4. Manning River

In the south a dune barrier encloses the lakes system, chiefly the Myall Lakes, but including some alluvial land that is used for dairying. To the north is the valley of the Manning River, drainage to which occupies the greater part of the region. Behind a dune barrier are extensive lower river alluvials surrounded by grazing country. The upper river leads to the rugged country where timber getting and cattle are dominant, leading to the Barrington Tops National Park. The Gloucester River drains south from the uplands and was the scene of the first operations of the Australian Agricultural Company.
This region is bounded on the south by the inlet of Port Stephens that has never had the shipping importance its size would suggest. To the north is the Myall Lakes subregion with a sandy coast mostly, of limited dairying, grazing and timber development, but which has discovered two important seaside resorts from mere fishing settlements at Forster and Tuncurry in the post-1945 era. To the west the Gloucester River drains a long broad valley running from north to south. The bar-bound Manning River drainage, with alluvia to the east, forms a major part of the region. Rising to steep country and the Barrington Tops National Park, the land is used for cattle grazing and timber-getting. To the north lie the Comboyne and Bulga plateaux. Reached by steep roads, both densely populated by dairy farmers in the early nineteenth century, they are now given over to beef cattle grazing where once luxurious rainforest stood on basalt flows. Both were served by the growth of the town of Wingham.

THE AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY

The Australian Agricultural Company was formed in London in 1826 to raise funds to exploit the grazing possibilities of New South Wales, becoming apparent from wool shipments and the reports of successful immigrants. A nominal one million pounds capital was raised, which entitled the Company to one million acres of land in New South Wales. The directors sat in London, but there was a colonial board in Sydney. The Company imported labour, tools, and sheep and cattle, especially fine merino sheep whose progeny greatly benefited the colony's stock, and its sales at Maitland were much frequented. Instructions from England led the colonial board to look for land near the sea-coast, and preliminary surveys seemed to have found good grazing on the northern side of Port Stephens, extending to the Manning river. Their large grant was given to them there, and an adjacent strip was set aside for the Clergy and Schools Corporation. The first superintendent, Robert Dawson, began to organise the land.

At the head of Port Stephens he discovered the site of Carrington, where ships might lie close inshore. This was at first meant to be the Company headquarters, and a town was laid out in 1827. Many buildings were erected, including a slaughterhouse and tan-yard. Bricks were made on the site, and slipways for building and repairing boats. A lime-kiln was erected. Tahlee House provided a grand home for the manager. In 1829 it was a straggling village of convict barracks and huts, and houses for the officers of the company, including the doctor. About 1830, with a new superintendent, Dumaresq, it was abandoned for Stroud as company headquarters. However most of the Company's land was heavily wooded, and it was already apparent that the extensive open grazing was a chimera. 1850 saw a revival of Carrington with a proposal to settle the company's estate with small farmers, for whom it would be a port, but the gold rushes put an end to those plans. In the 1880s Tahlee House was bought by F.H.D. White from Sydney, accessible to his yacht as a country estate. Most recently it has become the core building of a religious institution. Only a church, now used as a youth hostel, is otherwise left standing, and Carrington is chiefly to be seen as an archaeological site of considerable complexity.

Carrington stands near the mouth of the Karuah river which was navigable to small ships, and these reached Booral, a station of the Company's activities. A wharf was built in 1834 that still stands, to send goods inland to Stroud. Wheat and tobacco were grown, and cattle grazed, but in the 1850s there were some tenant farmers here. Booral House was constructed as a main residence, and survives. The wharf was closed in the 1870s, and commodities then went overland to the Hunter. There are now only a handful of timber huts, Booral House, and the stone and timber wharf surviving.

Stroud was located further north in the best land that Dawson found, and was used as headquarters by superintendents Parry, Dumaresq and King. It was well-watered grassland with rich soil, and carried the majority of the Company's sheep. Stroud House, and a church were built about 1832. Large brick silos for grain were sunk in the ground on an adjacent hilltop. It became a thriving agricultural and industrial village, with many homes of wood, the earthen remains of a sluice to serve the flour mill can be found. Its heyday was in the 1830s and 1840s, when it sent stores to distant sheep stations and received the
Company's sheep for shearing - the sheepwash can still be seen in the river not far off. From 1848 it was to be the headquarters for subdividing the estate, and town lots were sold off in the 1850s, when it received a slight boost from some travelling to the New England diggings using the company's trail by way of Nowendoc.

By this time the Company had long ago transferred its pastoral activities to the estates it exchanged for these in 1832 on Liverpool Plains. Only a remnant of the best land remained in the region, mainly on the Gloucester river running north to the Manning. By 1895 only 23,000 acres of the whole 400,000 acres had been sold, but most of the useful land went in the Great Gloucester Estates sale in 1903. By this time the free selectors had taken up more cheaply the best agricultural and dairying land elsewhere in the colony. Stroud meanwhile stagnated in a backwater, bypassed by the railway, surviving as a small village to this day, servicing surrounding farms, though its former grandeur can be seen in Stroud House, the schoolhouse, and the wheat silos.

The company had one outlying sheep station at Nowendoc, on its track to New England, on which mules were used. When the Company withdrew, it became a private run and a small village centre for the upper Manning. It enjoyed a period of activity with a gold rush from 1872 to 1890, with reef mining. Then it settled back to a service centre with five stores, two blacksmiths, a school, post office and police station in 1901.

THE MANNING VALLEY
The existence of the valley was reported by John Oxley in 1818 on his overland journey southwards from Port Macquarie. The Australian Agricultural Company found its southern banks unsuitable for sheep, and kept its operations in the Gloucester valley. The river mouth was explored in 1827 and found impassable at first, but successive attempts to cross the bar were successful and entrants by sea found extensive grassy plains. Settlers began to arrive in 1827, though the area was not officially open for occupation. The Limits of Location were extended to the Manning soon after. Now they included the Australian Agricultural Company's grant. Then in 1830 the new county of Macquarie opened up the land as far as the Hastings with the scaling down of the penal station at Port Macquarie.

The first settlers were eccentric — John Guilding and Arthur Onslow came to grow tropical crops, including sugar, but conventional pastoralists soon followed. Cattle stations succeeded on the level country and pushed inland to the hills. Cedar getters also arrived, when the Hunter cut out, and provided shipping services useful to the pastoralists. Cedar was still being extracted in the 1870s, but other timbers were by then important. The pastoral inflow continued into the 1840s, with many absentee landowners providing only huts for the men. There were also resident landowners who built substantial homesteads, and grew wheat, tobacco, maize and vegetables. On the absentee runs a little wheat might be grown for the consumption of the men. By the 1850s the runs on the lower river had some tenants, while those in the hills could offer no fertile land or shipping, and in any case were still licence-holders or leaseholders rather than owners. Cattle rather than sheep were run due to high rainfall, a want of shepherds, the presence of dingoes and the heavier vegetation. There was a distinct pastoral phase on the Manning from 1827 to the mid-1850s.

Small farmers were however already arriving as tenants, enough to make the subdivision of alluvial land profitable, and free selection brought in more up river. The loss of convict servants on the large holdings made this more attractive, while the Hunter was overcrowded by small farmers and their sons to whom 30-40 acre farms on the Manning were most acceptable, even on tenancy, to which they had become used. Some government land also became available from 1847, when the lower river became part of the Settled Districts with its one-year leaseholds, making freehold small farms available. A dense landscape of small wooden huts sprang up, surrounded by patches of maize, wheat and tobacco. Most of the lower river was cultivated in this way by 1860, but selection saw this way of life extend upstream. Towns grew up to serve the farmers, Cundletown in 1855 on the lower river, Taree, founded by Fletts as a private town in 1854 in the centre, and Wingham and Tinonee upstream. All those were accessible to shipping.
Gloucester was founded in 1855 to serve the farms sold or let by the Company, it had a company store and in 1860 its first church was built. Nowendoc and Giro villages served the upland country still given over to extensive cattle grazing. All the towns in 1861 had fewer than 150 people, communicating between each other and the outside world by boats on the river. The Manning Valley was in the 1860s clearly divided between a small farm area with few stock on small acreages, and the big cattle runs in the hills to the west.

The 1860s saw the collapse of wheat as a crop due to rust, at the same time as the free selectors invaded the cattle stations and picked out those areas suitable for small farms. Maize became the staple crop on a market soon glutted, though the demand in Sydney and Melbourne for horse feed and brewing was very great. The difficult bar made for high freight charges, and the price of maize was almost too low to bear them: the settlers relied on their own vegetables and maize and were reduced to semi-subsistence.

