Volume 2

Thematic History

(Note: It should be noted that this is not a definitive history of Byron Shire and was written to support the Byron Shire Community-based Heritage Study.)

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1999	Goonengerry National Park dedicated
2004	Casino to Murwillumbah railway closed

INTRODUCTION

The Shire

Byron Shire is situated in far north-eastern New South Wales. It comprises most of the catchment area of the Brunswick River, and part of that of the Richmond River. It adjoins the shires of Tweed (to the north) and Ballina (south), and the City of Lismore (west). The Shire is bounded in the east by the South Pacific Ocean, in the south partly by Skinners Creek and Wilsons River, in the south-west partly by Coopers Creek, and in the north-west partly by the Nightcap Range (Figure 1). The area of the Shire is 567 square kilometres.

The Shire was proclaimed, and its initial boundary described in detail, in the *NSW Government Gazette* of 7 March 1906.[1] It was a creation of the *Local Government (Shires) Act* 1905, under which the whole of New South Wales, exclusive of the Western Division, the City of Sydney, and existing municipalities, was divided into shires.

Byron Shire has an estimated resident population of 30,400 (June 2003).[2] Its major urban areas are Byron Bay (with its satellites Suffolk Park and Ewingsdale); Brunswick Heads; Mullumbimby; Billinudgel/New Brighton/Ocean Shores; and Bangalow (Figure 1). Mullumbimby was incorporated as a separate municipality in 1908, and for the next seven decades was administered independently of Byron Shire.[3] The Council of the Municipality of Mullumbimby was dissolved in October 1980, and its 1.7 square miles of territory reunited with the surrounding Byron Shire.[4]

Although Aboriginal history is not within the scope of this study, it is acknowledged that Byron Shire contains a wealth of Aboriginal cultural sites which include middens, stone arrangements, rock shelters, and tool-making sites. Additionally, many Aboriginal words have survived in the names of places within the Shire (e.g. Mullumbimby and Billinudgel). These all testify to the long period of occupation of this area by Aboriginal people prior to the arrival of the first explorers, surveyors and settlers of European origin.

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[1]   *NSW Government Gazette*, 7 March 1906, pp. 1593, 1602.
[2]   ABS cat. no. 3218.0 and 3235.1.55.001.
[3]   *NSW Government Gazette*, 24 June 1908, pp. 3344-3345.
[4]   *NSW Government Gazette*, 25 July 1980, pp. 3787-3790.

Figure 1:   Map showing the boundaries of Byron Shire, main urban areas, and some other places referred to in this report

Historical Themes

Eight major themes have been chosen through which to represent the history of Byron Shire. These themes are:

1. Discovery and exploration;

2. Transport and communication;

3. Forest industry and forest conservation;

4. Agriculture, dairying, and related industry;

5. Fishing and whaling;

6. Quarrying, mining, and mineral processing;

7. Towns and villages; and

8. Leisure and tourism.

Historical Sources

This report has, where possible, made use of secondary historical sources such as works of local history which deal with various parts of Shire. Notable among these are Denning's *Sunkissed Playground* (undated; c. 1980), Furnell's *Out of the Big Scrub* (1981), Ryan's *Time and Tide* (1984), Johnston's *Rich Heritage* (1987), Brokenshire's *The Brunswick: another river and its people* (1988), Keats's *Wollumbin* (1988), Ryan and Smith's *Time and Tide Again* (2001), and Dening's *History of Byron Bay* (2002). These sources have been supplemented, and often verified, by the use of a range of primary sources, in particular local newspapers such as the *Byron Bay Record*, *Mullumbimby Star* later *Star Advocate*, and *Northern Star* (Lismore). A bibliography of works consulted and cited appears at the end of the report.

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1 DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION

When Captain James Cook sailed the *Endeavour* northward past what is now far northern New South Wales in mid-May 1770, he was too far offshore to notice the Clarence, Richmond or Tweed Rivers, but he did note the 'remarkable sharp peaked mountain' lying '7 or 8 Leagues [about 35-40 km] inland in the latitude of 28° 22' s' to which he gave the name Mount Warning. Cook also named the prominent coastal features Cape Byron and Point Danger, the former after Commodore John Byron (1723-1786), famous, among other things, for his circumnavigation in *Dolphin* in 1764-66.[1]

Many ships sailed past Cook's Cape Byron during the next twenty-five years: Matthew Flinders did so in the sloop *Norfolk* in 1799; and again in 1802, in *Investigator*, during the voyage which resulted in the first circumnavigation of Australia; in 1822, John Bingle, in *Sally*, passed on his way to Moreton Bay; also in 1822, William Edwardson sailed from Sydney to explore the coast north of Cape Byron; in 1823, John Oxley, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales, sailed past *en route* in the Colonial cutter *Mermaid* to survey Port Curtis and Moreton Bay; and in 1824, he returned, in *Amity*, with a party of convicts and soldiers to form a settlement at Moreton Bay. But sail past is all that they did, and all of these passages together, Cook's included, revealed little of the nature of the landscape or seascape in the vicinity of Cape Byron or the Brunswick River.

The voyage of Captain Henry Rous, in 1828, was the first to produce any detailed geographical knowledge of Cape Byron and its immediate environs. Rous, in the frigate *Rainbow*, explored part of the coast between Sydney and Moreton Bay, and identified the bay at Cape Byron as providing safe anchorage for both large and small vessels. William Johns, Master of the *Rainbow*, prepared a chart (Figure 2) of the bay between Cape Byron and the 'small river' to the north which later became known as the Brunswick.[2] To facilitate the production of this detailed chart, a party landed and set up surveying markers; this is the first documented landing at Byron Bay, and on the sea coast within the present Byron Shire.[3]

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[1] Beaglehole, J. C., (ed.), 1955, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery. I The Voyage of the* Endeavour *1768-1771* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge). Cook's Point Danger is the headland now known as Fingal Head.

[2] Johns's chart is also reproduced in Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 13.

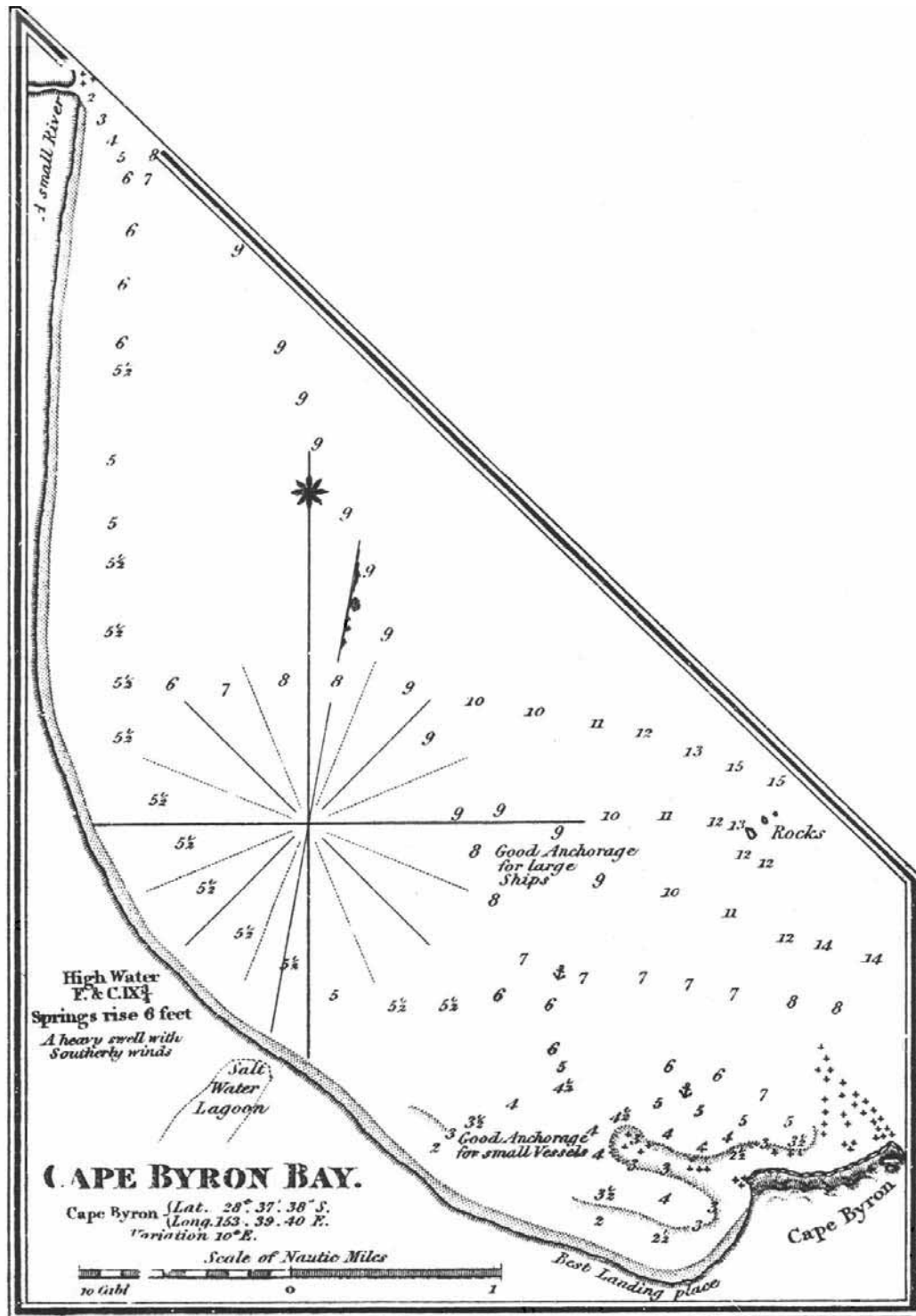[3] Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, pp. 7-9.

Figure 2: William Johns's plan of Cape Byron Bay, from the voyage of HMS *Rainbow*, 1828. Note 'a small river' (now the Brunswick River), 'salt water lagoon' (now Belongil Creek), and 'best landing place' (at what is presently Clarke's Beach) *(Source: Plans on the East Coast of Australia, made in H. M. Ship, Rainbow, Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty, 1831)*

In 1840, surveyor Robert Dixon and his party conducted a coastal survey from South Passage, the opening to the sea of the Southport Broadwater below present-day South Stradbroke Island, to the north head of the Richmond River.[4] Dixon arrived by boat at the Brunswick River on 23 June; his pack horses arrived the following day and were swum across the river to a camp on the southern side. On 25 June the survey party reached Cape Byron where they passed 'a tribe of natives with their nets, fishing', who came to meet them. On 26 June they were 'brought up with steep broken cliff running into the sea' (Broken Head), so they proceeded carrying their blankets and rations on their backs, assisted by two natives, and leaving the horse with 'two of their own number'.

After completing the survey to the Richmond River, the party returned to Cape Byron where Dixon 'cleared one of the peaks for a Trig Station'. On 2 July, while camped on the north side of the Brunswick River, they saw a schooner come to anchor in the bay under Cape Byron, and found it to be *Letitia*, going to the Tweed River in search of cedar. The following day the party's boat was swamped in the mouth of the Brunswick River, resulting in an extended stay at that place.

Dixon's was the first documented visit by land of Europeans to the Brunswick River or Cape Byron, though Europeans had been in the area before. Especially after the penal outposts were established at Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay, an unknown number of escaped convicts passed through the area on foot. In August 1828, for instance, the *Rainbow*, while anchored off the Tweed, took on board eight escapees who had surrendered themselves.[5] None of these or other convicts are known to have left written descriptions of their time in Byron Shire.

Cedar cutters are known to have become active in the Richmond River valley in 1842, in the Tweed valley in 1844, and in the Brunswick in 1849.[6] It is probable that by the 1850s cedar logs were being loaded from the beaches around the Brunswick River and Cape Byron, through the surf to schooners anchored close offshore. The historical record is relatively silent, however, about the details of such activities. Nevertheless, Keats (1988) has compiled a

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[4] Robert Dixon, Survey from South Passage to the Richmond River, 1840, Surveyor General, letters received from surveyors, Robert Dixon, 18 October 1827 to 24 July 1855, AONSW Reel 3063, letter no. 40/54, 3 August 1840.

[5] Log of *Rainbow*, 21, 22 and 23 August 1828. At least two of these men were travelling northwards, having escaped from Port Macquarie.

[6] Stubbs, B. J., 1996. 'A question of competing values: forest and timber conservation in New South Wales, 1838-1996', unpubl. Ph. D. thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

useful account of the first (1849) Brunswick River cedar camp (the first European settlement in the Shire), based on shipping and other records.[7] The subject of timber industry is dealt with in greater detail in chapter 3.

The waters around Cape Byron were charted in 1865 by Commander Frederick William Sidney as part of his wider survey of coastal waters in New South Wales.[8] Also in 1865, Inspector of Police, John Brown, visited Cape Byron during a tour of his district which extended from Armidale to the Queensland border. A member of his party later recalled of the Cape that 'there was not a sign of human habitation to be seen' at that time.[9]

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[7]   Keats, N. C., 1988. *Wollumbin: the creation and early habitation of the Tweed, Brunswick and Richmond Rivers of N. S. W.* (the author, point Clare, N. S. W.), pp. 213-221.

[8]   'East Coast of Australia, New South Wales. Sheet VIII, Evans Head to Danger Pt', surveyed by Com. Fredk W. Sidney, 1864-65. Published at the Admiralty, London, 15 June 1866.

[9]   'The Tweed in the sixties', *Northern Star*, 21 June 1920.

2 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

For many years the main means of transport into and out of the Brunswick valley was by sea. Ships began calling at the Brunswick River in 1849 to collect the harvest of red cedar (chapter 3), and the large number that were wrecked at the river mouth (Table 2.1) is testament to the hazardous entrance and to the considerable shipping trade that took place during the four to five decades prior to the coming of the railway. It is pertinent that the last known wreck at the Brunswick River entrance was that of *Cairo* in August 1893, less than a year before rail traffic commenced between Lismore and Mullumbimby.

Table 2.1: Vessels wrecked at the mouth of the Brunswick River, 1850-1893.

Name of Vessel	Description	When Wrecked	Comments
Clara *	Schooner, 50 tons	1850 (16 April)	Lost ashore during a gale at North Head as she crossed the Brunswick River bar.
Brothers	Schooner	1866 (19 August)	Grounded while entering the Brunswick River. Later driven onto rocks where she capsized. *CRE 4 September 1866*
Francis George	Schooner, 53 tons	1866 (28 April)	Wrecked on rocks at North Head, Brunswick River. *CRE 8 May 1866*
West Hartley 1	Iron schooner, 69 tons	1874 (11 February)	Ashore on rocks at Brunswick River entrance. *SMH 24 February 1874*
Centurion	Schooner, 47 tons	1875 (3 March)	Lost on the Brunswick River bar attempting to enter the river. *SMH 10 March 1875*
Star of the Sea	Schooner, 59 tons	1878 (22 February)	Drifted onto south spit when the wind failed as she was entering the Brunswick River. *SMH 28 February 1878*
Eva Maud	Wooden ketch, 54 tons	1879 (7 April)	Wrecked on Brunswick River bar. *NS 17 May 1879*
Titania	Schooner	1879 (7 June)	Wrecked on bar while entering Brunswick River. *NS 14 June 1879*
Nambuccra	Schooner, 55 tons	1880 (13 March)	Ashore at the mouth of the Brunswick River. *SMH, 16 March 1880*

Siskin	Ketch	1886 (12 September)	'Considerably damaged' while entering the Brunswick River. *NS 25 September 1886*
Dolphin	Wooden ketch, 70 tons	1887 (19 February)	Ashore on rocks at the entrance to the Brunswick River. *NS 26 February 1887*
Lizzie Frost	Ketch, 52 tons	1887 (28 December)	Ashore on rocks at North Head as she entered the Brunswick River. *NS 31 December 1887*
Annie C. Lynn	Schooner, 54 tons	1891 (1 May)	Driven ashore and lost on North Head while entering the Brunswick River. *NS 6 May 1891*
Endeavour (formerly *Rose of Sharon)*	Wooden screw steamer, 78 tons	1892 (14 February)	Driven ashore and lost on North Head while entering the Brunswick River. *NS 5 March 1892*
Cairo	Wooden steamer, 94 tons	1893 (25 August)	Wrecked on rocks at Brunswick River while being towed out by tug. Salvaged and re-registered as *Sarah Fenwick*, to be lost at Richmond River in 1900. *NS 2 September 1893, RRT 29 March 1900*

Note: This table is based on several sources, especially Stone (2006), *Encyclopedia of Australian shipwrecks*. Wherever possible, information has been checked against contemporary newspaper reports, in which case a relevant newspaper reference is given in the comments column. If it has not been possible to verify an entry in this way, and asterisk is placed against the name of the ship. Newspaper titles are abbreviated as follows: *NS = Northern Star* (Lismore); *CRE = Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton); *SMH = Sydney Morning Herald*; *RRT = Richmond River Times* (Ballina). A list of other vessels wrecked near the Brunswick River and Cape Byron (other, that is, than those wrecked entering or leaving the Brunswick River) is included as an Appendix.

Land transport was made difficult by the rugged terrain, the dense cover of vegetation, and the wet climate, and to overcome these impediments early travellers made good use of the long sandy beaches which form much of the eastern boundary of the Shire. For instance, in 1865 when the Inspector of Police travelled from Ballina to the Tweed, his party was guided along the beaches between those two places. Some deviations were necessary, including climbing over sand hills to avoid the high rocky headland of Cape Byron, and

fording the Brunswick River at low tide.[1] Many early settlers made similar use of the beaches. Among them was William Reilly who travelled with pack horses along the beach from Ballina to the Brunswick, accompanied by his young wife and infant child, when he occupied his selection adjoining the township of Mullumbimby in the early 1880s.[2]

The earliest land transport routes to be established in the Shire were informal tracks used by the cedar-getters to draw their harvest to water for shipping. Some of these, such as The Saddle Road from Mullumbimby Grass to Brunswick Heads, were used later for more general purposes and formed the basis of a rudimentary transport network. An 1881 plan of the first survey of the land around Cape Byron, for instance, shows, in addition to the beach track joining Ballina and the Brunswick, a connecting track which emerges from the dense brush at Cooper's Shoot.[3]

The letting of the first contracts for the delivery of mail to the Brunswick River helped to formalise the district's road network. In May 1882 William Jarvis was awarded the contract for a once-a-week mail run between Lismore and the Brunswick River via Bexhill, Clunes and Eureka. Concomitantly, the first post offices were opened in the Shire. A postal receiving office was opened at Eureka in 1882, and this was raised to the status of post office in 1885. Presumably a post office was also opened at Brunswick Heads in 1882, but this has not been verified. It is known, however, that a post office was in operation on the northern side of the river at Brunswick Heads by 1885.[4] George Jarvis, who operated the Lismore to the Brunswick River mail service from 1884, began a coach run along the same route in 1885. He extended this to the Tweed in 1888.[5]

The Lismore-Brunswick road became, for a while, one of the district's major transport arteries, and the growing traffic attracted new settlers and businesses. In particular, Eureka, situated about half-way between Lismore and the Brunswick River, became a place of importance.[6] The two-storey Eureka Hotel, which was first licensed in 1885 and continued to operate until 1890, was the second pub to be established in the Shire (Table 7.1); and Eureka was sufficiently large by 1887 to merit the establishment of a public school,

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[1]   *Northern Star*, 21 June 1920.
[2]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 15 February 1923.
[3]   Plan no. C79.1834.
[4]   *Sydney Mail*, 26 September 1885, p. 666.
[5]   *Northern Star*, 6 May 1882; 1 July 1885; 22 August 1888.
[6]   The development of Eureka is dealt with thoroughly by Johnston, *Rich heritage*, pp. 36-43.

the third in the Shire after Bangalow and Mullumbimby (Table 7.2). Eureka was also the site of the first butter factory in the Shire, opened in 1890 (4.3.2).

Only two years after the establishment of the Lismore-Brunswick River mail service in 1882, a telegraph line was erected between the Brunswick River and Murwillumbah on the Tweed River. A station-master was appointed in May 1884 to take charge of a new telegraph office on the northern side of the river. Soon afterwards, the line was extended from Ballina to the Brunswick River Heads via Tintenbar and Cape Byron (a distance of thirty miles), making the Brunswick Heads telegraph station an important one in the communication network of the Richmond-Tweed district.[7] An application for the establishment of a telegraph office at Byron Bay was refused in 1886 on the ground that there were already too many small, unprofitable offices in the district, but one was opened there in 1888, in which year a post office was also established (in lieu of the existing receiving office).[8]

In the early 1890s the Brunswick Road brought travellers seeking work on the construction of the Lismore to the Tweed railway, but soon afterwards its importance declined, and with it the town of Eureka, as road traffic followed the railway through Bangalow to Byron Bay and beyond. The railway also ended the reliance of Brunswick valley settlers on ships to bring in supplies and take away timber and other products of their land. This was predicted by Edward Price, the examiner for the Public Works Department who reported in 1890 on a proposal to improve the Brunswick River entrance.

The entrance to the river had long been an impediment to the economic development of the Brunswick valley, and engineering works were sought as the solution. When government agricultural inspector Walter Scott Campbell visited the Brunswick River in 1886 he found that it drained 'a very small area in comparison with that drained by the Richmond, or even that by the Tweed', but the soil (with the exception of the sandy strip along the coast) was 'of excellent quality' and 'wonderfully productive'. The settlers, however, produced 'little or nothing beyond what is required for local consumption, and they must suffer considerable hardships in consequence of the want of roads and an outlet for produce. The river is a poor little gutter, with an awkward bar at its mouth, and is navigable for very small craft only.'[9]

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7   *Northern Star*, 14 June 1884, 18 June 1884, 21 June 1884, 2 July 1884.
8   *Northern Star*, 11 August 1886, 24 March 1888, 10 November 1888.
9   *Northern Star*, 3 October 1886.

By the time Edward Price came to report on the proposed Brunswick River entrance works, the jetty had been completed at Byron Bay, and work was soon to start on the railway that would feed it. Price considered that 'people will never send their goods in small vessels by way of the Brunswick when they can send by rail to a fine deep-sea port, such as Byron Bay will eventually become'. The railway, therefore, 'must destroy the shipping trade of the Brunswick River', and expenditure on improvement of the entrance could not be justified.[10] During at least the next half a century, the port of Byron Bay, and the railway which fed it, dominate the transport history of Byron Shire.

2.1 The Port of Byron Bay

The main function of Byron Bay in its early years was as a transport hub; it was promoted and developed as a port, with rail connections to the Richmond in the south and the Tweed in the north. The port and railway aspects of Byron Bay are strongly inter-related, but the railway is dealt with in a separate section (2.2). The Cape Byron lighthouse and the second Byron Bay jetty are also considered separately (2.3 and 2.4 respectively).

The idea of making Byron Bay a port for the trade of the coastal districts north of the Richmond River emerged in the early 1880s. In 1883, Captain Frederick Howard, a Nautical Surveyor in the Department of Harbours and Rivers, made an examination of the bay and prepared a plan for its improvement. His plan included alternative sites for jetties, and breakwaters to give shelter. Howard expressed the opinion that Byron Bay was 'well fitted to become the port of this district, and, if facilities for shipping were given, would soon become an important place'.

Mr Moriarty, the Engineer–in–Chief for Harbours and Rivers, subsequently was of the opinion that the construction of a pier would meet the needs of the place without the need for expensive breakwaters. A sum of £5,000 was allocated in 1884 for the construction of a jetty, and work began in 1886. The Byron Bay Jetty Opening Celebration Committee arranged a day of activities to mark the opening of the jetty on 24 July 1888, which neither the Minister for Works nor the local Member of the Legislative Assembly, Thomas Ewing, were able to attend. Activities included a picnic, athletic sports, and horse

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[10] Brunswick River: report of Mr E. B. Price, temporary examiner of public works proposals, on proposed improvements, 12 November 1890.

racing, and steamer excursions were arranged from Ballina.[11] The government took over the jetty probably a few months afterwards, at which time a more official opening may have taken place.

The question of providing protection for Byron Bay was raised again in 1887 when the jetty was under construction. Thomas Ewing requested that the Secretary of Public Works allocate £10,000 so that work could begin on the construction of a breakwater. No action seems to have been taken until 1889 when Robert Hickson, the Acting Engineer-in–Chief for Harbours and Rivers, made a special visit to the north coast to inspect and report upon 'the districts in the immediate neighbourhood of the rivers Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond, and Clarence, and Byron Bay'.

