

**THEMATIC HISTORY  
OF  
EUROBODALLA SHIRE**

by

Dr. J.W. Turner

August 1996

**Hunter History Consultants  
2/49 Telford Street  
Newcastle. N.S.W. 2300  
Phone or Fax: 26-5129**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acknowledgments and Sources</b> .. .. .	4
<b>Overview</b> .. .. .	5
 <b>Historical Themes</b>	
1. Aboriginal Culture and Contact with White Settlers .	9
2. European Exploration of the Eurobodalla Area ..	15
3. Convicts and Eurobodalla.. .. .	16
4. Pastoralism .. .. .	16
5. Agriculture .. .. .	18
6. Land Tenure.. .. .	19
7. Mining .. .. .	21
8. Fishing .. .. .	23
9. Changing the Environment .. .. .	24
10. Country Towns .. .. .	26
Broulee.. .. .	26
Moruya .. .. .	26
Batemans Bay .. .. .	27
Nelligen .. .. .	27
Nerrigundah .. .. .	29
Narooma and Wagonga.. .. .	29

	Bodalla .. .. .	30
	Tilba Tilba and Central Tilba .. .. .	31
	Granite Town .. .. .	32
	Mogo .. .. .	32
	Eurobodalla .. .. .	33
	Town Population Changes 1971-1991 .. .. .	33
11.	Migration .. .. .	33
12.	Ethnic Influences .. .. .	34
13.	Transport .. .. .	34
14.	Communication .. .. .	36
15.	Utilities .. .. .	37
16.	Industrialisation .. .. .	38
17.	Commerce .. .. .	39
18}	Science and Technology .. .. .	39
19}		
20.	Growth of Democratic Government .. .. .	40
21.	Law and Order .. .. .	41
22.	Defence .. .. .	41
23.	Housing .. .. .	43
24.	Social Institutions .. .. .	43
25.	Cultural Life.. .. .	44
26.	Leisure and Tourism .. .. .	45
27.	Sport .. .. .	47
28.	Health .. .. .	47
29.	Welfare .. .. .	47
30.	Religion .. .. .	48

---

31.	Education .. .. .	48
32.	Death .. .. .	49
33.	Important People .. .. .	50
	<b>Select Bibliography</b> .. .. .	<b>55</b>
	<b>Notes</b> .. .. .	<b>57</b>

---

## THEMATIC HISTORY OF EUROBODALLA SHIRE

by

**J.W. Turner**

### **Acknowledgments and Sources**

After writing a good many other heritage study histories I was surprised by my first contacts with Eurobodalla, firstly by the richness of the history already written and secondly by the enthusiasm of the three historical societies, those of Moruya, Narooma and Batemans Bay. The very existence of three societies in a single shire is unusual in my experience and, I suppose, the richness of the written history may be seen as both a reflection of the enthusiasm of the local societies and a contributor to that enthusiasm.

Given the plethora of publications available, the main task in preparing this brief account has been one of selection and compression, whereas with some other similar areas, the problem has been finding the material.

Although the main sources used are listed at the end of the report, an earlier acknowledgment must be made of my debt to H.J. Gibbney's *Eurobodalla: History of the Moruya District* (Shire of Eurobodalla, 1989) and the excellent *Eurobodalla Almanac* compiled for the Moruya and District Historical Society by Noel Warry in 1991. The Shire is to be congratulated on the quality and scope of these publications.

J.W. Turner

August 1996

---

## THE HISTORICAL THEMES OF EUROBODALLA SHIRE AN OVERVIEW

For tens of thousands of years before European explorers visited the Eurobodalla area, Aboriginal people had exploited its abundant natural resources, living as hunter-gatherers along its extensive coastline and on the fringes of its other waterways. Familiar with every aspect of the flora and fauna of the coastal plain squeezed between the Great Dividing Range and the Pacific Ocean, they were perfectly adapted to the region. For the European settlers who began to penetrate the district in the 1820s it was at first an unknown: they hoped a living could be made from its timber and arable land despite its distance from market places and the serious transport obstructions caused by numerous waterways and a hilly hinterland.

Before gold was discovered in the 1850s in the mountains on the western fringe and along its waterways, the settlers were almost all small farmers for the area did not attract the colonial gentry who were then turning Eastern Australia into a vast sheep run. Significantly, the first farmer was an Irish tailor, Francis Flanagan, who was initially rejected by Governor Darling because he was not a gentleman by the standards of the ruling elite. When he applied for a land grant, the Governor "informed him that it was not the practice to give land to people of his class ...." <sup>1</sup> However, Flanagan was representative of those who would follow for the Shire in the last century was, par excellence, the domain of a class of hardworking small farmers: they were the backbone of the community and there were few who lived by wages alone.

