⁶⁶⁷ *The Dubbo Liberal Advocate* 30 October 1914 p6

⁶⁶⁸ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p251

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁷⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North West Representative* 5 February 1914 p5

⁶⁷¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p251

⁶⁷² *Ibid* p256

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*

The Dunedoo Freezing works commenced in September 1910 with ten hands and 60 men trapping. It is said to have ‘occupied probably the foremost place on the English Market’.⁶⁷⁶

4.3.7 Cobbora

Given its proximity to Dunedoo, approximately 9 miles, the development of each of the towns impacted upon the other. Cobbora developed at around the same time and pace as many of the other towns in the shire until around 1909-1910 when the railway arrived in Dunedoo. Until this point Dunedoo had stalled in its development, this changed from this point. It seems likely that the energy and resources that had previously gone into Cobbora then went into Dunedoo hence the change in nature and development of both towns at that time.

Cobbora became an early and important staging post junction as it was possible to travel regularly by coach to and from Mendooran and Coonabarabran; Merriwa and Muswellbrook and Gulgong and Mudgee.⁶⁷⁷ Cobbora was described as a thriving settlement in 1866 and a bridge was erected over the Talbragar River in 1880, increasing the importance of the township as the shortest route to the Castlereagh was through Cobbora.⁶⁷⁸

It is thought that the Rouse brothers were probably grazing stock in the Cobbora district in the early 1820s.⁶⁷⁹ The first freehold land to be acquired in the area was by Robert Martin who eventually, after a misunderstanding, took possession of 1280 acres south of the Talbragar River approximately 9 miles downstream from the ‘Bolaro’ station at what is now Dunedoo.⁶⁸⁰

The first map on which the name Cobborah appeared was in 1832 and it was located near where Martin had his homestead where he later developed an inn known as ‘Martin’s Inn’.⁶⁸¹ By 1859 it would seem the town of Cobbora was establishing itself. *The Bogan* printed this account of the town in that year:

The inhabitants of Cobbora have memorialised the Post Master General for the establishment of a post office ... The village is certainly very much increasing in importance, as there is an inn in full business and new

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid 165

⁶⁷⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p232

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid

⁶⁷⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p265

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid

⁶⁸¹ Ibid

buildings are steadily progressing towards completion. Agricultural pursuits are on the increase also, a new farm having been put under cultivation just across the Talbragar Creek; and several persons are clearing land for further operations. Progress seems to be the order of the day and from what I can learn, stores will be established forthwith for the conveniences of the many travelling persons. ⁶⁸²

The town was surveyed in 1863 by Surveyor William Jacob Conder and the town plan provided for 9 sections each containing 10 half acre lots, between the present town and the river and 6 sections each of 10 half acre lots in the present residential section.⁶⁸³ The original plan provided for an intended population of 400, was extended twenty years later and was officially proclaimed a town in 1885.⁶⁸⁴

In 1875 the *Australian Town and Country Journal* published the following account of Cobbara written by a traveller going through the region:

The principal buildings are on the east and comprise 2 hotels, 2 stores, blacksmith's shop, post office, Church of England and 2 private houses. One of the latter is the family residence of Mr J Jones, squatter; the house is pleasantly situated on the top of the rise, overlooking the town and of course the river. The greater portion of the town and suburban lands are freehold and in the hands of one man, which may account for the slow progress the township has made; the land is rich and very lightly timbered; the population is very scattered; farming the principal industry. ⁶⁸⁵

In 1899 Cobborah is described in the *Narromine News and Trangie Advocate*:

Near Cobborah, which consists of the inevitable hotel, a store, PO, blacksmiths shops, police station and about a dozen private houses, corn is grown with satisfactory results. At present there is a fair amount of grass and stock are in good condition. Most of the people along the Talbragar River own the land on which they live and appear to be comfortable and contented. ⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² *The Bogan* 16 August 1859 p5

⁶⁸³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p224

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid* p225

⁶⁸⁵ *Australian Town and Country Journal* 9 October 1975 p19

⁶⁸⁶ *Narromine News and Trangie Advocate* 7 July 1899 p3

The police station, courthouse and gaol remain in the town today and are listed as heritage items.

There were a number of hotels servicing both the town and passing trade. They included Martin's Inn which operated from the 1850s and is possibly the location of the post office.⁶⁸⁷ The Welcome Inn was near the site of the present 'Cobbra' station homestead and operated a store and blacksmiths shop and is thought to have operated from the 1850s.⁶⁸⁸ The Sportsman's Arms is thought to have opened around 1877.⁶⁸⁹ The Royal Hotel, constructed in 1877, was located on the main road from Mudgee to Coonamble it also operated as a Cobb and Co Booking office and was burnt down in 1935.⁶⁹⁰

The Commercial Hotel would appear to have done good trade during its day and appears to have been the favoured site of local sporting groups such as the local cricket and rifle clubs.⁶⁹¹ The Commercial Hotel also burnt down in 1935 and the reports indicate that it had been operating for over 70 years which suggests an opening date of around the mid 1850s.⁶⁹²

Cobbora continued as a town until the post WWII War period but since then it has diminished as a settlement. As previously mentioned the arrival of the railway had a significant impact on development in the area. It was also seriously impacted by the 1955 floods. Most recently the impact of a threatened open cut coal mine also impact on the small community.

4.3.8 Leadville

Originally known as 'Hobbins Dam' after Martin Hobbins, one of the early settlers in the area Leadville was given its official name in 1891.⁶⁹³ A town created partly by private subdivision, its origins formed around the development of the Mt Stewart silver mine in 1888. The previous year, in 1887, an Aboriginal man, Tommy Governor, discovered something glinting in the sun. What he found lead to the discovery of silver in the area and this, in turn, lead to the creation of the mine at Leadville. Tommy was given a small sum of money, a horse and dray and ten acres of land for his find.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁸⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p229

⁶⁸⁸ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p233

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid

⁶⁹¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 7 July 1899 p14

⁶⁹² *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 7 March 1936 p2

⁶⁹³ Cameron R *Around the Black Stump* 1993 p300

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid p301

The town was a small settlement that had established itself by 1891 and had a town plan drawn up in that year. Cameron provides a description of the town at this time: 'The census for this year showed 40 persons permanently resided at Mount Stewart, including 9 women.'⁶⁹⁵

From the turn of the twentieth century water was supplied via a community well that was improved, at a cost of seventy pounds, in 1901.⁶⁹⁶ Electricity arrived late, as with much of the rest of the southern parts of the Warrumbungle Shire and light poles were erected for a towns lighting scheme in 1954.⁶⁹⁷

The fortunes of the mine fluctuated and the periods of mine investment reflect this waxing and waning of the mine's operations. The years of the mines operation were: 1888-1893, 1921, 1926-27, 1932 – 1936 and 1950-1952.⁶⁹⁸ Indeed these fluctuations were present throughout the mines years of operation. It began with high expectations with 15000 tons of ore being smelted in the first 14 months yielding 292 093 ounces of silver and 1 539 tons of lead.⁶⁹⁹ However, by 1893 the price of silver fell significantly making the mine uneconomic and in 1894 the following appeared in the *Dubbo Liberal* describing the town as:

*... a wreck of its former self. ... On all sides you behold closed shops of all businesses and empty houses innumerable. This town contains 2 hotels, 2 cordial factories, 3 stores and a few private dwellings.*⁷⁰⁰

The town itself was created by private subdivision by Mr CL Garland and consisted of 253 lots.⁷⁰¹ In 1892 The *Sydney Morning Herald* published the public listing of the company Mt Stewart Silver Mine *Extended* Silver Mining Company with CL Garland as a director.⁷⁰² It would appear that this was a different company, and possibly a different, extended lease to the original mining company. This was prior to the fall in the price of silver which led to one of the many closures of the mines discussed above.

In 1898 Garland went on to buy the whole company at public auction and to become instrumental in the development of the town in its early days. In 1891

⁶⁹⁵ Cameron R *Around the Black Stump* 1993 p302

⁶⁹⁶ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 15.08.1901 p22

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid* 15.07.1954 p9

⁶⁹⁸ Everick Heritage Consultants *Statement of Heritage Impact Mt Stewart Mine* 2016 p42

⁶⁹⁹ Cameron R *Around the Black Stump* 1993 p301

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid* p 301

⁷⁰¹ Everick Heritage Consultants *Statement of Heritage Impact Mt Stewart Mine* 2016 p25

⁷⁰² *SMH* May 30 1892 p3

he wrote to the government regarding the moving of a post office from nearby Denison Town to Leadville.⁷⁰³

Whilst we don't know a great deal about the residents of Leadville at this time we do know that there were two shops owned by Chinese people in the town in the early twentieth century. Charles Ah Nim owned a shop in Leadville and his sister '... opened a millinery and haberdashery business in the new shops recently erected in Garland St and is getting well patronised.'⁷⁰⁴ This second business suggests that there were sufficient women in the town to sustain such a business.

Leadville's beginnings are firmly based in the mining industry that continued, in some form, over the next sixty years. However the town probably would have not survived through the first half of the twentieth century intact if it weren't for the soldier settlements that evolved there from the 1920s onwards.

Two soldier settlements were developed near Leadville, both of which influenced the development of the town, in the first half of the twentieth century considerably. The first soldier settlement to be advertised in the Leadville area was Lawson Park which was advertised in 1918 as 12 blocks.⁷⁰⁵ The following year a further 30 blocks were advertised for the Pine Ridge Soldier Settlement.⁷⁰⁶

The fortunes of these settlements are detailed in Section 4.2.1 Soldier Settlements. Whilst they had some initial success the vast majority did not make it through the first half of the 1920s. In essence, the blocks were too marginal and too small to make a living from. Some however, did survive, particularly in the Pine Ridge Settlement and the construction of a school there in 1936 is testament to this.

4.4 Utilities

4.4.1 Water

During the early years of the settlement of the Warrumbungle Shire water for drinking and domestic use was obtained from rivers or creeks or from barrels or tanks that collected rainwater. Most settlements were established on the sides

⁷⁰³ Cameron R, *Around the Black Stump* p307

⁷⁰⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 17.12.1908 p8

⁷⁰⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 11.11.1920 p24

⁷⁰⁶ *The Sydney Stock and Station Journal* 11.04.1919 p20

of watercourses from which water could be obtained. These same watercourses were dumping grounds for sewage and domestic waste. They were also watering points for increasing numbers of livestock. On properties or in settlements located away from regularly flowing watercourses wells were sunk. These were generally lined with timber to keep the water free of silt.

The use of bores began in the first decades of the twentieth century in the Warrumbungle Shire. A newspaper article in 1911, for example, details the sinking of bores on two properties in Mendooran, enabling a permanent, reliable supply of water at a depth of between 20 and 60ft and notes that ‘...the idea of boring for water is new to the district.’⁷⁰⁷ In 1920 the government developed a shallow boring scheme in order to assist smaller properties in developing a permanent water supply.⁷⁰⁸ The settlers were provided with all tools and materials required to complete bore and they supplied wood, water and transport of the plant to the bore site and the cost was repaid, in instalments, over a 5-10 year period.⁷⁰⁹

Throughout the Shire it was not until well into the twentieth century that a town or reticulated water supply was provided by local government. Such a water supply as dependent on electricity and for many towns, particularly in the southern parts of the shire, this did not arrive until close to the middle of the century. Some towns never received a water supply and therefore were not able to get a sewerage system either.

4.4.1.1 Coonabarabran

The first supply of drinking water post European settlement came from the well in Neilson Park, Coonabarabran was originally sunk by James Weston to supply water to his house. Early government efforts to provide water included tanks and wells established on stock routes to provide water for travelling stock. Rolls described a government well on a stock route near Baradine that was fitted with a horse-drawn whim that operated two large buckets of 180 litres capacity each.⁷¹⁰

By the 1890s the quality of the Coonabarabran water supply had deteriorated greatly. A typhoid epidemic late in that decade created concern about water drawn from the river. In 1901 G. E. Wright sunk a well on a reserve on the

⁷⁰⁷ *The Farmer and Settler* 26.09.1911 p2

⁷⁰⁸ *Daily Advertiser* 06.02.1920 p8

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid*

⁷¹⁰ Rolls, E *A Million Wild Acre*. p298

northern side of the Castlereagh River. He advertised the supply of 'pure' water 'in place of the germ infested water of the river'.⁷¹¹

Wells continued to be sunk in and around Coonabarabran during the early 20th century. By 1932, in a debate on funding a reticulated water supply, Councillor Deans reported to Council that 'private owners have ... installed £18,000 worth of bores'.⁷¹² Council had also established public water supply tanks in Baradine, Binnaway and Coonabarabran. Problems with water supplies continued and much Council attention was directed towards managing public watering places and assuring clean water supply to towns and villages. During the 1920s problems were continually encountered with wandering stock fouling the Bugaldie water supply.⁷¹³

Coonabarabran Shire Council first investigated the development of a reticulated water supply for the town of Coonabarabran in 1928. In that year it received assurances from the New South Wales Department of Works that allowance for such a scheme would be included in its 1929 budget.⁷¹⁴ Interests in the town and within the ranks of elected Councillors, including Councillor Deans, appear to have been opposed to a reticulated water supply and lobbied unsuccessfully over an extended period for a public poll to be held on this matter.

In considering options regarding the installation of a town water supply in 1932 Council sought funding of £20,000 under existing unemployment relief and infrastructure schemes. It was hoped that such a scheme would provide employment for those out of work during the worst period of the Great Depression.⁷¹⁵ In August 1932 the Council voted 3 to 2 to accept an offer from the New South Wales Public Works Department to construct a water supply scheme for the town of Coonabarabran at an estimated cost of £21,000.²⁶⁵ Following rejection of their proposal for a community ballot dissenting councillors lobbied the Minister for Works to stop the development pending the conduct of a poll. These actions led to some heated debate in the council chamber.⁷¹⁶

Development of a reticulated water supply was commenced in Coonabarabran in 1932 with water being supplied from a weir constructed on the Castlereagh River near Robertson Street. Pumps installed in the Coonabarabran Power House raised water from the river to reservoirs. In the summer of 1941 Council's

⁷¹¹ Pickette, J & Campbell, M *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. p.139

⁷¹² Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 6 May 1932

⁷¹³ Minutes of Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 21 December 1928

⁷¹⁴ Minutes of Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 21 December 1928

⁷¹⁵ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 6 May 1932

⁷¹⁶ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 9 September 1932

Electrical Engineer estimated that 80% of the town's water consumption was used for gardening purposes.⁷¹⁷

In 1949 the area upstream from Council's weir was declared as a catchment. Increases in demand led to plans being developed for a larger water storage upstream from the Robertson Street weir. The Timor Dam was constructed in 1960 upstream from Timor Rock.⁷¹⁸ This dam continues to supply Coonabarabran.

The date of arrival of a town or permanent water supply varied throughout the shire. The development of town water supplies relied upon the supply of electricity to pump the water from the source. Subsequently the towns in the southern parts of the shire did not get a permanent water supply until after the second world war.

4.4.1.2 Baradine

The arrival of a town water supply in both Baradine and Binnaway was a long time coming. The debates and requests regarding the provision of a reliable town water supply occurred over the decades leading up to the mid twentieth century. The late arrival of electricity played a significant role in the development of the towns and their economies.

