MOVING TO THE COAST:

Internal Migration and Place Contestation in

Northern New South Wales

Johanna Kijas

Doctor of Philosophy

2002

Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Johanna C. Kijas

July 2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABSTRACT

The study of place was often divided between the spatial interests of geographers and local historians intent on constructing heroic lineages. In the period of accelerated globalization however, discrete discourses on time and space are no longer tenable. Histories of place engage the transdisciplinary approach of recent scholarship in understanding the complexities and fluidity of the world in which we live. Places are constructed out of the enmeshing of the material, social and cultural. The reasons why people migrate both within and to particular places are also critical to the ongoing perceptions of that place, and the dynamics by which local communities operate within global networks.

This thesis is an historical study of a recent sewage ocean outfall dispute between residents and the local council at Emerald Beach, in the Coffs Harbour region of New South Wales' Mid-North Coast. Alongside documentary sources, it uses oral testimony to examine the factors that contributed to people's understanding of their place, and the processes that resulted in the public contestation over that place. It argues that the positions taken in the sewage dispute cannot simply be perceived as a function of individual residents' responses within a bounded local context, but were a result of the complex processes of internal migration to the region since colonisation, and especially since the 1970s, that brought competing visions for the same place.

In exploring the historical traces of the dispute, the thesis examines the first wave of non-Aboriginal migration to the coastal hinterland before turning attention to the second intensive wave of migration in the postwar period. Attention shifted away from the hinterland to the coast, and the chapters examine competing uses for the coast as local born residents, tourists and the influx of new settlers from the 1970s brought diverse dreams for the warm North Coast. In particular, the sewage conflict that grew into the direct-action protests at Emerald Beach provides clear insights into the flows of migration and settlement that led to the particular mix of people who fought for their divergent conceptions of place as critical to their lifestyle and residency.

Without examining historical representations of places and events, conflict situations such as the sewage dispute at Emerald Beach cannot be fully illuminated. By demonstrating the force of internal migration on perceptions of, and contestation within place, this thesis provides one framework from which other places might be investigated.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics

CHDLALC: Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council

CHHSM: Coffs Harbour Historical Society Museum

DCLM: Department of Conservation and Land Management

DEP: Department of Environment and Planning

DL: Department of Lands

DPW: Department of Public Works

DUAP: Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

LAMN: Look-At-Me-Now (Headland)

LEP: Local Environment Plan

NIMBY: Not In My Back Yard

NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service

PWD: Public Works Department (see DPW for footnote abbreviations)

REP: Regional Environment Plan

SPA: State Planning Authority

SPCC: State Pollution Control Commission

UNE: University of New England

INTRODUCTION

MOVING IN AND MOVING OUT:
INTERNAL MIGRATION AND PLACE MAKING

Residents of Coffs Harbour will often proudly tell you that the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) named their place as having the mildest climate in Australia. In a shire of 60,000 people, Coffs Harbour is half way between Sydney and Brisbane on New South Wales' Mid-North Coast.[1] A typical winter's day shines bright with sharp colours: blue cloudless sky and ultramarine sea against a purple mountain backdrop.

Migrants from other parts of Australia have been settling there in accelerated numbers since the early 1970s. They continue to come seeking new opportunities, a pleasant climate, better lifestyle choices and safer places for themselves and their children - similar reasons that have pushed migrants to other places for thousands of years but with new, urgent momentum worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century. This thesis tells a history of internal migration within Australia, out of the cities and into the coastal countryside, and consequences of that migration for the coast and its diversified communities.

The thesis has three central, interrelated concerns. First, since the 1970s, the shift in internal migration within Australia to attractive coastal areas like Coffs Harbour has been witnessed and experienced by many. In 1996 it was reported that:

> ...over the past twenty years, non-metropolitan coastal towns have grown much faster than the cities, with 95% of all population growth occurring in coastal statistical divisions in this period. Australian Bureau of Statistics projections indicate that about half of the total Australian population growth in the near future will be in coastal regions.[2]

However this migratory shift has been slow to gain research attention and in its broadest context, the thesis contributes to a growing body of interest in this population dynamic.

---

[1] At the 30th June 2001 ABS figures for the Shire's population was 60,898; ABS *Regional Population Growth,* Catalogue No. 3218.0: p34.

[2] Hamilton and Cocks 1996:183.

Second, within the context of internal migration, my specific focus is on understandings and contestation over places that have emerged and re-emerged through shifting settlement patterns to the coastal countryside. In recognition of the pressures of population growth on the coast, the Federal Government instigated a House of Representatives Inquiry in 1989 to:

> ... inquire into the environmental degradation of the Australian coastline and coastal waters, with particular reference to: [point one of seven] causes, effects and costs of pollution, sewage disposal, coastal land degradation and resource depletion.[3]

The title of the report, *The Injured Coastline*, and the committee's terms of reference above, indicate that the 'environmental degradation' of the nation's coastline was assumed. However the committee quickly found that there was no universal belief that population growth was endangering the coast, finding that competition and conflict over the use and vision for the coastal zone was endemic.

Third, the two interests of internal migration and place contestation converge in my thesis in the story of a dispute over a sewerage ocean outfall at Emerald Beach, a small seaside estate eighteen kilometres to the north of Coffs Harbour. In late 1991 the village erupted as residents and supporters began two months of direct-action protest to stop the outfall being built off Look-At-Me-Now Headland; a rather unfortunately named headland for those who had hoped to quietly install the outfall. The protesters were predominantly, but not exclusively, white, middle class, permanent settlers to the area of the past ten years, many coming from southern cities. The protest at Emerald Beach followed nearly a decade of conflict over the location of sewerage facilities on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches. This conflict focused the competing visions for the type of place in which people wished to live, invest in and dream about.

New patterns of internal migration along the coast from the 1970s came at the same time as a growing public awareness of environmentalism and a willingness of law-abiding citizens to act against the state. This contributed to the acceleration of contestation over public and private space, and the constitution of such spaces, in the countryside.

However the direct-action dispute at Emerald Beach was not repeated in the

---

[3] House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1991 *The Injured Coastline*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra:vii.

same ways in other coastal communities that were facing similar development issues. Therefore, while focusing on the dispute as a way of exploring underlying structural shifts of internal migration and the machinations of place contestation, this thesis also supports the argument that the particularities of time and place can never be excluded from understanding patterns of change.[4]

My thesis focuses on the 'countryside' of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales, where internal migration in the past thirty years has been intense. Australian academic histories long concentrated on narratives of national history in which the countryside often disappeared from view as the non-Aboriginal rural populations drained into the cities. The countryside of twentieth century Australia generally remained under researched in history and Australian studies, except as the mythologised place of the bush ethos, and more recently in those places where regional universities were established.[5]

The long-running outfall crisis that resulted in the protests at Emerald Beach created the circumstances through which people came to articulate the smouldering tensions born out of economic and social transformations on the warm coastal countryside. Taking the story of the outfall dispute as its local focus, the thesis examines a history of the Mid-North Coast from its colonisation in the late nineteenth century to the shifting focus from its rural hinterland to its urbanising coastline in the last third of the twentieth century. Antecedents of the outfall dispute can be found deep within the dynamic processes of migrations, displacements and the competing visions and contestations over place across this period.

The local context

I had long been interested in a project about contested interests in place. After a new job took me to Coffs Harbour in 1995, thousands of miles in the opposite direction from my original case study choice of Purnululu (The Bungle Bungles) in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, I set out to look for another one. I moved to Emerald Beach in

---

[4] Murdoch and Marsden 1994.

[5] The exception is the University of New England that has been producing histories of the region for decades. Regional universities are also helping shift this metropolitan bias. See the journals *Rural Society* and *Transformations*.

August of that year because I found a house to buy, I thought the beaches were wonderful and I had views of the purple mountains from my kitchen window.

Some people had told me the village was a lively and interesting community in which to live, although I knew little of its recent history. I was the new, and only, history lecturer at the local campus of Southern Cross University and in that role I agreed to do some oral interviews for a group of community members who were interested in preserving accounts of the outfall dispute. As I started to listen to the diverse and conflicting stories of the dispute, I quickly realised that I was living adjacent to my future local focus - Look-At-Me-Now Headland.

The geographical context for my study stretches broadly to take in the mid-north coast region from Port Macquarie in the south, onto the western plateau country and north to the Clarence River around Grafton.
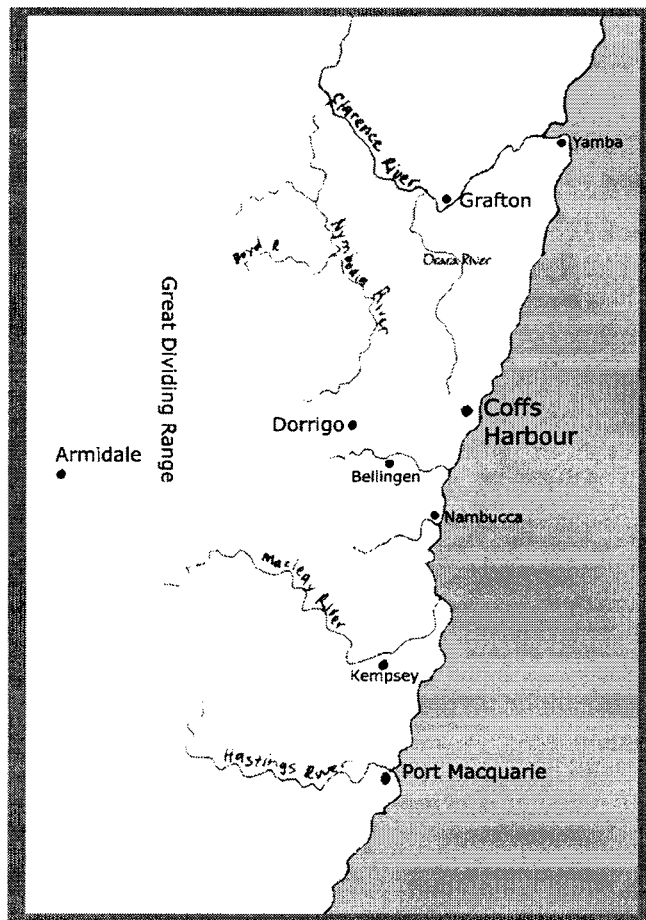
Study area of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales

In its closer context, the study encompasses the region from Nambucca in the south, travelling beyond Bellingen to the Dorrigo Plateau in the west, and north to Red Rock on the coast. This area includes diverse local characteristics, from cold mountain country to the humid coastline. However, from the beginning of the twentieth century Coffs Harbour slowly developed as a focus for the region, firstly as the port for its rural produce and later as a commercial centre.

The immediate study area encompasses the Local Government Area (LGA) of Coffs Harbour, from Sawtell/Bonville in the south to the hinterland town of Nana Glen and to Arrawarra in the north. Within the thesis I often refer to this area as Coffs Harbour, following bureaucratic and everyday use where 'Coffs' implies both the town and the LGA. Where necessary I have clearly differentiated the two. The coastal villages of Corindi and Red Rock, to the north of Arrawarra, are often incorporated into popular identification of the Coffs region.
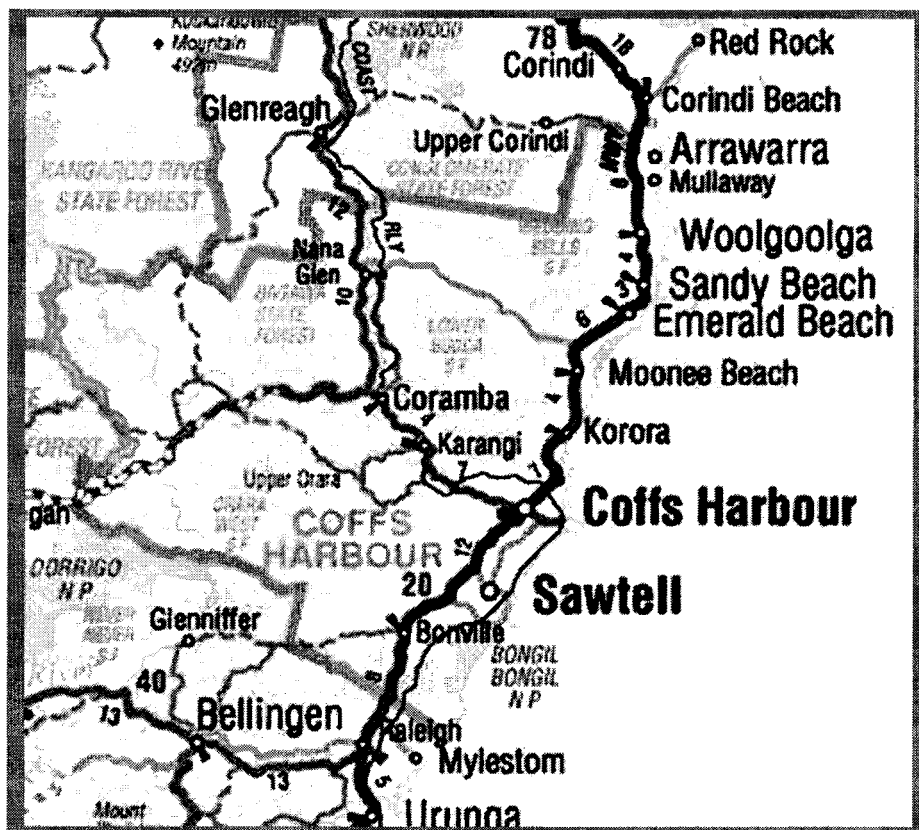
Local study area. Map source: Land and Property Information
http://www.lpi.nsw.gov.au [accessed 6/12/2001].

Emerald Beach lies eighteen kilometres north of Coffs Harbour and Look-At-Me-Now Headland protrudes into the ocean on its south-eastern flank. No one knows for sure who named it or why, however they left us with a memorable metaphor through which to explore the different ways people see places. Ben Holder, whose mother belonged to the settler family who first came to farm in the vicinity of the Headland in the 1880s, found that the area was know as 'Look at me Now' by 1882.[6] The Headland is one of the largest of eleven in a twenty-seven kilometre stretch between Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga, the area which came to be known from the 1960s as Coffs Harbour's 'northern beaches'.

The traditional owners of the Coffs Harbour region are the Gumbaynggir/Gumbaingirr.[7] In their cosmology the Headland is associated with the creation of the sea. Two sisters revenged themselves against the advances of the great creating ancestor known variously amongst the Gumbaingirr as Mindi or Yuladara. The sisters beat the ground with their sticks making the seas rise, cutting him off from his land to the east and in the process forming the Solitary Islands and the surrounding headlands. Gumbaingirr and their indigenous neighbours associate the Headland with their stories about the power of the clever men, especially with relation to an east-facing cave.[8] The legal proceedings accompanying the outfall dispute of the early 1990s brought about the resurfacing, in a public forum, of enduring indigenous histories of the Headland.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the process of colonisation and the displacement and dispossession of its original owners. Contested visions for the North Coast were evident from this time, both between new settlers and indigenous owners, and from within the colonial society.

---

[6] Holder 1984

[7] The spelling depends on the local area under discussion. Nambucca and Coffs Harbour people spell their name Gumbaynggir - sometimes with a double y. LAMN Headland lies within the precinct of Moonee Beach which was a traditional meeting place of north coast groups. Through consultation with the various local indigenous groups, the National Parks interpretation board at LAMN Headland uses the spelling of the Yarrawarra Community at Corindi, just to the north. I have used this spelling (Gumbaingirr) throughout this thesis when referring to the whole group and specific spellings when referring to particular groups, for example from Nambucca.

[8] Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland* prepared for CHCC and CHDLALC; Lardener 1999 NPWS interpretation board, LAMN Headland.

In this first period of intensive non-Aboriginal migration, the focus of settlement was on the rural hinterland rather than the coastal zone. This hinterland, as it is often referred to in local description, comprises the level river valleys near the coast, extending up into the mountains where the plateau country marks the edge of the Great Dividing Range. In this period, the construction of a settler-domesticated landscape was more conspicuously carved out of the dense forests for dairy farms beyond the coast, rather than the less arable pastures near the sea.

Colonisation of the broad region accelerated from the 1830s around Port Macquarie, but took much longer to reach into the immediate study locality. After the initial period of new settlement, which continued into the first two decades of the twentieth century in parts of the local study area, north coast New South Wales felt the brunt of rural decline as large numbers moved to Sydney.

However after the Second World War, reflecting international trends, there was an acceleration of new populations into the sparsely settled rural coastline of eastern Australia. Tourists led the way, followed by new patterns of permanent settlers. For the first time since the interwar years, the 1970s saw a growth in the permanent population rather than the historical decline on the rural North Coast.[9]

Chapter two extends the historical examination of the Mid-North Coast and considers the transforming rural countryside that eventually brought people to Emerald Beach and required more sewerage infrastructure. The main growth went to the previously small coastal towns and their immediate environs such as Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Ballina, while the historically larger inland towns such as Taree, Grafton and Casino saw much more modest growth.

Throughout the 1980s one of the most spectacular growth areas along the whole North Coast was the rapidly urbanising coastal strip around the Coffs Harbour Shire, with increases in excess of twenty per cent between 1981 and 1986.[10] As tourist and settler attention turned from the hinterland to the coast, new pressures were brought to bear on previously isolated places. Chapter three introduces the conflicts that developed over uses of the coast and the central issues of tourism development, policy and planning and environmental action, all of which underlay tensions erupting in 1991.

---

[9] Bell 1992.
[10] Weinand and Lea 1990.

Emerald Beach was the second of a number of small estates created through subdivision of farming land on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches, beginning in the early 1960s. No planning regulations were in place and premature subdivision was said to have 'hideously disfigure[d] many lovely headland silhouettes'. This phrase is quoted from an early pamphlet of New South Wales' State Planning Authority (SPA) in 1965 called 'Preserving A Heritage'. It featured the northern beaches estates as their example of what should not happen on the state's coastline.[11] Look-At-Me-Now Headland would take front-page prominence in one of their later publications as a degraded landscape, scarred by uncontrolled vehicle access.[12]

Chapter four explores the development of the estate of Emerald Beach, from its origins as farmland to a burgeoning village of new settlers from southern cities and inland New South Wales. It looks at those who came and what motivated their move to the coast. In providing a background to the October 1991 protests, it presents a demographic profile of residents who would take up the fight against an outfall and makes note of their most notorious outsider supporters, the 'ferals'.

My focus on the outfall crisis that occurred at Emerald Beach lies in the historical nexus between internal migration and place contestation. Therefore I do not investigate in any depth the myriad of other aspects of the dispute such as the workings of social movements, law and order issues, a focus on gender implications and the internal machinations of community politics. The uniqueness of the Emerald Beach direct-action protests on the North Coast, at a time and in a region replete with similar population dynamics and development issues, is also a reminder that local studies are essential in understanding the global world.

The growth rate of new settlers on the North Coast went largely unrecognised throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, leaving government authorities ill prepared for the rate of expansion of coastal populations. One of the consequences was that sewerage capacity was unable to keep pace with the surge. Sewage provides the focus for chapter five, exploring a history of the subject from Sydney to the first connections of sewerage infrastructure in Coffs Harbour in 1961, and a background to the outfall proposals on the northern beaches from 1983.

---

[11] State Planning Authority 1965 *Preserving A Heritage*, SPA:1
[12] State Planning Authority 1973 *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales*, SPA.

By that time sewerage infrastructure was required for the northern beaches to enable proposals for large international resort developments and housing subdivisions being actively pursued by local government. However the council was also facing challenge from residents wanting to slow or halt this type of development. Lifestyle choices that had taken people to the less developed northern beaches, a new environmental understanding and a growing belief that ordinary citizens could act to shape the outcomes of government decision making, all contributed to the volatile mix which erupted into the direct-action protests of October 1991. This period came to be known by protesters and the media as 'the Siege', and it focuses most of the stories told about the dispute by local pro and anti outfall protagonists. Chapter six tells some of these stories to provide insight into people's diverse reasons for acting in the place as they did.

The final chapter looks to the Headland itself. Its landscape has been read in a myriad of different, often competing ways, from a wild natural place to an ugly scarred landscape. Its indigenous stories, revealed to the Coffs Harbour public through the outfall dispute, challenged notions of indigenous invisibility at the end of the twentieth century. The Headland has weathered the shifting direction and intensity of internal migration to the rural coastline and holds within it both the contested stories about the place, as well as the ground on which shared spaces can be sought.

The chapters in the thesis take chronological shape in exploring a history of internal migration and place contestation on the Mid-North Coast, combined with a thematic approach that link aspects of the 1991 outfall dispute back and forth into this story. The rest of the introduction examines the central themes of internal migration, the countryside and place, before discussing the sources and methodology utilised in the thesis.

Internal migration: an overview.

Since the Second World War the pace of migration across the world has escalated momentously, changing forever our conceptions of place making as stable, homogenous and cohesive. Histories and theories of migration have largely concentrated on Europe, Britain and America, and in Australia such projects have predominantly concentrated on external, ethnically diverse migration into our metropolitan cities. There are no extended histories of internal migration within Australia, before this thesis, especially with a focus on the shift of largely ethnically similar people into the warm coastal zones

of eastern Australia in the postwar period.[13] The following section reviews the research on internal migration to the coastal countryside and its urban centres by briefly looking to the process of migration before providing an overview of population mobility in Australia.

Referring to international migration patterns and consequences, Stephen Castles and Mark Millar described the development of migratory networks, linking areas of origin and destination and helping bring about major changes in both. 'Migrations can change demographic, economic and social structures, and bring new cultural diversity...'[14] This is no less true for internal migration.

In 1995 John Nieuwenheysen, Director of the Australian Federal Government's Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, alluded to the recency of research concerned with internal migration in this country. Although research attention was regularly focused on immigration to Australia from overseas, he said, this 'should not overshadow the very large degree of internal mobility'.[15] In their recent book *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia,* Peter Newton and Martin Bell commented on the growing interest in population mobility in Australia in the 1990s, arguing for its significance in understanding social change.

> The movements of people, products, services and information and the patterns they etch on the landscape are the artefacts of a deeper set of structural processes that relate to the changing locational needs and preferences of individuals, households, firms and governments. Similarly, shifts in the type, magnitude and patterns of movement reflect changes in these underlying structural forces - in the nature of consumption and production, in technology and in the political economy of the nation. Indeed, shifts in patterns of mobility often represent the clearest indicators of underlying societal change.[16]

However, the quotes above fail to include the far-reaching consequences for the physical environments that bear the brunt of increasing populations.[17] The entanglement of place - itself the enmeshing of the material, social and cultural - and migration are central to any investigation of the social, cultural and environmental consequences of the shift to the coastal countryside.

Bell identified four main phases of internal migration in Australia's post 1788

---

[13] See Salt 2001.
[14] Castles and Miller 1993:3.
[15] Foreword to Bell 1995:iii.
[16] Newton and Bell 1996:1.
[17] See Hamilton and Cocks 1996.

history. The first phase was the massive clockwise movement of populations across Australia following gold in the nineteenth century and the colonisation of agricultural frontiers. The second, during the interwar years, was manifested by low levels of interstate movement but high rates of rural to urban migration. The Second World War to the late 1960s encompassed the third main phase, predicated on the development of the manufacturing sector and a second mineral boom. And the fourth phase emerged from the 1970s with the structural changes in industry (the transition from manufacturing to service industries) and a move to a leisure society. It is this phase that saw greater numbers of new settlers migrate to the warm rural coastline.[18]

Research and analyses of the first two phases of internal migration are found mainly within history texts and those of historical geography.[19] For example, one can find patterns of nineteenth-century migration amongst the material on the squatters, shearers, shepherds and gold miners, but there is little that places internal migration as the specific focus. University of New England historian John Atchison has been involved in a large study on 'Patterns of Internal Migration in Inland Rural Australia 1851-1914' to fill a gap in the historical literature of place and people. 'There is, as you are aware', he wrote to me in August 2000, 'very little on internal migration.'[20]

These histories have been predominantly, if not exclusively, focused on white, male subjects as if they were the only people 'out there'.[21] Work on women and gender, and Aboriginal and non-Anglo settlers, have until recently been discussed separately.[22] One can find gendered patterns of population movement enunciated in the work on colonial families.[23] Population movements of Aboriginal people through to the Second World War can be found in anthropological and historical studies.[24] That work traces movement around the rural areas within states, and rural-urban movements in the pre and post-war periods. Published Aboriginal oral accounts tell of extensive movement around the North Coast, especially escalating during and after the Second World War.[25]

---

[18] Bell 1995:72.
[19] For general accounts see historians Bolton 1981; Martin 1987; historical geographers Powell 1976, 1988; Jeans 1972 on New South Wales.
[20] John Atchison pers. com. 21/8/00.
[21] Saunders and Evans 1992.
[22] For example see Grimshaw et al 1994.
[23] See Grimshaw et al 1988.
[24] For example Beckett 1958; Reay 1964; Barwick 1962 and 1971; Gale 1988; Goodall 1996.
[25] For example Becker (nd); Cohen 1987; Walker 1989; Langford 1994.

Patterns of non-Anglo experience in Australia prior to the 1940s are predominantly focused on the nineteenth-century racist policies against Asian and Pacific Islanders and their histories.[26] Less has been written about the patterns of non-Anglo European internal migration. Prior to the 1960s pockets of non-Anglo migrants went to rural areas, buying up struggling properties in intensive agriculture such as banana farming.[27]

On the North Coast the large Italian population that settled at New Italy, south east of Lismore, has had some research attention, but little has been written of the Italians who came to settle the banana plantations in Coffs Harbour from the 1930s.[28] Marie DeLeparvanche's anthropological study of the predominantly Punjabi Indian's who took up banana farming in Woolgoolga, just north of Coffs Harbour, was the only substantial study of this large non-Anglo group outside the metropolis until recently. It has been joined by Rashmere Bhatti and Verne Dusenbery's community history.[29]

Since the end of the nineteenth century the North Coast of New South Wales has been promoted as a land of plenty with room for ever-more new settlers. However the reality was that the main direction of internal migration throughout most of the twentieth century was out of the North Coast and into Sydney. Some of the most strident comment on this direction of internal migration can be found within the political material of the New South Wales Country Party and its later historians[30].

Looking to Bell's third phase of mobility, throughout the 1960s the balance of migration was still firmly tipped in favour of out-migration from the rural North Coast. However there were changes afoot on the immediate coastline. For example, the town of Coffs Harbour saw its population grow slowly but steadily from the Second World War through its port and railhead activities, and new settlers began to arrive seeking business opportunities.[31]

Even by the late 1950s it was the leisure trade that was coming to interest fledgling entrepreneurs of the North Coast. The Geography Department, and the

---

[26] For example Evans, Saunders and Cronin 1975; Yarwood and Knowling 1982.
[27] Burnely 1985.
[28] Jenkins 1993; Yeates 1990.
[29] DeLepervanche 1984; Bhatti and Dusenbery 2001.
[30] Aitkin 1972; Costar and Woodward 1985.
[31] Yeates 1993.

Department of Adult Education, at the University of New England produced a series of research reports and conference proceedings from the late 1950s on tourist and permanent new settlement along the North Coast. These discussed the potential consequences for the region of population growth.[32] Pressures of holiday and permanent settlement on New South Wales's south coast, and areas close to Sydney, had already been felt from the 1950s and the positive potentials or horrors of the Gold Coast to the north were already being debated.[33]

The population 'turnaround' experienced from 1970 is part of Bell's fourth phase, and has brought the greatest impact to Australia's southern and eastern coastlines. For the first time in the twentieth century, certain non-metropolitan areas grew more rapidly than the capital cities. The authors who have written on this change in internal migration are population geographers, sociologist, economists and planners. Most of this work, so far, is macro-level data analysis based on census figures since 1971 and questionnaire surveys.[34] Except in some work on retirement, there has been no in-depth ethnographic research on the migration patterns which have brought people back to the coastal countryside in the postwar period.

Four major patterns of population redistribution in this period are widely agreed upon, differing in intensity over time. Bell identified them as a movement away from the southern states towards the north and the west, especially to Queensland;[35] net losses from the interior; counterurbanisation and suburbanisation.[36]

The first three have all impacted on growth in the Coffs Harbour Shire, with suburbanisation of the coastal zone being an outcome. While the vast majority of new settlers to Coffs originate from Sydney and other parts of New South Wales,[37] the 1970s and 1980s also saw a strong contingent of southerners (pejoratively known as 'Mexicans') from Victoria.[38] Further, the continuing net population loss from New South Wales' interior has not only gone to Sydney, but also to adjacent non-

---

[32] For example analysis by Barbara Hannah on the North Coast; Hannah 1968a; 1968b; 1968c
[33] See Brown 1996 on the South Coast; Piper 1980; and the Department of Adult Education UNE 1959 on northern developments.
[34] Taylor and Bell 1996; Salt 2001.
[35] A similar movement to the West slowed in the late 1980s.
[36] Bell 1995; Newton and Bell 1996; Salt 2001.
[37] In the 1986-91 period, 90% came from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Walmsley et al 1995.
[38] Shelaimoff 1986.

metropolitan coastal centres.[39] For example, Coffs Harbour's share of this coastwards migration has traditionally come from Tamworth to Armidale.

Counterurbanisation has been a major contributor to population redistribution since the 1970s. This is the 'turnaround' discussed above, where the long established concentration of populations into metropolitan areas was overtaken by a net growth out of the cities and into less densely settled, non-metropolitan areas.[40] However, even at its height in the 1970s and early 80s, it has only been a partial redistribution. Counterurbanisation did not see the diminution of the loss of many inland populations, and has increasingly concentrated to attractive country-coastal and river locations and near-metropolitan areas.[41] Also, internal migration patterns within areas such as the North Coast have not been one way. Young people of working age have retained high levels of out-migration, and a relentless movement of all ages in and out of the region continues.[42]

International literature on counterurbanisation is extensive, as the phenomenon has been more widespread across America and Europe.[43] The research of American, Brian Berry, is often cited as the first major work on counterurbanisation. He concluded that a fundamental shift in population distribution in America occurred around 1970. About the same time the European Commission was also funding research on similar migration trends.[44]

In reviewing the early literature on counterurbanisation, British geographer Tony Fielding argued that while these migration trends were similar in virtually all advanced capitalist nations, there were substantially different explanations. American authors tended to follow Berry's explanation of it as the will of individual, 'ordinary' people to leave the large cities in preference for the environments of rural and small-town living. On the other hand, European explanations tended to follow the structural arguments of regional development that focused on shifting capitalist relations of power.[45]

---

[39] Bell 1995; Walmsely et al 1995.
[40] Hugo 1996.
[41] Weinand and Lea 1990; Bell 1995; Hugo 1996; Salt 2001.
[42] Weinand and Lea 1990; Salt 2001.
[43] For example see the edited collections of Champion 1989; Boyle and Halfacree 1998.
[44] Walmsely et al 1995; Fielding 1998.
[45] Fielding 1998. His extensive class-based analysis of counterurbanisation in England/Europe in the 1980s is widely cited in the international literature.

While all Australian commentators cited here agreed in hindsight that the process had also begun in Australia in some places from the early 1970s, it went largely undiscussed through to the latter 1980s. While the unexpectedness of this turnaround is commented on, no one provided a direct explanation for why it took so long to be noticed as significant to understanding social and economic restructuring.[46] No doubt it is due to a combination of effects. These include the general lack of interest and research in the Australian countryside until recently, outside of its mythic representations. Also the out-migration from the metropolitan cities was not noticeable through the 1970s as international and rural in-migration meant that the overwhelming historical population concentrations in those cities was maintained.[47]

Some Australian authors also emphasised that the 'turnaround' did not have the same intensity or widespread impact as experienced in America and Europe in the 1970s and 80s.[48] Their research showed that counterurbanisation has not been the uniform phenomena across capitalist nations suggested by Fielding. Australia's geography and settler history has produced important differences that have resulted in the ongoing heavy concentration of populations in the coastal-metropolitan cities. However this observation should not diminish the enormous impact on those areas where the 'turnaround' has occurred in Australia.

The recent interest has meant that Australian research has been able to tap into the longer international history of analysis, plus reviewing two decades of statistical data in Australia, resulting in a generally less dichotomised debate than outlined by Fielding.[49] Authors offer a variety of explanations for causes of the turnaround. These include the centrality of economic structural change that has seen the growth in service industries less tied to the major cities; improvements in transport; portable communication technologies; the development of a leisure society that has encouraged lifestyle choices to attractive coastal areas; a dissatisfaction with city living including perceptions of greater safety and healthier living in the county; increased affluence that has allowed greater mobility; portability of social security benefits and cheaper living in regional

---

[46] Walmesley et al 1995.
[47] Burnley 1988; Rowland 1996.
[48] Weinand and Lea 1990.
[49] See Bell 1995.

centres; and new choices in retirement options amongst the growing population of the aged.[50]

Different patterns of migration have now been discerned across the period from the 1970s to the 1990s. For example there has been a spatial differentiation. The 1970s saw a broader spatial distribution of new settlers moving into rural areas as hobby farmers, rural retreaters and alternative lifestylers, later shrinking back to selective urban, predominantly coastal centres.[51]

The alternative counter-culture movement is the most famous amongst those groups of the 1970s moving into the North Coast hinterland, taking up rural properties left by dairy farmers in their losing battle with rural restructuring. They brought the most obvious cultural diversity amongst the new settlers, but have had very little academic attention. Peter Cock, who has written one of the few ethnographic accounts of their experiences, argued this was because it happened outside of the city and hence away from the interests of city academics.[52]

These shifting spatial and economic patterns of migration are important to my thesis. The majority of the local new settlers who were involved in the Emerald Beach dispute migrated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was at the height of the counterurban push, and prior to the rapid acceleration of housing prices and cost-of-living in Sydney. They were making deliberate lifestyle choices to leave the city, seeking particular visions for their lives in the coastal countryside, often taking months or years to settle on just the right place to live.[53] The Emerald Beach protesters generally fitted Graeme Hugo's research findings (following Bell), that in the hey-day of counterurbanisation the net gains of migrants to growing non-metropolitan areas were employed, predominantly middle-class people.[54]

However through the 1980s and escalating into the 1990s, the net gains have overwhelmingly been amongst the retired, the unemployed and others outside the labour force.[55] In the recent literature published about these migration trends, there is increasing focus on welfare-led migration from the metropolitan cities to regional

---

[50] Bell 1992; Hugo 1989, 1996; Burnley 1998 and on the north coast see Walmsley 1990.
[51] Bell 1992, 1995; Coffs Harbour City Council 1999 *Population Profile.*
[52] Cock 1976.
[53] See chapter five.
[54] Hugo 1996.
[55] Ibid.

centres such as Coffs Harbour.[56] Ongoing economic restructuring resulting in the lack or loss of jobs, escalating house prices and high costs of living are cited in this literature as the main reasons for moving out.[57] A growing geographical divide of winners and losers is argued to be growing between the concentration of high status jobs in the metropolitan cities, especially Sydney, compared to lower status jobs in the regional cities based on service industries in the community, retail and tourism sectors.[58]

While an important historical perspective of counterurbanisation is being brought to bear, such generalisations also hide the complexity and diversity within and between regions and the focus and interpretation of data. Large numbers of the employed continued to move to the coast in the 1980s and 90s, just as the unemployed were already moving out of the cities in the 1970s.[59]

Retirees have been a major cohort of migrants to the coast. Research on the characteristics of retirement on the North Coast suggests some differentiation in choice of region, with greater numbers of older people migrating to Port Macquarie and Ballina than to Coffs Harbour.[60] This hardly mitigates the substantial population of retirees to the Coffs Harbour region and again blurs the differences between the neighbouring communities of Sawtell, Coffs Harbour and Emerald Beach in the Shire, each with different demographic profiles.[61] Little research has as yet been carried out on these intra-regional differences. The 1970s and early 1980s may have seen a greater percentage of young retirees. However, overall the research shows that most coastal retirees are able bodied and middle class, reflecting international trends.[62]

One thing which has remained constant over the whole period is that the

---

[56] Wulff and Bell 1997; Hugo and Bell 1998; Birrell 1999.

[57] Wulff and Bell 1997. While it may only now be appearing in the literature, many people living in Coffs Harbour would argue that this phenomena has long been observed and hardly a surprise.

[58] National Institute for Economic and Industry Research 1998; 2001 *State of the Regions Report,* NIEIR for the Australian Local Government Association, Canberra.

[59] For example see Walmsely et al 1995 for high rates of employed migrants moving to Coffs Harbour in the period 1986-1991. However the fact that they did not interview any households without a phone would have narrowed their survey away from welfare recipients. Also see Burnley's 1988 discussion of the turnaround out of Sydney in the 1970s where he notes it was obvious that the unemployed were heading out of the metropolitan area. One of the emphases of his article was to point out that traditional models of internal migration arguing that migration followed employment opportunities were no longer valid. The North Coast destination of migrants were known to be experiencing very high unemployment rates.

[60] Murphy and Zehner 1988; Walmsley et al 1995.

[61] Sherlaimoff 1986; Munday 1998; Coffs Harbour City Council 1994 *Population Profile.*

[62] Murphy 1981; Murphy and Zehner 1988; Rowland 1996; Neyland and Kendig 1996.

migrants moving to the coast across all ages have been overwhelmingly 'white', Anglo-Australians. However this has raised little analysis or comment.[63] It is particularly noticeable in the retirement literature on the coast, partly because this is one of the only areas where some in-depth research on a particular group has been carried out.[64] For example Peter Murphy and Robert Zehner make no mention of this in their article on retirees in Port Macquarie, 'Satisfaction with Sunbelt Migration'. However anecdotal evidence from Port Macquarie indicates that for some older people, their satisfaction is linked to the town's perceived ethnic homogeneity - a place predominantly of white people, especially 'no Asians'.[65] There is no theoretical work on whiteness as a colour/ race issue.[66]

An understanding of the spatial mobility of Aboriginal populations also remains 'woefully inadequate'.[67] In 1996 John Taylor and Martin Bell commented that:

> ...a good deal is known about the non-indigenous population in respect of their propensity to move and spatial redistribution, whereas knowledge of movement propensities for the indigenous population is virtually nil while that concerning spatial redistribution is restricted mostly to case studies of urbanisation.[68]

They argued that whereas greater quantitative analysis on the macro level of non-Aboriginal movement is available and less on detailed patterns, the opposite is true for the Aboriginal population due in part to the ethnographic focus of much research. However, given that essentially the same data since the 1971 census have been available for comprehensive analysis of population mobility for both groups, they suggested that the limited focus on indigenous issues is 'striking'.[69]

Indigenous people in settled Australia have also been highly mobile in the post-war period, although often not in the same patterns of flow as non-indigenous migrants.[70] A greater understanding of Aboriginal mobility is not only important for

---

[63] Recent trends have shown more well-established English-speaking European migrants moving north. See Bell 1995; Wulff and Bell 1997.

[64] Murphy 1981; Murphy and Zehner 1988; Rowland 1996; Neyland and Kendig 1996.

[65] This was strongly argued by observations from Port Macquarie students in my classes at Southern Cross University 1996 - 1998.

[66] Analysis of One Nation politics in a place like Port Macquarie where there was both very strong support and also challenge would be productive.

[67] Allen et al in Taylor and Bell 1996:392.

[68] Taylor and Bell 1996:394.

[69] Ibid:395.

[70] For example, while there has also been a rural-urban flow, there has been much less interstate movement than non-indigenous people and intra-state movements have often been quite different; see Taylor and Bell 1996.

adequate planning of services and programs. It also has far reaching consequences in understanding the histories of places like Coffs Harbour, where many local Aboriginal people are also internal migrants from other parts of the North Coast and inland.

The motivations for Aboriginal migration on the North Coast have some similarities and vast differences to non-Aboriginal migrants. Similarities include the gravitation to centres of employment, proximity to social services and following family. However these stand alongside entirely different histories of enforced migration through government policies and racist exclusive community actions.[71] My thesis is predominantly a story of the non-indigenous migrants and the communities that they found already there. However it can never solely be a non-indigenous story because the emotional and legal ownership of the land on which those people settled, in the nineteenth century and in the twenty-first century, remains contested.

In carrying out an historical, qualitative study of migration and place on the North Coast of New South Wales in this thesis, I aim to put some meat on the statistical bones of the field of internal migration. It is also a story of the transformation of place that the shifting patterns of internal migration brought to the countryside of the North Coast.

The countryside

In the late 1960s Coffs Harbour was still a small, poor service town to its forestry, banana and dairying rural hinterland, and it reflected many typical features of country life around Australia. These included income dependency on agricultural production prone to seasonal fluctuation, cheap and functional housing, high food prices, less emphasis on educational attainment, poor quality and fewer services, particular concern about isolation and poor road conditions and an out-migration of the young.[72]

Even as late as 1974, the Federal Government Green paper on 'Rural Policy in Australia' devoted less than 4 percent of its content to the non-farming population. However, by 1993 only about ten percent of people living in rural areas were directly involved in agricultural production.[73] Keith Halfacree, talking about the English countryside but referring to similar patterns across the industrialised world, identified

---

[71] See Goodall 1996.
[72] As identified by Epps and Sorenson 1993.
[73] Ibid.

this as a shift from a productivist to a post-productivist era in the countryside.[74] These shifts have been experienced in very different ways within the countryside, with some areas gaining population and prosperity and others drained to non-viability. It has meant that, more than ever, we cannot talk about a homogenous, typical countryside, but rather countrysides.

Many country places in Australia, especially the inland, experience the country/city divide in very stark ways, made clear to city Australians through the politics of Pauline Hanson's *One Nation Party* in the 1990s. However the experience of the rural and the urban is not so easily set in opposition in a place like Coffs Harbour. It is still 'in the country' but its urban features, which developed from the 1970s, protrude into the banana covered mountain vistas.

This in-betweenness of the rural and the urban, which has been created outside the metropolis through the surge of internal migration since the 1970s to parts of the coastal countryside, has been under explored in Australia. In 1994 Andrew Beer, Andrew Bolam and Alaric Maude published their government commissioned research, *Beyond the Capitals: Urban Growth in Regional Australia,* on the non-metropolitan urban places that have been impacted upon so strongly.

> More than one in ten Australians live in a city of 10,000 persons or more that is not Canberra or one of the state capitals... [D]espite their significance there has been little research into their economic structure, population dynamics, levels of service provision, housing markets or administration.[75]

The research of the rural sociologists from regional universities such as the University of New England, Charles Sturt University from the 1980s and the University of Southern Queensland in the 1990s, have broadened understandings of rural communities.[76] However their focus has predominantly been on the impact of economic restructuring on largely agriculturally-dependant inland places and populations rather than coastal places.

The sociological investigations of country towns by Ken Dempsey and Ian Gray, following from the earlier work of Ronald Wild, elucidated the power relations within

---

[74] Halfacree 1997.
[75] Beer et al:1.
[76] Centres for rural research at UNE, Charles Sturt and their journal *Rural Society*, and Southern Queensland University; Lawrence 1987, Lawrence et al 1996, Lawrence and Gray 2001 and SQU's e-journal *Transformations*.

country towns.[77] Those studies have been important in exploring social relations which have maintained the boundaries often ostracising outsiders who did not fit the hierarchies already in place, and the mythologies of country living. Again, they have focused on the smaller country towns of inland Australia. Here the impact of internal migration has generally been one of leaving for the metropolitan and smaller coastal cities, rather than in-migration experienced by the previously small coastal towns of my study.

Researchers from the University of New England have produced the most extensive studies on northern New South Wales, mostly in reports. From the 1960s the Department of Geography and Planning produced a series of reports by Helen Hannah on the North Coast and inquiries into tourism from as early as 1959.[78] John Walmsley's 1990 edited collection, *Change and Adjustment in Northern New South Wales*, remains the most comprehensive book on the region. It discussed the shifting fortunes of the tablelands compared to the coast.[79]

In the face of the burgeoning growth of alternative and additional uses of the countryside, Epps and Sorensen 'felt compelled' to adopt a broad definition of 'rural'.[80] They used the term to encompass everywhere except the six metropolitan capitals, New South Wales's Central Coast, Canberra, Queensland's Gold Coast and the major industrial cities of Wollongong, Newcastle and Geelong. As rural places, they included the coastal resort-based centres like Coffs Harbour because they remained service centres to rural communities. Rural, for them, encompassed non-metropolitan Australia. However this definition does not adequately reflect the in-betweenness referred to earlier, and is explored further below.[81]

There is still little published academic material in Australia on the identity politics of rural people.[82] One area that had some early exploration comes from within the work of political historians interested in rural politics, such as Don Aitkin. As part

---

[77] Wild 1974; Dempsey 1990; Gray 1991.
[78] See chapter three.
[79] Walmsley 1990.
[80] Epps and Sorenson 1993.
[81] See Boyle and Halfacree 1998 for discussions on English angst over the use of 'rural' in the face of the post-productivist countryside.
[82] See Sinclair 2001. Ongoing research by Heather Goodall on the black soil country of north western NSW and Damian Lucas on the big river country of northern NSW and southern Queensland, will enhance this area.

of his research on the Country Party, Aitkin was interested in 'countrymindedness' - that 'imprecise concept' which explored country conservatism and opposition to the city.[83]

Two international edited collections published in 1997 have been helpful in exploring the issues of rurality, particularly in response to the international patterns in population trends of internal migration. Both books set out to make the rural visible, arguing that rural people and issues have been largely invisible both in political and economic processes and academic discourse. Barbara Ching and Gerald Creed published their book, *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Heritage*, out of America. Paul Cloke and Jo Little's publication, *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, comes from England.

Both were concerned to bring the rural more firmly into the realm of postmodern academic interests in identity politics and difference. Creed and Ching powerfully argued that the explosion of such scholarly interest has resulted in the:

> representation of social distinctions primarily in terms of race, class and gender thus mask[ing] the extent to which these categories are inflected by place identification. ... [C]ontemporary discussions of the fragmentation and recombination of identities locate this process almost exclusively in the city. Conversely, the few scholars who explicitly discuss rural identity have generally failed to connect it to these larger theoretical debates...[84]

Cloke and Little talk about 'new fascinations' in rural studies in Britain which have moved away from a theorising of 'sameness' to a more recent emphasis on 'theorising difference and significations in geographies of otherness, discourse and cultural symbolism'.[85] Both collections are interested in issues of power and representation, with Cloke and Little in particular focusing inquiry back to class analysis.

