



# **Ballina Shire Council**

## **Wardell Community Based Heritage Study**



February 2004

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**PART ONE**

**Methodology and  
Recommendations**

## Introduction

This Heritage Report includes the following;

- (a) An explanation of the process of the Community Based Heritage Study undertaken between March and December 2003 to identify items and places of natural and cultural heritage significance in the Wardell area<sup>1</sup>. This section of the Report also includes a discussion of issues raised by the Study that require ongoing attention, or may be of use to conducting future studies of this nature.
- (b) An inventory of items and places nominated by members of the Wardell area community to be of heritage significance indicating the reason for significance and the themes under which these items and places are discussed in the Thematic History.
- (c) A Thematic History explaining the significance of the items and places nominated by the Wardell area community as being of heritage significance.
- (d) Future Heritage Recommendations suggested by members of the Wardell area community concerning how future heritage issues in the Wardell area community might be managed.
- (e) Completed State Heritage Inventory forms for a selection of items and places nominated by the Wardell area community as being of heritage significance.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Wardell area' has been used throughout this report to refer to all the localities embraced by the Heritage Study. These localities are listed under Scope of the Heritage Study.

## **Overview of the Heritage Study**

### Scope of the Heritage Study

The Wardell area referred to in this Community-Based Heritage Study report comprises the township of Wardell and a number of other small localities including Bagotville, Cabbage Tree Island, Coolgardie, East Wardell, Empire Vale, Keith Hall, Pimlico, Meerschaum Vale, Patch's Beach & South Ballina. The localities to be included in the Heritage Study were determined by Ballina Shire Council before the commencement of the Heritage Study. The geographic scope of the Heritage Study delineates an area that has historically been closely linked socially, economically and politically.

### Heritage Study Objectives

The purpose of the Heritage Study report is to identify items and places of heritage significance in the Wardell area. The use of the Community-Based Heritage Study process involved the community in the nomination of important places, but also asked for their assistance in the research of these places. Community involvement in the Heritage Study recognises a significant and valuable source of local historical information.

Additionally the process aimed to encourage the community to take ownership of their heritage and reduce the potential for conflict in the community over heritage listings, as well as the interpretation of the significance of heritage listings. The recommendations for the future management of heritage items and places include community feedback to the co-ordinator of the Heritage Study.

## **Methodology**

### The NSW Heritage Office's guidelines for conducting a Community-Based Heritage Study

To a considerable degree the Wardell & District Community Based Heritage Study process has followed the guidelines set down by the NSW Heritage Office in its publication, Community-Based Heritage Studies: A Guide. For some facets of this process, the NSW Heritage Office's model has been adapted to accommodate the unique aspects of the Wardell area community and the Ballina Shire Council's directives for the study. Despite these adaptations the Wardell & District Community-Based Heritage Study model has maintained an emphasis on harnessing as much local input as possible throughout the course of the Heritage Study.

### The Community Consultation Process

The timeline overpage presents the steps taken during the community consultation process for the Wardell & District Community Based Heritage Study.

Monday March 31, 2003	Initial Community Committee meeting to discuss the process of the Heritage Study
Monday April 28, 2003	Community Committee meet to prepare for general community meeting in Wardell
Monday May 5, 2003	General community meeting in Wardell to explain Heritage Study process and invite nominations of items and places of Heritage Significance in the Wardell area
Tuesday May 6, 2003	Meeting with Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council members at Cabbage Tree Island to explain the Heritage Study process and invite their nominations of items and places of Heritage Significance
Friday May 23, 2003	Meeting with Elders group - Cabbage Tree Island to invite nominations of items and places of Heritage Significance
Wednesday August 6 - Wednesday August 20	Public exhibition of Draft Heritage Report and historic photos at Wardell Community Access Space inviting public feedback on the Heritage Study
Monday August 25 – Friday September 5	Public Exhibition of Draft Heritage Report and historic photos at Richmond Tweed Library, Ballina inviting public feedback on the Heritage Study

#### Wardell & District CBHS Committee

Initial involvement of the Wardell community in the CBHS was sought through the establishment of a committee. Committee members were drawn from local community organisations who have a stake in local heritage issues, along with one member of the Wardell community and a Council representative. The organisations represented on the committee included Ballina Shire Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Wardell Progress Association and the Richmond River Historical Society.

The first meeting of the Wardell & District CBHS Committee was held on 31 March 2003. At this meeting, the aims of the CBHS were discussed along with a suggested timetable and the process of identifying sources, both documents and people, for further research was begun. The initial meeting also began to compile a list of items and places of significant heritage value to the community to establish an initial framework within which the research work for the Thematic History could commence.

A further CHBS Committee meeting was held on 28 April 2003 to discuss and prepare for a broader community meeting held on 7 May.

#### Community meeting in Wardell

The broader community was asked to nominate items and places of heritage significance and discuss the history of the local area at a meeting held in the Wardell and District War Memorial Hall on 7 May 2003. The CBHS process and the desired outcomes were explained. The CBHS Committee members assisted by setting up and attending the meeting as well as providing further explanations where needed.

Nomination forms were provided asking respondents to identify heritage places and items and state why they thought the item or place is significant. Evidence to support the item or place's significance was requested. As a way of sharing the nomination process between all those who attended the meeting, nominations were

written up on butcher's paper for all to view. This step not only enabled all to see what others felt were significant items or places but helped those attending the meeting to understand how their input slotted into the aims of the project. Often this stimulated further nominations. Historic photographs of the area were also displayed at the meeting to stimulate thinking about the community's heritage. Following the nomination process the meeting was open to general discussion over a cup of tea.

#### Community Meetings at Cabbage Tree Island

The complex issues associated with documenting Aboriginal heritage and history required ongoing consultation with the Koori community at Cabbage Tree Island. Thus several meetings were held at Cabbage Tree Island to foster Kooris' understanding of the CBHS as well as stimulating contributions to the nomination and research process.

On 6 May 2003 an address was given at the monthly meeting of the Jali Land Council explaining the CBHS process. A further meeting with community Elders was held on 23 May to further discuss the Heritage Study and distribute Nomination Forms. Some of those attending the meeting preferred to make their nominations verbally, and these nominations were then recorded on the Nomination Forms. Other Elders at the meeting preferred to take their forms home to think further about nominating items and places.

Outside of these informal meetings ongoing consultation regarding the study and its progress occurred with representatives of the Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council.

#### Public Display of the Draft Heritage Report

Council placed a draft CBHS report on exhibition for a total of four weeks. A display of photo's and information explaining the significance of particular places and historical themes was included as part of the public exhibition process. This display was located at the Wardell Community Access Space and subsequently the Ballina branch of the Richmond-Tweed Regional Library. The Draft CBHS report was available to individuals to borrow during the time of the public exhibition, as well as being available on the internet from Council's website.

Four submissions were received offering additional information on nominated items and places.

#### The Thematic History

The Thematic History provides a simple explanation of why each item or place nominated is of heritage significance. These explanations have been set out according to a list of historical themes devised by the NSW Heritage Office as a framework to conduct Heritage Studies. Not all of the Heritage Office's thirty-six themes have been of relevance to the Wardell area Heritage Study as the items or places nominated by the local community do not relate to all these themes. For example, while documentary evidence suggests that a number of Chinese and other families of various ethnicity lived in the Wardell area in the late nineteenth century, no items or places have been identified relating to the association of these families with the area. So while the stories of all these families form an important part of the history of the Wardell area these stories have not been included in the thematic history.

Also, some themes have been dealt with more thoroughly than others. This is not because these themes are considered more important than others but reflects a bias in the availability of information on certain themes. Where there has been greater

information available on a certain theme, it has generally been covered more comprehensively than a theme that has only scant evidence to support its analysis. Where the availability of evidence has been a problem in the analysis of certain themes this has been indicated in the Thematic History.

#### *Written primary and secondary source evidence*

A broad range of primary and secondary source material was collected in the process of researching heritage items and places. The bulk of written evidence was collected from local depositories including the Richmond River Historical Society, the Ballina Local History Room and Southern Cross University Library. A considerable amount of primary source material was also made available by individuals in the community who have over many years, (for some, generations) kept records of the area and/or their families. These sources have been an incredible boon to this project and have enabled a very detailed picture of many facets of the community's past.

Other primary sources have been gathered from State archives, either specifically for this research or through the course of other local research projects. These sources have been particularly important in placing local events in the broader context of state or national influences. This has also been true of the use of much secondary source material gathered from books and journals.

The usual crosschecking of reference material and understanding the nature of resource material has been considered when interpreting written sources. Where my analysis has drawn conclusions that differ from other historical accounts of local issues this has been indicated in the Thematic History.

#### *Oral histories*

Oral histories have been both important to the community-based approach of this study and to 'fill the gaps' in the historic record. A number of oral histories were conducted in the homes of individuals to gather information about people and events relating to the items and places of heritage significance that were nominated. Most of these interviews have been recorded for future historical reference.

Oral history interviews were prompted by a series of questions and intend to be informal discussions rather than 'polished' interviews. The rationale behind the informal method of interviews aims to make interviewees as comfortable as possible with the recorded interview process and to allow the interviewee's recollections to direct much of the interview rather than be forced to remember events that the interviewee sees as important. Most of the interviewees participating in this project demonstrated anxiety about their interviews due to their concern that they might 'get it wrong' when it came to remembering the past. So at times interviews involved talking about the nature of oral history and issues associated with memory before respondents were comfortable with switching on the tape recorder.

Like written evidence, oral histories are subject to bias and need to be considered within a broader analytical framework. The oral histories collected for this study have been used in association with written material and have been subject to the same rigorous historical method as written sources.

#### The State Heritage Inventory

The State Heritage Inventory (SHI) aims to document the particularities of each item or place nominated by the community and record this information as a database held

by the Council and the State Heritage Office as a reference to guide the future management of heritage items and places.

Whilst the Wardell & District CBHS process identified 57 items and places of heritage significance to the community, only 10 of these items and places have been entered onto State Heritage Inventory (SHI) Forms. Primarily, the time frame for this study has not allowed all the items and places nominated as being of heritage significance to be entered onto SHI forms immediately. Though as indicated throughout the Thematic History there are a number of items place nominated that require further research in order to gather the sufficient documentation to enable these to be entered onto the SHI database. The remaining items and places, it is hoped, will in due course be entered onto the SHI database.

### *Assessing significance*

As part of the process of compiling the SHI the *significance* of each item must also undergo an assessment to ensure the items and places nominated are of 'true' heritage value. The NSW Heritage Office refers to seven criteria to make an assessment of an item/place's heritage significance. These criteria encompass the 'four generic heritage values' referred in the Australian ICOMOS *Burra Charter*. The generic heritage values are historical significance, aesthetic significance, scientific significance and social significance. The NSW Heritage Office has broadened their interpretation of these criteria to seven.

### NSW Heritage Office's Guidelines for Assessing Heritage significance<sup>2</sup>

Criterion (a)	an item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);
Criterion (b)	an item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);
Criterion (c)	an item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area);
Criterion (d)	an item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
Criterion (e)	an item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);
Criterion (f)	an item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW's cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area);
Criterion (g)	an item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW's cultural or natural places or cultural or natural environments; (or a class of the local area's cultural or natural places or cultural or natural environments.)

<sup>2</sup> See publication *Assessing Heritage Significance*, NSW Heritage Office.

### Level of Significance

In addition to recording why an item is considered significant, each item or place is also given a *level of significance* assessment. The question of an item or place's level of significance is determined through the process of *historical research* and *historical comparison*. The *level of significance* each item is given refers to the comparative context of its significance. There are two levels of historical significance, either local or State. Items or places of local significance are those that form part of the Wardell area's individual heritage, whereas items or places of State significance are those that form a unique part of the heritage of New South Wales.<sup>3</sup>

The following pages include two inventory lists. The first lists those items and places for which SHI Forms have been completed as part of the Wardell CBHS. The second lists the items and places considered to be of heritage significance to the Wardell area community for which SHI forms have not been completed as part of this report but that have been explained in the Thematic History. Each inventory provides the reason why the item or place is considered to be of heritage significance and its level of significance. These assessments have been made using the guidelines referred to above and the Thematic History.

### Issues arising from the Wardell Community Based Heritage Study

There are a number of issues that were raised during the course of the Heritage Study that require special mention.

#### *Oral Histories*

At the outset of this study it was anticipated that oral history interviews would be collected from members of the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal community. Unfortunately interviews were not carried out with members from the Aboriginal community as the time frame for the study did not allow for the level of consultation needed to generate the trust required for these.

Kooris' reluctance to contribute to oral history interviews stemmed from a number of issues; one issue however was emphasised. Many Kooris felt that past experiences of negotiating the significance of their sites throughout the Shire had come to very little and therefore questioned the worth of their participation in further processes of this nature. Members from the Koori community were however happy to participate in the Study through informal discussions rather than commit to taped discussions. Had the Heritage Study been given more time to create a greater understanding of the Heritage Study this may have been different.

#### *Issues relating to collection of resource material and documentation of heritage items and places*

As raised earlier in the discussion of the Thematic History, certain items and places are discussed more fully than others because of the level of documentation available regarding each of these. This 'problem' to some degree is also reflected in the completed SHI forms as the documentation supporting some of the information required to fill out these forms had simply not been gathered during the research process. This issue highlights the need to recognise that the documentation of local heritage has to be an ongoing process, whether this is carried out by Council staff or

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to the NSW Heritage Office's Publication *Assessing Heritage*.

through the volunteer efforts of ordinary community members with the support of Council.

#### *The Community Consultation Process*

While a number of individuals enthusiastically participated in the community consultation process for the Wardell Heritage Study others remarked that they were disappointed that more individuals had not participated in the process. In addition, members of the community who heard about the project after community meetings had been held expressed disappointment in having 'missed' the Study's consultation process. In all however, it is felt that there is a strong section of Wardell community that is keen to follow up the interest the Study has raised in local heritage.

## Future Heritage Recommendations

Residents of the Wardell area have expressed a keen desire to better promote local heritage through the community committee meetings and throughout the process of nominating heritage items and places. Suggestions as to how to better manage heritage in the Wardell area include:

1. Exploring the option of reviewing the current zoning of some natural features in the Wardell area identified in this report. During the research of the theme 'Environment-naturally evolved', it was found little documentation exists explaining the ecological history of many local natural features (as opposed to explaining what flora and fauna characterise these areas). As a result of the inadequate documentation of local natural features it has been expressed by a number of community members that important natural features in the Wardell area are under-recognised. Through this action it is anticipated that natural features identified in this report will be appropriately documented in order to properly assess and promote the heritage value of these areas.
2. Many participants in the Heritage Study process suggested erecting signage and publishing brochures to inform local residents and the visiting public of the Wardell area's history. The development of walks through natural areas that provide information about local flora and fauna, as well as, cultural connections to these areas has also been suggested.
3. Any signage and information produced to educate local residents and the visiting public about local heritage items and places should also include information about aspects of the Wardell area's history that are not represented by existent items or places. This action aims to provide the community with a more inclusive history of the past than the focus on heritage items or places will allow. This might include the stories of a number of ethnic families who lived and worked in the Wardell area or highlighting the connections Bundjalung peoples had to other area and sites away from the Wardell area etc.
4. The establishment of a local organisation to collect and preserve history sources of the Wardell area, as well as to see to ongoing heritage issues arising from this study and ongoing heritage matters.
5. Make history sources of the Wardell area available locally.
6. Support the ongoing documentation of nominated heritage items and places for entry onto the SHI database and for inclusion in the Council's LEP.