Public meetings were held and recommendations made to various local governments to enable the provision of water to the towns. In 1938 Coonabarabran Shire Council agreed to take steps towards installing a water supply for Baradine.⁷¹⁹ Tenders were called for the development of the water supply for Baradine in 1942 but no doubt WWII war played a role in the slowing of this process.⁷²⁰

Eventually, in May 1949, Baradine had a new thirty thousand pound water supply system that was officially turned on 29 April 1949.⁷²¹

4.4.1.3 Binnaway

The official switching on date of Binnaway's water supply system has not yet been established. However we do know it was turned on sometime between June

⁷¹⁷ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 20 January 1941

⁷¹⁸ Carmichael, D., 1991. *Timor Valley*. pp.96-99

⁷¹⁹ *SMH* 12.07.1938 p8

⁷²⁰ *Construction* 22.08.1949 p9

⁷²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly* 05.05.1949 p2

1949, when Mr Lloyd the Electrical engineer ‘... has the Binnaway water supply reticulation well in hand’⁷²² and January 1950 when there is a discussion regarding the amount Council agreed to charge for water pumping in Binnaway and Baradine.⁷²³

4.4.1.2 Mendooran

The exact date of the arrival of a water supply into Mendooran has not, as yet, been established. We know that the school had its water supply switched on in 1950.⁷²⁴ Tenders were called for the ‘manufacture, supply, delivery and erection of electronically driven bore hole type pumping plants’ was called for in January 1951.⁷²⁵ However an article appearing in the newspapers in 1955 details a fire that burnt down a property in the centre of Mendooran that, it was believed, would not have occurred had there been access to water, indicating that there was no town water supply at that time.⁷²⁶

The only other reference to the water supply in Mendooran comes from the government gazette from 1964 and refers to the appropriation of land in Mendooran for use as a service reservoir for the purpose of the Mendooran Water supply.⁷²⁷

4.4.1.3 Coolah

As with all of the towns in the southern areas of the shire a reticulated water supply was a long time coming. There were many discussions, reported on in the paper, and the local member of the legislative assembly was called into be involved on a number of occasions.

Eventually in 1949 the then MLA for the town, Mr RB Nott, wrote to council with a quote for the development of the towns water supply, which was a total of twenty six thousand four hundred pounds.⁷²⁸ A report from May 1951 indicates that the Coolah Water Supply Scheme was complete and ready for testing.⁷²⁹ The next reference to the scheme is in August the following year where again the MLA Mr Knott has written to the Minister for Public Works and the response

⁷²² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 09.06.1949 p13

⁷²³ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle* 13.01.1950 p8

⁷²⁴ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 21.02.1950 p3

⁷²⁵ *Construction* 13.12.1950 p16

⁷²⁶ *Gilgandra Weekly* 3.11.1954 p2

⁷²⁷ *Government Gazette* 18.12.1964 p4102

⁷²⁸ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 07.02.1949 p12

⁷²⁹ *Ibid* 31.05.1951 p22

has been that ‘...the Coolah water supply has a fairly high priority listing but ... it is not yet clear when construction will start.’⁷³⁰

It would appear that the testing that had been recommended in 1951 had not gone well and was described by council’s engineer as ‘unsatisfactory’.⁷³¹ The scheme was then taken up again in November 1953 and tenders were called for.⁷³² There does not appear to be an official turning on of water date for Coolah but it would seem that the water was turned on sometime between November 1953 and May 1954 when discussion regarding a water softening plant began.⁷³³

4.4.1.4 Cobbora

Cobbora never got a reticulated water supply.⁷³⁴

4.4.1.5 Dunedoo

Dunedoo had its water supply provided for by Cobbora Council and it was turned on in March 1940.⁷³⁵ There appear to be a number of dates that water was provided but a supply would appear to have been made available prior to the official ‘turning on’ of the water supply.⁷³⁶

4.4.2 Sewerage

4.4.2.1 Coonabarabran

After its establishment in 1906 the Coonabarabran Shire Council began moves to improve the general health standards of the community. By May 1907 the council was debating the best ways to support improved health management and in doing so moved to declare Coonabarabran an Urban Area. The town was also declared as a Sanitary Area.⁷³⁷ In December 1907 council sought estimates for the cost of a night soil removal service and began moves to establish a site for rubbish tips and a night soil depot.⁷³⁸ Contracts were later arranged for night soil removal and cleaning of pans in Coonabarabran, Binnaway and Baradine.

⁷³⁰ Ibid 24.07.1952 p11

⁷³¹ Ibid 27.03.1952 p8

⁷³² Ibid 03.11.1953 p11

⁷³³ Ibid 13.05.1954 p20

⁷³⁴ Pers Comm. John Horne January 2018

⁷³⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 07.02.1949 p3

⁷³⁶ Ibid p9

⁷³⁷ Minutes of Coonabarabran Shire Council. 5 July 1907

⁷³⁸ Minutes of Coonabarabran Shire Council. 6 December 1907

During the 1920s septic tanks were becoming common in urban areas with many commercial premises installing and gradually upgrading septic systems. Problems of overflow of septic systems seemed to occur regularly. A sewerage plant driven by windmill had been installed in Baradine by the 1930s.⁷³⁹

4.4.2.2 Cobborra

Cobborra did not get a sewerage system, no doubt resulting from the lack of a town water and electricity supply.

4.4.2.3 Dunedoo

Dunedoo would appear to have had a sewerage system in place by September 1949 when a discussion regarding the charges for 'sewer rates'.⁷⁴⁰ Details regarding the actual start date have not yet come to light.

4.4.2.4 Coolah

In 1933 a proposal for a sewerage system for the Coolah District Hospital was made and funds were made available through the Unemployment Relief Council.⁷⁴¹ There is correspondence from the Public Works Department in the newspaper around this period regarding the approval of a storage tank for sewerage at the hospital to be increased to 6000 gallons.⁷⁴² There are no further references that have come to light.

Around 1941 or before Coolah Council had developed a limited sewerage treatment system starting on the western side of Binnia St near the intersection of Goddard St and running along the western side of Binnia St picking up sewage from private premises.⁷⁴³ The sewage eventually discharged into a surface drain on a street 'where offensive conditions occur.'⁷⁴⁴ A health inspector made 2 recommendations regarding how this might be resolved. The first recommendation was for a similar system, with details provided costed out to approximately sixty pounds and the second, adopted by council, was to seal up the old system and that the residents go back to 'disposing of sullage water arriving on their premises as required by council in a sanitary manner.'⁷⁴⁵

⁷³⁹ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council, 4 August 1932

⁷⁴⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 22.09.1949 p20

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid* 05.01.1933 p9

⁷⁴² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 13.04.1933 p3

⁷⁴³ *Ibid* 07.08.1941 p14

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid*

Details regarding the eventual provision of a sewerage system in Coolah have not yet revealed themselves. We do know that land was resumed for the provision of a sewage treatment works in 1971⁷⁴⁶ and a publication exists for the operation of the Coolah Sewage Treatment Works from 1980.⁷⁴⁷

4.4.3 Electricity

The 1920s saw an ongoing expansion of New South Wales' electricity supply network. Before 1950 electricity generation and supply in the state was the responsibility of local councils. In some areas power generating plants, built for large industries or mines, were used to supply local towns.

In the towns that obtained electricity later, there was not an initial 'street lighting' stage prior to the introduction of full domestic power. They received power and lighting simultaneously. The southernmost parts of the shire struggled with the arrival of electricity. It is stated in newspapers of the time that it was questions of money, materials and the 'difficulty of deciding upon the most economic method of obtaining the supply.'⁷⁴⁸

A solution to this problem was eventually found and it is said that this final stage of electrification in the shire resulted from the actions of a councillor for Ulan Council in 1948, Councillor Ray Horne. The Coonabarabran Times covered this in a newspaper article in 1995:

*Ray Horne played an important part in persuading the councils of Mudgee Municipality and Gulgong, Cudgegong, Coonabarabran, Coolah, Cobbora and Merriwa Shires to combine in forming a County Council to take over the coal mine operations at Ulan, to establish a power-generating plant there and to distribute electricity from that power station throughout the County District.*⁷⁴⁹

4.4.3.1 Coonabarabran

In Coonabarabran, with the absence of major industries, it fell to the Council to provide an electricity supply. In 1929 the Coonabarabran Shire Council voted to purchase a power generating plant, switchboards, transformers and electricity

⁷⁴⁶ Government Gazette 12.03.1971 p773

⁷⁴⁷ Coolah Sewage Treatment Works: Instructions for Operation and Maintenance. Prepared for the Coolah Shire Council by Sewerage Branch Department of Public Works 1980

⁷⁴⁸ The Gilgandra Weekly 13.09.1945 p4

⁷⁴⁹ Coonabarabran Times 30.11.1995

supply installations for the town of Coonabarabran. Council also acquired land in Castlereagh Street to construct a power station. An electricity supply was available to parts of the town by 1930. The generators installed in the Coonabarabran Power House were driven by diesel engines.

World War II created some interesting challenges for the Council and its Electrical Engineer. Council's decision to purchase new generating equipment in 1938 was set against the backdrop of uncertainties of supply of equipment from Europe due to the worsening political situation in that continent. The decision to buy at this time was made with the knowledge that a delay in making the decision could seriously compromise the capacity of the local electrical supply.

During the war Council resolved to release power house workers for service in the armed forces. This led to problems in staffing the plant at a time of increased demand. The power station truck and Station Engineer's car were modified to burn gassified coal and Council voted in 1942 to give permission for the use of the truck to transport men of the 6th Volunteer Defence Corps Battalion for training purposes. Council also took steps in the same year to camouflage the power house.⁷⁵⁰

From 1943 onwards Council made ongoing attempts to obtain a reliable bulk electricity supply from a major coal fired generating station. Options included Lithgow, Tamworth and Ulan power stations. Pressure on Council's electricity supply grew during the immediate post-war years as outlying communities and newly created soldier settler areas clamoured for extension of electricity supplies. This situation was exacerbated by ongoing representations from communities such as Gwabegar and Mendooran in surrounding shires for Council to provide an electricity supply. In the face of these pressures Council resolved on 18 March 1948 to support the establishment of a proposed County Council as it was considered that this would facilitate an expansion of supply and lowering of electricity costs.⁷⁵¹

On 17 June 1948 Council formally resolved to petition the Governor to constitute the Ulan County Council which was to include the Municipality of Mudgee, Shires of Coolah, Coonabarabran, Cudgegong and Gulgong, "A" Riding of the Shire of Cobbora and "C" Riding of the Shire of Merriwa.⁷⁵² Ulan County Council was established during 1948 and formally came into existence on 1 January 1949. Coonabarabran County Council's electricity generation and supply assets

⁷⁵⁰ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 10 March 1942

⁷⁵¹ Coonabarabran Shire Council Special Meeting, 18 March 1948, Shire President's Minute.

⁷⁵² Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 17 June 1948

were transferred to the new County Council.⁷⁵³ Expansion of the electricity supply network continued with some outlying settlements not receiving an electricity supply until the 1960s.

4.4.3.2 Baradine

By 1937 the Coonabarabran Shire Council electricity supply had been extended to Baradine and Binnaway. Increasing demand, including the connection of the Binnaway Railway system led Council to approve the purchase of additional generating plant in June 1938.⁷⁵⁴

The switching on of the electricity was ceremonially performed in on Wednesday 2 February 1938 in Baradine.⁷⁵⁵ It was supplied over a 27 mile distance.⁷⁵⁶

4.4.3.3 Binnaway

Binnaway performed its official 'switching on' ceremony on Wednesday 11 May 1938 and it too was supplied by Coonabarabran.⁷⁵⁷

4.4.3.4 Mendooran

Mendooran did not secure electricity until after WWII. By 1947 Mendooran residents were becoming anxious for electricity '... but were unable to procure same from Cobbora Shire, Dubbo or Gilgandra areas, but Coonabarabran Shire was willing to extend its supply line to the area.'⁷⁵⁸ Eventually the line was completed from Binnaway to Mendooran and Merrygoen, with a substation at Neilrex.⁷⁵⁹ It was 'switched on' on April 9 1952 and an official dinner was held at 6pm followed by the ceremony and 8 and a ball to finish the proceedings.⁷⁶⁰

4.4.3.5 Coolah

Coolah began to look for a franchisee to provide electricity for the town in 1928.⁷⁶¹ The official turning on of the electricity supply coincided with the opening of the Shire Hall on Wednesday 31 July 1935 provided by Messrs

⁷⁵³ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 15 September 1948

⁷⁵⁴ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 15 June 1938

⁷⁵⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 7.02.1938 p4

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid

⁷⁵⁷ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 16.05.1938 p6

⁷⁵⁸ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 3.04.1952 p18

⁷⁵⁹ *Gilgandra Weekly* 24.04.1947 p18

⁷⁶⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 03.04.1952 p18

⁷⁶¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 26 January 1928 p2

Tuckers Bros.⁷⁶² They received a 'continuous electric light service' in 1936.⁷⁶³ In 1936 the Coolah Hospital was connected to both lighting and general power.⁷⁶⁴

A new plant was constructed in 1947.⁷⁶⁵

4.4.3.6 Cobbora

The first 3 consumers in the Cobbora Shire to be connected to electricity did so in 1949.⁷⁶⁶ It was provided by the Ulan County Council.⁷⁶⁷

4.4.3.7 Dunedoo

Dunedoo was initially provided with electric lighting on 7 July 1937 and the official 'switching on' of the town on 21 July that year.⁷⁶⁸ This was eventually taken over by the Ulan County Council in 1953 and the generating plant was situated at the junction of Tallawang Street and the lane behind Cobbora Street.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶² Cameron R, *Around the Black Stump* p173

⁷⁶³ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 26.03.1936 p3

⁷⁶⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 10.11.1936 p16

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid* 24 April 1947.

⁷⁶⁶ *Wellington Times* 21.03.1949

⁷⁶⁷ Pers. Comm John Horne January 2018

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibid* 7 July 1938 p8

⁷⁶⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p274

5. Working

5.1 Labour

The many narratives associated with work demonstrate the central involvement of Aboriginal people in the economic development of the bioregion throughout the historic period. The types of work included: station work, ringbarking, shearing and shed work, domestic labour, droving, brumby catching, railways, sleeper cutting, fencing and tobacco and cotton farm labouring. The stories told of work and demonstrated people's pride in their and their ancestors' knowledge and skills. Many of the narratives of work indicated the semblance of freedom that work sometimes provided in the era of intense control and suppression.⁷⁷⁰

Life and work in the pastoral regions of Australia are governed by the rhythms of the seasons and the cycles of rain and drought that affect the southern continent. The demands of work vary with the growth of pasture and growth of wool. Patterns of obtaining labour for rural work varied throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of the early squatters were able to access the relatively cheap labour available through the system of assigning convicts to settlers. From the 1840s free labour replaced the virtual slavery of the convict system and squatters started to seek other workforces. In various parts of New South Wales in the 1840s squatters experimented with workers from India, China and the South Pacific with varying degrees of success.⁷⁷¹

As gold petered out from the mid 1860's many erstwhile diggers drifted into pastoral occupations. Station owners wielded a great amount of power over these itinerant workers. Each pastoral station maintained its core staff members who undertook or oversaw maintenance or domestic work on the property. The ongoing employment of these people, overseers, shepherds, cooks, gardeners, domestic staff, stable hands etc depended on the prosperity of the station. The rural labour force was supplemented at various times of the year by itinerant workers who tramped between stations following the flow of work. Duke Tritton, who spent years on the roads of the New South Wales northwest in the early 20th century as an itinerant worker, left detailed accounts of the life of the bush worker. He recalled that stations issued travellers' rations to these itinerants 'as a means to ensure a plentiful supply of casual labour'.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Resource and Conservation Assessment Council *Brigalow Belt South Indigenous Heritage Study* p35

⁷⁷¹ Buxton G *The Riverina 1861-1891* p19

⁷⁷² Tritton HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* 1964 P26

The travellers' rations prescribed by the Pastoralists' Union consisted of 'ten pounds of flour, ten of meat, two of sugar and a quarter of a pound of tea'. Most squatters added extras such as 'a tin of jam or baking powder, sometimes a plug of tobacco or, in the case of a sick man, some of the rough medicines of the period'. Pastoralists noted as providers of generous handouts were popular and, according to Tritton, always had a plentiful supply 'of men to choose from, but the tight ones were always avoided by any self-respecting swagman'.⁷⁷³

Prior to the beginning of the 20th century shearers worked on terms dictated by the squatter. Terms were harsh and the squatter had complete control over judging the quality of shearing and consequently the level of pay received by the shearers. A shearer not completing his contract was 'liable to a fine or even imprisonment'.⁷⁷⁴

Shearers began organising by the 1880s to achieve improved conditions. In 1886 moves by pastoralists to reduce rates paid to shearers resulted in attempts to establish trade unions in the industry. A shearers' union was formed at Tubbul in May 1886 'to oppose the reductions contemplated by the sheep owners. The Tubbul Shearers' Union was the first of its kind in Australia. Elected office bearers were President C. B. Frater, Secretary W.G. Scott 'and a working committee comprising John Harris, Thomas Pegrum, James Geeves, Frederick Harris, James Summerfield and Thomas Whybrow'.⁷⁷⁵

By 1887 the Tubbul union had become the Shearer's Union of New South Wales. The Shearers' Union of Victoria was formed in June 1886 with W. G. Spence as its Secretary. Spence worked with other shearers' organisations to build the Amalgamated Shearers' Union of Australia (A.S.U.). The Tubbul union was invited to join the A.S.U. A meeting in Young in November 1887 rejected this offer. Later in that year 'W. G. Spence ... addressed a meeting at Young at which, swayed by his eloquence, the greater number of Tubbul shearers joined the A.S.U'.⁷⁷⁶

The Australian Shearers' Union began staging strikes from 1888 and by 1891 were in full-scale conflict with the pastoralists and colonial governments.⁷⁷⁷ The drought and economic downturn of the 1890s, Federation in 1901 and a large-scale shearers' strike in 1902 created circumstances leading to improvements in

⁷⁷³ Tritton HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* 1964 pp19-20

⁷⁷⁴ Freeman P *The Woolshed: A Riverina Anthology* 1980 p60

⁷⁷⁵ Bayley W *Rich Earth History of Young NSW* p97

⁷⁷⁶ IBID

⁷⁷⁷ Freeman P *The Woolshed: A Riverina Anthology* 1980 p60

working conditions. By the early 20th century pastoralists were required to provide improved accommodation for their shearers. In the 19th century 'accommodation was rotten .. huts built of bark or slabs, with leaking roofs, no windows, earth floors, bunks in three tiers and bare boards to sleep on. ⁷⁷⁸

Following the Shearers' Agreement stations set about building better quarters. Shearers were not the only workers to organise in the district in the 1880s. Following the formation of carriers' unions at Hay and Nyngan a meeting was held at Young in January 1889 to form the Lachlan Carriers Union. The purpose of this union was 'to unite and endeavour to remedy the wrongs and injustices' to which the district's carriers had felt they were subjected.

