

The background is a painting of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, a large, white, semi-transparent geometric shape, resembling a stylized 'P' or a large arrow, is positioned on the left side. The landscape features a sandy beach, a blue body of water, and a distant shoreline with some buildings and trees. The sky is a mix of blue and white, suggesting clouds.

Central Coast Thematic History

Report prepared for Central Coast Council

December 2024

GAL
HERITAGE

Acknowledgement of Country

We respect and acknowledge Traditional Owners of the Central Coast, their lands and waterways, their rich cultural heritage and their deep connection to Country, and we acknowledge their Elders past and present. We are committed to truth-telling and to engaging with relevant Traditional Owner organisations to support the protection of their culture and heritage. We strongly advocate social and cultural justice and support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Cultural warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report may contain images or names of First Nations people who have passed away.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the
Traditional Custodians
of the land on which
we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country,
and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection to
these lands and waterways and extend this
acknowledgement to the homelands and
stories of those who also call this place home.

We recognise our future leaders and the
shared responsibility to care for and protect
our place and people.



Central
Coast
Council

Report register

The following report register documents the development of this report, in accordance with GML’s Quality Management System.

Job No.	Issue No.	Notes/Description	Issue Date
22-0430	1	Draft Report	9 June 2023
22-0430	2	Revised Draft Report	18 July 2023
22-0430	3	2 nd Revised Draft Report	20 August 2024
22-0430	4	Final Report	14 November 2024
22-0430	5	Revised Final Report	20 December 2024

Quality management

The report has been reviewed and approved for issue in accordance with the GML quality management policy and procedures.

It aligns with best-practice heritage conservation and management, *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* and heritage and environmental legislation and guidelines relevant to the subject place.

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Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

We acknowledge and respect the inherent rights and interests of the First Nations in Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to be acknowledged and attributed for their contribution to knowledge but also respect their rights to confidentiality. We recognise our ongoing obligations to respect, protect and uphold the continuation of First Nations rights in the materials contributed as part of this project.

Cover image: General view of Terrigal from the road to Avoca by Alfred Coffey, 1918. (Source: National Library of Australia)

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Introduction



Group on lookout above Pretty Beach, c1910s.

Source: Central Coast Library Service.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Central Coast Council commissioned GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) in December 2022 to prepare a thematic history of the Central Coast Local Government Area (LGA).

The Central Coast Council was formed from a merger of the former Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council in 2016. Both former councils had thematic histories for their respective areas.

The new thematic history is intended to unite the two existing histories, and revise and update them to ensure identified themes are relevant, accurate and reflect major processes and factors affecting the Coast.

This thematic history is based upon the two existing well-researched and detailed histories for Wyong and Gosford and supplemented and updated with additional primary and secondary research and graphics.

1.1.1 Key Objectives

The objectives of the Draft Central Coast Thematic History are:

- To prepare a new thematic history to reflect the course and pattern of Aboriginal occupation, land use and the development of the Central Coast as it exists today.
- To specifically include Aboriginal occupation, history and heritage, landscape heritage, the impact of post war and modern (post-1960) development and all other relevant aspects of cultural and natural heritage.
- To examine, identify and characterise what is unique about the Central Coast in a thematic context.
- To create specific local themes relevant to contemporary communities, that have regard to the 36 NSW State Themes.
- To explain the major factors that have influenced the history and heritage of the Central Coast and shaped its distinctive character in an engaging, 'contemporary' and usable format.
- To provide a thematic history that can ensure the historical development and unique character of the Central Coast can be reflected in Council's subsequent studies recommended by the Central Coast Heritage Gap Analysis and Action Plan.
- To identify gaps in the current heritage schedule for the Central Coast, and to ensure where possible, that all identified historic themes are represented.

1.2 What is a thematic history?

A thematic history provides a broad historical context for understanding the patterns and forces that shaped an area over time. It provides a framework through which the development of a type of place or area can be understood through historical themes, which are identified by research and analysis. Research and identification of themes can relate the specific history of areas or items to a wider context, providing comparative information on their relative importance.

Thematic studies are a well-recognised tool in heritage practice; they are used to provide a structured and systematic approach to assist in the evaluation and management of individual elements and are especially useful in analysing repetitive groupings of similar elements. Historic and typological themes can be used at the national, state or local level and across similar and related types of places.

A thematic history links to State and National Heritage Themes. The NSW thematic framework was developed in 2001 by the NSW Heritage Council. It identifies 36 themes and is applied to a range of heritage reports such as thematic histories.

This history identifies locally distinctive themes to structure Central Coast's historical narrative. A theme can unite a variety of actions, events, functions, people and dates.

It helps to prevent overemphasis on a particular type of item, period or event of history.

The thematic history is NOT intended to be a detailed account of all aspects of the history of the Central Coast LGA, nor to replace the extensive local, scholarly, genealogical or published histories that provide detailed historical accounts focused on specific subjects and utilise extensive primary historical sources. The history aims to help readers understand and appreciate why an area like the Central Coast LGA has developed into its current form. It identifies and explains a selection of locally distinctive themes that help us understand the area and its historic physical fabric.

The Central Coast LGA has had a strong First Nations community since Deep Time. This history provides a high-level summary of the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the region, it does not provide commentary on native title determinations. GML recommends for Council to undertake a comprehensive Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment to provide more information on the history, heritage and culture of the First Nations people of the LGA.

The thematic history will inform future programming in accordance with the Central Coast Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). The LSPS entails a range of studies to inform a new Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) for the Central Coast.

1.3 What is unique about the Central Coast Council LGA?

The Central Coast Council governs the sixth largest urban area in Australia, covering an area of 1,681 square kilometres.

This thematic history is guided by the 36 themes in the NSW state thematic framework and a comparison of themes identified in the two existing thematic histories for the area. However, as noted by Heritage NSW, 'Not all themes are relevant throughout the state ... [and] local themes will not necessarily fit neatly into the state thematic framework.'¹

The thematic history aims to identify those key themes that capture the unique aspects of the Central Coast LGA and its development through time.

While many local government areas can lay claim to themes such as convicts, agriculture and pastoralism, this history aims to ask: what are the unique and distinguishing factors that shaped the Central Coast LGA?

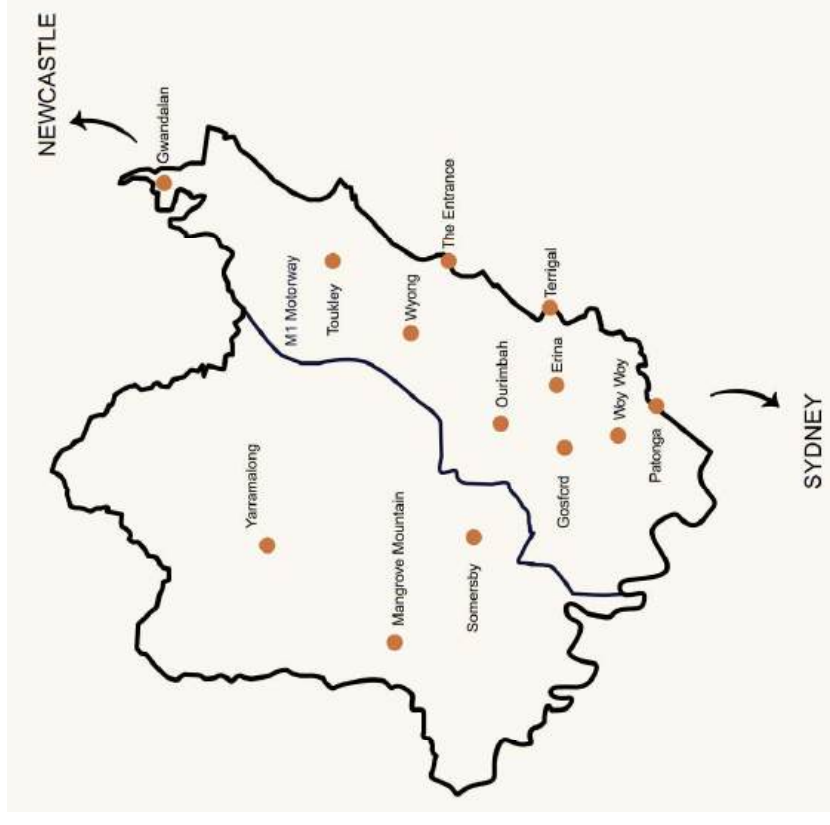


Figure 1.1 Central Coast Local Government Area. (Source: Central Coast Council Annual Report 2021/2022)

1.4 Previous thematic histories

Australian theme	NSW theme	Local theme for City of Gosford (Gosford Thematic History by Dr Terry Kass, 2016)	Local theme for Wyong Shire (Wyong Shire-wide Heritage Review by Nicole Secomb, 2010)
1 Tracing the natural evolution of Australia	Environment—naturally evolved	Topography	Landscape and topography—a framework for history
2 Peopling Australia	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures	Persisting on their native soil	Old and new inhabitants
	Convict	Spreading down the Hawkesbury Settling the best land	Slow beginnings
	Ethnic influences	Peopling the City of Gosford	
	Migration	Peopling the City of Gosford	
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Agriculture	Spreading down the Hawkesbury Surviving on the land Diversifying rural land use	Primary industry
	Commerce	Making towns Servicing Brisbane Water	Town growth 'The scenery is picturesque and the climate quite remarkably healthy'— Sydney's playground
	Communication	Connecting Brisbane Water	Lines of communication
	Environment—cultural landscape	Diversifying rural land use Changing the shape of Gosford	Slow beginnings

Australian theme	NSW theme	Local theme for City of Gosford (Gosford Thematic History by Dr Terry Kass, 2016)	Local theme for Wyong Shire (Wyong Shire-wide Heritage Review by Nicole Secomb, 2010)
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Events	All themes	All themes
	Exploration	Finding Brisbane Water	Slow beginnings
	Fishing	Harvesting the bounty of the sea	
	Forestry	Cutting the forests	Slow beginnings Timber
	Health	Looking after others	
	Industry	Building ships Working in Brisbane Water	Primary industry (industrial activity)
	Mining	Working in Brisbane Water	Mining and utilities
	Pastoralism	Settling the best land	Primary industry (farming)
	Science	Being creative	
	Technology	Being creative	Lines of communication
	Transport	Connecting Brisbane Water Building ships	Lines of communication
	Towns, suburbs and villages	Making towns Retreating to holiday havens	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth
	Land tenure	Settling the best land Diversifying rural land use	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth

Australian theme	NSW theme	Local theme for City of Gosford (Gosford Thematic History by Dr Terry Kass, 2016)	Local theme for Wyong Shire (Wyong Shire-wide Heritage Review by Nicole Secomb, 2010)
		Making towns	
	Utilities	Servicing Brisbane Water	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth
	Accommodation	Housing for everyone	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth
5 Working	Labour	Working in Brisbane Water Building ships	Primary industry Mining and utilities Timber
6 Educating	Education	Educating young and old	Town growth
7 Governing	Defence	Defending the nation	
	Government and administration	Governing Brisbane Water	Town growth
	Law and order	Governing Brisbane Water	Slow beginnings
	Welfare	Looking after others	
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Domestic life	Housing for everyone	
	Creative endeavour	Being creative	
	Leisure	Retreating to holiday havens Having fun	Town growth 'The scenery is picturesque and the climate remarkably healthy'— Sydney's playground

Australian theme	NSW theme	Local theme for City of Gosford (Gosford Thematic History by Dr Terry Kass, 2016)	Local theme for Wyong Shire (Wyong Shire-wide Heritage Review by Nicole Secomb, 2010)
9 Marking the phases of life	Religion	Servicing Brisbane Water	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth
	Social institutions	Having fun Servicing Brisbane Water	Subdivision: a sense of community Town growth
	Sport	Having fun	'The scenery is picturesque and the climate remarkably healthy'— Sydney's playground Town growth
	Birth and death	Marking life's milestones	
	Persons	All themes	All themes

1.5 Community consultation

In preparing this thematic history GML has consulted the Central Coast Library's local studies and family history librarians. GML also attempted to contact members of local historical and family history societies, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, local Aboriginal community groups as well as specific individuals recommended by the client via email, telephone and in person.

The Draft Central Coast Thematic History was placed on public exhibition from 11 December 2023 to 11 February 2024 providing all stakeholders the opportunity to review and comment on the document. Council undertook additional consultation with key stakeholders during the public exhibition period. In May 2024 the client provided GML with a consolidated table of submissions for review as well as feedback from the supplementary consultation with key stakeholders.

See Appendix 1 for the Community Participants.

1.6 Research and literature review

GML has undertaken an extensive review of key research collections and resources including a literature review of books, reports, studies and select vertical files from the Central Coast Library Local Studies Collections at Gosford and Tuggerah and

other archival repositories. This included an inspection of published secondary sources (including some of the material listed in the two previous histories) and an extensive desktop survey including:

- University of Newcastle Living Histories;
- Trove (National Library of Australia);
- NSW Land Registry Services;
- Museum of Australia;
- State Library of NSW;
- Museums of History NSW (State Archives Collection);
- NSW Spatial Portal;
- NSW Heritage Office Library;
- Australian Bureau of Statistics archived reports; and
- Ancestry.com.au (directories and census collections).

1.7 Thematic framework

GML has identified the following themes for inclusion based on a review of the two thematic histories and additional historical research and literature review.

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
Aboriginal Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early European contact/observations • Early records of Aboriginal people • Aboriginal policy • Continuity of Aboriginal occupation of Central Coast • Aboriginal people comprise fifth largest population group in Central Coast • Origin of place names with meanings 	Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures Events Science Land tenure Persons
Coast and Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural history of the LGA • How the natural environment has informed the location and form of development in the LGA • Various environments including coast, estuarine, rivers, lakes, plateau, valleys, mountains • Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay • Principal waterways such as Tuggerah Lakes, Lake Macquarie, Brisbane Water • Central Coast's biodiversity • More than half of the LGA is in national park and state forest ownership, e.g., Strickland State Forest, Dharug National Park • Council's land portfolio includes approximately 600 ha of bushland primarily for the purpose of preserving natural and heritage values 	Environment – naturally evolved Environment—cultural landscape Events Science Land tenure Leisure Persons

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental management issues—bushfires, floods, pollution, coastal erosion, sedimentation 	
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploration Isolation of the area Brisbane Water Police District Early land grants Early cemeteries Crown land Convicts Bushrangers Early industries 	Convict Environment—cultural landscape Events Exploration Forestry Industry Transport Towns, suburbs and villages Land tenure Accommodation Labour Government and administration Religion Birth and Death Persons
The Industrial Spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timbergetting, State Forests Citrus orchards, e.g., Mangrove Mountain, Narara Ship building (Brisbane Water) Oysters (Hawkesbury River etc) / oyster shell collecting for lime 	Agriculture Commerce Environment—cultural landscape

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dairies Poultry farming and piggeries Vegetable farming (postwar) Commercial fishing, prawning Sandstone quarrying e.g., Gosford Quarries Manufacturing in the twentieth century – Garnet Adcock and the Jusfrute factory (1921), Sara Lee (1970), Margins Cordials (1906), Nanna's (1969) Coal mining—associated with power stations e.g. Chain Valley Bay 	Events Forestry Industry Mining Pastoralism Transport Labour Persons
Between Two Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great North Road Simpson Track M1/Pacific Highway Maitland Road Homebush to Waratah railway line Electrification of railway line in stages, Sydney to Gosford, Gosford to Newcastle Bridges (road and rail)—e.g. Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge, Mooney Mooney Bridge, twin bridges on F3, Mill Creek Bridge (Gunderman), Entrance Bridge, Toukley Bridge, Rip Bridge Ferries/punts across rivers and lakes Coastal steamers Local roads in the twentieth century and importance of the car Warnervale Airport, Wyong Norah Head Lighthouse and shipwrecks 	Communication Environment—cultural landscape Events Transport Utilities Birth and Death Persons
Playground for Two Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holidays at the beach 	Commerce

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest houses, holiday homes, weekend cottages, hotels, motels, and resorts, holiday camps • Influx of Sydneysiders on weekends and holidays • Scenic highway along coast • Service industries along main roads, support for road transport and travel to Central Coast, e.g. service stations, Oak milk bar at Peats Ridge • Popular beachside resorts, e.g. Terrigal, Avoca, Pretty Beach, and The Entrance • Popular holiday activities e.g. fishing, boating • Tourism – coast and waterways / nature-based recreation and attractions • Recreation and attractions, e.g. Old Sydney Town, Australian Reptile Park, Glenworth Valley, Calga Springs • Employment of tourism officer by Gosford Council in 1960s 	<p>Communication</p> <p>Environment—cultural landscape</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Towns, suburbs and villages</p> <p>Accommodation</p> <p>Labour</p> <p>Creative endeavour</p> <p>Leisure</p> <p>Persons</p>
Country Charms with Urban Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns/villages formed around transport hubs or industry hubs, e.g. Gosford, Woy Woy and Wyong • Coastal towns vs rural towns • Early commerce and community stores • Retail development – shopping strips such as Mann Street, Gosford, and Pacific Highway Wyong versus big shopping centres such as Erina and Tuggerah • Creative endeavours • Schools • Local government e.g. Erina Council, Gosford Council and Wyong Shire • Law and order • Health and medicine • Subdivisions and estates 	<p>Commerce</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Environment—cultural landscape</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Health</p> <p>Industry</p> <p>Towns, suburbs and villages</p> <p>Utilities</p> <p>Accommodation</p> <p>Government and administration</p>

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Population growth pre-World War Two 	Law and order Domestic life Creative endeavour Leisure Religion Social institutions Persons
Tree and Sea Changers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commuting to Sydney via train and car to work, increase in population buying cheaper houses on Central Coast Warnervale Town Centre, Warnervale City Centre, land release areas e.g. HomeWorld and Greenfield residential development in northern part of LGA Influence of motor car Gentrification Gosford Wyong Urban Structure Plan, 1970s Ageing population/retirement population and large number of retirement living and retirement villages in Central Coast Families Downsizers Effects of COVID-19—people looking for space/room to grow Projected population growth—Central Coast population of 328,000 in 2020 expected to grow substantially to 417,500 by 2036 Pressures on maintaining distinct environmental areas and landscapes Semi-rural fringe and bushland becoming urban residential areas Gosford city centre revitalisation and high-rise developments 	Migration Environment—cultural Landscape Events Technology Transport Towns, suburbs and villages Utilities Accommodation Government and administration Welfare Domestic life Leisure Religion Social institutions

Local theme for Central Coast	Key Stories	Associated NSW theme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of early beach shacks and weekenders for large architect designed houses, part-time residences	Birth and Death Persons

1.8 Recommendations

This Thematic History consolidates the two existing Histories and identifies themes which are relevant, accurate and reflect major processes and factors affecting the Central Coast LGA. The following recommendations consider how the Thematic History could provide the basis for future stages of work.

Further Research

The thematic history has highlighted the important historical patterns and forces that shaped the Central Coast in its distinct historical and geographical formation. Some key areas for further intensive research are as follows:

- Aboriginal history and heritage studies;
- Rural and remote communities;
- Postwar housing c1940–1960; and
- Planning and suburbanisation post 1960s.

Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Assessment

During the preparation of this thematic study and review of stakeholders' submissions, it was noted that a comprehensive Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage Assessment is required. This assessment would provide more information on the history, heritage and culture of the First Nations people of the LGA.

Local Aboriginal Community groups should be consulted from the beginning of the development of this assessment and be provided with the opportunity to co-write and regularly review this assessment. This is to ensure for historical and cultural accuracy, that their voices are clearly communicated, and the local Aboriginal groups consent with this information being shared with the broader public.

Heritage Study

In reviewing prior thematic histories, heritage studies and specific places, it was noted that places of significance on the State Heritage Inventory are catalogued by previous local themes, have a numeric bias towards building from the Late Victorian and Interwar periods and have a variable quality of site history and significance assessment across the breadth of listings. Additionally, there is a paucity of items listed in some localities, e.g. Umina, and in rural and remote areas of the LGA.

A Heritage Study would capture potential heritage items not yet identified that relate to the history and development of the Central Coast LGA to the present time; and update existing inventory sheets to accurately reflect the history of listings and their significance.

1.9 Authorship

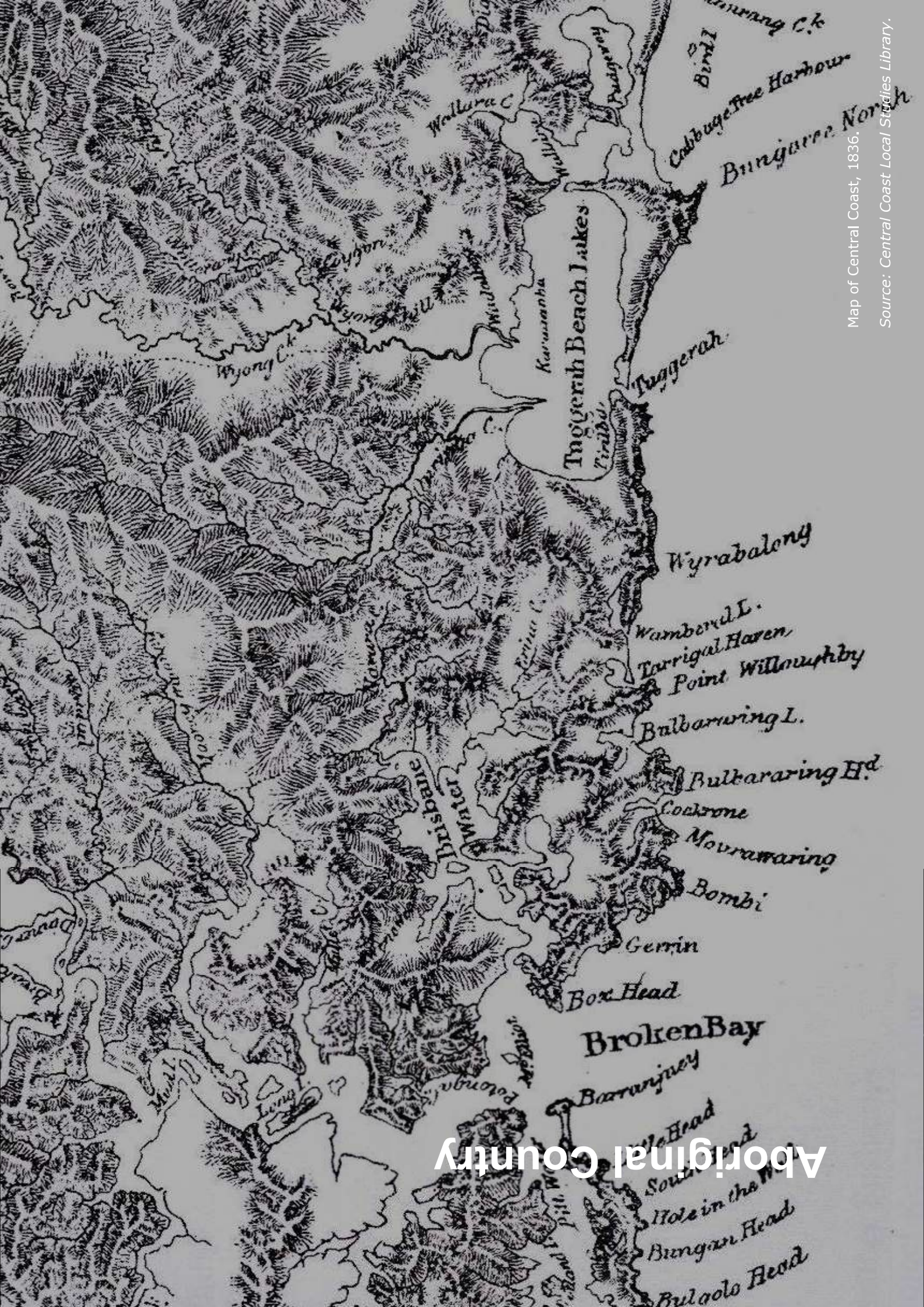
This report was prepared by Léonie Masson (Associate, Historian) and Angela So (Senior Heritage Consultant). Strategic advice and review were provided by Minna Muhlen-Schulte (Associate/Team Leader, Interpretation and Design) and Sharon Veale (CEO).

1.10 Acknowledgements

GML would like to acknowledge Rebecca Cardy (Senior Heritage Officer, Central Coast Council), Peta James (Senior Strategic Planner, Central Coast Council), Deanne Frankel (Section Manager, Strategic Planning Projects, Central Coast Council), Geoffrey Potter (Central Local Studies Librarian) and Michelle Goldsmith (Family History Librarian) for their assistance with this project.

1.11 Endnotes

- ¹ Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2022, *New South Wales Historical Themes*.



Map of Central Coast, 1836.

Source: Central Coast Local Studies Library.

2 Aboriginal Country

The following theme was written within the limits of the scope of a thematic history. It is based on a select range of historical documents. It provides a high-level summary of some of the key places and people associated with Aboriginal cultural heritage on the Central Coast.

The content is based on written historical record, typically produced by non-Aboriginal people, and may not accurately represent Aboriginal knowledge, traditions and practices. This theme needs to be complemented by future projects that record and listen to the oral histories and traditions of the Aboriginal community groups living on the Central Coast, contemporary Aboriginal expressions of culture and connections to the area today, and the archaeological record.

Introduction

The correct names for the Aboriginal people, their territory and the language of the Central Coast region are the subject of ongoing debate. This is a contentious issue for the Central Coast Council, the Aboriginal community groups and other residents. It will require further discussion and cannot be resolved in this

thematic history. The importance for this Thematic History is to acknowledge the First Nations people's connection to the Central Coast and their continuing role in its development.

This history acknowledges that today Aboriginal people who identify as Guringai, Darkinjung/Darkinoong and/or Awabakal recognise the Central Coast as being part of their Country.

At the present time, the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) formed under the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* is known as the Darkinjung LALC. The Darkinjung LALC boundary extends from 'Catherine Hill Bay to the North, Hawkesbury River to the South, Pacific Ocean to the East and Watagan Mountains to the West'.¹

The 1994 Wyong Shire thematic history states 'The Wyong district were occupied by three Aboriginal language groups, the Kurringgai, Darkinjung and Awabakal tribes'.² The 2010 Wyong thematic history states that the Central Coast region 'is generally accepted' as 'home to the Darkinjung Nation'.³ The 2016 City of Gosford thematic history states: 'Gosford City was originally occupied by the coastal Guringai (Ku-ring-gai) people, whilst Darkinjung people occupied the area west of Mangrove Creek'.⁴

These statements within the three thematic histories for the Central Coast are based on multiple studies. Anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists and historians have been working on this debate and drawing varied conclusions since the nineteenth century.⁵ Even the name Guringai and whether it is the correct name for one of the Aboriginal language groups that live in this region is disputed.⁶

The current names of Aboriginal groups and languages are a late construct, recorded by European observers during the contact period of Australia. These observers do not acknowledge that names and language can change over time and that this is what the names were at the time of inquiry. Nor that some names were lost due to invasion, displacement, and death.

In 2021, Dr Laurence Allen acknowledged the debate about the names for Aboriginal people of the Central Coast in his PhD, 'A History of the Aboriginal People of the Central Coast of NSW to 1874'. He suggests:

...the names of the small family clans on the Central Coast (since lost) would have been the only collective names used, and in all probability, there would have been no name in their language for the people as a whole, the Central Coast region or, in fact, the language itself.⁷

Just like today, Aboriginal people would have moved within and outside of their Country before and after colonisation. Boundaries

were fluid and would have changed over time. The different language groups would have interacted with each other through trade, marriage, ritual and war. Based on where the different family groups were located—in the hinterland, at the foothills and plateaus, by the Hawkesbury River, by Brisbane Water, on the coastal plain or along the coastline—they would have managed different landscapes and have access to different resources.

Before European settlement

The southern boundary of the Central Coast region is the Hawkesbury River or Dyarubbin. For over 50,000 years, Aboriginal people have lived close to Dyarubbin. The Dyarubbin provides physical and spiritual nourishment for Aboriginal people through its rich resources and ceremony spaces with potential connections to Dreaming stories or songlines. Aboriginal people would have likely followed the waterways, walking up the hills, down the valleys and to the coast.⁸

To the north of Mangrove Creek, a tributary of Dyarubbin, archaeological excavations have revealed that Aboriginal people were living mid-way on the sides of hills and the valley bottoms over 7,000 years ago.⁹ Most of their earlier camps were submerged when sea levels rose about 4,000 years ago.

Archaeological surveys and excavations of the Central Coast region have been carried out since the early 1930s. A

considerable number of sites have been found along the coast and further inland.

Archaeologists believe the Mangrove Mountain was an area of great significance. Archaeological evidence suggests Aboriginal people travelled to exchange basalt (blanks and finished artefacts) for other items, including non-basalt materials. F.D. McCarthy identified extensive ridgetop engravings sites along Flat Rocks Ridge and other connecting ridges near Mangrove Mountain. He hypothesised that this area was a ceremonial site and potentially also visited by the Darug from the Cumberland Plains.¹⁰

Other archaeological sites include habitation sites (open and within a shelter), rock engraving and stencils art sites, axe grinding grooves sites, middens, culturally modified trees, stone arrangements, and stone artefact scatters.¹¹ (Figure 2.1) Several Aboriginal burial grounds were found at MacMasters Beach on 17 June 1898.¹² These sites provide evidence of a widely used landscape prior to European people arriving in Australia, as well as trade and interaction with neighbouring Aboriginal groups.



Figure 2.1 Photograph of Aboriginal hand stencils, found in a rock overhang during the construction of the Mangrove Creek Dam, 1978–1982. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

Aboriginal groups who lived near the coast subsisted mainly on fish and shellfish. Extensive shell middens once existed along the coastline. These middens were collected by European people for making lime. Beached whales would result in major gatherings to feast on that unexpected bounty from the sea. Inland Aboriginal groups would be invited to the coast for the feast and during mullet season.

Coastal Aboriginal groups would also eat small animals and vegetables, especially in the winter months when fewer fish were available. They collected the seeds of Lillypilly and Tamarind trees plus wild potatoes, blossoms, Blueberry ash berries, sweet blue *Dianella* berries, Warrigal spinach and hearts of the Cabbage tree palm. They also ate the seeds of the Burrawang palm after leaching out the toxins. In leaner times, coastal Aboriginal people broke up into smaller groups but stayed in the same area and rarely moved inland.¹³

Aboriginal groups who lived further inland, at the foothills and plateaus, would hunt terrestrial and arboreal animals such as kangaroo and wallabies, possums, reptiles and a broad range of birds and their eggs including duck, emu, parrot, pigeons and brush turkey. Along inland rivers, creeks and swamps, they would have caught eels and rodents.



Figure 2.2 This c1817 painting by Joseph Lycett depicts Aboriginal people cooking and eating a beached whale. While Lycett mainly painted Aboriginal people from the Newcastle region, they are representative of similar scenes and activities in the Central Coast region. (Source: National Library of Australia)



Figure 2.3 Aboriginal people hunting kangaroos by Joseph Lycett, 1817.
(Source: National Library of Australia)

Inland Aboriginal people also collected fruits, berries, flowers and nectars in the summer and roots, tubers, bulbs and rhizomes in the winter. Foods collected include nectar and roots from the Giant Lily, roots of the Kurrajong tree and fruit of the Geebung.¹⁴

Inland Aboriginal groups would occasionally travel to the coast, possibly only once a year, to eat fish and sea plants in addition to whale feasting and mullet season. The coastal Aboriginal groups would also occasionally travel inland for gathering food sources.¹⁵

Aboriginal people from the Central Coast region used a hunting spear plus a multi-pronged fish spear, along with woomeras, shields, clubs, digging sticks, coolamon boomerangs, hatchets and dilly bags. Women looked after fishhooks and lines. Local Aboriginal people constructed huts out of bark propped up on a suitable tree or shrub, as a A-frame structure or as a large conical dome. They also lived in rock shelters.¹⁶

Historians generally state that prior to European settlement, 12 clans lived within the Central Coast region. They could be allocated to the following areas: Kincumber Peninsula, the Patonga area, Erina Wamberal and Terrigal, Gosford, Somersby, Ourimbah Creek Valley, Lower Wyong River and Jilliby Creek valleys, Upper Wyong River valley, Tuggerah Beach, Norah Head, Cooranbong, and Mangrove Kulnurra.¹⁷ FC Bennett wrote in late 1960s that no more than 12 family groups were in the Central Coast region with a maximum of 30 people per group. He claimed: 'This represents a top population of 360 people.'¹⁸

This number is challenged by Dr Allen. He undertook a detailed analysis to estimate population of the Central Coast region, based on densities of the Sydney region, historical observations of Sydney's coastline and other evaluation tools. Dr Allen estimates a possible population of around 2,800 Aboriginal people across the current Central Coast LGA and approximately 1,500 people living near its coastline in 1788. However, by 1823,

when formal settlement of Brisbane Water had begun, the local Aboriginal population was down to a few hundred.¹⁹

Early contact

In 1770, Captain Cook recorded sighting smoke upon the shore at Cape Three Points, about two to three kilometres from land. Cook most likely saw campfires used for cooking.²⁰

The earliest exploration parties of Broken Bay were led by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788, first landing at Pearl Beach. William Bradley, who accompanied Phillip, recorded his observations of the local Aboriginal people as they sailed along. The Aboriginal people were friendly and would interact with the European explorers when they came ashore.²¹

The European explorers were in search of land suitable for agriculture, which was found further along the Hawkesbury River near Windsor. Combined with the desire to restrict occupation on the north side of the Hawkesbury River by the colonial government, this area remained undeveloped and isolated.

In 1796, David Collins wrote about an exploration party who ran aground at Port Stephens. The local Aboriginal people led the Europeans back to Sydney and told them about a white woman living with Aboriginal people. This woman was identified as an escaped convict, Mary Morgan. A search party for her travelled

along the northern arm of Broken Bay to Cape Three Points. During this expedition, the search party came across a large sea fed lagoon that ran parallel to the coast. Historians believe this is a record of the first European encounter of Tuggerah Lakes. The search party returned to Sydney without finding Mary Morgan.²²

While few European people went to settle in the Central Coast region, the local Aboriginal people were still severely impacted by their arrival. Europeans brought with them diseases including smallpox, syphilis and influenza. Despite the limited contact, the smallpox plague severely affected Aboriginal people living at Broken Bay within six months of European people's arrival, similar to Aboriginal people living in other areas of Sydney. David Collins wrote:

In the year 1789 they [the Aboriginal people] were visited by a disorder which raged among them with all the appearance and virulence of the small-pox. The number that it swept off, by their own accounts, was incredible.²³

When visiting Broken Bay, Collins found 'in many places our path was covered with skeletons'.²⁴ Captain John Hunter wrote of his surprise of not seeing many Aboriginal people as he travelled along the shore of Port Jackson and Broken Bay. He noted seeing no more than 30 Aboriginal people at Broken Bay. As he continued to explore the coastline, he began to see more bodies

of Aboriginal people that had died from smallpox, and encountered a young woman sick from smallpox.²⁵

While no direct reports on the consequences of this disease exist for the Aboriginal groups that live north of Broken Bay, they most likely would have also been affected by smallpox. However, as European people struggled to settle across the Central Coast region, this probably made it possible for the local Aboriginal groups to maintain their traditional lifeways.

As more European people came into the region, Aboriginal people survived, either through integration or resistance. James Webb, the earliest settler and the grantee of Woy Woy, is reported to have employed some Aboriginal men and women on his property in 1823.²⁶ On the other hand, Aboriginal people drove some early settlers away.

Early censuses of Aboriginal people

In 1827, the first census of Aboriginal people in the Brisbane Water district was undertaken by the District Magistrate Willoughby Bean. Bean reported only 65 Aboriginal people belonging to five separate 'tribes' (probably family groups) in the district.²⁷ He counted 15 at Broken Bay, 15 at Tuggerah Beach, 15 at Wyong, 10 at Narara and 10 at Erina.²⁸ This is in contrast to the 1826 census created by the Newcastle Magistrates Allman and Brooks, who counted 200 members of the 'Tugrah Beech

Tribe' and their 'chief' known as 'Chuge'.²⁹ While Bean most likely understated the number of local Aboriginal people, it is also possible that they, most likely the older people, would have deliberately avoided the blanket distribution as a form of resistance towards the colonial government.³⁰ During this period, it was still possible for the local Aboriginal groups to retreat to areas that Europeans were not interested in cultivating such as the hinterland, swamps, wetlands and dense forests.

Conflict

Bean reported about an ongoing dispute between a Wyong settler William Cape and the local Aboriginal people in 1828. The local Aboriginal people had been taking Cape's corn and Cape responded by shooting at them. As a result, the local Aboriginal people retaliated with violence. They also invited people from the north (Bean believed to be from the Hunter's River, Wollombi and Sugarloaf areas) to intimidate Cape. Bean estimated that over 200 Aboriginal people confronted Cape on one occasion and 180 on another. Two Aboriginal men who were arrested by the District Constable admitted they intended to capture and burn Cape.³¹ While Bean did not condone the violence, he did believe that Cape provoked the local Aboriginal people and was a difficult neighbour.

Reverend L E Threlkeld who operated an Aboriginal Mission north of Lake Macquarie also noted that Aboriginal people were provoked. About 60 Aboriginal people from the Tuggerah Beach Tribe and Newcastle Tribe lived on his land. While the people around his house were safe, he described how European people were forcefully taking Aboriginal girls. Threlkeld would hear the girls screams and see marks of the butt-end of muskets on the heads of the males who attempted to stop the abductions. Threlkeld wrote:

It is not a matter of surprise that a few Europeans are yearly speared by the Aborigines, but it is wonderful that more of the English are not destroyed, considering the numerous aggravations given, and the many opportunities the Aborigines have of secretly taking vengeance on them.³²

These activities demonstrate the conflict between Aboriginal people and the incoming settlers, while also highlighting the relationship between the Central Coast Aboriginal groups and their neighbours. Not only were a variety of social interactions demonstrated but contact with neighbouring groups also appeared to involve organising a coordinated effort in resisting the white settlers.

The 1830s and 1840s were a period of heightened conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Brisbane Water. Attacks on the European population were numerous, with

Aboriginal people from the Brisbane Water district working with Aboriginal people from the Newcastle and Sydney regions. Several Aboriginal men were tried before the NSW Supreme Court for intimidation, stealing shirts and food, and other similar offences.

Many homes were robbed. One raid began with an attack at Currangbong, where a group of Aboriginal people demanded tea and bread. The same group then moved to Cape's farm at Wyong, taking food and clothing, and then returned to Currangbong to steal tins of milk from Manning's dairy. Next came a series of 'attacks' on farmers and assigned convicts. During October and November 1834, three groups totalling between 80 to 90 Aboriginal men attacked Alfred Jaques in Ourimbah and robbed his house.³³

The men carried guns, as well as the traditional spears and waddies. Many threats were made against the settlers, but few spearings and no deaths occurred. Jonathan Warner, visiting Magistrate to Brisbane Water, pursued the marauding groups of Aboriginal men for several weeks but was unable to apprehend them. In October 1834, Warner wrote to the Governor appealing for a party of mounted police to be sent to his district for about a month so that he might capture the ringleaders.

With the military at hand, relative peace returned to the district, but the raids began again when they were withdrawn at the end

of 1834. Following a series of robberies and other activities, Warner drew up a list of 18 Aboriginal men, all of whom came from Wyong, Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Beach, and offered a reward for their capture. However, he did not manage to arrest any of them until early January 1835.

A reward of forty pounds was also offered for those responsible for the rape and robbery at the farm of John Lynch. By the middle of 1835, 16 men had been committed for trial for robberies at Wyong, Brisbane Water and Lake Macquarie.

Many of those tried received a sentence of 'death recorded', meaning a formal sentence of death, without the intention of the sentence being carried out.

The original intention was to send the eight Aboriginal who had received the sentence of 'death recorded' to Van Diemen's Land. Instead, they were confined on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour. As an act of mercy, the Governor commuted the sentence to the lesser time of two years labour on Goat Island.

Time of peace

Peace appeared to return to the Brisbane Water and Lake Macquarie regions for some years following the events of 1835. The removal of these men from the local family groups had an impact on the Aboriginal population, as well as an outbreak of

measles in 1835 and influenza around 1837. Some sick Aboriginal people were cared for at Hospital Gully near Mangrove Creek.³⁴ Several settlers reported this decline during this period, including Sarah Mathew who, in the mid-1830s, described her encounter with a group of local Aboriginal people.