Their projects also diverge in a number of ways. Cloke and Little said their principle concerns were with 'hidden others' within 'countrysides'. Their attention remained *within* those various countrysides and the 'complex hegemony of domination' which constructs selves and others. Ching and Creed, on the other hand, highlighted the ongoing pervasive opposition between urban and rural.

---

[83] This is discussed in chapter two. Aitkin 1972; 1985; Costar and Woodward 1985.
[84] Ching and Creed 1997:3.
[85] Cloke and Little 1997:2.

Even in looking to the romantic representations of the country, they argued, one finds negativity: the urban remains the cultured, sophisticated, assumed subject, and in the end the rural always boils down to Marx and Engels representation of the 'idiocy of rural life'.[86] For them, therefore, the countryside itself is other. However whereas their subjects are easily marked out as rural such as Central American peasantry, 'redneck' Texans, and New Zealand sheep farmers, Cloke and Little included some of the more ambiguous groupings that have appeared in the post-productivist countryside such as city-bred groupings from urban out-migration.

Read together, both publications provide much needed ways into discussing old and new countrysides. They explored the ongoing dichotomies that place the urban as self and the rural as other in many places. They also examined the increasing fracturing of the countryside with the new economies, technologies, lifestyle preferences and cultural hierarchies so that divisions within countrysides cannot always be so easily reduced to a powerful/powerless, urban/rural divide.

Halfacree argued in Cloke and Little's book that new spaces have been opened up in post-productivist countrysides for the expression of new identities within rural contexts.[87] For my own project, based in a region where changes to the countryside have seen urban and rural collide and collude, the dichotomy of Creed and Ching's urban/rural divide is not always as helpful as the *countrysides* of Cloke and Little.

All the authors in the two volumes would agree that how ever 'the rural' is viewed, it is a construction and not a fixed, naturally occurring or neutral concept. While the rural and urban blur in a place like Coffs Harbour, the meanings of those terms are constantly contested and reshaped.

Cloke argued that it is important what images of the country people have when they move there.[88] Equally, those already there produce their own images of country living which often do not match up with the ones people bring with them. Struggles over control of space in the country often reflect conflicts over what it means to live in the country. The Emerald Beach dispute was not only an environmental battle over discharging effluent into the ocean. It was about the contested ways that people wish to claim and define the coastal countryside.

---

[86] Ching and Creed 1997:vii.
[87] Halfacree 1997.
[88] Cloke and Little 1997.

Locating place in history

Urban dwellers' yearnings for countryside living on the warm coast, alongside local impacts of global restructuring on rural residents and the physical place itself, all combined in the initial construction of the estate of Emerald Beach. Constructing place is an ongoing process of making and remaking, shaped out of the competing visions of those who claim some sense of belonging. Geographer, Tim Creswell, makes the observation that a place is often not consciously *seen* until something becomes 'out of place' there.[89] Place becomes invested with a diversity of socially and culturally constructed imaginings both of the physical place and the appropriate behaviour and use of that place.

By asserting identity, as anthropologist Rosita Henry pointed out in her work on competing visions for the Queensland town of Kuranda, people transform places, while environmental historians like Donald Worster insist that this is never accomplished independently of nature as agent.[90] The focus of this section is a review of literature that has been useful to me as a historian in understanding the relationships between people and place, as I've explored histories of the North Coast and Look-At-Me-Now Headland.

Economic restructuring, and the social and cultural transformations which have accompanied the expanding global and shrinking local worlds of the postmodern age, have put space and place firmly within the discourses of the humanities and social sciences. There has been a revival of interest in the concept of place.[91] From local council documents concerned with a 'sense of place' to diverse academic fields, the language of the spatial is now everywhere in our grappling with the postmodern world of multiplicity and fluidity.[92]

In commenting on the range of spatial language 'on the agenda', geographer Doreen Massey noted that it was a delight to find concepts long at the centre of her field's discussions now also at the centre of wider social and political debates.[93] She was uneasy, however, about the meanings and definitions (or lack of) often given to

---

[89] Creswell 1996.
[90] Henry 1994; Worster 1993.
[91] Jackson and Penrose 1993.
[92] Keith and Pike 1993:1 provide the following examples: position, location, situation, mapping, centre-margin, open-closed, inside-outside, global-local.
[93] Massey 1993b.

spatial terms. When an author explores the meaning of place, for example, it is often understood as humanised, meaningful space.[94] Space however, argue Michael Keith and Steve Pike, 'cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive, abstract arena on which things happen'.[95]

Massey's conceptualisation of space and place has been influential to my thesis. She was part of a new generation of Marxist geographers during the 1980s whose arguments 'turned intellectually on how "the relation between space and society" should be conceptualized'.[96] Central to their concerns was the relationship between space-time, where previously space was constructed as passive and fixed, whilst time was considered dynamic and changing.

Rather, she argued that the spatial and society are inseparable, where the spatial is understood to be an active force in social relations. Space, in this understanding, is not static but both a dynamic, productive force as well as socially constructed and not a given. In this way it is 'implicated in the production of history - and thus, potentially, of politics'.[97] Massey argues that in understanding space in this way allows us also to understand place as fluid and unbounded because it is part of dynamic human processes.[98]

Debate between humanistic and Marxist geographers through the 1970s over meanings of space and place construction was heated, where humanistic geographers who were concerned with a sense of place conceived place, according to Allan Pred, as 'frozen scenes for human activity'; 'an inert, experienced scene'.[99] Anthropologists have also said of their own field that until recently there has been 'surprisingly little self-consciousness' about the issues of space and place in anthropological theory or attendance to the 'rich histories of debate' within geography.[100]

As the radical geography agenda became more mainstream, in the early 1990s some of the most hostile debate about the meanings and construction of place was

---

[94] For example Carter 1988; Cresswell 1996; Read 1996.
[95] Keith and Pike 1993:2.
[96] Massey 1994a:254.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Massey 1993a,b; Lefebvre 1991.
[99] Pred 1986:6.
[100] Gupta and Ferguson 1992:6; Moore 1998:347. See Strang 1997 and Merlan 1998 for two recent Australian examples.

fought out between cultural geographers and environmental historians.[101] In their 1992 collection, Trevor Barnes and James Duncan took up 'the linguistic turn' in the writing and representation of geography. They argued that '"the social-life-as-text" metaphor is easily applicable to landscape because it too is a social and cultural construction' and that 'places are intertextual sites because various texts and discursive practices based on previous texts are deeply inscribed in their language and institutions.'[102]

In response, environmental historians argued that nature as agent had been left out of such textual readings of place, and that places are not only social and cultural constructions. Worster said of places that they are both 'invented and discovered'. For example he argued that creators of popular and elite culture have constructed the West of America as if it were only a cultural construction, denying the 'complex truth' that the natural environment has also played 'an active, crucial role ... and often its unmaking and remaking'.[103]

As one who engaged in those oppositional debates and also engaged within his own field about the nature of nature, the environmental historian William Cronon has offered broad insight to my understandings of place. While arguing that the material nature of place - its rocks, birds, wind and sky - cannot be extracted from the making of places, 'nature is a profoundly human construction.'[104]

> This is not to say that the nonhuman world is somehow unreal or a mere figment of our imaginations - far from it. But the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated.[105]

Based on these analyses, I understand the concept of place to be where the social, the material and the spatial are inseparably intertwined, known only through our historical and culturally-specific understandings. Rather than being fixed or naturally occurring entities - the location of bounded and homogenous communities, or merely the stage on which historical events unfolded - places are historically contingent, constantly contested, interrogated and reinterpreted in our material and imagined worlds.

---

[101] See Demeritt 1994.
[102] Barnes and Duncan 1992:6-8.
[103] Worster 1994:x.
[104] Cronon 1995b:25.
[105] Ibid.

Another central influence on my understanding of place is Massey's conception of 'progressive place' in the new world of accelerated globalisation. In her *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture,* Meaghan Morris referred to the shaping pressures of global economic, political and technological shifts in which people:

> confront the collapsing of old economies of 'work' and 'home'; the fraying of social bonds and political alliances that once secured, for some, a progressive sense of history; and an abrading of familiar boundaries of 'culture'.[106]

In this environment, places have again become consciously articulated as people seek ways to hold on to the distinctiveness of localities. Modernist conceptions of a global society, which worked to break down the bonds of community and place, have been increasingly challenged since the 1980s as nationalist, regional and localised claims to exclusive and authentic rights to place have, often violently, been put.

At the same time it is no longer just the dispossessed, displaced and exiled groups who cannot assume a comfortable relationship of identity and place. Referring to the construction of Englishness in their introduction on space, place and identity, Erica Carter et al asserted that:

> The presumed certainties of cultural identity, firmly located in particular places which housed stable cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective, though never a reality for some, were increasingly disrupted and displaced for all.[107]

Massey has kept up a long running argument with fellow geographer David Harvey on the possibilities of the retention of place as a useful concept. Harvey maintained that place-centred projects are inherently bounded and nostalgic, hence inevitably conservative, backward looking and reactionary in their aims or outcomes.[108] Massey, on the other hand, argued that local places are never independent from the outside, global world of their historical and contemporary construction, and hence do not necessarily fit this description.[109]

Rather than retreating back into exclusive, essential representations of place as settled, stable and culturally homogenous, Massey argues for its retention in a progressive sense. She argues for place construction to be understood as a process, lacking defined boundaries and acknowledging the internal differences and conflicts

---

[106] Morris 1998:22.
[107] Carter et al 1993:vii.
[108] Harvey 1989; 1993.
[109] Massey 1993a; 1994b; 1995.

that have always been part of the history of local places. Hence places should be understood as always in flux and consequently local, place-specific projects can and should be dynamic, progressive projects.[110]

Massey described the global as the world beyond the place itself, where the local is always hooked into the global network, but not reducible to it.[111] In 1972 when Keith Hancock wrote his local history *Discovering Monaro: A study of man's impact on his environment*, he exhorted historians to relate parish pump to cosmos. However even in 1991 Bill Gammage had to admit that local historians had not fully met this local/global imperative, neither the part-time ones whose heroic-local-success stories were weak on the cosmos, nor the professional full-timers who wrote thematic fragments which avoided both parish pump and cosmos.[112]

In Australia, the explicit early histories of place that made some deliberate inroads on discussing the construction of places as a complex interrelationship between the social and the natural, were rarely professional historians but historical geographers.[113] However, while professional historians directed their attention to national histories laid onto places as an 'inert scene', Tom Griffiths argued that local history focused on 'intimate allegiance' and loyalty to place and people, where special influence was given to either environment or heredity.[114]

Such constructions of local history most directly reflect Harvey's concern about nostalgic, reactionary place-studies. Heather Goodall showed how such local histories continue to be generated to endorse certain rural groups as the most authentic spokes-people, to the exclusion of others, in the face of the rapidly diversifying countryside.[115] However, as academic historians have joined others in casting their gaze back to local places as essential to understanding the complexities of broader regional, national and global worlds, local history does not have to replicate the process of imagined bordered, exclusive places.

Local histories of the countryside have also predominantly been the preserve of

---

[110] Massey 1993a; 1994a.
[111] Massey 1994b.
[112] Gammage 1991. See Davidson 1989 for his overview of the styles of local Australian history writing since the late nineteenth century.
[113] . See Heathcote 1965, Seddon 1972 and Powell 1976 and see Powell 1994 for comment.
[114] Griffiths 1996:220-221, referring to comments about local history from Les Murray and Paul Carter.
[115] Goodall 1999a, 2000.

Anglo-Australians, with an increasing interest in Aboriginal histories of the same places emerging from Aboriginal biographies, oral historians and Aboriginal heritage experts. This is reflected in the rewritten national historical narratives, leading historians and anthropologists reflecting on the Australian literature to point out further exclusions. It is as if Anglo-settlers and Aborigines only populated the Australian past, with no room for the other ethnic influences that have been part of the past. This isn't a demand to 'find an ethnic' where none existed - but to reflect what was there.[116]

Some social historians in Australia have long had an interest in understanding the places in which their histories have unfolded, understanding them as an active, intrinsic part of the story. Amongst those professionals most interested in place have been non-Aboriginal writers of Aboriginal history, gleaned through oral sources. They have understood such elements as the topography, water sources, feral and pastoral animals and plants, and the cultural histories that drove land use and human practices, as embedded relationally between places and people.[117] Others who have focused onto ecological and environmental imperatives in their histories have found American environmental historians such as Cronon, Worster, Caroline Merchant and Alfred Crosby influential.[118]

More recently, to understand the intertwined cultural and environmental historical processes of place-construction, some of these historians have turned their attention to stories. They include Peter Read's search for non-Aboriginal stories of their emotional attachment to places from which Aboriginal people have been dispossessed, Heather Goodall's exploration of the ways stories illuminate both publicly silenced knowledges as well as competing constructions of the same places, Paul Sinclair and Damian Lucas's river stories and Rebe Taylor and Maria Nugent's work on indigenous places in settled Australia.[119]

Historians arrange the disjointed and unstructured artefacts of the past into histories through the narrative structure of our telling. That this process silences other

---

[116] See above section on internal migration plus Saunders 1995; Hall 1999
[117] For example Read 1984; McGrath 1987; Goodall 1996.
[118] Griffiths 1992, 1996; Garden 1993; Griffiths and Robin 1997; Robin 1998.
[119] Read 1996, 2000; Goodall 1999a,b; Goodall and Lucas 1997; Sinclair 2001; Taylor 2002; Bonyhady and Griffiths 2002; and the doctoral work of Damian Lucas, Rebe Taylor and Maria Nugent.

stories that do not fit the plot has been widely discussed in postmodern and other critiques.[120] All historians, as Cronon says:

> ...configure the events of the past into causal sequences - stories - that order and simplify those events to give them new meanings. We do so because narrative is the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality.[121]

So, of course, do our story-tellers. Some people articulate this clearly in the interview process. In my interviews one person said to me, as she struggled to get a flow of stories: 'It's a bit hard to get things in their perspective... I suppose that's the thing - you have to get things in some sort of order'; another saying that '...the most important thing I have to tell you is...'.[122] Much has been written about the ways and reasons why people remember things as they do. That it is never only an individual process but one that is also socially conceived is discussed in the work on social or collective memory.[123]

Therefore much recent work seeks out stories not in a belief that they can reflect what actually happened in the past, but rather that they provide an insightful way of understanding how people find meaning in changing places in diverse and often contested ways. Memory is understood in this work as a social process grounded in the present, where 'people frequently mobilise particular accounts of the past not only to explain but to justify and authorise their current choices, alliances and decisions.'[124]

In understanding place as a fluid part of social relations, the power of naming also becomes apparent. Language is not a mirror of a real world, but is itself productive of that world. Paul Carter's 1988 spatial history *The Road to Botany Bay* has been influential on Australian analysts interested in place. He criticised both historical geographers and historians for not recognising the ways that the landscapes described and named by the early explorers were not reflective of an objective reality of something already there, but actually needed to be constituted through the texts of those who described it.[125] His own blindness to the eurocentric and appropriating nature of his

---

[120] White 1987; LaCapra 1983.

[121] Cronon 1992: 1349.

[122] Interview T 31; Interview T 34.

[123] Samuel and Thompson 1990; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994; Sturken 1997.

[124] Goodall and Lucas 1997:3.

[125] Carter 1988.

explorations of what he called 'spatial history' is discussed by Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs.[126]

The language of authentic entitlement to place therefore powerfully constructs the landscapes of contestation. At Look-at-Me-Now Headland the landscape was described as spiritual and natural, as wasteland, as a car park or perfect for a golf course. Tim Cresswell says that people read places by acting in them.[127] The same places hold within them competing stories about whose place it is, and who has the right to act in them. An event such as the direct-action protest at Emerald Beach, and its long-running history of sewerage dispute both before and after the events of late 1991, enabled the articulation of competing visions for the transforming region of Coffs Harbour in ways that would have been less visible without the episode.

People's competing claims of their rights to act and hence belong in place are shaped through their understandings of local history, ideological beliefs and global processes, each impacting on the other. Particular conceptions of countryside culture, claims of environmental stewardship, histories of indigenous visibility, rights to work and claims of insider and outsider localness, all impacted at Emerald Beach and were constructed into narratives of belonging.

Places impact onto the stories people tell of them. Those stories also help construct places. The histories that are told of them are therefore part of the process of place-making. Read's book on individual Australians' sense of loss in place in *Returning to Nothing* met with mixed reception. Many non-Aboriginal Australians felt a sense of relief that someone was determinedly reflecting their sense of emotional attachment to Australian places. Others, however, felt uncomfortable or troubled with his uncritical equation between the attachment to local places of contemporary indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, without interrogating colonial histories and current policy determinations in the same body of work.[128]

There are no parts of Australia where stories of possession, dispossession, displacement and the search for new homes don't crowd into, and onto, the meanings of those places. Denis Byrne, an archaeologist who has long worked in cultural heritage, explained the shift in history and heritage to its focus on place and belonging.

---

[126] Gelder and Jacobs 1996.

[127] Creswell 1996.

[128] See Jacobs 1997 for criticism and Huggins for a welcoming Aboriginal response in Harms 1998.

> In settler colonies it is not enough to *occupy* the new landscape, you must inscribe it culturally - ie, the new country must begin to reflect your presence. To cease being foreigners and start being citizens, to start being *of* a place instead of merely being *in* a place, the landscape needs to begin to tell your story. [original emphases][129]

In Australia, while Anglo Australians have long battled to secure their identity in what many have regarded as an alien place, white entitlement to Australia was not broadly challenged in the twentieth century until the land rights movements of the past three decades. As Garralwuy Yunupingu pointed out, Aboriginal people who stayed on their homelands became the nomads on 'walkabout' in white Australian mythology, while European Australians who strayed far from their original homelands were named the settlers who stayed at home.[130]

However, the contemporary combination of increasing non-Aboriginal anxiety and insecurity about entitlement to land, at the same time as a greater academic attention to non-indigenous attachments to place, raises many vital questions for a project such as mine. It is really important that in talking about place, belonging and attachment of non-indigenous Australians, that such a project is always aware of the ways it can act as a recolonising process, excluding Aboriginal people and settling, once and for all, non-Aboriginal Australians unproblematically in place.

Postcolonial Australia remains in a state of unsettled settledness, as argued by Gelder and Jacobs - an uncanny sense of place.[131] Arguing for a view of place as fluid and unfixed resists the tendency for 'place studies' to be a colonising force in the process of recognising the various ways non-Aboriginal Australians have constructed their meanings and attachments to this place, Australia, and the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales.

Historical representations of the Mid-North Coast

The region did not easily fit the nineteenth century representations of Australia - neither the sour ones of a dismal dry, treeless land, or the celebratory ones of unbroken, clear horizons. However local histories of the area have been no less exuberant about the promise and progress of the region, usually presenting a view of gritty white pioneers in a difficult landscape of forests and water.

---

[129] Byrne in Byrne et al 2001:51
[130] Yunupingu in Curthoys 1999:14
[131] Gelder and Jacobs 1998.

Two contemporary commentators who published their observations of the region in the nineteenth century are referred to in most relevant histories. Clement Hodgkinson was the first government surveyor of the Macleay, Nambucca and Bellinger River regions and published his 'adventures' in 1844.[132] John Henderson, a squatter from the Macleay River, published his book a few years later in 1851, covering a similar area.[133] Both ventured over the Great Dividing Range and briefly down to the Clarence before returning to the Macleay.

Other published accounts to the early twentieth century were locally based and few in number. Most came from the established settlements in the Hastings and Macleay areas, and Clarence region.[134] This pattern of localised histories has continued to the present, with only three recent histories covering the broader region - Terry Kass's survey report of North Coast history, Alex Gaddes' history of red cedar and Baiba Berzins' history of North Coast women.[135]

In the southern Clarence region the Bawden Lectures are cited in many books interested in early contact history of the region, and are the source of many of the massacre stories that have been written down. Thomas Bawden lived on the Clarence in the 1840s and heard the stories, sometimes first hand. He wrote a series of lectures in the 1880s as he considered such a record of early settlement was required.[136]

To the south of Coffs Harbour, Norma Townsend's history of early settlement of the Nambucca region provides a less congratulatory account of pioneering life, providing vivid insight into the isolation and hardship on the Mid-North Coast.[137] Non-Aboriginal settlement came late to Coffs Harbour because there was no navigable river. Local histories of the region celebrate the hinterland dairy country and the struggle to grow the tiny port community throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[138]

Neil Yeates' two volume history of Coffs Harbour township is the most comprehensive, reaching to 1964. He was unable to complete the third volume before

---

[132] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*, T&W Boone, London.

[133] Henderson 1851 *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales with Pictures of Squatting and of Life in the Bush.*, W.Shoberl, London..

[134] See bibliographies to Daley 1966; Townsend 1993; Berzins 1996.

[135] Kass 1989; Gaddes 1990; Berzins 1996.

[136] Bawden 1997.

[137] Townsend 1993.

[138] The Coffs Harbour area has seen five substantive local histories published. England 1976 and Yeates 1990, 1993 on Coffs Harbour: Secomb 1986 on the Upper Orara Valley: Yeates 1982 on Woolgoolga; Holder 1984 on the Look-At-Me-Now coastal strip.

he died. Yeates was aided in his research by the work of another prolific local historian, George England. England's mark is to be found on nearly all the published historical material of the area. A Rotary club member compiled England's book from his voluminous notes after a stroke incapacitated him.

Of great influence are his notes made on the Gumbaingirr which included interviews with older Aboriginal men of the area.[139] Notes he made for a lecture in 1968 on the Moonee Axe Factory behind Look-At-Me-Now Headland have been cited in a wide variety of reports on the Gumbaingirr.[140] It was often his interpretation of Aboriginal ancestral stories that filled newspaper reports, historical society pamphlets and other published histories, portraying them as a relic of a Dreamtime past. [141]

There have been few indigenous authored stories of contact history in the study area. The most widely read and available are from the late elder of the Gumbaynggir from Nambucca, Harry Buchanan, who recorded many Dreaming stories and provided oral accounts of early Aboriginal and some contact history.[142]

A large survey project from 1973-83, sponsored by National Parks on significant sites on the North Coast, revealed much ongoing indigenous knowledge of the study area.[143] Indigenous academic, Ron Heron, wrote an influential report regarding the significance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, and a number of reports by archaeologists and anthropologists on the Gumbaingirr of Corindi Beach at Yarrawarra provide some contact history of the area. Recently that community has produced a series of books called Yarrawarra Place Stories, outlining their long historical attachment to the area.

Much of the academic work refers to England, J. Ryan and early nineteenth observers such as A.C.McDougall, R.H.Mathews and an early settler in the Upper Orara Valley, Eugene Rudder. Such observations often reveal more about the colonists thought processes than their subjects, however they provide the only contemporary

---

[139] England used the spelling 'Kumbaingeri'.

[140] England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society', unpublished notes, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society.

[141] Eg Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob: Aboriginal Relationships with the Red Rock- Corindi Area, NSW.* Department of Lands; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland* prepared for CHCC and CHDLALC; Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach* Report to NSW Public Works Department.

[142] Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992 and material held in the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Lands Council; Interview between Harry Buchanan and George England.

[143] See Creamer 1984 *A Gift of the Dreaming* National Parks and Wildlife.

written material on these areas and help in the reconstruction of pre and early contact Aboriginal lives.[144] The work of archaeologist, Isabel MacBryde, and her University of New England colleagues in the 1970s, also provide much influential knowledge of the area.[145]

The only historian who made any attempt to examine ongoing Aboriginal, or non-Anglo, settlement of the Coffs Harbour area was Yeates. Otherwise the histories are of pioneering white male settlement and the progress of reaping 'wealth from the wilds'. In a region that has witnessed momentous population shifts since colonisation, no histories before this thesis inquire into the processes of internal migration or the consequences for the warm coastal countryside.

Sources and methodology

Historical methodology shaped much of my thesis, always also engaged with the transdisciplinary approach with which we must surely all grapple in the postmodern world. Central to my exploration of such a recent episode as the sewage dispute was extensive use of oral interviews. Primary written documentation included extensive reading of newspapers, relevant government and academic reports, court documents, submissions and outcomes to two Environmental Impact Statements and two State Government Inquiries, plus access to personal archives such as minutes of meetings, scrapbooks and letters, photographs and video tapes.

By the time I came to live in Coffs Harbour and Emerald Beach, I had already done thorough secondary reading of historians, geographers, anthropologists and archaeologists interested in landscape, contested place, community history, environmental history and the natural and cultural estate. As I became more interested in internal migration and the countryside I read the work of population geographers, rural sociologists and planners.

I began work on the Look-At-Me-Now Headland case study through oral interviews and participants' newspaper scrapbooks. My first interviews were with people who had been protesters against an outfall at Emerald Beach. This was because my initial contact was through a group of anti-outfallers calling themselves the LAMN Arts Project. I had gone to an early meeting in the village, answering a general

---

[144] Goodall 1996, 2000; McBryde 1978.
[145] Especially her 1978 edited book *Records of Times Past.*

invitation to residents out of my letterbox, because as an historian I was interested in their desire to develop ways of remembering the dispute. I also thought it was a way to start to get to know more about the community in which I had come to live. At the time I knew little of its history.

As I learned more about the dispute and its long history from people's stories and newspaper coverage, I began to interview more widely. Interviewees included prominent and less overt supporters of an outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, and residents from around the Shire who could tell me about the place they remembered both before and after the population acceleration from the 1970s.

Fifty-six formal interviews were conducted where appointments were arranged specifically for that purpose. Seventeen informal interviews were carried out where extended conversations were noted at the time or shortly afterwards. Participants have verified all quotes in the thesis and the project was clearly outlined to everyone.[146] Forty-nine of those interviews were related specifically to the sewage dispute and twenty-five were on the transforming countryside. I had at least as many chats at the beach and on the street, over meals and cups of tea, at parties and on aeroplanes, from Coffs Harbour's northern beaches to Sydney and Wollongong. Their voices have been recorded in the text of my thesis with a different font.

I used oral testimony to seek ways in which people understood their past and the sense they have made of it from the present. In this way I was also interested in the meanings of the past that they have stamped onto contemporary analysis.[147] I am aware of the power of the oral historian to shape her story through the choice of interviewees, the process of the interview and editing.[148]

One has to set parameters and I focused on the historical intersections of internal migration and place contestation, rather than the sociological workings of social movements and conflict. Therefore in pursuing the Emerald Beach dispute I interviewed resident protesters and outfall supporters, rather than outside participants such as the police and the ferals. I put advertisements in local newsletters and advertised my project in an article for the local paper, the *Advocate*. Most of my interviewees however were

---

[146] All taped interviews or untaped transcripts were returned to participants in accordance with University ethics guidelines.

[147] See Attwood in Attwood et al 1994, Part 111; Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994.

[148] See Perkins and Thomson 1998.

followed up through suggestions from other people, as well as interviewing key figures made apparent through newspaper coverage and people's stories.

The other main group of interviewees were those with whom I explored the transforming countryside. I chose people to interview from different elements of the changing landscape which my secondary reading of the region, and discussions with residents, indicated were the most significant. I therefore interviewed people from the dairy hinterland, the beach and the townships of Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga, from old settlers who had lived in the region all their lives, new settlers of the 1970s and 80s and Aboriginal locals.

Most of those interviewees who were recommended to me by other people across the two main groups - outfall and transforming countryside - were men. This was apparent particularly in the farm stories where I was directed to the men of the household as the knowledge holders. This reflects ongoing gender relations in public and private conceptions of rural Australia where men are viewed as the farmers.[149] And although I spoke with Aboriginal women, the indigenous people with whom I carried out formal interviews were men as they either held relevant positions or were recommended to me as the willing and knowledgeable spokespeople on the issues. Men were also the prominent public characters in the outfall dispute. I then sought out and interviewed women across both groups.

My own interests and beliefs impact the shape of my story, for example my long-term personal and professional interest in race relations. In this I formed a clear agenda in my hope to provide an analysis of the fragile alliance between Aboriginal and anti-outfallers, in their joint interests in the Headland, which would provide a more complex set of stories about indigenous issues in settled Australia, challenging the continuing ideas of who the 'real' Aborigines are and how they should act.

One of my central dilemmas in using oral stories as a central source in analysing the contested domain of the outfall crisis, was how to present the diversity of views. Not only did I live in the community, but more importantly so do most of my participants whose views were passed on to me in good faith from all sides of the fence, in the hopes that I would understand their position and represent them fairly. In telling a story of a

---

[149] See Alston 1995.

contested domain, I have striven to present a wide range of competing views without making judgements, leaving interpretations open to the reader in the ways I have structured the text.

I had to grapple with how to identify these oral participants in such a contemporary setting. Most anthropologists still do their fieldwork in places other than where they live, and the subjects of most historians are distanced in time as well as space. Theses often sit on library shelves far away from the participant populations, but I wanted my thesis to be freely available within the host community.

As more historians have become interested through oral sources in the histories of the every day and 'ordinary people', Ann McGrath noted in a recent conference that while discussion over the privacy of our living historical subjects remains one of intensity, there are few professional guidelines, all of which are very recent.[150] She asked who we should name or whether we must become 'social-science-ish' and call everyone Mr A. or Ms B. or use pseudonyms. Do we only name the famous people and if so, do we deny 'ordinary people' a 'true factual place in history'.[151]

It quickly became apparent that some characters within the outfall saga would be impossible to disguise because of their distinctive contributions. However it was also evident from conversations from all sides of the dispute that people were unapologetic for their stand and hence I did not want to relegate some people to historical invisibility while others retained their prominence. After discussion, and written drafts of their stories returned to participants, most of the people I interviewed were happy to have their names included in the thesis. Those who were not are included in the interview section of the bibliography with only the date and place of their interview, and are unidentifiable.

Amongst the primary documents used for the thesis in exploring the outfall dispute, I examined media coverage from a few different approaches. One was to pore over the scrapbooks of an anti-outfaller, Gill Reay, who had died by the time I started the project. Her extensive collection of scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings from local, state and national papers is much treasured amongst a group of Emerald Beach

---

[150] McGrath 2000.
[151] Ibid:67.

protesters and will be archived in the Coffs Harbour City Library.[152] I also read all the local newspaper coverage of the Siege between September and December 1991 from two local papers; Coffs Harbour's *Advocate* and the Sawtell based *North Coast/Coffs Harbour Times*, and much of Woolgoolga's *Advertiser*.[153]

Pro and anti outfallers lent me their videos of the nightly TV news bulletins on the Siege and their collections of sewage related material. A number of anti-outfallers lent me their detailed scrapbooks that included poems, newsletters and stickers. All these materials provided me with some insight into the depth of protagonists' personal investment in the episode.

Two sources allowed me access to the vast array of arguments for and against an outfall. One was the *Advocate's* large file on the outfall dispute. At one time or another everyone who had an interest in the outfall corresponded with the Advocate's journalist, Mike Secomb, sending press releases, information, comments or letters. The file is therefore a very rich source of the diversity of community feeling and technical and political argument.[154]

I was also given access to the voluminous collection of documents with which the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre fought its court cases against the outfall. These included reports written for Council and the State Government as well as those commissioned by the anti-outfall lobbyists, articles on sewerage infrastructure, government department correspondence, unpublished submissions to the various state and local government inquiries and court statements.[155] These materials will be archived in the Coffs Harbour City Library. I have referred to the first source as the 'Advocate File' and the second as the 'LAMN Collection' and I have noted in the primary sources of the bibliography when I have accessed materials from these sources.

---

[152] Thankyou to Norma Bourne who initially lent me the Siege scrap book, and then Geoff Cooke who allowed me full access to all the scrap books once they came into his care. They have now been handed over to the Coffs Harbour City Librarian.

[153] My thanks to staff at the Advocate office who found me a desk and allowed me to lug the bound collections of newspapers back and forth; to the editor of the now-deceased *North Coast Times* (which was then called *Coffs Harbour Times* and then the *Holiday Coast Times*), Hugh Saddleton, for lending me box loads of the paper; and to Joe Plewenski whose boxes of newspapers which he leant me included the *Advertiser*.

[154] I am very grateful to Mike Secomb for allowing me access to this file. My bibliography only refers to materials I sited in the thesis, a tiny proportion of what I read and insights I gained from this source.

[155] I am very grateful to Mark Wittleton for making these records available to me on long-term loan.

Further vital sources in researching the drawn-out issue over sewerage infrastructure in the region are the two EISs and two Commissions of Inquiry reports.[156] While the EIS and Commission of Inquiry for the Woolgoolga proposal of the late 1980s were only one volume each, the ones for the Look-At-Me-Now Headland proposal were multi-volume accounts of the technological and scientific appraisals of sewerage.[157]

Amongst the visual and material sources relating to the outfall dispute were personal photographic collections and videos, a series of anti-outfall cartoons by George Reay and individual collections of an impressive array of anti-outfall t-shirts. Visual sources were also important in understanding the transforming countryside and they included photographs from personal collections and early tourist guides, early real estate posters and postcards.[158]

Two written sources were most important in gaining an understanding of dominant representations of the Mid-North Coast in the first period of intensive non-Aboriginal migration to the 1920s. One was the North Coast Steam and Navigation Company's three editions of *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers Districts of New South Wales* printed in 1900, 1909 and 1920, accessed from the Mitchell Library. The editions provided a typical representation of the North Coast, reflected in other tourist pamphlets, settler guides and agricultural journals, as a land of plenty with expansive room for settlement amidst a bountiful landscape.

The other was the Newcastle based newspaper called *The Voice of the North,* which I read from 1918 to 1925 and accessed by microfilm from the Mitchell. It set a far more critical tone of development on the North Coast which revealed its poverty and lack of infrastructure, blamed on the strangle hold of Sydney over the regions. In its

---

[156] Many thanks to Graham Russell and Cathy Wills for giving me their copies of the Woolgoolga and LAMN EISs.

[157] Binnie and Partners 1987 *Coffs Harbour Shire Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: Environmental Impact Statement,* Prepared for Public Works Department NSW; Camp Scott Furphy Pty Ltd (1993) *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement,* Prepared for Public Works Department of NSW; Simpson, William and Kevin Cleland 1988 *The Coffs Harbour City Council Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: A Commission of Inquiry,* Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning; Carleton, Mark 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing: Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour.* Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning, March.

[158] Most impressive was a folder of postcards of the region from Nambucca to Yamba taken by the famous Antarctic photographer, Frank Hurley, kindly lent to me by David Bailey.

particular brand of patriotic fervour, the editorials spent much time in scolding North Coast settlers for their lack of care of its wild life. And as part of its nationalistic agenda it was highly unusual in supporting North Coast Aboriginal farmers in their attempts to hold onto their land. In doing so it offered a contrasting view to the invisibility of indigenous owners in most other accounts of the region.

To gain a general understanding of the postwar period of accelerated change in the Coffs Harbour Shire I read the *Advocate* (a daily paper excluding Sundays and Mondays) for two months of 1965, 1969, 1971, 1975, 1978 and the whole decade of the 1980s.[159] This was an invaluable source of the shifting representations of Coffs Harbour, portrayed back to itself. Throughout the 1970s and early 80s, the *Advocate* continued to celebrate the population shift in uncritical tones. By the mid 1980s, however, the paper was increasingly noting simmering concerns over rapid land subdivision, tensions between development and conservation on the coast, high unemployment rates, a shifting tourism industry and debates over sustainable population numbers in the face of struggles around water and sewerage infrastructure.

I read extensively of coastal, rural and regional planning documents on the Mid-North Coast by local and state government bureaucrats and academics especially from the University of New England. Coffs Harbour was highlighted in a number of such reports because of its high growth rates. The chair of the New South Wales' State Planning Authority, Nigel Ashton, was a significant figure in early coastal planning on the North Coast from the mid 1960s. A large archive of his papers in the Dixon Library includes his notes, lectures and an array of relevant coastal-planning documents.[160]

My project has involved the recent past that is not usually the preserve of historians, but has also drawn extensively on primary sources in the mode of the historian. I have particularly drawn on other disciplines such as geography, rural sociology and anthropology that do not detail their primary sources. In writing a history, crossing disciplinary boundaries and drawing on oral sources, I have sought to reflect this in my bibliographic and referencing style.

---

[159] The *Advocate* can be accessed by microfilm from either the Coffs Harbour City Library or the Coffs Harbour Education Campus Library, where between them they hold nearly all published copies. I read the hard copies for the decade of the 1980s from the Advocate office.

[160] Many thanks to Damian Lucas for alerting me to the collection.

Secondary sources are referenced in the footnotes with the author and date of publication only, with full details produced in the bibliography under secondary sources. The footnotes to the primary sources provide the more detailed information of abbreviated title and publisher or origins of publication, which order the subheadings of the bibliography. The oral testimony of individuals has been coded in the primary sources under Interviews, and appears in the footnotes as numbered interviews. Drawing on a variety of sources and disciplines has allowed me to investigate the near as well as the distant past for this thesis.

Local history in the global world

Visions for the proper use of places have always been contested on the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales, between indigenous and settler populations and farm and forest in the hinterland from the first waves of non-Aboriginal migration, to uses of the coast as tourist populations increased from the 1950s. However the acceleration of internal migration to certain countryside regions from the 1970s has meant that competing claims over rights to act in place, and of belonging to them, have gathered speed. Central to my thesis, then, is the belief that conceptions of place and belonging are especially important at the end of the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century, as people have become increasingly mobile, seeking attachments to new and old places in different and competing ways.

My intention in this thesis has been to produce a history of place that is underpinned by Massey's dynamic, progressive understanding of place. This concept of place has a number of factors interwoven into my project. One is to understand the local as never outside the global, but not reducible to it. Recent scholarship in New South Wales rural and indigenous history has profoundly challenged the notion of local places as ever having been securely bounded, homogenous and stable as nostalgic representations might have it.[161] Even could such 'fixed' places be said to have existed, accelerated migration and globalisation from the 1970s has shattered the possibility of an isolated and consensual 'local'.[162]

A second factor is therefore to understand history, in this progressive sense of place making, as an inevitably fluid project which has no one truth in its telling but is

---

[161] Goodall 1996.
[162] Jacobs 1996.

deeply implicated in the production and politics of that place-making. Such a view of history raises tensions between different conceptions of local history. On the one hand are those local histories intent on revealing the true story of pioneers and progress within a bounded locality. On the other are narratives of contested stories in a porous local environment.

Thirdly, such fluid conceptions of the local and place must find contestation of ideals, visions and desires for those places - where claims of attachment, rights and belonging in place jostle with each other - at the centre of the ongoing process of place making. The challenge remains to find ways in which to cohabit in place in this period of globalisation, which open them up rather than close them down into exclusive fortresses.

CHAPTER ONE

CLAIMING PLACES: COLONIAL EXPANSION INTO MID-NORTH COAST NEW SOUTH WALES

The Mid-North Coast of New South Wales encompasses a region stretching from the Hastings River in the south, along the coastal hinterlands and up onto the plateau country, to the Clarence River in the north. The main townships take in Port Macquarie and Kempsey to the south, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Dorrigo around the middle, and Grafton to the north.

The physical features of this country, where steep forested mountain ranges create the majestic backdrop for sandy beaches, rugged headlands and broad rivers, contain all the ingredients that western analysts of the late twentieth century declared to be the most aesthetically pleasing and beautiful of landscapes. And yet for many of the colonists, this same landscape was seen as the damned impediment that forestalled settlement of the area. The mountains were too rugged to cross, the forests a feared wilderness that needed conquering, the rivers too wide to broach and the seas the graves of many. 'Settlement', for the indigenous owners of this coastal country, meant dispossession and often eradication, along with the forests.

The region is the traditional country of three indigenous groups, the Birrpai and Dhan-Gadi peoples to the south and the Gumbaingirr, whose country around Coffs Harbour includes the specific study area of this thesis. Extensive non-Aboriginal settlement of their country came later than other parts of the east coast of Australia because of the terrain. However, by the early twentieth century, newspapers and magazines were starting to promote the region as a place of rapid development and popularity.

In this chapter I offer one way of viewing the first period of non-Aboriginal migration to, and settlement of, the region and the consequential dispossession and displacement of those people who were already there. I frame this view through a settlement and tourist guide to the region published by the North Coast Steam Navigation Company Limited, which worked its coastal and river trade between Sydney and the northern rivers.

From the mid-nineteenth century, settlement of the North Coast was heavily reliant on the water transport of the various steamships which carried timber and farm produce to the markets, brought in goods and transferred passengers around the area. During the 1880s the various steamship companies that plied their trade were amalgamated under the one company and subsequently produced three editions of *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers District of New South Wales*, published in 1900, 1909 and 1920.

These booklets provide a glimpse of how the new migrants wished to present the North Coast to themselves, and the world beyond, in the burgeoning period of new settlement in the early twentieth century. By the time of the last edition, the North Coast's reliance on the steamships was nearing an end as rail and road transport linked Sydney to Brisbane along the coast via land, bridges and ferries. The physical impediments that the rivers had brought to the flow of settlement along the coast was coming to an end by 1920.

The first edition of *The Guide* was little more than a pamphlet providing brief paragraphs to each of the major settlements of the region, accompanied by an array of advertisements. In contrast, the introductory notes to the second edition (1909) extolled the virtues of the region, declaring it to have turned in three or four years from a *terra incognita* to most people, to the most generally and most deservedly advertised region in Australia.[1]

Each settlement was now awarded a separate chapter and by the last edition (1920) the publication was a substantial small book. In the last two editions the central core of the written text celebrated *man* taking up, and taking over, the lands of the North Coast. '...and so the march of progress has continued, and the North Coast of New South Wales has emerged from obscurity into the fierce light of amazing popularity and prosperity.'[2]

Within these pages, two of the consistent themes of competition over place on the North Coast can be read. First, the competition between the incoming migrants and indigenous owners must be read in the silences. Only one photograph of an Aboriginal

---

[1] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1909 *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers Districts of New South Wales*, Websdale, Sydney, 2nd edition.

[2] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1920 *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers Districts of New South Wales*, Websdale, Sydney, 3rd edition: p8.

man in the second edition gives any clue to the fact that this was not unoccupied or unknown land - *terra incognita*. These silences helped establish the pervading myth that the region was unowned territory within which new settlers could innocently stake their claim.

The second element of competition came from within the encroaching colonial society, and focused on the proper use of the land. It was the forested hinterland that centred the gaze of the promoters and new settlers at the beginning of the twentieth century, rather than the coast to which new settlers had turned at the end of the century.

While the *Guide's* celebratory text of successful exploitation of 'wealth from the wilds' remained largely unchanged, the photographs shifted dramatically between the last two editions. The triumphal scarred landscapes of ringbarked, burnt forest remnants in the second edition were all replaced by forested mountains, fern gullies and languid river scenes in the third edition. One can read from these images a shifting valuing of the landscape and promotion of the 'wilderness'. However the unchanged, celebratory written text provides some insight into deeply ambivalent imaginings of land use and value.

This chapter therefore outlines the movement in of new migrants and the displacement of the indigenous owners, and introduces some of the competing patterns of migration, settlement and contestation over place that resonated again in the late twentieth century on the North Coast. It concentrates on the hinterland and plateau country where the focus of the first intensive wave of migration and settlement took place.

The discussion firstly outlines the spread of new migrants across the Mid-North Coast from the mid-nineteenth century, and some aspects that are known of the indigenous groups who lived there. The focus then shifts to contestation on the frontier between the Mid-North Coast Aboriginal groups and Europeans, before turning to explore competing values of the land amongst the colonists through comparative examples from the 1909 and 1920 editions of *The North Coast Guide*. Competing visions for the Mid-North Coast, and the willingness of new settlers to act on them, are not unique to the 1980s and 1990s but are deeply embedded in the histories of the place since colonisation.

Moving in: European colonisation of the Mid-North Coast to 1920

The official movement into the region of new, non-indigenous settlers embarked with John Oxley, Surveyor-General of New South Wales. He ventured north of the settlement at Sydney Cove in 1817 and was perturbed to find that the Lachlan River did not extend inland to an imagined large expanse of water. Instead the river petered out into 'impassable bogs'.[3] On his next expedition in 1818, over the New England Tableland and down to the mouth of the Hastings River, he was faced with a different set of watery circumstances. This time he had trouble crossing the great expanse of water to the site that became Port Macquarie. The homeward-bound trip was only made possible by the chance finding of a dingy abandoned after a shipwreck, and the stealing of a bark canoe.[4] The big rivers of the North Coast would impede European settlement throughout the nineteenth century, while also providing the main transportation conduit making settlement possible.

By 1820, white settlement had moved into the country surrounding the penal establishment of Newcastle and Governor Macquarie decided that a more isolated place was needed for 'intransigent felons'. The entrance of the Hastings River was chosen and the first fleet of convicts arrived at Port Macquarie in 1821. As was to be a pattern all along the North Coast, the cedar getters followed swiftly in search of 'red gold'.[5] Cedar was one of Australia's most important and valuable exports throughout much of the nineteenth century. It was greatly sought after as it was one of Australia's few light timbers, with a rich colour and heady scent.

Once convicts were removed from Port Macquarie by 1831, squatters began moving northwards as the land was opened for closer settlement. There was little suitable pastoral country in the coastal river valleys and the Australian Agricultural Company moved up onto the nearby Liverpool Plains in 1831, forcing out smaller squatters who looked to the New England Tablelands. By 1835 the cedar getters had arrived by ship on the Clarence River, a year after the escaped convict Richard Craig returned to Sydney and alerted the government to the existence of that big river and fine

---

[3] Jeans 1972:38.
[4] Oxley in McLachlan 1988.
[5] All the north coast histories discuss the cedar getters: eg McLauchlan 1988 (Port Macquarie); Townsend 1988 (Nambucca); Yeates 1990 (Coffs Harbour); Daley 1966 (Richmond River).

timber.[6] The white-frontier pushed out towards Guyra and Tenterfield by 1837 and new lands and a seaport were needed.