Now the Manning River News published at Tinonee suggested sugar cane. Following the earlier attempts, the first was grown in 1866, and a number of farmers took it up. Sugar mills were established at Tinonee, Woodside, Kimbriki and Wyoming, and there were some small sales to Sydney. By 1871 there were 500 acres of cane, much of it crushed in horse-powered mills and boiled in open pans to make a crude 'concrete' that had only a local sale. Nevertheless it was more profitable than maize, and indicates the spirit of enterprise moving among the farmers, who showed a proclivity to experiment and invest. Other attempts with arrowroot, tobacco and vines also failed, and the community resumed its dependence on maize. This was a stagnant period, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s, when little hope lay ahead. Taree had reached a population of merely 339 in 1871, but was emerging as the chief centre with wharf, stores, post office, hotels and a newspaper. Other ports were Harrington, where a breakwater was built later, Croki, Wingham and Tinonee. Wingham was planned by government. There was a large reserve for future development behind the wharf on which rainforest was fortuitously preserved. It survives as Wingham Brush, a most important remnant of lowland rain forest though only 8 ha in extent. It did not develop as the chief town of the Manning as the government hoped, and its fate was sealed by the siting of the railway and Pacific Highway through Taree. Partly this was because with increased clearing the river silted up above Taree, and larger vessels could not reach Wingham.

By the mid-1880s selectors had taken up all the fringes of good land, and the cattlemen had bought the remaining land in the hills hoping to discourage selectors. Sawmilling was also spreading inland, shifting location periodically and with them the company villages that supplied them with labour.

Dairying rescued this stagnant agricultural economy. The revolution in dairying technology that had begun at Kiama was slow to reach the Manning, but a co-operative butter factory opened on Mitchells Island in 1893, receiving cream by boat, and at Wingham in 1896. Cream was also sent to Newcastle, but the main central factories emerged at Taree and Wingham, respectively serving the lower and upper areas. Many small villages with creameries grew up - Coopernook, Tuncurry (which also engaged in the timber trade), Nabiac, Harrington, Purfleet and Croki which also engaged in fishing. The hand separator made these creameries unnecessary, but the settlements, some of long standing, survived as service centres.

The small farms persisted, some as small as 20 acres using paspalum and growing maize for winter fodder. Economies of scale made for some amalgamations, but even in 1941 the Taree factory had 855 suppliers and Wingham 143, the latter figure down from 494 in 1901, indicating a retreat from the uplands, while the farmers on the Gloucester estate first supplied a factory at Gloucester, this was closed in favour of Wingham.

The general decline of dairying in recent years has led to rural depopulation and the conversion of land to beef cattle. Those small centres on the coast, like Tuncurry and Crowdy Head, have been revived as resorts.
The Manning Valley has gone through distinct phases of growth which are now reflected in abandoned dairy farm sites both in the uplands and on the flood plains. Sugar was a slight episode in this story, and the height of rural development was achieved with the dairying industry, now largely defunct, and with it a whole society of small farmers and thriving small towns.

SHIPWRECKS
The area relied for most of its transport on coastal shipping, and consequently there are many wrecks, the sea being uncertain in its weather and the Manning River offering a difficult entrance. The majority of wrecks found to date are in the vicinity of Port Stephens. Many other vessels have also been lost at the Manning River and Cape Hawke. These may be found by diving, remote sensing surveys or documentary research.

CONCLUSION
This region has experienced two formative influences. The first was the Australian Agricultural Company, with lands running from Port Stephens to the Manning River. The early disappointments and subsequent policies of the Company have had a great effect on the farming development of that area to the south. Meanwhile the private development in the valley proper has seen a sequence of occupancies, from timber getting to pastoralism and farming which have produced a valley community in which the upper and more rugged areas are still less extensively used. Indeed, dairying, once the mainstay of the valley, has retreated downstream, and there is much conversion to beef cattle. Growth has produced the unusual pattern of two close-by towns, Wingham and Taree.
5. North Coast

Bounded on the west by high scarps leading up to New England with few passes, this region is not strictly a coastal plain, consisting rather of a series of river valleys separated by ranges, or in the case of the Clarence-Richmond divide, by an extensive stretch of sterile and undeveloped land. Coasts typically alternate headlands and coastal barriers, with bar-bound river mouths dangerous to large vessels. Port development at Goffs Harbour and Byron attempted to remedy this situation.

River valleys, in order from the south are: Hastings, Maclean, Nambucca, Bellinger, Clarence, Richmond, Tweed. All except the Nambucca and Bellinger provide extensive alluvial flats, liable to flooding, but intensively developed for agriculture. On the north side of the Richmond River lies the Big Scrub plateau once intensively cleared of rainforest for grazing. Rainforest once covered the levee banks of the lower rivers, and is present in the steep valleys to the west. On the longer rivers are large areas of forest-grazing country early occupied by pastoralists.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

CITIES
Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Lismore

MUNICIPALITIES
Casino, Hastings

SHIREs
Ballina, Bellingen, Byron, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Kyogle, Maclean, Nambucca, Nymboida, Richmond River, Tweed, Ulmarra
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Sequence of occupation is a device that classifies regional history by identifying dominant regional commodity-based economies, their associated life and landscapes, and sees the history of the region as leading from one pattern of occupation into the next as new opportunities are seized upon. Each participant looks for some ecological niche in the complex landscape, each leaves remnants that influence later occupancies and contributes to the build-up of a regional landscape which is a palimpsest of the material products of a sequence of occupancies. Nowhere in New South Wales is this clearer than on the Northern coastal rivers.

The region comprises a number of river basins to the north of the Hunter and Manning Rivers and Port Stephens. The rivers Hastings, Macleay, Nambucca, Bellinger, Clarence, Richmond and Tweed rise in heavily dissected country forming the eastern margin of the New England Tableland and follow a generally eastern direction to the Pacific Ocean. The most northerly river, the Tweed, flows close to the Queensland border that came into existence in 1859. There is a close resemblance between river valley environments. The coast consists of rocky headland and interspersed barrier systems that provide low dune environments sterile for agricultural occupation. There are no good ports in this coast, though minor calling places, as at Byron Bay and Coffs Harbour, were developed in the past. The river mouths themselves provided the chief access from the sea even though they are barred: ships could penetrate the larger rivers to ports situated up to forty miles inland.

The lower courses of the rivers flow through extensive flood plains of alluvium, bounded by levee banks that were covered by rainforest or ‘brush’ vegetation. Much of the alluvium was ill-drained and where this was so, it was clear of trees. The flood plains are set in a landscape of undulating country with naturally poor soils, and which was covered by dense forest near the coast where high rainfalls up to 50 inches per annum are experienced on average. Inland, with lower rainfalls, the undulating country was in ‘forest’, an open tree cover with grass. Upriver, small discontinuous patches of alluvium are found in increasingly steep country that leads into blind valleys penetrating the New England scarp. A few passes give precipitous access to the tableland.

Each valley is bounded to the west by the scarp, and to the north and south by hilly interfluves that have been unattractive areas for settlement and are mostly still in dense timber vegetation. Only between the Clarence and the Richmond is the divide low, but here also there is agriculturally poor country that separates developed country around the rivers to north and south.

Basalt flows of tertiary age provide exceptions to the generally poor quality of upland soils. North of the Richmond River is the ‘Big Scrub’, a dissected low basalt plateau that was extremely attractive to early agriculturalists. Perched high on the tableland margins are other basalt areas, the Comboyne, Bulga and Dorrigo plateaus that were settled from the river valleys.

Though the river basins have a morphological similarity, the smaller valleys offered a less diverse environment. There were no large grassy areas in the Nambucca, Bellinger or Tweed river valleys.

The valleys were similar too in their dependence upon metropolitan Sydney, and in their need for commercial staples - there was no subsistence economy here. Brisbane, though closer for the northern settlers, offered a smaller market that was cut off by Queensland’s tariffs on timber and produce. The valleys have a climatic similarity, though frosts are more common in the south. This was an area in which settlers faced similar problems, and a solution found in one valley would be taken up and tried in the others. The influence of government - generally on the side of the small settler - was uniformly pervasive, and a similar sequence of occupancies can be distinguished.
Briefly, the common sequence is:

Aboriginal Occupancy
Exploration
Penal Settlement
Cedar cutters and shipbuilders
Pastoral Occupancy
Small Farmer Occupancy
  - experimental phase
  - maize-growing
  - sugar growing
  - dairying
  - Localised mining

Each of these modes of occupancy selected different land types within the valleys as its most suitable environment. Together the surviving occupancies make up a suite of present-day land-uses, along with some minor industries like banana and fruit and vegetable production.

THE ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION
Aborigines used every part of the diverse landscape. Early reports, such as those of John Oxley the explorer, make it plain that there was a high density of Aboriginal occupation of the northern rivers, especially close to the coast where a rich marine environment could be exploited. The brushes too were rich in small animals and fruits. On the inland grassy plains Aborigines lived a hunting and collecting life more closely similar to that of Aborigines in New England and to the west. It seems that trade linked the coastal and inland tribes, while contact was maintained with the population of New England. The Aboriginal landscape was rich in the mythology that attached to all natural features. Little of this survived the impact of settlement.