Our camp is surrounded by a number of the natives ... they are so happy, too, it is a pleasure to see them... They are rapidly diminishing in number; and most probably another generation will see their entire extinction in at least this part of the colony.³⁵

Despite this, some Aboriginal people continued to live together, possibly on the outskirts of European settlement. It was reported in *The Gosford Times* in 1928 that a large Aboriginal camp was located at Davistown. Alfred Settree would regularly visit this camp in the 1830s.³⁶ In a paper presented by Charles Swancott for the Brisbane Water Historical Society in 1953, Swancott reported on an Aboriginal camp near McMasters Beach in the 1830s and 1840s. In about 1840, Anne Pickett nee Humphreys from the Kincumber area adopted an Aboriginal baby from this camp, after the baby's mother was killed. The baby lived with the Pickett family for the rest of her life.³⁷

In 1842, John Mann visited Brisbane Water, eager to meet the local Aboriginal people. His record indicates Aboriginal people were still living a traditional lifestyle at this time. Mann paid an

Aboriginal man to show him how they would climb a 70- to 80-foot tree, which he did by cutting small notches up a tree. Mann was later guided from his accommodation by local Aboriginal people known as Emu and Mary Anne to Ourimbah, and then to the junction of Wyong Creek and Tuggerah Lake. At this final location, a corroboree had been planned in honour of an Aboriginal group visiting from Wollombi.

At Tuggerah Lake, Mann noted the abundance of wildlife and Emu took the opportunity to catch fish, birds and collect swan eggs. When they arrived at Wyong Creek, another older Aboriginal man, Long Dick, had already set up a camp. The tents were created from sheets of bark and lined with dry grass. Later, another older Aboriginal man called Jew Fish arrived by canoe with a large quantity of fish. The fish were thrown onto the shore, collected by Long Dick and cooked over a fire. They also cooked 'opossums, bandicoots, snakes and iguanas'³⁸ and swan eggs.

The next morning, Mann participated in a kangaroo hunt. He was impressed with the accuracy and efficiency of the Aboriginal people's use of spears and boomerangs to kill the kangaroos. Twenty kangaroos were caught. Mann watched them skin and cook the kangaroos and was fascinated by the skinned tails:

The sinews attached to each joint have much the appearance of thick skeins of white floss silk, or perhaps spun glass. They

can be separated into single threads, which are then used by the blacks[sic] in making their cloak.

The next evening was the corroboree. Mann mentions the Aboriginal people went into the bushes as 'no white man is permitted to see the operation of decorating themselves'³⁹ Mann described the corroboree (Figure 2.4):

When darkness had closed around us the ceremony commenced. A clear space on this flat afforded a favorable spot for the entertainment. Drawn up in line these men, painted with pipe clay in all kinds of devices, with head gear of feathers, presented a weird appearance. In front stood the master of the ceremonies or fogleman, or 'fiddler' as they called him. He sang the song to which the dancers kept admirable time, which was well marked by the striking together of two small boomerangs. This enabled the performers to move in perfect time, their foot striking the ground as one thud.⁴⁰

Not all interactions between Aboriginal people and Europeans were peaceful during this time. Some settlers such as Cape and William Turner from Jiliby were hostile to local Aboriginal people, including shooting at them.⁴¹



Figure 2.4 Depiction of a corroboree by William Romaine Govett, painted in c1836. Govett worked as a surveyor who worked in the Hawkesbury region between 1829 and 1833. After returning to England in 1834, he created several paintings about the Country and life of Aboriginal people. (Source: National Library of Australia)

In 1845, the *Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines* was published. The Brisbane Water district magistrate wrote only 47 Aboriginal people were left—27 men, 13 women, four boys and three girls. He stated:

Their numbers have diminished during the last five years, to the extent of one-fourth of their original number; in the previous five years the deaths were more numerous.⁴²

The magistrate's count may not be completely accurate, as he claimed only four people were born from Aboriginal and European couplings. However, the number of Aboriginal people appeared to be declining. The magistrate attributed this to:

1st., to immoral habits and disease; 2nd., to the use of intoxicating liquors, and exposure to the night dews; 3rd., to the general intercourse subsisting between the aboriginal females, and the males of the white population, may be considered as the primary cause of there being no increase in their numbers; as a natural consequence, they are rapidly diminishing.⁴³

The magistrate also observed that the local Aboriginal people subsisted by catching fish and hunting small animals. Aboriginal people sometimes worked for local settlers, 'employed in driving cattle, as guides, and sometimes as messengers, and at times procured fish and other articles for the settlers'⁴⁴. In return, Aboriginal people received 'provisions, clothing and sometimes money'.⁴⁵

The magistrate described the local Aboriginal people:

The most friendly relations subsist between the Aborigines and settlers of this district – no hostility or collision has taken place within the last nine years... No property has been destroyed by them within the last nine years... Meetings of a hostile character amongst the Aborigines, rarely occur in this district.⁴⁶

He recommended that blankets continued to be issued, as well as medicine, food and accommodation.

It was identified on an 1864 historical plan that there was a 'Blacktown' along The Entrance Road in Erina. Blacktown 'was a term commonly used during the period for Aboriginal contact period encampments, and therefore is likely to refer to a place or series of buildings occupied by Aboriginal residents'⁴⁷. The place was recorded as comprised of six buildings with fences and enclosure. Its location was adjacent to an area marked 'swamp', 'located at the confluence with Erina Creek and at the interface where the upper freshwater part of the creek meets the lower tidal saltwater portion of the creek'.⁴⁸

It was claimed in 1874 that only 13 Aborigines were left in the district. A man who contemporary writers claimed was the last Brisbane Water Aboriginal man, Billy Fawcner, died in the 1880s.⁴⁹ This does not consider those who had merged into the ascendant white population, often by intermarriage. Aboriginal women survived by becoming partners, either in or out of wedlock, of white men, so that their descendants were of 'mixed' blood. Some of their descendants retained a consciousness of their Aboriginal ancestry and tribal lore, although the devastation of family groups had severely affected the chain of transmission throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Aboriginal Protection Board

By the 1880s, the largest concentration of Aboriginal people in the Sydney region could be found in Sackville Reach and La Perouse. Aboriginal people from all over New South Wales, including from the Central Coast region, lived at these two camps since the 1870s.⁵⁰

In 1883, the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) was established in New South Wales, signalling the beginning of successive waves of intervention into Aboriginal lives. Protectionism, segregation, assimilation and self-determination are the core themes that characterised government policies towards Aboriginal people. La Perouse became an official reserve managed by APB by 1885, and Sackville Reach was one by 1889.⁵¹ In 1893, the St Clair Aboriginal Mission was established near Singleton and some Central Coast Aboriginal people lived here. No official reserves were established in the Central Coast itself, although several small groups still camped seasonally at Terrigal Lagoon, Ash Street and North Avoca Lake in the twentieth century.

In 1916, the well-liked and capable missionary Retta Dixon left the Sackville Reach Reserve to work at the St Clair Aboriginal Mission. Life at Sackville Reach quickly declined and it was nearly deserted by 1915.⁵² The last resident of the Sackville Reserve was Andrew (Andy) Barber, who enjoyed 'a wide popularity in the district'.⁵³ He died in 1943 and was buried in the Church of

England Cemetery, Windsor. By this time, only 32 of the 50 reserves (excluding stations) in New South Wales were occupied, with a total of 1,674 Aboriginal people living on them. The Sackville Reach Reserve was revoked in May 1946 and set aside for public recreation. Some Aboriginal people stayed in the Sackville area, while others moved on to other parts of Sydney and beyond.



Figure 2.5 Photograph of Andrew Barber, possibly at Sackville Reach. (Source: Hawkesbury Library Service)

National Aboriginal policy

In response to the national consensus at the 1937 Commonwealth State conference, the NSW Aborigines Protection Board reconstituted itself around the new goal of assimilation. The board was renamed Aborigines Welfare Board in a legislation introduced in 1940. Under the *Aborigines Protection Act 1940*, an Aboriginal child found to be neglected under the *Child Welfare Act 1939* became a ward of the board. The child was removed from their families and rehomed in the board's institutions and State Corrective Institutions such as Parramatta Girl's Home. In the 1950s, Aboriginal children were placed in foster homes with non-Indigenous families.⁵⁴

In 1958, the Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines was formed, later changed to the Federal Council of the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, to campaign for changes in the constitution and equal rights for Indigenous people. In 1962, the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* was amended so that all Indigenous people could enrol to vote at Federal election. In 1967, a referendum was passed with the overwhelming majority of Australians voting 'yes' to count Indigenous Australians in the census and the power for the Federal Government to create laws that benefited Indigenous people.⁵⁵

In 1969, the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board was abolished, leaving over a thousand children in institutional or family care. Almost none of them were being raised by Aboriginal people, and fewer still by the child's own extended family.⁵⁶ The Aboriginal Community was frustrated by the lack of Federal Government action and formed the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House in 1972. In the same year, the Whitlam Government was elected and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established. Self-determination was adopted as the federal policy for Indigenous people, while Indigenous activists pushed for treaty and self-government over their local and internal affairs over the next two decades.⁵⁷

Reconciliation and the National Apology

In 1991, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established under the Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991. This organisation was replaced by Reconciliation Australia in 2001, as the national body promoting reconciliation in Australia. The body seeks to achieve national reconciliation in five areas—race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance. Reconciliation Australia encourages a range of organisations, such as workplaces, local government authorities and schools, to develop an Aboriginal Reconciliation Action Program (RAP) to contribute to reconciliation.

The Central Coast First Nations Accord was adopted by Central Coast Council on 13 December 2022. The accord is described by Council as:

...an important step on the journey of Reconciliation and developing a shared vision for our future with our local First Nations people. The Accord is a commitment to the First Nations People that Council will not only continue to support the principles of cooperation, but also listen to history and support Aboriginal people to realise their future.⁵⁸

The Central Coast LGA has one of the fastest growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in New South Wales. In 2006, 6,455 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were in the LGA. By 2016, this number rose to 12,485 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁵⁹

The Central Coast LGA currently has the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in New South Wales. In the 2021 census, 17,047 people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander lived in the Central Coast LGA, 4.9% of the total LGA population (346,596). This group has a low median age, with 53.5% of the area's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged under 25 in 2021.

Many significant and dynamic Aboriginal organisations and peoples exist in the Central Coast region. The Darkinjung LALC has a membership of over 700 people. It is the largest private

landholder on the Central Coast.⁶⁰ The Barang Regional Alliance Ltd (Barang) is a non-profit Aboriginal organisation that works to support the Central Coast Aboriginal community. Barang acts as a conduit between all levels of government as a member of the Empowered Communities reform initiatives and the Local Decision Making reform program. Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services, Nunyara Aboriginal Health Unit and Bungee Aboriginal Association support the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region. Local groups such as Wannangini Org, the Kurriwa Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and Gudjagang Ngara li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation (GNL) facilitate and enhance education and Aboriginal cultural heritage management in the region. These groups, along with many non-Aboriginal people and organisations, are working to support the local Aboriginal community, and increase understanding and promotion of Aboriginal cultures.

Since the early 2000s, Darkinjung and Guringai women have been working together, along with the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, Australian Wildlife Walkabout Park, local activists and environmentalists, to protect a significant women's site at Calga. Located along the Peats Ridge songline, the Calga Aboriginal landscape is the highly sacred place where Daramulan came into being. Rock engravings at Calga depict Daramulan,

Baime and Boothia in both human and anthropomorphic forms.⁶¹ This place was under threat from the expansion of a sandstone mine. In 2015, the NSW Land and Environment Court overturned the proposal based on the evidence of the Aboriginal women. The 2015 judgement 'is regarded as an historic landmark precedent in the way that Aboriginal cultural landscapes with tangible and intangible values are recognised and protected in law.'⁶² In 2019, the Calga Aboriginal cultural landscape was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.⁶³ (Figure 2.6)



Figure 2.6 Photograph of cultural water pools on a sandstone platform, which also has engraved art, within the Calga Aboriginal cultural landscape site. (Source: GML Heritage)

Some notable historical individuals

Bungaree

Bungaree (some people believe him to be a Guringai man) arrived in Sydney from Broken Bay in 1790. (Figure 2.7) He became a guide, interpreter and intermediary for explorers and settlers across NSW. In 1789, he was one of three Aboriginal people employed on the HMS *Reliance* to sail to Norfolk Island. On this 60-day round trip, Bungaree met Lieutenant Mathew Flinders. Flinders was so impressed, he hired Bungaree. Travelling with Flinders on the HMS *Investigator* from 1802 to 1803, Bungaree became the first known Aboriginal person to circumnavigate Australia. Bungaree negotiated meetings and safe passages with coastal people encountered on the trip. He acted in this capacity again for other voyages and expeditions. Bungaree was part of the first official party of the Hunter River on the *Lady Nelson*, travelling through Newcastle and Wallis Plain, as their guide and interpreter.⁶⁴

In Sydney, Bungaree was well liked and well known to European settlers. More than 20 portraits of him exist. He was a brilliant mimic, imitating the walks and mannerism of past New South Wales governors. He was given clothes, including a military jacket and hat. Macquarie was a patron to Bungaree, giving him the title of 'King of the Broken Bay Aborigines' and the first

Aboriginal land grant at Georges Head. Macquarie provided a fishing boat, clothing, seeds and farming implements so Bungaree and a group of Brisbane Water Aboriginal people could 'settle and cultivate'⁶⁵ on this grant. Bungaree only stayed at George Head for a short period before returning to sea.



Figure 2.7 *Portrait of Bungaree, a native of New South Wales, with Fort Macquarie, Sydney Harbour, in background, Augustus Earle, 1826.* (Source: National Library of Australia)

Bungaree and his group eventually moved to the Governor's Domain (Sydney Domain). He was affected by age, alcohol and malnutrition. Bungaree died in November 1830 after a long illness and was buried at Rose Bay.⁶⁶

Biddy Lewis

Biddy Lewis, also known as Sarah Wallace, was born around 1803. She is the daughter of Matora, wife of Bungaree but she may have been Matora's granddaughter. Her death certificate identifies her father as 'Richard Wallace, Aboriginal' although some of her descendants believe her father was British.

Biddy was married to John Lewis, also known as John Ferdinand, a convict that she met in 1815. He was working on Bungaree's farm at George Head, where Biddy was living.

Biddy received a land grant of three acres on Marramarra Creek in 1835, although she and her husband may have already been living there for a year. Most of their seven surviving children were born on this farm.⁶⁷ Biddy and one of her daughters acted as a midwife for Aboriginal and European women that lived on both sides of the Hawkesbury River.⁶⁸

Biddy died in 1880 and was buried on Bar Island, at the mouth of the Marramarra Creek. Her descendants continue to live along the Hawkesbury River.⁶⁹

Charlotte Ashby

Charlotte Ashby was born in the mid-1820s. She was the daughter of Sophy/Booratora, the daughter of Bungaree and his first wife Matora, possibly an Awabakal woman. Charlotte's father was most likely James Webb, the first European settler of Woy Woy. The relationship between Charlotte's mother and father was short-lived and Charlotte was adopted by her stepfather John Smith.

Charlotte was 22 when she married a ticket of leave convict Joseph Ashby in 1845. She was baptised on the same day. She eventually had four children with Joseph. Charlotte left Joseph at some stage after their fourth child was born in 1853. From 1859, she had six more children and Joseph was not named as the father.⁷⁰

Charlotte was involved in five different court cases during her lifetime. In 1863, two of her young children were removed from her custody and she was ordered to send them by steamer to the Benevolent Society in Sydney. In 1869, she was accused of theft but found not guilty. In a third case, she took a man known as Thomas Deasey to court for assault and attempted rape when she was 60 years old. The jury found her testimony was insufficient to charge the defendant and Deasey was dismissed.

Charlotte was poor in later life, living for some time in a hut at a railway siding at Narara. Charlotte died in her 80s in 1913.⁷¹ She is buried in a pauper's grave at Bradys Gully Cemetery, North Gosford, formerly Gosford New Cemetery.⁷²

Margaret White

Margaret White was born near Wyong around 1827, although her parents may have been Awabakal. Not much is known about her childhood. She met Lancelot Threlkeld as a child and she possibly worked as a domestic servant for other settlers. By the time White was an adult, she was fluent in English, Awabakal and possibly other Aboriginal dialects. She could also read and write English.

White's life partner was Old Ned, an Awabakal man. During the 1850s and 1860s, they lived on Tuggerah Lakes and worked for Edward Hargraves at Norahville. They had two children, Ellen and William Henry, who were baptised in 1860.

In 1868, White and Ned moved north to near present-day Swansea. They were accompanied by four or five children, some who were possibly their grandchildren. Here they became known as the Aboriginal King and Queen of the Swansea District.

White was an accomplished dressmaker and made all her family's clothes. She also made cabbage-tree hats, which sold for £2 to

£4 each. White was also a skilled fisherwoman, storyteller, singer and shellwork artist. One of her works, a trophy made of shell, was on display during the 1888 wildflower show at the Wickham School of Arts.⁷³

Ned supported his family by collecting honey and wax, and growing corn, vegetables and tobacco. He was also a popular guide for hunting and fishing parties at Lake Macquarie. Their home included a slab hut, garden plot, a pig and poultry.

In 1871, White and Ned were nearly evicted from their land as they were squatters and another settler wished to buy their land. Rev. John Shaw of Scone defended their claim. The claim was eventually bought to the attention the Minister for Land in Sydney, who allowed for 20 to 30 acres to be reserved for Ned. Ned died in 1872 and is buried near Black Ned's Bay.

Another challenge for White's land occurred in 1879. Her claim was again defended by members of the local community. This time the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, became involved. In 1880, the Secretary of Lands 'approved the reservation of 40 acres for the use of Margaret'⁷⁴. It appears that her land reverted back to crown land after her death.

In 1882, a survey commissioned by the newly appointed Protector of the Aborigines, George Thorton, found White was impoverished. She would take in washing but did not have

enough work to support herself. White had to rely on her neighbours for food and clothing. As a result of the survey, she was given a ration until her death in 1894, aged 67. White is buried in Newcastle Sandgate Cemetery.⁷⁵



Figure 2.8 Portrait of Margaret White, aged 65. (Source: Threlkeld, L E, 1892, *An Australian language as spoken by the Awabakal, the people of Awaba, or Lake Macquarie [near Newcastle, New South Wales]*)

Billy Fawkner

Billy Fawkner was often described by his contemporary white neighbours as the 'last' Brisbane Water Aboriginal man, even

though the Gosford magistrates reported that 13 Aboriginal people were living in their district.

Not much is known about Fawkner. His name does not appear in any of the Brisbane Water or Newcastle Native Returns. Dr Allen suggests that he might have been 'Bill Falconer', an Aboriginal horse breaker from the Lower Hawkesbury area mentioned by Rev William Simpson in 1846.⁷⁶ Fawkner also may have been a local Aboriginal man who chose not to collect any government blankets. Fawkner may have also worked for the Ward family in Brisbane Water, looking after their children.⁷⁷

Fawkner was remembered by local settlers as an old man living on Tuggerah Lake who survived by fishing and collecting honey, some of which he would sell. He also had a small garden. Apart from alcohol consumption, he appeared to have avoided a settler's lifestyle.

Fawkner drowned in 1874 when his bark canoe sank as he crossed Tuggerah Lake. His death was mentioned by the poet Henry Kendall in his two-part prose article about the Gosford region, 'Arcadia at our Gates'.⁷⁸

Aboriginal place names

A list of Aboriginal place names of the Central Coast LGA was included in Bennett's *The Story of Aboriginal People of the*

Central Coast.⁷⁹ The list was based on research of early historical records by the Brisbane Water Historical Society and The Entrance and District Historical Society. Meanings for most of the place names have been included, although it is unknown if the meanings are correct or what language the word originated from. The book concedes 'the local meanings for some of the names became lost in records or forgotten or the different meaning from another dialect for the same word has been applied.'⁸⁰

In 1924, Sydney J. Endacott published a book of Aboriginal words called *Australian Aboriginal Words and Place Names and their meanings*. The intention of this book was to provide its reader with 'musical [A]boriginal names for their homes'⁸¹. By 1955, the book was in its ninth edition and contained over 3,000 names that the author had compiled from 'old books and journals' and 'old hand-written records'.⁸² The origins of these names and the accuracy of their meanings are unknown. While the book was aimed at members of the public, it was also used by local councils for naming places within their LGA, including the Central Coast LGA. Central Coast Library's Local History Collection holds a copy used extensively by a Council staff member to name streets in the area.

The following list shows some of the suburbs with Aboriginal names in the Central Coast LGA and also shown on a map at Figure 2.9. The meanings included have been taken from

Bennett's book. Alternative meanings are noted by reference to endnotes.

Name	Meaning
BOUDDI	The Heart
BUDGEWOI	Young grass
CALGA	The mouth ⁸³
DOORALONG	Timber for making spears there
ETTALONG	Place for drinking
GOROKAN	Dawn or early morning
GWANDALAN	Peace ⁸⁴
JILLIBY	Where two creeks meet
KANGI (KANGY ANGY)	meaning unknown
KANWAL	Snakes indeed
KARIONG	A meeting place
KINCUMBER	The direction of the rising sun
KOOLEWONG	Koala bears there
KULNURA	Up in the clouds
MOONEE MOONEE	meaning unknown
NARARA	Black snake

PATONGA	Oysters ⁸⁵
OURIMBA	Sacred circle of the initiation for investing the 'ourin' or belt of manhood
TERRIGAL	Place of little birds
TOOWOON BAY	The mating call of the Wonga Pigeon
TOUKLEY	Many brambles
TUGGERAH	Savannah grass land ⁸⁶
TUMBI UMBI	Plenty of water
UMINA	Repose
WATANOBBI	Hills surrounded by water
WALLARAH	A lookout
WAMBERAL	Where the sea breaks
WOY WOY	The big lagoon ⁸⁷
WYEE	Fire
WYONG	An edible yam ⁸⁸
WYONGAH	The yam patch
YARRAMALONG	Cedar trees there

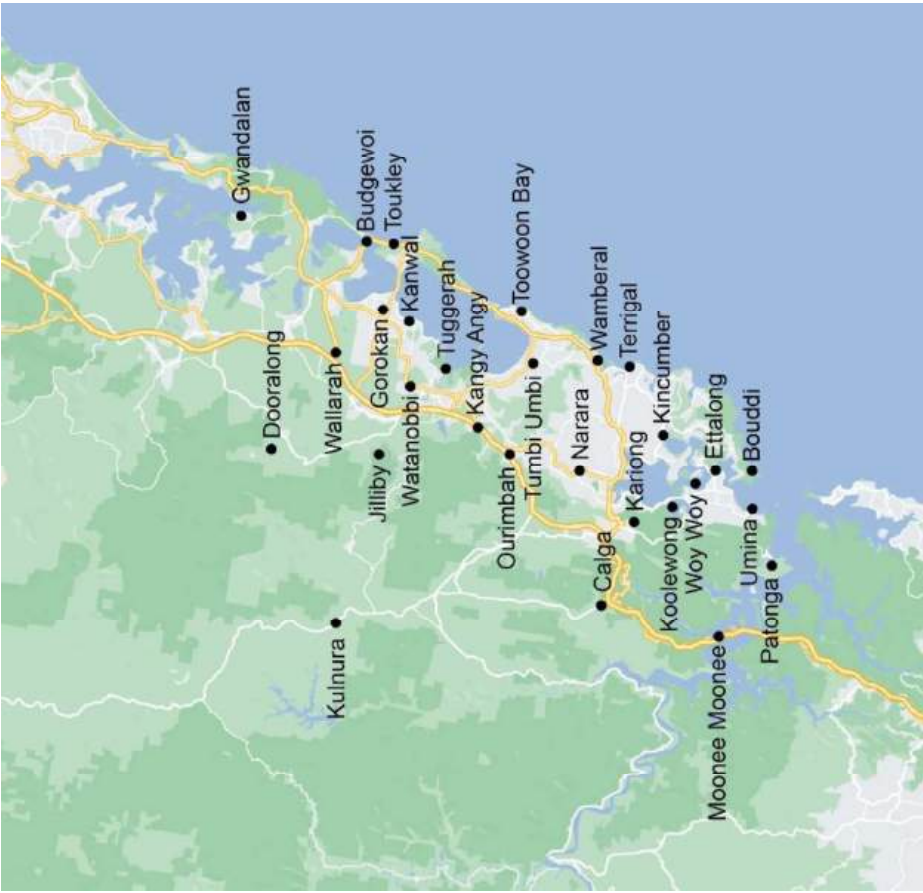


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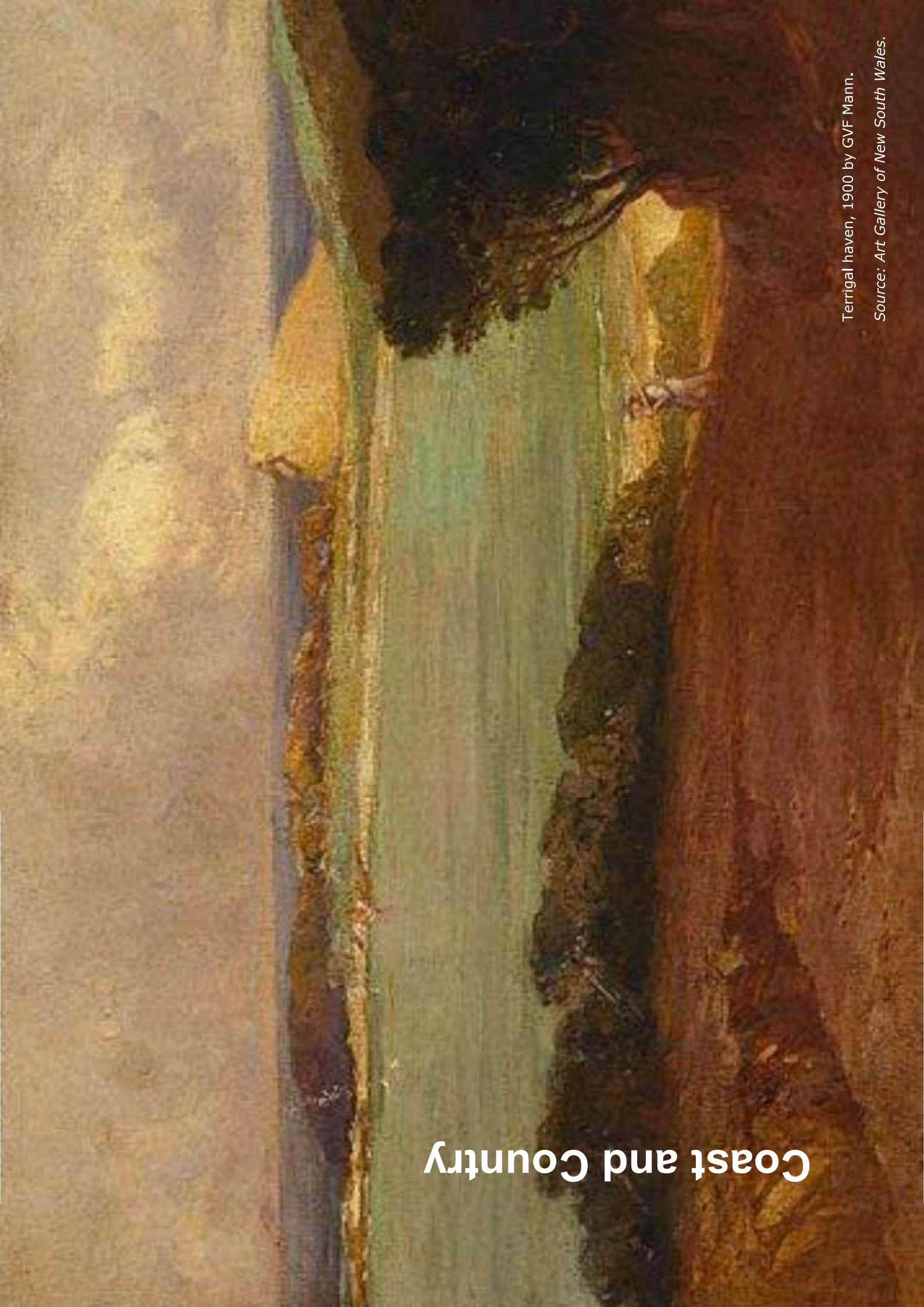
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Coast and Country



Terrigal haven, 1900 by GVF Mann.
Source: Art Gallery of New South Wales.

3 Coast and Country

The Central Coast LGA lies between Sydney and Newcastle on the east coast of New South Wales. It is bounded by the Watagan Mountains and southern shores of Lake Macquarie in the north, Hawkesbury River in the south, the Pacific Ocean in the east and the Great North Road in the west.

The Central Coast LGA encompasses a total land area of over 185,400 hectares, with an 80-kilometre-long coastline. Council manages 6,000 hectares of bushland for the preservation and protection of natural and heritage values. Another 46,909 hectares of the Central Coast LGA is in national parks and 21,798 hectares is in State Forest.¹

The Central Coast formed as a delta over 270 million years ago. The land south of the Hunter region began to sink and great quantities of eroded material were washed into the depression. A wide shallow sea was formed in the Sydney Basin, laying down massive coal deposits and deep sand deposits formed in the area. The sea retreated about 250 million years ago, laying down more coal deposits.²

More eroded material came into the area through two large rivers emptying into the basin. A sandy coastline developed as the

basin was gradually closed from the sea by the deposition of sediment. Multiple deposits of eroded materials and sediment have resulted in three geological formations in this area—the Narrabeen Group, Wianamatta Shale and Hawkesbury Sandstone.³

From the west, the LGA comprises mountains and steep escarpments, with narrow ridges descending to wide valley systems in the east. The coastal zone includes estuaries, lagoons, beaches and sand dune systems, and rocky shoreline. Creeks provided navigational possibilities, while features such as the Kangy Angy Range separating the Ourimbah and Wyong Creeks presented difficulties for access and, in places, almost insuperable barriers. The Ourimbah and Wyong Creeks empty into Tuggerah Lake, the largest of three coastal lagoons. The Hawkesbury River collects water from Mangrove, Popran, Mooney Mooney and Mullet Creeks before reaching the ocean. Brisbane Water drains into Broken Bay.

Recorded temperatures between 1954 and 2013 show that Gosford had average maximum temperature of 27.6°C in January and 17.5°C in July. While temperatures can be mild, rainfall can

be unpredictable and severe, with storms in the summer and spring. Average annual rainfall from 1916 to 2013 was 1,328.7 millimetres.⁴ Recorded average annual rainfall for inland areas, such as Kulnura and Mangrove Mountain, are similar but less than the coastal region.⁵ Many floods have been recorded throughout the history of the Central Coast, particularly impacting the Tuggerah district.

One of the local environment's most outstanding features was the dense and in places almost impenetrable tree cover.

Approximately 30 million years ago, eucalypt and rainforest vegetation evolved in the area. The rainforest vegetation eventually retreated to the shadier gullies. Red cedar became particularly noticeable in the forests at this time. Other species that adapted were the blue gum, blackbutt, round-leafed gum, spotted gum and white mahogany, among others.⁶ European settlers began to exploit the natural timber from 1820s onwards. (Figure 3.1)



Figure 3.1 Strickland State Forest. (Source: Central Coast NSW)

Natural disasters such as floods and bushfires regularly occur within the Central Coast. Floods impacted early settlement within the region, resulting in the abandonment of allotments and stalling growth.⁷ A series of major floods recorded in 1949 caused a severe decline in the population in Lower Hawkesbury including at Wyong and Tuggerah Lakes. More recently, intense and prolonged rainfall in February 2020 resulted in flooding around the Tuggerah Lakes estuary and other catchment areas. On average 843 bush and grass fire incidents occur per year. Approximately six to eight per year are major fires, including the ones that occurred in 1994 and 2019/2020⁸ Sandra Hazledine, a

retained firefighter who fought the 2019/2020 bushfires on the Central Coast later recalled:

The fire. It was thick. Heavy. It sticks in your hair and your pores for weeks. It stays months even. It's loud. It sounds almost like a thunderstorm approaching. It picks up wind, speed. Then it's just a blanket of smoke. It turns day into night. You wouldn't even know what time it was sometimes when you are out in the bush and it hits. And it stays with you. Just the smell. It comes rushing back, a reminder of what we had been through.⁹

Nineteenth-century observations

Early survey maps of the Central Coast region, such as those of Sir Thomas Mitchell, recorded large areas of dense bushland and tea-tree swamp in other places. In 1826, one person recorded his trip across the Central Coast region, from Sydney to Lake Macquarie. At Terrigal, he turned inland with his fellow travellers and wrote:

We now bade adieu to the coast, and turned again into the bush, for the head Erina Creek, the hospitable retreat of the magistrate of the district. And a bush indeed it turned out to be. It was the thickest brush either of us had ever seen. Not a gleam of sunshine ever reaches to the bottom of Terrigal Brush. Not Vallom brosa, with its deepest shades, can surpass the rich gloom of this impervious wood. Trees unknown near

Sydney, and other open parts of the country, here flourish in all their tropical luxuriance—the cabbage tree, with its towering stem and tufted top—the elegant palm, which makes you fancy you are in the West Indies, with its umbrageous and lofty foliage, explaining at once the compliment and honor intended by that description of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, which says, they took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him. The splendid fern tree, and the gigantic lily here, also seek the shade in the deep solitudes of the thickest brush; vines, and a hundred other beautiful and strange shrubs keep them company in such abundance, as in five minutes might fill the herbals of all the lovers of botany in the Colony; here particularly,

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,

And waste its fragrance on the desert air!

We lost our path, and became a little alarmed, till it was found.¹⁰

In 1834, Sarah Mathew accompanied her husband, the surveyor Felton Mathew, who was sent to explore and map the Central Coast region. She wrote about the dense vegetation in the area just to the south of Wyong:

...fine forest country, occasionally crossed by belts of dense brush absolutely impervious to the sun's rays... These brushes always border creeks and gullies and are composed of rank vegetation in every shape; trees of gigantic height, the

magnificent and graceful palms and the beautiful, feathery fern tree are all collected here with vines of immense size twisting their snakelike branches to the tops of the smallest trees and hanging in grotesque forms from one to another; these vines... vary in thickness from the size of the finger to that of a man's arm and twined in many places so firmly together that the aid of an axe is necessary to cut a patch through...¹¹



Figure 3.2 Brush scene, Brisbane Water, painted by Conrad Martens in 1848. Martens is believed to have painted this picture based on

drawings he made in Brisbane Water in 1835. (Source: State Library of NSW, call no. DG 165)

The Central Coast was abundant with wildlife including kangaroos, wallabies, possums, wombats, native rats, mice, emus, goannas and snakes. Platypuses could be found in the fresh water, and marine turtles, dolphin and whales in the sea. Fish and shellfish were found throughout the waterways. Birds were also prominent in the region.¹² John Mann described the wildlife he encountered at Tuggerah Lake in 1842:

...abounded with fish of all sorts; but what attracted my attention... were the black swans; their nests built in the water of sticks, were dotted over the whole of the shallow beaches of the lake... The several points of land which extended into the lake were black with ducks and water fowl; they were in thousands and covered acres of ground. The outlines of the sand flats were indicated by countless numbers of pelicans...¹³

Mann also wrote about his impression of the natural environment:

I was much struck by the romantic and varied beauties of the district; the river a series of lakes, backed tip by high rocky ranges; timber of immense size, varied by dense tropical foliage. I lost no time in exploring all localities within my reach. There was a feeling of freedom; no "keep off the grass" notices — go where you please.¹⁴

Commercial fishing at the lakes commenced in the late 1850s. It was initiated by a group of Chinese fishermen at a beach near Toukley, now known as Canton Beach.

Fish and prawns were smoked, dried and sent to markets at the goldfields, in Queensland and in China. Commercial and recreational fishing in the Tuggerah Lakes region has continued into the twentieth century.¹⁵



Figure 3.3 Entrance to Brisbane Water, 16 January 1867. (Source: National Library of Australia)

By the 1870s, farms were established throughout the Gosford and Tuggerah Lakes districts. Even though an increasing number of farms and small villages were established along the coastal

zone, much of the Central Coast region remained forested with few settlements.¹⁶

Its vast, pathless, well-timbered forest, its wide lakes and broken country, interlaced almost everywhere, especially on its western side, with precipitous mountains and hills ... only sparsely inhabited by about three thousands [sic] souls.¹⁷

The natural environment of the Central Coast, including the mountainous ranges, caves, creeks, lagoons and beaches, as well as the wildlife, were promoted in numerous tourist publications and advertisements during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Over time, recreational activities became concentrated on the coastal fringe, with rural activities of market gardening, orchards and poultry farms located mainly in the western sections of the LGA.

By the 1880s, the Tuggerah Lakes was a popular picnic and camping spot. Dingoes were still found in the district, and travellers continued to notice the large flocks of birds and immense quantities of fish.¹⁸

Fish fairly swarm in' the Ourimbah Creek, which, after running through the promontory, finds an outlet into the lake. Mullet, schnapper, and bream are to be found of great size, and jewfish have been caught up to 3 and 1/2 feet in length and nearly 45lb. weight. Pelicans, swans, ducks, teal, snipe, curlews, and pigeons, too, find a home either on the placid

surface of the lake or the thick, grassy, and thinly-timbered fringe through which we travelled.¹⁹

The Great Northern Railway was completed between Gosford and Newcastle in 1887. The through line to Sydney was finally completed with the opening of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge in May 1889, providing a direct line between Sydney and Newcastle. The railway provided travellers with the opportunity to view the natural features of the region, although opinions varied. In 1887, a reporter for *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* travelled from Waratah to Gosford on the opening of the Sydney to Newcastle railway. The reporter was underwhelmed by the landscape and wrote:

Beauty of scenery is by no means a characteristic feature of the country for the greater portion of the distance. Indeed, generally the landscape is uninteresting. Eucalypti, or what are commonly known as gum trees, some of which have attained enormous dimensions, are the predominant members of the forest, and in parts there is considerable undergrowth. Here and there however the forest has a picturesque aspect by reason of the delicate tints of leaf and numerous ferns and shrubs...²⁰

Although he was looking forward to seeing Gosford:

Gosford is said to be remarkable for the beauty, variety and vigour of its natural vegetation. Ferns are to be had in rich

profusion and the cabbage tree and other forms of vegetable life are plentiful.²¹

A reporter for the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* who was on the same journey wrote about the landscape among the railway infrastructure:

The [Wyong] creek presents a very attractive appearance. Large forests of timber stretch down towards the water's edge. The water is salt, but beautifully clear... Here [at Ourimbah Flats] several neat little homesteads catch the eye, and form a pleasing feature in the view, which for the next four miles is, indeed, charming. Ferns, lofty timber, and immense grass trees, together with creeping plants of every description are abundant. Many picturesque tiny streams of fresh water are crossed by neat, yet strongly constructed, bridges... At a mile and a half from Gosford, after emerging from a very deep cutting, a magnificent landscape bursts upon the delighted gaze of the travellers.²²

Reshaping the landscape

By the early 1900s, the Central Coast was a popular holiday destination and the landscape was affected by the tourism industry. From 1900 to 1945, the landscape character of the coastal fringe was one of a 'designed landscape', where trees were planted as a scenic addition to the landscape. Norfolk Island Pines and Canary Island Pines were planted at The Entrance,

which reflected the trend at the time to plant Norfolk Island Pines on beaches along the foreshore of the Sydney Metropolitan region, and in the Central and South Coast.²³ In 1934, a bridge was constructed across the Tuggerah Lakes Entrance Channel, joining The Entrance and The North Entrance.

Land speculation in the early twentieth century was a significant contributor to urban development in the Central Coast. Sales stressed the use of land for weekenders and holiday homes. Many residential areas also developed from tourist havens as more people chose to live in the Central Coast permanently. Towards the end of World War Two, the region had changed from an open, informal rural area to a closer settlement of mainly single-storey housing.