In the early 20th century the various tasks required to undertake a successful shearing were allocated before a shed started. The workers would elect an A.W.U. representative and then 'put in' a cook who then nominated his assistants. Other tasks around the shed, as described by Tritton, included:

- *The "penner-up" was an important man in a shed. When the musterers brought the sheep from the paddocks to the shed, the penner-up took charge of them and was responsible for keeping the catching pens full.*
- *Pickers-up took the fleece as it fell on the board and spread it skin-side down on the wool table.*
- *Wool-rollers, two at each table, would strip three inches of skirting around it, roll the fleece, throw it in a bin where the classer would examine it and place it in a bin according to its class. The skirting went to another table where the piece-pickers would sort it into grades, clean, stained and burry.*
- *The pressers were kept busy. They worked on a contract system at so much per bale, and the rules of the shed did not apply to them in regard to working hours. It was not unusual to see them working long after the shearers had finished for the day.*
- *"The expert" is another important man in the shed. He is responsible for the smooth running of the machinery and has to have a thorough knowledge of everything mechanical in the shed.⁷⁷⁹*

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw many changes in the working lives of shearers. The change from hand to machine shearing changed the atmosphere of the sheds forever.

⁷⁷⁸ Tritton HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* 1964 pp19-20

⁷⁷⁹ Tritton HP (Duke) *Time Means Tucker* 1964 P40

Shearers worked bent over with heavy strain placed on their backs. 'It was not unusual to see a man making his way on his hands and knees to his bunk. No one offered assistance as it was a point of honour to be able to reach one's bunk under one's own steam.'⁷⁸⁰

In his books Eric Rolls provides some personal insights into work in the agricultural industries during the early and mid 20th century. This includes his description of the process of sewing and tipping wheat bags in the years before bulk handling of grains:

Until the 1960s farmers still bagged wheat on their farms. Carriers loaded the bags on their trucks and took them to the silos where contract tippers emptied them down the elevator chutes. The itinerant bag sewers ... skewered the top of a loosely-filled bag with a needle thirty-five centimetres long, threaded it with a length of binder twine, drew the needle back, then tied the ends of the twine across the top of the bag. They devised quick methods for cutting the twine. Most rolled it round twenty-three litre oil drums, slashed it down one side, and tied the lengths together in bundles. They came into the paddocks about daylight, the twine dangling from keepers on their hips. They left at dark. Some sewed up to 1,200 bags a day. Bag sewing and tipping employed a lot of men in country towns. Then farmers equipped their header boxes with augers, carriers fitted bins to their trucks, and the grain was carried in bulk from paddock to ship.'⁷⁸¹

During the bumper wheat harvest of 1939-40 the Binnaway wheat silo was unable to cope with the large amount of bagged wheat received from local farmers. A special bulkhead was constructed to handle the excess wheat. Wheat lumpers were required to carry bags up a plank to pour the contents into the bulkhead. 'The plank became so slippery with wheat that the men had to go barefoot'. Charlie Oram, the Wheat Board agent, was required to use 21 men in one day 'due to men getting such sore feet that they were unable to carry on'.⁷⁸²

Rolls also noted the post World War II push to increase the amount of land under crops:

⁷⁸⁰ IBID

⁷⁸¹ Rolls, E., 1982. *A Million Wild Acres*. p.220

⁷⁸² Bull, R., 1986. *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.91

Farmers fitted their old tractors with rubber tyres or bought new tractors already equipped with rubbers. They fitted old generators, batteries and lights and drove night and day. The cold at seven or eight kilometres an hour on an open tractor on a frosty night is unbelievable. I've taken off two pairs of gloves and slapped my hands together till my fingers had enough feeling to open my penknife to cut the twine on the bags of seed. My toes pained through two pairs of socks and boots thrust inside a cocoon of wheatbags seven thick. I've thought of knocking off but the lights of other tractors whose drivers were braving it have kept me there. Stupefied by noise and cold we sat and spiralled round our paddocks sowing wheat.⁷⁸³

Small landholders, taking up the increasing number of blocks opened up for closer settlement during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, provided a more stable labour source for many large properties. Many free selectors found their small properties alone could not provide a sustainable living for a family and were forced to seek outside employment.

As noted in *Section 2.7 Migration* the latter half of the 20th century saw major changes in the technologies applied to work, and in the nature of local industries. These changes have had profound effects on the job skills required in the region and on the total number of persons employed. Much of the earlier seasonal work has gone with stations employing fewer hands and less opportunities for contract work. Smaller communities have consequently suffered declines in population and levels of commercial activity.

It has been said that no one in the bush worked harder or suffered more than the wife of the small farmer. An article in the *Melbourne Argus* early in 1902 detailed her drudgery. Her day began before dawn. After milking the cows, she fed the calves, pigs and fowls. Then she

... got breakfast, consisting of cold, salt beef, porridge and tea; washed up; sent children to school; carried water in kerosene tins for the day's use, set the house in order, made bread. Scrubbed and washed. Dinner must be prepared – mutton, potatoes, rice and tea. Then she must help outside with planting potatoes, or with find the pigs that have escaped. Then milking time, then tea-time – cold beef, bread, butter and tea, but if times are bad merely bread, dripping and tea. After tea, clothes to make, or maize to shell, or potatoes cut for the morrow's planting.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸³ Rolls, E., 1982. *A Million Wild Acres*. p.220

⁷⁸⁴ Macqueen, H *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001* p54

Domestic service was widely used throughout the nineteenth century starting with the use of convict women and then orphans arriving as a result of the Irish famine and also those who arrived on assisted passage. Unfortunately information about the numbers of women (mostly) in this capacity is very limited and relegated to those who mark it as an occupational category.⁷⁸⁵ What is even more limited is information pertaining to those who employed them.⁷⁸⁶

Interestingly Theresa McBride makes the following point about the history of domestic service saying that it:

*has more to with the stages of economic development than with particular culture styles. ... The most intense period of domestic service is in the early stages of industrialisation when it served as the major acculturating or socialising agency for rural or foreign migrants.*⁷⁸⁷

In broad terms there was barely one domestic servant per 1000 people in 1800 but by 1860 there were close to 40 per 1000.⁷⁸⁸ Higman makes the point that British capitalists saw themselves as the rightful owners of people and their labour. Slavery and other forms of labour coercion flourished under the empire.⁷⁸⁹ The era of the wealthy squatter and the subsequent creation of a landed gentry provided an important role for the use of domestic servants not only in practical terms but also in symbolic ones.⁷⁹⁰

As a result of the wealth created by the agricultural and pastoral activities in Australia the geographical spread of domestic servants in the lead up to the twentieth century were most numerous, as a proportion of the total population in the great interior pastoral zone of NSW and QLD.⁷⁹¹ In 1901 21 885 Australian households employed servants.⁷⁹²

It is important to note that domestic service falls outside of the usual employment related legislations and subsequently were not given the levels of protection that other employees were. The consequence of this Higman states:

⁷⁸⁵ Higman BW *Domestic Service in Australia* p45

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid* P18

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid* p23

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid* p24

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid* 45

⁷⁹² *Ibid* p45

...was legal inferiority on the grounds that the domestic servant could not be defined as an 'employee' working in an 'industry' or performing 'work' in 'employments'. These definitional devices exposed the domestic servant to varieties of exploitation unknown in most Australia workplaces and made her welfare to the arbitrary decision of the employer.⁷⁹³

This places the domestic servant somewhere between the category of slave and that of employee. They were not quite citizens, they had no autonomy or agency. At the crux of the relationship between servants and their employers was the Master and Servants Acts in Australia which were based on British versions of the same act.⁷⁹⁴ The basis of which is the presumed inequality between the two.

This act, in the first half of the nineteenth century, meant that legally there was no requirement for there to be a contract between the two and this absolutely worked in the favour of the master as there were no agreed tasks, times or moneys to be agreed upon.⁷⁹⁵ This would appear to have been the norm in Australia until around the 1850s, when contract forms were introduced for the use of both master and servant.

These regulations however were not legal and many young women were isolated and thereby vulnerable to the whims of their employer. By far the most common servant in Australia was a maid of some description, although the singular term 'maid' was not used very often. The term would appear with an extension in advertisements such as housemaid, parlourmaid, nursemaid, kitchenmaid, pantrymaid, doormaid, children's maid and lady's maid.⁷⁹⁶ An example of the hours required for a servant appears in a publication entitled *Men and How to Manage Them* published in Melbourne in 1885.

The Servant was to rise at 6 am (5 am on washing days) serve lunch at 1pm, be 'at liberty to go out' from 2 and return by 4 pm to commence cooking. Dinner was served at 6pm and by 8 the coffee tray having been removed from the sitting-room, she was again at liberty to go out, but required to be home by 10 in order to retire early. Kitchen, hall passages and dining-room were to be cleaned every day before breakfast, except washing day. Sundays brought many visitors to 'middle-class households' so extra time had to be given to setting the house to rights on Monday

⁷⁹³ Higman BW *Domestic Service in Australia* p167

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid* p175

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid* p135

*mornings. Tuesday therefore was the recommended day for washing, with ironing on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday were for heavy house-cleaning and Saturday devoted to preparations for Sunday.*⁷⁹⁷

The author of the publication, known as 'An Old Housekeeper', suggests that by undertaking the following method it is possible to get 'ten hours of steady work every week day out of a servant' and on Sundays 5-6 hours can be 'extracted' making the weekly subtotal of hours worked by the servant at around 68.⁷⁹⁸ This was considered ideal. The average wage for a housemaid, in 1890 and in the cities, was around forty pounds per annum. Some would have received some payment in kind, board and food for example.

It is important to note that the above information pertains to people living in the city and that these wages and conditions may not necessarily be extrapolated to the country. This is certainly the case for male servants working in rural properties where it is not unusual for them to be paid 'board wages' and expected to find their own food.⁷⁹⁹ Whilst we don't have any statistics relating specifically to the Warrumbungle Shire there is no doubt that many of the properties would have employed numerous servants throughout the history of the area. Domestic service reached a peak in Australia during the 1930s.⁸⁰⁰

The below account comes from Rose Fitzgerald in her family history 'Victory in our Veins' about early life at 'Carmel' near Baradine.:

The days were hard and long, yet the kitchen stove was continually stoked and working overtime. The daily batches of biscuits for morning and afternoon tea were devoured by the hungry workers faster than it took to make them. For their very early breakfast in the coolest part of the day Flo would have hot porridge waiting, the batter for the Johnny cakes ready and the fat boiling in the pan. They ate them hot, spread with golden syrup or lemon juice and sugar. The teas made from or water was almost black but still pleasant to drink in spite of its colour. Every Friday they killed a sheep, but they had no refrigeration so Flo cooked as much as she could the first day, and the rest she put in a kerosene tin and with mixture of salt and saltpetre in the water and brought it to the boil. When taken off the stove, or a little outside fire made from a few bricks, an iron

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid p162

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹⁹ Higman BW *Domestic Service in Australia* p167

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid p93

*weight was put on top of the lid to keep the meat under the water. As it cooled the fat rose to the top, thus sealing the meat from the air. It was left in the cool room until needed.*⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰¹ Cutts, L Kildey, R Baradine – *A Town Full of History* Sunnyland Publishing p23

6. Educating

6.1 Education

The public schools system began in NSW in 1848 and this resulted in the establishment of several schools in the Central West of NSW. Whilst there can be little doubt that the wealthy in the country would have provided education for their children either by undertaking the task themselves or by employing servants to do it for them this is not a luxury that would have extended to the majority of children living in the area at this time.

It is important to note at this point that literacy levels would have been very low prior to the establishment of a mandatory school system. Whilst statistics are unavailable for country NSW during this period it is fair to gauge that the rates of literacy would have been similar to those of Britain. In the period 1839-1854 it is estimated that 52% of the population were literate, leaving almost half the population unable to read or write. The introduction of education in a limited fashion from the 1850s onwards was due to the fact that employers were requiring an increase in literacy from its working classes.

The government educational framework was reformed in 1866 which united all education under one board in NSW.⁸⁰² At this stage funding and administration was undertaken largely by parents of children attending Provisional Schools. Most schools operating from 1870 to 1900 in country NSW were of this nature.⁸⁰³ Whilst perhaps it was limited by the lack of resources it did, nonetheless, enable education to reach country children of the working classes and children in remote areas for the first time.

In 1867 the Council of Education had inherited 259 schools. Within 3 years this number doubled and by early 1880 the number had grown to over one thousand, one hundred with the typical government school being a one-teacher school in the bush.⁸⁰⁴

Prior to 1866 it had been difficult to make educational reforms in the Colony due to political instability and the contentious nature of the education sector. This contentiousness was essentially between Catholic education reformers and those that believed in a secular education system. By the 1880s the education reformers were advocating for an education system that was free, secular and compulsory.

⁸⁰² Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* P65

⁸⁰³ Ibid

⁸⁰⁴ NSW Government Education and Communities Website *Government Schools of NSW from 1848*

The Public Instruction Act was introduced in 1880 and amongst other things the two main changes that it brought about were the withdrawal of state aid to denominational schools and the introduction compulsory education. This meant that all children between the ages of 6-14 yrs old had to attend school not less than 70 days in each half year.⁸⁰⁵ This, naturally, led to a massive increase in the numbers of children attending school and subsequently, the need for more schools. 'By using tents, portable classrooms and rented premises, as well as conventional school buildings, the department increased the number of schools within 5 years from 1,100 to 2,100 and by the time of Federation there were 2,800 schools in existence.'⁸⁰⁶

Separate Aboriginal schools were also formed during this period, appearing for the first time in the 1880s. This system peaked in the late 1930s when some 40 schools were in operation. After 1940, in line with a newly adopted policy of assimilation, Aboriginal schools were merged into local public schools.⁸⁰⁷

After the reformation of the education framework in 1866 the first of Australia's public schools were established. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth, the Warrumbungles district had many small, often one teacher schools. These developed particularly after the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1880 and it became a legal requirement to send children to school. Records suggest that many of these schools did not survive long and were established in order to meet the educational needs of various different communities. The nature of the school varied from denominational to provisional and public schools. Some schools were a number of different types of school throughout its lifetime. Occasionally a school would start in a tent and then a one room building, often building of slab and bark construction, would be built. Once the school was no longer required it was often moved on to the next site where it was needed.