The towns needed to provide services for a sparse population of self-sufficient farmers would have been elementary, indeed, if it had not been for goldmining and the timber industry. Gold mines gave Moruya the stimulus it needed between 1850 and 1870 but in the next decade their output fell away sharply. With gold failing, the district fell back on its extensive forests of spotted gum, stringy bark and ironbark. These became the seemingly endless resource for steam sawmills which were set up after 1850 to provide Australia with timber and to yield the raw materials for the boats and ships built in the district.

Apart from the produce of the mills, there were the railway sleepers cut and shaped in their thousands by a small army of the hardest, most industrious men in Australia. These were the sleeper cutters who worked in remote locations to make rail travel possible in those parts of the world which did not have the excellent hardwoods of New South Wales.

Although gold and timber helped the regional economy along, dairying developed into the district's main industry. Handicapped at first by their distance from the Sydney market, the settlers began to manufacture cheese. With T.S. Mort's Bodalla Estate showing the way, they built up an industry which stood them in good stead until the second half of the Twentieth Century. As Gibbney noted, "the name Bodalla soon became synonymous with the highest quality dairy produce". (p.104)

Responding to the endeavours of farmers, goldminers and timbercutters, little towns began to develop. Thus by 1890 the town of Moruya had about a thousand residents, considerably more than the villages of the area: Nelligen (about 500), Batemans Bay (about 250), Mogo (about 200).

The development of the industries and commerce of the district might have been more rapid and continuous if it had not been for its transportation problems. Just as the people depended on the ocean to link them to the outside world, so the reliability and efficiency of shipping services were governed in part by the availability of secure harbours. Yet Moruya was cursed by a shifting harbour bar and there were problems at some of the other ports, as well. Unexpected interruptions to the area's main form of transport for quite long periods did not auger well for trade and commerce. To make matters worse, floods and droughts came along with great frequency, a plague on both farmers and townsfolk.

Given the geography of parts of Eurobodalla Shire, flooding was bound to be a major problem and this is amply borne out by the Moruya and District Historical Society's *Eurobodalla Almanac* which records scores of serious floods between white settlement and 1990. Immense damage was done by these floods which were often caused by the co-incidence of heavy rain and strong easterly seas. The 1925 flood, though to be the most severe to that time, produced havoc in Moruya:

When the flood subsided next day the damage was assessed: All buildings on the river bank including the big cargo sheds of the shipping

company were crazy ruins fit only for demolition. Most of the water tanks in the town were polluted by silt and there was a temporary water shortage. Almost every building in the town centre had suffered some damage. The Yaragee flats, hitherto some of the richest farming land in the district, were covered with sand and temporarily ruined.<sup>2</sup>

With savage irony nature also inflicted severe droughts on the Shire, destroying crops and farmers' incomes and affecting the health of residents who had to depend on impure water supplies.

In the present century changing technology boosted the fortunes of the Shire: its deficits became assets as new transport systems and changing lifestyles transformed life in Australia. Before the rise of the motor vehicle, dairying in the Shire was declining, timber shipbuilding had largely disappeared and the gold of the area seemed to have been exhausted. Population was also declining as people moved to the cities in search of employment or to other more promising farming areas. However, as motor transport developed, governments began to improve the network of roads and bridges and Eurobodalla Shire's prospects were transformed.

The Princes Highway, vastly improving north-south access to the Shire, and improved road links to the interior, particularly the Australian Capital Territory, made the waterways of the south coast increasingly accessible to city dwellers keen to escape the confines and crush of life in the capitals.

Isolation, which had been a curse, was now an asset as first the motor vehicle, and then the passenger aircraft, made it possible for increasing numbers of people to holiday in or retire to the far south coast. Moreover, the tractor, bulldozer and timber jinker revolutionised the transportation of timber so that at least one of the district's traditional industries was able to expand.

Population trends indicate the effects of these changes. In 1911 Eurobodalla Shire had 4,226 residents, a figure that may not have included its Aborigines. There was slow growth in the next two decades but then a decline to 4,620 in 1941. After the war the population began to grow again and this time the trend was not reversed. By 1971 there were 8,600 in the Shire and ten years later, 16,500, while the population in 1991 was 27,100. As this growth was based on tourism and the desire for coastal



---

living, most growth has occurred in the seaside locations. In 1971 Batemans Bay had 2,100, ten years later this figure had grown to 4,900 and in 1991 the census showed 8,300 in Batemans Bay.

Not even the recent decline of the beef industry and restrictions on timber production could reverse this strong growth trend: Eurobodalla Shire has some of the living conditions most valued in the Twentieth Century and is particularly attractive to retirees.