Large-scale residential subdivision of undeveloped areas and farms resulted in erosion that remains a problem to present day. During the 1920s and 1930s, Erina Shire Council prohibited any further removal of rock in the area. At that time, builders had indiscriminately taken rocks for use after creating numerous subdivisions, and even the Council had used them to form the main street of The Entrance.²⁴ Their removal had weakened an important element in maintaining the landscape's stability. In 1967–68, a seawall was constructed at The Entrance to control erosion.²⁵

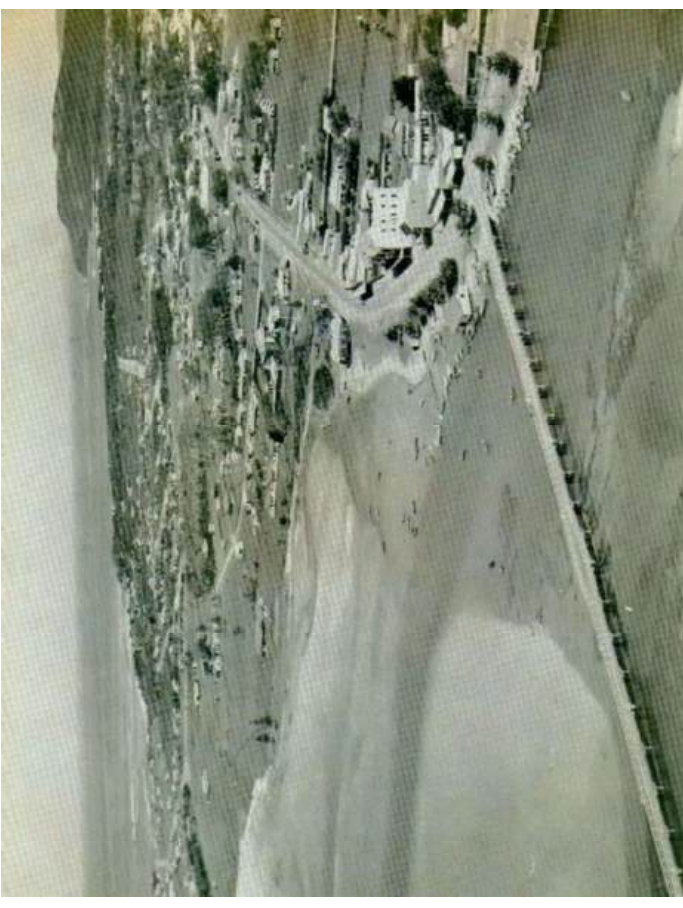


Figure 3.4 c1940s aerial photograph of The Entrance, showing the bridge and main street of The Entrance. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service, identifier S734899016)

During the 1950s and 1960s, much of the natural vegetation was removed in newly developed areas, although more of the existing vegetation was retained by the 1970s. After power stations were built in the former Wyong Shire, appreciation increased for the natural vegetation in contrast to a large industrial form.²⁶

Saving the environment

Urban development in the region has increased rapidly since the turn of the twentieth century spurring local efforts to preserve the natural assets of the Central Coast. Land had traditionally been reserved by the Surveyor-General and later by the Lands Department for a variety of community needs. Reserves provided access to water, for camping and so on. In time, reserves were set up to preserve forests, for water supply, for recreation and for what we would today call natural areas or even wilderness.

The original town layout for Gosford included a large central area for public recreation that eventually became Waterview Park. In 1887, land set aside west of Gosford became the State Forest Nursery.

Bouddi National Park, originally 650 acres, was proclaimed in 1935. An additional part near Killcare was proclaimed in 1937. Marie Byles, a lawyer and environmental activist, was instrumental in persuading the Lands Department to proclaim the area.

In 1941, Warrah, a 950-acre flora and fauna reserve that extended from Pearl Beach to Patonga, was gazetted after lobbying by Minard Crommelin. Crommelin owned land at Pearl Beach, where she had created a sanctuary and native botanical

garden. The 950-acre flora and fauna reserve became part of Brisbane Water National Park.

Other national parks, forests and reserves established in the Central Coast include Brisbane Water National Park, Dharug National Park, Marramarra National Park, Wyrabalong National Park, Popran National Park, Strickland State Forest (formerly Hogan's Brush Forest Reserve), Ourimbah State Forest, Olney State Forest, Palm Grove Reserve, Katandra Reserve, Jiliby State Conservation Area and Munmorah State Conservation Area.

The development of the Central Coast region during the 1970s and 1980s was matched by an increasing concern for the protection of environmental and cultural qualities. Riley Island was saved from development in the 1970s through community campaigning, although the adjacent St Hubert Island was developed as a canal estate. Noted comedian Spike Milligan was involved in the campaign. Through the advocacy of community organisations, such as the Central Coast Group of the Australian Plant Society, there has also been an emphasis to conserve the local natural area and develop public Australian native gardens in the LGA.²⁷

During the 1970s and 1980s, local councils also undertook many studies to protect the natural and historic sites from the impacts of urban development and implemented initiatives. The Gosford

Shire Council established the Coastal Open Space System (COSS) in 1984, which is described as:

...a network of reserves of supporting native vegetation, situated predominately in six separate units. They are located close to each other in the eastern part of the former Gosford LGA. The primary purpose of the COSS is to maintain areas of native vegetation and habitat for native animals...²⁸.

The COSS contributes substantially to the preservation of the environment, scenic quality and the provision of low impact nature based recreational opportunities.²⁹

The COSS is now maintained by Central Coast Council.

The Tuggerah Lakes have also been affected by industry and urban development of the Central Coast. Over 100 years of logging for agriculture and timber harvesting has resulted in severe erosion. Sediment, residues such as plant fertiliser, and organic matter such as animal manure have been washed down the waterways and into the lakes, affecting the overall health of this environment.

Land reclamation of wetlands and coastal shoreline for industrial, recreational and housing activities across the Central Coast has also impacted the coast and lakes, as well as commercial and recreational fishing and hunting. In more recent years, the Central Coast Council has implemented several initiatives and controls to rectify these problems. This includes stream bank

rehabilitation, wetland and saltmarsh restoration, foreshore and recreational upgrades, and research and water quality monitoring.³⁰



Figure 3.5 View of Tuggerah Lakes Estuary. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

The *Central Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2020* indicated the existence of at least 83 distinct ecological communities across the LGA. They can be broadly classified as rainforest, forest and woodland, swamp forest, heath, wetland, mangrove swamp, saltmarsh and seagrass, maritime grassland, freshwater rivers and marine. The Central Coast LGA has 15 threatened ecological

communities, including Pittwater and Wagstaffe Spotted Gum Forest, and Umina Coastal Sandplain Woodland.

Within these ecological communities are over 2,100 native plant species, 384 native birds, 108 native mammals, and 122 native reptile and amphibian species. Over 1,600 species of insects and spiders have been recorded across the LGA.³¹

The natural environment of the Central Coast is cherished and admired by the locals and many others. It is the subject of many artworks and was captured by artists including Lionel Lindsay, Julian Ashton, Sig Long and George Collingridge.

Several independent community groups have formed across the LGA to maintain and care for the broad ecosystems of the Central Coast. This includes the Crommelin Native Arboreum, and local Landcare, Bushcare and Dunecare groups. In 1997, the Central Coast Community Environment Network (CEN) formed as an independent and non-profit organisation, advocating for the protection of the local environment and ecologically sustainable development.³² In 2009, CEN and the Central Coast Wildplant Rescue Service established the Wildplant Community Nursery, promoting and growing local native plants for its members and the public.³³

Central Coast Council run an Environmental Volunteer Program where the community can participate in projects for the

conservation, protection and remediation of the local environment. Activities include bush regeneration, weed control, planting and seed collection.³⁴ The Environmental Volunteer Program also assists in running the Council's local species plant nursery at Erina. Volunteers spend over 400 hours a year at the nursery producing 20,000 plants that are planted at various location across the LGA.³⁵

One of the most famous environmental advocates of the Central Coast was Spike Milligan. Milligan moved to Woy Woy in 1959, following his parents Leo and Florence Milligan. While Milligan made many jokes about the Central Coast, he said:

In 1951 my parents emigrated to Australia, and I thought they were mad, however in 1959 I came out to see them, and I went mad, I fell in love with the place...I couldn't get enough of it.³⁶

Milligan was supportive of many organisations including the Woy Woy Little Theatre and Woy Woy Rotary Club. He was active in the campaign to save Riley Island, and he also helped to save Henry Kendall's Cottage (Figure 3.6).³⁷



Figure 3.6 Spike Milligan fishing at Woy Woy, 1962. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

3.1 Endnotes

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South headland of Broken Bay, New South Wales, c1836
attributed to William Romaine Govett.
Source: National Library of Australia.

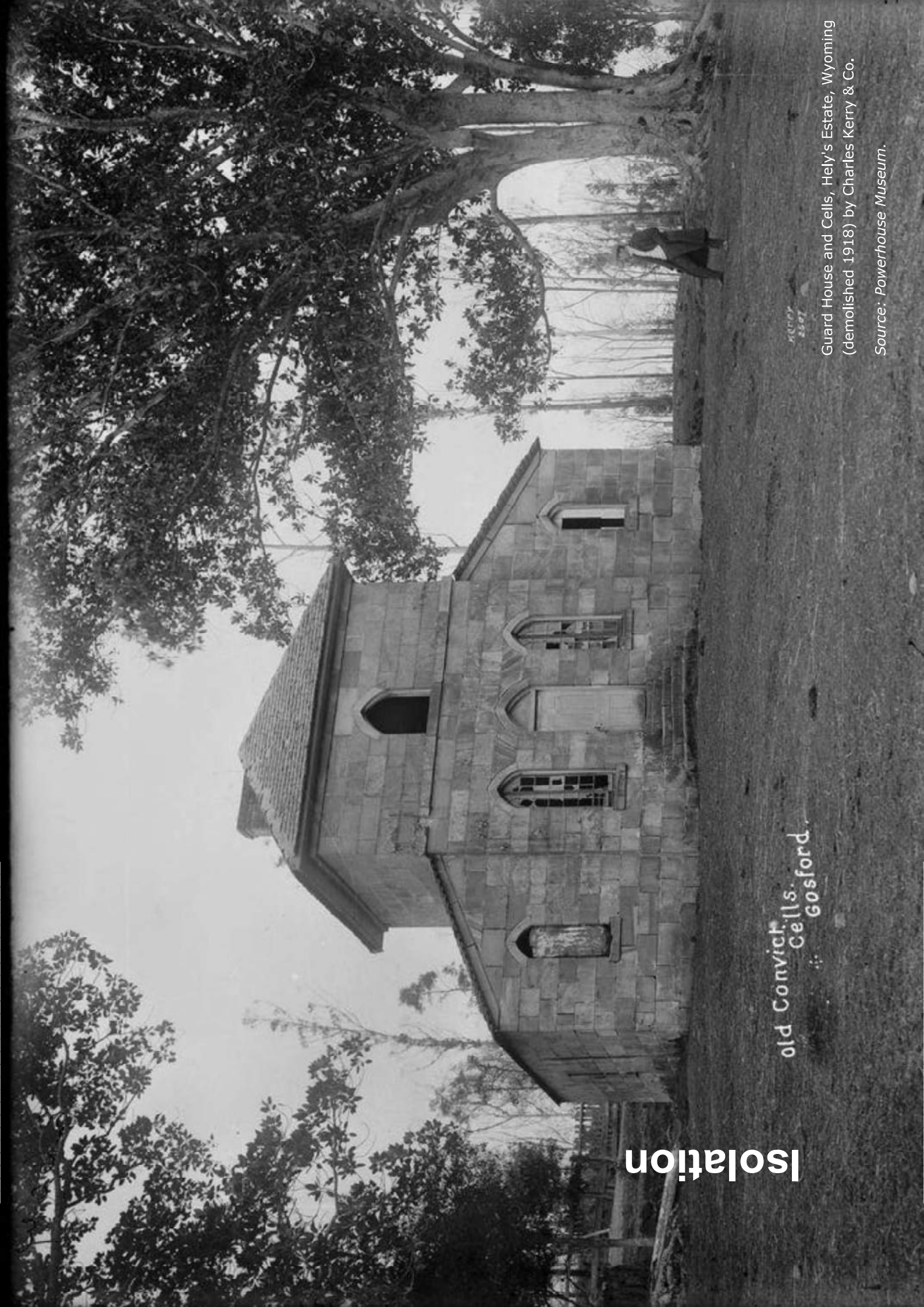
Isolation

old Convict
Cells.
Gosford.

1897
25/1

Guard House and Cells, Hely's Estate, Wyoming
(demolished 1918) by Charles Kerry & Co.

Source: Powerhouse Museum.



4 Isolation

Within a few weeks of arrival at Sydney Cove, Governor Arthur Phillip went by boat to examine the land north of Port Jackson in March 1788. Arthur and his group spent eight days exploring the branches of Broken Bay. With difficulty, they entered the branch later known as Brisbane Water, which had a strong tide and deep water. They found several smaller branches and a large lagoon that they did not examine, as they did not have enough time to find a channel among the banks of sand and mud for the boats. Arthur noted:

Most of the land in the upper part of this branch was low and full of swamps. Pelicans and various other birds were here seen in great numbers.¹

In the following year, Phillip undertook two expeditions of Broken Bay and Hawkesbury River. The first expedition was in June 1789, sailing into Brisbane Water to The Broadwater of Kincumber, and eventually to the site of Gosford. John Hunter, who was part of the expedition, wrote about the difficulties of exploring Brisbane Water. Hunter described the shoreline as 'very shallow and narrow, and ended in a large bason [sic], full of shoals, and surrounded with mangroves.'² Upon leaving Brisbane Water, the expedition travelled up the Hawkesbury River,

exploring the area between Mangrove Creek and Wiseman's Ferry.

The second expedition in June and July 1789 led to the discovery of fertile land around Windsor. With relatively easy access and opportunities for viable agricultural ventures, efforts towards establishing a new European settlement focused on the Windsor and Richmond area. The area north of Broken Bay received little attention from the government due to its difficult access, limited good soil, heavy timber and steep slopes.³

Early European settlement

Settlement along the Hawkesbury River began in 1794 in the vicinity of Pitt Town, which spread downstream towards Wiseman's Ferry by 1810. Occupation of the Hawkesbury River was restricted to the southern side as the government had prohibited settlement outside of the County of Cumberland. This measure allowed the government to maintain strict control over the rapidly expanding settlement of Sydney and provided the ability to choose prime land for government farming establishments. It also served the purpose of separating the Newcastle penal station from Sydney.⁴

In 1820, John Howe mapped an easily accessible route between the Hawkesbury region and the Hunter Valley. The Newcastle penal station was closed in 1821 and moved to Port Macquarie so the government could continue to isolate the recidivists. This allowed European settlers to occupy the northern side of the Hawkesbury River.⁵

Initial occupation occurred from 1820 (although some earlier settlements were recorded), with more intensive settlement in the 1830s and 1840s. Early settlers lived in the Macdonald River area, and around Mangrove and Popran Creeks. Joshua Rose was occupying land at 'Rose Valley' near Wiseman's Ferry as early as 1821. Richard and James Kelly soon followed at Gunderman Creek. Thomas Dillon occupied 50 acres at Dillon's or Myrtle Creek, now known as Mill Creek, in 1816, but was forced out by poor conditions, floods and attacks by the local Aboriginal people. James Singleton took up the same land about 1823 and set up a tidal flourmill.⁶

James Webb was the first known settler of the Gosford area, settling near The Rip in 1823. He was one of the first 22 settlers on the Hawkesbury River at Pitt Town.⁷ Robert Holl (or Holt) and Mary and Ann Holl applied for two grants of 2000 acres (809.37 ha) in the vicinity of Ourimbah in the district of Brisbane Water in this same period but there is no evidence they developed the land.

By 1825, the waterway between Wagstaffe and Gosford was named Brisbane Water after the incumbent governor. This area was described in *The Sydney Gazette* as containing good land but only in 'small patches, from sixty to one hundred acres', making suitable farms for 'small settlers'.⁸ The author noted that 15 miles north of Brisbane Water is land 'available for large agricultural establishments... a quality *equal to any* in New Holland, *and superior to most* tillage of every description, consisting of thick brush and forest land, heavily timbered.'⁹

The government noted this observation. The land around Brisbane Water was granted to small settlers, including free settlers, emancipists, retired military men and native-born people. The land at the northern end of the waterway, such as the heavily timbered lands on Narara and Erina Creeks, was granted to settlers of higher standing in the colony. Jeremiah Walters, a timber getter, selected 1920 acres (776.99 ha) about the present Upper Tuggerah Lakes in 1825. When he transferred his grant to the Lake Macquarie district he left behind his Wyong land with improvements including buildings and fences.

Frederick Augustus Hely, appointed Principal Superintendent of Convicts in 1823, was to amass one of the largest landholdings on the Central Coast. He was initially granted 1,000 acres of land at Narara Creek. Eventually he came to own most of the land in

the Narara Valley, and all the land near Wyong Creek downstream to Tuggerah Lake, and as far south as Tuggerah.¹⁰

Hely established a farm called 'Wyoming', although he spent most of his time in Sydney. Hely died in 1836 and was buried at the Wyoming Estate. The present day remains of the Wyoming Estate include Wyoming cottage, the Grange and Hely's Grave, and are listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.¹¹

In 1824, Willoughby Bean selected 2,000 acres of land in Erina Creek. Bean became the first Magistrate of the Brisbane Water district in 1826 and was responsible for taking the 1828 Census for the district. This covered only the eastern part of the Central Coast region. The western part was counted as part of the Lower Portland Head district. Bean counted 15 households in the Brisbane Water district, eight in Brisbane Water, and the rest at Erina and Narara Creeks, Wyong, The Entrance, Budgewoi and Tuggerah Lakes.¹²

To the north of Hely and Bean's landholdings, Jeremiah Walters was granted 1,920 acres (776.99 ha) at Upper Tuggerah Lakes in 1825.

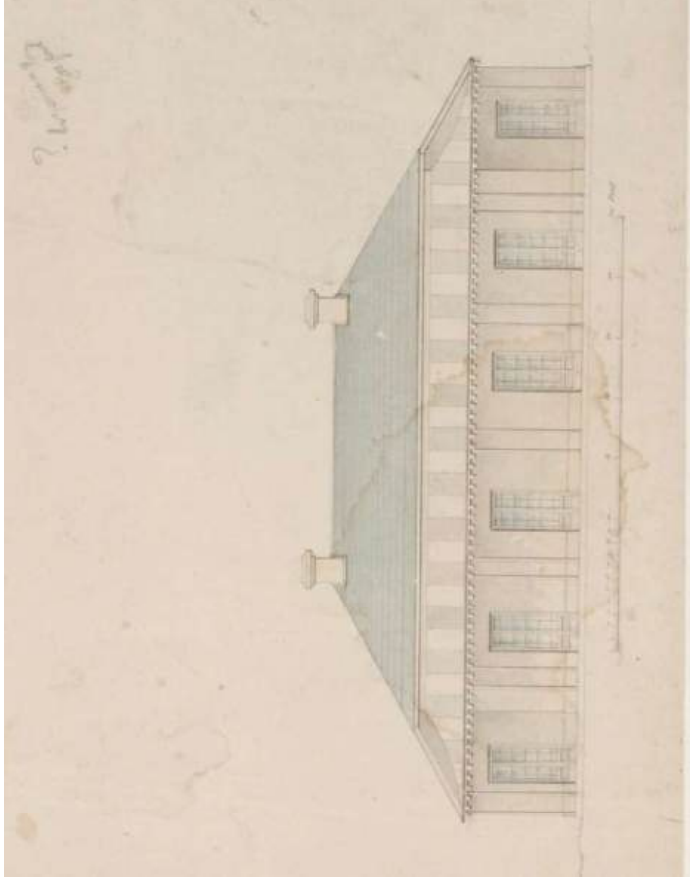


Figure 4.1 Watercolour wash sketch of a cottage, possibly Wyoming, Brisbane Water, undated. (Source: Gother Kerr Mann, 20 architectural drawings, 1841–1883, State Library of NSW)

The pace of alienation escalated from the mid-1820s onwards, with several large (up to 2,000-acre) and medium-sized grants (around 600 acres) being made. The farms established during this first period of occupancy of the district were like many found throughout the colony at this time.

With the assistance of assigned convict servants and freemen, the occupants cleared land, commenced cultivation, ran herds, and constructed buildings to accommodate both residential and farm needs.

John Slade's improvements to his property serve as a typical example of the more ambitious settler. He had selected 640 acres with frontages to Lake Munmorah and Lake Budgewoi in 1828. Slade and his assigned convicts cleared and constructed various improvements. By 1830, he had 15 acres under cultivation, 35 acres fenced and 65 head of cattle. In addition to this, Slade had erected stockyards and huts, and built piggeries, a corn house and a cottage for his own use.¹³

Other early land grantees in the northern section of the Central Coast included members of the Cape family (near present day Wyong), Percy Simpson at Cooranbong, Jeremy Slade at Budgewoi and Tomas McQuoid at Ourimbah, prompting the *Australian* to report in 1827:

Wyong, a district so called by the natives, about twelve miles from Brisbane Water, is destined for small fifty acres farms.¹⁴

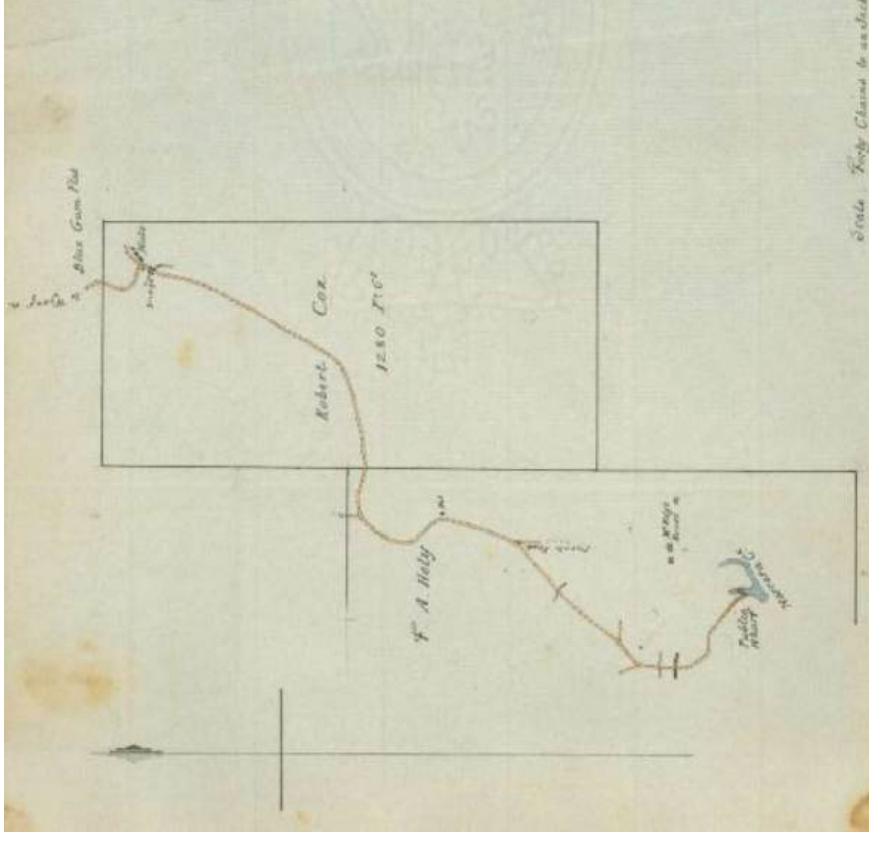


Figure 4.2 Survey of the Country between Narara and Blue Gum Flat shewing [sic] also the Road now in use leading to Wyong etc from the Public Wharf at Narara, 1834. Survey drawn by A Larmer. (Source: MHNSW, State Archives, NRS-13886-1-[X752]-Volume 2-8-9)

In 1830, Surveyor-General T L Mitchell identified land at Point Frederick as the best site in Brisbane Water for a town. This location was to become present-day Gosford. Mitchell described it in a letter to the Colonial Secretary as:

...the best anchorage in Brisbane Water; and at the termination of a straight and flat topped range which would connect a town on this promising bay with the new road at the head of the Wollombi.¹⁵

The site was occupied by Thomas A Scott and he was asked to vacate the area. Scott was allowed to select 1,200 acres at Point Clare and he later acquired more land. Scott later served as postmaster, and Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. He grew sugar cane, tobacco and bananas, and kept bees on his land. He died in 1881, aged 105. The suburb of Tascott is named after him.¹⁶

Several routes provided access to the Central Coast region. The early colonial settlers accessed the Brisbane Water and wider region via the Hawkesbury bush bridge tracks. Solomon Wiseman conducted a punt service at Wiseman's Ferry along the route of the Great North Road from 1827.¹⁷ Construction of the Great North Road began in 1826 to connect Sydney to Hunter Valley, crossing the Hawkesbury River, and through Wisemans Ferry and Ten Mile Hollow, and beyond Wollombi. Up to 720 convicts worked on the road. The road was finished by around 1841,

although it was in use before its completion.¹⁸ The Old Great North Road is one of 11 places that make up the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage serial listing.¹⁹

The Simpsons Track surveyed in 1830 took travellers from Ten Mile Hollow to Mangrove Creek, Mangrove Mountain and then to Gosford. It was a popular route into Brisbane Water as it went through easier terrain with ample water and grass, and passed established small land holdings.²⁰

In this early period there were two means of descent to Brisbane Water from the Mangrove Road. One traversed Dog Trap Road and the Narara Valley, and the other travelled via what is now known as Debenham Road (including its 'Devils Elbow') to West Gosford. Both of these routes were later developed for road traffic.

Other facilities soon opened in the eastern part of the Lower Hawkesbury area. In the early 1830s, James Everingham built St Peter's Anglican Church at Greengrove, Mangrove Creek, later replaced by a new weatherboard building in 1901. Another Anglican Church, St Thomas, was built a few years later at Dubbo Creek, 27 kilometres upstream in the 1830s. The church has disappeared but the cemetery remains.²¹

Until the establishment of church cemeteries, across the sparsely settled Central Coast there were many lone graves and bush

graves located nearby or close to where people died. Some people were buried on their own property, for example: Frederick Augustus Hely - Superintendent for convicts (1836) - was buried on his property in Wyoming; John Menton (1837) buried at Hardy's Bay; John Campbell (1840) was interred at Saratoga; Elizabeth Bridge (1850) interred at Mangrove Creek; John Kay (1859) buried at Terrigal; Allan MacMaster (1860) was interred at MacMaster's Beach on the site of 'Corribeg Reserve'; Catherine McIntosh (1863) at Mangrove Creek; and James 'Jacobo' Cutter (1880) buried at his Glenrock Farm, Koolewong. There were also the personal private burial grounds such as that of Robert Henderson and his family and close acquaintances in Veteran Hall Graveyard (Cemetery). Patrick Geary was the first person buried at Veteran Hall Cemetery in 1827.

Even after the construction of the Great North Road and connecting tracks towards the coast, the district remained largely unknown and unexplored. From 1830 to 1832, Felton Matthew charted the Central Coast region. He recorded several prominent features, including Ourimbah Creek. His journal described the difficulty of moving through the terrain and he wrote about being lost several times. His entry for 3-5 January 1831 states:

Exploring & endeavouring to trace the principal Ranges between Narara and Tuggerah Creeks very difficult – intricate & bushy.²²

More people came to settle in this area, including William Macdonald, who held a large grant extending from the foreshores of the lake to what is now the lower Wyong Creek area by 1834. Charles Farrell held a grant in the Jilliby area and George Bloodsworth had created a station at Little Jilliby. Through several grants, members of the Cape family ended up owning most of the land that was to encompass Wyong. By the late 1830s, the Wyong district had a sufficient population to warrant itinerant clergy to pass through it.²³

In 1836, surveyor H F White drafted a plan of the proposed Village of Snodgrass Valley. It would be in the area of Ten Mile Hollow, at the junction of the Great North Road and the road to Mangrove Creek and Brisbane Water. It was officially gazetted as a village on 24 August 1836. However, the village never prospered as most people preferred to travel between Sydney and the Hunter Valley by steamer. Introduced in mid-1831, steamers were more reliable and faster than previous water transport. In comparison, the terrain of the Great North Road was considered long and difficult to navigate with a scarcity of water. By 1836, the Great North Road was almost entirely abandoned.²⁴

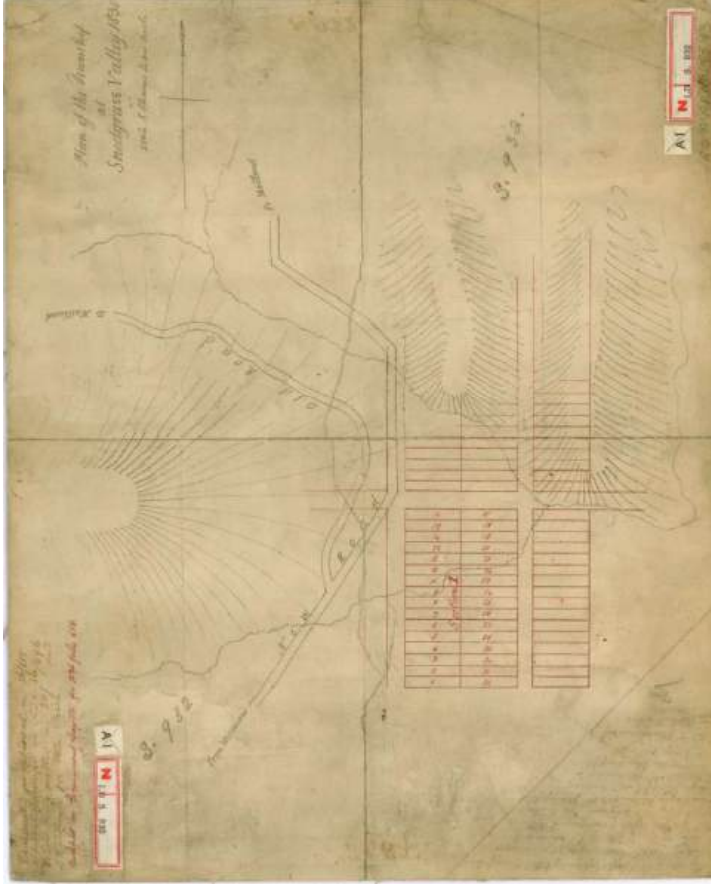


Figure 4.3 Plan of the Township at Snodgrass Valley, 1830 by HF White. (Source: Museums of History NSW, State Archives, Crown Plan 1-S932)

The main form of transport to and from the Brisbane Water District and Lower Hawkesbury was by boat. The *Colonist* exhorted readers in 1828 to visit the district of Brisbane Water but advised them to 'postpone their visit till some of our enterprising colonial speculators shall have put a steam-boat on

the course between Sydney and Brisbane Water'.²⁵ Further, the area is as distant from Sydney as Port Macquarie due to want of regular steam communication.

Robert Henderson, one of the early settlers and landholders in the district, regularly travelled by sea to Sydney for business and shipping purposes. His sloop 'Rambler' foundered off Sydney Heads in December 1831 with the loss of the master and two men aboard, though Henderson was not travelling with the ship at that time.²⁶ Henderson also commissioned and operated various boats for the coastal shipping trade including the 'Maid of Australia' which had its maiden trip in July 1834.²⁷

Solomon Wiseman was given land at Snodgrass Valley to establish an inn, although it does not appear to have been built. During the 1840s, Samuel Paley operated an unlicensed house at Snodgrass Valley, offering refreshments to travellers and stealing livestock.²⁸ John Jenkins Peacock held a farm with a house next to Simpson's track from the Great North Road on the upper reaches of Mangrove Creek near Dubbo Creek (derived from 'Duggo Creek' after another early landholder Douglass). Peacock also had several landholdings within the Lower Hawkesbury, and other landholdings elsewhere.²⁹

The Yarramalong Valley was another colonial-era settlement started in the early 1850s which had attracted the cedar getters from the 1830s. By 1865 the valley was populated by a close-

knit group of families including the Balls, Beavens, Boyds, Durringtons, Fannings, Hills, Kellys, Kennedys, Lettes, Morans, O'Neills, O'Tooles, Stinsons, Tobins, Waters and Watkins.

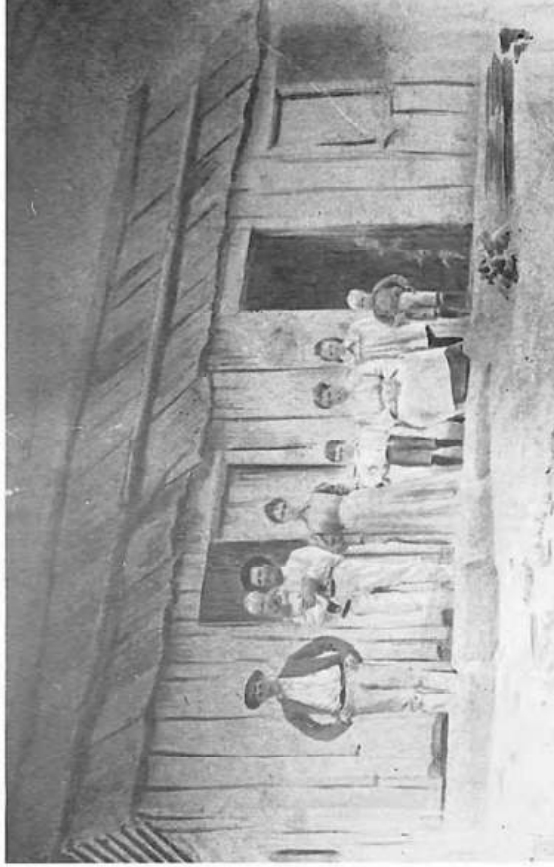


Figure 4.4 William Beaven and family, pioneers of Brush Creek in front of their slab home, built in 1858. (Source: Edward Stinson, *A pictorial history of the Wyong Shire*, Vol 3, p 48)



Figure 4.5 Plan of the Town of East Gosford Brisbane Water from actual survey by WH Wells, Surveyor, 1840. Printed and published by C Turtle. (Source: State Library of NSW, M Z/M2 811.259/GOSFORD/1840/1A)



Figure 4.6 Plan of land grants between Broken Bay and Brisbane Water, 1841. (Source: State Library of NSW, Digital order number c018240001)

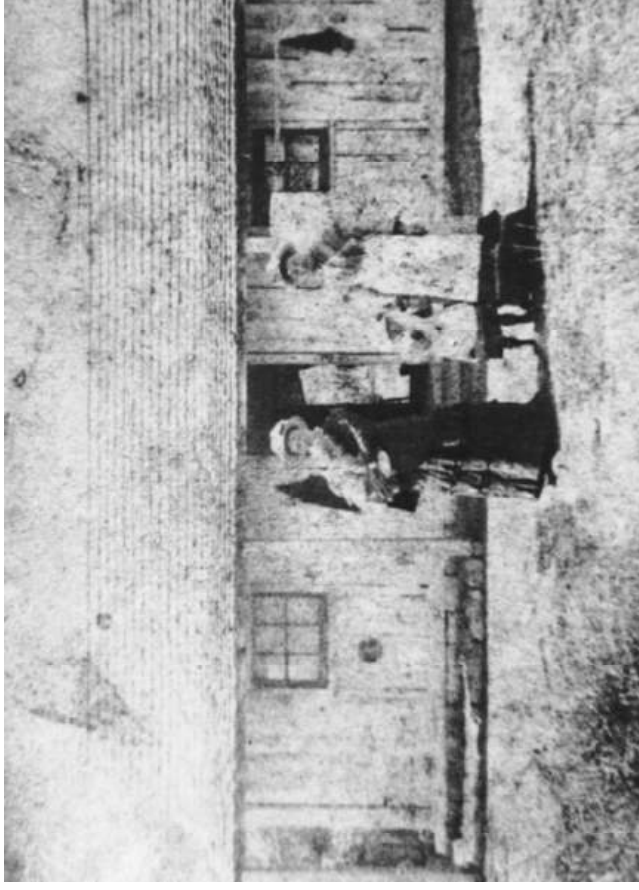


Figure 4.7 Timber slab hut, believed to be that of Edward Hughes, sawyer of Kincumber, c1870s-1890s. (Source: Central Coast Council, 000716.JPG)

The homes of the pioneer settlers were built by hand using timber and materials available close at hand, hence the typical slab huts such as that of William Beaven built at Brush Creek in 1858 (Figure 4.7) or Kincumber sawyer Edward Hughes' hut erected in a similar period.



Figure 4.8 Slab hut of William James Martin, Coachwood Road, Matcham, about 1912. (Source: Dundon, Gwen; *Third Old Gosford and District in Pictures*, p 78, also Central Coast Council, 002793.JPG)

Blue Gum pioneer Vic Walmsley is quoted as saying:

You grabbed the axe and built it yourself. It stopped undue dreaming and flashness....by the time you dug the well and the privy, and made a road out, any over-enthusiasm had mellowed somewhat and you made quite a good neighbour.³⁰

The early Central Coast homes of settlers were primitive one room structures built with slabs or logs and the roofs of bark or timber shingles. Inside the floors were bare earth floor.

The single large room usually had unlined walls, and a section was partitioned off by a curtain for a parents' bedroom. A large fireplace was usually positioned at one end of the building or outside, while the windows were also unlined with glass.³¹

Early industries

Following the completion of the Great North Road to Wollombi, a small settlement was established at this location in the early 1830s. From there, settlers could travel eastwards to exploit the timber resources of the Central Coast region. Forest oak and hardwood, used to make shingles for roofing, could be found along ridges and slopes, as well as the banks of Narara and Erina Creeks. Red cedar, which was in demand for furniture, wall lining and doors, was found in valleys, particularly around Yarramalong, Brush Creek and Dooralong.

Timber was transported out of the region via different routes. Some of the timber was taken by dray to Maitland via Wollombi and Cessnock. George Bloodsworth, who cut large quantities of cedar near Jilliby, rafted the logs across Tuggerah Lakes to the boat harbour established at Cabbage Tree Hollow. Here, the timber was shipped to Sydney. Timber cut on Bean's grant at Erina Creek by Henry Donnison, and hardwood cut by Hely and Robert Cox in the Narara Creek valley was shipped out through Brisbane Water.³²

Cedar was high in demand as it more workable than eucalyptus hardwood, but it was in short supply due to its limited habitat. By 1832, it was reported that the timber-getters were causing devastation to the Wyong area and further north by removing vast quantities of timber. In 1835, a timber licencing system was introduced to regulate the industry and deter illegal logging of vacant Crown lands.³³ Hely was the first person in New South Wales to apply for a cedar licence for his lands at Yarramalong on Wyong Creek and at the head of Tuggerah Beach (Ourimbah Creek).³⁴

Other industries were also developing in the region. At Brisbane Water, ironbark was cut into thousands of pieces of shingles and shells were collected to be turned into lime mortar for the Sydney building industry.³⁵

Shipbuilding was also being established and would become a major industry. James Webb, the first European person to settle in Brisbane Water in 1823, is also regarded as the first shipbuilder of the region. Kincumber was later to become an important centre for shipbuilders around The Broadwater and Cockle Creek.³⁶ The Davis Family was possibly the most prominent, but other families also emerged including the Piper family, the Beattie family, the Cox family and the Settler family. Individual shipbuilders include Robert Henderson, John Jacob Pister, George Meadows, Thomas Humphries (Humphreys), John

Korff, Robert Papworth, James Woodward, John Easson, William Ballantyne, Thomas Whitty Toby and George Richard Berry Venteman.³⁷

Farming was also successful in parts of the Central Coast region. Mangrove Creek was renowned for its fruit and maize. Cape and others were growing wheat, corn and potatoes. Many also practiced mixed farming, keeping cattle, sheep and pigs.³⁸

By the 1840s, Australia had sunk into a severe economic recession. Its effects reached the Central Coast region, although perhaps not as adversely as other areas of the country. Land sales, however, diminished and the burgeoning timber industry slowed. Land grants made in the 1840s, for example those at Yarramalong and Lemon Tree, appear not to have been occupied by the original owner.³⁹

Creation of the Brisbane Water District Council

In the early years of settlement in the area frontier violence with Aboriginal people accelerated as colonisation increased. There was also general unrest caused by attacks by bushrangers and also escaped convicts from both Sydney and the Newcastle penal settlement. Robert Henderson was appointed a District Constable for Brisbane Water in 1824 and was responsible for the large area between Wiseman's Ferry on the Hawkesbury River and Brisbane Water.

In 1827, soldiers were sent to protect the district from a feared onslaught of eight bushrangers. In 1836, the police force was doubled and later tripled. It was not until the 1850s that some degree of stability returned to the district.

Since 1835, the government had been discussing the boundaries of Police Districts across New South Wales as part of the broader examination on police and gaols. In 1840, a Government Gazette was published on the 'Boundaries of the Police Districts of the Colony'. The Brisbane Water boundaries were defined as:


Embracing the south-eastern portion of the County of Northumberland; bounded on the north by a line from Reid's Mistake across Lake Macquarie, bearing westerly to Dora Creek and by Dora Creek to the Warrawolong Range and to Mount Warrawolong, hence on the west by the crest of the said range to Mount Simpson and the north road, and by this road to Wiseman's Ferry ; on the south by the Hawkesbury and Broken Bay roads to Box Head on the sea shore, which forms the eastern boundary to Reid's Mistake aforesaid.⁴⁰

The Brisbane Water District Council was established in 1843 and operated until 1859. It was the forerunner of later shire councils.

4.1 Endnotes

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A black and white photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, a small boat with several people is on the water. The background shows a steep, rocky bank with sparse vegetation. The overall tone is somber and atmospheric.

*From the rainy hill-heads, where, in starts and in spasms,
Leaps wild the white torrent from chasms to chasms—
From the home of bold echoes, whose voices of wonder
Fly out of blind caverns struck black by high thunder—
Through gorges august in whose nether recesses
Is heard the far psalm of unseen wildernesses—
Like a dominant spirit, a strong-handed shearer
Of spoil with the tempest, comes down the Narrara.*

(First stanza of 'Narrara Creek' by Henry Kendall)

Waterfall Creek, Woy Woy, c 1910s–1920s
by George Murphy.