## Inventory of Items and Places of Significance in the Wardell Area

ITEM OR PLACE	CRITERIA	SIGNIFICANCE	STATE THEME
"Mayley"	(c)	local	Accommodation/Creative Endeavour
"Oak Vale"	(c)	local	Accommodation/Creative Endeavour
"Stonehenge"	(c)	local	Accommodation/Creative Endeavour
Bagot's Graves, Bagotville	(a)	local	Birth & Death
Bagotville Public School	(a)	local	Education
Bank	(a) & (g)	local	Commerce
"Big Scrub" remnant	(a) & (f)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved
Cabbage Tree Island and various other Aboriginal sites	(a) & (d)	local/state	Aboriginal cultures etc.
Tramlines across River Drive	(a)	local	Agriculture
Catholic Church	(a) & (g)	local/state	Religion/ Creative Endeavour
Catholic Convent/Mercy Centre	(a) & (g)	local/state	Education/Creative Endeavour
Catholic Presbytery	(a) & (g)	local/state	Religion/Creative Endeavour
Coastal Heath-Old Bagotville Road	(a) & (f)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved
Coastal Heath-Sinclair Street & Pacific Hwy	(a) & (f)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved
Coastal Heath-Thurgates Lane	(a) & (f)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved
Eleven Mile Beach sand dunes	(a)	local	Environment-naturally evolved
Empire Vale Public School & Library	(a)	local	Education
Fig Tree	(a)	local	Environment-cultural landscape
Fig Tree, Back of Royal Hotel	(a)	local	Environment-cultural landscape/Law & Order
Fig Trees, Richmond Street	(a)	local	Environment-cultural landscape
Grotto at Catholic Church	(a)	local	Religion/Creative Endeavour
Henderson Family graves, Meerschaum Vale	(a)	local	Birth & Death
Iron and timber houses in Richmond Street	(g)	local	Towns, suburbs and villages
Little Pimlico Island	(a) & (f)	local & state	Environment-naturally evolved
Meerschaum Vale brick works site	(a) & (e)	local	Industry
Meerschaum Vale Public Hall & Honour Roll	(a)	local	Social Institutions/Defence
Old Wardell Ferry approaches	(a)	local	Transport
Patch's Beach Reserve/Patch's Beach	(a)	local	Environment-naturally evolved/cultural landscape
Pimlico Hall and Honour Roll	(a)	local	Social Institutions/Defence
Pimlico School House	(a)	local	Education
Police Station, Wardell	(a)	local	Law & Order
Post Office, Bagotville	(a)	local	Communication
Post Office, Empire Vale	(a)	local	Communication
Post Office, Meerschaum Vale	(a)	local	Communication
Post Office, Wardell	(a)	local	Communication
Posts at entry to pre-school Catholic Church grounds	(a)	local	Creative Endeavour
Pottery House	(a)	local	Accommodation/Creative Endeavour
Rainforest trees, Wardell Public School	(a)	local	Environment-cultural landscape
Randles Timber Mill site, Coolgardie	(a)	local	Forestry
Remnant Coastal Rainforest/Palm Forest	(a)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved
Richmond River	(a) & (d)	local	Environment-naturally evolved/Aboriginal cultures
Richmond River Reserve	(a) & (f)	local/state	Environment-naturally evolved Towns, suburbs and villages/Creative Endeavour/
Royal Hotel	(a) & (c)	local	Commerce/Work
School Master's Residence, Meerschaum Vale	(a)	local	Education
South Wall	(a) & (c)	local	Environment-cultural landscape
St Barnabas, Church of England (brick)	(a) & (c)	local	Religion/Creative Endeavour

St Barnabas, Church of England (wooden)	(a)	local	Religion/Social Institutions
St Patrick's School Building	(a)	local	Education/Towns, Suburbs and Villages/ Creative Endeavour
St Thomas, Church of England, Meerschaum Vale	(a)	local	Religion
Uniting Church	(a)	local	Religion
Wardell & District War Memorial Hall & Honour Roll	(a)	local	Social Institutions/ Towns, suburbs & villages
Wardell Cemetery	(a), (c) , (d) & (f)	local	Birth & Death/ Creative Endeavour
Wardell Public School & Honour Roll	(a)	local	Education/Defence
Wardell Recreation grounds	(a)	local	Sport
Wardell Townscape	(a) & (g)	local	Towns,suburbs & villages
Wharf	(a)	local	Transport

**PART TWO Thematic History of the  
Wardell area**

## Environment – Naturally Evolved

### The Dreaming and the Bundjalung Nation

The township of Wardell and its surrounding localities lies within a broader geographic landscape, known by Kooris as the Bundjalung Nation. The borders of this nation are delineated by the tribal boundary within which the Bundjalung peoples lived for many thousands of years before Europeans permanently settled here from the 1840s. The many natural features and landforms that made up the Bundjalung landscape were understood by the Bundjalung peoples to be the creations of their Dreamtime ancestors. While Dreaming stories relating to the creation of Bundjalung country are unique in that they refer to specific localities, Dreaming stories are a shared characteristic of all indigenous Australian cultures.

As a direct legacy of European invasion and colonisation of the Australian continent many Dreaming stories belonging to Bundjalung peoples have been 'lost' while others remain secret, held by Bundjalung peoples and their communities as sacred and private stories. Some however, have been shared with the broader non-indigenous community in an effort to foster understanding and appreciation of Bundjalung culture and peoples. Perhaps the most well known Dreaming story relating to the Bundjalung nation is the creation of Goanna Headland, the place where Bundjalung peoples say they first arrived in their territory many generations ago.<sup>4</sup>

### European explanations of natural features and ecosystems – Transforming the 'native' landscape into a farming landscape

While the first Europeans to traverse Bundjalung country near Wardell marvelled at the beauty and extent of the natural environment, it was a beauty that was subordinate to the primary interest of developing the colony, and later the nation, economically. Preoccupied with scientific ideas that suggested Anglo-Saxons, and most things associated with their culture, were superior to all other cultures, nineteenth century European thought justified both seizing 'new' lands and transforming the landscape to perceived better ends<sup>5</sup>. However intriguing to the early European settlers, the native vegetation was considered inferior to the European farming landscape because it made the land 'unproductive'. One early commentator writing some years after the natural landscape around Wardell had been transformed into cane farms, expressing the same view held by the early European settlers about the nature of the native landscape, commented,

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<sup>4</sup> Cook, Lois, 'Jinda Walla News', *The Advocate*, November 1, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Here I refer to both the Linnean idea of the "Great Chain of Being" which classified animal and plants (including people) in an evolutionary hierarchy ranging from the least, to the most advanced. Later Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) challenged the Linnean concept that all living things were in a fixed state and were unchangeable. Darwin's theory argued that species were able to adapt but only the strongest would survive the course of adaptation. For references to these ideas see White, Richard, *Inventing Australia*, Allan & Unwin, 1981 & Griffiths, Tom, 'Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in our History-Making', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 6, 1987.

'Had Rous gone ashore at Wardell, and driving his way through the scrub covered swamp between, climbed the hill now known as Coolgardie, he merely would have seen an area covered with scrub and ti-tree, and the river winding its way through, and farther away the white sand hills of the coast, and beyond that again the blue Pacific. An uninteresting monotonous view containing no hill, or outstanding landmark, just a drab coloured stretch of flat country'.<sup>6</sup>

Land within the immediate vicinity of the Richmond River near Wardell – including East Wardell, Pimlico, Empire Vale, Keith Hall and South Ballina - was considered valuable to the first European farmers because of its rich alluvial fertility. The proximity of this land to the river also enabled the convenient transport of produce such as maize and then sugar cane to markets and for processing at nearby sugar mills. The topography of the river plains also slightly eased the hard work of growing crops with tasks such as ploughing aided by the flatness of the ground. In addition, to the east of the flood plains along the Richmond River near Wardell lay the sea, which also aided the successful farming of cane. This vast expanse of water ensured warmer temperatures along the coast therefore reducing the risk of winter frosts, which could devastate cane crops and did so in areas further inland.

To the north west of Wardell in the localities of Bagotville and Meerschaum Vale where the ground was higher and the soil 'red' dairy farming emerged as the dominant economic enterprise of Europeans who settled here. Dairy farming in these areas had been preceded by cedar-cutters camped roughly mid-way between Wardell and Meerschaum Vale to take advantage of the services of the town (however limited), as well as be within fair proximity to the location of cedar. Meerschaum Vale lay on the southeastern extremity of the Wollumbin<sup>7</sup> larva flow and hence, the red basalt soils which sustained 'the Big Scrub' cedar<sup>8</sup>. Other Big Scrub and dry forest timbers in this proximity were sought once the cedar was exhausted, including rosewood, teak, pine & beech. Timber was also taken from the Bagotville area, from land skirting the Tuckean Swamp and along the Blackwall Range to Coolgardie. Coolgardie Mountain also harboured pockets of cedar and later many other dry forest timbers, while tallow wood and red-gum was found throughout Bagotville<sup>9</sup>.

Despite the amount of timber taken from these localities the elevation of the country throughout Meerschaum Vale and Bagotville was above all considered prime grazing land for dairy herds. While some farmers at Wardell turned their hands to dairying at various times from the 1890s up until the mid-twentieth century this area had always been considered to be most suited to sugar cane<sup>10</sup>. Wardell farmers who had tried dairying had turned to it as a temporary measure to see through slumps in the sugar industry. They did not dairy exclusively, but rather, simultaneously with the growing of sugar. Another historian has argued that the flood plains along the Richmond River around Wardell were too narrow strips of land to accommodate

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<sup>6</sup> H.E.S, 'Lower Richmond, Fertile Centre of the Sugar Cane Growing Industry, Some Early History, Development from Wilderness of Dense Scrub, River Towns and Mill, *The Northern Star*, October 11, 1924, Richmond River Historical Society, Sugar Cane File.

<sup>7</sup> Also known as Mt Warning.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Ross, *A geographic information systems inventory of the Big Scrub remnants as a conservation management tool*, Integrated Project, Faculty of Resource Science and Management, University of New England, Northern Rivers, 1992, see espec pp. 3-5.

<sup>9</sup>Taped Interviews, Barry Johnson & Greg Gahan.

<sup>10</sup> Jeans, Dean, (b), *An Historical Geography of New South Wales*, Reed Education, 1972, , pp. 239-244.

sizeable enough farms that would sustain dairying<sup>11</sup>. This reasoning does not seem to accurately explain why dairying was eventually abandoned in this area. The O'Connor's, one farming family to go into dairying to prop up their cane enterprise at Empire Vale, found the condition of their dairy herd suffered considerably on the coast especially during the wet and windy periods of the winter months<sup>12</sup>.

Though Coolgardie also boasts red soil, in parts, its position on the ridge of the Black Wall Range made it unsuitable for dairying. The steep gradient of the land did not however prevent banana growing on some parts of the mountain throughout most of the twentieth century.

#### Reclaiming the native landscape as significant natural heritage

It has been difficult to trace moves in the Wardell area to conserve features of the landscape that have been left in a 'native' state. This is because there are few natural areas that have been sufficiently documented to appraise and record their natural historical value OR have, according to official criteria, significant conservation value. Nonetheless a few local sources have identified places in the Wardell area that are considered to be of significant natural heritage.

Even though forest conservation began in some areas of NSW in the 1870s no evidence has been found that suggests Europeans living in the Wardell area at this time sought to initiate the conservation of forest or any other natural areas. Jeans has noted that moves to conserve red gum forest areas in the 1870s along the Murray sprang not from a concern for conservation on aesthetic or spiritual grounds but rather due to a scarcity of red gum timber for works and building<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that conservation did not emerge here at this time for either of the reasons Jeans notes, especially given much of the land here was still forested at this time even though the cutting of cedar was by the 1870s close to being exhausted.<sup>14</sup>

Although, in the broader local region there is evidence of individuals moving to conserve remnants of the Big Scrub in the early twentieth century, this study has not been able to identify other examples of individuals organising to conserve the natural environment in the immediate area.<sup>15</sup> Instead, it seems government bodies have been the most influential in setting land aside for conservation in the local area most notably the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Local research has however, over the past several decades, identified important areas outside of National Parks that are important natural heritage areas.

A number of natural features have been nominated as significant natural heritage places. Perhaps the most prominent of these areas is the coastal heath. Heath plant communities are scattered throughout the immediate Wardell area. Given the major environmental factor controlling the distribution of heath vegetation is the low soil nutrient status, the Wardell heath occurs in areas where the soil is predominantly sand.

The heath communities found around Wardell were formed during the last interglacial period between seventy and eighty thousand years ago. This heath once formed part of a greater heathland system that extended well beyond the present

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Taped Interview, Pat O'Connor.

<sup>13</sup> Jeans, (a) *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Jamieson, E, *et. al.*, 'The Spatial Scale of European Colonisation and Land Alienation in Northern New South Wales, 1850-1910', *Australian Geographer*, Vol. 15, 1983, p. 323.

<sup>15</sup> Here I refer to Victoria Park.

day concentrations of heath to include the flood plain area south of the Richmond River now covered by alluvium. The onset of a 'warming period' twelve to fifteen thousand years ago caused the sea levels to rise and through the process of erosion much of the sand supporting heath communities was removed. In addition the migration north of the Richmond River over this time in turn deposited alluvium over the low-lying areas bordering the river. The heath in the Wardell area today is positioned away from the sea or on high ground, enabling it to avoid the erosion caused by rising sea levels and the depositing of alluvium from the river.<sup>16</sup>

The existing Wardell heath demonstrates a number of physical characteristics associated with heath systems, but each of these characteristics are not necessarily associated with each local heath community, creating a diverse variety of heath communities in the area. A clearly defined ridge and swale system can be seen in the areas along the Old Bagotville Road, where heath vegetation that can withstand swampy conditions growing in the swale is found alongside vegetation that grows in much drier conditions, growing on the ridge. In other areas large eucalyptus species co-exist along with many hardy medium and dwarf shrubs. More delicate and sometimes endangered heath species are also found in these areas, including mosses, orchids and ferns. A diverse range of fauna is also supported by local heath systems.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past few decades the Wardell heath has also played an important role in developing a key for identifying heath plants in eastern Australia. From the early 1970s several new orchid species have been identified in the Wardell heath. Thus, the heritage value of the Wardell heath not only lies in the historical importance to the geological and ecological development of the region but also its role in documenting the diversity of heath communities throughout Australia.

In addition the many *Callitris* dispersed throughout the township of Wardell are remnants of the heath that once covered these areas. Most of these trees predate European settlement in the area and add considerable aesthetic value to the town.

Other significant natural phenomena identified by this study include Lowland Sub-tropical Rainforest on Little Pimlico Island and Palm Forests to the south and north of Patch's Beach. Further research is needed to correctly document the heritage significance of these areas. Sources collected thus far sufficiently explain the characteristics of each of these plant communities but fail to document the geological and ecological histories of these features. The Wardell & District CBHS has highlighted the need for further action regarding the assessment of these areas as outlined in Part 1 - Future Heritage Recommendations section of this report.

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<sup>16</sup> Personal communication, John Moye. In the early 1970s John Moye completed a dissertation on the formation of the Wardell Heath as part of his M.Litt. at the University of New England. John does not hold a copy of this paper but believes a copy is held by the Department of Geography at the University of New England.

<sup>17</sup> Moye, *op. cit.*, and field notes taken during tour of the Wardell Heath on June 21, 2003 with John Moye.

## Peopling Australia

### Bundjalung peoples to 1840

Local Dreaming stories tell not only of the creation of the Bundjalung landscape but also of how Bundjalung peoples came to this land 'long ago' in the story of the 'Three Brothers'. The story explains how three brothers, along with their wives and children, travelled across the sea by boat to Evans Head where each family disembarked and spread out across the Bundjalung nation.<sup>18</sup> The dispersing of each of the families to live in different localities is told to explain the different dialects of the Bundjalung peoples.

Bundjalung people tell of how, before the coming of 'whiteman', they lived in harmony with the natural environment. Like other indigenous cultures Kooris suggest they belonged to the land and the land to them.<sup>19</sup> The land provided a wide variety of foods including fish, crustaceans, mammals, birds, reptiles and vegetables and fruits. Shelters were made of timber, bark, branches and palms. Timber, rock and fibres used to make tools and utensils with which to hunt, gather and prepare food. Fire was used to cook food. Individuals were part of a complex kin and tribal grouping that frequently moved across different parts of the land in search of food and in response to seasonal change and for ceremony. Bundjalung peoples also travelled to other parts of the continent to meet with other Aboriginal people for ceremony and festivals. Bundjalung people's culture and traditions evolved over many thousands of years with the passing down of knowledge from previous generations and adapting to environmental change.<sup>20</sup>

A number of 'traditional' sites of significance to the Bundjalung peoples and culture were identified in the Wardell area during this study. These sites are not detailed in this report due to the sensitive nature of many of these and the short time frame for this project has not allowed them to be sufficiently documented. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (now Department of Environment and Conservation) is charged with documenting and managing these areas. It holds an extensive list of these sites.

### European Migration to the Wardell area

The long and intimate relationship the Bundjalung people had with their territory began to be encumbered by the movement of cedar-getters, and other early settlers, to the region in the 1840s. No doubt Captain Henry Rous' earlier voyage to the Richmond in 1828 had been disturbing to the Bundjalung, who most likely had beforehand heard about the might of European settlement. As Griffiths has argued, Aboriginal oral tradition from other parts of the continent, including south eastern Queensland, suggests Aboriginal groups in these areas had learnt of Europeans and their weaponry well before they had seen them. News of Europeans travelled to

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<sup>18</sup> I have not provided a full account of the story of the Three Brothers as there are many versions and I believe this is best left to those to whom the story belongs. I have provided but a small summary of the story to demonstrate that Bundjalung peoples have a very different explanation for their arrival to European explanations. Sharpe, M, 'Bundjalung Settlement and Migration', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 9, no. 1, 1985, pp. 106-108, & Steele, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Cook, Lois, 'Jinda Walla News' *The Advocate*, August 23, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; Sharpe, *op. cit.*; Steele, *op. cit.*; Crowley, T, *The Middle Clarence Dialects of Banjalang*, [sic], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1978; Bailey, G. N, 'The Role of Molluscs in Coastal Economies: The results of Midden Analysis', *Journal of Archeological Science*, 1975, Vol. 2, nos. 45-62.

these areas from the south via a system of intertribal communication as a forewarning of their presence.<sup>21</sup>

The first Europeans to settle at Wardell, or Blackwall as it was then called, were cedar-cutters, though little is known of the camp or who made up this camp. Much of the information about the cedar camp at Wardell is derived from the reminiscences of other early residents of Wardell recorded in the 1880s and 1890s. These sources reveal only general information about the camp, most notably, its locality.<sup>22</sup> In comparison much more is known about other cedar camps in the Richmond area around Ballina and Lismore.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, several sources suggest that cedar-cutters were established at Blackwall by the early 1850s. William James Cook, the son of a cedar-cutter to come to Wardell, told the Northern Star in 1935 that he was born at Blackwall in 1853.<sup>24</sup> Daley also notes that Mr. J Gordon Blackwall purchased a table for the camp in 1851 and a safe in 1853.<sup>25</sup> When Frederick Peppercone visited the Richmond River to survey the Richmond in the mid-1850s his sketches and notes also reveal Europeans were settled at Blackwall.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly cedar-cutters could have settled at Blackwall some time before the early 1850s as the movement of these men and their families to the area had begun in earnest by 1842. An article from the Sydney Morning Herald in December of 1842 reported one of the early journeys made by a number of families to the Richmond to make their livelihoods from cutting cedar.

'Eight pairs of sawyers, with their large families, late in the employ of Mr Small of the Nambucca, have determined to open the Richmond River, 140 miles to the northward of the McLeay [sic], for the purpose of thereon cutting the finest specimens of cedar, hitherto produced in the colony. They have already proceeded in the *Northumberland*. Two or three vessels from Sydney have also proceeded there.