By 1839 the first of the squatters had entered the Clarence region across the Tablelands from Maitland and the Macleay. Ramornie station was the first claim, taken up in that year on the banks of the Orara River near its junction with the Clarence. Administratively, in 1842 the Clarence and Richmond River valleys were made into the new Clarence Pastoral District, as it was too far from Port Macquarie for efficient control. The area was only suitable for cattle in the drier parts of the upper river valleys, and sheep were unsuccessful as it was too wet and humid.[7]

During this period the first government surveyor of the Mid-North Coast, Clement Hodgkinson, was surveying the Nambucca and Bellinger regions and published his 'adventures' in 1844.[8] His aim in writing, as he declared it, was to dispel the view of Australia's economic hopelessness back 'at home', and to provide descriptive evidence of a region that did not fit the usual picture of a treeless, arid land. His descriptions therefore are promotional in nature and sometimes overzealous in his celebration of rich watered soils, bountiful vegetation and majestic scenery.

Rather than a smooth movement north of the cedar getters, from river to river, historian Norma Townsend argued that they exploited different parts of the North Coast in a less orderly sequence.[9] Therefore it took until 1841 for Hodgkinson to learn that a group of sawyers had recently come across the Bellinger River, and he took a party in shortly after. He described it as land of great beauty with huge timber resources but totally unsuitable for grazing.[10] It took until the 1860s for the first settlers to migrate to the region and the historical geographer D. N. Jeans described the area as 'backward' into the late 1800s.[11]

The closer settlement of farmers came after establishment of the Robinson Land Acts of 1861 that encouraged the selection of agricultural, family-based, permanent white settlement beyond the old 'Limits of Location'. Many of the early male settlers around Bellingen hauled timber as well as carving out the forests for growing maize and

[6] Cousins 1933 *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Shakespeare Head Press Ltd, Australia..
[7] Jeans 1972; Sabine 1970.
[8] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*: T&W Boone, London..
[9] Townsend 1988.
[10] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*: p41.
[11] Jeans 1972:266.

early attempts at sugar cane. Townsend described the early selector families of the Nambucca as poverty stricken, a far cry from the cherished yeoman myth of healthy rural living.[12]

Non-Aboriginal migration and settlement to Coffs Harbour came as 'overflow' from the established Big River settlement of the Clarence to the north, and from Bellingen to the south.[13] A white presence lagged behind other parts of the Mid-North Coast because of the lack of a navigable river, and the barrier of the escarpments of the Great Dividing Range. Walter Harvie is recorded as the first white man in the area in the mid 1860s, hauling timber out of Bonville.[14] Access was very difficult with the only coastal road from the south coming to the Bellinger by 1875 and progressing no further towards the Clarence.

Indeed the area took well into the twentieth century to grow to any prominence. This is reflected by a map still displayed in 1915 as the header to the newspaper *The Voice of the North*, showing no settlements on the coast between Bellingen and Grafton.[15] However permanent settlement came to Coffs Harbour in the decade between 1880 and 1890, including from the Tablelands that began a familiar pattern of inland to coastal migration that has remained to present times.

The area immediately to the west of Coffs Harbour, in the Upper Orara Valley, was the focus of much of the early colonial settlement of the region. Hodgkinson drew a map of the North Coast in 1843 which correctly traced the lower reaches of the Orara River from the Clarence along the Orara Valley to Nana Glen (calling it the Ora Ora) and proceeding as a dotted line to its upper reaches above Coffs Harbour. A few miles over Red Hill to the north of Coffs, cedar getters began hauling timber out of the Upper Orara from the 1870s and the great promoter of the area, Eugene Rudder, took up land for agriculture there in 1880. Gold was discovered in the Orara Valley near Nana Glen in 1881. This saw the establishment of a thriving mining community that was a very valuable market for the earliest agricultural producers in the area.[16]

---

[12] Townsend 1988.
[13] Ibid:2.
[14] Yeates 1990.
[15] *The Voice of the North*, Newcastle, 10/6/15.
[16] England nd; Yeates 1990.

A timber reserve was established in 1880, preventing selection of fifty square miles. However by 1886 the lands of the Upper Orara were 'thrown open' for selection after great pressure had been brought to bear on government for its release.[17] Amongst these early settlers was a substantial mix of Europeans from Germany, Norway and Denmark, alongside the Anglo migrants.[18]

One of the new migrants to settle this country in 1886 was Amandus Hoschke, a merchant seaman from Germany. He had seen one of Rudder's enthusiastic articles on the area in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. His great grandson, Doug Hoshke, still works a dairy farm next to the land Amandus procured. In explaining Amandus' motivations for seeking out the isolated area, Doug said:

> He went to work as a fettler on the railway going west between Orange and Bathurst. Got married and had a small property there. No chance of getting any bigger out there... What were they called?...the first fellas who took claim over the country? - the squatters. They got all the good land and by the time he had any money all the good land had gone. And the few acres he did have there just wasn't suitable for bringing up a large family and they already had - I could be out by one - but nine or ten. He saw a write-up in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about the opening of the land in the Orara Valley for settlement so he applied. He happened to be up at Grafton when it was first opened up in July 1886. Him and six others were there in the first year.[19]

The tiny settlement of Coffs Harbour provided the port for the timber and farm produce from the region, leading local historians to claim its growth, what there was of it in those early years, was owed to the Upper Orara.[20] A jetty, which had been demanded by the early Orara settlers and promised by the colonial government, was eventually built at Coffs Harbour in 1892, thus allowing the extension of trade in timber and produce.

Settlement had expanded around the general area of Coffs Harbour by this time. For example on the coast, eighteen kilometres to the north, the Skinner family had selected land for farming when it became available in 1881, leaving their claims on the New England Tableland. The area became known as Moonee Creek Settlement and included Look-At-Me-Now Headland. Three years later the Dammerel family moved

[17] Secomb 1986.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Interview T 28.
[20] England 1976; Secomb 1986; Yeates 1990.

into the area from the Glen Innes district, taking up land in 1884 on the site of the present village of Emerald Beach. Both families initially planted sugar cane and other crops and kept farm animals including dairy cows, however it was not a productive area for such agricultural pursuits.[21]

It was the hinterland that beckoned southern settlers keen to make their living from the land. Above the Upper Orara, linked by a steep road and later a rail spur, was the plateau country of the Dorrigo. Under pressure to find unalienated land for farming, the Minister of Lands visited the isolated region in 1905 where only a handful of new settlers struggled on. His enthusiasm for the area brought on a land rush.[22] This was the last large area of crown land in New South Wales to be 'opened up' for agriculture and hence continued the 'pioneer' era, which was well past on the rest of the New South Wales coast. The new migrants proceeded to chop and burn their way into the dense forests to make way for their settlement through dairy farms.
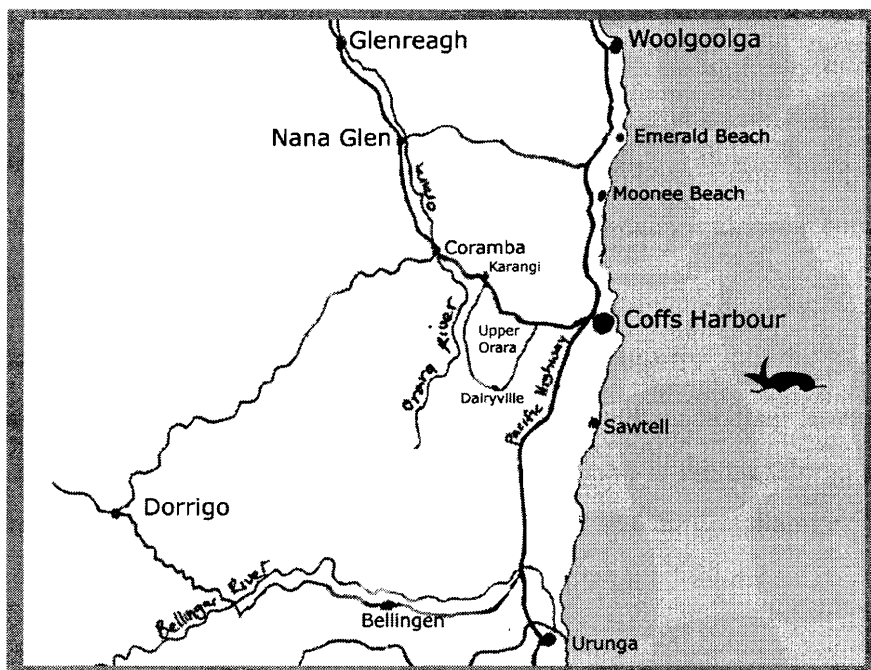
Map showing the Upper Orara and Orara Valley to Glenreagh and across to Dorrigo via today's roads.

Sugar cane had been attempted on the coast since the early Port Macquarie settlement, wheat had been unsuccessfully planted and maize was the most important crop to be grown in the wider region. Potatoes and tomatoes were successful and

---

[21] Holder 1984. See chapter four.
[22] Henderson 1980.

bananas were being shipped to Sydney from Coffs Harbour by the 1880s. However it was the dairy industry that brought increased settler migration to the North Coast by the end of the nineteenth century. The Upper Orara Valley and Dorrigo Plateau were two of the premier districts to which south coast dairy farmers moved.[23]

The 1909 edition of the steamship company's *The North Coast Guide* crowed about the increase of population of the North Coast counties from 62,834 in the 1891 census to 111,370 in 1907.[24] The final edition of *The Guide* in 1920 featured a car on a scenic mountain road. Road and rail were now bringing ever-increasing numbers of new settlers and visitors to the North Coast. The demise of the steamship trade had begun as the railway crept towards its linkage from Sydney to Brisbane in 1922.[25] Progress in the form of material prosperity, accessible markets and easy communication for migrants to the Mid-North Coast had been slow. Nevertheless, by the last edition of the *Guide* the region was thoroughly settled by Europeans.

Displayed amongst the celebratory representations of dairy herds and ringbarked trees in the second edition of *The Guide* was a photo, with no written reference, of an Aboriginal man wearing a king plate.[26] This was the only acknowledgment of an Aboriginal presence in the first two editions, and he disappeared from the last one. No other mention was made of the traditional owners of the dairy and forest country being so enthusiastically promoted.

A place already settled: Aborigines and their country

This same place into which white immigrants came and made their homes was, of course, already the home of others. The Mid-North Coast is the traditional country of three large indigenous groups; the Birrpai, Dhan-Gadi and the Gumbaingirr.[27] There is

---

[23]The aptly named community of Dairyville was established on the Upper Orara by the late 1800s; Secomb 1986.

[24] The counties ran between the Richmond in the north and Gloucester in the south.

[25] At this time the journey was still broken by the ferry crossing at Grafton across the Clarence River.

[26] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1909 *The North Coast Guide*: p34.

[27] There are many different spellings and pronunciations for each of these groups. One common spelling for the Dhan-Gadi still used is Thungutti. Local historian, George England, told Harry Buchanana he had counted 12 spellings for the Gumbaingirr, settling for a common spelling at that time of Kumbaingeri (England interview with Buchanan, nd c1970). I have used the spelling that the Gumbaingirr of Yarrawarra Community at Corindi prefer when discussing the overall group - see Introduction - and then the specific spellings of each group preference, for example when referring to Coffs Harbour and Nambucca people (Gumbaynggir).

also a fourth, smaller group immediately to the north of Gumbaingirr country, the Yaygir.[28]

The territory of the Gumbaingirr nation takes in the Coffs Harbour region. It is generally agreed to reach from Nambucca in the south, to north of Woolgoolga at Corindi/Red Rock, across to the Clarence around Grafton, inland to the Nymboida and up to Ebor on the Dorrigo Plateau. Within this broad language grouping are a number of smaller groups with different dialects.[29] The Yaygir's territory encompasses the lower Clarence. To the south west of Nambucca the Dhan-gadi territory is in the Macleay Valley and the Birrpai in the Hastings area. All these neighbouring groups formed what anthropologist of the area, Barry Morris, argued was a cultural bloc. This is because the kinship, marital and descent arrangements of these groups stood in contrast to other coastal neighbours to the north - for example the Bundjalung, and south - for example the Ghadung.[30]

Social and Linguistic Groups of the Mid-North Coast Region, taken from Morris 1989:56.

---

[28] There is some academic controversy whether the Yaygir are really another clan group of the Gumbaingirr or a separate group; see Burke 1997. Today's Yaygir elders see themselves as separate people from the Gumbaingirr; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of LAMN Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW,* prepared for Coffs Harbour City Council and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council.

[29] England 1976; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of LAMN Headland*; Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach: Part Two: Anthropology Study* (of Dallas and Morris), Report to NSW Public Works Department.

[30] Morris 1989. Also see Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992. They shared a matrilineal section system which would seem to have nothing in common with the social relations of other neighbouring coastal groups.

Some early white observers quickly came to realise that Aboriginal people had specific attachments with particular areas of land. After travelling with Aborigines from another group to the Bellinger Valley in 1841, Hodgkinson said:

> It is astonishing what a fondness the Australian natives display for the tribes to which they belong, and the localities in which they are accustomed to roam; they cannot bear even a short separation from their fellows, and their usual haunts without feeling a strong desire to return to them.[31]

However such observers rarely had any understanding of what that attachment meant, indicated by Hodgkinson's typical conception of Aboriginal people 'roaming' over the land. A group's social organisation, law and customs, ritual and religious practices and economic responsibility were all embedded in their particular country. Historian of New South Wales indigenous land politics Heather Goodall talks about 'place' for Aboriginal people as the organisational framework through which knowledge was structured, political authority gained and social relations expressed. Social knowledge and practices were laid onto the land and spoken of as if they arose from land itself. Goodall described the land as:

> central to Aboriginal self-identification on many levels because it forms the physical and symbolic basis on which one is related: related to religious knowledge and practice, related to ones kin and wider society, related to one's history and to the economic resources to which one is entitled by right.[32]

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose talks about country as 'nourishing terrain' which is:

> the active manifestation of creation. This does not mean that everything that happens is right or good. For many Aboriginal people, everything in the world is alive: animals, trees, rains, sun, moon, some rocks and hills, and people are all conscious.[33]

Gumbaynggir men of the Nambucca region told local historian George England that the Moon buried himself on Mutton Bird Island at Coffs Harbour, and just south at Bundagen and Yellow Rock could be found important rain-making sites.[34] The same geographical formations that the colonists had to cross, ford and circumvent, were the creations of the ancestral heroes of the indigenous owners of the Mid-North Coast. The

---

[31] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*:p43.
[32] Goodall 1996:8.
[33] Rose 1996:23.
[34] England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society', unpublished notes, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society. See the late Gumbaynggir elder Harry Buchanan's stories in Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992; Yaygir man, Ron Heron's stories of the Clarence 1993; North Coast stories in Rose 1996.

Gumbaynggir authors of elder Harry Buchanan's book, who are from the Nambucca region, explain:

> Each *jagun* (homeland) had its sacred paths and areas where the life passed on by the Dreaming heroes was remembered and renewed - but only by those clans who were *guumunbu* - belonged or were related to - each place.[35]

Three of the most powerful ancestors of the Gumbaingirr people are Yuludarra, his wife Gawnggan and their son Birrugan, who are believed to have created much of the landscape of the North Coast.[36] Yuludarra is also known as Mindi, especially by northern Gumbaingirr people.[37]

According to the translation of the nineteenth-century observer, A.C. McDougall, and reproduced in Yaygir academic Ron Heron's report on Look-At-Me-Now Headland in 1994, Gawnggan had the waters divided into the sea, rivers, lakes and creeks as they are today. However it was Yuludarra's actions that caused the rising of the sea waters to their present levels. He had beaten two sisters in the vicinity of Look-At-Me-Now Headland while on his way to war with another group. In revenge the young women had gone to one of the headlands at what is now Emerald Beach and called up the waters. In this way South-West Solitary Island was formed. When Yuludarra and his group returned they found they could no longer travel across land from the headland to go home. They were eventually able to make a rope bridge to return safely. However all the waters rose and those who were on the mainland sought refuge on a mountain that rose up - Mt Coramba behind Coffs Harbour. Yuludara rose into the sky and was understood to be the main Creator of the region.[38]

While Aboriginal people's primary attachment was to their own country, related groups had certain rights and privileges to move around the country of others. Archaeologists have debated whether or not people in this coastal stretch moved from the coast to the distant hinterland on a seasonal basis looking for food resources, or

---

[35] Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992: vii.

[36] This is the preferred spelling of the Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group. Other spellings include Uli-tarra, Ulitara, Yuludarah, Yooloo-tahna; see Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of LAMN Headland.*

[37] Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992;Interview C 64.

[38] McDougall's translation is repeated in England 1968 'Notes'; Ryan 1988; Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, Report to the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of LAMN Headland.*

whether they remained in fairly sedentary groups along the coast, moving up and down for ceremonial reasons.[39]

In the local area Gumbaingirr moved between the river hinterland seventeen kilometres inland, and the coast. For example, Garby Elders from Yarrawarra Community at Corindi tell of people travelling from Nana Glen and Glenreagh to birthing grounds and for ceremonies at Red Rock and Arrawarra on the coast.[40] Observations of early white farmers in the immediate study area also provided evidence of the local group's movement. For example Ben Holder, who came to live at Moonee Creek Settlement in 1942, recounts the old Skinner's stories of the Gumbaingirr groups who camped at Moonee. They moved up into the Bucca Creek, Nana Glen and Glenreagh area in the summer months, 'hunting along the streams and up into the forest and mountain country where food was plentiful'.[41]

England said people of the Moonee and Coffs Harbour area moved in the winter between a large camp at Bagawa, on the junction of the Orara and Bucca Bucca rivers between Nana Glen and Glenreagh, and down to camps along the coast from Sawtell to north of Woolgoolga. Shell middens can be found in patches from a path stretching from the coast to the Bagawa camp, where they carried seafoods back to their inland camp.[42]

While the coastal groups moved around the region, the large camping grounds at Moonee, Yellow Rock at Urunga and Fernmount near Bellingen had some residents most of the year.[43] This supports the archaeologists who thought the food supplies were diverse and abundant enough that the coastal populations did not need to move far into the hinterland for food supplies. However large groups from different language areas moved up and down the coast for ceremonial purposes.

Hodgkinson said that when the time came for boys to be initiated, 'they send messages to the surrounding tribes of blacks, to invite them to be present on the

---

[39] See Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of LAMN Headland*; Ahoy and Murphy 1996 *A Preliminary Investigation of Aboriginal Values in the North East Forests:* A Report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. For example Isabel McBryde believed groups moved long distances between the New England Tablelands and the coast while others thought they remained on the coast.

[40] Interview NT 72; Yarrawarra Place Stories 1999; 2000c.

[41] Holder 1984:20.

[42] England nd b 'Aborigines and Settlers' Coffs Harbour Historical Society; England 1976.

[43] England 1969 'Notes compiled for a visit to a Bora Ground at Yellow Rock Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society; England nd b 'Aborigines and Settlers'.

occasion'.[44] He was not allowed by the 'Macleay blacks' to witness the main part of the ceremony. R.H. Mathews, the keen nineteenth-century observer of Aboriginal life, also repeatedly recorded that once it was decided to hold an initiation ceremony, messengers were sent to the surrounding groups to discuss time, place and attendance.[45] Gumbaingirr ceremonies were attended by the Dhan-Gadi around Kempsey through to the Bundjalung as far north as Tabulum.[46] Through to the 1930s, initiation ceremonies were continued in parts of the Mid-North Coast, bringing together the various North Coast groups.[47]

'Tribal feuds' were reported with some relish by early white observers and were a further indication of large numbers of the coastal groups meeting together. Walter Harvie recorded his memories of a large battle on a ridge in the Sawtell area, just south of Coffs Harbour, which probably occurred in 1865.[48] Harvie was invited to witness the battle by the father of two boys who had been working for him for two years. 'Their father was Boss of the coastal blacks from the Bellinger to a good distance north.' He described a very fine group of athletic men engaged in highly organised hand to hand combat, estimating about 500 men took part with about 1,000 people participating in a great corroboree throughout the night. The various southern tribes then stayed on 'for a long time', camped by the creek and tending to their wounded.[49]

Whether groups moved predominantly for ceremonial business or to make use of surplus food resources in another group's territory, inter-group participation was a vital part of life that has continued. Food surpluses often meant that large gatherings for ceremonial purposes could go ahead.[50] Jerry Flanders from Yarrawarra described such meetings at Arrawarra Headland north of Moonee.

---

[44] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*: p230
[45] Matthews in Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach*.
[46] Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach*.
[47] Lane 1978; Morris 1989.
[48] Harvie 1927 'Tribal Fight at Bongol' typed copy of Harvie's notes with comment by George England, Coffs Harbour Historical Society.
[49] Ibid. His notes, made at the age of 83 in 1927, were reprinted in the *Advocate*, 28/2/58. He said three men died and many wounded. This would probably not have been a battle brought on by white encroachment onto Aboriginal territory which increased intergroup warfare in many areas, as Harvie was one of the only whites in the area at that time.
[50] The extensive ceremonial activity that accompanied the Bunya nut festivals in southern Queensland, attracting groups from as far away as Taree, are a famous example.

When they had their gatherings, like they'd meet there and they might have had whatever and they'd bring it across - there might have been a lot of sea mullet this way or might have been a lot of pipis and that sort of thing. They sort of have a lot of sharing and things so they used to meet like that.[51]

The territories of local groups of North Coast Aborigines were smaller than in many other parts of Australia due to the richness of the resources available to them.[52] Nineteenth-century observers commented favourably on the appearance of the coastal Aborigines, especially in comparison to those of the Tableland where food was less plentiful. Population density was greater in Gumbaingirr country than that of their southern neighbours because the coastal hinterland stretches further before coming up against the escarpments of the Great Dividing Range and dense forests.[53]

The pre-invasion population estimates of archaeologist J.Belshaw are widely cited. He suggested that the area between the Bellinger and Clarence rivers had a permanent population of between 1,200 and 1,500 people. He estimated the humid coastal zone from the Macleay to the Tweed had a population of about 6,300 people, where the highest population densities of between three to six people per square mile were in the coastal estuarine areas.[54]

The popular camping area of Moonee Moonee at Moonee Creek had all the right ingredients. It was close to permanent fresh water, with flat raised land suitable for camping as well as for the ceremonial Bora grounds that lay just inland. Being adjacent to the coast there was a huge supply of suitable beach rocks used for making tools. The sandhills at the mouth of Moonee Creek, at the base of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, was the site of an extensive axe factory.

Ben Holder said in our interview that he always thought there were many more residents at the camp than were estimated in archaeological reports at the time of the outfall inquiries. This is due to the extent of stone tools that he has found on Look-At-Me-Now Headland and around the Skinner farms over the years.[55] The camp area was close to bountiful resources of fish, shellfish and other seafoods from the rocky headlands and had abundant supplies of small animal food such as pademelons (small

---

[51] Jerry Flanders in Yarrawarra Place Stories 1999:16.
[52] Ahoy and Murphy *A Preliminary Investigation of Aboriginal Values* 1996.
[53] Belshaw 1978.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Interview T 26.

wallabies). According to England's Gumbaynggir informants, Moonee meant pademelon and the repetition of Moonee Moonee meant many.[56]

As was common even to sympathetic white observers, England reiterated the belief that Aborigines lived 'parasitic' lives off the bounty that nature provided.[57] Many writers of the colonial period believed that Aboriginal people were lazy. A squatter in the Macleay district, John Henderson, complained that they were not early risers and the Swiss squatter on the Clarence, Etienne Bordier, complained in 1850 that they would not do more than two or three days work in succession.[58] One can imagine the bemusement with which Aboriginal people must have viewed those strangers in that bountiful country, who either worked from sunrise to sunset - or got others to do it - with little time for ceremony and recreation.

Such representations of laziness are part of the colonial construction of an undeserving people. The silence about the presence of Aboriginal landowners in the three editions of *The Guide* is yet another example of the powerful myth that this land was unowned. The idea that Aboriginal people only 'roamed' across the land, or merely passed through without having permanent attachment in an area or working the land to make it 'productive', has been a central justification within settler discourse of the dispossession of Aboriginal lands. Rose however said it is now possible to say with certainty that 'far from being parasites who put no management into ecological systems, Aboriginal people were... active land managers. Their management strategies sustained a complex mosaic of ecosystems across the Australian continent within which the diversity of living things could flourish'.[59]

It is now well understood that the low intensity, manipulated fire-stick farming practices of Aborigines created the landscapes which incoming Europeans so often admired - the 'park like' quality of grazing lands that the likes of Hodgkinson and Henderson sought amidst the dense forests of the North Coast.[60] For example the heath lands behind Red Rock, to the north of Moonee, are likely to be the product of Gumbaingirr burning practices. The suggestion is supported by observations that

---

[56] England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory'; England 1976; Holder 1984.

[57] England nd b 'Aborigines and Settlers' following from AP Elkin.

[58] Henderson 1851 *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales with Pictures of Squatting and of Life in the Bush*, W.Shoberl, London.; Bordier 1987.

[59] Rose 1996:68.

[60] See Hallam 1975; Rose 1996: chapter 6.

banksia and acacia scrub are now overtaking the area presumably since Gumbaingirr burning ceased.[61]

Country was nurtured and cared for, not only through physical manipulation, but also through the spiritual and social responsibilities which people had for their place. While some places were accessible by most of the local group, other places were accessible only on the grounds of gender, initiation status or other knowledge-based criteria. In the broad Coffs Harbour area, for example, what is now called St. Mary's Waterhole above Woolgoolga is a women's site, and South Headland and Mutton Bird Island at Coffs Harbour are initiated men's sites.[62]

Places were dangerous to those who should not trespass and that way sacred places were often completely avoided. In the early 1990s, Yaygir people told Heron that Look-At-Me-Now Headland was a sacred place and something would happen to them if they went there.[63] An un-named 'old' Gumbaingirr man told England in the late 1960s that Moonee was a very 'powerful place'.[64] It is now a truism widely repeated that the incoming colonists who gradually invaded Birrpai, Dhan-Gadi and Gumbaingirr country, came with very different understandings of those same places.

Country under siege: indigenous and new settler contestation over place

There is now a substantial historical literature about the violence that occurred between indigenous owners and incoming migrants on the Australian frontier, from the early 1800s around Sydney through to the 1930s in northern Australia, shattering the myth of peaceful settlement.[65] Goodall has shown how the pace and intensity of invasion in New South Wales varied across the colony through a mix of geography and demographic and global economic fluctuations, impacting on the concentration of pastoral expansion.[66] Morris has shown how, alongside the centrality of conflict over

---

[61] Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob.*

[62] Swain 1995 'Draft Conservation Plan: Meemagagongoin St Mary's Waterhole', Department of Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology, University of New England, Armidale.; Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992.

[63] Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of LAMN Headland.*

[64] England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory'.

[65] See McGrath 1995 for chapters on each state/territory with accompanying reference lists.

[66] Goodall 1996.

land and resources, the ideological thrust of colonial racism was to construct an indigenous character incapable and undeserving of belonging on equal terms in the new colonial society.[67]

For Henderson, a squatter from the Macleay who also wrote an account of the North Coast in the same period as Hodgkinson, just as civilisation meant the eradication of the suffocating forests for agriculture and pastures, the indigenous people also had to make way for the pioneers of civilisation.[68] The physical environment that impeded white settlement, which was the same that produced the abundant food sources that sustained indigenous groups of the Mid-North Coast, meant violent conflict came later and more sporadically to that region than other Australian frontiers.[69] These conditions also allowed ceremonies and cultural continuity, from before colonisation, to last longer on the Mid-North Coast than other parts of settled Australia.[70] Nevertheless the same patterns of conflict were apparent throughout the region, from Aboriginal guerilla warfare tactics to non-Aboriginal reprisal massacres.

One of the most infamous recorded massacres of Aborigines of the area was on the Orara River in 1841 near Ramornie Station. All accounts refer back to the lectures of Thomas Bawden who lived on the Clarence in the 1840s and heard the stories, sometimes first hand. In reprisal for a suspected theft from Ramornie, Bawden reported that between two and three hundred men, women and children were ambushed and driven into the river, their corpses floating past the new settlement of Grafton. The culprit was later discovered to be a white hut keeper.[71]

Despite - or because of - directly sanctioning the attack, Commissioner of the New England Tablelands, George McDonald did not mention the massacre in his report. In this way he helped to establish the silence in Australian history of such events, perpetuating myths of peaceful settlement. At the time he said those cases of settlers

---

[67] Morris 1989.

[68] Henderson 1851 *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales*. Both writers can be read in similar ways to Mary Louise Pratt's exploration of colonial writers of South Africa in Pratt 1992:chapter 3.

[69] Morris 1989; Goodall 1996.

[70] Morris 1989, 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach*; Creamer 1984 *A Gift of the Dreaming*, National Parks and Wildlife.

[71] Bawden 1997 He wrote a series of lectures in the 1880s as he considered such a record of early settlement was required. Also see Cousins 1933 *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*; Medcalf 1993 and Reece 1974 for references to Bawden's account of the Orara massacre. Blomfield 1981 referred to it as the Bluff Rock massacre.

taking the law into their own hands had now 'entirely ceased'.[72] However Bordier, taking up the lease to Ramornie a decade later, indicated that neither Aboriginal resistance to invasion nor white reprisals had diminished. On reporting in his diary that some Aboriginal groups were known for killing or frightening cattle, he said:

> Whenever they have done some mischief of this kind, a number of people join together and go out on an expedition against them. Killing is quite common; but when it takes place, one is very careful not to brag about it so as not to have any trouble with the police. They have been fairly quiet of late, so we have not yet had the occasion to hunt them.[73]

Squatters started moving their sheep and cattle onto the Dorrigo Plateau in the early 1840s and the following decades witnessed a bitter and violent struggle between indigenous owners and pastoralists. A number of shepherds were killed and large stock losses from Aboriginal guerilla warfare tactics were recorded, while very little was recorded of white reprisals on Aborigines.[74]

Eric Fahey's history of the Dorrigo is a typical example, full of anecdotes of the colonial pioneers, where no mention of massacres of Aborigines is made.[75] Instead 'the Meldrum Massacre' is discussed where Aboriginal people murdered a Mrs Mason, her two girls and baby and a shepherd, John Meldrum, in 1851. In a telling reflection on the gender hierarchy on the frontier, the name of the killings commemorates the one man rather than the Mason females.

Unwritten stories abound of massacres on the plateau. Reprisals for the 'Meldrum Massacre' may have led to the infamous massacre of perhaps hundreds of Aborigines off Point Lookout near Ebor. Local historian Colin Newsome reflected the disquiet which underlays Dorrigo's history in this poem.[76]

> Mount Look Out, veiled in mystery - of crime and massacre;
> Not mentioned in our history - hiding such bad things that were.
> To make corpses that were carnaged - look like massive suicide,
> According to the yarn aged-men told before they died,
> Up Mount Look Out, through the rock, then, - the bodies on a sledge
> Were drawn by cautious oxen - and rolled down off the edge.[77]

---

[72] Blomfield 1981; Medcalf 1993.
[73] Bordier 1987:12
[74] Blomfield 1981 see pp 86-91.
[75] Fahey 1976.
[76] Newsome 1993.
[77] Ibid:26.

The other renowned massacre on the plateau is where Aborigines were driven over the escarpment that plummets into the Bellinger Valley at a place known as Darkies Leap or Point. Poet Judith Wright, who grew up in the fall country of the Tablelands, wrote about it in a poem called 'Niggers Leap: New England' after her father retold the story on one of their regular childhood camping trips to Point Lookout.

> Across the valley north of the Point stands an escarpment jutting from the tableland, and dropping in sheer cliffs of hundreds of feet to the rainforest below. It is named Darkie Point. My father, one of the few who knew a little of the unwritten history of the eastern side of the tableland, stood beside me once on Point Lookout when I asked the meaning of its name. Long ago, he said, the white settlers of the region had driven the Aborigines over its cliffs, as reprisal for the spearing of their cattle.[78]

Despite the silence in the history books, such stories are deeply embedded in the sub-surface of white memories of the Dorrigo.

It is common for people on the coast to acknowledge the massacres on the plateau and tablelands, but claim that settlement of the coastal lands was peaceful. However Morris, for example, cautions that: 'the assertions by England that the Aborigines in the local district were "generally friendly and cooperative" and "white diseases killed practically all the local aborigines" obscures more than it reveals about frontier violence'.[79]

For example the massacre that occurred at Red Rock, thirty kilometres to the north of Coffs Harbour, is still not widely known about outside Aboriginal and local-born non-Aboriginal residents. Here the oral stories tell of people being driven from Arrawarra Creek, eight kilometres south, to the estuary at Red Rock where they were caught in the water by deliberate cross fire from land and a ship moored in the entrance.[80]

Only hints of this massacre can be found in the contemporary written records, suggesting it happened in the early period of frontier warfare of the 1840s and 50s.[81] However there is explicit written evidence of similar massacres on the coast where people were ambushed in estuaries at Evans Head to the north and Nambucca to the

---

[78] Wright 1991:30; also see Blomfield 1981 pp 86-91 for what he thinks is a contemporary account of it.
[79] Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach.*
[80] Ibid; Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob.*
[81] Bawden described Aboriginal people being pursued 'somewhere about Corindi' where they were 'severely punished', in Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob*: p18.

south.[82] Contemporary Aboriginal oral evidence speaks of relatives' escape from the Red Rock Massacre, placing the date much later into the 1890s.[83] Whether it happened in the 1840s or the 1890s, it is part of the ongoing lived history for Gumbaingirr. Goodall says:

> The memories of pursuits and massacres were denied by whites, hidden and covered over, to fester far into the future. Aboriginal people laid these stories out onto their land. They told and retold them to their children as part of the body of knowledge which could be read from the land.[84]

Geoffrey Blomfield, who wrote of the extensive massacres in the fall country above the Mid-North Coast river valleys, collected many of his stories from white stockmen in droving camps 'late at night'. He said such stories were burnt into 'the race memory' of both Aboriginal and white Australians.[85]

Population decreases in Aboriginal numbers on the Mid-North Coast, through killing and disease, provides ample witness to the horror and destruction of indigenous people in the colonial period. By 1891, only 569 Aboriginal people were accounted for in the entire Gumbaingirr area.[86] By then only small family groups were occasionally visiting the Moonee camping ground and Gumbaingirr were said to have 'disappeared' from the Coffs Harbour area.[87]

As closer settlement brought greater numbers of non-Aboriginal immigrants into the region, Aboriginal people responded by devising new strategies to regain autonomous control over sections of their traditional country. They began petitioning government for land that they could farm in their traditional country.[88] At Rollands Plains and other pockets of land around the Hastings and Macleay River Districts, at Nambucca, Yellow Rock and Bellingen, Aboriginal people took up farming on small areas designated Aboriginal reserves.

They cleared the land, planted crops and constructed successful self-sufficient lives for their families. However, by the 1920s they had again been cruelly dispossessed of almost all of that land in what Goodall has called the Second Dispossession. Government revoked title to the farms and reserves that Aboriginal farmers had

---

[82] Ibid: Medcalf 1993.
[83] Perkins interview with Ross (1998);Yarrawarra Place Stories 2000c; Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob.*
[84] Goodall 1996:33
[85] Blomfield 1981:6.
[86] Morris 1989:57.
[87] Holder 1984.
[88] Goodall 1996.

believed was theirs, sometimes in mid harvest and in the middle of the night, handing it over to white farmers.[89] Aboriginal individuals and groups, supported by some non-Aboriginal people, fought the revocations but with little success.[90]

Land, for both the indigenous owners and the incoming colonists, formed the basis of survival and nourishment and was the central focus of competition both between the two groups and within them. Amongst the colonists, conflicts emerged over how to respond and act within this new land, and how to shape it into a place of familiarity and home. Amongst the new migrants, no consensus was ever total on how to treat the land or its invaded peoples.

The 'sleeping scrub': colonisers and the land

The same country that was filled with a rich embroidery of meaning for the indigenous owners, was a landscape the incoming Europeans battled to understand or gain familiarity with. Even Elizabeth Macarthur's famous statement about her pleasure in landscape near Sydney, which she compared to an English park, held no such allure for the Manager of the Australian Agricultural Company, Robert Dawson. He complained:

> Where the soil is pretty good it is lightly timbered, occasionally resembling a gentleman's park; but the traveller soon loses this idea from finding no mansion at the end of the scene. He plods on from park to park, as it were...[91]

The sub-tropical, moist north coast held no greater familiarity or comfort than the arid interior for Henderson. He complained that 'everything is exactly the opposite of what it is in all other regions', where in the Antipodes, 'everything appears upside down'.

> Thus we have the mountains near the coast, and the low and level land in the interior, while, as a natural consequence, the largest rivers run inland. The country within twenty to thirty miles of the sea-coast is almost universally sandy, rocky, and barren, or swampy, and brushy, or jungly, redolent of fevers and agues, and dispersing its mephitic vapours in a summer morning, like steam from a cauldron.[92]

The country most valued by Henderson was the flatter, lightly wooded areas at the head of the rivers which were suitable for grazing. Hodgkinson lamented the fact

---

[89] Ibid.

[90] The newspaper *The Voice of the North,* whose editor J.J. Moloney supported Aboriginal attempts to save their farms, followed this story into the 1920s.

[91] Dawson in Jeans 1972:61.

[92] Henderson 1851 *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales*:p75 and see Arthur 1999.

that the dense vegetation that he assumed indicated rich soils, precluded 'all possibility of its ever being made use of for the ordinary colonial productions'. He continued: 'Yet the time might arrive, in some future generation, when much of this kind of land might be chequered with plantations of rice, tobacco, indigo, cotton, sugar-cane and mulberry trees.[93]

Hodgkinson was bountiful in his praise of beautiful landscapes, appreciating it beyond the immediate use value of the land and his promotional aims. Mary Louise Pratt, in her analysis of the travel and exploration genre of colonial writers, referred to such sentiments in her linking of the emergence of natural history as a structure of knowledge which just as surely encompassed the colonial project as the sour disappointment of Henderson.[94] As a surveyor and new colonist, Hodgkinson was also thoroughly embedded in a capitalist, western land ethic. Like his fellows, he was unable to recognise the landscape he purveyed as the nourished terrain of current landowners. He looked forward to the day when the wilderness would be swept aside to make way for the crops of a civilised world.

Seeing the country as wilderness - unowned *terra incognita* - was central to the predominant frontier view which colonists brought to the North Coast. The enlightenment dichotomy, which separated human from nature, was fully opposed to indigenous peoples' understandings of their integrated relationship with the non-human environment. Whether endowed with positive or negative values, a core component of the idea of wilderness throughout its history of use is as a place where 'nature' is supposed to have been left to function and reproduce independently of human interference.[95]

Spatially, wilderness has been conceived of as unbounded, without the impermeable constraints of the demarcating lines of civilisation. The very notion of the unbounded, remote wildness of the wilderness was an anathema to Aboriginal conceptions of the same places as highly cultured, humanised and socially mapped landscapes.[96] In the frontier view, wilderness had to be eradicated or contained through

---

[93] Hodgkinson 1844 *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay*: pvii
[94] Pratt 1992.
[95] See Cronon 1995c.
[96] Rose 1996.

mapping and fencing to bring about the progressive civilising forces. One of Michael Secomb's subtitles in his local history of the Upper Orara indicates another way of expressing it. As wilderness the scrub was 'sleeping', inactive and passive, but which would be awakened, utilised, civilised with the coming of the colonists.[97]

Major Innes's estate on Lake Burrawan near Port Macquarie, renamed Lake Innes by the Major, provides a graphic example of constructing a europeanised landscape onto the frontier wilderness.[98] Innes brought his wife Margaret to Port Macquarie in 1829, taking up a grant of land on the forested shores of Lake Burrawan.[99] He built a large house that was only rivalled in the region by the Ogilvie's mansion at Yuglibar on the Far-North Coast. Over the next two decades he created a flourishing agrarian haven, growing a variety of crops and extending the house to 'twenty-two apartments' plus a separate bachelor's quarters.[100] His niece and published diarist, Annabella Boswell, came to live there a couple of decades after the Innes'es first arrived, describing a beautiful garden of sweet smelling European flowers, bamboo and lantana.

The idea of the pre-Innes landscape as an uncivilised one is not unique to the nineteenth century. In 1965 when Morton Herman first wrote the introduction to Boswell's diary, he stood on the site of the ruined mansion in a pall of mosquitoes in thick forest with dense undergrowth, saying the whole district had 'relapsed into its former primitive state.' He wondered at Major Innes's decision to turn his back on all the 'fine farming... country' to build his mansion surrounded on three sides 'by some of the dreariest jungle swamp imaginable'.[101]

However it is very likely that the original site was clear of the tangled undergrowth of 1965, through centuries of Aboriginal land-management practices of burning. The lake was very well stocked in fish and would have been utilised by the Birrpai, hence requiring good access to the lake. One can imagine such a scene was the very reason the Major was enticed to the lake's shore, for Boswell described it as a very

---

[97] Secomb 1986.
[98] See Bramble and Sagmeister, 1998.
[99] Innes returned to Port Macquarie in 1829 according to Herman in Boswell 1981; and 1830 according to McLaughlin
[100] Boswell 1981.
[101] Herman in Boswell 1981:vii-ix.

beautiful landscape of mountain, lake and sea views.[102] Neither Innes or Herman could recognise the difference between uncared for land in a primitive state, and Aboriginal 'nourished terrain'.

Common to these accounts, and to Secomb's sleeping scrub, is the separation of humans and nature in the wilderness idea. As the rallying call for designated 'wild' areas in Australia developed from the early twentieth century, the wilderness functioned as an escape from the boundaries of progress. Reflecting the romanticism of Rousseau, Myles Dunphy, 'Australia's father of wilderness', asked: '...for where else can man go to escape his civilisation'.[103] Remoteness from *man's* interference is common in the visual and imagined representations of wilderness in all its various forms. So is its perceived primordial, and hence static representation where wilderness either needed to be extinguished or contained within the domesticating process of agriculture, or preserved in its 'natural' state for future generations. These remain colonising constructions of wilderness that either perceived Aboriginal people as part of the wilds to be eradicated, domesticated and civilised - or as having no contemporary relevance.[104]

In the battle of the colonists to make this 'new' land their own place and to reshape it to their own design, the forests of the coastal hinterland made way for the civilising advance of settler families and farms. In this first intensive period of white settlement and promotion of the North Coast, little attention was paid to the coast other than its potential for ports, and passing comment about the delights of the waves for recreation.[105] Even as tourism gained popularity from the early twentieth century, the gaze lingered on the hinterland pastures, rivers and mountains and it took until the second half of the century for the coast to gain substantial tourist or new settler attention.[106] For now, the processes of migration focused firmly on the hinterland regions where dairying and forestry came to prominence.

---

[102] Ibid.
[103] In Mosley 1994: 205.
[104] Cronon 1995c.
[105] For example see the chapters on Yamba and Byron Bay in North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1909 *The North Coast Guide*; 1920 *The North Coast Guide*.
[106] See chapter three.

The Upper Orara Valley and the Dorrigo Plateau both featured notably in the last two editions of the *North Coast Guide's* settlement and tourist publication. They were promoted as areas that still had the space for industrious yeoman farmers to take up dairying. To accomplish this agrarian ideal the forest wilderness had to be overcome, but there was no single agreement about the fate of the forests or the value of wilderness within colonial society. In comparing images of the land in chapters on these places between the 1909 and 1920 editions of the *Guide,* a clear example of one of the central competitive forces waged at the time over land use is provided. This was between the push for farms which meant the eradication of the forests, and those seeking to conserve some of the forests for the future.

Farm and forest: 1909

The forests of the wet coastal hinterland of the Upper Orara, and up onto the mountainous region of the Dorrigo, were very dense. In describing them, local forestor historian Alex Gaddes talked of the massive entanglement of vines holding aloft the huge branches of trees in the process of felling. The cedar getters lived a life 'locked away from the sun', their skin an almost translucent pallor.[107] They began arriving from the mid-nineteenth century to fell and mill the last remaining stands of commercially viable Red Cedar on the east coast. By the mid 1890s their job was almost completed as the last of the giant trees were removed.

By 1890 98.5 per cent of the land area of New South Wales was leased or alienated by land grants, helping explain the landrush to the Dorrigo.[108] The 1909 *Guide* gives clear evidence of the dominant, celebratory cry of wilderness giving way to civilisation. In each edition the Upper Orara and Dorrigo regions were described in the introductory notes:

> Country for many years regarded as practically valueless because it would not yield the heavy crops of cane and maize the farmers had been used to from the alluvial flats, proved splendid dairying land ... areas formerly worth practically nothing immediately assumed a value that the most optimistic had never dreamed of.[109]

[107] Gaddes 1990: 53.
[108] New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1995 *Understanding Old Growth Forests in Australia: Identifying and Mapping Old Growth Forests in New South Wales: Draft*, National Parks and Wildlife Service: p91.
[109] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1909; 1920 *The North Coast Guide;* introductory notes.

The photos throughout the edition reflect this notion of land as having but one main purpose, its potential for economic exploitation. The idea of wilderness in this pioneering era is of valueless wasteland, waiting to be cleared for productive use. This is encapsulated in the photo of 'A typical north coast dairy'; a hut and cows against the backdrop of a razed hillside. The publication is full of scenes of dead white stands of ringbarked trees, or charred stumps on bare hills.

These are deliberate, proud representations of a land in the full swing of progress and order, hewn out of the wilderness. There are no photos of the standing forests in the 1909 edition. Instead, the Upper Orara and Dorrigo chapters show figures of proud masculinity, hands on hips beside their conquered foe - enormous logs. There was an overwhelming feeling amongst the new settlers that the timber supplies were inexhaustible; 'timber, timber, timber' is the subtitle to one section of the publication.

However the chopping, burning and razing of forests in this last 'frontier' did not go unchallenged. By the early 1890s, concern was expressed at the rapid disappearance of New South Wales forests in some quarters.[110] A plantation reserve had been established in 1872 on the Dorrigo and planting had begun, but nothing came of it, and in 1880 a timber reserve was established in the Upper Orara region. However by 1886, clearing of the forests was in full swing as the area was opened to closer settlement under pressure from colonists eager to gain agricultural allotments.[111]

The period of accelerated settlement on the Dorrigo after 1905 coincided with the 1908 Royal Commission of Inquiry into Forestry and the development of professional forestry management in New South Wales. It was understood that there were two conflicting interests at work - the interests of farming settlement and that of timber. The Inspector of Agriculture, George Marks, was well aware of this conflict between farm and forest and was obviously ambivalent in his views on the proper use of the land. Writing in the *Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales* in 1911 he said:

> The Dorrigo Plateau was originally covered with dense scrub, and while the march of civilisation is causing the destruction of this jungle, there yet remains thousands of acres standing. [However he immediately continued] During the last 12 months it is estimated that fully 3,000 acres of timber have been committed to the flames, so that at the present rate it will not be very long before the entire original scrub has disappeared. Unfortunately, the farmers are

---

[110] Maiden 1894 'The Dorrigo Forest Reserve' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp 218-223.