Source: Central Coast Library Service.

The Industrial Spirit



Wilson and Flood timber yard near Wyong, c1920.

Source: Central Coast Library Service.

5 The industrial spirit

The land and waters of the Central Coast LGA have been adapted and transformed since the 1820s to provide building materials for the colony, sustain the local population and contribute to the nation's prosperity. Along the way it added to some people's fortunes, provided steady employment, supported the growth of towns and villages, and fostered the formation of local government as the population grew.

Key industries of the Central Coast include forestry and silviculture, orchards and agriculture, alongside extractive industries such as mining and quarrying. The region's waters were rich in oysters, fish and shellfish, and supported a thriving commercial fishing industry.

Population growth in the postwar period fostered new business opportunities and secondary industries, while planning policies at state and local levels set aside lands for industrial estates and business parks.

Woodmen's axes echo through the forest

Timber extraction, sawmilling and forestry played a major role in developing the present Central Coast. A significant part of the community relied on this industry during the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. However, exploitation of timber resources within the LGA has a history that extends back to the 1820s and 1830s. The colony's insatiable need for durable timber for sawmill logs, railway sleepers, fence posts, piles, firewood, building materials, shipbuilding, furniture and mining timbers resulted in widespread and indiscriminate removal of forests in the area.

The early small settlers at Brisbane Water and the Lower Hawkesbury cut timber and other forest products as a major source of income while establishing their properties. For some it was not a temporary phase but remained their principal source of income.

The completion of the Great North Road to Wollombi in the early 1830s increased access to the district for timber-getters. Landholders such as Thomas Hyndes and cedar merchant James Bloodsworth were authorised to cut cedar on their own land,

though little policing prevented wide scale removal of timber in surrounding Crown lands. For instance, in 1825, Frederick Hely threatened to prosecute anyone trespassing on his farm, Wyoming 'by cutting Timber, Shingles, Wattle (Mimosa) Bark'.¹ Valuable and extensive stands of cedar were found in the gullies west of the Tuggerah Lakes, around the head of Wyong Creek.

Concerned at the unregulated removal of vast quantities of timber from Crown land, the government introduced a licensing system. In 1835, Frederick Hely successfully applied for a lease on his lands at Yarramalong on Wyong Creek, and also at Ourimbah Creek. However, in October the same year, the Colonial Secretary announced no further licenses would be granted to cut cedar on vacant Crown Land in Brisbane Water 'in consequence of the Lands ...being in immediate progress of Sale'.²

By 1841, more timber licenses were granted in the area for hardwood cutters than cedar cutters. Further south in the district, timber cutters were employed on private land, including those of Morris and Humphries at Kincumber, Cox's at Blue Gum Flat, and Henry Donnison and Hughes at Erina Creek. Illegal timber removal on Crown land continued unabated, with local authorities concerned at the quantity of timber that had been removed from the district.



Figure 5.1 Timber-getters, Blue Gum Log, Ourimbah/Wyong District, c1909. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

The heart of the timber industry in the region was in the Ourimbah Valley, as it was readily accessible by land and water. JL Travers established a steam mill in 1855 'in full operation and capable of cutting 20,000 feet of timber per week'. Travers mill was leased to Scott and Jolly in 1857 where 'there is here an almost endless extent of virgin forest and thickly wooded ranges, producing, in inexhaustible abundance, immense trees of blue

gum, black butt, pine, mahogany, beech, cedar, etc of the finest quantity'.³ The Ourimbah Steam Saw Mills, Brisbane Water, was advertised for sale in 1862, including a lease of 2,560 acres of land known as the Blue Gum Flat. It included many buildings and improvements apart from the sawmill plant including a weatherboard dwelling house, an overseer's weatherboard cottage, twenty huts for workmen, a stable, a blacksmith's and wheelwright's shop, a stockyard, a slaughtering yard and a tan pit.⁴ The mill was capable of cutting 30,000 feet of timber per week.

By 1868, eight teams of bullocks were at work in the Ourimbah and Palmdale areas taking logs to the Ourimbah mill.

Several sawmills, some with timber tramways, operated elsewhere in the region. In the 1880s, Thomas Davis built a sawmill at Terrigal and a wooden tramway to transport logs from his land at Avoca, where he had a slipway and jetty. Nearby at Erina, George Henry Howard operated the Pioneer Sawmill (as well as his shipyard) from about 1879.

The timber industry produced substantial and ongoing incomes in the district. It also fostered the creation and maintenance of many small townships across the LGA, including Ourimbah.

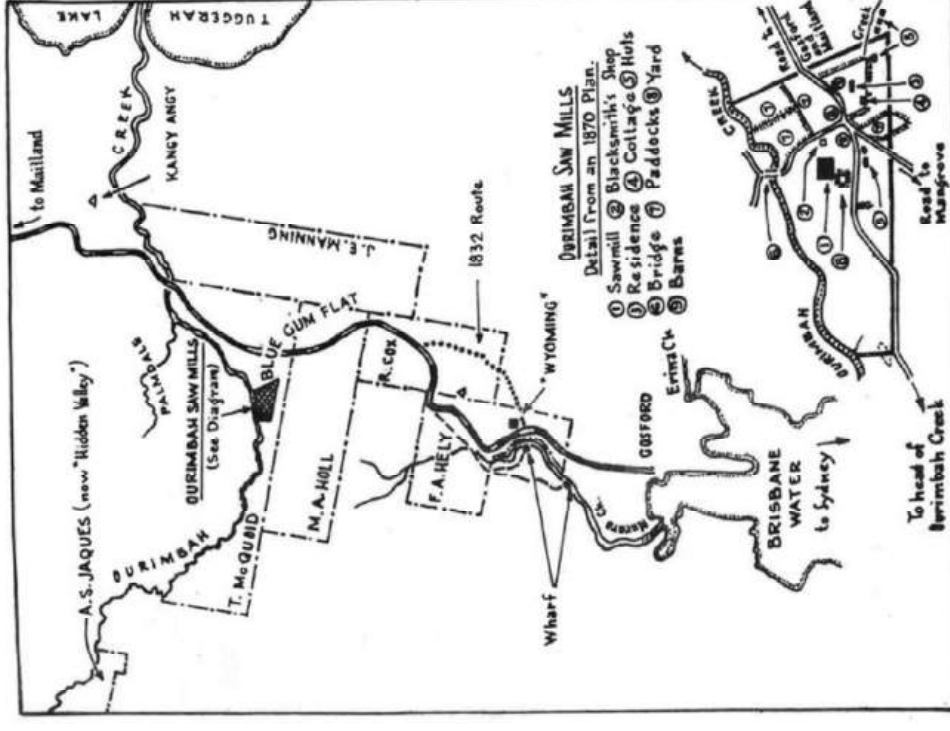


Figure 5.2 Ourimbah Saw Mills redrawn from an 1870 plan. (Source: Beryl Strom, *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage*, p 15)

The completion of the Sydney-Newcastle railway and expansion of the railway network generated a new hardwood timber boom from the 1890s on the Central Coast. Railway construction created a great demand for timber railway sleepers and improved accessibility delivered lower transport costs for the timber mills and associated businesses as they were no longer reliant on water transportation. Wyong became the centre of the timber industry in this period. To meet the increased timber trade done at Wyong Station the Railway Commissioners authorised the erection of a second crane to lift logs of up to 10 tons at the station yard in 1892.⁵

According to 'Old Wayfarer' in 1896:

Along the Yarramalong road may be seen some of the finest timber in the world. Many of the trees are 250 ft high. More timber leaves Wyong annually than from any other timber station in Australia.⁶

The industry flourished in the Wyong area with millers located at Wyong, Jiliby, Yarramalong and Wyong Creek. Timber products such as sleepers were exported to New Zealand, China and South Africa, turpentine to Canada and blackbutt piles to Japan. The district also supplied the national market with bridge piles for Inverell and wharf piles for Sydney, though about 70% of the timber removed from the area was exported.⁷ To service the supply there were at least 100 bullock teams operating in the

district hauling logs to the railway. The *Gosford Times* complained in 1907 that 20,000 sleepers were stacked in the yard at Ourimbah Station as well as a great number of piles destined for Darling Harbour.⁸



Figure 5.3 Square turpentine beams on railway wagon at Wyong Railway Station, c1909. Turpentine was used extensively in wharves and jetties on the Central Coast and in Sydney. Timber from Stinson's mill. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 5.4 Ourimbah Hardwood Sawmills, Ourimbah, owned by McKenzie Ltd, c1911. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

On the eve of World War One, timber was becoming an even more diminishing resource. In 1917, it was reported that:

the local situation insofar as timber supply is concerned is rather acute. Good mature timber is scarce and difficult of access and forests which have been considered to be cut out years ago are still being gone over again and again and more inferior timber taken out at each succeeding time.⁹

By 1929, low market prices and the inaccessibility of resources ensured the demise of the industry. The local timber industry continued throughout the remainder of this century, although on a considerably different basis to that which had operated during its heyday. It had a short revival during the war years and post-war years, with heavy demand for supply, but afterwards it suffered an inevitable decline. In 1961, it was reported that:

The Forestry Commission has an established office at Wyong and controls some 100,000 acres of forests in the two shires. The forests are of Australian hardwoods. Much of the timber is sold on Royalty basis to local timber mills for building purposes and for piles, mining props and fencing.¹⁰

State Forest Reserves

In 1871, the government established Forest Reserves throughout the state to prevent the destruction of the colony's timber resources, where permission was required to cut timber on the payment of a fixed fee.

This measure did not prevent the continuation of illegal and destructive timber cutting. The first reserve formed on the Central Coast was gazetted in 1882, being Forest Reserve No 129, an area of 420 acres in the Parish of Ourimbah.

By 1892, the Brisbane Water and Wollombi district had 17 forest reserves, comprising 85,197 acres.

The Olney State Forest was proclaimed in 1914 and Ourimbah State Forest in 1916. The latter included 17,400 acres encompassing the areas proclaimed in 1882, 1891 and 1909. Strickland State Forest nearby at Narara was established in 1917 on 2,000 acres and included the Narara Forest School.



Figure 5.5 Regenerated 11-year-old blackbutt strand, Ourimbah State Forest, 1925. (Source: Museums of History NSW (MHSW), State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/15992]-St10246)

In 1918, tenders were called for the purchase and removal of 50,000 feet of mixed brushwood mill logs in Ourimbah State Forest.¹¹ In 1925, a party led by Australian Forests Limited inspected the Ourimbah State Forest, finding:

a dense wall of young trees, full-topped and healthy, averaging about 40 feet high, and so thick that it is difficult to get between them... The forest is 19,000 acres in extent; 7000 acres are now under afforestation treatment and the portion which the party saw was part of 3000 acres which has been brought into "Full bearing" with an estimated average of 500 trees to the acre. Ten years ago this land was bare...¹²

Forest reserves evolved into State Forests under the control of the Forestry Commission, which supplies timber to sawmills alongside commercial and recreational uses. Ourimbah State Forest is a regrowth forest that has been in operation for 150 years.¹³

Gosford State Nursery

In 1884, a site on the Central Coast, which subsequently proved unsuitable, was selected for a state forest nursery. A new parcel of land was located in 1886, forming part of Hogan's Brush Forest Reserve (close to the present Gosford Racecourse and Recreation Reserve). The 65-acre site was formerly gazetted in June the following year. In the intervening period, tenders were

invited for clearing and stumping 10 acres for the State Forest Nursery.¹⁴ The nursery commenced operation in 1887 and 30,000 young trees between 12 inches and two feet high were planted on the property by March 1888.¹⁵

The role of the nursery was to raise indigenous timber trees to plant in the state's forest reserves, and also propagate useful trees and shrubs for distribution to municipal councils and farmers, and for planting in parks, town reserves, hospital grounds, cemeteries and schools. Many trees from the nursery were supplied across the country for annual Arbor Days.

The *Year Book of New South Wales* reported in 1894 that 30 of the 65 acres was cleared and partly planted, and the stock consisted of 686,583 trees and shrubs, representing 130 kinds valued at £22,000.¹⁶

In the year prior to its closure (1939), the nursery supplied 21,470 fodder shade and ornamental plants to landowners.¹⁷ At its peak the nursery covered an extensive area encompassing the present Victoria Park, extant sites of Gosford High School, Gosford Golf Club, Henry Kendall High School Agricultural Farm and the tennis courts to the west bordering Narara Creek and Gosford Racecourse.

Shipbuilding

Shipbuilding in the Brisbane Water district commenced in the 1820s, with the many shipyards gaining a reputation for their quality and output. The area was ideally suited for shipbuilding, as it had ready access to deep water, a good supply of suitable timber in the surrounding forests and lay in close proximity to Sydney.

Several shipwrights applied for land at Brisbane Water in the 1820s, including James Webb, Robert Drybrough Cunyngname, Daniel Egan and Thomas Street.

The *Sunday Times* reported in 1834 that Mr Henderson had built five vessels ranging from 20 to 100 tons at Brisbane Water, including the 'Maid of Australia'. The newspaper declared that 'were it not for a bar and a shoal at the entrance of the river, the place would be unequalled for ship and boat building'.¹⁸

Local historian Gwen Dundon documented that at least 500 timber vessels were built in and around Brisbane Water between 1829 and 1953 by at least 58 ship builders.¹⁹ The shipyards were mainly located at Davistown and Kincumber, with at least one yard at Terrigal.

Jonathan Piper, known as the 'Father of Brisbane Water Shipbuilding', established his yard at Kincumber Broadwater and commenced operations by 1844. While only 25 vessels were

officially registered as being built by Piper, the actual number was much higher as the builder's name was not always recorded.²⁰ Piper was a significant leader in the shipbuilding industry on the Central Coast and taught the trade to others including the four Davis brothers.

Several members of the Davis family were prominent in the shipbuilding industry at Brisbane Water from the 1850s. Rock Davis commenced shipbuilding at Davistown in 1854 and relocated from Davistown to Blackwall in 1862 to James Webb's land grant. He erected a large shed over the main slipway in 1864, which was demolished by a gale in 1920. He expanded his yard to the adjoining 40 acres and operated there until 1913.

His brother Thomas established his shipyard at Davistown in 1854 and later at Terrigal Haven, where he had a sawmill, house and shipyard. The ships built at this location by Thomas Davis include the paddle steamer 'General Gordon'. In 1867, four shipbuilding yards were operating at Kincumber, building sailing vessels of 200 tons. Of the over three million feet of sawn timber cut in the area annually, 250,000 feet was used locally for shipbuilding.

Brisbane Water has long been celebrated for the number of vessels it has sent forth to plough the deep. There are some fine ship-building establishments here. The principal amongst these is that of Mr Thomas Davis of Cockle Creek. Next in

importance is the building yard of Rock Davis, on the main river...Edward Davis, brother of the two shipwrights just mentioned, and a fourth brother, have each a shipbuilding establishment on Cockle Creek...Jonathon Piper has a yard on the commodious inlet, where he now and again lays down a vessel.²¹

The launches of some ships were major events in the district. For instance, in December 1878, a schooner named the Susie was launched at Rock Davis's large establishment in front of 150 residents of Gosford, Terrigal and Kincumber.²² In 1895, the 120th vessel built by Rock Davis was launched at his yard, comprising a 70-ton craft built for the New Zealand coastal trade. Rock Davis died at Blackwall in June 1904. His son Rock continued his father's business until his death in August 1913.

Edward George Beattie purchased the Palermo shipyard at Empire Bay (present Daley's Point) in 1872 and began shipbuilding two years later. His son Gordon Edgar Beattie continued in the family business after World War One.



Figure 5.6 The shipyard of Rock Davis, Brisbane Water, New South Wales/etching by Lionel Lindsay, 1916. (Source: *Art in Australia*, No 2, 1917)

Shipbuilding languished during the 1930s. The *Gosford Times* reported in 1940 that the last large vessel to be launched in Brisbane Water was the motor ship *Erina II*, built at Beattie's establishment in about 1934. Gordon Beattie's business picked up in 1940, hosting the Minister for Trade and Customs at his shipyard to inspect the collier they were building for Cam & Sons Pty Ltd. At this date, 18 men and four boys were employed in

Beattie's shipyard.²³ In December the same year, the 250-ton tuna fishing vessel *Patricia Cam*, built from local wood, was launched at Beattie's yard.²⁴



Figure 5.7 Section of the Palermo shipyard near Empire Bay, October 1943. (Source: Australian War Memorial, 069752)

The Palermo shipbuilding yard was leased during World War Two to S G White and Co of Balmain, where they built small wooden vessels for the United States as part of the reverse Lend-Lease

scheme, whereby Australia paid in kind for the equipment and materials it received from the United States. The hulls were built at Palermo and towed to the company's yard at Balmain to be finished. The Palermo shipbuilding yard was the last operating shipyard at Brisbane Water. The last vessel built at Palermo was the 'Palermo', an auxiliary sloop, in 1953. Prior to that the last commercial vessel built in the yard was the Patricia Cam in 1940, the last of 500 Australian registered ocean-going vessels built on Brisbane Water in a 120 year long history.

Oyster farms and commercial fishing

Fishermen had reached the coast of Brisbane Water by 1826, when a traveller spied a boat fishing off the headland called Bungaree's Nora. At Terrigal, fishermen had set up a 'successful establishment' for catching and drying schnapper.²⁵ In 1834, several vessels, from 16 to 70 tons, were plying between Sydney and the Brisbane Water district carrying timber, shingles, and shells for the lime trade. One source proclaimed in 1855 that:

Another profitable article of commerce is the shell-gathering-pursuit for lime-burning purposes, from which those engaged in it, are earning a good living.²⁶

At the same date, the fishing trade at Tuggerah Lake employed 'a good many', with a full cargo being transported to Sydney via the steamer *Kate* four times a week. A lobster fishery was also operating at the north head entrance to Brisbane Water.

Commercialisation of oyster farming from the 1860s had a devastating impact on oyster beds in Broken Bay, in the Hawkesbury River and Brisbane Water. Overexploitation of the wild oyster beds was noted in a September 1877 inspection. The inspector noted the principal oyster bearing portion of the Hawkesbury River was leased to F Gibbons while Mullet Island, Mooney Mooney Creek, Porter Bay, Cowan Berowra Creek and the Main River were worked out.²⁷ The *Australian Town and Country Journal* reported in 1878 that 'some few years ago the oyster trade afforded a lucrative employment to a great many people but the trade has become stagnant through the action of the lessee of the oyster beds'.²⁸

Extensive beds of oysters were located at Brisbane Water and Broken Bay. In 1868, four or five vessels were constantly employed in bringing live shell (young oysters) to Sydney from Broken Bay for the lime burners. Lime burning also took place at spots along the Hawkesbury River.

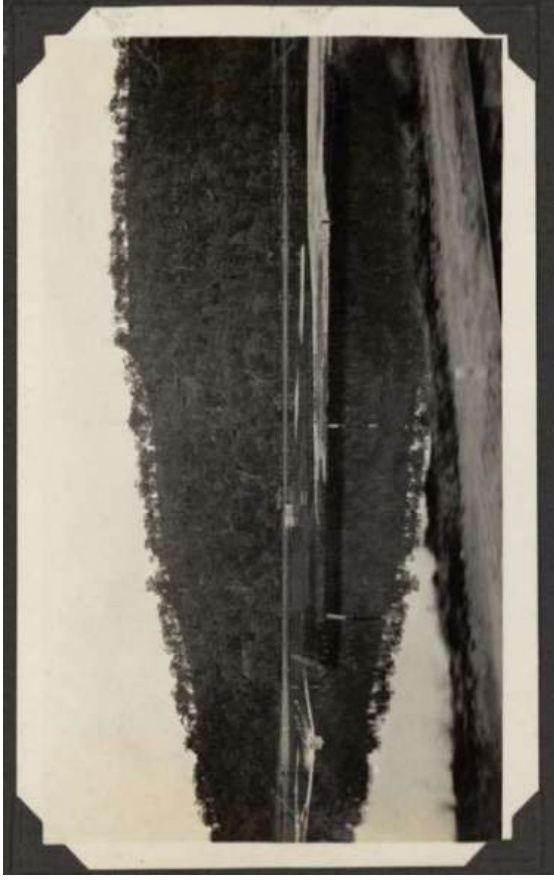


Figure 5.8 Oyster cultivation, Hawkesbury River, c1928. Photograph by Charles Maurice Yonge. (Source: National Library of Australia, PIC/11204/151 LOC Album 1115/2)

Following the passing of the *Fisheries and Oyster Farms Act* in 1884, oyster leases were issued at Brisbane Water, including that of 600 yards to Michael Fagan in 1886.²⁹ The parcelling out of the foreshores as oyster leases ensured that commercial fishing of a kind continued. Net fishing was banned, and Brisbane Water was closed to commercial fishing in 1904, giving priority to recreational fishermen.



Figure 5.9 Brisbane Water Oyster Company bottle. (Source: Gostalgia: local history from Gosford library)

In December 1953, Brisbane Water had 77 extant foreshore oyster leases with 23,015 yards frontage, and 16 offshore leases with a total area of 69 acres 14 perches.³⁰

Fishing provided good employment for Central Coast residents. Schnapper was caught and dried at Terrigal in 1826, and by 1878 men were fishing at Tuggerah Beach Lake, shipping their catch to Sydney. In 1898, a Fisheries Inspector was based at The Entrance.

All around the three Tuggerah lakes, which go by the names respectively of Tuggerah, Budgewoi and Munmorah, there are fishermen...altogether there are some 25 boats and 70 men employed in the service, and the work done may be gauged from the fact that an average of 300 baskets a week is sent to the Sydney markets.³¹

In the 1900s, the centre of fishing in the Central Coast district was Tuggerah Lakes. On the opening of the waters at the Tuggerah Lakes entrance in June 1903, the Superintendent of Fisheries Investigation and Fish Hatcheries reported that all of the fishermen were successful, with the biggest catch amounting to 60 baskets and the nearest being 40 baskets, both of large mullet, while meshing nets caught four to seven baskets each consisting of mullet, blackfish, perch and few bream, while garfish and whiting were scarce.³² At various times, the authorities closed Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water to net fishing.

The *Gosford Times* reported in 1906 that the southern shore of the lakes had 'a number of nice cottages, the residences of the fishermen who are engaged in net fishing on Tuggerah Lakes'. On the eastern side of the lake, fishermen were living at Canton, Green Patch and Tacoma. A wharf and shelter shed were built in the area to enable fisherman to unload their catch and ship it to Sydney. It was here that the headquarters for the fisherman's co-operative were based in the 1960s.

The Entrance fisheries shipped 13,365 boxes of fish and 1676 boxes of prawns in 1926 alone, with a value of £10,000.³³ In 1951 the Tuggerah District Fishermen's Co-operative Limited, comprising 130 professional fishermen, ceased operation due to the increased minimum fish sizes and consequently could not

make the work pay, even though they were shipping 25,000 lbs of fish to Sydney and Newcastle weekly.³⁴



Figure 5.10 Fishing boats at Tacoma, c1890s. (Source: E Stinson, A *Pictorial History of Wyong Shire*, Vol 3, p 138)

Forest to farm

The first white settlers to the area practiced mixed farming, clearing portions of their land and planting a few crops, raising some livestock and eking out an existence in this isolated corner

of the colony. The first land grants were made in the district in the 1820s—the first in 1823 to James Webb, comprising a permissive occupancy of 300 acres at Brisbane Water to run cattle. He later received a grant of 100 acres at The Rip near present-day Woy Woy.

The first settlers in the district were located along the Hawkesbury River in the vicinity of Mangrove Creek and Wiseman's Ferry. A Brisbane Water Settler proclaimed in 1825 that land at the 'northern extremity' of Brisbane Water was suitable for 'large agricultural establishments and in that direction will be found land of a quality equal to any in New Holland and superior to most for tillage of every description'.³⁵

By 1825, William Cape, one of the earliest settlers, had 45 head of cattle on his property. His grant of 'Treelands' extended east from the junction of Jiliby Creek and Little Jiliby Creek. Cape stated in a memorial to the Colonial Secretary Macleay in November 1829 that he had had planted wheat, corn and potatoes on part of his extensive landholding at Wyong.

Frederick Augustus Hely, Superintendent of Convicts, was granted 1,340 acres (542 ha) in 1823 at Narara, called 'Wyoming'. By 1828, he had 82 acres of land cleared and 46 acres cultivated. He also owned 196 head of cattle and 350 sheep. Further north, John Slade was actively involved in farming and pastoral pursuits, as in 1830 he had 15 acres under

cultivation; 35 acres fenced; 65 head of cattle; had erected stockyards and huts; and built piggeries, a corn house and a cottage for himself.

Despite some cattle and sheep being run on the larger landholdings, the principal products and exports of the Brisbane Water District in the 1830s were maize, onions, shingles and sawed timber.

In 1855, residents of Brisbane Water were growing vegetables including 'potato, cabbage, turnip-both white and Swedish-French and English Bean, parsnip, carrot, lettuce, radish, pumpkins and a legion of other culinary esculents'.³⁶ Fruit growing had also commenced in the region, and grapes, peaches, lemons, apricots, loquats, oranges and bananas were flourishing, with Mr Scott and Mr Coghlan supplying oranges and bananas, respectively, to the Sydney market.³⁷ Maize crops were also grown in the neighbourhood.

Several developments in the 1880s anticipated the growth of farming on a wider scale. Extensive logging of Brisbane Water forests had resulted in significant areas of cleared land suitable for cultivation. The *Crown Lands Act of 1884* contained provisions for small portions of Crown land (from 40 acres) for purchase on easy terms over several years. Farming spread along the railway line, and westerly to the Dooralong and Yarramalong Valleys. In 1885, auctioneers Boyd and King prepared a lavish *Farmer's and*

Settler's Guide to the Gosford Model Farm Blocks comprising a large area of land subdivided into model farms of three, five and eight acres. Boyd and King reported that the sale of this subdivision was highly successful, realising the sum of £26,460 9s.³⁸

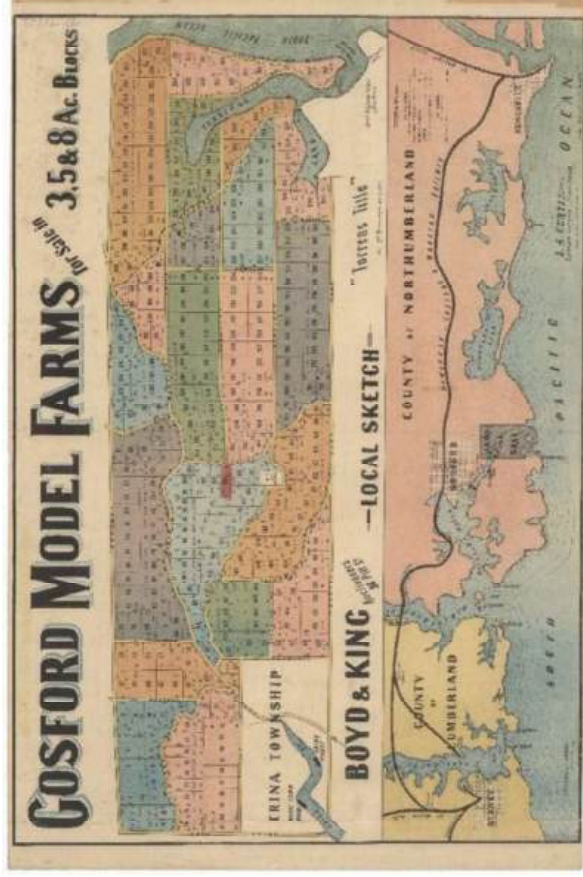


Figure 5.11 Subdivision plan for Gosford Model Farms, 1885. Boyd and King, auctioneers. (Source: National Library of Australia, MAP LFSP 971, Folder 65)

The construction of the Homebush-Waratah railway line (completed between 1887 and 1889) and development of road networks throughout the region created an environment conducive to small farms and farmlets.

The Gosford and Brisbane Water Agricultural and Horticultural Association, later the Gosford Horticultural Society, were influential in the development of farming in the region. They regularly held shows from 1888 onwards, showcasing the local agricultural and floral developments.³⁹ Their members included prominent residents such as WE Kirkness, a citrus farmer who later served as a councillor in Gosford and was a member of the NSW Legislative Council.⁴⁰

At various places throughout the district land was subdivided into farm allotments, such as for the Warner Estate at Wyong. In 1911, William of Abergeldie near Wyong described the nature of farming on the Warner Estate, which included apple, citrus and stone fruit orchards, maize and sorghum, and passionfruit. He wrote:

Make no mistake about it, the land that produced the forest will grow marvellous apples and oranges, and maize and pumpkins.⁴¹



Figure 5.12 Edward Richard (Dick) James farm at Copacabana, c1929.
(Source: Central Coast Library Service)

Over time, many small farms disappeared while farm production remained varied at others like Kincumber. Specialised farming became increasingly common.

In the postwar period, European migrants, among them Italians, commenced vegetable farming at Mangrove Mountain and surrounds. Tomato growing increased in popularity from this date. In the 1950s, one of the main growers in the district was

Mr Butt at Springfield, who had 33,000 tomato plants under crop, alongside beans and peas in 1950.⁴²

Alongside the rise of citrus orcharding, other forms of specialised commercial farming appeared in the district—poultry and egg production along Narara Creek and in the Kanwal area northeast of Wyong, and dairying on the flats along Wyong Creek and its tributaries.

From the 1970s, farm costs and low prices led some farmers to sell their properties for rural/residential subdivision, or as weekend or hobby farms.

Nonetheless, agricultural production on the Central Coast comprised 1% of all farm businesses in New South Wales in 2020. The principal agricultural industries include poultry (meat and eggs), nurseries/cut flowers/turf, vegetables and fruit orchards.⁴³

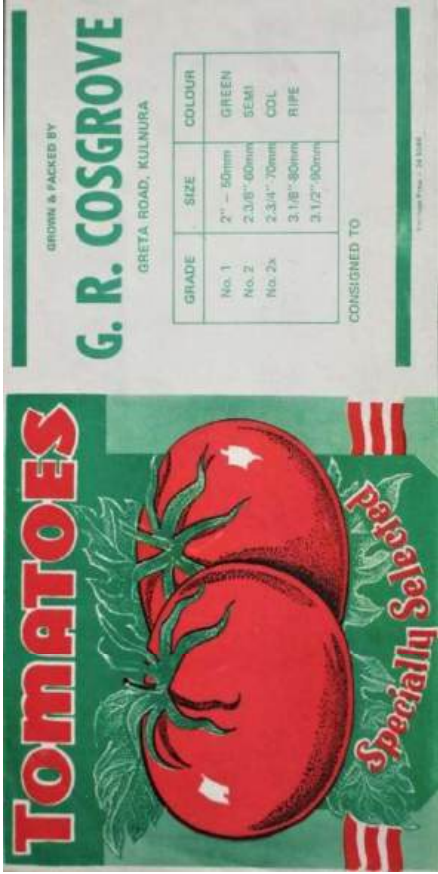


Figure 5.13 Tomato case labels, CR Cosgrove at Kulnura (top), AR Hicks at Kincumber (bottom left) and P Dwyer at Somersby (bottom right), undated. (Source: Ross Collection, Central Coast Library Service, Gosalgia: collections of Gosford Library)

The present Narara Eco Village is located on the site of the former Narara Viticultural Research Station. Following intensive logging in the Narara Valley, in 1907-08 the government established an experimental station on this site for research into codlin moth and fruit flies. By 1913 a Nursery and grafting establishment was operating here, producing grafted grapevine stock, free of Phylloxera.

Horticultural research continued on this site until it closed in 2012 and sold to the Narara Ecovillage Cooperative. During its 100 year history, the research station researched all types of citrus, strawberries, Zizphus jujube, pecan nuts, sweet potatoes, passion fruit, stone fruit, passion fruit, mangoes, lychees, bananas, sapotes, green tea and Asian vegetables. The station also undertook entomological and fruit fly research.

Orchards

The citrus-growers of the Gosford district (Erina shire), which includes Mangrove Mountain and Creek, Narara, Ourimbah, Wyong, and other localities, have much to be proud of.

Although citrus plantings on a large scale have been made there only during comparatively recent years, the name of Gosford is supreme—in fact, it is now almost synonymous in the public mind with the word orange, lemon, or mandarin.⁴⁴

By the early 1900s, the citrus industry was equal in importance to the timber industry in the Central Coast's economy. Timber-getters paved the way for citrus farming, clearing the land in earlier years.

One of the principal fruit growing areas on the Central Coast was the district of Narara, Ourimbah and Wyong. A string of orchards stretched along the rail corridor north of Gosford at Narara, Lisarow, Wyoming, and further north at Wyong. The construction of railway sidings at Narara and Niagara Park gave fruit growers easy access to transport their produce to Sydney to the markets.

In the 1880s, notable Gosford orchards included Charles Fagan's 'Curumbene' fronting Narara Creek, JRW Parker's 13-acre orchard at Green Point, and David Tuck's 13 acres under cultivation at Lara Lodge. Several orchards were also at Erina, including Sea View and Sunny Side owned by Robert Denning and KW Denning, respectively.⁴⁵

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in December 1911 that the largest orchard in the Ourimbah district was 'Palmdale', comprising 130 acres of fruit trees.⁴⁶ Three miles from Wyong, Johns Bros had 733 acres of land, of which five acres were planted as fruit, including half a dozen varieties of apple, as well as lemons and oranges.



Figure 5.14 Home and orchard of EPM Sheedy, Niagara Park, c1910–1920. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

Citrus growing later spread to the plateau at Somersby, Mangrove and Kulnura. In 1914, a newspaper pronounced Mangrove Mountain a 'promising citrus centre' with thriving orchards and passionfruit vineyards.⁴⁷ Many of the settlers in this area included the younger members of the old fruit growing families of the Castle Hill, Galston and Dural areas, including the Moores, Roughleys, Gallards, Cowlshaws and Kelynacks.

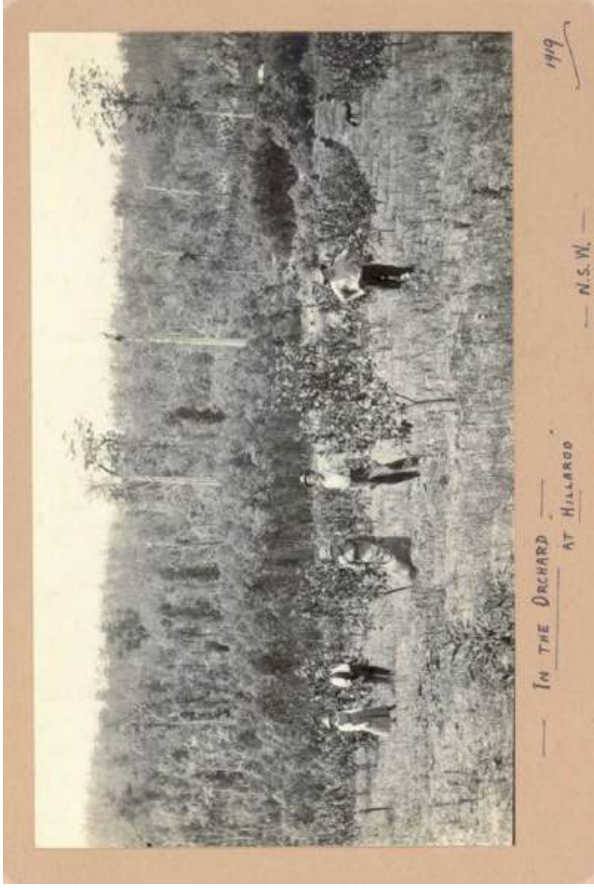


Figure 5.15 In the orchard at 'Hillaroo', corner of Toomeys Road and Maidens Brush Road, Lisarow, 1919. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

In all stages of development, orchards may be seen...The

Mangrove Mountain should soon be turning on the thousands of cases of oranges, lemons and passionfruit.

The area's elevation, soil and climatic conditions made the Mangrove Mountain district ideal for fruit growing. By the early 1920s, the area had more than 200 settlers and over 40,000 acres in cultivation, served by three packing houses erected in

the district. One of these, the Central Mangrove Citrus Packing House, commenced operations in August 1922 with a grand opening in October the same year attended by members of the press, city and local selling agents and other visitors.

The fruit is brought from the orchards in dump boxes, and after being prepared for market, is despatched by motor lorry to Gosford Railway. The carrier, Mr. G. L. Roberts, provides an excellent service with two lorries, a 3-ton Thornycroft and a 2-ton Clydesdale...The packing house is equipped with a "Lomas" sizer and grader for mandarins and apples, and a "Penang" sizer and grader for oranges.⁴⁸

In 1928, the packing house at Central Mangrove was extended substantially to increase capacity to handle 70 million oranges from the Mangrove Mountain district. In the postwar period, the Central Coast maintained a strong citrus industry, with the Gosford Co-Operative Citrus Packing House packing approximately three million cases between 1942 and 1952, being 28% of the fruit grown in the district.

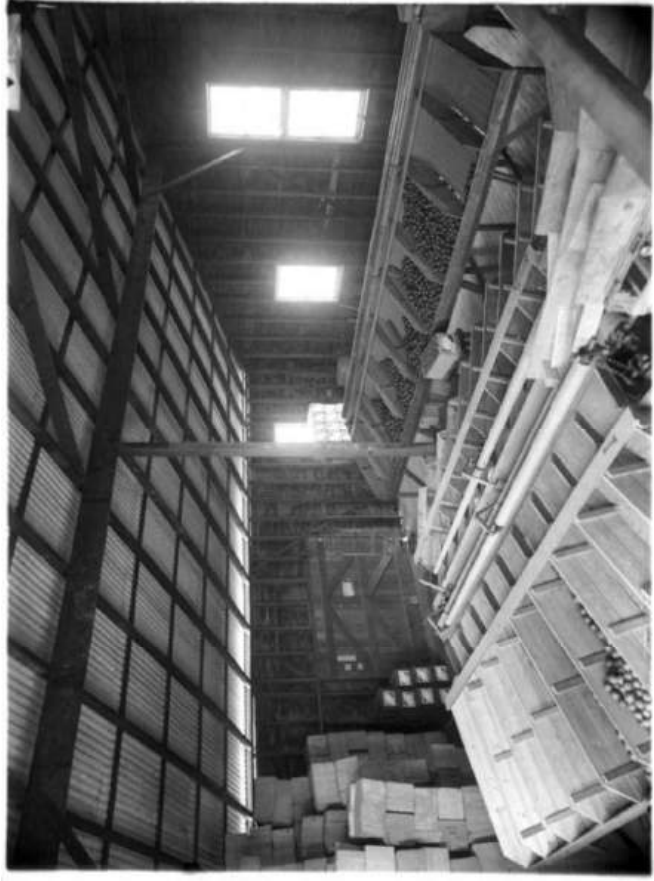


Figure 5.16 Interior of fruit packing shed, Wyong orchard, 1926.
(Source: MHNSW, State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/15999]-St11265)

A group of Finnish migrants established themselves around Kulnura and Mangrove Mountain by the early 1930s. Members of the community worked as orchardists such as August Lammi. By the 1970s, agricultural activities on the Central Coast were coming under increasing pressure from population growth, residential development and other activities such as sand mining.

Few orchards were still operating along the railway corridor at Gosford, Narara and Wyong. Orchards were increasingly restricted to the valleys west of Wyong and on the plateau around Mangrove Mountain.

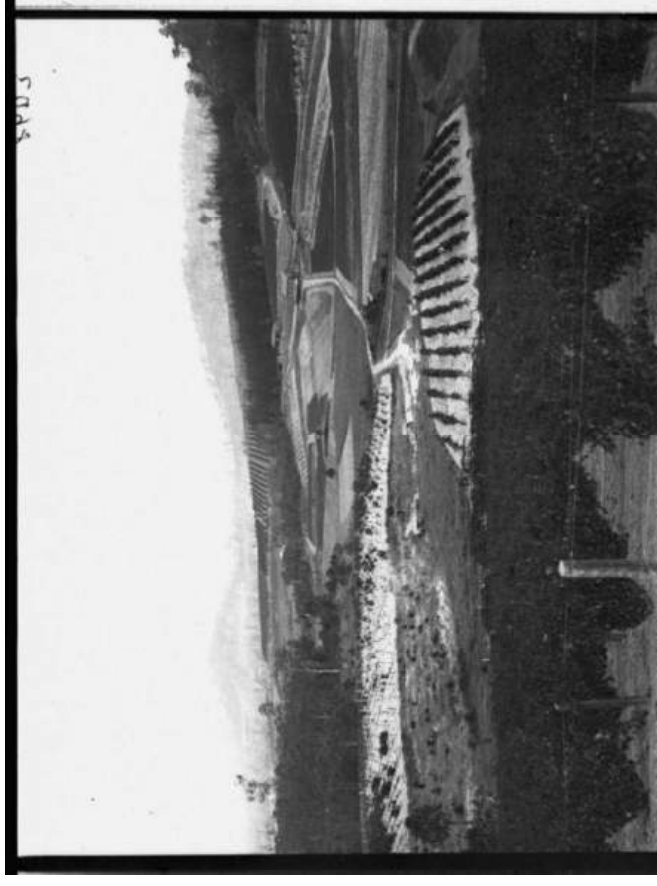


Figure 5.17 State Viticulture Station, Narara, 1923. (Source: MHNSW, State Archives, NRS-4481-3-[7/15982]-St8603)

A vital service to citrus industry was the establishment of the Agricultural Research Station (Gosford Citrus Experiment Station) at Narara. It consisted of three properties—two at Somersby and the third at Narara (devoted to viticulture). The Narara Viticulture Nursery was established in 1912 and in the 1950s transformed into a Citrus Research Station.