The Aborigines were soon living close to pastoral stations where they formed a casual labour force, drawing rations to buttress dwindling returns from traditional pursuits. Disease and armed conflict hastened the decline in their numbers, but there was still a substantial population in the late nineteenth century when government made positive moves to improve their lot. Tools, seed and rations were provided to help Aborigines to take up farming and fishing. At the end of the century there were small groups growing maize on islands in the rivers, fragile communities under the threat of disruption by strong drink supplied to them illegally.

EXPLORATION
These Aborigines first saw European men in the guise of small exploring parties and runaway convicts. Cook sailed by remotely, noting only the grosser forms of coastline, Shoal Bay, Trial Bay and the characteristic shape of Mount Warning.

John Oxley first came upon the northern rivers by land in 1818. He set out at the Macquarie River in the east and travelled to the coast at the mouth of the Hastings. He reported what he thought would be a good harbour and fertile soil. Two years later he made a second trip to re-connoitre the port and look for the Macleay River. The Tweed was found by a party going south from Brisbane, while convicts discovered the intervening rivers as they fled from Moreton Bay only to be intercepted at Port Macquarie. No immediate rush followed reports of fertile land and timber resources, but Oxley’s discovery prompted government to make the first settlement.

THE PENAL STATION
Oxley’s report on Port Macquarie came at a convenient time, for it was hoped to open the Hunter River valley to free settlement. No settlers had been allowed there because of the presence of the penal settlement at Newcastle which for safety was kept surrounded by a barren wilderness. In the County of Cumberland, pressure on land built up in the third decade of settlement. Its resources and sea communications made the Hunter a suitable area of expansion. In 1823, convicts were shipped north from Newcastle to Port Macquarie.

Convicts cut cedar from the brushes on the Hastings and Maria rivers, and grew maize for their own consumption. More important, the
'tropical' climate of the area led to an attempt to grow sugar, at first on the Hastings and later on Wilson's River. A former West-Indian planter, Thomas Scott, was sent to supervise the plantation on which convicts took the place of slaves in other sugar-growing areas. Frost and floods ruined the experiment, but enough survived to encourage a second and successful attempt in the 1860s.

Sugar growing emphasises the contemporary view of the tropical character of the north coast climate. Before 1830, John Guilding had been given land on the north bank of the Manning River to grow tropical crops, and there was a persistent testing of this climatic stereotype through the century.

THE CEDAR GETTERS
The private cedar cutters who had first invaded the Hunter and its tributaries followed the convicts. They then turned their attention to the brushes of the Illawarra, south of Sydney. The red cedar, Toona australis, is deciduous and provides a soft easily worked timber rare in New South Wales, and attractive because when finished it resembled the fashionable mahogany. Some cedar was exported, much more was used in the colony for building, fittings and furniture.

Cedar cutters turned their attention northward at the end of the 1820s; in 1837 they reached the Macleay, in 1838 the Clarence and in 1842 they were cutting on the Richmond. The brushes of the lower riverbanks held their attention and localised this activity. The rivers provided transport for the bulky product. Cedar cutters worked in the brushes, rolling logs to the water’s edge or sometimes using bullocks. Logs floated downstream and were intercepted at ports from which the timber was shipped to Sydney. These ports were the first settlements on the rivers. Tumbulgum and Teranora on the Tweed, Ballina and the Richmond, Grafton on the Clarence and Hungry Heads on the Bellinger were cedar ports. The Nambucca bar proved impassable and slowed development.

Shipbuilding accompanied the cedar getters in their northward spread. Cedar required transport to Sydney, and shipbuilders were attracted by plentiful riverside timbers. As in New Zealand, shipbuilding was an early element in the settlement. The heyday of northern rivers shipbuilding came in the 1850s; riverside settlement reduced the attractions in the 1860s and only the Manning remained in the late century as an important shipbuilding centre to rival Brisbane Water on Broken Bay and Sydney, the two chief locations of the industry.

THE PASTORAL OCCUPATION
With removal of the Port Macquarie penal station in 1833 [the prison continued in use until 1846], land around the Port was opened to free settlers. Good open grazing land was limited by terrain, and since this was within the Limits of Location, holdings were kept fairly small by the need to buy land rather than occupy it under licence for a small fee. In 1836, settlers were allowed to take up land on the south bank of the Macleay River. Beyond lay the Port Macquarie Pastoral District.

The chief northern frontier of pastoral expansion lay at this time in New England. As settlement moved north the long line of road leading back to markets and supplies became more and more inconvenient, so that just as some men were thinking of moving further out by settling the Darling Downs, others tried to shorten their lines of communication by taking up river valley land with access by sea to Sydney. In 1839 settlers moved down to the open forest country in the Clarence River valley, and in 1840 similar land was first taken up on the Richmond. By 1845, most of the available grassy country was taken up on the larger rivers. This occupation was very limited on the Nambucca, Bellinger and the Tweed where it arrived in the 1860s.

This occupation emphasised the inland parts of the river valleys, and gave rise to new valley centres, except for Grafton which as an established cedar cutters’ port was also well
placed to serve the surrounding pastoralists. Casino and Kempsey belong to this occupation. The pastoral population was small and scattered, and with a predominance of men.

The pastoral economy was at first based on sheep as in New England. In 1844 there were 16,000 cattle and 119,000 sheep. But this was not good sheep country, the rainfall was high and the flocks suffered from footrot and catarrh. By 1850 cattle were clearly dominant. Sydney could be reached by shipping live fat cattle, but more were marketed as tallow, hides, horns and bones after boiling down in large vats close to shipping points. Cattle could also be sold for stocking new inland runs, and this was one source of stock for the Queensland cattle kingdoms built northwards from the 1860s. Meat preserving began in the 1860s at Ramornie on the Clarence. However, a large scale marketing system needed refrigeration and this was not perfected until the 1890s.

THE SMALL FARMER OCCUPATION
Land was opened to agriculturalists in the 1850s, lying on the levee banks of the lower rivers in densely forested country spurned by pastoralists who could not afford to clear the land they used so extensively. There was only limited settlement until the Land Alienation Act of 1861 opened crown lands to 'free selection' at a low fixed price that could be held over by paying a small interest each year. Before 1861, men took up small farms of 40-60 acres, but under free selection holdings of up to 320 acres were possible, and 640 acres after 1875. Such farms were too large for a single family to clear and use, so that clearing leases and tenancy resulted.

The farmers with their dense population and many and frequent needs to buy goods, created a new town system on the lower parts of the rivers. The old cedar ports were revived and new settlements founded, at Ulmarra on the Clarence, Smithtown and Gladstone on the Macleay. Shipping services grew more frequent to serve farmers growing perishable produce.

THE EXPERIMENTAL PHASE
The first farmers tried growing wheat, which failed in the wet summer conditions. There was a search for a new valley staple to supplement maize that clearly would grow well. But maize was very soon in overproduction through it was shipped to feed the large animal populations of Sydney and Melbourne, and prices were permanently low except when the competing New Zealand oat crop failed.

The search for new staples demonstrated the 'tropical' view of the climate. Arrowroot was successfully grown and survived as a crop, but the demand was small. Mangoes were tried, but exports to India did not take place as hoped. Breadfruit was tried, but the expected market in the South Sea islands was cut off by a British embargo. Opium poppies were not successful, nor coffee nor tea. Tobacco was grown, but of such a low quality that it was used as a treatment for scab in sheep. Sericulture was attempted, with the idea of shipping seed (eggs) and grain (cocoons) to labour-rich Italy and France, but the scheme came to nothing. Cotton enjoyed a small boom during the American Civil War when normal supplies were cut off, but suffered a decline when peace came. Rice was grown on the Macleay but soon given up. Here is an example of a region actively searching for profitable crops and with limited success.

SUGAR-CANE GROWING
The only tropical crop to prove successful was the sugar-cane. Thomas Scott was still alive to communicate his skills, and he had continued to grow a stock of canes. Revival came on the Hastings and Manning Rivers in 1864 at the height of the experimental phase, and the crop rapidly increased its acreage in the 1860s. There was however a northward shift to find a less rigorous climate, and the industry came to a rest on the Clarence, Richmond and Tweed, abandoning the two southernmost rivers before 1870, and the Macleay in the mid-1870s. Cane growing also shifted down river, away from the frost-prone upper reaches in which it was first
tried. On the Richmond there were attempts to escape frosts by ascending the slopes of the Big Scrub, but high transport costs away from the river artery made this an uneconomical site.

Sugar growing by European labour on small farms was then an anomaly among sugar regions of the world, but it fitted well into the intensive farming pattern of the northern rivers. Sugar succeeded early on because it could be sold to a local market in an unrefined state, but was soon aided by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company which built mills on the Macleay and Clarence in 1870, and northward on the Richmond and Tweed by 1880. Small riverbank mills remained in the industry to allow spread away from the big central mills of the CSR.

