Wellington Shire Heritage Study: Stage 1

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CONTEXT

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1. EXPLORATION

1.1 Discovery of Coastline

It was on New Year's Day, 1798, that George Bass made the first recorded European observation of the coastal area of Wellington Shire as he explored the south eastern coastline of Australia and proved the existence of a strait between the mainland and Van Diemens Land. Sailing in his small whaleboat, Bass was unimpressed by what he saw of the coast, describing the 'Long Beach', now the Ninety Mile Beach, as 'nothing but a low beach'.[1] This lukewarm description did not encourage further investigation and although there is evidence that sealers worked in Corner Inlet, the area remained unknown until the late 1830s.[2]

1.2 Pioneer Explorers

By 1835 several squatting runs had been established on the Omeo Plains, to the north-east of Wellington Shire. Severe drought in the Monaro district in 1838 and 1839 prompted Lachlan Macalister to seek new pasture for his cattle. Angus McMillan, his employee and countryman, ventured south with an Aborigine as guide, reaching the vicinity of present day Buchan. On a second expedition, he selected a suitable place for a station at Numbla Munjie, now Ensay. A further expedition pushed south to Lake Wellington, crossed the Avon River upstream, reached the Macalister River and followed it to the junction with the Latrobe River. McMillan named the country Caledonia Australis, also naming the rivers and Mount Wellington. Dwindling supplies forced a return to Numbla Munjie. A track was soon cut and another station established for Macalister on the Avon River on country McMillan described as 'beautiful, rich, open plains'.[3]

Also in 1840, another explorer entered this unmapped country. Polish explorer Paul Strzelecki and his party followed a similar route to McMillan but after crossing the Glengarry or Latrobe River, headed for Western Port. His report of the journey described the country in glowing terms. Strzelecki also named the natural features, recording them on a map.[4] Although few of his names were retained, his name for the region, Gipps Land after the Governor, was adopted.

Meanwhile, McMillan continued to search for a route to the coast, as a port was now vital for shipping stock to market. He finally reached the coast at Port Albert on 14 February 1841. Soon after, a group of squatters had arrived at Port Albert to investigate the possibility of settlement. On its route between Sydney and Melbourne, the *Clonmel* had been wrecked near the entrance to Corner Inlet on 2 January 1841. Some of the crew and passengers explored the adjacent coast and their account of the area, along with Strzelecki's report, stimulated the formation of the Gipps Land Company. This group of pastoralists immediately chartered the *Singapore* and sailed to Corner Inlet, eventually finding a channel and suitable landing place. They explored the nearby hinterland, finding the country favourable, well grassed and timbered.[5]

Both McMillan and Strzelecki claimed to be the founders of Gippsland. McMillan had come in search of land and had initially kept quiet about his exploits, aware of the competing interests of other squatters. Strzelecki, who had come as an explorer, quickly published accounts of his discoveries. The men disputed each other's claims.[6] Happily, the Victorian Historical Memorials Committee, anxious to infuse a sense of history into the landscape through the erection of historic memorials, honoured equally the contribution of both men to the settlement of Gippsland.[7] Twenty four memorials were erected along the explorers' routes stretching from Omeo to Corinella. Victorian governor Lord Somers unveiled the cairns over a week in April 1927. Within the shire, McMillan's route is commemorated by cairns located in York Street in Sale, near the Stratford bridge, near McMillan's old homestead at Bushy Park, at Bundalaguah, Rosedale, Yarram and Port Albert. In 1926, a reserve was cleared at Tom's Cap, the prominence from which McMillan first saw Corner Inlet, and a memorial was also erected there. One of the memorials to Strzelecki is situated at Heyfield.[8]

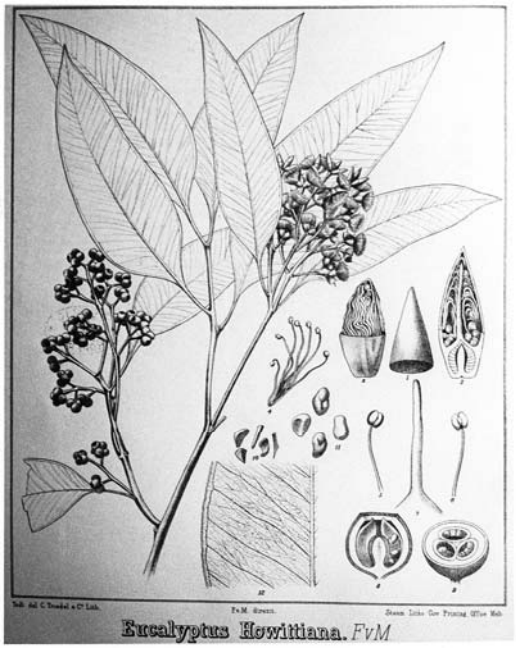
1.3 Pastoral Occupation

After this initial exploration, the occupation of the central grassy plains was rapid, as was the high country on the headwaters of the Macalister River. By 1844, forty stations were established in Gippsland.[9] The following year, surveyor T.S. Townsend mapped the runs, showing squatters established along the Avon River, around Lake Wellington, along the Latrobe River, around Port Albert, and along the road from the port to the hinterland. All Gippsland runs were described in the *Port Phillip Government Gazette* of 23 August 1848 and of the 64 runs listed nearly two thirds were located within the present Shire of Wellington. A map of squatting runs in 1857 shows almost complete occupation of the Shire, apart from the mountainous areas in the north and the Strzelecki Ranges.[10] As the runs were occupied, Scottish and imperial names began to overlay existing Aboriginal names. The names squatters gave to their runs, such as Boisdale, Clydebank, Glenfalloch, were redolent of another landscape. The River Tarra was an exception and was named after Charlie Tarra, the Aborigine who accompanied Strzelecki and returned with the squatters on the *Singapore.*

1.4 Botanical Exploration

Little indigenous vegetation remains on the central plains of Wellington Shire. Historical accounts, early drawings and early maps provide some information about these grasslands and woodlands.[11] Botanical specimens were collected by the Government Botanist Ferdinand Mueller during an expedition through the area in 1853. A.W. Howitt collected further specimens for Mueller during his appointment as police magistrate in Gippsland. Howitt lived at Sale from 1879 and also published a study of the eucalypts of Gippsland in 1891. Returning to Gippsland in 1854, Mueller ascended Mount Wellington and collected about forty plant species, eight of which were new.[12]

Knowledge of the flora of the area was also extended by local naturalists and beekeepers among them Tarlton Rayment and Bill Cane. Tarlton Rayment's apiary was based at Briagolong from 1913 until 1922. He published many books on bees, beekeeping and flora and is credited with saving the Bow-worrung forest reserve when there was pressure to open it for selection about 1916.[13] This red gum forest reserve is now of state botanical significance. Beekeeper Bill Cane established a nursery at Maffra from 1947. During his expeditions, he discovered many undescribed plants and located others where they had not been known to exist. A new specimen he found on Mount Tamboritha was named *Banksia canei,* the mountain banksia.[14]



Howitt collected botanical specimens and studied the eucalypts of Gippsland (Carlyong Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

1.5 Surveying

In the early days of settlement in Wellington Shire, a port on the coast was necessary for communication with the outside world. When surveyor T.S. Townsend was sent to the new settlement in 1841, mapping Corner Inlet was his first priority.[15] Ships soon began to use the port and Captains Mickleburgh and Foxton also prepared charts of the shallow inlet. Captain Thompson marked out a channel with stakes while later surveys by Townsend and Commander John L. Stokes marked the channels and sand banks.[16]

Townsend also produced a map of the hinterland, showing the location of pastoral runs, rivers and some vegetation, as well as marking the road to the Monaro and the coastal track to Port Phillip.[17] In 1847, C.J. Tyers surveyed a track, north of the Latrobe River, which was beginning to be used for travel overland to Melbourne.[18] Gradually other tracks were marked, for example Whitelaw surveyed pack horse tracks from Rosedale to Yarram and from Yarram to Alberton.

During the 1850s and 1860s, the boundaries of the pastoral runs were mapped. These surveys described the terrain, the soil and the vegetation as well as early manmade features such as roads, huts, bridges, sheepwashes and fenced paddocks. Buntine's pre-emptive block at Bruthen Creek was surveyed by Dawson in 1853, showing the location of the road, paddocks, buildings and Buntine's public house.[19] Dawson surveyed many runs, as well as rivers, townships and roads.

The river surveys also provide information on vegetation, landscape and the progress of settlement. Dawson surveyed the Latrobe River near Rosedale in 1849 and part of the Tarra and Albert Rivers in 1850. These maps show boundaries, blazed trees, roads, bridges, waterholes and location of settlers, as well as a public house, huts, sawpits, a sheepwash and a tannery.[20]

As settlement increased, townships and more roads were surveyed. George Hastings worked in Gippsland from the 1850s, surveying Maffra township in 1864, as well as runs, other townships and a number of roads. Parts of many townships were surveyed by William Turton, including Alberton and Victoria, Rosedale, Tarraville, Sale, Giffard, Stratford and Woodside. E.L. Bruce surveyed a number of roads, such as the route from Stratford to Grant in 1872 and the Sale to Port Albert road in 1882, as well as townships including Carrajung in 1887 and Woodside and Alberton in 1890. The early township plans and sale plans are similarly informative, showing tracks, runs, location of settlers, buildings, vegetation and terrain.

Contour maps of the state were compiled by the Survey section of the Royal Australian Engineers, as part of defence planning. The Second World War made this work a high priority and most of the area encompassed by Wellington Shire was mapped between the mid 1930s and the early 1940s.

2. SETTLING THE LAND

2.1 Phases of Land Settlement

Squatting and Displacement of Aborigines

The squatters came in search of suitable grazing land and a port that would connect them with markets. They came to establish runs of vast acreages over which they had no security of tenure and for which they paid an annual license fee of 10 pounds. The open grassland of the red gum plains, well watered by rivers that drained into the Gippsland Lakes, seemed ideal grazing land.

Retreating from drought-affected New South Wales, the squatters considered the land an open canvas for their grazing activities. But they were invading Ganai country, 'country' meaning land where Aboriginal people belonged, to which they had a responsibility and from which they drew spiritual strength.[21] For centuries the Ganai had been hunters and gatherers on land which provided them with an abundance of food. They also managed the land by burning in summer to encourage new grass for the animals they hunted. These burning practices helped to create the very landscape that the invaders were seeking. The young squatter William Brodribb observed in 1841 that 'the natives had burnt all the grass in Gippsland late in summer'. By autumn, he continued, 'the whole country was very green. It had the appearance of young cornfields, the grass was about six inches high and in places very thick'.[22]

The violence of the invasion was described by a young squatter Henry Meyrick in the letters he sent to his family in England in 1846. From his isolated run north of Glenmaggie, Meyrick wrote of how Aborigines were constantly hunted down.

Men, women and children are shot whenever they can be met with. Some excuse might be found for shooting the men by those who are daily getting their cattle speared, but what they can urge in their excuse who shoot the women and children I cannot conceive. I have protested against it on every station I have been in Gippsland in the strongest language but these things are kept very secret as the penalty would certainly be hanging.[23]

Meyrick admitted he would shoot any Aborigine he found in the act of spearing his sheep but 'no consideration on earth would induce me to ride into camp and fire on them indiscriminately, as is the custom wherever smoke is seen'.[24]

Despite the veil of secrecy that Meyrick alluded to, violent confrontations between Europeans and Aborigines were recorded. Writing about the massacre at Warrigal Creek near Port Albert that occurred in 1843, the Assistant Protector for Aborigines, William Thomas, noted 'the Awful Sacrifice of life after the Murder of Mr Macalister was awfully reckless and merciless'.[25] Warrigal Creek emerges as a site of historic significance that documents the reality of European/Aboriginal relations on the squatting frontier. According to Gippslander's account published in 1925, the settlers were so enraged by Macalister's death that they formed a 'Highland Brigade' and attacked the Aborigines around the waterhole at Warrigal Creek until 'the water was red with blood'. This account estimates that up to 150 people were killed.[26] During the pastoral occupation, the Ganai population decreased dramatically.

The success of the squatters' enterprise on the central Gippsland plains depended on having a reliable market for their stock. Port Albert was the nearest mainland port to Hobart, and by 1842, a regular shipping route had been established between Port Albert and Van Diemens Land. Live sheep and cattle were shipped across the strait to fulfill government contracts for provisions. Cattle were also shipped across the Tasman to New Zealand, and wool was shipped to Sydney. By the end of the 1850s, the buildings at Port Albert reflected its vital commercial and administrative importance as the port of entry to Gippsland. There are many sites that exist from this early colonial period in Gippsland and they contribute to a significant colonial landscape. Among them are the former Derwent Hotel, Turnbull, Orr and Company bond store and the former immigration barracks.

Once the squatters gained security of tenure over their land and were able to purchase sections through their pre-emptive rights, more permanent structures were built on their properties. Instead of bark huts, brick houses began to appear. This transition is illustrated on the former Fulham run. On one side of the Myrtlebank Road is a brick two storey home built in Colonial Georgian style by Captain Jones who took over the Fulham run on the Thomson River in 1853 and purchased the pre-emptive right three years later. On the other side of the road is a plaque marking the graves of Catherine Desailly and Henry Meyrick, who were buried in 1847 in what is now a lucerne paddock. These two sites, homestead and plaque, record much of the experience of squatting in the first two decades of settlement. In 1846, newly-married Catherine Desailly joined her husband at the Fulham run, which, according to a surveyor's plan, consisted of a collection of huts. The following year, in 1847, Henry Meyrick, who was staying with the Desaillys, drowned while trying to cross the flooded Thomson to get medical help for Catherine, who died soon after in childbirth.[27] The nearest doctor was resident at Tarraville, near Port Albert. Their experiences reflect the difficulties and isolation of the squatting era. But less than 10 years later, after gaining freehold to a section of the run, Captain Jones built a house that reflected the aspirations of squatters as substantial landowners, greatly removed from the Desaillys' collection of huts.

With greater security over the land, squatters started building substantial homes. Still surviving are The Heart homestead, the comfortable home that Elizabeth Montgomery lovingly describes in her memoirs, and a wing of the U shaped homestead built at Mewburn Park near Maffra in the late 1840s. When he purchased his pre-emptive right at Strathfieldsaye in 1854, William Raymond built a homestead overlooking Lake Wellington. Extended in the 1870s, the house, garden and collection of outbuildings document a pastoral property that evolved from the squatting run.[28] Similarly, Reedy Creek near Woodside - a group of early slab and bark buildings, homestead, school house, and family graveyard - also retains buildings from the squatting era and documents the life of the O'Rourke family.[29] At Hawthorn Bank, near Port Albert, the earliest building is constructed of wattle and daub and dates from the 1850s.[30]

Descendants of the early squatters on the red gum plains who had managed to consolidate their runs into substantial holdings, built grand, architect designed homes fifty years later. Among them was Boisdale House, built by the Foster family in 1892. Its garden retains many elements of a late nineteenth century homestead. William Pearson's mansion Kilmany Park was completed in 1906, and the Crookes' towered Holey Plain near Rosedale, was built in stages from the 1890s. Both of these incorporated earlier houses built on the site.

Selection

Twenty years after the squatters began grazing sheep and cattle in the shire, the first of a series of selection acts was passed that would have a tremendous impact on land use in the shire, and of shaping the cultural landscape. Superimposed on the squatting runs were new maps dividing the land into counties and parishes and then subdividing the parishes into farm allotments that were open for selection. This legislation was intended to loosen the squatters' domination over vast tracts of land, and to promote land settlement and more intensive use of the land by encouraging cultivation rather than grazing. The selection acts contained residency clauses and schedules of improvements. The earliest acts led to selection of the land around the settled districts of the shire such as Port Albert, Sale and Maffra, as the 'New Map of Gippsland' compiled by John Lidgate Ross in 1864 shows.[31] As further acts were passed, including legislation which opened the whole of the state for selection, selectors occupied blocks to the north of the shire including river flats along isolated valleys. Selectors could also occupy areas close to where gold had been discovered, leading to settlement at Cowwarr, Briagolong and Crooked River. But some control over selection was exerted by the Gippsland Mining Board, who feared agricultural development would restrict mining activities. During the 1880s, the wave of selection within the shire continued as selectors moved into the steepest and most isolated parts of the mountain ash forest in the eastern Strzelecki Ranges. In the early years of the twentieth century, areas north of Licola in the mountainous upper Macalister Valley were opened for selection.

Experiences of selectors and their success at turning allotments on maps into viable farms differed greatly throughout the shire and often depended on the size of the selection and the terrain. Early selector Donald Manson who took up his allotment of rich river flat country at Upper Maffra (now Newry) under the 1861 Nicholson Act, successfully acquired other properties to extend his holdings. The home he built at Summerlea on Newry's outskirts reflects his success as a selector, and the role he played in the community. The buildings associated with his community activities such as the mechanics institute, the cheese factory and St Andrews Church still stand in Newry.[32]

The activities of the Osborn family of Tinamba show how selectors worked the unimproved pastoral runs into productive farms. The Osborns arrived in Tinamba in 1862 to occupy their selection on what had been the Mewburn Park run. Twenty years later they had 250 acres sown with rye, cowgrass and oats, and 200 cows including 30 milkers on the property. The milk was sent to the Maffra Cheese Factory. The Osborn brothers had carried out extensive drainage to overcome flooding, had planted boxthorn hedges as 'live' fences, extended their original two roomed cottage and had built a 'commodious barn'.[33] Once the initial years of establishment were over, they and other selectors on the fertile river flats were creating a new landscape, building comfortable houses surrounded by gardens, substantial farm buildings including barns and stables and all enclosed by miles of fencing that defined their properties. Many of the buildings survive today. More intensive use of the land included replacing native grasses with crops and draining areas of morass.