This list is probably not exhaustive but what it does is illustrate the mobile nature of life in rural Australia during this time. Some of this mobility is related to mining, gold rushes included, and it is quite possible that many of these schools did not last more than ten years or so. Some did, however, make it through until the end of the twentieth century but many of them have closed in recent years, largely to a lack of demand.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid

⁸⁰⁷ NSW Government Education and Communities Website *Government Schools of NSW from 1848*

Mechanics Institutes play a significant role in terms of providing adult education in many towns and cities all over the world. The Mechanics Institute movement began in Scotland in the 1820s, a result of the values of the Scottish Enlightenment. They were formed to provide adults with education and were often used as libraries for adults. The movement also aimed to provide an alternative pastime to drinking alcohol for the working classes.

6.1.1 Baradine

A provisional school would appear to have been established in the town in 1875 with land being dedicated for the purpose of a school the following year.⁸⁰⁸ At this stage there were 29 pupils and a successful application was made for a public school in 1877 with a new school building being opened in 1880.⁸⁰⁹ A big increase in the town's population at this point increased enrolments to 50 and extensions and a new kitchen were added to the school in 1900.⁸¹⁰

In 1908 a new school building and residence was constructed and another increase in the school numbers to 86 in 1917 led to the construction of a new classroom.⁸¹¹ In 1926 a new school building and residence was constructed and by 1932 140 students, 3 teacher and 3 classrooms comprised the school and in 1934 a classroom and headmasters office were added.⁸¹²

In 1943 Baradine school became a central school and in 1967 the student numbers exceeded 300. In 2015 the school was still operating and is still going taking students all the way from Kindergarten to Year 12.⁸¹³

St John's School

The Sisters of St Joseph arrived in Baradine in July 1926 and the school commenced, originally run out of the church buildings opened one month later.⁸¹⁴ When enrolment started there were 72 students.

6.1.2 Coonabarabran

The first public school was a weatherboard construction built on Robertson Street and was opened 31 October 1870 and the building consisted of 1 large

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid

⁸⁰⁹ Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* Sunnlyland Publishing p35

⁸¹⁰ Ibid

⁸¹¹ Ibid

⁸¹² Ibid

⁸¹³ Ibid

⁸¹⁴ Bid p39

teaching room with the teacher's residence of 4 small rooms were attached.⁸¹⁵ In 1889 the school was replaced with a brick construction, currently the TAFE College.⁸¹⁶

The 1930s saw an increase in the population in Coonabarabran and a new school was built in 1939 to cater for the new students.⁸¹⁷

The Sisters of St Joseph opened a Catholic School in 1888 and it stood on the corner of Cassilis and Robertson Streets.⁸¹⁸

6.1.3 Mendooran

The first moves towards establishing a school in Mendooran occurred in 1868 when Andrew Brown informed the Council of Education that a school site had been applied for from the Department of Lands.⁸¹⁹ The initial aim was to get a building that could be used as a school during the week and a church on Sunday and approval was given, 2 acres were dedicated, and the following year and official application was made for a public school in Mendooran.⁸²⁰

The building was constructed and was 36' x 18' of 2" sawn pine slabs, with ironbark uprights, it was floored and the roof was shingles.⁸²¹ The furniture consisted of three desks and six forms.⁸²²

The Mendooran population was slow to grow generally during this period and as a consequence of this the school suffered, at some times of the year more than others, from a low or fluctuating school population. As a result of this it is presumed that between the years of 1868-1876 the school did not operate and a new application was eventually made for a provisional school in 1877.⁸²³ By 1880 the numbers of pupils had increased and by the following year it was elevated to a public school.⁸²⁴

In 1888 a new school was completed on 20 October when it was opened and in 1900 school buildings at Bective had been transported to Mendooran and used as

⁸¹⁵ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p31

⁸¹⁶ Ibid

⁸¹⁷ Ibid

⁸¹⁸ Ibid

⁸¹⁹ Ibid p194

⁸²⁰ Ibid

⁸²¹ Ibid

⁸²² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p194

⁸²³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p196

⁸²⁴ Ibid

a residence for the teacher.⁸²⁵ In 1937, school buildings were removed from Dapper to Mendooran. The pressure was so great that it had been necessary to rent the Oddfellows' Lodge Hall whilst they were waiting for the buildings to arrive.⁸²⁶

In 1945 the school was a Central School, becoming a public school in January 1946 and converting to a Central School in January 1959.⁸²⁷

6.1.4 Binnaway

In 1877 a meeting was called with school inspector regarding the establishment of a public school in Binnaway. A private teacher had already been engaged and had been teaching students in a private residence.⁸²⁸ Fundraising began and plans were made for a dual purpose building to be constructed that could function as both a school and a church.⁸²⁹ It was completed in 1879 and was located on the bank of the Castlereagh River and the junction of Arampadi Creek.⁸³⁰

Whilst there is not much information regarding the school and its activities in the latter part of the nineteenth century the significant increase in the population of Binnaway during the first decades of the twentieth century are reflected in the development of the public school. In 1900 tenders were called for the enlarging of the school⁸³¹ and in 1913 a residence was added.⁸³² In 1916 tenders were called for the construction of a new school building⁸³³ and in 1923 tenders were called for an additional two rooms to be constructed.⁸³⁴

In 1926 a letter was written to the press suggesting that if the population of Binnaway keeps on increasing at the same level that further extension to the school will be required soon.⁸³⁵ The letter goes on to point out the 'last year' the number of students at the school was 146 but now there were 174 pupils on the books with a regular attendance of 150.⁸³⁶

⁸²⁵ Ibid

⁸²⁶ Ibid

⁸²⁷ Ibid

⁸²⁸ Ibid p25

⁸²⁹ Bull, R *Binnaway on the Castlereagh* p25

⁸³⁰ Ibid

⁸³¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 6 April 1900 p 22

⁸³² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 27 February 1913 p21

⁸³³ Ibid 5 October 1916 p18

⁸³⁴ Ibid

⁸³⁵ Ibid 18 July 1926 p19

⁸³⁶ Ibid

6.1.5 Coolah

A provisional school opened in Coolah in July 1868, however, the school was temporarily closed after the death of the teacher from the flu and it was resolved not to re-open in the old school building and a new one was built and re-opened in July 1871.⁸³⁷ The building was of slab with ironbark shingles and the plan shows a 32 ft x 24 ft structure with 2 rooms on one side and three rooms along the other.⁸³⁸

In 1875 it was upgraded to Coolah Public School and on March 13 1883 a new school was opened built of bricks with a shingles roof and providing accommodation for 55 pupils, with a new teacher residence.⁸³⁹ A new classroom was built in May 1905 and another classroom was constructed at the end of 1914 adjoining the one built in 1904.⁸⁴⁰

In 1955 a weatherboard block was erected and this was doubled in size in 1960 and in 1965 a very modern brick secondary classroom block was erected.⁸⁴¹

6.1.6 Dunedoo

The first school here was also provided by the settlers four miles from Redbank along the Cobborah Road. It was abandoned due to insufficient attendance.⁸⁴² The first provisional school opened in Ballarah in November 1876 and was closed within 12 months. It reopened in March 1879, was classified as a public school in May 1881 and continued until November 1922. A new building was eventually constructed in January 1899. It closed in 1922.⁸⁴³

Dunedoo had a provisional school from 1896 to 1900 on 2 acres, in the vicinity of the present day Ulan County Council substations. A school paddock of about 19 acres extended down to the southern bank of the Talbragar River. The school was constructed with money provided by the local community and was opened with 1 teacher and 20 students. It closed in 1900 due to a lack of students.

In 1910 with the railway in town the demand for a school presented itself again and an application was made on the bass of the 34 students in the area in need

⁸³⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p175

⁸³⁸ *Ibid* p175

⁸³⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid* p177

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁸⁴² *Ibid*

⁸⁴³ *Ibid* p273

of a school. As a result the department of education acquired land (part of the current school's site) and had a new school constructed and occupied.

There was a public school from 1911 to 1943, a central school from 1944-1947, a public school again from 1952 only, then back to a central school in 1953.⁸⁴⁴

6.1.7 Cobbora

The first school in Cobbora is said to have opened in June 1866 and was constructed of slab and bark.⁸⁴⁵ As this pre-dates the official public school system it is likely that this would have been some kind of private or half-funded school, although no details exist. As Roy Cameron points out, as with many schools in rural areas, pupil numbers would appear to have fluctuated and this led Reverend Wilson to write to the Council of Education:

*When the proposal for a school first was made, there were within reach nearly 40 children, almost all of whom the parents promised to send. By and by when the pastoral lands became open for selection several families selected at a distance, and there were other changes among the residents which greatly diminished the number of children – most if not all of school age within reach have attended but in a farming settlement the children are often required at home, and the books consequently show much irregularity.’*⁸⁴⁶

It would seem that the school closed for a period of time but was re-opened in 1868 when aid was provided and a local landowner had allowed the school to operate on his property.⁸⁴⁷ It again closed down due to lack of interest until 1877 when, presumably there were sufficient numbers to warrant a school and aid was provided.⁸⁴⁸ The public school was officially opened on Monday 8 March 1880 and approximately 18 pupils were in attendance.⁸⁴⁹

Further extensions were made in 1899 and in 1907, these are said to have involved a new iron roof and an extension of 14 feet at the rear.⁸⁵⁰ Further

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid p272

⁸⁴⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas*

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p.233

⁸⁴⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p233

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid

⁸⁴⁹ *Australian Town and Country Journal* 20 March 1880 p39

⁸⁵⁰ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p233

extensions and alterations were made again in 1923 at the school and in 1943 to the teacher's residence.⁸⁵¹ It closed in 1968.⁸⁵²

The school remained open into the post war period despite a few threatened closings due to low pupil number such as in 1937 when the school was allowed to continue as the pupils numbered 13 and the cut off for the number of pupils before closing the school was ten.⁸⁵³ Indeed it would seem the school was an important part of the town's life and during the 1940s and 1950s the school's end of year celebration was an important one for the town. In 1945 such an event was held and the newspapers reported 'The hall was packed to capacity with children and adult and everyone voted the function a great success.'⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 16 December 1943

⁸⁵² Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

⁸⁵³ *Wellington Times* 29 November 1937 p7

⁸⁵⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* December 1955 p15

7. Governing

7.1 Defence

The Warrumbungle Shire does not occupy a strategic geographic position in Australia and has not been a place where defence works, fortifications or defence manufacturing have played a prominent role. Memorials and honour boards throughout the district remember people from the towns, villages and properties of the area who served in Australia's conflicts. Soldier Settlement communities throughout the district also recognise this service.

The area has been involved in preparations for the defence of Australia. Local rifle clubs have long held an ancillary role in defence preparations.⁸⁵⁵ In 1929 the Department of Defence offered the Coonabarabran Shire Council assistance with the identification of a site for an aerodrome and in the 1930s the same department provided funding to commence construction.

During World War II Coonabarabran Shire Council applied to have a militia training camp established in the area.⁸⁵⁶ Coonabarabran hosted the 6th Volunteer Defence Corps Battalion to whom Council provided the use of its power station truck. Council also camouflaged its power station against air attack.⁸⁵⁷

In the difficult and worrying period after entry into Japan into World War II Coonabarabran Shire Council put in place plans for civil defence. In early 1942 Air Raid Wardens were appointed in the towns of Coonabarabran, Baradine and Binnaway and evacuation plans developed to cope with the eventuality of enemy attack.⁸⁵⁸ Council also constructed bomb shelters in the yard of the council depot.⁸⁵⁹

One of the most significant events to occur in Coonabarabran during World War II was the hosting of Italian prisoners of war on local farms (refer to *Section 2.6 Italian Prisoners of War*). Local people also remember motor vehicles fitted with gas producer units to reduce dependence on oil which was a precious strategic resource

⁸⁵⁵ Carmichael, D., 1991. *Timor Valley*. p.16

⁸⁵⁶ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 9 September 1941

⁸⁵⁷ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 10 March 1942

⁸⁵⁸ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 27 February 1942

⁸⁵⁹ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Coonabarabran Shire Council, 27 February 1942

7.2 Government and Administration

The earliest forms of government administration in the district came through the Commissioners of Crown Lands who controlled the occupancy of rural properties and administered justice along the frontier from 1839. The Commissioner:

*... was in charge of the Border Police. His duties were also to collect the fees, check on the boundaries of the runs and settle disputes. He was generally to see the smooth running of the affairs in his district. The powers given to these men were very wide. They had the right to grant licences or terminate them at any time. In their district their word was law.*⁸⁶⁰

Graham D Hunter was the first commissioner appointed to the Land District of Bligh in 1839 when 3 border police and the Commissioner were attached to headquarters in what is now Coolah, this number was increased to 6 in 1842.⁸⁶¹ The census taken in 1839 lists 259 free males and 238 convicts with no women and of the 44 stations in the area only 8 licensees were residents.⁸⁶²

In essence the role of the Commissioner and the border police was to regulate and manage the district with a specific focus on the conflict between the Aboriginal people of the region and the white settlers. They were paid for by the squatters who would supply provisions at a contracted rate for daily rations for both the men and for forage for horses.

The reports from Hunter illustrate well the earlier patterns of conflict between Aboriginal people and settlers (*as detailed in Section 2.2 Aboriginal Settlement History*). In 1843 he reported that during the past year a new tract of country has been opened up to the settlers and 'on all such occasions the natives are inclined to be hostile.'⁸⁶³ The following year he reported that '... at no period during the last 12 months been any collision between the natives and the squatters.'⁸⁶⁴

The largest run during in 1844 in the Bligh District was owned by James Walker who owned 27 runs, 8 100 square miles, under 1 license running 3 096 cattle and 13 394 sheep.⁸⁶⁵ Hunter's report from the following year discusses the increase in the number of Aboriginal people working on the stations: The longer they are

⁸⁶⁰ Pickette, J. & Campbell, M., 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. pp.22-23

⁸⁶¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p107

⁸⁶² Ibid

⁸⁶³ Ibid p109

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid

⁸⁶⁵ IBid

employed at these stations, the more useful they become, provided they are treated kindly and without abuse.’⁸⁶⁶ He goes on to talk about how the number of Aboriginal people were decreasing and the possible reasons for this: ‘It may be said that intoxicating liquor is the reason, but in many parts of the country seldom or ever are spirits to be found, and yet the Aborigines are on the decrease.’⁸⁶⁷

The arrival of fatal diseases, the reduction in access to food and incursions between Aboriginal people and white settlers all would have contributed to this, as previously discusses in Section 2.3 Aboriginal Settlement History. Hunter also goes on to say that ‘...it does not appear but in a few instances that the natives have children ...’ this no doubt reflecting the sharp drop in fertility owing to the above mentioned factors.⁸⁶⁸

Hunter was well known in horse racing circles and it would seem that his horse racing interests were his downfall. In 1850 an inquiry is called into Hunter and his position as a result of a letter published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in that year. This letter details Hunter’s absences from the district as he attended the various race meetings held in NSW. The letter details concerns over Hunter’s executing of his duties but also reveals quite a bit about the area at that time.

There are but few men of education or of standing resident in the district of Bligh. Its population is composed chiefly of the servants of non-resident proprietors and those who have been servants.

... Grog selling is so rife that a man who ventures to exclaim against it is made the subject of petty persecution ... grog carts abound in every direction. The absence of any controlling power permits scenes of debauchery to occur, of which a great part of this wouldn’t ever have occurred if Mr Hunter had done his duty: it does not occur in districts where Commissioners are not training grooms. I believe that for the last 10 years there has hardly been a race meeting within 200 miles of his residence at which Mr Hunter has not attended.’⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p109

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid p111

Hunter was replaced the following year by William Hall Palmer. As the 1850s wore on a number of factors changed the nature of these issues in the district. These include the increase in the number of hotels in the region, thereby providing some regulation around the manufacture and sale of alcohol. Towns in the region established police stations and other administrative functions like courts replacing the previous Commissioner and border patrol system. Other services also began to be provided and these include postal and telegraphic services (*Section 3.3 Communication*), education (*Section 6.1 Education*) and health (*Section 3.9 Health*). Other services such as Aboriginal welfare (*Sections 2.1 Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures and 7.4 Welfare*) and forestry management (*Section 3.7 Forestry*).