Hickson reported that the Tweed and Brunswick entrances were 'not worth spending much money upon;' and that, as most of the agricultural country around the Clarence River was already taken up, not much increased traffic could be expected, and expenditure of a lot of money on the entrance there could not be justified. The Richmond River was the 'natural and proper outlet' for its own district, which was rich and extensive, but not for the whole district up to the Tweed. Byron Bay, Hickson thought, was capable of being made into 'a first-rate shipping place', and providing the best outlet for the produce of the Brunswick and part of the Tweed River districts.[12]

Ultimately the matter of the Byron Bay port came before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (hereinafter Public Works Committee) which gave it close consideration in 1889-90. The committee essentially concurred with Hickson's sentiments in deciding to support the construction of the breakwater at Byron Bay, which would extend from Cape Byron to the Juan and Julia Rocks.[13] The enabling legislation lapsed, however, in the Legislative Council, and construction was never commenced.

The idea of a Byron Bay port persisted, however, and several further attempts were made to achieve it. The breakwater scheme was referred to the Public Works Committee again in 1901, the year in which the Cape Byron lighthouse was opened. This time the scheme was rejected on the grounds that a decision on whether the New England tableland was to be connected by a railway to a

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[11] *Northern Star*, 11 July 1888, 1 August 1888.
[12] Report by Mr. R. Hickson on the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond, and Clarence Rivers, and Byron Bay Districts, 4 May 1889.
[13] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, 15 April 1890.

port on the coast, and if so which port that should be, should be made first.[14] In 1908 a conference of district representatives was held at Lismore to consider what steps were required to have 'proper harbourage facilities provided at Byron Bay'.[15] The claims of the Bay to be made a seaport and to be connected by rail to the north-western districts of the state were argued before the Decentralisation Commission in 1910.[16] Ultimately, however, the Byron Bay harbour works remained an unfilfilled dream.

2.2 Railway

In September 1884, Treasurer George Dibbs presented to the Committee of Supply his Government's proposals for 'a bold and comprehensive system of railway construction throughout the length and breadth of the land', designed to assure the future greatness of the colony of New South Wales. Included were: the long-awaited Clarence to New England line, which was to run from South Grafton to Glen Innes, and enable the Clarence River to serve as an outlet for the New England region; and a line connecting Grafton with the Tweed River via Casino and Lismore which would divert traffic from the Tweed, Brunswick and Richmond Rivers to the more easily navigable Clarence. Both were predicated on the development of the Clarence River as a major port. The votes for both lines were passed, but Dibbs's railway policy came to grief with a change of Government early in 1887 which saw Sir Henry Parkes again become Premier.

By 1884, the Great Northern railway line had opened to Glen Innes making the Grafton-Glen Innes line a contradiction, according to Parkes, as it would compete with the Great Northern line for traffic. Dibbs had had no problem with the idea of both a southerly and easterly connection to the New England, but according to Parkes, Dibbs's policy made no economic sense. This was a major defeat for the proponents of a Clarence-New England line. Agitation continued, but in reality the importance of the Clarence as New England's outlet declined after the construction of the Great Northern Railway.

Although the 1888 railway policy put the Clarence-New England Railway out of contention, it did not spell the end of the Clarence to the Tweed railway, another element of the Dibbs policy of 1884. A major point in favour of the

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[14]   Coltheart, *Between Wind and Water*, p. 72; Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, 5 June 1901.
[15]   *Northern Star*, 8 May 1908.
[16]   *Northern Star*, 21 September 1910.

Grafton to Tweed line was that it would become part of Parkes's proposed coastal railway connecting the Tweed and Hunter Rivers.

In stating his government's railway policy to Parliament in June 1888, Sir Henry Parkes described the new coastal line as 'a gigantic undertaking' the construction of which would probably occupy five years. This was a considerable underestimate, as the line was not completed until 1924 when the Maitland to South Grafton section was opened (although the Clarence River at Grafton remained unbridged for another eight years).

The Lismore to the Tweed section of Parkes's coastal railway was the first to be completed. It was opened to traffic between Lismore and Mullumbimby in May 1894, and to the terminus at Murwillumbah in December 1894. Extensions were subsequently opened to Casino (October 1903), and to Grafton (November 1905), but afterwards the Grafton to Tweed line remained isolated from the rest of the state railway network for another two decades. Thus, during the period from 1894 until at least 1924, Byron Bay flourished as a railway and shipping centre. The narrow gauge railway laid on the jetty in 1888 was replaced with standard gauge in 1894 to link it with the newly-completed railway. Extensive repairs were made to provide for the increased traffic generated by the railway.[17]

The Lismore to the Tweed railway enters Byron Shire at Pearces Creek in the south, and leaves it about 1.5 kilometres south of Crabbes Creek in the north. Between these two points, over a distance of about 54 kilometres, were thirteen stations and sidings: Booyong, Nashua, Binna Burra, Bangalow (originally Granuaile), Talofa, St Helena, Byron Bay, Quarry Siding, Tyagarah, Myocum, Mullumbimby, Billinudgel, and Yelgun. Most of these were closed in the 1970s, and their sites later cleared; only Bangalow, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby stations remain. Only the latter two were operational when the line between Murwillumbah and Casino was closed in May 2004.

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[17]   Coltheart, *Between Wind and Water*, p. 72.

Figure 3:   The Grafton-Tweed train at Mullumbimby station in 1907, after the extension of the line to Grafton via Casino in 1905. *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

The opening of the railway had a profound effect on the pattern of settlement within the area that later became Byron Shire. In particular, the railway catalysed the growth of Byron Bay from a small seaside village to an industrial and port town, and caused the eclipse by Mullumbimby of Brunswick Heads, previously the major settlement on the Brunswick River.

2.3 Cape Byron Lighthouse

Like the opening of the first Byron Bay jetty in 1888, the opening of the lighthouse in 1901 was celebrated in the absence of government representatives. The steamer in which the Premier and other visitors from Sydney were travelling was delayed, and it arrived several hours late for the official opening which was therefore postponed until the following day. The locals, however, proceeded with the banquet that had been laid out at the Great Northern Hotel, and made all the appropriate speeches in the absence of the southern dignitaries.[18]

Although the idea is probably as old as that of the port of Byron Bay itself, the construction of a lighthouse at Cape Byron seems to have been first seriously advocated in the mid-1890s, by which time the jetty and railway had made Byron Bay a shipping port of significance. The colony had only one light

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[18]   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1901; *Northern Star*, 4 December 1901.

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north of the Richmond River (where a lighthouse had been established on the northern head in 1866), and that was at Fingal Head (established in 1872). The *Northern Star* pointed out in 1895 that a light on Cape Byron was a necessity, and suggested that a superior light to those two should be provided there. The newspaper confidently predicted that if representations were made to the Marine Board and to the Treasurer, and supported by the various steamship companies operating in the north of the colony, a light would 'probably be provided next year'.[19]

The details of the representations and lobbying that subsequently took place are not known, but by the end of 1897 a sum of £18,000 had been allocated for a lighthouse and quarters at Cape Byron. By the middle of 1898 a site had been cleared, and after some delay caused by alterations to the plans, and after a road to the site was completed, construction of the lighthouse began in mid-1900; it was completed towards the end of 1901.[20] The delayed official opening took place on Sunday 1 December 1901, and the first regular exhibition of the light after sunset that evening was reportedly 'of great interest to people at the Bay', an event which 'everyone turned out to view'.[21]

Figure 4:   Cape Byron Lighthouse *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

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[19]   *Northern Star*, 28 August 1895.
[20]   *Northern Star*, 6 May 1899, 21 October 1899, 14 July 1900.
[21]   *Northern Star*, 4 December 1901; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1901.

Besides serving its primary purpose as an aid to navigation, the Cape Byron Lighthouse became a popular destination for tourists. In 1929 it was said to be 'within easy access of the tripper, either by car or for pedestrians.' A 'glorious view await[ed] the spectator from the vantage point. Views as these are impossible to describe; they must be witnessed to appreciate their grandeur.'[22] By the end of the 1930s, about 7,000 tourists were said to be visiting the lighthouse every year, three-quarters of them from Queensland.[23]

Despite the impression which it gives of changelessness and stabilty, the lightstation has undergone some important though outwardly inconspicuous modifications at the hand of advancing technology in recent decades. The connection of mains electricity to the lighthouse in 1959 enabled an electric filament to replace a vaporised kerosene burner as the light source. An electric motor also replaced the 'wind-up' mechanism which rotated the optical apparatus. Electrification enabled the staff to be reduced from three to two keepers.[24] Automation of the light in 1987 did away entirely with the need for keepers, the last of which left the station in October 1989.[25] By this time responsibility for the care and administration of the lightstation precinct had passed to the Cape Byron Headland Reserve Trust which embarked upon a programme of commercialisation of the site, including the provision of tourist facilities in the former keepers' cottages.

2.4 The Second Byron Bay Jetty

In 1920 a design and estimate for a new jetty at a new site at Byron Bay was prepared for submission to the Public Works Committee. The committee recommended the proposal in 1923, a contract was let in 1925, and the new jetty was opened in 1929, at a site about one kilometre north of the original jetty, towards the mouth of Belongil Creek.[26] The old jetty was retained until 1948 when it was demolished.

The Public Works Committee displayed little opposition to the new jetty proposal, largely because of a serious accident which had occurred at the old jetty in 1921. The pride of the North Coast Steam Navigation Company's fleet, *Wollongbar*, foundered on the beach during a storm. The area around the jetty

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[22] *Northern Star*, 12 December 1929.
[23] *Northern Star*, 3 May 1939.
[24] Reid, *From dawn to dusk.*.
[25] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 December 1986; *Northern Star*, 16 October 1989.
[26] Coltheart, *Between Wind and Water*, pp. 134-135.

was in need of dredging to bring it down to a safe depth. Although *Wollongbar* would normally have been safe at the jetty in calm conditions, she was badly damaged in the heavy seas on 14 May and was forced ashore.[27]

Figure 5:   The wreck of SS *Wollongbar*, Byron Bay, with the first jetty in the background *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

The new Byron Bay jetty had been in use for about 25 years when it was severely damaged by heavy seas during a cyclone in February 1954. The outer 600 feet, and its two mobile electric cranes, were swept away. This brought about the end of Byron Bay as a port. Its position had been tenuous, however, for several years before then. The Public Works Department had decided against funding repairs to the jetty, as the already declining shipping trade could not justify the expense. The North Coast Steam Navigation Company had discontinued its regular service to the Bay after it lost *Wollongbar* (2) to a Japanese submarine attack off Crescent Head in April 1943. With many of its ships engaged in war service, the loss of *Wollongbar* made it difficult for the company to maintain its services.[28] The completion in 1932 of the Grafton bridge, the final link in the north coast railway, had connected Byron Bay to the state network. Government favouritism in the early 1950s helped the

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[27] Richards, *North Coast Run*, pp. 98-99; Ryan and Smith, *Time and Tide Again*, pp. 103-104.

[28] Richards, *North Coast Run*, pp. 143-145; Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, p. 39; Ryan and Smith, *Time and Tide Again*, pp. 104-105; Gallagher, 'The outports of New South Wales'.

railways to capture much of the north coast trade. This, and the need to replace vessels which were in poor condition after years of war service, led to the company's decision on 18 February 1954 to go into voluntary liquidation. Coincidentally, this decision came just one day before the cyclone that destroyed the Byron Bay jetty.

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3 FOREST INDUSTRY AND FOREST CONSERVATION

The heavily-forested nature of much of the land which now constitutes Byron Shire ensured that the timber industry would be an important one in that area. Later, areas of forest which survived clearance for farming, or which survived because they were unsuitable for farming, became important as objects of conservation. Thus, both forest industry and forest conservation are important related themes in the history of the Shire.

3.1 Forest Industry

3.1.1 Red Cedar and the Big Scrub

The sub-tropical rainforests of northern New South Wales contained an enormous variety of timbers, yet the interest of the earliest timber getters was mostly in only one species. This was was the Australian red cedar, *Toona ciliata* (formerly known as *T. australis*). One of the best known sources of red cedar was the large area of rainforest north of the Richmond River, between Lismore, Ballina and Cape Byron, which became known to the district's nineteenth century settlers as the Big Brush, and later as the Big Scrub. The Big Scrub extended into and occupied the south-western third of Byron Shire. Red cedar also grew within less extensive patches of rainforest in other places, including along the lower reaches of the coastal rivers. There it was most easily accessible and therefore first exploited. Generally, the cutting of red cedar became the first economic activity in the coastal districts of northern New South Wales.

The first cedar-cutters arrived on the Clarence River around 1838. Export figures show that the Clarence River cedar, which was restricted mainly to narrow bands of brush along the river, was quickly exhausted, and cutters moved northward to the Richmond River in 1842. As mentioned already in chapter 1, the first cedar-cutters' camp on the Brunswick River was established in 1849.

Keats (1988) has compiled a detailed and useful account of the beginnings of the Brunswick River cedar trade, based on shipping and other records.[1] The earliest mention of Brunswick River cedar in the coastal shipping records is the arrival in Sydney on 21 May 1849 of *Midas* carrying 17,000 super. feet of

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[1]   Keats, N. C., 1988. *Wollumbin: the creation and early habitation of the Tweed, Brunswick and Richmond Rivers of N. S. W.* (the author, Point Clare, N. S. W.), pp. 213-221.

the timber. This was followed by *OPS* on 8 August 1849 (21,000 super. feet) and 20 September 1849 (21,000 super. feet). Shipments of cedar from the Brunswick River appear to have been curtailed after the loss of *Clara*, destroyed while attempting to cross the shallow and hazardous bar on 16 April 1850. Keats surmises that when shipments resumed briefly in 1851, loading was carried out from the beaches, the logs being dragged through the surf to schooners anchored close offshore. It is probable that 'surf loading' became common practice around the Brunswick River and Cape Byron when, according to Keats, cedar getting was resumed in earnest in that district around the end of the 1850s after several years of inactivity.

While 'surf loading' was developed to overcome the problem of getting vessels across the dangerous Brunswick River bar, towards the southern end of the Byron Shire coast another natural obstacle required another inventive response by the cedar getters. South of the Brunswick River, and particularly south of Cape Byron, the sandy coastal plain is backed by steep hills, and in some places by cliffs. At places where the escarpment was less precipitous, although still very steep, logs were slid from the elevated basaltic plateau where the cedar grew, to the back of the coastal plain from where they were dragged by bullock teams to the coast for loading onto ships. Such places were known as chutes or shutes, a term which has survived, albeit spelled differently, in the names of several Byron Shire localities: Cooper's Shoot (directly west of Suffolk Park), Skinner's Shoot (near Hayter's Hill), McLeod's Shoot (south of Ewingsdale), and Possum Shoot (near Coorabell).

The historical record is relatively silent about the details of how 'surf loading' of cedar was carried out, and of how the shutes were used, but Carr (1973) provides the following rare descriptive account.[2]

> *To shoot a log, it was sent over end first, although it sometimes changed course. But with no mechanical aid other than handspikes and cant-hooks, it wasn't always easy to send them end first, so they were rolled over. It was not a good way, because even the best logs have a taper, and so they could veer off to left or right, and get lost or stuck half-way down a mountain-side.*

Referring to Cooper's Shoot, Carr said that two men would camp at the foot of the shute where:

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2   R. D. Carr, 'More about shoots and shutes', RRHS Bulletin no.65 (March 1973); R. D. Carr, 'More about Cooper's shoot', RRHS Bulletin no.68 (December 1973).

their contribution would be to snig the logs to the Bay, swim the bullocks out to where the seamen could get a line on them from the whaleboats, take them to the anchored ship and winch them aboard…This was called 'surfing' the logs.

All went well until the track and snig-road across the marshy neck of the Cape began to cut up and bog, and the bullockies withdrew. J. J. Cooper and his next brother Will were determined not to lose the logs that had cost them so much hard labour. [They] handspiked the logs down to the northern end of Tallow Beach one at a time, got a whaleboat, and towed them one or two at a time out through the surf, round the Cape, and to the schooners under the Julians.

Surf loading may have been common at the Brunswick River for the export of timber from the 1860s, but the technique was certainly not used exclusively. It is clear that many vessels continued to brave the entrance, and this is well illustrated by reference to some of those that were wrecked at the mouth of the river—either entering or leaving—during the first four to five decades of the timber trade there (Table 2.1). In 1875, the schooner *Centurion* drifted onto the bar and was wrecked while entering the river. She was in ballast, so presumably came with the intention of loading timber. The schooner *Eva Maud* was wrecked while attempting to get to sea with a load of cedar in 1879. In the same year, when the schooner *Titania* was wrecked while entering with an unknown cargo, the schooner *Brilliant* lay safely outside the river, loading the last cargo of cedar for the season. The vessels *White Cloud*, *Siskin* and *Dolphin* spent several days bar-bound in the Brunswick River during January 1886. [3] *Siskin* had been damaged on the rocks inside the bar while entering the river the previous September, and *Dolphin* was wrecked while leaving the following February.

There is evidence to suggest that by the mid-1880s the timber trade of the district adjoining the Brunswick River and Byron Bay was subdued, at least in comparison to the previous two decades. [4] The most easily accessible cedar had been removed, and that which remained, together with less desirable species, could not be transported to Sydney profitably. In 1885 it was said that Henry French was 'one of the few settlers who still deals in cedar' at the Brunswick River. Nearly all the cedar had been cut from his 640 acre property

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[3]   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1875, p. 4; *Northern Star*, 17 May 1879, 14 June 1879; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 December 1886, p. 6, 14 January 1887, p. 4.

[4]   This matter would be resolved by a detailed examination of the shipping trade of the Brunswick River, but such is beyond the scope of this work.

five miles south of the river, leaving 'beech, pine, rosewood, sassafras' and some varieties of hardwood as the most valuable.[5]

Surf loading was expensive. In 1885 the cost of the surf-boat and crew was equal to 2 shillings per 100 super. feet, and the freight to Sydney an additional 5 shillings for the same quantity, leaving a very small profit to the owner of the timber. An alternative then was to use *White Cloud*, a ketch that traded to the Brunswick River in the 1880s and which seemed able to defy the dangerous bar. Her charges, however, were 7 shillings per 100 super. feet of timber to Sydney, a rate which attracted criticism from owners of timber, and probably discouraged many of them from shipping it.[6]

It is clear from shipping records that not all, however, were so discouraged. It was reported in July 1884 that 'large quantities of cedar and pine' were being surfed out in rafts to vessels laying off the Brunswick River bar. The steamer *Brunswick* left the river on 21 January 1886 with a cargo of sixty cedar logs. *White Cloud* carried much smaller loads. For instance, she took 17,000 super. feet of cedar to Sydney from the Brunswick River in January 1885; 16,000 super. feet of unspecified 'timber' in February 1885; and sixteen cedar logs and 1,000 staves in February 1886.[7]

The completion of the first jetty at Byron Bay in mid-1888 was a great boon to the timber industry in the adjoining district, as it greatly simplified the task of loading logs for shipment. Probably in 1887 or early 1888, the brothers William and Harry Flick visited Byron Bay from Lismore to 'ascertain the timber possibilities' which they found to be 'exceedingly bright', despite the fact that Byron Bay and district was 'almost in its primitive state of swamp and marshland surrounded by dense standing scrub' and required 'much pioneering work…in making roads to get timber to the jetty.' The Flicks made arrangements with Owen Wareham, agent for the shipping company servicing Byron Bay, to take delivery of their timber at the jetty. They also purchased from a farmer at Cooper's Shoot all the timber on his 640 acre property. There they found 'one of the best forests of hoop pine possible to see'.[8]

In November 1889, during the inquiry into the proposed Byron Bay breakwater, timber merchant Owen Wareham said that he had shipped

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[5]   *Sydney Mail*, 3 October 1885, p. 717.
[6]   *Sydney Mail*, 26 September 1885, pp. 665-666, 3 October 1885, p. 717.
[7]   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 1885, p. 6, 13 February 1885, p. 4, 22 January 1886, p. 6, 10 February 1886, p. 8.
[8]   William Flick, 'The early history of Byron Bay', *Tweed Daily*, 12 October 1938.

800,000 super. feet of timber from the jetty which had been completed only about eighteen months.[9] The types of timber shipped by Wareham were not specified by him, but it seems reasonable to assume that they were various brushwood species, probably including hoop pine and red cedar. This belief is supported, besides by Flick's comment above about hoop pine, by evidence given a little more than a decade later, in 1901, by John Glasgow at the second inquiry into the proposed Byron Bay breakwater. Glasgow said that the principal types of timber cut by him for export then were '[hoop] pine, [white] beech, [red] cedar, boligum, and small quantities of rosewood and [black] bean', all brush timbers.[10]

The boat service used initially by the Flicks was discontinued after a short while, but another shipowner, G. W. Nicoll, who was already running two small steamers to the Tweed River, was persuaded to begin calling at Byron Bay. Interestingly, these steamers loaded timber off the beaches at various places between Broken Head and the Tweed, the logs being surfed out to the boat during calm weather.[11]

3.1.2 Hardwood

In his evidence to the Byron Bay breakwater inquiry in 1901, John Glasgow predicted the direction that the timber industry in the district would take in the future. Although the types of brushwood timber that he principally shipped were still available in large quantities, hardwoods were far more plentiful and represented the future of the industry. Hardwoods available in the Byron Bay district included blackbutt and mahogany, the former being most abundant, especially 'underneath the Nightcap'.[12]

Glasgow (c.1838-1920), who had started in the timber-milling business in Lismore in the 1870s, established a sawmill at Byron Bay in 1891 or 1892. He relocated to Mullumbimby in 1897, setting up his mill at a site close to the railway station.[13] Glasgow told the breakwater inquiry in 1901 that the greatest proportion of the timber cut at his mill was for local requirements.

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9   Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of evidence, 23 November 1889.
10   Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of evidence, 6 April 1901.
11   William Flick, 'The early history of Byron Bay', *Tweed Daily*, 12 October 1938.
12   Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of evidence, 6 April 1901.
13   *Northern Star*, 9 September 1891, 20 January 1897, 28 April 1897.

When possible, what he did cut for export was railed to Byron Bay and shipped from the jetty there. Often, however, the limitations of the shipping facilities at Byron Bay required him to send it via the Richmond River.[14] These limitations had also prevented the opening up of the hardwood trade.

During 1898, 1899 and 1900, the export of timber from Byron Bay was in the order of 2 million super. feet each year. Although far greater a quantitiy than that shipped by Wareham in 1888-89, the trade had stabilised, even declined a little, during the late 1890s. The facilities at Byron Bay were unable to handle increased quantities, and by 1901 probably an equal amount of timber was being railed to the Richmond for shipment from Lismore.[15]

In 1908 the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Forestry was told that the shipment of logs from Byron Bay had ceased; almost all the log timber was cut up at the local mills. Moreover, most of the timber cut was for local consumption, with the relatively small amount exported being restricted to scarcer, higher-priced kinds such as cedar, teak and rosewood.[16] In 1923 when the Public Works Committee was considering the question of a new jetty at Byron Bay, timber was not among the principal exports of the place (which were by that time mainly perishable products such as butter and bananas).[17]

Although the Brunswick valley timber mills in 1908 were cutting both hardwoods and softwoods, the latter, such as cedar and hoop pine, had become scarce within economic haulage distance of the mills. Consequently, the more plentiful hardwoods were becoming an increasingly important component of the local industry. Mullumbimby timber-getter William Law nominated 'ironbark, tallow-wood, messmate, red stringybark, and red gum' as the principal timbers of the district. Logs were hauled by bullock teams to local mills, or to railway yards for transport to mills farther away, such as the Richmond River Timber Company's mill at Lismore.[18]

By the middle of the 1940s there were about 22 sawmills licensed to operate in Byron Shire, evidence of the continuing economic importance of timber in the

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[14] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of evidence, 6 April 1901.

[15] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of evidence, 6 April 1901.

[16] Royal Commission of Inquiry on Forestry, evidence of G. R. Henson, 2 September, and R. R. Mallett, 5 September 1907.

[17] Report…relating to the proposed new jetty at Byron Bay, 1923.