THE DAIRYING INDUSTRY
In some years sugar was the most important crop measured by acreage on the Tweed, but was always second to maize on the Richmond and Clarence, while to the south Macleay, Hastings and Manning farmers had little choice but to grow maize and sell it as grain or feed it to pigs. Then in the 1890s the sugar-cane was heavily infested with gumming disease which seemed to spell disaster, while the government threatened to remove the tariffs which protected the industry against Queensland competition.

Dairying was taken up as an alternative. For long it had been supposed that dairying as a temperate zone activity could not survive on the 'tropical' north coast. But in the 1880s, farmers from the main dairying district of the Illawarra actively disproved this belief. Indeed, optimism replaced pessimism, and it was supposed that northern dairying would be free of the winter season which reduced southern output. This was not the case, and dairying expanded with the same seasonal problems faced elsewhere. Not until the mid-1890s was Paspalum dilatatum found to be a useful grass for the northern coastlands, so that there were early problems with getting suitable fodder grasses.

With the dairying industry the small farmer was much more mobile than he had been hitherto. Now, with a compact product easily transported, he could move away from the rivers, while his crop of grass was climatically more tolerant than sugar-cane. Dairying dispersed over the flood plains, into the Big Scrub and upriver to compete with extensive beef cattle raising on the inland country. After 1901 the industry spread to the high basaltic plateaus lying above the river valleys. Basalt and dairying had a strong connection - the Illawarra men sought out first the basaltic soils of the Big Scrub that most resembled their best southern soils around Kiama. They chose the Richmond rather than other rivers, which accounts for the dominance of that valley in north coast dairying until after 1901 when it began to spread more strongly in the Clarence and other valleys to the south.

By 1901 the chief occupation types of the northern coastal rivers were established, though dairying was yet to spread to occupy the large areas it filled by 1920. On the lower rivers were small farmers cultivating much ground in maize and sugar. Around them were the dairymen supporting a dense population and numerous villages and towns, many with their butter factory. The dairy farms spread into favourable environments in the upper valleys, supporting towns like Kyogle, and were often pushed deep into the scarp by large freehold pastoral stations that had pre-empted the grassy portions of the valleys. Timber cutting was also relegated to the steep hill slopes where some uncut-over land was left, including sheltered rainforests with red cedar growing in them.

Since 1901 there have been changes, accelerating in the 1960s as coastal tourism has provided a new phase of occupancy which along with beach mining fills an empty niche in the earlier ecology. Dairying has retreated, and many beef cattle are now to be seen in areas like the Big Scrub which formerly were all dairying country. A retirement element has emerged strongly in the
population, and the north coast has become a haven even for younger people seeking a lifestyle different from that available in the city.

**THE MACLEAY RIVER VALLEY**

The valley supported the Dangadii until settlement. Some survived the impact of contact with settlers, and Aborigine reserves were made in 1883 at Kinchela, in 1885 at Bellbrook, and at Burnt Bridge in 1893 as refuges.

The Macleay was discovered first from the sea, by Commander White who found the wreck of the brig *Trial* and so named Trial Bay, and by John Oxley who entered the river in 1820. More important was a report published in the *Sydney Gazette* in 1826. It so impressed the Commander at Port Macquarie that he sent an expedition to examine the area.  In 1834 limekilns were built to supply Port Macquarie at Pipers Creek near Kempsey. Clearly the river was known quite early overland.

In 1836 the commissioner of crown lands found nine squatters established on the Macleay - the Limits of Location embraced the lower river banks - with a population of 56 freemen, 8 women, 23 children and 111 convicts. Enoch Rudder was growing wheat and vines, and running sheep and cattle, and in the same year tried to sell land in a town he called 'Kempsey', which later became East Kempsey. There were three shipbuilders - with the cutting out of the Manning cedar, timbermen had arrived on the Macleay about 1835. Many ships were built, but the industry passed north with the cedar getters in the 1840s.

The commissioner's headquarters were fixed on the site of Kempsey, on the river bank opposite Rudder's town, but after a short while they were moved to Yarranal (Belgrave) at the head of navigation. By 1845 there were 45 runs and a boiling down at Warneton where the Macleay River steamworks was located. Population had grown to 340 men and 126 women, and sheep had almost disappeared - this was cattle country.

Produce shipped out included timber, tallow, hides but also wheat and maize. Small farms were established from 1842. Rudder's Town acquired some buildings and a post office, but in 1855 a government town was gazetted north of the river and became West Kempsey. It adjoined private land that became Central Kempsey. In 1856, though Rudder in 1836 had advertised his town as 'on the high road to New England', the first practicable road to the tableland was found, though the present-day easier route was found only at the end of the century. The first steamships arrived in 1858; they could reach Kempsey, but as they became larger they increasingly unloaded passengers and cargo at Trial Bay. The difficulty of the coast made government concerned to provide harbours of refuge apart from the dangerous river mouths. Trial Bay was chosen as one such site, and the prison was built there from 1877 to 1886 to house convicts who would construct a large breakwater. Work stopped in 1903 before completion. It was later the site for confining German internees. Reminders of the effort are the gaol, remains of the breakwater, quarry and Arakoon House. The tourist town of South West Rocks borders the site.

Free selection brought an invasion of small farmers from the south, and population grew from 1,963 in 1861 to 4,973 in 1871. Kempsey grew to a population of 375, with post office, stores, churches, two schools, two hotels and a newspaper. Maize was the staple crop when wheat failed, but paid little, and sugar was tried from 1866. This was downriver settlement, and villages grew at Fredericktown and Darkwater, gazetted as Gladstone in 1864. Aldavale was notable for some German settlers, and Stuarts Point inside the heads, took the larger ships. Warneton was surveyed as a private town above Kempsey, continuing its industrial tradition with tallow and a soapworks. Bellbrook and Urulguurra, both now gone because of the change of line of road, served the upriver pastoralists also.
Sugar in private mills made only ‘concrete’ for local sale, but in 1868 the CSR built the Darkwater Mill and some larger mills were also built at Kempsey and Frederickton. The Macleay is frost-prone, sugar failed, the CSR crushed at a loss in 1870-73, and finally removed its mill to Harwood on the Clarence. There was a return to maize, but this supported a growing farm population and a rising Kempsey, with its hospital in 1881 and its incorporation in 1888.

Dairying arrived later here than further north, and the central factory system was adopted from the beginning. Central factories were at Smithtown, Kempsey, Warrington, Frederickton and at Tooooka on the upper Macleay when dairying spread there in 1906. In the 1802 there were 29 scattered separating stations, to be replaced after 1900 as farms acquired hand separators and drove to the central factories three times weekly.

In the new century, with a bridge over the Macleay at Kempsey built in 1900, dairying and maize continued to provide low incomes. Sawmilling prospered on the upper river. Kempsey increased its hold on the valley with the coming of the motor vehicle, and the small towns and village stagnated, shrank, or disappeared, leaving some excellent examples for preservation, as at Gladstone. With the collapse of north coast dairying most of the alluvial land, as well as the upper Macleay, is given over to beef cattle. Kempsey meanwhile is a small town with high unemployment. Prospects for development seem better on the coast, where some sandmining has taken place.

THE CLARENCE RIVER VALLEY

‘The Big River’ was discovered in 1834-5 by an escaping convict, Richard Craig but was not explored further for some years. In 1839 Thomas Small, a Sydney merchant, and Henry Gillett organised an expedition that named ‘Susan Island’. They settled at Woodford Island to run cattle. A now-vanished village, Birchgrove, grew up here. Also in 1839, Captain S.A. Perry, deputy Surveyor General, entered the river in the William IV steamer, though it seems previously to have been navigated by a Captain Butcher. The name ‘Clarence’ was bestowed on this biggest of all rivers so far discovered in the north.

Settlement began immediately. Small took up an upriver run, and with drought in districts to the south there was much interest in new land, all forest country above Grafton suitable for grazing. Copmanhurst station was taken up in 1839, Dobie took up Ramornie in 1840, Ogilvie took up Yulgilbar, where the famous castle homestead was built, in 1840, and Clark Irving, a major entrepreneur on the northern rivers, took up Tomki. The Clarence pastoral district was separated from the Macleay in 1842. Cedar getters had already been at work further downstream, and on the site of Grafton shipbuilding was going on. This site became known as ‘The Settlement’ from the earliest times. By 1842, most of the cedar getters had moved north to the Richmond, though until the present, timber getting has continued in the fringes of the valley: in the late nineteenth century Grafton was a sawmilling centre and exported timber by sea.

Conflict with the Aborigines followed settlement. European men were killed and stock speared and driven off, and some massacres of tribes ensued, one at Ramornie. One squatter, Coutts, was tried and acquitted of poisoning Aborigines with arsenic in flour. A reduction in numbers, and the police, brought peace, and by 1891 it was possible to report that Aborigines were employed as stockmen, in cane stripping, and fishing, and that nine reserves had been made for them up to 180 acres in size.