Clearing the land on Miles' farm in Tarra Valley (Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The experiences of selector Louis Wuillermin also shows how selectors experimented with a variety of crops as explored the land's agricultural potential. Swiss-born Wuillermin, who had taught languages at Melbourne University, selected land at Briagolong near the Freestone Creek in 1869. He planted tobacco, grew hops and established a winery. His home, The Delta, can be seen close to the Delta Bridge.[34]

For selectors coming to carve a farm in the steep mountain ash forests of the Strzelecki Ranges, it was another matter. Unlike the rich river flats on the red gum plains, their allotments were heavily forested with giant mountain ash and understoreys of blackwoods, myrtle beech, sassafras and tree fern, all of which had to be cleared. The arduous process of felling and ringbarking trees and clearing land for a homestead and grass paddocks began. Selectors relied on having a good burn during summer and then sowing grass seed in the thick ash. Photographs such as that of the Miles' farm in Tarra Valley reveal the extent of the mammoth task.[35] Similar to the Miles' selection, small clearings appeared in the dense forest. Slab huts

made of timber split on the property stand close to laboriously cleared paddocks where small herds of cows graze among the stumps and isolated tree ferns. The ground is littered with fallen trunks and branches.

With so many selectors moving into the forests, there was an immediate need for roads, bridges and schools. There was optimism about the area's potential to create fertile farms, and townships were surveyed. Surveyor E.L. Bruce laid out a town at Carrajung in 1887.[36] But viable farms did not eventuate. The magnificent forest was destroyed, weeds and rabbits proliferated and erosion scarred the hillsides. In the Bulga area (now Balook), the average occupancy of blocks was nine years.[37] By the 1920s, many farms had been abandoned and the area became known as the 'Heartbreak Hills'. The Forests Commission began buying land, as did APM Forests Pty Ltd, and during the 1950s began a re-afforestation program throughout the Eastern Strzeleckis, planting pines and mountain ash. Now plantations cover the traces of many of the abandoned farms, while halls and schools have been burnt in bushfires that have raced through the ranges, obliterating much evidence of settlement. Huge mountain ash stumps with springboard notches - such as those on the Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail at Balook - are evidence of the extensive clearing activities and the skill of the axemen. A remnant of the magnificent forest can be seen in the Tarra Bulga Park, first reserved in 1903.

In the alpine regions of the shire, a combination of leaseholds and selection co-existed. Despite the policy to open the state to selection, the mountains and high plains of Victoria's alpine areas, parts of which had been grazed as squatting runs, were not made available for selection as this eventually led to freehold. As a result, only small pockets in the shire's alpine area – among them the Wonnangatta Homestead area and Higgins on Bennison Plains – were alienated.[38] Instead, a different form of grazing emerged. Grazing licences were issued and selectors in lower regions worked the licences with their home properties by grazing cattle on the summer pastures of the high plains. The Guy family, with freehold land at Crooked River and Wonnangatta Station, had grazing leases extending up to 100,000 acres.[39] Because the licenses were short term, only basic improvements were undertaken on the high country and these include the evocative mountain cattlemen's huts, nestled among the snow gums.

Village Settlements

As a response to the 1890s depression, and influenced by the ideas of Christian Socialist Reverend Horace Tucker, the Victorian government introduced the village settlement scheme, where unemployed workers could settle on very small allotments and supplement their farming enterprise with other seasonal work. Under the Settlement on Lands Act in 1893, Crown land was made available for this scheme. In Wellington Shire, village settlements were established at Sale and Rosedale. The settlements were intended for unemployed people from Melbourne but generally local people suffering from the effects of the depression became the main beneficiaries. Both settlements were established on land that had previously been town commons. In Sale, the land flooded regularly. 430 acres of the drier part of the Sale Common were subdivided into 103 blocks, and some settlers were also allotted a second block on higher land on the former Government Paddock. In Rosedale, 1200 acres of unalienated land near the town were made available for village settlement but very little of this was successfully cultivated. In Sale at the turn of the century, one third of the area was under cultivation. Today, cottages remain from both village settlements.[40]

Closer Settlement

Despite the mixed success of selection throughout the state, the Victorian government persisted with a policy of promoting intensive land use and introduced closer settlement legislation in 1898 to achieve these aims. Under this scheme, large pastoral estates were purchased by the Closer Settlement Board and subdivided into small allotments to be farmed intensively by settlers of modest means. To keep the farms small, a maximum value for all allotments was set at 2,500 pounds and settlers could only occupy one block. Closer settlement has had a major impact on part of Wellington Shire, contributing to forming a landscape that is now a highly

productive irrigated dairying landscape. It also incorporated soldier settlement and a scheme for placing British settlers on farms.

In Wellington Shire, however, the closer settlement process began as a private development that was then overlaid by a government scheme. On the rich Avon River flats at Boisdale, the Foster family had managed to accumulate much of their original Boisdale squatting run as freehold land by amalgamating the pre-emptive right purchase from three of their runs and by dummying.[41] In the 1890s they promoted the policy of making more intensive use of their land by converting their enterprise from grazing to dairying. They subdivided a large section of their estate into 35 farms. Each of the farms had a house (those built before 1901 were weatherboard but later houses were built in brick after a kiln was established on the property), stables, milking shed and silos. Sale architect George Cain was engaged to help with the development.[42] In 1900, Foster Brothers built a butter and cheese factory on their property and then houses to accommodate the factory workers, creating the town of Boisdale, in essence an estate village. The town was owned by the Foster family, and the river flats had been subdivided into dairy farms operated on a share-farming basis. The owners had built a large home designed by architect Guyon Purchas on the ridge overlooking their enterprise.

In 1911, the Closer Settlement Board purchased 2,500 acres of the Foster's estate for a more intensive subdivision and carved the land into 57 allotments averaging around 40 acres. Besides promoting intensive land use, the CSB had another motive - to assist the ailing sugar beet industry by compelling the new closer settlers to grow 10 acres of sugar beet on their allotments. There was a further transformation of the landscape: four roomed cottages were built, paddocks were prepared for cultivation and fences defined the new farms. The scheme was ill-conceived with the allotments being too small and the rainfall inadequate for beet growing. The solution was to build an irrigation scheme based on a weir at Glenmaggie on the Macalister River and irrigate extensive areas of the river flats around Maffra and Sale.

Completed in the 1920s, the irrigation scheme also spawned other closer settlement schemes including settling British migrants who came to Australia under the Empire Agreement Act to settle on impossibly small farms in the Cobains area near Sale and on estates at Myrtlebank and Bundalaguah.

Other closer settlement estates within the shire included The Heart and Kilmany Park, both excised from former squatting runs near Sale.

The process of closer settlement has formed a significant cultural landscape at Boisdale. Many of the farm houses and stables of the Foster subdivision dating from the late 1890s have survived, as have some of the closer settlement cottages. The cottages on Malcolm's Road, most of them extended into bigger houses, document the early twentieth century belief that small allotments could make viable farms. The factory workers' cottages in the village of Boisdale continue to line the street, and the hall built by the Foster family in 1904 is still a prominent landmark and community hub. The Main Channel, an artery of the irrigation system taking water from the Glenmaggie Weir to the irrigation outpost of Clydebank, is suspended behind the farms on Boisdale's western boundary.

Soldier Settlement

In 1915, a Royal Commission into Closer Settlement revealed the scheme's many failings. A year later, the policy of rewarding returned soldiers with farms was widely endorsed as a repatriation policy and legislation was passed to buy estates and subdivide them into small allotments for returned soldiers to farm. Despite the failure of closer settlement, the policy was re-invigorated in its guise as soldier settlement. Pressure was on to buy hundreds of thousands of acres throughout Victoria to settle up to 16,000 returned soldiers who qualified as soldier settlers. Land for soldier settlement estates was purchased in areas throughout the shire, including Kilmany Park, Llowalong on the Avon, Mewburn Park, Airly, Seaspray, Woodside, Devon, Giffard, Gormandale, Carrajung and Balloong.[43]

The Kilmany Park soldier settlement estate provides an example of soldier settlement experiences within the shire. The Kilmany Park closer settlement estate, first subdivided in

1911, was such a spectacular failure that it was singled out in the *Royal Commission on the Working of the Closer Settlement Acts, Progress Reports 1915* (pp 23 – 25). However, the same mistakes were repeated for the soldier settlers in 1921. The overpriced land was divided into 36 allotments, and many of the soldier settlers found they had swapped the trenches for morass as they tried to farm land along the Latrobe River that was constantly flooding. The soldiers battled falling dairy prices as the European dairy industry recovered after the war, the effects of the depression as prices for primary produce plummeted, trying to subsist on their small flooding blocks that could not support a family. The vision of an estate of productive dairy farms averaging 110 acres at Kilmany could not be realised. Throughout Victoria, extreme measures were taken to arrest the debt load of soldier settlers and lessen their despair. Land was revalued and the debts were written off. After surveying Kilmany Park in 1937, only 9 settlers were judged to have 'living areas', and this was after their original holdings had been doubled in size.[44]

Today, Kilmany retains much evidence of the attempts to subdivide the former squatting run into closer and soldier settlement estates. It has a complex network of narrow roads, mostly named after settlers. There are houses and farm buildings dating from the closer and soldier settlement subdivisions, and evidence of the two former school sites where the settlers' children were educated. Much of this has been overlaid by recent subdivisions for hobby farms, due to the area's proximity to Sale.

The Second World War soldier settlement scheme on Nambrok Denison was much more successful. After the war, the Glenmaggie Weir was increased in capacity to irrigate this area on the Thomson River plains and convert grazing land to dairying for returned soldiers. Altogether, 16,000 acres were purchased for the estate and by 1957, 138 returned servicemen had settled on their new farms, and were milking herds of 35 to 40 cows.[45] Schools were opened to educate their young families. The land had been graded for irrigation and each settler was provided with a house, dairy, machinery shed and garage. The distinctive 1950s soldier settlement houses still line the roads at regular intervals on Nambrok Denison. Problems were soon experienced with drainage as the water table rose and salinity levels increased. This has been an on-going problem in the area.

Another post Second World War soldier settlement estate within Wellington Shire was the Evergreen estate south of Rosedale. Four returned servicemen settled on a property purchased from the Ayres estate.[46]

New Settlers

In the mid 1970s, another wave of settlement made an impact on the shire's landscape. People dubbed as 'alternative lifestylers' or even 'feral people', disillusioned with city life and with a strong commitment to energy conservation, self-sufficiency and ecologically sustainable development came to settle in areas within Wellington Shire. Attracted to bush and hill settings, they moved into areas such as the hill country north of Yarram and Briagolong to build their own homes. For Pat and Mick Waters and Anton and Wylva Tease, the land they bought up the Freestone Creek consisting of river flat and timbered hillside seemed to fit their ideal. There was evidence of former occupation. The land was close to the Gladstone Creek where gold had been found, and there were miners' hut sites on their land. They were also surrounded by secondary growth and cleared flats where people had tried to farm along the Freestone north of Blue Pools. The new settlers set about overlaying their lifestyle on the land, building mud brick houses and planting olive trees.[47] Vibrant communities of new settlers developed during the 1970s and 1980s in the shire, and their innovative mud, stone and wooden houses are dotted around the shire.

2.2 Immigration

An enduring theme in the shire, as indeed in the rest of the country, has been the process of attracting migrants to the area. In the early colonial period, Gippsland suffered an acute labour shortage, especially after gold was discovered at Ballarat and Bendigo. Influential residents of

Gippsland were keen to encourage British migrants to come directly to Port Albert where prospective employers were anxious to employ them. In 1856, the *Victoria* arrived at Port Albert with 35 single female migrants and 16 couples, all of whom had sailed from England on the *Medway* as assisted passengers.[48] Their accommodation at the Port was so inadequate that an immigration barracks was built in 1857. The brick and slate-roofed building still stands, and is an important reminder of Port Albert's role as the port of entry to Gippsland, and of the experiences of migrants.

There were some Chinese in the shire, many of whom first came to Gippsland as gold miners. Some later worked as packers and others cultivated market gardens around the larger towns, such as Sale and Maffra.

Australia's involvement in the Empire Agreement Act, a scheme that induced middle class British settlers with capital to migrate to Australia in the 1920s and settle on small farms, had an impact on Wellington Shire. In the mid 1920s, 33 British settlers arrived on estates at Bundalaguah and Cobains to farm allotments that would be irrigated by the Glenmaggie irrigation scheme. For most, their dreams of becoming yeomen farmers collapsed. Promised viable farms that would provide a 'good living', they were soon victims of the ill-conceived government closer settlement policies. Their experiences parallelled the soldier settlers and closer settlers as they struggled on impossibly small allotments.[49] Those who left received compensation. In areas of Myrtlebank, Bundalaguah and Cobains, houses that were built for the British settlers in the 1920s can still be seen.

During the era of massive government assisted migration to Australia after the Second World War, migrants were accommodated at the West Sale Holding Centre, which had been converted from the wartime West Sale RAAF Base. Migrant families from many countries in Europe lived there, with husbands working in local factories or on public works. Some worked on the railways while some left during the week to work for the SEC in the Latrobe Valley. Others lived away from their families in camps at Heyfield where they worked for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission or for the saw mills. A water tower still survives from the migrant camp.[50]

Some migrants brought to the shire distinctive ways of building and living. After the Moravian missionary, Reverend Hagenauer, established the Ramahyuck mission station on the banks of the Avon near Perry Bridge in the 1860s, other German migrants came to farm in the district. Hartwich's Hut, built by German selectors on part of the Strathfieldsaye run, has horizontal sapling and pug lining that is similar to other German settlements in the Wimmera.[51]

A century later, houses were being built for American oil and gas executives in Sale on recently subdivided paddocks east of Guthridge Parade. They were large homes with second bathrooms, spacious open living areas, dishwashers and waste disposal units, all features which were considered standard for American executives in the 1960s but which contrasted greatly with existing Sale homes.[52]

3. DEVELOPING PRIMARY PRODUCTION

3.1 Grazing

The earliest settlers came in search of pasture for their sheep and cattle and for a port that could connect them to markets. Within three weeks of reading Strzelecki's account of the new region, William Raymond was en route to Gippsland with 8,000 sheep and established runs at Stratford and Strathfieldsaye. By 1844 there were 15,000 cattle in the new province, and in 1845, there were 78,399 sheep. When the *Waterwitch* sailed from Port Albert to Hobart in 1842, she was pioneering an important export for Gippsland squatters, shipping live cattle across Bass Strait. Sheep were also shipped to Van Diemens Land, and a live cattle trade was also established with New Zealand. Wool was another important export from Port Albert. Shipping cattle from the port ended in 1866, and cattle were overlanded to Melbourne.

During the squatting period, squatters had to contend with diseases in their stock such as pleuro-pneumonia in cattle and footrot and scab in sheep as well as attacks by dingoes. They were also faced with fluctuating markets, and began to export tallow, skins and hides from the province.

With selection, primary production was diversified, but the estates that evolved from squatting runs and other properties continued to graze cattle and sheep, with attention paid to increasing the quality of the breeding stock. In 1882, Mewburn Park, which at that time consisted of 15,000 acres, was stocked with 3,000 cattle as well as sheep, horses and pigs.[53] Saleyards were built in many towns in the shire.

The early 1950s were golden years for sheep farmers. Myxomatosis became an effective way of controlling rabbits which had severely degraded grazing land. Top dressing with superphosphate increased stocking rates. Beef farmers also benefited from pasture improvement and expanding markets.

The practice of using summer pasture in alpine areas for grazing also developed in the early days of European occupation of the region. Perhaps the first Wellington Shire mountain cattleman was squatter Malcolm Macfarlane of the Glenfalloch run, who began to use the high country for summer grazing. The Holmes of Eagelvale and Richard Bennison of Sale followed suit.[54] The early occupiers of the high country began a tradition, extended after selection, of an interplay between high country leases and lower freehold properties. The huts the cattlemen built for shelter on the high plains have become important heritage sites in the shire and have also evolved as major refuges, among them Howitt's Hut and Guys Hut on Snowy Plains. Guys Hut was built in 1940 of logs from timber felled near the site and corrugated iron that had been packed in by horses.[55]

Yard Built of logs at Licola (Con Gleeson Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The yards the cattlemen built are evocative of their grazing enterprise on the high plains. The yards at Holmes Plain are an example of the various techniques used by cattlemen for yards for holding and drafting the stock they had mustered in early autumn, before bringing them down to saleyards.[56] The cattlemen developed stock routes throughout the area. In the shire, towns such as Heyfield and Maffra on the plains were connected with the high country, as cattlemen drove their cattle down to the Heyfield and Maffra cattle sales.

3.2 Dairying

Wellington Shire has evolved as a major dairying region in Australia. It is a complex history involving improvements in transport, technological development, land settlement policies, the influence of the cooperative movement and the introduction of an extensive irrigation scheme. Recent government policies of dairy deregulation will have an impact on this industry in the shire.