GOSPACK

LEMONS



GRADE	
VARIETY	
NUMBER IN CASE	

G

GUARANTEED

WAVE

PACKING HOUSE LTD.

F

GOLDGLOW

ORANGES



SPECIALLY PACKED FOR A. J. CARTER, BRISB



PRODUCE OF AUSTRALIA

P.D.S.

Dairying

Dairying spread through the Central Coast district but was mainly centred on Wyong. As early as the 1830s, Henry Holden operated a commercial dairy at his Tuggerah Beach (The Entrance) property, with his produce transported to Sydney by boat.⁴⁷ Joseph Frost leased the dairy property in 1854 and produced butter and cheese, which was shipped to Sydney by water.⁴⁸

William Chapman established Pioneer Dairy at Wyong in 1897. It was one of the longest running of the local dairies, operating until the 1980s. The dairy farm was sold to new owners in 1941 as a going concern. In 1951, the farm covered 670 acres of flat land divided into 40 paddocks carrying 200 head of AIS Ayrshires and Guernsey's.⁴⁹

The dairying industry was in its infancy in the Jilliby district in 1905 when Ponton, Alford, Smith, J Morris, Denny and Scanlon were employing separators on their farms. The Gosford Times reported that 'some are milking as many as 19 cows, and before long this end of our district will have become a very important one'.⁵⁰

The second annual Wyong Show in 1907 was a great success, with 743 entries in all classes. The dairy cattle class stood out and had 116 entries. Prizes were awarded to FJL Measures of Niagara Park, who won for champion bull and champion cow.

Winners in the dairy cattle class included Morris and Denny of Jilliby Creek, William Smith of Jilliby, Mrs Knight, WJ Chapman and L Ross of Wyong, WM Stoddart of Palmdale (Ourimbah) and the Sleeman Brothers of Tuggerah.

In 1907, 56 local farmers established the Wyong Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd and officially opened the Wyong Butter Factory in November the same year. It was not a substantial building but was an up-to-date facility featuring a boiler room, engine room, butter working room, cool room with refrigerator, test room, store room and office, while the machinery was supplied and fitted by Waygood Co Ltd. The necessary water supply was provided by a weir built across the creek.

In the Gosford Police Patrol region, the quantity of dairy produced during the 12 months to March 1906 was 8,498 pounds of butter, and in addition to dairying, farms produced 8,850 pounds of bacon and ham.⁵¹

One of the many local dairy farms along the coastal fringe was the Athelstan Dairy, which was established in the 1920s at Wamberal by Arthur Eric Brooks. At its peak, the dairy was the main supplier of dairy produce to Terrigal and Wamberal, and later to Erina and towards The Entrance. At East Gosford, F Dibben notified the public in January 1926 of his intention to sell milk at six pence per quart from his 'own dairy'.⁵²

Dairying continued to grow in the Wyong and Tuggerah districts in the 1930s. Dairy farms changed ownership regularly in the 1920s and 1930s, as for instance in 1939, when Morgan's Dairy Farm near Ourimbah Station was advertised for sale comprising cottage, shed, dairy, cow shed and stock yard.⁵³ Hutchinson's Dairy in the Parish of Tuggerah was advertised for sale in the same year, comprising cottage, dairy, bails, sheds and fenced paddocks—it comprised over 87 acres of land and had been worked as a dairy farm, carrying 20 head, for the previous five years.⁵⁴

In 1961, the Wyong Shire was described as 'primarily dairy country and through a co-operative it produces some 1½ million gallons of milk annually'.⁵⁵



Figure 5.18 Delivery van for Athelstan Dairy, Brook's Hill, Wamberal, 1920s. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 5.19 Pioneer Dairy, Wyong, 1980s. Photograph by Beryl Strom.
(Source: Central Coast Council)

Coal mining and quarrying

In 1864, a mining expert identified the northern extent of a coal seam extending north from the Illawarra, reaching the surface at Tuggerah Beach.

The *Newcastle Chronicle* reported in 1874 that the lessees and owners of coal lands near Cabbage Tree Harbour urged the

Minister of Lands to set aside two acres for shipping coal and a shipping port.

Two large landholders in the district, John Fountain and William Allison, both located a rich seam of coal on their properties by 1881. John Fountain of 'Woodlands', north of West Gosford on the Maitland Road, sent a sample of iron on his property for inclusion in the mineral display at the Melbourne Exhibition in 1875 and planned to open an 'iron mine' in 1882. The previous year, William Allison discovered a rich seam of coal of splendid quality for gas and cooking purposes on his property 15 miles north of Gosford beyond Wyong Creek; the Australian Diamond Drill Company drilled two bores on his land.⁵⁶

The early promise of the coal discoveries in the Central Coast region were not realised until the second half of the twentieth century, when power stations were built in the region. In the 1960s, new coal mines were established to supply Vales Point and Lake Munmorah Power Stations, including Newvale 2 Colliery, Munmorah State Mine, Chain Valley Colliery and Wyee State Coal Mine.

Since the early 1920s, the Central Coast has been renowned for supplying high quality sandstone used for monumental and other purposes throughout Australia and overseas. Sandstone quarried locally was used in a range of buildings and structures such as the exterior of St Andrew's (Canberra), Burns Place, Gosford

walls at Paul's Corner Mann Street, 2 Broadview Avenue and Gosford waterfront seawalls.

George Oliver Hayward pioneered the industry from a site at Gosford in 1922 on Mt Mouat. He located the site where stone for the Gosford Court House was taken, which was on the southern end of the hill on the eastern side of Gosford. The firm 'Gosford Quarries Ltd' was registered in January 1923, with GO Hayward, GH Henson and AL Fell serving as directors.

By 1924, 30 quarries were registered in the district, including Harrison Bros, and Freestone Quarries operated by Wright Bros and Smith.

One of the most successful of the several quarries engaged in working the big deposits is the concern known as the 'Freestone Quarries,' Gosford. This up-to-date enterprise is conducted by the Messrs Wright Bros, and Smith...The Gosford Freestone Quarries are at present working on a 30ft face of stone of splendidly uniform first-class texture. The proprietors say 'there's enough stone in sight to keep them going for half a century, and as the big bite they have made into the hill shows perfect stone at front, sides and bottom, appearances certainly seem to support their contention.'⁵⁷

Quarrying in the Central Coast continues today under the auspices of Gosford Quarries.

In 1954, mining warden J Duncan at Newcastle approved two applications to Dr JA Paul and Dr AB Paul to prospect for petroleum and mineral oils at Terrigal.⁵⁸ This was not the first incidence of oil exploration in the region as in 1935 the Kamilaroi Oil Co Ltd with a bore drilled at Kulnura which proved to be dry.⁵⁹



Figure 5.20 Gosford sandstone quarry, c1960. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 5.21 Wallarah Colliery Railway, March 1894. Photograph by Ralph Snowball. (Source: Brian R Andrews Collection, University of Newcastle)

Manufacturing

Manufacturing expanded on the Central Coast during the twentieth century and the region became synonymous with food manufacturing. Jusfrute and Margin's were established in Gosford in 1921 and 1906, respectively. From the 1960s, national and

international food manufacturers acquired land in the region and relocated their factories to the area, the best-known being Sara Lee, Masterfoods, Nanna's and Sanatorium Health Food Co.

Aside from food manufacturing, decentralisation of industry in the postwar period led to a raft of factories relocating to the Central Coast, including Nielsen Slipper Factory at Woy Woy, and SGB Clothing and Super-Fit Clothing.⁶⁰ Albany Felt, a Canadian company, selected 19 acres at Niagara Park in 1965.

A new round of industrial development took place from the 1970s, spurred on by Sydney land prices in conjunction with Council's planning policies, cheaper land prices, and improved transport and communication between Sydney and the Central Coast. National and international companies relocated their factories to the area. In the following decade, an industrial park was gazetted at Somersby in 1981. By 2000, several industrial and business parks were established in the northern reaches of the local government area.

An Orchard in a Glass: Jusfrute

In 1921, Garnet I Adcock established the Fruit and Vegetable By-Products Pty Ltd at West Gosford to produce and extract essential oils and other vegetable products. The site chosen for the factory was below Mt Penang, close to good fruit supplies and pure water.

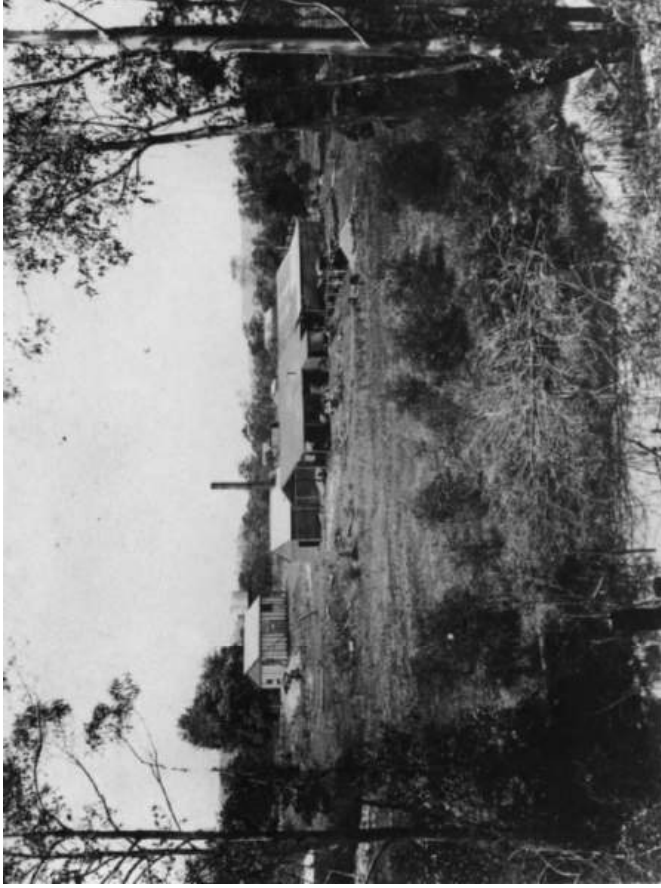


Figure 5.22 Jusfrute factory, West Gosford, before December 1928.
(Source: Central Coast Library Service)

The company introduced a new product soon after—'Jusfrute' Essences for fruit drinks.

During 1924 the factory treated 19,132 bushels of lemons and 4126 bushes of oranges; 3000 gallons of lemon juice were extracted together with over a ton of lemon oil and 4 cwt of orange oil.⁶¹

So popular was this product that by late 1925 it was supplied to 230 approved bottlers across Australia under licence from the company, 'who make them up into beverages ready for retail sale'. A new line was introduced in 1925, Jusfrute Cordials, comprising pure fruit juices ready to mix with water or other mixers.⁶² The company was successful for many years. Jusfrute was taken over by Keith Harris Pty Ltd of Thornleigh and traded until at least the early 2000s.

Make Mine Margin's

In 1906, George Margin, manufacturer of cordials and soft drinks, set up business in Gosford and added an ice-making plant in 1914. The same year, he entered into partnership with his brother Hubert Charles Margin and the company was renamed G & HC Margin and expanded to a site in Blackwall Road, Woy Woy.

When the partnership was dissolved in 1927, H.C. Margin & Son was established. The successful Woy Woy business was owned and operated by the Margin family, including grandson Colin, his wife May and their son Kim, until it was bought out by Coca-Cola in 1985.



Figure 5.23 Margin’s bottle tops. (Source: Gostalgia: local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 5.24 Advertisement for Margin’s of Gosford, undated. (Source: Gostalgia: local history from Gosford Library)

Made With Love: Nanna's

In 1969, Alex Mutch approached Gosford Council to raise the prospect of relocating his cake and pastry factory from Cremorne to the Central Coast. Soon after, he built a new factory on Manns Road, West Gosford. Although the factory was destroyed by fire in 1972, it was rebuilt soon after and was manufacturing 4,800 apple pies a day later the same year. The company was taken over by Edgell in 1974. The factory operated at this location until about 1998. By this date, the factory was producing approximately 7,500 tonnes of desserts with a \$26 million turnover.⁶³

Making Life a Little Sweeter: Sara Lee

Charles Lubin established a chain of bakeries in Chicago in 1934, growing the business with his brother-in-law. He established the Kitchens of Sara Lee in 1949 and named his first product, a cream cheesecake, after his eight-year-old daughter Sara Lee. Lubin developed the process for freezing his line of desserts in 1953.

Sara Lee chose land in the 'garden factory' area at Lisarow, comprising 380 acres converted from rural to industrial zoning. Australian production commenced in a new factory on this site in 1971 at Lisarow, baking and freezing desserts and cakes for the Australian and overseas market.

At the time of opening, it had about 70 employees. The factory was officially opened on 8 June by Sonia McMahon, wife of the Prime Minister, William McMahon.⁶⁴



Figure 5.25 Advertisement for Sara Lee, Lisarow, 1970s. (Source: Gostalgia: local history from Gosford Library)

By 1988, the company was selling 126 different products and manufacturing 50,000 cheesecakes a day.

The company changed ownership in 2013 to McCain Foods, and it changed hands again in 2021 to the South Island Office Ltd. Manufacturing continues at this factory today.

Industrial estates

The Central Coast has several areas of zoned industrial land, generally along the M1 motorway and railway corridor. The largest of these areas are in the north of the LGA around Bushell's Ridge and Warnervale, which are currently undergoing development. Others are located at West Gosford, Lisarow, North Gosford, Erina, North Wyong, Tuggerah and Charmhaven, with a large area at Somersby.

Apart from Bushell's Ridge and Warnervale, the largest industrial estate is located at Somersby south of Dodds Hill. This area was officially opened in June 1980. The following year, *Local Environmental Plan (LEP) No 22* was gazetted and zoning the majority of the Somersby Industrial Park. The scheme was developed jointly by the NSW Government, Gosford Council and private landowners.⁶⁵

The major industrial precincts on the Central Coast are as follows:

- Berkeley Vale (southern-most section)
- Charmhaven (Charmhaven Industrial Area)
- Colongra (Centennial Coal, Munmorah Colliery, Munmorah Power Station)
- Doyalson
- Fountaindale (northern-most section)
- Jiliby (Bottonderry Waste Management Facility, Warner Industrial Park)
- Kincumber
- Lisarow
- Mannering Park (Chain Valley Colliery, Mannering Colliery, Vales Point Power Station)
- North Gosford
- Somersby
- Tuggerah Business Park
- Tuggerah Industrial Park
- Warnervale (north-western section)
- West Gosford
- Wyoming
- Wyong (North Wyong Industrial Estate)

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Between Two Cities

Steamboats might land people at the wharf in Gosford; but, however, much they admire the many beauties of the shores of the bay, they could see but little of the more fertile and luxuriantly foliaged interior. The roads were not the best; and further conveyances were few; and to explore it on foot required endurance and nerve. The railway has changed all this. It has opened a way through the very heart of the country, and exposed the resources and its beauties to the eyes of the numerous passengers travelling along the line.

Source: Australian Town and Country Journal, 8 June 1889, p.23.

RAILWAY STATION
POINT CLARE - 1 -

6 Between two cities

Transport and communication networks have played a significant role in connecting the residents of the Central Coast LGA to their own locality, as well as to the larger world. The LGA is intersected by two major transport corridors: the Sydney-Newcastle (F3) Freeway (National Highway 1), and the Central Coast and Newcastle rail line (part of the Main North Railway Line). The main centres of population in the LGA are located along these routes, or connected to the railway stations by a network of roads serviced by cars, buses and taxis.

In addition, services by mail runs, post offices, the telegraph and telephone played a vital part in connecting people in the LGA.

The geography of the Central Coast LGA, comprising extensive lakes and waterway systems, mangroves, coastal beaches, mountain forest areas and valleys, presented a major challenge to early settlers and travellers. Because of its inaccessible nature, the development of roads was a slow and difficult process, which delayed the successful and intensive early development of the district of Brisbane Water.

Tracks and roads

The first roads in the LGA were adapted from the much-used tracks used for countless generations by Aboriginal people. These first pathways were made by the Guringai, Darkinjung and Awabakal people travelling to meeting places for trade and ceremony, and moving through Country to access food and water.

Tracks and roads were slow to develop in the LGA due to the difficult terrain. The first of the European roads via the western extent of the Central Coast was the Great North Road. It was built to provide a better overland access to the rich pastoral district of the Hunter Valley from Sydney. Construction of the road by convicts commenced in September 1826 north of Castle Hill. The *Australian* reported on 24 May that:

The Great North Road is to be commenced, we believe, this day, Mr Oxley and Captain Dumaresq having left town for the purpose of marking it out. It goes through Castle Hill to Wiseman's, where a punt of large dimensions is constantly to ply across the Hawkesbury. The road then passes a hilly, rocky country for thirty miles, to the Wollombi Brook, along which it

will wind its course as far as Patrick's Plains on the Hunter River.¹

Construction of the road north of Wisemans Ferry commenced under the supervision of Lt Jonathon Warner in 1827. Lt Percy Simpson replaced Warner as the Assistant Surveyor at Wiseman's Ferry in June 1828 and took charge of up to 700 convicts (Nos 3, 4, 8 and 9 Iron Gangs and No 25 Road Gang). The No 25 road gang constructed the first ascent of the north bank of the Hawkesbury River in 1827 and 1828. This ascent was deemed too steep and tortuous, so Surveyor General Mitchell marked a new line in January 1829 (Devine's Hill). The opening of the Great North Road as far as Twelve Mile Hollow (later Ten Mile Hollow) in 1829 and the development of Simpsons Track made the eastern part of the Lower Hawkesbury, especially along Mangrove Creek, more accessible to small settlers.²

When surveyor William R Govett conducted a survey of the Hawkesbury River and Broken Bay area in 1829, he reported 'there are no less than two separate lines marked out, the one to cross at the mouth of Mangrove Creek, the other at Mr Peat's residence, a few miles lower down (Kangaroo Point)'. He was in favour of the latter, which was more direct as George Peat, guided by an Aboriginal man, had marked the 'entire line' from Brisbane Water to his residence (Fairview), and then to Sydney with a proposed punt across the river. The former route was by

ferry at Mangrove Creek, travelling along that creek to join the other road. Peat's route was the one that was eventually used.³

Simpson's Track was another important early route in the district. It branched east from the Great North Road at Twelve Mile Hollow (later Ten Mile Hollow), linking Wiseman's Ferry to Yarramalong and Dooralong, before proceeding on to Mandalong and Cooranbong. Percy Simpson owned 2,000 acres (809.73 hectares) at Cooranbong and had lobbied the government (unsuccessfully) to route the Great North Road via his track. While Simpsons Track was mostly unformed, it was suitable for horse-drawn transport.⁴

At the twelve-miles hollow a path turns off to the right, down the ridge, towards Mangrove Creek and Brisbane Water, on the sea coast.⁵

The Great North Road from this strange region was found to proceed along a barren ridge and continued in a winding direction to Twelve Mile Hollow, which was sixty miles from Sydney. A track across Mangrove Creek, reached Brisbane Water twenty miles from the Hollow.⁶

The two means of descent from the Great North Road into Brisbane Water from the Mangrove Road follow the present route of Debenham Road to West Gosford and the Dog Trap Road through Narara Valley. Incidentally, the Ten Mile Hollow became the main road link between Sydney and Gosford until 1930.

The 1833, the *NSW Post Office Directory* described the early roads connecting the Central Coast to the north and south. The Maitland Road traversed the district via the coast road from Sydney to Pittwater, with a ferry connection to Gosford. The Great North Road was also in use at this time, comprising Simpsons Track heading eastward from Twelve Mile Hollow leading to Brisbane Water, with another branch leading to the farms along Mangrove Creek and Popran Creek.⁷

The road from Gosford to Dora Creek was surveyed in 1841, indicating an extant road.⁸ In 1858, the parish road from Gosford to Kincumber was surveyed. The road from Gosford to Wamberal Lagoon was surveyed in 1864.⁹ At mid-century then, the network of roads through the region were formed by common usage as routes used by early settlers to locate timber and other resources and to establish improved lines of communication.

The Peat's Ferry Road was surveyed and partly constructed during the 1840s and early 1850s, following a route 'found' by George Peat and an Aboriginal guide. In 1925, this road was proclaimed a main road and heavy construction work was carried out along the length of the route. It was officially opened in 1927 as the Great Northern Highway, later the Pacific Highway. The main highway to Sydney was the focus of considerable investment. As car ownership increased, so did the use of the Pacific Highway.

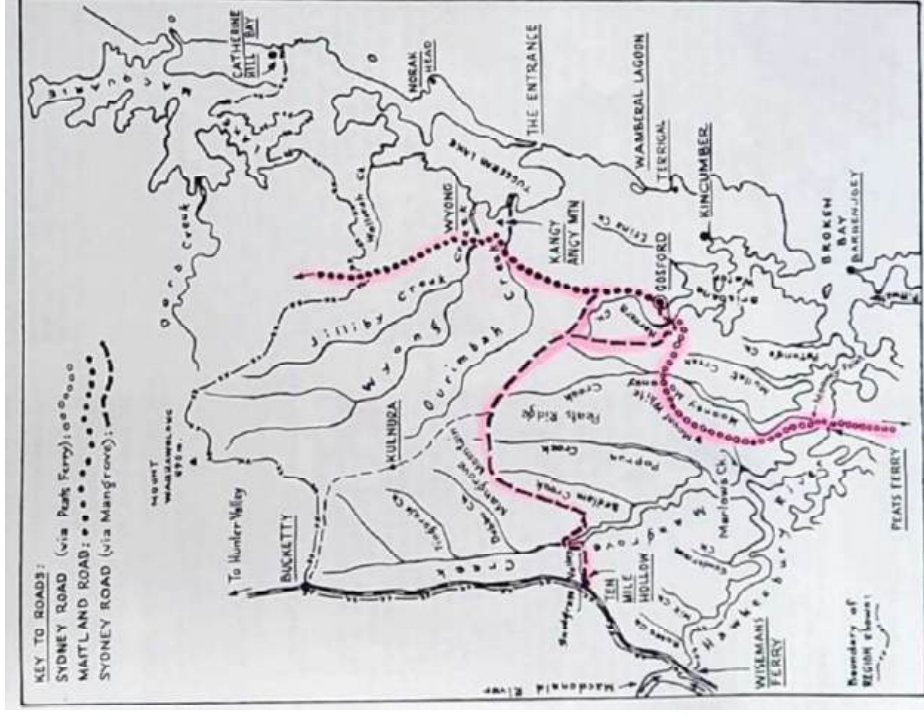


Figure 6.1 Early roads on the Central Coast. (Source: Beryl Strom, *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage*, p 13, annotated by GML)



Figure 6.2 Detail from Major Mitchell's General Plan of Roads northward from Sydney from a survey made in July 1829. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Following lobbying by commercial interests in Gosford, a new road heading north was built through Gosford rather than via the more suitable Somersby plateau. The Pacific Highway opened in June 1930, following much of the original Peat's line of road.¹⁰ The arrival of motor cars at the turn of the century saw further changes to roads in the municipality. The demands of motor cars—namely the need for solid surfaces—meant that roads were

gradually improved for vehicular use. Cars were generally limited to the wealthiest families due to their expense.



Figure 6.3 Part of the route of the Peats Ferry Road (Pacific Highway) within the Erina Shire, 1920s. (Source: MHNWS, State Archives Collection FL116227 79)

In the 1930s, the local council used unemployed relief works funds to maintain existing roads and build new roads. The Coast Road was one such new route, running between Terrigal and Killcare, comprising part of the Scenic Highway.¹¹

Improved road access spurred the growth of coastal and tourist villages that had been adversely affected when the railway caused a decline in transport to such centres by boat.¹²



Figure 6.4 Finished section of Peats Ferry Road (Pacific Highway), Mooney Mooney-Gosford section, December 1928. (Source: MHNNSW, State Archives)

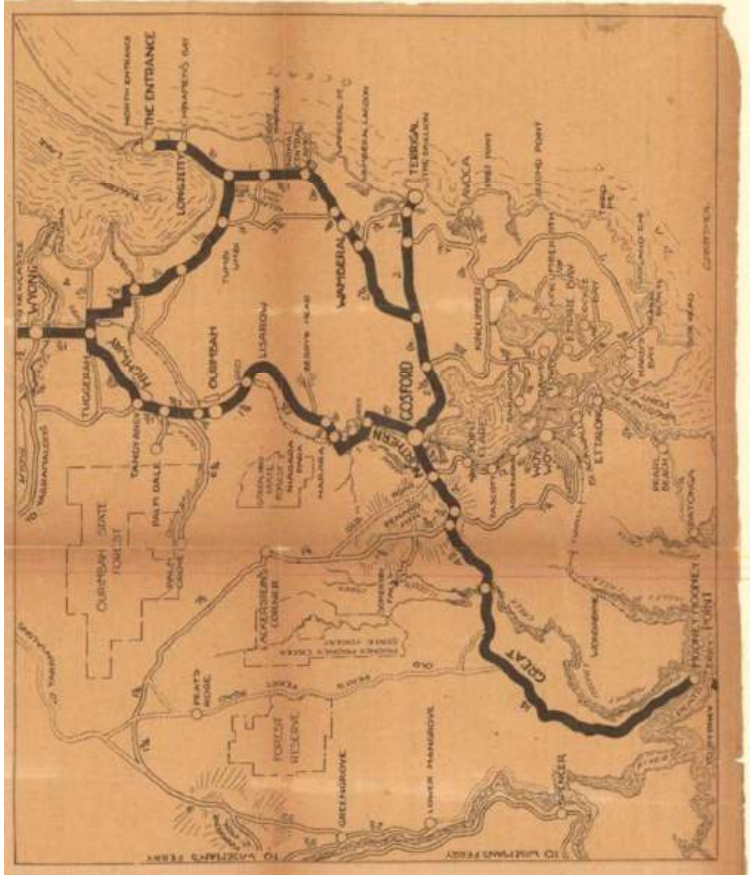


Figure 6.5 Route of the new Pacific Highway via the Central Coast. (Source: *The Open Road*, 15 May 1930)

On 20 May 1960, the Pacific Highway near Mount White was declared a motorway. The F3 was built in stages commencing in April 1963 to provide a high-speed road link between Sydney and Newcastle via the Central Coast. For instance, the seven

kilometre Hawkesbury River to Mount White section of the motorway was completed as a toll road on 15 December 1965, becoming the first motorway to be built in New South Wales.¹³ Other sections opened in December 1968 (Berowra–Hawkesbury River), October 1973 (Hawkesbury River Bridge connection Berowra and Calga), December 1983 (Somersby–Ourimbah and Kangy Angy–Wallerah Creek, also link Wallarah Creek to Pacific Highway at Doyalson), December 1986 (Calga–Somersby and Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge) and September 1987 (Wallerah Creek interchange to Mandalong Creek interchange).

The opening of the Wyong Bypass in 1983 was greeted with much enthusiasm, as motorists anticipated the end of one of the worst bottlenecks on the Sydney–Newcastle Freeway. The 128-kilometre freeway was completed in December 1997 with the opening of the three kilometre Ourimbah Creek section (Ourimbah Creek Road to Kangy Angy). In 2009, the F3 was renamed the M1 Pacific Motorway. Safety issues and increased capacity have resulted in further improvements to the motorway, including widening the four-lane section between Mount White and Calga to six lanes, creating a six-lane freeway between Cowan and Kariong. Upgrades have also taken place in an attempt to reduce increasing traffic congestion.

Improved road access emerging from the motorway changed the urban hierarchy of the district so that Gosford and Woy Woy expanded at the expense of the small villages.

Road bridges

Building roads was just the first step in opening up the Central Coast. The area's multiple creeks, rivers and waterways presented a considerable challenge to the community of the region. Bridges were required at points along the narrow coastal fringe and hinterland, as the early tracks and roads had to navigate around or over several waterways. Construction of bridges improved transport connections and reduced the relative isolation of many parts of the Central Coast.

Bridges replaced punt services across the region, for instance the Fagan's Creek Bridge at West Gosford. In connection with the new road from Gosford to the top of Mount Penang, a new long, wooden bridge was built across Narara Creek to replace Fagan's punt, opening to traffic in January 1892.¹⁴

The bridge...will prove a great boon to the residents of the Penang, being five miles nearer the town by the proposed route than by the route at present use.¹⁵

Due to safety concerns, it was re-erected in 1923, then replaced with a concrete bridge and renamed Henry Kendall Bridge in 1956.

A de Burgh Truss bridge was constructed at Wyong in 1902 and survived until 1967 when it was demolished. It was one of 20 such bridges built between 1900 and 1905.



Figure 6.6 Bridge over Wyong Creek at Wyong. (Source: *Annual Report of the Department of Public Works for the year ended 30th June 1902*, p 132)

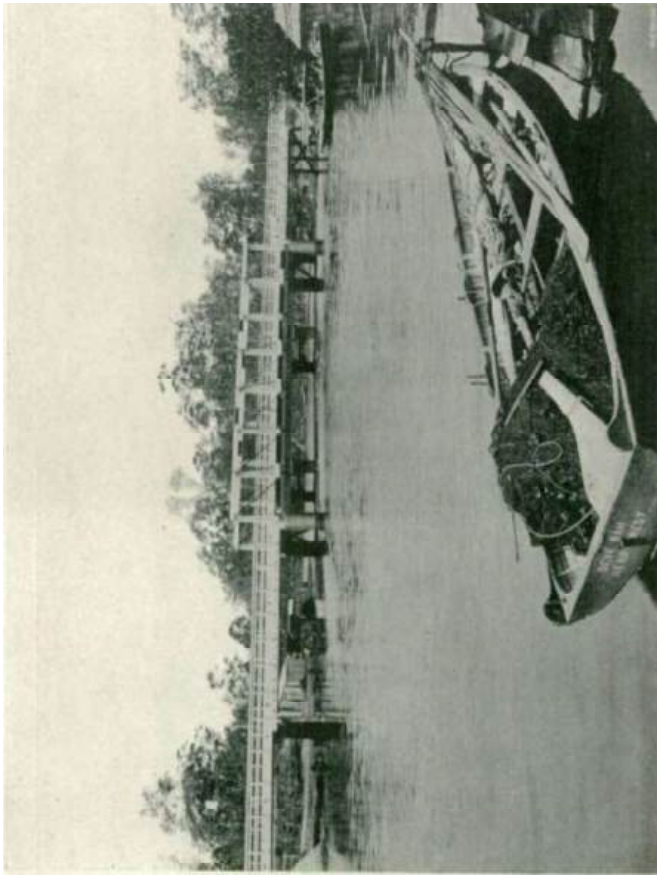


Figure 6.7 Bridge over Wyong Creek at Wyong. (Source: *Annual Report of the Department of Public Works for the year ended 30th June 1902*, p 132)

In 1906, construction of the low-level timber beam bridge over Ourimbah Creek at Chittaway replaced the Chittaway Ferry and provided a direct road link between Gosford and Cooranbong. This had been originally constructed to provide access for timber-getters.

The construction of a timber bridge across Mangrove Creek at the base of Oystershell Hill in 1931, on the main road from Spencer to Mangrove Mountain, reduced travel times for motorists. Like similar bridges of that period, it was later replaced by a concrete bridge in 1966.¹⁶

The Peats Ferry Road Bridge was constructed between 1939 and 1945 at the site of the early ferry crossing first established by George Peat in 1847 between Kangaroo Point and Mooney Mooney.

The new bridge provided for the first time a direct link from Sydney and Newcastle via the Central Coast. In connection with the construction of the Sydney–Newcastle Freeway (F3), a new six-lane traffic bridge was built adjoining the 1945 bridge and was officially opened to traffic in October 1973.

The bridge across the Terrigal Lake entrance was built in 1927, providing road access along the coast to Wamberal.¹⁷ In 1934, settlements on each side of The Entrance channel were joined by a road traffic bridge.

The NRMA and Wyong Chamber of Commerce decided to jointly lobby the Authorities in 1937 to have a bridge built across the northern end of Tuggerah Lakes between Wallarah Point and Toukley which would shorten travel to Norah Head and the beaches north, provide direct access to the increasingly popular

tourist destination of Toukley, and shorten the journey from the Pacific Highway to Toukley by 8 ½ miles.¹⁸ The lobbying was successful as in 1939 the Wallarah Point Bridge was constructed saving motorists a 16 mile drive and, according to the NRMA, would 'materially assist in the development of the country on the eastern side of Tuggerah Lakes'.¹⁹



Figure 6.8 Hawkesbury River Bridge, Pacific Highway, 1945. (Source: Department of Main Roads, *Vital Link with Our Industrial North: The Hawkesbury River Bridge Pacific Highway*)

In 1941, a road bridge was built across Brisbane Water at Parks Bay, Woy Woy, alongside the railway line, easing traffic problems in that area. The new Toukley Bridge was officially opened on 5 July 1985, replacing the original two-lane timber bridge.

Within the City of Gosford, road improvements and new bridges reduced traffic congestion and shortened travel times. The opening of the Rip Bridge on 14 June 1974 improved travel around Brisbane Water. When completed, it was the longest cantilever bridge built of pre-stressed concrete in the Southern Hemisphere. The builder was John Holland Constructions Pty Ltd. Residents of the relatively isolated eastern shore welcomed the opening of the bridge, which was used to promote new housing estates east of Woy Woy such as St Huberts Island:

St Huberts Island is even closer to Sydney than it was before!
The Rip Bridge is now open which makes St Huberts an easy hour's drive from the City.²⁰

The Brian McGowan Bridge opened on 10 December 1995 across the railway line at Gosford, removing one bottleneck on arterial roads in the town centre.

The rugged terrain of parts of the region, heavily dissected by several creeks, made travel on the Central Coast challenging, and road and bridge building difficult. Mooney Mooney Creek is a deep chasm where a two-lane steel truss bridge was built to carry the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Newcastle.

Although still in use, a new twin cantilever bridge was constructed downstream to carry the new six-lane F3 Freeway (now Pacific Motorway M1) across the Mooney Mooney Creek between Calga and Somersby. It was officially opened on 14 December 1986 and is the highest road bridge in Australia.

Steamers, ferries and barges

Sea and river transport was the primary means of moving goods and people around the Central Coast region until the development of rail and reliable roads. Water transport remained essential for trade, tourism and general communication well into the twentieth century. A general shipping route to Newcastle and the North Coast made stops to Brisbane Water and other ports along the coast. To facilitate travel within the region, punts were established in various places, including Wiseman's Ferry and Peat's Ferry on the Hawkesbury River, Brisbane Water and Tuggerah Lakes, as well as the many rivers and creeks throughout the region, particularly Mangrove and Wyong Creeks.



Figure 6.9 Wiseman's Ferry punt, c1908. WE Phegan. (Source: Gwen Dundon Collections, Central Coast Library Service, Gostalgia)

The basic roads of the district had to cross waterways as best they could. A punt across Erina Creek at East Gosford was shown on the 1840 subdivision plan of Samuel Peek's Estate. It had been in operation since the late 1830s. It continued to operate until the mid-1880s, when a steel drawbridge replaced it.²¹ In 1843, Samuel Taylor, who operated *The Green Man* hotel on John Marlow's 50-acre grant at Marlow Creek, conducted a punt at the south of Mangrove Creek.²² George Peat commenced his ferry service across the Hawkesbury at Kangaroo Point in 1844.²³ By

1849, a punt known as Fagan's punt, named after lessee Peter Fagan, was operating across Narara Creek.²⁴

Cabbage Tree Harbour provided an early shipping point for cedar and Gosford was another such departure point. Mangrove Creek provided an entry for early settlers on the plateau and Wyong Valleys. To accommodate travel by water, works have been undertaken over the years to improve natural features, lessen existing hazards, drain wetlands or improve water quality. The channel at The Entrance, for example, has been dredged and cleared on several occasions, riverbanks have been rebuilt or reinforced, and low-lying areas have been drained. In 1908, the obstructions in Wyong Creek were resolved, finally making it navigable to Tuggerah Lake.

Wharves were built to service Gosford and Brisbane Water, including a wharf erected at the southern end of Mann Street, Gosford, in 1841.²⁵ *The Australian* reported in December 1840 that 'it is his Excellency's intention to send down a party of men without delay for the purpose of constructing a stone wharf at Gosford'.²⁶ In July 1881 the land was surveyed at Gosford for a wharf reserve which included a formed road for access to the wharf from Mann Street.

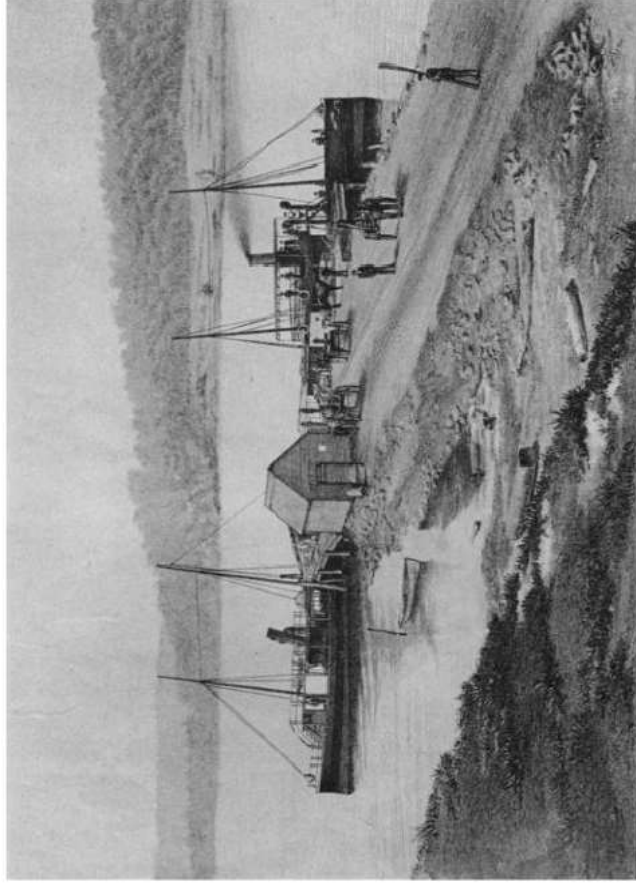


Figure 6.10 Gosford wharf with steamships, c1885. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

In 1897, a deputation of Wyong residents met with the Minister of Works urging the construction of a jetty at Tuggerah Lakes to enable fishermen to land their fish and 'to make the place a suitable tourist resort'.²⁷ The Department of Public Works invited tenders for construction of the jetty at Tuggerah Lake in late 1896 and early 1897. It appears no tender was accepted at this date, as in 1899, a new tender was advertised and that of

Matthew James Woodbury was accepted for £576.²⁸ In 1915, the village of Long Jetty was named for this long wharf.



Figure 6.11 Ferryman on Brisbane Water serving Veteran Hall, Linterns, Davistown, Pine Tree. Empire Bay and Kincumber, undated. (Source: Gwen Dundon Collection, Central Coast Library Service)

The increasing tourist trade to the area during the early twentieth century also necessitated several improvements. Following the opening of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge and completion of the Sydney–Newcastle rail line, most visitors

to emerging tourist spots around Brisbane Water caught the train to places such as Woy Woy, where they transferred to small boats or ferries to reach their final destination.

Many of the boarding houses and guesthouses provided their own boating services. In 1905, ferry services commenced on Brisbane Water when the Sisters of St Joseph began their Pioneer Ferry service.²⁹

A plethora of new ferry wharves were constructed in this period, such as at Wyong in about 1912 to support the tourist industry. In August 1917, Louis Taylor introduced to service his new launch *Loongana* at The Entrance, comprising 'the largest and most up-to-date passenger boat on the Tuggerah Lakes'.³⁰

The availability and reliability of water services to the holiday centres featured as major promotional attractions in tourism publications of the time.