Originally the area known as the Bligh District was overseen by the Cassilis District Council which was formed in 1843, along with a series of similar district councils. The boundary of the Cassilis District Council coincided with the Cassilis Police District and at this point in time it was estimated that the population of the area was 800 ‘...with 40 permanent cottages with the majority living in huts’.⁸⁷⁰ These councils largely failed due to a lack of interest and resources.

The Local Government Act was introduced in 1906 and this led to the formation of local councils throughout NSW. The area now known as the Warrumbungle Shire is made up of, roughly, three previous Shire councils. These include Coonabarabran Shire Council, Cobbora Shire Council and Coolah Shire Council. Parts of the Shire were also incorporated into other shire areas including Gulgong, Geurie, Narrabri and Cassilis. As previously mentioned the nature of the various town centres in the area changed over time with changes to transport and its networks and other commercial factors. This is reflected in the changes to local government at the time.

7.2.1 Coonabarabran Shire Council

The Coonabarabran Shire Council was formed in 1906. In that year an interim council meeting in the Coonabarabran Court House made arrangements for the conduct of a council election for representatives of three ridings. The designated polling places for this election provide interesting information regarding the distribution of population within the shire at this time. Polling places were as follows:

⁸⁷⁰ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* P114

- 'A' Riding – Erinbri, Wagga, Baradine, Bugaldi (sic), Warkton, Belar Creek, Mollyann, Coonabarabran.
- 'B' Riding – Tambar Springs, Rocky Glen, Mullaley, Purlewaugh, Coonabarabran.
- 'C' Riding – Binnaway, The Flags, Coonabarabran, Warkton, Purlewaugh, Mollyann.

From its first meeting on 7 December 1906 the council dealt with the minutiae of the regulation of animal slaughter, nuisances and road maintenance. The first Council Chambers building was constructed in 1909 and was a two storey building which might be described as Federation Free Style; utilising arches, columns and other classical influences. It was used for purpose until it was replaced, at the same location, by the current council buildings in 1962.⁸⁷¹ Alterations and renovations were then carried out in 1992.⁸⁷²

During the middle years of the 20th century the Coonabarabran Shire Council developed the local road network, arranged the construction of new bridges and presided over the development of local utilities including a reticulated water supply, power generating plant and electricity supply network, sanitation systems and an airport. These schemes were envisaged in the 1920s at a time when local entrepreneur Robert Neilson was Mayor of Coonabarabran. They are further explored in sections on Transport (*Section 3.15 Transport*) and Utilities (*Section 4.4 Utilities*).

7.2.2 Coolah Shire Council

Prior to the introduction of the NSW council system Coolah came under the Cassilis District Council.

The first election in Coolah was held on 24th November 1906.⁸⁷³ Elected councillors included: J McMaster, EJ Scully, A Fraser, CF Dean, FJ Piper from 1907-08 J McMaster (pres), EJ Skully, A Fraser, CF Dean, D McMaster, Thos. Goddard (same in 1909 plus a D Niven) with the first shire clerk being William Edward Cole.⁸⁷⁴

The earliest polling booths were located as follows again providing some indication of population distribution at this time:

⁸⁷¹ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran- As Time Goes By* p25

⁸⁷² Ibid

⁸⁷³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p122

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid

- Hawthorn and Pandora in A Riding
- Coolah and Leadville in B riding
- Turee Station in O riding.⁸⁷⁵

At this early stage meetings were held in the local courthouse.⁸⁷⁶ It would appear that Council may have bought a building for use rather than having a purposed built Council Chambers in the first half of the twentieth century. There are no references to the construction of the original Council Chambers in the newspapers of the day nor in the histories that have been written since. This suggests that perhaps it was a building that had already been constructed and it was procured, either through leasing or purchasing, by Council for use as council chambers. The building is described as a typical federation style cottage, suggesting that it may have been constructed around the turn of the twentieth century.⁸⁷⁷ It was located on the Corner of Cole Street and Central Lane directly opposite the rear of the Coolah Baths.⁸⁷⁸

It is likely that the building was used from 1906, with the introduction of the Local Government Act and Coolah Council came into existence. Oral history suggests that part of the building, 'the room with the large bay window' was used by the CWA for mothers and another room was utilised as a baby health clinic.⁸⁷⁹ When the new Council Chambers were constructed, in 1955, the old chambers operated as a health clinic as a plaque that was attached to the building attests declaring the building open as a health centre by the then health minister in 1959.⁸⁸⁰

It operated in this capacity, including an optometrist, until December 1997 when it was removed from the site and relocated to a property, 'Hillside', in Leadville. The current owners have provided the following description: 'The 2 original rooms have pressed tin ceilings, cedar doors and skirting boards as well as a picture rail.'⁸⁸¹

The new Council building was built in 1954 and comprised 3 offices and a small meeting room.⁸⁸² The building was expanded to include a new Meeting chamber,

⁸⁷⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 02.08.1906 p12

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷⁷ Description provided by Noel Gilbert; June 2019

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁷⁹ Pers. Comm. Ian and Felicity McMaster; June 2019

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid*

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid*

⁸⁸² *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 8.08.1920 p5

health and engineering departments and an archives room in the late 1970s. A new car park was established at the rear of the building in 1982. Until the expansion in the 70s the engineering and soil testing laboratory were attached to the depot located in Cunningham Street on the corner of Martin Street.⁸⁸³ Coolah Shire Council was amalgamated with Coonabarabran Shire Council to form the Warrumbungle Shire in 2004.

7.2.3 Cobbora Shire Council

The details regarding Cobbora Shire Council remain elusive. The photograph included below dates from 1910 and it is reasonable to presume that this council was formed in 1906 with the introduction of the Local Government Act.

The area covered by this incorporated the towns of Mendooran, Cobbora and Dunedoo from the now Warrumbungle Shire.⁸⁸⁴ They held their meeting in Geurie and sometimes in Dunedoo. It was closed around 1946 at which point Dunedoo and Mendooran went to Gulgong Shire, where Leadville had always been.⁸⁸⁵ In 1957, Gulgong was abolished and Dunedoo and Mendooran went to Coolah with the rest of the area going to Cudgegong.⁸⁸⁶



*Cobbora Shire Council – 1910
(University of Newcastle – Living History Collection)*

7.3 Law and Order

⁸⁸³ Pers. Comm. Noel Gilbert; June 2019

⁸⁸⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne 2018

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid

For thousands of years the various Aboriginal groups who lived in the region administered justice according to traditional law. With the coming of the Europeans this system of laws was broken down.

The early European settlers had moved beyond the limits of settlement and civil authorities were not initially stationed in the region to regulate their activities. Despite this British law was considered to operate in the region. A punitive expedition by the NSW Mounted Police in 1837 appears to have been the first formal exercise of British law in the Coonabarabran region.

In the early days of settlement bushrangers and escaped convicts were a relatively regular occurrence in the Warrumbungle Shire and police was often one of the first services that the community called for.

7.3.1 Baradine

By 1875 the police station and courthouse were established in Baradine staffed by one senior constable and one junior constable.⁸⁸⁷ When the original police station was demolished in 1916 and replaced the following article appeared in the *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative*:

Progressive Baradine

*The police station at Baradine has been completed and taken over by the clerk of works. A new billiard room, with four rooms in front for offices etc is nearing completion.*⁸⁸⁸

7.3.2 Coonabarabran

One of the first activities suggesting the role that Coonabarabran would hold into the future was the establishment of a police service in the town. William Field rented premises that consisted of a rough, slab and bark hut with two rooms and a dirt floor and this was used as a temporary police station from 1856 onwards.⁸⁸⁹ There was no lockup in the town and Joy Pickette describes the alternative arrangements that were made available:

*Drunks in plentiful supply at the time were simply shackled to a hug gum tree with 2 sets of bullock chains until they sobered up.*⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁷ Cutts, L Kildey, *R Baradine – A Town Full of History* Sunnyland Publishing p89

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid

Field then rented another building as a lockup until plans for a courthouse and watch-house began in 1858 but were not completed until 1861.⁸⁹¹ Prior to the construction of the courthouse hearings were held at the Castlereagh Hotel.⁸⁹² The site of the original court room was the site of the current post office with the courtroom at the front with the lockup keeper's room behind it.⁸⁹³ At the sides of the courtroom were two cells constructed of "American Log Work" with the rest of the building weatherboard.⁸⁹⁴

In 1878 a new stone courthouse was constructed and is described as follows:

*The Coonabarabran Courthouse is an attractive and simple two-storey country building designed in the Victorian Regency style. The building is symmetrical in form being a central building flanked on either side by single-storey wings and surrounding ground floor verandah. The coursed rubble sandstone walling and multi-pannel Georgian windows provide interest to the simple design. ... Construction: The Coonabarabran Courthouse is constructed in rubble sandstone walling and base course. The roofs are clad in slate. The chimney is constructed in rendered brick. The verandah roofs are supported on timber posts.*⁸⁹⁵

In the 1860s the police sergeant's house was located at the river end of Robertson Streets until the present residence was built in the 1880s.⁸⁹⁶

7.3.3 Mendooran

The first police constable was appointed in 1854.⁸⁹⁷ The references in the press during Mendooran's early years regarding the police refer mostly to the removal of the police service from the town during the 1860s. This mention in the *Maitland Mercury and North Western Representative* is typical of a number of similar references made at the time:

*Mundooran is a township and possess a substantial lock up and quarter but for some reason, or no reason, no constables have been stationed there fore a long time past, notwithstanding that a petition for police protection was months ago forwarded to the proper quarters.*⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹¹ Pickette, Joy and Campbell, Mervyn *Coonabarabran as it was in the beginning* p.55

⁸⁹² Heritage Listing for Coonabarabran Courthouse

⁸⁹³ Ibid

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid p62

⁸⁹⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p186

⁸⁹⁸ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 27 January 1863 p3

The Mendooran area was prone to bushranging activity in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the mail was robbed a number of times during this period. Murders, suicides and lost children and adults during this time all required the attention of authorities at different times and the police in Mendooran would have, at times, been busy.

The barracks or police station was later built on the south side, western end of Bandulla Street, the Court House site approved in 1878 adjoined it on the east side.⁸⁹⁹ A pounds site was fixed and Poundkeeper appointed in 1861. However it was not until 1878 that a 3 acre stockyard, garden and pound keeper's house was erected at the southeast corner of Benewa and River Streets.⁹⁰⁰

7.3.4 Binnaway

A police service was called for for sometime in Binnaway before it was established.⁹⁰¹ In 1913 a newspaper article reports 'Mr Lebrinsic will soon have the police residence completed. It will not be long before the old playground is a mass of buildings and old Binnaway will just be a dream of the past.'⁹⁰² The impact of the establishment of the police service clearly impacted on the streetscape of old Binnaway.

7.3.5 Coolah

Prior to the arrival of a police service in Coolah it had been part of the Cassilis police district and following that Denison Town. It is noted that in 1873 both the Coonabarabran and Cassilis police were called to Coolah to search for a fugitive who had stolen a horse and gun from his employer.⁹⁰³ Given the length of time it would have taken to travel between the towns this must have been an impractical solution.

In 1873 the community made a series of attempts to remedy the situation and petitioned for a police station in Coolah and then, with little response, wrote letters of complaint to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁹⁰⁴ In September 1874 a senior constable Breen was appointed as Acting Clerk of Petty Session and the following month it was announced in the newspaper.⁹⁰⁵

⁸⁹⁹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p186

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid

⁹⁰¹ 'Wicked Binnaway' *Mudgee Garden and North Western Representative* p09.02.1900

⁹⁰² Ibid 24.07.1913 p27

⁹⁰³ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River Advertiser* 20 February 1873 p3

⁹⁰⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 December 1873 p5

⁹⁰⁵ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River Advertiser* 20 October 1874

There are no records as to where the police were located but it was not unusual to rent accommodation until appropriate provision could be made. Tenders were called on 28 July 1878 and plans were made for the construction of a combined Court House, Police station, a residence, a slab four stall stables and a forage room.⁹⁰⁶ In September of that year a tender was accepted and the buildings were complete in 1880 on land which is now 74 Binnia St, Coolah.⁹⁰⁷ Additions were made in 1898 and new cells and an exercise yard were added and the old cells were altered to create additional bedrooms for the police residence.⁹⁰⁸ Other alterations were made later on and included changing the entrance to the courthouse, adjusting verandahs and converting the stable into a garage.⁹⁰⁹

The current police site was chosen in 1974 and construction finished in 1979 and the old building was later sold, subject to Permanent Conservation Order in 1988.⁹¹⁰

7.3.6 Dunedoo

A police station was first established at Dunedoo in 1910 and in 1911 it became a two man station. The location of the first station is not known but it appears to have operated out of rented premises. Attempts were made to start this process but the war would appear to have thwarted these early efforts. From 1918 to 1923 a weatherboard building was rented in Cobbora Street as a police residence and two hardwood portable cells were constructed in the rear of that building. Later another weatherboard building was leased at the corner of Tucklan and Wallaroo Streets and used as a police residence and office until 1925. The two portable cells were transferred there.⁹¹¹

7.3.7 Cobbora

Land was initially dedicated for the purpose of a police station in 1884 and it is thought that it opened the following year. The *Evening News* reported the following in 1884 'The Courthouse and police barracks will be finished in a few months' time. The walls have been completed. This building will be quite an ornament to the town.'⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p165

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid

⁹¹⁰ Ibid p166

⁹¹¹ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p257

⁹¹² *Evening News* 21 July 1884 p6

The police station was opened in Cobbora in 1885. It was located in Dunedoo Street and a 13 acre police horse paddock was provided at the corner of Dunedoo and Martin Streets.⁹¹³ It was staffed by one senior constable until 1896 when it became a two man station.⁹¹⁴ Roy Cameron describes the building:

The station was constructed on stone foundations with an iron roof for [eight hundred pounds] containing a courtroom, quarters for the police, two cells 13 x 10 feet, and a grill yard 33 feet x 20 feet. A slab stable and forage room were built at the rear. It had an extensive residential area including 3 bedrooms, a large dining room, parlour or family room and an outdoor kitchen connected by a covered verandah passing through an open courtyard. Credit goes to the government architect for judiciously siting the station on the crest of a stoney ridge commanding an excellent view of the town's two hotels.

The building remains in the town today.

7.4 Welfare

The concept of welfare as a function of government developed from liberal and socialist philosophies of the 19th century. The desire to create a society characterised by fairness and a just allocation of resources was one of the defining notions of the federated nation that was established on the Australian continent in 1901. This was a utopian notion that, in the eyes of many, failed to eventuate.

For Aboriginal people 'Welfare' was quite a different experience than for their white settler neighbours. The Brigalow Belt Study found that:

*"The "welfare" was spoken of by people in relation to the removal of children and adolescents from communities. Children were removed from their families and communities and became part of the stolen generations. Adolescents, mainly girls, were taken from their families and communities and placed on stations as domestic labourers for years on end. The narratives are by those who themselves suffered from these policies."*⁹¹⁵

⁹¹³ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p227

⁹¹⁴ Ibid

⁹¹⁵ Ibid

During the 19th century and much of the early 20th century welfare was provided by benevolent institutions, the churches and friendly societies such as the Order of Oddfellows. In the first half of the twentieth century the CWA was instrumental in the provision of healthcare and welfare, particularly for women and children. The raised funds to provide CWA buildings which were used as baby health centres and feeding rooms, for public toilet and in many towns they were responsible for the establishment of the local community hospital. After WWII the development of the welfare state led to governments taking over this role.

Aboriginal Australians experienced one of the earliest exercises of a government sponsored welfare system. The NSW Aborigines Protection Board was established in 1883. This was the instrument of a philosophy that encouraged separation of Aboriginal people from mainstream society. This was a system of control. Aboriginal people were not permitted to drink in hotels, and a curfew applied to their visits to many towns including those in the Warrumbungle Shire. From the mid 20th century this system of exclusion and separation was gradually broken down as prevailing government philosophies changed. From the late 1940s the system was altered to encourage Aboriginal people to move to town.

