

Historical Roads of New South Wales

*PACIFIC
HIGHWAY*



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NEW SOUTH WALES

Historical Roads of New South Wales.

Roads from Sydney to the Hunter River Valley and Newcastle.

Captain Cook was the first person to record the site of Newcastle. When sailing north along the eastern Australian coast in May, 1770, about six miles out, he noticed "a small clump of an island" close in shore. This island is situated at the entrance to the Hunter River. It is now known as "Nobby's," and artificially connected to the mainland.

When Governor Phillip established the first permanent Australian settlement at Port Jackson in 1788, the people were solely dependent on the stores carried by his ships and on later relief ships. The potentialities of the country behind Sydney Cove were quite unknown, and Phillip, after providing temporary shelter, immediately set himself to the clearing and development of suitable land for growing food.

Phillip soon realised that it would be necessary to discover land more suitable for farming and more fertile than that found adjacent to Port Jackson. Some good land was found at the head of the Parramatta River, and a settlement which he called "Rose-hill" was started. The name was later altered to Parramatta.

The range of mountains (the 'Blue Mountains'), seen to the west by Phillip from a point near Pennant Hills north of Parramatta, led him to believe that a great river must have its source somewhere there, and that in all probability good farming land would be found along its banks. Captain Cook had referred to an opening in the coast north of Port Jackson and Phillip took an expedition there on 2nd March, 1788, in his search for land to grow food for his company. The opening seen by Cook is that now known as Broken Bay. Phillip explored the two arms of Broken Bay naming the southern Pittwater and the northern Brisbane Water, but he was not impressed by the surrounding country for farming purposes. He returned to Broken Bay on 6th June, 1789, and on this occasion discovered the mouth of the Hawkesbury River which discharges into Broken Bay. Shortage of provisions prevented him from exploring the river for more than about 20 miles. A few weeks later he set out again and followed the Hawkesbury as far as navigable. This time he found the good agricultural land he sought along the upper reaches of the river.

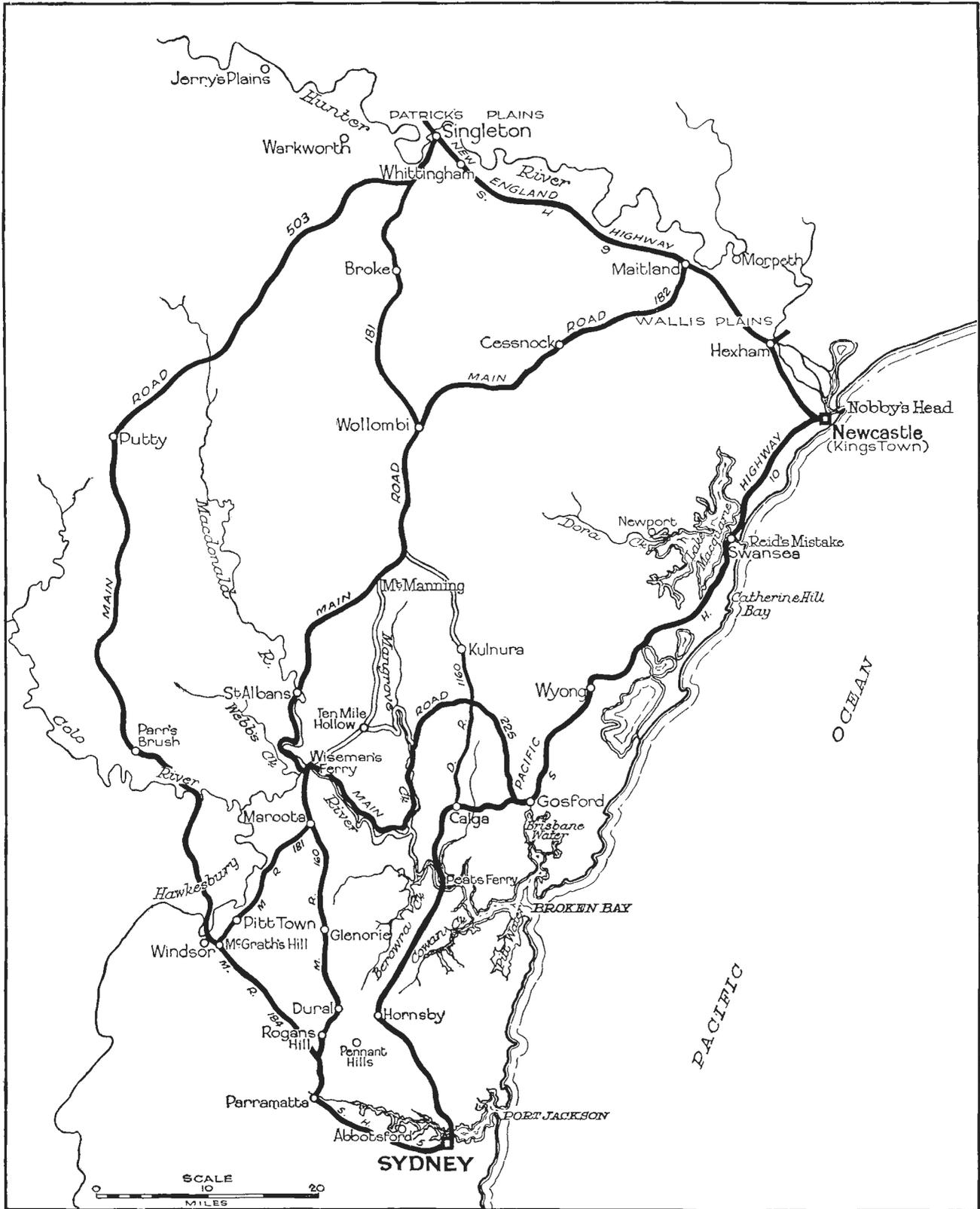
A settlement was established on the Hawkesbury River in 1794, near the site of the present town of Windsor and apparently a line of communication with Sydney by land was soon established. Lieut-Governor Grose reported in August, 1794, "I have caused a very good road to be made from Sydney to the banks of the Hawkesbury, by which we discover the distance from this place by land is much less than we expected." Although it was found that the river flats around Windsor were subject to flooding, the land was fertile

and became the principal source of Sydney's food supply, until the country west of the Blue Mountains was opened up following the discovery of a route by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813.

Early Newcastle and the Hunter River Valley.

In September, 1797, the "Cumberland" a small coastal vessel was proceeding up the coast from Sydney with stores for the settlers along the Upper Hawkesbury. Near the mouth of the river it was hailed by a party in a small boat. The "Cumberland" was boarded by the party who turned out to be escaped convicts. The coxswain was informed by the convicts they intended to seize the boat and make their escape. The convicts were well received on board by a number of the "Cumberland's" crew, who agreed to join the enterprise. The coxswain could do nothing but submit. Taking those of the crew who wished to remain with him, he was landed at Pittwater. This remnant of the "Cumberland's" crew made their way overland along the coastline to Port Jackson. Governor Hunter "Not having any fit vessel to pursue upon such occasion, I despatched two row boats, well armed, the one went about sixty miles northward along the coast, and the other forty miles southward, but without success, a gale blowing soon after the escape of the second boat, which obliged the officer in pursuit to land upon the coast." The boat that went northward was in command of Lieut. Shortland. On his return journey from the unsuccessful pursuit of the "Cumberland," he entered a river which he named the "Hunter's River," and thus discovered the site and harbour of the future Newcastle, and the gateway to the fertile Hunter valley. Shortland explored the harbour and noticed coal deposits "lying so near the waterside as to be conveniently shipped, which gives it in this particular, manifest advantage over that discovered at the southward." Shortland brought specimens of the coal back to Port Jackson. In the next two years several ships were sent to the Hunter in search of coal and by 1799 sufficient quantities had been brought to Sydney to make a complete shipment for export—it went to Bengal.