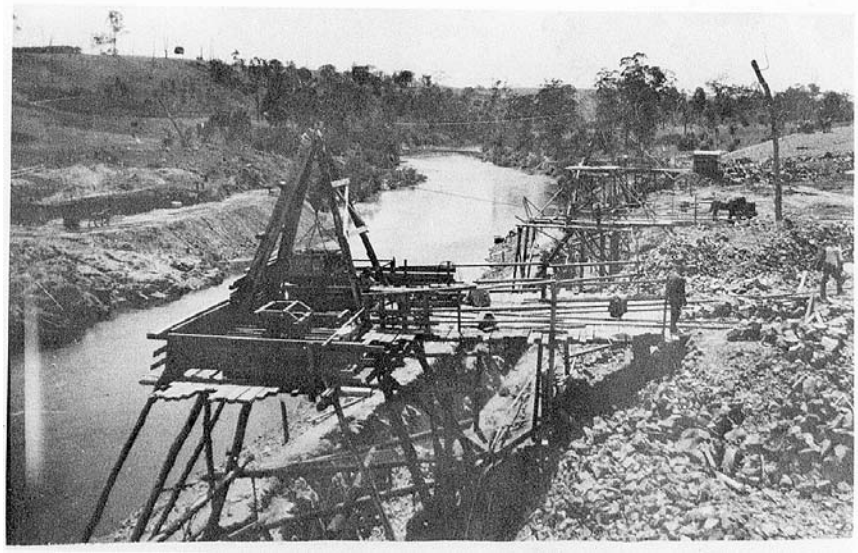
During the first few decades of European settlement, dairying was mostly restricted to providing for local consumption. Lack of transport meant that dairy products could spoil in the long process of getting to markets. All the same, kegs of butter and cheeses were shipped from Port Albert to the Melbourne market in the 1840s.[57] During the 1870s, cheese manufacturing became widespread. Cheese was not as perishable, it was easy to transport and could provide farmers with a fast cash return for their milk. The Maffra Sale area became a major cheese-producing region in Victoria, with private operators and companies in full swing.[58] Surviving from this period is the former Miller's cheese factory at Upper Maffra, which still has the interior bark walls that were installed for insulation.[59]

Cheese making was overtaken by milk manufacturing in the 1880s. A combination of improved transport – the railway opened from Melbourne to Sale in 1878 - and technological advances in dairy manufacturing such as the invention of the centrifugal cream separator, changed dairy production methods from a cottage industry to factory-based production. Cooperative creameries and then butter factories spread in areas of the shire in the 1880s. In the 1890s, there were numerous creameries and several butter factories operating in the former Alberton Shire. Settlers in the hill country began to stock their allotments with cows as soon as they had made a clearing and sowed pasture among the burnt logs. This provided them with an income as they continued the arduous task of felling trees on their blocks. The Yarram Butter Factory, its building still an important feature of Yarram's streetscape today, was a major component of the industry in this area of the shire.[60] The butter factory at Cowwarr, now converted into a gallery, was built on a site close to the railway line after an earlier factory building was demolished in 1918. Built in Queen Anne style complete with red tiled roof, this cement building still contains components of the butter factory operations. The large chimney continues to dominate.

Subdivision of large estates in the Maffra Sale area also increased dairy production. The private subdivision of the Boisdale estate in the 1890s to create dairy farms, and the government closer settlement and soldier settlement schemes increased the number of dairy farms. Reflecting the increased milk production, a series of milk factories was built near the railway station in Maffra, including Nestles, the Commonwealth Milk Factory and the Maffco Factory. Of particular note is the Commonwealth Milk Factory designed by Steve Ashton and completed in 1922. Although now used for other purposes, the building retains many of its dairy factory features. Where there were several factories in Maffra, now one very large plant, Murray Goulburn, dominates and is the primary receiver of milk for an extensive area in Gippsland.

Changing technology such as the introduction of milking machines, refrigerated milk vats and bulk milk transport has had a major impact on farm buildings and the layout of dairy farms in the shire. The Leathorn dairy at Upper Maffra West, built around the turn of the century, retains evidence of changes in dairying practices.[61] Some rickety milk stands still survive in front of farms, documenting the backbreaking work farmers had when they hauled milk cans to the road for collection. Abandoned 'walk through' sheds show the way cows were milked

before the introduction of herringbones. Large new rotary sheds also reflect changing methods of milking and increasing herd sizes.



Glenmaggie Weir was built on the Macalister River to provide water for the irrigation of the plains (Lobley Album, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The irrigation landscape formed by the network of channels snaking from the Glenmaggie Weir is also closely associated with documenting the development of dairying in this area of the shire. Built to make small Boisdale closer settlement allotments viable and rescue the sugar beet industry, it has had its greatest impact on dairying. At the north eastern end of the irrigation scheme, the bright green irrigated pasture contrasts with dryland farming that is 'above the channel'. Stretching from Boisdale and Valencia Creek to Clydebank and Denison are paddocks of carefully graded land heavily stocked with Friesians. Dethridge wheels rhythmically turn in the channels to monitor water usage. The distinctive water bailiff houses that were built for former State Rivers and Water Supply Commission employees have now been sold to private owners. At the intersection at Kenevan's Corner between Heyfield and Cowwarr stands a cairn on which is mounted a stylised dethridge wheel. Unveiled in 1991, it commemorates forty years of soldier settlement on irrigated land. Where the soldier settlers came to 100 acre farms to milk 40 cows, the average farm is now 160 acres (65 hectares) and the average herd is 180 cows.

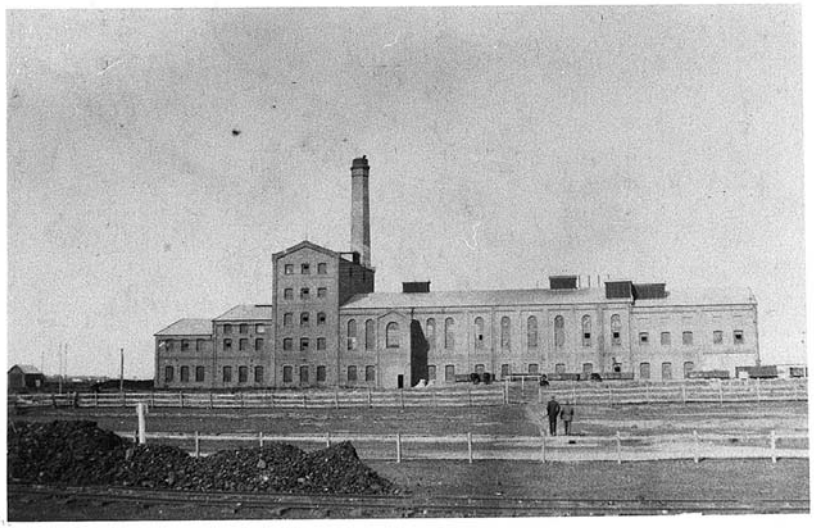
3.3 Crops

Sugar Beet

Standing on the outskirts of Maffra near the railway station are the remains of the Maffra sugar beet factory, the only beet sugar factory to operate in the southern hemisphere.

The Maffra Sugar Company was formed by local landowners in 1896, with considerable government investment. An imposing factory was built near the railway station, and equipped with machinery imported from Germany. It opened in 1898, and commenced manufacturing sugar from sugar beet, a root crop grown in temperate climates. But the factory ran at a loss due to a lack of supply of beets and was closed after the second season in 1899. The factory then reverted to government ownership. In 1910, the Department of Agriculture reopened the factory, but once again was unable to obtain a sufficient supply of beets from local farmers. To stimulate beet production, further government investment was expended on buying part of the Boisdale estate and subdividing it into small closer settlement allotments where farmers had to grow 10 acres of beet. But this measure did not increase the supply of beets. One major problem was that the rainfall was insufficient for beet growing - Maffra lies in a rain shadow area. Irrigation seemed the only way to make the crop a success, and plans were drawn up by

the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to irrigate the river flats from a weir built on the Macalister River at Glenmaggie. Work began on the irrigation scheme in 1919 and the township of Glenmaggie was flooded.



Sugar beet factory at Maffra (Lobley Album, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

While there were some profitable years for the sugar beet factory, generally the enterprise was not a success. Growing sugar beet was labour intensive, requiring much soil preparation, and laborious thinning, cultivating and topping of the crop. Rather than putting the beet industry on its feet, the irrigation scheme stimulated the dairy industry. The factory was sold in 1953 and demolished in 1964.

Still standing on the factory site is the large brick sugar store designed by Maffra architect Steve Ashton in 1922.[62] The factory's office and weigh station have been moved to the Apex Park and are now the home of the Maffra Sugar Beet Museum. Along the railway line between Maffra and Stratford are the remains of the Powerscourt Siding that was built for beet farmers to tip their beets into trucks that were then railed to the factory.

Other Crops

Hops were grown, with marginal success, by the Barton family first at Strathfieldsaye in the 1860s and then at Sperm Whale Head. They were also tried at Glenmaggie around 1868. In the Briagolong district, hops flourished on the river flats until infestation with red spider in the early 1890s. Tobacco was also grown at Glenmaggie from about 1868 and at Briagolong for some years from 1872. Captain Edgar Slade had a winery around 1867 and the Delta Winery was established at Briagolong in 1885.

Maize has also been grown in various parts of the shire, with maize cribs still remaining in the Briagolong district. It was also grown on the isolated but fertile river flats along the Crooked River by settlers who used it to feed pigs. The Guy family raised 200 to 300 pigs annually, and then walked them out to Fernbank, a droving exercise that took about four days. The pigs followed a trail of maize.[63]

Flax was grown at Won Wron and Devon North in the 1890s, and again in the same areas in the late 1920s. During the Second World War, flax was grown on the river flats between Maffra and Stratford as part of the war effort. It was sent to a deseeding factory that was built near the Powerscourt siding. Some evidence of this site remains.

There has been a recent increase in vegetable growing in the shire. There is a large vegetable growing enterprise at Longford and dairy farms in the Macalister Irrigation Area, especially around Boisdale, have been converted to vegetable growing.

4. EXPLOITING NATURAL RESOURCES

4.1 Gold Mining

Gold played an important part in the early development of Wellington Shire. During the 1850s, many alluvial fields were discovered and worked throughout the colony. At the end of the decade, when discoveries were faltering, the government sponsored exploration and prospecting in order to stimulate the mining industry and open new fields. Gold finds attracted many miners to the mountainous region in the north of the shire. A number of small settlements sprang up, as well as the substantial town of Grant. Access was difficult and the climate harsh so when the goldfields waned, the miners left and the towns disappeared almost without trace. However many of the miners did not move on to other rushes but settled on the central plain, selecting land and farming, and there is a close interplay between miners and selectors. Some also selected land in the mountainous areas. The gold discoveries also provided a stimulus to established towns such as Sale and Port Albert.

Crooked River, Grant

When surveyor John Wilkinson mapped the upper reaches of the Mitchell River in 1850, he noted the presence of gold in the rivers.[64] So, in 1860, A.W. Howitt led a government prospecting party to further explore the upper tributaries. Good prospects were found at the junction of the Crooked River and Good Luck Creek and a rush quickly followed. Hotels and stores were established at the diggings, the settlement becoming known as Bull Town. Smaller settlements named Hog Town and Thiel Town also sprang up along the river. Finds in the Upper Dargo River led to the development of other small communities.

In 1864, the government contracted Angus McMillan to oversee the cutting of a track to link the Crooked River field with other goldfields in the Great Dividing Range, as shown on his sketch map.[65] In the course of cutting this track between the Crooked and Dargo Rivers, quartz reefs were discovered on the ridges. A new rush revived Bull Town and Hog Town and new settlements were established along the Crooked River at Howittville, Ram Town (later Talbotville), Stonewall and Little London or Winchester. By 1865, these towns were substantial, with hotels, stores and government buildings. Talbotville had a hotel, two restaurants and a court and held horse races.

In a clearing on the ridge, a settlement known as Isaac's Shanty mushroomed. The township became known as Mount Pleasant and finally Grant, after the Commissioner of Lands who visited the town in 1865. The clearing was enlarged to accommodate a double main street, with over thirty streets in all, as shown on the township map surveyed in 1865.[66] Soon there were fifteen hotels, numerous stores, banks, a police station, courthouse, school, church, newspaper office and doctors, solicitors and sharebrokers.

By early 1865, 91 reefs had proved auriferous and 180 quartz prospecting claims had been registered.[67] Crushing mills and eight batteries were set up, and, by the end of 1865, there were nearly three hundred auriferous reefs identified.[68] By this time, there were nearly two thousand residents in Grant.

But by early 1866, gold production was already declining. The reefs were not extensive enough to justify the cost of ore cartage and crushing. Although the main road into Grant was improved, there were only packhorse tracks to the mine sites. Large scale mining speculation meant that many mines were never properly developed. The township of Grant had no reliable water supply and weather conditions were extreme, with snow cover regularly in winter.

As the mines closed, the miners began to leave. Businesses closed and the smaller settlements on the Crooked River disappeared. By 1876, Grant was almost deserted. The school closed in 1890 and in 1916 the Anglican Church was dismantled and the last resident left. Now Grant has been declared an Historic Area and is administered by Parks Victoria. The town site is still

visible in a clearing in the bush. Historical groups have repegged and signed the main streets and headstones remain in the cemetery. Walking tracks provide access to some of the many mining relics, such as ore carts, boiler and stamper at the New Good Hope mine, and crushing equipment, battery and stampers at Old Good Hope mine.[69]

A few people still lived in Grant in 1913 (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

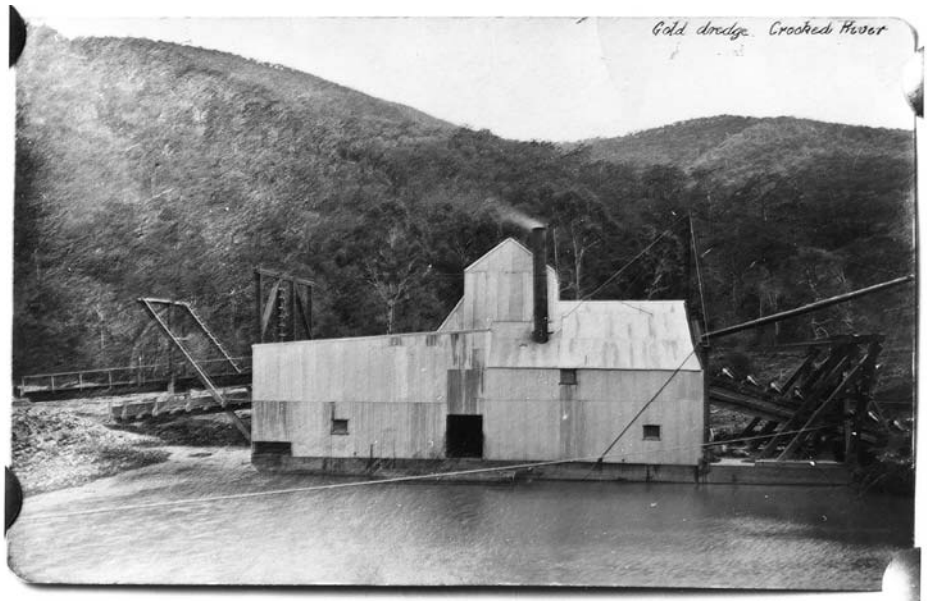
The settlement of Talbotville survived longer as there were large river flats for cultivation, using old mining races to supply water for irrigation. In 1900, there was still a licensed public house, a store and numerous houses. The school finally closed permanently in 1913. The Good Hope Mine, the most productive mine on the field, worked until 1915 and some of the other mines were opened sporadically. A dredge worked the river from 1906 until 1914. During the 1930s depression, a number of families prospected for gold in the area, such as the small settlement on Black Snake Creek, a tributary of the Wonnangatta River.[70] However after 1900 agriculture was the main occupation and, without the stimulus of mining, tracks became overgrown and access became difficult. The last residents left in 1947 and little remains at Talbotville but the overgrown cemetery, deciduous trees, crumbling brick chimneys, a water race and old mine tunnels.

Freestone Creek

Small quantities of gold were found by prospectors along Freestone Creek, a tributary of the Avon, and by 1868 many claims had been taken out along the creek and its tributaries. For a while there were two hundred miners on one creek named Gladstone Creek. The settlement of Gladstone sprang up in this valley, but was razed by a bushfire on Christmas Eve of the same year. During the 1870s, a small number of miners continued to prospect. The See It Out, a quartz mine, was worked by a number of different groups over the years but was never really successful. A local syndicate reopened it again in 1924 but it was again shortlived.[71] Ben Cruachan Bushwalking Club has constructed a walking track, based on old pack tracks linking some of the diggings, including Lees Creek, Granite Creek and Gladstone Creek. Some mining relics remain: at Lees Creek there is evidence of alluvial diggings, a dam, a water race and shallow shafts.[72]

Dargo

The township of Dargo, in the lower valley of the Dargo River, developed as a stopping place and supply town for the Crooked River goldfield. The town was surveyed in 1864, with lots sold in 1866. Hotels and stores were soon established. There was some mining activity on the lower Dargo River, the river being worked briefly for alluvial gold and in 1893 being dredged for a while. There were a few shortlived quartz mines and the government battery was located near Dargo in the early 1900s. But the town has survived because it was not dependent on mining, being located on broad river flats suitable for agriculture.