[111] Jeans 1972; Secomb 1986.

cutting out almost every inch of scrub as fast as they can to make room for grass. No provision has been made in the direction of leaving suitable belts for providing shade or shelter for stock, with the result that already many parts are fully exposed to every wind that blows.[112]

Of those who lamented the waste of timber in the clear felling for grass, some advocated reserves of forest, intending the timber to be available for future use. T.W. Comyns, who wrote many settlement guides on the area, found the burning of the forests in the region 'truly lamentable', suggesting that what was left 'should be reserved for use before being burnt by soldier settlers'.[113] This was a plan for scientific management of a resource rather than an idea that forests be preserved as untouched wilderness in perpetuity. Nevertheless their voices were raised in competing claims over land use, having a different vision of the forests as a necessary part of the civilising process. In the early years of the 1900s, however, their voices were drowned out in government as elsewhere, in the rush to 'clear for cows'. 'The town of Dorrigo keeps on growing amongst the burnt logs' cried one writer, and the wilderness was triumphantly felled in the name of civilisation.[114]

Wilderness in Splendour: 1920

The third edition of the *North Coast Guide* appeared in 1920. The text remained unaltered from the second edition, other than to update population figures and expand with information on the growth of settlement in the same self-congratulatory mood. However there was a noticeable shift in the visual representation. The photos of razed countryside with dead trees were all replaced and the signs of progress were now boasted of in photos of grand buildings and thriving streets of business.

Striking comparison between the two editions were contained in the Upper Orara and Dorrigo chapters. The felled giants and conquering men were all replaced with scenes of nature - rainforest, mountain and river - where signs of human intervention were no longer apparently visible. The shift in visualisation can be seen as a deliberate promotional move because photos for both editions were selected from the same series taken in September 1905.[115]

---

[112] Marks 1911 'The Dorrigo' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp 277-90, p282.

[113] Comyns c1917 *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917*, no publisher; p37.

[114] O'Grady 1913 'Coffs Harbour and Dorrigo' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp29-41.

[115] Vidoedisk G.P.O.1, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

These photos are directly comparable to photos from the Dorrigo chapter of the 1909 *North Coast Guide.*

above Red gum log, north coast forest reserve 1910. (Video Disk GPO 1, still no. 12069, Mitchell Library, Sydney). *right*: Dairy farm on the Dorrigo Plateau, 1905. (GPO 1 still no. 09681).

The photographs had all been changed in the 1920 edition of the *Guide,* representing a different view of the landscape. These photos appeared in the 1920 Dorrigo chapter. *top left* Bangalow Palms 1905 (GPO 1 09664), *bottom left* Dorrigo mountains 1905 (GPO 1 09921).

Mid-North Coast images to 1920

Three of many possible influences are suggested here as explanations for the dramatic shifts in the photographic subjects. First, the professional foresters were by then making some head way in reserving forests for future use, and the first state forests in New South Wales were set aside by 1920 with sixty-seven dedicated in the upper north-east region between 1913 and 1920.[116] Such areas were said to be 'locked up', a phrase which had already entered the language over competing white claims for Aboriginal farming lands. 'Crown lands are now practically unprocurable in some parts, all that remain being locked up in different reserves'.[117] Following the lead of American foresters, New South Wales' foresters advocated an economic strategy of 'wise use' and the development of scientific knowledge of the forest resources.[118]

Second, conservation interest in the forests was also developing. From the late nineteenth century there had been a growing concern to reserve natural areas in perpetuity for human recreation as well as for scientific purposes. The bushwalking clubs that were growing in Sydney between 1900-1910 were urging the preservation of natural areas surrounding Sydney as 'primitive areas'.[119]

On the North Coast, conservation issues were taken up under the nationalistic turn towards an appreciation of the Australian landscape as eloquently detailed in Tom Griffiths's *Hunters and Collectors*.[120] This nationalism was apparent in the newspaper *The Voice of the North*, published monthly from 1909 in Newcastle by the Australian patriot, J. J. Moloney. In its fifteenth year of publication it reminded readers that at all times it 'advocated strongly everything that is Australian'.[121]

The newspaper extolled the beauty and variety of the landscape. Referring to the North Coast in a regular column about 'Protection of our flora', the contributor described 'scenery so delightful that no place can show anything superior, and few countries can display the same wealth of mountain, river and lake'.[122] The article, reflecting a consistent theme of the newspaper, went on to abhor the destruction of its

---

[116] New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service 1995 *Understanding Old Growth Forests*: p4.
[117] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1920 *The North Coast Guide*: p8.
[118] Dargavel 1994.
[119] Mosley 1978.
[120] Griffiths 1996:chapter 7.
[121] *Voice of the North* 11/8/24.
[122] Ibid 12/5/24:5.

native brush, forests and wildflowers, its native bears, possums and bird life and demanded their protection. Dorothy Moloney's monthly column, 'Young Australians' addressed to 'comrades', outlined a clear project of raising the status of indigenous fauna and flora as a way of valuing the special 'indigenous' uniqueness of Australia for white Australians.[123]

The Moloneys had become much more strident in their condemnation of the wasteful destruction of the forests by 1920. Their nationalistic conservation views can be contrasted to the commodification of the scenes of wilderness in the 1920 edition of the *North Coast Guide* for the purposes of tourism. The increasing tourist trade to the North Coast can be seen as a third reason for the shift in the photographic representation.

The first five pages of a 1912 New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau publication on the North Coast was jammed with descriptions of a varied landscape of 'imposing', 'magnificent', 'stupendous', 'glorious', 'exceedingly beautiful', 'superbly grand' scenery.[124] There seemed to be no contradiction for the writer, however, as he described the rapid disappearance of the forests in the same euphoric tones in which he described the 'luxuriance' of their vegetation. In referring to the fauna he described '...the waters full of fish, and along the banks the birds abound, and afford sport for those who delight in shooting them'.[125]

The majestic mountain scenery featured in the 1920 edition of *The Guide* reflected the linking of wilderness to the sublime, centred in mountains and waterfalls.[126] The sublime was becoming domesticated within the promotion of tourism to the North Coast that developed as a part of the steamship passenger freight from the late nineteenth century. Coastal tourism, while developing early in some places such as at Yamba and Byron Bay, took well into the twentieth century to gain mass popularity.[127]

The railways largely took over the steamers' tourist trade by the 1920s when Coffs Harbour was joined to the line from the north and south - excluding the steamer

---

[123] For example *Voice of the North* 12/7/20; 10/12/20.
[124] New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau 1912 *The North Coast Tourist District of New South Wales: Noble Streams, Lush Meadows and Forest Stretches*, Sydney: pp1-5.
[125] Ibid:139.
[126] Cronon 1995c; Griffith 1996
[127] Griffith 1996. See chapter three of this thesis.

crossing at Grafton across the Clarence until the bridge was built in 1932. By the 1920 edition, the car was a feature in some photos of the densely forested mountain roads. Wilderness was being commodified for the growing mobile tourist trade.

While the visual promotion of the landscape had shifted dramatically between the 1909 and 1920 editions of the *Guide*, the conflict and competition over land use and value remained deeply embedded in the 1920 edition. In contrast to the scenes of humanless forests, waterfalls and rivers, the text made no mention of these 'natural' places. The Dorrigo chapter admitted that '...man on the land has somewhat considerably altered the land [sic]'. Otherwise the rhetoric of progress through dairy farming and the timber industry was the only subject of discussion in the chapter, claiming that the boom begun in 1906 which had seen 'wealth in the wild' had not yet abated.[128]

White Noise

Central to the frontier promise of turning wilderness from the wilds into civilisation was the type of human population who inhabited the land. Not only were the single, male cedar getters to be removed to make way for the civilising force of white women and their farming families. The place had to be cleared of its indigenous owners. The 'white noise' of the Great Australian Silence resonates through the landscapes of both the 1909 and 1920 editions through to today.[129]

On the Dorrigo the Gumbaingirr, if mentioned at all, were said just to have vanished by the 1880s. However the tales of spectacular massacres of Aboriginal groups at places such as Point Lookout, by the sparse population of pastoralists in the area, still murmur through photos of burnt stumps of the dairylands and the humanless forested landscapes. The mountain scenes from the Dorrigo chapter, emptied of human impact, can tell a quite different tale from its intended alluring splendour for tourist promotion.

These photos contribute to the myth of a previously uninhabited land, adding to indigenous anthropologist Marcia Langton's discussion of the emptied landscape paintings of non-Aboriginal Australian artists.[130] Those same peaks can also be

---

[128] North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1920 *The North Coast Guide*: p55.
[129] Griffith 1996.
[130] Langton 1995.

imagined as the ones over which hundreds of Gumbaingirr were driven only a few decades before the photo was taken.

Contested visions for the Mid-North Coast

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the dominant representation of the Mid-North Coast in promotional materials such as *The North Coast Guide* was that of a land of plenty, ready to take ever more new settlers. Such themes of abundance and limitless resources are hardly surprising or unique in the colonial project of settling the land. The celebration of the areas 'phenomenal growth', as expressed in the guides, would resonate again in the late twentieth century as internal migration patterns once again focused back onto the rural North Coast. By then, however, the focus had shifted from the hinterland to the coast.

The promotions of *The North Coast Guide* that celebrated the domestication of the wilderness helped drive particular visions of the North Coast as the home of the yeoman farmer. To do this the North Coast had to be imagined as a place that was *terra incognita* - unknown and unowned - and it had to be cleared of the forests to make way for the dairy farms that would create the landscape of new homes and belonging.

It helped construct Aboriginal invisibility in the rural coastal countryside, and papered over the poverty and hardship of the white farmers' existence in the isolated country they came to settle. It buried the early disquiet over felling of the forests, with its attendant arguments about the proper use of the land and its economic development. Contested imaginings and competition over places on the Mid-North Coast came with the first of the new migrants and is not new to the late twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWO

CHANGING PLACES: THE TRANSFORMING COUNTRYSIDE

The first intensive wave of non-Aboriginal migrants into the North Coast headed for the hills and valleys rather than the sea-lapped coastline. It was only in the last third of the twentieth century that an increasing proportion of Australia's population began to move inexorably from the inland to the coast. The Mid-North Coast experienced rapidly accelerating growth rates along its shorelines from the early 1970s, bringing a partial turnaround to the rural drain which had been especially acute in northern New South Wales from the interwar years. New settler and tourist populations came to overwhelm the local farming families, Aboriginal communities and small business people who had gained their identity and livelihood from the rural hinterlands.

The clash at Emerald Beach in the early 1990s did not erupt out of thin air. Its origins were deeply embedded in these changing demographic patterns that diversified cultural and social alignments and challenged environmental attitudes. All these transformations were manifest in contested claims of belonging and custodianship of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.

Two central themes emerge in examining the historical background to the Emerald Beach outfall crisis, both being a consequence of this postwar move to the coast. One is often seen as the obvious catalyst for the dispute - that of an environmental conflict over *sewage* being pumped into the ocean, created through pressures of an increasing population on the coast.[1] The second theme is less obvious, but no less important to the history of the dispute and concerns the social and economic changes wrought on the countryside and its human communities. The significance of these changes is the focus of this chapter.

One of the powerful symbolic mechanisms used by some Coffs Harbour pro-outfall advocates against anti-outfall Emerald Beach residents was a claim of authority and right to speak on the basis of length of residence in the area. The claim and status of

---

[1] As discussed in chapter five, while the terms sewage or sewerage are popularly used to refer to all matter pumped into the sea from a sewerage treatment plant, the correct term for treated sewage is effluent.

being 'local' is a contested category that can hold within it powers both to speak and to silence, and embraces consequential claims of belongingness. In my study this was often contained in language referring to the country/city split, where Emerald Beach people were represented as outsiders from the city and Coffs Harbour residents as the local country spokespeople. Struggles over control of space in the countryside often reflect struggles over what it means to live in the country.

The Emerald Beach dispute represents a spectacular catalyst of the tensions and conflicts over competing land use, visions for the region and power relations, each of which had been brewing on the North Coast in the postwar period. The analysis in this chapter and the following one will, therefore, explore community and landscape change on the Mid-North Coast in providing a broad historical context to the Emerald Beach dispute. This chapter explores the transforming countryside, while chapter three focuses onto the impact of the population shift on the coastal environment.

This chapter sketches key regional patterns of settlement in the twentieth century, outlining the shift from its rural to an urban focus which emerged with the influx of city and other newcomers from the 1970s in the midst of unsettling rural restructuring. It also interrogates the meanings and myths of countryside that pitted the country as the inclusive and compassionate opposite to the corrupted city. However within this ideal were exclusions of those groups constructed as aberrant, such as local Aboriginal groups.

The underlying argument of the chapter is that the clash at Emerald Beach was as much to do with the processes of internal migration that accentuated and brought new, competing values and visions to the countryside, as it was about effluent into the ocean. It was about the contested ways that people wished to claim and define the diversifying countryside.

Old locals new locals

As noted in chapter one, the colonial settlement period and marginalisation of indigenous owners was not fully accomplished on the Mid-North Coast until the first two decades of the twentieth century. From then on, three loosely defined periods of settlement patterns in the Coffs Harbour region can be identified; the first period through to the Second World War, the intermediate period to the late 1960s and the period of accelerated internal migration from the early 1970s creating the third. This

section introduces important aspects of these periods that are then more fully explored in the rest of the chapter.

Firstly, through to the Second World War, what little population movement there was in the region reflected the general rural malaise of people's migration out of the area to the city - Sydney. The township itself grew slowly through its railway and port activities and the small horticultural farmers who lived in the town. Despite the economic and social turmoil of the First World War and the Depression, this is often remembered as a period of stability. For some, it is this era which identifies pioneer or 'real locals'.[2]

For these people it is not good enough to claim genuine local status merely on the basis of birth or length of residence, because this no longer guarantees a rural background.[3] An elderly Coffs Harbour resident vehemently denied to me any local status as he had only come to the town from Sydney as an adult in 1958. Another local explained to me that to be a 'real local' one's family has to be of pioneering stock from the nineteenth or early twentieth century.[4]

He also conceded 'real local' status to similar generations of local business people and the few professionals in the town. The rural hegemony enveloped small towns such as Coffs Harbour as they existed to service their rural hinterlands. They did not escape common North Coast rural problems such as isolation through poor roads and distance from major urban markets, nor remain aloof from the binding identity of being country people.[5]

Whiteness is an assumed characteristic of this kind of local status. One way of constructing settler localness is to deny an historical Aboriginal presence in rural regions, for example suggesting that they just passed across an area with no permanent attachments and therefore rights.[6] In Coffs Harbour a pervading belief that either there were never any traditional owners of the town site or that there are no contemporary Gumbaingirr with traditional attachments to the area, has been powerfully perpetuated through local history and media.[7]

---

[2] Aitkin 1972; Yeates 1990.
[3] See Gray 1991 for similarities with his study of Cowra.
[4] Interview T37
[5] Aitkin 1972.
[6] Griffiths 1987, Blomfield 1981.
[7] England nd a 'Local Aborigines: Notes by G.E.England 1960s'; England nd b 'Aborigines and Settlers', unpublished notes Coffs Harbour Historical Society; 'the last of the Kumanigerri' *Advocate* 8/3/84.

North Coast Aboriginal people however know what is their country, and what rights they have in their mother's and/or father's country. During the first half of the twentieth century they also lived a rural-based lifestyle which had some similarities, as well as significant differences, to non-Aboriginal locals.

From the early postwar period to the end of the 1960s, a second pattern of settlement emerged. Gumbaingirr and other Aboriginal people from around the North Coast had migrated to Coffs Harbour during the labour shortages of the war years and continued to increase their numbers. Non-English speaking migrants also arrived - some Italians came to boost the small Italian community that had originated in the 1930s, and from the 1950s, Indians originally from the Punjab migrated to the Woolgoolga area.[8] Ex-servicemen returned as well as some new settlers from the city and from the west across the Great Dividing Range. Dairy farmers from the hinterland moved into the town. Many of this diverse grouping took up banana and other small horticultural farming and labouring.[9]

It was also in this period that the first of the retirees and hobby farmers arrived to take up residence on the warm coast and hinterland. Others came to take advantage of the postwar prosperity that brought a boom in building, real estate, a fledgling tourist trade and offered new professional and business opportunities. The numbers of these new migrants were modest and while often leading change through to the late 1960s, they generally fitted into the patterns of country living and identification as country people.

Today many of those people claim a local status in their own right, or on the basis of marriage or friendship with 'real locals'. While their local status is still scoffed at by some of the pioneering locals, this interim group's claims of being local has brought political clout and credibility to many as they have taken on the positions of local politicians, community and business leaders.[10]

A third pattern of North Coast settlement came in the boom times of the 1970s and 80s. In 1981 and 1982 the unprecedented and unexpected growth of the region was featured in large special reports in the *Financial Times*, canvassing the economic and social shifts[11]. Population growth rates soared to highs way above state and national

---

[8] Yeates 1993; deLepervanche 1984.
[9] Yeates 1993.
[10] I have to thank Kerry Shipman in alerting me to what he referred to as the interim group.
[11] Medcalf 1981; Taylor 1982.

averages as new patterns of internal migration from retirees, young couples, hobby farmers, rural-retreaters and alternative lifestylers brought large numbers of new settlers to the region and to Coffs Harbour. They came predominantly from Sydney, western inland New South Wales and Victoria.[12]

A mix of young retirees and families moved into the newly established beach estates north of Coffs Harbour, such as Emerald Beach, bringing with them expectations and desires to forge new lives. It was from amongst these new settlers that many of the Emerald Beach protesters emerged. A number gained their sense of belonging to the area over years of visiting on regular holidays and so they did not feel like strangers. For others, their sense of localness became bound up in their own village or community, outside of and separate from the burgeoning township of Coffs Harbour.

For the new settlers who moved into the rural hinterland, few earned their income solely off the land. The countryside became, for many, a place to live on rather than a place to live from. The first two settlement patterns above can be linked to rural-based country identities. However the growth resulting from the influx of city people from the 1970s coincided with radical economic transformation of the rural sector, resulting in a greater diversity of competing uses and visions for the countryside.

Living on the land: the hegemony of the rural sector to the late 1960s

By the 1920s, the pattern of agriculture that dominated throughout the district to the 1960s had been established. Timber extraction and dairying remained the prominent agricultural industries, joined by banana cropping and small-scale horticulture such as tomato growing on the coast. Maize and other crops had been grown from the nineteenth century, often for family and livestock use, and pig raising using milk residue was common. It was usual for farmers to work a variety of jobs crossing between timber cutting, dairying and cropping.[13]

---

[12] Sherlaimoff 1986.
[13] Berzins 1996; Interview T28; Kijas 2001.

Today timber and bananas still cover much of the steep hillsides and have always been the largest agricultural earners for the immediate Coffs Harbour region, with bananas its most famous.[14] However it is the history of the dairy industry that has left its most obvious transformative marks on the physical and social landscape. Nearly all the flat land in the area has been cleared at some time for dairying, creating the pastorale landscape that has attracted more recent migrants to the North Coast hinterland.

Coastal, swampy areas on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches were cleared in the colonial period in attempts at dairying. However they proved generally unviable and it was the hinterland that attracted the majority of new settlers. While the Bellinger Valley and the Dorrigo are the most famous dairying areas in the district, dairy farms spread throughout the upper and lower reaches of the Orara Valley and south throughout the Nambucca region. In the postwar period the transference of ownership and use of this land, from dairying to subdivided living spaces, gives example to the transforming countryside.[15]

Author of many buoyant *Guides* to the North Coast, T.W. Comyns, promoted the Dorrigo in 1917 in typical style for the region: 'There are large tracts of country here where thousands of industrious dairy farmers could be placed on small areas, which would amply maintain them.'[16] The enthusiasm for the North Coast region lay in beliefs of the land's fertility. This allowed its promotion as able to hold a large population of small-scale family farms, so dear to the hearts of government administrators pushing the policy of closer settlement in the early twentieth century.

However, despite the continuing rhetoric of the North Coast as a land of plenty, it was not a prosperous area of economic growth. Such promotions ignored the impediments of distance from viable markets, floods, a lack of understanding of the subtropical climate and the uneven fertility of the soils for cropping. This meant that Mid-North Coast farmers continually struggled for anything beyond subsistence.

The scale of dairy and horticultural farming typical of the North Coast was

---

[14] Yeates 1990; 1993. As the banana industry in Coffs Harbour continues to fail, aesthetic concerns for the loss of the identifying features of banana-clad hillsides are periodically raised.

[15] Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1996 *Rural Settlement: Guidelines on Rural Settlement on the North Coast of New South Wales*, NSW State Department of Urban Planning.

[16] Comyns nd *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917*, no publisher; p27.

closer than anywhere else in Australia to the idealised yeomanry lifestyle. The reality however, in many areas, was far from the proffered contentedness suggested in immigration advertising to the region such as this c.1902 government publication:

> To go on the land in NSW means...to take up the healthiest, hardiest, happiest occupation that life affords: ... it means a vigorous husband and father, a smiling wife and mother, and happy, healthy children.[17]

Historian Norma Townsend's portrayal of life on the small farms around Nambucca into the 1930s painted a dismal picture of relentless labour for all the family, with no respite in old age.[18] Comyns was scathing in 1916 about the farmers in the same district, chiding them as backward, ignorant and lazy and extolling the virtues of scientific cultivation of the land which would bring forth 'countless products of the soil'.[19] However little or no capital, high competition from other small farmers, low populations offering few local markets and huge expense to reach the Sydney market, provided little hope of getting ahead.[20]

One of the few remaining dairy farmers around Coffs Harbour today is Doug Hoschke. His family was among the first to settle in the Upper Orara Valley in the 1880s, one of the regions featured in the *North Coast Guide*.[21] In 1917 the area was touted as one of the richest dairying districts on the

Doug's great grandparents, Amandus and Maryanne Hoschke c.1920. Amandus selected land on the Upper Orara in 1886. Photo courtesy of the Hoschke family.

---

[17] Government Tourist Bureau Sydney nd *Pleasure Trips by Rail in the South Coast Districts of Queensland and the Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Government Tourist Bureau Sydney in conjunction with the Commissioner for Railways, Queensland.

[18] Townsend 1993.

[19] Comyns 1916 *The Nambucca River in 1916 Embracing Macksville, Bowraville, Taylor's Arm, Nambucca Heads, Deep Crook: Rising Centres in a Glorious Fertile and Picturesque District with a Splendid Future*, no publisher.

[20] Townsend 1993; Martin 1987.

[21] See chapter one.

North Coast, with 115 dairies in the Coramba police patrol.[22] The Valley had its largest number of farms in the 1920s, filling up again for a time with novice farmers after the Second World War, before emptying out in the 1950s to 70s with the restructuring of the dairy industry.

Doug remembered his father's battle in the Valley:

> Me father finished up in the wrong job... [When he took the farm] over from me grandfather, it wasn't until depression time ... and things weren't too bright back in them days. They battled hard - he had a go at growing bananas back in the depression years. There were up to two hundred acres of bananas around the hills around here and a lot of the farmers too - they had two jobs. They milked cows and looked after their farm; in the early times some of them had bullock teams and then later on they had a go at bananas and then me father got into growing tomatoes and vegetables. Once the railway was opened through to Sydney markets, they were able to send the produce further on. There were that many growing here so it had to go to Sydney - so he tried bananas and failed. He didn't have enough money to put enough fertiliser on to make them grow so it didn't work. When they put the power lines in here, in 1936 I think, he worked on that. He was one of the haulers who went through and felled the trees to put the lines through. And then he also bought a little rotary hoe that he walked behind - this was before tractors come in - and went out contract working on other people's paddocks which was other income. Then I got the place off him back in 1968.[23]

Today the proximity of Doug's farm to Coffs Harbour, only fifteen minutes up and over Red Hill, has seen it subdivided into a rural suburb of the city. In describing the changes to the Valley over the past twenty years Doug said:

> Now it's all filled up again because everyone is moving out of Coffs Harbour and moving out to live in the pretty little country area like it is. I know it is [pretty] because people tell me.

I asked him to describe the Valley.

> Well, I've been here all me life. How do you describe that!? Well, we are lucky anyway in that there is permanent water. The view's all right if you've got time to look at it. It always looks green, very seldom not. ...But I just happen to be here. Me parents were here.[24]

Half an hour north by car from Doug's place on today's roads, Kerry Shipman's family arrived in the Glenreagh region in 1887, settling on Tallawudjah Creek. Half

---

[22] Comyns nd *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917.*
[23] Interview T28.
[24] Ibid

way between Grafton and Coffs Harbour, and today the home to daily commuters to Coffs Harbour, it was an isolated area until the upgrading of roads began in the late 1960s. There are Shipmans everywhere around this part of the Orara Valley and in Coffs Harbour. Kerry is the youngest of one such family, growing up on a dairy farm at Nana Glen on the Orara River eleven kilometres to the south of Glenreagh, where going to 'town' meant the monthly trip into Coffs. Kerry remembered life on the farm:

> There were no holidays. You can't go on holidays on a dairy farm... When I talk about Moonee Beach [where the family would visit their grandparents on some weekends] I always think of it in terms of three o'clock. Because at three o'clock that was the absolute maximum we could leave to get back to milk the cows.
> ... It was just hard and people don't realise, newcomers, it was a poor area. There were no rich people on farms ... The women had to be extremely good managers just to get food on the plate... the job they did was incredible. Looking back, obviously, we all took it all for granted. The day started at four am - long days with the milking of the cows. And the dad would have to go out to work, probably as a fettler on the railway, to supplement the income - then come home and milk the cows again. And Mum ... it was just tedious and long and lonely - never ending. [25]

The poverty of dairy farmers' often barely subsistence lifestyle was recorded in the 1943 Rural Reconstruction Commission's report and again by the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty in 1973, where North Coast farmers were specifically noted.[26] Kerry recalled his parents' generation around Nana Glen deliberately directing their children away from dairying to more secure government jobs, such as the railways or in the post office, rather than subjecting their children: 'to that hardship. There was a strong sense to have security in work and you weren't going to get that on a farm ...or working in the bush.'[27]

In 1960, not yet a teenager, Kerry went to live in Coffs Harbour with his family. This was at a time of oversupply of dairy produce to a rapidly changing international market that was turning away from the traditional cream-based products of the North Coast. Added to this was a shrinking domestic market at the beginning of global economic restructuring, which would see government policy shift away from a history of protecting primary producers and small-scale farming.[28]

---

[25] Interview T 37.
[26] Martin 1987.
[27] Interview T 37.
[28] Martin 1987; Powell 1988.

The rationalisation process of dairying moved through the countryside 'at express speed'.[29] On the densely-farmed North Coast, half the dairy farmers of 1958 had left the industry within the next ten years.[30] Increased costs, loss of markets, declining soil fertility, weed problems and an aging farming community where children had left the farms, all contributed to the rural decline. It was not until the late 1980s that this exit was stemmed, by which time the countryside had been thoroughly transformed from a patchwork of small cleared dairy farms hewn out of the forests, to a mix of subdivided residential, hobby and diversified horticultural blocks.[31]

In the Coffs Harbour area about 25 per cent of families had left their farms between 1952 and 1962, the majority of the balance following through the 1970s.[32] The Shipmans left their dairy farm near the end of the first period, Kerry's father taking up full-time work with the Forestry Commission. By then the traditional send offs for people leaving the area had already died out as so many were leaving, and so few were left in the area to celebrate the farewells.[33] Throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s, the last of the Nana Glen dairy farmers followed the Shipmans into Coffs Harbour, south to Sydney, or turned to part-time farming of beef cattle while taking up other jobs in the timber industry, government services or local council.[34] While jobs were still in sufficient supply to provide economic alternatives for those who chose to stay in the district, Kerry said for men like his father: 'they couldn't identify any longer as dairy farmers. It was taken from them. It wasn't their decision. They just literally walked away.'[35]

Despite the hardships of dairying life, this dislocation brought Kerry a great sense of loss. He described his understanding of the transforming countryside:

> ... the 60s - it was the start of the whole move away from the area as being rural to being a place of development and - real estate really... The farm continued on for dairying for a little while... and then the dairying stopped and the dairy was converted into a house. There's no livestock out there [at Nana Glen] ...they didn't even bother rearing animals. There were a few small crops - but nothing really... There's nothing happening out there... they just went there to live... Hobby farmers as they call them... That was

---

[29] Powell 1988:309.

[30] Martin 1987:111;Taylor 1981.

[31] Taylor 1981.

[32] NWS Agriculture 1996 *Agricultural Land Classification in the Orara-Bucca Valley and Bonville-Crossmaglen Areas of Coffs Harbour City*, Department of Agriculture.

[33] Interview T 37.

[34] NWS Agriculture 1996 *Agricultural Land Classification*.

[35] Interview T 37.

definitely the beginning of this sense of no longer being connected to a worthwhile rural lifestyle.[36]

Part of this loss is associated with memories of an inclusive rural lifestyle. However in hindsight Kerry also recognised exclusions and marginalisation of certain others. For example he remembered great antagonism towards what he thought were Italian, Yugoslav and Greeks in a huge fettlers camp at Glenreagh.[37] More importantly for him are his memories of his closest school friend, Ronnie Heron. Ron was the youngest child of the only Aboriginal family living in Nana Glen in the late 1950s. While Kerry said he could remember no overt examples of racism towards Aboriginal people as he grew up at Nana Glen, in hindsight he said, he recognised the powerful tools of racism through exclusion.

> ... when I talk about all that inclusion and sense of access - well Ronnie and Brenda and Charlie certainly had access to our places - but their parents didn't. They just never got invited to anyone's functions or homes. They didn't have that freedom to visit- when I look back... they didn't belong. They weren't included and these were lovely people - very dignified people - especially his father. So these things unravel later.[38]

Nana Glen Primary School 1956. Back row: Ron Heron (far left) and Kerry Shipman (5th from left). Photo courtesy of Kerry Shipman.

Kerry explained his own sense of belonging to the region as a secure and confident one, based on a combination of his pioneering family heritage and his own

---

[36] Interview T37.

[37] Local historian of the Glenreagh area , Elizabeth Webb 1998, recalls great hostility to Maltese railway workers in the area through the Depression.

[38] Interview T 37.

familiarity with the social and environmental landscape.[39] He claimed a shared sense of connection and affinity between members of pioneering families, even when meeting previously unknown individuals. This connection, he said, is based on the common experience of the hardship of making a living on the land and the ethic of looking out for each other.[40]

In his study of a small country town, Ken Dempsey found that his participants presented very positive stereotypes of themselves and their community, perceiving themselves as egalitarian, friendly and caring.[41] Elizabeth Teather's research on the Country Women's Association of New South Wales found that common values mentioned were friendship, family and a 'country concern' for neighbours.[42] Local historian Elizabeth Webb reflected this ethic saying that the early settlers of the Glenreagh region:

> ...brought with them ... a caring compassion for their fellow man and neighbour. This was no doubt fostered by the distance they lived from one another and the trials they encountered in just every day living. Whether the pioneers brought this spirit with them or if, indeed, it developed through necessity, it still exists in this community to-day, a heritage to be proud of.[43]

That it was largely an exclusive compassion for fellow white, Anglo neighbours has been a painful awakening for Kerry over the past ten years.

Changing places: Myths of countryside

Webb's declaration of community, country compassion stands as one of the most enduring myths of a positive conception of the countryside. The term *myth* is not used here to imply falsehood as opposed to reality, but rather in the understanding of myths as stories that are widely shared.

> [it is used] to refer to an intellectual construction which embodies beliefs, values and information, and which can influence events, behaviour and perception. Myths are (re)-presentations of reality which resonate across space and over time, which are widely used and reproduced, which are broad enough to encompass diverse experiences yet deep enough to anchor these experiences in a continuous medium of meaning.[44]

---

[39] See Gray 1991: chapter 9 for a discussion of the greater status of the farming families generational connections to his study town of Cowra over town businesses; and Wild 1974 for a similar discussion.
[40] Interview T 37.
[41] Dempsey 1990
[42] Teather 1992;375.
[43] Webb 1998:40.
[44] Short 1991:vi.

I use the term *countryside* deliberately - interchangeably with *rural* - to distinguish between the conceptions of North Coast countryside and the Australian bush legend of a wide, brown land or the red-centre imaginings of the outback. The green, cleared and watered landscape of the North Coast comes as close to the English pastorale imagination as any part of Australia. The history of small-scale dairy farms on the North Coast helped construct this landscape, just as the push for dairy farming itself was constructed from the ideology of the independent yeoman farmer.[45]

Two myths of countryside are particularly important to this study: a rural conservative myth and a middle-class urban one. Both constructions hold to an essential notion of place as stable, homogenous, eternal and unchanging. These myths of countryside are deeply embedded in the construction of the other - of establishing identity through contrasts with what it is seen not to be.[46]

For example, one of the commonly stated binding forces of identity amongst country people has been a contrast between the impersonal, corrupting city and the productive, egalitarian country.[47] Exploring the powerful rural ideology in his Australian study of Cowra, Ian Gray refers to its British tradition in the rural idyll, 'the core of which attributes harmony and virtue to rural living and disorganisation and alienation to city life.'[48]

This distinction between the country and the city has also drawn many city people to the countryside where they long for the sense of community, simplicity and fresh air the myth promises. As an example many of the middle-class, urban youth of the 1970s alternative movement were seeking a redemptive harmony of the countryside in the face of a soulless, polluted and corrupted city.[49] So too were those Emerald Beach residents of the early 1980s who had travelled the length of the eastern coastline in search of their place in the country. However their status as city people created them as other within the conservative rural ideology.

In Australia this ideological contrast and opposition embedded in rural conservatism has been called 'countrymindedness'; its high period argued to be between 1925 and 1960.[50]

---

[45] See Massey 1994a; Moore 1998.
[46] See Sibley 1995.
[47] Williams 1973; Aitkin 1985; Costar and Woodward 1985; Dempsey 1990; Gray 1991.
[48] Gray 1991:151.
[49] David Hollinsworth pers. com. 10/7/00; see this chapter below and chapter five.
[50] Aitkin 1985; Costar and Woodward 1985; Dempsey 1990; Gray 1991.

[it is] the special elevated virtue of rural living, and the "mission" of rural people to defend embattled faiths and "standards"...[which includes]... the family, Christian faith, Empire loyalism, sexual moralism, reward for effort and so on.[51]

Don Aitkin, historian of the Country Party, considered countrymindedness as the core of the party's ideology. He used the term ideology not as a pejorative dismissal but as providing a 'critique of contemporary social reality'.[52] He argued that countrymindedness borrowed from the emerging Australian legend to promote a uniquely Australian character in the 'country man', while the city dweller was seen to be much the same the world over.[53]

Countrymindedness provided one powerful avenue to argue for a bounded, true nature of the countryside that was being undermined by selfish, and often immoral, city intruders. In northern New South Wales, such representations hook back into a long-established historical rhetoric of the malignancy of Sydney. This was born out in the conservative politics of the Country Party and the New State Movement that persevered throughout the twentieth century to the late 1960s, and can be argued to have flourished again in the 1990s with Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party.

On the North Coast from the early twentieth century, consequences of the country/city divide were given as explanation for residents' poverty and isolation, understood as a direct result of the stranglehold of Sydney over their destiny. 'Why is this area, the most prospective in the Commonwealth, not developing?', demanded W.Ager in 1919 in *The Voice of the North*. Answering his own question he claimed that Sydney was:

> strangulating this area. ...the country gets the promises, the city gets the money... What heed has he [Premier Holman] and his Government of the railway needs, electrical problems and deep-sea ports of this vast prospective stagnating area?[54]

In collaboration with others, Grafton resident Earle Page, founder of the Country Party, argued for the subdivision of New South Wales to address this problem, proposing a new state in the north incorporating New England and the North Coast.[55]

---

[51] Verrall et al 1985:21 drawing from Aitkin.

[52] Aitkin 1972:6.

[53] Aitkin 1985.

[54] Ager W 'Decentralization will kill Sydney Octopus' in *The Voice of the North*, 16/5/19:8.

[55] The New State Movement had its roots in the mid 19th century, revived as an idea in Grafton in 1915, and galvanised into the New England New State Movement which was active on the tablelands and north coast between 1948 and 1967. Ellis 1965 *The Battle for Decentralisation: Northern Districts Lose 48,000 Potential Citizens in Ten Years*, New England New State Movement.

Advocates claimed that Sydney retained all the political power enabling it to 'unscrupulously manipulate' public funds to provide superior facilities in the city and concentrate all the trade there.

> And while the artificial progress of Sydney is thus maintained, need we wonder at the general discontent which prevails throughout the State? ...The country is bled that Sydney may flourish.[56]

Countrymindedness, and the interconnected history of the North Coast constructed through the New State Movement, portrays a unified experience of North Coast people battling the malicious gargantuan of Sydney. In Massey's progressive place conception however, this history changes from being *the* historical truth of the region, to one amidst a *mixture* of histories, interpretations and experiences which created the specific localness of the North Coast region and of Coffs Harbour.[57]

This in no way denies the reality of the loss of family through out-migration to the city or the economic depression of the region. The reality of the drain of country populations into the cities was not unique to the rural regions of northern New South Wales. Objective (b) of the New South Wales Country Women's Association, established in 1922, was '[t]o arrest the drift of population from country to city'.[58] Aitkin noted that country people were decrying the loss of their sons and daughters to the city in the 1870s, although it was not until the early twentieth century that economic and population growth died throughout the countryside.[59]

The period between 1930 and 1945 was one of stagnation in the countryside. The Depression stunted the growth of country towns, accelerating the drift to the cities, with the consequential drain of vigour from rural environments.[60] Each of the capital cities has historically dominated the economy of its state even more comprehensively than it has dominated the pattern of population distribution. Historian Allen Martin's statistics remained consistent with Earle Page's earlier claims in 1920. In 1960, while Sydney represented only 56 per cent of the New South Wales population, it had 75 per cent of the manufacturing jobs.[61]

---

[56] Page et al 1920 *Australian Subdivision: Effect on Development: The Case for Northern New South Wales*, Examiner Printing Works, Glen Innes: p10.

[57] Massey 1993a.

[58] Teather 1992:387.

[59] Aitkin 1985; for general accounts see Bolton 1981; Martin 1987.

[60] Bolton 1981.

[61] Martin 1987.

Population decline on the North Coast was especially acute. Ulrich Ellis, a long time activist for the Country Party and New State Movement, claimed an estimated 48,000 people between 1954 and 1964 had been 'spirited away in one decade, dribble by dribble'.[62] This, he said, was enough to form another community as large as the combined populations of Kempsey, the Macleay, Nambucca, Coffs Harbour and Bellingen - a population of 46,140 people. His response was that: 'Only a raving madman would suggest the evacuation of such a numerous community. ...The north is the victim of raving madness... Sydney got them'.[63]

In focusing all the ills of rural life onto the city and its elites, the Movement developed a populist ideology. Geoffrey Stokes described populist ideologies as offering an account of 'the people and their vulnerabilities, as well as their struggles against various elites, outsiders or foreigners that are represented as the causes of their distress'.[64]

In doing so, other explanations for rural poverty and depopulation on the North Coast were excluded. For example, the focus was shifted away from what Aitkin described as the impediment of parochial country towns vying against each other, rather than collaborating to gain funding and resources.[65] Instead, Sydney arrogance was a potent explanation and remains so, drawing on the Movement's particular construction of its historical legacy.

The power of the Country Party has also been to portray the North Coast as a politically conservative place. However the port in Coffs Harbour, and parts of the forestry and dairying community in the Orara Valley, harboured strong, active pockets of Communist Party supporters and less radical Labour support in Local Council, fracturing the historical representation of a homogenously conservative countryside.[66]

Viewing North Coast history through Massey's progressive sense of place, rather than an essential and unified concept of place, also does not deny the neighbourliness

---

[62] Ellis 1965 *The Battle for Decentralisation*; also see Taylor 1981.
[63] Ellis 1965 *The Battle for Decentralisation*: pp1-2.
[64] Stokes 2000:23.
[65] Aitkin 1972.
[66] Interview T 37; Jack Small pers.com. 23/5/98; Elliot 1998.

and positive aspects of a tight-knit community that many people have experienced at one time or another living in the country. Rather, it acknowledges that this was not a universal experience. The same places have different meanings to different groups and individuals at one time, and changing meanings over time.[67]

Aboriginal people, for example, were excluded from countrymindedness and their presence in rural Australia was often treated as aberrant. Forced migrations, marginalisation to the edges of towns and welfare control over families' lives have meant that notions of home and stability, which are core to essential notions of place, have often not been the experience of Aboriginal people living in the countryside.[68]

Therefore in arguing for a different and progressive conception of place, Massey challenges the notion that places ever were as homogenous, bounded and enduring as the myths of countryside have made them appear. One step in reconceptualising the static notion of place is to recognise and acknowledge that there are multiple histories, if often publicly silenced, that make up any place. One consequence of this is it reveals rents in the fabric of country community compassion and homogeneity. Its inclusiveness was partial, excluding those considered deviant, whether they be Aboriginal, non-conforming city folk or country born, non-Anglos and so on.

Aboriginal lives in the rural hegemony

The past three decades have seen a flowering of indigenous writings from rural Australia, telling different histories about the same places from those of white local histories.[69] In Maclean on the Clarence River, members of the Historical Association are clear that only one Aboriginal child was taken away from the area and that relations were good with the local Aborigines.[70] In comparison, Della Walker and others who lived on the Aboriginal Reserve on Ulgundahi Island, upstream from Maclean, tell of constant surveillance of their lives by government welfare officers and their parents' fears of welfare threats to take their children away. At least six children were known to have been taken.[71]

Walker's book is also filled with family stories, kinship connections and her

---

[67] Pred 1986; Massey 1993a, 1994a,b: Ching and Creed 1997.
[68] Morris 1994; Goodall 1996.
[69] See Goodall 2000.
[70] Jenny Ledgar pers com 12/8/97.
[71] Walker 1989; Ledgar 1998.

family's knowledge of the river and land up to Yamba at the river's mouth. Her book contains many typical features of this Aboriginal writing, full of yarns about kin and country that clearly attaches belonging to country. In a similar fashion Ruby Langford Ginibi's books re-establish her belonging in Bundjalung country after years in the city.[72] In telling the stories about their Aboriginal families' lives, they give another insight into the different ways of living in rural Australia.

Bill Cohen was a Gumbangarri[73] man whose ancestors were from the region around the Dorrigo Plateau through to the New England Tablelands. His autobiography provides vivid insight into aspects of rural Aboriginal men's lives in the first half of the twentieth century, such as the boxing troops and droving work still carried out in the steep river valley country of the Great Dividing Range. Hints of the marginalisation of Aboriginal people from white rural society are revealed in his story of outstanding members of an all-Aboriginal cricket team he played with in Armidale. 'Of course' he said 'this team never played in the comp...'[74]. However his knowledge of massacre stories, and his own experiences of racism, were hardly mentioned in the book because Geoffrey Blomfield, author of *Baal Belbora*, said Cohen 'did not like talking about [them] because he felt this unchristian'.[75]

Various reasons for Aboriginal self-censorship, as well as their different interests in what is important to tell,[76] has meant that it has often been non-Aboriginal academic historians who have publicly revealed the extent of racism and indigenous exclusion in twentieth-century rural Australia.[77]

After their decimation by disease and warfare of the frontier era, the colonial government carried on the dispossession of North Coast Aborigines, as in other parts of Australia, by trying to confine people to segregated reserves. In Gumbaingirr country for example, small to tiny reserves were established from the late 1800s. A number of those places had at first functioned as safe-havens and were controlled by Aboriginal

---

[72] Langford 1994.
[73] This was the spelling used in the book, Cohen 1987.
[74] Ibid:32.
[75] In ibid:x. See chapter one.
[76] For example see Diane Barwick's famous rebuke of some non-Aboriginal historians in their analysis of Aboriginal history-telling: Barwick 1981.
[77] On the North Coast Heather Goodall and Barry Morris's work has been the most significant through their use of archival and oral sources. For example see Goodall 1996; Morris 1989.

people.[78] They established farms on some of the land, such as at Bellingen, but then had to fight often unsuccessfully to hold onto them. By the 1920s government policy had again changed, creating the places which many Aboriginal people remember as concentration camps, with consequential losses of legal, social and cultural freedoms. As Heather Goodall and Barry Morris have retold, forced migration was a common experience of North Coast Aborigines.[79]

One reason for Aboriginal displacement was the increasing demand of white families to have Aboriginal children removed from public schools. The formal policy of the Department of Public Instruction was that any complaint from a European parent was grounds for removal of all Aboriginal children from that school.[80] Pressure for removals from white parents was greatest on the North Coast, and Aboriginal families found themselves reluctantly moving to towns or reserves where schooling was available.[81]

In 1936 Aboriginal parents at Corindi found themselves faced with this demand. The white parents confessed their request was not based on health or moral grounds but that it 'just didn't seem right' that the two racial groups mix freely.[82] In this case the schoolteacher did not support the parents, and the school remained open to the Aboriginal children. Because of the small number of students, half of whom were Aboriginal, the school would have had to close if the removals had been successful.

Unlike many other North Coast groups who had been forced onto government controlled reserves, Gumbaingirr people at Corindi are proud of their history of survival outside of the reserve system. After the Red Rock Massacre (discussed in chapter one), Gumbaingirr and Yaygir people began moving back into the area from the early 1900s, camping at Red Rock and around Corindi Lake. In the late 1980s, the Garby Elders from Corindi would come to play a significant role in the outfall dispute on the northern

---

[78] They were established in the south at Stuarts Island and Goat Island in the Nambucca River, Brushy Island, Macksville and Bellingen Heads Island, and to the west and north at Nymboida, Orara River, Grafton, South Grafton, Copmanhurst Island, Lawrence, and Yaygir people at Ulgundahi Island. Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach: Part Two: Anthropology Study,* Report to NSW Public Works Department.