Governor King displayed great interest in the possibilities of the coal at "Kings Town" as it was then known. On 9th June, 1801, he commissioned Lieut. Grant to take the "Lady Nelson" and the "Francis" together with a party including Lieut.-Col. Paterson to the "Hunter's River" and "when arrived there you will give every assistance to Ensign Barrallier in making as complete a survey as possible of the entrance and inside of that river . . . you will take under your command the 'Francis' colonial schooner, and cause her to be laden with the best coals that can be procured." Paterson and his party explored the river



Locality Map.

past the present position of Maitland to somewhere above the site of Singleton, about 50 miles inland. He reported that the "excellent soil in its neighbour-

hood and not subject to floods would, in my opinion, be a very fitting situation for forming a settlement for the cultivation of grain and grazing."



Typical country in Colo Shire that was traversed by explorers looking for a route to the north. View taken from the present main road linking Windsor and Putty.

The suitability of coal mining as a convict occupation, added to the distance from Sydney the absence of any road or track and the rough nature of the intervening country, made a site on the "Hunter's River" particularly favourable for a penal settlement for the more difficult characters among the convict population of Sydney. Apart from the nature of the intervening country, the passage of the broad Hawkesbury River would be a difficult proposition for escapees, and would tend to confine them to the Hunter River district. All communication between Sydney and the Hunter River settlement would it was thought necessarily be only by sea.

In 1801, therefore, Governor King established a small convict post at the mouth of the Hunter River under Corporal Wixstead, where coal was to be secured. Another party was sent up the river to collect cedar. Owing to the unsuitability of both Wixstead and his successor, Dr. Mason, the settlement was abandoned in 1802. It was re-established in 1804 under Lieut. Menzies, not because of any economic benefits that might accrue to the colony by reason of its natural resources, but because of its value as an isolated location for the more difficult of the convicts. The event that prompted Governor King to send a further party to the Hunter was a serious mutiny

that broke out among the convicts at Castle Hill. Governor King, writing to Lord Hobart, 6th April, 1804, referred to "the short lived insurrection of those deluded Irish." He further stated that any "similar attempts being carried into effect, has been fully guarded against by sending a number of the most active to the coal works." To lay complete emphasis on the purely penal nature of this latest settlement, no private persons were to be allowed to work without a permit from the Governor and if any vessel entered the port without a licence the crew were to be confined and the vessel scuttled. The convicts were to be employed in procuring coal and cedar.

By 1819 Governor Macquarie realised that the purpose for which Newcastle had been established, i.e., as a place for more severe punishment of convicts, had outlived its usefulness. In a despatch dated 8th March, 1819, he pointed out to the Home Government "Extensive rich and fertile land being found at no great distance-along the three principal sources of the River Hunter whose embouchure is at Newcastle . . . these plains now become an object of valuable consideration in the necessary increase of the population, and hold out important advantages for the establishment of free settlers upon them. An inducement of another kind to such settlement arises out of the



Section of the first road built between Hawkesbury River and Hunter River. 25m. north of Windsor.

consideration that Newcastle now ceases to be of that material benefit, which it was formerly to the principal settlement at Port Jackson as a receptacle for our worst characters, in consequence of the interior having been explored and the passage thence to Windsor on the Hawkesbury River having become familiar to several of those persons who have been transported thither, and who now find little difficulty in deserting from thence and returning to this place. . . . I conceive it would be highly expedient to remove the convicts and others under colonial sentence from Newcastle thither" (to Port Macquarie) "and in such a case it would be no less judicious to establish settlers on the plains along the River Hunter." With the admission of free settlers, the need for the isolation of the Hunter Valley passed and attention could be turned to the development of a land route for the passage of stock, and as an alternative means of communication with Sydney.

It can be assumed that impressions and details of routes would not be secured from escapees and therefore were not recorded. The first report of such an escape appeared in the Sydney Gazette of 22nd December, 1805. Four convicts escaped from Kings Town (the former name for Newcastle) and were pursued by a "party of military." One of the convicts was soon caught up with and escorted back by one of the party. The remainder "reaping every information from the natives, they continued the pursuit, and near Reid's Mistake (at the entrance to Lake Macquarie) overtook the other three, whom they conducted into Castle Hill (near Sydney) after a painful and fatiguing travel, and who were received in town on Friday, to be returned to Kings Town." This party can be regarded as the first white overlanders between Newcastle and Sydney of which there is a record. The following year, 1806, the "Governor King" a small coaster was wrecked at Newcastle. One of the crew set out with a native and reached Sydney. There is no record of

the route followed, but it is probable they followed the coast via Broken Bay.

The first serious attempt to discover a route connecting the Sydney district and the Hunter River Valley was by Benjamin Singleton, who set out from Windsor with a party in 1818. He failed to reach the Hunter mainly because his provisions were getting low and because of his uncertainty regarding treatment by a party of natives. The natives, however, informed him of a big river to the north, which must have been the Hunter. Singleton kept a journal during the expedition which he forwarded to Governor Macquarie.

Singleton's journal apparently proved of sufficient interest to Macquarie for him to direct that a further expedition be undertaken to open up a track to the north. As a consequence John Howe, the chief constable at Windsor, set out with six others on 24th October, 1819. It is highly probable that he followed Singleton's track and was assisted by information given him by Singleton. This expedition crossed the Colo River near its junction with the Hawkesbury, followed the ridge dividing the Colo River from Webbs Creek (the Wheelbarrow Ridge) to Parr's Brush, and then proceeded generally in a northerly direction to the Hunter River, which was reached on 5th November not far from the site of the present town of Jerry's Plains.

Writing to Governor Macquarie on 5th February, 1820, John Howe said, "Your Excellency was pleased to signify your wish that I should explore the River I have lately discovered. I will very cheerfully do it. . . ." He accordingly set out again following his original track for the most part and reached the Hunter River on 15th March, 1820 at a point below that reached on the first expedition. He proceeded downstream and reached Patrick Plains (now Singleton) on 17th March. Howe named the locality "Saint"

Patrick Plains in honour of the day he discovered it, but the "Saint" dropped out of the name many years ago. He explored the river as far as Wallis Plains (now Maitland).

The route to the Hunter River Valley pioneered by Howe was somewhat roundabout. It passed through rough sandstone country densely timbered and for much of its length water was scarce in dry periods. It was used only by the more venturesome of those who journeyed north to take up land along the Hunter River. The present day Main Road 503 (Windsor-Putty-Singleton) follows the general line of Howe's route for the greater part of its length.

The number of settlers along the Hunter River was increasing and they began to agitate for a shorter and casier route to Sydney. The agitation became so persistent that in 1825 the Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane issued instructions to Mr. Surveyor Heneage Finch to carry out a survey with a view to finding a better route. Mr. Finch succeeded in locating a ridge leading from Castle Hill near Sydney to near the site of Wiseman's Ferry on the Hawkesbury River north of Windsor. The line then crossed the Hawkesbury River about a mile below the present ferry, ascended the main range on the northern side, and followed the crest of Judge Dowling's Range to the head of the Wollombi Brook. Except for one or two alterations referred to later, the present Main Road 181 (Wiseman's Ferry-Wollombi-Singleton) follows closely the line surveyed by Finch.

