

Cooloola Shire

...a golden past

PART 1

Cooloola Shire Library Service

Published by Cooloola Shire Council 2001.

This book has been produced by the Local History Section of the Cooloola Shire Library Service. Those involved include Elaine Brown, Amelia Connolly, Ann Egan, Cathy Hunt, Janet Lee and Moira Maclachlan. Thanks must go to Friends of the Library volunteer researchers, in particular Merlyn Burkhardt and Rose Sami. Production of this book would not have been possible without the support of the Cooloola Shire Council's Heritage Committee.

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Welcome to Cooloola Shire

Cooloola Shire was formed when Widgee Shire and Gympie City merged in November 1993. They were the first local authorities to amalgamate in Queensland as a result of the recommendations presented by the Electoral Administrative Review Commission.

Cooloola Shire is centred on Gympie and encompasses the Cooloola Coast and the Mary Valley. Other major towns in the shire are Tin Can Bay, Rainbow Beach, Amamoor, Kandanga and Imbil.

Gympie is located on the Mary River and is 40 kilometres inland from the coast, and about 160 kilometres north of Brisbane on the Bruce Highway. The word Cooloola comes from the name given by Kabi-speaking aborigines to the coastal cypress pine (*Callitris columellaris*). Cooloola is the sound the wind makes as it whispers through the branches of the tree. The tree grows to a height of thirty metres and has a rough, black bark and dark green foliage. Its timber is resinous, aromatic, resistant to termites and useful for construction.

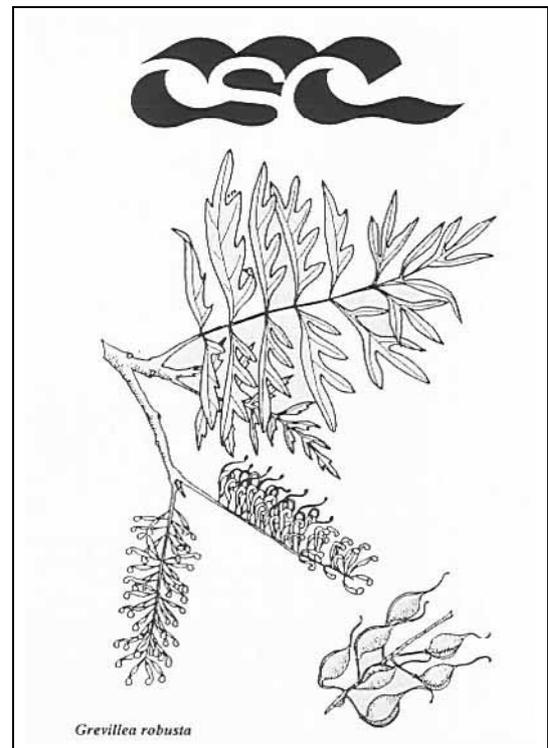
The Cooloola Region's climate is subtropical. Summers are warm to hot with thunderstorms and heavy rain which at times causes flooding in the Mary River and coastal streams. Winters are cool on the coast becoming colder with frosts further inland. In autumn and spring especially, residents enjoy temperate weather and brilliant sunshine. The 1996 Census recorded the population of Cooloola Shire as 31 862.

LOGO

The logo of the Cooloola Shire Council (right) represents the shire's mountains, seas and rich earth.

FLORAL EMBLEM

The floral emblem of the Cooloola Shire is the Silky Oak, *Grevillea robusta*, a native of the area. The Silky Oak is a fast growing tree, reaching a height of about 35 metres. Its orange/yellow flowers blossom in Spring and make a beautiful show from September to November. The tree's timber is suitable for cabinet making.

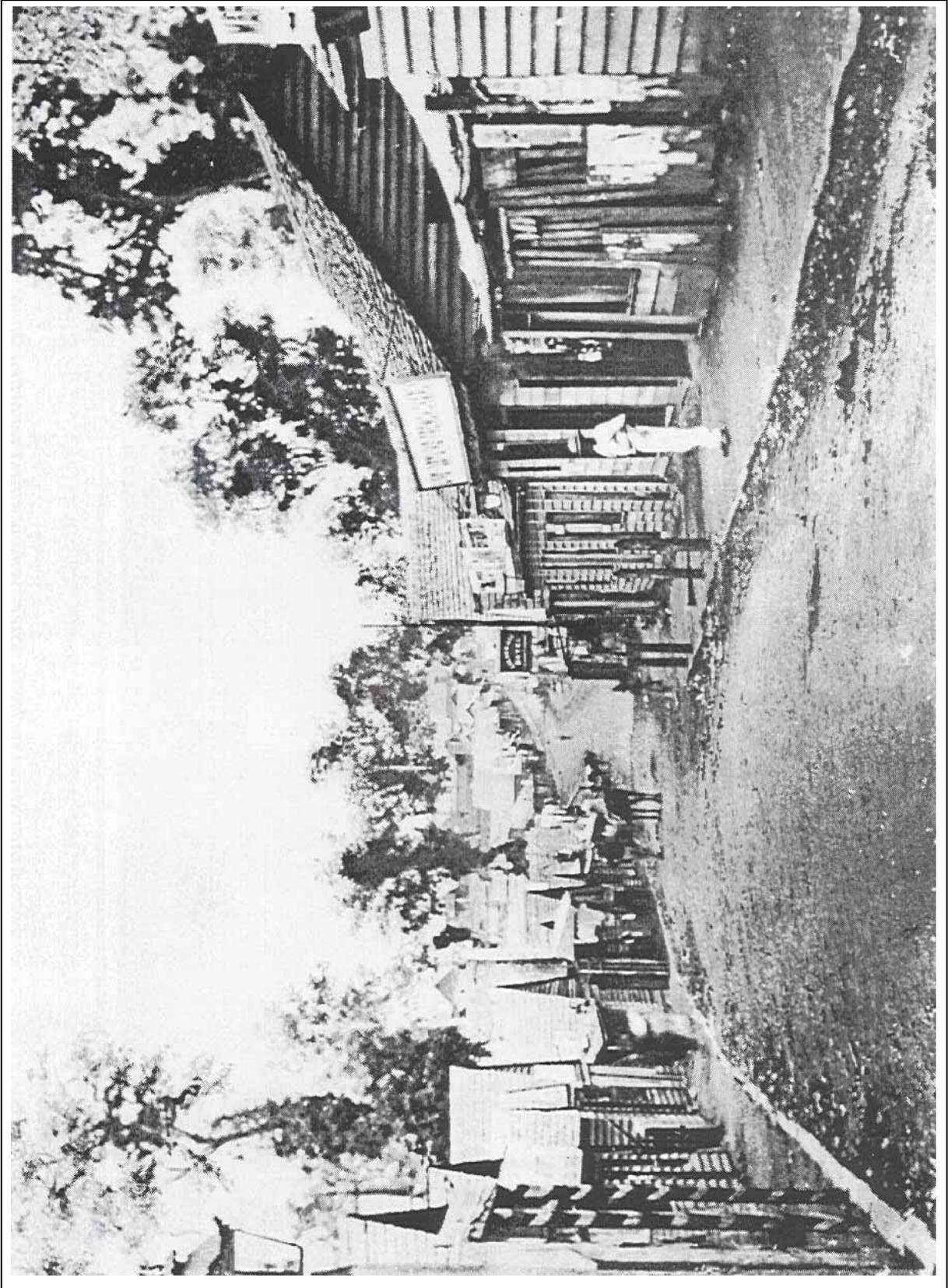


The logo of the Cooloola Shire Council and the Shire's floral emblem.

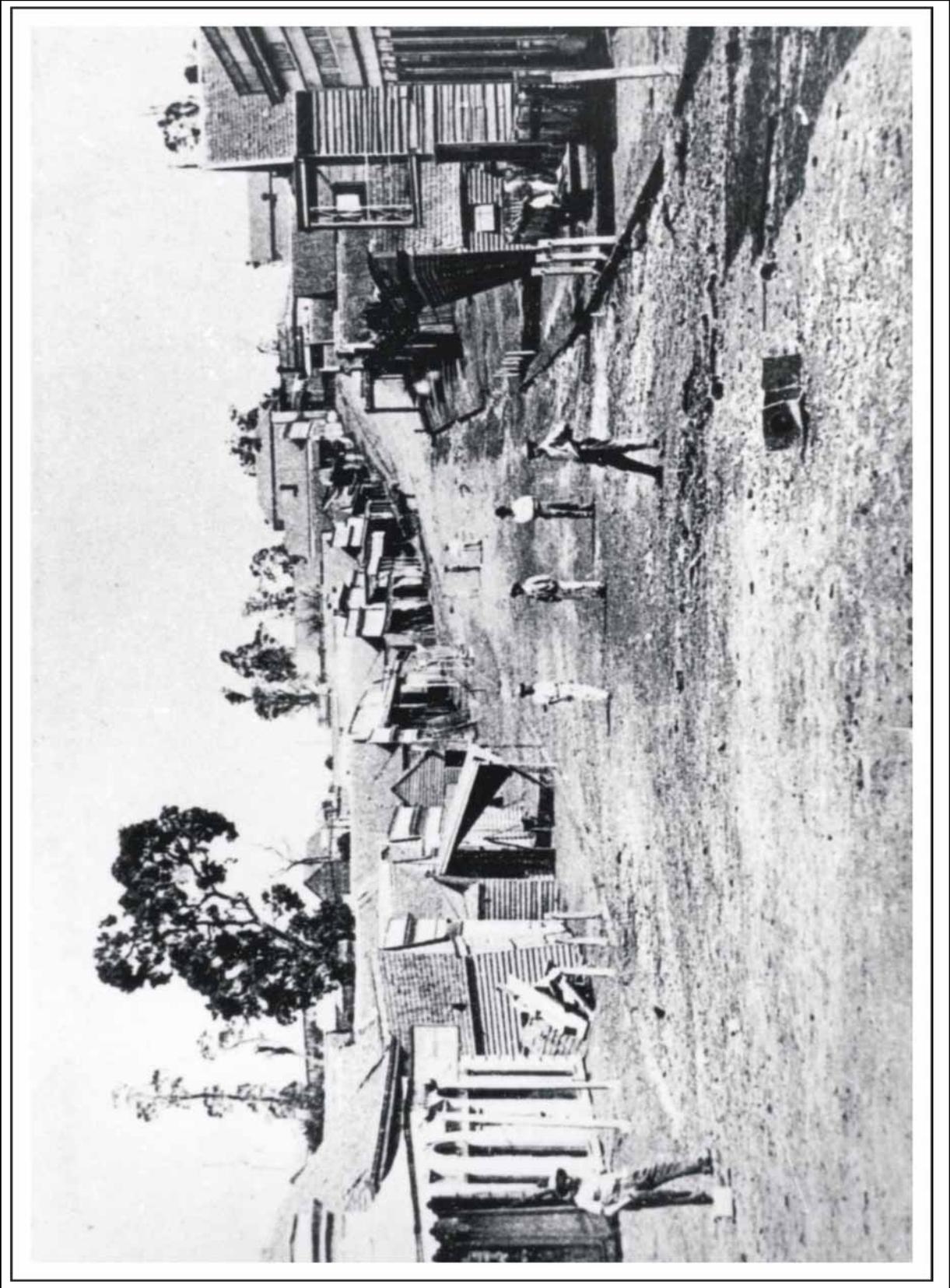
Important events in the history of Cooloola Shire ¹

- 1849** After the establishment of a port at Maryborough in 1847-48, settlers began to occupy land along the Mary River. Kilkivan and Widgee stations were established in 1849, followed during the 1850's by the Imbil, Traveston, Kenilworth, Yabba, Curra, Tahiti and Tagigan runs.
- 1859** June 6. Queensland separated from New South Wales and became a self governing colony.
- 1867** October 16. James Nash reported a find of gold in a gully off the Mary River, near Gympie Creek. The first miners to arrive named the settlement Nashville. Several months later it was officially changed to Gympie.
- October 30. The Goldfield was officially proclaimed and called 'Upper Mary River Goldfield' with an area of 25 square miles.
- December 1. The first death was recorded on the goldfield - Charles Wagner, aged 35.
- December 9. First established bank on the field, the Commercial Bank of Sydney, officially opened for business.
- December 18. First recorded marriage on the goldfield was celebrated between John Hulyer and Flora Lama.
- 1868** January 10. First recorded Gympie birth was that of a girl, Jane Smyth - registered in Maryborough on January 24.
- January 31. Founding of the Nashville Miner's Hospital.
- February 6. Queensland's largest gold nugget, called the Curtis Nugget was found at Sailor's Gully (which has its beginnings at Lady Mary Terrace, traverses Pollock Street and runs into Nash's Gully near the Civic Centre). Its net gold content was 906 ozs.
- February 15. *The Nashville Times and Mary River Mining Gazette* (later *The Gympie Times*) issued its first edition.
- April 6. First significant robbery on the field was committed by three bushrangers who bailed up La Barte and Co coach and got away with 14 ozs of gold, 30 gold sovereigns and £250 (pounds) in bank notes.
- April 29. First crushing battery, the Pioneer, commenced operations.
- November 19. Cobb and Co began a coach service between Brisbane and Gympie. Cootharaba Road was cut from Gympie to Lake Cootharaba and a sawmill was erected at Elanda Point.

¹ Timeline details taken from: 'A Chronology of Events - A Touch of the Past, 1867-1917' published in Gympie and District Historical Society Journal, Jan 1987 and from a time line by Pat Towner.

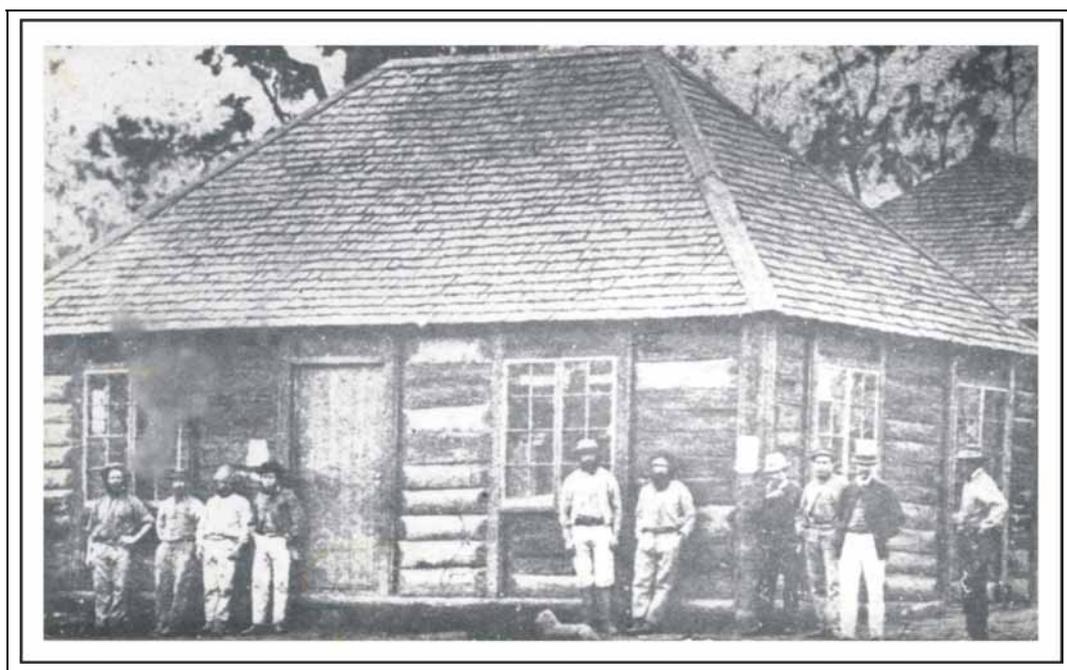


Mary Street in 1868



Mary Street in 1870. After Gypie's first recorded flood.

- 1870** March 9. Gympie's first recorded flood reached a height of 71 feet (21.64m)
- 1873** October 30. The colony's first private railway, operated by Pettigrew and Sim to haul kauri pine timber from the scrubs of the Cooloola sandmass, was officially opened. The 'Kaloolah' railway line had a length of about 9 miles (14 km).
- 1875** April 22. Opening of the Gympie Court House (now housing the Lands Office) in Channon Street.
- 1877** October 16. The first Gympie Show was held on the site then known as Tucker's Paddock (now the railway yards).
- 1879** June 21. Aboriginal bushranger, Kagariu, better known as Johnny Campbell, began his scare tactics against the new settlers of the district.
- 1880** February 25. First meeting of the Widgee Divisional Board.



*The original Court House in Reef Street, Gympie, (at the rear of the Surface Hill Uniting Church).
Commissioner King can be seen in the frock coat and top hat.*

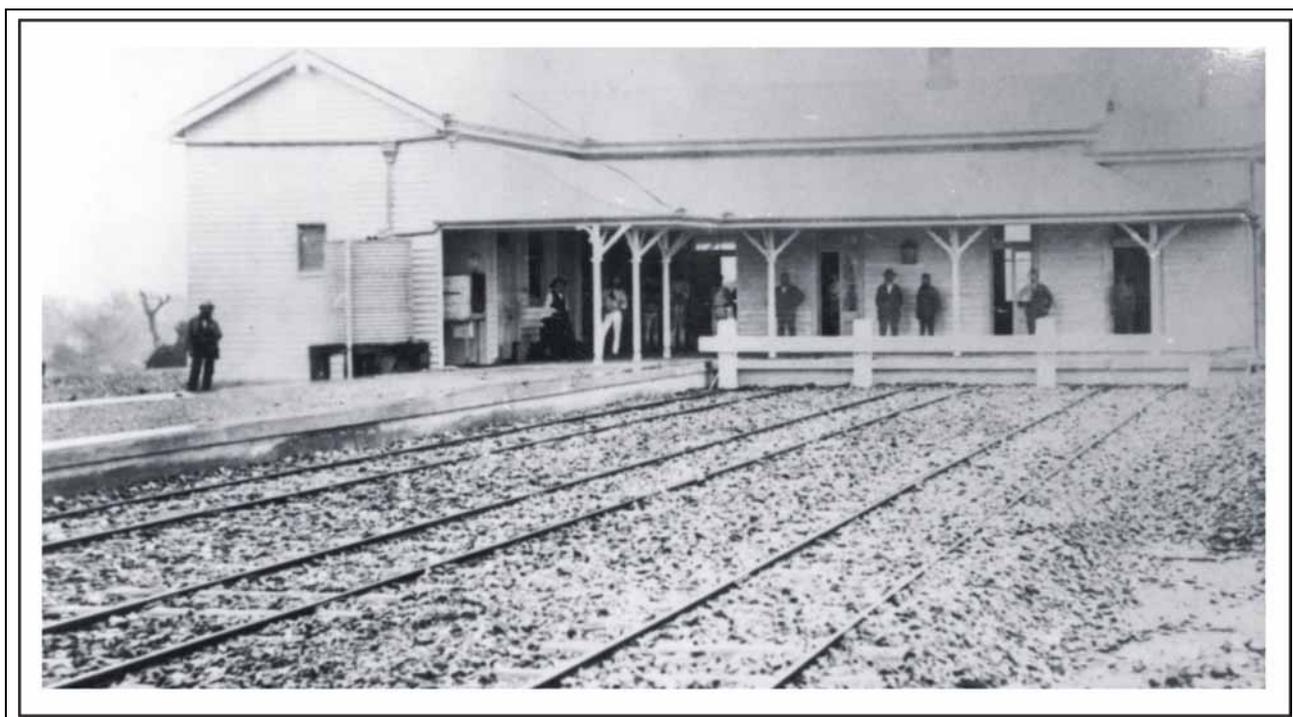


An early, undated photograph of Mary Street.