[79] For a chapter overview of this history see Goodall 1995.

[80] Morris 1989.

[81] Goodall 1996.

[82] Corindi Parents and Citizens Association 1984 *Centenary Book 1884-1984,* Corindi Public School: p16; see Goodall 1996: Ch9.

beaches, as they attempted to find solutions to the sewage problems which had killed their lake by that time.

The memory which many non-Aboriginal people hold of their camps on the lake is of appalling living conditions.[83] However the independent life in their own country, well sustained by the abundant bush and sea foods around Corindi Lake to the 1970s, is what Gumbaingirr of the area treasure. While their housing was very basic, constructed from available local resources, the old camp sites remain special places which 'represent both a physical and spiritual relationship to the land'.[84]
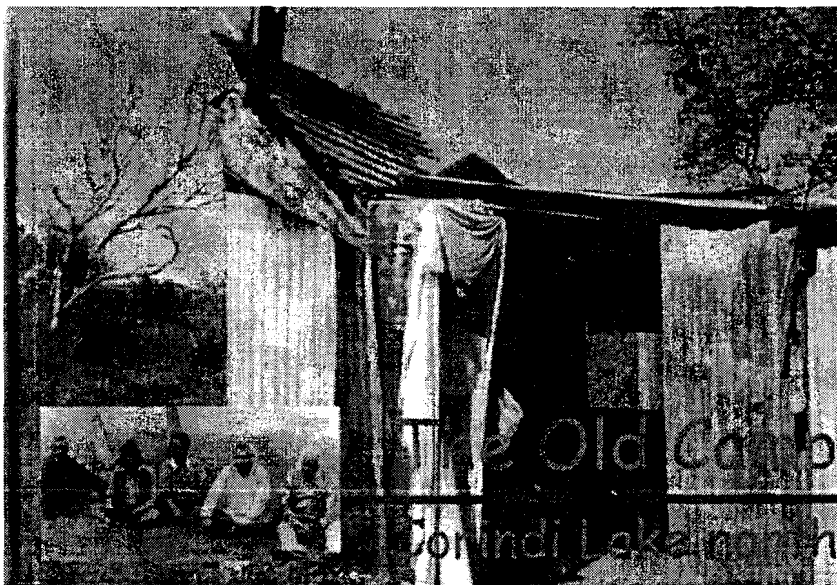
'The Old Camp: Corindi Lake north';. Front cover of Garby Elders and 'Old Camp'; Yarrawarra Place Stories Book 3 2000.

While their remoteness allowed them an independent existence, they did not fully escape the discriminatory effects of government policy. For example two sisters were taken from the school one day by a welfare officer, never to return.[85] Tony Perkins of the Yarrawarra Community at Corinidi explained another consequence of living as identifiable Aboriginal people, under the shadow of government policies, within a predominantly white community. He argued that the history of the Red Rock Massacre has been told publicly much later by Aboriginal people than in other places where

---

[83] For example Advocate 8/2/84.
[84] Yarrawarra Place Stories 2000c:5; Perkins 1997; Yarrawarra Place Stories 2000 b,d. Many Gumbaingirr know the lake as Pipeclay Lake.
[85] Morris 1994 The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach.

massacres occurred.[86] That is because Aboriginal people at Corindi did not want to cause trouble:

> ... see - the Aboriginal people who are here had to live somewhere - and in the finish they were living on land belonging to someone else... So really in one sense you had to become sort of linked together a bit more and so you didn't speak out a lot, because this is only a small area and you know - it didn't have a large Aboriginal population compared to other areas where they spoke out. ...You had to work for people... so you virtually kept the peace...[87]

Labour shortages through the Second World War, followed by the buoyant postwar economy, gave Aboriginal people opportunities and confidence to move away from the reserves.[88] In Coffs Harbour, since its beginnings in the early 1900s, some Aboriginal people had always lived or moved through camps on the fringes of the town because Coffs is an important place.[89] However the numbers swelled from the early 1940s.[90]

Grace Roberts, a Bundgalung woman who became a prominent community worker in Coffs Harbour, moved there in 1941. She said that many Aboriginal men from the North Coast came to find work in the Coffs Harbour district around that time, their families following later.[91] The Shire Council reported on 'the uncontrolled settlements... on Crown reservations' and applied in 1946 to the Aborigines Welfare Board in Sydney for land acquisition to establish a formal reserve for the 'coloured population'.[92]

As Goodall explained, New South Wales' government policy, developed by and executed through the Aborigines Welfare Board, tried to maintain its policies of segregation into the early 1940s. When they had to admit they could no longer keep such control in the new labour market conditions, they changed policy direction in 1948. Now they maintained their surveillance of Aboriginal people through a network of district welfare officers.[93] The fear of increasing numbers of Aboriginal campers at

---

[86] He says it has only become publicly talked about since Scott Caine's report on it in 1988. Perkins interview with Ross 1998.

[87] Tony Perkins interview with Veronica Ross 1998.

[88] Goodall 1996.

[89] Interview NT 74.

[90] The camps were on the south bank of Coffs Creek near the present day Olympic pool, on the sand dunes between the mouth of the creek and the harbour, and the south side of the harbour near the Deep Sea Fishermans Club. Yeates 1990.

[91] Becker nd:

[92] Yeates 1993; Goodall 1996.

[93] Goodall 1996:264-265.

Coffs Harbour became so great that one of these officers was positioned in the town in 1950. The *Advocate* reported in 1951 that since Mr McBean's arrival, 'there had been a marked exodus of coloured people from the district'.[94]

It took until 1955 for eight tiny, one-bedroom houses to be erected by the Board on land north of town at what is now called Wongala, known as 'the mish' by those who lived there.[95] The campers on the south bank of Coffs Creek were moved out, following a proposal for a recreation park under the new Town Plan. By 1956 sixty people were living in the tiny dwellings. In such houses Aboriginal people were meant to learn the civilised habits of Europeans, although the initial lack of any internal doors, including to the bathrooms, was thought to be an impediment to learning the central lessons of privacy.[96]

Ron Heron's memories of Coffs Harbour immediately made him think of those houses - 'not worth putting up really' he thought.[97] Ron was Kerry Shipman's childhood friend. He was born in Lismore, and has spent much of his life in the Clarence area. His father was a Bundjalung man, born in Ballina, and his mother was a Yaygir woman from Maclean. His Aunt or stepmother, with whom he lived in Nana Glen, was a Gumbanygir woman from Grafton. His parents gave him a strong education in traditional ways, crossing between these various North Coast groups. Ron is also important to the Emerald Beach outfall story as he was the consultant who authored the 1995 anthropological report on Look-At-Me-Now Headland.[98]

The Heron's arrived in Nana Glen in 1956, staying for about five years, where Ron's father was a member of the small gang of local railway fettlers. There were more Aboriginal people up the road at Glenreagh in the large transient fettlers' camp.

> Dad's first cousin lived at Glenreagh. ... His father was a Gumbaingirr man and my cousin's mother, Dad's sister, she was a Cabbage Tree Island woman - Bundjalung woman. ... He was an extra ganger. If there was extra work had to be done - that gang would go in and stay in the area, might be for six to twelve months ... and then move on to another area. ...He had to go all over, right down to Newcastle... so he was what they called the extra

---

[94] In Yeates 1993:10.
[95] Interview NT 74.
[96] Yeates 1993.
[97] Interview T 51.
[98] By then he was trained in anthropology and archaeology and was a lecturer at Southern Cross University, Lismore. As the court cases dragged on over the siting of the outfall at Emerald Beach, Ron was employed jointly by the Coffs Harbour and Regional Local Land Council and the Coffs Harbour Shire Council to find out what significance the Headland had for local indigenous people (see chapter seven).

> ganger. But the fettler was a permanent thing where they lived in one area
> and just did their boundaries... There were five in [Dad's] gang... When Dad
> left the railway he sold the house we was living in - he sold it to his cousins
> - Albert Page - whose two children went to school after us at Nana Glen.[99]

Ron had other cousins in Coffs Harbour, and his family would often go into town on a weekend. He remembered the main jobs for Aboriginal people around Coffs were in the banana industry.[100] This reflected the slow mechanisation of the small, poor, family-owned banana industry around Coffs Harbour, in comparison to the more rapid mechanisation in other agricultural industries throughout the 1950s and 60s that seriously eroded the jobs of Aboriginal and other rural workers.[101]

His cousins were 'gun packers', in high demand for their reliable and fast labour amongst a group of employers. Other jobs Ron remembered included timber work, council labouring especially on the roads and some mullet hauling where the white fishermen held the licences.[102] He recalled most of the Aboriginal people he knew in Coffs Harbour had work at that time.

Like many children, Ron said that as a child he was not conscious of the racism and exclusion experienced by his family. His five years at Nana Glen, as a member of one small Aboriginal family in the district, were obviously quite different from the children at the Coffs Harbour camps and 'the mission'. He was well known amongst the white community, liked the school and his friends, went to all the parties and learnt to dance at the Nana Glen dances. But looking back he remembered that he was never invited to the debutant balls that the white community held, a memory that is particularly hurtful to him now.

I asked if there was a common experience of being Aboriginal on the North Coast in the 60s. Ron said:

> Oh yeah. The police was always harassing you. You know, if you were sitting
> in a park just on dusk the police car would come to see if there was anyone
> there drunk, and if there was they would lock em up and try and move on
> the other people there... That was very common. 'Course in those days you
> couldn't enter the hotels unless you had your exemption card - or the dog
> collar. Dad had one by the way.[103]

---

[99] Interview T 51.
[100] Also see Burke 1997.
[101] See Goodall 1996.
[102] Interview T 51; Yeates 1993.
[103] Interview T 51.

The anger felt by many Aboriginal people over the constant surveillance and intervention in their lives by white authorities is often expressed through their hatred of the exemption certificates. In New South Wales, as in other states, these were handed out to people in the period of assimilation, where Aboriginal people were expected to divorce themselves not only from their cultural ways but also from their Aboriginal kin and friends. However the exemption certificates were not universally despised as they meant different things to different people. Ron remembered the day his father received his exemption ticket two or three years after arriving in Nana Glen, on the recommendations of the local postmaster:

> ...and I asked him - what is all the commotion about - why are you so happy? 'Put it this way', he said, 'I'm equal to any man in this town - anywhere I go I'm equal'. He said that 'you can go to any school that I want you to; no-one can kick you out'. And the thing that stuck in my mind all these years - Dad was explaining it to me - 'Now we have to be treated as equal to any white man - even the Queen of England'. That was the way he put it to me. So we were all happy for him - he was more happy than I've ever seen him - because he had all those years of being put down and moved on by the police. I think he thought he'd have no more of that.[104]

Living as the only Aboriginal family in a small town worked well in Mr Heron's favour before the Board. Ron's father and stepmother did not 'rock the boat', but they did not fit in, exemption certificate or not. Here the accounts of Ron and Kerry coincide in remembering the adult Herons' exclusion from the social life of the community. Ron said his parents only came to big occasions such as the school Christmas party when their children where performing, and then they would sit right up the back of the audience because they didn't feel they fitted in.

However they did not eschew either their culture or kin, as was hoped of such recipients by the Welfare Board. Ron felt they made their regular weekend trips into Coffs because of their parents' isolation, the desire to be amongst their own people and be involved in their own cultural activities. This included the Aboriginal balls held regularly with Aboriginal bands and MC's. These were places were Aboriginal people from around the North Coast, from Kempsey to Lismore, would gather. They were important places for social and political interaction.

At home, away from the public gaze, the Herons carried on a different cultural life.

---

[104] Ibid.

Jo: What was it like being the only Aboriginal family in town? Ron: Oh, we still kept our cultural things you know. But only when we'd get home. We'd rarely discuss those sort of things with other people. We tried to act like good white citizens (laughs). ....*Jo: What sort of things did you do differently at home that was about being Aboriginal?* Ron: Oh well - we often used to have freshwater turtles baking in the oven - porcupines etc. *Jo: Was the food thing the main thing?* Ron: and the language - the Aboriginal English. Dad was a Bundjalung man and he taught us all the common stuff - we grew up knowing it [Bundjalung] and talking it too.[105]

Kerry remembers some other things. 'Ronnie used to tell some weird little stories - tell me about this stone that could do strange things - could move. Scared the crap out of me... [But] it was the period of assimilation - there were no ears to hear...'[106]

Post-war settlement: The intermediate years

The fragile balance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal locals was soon to be affected by further migrational change, as new settlers from the south and the west came to make their lives in the region. Kerry referred to the period of new settlement between the end of the war and the late 1960s as the intermediate years.

At Nana Glen the pioneering white ethic amongst fellow neighbours was seen to be broken down with the settlement of outsiders from the late 1950s. Kerry cited examples of newcomers who bought up the farms and excluded access to their properties that had previously been the run of the neighbourhood kids, and to the water holes that had been accessible to all the locals.[107]

The new landowners came from Melbourne, Sydney and across the range and brought with them notions of private and exclusive property rights, not only of their land but also of their produce. For Kerry these were the markers of a shift from the centrality of community, which was a close engagement between the social and physical environment, to its breakdown into closed-down, privatised, individual units.[108]

The town of Coffs Harbour got off to a slow start in the immediate postwar period, with government restrictions on building, petrol rationing and coupons lasting into the late 1940s. Local historian Neil Yeates described a general inertia in the town

---

[105] Ibid.

[106] Interview T 37.

[107] Ibid

[108] The late 1970s and 1980s saw a re-invigoration of community activity in the area, especially with new craft-based and experimental farming ventures and environmental groups bringing together new and old settlers. The primary schools in the area and in Upper Orara reflected the fluctuating population, with school numbers only rising again in the 1980s that warded off closures.

where, for example, barbed wire entanglements to ward off enemies lay on the beach until 1948.[109]

However an Urban Committee and Town Planning Committee were both established before the end of that decade in an attempt to clean up and organise the sprawling township.[110] A central concern of these committees was the removal of Aboriginal and other campers, with the consequential marginalisation of its Aboriginal population to the fringes of town. By 1961 the local newspaper, *The Advocate,* was extolling Coffs Harbour's progress over the past years. There was 'prodigious growth' in building, 'beautification' of the town centre and the tourist trade was touted as a burgeoning success.[111]

For Kerry, change in the town was marked by the push of newcomers onto local council and a 'rather focused interest' with real estate profiteering which, he said, was carried on with greed and disregard for the experiences of the locals. He acknowledged that it was never simply a clear-cut division between the locals and newcomers, where some locals joined the real estate 'grab' alongside the newcomers.[112]

In referring to the burgeoning real estate phenomenon as his example of negative changes in the town, Kerry in part reflected a broadly held resentment that remains between some of the old locals and the intermediate group. Gary Nehl said of the time that those outside the region, and some of the newcomers, declared Coffs to be in the grip of 'North Coast Apathy' - NCA - which was said to explain its backwardness. Later to become the long-standing federal National Party member of Cowper, Gary was working out of Armidale through the 1960s for the New State Movement and was aware of such negative stereotypes.[113] This poor reputation did not go unnoticed by its local born.

Two prominent Coffs Harbour families of interest to this project arrived at either end of this intermediate period of new settlement. The prolific and influential local historian, George England, and his energetic wife Naomi, came to live in Coffs Harbour at the end of the war.[114] After her husband's stroke in 1975 and subsequent death in

---

[109] Yeates 1993.

[110] Coffs Harbour was the first town in the state to have its plan drawn up by the Town Planning Section of the Department of Local Government in 1950. Yeates 1993.

[111] *Advocate* 19/4/1961 (Centenary Supplement):10; Yeates 1993.

[112] Interview T 37.

[113] Interview NT 47; also see Best 1959.

[114] England arrived in 1945 - his family following a year later.

1980, Naomi became the keeper of his records and these materials have been at the core of nearly all subsequent history telling of the town.

In 1969, at the other end of this period and merging with the start of the boom times of population growth, John Smith brought his family and engineering business from Sydney to Coffs Harbour. He was on Council and shire president or mayor for much of the 1980s and 90s. A passionate advocate of the Look-At-Me-Now Headland ocean outfall proposal as essential to the growth and prosperity of the region, he headed the council that tried to implement the sewerage plan, retiring as mayor and councillor in 1999.

George England was returning home as a schoolteacher, bringing his city-bred wife to struggle with the difficulties of life in a poor country town. Naomi remembered the little town she encountered in 1946 as an awful, dilapidated place. Their first home was an army hut on the flats where the airport now stands, as building materials were in such short supply. It rained ceaselessly for eleven days and nights on their arrival - wet hessian walls flapping in one's face while sitting on the toilet adding to her misery.[115]

Flooding was common on the flat land that housed the sprawling mix of homes and industry, including the town centre. Naomi remembered only one paved road, no footpaths, a variety of domestic animals roaming the streets and a general air of untidiness. But, she said, life started to improve by the late 1940s as she swung in with the newly invigorated town's people in the wake of depression and wartime, ready to make their town grow and prosper.[116]

By the time the Smiths arrived twenty-three years later, the town had seen a frenzy of public and private building projects, new stores and businesses and development of infrastructure in roads, paving, town sewerage and water.[117] John brought his company, W.E.Smith Engineering, from the north shore of Sydney at a time when government was promoting decentralisation, especially to Orange, Bathurst and Albury-Wodonga. His was the first big company to decentralise to Coffs Harbour and

---

[115] England, Naomi interview with Lesley Gibbs, 23/2/87 in Coffs Harbour Historical Museum and Interview NT 25; also see Yeates 1993 for conditions in Coffs Harbour in the immediate postwar period.

[116] Mrs England became a relentlessly busy community worker throughout her life in Coffs Harbour. My own understandings of Coffs Harbour and its history were influenced by the many hours I spent in her house pouring over the historical records, drinking tea and eating lunches with her, and hearing many of her stories.

[117] Yeates 1993.

twelve to eighteen months later others followed. One of his distinctive memories of the region when he first arrived was of the landscape. 'There was far more open space - it was a more open place then. There are lots more trees now - the dairy farms are now covered with trees. It felt like there was more sunshine.'[118]

A *Women's Day* article on the company's move reflected the myth of countrymindedness. It declared that everyone from the boss down felt more relaxed and healthier now that they were in the country. John's wife Fay was quoted as saying that in a country town 'it's amazing how quickly one makes friends'.[119] In our interview, John emphasised the welcome that the country women gave the city women and the willing integration into country life of his city workers. He was one of the newcomers who quickly became involved in the business, religious and political life of the town through the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Development Centre in the early 1970s, before his move into local politics.[120]

These intermediate years brought a number of changes to the town. It was a period where the authority of the older local establishment was challenged as new businesses and professionals moved in, bringing with them a degree of wealth that was previously unknown. Although class division had always been one of the social dividers in the town, prior to the 1960s it was not a prosperous region where wealthy graziers or affluent professionals confronted a poorer labourer/farmer workforce as elaborated in the countryside studies of Wild, Dempsey and Gray.[121]

Perceptions of change vary. When he arrived, John's view of Coffs Harbour was that it was still a small town with poor roads and few newcomers.[122] However Gary Nehl remembers it differently from his year's residence in 1968, before returning to live in the area from 1976. Even in 1968 he said that the newcomers had become significant in promoting and running the town.[123] Each wave of newcomers compares their recollections with later periods of growth. Gary had been visiting the region for many years whereas John was new to the region and was not comparing his arrival with

---

[118] Interview NT 32.
[119] Women's Day 1972;39.
[120] Interview NT 32.
[121] Wild 1972; Dempsey 1990; Gray 1991.
[122] Interview NT 32.
[123] Interview NT 47.

earlier knowledge of the area. It was the beginning of an era of greatly accelerating change and both perceptions hold their own validity.

The post-productivist countryside

The Shipman family arrived in Coffs Harbour as rural Australia embarked on rapid economic, social and environmental transformation. The town they settled in was still a small, poor service centre to its dairying, forestry and banana rural hinterland. However since that time the countryside around Australia has diversified quickly, with primary production falling from around 90 per cent of total Australian exports to below 50 per cent in the early 1970s.[124] On the North Coast, employment in the rapidly expanding service industries, the building trade and small scale industry came to far outstrip diminishing rural industry employment, and rates of unemployment escalated as in-migration outstripped available work.[125]

The processes of transformation have not been unique to the North Coast or regional Australia generally, but experienced across the industrialised world. The changing function of the countryside, which Kerry understood as a loss of the sense of a worthwhile rural life, is reflected in Keith Halfacree's discussion of what happened in rural England at the same time. He referred to it as the shift from a productivist to a post-productivist era in the countryside.[126] While local economies, histories and communities have experienced these processes in different ways, conflicts in the countryside such as the Look-At-Me-Now outfall dispute must also be read within these rapidly shifting global forces.

In his writings on the condition of postmodernity, David Harvey said that in the history of capitalism there have been intense phases of spatial reorganisation. From about 1970, he argued, there was a powerful surge in this process resulting in crisis and insecurity within and between places.

> ...tension between fixity and mobility erupts into generalised crisis... when the landscape which has been shaped in relation to one phase of development becomes a barrier to further accumulation. The landscape must then be reshaped around new transport and communication systems and physical infrastructures, new centres and styles of production and consumption, new

---

[124] Aitkin 1972.
[125] Medcalf 1981; Taylor 1982; *The Advocate* for example 22/6/83; 3 part series 15/1/85, 17 and 18/1/85; Sherlaimoff 1986; Walmsely 1990.
[126] Halfacree 1997.

agglomerations of labour power and modified social infrastructures (including, for example, systems of governance and regulation of places). [127]

These shifts have been experienced in very different ways within the countryside, some areas gaining population and prosperity and others drained to non-viability. For much of inland, regional Australia the consequences have been an often devastating withdrawal of capital with a consequent lowering of the level of economic activity, decreases in employment, lowering of regional demand for services, withdrawal of services and loss of population. On the other hand some areas of regional Australia, such as certain centres on the North Coast including Coffs Harbour, have seen rapid growth through these international processes which have included the burgeoning of tourism, niche agricultural markets and changing cultural and lifestyle preferences. [128]

The move from the inland onto the coast in Australia, and the differing fortunes within the diversifying countryside, reflects similar patterns in other industrialised countries. It has meant that, more than ever, we cannot talk about a homogenous, typical countryside, but rather countrysides. [129]

Moving to the North Coast in the 70s and 80s

While an overall loss of population on the North Coast continued between the 1961 and 1966 censuses, the period between the 1971 and 1976 censuses saw an increase in all areas except the far-north inland shire of Kyogle. [130] The 1981 census was the first one where the rate of growth was faster in the country than the city. [131] The population of Coffs Harbour grew by 32,000 between the 1966 and 1991 censes, with most coming in a surge from the mid 1970s. [132]

The extent of this growth, however, went largely unrecognised throughout the 1970s. Planners retained the historical patterns of steadier growth around the tableland centres such as Armidale, in comparison to population loss on the North Coast. All the forecasts made for growth in that period were subsequently extremely low for the North

[127] Harvey 1993:7.
[128] Lawrence et al 1996; Salt 2001.
[129] Cloke and Little 1997.
[130] Taylor 1981:27.
[131] This followed both nationally and internationally where, in Australia, non-metropolitan areas increased their share of population growth for the first time in a century. See Bell 1992; Beer et al 1994. Rates of growth on the North Coast were amongst the highest for the nation throughout the 1970s and 80s.
[132] Coffs Harbour City Council 1997 *Local Environmental Study*, May.

Coast and too high for the New England region. In little more than a decade to 1986 the population of northern New South Wales had greatly deviated from what had been expected.[133]

There is no clear-cut marker between the intermediate period and the boom times from the 1970s. It was more of a growing feeling amongst residents of change - more motels, more traffic, the growth of the industrial estate and the sense of no longer knowing everyone down the street on the Saturday morning shop or in the waves at the surf beaches.

Two of the leaders of the anti-outfall protests at Emerald Beach arrived within a decade of each other. Mark Wittleton came as a teenager with his family, arriving just prior to the Smiths in late 1968, having grown up on the family farm near Ballina two hours further north. Away from school, his teenage years were spent in the surf between Woolgoolga and Sawtell where a close-knit surfing community grew up. Surfing remained central to his life and he spearheaded the early anti-outfall protests on the northern beaches at Moonee in 1983, and continued the fight at Emerald Beach.

In 1976, Alph Williams settled in Coffs Harbour. Originally from America, Alph came to teach English at Orara High School and is well remembered by students as a dynamic and challenging teacher.[134] After a few years away in the mid 1980s, he returned to Coffs in 1987 and a year later started building his house in Dammerel Crescent, Emerald Beach. The outfall dispute shifted to Look-At-Me-Now Headland in that year by which time, Alph said, environmental issues had become a grave concern for some residents as people witnessed much of their natural assets being sold off and developed.[135] Alph took on the unofficial mantle of leader of the outfall protesters, continuing through to the proposal's final closure in 1995.

As new settlers moved in, growth to the North Coast was not evenly distributed. The main influx, coming from both outside and inside the region, went to the previously small coastal towns and their immediate environs such as Port Macquarie, Coffs

---

[133] Weinand and Lea 1990.

[134] For example social history presenter on ABC Radio National, Michelle Rayner, remembers her classroom experience with Alph as the early influence that led to her love of history and her future career. Pers com 18/11/01.

[135] Alph Williams pers.com. 21/11/01.

Harbour and Ballina. The historically larger inland towns such as Taree, Grafton and Casino saw much more modest growth rates.[136]

Population movement within the region was from the increasingly poorly serviced rural areas into the growing coastal towns. The Shipmans' move into Coffs Harbour helped such places grow into large regional centres that brought increased services and expanded their political roles.[137] However the greater proportion of population growth to these rapidly growing urban areas was through in-migration from Sydney and other areas from outside of the region.[138]

Win Hulbert is one local person who has commented on the 'phenomenal growth' of outside populations into the area.[139] In 1924, when her parents brought her to live in what became the thriving seaside town of Sawtell, there was only one other permanent family living in the area. Now the township is all but joined to Coffs Harbour by the sprawling suburb of Toormina. Except for ten years when she lived in Sydney, Win has always lived in Sawtell.[140]

After the war, Win's husband's family bought four hundred acres of land in the vicinity of the town, on which they grew tomatoes and other small crops. For Win, 1970 marks the time of rapid changes in opportunities and lifestyle. They sold the farm in that year to the developer who built Toormina.

> [F]our families lived in the whole of what is now Toormina ... and now it's all covered in houses. 1970 we left there and they started to develop it then. And that's when the big changes started to come I think. My husband went into building. He went and got a ticket. That was good - there was a boom on then. He employed four men - builders. He learnt to build himself. There were big changes then. He bought land out on the Sawtell road and put houses there. It was still cheap land then. As soon as you put the joist down somebody would come along and want to buy it. Some of them were retired - a lot of men had great dreams of when they retired they were going to come up here and spend their life fishing - and then the golf

---

[136] Lismore's population growth has been higher than the other inland towns due to its alternative population and higher-education institution.

[137] The much lower growth rates of the inland centres such as Grafton came predominantly from people coming in from their own rural hinterlands. As Duncan and Epps (amongst many others) have noted, it is ironic that one of the catalysts for the reversal in internal migration in the region was as a consequence of the reduced populations and depressed economies of the rural hinterlands. Duncan and Epps 1992; Weinand and Lea 1990.

[138] See Sherlaimoff's 1986 study of Coffs Harbour Shire for the first detailed study of these demographic shifts on the North Coast.

[139] The phrase 'phenomenal growth' was used by the media in both the early and late twentieth century to describe accelerated population numbers to the North Coast. See chapter one.

[140] Interview T 31.

started. They'd amuse me - they'd fish like mad when they first got there
and then a lot of them gave it up. They came for the easy life...[141]

By 1990 65 per cent of the total North Coast population lived in the urban
centres. Throughout the 1980s the most spectacular growth along the whole North
Coast was the rapidly urbanising coastal strip between Nambucca and the northern parts
of the Coffs Harbour Shire, with rates in excess of 20 per cent between 1981 and 1986.
This included the rapid growth of commuter seaside settlements such as Coffs Harbour's
northern beaches estates. The growth rates can be compared with those of around 1 to 2
per cent on the Northern Tablelands.[142]
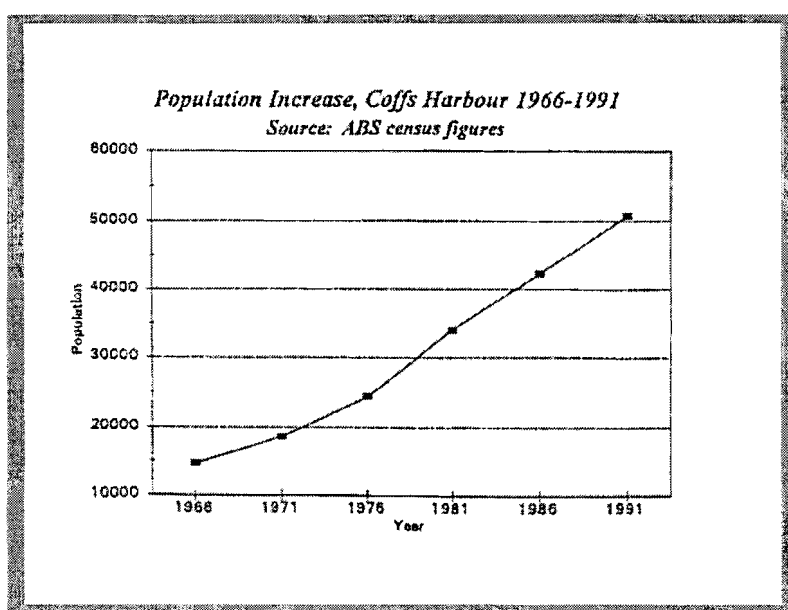
Population growth
in the Coffs
Harbour Shire,
taken from Coffs
Harbour City
Council 1996:6.

Australian Bureau of Statistics provide figures for the Coffs Harbour Shire
showing an increase from 24,000 residents in 1976 to 41,000 eight years later, the
majority of whom settled in the urban areas of Coffs Harbour and Sawtell/Toormina.[143]
The Advocate constantly ran articles in the early 1980s celebrating these Coffs Harbour
growth rates, one article suggesting it was '...one of history's great migration stories'
after the nineteenth century gold rush.[144]

---

[141] Interview T 31.
[142]Weinand and Lea 1990.
[143] Sherlaimoff 1986:8.
[144] Advocate 2/12/82.

The second area of growth focused on the rural hinterland. The low rural land prices and vacated properties, which were a consequence of the depressed economies of the hinterlands especially in dairying, provided the opportunity for a variety of back-to-the-land enthusiasts to selected rural areas. The high point of this broader distribution of in-coming migrants came in the 1970s to the early 80s, shifting back into the urban centres throughout the later 80s and 90s.[145]

In the 1970s, as the roads were tarred and straightened out to places like Nana Glen and Glenreagh, commuting populations and others re-filled the valleys with newcomers from Sydney, the Northern Tablelands, Melbourne and other parts of Victoria.[146] They included young families, young retirees with capital looking for experimental farming opportunities, the city 'hobby-farmers' with non-farm incomes and poorer city 'refugees' looking for cheap land to settle. The universality and portability of social welfare benefits helped make this in-migration of 'rural-retreaters' possible.[147]

The changing rural landscape

Amongst the early outsider groups to move into the rural North Coast were the alternative life-stylers, known as new settlers by the media, hippies and worse by local populations and often self named as freaks. Mostly fleeing the city, many of them were indeed seeking to create aspects of an idealised country culture of social cooperation, caring and community, in opposition to a perceived corrupting city. In this way they shared some of the same representations of country life with advocates of countrymindedness. However their beliefs that these values had been contaminated by the material over development of the Corporate State, which included a re-evaluation of family structures, sexual mores and work ethics, set them apart both ideologically and politically from the people already resident.[148] While changing in style and focus, riven with contradiction and conflict, for twenty-five years the loosely defined alternative movement has greatly influenced large areas of the North Coast economically, culturally and socially.

---

[145] Hugo 1996. Coffs Harbour City Council 1994 and 1999 *Population Profile.*
[146] Sherlaimoff 1986.
[147]Taylor 1981.
[148] Cock 1976; Horin 1985; Taylor 1981.

Those arriving in the early 1970s were able to take advantage of the depressed land prices in the rural hinterlands of the North Coast. David Hollinsworth came to the Bellinger Valley in 1974 with his partner Margaret Collet and their young son, joining around twenty other 'freaks' in the area. Even that early in the movement of outsider populations to the rural North Coast, land prices had begun to rise. While the thirty acres of subdivided farm land they bought was comparatively cheap to anything further south, David said they could have bought a hundred acres for the same price only two or three years earlier.[149] The dairy lands in the most scenic landscapes were set to boom from the mid to late 1970s, allowing the farmers who had hung on in those areas to sell out.

Urban, middle-class university students largely led the search for an alternative society in Australia, with small beginnings in 1971 and isolated examples back to 1968.[150] David was at Sydney University between 1968 and 1971. Amongst the left wing, dope-smoking activists with whom he travelled was a science student from Orange, deeply interested in finding domestic situations which could be self-sustaining. The reasons he and others found the North Coast particularly appealing were reminiscent of the new settlers' hopes for the region in the early twentieth century. The warm climate for year-round growing and high rainfall offered the possibility to produce on small, affordable parcels of land to create independent family lives.[151]

In 1981 the coastal-alternative community of Bundagen, twenty kilometres south of Coffs Harbour, was established with the aid of Bellingen people. Peter Cock, author of one of the only academic analyses of the alternative movement in Australia, refers to such places as rural-survival communities. He argued they were established in isolated, abandoned areas in an attempt to make a fundamental break from the city and the dominant style of the Corporate State.[152] Peter Velez of the Bundagen Community reflected the motivation of many of the survival pioneers:

> I realised quite early in my life that I was a pawn in a game I didn't want to play, and felt the ... need to escape the clutches of a system of modern slavery which stunts personality and corrupts human relations... Industrial society, unless radically reformed, must come to a bad end... To change this course, a

---

[149] Interview T 39.
[150] Cock 1976.
[151] Interview T 39.
[152] Cock 1976.

transformation of society and the individual consciousness seems to be imperative.[153]

Early days at Bundagen 1985. Photo by Chris Pile, courtesy of Jenny Ledgar.

Environmental responsibility and sustainability was espoused by, and acted upon, by most of these new settlers.[154] For example many who came to set up Bundagen had already been involved in the fight against sandmining at Middle Head to the south and others became involved in the increasingly hostile timber issues between locals and new settlers at Bellingen. Active networks were developed between the alternative communities across the North Coast, dominated by the Rainbow region around Nimbin because of their greater numbers.[155]

New settlers also moved onto the cheap land in the Nymboida region throughout the late 1970s and 80s, becoming activists in water issues around the Nymboida River.[156] By the time the sewerage issue on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches was set to erupt into direct action, environmental networks and action groups were well established amongst the alternative new-settler populations around the region. They provided broad-based sympathy and active support for the Emerald Beach protesters in the early 1990s. People from Bellingen, Nymboida, Bundagen and forest campaigners from the Far-North Coast were especially supportive of the Emerald Beach protesters, much to the outrage of many pro-outfall supporters.[157]

Subdivision of land for a variety of 'rural retreaters' galloped along through the 1970s, alienating productive agricultural land.[158] Problems such as inflated land values

---

[153] Bundagen newsletter 24, 1984:29, courtesy of Andy Bullock.

[154] This has never been a straightforward issue where, for example, there has been debate on Bundagen from its inception to today about the degree to which preservation of land away from human uses can be sustained alongside those who wished to be self sustaining on the land.

[155] Interview T 39.

[156] Interview NT 11. See chapter thee for the development of coastal environmental action.

[157] See chapter four.

[158] Wilcox 1975.

and huge increases in rates brought one of the many aspect of conflicting lands uses into focus as established farmers, already under economic pressure, found themselves unable to pay the hikes in rates.

The story of one older Bellingen couple, Ron and Daphne Bateup, reported as a typical example was followed in the *Advocate* over a few weeks. They had their pension stopped because 'bureaucrats in Sydney valued their farm so high'. While they had remained on the farm, Ron had left dairying to work in a supermarket in town in 1974 as they could no longer make a living off the farm. They described city people buying up the farms at great expense and letting the land lie idle. Their choice seemed to be to sell up and move into town or starve. Daphne said: 'If we'd wanted to live in town we'd have given up the struggle years ago. But I don't like the thought of people looking in the windows. It's lovely out here - you can't see anyone'.[159]

Different meanings of countryside collided. The place of rural production, with all its accompanying smells and noises, got in the way of an urban, nostalgic image of the timeless and peaceful countryside. Doug Hoschke remarked about the shift back into the Upper Orara Valley:

> They like to live in the Valley. It's fairly quiet. We do have our problems with a few new people that come in. Noise of our diesel pumps, pumping water of a night time - it upsets their sleep a bit. I have an electric one now so they don't point their figure at me. *Jo: they complained at the noise?* Doug: Noise - that's it. They come out to the country - they thought it would be a bit quieter.[160]

Simon Miller argued that an urban countryside ideal is about the place and not the people, with a 'pervasive and often antagonistic ignorance of life on the land'.[161] The negative stereotypes of country people as backward and uninteresting were reflected in a city newspaper's article on Sydneysiders' 'love-affair' with Bellingen. One woman described a lot of people she met as 'terminally boring. Some of the women spend their whole days discussing babies' names and the price of Omo this week'.[162] Bernard Salt has suggested a new cultural cringe has developed in Australia - that of an urban

---

[159] *Advocate* 10/4/85:2. A follow-up article pronounced them safe for now as they had part of their pension re-established.

[160] Interview T 28. See NSW Agriculture 1996. One of the most publicised clashes in land use between farming and rural subdivision has been spraying of bananas.

[161] Miller 1995:98. See Ching and Creed 1997.

[162] Burke 1995: 6 (in Spectrum).

chauvinism that he suggested has emerged since the 1970s 'as our cities gathered momentum at the expense of the bush'.[163]

The myths of countryside, whether portrayed negatively as the backwardness of country life, or the positive image of community compassion, work to conceal the reality of complex, shifting lives within the country. That the lure of a life in the country is a real one is attested to by the increasing rural subdivision of the period. Whether city people found what they were looking for within the myths meant staying or leaving for many.

Sydney people, Gloria Small and her family, arrived at the beginning of the move back into the Upper Orara Valley. They bought their forty-acre subdivision in 1975, across the river from the Hoschkes. They grew a variety of crops and kept cattle as a sideline, however Gloria's husband maintained his professional job in town.

Her attachment to the place has grown stronger over the years and her descriptions of the landscape and lifestyle in the Valley vary markedly from Doug's in their expression. They bear the hallmarks of the city longing for the peace and safety which urban myths of the countryside promise, but also echo the valued sense of solitude reflected in Daphne Bateup's lament for a transforming countryside. Gloria responded to my request for her to describe the place:

> Well - the rest of my family all say it's god's given place. I like the climate - usually. It's just so peaceful and fresh. The people in the valley are nice. They don't interfere with you - but if you need help there is always someone there. The landscape is beautiful - the hills, the trees, the smell - you know. You walk up the back paddock of an early morning and smell the moisture in the leaf mould, the lantana - just the whole bit. ... When Mum and I go into town she says 'Glor, lets get home'. And as soon as we get over the hill she says 'ah - you can just feel the difference' - and you can. In the afternoons on a rainy day you can sit there and look out and see the mist coming up between the valleys. Nothing's boring and you're not looking out onto someone's back yard. You don't have to lock your doors. And the best thing - you don't have to have curtains and blinds - the moon comes up and shines right across. [164]

While her experiences of the land and length of custodianship are quite different from Doug's, she would claim no lesser attachment to her place. For Doug, to be a local is not a matter of length of residence or place of birth or socialisation, but a matter of

---

[163] Salt 2001:73.
[164] Interview T 29.

contribution to the community.[165] A shared sense of responsibility for the land and the community found Doug and Gloria learning new environmental lessons together as they watched the Valley's population soar from the late 1970s.

By the early 1980s the extent of rural subdivision and alienation of agricultural lands to other uses on the North Coast was being discussed in conferences and regional newspapers.[166] While a University of New England study on 'Rural Retreating' took up two pages of its report with terms to describe rural subdivisions and their new owners, 'hobby farmers' was the generic term used by many to describe all but the alternative lifestylers.[167] In July 1980 Paul Bennie, Coffs Harbour's town planner, admitted that rural subdivision was becoming one of the big issues Council would have to confront in the future. Councillor Hogbin described many hobby farmers as having 'virtually taken over... growing nothing but weeds'.[168]

Stories and accusations abounded of arbitrary council decisions over subdivision of rural lands into blocks not viable for agriculture, helping councillors and friends and stalling others. These accusations were partly vindicated in 1986 by a highly critical report on the Coffs Harbour Shire Council by the Department of Local Government, who sent inspectors in after the clamour of criticism of Council became so great. On the other hand the council was not sacked like some, an *Advocate* editorial suggesting that rather than corruption it was an indication of the furious pace of development for which the council was unprepared and inexperienced.[169]

Along the length of Coffs Harbour's northern beaches, large areas of farmland were held onto or bought up in anticipation of selling for subdivision into suburban, rural-residential and tourist developments. In the mid 1980s, local and state government eventually settled upon the tiny village of Moonee Beach to be a new town of 15,000 people.[170] No development projects could go ahead, however, until sewerage infrastructure was developed. From 1983, when the first protests against an outfall on the northern beaches were mounted at Moonee Beach, the council and community came to realise this was not to be a simple matter.

---

[165] Interview T 28.
[166] For example *the Advocate* 3/7/80; 12/4/84; Prater and Day 1981; Prater et al 1987.
[167] Vane 1981.
[168] *Advocate* 3/7/80:4.
[169] *Advocate* March 1986 reports - see especially 20/3/86:1,4.
[170] See chapter five.

Knowing your place: mobilising the country/city split

Spatially, Emerald Beach is in the country, separated from Coffs Harbour's outer suburbs by a thirteen-kilometre stretch of remnant banana plantations and bush. Despite its country-village appeal, it is Emerald Beach residents who are tagged with the city slicker label while Coffs Harbour holds the real country people.

Of course there are no clear-cut boundaries and the labelling is a fluid process, sometimes encompassing or excluding the same people depending on the circumstances. Members of one of the original farming families around Emerald Beach still lived in the village and a couple of them became anti-outfall supporters. They were interchangeably labelled within the general Emerald Beach rabble, and as worthy pioneers of the district. Long-time locals were against an outfall, and new residents wanted the sewerage to go through to improve their personal amenity and house prices. Such complexities, however, do not necessarily upset simplistic representations of black and white.

The countryside has never been as homogenous as representations have often portrayed - neither as the caring and peaceful place of romantic ideals or as brutal and uninteresting as the negative portrayals.[171] Nevertheless the period after the Second World War, and accelerating from the early 1970s, has seen enormous change to the physical and social landscape of the North Coast countryside. As Coffs Harbour grew with new populations from both country and city areas, and the surrounding rural lands changed ownership and function, the easy dichotomy between the country and city blurred.

Despite this, affirming a country identity in the mould of countrymindedness allowed some of the intermediate group, in their alliance with some of the older locals, to construct a solidarity of their combined interests in opposition to a particular typecast of an over-educated, selfish newcomer population of post-1970s city dwellers. As Massey said: 'Senses of place often work to establish differences between one group of people and another. These definitions are bound into social power relations. ...The politics of claiming to be an insider are also the politics of claiming power'.[172]

---

[171] See Ching and Creed 1997.
[172] Massey 1995:116.

The eruption of such contestations within the countryside reflected the threat to the hegemony of previously dominant groups by new groupings, just as the intermediate postwar group had threatened the 'real locals'. There was actually no clear-cut division between city-based Emerald Beach dwellers, and country local Coffs Harbour residents. A new environmental awareness, a concern for unfettered growth and debates over the meanings of 'development' were not confined to the newcomers. Plenty of newcomers had no such sympathies. However claims over the right to speak and act on behalf of the countryside became central to the contestation over the meaning of the countryside in the changing rural contexts of the last three decades of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FRAGILE COAST? DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION

By the mid 1950s, recognition of the potential for population growth through tourism and new settlement to selective coastal towns in northern New South Wales had begun. As a consequence, tentative discussion about the pace and type of development on the coast was raised. There was little State Government interest in planning on the rural coastline until town planner, Nigel Ashton, became chair of New South Wales' newly established State Planning Authority in 1964.[1] His concerns for coastal planning reflected some of the main pressure points appearing on the North Coast in the postwar period. These included the impact of uncontrolled sand mining, the lack of publicly owned land for recreation and conservation, the increase of unplanned coastal estates - especially as they encroached on coastal headlands - and the suburban spread of settlement in strip or ribbon development along the rural coastline.

Increasingly these issues were taken on by individuals and community groups and discussed in conferences and workshops between state and local bureaucrats, academics and community members. By the 1980s there was a growing sense amongst parts of the community that the largely unanticipated, and certainly unplanned, growth to the North Coast was having a detrimental impact on a fragile coastal environment.

However this construction of a fragile coast was not universally held. The spectre of Queensland's Gold Coast loomed large, with its high-rise real estate teetering on the edge of the sand, poised to tip across the state border into northern New South Wales. While it was held by some as a model to be avoided at all cost, for others it represented the potential of wealth creation, prosperity, progress and modernisation for themselves and their communities. Growth through tourism and new settlement was enthusiastically embraced, and planning regulations were often looked upon as the meddling of city outsiders.

The traditional agricultural industries of the coast and hinterland became increasingly vulnerable as tourists and the new populations of internal migrants arrived on the coast. John Smith, councillor and Coffs Harbour Shire President through much of

---

[1] The Nigel Ashton papers were kindly pointed out to me by Damian Lucas.

the 1980s and 90s, argued that people had to live somewhere and that Coffs Harbour was a 'people area', perfectly situated to take in a greater urban population.[2]

The farmland around Coffs Harbour was considered ideal to convert into housing for the influx of new settlers as well as tourist developments. From a permanent population that had already grown from around 8,000 in 1965 to 40,000 in the mid 1980s, unofficial estimates of increases to between 250,000 and 500,000 in the Coffs Harbour Shire early in the new millennium, were enthusiastically promoted.[3] Those residents who challenged developments, or wished to stem the flow of new populations on environmental grounds, were often seen as selfish green extremists, not willing to share in the bounty they had found, which nature provided.