Cedar cutters and families moving to the Richmond in the early 1840s followed the news of the overland journey of a party of cedar-cutters from the Clarence in the spring of 1842. Equipped with bullocks and a whaleboat these men after reaching the Richmond at Codrington launched their boat and rowed to the mouth of the Richmond River at Ballina. It is noted that after checking the 'bar' here, they returned to the Clarence to collect their families and tools before settling on the Richmond more permanently.<sup>27</sup>

As the number of cedar camps throughout the Richmond increased steadily throughout the 1840s and 1850s other settlers moved to the area to take advantage

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<sup>21</sup> Griffiths, Tom, 'Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in our History Making', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 6, 1987, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> See for example 'Reminiscences of Mrs Troy', Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>23</sup> Ballina Apex, *Reminiscences: Ballina in the Early Days*, Economy Printing Services, Knockrow, 1987; Lester, Marlene (ed.) *The Diaries of Richard Glasscott*, Richmond River Historical Society, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> R.W.D., 'Mr. W. J. Cook In Reminiscent Mood, When Wardell was known as Blackwall', Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>25</sup> Daley, Louise, *Men and a River, Richmond River District, 1828-1895*, Melbourne University Press, 1966, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Sketch Books of Frederick Peppercorne, Surveyor General, Sketch Books, 1828-90, NSW State Records, microfilm 2781.

<sup>27</sup> Daley, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-31.

of the economic opportunities that surrounded the cedar cutting trade. Sawyers, storekeepers, ship-owners and shipwrights were some of the many occupations burgeoning cedar-camps supported. Many of the camps accommodated women and children also, and there was a need for clergy to guide the moral and spiritual lives of settlers, as well as teachers to instruct the children of the cedar-camps. Each new group added further diversity to the Richmond settlements.<sup>28</sup>

Blackwall, it seems, was one of the smallest settlements during this early period. Only a few sources to date reveal anything of the nature of the settlement in the 1850s. According to Mr. William Cook's memories, his father 'erected a saw plant and shipbuilding yard' at Wardell when he settled there in the early 1850s. William Cook also remembered the 'launching of several vessels that had been built by his father' from the shipyard' at Wardell. William Cook's further claim that he was born at Blackwall suggests, at least, his mother was living there in the early 1850s.<sup>29</sup> Between the early 1850s and 1867 all that is known is that the town was laid out in 1863 and in 1866 residents of the town sought the establishment of a school. The request for a school indicates an increased number of women and children coming to the area either to join men already settle here or with the greater numbers of men looking for opportunity. When the provisional school first opened in 1867 15 children were enrolled.<sup>30</sup>

Frederick Peppercorne's survey of the Richmond in 1856 indicates that the settlement at Blackwall was concentrated close to the river, within the vicinity of the present-day township of Wardell. It was not until after the passing of the Robertson Land Acts from 1861 that settlement moved beyond the immediate vicinity of the river.<sup>31</sup>

With the passing of the Robertson Land Acts opportunities were opened up for those already settled in the area as well as those living further afield who had heard of the good fortunes to be made on the Richmond. Since the Robertson Land Acts changed the way land was allocated beyond surveyed towns and required selectors to occupy their chosen tracts of land, farmers and farming families dominated the next wave of early settlers to the Richmond. Sources detailing the lives of the early 'pioneers' of Wardell and its surrounding localities are dominated by the stories of resilient men, many of whom, it is told, brought their families with them. A few of these families date from the 1860s and 1870s although most came to the area in the 1880s and 1890s and early 1900s. Like the earlier cedar-settlements, the growth of farming settlements spurred on the movement of other occupations and services to the area also.<sup>32</sup>

### Cabbage Tree Island Koori Community

Closer settlement on the Lower Richmond increasingly disturbed the association of Koori people across their territory. The radical clearing of native vegetation diminished native food sources and the delineation of private property inhibited the freedom of Kooris to visit their country for spiritual and/or other reasons. The

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<sup>28</sup> Lester, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> R.W.D, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Lockton, Helen & Ian, *Wardell School and District Centenary, 1867-1967*, Ballina Summerland Printers, 1967, pp. 4-12.

<sup>31</sup> Sketch Books of Frederick Peppercorne, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> See Wardell Pioneers Folder, local private collection.

transformation of the native landscape into a farming landscape had little regard to the sacred sites of Koori people.<sup>33</sup>

The extent to which Koori peoples association with their country was encumbered gradually increased as greater numbers of Europeans sought to settle on the Lower Richmond. During the 1840s, 1850s and early 1860s when the taking of cedar predominated the association Europeans had with Bundjalung territory, the Bundjalung peoples' tradition of living with the native environment was less threatened than during the later three decades of the nineteenth century when the landscape was substantially cleared of native vegetation. Notwithstanding, the period of the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s saw many Bundjalung families ravaged by the violent and murdering behaviour of some European settlers.<sup>34</sup>

Kooris resisted both the invasion of their territory and the violence of Europeans by responding in a number of ways. Aside from adopting traditional warfare resistance, and instead of retreating and 'dying out' as European scientific theory suggested would happen, many Kooris sought to establish new ways to survive in the new environment of European capitalism. Employment with Europeans for money or for rations enabled Kooris to supplement diminished native food sources, as well as, develop European farming skills. In the 1880s a number of Koori families moved to Cabbage Tree Island where they, like the European farmers around them began farming sugar cane. Here Kooris provided themselves with a base from which to regain control over their lives. Aside from taking up European farming practices Kooris established gardens to grow their own fruit and vegetables, often selling these and firewood to local residents in Wardell.<sup>35</sup>

Koori families who moved to Cabbage Tree Island in 1880 also built their houses from cabbage tree palms growing on the Island and purchased punts with which to travel to and from the mainland. Despite strong European influences in the lives of Kooris living at Cabbage Tree Island these families continued to maintain 'traditional' links with their country as a source of food and spiritual well being.<sup>36</sup>

Cabbage Tree Island has been nominated by Kooris as an important Aboriginal place. The history of the movement of Kooris to Cabbage Tree Island along with other aspects of their lives on the Island documented in this and other studies, demonstrates its significance in the pattern of local history since European invasion as well as the history of Aboriginal policy in NSW.

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<sup>33</sup> Gahan, Kate, *Community is Strength: A history of the daily working lives of Cabbage Tree Island Koori Community under the controls of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board, 1911-1939*, Unpublished Honours Thesis, Department of Classics History and Religion, University of New England, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Metclafe, Rory, *Rivers of Blood: Massacres of the Northern Rivers Aborigines and their resistance to white occupation*, Northern Star Print, 1989.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Gahan, *op. cit.*



Cabbage Tree Island settlement around 1911, the year the NSW Aborigines Protection Board appointed a Manager and Matron to the Island. The buildings in this picture include the School (left) and the 'Manager's residence'. The Board's action of appointing a Manager to the Island interfered with the independence Kooris sought when they first shifted to the Island in the 1880s. (Photo courtesy of Richmond River Historical Society).

## Developing Local, Regional and National Economies

### Forestry

#### *Red Cedar & other timbers*

The cedar-cutters at Blackwall were a small part of a much greater network of European men and their families who had come to the Richmond River in the 1840's and 1850's specifically to take cedar from the 'Big Scrub'. Cedar had been in steady demand from the beginning of European settlement when it was first found on the Hawkesbury River. Increasing demand for timber during the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw timber become the colony's largest export. Domestic demand for timber had also contributed to the expansion of the timber industry during this time. Much of the red cedar that made its way to the domestic markets, however, was reserved for finer houses in the cities or the grand mansions of country estates. Cedar's polished finish made it suitable for use in either house fittings or furniture.<sup>37</sup> The resistance of cedar to white ants also made it an attractive timber to use in the climate of the colony.

With the supply of cedar on the Hawkesbury exhausted by 1820 sawyers began looking further north to other rivers that also harboured rich stands of cedar to meet the growth in its demand.<sup>38</sup> Beginning next with the Illawarra, cedar-cutters and then dealers slowly moved north until reaching the Richmond in 1842. The *Sally* is reported to have transported the first group of cutters and their families to the Richmond, (including members of the group that had first travelled overland from the Clarence only days before). Soon after setting down this first group of cutters and their families the *Sally* returned with a new group of men and loaded the first cargo of cedar, 17000 feet, which reached Sydney on December 16, 1842.<sup>39</sup>

While the earliest cedar camps were established upstream from the mouth of the Richmond where fresh water was more readily available, some of those who worked in these camps soon moved closer to the river mouth. The first of those to move from upstream came to Wyrallah, and then to Tintenbar on Emigrant Creek.<sup>40</sup> By this time other cedar-cutters had moved to Ballina from the south. It is difficult to estimate the number of sawyers working on the Richmond in the 1840's but figures indicate considerable amounts of cedar was reaching the city from the Richmond. In 1845, 624,500 feet of cedar was exported, making up two-thirds of the colony's exports for that year.<sup>41</sup>

As discussed earlier in this report, the cedar-cutters working from Blackwall had come there some time in the early 1850's, or several years before. With the growth of cedar camps in and around Ballina during the 1840's it was only a matter of time before other camps spread out to Blackwall. Like the other camps located on the Lower Richmond, the cedar-cutters at Blackwall would have rafted their cedar to Ballina where it was measured, sold to a dealer, and then shipped to Sydney, Melbourne or Newcastle. Ballina was also the centre to which these men and their families travelled to collect supplies that arrived by boat. The diaries of Richard Glascott, a cedar-cutter on the Richmond in the 1860's & 1870's demonstrates the

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<sup>37</sup> Jeans (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*; Daley, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Daley, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Trudgeon, Ted, *Cedar and the Development of the Richmond River*, Richmond River Historical Society, pamphlet No. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Jeans (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

dependence cedar-cutters and their families had on supplies from the south, particularly before free selection. Later, many of the cedar-cutters and their families at Blackwall would have depended on the cedar dealer, William Heugh, who set up his agency and store at Pimlico in the late 1860's.

Demand for cedar remained significant into the 1860's when the land was opened up for free selection, as it did for a further two decades, but other timbers also became increasingly important during this period. Free selection enabled access to other timbers, as the taking of timber was no longer restricted by the stipulations of cedar licenses. All men could now cut timber on their own land, or other's land with permission. Some of the earliest selections in the Wardell area were made specifically to access timber and then sold again once the useable timber had been exhausted.<sup>42</sup>

In turn the influx of selectors to the area from the early 1860's increased demand for timber locally to build houses, businesses and villages. Pine and beech were popular timbers used in local buildings with most of the cedar continuing on to city markets. However, some cedar was also used in the finer houses constructed on the north coast, and even some less well-to-do settlers have told of extensive use of cedar in the construction of local homes.<sup>43</sup>

#### *Sawmills at Wardell, Bagotville & Coolgardie*

Local demand for timber also lead to calls for the establishment of timber mills on the Richmond. The new influx of European settlers in the 1860s, Daley argues, demanded mill sawn timber to build their houses, churches and halls. The Breckenridge Brothers first heeded the call for a local mill with the opening of the Wyrallah sawmill in 1865.<sup>44</sup> In 1868 and down river from Wyrallah, Thomas Carter built a mill for his son Ernest at Wardell. Thomas Carter, a timber merchant, also owned a mill on the Clarence, but according to Daley established the mill at Wardell to take advantage of the 'best softwoods' found on the Richmond.<sup>45</sup>

Carter's mill is said to have boomed at Blackwall despite burning down in the early 1880's. No doubt perturbed but not defeated, Carter rebuilt the mill, describing it as the 'best mill on the river'. An observer writing in the *Town and Country Journal* in 1881 apparently agreed with Carter's assertion, noting of Carter's mill. 'The latter establishment is the finest on the river, and the machinery equal to any found in Sydney'. The re-established mill provided joinery and glazing services, as well as 'estimates for houses at reduced prices'.<sup>46</sup>

Carter's mill had a significant impact on the township of Wardell. Aside from occupying two acres of land adjacent to the riverbank, it employed up to forty men and those who were married were accommodated in four roomed houses built by the mill. Carter also supplied the timber for other houses and buildings constructed in and outside the town.<sup>47</sup> The original school built in Wardell was also built with timber milled by Carter.

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<sup>42</sup> see for example, copy of obituary of Patrick Doran, Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>43</sup> Taped Interview Allan Lumley; 'Golden Wedding, Baker-Hendley' from *The Northern Star*, August 7, 1928, Clip in Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>44</sup> Daley, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>46</sup> Mullens, M (ed.), *Town & Country Journal on the Richmond*, Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, 2001, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.

Carter's mill was one among many to establish on the river during the timber boom of the 1870s and 1880s. Few, however, were as well equipped as Carter's mill. This did not bother Mr. James James, who in 1871 established a second mill in Wardell on the opposite side of the river to Carter. Nor did James James's mill bother Carter, as he was unable to meet demand for sawn timber. James's mill had less of an impact on the town than Carter's, nonetheless it played an important part in providing local employment and servicing the timber industry. Both Carter's and James's mills ceased operations in the early 1890's with the onset of the depression.<sup>48</sup>

The Bagot brothers also established a mill in 1884 across the river from Broadwater and close by terrific stands of flooded gum and tallow used for local building purposes and fencing. The establishment of a mill by the Bagots led to the naming of the immediate locality Bagotville, despite operating here for only several years. In 1890 the mill was destroyed by fire, and while the Bagots eventually re-established their mill in Ballina, it was not until the worst of the depression years had begun to pass.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the depression two other small saw-millers were to operate in the Wardell area, one at Meerschaum Vale, and the other within the township of Wardell. Robert J. Randle, who had formerly worked for James James at Wardell, established the first in 1883 at the foot of the Meerschaum Vale cutting. Randle milled local timber, most of which was transported to Lismore to build houses for the growing community there, Lismore had received municipality status in 1879. Randle himself has noted, his mill operated in this locality 'for nearly thirty years'. Joined by his son Robert (Alban), Randle later took his milling business to Wiangarie providing timber to 'big cattle stations in that district'. After spending some time at Wiangarie, the Randles returned to Wardell to live on land at Coolgardie, where they continued to operate a saw mill until the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> The Randles' Coolgardie milling operation continued to supply timber for local building purposes, but also cut and constructed banana cases for local growers.<sup>51</sup> Randle's mill site is still visible at Coolgardie. The mill site is a rare vestige of the impact timber had on the local community.

Duncan McIntyre was another local towns-person to own and operate a mill in Wardell, and the story of his mill is also an important post-script to Randle's milling operation<sup>52</sup>. Established in the 1890s, curiously when others were closing, McIntyre's mill filled an apparent gap in the local market for sawn timber. The small size of McIntyre's operation enabled him to start his operation and survive in the depressed years. The closing of many mills during this time also perhaps enabled McIntyre to acquire his mill cheaply. With many local dairy farms established during this era in the Wardell area there was clearly local demand for timber to construct dairy buildings. Sources gathered for this study however, do not show how long McIntyre's mill operated, but one source suggests McIntyre's mill was the one operated by the Randles when they returned to Coolgardie<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> see for example *Reminiscences of Arthur Cousins & Mrs. W.H.Lumley*, Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>49</sup> Hall, Glen, *Port of Richmond River: Ballina 1840s to 1890s*, Ballina Shire Council, 1983, pp. 130-131.

<sup>50</sup> Obituary of Robert Randle, Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>51</sup> Taped Interview, Lester Lovett.

<sup>52</sup> Other sources have suggested McIntyre's son in law operated the Mill see for instance Arthur Cousins, *op cit*.

<sup>53</sup> Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

## Pastoralism and Agriculture

### *Bordering the 'Lismore Run'*

Despite forming part of the Lismore pastoral holding which was first taken up by Ward Stephens in 1842 for William Dumaresq, land in the Wardell area had been unused and unexplored by Europeans until the first cedar-cutters settled here. The 'dense scrub', which buffered the Wardell area, with its understorey of magnificent palms, ferns, elkhorns and many other species of plants inhibited sheep or cattle from grazing in these areas. In any case also, Wardell was well away from Lismore where the Wilson's who took over the holding, in 1845, decided to centre their grazing enterprise. Moreover, the consolidation of the Lismore run into smaller holdings, during the depressed pastoral years of the 1840s and 1850s, placed Wardell outside the areas gazetted for pastoral purposes.<sup>54</sup>

### *Mixed farming on the flood plains*

It was not until land was opened up for free selection from 1861 that pastoral or agricultural activities began in the Wardell area. As noted above, some of the earliest selectors in the area took up land from which to cut timber. The stipulations applying to selected land however required that landholders had to 'improve' the land by way of buildings, clearing and cultivation in order to own the land. So even those selecting land principally for timber had to improve the land in some way.

These selectors, along with those who took up the land as bona fide farmers initially worked their land on a mixed farming basis. The considerable distance of these early farms from markets meant maize was for a decade the only crop they grew for cash<sup>55</sup>. Aside from keeping a portion of the crop for domestic use and for new seed, the maize would be shipped to the city market and sold on as grain. The restrictions distant markets placed on early farmers in the Wardell area also meant a large portion of their work focused on producing food for domestic purposes. Many families kept animals such as cows, pigs and chickens, and grew vegetables and fruits<sup>56</sup>. As occurred down-river near Ballina at Tintenbar, families also would have exchanged or shared the fruits of their domestic labour with others<sup>57</sup>. Some farmers who had suitable timber on their holdings, or had access to others' timber, also supplemented maize growing and domestic production with timber cutting.

### *Specialising in Sugar Cane*

The introduction of commercial sugar to the Wardell area in the early 1870's marked a change in land use that has continued for over 130 years. Few areas in coastal NSW can boast an unbroken pattern of exclusive land-use, as does sugar cane here. Initial attempts to grow cane in other parts of the colony were relatively short-lived. Captain Arthur Phillip transported cane to Australia on the First Fleet from South Africa and attempted to grow it at Farm Cove and at Norfolk Island, but this proved unsuccessful. In the 1820's further attempts were made at Port Macquarie using convict labour, under the direction of a sugar expert Rev. Thomas Scott, but it too failed as a commercial venture. While further attempts to grow cane commercially

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<sup>54</sup> Olley, W.J. *Squatters on the Richmond: Runs, Owners and Boundaries from Settlement to Dissolution, 1840-1900*, William J. Olley, 1995, p. 94.