The Great Depression, which began in 1929 and led to massive unemployment across the country and led governments to develop systems for the delivery of social welfare and to utilise unemployed people on infrastructure projects. Local councils were actively involved in the delivery of 'emergency relief work in lieu of the dole.' Council began applying for grants to fund relief work on local roads early in 1930.⁹¹⁶ Following representations from members of the Unemployed Movement in March 1932 seeking 'work for the unemployed to carry them over Easter' the Coonabarabran Shire Council sought information from the Unemployed Relief Council on the number of unemployed in the district and asked for '£200 immediately for Easter Relief work'.⁹¹⁷

In the same year Council sought £20,000 from the Commonwealth Government for a water supply scheme 'to absorb the unemployed about Coonabarabran. By 1933 the Coonabarabran Shire Council was arranging for work to be undertaken on a number of public facilities including Coonabarabran streets, the aerodrome, the Mechanics' Institute, Court House, rifle range, public school and

⁹¹⁶ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 3 January 1930

⁹¹⁷ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 4 March 1932

showground. Council gangers supervised work under these programs and Council received funding through the Department of Local Government.⁹¹⁸ Coonabarabran Council took an active interest in relief work during the Depression with the Coonabarabran town water supply being a major local initiative. Despite the fact that this scheme was being undertaken by the Public Works Department Councillors lobbied for better conditions for men employed on the water scheme and in late 1932 sought to have additional men employed to provide some Christmas relief. The Council also sought funding of £150 to progress the development of the Coonabarabran aerodrome and absorb '30 unemployed who are not accommodated on the water works'.⁹¹⁹

A number of grants for public works were applied for and granted from the Unemployed Relief Committee in the Coolah district during the Depression. These works included road works, tree planting and water schemes and a plan to open up the Warung State Forest to tourism.⁹²⁰ Some were successful, like the tree planting and road works but others, such as the tourism plan were not.

The regional community has continued to play an important role in the provision of welfare through a variety of community-based organisations. In 1957 representatives of the Coonabarabran Hospital Board, concerned about the need for housing for seniors, approached the organisers of the C.O.R.(Commonwealth Oil Corporation)-BP speed trials to arrange a controlled spectator area beside the Wittenbra-Baradine to raise funds for new housing.⁹²¹ This fundraising promotion was quite successful in raising money for the Coonabarabran Branch of the Smith Family to purchase land in Charles Street. With matched Federal funding a group of homes for pensioners was constructed in 1960 at a cost of £5,966. A second stage was constructed in 1972 for \$26,000.⁹²²

⁹¹⁸ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 1 September 1933

⁹¹⁹ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting Coonabarabran Shire Council. 2 December 1932

⁹²⁰ *Mudgee Garden and North Western Representative*

⁹²¹ Grey, J., 1988. *Speed Trials and the Smith Family Homes*, p.19

⁹²² Grey, J., 1988. *Speed Trials and the Smith Family Homes*, p.22

8. Developing Australian Cultural Life

8.1 Creative Endeavour

Creativity has no formal boundary. Our society generally recognises a divide between the professionally creative and amateurs. In the working communities of regional areas creativity has often been expressed as an extension of daily life. Some residents of these areas have followed creative professions while many members of the community have worked beyond their normal occupations to provide pleasure and entertainment to others.

Domestic and handicrafts gave people the opportunity to be creative in their daily life. Indeed arguably for most the past would have enabled people more opportunities to be creative in their daily work than the present. People played musical instruments and this played a significant role in people's social lives. The pianola was the radio and television of its time, for those who could afford it enabling people to get together and sing.

The Warrumbungle Shire has a long history of brass bands. Brass bands play an important and symbolic role in towns and cities, both past and present. Coonabarabran had had a brass band for many years prior to the formation of the Shire band in 1953 which was supported by the Coonabarabran Shire Council.⁹²³ The Coolah Band was active in the post WWI period through the interwar years and was similarly supported by the local council.⁹²⁴

Binnaway's nationally acclaimed Frank Bourke and his White Rose Orchestra are the most celebrated entertainers of the district. The Big Piano in Binnaway was as a monument to this musical phenomenon. The district hosted many other dance bands and musical groups from the time of its first settlement by Europeans. Other local dance bands of the mid 20th century were Fred Hawkins' Black Cat Orchestra which had its origins in Baradine and later moved to Coonabarabran, and Binnaway's Railway Band and Stan Guy's Rhythm Rascals.⁹²⁵ Some members of these bands also played with the White Rose Orchestra.

⁹²³ 1860-1960 Coonabarabran Centenary Celebrations

⁹²⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 02.07.1920 p17

⁹²⁵ Meredith, J *King of the Dance Hall: The Story of Fifty years of Ballroom Music with Frank Bourke and the White Rose Orchestra* pp52&82

Frank Bourke was a great innovator who is credited with starting the concept of the circuit dance.⁹²⁶ He also established a successful recording studio at his property *Killara* at Binnaway.⁹²⁷ The Bourke brothers' first drum kit, constructed from sections of a 44 gallon drum, the skins of kangaroos shot and cured on their family farm *Killarney*, hoops made from local willow branches, the converted rear vision mirror of an old truck⁹²⁸ represents the ultimate convergence of bush craftsman and musicianship.

Binnaway was also the place in which the original 1957 movie version of D'Arcy Niland's 1955 novel 'The Shiralee' was filmed. The movie, starring Peter Finch and Dana Wilson, included many scenes in and around the Royal Hotel. The woolsheds at Goorianawa hold a strong association with Australian folk song. The Australian folk classic 'Click Go the Shears' is reputed to have been written at Goorianawa and the station is itself the subject of the 19th century lyric of 'Goorianawa'. Banjo Paterson's 1892 ballad 'Travelling Down the Castlereagh' succinctly captures the massive changes that occurred in rural work patterns in the late 19th century.

As in many areas the women of the district combined the need to manage meagre household budgets with high levels of creativity to fashion domestic objects. Oral histories, including Somerville's 'The Sun Dancin', contain many examples of domestic creativity.

8.2 Domestic Life

A number of histories of the region recall the rhythms of domestic life and the recurring task required to maintain a household. These rhythms swing around the relentless battles to feed families and maintain an acceptable level of cleanliness and hygiene. Scientific discoveries of the 19th century highlighted the need for domestic cleanliness to fight disease or the possibility of disease.

During that century cleanliness came to be associated with moral virtue. The most despised in society were most often assessed in terms of perception of their cleanliness with 'moral sensibility' being presumed to be 'governed by the same mechanisms as physiological health'. Under this paradigm 'a poor or sick person' was considered 'likely to be an evil person'.⁹²⁹ The antithesis of this was the

⁹²⁶ Meredith, J. *King of the Dance Hall: The Story of Fifty years of Ballroom Music with Frank Bourke and the White Rose Orchestra*. p.39

⁹²⁷ *Ibid* p.67

⁹²⁸ *Ibid* p.26

⁹²⁹ Upton D *The City as Material Culture* p.61

notion that ‘cleanliness is next to godliness’. Regardless of circumstances most women took great pride in the presentation of their houses.

There are many accounts of cooking with camp ovens on open fires well into the 20th century. Relative prosperity translates into the sophistication of domestic working arrangements. The wealthy have always employed servants or contractors to handle difficult or unpleasant domestic tasks. Retailers have long prospered selling appliances to reduce the drudgery of domestic toil. The expansion of electricity supply mid 20th century created markets for newer innovations and introduced much modern gadgetry to the area.

In the days before refrigeration was available in homes the challenge of preserving meat created much work for households.

Much analysis of gendered spaces within homes has been undertaken in recent decades. Whilst informative many of these analyses seem to come from an upper class perspective that failed to recognise the role of the back door as the ‘normal’ entrance to most Australian homes or the importance of the kitchen as a gathering place. Sound archaeological analyses of the use of space within the homes of working people recognise the importance of the kitchen as a place of warmth in winter and a place of light for all kinds of close work.⁹³⁰

In most Australian homes the front door was a place to meet the representatives of authority, the policeman or the minister and the parlour or lounge was only used to entertain such figures, or to lay out the bodies of the newly deceased. The introduction of radio, whether powered by mains electricity or a car battery, or a crystal set, tended to reinforce the role of the kitchen as a gathering place. Over time the radio tended to move into the living room and television, when introduced, was often regarded as such a status symbol that it was given pride of place in the living room.

Women in the Pilliga collected naturally occurring sodium carbonate from the soda plains to use as a cleaning agent. Rolls noted that ‘Mrs Cormie’s floors at Cumble were so white that visitors hesitated before walking on them’. He also noted that women in the Rocky Creek area collected salt from the Salt Caves to cure meat.⁹³¹

⁹³⁰ Casey M *Falling through the Cracks: Method and Practice at the CSR Site* p35-40

⁹³¹ Rolls, E., 1982. *A Million Wild Acres*. p.315

House design in the 20th century tended to alter to reflect the advantages of domestic innovations. Kitchens moved into the main building and by the 1920s housing designers were promoting the ‘servantless’ house that included the modern innovations of electric or gas hot water and cooking, and electric house cleaning.

The Californian Bungalow of the same era invariably included the innovation of a low-walled sleep out or sleeping porch to facilitate the Australian practice of sleeping on camp beds outside an oppressively overheated house on hot summer nights.⁹³²

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the ideology, which insisted on the “separation of spheres”, was becoming more pressing. It insisted that men worked and went into the wider world to battle for the family’s prosperity, whilst women managed the domestic sphere, ensuring that it was a haven from the troubled world outside. Such an ideal was rarely achieved. But it was a powerful influence and was especially important for the middle classes. Even for them, it often remained an ideal rather than a reality.⁹³³

The lower middle class wife married to a shopkeeper or innkeeper was heavily involved with her husband’s business. Indeed, the domestic skills of the publican’s wife were an essential element in transforming the pub for drinking into the hotel providing high-class accommodation for travellers. Farmer’s wives were also a part of the family economy and domestic work was only one of their many responsibilities. The ideology of “separate spheres” exerted its influence on all classes in society but was most effectively implemented by the wealthy. In combination with the passion for new types of ornamentation, the result was the fussy domestic interiors of late nineteenth century, which were dust-traps and could be managed only with a servant. Family-focused daily routines also emerged with family bible readings, taking the sacraments together and other routines, which strengthened the Christian family focus.

8.3 Leisure

Leisure activities were and are often communal occasions that have great importance in the life and development of all communities. Historically such activities have included picnics, sporting events (refer *Section 8.6 Sport*), amateur theatricals and dances. In the days before mass media people tended to make their own entertainments that were often seasonal or planned around

⁹³² Butler G, 1997 *The Californian Bungalow in Australia* pp 18-19

⁹³³ Kass, T *Thematic History of the Central West* 2003 P78

specific events such as Christmas, Queen Victoria's Birthday (later Empire Day) or community organised carnivals.

Hotels and public houses have long been places of leisure. These establishments have hosted dances and dinners, and continue to be popular places for people to socialise. Prior to the development of other buildings specifically designed for the purpose hotels provided the venues for travelling entertainers and artists. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many such travelling performers travelled through NSW including jugglers, contortionists, mystics, hypnotists, actors and burlesque dancers.⁹³⁴ Lectures too, often given at the Mechanics Institute proved a popular form of entertainment particularly in the early twentieth century.⁹³⁵

Balls and dances were another popular form of entertainment and throughout Warrumbungle Shire history many such events have been organised in order to raise money for charity. Annual balls occurred in order to raise money for the hospitals and churches and other fundraising events raised money for such resources as swimming pools, the ambulance service and the community centres.

Picnics too were important events in the annual social Calendar. Empire Night, held in May, was a popular event with a bonfire and fireworks each year. Sports days were important and in some places public holidays were called for such days as well as for Pastoral Agricultural and Horticultural Shows during the latter years of the nineteenth century.

Movies became popular and were often a feature in towns from the first decades of the twentieth century. Whilst silent movies had been shown in Coolah from 1919 the Regent Theatre leased a hall and showed talking pictures, its opening night on was Saturday 3 August 1935.⁹³⁶

8.4 Religion

Traditional Aboriginal belief systems and practices demonstrated an inextricable link between land, people and belief. These links were largely broken during the period of European colonisation of the area. 'In many cases, white settlers and missionaries actively expunged Gamilaroi (Gamilaraay) cultural traditions in an attempt to 'civilise' and 'assimilate' Aboriginal people into white society.'⁹³⁷

⁹³⁴ Lloyd, H *Boorowa – One Hundred and Sixty Years of White Settlement* P263

⁹³⁵ Ibid

⁹³⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p173

⁹³⁷ Fox, P., 1996. *Warrumbungle National Park*. p.48

In the latter half of the 19th century religion in regional New South Wales was generally an identifier of the place from which individuals had emigrated, or where their parents were born. ‘... Scots tended to be Presbyterians, the English Anglicans (Church of England) and the Welsh, Methodist, while 70 per cent of the Irish were Catholics, the remainder being Anglican or Presbyterian. Some Germans were Catholics, some Lutheran.’⁹³⁸ Old enmities from reformation era Europe and from the English conquests of the British Isles tended to create a Protestant-Catholic divide that lasted well into the 20th century.

In the Warrumbungle Shire a good number of the initial settlers to the area would appear to have been Scottish Presbyterians, as is evidenced by the presence of Presbyterian churches early in the area’s development and manses (Presbyterian Ministers residences). Andrew Brown, one of the area’s first settlers, a well-known Presbyterian Scot and he was one of the first people to the area, no doubt influencing the Presbyterian flavour in Mendooran in its earliest days. Many towns in this area started out with Methodist roots but were quickly introduced to other Christian denominations as other settlers arrived and this did not have a long lasting effect.

8.4.1 Baradine

8.4.1.1 Union Church

The first church to be constructed in Baradine was the Union Church. Thus far we don’t have a clear opening date for this important building in the history of churches in Baradine but it is thought to have been in operation from around 1899.⁹³⁹ It was used by all denominations in the town up until the first decades of the twentieth century.⁹⁴⁰ A simple timber building it is believed to have been constructed from pit sawn timber in Baradine by Anglican Stephen Holt and Jim Leithead, a devout Catholic.⁹⁴¹

All of the main denominations set about constructing their own churches during the first half of the twentieth century and by 1954 the old Union Church was used for that purpose no more.⁹⁴² It was eventually demolished and a residence built in its place.

⁹³⁸ Cremin, A., *1901 Australian Life at Federation: An Illustrated Chronicle*, 2001 p.74

⁹³⁹ Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* p76

⁹⁴⁰ Cutts, L Kildey, R *Baradine – A Town Full of History* p27

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid* p66

⁹⁴² *Ibid* p67

8.4.1.2 Catholic Church

The first Catholic Church was consecrated on 27 August 1903 and is described as a mid-twentieth century gothic style rendered brick building with external piers walls.⁹⁴³ The current church on the site was constructed and opened in 1924.⁹⁴⁴

In 1926 three nuns were chosen to open a Catholic School in Baradine and a convent was subsequently constructed from locally produced timber.⁹⁴⁵ Donations were made from the local community and upper primary classes were taught in the original church building.⁹⁴⁶ Other classes were taught in the present day church and enrolment when the school started was 72 children.⁹⁴⁷

8.4.1.3 Anglican Church

Land was first dedicated for an Anglican Church in 1878 and the foundation stone laid in 1928. The opening date has not been established.

8.4.1.4 Methodist Church

Moves began towards a Methodist Church for Baradine in 1948 but delays slowed development and it was not opened until 23 October 1954.⁹⁴⁸ It is a simple brick twentieth century church. However by the mid 1980s the Methodists had joined the Uniting Church and attendance had dropped significantly.⁹⁴⁹ It was closed in 2001 and in 2013 it became a preschool.⁹⁵⁰

8.4.1.5 Presbyterian Church

The first steps towards a Presbyterian Church in Baradine were taken in 1932 and the Foundation stone laid in 1939.⁹⁵¹ It was opened in September 1940 and is described as:

Twentieth century Gothic Style with finely buttressed brick walls of the church [which] are constructed in Flemish bond. The lancet arches of the

⁹⁴³ Ibid p68

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid p71

⁹⁴⁵ Heritage Listing of St John's Church, Baradine

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid p74

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid p75

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid

⁹⁵¹ Ibid p77

*windows and the roundel in the gable are highlighted with contrasting bricks. The vestibule is set within a squat tower like structure.*⁹⁵²

The building was closed around 2005, sold in 2010 and is now a private residence.