[18] Royal Commission of Inquiry on Forestry, evidence of R. R. Mallett and W. G. Law, 5 September 1907.

district.[19] One of the most enduring, and perhaps the best known Brunswick valley timber mill was the Hollingworth mill in Mullumbimby which operated for more than sixty years. It was the first sawmill to be established in Mullumbimby, having been moved there from Byron Bay in 1897 by its then owner John Glasgow. Joseph Hollingworth (1864-1919) bought Glasgow's mill in 1902; he and his descendents continued to run it until 1964 when it was sold to Standard Sawmilling of Murwillumbah, who closed it the same year.

A second Hollingworth mill was established in 1921 at Goonengerry where the timber rights over Kurt Back's 1,200 acre property had been acquired.[20] In the 1940s this property was purchased by the Banana Growers' Federation as a source of timber for the manufacture of banana packing cases (mentioned again in chapter 4 in the context of the banana industry). It became known as Tom Rummery Forest after the forester whom the BGF employed to supervise reforestation there.

Figure 6:   Log yards at Hollingworth's mill, Mullumbimby, c.1955. The Railway Hotel is in the right background *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

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[19] The Richmond-Tweed Region: a preliminary survey of resources, Division of Reconstruction and Development, Premier's Department, Sydney, 1945.
[20] *Mullumbimby Star*, 24 November 1921.

3.1.3 The State Forest System

The lands of the Big Scrub became economically more important for the farming activities which they supported than for timber, and the greater proportion of the area's softwood timber was destroyed, mostly burnt, during the process of clearing for sugar growing and for dairy farming, topics of Chapter 4. Hardwoods generally grew on land less favoured for agriculture, so were often spared from such wholesale destruction, but inefficient industry practices and the widespread ringbarking of trees on pasture land nevertheless wasted much timber; undoubtedly more than was consumed by the timber industry state-wide. Concern for the future of the hardwood resource gave rise to calls for the permanent reservation of tracts of forest to ensure the long-term availability of supplies of timber. This movement led to the appointment in June 1907 of a Royal Commission to conduct a broad ranging inquiry into the timber resources of the State, and the operation of the forestry laws.

After hearing evidence at many places around New South Wales, including at Mullumbimby court-house in September 1907, the Royal Commission on Forestry issued its final report on 29 October 1908. Principal among its recommendations were the permanent dedication of areas of forested land as state forests, the withdrawal of the control of these forests from the Department of Lands, and the framing and passing of a forestry act. Accordingly, in June 1909 the administration of forestry was transferred from the Department of Lands to a Forestry Department under the control of the Minister for Agriculture, and a Forest Bill, based partly on Victorian legislation and including many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, was prepared and presented to Parliament. The first New South Wales *Forestry Act* became law on 1 January 1910. By the end of 1913, forty-five state forests had been proclaimed, comprising about 320,000 acres. Twenty-nine of the first thirty of these (numbers 1-19 and 21-29, comprising about 270,000 acres, or 84 per cent) were situated within the Counties of Rous, Richmond, Clarence, Fitzroy and Buller, that is, within the Northern Rivers region. This highlights the importance of the forests in that region and the urgency of having them protected.

It became clear soon after the commencement of operation of the *Forestry Act* 1909 that conflict between the Forestry and Lands Departments hindered the forestry activities under the Act. An amending forestry bill was therefore prepared for presentation to Parliament, extending the machinery for forest

management. This bill became law on 1 November 1916 as the *Forestry Act* 1916. The outstanding feature of the Act was the transfer of the business of the Forestry Department to the control of a Forestry Commission, separating forest management from the vicissitudes of politics. The creation of the Forestry Commission of New South Wales under the *Forestry Act* 1916 fulfilled another of the recommendations of the Royal Commission in 1908, but one that had not been incorporated into the *Forestry Act* 1909. The process of dedication of forest lands as permanent state forests that had begun under the 1909 act was continued under the 1916 act, until in 1919 the area of state forests reached about 5 million acres, the government's minimum target.

Of the four state forests that existed wholly or partly within Byron Shire (Table 3.1), two (Whian Whian East and Whian Whian) had been created during the brief period of operation of the *Forestry Act* 1909; and one (Nullum) during the early period of operation of the *Forestry Act* 1916. The fourth, Goonengerry State Forest, was a much more recent creation. It was dedicated in 1985 after the Forestry Commission purchased from the Banana Growers' Federation the forest which they had used since the 1940s as a source of timber for the locally important purpose of manufacturing packing cases for bananas.

Table 3.1:   Former State Forests in Byron Shire

Name	Number	Year Dedicated
Whian Whian East *(most)*	3	1913
Whian Whian *(part)*	173	1914
Nullum *(part)*	356	1917
Goonengerry	1044	1985

3.2 Forest Conservation

Conflict between timber interests and land-settlement interests typified the debate over forest use in New South Wales in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and gave rise to state-sponsored forestry as a means of conserving timber resources. In the post-Second World War period, forest conflict typically concerned the protection of relatively undisturbed areas of the various natural ecosystems from 'development', including extractive industries such as mining and, of most relevance here, timber harvesting.

In the particular case of forestry, the post-war development drive had intensified forest use—including the expanded softwood plantation programme, the accelerated silvicultural treatment of existing forests, the roading and logging of previously unlogged state forests, and the combing of other Crown timber lands for areas suitable for dedication as new state forests—and this clashed headlong in the late 1960s with the growing nature conservation movement, newly empowered by the passage in New South Wales in 1967 of the first *National Parks and Wildlife Act*.

More generally, by the early 1970s the task of nature preservation had come to be considered as an urgent one. At the rate at which the State was being developed, some saw that the area of appropriate land which ultimately would be available for inclusion in parks and reserves would be determined within a decade. Not only was development consuming or disturbing the remaining natural areas at an accelerating rate, but the recreational needs of an increasing population, and one more mobile and with more leisure time than ever before, was multiplying the demands on the existing parks and reserves.

3.2.1 The Rainforest Decision

The rainforests of north-eastern New South Wales became the focus of anti-logging protests in the 1970s, first in the Border Ranges, and later in the Terania Creek basin, at the junction of Goonimbar and Whian Whian State Forests in the Nightcap Range. These protests, among other things, led to a decision by State Cabinet in October 1982 to adopt a policy involving the conservation of certain areas of rainforest in national parks and nature reserves, and the phased reduction of rainforest logging in other forests and its cessation in the late 1980s.

The 'rainforest decision' added about 120,000 ha of forest in north-eastern New South Wales to the national parks estate, about 100,000 hectares of which was formerly state forest under the control of the Forestry Commission. A major component of this forest reallocation was the creation in 1983 of Nightcap National Park (4,277 hectares), from Goonimbar State Forest no. 344 and part of Whian Whian State Forest no. 173. Only a very small part of this national park was originally within Byron Shire.

3.2.2 Beyond the rainforests

Although the 'rainforest decision' by reallocating 120,000 hectares of the public estate had transferred most of the remaining areas of rainforest in New

South Wales to the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, it did not change the law regarding the more than three million hectares of forest which remained under the control of the Forestry Commission and which contained various other 'conservation values' such as 'wilderness', 'old growth', and 'biodiversity'. These forests became the focus of anti-logging protest in the years after 1982.

Conservation campaigns based on these three aspects brought about the reallocation of forested land from the state forest to the national park estate during the following decade, and placed further restrictions on the activities of the Forestry Commission. The public forests of Byron Shire underwent little change, however, until the mid-1990s. The parliamentary election in March 1995 brought Labor back into government in New South Wales after an absence of seven years and with a clear majority in both Houses. Resolution of the long-standing forest conservation debate was now approached with renewed vitality and in a more concerted fashion than previously was possible. Under the forest reform package announced on 13 June 1995, logging would cease in all old growth forest areas, logging quotas would be reduced generally, the price of timber would be increased, a concerted effort would be made to increase the area of hardwood plantations, and twenty-four new national parks and nature reserves would be created around the state, many of these from areas of forest withdrawn from logging. One of these new national parks was Mount Jerusalem National Park (970 hectares) in the north-western part of Byron Shire. It was created in 1995 from part of the Nullum State Forest which had been revoked for the purpose under the *Forests and Reserves Revocation Act* 1995.

By this time, however, the Federal Government had taken a leading role in forest reform. The Federal Government's interest in the forest question had been increasing for many years, and since 1992, especially, initiatives at Federal level have dominated the debate. Among these various initiatives was the development of a strategy for the ecologically sustainable management of Australia's forests, embodied in the National Forest Policy Statement which was signed by all participating Governments at a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments in December 1992 (with the exception of Tasmania which signed later). The Policy Statement bound the governments to certain courses of action which were central to the forest reform arena subsequently.

A goal of the National Forest Policy Statement was the achievement of the national reserve system, and the mechanism for doing so was a process of

'comprehensive regional assessments' under which the full range of forest attributes were assessed at a regional level to determine what additional areas needed to be included in the reserve system to meet agreed conservation criteria. This process ultimately led to the completion of Regional Forest Agreements, within a national framework, under which forest resources were allocated for both environmental protection and industry use.[21]

In regard to Byron Shire, the forest reform process after 1995 led to: the expansion of Nightcap National Park (to incorporate parts of Whian Whian East and Whian Whian State Forests); the expansion of Mount Jerusalem National Park (to incorporate the balance of Nullum State Forest); and the creation of Goonengerry NP (formerly Goonengerry State Forest), all under the *Forestry and National Park Estate Act* 1998.

Subsequently, under the *National Park Estate (Reservations) Act* 2003, the remainder of Whian Whian East and Whian Whian State Forests became Whian Whian State Conservation Area, and since that time there have been no state forests within Byron Shire. The State Conservation Area is a new category of reserve under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* 1974, established with the dual purpose of protecting conservation values and permitting mineral exploration and production.

Table 3.2:   **National Parks, Nature Reserves and State Conservation Areas in Byron Shire**

Name	Year Dedicated
Nightcap National Park *(part)* (1)	1983
Mount Jerusalem National Park *(part)* (2)	1995
Goonengerry National Park	1999
Arakwal National Park	2001
Broken Head Nature Reserve	1974
Brunswick Heads Nature Reserve	1979
Tyagarah Nature Reserve	1986

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[21] Kirkpatrick, J., 1998, 'Nature conservation and the Regional Forest Agreement process', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management* 5, 31-37; McDonald, J., 1999, 'Regional Forest (dis)Agreements: the RFA process and sustainable forest management', *Bond Law Review* 11, 295-335.

Hayters Hill Nature Reserve	1989
Inner Pocket Nature Reserve	1989
Snows Gully Nature Reserve (3)	1992
Andrew Johnston Big Scrub Nature Reserve	1993
Billinudgel Nature Reserve	1996
Cumbebin Swamp Nature Reserve	1999
Marshalls Creek Nature Reserve	1999
Cape Byron State Conservation Area	1997
Whian Whian State Conservation Area (4)	2003

(1) Formerly part of Whian Whian and Whian Whian East State Forests
(2) Formerly part of Nullum State Forest
(3) Formerly private land, purchased by NPWS
(4) Formerly part of Whian Whian and Whian Whian East State Forests

3.2.3 Other conservation reserves

It would serve little purpose to detail the reservation history of all the minor reserves listed in table 3.2, or of other reserves within Byron Shire. There are two further sites, however, which merit attention. Although small, they have long been places of special significance in the Richmond and Brunswick River districts.

Booyong Recreation Reserve

Like Hayters Hill and Andrew Johnston Big Scrub Nature Reserves (Table 3.2), the Booyong Recreation Reserve[22] protects a small remnant of the Big Scrub sub-tropical rainforest which once covered the south-western third of Byron Shire (and extended westward to Lismore and southward to beyond Alstonville). Unlike the aforementioned Nature Reserves, it has not passed into National Parks and Wildlife Service control, but remains a Crown reserve under the management of a local trust. Booyong Reserve had its origin in 1900 when a small area of land on Cudgerie Creek at Booyong, adjacent to the Lismore-Tweed railway line, was reserved for 'preservation of native flora'. It was later enlarged, and today is partly cleared land, serving the dual role of nature preservation and public recreation.

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[22] Stubbs, 'Nineteenth century origins'.

Minyon Falls

A reserve for public recreation of 60 acres around Minyon Falls was notified in 1882, but for many years the place remained difficult of access.[23] A writer to the *Northern Star* in 1902 lamented that 'such a place of pleasure resort should be comparatively hidden from public inspection by visitors to the district and others'. Trustees had been appointed to the reserve some two years previously, and it was hoped that they might take steps to 'get an accessible road to one of the beauty spots of the Richmond River'.[24] In the opinion of another early commentator, the 'Minyon Waterfall…will, by-and-bye, be considered one of the sights of the colony. There are larger and more imposing falls, but none more beautiful'.[25] It is not necessary here to trace the reservation history of Minyon Falls, but ultimately the original reserve surrounding the falls was incorporated into Nightcap National Park.

3.2.4 Heritage in the National Park estate

Despite the common perception of national parks as natural areas which have suffered minimal human disturbance, such areas often have rich histories of human use, such as roads and tracks, mining, timber extraction and milling, and forestry (including silvicultural treatment and plantation establishment). This is especially so of many recently-established national parks and reserves which had been state forests or Crown land for long periods of time prior to their transfer to the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Some heritage sites within what are now national parks have been identified in previous heritage studies of state forests. These include the Rummery Park Forestry Camp on Peates Mountain Road, formerly within Whian Whian East State Forest but now within Whian Whian State Conservation Area (Bickford *et al.* 1998). Another interesting aspect of the forests in Byron Shire is the historic Nightcap Track, a pack-horse track which was opened in the early 1870s to link the Richmond and Tweed valleys.[26] Part of the Nightcap Track is in use today as a walking trail through Nightcap National Park, along the far-western boundary of the Shire.

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[23] *NSW Government Gazette*, 30 August 1882.

[24] *Northern Star*, 17 May 1902, p. 4; *NSW Government Gazette*, 2 December 1899.

[25] *Northern Star*, 7 April 1894.

[26] 'The New Road from Richmond to the Tweed', *Town and Country Journal*, 13 September 1873; 'From Casino to the Tweed River', *Richmond River Express*, 23 November 1878; 'Lismore to Murwillumbah', *Tweed Daily,* 15 October 1923.

4 AGRICULTURE, DAIRYING, AND RELATED INDUSTRY

4.1 Free Selection and the Growth of Agriculture

When the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* 1861 came into operation at the beginning of 1862, the land in the coastal districts of northern New South Wales that was most eagerly sought for farming was that which lay close to navigable water. Thus, the earliest portions of land to be selected in the Richmond River district were situated near that river between the established towns of Lismore, Casino and Ballina. By 1869, when the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Belmore, visited the Richmond, there had been 60,000 acres free-selected on the river, upon which were 600 selectors, most of whom kept to the navigable part of the river, where they could 'find the means of easy transit for their produce'. The banks of the river were then:

> *clothed with dense foliage, broken here and there by small clearings, upon which appeared withered maize stalks, looking rather dismal among the fallen timber, tons of pumpkins, a few fruit trees, and the usual primitive buildings which are to be seen about new settlements.*

Settlement of the Tweed River commenced later than of the Richmond, but the pattern was similar, and the pace similarly rapid. By 1869 the greater part of the river frontage along the navigable water, about twenty-five miles, had been taken up. A press writer visiting the Tweed in 1871 described his trip down the river thus: [1]

> *The banks which were all dense scrub, were disfigured by small, wretched tenements, the inhabitants of which appear to have buried themselves in the depths of the bush. These are relieved occasionally by a hut of the better sort and by a field of bright, green corn…*

Maize was the first 'staple' crop, thriving on the narrow strips of fertile soil which flanked the navigable reaches of the rivers. Sugar, however, soon superceded maize as the most important crop on both the Richmond and Tweed Rivers, as it had earlier done on the Clarence. The spread of sugar cultivation across the Clarence had been rapid and spectacular. Although sugar cane was first grown experimentally on the river perhaps as early as 1860,[2] cultivation specifically for the manufacture of sugar was not widely attempted until several years later. By 1868 there were nine sugar mills in

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[1]   Report of a visit in May 1871, quoted in *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah) *Centenary Supplement*, 1923, p. 27.

[2]   'The Tourist. The Clarence River in 1871. Sugar', *Sydney Mail*, 28 October 1871, p. 1114.

northern New South Wales and these produced a total output of about 60 tons.[3] The development of sugar growing in the region was watched carefully by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited which in 1868 announced that, in return for assurances that sufficient area of land would been planted to cane, they would erect central sugar mills.[4] The company then proceeded to establish three mills, which commenced crushing in 1870: at Darkwater on the Macleay River; and at Southgate and Chatsworth on the Clarence River. This move firmly established sugar growing on a large scale, and in a small number of years sugar had attained a position of agricultural pre-eminence on the Clarence which it never lost. Indeed, the Macleay district soon proved unsuitable for cane growing and the Darkwater Mill was transferred to Harwood on the Clarence in 1873.

On the Richmond River, experimentation with the growing of sugar cane commenced in 1863, but the first commercial production of sugar did not take place until 1869.[5] By this time there were about 300 acres planted to sugar cane on the Richmond.[6] By the end of the 1860s, the growing of sugar had commenced on the Tweed, too. The place of sugar in the economies of the Richmond and Tweed was cemented when the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited established central mills at Condong on the Tweed River in 1880, and at Broadwater on the Richmond River in 1881. Sugar growing continued to expand until by 1891 it was 'by far the main industry' of the lower part of the north coast of New South Wales, extending from Grafton to the Clarence Heads, from Casino to Ballina on the Richmond, and all along the Tweed River.[7]

By that time the industry had spread away from the riverbank farms where it had begun. Notably, selection in the Big Scrub, the large block of elevated, rainforest-covered land between Byron Bay, Ballina and Lismore, had been driven in the 1870s and 1880s by the demand for land on which to grow sugar. Thomas Scott, for decades a strong advocate of sugar cane cultivation, visited the Richmond River district in January 1871. He took particular interest in the very heavily timbered 'Duck Creek Ranges', to the east of Lismore, which he believed had the potential to 'elevate the Richmond River

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[3] Lowndes, A. G., 1956, *South Pacific enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney), p. 22.

[4] Advertisement in *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 14 July 1868.

[5] Bondfield, W. G., 1938, 'Rise of the sugar growing industry in the Richmond River district', *Richmond River Historical Society Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 20-30.

[6] 'Mr Robertson's visit to the Richmond River', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1869, p. 3.

[7] Despeissis, 'Sugar industry', p. 35.

into a state of prosperity as a sugar producing locality…unsurpassed in any part of the globe'.[8]

Shortly afterwards, Thomas Carter, writing in the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, echoed Scott's observations.[9] Carter wished to bring to the attention of farmers on the Clarence, who were looking for land on which to grow sugar:

> *a large tract of excellent brush land on the Richmond River. It is commonly known as the 'BIG CEDAR BRUSH,' and up to the present time has not attracted the attention of selectors to the extent that its advantages seem to merit.*

In Carter's opinion, the great fertility of the area and its freedom from floods far outweighed its distance from transport and the poor state of its roads, and it was 'a place where thousands could settle and live in prosperity'.

It is clear from the subsequent progress of the sugar industry that many farmers were attracted by these optimistic claims. By the late 1880s, several mills were in operation in the Big Scrub. In the south these included the mill and plantation at Rous, near Alstonville, set up by the Richmond River Sugar Company Ltd in 1884. In the north, in that part of the Big Scrub which lies within Byron Shire, mills were erected at Ewingsdale and at Nashua.

The Ewingsdale mill was erected by Edward Atkins, probably in 1887. The *Northern Star* in August that year reported that Mr Atkins 'purposes erecting, very shortly, a sugarmill near the bay upon Mr H. Barne's [*sic*] property'. The 'original owners' of this property, McAulay brothers [Neil and Alex], had already planted about 120 acres of cane which 'this season will be crushed'. The mill would be 'a good thing for the district', and would hopefully 'put new life into the drooping spirits of the selectors adjacent thereto' who had suffered years of hardship and losses through lack of communication with any market. Some were selling out from 'sheer discouragement'.[10]

Atkins's mill seems to have been short-lived. He showed samples of the sugar grown by him to the Sectional Committee inquiring into the proposed Byron Bay breakwater in November 1889, but he was declared bankrupt early in 1892, by which time, it is assumed, the mill had ceased operation.[11]

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[8] 'The Richmond River as a sugar growing district', *Town and Country Journal*, 28 January 1871, p. 110.

[9] 'Big Cedar Brush, Richmond River', *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 7 March 1871. One could speculate about whether Carter had read Scott's letter.

[10] *Northern Star*, 24 August 1887.

[11] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Report of Sectional Commitee, 28 January 1890; *Northern Star*, 2 April 1892.

Brokenshire (1988) states that Atkins established his mill 'about 1880' and that it operated 'until about the turn of the century', but this would appear to be a considerable overestimate. The same author states that the mill was situated 'on the property of Mr George Flick, in Quarry Lane at Ewingsdale' where 'the rusted remains of a huge old molasses tank used in the operations' were visible.[12]

After the opening of the Lismore to Tweed railway in 1894, the growing of sugar cane seems quickly to have become oriented to the railway. By the end of the following year it was said that Tyagarah (which then included Ewingsdale in the south, and extended northward several kilometres towards Brunswick Heads) was 'ahead of any centre on the Brunswick for cane-growing'. Several truck-loads of cane were taken by every train to Condong, and between the cane and the timber the railway employees were kept very busy.[13] Evidently, if Atkins had stayed in business until the mid-1890s, he would have found the combination of the railway and the Condong mill too much to compete with.

The Nashua sugar mill was situated on the northern side of Skinner's Creek, now part of the southern boundary of Byron Shire. Kirkland (1982) states that the mill was established in 1882-83, but no evidence is given; it is certain, however, that it was in operation by 1885 as it was mentioned in Colonial Sugar Refining Company correspondence that year.[14] In 1887 the *Northern Star* reported that it would 'resume crushing' in the coming season.[15] Operation of the mill was continually hindered by frost, which damaged the cane, and by siltation in the creek, which impeded export of the sugar. Consequently, in 1891 its owners, Sydney brewing brothers John and James Toohey, offered to remove the mill to Emigrant Creek in exchange for promises from farmers there to grow cane.[16] Such promises evidently were not forthcoming, for in 1894 the mill was relocated to Bundaberg, along with another from the Clarence which had also closed.[17] A commentator at the time lamented the loss of the latter from the district, saying that it was a pity that it was not 'secured for the sugar land of the Brunswick, where it would have been admirably located'.[18] It seems unlikely, however, that another mill on the

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[12]   Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 174-176.
[13]   *Northern Star*, 'Brunswick River', 9 October 1895.
[14]   Smith, *Sweet beginnings*, p. 45.
[15]   Kirkland, *The Booyong district*, p.110; *Northern Star*, 30 April 1887.
[16]   *Northern Star*, 20 May 1891.
[17]   *Northern Star*, 17 January 1894.
[18]   *Northern Star*, 28 October 1893.

Brunswick could have survived for long, given the tendency at the time for small mills to succumb to competition from the big CSR central mills; the number of steam sugar mills in the Clarence-Richmond-Tweed Rivers district reached a peak of eighty-six in 1884, but declined to only thirty-one in 1890, and fewer than ten by the end of the century. By that time it was said of sugar-cane growing around Byron Bay that it was 'practically dying-out' on the hill country, and that dairying, 'being more profitable, is taking its place'. In future, due to the expense of getting it to the mills, 'the only persons who will grow sugar-cane are those next to the railway line or close to the water'.[19]

4.2 The Dairying Revolution

Despite the extravagant predictions of Thomas Scott and others, sugar cane and pioneer labour failed to subdue the forest and establish a thriving agricultural economy in the Big Scrub.[20] Sugar growing on the elevated Big Scrub land was not a success, through the combined effects of frost, falling sugar prices during the 1880s, and the inefficiency of small mills. The introduction and rapid expansion of dairying, however, caused a revolution which transformed the landscape of the Big Scrub profoundly and irrevocably during and after the 1890s. In the Brunswick Valley as a whole, dairying became the leading industry, far exceeding sugar cane growing in importance.

Dairying has been carried on in New South Wales since the earliest days, but until the 1880s it remained largely a local consumption, cottage industry. The establishment of dairying on a sound commercial basis, and its development as an important export industry, was enabled by some significant technological developments during the 1880s and 1890s. The introduction of the centrifugal cream separator in 1881 was followed closely by the advent of refrigeration which facilitated the shipment overseas of highly perishable butter. In 1883 the factory production of butter was inaugurated in New South Wales when the New South Wales Fresh Food and Ice Company Ltd installed the new centrifugal separators at its south coast milk depot. The introduction in the 1890s of the Babcock test for estimating the butterfat content of milk and cream helped to improve and standardise butter manufacture. The method also provided a fairer and more accurate basis for

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[19] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of Evidence, 6 April 1901, p. 34.