The North Coast of the 1970s and 80s became the front line for the meeting of diverse and often conflicting ideologies and politics, such as the dichotomies of country/city, development/conservation and alternative/conservative values. The ocean, estuaries, beaches and headlands became a focus for competing visions of places on the North Coast. In the face of tourism growth from the 1950s, and new settler growth burgeoning from the 1970s, Coffs Harbour took early prominence in discussions on the role of coastal planning and became deeply divided over environmental concerns by the 1980s.

This chapter explores the competing claims of development and preservation on the coast through the intertwined processes of tourism, planning and environmental action. Firstly it examines tourism as it developed from the late nineteenth century through to its acceleration after the Second World War. It turns to the first steps towards planning begun on the rural coast from the 1960s, focusing onto the Coffs Harbour region. The chapter then looks to environmental action on the Mid-North Coast as tourism and new settler populations converged. By the time of the October 1991 direct-action protests at Look-At-Me-Now Headland there had been three decades of discussion, conflict and environmental campaigns that would find resonance in the campaigns for and against the outfall.

[2] Interview NT 32.
[3] Yeates 1993; 'Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill' Second Reading, NSW Legislative Assembly 27/3/92, pp2193-2211; Coffs Harbour City Council 1996a *Coffs Harbour Urban Development Strategy*, August. Denis Smith Interview NT 67. Denis was Coffs Harbour Council's Director of Planning from 1993. Under his leadership population estimates were reduced to 104,000 by 2021.

From the mountains to the sea: the shifting gaze of the tourist

From the second half of the nineteenth century, tourism across the western world shifted from the domain of the privileged few to an experience of the masses, and despite its isolation, New South Wales' North Coast was promoted to tourists from late in that century.[4] Early promotion of the region followed global trends in focusing on the hinterland, while the beaches came to attract increasing numbers of inland tourists from within the region from the 1920s. Tourist numbers and their consequential pressures on the local area shifted radically in the postwar years, however tourism was not new to the North Coast in the 1950s.

Tourism and settler migration on the North Coast and elsewhere have been historically linked since the nineteenth century. For example, until 1919 the Immigration and Tourist Bureau in New South Wales came under the Premier's Department.[5] Sometimes the promotional material of the North Coast in the early twentieth century explicitly addressed itself to both tourist and immigrant groups, as in the three editions of the steamer company's *North Coast Guide* discussed in chapter one. Others were more ambiguous about their audience, blurring boundaries between the two. The settlement guides to the region written by the prolific T.W. Comyns never missed the opportunity to promote the 'magnificent' scenery to potential tourists.[6] Similarly, the first pages of a 1925 settlement and agricultural products booklet of the region was devoted to the 'tourist haven'.[7]

The focus of tourism promotion was then largely on the hinterland scenery rather than the coast.[8] Romantic notions of beauty and the sublime, embedded in scenic tourism that had arisen in nineteenth-century Europe, were clearly evident in the promotional descriptions of the North Coast hinterland.[9] Coymns described the road trip from Bellingen to Dorrigo, along the Bellinger River valley and up into the mountains,

---

[4] See Urry 1990; Craik 1995 and Hall 1995 on tourism history and England 1976 on early tourism to Coffs.

[5] Hall 1995.

[6] Comyns 1916 *The Nambucca River in 1916 Embracing Macksville, Bowraville, Taylor's Arm, Nambucca Heads, Deep Crook: Rising Centres in a Glorious Fertile and Picturesque District with a Splendid Future*, no publisher; nd *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917*, no publisher.

[7] Overall 1925 *North Coast and Northern Tablelands of NSW* Tweed Daily, Murwillimbah.

[8] Government Tourist Bureau nd *Pleasure Trips by Rail in the South Coast Districts of Queensland and the Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Government Tourist Bureau; NSW Government Tourist Bureau 1912 *The North Coast Tourist District of New South Wales: Noble Streams, Lush Meadows and Forest Stretches*, Sydney; North Coast Steam and Navigation Company 1909, 1920 *North Coast Guide*.

[9] Urry 1990; In Australia see Horne 1991; Davidson and Spearitt 2000

as 'one of extraordinary diversity, great charm and indescribable beauty'.[10] The contrasts of dark mountain forests, waterfalls, lush pastures and rivers were more familiar reflections of the romantic European landscape than the red and brown of much of the rest of the country. The constant reference to the diversity of the landscape to be found in all the contemporary promotional material is repeated in today's promotions, and reflected in recent tourism texts which count such visual diversity as central to a place's allure to the potential tourist.[11]

The coast took much longer to attract promotion. The strict Victorian codes of conduct in the second half of the nineteenth century had seen sea bathing in daylight hours banned. They were lifted through popular challenge to increasingly unpopular laws, firstly in Manly in 1903 and finally in Hobart in 1935.[12] After the 1920s the focus of holiday pleasure in eastern Australia slowly began to include the 'sand, surf and sunshine' of the beach, as changing fashions and mores were shaped through nationalistic fervour which portrayed the beach as the robust and healthy place for the young nation.[13]

For example the battle to allow daylight swimming was expressed in terms of the health of individuals and community; '...no finer... health-retaining pastime known to mankind, nor one freer from debasing influences...'.[14] In her 1929 article titled 'The Race on the Sands: Showing What Surf and Sun Are Doing for the Inhabitant of the Australian Coastline', Jean Curlewis reflected broadly held sentiments about the physical and mental attributes of the surf to a new 'race' of Australians.[15] Rather than the pallid skin colours of a Victorian age, suntans were gaining enthusiastic acceptance as the outward sign of physical, moral and national health.[16]

However, even then tourist promotion lagged behind the increasing popularity of the beach. As late as 1938 The Sydney Mail Annual: Australia's Beautiful Scenery, while mentioning 'our surfing beaches' as the 'finest in the world', did not print one

---

[10] Comyns nd The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917: p5.

[11] Burton 1995.

[12] Hall 1995.

[13] Craik 1991; Drew 1994; for a contemporary account see Curlewis 1929 'The Race on the Sands: Showing What Surf and Sun Are Doing for the Inhabitants of the Australian Coastline' in The Home, March.

[14] Harris 1907 'Surf-Bathing in New South Wales' in The Red Funnel, August 1st, 5(1):p1 also see C.D.P. 1908 'Sun-Baking, Surf- Bathing, and Camp Life in New South Wales' in The Red Funnel, April.

[15] Curlewis 1929 'The Race on the Sands'.

[16] See Booth 1997; Saunders 1998.

beach photograph amongst its coloured photos of inland scenes aimed at the tourist.[17] Promotion of the North Coast from outside the region, coming from such organisations as the State Government Tourist Bureau, the NRMA and the State Railways, continued to focus on the waterfalls and mountains. The subtitle of one Government Tourist Bureau guide to the North Coast was typical in reflecting the hinterland emphasis of tourism: 'Noble Streams, Lush Meadows and Forest Stretches'.[18]

Within the region, however, the coast had always attracted holidaymakers. From the late 1800s, while the new settlers staked their claims to the place in hinterland farms, they holidayed at the beach. For example, from the 1880s the Shipmans and other families of the Glenreagh and Nana Glen region took regular summer holidays at Moonee Beach and Look-At-Me-Now Headland.[19]

On Coffs Harbour's beaches, surf bathing had become so popular by 1908 that according to the local newspaper *The Advocate*, some surfers were using '10 foot lumps of wood to ride the waves'.[20] Women's and men's dressing sheds were built on local beaches by 1909 and in 1910 the Jetty Beach surf club was initiated. This closely followed the establishment of the Surf Life Saving Association in Sydney in 1907. When Comyns made his visit to Coffs Harbour in 1917 he noted all these features, referring to the 'magnificent, safe, clean beaches'.[21] Despite his enthusiasm for the beach resort that Coffs Harbour could offer, few other contemporary North Coast settlement or tourist guides even mentioned the existence of the town.

While the steamers had always carried a small tourist trade to the North Coast, it was the railways that opened up areas to mass tourism of all classes.[22] Byron Bay, for example, had a rail service since 1894 and became a popular destination for day-trippers from Lismore and further afield.[23] Grafton residents had a harder time getting to their beaches at Yamba to the north, or Red Rock and Woolgoolga to the south, coming by horses and early cars along the atrocious road.

Coffs Harbour was only joined by the railway from the south in 1915, and had to

[17] Sydney Mail Annual 1938 *The Sydney Mail Annual: Australia's Beautiful Scenery*.
[18] New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau 1912 *The North Coast Tourist District*. As noted in chapter one, the 1920 edition of the *North Coast Guide* retained this emphasis on the hinterland.
[19] Holder 1984; Interview T 26.
[20] Yeates 1990:128.
[21] Comyns nd *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917*: p63.
[22] Kass 1989; Hall 1995.
[23] McTavish 1997.

wait until 1922 to be linked with South Grafton. Once that happened, however, the New South Wales Department of Railways introduced weekend excursion trips from Grafton and Kempsey, terminating at Park Beach, Coffs Harbour. The beaches would be packed with picnickers listening to bands and attended to by lifeguards.[24]

Even more popular was the established coastal reserve at Bonville, ten kilometres south of Coffs Harbour. Local farming families and residents of the Bellingen and Dorrigo districts had been holidaying there since the 1880s. By 1912 three hundred tourists were said to be camping on the reserve during the summer holidays, rising to well over a thousand after the railway line went in.[25]

Ossie Sawtell, originally from Dorrigo, saw the potential for a seaside resort there, and in 1925 bought and subdivided farming land.[26] 'Bonnie Bonville' was a subdivision of five hundred blocks, half of which were reserved for families from the west of the state.[27] This pattern of holiday and retirement movement from the inland to the Mid-North Coast has remained strong. In 1925 the railway was still expected to link the tablelands to the coast. When a new siding on the coast line had to be built as part of the subdivision, a new name was required for the station. It was eventually named Sawtell and a village of the same name, arising out of the subdivision, was proclaimed in 1927.[28]

Seaview Guest House at Sawtell, c.1925. Photo courtesy of Win Hulbert.

Today Sawtell is a thriving seaside holiday destination and retirement haven, but its rise was very slow. An expansive two-story guesthouse was erected in the village precinct in about 1925 in anticipation of all the tourists from the west and south, and a local newspaper report in 1929 heralded Sawtell as the 'Manly of the North

---

[24] Gerard 1989;Yeates 1990; Berzins 1996.
[25] Interview T 34; England 1976; Yeates 1990.
[26] Yeates 1990.
[27] Bonnie Bonville real estate poster c1925, Sawtell Historical Society.
[28] Interview T 31; Yeates 1990.

Coast'.[29] However such enthusiasm was premature, frustrated by rural poverty, the Depression and the Second World War.

Win Hulbert, who came to live there as a baby in 1924, thought the guesthouse owners 'must have been conned'.[30] Tourists continued to camp or build small shacks on the reserve rather than pay for accommodation or take up the blocks in town.

Bonville Reserve remained a popular holiday destination. Tourism to the Coffs Harbour Shire maintained this primary focus on low-cost family accommodation, predominantly for New South Wales' residents, until the late 1980s.[31] While camping and some holiday shack development grew in number between the wars, such as on the banks of the Bellinger River near the sea at Mylestom and on the beach reserves in the Coffs Harbour region, it was in the postwar period that tourist numbers boomed.

'Seeing something of the country': the postwar tourism boom

In the 1950s and 60s, tourism from outside the region opened up the rural North Coast in advance of the growth of permanent settlers. As the rural economy faltered, the tourist industry brought new economic opportunities to old and new settlers, as well as new transient populations to boost the coastal towns. Increasing numbers of people brought new environmental challenges and tourists placed their own demands on local communities about their rights to have a say in those places. Many became the new settlers of the 1970s and 80s.[32]

Better transport and roads, increasing individual wealth and longer holidays all contributed to the acceleration of tourism.[33] By 1950 2,546,000 Australians were entitled to holidays with pay.[34] The great increase in private car ownership and consequent travel within New South Wales is reflected in figures from the State Government's road service, the NRMA. In 1946 they issued 219,601 strip maps. Twelve years later they issued 2,876,000.[35]

Writing in 1966 about Australian life in the postwar period, Craig McGregor said that 80 per cent of Australians were now travelling away from home in their

---

[29] T.J.M. 'Sawtell: Review of Past Progress and Prospects' 1929 newspaper report in the possession of Mrs Win Hulbert.

[30] Interview T 31.

[31] Kass 1989.

[32] Drew 1994.

[33] Craik 1991; Hall 1995.

[34] Best 1959.

[35] Ibid.

holidays, setting out to 'see something of the country'.[36] The shifting nature of tourism to the North Coast reflected national and international patterns.[37]

This increased desire and capacity for leisure time and activity saw a rapid invasion of tourists into previously isolated beaches, erecting shacks and clearing camping sites. They brought on a market for increasing subdivision of coastal land and provided the impetus for the growth of coastal villages and towns.

Closer to Sydney, subdivision for holiday houses started in the late 1940s and galloped along after that.[38] Typical of the subdivisions along the length of the New South Wales' coastline that would follow, there was no interest in rural planning and houses were built onto frontal dunes, headlands and anywhere that the best locations could be found. Referring to the east coast in an early coastal-planning conference in 1969, an international guest expressed his great disappointment that beach shacks and holiday houses had been allowed to encroach directly onto beautiful areas in such profusion.[39]

At Moonee Beach, tourists from around New South Wales and interstate now joined residents from Nana Glen and Glenreagh in the summer holidays. Kerry Shipman remembered that in the 1950s you could be fairly certain that the same people would be back each year. He especially remembered one regular Melbourne family because their campervan was made out of the body of a DC3 plane.[40]

By the mid 1950s, businesses in the region had come to appreciate the spending power of the tourists who camped at Bonville, Park Beach, Moonee and Woolgoolga, and set about promoting tourism.[41] At the forefront of the local move to promote the region was a new settler to Woolgoolga, Don Clinch, who had arrived in 1951 as the new chemist.

In a bid to attract more people into the town and region, he started writing as a rural correspondent for the ABC and began talking to others about promoting the region. This culminated in May 1955 in the first regional conference on tourism, held in

---

[36] McGregor 1966.
[37] Hall 1995; Burton 1995; Urry 1990.
[38] Piper 1980.
[39] P.J.Benthem in Washington 1975.
[40] Interview T 37.
[41] Yeates 1993.

Woolgoolga and attended by fifty-three delegates from the Clarence to Nambucca.[42]

Clinch outlined the hopes of the Woolgoolga Chamber of Commerce in holding the conference:

> It feels that if delegates to the gathering view proceedings and argument in a non-parochial manner, and with a spirit of co-operation, a mighty organisation will be born which will transform the zone into the haven of travellers from the whole world.[43]

The Mid-North Coast Tourist Authority was formed in the following year and 'Pacific Beautizone' was the name eventually settled on for the region.[44] Frank Hurley, Australia's famous Antarctic photographer, produced a magnificent postcard strip of the 'Beautizone' where the beaches and seascapes were now celebrated.[45] However by 1964 the Tourist Authority had fallen prey to the parochialism Clinch had warned against, demising through a lack of support from the competing North Coast councils.[46]

The first motel was built in Coffs Harbour in 1958, four followed in 1960 and the numbers continued to grow rapidly from then on. Caravan Parks were also developed from 1960.[47] For Glen Shipman, Kerry's older brother, this tourist development was directly linked to broader changes in the town. As he recalled the period, he spoke faster and faster as he described a rolling momentum of development.

> Things started to change in the mid 60s - really changed. The developers started to take on. We'd never seen motels much but all of a sudden there was an increase in motels - and when the motels started you could see everything else started - then a bit of industry come to town... - then all of a sudden the developers took on with the subdivisions and housing and the industrial sites...[48]

By the early 1970s, the strip of motel and flat accommodation along Park Beach had become so overcrowded that one report described it as a long line of 'holiday hutches'. The same report sounded an early warning of the consequences of such unplanned development on water and sewerage infrastructure.

> Coffs Harbour region has evolved a marked suburbanisation of the coastline which now requires firm planning control. The provision of water and sewerage utilities to present areas will be a public works problem of great proportions for many years.[49]

---

[42] Grafton's *Daily Examiner 20/5/55,* courtesy of Don Clinch.
[43] *The Daily Examiner* 19/4/55:8.
[44] Yeates 1993.
[45] The colour and black and white strip of seventeen postcards was kindly lent to me by David Bailey.
[46] Yeates 1993.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Interview T 52.
[49] Clark and McPhail 1973:47.

SURFING BEACH. NAMBUCCA HEADS

BELLINGER RIVER AT URUNGA
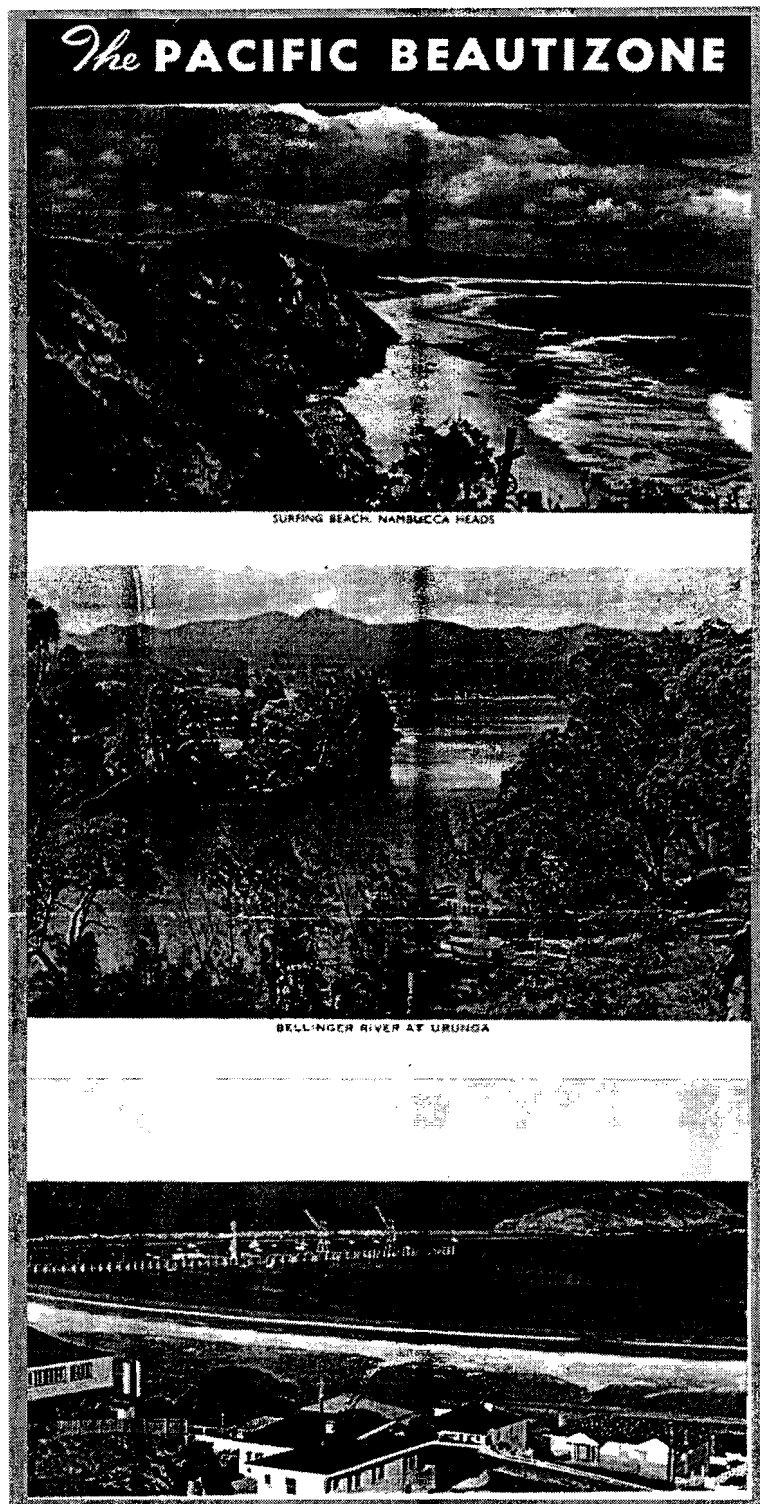
Frank Hurley's postcard strip, courtesy of David Bailey. Coffs Harbour (bottom postcard) shows The Jetty area as a place of work and Mutton Bird Island joined by the breakwater.

A focus on events and sights marked a shift in tourism promotion around the country from the 1960s.[50] Coffs Harbour fully participated in such promotional strategies, staging festivals and introducing the banana theme onto the tourist landscape. In 1964 the Big Banana was erected on the site of a banana plantation north of the town and was to quickly become Coffs Harbour's most famous symbol. In the 1980s it was voted the 'No 1 Most Bizarre Tourist Attraction in the World' by an international survey of student travellers.[51]

Places have to be constructed as enticing for tourists, as recommended at a 1959 tourism conference in Grafton, organised by the University of New England (UNE). H.E.Best instructed delegates on how to attract tourists, such as naming natural areas which might otherwise seem commonplace to locals - for example old trees, springs and wild flower swamps - and providing stories of events at those sites.[52]

He and other speakers at the conference stressed the need to beautify and tidy up townscapes to make them more attractive to the tourist, and to get the local residents behind the tourist promotion. Complaints from delegates about the apathy and parochialism that characterised the North Coast's approach to tourism, said to be evident in both local government and residents, would be echoed throughout the following decades.[53]

As tourism gained its foothold as a viable industry, a series of displacements followed such as the removal of the private shacks that had grown up on the reserves from Red Rock to Bonville from the 1920s. It was an era in which Aboriginal people were further displaced as coastal areas were 'tidied up'. The irony of the removal of Aboriginal campers from Coffs Creek and beach reserves in the 1950s to 'the mission' at Wongala, was that it no longer lay out of sight on the fringe of town. The town and its tourist attractions had grown around and beyond it. Tourists had a prominent view of the community that spilled out onto the Pacific Highway as one climbed the hill to the Big Banana, or travelled further north.

By the 1980s the direction, success and pace of tourism had become a hotly debated issue in Coffs Harbour, with local journalist Mike Secomb suggesting that 'trouble has been as inevitable as death and taxes in the Coffs Harbour tourist

---

[50] Hall 1995.
[51] *Escape* The STA Travel Guide in Beasley 1998:189.
[52] Best 1959.
[53] Dutton 1959; Hannah 1968c; *Advocate* reports throughout the 1980s: eg 27/6/80.

industry...'.[54] As unemployment levels rose far above state and national averages in the 1980s, and the building boom of the 1970s slumped dramatically, tourism growth was regarded as central to the economic viability of the town.[55] However, there was great competition with the other North Coast tourist centres and Coffs Harbour could offer little that was distinctly different other than its banana promotion. Its image was therefore very important.

The fear of bad press that might impede tourism growth was heightened through the 1980s as a series of environmental and health controversies put Coffs Harbour squarely in the national spotlight. The most infamous was the fear that heavy pesticide spraying on the banana plantations, which bordered onto suburban housing and tourist resorts, was causing sickness and an abnormal number of birth defects.[56] Throughout the 1980s, Secomb ran a series of challenging articles on Coffs Harbour, including grave concerns over health issues. And from 1983 the northern beaches sewerage debates added to the image of Coffs Harbour as a polluted place, culminating in the Look-At-Me-Now Headland dispute at Emerald Beach.

From the mid 80s the focus and direction of tourism was also questioned as international resort developments on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches were enthusiastically supported by members of Council and the business community. This raised tensions between the types of tourists that the town was attracting, and their place within the changing structures of the town. So far this discussion has treated tourists as a general category who can be:

> ...defined in behavioural terms as people who travel away from their normal place of residence for a temporary period of at least one night, and to the extent that their behaviour involves a search for leisure experiences from interactions with features or characteristics of places they choose to visit.[57]

However beyond this useful generalisation are a diversity of experiences of tourism which help shape people's sense of knowing an area. While reports into tourism in Coffs Harbour in the 1980s indicated that a high proportion of tourists were a

---

[54] *Advocate* 2/1/86:2 and *Advocate* reports throughout the 1980s. For example, compare the exuberant reports through June 1980, 11/11/80; 12/2/80 with Mike Secomb's 'Here's Why Coffs Fails' 24/1/86.

[55] Official levels sat around 17% through much of the 1980s, while research indicated that the real figures were more like 26%. Department of Planning 1989 *North Coast Population and Development Monitor*, Grafton Office of the DEP, Issue 10, July; *Advocate* 17/1/85; Pigram 1987:

[56] For example see *Advocate* throughout January 1984 eg 24/12/84; 3/1/86; 5/3/86.

[57] Leiper 1995 in McTavish 1997:7.

transient population of one-night stopovers in motels, they also identified a continuing tradition of regular, low budget holidaymakers returning to the region year after year.[58]

Such returning tourists bring different expectations to the place compared to those who only stay a night or visit just once. They develop close relationships with those places that can produce concepts of belonging, responsibility and beliefs in their right to speak out on behalf of those places. As might be expected, such claims can both be utilised by permanent residents in local issues and cause tensions around issues of local and outsider claims to places.

For example, from 1965 to 1990 Robyn Howell's family travelled from Grafton to Moonee Beach every year to stay for the full six weeks of the summer holidays. During that time, Robyn witnessed great changes to the region's environment such as sand mining which eradicated the extensive Aboriginal axe factory and middens behind Moonee Beach. She developed a strong affiliation with the area, petitioning against sand mining in the 1970s and actively trying to preserve undeveloped land between Moonee and Emerald Beach. Throughout the 1980s she joined the anti-outfall protests on the northern beaches: 'we were all fiercely protective of the area'. But the family eventually stopped coming. Robyn said they didn't like the 'glitz' and 'raz-a-ma-taz' of 'the way Coffs was going', symbolised for them by the 'destruction' of coastal rainforests for resort and housing developments.[59]

In 1986, much anger and upset was caused when Coffs Harbour Council decided to move Park Beach Reserve campers from their sites directly on the creek and beach front across the road to an unattractive bare lot, turning the vacated space into a public picnic area. Large meetings were held, attended mainly by tourists who camped there, and petitions were gathered over the summer holidays of that year. According to the *Advocate*, many had been coming for thirty years, bringing three generations to the town and sometimes coming three times a year to the same spot. At a time of increasing international resort development, there were claims of it being a 'working man's holiday' where 'the little people' were being moved out to make way for big people and the multinationals.[60]

---

[58] Pigram 1987.
[59] Interview T 14.
[60] *Advocate* 1/1/86:4; 25/3/86.

Despite the tourists' outcry, the campers were moved across the road and the creek frontage was turned into a public picnic ground. Central to this episode was the conflict over the use of public space and who had rights to claim an interest in such spaces. After such long and established relationships with places, tourists are not always so easily cast as outsiders who have no rights to make their claims heard. Some demanded to be heard on the basis of their economic contribution to the town: '...we've spent a lot of money in this town over the years'... 'Yes! Tell them we built it!'[61]

The dilemmas that would come to face the region as a consequence of its increasing popularity had already been flagged at the 1959 Grafton conference. On the one hand, speakers expressed exuberance about the potential of utilising the warm coastal environment, demanding the release of crown lands for development and suggesting new coastal roads be built to open up the region. In the same breath they mentioned the need for preservation and regional planning before local subdivision.

Even then, the Gold Coast arose as symbolic of the competing visions for the North Coast. Some North Coast delegates argued that tourist development must not mimic that of its northern neighbour, while another celebrated its move in thirty years from 'swamp to national playground of Australia' with its sense of 'absolute freedom' and 'prosperous, exciting development'.[62] Freedom to build without the meddling of government planning regulations was regarded as central to the Gold Coast's success.[63]

To the late 1960s, the escalation of tourists into the rural North Coast was occurring at the same time that its permanent population was still emptying out to the city. Therefore within local councils there was growing support for industries that could bring in money. The promises expounded of tourism and population growth for poor rural communities were employment and better services, such as shopping, health and education, and the hope they might help stem the flow of family members to the city.[64]

The scramble to subdivide and build on the North Coast boomed in the early 1970s, as tourism and new permanent settlement populations merged.[65] However planning authorities were unprepared for the move to the coast, and the general public as yet showed little interest in coastal planning with the consequence that there was

---

[61] *Advocate* 1/1/86:2.
[62] Juppenlatz 1959:51.
[63] See Jones 1986.
[64] For example Hannah 1968a.
[65] See Prater and Day 1981.

little political incentive to act.[66] Despite this lag between the population shift and the broader recognition of planning needs, however, concern about the impact of accelerated population growth on the rural coastline was publicly raised from the 1960s.

Planning on the unplanned coast: the 1960s and 70s.

Two fledgling and interlinked strands of environmental concern for the North Coast were discernible by the 1960s, gaining strength in the 1970s. One came from within the planning apparatus of state government, while the other came from academic researchers especially from UNE, and city and local environmentalists who joined government speakers in a series of coastal seminars over that period.[67] Together they shared the fear that the coast was being swallowed up before their eyes through largely uncontrolled land subdivision, suburbanisation of the rural coastline, sand mining and the consequent shrinking of public access to its 'beauty spots'.

Government planning regulations had intermittently been put into practice in metropolitan areas since the late nineteenth century, and Coffs Harbour had made some attempts towards town planning from the 1950s. However there was little recognition, or concern, before the 1960s in government that rural areas also needed planning strategies. Coastal planning took even longer. This reflected the ongoing metropolitan focus of New South Wales State governments and the lack of recognition of economic and lifestyle changes which were shifting focus to the coast.[68]

The State Planning Authority (SPA) which was established in 1964 in the last year of the McKell Labor government, under the chair of town planner Nigel Ashton, took the first tentative steps towards planning on the coast. Ashton had a particular interest in coastal conservation. The change to the Askin Liberal/ Country Party government in 1965 diluted the enthusiasm for coastal planning which he initiated. However, while the new government was generally on the defensive against the growing confidence of resident and environmental action groups, even it could not ignore an increasing call for government intervention in environmental matters,

---

[66] See chapter two; Nichols 1975.

[67] The national conferences were held in Terrigal 1964, Adelaide 1969, Coffs Harbour 1970 and Kempsey 1975.

[68] Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects, 18/5/77 "On Developing a Planning Strategy for Coastal NSW"' in 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110 Dixon Library; Bolton 1981.

maintaining the SPA and then establishing the Planning and Environment Commission in 1974.[69]

The approach of academic researchers and government representatives at this time was cautious, generally pushing a call for 'balance', where there was 'room for all' once some elements of planning were implemented to stem the excesses.[70] For example, the SPA took a pragmatic approach to its stated charge of responsibility to the coast, attempting to encompass all the active commercial activities such as sand mining, agriculture, tourism and marine industries, while setting out to stem speculative land buying and premature subdivision in protecting coastal lands.

Under Ashton's leadership, the SPA initiated inter-departmental cooperation between the Minister for Lands, the Minister for Local Government and National Parks, to discuss acquisition of rural coastal lands in need of protection or for public access.[71] The highly controversial Sim Committee which sat in the mid 1960s, discussed below, started an inventory of coastal assets. Out of the Sim report and other SPA activities, a series of planning strategies and orders were devised to speed up the process of coastal planning.[72]

By 1969 the SPA had cajoled all but four local councils (all on the North Coast) to adopt planning powers and agree to Interim Development Orders (IDOs), thereby forcing them to take responsibility for planning within their localities which conformed to state-wide principles.[73] Ashton conceded that this only provided the legal power to prevent the worst.[74]

The outcome was the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme, devised in 1971 and implemented from 1973.[75] It started discussions on land acquisition, restrictions and zoning on the basis of needs of public access and landscape and scenic values. There was still little understanding of, or willingness to act on, the needs of ecological protection of coastal environments.

---

[69] Painter 1987.

[70] State Planning Authority 1965 *Preserving A Heritage* SPA.

[71] Robert Freestone of the Department of Planning says that it was under Ashton's leadership that the New South Wales government first demonstrated a significant commitment to coastal protection. Freeston 1994 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 1, 1/C.

[72] Recher 1970.

[73] *Advocate* 21/4/69:1; Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects'; Hannah 1968a.

[74] Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects'.

[75] State Planning Authority 1973 *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales: Proposed by the State Government*, SPA; NSW Planning and Environment Commission 1975 *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales: Report by the Inter-Departmental Committee* SPA.

In response to the Scheme, North Coast councils, developers and private landowners decried a loss of freedoms, rights and access to land. A tiny proportion of the land recommended as needing urgent acquisition was financed by an unwilling Askin government, one consequence of which was to leave many landowners in limbo over the fate of their properties. Following from that an outcry against proposals for national parks and public reserves was heard across the North Coast, impeding new proposals and pulling back large areas already proposed in the new Yaragir and Bundgalung National Parks.[76]

The Coffs Harbour Shire and coastline was the fastest growing area on the North Coast in the early 1970s, and it consequently gained a high profile in state-wide coastal planning discussions. In 1970 a three day seminar on coastal development was held in Coffs Harbour, run jointly by UNE and the National Trust and attended by an array of bureaucrats, industrialist, planners and academics. The Ulittarra Society, Coffs Harbour's conservation group, was formed out of this meeting.[77]

Mary Campbell of the National Trust made an impassioned opening address to the conference about the needs for an environmentally privileged vision beyond pragmatic economic compromises pushed by planners, businessmen and miners. She was still a lonely voice at that stage. She further expressed the hope that one of the concepts that would soon disappear was:

> [t]he outworn creed that the prime purpose of a watercourse is to provide a free sewer, and that the ocean's cleansing powers can be relied upon as a limitless receptacle for all our wastes.[78]

The area from Coffs Harbour north to Corindi was also chosen as one of three areas for a specific study of coastal protection needs by the SPA. This was partly a positive affirmation of Coffs Harbour Council's early initiatives in employing a town planner, ahead of other coastal councils. It was also due to Ashton and the SPA's particular concerns about what they regarded as the destructive, unattractive subdivisions north of the town.[79] Throughout its existence much of the SPA's coastal focus was on unplanned, rushed estate subdivisions, especially where they encroached

---

[76] Recher 1970; Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects'.
[77] Wigham 1970.
[78] Cambell 1970:4.
[79] Robertson 1970; Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects'; *Advocate* 21/4/69:1.

on coastal headlands. An early booklet in 1965 pronounced these processes to have 'already hideously disfigured many lovely headland silhouettes.'[80].

* Planning is the
    way to safeguard...

OUR COAST

WHAT IS ...

FEW countries in the world can boast as vast as versatile or valuable as the 800 mile coastline of New South Wales. Blessed in climate, glorious scenery, abounding in recreational facilities and bursting with potential wealth, it is a heritage to be guarded vigilantly not only for the State but for the nation. The State Planning Authority of New South Wales has been charged with this responsibility, and is moving fast to fulfil it. This does not mean that every inch of the coast is to be preserved untouched or closed off as something to be admired from afar.

ROOM FOR ALL

To the contrary, the coast's inestimable potential for primary, secondary and maritime industries, for tourist resorts, for a host of healthful recreations and for scenic, scientific and historic interest must be developed to the fullest extent. But this must be done carefully and in accord with sound planning principles. The Authority has already conducted preliminary surveys of the coast. From these surveys, senior planners are drawing up comprehensive ideas for protection and development of the whole coast, zoning the land and defining the uses to which land in these zones can be confined or extended. This is essential to end the speculative land buying and premature subdivision which has already hideously disfigured many lovely headland silhouettes.

WHAT SHOULD BE

1965 SPA booklet, 'Preserving A Heritage', comparing what Ashton and the SPA
considered was unsightly headland housing development, to an undeveloped
headland landscape.

The SPA, and researchers such as Barbara Hannah from UNE, focused on planning as the tool to preserve areas for landscape values, public recreation and public access. Focus was placed on the need to protect coastal lands for their visual character and scenic beauty. It was in this context that the northern beaches of Coffs Harbour were particularly noted in their concern with obvious, although unstated, reference to the Emerald Beach estate begun in 1963.[81] For example in 1968 Hannah discussed new estates, many of which, she said, were located on headlands offering excellent views of the coastline.

> However, it is unfortunate that many of these leave ugly scars on the landscape and that their siting is frequently to be deplored, especially in the Coffs - Woolgoolga area where the beauty of the coastline has, to a large extent, been at least temporarily marred by the occurrence of large bulldozed areas. Many of the estates are of very recent developments (last five years) and some seem to have been opened up to forestall the provisions of the interim development

---

[80] State Planning Authority of New South Wales 1965 Preserving A Heritage: p1.

[81] Ibid; State Planning Authority 1973 Protection of Coastal Lands; Advocate 21/4/69. See chapter four on Emerald Beach.

orders which will come into effect when the State Planning Authority's zoning scheme is released. It is possible that some local councils have encouraged such premature and unfortunate subdivisions...[82]

Don Clinch, by then a real estate agent, helped sell the early Emerald Beach blocks. He remembered that the council was anxious to get development into the area and they were very keen to see the Emerald Beach estate go ahead. However, while there was no formal planning in those days, he said it was 'nonsense' to suggest it was a bad development. For him, the success of the estate remains precisely those headland characteristics which Ashton and Hannah lamented: the height of the headland sites providing a feeling of power while also providing a diversity of high and low areas on the estate.[83]

Don bought land on Dammerels Headland at Emerald Beach, and he and his wife Shirley moved onto the estate in 1966. Photos show the area as cleared and generally bare with few houses. They thought it was the best spot on the whole North Coast and are still there today.[84] Concepts of scenic beauty are perilous ones to define and impossible to fix.

One of the four councils to resist the planning IDO's was Ulmurra Shire Council, immediately to the north of Coffs Harbour Shire. They argued that town planning would retard development of the shire and that with a proposed national park (Yuragir) and huge forest areas, there was little left for Ulmarra to develop. Ashton's response to the council was that the shire was not an isolated piece of countryside but part of New South Wales.[85] He later echoed the comments of speakers at the 1970 and 1975 coastal seminars when he said:

> [L]ocal councils have been notorious in encouraging development no matter what the cost in loss to our coastal heritage, sometimes through ignorance, sometimes through vested interest and almost invariably due to each council's slice of the coast being considered as its own slice of real estate to be treated in isolation and for the immediate profit as the councillors see it.[86]

---

[82] Hannah 1968a:25. Emerald Beach and Diamond Head (later named Sandy Beach) were the only estates in the Coffs-Woolgoolga area to fit this timing. Diamond Head had no headland development unlike Emerald Beach.

[83] Interview NT 69.

[84] See chapter four.

[85] *Advocate* 21/4/69:1.

[86] Ashton 1977 'Talk to Landscape Architects': p9. These sentiments are echoed in Davidson and Spearritt 2000. Reflecting moves in the relationship between local and central political organisation in Britain, Ashton's demand for Ulmurra Shire to implement planning was also part of a broader process of professionalisation of local service delivery that endeavoured to counter the 'localism' of which Ashton complained. Harloe et al 1990.

Such sentiments went to the heart of the impetus for coastal planning outlined by bureaucrats and conservationists. They wanted to treat the coastline as a whole entity rather than the 'separatist territorial attitude' that Campbell argued left Coffs Harbour people thinking that 'this particular coastal strip belongs solely to Coffs Harbour'.[87]

Coming from those who lived beyond the local area, such comments struck a familiar cord of tension between locals and outsiders, country and city. Local councils repeatedly protested that they were being hamstrung and any control for their own areas taken away from them by state, city-centric bureaucracies. One reflection on the undoubted metropolitan bias in the state planning laws was that it took until 1977 for the negative terminology of *non-metropolitan* to be changed to *rural*.[88]

One example of the planning regulations on the North Coast that councils claimed were impeding development and further growth, was the SPA and National Parks' success in the 1970s in stopping plans for a coast road between Corindi and Angorie near Yamba. This was part of their attempts to stop urban ribbon development. Others, however, regarded the same planning regulations as woefully inadequate, reflected through suburban strip development and degraded environments.

Changes in community attitudes, especially coming to the fore from the 1970s, meant that the new planning system introduced in New South Wales in September 1980 under the newly elected Wran government, took greater note of both environmental issues and the demand for community participation.[89] Building on earlier conservation movements, environmentally conscious individuals and groups became increasingly active in direct protest measures.

From Myall Lakes to Middle Head: environmental protest on the Mid-North Coast.

It was sand mining that initially galvanised environmental action on the North Coast. The surge of new technological knowledge and increasing foreign and Australian capital in the 1950s and 60s dramatically shifted the pace and direction of resource

---

[87] Campbell 1970:2. The 1991 Federal government's report into the 'environmental degradation of the Australian coastline' clearly argued that coastal protection remained un-coordinated and at the hands of the 'tyranny of small decisions', leaving it vulnerable to destruction. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1991 *The Injured Coastline: Protection of the Coastal Environment*, Australian Government Publishing Service: ppvii;xiii.

[88] Hume 1981.

[89] The Department of Environment and Planning was established, taking over from the SPA, and it drafted the new Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Prater and Day 1981.

exploitation in the region. This was first brought to wide public attention through efforts to protect the sand dunes of Myall Lakes, two hundred kilometres north of Sydney, and a decade later further up the coast at Middle Head. Prior to the mid 1980s, sand mining was the most overt environmental example of competing visions for the region and competing claims over who should speak and act on its behalf.

After World War Two, Australia had become the major world supplier of the widely used minerals to be found in North Coast beach sand; rutile, zircon and ilmenite. Permission to mine Coffs Harbour's beaches was given in 1953, although caution expressed by the Shire's engineer over the damage which mining wrought to the 'natural beauty' of the area helped stave off mining until 1956.[90] However the Department of Mines was not sympathetic to calls for either caution or planning, and mining went ahead at Moonee Beach and many other areas in the region after that.

Environmental concern about sand mining, and the wish to protect the areas around Smith and Myall Lakes, was raised by a number of groups in the early 1960s prompting Ashton to establish the Sim Committee.[91] The Sim Committee, which sat between 1965 and 1968, concentrated on the conflict between sand mining, conservation and scientific research. Its findings pleased no one.

It produced much hostility amongst landowners who feared that coastal lands would be 'locked up' in national parks and scientific areas, echoing earlier colonists demands for unimpeded access to public and reserve lands. On the other hand, conservationists were horrified by the lack of protection that coastal lands were granted from the ravages of sand mining by the Committee.[92] However it was the first real step towards placing the conflicting claims of usage of the North Coast, especially between resource exploitation and environmental concerns, firmly on the public and political agenda.[93]

Myall Lakes was one of the few places left on the North Coast which had remained free of urban and agricultural development, and by the late 1960s had still not been extensively mined. Big plans where afoot, however, by the local council to subdivide lakeshore land for housing and to develop a substantial coastal road. Big

---

[90] Yeates 1993:145.
[91] Hutton and Connors 1999; Piper 1981.
[92] Wigham 1970 and 1975; Piper 1980; Hutton and Connors 1999.
[93] Piper 1980; Hutton and Connors 1999.

commercial building projects were also proposed and the area was riddled in mining leases.[94]

When the deliberations of the Sim Committee ultimately provided no protection for the Lakes, a disparate collection of predominantly city-based conservation and professional groups joined to form the Myall Lakes Committee. It began an extensive public education campaign throughout the first half of the 1970s through media releases, leaflets and car stickers, as well as lobbying politicians. Commenting in 1981 on their partial success only, prominent environmentalist Milo Dunphy said:

> [T]he northern half was mined but we saved the southern half. ...perhaps they were a bit too gentlemanly, and the people who were elected to [environmental] offices were more conservative than you could afford to be as a conservationist.[95]

Myall Lakes was one example of a transition that was occurring in the 1960s and 70s between an older, more polite style of environmental protest and a realisation that other strategies had to be employed in the face of new, aggressive economic development. In other parts of settled Australia, the postwar intensification of resource exploitation saw a number of parks and reserves that had been fought for and won in earlier years, retracted or faced with new threats of mining and forestry.[96]

However an expansion of education opportunities, Australians' increasing exploration of the countryside, heightened political awareness and new protest strategies such as direct action in the wake of the Vietnam War, all combined to shift and broaden earlier environmental concerns and activism. As has been widely written about, this linked into an international movement.[97]

Many of the high profile environmental campaigns from the 1970s have occurred beyond the beach, despite the huge pressure that was coming to bear on the coastline. Only two coastal protests usually appear in histories of the past three decades of environmental action; mining on Fraser Island in the early 1970s and the preceding Great Barrier Reef campaign.[98]

This tends to diminish the extent to which the coast has been the site of bitter environmental clashes. In Coffs Harbour, an ongoing campaign to get a Marine

---

[94] Piper 1981.
[95] In Hutton and Connors 1999:114.
[96] Robin 1998; Hutton and Connors 1999.
[97] Burgman 1993; Papadakis 1993; Hutton and Connors 1999.
[98] Bonyhady 1993; Toyne 1994; Hutton and Connors 1999.

National Park around the Solitary Islands has had a long history of various coalitions fighting for and against it since the 1960s. Some of the most bitter clashes in the region have been fought over access to the beach for four-wheel drives and the fear of the loss of public access to beaches through resort and residential subdivision development.

Throughout the 1970s sand mining continued to pick up pace, but in 1980 at Middle Head, south of Nambucca, it was challenged by direct-action protest.[99] This campaign was important in the history of the Mid-North Coast because it brought direct environmental protest to the beach for the first time. The protesters introduced new strategies, new coalitions across generations and between black and white, and introduced many of the pro and anti arguments which would become familiar in the outfall campaign at Emerald Beach.

The protest also reflected the move of new populations into the countryside. There was a noticeable shift in the protesting population from those at Myall Lakes. Rather than predominantly city-based individuals and groups, many of the Middle Head protesters were local residents, alternative lifestylers from the region and other North Coast residents.[100]

The threat of sand mining at Middle Head came only a few years after what many conservationists felt were very disappointing results at Myall Lakes. In 1978 in its aftermath, the government had promised that there would be no more sand mining in New South Wales' national parks or proposed extensions, but Middle Head was outside a park.[101] It was a popular beach with those looking for an escape from any amenities, frequented by surfers, local farmers and towns people from Macksville, and a significant site to Gumbaynggir people.