<sup>55</sup> Jeans (b) *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>56</sup> See newspaper clips of early European families to settle the Wardell area, Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>57</sup> Lester, *op. cit.*

were not made until the 1860's, the cuttings from Scott's cane were used to re-ignite the growing of cane.<sup>58</sup>

As Jeans argues, conditions for testing a new crop of cane along the north coast in the 1860's were favourable for a number of reasons. Wheat growing was shifting inland to avoid the problem of rust and overcome the competition from imports, while farmers on the north coast were facing a glut of maize on the Sydney market, returning lower prices to them. Other crops such as arrowroot and tobacco that were tried as more reliable crops were unsuccessful. In contrast sugar prices were high and were protected by a five per cent tariff.<sup>59</sup>

New experiments in cultivating cane again began further south on the Hastings where it was grown and processed successfully from the mid 1860s. From here cane was brought to the Macleay and the Clarence around the same period. Despite the gradual progression north of cane on the rivers south of Wardell, local research suggests Mrs. Garrard first grew cane at Boorie Creek (near Lismore). Mrs. Garrard's cane was not however the source of the first cane to be grown commercially on the Richmond, though it came from the same source as the cane that was brought to the area for this purpose. Rev. Holland, a Friend of Scotts and the Parish Priest at Port Macquarie, brought the cane to Coraki where it is told the first sugar was made from this cane in 1869. Sugar cane's links with clergy did not however stop with the Rev. Holland. Father Abe Schurr, the visiting Catholic priest at Wardell from 1871-1878, and Rev. John Thom are said to have transported sets of cane around to farmers whilst carrying out their religious duties.

While the truly dedicated Abbe Schurr, may have thought God intervened to bring sugar cane to the Wardell area, it is not known who were the chosen first farmers to grow cane here, although many have been bestowed with the honour as being 'one of the first'.<sup>60</sup> Certainly cane production proved attractive to all farmers at the time, as the return per acre was much greater than maize. In addition, sugar production could be managed on the many small size farms that were taken up after free selection. The short period it took to permanently establish cane farming in the Wardell area is indicative of the haste with which it was taken up by farming families.

The earliest cane farms however, remained small during the initial phase of cane production as farmers built up stocks for replanting and the operation of small mills, that were still honing manufacturing technology, could only process so much cane. The establishment of the Broadwater Sugar Mill by CSR in 1881 later sought to help farmers meet these restrictions with large-scale, and more efficient, production technology and advice to farmers. Problems associated with cane farming did not cease with the coming of the CSR Mill, however. In the 1880's problems with gumming disease, and later a host of other diseases proved a constant source of concern for farmers and the industry. While efforts to tackle disease included introducing new varieties of cane this often meant sacrificing other important qualities such as the sweetness of the cane. The CSR from the 1880's ran its own experimental farm at Keith Hall to test new varieties of cane and from 1919 developed a laboratory based at the Mill to aid the control of the problem of disease<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Jeans (b), *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>61</sup> Anon. *The Sugar Industry on the Richmond River*, Pamphlet No. 3, Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, n.d.

The economic depression in the 1890's and the threat of competition from Queensland cane, that was plantation grown and produced more cheaply, also impacted on the early production of cane on the lower Richmond. While many farmers toughed it out during these times relying on other crops or dairying to get by some were forced to leave their farms. Other lean times faced the industry into the twentieth century. The depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's decreased the production of cane in the area.<sup>62</sup> Even though these times brought hard times, throughout much of the twentieth century the industry has been characterised more by stability than economic threat.

### *Dairying*

The land along the alluvial plains in the immediate vicinity of Wardell had been taken up more readily by selectors than had the higher basalt country at Meerschaum Vale and Bagotville. The proximity of the alluvial farmlands to river transport and to the township of Wardell ensured selectors sought these areas first. The prospect of bringing dairy farming to the Richmond soon saw these areas cleared of 'scrub' and occupied by a predominantly new group of farming families.

Even though local and other histories of dairying on the north coast indicate many farmers who came to the area in the 1880's and 1890's had migrated from the south coast, only one dairy farming family in the Wardell area are known to have been part of this pattern.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, the movement of south coast farmers to the north coast encouraged the settlement of other farmers from other localities here by popularising it as a place of new opportunities. The reputation given to the north coast by south coast farmers was in turn influenced by their previous farming experience. Many south coast farmers had operated as tenant farmers because of the monopolisation of land on the south coast by 'gentlemen farmers'. As the gentlemen farmers accumulated their large holdings of land before free selection this meant farmers of more modest means were left only marginal and isolated country, making it difficult for them to turn a profit. The discontent of south coast tenant farmers spurred on their movement to the north coast, to select their own dairy farms.<sup>64</sup>

The north coast was considered prime dairy land because of its fertility, high rainfall and warm temperatures. The industry's methods, already established on the south coast, of using improved pastures to generate increased milk production were expected to be more successful in the north coast climate. These predictions however, proved disappointing as grasses brought from the south coast produced less than satisfactory results. New research and experiments conducted here found new solutions to the problems of sustaining suitable pastures, most notably the introduction of paspalum in 1895, which went on to sustain the industry both here and in other areas for many decades.

The successful cultivation of introduced grasses like paspalum along with the ongoing improvement of refrigeration and milk processing technology saw the industry flourish in the closing decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century. The establishment of the Wollongbar experimental farm in 1894

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<sup>62</sup> Smith, Graham, *Sweet Beginnings*, New Dimensions, Byron Bay, pp. 179-181

<sup>63</sup> Ryan, Maurice, *A centenary History of Norco*, Northern Star Press, Lismore, 1986; Trudgeon, Ted, *et al*, *The Dairying Industry of the Richmond River Valley*, Pamphlet No. 6, Richmond River Historical Society, n.d., Jeans (b), *op. cit.*, Chapter 16; Taped Interviews, Barry Johnson and Greg Gahan.

<sup>64</sup> Jeans (b), *op. cit.*

by the NSW Department of Agriculture also contributed to the industry's health by encouraging herd improvement.<sup>65</sup>

A number of dairy farms were established in the Wardell area during the decades the industry began to flourish on the north coast. These farms, like others in the district, supplied whole milk to a number of small factories for processing into butter or cheese. The farms at Meerschaum Vale most likely supplied the factories at Rous and Marom Creek, while those at Bagotville and Wardell supplied milk to factories either at Ballina or Woodburn. A milk separating station operated in Wardell for some time allowing farmers to separate their milk before loading it onto boats to be transported to the factory.<sup>66</sup>

Like cane farming, small farms characterised the pattern of dairying in the Wardell area in the early decades of settlement. Some of these farms were family owned and operated. Other dairy farms employed families to operate the farm and still others were share farmed.<sup>67</sup> Milking was done by hand and usually with the assistance of wives and children, however some farmers did employ dairy hands. Later, during the Second World War a number of farms also operated with the help of Italian prisoners of war.<sup>68</sup> Dairy farms usually also involved the production of other foods for domestic use including vegetable gardens and orchards, and the keeping of pigs raised on skimmed milk, a by-product of dairying at this time. Many dairy farmers in the Wardell area also looked to other sources of income aside from dairying. Many continued to cut timber from their, or others', land, raised crops or ran grazing cattle in conjunction with dairy herds.

Unlike cane farming, dairying in the area has a more erratic history, shaped by both economic times and government legislation. While some families who went into dairying in the early decades maintained it as the primary continuous source of their livelihoods for many years others entered and withdrew from the industry during peaks and slumps. Other families entered the industry later, in the mid-twentieth century, once the industry had become more stabilised through both the consolidation of the small factory system and government assistance aimed at regulating prices of milk products.<sup>69</sup>

Dairying in the second half of the twentieth century became a different operation to that of the earlier decades. The industry was more regulated and mechanized, with electricity and milking machines enabling farmers to increase production by enlarging their herds. While farmers closer to the Norco factory in Lismore began supplying bulk milk from the early 1950's, farmers in the Wardell area continued to supply only cream. Farmers by this time also separated their own milk, then sent the cream to Alstonville as other small factories in the area were by this time closed.

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<sup>65</sup> Trudgeon *et. al., op. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> Taped Interviews Pat O'Connor & Greg Gahan.

<sup>67</sup> Early dairy farms operated on McNamees, O'Briens and Esgate's farms at Meerschaum Vale prior to the 1920's. It is not known exactly when these farms were established, but one is told to have been constructed of 'round timber'. Both the McNamee's dairy and the O'Brien's dairy in the early decades of the twentieth century employed families to operate their dairies. The family employed on O'Brien's farm also occupied O'Brien's house, while the Clifford family, who worked on McNamee's farm, were housed in separate cottage accommodation. Tom and Bill Gahan and the Johnsons also operated dairies at Bagotville in the early decades of the twentieth century. Taped Interviews Greg Gahan and Barry Johnson.

<sup>68</sup> The Gahan brothers, Matthew and Herb, had prisoners of war on their farms at Meerschaum Vale during this time, Taped Interview, Greg Gahan.

<sup>69</sup> Ryan, *op. cit.*; Trudgeon *et. al., op. cit.*

Many farmers continued to fatten pigs and raise poddy calves with the left over skim milk. Not until 1972 did farmers in the Wardell area begin supplying bulk milk.<sup>70</sup>

Despite the immense significance of sugar production and dairying to the area's history no heritage items or places have been nominated that directly signify the significance of these industries in the area. Nonetheless, an historical account of these industries in this report gives important context to the community that grew out of these industries.

### Commerce

Only two significant buildings remain in the township of Wardell as evidence of the important commercial role it once played in the local area, the former National Bank and the Royal Hotel. However, these buildings are the remains of the optimistic times that followed the end of the First World War rather than the boom years of the 1870s and 1880s as other studies have suggested<sup>71</sup>.

#### *The Royal Hotel*

The Royal Hotel was built in 1927 by Tooheys Pty. Ltd., and is the only the remaining hotel in the township. Wardell had formerly supported a number of other hotels and 'wine shantys' before the Royal Hotel was built. Previous hotels in the town were either burnt in accidental fires or were demolished to make way for new buildings. These hotels had also been owned by individuals and thus were more vulnerable to the economic booms and slumps that have influenced the growth and decline of Wardell in the past.

The purchase of the Royal Hotel by Tooheys in 1927, at public auction, was part of a broader plan to expand its ownership of hotels. The cane areas along the coast, which relied on a large seasonal male workforce, seemed attractive areas in which to invest in hotels. The nearby Broadwater Hotel, had also been purchased by Tooheys, just prior to the auction of the Royal Hotel. The death of the Royal's owner, Paddy McNamee, provided the opportunity for Tooheys to invest in the area. However, the proximity of the Mill at Broadwater, and the reportedly poor state of the Royal Hotel building, saw it fetch a more modest price than the Broadwater Hotel<sup>72</sup>.

The current building was erected immediately after the purchase of the old wooden building, the need for this had been noted by Tooheys before the hotel went to auction. While the old hotel was positioned on the 'front' of the current site, facing the river, the new building was shifted to the 'back' of the block to face Richmond Street. The re-orientation of the building was in keeping with the National Bank, which only a few years earlier was orientated toward the street, rather than the river, to accommodate the advent of the car. Tooheys' strict business interest in the town was reflected in its demolition of the Victoria Hall and other buildings that formed part of the property, which were lamented by residents at the time, to place the hotel in its present location<sup>73</sup>.

The new double storey hotel remains the largest commercial building in the township. The design of the Royal Hotel is a replicate of another hotel Tooheys built

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<sup>70</sup> Trudgeon, *et. al. op cit* & Taped interview Greg Gahan & Allan Lumley.

<sup>71</sup> See *National Trust Survey of Wardell*, National Trust NSW, 1980.

<sup>72</sup> See papers on Royal Hotel, Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>73</sup> See for instance, 'Wardell Landmark, Passing After Many Years', *The Northern Star*, July 7, 1929.

in Kew, NSW around the same era. The Royal Hotel is of red brick, has parapet walls and a wide second storey verandah supported by plain timber posts that form an awning over the footpath below. The verandah is enclosed with a timber balustrade with decorative fretwork panels and a scallion roof with decorative gables.

While the Royal Hotel maintained a local clientele it relied on the seasonal cane-cutting workforce to sustain its profits (for further details see the theme WORK). The Hotel's aesthetic dominance in the town is also important to its heritage significance<sup>74</sup>.



Royal Hotel under construction, 1929.

### *The Queensland National Bank*

The Queensland National Bank building on the corner of Sinclair and Richmond Streets was opened in Wardell in 1922, (although a former National Bank building had existed along the riverbank prior to this, which burnt down).<sup>75</sup> It was the first commercial building in the town to face away from the river and toward the main street. The National Bank was the only financial institution to operate in the town, though the post office has provided limited banking services from the time it was established.<sup>76</sup>

While the new bank was built of brick to help prevent its burning, it is also indicative of the optimism of the times in which the building was constructed. The end of World War one was a time of great optimism and the prospect of better times would have enticed to the bank to construct a more expensive brick building. Though remaining a small building, the use of brick to construct the new building was also an important outward message to clients of the good economic times that it

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<sup>74</sup> National Trust Survey of Wardell, *op. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> The Bank was first established as the Queensland National Bank and much later became the National Australia Bank. For information regarding the Bank's former location on the river see taped Interview Allan Lumley, photographs of the businesses formerly along the Riverbank also reveal this, private collection.

<sup>76</sup> See 'Wardell Post Office History' in Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

anticipated. The architecture and prominence of the bank building in the townscape makes it an important heritage building.<sup>77</sup>

The Queensland National Bank closed in 1949 for full-time banking services. Residents of the town and the outlying area had come to rely more on services in the bigger centres of Ballina and Lismore. The branch continued to open restricted hours until 1990 to service clients who still found it difficult to make these trips and whom the bank continued to value as customers.<sup>78</sup>

## Transport

### *River Transport*

The sugar industry's changeover from river to road transport in the 1970s marked the end of a long economic relationship the Wardell area had with the river. Aside from commercial fishing interests, the relationship residents of the area now have with the river is for recreation and lifestyle purposes.

Notwithstanding the access the river enabled the early settlers to land (discussed earlier in this report), the centrality of the river to European settlement is reflected in the number of villages and towns that skirted the Richmond River. As the livelihoods of the settlers relied on removing goods to markets and bringing in supplies by boat, villages and townships also faced the river. The importance of the River is reflected in the early surveys of these towns, including Wardell, which encompassed land to the where riverbank land was the focal point for businesses, rather than residences as is seen today.

The relationship between inland towns and railway stations was mirrored in Wardell where the presence of a naturally deep and readily accessible port ensured the town's future growth. When Carter decided to set up his saw-milling operation here in 1871 the deep channel fronting the settlement had helped him to make his decision. Even though cedar and farming families traded from here for some years beforehand, Carter's Mill insured the importance of the town. Schooners en-route from, or to, Sydney, would call at Wardell to drop supplies or to collect timber and other goods. Riverboats would carry local produce and passengers between many villages and towns along the river. The establishment of the CSR Sugar Mill at Broadwater, and the steady growth of sugar cane production in the Wardell area, the river increasingly transported cane in punts, pulled by tugboats, to the mill.<sup>79</sup>

The river was busy too with the punts of local residents going about their daily lives. Individuals and families would 'pull' their way shorter distances along the river from home to church, school, the doctor or the homes of relatives and friends for social gatherings. They also transported their produce to the wharf at Wardell to be loaded onto schooners or other boats. Even the cemetery was positioned handy to the river, accessed from Bingal Creek, to allow for the more convenient burial of local residents.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>The National Trust survey also draws these conclusions.

<sup>78</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 62; 'One-hour-a-week bank to close', *The Northern Star*, March 17, 1990.

<sup>79</sup> See for example, *Reminiscences of Cousins and Lumley*, *op. cit.*, Daley, *op. cit.*, especially, Chapter 9.

<sup>80</sup> Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

Kooris from Cabbage Tree Island also had their own small punts they used to get from the Island to the farms where they worked, or to distribute firewood and other produce they sold to Europeans.<sup>81</sup>



Loading cane onto punts for transport to the Broadwater Mill.

For over sixty years, residents and travellers relied on the Wardell Ferry to cross the river at Wardell. Initially privately owned, then operated by the Tintenbar Shire until its removal in 1964, the Ferry accommodated people, animals and vehicles. Local residents relied on the Ferry to get produce to markets, children to school and to cross to church on Sundays. The Council's 'Scale of Toll' for the Ferry reflected the many purposes it served in accepting, 'foot passengers', 'mare, gelding, ass or mule', 'gig, buggy, wagon dray or other vehicle', 'sheep, lamb, pig or goat', and 'bicycles' and so on, to travel on the ferry.<sup>82</sup>

The Wardell Wharf and Ferry approaches have been nominated for heritage listing as vestiges of the prominence river transport played in the lives of local residents and its influence on the spatial layout of the town. While the Wharf is not an 'original' structure, its position has remained the same since it was built.<sup>83</sup> The Ferry approaches are less visible, but are well known and remembered by those who utilised the Ferry over the years. The approach on the northern side of the river sits below the fire station to the side of the bridge, while the approach on the southern side of the river is obstructed by re-growth along the riverbank west of the bridge.

### *Road Transport*

Much has been written of the prominence river transport played in shaping the lives of the early Lower Richmond settlers which has, to some extent, understated the importance of road links to areas positioned away from the immediate vicinity of the

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<sup>81</sup> Gahan, *op. cit*; It is also recognised that Kooris used river transport extensively prior to the European settlement of their territory, however the scope of this study has been unable to fully document this.

<sup>82</sup> Tintenbar Shire Minutes, July 1908, Ballina Shire Council Records.