Settlement was followed by economic depression in which the pastoralists sought to turn their cattle into money. Hides, bones and horns could be exported, but boiling downs for tallow were established, salting of sides of beef for export became common. Clark Irving started a meat preserving works at the Broadwater, and a canned meat factory worked at Ramornie. These were immediate developments of the primitive cattle stations whose centre was Grafton.
A second store opened at Grafton in 1840, and a court house was built there in 1846, to be renewed in 1861. Barnet designed the present court house built in the 1880s. Grafton grew as a town, becoming a municipality in 1859 and acquiring such features as a newspaper, The Clarence and Richmond Examiner. Much new building took place in the boom years, including the post office in 1878, Hunt's cathedral begun in 1884, and the gaol in 1891-3. Work on the entrance to the river to improve its navigation began in the 1860s, and the telegraph was connected to the main Australian system at Tenterfield in 1882. Grafton bid fair to become the urban centre of the north coast.

Always nagging however was the idea of a railway to New England and the west. The Railway Commissioners had no intention of seeing their New England traffic draining away to Grafton's shipping, and no line was ever built, either to Tenterfield or Glen Innes, though the routes were surveyed. The shipowners of Grafton dreamed in vain of an inland empire. The best they could achieve was a northern rivers' line which linked them to Lismore and Murwillumbah. The bridge at Grafton was not completed until 1932. So, there was not enough through traffic on this line to Sydney. The town of Grafton remained merely one of the larger country towns. The decision in 1874 to plant the town with decorative exotic trees has borne fruit especially in the 'Jacaranda Festival' in November.

Meanwhile, farmers had invaded the Clarence. Land was sold for small farms from 1854, and the 1861 selection acts brought in many more, though the big upstream runs mostly protected themselves, opening up to dairying in the 1890s when land prices were high. The interest of the early agriculturalists lay in the wide alluvial plain of the lower river that was soon densely populated by many small farmsteads connected by a complex road system. At first it was hoped the Clarence would be the 'wheatbowl of NSW', but rains in the 1860s brought rust, and maize became the mainstay. Soon the market was glutted. Sugar saved the day, and many small mills were built, the largest at Ulmarra, but the industry became fully established only when the Colonial Sugar Refining Company built Southgate, Chatsworth and Harwood. A new mill was recently built in South Grafton. As it was not built by CSR it has finally broken the monopoly nexus between New South Wales and Queensland sugar production. Company towns grew round the mills, and real farming centres arose at Ulmarra (ripe for conservation), Lawrence and Maclean. Maclean, on the highway and near the mouth of the river, enjoying some tourist development, has flourished but has few buildings of heritage interest. Fishing has long been the mainstay of Yamba, now also a tourist centre.

The shift of sugar after an experimental period towards the lower river allowed dairying to come in. There were at first many small butter factories, but these became creameries and the central factories emerged at Ulmarra and Grafton, which reinforced their urban status. Dairying also spread to the upper river, where Copmanhurst, a village serving the pastoralists, was enhanced.

In the last thirty years, sugar has maintained its place, helped by the share of Australian production given to NSW at Federation, but dairying has greatly declined due to loss of export markets. The pastures even on the flood plain have been given over to beef cattle, there has been much amalgamation of farms, and tree crops of poplars have become payable even on the richest land. Timber-getting has large resources available in the hilly country to the west, and a large pulp mill is proposed.

THE RICHMOND RIVER VALLEY
Here the Aborigines followed two economies. One was based on small animals and fruits in the downstream rainforests. The other was supported by the seeds, roots and larger animals of the interior grasslands. The tribes appear to have been small, but trade was extensive. Conflict and massacres followed settlement. Then, in 1891, Aborigines were reported stripping cane, clearing scrub, and working on cattle stations, with some 'too indolent to work'. The Cabbage Tree Island community had been established and given
agricultural tools and fishing boats; another such settlement had been established on the Numbucca, at Brushy Island.

Cook had seen and named Cape Byron in 1770, but the river was not explored until Captain Henry Douty sailed there in the Rainbow in 1828 and named Lennox Head. No immediate settlement followed.

By the early 1840s the cedar getters had worked their way north, and now began cutting on the Richmond River. Cedar camps were widespread on the complex stream system and were mapped by L. Daly in Men and a River. Pelican Creek and Gundirinima were early centres for stores and inns, and boats would come upstream to load, or the logs would be floated down to Ballina (Ballina) for loading. There was no apparent conflict with the Aborigines, indeed some cooperation, though the cutters introduced diseases. On the lower river and in the Big Scrub, cutting continued into the 1870s, with shipbuilding at Woodburn, and sawmills at Blackwall and Wyallah. From the 1880s the milling industry moved inland to the hoop pine of the scarp-land forests. Much of the valuable timber of the Big Scrub was merely burned in the process of later clearing.

Pastoralists began occupying the inner Richmond forests soon after those on the Clarence. Fairy Mount was taken up in 1842. Ogilvie, already on the Clarence, took up Wingerie in 1842, and Wilson occupied the Lismore station on the north arm in 1843. Grass here was limited, and pastoralists concentrated on the country above Casino, a station of Clark Irving. Insolvent squatters from New England came down to start again on the Richmond. By 1854 all the good grazing land had been taken up, sheep, suffering in the wet from footrot and catarrh had been replaced by cattle, and there were a number of boilling downs, at Fairy Mount, Casino and Waram. The long leases of 1847 gave security of tenure for improvements, and after 1881 much of the pastoral land was put into freehold to protect it from selectors.

Urban development was at first limited - the stations ordered their supplies by sea from Sydney in bulk, so that it was only in 1856 that land was sold at Casino. It soon had a store, post office, police station and court house. A school was established, races had been held since 1854, and a doctor and chemist established themselves there. At this time, the main population was on the upper river and Casino its natural centre. Lismore, where lots were also sold in 1856, served the cedar getters, with a store, inns and a sawmill. Ballina had for long been the port for larger vessels: it was opened as a town in 1857, when there were already many services. The Richmond trade benefited, as did the Clarence, from the discovery of gold on the Timbarra, and at Tooloom, where there were 2,500 diggers at its busiest. Grafton benefitted most from the goldfields traffic.

The lower river has much less well-drained alluvium than the Clarence, and more extensive ill-drained flood basins useful only for rough grazing, though the process of drainage has made much new agricultural land particularly in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, farmers were attracted from the south from the 1860s, taking up the drier levee banks where boat transport was available. There were many settlers of Scots origins, and most had farming experience further south. The Grafton Steam Navigation Company became the Clarence and Richmond Steam Navigation Company, and then further expanded its operations to become the North Coast Steam Navigation Company as settlement on all the rivers grew and trade expanded.

With more people, the urban focus shifted downstream. Casino remained a squatters' town, with an Anglican church in 1865 and a Catholic church in 1872. Lismore also built churches to serve the new settlers in the 1860s, and a new school in 1862. It displaced Casino as the chief town, with a thriving town life represented by a Musical Union, a Mutual Improvement Society, a School of Arts, and a branch of the Sons of Temperance. Lismore became a municipality in 1879. Ballina grew with more trade and
immigration by sea. Coraki grew as a village, with a Presbyterian church in 1865, and was boosted by William Yabsley's shipyard from 1864. Wardell was another agricultural centre founded early, on a site where sand dunes provide a fresh water supply from wells.

The Richmond population grew from 1,283 in 1861 to over 4,000 in 1871, and most of the riverbank land was then taken up. The remaining rainforest was cleared, and maize planted. Again, sugar was seen as the more profitable crop, cuttings were brought from the Clarence in 1864, and the first mill opened at Dorrington in 1869, with Gundurimba and some others by 1871. Up to 75 mills operated in the 1870s, when sugar growing spread up to Casino, only to be driven back by frosts. The CSR mill opened the Broadwater Mill with its company town in 1881 assuring the future of the industry on the lower river. Sugar also became popular through the Big Scrub basalt plateau, where mills worked reasonably successfully at Rous and Alstonville although without the advantages or river transport.

What transformed the Richmond most was the influx of dairy farmers from the South Coast, seeking basalt kraznozem soils to which they had become accustomed around Kiama. What started as a trickle became a flood in the 1880s and 1890s, many shipping their well-bred dairy cattle into Ballina, a process continuing until about 1910. The Big Scrub plateau was denuded of rain forest and sown with the new Paspalum dilatatum imported from South America. With the technological revolution in dairying, the industry became most profitable, and refrigeration in factory and shipping solved the problem of high summer temperatures. At first there were many small factories, but the central factory system centralised manufacturing at Lismore and Byron Bay. Lismore and Alstonville became the urban centres for Big Scrub farmers, and Lismore acquired a gasworks and sewerage scheme in the 1890s. As the Big Scrub was exhausted, farmers moved into the alluvia and inland - the sale and subdivision of the Kyogle station and the foundation of Kyogle and its butter factory in the early twentieth century presaged a movement into pastoral country that made dairying the dominant industry throughout the Richmond until the great retreat of the 1960s and 1970s that saw the demise and amalgamation of many small farms into beef grazing properties.