A wide publicity campaign to garner support to save the beach was mounted by the nearby Yarrahapinni Ecology Study Centre. State-wide attention was gained in September 1980 as protesters arrived from around the region and the city, setting up

---

[99] In an address to the Mineral Sands Industry Symposium in 1981, head of the Environment Protection Division of the DEP, John Whitehouse, proposed four phases in the history of mining on the North Coast. First came the pre Sims Committee era from 1930-1968 when there was minimal government regulation. Then the Sims regime between 1968-1977 attempted some resolution to the land conflict between mining and other interests. Thirdly there was 'open slather' outside national parks to 1980. Then the fourth phase began at Middle Head, which he called the 'Hippy Era' from 1980. Whitehouse in TWF Parkhouse 'Paper Presented for the 10th Annual State Conference of the Association for Environmental Education, May 1986'. 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57 (60).

[100] Ibid.

[101] TWF Parkhouse 'Ibid.

camp on the beach, blockading bulldozers and putting into action the strategies of non-violent protest. Police were brought in, ninety-seven arrests were made by the end of the month, and media attention was caught.[102]

Local and state media conveyed a set of arguments and dichotomies which would be played out over again in coming years. As at Emerald Beach, the analogy of a battle was often used with such titles as the 'Battle of the Beaches' *(Daily Mirror)*, 'Police Bashed in Beach "War"' *(Daily Telegraph)*, 'Middle Head battles sandmining for the nuclear industry' *(Daily Tribune)* and 'Battle lines form for sandmining clashes' *(Newcastle Herald)*.[103]

In March and April 1980, two editorials in the Kempsey *Argus* put an uncompromising position which argued that without sand mining, the Kempsey Valley would 'come to its knees' at the hands of a vocal minority of the 'new elite' - trendy environmentalists. The second raised the spectre of 'professional protesters' being brought in to help establish a 'very well organised group' who continued to ignore the needs and stability of the local community. Similar representations would recur resoundingly in the Emerald Beach dispute.[104]

The *Argus* then published a flurry of letters over that year with claims from both 'sides'. Many reflected the arguments of the editorials. Others claimed the support of a broad 'potpourri' of young and old protesters, including local farmers and North Coast residents from further afield. Economically, claims for the alternative economics of regional tourism were raised, arguing that sand mining was in direct competition through 'despoiling' the very environment the tourist came to see.[105]

There was now a clear agenda amongst many of the protesters of an ecological necessity to prevent mining, rather than just an aesthetic or landscape priority. Also some of the protesters who set up on the beach had been at the forestry campaign of Terania Creek, on the Far-North Coast. They were very important in bringing many of the strategies used in the forest campaigns such as non-violent direct-action tactics, use of theatre and entertainment, diversionary actions, media and organisation skills. Such skills were transferred across the North Coast and other parts of Australia as the forestry

---

[102] 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 58(60).
[103] *Mirror* 25/7/80; *Telegraph* 23/9/80; *Tribune* 11/10/80; *Newcastle Morning Herald* 23/9/80 in Ibid.
[104] *Argus* 18/3/80 and 1/4/80 in 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57(60).
[105] See *Argus* articles in Ibid.

campaigns escalated. They would also become prominent in the dispute at Emerald Beach.[106]

One of the prominent groups of young protesters camped on the beach were the male surfers and their girlfriends. Economic shifts in the 1960s and 70s now saw car traffic expand beyond the family sedan, moving into the hands of young single people. For over a

decade, North Coast beaches had been a mecca of Australian and international surfers, kombi vans and holdens filling the car parks of coastal villages. The beaches were featured in such famous surfing films as *Endless Summer*, and anti-outfaller Mark Wittleton described an exciting time: 'when many of the worlds leading surfers and surfboard designers gravitated to our bit of the coast'.[107]

A decade of anti-racism activism had preceded the protests at Middle Head where alliances across Aboriginal and other anti-racist campaigns, such as against the Springbok tours, had brought together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal protesters. Reflecting new non-Aboriginal awarness, and regained Aboriginal confidence to act, an Aboriginal Embassy was established at Middle Head where Dhan-gadi and Gumbaingirr people were represented, and wary alliances formed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal protesters.[108]

By the early 1980s a new environmental element was also encroaching into Coffs Harbour. The *Advocate* flagged 'battles' looming between conservationists and industry, especially over trees and Koala corridors, and a 'battle for the beaches' between conservationists and off road vehicles. Letters and news items in the early 1980s noted that the Franklin River activist, Bob Brown, was an old Coffs boy, and peace rallies against nuclear weapons were held in the town.[109]

The town had a peace group, members of whom would later become active at Emerald Beach such as their treasurer, Victor Tibbets. In September 1983 an editorial referred to the environmental campaigns being fought at Roxby Downs, the Franklin

---

[106] Cohen 1996; Bonyhady 1993.
[107] Wittleton 2001:98.
[108] NN no 134 in 'Middle Head' Rainbow archive ML MSS5057 Add-on 1916 58 (60); Paul Torzillo pers. com. 16/12/01.
[109] For example see *Advocate* 7/11/80; 23/4/82; 18/11/83; Kinhill Engineers 1991 *Coffs Harbour Economic Study*, Coffs Harbour City Council.

and Terania Creek, saying that planning was badly needed and that conservation issues were not just a 'greenie' concern.[110]

There was a heightened sense of urgency about the state of the environment that was becoming more widely shared amongst a diversity of people, reaching across multi issues and starting conversations about the links between local and global phenomena. Local, state, national and global circumstances created the conditions for the unfolding environmental conflicts in Coffs Harbour and later at Emerald Beach. Massey, amongst others, argued that while the local has historically never been divorced from a world outside of itself, the second half of the twentieth century saw the galloping processes of globalisation forgo any possibility of an isolated, bordered local place.[111]

Two rising moments in late twentieth-century history met in crescendo in Coffs Harbour in the late 1980s. A latent environmental ethic accelerated in conjunction with a boom and bust in large developments funded by Australian lending institutions and foreign capital. In exploring the broad context just prior to the Emerald Beach dispute, the last section of this chapter outlines the clash of environmental and development issues as they impacted on the Coffs Harbour region.

The late 1980s and early 1990s in Coffs Harbour: environmentalism and development

In 1988 the Coffs Harbour Council and the State Government decided to move the site of the proposed sewerage outfall, on Coffs' northern beaches, from the controversial position of Woolgoolga Headland to Look-At-Me-Now Headland at Emerald Beach, leading to the October 1991 direct-action protests. The timing to move the outfall to Emerald Beach coincided with a sharp rise in public anxiety over environmental issues. Reflecting back on the episode in 2000, Pam Allen, State Labor Opposition Minister for the Environment at the time, said that the Emerald Beach dispute occurred: 'at a time of a growing environment movement and willingness on behalf of communities to act - a whole mobilisation which has now gone dead'.[112]

The heightened public concern about the environment was recorded in electoral

---

[110] *Advocate* 18/11/83:4; see Watson 1990; Peace 1996.
[111] Massey 1993a; 1995. See Rosita Henry 1994 for a discussion on this process in an Australian case study of the north Queensland town of Kuranda.
[112] Interview NT 59.

research and opinion polls. In 1987 and 1990, researchers from the Australian Electoral Studies asked people how important the environment was in casting their vote. In 1987 31 per cent said it was very important. This had risen to 52 per cent of respondents in 1990.[113] Up to 1988, data from the Roy Morgan Research Centre indicated only about 5 per cent of the population considered the environment a top priority, or one that the Federal government should address. However in 1989 and 1990 the figure leapt to 26 per cent.[114]

By the late 1980s an increasing number of residents in the Coffs Harbour area were worried about the pace of development that had surged since the middle of the decade. Bellingen environmentalist, Trevor Pike, recorded some of these fears in a letter to the federal government's 1989 Inquiry into coastal protection. He stated that over three billion dollars of tourist resort development, some of it disguising new urban subdivision, was either under construction or was proposed for the Coffs Harbour Shire's coastline. He argued that the massive influx of capital, much of it foreign, was causing demonstrable environmental, social and economic damage.[115]

Growth in tourism to Coffs Harbour had stalled in the early 1980s.[116] However in the mid 80s undeveloped coastal land to the north and south of the town was quite suddenly either transformed into large resorts or earmarked for similar proposals. Three large resorts had been built by the end of 1987 to the north - Pelican Beach, Nautilus and Anuka - and Boambee Bay to the south at Sawtell. Opal Cove Resort to the north was near completion, estimated to be worth forty-eight million dollars, and the Charlesworth Bay Tourist Resort at two hundred million was on its way.

The frenetic pace of the development boom that emerged in Australia in the 1987-1988 period was at fever pitch in Coffs Harbour. Local lawyer Heather McKinnon described Coffs as a microcosm of the frantic mid 80s boom and bust: black tie dinners, helicopters flying the movie stars and big bands into Anuka resort, a ball every Saturday night of a ten week season and a new dress needed for each one. And, she claimed, 'it all

---

[113] Papadakis 1993:142.
[114] Ibid:142-143. Note figures from McAllister on p143.
[115] Pike, Letter to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts on behalf of the Three Valleys Branch of the National Parks Association, August 1989.
[116] Prosser 1997, numerous commentary in the Advocate.

came on the back of fake money lent by the young yuppie bank managers brought in by the increasing number of banks in town'.[117]

Journalist Paul Kelly says that when the 1987 share market crash failed to smash confidence, 'the business climate grew more frantic and the financial sector underwrote lending on a scale that defied rationality'.[118] In January 1988, according to the Coffs Harbour City Year Book, three other resorts were planned and waiting council approval - the two hundred million dollar Pearl Leisure Village Resort between Sandy Beach and Woolgoolga, the forty million dollar Marlin Resort at Moonee Beach and a 'massive complex' at Bonville.[119] This was widely reported to be a five hundred million dollar venture including two golf courses, luxury hotel, housing subdivision and villas.[120]

The character of tourism in Coffs Harbour shifted in this time from its earlier destination as a no frills annual family holiday, to a new focus on a high income, international tourism market.[121] The 1988 Year Book was brimming with excitement of the importance of these developments to the future of the town. The new focus of tourism 'as a source of income, foreign exchange earnings and employment' was given highest priority.[122]

However this change in pace and its impact on the town was controversial. The resorts were not universally welcomed as public beach access was curtailed, the coastal landscape was changed dramatically, more stress was placed on over-stretched water and sewerage infrastructure and allegations of local council and business corruption was rife.[123] Many local residents resented the increasing seasonal influx of tourists.[124]

Coffs Harbour born singer-songwriter, Judy Small's lament for Charlesworth Bay, reflects the loss many people felt for their favourite beach as the Charlesworth Bay Tourist Resort was built.[125] This was made far more controversial as the multi-story pink resort was not completed at the end of the 1980s, as recession followed hot on the

---

[117] Interview NT 70.
[118] Kelly 1994:376.
[119] Coffs Harbour City Council 1988b *Coffs Harbour Annual Report of the Year 1987: Coffs Harbour Bicentennial Activities*, Showcase Publications.
[120] Much discussed in the *Coffs Harbour Times; Sun Herald* 28/5/89; Pike 1989.
[121] Prosser 1997.
[122] Coffs Harbour City Council 1988b *Coffs Harbour Annual Report of the Year 1987*: p31.
[123] Prosser 1997.
[124] Pigram 1987.
[125] Judy Small 'Charlesworth Bay' on *Snapshots*.

heels of the boom. The resort lay empty until September 1996 when it was finally opened as the Pacific Bay Resort.

Throughout the 1980s, water and trees emerged as the most persistent and fraught environmental matters on the Mid-North Coast. Mark Campbell, living an alternative lifestyle on his own land in the Nymboida region, said that the outfall issue at Emerald Beach was only one part of a much larger issue of water use and development in the Coffs Harbour to Grafton region.[126] Coffs Harbour had always been susceptible to water shortages in dry years because it is not on a major river. A combination of rapid urbanisation and drought found Coffs in the grips of water restrictions throughout much of the 1980s and early 90s.[127]

The Shire Council had long searched for ways to utilise the hinterland river systems, including the Nymboida River, to service its growing population. Through the 1980s and 90s, communities in the Clarence catchment area were embroiled with Coffs Harbour and Grafton councils, and the State Liberal/Country Party government, in opposing philosophies of water usage. For example, the government and councils' plans were for large infrastructure projects built around dams and water extraction. In comparison small scale, individual alternatives such as the use of water tanks, composting toilets and recycling grey-water on site, were advocated by community groups.[128] Mark and others from Nymboida joined the protests at Emerald Beach on a few occasions because they believed in the principle that one should not pour useable water into the sea.[129]

1989 was a big year for North Coast environmental campaigns and the issues were all brought together in an unprecedented rally of thousands of North Coast residents in Coffs Harbour in July. At the time, one of the biggest regional fights outside of the forests was over Daishowa International's proposed pulp mill on the Clarence near Grafton. This brought concerns for trees and water together, facing off against jobs in the ailing timber industry and other powerful industry forces.[130]

---

[126] InterviewNT 11.
[127] The state of the water supply was a consistent news item in the local media through to the late 90s when the Karangi Dam on the Orara River was extended; eg *Advocate* 13/1/69; 10/2/69; 8/2/80; 9/4/80; See McCotter 1989 *Coffs Harbour Water Supply: Planning of the New Water Supply Scheme: Environmental Impact Statement*, for Public Works Department.
[128] Fardell 1998.
[129] Interview NT 11.
[130] Rolls 1993.

At the same time, extensive local lobbying against the eighty square kilometre horticultural development Fruit Australia, on the Orara River between Grafton and Coffs Harbour, was brought to State Government attention. The company was accused of massive environmental damage to the river and the marginal lands of the subdivision, sidestepping government policy and departments and damaging Aboriginal sites.[131]

There was also anger as hopes were dashed in mid 1989 to have the unique marine environment of the offshore Solitary Islands designated a National Park. It is here that the warm northern currents overlap with cool southern currents, producing the southern-most coral communities and a rich diversity of marine life. Tourist and conservation groups in Coffs Harbour had been arguing for a marine park since the late 1960s, bunting up against fishing, four-wheel drive and industry lobbyists. Liberal Party Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, had promised a 'good outcome' on a National Park. However the proposal was downgraded in 1989 to a marine reserve; 'a cop out' suggested the *Advocate's* editorial. It said:

> The area is already compromised in some eyes because of the presence of ocean outfalls... at the southern end of the proposed park, while to the north is the proposed outfall for the Clarence pulp mill... This [decision] will expose the State Government to the accusation that it is not serious about conservation and that Mr Moore and his Environment Department are 'toothless tigers' in the power structure of the Greiner-Murray Coalition.[132]

In Coffs Harbour, local environment groups were concerned about the environmental impact and loss of public beach reserves in the development of the two large resort and urban subdivisions to the north of the town at Opal Cove and Charlesworth Bay.[133] The long running battle to secure the protection of some of the last remaining littoral rainforest in New South Wales at Bonville,[134] contained within the proposed resort discussed above, had also intensified while inland of Emerald Beach local residents were fighting a quarry proposal at Avacodo Heights.[135] Koala corridors

---

[131] 'Brief Notes on Fruit Australia' 1989.

[132] *Advocate* 20/5/89:4.

[133] Ulitarra Society 1989 Submission From the Ulitarra Society Inc to the Inquiry Into Protection of the Coastal Environment, September 1989.

[134] The land was eventually brought under the new Bongil Bongil National Park.

[135] A number of these issues were covered in local and regional environmental group submissions to two government inquiries into the state of the coast in the late 1980s: the NSW State Government's Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development Coastal Inquiry, and the Federal Government's House of Representative's Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts, resulting in the report called *The Injured Coastline*; 1991.

and tree preservation orders that had remained bitter controversies since the early eighties added to the mix.

For John Smith the 1980s heralded a dangerous new phenomenon of environmentalism that has been destructive to the growth of the region.

> It was in the early 1980s that the environmental issues really started to hot up and it got heavier from there... The environmental push has been destructive, often without good reason. That push has seen the loss of millions of dollars to the area... Coffs has gained an image, pushed by the environmental lobby, that it is desolate - all the trees have been chopped down. This has been destructive to the image of the place and also put off investors in the city.
>
> ...It is a selfish attitude to say there should be no growth. It is the newcomers of the last twenty years who say - don't let's grow any more. However we need to take in more people. The growing population has to go somewhere. Coffs is a people area. The CSIRO has said this area has the best climate. This is not an area of highly fertile agricultural land - no class 1 or 2 land here. So it is a perfect place to take in greater urban populations.[136]

Brian Beckett, Deputy Mayor during the years of dispute at Emerald Beach, referred to a local BANANA attitude: Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone. There was also a growing sense amongst members of the business community and council that Coffs Harbour was being targeted by outside green activists. For John, the outfall dispute at Emerald Beach was just another stage in a ten year smokescreen under which the North Coast and Coffs Harbour 'had been targeted particularly by the environmental lobby'.[137]

As the local campaign in Emerald Beach against the outfall began to take shape in 1988 Alph Williams, the prominent spokesman against the outfall, formed the Coffs Harbour Environmental Coalition to extend the dispute 'out of people's back yards' and into the wider environmental arena.[138] The 1989 rally in Coffs Harbour was organised to provide such impetus, gain media coverage for the wide range of issues noted above and garner broad community support. The local media, police and supporters put the attendance between 4,000 and 6,000 people. Pam Allen joined actor Jack Thompson, Alph and others in rousing speeches.[139] A few days later the *Advocate's* editorial noted that:

---

[136] Interview NT 32.
[137] In *The Weekend Australian* 4-5/4/92:6.
[138] Interview T 13; Also Interview T 2; Interview T 54.
[139] *Advocate* 29/7/89: 1/8/89.

> A gathering variously put as from between 4000 people and 6000 people for any single event in Coffs Harbour is voice enough to show that there is a rapidly growing concern for environmental issues within our own community...
> ...that combined voice signals an entirely new outlook for the city.[140]

Don Clinch thought the fuss about an outfall at Emerald Beach was all a bit much at first, thinking one was inevitable. However he and Shirley attended the rally and recall it as a day that impressed them and helped them to think again about the outfall as an environmental issue. Don remembered that people came from everywhere. They had never seen such numbers in Coffs Harbour. At the rally they talked to:

> ...some very nice people who had come from Yamba. These were not rent-a-crowd people. They were people who really cared about what was happening to the environment in their region and wanted to support Coffs Harbour people in their environmental causes. They had paid their own money to get there - they were nice people with families.[141]

Don's claim of the ordinariness of the gathered crowd is symptomatic of the nationally recorded shift in environmental concern by the end of the 1980s. It is also a retrospective response to those in the local community who claimed heightened environmental arguments impeding development in Coffs Harbour lay at the feet of green extremists. By the end of the 1980s, Coffs Harbour was poised on the brink of a potent combination of economic recession on the heels of booming development, and mainstream environmental activism.

....

A mix of people now lived on the northern beaches. Some were waiting impatiently for sewerage so they could subdivide their land, long promised by Council. Others were keen to maintain the less developed countryside feel that had drawn them to the area. At Emerald Beach a stable population of permanent settlers had grown over the decade, drawn to its beaches and lifestyle from the southern cities and inland. Amongst their number the protesters would emerge to demand their vision of an outfall-free coastline.

---

[140] *Advocate* 1/8/89:4.
[141] Interview NT 69.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMERALD BEACH: A PLACE AT THE COAST

Emerald Beach is a place created out of the postwar migration shift from the cities, inland and cooler southern climates, to attractive northern coastal zones. Surf Street, Bluff Road, Fishermans Drive and Ocean View Crescent are a few of the street names which map the village of Emerald Beach. 'What a lovely address' people sigh over the phone from distant places. All the attractions of the warm coastal belt are evoked in such names, and can be found in the physical landscape of the village. These include white sandy beaches, rocky headlands, offshore islands, a purple mountain backdrop and blue-green surf inhabited by dolphins, turtles and whales. The romance of seaside living is easy to conjure up in such a place, and postwar settlers have been lured there since the mid 1960s.

Common to residents' stories of choosing to live at Emerald Beach is the search up and down the coastline looking for the right place to settle. However such stories are also tinged with claims from some Coffs Harbour people that Emerald Beach residents just cannot afford to live at Korora, a wealthy coastal suburb closer to town, and that cheap land drew people to the village. The perception of a social divide between the northern beaches and Coffs Harbour preceded and proceeds the outfall dispute of the early 1990s. Eighteen kilometres north of town, Emerald Beach might as well be in Timbuktu for many residents in the rest of the Shire. But for long-time Emerald Beach residents, it is a unique and special place.

This chapter recounts some people's stories of Emerald Beach. First, its development as the product of the new patterns of postwar internal migration is explored. The stories outline the transition of the place from isolated farmland to a slowly growing village through to the early 1980s, by which time many of the residents who would take part in outfall protests a decade later had arrived from the cities and inland. Second, it introduces the village as a place of contestation created out of the migration shift to the rural coast. By the late 80s tensions between a growing environmental ethic alongside a decade of development growth and speculation on the Coffs coastline was set to explode. This section provides a background to the protests

by outlining a demographic profile of Emerald Beach residents who fought an outfall, and tells stories of some of the colourful outsiders who came to support them.
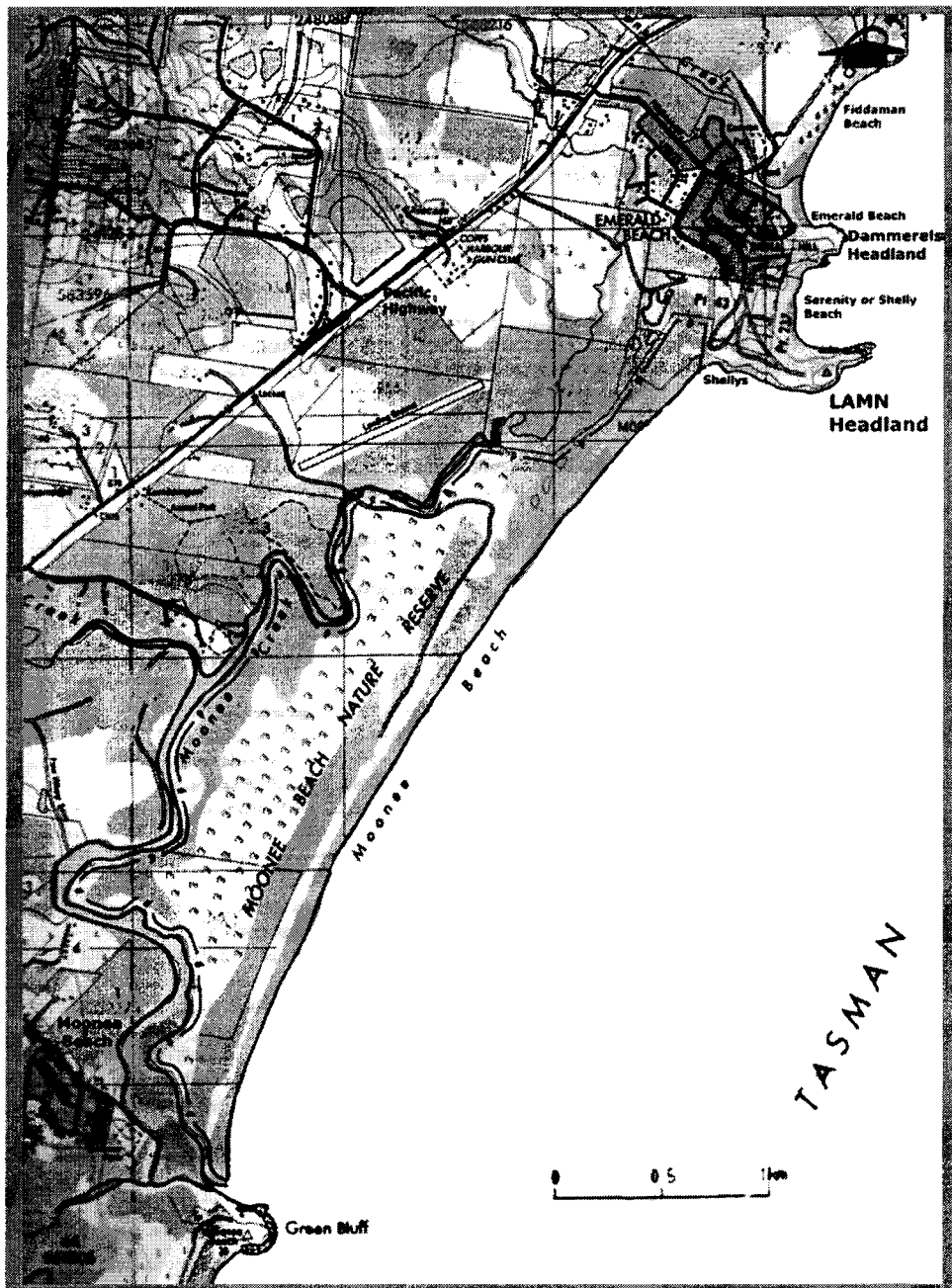
Map showing the villages of Moonee Beach and Green Bluff in the south and Emerald Beach to the north, with Dammerels and Look-At-Me-Now Headlands. Adapted from Camp Scott Furphy 1993: Vol 1: Figure 9.5.

Farm land to coastal village

A tiny cottage called 'the Fish Hook' sits back from the road on the ridge above Look-At-Me-Now Headland, surrounded by imposing two-story brick homes. When it was built in 1953 for a Sydney man, William (W.T.) Lentfer, it stood alone on the hill. Lentfer had bought the 140 acres on which it sat - portions 47 and 48 of the Parish of Moonee - from James Hilder Skinner in the previous year. Skinner was a member of the extended Skinner clan who had farmed the area, then known as Moonee Creek Settlement, since 1881. At the time of buying portions 47 and 48 in 1937, Skinner still farmed inland at Glenreagh and the land was procured so that he and his family could holiday at the seaside.[1]

The first white owners of portions 47 and 48 were the Dammerels, acquiring it in 1884. They had attempted cane cropping with little success. Then through to the early 1920s, George Dammerel operated an official shipping signal station from the high vantage point of their land.[2]

In 1962 due to waning health, Lentfer sold portions 47 and 48 to Albert Moonee Pty Ltd, a Sydney development company. Parkes Development was the selling agent and the promotional arm of the company. They set about developing the second housing subdivision on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches, calling it Emerald Beach[3]. Don Clinch remembers it was named to carry on the theme of precious stones already established in the naming of Sapphire Beach to its south.[4]

Don arrived in the region in 1951, having come to set up a pharmacy in Woolgoolga.[5] He also established a real estate business that he and his wife Shirley still run today. With his interests in encouraging tourism and new settlement into the region, Don had been on the lookout for land to subdivide. When Lentfer told Don of his wish to sell, he and prominent Coffs Harbour businessman Peter Seccombe tried to get financial backing to buy the land, without success. Parkes Development came looking

[1] Holder 1984.

[2] See Harold Rudder's contemporary account of the signal station and the job it entailed in Holder 1984:62-63.

[3] Interview NT 69; Holder 1983. Parks Development added the three acres of Mrs Holder's land along Fiddaman Creek in 1963. A 1960 article in the *Opinion* 27/10/60, relating to a subdivision planned for 'Look-At-Me-Now', was further south behind the present zoo and not on the site of Emerald Beach. The subdivision of Mullaway was set out much earlier than Sapphire and Emerald Beach but did not successfully sell housing blocks until the 1970s.

[4] Interview NT 69.

[5] See chapter three.

shortly afterwards for North Coast land to develop and Don and Peter took on the role of selling the land locally[6]
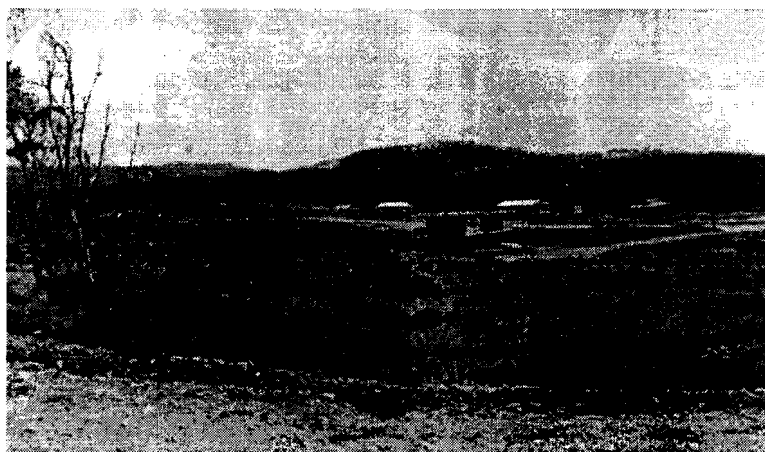
Central section of the Emerald Beach estate in 1963.
Photo courtesy of Ben Holder.

Many residents originally from Sydney remember the radio and newspaper advertisements selling the first stage of blocks at Emerald Beach.[7] Lee and Greg Cahill, who settled in Emerald Beach in the late 1970s, laugh when they remember their distrust of the advertisements. They thought it might be a scam, the land sinking under the high tide as had been the case in some famous Queensland real estate developments.[8]

Don recalled that it was a highly organised and successful sales strategy that included a great day out. Parkes Development was prominent in selling country land to city people. They flew prospective buyers to Coffs Harbour on a Sunday, usually in a DC3 holding about twenty-three passengers, and sometimes in the larger Fokker Friendships. Don remembered that the company had two or three people in Sydney devoted to selling land at Emerald Beach.[9]

Once an interested person registered their name with the company, a salesman went to their house at night when, as Don said, the breadwinner was home from work. That way they could look at the people's home, their car and check how well kept

---

[6] Interview NT 69.
[7] For example Interview NT 32.
[8] Lee and Greg Cahill pers. comm. 23/4/97.
[9] Interview NT 69.

things were. On that basis the salesmen would make a judgement whether the people were serious, thereby forming an estimate of their capacity to make a purchase. Such a process was their way of ensuring their planes were filled with one hundred percent of potential buyers. In addition the salesmen took a payment of twenty-five pounds from people which they returned on the steps of the plane. That way they were guaranteed usually full flights.

Don, Peter and two others would meet the plane at Coffs Harbour in their vehicles and ferry the passengers and Sydney agents out to Emerald Beach. On arrival at Emerald Beach, passengers were given morning tea and beer and later provided with lunch and drinks in a purpose-built house in Signal Street. 'It was in a red hot position – up on the headland with sweeping views north up the coast and back all the way to Coffs.' There was more beer on the way home, the plane returning at three pm. 'Everything was free of charge - and it made for a great day out... [The Sydney agents] rarely went home without people signing to buy'.[10]

Don and Shirley moved to Emerald Beach in 1966. Don said all the blocks in the first stage were sold, however little of the land was built on at the time and he thought there were only five or six houses on the estate. He felt this was because it was easy enough to find money for a block of land, but it was a different matter to build. Also Emerald Beach was a long way from Sydney. Further, Don said, 'a lot of the blocks were sold on terms to migrant families wanting a stake in their new country either for investment, or building later after paying the land off.'[11]

Those who did come to live on the estate through to 1970 are recorded in Ben Holder's local history on the area, *The History of the Coastal Strip known as 'Look-At-Me-Now': Moonee Creek Settlement (100 years); the Skinner Family and Descendants*. At that time, most of residents came from country areas outside the region.[12] Ben, however, came to Moonee Creek Settlement in 1943 as a child. He and his eleven siblings lived with their parents in a cabin on the banks of Fiddaman Creek, which

---

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Most of those named came from inland NSW and Newcastle, but included a European couple and people from Melbourne. Holder 1984:156-159.

borders the northern side of Emerald Beach village.[13] His mother was a Skinner and he spent much of his youth on the Skinners' farms in the immediate area.[14] While all of his brothers and sisters have left Emerald Beach over the years, Ben remains despite the vast changes to the place he once had free range over. In describing some of the changes he said:

> ...see we had the run of the place when we were young... We had the beach - you could go down and catch a fish anytime you wanted to. Well then all the fishermen started to come in cars and it was eroded then. When I was a kid there was no road, only an old bullock track and probably one person who would come fishing once a month. So later when you went down to your favourite fishing spot there were two or three people there and you couldn't get to it to catch a fish. But that's all it was - just a feeling it was a bit crowded.[15]

While he suggested he wouldn't mind moving next to a golf course, he says he wouldn't go anywhere else to live: '... I like it here'. He came to believe that the outfall was not right in an age where alternatives were already working in other countries and other parts of Australia. 'I mean, we'd love the sewerage, but it's not the sewerage that is the problem but how they were dispersing it... It's not just for today, it's forever and ever...'[16]

Amongst the early arrivals to Emerald Beach recorded in Ben's book were the Quirks; Betty, John and son David. They became firm friends with the Holders, learning how to fish from them and learning the history of the area from Ben. Betty remains in the house in Surf Street, opposite Emerald Beach, which was built for them while they were still moving up from Melbourne in 1967.[17]

---

[13] The spelling of streets and landmarks in Emerald Beach after a gold miner, Fred Fiddaman and settler George Dammerel, are confused. For example the street names and phone directory refer to Fiddamens St and Dammeral Cr. I use that spelling when referring to streets. Otherwise I use the original spelling from Ben's book.

[14] Interview T 26.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Emerald Beach is the small beach at the end of the access road into the village. Across Fiddaman Creek to the north is Fiddaman Beach, and to the south over Dammerels Headland is a small sheltered beach. Ben calls it Shelly Beach, while others call it Serenity Beach. Beyond that, over Look-At-Me-Now Headland, one comes to Moonee Beach. Surfers call the section of breaks up against Look-At-Me-Now Headland - Shellys.

Betty recalled the steps to buying their block.[18] John had been flown to the estate in the mid 1960s by his friend Ron Mortimer, who already had a holiday house in Surf Street and was planning to build a motel.[19] Having become acquainted with the estate, John applied to Don Clinch to buy a block. Don wrote back in March 1965 that while they did not usually sell blocks sight unseen, the circumstances allowed him to proceed. There were, he wrote, few blocks of quality left as most were sold. He and Ron Mortimer agreed that the Surf Street blocks were the best left on the subdivision. Don finished the letter:

> Finally we advise that we have three lots in this same subdivision and have selected them after having land at every spot on the coast at our disposal. We believe the region is magnificent in scenery, climate and living conditions. You will probably have heard all about it from Mrs Mortimer![20]

The Quirks built their house next door to the Mortimer's house, shown here in 1965. Photo courtesy of Betty Quirk.

The Quirks' Melbourne friends were aghast at how expensive the block was, at 650 pounds.[21] While there was electricity, there was no running water and the roads were gravel and prone to flooding. Mains water was only connected in August/September 1980.[22] The promises of sewerage began to surface a little later. Betty was 'pro-outfall', believing there were too many double standards such as the pollution of Fiddaman Creek from backyard septics. But, she wished to assure me, she never felt intimidated in the village because of her views.[23]

---

[18] Interview T 30. They bought the land for their retirement. However because of John's poor health they decided to move up while they were still in their 40s. John wrote a manuscript on a history of the area, much of it taken from Skinner documents and oral histories collected from Ben. He handed the manuscript on to Ben, forming the foundation of his book. See J. Quirk 1968 'History of Emerald Beach', unpublished manuscript in the possession of Mrs Betty Quirk; Holder 1984.

[19] The Esmerelda was opened for business in 1967 and is now holiday flats.

[20] Letter from D.J.Clinch & Co to Mr J.T.Quirk, March 1965, in the possession of Betty Quirk.

[21] Contract for Sale of Land; in the possession of Betty Quirk.

[22] *Advocate* 15/8/80; Camp, Scott, Furphy 1993.

[23] Interview C 65.

Despite the hardships in the early years, Betty has always loved Emerald Beach and will stay as long as she can. She feels the place has got her through a number of very difficult times. However for others, she laughed, it can be 'a hell hole'. She remembered two women who lived for a while in a neighbour's house opposite the beach. They left because the place 'drove them mad'. One liked to play the pokies and it was too far from the clubs, while the other found the isolation too much to take.[24] The same place is experienced in very different ways by different people, and is also experienced differently over time by the same people.

There have been many changes in the village, most obviously as a consequence of the accelerating residential population from the early 1980s. Some found the changes too much, choosing to move on. Robyn Howell and her family had been holidaying annually at Moonee Beach from Grafton since 1965. They bought a block at Emerald Beach in 1970 for their retirement. It was on the ridge with spectacular views up and down the coast. 'Now', she said, 'you'd have to build a three storey house to see anything'.[25] They sold the block in the 80s without building on it, disillusioned by the rapid growth of houses where they felt people selfishly blocked the views of others, and by the loss of the peace and quiet which they had envisaged for their lives in the village.

For Naomi England, who had come to live in Coffs in 1948, it was Emerald Beach residents who typified the superior attitudes of new settlers from the city. She remembered the early sales at the estate where people were offered free flights to come and look at the land. She went out on a few occasions to serve tea and snacks to make money for the Girl Guides and Scouts, carting all the equipment out there including the kero tins on which she boiled the billy.

They were Sydney people, Naomi explained, and it was as if they had to show country people like herself that there was a division between citified people and country bumpkins. She said that such tension had always been there and that it was continued on at Emerald Beach, unlike Sapphire or other places. Everyone else had to assimilate, but out at Emerald Beach people were contained in their own little community.[26]

---

[24] Betty Quirk, discussion after interview T 30; notes in my possession.
[25] Interview T 14.
[26] Interview NT 25.

Betty loved the isolation and the holiday feel of the village, but worked and socialised in Coffs Harbour. Some of the changes to the village have saddened her, such as the growth of large houses which has created a suburban feel. But she says the ocean is still the same and her daily vista from her window up the beach gives her great satisfaction.[27] However she feels a loss of freedom acutely and told me she believed some of the Holders left because they could no longer bear their lack of access to areas they once roamed across freely.[28] It is the National Parks and Wildlife Service that features prominently in some people's stories of having been robbed of unfettered access to places.

Roger Price is another who came and went from Emerald Beach. When National Parks blocked vehicle access to the local beaches in 1985 due to the population growth, residents at Emerald Beach held protest meetings.[29] For Roger, the closures were an unfortunate but necessary step of control. He felt the move probably helped their decision to leave the village in 1989.

Roger came to live in Emerald Beach in 1974, and today he owns one of the largest real estate businesses in Coffs Harbour. His memory of arriving in the region is about the weather - his story reflecting common sentiments in others' stories about choosing the Coffs region for its mild climate. His work for Elders required him to transfer from Wagga Wagga to the northern regions. The company told him to look at Armidale, but that there was the possibility of living on the coast. When he and his family arrived in Armidale in July it was sleeting. They left, driving down the Dorrigo Mountain and arriving at Coffs Harbour a couple of hours after leaving Armidale, where it was a beautiful warm, sunny day.

That was Friday. They were taken out to Emerald Beach by a real estate agent and fell in love with it straight away, agreeing to buy a house that weekend. They lived a third of the way down Fiddamens Road at number 44, the access street into the village. At the time there were six other houses between the highway and the beach.

Roger thought it was the peacefulness that drew them to the village. He also enjoyed the beach lifestyle that included the family outings in the four-wheel drive. He had a boat that he launched off the beach and he remembered how they would take the

---

[27] Interview T 30.
[28] Betty Quirk, pers. comm. 27/8/00.
[29] See *the Advocate* 31/5/85; 12/6/85; 18/6/85.

four-wheel drive and go fishing on their choice, anywhere, along Moonee Beach. When he wanted to get rid of the garbage he would pack it up and take it to the Woopi[30] tip by driving up the beaches and over the headlands, never going near the highway. After the beach access was blocked and the place got too crowded, they bought a farm and moved there for the privacy and the open space they felt they had lost at Emerald Beach.[31]

He was still living in the village when the 1988 decision was made to shift the outfall from Woolgoolga to Emerald Beach, and was a member of the original committee that opposed it. He later came to support the outfall through his belief that it was the only viable option to allow an increasing population, needed to sustain a prosperous economy. At the time he felt part of the general shock which he said Emerald Beach people experienced over the decision to move the outfall to Look-At-Me-Now Headland.

> John Smith publicly stated that he believed that Look-At-Me-Now would be a better option because there would be less opposition there... The idea was just thrown at us. And at that time there was no such thing as community consultation - we were just told to wear it. There was no education of the issues and people felt threatened. I think these are some of the reasons for the ongoing opposition in the face of sound scientific evidence to support the outfall - that this lack of community education cemented the opposition stand.[32]

Emerald Beach: a profile

In 1991 Emerald Beach had a permanent population of 1,432 people.[33] It had been a slow growth through the 1970s, escalating from the early 80s. Coffs Harbour resident Barry Wilks grew up in Grafton and used to surf off Look-At-Me-Now Headland in the early 1970s.[34] In those days it felt like there were more surfers than residents. He remembers only a few houses on the ridge, while there might be fifty surfers out to sea. It often got too crowded and they would head for Wooli, a lonely fishing settlement back up the coast towards Grafton.[35]

---

[30] Woolgoolga
[31] Interview NT 68.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Coffs Harbour City Council 1997 Local Environmental Study: p88.
[34] In those days they called it Back Beach. Like many people in the region, Barry only heard the Headland called Look-At-Me-Now at the time of the outfall.
[35] Interview C 41. Barry says there were many more surfers around in those days. Now one wouldn't surf at Wooli because it's too lonely and sharkey.

In the later 70s Emerald Beach still felt very isolated and sparsely populated. The Pacific Highway from Coffs Harbour had not yet been straightened, leaving it a windy, slow trip up the northern beaches. Poor visibility as one popped over a rise meant taking one's life in hand to turn right into the village off the highway. The idea of commuting into Coffs to work was almost laughable.[36]

In those days another Coffs Harbour resident, Vaugh Hagglestein, used to fish at Emerald Beach with the Holder brothers. He thought there were only about fourteen or fifteen houses on the estate at the time.[37] These were the visible houses from the main road in, and near the beach. In fact there were houses going up in all the streets on the estate, tucked into pockets of paper barks and banksias on the flats as well as on the visible ridges. When Peg and Jack came to live in Fishermans Drive in the mid 1970s they thought there were about seventy-five houses on the whole estate compared to their estimation of at least six hundred in 1999.[38]

1979 postcard of Emerald Beach, courtesy of Betty Quirk.

In the period between the two censes of 1981 and 1986, parts of the North Coast saw growth rates in excess of 20 per cent, beaten only by some areas of southern Queensland. Coffs Harbour's northern beaches shared in the strongest of these growth

---

[36] Ibid; Holder 1984. The straightening of roads across the district enabled commuting populations to reach further into the countryside; eg see Kerry Shipman, chapter two.
[37] Vaughn Hagglestein pers. comm. 18/5/98.
[38] Peg and Jack pers. comm. 26/4/99.

rates.[39] Between 1976 and 1991 the overall average growth rate on the northern beaches was 8 per cent - the highest in the Local Government Area.[40]

However perceptions of growth vary. Chatting over a cup of tea, Betty and her friend Malcolm differed over their sense of change in the village. Malcolm and his wife retired from their farm near the north-west town of Mooree to live in Emerald Beach in 1980. He felt the place really hadn't changed much since then. While more houses had since filled the vacant lots, the caravan park, holiday flats and the shops were already there when they arrived, providing the shape of an established village.[41]

Betty said she was really surprised that he felt that way. She believed the growth had come later and that it was still pretty small in the early 1980s. Others arriving from Sydney at that time have a similar sense of growth occurring later. Malcolm's experience of coming in from the isolation of a farm to the proximity of neighbours stands alongside the experience of the city dwellers' move to the quiet village.

Betty describes herself and others in Emerald Beach, excluding the Holders and the Skinners, as 'imported'. The general demographic and statistical patterns of the coastal shift of internal migrants discussed in the introductory chapter are reflected in the population of Emerald Beach.[42] While variations occur within shires such as Coffs Harbour, for example between the coastal communities of Sawtell to the south, Coffs Harbour and Emerald Beach to the north, the same general trends are discernible.

For example a number of authors on internal migration note a shift in the profile of migrants, firstly between those arriving in the 1970s to early 80s, and secondly through the later 80s and 90s. In broad terms the first period saw more employed, younger, middle-class migrants coming explicitly for lifestyle reasons. In the later years they argue there has been a shift towards more retirees and others outside the workforce looking to escape the increasingly prohibitive costs of city living, amongst other lifestyle choices.[43]

Across the whole period of migration towards the warm New South Wales coastal countryside since the early 1970s, there are some further general patterns. These

---

[39] See chapter two; Weinand and Lea 1990.
[40] Munday 1998 Submission of EIS for Emerald Beach Earthworks, Waterbody System and Residential Development, Pridel Investments Pty Ltd.
[41] Interview C 65.
[42] For example Bell 1995; Walmsley et al 1995; Newton and Bell 1996.
[43] For example Wulff and Bell 1997; Hugo and Bell 1998; Birrell 1999. These trends are loosely defined with plenty of employed and unemployed, young and old arriving in both periods.

include a predominance of migrants from Sydney,[44] an ethnic homogeneity of Australian-born, white Anglo migrants,[45] retirees of whom the majority are relatively young and fit, middle class and often with a prior connection to the area,[46] and a consistent outflow of young single people of working age.[47] There are a variety of reasons for the move to the coast. They include an overall increase in affluence and shift in lifestyle values in postwar Australia that has allowed greater flexibility in lifestyle choices. The perception of greater safety in the country and healthier living is also strong, as is the desire for a comfortable, warm climate.[48]

Emerald Beach residents broadly fit this profile, with some differences to other communities in the Coffs Harbour Shire such as Sawtell. For example, while Emerald Beach always shared the high unemployment rates of the North Coast and its attendant issues of welfare dependency, it historically has a substantially lower number of retirees and higher number of two parent households in stand-alone residences. In relative terms it has a higher rate of employed people in the tertiary sector and in professions, with a greater bias towards middle-income families.[49]

These differences were highlighted in a 1998 Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed housing development on the northern boundary of Emerald Beach. Through the inclusion of a mobile home park, residential caravans and units in the development, the EIS suggested it would 'encourage an equitable in-migration of various household types consistent with comparable urban areas across the Coffs Harbour LGA'.[50] It was therefore presumed by a number of Emerald Beach dissenters to the plan that this meant more low income and retiree populations were to be encouraged into the Emerald Beach precinct.

---

[44] Walmsley 1995; Burnley 1988. The earlier period saw a greater number of Victorians coming north. Also, historically there have always been a proportion of retirees from inland NSW settling on the coast, and this pattern accelerated from the 1970s.