## 1. ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND CONTACT WITH WHITE SETTLERS

The first Europeans to travel along the Eurobodalla coast were the survivors of the ship-wrecked *Sydney Cove* in 1797. Their supercargo, W. Clark, described the Yuin people of the area and noted their apparent dependence on sea foods. Well-received by these people, whom Gibbney believes may have been from Tuross, Clark wrote:

Met fourteen natives who conducted us to their miserable abodes in the wood adjoining to a large lagoon and kindly treated us with mussels, for which unexpected civility, we made them some presents. These people seem better acquainted with the laws of hospitality than any of their countrymen ... for to their benevolent treat was added an invitation to remain with them for the night ... As far as we could understand these natives were of a different tribe from those we had seen and were then at war with them. They possessed a liberality to which the others were strangers and freely gave us a part of the little they had ...<sup>3</sup>

These comments reveal the typical misunderstandings of the settlers, who could not comprehend that the hunter-gatherers really had an abundance of food and that their shelters were quite adequate for people accustomed to the climate and needing to move regularly to maintain their food supplies.

The Yuin are the Aboriginal people of the far south coast of New South Wales. They have lived in this region since The Dreaming, claiming the country from Cape Howe to the Shoalhaven and inland to the Great Dividing Range and possibly beyond.

As Merv Penrith, Chairperson of the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council explains in a submission to this study, Yuin "culture has always been very rich, diverse and adaptable to survival ..." and central to that culture since the Dreamtime has been the relationship of the Yuin to their land, particularly to Gulaga (Mt. Dromedary), the focus of their cultural and spiritual life.

There may have been conflict with other Europeans before the next recorded contact between whites and blacks because the crew of the *Fly* were attacked without provocation at Batemans Bay when they were searching for water in 1808 and three sailors were killed. Thirteen years later another group of mariners were attacked in the same area and Governor Macquarie arranged for a reconnaissance of Batemans Bay late in 1821, possibly to investigate the cause of this attack.

This expedition, under the command of Lieutenant Robert Johnston R.N., discovered the Clyde River and explored it twenty five miles to the point where navigation was no longer possible. In January 1822 Alexander Berry, a natural scientist, also sailed into the Clyde and either he or Johnston named it after the Scottish River Clyde. Johnston enjoyed good relations with the Aborigines on this occasion though he was told of earlier clashes between the races.

After the arrival of the first settlers in 1828 there was a renewal of conflict, the first signs being the spearing of cattle. In 1830 the settlers complained that they were losing cattle at Batemans Bay, Mullenderra and south of Mt. Dromedary. This was a common occurrence during the early stages of white occupation of tribal territory and the settlers pressed the Governor to make a show of force against the offenders.

According to Gibbney, Lieutenant Lachlan Macalister, who led a patrol into the area, discovered the cause of these spearings and restored peace in an intelligent and humane fashion. Unfortunately, this source was accepted at face value, leading to the claim that this was the end of resistance to the settlers. In this Gibbney was mistaken for, as Michael Organ shows in *A Documentary History of the Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850*, there was a massacre at Murrumurang in 1832. Hugh Thompson, a local contractor, witnessed the massacre of a number of Aborigines, including a pregnant woman and an elderly couple, by a party of settlers led by Joseph Berryman, the overseer at a station near Murrumurang Point about 20 kilometres south of Ulladulla. After several months of procrastination by the Governor it appears that Berriman was not even tried for these murders and, as Organ shows,

It was ultimately up to the Governor and his administration (including the Attorney General) to protect the Aborigines. In this instance they failed in that duty, and it was not until the famous Myall Creek massacre of 1838 that they pursued the rights of Aborigines in a court of law to the fullest extent.

It would appear, from Laurelle Pacey's research, that the racial conflict which is recorded for other parts of the Shire did not occur in its southern portion:

Over the next thirty years [1797-1827] they [the Yuin] had contact with sealers, whalers and sailors, and sometimes with some conflict. There are no known records of any such contact near the Tilba district.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, as Pacey and Hoyer show, good relations between the settlers and the Umbarra people of Wallaga Lake were to continue long after first contact:

Settlement of the Tilba district occurred without the conflict and violence seen in some other parts of Australia at this time. There appears to have been a good relationship between local Kooris and the early settlers. They all were part of the Tilba Community and went to many of the same sports days and social events.<sup>5</sup>

In the absence of population statistics for Aboriginals in the last century it is difficult to assess the impact of European diseases on the Yuin but it is likely to have been severe as it was in other areas.

As Howard Billing points out in a submission for this thematic history, archaeologists estimate that up to two thirds of the Aboriginals may have died before close contact with European settlers. Moreover, the process of settlement "forcibly dispossessed Aboriginal people of their land. This destroyed complex spiritual and economic cultures evolved over millennia."

According to Deborah Rose, estimates of the Aboriginal population of the Far South Coast range from Radcliffe Brown's low estimate of 3,600 to Butlin's high figure of 11,800 and she believed that loss of life among the Yuin was so severe that the 1788 total may have been reduced by 95% by the 1840s. Such a tragic loss of life would have been due to a range of causes including violence, disease and the loss of tribal land. It is not possible to provide population estimates for the study area but Rose describes the effects of white settlement on the Aboriginal population as "The Great Dying".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, by sheer determination and skilful adaptation the Yuin were able to survive in greater numbers than in some other coastal areas despite the disruption of their way of life and dispossession of much of their tribal land. Thus there has been continuity of Aboriginal presence in their original tribal territory.