It is probable that a track along this line was used immediately by travellers to the Hunter River, but the road was not commenced till 1826. "The Australian" announced on 24th May, 1826, "The Great North Road is to be commenced, we believe this day, Mr. Oxley and Mr. Dumaresq having left town for the purpose of marking it out." Governor Darling travelled over the completed section as far as Wiseman's and the *Sydney Gazette* reported that "His Excellency was much struck and expressed his gratification at the state and progress of this noble looking and serviceable road." Darling raised one objection, however, and that was the ascent on the northern side of the Hawkesbury as marked out by Finch. This ascent was steep and difficult, and the Surveyor-General (Mitchell) was instructed to carry out a detailed survey with a view to improving the approach to the Hawkesbury on the north side. Mitchell succeeded in finding a better ascent and when this was completed the site of the river crossing was altered, which had the effect of shortening the road by $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles.

It is appropriate at this point to mention Solomon Wiseman, whose name will always be associated with the locality at the first regular crossing of the Hawkesbury River. Solomon Wiseman had been transported to Australia in 1805 for stealing 704 pounds weight of Brazil wood, valued at £24. During his time he had ships built and traded on the coast. He became an inn-keeper in 1813 when a licence was issued to him for premises in Bligh-street, Sydney. He had licensed premises on the Hawkesbury in 1821, and received a grant of land in 1823. On 4th September, 1827, he wrote to the Colonial Secretary informing him that he



Scene at Darkey Creek about 4 m. from Milbrodale in Patrick Plains Shire.

had built a punt and requesting a lease of a ferry site on the Hawkesbury near his residence. He was informed there would be no objection to granting a lease of the ferry site for a period of seven years, subject to such regulations as might be drafted by the Council, and subject to horses and property belonging to the Government being allowed free passage. In addition to a main cattle punt and horse boat, Wiseman kept smaller boats in readiness. Persons forwarding cattle had the choice either of swimming them across or transporting them by punt. Wiseman, junior, opened an inn at the head of the Wollombi Brook about October, 1827.

Surprise has been expressed from time to time that the early road builders did not at once find a route to Newcastle closer to the coast, somewhat following the present Pacific Highway route, instead of the longer and more circuitous route through the rugged country between Wiseman's Ferry and Wollombi. It must be understood, however, that at that period the authorities were not concerned primarily in establishing road communication with Newcastle. That town was of less importance than the larger agricultural settlements which had developed on the rich country



A section of the Patrick Plains near Singleton.

further up the Hunter River. Morpeth (or as it was then known, Greenhills) became the terminus of steam packets from Sydney, and for many years Newcastle was regarded as a minor port of call. Maitland was the centre of a big farming district and its produce was shipped via Morpeth. During the 1820's and 1830's Newcastle seemed to fall into the doldrums. The Rev. John Dunmore Lang in his "New South Wales" says, "The town of Newcastle, I have already observed, has somewhat the appearance of a deserted village. It is reviving, however, though rather slowly." . . . "The Monitor" of 13th December, 1827, has this to say: "Accommodations for visitors are exceedingly meagre. . . there is no society. . . There is scarcely an agreeable walk about Newcastle, nothing but rock and sand. The only moving objects are the Government Gangs, employed about the wharf, the mines, etc."

The position of Windsor was another factor influencing the early routes to the north. Communication by road had long been in operation between Sydney and Windsor, and Windsor was, therefore, the natural commencing place for any attempt to penetrate further north.

Major Mitchell reported in 1829 on the best line for a road between the Hawkesbury and Hunter Rivers. This survey had been carried out on instructions from the Governor to decide on "the line of road to be pursued on to Wallis Plains (Maitland) from the Twelve Mile Valley." Mitchell's report runs: "It is desirable that two extreme points, between which the road is required, should be determined before any intermediate part is made or decided upon. . . The principal objects of the road northward appear to be:—

1. A direct communication by land to the central upper districts of Hunter River including the Goulburn River.
2. The most direct communication by land to the township of Maitland or lower district of Hunter's River, and

3. The continuation of the road further northward, in the direction most eligible under these various circumstances.

Sydney being one point, the next to be determined is that at which the road should reach the Hunter River District, so as to admit of branch roads at equal angles right and left to the points of ultimate destination.

It is obvious from the map that that point is the head of the Wollombi Brook, and that this is a fortunate circumstance inasmuch as the direction of the ravines and ridges, a circumstance also to be considered, leaves little room for selection elsewhere. . . and it is plain that any deviation further to the westward would be a more circuitous route northward from Sydney."

This report emphasises the points which should be joined by road and makes no mention of Newcastle as being a place of importance that should be connected to Sydney.

Between Newcastle and Wallis Plains (Maitland) there had been a bridle track through the Hexham Swamps prior to 1826. On 14th June of that year the "Australian" reported: "We have the satisfaction to state that the new road between Newcastle and Wallis Plains is open for travellers on horseback. The difficulty of a land communication between the two districts is therefore at an end. The distance is about eighteen miles, and the abominable swamps, which, in the winter, the traveller is obliged to wade through, almost up to the chin in water are now avoided. At the same time, it is a very inferior road . . ."

In his report of 1829, Mitchell pointed out that the road had been made from Maitland to within about ten miles of Wollombi, and from Wiseman's Ferry to Twelve Mile Hollow (now known as Ten Mile Hollow on the old section of the road from Wiseman's Ferry along Judge Dowling's Range to Mt. Manning). Acting on his principle that "considerable saving of road-making may be effected between three points by carrying one road for a certain distance in an intermediate

direction, so as to describe the letter "Y" rather than "V", he recommended that the road should branch at Wollombi, one arm leading to Maitland, and the other to Broke. At Broke the road was to separate again, with branches to Patrick's Plains and Warkworth. From Warkworth the road was to continue to Jerry's Plains and the districts of the Goulburn River. The final link in the system was a road from Warkworth along the Hunter River to Patrick Plains, and on to Maitland.

The grand purpose of Mitchell's scheme was that "the communication between Sydney and all the northern parts would be united in one road to the reserve of the village of Corobear (later Wollombi) where the road would separate 'to serve' the districts of the Upper Hunter, the Goulburn River, Kingdon Ponds, Liverpool Plains and Maitland" with the interconnecting link between Maitland and Warkworth.

The Surveyor-General objected to "the angle formed by the road at Parramatta." To eliminate this angle he suggested a crossing of the Parramatta River at Kissing Point. The punt actually crossed from the point now known as Abbotsford to Bedlam Point, and a route was opened up in 1832 through Ryde, Carlingford and Dundas joining the original road from Parramatta, at the present day Rogan's Hill. The road never came into general use, and the punt eventually ceased



Wiseman's Ferry, Hawkesbury River, showing rugged nature of country.



Old culvert and retaining walls on the old Great North Road in the vicinity of Wiseman's Ferry. Now part of M.R. 181.

running. That part of the road leading from Parramatta-road through Five Dock to Abbotsford is still known as the Great North Road.