[20] Sugar did become an important crop on the Richmond lowlands.

paying farmers, and provided a strong incentive for herd improvement and a general raising of milk quality. Technical improvements to the pasteurisation process in the 1890s helped further to eliminate the need for preservatives in butter, improving its export marketability. These improvements also contributed to greater hygiene in liquid milk distribution, helping to expand domestic markets for liquid milk.[21]

Another development in the late nineteenth century which aided the growth of the dairy industry was the creation of co-operatives. The first farmer-owned and controlled co-operative dairy produce factory in New South Wales was established near Kiama, in the Illawarra district, in 1884. The co-operative structure was ideally suited to the model of a central butter factory supplied by a number of creameries, a system which had been pioneered by the Fresh Food and Ice Co. Ltd in Sydney in 1883. At about the same time, a co-operative was formed on the south coast to undertake the marketing of dairy and agricultural produce. The co-operative development of manufacturing and marketing of dairy produce quickly became the order of the day throughout the industry.

At the end of the 1880s, the base of dairying in New South Wales remained firmly in the Illawarra district where the industry had begun. The next decade, however, saw the rapid expansion of dairying along the north coast, and a corresponding decline in the south.[22] Although the expansion of dairying during the 1890s occurred along most of the north coast from the Hunter valley to the Queensland border, the most remarkable growth occurred on the brush lands of the Tweed and Richmond Rivers, in particular the Big Scrub.

The growth during the latter part of the nineteenth century of the dairy industry in the North Coast region of New South Wales, and especially in the Richmond-Tweed district, was phenomenal. The rapidity and suddenness of this growth is indicated by the fact that seventy per cent of New South Wales butter production in 1900 came from the Tweed and Lismore electorates, the former embracing the catchments of the Tweed and Brunswick Rivers, and the latter including much of the Richmond's Big Scrub. Despite the origins of

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[21] Stubbs, 'A question of competing values'; Ashton, *Dairy farming*, pp. 6-7; Drane, N. T. and Edwards, H. R. (eds), 1961, *The Australian Dairy Industry: an economic study* (F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne), pp. 29-30; Linge, G. J. R., 1979, *Industrial Awakening: a geography of Australian manufacturing, 1788 to 1890* (Australian National University Press, Canberra), pp. 543-548.

[22] Jeans, D. N., 1972, *An historical geography of New South Wales to 1901* (Reed Education, Sydney), pp. 259-260.

the industry in the South Coast region of New South Wales, by the early years of the twentieth century the North Coast far exceeded the South Coast in milk production, and had come to be considered the 'real home' of dairying in the State.[23]
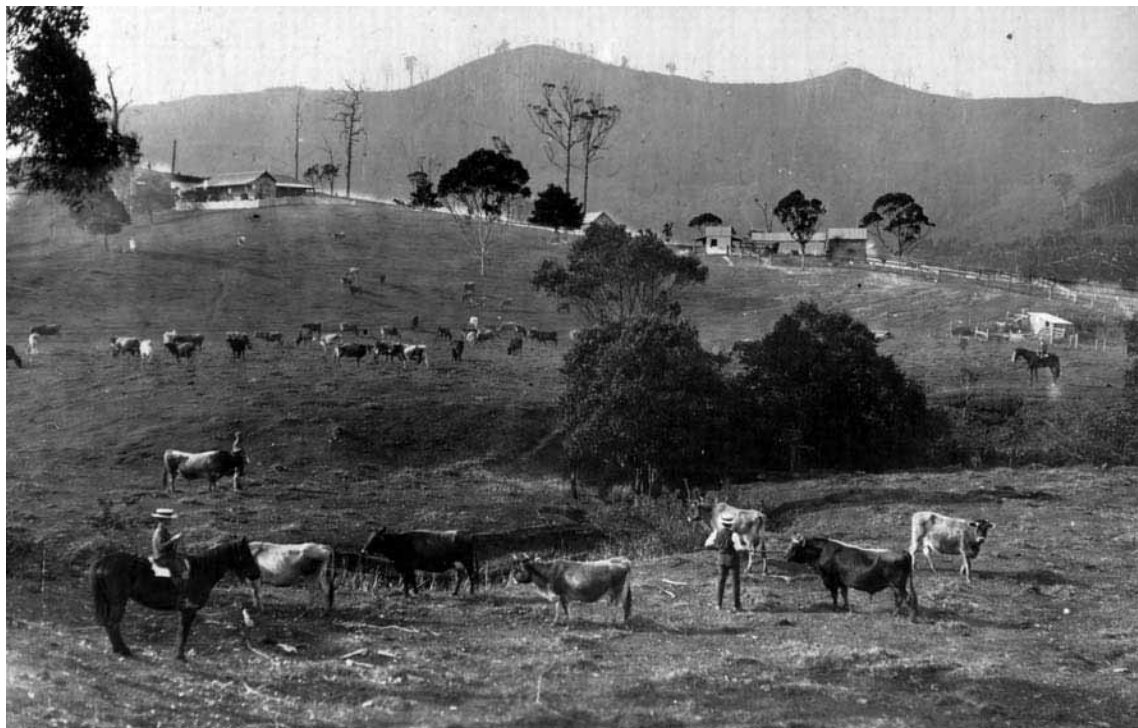
Figure 7:   A Brunswick Valley dairy farm: the McPaul farm, 'Overlook', on Main Arm Road *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

4.3 Related Industry

The rapid uptake of dairy farming by Big Scrub selectors was paralleled by the establishment of milk and cream handling and processing facilities, ranging from receiving depots for farm-separated cream, to central creameries, to large-scale central butter factories. Predominant among these was the Norco butter factory, established at Byron Bay in 1895. This and some of the Shire's other significant dairying-related industries are examined more closely below.

4.3.1 Byron Bay Butter Factory

A decision was made in November 1892 by Big Scrub district dairymen to establish a large central creamery depot, and it was agreed that the building

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[23]   Hall, *The official year book of New South Wales 1904-5*, p. 324.

required should be erected 'as near the shipping port of Byron Bay as practicable'. There was subsequently some argument about the site, with strong support for Lismore from some quarters, but the factory was eventually built at Byron Bay. The recently-completed railway from the Tweed to the Richmond placed Byron Bay in a perfect position to tap the surrounding districts and capitalise on the rapidly growing and increasingly export-oriented dairy industry.[24]

Figure 8:   The Butter Factory Siding, Byron Bay, 1947 *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

The Byron Bay factory of the North Coast Fresh Food and Cold Storage Co-operative Ltd commenced operations on 5 June 1895, six months after the opening of the railway, and the first despatch of butter was made on *Wollumbin* on 29 June 1895. Butter was loaded onto rail carriages at the factory, conveyed to the jetty, placed into the refrigerated holds of a coastal steamer, and shipped to Sydney. Here it was re-loaded into liners bound for London.[25] The North Coast Fresh Food and Cold Storage Co-operative Ltd was restyled as the North Coast Co-operative Ltd in 1904, and again as Norco Ltd in 1925.[26] For the next five decades Norco continued to dominate the industrial landscape of Byron Bay, and the economy of the entire Shire.

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[24] Ryan, *Norco 100*, pp. 129-135; Ryan, *Time and tide*, pp. 116-117.
[25] Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 117; Ryan, *Norco 100*, p. 49.
[26] Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 117.

Figure 9:   Norco Butter Factory, Byron Bay, 1947 *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

Unlike sugar-cane, which was mainly railed from the Brunswick Valley to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mill at Condong in the Tweed valley, dairy products became and long-remained important in the exports of Byron Bay. In 1900, for instance, butter was the most valuable commodity exported from Byron Bay (72 per cent. of total value of exports), and, with the exception of timber (around 5,000 tons), made up the greatest tonnage (884 tons).[27] By the early 1920s, about a quarter of the whole of the butter produced in New South Wales was shipped over the Byron Bay jetty; this amounted to 514,000 boxes in the year 1921-22.[28]

In addition to its butter factory, Norco ran a meatworks, curing ham and bacon, and producing a large variety of other pork goods including sausages, and various canned foods. Because North Coast dairy farmers were primarily cream producers, oriented to supplying cream in cans to factories for butter production, the raising of pigs on skim milk became a logical supplementary enterprise. It is uncertain when Norco began its meatworks, but it was soon after butter manufacture had started; company records show that 7,724 pigs

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[27] Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Minutes of Evidence, 6 April 1901, p. 33.

[28] Report…relating to the proposed new jetty at Byron Bay, Minutes of Evidence, 5 and 24 April 1923, pp. 5 and 15.

were handled in 1900, increasing to 29,679 in 1910.[29] In 1968, in the midst of a serious decline in the dairy industry, this industry was said to be 'in an unhealthy economic situation'. Employment at the Byron Bay factory was 'at its lowest ebb', and mostly concentrated on production of bacon and delicatessen lines.[30]

Soon afterwards Norco closed its Byron Bay butter factory and transferred its headquarters to its Lismore factory; the last butter was made at Byron Bay on 31 March 1972.[31] The associated meatworks closed in 1975, after which F. J. Walker's meatworks (4.3.3) produced Norco's pork lines. When that meatworks closed in 1983, Norco transferred the manufacture of its meat products to Casino.[32]

4.3.2 Other dairy factories

From its advantageous position near both railway and jetty at Byron Bay, the Norco factory tapped a large area, and its dominance over the industry was ultimately almost absolute. Several other butter factories which at one time or other had shared the trade with Norco eventually succumbed to it. Among these were the Rose Vale Dairy Company at Eureka, the Binna Burra Co-operative Dairy Company at Binna Burra, west of Bangalow, and the Foley Brothers butter factory at Mullumbimby.

The Rose Vale dairy factory at Eureka, which opened in October 1890, was the first to be established in the area that later became Byron Shire. After Norco was established, the Rose Vale factory operated only as a separating station, sending its cream to the Byron Bay factory. This arrangement continued for several years until the factory at Eureka closed in 1904.[33]

The Binna Burra butter factory was erected in 1912, initially of hardwood timber with a corrugated iron roof. It became the focus of the economy of the Binna Burra, Bangalow and Newrybar area. In December 1924 the shareholders of Norco approved of the amalgamation of their company with the Binna Burra company. In 1937 the factory was renovated, and a casein factory included, but ten years later, in December 1947, the Norco board resolved to close their Binna Burra branch, and gradually thereafter the

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[29] Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 119.
[30] Killion and Olive, *Byron Bay*, p. VI/2.
[31] Ryan, *Norco 100*, pp. 382-383; Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, p. 57.
[32] Ryan, *Norco 100*, pp. 382-383.
[33] *Northern Star*, 4 October 1890; Ryan, *Norco 100*, pp. 82-85; Johnston, *Rich heritage*, pp. 104-108.

buildings and other property were disposed of.[34] The main factory building is extant, and is today used as a drug and gambling rehabilitation centre under the name 'The Buttery'.

The Mullumbimby butter factory was established by Norco's arch-rival, Foley Brothers, who in 1897 had set up a central butter factory on the Richmond River at Lismore, supplied by a network of separating stations throughout the district. Their relatively recent Mullumbimby venture was a substantial brick, concrete and steel structure, the opening of which in August 1937 was said to 'mark another epoch in the steady progress of the town.'[35] The takeover of Foley Brothers by Norco in 1958 brought about the end of the Mullumbimby factory which, in the interests of efficiency, its new owners soon closed.

4.3.3 Byron Bay meatworks

Byron Bay was chosen in 1912 as the site of a major new industry, a meatworks. The Byron Bay Co-op. Canning and Freezing Co. Ltd selected the Bay over several other sites, partly because of its port facilities, and proceeded to erect its works on the town side of Belongil Creek, next to the railway line on the beach side.[36] During construction in June 1913 it was reported that 'seen from the railway line it is a huge building of corrugated iron and brick'.[37] The meatworks commenced operation in August 1913, and were officially opened by John Perry, M. L. A., the following month.[38] The first batch of cattle for processing had arrived at the Bay on Saturday 24 August, and first beast was killed on the following Monday.[39]

The meatworks arose as an offshoot of the dairying industry. Only a small proportion of that industry's surplus stock—bull calves and old dairy cows — was required to satisfy the local demand for meat, so it was necessary for farmers to send most of these to Sydney for slaughter. The cost of freight and the loss and deterioration of stock in transit made this an inefficient solution. The idea of establishing a freezing and canning works was conceived as a profitable way of disposing of the district's unwanted dairy stock.

Despite the great optimism with which the meatworks had been launched, it was from the beginning dogged by financial problems. It recorded a loss in the second half of 1914, caused by the difficulty of obtaining cattle; promised

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[34] Ryan, *Norco 100*, pp. 114-117.
[35] Ryan, *Norco 100*, p. 161; *Mullumbimby Star*, 31 August 1937.
[36] *Byron Bay Record*, 27 July 1912.
[37] *Byron Bay Record*, 7 June 1913.
[38] *Byron Bay Record*, 16 August 1913; *Northern Star*, 27 September 1913.
[39] Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, p. 15.

supplies had not come to hand, forcing the company to buy prime cattle elsewhere at high prices to keep the factory running.[40] A reason for the shortage of cattle for slaughter was an unanticipated demand for Northern Rivers cattle to stock dairy farms in Queensland.[41] At the end of 1915 the position had not improved, and the matter of leasing the works was discussed; in June 1916 the works were handed over to lessees Messrs W. Reynolds and Son Pty Ltd of Sydney and Melbourne.[42]

The demand for canned meat for the war effort seems to have ensured Reynolds and Son a market; in March 1917 the company was packing 'portion of an order for 50,000 cases of [canned] meats for the Imperial Government', and about 25 extra hands had been brought from Sydney to expedite the work. The brisk trade even caused the firm to seek an extension to their lease. Even four months after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the works were employing more then 100 hands and killing 80-100 head of stock daily. By August 1919, however, they were closed.[43]

The works re-opened briefly in 1920 under the Kensington Preserving Company Pty Ltd which had taken over the lease from Reynolds. The works closed again in October 1920, operated again briefly in 1921, but then closed and remained closed for about seven years.[44]

In 1928 the Byron Bay Co-operative went into voluntary liquidation, and its works were sold to Norco Ltd. Norco in turn leased the property to A. W. Anderson who resumed operation in June 1930. The decision to re-open the works was a considerable boost to Byron Bay's economy. By the end of 1932 the meatworks was killing 1000 calves, 400 cattle, and 300 pigs per week, and in that year it distributed £100,000 throughout the district.[45] The meatworks entered a new period of growth in the late 1950s with the opening of markets in the United States of America for boneless beef. This necessitated the complete rebuilding of the works in the mid-1960s.[46]

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[40] *Byron Bay Record*, 20 February 1915.
[41] Stokes, part I.
[42] *Byron Bay Record*, 26 February 1916, 10 June 1916.
[43] *Byron Bay Record,* 10 March 1917, 1 March 1919, Stokes, part I.
[44] Stokes, part I.
[45] Stokes, part III.
[46] Stokes, part IV.

Figure 10:   Byron Bay meatworks, 1983 *(Reproduced from Ryan (1984) with kind permission of the author)*

In 1967 the Byron Bay meatworks processed 800 cattle, 600 pigs, and 800 calves weekly, and employed more than 200 people. Economic difficulties that year forced Andersons into bankruptcy. This had dire consequences in Byron Bay as the company was a major employer. F. J. Walker took over the plant in 1968, continuing to employ 140 to 200 people. Sales that year were largely export (44%), with the balance to Sydney (33%), to Newcastle (14%), or local (8%). Of the export sales, 75% were to the USA, with minor proportions to Japan (10%), Hong Kong (5%), and the United Kingdom (10%).[47]

In 1983 Elders-IXL became a major shareholder in F. J. Walker Ltd, and in October that year took the decision to close the then loss-making meatworks. Production ceased on 28 October 1983, with the loss of 320 permanent and about 40 casual employees.[48]

4.4 The Decline of Dairying

Dairy production in the North Coast region of New South Wales continued to grow during the earliest decades of the twentieth century, reaching a peak in the early 1930s at which time the Region produced 60 per cent of the State's butter. North Coast dairy production declined progressively after 1934 with butter production falling from 34,800 tonnes in 1934 to 11,900 tonnes in 1969, and milk production falling from 709 million litres in 1934 to 497 million litres in 1971. The decline in production was accompanied, especially since the Second World War, by a movement of North Coast farmers out of dairying. This movement gathered momentum in the 1960s, and towards the end of that decade it was estimated that 50 per cent of dairy farmers in the region—some 3,500 farmers—had left the industry during the previous ten years.[49] In the smaller Richmond-Tweed region, in similar fashion, the number of 'commercial dairies' declined from about 5,300 in the mid-1930s to 3,500 in 1964-65; the number of dairy cows in those dairies declined from 291,000 to 213,000 during the same period.[50]

The reasons for the decline of the industry are complex, but several factors can be mentioned. Historically, North Coast dairy farmers have been oriented to the export butter market, particularly to the United Kingdom, the

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[47] Killion and Olive, *Byron Bay*, p. VI/3.
[48] *Northern Star*, 15 October 1983, 29 October 1983.
[49] Bell and Nalson, *Occupational and residential mobility*, pp. 2-4.
[50] Bird, *Alternatives in dairy industry adjustment*, p. 12.

destination of more than 90 per cent of Australian butter in the earliest decades of the twentieth century. Australian butter exports to the United Kingdom declined during the late 1950s; at the same time prices also declined. These trends were the result of greater quantities of butter entering the British market after the Second World War from countries with either more favourable natural resources for dairy production, or considerable Government support, or both, and lower net production costs than Australian producers.[51]

North Coast dairy farmers, suffering from declining farm incomes, were faced with the choice of accepting reduced standards of living, making substantial adjustments to their farm practices, or leaving the industry. Bird (1966) illustrated their predicament by explaining that a dairy farmer who maintained his level of butterfat production over the period 1958-59 to 1963-64 lost 13 per cent of his purchasing power, while during the same period, factory employees enjoyed a 15 per cent increase.[52] Not surprisingly, many children of dairy farmers left the farm to pursue more lucrative careers in the many secondary industries that developed in Australia during the post-war 'long boom', leaving behind an ageing and inflexible farm workforce.

North Coast dairy producers were prevented from diverting their production from butter to liquid milk to any significant extent by their exclusion from the Milk Zone—an area encompassing Sydney, Newcastle, and Wollongong, and other proclaimed districts in the State which contained fast-developing industrial populations. The Milk Zone was the creation of the *Milk Act* 1931 which gave to a minority of South and Central Coast dairy farmers legally protected access to 80 per cent of the State's population for the sale of liquid milk. This arrangement further disadvantaged North Coast farmers who, being largely butterfat producers, were subject to the vicissitudes of overseas markets and world prices; Milk Zone farmers, on the other hand, were mainly producers of liquid milk, the price of which only varied in accordance with urban prosperity. Moreover, surplus liquid milk produced in the Zone was directed into butter production, contributing to the oversupply of that product and further disadvantaging North Coast butterfat producers.[53]

The general situation in the North Coast dairy industry in 1970 was described in the following terms. Buildings were generally badly maintained, both from

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[51]   Drane and Edwards, *The Australian dairy industry*, pp. 54-55.
[52]   Bird, *Alternatives in dairy industry adjustment*, p. 3.
[53]   Bell and Nalson, *Occupational and residential mobility*, pp. 4-5.

a structural and hygiene point of view, engendered by a lack of supervision. Badly rotted and missing weather boards in walls, missing glass in windows, broken and cracked floors, corroded or missing gutters and downpipes, and boggy conditions around the dairy were common. Milking machines were often old, neglected, and in a poor state of repair.[54]

Further troubles for dairy farmers came in the early 1970s. On 1 July 1970, the Dairy Industry Authority was constituted to regulate the milk market over all of New South Wales, and one of the first actions by the Authority on the North Coast was to inspect all dairy farms and to recommend improvements to meet the minimum statutory requirements. Then Norco Ltd, the biggest dairy product manufacturer in the North Coast region, announced that its factories at Lismore and Murwillumbah would not receive milk in cans after 30 June 1971. The introduction of bulk milk collection forced farmers to invest in new equipment and better roads and bridges for bulk milk tankers, or leave dairying.[55] In 1972, the already depressed export market for dairy products was further depressed by the decision of Great Britain to join the European Economic Community.

Some farmers responded to their adverse circumstances by converting their dairies to beef production, which could be done without major investments, but this was a short-term solution as the beef market collapsed in the mid-1970s.[56] Some dairy farms were converted to horticulture; others were sold or subdivided to provide rural residential blocks for cashed-up refugees from the big cities who were attracted by the climate, scenery and lifestyle to the North Coast region generally, and to the coastal Byron Shire in particular.

By the late 1980s, dairying had become a relatively insignificant economic activity in Byron Shire. In 1987-88 there were only 3,200 dairy cows in the Shire, compared to 38,000 in 1941.[57] The industry's legacy, however, is substantial. The present pattern of villages, schools, farms and roads, among other things, was largely determined by the dairy industry during its Golden Age from the 1890s until the Second World War.

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[54]   Muller, *Dairy farming on the North Coast*, p. 4.

[55]   Muller, *Dairy farming on the North Coast*, pp. 4-5.

[56]   Muller, *Dairy farming on the North Coast*, p. 5.

[57]   NSW, Premier's Department, *The Richmond-Tweed region*, p. 24; Foley, *Agricultural statistics summary*, pp. 57-58.

4.5 Banana Growing

Banana growing as an industry in Byron Shire is of comparatively recent origin, having begun only in the earliest decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, it could be said that the banana industry in New South Wales had its beginning after 1912 when a Department of Agriculture fruit expert advised that the soil and the climate 'from Coffs Harbour northward on the coast line' were particularly suitable for bananas. The author of this advice bemoaned the fact that 'two to three hundred thousand bunches of bananas annually' were imported into New South Wales from Queensland and Fiji and asked 'why should not our State take some more considerable part in this very large and increasing industry'.[58]

Bananas were being grown on a small scale in the Northern Rivers as early as the 1880s. For instance, the cargo of the steamer *Helen Nicoll* when it left the Clarence River for Sydney on 11 February 1885 included 197 bunches. Walter Scott Campbell, a government agricultural inspector, found in 1886 near the Brunswick River 'an enormous bunch of the largest bananas that [he had ever seen]'. In the Tweed, too, bananas were being grown in the late 1880s, but the activity remained insignificant for the next two to three decades. When a select committee on agricultural industry took evidence at Murwillumbah in 1921, banana growing on the Tweed was described as 'practically a new industry'. It was so new that the bearing life of a banana plantation had not been ascertained, the first Tweed bananas having been sent to Sydney as recently as 1909.[59]

One of the earliest Brunswick Valley banana farmers, John Innes Stewart, commenced planting with his son at Mullumbimby Creek in November 1913. He described his experience thus:[60]

> *The land is very rough and steep, but it proved to be an ideal place for banana-growing, as the soil is fairly good and the aspect is the right one, being north-east. We started planting without any previous experience, only knowing what we had read in pamphlets on the subject. However, we happened to strike the right method, as after experience proved.*

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58   Allen, 'The Banana', p. 897.
59   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1885, p. 4; *Northern Star*, 6 October 1888; Minutes of the proceedings of the select committee on the conditions and prospects of the agricultural industry, 28 and 31 May 1921.
60   *Agricultural Gazette of NSW*, 2 June 1921, p. 452.

Bananas were ideal for old sugar-cane land, much of which was abandoned after the new Commonwealth government outlawed the use of Pacific Island labourers in the sugar industry; the high cost of white labour subsequently made sugar-cane growing unprofitable on rough and hilly country. Bananas could also be grown profitably on sites which were too steep and rocky for any other crop.[61]

The industry was stimulated at the end of the First World War by the siting of returned soldiers' settlement areas, principally devoted to banana growing, in both the Tweed and Byron Shires. The Mullumbimby Soldiers' Settlement, on which operations commenced in mid-1918 (Figure 11), comprised an area of about 400 acres, subdivided into fourteen farms of which twelve were devoted to banana growing and two to dairying.[62] The location of these farms is indicated today by The Settlement Road, off the Main Arm Road about seven kilometres north-west of Mullumbimby.