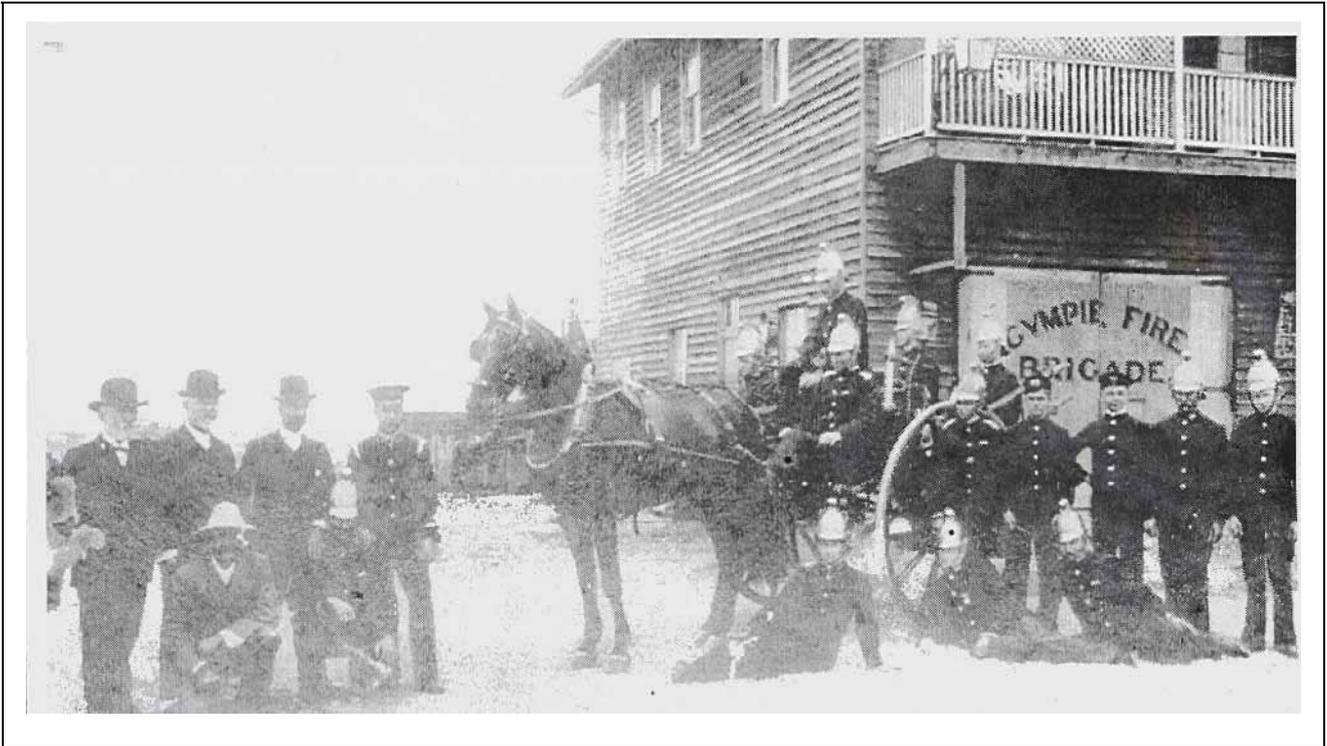
An early, undated photograph of a Gympie blacksmith shop.

- 1880** August 16. Captured bushranger, Johnny Campbell was hanged in Brisbane jail.
- August 25. Newly elected Aldermen chose Mr Matthew Mellor to be Gympie's first Mayor.
- 1881** August 6. The railway line from Gympie to Maryborough opened.

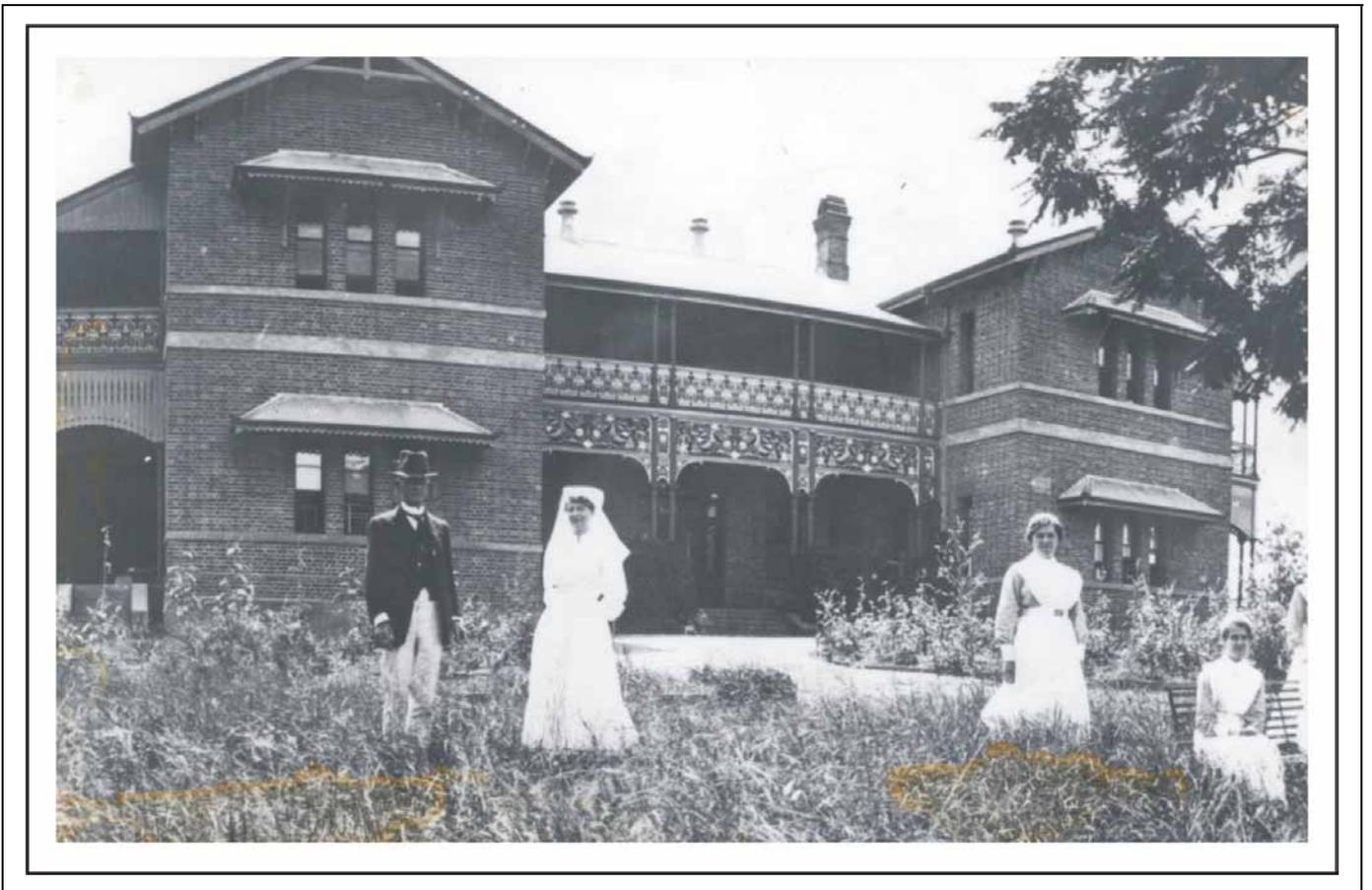


The original Gympie Railway Station 1881. Lines were laid from Maryborough and Gympie was the terminus. (photograph courtesy John Oxley Library)

- 1884** July 10. The Gympie Stock Exchange opened.
- 1889** October 24. The opening of the first Gympie Hospital - a substantial brick building (since demolished) on the site of the present Gympie Hospital.
- 1891** July 25. The railway line from Brisbane to Gympie was officially opened by the Governor, Sir Henry Norman and the Premier, Sir Samuel Griffith.
- 1896** July 25. The '*Gympie Truth*' newspaper began publication.
- 1900** November 20. Gympie Fire Brigade began its service.
- 1901** January 1. Queensland joined five other colonies to form the Commonwealth of Australia.



Gympie Fire Brigade 1908/1909 (Photograph courtesy John Oxley Library)



An undated photograph of the Gympie Hospital (opened 24 October 1889)

- 1901** October 1. The Gympie Telephone service commenced.
- 1904** Ambulance Station opened in Crown Road in purpose built premises. Prior to this, operations were conducted from a room in the Atlantic Hotel (1902) and then from the Fire Station.
- 1905** January 5. Gympie was declared a city.
- February 28. School of Arts and Mines opened in Nash Street.
- 1913** October 5. James Nash, died aged 79 years. He was buried in the Gympie Cemetery.
- 1921** May 24. Memorial Park, in Reef Street, officially opened by the then Prince of Wales, (later Duke of Windsor). It was originally the site of the old Union Sawmill owned by Ferguson.
- 1925** September 25. Opening of the Gympie butter factory, in Tozer Street.

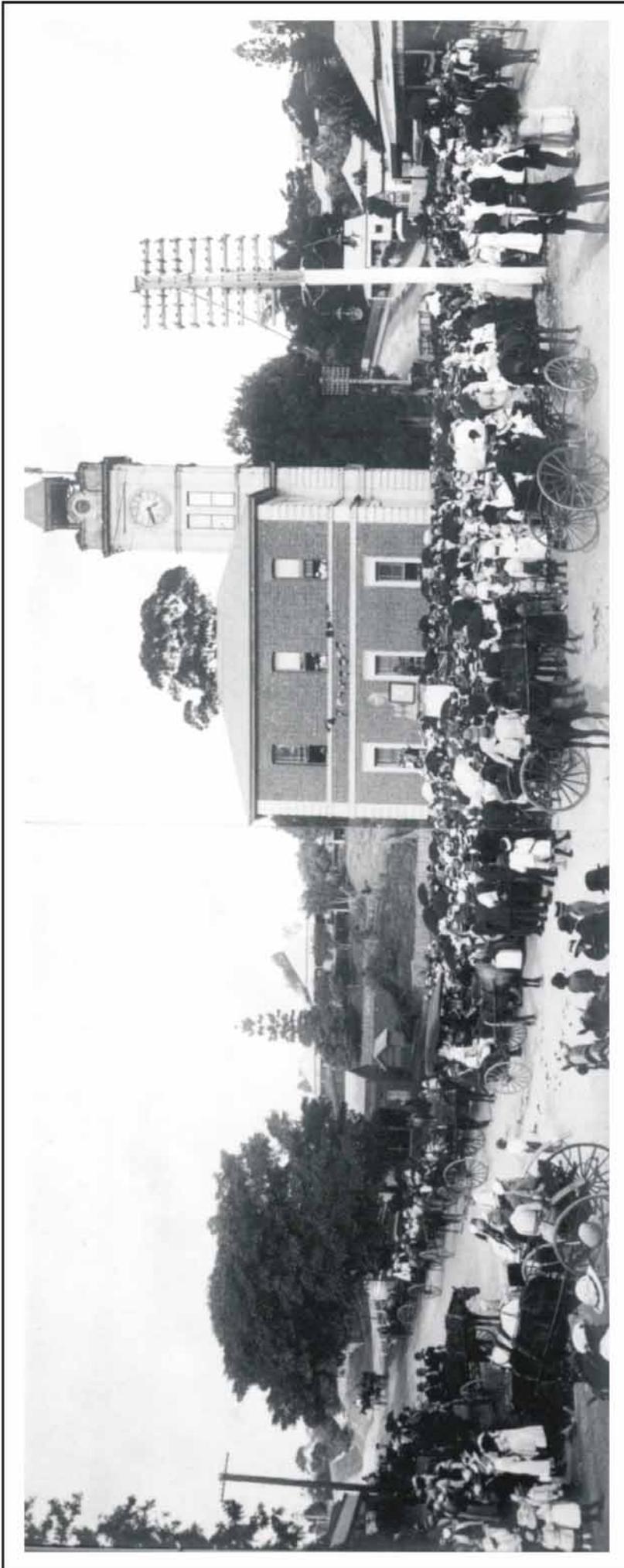


The bandstand in Memorial Park, Gympie, c.1918.



— PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF ROAD PLANT — TUESDAY SEPT. 14th 1926
HELD BY WIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL AT LONG FLAT — GYMPIE
PLANT COMPRISING ... 5 TON CATERPILLAR TRACTOR ... 3 TON SCARIFYING GRADER
BEING THE FIRST COMPLETE PLANT IN AUSTRALIA ...





Unveiling of the James Nash Monument, 6 March 1915. (Photograph courtesy John Oxley Library)

- 1940** November 21. Widgee Shire moved into new offices (formerly the Bank of New South Wales) the offices currently occupied by the Cooloola Shire Council.
- 1941** November 3. Radio Station 4GY commenced broadcasting.
- 1959** October 17. Opening of present Normanby Bridge.
- 1961** August 5. Opening of present Channon Street Bridge - renamed Kidd Bridge.
- 1964** September 12. Opening of Borumba Dam, source of Gympie's water supply.



Borumba Dam under construction. The Dam was officially opened in 1964.

- 1966** May 7. Gympie Airport opened.
- 1970** June 6. The Gympie and District Historical Society opened the Mining Museum at Monkland.
- 1973** July 8. The "Cherry Venture" ran aground at Teewah, on the Cooloola Coast. The rusting hulk still attracts tourists.
- 1977** October 13. The Gympie Civic Centre opened on the former gasworks site in Mellor Street.
- 1993** November 2. Gympie City and Widgee Shire join to form Cooloola Shire.
- 1995** December 9. Gympie Library opened at Mellor Street premises.
- 1996** June 15. The Pavilion at the showgrounds officially opened.
- 1998** February 28. Opening of Cooloola Shire Public Gallery, in former Schools of Arts/Library building.



Coronation Day Celebrations at Albert Park 12 May, 1937.

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The first people ²

Aborigines

The Aboriginal people of the area now known as Cooloolool Shire spoke a language named Kabi after the word they used for 'No'. Dialects of this language were spoken among the Aboriginal groups who occupied particular territories from Childers in the north to Bribie Island in the south and west to the mountains that divide the Mary and Burnett Rivers.

Only fragments of information about the traditional lifestyles of the Aboriginal people of Cooloolool have survived, though there is currently much interest in piecing together what remains. Archaeological studies carried out along the Cooloolool Coast and at a few inland sites reveal an Aboriginal presence at least 5,500 years. A number of nineteenth century writers recorded observations of Aboriginal customs and beliefs and vocabularies of the Kabi language.

According to Aboriginal elder Gaiarbau (Willie McKenzie), the people who occupied the Cooloolool Coast from Fraser Island to Noosa and west to the watershed between Tinana Creek and the Mary River at the time of the European contact were called the *Dulingbara*, meaning 'people of the nautilus shell'. The people of the upper tract of the Mary River around Gympie were known as *Kabi Kabi*. (*Gubbi Gubbi*, an alternative spelling, more closely represents the way these words are spoken.) Within the territories of these groups, extended families consisting of several generations had the right to use certain lands for hunting, fishing and food gathering. Names recorded for these 'clans' include *Doombara* at Inskip Point and *Poombabara* at Double Island Point (1842), and *Dullambara* near Gympie (1843).

Traditional Aboriginal society was based on the sharing and exchange of food and resources. Aborigines saw themselves as part of nature and the land, and maintained their food supplies by closely observing the changing seasons and the life cycles of plants and animals. They had strict rules about what, when and by whom foods could be eaten. When food was plentiful (such as a run of fish along the coast or the ripening of bunya nuts on the inland mountains), they came together for ceremonies, fights and feasts. Although territorial boundaries were defended, intermarriage was common and people travelled widely within the region.

The Cooloolool Shire area was rich in food supplies. The diet of Aborigines was based on plants gathered daily by the women and children - the roots of the *bungwall* fern of the coastal swamps, macrozamia and pandanus fruits, grass seeds, yams, the tops of cabbage palms and a variety of nuts and berries. Shellfish were gathered on beaches and creek banks, and honey was obtained from the hives of native bees. The men trapped possums and birds, hunted kangaroos and wallabies and fished skilfully using spears and nets.

The most valuable technology possessed by Aborigines was fire, which they used for warming their camps, cooking, signalling, hunting and keeping the bush clear of undergrowth. From stone and wood, fibre and gum they fashioned tools and weapons, axes, grinding stones, spears, boomerangs, shields and nullas. They wove dilly bags and nets, carried water in the leaves of piccabeen palms and stripped bark from trees to make shelters and canoes.

² Brown, Elaine., 'Examining the history of local Aborigines'. The Gympie Times, Friday July 30, 1993, p.8.

The survival of Aboriginal groups depended on constant movement from place to place to allow renewal of supplies. The Rev John Matthew, who observed Kabi and Wakka people, wrote this description of an Aboriginal group moving from camp to camp.

*When shifting from one camping-ground to another, they usually moved slowly through the bush, the families separating and gathering their food on the way - opossums, bandicoots, honey, grubs, birds and so forth. At other times they marched along singly, the lords of creation, stepping out with elastic tread and graceful bearing, carrying their light weapons with perhaps some game, the weaker vessel loaded with chattels and possibly a baby on the back in a loop of rug or sitting stride-leg on a shoulder. Some would carry live firesticks to save the trouble of producing fire by friction. Arrived at the familiar, well-chosen rendezvous, it was the duty of the women to cut the bark for the humpies and prepare the fires.*³

Aboriginal society was held together by strong cultural and spiritual ties. Ceremonies such as corroborees, which involved elaborate dressing up, music and dancing, were arranged for entertainment and the exchange of ideas. In a culture dependent on oral tradition, solemn ceremonies such as the initiation of young men were vital for the passing on of beliefs and practices. In Cooloola Shire, a few ceremonial sites, such as bora rings at Pipeclay National Park and Poverty Point on Tin Can Inlet, have been preserved.

Aborigines believed in a spirit world which had the power to influence their lives. Some of the spirits were the *nguthuru*, the spirits of the dead, who haunted the living; the *ubi ubi*, who tempted people to do wrong; and the *jonjari*, who protected people who called on them. There was also *birali*, the creator spirit, and *dhakkan*, the rainbow, who lived in pools of water and gave medicine men their powers.

The coming of Europeans rapidly impacted on traditional Aboriginal society. Aboriginal people resented the invasion of their lands by settlers with their flocks and herds, because it resulted in interference with their food and water supplies and traditional social arrangements. Although they fought back, they were successful in stemming the tide only during the 1840's, when they greatly outnumbered the settlers. During the 1850's, the activities of the Native Mounted Police, who were based at Maryborough and Yabber, broke Aboriginal resistance and made the district safe for the European immigrants who arrived during the 1860's. By the time of the Gympie Gold Rush, surviving Aborigines either lived on the stations and worked for the settlers, or tried to maintain their traditional lifestyles in the remote swamps and forests of coastal Cooloola.

Mr Zachariah D S Skyring had a long and close association with the aborigines of the area and was adopted into their tribe. Later in life he wrote down all the Kabi words he could remember which are of great significance to local aboriginal history. The following excerpts give account of some of his experiences with the tribe.