The rivers were dredged for gold in the 1890s (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

Gold Field Tracks

With the discovery of gold in the mountains of North Gippsland, the old route through Sale and Port Albert was heavily used. Supplies to the goldfields were carried by bullock dray, then packhorse for the last part of the journey. Port Albert's prosperity was boosted, just when the cattle trade was dwindling. Regular steamship services carried prospective miners, mining machinery and supplies to Port Albert. Gold from Crooked River, as well as from Omeo and Boggy Creek fields, was exported through the port where a powder magazine was also built.

In the early 1860s, gold was also discovered in the ranges to the north-west of the shire, on Stringer's Creek and the Jordan River. Miners and supplies were transported from Port Albert through Sale and Rosedale, stimulating the growth of these towns. As soon as the tracks reached the mountains, supplies were unloaded from the bullock wagons on to pack horses. Cowwarr developed as a staging post on one of the tracks, the area was soon settled and farm produce packed to the goldfields. During the mid 1860s, shipping began to utilise the Gippsland Lakes, so miners and supplies were landed directly at Sale. A powder magazine was built at Sale in 1864 to store explosives for the goldfields. It has been recently restored.

Rugged terrain made access to the mountain diggings difficult so the government funded the cutting of tracks to aid prospecting and provide a means of communication between the goldfields. In 1864, Angus McMillan supervised the cutting of tracks to link the goldfields at Omeo, Crooked River, Walhalla and Jordan. From 1983, members of Ben Cruachan Bushwalking Club have relocated, mapped and marked McMillan's original route, creating a walking track.[73] Blazes on trees have been located along the track.[74] The club has also cleared some of the many other tracks that were also forged during this period. A recently opened walk, Track 96, was part of the historic track from Briagolong to Cobbanah, constructed in the

1880s. A number of tracks cross the Freestone Creek, Lees Creek and Granite Creek areas and track notes detail remaining mine relics.[75]

4.2 Brown Coal Mining

There are extensive areas of coal deposits in the southern part of the Shire of Wellington. One field extends east from the Loy Yang field, another is located around the town of Gormandale, another is located in the parishes of Holey Plains and Coolungoolum, and another is located in the Stradbroke area. However, very little coal has been mined.

Government testing found lignite west of Alberton as early as 1863.[76] In 1926, James Knox applied for a mining lease on the Gelliondale deposits. The government would not support the venture as it was developing its interests at Yallourn, but Knox persevered, opening the mine by 1931 and selling bags of fuel the next year. In 1937, the company began production of briquettes.[77] With the commencement of the Second World War, most of the labour force was withdrawn. After the war, the enterprise did not go ahead, affected by freight costs, the poorer quality of the coal and government disinterest. It carried on in a reduced capacity, closing in 1950.[78]

Over the years, several companies were interested in developing the field but in 1983 the Brown Coal Council suggested that the Gelliondale deposits may never be developed.[79] In the 1960s, a private company opened a mine at Won Wron where there was a small deposit of good quality coal.[80] There was also growing interest by the government and the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in the coal reserves in the Stradbroke and Darriman area. The extent of the reserves was surveyed by drilling in the 1970s. In 1983, plans to utilise the coal deposits in the Merriman's Creek valley met with strong protests from local residents and were abandoned.

4.3 Quarrying

A quarry operated on Freestone Creek, north of Briagolong, from the 1860s. The stone was used for Mount View homestead and the first Roman Catholic church at Briagolong, for the Anglican church at Sale, for a number of buildings at Stratford including the Anglican church and the post office, and for Angus McMillan's tombstone. Another fine building is the former National Bank and residence in Maffra, built in 1877. In 1875, the stone was sent to Melbourne for the Colonial Exhibition.[81] The rocky wall of freestone was largely quarried, but a part is still visible at the southern end of Quarry Reserve.

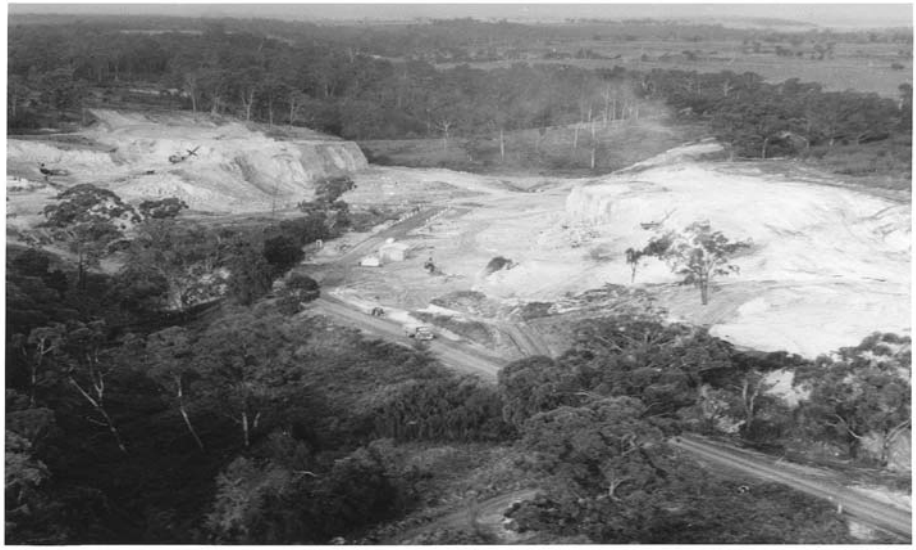
Gravel and sand are extracted from numerous small pits throughout the shire.

Lime

Lime was used extensively in the early building industry. Limestone deposits were discovered in the area south of Sale and a lime burning industry developed. Sale lime was of high quality and in demand.[82]

Reflecting the boom in the Melbourne building industry, there were three operations situated in the Sale area by 1890. The Dutson Lime Works eventually had three kilns and employed 13 men in 1890. The Armidale Lime Company, also at Dutson, was operating in the mid 1880s, until at least the early 1890s. The Boggy Creek Lime Works were located at Longford, and began operating as early as 1863. A second kiln was constructed in 1889 and at one point, there were 26 men employed at the works.[83] The kilns were located at the quarries, and the workmen also lived around the lime works. The lime was hauled by horses to the railway station at Sale or to the Latrobe Landing at Longford.

There was also some lime burning further south. There were three kilns on Merriman's Creek in 1891. The lime was carted to the railway station at Rosedale by bullock wagon.[84] However the financial depression of the 1890s caused stagnation of the building industry and the demand for lime declined.



Limestone quarry, Merriman's Creek, about 1960s (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

A lime pit was opened at Darriman in 1904 and lime was also mined north of Woodside.[85] In the early 1930s, two companies commenced production of lime near Longford, supplying building and agricultural lime.[86] Limestone mining recommenced at Merriman's Creek in the 1950s, producing lime for cement manufacture.[87] Agricultural lime is still mined at Darriman.

Evidence of lime burning activities has survived. At Boggy Creek the kilns were bulldozed around 1994 for safety reasons, but the large limestone quarry remains, as well as the outlines of two filled shafts and the site of a residence. There is a well-preserved kiln at Darriman.[88] There is also a kiln in good condition at Dutson.

4.4 Oil and Gas

The production of oil and gas has had an impact on Wellington Shire, and has increased business and employment, bringing prosperity and development to Sale and the shire. After the First World War, the government offered a reward for the discovery of a payable oil field anywhere in Australia. The government sank a series of bores at Longford and Stradbroke in 1922 without success. However bores in the Lakes Entrance district proved more hopeful and drilling activity centred on this area.

In the late 1930s, interest was revived in the search for oil and the Gippsland area was systematically tested with five lines of bores from north of Fernbank and Maffra to Seaspray and Seacombe. Promising prospects of oil and gas were found in two bores at Lake Wellington and another at Sperm Whale Head, but this project lapsed.[89] After the Second World War, there was intensive drilling in the Woodside and Darriman areas with encouraging results, but not of commercial significance.[90]

In the 1960s, prospecting moved offshore and Esso BHP found oil in Bass Strait. A number of wells produce oil and gas, brought ashore by pipelines under the seabed. A large processing plant was built at Longford in 1969, and from there oil is carried by pipeline to Long Island Point on Westernport Bay and natural gas is piped to Dandenong. Sale became the administrative centre for Esso BHP, as well as for engineering, transport and supply companies servicing the oil industry. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, this created a great demand for office space and for housing in Sale. Some large new office buildings were constructed, new housing subdivisions created and new shops and restaurants opened. Oil production peaked in 1985, although the production of natural gas is slowly growing.[91] The relocation of Esso's administration to Melbourne in the early 1990s had a significant impact on Sale's economy.

4.5 Timber

Wellington Shire contained vast areas of forest and woodlands when European settlers arrived to farm the land in the 1840s. Utilisation of these forests has been a continuing theme in the shire's history. Among the forests that have been exploited are the red gum woodlands on the central plains, mountain ash in the Strzeleckis, yellow stringybark in the Woodside area and alpine ash in the rugged mountains to the north. Stripping wattle bark was an early enterprise. More recently, extensive plantations of pines and eucalypts for timber production have made an impact on the shire's landscape.

One of the first substantial red gum mills was William Forbes' Stratford Steam Saw Mill, that he established in 1865 at Murray's Corner, now known as Invermichie.[92] In 1872, he relocated to a creek on Freemans Road at Briagolong, and named his significantly expanded enterprise the Victoria Saw Mill.[93] The saw mill provided red gum weatherboards for buildings, had a significant contract with the Melbourne Tramways Trust to supply two million red gum blocks for street paving, made red gum fellows used in wagon wheels, and produced fencing and verandah posts. Another sideline was the production of kit houses. The red gum was quickly cleared from the plains and Forbes closed his mill in 1889. At the mill site today, the top of the well can still be seen, while in the Briagolong area, there are several Forbes' kit homes. One of the most notable buildings in Briagolong, the Briagolong Mechanics Institute, was built from Forbes' weatherboards.[94]

A contrasting site not far from where the Forbes mill was located is the Briagolong Red Gum Reserve, a botanical site of state significance. Saved from selection by naturalist Tarlton Rayment, this reserve consists of regrowth red gum. Its density differs from that of the woodlands at the time of European settlement as it has not been subject to the regular burning regime practised by the Aborigines.[95]

There were many spot mills in the area, with little to show of their existence other than the ruts made by bullock wagons transporting the sawn timber. Other saw milling enterprises in the district included that of the Littles. In his memoirs, George Little describes the family's operations from the early 1900s as they established and moved mills from Blackall Creek to Perry Bridge and to Boisdale.[96] Not far from Briagolong, Maurie Killeen operates a saw mill at Valencia Creek. As the red gum has been cleared, he now concentrates on milling mixed species such as stringybark, mountain grey gum and messmate.

In the early 1880s, the potential of the valuable forest in the Mullungdung area was recognised and timber reserves were gazetted in the Darriman and Mullungdung parishes and in the Won Wron area. The yellow stringybark was renowned as a structural hardwood, and was used for piles and wharves by the Melbourne Harbour Trust, and for bridges and railway sleepers. A major saw milling enterprise in the Mullungdung Forest from 1910 to 1919, was the Goodwood Timber and Tramway Company. The company built a steel tramway from its mill site near the Old Rosedale Road to Port Albert, where the timber was loaded on to railway trucks. The company had substantial contracts with the Railways and with the Public Works Department. When it operated at full capacity, it employed 100 men and cut an average of 60,000 square feet of timber a week. A settlement consisting of mill houses, a school and hall, recreation reserve and tennis courts developed around the mill. Goodwood's extensive operations soon had an impact on the forest, which was cut out by 1918. The company relocated its operations to Neerim and closed the mill in 1919. Remains of bridges built over gullies by the Goodwood Company can be seen in the forest, and there are cuttings over which logs were rolled. The forest abounds with stumps.[97]

During the Second World War, large quantities of charcoal were obtained from the Mullungdung and Boodyarn Forests. In more recent years, the Mullungdung has been logged for fencing materials.[98]

The once magnificent forests of mountain ash that covered the eastern Strzeleckis were mostly burnt as settlers set alight the trees they had ringbarked and felled. Some were split for palings. During the 1920s, after advances had been made with the process of kiln drying the ash, its demand as a building timber escalated.[99] In the Strzeleckis, small saw mills such as the Duff

Sawmill operated until logs became too difficult to extract. The Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail near Balook shows evidence of this period of logging. The trail follows tracks made by horses and tractors pulling logs to the mill.[100]

By the time the settlers had abandoned their farms, blackberries, rabbits and ragwort had invaded the Strzeleckis and scrub was taking hold on the hillsides. Before the end of the Second World War, the Forestry Commission stepped in to rehabilitate the Strzeleckis and establish a major timber supply there. It was joined in the venture by APM which had a large paper mill in the Latrobe Valley, and the company began buying land in the 1950s. The forest could not regenerate by natural means as the seeds of the mountain ash had long since been destroyed. Only a program of planting and silviculture would create the forest.[101] After research to investigate the best species to plant in the area, *pinus radiata* was found to be the most suitable softwood and mountain ash the best eucalypt. Much of the preparation and planting in the Eastern Strzeleckis was carried out by prisoners from the Won Wron Prison Farm. By 1986, 18,000 hectares of softwoods had been planted and there were 11,000 acres of eucalypt plantation.[102] This has increased and the scrub covered hillsides are being overlaid by plantations of pine, mountain ash and shining gum which are harvested and replanted every 25 to 30 years.[103] A drive through the hills reveals a mixture of plantations and regenerated forest. Near Balook, the Tarra Bulga National Park, filled with magnificent forest, fern gullies and waterfalls, conveys to the visitor a sense of what the ranges were like when the settlers moved into the forest.

APM's pulp mill at Maryvale has had an impact on other parts of the shire as well as the Strzeleckis, with extensive pine plantations in areas such as Longford and Stockdale. A tree farm was established by APM at Stockdale from the 1950s, and APM has also used alpine timber for pulpwood. Former Licola sawmiller, Wilbur Saxton, established a tree nursery at Longford in the mid 1960s – at the time the only private tree nursery in Australia – and worked to develop genetically superior pines to supply to APM.[104]

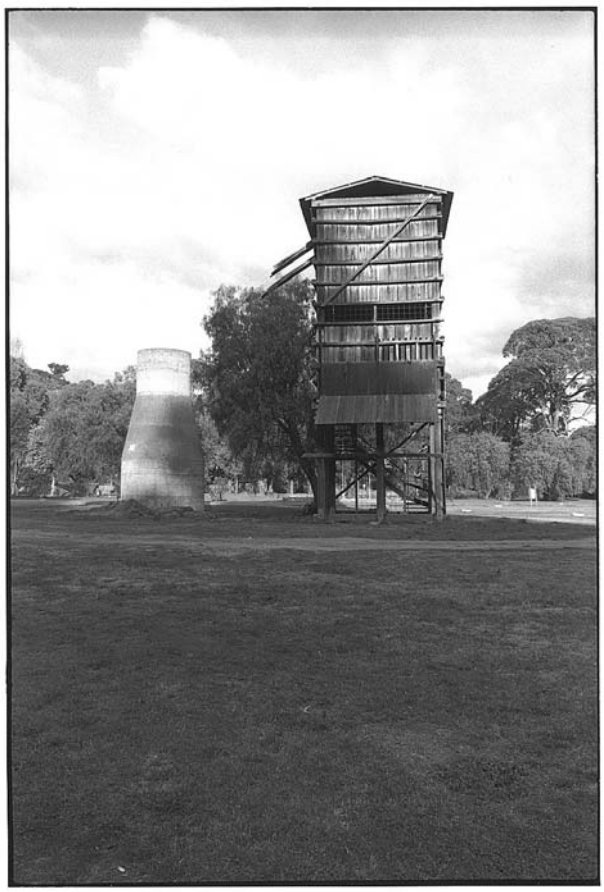
Away in the lonely north of the shire were vast stands of alpine ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*), found between elevations of 950 to 1400 metres. This isolated and untouched area of the shire, penetrated only by the occasional mountain cattlemen's stock route or hardy bushwalkers, was about to be transformed in 1950. In February 1950, a Mack Diesel truck wound its way down the mountains, carrying the first load of alpine ash that had been cut on Connors Plain.[105]

The alpine timber industry was to not only transform the alpine ash forests and send roads threading into this isolated area, but also to transform Heyfield, below the mountains on the red gum plains. After the 1939 fires with their horrific loss of life and the destruction of Victoria's main mountain ash forests and hardwood timber supplies, the state's timber industry was restructured. Saw mills would be relocated to towns away from the forests and milling operations would be centralised in the towns to be known as conversion centres. The Forests Commission began surveying the untapped and inaccessible alpine reserves of timber, then planning roads to penetrate the area and nominating Heyfield a conversion centre. A road was built to Connors Plain and plans were made to extend it to cross the Divide and link Heyfield with Jamieson. In 1950, during the heart of the post war timber shortage, seven saw mills were established in Heyfield which was quickly transformed into a timber town.[106] Streets of mill workers houses were hastily built on the perimeter of the town - 185 houses altogether - giving workers proper housing and access to educational, health and shopping facilities that they had been denied when they lived in the forests. The Saxtons were able to establish their mill at Licola in 1950, and built houses and facilities for workers and their families on a flat bordering the Macalister River.

Existing reserves on Connors Plain were soon under pressure and new areas for logging were investigated. Bennison Plains was surveyed as the next forest reserve. The alpine ash growing here was not in contiguous forests as on Connors Plain but in scattered pockets. The expense that would be incurred in building the Mt Tamboritha Road led to a more cooperative venture among the saw milling companies and a co-ordinated approach to logging the new areas. Work began on the Tamboritha Road in 1959, and in 1962, the first trees were felled on the

Bennison Plains. Logging extended to Arbuckle and into the Moroka unit. As logging allocations have been reduced, companies in Heyfield have amalgamated until the situation in 2001 where one company, Neville Smith Pty Ltd, owns the two remaining saw mills.[107] Because of the shrinking allocations, timber is now trucked to Heyfield from all parts of Victoria.