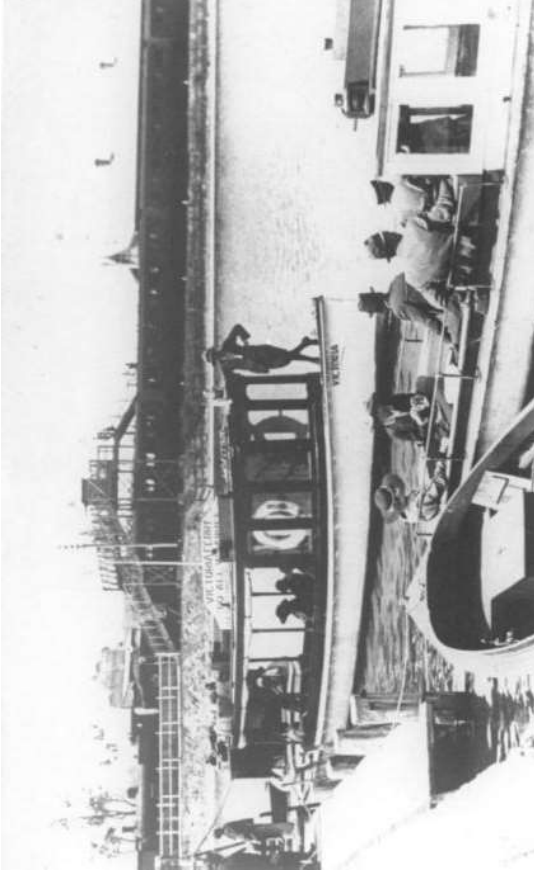


Figure 6.12 Train-ferry connections at Woy Woy, c1919. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

Shipwreck Coast

With the colony's dependence on shipping for travel, trade and communications along the coastline and inland waterways came the ever-present risk of shipwreck with loss of life and cargoes.

The toll of lost ships, along with large numbers of crew, along Australia's rugged east coast is significant with upwards of 2,000 wrecks along the New South Wales coast and countless other vessels foundered in inland rivers and lakes. The Central Coast

had its fair share of shipwrecks, including the *Lord Ashley* and *SS Maitland*. Ships of all shapes and sizes were wrecked off the coast such as *Allyn*, *Effort*, *Suffolk*, *Bealiba*, *Thomas H Walter*, *Tamar*, *Gwydir*, *Ceres*, *Janet Dickson*, *Speedwell*, *Tim Whiffler*, *SS Narooma*, *Hawk*, *Nerong* and the *Galava*.

The first ship recorded lost in local waters was the 16-ton Hawkesbury trading vessel named *Hope*, owned by Andrew Thomson. In 1803 she was lost in Broken Bay while sailing to Sydney with a full cargo of maize, potatoes and melons. Her loss was put down to a sailing error and her two crew members managed to save themselves but not without great difficulty.

In August 1836 the paddle-wheeler steamer *Ceres* travelling along the coast from Newcastle to Sydney struck Bullen Agglen Rock off Bungaree North. All 52 passengers and crew made it safely to shore and all but one of the cargo of 60 sheep also made shore.

The coal schooner *Janet Dickson* was wrecked on a reef off Norah Head (formerly called Cabbage Tree Harbour) in April 1870. The captain took shelter in Cabbage Tree Bay as the seas and wind rose. The anchors were let out, but the boat dragged north onto the reef and became a total wreck. There was no loss of life in the wreck.³¹ Afterwards the wreck site was known by the variant name Jenny Dixon Beach.

The steamer *Lord Ashley* was wrecked off the Terrigal Reef on 8 September 1877 on a voyage between Newcastle and Melbourne. Soon after departing Newcastle Harbour the vessel took on water rapidly, eventually engulfing the engine and holds. The crew were taken to shore and taken care of by Mr Davis, the shipbuilder at Terrigal.

The whole bay was strewn with wreck, and it was not expected that anything would be saved from the ship in consequence of the heavy surf. The ship now lies awash at half-tide and only a few yards from shore.³²

The *SS Maitland* shipwreck, probably the most well-known of the shipwrecks on the Central Coast, occurred on 6 May 1898 occasioning the loss of 26 lives when it was driven by mountainous seas onto the foot of East Reef, Broken Bay, in a major gale. A huge gale tore off one of its paddle wheel housings and ripped a hole through the hull, and water flooded the boiler room. The captain turned back for the shelter of Broken Bay but the ship foundered on the reef.

"It seemed", said one of the survivors, "as if all the winds of heaven and from every point of the compass had been let loose from their caverns".

Several of the steerage passengers lost their lives when the vessel struck the rock and parted amidstships. Others were drowned in attempting to reach the shore in one of the

steamer's boats; some became victims to the raging seas in their heroic efforts to convey a line from the vessel to the shore, while some again were drowned by the fury of the waves as they were being brought on the life line to the shore...³³

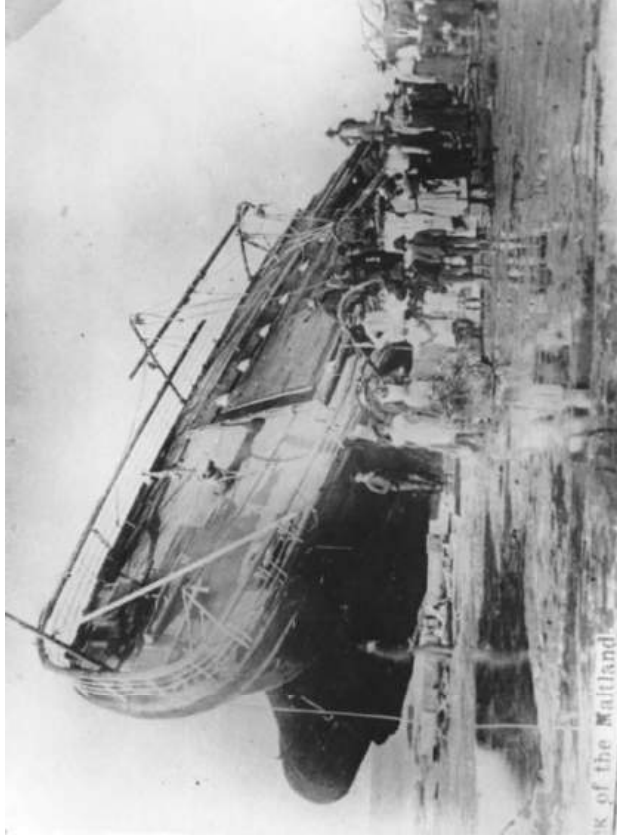


Figure 6.13 The wreck of the SS *Maitland*, Cape Three Points, Maitland Bay, Bouddi Peninsula, May 1898. (Source: Central Coast Council 001151.jpg)

The Maitland Gale, as it became known, was also responsible for the loss of another vessel off the coast of New South Wales—the *Merksworth*—with some loss of life.

There are also significant wrecks in the Hawkesbury River including two River Class Torpedo Boat Destroyers the ex-HMAS *Parramatta* and HMAS *Swan* while off the coast the HMAS *Allenwood* was wrecked near Norah Head in 1951.

Norah Head Lighthouse

As early as 1864, land was set aside for a lighthouse and recreation reserve at Norah Head. In 1894, the steamer *Gwydir* was wrecked at Norah Head, leading to calls from local residents and mariners to erect a lighthouse. It was a particularly treacherous site along the coastal shipping route, with numerous vessels coming to grief on the shoals at the same spot. Two years later, the steamer *Wollumbin* became stuck on Bungaree North Head suffering no loss of life, but intensifying calls for a lighthouse to be erected.

Several shipmasters are of the opinion that a light is needed at Norah Head to guide vessels clear of the numerous dangers there. This point, it is argued, is one of the most eastern on the coast and a light would prove most invaluable.³⁴

After yet further delay, in August 1899, a petition was submitted to the government urging the erection of a lighthouse at Norah

Head, as up to this date 35 ships had been wrecked in the vicinity of this location.



Figure 6.14 Norah Head Lighthouse, 1939 by Ray Olson. (Source: State Library of NSW)

In December 1900, plans for a lighthouse and caretakers' cottages at Norah Head were completed and tenders invited in January 1901 to complete the work. The lighthouse was

completed and tested and commenced operation on 15 November 1903.

The light is exhibited from a concrete tower painted white, 77ft high. It is one of the second order dioptric white lights, giving a flash of one-fifth of a second duration every five seconds. The elevation of the light is 15ft above sea level, and the light is visible at a distance of 18 ½ nautical miles in clear weather.³⁵

Building the railway

Railways rather than roads acted as the driver of town growth in the Central Coast. In March 1881, the Homebush to Waratah Railway was included in Loan Bills and the route of the line was confirmed two years later. £2,000,000 was voted to proceed, with the route extending from Strathfield to Waratah via the Central Coast.

In 1883, tenders were invited for construction of the section of the Great Northern Railway commencing near Gosford and terminating at Hamilton, and the section between the Hawkesbury River and Gosford, being a length of over 13 miles.³⁶

Railway workers' (or navvies') camps were established along the route where navvies blasted rock, cleared the forest, felled timber and laid tracks. To accommodate workers, semi-permanent towns were established at various points along the route. For instance, a large camp was located at Mullet Creek for

a period of eight years, and accommodated 800 railway workers and their families. A similar encampment at Bull's Hill near Woy Woy had three hotels, two grocers' shops, a butcher's shop, a greengrocer, a boarding house, a school and a post office.³⁷

The influx of population, employment opportunities and demand for local timber afforded by the construction phase of the railway were nearly as significant for local development as the railway was to be on its completion. Sections of the railway line were progressively opened from 1886 as follows:

Date	Section of railway line
17 Sep 1886	Strathfield - Hornsby
7 Apr 1887	Hornsby (Start Boronia No 5 deviation) - Hawkesbury River
5 Aug 1887	Gosford - Islington Junction
16 Jan 1888	Wondabyne - Gosford
1 May 1889	Junction (Start Hawkesbury Bridge deviation - Wondabyne via Hawkesbury Bridges

The Long Island and Gosford Railway Stations opened in August 1887. The extension from Gosford to Mullet Creek (the northern abutment of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge) opened on 16 January 1888 and involved the construction of two bridges crossing two bays on Brisbane Water and the Woy Woy railway

tunnel, the longest railway tunnel in Australia. It was built with 10 million bricks, which were transported to the tunnel along a tramline across Woy Woy from Brick Wharf. The tunnel was opened on 1 February 1888 and one year to the day the Woy Woy Station opened. The through line to Sydney was finally completed with the opening of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge in May 1889, filling in the missing link in the 2,700km of railway connecting Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

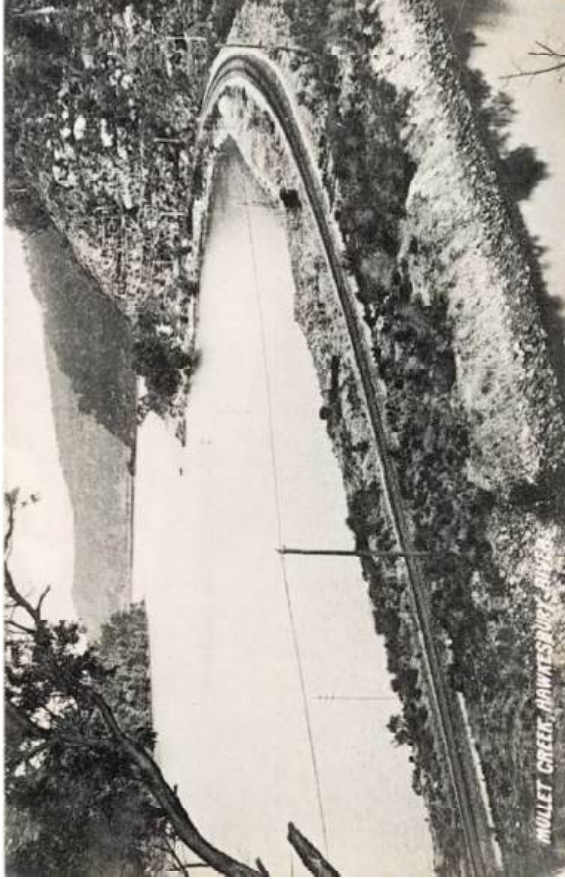


Figure 6.15 Railway line alongside Mullet Creek, c1906–1926. Postcard by Amy and Lindy Hall. (Source: Powerhouse Museum)

The pattern of residential development on the Central Coast was influenced by the location of railway platforms and sidings. The coming of the railway brought about profound changes in the district. Landholders, speculators and auctioneers were active in the 1880s and early 1890s acquiring, subdividing and selling allotments to prospective buyers along the railway routes.

One such subdivision, the Wyong Estate, was promoted by the Gosford Land, Building and Investment Company Ltd in December 1886 as follows:

...The railway, Homebush to Waratah will be opened in a few months, and the WYONG STATION will be close to this
 SPLENDID ESTATE. BUY at once before the Railway opens. BUY now and make a big profit. BUY while you have the chance.
 BUY while you have the money. To all who want good investments for their children, buy Blocks in Wyong Estate, Gosford, and you will be able to MAKE big profits.³⁸

When the Great Northern Railway was completed from Gosford to Newcastle, newspaper reporters travelled to Newcastle, describing the passing scenery and their experience. Morisset station was mentioned, as well as that at Norahville, Wyong (where a large yard was laid out to service the timber trade) and Ourimbah, where a 'very fine' station had been constructed that was, next to the two terminal stations, the largest components

on the railway construction contract, Narara Flat and Gosford and Brisbane Water.³⁹

The coming of the railway brought about enormous changes in the district. By 1900, the advantages of the railway had become abundantly clear as it provided growers and producers on the Central Coast with more reliable and quicker access to Sydney markets. It fostered the growth of small towns and supported tourism to the area.



Figure 6.16 Steam train at Ourimbah Railway Station, c1910. Photograph by William Henry Broadhurst. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

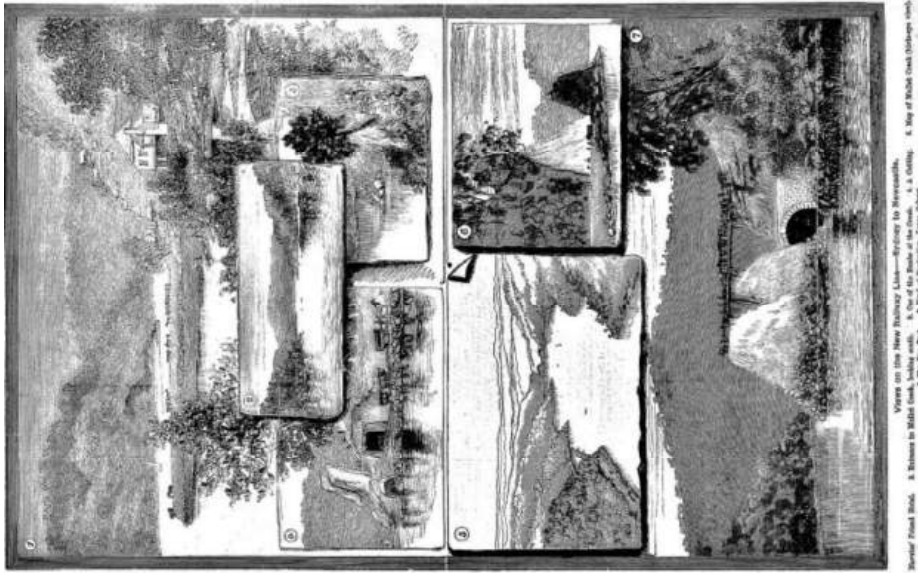


Figure 6.17 Views on the new railway line from Sydney to Newcastle at Mullet Creek north of the Hawkesbury River. (Source: *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 4 July 1885, p 26)

In the 1950s, NSW Railways commenced electrification of railway lines servicing the Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Illawarra. Electrification of the Intercity Network railway lines reduced travel times, making it more attractive for commuters to travel longer distances. The section from Hornsby to Gosford was completed on 23 January 1960. The arrival of the first electric train at Gosford Station was a major event celebrated in the district. The Gosford–Wyong electrification was officially opened in April 1982. Two years later, electrification was completed as far as Newcastle.

Catering to increasing passenger traffic, NSW Railways introduced double-deck, air-conditioned trains for the Sydney–Gosford service on 22 June 1970. Later models of these trains were put into service from Gosford to Wyong and Newcastle following completion of electrification of the railway line.

Railway bridges

By the 1870s, railway lines radiated from Sydney to the south and west, and a separate railway network handled traffic to the north of Newcastle. However, the Hawkesbury River remained an impenetrable barrier to unifying the rail network. In 1883, the government voted to construct the railway from Strathfield to the Hawkesbury River, continuing northward via Long Island by a causeway across the Hawkesbury River to the northern bank,

through to Gosford, and continuing to a terminus at Hamilton or Hexham. Several bridges were built to carry the railway line from the Hawkesbury River to Gosford and beyond, including crossing two bays in Brisbane Water near Gosford and Woy Woy.



Figure 6.18 Official opening of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge, 1 May 1889. Photograph by Henry King. (Source: National Library of Australia, PIC P861/606 LOC Box N4 Folder 1 Row 44 Bays 6-9)

The missing link, the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge, was put out to international tender, with the Union Bridge Company of New York being the successful bidder. During construction of the bridge the paddle steam 'General Gordon', built by Thomas Davis at Terrigal Haven, filled the gap in the railway line from Sydney to Newcastle, navigating open sea conditions at northern Broken Bay from August 1887 until February 1888 when the Woy Woy Tunnel was opened and a station and wharf established in Mullet Creek (south of present Wondabyne Station).

The bridge was officially opened on 1 May 1889, rendering the General Gordon obsolete. Built to last 100 years, serious problems were evident with the bridge within 40 years, and building a replacement bridge became necessary during World War Two.

At the end of the 1940s, NSW Railways built seven new railway bridges between Hornsby and Newcastle to accommodate heavier locomotives and faster trains on the line. New bridges replaced old ones at Woy Woy Creek, Broadwater (Gosford), Ourimbah Creek, Wyong Creek and Wallarah Creek (between Warnervale and Wyee) in the Central Coast, as well as Dora and Cockle Creeks to the north.⁴⁰



Figure 6.19 New and old Hawkesbury River Railway Bridges, 1946.
(Source: Hawkesbury Bridge Opening Programme)

Post and telegraph services

Communications in the area were generally poor in the nineteenth century. The Brisbane Water Post Office was established in July 1835; however, regular overland postal services via Windsor and Wisemans Ferry did not commence until 1838. Early postal services were carried out by contractors. In 1838, for example, a contract was advertised for a mail run from and to Brisbane Water and Wisemans Ferry once a week.⁴¹



Figure 6.20 Horse drawn postal cart, Dooralong, undated. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

Residents of the Brisbane Water District rejoiced in 1879, when tenders were invited for the conveyance of mail between Sydney and Gosford via Pittwater and Manly, as it represented a saving in time, taking six hours at most (as opposed to nearly 24 hours via the overland mail route). Two years later, the *Australian Town and Country Journal* reported:

Till quite recently a horse-mail ran from Gosford to Sydney via Peate's Ferry, but it is now abolished, and a steam launch has been substituted to run from Barrenjoey up the bay once a week.⁴²

Post offices were often established by local residents. A post service was established at Mangrove Creek in January 1857 when Daniel McIntosh commenced as Postmaster. He opened a post office in 1872; he was succeeded by his wife Janet nee Ferguson on 1 January 1875 due to her husband's ill-health. Matthew Pemberton secured the postal service from 7 October 1875 following the relocation of Daniel and Janet McIntosh to Sydney.⁴³

Many of the local post offices were established during the later years of the nineteenth century, including one at Blue Gum Flat (later renamed Ourimbah) that was opened in 1871, at Peats Ferry in 1881, at Woy Woy in 1884, at Wyong in 1888, Norahville in 1891 and Tuggerah in 1892. Several others, such as that at The Entrance that opened in 1911, commenced operation prior to World War One. Post offices not only provided much-needed communication with the 'outside world', but also provided a range of community services and were often attached to a shop. For example, Dooralong Post Office was attached to the new Chapman and Sons' branch store built in 1919.



Figure 6.21 Wyong Post Office, after 1882. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

A telegraph connection was established in the area by 1878, when EC Cracknell, Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, arrived in Gosford on 23 July to open direct communication with Sydney. A temporary office was erected at Mr Jacque's, West Gosford.⁴⁴ Telegraph offices were subsequently opened at Blackwall in 1881, Blue Gum Flat (Ourimbah) in 1888, Gosford Railway Station in 1890 and Wyong in 1891.



Figure 6.22 Post and Telegraph Office, Gosford, c1905. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

Part of the Central Coast was connected to Sydney and Newcastle by a telephone service established in 1904. The Gosford service included Terrigal, Wamberal, Erina, Green Point, Point Clare, Woy Woy and Blackwall. Residents to the north and west at Wyong and Yarramalong lobbied for an extension of the service to these areas. In September 1911, the Josiah Thomas, Postmaster General accompanied by Joseph Cook, MP, officially opened the new post office at Wyong. After the official events on the day 'residents waited on the Minister with an urgent request for the establishment of a telephone line to Wyong'.⁴⁵

Telephone services branched out from here over the course of the next decade, catering to a growing population in the district.

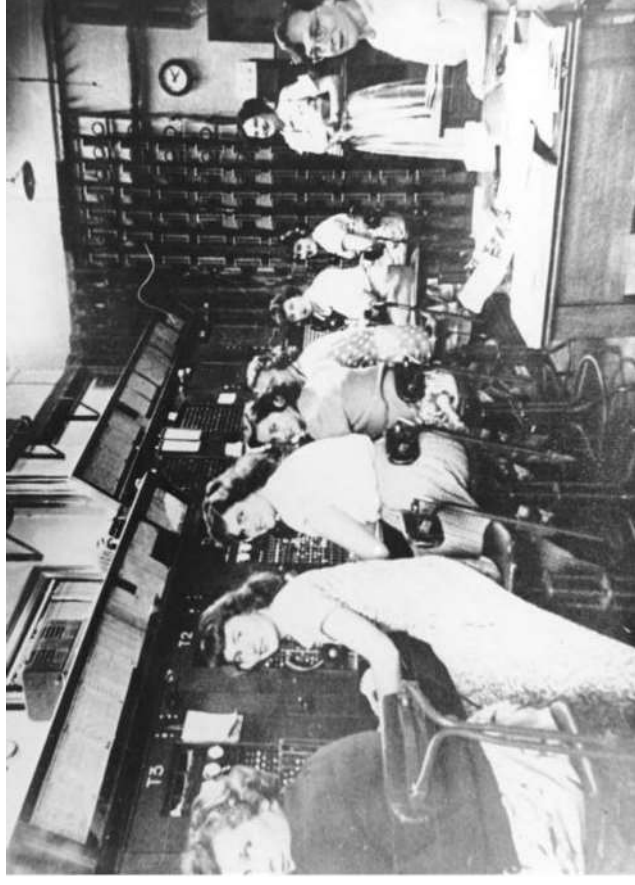


Figure 6.23 Telephone operators, Gosford Telephone Exchange, c1950s. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

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Holiday Playground of Two Cities



7 Holiday playground of two cities

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, interest in health and leisure was developing, along with a movement towards shorter working hours, free weekends and holidays for all workers. Since the arrival of European settlers in the Central Coast region, locals and visitors have appreciated the unique qualities of the regional environment, topography, climate and other natural features. These natural advantages became the focus of holiday and tourist trade in this region towards the end of the nineteenth century.¹

Tourism was slow to develop in the Central Coast due to difficulty in access, although Sydney residents were already visiting by the 1880s. Those willing to undertake the long journey came to hunt, fish and camp along the waterways.¹

The rail line between Sydney and Newcastle opened in 1887, making it possible to access the Gosford and Wyong region within a two- or three-hour trip from Sydney. Visitors were initially drawn to Gosford and Woy Woy, as the extra distance to Wyong required overnight accommodation. This was not generally available in Wyong until end of the 1890s.

Holiday accommodation

Woy Woy was the first stop of the Great Northern Line after crossing the Hawkesbury. It was a popular set-down place and was known as the 'Venice of Australia'². Visitors could fish, hunt and go swimming, as well as travel by horse and cart to Blackwall, a town a couple of kilometres from Woy Woy railway station.

From the early 1890s, guesthouses were being established in the Woy Woy area. The guesthouse Roma was built around 1891 near the railway station. This was followed by Woy Woy Hotel and Murray's boarding house, The Retreat, at Booker Bay. MRS HG Benson advertised Somatic, a private boarding establishment at Gosford in 1893 offering 'change of air, unrivalled climate...standing on 6 acres, with private water frontage'.³

Further north of Brisbane Water, the first guesthouse to open in the Wyong area was Dunleith at North Entrance in 1895. Soon after, another guesthouse opened on the northern side of the channel at The Entrance.

In September 1897, *The Gosford Times* reported that not enough overnight accommodation was available. They wrote that 'upwards of 9000 pleasure seekers visited Woy Woy and Blackwall during last holiday season'⁴ and over eight hours, 400 people alighted at Woy Woy station.⁵

By 1901, *The Gosford Times* claimed 400–500 people per year camped at The Entrance during the summer. The article described the area as follows:

It is one of the finest camping grounds, being well sheltered by trees and having a fine carpet of grass right down to the edge of the lake with plenty of fresh water springs. The scenery is all that can be wished.⁶



Figure 7.1 Camping ground at The Entrance, c1910. Photograph by MAB Broadhurst. (Source: State Library of NSW)

By 1906, the main road of Woy Woy (which was then located to the south of the railway station) was lined with guesthouses. They were built as close as possible to the station.⁷

The Erina Shire Council, which covered the Gosford and Wyong region, was established in the same year. The Council created a body devoted to the marketing and capitalisation of the area. Tourism was the immediate answer and attention was turned to promoting the attractions of the shire.

The *Tourists' Handbook of the Hawkesbury River and North Coast District* was issued by the NSW Government Tourist Bureau in 1906. This handbook provided information of the main attractions of the Central Coast—fresh air, natural landscape, camping, sport (hunting and fishing) and sightseeing by boat or on the train.⁸

Between 1906 and 1916, guesthouses were spread throughout the Brisbane Water area. In 1912, the land around the Woy Woy railway station, Brick wharf and today's Orange Grove was subdivided by the then-owner James Cox. The town centre of Woy Woy eventually moved to Cox's land, with guesthouses being built there. Woy Woy developed as a residential area.



Figure 7.2 Guesthouses at Saratoga and Mount Pleasant, Woy Woy, c1910. Photograph by MAB Broadhurst. (Source: State Library of NSW)

Subdivided land along the waterfront from Saratoga to Point Clare was offered for sale during this period. Many of these sites were purchased for holiday accommodation, such as boarding houses and furnished cottages, and shops for visitors. Several stylish shops were built at Woy Woy, designed to capture the attention of visitors. Only a few survive, including the former Mrs Wilson's shop and part of the former Alecia Tea Rooms.⁹

All the holiday places around Brisbane Water could be accessed by boat, while Tascott and Point Clare also had their own railway

stations. A wharf near the Woy Woy railway station was built in 1899. The first ferry service on Brisbane Water was established in 1905 by the Sisters of St Joseph. An overhead bridge was constructed a few years later, as visitors had to cross the rail line to access the wharf. Additional wharves were built over the next 20 years.



Figure 7.3 On a boat trip, 1910. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 7.4 Group of men, believed to be from Sydney, visiting Woy Woy in 1909. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

By 1920, a significant population was recorded living in Woy Woy, although most houses were occupied on a temporary basis. Further subdivisions had been made between the railway and coastline and the sand flats, and at Patonga.

To the north, other towns had also developed into holiday destinations, including Wamberal, Tuggerah, Norahville, Wyong and Morisset. All these places contained numerous guesthouses.

One enterprising family, the Taylor family, had opened four more guesthouses at the Entrance by 1916. Their largest guesthouse, Bayview at the Entrance/Tuggerah Lakes, could accommodate up to 150 guests. This was still not enough to meet demand and the Entrance was akin to a 'tent city' during the holiday period.¹⁰ The Taylors opened a campground on their land on the foreshore of the Entrance and offered fully furnished tents. The Taylor family also operated the Taylors Ferry Service, which ran from the newly constructed Wyong Wharves.¹¹



Figure 7.5 Bayview Guesthouse, The Entrance/Tuggerah Lakes, undated. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 7.6 Arthur Wray and Elinor Wray with fish identified as Luderick, Wagstaffe Point, 1913. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

The National Roads Motoring Authority (NRMA) established holiday camps in Forresters Beach and Bateau Bay in the late 1920's to promote tourism to the Central Coast. This was in a time when car ownership was starting to become more widespread. This bid was foiled by the 1930's depression. In 1931 Central Camp at Forresters Beach was 'one of the best fitted-up auto camps in the State', while motor grounds at the

northern end of Tuggerah Lakes were under the management of Mrs Duncan.¹²



Figure 7.7 Women playing on a see-saw, c1900s. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

Delectable Places and Tourist Attractions

With the close of the Victorian period, preferences for recreational activities changed. With the advent of surfing and the promotion of the healthy aspects of the sun, the Wyong Shire

had an increasing number of tourists traveling to bathing beaches as the main reasons for visiting the area.

There were several locals actively promoting the area. Notable among them were Woy Woy businessman WE Phegan and Richard Henry Clifford (Gosford Wharfinger). Phegan was a photographic artist and published a series of postcards of the Central Coast and other tourist publications such as *Woy Woy: the sports paradise: beautifully illustrated* (1911) and one year earlier, *Phegan's Great Northern Line Tourist Guide* (1910).

In 1921 the *Gosford Times* and *Woyong District Advocate* reported on Phegan's new 128-page tourist guide illustrating every district between Sydney and Tamworth with an emphasis on the waterside resorts of the coastal areas such as the Hawkesbury, Woy Woy, Terrigal, Gosford, Wamberal, The Entrance, Wyong and Lake Macquarie:

It is ten years since Mr Phegan issued a Tourist Guide of the district, then acknowledged to be the finest production of its kind up-to-date.¹³

Efforts to market land in the Central Coast region for potential holiday houses or weekend properties increased during the 1920s and 1930s. The development of associations such as the Erina Shire Development League and the publications produced by them to promote the locality highlighted the commitment to tourism as a marketable commodity.



Figure 7.8 WE Phegan, *The Great Northern Guide Sydney to Newcastle Beautifully Illustrated*, 1922. (Source: Gostalgia: local history from Gosford Library)

These publications would highlight the features of the area, writing about the natural landscape, and well-resourced townships that provided many attractions and recreational activities for visitors and residents.



Figure 7.9 Playing at Terrigal Beach, early 1920s. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

The Gosford School of Arts was a centre for cultural activities such as lectures, a venue for public meetings and subscription library, and was also used for traveling picture shows. The Gosford Wildflower Show was held here, which was a popular tourist attraction, pulling in visitors from Sydney. The first show was held in 1885 at William Parry's Assembly Hall in Mann Street, Gosford. All the plants on show were picked in the wild around the district. The funds raised from the first show was used towards the construction of the Gosford School of Arts. The

Gosford Wildflower became a popular annual event. Similar shows became popular in the region and around Sydney. (Figure 7.10) This caused a lot of damage to the bush, especially around Gosford as many of the display plants were picked from there. In 1927, the *Wild Flower and Native Plants Act* was enacted to ban the indiscriminate picking and sales of wildflowers.¹⁴



Figure 7.10 Woy Woy Wildflower Show, possibly 1918. (Source: Central Coast Library Service)

Dances, concerts, plays and picture shows were also held in public halls. Cinemas were built in several locations—two of the earliest were located in Woy Woy and Gosford. Guesthouses hosted sing-a-longs and fancy-dress parties.¹⁵ Recreational activities including swimming, surfing, fishing, camping, bushwalking, boating, golf, cricket and game shooting.

Several surf clubs were established along the coast, and sailing, motorboating and sculling could be undertaken at Brisbane Water. Competitive sporting events also occurred, such as boxing horse racing, which began at the turn of the century. Road and track racing, as well as general athletics carnivals and swimming carnivals occurred throughout the year.

The Erina Shire Council and the Development League were major agitators for the construction of new and better road access to the area in this period as its connection to developing the tourism industry. The Pacific Highway was constructed in large part due to the efforts of these and similar groups. A 1937 tourist booklet promoting the Pacific Highway and the towns, beaches and bushland along the way referred to the highway as 'The Coastal Scenic Highway'. The booklet's message to the reader was:

...no written or illustrated pages can ever describe adequately the glory of the scenery revealed by the journey. THE ROAD MUST BE TRAVERSED.¹⁶



Figure 7.11 *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide*, published by the Erina Shire Development League in 1928. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

Public rail transport had opened this region to tourism in the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, motor vehicles allowed access to out of the way places. Those who had a car could stay away from the guesthouses that crowded around the railway stations and instead visit camping places. During the postwar period, more private shacks were built along the coast. Some families also purchased caravans, which were like a portable shack that travelled with the car and allowed flexibility in destination.

Carnivals have been held at The Entrance since the 1930s, featuring processions, lights, races, parades and carnival rides. According to oral history accounts, the carousel on the Waterfront Plaza arrived in The Entrance in around 1930. It was previously located at the corner of Coral Street and The Entrance Road.¹⁷ By the 1950s, penny arcades, sideshows, chocolate wheels, showmen, rides and crowds of people could be found at the carnivals almost any night of the week, particularly during the school holidays. The carnivals would occupy vacant land on The Entrance Road and Memorial Park. In later years, due to development of The Entrance Road, the carnivals were restricted to Memorial Park.¹⁸



Figure 7.12 Carousel at The Entrance, February 1954, photographed by Max Dupain. (Source: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

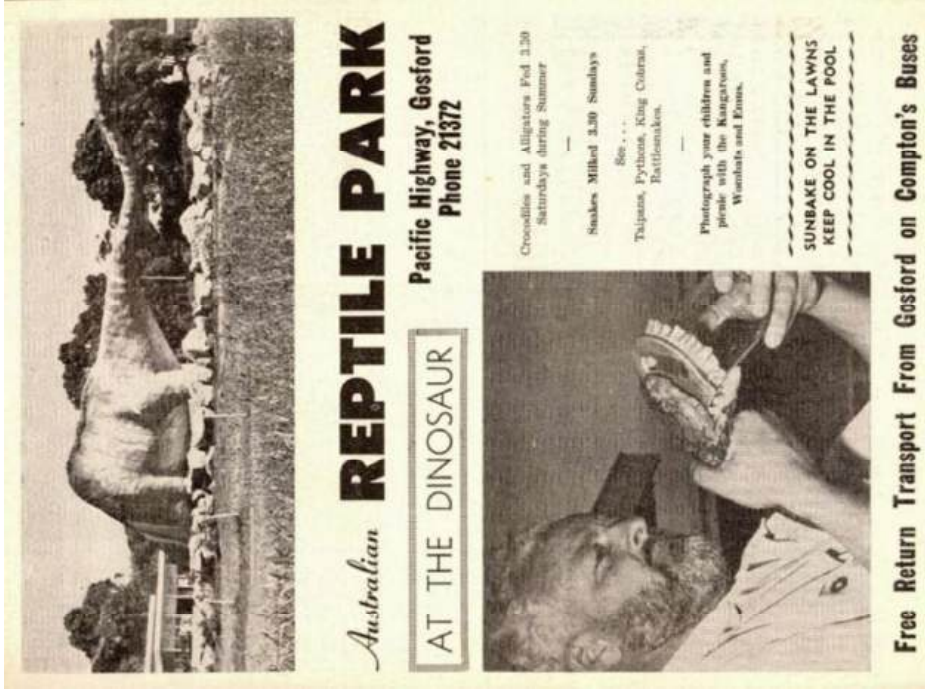


Figure 7.13 1967 advertisement for the Australian Reptile Park, showing Ploddy the Dinosaur and Eric Worrell. (Source: Gostalgia; local history from Gosford City Library)

Zoos were also established in the Central Coast Region. Eric Worrell set up the Ocean Beach Reptile Park and Aquarium in 1949 at Umina Beach. He began providing snake venom to the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories in 1951. Worrell later moved the facility to Wyoming, setting up the Australian Reptile Park and expanding his range of animals. Ploddy the Diplodocus, now a major landmark on the freeway after the park was relocated to Somersby in 1994, was completed in March 1963.

New phase of tourism development

From the 1950s onwards, motels emerged to offer more accommodation choices, particularly for visitors driving to the Central Coast. The Erina Drive-in Cinema opened in 1958, showcasing a new and highly popular entertainment that married the motor car and the cinema—two potent symbols of the twentieth century.

Clubs also boomed in the 1950s. Construction of the Woy Woy and District War Memorial Club began in 1953 and it opened in 1959. In 1954, the Central Coast Leagues Club took over a former clothing factory in Georgiana Terrace.

In 1961, the Central Coast was described as 'the playground' of two cities.¹⁹ The Real Estate Institute of NSW claimed the Central Coast region to be mainly composed of holiday resorts. This region provided many beach and waterside activities, as well as other recreational activities for visitors and residents. Visitors had been travelling to this area since the 1920s for swimming, bushwalking, sport, camping, fishing and prawning. The Real Estate Institute of NSW described the Wyong district as 'the Mecca of holiday resorts for thousands of city people'²⁰.



Figure 7.14 Robin D'Ombra's first fish at Elanora, Bateau Bay, NSW, Australia. (Source: Athel D'Ombra from the University of Newcastle Special Collections)

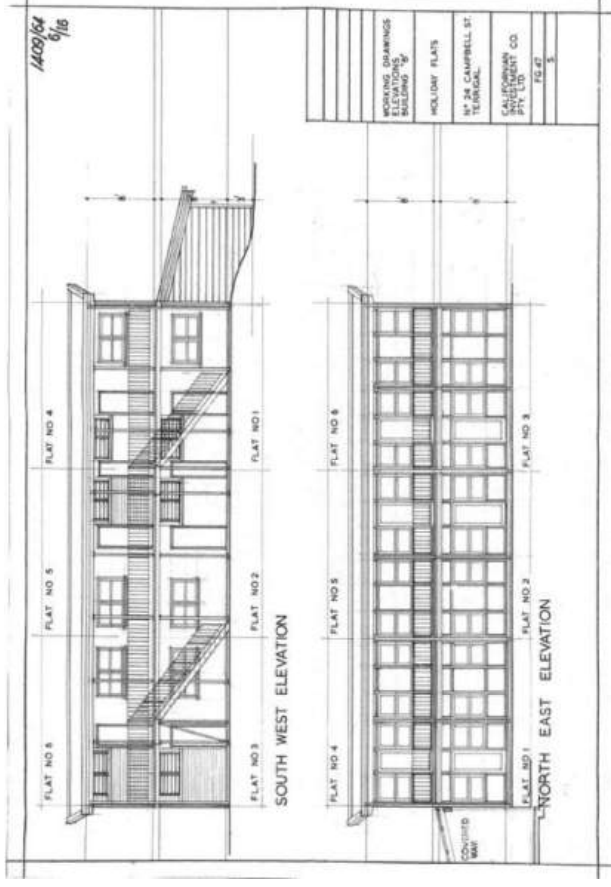


Figure 7.15 Elevations of Building B, holiday flats, 24 Campbell Crescent Terrigal, 1964. (Source: Central Coast Council, BA1964.1409)



Figure 7.16 The Bee Gees performing at the Central Coast Leagues Club on 20 February 1965. Maurice Gibbs (left) and Robin Gibbs (centre) were aged 16, and Barry Gibbs (right) was aged 18 at the time. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

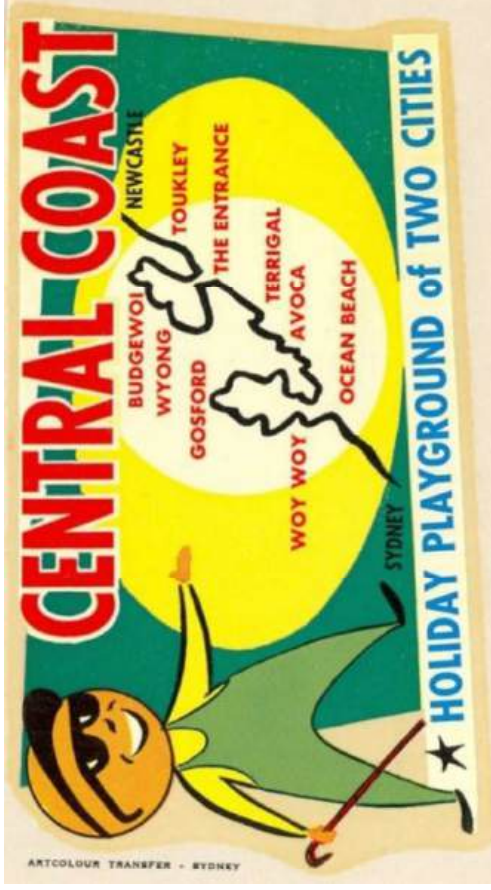


Figure 7.17 'Holiday Playground of Two Cities', water slide transfer sold through Central Coast Tourist Centres in 1960s and 1970s. (Source: Gosstalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

Although caravans had existed prior to World War Two it was not until the 1950s that increased access to motor vehicles and greater leisure time allowed caravanning to become a truly popular past time. The Central Coast was a popular tourist destination and was home to several caravan parks in beachside and lakeside locations.