Figure 11:   Banana-growing on Mullumbimby Soldier Settlement *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

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[61]   Welsh, 'Banana culture'.

[62]   NSW Department of Lands, Returned Soldiers' Settlement Branch, report for year ended 30 June 1918, p. 52; report for year ended 30 June 1919, p. 53; report for year ended 30 June 1920, p. 60.

By the early 1920s bananas had become one of the three most important exports, with butter and bacon, from the Byron Bay jetty. Outward goods in the year to 30 June 1922 included 400,000 cases of bananas (together with 500,000 boxes of butter, and nearly 5,000 half-ton cases of bacon).[63] Although Tweed Shire was then a far more important banana-producing shire than Byron, much of the produce of the former was railed from Murwillumbah to Byron Bay for shipment to Sydney.

The rapid growth of the banana industry was curtailed by the ravages of the viral disease known as 'bunchy top' which began to appear in the early years of the industry but was rife by the mid-1920s.[64] As a result, by 1925 many settlers had abandoned their banana plantations. On the Mullumbimby soldier settlement area, for instance, steps were taken by the Department of Lands to re-establish those who remained as dairy farmers.[65]

Bunchy top was eventually defeated and the banana industry experienced a revival. The *Mullumbimby Star* was able to report in early 1933 that 'the return to bananas in this district will mean a return to prosperity and…it is clear that the Brunswick will again be noted for its productivity'.[66] By 1941, about 1 million cases of bananas were produced in New South Wales, of which 140,000 (13.4%) came from Byron Shire and 460,000 (43.6%) from Tweed Shire.[67]

To assist with the marketing of their bananas, and otherwise to improve the interests of growers, various organisations were formed, one of which was the Tweed Fruitgrowers' Co-operative Company Limited in 1918. This became known in 1932 as the Banana Growers' Co-operative Company (NSW) Limited, reflecting the dominance of bananas in the fruit output of the district. In 1933 this company and the similarly-intentioned New South Wales Banana Growers' Federation were amalgamated to form the Banana Growers' Federation Co-operative Limited (hereinafter BGF). A branch of the BGF was formed at Mullumbimby in 1933, at which time it was foreseen that the Brunswick would 'come back as one of the best banana districts on the North Coast'.[68]

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[63] Proposed New Jetty at Byron Bay, p. 15.
[64] Darnell-Smith, 'Bunchy top'.
[65] NSW Department of Lands, report for year ended 30 June 1925, p. 9; report for year ended 30 June 1926, p. 10.
[66] 'Banana industry', *Mullumbimby Star*, 23 February 1933.
[67] The Richmond-Tweed Region, p. 45.
[68] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 July 1932, p. 7; *Mullumbimby Star*, 1 June 1933, 7 September 1933.

One of the main functions of the BGF was to arrange transport of bananas, most of which were consigned to southern markets (especially Sydney and Melbourne) by rail (which became the usual means of transport after the completion of the north coast line). In addition, the BGF operated ripening rooms; stores to supply farm inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and bunch covers; retail fruit stores in Sydney; and a banana wholesaling business at the Sydney markets. For a while the organisation even owned forests and sawmills, and manufactured the timber packing cases in which bananas were transported (see Chapter 3).

After the Second World War bananas became a leading generator of economic prosperity in Byron Shire, compensating for the decline of dairying. Banana land became so valuable that even an experimental plantation of macadamia nuts, established in the 1920s at Palmwoods in the Brunswick valley, was destroyed in 1950 and replaced with bananas. In the early 1950s the Brunswick valley briefly surpassed the Tweed to become the greatest banana-producing district in the country. Mullumbimby, correspondingly, became the fastest-growing of the main population centres on the far north coast. [69]

The New South Wales banana industry reached its peak around 1960; the maximum area planted in the state was about 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) in 1958-59, and the maximum production was about 88,000 tonnes in 1963-64. The industry then declined through the 1960s and until the mid-1970s, then remained fairly stable until the mid-1980s. In 1985-86, total production was 61,000 tonnes, of which 6.4 per cent. came from Byron Shire (compared to 24 per cent. from Tweed Shire, and 47.0 per cent. from Coffs Harbour Shire).[70] After that time, especially, the banana industry in New South Wales was affected by strong competition from the industry in far northern Queensland, which expanded phenomenally from the 1970s.

As banana production in northern New South Wales is restricted to sheltered, frost-free, sunny hillsides, close to the coast, suitable sites are therefore generally small and steep, and not amenable to mechanisation. This created an industry typified by a large number of growers with small holdings (average plantation area of around 4 hectares). In tropical northern Queensland, however, bananas can be grown on flat land, suitable for

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[69] Tsicalas, *Settlement of Greeks and other aliens on the Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, chapter 8.

[70] *New South Wales Official Year Book, 1971*, pp. 647-648; *New South Wales Year Book, 1981*, p. 457; *New South Wales Year Book, 1985*, pp. 417-418; New South Wales, Department of Agriculture, *Agricultural Statistics Summary, North Coast Region, 1985-86*.

mechanisation, allowing for larger plantations (average area greater than 10 hectares) and greater efficiency.

In 1970, and for the three decades prior, Queensland production for the central markets was typically only about one-tenth that of New South Wales. In the mid-1980s, Queensland production first surpassed that of New South Wales, and by 2003 it was more than ten times as great. By that year the area under cultivation in New South Wales had declined to only about 3,200 hectares (less than 8,000 acres), similar to what it had been in the early 1930s.

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5 FISHING AND WHALING

5.1 Fishing

Fishing became an important industry at Byron Bay, but the fleet lacked a safe harbour, and suffered frequent damage from heavy seas. In June 1948 a severe storm struck Byron Bay jetty and destroyed six of the eighteen fishing boats moored there. Disaster struck again in June 1952 when a gale and huge seas destroyed all but two of the seventeen boats moored at the jetty. Financially wounded but not defeated, many of the Byron Bay fishermen purchased new boats and re-established their industry.[1]

There was no recovering, however, from the cyclone in February 1954 which, as well as destroying a major part of the fishing fleet, also extensively damaged the jetty. Twenty-three boats out of a fleet of thirty-two were totally wrecked. Of the nine remaining boats, two were large ones, and seven were only dinghies.[2]

Defiance, one of the two trawlers at Byron Bay to survive the 1954 storm, adopted the Brunswick River estuary as its new base. Other boats followed to form the nucleus of a new fishing industry. The Public Works Department surveyed alternative sites for fishing trawlers and agreed that the Brunswick River was a suitable place for a safe harbour; breakwaters were built there in 1960-61 to fix the entrance and provide a safe passage into a boat harbour for the trawlers.[3]

Until 1964, the fish and prawns caught by the Brunswick River fishermen were transported by road to the Fishermen's Co-operative which remained at Byron Bay. In that year, however, a depot was built at Brunswick Heads, and in 1967 the whole operation was re-named Brunswick-Byron Fisherman's Co-operative.[4]

Long before the Brunswick River became the base for a fishing fleet, it had been an important oyster farming area. The first oyster lease was granted there in 1902, and at least until 1954, oyster farming was the most important part of the Brunswick Heads seafood industry.[5]

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[1] *Northern Star*, 18 June 1948, 16 June 1952.
[2] *Northern Star*, 25 February 1954.
[3] Coltheart, *Between wind and water*, p. 170; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 26-27.
[4] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 27-29.
[5] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 25-26.

5.2 Whaling

The destruction of the jetty in 1954 may have brought about the end of Byron Bay's fishing industry, but it did not impair plans for the establishment of a new industry—whaling—which, although short-lived, was one of the Bay's more unusual industries. After the outer section of the Byron Bay jetty was swept away in February 1954, the Public Works Department decided against funding repairs, but the structure continued in use after it was leased in its damaged state to the newly-established Byron Whaling Company Pty Ltd.[6]

Whaling was one of Australia's first industries. It is well established that commercial whaling was carried out in eastern Australian waters by the first decade of the nineteenth century. American ships were whaling along the east coast by 1804, and the first of several British bay whaling stations were established in Van Diemen's Land in 1806.[7] Whaling became an important industry, whale oil being Australia's main export into the 1830s.

The discovery of gold in Australia in the early 1850s diverted labour away from whaling, and the industry declined. It remained at a low level until the early twentieth century. The first half of that century was typified by strong Norwegian involvement in Australian waters; Norwegian companies operated shore stations at Jervis Bay (1912-13), and in Western Australia at Albany (1912-16) and Point Cloates (1913-16, 1924-29). In the late 1930s there was extensive hunting by foreign fleets off the Western Australian coast and in the Antarctic feeding grounds, but this virtually stopped during the Second World War.[8]

Whaling re-emerged as an important industry in Australia after the Second World War. The old station at Point Cloates, on the Exmouth peninsula, was re-opened in 1949, and Australia's first publicly-owned shore station was established soon afterwards at Carnarvon. By 1956 there were six shore-based stations operating in Australia, all based on humpback whales: in Western Australia at Point Cloates, at Carnarvon, and at Albany; at Norfolk Island; and on the east coast at Tangalooma (Moreton Island) and Byron Bay.[9]

The industry began at Byron Bay in 1954 when the Byron Whaling Company Pty Ltd took its first whale. The company was granted an initial quota of 120 whales for the 1954 season; this was increased to 150 in 1959. A. W. Anderson,

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[6] Coltheart, *Between wind and water*, p. 135.
[7] Colwell, *Whaling*, pp. 13-23.
[8] Frost, *Whales and whaling*, vol. 1, pp. 31-25.
[9] Frost, *Whales and whaling*, vol. 1, p. 35; Colwell, *Whaling*, pp. 148-153.

owners of the Byron Bay meatworks, had a major interest in the Byron Whaling Company Pty Ltd, so to some extent it was an offshoot of an existing local industry.

Figure 12:   Byron Whaling Company works, Byron Bay. This building can be seen in the aerial view of the Byron Bay meatworks in Figure 10. *(Reproduced from Ryan (1984) with kind permission of the author)*

When the first whale was taken on 29 July 1954, it was estimated that a crowd of one thousand people gathered on the jetty and along the beach to watch the proceedings. Hundreds more occupied vantage points on the Cape near the lighthouse.[10] Subsequently, the industry aroused great public interest, with crowds of spectators attending the whaling company's factory to watch the whales being butchered.[11]

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[10]   Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, p. 115; *Northern Star*, 30 July 1954.
[11]   For example, *Northern Star*, 20 September 1954.

Figure 13:   Whales on flensing deck, Byron Whaling Company works, Byron Bay
(Reproduced from Ryan (1984) with kind permission of the author)

By 1962, humpback whaling collapsed in Australia, and all whaling operations on humpbacks had ended by 1963. The Albany operation hunted both sperm and humpback whales from 1955 until 1963, with sperm whales becoming increasingly more important. From 1964 until it closed at the end of the 1978 season, the operation was based solely on sperm whales. It was during that period the only active whaling operation in Australia.[12]

The last whale was taken at Byron Bay in October 1962. The decline in the population of humpback whales that brought about the end of the industry at Byron Bay is illustrated by the following figures: during a season of 56 days at Byron Bay in 1959, 150 whales were taken, yielding 9.7 tons of oil each on average; during 1962, despite a longer season of 144 days, only 107 whales were taken, with an average oil yield of only 5.9 tons. A decline in the price of oil compounded the company's problems.

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[12]   Frost, *Whales and whaling*, vol. 1, pp. 3, 35-36, 226-227.

Thus, the Byron Bay whaling industry ended in October 1962 after only eight years of operation. The jetty from which it operated received further damage in storms in 1963 and was closed to the public. It was demolished to the beach in 1972, and the remnants removed in 1989.[13]

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[13]   Coltheart, *Between wind and water*, p. 170.

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6 QUARRYING, MINING, AND MINERAL PROCESSING

Geologically, Byron Shire comprises four major units. The mining and quarrying activities that have been carried out in this area reflect this range of rock types. Each of the four geological units is described hereunder, in order of decreasing age, together with a brief comment on the associated mining and quarrying activities.

(i) *Palaeozoic metasediments of the Neranleigh-Fernvale Group*

These rocks form the basement of most of the shire and crop out in the north, and in the south-east to form coastal headlands at Broken Head and Cape Byron. They generally comprise closely jointed and steeply dipping metasediments and metavolcanics which, apart from fresh exposures in the sea cliffs, are deeply weathered. Very little mineralisation has been reported in these rocks in Byron Shire, and their principal use has been for construction materials, particularly for road base. Most quarrying activity in the Shire at present involves the extraction of 'chert', deep-weathered material from the Naranleigh-Fernvale Group, for use as road base.

(ii) *Mesozoic sandstones and conglomerates of the Bundamba Group*

Byron Shire is at the eastern margin of the Clarence-Moreton sedimentary basin of northeastern New South Wales and southern Queensland. The basin comprises a substantially unfolded sequence of mainly fluvial sediments deposited unconformably on the palaeozoic basement. The basal unit of this sequence, the Ripley Road Sandstone, crops out in the cliffs to the west of Suffolk Park and south-west of Byron Bay.

These rocks have been quarried from certain deeply weathered exposures to produce sand for use in concrete and asphalt, bricklayers' sand, and decorative quartz pebbles. The major quarry occurs in the south-eastern corner of the shire, near Suffolk Park. It has been worked since the 1920s.[1]

(iii) *Tertiary basalts of the Lamington Volcanics*

The Lismore Basalt, the oldest unit of the early Miocene Lamington Volcanics, constitutes the surface rock type across much of Byron Shire where it occurs primarily as lava flows. Other units of the Lamington Volcanics, namely the Nimbin Rhyolite and the Blue Knob Basalt, crop out in the north-western corner of the shire.

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[1]   Stubbs and Smith, 'Weathered bedrock'.

Within the shire, basalt has been quarried for use as a construction material in various forms; it has been crushed to produce coarse and fine aggregate for use in concrete and asphalt, and large boulders have been used in coastal engineering works. One notable basalt quarry in Byron Shire was the Island Quarry (sometimes referred to as the Island Bend Quarry), situated between Byron Bay and Ewingsdale. It has not been ascertained when this quarry commenced, but it was certainly in operation by 1949, and possibly as early as 1930. It continued until mid-1977.

Perlite, a volcanic glass of rhyolitic composition, has also been quarried within the Shire. A site at Mafeking Road near Goonengerry was worked to a limited extent in the early 1960s by Perlite Consolidated Industries Pty Ltd. Only about 100 tons of perlite was removed.[2]

(iv) *Quaternary Coastal, Estuarine and Alluvial Sediments*

A low-lying veneer of Quaternary sediments covers a substantial proportion of the shire, especially adjacent to the coast. These sediments include: extensive broad, soil-covered alluvial flats associated with streams such as the Brunswick River; swampy sand plains formed by estuarine depositional processes, and; coastal beaches and dune deposits.

Beach sands in the study area have been the source of gold in the past. More recently, and much more importantly from an economic point of view, they have also been the source of the important heavy minerals, rutile and zircon. The history of beach sand mining is considered in more detail below.

6.1 Beach Sand Mining

Of all the mining and quarrying activities in Byron Shire, the most important has undoubtedly been the extraction of zircon and rutile from beach sands. This was a significant industry in the Shire from 1935 when Zircon-Rutile Ltd commenced operation in their Byron Bay plant until it closed in 1977. The zircon-rutile mining era was preceded, however, by a long period during which the beaches were exploited as a source of gold.

6.1.1 Gold

The black sand gold mining era in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland lasted for sixty years. It began with the discovery by John Sinclair

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[2]   Dickson, 'Perlite'.

of traces of gold in the black sands on the beach at Shaw's Bay, Ballina, in March 1870,[3] and ended in the early 1930s when the black sands began to be exploited for their more plentiful constituents, rutile and zircon.

After Sinclair's discovery, the Richmond River district experienced a period of storms and floods, and it was not until June 1870 that prospectors began to look for gold elsewhere along the coast.[4] In July the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* reported that 'thirty to forty people' were at work at the 'diggings at Ballina'.[5] In September about sixty miners were at work, and the diggings extended thirteen miles north from the Richmond River heads, to around Broken Head, and also for eight miles north of the Evans River where black sands had also been discovered.[6] Early in October there were reportedly about 250 men at work, giving the township of Ballina a substantial boost.[7]

It is uncertain when mining extended beyond Broken Head, onto Tallow Beach, and into Byron Shire. A correspondent to the *Town and Country Journal*, travelling south from the Tweed River in May 1871, camped on the beach between Cape Byron and Broken Head, but made no mention of miners. After rounding the Three Mile Scrub, however, he encountered 'several mining parties' at work on Seven Mile Beach, one at the north end.[8] It seems probable that mining began on Tallow Beach soon afterwards, in the early 1870s. Indeed, mining had extended northward to Currumbin Creek, beyond the Tweed River, by 1878.[9]

It seems probable, also, that mining had been completed on Tallow Beach by the late 1880s, and certainly by the mid-1890s. Carne, in 1895, described Tallow Beach, with Seven Mile Beach, as being 'especially distinguished by their original richness', but added that 'for a considerable time past little actual beach mining has been done'.[10] Although the main beach deposits were worked out rapidly, mining continued intermittently for many years as storms periodically exposed or accumulated new seams, or as minor deposits, initially considered unprofitable, were worked for the first time, perhaps using better technology. For instance, the *Northern Star* in 1905 reported that a 'scheme for extracting gold from the black sand along our beaches, known as

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[3]   Carne, 'Auriferous beach sands', p. 150.
[4]   Morley, *Black sands*, p. 19.
[5]   *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 19 July 1870.
[6]   *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 6 September 1870.
[7]   *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 4 October 1870, 25 October 1870.
[8]   *Town and Country Journal*, 17 June 1871, p. 747.
[9]   *Northern Star*, 22 June 1878.
[10]   Carne, 'Auriferous beach sands', p. 150.

the New Zealand dredging or hydraulic sluicing process, is about to be tried on the beaches between Ballina and Byron Bay.' In 1907 it was reported that a local syndicate was preparing to work a portion of 'First Beach, just beyond the lighthouse' (possibly Wategos Beach), using 'up-to-date appliances' including large sluice boxes and a four horse-power engine for pumping.[11]

6.1.2 Zircon and Rutile

The presence of zircon in the heavy mineral sands had been noted in the gold mining era, but rutile appears to have remained unidentified until 1925.[12] The economic significance of both, however, was not recognised until 1928, by D. M. Newland, who had been sent by the Titanium Alloy Manufacturing Company (TAMCo) in the USA to examine beach sands in eastern Australia. Newland studied the sands from Coffs Harbour to southern Queensland, and concluded that they probably represented the largest reserves in the world of rutile and zircon.[13]

The first two companies to start operation to extract rutile and zircon were the Beach Sands Mining Company at Tugun, and the Black Head Mineral Company near Ballina, both in 1932. In 1934 Zircon-Rutile Ltd was formed to mine areas at Brunswick Heads, Byron Bay, and Broken Head, and it became the first public company to enter the industry.[14]

One of the principal assets of Zircon-Rutile Ltd was a patented flotation process for separating zircon from other black sand constituents. This process had been developed in the early 1930s by Cecil Cumberland of the Black Head Mineral Company, and was purchased by the promoters of Zircon-Rutile Ltd.[15] The company thus became pioneers in the separation of zircon by flotation.

Zircon-Rutile Ltd commenced construction of its Byron Bay plant in November 1934 and treatment of the sands began in April 1935.[16] During its first six months of operation, the plant produced 1,481 tonnes of zircon, but it was then forced to close because of insufficient demand, the company having overestimated the size of the world market. It re-opened in April 1936 and

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[11] *Northern Star*, 20 March 1905, 14 January 1907.
[12] Raggatt, *Bulletin*.
[13] Whitworth, *The Zircon-Rutile deposits*; Morley, *Black sands*, p. 37.
[14] Whitworth, *The Zircon-Rutile deposits*, Morley, *Black sands,* p. 42.
[15] Morley, *Black sands*, pp. 40-42.
[16] *Northern Star*, 23 April 1935.

produced a further 250 tons of zircon in the next three months. At this time the company was working a lease at Broken Head.[17]

The company made Australia a leader in the supply of high quality zircon concentrates. It also produced mixed ilmenite-rutile concentrate from 1937 to 1945, and a clean rutile concentrate from 1943. Production increased rapidly from 1948.
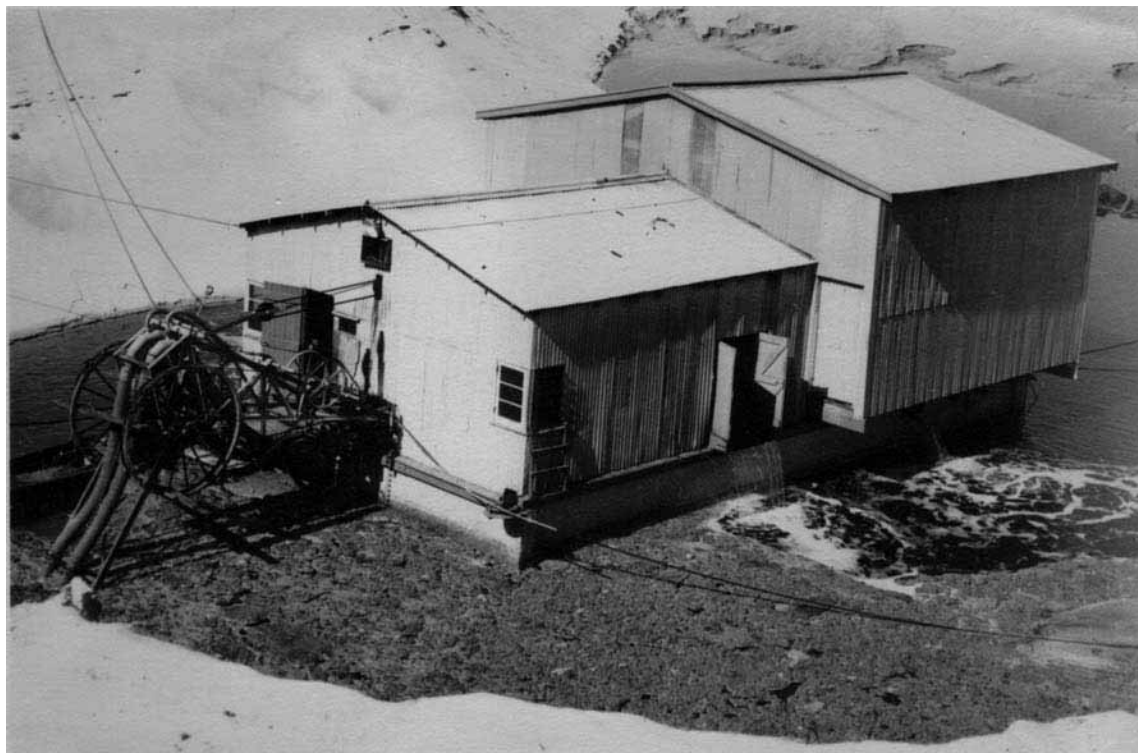
Figure 14:   Dredge at beach workings, Byron Bay

Zircon-Rutile Ltd continued as a major operator in the industry through the 1950s. The company installed a plant at Bogangar which commenced operations in 1952, and in 1955 completed a further plant at Port Macquarie. In 1955 a subsidiary, Titanium Corporation of Australia Pty Ltd, commenced operations just north of the Noosa River in Queensland.[18] Late in 1957, much of company's main plant at Byron Bay was destroyed by fire, but it was rebuilt, and the zircon flotation plant improved.[19] This was situated between

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[17] Morley, *Black sands*, pp. 43-45; *Mullumbimby Star*, 24 April 1936; *Northern Star*, 27 August 1936.

[18] Morley, *Black sands*, p. 95.

[19] *Northern Star*, 9 December 1957; Morley, *Black sands*, pp. 121, 250.

Jonson Street and the railway line, opposite Carlyle Street, on land now occupied by Woolworths.