The alpine timber industry has also had an impact on Dargo. A mill was established in 1960, but closed in 1987 after Neville Smith Pty Ltd took it over. Reasons given for the closure were scarcity of alpine ash and lowering of timber quotas.[108]



This chip hopper and sawdust burner were part of Saxton's sawmill at Licola (Susan Purdy, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

Companies in Heyfield amalgamated and the main operating mill is Neville Smith Pty Ltd. Today there is plenty of evidence of the postwar alpine timber industry when the demand for timber seemed insatiable and the industry was restructured. Most of the 1950s mill houses are now in private hands, some have been renovated. The silent virgin stands of alpine ash of the 1940s no longer exist. As a result of logging, extensive roading has penetrated these areas, including the link over the Great

Divide, opening the area up for skiing, bushwalking and camping. At Licola are remnants of the Saxton mill settlement which closed in the late 1960s. It has now been transformed into a camp for school children. The lovely avenues of poplars and planes planted by the Saxtons lead to the mill houses that have now been converted to bunk rooms. The brick power house remains, as does the saw dust burner now used as a furnace. The chip hopper has been converted to an abseiling tower.[109]

Wattle Bark

Stripping bark from wattle, particularly black wattle (*acacia mearnsii*) was a very early industry in the shire. Wattle bark was used in the process of tanning. A tannery was established at Port Albert in the 1840s and by the 1880s there were also tanneries at Rosedale, Heyfield, Stratford, Wurruk, Longford and Sale. From the 1840s, large amounts of bark were also exported to Melbourne.

The wattle tree was generally felled to strip the bark so large areas of land were cleared, although the trees did regenerate fairly quickly. By the 1870s, the main source of wattle was on the land of selectors and on the large runs. Wattle bark stripping provided seasonal work and supplementary income for selectors. At Ramahyuck mission station, in the 1860s and 1870s, the Aborigines cut wattle bark to earn money for the mission and for themselves.[110]

Wattle bark was harvested until about 1960. In 1950, there was still an agent in Briagolong and a weighbridge for the bark at Bushy Park railway station.[111] However, increasing use of substitutes by tanneries has meant the demise of the industry.

4.6 Fishing

A fishing industry had developed at Port Albert by the mid 1860s. At first, much of the catch was cured by Chinese but from the 1880s fresh fish were transported by steamer or by rail from Sale. The railway through South Gippsland reached Port Albert in 1892, further assisting exports to Melbourne. The thriving industry stimulated improvements to the wharf and supported a boatbuilding industry.

Port Albert was renowned for flounder but by the 1930s shark fishing became important. From the late 1940s, the industry grew considerably and by 1965 there were 33 boats at Port Albert.[112] However, from the late 1960s, the fishing industry declined. From 1983, management plans for a marine park controlled commercial and amateur fishing in Corner Inlet, but a small fleet of trawlers still fishes for shark.

5. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

5.1 Shipping

In the first days of settlement in Gippsland, the difficulties of overland travel made sea transport preferable. The wreck of the steamer *Clonmel*, on the outer sandbanks of Corner Inlet in January 1841, stimulated the interest of pastoralists in the hinterland. At the same time, Angus McMillan reached the red gum plains from the Monaro, and was soon followed by other squatters arriving with sheep and cattle. The need for a port from which to export their cattle was a pressing concern.

Coastal Shipping

The survivors of the *Clonmel* grounding reported favourably on Corner Inlet, and Captain Lewis, one of the rescuers, called it 'a noble inland lake, capacious enough to ride a fleet of shipping secure from every storm, with a navigable passage from Corner Inlet, and also from Shallow Inlet'.[113] These good reports prompted a group of pastoralists to form the Gipps Land Company and charter the *Singapore* to investigate the area.

The settlers at Port Albert struggled at first, waiting for the survey of land and township blocks. The first town site on the Albert River was unsuitable for shipping stock, so in February 1842 another site was established on a headland near the mouth of the Tarra River. This location became known as Shipping Point.

The shipping trade grew, with a number of ships serving the port en route between Melbourne and Sydney. In the first six months of 1844, Commissioner C.J. Tyers reported 48 arrivals and 43 departures.[114] Cattle were regularly shipped to Van Diemens Land and to New Zealand. Sheep, wool and some dairy produce were also exported, as well as timber and wattle bark, tallow, skins, grain, potatoes, fish and oysters. As trade increased, a customs officer was appointed in January 1844, and a customs office built soon after. The discovery of gold in north Gippsland from the 1850s boosted trade. The Port Albert Steam Navigation Company ran a regular steamship service, landing prospective miners, mining machinery and supplies. A powder magazine was built on the foreshore, a substantial new customs house was completed in 1857 and an immigration barracks built by 1858.

At first, stock and goods were transported through shallow water to ships waiting in the channels but Turnbull & Orr built a small jetty in 1846. Gradually facilities at the port were improved, with a government wharf erected in 1860 as well as three new private jetties. A crane and a goods shed were installed in the following years. The port was served by an unofficial pilot from 1841, but in 1845 a government pilot was appointed to guide ships through the entrance and channels. A signal station was established on Clonmel Island, and later when the island washed away, a lighthouse was built on the eastern end of Snake Island. This light was removed by the early 1880s and a flagstaff erected. There was also a signal station on Sunday Island. There were numerous wreckings and groundings near the entrance to the inlet, so a lifeboat was added in 1860 and a rescue rocket in 1877.[115]

However, Port Albert's importance as a port gradually declined. By the mid 1860s, many cattle were being driven overland to the Melbourne market. Coach services competed with the steamers, and the opening of the Gippsland Lakes to navigation allowed steamers direct communication with the inland towns. Sale had a railway connection to Melbourne in 1878 and in 1892 the railway through South Gippsland reached Port Albert. In 1891, there were three steamers weekly but after 1900 there was only one steamer a week, ceasing operation in 1928. The customs house closed in 1903.

Port Albert supported a fishing industry from the days of early settlement when dried fish were exported by Chinese. Fishing sustained the port and growth in this industry in the 1940s prompted the provision of further mooring facilities and improvements in port services.[116] The port has also supported some shipbuilding over the years. The fishing industry declined from

the late 1960s, but a small fleet still works from Port Albert, trawling in Bass Strait or netting in Corner Inlet.

The port was also used for recreation. An annual New Year's Day regatta was held at Port Albert for about eighty years from 1858, visitors coming from all over Gippsland, by special trains and by boat.[117] Now the port facilities are used by numerous recreational fishermen and boating enthusiasts.

The Maritime Museum at Port Albert holds an extensive collection of artefacts and records which show the type and variety of shipping which used the port. These include the lifesaving rocket, and a cannon from the *Clonmel*. The remains of the *Clonmel* boilers are sometimes visible at low tide. The *Clonmel* was declared an historic shipwreck in 1985 after examination by Heritage Victoria maritime archaeologists who found many remains buried in the sand. A rescue project in 1996 mapped the wreck in detail and recovered a number of artefacts.[118] There are some relics of the heyday of the port. The cottage that housed the lighthouse keeper on Snake Island is now located in Port Albert. Most of the wharves have been replaced but retain approximately their early profile. The former immigration barracks is still standing and some basalt footings of the powder magazine remain. As well, there are the hotel, offices and stores, and public buildings which recall Port Albert's position as the port of Gippsland.[119]

Lakes Shipping

Some shipping used the Gippsland Lakes for internal commerce from the late 1850s, carrying supplies from Sale for the gold diggings in north Gippsland and backloading timber.[120] The natural outlet of the lakes to the sea was discovered in 1842 but it was 1858 before a sizeable vessel sailed through the shallow opening.[121] Despite the hazards of the changeable entrance, vessels from Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart were soon navigating the lakes and the lower reaches of the rivers. Shipping companies based in Sale provided direct communication with Melbourne, by-passing the long and arduous overland journey from Port Albert to Sale.

Sale's port was on the Latrobe River, some distance from the township and downstream from the bridge across the river on the road to Port Albert. Two hotels were built at the port, as well as storehouses. On the lower reaches of the Avon River there were wharves at Clydebank and Redbank. During the late 1860s, a silt bar developed at the mouth of the Latrobe River and traffic for Sale used the port at Clydebank. A channel was cut through the bar in the early 1870s and Latrobe Wharf became the main port for Sale and district while the Avon River ports sank into obscurity.

The steamers carried passengers, supplies and machinery for the gold diggings, as well as wool, timber and wattle bark. Excursion trips were introduced in the 1870s and proved very popular. The opening of the railway from Sale to Melbourne in 1878 removed the monopoly of lakes shipping, but encouraged tourism and new trade such as fresh fish. A rail link from Sale to the wharf was planned but, instead, the old low level bridge was replaced by a moveable bridge, opened in 1883. Sale's connection to the lakes was further improved by the construction of a canal, from 1886 to1890, from the Thomson River to a basin south of the town. The construction of an artificial entrance to the lakes, opened in 1889, also benefited the shipping trade but the boom days were already passing. Improving road and rail services seriously challenged the steamer trade and by the 1930s the last steamers on the lakes ceased service.

The canal and swinging basin and the Swing Bridge are vivid reminders of the role of river transport in the early development of Sale. At the Latrobe Wharf there is only minimal evidence of the wharf footings.[122]

The paddlesteamer Tanjil is moored at Latrobe Wharf on the LaTrobe River near Sale (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

5.2 Roads

The first Europeans to venture into Gippsland came from the Monaro. By 1845, when surveyor Townsend made his map of Gippsland, this route, crossing the Avon River, then the Latrobe below its junction with the Thomson and proceeding to Alberton, was an established track. Port Albert became the outlet for the region and the rough dray track became a permanent road. The rivers and morasses were bridged in the 1850s, but the road was still often impassable in winter and sandy in places. Townsend's map also showed a 'Road to Port Phillip' along the coast but this route was swampy, difficult and little used. An early track north of the Latrobe River was surveyed and improved by C.J. Tyers in 1847, but rough terrain and swamps hindered the development of a direct overland route to Melbourne.[123]

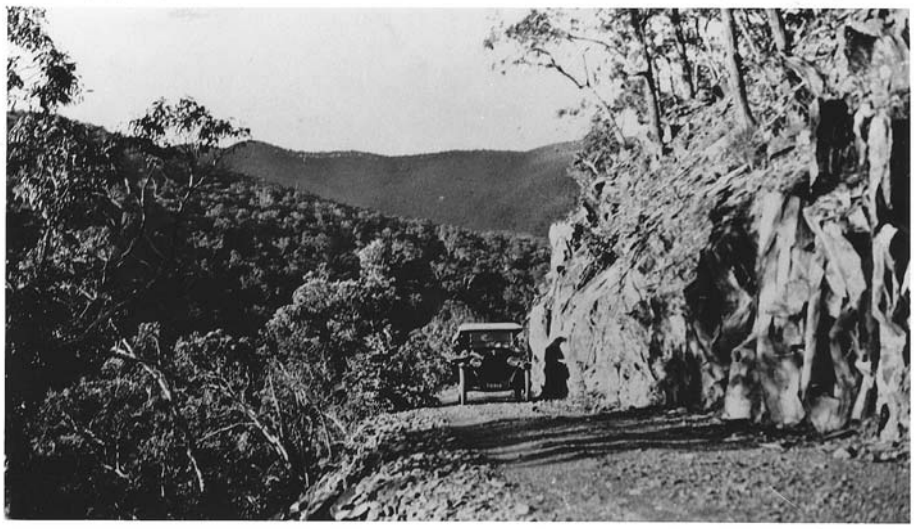
With increasing settlement other tracks came into use, such as the Straits Road which branched from the Port Albert track via McLennan's Straits and Seacombe.[124] The fledgling settlement of Flooding Creek was linked with the Latrobe River crossing by a dray track, known as Punt Lane.

The discovery of gold at Omeo in the early 1850s greatly increased traffic on the Port Albert track, with accommodation houses and shanties springing up along the route. When gold was also found at Crooked River in the 1860s, a route was pioneered from Stratford. Rugged terrain made travel in the mountains difficult so the government funded the cutting of a number of tracks to aid prospecting and to provide means of communication between goldfields. Gold finds in the ranges to the north-west of the shire, on Stringer's Creek and the Jordan River, also stimulated the cutting of tracks. Miners and supplies bound for these fields landed at Port Albert, then travelled via the track to Rosedale and thence to Toongabbie and Walhalla, or else through Sale, Maffra, Heyfield and Seaton.[125]

The early bush tracks were rough, passable only on horseback or by bullock dray. District road boards were formed from the early 1850s to improve road conditions in the country. As shires were formed, the roads in the area became a municipal responsibility. Alberton Shire was proclaimed in 1864, Avon Shire in 1865 and Rosedale Shire in 1871. These bodies constructed new roads, maintained and improved existing roads, and built bridges.

The completion of a causeway across the morasses at the crossing of the Latrobe River allowed the operation of coach services between Port Albert and Sale from 1859. From the early 1860s, other coaches also ran from Sale, carrying miners heading for the Jordan and Crooked River goldfields. Regular coach services also ran between Sale and Bairnsdale. The track to Melbourne was gradually improved and coach services commenced operation between Sale and Melbourne in 1865. By 1867, in good conditions, a journey from Sale to Melbourne took twenty four hours.[126] The opening of the railway from Melbourne to Sale in 1878 ended coach travel on that route, but coach services continued to operate from railheads for many years. In the early 1900s, motor cars began to appear in the shire. As roads were upgraded and bridges constructed, motor transport superseded horsedrawn coaches throughout the region.

The Country Roads Board was formed in 1913 to improve the state's road system and in July of that year the Board inspected the roads of the eastern Strzelecki Ranges. Settlers had penetrated the hill country from the late 1860s, and the opening of a number of tracks had encouraged further settlement.[127] The Shire of Alberton also constructed roads in the hill country to encourage selection.[128] Some of these steep, narrow and winding tracks were declared main roads and work soon began on widening, gravelling and realignment. From 1918, the Board was also responsible for 'developmental' roads and eight more roads in the area received attention, including the Tarra Valley Road and the Grand Ridge Road.[129] The Ridge Road, as it was first called, was planned to run from Strzelecki in the west to Carrajung on the Traralgon to Yarram Road. Several new roads were constructed during the 1930s using unemployment relief and the Isolated Settlers Fund provided roads at Dingo Creek, west of Wonyip, in 1927.[130] In 1935, hill residents showed their appreciation of their improved access by erecting a memorial to the CRB at the junction of the Hiawatha and Binginwarri Roads.[131] Isolated settlers in the Upper Macalister River Valley battled for thirty years to get a road, which eventually reached the Barkly River in 1919. But it was another twelve years before the river was bridged, giving the Glencairn people access to the outside world.[132]



Roads in the Upper Macalister Valley were steep and narrow (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The route between Port Albert and Sale declined in importance from the 1860s as shipping on the lakes was able to land close to Sale. The advent of the railway in 1878 gave Sale direct communication with Melbourne and the route to Port Albert became less important. In 1927 the CRB took over the Yarram to Sale road, improving the surface with metal and later tar. This road became part of the South Gippsland Highway, proclaimed in 1938.[133] The coach road to Melbourne was upgraded over the years and became part of the Princes Highway.

The road linking the Dargo area to the lowlands follows the route of the track, cut to take miners to the Crooked River goldfield. It was upgraded for vehicular traffic in the late 1880s and, as late as 1932, mobs of cattle were brought down the track to Stratford and on to markets at Maffra.[134] The grid network of minor roads on the central plains of the shire are a legacy of closer settlement schemes over the years. The timber industry was responsible for many tracks in the eastern Strzelecki Ranges, where logs were removed with horses and tractors. Some of these tracks are visible on the Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail near Balook.[135] From the 1950s, timber was extracted from the mountains in the north of the shire and extensive roading was constructed, including a link to the other side of the Great Dividing Range.

5.3 Bridges

Large rivers, streams and marshes were a great impediment to travel in the early days of settlement in the Shire of Wellington. At first, rivers were forded at a shallow place. Punts operated for a time over the Latrobe River at Longford and Rosedale and over the Macalister River at Maffra. The Tarra and Albert Rivers were bridged in the first years of settlement and by 1858 a bridge and causeway were constructed across the Latrobe River and its morasses at Longford. During the 1860s, bridges were built over the smaller streams on the route between Port Albert and Sale and in 1883 a moveable swing bridge replaced the old Latrobe River bridge. A new bridge is currently under construction.

Floods were common, often significantly damaging bridges and leading to their fairly frequent replacement. Usually the original small wooden bridge was replaced by a bigger and better structure, eventually superseded by a modern concrete and steel model. The fourth bridge over the Avon now stands at Stratford, while a line of pines documents an earlier bridge alignment. At Rosedale, the duplication of the long bridge over the Latrobe was opened in 1996, improving on the two bridges and a causeway constructed after the devastating floods of 1934. The Delta Bridge near Briagolong crossed the morass of the Freestone Creek. A low wooden bridge was replaced by a larger bridge in 1893. Flooding and gradually widening of the creek

led to the bridge eventually being about four hundred feet long. It was destroyed by bushfires in 1965 and has been replaced by a concrete bridge.