Alterations took place in the route of the Great North Road as settlements developed. Thus as settlement extended north from Windsor and Pitt Town, a track from Cattai Creek along the Maroota Ridge was surveyed and a road formed, joining the Great North Road at Maroota. The road from Parramatta through Castle Hill and Glenorie became disused, and the route of the Great North Road became diverted to that through Parramatta, Windsor, Pitt Town and Cattai Creek to Wiseman's Ferry, now embraced within Main Roads Nos. 184 and 181.

North of the Hawkesbury River, the settlements along its tributary, the Macdonald River could be reached as far as St. Albans only by river. A track was developed, however, from the Great North Road near Wiseman's to Whalan's Punt (later Book's Ferry) on the Macdonald River and up that river to St. Albans. This section of the road gradually became adopted for northern traffic in lieu of that through Ten Mile Hollow and Judge Dowling's Range. The main route to the north thus became established through Windsor, Wiseman's Ferry, St. Albans and Wollombi.

The Early Coastal Route.

While it was natural that the first roads to the north from Sydney should follow the settled districts, and lead to the primary producing centres of the Hunter Valley, the development of tracks nearer the coast was not neglected. There is evidence that as early as 1824 the country through which the Pacific Highway was to run was receiving attention. On 1st August, 1824 Thomas Edwards received a "ticket of occupation" for a point of land "known by the name of Kangaroo Point near Long Island" for use as a grazing run. The *Sydney Gazette* also advocated the provision of access between Newcastle and the "settlements at or near Broken Bay. That fine settlement is almost unknown from the present want of ferries and roads. . . Settlers, newly arrived, are beginning to cry out there is no land while millions of acres lie entombed upon the sea side." Surveyor Govett reported on 16th July, 1829: "It has occurred to us that considerable saving both in time and inconvenience might be effected in the route from Sydney to Brisbane Water by the formation of a line of road to meet the Hawkesbury at a point near the vicinity of the heads in lieu of the long, tedious and circuitous journey at present resorted to by the great north road and it appears that the plan has not merely been proposed, but acted upon and that there are no less than two separate lines marked out, the one to cross at the mouth of Mangrove Creek, the other at Mr. Peat's residence a few miles lower down. Without wishing in the least to interfere with the proposed arrangements, we may be permitted to observe that the originality of the measure was, we believe, Mr. Peat's, who long since following the guidance of a native black, well versed in the geography of the country, undertook and carried out the measure of marking the entire line from Brisbane Water to his

residence, and from thence again to near Sydney, proposing at the same time to establish a punt at Fairview in the event of the measure being approved and supported. The other and later candidate for having found a new cut is, we understand, Mr. Taylor, the publican at Mangrove, who has already established a punt from his premises and we imagine is sanguine in the preference given to this line. As far as our knowledge of the locality extends, we are decidedly in favour of the original measure proposed by Mr. Peat, considering the journey from Sydney to Cowan decidedly the most direct and every way convenient route; the transit at Fairview is likewise unobjectionable, from whence the continuation by Mooney Mooney Creek is easy and direct until it meets the present track a few miles from Gosford."

The line proposed by Taylor commenced at Dural and ran west of Berowra Creek to the Hawkesbury which it crossed at the entrance to Mangrove Creek where he had an Inn. From this point the route ran north and joined an existing track from Mangrove Creek to Gosford. Taylor's proposal was rejected, the Brisbane Water District Council deciding that the best route would be via Fairview, Mr. Peat's property.

George Peat established a ferry across the Hawkesbury at Kangaroo Point in 1844. Announcing this fact the *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as "pregnant with great advantage" and was sure "the increased traffic will amply remunerate the spirited proprietor." Land was being taken up along Brisbane Water, and the landholders had approached the Government in 1833 to give them a road joining with the Great North Road, but nothing was done. The settlers along the Hunter River were also asking for a shorter route to Sydney. It must be remembered that the road from Sydney to Newcastle was then 165 miles long, passing through Windsor, Wiseman's Ferry, St. Albans, Wollombi and Maitland. It was suggested that a route could be found from the Hunter Valley through Wollombi to Peat's Ferry and thence along the coast to Sydney. On 5th March, 1845, it was reported that "they had partially succeeded in finding such a line by taking a course to the eastward of the Warawallong Ranges." It was found that a "bridle road is capable of being used, which crossing the old post road from Hawkesbury to Brisbane Water, near the turn off to Brisbane Water will join the new line from Gosford to Sydney and give an immense saving of distance besides avoiding the inconveniences and jumps up of the Great North Road. The Messrs. Milson have just left to determine upon the practicability of the route and we believe there is little doubt that a good road might be constructed through these hitherto unused sierras."

In 1849 the Deputy Surveyor-General, Capt. Parry surveyed the line personally from Peat's Ferry to Wollombi acting under instructions from the Colonial Secretary—"to do whatever was necessary regarding surveys so that it could be brought forward for proclamation." This also followed a memorial which had been presented to the Governor, praying "that a sum of £200 be placed on the estimates for the purpose of



View of the Hawkesbury River from M.R. 181 approximately 1½ m. from Wiseman's Ferry in Baulkham Hills Shire.

completing the line of road from Sydney to Jerry's Plains via Peat's Ferry." In his report Captain Parry stated that "several gentlemen who have travelled the line referred to represent it to be free from any serious difficulties." It would appear that the road was started but not completed, due probably to the Opposition of Sir Thomas Mitchell who had never shown any enthusiasm for the proposal. In a note in his handwriting he referred to "this (to me) most unpleasant subject." The proposed route can be travelled to-day if the Pacific Highway is followed to Calga, thence along Developmental Road No. 1160 through Kulnura and on Main Road No. 181 the Wiseman's Ferry-Wollombi-Singleton road, which is joined about 35 miles north of Wiseman's Ferry.

In 1854 the Colonial Secretary approved of the expenditure of £570 per annum for the maintenance of the road from Sydney to Wollombi via Peat's Ferry and for working the punt at Peat's Ferry. The route was apparently little used and it was not thought worth while to make it fit for wheeled traffic. It was used only by horsemen and for the passage of cattle and other stock.

The route from Sydney to Peat's Ferry passed through St. Leonards to Aaron Pearce's Farm (Hornsby) then followed the range between Berowra and Cowan Creeks to the ferry.

Maitland to Gosford.

A road from Maitland to Gosford was mentioned with some enthusiasm by *The Australian* on 4th February, 1841: "It is a great advantage to the inhabitants of these districts (bordering Maitland) that the new road from Maitland to Gosford, discovered by Mr. W. H. Wells, proves so excellent a one. It avoids the hilly range of Wyee and the Sugar Loaf

Mountain and it is also shorter than the road lately in use. It is, our readers will observe, upon this new road that the town of Newport is situated, having Lake Macquarie on the one side and the road on the other. . . . It seems obvious that the settlers on Jerry's Plains will instead of going out of their way to Newcastle or Maitland bring down their wool to Newport direct, as shipping can lie within a cable length of the shore.

The 'Kangaroo' will shortly be engaged to perform a trip from Sydney to Newport passing through the Strait called Reid's Mistake, and affording the passengers a view almost for the first time since the existence of the colony, of Lake Macquarie in its entire beauty." Newport was a township on Dora Creek, "contiguous to that part of the coast known as Reid's Mistake or the embouchure of Lake Macquarie." An advertisement for a land sale at Newport in April, 1841, after describing the beauties and advantages of this district stated "The Great Gosford and Maitland NEW ROAD under a Government Surveyor, passes through the western part of the town and brings Gosford within a distance of fifteen miles."