The hunt--a battue--was very scientific. Kangaroos, wallabies and emus were plentiful...Starting out on a battue, the tribe would march in open order, 50 or 60 tribesmen at a time. When a kangaroo (say) was sighted the signal would be given by arm action right along the line and thenceforth no sound was made or word spoken...The line would gradually bend until the quarry was encircled. The circle would gradually become smaller and smaller until the kangaroo was imprisoned. As he sought to escape the hunters would set up a shout and brandish their nulla nullas. In fright he would dart back until he was bolting frantically round and round inside the ever narrowing circle...When a kangaroo 'took the bit in its teeth' and bolted straight out of the circle he would get away as the natives immediately in his path had no wish to meet a berserk 'roo face to face, but

³ Matthew, J., 'Two Representative Tribes of Queensland', pp83-84.

as a general rule the entrapped animal was taken. The natives never used spears in the hunt; it was always the waddy or nulla nulla...All the hunting parties he took part in were enacted within a few miles of Gympie, nine miles at the most.

The initiation of the young men into manhood was a solemn ceremony and regarded with great superstition. Until he was initiated there were certain foods that a young man must not eat and things he must not do. Should he come across some of the forbidden food in the bush he must bring it home to the tribe or the family and he may not marry until he became a man according to the rites. When he was to become initiated, the boy was taken from his parents and placed under the tutorship of an elder; certain traditions were handed down to him as they had come down from the ancestors of the tribe and he was put through a ceremony in the kippa ring. The kippa ring was enclosed so that nobody but the functionaries conducting the sacred rite, and the initiates themselves, could see what was going on. Women particularly could not come near...Coming out of the initiation successfully they wore for the first time tribal marks. In these districts the marks were on the wrist and their shape and locality decided at once the tribe to which the young man belonged.⁴

⁴ Skyring, Mr Zachariah D S., Article 11, Gympie in Its Cradle Days, 1952. First Published in The Gympie Times of 1938.

Castaways and Runaways

The first white people the Aborigines of the Cooloola region met were castaways from shipwrecks off the coast and runaway convicts - men who chose to take their chances in the unknown bush rather than face the brutalities of daily life in the Moreton Bay penal settlement (1824-1842).

Many castaways and runaways perished, but some, taking advantage of an Aboriginal belief that white people were the ghosts of their own dead relatives, learned to survive among the Aborigines and their stories were recorded after they returned to Brisbane.

The first castaway to pass through Cooloola Shire was Richard Parsons, a ticket-of-leave convict, who was cast up with two companions on Moreton Island in 1823. Parsons walked northwards along the coast in the mistaken belief that he would reach Sydney. At Hervey Bay he turned back and was rescued by John Oxley at Moreton Bay in 1824. Between 1823 and 1842 a number of runaway convicts including George Mitchell, John 'Moilow' Graham, James 'Duramboi' Davis and David 'Wandi' Bracewell, roamed widely with aboriginal groups in the Wide Bay region.

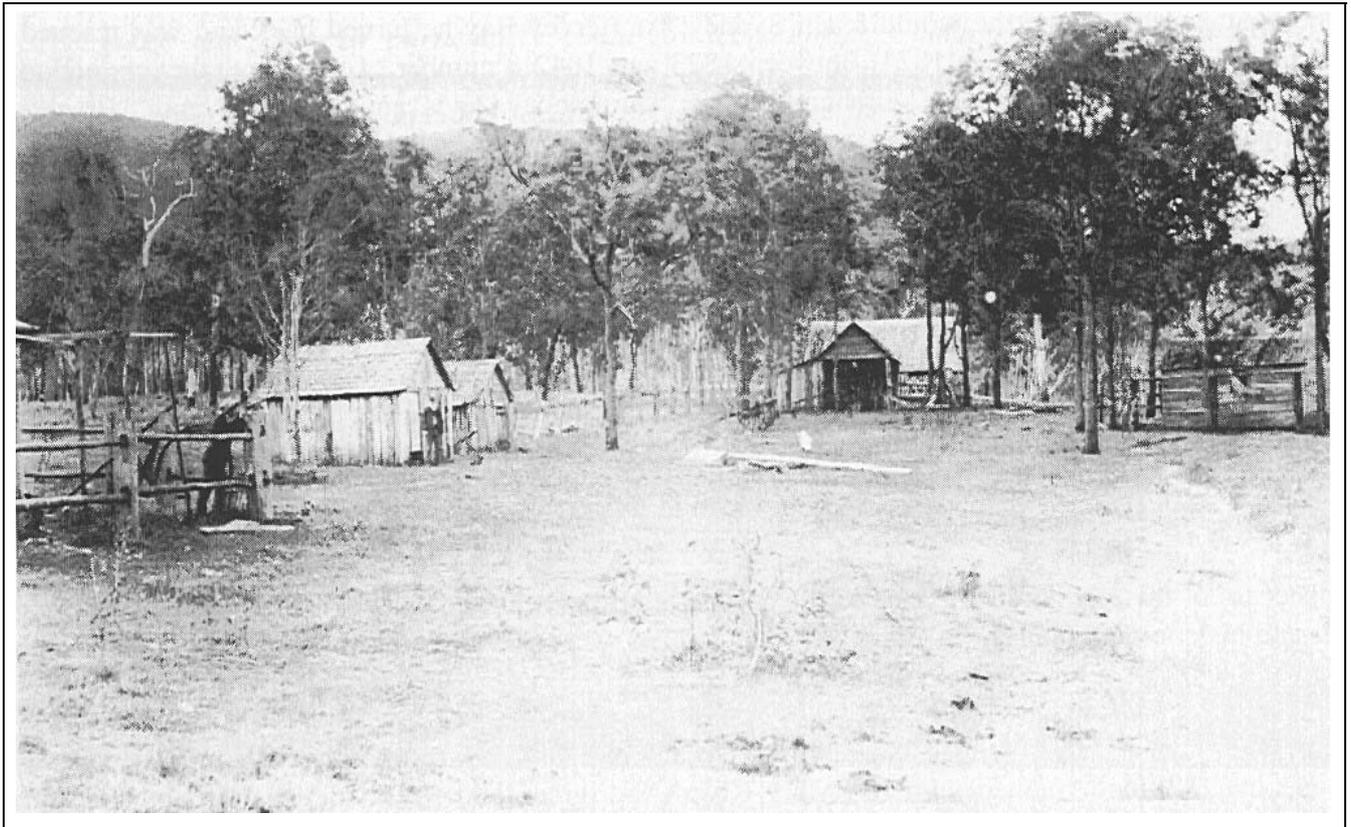
The most famous castaways were the survivors of the Stirling Castle shipwreck in 1836, who walked from Fraser Island through parts of coastal Cooloola before being rescued. The ship's Captain, James Fraser, was killed on Great Sandy Island (later renamed after him), and two seamen drowned trying to swim the passage between Hook and Inskip Points. The mate Charles Brown, died near Double Island Point. Three crewmen walked south along the coast to Bribie Island where they were found and taken to Brisbane. A party of volunteer soldiers and convicts set out to rescue the remaining survivors. Two seamen were found near Lake Cooroibah inland from Noosa. The party then camped at Double Island Point while the Second Mate, John Baxter, was rescued from Hook Point, and the Captain's wife Eliza Fraser, from Fig Tree Point on Lake Cootharaba.

The success of this operation was due to the co-operation between the party's leader, Lieutenant Charles Otter and his convict guide, John Graham. John Graham was one of the runaway convicts known to have lived with the Aborigines in Cooloola Shire.

The best known convict escapee was James 'Duramboi' Davis, who absconded from Brisbane as a teenager in 1829 and roamed with the Mary River Aborigines until 'rescued' at Tiaro by the Petrie-Russell expedition in 1842.

Early Settlement

The spread of European settlement in the belt of country we now know as Cooloola Shire began in the mid 1840's. In 1842 Andrew Petrie, Henry Stuart Russell, Mr Joliffe and the Hon. W. Wrottesby and their party were the first white men to locate the Mary River, although they did not give it this name. They entered Wide Bay and came up the river past Maryborough as far as Tiaro, naming the river the Wide Bay River. It was known under this name until 1847, when his Excellency Governor Fitzroy directed that it be called the Mary River after his wife, Lady Mary Fitzroy.



An unknown station in the Gympie District c.1890.

A few months after the return of the Petrie-Russell expedition in 1842, one of its members, W.K. Joliffe, employed 'Duramboi' to guide his men and a large flock of sheep along Aboriginal tracks from the Brisbane Valley, across the Conondale Range and down the Mary Valley to Tiaro, where they established a grazing run. This action worried Dr Stephen Simpson, the Commissioner for Crown Lands, because the Tiaro run was outside the legal limits of settlement and he could offer the squatters no protection.

Early in 1843 Simpson, accompanied by the Reverend Christopher Eipper, set out on an official tour of inspection, reaching Tiaro after crossing the Mary River. This trail soon became the mailman's route to the Wide Bay District.

Joliffe's venture at Tiaro failed because of Aboriginal hostility, the unsuitability of the land for sheep and the Australia-wide economic recession of the mid-1840s. By the end of 1843 the Tiaro run was abandoned. However, after a river port was established at Maryborough in 1847, squatters with their flocks and herds again moved into the valley of the Mary River and during the 1850s most of the land was taken up for grazing.

During this early European settlement, the area we now know as Gympie was part of the Widgee run, with the runs of Curra to the north and Traveston to the south.



Widgee Station in the 1860's (Daintree Photo)

Most of the runs were stocked with sheep and a few cattle, but as a majority of the land in the area was poor it was found cattle were better suited and the changeover from sheep to cattle occurred in approximately 1868. Agriculture was limited at this time, although most stations had crops such as maize, barley and potatoes. Once the pastoralists were in the area, the district became known for its timber. Cedar was cut on the banks of the Upper Mary River and its tributaries.

A network of tracks linking sheep and cattle runs developed during the 1850s. Along them rode squatters, shepherds, stockmen, mailmen, prospectors, government officials and travellers, some of whom left their accounts of their journey.

During the 1850's, Aboriginal hostility to European settlement made the valley of the Mary River a violent frontier. By the 1860's however, the activities of the settlers, assisted by the Native Mounted Police, had markedly reduced Aboriginal numbers. Their resistance broken, surviving Aborigines lived and worked on the sheep and cattle stations, or sought refuge in the scrubs and swamps of the Cooloola Coast and Fraser Island.

Gold

James Nash (1834 - 1913)

'The discoverer of Gympie and the saviour of Queensland'

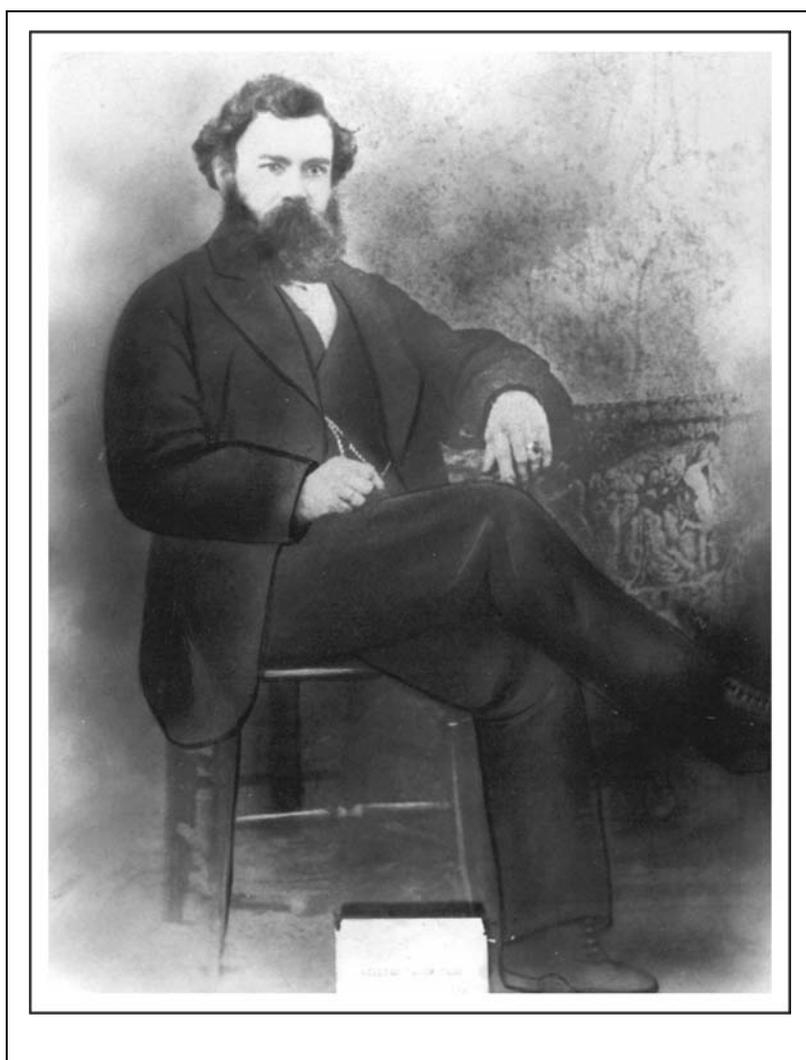
James Nash, one of five sons of Quaker farm labourers Michael and Elizabeth Nash, was born at Beanacre, Wiltshire, England in 1834. He arrived in Sydney in 1858 at the age of 23. Three of his brothers, John, William and Mark, also migrated to Australia. James worked as a labourer and spent much time searching for gold, walking alone for long distances on his prospecting trips.

In 1863 he moved to Queensland, prospecting at Calliope and Nanango without success. Then in August 1867, he found rich alluvial gold in a deep gully running into the Mary River. A cautious man, he proved his find over many weeks before announcing it in Maryborough on October 16, which has been celebrated ever since as Gympie's birthday.

The Queensland Government which was in dire financial trouble, had promised a reward of 3000 pounds to the discoverer of a payable goldfield within 90 miles (145 km) of Brisbane. Gympie was 100 miles (160 km) from Brisbane, and on this technicality Nash was denied the reward. After a year long battle with the authorities, he was eventually awarded 1000 pounds.

He was, however, allowed to peg the first claim on the field (in Nash Gully, in the vicinity of the present Civic Centre) and next to it the prospector's reward of an extra claim and a half. The goldfield was originally named Nashville after the discoverer, but within a year the name was changed to Gympie after Gympie Creek.

James Nash and his brother John made a great deal of money from their alluvial claims. James's share was £7000. He spent some of it on a trip to England then invested the remainder in businesses, farms and mining ventures. All of his investments proved unsuccessful. In 1885 the Queensland Government made him keeper of the powder magazine at Gympie at a salary of 100 pounds per year. In 1898, the powder magazine was moved to Traveston, on the railway line south of Gympie, and James Nash went with it, retiring because of ill health in 1912. When he died in 1913 at the age of 79, he was given a civic funeral and was buried at the Gympie Cemetery.



James Nash (1868)

In 1868, when the photograph was taken, James Nash was a rich and famous man. That year, in Maryborough, he married Catherine Murphy. Of their six children, three died young. A son, Major Allan Nash, head teacher at the Two Mile School was killed at Gallipoli; Herbert Nash, who was deaf and dumb owing to an accident when a baby, lived a long life in Gympie District; and Amy (Mrs Moore) helped look after her father in his old age.

The numerous memorials to James Nash in Gympie include Nash Gully and Nash Street, James Nash State High School, the James Nash Arcade and a granite block outside the Gympie Town Hall.

James Nash gives his own account of finding Gympie gold.

I had been working some time in Nanango; there was nothing worth staying for, so, about the middle of August 1867, I thought of going to Gladstone, trying all likely places on the way.

I had nothing but my dish, pick and dog with me. I came by Mt Stanley to Yabba and stayed there with two boys who were tailing cattle. I had been breaking quartz all day, while travelling down the range, and the boys, seeing my dish, asked me if I was prospecting. They told me there had been some gold found at a place three miles from there called, I believe, Bella Creek.

I tried it, and got colours in several places; then went to Brisbane by Imbil, where I bought a horse and some rations; came back and tried the same creek in several places and only got a colour.

I then camped at Imbil a night with Rees Howel (who was running the mail from Maryborough to Brisbane) and Mr Lamb (Manager of Imbil); left Imbil next morning, got to Denman's camp about 11 o'clock, saw a fire, boiled the billy and had dinner. Just as I finished Bob Wannel came up; he was hauling timber for Denman. I asked him to tell me where to cross the Mary River and he told me he would send a boy with me after dinner. I told him I had taken dinner, but he wanted me to have a drink of tea for friendship sake.

After dinner we all went to Denman's tent; he said he was an old digger from Victoria. I showed him the few specks from Bella Creek; he told me the Six-Mile Creek would be a likely place for gold.

Mr Wannel sent a boy to show me the crossing; when I did cross I was searching for the track until the boy came looking for his bullocks. He put me on it, and I reached Traveston that night and stayed there with Harry Best and a man named Ramsay, stockmen for Mr Powell.

I left there next morning and got to the Six-Mile Creek, but not liking the look of it I did not try it at all, nor any other place, until travelling down what is now Caledonian Hill. Just at the end of where Mr T.J. Ferguson's garden is now I tried a dish of dirt and got a speck in it that half day and the next day I got an ounce and three dwts, (pennyweight)..

I broke the hammer-headed pick I had and could do no more digging, so I went to Maryborough where I tried two banks and several stores but could not sell the gold. (times were so bad that they hardly knew what gold was like.) At last I tried Mr Southerden a second time, and he allowed me three pounds for it - one pound in money, the rest in tools and rations.

I then went back to try the place again, taking about ten or twelve days for the journey both ways. When I got back I started digging in the same place, washing at the back of what is now Tattersall's Hotel, but the water was getting dirty.

I went up the creek, near where the Gas Works now is. While washing the first dirt there, I picked up gold beside me, in small pieces. I had camped about where Mr Woodrow's store is now, but shifted further up the creek where I was working. I got 75 ounces in six days.

Then I started for Maryborough again, camped at Curra Station one night, helped bury a black boy next morning, then took five days to reach Maryborough. My horse knocked up near the Five Mile. I reached the punt just at dark, and could not get the old horse on, so I left him and carried my swag and saddle to the Sydney Hotel.

I took the first steamer to Brisbane. On board I met a young fellow named Malcolm and we stayed together at the St Patrick's Hotel. I told him I would be going into the bush back of Maryborough with horse, dray and rations, and that if he would like to come, it would cost him nothing. I went then to Flavelle Bros. and sold the 75 ounces of gold⁵

⁵ Nash, Mr James,. "The Discovery of Gympie, 29 years ago' True account of, The Gympie Times, Thursday October 15, 1986.

Mining Development

Alluvial Mining

The discovery of gold in Gympie was of great value to Queensland as it was in a period of depression. It was a common sight to get an ounce of gold to the dish and large nuggets were unearthed. The most famous was the Curtis nugget, a mass of pure gold found by Mr G. Curtis on 6 February 1868, in Sailors Gully (now Lady Mary Terrace & Pollock Street). The nett gold content was 906 ounces and it was valued at £3132/9/9 at the Sydney Mint. The names Reef Street and Surface Hill are reminders of the days when small gold nuggets could be picked up from the ground there. The diggers soon exhausted the alluvial gold so by the end of 1868 this form of mining was almost at an end.

An early Gympie miner and his living quarters (undated).



Description of the early diggings

Gympie as a town was a marvelous place, and to my eyes very interesting, though at the same time very ugly. Its population was said to be six thousand souls, but I found throughout the country that no statement of the population of a gold-field could be taken as accurate.