Developments in recent years have seen the centre of development shift to the coast for tourism and sand mining, while a significant element of retirees and 'alternative society' has appeared, as at Nimbin. A strong appeal to save remaining rainforest patches has come along with these. Tropical fruits have replaced dairying to some extent, notably macadamias, avocados and bananas.

THE TWEEDE RIVER VALLEY
The Tweed river comprises the north, south and middle arms within a valley much smaller than the Clarence or the Richmond. The amount of alluvium is therefore limited, and steep slopes have been cultivated leading to a soil erosion problem much less apparent to the south. There are cultivable areas of tertiary lavas. The Tweed is connected with Brisbane by rail. The Queensland style of house on piles and the club industry at Tweed Heads that serves Queenslanders with gambling facilities not available in their own state show the marked associations with Queensland. Murwillumbah is the chief service town for rural areas, while Tweed Heads is an old port and now a tourist resort.

The Aboriginal tribes were the Uukimbil and the Wollembin. After conflict, peace ensued, and reserves were made on the lower river in the late nineteenth century, when the population became admixed with Kanakas imported to work the sugar plantations.

The river was discovered from Brisbane by John Oxley in 1823, and Henry Rous in Rainbow explored the first 30 miles of river course, finding it navigable for small vessels. For a while, a guard was mounted at Point Danger to intercept runaways from Moreton Bay fleeing south, but was withdrawn due to Aboriginal hostility.
The first cedar parties arrived in 1843-44, and cutting on a small scale continued through the 1850s, but early in the 1860s there was a cedar boom as the southern rivers were cut out. Prices for cedar were high. Terranora emerged as the centre for the cedar getters, with stores, inns and shipping facilities, while Tumbulgum had its origins in this phase. Shipbuilding, as elsewhere, accompanied cedar getting.

Forest land is limited on the Tweed, so by 1860 there were two runs on the upper river, but there were poor prospects as much clearing was needed. The entry of small farmers - some of the cedar getters settled down - was more important. From the 1860s, with a boom in the 1870s, land was quickly taken up in small farms, including the rich basaltic around Cudgen. The selections allowed, at first 320 acres, then 640 acres after 1875, were too large for workable farms, and the social problem of share-farming and landlordism was introduced. In 1941, at the peak of the small dairy farmer industry, there were 1,437 share farmers. This was a lesser problem on all the northern rivers.

Farmers as elsewhere experimented with 'tropical' crops - opium poppies, arrowroot, mulberry trees for silkworms, tobacco, but fell back on maize and sugar. In 1869, sugar was grown at Cudgen using Kanaka labour. Through the next decade, several mills were operating, as at Cudgen and Abbotsford. The CSR once more brought efficiency to milling operations with its Condong Mill in 1880, heralding a sugar boom.

Byron Bay merely had an inn for travellers, and Tintenbar served the Brunswick River settlers, but it was built as a port in 1880. The river mouths on the north coast are all bar bound, and no refuge in a storm, leading to many wrecks. Government systematically tried to remedy this with its abortive breakwater at Trial Bay, and the more successful Coffs Harbour (1892) and Byron Bay. Coffs Harbour was given a boost by the late discovery of Beacon Hill gold in the 1890s. Both ports have now been dismantled.

Cane had thrived on the Tweed, and dairying followed, with the participation of the South Coast. It was helped by the gumming disease crisis in cane in the 1890s, and by uncertainty of retaining the NSW sugar market at the coming of Federation. Edward Seccombe introduced Paspalum dilatatum to the north coast on the Tweed in 1892. Factories sprang up at Murwillumbah, Byron Bay (with the aid of the railway), Uki, Tweed Heads, Tyalgum and Brunswick Heads, eventually to be centralised on Murwillumbah and Byron Bay.

Bananas followed, with commercial production from 1910. This industry was given impetus by returned soldiers' farms after World War I, occupying the steep slopes hitherto ignored. Indians and Chinese also entered the industry. In the 1920s the industry was devastated by the disease 'bunchy top', but recovered from the 1930s to remain an important industry. Vegetables - peas, beans, potatoes - also developed as a twentieth century industry replacing maize, now grown chiefly as a fodder crop.

The dense population that all these industries supported was served by Murwillumbah, but also by many outlying villages that have virtually disappeared with road transport. Condong retains its mill employment, but Tumbulgum is a shadow of its former self, as are Uki and Tyalgum based on closed-down butter factories. Tweed Heads had turned to tourism and is booming. Bangalow, which in 1914 had two stores, bootmaker, solicitor, doctor, dentist, two blacksmiths, oyster
saloon, tailor, mercer, fruiterer, three carriers, a
tinsmith and a newspaper is now largely a
residential area. Mullumbimby, declared a
municipality in 1908, now struggles. The
devastation associated with the decline of dairying
has hit the Tweed less than the Richmond, but the
inexorable process of centralisation has reduced
the rich variety of its landscape. Even
Murwillumbah displays little of its early past, the
great fire of 1907 having destroyed its main street.

SHIPWRECKS
The northern rivers are bar-bound, which makes
them impossible to enter during a storm.
Government only partly remedied this by
providing havens at Coffs Harbour and Byron Bay.
Consequently there were many shipwrecks, those
known being mainly near the river mouths. Ships
were wrecked as they tried to enter, or as they lay
offshore in storms awaiting an opportunity to
enter. The main concentrations of wrecks are at
Tweed Heads, Byron Bay, Ballina, Nambucca
Heads, the Clarence, Macleay and Hastings Rivers
and Crescent Head. The coast is strewn with the
wreckage of ships carrying supplies for the North
Coast.

CONCLUSION
The North Coast region consists of a series of
valleys that offer a variety of ecological niches,
from rugged timbered uplands to open grazing
country and the rich flood plain alluvia.
Successive waves of incomers have taken of these
niches and provided a rich and varied land-use
pattern now changing as dairying withdraws and
beef cattle replace the Friesians and Jerseys of old.
By the end of the nineteenth century the cedargetters had cut out the lower rivers, sawmillers
were working the inland forests, pastoralists
grazed cattle upstream, sugar and maize farmers
occupied the alluvials, and dairy farmers cleared
the high rainfall wet sclerophyll forests and
rainforests. Only in the twentieth century have
the sandy coastlands been taken up by beach
tourism and sandmining. This is an example of a
complex environment in which a rich diversity of
land-users have evolved over time.

\textsuperscript{30} Comments, Barry F Pullinger, Shire Clerk/General Manager, Byron
Shire Council, 30 November 1990.
\textsuperscript{31} Marie H Sell Valley of the Macleay: the history of Kempsey and the
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
6. New England

The New England region is largely made up of a plateau bounded on the east by very rugged country. On the west, steep country falls onto the valleys of the Manilla and Namoi Rivers, but the divide is less marked to the north, where the division between alluvial plain and solid geology makes the boundary. There are great gorges incising the plateau on its eastern edge with spectacular falls such as the Wollomombi.

The plateau itself is generally a rolling thinly-forested surface with extensive flat areas such as Beardy Plains. The area presented an attractive grazing resource to early settlers.

Rainforest and wet sclerophyll forests occur on the surrounding steep country and provide a basis for timber industries. The plateau itself is naturally open forest with grassland. Original natural grasslands have been much extended by clearing.

The hilly shires of Bingara, Barraba and Manilla are included in the region as the boundary of New England. Their solid geology and mining history distinguish them from the Darling Plain.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

CITY
Armidale

MUNICIPALITY
Glen Innes

 SHIRES
Barraba, Bingara, Dumareso,
Guyra, Inverell, Manilla,
Severn, Tenterfield, Uralla,
Walcha
New England was only thinly populated by Aborigines, as the first settlers reported: the Anaiwan occupied the area about Armidale; and Walcha in the south; the Narbæ frequented Beardy Plains about Glen Innes and Inverell; the Kianbal lived around Ashford, and the Bombay at Ben Lomond and Mount Mitchell. As elsewhere, they put up guerrilla resistance, killing at least fifteen Europeans, but some proved amenable to employment on stations. The first Crown Lands Commissioner, Macdonald, took a benevolent view of them, distributing blankets from 1839. By 1845 he could report that there had been no white deaths from attack for three years; though this might also have been because of massacres like the one at Deepwater station. Macdonald expected them to become extinct, particularly with the failure of a mission on Mooki station where some Aboriginal graves are still to be seen. The équipéning of clubs with hobnails as shown in the Armidale Museum shows some adoption at least of European goods.

EXPLORATION
The New England plateau runs north from a tangle of mountains and stands about the heads of the Hunter and Gloucester rivers. British discovery was mainly the achievement of pastoralists seeking open land. Certainly Allan Cunningham passed on its rugged western fall in 1827, and John Oxley crossed its narrow southern end in 1818, camping at the site of Walcha, before descending into the Hastings Valley from Mount Seaview. But Cunningham never saw the grasslands, and Oxley's famous discovery was the 'tropical' country on the coast.