Modern Developments.

The completion of the last link in the railway between Sydney and Newcastle in 1889—the building of the railway bridge across the Hawkesbury River—naturally reduced the use of the roads considerably.

Peats Ferry ceased to run which left the route, regarded as the Great North Road, as that via Parramatta, McGrath's Hill (Windsor), Pitt Town, Wiseman's Ferry, St. Albans, Wollombi, Broke, Whittington, Singleton and beyond. At Wollombi a road branched via Cessnock to Maitland and thence to Newcastle.



Road to Ten Mile Hollow—Section of the old road to the north, via Mangrove Mountain.

An alternative route from Sydney to Newcastle was via Mangrove Mountain. This road branched from the Great North Road at Wiseman's Ferry and went via Ten Mile Hollow, Mangrove Creek, Mangrove Mountain to Gosford and thence to Newcastle via Wyong, Catherine Hill Bay and Swansea.

When motor traffic began to develop from 1905 onwards, Newcastle was already growing to become the next largest city to Sydney in New South Wales. In its first annual report in 1926, the Main Roads Board observed "although 129 years have passed since the discovery of what is now Newcastle, no direct road yet links the two cities." The weight of importance had swung from the farms of Morpeth and Wallis Plains to the highly developed industries at Newcastle, and just as the early settlers on the Hunter agitated for a direct link with Sydney in 1819, so in 1925 the pressure was on for a shorter road linking Sydney and Newcastle.

The construction of the road was one of the first tasks confronting the Main Roads Board when it was constituted in 1925. A review of existing and previous routes showed that none was suitable throughout its whole length as a through road for modern traffic. If the existing road from Newcastle to Gosford were further developed and joined to a new road to be built between Gosford and Sydney via Peat's Ferry, the construction would be justified by the saving in distance alone, namely fifty miles. The work was at once put in hand and was completed in 1930, including the re-establishment of Peat's Ferry with modern vessels. Traffic increased rapidly and not many years passed before it became evident that the ferry must be replaced by a bridge.

A detailed account of construction of the Pacific Highway may be found in the Journal of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, Vol 4, Nos. 5, 6 and 7 written by Mr. T. H. Upton, O.B.E., M.Sc., M.C.E., M.I.E. Aust., who was a member of the Main Roads Board during its construction. The road bridge across the Hawkesbury River at the old Peat's Ferry crossing is described in the May, 1938 and November, 1939, numbers of this Journal, and also in a brochure "The Hawkesbury River Bridge" issued at the time of its opening in 1945.

Acknowledgments.

Material has been used from the following publications:—

- Various volumes of the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, particularly articles by Mr. J. Jervis.
- The Establishment of Direct Road Communication between Sydney and Newcastle—T. H. Upton, O.B.E., M.Sc., M.C.E., M.I.E. Aust.
- Road Engineering and its Development in Australia, 1788-1938—H. H. Newell, C.B.E., M.Inst.C.E., M.I.E. Aust.
- The Newcastle Packets and the Hunter Valley—J. H. M. Abbott.
- The Hawkesbury River Bridge—Pacific Highway—Brochure.
- Newspapers—*The Australian* and *The Sydney Gazette*.—Mitchell Library.
- The N.S.W. Calendar and Directory—1835—Mitchell Library.
- Two Years in New South Wales—P. Cunningham, Surgeon, R.N. (1827)—Mitchell Library.
- Report on Roads, 1827-1855 by Sir Thomas Mitchell—Mitchell Library.

Historical Roads of New South Wales

The Story of the Pacific Highway North of Newcastle

THIS article deals with the history of the section of the Pacific Highway north of Newcastle. The history of the section between Sydney and Newcastle was covered in the article "Roads from Sydney to the Hunter River Valley and Newcastle," published in the March, 1949, number of "Main Roads."

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

Many of the routes of the State Highways of today followed a similar pattern of development—first exploration, and then expansion of settlement. As the country was explored and settlement crept outward from coastal centres, so were these major routes established. The northern coastal area, however, was not traversed by any of the early explorers apart from Oxley's journey from Port Macquarie to Port Stephens in 1818. Settlement spread slowly from different points on the coast inland along the river valleys and it was only in the present century that a continuous road along the coastal belt became a reality. The late development of a coastal route was due to a number of factors, the most important of which were the proximity to the sea and the consequent use of the quicker mode of sea transport; the official limitation placed on the expansion of settlement during the early colonial era, and the difficulties associated with the establishment of a through road owing to the nature of the terrain with its many wide rivers separated by rugged country.

DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE NORTH COAST.

Captain Cook was the first white man to sail up the east coast of Australia. He made the journey in May, 1770, in H.M.S. "Endeavour." On the 7th May he discovered and named Broken Bay, the mouth of the Hawkesbury River, and on the 11th, Port Stephens just north of Newcastle. He continued north, and in his Journal he recorded, on the 15th May:

"At 9 o'clock, being about a league from the land, we saw upon it people and smook in several places . . . A tolerable high point of land bore N.W. by W. distant three miles. This point I called Cape Byron."

Cook called this cape, which is the most easterly point of Australia, after Captain John Byron, who was

one of Cook's predecessors in exploration in the Pacific, having sailed round the world in H.M.S. "Dolphin" in 1764-6. Lying inland from Cape Byron, Cook noted "a remarkable high-peaked mountain," which he named Mt. Warning.

On Wednesday, 16th May, the "Endeavour" reached what is now the boundary point on the coast between New South Wales and Queensland, and Cook named it Point Danger.

No further exploration was made until 1799. In July of that year, Governor Hunter despatched Lieutenant Matthew Flinders in the sloop "Norfolk" to survey the coast. Flinders wrote a book some years later called "A Voyage to Terra Australis," and in it he says:—

"In latitude 29° 43' we discovered a small opening like a river, with an islet lying in the entrance; and at sunset entered a larger, to which I gave the name of Shoal Bay, an appellation which it too well merited." (Shoal Bay is the bay at the mouth of the Clarence River.)

Flinders landed, and examined the bay, but he failed to find the Clarence River at its head. He then sailed up the coast as far as Moreton Bay (Queensland), where he also made a landing. He then returned to Port Jackson, and the following is his published opinion:—

"I must acknowledge myself to have been disappointed in not being able to penetrate into the interior of New South Wales by either of the openings examined in this expedition; but however mortifying the conviction might be, it was then an ascertained fact, that no river of importance intersected the East Coast between the 24th and 30th degree of south latitude." That is, he considered there were no rivers of importance on the whole of the New South Wales coastline.

The vast area drained by the Tweed, Brunswick, Richmond and Clarence rivers, approximately 11,000 square miles of some of the most fertile country in Australia, remained practically undisturbed for many years after the establishment of the colony of New South Wales. This territory was left a blank on published maps, with the exception of imaginary courses of the Tweed and Richmond Rivers. The coastal country from just beyond the Hastings River at Port Macquarie right up to the McPherson Range on the Queensland border had not been explored.