The men go and come so quickly that the changes cannot be computed. It consists of a long street stretching more than a mile - up and down hill - and without a single house in it that looked as though it had been built to last ten years... The main street contains stores, banks, public houses, a place of worship or two, and a few eating houses. They are framed of wood, one storey high, generally built in the first place as sheds with a gable-end to the street, on to which, for the sake of importance, a rickety wooden facade has been attached. The houses of the miners, which are seldom more than huts, are scattered over the surrounding little hills, here and there, as the convenience of the men in regard to the different mining places has prompted the builders. All around are to be seen the holes and shallow excavations made by the original diggers, and scattered among them the bigger heaps which have been made by the sinking of deep shafts.

When a mine is being worked there is a rough wooden windlass over it, and at a short distance the circular track of the unfortunate horse who, by his rotary motion, pulls the buckets up with the quartz, and lets them down with the miners. Throughout all there stands the stunted stumps of decapitated trees, giving the place a look of almost unearthly desolation. At a distance beyond the mine shafts are to be seen the great forests which stretch away on every side over almost unlimited distance.

There is a hospital, and there are schools which are well attended, and as I have before said, various places of worship.

I put up at an inn kept by a captain, which I found to be fairly comfortable, and by no means expensive. There were a crowd of men there, all more or less in the search of gold, with whom I found myself to be quite intimate before the second night was over, and from whom, - as from everybody at Gympie - I received much civility and many invitations to drink brandy and water.⁶

Reef Mining

Huge individual fortunes were made from early reef mines such as Lady Mary, Caledonian, Smithfield and New Zealand. On one memorable night, two men who were working the shaft on the Lady Mary Reef fired two holes with explosives and then went for supper. When they returned, the bottom of the shaft was covered in gold. They sat up all night guarding the specimens. When the stone was put through the battery, gold had to be chiseled from between the stampers. On the same night, the wife of one of the partners gave birth to a son.

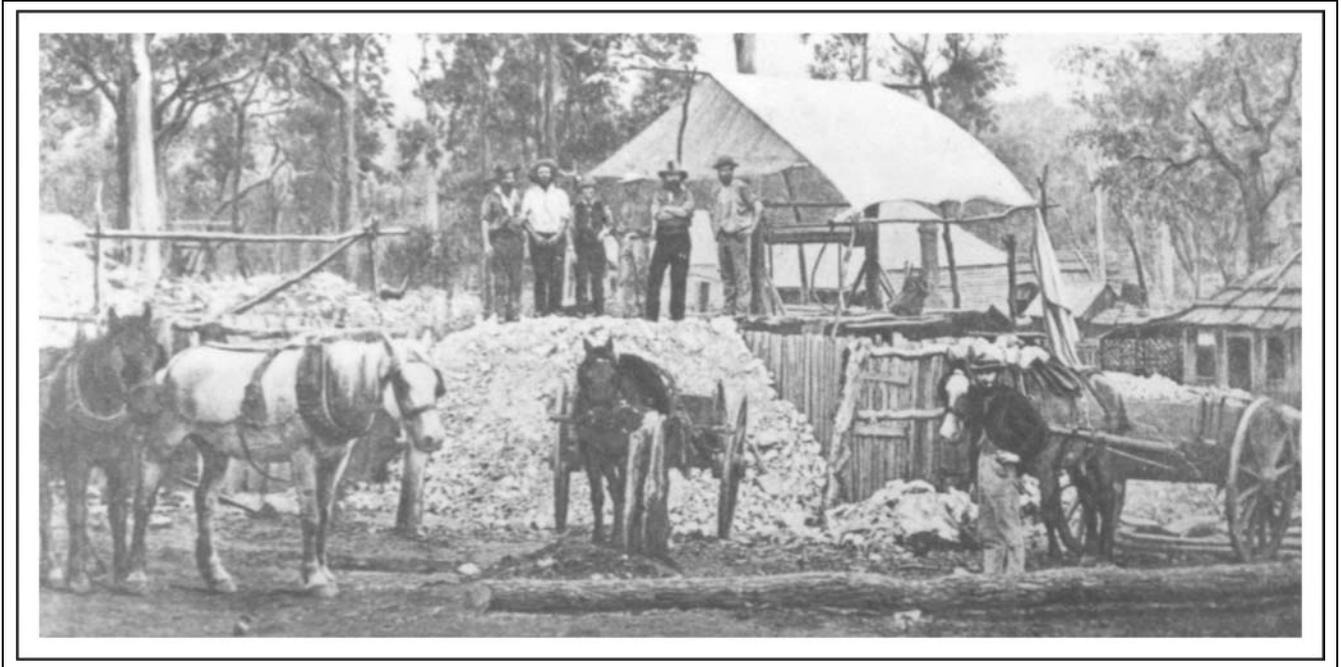
⁶ Trollope, Anthony, *Australia and New Zealand*, 1873, Vol II, p.91.



Gympie miners home c1870 (Richard Daintree photograph)

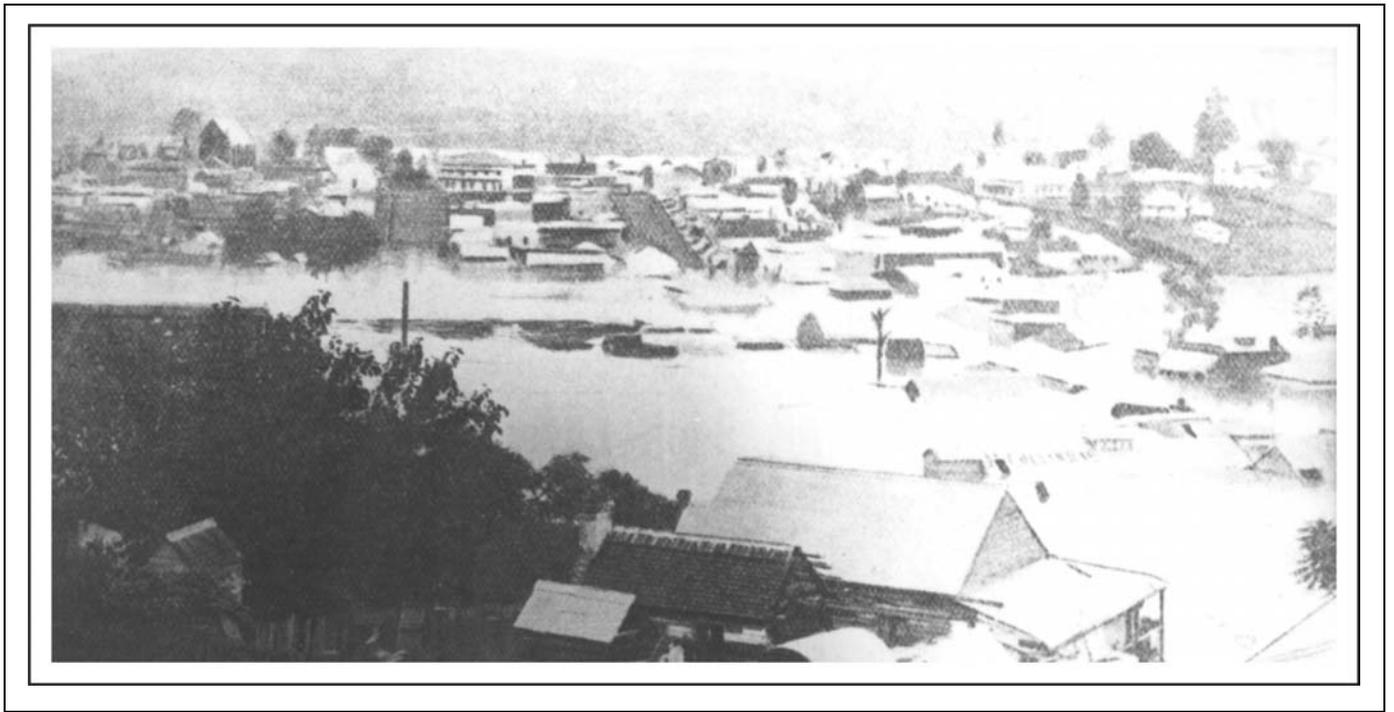
The mining landscape changed. Whims turned by horses raised and lowered buckets of gold bearing quartz. Batteries of stampers, powered by steam, were erected on the banks of the river to crush the rock and extract the gold. Powerful winding engines replaced the whims, and sturdy poppet heads appeared over the shafts, growing taller as the miners tunnelled deeper into the earth. Machinery meant a large capital cost, so later mines were operated by companies and worked by paid employees instead of self-employed men. Many miners invested in Gympie mining companies, and a Stock Exchange flourished.

Since the gold-bearing reefs dipped at an angle of 22 degrees south of Gympie, mines became deeper and mining activity moved from Caledonian Hill to Red Hill and Mt Pleasant, and then to Monkland, where the largest and richest mines, the No 2 South Great Eastern and the Scottish Gympie, operated from the mid - 1890s. The goldfield reached its peak production during 1900 - 1910, then yields declined. In 1893 record floods at the beginning of February caused widespread disaster. Soon after, Queensland saw financial panic set in and some banks closed their doors while others restricted advances. As a result most prospecting ventures had to close down.



An early minesite: South Monkland No. 3 in 1870

Beneath the surface of Gympie lies a huge, system of shafts and drives, so interconnected that it was possible in the mining days to enter a shaft at Monkland, walk underground, and come to the surface in Gympie. As mines closed, pumps could not cope with the water that rose in this network of tunnels. With closure of the field's largest producer, the Scottish Gympie (18773.5kg of gold) in 1924 mining virtually came to end. As gold production declined miners either migrated or found new occupations in the agricultural and dairying industries.



This photograph was taken on February 3, 1893 from Calton Hill and overlooking Mary Street. The water subsequently rose another 8 ft.

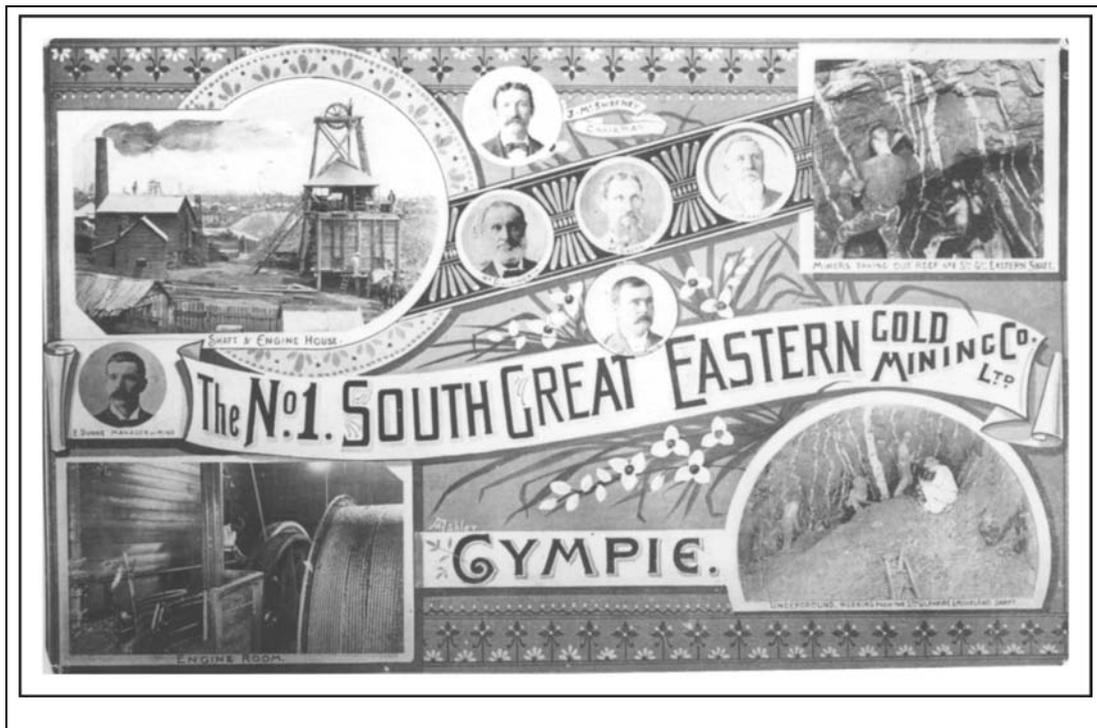
Gympie Eldorado Gold Mines (GEGM) were encouraged to amalgamate the Gympie Goldfields leases in the early 1970s. Exploration drilling commenced in 1980 and discovered zones of high-grade ore at depth. In 1988, the deepest shaft in the goldfield, the West of Scotland Shaft, was re-opened. The field was de-watered and the Scottish Gympie No 2 Shaft was re-opened in 1996 with ventilation being upgraded by an exhaust fan fitted to the Scottish Gympie No 3 Shaft. In June 1998, the old Scottish Gympie No 1 Shaft (renamed the Bas Lewis Shaft) was re-opened also to act a ventilation shaft.

In March 2000 GEGM decided to proceed with a decline in order to access shallow ore (200-500 metres below surface) using modern mining techniques.

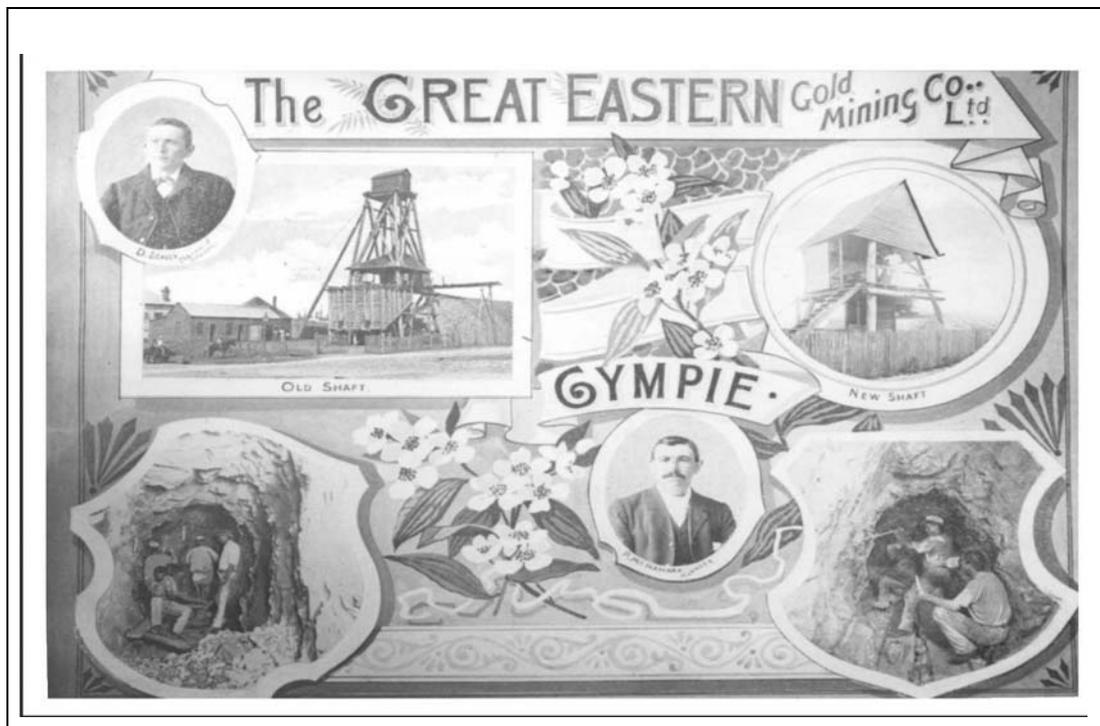
To date over \$70 million has been invested to establish the modern Monkland Mine which operates from 400-900 metres depth (1300 - 3000 feet).

The Monkland Mine produces in excess of 30000 ounces of gold annually and with the addition of the decline this production will more than double. It also owns tenements covering the Gympie Goldfield and surrounding exploration areas exceeding its operations through exploration and development, reclaiming Gympie's former standing as a world-class goldfield with several mines supporting each other in a co-ordinated organisation.⁷

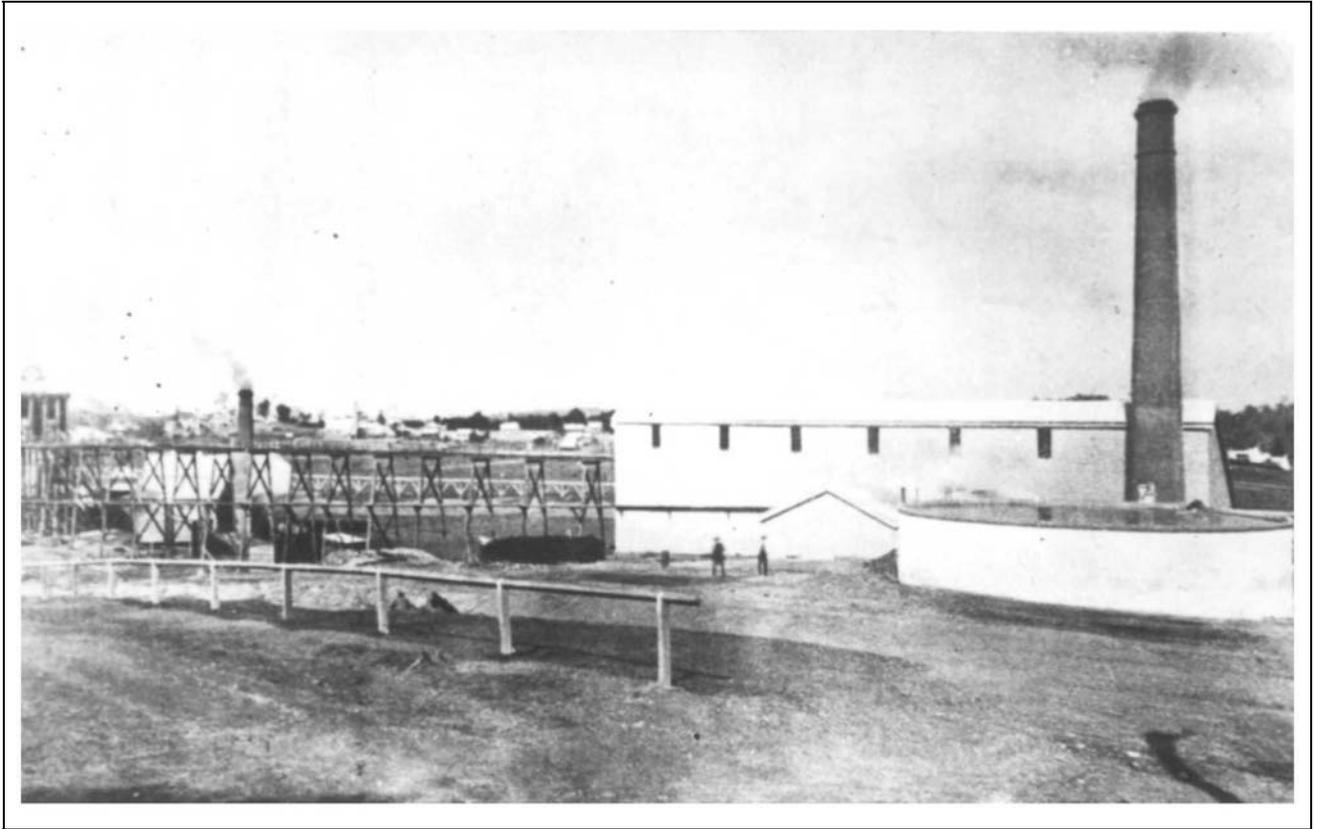
⁷ Extract from: Foreword - *Gympie Gold Limited*, HOLTHOUSE, H 'Gympie Gold' Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1999 (reprint).