From the arrival of the first settlers the Yuin accepted employment on a casual basis but in the last century rarely worked permanently for the newcomers according to William Bayley in *Behind Broulee*: "although some assisted in haymaking, reaping and sheepworking, they were undependable as a means of supplying labour."<sup>7</sup> However, Pacey and Hoyer point out that in the Tilba district the Aboriginals took permanent

employment on farms and as domestics and also worked as sharefarmers. Their detailed knowledge of the resources of the area and their special skills, made them invaluable at times. As guides, their assistance was essential and in 1841, when the schooner *Rover* was cast ashore in Broulee Bay, they helped to form a human chain which saved ten lives. According to Bayley, the Aborigines formed "the seaward end of the chain": their courage was rewarded with special plates.

Intermarriage between whites and blacks was not uncommon and many residents of the Shire are descended from the Yuin. Children of mixed race were attending Narooma Public School in 1891 and such children were not excluded as in some other districts of New South Wales. This suggests that race relations were more harmonious in the study area than in some other areas before the intrusion of the Aborigines Protection Board which was formed in 1884.

According to Rose,

The Yuin people's effort peacefully to accommodate Europeans in their midst and to adapt their own lives to circumstances which were beyond their control can be measured as a success. Their success, however, was to be systematically destroyed by the Board which existed allegedly to protect them.

An investigation of the History of the Aborigines of the Far South Coast of New South Wales in the Nineteenth Century, a thesis by Stuart Cameron, shows that by the 1880s the Yuin

had mastered the full range of pioneering skills. Most were employed, at least seasonally, and a few families lived independently on their own blocks of land which they farmed in the European style.

He believes that they

seem to have established for themselves a valuable place in a new society. Minimally, Yuin people were valued for their labour, of course, but they were also given credit for their tracking abilities, hunting and sporting abilities, and musical skills.

Claiming to assist the Aborigines, the Protection Board set out to concentrate them in settlements and to achieve this excluded them from land ownership as

---

individuals, condemning them to the status of "landless rural labourers or mere dependents of the Board".

The principal Protection Board reserve in the study area was established at Wallaga Lake although there were at least eleven by 1902 including four at Bodalla, two at Moruya, two at Batemans Bay and one at Currawan and Nelligen. The published list of Aboriginal Reserves in New South Wales does not reveal the fate of all these reserves but most were revoked after Protection Board policy changed in 1918, to favour the dispersal of settlements on reserves.

For two decades the Protection Board moved Aborigines to these reserves but from 1909 a change in policy saw able-bodied people forced off the reserves to seek work mainly as farm labourers and domestic servants. According to Norm Hoyer the Wallaga Lake people tended to fare better than Aborigines in some other areas, remaining "respected members of the community during this period and throughout the subsequent decades". Rose shows that the Wallaga Lake Reserve remained open and its families were not dispersed.

In the harrowing conditions of reserve life the Yuin ceased to practice their traditional tribal ceremonies and according to Billing, initiations were last performed at Mumballa in 1910. Moruya and District Historical Society records show that the last Yuin to speak his own language, Narramurrao (Percy Davis) died in 1968. This process was accelerated by the forced removal of Aboriginal children into the Board's training homes. The effects of this practice on the Wallaga people have not been fully researched but some Wallaga Lake women condemned these "kidnappings" in conversation with Rose.

During the Depression of the 1930s many Aborigines suffered further discrimination at the hands of the N.S.W. Government, being denied the "dole" given to other citizens and the population of Wallaga Lake Reserve grew from 73 in 1921 to 159 in 1939.

In 1933 the Protection Board was empowered to force people onto reserves and keep them there. Their wages could be received by the Board and it had the

---

power to terminate their employment. Reserves were managed by Board officials and residents were subjected to surveillance and interference in their private affairs.

### **The Aboriginal Welfare Board**

In 1940 the Aboriginal Protection Board was renamed the Aboriginal Welfare Board which was influenced strongly by anthropologists including A.P. Elkin. Nevertheless the new board continued to pursue a goal of assimilation and the eradication of Aboriginal culture. This aim was pursued by encouraging families to leave Wallaga Reserve, as D. Jordan points out, and "to cut themselves off from their family, their kin, their place of birth, their culture, and indeed their Aboriginal identity." Nevertheless, those who left the reserves at this time managed to retain their Aboriginal identity, according to Rose, and to re-assert it when conditions permitted.

In 1967 the Federal Government took over responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and all Aborigines were granted citizenship. In 1969 the Welfare Board was abolished and since then the Wallaga Reserve has become the property of the Yuin under the N.S.W. Land Rights Legislation. Another important development was been the creation of Aboriginal Land Councils, providing leadership and representing Aboriginal people in negotiations with State and Federal Governments.