SETTLEMENT
When the Australian Agricultural Company took up its vast estates on Liverpool Plains in 1832 it displaced some squatters and barred the way to others seeking well-watered land. Some of these went up to New England, some by way of Nundle from the Hunter Valley, as Sempill went to settle the Walcha run in 1832, some over the Moonbi Range, as Edward Gostwyck took up his Gostwyck run in the same year. The invasion moved north quickly, with Tilbuster occupied in 1835, Sannarez in 1835, so defining the land around the future Armidale, while Campbell was out to Inverell in 1837, when Boyd took up Glen Innes, and Tenterfield run was taken up in 1839 by Robert McKenzie. This left Patrick Leslie to go on north to the Darling Downs in 1840. In 1839 there were 46 stations, in 1852 there were 178, and one million sheep; the land of the central grassy spine had been taken up, and only wooded land suitable for cattle was left on the eastern and western falls. For this was an invasion of sheep; these were prosperous men who could afford the more profitable sheep, and by comparison with the coastlands and the black soil plains to the west, this was ideal sheep country. It seems necessary to make this point, because cattle runs were more numerous than sheep stations in the great squatting expansion of the 1830s and 1840s.

Licences had been issued in 1836 at ten pounds per station, but few took them up, as the district was administered from the distant Macleay river. In 1839 a New England pastoral district was formed and the new commissioner of crown lands made his headquarters at Armidale, which soon had a court house, commissioner's home, police barracks, lockup, and store. The urgent problem was first to issue licences and define the runs, but also to find a route to the coast. From New England it was a journey of months with wool to Maitland and with supplies on the return journey. Meanwhile the timber trade had established ports on the closer northern rivers. Convicts made a road from Walcha to Port Macquarie, but the descent was so steep that erosion soon made it impassable. There was a route from Kempsey through Big Hill to Armidale, but Mrs Baxter's account of it in 1842 makes it clear it was no dry road. In 1846 the government made a poor road from Armidale to Grafton by way of Newton Boyd. However, it was the much easier route going from Tenterfield to Grafton which proved most successful, though a road was not made until 1859. Some in the north used it; most took the path to Maitland, by way of Liverpool Plains and Page's River. With its headquarters and outside links established New England's population reached 2200 people in 1846.

Some stations were part of strings of runs with headquarters and absentee owners in the Hunter Valley, but many owners dwelt on their own
properties and made a vigorous gentry society. The first Armidale races were held in 1842. Few original homesteads survive - Salisbury and Ohio are two notable ones - and these, surrounded by outbuildings and a cultivation paddock for station wheat supplies, formed the centre of a ring of outstations each with its flock of 600 to 1,000 sheep, guarded by a shepherd and hutkeeper. As many as 40 men might be employed on such a station, many of them convicts taken illegally out of the settled districts. Grain might be ground by each man in his own steel mill but horse-mills soon made an appearance, and soon also a few water mills. Many of the settlers were Scots, hence the place names, and there were more women than in most pastoral areas, lending gaiety and respectability to station life. It was not an easy existence, particularly during the great depression of the 1840s when stock had to be driven down to Maitland or Grafton for boiling down to pay expenses and interest on debts.

As the population grew, and it was a highly mobile one, village centres emerged to provide the origins of present-day urban settlement. Armidale had 76 inhabitants in 1846, with a post office, inns, a new court house, a new steam flour mill, and a new church. A plan was gazetted in 1849 for the town, and the population had reached over 500 in 1851. This was the central administrative town, but New England was large enough to support other incipient towns. Tenterfield was marked by the George Inn and a store in the 1840s and was surveyed as a town in 1851, soon acquiring a court house and steam mill and receiving a boost from gold discoveries at Timbarra and Drake east of the town. To the south, the court of petty sessions was first placed at Wellingrove, but when town land was sold at this site in 1854 along with land at the site of Glen Innes, the latter sold best. The court was moved to Glen Innes, the doctor moved there, and Wellingrove languished in a dead end while Glen Innes took the traffic on the main roads. Meanwhile Inverell was not laid out until 1858, and had a court house and lockup by 1861. Uralla in the 1840s was merely Corey’s Inn on the edge of Saumarez, but Walcha in the south, with its safe waterhole, was a village in the pastoral era, with an inn, smithy, post office and store, with a blacksmith and butcher making up the necessary complement of a country centre. As life grew more settled the towns grew, and provided more services - Armidale opened an Academy and Day School in 1854 - and in 1847 the station owners obtained the fourteen-year leases under the Orders in Council that provided security of tenure.

EARLY GOLD DISCOVERIES
News of the gold finds at Ophir and on the Turon spread like wildfire, and the Rev W.B. Clarke had already visited New England and declared it to be on auriferous country before 1851. Suitable discoveries were immediately made.

There was a rush to Rocky River, near Uralla, in 1851, with 3,400 miners searching for pay dirt. At first it was an individual’s field, but deep leads were discovered, companies and bands were soon at work, and by 1855 there were 5,000 on the field. Water races were constructed for sluicing, and Chinese arrived and built a joss-house. A smaller field opened on the Timbarra north-east of Glen Innes which kept 400 men at work through the fifties, with many Chinese.

Gold was much more widespread. In the headwaters of the Gwydir were Mount Beef and Mount Mutton, and Glen Elgin, Oban, and Oakwood grew as mining villages. On the western fall, a town was declared at Barraba in 1852. Its growth was encouraged by goldmining at Crow Mountain, Woods Reef and Ti-Tree. It eventually became a railhead and centre for a wheat and pastoral district, and was also supported by the Woods Reef Asbestos mine until it closed in 1892.

Bingara was a small village offering a few inns until gold was found, a long continuing effect since the All Nations Gold Mine worked from 1880 to 1948, and a 10-head stamper battery still remains. Diamonds were also found here, most of Australia’s production. The town was given a court house in 1879. Bingara gold also boosted Bundarra, on the crossing of the Gwydir river where a number of roads converge. Built on the site of Clerkeness station taken up in 1839, it built a Horbury Hunt church in 1874.
The effects of gold were to push up meat prices and swell the local demand for available produce, so that 4000 acres were already in cultivation by 1861 with steam flour mills at work in nearly every town. Small farmers found niches on government reserves and as tenants. The towns benefited, notably Uralla, which in 1859 had three hotels, a post office and a school. Inverell came into being, laid out in 1858, starting off with two inns, a church and a growing residential population, as increased farming on its fertile soils served the northern miners. The farming possibilities and its strategic location made it survive, as against the mining villages most of which are now abandoned. Generally, all the existing towns benefited from the increased population and mobility of the 1850s gold rushes, though the pastoralists found labour scarce.

FARMING

New England remained a pastoral district until 1874, when it was divided into counties, a recognition of a new status. This began with the Robertson Land Acts of 1861, which allowed the small farmer to invade the big runs at the end of their 1847 leases. There was much avoidance of this legislation in the colony as a whole, but it produced a genuinely new settlement pattern in much of New England. Here the run-holders had not the financial power of their colleagues elsewhere, runs were smaller, rents were rising, pastoralism was making new demands on capital for fencing and water conservation. So while they peacocked, dummied and grid ironed in the expected way, most of the early large stations had shrunk by half by the mid-1880s. Big holdings survived to support mansions such as Saumarez, but they were part of a very mixed range of holding sizes.

Small farmers could take up to 320 acres at one pound an acre paid over time; after 1875 the maximum was raised to 640 acres. Most small farms were however from 50 to 100 acres. The basalt soils in the west, in the Inverell, Barraba, and Bingara areas drew many, but there were also good locations on the central tableland where towns provided a market eventually, by 1889, all provided with a railway to the Hunter and Sydney. Clearing land was a heavy task, and a lack of capital caused many failures, but those who succeeded grew wheat, maize, oats and potatoes. Wheat found a market in the western pastoral stations, particularly from Inverell. The introduction of the stripper in the 1860s and the reaper-binder, suitable for the moist summers, in the 1870s increased wheat acreage and the size of farms. Orcharding was very important, providing apples and cherries notably. An early cool store was built at Uralla to allow for an extended period of marketing by rail to areas with a warmer and less suitable climate for these temperate zone fruits.

The arrival of the railway, at Armidale in 1883 and progressively northward until it reached Wallangarra on the Queensland border in 1889 meant the impact of better milling wheat from South Australian than could be grown locally in conditions of winter frost and summer humidity. Wheat disappeared from the central and eastern plateau, replaced by maize, oats and potatoes particularly at Guyra and orchards [particularly] at Armidale and Glen Innes. With the technological advance of dairying, this was seen as a suitable export industry, with factories at Tilbuster (1892), Glencoe (1893), Guyra (1893), and Glen Innes (1894). Other butter factories were located at Red Range and Tenterfield. Unable to compete with coastal butter, except in the local area, the industry contracted to a few central factories, as at Glen Innes and failed to support a large number of farmers.