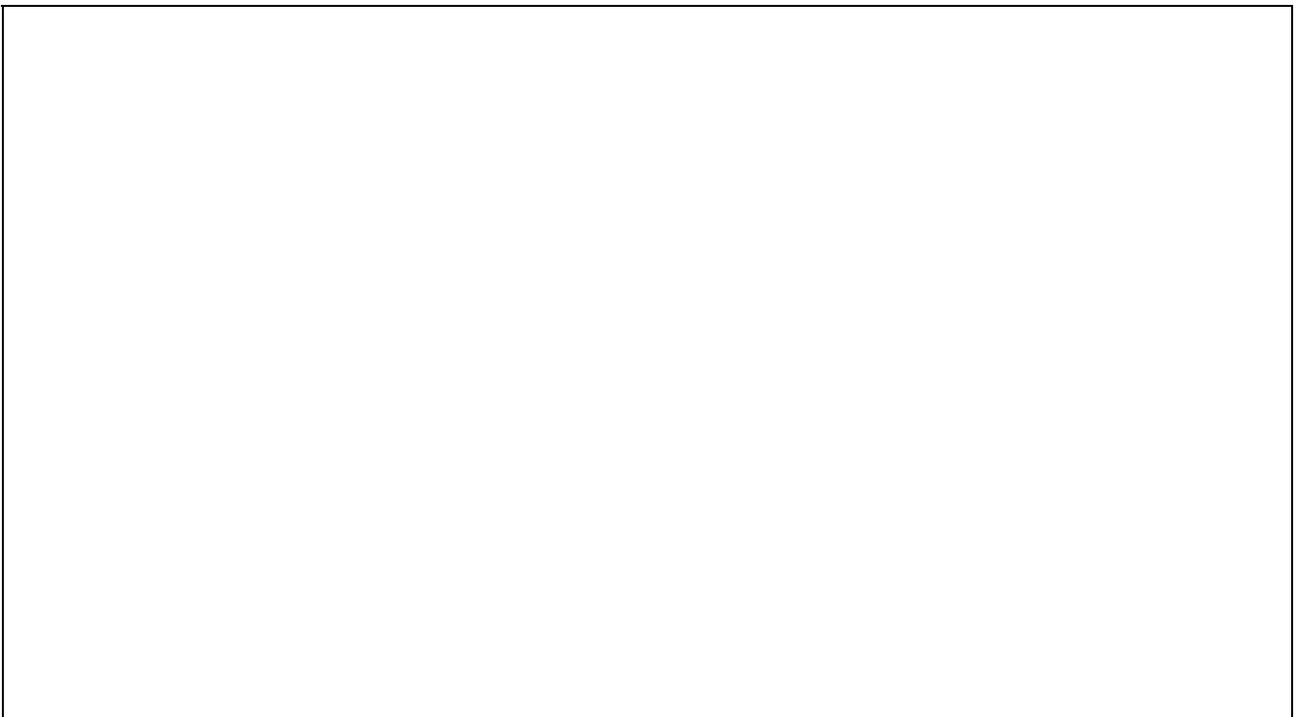
A promotional card of the No.1 South Great Eastern Gold Mining Co. c.1899



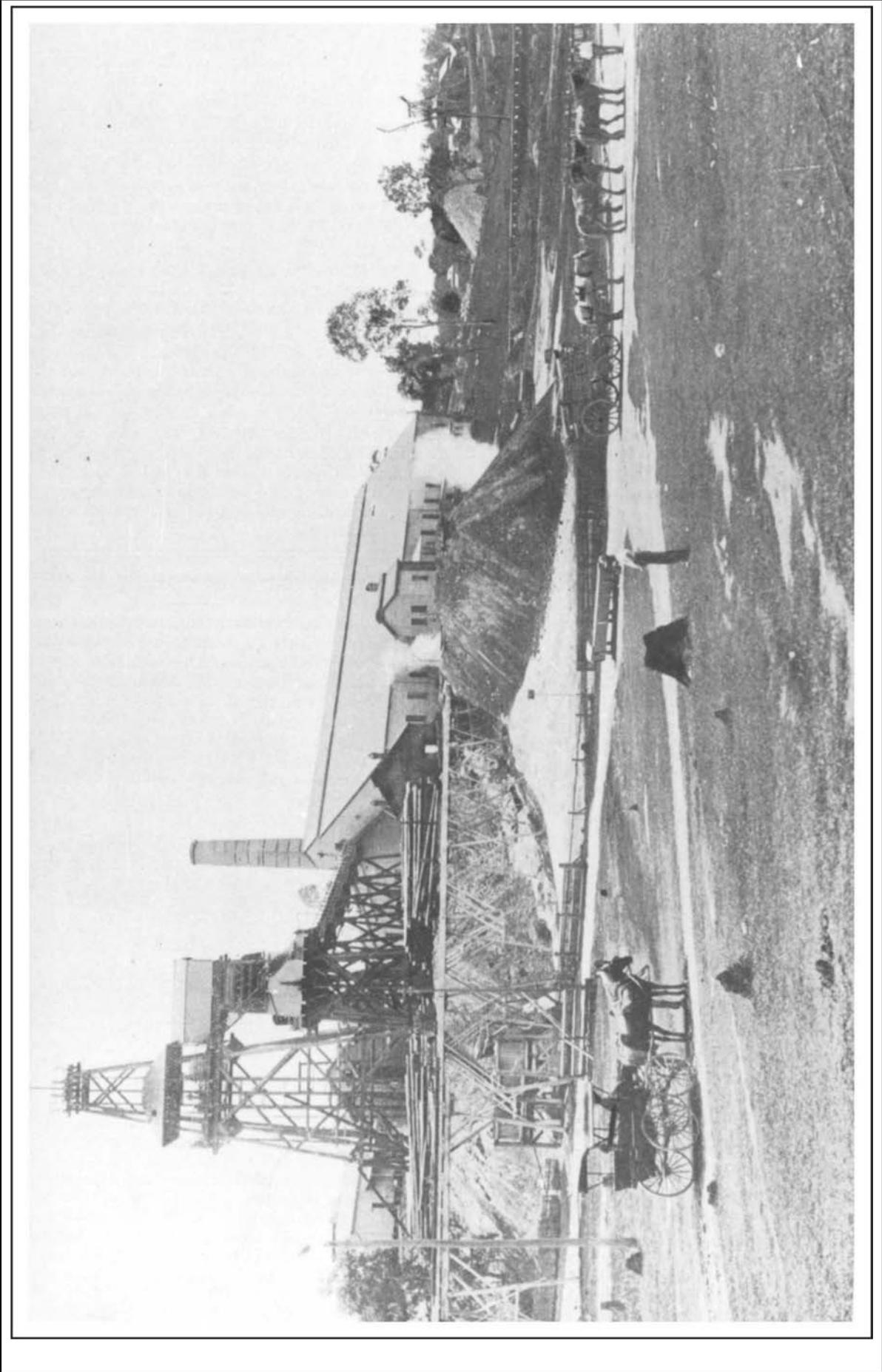
Promotional cards for Gympie mines c.1899



The No 2 South Great Eastern in 1906.



An early undated photograph of Red Hill taken from approximately Woolgar Street. This photograph shows the mines Great New Zealand (centre foreground) and No.3 Phoenix (extreme left).



Scottish Gympie Gold Mine , Gympie in 1907. This mine had 120 stampers, five of which still remain. The only surface building remaining from this mine is the retort house which is seen centre of this picture.

Cooloola Shire

...a golden past

PART III

Cooloola Shire Library Service

Published by Cooloola Shire Council 2001.

This book has been produced by the Local History Section of the Cooloola Shire Library Service. Those involved include Elaine Brown, Amelia Connolly, Ann Egan, Cathy Hunt, Janet Lee and Moira Maclachlan. Thanks must go to Friends of the Library volunteer researchers, in particular Merlyn Burkhardt and Rose Sami. Production of this book would not have been possible without the support of the Cooloola Shire Council's Heritage Committee.

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Gold rush days

From the early pages of the Nashville Times, come these verses, written by a miner to the 'Goddess Gympie' expressing his feelings and thoughts during the four or five weeks he had been 'a votary at her shrine'.

*Your narrow street and verdant mud
I must admire young Gympie
While eyebrow deep I wade your flood
To reach my fire-quenched humpy.*

*At last I find the wretched spot
In darkness gloom and rain,
A dreary homeless lonely cot
Pitched somewhere on the plain.*

*No hope of sleep, in dripping clothes,
I lay me down to mourn,
And think in heartfelt grief of those
Who'd welcome my return.*

*My wayward fortune brought me here
In damp and cold to suffer
The mush and slush up to my ear,
And each hole I sink a duffer.*

*What wretched spot to build a town,
And then to call it Nashville;
When on the flat it was laid down,
Its name was plainly Slushville.*

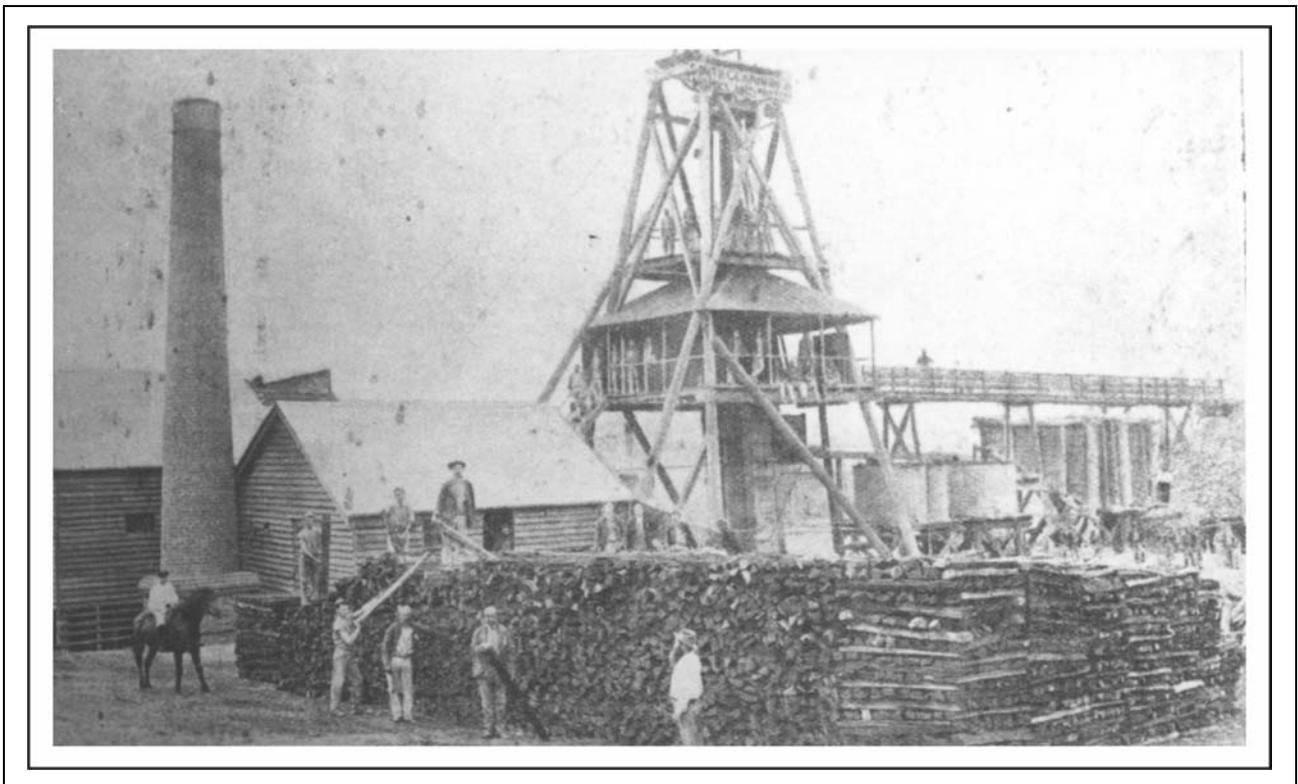
*The hills around are high and dry,
The Township in a gully
That can't be seen by human eye
Till you come upon it fully.*

*May the Fates in mercy take me
Gympie from thy mud and puff,
Or if my stars don't all forsake me,
Send, oh soon, some golden stuff.*

Miner, 26 February 1868.

*T'was in historic Sixty-Seven the world heard this news flash
 Important Gold discovery reported by James Nash;
 Men rushed this El-Dorado and their tents did quickly pitch,
 Enamoured with this thought in mind, to strike the gold ore rich.
 High hopes were held by everyone as on the site they strode
 Obsessed to make a fortune when they struck a rich veined lode;
 Nor were they disappointed when the gully's bed they tried
 On peering in their sluicing dish, fine specimens they spied.
 Resplendent were the grand returns that this famed spot did yield,
 Exciting all the fossickers who worked this new-found field.
 Deep sinking era then began which caused a mining boom
 Just as our sunny Queensland slumped and faced financial doom.
 And though it seems an idle boast which young folk may decry
 Mines striking richly studded reefs built this State's prestige high.
 Eventful were those stirring times when youth was all ablaze,
 Steeped full of thrilling episodes which time can ne'er erase.
 Now in the eventide of life when back our thoughts are cast,
 Amazing scenes on stock exchange come flashing from the past.
 Still further as we dream of yore James Nash reflects in mind
 Highlighted in our memories for Gympie's rich gold find.*

Written for Gympie's 87th Anniversary 1954 by Bill Stuart (ex-Calton Hillite)



An early undated photograph of the South Glanmire gold mine.

Timber

The timber industry has become a very important part of the Coolooloa region.

Many of the early farmers were originally timber getters. The Gympie area was heavily timbered with hardwoods, rainforest and huge amounts of Hoop Pine. Cedar was considered a valuable timber and was in demand for cabinet making and boat building as well as houses and barns. Cedar enticed the first timber getters to the district where the industry was an all year process with felling in the winter and sending the logs down river to the mills at Maryborough in the summer when the Mary River was swollen with flood waters from storms. Large quantities of Cedar and Hoop Pine was shipped south to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

As well as Cedar, Hoop Pine grew most abundantly in the Gympie district and it was claimed to be one of the best pine timbers in the world. Hardwoods such as Ironbark, Stringybark and Gympie Messmate were used to shore up mineshafts and raise the tall poppetheads that characterised the mining landscape.



An early photograph of Jack and Bob Tomkins on springboards felling a tree at Wolvi.

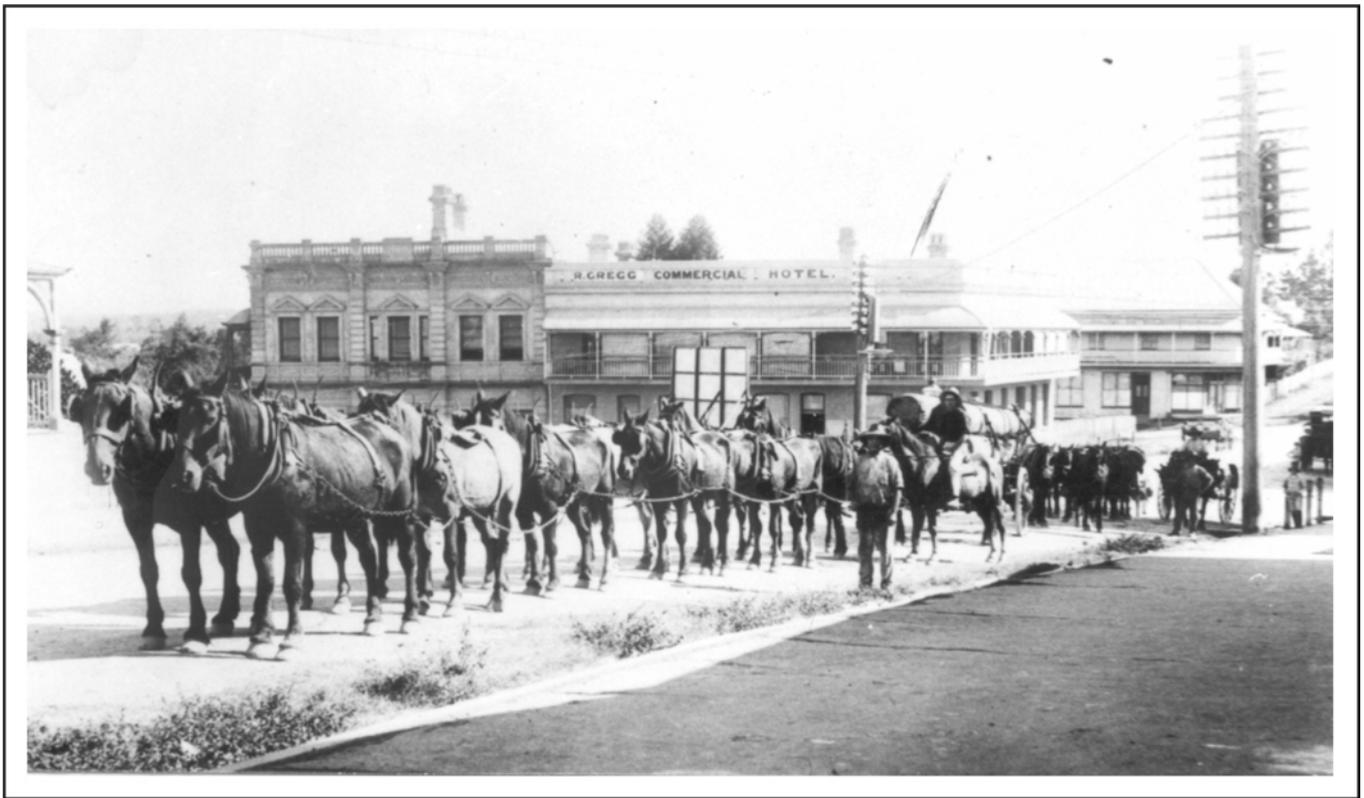
In 1868 a mill was opened at Chatsworth by Ferguson and Co. It was shifted in the same year to Mary Street where Memorial Park is now situated. This was later moved to an area near the One Mile school. During Gympie's early years timber was in demand by miners for their homes, pit props and firewood to stoke the boilers. Shingles became particularly important as they were used to build better homes. As well as miners, farmers also needed timber for their houses and yards.

The industry was a cut throat business with fights and sabotage occurring when rival timber getters moved in on another's territory. It was also a dangerous business as shooting logs down hillsides meant instant death to anyone in their way. Springboard chopping could lead to a tree falling the wrong way, and axeman had to be careful not to land on a stake when jumping down from the tree.

The Gympie timber industry has the remarkable story of the four Lynch sisters who felled pine and hardwood logs and drove bullock teams to transport the logs. They also carried out contract fencing in the district and carted cordwood for the Gympie mines. The Lynch sisters became highly respected members of the community expecting no favours because of their gender and more than capable of looking after themselves.



The Lynch sisters (Photograph courtesy John Oxley Library.)



A horse team with logs in Channon Street, note the Council chambers in the background.