<sup>83</sup> Sources relating to the Wharf do not indicate when the wharf was first built; there is plenty of documentation however concerning the renovations of the Wharf and incidents of boats running into the Wharf. Also, the current wharf is not the only Wharf that existed in Wardell, as there were a number along the river bank that were privately owned, as the existing wharf would have once been before it was declared a public wharf.



The Wardell Ferry approach on the northern side of the river, early 1960s.

river. For both cedar-cutters and other timber workers, as well as farmers, living in the localities of Coolgardie and Meerschaum Vale road travel was as much a part of their lives as the river was to those whose properties bordered it. Proximity to the river however did not preclude the need for residents to use roadways.

Like at other nearby settlements, the first roads heading toward Meerschaum Vale and Coolgardie were 'cut' by the cedar-getters enabling them to access cedar trees and then draw it to the river to be rafted further downriver to sell. The continuous use of these tracks by timber workers, along with their bullocks and trucks, to and from the river ensured these roads remained defined. Selectors wanting to access land beyond the reach of cedar later extended cedar tracks further. The road from Wardell to Meerschaum Vale, the Bagotville Road, Dutton's to Marom Creek Road, the Meerschaum Vale cutting, Bartletts Lane Lumley's Lane, Thurgate's Lane, Buckombill Mountain Road, the Road to Duck Creek (now the Pacific Highway), Coolgardie Road and others, mark the access routes selectors made in taking up land. Most of these roads remained mere bridle tracks for many decades after Europeans selected the land. Over the years the traffic of pedestrians, horses, bullocks, and buggies that traveled these routes for supplies, to deliver produce, attend school, church and for visitations increased. Businesses in Wardell, like the butcher, relied on these routes to deliver meat and other goods to families in these outlying districts.<sup>84</sup> Dairy farming too relied on the roads to deliver cream directly to factories or for loading onto boats. At Bagotville horse drawn slides would bring the cream to the main Wardell road to be picked up for carriage, to the factory or wharf, by cart then later by truck.<sup>85</sup>

Roadways south and east of the river were routes to and around the farms that had sprung up in this area also from the 1860s. Many of these roads or lanes were primarily maintained to enable the hauling of cane to the river. In the early days this was performed by horse or bullock drawn carts, some of which were adapted to operate on tramlines positioned down the lane ways, during the harvest season. The use of these tramlines enabled the production of cane in these areas to be increased

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<sup>84</sup> Taped Interview Allan Lumley.

<sup>85</sup> Taped Interview, Barry Johnson.

as the efficiency of cane transport increased.<sup>86</sup> The introduction of the Burn's Point Ferry at South Ballina saw the route from East Wardell, through Empire Vale, become the main road to Ballina.

Families living on the river did not always travel by boat. For those who had horses and buggies or sulkies, no doubt the task of riding or driving their horses, for whatever errand they were running, was a more enjoyable way to travel than pulling a punt against the river tide. Also, living on or near the river did not always mean one owned a punt, therefore walking or horse riding was for some the only way of getting round the Wardell area.

The surface of roadways in the Wardell area was continually hampered by wet weather making them 'boggy' and sometimes impassable.<sup>87</sup> Not until well after the area came under the jurisdiction of the Tintenbar Shire in 1906 did the condition of these roadways improve. Early road maintenance carried out by the Tintenbar Shire was limited primarily by funding. Bridging creeks was a priority but one that had to wait the availability of funds. Roads determined 'main roads' by the NSW government generally were serviced more frequently because greater allocations were given for this purpose, regardless of whether more traffic used these roads. The Shire's minutes indicate that it received more complaints about supposedly minor roads like Wardell and Bagotville Road than it did about main roads. Much of the early road maintenance that took place along these minor road routes were undertaken by the Shire at the part expense of residents living on these roads either through, offering money toward the cost of the road or giving of their labour.<sup>88</sup>

It was not until the Shire developed its own quarries in the area from the 1930s were that minor roads gradually surfaced and usually in response to requests from local Progress Associations that had sprung up as a means to lobby Council on these issues. The need for ongoing improvements to roads within the township of Wardell was brought to the attention of the Shire through the Wardell & District Betterment League from the early 1920s.<sup>89</sup> Main roads and roads within the town in the early decades were surfaced with rock from Riley's Hill, and one reference reveals that some roadways in the town before this were surfaced with shells sourced from a midden at North Creek.<sup>90</sup> In areas around Empire Vale, the Tintenbar Shire 'borrowed' the CSR tram tracks during the slack season, to assist the macadamising of roads.

While the advent of car and motorised trucks may not have changed the importance of the links roads provided to farms and communities living further away from the river, it did however change the attention given to the quality of roadways. By the 1940's the Shire was using metal and bitumen on the roads and had considerably increased the amount of heavy machinery it had for road making. Cars did however change the importance of roadways between major centres along the coast and to the city. Where schooners and other boats had previously maintained links with other coastal towns and cities, by the 1940's shipping was in decline and road travel increasing. The 1950's and 1960's also brought increasing numbers of tourists to north coast beaches from the south and inland to camp and caravan. The increasing

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<sup>86</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>87</sup> Tintenbar Shire Minutes, May 5, 1933, "T.J. Gahan & Others" writing concerning the impassability of the Meerschaum Vale to Bagotville Road in wet weather.

<sup>88</sup> See for example, Tintenbar Shire Council Minutes, November 24, 1923, re: Correspondence from M.Gahan asking when Council will form the road residents had recently cleared. There are many examples of this kind of request relating to the Wardell area in the Shire Minutes.

<sup>89</sup> Tintenbar Shire Council Minutes, 1906-1965, Ballina Shire Council Records. The Wardell & District Betterment league later became the Wardell Progress Association.

<sup>90</sup> Arthur Cousins, *op. cit.*

traffic coming into the region placed stress on the ferries that crossed the river at Wardell and South Ballina. As a temporary measure of overcoming this problem the Shire began operating a second ferry during the summer holidays to move vehicles across the river to Ballina.<sup>91</sup> A more permanent solution was implemented by the State government in 1964 with the construction of the Wardell Bridge and the redirection of the main route to Ballina.

Despite the significance of roadways to the history of the Wardell area, aside from actual routes, only one item has been nominated as being of heritage significance. Tramlines used for hauling the cane to the River at Empire Vale still cross River Drive at a number of points. These tramlines are considered of local heritage significance because of their historical importance to the cane industry.

### Communication

Ferry has argued that, '[a]bsolutely essential to the smooth economic and administrative functioning of a district was an efficient and reliable mail service.'<sup>92</sup> The residents of Wardell also expressed this view when they petitioned Post-Master General's Department for their own post office from the 1860s. Prior to the appointment of the first Postmaster, Mr. James Kennedy in 1870, residents of the Wardell area had to pick up their mail from Ballina. The 66 residents that signed the petition in 1869, felt not only did they have sufficient numbers in the town to request an end to the inconvenience of travelling to Ballina to collect their mail, but also that the business of the town was important and warranted a post office. The resident's petition to the Postmaster General stated;

'That your Memorialists, Inhabitants of Wardell and its vicinity are labouring under great inconvenience through the want of a Post Office in our District; our nearest being "Ballina" Office for their communication to travel by open boat from ten (10) to twenty five (25) miles, making in some cases fifty (50) miles.

The population is rapidly increasing in number, and the business in importance as the resources in the District are being developed, for instance a Melbourne Company has just erected a Saw Mill in the Township of Wardell [sic].

Your Memorialists being aware a new Mail route has been granted by your Honourable House to Ballina, Via Woolli, Clarence River Heads we would humbly pray that such an arrangement may be made by the Honourable Postmaster-General for a post office to be established at the Township of Wardell and that our Bags may be dropped by the Mailman on his route to and from Ballina.'<sup>93</sup>

While residents of the town highlighted the need for a post office for the functioning of the business of the town, the mail would have been as important for making contact with distant family and friends. In the early decades of settlement correspondence with distant friends and relatives would have been infrequent, but

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<sup>91</sup> See for example, P.J. O'Connor to Tintenbar Shire, expressing appreciation for the service of extra ferry at Burns Point during Christmas School holidays and requesting the same service during the 'coming December holidays', 22 May, 1957.

<sup>92</sup> Ferry, John, *Thematic History, Parry Shire*, 2000, Unpublished Report, p. 64.

<sup>93</sup> Post-Master General's Department to Mrs L.T.Daley, June 30 1953 regarding the history of the Wardell Post Office including transcription of petition. Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

nonetheless important. The volume of mail that passed through the post office in 1883 is testament to the importance communication was to the community, with 13,398 letters posted in that year. The post office also operated as an agent for the Government Savings Bank and processed money orders from the early years.<sup>94</sup>

Mr. James Kennedy operated the first Wardell Post Office from his store on the south side of the river to the dissatisfaction of many residents on the north side who felt the post office should be in the town proper. Residents from the north side of the river continued to petition the PMG department for a number of years and eventually they, too, were granted a Post-Master in 1875. The new Post Office operated from a room attached to Ernest Carter's store, which had been newly built. Carter also acted as Post-Master for a short time.

Given the post office on the south side of the River remained when the new post office came into existence, and was called Wardell Post Office, the new post office was referred to as North Wardell. The naming of the post office in the town North Wardell, however, was to cause the PMG and residents some dissatisfaction and so in 1878 the North Wardell Post Office became Wardell and the office on the south side was referred to as East Wardell.

After Carter ran the Post Office from his store it was run from a number of other buildings in the town that also operated as stores, as was often the case in many small rural towns during this time. The East Wardell post office operated from the one building but with different personnel in charge then later closed. Wardell retains its Post Office which has been housed in a building built specifically for the post office and telephone exchange since 1927. The telephone exchange in Wardell was first operated in 1919. Before the installation of the telephone service urgent messages were transmitted by telegram using the single telephone line installed in 1909. A telegraph service pre-dated the telegram service and telephone exchange.<sup>95</sup>

The establishment of a post office in other surrounding localities followed the establishment of the post office in Wardell. As surrounding localities grew, residents of these areas also sought the convenience of having postal and associated services nearby. Empire Vale, Keith Hall, Bagotville and Meerschaum Vale each had their own Post Offices. Cabbage Tree Island also was granted a post office in the 1960s. While the Empire Vale Post Office is the only office still functioning, the post office buildings at Bagotville and Meerschaum Vale remain and are used as private residences. Details on each of these postal offices require further research. However, all remaining post office buildings have been nominated as heritage items. The importance of communication to the functioning of each of these communities makes these places significant to the heritage of each of these localities.

### Cultural landscape

Both the Bundjalung peoples' custodianship of the land and European settlement of the Wardell area has considerably shaped and reshaped the physical environment over time. European settlement of the area however, has seen the physical environment altered by human intervention more rapidly than ever before. The rapid alteration of the landscape by Europeans, many argue, has been overwhelmingly detrimental. Nonetheless, Europeans have, over the decades, celebrated the many changes they have made to the environment as they have sought to 'civilise' and 'beautify' their once 'new' surrounds.

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<sup>94</sup> Wardell Post Office History, Wardell File, *op. cit.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

### *The 'South Wall'*

For Europeans living on the Richmond in the early decades of settlement, river transport, as has been noted elsewhere in this report, was vital to their daily lives. The transportation of goods to and from the Richmond sustained the many settlements along the river, including those in the Wardell area. It is well documented that the Ballina bar frequently caused havoc with vessels coming to and leaving the area with supplies and goods.<sup>96</sup>

In an attempt to alleviate the dangerous conditions the Ballina bar had become known for, the State Government, in 1885, commissioned Sir John Coode to examine the bar and give recommendations on making it a safer place to cross. Coode's investigation came up with the solution of constructing a north and south breakwater that would 'confine a wide estuary into a comparatively narrow channel a few hundred yards in length, than the ebb current [would] scour out a channel' deep enough for vessels to cross.<sup>97</sup>

The construction of the south breakwater was an incredible feat in its time. The large stones used to construct the wall were quarried from Riley's hill then loaded onto railway trucks and drawn by horses to the river bank where they were loaded onto big wooden barges '30 to 40 feet long and about 20 feet wide'. The barges were then towed down river to Ballina and unloaded at the breakwater.<sup>98</sup> The towing of the large stones became a familiar site on the Richmond as the breakwater took many years to complete.<sup>99</sup>

The construction of the 'south-wall' at South Ballina, in association with the north wall, considerably altered the estuarine landscape of the Richmond River and thus is considered to be at least of local heritage significance.

### *Fig Trees in Sinclair and Richmond Streets*

In contrast to the construction of south-wall tree plantings were a more subtle way in which local residents shaped their physical surrounds. The large fig trees that adorn Sinclair and Richmond Street, as well as, the rainforest trees in the Wardell Public School grounds, all mark important events in the lives of many town residents. In 1935, to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary three Fig Trees were planted in Sinclair Street. Only one of these trees survives. The marking of this event was of particular importance to those of English descent or the Church of England faith who, through other events like Empire Day, enthusiastically celebrated Empire.

The occasion of the King and Queen's Jubilee was celebrated in the usual fashion of festooning a row of bunting in 'patriotic colours' (red and blue) across the street from the Royal Hotel to the National Bank. The planting of trees to mark the occasion was attended by the Public School, whose Principals also celebrated Empire each year on Empire Day.

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<sup>96</sup> see for example, Hall, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9; Ballina Apex, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>97</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> Broadwater CWA, *A short history of Broadwater*, Quality Plus Printers Ballina, 1994, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Glen Hall has noted that even though Coode made his recommendations in 1885 it was not until some time in the 1890s that construction began on the south breakwater and another source suggests it was not completed until 1906. For precise dates the Public Works Department files held by NSW State Records would need to be consulted.

Sketchy evidence suggests the fig trees along Richmond Street were planted there in August 1938 but this evidence does not make clear what event they marked. The year 1938 marked 150 years of European settlement but the 17 of August was not the official day this was celebrated, unless Wardell did things differently or the trees were planted at another time. Further research is required to fully document the significance of these trees.

### *Wardell Public School Rainforest Trees*

The planting of trees in the Public School grounds in 1967 by ex-pupils and the principal marked the centenary of the Public School (see the theme Education for further details about the school).<sup>100</sup> The celebration of the Wardell School's centenary was also a celebration of the European settlement of the Wardell area with a complete day of festivities and an historical exhibit of 'old photographs, documents and curios' put together by local residents to also mark the occasion.<sup>101</sup> In addition, the school principal of the time published a centenary booklet chronicling the local 'pioneer' families and the 'progress' of the 'district'.<sup>102</sup> By the 1960s the celebration of local history was not widespread nonetheless the planting of trees to mark the Wardell School centenary marks the town's recognition of its past and tells the story of how that past was celebrated.

## Events

### *The Great War and World War II*

While many cultural events of national or local importance were recognised by residents of the Wardell area in the past, few have left more public evidence than the Great War & World War II. Certainly, the proliferation of Honour Rolls in the Wardell area after the wars was influenced by the political environment of post war society, which promoted the legend of the Anzac and the brave soldier as proof that the Australian nation had come of age.<sup>103</sup> To spur on this sentiment, local communities were offered financial support to memorialise their 'loved ones' lost at War, as well as, the 'lucky ones' who returned, by constructing some kind of monument to them.

A popular way of honouring soldiers after both wars was the dedication of Memorial Halls. Where communities already boasted halls, the construction of Honour Rolls, listing the names of men who served at War, to hang in Halls or Schools, was the other popular means used to acknowledge them. After the Great War a number of localities in the Wardell area adopted the hanging of Honour Rolls to acknowledge the local men that had served. The Wardell Public School, Meerschaum Vale Hall, Pimlico Hall and Empire Vale Public School, house these Honour Rolls.

After World War II Wardell residents sought to honour the local servicemen of this war by amalgamating the old School of Arts building and the Richmond Hall and dedicate it as the Wardell and District Memorial Hall. The Richmond Hall had been built in 1925 to replace the town's older Victoria Hall, which had been demolished to make way for the new Royal Hotel. Along with some government assistance

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<sup>100</sup>Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>101</sup> '600 Attend Centenary Despite Rain', undated Northern Star Clip, Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>102</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Garton, Stephen, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, White, Richard, *Inventing Australia*, Allan & Unwin, 1981, Chapter 8.

residents of the town raised the funds to move the School of Arts Hall from the 'back' of the existing block to front Richmond Street.<sup>104</sup> A new deco façade was added to the weatherboard building in 1953 to display the Hall's new title and give it a 'modern' appearance. In addition a small memorial plaque was also erected at the side of the building dedicated to the servicemen of both wars.

The other localities noted above who displayed Honour Rolls from the Great War also had Honour Rolls drawn up to acknowledge the local men who served during World War II. These Honour Rolls, most of which are of polished timber with painted lettering, are cherished by the local community as items of aesthetic and historical importance. While Honour Rolls are symbols of how governments sought to eulogise the soldier in the public's imagination for political purposes, they also embody the personal loss suffered by the local community during both wars. The Honour Rolls of the Wardell area, and the Wardell obelisk, are considered to be at least of local heritage significance.

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<sup>104</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

## Building Settlements, Towns and Cities

### Towns and Villages

The very few Bundjalung place names that remain in the local landscape only hint at the complex network of names that Europeans paid scant attention to when exploring and settling the Wardell area. Some of the first European settlers at Wardell had however, for a short time, used the 'native' name of Bingal to refer to the locality. Most, however, came to know the area as Blackwall until at least the 1885 when the town was given official township status and the name changed to Wardell. Even with the official recognition of the town of Wardell some early settlers chose to continue to use the name Blackwall.<sup>105</sup>

Confusion remains to this day as to why Wardell became known as Wardell. However, most agree the town was named after Robert Wardell, who established an early Australian newspaper based in Sydney. Wardell had never been to the Richmond, and in fact, had died before Europeans settled the area, yet his name was given to the Wardell settlement. Local histories reveal however, that his sons were both surveyors and perhaps had some role in recommending the name Wardell.<sup>106</sup> Why Wardell's sons chose to memorialise their father's name on the Richmond remains a topic of further research.