In 1961, Z-R Holdings Ltd (a new holding company formed in 1955) was one of nine major mineral sand producers on the east coast. In November 1961, as part of a major takeover programme, Associated Minerals Consolidated Ltd made a successful offer for Z-R Holdings Ltd.[20] AMC closed some of its uneconomical plants on completion of its takeover programme, and at the end of 1962 it was operating four main separating plants, one of which was at Byron Bay.[21]

Figure 15:   Zircon-Rutile plant in Jonson Street, Byron Bay (site is presently occupied by Woolworths)

Beach mining in the Byron Bay area ended in 1974 after an AMC mobile plant made a final pass along the northern end of Tallow Beach. The separation plant in Jonson Street was subsequently closed, and mill tailings on the site

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[20] Morley, *Black sands*, p. 137.
[21] Morley, *Black sands*, p. 140.

were processed during mid-1977. All buildings and plant had been removed from the site by mid-September 1977.[22]

Compared to dairying, the mineral sand mining industry was a only a minor contributor to the economy of Byron Shire, but it did provide alternative employment at a time when dairying was in decline (4.5). In recent times the industry became controversial because of its legacy of altered coastal landform and vegetation (especially its introduction for post-mining rehabilitation purposes of exotic species such as the now notorious bitou bush, *Chryanthemoides monilifera*). Roads constructed by mining companies to provide access to their lease areas later provided vehicular access for residents and tourists to many shoreline locations for beach recreation. The 'coast road' from the Brunswick River to Wooyung (in Tweed Shire) and beyond is an important case in point (although the section between Wooyung and New Brighton is now untrafficable).

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[22] Mine Inspector's Reports, 1965-1979, MR 3739, Department of Mineral Resources. Note that Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, p.xiv, say that mining ended in 1962.

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7 TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The major urban areas of Byron Shire are: Byron Bay (with its satellites Suffolk Park and Ewingsdale); Brunswick Heads; Mullumbimby; Billinudgel-New Brighton-Ocean Shores; and Bangalow. The history of each of these places is outlined below. Numerous villages also exist within the Shire, and although these are not considered individually, their existence is acknowledged in the sections of this chapter dealing with the sub-themes of Licensed Public Houses and Education.

7.1 Byron Bay

The first selections of land in the immediate vicinity of Byron Bay took place in 1881, in terms of the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* 1861. Thomas Skelton, who took up the 640 acre portion 1, Parish of Byron, on 2 June that year, probably qualifies as the first settler in the Byron Bay area. The adjacent portions 2 (Joseph Wright, 100 acres) and 3 (Eli Hayter, 640 acres) followed Skelton's on 16 June.[1] These earliest selections were on the high basaltic ground to the south-west of Cape Byron, all beyond the boundary of the town of Byron Bay. This was partly because the land closer to Cape Byron was low-lying, sandy and swampy, and therefore less favoured for selection. More importantly, a large block of land surrounding the Cape had been set aside as a Government reserve in 1861, excluding it from free selection when this came into operation at the beginning of 1862.

The earliest settlement within the present Byron Bay township was on and near the Cape. Because the Cape and present town site were within the reserve created in 1861, this settlement was probably unauthorised, probably temporary, and consequently difficult to date. A pertinent early description of Byron Bay comes from an account of the journey of the Reddacliff family to the Brunswick valley in 1882.[2] Robert Reddacliff had selected land in the Myocum area, near present-day Mullumbimby, in 1881, and returned from the Clarence River the next year with his wife and children to occupy his new selection. The family travelled from Ballina, along the beach to Three Mile Scrub, as the Broken Head area was then known. There the party detoured inland to avoid the rocky coastline. They spent the night at Cape Byron, then travelled to Brunswick Heads along the beach at low tide. At Cape Byron the only sign of habitation was a slab hut on what later became known as

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[1]   Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, p. 16.
[2]   *Northern Star*, 7 August 1936.

Brooke's camping reserve (now Palm Valley). 'Not a person was met, Cape Byron then being a wilderness, where it was not a swamp'. In fact, not a single person was seen by the Reddacliff family between Ballina and the Brunswick.

There are other references to an early building at Palm Valley, the small, north-facing valley at the base of the Cape Byron headland. In 1883, Captain Frederick Howard, a Nautical Surveyor in the Department of Harbours and Rivers, made an examination of the bay and prepared a chart. Howard's chart shows a hut and a well there.[3] Ryan cites an unidentified letter from the Richmond River Historical Society's files which says that George Brooke had first gone to Palm Valley, Byron Bay, in 1881. There he had bought a house from Mr Jarman.[4] Brooke selected 200 acres near Bangalow in August 1883, and had built a house there by August 1884 when his selection was surveyed.[5]

Howard's chart shows a second hut, near the present caravan park at Clarke's Beach, at the end of a 'track from Tintenbar'. This may have been built by David Jarman after he sold his Palm Valley hut to Brooke. George Daniel, who was headmaster at Lismore Public School until the end of 1884, moved to Byron Bay to open a store in 1885.[6] He later wrote that for some time Mr and Mrs Jarman and he were the only persons living at the Bay. Jarman, he said, 'had an accommodation house at the south end of the Bay'.[7] This was possibly the second hut on Howard's 1883 chart.

Little urban development took place around Cape Byron until the mid-1890s, after the opening of the railway between Lismore and Murwillumbah, with its station at Byron Bay, in 1894. The town of Byron Bay can therefore be said to have been largely a creation of the railway. Nevertheless, two earlier events had stimulated settlement at the Bay, and a village of a sort developed there during the decade-or-so after Howard's survey in 1883, and prior to the opening of the railway. These two events were (i) the first sales of land within the surveyed village in 1886, and (ii) the construction of the Bay's first jetty which opened in 1888. The former is discussed in detail below; the latter in another section (3.1 The Port of Byron Bay).

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[3]   'Cape Byron Bay. Report of Staff Commander Howard', 18 October 1883, *V&PLANSW*, 1883-84, vol. 11, pp. 421-434. A later version of Howard's chart, overlain with the plan of the proposed village, is reproduced in Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 21.

[4]   Ryan, *Time and tide*, p. 22.

[5]   Plan no. R3544.1759.

[6]   *Northern Star*, 30 September 1885.

[7]   Unidentified article in *Northern Star*, quoted by Ryan and Smith, p. 34; the existence of Jarman's accommodation house is confirmed by *Northern Star*, 31 January 1885.

In December 1861, a reserve was created around Cape Byron, extending southward to beyond the mouth of Tallow Creek, and westward to near the mouth of Belongil Creek, and comprising an area of 5 square miles (about 13 square kilometres).[8] This reserve was put in place only a month before the lands in the surrounding districts were opened for free selection under the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* 1861. It was only one of many such reserves which were created shortly before 1862 in order to exclude free selection from certain sites for various public purposes such as the preservation of water supply, and the future establishment of towns and villages. Reserve no. 3 at Cape Byron was surveyed in October 1881, and the plan was approved the following year.[9] The surveyor was C. F. Napier North who also surveyed the first conditional purchases in September 1881.

In 1884, Surveyor Fred Poate completed his design of the village of Cavvanba, fronting Byron Bay, within Reserve. no.3.[10] The boundaries of the village and of the surrounding 'suburban lands' were notified on 19 December 1885 on which day the earlier 'temporary' reserve, no. 3, was revoked.[11] The streets in the surveyed village of Cavvanba were given the names of literary men such as Jonson, Wordsworth, Browning, Milton, Marvell, and Byron. That they were literary and not nautical figures suggests a misunderstanding on the part of the Lands Department official who bestowed them; we know that Cook named Cape Byron after Commodore John Byron (1723-1786), not after his grandson, the poet Lord Byron (1788-1824). The same confusion, if that is what it was, resulted in the naming of Juan and Julia Rocks after characters in Lord Byron's poem *Don Juan* (published 1819-1824).[12]

The gazettal of the boundaries of the village of Cavvanba in 1885 paved the way for the first Government sale of land at Byron Bay. This sale took place at the Land Office, Lismore, in July 1886.[13] The previous year, however, a highly-publicised private land sale had taken place at the Albert Theatre, Lismore, on 12 December. This sale involved two beach-front portions immediately outside the village reserve at its north-western corner. They were the property of Nathan Julian Simmons, a Lismore solicitor. Further details of this land sale have not been researched.[14]

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[8]   *NSW Government Gazette*, 3 February 1862, p. 260.
[9]   Plan no. C79.1834.
[10] Plan no. C.2420a&b.
[11] *NSW Government Gazette*, 19 December 1885, pp. 8248, 8255.
[12] It is not known when the present, abbreviated name, Julian Rocks, first came into use.
[13] *NSW Government Gazette*, 28 May 1886, p. 3717; *Northern Star*, 28 July 1886, 31 July 1886.
[14] *Northern Star*, 30 September, 1885, 9 December 1885, 16 December 1885.

It is no mere coincidence that the survey of the village occurred in the year in which funds were allocated for the construction of a jetty at the Bay, so both the key events mentioned are in fact closely related. Construction of the jetty began early in 1886, and it was possibly the related activity at the Bay that prompted David Jarman to seek a licence for his accommodation house. This was granted in April 1886, giving Byron Bay its first licensed hotel—the Byron Hotel (Table 7.1). The jetty was completed in mid-1888, shortly prior to which Jarman removed his licence to the new, more commodious Pier Hotel, near the site of the jetty, the focus of activity at the Bay.

The surveyed village at Byron Bay was officially proclaimed the village of Cavvanba in 1890, but development had been slow in the years immediately following the opening of the jetty.[15] Comments made to the Public Works Committee inquiry into the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay in 1889 illustrate this. Robert Hickson, the Commissioner and Engineer-in-Chief for Roads and Bridges, when asked if he had any knowledge of the surveyed village at Byron Bay, replied that he had been there, adding that 'there are one or two houses. The land is not cleared—it is still bush.' Shipowner and timber merchant Alexander Kethel replied to a similar question that he knew 'where the boundary pegs are put down. There are only a few allotments occupied'.[16] Early in 1892, according to a *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter, the village had only 'two or three stores', and a hotel. It consisted partly of sandbanks, and partly of a 'dismal swamp'. 'As a township its only existence [was] upon paper'.[17]

This account gives a slightly pessimistic impression of the town's early development. In reality, it also had a post and telegraph office (opened in 1889 through the amalgamation of the earlier post office and the telegraph office, both opened in 1888); and the first policeman had been stationed there in 1890.[18] It might have had only one pub, but another had come and gone; Beaumont's Byron Bay Hotel had opened in 1887 on a site well to the north of the jetty, but it was closed soon afterwards, probably by the end of 1888. And another was about to arrive. In February 1892 a licence was granted for the Great Northern Hotel, built nearly opposite the site of the railway station, in anticipation of the opening of the railway two years later. Also in 1892, the

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15   *NSW Government Gazette*, 4 October 1890, p. 7726.
16   Report…relating to the proposed breakwater at Byron Bay, Evidence of R. Hickson and A. Kethel, 7 November 1889.
17   *Northern Star*, 6 January 1892.
18   Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, p. 44.

Australian Joint Stock Bank opened a branch in Cavvanba, the Byron Bay Public School opened (in August), and a School of Arts was established (perhaps in 1891).

It is symbolic of the change brought by the railway that the name of the village of Cavvanba was changed to Byron Bay in 1894, the year in which the railway opened.[19] Two years later, on 29 August 1896, Byron Bay was proclaimed a town.[20] The following is far from an exhaustive account of the subsequent development of the town of Byron Bay, but it does highlight some important events, including some related to the present built heritage.

Figure 16:   Church of England, Byron Bay, 1947 *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

Churches

The first church in Byron Bay, St Paul's Church of England (Figure 16), was opened on 1 May 1898. It was a small, simple timber building, 40 ft x 30 ft, with two porches and six gothic windows.[21] A vicarage was added in 1900. A new brick church replaced the original timber structure in 1961, the latter being moved to the back of the block for use as a hall.[22] Tenders were called for the construction of a Presbyterian Church in September 1903, but the date of opening has not been ascertained.[23] A Methodist Church, a timber building

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[19] *NSW Government Gazette*, 10 March 1894, p. 1642.
[20] *NSW Government Gazette*, 29 August 1896, p. 6024.
[21] *Northern Star*, 26 January 1898, 9 April 1898, 7 May 1898.
[22] Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, pp. 134-140.
[23] *Byron Bay Record*, 26 September 1903.

in similar simple style to the Anglican and Presbyterian churches which preceded it, was opened in November 1911.[24] A Roman Catholic church, also of timber but larger than the other three, had been added by end of 1912, giving Byron Bay churches of all four major Christian denominations.

Schools

The first public school at Byron Bay was opened in August 1892, and the original small timber building (20 ft x 16 ft.) served as a school until 1902 when it was moved for use as a weather shed, and a new and larger building (40 ft x 20 ft.) was erected. A teacher's residence was also added at this time. Various additions were made to accommodate increasing enrolments, including a brick infants block in 1926. The opening of St Finbarr's Roman Catholic school in 1916 added another dimension to Byron Bay's educational facilities. Post-primary education in Byron Bay is a much more recent phenomenon, with the Byron Bay High School opening in 1987.[25]

Licensed Hotels

The opening of David Jarman's Pier Hotel in 1888 occurred almost simultaneously with the establishment of a post office at Byron Bay, and with the driving of the last pile in the construction of the Byron Bay jetty. All symbolised the development that was beginning to take place at the Bay, much of it in anticipation of the arrival of the railway (which was still six years away, much to the frustration of the growing populace). Jarman previously had run a boarding house at Byron Bay, and obtained a publican's licence in 1886 for the Byron Hotel. From there the licence was removed to the new Pier Hotel in January 1888.

The Pier Hotel, a two storey weatherboard and fibro building in Bay Street, facing the beach, was destroyed by fire on 28 March 1949. The fire was attended by Lismore Fire Brigade but when they arrived the building had already been razed. As there was no town water supply at Byron Bay, the fire brigade fed 250 yards of hose to a swiftly-flowing stormwater channel as a source of supply. A temporary bar was duly erected in place of the former pub, and business was carried on until 1957 when the licence was removed one block northward to newly erected premises called the Pier Astor Hotel. The pub's name was changed again in 1968—to the Surfside. Following a major remodelling, it became the Beach Hotel, which opened in 1991.

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[24]   Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, p. 141-142.
[25]   Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, pp. 67-70; Ryan and Smith, *Time and tide again*, pp. 45-47.

The Great Northern Hotel, opened in 1892, was destroyed by fire on 8 August 1897. It was owned by Robert Campbell of Bangalow, and licensed to Murdoch McLean. McLean subsequently purchased the property from Campbell, and built a second and greater Great Northern on the same site. This, a three storey timber building, was officially opened in May 1898.

The second Great Northern Hotel was also destroyed by fire, on 9 June 1936. By that time the property was owned by Tooheys Limited, the Sydney brewers. All that remained standing after the fire were three brick chimneys. Construction of a third Great Northern, the present building, commenced in January 1937, and the new brick structure was completed in December of that year.

Local Government

After Byron Shire was incorporated in 1906, the first council chambers was a timber building on the corner of Fletcher Street and Bay Lane, a former dance hall, purchased from David Jarman, the first Shire President.[26] It was destroyed by fire in the evening of Sunday 21 October 1928. All the contents of the building, including records, were destroyed. By mid-January 1929 the Shire had accepted the tender of Kyogle builders Holland and Thorne for the construction of a new council chambers, at a cost of £3100, to the design of Lismore architect V. L. Miller. The substantial new building, which was built of Coombell bricks, was opened in September 1929 at a ceremony attended by representatives of several neighbouring councils, the M. L. A. for Byron, Arthur Budd, and the architect.[27]

In 1980, following a Boundaries Commission inquiry, the Municipality of Mullumbimby was absorbed into Byron Shire which continued to operate from its former headquarters in Byron Bay, until a new council chambers and offices were opened in Mullumbimby in 1996.[28]

Hospital

A movement for a 'cottage hospital' had begun in Byron Bay as early as 1903 when a public meeting was held to promote the idea.[29] The movement was

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[26] Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, p. 62. N.B. Dening says, wrongly, that the fire occurred in October 1927, and that the new building was erected in 1928; Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, says, again wrongly, that the new building was erected in 1928.

[27] *Mullumbimby Star*, 25 October 1928; *SMH*, 17 January 1929; *Northern Star*, 16 September 1929.

[28] *Northern Star*, 3 September 1996.

[29] *Byron Bay Record*, 25 April 1903.

revived in 1913, and the money previously raised and deposited in a bank account, was handed over to the new movement.[30] After a further lapse, the movement was revived during the Second World War. The Hospitals Commission in 1943 agreed to establish a public hospital at Byron Bay. Delays occurred so in 1949 a plan was promoted to build two large adjoining cottages for use as a temporary hospital until a permanent building could be erected.[31] Ultimately, the Byron District Hospital commenced business in its 'temporary' premises in April 1952, and was officially opened by the Governor of New South Wales on 2 June 1952.[32]

Figure 17:   Byron Bay street scene, opp. railway station, 1947. The Literary Institute (1907) is at the far right, and the English, Scottish and Australian Bank (1934) is in the right-centre. *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

7.1.1 Suffolk Park

Much of the urban development at Suffolk Park is a very recent phenomenon, yet the village had its origin in the 1920s. It was a private subdivision of parts of portions 212 and 221, Parish of Byron. At least the latter portion, which contained the major part of the subdivision, was owned by the Suffolk family. The design of the beachside estate was prepared in January 1922 by surveyor Frank Wearne.[33]

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[30] *Byron Bay Record*, 9 August 1913.
[31] *Star Advocate*, 9 February 1949, 4 March 1949.
[32] Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, pp. 145-153.
[33] Plan no. DP 11632.

The street names of the Suffolk Park Estate subdivision commemorated many Byron Bay identities: Wareham Street (after one or both of the brothers Fred and Owen Wareham, early selectors in the Parish of Byron), Jarman Street (David Jarman, early Byron Bay businessman), McLean (possibly George McLean, early director of Norco), Clifford (William Clifford, Norco general manager, 1914-1928), MacGregor (John MacGregor, chairman of Norco, 1914-1927), Armstrong (James Armstrong, chairman of the provisional board of Norco, 1892), Brandon (Wallace Brandon, Norco general manager, 1895-1914), and Alcorn (Andrew Alcorn, early director of Norco).

The 1920s subdivision appears to have been unsuccessful, for it was reported in 1936, when George Suffolk tried to develop it, that the spot 'was little frequented at present as it had not been developed'.[34] It seems to have remained so until the late 1950s when Suffolk Park participated in the growth occurring generally along the northern New South Wales coastline around that time.[35]

Suffolk Park was gazetted as a place name under the *Geographic Names Act 1966* in 1970.[36] The village then waited many years for its first and only pub, the Park Hotel Motel, which opened on 23 March 1989. The present urban area extends beyond the original subdivision, especially in a westerly direction.

7.1.2 Ewingsdale

Although never a village in the strict sense of the word, Ewingsdale was an important centre of community, being the site of a public hall (est. 1908), St Columba's Church of England (est. 1915), and a public school (1895-1976).[37] The place takes its name from Sir Thomas Ewing who owned the land upon which the school, hall and church were established. Thomas Thomson Ewing (1856-1920) was closely associated with the Richmond-Tweed district, first as a surveyor, and later as a State and then Federal politician. Residential subdivision of former farmland at Ewingsdale has occurred in recent years, but the locality remains largely rural in character.

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[34] *Northern Star*, 2 July 1936.
[35] *Star Advocate*, 21 February 1958.
[36] *NSW Government Gazette*, 29 May 1970, p. 2045.
[37] Stubbs, B. J., 'Ewingsdale Preliminary Historical Report', 9 July 2003.

7.2 Brunswick Heads

Brunswick Heads is the oldest settlement within Byron Shire. In 1871, when the Brunswick was described as 'the chief seat of the cedar trade' with 'some fifty or sixty men employed at it', the settlement just inside the heads, on the south bank of the river, comprised a store, dwellings, and 'a comfortable accommodation-house, kept by [Robert] Marshall'.[38] When the Reddacliff family settled in the Brunswick valley in 1882, Brunswick Heads was a village of several cottages. The population of the Brunswick River district then was 'not more than 30' (presumably meaning the settled population, as opposed to itinerant timber cutters), and no village existed at Mullumbimby or Byron Bay.[39]

Another early settler in the Brunswick valley was William Law, who also arrived with his family in 1882. His daughter, Elizabeth, later Mrs Andrew O'Neill, recalled that the only store at Brunswick Heads at that time was 'a little ganvanised iron place' near where the school was later established. The Law family at first lived on the north side of the river, where there was also a signal station and a residence for the pilot (Mr Simpson). Mrs Law was then the only white woman living on the north side. Shortly afterwards, Delaney Hains and his wife Maria built a residence and established a general store on that side of the river. The Law family remained there for about a year while sufficient of their 300 acre selection at Mullumbimby Creek was cleared to enable a house to be built.[40]

The beginning of free selection in the Brunswick valley in the early 1880s, of which the Reddacliff and the Law families were part, stimulated development of the settlement at the Heads. Its first licensed hotel, the Ocean View, was opened in 1884 by Robert Marshall, who previously had operated an accommodation house and store. A telegraph office was opened in June of the same year,[41] and the 'Village of Brunswick' was proclaimed on 20 March 1885. When a reporter from the *Sydney Mail* visited the place later that year, he was able to say that 'a township is slowly but surely being formed at the Heads'.[42]

> *At present there is one hotel, two stores* [one on each side of the river], *the ferryman's residence, and the post and telegraph office. The latter is to be shifted*

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[38] 'Jottings by the Way', *Town and Country Journal*, 17 June 1871, p. 747.
[39] *Northern Star*, 7 August 1936.
[40] 'Mrs O'Neill turns back the clock', *Mullumbimby Star*, 4 March 1947.
[41] *Northern Star*, 18 June 1884.
[42] *Sydney Mail*, 26 September 1885, p. 666.

this week from a ramshackle old building, which acts also as the pilot station, to a new one on the opposite or south side of the river. It is here that the township of the future will flourish.

A courthouse and police station were 'in the course of erection', and a second hotel was 'shortly to be built'. This was the Court House, which opened in 1886. A government school ('Brunswick River') followed in 1888. Nevertheless, when the Victorian ornithologist Archibald Campbell visited Brunswick Heads in 1892, he described it as a 'primitive and out-of-the world place', consisting of 'about half a dozen wooden houses on a sandy flat'.[43]

Growth of the village was also encouraged by the expectation that the Lismore to Murwillumbah railway line would pass nearby. The settlement declined, however, when the route was changed and the line was built farther to the west, through Mullumbimby. This is well illustrated by the fact that the school at Brunswick Heads closed in 1896, the Ocean View Hotel closed in 1897, and the Court House Hotel was relocated to Mullumbimby in 1898 (Tables 7.1 and 7.2). Indeed, almost every building was pulled down, and many of them were re-erected at Mullumbimby; Brunswick Heads 'went back to nothing'.[44]

Figure 18:   The Terrace, Brunswick Heads, during holiday time *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

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[43] *Northern Star*, 18 June 1892.
[44] 'Mrs O'Neill turns back the clock', *Mullumbimby Star*, 4 March 1947.

Brunswick Heads soon recovered, but as a seaside resort not a railway town (see section 8). The Ocean View Hotel was relicensed in 1902, becoming an important amenity for visitors. The return of prosperity brought an increase in the resident population, too, and the government school was re-opened in 1903, and postal services returned in 1906.[45] The township then comprised 'an hotel, two boarding houses, a brick public school, small store, and a number of residences', and was described as 'one of the finest seaside resorts on the North Coast'.[46]

The first church at Brunswick Heads was of the Roman Catholic denomination; it was opened by Bishop Carroll in 1918. The present Roman Catholic church, however, is a newer building, having replaced the original in 1936. It was blessed by Bishop Carroll in November of that year.[47]

A Church of England followed its Roman Catholic counterpart at Brunswick Heads by several years. Its foundation stone was laid on 1 January 1922 by Bishop Ashton; it was the first to be laid in the diocese by the newly-appointed Bishop of Grafton. Interestingly, even in the early 1920s a shortage at this seaside resort of residents (as opposed to visitors) to assist with the building of the church made progress slow, and it took more than a year to complete. Bishop Ashton returned to dedicate the new church on 18 March 1923.[48]

7.3 Mullumbimby

About twelve kilometres upstream from Brunswick Heads (but only six as-the-crow-flies), near the head of navigation, the Brunswick River has its confluence with Mullumbimby Creek. There in October 1872 a reserve of one square mile was created as a site for a future village.[49] The village reserve was surveyed in August 1881 by James Anderson.[50] It was several more years, however, before a village was established there. A village was surveyed on the site in 1887, the Village of Mullumbimby was proclaimed the following January, and in September 1888 the first sales of land within the new village took place.[51]

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[45] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 110.
[46] *Northern Star*, 6 February 1906.
[47] *Mullumbimby Star*, 25 July 1918, 1 December 1936, 8 January 1937.
[48] *Mullumbimby Star*, 5 January 1922, 22 March 1923.
[49] *NSW Government Gazette,* 18 October 1872, p. 2714.
[50] Plan no. C94.1834.
[51] *NSW Government Gazette*, 4 February 1888, p. 950 (date of proclamation 17 January 1888); *NSW Government Gazette*, 19 July 1888, p. 4966.