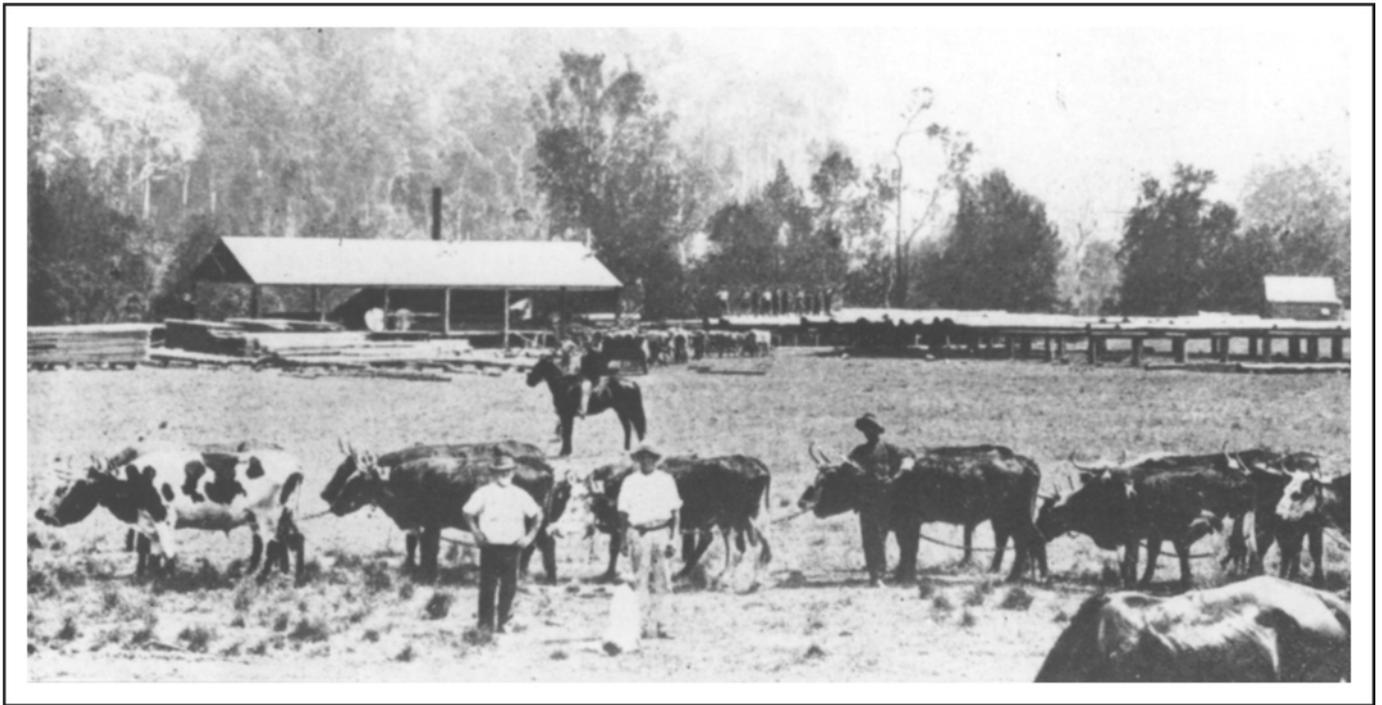
Many valuable areas of forest were cleared for pastures and this process accelerated after the introduction of Rhodes and Paspalum grasses used to feed dairy cows in the expanding dairy industry.

Bullock teams were used extensively to transport timber. The bullock drivers needed to have a lot of patience. They knew every bullock by name and the bullocks would be called up individually to be yoked with the leaders. The animals understood the teamster's special language and when they were rounding a tight corner the teamster had to constantly give instructions to each bullock to make sure they negotiated the turn successfully. The bullock teams managed eight or nine miles a day with a load, which was only half the rate of horse teams. The bullocks were much better in boggy conditions as well as being steadier and having a more even pull. Bullock teams started to give way to truck and tractors in the early 1900's with the last team driven along Channon Street and Horseshoe Bend in 1925.

As well as floating timber down the river, it was also rafted from Tin Can Bay to Maryborough with heavy reliance on the tides. The Kaloola (Cooloola) railway was a nine mile railway which opened in 1873. It provided a more economical means of transport for timber to the ports. The railway from Brisbane to Gympie was completed in 1891 and timber was the main product to be transported for many years. A lot of timber was sent to Maryborough by rail, because Gympie's sawmilling capacity was not adequate for the amount of timber felled.

In December 1910 the Gympie Lands Office had the largest auction of standing timber in the area located at the head of Eel Creek and this resulted in two large mills being set up there. The Queensland Forestry Service came to the area just before World War One and built a large sawmill in the Imbil area. It was worked for about 10 years.

More forest on high country ridges was cleared during the banana boom of the 1920's. This clearing allowed new sawmills to open.



An early photograph of the Columbia Sawmill at Eel Creek

Reafforestation began on a token scale after the end of the World War 1 and in the beginning was confined to the Imbil area. Gradually the programme increased and hoop pine plantations extended to Amamoor.

The Forestry Department established a Forestry Training centre at Two Mile on the Bruce Highway in 1984. National and international timber experts meet there to learn and teach of new developments in the Timber Industry. The Woodworks Museum is located at the Forestry Complex and is a joint venture of the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Forest Service. Here retired timber workers demonstrate the use of the old tools and equipment.

According to 2000 figures, the Tuan Toolara estate in Gympie with 75,000 ha of Slash and Caribbean pine is the largest single plantation area in Australia. It employs 140 permanent and temporary staff with an annual expenditure and revenue of \$9 million and a revenue of \$25 million. The current harvest of approximately 800,000 cubic metres per year is predicted to reach full production in the near future. This harvest will continue to provide a range of products including sawlogs, roundwood, pulpwood, poles and woodchips.



Mick Morley's bullock team hauling timber from Moses Richardson's Neerdie mill in 1922. Following behind is Billy Foster's team.

Dairying

The decline of mining after 1906 saw a drop in population and a change to agricultural and pastoral activities.

One of the reasons for such a great growth in agricultural industries and in particular the dairy industry was the opening up of large holdings of rich scrub land which earlier settlers had left alone. Much of the land had rich red soil with vine scrub and fairly consistent rainfall which was ideal for dairying.

In 1882 the first cream separator was imported by Mr Hugo Durietz. The introduction of refrigeration enabled Gympie to export overseas and interstate. By 1906 dairy farming was very prosperous with large numbers of dairy cattle being imported from southern states. Artificial grasses such as paspalum from Africa and Rhodes grass made a big impact on the industry.

There were two companies on the same site before the Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy Company was established. It took shape in 1906 with a prospectus drawn up by May 5th. A call for shares was so successful that by September 1, it commenced operations. By the end of December the Wide Bay Co-op was exporting to London.

Supply outgrew the capacity of the factory so on September 25th in 1925, a new building was officially opened. The cost of the building was 60 000 pounds. It was one of the biggest in Australia and one of the most completely equipped factories with its own railway siding and a branch factory at Cooroy. By 1927 the district was producing one tenth of the milk production of the whole state. The record manufacture

for the Gympie factory was in January 1943 when 1,166,020 lbs (pounds) of the famous Golden Nugget brand was produced.

In the late 1940's Nestle chose Gympie for the site of its new factory because of the potential for producing the large quantities of milk needed as well as the town being able to provide all the services to run a modern factory. This decision involved an investment of over one million pounds and shows the importance of Gympie as a dairying concern.

After the establishment of the Nestle factory in 1953, butter making gradually declined and finally ceased in 1978. The factory turned to milk processing while Nestle went out of the milk industry altogether.

The dairy industry's worth outshone the gold production years. The average yield from dairying for the twelve years between 1915 and 1927 was £317,744 per annum while the average for the goldfield for the thirty-seven years to 1917 was only £147,500 per annum.

After the rationalisation of the dairy industry the factory ceased processing milk in 1987. The building was then used as a bulk milk collection point. With declining milk collections the depot closed in October 1994.



The Butter factory prior to the new building being opened in 1925.

Agriculture

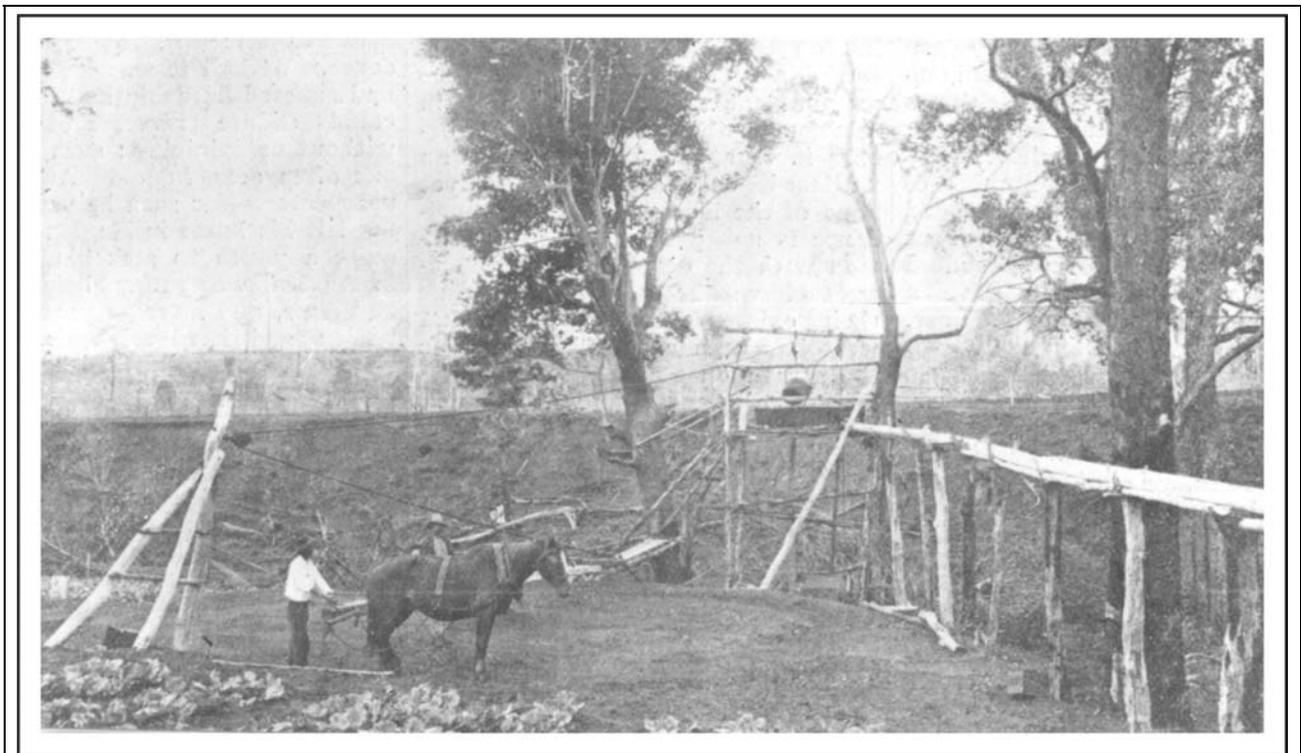
At the time gold was discovered in Gympie the area was rated as second class pastoral land. The best known cattle station was Widgee, from which the shire, (Widgee Shire) later received its name.

There was a certain amount of agriculture in Gympie before the mining boom, although crops were mainly grown to satisfy the needs of the station population. Once mining was established the early farms catered for the local market. Maize, greens and potatoes were grown and most farmers had a few cows.

One of the remarkable features of the industry at that time was the Chinese market-gardening. Chinese prospectors arrived on the field immediately after the news of the gold find became known. They quickly established vegetable gardens as a source of fresh food for themselves and the busy miners who were more accustomed to a diet of salted beef and game such as wallaby. As Gympie became more established the Chinese took up land on the Southside, Chatsworth and Pie Creek.

Apart from the Chinese, George Flay was probably the first man to begin growing fruit near Gympie. He arrived in 1868 and worked a claim but in 1871 he started the famous Green Park farm at Two-Mile. There he grew citrus fruits, grapes and later strawberries. His strawberry farm was a very popular attraction on Sunday afternoons.

In 1876 the acreage under cultivation in Gympie was 1014 acres comprising of: wheat, maize, potatoes, sugar, gardens, vines and other crops.



Wang Choo Market Gardener with his own irrigation system c.1870 at Eel Creek. This system was capable of raising 6000 gallons of water per hour to a height of 30 feet.

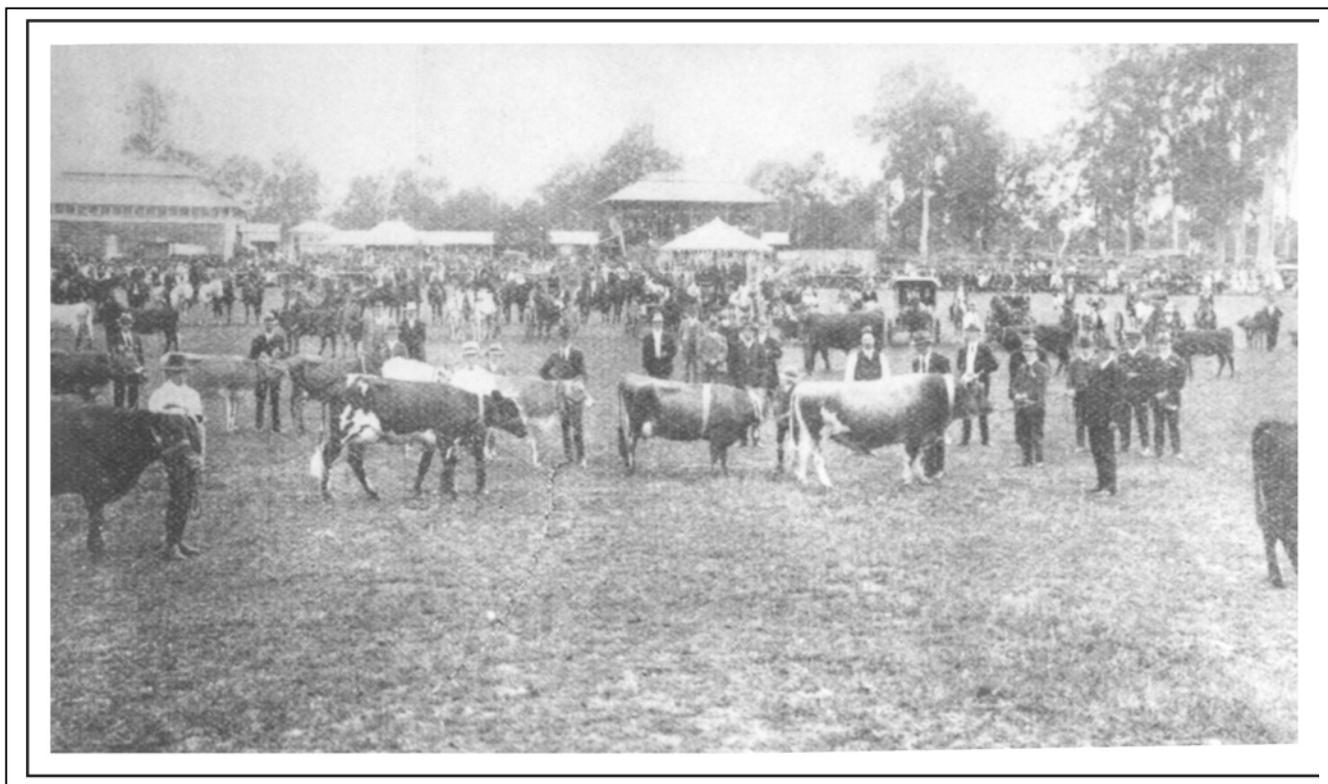
Small areas of grape vines were planted for local consumption of fresh grapes and production of wine. These vineyards and wineries sold their produce for three pence per pound or 1/- (one shilling) per bottle.

Although sugar bananas were planted in backyards in Gympie's very early history and commercial crops were then grown and sold locally in the 1890's, the Cavendish banana established the fruit growing industry. The banana boom began just after World War 1 and Gympie had found a crop worth growing on a large scale. In the following decade the Widgee Shire became the largest banana producing area in Australia. The great depression of the 1930's, attacks from rust thrip and increased competition saw Gympie's banana industry slump.

At this time many farmers left Gympie while others turned to pineapples and beans. Pineapples were planted extensively in the Mary Valley and within a few years the area was one of the largest pineapple producing centres in Queensland. There were hopes that a cannery would be built near Gympie but a site near the railway line at Monkland was rejected.

During the banana days, beans had been a sideline crop. The early seeds were grown on Norfolk Island or in Victoria and these seeds had a tendency to be attacked by the Halo Blight. Experimentation done by Mr Bill Anderson who was one of the first growers of commercial beans, and the DPI led to disease free seeds used almost throughout Australia.

Beans were grown under dry cultivation until the late 1930's which meant that crops were almost finished by the end of winter. Irrigation, introduced after World War 1 brought bigger yields. As the industry grew, cottages were often built to accommodate the pickers although these houses were no longer used once motor transport and roads improved. Many Gympie people still find employment in the bean picking season.



Gympie Agricultural Show 1926

The first Gympie Fruitgrowers' Co-operative Association was formed in 1916 after a meeting of interested people organised by Mr V. H. Tozer. The local district associations of Chatsworth, Goomboorian and Mooloo formed in 1918 and 1919. The four associations combined in 1919 forming a district council.



*Mayfield Banana farm at Mooloo 1924. (l to r) Henry Mallett, Charlie Mayfield and Walter Mayfield.
(Photograph courtesy John Oxley Library)*



George B. Geiger turning the soil with a Mouldboard Plough on his farm at Kin Kin 1947

The Cooloola Region still has a rich agricultural base. Dairying and fruit and vegetable productions are the major industries with significant beef cattle production.