8.4.2 Coonabarabran

Prior to the advent of church buildings services were often held either in private homes or in community halls. In the early decades clergymen would visit on a semi regular basis from all of the denominations. All of the churches that remain in Coonabarabran were constructed around the middle of the 1870s and it would seem unlikely that there was no church or community building dedicated to this purpose after almost 30 years of settlement. It is possible that there was an earlier simple building that served this purpose.

8.4.2.1 Church of England

The first Anglican Church was constructed by John Neale, opened on 30 November 1873 and was on the north east corner of Dalgarno and Robertson Streets.⁹⁵³ The Church was moved to the corner of Dalgarno and Cowper streets in 1911 and in 1934 a new brick building was opened.⁹⁵⁴ The original Rectory was built in 1916 and this was replaced in 1966.⁹⁵⁵ The stained glass window at the rear of the church was donated by Alfred Croxon of Coonamble in 1939 and dedicated to his parents.⁹⁵⁶

8.4.2.2 The Wesleyan/Methodist/Uniting Church

Plans began for a Methodist Church in 1873 when land was dedicated for this purpose as there were a large number of Methodists in Coonabarabran.⁹⁵⁷ Whilst we know that tenders were called for the construction of a Wesleyan Chapel in September 1874 we don't know, as yet, know when it was officially opened.⁹⁵⁸ We also know, from the newspapers that the Presbyterians had made inroads towards securing their own church and had their own minister.⁹⁵⁹ In the interim they used the Methodist Church.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵² Ibid p76

⁹⁵³ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p34

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid

⁹⁵⁷ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By* p34

⁹⁵⁸ *Freeman's Journal* 12 September 1874 p15

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid

⁹⁶⁰ Pickette, J *As it was in the Beginning* p34

8.4.2.3 The Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterians would appear to have continued to use the Methodist Church, which was directly behind the new church, until their new church was constructed in 1914.⁹⁶¹ In 1920 the Methodist Church was bought and moved to its current site.

The Rev John Thorpe was minister for Coonabarabran from 1882-1894 and it was during his time that 'The Manse' was constructed.⁹⁶² A Manse is a residence for a religious minister in some denominations, in particular Scottish Presbyterianism. This building was demolished in 1985.⁹⁶³ A new Manse was constructed in 1956.⁹⁶⁴

8.4.2.4 Burra Bee Dee Church

The church at Burra Bee Dee was built of pine logs and corrugated iron by the Aboriginal people who made Burra Bee Dee their home. The curtain was of hessian dye a deep red brown and the letter of the text cut out and pinned on. The lectern was dedicated to the memory of Leo Moses Cain who gave his life in World War II after being a POW.⁹⁶⁵

8.4.2.5 The Catholic Church

The first Roman Catholic Church to be built in Coonabarabran was in 1875 and it was a small wooden building in the grounds of the present infants' school.⁹⁶⁶ When the Sisters of St Joseph arrived they used the original church as a school room building a second church in 1901.⁹⁶⁷ A new concrete building was constructed with its intended use as a school room however it was then used as a church until 1966 when a new church was built.⁹⁶⁸

Other churches in the area include the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Cassilis Street, The Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses, corner of King and Charles Streets. And the Christian Outreach Centre, Cowper Street.⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶¹ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes By* p37

⁹⁶² Ibid

⁹⁶³ Ibid p38

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid

⁹⁶⁵ Pickette, J *Coonabarabran – As Time Goes* p40

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid p36

⁹⁶⁷ IBid

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid p41

8.4.3 Mendooran

It is thought that the first regular church service was held in the old village hall, 'near the Chinese Market Garden on the southern side of Merrygoen Creek.'⁹⁷⁰ However, given that these buildings were not constructed until the village became established it is likely that the first church services held in this area were held in private homes, which was the practice in the early decades of a town's development.

8.4.3.1 Anglican

In 1886 the first St Chad's Church was constructed on the present site from pit sawn timber.⁹⁷¹ This was replaced in 1913 by what is described as a 'fine brick church' but this was destroyed in a storm in 1950 and was replaced nine years later with a church with funds raised by the local community.⁹⁷² A book was published in 2014 celebrating 100 years of St Mary's Church in Mendooran.⁹⁷³

8.4.3.2 The Catholic Church

St Mary's Catholic Church in Mendooran had its foundation stone laid in 1914 and was opened and blessed on October 14, 1917 at 10.30am.⁹⁷⁴ Prior to this it is likely that the congregation met either in private homes or in a public building. In the early days Mendooran was attached to Coonamble Parish, it was transferred to Coonabarabran and then in 1922 the Parish of Dunedoo and finally the Mendooran-Binnaway Parish was established in 1964.⁹⁷⁵

8.4.3.3 Methodist Church

There are no early references to Methodist Church services in Mendooran. It is likely that the early services held in community halls, referred to above, were Methodist services given that this was the religion of the early settlers to this region. Methodist services were not taken up in Mendooran until the early 1920s with a minister travelling from Gulgong.⁹⁷⁶ During the 1930s Revered N Lickiss was appointed to develop the area from Baradine to Mendooran with the headquarters for this region in Moree.⁹⁷⁷

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid

⁹⁷¹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* October 1917 p3

⁹⁷² Cameron, R *Around the Black Stump...* p201

⁹⁷³ Kuhner, P *St Mary's Church Mendooran – Celebrating 100 years 1914 to 2014* 2014

⁹⁷⁴ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* October 1917 p3

⁹⁷⁵ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump...* p202

⁹⁷⁶ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump ...* p202

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid

In 1960 the Mendooran Methodist community established the Mendooran Methodist Youth Centre and since 1966 it has been used as a classroom by the Department of Education.⁹⁷⁸

8.4.3.4 Presbyterian

Before the construction of a church services were held in Mendooran often on a monthly basis from around the turn of the twentieth century, led by Reverend Jas Hendry.⁹⁷⁹ It is believed that the services were held at the old Mechanics Institute prior to the construction of St Andrew's Church which was dedicated by Rev Hendry in 1924.⁹⁸⁰

8.4.4 Binnaway

The late development of churches in Binnaway suggests that services may have been held either in the homes of people or perhaps later on, in publicly available spaces such as community halls. A late example of this was when Reverend Jas Hendry held a service in the Mechanics Institute 1920 and later a meeting was held to explore the building of a Presbyterian church in the town.⁹⁸¹

In 1913 the following appeared in the press: 'Once more the good squire of Ulinda has shown his good qualities by giving both the Presbyterian Church and the Church of England a block of land, so that each denomination can have its own.'⁹⁸² This does suggest that perhaps there were more Protestant members of the community than Catholic in the town's early development.

There was a Union Church in Binnaway although dates of its operation have not yet come to light. In 1921 a carnival was held to 'augment the funds for the erection of the Union Church'⁹⁸³ and two months later a market day was held in order to raise money for the Memorial Union Church Fund. A Union Church was established, presumably during the 1920s. It is now a private residence.

8.4.4.1 Anglican Church

The dates of the construction and consecration of the Anglican Church are not known but the building, no longer operating as a church, is a simple timber church. There were many weddings held here during the middle of the twentieth century. St Andrews Anglican church still in use today.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid

⁹⁷⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 1 April 1904, 14 July 1910 p18

⁹⁸⁰ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p202

⁹⁸¹ Ibid 19 February 1920 p5

⁹⁸² Ibid 28 August 1913 p30

⁹⁸³ Ibid 24 March 1921 p8 and 27 May 1921 p1

8.4.4.2 Catholic Church

It was the Catholic community that built the first church in town in 1924.⁹⁸⁴ They had started to make moves towards a church a few years prior to this with ½ acre of land being procured (presumably this means donated) in 1922.⁹⁸⁵ There are references to a convent in a newspaper article about a flood in the early 1940s.⁹⁸⁶

8.4.5 Coolah

8.4.5.1 Anglican Church

It is said that the first Anglican Church Service held in the Coolah Shire area was held at Tongy Stations in July 1843 and it was led by Archdeacon William Grant Broughton.⁹⁸⁷ From 1848 Merriwa, Cassilis, Uarbry and Coolah were all in the Muswellbrook Anglican Parish and later Coolah was in the Merriwa Parish and then the Cassilis parish.⁹⁸⁸

St Andrew's Church began construction in 1874, was built from stone, took 8 years to complete and was consecrated in 1882.⁹⁸⁹

After some moving between different parishes it eventually became, and remains, part of the Dunedoo Parish.⁹⁹⁰

8.4.5.2 Catholic Church

It is not known where the first Catholic Service were performed but it is thought that Father O'Reilly was the first priest to service Coolah as part of his role with the Merriwa Catholic Parish.⁹⁹¹

Again there was movement between the different parishes, including Gulgong and Coonabarabran, but eventually became its own parish. Catholic Services were held in the Commercial Hotel, on the site of the present saleyards until the first Catholic Church was built sometime between 1885-1890.⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid 17 March 1924 p8

⁹⁸⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 29 June 1922 p15

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid 20 February 1941 p4

⁹⁸⁷ Cameron, R *Thematic History of the Coolah Shire* p20

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹⁹¹ Ibid

⁹⁹² Ibid

St Pauls' Catholic Church foundation stone was laid on 9 July 1905 and it was open on June 21 1906:

*... a handsome structure of white sandstone occupying a commanding position in the township of Coolah, presenting a charming appearance with its red roof contrasting with the white walls. The exterior is of local sandstone, built up in rock-faced work, supported on concrete foundation sufficiently strong to last for ages. The roof is of Wunderlich tiles painted with oxide of iron of a terra-cotta colour.*⁹⁹³

In 1982 a new Sacred Heart Church was constructed on land opposite the old church, which has been retained and remains on site.

8.4.5.3 Presbyterian Church

The first pastoral visit of a Presbyterian Minister to the area is said to have occurred in 1839, in Mendooran, when a minister (from Bowenfels; Andrew Brown's original property) baptised some children of shepherds then in the area.⁹⁹⁴ Coolah had its first Presbyterian Church was constructed by James McCubbin in 1868 and it was located at the corner of Binnia and Booyamurra Streets.⁹⁹⁵ The church was renovated in 1905 and possibly renovated in 1909 although there is no evidence that has emerged of this as yet.⁹⁹⁶

A cemetery existed on the grounds but most of the headstones were removed in 1956 to allow for the construction of a Manse.⁹⁹⁷ Part of the cemetery is thought to have extended into the land which later went on to become Booyamurra Street.

8.4.6 Dunedoo

8.4.6.1 Anglican

Prior to the establishment of an Anglican church in Dunedoo locals either travelled to Denison Town or Cobbora for services. When the Anglican Parish of Coolah was formed in 1890 the Coolah Rector gave periodic services held in the

⁹⁹³ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 21 June 1906 p7

⁹⁹⁴ Cameron, R *Thematic History of the Coolah Shire* p20

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid*

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid* p21

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid*

Bolaro School. The foundation stone for All Saints Church was laid on 8th July 1924 and the dedication service was held 19 September 1925.⁹⁹⁸

8.4.6.2 Union Church

The Union Church about half a mile along the Dubbo Road was opened in 1906. It was financed by residents of the district. The church was shared by the local Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians.⁹⁹⁹

8.4.6.3 Presbyterian Church

St David's Church was officially opened and dedicated on 10 May 1924.¹⁰⁰⁰

8.4.6.4 Catholic Church

The church was erected in 1912, as previously mentioned prior to the followers attending services at Cobbora and at the Redbank Hotel and 'Rosedale' and later at 'Granny Johnstone's'.¹⁰⁰¹ The Foundation Stone was laid in 1911 and in 1921 the convent opened and at one time had 14 boarders. The new brick school was built in 1961 and ten years later, in 1971, a new brick church was opened.¹⁰⁰²

8.4.7 Cobbora

The first documented church building appears to have been constructed in the late 1870s. It is possible that an earlier church did exist, perhaps a simple timber building, but so far no records suggest this. Records do however suggest that it was a largely Anglican town during the nineteenth century with the Catholic Church being constructed in 1904 and both church remaining active until after WWII.

The *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* carried a report entitled 'Cobbora' in November 1914 containing the following: 'Just on the boundary of Johnson Bros property a very nice brick church has just been erected which is a credit to the congregation.'¹⁰⁰³ It is thought that this church was not in Cobbora as such but that it was actually Dapper Union Church, Dapper being a locality between Cobbora and Goolma.¹⁰⁰⁴

8.4.7.1 Anglican Church

⁹⁹⁸ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p251

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid p252

¹⁰⁰² Ibid p 252

¹⁰⁰³ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 27 November 1914 p3

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

The construction date of the Anglican Church in Cobbora, St Pauls', appears to have been sometime in 1875. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports that the Church of England Church 'is about to be erected on the Talbragar.'¹⁰⁰⁵ Whilst a consecration or church opening date has not yet been established there is a report in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in 1875 which describes the town as having an Anglican Church.¹⁰⁰⁶

The church is said to have been built on the flat side of the old police station, of wood 37 by 20 ½ feet with a shingle roof. ¹⁰⁰⁷ It featured coloured glass windows 'right down to the floor' through which the sun would stream.'¹⁰⁰⁸

The *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* reports that moves were made toward constructing a new Anglican Church in Cobbora in 1924.¹⁰⁰⁹ This was mentioned again in the press in 1928 but does not appear to have eventuated. The Anglican Church remained active in Cobbora until after WWII holding fund raisers, such as fundraising for the local rector to purchase a car during the 1920s and the Cobbora Ball in 1931.¹⁰¹⁰

8.4.7.2 Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Cobbora was consecrated in 1904 and the following description comes from St Michael's Parish Story 1901-1996: 'The original Church in Cobbora was opened in 1904. JH Craft told us most of the timber was cut from River Red Gums on the flood plain near the Cobbora Bridge. There was also Ironbark in the building obviously cut elsewhere. The timber was then sawn at William craft's sawmill, and I believe this work was donated by Mr Craft.'¹⁰¹¹

By the 1930s however the church would seem to have been in a precarious position caused by termites. Attempts were made at this point to improve the structure initially by installing pine posts and then in 1943 these were replaced by ironbark posts.¹⁰¹² Eventually the church was demolished in 1963.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 April 1875 p7

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Australian Town and Country Journal* 9 October 1875 p19

¹⁰⁰⁷ Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p224

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 15 November 1924 p24

¹⁰¹⁰ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 2 July 1931 p4

¹⁰¹¹ New Joan St Michael's Parish Story 1901-1996

¹⁰¹² *Ibid*

A new Catholic church was constructed, also of timber and it opened in 1962.¹⁰¹³ In 1980 the church was then sold for use as a private home.¹⁰¹⁴

8.5 Social Institutions

Australian communities share common threads of community endeavour. Social organisation, social services and social cohesion have long been supported by societies established for the good of their members and/or the good of the community. Volunteer effort drives and sustains many of these institutions. The built environment is studded with buildings, monuments and works which stand as testament to the development and impact of these organisations.

One of the most enduring of these is the Country Women's Association which was founded in New South Wales in April 1922. Formed to foster the 'community spirit' and a sense of 'self help',¹⁰¹⁵ the CWA has branches in almost all communities and is active in providing a focus for the women of the country. Early campaigns of the CWA included ongoing lobbying and agitation to improve women's health services and create maternity and mother care facilities in public health facilities.¹⁰¹⁶ CWA Branches continue to raise money for charities and community projects, as well as catering for social functions. The CWA established in Coonabarabran in the mid 1920s, and at Baradine¹⁰¹⁷ and Binnaway¹⁰¹⁸ in 1928. Freestanding CWA halls exist in the larger towns and include the 1961 Coonabarabran CWA Rooms that were constructed as a meeting place and a women's health centre.

The CWA in Coolah was formed in 1927¹⁰¹⁹ and was involved in many activities in the town. It assisted with the operation of the memorial School of Arts, Anzac Services, lectures, sports days, fund raising balls and monthly card parties held in aid of raising money for the institution.¹⁰²⁰ The Younger Set of the CWA conducted Thrift and Craft Exhibitions and an annual ball 'always regarded as the ball of the season.'¹⁰²¹

In smaller communities the CWA facilities are combined with the community hall. Purlawaugh's Mechanics Institute is built next to and connected with the

¹⁰¹³ Ibid

¹⁰¹⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

¹⁰¹⁵ Kingston, B. (ed.), 1977. *The World Moves Slowly*. p.36

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁰¹⁷ Hadfield, J., 2006. Notes on the history of the Baradine CWA Rooms.