When Frederick Peppercorne came to the Richmond in 1855 to survey land along the Richmond he knew Wardell as Blackwall. In fact, Peppercorne had recommended the name Bingal or Blackwall as an official name for the settlement. In addition his surveys indicate that he had also taken the liberty to impose a couple of his own names on the local landscape, including the naming of Cabbage Tree Island, the Isle of Dogs, Goat Island and Cat Island. Some early European settlers had also known these islands as Double Island, obviously because of their proximity to one another.<sup>107</sup> Later Europeans adopted the name Cabbage Tree Island for one of these Islands because of the unique palm forest vegetation that once covered a great portion of the island. When Kooris moved to the island in the 1880s they also adopted and used the name Cabbage Tree Island.

When visiting the Richmond in 1856, Peppercorne surveyed and laid out an area as a proposed future village at Blackwall. Later in May 1857 Peppercorne transmitted a more detailed plan and design for the village to the NSW Surveyor General. Following Peppercorne's survey work, the town of Wardell was gazetted on July 29, 1859 and land within the village reserve went to public auction at a later date.<sup>108</sup>

The naming of other localities by Europeans in the Wardell area was a much more organic process. Names emerged because of the events that took place there or because of the people that settled there. German Creek was so named because of the early German settlers who had worked to clear the land there. However, during the First World War, the emergence of anti-German sentiment within the community gave rise to the need for a name change. In the fervour of going to war with Britain the name Empire Vale was instead appropriated.<sup>109</sup> Whereas, Pimlico marked the spot where Steve King's cedar party stopped on the boat trip to the Richmond in 1842. As the story goes, on their journey up river they anchored at Pimlico to wait

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<sup>105</sup> Cousins & Lumley, *op. cit.*, make reference to the continued use of the name Blackwall.

<sup>106</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Peppercorne's sketch of the Richmond River show these names, Sketch Books of Frederick Peppercorne, Surveyor General, *op. cit.*

<sup>108</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>109</sup> Empire Vale Public School Centenary Committee, *Empire Vale: A history of the School and District*, Northern Star Print, 1991, p. 65.

for the outgoing tide to turn, and while the women did the washing the men drank bottles of Pimlico Ale and threw the 'empties' in the river.<sup>110</sup>

Robert Randle, the Coolgardie sawmiller, claims to have given Meerschaum Vale its name after finding deposits of meerschaum clay here. Randle also noted that Siegfried Sohn, the local chemist, had also named the area Kinanacane after he selected land there. The origin of Sohn's name is not known. Coolgardie, is said to be an Anglicised version of the Bundjalung name for the Meerschaum Vale area, though the source of this information has not been verified.<sup>111</sup>

Bagotville, as has been noted elsewhere in this report, was named by relative latecomers, the Bagot brothers, and this area before their arrival had been known as part of Meerschaum Vale. Keith Hall was named by one of the early selectors in the district, Byrnes, after the town Keith in his 'native' Scotland. South Ballina was named simply because of its southern proximity to the township of Ballina.

As many of these localities further away from the town of Wardell grew with the arrival of new settlers and required halls, school and church land was either donated or re-claimed for such purposes. The details of these stories are provided elsewhere in this report.

### Accommodation

The immediate Wardell area boasts a handful of country 'homesteads' that once accommodated large and extended successful farming families. The majority of these homes were built around the turn of the century and are of timber and iron with varying degrees and styles of late Victorian ornamentation. Houses built before this time were either slab huts or sawn timber cottages, although one double story timber Georgian style home dating around 1880 is known to have been built in East Wardell.<sup>112</sup> Other more modest, but substantial family homes are peppered throughout the Wardell area, built at various times and of varying design. Overwhelmingly however, these 'older style houses' are of timber and iron. The abundance of timber in the Wardell area saw a clear preference given to timber for buildings well into the twentieth century.

Within the township of Wardell, and up until the 1970s, housing was predominantly timber cottage style housing. Two cottages in Wardell are pre 1900, with the majority built after 1900 and before 1950. Many other older style houses larger than cottage accommodation also exists. The most well known, 'Mayley', built by the Lumley family in 1910 is an Edwardian Art Nouveau style house.<sup>113</sup>

In contrast to housing in the town and surrounding country side, the 'huts' and 'cottages' built by the Aborigines Protection Board and the Aborigines Welfare Board at Cabbage Tree Island from the turn of the century have been removed, and replaced by modern 'Queenslander' style houses.

The array of sizes and styles of older housing in the Wardell area at first glance reflects the different degrees of 'success' the earliest settlers and those following achieved. To what degree this also reflects other social phenomena, such as cultural

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<sup>110</sup> Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection.

<sup>111</sup> This information was taken from a transcription titled 'Place Names of the Richmond Region', the geographic names Board does not record this information. Other research is required to substantiate the accuracy of this information.

<sup>112</sup> Personal communication with a number of East Wardell residents.

<sup>113</sup> Goodwin, Leanne, *Building Census, Richmond Street, Wardell*, unpublished document.

background, is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>114</sup> The pattern of timber and iron cottages and houses in the township of Wardell does however, project a particular 'village' streetscape that is valued by Wardell residents and contrasts aesthetically with the 'new style' brick housing situated further away from the town centre, although some brick and tile houses are dispersed throughout the 'old' part of the town. Iron and timber houses are not only of aesthetic heritage significance, but they represent important aspects of the Wardell area's social history. Further investigation is required of a number of houses identified by this study to adequately document these for inclusion on the Heritage Inventory.

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<sup>114</sup> Davison, Graeme, in Troy, Patrick (ed.), *European Housing in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 6-25. Davison talks about the different housing styles found among English, Scottish and Irish in Colonial Australia.

## Work

### *Occupational patronage at the Royal Hotel*

As noted earlier in this report, the Royal Hotel in Wardell relied considerably on the patronage of local and itinerant cane cutters to make it a viable business. Records relating to trading at the hotel indicate that the Royal made most of its income during the harvest season when cane cutters were in town. Indeed Tooheys had purchased and rebuilt the hotel because of the cane-cutters patronage. One account of 'Cane Pay Saturday at Wardell' reveals the habits of cane cutters when they came into the town; 'there are frequently some sixty or seventy young men who are there for the expressed purpose of having a good time. After a fortnight's hard and unremitting toil usually under a scorching sun, it is easily understood that there is something like [sic] – a sailor ashore – a soldier on leave – a dog off the chain'.

Not all cane workers however, were welcomed to spend their money openly at the pub. Indeed Koori workers were excluded from drinking at the pub under the NSW government's legislation the *Aborigines Protection Act*.<sup>115</sup> According to this legislation it was illegal for any person to supply liquor to Aboriginal people unless, from 1943, they held an Exemption Certificate excluding them from the provisions of the Act. Even after this legislation was abandoned in 1963 allowing all Kooris to legally drink at the Hotel a separate bar continued to operate for some time from where Kooris were served.<sup>116</sup>

### *The CSR Cane Barracks*

The seasonal demand for harvest labour in the Wardell area placed pressure on the availability of accommodation for cane workers. From the earliest days men coming to work in the cane from afar would 'camp out' or sleep and eat in tents provided by the CSR. Later, changes brought about by the *Agricultural Workers Act* stipulated more permanent style accommodation had to be provided for itinerant workers and the CSR built barracks made of corrugated iron with bunk beds. With the changeover to mechanical harvesting in the late 1960s and early 1970s the barracks were no longer required. Most of the barracks were demolished or converted into machinery sheds,<sup>117</sup> but some survive on a number of farms around Empire Vale. These 'buildings' require further investigation.

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<sup>115</sup> *Aborigines Protection Act, 1909, The statutes of the NSW Parliament (Public & Private) passed during the session of 1909*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1910.

<sup>116</sup> Personal communication. [name withheld]

<sup>117</sup> Empire Vale Public School Centenary Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

## Education

### Wardell Public School

Contrary to other accounts of the history of education in Wardell, the establishment of the Wardell Provisional School in 1867 suggests a keen interest in the education of children among early European settlers. Compulsory schooling was not introduced in NSW until 1880 and any establishment of schools prior to this time required financial assistance from parents toward the School building and payment of the teacher's salary. Parents also had to get their children to school under difficult circumstances, including excessive wet weather and crossing the river in these conditions. When in 1871 the School was closed temporarily, it was due to lean times on the river which prevented parents from being able to afford school fees, rather than parental disinterest.<sup>118</sup>

The School re-opened again in 1874 and for the next 25 years operated in a purpose built timber building, instead of a rented room. This building was replaced and repaired a number of times before the current 'old' School building was erected on an adjoining site in 1901. The School's status was also changed from a Provisional School to a Public School in October 1876. The Wardell Public School celebrated its centenary in 1967.

Over the past 130 years or so the Public School has operated in Wardell, it has served not only children's education needs but also it was often through the School, and at the School site, that community events were held. The most well known and well remembered were the Empire Day picnic and sports.<sup>119</sup> As Ferry has noted of the establishment of small schools in other rural areas, Wardell School brought some degree of social cohesion to the area and a sense of community identity, particularly through the operation of an active P&C Association.<sup>120</sup>

### Empire Vale Public School

Other Public Schools in the area followed the establishment of Wardell Public School and the growth of European settlement in the area. With sugar cane well established at Empire Vale and bringing permanent residents to the area, a new school was opened in 1878 after members of a local School Board made application for a Provisional School. Like the early school at Wardell, the Empire Vale School (then known as Pimlico rather than German Creek) operated in a privately owned building built especially as a schoolroom.<sup>121</sup> However, soon after, the NSW Council of Education built another building on a new site which had an attached teachers residence. This site was located close to the riverbank to allow access from the river to the School. However, the problem of erosion of the riverbank and dampness and cold from being close to the river were reasons later given for the School to be moved once again. In addition the building proved too small, and by the time it was replaced it was riddled with white ants. In 1890 tenders were called for the erection of a new School building away from the riverbank on the present School site. The current School site was resumed from the CSR in 1890 and a new brick building was constructed in 1891.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-12; Ramsland, John, 'The teacher and the Curriculum on the Richmond River, 1860-1910, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 67, pt. 3, 1981, pp. 249-263.

<sup>119</sup> '600 Attend Centenary Despite Rain', *op. cit.*

<sup>120</sup> Ferry, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>121</sup> Empire Vale..., *op. cit.*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-13.

### Meerschaum Vale Public School 'Headmaster's Residence'

Across the river and over Coolgardie mountain, the Meerschaum Vale Public School was opened in 1885 with an enrolment of 35 pupils. As in other localities in the Wardell area, increasing settler numbers in the closing decades of the nineteenth century saw increasing enrolments at these small Schools. The growth of dairying in the Meerschaum Vale area at this time saw the need to upgrade and expand the School's buildings. In 1909 a new timber classroom together with a teacher's residence was built.<sup>123</sup>

The building of teachers' residences alongside or near School buildings was common in rural localities during this era and before. The Department of Public Instruction provided a residence to teachers as part of a salary package that aimed to attract and retain teachers in difficult locations. Where a residence did not exist, teachers often boarded with local families. This arrangement proved satisfactory for single teachers but inappropriate for married couples. Early teachers at Meerschaum Vale prior to the erection of the teacher's residence boarded with local families, and this had also occurred at Empire Vale.<sup>124</sup>

Meerschaum Vale Public School was closed in the 1970s and the class room building was removed and the land and teacher's residence sold.<sup>125</sup>

### Pimlico 'School House'

A School was also established at Pimlico in 1866 and the first classes were conducted in a 'little church' built on the property of a local family. Two years after its establishment the school was moved to a purpose built classroom and operated here until 1923. Neither of these early buildings, or the 'modern' building that replaced the first classroom, exists today. However, as at the Meerschaum Vale Public School, a 'cottage' was built in 1912 to house the teacher. It is still located on River Bank Road, Pimlico and has been nominated for heritage listing.<sup>126</sup>

### Bagotville Public School

Bagotville Public School was the smallest and most short-lived school in the Wardell area. First established as a Provisional School in 1913, in a building erected by the local Progress Association, 'a local girl' taught at the School. Within a year of opening enrolments increased enough to warrant the upgrading of the School to a Public School. In 1914 a new building was erected, a Departmental teacher appointed and a P&C established. In 1929 the school closed due to falling enrolments, but then re-opened in January 1931 as enrolments increased again. Hard times fell on the School again in 1937 when it burnt down and had to be rebuilt. The children were taught in a 'barn' in the school grounds while another classroom was rebuilt. The 'new' and currently standing school building was re-opened in January 1939. Further research is required to determine exactly when the Bagotville School ceased to operate.<sup>127</sup>

Each of the above school buildings have been nominated as significant heritage items because of the important role they have played in educating children living in

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<sup>123</sup> Department of Education, *status quo*, Education week 1959, see Meerschaum Vale Public School, p. 9.

<sup>124</sup> Taped Interviews, Pat O'Connor and Greg Gahan.

<sup>125</sup> Personal. Communication, Greg Gahan.

<sup>126</sup> 'First Classes held in Church, Pimlico School Celebrates Golden Jubilee, Early settlement on Richmond', *Northern Star*, March 16, 1937; 'History in the House', *Northern Star*, August 4, 1996.

<sup>127</sup> Department of Education, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

the Wardell area. In addition, the role played by Schools in building community in the various localities is also represented by each of these buildings. These buildings, together, tell an important story of the volatile nature of rural schooling over the last century and longer.

#### Cabbage Tree Island Public School

An Aboriginal School was established at Cabbage Tree Island in 1893 in response to a petition made by a number of parents at Wardell Public School to exclude Koori children from attending there. Kooris settled at Cabbage Tree Island had enrolled their children at the Wardell School a short time before they were excluded. In response to the demands of white parents, the Department of Education established a Provisional School at Cabbage Tree Island and a teacher was appointed.<sup>128</sup>



Cabbage Tree Island School group 1913 with the Manager Mr. Caldwell. (Photo courtesy of Richmond River Historical Society)

Like many other rural schools at this time Cabbage Tree Island School was vulnerable to closing if the minimum number of students required for the School fell below 12 students. The need for Kooris to leave the Island for work, to visit family and for other reasons saw the School closed in 1895 because of falling enrolments. The closing of the Cabbage Tree Island School meant Koori children were left without access to schooling for 13 years as they were unable to attend the Wardell Public School. This exclusion however did not stop Koori parents from trying to enrol their children at the Wardell Public School a second time in 1908. While some Koori children attended at this time for a short period, as had occurred 15 years previously, parents from Wardell Public School soon requested the exclusion of Koori children from the school on the grounds of poor cleanliness.

While in attendance at the Wardell Public School, records indicate Koori children were 'kept apart from the other children as much as possible'. Each Aboriginal child that attended the Wardell School was also required to 'bring a mug for drinking

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<sup>128</sup> Gahan, *op. cit.*

purposes'. Despite the teacher's report that vouched for the 'neat and tidy' dress of Koori children, they were again excluded from attendance at the School.<sup>129</sup>

The exclusion of Koori children from Wardell Public School in 1893 marked the beginning of their exclusion until the early 1960s. This was an official policy that was endorsed by the Department of Public Instruction officially until the 1940s that continued unofficially in many localities until the mid 1960s. Indeed, as late as 1964 the Department of Education shied away from allowing Kooris from Cabbage Tree Island to attend Wardell Public School for fear of parents' complaints. Instead the Department of Education sought to send students to school in Ballina where the School there had a much greater enrolment than Wardell to ensure, as the Department argued, Aboriginal students would become 'lost' rather than 'swamp' the School.

The exclusion of Koori children from Wardell Public School was part of a broader pattern of School exclusions throughout NSW until the early 1960s.<sup>130</sup> However, Cabbage Tree Island School was one of the last Aboriginal Schools in NSW to amalgamate their students into the mainstream Public School system in line with the Aborigines Welfare Board's assimilation policy. Even when this occurred in 1964, only 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> classes attended the Ballina Public School as the Department felt it was too far for young children to travel to School. Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal School was retained but renamed a Public School to avoid having to send the younger children to Wardell Public School.<sup>131</sup>

Cabbage Tree Island School site forms part of the greater Cabbage Tree Island precinct. While the entire Island has been nominated as a significant heritage place, the history of the School in itself tells important stories of Koori's demands to have their children educated in the same manner as other children; and of the Aborigines Protection Board's, the Aborigines Welfare Board's and the Department of Public Instruction's policies of segregated Aboriginal schooling. These stories are of local and state heritage significance.

### St Patrick's Convent School

In 1913 St Patrick's Convent School was opened in Wardell and was run by the St Joseph's Sisters. The Catholic School was set up in the old timber church that had been replaced by a brick building in 1911.<sup>132</sup> The opening of the Catholic School in Wardell had an impact on each of the small Public Schools in the district as many of the Catholic children attending these schools withdrew and attended St Patrick's, despite the extra distances many children had to travel. Not all Catholics were however willing to have their children travel the extra distance, particularly during their early primary years, although they endorsed and supported the school in other ways.<sup>133</sup>

St Patrick's Convent School was only the third Catholic School run by the St Joseph Sisters to open in the Lismore Diocese, and its opening had been an incredible boon

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<sup>129</sup> Department of Public Instruction, Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal School file, NSW State Records, 5/15225.4.

<sup>130</sup> Fletcher, J. J., *Clean, Clad and Courteous: A history of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales*, Southward Press, Marrickville, 1989.

<sup>131</sup> Gahan, Kate (b), forthcoming research, 'Live Like Us': assimilation discourse, the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board and assimilation policy in northern New South Wales, 1939-1969.