Figure 7.18 Ettalong Caravan Park, c1970. Photograph by Gwen Dundon. (Source: Gosstalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 7.19 Canton Beach and Holiday Park, 1980s. Photography by Beryl Strom. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

Theme parks were established across Australia from the 1960s. A popular theme was history such as Old Sydney Town which opened in 1975 at Somersby. It was constructed to be a faithful reconstruction of colonial pre-Macquarie Sydney.²¹ The park closed in 2003.

In the 1980's and 1990s the entire western side of Forrester's Beach was taken up by an amusement complex called 'Central Park' which ultimately failed.



Figure 7.20 A sergeant issuing work orders to the convicts at Old Sydney Town. This photo was taken in January 2003, during the last few days of Old Sydney Town being open to the public. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

By the late twentieth century, large-scale resorts were developed to cater to a different type of holiday maker, complete with restaurants, day spas, conference facilities, retail outlets and other facilities. Among these were The Pacific International Waterfront Resort at The Entrance in 2000.

Today, the primary strengths for the tourism industry are similar to those from the late nineteenth century. They are identified in the *Central Coast Destination Management Plan 2022-2025* as the coast and waterways assets, nature-based assets, and associated recreation and attractions. Coast and waterways include the beaches, rivers, lakes, bays and estuaries. Popular water activities include swimming, surfing, canoeing, fishing, reef diving and guided boat tours.

Nature-based assets include the several national parks, state parks and reserves in the region. The Central Coast has infrastructure to support a range of recreational and sporting activities, including bushwalking, mountain biking, 4WDing, fishing and boating.²²

The Central Coast Council is working to enhance their primary strengths and develop emerging strengths. The emerging strengths are based on local food and beverages, including encouraging tourists to visit the direct source; transport and access; events and festivals; and arts, culture and heritage.



Figure 7.21 Broken Bay Pearl Farm Tour, Mooney Mooney. (Source: Central Coast Destination Management Plan 2022-2025, p 19)

The Central Coast is an ECO destination, certified by Ecotourism Australia. It is the third destination in Australia to receive this certification and second in New South Wales. The Central Coast currently has 15 ecotourism experiences on offer—six have received ECO certification and nine are ECO applicants.²³ For Council, this certification:

...recognises the Central Coast as a world-class destination for sustainable, nature-based tourism. It highlights the Central Coast's commitment to quality and sustainable practices, which many of our businesses share at the core of their operations. It also gives conscious travellers a clearer choice of the best eco-friendly, nature-based experiences, attractions and accommodation the Central Coast has to offer.²⁴



Figure 7.22 Iris Lodge Alpacas, one of the businesses that has ECO certification. (Source: Central Coast NSW)

7.1 Endnotes

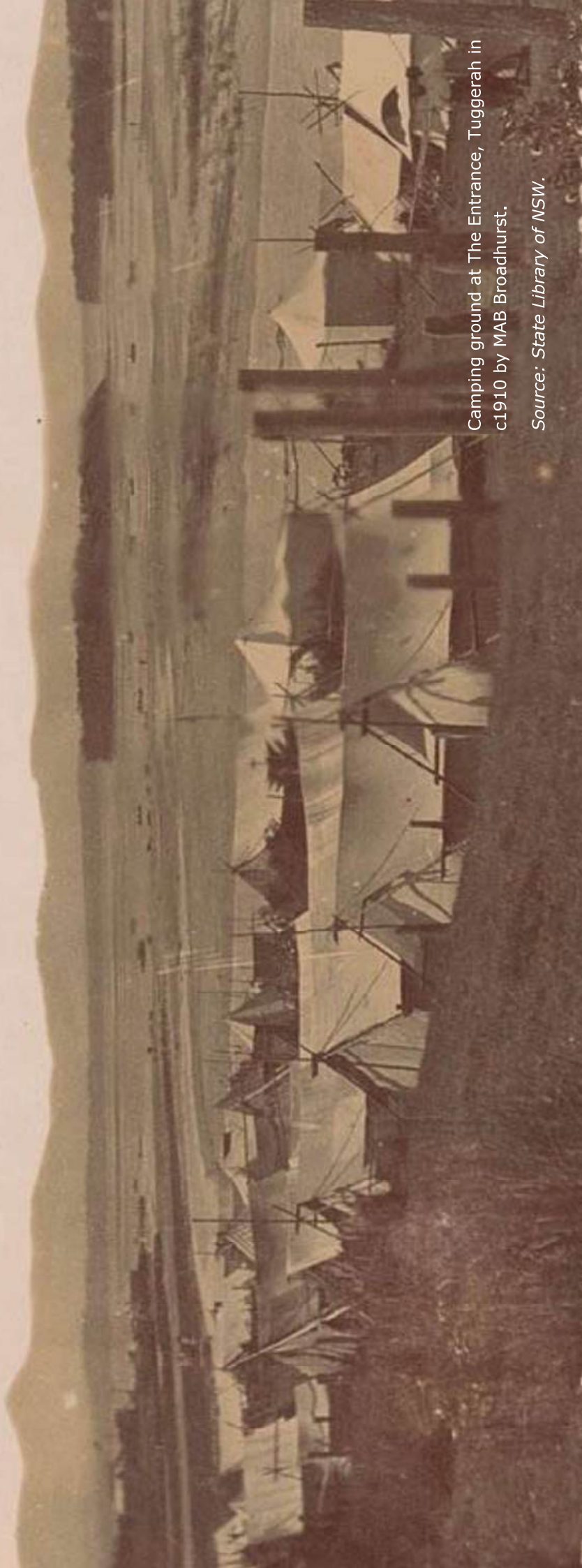
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***The Entrance looked like “Calico Town”
during the holidays, scores of tents
being dotted along the foreshores.***

The Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate, 3 January 1918, p 14.



Camping ground at The Entrance, Tuggerah in
c1910 by MAB Broadhurst.

Source: State Library of NSW.

Country Charms with Urban Advantages



Davistown Hall and shops, undated.
Source: Central Coast Library Service.

8 Country charms with urban advantages

The development of many of the settlements in the Brisbane Water District was initially in response to the local timber industry. The principal waterways, such as the Hawkesbury River, Mangrove Creek, Brisbane Water, Wyong Creek and Tuggerah Lakes, provided access to important timber resources and supported several small settlements in the nineteenth century.

The opening of the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge in 1889 enabled fast and reliable communication between Sydney and the Central Coast and Newcastle. The railway influenced the pattern and location of residential development, and attracted intensive speculation with subdividers, surveyors, auctioneers and real estate agents occupied for many years following.

In the early twentieth century, the Central Coast evolved as a favourite holiday destination. The timber industry was at its peak and new industries, such as dairying, citrus growing, poultry and other agricultural pursuits, provided economic promise and stimulation to a growing resident and tourist population.

The townships established during the later years of the nineteenth century grew and provided more services for the population

Subdivision and settlement

At the turn of the twentieth century, residential subdivisions sprouted up along the railway line, along the region's extensive waterfront and along the coastal strip. Almost all of the holiday resorts around Brisbane Water and along the coastal strip developed as they were subdivided, creating a network of guesthouses, small corner shops and houses to let, plus weekend cottages. Brisbane Water settlements such as Sorrento (Empire Bay), Ettalong, Wagstaff Point and Saratoga gained popularity in the period before World War One.

Meanwhile, inland estates along the railway corridor and the main town centres of Gosford and Wyong generally served the timber and farming industries and provided business sites and housing allotments for local workers.

Subdivisions often provided a mix of allotments such as the Warner Estate (1910s), which advertised blocks highly suitable for productive farming, as well as weekend river and lake-front blocks at reasonable terms. Many estates were aimed at weekenders, offering absolute water frontages and allotments for wharf and boating facilities.

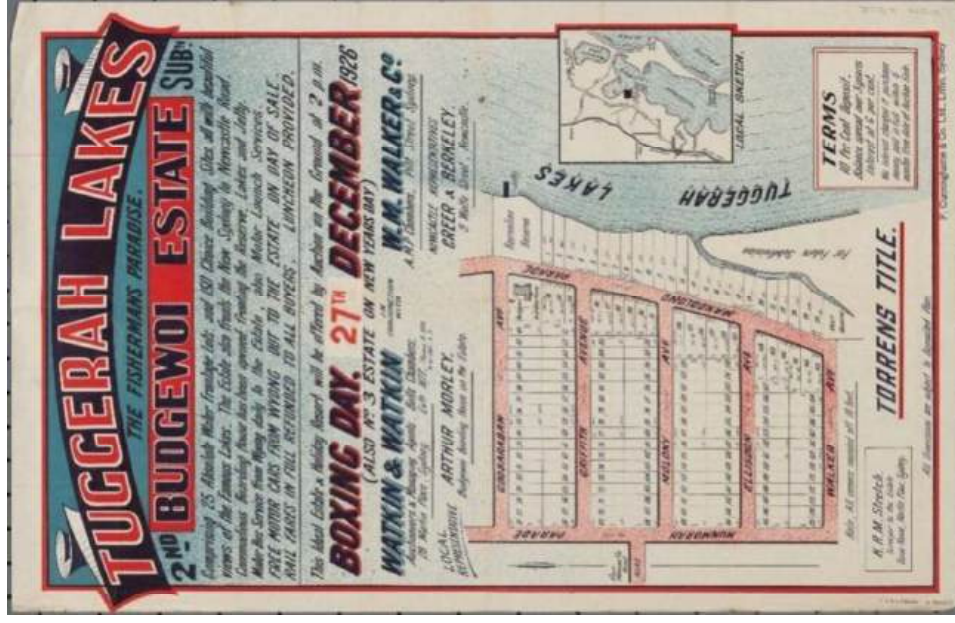


Figure 8.4 2nd subdivision Budgewoi Estate Tuggerah Lakes, 1926.
(Source: Central Coast Council)

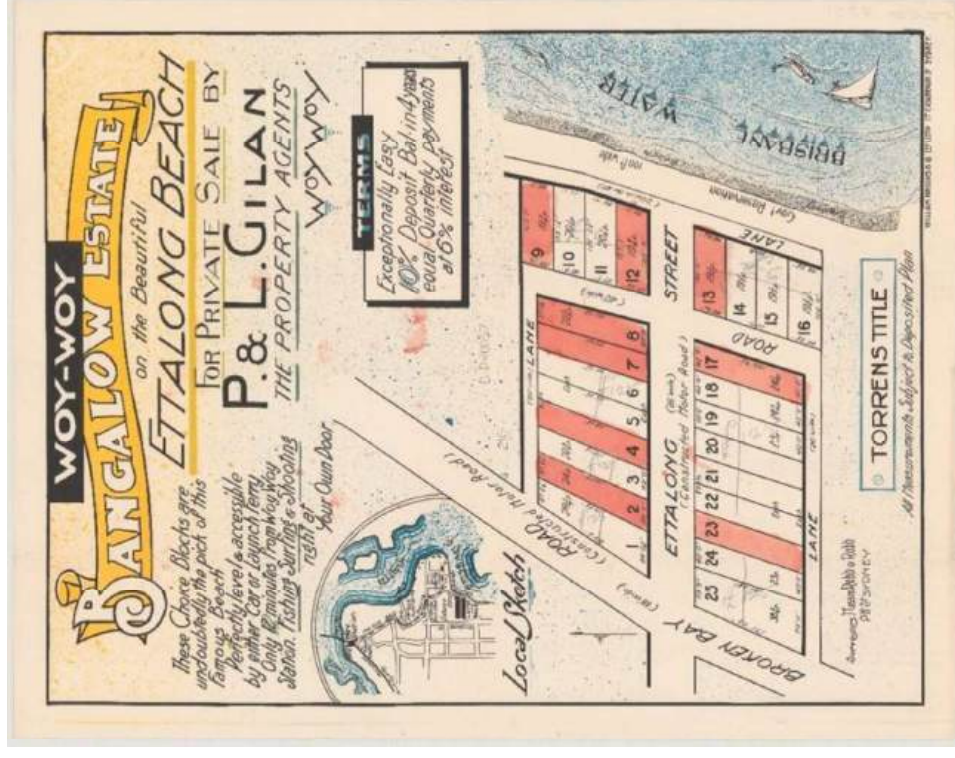


Figure 8.5 Bangalow Estate Woy Woy at Ettalong Beach, 1927. (Source: National Library of Australia)

Several local real estate agents and branches of Sydney-based firms were established in the area. In 1920, Roughly and Parry of Gosford advertised their services to those interested in settling on the Central Coast as follows:

If You Wish to Reside about Gosford

Either on an ...
Orchard or Market Garden
or in the Town or by the
Waterside

WE CAN SUPPLY YOU
With whatever you need in the way of

Land or Homes at Reasonable Prices
ON EASY TERMS

Roughly and Parry
Property Salesmen, Auctioneers, &c.
Gosford

(Opposite Royal Hotel)
Phone ... Gosford

Figure 8.6 Advertisement for Roughly and Parry, Gosford, 1920.
(Source: *The glorious Gosford district in the front rank of the World's Best Tourist Resorts*)
By the 1920s, with the improved communications now available, the Wyong area was being promoted as a healthy environment in which to bring up children:

Easily and quickly accessible by road and rail it is in an ideal location for the businessman's home, away from the drawbacks of a city in the midst of all that makes for the healthy upbringing of a strong family.³

Likewise, the price of land and cost of living were claimed to be cheaper in Gosford 'than in any other part of Australia' and 'you will live on the sunny side of life when you live in Gosford District'.⁴

According to the *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide* in 1928:

Variety is the big advantage; the resident may choose an ocean frontage, a lakeside situation, some quiet valley, or he may prefer the stimulating atmosphere of the mountain plateaux.

...The Shire presents great possibilities for subdivision, and each new offering of and finds a responsive market. Some of the most desirable areas have been opened up of recent years at Ocean Beach and Pearl Beach, Woy Woy; Patonga Park, Ettalong Beach; along the coast from Wagstaff to Avoca, Terrigal, Wamberal, Toowoong Bay, The Entrance; along the line at Woy Woy, Koolewong, Tascott and other points; round the lakes at Long Jetty, Killarney, Wyong Creek and other localities. There are still picked areas to be opened up...

Booming Businesses

The services and community places required by the various townships and villages commenced around the turn of the twentieth century, and continued with more emphasis on services attuned to growing urban needs and the tourist trade. Gosford, Woy Woy and Wyong were the principal shopping centres in the region.

As towns developed, all had a general store and other shops according to the size of the population. These small one-stop shops were scattered across the district at tourist resorts and fishing villages, largely catering to the influx of tourists and the small number of local residents.

After the official survey and naming of Gosford as a government town in 1839, two villages developed in parallel, as East Gosford was run as a private town. However, the government village of Gosford overtook the eastern village, and the administrative centre developed along Mann Street.

In 1912, Gosford was described as follows:

'Gosford township is still improving. The new brick shops are finished, and occupied by new land agent, pharmacy, and up-to-date smallgoods shops, and as all have large plate glass windows and abundant light, the township has a greatly improved appearance at night.'⁵

Following World War One, business and building activity rebounded in the area, although the permanent resident population remained relatively small. For instance, in 1924, the population of Woy Woy was about 1,000, Gosford 600, Wyong 310, Ourimbah 120 and Terrigal 105.⁶

In the mid-1920s, 'Gosfordcar' commented on the change and improvement he had witnessed in Gosford after an absence of less than a year:

New buildings everywhere— new Bank, and what a beauty it is too! New shops on either side of the street, and all seem to be well occupied, or bespoken when not finished. New garage...⁷

General stores were a central feature of most of the townships on the Central Coast. They provided a wide range of goods and services and were generally run by local families. These one-stop shops sold groceries and refreshments, acted as the local post office and bank agency, sold bait and tackle, and served absentee holiday rental owners as well as rental agents. They also served an important community function as a gathering place.



Figure 8.7 View north along Mann Street, Gosford, c1910s. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 8.8 Pryor Bros grocery and general store, Lisarow, c1928. (Source: Central Coast Council)

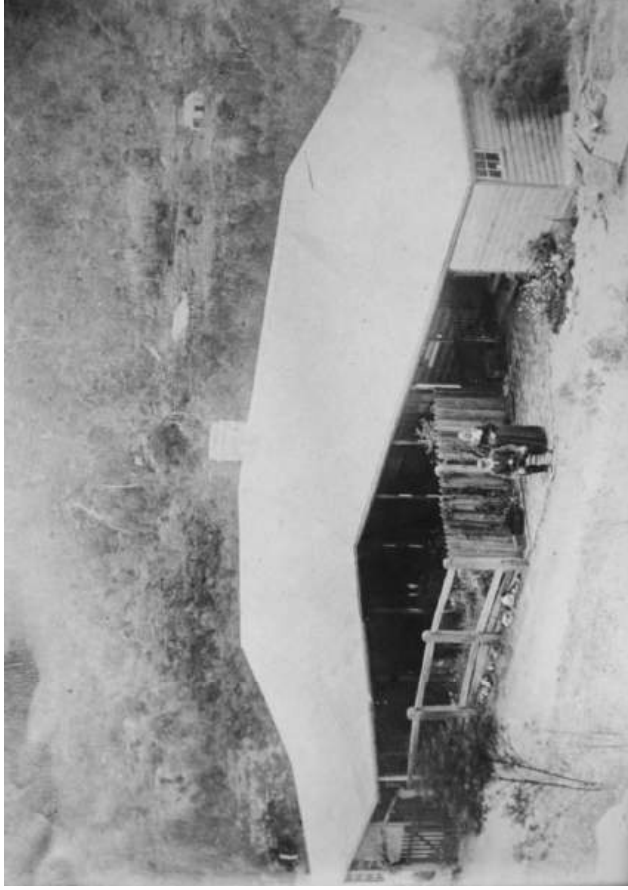


Figure 8.9 Matthew Pemberton's Post office, store and home, Mangrove Creek, c1900–19. (Source: Central Coast Council)

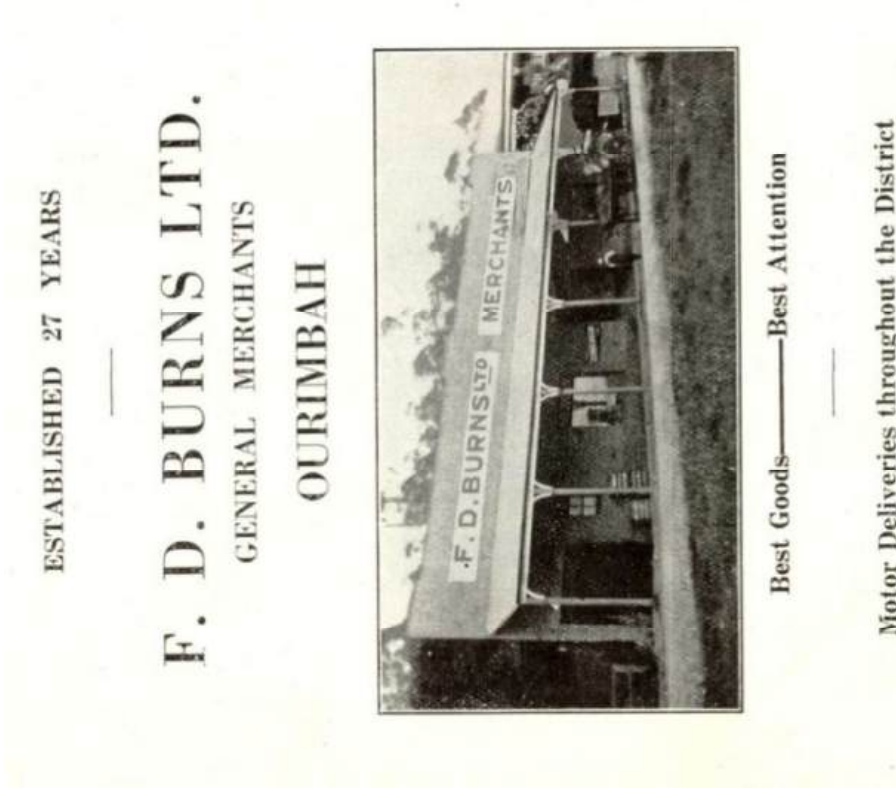


Figure 8.10 Advertisement for FD Burns Ltd at Ourimbah, 1928.
(Source: Erina Shire Holiday & Touring Guide Woy Woy-Gosford-Wyong)

At least one tourist guide boasted that living costs were cheap in the district, with all types of businesses able to deliver goods daily throughout the region by motor lorries, launches and other forms of transport. In 1922, the *Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate* reported on the progress being made at Wyong:

Wyong is bounding ahead, and workmen are busy in all directions, erecting nicely designed cottages, commodious shops, tidy workrooms and huge picture palace.⁸

Chapman and Sons General Store was established at Wyong in 1901 and for many years it was the 'largest trading firm between Sydney and Newcastle'.⁹ A 1906 article stated that they were the oldest storekeepers in the place, they kept a large stock, carried on an immense business and employed a large number of employees.¹⁰ Other businesses located at Wyong at this time included a Bank of New South Wales, Wilkinson Brothers' General Stores, AH Bailey's Butchery, Miss Jones' Wyong Coffee Palace, and WJ Moore's Commercial Hotel.

Edmund Denning Duffy and his father Charles Duffy established Duffy's Emporium and Refreshment Rooma at Wyong Lakes in 1910. This was the first store opened at The Entrance.



Figure 8.11 Duffy's Emporium, Wyong Lakes (The Entrance), c1910s.
(Source: Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 8.12 Chapman & Sons stores at Wyong, c1911–1929.
Photograph by Rex Hazelwood. (Source: State Library of NSW)

One of the biggest investors and builders in the region, Albert Henry Warner, erected a large number of stores in the then Erina Shire on his Wyong and Warnervale Estates from the early 1900s. This included four shops and an office adjoining the stationmaster's residence at Wyong, approved by Council in October 1925, when the area had a shortage of vacant shops.¹¹

Warner's five new shops at Wyong were completed in 1926 and faced in brown tiles with an ironite pavement running the length of the shops. Simultaneously, Warner was erecting four shops of a similar style at Woy Woy, 'and when they are completed there will be twenty-four shops in Erina Shire owned by the Warner family'.¹²

Business turnover was common on the Central Coast, as for instance in 1927, when Wade Bros sold the general store at Terrigal to G Henningham, who had plans to extend the store, 'retaining departments for groceries, ironmongery, glassware, crockery, fancy goods, drapery, confectionery, ices, cool drinks, tobacco, fruit, etc.'¹³

The *Erina Shire Holiday and Touring Guide* in 1928 wrote:

There are in Gosford and other centres of the district business places, from great departmental stores to small shops, which make available at competitive prices every necessity, luxury and service of modern life.

Following World War One, new banking premises were erected by the two banks already based in Gosford and in 1920, the Commercial Banking Co of Sydney announced plans to build on a site fronting Mann Street. Business confidence boomed in the 1930s following the Great Depression, with several new banks, shops and facilities built in the region. A new Rural Bank branch was opened at Gosford in 1934.



Figure 8.13 Mann Street, Gosford, mid to late 1950s. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

Municipal matters

The Borough of Gosford was proclaimed on 11 November 1886 following a petition signed by 59 Gosford residents of an estimated local population of 1,000. The borough covered an area of 1,840 acres (744.62 hectares) and the Council met initially at the Gosford School of Arts from 1888.¹⁴

Police magistrates administered the remaining area in the Brisbane Water Police District until March 1906, when the area was gazetted as Erina Shire.¹⁵ This new shire was divided into three ridings and met at the Gosford Courthouse until 1912.¹⁶

The Borough of Gosford was renamed the Municipality of Gosford in accordance with the *Local Government Act, 1906*. The following year, the council petitioned to merge with the Erina Shire.¹⁷ Following a public inquiry, the Commissioner recommended the merger and proposed a six-ward Erina Shire—Gosford became F Riding, taking effect on 23 January 1908.¹⁸ In 1912, new Erina Shire Council Chambers were erected in Mann Street, Gosford.¹⁹

Woy Woy Shire separated from Erina Shire in 1928.²⁰ The Council met at the Woy Woy Masonic Hall until 1931, when a new Council Chambers Building, designed by Clifford H Finch and built by GW Richards, was officially opened on 14 March.

In 1946, Erina and Woy Woy Shire Councils, and Gosford Municipal Council were reconstituted as two Councils—Wyong Shire and Gosford Shire.²¹ The improved road and rail connections increased accessibility throughout the district and hastened the transition from rural and holiday/retirement area to a dormitory suburb of Sydney with a large commuter population.

In the later years of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th century local residents formed progress associations to gain improvements in services and to lobby local councils on local issues. Key issues of interest to progress associations included rates, street lights, better roads and footpaths, and sporting facilities. Fundraising was another aspect of the voluntary work

of progress associations, usually for specific needs such as school equipment. Wyong Progress Association was formed in 1902, The Entrance in 1920 and Budgewoi in 1937. Gosford's Progress Association was re-established in 1906 and according to the *Gosford Times*:

An organisation of this kind is one that should appeal to every individual who is living, or gets his living in the district.²²



Figure 8.14 New Erina Shire Council Chambers, Mann Street, Gosford, post-1912. Broadhurst Post Card Publishers. (Source: State Library of NSW, 796359)



Figure 8.15 Woy Woy Shire Councillors and staff, after 1931. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

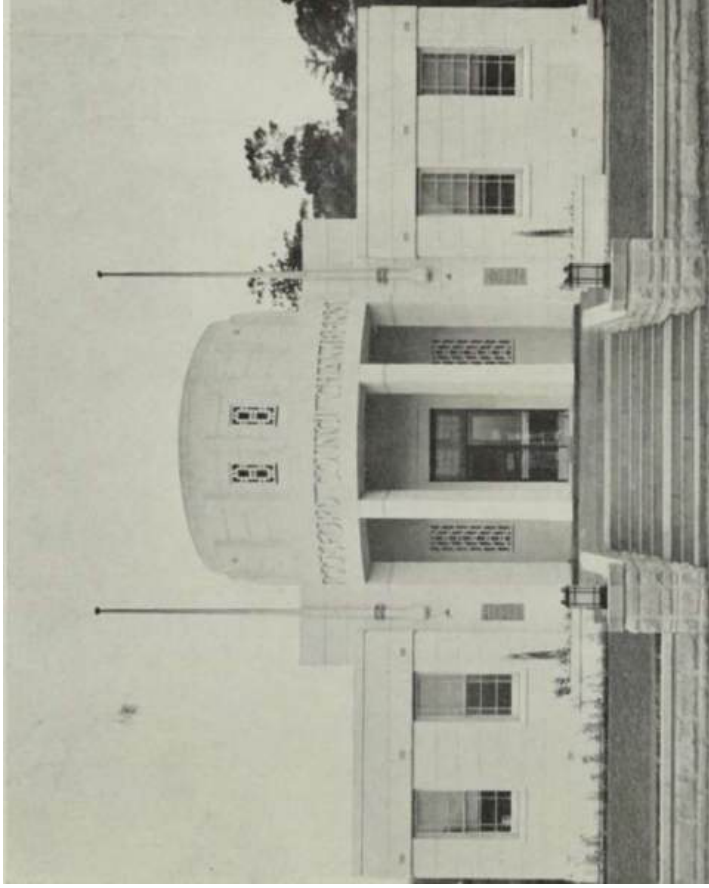


Figure 8.16 New Council Chambers, Gosford, 1939. (Source: *Building*, 24 May 1939, p 2)

Urban infrastructure

In providing the services required by urban settlement, the Central Coast was largely forced to develop its own systems due to its physical isolation from Sydney and Newcastle.

Street lighting was installed in Gosford using kerosene lamps in 1902, while Wyong trialled kerosene and vapour lamps in 1912. Electric street lighting in Gosford was powered from a distribution station at the corner of Erina and Watt Streets, commencing in November 1923.

In neighbouring Woy Woy Shire, an electricity supply commenced on 21 December 1929, while electric light and power was later switched on in Kincumber in November 1948. From 1929, the Railway Department supplied electric light and power from the Fassifern power house to districts from Newcastle to Wyong and Gosford. The supply was later extended to The Entrance, Ourimbah and Wamberal. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* proclaimed:

This light and power is going to greatly stimulate settlement in Erina Shire and Woy Woy Shire.²³

In 1942, the Brisbane Water County Council was inaugurated to supply electricity to the Gosford Municipality and the Shires of Woy Woy and Erina.



Figure 8.17 Electric lighting at the Gosford School of Arts, 2 November 1923. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

For over a century, the European settlers of the region relied on the plentiful fresh water resources of the region's rivers, creeks and water holes. These rapidly became contaminated, and landowners were forced to supplement from wells and household rainwater tanks. As early as 1885, land was set aside in the hills east of Gosford for a water supply, however no progress on a piped water supply occurred until the 1920s, when Wyong

advocated for a 'huge dam or wall across some mountain gorge through which flows a clear stream, and thus impound a vast quantity of exceedingly pure water, which could be conveyed by gravitation to Gosford, Ourimbah and Wyong.'²⁴ The lack of a piped water supply was seen as an impediment to development in the region. Eventually, in mid-1935, the Department of Public Works commenced work on constructing a reservoir and associated works to supply water to Gosford at a cost of over £72,000. The catchment was located on the lower reaches of Mooney Mooney Creek and a reservoir with a capacity of 300,000 gallons was constructed on President's Hill, overlooking Gosford. Gosford Mayor, William Calman Grahame, turned on Gosford's water supply on 15 March 1938, 'thus given to the town one of them main services for comfort of householders'.²⁵

The Minister for Works and Local Government, Eric Sydney Spooner, officially opened the town's water supply system on 22 May 1938 and also turned the first sod for excavations connected with the sewerage scheme. At this date, the piped water supply did not extend to the broader Central Coast area of 500 square miles, and excluded The Entrance, Ourimbah, Terrigal, Wyong, Avoca and smaller towns on the coastal strip, as well as the inland valley and plateau towns.

Alongside the water supply scheme for Gosford and electricity undertaking in Erina Shire, Gosford Council arranged £58,000 in

funds for a sewerage scheme in 1937. At the end of World War Two, Erina Shire still had no sewerage and its water supply was confined to Wyong.

In 1847, a new courthouse and police station opened in Mann Street, Gosford. This served the entire district of Brisbane Water until the end of the nineteenth century. By 1906, Wyong had a police station, which was extensively renovated in 1921. A temporary police station was established at The Entrance in 1926 while a new station was built at Woy Woy in 1946.

In 1911, Gosford and Wyong were still without a fire brigade, despite the ever-present risk of bush fires in the district. This, coupled with a lack of a regular piped water supply, put the many townships of the Central Coast on alert during dry spells in summer. When a fire broke out in the stables of Chapman & Sons stores at Wyong on 2 October 1923, the damage to buildings and property was extensive, and the fire spread to the adjoining stables of the Grand Hotel despite the best efforts of volunteers using the limited available facilities.²⁶ Numerous buildings were destroyed by fire in this period.



Figure 8.18 Some public buildings at Wyong, c1910. (Source: University of Newcastle, Living Histories)

Fire stations were eventually built at Woy Woy in 1935 and Gosford in 1939, while a brigade was established in Wyong in 1936.



Figure 8.19 Volunteer firemen outside the new Fire Station, Woy Woy, 1935. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)

Community Life

Town and community services were progressively established across the Central Coast as land was increasingly subdivided for residential development and the population grew. Residents banded together to establish churches, lobby for public schools, form progress associations and community welfare organisations,

build schools of arts, establish musical/theatrical groups and, sporting clubs, and erect picture theatres and a range of recreational facilities.

Prior to the 1880s several church and provisional schools provided education to the children of local families in isolated hamlets across the region. Schools at Kincumber, East Gosford and Gosford for instance were established in the 1830s and 1840s, while there were schools serving the Lower Hawkesbury and Mangrove Creek areas by the 1850s and 1860s. The right to 'free, secular and compulsory' education was enshrined in the *Public instruction Act 1880*.

This legislation spurred on the establishment of a raft of new public schools throughout the Central Coast when the local population was large enough. For instance, Blackwall (1871), Empire Bay (1881), Mullet Creek (1884, closed in 1890), and Woy Woy (1891), Kulnura in 1928, Peats Ridge in 1931, Avoca Beach in 1935 and Calga in 1937 (closed 1949). The northern reaches of the region also gained new schools. Ravensdale school, for example, opened in 1892 as did Tuggerah School, Wyong opened in 1889, Cedar Brush Creek in 1900, Wanda in 1902, Kanwal School in 1911 and The Entrance Public School in 1915.



Figure 8.20 Ourimbah Public School, c1910. (Source: Central Coast Council)

The educational, social, literary and theatrical needs of adults was also well catered for in the area. Public halls and schools of arts were an important meeting place, cultural centre and the hub of civic and community matters and the heart and soul of the community. The Gosford School of Arts for instance was established in a new building in 1888 and served throughout its history as a hall, library, chambers for the Municipal Council, Oddfellows Lodge and the site of the first showing of a motion picture on the Central Coast in 1897. A similar school of arts

opened at Wyong in 1898, later known as The Wyong Literary Institute. The Lending Library was the major activity of the Institute but other activities included use as a Boys Club, a billiard room, and a hall which was used for many other community matters. It was also the local picture theatre. The local branch of the Returned Soldiers Association used the hall as did many other groups such as The Red Cross, The Grand United Order of Oddfellows, The Methodist Church, The Agricultural Association and the Department of Justice.²⁷ The Art House in Wyong, which opened in 2016, demonstrate the role of new cultural facilities in growing creative entertainment locally and activating regional centres. It is a key example of the evolving character of the post 2000 regional development of the Central Coast.

The first branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA) in New South Wales was formed in 1922. By 1932 there were several branches on the Central Coast including Gosford, South Brisbane Water (Woy Woy), Wyong, Lisarow, Somersby, the Entrance, Tuggerah Lakes and Terrigal-Wamberal. They started Baby Health Centres and Restrooms for women across the region. CWA volunteers at Mangrove Mountain established a bush nurse service in 1968, the forerunner of the present community nursing system.

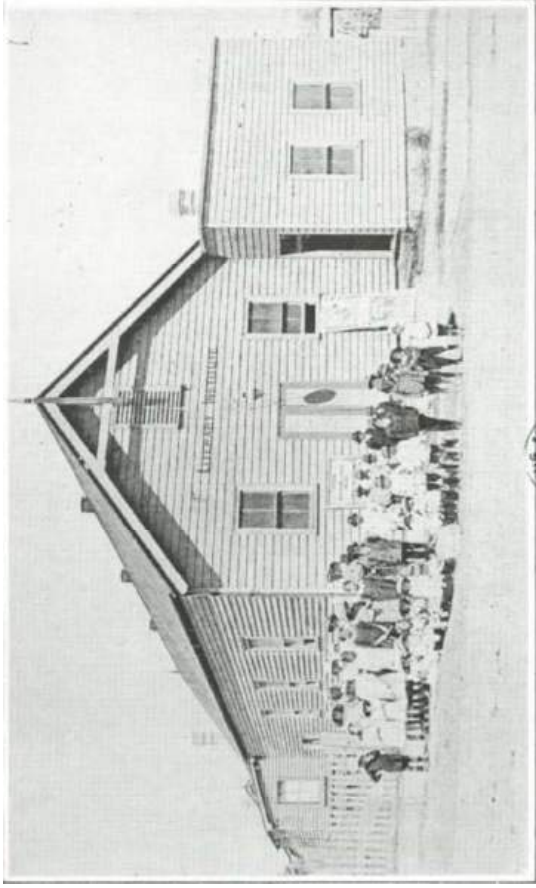


Figure 8.21 Wyong Literary Institute, 1912. (Source: *Stinson's Pictorial History of Wyong Shire* Vol 3, Central Coast Council)



Figure 8.22 Souvenir of production of Lady Audley's Secret held in 1909 by the Wyong Musical & Dramatic Society. (Source: Central Coast Council)

The Central Coast has inspired many people. Australian poet Henry Kendall lived briefly in Gosford in a cottage that was then owned by the Fagan Family. The cottage was located on 60 acres on the Coorumbine Creek, purchased by Peter Fagan in 1836. The house was built with convict labour and one of the earliest

buildings in the region. It was used as an inn known as Red Cow Inn from 1840. The Fagan family retained this property until 1921. Kendall stayed at the cottage between 1874-5 during a difficult period in his life. The property was inspiration for several of his poems including 'Names upon a stone'.²⁸

In 1958/59, Spike Milligan was taken to see this cottage by local historian Charles Swancott. At the time, the Brisbane Water Historical Society was undertaking a fundraiser to preserve the building and use it as a museum. Milligan's interest in Kendall's work and the building led him to make a tv special about the cottage. The program was aired on the ABC and all monies raised in connection to the program was donated by Milligan to the local historical society.²⁹ The Henry Kendall Cottage continue to be maintained by the Brisbane Water Historical Society. In 1983, a larger museum building was erected next to the house.³⁰

Artists including Conrad Marten, Lionel Lindsay, Julian Ashton, Sig Long and George Collingridge, have painted the natural landscape of the Central Coast.



Figure 8.23 Henry Kendall Memorial, Pacific Highway, West Gosford, c1972. (Source: Central Coast Council, 001445.JPG)

Russell Drysdale, the internationally recognised artist credited with revolutionising Australian landscape painting lived at Bouddi Farm, which adjoins the Bouddi National Park. The Drysdales commissioned the architect Guilford Bell to design the house. Completed in 1966, the house was placed at the top of a ridge to take advantage of the natural environment. The property included Drysdale's studio.

Bouddi Farm was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register and is of state significance 'for its contribution to the development of mid-20th century Modernist domestic architecture in Australia'³¹ and as Drysdale's home and studio. It is also recognised for its association with 'the history of cultural life and the visual arts in New South Wales'.³² Drysdale also established the Gosford Art Prize which is part of the Gosford Regional Art programming as a centre for cultural and social activity.

More recently the *Central Coast Cultural Plan 2020-2025* is a whole of region plan providing established themes and strategies for culture and heritage for the Central Coast based on extensive engagement with arts and cultural organisations across the LGA. This plan outlines Council's framework for cultural development and strategic goals.

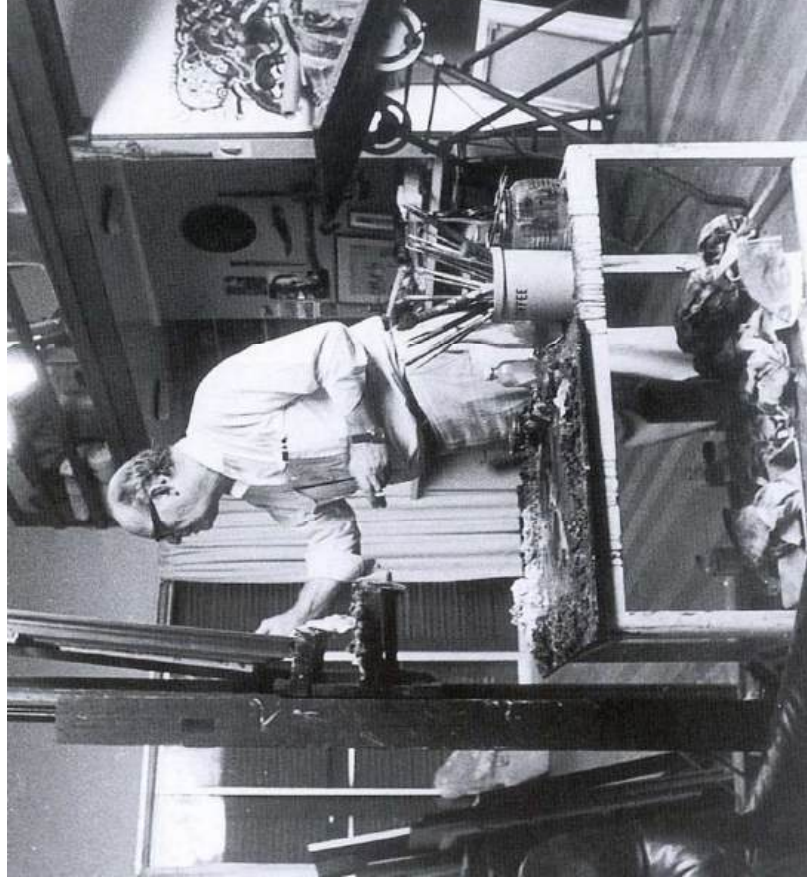


Figure 8.24 Russell Drysdale painting in his studio at Bouddi Farm.
(Source: Reproduced from Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery brochure, 1999, Russel and Maisie Drysdale at Bouddi Farm by Bouddi Photos Part and present on Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/148100404@N05/albums/72157679215599950/>)

The Central Coast has a number of active historical societies and family history groups comprising passionate individuals dedicated to the research, promotion and protection of the history of the region. Local historians such as Edward Stinson, Beryl Strom and Gwen Dundon have authored numerous publications on the Central Coast. Stinson for example, compiled six volumes entitled *A pictorial history of the Wyong Shire*, Beryl Strom was the author of *Gosford/Wyong History and Heritage* and Gwen Dundon wrote *The Shipbuilders of Brisbane Water NSW*.