As part of the cultural and spiritual revival of the Aboriginal people of Eurobodalla Shire, a thorough investigation of their history appears desirable as this thematic history, limited as it is by definition, has been handicapped by a scarcity of resources.

---

## 2. EUROPEAN EXPLORATION OF THE EUROBODALLA AREA

Although James Cook in 1770 noted some topographical features of the Eurobodalla region, and named Mt. Dromedary and Batemans Bay, it was not traversed by Europeans until 1797 when a party of shipwrecked sailors made their way up the coast from Gippsland to Sydney. Later that year George Bass examined the Tuross Lake but no official interest in the area was shown until 1821 when Lieutenant Johnston, R.N., explored Batemans Bay on the orders of Governor Macquarie, naming Snapper Island and sailing up the Clyde River.

Johnston's reports on the area inspired a further investigation by Alexander Berry, Hamilton Hume and Thomas Davison in the *Snapper* and by Charles Throsby in search of a land route from Lake George to Batemans Bay. These early reports did not lead to white settlement in the study area, probably because of its relative isolation from Sydney and the interior and a scarcity of arable land between Murramurang and Batemans Bay.

Given the rapid geographic expansion of the Colony in the 1820s, the arrival of settlers on the far south coast was inevitable. In piecemeal fashion the more accessible south coast sites began to be occupied and in 1825 the Moruya River was recognised as the southern limit of areas approved for settlement. To facilitate the process the survey department undertook a survey of the Deua River Valley and a detailed exploration of the coast from Port Jackson to the Moruya River. The expedition from Araluen to the coast was led by Robert Hoddle who returned via Buckenboursa to the Clyde River. This survey was completed by March 1828.

The coastal survey which was conducted by Thomas Florance between April and July 1828, provided the Government with an accurate account of the coast as far south as Batemans Bay. With the Hoddle and Florance surveys complete, landseekers would be drawn to the far south coast and the Government would be able to accurately locate the sites they selected for settlement. To regularise the alienation of Crown Land the area available was divided into nineteen provisional counties and the most southerly, St. Vincent, was terminated at Moruya River. (Maps 1, 2 & 3)