<sup>132</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>133</sup> Taped Interview, Greg Gahan.

to the many Irish Catholics who settled in the area.<sup>134</sup> The building of the first Catholic Church in 1879 had been financially supported by a number of Irish Catholic families in the Wardell area. The establishment of the School in 1913 after the opening of the new Church in 1911 was the 'icing on the cake' for Catholic families in the Wardell area, as the community now boasted the full complement of services they saw important to the nurturing of their faith.

The old church building in which the School began was demolished and replaced by two buildings in 1951. These buildings remain and form part of the Catholic precinct in Wardell. The School buildings are both weatherboard buildings, with sash and louver windows and a corrugated gable roof, adorned with a wooden cross at each end of the apex. The 'new' school buildings were constructed by R.G. Grainger using timber and other materials from the old church building, as was common during this era.<sup>135</sup>

The Convent building is also significant to the history of St Patrick's School. It was built in 1912 to accommodate the St Joseph Sisters who traveled by boat from Sydney to take on the running of the School from 1913. The 'nuns' also played a role in visiting the children at Cabbage Tree Island and fostering sporting competitions between the two schools.<sup>136</sup>

Both St Patrick's School buildings and the Convent building have been nominated as being of local heritage significance because of the place they hold in the town's history, in particular the history of Irish Catholic families and Catholic education in the area.

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<sup>134</sup> Reunion Committee, *St Patrick's School, Wardell, 1913-1967*, Lismore City Printery, 1988, p. 6.

<sup>135</sup> Goodwin, *op. cit.*

<sup>136</sup> Reunion Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

## Governing

### Government & Administration - Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Reserve and Station

Even though, as discussed earlier in this report, Kooris moved to Cabbage Tree Island of their own accord to establish an independent means of living, in the early 1880s as a result of 'Aborigines protection' policies they increasingly came under the watchful eye of the NSW Government. In 1880 the government moved to appoint an Aborigines Protector, following complaints from small sections of the community concerning the ill treatment of Aboriginal people by Europeans. The Protector's role was to survey Aboriginal communities throughout NSW and make recommendations to the government on their future 'Protection'. It was at this time that Kooris living at Cabbage Tree Island came to the attention of the government.<sup>137</sup>

Upon completing his survey, the Protector of Aborigines recommended the allocation of reserves for Aboriginal people and the establishment of an Aborigines Protection Board to oversee the management of these reserves and the allocation of rations to the young and infirm. The government's thinking behind the Protector's recommendations was not only that Aboriginal people were a 'primitive' and 'dying race' but that its actions would help 'smooth the[ir] dying pillow'.<sup>138</sup>

As a number of other historians have noted however, the idea that Aboriginal people were a dying race was complicated by the population increases in Aboriginal people of 'mixed descent' during the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>139</sup> These Aboriginal people, the government believed, were in need of management and training to 'absorb' them into the general population. In order to do this however, the government held it needed to establish a network of 'stations' that had a resident manager and matron to regiment and oversee the daily lives of Aboriginal people.

In line with its aims to 'train' Aboriginal people, the Aborigines Protection Board began shifting other Kooris camped in the vicinity of Cabbage Tree Island onto the Island in the late nineteenth century. At this time also, through the agency of the local police, the Board took control of the Island from the first Koori farmers to go there, and divided it into a number of 'family farm blocks'. The Board also sought to entice Koori families to remain there by donating farming implements, roofing iron and the establishment of a Provisional School. Then in 1911 a manager and matron were appointed to the Island.

While Kooris over the generations worked the Island growing cane and keeping gardens to sustain their families and maintain important cultural traditions, their daily lives were tormented by the control the Protection Board and the Welfare Board had. Under the administration of both Board's Kooris at Cabbage Tree Island were treated as second class citizens in all aspects of living. In addition Kooris were subject to harsh penalties like the removal of their children or expulsion from living with or visiting family on the station, as well as often racist treatment by managers and matrons.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Gahan, *op. cit.*

<sup>138</sup> Aborigines Protection Board Annual Reports, 1883-1939, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales*, [respective years], Government Printer, Sydney.

<sup>139</sup> See for example Goodall, Heather, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1788-1972*, Allan & Unwin, 1996.

<sup>140</sup> Gahan, (a) *op. cit.*; Kapeen, Bertha, *Werlu Wana, Be Yourself*, Northern Star Print, Lismore, 1989.

While other Aboriginal reserves or stations in NSW were settled independently and farmed by Aboriginal people during the same era Kooris settled at Cabbage Tree Island, Cabbage Tree Island was noted by the Protection Board in the early years for its farming successes. Cane was harvested and sold to the Mill at Broadwater. Some of these families made profits allowing them to purchase items such as cars. The successful farming of cane was however interrupted by the Board as it sought to move more and more Kooris to the Island and broaden its scope of control. In the late 1930's and 1940's the Board prevented families from farming cane.<sup>141</sup> However in the 1950's, with the assistance of the United Aborigines Mission, Kooris began farming cane on a co-operative basis. Initially the Welfare Board had endorsed this venture but later criticised it because it felt it was not consistent with its policy of assimilation. Kooris continued to farm cane on a co-operative basis despite the Board's arguments. Co-operative farming at Cabbage Tree Island is unique to the history of Aboriginal people in NSW.<sup>142</sup>

This report in no way provides enough space to detail the impact past government policies toward Kooris have had nor to tell the stories of Koori resistance to European settlement and government policies. Cabbage Tree Island embodies all these histories and is considered a place of local and state heritage significance.

### Law & Order

Prior to the establishment of a Police Station at Wardell in 1876, it seems that law and order was left to the townspeople to administer. Mrs H.W. Lumley, an early resident of the town noted; 'In the early 1870s there was no lock up. If anyone became disorderly, he was chained to a tree on the bank of the river'.<sup>143</sup> Without further investigation of records held in State Archives it is not known what triggered the initial appointment of a Police officer to the township of Wardell. Certainly it was established at a time when the town was experiencing tremendous growth in population which in turn would have increased the need for the formal establishment of law and order in the town. Ferry has noted that small communities continuously struggled to gain and retain government services like Police, so it is most likely the appointment of an officer to Wardell in 1876 came after the request by citizens within the town.<sup>144</sup> The growing population of the town would have aided such a request.

Ernest Carter is noted to have built the first Police station in Wardell, along with a 10x10 slab cell that was painted black and referred to by locals as the 'Tar Pot'. The first Police station typically included a combined residence and office. Later the Police station was shifted to the main block fronting the river and the 'Tar Pot' was taken with it.<sup>145</sup> In 1898, the Police Department built a bigger station, including a residence, cells and courtroom on land that had been included in the original town survey for this purpose.<sup>146</sup> The combination of residence and lock up in the one building was typical of Police station architecture in rural centres. So too is the external appearance of the Police Station, which looks like an ordinary house.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> 'The Price of one man's Family Pride, My Island Home, A Place of Dreams – Roberts', *The Northern Star*, February 27, 2001.

<sup>142</sup> Gahan, (b) *op. cit.*.

<sup>143</sup> Lumley, *op. cit.*

<sup>144</sup> Ferry, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>145</sup> Mrs. Lumley, *op. cit.*

<sup>146</sup> See Floor Plan for Police Station Building, Wardell Pioneers Folder, private collection; Parish Map for the Town of Wardell, 1915, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>147</sup> Ferry, *op. cit.*

While the virtually unchanged external appearance of the Police station is considered an important feature of the Wardell townscape some of the more colourful aspects of the town's law and order history add to its heritage value. Most notably, the locally famous 'Ferry Murder', which occurred in 1885, has been and continues to be enthusiastically retold to the descendants of 'old timers' and 'newcomers' to the town. The local officer who arrested the culprit after much clever investigation is given special mention in some historic accounts as the 'arresting officer in the Ferry Murder case'. Local accounts also make gleeful mention of the times early settlers got away with breaking the law with one account noting a time when '[t]he local arm of the law tried unsuccessfully to 'nab' the wharf shed 'two-up' school but had no success until he detected his own children as the 'cockatoos'.<sup>148</sup>

The police also played a significant role in administering the Aborigines Protection Board's policy at Cabbage Tree Island, particularly prior to the appointment of a resident manager at the station in 1911. This involved the annual distribution of government blankets as well as rations, and the general surveillance of Kooris.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Cousins, Arthur, *op. cit.*

<sup>149</sup> Aborigines Protection Board Annual Reports, *op. cit.*

## Developing Australia's Cultural Life

### Religion

Three of the mainstream Christian denominations – the Church of England (later the Anglican Church), the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church (later known as the Uniting Church, incorporating the Presbyterian Church) have each played significant roles in the broader Wardell community for at least one hundred years. Churches not only provided places of worship and spiritual guidance to European settlers in the community, but also, like schools, fostered social cohesion and re-enforced community and religious identity within Church groups. To some degree also, the social function Churches filled in the Wardell area encouraged inter-Church community.<sup>150</sup>

#### *St Barnabas & St Thomas Anglican Churches*

Two Anglican Churches were established in the Wardell area and continue to function, one at Wardell and Meerschaum Vale. The history of St Barnabas' Church in Wardell includes the stories of two Church buildings, one the 'original' Church building erected in 1879, and the 'brick church' dedicated in 1920.<sup>151</sup> A local builder John Butler Ford constructed the original timber Church building, on land granted by the Crown in 1873 in Richmond Street. The original church was one of the first (among three) Church of England Churches in the Parish of the mid-Richmond.

In the early years Church services were celebrated by visiting clergy from Ballina, whilst some of the later clergy were resident in Wardell. The Diocese Anglican Bishop also made annual visits to the small parish of Wardell. In 1897, the Anglican Church building was moved to 'the front of the block' and in 1904 the building was lined and repainted.<sup>152</sup> The original church, like many other local timber churches of all denominations, was a simple 'carpenter gothic' style building with the vestry attached to the left side. Later when the brick church replaced the old church the building was considerably altered to look less church-like, to function as a hall. The vestry on the side remained and a lean to attachment added to the rear to make way for a kitchen. The shingle roof was replaced with a corrugated roof over the main part of the church and vestry and with a scallion roof over the rear attachment. Wooden crosses attached to the apex of each gable were also removed. The gothic windows along each side of the church were replaced with rectangular sash windows. The only hint that the new hall was once a simple 'carpenter gothic' building is in the front entrance chamber, where the Gothic arch doorway was retained.

The simplicity of the original building reflects the history of the 'struggle' to establish a Church of England building in the community. Paid for by locals of the Church of England faith through fund raising and donations, local building materials and designs were used to build the church rather than rely on outside builders or architects as occurred in some small parishes in other parts of the colony. The acquisition of other Church items also relied on local support. After the completion of the Church, for instance, 1896 a new fund was instigated to purchase an organ, an object of great importance to the culture of Church of England faith. The last service in the old church was held in October 1920, with the building from then used as a Sunday school and Parish Hall. Presently the building is unused, awaiting a decision about its future.

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<sup>150</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

<sup>151</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24, Taped Interview Allan Lumley.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



St Barnabas Church of England prior to its re-modeling in the early 1920s.

The erection of the 'brick church' in 1920 reflected a level of increased prosperity for the local Church of England parish. The new and larger church was not only of brick but also a distinct gothic style, with lead light windows, and a shingled gable and hipped roof. This study to date has not recorded who designed the church, but it is most likely outside expertise was sought.

The interior decoration and furnishing of the new church was however, overseen by local church members. In 1919, in anticipation of the new church the St Barnabas Women's Guild was established to raise funds to furnish and decorate the church. The timing of the new building also saw many of the church's furnishings, along with the building itself, dedicated to the memory of lost soldiers. In 1924, the pulpit, also dedicated to World War I soldiers was donated by the Women's Guild, along with the reredos and altar vases. In 1953 a memorial wall and gates were built around the Church honouring World War II soldiers.

Funds raised by the Guild and Church community for items like the pulpit and altar vases, along with many others over the years, were also aided by social events held by the Church. Early events, including dances, balls and concerts were held in the Victoria Hall, and when the brick church was established these events took place in the old church (now converted to a hall) or the Wardell and District Memorial Hall.<sup>153</sup>

St Thomas' Anglican Church at Meerschaum Vale was erected in 1945 on land donated by Mrs. T. Molyneux. This building however has a longer history than its establishment at Meerschaum Vale. The building had been moved down the Meerschaum Vale cutting from Dalwood, where due to the declining rural population in the area, it was felt it would be more efficiently used at Meerschaum Vale by amalgamating the Dalwood and Meerschaum Vale congregations. Previously

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

worshippers from Meerschaum Vale either travelled to Dalwood or attended monthly services conducted in the Meerschaum Vale Hall from 1909.<sup>154</sup>

Like the old church in Wardell, St Thomas' was built with funds raised by the Dalwood and Meerschaum Vale congregations. The building of the church commenced in December 1896 and was dedicated in May 1897. Also a carpenter gothic building, the Church was moved to Meerschaum Vale by a builder from Alstonville, Mr. G. Wright, who also carried out 'considerable renovation[s]' at this time. Services are still offered at St Thomas' each month.

### *St Patrick's Catholic Church*

Though Catholic parish churches were often less conspicuous than Church of England parish churches in the past,<sup>155</sup> the Roman Catholic Church in Wardell is positioned on 'high ground' adjacent to the main part of the town of Wardell. Though its original carpenter gothic building was a modest building, its position in the town may well reflect the influence a number of early Irish settlers had in the town. While (at this stage) it is not known when the land at Wardell was granted to the Catholic Church, Catholic clergy had begun to visit the town from at least 1868.

In 1878, one year earlier than the Church of England, the first Roman Catholic church was built, blessed and opened on the Sunday after St Patrick's Day, 1879. Clergy travelled from Lismore to celebrate mass each Sunday for a number of years until Wardell was made a separate parish in the year 1902. To accommodate the appointment of a priest to the Parish a Presbytery was built in 1904. A few years later it was decided that a new Church was needed. In 1910 the foundation stone of the new Church was laid and in 1911 the new Church was blessed and opened by the Diocesan Bishop, Bishop Carroll.<sup>156</sup> As for the Church of England church, the older Catholic church was renovated and used for Catholic school buildings.<sup>157</sup>

Again, as for the new Church of England building, the new Catholic Church was grander than the old church. It was made of brick as well as was of a more elaborate gothic design. Lancet windows trimmed by masonry arches and sills, a double gothic entrance with wooden doors trimmed in white masonry and gothic roses, along with external wall buttressing are some of the external features of the Catholic Church. Exposed stud framing dominates the interior view of the main part of the church until reaching the front of the church. Here the original reredos and central and side altars are positioned below another masonry arch in which a central stained glass window is positioned. Original pews and stations of the cross, along with a marble holy water font, also remain in the church.

Whilst each building individually represents an important part of the history of the Catholic parish in Wardell, the architecture of the Catholic precinct as a whole is also important to maintain. While features of each of these buildings are individually unique, they are also unique because they remain virtually unspoiled as a group of buildings that are connected in their purpose. The aesthetic dominance they hold as

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<sup>154</sup> notes on St Barnabas' Church and 'other Church of England History of the Richmond River', in Wardell File, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>155</sup> Kerr, Joan & Broadbent, James, *Gothic Taste in the Colony of New South Wales*, The David Ell Press, Sydney, p. 80.

<sup>156</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>157</sup> For further details see the theme, Education.

part of the complete townscape also makes them important to the heritage of the Wardell area.<sup>158</sup>

### *Uniting Church*

The Methodist Church, located at the opposite end of, and further away from the town to the Catholic Church, was built over the two years to 1905, when it opened. Also built by John Butler Ford, on land donated to the Church, it is also of simple carpenter gothic style. The fact the Methodist Church did not upgrade its Church like other denominations reveals its congregation was smaller than other Churches, along with the fact the Methodist religion had a smaller following than the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. In 1958, the building was raised on brick foundations after the 1954 flood had caused some damage to the building. The Church has provided Methodists in the Wardell community the same spiritual and social support the Anglican and Catholic Churches have to their congregations, through regular services and Sunday school activities. From the 1960's Presbyterian services were also held in the Methodist Church,<sup>159</sup> and from 1977 the Church became known as the Uniting Church with the amalgamation of the Methodist and Presbyterian religions. Church fund raising to support the Church has also been a feature of the Methodist Church. This building is not only an important example of local carpenter gothic architecture, but embodies the history (much more of which needs to be uncovered) of the least represented religious community in the Wardell area.

### *Cabbage Tree Island Church*

In 1960, a church was opened at Cabbage Tree Island. A small weatherboard building, the Cabbage Tree Island Church was funded by residents from the Island through fund raising and the receipt of donations. The Church welcomed Kooris of all denominations to worship at the services held there, although it was a Methodist minister, Mr Leo Bolt, who played a key role in instigating the building of the church. Its opening was celebrated by clergy from the Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican faiths.<sup>160</sup>

The Cabbage Tree Island Church symbolises Kooris' determination to practice their faith on their terms. The practice of Christianity and Evangelism among Kooris on the north coast has been little explored by historians, but it has been and remains a strong part of their culture for many generations. The north coast has produced many Koori pastors who during the first half of the twentieth century adopted the Christian faith and used it to uplift their communities and as a vehicle for fighting for their rights. Cabbage Tree Island was one post, in a larger circuit of north coast communities, to which Koori clergy travelled to celebrate their culture through Christianity.<sup>161</sup>

At the same time, the Church at Cabbage Tree Island is an important building from the assimilation era and represents the contradictions of the Welfare Board's

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<sup>158</sup> National Trust Survey of Wardell also draws these conclusions.

<sup>159</sup> Lockton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>160</sup> 'Crowd Attends Opening of Church on Cabbage Tree Island', *The Northern Star*, May 23, 1960, clip in Cabbage Tree Island file, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>161</sup> Personal communication, the late Fletcher Roberts; Calley, Malcolm, 'Pentecostalism among the Banjalang' in Reay, Marie, (ed.), *Aborigines Now: New Perspectives in the study of Aboriginal Communities*, Angus and Robertson, 1964, pp. 48-58.

assimilation policy. Built at a time when the Board proclaimed its discouragement of developing stations and reserves in ways that encouraged the 'segregation of aborigines [sic] and whites', the Board supported its establishment. The Board's decision to allow the establishment of the Church at this time is but one example of the contradictory nature of assimilation policy.