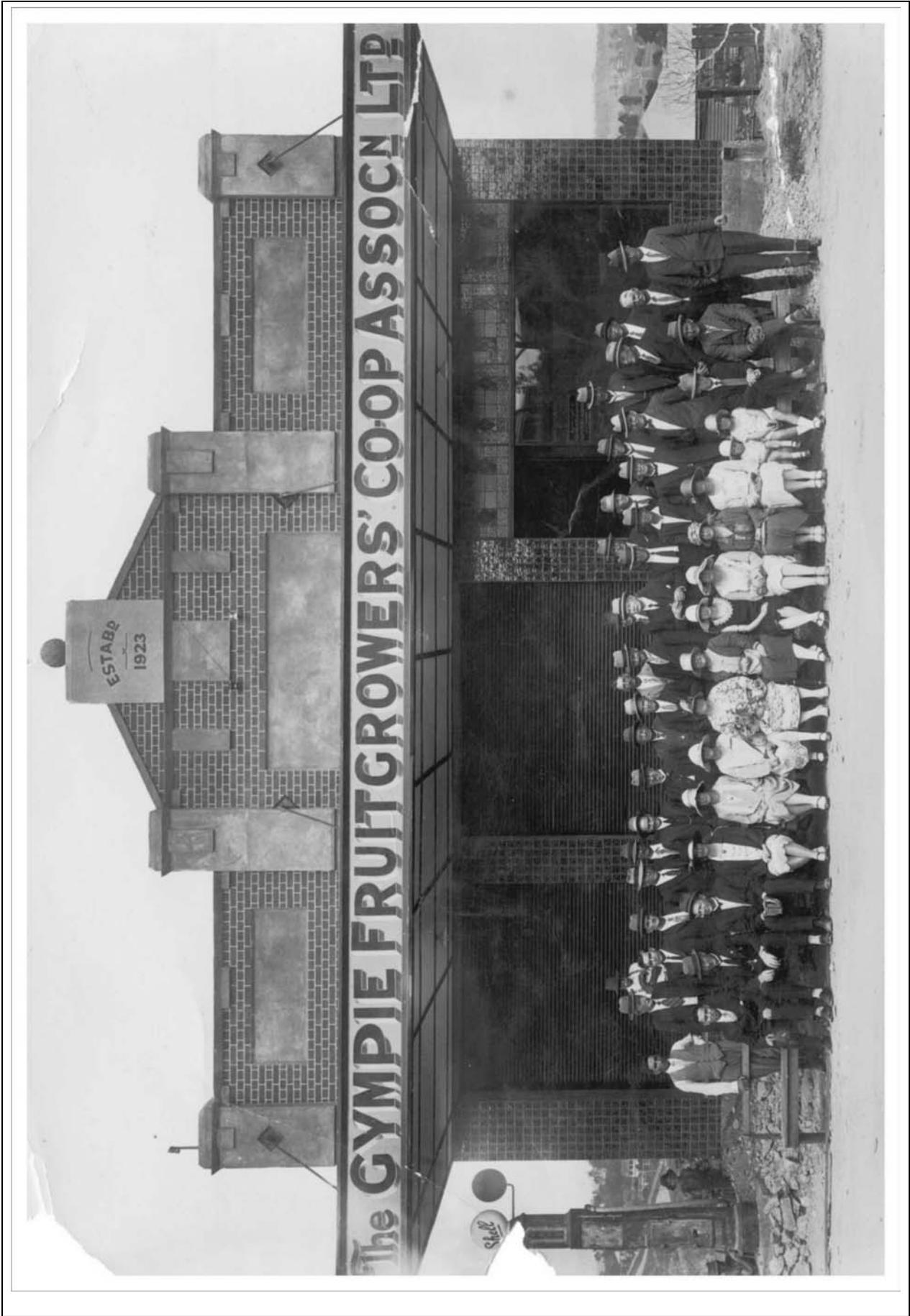
On the frost-free hillsides of the shire farmers produce a wide variety of other horticultural produce. Mango, avocado and lychee orchards, cut flowers, vegetables and small-fruit crops contribute to the local agricultural economy.

Macadamia nuts are native to South East Queensland. They are known as Bauple Nuts after Mt Bauple in Tiaro Shire where they occur naturally. These nuts were taken to Hawaii, successfully grown in plantations and marketed to the world as macadamias. Australia now produces the most macadamia nuts, overtaking Hawaii. In the Cooloola region, macadamia production (worth \$8 million in 1998) is estimated to increase to a figure in excess of \$20 million over the next ten (10) years. Sixty-five (65%) percent of production is currently exported. Macadamias are sold to the confectionery and icecream industry and retailed as a popular choice of nut processed in a variety of sweet and savoury forms.

In 1998 Major Horticultural Crops in the Cooloola District were worth:⁸

Green Beans	\$12m
Pineapples	\$10m
Macadamias	\$ 6m
Pawpaws	\$ 2m
Zucchini and Squash	\$ 2m
Cucumbers	\$ 2m

⁸ Cooloola Regional Development Bureau Inc. 'Cooloola Shire Profile - draft'. July 1994.



Gympie Fruitgrowers Co-Operative, Tozer Street c.1920's.

Early Education in Gympie

Many small private schools existed before state schools were established on the Gympie Goldfield. The owners of these schools were mostly educated people who not only taught the basic subjects, but also cultural subjects such as dancing, painting and deportment. Mary Helen Touchburn, believed to be the first school teacher to work on the Gympie Goldfields, met and married a gold assayer, Mark Curtis, shortly after arriving in Gympie. A commemorative plaque to early Gympie teachers has been erected at the Gympie Mining Museum.

One Mile School was one of the two Government schools established in Gympie in 1869. Enrolment on the first day was 39 pupils. Within three months 160 were listed and attendance reached 360 the following year. Although it was not technically a co-educational school, boys and girls were taught together. When a new building was erected in 1874, the girls and infants were placed together, while the boys were in a separate building. By 1884 wings were added to both buildings to accommodate the increased attendance.

Central School also opened in 1869 and was a co-educational school. As attendance rapidly increased, a separate girls and infants' school was built and later a girls' school was erected.

Monkland State School opened in 1884 with 96 pupils.

Enrolment figures in the 1890's show how prosperous Gympie was at the time. Monkland had 700 students and One Mile had 1200, however by 1927 enrolments were Monkland 87, One Mile 292 and Central 574. (Figures taken from Centenary of Education in Queensland)

The State High School opened in Gympie in 1912. It was housed in the Central Boys' School which quickly outgrew the space required. The High School building on Cootharaba Hill was opened on September 3, 1917. This building later burnt down on May 18, 1955.

The earliest known private church school was opened by then Catholic Sisters of St Joseph at Monkland. In 1879 the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Gympie and opened a school on the site of the present St Patrick's Primary School on Calton Hill with an attendance of 173 girls and 101 boys . By 1897 enrolments has soared and the need for a new school was imperative. In February 1904 the Christian Brothers opened a school in the old wooden church building and took over the education of boys.

Today the two schools have combined to form St Patrick's College, providing primary and secondary education.



The original Gympie State High School building which opened 1917. This burnt down in 1955.

Cooloola Shire

...a golden past

PART IV

Cooloola Shire Library Service

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This book has been produced by the Local History Section of the Cooloola Shire Library Service. Those involved include Elaine Brown, Amelia Connolly, Ann Egan, Cathy Hunt, Janet Lee and Moira Maclachlan. Thanks must go to Friends of the Library volunteer researchers, in particular Merlyn Burkhardt and Rose Sami. Production of this book would not have been possible without the support of the Cooloola Shire Council's Heritage Committee.

All photographs, unless otherwise acknowledged, are housed in the Local History Section at Gympie Library. Many of these photographs have been donated, originally coming from private collections, The Gympie Times and the Gympie and District Historical Society.

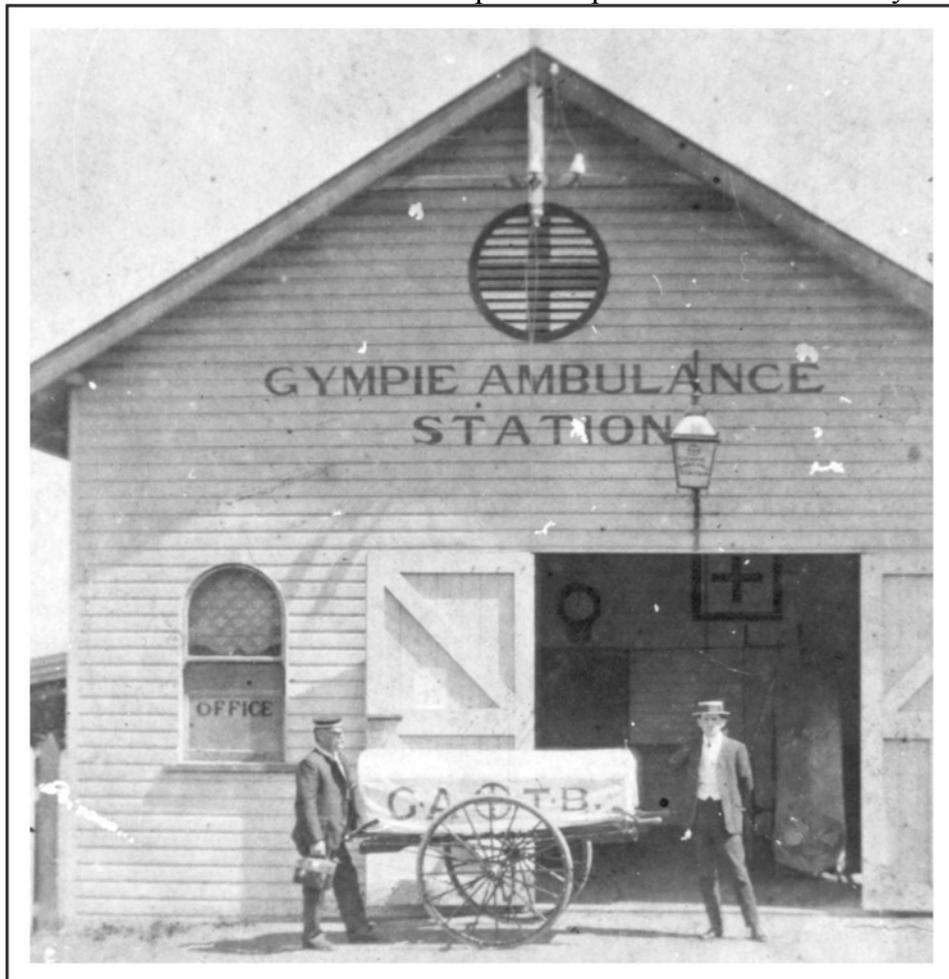
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Floods and other disasters ^{*} ⁹

- 11 March 1870.** The first recorded Gympie flood, reached a height of 21.61 metres.
- 17 August 1877.** A fire and two dramatic explosions destroyed the premises of storekeepers William Scott and James Woodrow, chemist B.B. Smith and gunsmith Robinson in lower Mary Street. Six people were injured by flying debris and 16-year-old John Stuckey later died of his wounds. .
- 14 August 1881.** A fire which started in Ferguson's seed store swept through twelve premises in upper Mary Street from Pattersons (Hanlons) to the Bank of New South Wales (Cooloola Shire Chambers).
- 3 January 1891.** All the buildings on the opposite side of upper Mary Street from the Gympie Times to the Mining Exchange Hotel (now the RSL Club) were destroyed by a fire which started in the shop of the Ipswich Woollen Factory.



Gympie Ambulance Station 1904. (photograph courtesy John Oxley Library)

^{*} Only those floods with peaks above 20 metres have been quoted here.

⁹ Woolgar, Walter, Historical Sketch of Gympie 1867 - 1927, (The Gympie Times, 1927).
Gympie Greatest Floods, 1867 - 1999, (The Gympie Times, 1999).

- 4 February 1893.** Gympie floods with a peak of 25.45 metres.
- 17 February 1893..** Gympie floods with a peak of 21.08 metres.
- 11 February 1898.** Gympie floods with a peak of 22.00 metres.
- 8 March 1898.** Gympie floods with a peak of 21.49 metres.
- 1902.** Farmers experienced the worst drought on record. In a district where the average annual rainfall is 45 inches, total rainfall in 1902 was only 18.99 inches. The year began with searing summer temperatures of over 100 degrees fahrenheit and the drought worsened into winter with barren paddocks and dry water holes. Food prices rose in Gympie and everyone prayed for rain. Sheep and cattle were moved from the area and agisted on the coast. The drought was a double blow to farmers, who were suffering stock losses from the introduction of ticks and redwater fever.
- 9 June 1925.** In what became known as the Traveston Rail Disaster, the engine of a north-bound train left the rails, dragging four carriages with it over a bridge. Nine people died and twenty-six were injured. People from Gympie offered assistance and many provided their cars and trucks for use.
- 11 May 1929.** The section of Mary Street between the Memorial Gates and Tobin's Cafe (opposite Toyworld) was destroyed in the worst fire in Mary Street since water was laid on to the town. Five shops and the Tivoli Theatre were burnt to the ground, and a number of other buildings were damaged.
- 2 September 1932.** A tornado hit Gympie and in fifteen minutes left behind a trail of destruction. Moving in from the north-west, it came through Two Mile and hit Reef Street, where the Freemasons and Commercial Hotels were extensively damaged. As it moved along, it unroofed the Royal Hotel and uprooted eight trees in Memorial Park. Excelsior Road and Stanley Street suffered heavy damage and at Monkland the Catholic Church was destroyed and the Monkland State School damaged.



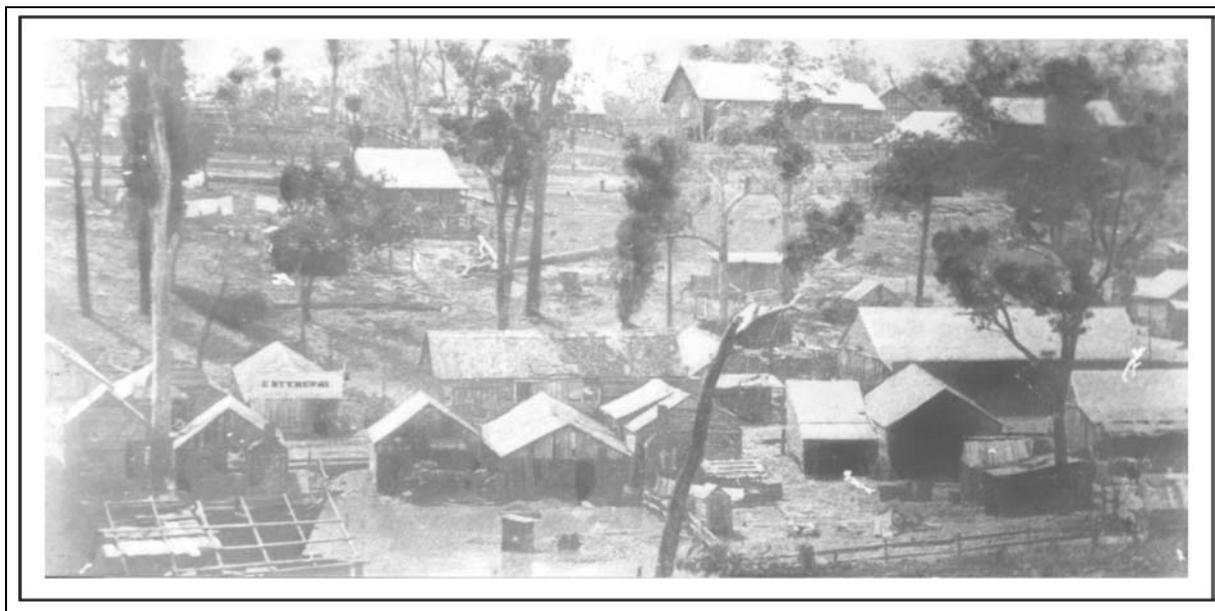
Monkland school after the 1932 tornado.



*The interior of Monkland School after the 1932 tornado.
(Photograph courtesy the John Oxley Library.)*

- 6 November 1939.** Cullinanes store was burnt down and the firm experienced great losses with damage estimated at £ 60,000.
- 2 June 1946.** Fire destroyed the Mining Exchange Hotel in Upper Mary Street. An explosion at 11.20 pm on Sunday night disturbed the 20 people asleep in the building.
- 18 October 1947.** The Townsville mail train crashed, with the incident being named the Tamaree Rail Disaster
- 28 March 1955.** Gympie floods with a peak of 21.44 metres.

- 18 May 1955.** Fire destroyed the Gympie State High School. Due to a strong wind, the main school buildings were enveloped in 15 minutes. The cause was believed to be chemicals exploding.
- 27 March 1969.** Fire damaged the RSL Memorial Hall in Reef Street. The building was subsequently sold to Paddy's Markets and the RSL re-built in Mary Street on the site of the Mining Exchange Hotel.
- 21 January 1969.** The Northumberland Hotel was destroyed in a spectacular fire.
- 27 July 1969.** The Railway Institute Hall (formerly St Peter's Church of England) which had been a landmark in Gympie for a century, was destroyed by fire.
- January 1974.** The 1000 ton Greek freighter Cherry Venture ran aground just south of Double Island Point after losing a battle against mountainous seas. In zero visibility, nineteen seamen were rescued by RAAF helicopters and airlifted to Tin Can Bay. Later attempts to re-float the stricken vessel failed, and its hulk remains a landmark on the beach.
- 28 January 1974.** Gympie floods reach a peak of 20.73 metres.
- 18 February 1978.** Paddy's Markets (formerly the RSL Memorial Hall) in Reef Street burnt down.



Believed to be looking over Mary Street during the 1870 flood. The old St Peter's church can be seen on the top of the hill centre right.

- 6 August 1989.** Arson was suspected in the fire which destroyed Tattersalls Hotel in Mary Street and spread to Ward and Francis Real Estate.
- 22 February 1992.** Gympie floods reach a peak of 21.4 metres.
- 10 February 1999.** Gympie floods reach a peak of 21.95 metres.

Some of Gympie's historic buildings

The Scottish Mine Retort House

This is the only surviving mining building on the goldfield and is listed by the National Trust. It was part of the Scottish Gympie Gold Mines Ltd. and was built in 1897. It was in this building that the gold was heated, smelted and poured into moulds. (Brisbane Road, opposite Lake Alford)

The Stock Exchange Building

This building was one of the few exchanges found outside the capital city. It was built in 1888 as the Australian Joint Stock Bank and was purchased by the Stock Exchange in 1893. It closed in 1923 and now houses the solicitor's firm of Neilson, Stanton and Parkinson. (Mary Street, next to Shire Chamber)

The Lands Office

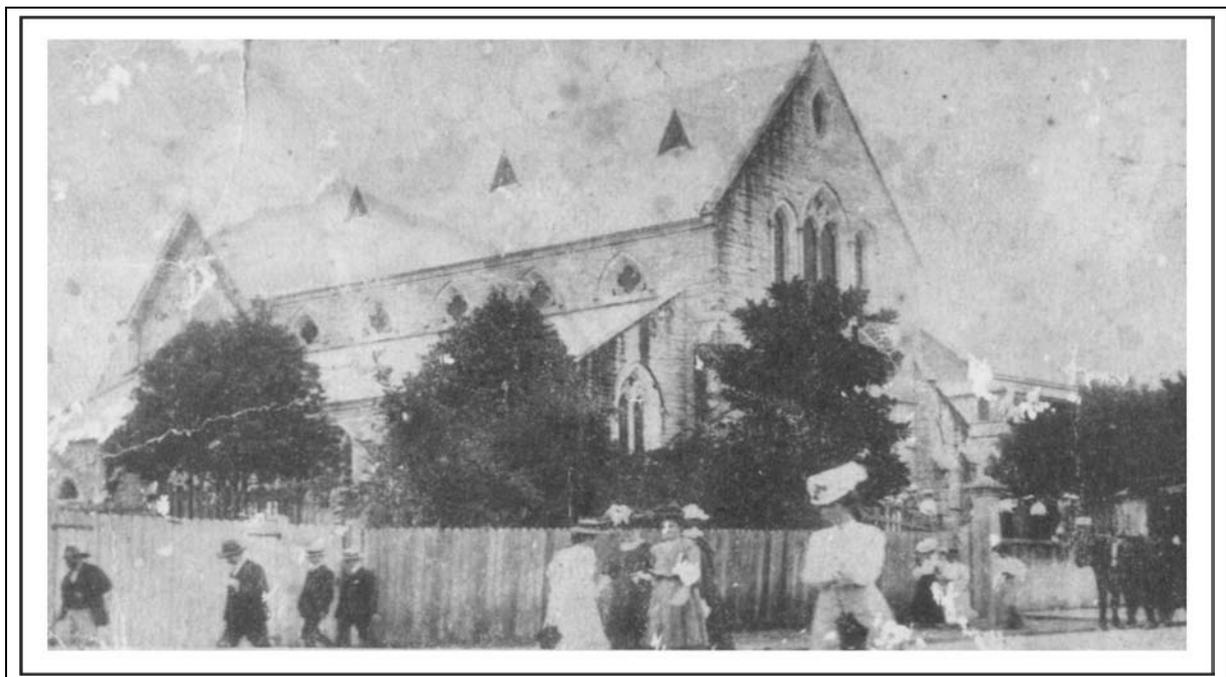
This building was built in 1873 and was the first important public building on the goldfield. It served as the Court House until 1901. Since then the building has been used as the Lands Office as well as other state government departments. (Channon Street, next to Police Station)