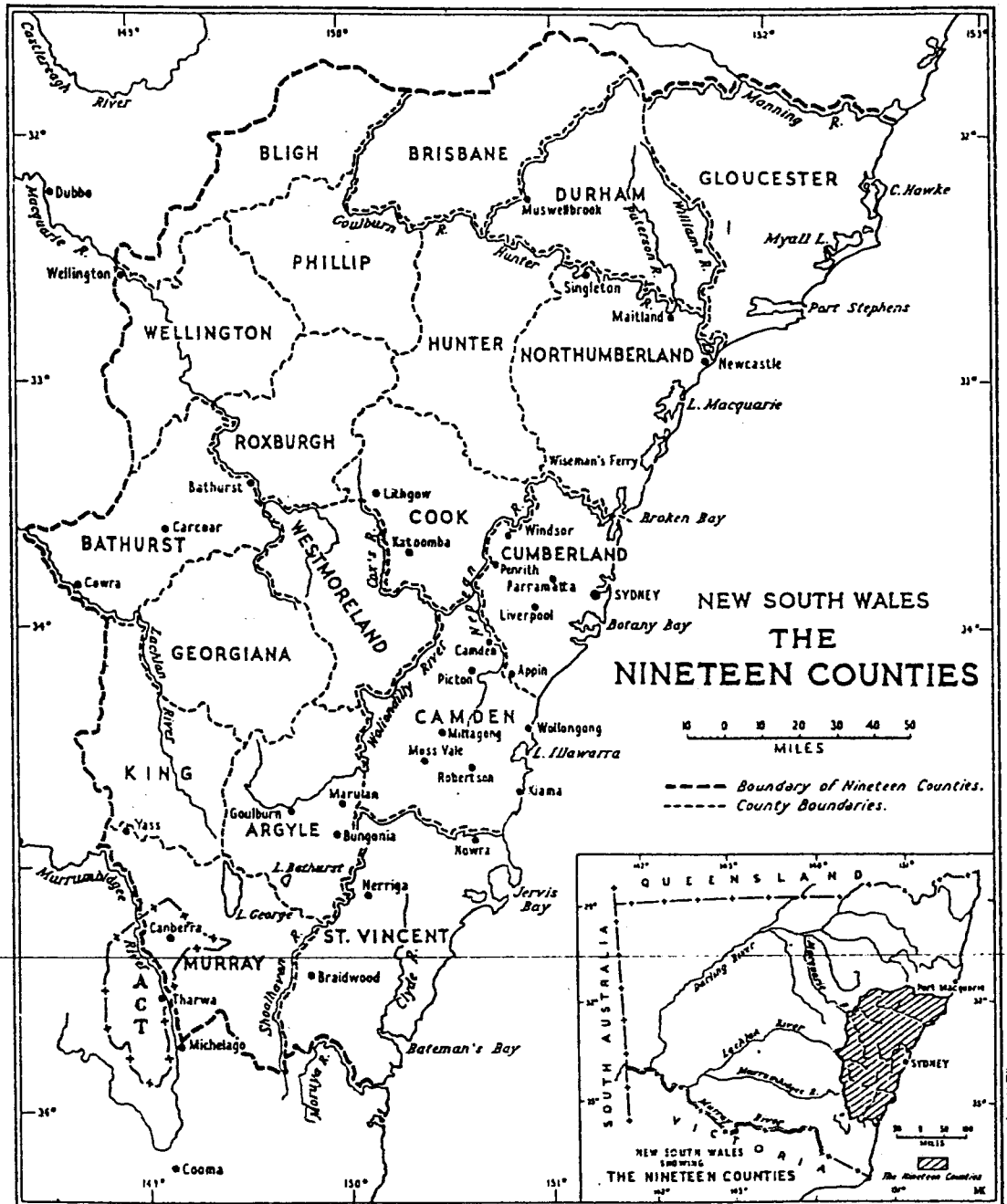


FIGURE I *New South Wales: the Nineteen Counties*

MAP 1

From T.M. Perry, *Australia's First Frontier*  
 showing the limits of approved settlement from 1825