## Social Institutions

### *Community Halls*

Most of the small localities in the Wardell area boast a Community Hall. The oldest of these halls (i.e. of those that still exist) is the Meerschaum Vale Hall which was established in 1906.<sup>162</sup> Other Halls in the area that predate the Hall at Meerschaum Vale have, over the years, been pulled down to make way for other buildings such as the Victoria Hall in Wardell.<sup>163</sup>

Most of the area's surviving Halls were built after the World War I, a period when many community halls were built in other parts of the state also. In 1925 a new Hall was built in Wardell to replace the Victoria Hall and named the Richmond Hall. After World War II, however, the Wardell community decided to raise funds to dedicate a new Hall to the returned and lost soldiers of the area. The state government aided the building of memorial halls during this era, as long as they were officially dedicated as such and displayed an Honour Roll.<sup>164</sup> Despite government aid however, the Wardell Hall committee was unable to raise enough funds to build an entire new hall building. It was then decided to join the old School of Arts building at the 'back' of the block, to the front of the Richmond Hall and rename the co-joined building the Wardell and District Memorial Hall. Controversy surrounded this decision, as some residents were not satisfied with the decision to amalgamate a Memorial Hall with the Richmond Hall. Representatives of the town's returned soldiers had felt the funds for the new building were to serve their requirements only, this opinion differed from other community members who argued the funds were to serve the whole of the community but in memory of the district's soldiers. In the end a compromise was reached, the new building incorporated a "Diggers Room" for the exclusive use of returned soldiers and was overseen by the local Returned Servicemen's League.<sup>165</sup>

A community hall was also built at Pimlico by two of its 'early pioneers', Albert and Clarrie Leeson, in 1937.<sup>166</sup> The Pimlico Hall also honoured its lost and returned soldiers by displaying an Honour Roll.<sup>167</sup> The surge of patriotism after the war also inspired many events that were held in the Hall in the immediate decades following its erection.<sup>168</sup>

At Bagotville in 1939 the local residents also moved to erect their own hall, or 'Club', as it was referred. A much smaller building than any of the other Halls in the

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<sup>162</sup> Taped Interview, Barry Johnson.

<sup>163</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley. The Victoria Hall was pulled down to make way for the new Royal Hotel, it was a privately run hall rather than a public Hall. The Empire Vale Hall sold to Des Akins of Bagotville in 1966 and recycled for farm buildings.

<sup>164</sup> Ferry, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>165</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

<sup>166</sup> Trustrum, Helen, *Old Time Country Halls*, [no publication details in book], 1998, pp. 237-238.

<sup>167</sup> pers. comm. Rose Leeson.

<sup>168</sup> Trustrum, *op. cit.*

district, the Bagotville Club hall was not, it seems, built in honour of local soldiers as other local halls had been. Instead, built with voluntary labour and timber purchased through fund raising, the Club hall aimed to provide local Bagotville residents with a space to hold their own social and recreational events. In addition, the Club's proximity to the Bagotville Public School - immediately next door - saw it also function as a meeting place for the P&C.<sup>169</sup>



The Wardell & District Memorial Hall with its deco style façade. Note the gable of the 'old' School of Arts protruding the roofline of the 'new' entrance.

Despite the different origins of community halls in the Wardell area, each of these places were important centres of cultural activity in the Wardell area. Dances, were one of the most regular events held in each of these venues. Dances provided important social outlets, and were often the most talked about social event for residents in the Wardell area. The local dance was also often the place where local residents met their future spouses. Furthermore, dances enabled the opportunity for young men and women to practice and display their social graces and those of musical talent to share it amongst the community and with other musicians. Concerts and other social events like cards were also held in many local Halls. The most sophisticated events however were the balls in honour of many of the towns institutions, for instance the 'Church of England Ball', the 'Catholic Ball' or the 'Diggers Ball', were held annually in the Wardell and District Memorial Hall.<sup>170</sup> In the 1950's and 1960's other organisations like youth clubs, and Junior Farmers operated in the district's local Halls.<sup>171</sup>

Halls also served as the gathering places for local political organisations. Usually the domain of men, groups like the Farmers and Settlers association held its monthly meeting in the Meerschaum Vale Hall.<sup>172</sup> Halls also, were places where democracy was promoted and practiced with Polling booths operating from each of the local halls at election time.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

<sup>171</sup> Trustrum, *op. cit.*

<sup>172</sup> Meerschaum Vale Farmers and Settlers Association Minute Book, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>173</sup> Taped Interview, Greg Gahan.

Despite the strong involvement of men in each of the local halls in the Wardell area, halls were also important places where the otherwise private work of women was shown publicly. Though not having the same representation as men, women often held positions on Hall committees and were almost always those behind decorating and catering to Hall functions.<sup>174</sup> Women sometimes too, played musical instruments at local social events.<sup>175</sup> The Meerschaum Vale Ladies Wounded Soldiers Society also operated from the Meerschaum Vale Hall during the First World War. Similarly the Pimlico Ladies Charitable Organisation operated at the Pimlico Hall in latter years, forming in 1960. The Wardell Red Cross functioned from the Wardell and District Memorial Hall.<sup>176</sup>

The activities outlined above are a small sample of the many that depended on Halls as important meeting places in the Wardell area. These activities are symbolic of many of the ideas and events that shaped the European culture of the Wardell area community in the past.

### *Cabbage Tree Island Recreation Hall*

In 1952 the Aborigines Welfare Board constructed a small recreation hall at Cabbage Tree Island. The hall was erected in association with a number of dwellings and administrative buildings in an attempt to rebuild the 'station' as a suitable 'training ground' to implement the Board's policy of assimilation. In particular the Hall aimed to provide the means by which the stations' manager and matron could organise and run social and recreation events on the Island that were akin to the kinds of events held in the 'white' community. The Board advocated that by instructing Aboriginal people in the culture of Europeans, they could 'one day' participate as 'equals' in the broader community.<sup>177</sup>

In line with the Board's policy, supper dances, concerts, progress and sporting organisations and youth groups were some of the kinds of events the manager or matron oversaw in the recreation hall. Despite the Board's intention behind the organisation and oversight of social events in the recreation hall, many were well attended and enjoyed by Kooris as they provided a means by which to bring the community together. At times both Koori men and women played significant roles in organising and running social events held in the recreation hall. Kooris continued to run and use the Hall after the abolition of the Welfare Board in 1969.<sup>178</sup>

The Cabbage Tree Island recreation hall is therefore symbolic of both the Welfare Board's policy of assimilation and the different ways in which Kooris have continued to express their independent sense of community and culture through their independent coming together.

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<sup>174</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley and Evelyn Attewell.

<sup>175</sup> Taped Interview, Barry Johnson and Allan Lumley.

<sup>176</sup> Trustrum, *op. cit.*, p. 237 & Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

<sup>177</sup> Aborigines Welfare Board Annual Reports, 1940-1955 especially, Government Printer, Sydney.

<sup>178</sup> Personal communication Francis Paden, Jali Land Council.

## Creative Endeavour

### *Sid Thompson's Picture Show*

Local community halls were also often the venues where community creativity was displayed or expressed. When the Wardell and District Memorial Hall was upgraded to a larger building, a projection box was constructed to allow for the showing of silent pictures run by Sid Thompson. Sid had formerly shown pictures in the Victoria Hall before it was demolished. The pictures were a popular event in the town both in the Victoria Hall and the Memorial Hall.<sup>179</sup>

A motor, housed in a 'tin shed' just outside the hall powered the picture show, and Mrs. Johnson, a local pianist, provided music to accompany the show. When Sid could no longer keep the shows running the Hall committee brought his equipment and continued to run pictures until the early 1930s. The closing of the Picture Show at the Memorial Hall coincided with the introduction of wireless to the broader community.<sup>180</sup>

### *The Wardell Flower Show*

The Wardell and District Memorial Hall was also the place where the Wardell Annual Flower show was held. While it is not known when the show ceased, it had begun as a regular event in the era of the Victoria Hall. The aim of the Flower Show was to raise money for local community needs but it also provided an outlet for local women to display their creative talents through appropriate activities. The show displayed many exotic and native flower arrangements, along with needlework, that was judged. Flower arranging however was not practiced solely by local women, as Mr. Allan Lumley recalls that during the time of the flower shows he and his siblings would put together an exhibit of flowers from the Wardell heath.

## Leisure

Visiting family and friends in the privacy of their homes seems to have been one of the most popular forms of leisure practiced by families during the early decades of European settlement of the Wardell area.<sup>181</sup> Other pastimes that might be construed as leisure, such as reading, listening to the radio and baking also took place within the confines of family homes.<sup>182</sup> Adults, and especially children, also spent time in the outdoors for leisure, usually roaming the family farm. The many organised social events that took place in the Wardell area, outlined elsewhere in this study, also describe the ways local residents spent their leisure time away from their homes.

The rural nature of living in the Wardell area along with the influence of religion meant Sunday was the usual day for leisure. Other religious and political events also created extra leisure days such as Christmas Day and Empire Day, or for the Irish, St Patrick's Day. Some residents spent other times at leisure, such as the men who attended the 'Lodge' to play cards and draughts (and no doubt swill a glass or two) on weekday evenings. The Wardell Men's Lodge was established in the 1880's but where the men met and for how long it existed has not been made clear during

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<sup>179</sup> Taped Interview, Allan Lumley.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Taped Interview, Evelyn Attewell.

<sup>182</sup> Rickard, 'John, For God's Sake Keep Us Entertained', in *Australians 1938*.

this study.<sup>183</sup> The activities enjoyed at the Lodge, however, were the kinds of activities that carried over into the establishment of the Wardell Hall of Arts.

Families who took their routine Sunday leisure away from the home would often go on picnics. One notable favourite picnic spot was Patch's Beach. On any Sunday during the summer months especially, families could be seen picnicking there. This was more likely to have taken place from the 1920's onwards when going to the beach became a popular leisure activity for many Australians up until the present. Photographic evidence also reveals that Little Pimlico Island was used as a picnic spot for locals from the turn of the century. Certainly the river featured as an important means by which to travel for leisure but given its predominant use for transport needs, it was less likely used for recreation before the 1950's. Patches Beach has been nominated as a place of local heritage significance.

## Sport

### *The Wardell Sports and Recreation Grounds*

Outside of regular school sport, a variety of sports were played by residents in the Wardell area and in a number of locations. Typically men played the English sports of cricket and football, and women would usually play the less strenuous and more fashion conscious, tennis. But it was men's sport that was given greater recognition with the establishment of the Wardell recreation grounds as it catered more to cricket and football.<sup>184</sup> These sports were also played at a number of other paddock locations in the Wardell area.<sup>185</sup> Local teams also travelled to other districts to play sport and were followed enthusiastically by their fans, such as the time when the Wardell Warriors (Rugby Union) played the visiting Sydney Teacher's College team at Ballina in 1905.<sup>186</sup>

Kooris too became proficient at cricket and football and can boast local 'legends' in both games.<sup>187</sup> Sport represented one of the few arenas in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people 'mixed' in the community. This is not to suggest that European and Koori residents mixed equally, evidence suggests to the contrary. One story of a cricket game played at Rous against Wardell where Kooris from Cabbage Tree Island were invited to fill the team reveals that when it came to lunchtime the Wardell team were embarrassed to find Kooris sitting to the table to have their lunch. The extent of the Wardell team's embarrassment was so great they vouched never to take Kooris on visiting matches again.<sup>188</sup>

Family sports also took place at the Wardell Recreation grounds, the most notable being the St Patrick's day sports. Beginning sometime in the 1890's the sports day was first organised by the Lower Richmond Irish National Association (INA) based in Wardell. Without further research it is not known exactly what the organisation

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<sup>183</sup> Attendance at the 'Lodge' is mentioned in the diaries of Colin Heugh. The Heugh family lived at Pimlico. Heugh Family file, Richmond River Historical Society.

<sup>184</sup> This study to date has not identified when the Wardell Recreation Grounds were established and has uncovered little of the history of football and cricket in the area even though it is well known these sports were keenly followed.

<sup>185</sup> Cricket was played in Larkin's Paddock at Meerschaum Vale, Taped Interviews, Barry Johnson & Greg Gahan.

<sup>186</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>187</sup> For example, Sam Anderson was a noted cricketer and the Roberts family, footballers.

<sup>188</sup> Arthur Cousins, *op. cit.*

stood for but clearly it sought to promote Irish cultural traditions and encouraged 'Irish style' sport as one means to do this. From the time the INA was formed an 'Annual Gathering' was held on the weekend closest to St Patrick's Day. Events took place over an entire day with people attending from as far away as Woodburn and Ballina, transported at excursion rates by the well-known Fenwick Bros.

The games day included more conventional events such as leg races, sack races and high jumps, as well as 'Irish style' events like putting weights, the Irish Jig, the Highland Fling and the Seann Triubheas. Each event on the program offered generous prize money donated by local individuals or businesses, with the highest prize of two pounds offered to the 'Champion Piper'. The Irish spirit the games day enlivened was topped off with a 'Grand Annual Social' the following Friday evening, offering '[r]efreshments and first class music'.<sup>189</sup>

As with church functions, the Irish games were open to all regardless of the origin of their native land. A number of individuals interviewed in the process of this research recalled the 'St Patrick's day sports' with great fondness and suggested it was an event the whole district turned out for. It is not known when the Irish National Association was disbanded but certainly the sports day continued well after the Association's existence had declined, through the organisation of the Catholic Church.

The recreation grounds at Wardell have supported a long tradition of sport in the community. The history of sport played in the local community is also telling of race relations and the different sporting traditions local Irish families for some time held.

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<sup>189</sup> Lower Richmond Irish National Association, Wardell, Seventh Annual Gathering, Games Programme, Saturday March 16, 1907, Rose Leeson personal archive, Wardell Pioneers Folder.

## Birth and Death

### The Wardell Cemetery

The cultural connections Irish settlers had with their homelands were also expressed in the monuments of those who died in Wardell. The Roman Catholic section of the Wardell cemetery is peppered with a number of early monuments featuring the Celtic cross and other Celtic artwork. Some of these monuments also make reference to one's 'native' Ireland.<sup>190</sup> The need to express the sentiment of belonging to native lands however was not confined to the Irish, as many English and Scottish settlers also made these statements on their graves.

Overall however, the heritage significance of the cemetery lies in the number of old monuments of varying designs and size. Some of the oldest are of sandstone and larger and more elaborate monuments distinguish many of the more successful pioneers' graves. Many older monuments also have ironwork surrounds. The bushland setting of the cemetery also adds to its aesthetic appeal.<sup>191</sup>

The division of the cemetery into denominational sections is telling of past religious tradition despite a long history of cordial relations between the different churches in the Wardell area. The 'Aboriginal section' however, tells a different story. Despite the different denominations of many Kooris, their graves are grouped together in a separate section of the cemetery. While this tradition may be of comfort to Kooris families today, it was a tradition established in an era when Kooris were not welcome in the 'main section' of the cemetery.

### *Bagot and Henderson Family Graves*

Other graves are also found at Bagotville, where members of the Bagot family are buried, and graves belonging to the Henderson family are located at Meerschaum Vale. Members of both families were buried on the land on which they lived at the time.<sup>192</sup> Further research is required to establish the significance of these graves.

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<sup>190</sup> For instance see the headstone of Patrick Meaney.

<sup>191</sup> The National Trust Survey of Wardell also draws these conclusions.

<sup>192</sup> Taped Interview, Barry Johnson & Greg Gahan.

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Map of the Township of Wardell & Suburban Lands, Parish of Bingal, County of Rous, Land District of Lismore, Tintenbar Shire.

Map of the Parish of South Ballina, County of Richmond, Land District of Lismore, Tintenbar Shire.

Map of the Parish of Pimlico, County of Rous, Lismore Land District, Tintenbar Shire.

Map of the Parish of Meerschaum, County of Rous, Land District of Lismore, Tintenbar Shire.

*Richmond River Historical Society*

The following list of files and other records were searched: -

Cabbage Tree Island.  
Bora Rings.  
Murders and Massacres.  
Middens.  
Soldiers.  
Wardell locality.  
Meerschaum Vale locality.  
Empire Vale locality.  
Pimlico locality.  
Bagotville locality.  
Marom Creek locality.  
Sugar Cane.  
Norco.  
Heugh Family.  
McIntyre Family File.  
Monti Family File.

Minute Books of the Meerschaum Vale Branch of the Farmers and Settlers Association, 1911-1914.

*Ballina History Room – Richmond - Tweed Regional Library, Ballina.*

The following list of files were searched: -

Cabbage Tree Island.  
Wardell.  
Empire Vale.  
Pimlico.  
South Ballina.

*Richmond River Cane Growers Association*

Minute Books & Photographic Collection, Richmond Street, Wardell.

*Personal archive and photograph collections*

Rose Leeson.  
Leanne Goodwin.  
Allen Lumley.  
Lester Lovett.  
Barry Johnson.  
Greg Gahan.

*Newspapers*

The Northern Star  
Clarence and Richmond River Examiner  
Koori Mail

*Oral Sources*

The following taped interviews were made: -

Mr. Allan Lumley, Wardell.  
Mrs. Evelyn Attewell, Lismore.  
Mr. Barry Johnson, Meerschaum Vale.  
Mr. Lester Lovett, Meerschaum Vale.  
Mr. Pat O'Connor, Empire Vale.  
Mr. Greg Gahan, Meerschaum Vale.

*Other Personal Communication*

Jali Land Council, Cabbage Tree Island.  
Rose and Errol Leeson, Pimlico.  
Mr. John Moye, Alstonville.

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