Probably more important, as the Morris and Ranken report of 1883 makes clear, was the emergence of larger grazing units than these smaller cultivation farms. Turning the tables on the pastoralists, new settlers used dummying and selection by minors (banned from 1875) to put together small grazing runs up to 4,000 acres and running up to 4,000 sheep. Formerly the land had been rated at 5 acres per sheep. Now, with more intensive use one sheep could be kept on two acres. Ringbarking intensified, and fencing, introduced at Rockvale Station in 1851, became general and the shepherds disappeared. By 1880, most of New England was fenced, with a great reduction in labour costs. The effect of the Robertson Acts, in New England as in Monaro, was to create a new class of small grazier, who co-existed with the remnants of the old and huge
stations surviving from the pastoral era. The effect was a larger, denser population, cultivating 67,000 acres in oats for hay, maize, potatoes, orcharding and dairying by 1901, but more significantly, the new grazing class. This rural population reached its maximum in 1911, since then there has been retreat as the small farms have been abandoned and amalgamated. The locations of this dense rural settlement can be traced, as Smailes and Molyneux reported, partly by maps and aerial photographs, partly by ground survey of abandoned homesteads, plantations, graves, and other evidence.

This was a period of major urban growth, impelled by larger population and output, by the railways and shaped by government investment particularly of the 1870s and 1880s, and characterised by the new and more elaborate architectural styles. Armidale had been gazetted as a town in 1849 and soon acquired inns, stores, churches and a court house. The Catholic and Anglican churches followed the Presbyterian church in the 1850s when both were replaced by elaborate cathedrals. A hospital was built in 1853, and a newspaper published from 1856. Already in 1861 it had a population of 4,200. The next forty years saw major growth, from incorporation in 1863, and grand new buildings, ranging from hotels to a new town hall, courthouse and goal in the 1880s boom style neoclassical architecture. The town was lit by gas from 1883, a product of the railway. In 1893 the Armidale School was opened, and in 1895 the New England Girls' School, marking its future as an inland educational centre. Armidale was reinforced as the regional capital.

To the south Walcha stagnated, being incorporated in 1891, and Uralla remained a rural small town with the demise of gold. Northward however, Glen Innes saw much rural development and benefited from the new tinfields. It was incorporated in 1872, had a road to Grafton which increased its trading significance, and built a hospital in 1875. The railway arrived in 1884, and the streets, formerly lit by kerosene lamps, were lit by gas from 1893. This was the period in which the main street buildings, and particularly the fine and elaborate town hall, were constructed.

The railway however had created a competitor in Guyra, a small village that was given a station and gazetted as a town in 1885. It has no earlier buildings surviving, but it provided a rival to Glen Innes, since the railway commissioners, seeking to draw traffic away from the port of Grafton, imposed special rates which allowed Guyra to compete with Glen Innes for local traffic. Only after a trade war, in which Grafton was defeated, was Glen Innes' disadvantage in rail rates removed. It remained, however, the larger town with intensive agricultural settlement around it.

Tenterfield drew fewer farmers, and enjoyed slower growth, being incorporated in 1872 and receiving the railway in 1886. It too benefited from access to Grafton, and it was in the School of Arts there that Henry Parkes delivered his famous Federation Address in 1888. Inverell was a thriving agricultural town, its wheat industry little affected by the railway, and it received a fine town hall and court house in the 1880s. Bingara remained backward, surrounded by large pastoral stations, and was not incorporated until 1889. Its wheat industry is a product of the twentieth century.

These towns were mostly built of timber, though brick was increasing in the larger towns, not only in the main streets but in the residential area. The 'blue' brick was a characteristic local feature. The towns were industrial centres, with common industries being tanneries, saddlery, flour mills [that at Glen Innes survived] soap and candle manufacture, brickmaking, foundries, wheelwrights and coach builders, clothing and boots and shoes, though some of these came under attack from Sydney when the railway arrived, though that brought gasworks to the larger towns. As well there were flourishing community activities: Freemasons, Oddfellows, Rechabites and other societies spread, as did mechanics institutes, literary institutes and schools of arts and many sporting clubs. Recreation parks and ovals were formalised at this time. Above all, there was a new grandeur in the prominent buildings, and the emergence of a class of affluent people who generally made one residential part of the town their own, though still building in the vernacular Georgian style.
until the 1890s when Federation homes made their appearance. Schooling became more universal; private schools had existed before the new national schools of the 1860s, but the 1880s saw the proliferation of systemic public schools with compulsory attendance. Always, supplementing these, were the religious schools, though Catholicism was not strong enough in New England to provide the impressive religious and educational precincts such as one finds in Wagga Wagga. New England country towns largely saw their present day landscapes come into being from 1861 to 1914.

LATER MINING
Gold continued to be found after the 1850s, and added to the general air of development. Large capital still worked Rocky River, but there was also a small rush to Melrose that produced a small village. Even later, another settlement resulted from a rush to Kookabookra in 1889. The nearby fields at Tia supplied Walcha between 1887 and 1900. From 1872 to 1890, the settlement at Walcha also benefited from the field at Glen Morison. Together, Tia and Glen Morison only involved a few hundred miners. The major find was deep in a 1,000 foot gorge at Hillgrove east of Armidale. First antimony was found, then the Elena gold mine followed, with more as the field developed. Hillgrove township grew up on the hill, and at its peak contained some 3,000 people, while tramways with winding gear led to the shafts in the gorge. This boosted Armidale, though the storekeepers there lost an opportunity to set up branch shops in Hillgrove. Hillgrove worked gold from 1881 to 1921, and was working antimony until the 1970s. At its peak it supported a newspaper and six hotels, and an innovative hydro-electric scheme in 1894. A subsidiary town, Metz, also developed. Tenterfield received a boost from the Drake discovery of gold and copper in 1886, and gold and silver at Boorook.

Vegetable Creek became Emmaville, which grew to a town from a mere hotel and store. The railway platform at Deepwater was put in to serve Emmaville, and a settlement grew up there. Tingha was another major centre, which was big enough for a hospital and court house in the 1890s. The surviving 'Northern Dams' near Tingha indicates the expense incurred to assure a water supply for washing tin. But tin was widespread, and produced many settlements, such as Stannifer, Elsmore, Copers Creek, Mariaville and Tarrington, which in turn had outlying centres at Curnow, Wallaroo and Bismark, now abandoned. A great depression in the 1890s reduced the price of tin and virtually destroyed the field, but Glen Innes in particular had benefited from its trade, as had Inverell. Towns such as Tingha, which was finally connected with electricity in the 1950s, demonstrate the area's longevity.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
Since 1911 the rural population has declined, and an increasing proportion of people are found in the larger towns where government at all levels is a major employer.

New England faced a problem of declining pastures from the late nineteenth century, due to overgrazing and the rabbit plague, so that it ceased to be breeding country and bought in wethers from the west for wool production. Sheep numbers fell from 4.9 million in 1900 to 3.2 million in 1935. Since then, the introduction of superphosphate and clovers for pasture improvement together with the removal of rabbits because of myxomatosis has greatly restored the breeding industry. Fat lambs are now a major product, with cattle predominating in the wetter country of the eastern fall. Agriculture has declined, oats being grown for green pasture and for hay, wheat has retreated west of New England, but potatoes are still grown, and a Kelloggs contract has led to renewed maize-growing in the Glen Innes area. Orchards have become less important, and the coolstore at Glen Innes has closed down, though that at Armidale may still be used - these were the two chief centres for apple and cherry production.
The declining rural population has come from amalgamation of holdings and the decay of secondary industry in the towns which are now merely service centres. Many small towns and villages have declined or disappeared with the coming of the motor vehicle from the 1920s on. Meanwhile Armidale has grown significantly, offering the best range of services and boosted by the Teachers' College from 1928 and the foundation of a university college in 1938 which became a university in 1954 with the Wright's Federation Boolominbah homestead as its administration building.

This period has seen the end of the last remnants of the great pastoral holdings, and the rise of medium-sized grazing farms begin under the 1884 Act, but now considerably larger. Subdivision has been profitable for landowners but there was an element of compulsion and consumption after the 1895 Land Act. Thus, near Inverell, Myall Creek was subdivided into 138 farms in 1902, Byron was divided into 129 farms in 1906, and Inverell station was divided into 80 farms in 1910. After both world wars, soldier settlers were placed on resumed land: mainly near Uralla and Glen Innes after World War I, more widely after World War II. Most of these subdivisions, like the new grazing holdings of 1884, have eventually proved too small. There has been amalgamation, leading to the present division of New England into medium-sized grazing holdings. As a result the workforce which was necessary in an earlier period has been reduced.

New England has thus emerged in the 1980s as a rural grazing district supplied with a small number of country towns offering a range of social and commercial activities for the surrounding areas, and relying very much on government employment. Built into its landscape are the remains of many pioneering elements from abandoned homesteads, and mine sites to the still-functioning urban landscapes of the late nineteenth century. Perhaps Glen Innes is the place most strongly trying to capitalise on this past landscape for heritage tourist purposes, though Armidale is following suit.