Meanwhile, selection of farm land in the Brunswick Valley had begun in 1881, and to serve the needs of the first selectors and their families an informal village had preceded the 'official' settlement at the head of navigation. This was centred about two kilometres to the south of the latter, on the junction of two early roads (the present Mullumbimby-Ewingsdale Road and Coolamon Scenic Drive). At this road junction a reserve of 240 acres for 'water supply and camping' had been created and surveyed in 1881. The reserve, known as Mullumbimby Grass Reserve, contained flat, open, grassy land, where the working stock of timber getters could be rested and fed.[52] A public school, the first in the Mullumbimby area, was opened early in 1886 in the south-western corner of the grass reserve, adjacent to the road junction.[53]

The development of the government village of Mullumbimby at first proceeded slowly. In the mid-1890s, it has been said, the village consisted only of 'two small shops, a blacksmith shop, a hotel, the Mechanics Institute, and perhaps a dozen very humble cottages'.[54] Mullumbimby's first pub, the Mullumbimby Hotel, was opened late in 1891 by Donald McGougan. A primitive, two-storey timber structure, it was, according to Brokenshire, 'the first business outlet on the river west of Brunswick Heads'.[55] In 1892 the Mullumbimby Public School was relocated from its initial site at the Mullumbimby Grass Reserve to a site within the surveyed village, a further indication of the growing importance of the new village.

Although Mullumbimby began life as a settlement at the upper limit of navigation on the Brunswick River serving the surrounding farming and timber-getting communities, its later development was boosted by and inextricably linked with the coming of the iron horse. In this sense Mullumbimby can be called a 'railway town'. The development of the town after the opening of the railway is illustrated by the following.

Churches

The first church in Mullumbimby was the Presbyterian Church, which opened in 1903. Services had been conducted, however, for many years before that, in a private residence from the late 1880s, and after 1894 in the Mullumbimby School of Arts. The first Anglican church (Figure 19) was erected in 1905. The Methodist Church followed soon after in 1907

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[52] Stubbs, 'Grasses'; the present Mullumbimby Golf Course is within the former
      Mullumbimby Grass Reserve.
[53] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 98.
[54] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 48.
[55] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 132.

(foundation stone laid on 28 January 1907; opened for service in August), prior to which the Methodist church at Myocum served the needs of the people of Mullumbimby. The Roman Catholic Church was the fourth to be built in Mullumbimby; it was commenced in March 1907, and completed in November that year.[56]

The first Anglican church was replaced by a larger structure, in brick, the foundation stone of which was laid in November 1921. The new church, named St Martin's War Memorial Church, was built to preserve the memory of those servicemen who had died in the First World War. It was dedicated on 25 March 1925.[57]

Figure 19:   Church of England, Mullumbimby, 1907 *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

Schools

A government school was established on the Mullumbimby Grass reserve in 1885, and classes began there early in 1886. A new school was built within the surveyed village, on the site of the present high school, in 1892. As the town grew in population, the school expanded, gaining the status of intermediate

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[56]   Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 116-121; Mullumbimby Jubilee Week Committee, 1933, pp. 15-21; Watson, *Anglicans on the Brunswick.*

[57]   Watson, *Anglicans on the Brunswick*, pp. 34-38; *Tweed Daily*, 26 November 1921; *Mullumbimby Star*, 26 March 1925.

high school in 1940. The site soon afterwards became inadequate, and in 1948 a separate site at Mullumbimby East was gazetted for school purposes. An infants' block was erected there in 1951, and the primary department moved there in 1953, leaving the secondary grades to occupy the original site in Jubilee Avenue. In January 1955 the dual-campus intermediate high school was reclassified as separate primary and high schools.[58] Roman Catholic education in Mullumbimby was placed on a firm footing with the opening by Bishop Doyle of a school in 1907. It was replaced by a new school opened in 1915 by Bishop Carroll.[59]

Licensed Hotels

McGougan's Mullumbimby Hotel was soon joined by the Railway Hotel, which opened on 2 December 1892 in anticipation of the completion of the line from Lismore in mid-1894. McGougan closed his Mullumbimby Hotel in 1894 and took over the licence of the Railway Hotel (Figure 24). This pub continued in business until its complete destruction by fire in November 1963.

Mullumbimby's third pub was the Court House Hotel, which was opened in 1898. It was first licensed to Robert Marshall who had run the Ocean View Hotel at Brunswick Heads for thirteen years from 1884. Marshall gave up the licence there in 1897 with the intention of leaving the Brunswick, but ended up in the nearby and up-and-coming town of Mullumbimby. Marshall became the first licensee of the Court House Hotel, Mullumbimby, which was built from materials which came from the demolition of the Court House Hotel at Brunswick Heads which had closed in 1895. This was a double storey building, whereas the rebuilt one at Mullumbimby was single storeyed. It was later enlarged to two-storeys in 1912.

The Court House Hotel was completely destroyed by fire in the early hours of Christmas Day in 1983. In its place was erected the present brick building which was named the Chincogan Tavern after the nearby Brunswick valley landmark, Mount Chincogan.

The Commercial Hotel, which opened in 1904, licensed to Henry O'Meara, was Mullumbimby's fourth pub (Table 7.1), after the Court House and Railway Hotels, and the short-lived and by then non-existent Mullumbimby Hotel (1891-1894). The Commercial Hotel is still known as the 'Middle Pub', a hangover from the days when there were three pubs in Burringbar Street, a

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[58] *Northern Star*, 5 August 1935; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 97-102; NSW, Department of Education and Training, *Government schools*.

[59] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 108.

situation that changed when fire destroyed the Railway Hotel (Burringbar and Station Streets).

Hospital

Byron Bay had been selected in 1943 as the site for a public hospital to serve the Brunswick River district, but following strong representations from Mullumbimby it was announced by the Minister for Health in November 1946 that public hospitals would be built at both places.[60] Mullumbimby's case was aided by the fact that a committee had already been formed for the establishment of a war memorial hospital at that place. Accordingly, the new public hospital would be designated Mullumbimby and District War Memorial Hospital.

As at Byron Bay, progress towards establishment of a public hospital at Mullumbimby was slow, despite land having been reserved for that purpose in 1900. The opportunity arose, however, for the Mullumbimby and District War Memorial Hospital Board to take over the management and control of an existing private hospital—the Brunswick Private Hospital, opposite the Church of England in Stuart Street. This was done, with the approval of the Hospitals Commission, in January 1949.[61]

A new War Memorial Hospital, a brick building on an elevated site within the original hospital reserve, was opened on 3 February 1968 by the Minister for Health, Arnold Jago. After occupation of the new hospital, the old weatherboard building in Stuart Street, which had been opened as a private hospital in 1921, was used for storage of beds and furniture. It was destroyed by fire in December 1968.[62]

7.3.1 Seat of Government

Byron Shire was incorporated in 1906, and an early decision of the first Byron Shire Council was to choose a location for its headquarters. That this was to be Byron Bay was regarded distrustfully by the residents of Mullumbimby who soon took steps to create a separate municipal council to serve their interests alone. The Municipality of Mullumbimby was incorporated in 1908; it had a population of only 900, and embraced an area of only 1.7 square miles (about 440 hectares). Interestingly, when Bishop Doyle visited Mullumbimby in 1906, on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the new

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[60]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 3 December 1946.
[61]   *Star Advocate*, 19 January 1949, 28 January 1949.
[62]   *Northern Star*, 5 February 1968, 30 December 1968; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick,* p. 125.

Roman Catholic school, he supported incorporation of the town by telling a gathering of townspeople that it would be 'much more preferable than the Shires Act'.[63]

Figure 20:   Street scene, Mullumbimby, c.1920, featuring the substantial Bank of New South Wales on the corner of Stuart and Burringbar Streets, opened in January 1907 *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

Mullumbimby Municipal Council met for the first time on 18 September 1908, in the town's School of Arts.[64] Several meetings were held there until a move was made in November to a 'temporary' council chambers in Burringbar Street. It was not until June 1934, however, that the council's permanent headquarters was opened near the corner of Dalley and Tincogan Streets. This single-storey brick building cost about £1200.[65] It was later enlarged substantially.

In 1970 the Byron Shire Council sought in the interests of efficiency to discuss amalgamation with the Municipality. The latter preferred to maintain its separate identity, but in 1980 the Shire and the Municipality were

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[63] *Northern Star*, 19 May 1906.

[64] *Mullumbimby Star*, 1 October 1908.

[65] *Mullumbimby Star*, 28 June 1934.

amalgamated by Ministerial direction. By this time the Municipality had been deprived of a significant source of revenue by the takeover that year by Northern Rivers County Council of its hydro-electric power station. The combined electorate subsequently voted to establish the headquarters of the new council at Mullumbimby, but the Council ignored this popular wish and made Byron Bay the new seat of local government.[66] Later, however, council took the controversial decision to move to Mullumbimby, where a new council chambers and offices were opened in September 1996.[67]

7.3.2 Hydro-electric power scheme

During the more than seventy years when Mullumbimby was administered independently of the surrounding Byron Shire, the Municipal Council embarked on many town improvement projects, perhaps the most ambitious of which was the provision of electric power. This was a project which grew from a desire to provide Mullumbimby with water, but which actually preceded the water supply scheme in its realisation.

The idea of providing the newly incorporated town with a water supply was considered by the council as early as 1909, but it was not until 1922 that it was commenced in any tangible way. In December of that year the ratepayers of the Municipality agreed to proceed with a bold project which combined the provision of water with the generation of hydro-electric power.[68]

The scheme comprised the construction of a weir on Wilson's Creek, a tributary of the Richmond River; the driving of a tunnel to divert the waters of Wilson's Creek into Yankee Creek, a tributary of the Brunswick River; and the construction of a power station. Despite the forecasts of some critics of the scheme that it would never succeed, there was great excitement in Mullumbimby in the afternoon of 23 December 1925 when electric street lights were switched on for the first time.[69] On 6 March 1926 the people of Mullumbimby were able to switch on their electric lights for the first time; Byron Bay was connected to the supply in June, and Bangalow in July. It was not until 1939 that the water supply part of the scheme came to fruition. This involved the construction of a town reservoir, and filtration and purification plant. Unlike the electricity, the water was for Mullumbimby alone.[70]

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[66] Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 78, 81.
[67] *Northern Star*, 3 September 1996.
[68] Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, p. 38; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 74.
[69] *Mullumbimby Star*, 24 December 1925.
[70] Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, p. 38; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, pp. 75-76, 79.
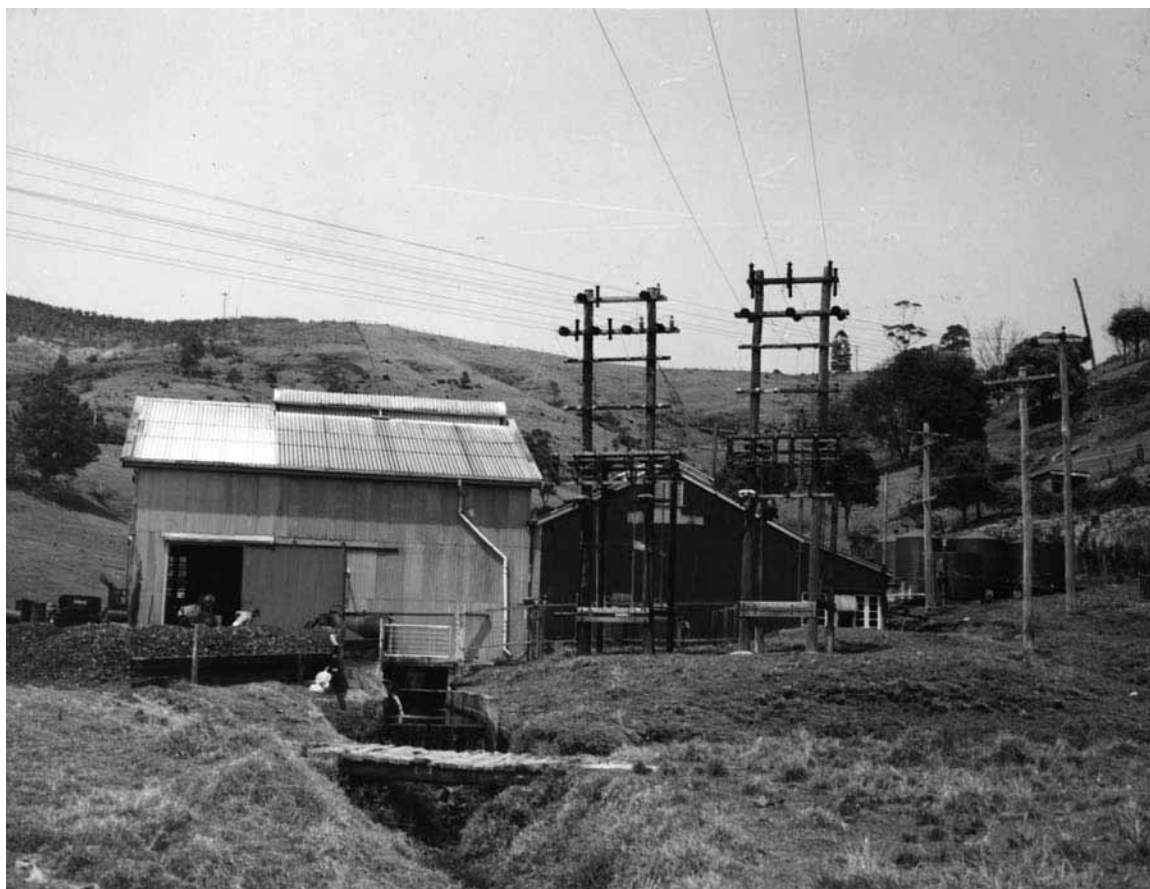
Figure 21:   Hydro-electric power station, Mullumbimby *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

7.4 Billinudgel-New Brighton-Ocean Shores

The final section of the Lismore-Tweed railway commenced at Mullumbimby, proceeded to Murwillumbah, and then continued a further two miles to the Condong sugar mill. Construction of this section got under way towards the end of 1892. The *Northern Star* reported in December that a 'considerable portion' of scrub had been felled during the year around the Brunswick 'with the object of growing corn to supply demand along the railway line'. 'Numerous hotels and stores' were being opened all along the line north of the Brunswick, and 'hundreds of men, with their families' were camped at places where the work was especially heavy.[71]

One of the busiest railway camps in the early 1890s was situated about two kilometres north of the Brunswick River, where the railway line came close to and then crossed the road from Brunswick Heads. This site, around the

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[71]   *Northern Star*, 17 December 1892.

present entrance to Ocean Shores, became known as Hainsville. Three pubs operated briefly in the vicinity (Mountain View, Pine Valley, and Kiora; Table 7.1). Hainsville declined rapidly after the railway line opened and the workers departed.

One of the first buildings at Billinudgel was the Tramway Hotel, opened in 1892. It took its name from the tramway which was built to convey railway materials from the head of deep water on the Brunswick River to Billinudgel, a place on the line where the work was exceptionally heavy. A school was established near the hotel in 1893, taking the name Tuckaburra after the property on which it was situated. The school building was relocated from Graham Town, another railway camp south of Byron Bay, where a school was no longer required. The first pupils at Tuckaburra school were mainly the children of navvies employed on the last section of the Lismore-Tweed railway. In 1898 the hotel was replaced by a new one on the present site. The following year the name of the school was changed officially to Billinudgel, the name which by then was in use for both the post office and railway station. In 1900, after unsuccessful attempts to have the disused Brunswick Heads school building relocated to Billinudgel, a new school was erected. This was situated about 100 metres north of the original, on the site of the first Tramway Hotel. In October 1907, by which time Billinudgel was described as 'a flourishing centre', an Anglican church was opened there.[72]

While the village of Billinudgel was growing around the railway line and station, a few kilometres away on the coast the village of New Brighton was developing. Beach-front allotments had been sold there as early as 1906 and the locality became a popular seaside resort. The name of the Tramway Hotel was changed in 1911 to the New Brighton Hotel, reflecting the rising importance of Billinudgel's coastal neighbour.

Development of New Brighton and North Beach was hampered by severe erosion which accompanied storms in 1967 and 1974. Homes were destroyed and a foreshore road was undermined. It has been suggested that the construction in the early 1960s of the training walls at the Brunswick River entrance, 3 kilometres south of New Brighton, may have made this section of coast more susceptible to erosion by interfering with the northward littoral drift of sand.[73]

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[72] Gardiner and Timms, *Billinudgel Public School*, pp. 23-31; Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, p. 40; Watson, *Anglicans on the Brunswick*, pp. 20-21; *Mullumbimby Star*, 24 October 1907.

[73] Caton, 'Beach erosion', 1975; Chapman *et al.*, *Coastal evolution*, p. 123; *Northern Star*, 27 June 1967, 28 June 1967, 29 June 1967, 7 February 1974.

In the late 1950s a Melbourne-based company, South Golden Beach Pty Ltd, began to develop land to the immediate north of New Brighton to create the new township of Golden Beach. The scheme was described at the time as 'the first pre-planned holiday resort on the New South Wales coast'; it would eventually encompass 1,200 acres of land and provide almost 5,000 building blocks.[74] The 'credit squeeze', introduced by the Holt government at the end of 1960 to curb inflation, stifled the Golden Beach development.

Figure 22:   Post office (left) and hotel (right), Billinudgel *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

In the 1960s the land between the settlements of Billinudgel and New Brighton comprised dairy pasture, scattered banana plantations, and uncleared forested slopes. It came then under the notice of an American company, Wendell West Development Company, which was seeking land on which to develop a large-scale, high-class housing estate. The project was officially launched on 29 March 1969 when S. T. Stevens, the M. L. A. for Byron, and also the Minister for Housing and Co-operative Societies, opened the 'Roundhouse' administration building on the site of the future town of Ocean Shores. Initial plans for Ocean Shores envisaged an eventual population of 40,000 people, housed on 8,000 fully-serviced blocks. Additional

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[74] *Star Advocate*, 18 April 1958, 2 September 1958.

infrastructure included a golf course and clubhouse, schools, a shopping complex, and a marina. The scale of the development was unprecedented in the district.[75] Although Ocean Shores developed slowly at first, it is now the second largest population centre within Byron Shire.

7.5 Bangalow

Like Byron Bay and Mullumbimby, the development of Bangalow is inextricably linked to the construction of the Lismore to the Tweed Railway. In 1892, when the railway reached Byron Creek, 21 miles from Lismore, on its way northward to the Tweed River, a post office was established and named Byron Creek. The village that developed around this place also became known as Byron Creek. The railway station at Byron Creek, however, had been named Granuaille, and it was this name that Robert Campbell chose for the pub which he opened there in December 1891 in anticipation of the business that the railway construction was about to bring. Bangalow, the name of a palm (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*) common in the district's rainforests, was later selected as the new name of the town.

Bangalow is also strongly connected with the dairy industry. Thomas Robinson from the Hunter valley selected the first land in the Bangalow district in 1881. Robinson and other settlers who followed him intended planting sugar cane, but instead turned their attention to dairy farming for which the district became famous. After Norco established its central factory at Byron Bay in the 1890s, a receiving depot at Bangalow channelled much of the district's cream to the Byron Bay factory.

The growth of Bangalow is indicated by the establishment of its various public institutions and services. Its first church, St Kevin's Roman Catholic Church, was opened in January 1894 by Bishop Doyle who, with his entourage, travelled from Lismore to Byron Creek by train for the event. Although the line was not yet officially opened, the contractors placed it and their own locomotive and ten trucks at the disposal of the church committee for this excusion.[76] The town's first bank, the English, Scottish and Australian Bank, opened in 1903. A hospital opened in Bangalow in 1908, and a court house in 1909 (used as a police station after the Court of Petty Sessions at

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[75] Denning, *Sunkissed playground*, p. 39; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 247; *Northern Star*, 31 March 1969.

[76] *Northern Star*, 17 January 1894.

Bangalow was abolished in 1964). By 1912, Bangalow was described as 'the pivot of a big circle of outlying country claimed as the finest dairying country in the world', and its four churches and three banks were said to be 'the greatest evidence of its prosperity'.[77]

Figure 23:   Main street, Bangalow, c. 1915 (*Richmond River Historical Society photo*)

Churches

The first church in Bangalow, St Kevin's, was followed in 1903 by a Church of England. This was moved in 1910, and rebuilt in 1928. The resulting brick All Souls' Memorial Church was erected in memory of those who fought and died in the First World War, and was furnished mostly with items donated by relatives and friends of soldiers. The church was dedicated by the Bishop of Grafton on 7 December 1928.[78] A 'temporary' Presbyterian Church was dedicated in 1912, to be used until a bigger building was erected on the vacant space adjacent to it.[79] The intended permanent church did not eventuate, and the original building continued in use. The present Uniting Church, in Station Street, was formerly the Methodist Church. It was erected in 1916 (and dedicated on 15 June) to replace a similar structure that was blown down by a storm in December 1915.[80]

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[77] *Northern Star*, 31 May 1912.
[78] *Northern Star*, 11 December 1928.
[79] *Northern Star*, 30 May 1912.
[80] *Northern Star*, 16 December 1915, 21 June 1916.

Schools

At the end of October 1884, a new provisional school opened at Byron Creek, eastward of the site on which the town of Bangalow later arose. In 1892, by which time the growing enrolment had made the original school inadequate, and by which time the status of the school had been raised from provisional to public, a new school site was resumed from the property of Bangalow pioneer Robert Campbell. A new school was built there in 1896. In 1907 the name of the school was changed from Byron Creek to Bangalow, reflecting the earlier change of name of the town. The original timber buildings of the Byron Creek/Bangalow Public School were replaced with a brick building in 1925.

Licensed Hotels

In 1898 Robert Campbell obtained permission from the Licensing Court to erect a new, more commodious Granuaille Hotel, and to use the original building as a dwelling. The location of the original hotel is unknown, although it was probably very close (perhaps next door) to its replacement, which was on the site of the present Bangalow Hotel. A fire in 1939, described as 'one of the most disastrous in the history of Bangalow', destroyed the two-storey wooden Granuaille Hotel and three other large buildings. By that time the hotel building had been condemned, and plans prepared by its owner Tooth & Co. for its replacement with a modern brick structure; business was being carried out in temporary premises. The new brick building was duly erected, and its name changed to Byron Hotel in 1940. Bangalow's other hotel, on the northern side of the railway line, was called the Bangalow Hotel when it opened in 1902. It closed in 1957 when its licence was removed to East Gosford. The Byron Hotel was renamed Bangalow Hotel in recent years.

Hospital

The Byron Private Hospital was built and opened in Bangalow in 1908 to serve the public of the town and surrounding districts, which it did for the next 44 years. In 1952, after it had been announced that the private hospital would close, a movement began for its replacement. A public meeting of subscribers to the War Memorial Fund agreed to place the funds at the disposal of the Bangalow War Memorial Hospital. The private hospital building was renovated and re-equipped, and the new public hospital opened in November 1953. It was subsequently 'officially' opened by the Governor, Sir John Northcott.[81]

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[81] *Northern Star*, 2 April 1953; 13 April 1953.

7.6 Sub-themes

Within the broad theme of townships, many sub-themes could be considered. These include such things as utilities, commerce, government administration, law and order, housing, social institutions (halls, schools of arts, pubs), leisure, sport, health (hospitals), religion (churches), education (schools), death (cemeteries), and monuments (war memorials). It has not been possible within the scope of this project to deal separately with all of these topics, so where possible reference is made to them within various other sections. Nevertheless, two sub-themes are given special attention here; 'pubs', and 'education'. These have been chosen not because they are perceived as being more important than other topics, but because systematic, official records are available for both, enabling relatively comprehensive and reliable overviews to be easily prepared. These overviews are useful as indicators of the pattern of settlement within the shire.

7.6.1 Pubs (licensed public houses)

More than twenty licensed public houses have operated around Byron Shire since the first, the Ocean View Hotel, was established at Brunswick Heads in 1884. All of the shire's known pubs, extant and former, are listed in Table 7.1. The opening dates are especially useful as they indicate the times of settlement of various localities within the shire. Many pubs were established during the period of railway construction in the early 1890s, and some of these were only short-lived (indicated by asterisks), a consequence of the temporary demand for accommodation and refreshment created by railway construction in between places of more permanent settlement.