The Brisbane Water Historical Society is one of the oldest and was founded in 1950 to research and foster an interest in the history of the area and the poet Henry Kendall. Older still, the Wyong District Pioneers Association was formed in 1915 as a social group for local residents with pioneer connections dating back to the 19th century. These groups were joined in the 1980s by the Central Coast Family History Society and the Wyong District Museum & Historical Society. In 1988 the Society arranged to lease Alison Homestead from the Wyong Council. The society relocated their museum exhibits and collections to Alison Homestead in 1992. The Wyong Family History Group was established in 1983 and run by volunteers to promote, research and preserve the family history of members, visitors and Wyong Shire pioneers.

Dr Sue Rosen, Dr Noni Boyd, Christine Hay and Liz Gorman prepared a plan of management of Alison Homestead for Central Coast Council in 2017. This plan supplements and adds to the work of the region's volunteer historical societies.



Figure 8.25 Undated view of Alison Homestead, Wyong. (Source: Central Coast Council, HistoricV0068)



Figure 8.26 Interior of the Henry Kendall Cottage Museum, West Gosford, c1970. (Source: Central Coast Council, 001451.JPG)

8.1 Endnotes

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Tree and Sea Changers



9 Tree and sea changers

The 1950s marked a turning point in the development of the Central Coast, transforming it from a prosperous region reliant on timber, farming and tourism into one of the state's fastest growing urban districts. People from outside the district bought land and simple houses along the beach and on lakefronts, and established holiday houses and weekenders, transforming once quiet fishing and holiday hamlets into up-market and highly prized suburbs.

This change accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s as the region became better connected to Sydney with the electrification of trains and the new M1 Motorway. The permanent population swelled with immigration from Sydney to the Central Coast comprising downsizers and retirees seeking affordable housing near the beach, and young families moving into the region to access cheaper housing within commuting distance from employment centres in Sydney.

The increasing urbanisation, confined generally to the coastal strip and railway corridor, fostered local commerce and industry. Existing services and community facilities expanded to accommodate the growing population.

Movement from Sydney to the Central Coast has resulted in substantial population growth over recent decades, with an associated expansion of existing holiday and fishing villages in the LGA.

Social challenges emerged in the region in the 1970s and were a prominent part of public debate in the following decades with high levels of local unemployment, an increasing need for supply of affordable housing and the rise of permanent residency within caravan parks, and increasing social disadvantage disproportionately located in pockets of the LGA.

The Coasties

Although the bulk of the population of Brisbane Water and its successive local government areas was of Anglo-Irish origin, a small percentage of the population was from other nations or ethnic backgrounds.

While the cultural diversity of the Central Coast has changed little over time, an influx of Southern Europeans settled on farms on the plateau at Mangrove Mountain and nearby areas following World War Two.

Recent arrivals to the Central Coast LGA have included overseas migrants, mainly from the United Kingdom, although new arrivals include (but are not limited to) people born in India, the

Philippines, New Zealand, South Africa, Nepal, China, Thailand, the United States of America and Brazil. But overall, the Central Coast has a far greater percentage of people born in or claiming United Kingdom ancestry than Greater Sydney does.

The four largest ancestries of residents on the Central Coast at the most recent census in 2021 were English (42.6%), Australia (39.9%), Irish (12.0%) and Scottish (10.5%). Furthermore, 7% of the population speaks a language at home other than English, which is a significantly lower percentage than Greater Sydney and New South Wales.

One significant figure from the census is the number of Australian Aboriginal people living on the Central Coast. Aboriginal people comprise 4.7% of the local population, but this group has seen the largest increase among all ancestries since 2016.

The population of the Central Coast has also sharply risen overall, from 72,000 in 1950 to 341,000 in 2023. This figure is forecast to increase by 66,980 people (19.23%) by 2036.

Retiring to the coast

Retirees have been coming to live on the Central Coast for many years, for instance the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* reported in 1917 that:

the Newcastle and Maitland districts are well represented amongst the settlers and townspeople of Brisbane Waters [sic]. Retired civil servants, from school, railway service, post office, etc are numerous, as also are retired bankers, surveyors, merchants and clerks. The charming district attracts to itself a fine class of people.¹

Throughout the next few decades, self-funded retirees purchased existing properties or bought land on which to build their own house. From the 1950s, many retirement villages were built throughout the region following the passing of the *Aged Persons Homes Act* 1954 (Commonwealth). Under this act, the Australian Government provided subsidies to eligible organisations (churches, charities and not-for-profit organisations) to provide housing for older people on a one-for-one basis.² Between 1954 and 1986, over 30,000 dwellings for older people were built across the country.³

Services to cater to senior citizens and those who were finding self-care more challenging emerged from the 1960s onwards, eventually progressing to the development of major purpose-built retirement complexes.

Architects Pettit & Sevitte advertised tenders in 1972 to build the Orana Retirement Village, Brisbane Water Drive, Gosford, for the NSW Baptist Homes Trust.⁴ An even more ambitious plan in 1975 was promoted by architect and planner Geoffrey Twibill,

comprising a \$15 million retirement village at Bateau Bay for a consortium of groups, namely Central Coast Retirement Village, United Protestant Association, Old People's Welfare Council, Catholic Central Committee for Care of the Aged, the Entrance Village Centre, the Elderslee Foundation, The Entrance-Long Jetty RSL and the Methodist Church.⁵ The Elderslee Retirement Village was officially opened in July 1979. Also at Bateau Bay, the final stages of the Nareen Gardens Retirement Village were officially opened in June 1984.

In 1979, retired builder Gordon Leech, MBE, worked with Gosford Council and a committee to build a 70-unit village with additional hostel and nursing home at Wyoming called Adelene.⁶

By the 1980s, the Central Coast had become renowned as an ideal area to construct retirement villages and nursing homes. The *State Environmental Policy No 5* was passed in 1982, opening the floodgates for private enterprise to enter the retirement village and aged care industry. The *Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed in 1983:

Construction of accommodation for aged people is shaping up to be one of the major growth areas in the NSW building industry over the next 20 years.⁷

The newspaper noted that Gosford and Wyong Councils had received four and two applications, respectively, at this date.

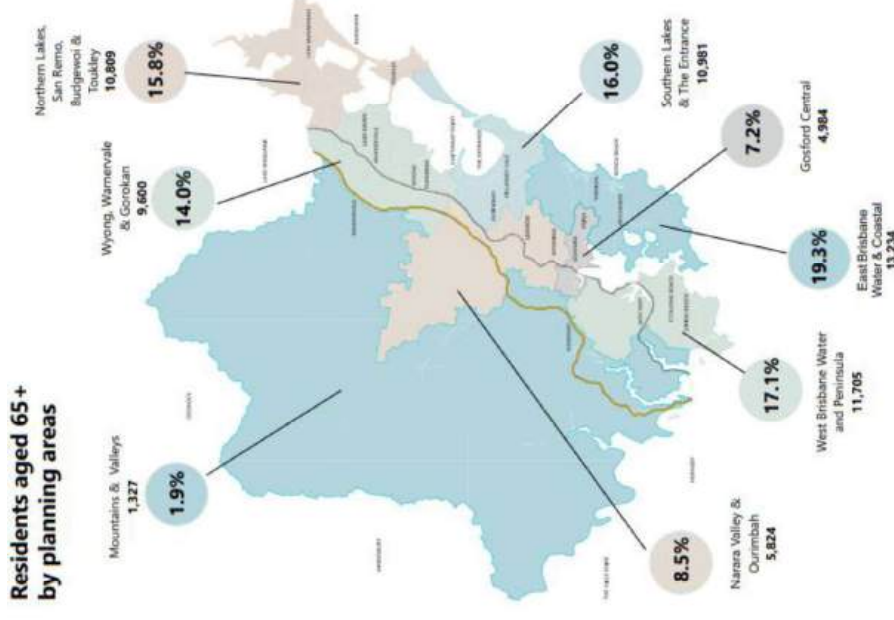


Figure 9.1 Residents aged over 65 by planning areas on the Central Coast. (Source: *Draft Central Coast Positive Ageing Strategy 2020–2025*, p 17)

At the present time, the Central Coast has no fewer than 91 retirement living and retirement villages catering to an increasingly large ageing population. At the last census in 2021, 22.2% of the population was aged 65 years and over (76,941).

Over the next decade the most rapid population growth is expected among those aged 70 years and older. Approximately 20 per cent of the Central Coast population will be aged over 70 years by 2031.⁸

According to the *Central Coast Positive Ageing Strategy 2021-2026*, the area with the largest number of people aged 65 and over is Umina Beach–Pearl Beach–Patonga with 4,065, while the area with the greatest proportion of people aged 65 and over is Erina at 43.9%.

The Central Coast has long been an attractive place for older people to live and retire. Many have grown and raised their families here, while others have settled from elsewhere, attracted by the sense of community and quality of life. People of all ages are connected by a shared appreciation of the natural environment, laid back lifestyle and friendly communities.⁹

Going to the mall

Postwar expansion of the Central Coast's population and growth of residential areas saw the development of large modern enclosed shopping centres. One of the first in the region was the Imperial Shopping Centre in Gosford, which was completed in December 1972.



Figure 9.2 Interior view of Imperial Centre, Gosford, 1970s. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library)

Shops in the centre were advertised to let in September 1972 as follows:

The Gosford Imperial Centre opens mid-November in the prime shopping position on the Central Coast. Located in the heart of Gosford's main shopping block, the Centre is fully air-conditioned, provides parking accommodation for 2000 shoppers' cars daily, is integrated with the Woolworth's Family Centre and has over 70 specialty shops. You will be joining with many nationally known retailers...¹⁰

It was joined in October 1979 by Market Town. West Gosford also had a shopping centre.



Figure 9.3 West Gosford Shopping Centre, 1986. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 9.4 Forrester's Beach Shopping Centre, 1986. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

The first of the major centres was Erina Fair. It was opened as Central Coast Fair in 1987 and has since undergone two rounds of expansions in 1994 and 2003 making it the largest shopping centre on the Central Coast. Competing for the retail business is Westfield Tuggerah which opened in October 1995 on a greenfield site and has progressively expanded to service the increasing population in the north end of the LGA.

Large shopping centres catering to a highly mobile and car-dependent population have drawn shoppers away from the traditional shopping areas such as Mann Street, Gosford and stores in smaller local centres.

Educational hub

Rapid postwar population growth on the Central Coast included many young families with children. New schools were needed across the region to accommodate increasing student enrolments. The Education Department in conjunction with Public Works and NSW Government Architect's Office embarked on a major building programme statewide to meet demand for school buildings.

No less than six new schools were built in the 1950s, including Central Mangrove (1957), Point Clare (1955), Tuggerawong (1957), Umina (1956), Wyoming (1955) and Wyong Grove High School (1950). *The Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate* reported in June 1954:

Two primary schools — one at Wyoming and one at Point Clare — which are expected to be completed by the end of September should relieve the accommodation problem at the Gosford school.

The contractor, Mr. F. P. I Butt, said that each school contains two classrooms to accommodate 40 pupils.

Foundations have already been put in for the Wyoming School, opposite the Midway service station, and the land has been cleared for the Pt. Clare School in Charlton Ave.

Both schools are to be constructed of North Coast hardwood, and classrooms will be separated by folding partitions, an innovation for this area.

Mr. Butt was also responsible for the additions to Holgate School, which were completed last year.¹¹

Wyoming School, mentioned here, was located in Laycock Street and was locally referred to as Laycock Street School. The main school known as Wyoming was built in Maiden's Brush Road, Wyoming and completed in 1969

Growth in the number of school age children continued to accelerate in successive decades, necessitating construction of additional primary and secondary schools in the district and additions to existing schools.

Innovative school designs were developed in the NSW Government Architects Office in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Chertsey Public School was a speculative cluster school designed by C Carter in 1968, while Brisanbia Public School at Saratoga was designed by Olga Kosterin in 1971 as an addition to an existing small school. It was located on a steep site with two two-storey buildings set apart to form a sloping courtyard and connected at each end by stepped covered ways.¹² It was featured in *NSW Builder* magazine in December 1973.

Several new schools were built in the northern section of the LGA since the 1990s, with the creation of new suburbs and greenfield site development.

Until World War Two, New South Wales had a single university—the University of Sydney (founded in 1853) and attendance was low, with few students aspiring to further education. By the early 1970s, the tertiary education sector had expanded rapidly, with the establishment of new universities, institutes of technology, colleges of advanced education and technical colleges.

As the population increased on the Central Coast, the lack of locally based tertiary education was discussed in the *Gosford/Wyong Structure Plan* (1975). This plan discussed future education needs and recommended establishment of a tertiary education facility that was a part of a joint facility project providing high-quality libraries, sporting facilities, theatres and other recreational spaces that would service the whole community.

The Commonwealth Government purchased 80 hectares of bushland at Ourimbah in the 1970s. However, no action to establish a tertiary campus on this site occurred until 1989, when the First Turning of the Soil Ceremony marked the commencement of the Ourimbah College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), and the Central Coast Campus of The University of Newcastle.

The first cohort of students commenced on site in July 1989 and graduated in 1993. The campus was officially opened on 1 September 1995 enabling the local population to obtain tertiary education close to where they reside and work via programs offered by the University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE and Central Coast Community College.

More recently, the University of Newcastle opened a clinical school within Gosford Hospital's Health and Wellbeing Precinct. In 2023, the university and the NSW Government signed an agreement to establish a new campus in Mann Street, Gosford, to accommodate over 900 students in allied health, bioscience, digital transformation, law, business and innovation courses.¹³

Healthcare

The region has had a history of institutions responding to the health policies of the time. The mixed legacies of these institutions have been revisited in recent years through extensive histories that consider how our approach to treating society's most vulnerable has changed over the centuries. The isolation of locations like the Hawkesbury River, led the NSW government to establish an asylum on Peat Island during the 1890s to separate patients from the general population. The natural beauty and associated health of Central Coast's environment was also utilised for its perceived reformatory benefits.

Gosford Farm Home for Boys at Penang Mountain near Kariong was opened in 1913, but boys lived there from 1911 as they laboured to build it. Gosford Farm Home for Boys was transferred to the Child Welfare Department in 1923 and became the Gosford Training School.

Modern healthcare for the region was signalled with the opening of Gosford District Hospital in 1945 notwithstanding only a meagre 34 beds to service a population on the Central Coast of 27,000. By 1961, it had expanded to 65 beds, including a new surgical wing. At this date, several smaller private hospitals operated at East Gosford, Umina and Wyong.

Within ten years, the Gosford District Hospital had 180 beds to serve a population of over 89,000 and four nursing homes on the Central Coast, serving a population scattered in small pockets across the region. Subsidiary hospitals were established in the 1970s to provide improved healthcare across the district, such as at Woy Woy in 1971, Entrance/Long Jetty in 1972 and Wyoming in 1973. Stage 1 of the proposed 400 bed Gosford Hospital was completed in April 1980 and Wyong Hospital was finished later the same year.¹⁴

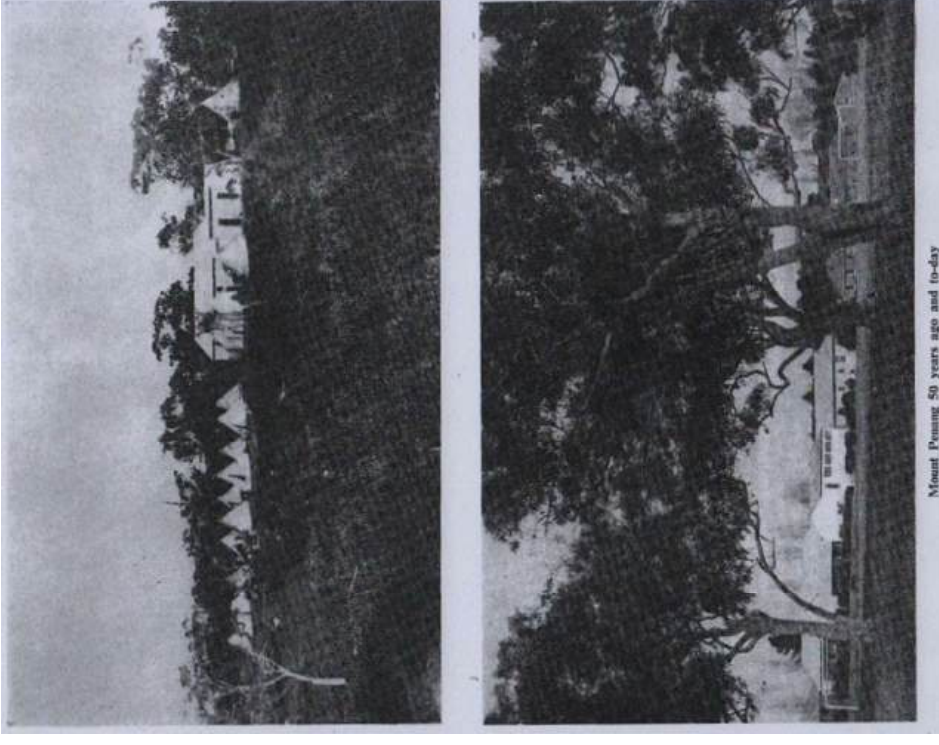


Figure 9.5 Gosford Farm Boys, Child Welfare Department of New South Wales Annual Report of 1962 (Source: State Library of NSW)



Figure 9.6 Assistant Nurse, Lorna Mason, outside newly opened Gosford Hospital, May 1945. (Source: Ben Smith, *Gosford District Hospital: 50 years booklet*, p 29, Central Coast Council)



Figure 9.7 Woy Woy Hospital 1973. Photograph by Gwen Dundon. (Source: Central Coast Memories, Central Coast Library Service)



Figure 9.8 Wyong Hospital, 1980. (Source: NSW Government, *Gosford & Wyong Hospital Redevelopment, Our Story*)

The present Central Coast Local Health District is served by two major hospitals—Gosford and Wyong—as well as Long Jetty Healthcare Centre, eight community health services and other community-based services. In addition, numerous GPs, private medical centres and allied health services are located throughout the region.



Figure 9.9 Map of Central Coast Local Health District (CCLHD), 2023. (Source: Central Coast Local Health District webpage)

Housing for everyone

The recent tree and sea change movement on the Central Coast has had a significant impact on housing forms, size and typologies. The Central Coast was once dominated by modest timber or (asbestos-based) fibrous cement (or 'fibro' sheeting) and corrugated iron houses.

The Beautiful Gosford District Guidebook in 1954 proclaimed:

Town and residential building projects total more than a £1 million each year. Suburban areas area developing and gradually linking with the town [Gosford], and all Brisbane Water settlements are expanding.

On the coastal belt, within 10 miles of the town, scores of new homes are being erected for permanent residency. Hundreds of city and country folk are already taking advantage of the sub-tropical climate and the pleasures of the many quiet Sunkist beaches to retire.

Until the late 1940s, the bulk of dwellings in what became Gosford City were built of timber, although an increasing number were built with fibro walls, which was replacing weatherboard as a cheaper cladding for dwellings. Between the censuses of 1947 and 1954, the situation was reversed. In 1947, Erina Shire had 2,618 timber-walled dwellings against 2,467 dwellings with fibro walls. Gosford Municipality had 666 timber dwellings and 280 fibro dwellings. In 1954, the new Gosford Shire had 2,425 timber

dwellings, but fibro dwellings had leapt to number 4,857. Construction reported that a record figure of £2,295,372 was outlaid on buildings in the Gosford and Wyong Shires, up from £1,565,656 and £1,101,467 in 1951 and 1952, respectively. Furthermore, Gosford Council granted 1,101 building permits and Wyong granted 524.¹⁵

Traditional builders still served the area, but estate developers were also offering to build houses on the land they had for sale. In 1952, buyers of lots on the Spencer Garden Estate were offered houses that could be built for them by the vendors, the Sydney Farm Specialists Pty Ltd, to a plan shown in promotional advertising.¹⁶ At Copacabana, developers Willmore and Randell built shops on their estate. They also actively promoted subdivisions at Wamberal (Wamberal Township Estate) and Budgewoi (Halekulani Estate) in the 1950s.

PRICES FROM £3 PER FOOT

EASY TERMS FROM 2 YEARS PAYMENT TITLE

LAND FOR SALE

LOCALITY SKETCH

WILLMORE & RANDELL

111 CASTLEBROUGH STREET, SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

Figure 9.10 Advertisement for Willmore & Randell's Copacabana Estate. (Source: *Sun Herald*, 29 August 1954 p 22)

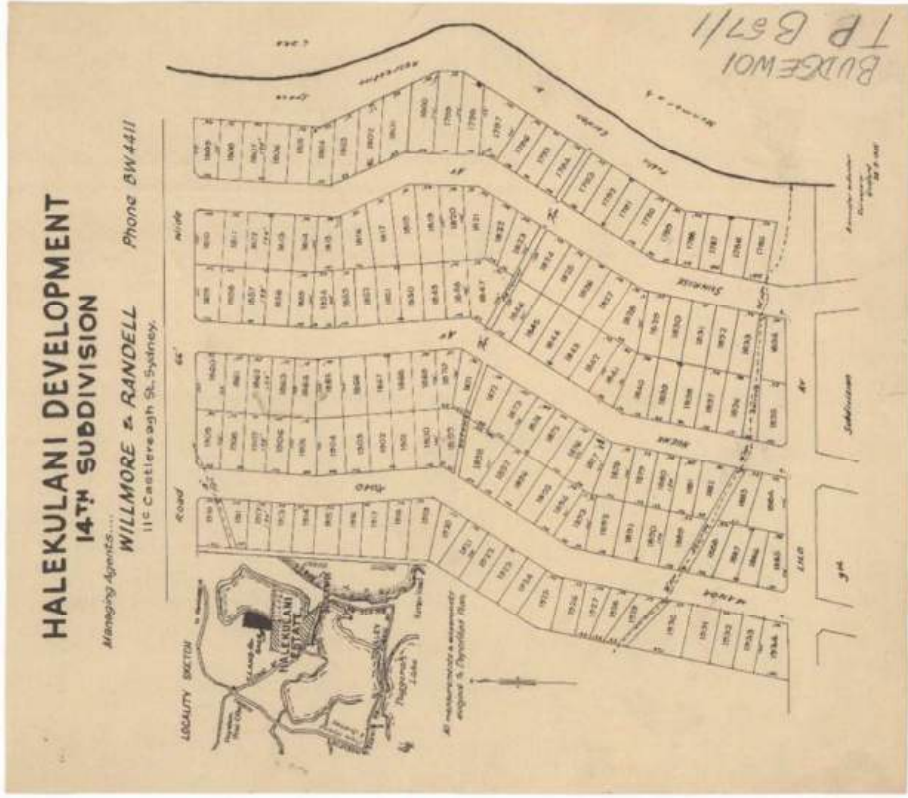


Figure 9.11 Willmore & Randell's 14th Subdivision Plan, Halekulani Estate, Budgewoi, 1955. (Source: State Library of NSW)



Figure 9.12 House, McMasters Beach, 9 June 1960. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 9.13 Houses fronting Avoca Beach with Avoca Beach Quarterdeck flats at rear, 6 June 1960. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 9.14 Les Collinge's house at Avoca Beach, 7 June 1960. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 9.15 Houses on Scenic Drive, Avoca, 7 June 1960. (Source: Gostalgia, local history from Gosford Library)

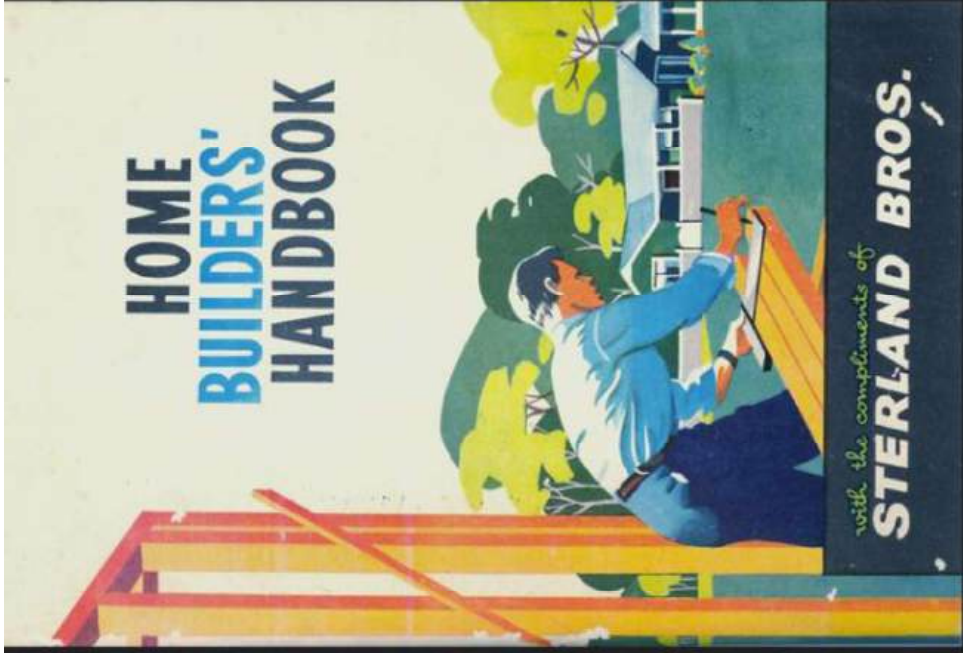


Figure 9.16 Front cover of booklet prepared by Sterland Bros. Gosford, 1961. (Source: Gostalgia; local history from Gosford Library)



Figure 9.17 Hooker-Rex Estate prospectus for St Hubert's Island, 1970s. (Source: Gostalgia; local history from Gosford Library)

From 1967 to 1973, building construction sharply increased. Until 1967, about 800 houses had been built annually in the Wyong Shire. Building accelerated in 1967 to reach almost 2,500 per annum in 1973. From 1973 to 1975, the bulk of new buildings in the shire were erected in the Wyoming, Lisarow and Narara areas.¹⁷

Building spanned the spectrum from custom designed and built dwellings to the standardised products of building agencies. For instance, in the 1970s, the Lobster House was built for noted photographer David Moore above Lobster Beach to the design of

architect Ian MacKay. At the other end of the spectrum, the Minister for Housing, Ron Mulock, opened the first 25 housing commission homes in the Wyoming Estate on 18 May 1978.



Figure 9.18 Holmes Avenue, Toukley, 1980s. (Source: Central Coast Council)

In 1984, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the large number of Central Coast residents spending up to four hours a day commuting to and from work in Sydney, 'lured by the chance to improve their lifestyles by living in modern houses and units near the Central Coast's many lakes and beaches'.¹⁸



Figure 9.19 New housing estates, Central Coast LGA, [2022?]. (Source: Central Coast Local Housing Strategy, p 21)

At the other end of the scale, house and land packages were being offered to potential buyers in in the burgeoning new suburbs in the northern section of the LGA.

In 1994, the *Sydney Morning Herald* promoted the Central Coast Display Home Expo at North Wyong showing 29 display homes

'to cater for people hoping to build between Sydney and Newcastle'.¹⁹ HomeWorld Warnervale, for example, comprises 38 display homes by 16 project home building companies.

At this time Central Coast was seen as an investment drawcard with most of the investors drawn from the western suburbs of Sydney. There was strong rental demand and low house prices throughout the region with the median house price below \$140,000. Investors outnumbered established homeowners and first-time home buyers.²⁰ However, life on the Central Coast was often at odds with the glossy picture of the region promoted in real estate and tourism marketing. The region was plagued by high unemployment, spiralling social problems and lack of infrastructure.

A decade earlier the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the lifestyle offered on the Central Coast, the chance to buy modern houses and home units near lakes and beaches at an affordable price, was the reason for over 10,000 Central Coast residents undertaking long commutes to work in Sydney by train and car.²¹



Figure 9.20 New housing estates in the northern areas of the Central Coast LGA on greenfield areas. (Source: *Wyong Settlement Strategy*, Wyong Shire Council, p 195)

Pearl Beach, established in the 1920s by real estate agents, was once a simple fishing and recreation village initially attracting returned servicemen and their families. In the 1970s, it was home to a mix of retirees and weekend residents. The demographics of the community changed by the mid-1980s to a haven for media personalities, celebrities and the very rich. A modest unrenovated beach-front cottage could sell for \$250,000, well above the price of an average brick house in a middle-class Sydney suburb.²² Local resident and historian Beverley Kingston wrote in 2009:

The new weekenders came with their architects and they built very modern holiday houses, larger generally than the older beach shacks or fibro cottages...[these] were photographed, written up and entered for prized as the architects tried to promote their work. Pearl Beach was discovered by the media and became fashionable.²³

The Entrance was another coastal suburb to undergo a building boom in the postwar period. Three- and four-storey brick 'walk-ups' were erected on the ocean front and lakeside, replacing the early timber guesthouses, rental cottages and homes. Over time, taller resort-style apartment buildings were developed in the suburb, vying to provide the best views and greatest luxury. By 2012, the area featured large apartments alongside and looming over tiny fibro houses that may have once enjoyed water views.



Figure 9.21 Hamlyn Terrace housing estate, Warnervale, 2022. Photo by Salty Dingo. (Source: *Central Coast Regional Plan 2041*, p 81)

In 2021, the Central Coast LGA had around 152,875 private dwellings, of which 116,684 (76.4%) were separate houses, 27,566 (18.1%) were medium density (e.g., townhouses and low-rise apartments) and 6,819 (4.5%) were high density (e.g., apartments). While the number of dwellings has been steadily increasing over previous decades for all housing types, single detached dwellings overwhelmingly dominate housing in the Central Coast LGA. One third of all households on the Central Coast are fully owned, 35.2% are mortgaged while 22.1% are privately rented.

Detached housing makes up almost all dwellings in the rural villages and surrounds, and exceeds 90% of all dwellings in the Northern Lakes (97.3%), Warnervale–Wadalba (93.6%) and San Remo–Budgewoi (94.6%) districts. Much of the housing stock in these areas has been primarily aimed at young family households migrating to the Central Coast from metropolitan Sydney.

In the first year of operation of the Central Coast Council (following the amalgamation of Gosford City and Wyong Shire Council in May 2016), the Council approved over 3,000 applications, worth over \$1 billion to the local economy.

State government strategies and local government policy have influenced the increasing frequency of high-density developments built in the region, including in the Gosford CBD. In 2022, St Hillers commenced construction of the first of three towers in the

Central Coast Quarter Development. More recently, construction commenced on Archibald by ALAND at 108 Donnison Street, comprising two towers with a total of 323 residential apartments, 130 hotel rooms, food and beverage tenants, a 2,061 square metre pub, and a 960 square metre skybar and lounge.²⁴

The shacks built in the early twentieth century, Great Depression and postwar eras are increasingly under threat as new residents from Sydney flock to the region, buying up beach and waterfront sites, and demolish the existing modest houses to make way for large seaside dream-homes, some as full-time residences, others for weekend getaways and holidays. The by-product of the tree and sea-change phenomenon on the Central Coast has been escalating property values while the 'character' of seaside and waterfront locations has changed.

According to local resident and historian Merrill Jackson, The Entrance area, including Long Jetty, Toowoona Bay, Blue Lagoon and Norah Head, are currently witnessing a construction boom, as is Umina Beach and Ettalong Beach.²⁵ The perceived housing affordability on the Central Coast has created a significant shift and influx of people relocating from Sydney, with the housing market out of reach for many people.

The pandemic, coupled with widespread adoption of a work from home/office hybrid work life, has encouraged many people to make the permanent move to the Central Coast as it presented

people with a viable option and provided a more enjoyable lifestyle and life-changing choice.



Figure 9.22 Waterfront and high-rise apartments at Gosford, 2022.
(Source: *Central Coast Regional Plan 2041*, p 19)

Commuting is a way of life

The Central Coast...transformed from a population of less than 30,000 people in the 1940s, largely scattered across farms and hamlets, to being a recognizably suburban community approaching 300,000 people by the end of the twentieth century.²⁶

By the 1950s around 1,000 people (10% of the workforce) were estimated as commuting from the Central Coast to Sydney. This increased by 1966 when a survey found that over 3,000 people were daily commuting to Sydney from stations north of the Hawkesbury River through to Gosford. This increase was partly attributed to electrification of the passenger rail services between Sydney and Gosford.

The number of commuters to Sydney increased steadily over succeeding decades. By the mid-1990s Gosford City Council reported over 35,000 people (one third of the workforce) were commuting daily to work outside of the Central Coast, the majority to Sydney. The increased commuter population was also boosted by substantial improvements to the Sydney-Newcastle motorway and the Central Coast Highway linking up with the M1 at Kariong/Somersby.

Rail electrification and road improvements reached the northern parts of the Central Coast in the 1990s, making parts of the former Wyong Shire a possibility for long distance commuting. According to Chris Beer:

The region's primary value proposition was that it offered access to housing by the coast that was otherwise not readily available to lower-income households along with transport infrastructure and services that enabled them access work in

the main body of Sydney if at the cost of extended travel time.²⁷

Since 2000 the northern parts of the Central Coast LGA, formerly the Wyong Shire, have experienced the greatest growth in housing and commuter numbers. In 2016 for example, 69.7% of the Wyong workforce drove to their place of employment, significantly higher than the Australian average. According to a travel survey during 2021/22 during the COVID period, 143,000 commuter trips by car were recorded for the Central Coast LGA, totalling 3,391.²⁸

A 2020 report for the Central Coast Council highlighted a need for the council and governments to address negative impacts of out-commuting on the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the economy of the region.

More than three quarters of Central Coast commuters (86%) travel 50-250 kilometres to work, typically to the Sydney CBD.

This commute takes over ninety minutes and requires considerable expenditure of time, money and physical effort.²⁹

The top public transport commuting suburbs in the LGA are, in descending order, Gosford, Koorleewong, Woy Woy, West Gosford, Tacoma South, Blackwall, Pretty Beach, Tascott, Point Frederick and The Entrance.³⁰

Social disadvantage and housing

Since the 1970s the Central Coast LGA has been characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage with a distinct social divide between the north of the LGA (the former Wyong LGA) and the south (the former Gosford LGA). The former Wyong LGA has higher levels of disadvantage with the main areas being located at Wyong, Toukley-Canton Beach, The Entrance, Charmhaven-Lake Haven, San Remo-Doyalson, Gorokan, Watanobbi and Woy Woy-Blackwall.³¹

The high level of local unemployment during the 1970s through to the 2000s gave rise to permanent residency within caravan parks. Central Coast Council acknowledges in its *Affordable Housing Strategy* that the Central Coast has historically been an affordable area, however the area has become less affordable than the Greater Sydney for local residents, resulting in higher rates of housing stress and higher rates of growth of primary homelessness and those in marginal housing. At the same time, income levels of local residents are also much lower than the Greater Sydney average.

Planning for growth

Planning on the Central Coast has evolved over the years to deliver jobs, housing, conservation planning and revitalisation for the region.³²

In 1954, the then Gosford Shire Council resolved to prepare a planning scheme. However, it was not prescribed until May 1968. Development was controlled under an Interim Development Order until then.³³

The Sydney Region Outline Plan of 1970 identified Gosford as a possible urban area for the expansion of Sydney.³⁴ The 1975 Urban Structure Plan for Gosford was adopted and sought to raise the population to 430,000.³⁵

There have been a number of Masterplans produced for the Gosford City Centre including the McInerney Gosford City Masterplan (2005), the Gosford Challenge (2010) and the Gosford Urban Design Framework (2018) produced by the Government Architect.

By 1991, the population in the Gosford and Wyong Shires exceeded 200,000 and continued to grow throughout the next two decades. New residential areas developed around the western shores of Budgewoi Lake (Lake Haven), the southern shores of Tuggerah Lake (Chittaway Bay, Berkley Vale and further south at Ourimbah), and westward through Warnervale, Wyong and Tuggerah. A shift in urban development from the southern areas of the shire to the northern and central areas from 1996 have resulted in the highest population increases in areas such as Blue Haven, Hamlyn Terrace and Mardi.

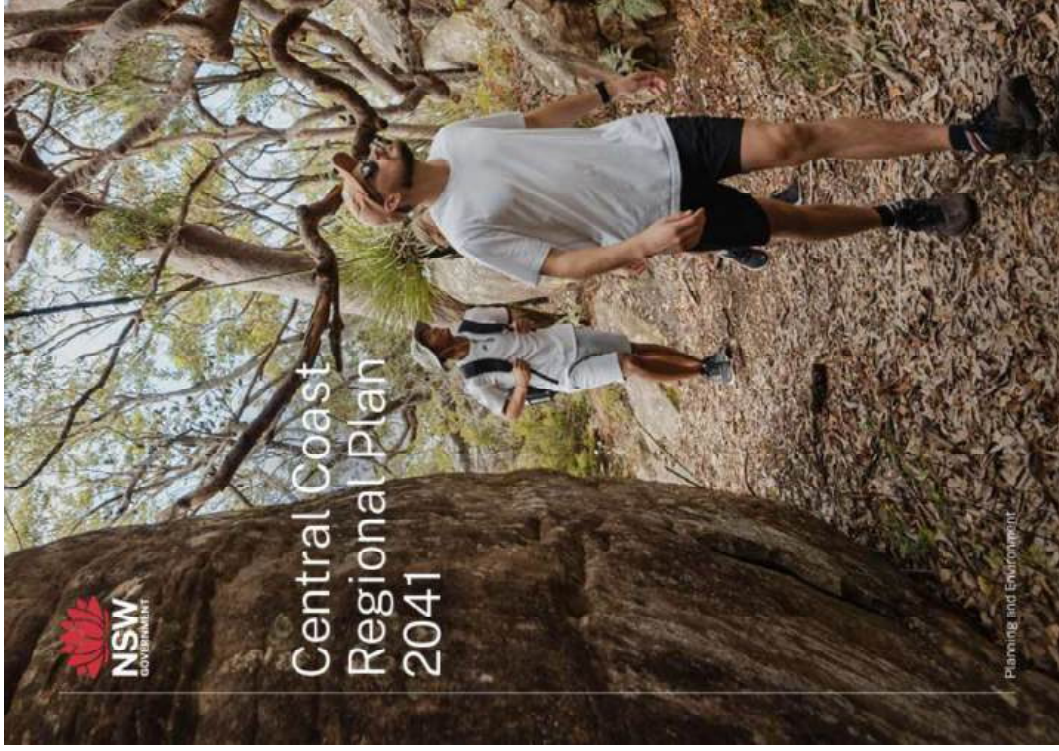
The population of the Central Coast is projected to grow by 22% by 2036, underpinning the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's *Central Coast Regional Plan 2041*. This plan draws from earlier strategic planning documents, namely: North Wyong Shire Structure Plan 2012 and the Central Coast Regional Plan 2006-2031, as well as Central Coast Council's Interim Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The Central Coast Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan both came into effect on 1 August 2022.

The NSW Government's vision of Greater Sydney has evolved in 2022 from the Metropolis of Three Cities to the Six Cities Region, which includes the Central Coast.

Our six cities vision is to create good jobs closer to where people live, attracting world-class industry and talent, and delivering the infrastructure to connect the cities together.³⁶

The Six Cities plan and its overarching body, the Greater Cities Commission was scrapped by the State Government in January 2024. More recent planning reforms announced by the State Government reflect its new agenda for the growth and development of the Central Coast. One of the key planning platforms is the Transport Oriented Development Program (TOD) with a raft of new planning controls to facilitate construction of more housing near the metro and rail stations including Woy Woy, Gosford and Tuggerah.



Associated with the Central Coast Regional Plan 2041, the Central Coast Council has adopted strategic plans including the Community Strategic Plan, Interim Local Strategic Planning Statement, Economic Development Strategy, and Affordable and Alternative Housing Strategy.

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 Dalley’s Point Estate Woy Woy
 Gosford Model Farms
 Halekulani Development 14th Subdivision
 Model Farm Niagara Park, Gosford
 2nd Budgewoi Estate Subdivision, Tuggerah Lakes
 Tuggerah Beach Estate
 Wagstaffe’s Point Estate, Woy Woy
 Yow-Yow, Woy Woy

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Daily Telegraph

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Community Participants

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- Alan Grant
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