In 1818, John Oxley, Surveyor-General of Lands in New South Wales, led an expedition to explore the interior, and to examine the course of the Macquarie River. Progress was blocked by impassable swamps at a point about 80 miles north of the present site of Warren. Turning east, the party finally crossed the

Great Dividing Range at Mount Sea View, from where they could see the ocean. Oxley, in his Journal, says:

“On the 23rd September, we gained the summit of the most elevated mountain in this extensive range, and from it we were gratified with a view of the ocean, at a distance of 50 miles . . . We had the further gratification to find that we were near the source of a large stream running to the sea. On descending the mountain, we followed the course of the river . . . until the 8th October, when we arrived on the beach near the entrance of the port which received it . . . I took the liberty to name it Port Macquarie in honour of your Excellency, as the original promoter of the expedition.”

Oxley named the river the Hastings, after the Governor-General of India. The party returned overland to Port Stephens via the coast, making the use of a chart which had been drawn by Flinders on his 1799 expedition, and thus being the first persons to traverse portion of the route of the Pacific Highway. Oxley found that although this marine chart was accurate in its outline and principal points, it could not be depended upon to show all the inlets and openings upon the extensive coast line. He said that he would have hesitated to attempt the journey overland down the coast “had the serious difficulties been laid down in the chart.”

The following year (1819), Oxley went with Captain Philip Parker King by sea to survey and map Port Macquarie and the Hastings River. A penal settlement was established at Port Macquarie in 1821.

In October, 1823, Oxley set out to survey Port Curtis, Moreton Bay and Port Bowen, on the Queensland coast, and to find a suitable place for a new penal settlement. He sailed north from Port Jackson and landed at Port Macquarie. John Uniacke, a journalist who accompanied Oxley on the trip, wrote a report on the expedition. An extract reads:—

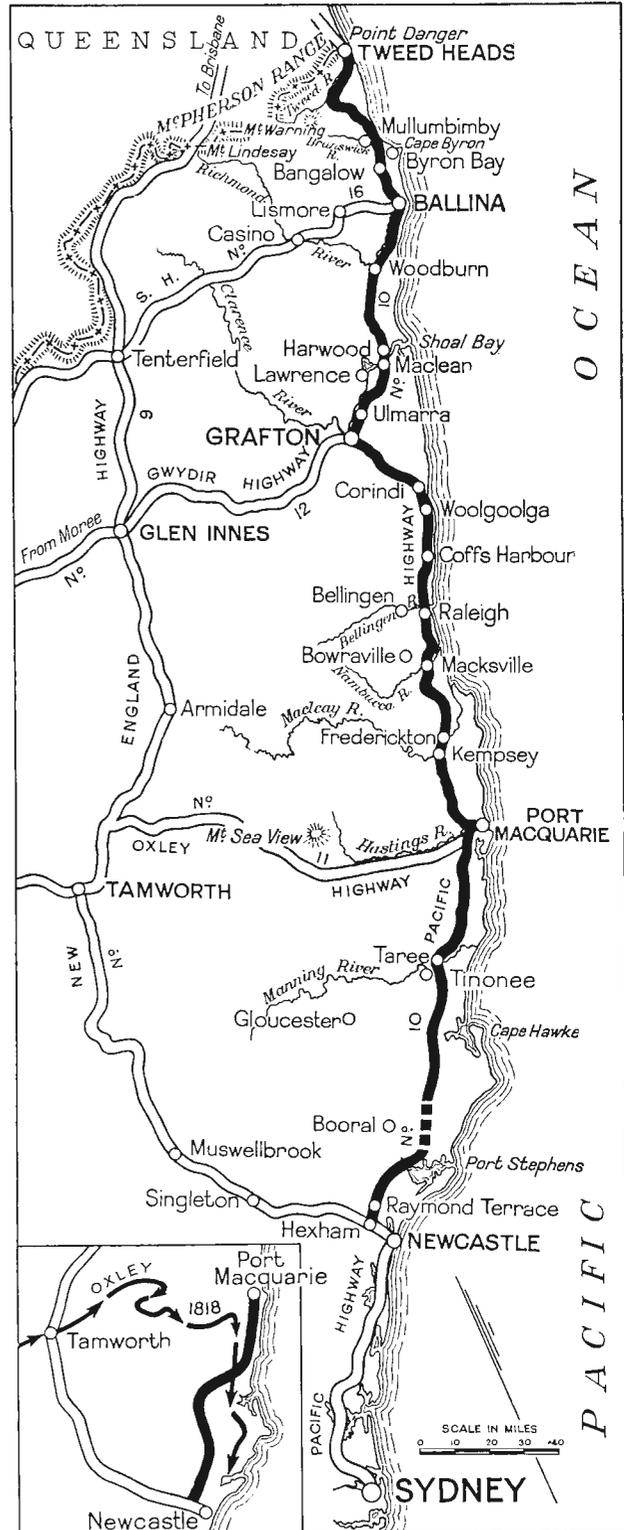
“Early on the morning of the 25th we came to an anchor off Port Macquarie, distant north from Sydney 175 miles. This place had been settled about two years before, as a penal establishment; but the excellence of the soil, the fitness of the climate, and its convenient distance from Sydney, made Government anxious to throw it open to free settlers, in case we should be successful in the object of our expedition.”

On the journey north the ship was compelled to shelter on the northern side of “a small island off Point Danger, about a mile from the land.” This led to Oxley discovering the mouth of the Tweed, and he sailed four miles up the river. Uniacke described the country thus:

“The scenery here exceeded anything I had previously seen in Australia—extending for miles along a deep rich valley clothed with magnificent trees, the beautiful uniformity of which was only interrupted by the turns and windings of the river, which here and there appeared like small lakes, while in the background Mt. Warning reared its barren and singularly shaped peak, forming a striking contrast with the richness of the intermediate country.”

Moreton Bay was the site chosen for the new penal settlement which was made in 1824, and for a time the Tweed seems to have been forgotten.

Locality Map showing present route of the Pacific Highway.



In 1825 some escapees from Moreton Bay made their way overland to Port Macquarie, and thus discovered further rivers. The Commandant at Port Macquarie (Captain Gillman), on November, 18, 1825, wrote to the Colonial Secretary as follows:—

“I have to inform you that four Crown prisoners who state themselves to be deserters from the settlement at Moreton Bay have arrived here. They assert that they have been five weeks on the journey, which they made nearly the whole way within a few miles of the sea-beach. They mention they crossed two very large rivers, besides many smaller ones, and over very large plains many miles in length.”

The *Sydney Gazette* of 1st December, 1825, gives a more elaborate account of the country crossed by the four escapees:—

“They report that they crossed not less than 60 rivers or streams, and that about 30 miles to the northward of Trial Bay, they fell in with a river as large as the Hastings. Plains of a boundless extent are described as lying between Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay, and the country altogether is said to be equal, if not superior to any other part of the continent.”

In 1827, Captain Rous sailed from Moreton Bay in H.M.S. “Rainbow.” He saw the Tweed entrance and a party explored the river. An account of the voyage published in the *Australian Quarterly Journal* of 1828 stated:—

“The banks are generally very high on rocky foundations, covered with thick forest . . . Mount Warning is very conspicuous S.W.½S. at least 20 miles further inland between the place allotted to it on the maps, under whose base it is probable that this river derives its source.”

Rous also discovered the Richmond River, and the *Australian Quarterly Journal* of 1828 reads:—

“The Richmond in lat. 28 deg. 53m. fills the opening in Flinder’s Chart about 14 miles to the southward



Captain Matthew Flinders.