7.6.2 Education

The first government school within the area which later became Byron Shire was established at Byron Creek (later known as Bangalow) in 1884. Subsequently, more than thirty other government schools were established within the shire. These are listed in Table 7.2 together with their dates of establishment and closure, and any other names under which they operated. Given the requirement of the Department of Public Instruction that a certain minimum number of children must reside in a locality before a school would be established, the opening dates are useful indicators of the times when various localities within the shire became populated.

Figure 24:   The Railway Hotel, Mullumbimby (this building was destroyed by fire in November 1963) *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

Table 7.1: Byron Shire Pubs

Estd	Name	Location	Closed	Present Name
1884	Ocean View	Brunswick Heads	c.1897	
1885	Eureka	Eureka	1890	
1886	Court House	Brunswick Heads	c.1895	
1886	Byron	Byron Bay	1888	
1887	Byron Bay	Byron Bay	c.1888	
1888	Pier	Byron Bay	1957	
1891	Mullumbimby	Mullumbimby	1894	
1891	Flower of the Forest	Nashua*	c.1894	
1892	Granuaille	Bangalow	extant	**Bangalow**
1892	Tramway	Billinudgel	extant	**Billinudgel**
1892	Great Northern	Byron Bay	extant	**Great Northern**
1892	Mountain View	Hainsville*	1893	
1892	Railway	Mullumbimby	1913	
1893	Pine Valley	Hainsville*	c.1895	
1893	Kiora	Hainsville*	c.1894	
1898	Court House	Mullumbimby	extant	**Chincogan Tavern**
1902	Bangalow	Bangalow	1957	
1902	Ocean View	Brunswick Heads	extant	**Brunswick**
1904	Commercial	Mullumbimby	extant	**Commercial**
1914	Railway	Mullumbimby	1963	
1957	Pier Astor	Byron Bay	extant	**Beach**
1989	Park	Suffolk Park	extant	**Park**
1992	Ocean Shores Tavern	Ocean Shores	extant	**Ocean Shores Tavern**

Given that many of the Shire's schools were established more than a century ago, buildings or other items within them are potentially of heritage significance. Of those which have closed, usually little or nothing remains. In some cases, however, buildings have been retained for other purposes. At Federal, for instance, where the school closed in 1978, the teacher's residence remains, and is presently used as the Federal Community Childcare Centre. Even where all structures have been removed, school sites may possess other heritage values. Again, Federal provides an illustration. In 1905 the *Northern Star* congratulated the teacher at Federal Public School, Mr T. A. Murray, for his efforts to provide shade for the children in the summer.[82] He had retained in the playground many of the indigenous trees, and some of these, and some of their descendents, survive on the site today as reminders of the rainforest that originally covered the landscape in that part of the Shire. In addition, along the boundary of the property Murray planted camphor laurels (*Cinnamomum camphora*), a popular species for schoolyard planting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and many of these are extant.

Figure 25:   Remains of the Court House Hotel, Mullumbimby, after fire on Christmas Day 1983 *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

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[82] *Northern Star*, 1 May 1905.

Table 7.2: Byron Shire Schools

Estd	Name	Closed	Previous Names
1884	**BANGALOW**	extant	Byron Creek (-1907)
1886	**MULLUMBIMBY**	extant	
1887	**EUREKA**	extant	Whian Whian (-1908)
1888	Nashua (1)	1893	Skinner's Creek (-1891)
1888	Brunswick River	1896	
1890	Granuaile	1894	
1891	**COORABELL**	extant	
1892	Nashua (2)	1976	Gay's Hill (-c.1910)
1892	Graham Town	1893	
1892	**BYRON BAY**	extant	
1893	Billinudgel	1993	Tuckaburra (-1899)
1895	Ewingsdale	1976	Tyagarah (-1909)
1895	Blindmouth	1897	
1896	Federal	1978	Jasper (-1906)
1899	Opossum Creek	1963	
1899	**GOONENGERRY**	extant	
1900	Mullumbimby Creek	1964	Mooyabil (-1945)
1900	**THE POCKET**	extant	Upper Pocket (-1915)
1900	**DURRUMBUL**	extant	
1903	Myocum	1973	
1903	**BRUNSWICK HEADS**	extant	
1904	Cooper's Shoot	1949	
1904	Repentance Creek	1964	
1908	**WILSON'S CREEK**	extant	
1909	Montecollum	1921	
1910	Broken Head	1975	
1911	Tyagarah	1953	
1921	Huonbrook	1962	Cooper's Creek (-1928)
1927	**UPPER MAIN ARM**	extant	Toolond (-1944)
1927	Middle Pocket	1968	
1947	Yelgun	1965	
1949	**UPPER COOPER'S CREEK**	extant	
1955	**MULLUMBIMBY HIGH**	extant	
1987	**BYRON BAY HIGH**	extant	
1993	**OCEAN SHORES**	extant	

Source: New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998. *Government Schools of New South Wales 1848 to 1998: 150 years*, 5th ed. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training)

Figure 26:   Byron Bay Public School, 1947 *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

8 LEISURE AND TOURISM

8.1 Byron Bay

The natural beauty and other attributes of Cape Byron and Byron Bay from a very early stage encouraged what would now be referred to as tourism. Early in 1885 the *Northern Star* suggested that 'Lismore folks would do well to pay [that] part of the district a visit or two during the summer months'. The climate was 'delightfully cool', there was 'splendid schnapper fishing to be had', and the mountain scenery to the west and north was 'particularly good, especially after rain, when the smoke from hundreds of selection fires [had] cleared away'.[1] In the following year Byron Bay was recommended as 'a summer retreat for the worn and weary inhabitants of the scorching inland plains', and as 'a most enjoyable place of resort for picnic parties from Lismore and Casino, or any other part of this district'.[2]

Early in the twentieth century, sea-side resorts became very popular, residents of inland towns realising the benefits of sea air and sea bathing and deserting their hot homes for the coast during the summer months. When the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the opening of the Cape Byron lighthouse in 1901, its position was described as 'a great place of resort for holidaykeepers during the summer' from which 'a magnificent view of the sea and of the adjacent coast is obtained'.[3]

In the summer of 1906 the *Northern Star* reported that a large number of residents had deserted Casino and Lismore for the seashore. Byron Bay was becoming more popular owing to its ease of access by rail. Both the Pier Hotel and the Great Northern Hotel were well patronised during the Christmas holidays.[4] Indeed, in full-page advertisements in the *Byron Bay Record* around this time, the Great Northern Hotel billed itself as a 'sea side resort'.[5]

Surf-bathing became so popular that early in 1909 the Byron Bay Surf-Bathing Life-Saving Club was formed. One of the first duties of the new committee was to select for the club 'costume' a colour 'that will not clash with other clubs'. Summer visitors to Byron Bay in the late 1920s, many of whom travelled by means of excursion trains, could enjoy the seaside in safety thanks to the 'men from the Byron Bay Surf Life Saving Club [who were]

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[1]   *Northern Star,* 31 January 1885.
[2]   *Northern Star*, 26 May 1886.
[3]   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1901.
[4]   *Northern Star*, 31 December 1906.
[5]   *Byron Bay Record*, 31 October 1908, for instance.

present on the beach on all occasions as picnics, holidays, and Sundays'. Dressing sheds, shelter sheds and a large picnicking shed were among the facilities provided; some visitors used the shade underneath the old jetty as a 'rendezvous for picnicking parties.'[6]

The two-storey timber clubhouse depicted below (Figure 27), the surf club's second headquarters, was completed in 1938. [7] In January of that year a crowd estimated at 5,000 people attended the annual surf carnival at Byron Bay, many of them conveyed to the event by two trains run especially for the purpose.[8]

Figure 27: Byron Bay Surf Life Saving Club, 1947 *(State Library of New South Wales photo)*

Despite the foregoing, Byron Bay's simultaneous development as a centre of industry and commerce diminished its popularity to tourists; it became a resort of the 'working class', those of greater means preferring the northern alternative, Brunswick Heads (see 8.2). Referring to the Bay's plight, the

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[6]   *Northern Star*, 12 December 1929.
[7]   *Byron Bay Record*, 16 January 1909, 23 January 1909 (reports the first committee meeting of this club and its first beach drill), 6 February 1909 (first general meeting); Dening, *History of Byron Bay*, p. 193.
[8]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 25 January 1938.

Mullumbimby Star commented in 1936 that the main approaches to the place were 'bare and unattractive' and that 'the nearer the town is approached the greater the "eye-sore" becomes'. This was 'undoubtedly a deterrent to the town'.[9]

The planting of trees in Byron Bay township and along the approaches to it was advocated as one solution to this problem. For example, an avenue of pines from the Ewingsdale crossroads to the town would become, it was suggested, 'a magnetic attraction to tourists'.[10] Such an avenue did not eventuate, but smaller-scale plantings within the town were undertaken, mainly at the urging of the Byron Bay Improvement Association. In the earliest of these improvement projects, in 1936, Norfolk Island pines were planted along the Esplanade, and Jonson Street was decorated with seventy-two oleanders.[11] These later became the inspiration for Byron Bay's annual 'Oleander Carnival', first celebrated in 1962.[12]

Despite the long time period over which Byron Bay has been used as a 'seaside resort', the emergence of tourism as a major 'industry' in the town is a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. Early Byron Bay was a reluctant tourist centre. In 1924 when the Chamber of Commerce talked about making Byron Bay attractive as a sea side resort, the *Byron Bay Record* accused it of 'fritter[ing] away valuable time in such a discussion'.[13] It should, instead, be devoting its attention to:

> *the important question of keeping Byron Bay a shipping port, a hive of commercial activity, the construction of the new jetty, the re-opening of the Freezing and Canning works, the building of the Byron Bay and District Hospital, the establishment of new industries, etc, etc. Anyhow, miles of coast-line, from Evans Head to New Brighton, afford seaside resorts for the fickle fancy of the public, whose baskets of sandwiches can as easily be taken to one place as another.*

Tourism was more firmly embraced, however, after the town's post-war 'deindustrialisation'. The fishing fleet was re-established at Brunswick Heads after the disastrous 1954 cyclone; whaling ended in 1962; sand mining ended in 1974; Norco's dairy factory closed in 1975; the mineral sands processing plant in Johnson Street was closed and removed in 1977; and the meatworks ceased operation in 1983.

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9   *Mullumbimby Star*, 30 June 1936.
10   *Mullumbimby Star*, 30 June 1936.
11   *Mullumbimby Star*, 18 August 1936.
12   *Northern Star*, 29 October 1962.
13   *Byron Bay Record*, 15 March 1924.

The need to replace Byron Bay's lost or declining industries was recognised in the 1960s. A University of New England study estimated that Norco, the meatworks, and the mineral sands industry provided the primary employment for nearly 30% of Byron Bay households in 1968. The study identified tourism as a potentially important alternative to the town's 'highly vulnerable' secondary industries. The innate attactiveness of Byron Bay and its hinterland was considered to provide a good foundation for the promotion of tourism, but the amenities (including access routes) available to tourists in the late 1960s were 'in general, substandard'.[14]

The opening of the new Pier Astor Hotel in 1957 had gone some way toward improving Byron Bay's tourist amenities. This modern establishment, on the corner of Jonson and Bay Streets, replaced the old, two-storey weatherboard and fibro Pier Hotel one block away that was destroyed by fire in 1949. Incidentally, it was said that the fire attracted the largest gathering of townspeople since the steamer *Wollongbar* was beached in 1921.

The Pier Astor was renamed the Surfside Hotel in 1968 reflecting the changing character of Byron Bay (and recognising the removal of the jetty). In the early 1990s the pub was totally remodelled, and its re-opening in March 1991 as the Beach Hotel was a highly significant event in Byron Bay from a tourism perspective. Perhaps more than any other development in the last two decades, the new pub epitomises Byron Bay's metamorphosis. The industrial town that developed around the Bay's jetty and railway in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has finally become the tourist's Mecca.

Changes at Cape Byron, too, reflect the modern transition from secondary industry to tourism and leisured living in the economy of Byron Bay. The Cape Byron Lighthouse is probably the most recognisable symbol of the town and its surroundings. Mention has been made elsewhere of its early attractiveness to visitors (2.3), but more consequential is the transformation of the lighthouse precinct since the station was demanned in 1989. The historic keepers' cottages have been remodelled for tourist use—one serves as holiday accommodation and one contains visitor facilities and displays. Visitation has boomed; added to the traditional attractions of the lighthouse itself and the spectacular coastal views, the suitability of the headland for observing the migration of whales has added a new dimension to its recreational use. Indeed, the site's navigational purposes, which were pre-eminent for most of

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[14]   Killion and Olive, *Byron Bay*, pp.VI/5-6, VIII/2.

the last century, and which connect it to the maritime and industrial history of Byron Bay, now seem almost irrelevant.

Watego's Beach, on the northern side of the headland, is another case in point. A Government residential subdivision was opened there in 1961. Previously, in 1933, Special Leases had been granted over three 6 acre lots fronting the beach. The western-most of these—Sp. L. 33-24—was in the name of Murray Watego from whom the beach, and later the subdivision area, took their names. The Special Lease areas were largely cleared, and farmed, Watego and his wife raising a family of ten children on their piece of Cape Byron.[15]

Public reserves existed in one form or another over most of Cape Byron from 1885, beginning with Reserve no. 53 for 'recreation, wood, defence, and other public purposes'.[16] In 1901 this reserve was redesignated for 'public recreation, preservation of native flora, and defence purposes'. It is unknown what logic lay behind the decision to grant the Special Leases over a substantial portion of this reserve in 1933; the subsequent decision to convert to residential blocks this and additional land on the Cape, all still reserved for 'public recreation and preservation of native flora and fauna', is even less explicable. Nevertheless, the decision was made, and the first sale of allotments took place at Watego's Beach on 25 November 1961.[17] The area has become Byron Bay's best known and most exclusive address, and has been described as both the Vaucluse and the Beverley Hills of Byron Bay; the opulence of recent development there has even gained for Byron Bay the epithets 'Torquay gone Toorak' and 'Hollywood by the Sea'.[18]

8.2 Brunswick Heads

Brunswick Heads declined in the 1890s after it was by-passed by the Lismore to the Tweed railway, but it later underwent a revival as a seaside resort. Its

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[15] The Watego family, being strongly associated with Cape Byron, merit further mention. The following background has been provided by Stephan Schnierer, a grand-son of Murray Watego. Murray Watego was born in Sydney in 1895, the fourth child of George Watego and his wife Mary who were married in Sydney in 1889. It is not known when George arrived in Australia, and it is uncertain whence he came. Some time after his premature death in 1904, his wife and young family, including Murray, moved to the North Coast of NSW. Murray married in the Tweed district in 1915, and after war service (1916-1918) he moved to Byron Bay.

[16] *NSW Government Gazette*, 19 December 1885, p. 8253.

[17] *NSW Government Gazette*, 20 October 1961, pp. 3298-3299.

[18] 'Off to Heaven with Waves', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1986; 'Paradise lost?', *Sunday Age*, 24 July 1994; 'Greetings from Byron Bay', *The Age*, 20 May 1995.

popularity in this regard exceeded that of Byron Bay. The Ocean View Hotel, which had closed in 1897, was relicensed in 1902, becoming an important amenity for tourists. The pub prospered to such an extent that it was enlarged in 1908-9 by the addition of a two-storey section, to plans by the Lismore architect F. J. Board. At that time, North Beach was the main surf bathing beach, probably because of the relative inaccessibility of South Beach. In November 1909 a branch of the Royal Australian Life Saving Society was formed in Mullumbimby and a squad of lifesavers was assembled to patrol North Beach.[19]

The advent of the motor vehicle greatly boosted tourism in Brunswick Heads, especially in the 1920s. Between Christmas 1926 and New Year's Day 1927, for instance, it was estimated that between 30,000 and 35,000 people visited the place. This was thought to be unprecedented, and Brunswick Heads now threatened to rival Tweed Heads and Coolangatta for crowds. The majority of the 'invaders' were said to have come from Queensland.[20]

Figure 28:   Holiday camp, Brunswick Heads, 1920s *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

The construction of two new bridges in the 1930s accelerated tourism growth at Brunswick Heads. First, the replacement of the Brunswick River punt with

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[19]   Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 206.
[20]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 6 January 1927.

a road bridge in 1934 greatly increased the flow of traffic to Brunswick Heads. Indeed, at the official opening of the bridge in April 1934, the Byron Shire President correctly predicted that the route through Brunswick Heads would eventually be adopted by the Main Roads Department as the State Highway, further enhancing the position of the Heads.[21]

Figure 29:   Surf Carnival, Brunswick Heads, c.1960 *(Brunswick Valley Historical Society photo)*

Secondly, the construction of a footbridge across the south arm of the river in 1937 provided a convenient means of access for bathers to the South Beach, which previously was attainable only by swimming, wading, or crossing in a boat.[22] South Beach had been declared the official surfing beach for Brunswick Heads in 1935, and when the initial surf carnival of the newly-formed Brunswick Surf Life-Saving Club was held there in November of that year 'all available craft' were employed to ferry spectators to and from the surfing area.[23] The club had been formed at the end of 1928, several years after the original club, based at North Beach, had lapsed.[24] The completion of the

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[21]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 12 April 1934.
[22]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 2 February 1933.
[23]   *Mullumbimby Star*, 27 November 1935.
[24]   *Northern Star*, 3 January 1929; Brokenshire, *The Brunswick*, p. 208.

footbridge came several years after agitation for its construction had begun. It was argued that it was a 'necessity' if Brunswick Heads was to 'keep its place as one of the most favoured watering villages on the Coast'; its importance was highlighted by the difficulty of transporting people to the surf carnival in November 1935.[25]

By this time the Ocean View Hotel was showing signs of age, and the licensing court in 1939 made an order for the demolition of the whole of the original portion of the hotel, and for substantial repairs to be made to the 'new' (1908-09) section. Tooheys Limited, the Sydney brewer, which owned the pub then, recognised the growing popularity of the town as a tourist destination, and elected to demolish the hotel entirely and rebuild. The result was the present substantial brick pub which was completed early in 1941.

8.3 Forests and Tourism

Beaches and coastal scenery have been the main focus of tourism in Byron Shire for a century or more, but the natural beauty and invigorating qualities of the forests in the western portion of the Shire have also attracted visitors over as long a period. Reference has been made elsewhere (3.2.3) to Minyon Falls, which by early in the twentieth century was considered to be 'one of the show spots of the North Coast'. Indeed, at that time the Nightcap Range was being touted as the site of a sanatorium where 'alpine freshness' would 'stimulate the weary pilgrim' to the North Coast region.[26]

The outstanding natural values of the Nightcap Range, including its recreational values, were recognised in 1936 when Nightcap National Forest was created from five existing State Forests including Whian Whian and Whian Whian East.[27] The main idea of the national forest tenure was to provide greater protection for the multiple functions of state forests (including timber production, catchment protection, nature conservation, and recreation) against the advances of agricultural settlement. Nightcap National Forest was dedicated in October 1936, and it was formally opened by the Minister for Forests, Roy Vincent, at a ceremony held near the top of Minyon Falls in May 1937.

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[25] *Mullumbimby Star*, 4 December 1935.
[26] *Northern Star*, 8 March 1915.
[27] Background to the creation of Nightcap National Forest is given in Stubbs, *A question of competing values*.

Access to the falls had been improved by that time with the building in 1936 of Minyon Drive, the first of the Forestry Commission's permanent access roads in Whian Whian State Forest. The Crown reserve around Minyon Falls was absorbed into Whian Whian State Forest in 1955, and in 1962 the Forestry Commission provided a picnic area near the top of the falls. In 1978 the Commission converted its forest headquarters and workers' camp in Whian Whian East State Forest to a public camping and picnicking area (the site now known as Rummery Park), further enhancing the recreational infrastructure of Nightcap National Forest.

The progressive conversion of the State Forests within (and around) Byron Shire to National Parks since the early 1980s (3.2) has ensured that, as predicted in 1915, the forests would provide 'a serious competitor' to the seaside resorts for 'those persons who are genuinely in search of renewed vigour.' [28]

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[28] *Northern Star*, 8 March 1915.

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Appendix: Byron Bay shipwrecks

This compilation of vessels wrecked near the Brunswick River and Cape Byron, 1849-1921, excludes those wrecked entering or leaving the Brunswick River, which are detailed in Table 2.1.

Name of Vessel	Description	When Wrecked	Comments
Swift	Two masted wooden schooner, 45 tons	1849 (6 May)	Capsized in squall north of Cape Byron; several passengers and crew drowned. The vessel drifted ashore north of the Brunswick River, where her only two survivors were released after being trapped in the hull. *SMH 21 May 1849*
Volunteer	Schooner, 70 tons	1864 (August)	Driven ashore in gale and wrecked at Cape Byron. *CRE 23 August 1864*
Clara *	Wooden ketch, 40 tons	1869	Lost between Richmond River and Tweed River *en route* to the latter.
Miranda	Barquentine	1874 (December)	Lost ashore south of the Brunswick River. *SMH 31 December 1874*
Andrew Fenwick *	Schooner, 74 tons	1875 (November)	Lost on beach near Cape Byron.
Brilliant	Wooden schooner, 140 tons	1876 (14 July)	Lost ashore in gale at Byron Bay. *CRE 29 July 1876*
William	Schooner	1876 (14 September)	Driven ashore and lost in a gale at Byron Bay. *NS 23 September 1876*
Inglis	Brigantine, 99 tons	1879 (28 August)	Driven ashore in a gale from her anchorage at Byron Bay. *CRE 30 August 1879*
Brilliant	Wooden schooner, 140 tons	1884 (2 May)	Ashore in gale onto beach 2 miles north of Brunswick River. *NS 10 May 1884*
Jane	Wooden brig, 160 tons	1886 (July)	Lost at Tallow Beach, near Cape Byron. *NS 7 August 1886*

Candidate	Ketch	1887 (12 August)	Ashore at Byron Bay in a gale. *NS 17 August 1887*
Scout	Steel screw steamer, 77 tons	1887 (12 February)	Ashore at Byron Bay in a gale. *NS 16 February 1887*
Reliance	Schooner, 74 tons	1887 (21 July)	Foundered ten kilometres east of the Brunswick River. *NS 27 July 1887*
Bannockburn	Wooden schooner, 111 tons	1889 (17 July)	Ashore and lost in a gale at Byron Bay. *NS 27 July 1889*
Fawn	Wooden brig, 216 tons	1889 (17 July)	Ashore and lost in a gale at Byron Bay. *NS 27 July 1889*
Hastings	Wooden schooner, 88 tons	1889 (17 July)	Ashore and lost in a gale at Byron Bay. *NS 27 July 1889*
Spurwing	Schooner, 90 tons	1889 (17 July)	Ashore and lost in a gale at Byron Bay. *NS 27 July 1889*
Agnes	Schooner, 80 tons	1890 (March)	Ashore in a gale 10 km north of the Brunswick River while bound for the Tweed. All crew lost; only three bodies were recovered from her complement of eight. *NS 22 March 1890*
Annie Theresa	Schooner, 64 tons	1891 (7 February)	Damaged crossing out from Richmond River, and beached near the jetty at Byron Bay. *NS 11 February 1891*
Tweed	Wooden screw steamship, 185 tons, 2 masts schooner rig	1893 (January)	Ashore at Byron Bay after her rudder head snapped in a gale. Attempts to refloat her were unsuccessful. *NS 8 March 1893*
Tuggerah	Cutter, 62 tons	1894 (13 March)	Parted moorings and ashore near the jetty at Byron Bay. *NS 17 March 1894*
Wollongbar	Steel twin scew steamship, 2005 tons	1921 (14 May)	Ashore and lost in Byron Bay; about to embark passengers when a gale blew up. *NS 16 May 1921*

Note: This table is based on several sources, especially Stone (2006), *Encyclopedia of Australian shipwrecks*. Wherever possible, information has been checked against contemporary newspaper reports, in which case a relevant newspaper reference is given in the comments column. If it has not been possible to verify an entry in this way, and asterisk is placed against the name of the ship. Newspaper titles are abbreviated as follows: *NS = Northern Star* (Lismore); *CRE = Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton); *SMH = Sydney Morning Herald*; *RRT = Richmond River Times* (Ballina).