In the rugged eastern Strzelecki Ranges, many deep creeks had to be bridged to give isolated communities access to markets and services. Often a large log was the first bridge, but from the 1870s the Alberton Council and then the Country Roads Board constructed many bridges in this region. 'A' frame bridges were once numerous in this area. An example survives on the Albert River near Hiawatha.[136] The bridge in the Tarra Valley National Park is an unusual suspension bridge, relocated from Alberton West. The settlers in the Upper Macalister River Valley were also very isolated. It was 1931 before a simple three-span bridge was built across the Barkly River, giving them access to Licola.[137]

The opening of the bridge at Licola about 1913 was a great occasion (Con Gleeson Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

5.4 Railways

After many debates about the most suitable route for a railway into Gippsland, a direct route to Sale was endorsed and work began at both ends (Oakleigh and at Sale) in 1875. The line was completed in 1878, and later extended to Bairnsdale.[138] A loop to link with the main Gippsland line was built in the 1880s from Traraglon to Stratford, with stations at Glengarry, Toongabbie, Cowwarr, Dawson, Heyfield, Tinamba and Maffra. Heyfield became especially busy when work started on the Glenmaggie Weir in the 1920s, and a tramline was built from Heyfield to the weir site to transport materials needed for the huge project. A spur line was also built from Maffra to Briagolong in 1889.

The railway ended the region's isolation as it significantly shortened the travelling time to Melbourne and stimulated industries. Large quantities of timber were railed in from Briagolong to Maffra, while at Maffra, cattle and dairy products were sent to the Melbourne markets. From the Melbourne end, excited holiday makers boarded the Gippsland train to alight at Sale and continue by boat to their holiday destinations on the Gippsland Lakes.[139] The Better Farming Train, an agricultural extension service, visited Heyfield and other stations along the line in the 1930s.[140]

Residents at the southern end of the shire agitated for rail connection from the 1880s, suggesting a link from Traralgon, Rosedale or Sale to Port Albert. Instead, the Great Southern Line was built, travelling through South Gippsland to its terminus at Port Albert in 1892. The line was extended to Yarram in 1921, reflecting the shifting dynamics of population and downgrading Port Albert to a spur line. In 1923, it had reached Woodside. However these extensions from Yarram did not prove viable and their services were very limited.[141]

Rail services have progressively contracted since the 1950s and now, only one of the lines is still operating in the shire. At present, the Gippsland line terminates for passengers at Sale, but the government plans to reopen services to Bairnsdale in the future. On this line, the Rosedale station with residence and the goods shed date from 1881.[142] In Sale, where the route has been diverted to the outskirts of town, the signal box remains as a sentinel that overlooks the original route and station site, now occupied by the Sale shopping complex.

Rails, stations and bridges may have been removed from the closed lines, but evidence of the once busy lines still abounds. Within the shire, on the former Traralgon to Stratford line, embankments and cuttings can be discerned, and the Maffra and Stratford stations remain. The former Dawson railway reserve is now a significant flora reserve that contains rare orchids and remnant grasslands. The Powerscourt siding, purpose-built for loading sugar beet, can be seen by those with a keen eye. This line is progressively being turned into a rail trail and all the remnant features - from bridge pylons to high earthen embankments that provide sweeping views of the river flats - will be appreciated by walkers and cyclists. Although the main railway station building is no longer at Yarram, parts of the platform and shedding remain.

Railway housing has also survived. At Cowwarr, a former railway house stands close to the overgrown platform, and in Heyfield, the station master's house backs on to what is now an empty railway reserve. Close to where the former railway line leaves Maffra for Stratford, there is a line of houses that were part of the Victorian Railway's 'Operation Snail'. These precut houses were manufactured in Nottingham in the late 1940s and imported to Australia by the railways to help overcome the postwar housing shortage. Another group of 'snail houses' can be seen in Macarthur Street in Sale and there is also one in Cowwarr.

5.5 Air Services

During the Second World War airfields were constructed at East Sale and West Sale for military purposes. After the war, East Sale became a permanent establishment, operating as a peacetime training centre. The airfield at West Sale was partially dismantled, before being used as a holding centre for displaced persons. From the late 1960s, the aerodrome was used for commuter flights, charter flights and agricultural work and facilities were upgraded. The discovery of offshore oil and natural gas increased traffic at the airport and in the late 1980s it was the headquarters of the National Safety Council of Australia – Victorian Division (NSCA). An airfield at Yarram serves light aircraft.

5.6 Communications

From the earliest days of settlement, the first residents of the shire maintained contact with the outside world, with mail being carried on horseback by settlers or travellers. The first post office in the shire was established at Alberton in 1843 and the mail was brought by coastal steamers. From 1848 a regular service was established with the mail coming overland from Melbourne through Sale. A post office was opened at Sale in 1848.[143] With increasing population, regular mail services were established to post offices in stores, hotels and homesteads, such as Rosedale where the first post office was conducted in Luke's store or at Won Wron where the school housed the post office. Loose bags of mail were left for settlers to collect and distribute. A postcard of Seacombe Post Office about 1900 shows a group of people gathered to collect mail.[144] Postal services eventually reached most isolated communities, such as Licola where mail delivery on a weekly basis began in 1912.[145] Even at Black Snake Creek, a tributary of the Wonnangatta River deep in the mountains, there was a small corrugated iron shed which functioned as a post office, as a photograph taken in 1941

shows.[146] One of the the oldest post office buildings still existing in the shire is the former Port Albert post office. Built in 1865, it closed in 1972 and is now a private home.[147]

The telegraph line from Melbourne reached Sale and Port Albert in 1864. Rosedale was connected in 1867 and this link to civilisation gradually reached many scattered communities. From the 1890s, the telephone network spread throughout the region. The Yarram district was connected in the early 1900s. Glenmaggie was linked in 1906, the line coming six miles from Heyfield, strung on trees and fences.[148]

Communications in the region were further advanced in the 1930s when two radio stations 3GI and 3TR, which was originally in Trafalgar, were established in Sale. A transmitter was located at Longford.[149]

In recent times, consolidation and improvement of services has seen the introduction of automatic telephone exchanges and the closure of small post offices, while modern telecommunications have improved links with the world.

Omega Base

The OMEGA Navigational Facility is located at Darriman. Plans for the site were announced in 1976 and, despite considerable protest, the facility was constructed and opened in 1982. The tower is 427 metres tall and the site covers 347 hectares. Part of a world chain of eight facilities, it provides long range all-weather navigational information.[150]

6. THE ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGING PUBLIC LAND

6.1 National Parks and Reserves

Throughout the shire are many areas of public land that have been reserved for a variety of reasons including forest reserves, railway and water reserves. Although the reason for their original reservation may no longer exist, many have evolved as important areas for preserving remnant vegetation, and as parkland and for recreation. This is the case with the Dawson railway reserve. Once a stop on the Traralgon to Stratford railway line, it is now an important remnant grassland area of the red gum plains.

The history of proclaiming national parks in the shire documents changing responses to the environment. The first park in the shire, now the Tarra Bulga National Park, was established after Alberton Shire asked the Victorian government to reserve an area of forest near Balook as a public park in order to preserve the fern gullies. Small in area, twenty hectares were reserved in 1903 and named Bulga Park. In 1909, more mountain ash forest was reserved nearby in the Tarra Valley. The shire relocated a suspension bridge from Alberton West, enabling visitors to walk through the rainforest canopy. Italian stonemason, Peter Moresco, was responsible for the imposing stonework at the entrance to the Tarra Valley National Park.[151] It was not until the recommendations of the Land Conservation Council (see below), that the two separate parks were merged, after a land exchange with APM. The new Tarra Bulga National Park of 1,230 hectares was opened in 1986.[152] Visitors to the park are soon immersed in the cool temperate rainforest with its beautiful fern gullies and buttressed trunks of mountain ash. They have some insight into what the settlers faced when they arrived with their axes to clear the land for farming

Differing greatly from Victoria's earliest national parks like Mount Buffalo and Wilsons Promontory that were noted for their imposing beauty and grandeur, Sperm Whale Head, a low-lying sandy peninsula which separates Lake Victoria from Lake Reeve, was reserved as a park in 1927. Local naturalists, especially Fred Barton who was the voluntary ranger there for many years, had campaigned to protect *Thriptomene micrantha* (known locally as heather) which was harvested on the peninsula for cut flowers.[153] Although the park was renamed the Lakes National Park in1929, the lake's water was not protected - the park's boundary stopped short of the water frontage.

After considerable debate in Victoria over the use of public land that stemmed from plans to farm the Little Desert, the Land Conservation Council (LCC) was formed to make recommendations on the balanced use of public land. This included preserving ecologically significant areas and conserving areas of natural interest, beauty or historic interest. During the 1970s, the shire's public land came under LCC scrutiny. Among the recommendations which were implemented was the formation of the Lakes Coastal Park in 1979, which protected the vital outer barrier to the lakes and the Ninety Mile Beach, and the reservation of the Holey Plains State Park near Rosedale in 1977. This park is one of the most floristically diverse parks in the state and has cultural significance that includes Aboriginal artefact scatters and links with the Holey Plain squatting run.[154]

The LCC turned its attention to alpine areas to the north of the shire, an area where very little land had been made available for freehold. The management of this land had long been a controversial issue. Land use included the relatively recent logging enterprises which had also resulted in a network of roads penetrating the area, and alpine summer grazing. Bushwalkers had long been attracted to the grand scenery and the cultural heritage of the Alps, walking into Tarli Karng or hiking the Crosscut Saw, staying at cattlemen's huts and hiking into Wonnangatta station, made famous by the Bryce family. The Victorian National Parks Association had been lobbying for decades for alpine national parks to preserve the environment, while cattlemen feared the creation of parks would end their grazing licences,

threaten their farming viability and end the tradition of alpine grazing stretching back for many decades. In 1979, the LCC recommended the creation of four national parks. One of these parks, the Wonnangatta Moroka, would encompass the northern part of the shire.

The lively debate that erupted over these recommendations focused on issues of cultural heritage, environmental damage caused by grazing above the snowline, and the issue of burning and wildfire. Following the LCC's recommendations, a contiguous national park has been formed along the Great Dividing Range and links with the Kosciusko National Park. In the Wonnangatta Moroka Park, areas of freehold – such as the Wonnangatta Station area - have been acquired and subsumed into the park, but some families retain their grazing leases. There are many sites of cultural significance within the national park.

In 1983, the state government announced its intention to establish four marine parks and wildlife reserves in South Gippsland. Among them was the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park that stretches from Port Welshpool to the beginning of the Ninety Mile Beach, and encompasses the many small islands, mud flats and tidal channels near the entrance to Port Albert. Much evidence of the shire's early history lies within this park, including the wreck of the *Clonmel* which had played an instrumental role in the early settlement of Gippsland. Snake Island is also included in the park. Each winter from the early 1900s to the 1950s, dairy cows, from areas such as Jack River, Wonyip, Tarra Valley, Balook and Binginwarri, were swum across to the island for winter grazing. The hill farmers were unable to feed their cows during the winter months, and had to find an alternative place to feed their herds.[155] Evidence of the agisters' huts and infrastructure remain on the island, and beef cattle are still taken across for agistment.

6.2 Changes to Lakes and Rivers

In 1957, a sewerage farm was developed at Dutson Downs to dispose of wastewater from the Latrobe Valley. This development had a devastating effect on Lake Coleman, on the southern edge of Lake Wellington, colouring the water and reducing light penetration necessary for aquatic life, turning it into a dead lake. Local disquiet grew as people became aware of the lake's degradation and the seeping of its polluted water into Lake Wellington. The plan in the 1980s to dump radioactive waste in Lake Coleman, close to the RAAF bombing range, had a mobilising effect on local people. It alerted them to a larger issue, the state of the Gippsland Lakes, and the extent to which they had been affected by 140 years of European settlement.[156] This included the effects that clearing the land has had on the lakes, the impact of farming practices and increasing use of farm fertilisers that have washed into the lakes, the effect of building an artificial entrance to the lakes and the increased salinity levels, eroding shorelines through the loss of reeds and tea tree and increased turbidity. As a result of the Lake Coleman mobilisation, the Save the Gippsland Lakes Committee was formed. The lakes have been under constant study and surveillance by other organisations since this group formed. The problems have been recognised but continue to exacerbate with the regular appearance of algal blooms, increasing salinity and erosion.

Allied to the changes to the lakes are changes to the rivers within the shire. Of particular concern for shire residents have been changes to the Avon River, which local people have seen as both a provider and a predator. The early settlers prized its alluvial river flats and its water supply. By 1940, however, with miles of red raw cliffs, an expanding river bed, banks devoid of vegetation and vulnerable to the next onslaught of floodwater, the Avon was known as the worse case of river bank erosion in Victoria. Surrounding farmland and the town of Stratford were considered vulnerable to the ravages of the river. Along the river is evidence of remedial action taken by farming groups and sixty years of river engineering. A concrete retaining wall was built to protect part of the town and the road bridge in 1930, protective works of encasing stones in wire mesh were built for the railway bridge in 1941. In the 1950s, concrete groynes were erected along the river and a program of willow planting was instituted in an attempt to stabilise the banks.[157] Willows are now being removed from rivers in the shire and native vegetation being replanted.

In the lower reaches of the river, towards Clydebank where once boats steamed up to Redbank, the river has silted markedly. During flood periods, when more silt is deposited from the river's upper reaches, the area takes on a desert-like appearance from the sand deposits.

There have been marked changes to the Thomson, Macalister and Latrobe rivers as a result of clearing, farming practices, impact of industrial waste, construction of dams, irrigation, draining morasses and snagging. Sites associated with agricultural engineering can be seen on parts of the Macalister irrigation district to combat the salinity problems caused by the rising water table.

In 1952, local farming families living along the Thomson River near Cowwarr saw a new river form overnight. During this severe flood, the Thomson had a breakaway and formed a new course, now called the Rainbow Creek. A natural process, centuries of silt accumulation had raised the river bed and banks until it 'perched' above its floodplain, and then broke its banks to find a new channel. In 1957, the Cowwarr Weir was built to help maintain flow in the Thomson River and continue providing local irrigation and drainage.[158]

In 1948, the passing of a River Improvement Act allowed local groups to initiate works to improve their own streams. The Avon River Improvement Trust was formed in 1951.[159] Trusts were formed for the Tarra River and Bruthen Creek in 1952.[160] These bodies have undertaken works to combat erosion and to mitigate flooding, such as constructing groynes, building levee banks and revegetating river banks.

6.3 Fires and Floods

Fires

Bush and grass fires are a constant threat in the region encompassed by Wellington Shire. Accounts of the 1851 fires in Gippsland reflect the awe of new settlers, as they began realising the extent of these forces in the Australian environment. The *Gippsland Times* and *Gippsland Guardian* also reported in graphic detail on fires on the plains of the Avon River in 1862 and 1863.[161] The northern mountainous area of the shire has been devastated by many fires over the years. The worst fire in the Upper Macalister Valley was in 1900 when a large fire, burning in the mountains for weeks, swept down to Glenmaggie and across to Upper Maffra. Homes, stock, pasture and fencing were lost and two people died.[162] Another memorable fire occurred in 1965 when, under hot and windy conditions, several fires merged, wreaking devastation from Glenmaggie to Bairnsdale.[163]

Bushfires are also an ever present danger in the Strzelecki Ranges in the south of the shire. The widespread fires of 1898 burnt out much of the ranges and ringed Yarram. In 1900 the township of Carrajung was partially destroyed by fire and over the years numerous bushfires in the hills have burned homes, halls, farms and forest. Many dugouts or safety tunnels were constructed to attempt to save human lives. Yarram was again threatened when the disastrous 1944 fires spread south over the ranges to Mack's Creek and Won Wron.[164] Even today, with modern fire fighting techniques, bushfires have devastating consquences. A huge fire north of Licola in 1998 burnt for weeks and was so severe that the soil was damaged, closing the area to grazing.

The regularity of bushfires led to plans for local bush fire brigades and by the 1940s many of these volunteer organisations were being formed. The importance of fire protection is reflected by the fact that, even in districts which have lost most other services, the CFA shed is prominent and well maintained.

Floods

Wellington Shire is drained by several major rivers, so floods are a regular occurrence. The Avon, Macalister, Thomson and Latrobe Rivers have wide flood plains which are often inundated. Contemporary accounts describe frequent flooding on these and the many smaller rivers and creeks of the region. The Albert and Tarra Rivers often flooded, sometimes joining and sweeping across the Alberton area and flooding Yarram. Merriman's Creek also flooded at

Seaspray and, as at Port Albert, the flood levels were sometimes compounded by high tides. The damage from floods was devastating, with bridges washed away, roads extensively damaged, stock and property lost, as well as the damage to soil and pastures and to the river bed and banks.

The most extensive floods during the twentieth century occurred in 1916, 1934, 1952, 1971 and 1990. Sale was cut off during the 1934 floods, with the highway impassable, train services suspended and telegraph and telephone communication cut. The Latrobe River was up to a mile wide and the river level at the Swing Bridge was the highest ever recorded. In 1952, during widespread floods, the Thomson River broke out of its banks at Cowwarr, cutting a breakaway which became the new course of the river. The Avon River has suffered many floods but in 1971 the river almost reached road level on the Princes Highway bridge. In 1990, major flooding on the Thomson and Avon Rivers caused massive damage to farmland and property. The highways were closed and Sale and Stratford were isolated.

