

SHORT HISTORY OF TOWRANG NSW 2580

The village of Towrang is located approximately 12 kilometers North East of Goulburn and is 5 kms from the Towrang Road/ Hume Highway intersection. It is nestled at the foot of the Cookbundoon Range and beside the Wollondilly River.

The area known today as Towrang was first crossed by European explorers Wilson, Collins, and a wee lad called Price in March 1798. They set out from Bargo to explore the South West and are known to have climbed the nearby Mount Towrang.

In the early 1800s various journeys of discovery were undertaken, but as to when Towrang was actually settled is unclear. In the 1820s Governor Brisbane gave "Tickets of Occupation" for people wishing to purchase land. One such ticket was to Richard Farrington for land known as "Tourong". In 1836 James Backhouse's diary stated, "we passed a few small huts, forming the village of Towrang".

The construction of "the Great South Road" through the area saw the establishment of the now well known, "Towrang Stockade" in the early 1830s. The stockade contained the iron gang of Convicts during the road construction and was in operation for around 13 years.

The Powder Magazine and three masonry culverts, the work of David Lennox, are still preserved today and are accessible through the rest area on the Hume Highway at Towrang creek.

The Southern Railway line came through Towrang in 1868/9 on the way to Goulburn. The original single line bridge across the Wollondilly River still stands, alongside the current dual rail line bridge, opened 1914/ 15. The Railway Station at Towrang, opened 16th May 1869, was quite active with a siding to the load goods wagons with local produce, wool, gravel, slate, wood and fruit. The station closed about 1968 and was bulldozed. For many years two gangs of railway fettlers were stationed at Towrang, but were then moved to Goulburn.

Since Towrang was founded there have been many industries established, and these include:

The Quartet Silver Mine leased a 20 acre site near Towrang in the Cookbundoon Range and reports of silver levels from a few ounces to 87 ounces per ton were assayed on testing. A Crystal line variegated Marble quarry was mined in the area, with the mined marble being sent to Sydney.

A Slate quarry was established on a spur of the Cookbundoon Range near Stillwell creek approximately 3 ½ miles from the station.

Two portable steam engines worked the quarry, sawing the slate and also cutting wood into billets to supply the furnace.

A siding was built at the Towrang station to load the slate for transportation. Rubble stone from the quarry had considerable commercial value and hundreds of tons have been sent to

Goulburn for use in the walls of the Church of England Cathedral and other properties. The stone culverts built on the Old Sydney Road, by the convicts (Towrang Stockade), were restored by the Historical Society using this stone.

On 28th June, 1879 a newspaper article reported, "Machine-Made Bricks". "Messr's Jessop and Company have so far succeeded with their new enterprise to be able to turn out bricks that compare favourably with any made in the district. These pressed bricks are being used in the new Post and Telegraph Offices." It has been said that bricks from the Towrang brickworks were used in the Goulburn Gaol and Goulburn Base Hospital, but this has not been confirmed.

Agriculture played a large role in the development in the area with cream from the local dairies being sent to Goulburn Butter Factory by train.

There were three large orchards and one smaller one. The majority of the crop was railed from Towrang to Sydney to the fruit markets.

Apples were exported to England and topped the market for some varieties in the English markets. There has been a long tradition of both sheep and cattle grazing in the district.

Fruit and vegetable production in the area is made possible by the nature of the Wollondilly river.

A wool wash and scouring plant was began in the 1880s. It was situated on the eastern side of the railway line between the line and the Wollondilly river. It closed in 1904 and was demolished, but the old wash pits and drains are still to be seen today.

The historic Community Hall, Rural Fire Service facility, St. John's Anglican Church and the Recreation Park are located in the middle of the village.

The Towrang Public School, opened in 1859 and closed in 1969, is now a private residence, and is adjacent the church. Postal services were begun in Towrang in 1869. The Post Office moved into the old general store in 1913 remaining there till its closure in 1973.

A mail service was provided from Towrang to Greenwich Park along Towrang Road and for many years was operated by horse and sulky, then a motorbike and then a motor vehicle.

A liquor licence was granted to a hotel in 1881 which operated as the "Cookbundoon Inn" and still stands today. This building was primarily constructed from large pieces of local slate. After closure of the inn, the building was used as a store and post office.

Information collated from "Towrang" produced by the Back to Towrang Day 1995 Committee and NSW Government history website.