Print from Mitchell Library.

of Cape Byron . . . As you ascend the river . . . as far as the eye could reach to the W.S.W. not a hill could be discovered of any size, and on the whole it appeared a remarkably flat country.”

Rous mentions another river, presumably the Brunswick, eight miles north-west from Cape Byron with “a rocky bar at the entrance, a shallow mouth, and a south arm.”

Rous examined Shoal Bay, which masks the mouth of the Clarence River. He found the entrance to the bay “impracticable during southerly winds owing to the heavy surf which broke across.” Rous, like Flinders, missed discovering the Clarence.

Building at Port Macquarie erected by Convicts for the Medical Officer.



SETTLEMENT.

Along the coast, from Sydney to the Queensland border, settlement proceeded in slow stages. By Government Order, known as "The Limits of Location," settlers were not allowed beyond prescribed frontiers, the policy being to keep down established costs by concentrating population. In 1826 the "limits of location" was at Cape Hawke, midway between Port Hunter and Port Macquarie, the latter being still a penal settlement.

In 1829 settlers were officially allowed to land on the coast as far north as the mouth of the Manning; that is, as far north as Taree. Port Macquarie district was added to the area the next year, 1830.

In 1824 the Australian Agricultural Company was formed in England. It received a Royal Charter granting it one million acres stretching from the Hunter River to the Manning River, and extending to the sea.

The land near the coast was found to be comparatively poor, and in 1832 some half a million acres of this land, regarded as of no particular value, were exchanged for a similar area of pastoral country on the New England tableland. There was, however, still left in the old grant of land, a strip of country some 60 miles long and 12 to 13 miles wide, broadening out to about twice that width on the Manning River frontage, and containing some 464,000 acres. A road from Raymond Terrace to the north ran through the centre of this property, linking several townships which had been established by the company.

St. Thomas Church, Port Macquarie. Erected 1828.



The headquarters of the company were located at Stroud, near the Karuah River. Subsidiary stations were established at Booral and at Gloucester. Communication with Sydney was by road to Raymond Terrace, and thence by river and sea to Sydney.

At a later date the company discontinued the active working of the estate. Some of the land around Booral and Stroud was sold, but the greater part of the estate was allowed to revert to the condition it was in when the company first acquired it. In the early 1900's the company disposed of the balance of the estate and this led to the closer agricultural settlement of this area.

Settlement of the districts drained by the far northern rivers was begun by sea. The real pioneers of these areas were the cedar-getters, who were followed by other timber-getters, who cut cedar, beech, pine, and other valuable softwood timbers growing in the extensive rain forests. The area of forest land which spread from the vicinity of Ballina to the McPherson Range and from Mount Warning and Leycester Creek (Lismore) almost to the sea was known as the "Big Scrub." Farther south, about 20 miles inland from Coff's Harbour, was another large area of rain forest known as the "Dorrigo Scrub."

The cedar-getters sailed up the coast from Sydney and first commenced operations in the 1830's. They had to apply for licences to cut the timber. The licences gave them permission to build huts, but forbade the cultivation of land. Cedar was at first felled from the forest on the river banks, and the logs floated down to the river mouths in rafts. When it became necessary to go further afield, tracks were cut through the forest and these tracks which led to the rivers became the first roads. By the end of the 1880's most of the cedar was cut, except that growing in the State reserves.

There was a gradual infiltration of settlers to the north coast from 1840 onwards. Some of these were men who had moved north with sheep and cattle across the New England tableland, and turned east at Armidale and Tenterfield, where they crossed the Dividing Range towards the coast.

The first town to be established on the far north coast was Grafton, on the Clarence River, which was proclaimed a township in 1850. However, it was not until 1855 that any town lots were sold. In that year the Government sent surveyors to prepare plans for Casino, Lismore, Codrington and Deptford (now Ballina), on the Richmond River.

No land for farming was sold by the Government till 1856, when a few farms were sold near Grafton. In 1857 a few more were sold, both on the Clarence and Richmond Rivers. On the Clarence the land offered for sale was near Grafton, and at Ulmarra and Lawrence. That on the Richmond was near the new towns of Casino, Lismore, Codrington and Deptford.

The Land Act of 1861 allowed free selectors to purchase land on terms and it made possible the further opening up of the land on the North Coast.

At late as 1883 the land around Coff's Harbour had not been settled. In a North Coast newspaper, *The*

Tribune, of November 16, 1883, a reporter who set out on a tour of the settlers along the coast, had this to say:—

“The whole of this rich brush land would have been occupied by a thriving population had it not been reserved from selection as a cedar reserve. It is without doubt some of the very richest land now in the hands of the Crown to be found in the colony. But I am glad to say it is now being cut up into farms, and I understand will shortly be thrown open for selection. . . . Coff’s Harbour could be made as snug a little port as could be desired.”

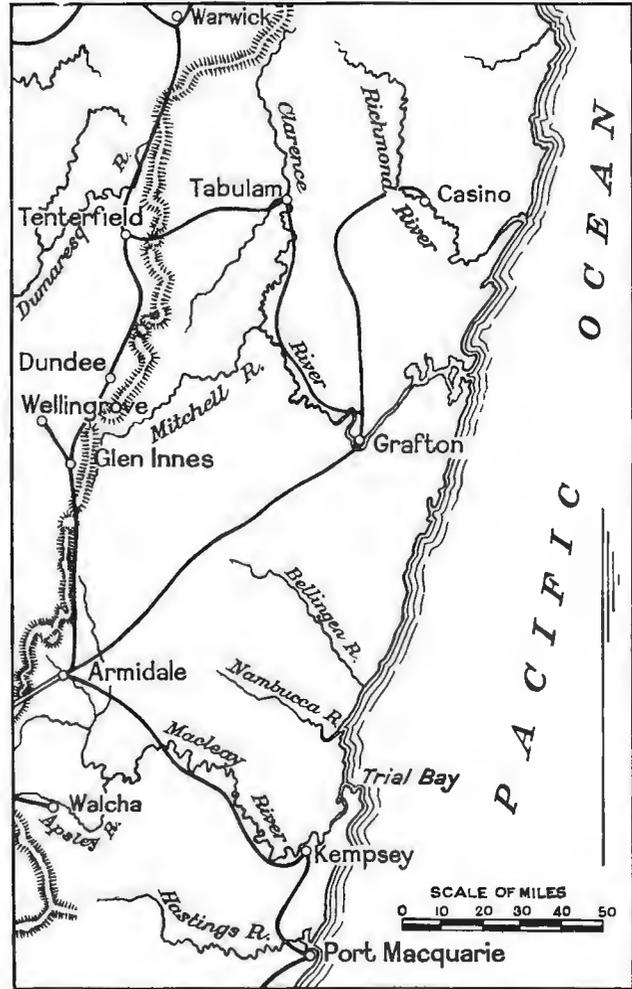
One of the major factors in the more intensive development of the North Coast was the introduction of refrigeration at the end of last century. Dairy products could thus be preserved for transport to the city and other markets, and it encouraged settlement of large areas of the North Coast adapted for that form of production and called for the extension of roads for the quick delivery of produce.

ROAD DEVELOPMENT.

All connections with the settlement at Sydney from places on the North Coast, were originally made by sea. Small ships traded up and down the coast, and much of the cargo, particularly that of timber, was carried by sailing vessels. The development of the coastal road from Newcastle to the Queensland border was very slow.