In 1990, a severe flood inundated farmland along the Avon River. (Courtesy Gippsland Times, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

6.4 Introduced Species

In the northern parts of the shire, it is a common sight to see creeks and waterways choked with blackberries. In places, St Johns wort is rampant and ragwort has spread throughout the Strzeleckis. Shire residents have been battling these and other introduced species that have colonised the shire. By the late 1890s, rabbits were sighted at Grant, and quickly invaded the shire, crushing the hopes of some local residents who believed that the rabbits would not be able to cross the mountains. The damage was overwhelming. Rabbit suppression leagues were formed and farmers began devoting significant slabs of their time to eradication. 'Shear in spring, dip in summer and chase rabbits for the rest of the year', recalled a Stratford grazier.[165] The farmers set traps and bait, dug out warrens and fumigated burrows, but no significant headway was achieved until the spread of myxomatosis from 1950.[166] Rabbits contributed to the severe erosion problems that were being experienced in parts of the shire.

7. BUILDING SETTLEMENTS AND TOWNS

Towns within the shire have had diverse beginnings and functions and this is evident in the buildings and sites that make the towns distinctive. Boisdale's origins as an estate village with its line of cottages are different from Newry's or Briagolong's selection origins. Port Albert's early importance as a colonial port and administrative centre is still evident in surviving buildings. Sale, the self-proclaimed capital of Gippsland that later experienced an oil boom, retains its grand administrative buildings, regional schools and innovative landscaping and town planning that was imposed on the original grid. Rosedale's hotels proclaim its importance on the coaching route, and Seaspray's cottages document a long history as a holiday destination. Heyfield's streets of timber workers' houses are evidence of the postwar timber industry. While this section provides a brief overview of the origins and developments of towns in the shire, more detailed histories can be found in the appendix.

7.1 Ports

Rough terrain and swamps made overland travel to Melbourne impractical, so a port developed on Corner Inlet to serve the early pastoralists. The first townships, Alberton and Tarraville, were overshadowed by Port Albert which thrived as the shipping trade grew. However, the importance of the port declined with competition from lakes navigation and the overland route. A fishing industry sustained the port and recreational boating now also uses the port facilities.

Sale benefited from the opening of the lakes to shipping. The wharf was on the Latrobe River, some distance from Sale, but from the 1880s the construction of a swing bridge and a canal and swinging basin brought the port to the edge of the town.

7.2 Service Centres

By the 1870s Sale emerged as the regional centre of the area encompassed by Wellington Shire. Its growth was aided by its location on the overland route to Melbourne as well as its position as port and railhead. The town has hospital and medical services, courthouse, secondary and tertiary education institutions, government offices, secondary industries, and commercial and retail businesses which serve the whole region as well as the immediate area.

Several other towns function as smaller service centres. Yarram developed as the municipal and service centre for the southern part of the shire, with a hospital and medical services, schools, administrative and commercial services. Maffra was also a municipal centre with a hospital and medical services, schools, and businesses serving the surrounding area, and has also emerged as a major dairy manufacturing area. Rosedale, also once a municipal centre, has schools, churches and hall but mainly a local shopping function, as does Stratford.

7.3 Small Farming Centres

Throughout the shire, there are many smaller towns serving the surrounding farming district. In the early days, many of these townships had a school, churches, a hall, hotels and general stores. Some, such as Briagolong, Tinamba and Woodside, have retained most of these facilities while others, such as Clydebank and Willung, have gradually lost these services and function mainly as a social centre. In the eastern Strzelecki Ranges there were many small farming communities, such as Blackwarry, Balook and Hiawatha, which have almost disappeared as the farms were abandoned.

7.4 Tourist Towns

The Ninety Mile Beach, with its spectacular stretches of sandy beach, attracted visitors at Prospect Reserve as early as the 1860s. Eventually renamed Seaspray, the town is still predominantly a holiday resort with a large influx of visitors during the summer months.

Woodside Beach, Reeve's Beach and McLoughlin's Beach were also visited by picnickers from the early days, while Mann's Beach, Robertson's Beach and Port Albert were popular for boating and fishing. From the 1950s, many holiday homes were built at these beaches, as well as in new estates at Golden Beach and Paradise Beach. The township of Loch Sport, on Lake Victoria, was also begun at this time and by the 1990s the town had nearly two thousand holiday homes.

7.5 Gold Towns

Many small settlements were established on the Crooked River, Upper Dargo River and tributaries for the purpose of mining gold. Grant was a substantial town during its heyday of the 1860s and 1870s, but most of the townships were small, shortlived and in isolated locations and, along with Grant, have disappeared almost without trace. Dargo developed as a supply town for the goldfields, but has survived because it had surrounding agricultural land and was not dependent on mining.

7.6 Timber Towns

Small sawmills utilised the forest resources of the shire from the early days of settlement. During the 1950s, mountain ash was extracted from the Great Dividing Range in the north of the shire, supplying seven sawmills in Heyfield and one in Licola and Dargo. This expansion stimulated significant growth of the towns, and Heyfield is still largely dependent on the saw milling industry.

8. GOVERNING AND ADMINISTERING

8.1 Development of Local Government

District Road Boards were formed to take control of local roads and bridges, funded by government grants and supplemented by rates charged on residents. These road boards were the forerunners of the later shires.

Shire of Alberton

The first shire established in Gippsland was Alberton where a District Road Board was formed in 1855. By 1858, the Board had overseen the clearing of 40 kilometres of road, had cut drains, made roads and built a number of roads and bridges. Tollgates were erected at Tarraville and Palmerston.[167]

Alberton Shire was proclaimed in 1864. The townships of Port Albert, Tarraville and Alberton were located near the coast, when the district was the port for Gippsland. At first, the Shire Council met at Tarraville, and then at Alberton. Shire offices were to be built at Alberton but the influence of the port had waned and in 1897 the Shire decided to move its headquarters to Yarram. Yarram had become the provincial centre, servicing an extensive dairying and grazing district. There were many small townships and farming districts in the shire. A number of small communities were established in the steep hill country but by the 1930s most of these farms were abandoned and later reforested.

In 1894, the western portion of the shire was severed to form the Shire of South Gippsland, and in 1914 an area in the north was annexed to Rosedale Shire. The modern shire stretched from Monkey Creek and the ridge of the Strzelecki Ranges in the north to the coast in the south.

Shire of Rosedale

Rosedale was proclaimed a Road District in 1869 and a Shire in 1871. The town of Rosedale was the administrative centre for this large shire which extended from the Ninety Mile Beach in the south-east to the Thomson River in the north-west. In 1914, part of Alberton Shire was annexed. Shire Offices were built in 1873, and new offices in 1969. The shire was predominantly rural, with small townships such as Glengarry, Cowwarr and Toongabbie, serving surrounding farming districts or, in recent years, providing rural living for people employed in business or industry in the Latrobe Valley or Sale. Coastal townships, especially Loch Sport and Seaspray, developed in recent years, with permanent populations of retired people as well as seasonal holiday makers. The gas processing and crude oil stabilisation plant at Longford, associated with offshore oil wells, was located in the shire.

Shire of Avon

Avon District Road Board was formed in 1864 and proclaimed a Shire in 1865 with Stratford as the administrative centre. By the 1870s, Maffra and district had prospered and councillors exerted pressure to move the seat of government to Maffra. This was achieved briefly from 1873 to 1874, but in 1875 Maffra formed its own shire. There were other changes to the boundaries over the years. Dargo district joined the shire in 1885, portions were annexed from Bairnsdale Shire in 1914 and 1964, and from Maffra Shire in 1917, and an area was severed to City of Sale in 1966 and 1967.

The shire stretched from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the Gippsland Lakes in the south. The northern part of the shire, mountainous and forested, was the scene of many gold rushes in the early days of settlement. Later, farming was pursued along the river valleys. The plains in the south supported beef cattle and sheep grazing and some dairying. Stratford, the only significant town, remained the centre of local government.

Shire of Maffra

At first, the Maffra district was part of Avon Shire but, as the town grew in size and importance, a growing movement wanted Maffra as the administrative centre of the shire. This dissatisfaction culminated in the creation of Maffra Shire in 1875. The town of Maffra was the administrative, commercial and social centre of an agricultural and pastoral district. Dairying was widespread in the shire, facilitated by water for irrigation supplied from Glenmaggie Reservoir on the Macalister River. In the early twentieth century, the growing of beet sugar was important, with a processing factory at Maffra. Small townships developed at Briagolong, Boisdale, Newry and Tinamba, while Heyfield grew substantially from the 1950s as the centre of a saw milling industry. Coongulla, on the shore of Lake Glenmaggie, grew from a subdivision for holiday homes in the late 1950s.

City of Sale

The city of Sale was becoming the regional centre of north Gippsland when it was declared a Borough in 1863. The municipality was small, bounded by Flooding Creek on the south and west, by Dawson Street on the north and by Platt Street on the east. In 1873, it was enlarged to include the land between Flooding Creek and the Thomson River and in the 1970s the township of Wurruk was annexed from Rosedale Shire. Sale was proclaimed a Town in 1924 and a City in 1950.

Wellington Shire

Wellington Shire was created by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Alberton, Avon and Maffra, the former City of Sale, most of the former Shire of Rosedale, as well as an area near Dargo which was formerly part of Bairnsdale Shire. The new shire is named after Lake Wellington which forms part of its boundary, and Mount Wellington. It covers an area of 10,560 square kilometres and in 1996 had a population of 44,200. The administrative centre is at Sale.

Buildings of historical importance to local government exist within the shire. Included among them are the first shire offices at Sale that now house a museum. An early Avon Shire office can still be seen in Stratford, while those completed in 1885 are now part of the Court Theatre complex.

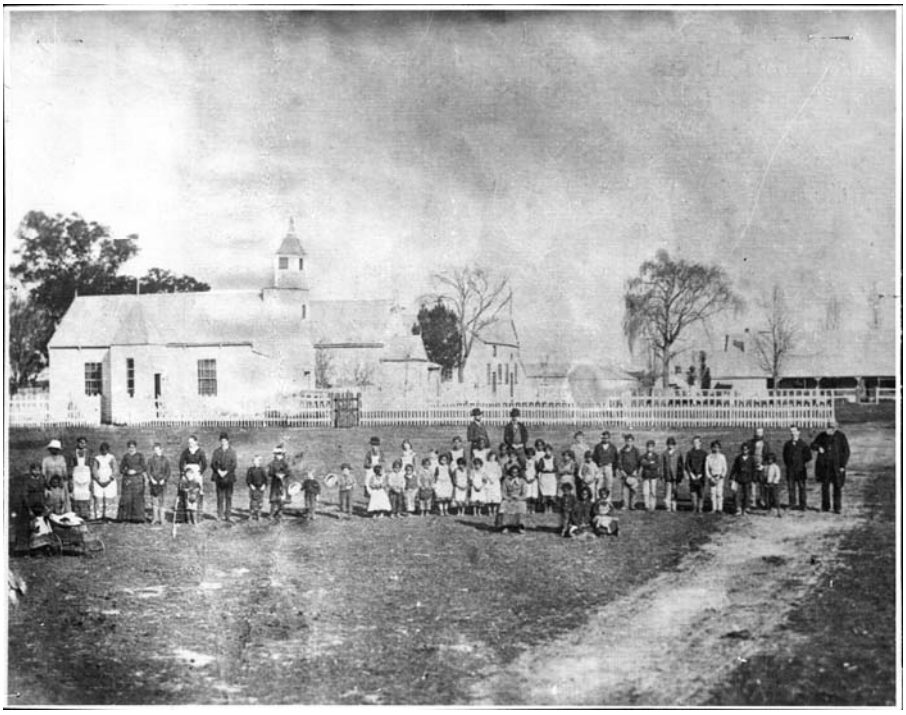
Records from the former Shires of Avon, Alberton, Maffra and Rosedale and the City of Sale are held at the Wellington Shire Archive. The Archive is housed in the former Alberton Shire Offices at Yarram and includes most of the rate books and council minute books, as well as some memorabilia from the former shires. Details of its holdings are listed on the Wellington Shire History Database.

8.2 Aboriginal Administration and Ramahyuck Mission Station

As a result of the pastoral invasion, the Aboriginal population declined dramatically in Gippsland. In 1859, a Select Committee investigating the conditions of Aborigines in Victoria recommended that a series of reserves administered by the churches be established. The task of establishing a Presbyterian mission was given to the Reverend F.A. Hagenauer, a Moravian missionary already working on the Ebenezer Mission in the Wimmera. Hagenauer came to Gippsland in 1862, and made contact with Aborigines who expressed a wish to settle near Maffra. Locals objected to prime agricultural land being used as a mission station, and the land was thrown open for selection instead. At an isolated site and on more marginal land, 2,300 acres were excised from the original Strathfieldsaye run on the banks of the Avon, close to its meeting with the Perry River to form the Ramahyuck mission station.

As administrator of Ramahyuck (a combination of the scriptural name Ramah and Aboriginal word meaning our home), Hagenauer instilled means of control, insisted on residence at Ramahyuck and discouraged the practice of traditional lifestyles and retaining the language. The children were placed in a boarding house near the school, rather than living in the cottages

with their parents. The mission station developed an orderly appearance, laid out on three sides of a quadrangle and dominated by the large mission house built in a commanding position overlooking the reserve. Ramahyuck was under-funded and Hagenauer had to use all his entrepreneurial skills to supplement its income. The mission station became a tourist attraction for the excursion parties that travelled on the Lakes.



Ramahyuck Mission Station and its residents (Carlyon Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The stability that Hagenauer had achieved in two decades of control was shattered by the legislation of 1886, the Half Caste Act that forced half caste Aborigines to leave the station and earn their own living. The irony of the legislation was that a group of people who had been forcibly isolated from the white community to live an ordered life on the mission station would be thrust back into the white community without any of the skills necessary for survival. With the onset of the 1890s depression, their situation was very difficult.

As early as 1891, the Presbyterian Church decided to close the mission, but it was not until 1908 that action was taken. Ramahyuck was closed and the remaining residents were forced to relocate to Lake Tyers.[168]

The cemetery at Ramahyuck is a site of great significance. At least 80 Kooris are buried there. A photograph taken in 1906 shows the many wooden crosses marking the graves, but these have since rotted away. Only one Koori grave has a headstone, that of Nathaniel Pepper who died in 1877 of consumption. For many years, the cemetery was incorporated into farming land, and became neglected. In the 1970s, Koori historian, Phillip Pepper, began the successful campaign to preserve the cemetery. This important site has now been fenced, restoration work has been undertaken, and access has been improved.[169]

The Ramahyuck Aboriginal Cooperative in Foster Street Sale continues as a cultural centre and support for Wellington Shire Kooris.

8.3 Public Buildings and Public Works

Public buildings and structures have had an impact on the Wellington Shire landscape. They illustrate government decisions and policies, the impact of Public Works Department (PWD) designs on a regional area and show how streetscapes evolve. They document government and administrative history within the shire, and they show the fusing between public buildings and community identity.[170]

An early priority for the colonial government was to instil law and order in the newly settled territories. This included building gaols and courthouses. The Sale Gaol, built in 1887, replaced an earlier structure in the town. Its design reflects the attitudes to imprisonment and punishment that were current at the time. The two courthouses that were built in Sale bear the imprint of Public Works Department designs. The earlier courthouse, designed by J.J. Clark in 1863, was typical of many courthouses around the state. The second and larger courthouse, designed in 1889, illustrates changing PWD designs and the end of the moderating influence of former inspector general William Wardell.[171] Its façade boasted pilasters and a frieze. Standing side by side, the two buildings document the impact of the Public Works Department on our streetscapes and also Sale's development as a prosperous regional centre by the end of the 1880s.

Surviving courthouses in other towns in the shire are also prominent buildings in the streetscape. At Stratford, the courthouse was built as part of a complex that included local government offices. The Yarram courthouse, opened in 1908, is a striking building based on a design for the Heidelberg courthouse.[172] With the closing of many courthouses, these buildings also provide a commentary on the changing court system and the quest to find new uses for buildings so that they remain an integral part of the streetscape. The courthouse at Maffra is now a visitor information centre, while the Stratford Courthouse has become a theatre.

The Public Works Department was also called on to provide solutions to problems posed by Gippsland's environment and developing economy. Among their solutions was the building of the Sale Canal to bring boats right up to Sale instead of terminating their voyages at the Latrobe wharf. Although not meeting economic expectations as it was superseded by rail transport, the canal was a major engineering project, and is a feature of Sale today, with its swinging basin and jetties. The plan to build a canal led to the designing of the Sale Swing Bridge over the Latrobe to deal with competing needs for road and water travel.

Discussed here are some grand public buildings and works that are prominent in the shire. The Public Works Department was responsible for designing many other more modest buildings, including residences and schools. In rural areas, standard school designs were built throughout the shire. The Won Wron School that was built in 1915 was a Type G structure and identical to many built in Victoria.[173] It replaced a long serving school that had incorporated a schoolroom, teacher's residence and post office. Standard designs like the Won Wron School took on an identity of their own as they became the centre of community activities. The teacher's residence at Boisdale, built to accommodate the teacher at the Boisdale School, was also a standard PWD design. Now sold and modified, it still stands in its original location next to the former school site in the main street of Boisdale.