The Town Hall

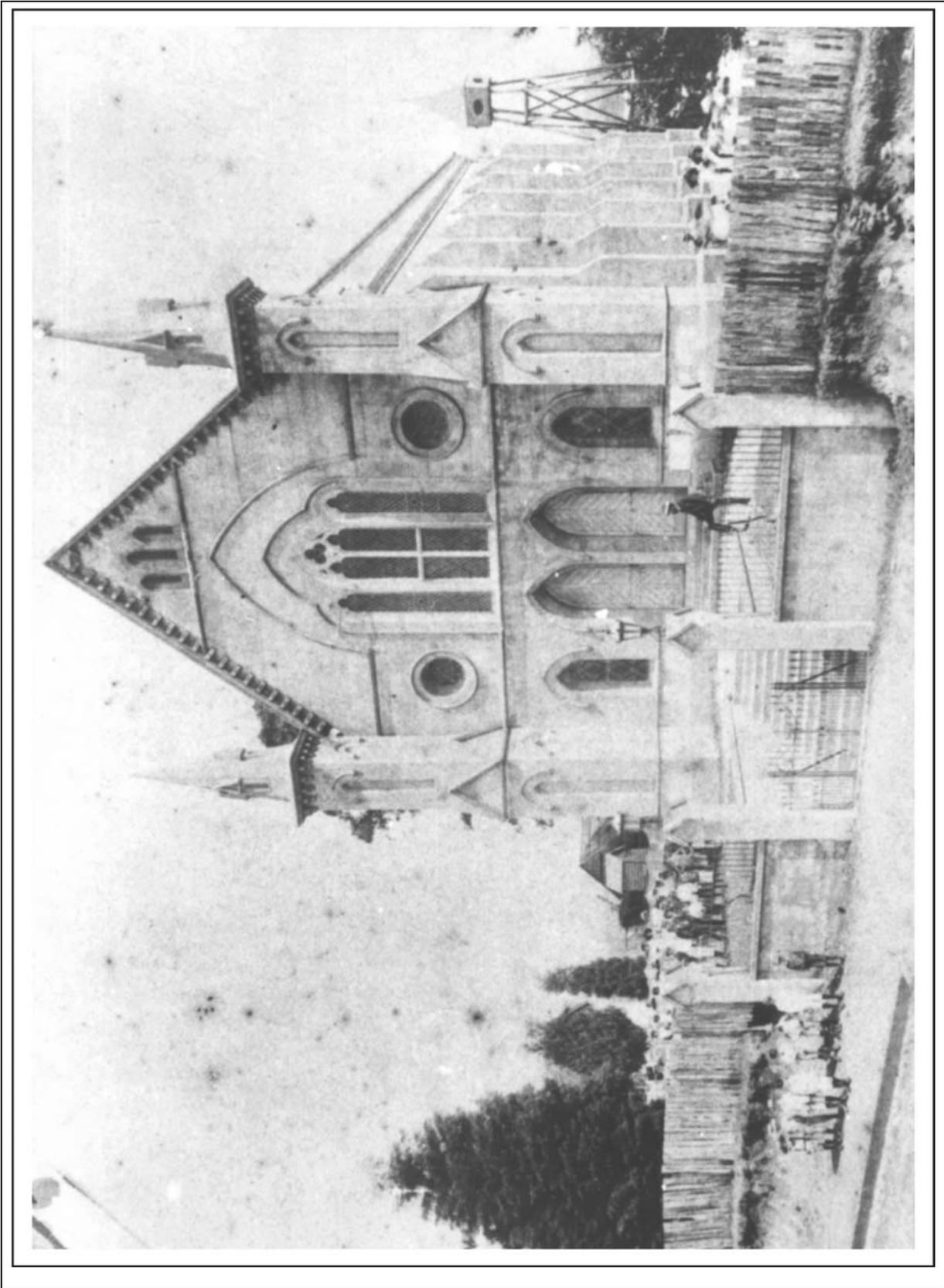
The Town Hall was built in 1890, with an annexe added in 1937-38. It served as the Gympie Shire Chambers for many years. (Fiveways, corner of Mellor Street, Lawrence Street, Mary Street, Calton Hill and Caledonian Hill)

St Patrick's Church

This church is of Gothic design and was built in 1883-85. Locally quarried sandstone was used. An extension to the sanctuary was built in 1924 -25. The whole building cost £20,000. The building is listed by the National Trust. (Church Street)



An early photograph of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church.



The Surface Hill Uniting(Methodist) Church. This photograph was taken for the Christmas wishes cards in December 1890. Note the wooden fence.

Surface Hill Uniting Church

The foundation stone of this church was laid on January 30, 1890. It was originally the Methodist Church. The retaining wall at the front of the church was built from local sandstone during 1935 - 1936. The church is listed by the National Trust. (Channon Street)

Cooloola Shire Chambers

This was built as the Bank of New South Wales in 1890 and was purchased by the Widgee Shire Council in 1942. It now houses the Cooloola Shire Council. (Mary Street)

The School of Arts

Designed by local architect Hugo Durietz, this building was opened on February 28, 1905 at a cost of £1,600. It housed the school of arts and library for nearly seventy years. The interior was altered in 1977-78 to accommodate the Gympie Library, now known as the Cooloola Shire Library Service. The Library is now housed in a different location and in 1998 the building became home to the Cooloola Shire Art Gallery. (Nash Street)

The Court House

The Court House was erected in 1901-1902. It cost £6,000 to construct and for many years there was no clock in the tower. This was added in 1945. The Court House is listed by the National Trust. (Channon Street)



Upper Mary Street, c.1910.

Name origins of some of Gympie's streets

Ashford Road

Named after G.J.Ashford, an early pioneer of the goldfield, who owned almost all the land between Crescent Road and Rifle Range Road and used to farm this area.

Baker Street, Red Hill

Named after Edward Baker who came to Gympie with the first gold rush. He was appointed road overseer in 1880 and was responsible for the formation of most of the roads in the city.

Bent Street

This street links Station Road to Crescent Road, and has this name because of the two bends in the street.

Bligh Street (Calton Hill)

Named after J. O'Connell Bligh, Warden and Police Magistrate in Gympie from 1870 until his death in December 1880.

Caledonian Hill

Named after the Caledonian Prospector's Claim Mine, second reef claim taken up in the field in November 1867.

Channon Street

Named after John and Thomas Channon, who took up the Lucknow Reef Prospecting Claim on February 26, 1868. The area being taken up extended across Channon Street from Monkland to Louisa Street.

Excelsior Road

Named after a gold mine and reef in that locality.

Garrick Street

Named after Gilbert Garrick, Mayor of Gympie in 1904-1905. Gympie was proclaimed a city during his term of office.

Horseshoe Bend

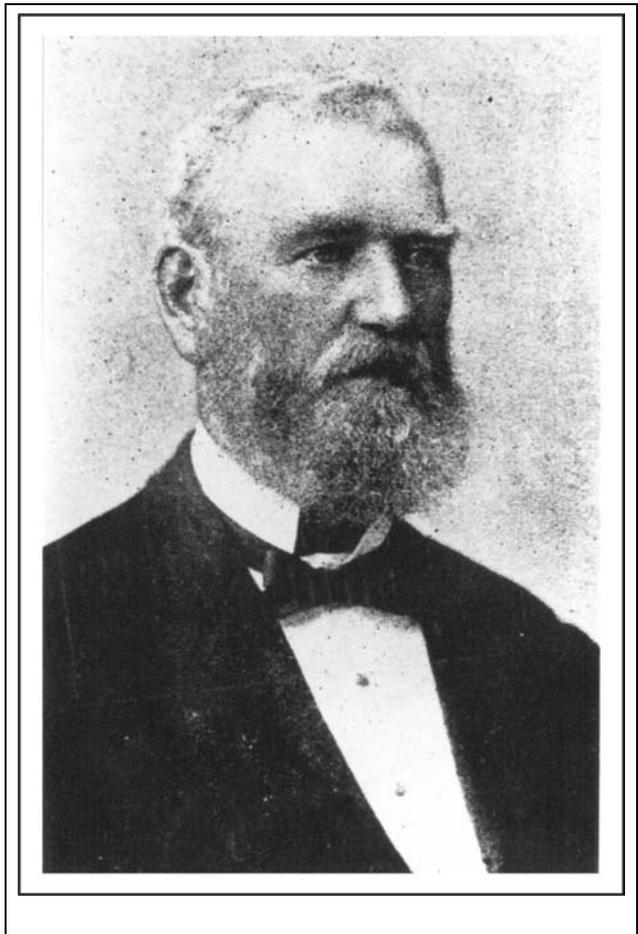
This road was named because it is formed like a horseshoe.

Lady Mary Terrace

This thoroughfare is named after the Lady Mary Reef, which was in turn named for Lady Mary Fitzroy, the Governor's wife.

Lawrence Street

Named after Franklin Lawrence, one of the founders of the Lady Mary Reef.



Matthew Mellor, Gympie's first Mayor.

Mellor Street

One of the main thoroughfares of Gympie, named after Matthew Mellor, who was the first Mayor of Gympie.

Old Maryborough Road

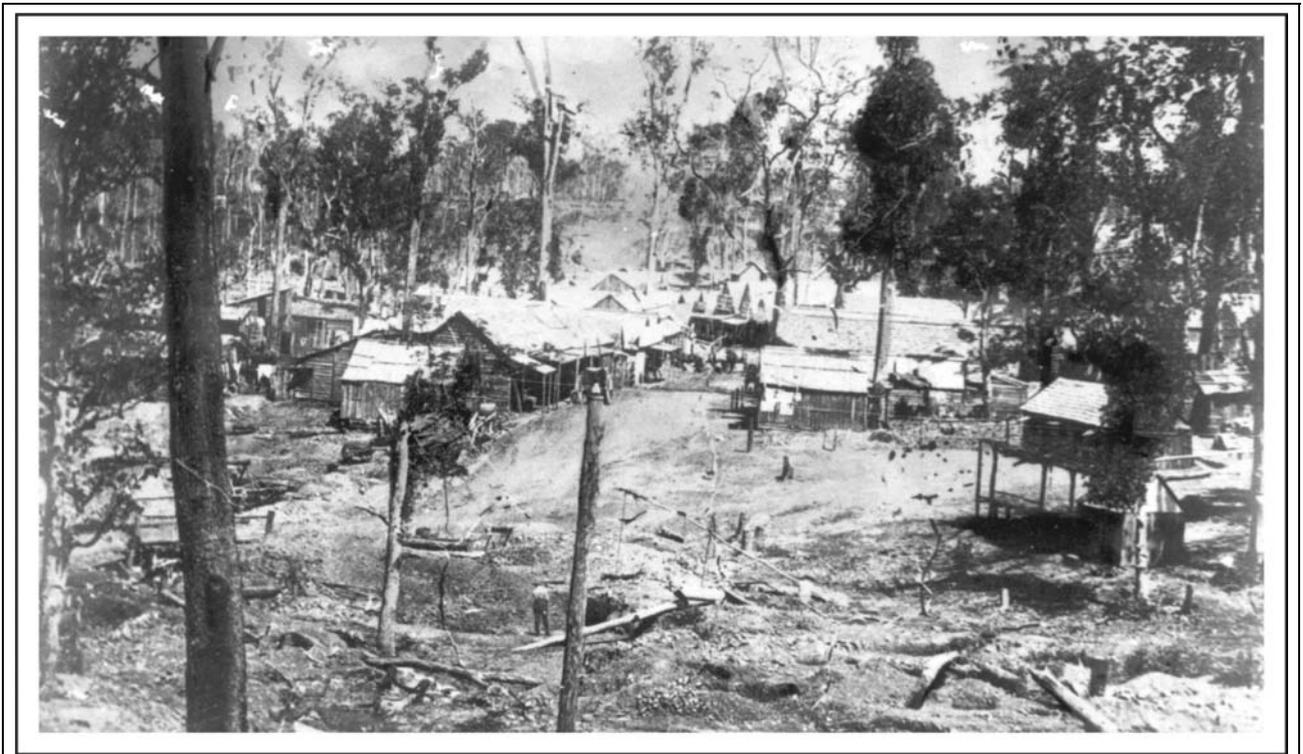
This was the original road to Maryborough and was a continuation of Mary Street and Duke Street, past the present Gympie cemetery. It was the route taken by the original miners coming from the north.

Rifle Range Road

Named after the Gympie rifle range which at that time occupied the ground between Rifle Range Road and Bath Terrace.

Tozer Street and Tozer Park Road.

Both a commemorate Sir Horace Tozer, who was one of the first solicitors practising in Gympie.



The Fiveways Gympie in 1870.

The population of the Cooloola Region

POPULATION OF GYMPIE CENSUS FIGURES 1881-1991

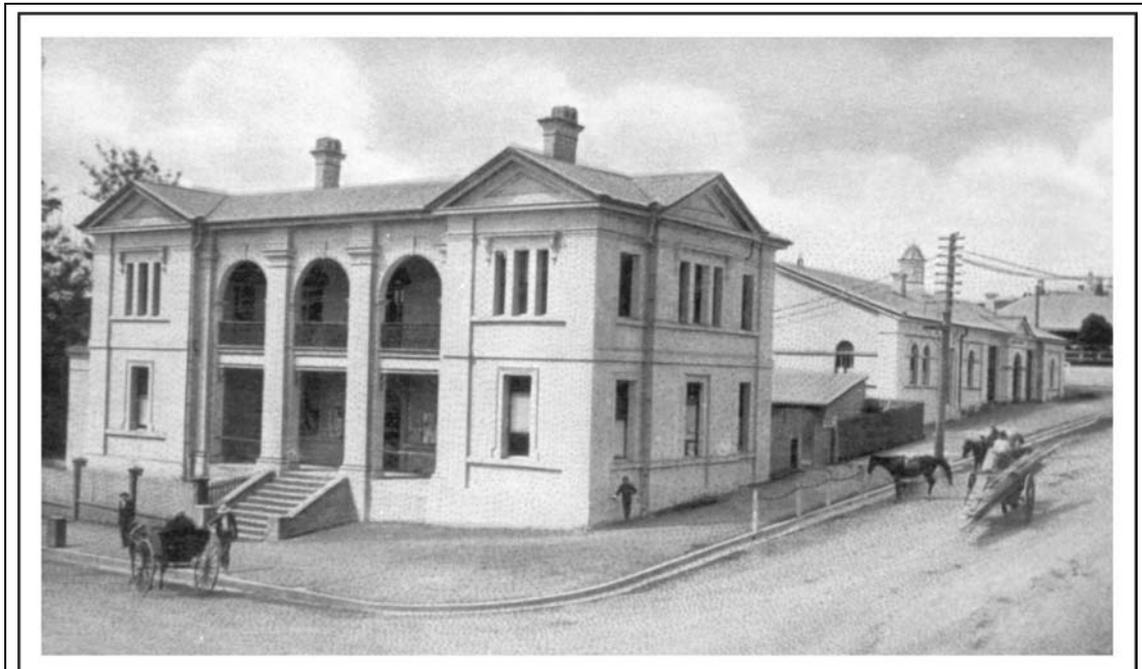
1881	4 564
1891	8 449
1901	11 959
1911	11 718
1921	6 539
1933	7 749
1947	8 413
1954	9 964
1961	11 094
1966	11 279
1971	11 096
1976	11 280
1981	11 420
1986	11 430
1991	10 784

POPULATION OF WIDGEE CENSUS FIGURES 1921-1991

1921	5 556
1933	8 686
1947	7 834
1954	8 139
1961	7 948
1966	7 490
1971	6 959
1976	8 240
1981	10 540
1986	12 970
1991	17 059

1996 Cooloola Shire 31 862

NOTE: Aborigines were not counted until the 1966 Census



Gympie Post Office c.1905

Chronological List of Gympie Mayors

YEAR(S)	NAME
1880/81	Matthew Mellor
1882	William Ferguson (S.M.)
1883	William Smyth
1884/85	William Ferguson (S.M)
1886/89	Lieut.-Col. William Ferguson
1890	Edward Bytheway
1891	John L Mathews
1892	Abraham Hutchinson
1893	John L Mathews
1894	William Suthers
1895	Edward Bytheway
1896	William Suthers
1897	Matthew Mellor
1898	Daniel Mulcahy
1899 to Oct 99	George Ryland
1899/1901	Daniel Mulcahy
1902	Edgar Benjamin Davidson
1902	Daniel C Dowling
1903	David Elder Reid
1904/05	Gilbert Garrick
1905/06	George F Lister
1907	Walter G Ambrose
1908	George A Buist
1909/10	William E Burbidge
1911	Richard H Cox
1912	Walter G Ambrose
1913	Alfred George Ramsey
1914/15	Peter Green
1916	Samuel D Weller
1917	George H Mackay
1918	R Stitt
1919	W H Sedgman
1920	Luke J Thomas **Last annual election *
1921/24	Luke J Thomas
1924/27	George Thomas
1927/30	Luke J Thomas
1930 to March 1931	Alexander Glasgow
1931 to April 1937	Dr Luther Morris
1937 to August 1941	Luke J Thomas
1941/1970	Ronald N Witham
1970/76	James E Kidd
1976/1988	Minas J Venardos
1988/1993	Joan E Dodt * amalgamation election held in 1993

Chronological list of the Widgee Shire Council Chairmen

YEARS(S)	NAME
1880/83	M Mellor
1884/85	J Broadbent
1885/86	W Ferguson
1886/89	W T Chippindall
1889/90	W Ferguson
1890/91	W T Chippindall
1891	J Flood
1892/93	W T Chippindall
1898/99	J Fraser
1899	W T Chippindall
1900/02	J Fullerton
1902/03	W C Anderson
1903/04	J Fraser
1904/07	W C Anderson
1907/08	G Preston
1908/11	J Fraser
1911/12	Z D S Skyring
1912/13	W M Tweed
1913/14	T T Powell
1914/15	T H Steele
1915/16	T E Betts
1916/17	Z D S Skyring
1917/18	J E Farrell
1918/20	T H Steele
1920/21	R B Parkyn
1921/24	J T Tatnell
1924/69	W H Kidd
1969/73	W N Buchanan
1973/76	M V MacDonnell
1976/79	K De Vere
1979/1993	A McClintock * Amalgamation election held

Chronological list of the Cooloola Shire Mayors

YEARS(S)	NAME
1993/1997	A McClintock
1997 -2000	Minas J Venardos
2000 -	Minas J Venardos

Cooloola Shire Council

1997 - 2000

Mayor:	Minas J Venardos
Division 1:	Del Cole, Col R Chapman
Division 2:	Ron Lawrence, Noel R Ellis, Annette K Reilly, Larry J Friske
Division 3:	Donna Neilson, Ian Petersen, David A Anderson.
Division 4:	Bill J McIntyre, Robert O'Farrell, Julie A Walker

2000 -

Mayor:	Minas J Venardos
Division 1:	Del Cole, Col R Chapman
Division 2:	Noel R Ellis, Annette K Reilly, Larry J Friske
Division 3:	Donna Neilson, Ian Petersen, Adrian McClintock.
Division 4:	Bill J McIntyre, Wayne Sachs, Julie A Walker
Divison 5:	Peter Cantrell

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