By 1840 a well defined road ran to the towns of the Australian Agricultural Company—Booral, Stroud, and Gloucester—from Raymond Terrace, which was an important centre of communication. Situated on the Hunter River, at its junction with the Williams River, it was within easy access of Newcastle, Maitland and the Hunter River districts, and had regular communication with Sydney by sea.

In 1857 Captain Martindale, Commissioner for Internal Communication, published a map showing that the coast road from Raymond Terrace had been extended beyond Gloucester to Port Macquarie and



Road System 1857, as shown by Captain Martindale’s Map.

Kempsey. From Kempsey a road ran inland to Armidale, then north-east to Grafton. From Grafton a road ran north to Casino, where it terminated.

Stroud House, Stroud. Originally occupied by Robert Dawson, Manager of the Australian Agricultural Company.





Coastal scene from the Pacific Highway, near Hayes Creek, north of Coff's Harbour.

In 1866 the *New South Wales Gazetteer and Road Guide* showed that the road had been extended four miles north of Kempsey to Fredrickton. In 1866 Grafton and its nearest neighbour, Maclean, twenty-eight miles downstream on the Clarence River, were served by a regular steamer service. The overland mail route to Grafton was via the New England Highway (as it is known to-day), to Armidale and thence through Ebor and Nymboida.

By 1883, although the coast road had pushed north of Fredrickton, it was in a primitive state. A correspondent of a North Coast newspaper, writing in 1883 of a trip from Coff's Harbour to Grafton, said he rode through Woolgoolga and Corindi by a road that ran close to the sea shore, and which wound over some beautiful downs. He ended his article thus:

"From Corindi I started for Grafton, distant about thirty-eight miles, but I missed my track. The labour and deprivations the settlers have undergone with so much courage should certainly win the sympathy of the Government and induce them to give the settlers the necessary outlet for their produce."

In 1886 Mr. W. S. Campbell was sent by the Government to make a report on the district of the North Coast rivers. In company with a surveyor he left Ballina and travelled on horse and on foot, for a period of about six weeks, covering between 600 and 700 miles. An extract from his report reads:

"Many of the roads of access were narrow tracks like tunnels bored through the vegetation, the end of the cut vines dangling just above one's head, and along the sides of the track, the long tentacle-like prickly thongs of the lawyer-cane were ever swaying about ready to tear one's hands or face, or pull off one's hat . . . Good roads are badly required through the whole district."

In 1893 Bangalow came into existence in the centre of the "Big Scrub" country. There were no roads in and round Bangalow, only bridle tracks that had to be cut through dense forest.

A map of coach and railway routes published in 1895 shows that the North Coast road ran from Hexham to Raymond Terrace, Stroud, Gloucester, Tinonee,

Small area of original rain forest or "scrub," preserved on Stotts Island in the Tweed River. View across south arm of river from the Pacific Highway between Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads.





"The Valley of the Tweed," by Elioth Gruner (1882-1939).

Original in the possession of the National Art Gallery.

Taree, Port Macquarie, Kempsey, Fredrickton, Coff's Harbour and Grafton. From Grafton the traveller going north had to take a steamer downstream along the Clarence River to either Lawrence or Harwood. From Lawrence there was a coach route to Casino and Lismore. From Lismore a railway ran via Bangalow to Murwillumbah, where the traveller had to take another coach to proceed into Queensland.

From Harwood a coach ran to Woodburn, where the coach route terminated. A map of coaching routes published in 1914 showed that the route beyond Woodburn had been extended to Ballina and Bangalow.

In 1899 W. S. Campbell made another report on the Northern Rivers District. Of the roads he said:

"Jolting along the roads for thirty or forty miles will have a tendency to knock the sentiment out of even the most enthusiastic in search of the beautiful, for the method now adopted of making roads throughout the whole district is cruel in the extreme, not only to man, but to the unfortunate horses as well."

The first railway to be opened on the North Coast was a line between Casino and Murwillumbah, the portion between Lismore and Murwillumbah being opened in 1894 and the extension to Casino in 1903.

This railway is now a branch of the main North Coast line. It was 1911 before the first portion of the main North Coast line was opened. It ran from Maitland to Dungog, and was gradually extended; Dungog via Gloucester to Taree being added in 1913, Taree to Wauchope, South Grafton to Glenreagh, and Raleigh to Coff's Harbour in 1915. By 1923 Sydney and the northern rivers were connected continuously by rail, except for the crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton. The bridge over the Clarence River was completed in 1932, being a combined rail and road bridge.

In 1909 it was still considered quicker and more comfortable to make the trip from Sydney to the border by sea, although the *North Coast Guide* of that year states that "Upon the whole the roads are good throughout . . . Good horses and comfortable vehicles are available at moderate cost at the many livery stables in all the larger towns along the road." According to this guide-book the road ran from Newcastle, Hexham, Raymond Terrace, via Booral, Stroud, Gloucester, Taree, Port Macquarie, Kempsey, to Macksville. From Macksville it went via Bowraville and Bellingen to Coff's Harbour, and through Woolgoolga and Corindi to Grafton. From Grafton it ran to Ulmarra, Maclean, Woodburn, Ballina, and via Byron Bay and

Mullumbimby to Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads. There were few bridges over the rivers, crossings being made by ferries. It is of interest to note that the bridge over the Macleay River at Kempsey, which was opened in 1900, contains the longest timber spans built in Australia, each 154 feet long.

In the early 1920's, when motor vehicles came into general use, many miles of the main North Coast road consisted of earth formation only, creating a dust nuisance in dry weather, and quagmires in wet.

When the Main Roads Board was established in 1925, its policy was to ensure that the correct locations for routes were determined. This involved deferring the building of bituminous pavements on sections of road requiring extensive deviation and realignment, and the continued maintenance of these sections with gravel surfaces, pending such reconstruction. Concurrently with the relocation of many sections of the road, a vigorous campaign was undertaken to improve existing surfaces on lengths of road which did not require relocation, including the provision of dust-free surfaces, particularly in and near towns and through areas having intensive agricultural settlement. This policy has been continued by the Department of Main Roads.

The Pacific Highway, which is 592 miles long, has now been provided with a dust-free pavement (bituminous or concrete) over a total length of 431 miles.

Bridging the rivers has been an important feature of the improvements carried out on the Pacific High-

way by the Department of Main Roads. At the inception of the Main Roads Board there were eleven crossings of waterways by ferries north of Newcastle. Since 1925 seven of these ferries have been replaced by bridges, *viz.*: over the Manning River at Taree, the Nambucca River at Macksville, the Bellinger River at Raleigh, the north arm of the Clarence River at Mororo, the Tweed River at Barney's Point, and the Tweed River at Boyd's Bay. To-day all streams have been bridged except for the crossings of the Hunter River at Hexham, where a bridge to replace the ferry service is now being built, the Hastings River at Blackman's Point, the Clarence River at Harwood, and the Richmond River at Burns Point.

On 22nd August, 1952, the section of the Pacific Highway from 12 Mile Creek, near Booral, via Stroud and Gloucester to Taree, was deproclaimed as part of the Highway and proclaimed as Trunk Road No. 90. The road from 12 Mile Creek via Karuah and Buldelah to Taree was proclaimed as the route of the Pacific Highway in its stead.

Details of the works carried out on the Pacific Highway and of the proposals for further improvements were given in the March, 1947, and June, 1950, issues of *Main Roads*.

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