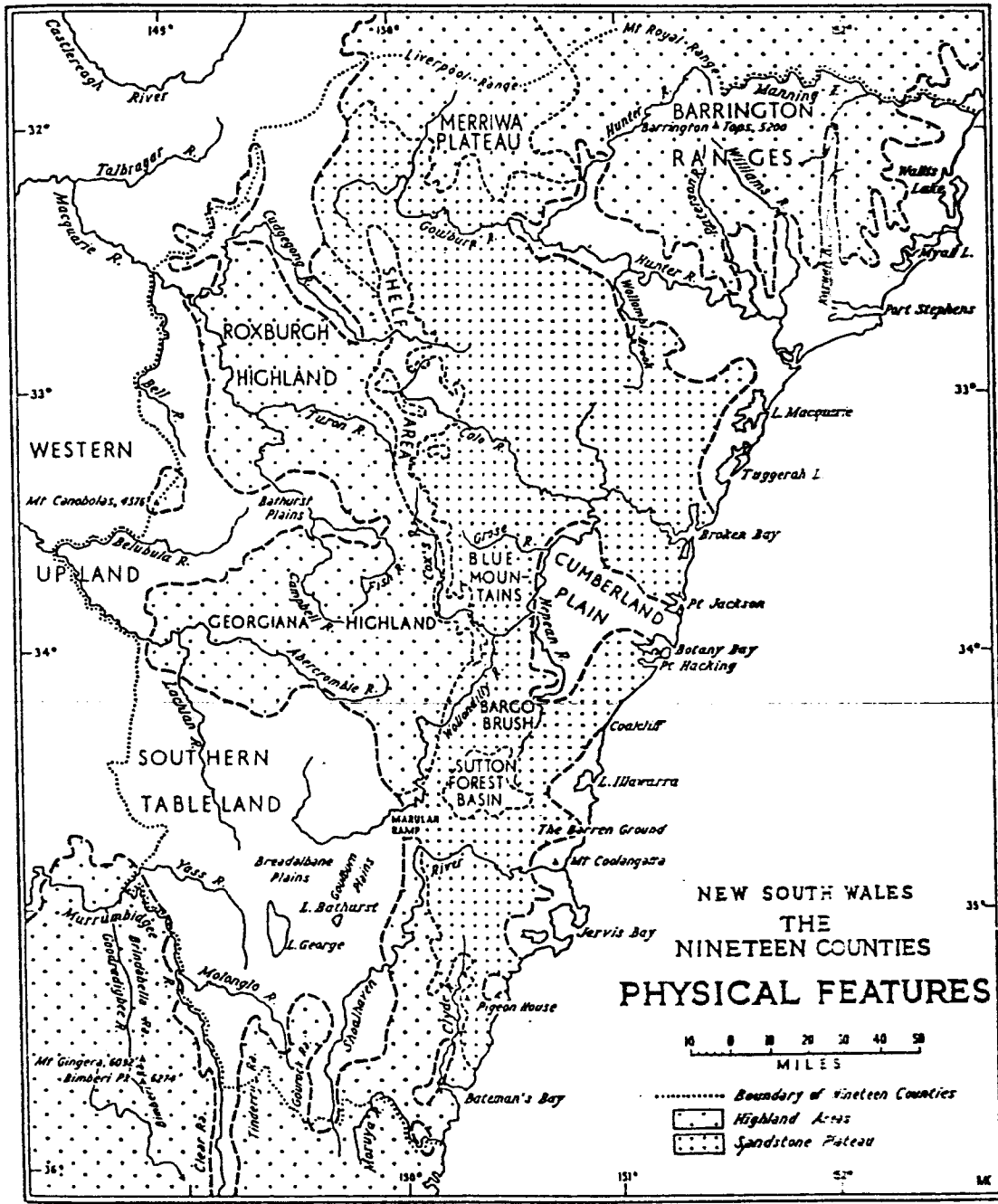
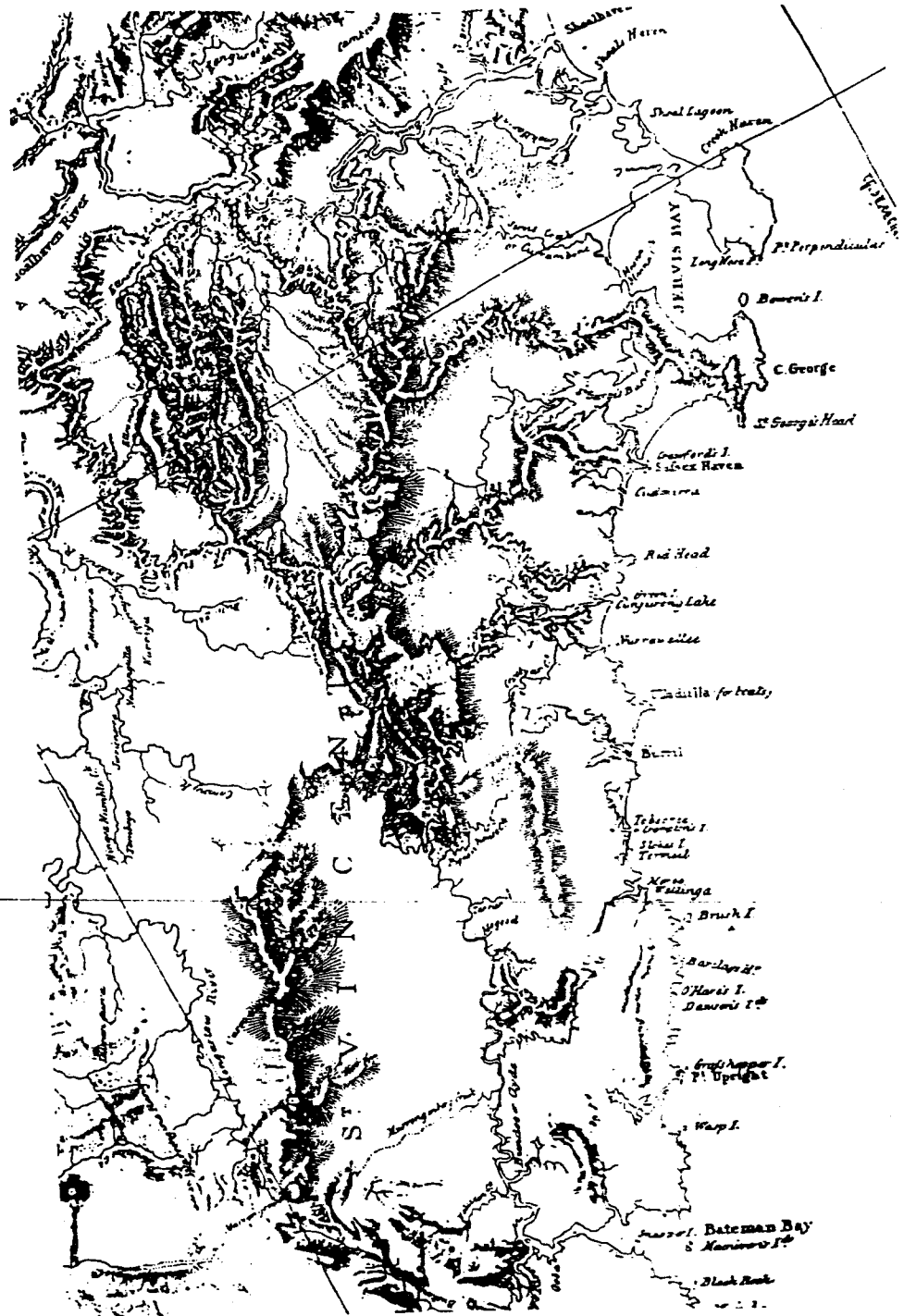


FIGURE 2 *The Nineteen Counties: Physical Features*

### MAP 2

From T.M. Perry, *Australia's First Frontier* showing the physical features of the study area



### MAP 3

A map by Thomas Mitchell, 1834, showing the extent of exploration of Eurobodalla.

From R.F. Pleaden, *Coastal Explorers*

From this point the exploration of the study area became unofficial, conducted by settlers in search of land or pasture. The southern boundary of settlement was immediately breached as pastoralists from the Braidwood area pushed through the passes in the range in search of land for their drought affected herds. By 1830 there was trouble between Aboriginals and stockmen at what was referred to as "Captain Raine's station near Mt. Dromedary", and three years later cattlemen were depasturing runs at Tilba Tilba.