¹⁰¹⁸ Bull, R., 1986. *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.74

¹⁰¹⁹ *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 25.11.1950 p5

¹⁰²⁰ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 25.04.1929 p17

¹⁰²¹ *Gilgandra Weekly and Castlereagh* 09.06.1936 p10

CWA Hall. At Goolhi the Progress Association and CWA function in one building. The CWA played a major role in fundraising for the Goolhi Hall and still uses the hall as its base. In other locations such as Rocky Glen and Purlewaugh the CWA share facilities with other community organisations.

The CWA formed in Coolah after a meeting was called at the Lyceum Hall on 2 September 1927.¹⁰²² Money was raised for the construction of a rest room for the convenience of mother and travellers and it was completed on 2 March 1930 and later that year the CWA Hall was registered as a place of entertainment, electrical installed and a piano purchased.¹⁰²³ In 1936 a younger set was formed, membership reaching a total of 40 and during the first year they raised funds to assist with the addition to the hall to house a library. In 1947 the Hall was further enlarged to include a room for visiting clinic sisters.¹⁰²⁴

The Manchester Unity Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF) operated in Coonabarabran. In the days before large-scale government funded social welfare organisations such as this provided health and sickness benefits to its members. It was also a point of social networking for people moving between communities. Lodge members often found referrals for employment or other assistance through the Oddfellows. A Lodge of the MUIOOF was formed in Coonabarabran in 1878 and held its first ball in 1881. This continued as an annual event until World War I. The society built a hall in Cowper Street.¹⁰²⁵ A lodge was also operating in Binnaway in Renshaw St which has since been re-developed into flats.

The Freemasons were also active in the area, establishing lodges in the larger communities. The Lodge Timor No.274 built a substantial hall in Cassilis Street in 1923 and Lodge St Andrew was constructed in Baradine in 1956.

A Mechanics Institute was formed in Coonabarabran and held its first monthly entertainment in June 1876. The social activities of this organisation were popular. They acquired the block of land on John Street between Cassilis and King Streets. A hall, containing a library 'and a large room where concerts, dances and public meetings could be held' was built in 1877. A new brick building was erected adjacent to the original hall in the early 20th century.¹⁰²⁶

The Coonabarabran Club was established in 1951 to provide an in-town facility for people from properties who travelled to Coonabarabran to transact business.

¹⁰²² Cameron, R. ed Job, K. *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p274

¹⁰²³ Ibid

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid

¹⁰²⁵ Coonabarabran Senior Citizens, 2003. *Easy Walks in Coonabarabran*.

¹⁰²⁶ Pickette, J & Campbell, M., 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. pp.104-106

The Club purchased a house in Cassilis Street for the use of its members and continues to provide a meeting place on these premises.

Dunedoo had a Masonic Hall, in its early days, and the CWA then appear to have taken on the building and it now operates as a Pre school.¹⁰²⁷

8.6 Sport

Human beings have always engaged in competitive activities that have been designed to train members of society for work or war. Team sports have also been used to enhance social cohesion and redirect individual attention away from social or economic hardships. In regional areas sports have provided opportunities for communities to connect with neighbours and with persons in other communities. Tennis provides a powerful example of the role of sports in community development within the former Coonabarabran Shire.

Tennis courts, and the remnants of tennis courts, dot the landscapes of almost all current and former communities. It is also unusual for pastoral properties to be without a tennis court. Tennis was particularly popular from the 1920s to the 1970s. The large courts complexes at Goolhi and Baradine are examples of the community effort applied to the development of communal courts.

Cricket has long been popular with communal cricket grounds being developed in many places. The atmospheric cricket pitch in a bush clearing at Purlewaugh is a fine example of the facilities developed for those described by Kipling as ‘flannelled fools.’

Football, of various kinds, have also been popular in Australia and was being played in the shire through the twentieth century. In 1933 the Burra Bee Dee Football Team versed the Gular Rovers in a match for the silver trophy:

*Before a crowd of well over 500 spectators, who were treated to the finest exposition of football played here this season. ... The match was hard and fast and devoid of any ill-feeling or roughness and much credit was due to both teas for the perfect condition of their players which enabled them to play at express speed throughout.*¹⁰²⁸

Horse racing has long been popular with the first formally recorded event being held in in Coonabarabran 1867.¹⁰²⁹ It is likely that races were held in the shire before this date as previously noted in Section 7.3 Government and

¹⁰²⁷ Pers. Comm John Horne

¹⁰²⁸ *Gilgandra Weekly and Castlereagh* 08.06.1937 p8

¹⁰²⁹ Pickette, J. & Campbell, M. 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. p.82

Administration that Commissioner Hunter was very involved in racing in the shire suggesting that this was an activity that was occurring as early as the late 1830s. Pickette and Campbell describe district race meetings in the 1890s:

Race meetings were not only held in the town, but also in the smaller settlements and on the big stations of the district. Sometimes they lasted as long as four days. The publicans all made sure to be there so that the winners could celebrate and the losers drown their sorrows. Upwards of three hundred race enthusiasts usually turned up.

The horses had to be brought here days before the races... The frivolities did not stop when the horses had been stabled for the night. Music and dancing and the odd "nip" or two, was available at any of the hotels on race nights. On the most favourable night, the Jockey Club held its Race Ball.¹⁰³⁰

Roy Cameron wrote the following about the races in Coolah:

The Coolah Flats near Jorrocks Park, at the junction of Charles and Binna Streets, and the present sewerage works was Coolah's first race track. The next racetrack was on a large area of vacant land, generally bound by streets now known as Goddard, Central Lane, Booyamurra and Hospital. The finishing post was at the back of the Post Office. The track was later moved onto what is now the Golf Links. The first official racecourse was about 2 km from Coolah, along the Cassilis Road and opposite Sunnyside. The last meeting was held on this course during 1910. There is an account of the Coolah races in the Sydney Mail on 8 September 1860.¹⁰³¹

Leadville, Dunedoo and Cobbora all had racecourses in their early days. Binnaway, Mendooran and Coonabarabran still hold horse races on the towns racecourses.

Cycling was popular from the 1890s with a club being formed in Coonabarabran. They held meetings at the showground that were large enough to be supplied with spirits by the local hotels.¹⁰³²

Rifle clubs were very popular up to and into the twentieth century. Prior to Federation there was no Australian army and to some extent these rifle clubs

¹⁰³⁰ Pickette, J & Campbell. M., 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. pp.133-134

¹⁰³¹ Cameron, R *Around the Black Stump – The History of Coolah-Dunedoo-Mendooran areas* p178

¹⁰³² Pickette, J & Campbell. M., 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. p.133

formed, and were given support by the government, as a kind of training ground. It was supported by colonial and Commonwealth governments as part of the country's defence infrastructure.

The Coonabarabran Rifle Club was founded sometime around 1901 and had established a rifle range on the Timor Road by 1909. In the early 20th century 'Interclub shoots were conducted with Binnaway, Tooraweenah and Coonamble'.¹⁰³³ Leadville and Cobbora also had rifles ranges.¹⁰³⁴ The Coolah rifle club formed in 1908,¹⁰³⁵ Mendooran formed on in 1925¹⁰³⁶ and Binnaway by 1908.¹⁰³⁷

Other sports have been more closely linked to the skills required on the land or in the forests. Horse-pulls, wood chopping, camp drafts and polocrosse have all provided opportunities to demonstrate skills and abilities linked to the occupations of the contestants. These sports have grown beyond the occupational area to become pastimes in their own right. There were also other motivations for organising sports. Rolls noted that for many years cockfighting was carried out on Sundays 'on a vacant corner block in Baradine'.¹⁰³⁸ The Centenary History of Baradine, published in 1963 listed tennis, rifle shooting, football, golf, cricket and bowls as being popular in the town.¹⁰³⁹

The late 20th century saw the development of swimming facilities with war memorial swimming pools being constructed in Coonabarabran between 1953 and 1957, Baradine in 1961 and Binnaway in 1965. Prior to the construction of these pools swimming holes in local creeks and rivers were popular places to cool off. Willow Vale was a much-frequented spot in Coonabarabran. The people of Binnaway frequented the deep hole at Greenbah and the length of river around the cement bridge.¹⁰⁴⁰

The Dunedoo War Memorial Pool was constructed by the local community around 1968. Prior to this there had been a privately operated one on the bank of the Talbragar River before WWII and people used to swim in the river.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³³ Pickette, J & Campbell. M., 1983. *Coonabarabran as it Was in the Beginning*. p.133

¹⁰³⁴ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

¹⁰³⁵ *Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative* 21.01.1909 p3

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid* 22.03.1926 p7

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid* 16.07.1908 p15

¹⁰³⁸ Carmichael, D., 1991. *Timor Valley*. pp.16-18

³⁷⁷ Rolls, E., 1982. *A Million Wild Acres*. p.296

³⁷⁸ ³⁷⁹ Bull, R. 1986. *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.66

¹⁰³⁹ Binnaway Centenary Committee, *A History of Binnaway*. pp.37-49

¹⁰⁴⁰ Bull, R. 1986. *Binnaway on the Castlereagh*. p.66

¹⁰⁴¹ Pers. Comm. John Horne January 2018

9. Marking the Phases of Life

9.1 Births and Deaths

Birth and death mark the beginning and end of life. The rituals and beliefs surrounding both are markers of culture. During the period since the European occupation of the Warrumbungles district birthing practices have changed dramatically with a shift from traditional Aboriginal birthing and European home birthing guided by the wisdom of midwives to 20th century notions of assisted and medically supervised birth.

The isolation of many women in regional areas, and the distances from which help had to be called, led to the death of many women due to the complications of childbirth or post-natal crises. In colonial times women on average ‘had a baby every 18 months to two years’.¹⁰⁴² Local histories contain tragic stories of early female deaths associated with childbirth. Mary Gilmore’s observations of the Wiradjuri people indicate that their midwives had very sophisticated approaches to birthing that ensured the safety of the mother and child. In accordance with tribal traditions older Aboriginal women selected special places for women to undergo labour. These places were screened off, the ground swept clean and fresh eucalypt leaves methodically laid to create a soft, clean and antiseptic carpet. Children were born on this mat.¹⁰⁴³

During the early years of European colonisation of the region the skills and care of Aboriginal midwives saved many otherwise isolated European women and their babies. Up to 80% of European births in this period ‘took place on eucalyptus leaves in the manner of the Aboriginal tradition’.¹⁰⁴⁴

Aboriginal birth practices also increased the efficiency of labour in ways not embraced by European society until the advent of the Active Birth movement of the 1980s. In traditional Aboriginal society, the woman adopted the squatting position to give birth whereas non-Aboriginal women were restricted to lying flat on the bed. Research has shown that any position other than lying flat on the bed increases the pelvic outlet by 28%. Labouring women are now encouraged to birth in any position which suits them.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰⁴² Gaff-Smith, M., *Riverina Midwives from the Mountains to the Plains*. 2004 p.27

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid P18

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid P18

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid P23

As the European population increased midwives from England, Scotland and Ireland began to practice in the various settlements of the region. These women were on call day and night to attend births in towns and on farms. As the 19th century progressed lying-in hospitals were established by midwives in country towns.

Country women, led by the Country Women's Association, began to agitate in the 1920s for improved birthing facilities and mother care support to 'save the babies for Australia'. The Association asserted:

*... that five hundred nursing mothers were lost in 1924 in New South Wales through the lack of proper accommodation and nursing ... 'Women are not more born mothers than they are born lamplighters,' says a prominent worker of the Association. 'All women need to be taught to be good mothers. The city provides ample facilities, and it is the Country Women's Association's aim to provide suitable enlightenment to the women of the west.'*¹⁰⁴⁶

Josephine Flood documents the traditional Aboriginal belief systems surrounding death:

*Death marks only the end of bodily existence, as the soul is indestructible. Spirits have two forms, the soul itself and a potentially malignant spirit able to harm the living. When death comes, body and soul complete the life cycle by returning to their 'bone and soul country', when the spirit may be reincarnated again and enter a woman's body to be reborn. Rituals enable undying spirits of the dead to return safely to a spirit home or totemic centre by way the of the sky, a waterhole or an offshore island. A terrible fate in Aboriginal society was for one's corpse to be left for animals or birds to consume; internment were protected from dingoes by large stone cairns. Enemies were left unburied but never kinsfolk, except in extreme circumstances.*¹⁰⁴⁷

Bodies were buried in a variety of different ways, depending on the circumstances and the position of the individual within the group. Often bodies were buried and then the bones exhumed and placed within log or bark coffins or

¹⁰⁴⁶ Kingston B (ed) *The World Moves Slowly* 1977 P36

¹⁰⁴⁷ Flood J, *The Original Australians* P155

inside hollow trees.¹⁰⁴⁸ Sometimes the bodies of important people like elders were buried at high tide marks or at the top of very high mountains in stone cairns.

Each town in the Warrumbungle Shire has its own designated cemetery, as was the practice during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Prior to the establishment of official cemeteries people were buried on private property in private cemeteries or close to where they had passed away, often in an unmarked grave if they were unknown to the local community. Local community cemeteries began to be established in Australia from the 1860s-1870s onwards, although many other examples exist from prior to this date there are few in rural NSW that predate this period.

Roy Cameron provides valuable information regarding the death practices during the late nineteenth century in the Shire in a document titled *Funeral By Moonlight*. This practice of holding funerals at the end of the day is thought to have been a common one.

*In the warm country areas, prior to about 1900, burials after sunset were not unusual. Funerals generally took place on the night of the death as hospitals with morgue facilities were not available. Also for those who worked in the field almost all day, it gave them the opportunity to attend funerals at night.*¹⁰⁴⁹

The following account of the funeral of Peter Luckie, in 1894, appeared in the Dubbo Dispatch in June of that year:

*The funeral took place on Thursday by moonlight in the general cemetery. Upwards of one hundred people, from all parts of the district, attended. The service at the grave was conducted by Rev. Mr Hurst. Many beautiful wreaths covered the coffin. The relatives and old friends of the deceased were deeply affected. [sic]Deceased, who was 51 years of age, had lived in this district for thirty years. The torchlight funeral procession by moonlight was well arranged by Messrs. John Luckie, Fred Taylor, Richard Shannon, Charles Digges assisted by Messrs Manusu and Sons and by many old friends.*¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁴⁹ Cameron, R *Funerals by Moonlight*

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Dubbo Dispatch* 19.06.1894 p2

Regarding these moonlight burials Cameron includes observations from author Dr R Brasch which include the following points. 'In the past there was a superstition that the sunlight should be shunned at the time of death. This was the reason behind the custom of wearing black, a black veil or a black arm band when outside the home and by closing curtains and shutters when at home during the day.'¹⁰⁵¹

The theory of *miasma* would have played a role here – the idea that disease moved through the air, changing its very nature, like and with a fog, predominated throughout history until it began to be disproved in the 1850s. It was this that was believed to cause epidemics like plague, cholera, diphtheria, typhus and many communicable diseases. It was a theory that predominated both in Europe and China from ancient times and it was not until the latter Victorian era, after the 1850s, that more scientific thinking was developed enabling a more accurate understanding of epidemiology.

Brasch also makes the point that burials at night were prominent during epidemics, including the black death. The dead were buried at night, as was done at the Manly Quarantine Station up to the year 1900 or so.¹⁰⁵²

During the nineteenth century burials were also often undertaken the day following the deceased's passing due to the absence of mortuaries facilities and the warm temperatures. In some places early mortuaries were constructed in the town's earliest days but these buildings were very simple and constructed of materials that did not last the test of time. They were often unremarkable buildings, no bigger than one room and were located on lower ground, perhaps near a creek or river as in these areas the temperatures can be cooler owing to convective currents at the beginning and end of the day. Once hospitals began to be constructed mortuaries were located on site and this is where the bereaved were stored until the funeral could be arranged enabling more time between the passing and the funeral.

There are many cemeteries and memorials to those who have died both on private and public property.

¹⁰⁵¹ Cameron, R *Funerals by Moonlight*

¹⁰⁵² Cameron, R *Funerals by Moonlight*

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