8.4 Education

Throughout the shire, the many school buildings document the history of the provision of education in the region. This includes the struggle for selectors and gold miners in isolated areas of the shire to have their children educated or the efforts for parents to give their children access to a sectarian education. It includes the struggle experienced by the population of a rural shire to have access to primary, secondary and tertiary education. As well as the buildings themselves, the sites where schools once existed are significant places. These sites reflect changing education policies and better access to transport, but they are also a reminder of the long commitment to keep schools open in rural districts. This theme continues through to the 1990s, with the protracted campaign of the Munro parents to save their school in the face of massive government orchestrated school closures.

Each school has social value for its community and it is only possible to mention a few examples here and their significance. Set high on a site overlooking the irrigated river flats between the Avon and the Macalister rivers is the Boisdale Consolidated School, celebrating 50 years of education in 2001. In 1951, seven rural schools amalgamated to form a consolidated school that would provide an expanded curriculum and greater opportunities than would be available to children in a one teacher school. The rural schools that agreed to amalgamate

included schools that had been operating since selectors lobbied to educate their children in the 1870s, as well as schools that had been established as the result of settlement schemes such as the Boisdale Estate and Llowalong schools. When the new school was built in 1951, some of the original buildings were moved there with their former pupils and still stand on the site. The Boisdale State School was relocated there, as was the Llowalong School, which has been converted to a language classroom. The Tinamba School was also moved to the new consolidated school. The Newry School went further afield in the shire and is now part of the Sale Primary School. In the grounds of the Boisdale Consolidated School is the gazebo that was moved from the Boisdale School. As part of the fiftieth birthday celebrations, the sites of all the former schools have been marked.[174]

Won Wron School, 1901 (Centre for Gippsland Studies)

The beginnings of secondary education spring from the mechanics' institute movement. A School of Design was established at Sale in 1885, eventually becoming Sale Technical School. An agricultural high school, the first in Gippsland, began at Sale in 1907.

Catholic schools in the shire are significant for their social value and historic and architectural values. Built on a prominent site in Sale, Our Lady of Sion, now the junior campus of Sale Catholic College, reflects the transplantation of French culture to Gippsland. The school was established by a French order of nuns who came to Gippsland in 1890 to provide girls with a catholic education. In Cowwarr, the former convent remains to mark the site of a Catholic school in a small community.

8.5 Mechanics Institutes

The mechanics institute movement originated from a series of lectures delivered by Dr Birkbeck in Glasgow to tradesmen, artisans and factory workers – or 'mechanics' as people who worked with machines were known – and it aimed to educate and spread industrial and technical knowledge. The movement became widespread in Victoria in the wake of the gold rushes. Land was reserved for mechanics institutes and residents in developing towns considered that building a mechanics institute was an early priority. Committees were formed in the new communities to build a mechanics institute that would serve as a meeting place, house a library and be a venue for lectures.

Many mechanics institutes survive in the shire. Some are the original buildings while others have been replaced by newer structures. They are important buildings for their social value. Besides the lectures that were held and the libraries that operated from the mechanics, the

institutes became venues for public meetings, wedding celebrations, farewells and welcome homes to local soldiers. Deb balls were annual events, as were community Christmas celebrations. Throughout the shire, residents can remember the nervous thrill of standing on the stage, waiting for the curtains to open and reveal to the audience the Sunday school nativity tableau, the annual school concert, or the set of the latest production from the dramatic society. It all happens at the mechanics institute.

One of the earliest mechanics institute buildings in the shire is the Rosedale mechanics institute, a brick structure that opened in 1874. The distinctive two storey additions that now face the Princes Highway were added in 1885. The Rosedale Library is now housed there. The Briagolong mechanics institute also opened in 1874. Beginning as a modest two-roomed building that functioned as a hall and a library, it has now been greatly extended to fulfil changing community needs and preoccupations. Importantly, the library collection still survives. At Newry, the original mechanics institute and a newer hall stand side by side. The Stratford mechanics institute is still popularly called 'the mechanics', and continues to function as the town's hall. The Glenmaggie mechanics institute was moved to higher ground and survived the town's drowning when the Glenmaggie Weir was built. It is an important reminder of the little town that once served its farming community. When their mechanics institutes were burnt at Binginwarri and Gormandale, the residents rallied and built new ones. At Maffra, the mechanics institute building has been incorporated into the town's library. The Sale mechanics institute, a two storey building dating from 1891, has had a long association with education, first accommodating the Sale School of Mines, Art and Technology, and later becoming part of the Sale Technical School, and is now amalgamated with Sale High School to form the Sale College.

Group Dancing outside the Glenmaggie Mechanics Institute (Con Gleeson Collection, Centre for Gippsland Studies)

8.6 Health and Medical Services

In 1989, the Gippsland Base Hospital, distinctive for its turrets and domed roofline, was demolished after 125 years of serving not just Sale but a much wider community. It was the only major hospital in Gippsland until the Bairnsdale hospital was built in 1888.[175] The new hospital operates on the same site, and still fulfils a regional function. The nurses' home is an important building to remain from the earlier hospital complex and documents the hospital's regional function as a training centre.

Hospitals were established in other towns within the shire, among them private hospitals and bush nursing hospitals. The Heyfield Hospital, which began as a private hospital, mostly for midwifery cases, was established by Sister Hilda Gell in 1924. This building still stands. The hospital eventually became a bush nursing hospital for the town in a more central location. Yarram's hospital was officially opened in 1914, but patients were not admitted until 1917.[176] The original building has been greatly expanded and reflects changing medical and health services. The Maffra and District Hospital also incorporates the original building in which it opened. The community health centre is located there.

Bush nurses were early providers of medical services in more remote parts of the shire. They were appointed to isolated hill communities in the Strzeleckis, such as Madalya, although the communities had a struggle to provide funding and accommodation. Dargo received its first bush nurse in 1912, when Nurse Brown was appointed. The Dargo Bush Nursing Centre has remained a vital institution in the town, servicing a wide area. The staff attend accidents and emergencies, as well as holding clinics and providing a district nursing service.[177]

8.7 War and Defence

With a coastline stretching from Corner Inlet to the Gippsland Lakes, Wellington Shire incorporates a large section of the Gippsland coast and has played a major role in the defence of the country, especially during World War Two. Enemy mines were laid in Bass Strait and enemy submarines also penetrated. In 1941, Port Albert was designated a coastal port where an invasion might land.[178] Air observation posts were set up throughout the shire with volunteers scanning the skies. Trenches were dug around schools in case of air raids.

In 1941, a bombing and gunnery school was established at Fulham or West Sale, to train pilots, air observers and wireless air gunners. In 1942, work started on another RAAF base, this time at East Sale where runways were constructed. Up to 1000 people were transferred to Sale as a result of this base.[179] As well, searchlight squadrons were stationed in the Stratford district to complete training before being sent to New Guinea. The groups trained on planes sent from the East Sale aerodrome.[180] For the air crews that were stationed at the Sale bases, crashes were frequent. The Sale Cemetery has a war cemetery section where 56 RAAF personnel are buried.

After the war ended, the East Sale RAAF Base became a permanent fixture. This has led to a special relationship between the city of Sale and the RAAF.

9. DEVELOPING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND WAY OF LIFE

After burying a friend in a lonely grave on the banks of the Latrobe River in 1846, Gippsland squatter Henry Meyrick reflected bitterly that there were no cultural institutions in Gippsland. 'Government looks upon a jail as the first thing necessary in a new settlement', he wrote to his mother.[181] It was up to the settlers to develop the cultural institutions that reflected their way of life.

9.1 Religion

In many towns throughout the shire, churches occupy prominent sites, documenting their importance to the society that built them. Complexes consisting of churches, halls, residences and schools have evolved. As well as community centres and places where people have performed some of their most important ceremonies, they contain memorials to local people through stained glass windows, monuments and plaques.

The first church services took place in huts and barns as travelling parsons journeyed through Gippsland. The Reverend E.G. Pryce, based in Cooma, made two sweeping journeys into Gippsland from the Monaro in the 1840s, conducting marriages and baptisms as he went. He was welcomed by all denominations.[182]

When Bishop Perry, the Anglican bishop of Melbourne, visited Gippsland in 1847, he chose a site for a church at Tarraville. The church, designed by J.H.W. Pettit and surveyor George Hastings, was opened in 1856. It was built of Tasmanian hardwood.[183] Still standing near the Tarra River, it is an evocative reminder of the early settlement period when settlers began transplanting the institutions that they knew from Britain, and replicating the architecture.

With selection leading to many new settlements, reserves for churches were gazetted. St Marks was an early building in Rosedale, erected in 1867. At Maffra, the first Catholic Church was built in 1871. Reflecting the town's growth as a dairy manufacturing centre, it was replaced by a larger church in the 1920s. The original church is now used as a hall. An imposing two-storey presbytery was built in 1916. The Maffra Anglican church, St John the Evangelist, is also the second church built on the site. Like many other churches, it contains memorials to local citizens. The lych gate at its entry was built in 1929 as a memorial to a local philanthropist, Rebecca Mills. A stained glass window in the church is a memorial to artist and VAD Louie Riggall who died in 1918 while on active service in France.

Sale developed as the diocesan centre for both the Anglican and Catholic churches. As well as the churches having cathedral status, bishops' residences and church schools were built. A significant historic precinct has developed around the Catholic Church's buildings, consisting of the recently extended St Mary's Cathedral, the bishop's residence, presbytery, St Mary's Primary School and the former St Patricks College, now Sale Catholic College. The Church of England established a theological training college in 1913. Known as the divinity hostel, this building is now part of the St Anne's and Gippsland Grammar Junior School.

9.2 Memorials

Memorials are significant for documenting on the landscape what people consider to be significant and what should be remembered.

The war memorials that are spread throughout the shire show the impact that the two world wars have had on so many communities and families in the shire. The Rosedale cenotaph illustrates this. Among the names listed are those of James Wilfred Harrap and Ernest Merton Harrap, brothers from Willung who were killed on the same day at the battle for Polygon Wood near Ypres in 1917.[184] Listed on the Briagolong war memorial are the names of six

Whitelaw brothers. Three were killed on active service and one died later from wounds he received.

There are also remnants of avenues of honour. The pine trees at Stratford lining the route of the former highway were planted as a memorial to soldiers who served in the First World War.

Among the many other memorials in the shire are those to pioneers. The cairns erected to Angus McMillan and Paul Strzelecki in 1927 follow their routes through the shire and were part of an orchestrated campaign of the Victorian Historical Memorials Committee to infuse a sense of history into a landscape that had no ancient monuments. The struggle for isolated areas to get road access is remembered by a cairn dedicated to the Country Roads Board, erected in 1935 at the intersection of the Binginwarri and Hiawatha roads. Transforming a landscape from dryland grazing to irrigated pasture is symbolised by a dethridge wheel mounted on a cairn on the Nambrok Denison estate. A memorial is planned at site of the West Sale Holding Centre to commemorate the migrants who came to settle in postwar Australia. Bronze plaques, designed by Sale artist Annemieke Mein and on display in Sale, document the contributions of several famous Gippslanders, including singer Ada Crossley and writer Mary Grant Bruce.

9.3 Cemeteries

The cemeteries throughout the shire record how people lived and died, and document how they have been remembered over the decades.

There are lone graves in the shire where people have been buried along creeks, in forests, near goldfields or on roadsides.[185] Among them are the graves of Henry Meyrick, who had bitterly resented the absence of cemeteries when he buried his friend on the banks of the Latrobe, and of Mrs Desailly, both of whom died in 1847 and were buried on the Fulham Park squatting run. The Alberton cemetery is perhaps the oldest cemetery still operating in the shire. The registers date from 1849.[186]

Other cemeteries in the shire began as private cemeteries. Greenmount Catholic Cemetery near Yarram was established after Edmund Buckley left four acres in his will in 1857 for a catholic cemetery to be established. A cemetery trust was formed in 1983 to restore and administer the cemetery after it had fallen into disuse.[187] At isolated Wonnangatta station is a family graveyard where Ellen Smith and her twin daughters are buried. In 1873, without access to medical help, Ellen Smith died in childbirth, and the babies did not survive.

Cemeteries are also commentaries on their localities, such as the Talbotville cemetery, where people associated with the isolated Crooked River gold mining community are buried. At the Carrajung cemetery, set high in the Strzeleckis, all that remains are the iron railings surrounding the grave of a settler who died in 1907. At least eight people are known to be buried there.[188]

To understand the extent of the Ramahyuck cemetery, it is necessary to consult H.B. Hammond's photograph taken in 1906 that shows the wooden crosses of Aboriginal graves. At least 80 Kooris and 16 non-Kooris are buried in this cemetery, but none of the wooden crosses have survived. Only headstones to Nathaniel Pepper, Elizabeth and Christian Baum and Henry Hartwich and his two young sons remain. This evocative site has been restored.[189]

The Sale cemetery provides an insight to a regional centre. The cemetery was gazetted in 1857 and records date from 1861, but the first marked grave dates from 1855.[190] Many of the early Gippsland squatters are buried there. There are also early wooden headstones, Chinese graves, headstones with inscriptions in Gaelic and a war cemetery where 56 RAAF personnel are buried.

9.4 Forming Associations, Recreation

Right from 1842, the time of the earliest 'organised' horse race in the shire, residents have formed all manner of political and social organisations to improve cultural and sporting

facilities within the shire. There are RSL halls throughout the shire, scout and guide halls and CWA rooms. From the Caledonian and Hibernian societies that organised sporting days, there are now extensive sporting complexes where local children perform their rites of passage, playing first for the juniors and then representing their district by playing in the seniors of their chosen sport. There are places of special significance to the community, such as the Knob at Stratford, where everyone gathered for a picnic on New Years Day. There are buildings like the Regent Theatre Yarram that still capture the atmosphere of a picture palace - when an important form of entertainment was regular attendance at the pictures.

The first horse race was held in Wellington Shire as early as 1842 when a challenge had been organised between two well known horses. Their owners, Pearson and McMillan, were also well known. The venue was Green Wattle Hill, near Flooding Creek. A site that had been surveyed as a 'place of public recreation and amusement' became the permanent site for a racecourse at Sale.[191] The Sale Turf Club was formed in 1860 and emerged as one of the major racing clubs in Gippsland.

Other racing clubs formed throughout the shire. Port Albert had an early race course, but organisers found it difficult to maintain. Often, the race courses were farmers' paddocks. Picnic race meetings were popular events on the local calendar. There were more permanent courses such as that at Heyfield. John Mills of Powerscourt had a race course on his property, consisting of a clear, level area, with a hill that provided a view over the proceedings. This area can still be viewed from the Maffra Sale Road.

Agricultural societies were also early organisations in the shire. The North Gippsland Agricultural Pastoral Horticultural Society – which eventually became known as the Sale and District Agricultural Society - had its first meeting in 1859. The showgrounds that have been built by agricultural societies throughout the shire have become important venues for agricultural, sporting and recreational activities.

9.5 Writers and Artists

'How Do I Like a Bush Life?' poet Caroline Dexter mused after moving into a bark hut near Stratford in 1856:

Well, it is Sunday! and –
No church-bells remind us of the Sabbath today,
No tiny feet trip along the pavement to pray.
No priest, save our hearts, no raised temple, nor spire,
No altar – save Nature in gorgeous attire.

Dexter was one of the earliest writers to reflect on life in Wellington Shire.[192]

Writer, poet and feminist Mary Fullerton grew up on a selection near Glenmaggie several decades later. Among her writing is a memoir of her childhood, *Bark House Days,* first published in 1921, and which remains an evocative book about life on a selection in Gippsland. The site of the bark house where the Fullerton family lived is still known by descendants.[193]

One of Australia's most famous children's authors, Mary Grant Bruce, grew up in Sale. Well known for her Billabong series - novels about a grazing property in Victoria and revolving around the activities of the Linton family - she also wrote novels set in specific parts of Gippsland such as the Gippsland Lakes and the Strzeleckis. She was an influential journalist as well. In her novels, Bruce wrote about the effect of the environment on people and also promoted imperialist causes. The home where she spent her childhood years still exists on the outskirts of Sale.[194]

Artist Eugen von Guerard was drawn by the rugged beauty of what has become the northern part of Wellington Shire. In 1860, he joined A.W. Howitt's expedition into the mountains to look for gold. Von Guerard made sketches of some of the properties where he stayed, before heading into the mountains. He completed paintings from these sketches in 1861: 'Mr John

King's Station' and 'The Panoramic View of Mr Angus McMillan's Station, Bushy Park, Gippsland'. The paintings he completed from his expedition into the mountains show steep peaks, and Aborigines camped near a stream in the majestic country. Von Guerard's paintings of Gippsland are held in major collections in Australia.

Nicholas Chevalier also visited Wellington Shire during a Gippsland excursion in 1860 and produced a series of chromolithographs that were enthusiastically received. Among them was ' View of the Dargo Valley' which, like von Guerard's 'Snowy Bluff From Wonnangatta', placed people in the wilderness.[195]

These early painters painted their impressions of the rugged Gippsland environment. Contemporary artists living in the shire today are now influenced by environmental issues.

Among the artists who were raised in the shire was Louie Riggall, born in 1868, who grew up in Glenmaggie and Tinamba. She studied in Sale with Arthur Woodward, and later studied in Paris. She had a studio in Melbourne before serving as a VAD during the First World War. She died while she was stationed at Rouen. Besides the paintings that Riggall has left, including 'Haymaking at Byron Lodge', there are two memorials to her in Maffra: a stained glass window at St Johns Church and a glass mosaic portrait displayed in the former RSL rooms, now the Maffra Library.[196]

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