### **3. CONVICTS AND EUROBODALLA**

As a late developing part of the N.S.W. coast, remote from Sydney, the Eurobodalla area did not experience the convict system to the degree that it affected many other areas. True, convicts were present in the official surveying expeditions and in the crews of some of the ships touching on the study area in the early period but the district was spared some of the more blatant trappings of the transportation system. However, the modern view of convicts as indentured civil servants is represented in the study area in the 1830s. Some of the workers bringing stock into the district were assigned servants but private assignment ceased about 1840, just as the Broulee Court House was being constructed. Thereafter, the first magistrates, F.C. Waldron and Captain William Oldrey, supervised the service of about a hundred convicts in their district. According to Gibbney, the most severe flogging ordered by their court was fifty lashes and the last punishments of this kind executed in the area occurred in 1843. Eurobodalla had escaped the worst of the convict period.

### **4. PASTORALISM**

As access to markets was the key to the early development of land in New South Wales, the first settlers in the area turned to pastoralism as a means of producing saleable commodities capable of being transported to Sydney or beyond. Cattle could be converted into salted meat, hides, horns and hooves, all saleable and capable of surviving transportation by sea without marked deterioration. Moreover, cattle were overlanded to Gippsland and Adelaide by men like William Coman and Joseph Hawdon. Thus cattle were the staple product of the 1830s and 1840s. Wool, too, was

---

saleable although the coastal plain was not suited to sheep and that form of pastoralism did not last past 1843.

Potentially the area was well suited to dairying but unimproved pastures and distance from the main market in Sydney was a problem. As Gibbney showed, most farmers kept a few cows and made salted butter and inferior cheese which they sent off in kegs, using the by-products to raise pigs for conversion into bacon or salt pork. Nevertheless, low yields and poor quality made dairying a cottage industry until the 1860s when T.S. Mort's work at Bodalla showed the way to increased productivity and profitability.

At Bodalla, Mort established a large scale cheese and bacon factory based on a formula of regimentation, Christian principles and pursuit of profit. This project was probably unique in Australia and cheese making became one of the area's basic industries.

As the century progressed the pastoral industry became progressively more important in the Moruya area, particularly the keeping of dairy cattle. The growth of demand for dairy products in Australia and overseas after the development of mechanical separation of milk and refrigeration strengthened the economics of farming in the study area.

D.J. Jeans' *An Historical Geography of New South Wales to 1901* shows how the large estates of T.S. Mort (Bodalla), H. Clark (Bergalia) and John Hawdon (Broulee) led the district into the dairying era. Mort planted the cleared section of his 22,000 acres with rye grass, cocksfoot, clover and prairie grass in order to run 1,000 cows. He employed 250 people excluding the army of children who performed the milking and turned out six tons of cheese each week from three factories. The associated bacon works processed 1,500 pigs each year. The success of these large operators inspired other farmers who made their own cheese or sold their milk to the bigger concerns. Butter was less important than cheese because it was more perishable: the Illawarra district tended to control the supply of butter to Sydney in this period.

A detailed description of "Bergalia" from the *Moruya Examiner* on 18 April 1882 indicates the nature of the larger dairying estates. The first cream separators appeared in the district in the 1880s and in the next decade farmers began to co-operate to create well-equipped factories. In 1891 the A.B.C. Cheese Factory, the first co-operative cheese factory in New South Wales, opened at Central Tilba: it would remain in use till 1981. The Moruya Dairy Society's cheese factory followed in 1892. It introduced pasteurising in 1919 and remained in production till 1971. The Bergalia Cheese Factory opened in 1893 and many others followed at Kiora, Buckenboursa, Corunna, Noorooma, Moggendoura, Deua River, Nelligen and elsewhere. These factories were updated or rebuilt from time to time to conform with changes to the Board of Health's regulations.

Dairying, mainly for cheese production, continued to be an important industry but much of the land was not ideal for the purpose and some farmers left the district in the early Twentieth Century. There were better prospects in Northern New South Wales and dairying continued to lose its small operators after the First World War.

One of the difficulties of the dairy farmers was the failure of their pastures in the summer but this problem was solved when J.P. Seccombe introduced paspalum in 1897. The conservation of fodder increased and as H.J. Gibbney and N.C. Hoyer show in *Taken at Tilba*, the Tilba district had more silos per farm than any other district in the state. The industry was also innovative in animal breeding and over its long history of dairying, three main cattle breeds were used: from Dairy Shorthorns to Jerseys and finally to Friesians.

## 5. AGRICULTURE

In Great Britain in the early Nineteenth Century the ownership of land was the key to high social status and the great majority of N.S.W. settlers wanted to become landed proprietors in their new homeland. However, land ownership was no guarantee of an adequate income, let alone an accepted place in colonial society. Having land might be a bulwark against hunger but the earning of an income from it depended to a large extent on access to markets.