[45] Newton and Bell 1996. In the later period there has been an increase in overseas born migrants of western European origin but few of non-English speaking background (NESB); see Bell 1995. However Coffs Harbour is one of the few regional centres designated for refugees and has hence gained some NESB migrants in recent years. See the Multicultural Access Resource Service (MARS) in Coffs Harbour.

[46] Murphy and Zehner 1988; Drysdale 1991.

[47] Bell 1995; Newton and Bell 1996.

[48] See the introduction and chapter two.

[49] Coffs Harbour City Council 1994 *Population Profile*.

[50] Munday 1998 Submission of EIS for Emerald Beach: 2.1. The proposal was challenged predominantly on environmental grounds.

An outfall at Emerald Beach

A protest meeting against the proposed housing development was held in the Emerald Beach caravan park in September 1998. One of the developers spoke from the crowd saying: 'We know about you Emerald Beachers. We know what you're like after the Outfall'.[51] Ten years earlier in the same caravan park, residents had met for the first time to hear about the plans for an ocean outfall at their back door. The decision to move the outfall from Woolgoolga to Look-At-Me-Now Headland had been made earlier that year in April, and the path to that decision is laid out in the following chapter.

Through to October 1991, protest against an outfall at Emerald Beach was predominantly in the form of political and media lobbying. From October to December 1991 residents from Emerald Beach, Coffs Harbour and neighbouring shires, and North Coast supporters from further afield, descended on Emerald Beach to take part in direct-action protest. This is the period that came to be known as 'the Siege'. Bulldozers were stopped on the Headland through a court injunction on the 9th December, dispersing the protesters. The fight to stop the outfall was continued to 1995 through ongoing court cases and paper wars with a Commission of Inquiry and an EIS. In April 1995 one of the first actions of the new State Labor Government was to stop the outfall proposal from proceeding (see the following three chapters).

Through this whole period, the focus of the protests centred on Emerald Beach. There were plenty of residents of the village who were indifferent to the cause, remained quiet about their views, or wanted an outfall to be built. A summary of the origins of pro-outfallers is offered in chapter six. Anti-outfallers came from around the Shire and the North Coast to fight alongside protesting village residents and contributed to the paper wars in the media and in political lobbying. The most noticed of these were the 'ferals', discussed below. However, while there were accusations that the dispute was run by outside forces, it was the protesters from Emerald Beach who are represented, both by themselves and observers, as the substantive core of the anti-outfall campaign at Look-At-Me-Now Headland.[52]

To gain a broad profile of anti-outfall residents of Emerald Beach, I enlisted the help of three people who were well known and active in the campaign. Lee and Greg

---

[51] Protest meeting which I attended, Emerald Beach caravan park 13/9/98.
[52] See Cohen 1996; LAMN Arts Project Committee 2000.

Cahill and Cathy Wills helped me go through all the names on the 'Emerald Beach Action Line Master List' - the phone tree of active Emerald Beach residents and some neighbouring northern beaches supporters.[53]

The list contained the names of 289 adults within 208 households.[54] We went through the first half of the list together. By that time a strong pattern had been established for the following questions: length of residence in the area and who was still there, the age of supporters, their employment status and occupation, whether they were renters or home owners and if their political allegiances were known. Cathy went through the rest of the list looking for discrepancies, of which she found only a few. Of the 208 households, seventeen were unknown to the group.

The following pattern emerged. Nearly all the people on the list had been in the area at the time of the outfall for ten years or longer, hence fitting into the early period of internal migrants mentioned above.[55] A few had come within five years and only a very few on the list had been there for two years or less. The group found that the great majority were still in Emerald Beach or somewhere close by. Those who had left usually went because of marriage breakup, following better jobs and a few moving further north for lifestyle reasons. Most of those known to have moved had gone further north.[56]

The list included a mix of ages with the greatest concentration between the mid 30s and mid 40s, with a contingent of younger people and a good proportion of people in their 60s and a few over. The great majority of named individuals were employed. There were a lot of teachers. The group said that they were not able to protest or they would have been sacked.[57] There were a number of other professionals such as accountants, solicitors, health workers and retired academics. A number of the partnerships of the younger age group were of employed men and full-time mothers,

---

[53] Action List in my possession. Thank you to Geoff Cooke and Keith Walker for providing me with a copy.

[54] A number of the households on the list named one person only, with many of those households known to contain more supporters.

[55] Such figures are broadly supported by Margaret Beckett who referred to the protesters as 'ten-minuters' - ie of a ten year time span; Interview NT 35. Mark Wittleton made a 'rough guess' that about 60% of active protesters had been in the district for at least ten years and 30% for twenty years. pers. comm. 26/2/01.

[56] This trend is noted in Walmsley et al 1995.

[57] For example a local teacher noted this in Interview T 17.

although many of the women had some part-time work. There were a lot of builders and other self-employed people in small business, enabling both employed men and women to join the protests. Nearly all were believed to be home owners.

Most people's political allegiances were not known. However of those high profile activists' whose voting preferences were known, there was a balance between Liberal and Labor and at least three were known to be staunch National Party supporters. Everyone on the list was 'white' and predominantly Australian born, with a smattering of northern European-born residents.

Emerald Beach community and the protesters were identified as predominantly middle class.[58] Ian Cohen, Greens Senator and radical environmental activist, said he had never protested amongst such a 'suburban' group before. He described them as 'part of the mainstream. In most cases they had not questioned authority before'.[59]

Education levels were generally high, with people on relatively modest to good incomes. Lifestyle choices which had brought most of the protesters to the North Coast, however, meant that family incomes were often much lower than could have been expected if they had remained in the city. Protesters had enough spare money to keep their outfall battle in the courts. However it was not a wealthy community and many Emerald Beach interviewees talked of the ongoing financial burden which the protests brought.[60]

While there had been warnings that the outfall was destined for Look-At-Me-Now Headland before 1988, shock and anger reverberated around the village after the announcement. Pat and Alan Manns were one couple on the list who became active protesters. They had come to live in Emerald Beach from Sydney in 1983, after buying their block two years earlier. Alan retired from his city job as a salesman and Pat continued as a social worker in Coffs Harbour.

They had been visiting the North Coast for over forty years, since their children had been little. Old friends lived in Emerald Beach in the early days of the estate and the Manns had since holidayed regularly with them. Keen beach lovers, they felt a long-

---

[58] For example Interview NT 59; Interview T 16; Cohen 1996.

[59] Cohen 1996:220.

[60] In 1997 old and new residents of Emerald Beach were still being called upon to help pay outstanding legal bills.

term attachment to the place. They left Sydney to escape the crowds, traffic and pollution, coming to a place they saw as safe, clean and beautiful. The threat of sewage pollution galvanised them into action to stop the outfall.[61]

The Shorters had been living in Emerald Beach since 1979 when they joined the campaign against the outfall. They left Melbourne with their young family to travel around Australia looking for the best place to live, ending up building a house with unobstructed views across Look-At-Me-Now Headland. Dave had been an engineer and once in the region set up a furniture-making business.

Carol and Dave were key organisers of the early anti-outfall committee STOP - Stop The Ocean Pollution. All the family was active throughout the outfall campaign and it was Carol who appealed to the Mayor as a fellow Christian to listen to the views of residents at one of the early protest gatherings in October 1991.[62] Carol described her shifting feelings for Emerald Beach and the Headland that helped her decision to become involved.

> The place itself has quite a marked and remarkable significance to us the longer we have lived here. I didn't realise. I used to say that wherever you lived didn't really matter, it was the people you were with. After I had been here for some years I suddenly discovered that the place itself was enormously significant.[63]

Another active member of STOP was Mark Ingleby. He and his wife Linda moved to Emerald Beach from Sydney in 1982, a young couple in their early 20s thinking about starting a family. Mark was a keen surfer, coming to know the waters off Look-At-Me-Now Headland intimately. Surfers of Mark's generation were a significant group of protesters, garnering the active support of the newly formed Australian chapter of the international Surf Rider Foundation. Mark's motivation to act against the outfall: 'right from the word go was anger'.

> I was that pissed off that they would try and shove it into Moonee, try and shove it into Woolgoolga ... then drop it in here... If it's not good enough for those two communities there is no frigging way it was going to be good enough for mine. And there was no way I was going to let them drop it into

> the best surfing break there is between Kempsey and wherever. I just couldn't believe that they had the audacity to try it.[64]

---

[61] Interview NT 44. They had attended anti-outfall meetings since Moonee days.
[62] Interview T 15.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Interview T 33.

Susie Hope came to live in the village at the end of 1988, one of the few late comers on the phone list. However, previous to that, she had been coming to visit friends for many years. Then in her thirties, she established a thriving natural-health practice in the village.

She chose Emerald Beach for the community feeling and life on the beach. She liked the mix of people: 'a lot of educated people... people who had travelled... people interested in alternative ways of thinking without being extremely alternative'. Suzie thinks that Coffs Harbour missed the opportunity at the time of the Outfall to become a centre of environmental and sustainable attraction.

> There was an energy here for people to do things... There was the green belt idea along the coast... People wanted to take responsibility for their sewerage on a village basis... Travellers were coming because they had heard about the outfall fight... The whole eco tourism thing could have been raging and booming... We missed the boat.[65]

By the late 1980s one of the many motivating factors which pushed politically moderate Emerald Beach villagers to fight the outfall was a new environmental consciousness. Two national environmental campaigns fed directly into the dispute at Emerald Beach. The fight for clean oceans was well established in Sydney and provided a sympathetic city audience already familiar with the issues.[66] The fight for old-growth forests provided the support of activists who taught the local protesters direct-action tactics used in the forestry campaigns.

The catalyst for the shift from political lobbying to direct action at Emerald Beach came with a new council determined to build the outfall. Soon after their election in September 1991, the predominantly pro-outfall council moved bulldozers into Emerald Beach to start work on the pipeline to the Headland. The Siege ensued between October and December.[67]

---

[65] Interview T 54.
[66] See chapter five.
[67] The stories of three pro-outfall and three anti-outfall protagonists surrounding the Siege are followed in chapter six.

'Emerald Beach residents "discuss" their anti-outfall protest with, right, Senior Sergeant Ron McDonald of the Coffs Harbour police'. Page1 of the Advocate, October 29 1991.

120 arrests were made over the period, the overwhelming majority of whom were permanent residents from either Emerald Beach or elsewhere in the Coffs Harbour Shire.[68] 308 charges were laid, and as the protests continued the charges changed from breaches of the peace to a variety of criminal offences and bail conditions that ordered people to stay away from the blockade.[69] This reflected the change in relations with the police over the period from generally peaceful encounters to increasing hostility. Police were accused of increasingly violent behaviour by protesters and elements of the media, as outside reinforcements replaced local police. The police strongly denied the accusations, retorting that the escalation was the protesters doing.[70]

The number of protesters attending on a daily basis through the two months of direct action at Emerald Beach varied between a few score and hundreds. Soon after direct action began, small groups of 'extremely alternative' people appeared in the village. In joining the middle-class residents of the northern beaches and across the Shire, this brought together a mix of people reminiscent of those who had fought sand mining at Middle Head a decade earlier. A few, like Ian Cohen and some Bundagen supporters, had been at those protests. Members of other alternative-lifestyle communities in the region, especially from Bellingen and Nymboida, also periodically arrived in Emerald Beach. The most prominent group to grab media and local attention came from amongst the generation of people known as ferals.

---

[68] Police charge sheets with all names and addresses; courtesy of Geoff Cooke.

[69] Letter from Stephan Green to Commander of Police, 10 January 1992; courtesy of Geoff Cooke.

[70] *Advocate* 30/10/91:1; 27/11/91:1; *Coffs Harbour Times*, 30/11/91:1.

Ferals at the beach

A self-identifying group of ferals joined the two months of direct action at Emerald Beach at the end of 1991.[71] While they were only a tiny minority amongst the local and other North Coast protesters, nearly all commentators of the unfolding events noted their presence. They camped at the bottom of the village, many of them perched high in their tripods, and they constructed - amongst other theatrical diversions - a huge black cockatoo with fearsome windmill eyes that spun in the wind. They were loved and loathed, but rarely ignored.

They were nomads moving between forest campaigns across Australia - often known as 'professional protesters' by their detractors. One local man who has worked all his life in the Coffs Harbour region, typified these sentiments. He told me of the day when he saw streams of cars and utes coming down the mountain. They were coming from Dorrigo down to Emerald Beach - the same people seen in the recent Chaelundi forest campaigns on the Plateau. He felt that somebody in Australia must be paying for these people to go from place to place.[72]

The fight for old-growth forests in the late 1980s and early 90s, both in the trees and in the courts, became the most prominent in the environment movement and in the media. At the end of the century as at the beginning, the Dorrigo forests were a central focus of the conflicting visions for the region. Chaelundi was particularly significant as the extended direct action in the trees in 1990 and 91 had bought the time for a series of successful court cases against the State Forestry Commission and Liberal/National party by the North East Forest Alliance (NEFA).[73]

Amongst a diversity of protesters who lived in and visited the forests of Tasmania, southern Western Australia, East Gippsland and southern and northern New South Wales, the ferals became the most mythologised and infamous in the public perception. *Simply Living* magazine described them as 'suburban kids from good homes, runaways, eco-warriors, born again hippies, bush punks.'[74]

---

[71] Many prefer to be called tribals because of the media sensationalism and ridicule which surrounds the term 'feral'. See Wessell 1996; Whittaker 1996. However it is agreed by protesters that the group at Emerald Beach identified themselves as ferals; for example see Interview NT 11.

[72] Interview C 62.

[73] Bonyhady 1993.

[74] Murray 1994:54.

Mark Campbell, who lived on his own land on the Nymboida and came to Emerald Beach to fight on behalf of regional water issues, said ferals self-defined themselves by rebelliousness against materialism and capitalism. They rarely had jobs and while they moved in and out of places, they had certain spots like the North Coast to which they had clear attachment. They were often identifiable by their appearance such as dreadlocks and loose clothing.[75] While he did not identify as a feral but rather as an environmentalist, he said that in direct-action campaigns including Emerald Beach, everyone living an alternative lifestyle - or looking as if they might - was incorrectly categorised by others as a feral.[76]

In the increasingly hostile environment of the forestry campaigns, the ferals were often portrayed in the media and by industry as eco-terrorists. At the same time as the direct-action protests were taking place in Emerald Beach, the East Gippsland Forestry campaign was raging and newspapers were full of stories about vandalism of logging equipment and sawlogs. While the papers were unable to substantiate any of their claims, and environmentalists deplored the lack of exposure of violence against themselves, the image of a violent green movement in the forests was pervasive.[77]

Local pro and anti-outfallers at Emerald Beach found themselves embroiled in the rhetoric of dispute more familiar to the forestry campaigns. The appearance of the ferals brought forth accusations of rent-a-crowd or payment for their attendance, and the entry of dangerous and violent radicals. A letter to the *Advocate* said:

> Anarchy, and associated terrorism - in this case eco-terrorism - is alive and well in this nation today. Posters in environment centres throughout the North East are inciting people to protest against the outfall and coordinating their transport to Emerald Beach.[78]

As was often apparent in the other forestry campaigns, the extent of local protest activism was challenged by pro-outfall advocates, arguing the protests were run by outside forces.[79] John Smith was clear that the direct-action protest at Emerald Beach 'was orchestrated' and not a local-based protest.

> At Bellingen there were notices around the town saying people would get paid for getting on the bus to Emerald Beach. It was very much the case of rent-a-crowd, where the same people who had been protesting in the

---

[75] Mark Cambell interview with Adele Wessell 2/1/96.
[76] Interview NT 11.
[77] See Bonyhady 1993; Garrett 1995.
[78] G.Watt 'letter to the editor' reproduced in Coffs Harbour Council 1992a 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.
[79] See McKeon 1991; Garrett 1995.

forests could be seen at Emerald Beach. Massive numbers at the protests were not locals. The protesters were not a true reflection of the local thoughts on the issue.[80]

Sandy Beach resident Graham Russell, an active campaigner for an outfall at Emerald Beach as the only viable way to solve the sewerage problems of the northern beaches, said that the ferals were paid $100 for sitting on the tripods and $50.00 a day for attending. 'They all denied it of course, but yep, they were getting paid'. Graham said there were twenty-three ferals at Emerald Beach.[81] Mark Wittleton thought there were between twenty and thirty and Dee Wallace, who had initiated the call for help to other environment centres, thought a hard core of ten stayed for the duration.[82]

Alph Williams, city councillor and prominent leader of the anti-outfallers, scoffed at the idea of payment of the ferals as 'complete rubbish', and wondered who would have had the money to pay them. For him, such ideas come from people 'who cannot even imagine that people would do something for altruistic reasons -that there are people who think the environment is more important than making money'.[83]

Mark Wittleton was worried when the ferals began to arrive in the village.

I had always been media liaison and was very conscious of appearances, and you just know if there's one feral and five grandmothers - they are going to shoot the ferals on television. The ferals are really gutsy and in the forest protests. But I was sceptical at first as I thought - if you want to do the best thing for your cause you present yourself the best way you can, and I could never understand why they wouldn't clean up their act... A lot of the community regarded anyone with hair longer than their collars was a feral. A lot of them were just alternate people that lived around here, right down to the full-on city drop out kids who were living in the forests. There was just a whole spectrum there.[84]

Referring to the residents of Emerald Beach, Alph was:

...petrified when the ferals came here because it was a conservative community. I saw them coming and thought - shit, what are we going to do, how will I handle this one - because the people weren't ready for this ...too conservative. I knew we needed them because I had no idea how to do things. The most puzzling shock to me was the fact that they were embraced by the community.[85]

---

[80] Interview NT 32.
[81] Interview T 40.
[82] Mark Wittleton pers. comm. 8/9/01; Interview T 16.
[83] Alph Williams pers. comm. 27/3/01.
[84] Interview T 2.
[85] Interview T 13.

Lee Cahill remembered the nightly trek of householders taking food down to the ferals' camp at the bottom of Bluff Road. Norma Bourne said: 'We'd been told the ferals were vegetarians but thought we'd do a big pot of curried snags anyway. It was eaten in record time and enjoyed immensely, so we heard'.[86]

Working for the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre, Dee remembered putting out the call for help to the network of North Coast Environment Centres. Posters went up around the region asking for support. She had met a number of the forest protesters at Chaelundi and seen their tactics: 'their tripods ... and chaining themselves to equipment, and I thought - we need a bit of *that*.' Chaelundi had gone quiet and the ferals started moving in. 'It was never ever a feral dominated blockade [at Emerald Beach], but they were invaluable for they taught us how to do things.'[87]

Working at night with the help of locals, the ferals erected a complex structure of tripods joined together by wires and poles. Known as the Star of David, the structure was guarded by ferals who lived in their high places like nesting eagles. The tripods blocked the path of the bulldozers, part of the ferals' stalling tactics that they taught the locals. They buried themselves to their necks in the sand, chained themselves to equipment and made daring sorties, in fact and fiction, down the newly laid pipes. These were tactics learnt in the forests and brought to the beach.[88]

Sonia, a feral who lived in the 'Star' at Emerald Beach. Photo by Bob Weeks from LAMN Arts Project Committee 2000:105.

---

[86] Norma Bourne in LAMN Arts Project Committee 2000:104.

[87] Interview T 16.

[88] See the stories by local residents about the ferals in LAMN Arts Project Committee 2000:104-112.

In an interview with Lee, Greg, and Cathy, Cathy said: 'it was great to have the ferals there. Without them I think we would have folded under the pressure.' I asked why. Greg said: 'well we didn't know a thing about tripods' and Cathy added: 'or even about protesting - to do little things to stop the police'. One of the things that stood out for Greg was the instruction in non-violent tactics that they received from the ferals.

> We had a couple of guys [from] around Eden... They gave us instruction on peaceful protest and stuff like that... They had a video down at Moonee Beach Hall... a seminar on how to delay things and not get arrested - to retain good relations with the police. That was good, interesting stuff we learned. [89]

Dee said:

> So they just came and helped. The locals at first were very much put off by them, because they looked dreadful. They were a bit frightened of them. But when we saw the hard work, the dedication of these young people, the community accepted them. It was really quite funny at night to see the local Emerald Beach guys sort of working side by side with these cave people, digging holes and things, and sharing food.[90]

Not all the Emerald Beach supporters were so happy with the feral presence. Some felt they were just young, rootless people bludging off taxpayers like themselves. Others felt there was no excuse for their unkempt and dirty appearance that added a liability to what they regarded as their otherwise respectable campaign. However for many of the supporters, their meetings with the ferals remain amongst their fondest memories of the protests.

....

Emerald Beach resident protesters had come from other places to establish new lives there, some looking for a place to raise their families and others looking to their retirement years. They had particular visions for the type of place and lifestyle they had invested in, and had deliberately chosen Emerald Beach in which to settle. They referred to it as a village, symbolising its potential for *community*, safety and desiring clean air and oceans, all embedded in countryside dreamings that Emerald Beach promised. By participating in the protests, residents actively constructed their claims of belonging to the village and the region, in turn helping shape the place in their own imaginings.

---

[89] Interview T 7.
[90] Interview T 16.

In December 1991 the ferals, police and other North Coast residents left the village after a court case stopped the bulldozers on the Headland. The following chapter continues the story of another four years of court cases, reports, lobbying and community conflict over the outfall. The focus of these conflicts revolved around sewage and its attendant infrastructure. Sewage came to take centre stage on which was played out the competing visions of the sort of place in which the unsettled, expanding population of Coffs Harbour wished to live.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPECTRE OF SEWAGE

The dispute over sewage on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches, emerging from the Moonee protests of 1983, encapsulated the contested visions that the diverse community had for the area. Without sewerage infrastructure, regardless of the place of its final disposal, there could be little further permanent population growth or large tourist development. Hence a central issue of the dispute concerned the pace of growth and style of development in the region.

An equally important issue was the site and method of the final disposal of sewage. Most residents on the northern beaches wanted to remove their on-site septic or pumpout systems and connect to sewerage.[1] However many also rejected the proposal of an ocean outfall on environmental grounds, suggesting a range of alternatives for disposal. The dispute coincided with, and was constituted through, the growing clash between development ideology and environmentalism, or the 'economy/environment' debate.[2]

Within the intermeshed contexts of the economic, technical, social and environmental levels of the dispute, the symbolic connotations of sewage and its material and physical properties were constantly blurred, so that it was not always possible to clearly demarcate one from the other. Pro-outfall advocates often demanded that the question of sewage be discussed in objective, scientific and rational terms, unsullied by emotions. In the same breath, many decried the social contagion that the protesters were argued to have brought to democracy. Anti-outfall lobbyists who understood the technological screening processes of highly treated effluent, ultimately proposed for the Look-At-Me-Now Headland outfall, nevertheless helped build a giant replica of a faeces to symbolise their disgust and fear of environmental pollution.

---

[1] Camp Scott Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement,* March, Prepared for Public Works Department, vol 3:appendices - part 1. Pumpout systems are where the sewage is stored in tanks on site, and removed regularly by the 'pumpout truck' - a smelly business.

[2] Mercer 1992.

The dispute at Emerald Beach has a history that moves far beyond any simple explanation of arguments over sewage and the following chapter takes up the stories of six protagonists to explore a range of responses to the conflict. However sewage stood as the central focus of all parties in the dispute. This chapter therefore provides some historical background to the subject of sewage, firstly introducing some of the murkiness of the language of the topic.

The chapter is then divided into two main sections. The first half takes an historical overview of New South Wales' sewerage infrastructure, focusing on Sydney's debates from the nineteenth century to the coming of Coffs Harbour's sewerage scheme first mooted in the late 1940s. Sydney's sewage history is central to this discussion. Here the problem of a sewerage system, incapable of servicing its expanding population adequately, has had great impact on the Coffs Harbour dispute. The move to the Coffs' Coast has come predominantly from Sydney residents and tourists. They have been quick to compare their city's sewage problems with their own desires for clean oceans on the North Coast. The second half of the chapter outlines the jagged path taken since the early 1980s to sewer Coffs Harbour's northern beaches, concluding with the proposals for the area's sewerage needs at the time of writing in 2001.

The language of sewage

The 1993 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Look-At-Me-Now Headland defines the terminology commonly used in the matter of sewage. *Sewage* (domestic) is: '[t]he wastewater from toilets, showers and sinks'; *sewerage*: '[t]he system for transporting, treating and disposing of sewage or wastewater[3] and *effluent*: 'The water that flows out of a treatment system'.[4] The type of treatment is also central to the debates and understandings around sewage. *Primary treatment* is: '[g]ravity sedimentation preceded by preliminary treatment of wastewater such as screening and grit removal'; *secondary treatment* is: '[t]ypically an aerobic biological process following primary treatment of wastewater' and *tertiary treatment*: '...incorporates secondary treatment plus disinfection of the treated effluent'.[5] There are further degrees of treatment within each of these categories.

---

[3] Camp Scott Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme*, vol.1:5.
[4] Ibid:2.
[5] Ibid:4-5.

As with any genre or specialist field, an array of general terms are used in specific ways regarding sewage. For example in tertiary treatment, to *disinfect* refers to a final stage in treatment which 'prevents the transmission of disease...by reducing the number of viable bacteria and viruses[6] and the term *to polish* is used when referring to the refinement of waste water through release to wetlands.

Decisions over treatment and disposal of sewage, however, are not just technical or scientific ones that are the sole preserve of a group of professionals - engineers and scientists. While sewage remained their privileged domain throughout much of the twentieth century, the environmental, social and economic consequences of sewage have increasingly come to be seen as the concern of any interested community member, making sewage a highly political issue. The language of sewage has arisen as one manifestation of this contested terrain.

An often-heard comment of engineers, government bureaucrats and others in the Coffs Harbour dispute was that sewage should be about scientific rationality rather than emotion. One common example of the perceived lapse into emotion was in the use of the words sewage, sewerage and effluent. Warren Fowler, the engineer managing Public Works in Coffs Harbour at the time of the Emerald Beach dispute, complained bitterly that people continued to use the words sewage or sewerage instead of the correct term, effluent, when speaking about treated waste water. He believed this was not just ignorance about the meaning of these terms, but often a deliberate misuse to conjure up the spectre of raw sewage pouring into the ocean.[7]

An illustration of the ways these terms can be interpreted was provided by Ballina Council, on New South Wales' Far-North Coast. It tried to sue Bill Ringwood who was chair of the Clean Seas Coalition for defamation over his use of the word sewage in a press release. Quoted in the local *Northern Star*, the press release said that 'sewage will continue to be pumped out surreptitiously at night' from the local ocean outfall.[8] According to engineer and academic Sharon Beder: 'Ringland was referring to Ballina Shire Council's practice of discharging sewage effluent at night from its treatment ponds and the fact that most local residents were unaware of this practice'.

---

[6] Ibid:2.
[7] Interview T 55.
[8] In Beder 1995:n.p.n. <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/sbeder/SLAPPS.html> accessed 4/6/00

The Council chose to interpret the use of the word 'sewage' in Ringland's press release as raw sewage rather than treated sewage and the word 'surreptitiously' as secretly and unlawfully and therefore claimed that the press release was falsely accusing the Council of breaching its license requirements.[9]

Anxiety about terminology reflected a heightened sensitivity over sewage in late twentieth century Australia. However struggles over sewage were not just a feature of the 1980s.

An historical tension: proponents for sewers and their alternatives

The water-carriage sewerage infrastructure that most urban Australians have come to take for granted needs to be made 'historically peculiar'.[10] Rather than an uncontested system that was universally regarded as the best option from its inception, Beder argued that dispute over sewage is settled Australia's oldest environmental issue, stirring passions between engineers, community members and government since the nineteenth century.

She outlined an historical struggle between these three groupings over which environments constitute the 'proper place' for sewage matter. Engineers have continued to act on a paradigm that sees waterways, particularly the ocean, as the natural outlet for human and industrial waste. A predominantly beach-going public has continued to think that sewage should be reused and not poured into waterways, and governments have historically sought the cheapest viable options.[11]

In outlining some of the historical debates about the best way to treat and dispose of sewage in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia, finding resonances again in the late twentieth century in Coffs Harbour, the following section focuses on Sydney. The first rudimentary sewers in Sydney were constructed in the 1850s, discharging raw sewage directly into the Harbour. Public protest soon gained momentum as the stench, surface matter and wind-blown effluvia affected local populations as well as prompting complaints from international naval authorities about the unhealthiness of their anchorage.[12]

As the problem and protest intensified through the 1870s, government decided to divert Sydney's sewage in two different directions; the north–draining sewage to be

---

[9] Ibid:n.p.n. The Court of Appeal of the Supreme Court of NSW found that a council could not sue for defamation.

[10] Rabinow in Sibley 1995.

[11] Interview NT 58; Beder 1998.

[12] Mayne 1982; Beder 1990.

piped to Bondi and discharged through an ocean outfall, and the south-draining sewage to be piped to a sewage farm at Botany Bay. Work on the Bondi ocean outfall was carried out over a decade to 1890. The sewage farm was abandoned in 1916, a later report finding that it was in the wrong area and had become grossly overloaded. The sewage was subsequently piped into the sea at Malabar.[13]

Prompted by the decision to build an outfall at Bondi, a passionate debate across the populace erupted in Sydney between proponents of water and dry-conservancy systems for the carriage and disposal of human waste. On the one side were those who thought that sewerage systems were the only modern and civilised option. At the time, sewers were known as water-carriage technology because of the dependence on large quantities of water to carry the waste to its destination. It was argued that the centralised system of sewers, which connected to flushing toilets that allowed for the automatic collection and transportation of waste away from individual dwellings, offered greater efficiency and control over dirt and disease. The dilemma of how to deal with the sewage at its destination was seen to be a separate and less important question than the process of collection and removal.[14]

On the other side were advocates of the dry-conservancy systems. These systems included dry closets and pan systems that used no water and relied on transportation offsite by manual collection for land-based disposal. Many proponents argued against an ocean outfall, fearing the same results of water pollution of the ocean as had been witnessed in the Harbour. One Melbourne commentator on Sydney in 1886 quipped about the 'eminently successful pollution of their harbour and their very streets with their drainage' - not that Melbourne was doing any better.[15] The dry-conservancy advocates argued the merits of reuse of human waste as agricultural fertiliser, the stemming of pollution and the conservation of water which was a scarce resource at times in Sydney.

The debate raged in the media and was carried out across the professions and ordinary residents. However, Beder argued that the dry-conservancy advocates had little hope of success. They were pitted against government authorities who were firmly in favour of water-carriage systems, and the engineers who advised them. Despite their

---

[13] Camm and McQuilton 1987; Beder 1998.

[14] Lloyd 1993; Beder 1998.

[15] F.W.L.Adams in Crowley, 1980:203; and for Melbourne's dire problems see Dingle and Rassmussen 1991.

antiquity, water-carriage systems were relatively new in nineteenth-century Britain and 'were considered to be a modern, progressive method of dealing with waste. Sanitary reform was virtually synonymous with sewer construction and Britain provided the model for Australia'.[16]

Government saw them as more easily controllable, thereby achieving the sanitary reforms that were required amidst the smells and disease of urban living. The aspect of control was crucial to an emerging middle class in the colonies. As Anne McClintock argued: 'A characteristic feature of the Victorian middle class was its peculiarly intense preoccupation with rigid boundaries... cleaning rituals became central to the demarcation of body boundaries and the policing of social hierarchies.'[17] Before the late nineteenth century the washing of bodies and clothes was an irregular activity by all classes. However dirt now took on a moral character, providing a marker of class and race that the middle class wielded effectively to construct a social order of their making. Sewerage became a central tool in constructing the physical and social boundaries differentiating class and race.

The 'great era' of Australian sewerage construction occurred between the 1880s and the early 1900s during which time the huge financial and social investments of the centralised sewerage systems of Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle were built.[18] It was also the period in which Australian engineers followed their international colleagues in carving out their own professional domain in sanitary engineering. They excluded others from their arena of expertise, such as the various heath and social workers who had previously been active in the sewage debates. The engineers' expertise shifted firmly into large-scale public works projects, feeding into the vast political, technical, social and financial vested interests in water-carriage sewerage infrastructure.

By 1920, sewage engineers in Australia and internationally had reached a general consensus about appropriate technologies for the use of sewage treatment. These were reliant on water carriage through underground pipes to a fresh waterway or ocean for disposal. Research in the late nineteenth century was characterised by the search for less land-intensive methods of disposal, and ocean outfalls seemed particularly appropriate.

---

[16] Beder 1990:1.
[17] McClintock 1995:33.
[18] Lloyd 1993.

However the consensus amongst engineers was achieved largely out of the British Royal Commission into Sewage Disposal 1898–1915. The Commission considered two stages of treatment - one being the removal of solids and the second being the biological decomposition of organic matter in effluent, thus establishing the concepts of primary and secondary treatment. Even more important was the Commission's declaration that recommended minimum quality standards for the discharge of sewage into waterways, according to Beder. This heralded in a form of consensus where engineers no longer strove for optimal treatment, but 'good enough' quality effluent, 'for as little money as possible and letting nature do as much of the work as possible'.[19]

As a consequence, alternative methods to large-scale pipe and outfall engineering solutions to sewage treatment and disposal were largely dropped from the repertoire of the profession. It has only been in the last two decades of the twentieth century that challenges to this status quo within the engineering profession, and the governments they advise, have become strong enough to demand a rethink in their approach to sewage and seek more environmentally sustainable options. For Beder, one of the most significant outcomes of the sewage dispute at Coffs Harbour was that for the first time a small group of practicing engineers set out to publicly challenge other engineers, and the engineers' paradigm, by suggesting alternatives to an ocean outfall.[20]

Until recently, comparatively little money had been spent within the water industry on research and development and it has been largely unprepared for the determination of community pressure to seek alternative methods of sewage disposal.[21] 'Radical rethink needed on water' was the title to the cover story in a 1992 edition of *Civil Engineers Australia*, the journal of the Institution of Engineers Australia. It reported on research from the CSIRO arguing that 'established engineering methods', and the authorities approach to water and waste water treatment, needed a drastic change to avoid looming crisis. The situation was already said to be critical in New South Wales.[22]

---

[19] Beder 1998:131.

[20] John Tozer and Ernie Armstrong, practicing engineers in Coffs Harbour, established 'Engineers against Ocean Outfalls' to fight ocean disposal of sewage.

[21] Johnson and Rix 1993; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1991 *The Injured Coastline: Protection of the Coastal Environment*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra; Beder 1998.

[22] Kannegieter 1992.

Sydney sludge and the New South Wales coast

By the 1980s, people around Australia watched in horror since Sydney's sewage problems could no longer be denied as excremental flotilla and brown sludge swept back onto its famous beaches.[23] Many coastal communities struggling with sewage disposal viewed Sydney as the example they must avoid at all cost. The pollution of its beaches was one reason a number of Sydney migrants interviewed for the thesis gave for moving north to Coffs Harbour.[24]

Sydney had three outfalls by 1920; Bondi, Long Bay at Malabar and North Head near Manly, none of which treated the sewage before disposal into the sea. Throughout the following decades, and especially after the Second World War, the rapidly spreading outer suburbs of the middle classes were demanding connection to sewerage.[25] Issues of the collection and removal of sewage from premises remained far more pressing for governments than what do with it. While increasing pollution of beaches from the outfalls was raised and debated at various times over the decades by the beach communities affected, general public and professional challenges to government only gained greater momentum from the 1970s.[26]

The discoloured stain that frequently fanned out around Sydney's outfalls, and intermittently swept its contents back onto the beaches, was vivid in the memories of many Sydneysiders who came to live in Emerald Beach in the early 1980s. Allan Manns remembered the Sydney beaches of Clovelly and Maroubra where sometimes, he said, 'the sewage had to be pushed away to swim'.

> You could see a big yellow stain from the plane and you'd have to tell the people who asked what it was- that it was sewage. When you walked on the beach at Maroubra there was lanoline and grease on the beach. The outlets were raw sewage in Sydney. They may have had good intentions here [in building superior treatment works for the Look-At-Me-Now outfall] - and that it would be different from Sydney - but there are breakdowns in Sydney and there would be here too.[27]

---

[23] The language used to describe floating faeces can take on infinitesimal dimensions. The disgust for human excrement, which is itself culturally and historically peculiar, is discussed in Brown 1985 and Miller 1998.

[24] For example Interviews T 7; T 18; T33; NT44.

[25] Gilbert 1987; Camm and McQuilton 1987.

[26] See Beder 1989, 1997.

[27] Interview NT 44.

By settling in Emerald Beach they had 'come to paradise', another early 1980s arrival told me, and they did not want another Bondi or Maroubra.[28]

Political pressure to clean up Sydney beaches in the early 1970s caused the State Government to begin plans to pipe the sewage further out to sea and debate receded. By the 1980s, however, public outrage over the state of Sydney's beaches, media interest, a new distrust of the promises of large bureaucracies such as the Sydney Water Board and the momentum of the environment movement, all converged to bring Sydney's ocean pollution to state and national attention.[29]

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, in particular, took up the story of fish contamination levels in the first months of 1989, placing the blame firmly with the outfalls.[30] Ongoing contamination of Sydney's surf and bathing beaches from the deep ocean outfalls came to be front page news of all the daily papers later in the year. This was hitting the headlines at the same time as Coffs Harbour City Council was planning the move of its northern beaches' ocean outfall from Woolgoolga to Emerald Beach and Look-At-Me-Now Headland. On December 2nd 1991, the large header to the letters to the editor section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* read 'Coastal Pollution from Cronulla to Coffs'.

> Sir: Wow! What Water Board wizard is responsible for the unacceptable errors associated with the new deep sea water ocean outfalls? The sewage is now being swept onto the beaches of Cronulla and Palm Beach which before the construction of these outfalls were relatively free of sewage. ...I travel to my long-time holiday destination of Coffs Harbour to find much the same problem will be occurring at Emerald Beach, the wizardry there being the Coffs Harbour Council.[31]

The Sydney Water Board continued to make promises to the public that its policies were sound, arguing that the contamination of fish and pollution of its beaches could often be blamed on other sources, and that the expense of higher treatment or alternative sewage disposal schemes was out of reach. However in 1992 the Chair of the Board, David Harley, said: 'A lack of foresight by Water Board of NSW engineers has been the cause of unacceptable levels of water pollution in and around Sydney.' He concluded by saying that 'there should not be any more ocean outfalls built'.[32] Such

---

[28] Pers.comm. 12/3/98.
[29] House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts 1991 *The Injured Coastline*; Beder 1989 and 1998.
[30] For example *SMH* 7/1/89; 24/2/89.
[31] Wendy Grounds, Cronulla; letter to the editor *Sydney Morning Herald* 2/12/91.
[32] In Davis 1992:19.

views, however, were still not universal amongst sewage engineers or government bureaucracies.

Sydney's ocean pollution was particularly marked because of the very slow progress in providing any treatment of its human and industrial waste entering the ocean, in the face of rapid urban growth and mounting costs. However other coastal areas of New South Wales were also experiencing problems of population growth outstripping sewerage infrastructure.

In the early 1970s on New South Wales' Central Coast, one man began a long campaign to stop ocean outfalls. Francis Sutton's story is told in a documentary of his fight. It followed his awakening interest in sewage, which anticipated stories of Coffs Harbour's northern beaches' residents ten to twenty years later. He and his wife bought a holiday house in Bateau Bay on the Central Coast because of his long association with the place from childhood, and memories of wonderful holidays. However he felt it had been forever spoilt by the building of an effluent pipe into the bay from the sewerage works above the town. The symbolism of a defiled place once clean stands alongside his accusation of smells, discolouration and the physical changes to the ecosystem around the outlet.[33]

This was despite the superior treatment of sewage at Bateau Bay in comparison to that of Sydney. As Forster Rayward, Manger of Public Works North Coast Region, was keen to point out in 1992, country New South Wales' sewerage treatment had been different from Sydney for thirty years. The minimum standard for PWD and county councils was secondary treatment.[34]

Sutton became active against ocean outfalls in his retirement from his profession as an advertising artist. He explained his activism in terms of having spent so much of his life in selfish individual and family pursuits, that it was now time to do more for others. He found himself engrossed in his project to provide government with a reuse alternative to ocean effluent disposal that would pipe useable water inland where it was needed. His awakening to environmental abuse, and a determination to be part of a

---

[33] Rubbo 1998 *the* man *whose still there*. [1978 Film Australia] 1998 update, Australian Broadcasting Commission, referring back to the earlier documentary.
[34] Rayward 1992 Press release to the editor *The Advocate*, 15/10/92.

solution, is echoed in many of the comments of anti-outfall advocates at Coffs Harbour. The interlinked issues of sewage and water supply were also central to debates to be raised.

Supporters of outfalls have also wished to declare their own care for the environment, arguing that the disposal of well-treated effluent into the ocean is far better than the seepage and leakages of unsewered areas into their surrounding environs. In the 1973 documentary on Sutton, chief engineer of the PWD, Mackintosh, said that it would be ideal that nothing affected the environment, but that perhaps at times people can improve on nature.[35] Here he was reflecting the broadly understood engineering paradigm that the ocean itself is a natural treatment works that can benefit from the input of certain waste materials. A 1987 Sydney Water Board advertisement reflected this belief under the headline 'Introducing the world's most efficient purification plant':

> This [the ocean] is also the world's largest and most natural treatment plant, and it has some of the most experienced employees as well. Hundreds of species of fish and other marine organisms exist here to do little more than thrive on breaking down the pre-treated effluent discharged into the ocean off Sydney.[36]

In 1973 in the face of rapidly increasing demands to open up Central Coast land for urban development, Mackintosh clearly put the government's view. 'In the situation along our coast, I can only see it becoming more and more necessary to use the ocean for our waste disposal'.[37] As the outfall issue on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches gained momentum in 1983, one Moonee Beach resident, previously of the Central Coast, lamented that he had already 'gone through this same deal ten years ago'.[38]

'Coming of Age': sewerage comes to Coffs Harbour

Local historian Neil Yeates described the first connection of houses in Coffs Harbour to a centralised sewerage system, on the 27th June 1960, as the town's 'coming of age'.[39] The degree of invisibility to which human excrement could be cleaned up, and carried away, had come to be a gauge of civilised living in western society.[40] As dispute over the disposal of sewage in the Coffs Harbour region accelerated through the 1980s, one

---

[35] Rubbo 1998 *the man whose still there.*
[36] *Sydney Morning Herald* Good Weekend 12/12/87 in Beder 1989:115.
[37] Rubbo 1998 *the man whose still there.*
[38] *Advocate* 16/12/83:2.
[39] Yeates 1993:23.
[40] Brown 1985, see especially chapter 13 'The Excremental Vision'.

strong response amongst some older residents to the protesters was bemusement that that they would stall such a taken-for-granted marker of modern society.

Prior to its connection to sewerage, Coffs Harbour's human waste was treated in much the same way as other towns and unsewered city suburbs. Some was self-managed in on-site septic tanks, but mostly it was contained in household sanitary pans that were collected by night men contracted by Council. The 'night dirt' was buried at the sanitary depot where the Regional Botanical Gardens now stands. By the mid 1950s the health inspector admitted it was 'at saturation point'.[41]

Naomi England described her horror of finding herself perched on their backyard toilet one night when the pan man came. When they had visitors her husband George would have to load the used pan into his ute, take it to the depot and get another to keep up with the heightened demand. She had found Coffs Harbour a dirty, dilapidated place when they first arrived in 1946. For her, the coming of sewerage in the early 1960s marked the shift towards the development of the town of which she became so proud. No more 'Dan Dan the dirty man' - the pan man.[42]

A plumber's ad in the *Advocate* in 1960 clearly reflected the celebration of sewerage as progress. A photo of a gleaming white toilet was captioned: 'Open the Door to Healthy Living by installing Sewerage in Your Home Now'.[43]

An advertisement for
Simmonds plumbing :
The Advocate 15/7/60:5

---

[41] Yeates 1990:112.
[42] Interview NT 25.
[43] *The Advocate* 15/7/60:5

Progress was associated with order. The town's untidiness, offensive sewage smells, dirty drains and tethered animals in the streets continued to concern town activists throughout the 1950s.[44] A lack of sewerage, according to the *Advocate,* was the main reason for the town's 'unsavoury state'.[45] Historically the spatial boundaries of class were maintained in Coffs Harbour through similar patterns to other towns and cities, with the wealthier residents living on the hillsides above the town beyond the smells and potential flooding of cesspools. 'Top Town' contained the business houses while the working class, who harboured Catholics and Communists amongst the strong trade unions at the wharf, lived in the lowlands at 'The Jetty'.

A central plank of bringing good order to the town was the need to clean up the unauthorised camps that housed Aborigines and poor whites. Aboriginal people camped on the banks of Coffs Creek, on the site of the current Olympic swimming pool not far from the centre of town. Geographer David Sibley argued that: 'Portrayals of minorities as defiling and threatening have long been used to order society internally and to demarcate the boundaries of society, beyond which lie those who do not belong'.[46] In 1948 the town's health inspector said the camps were dangerous to the health of the entire community, and at Coffs Creek the camps were said to have 'encroached' on dwellings in the town.[47]

The perceived contagion from Aboriginal campers symbolised a threat to the racialised boundaries that upheld the social order of the town. Within the discourse of town residents regarding the camps, Yeates recorded the usual stereotypes of Aborigines as dirty. Dirt is culturally and historically specific and not an absolute category. Mary Douglas wrote in her famous treatise *Purity and Danger* that, 'dirt is essentially disorder'.[48]

The campers needed to be brought under control both spatially and socially on the terms dictated by the non-Aboriginal activists for a progressive town. They requested the state Aborigines Welfare Board to fund 'the construction of uniform dwellings for the coloured people... so giving them encouragement to accept the

---

[44] Yeates 1993.
[45] *The Advocate* 9/10/53 in Yeates 1993:109.
[46] Sibley 1995:49.
[47] Yeates 1993:9.
[48] Douglas 1970:12.

principles of hygiene and citizenship'.[49] Yeates recorded Aboriginal memories of their scrupulous attention to hygiene in the camps, however this did not disturb the racialised discourse of Aboriginal transgression in a place constructed as white.

The grand promises of cleaning up the town from the secondary treated sewerage system soon came under a shadow. The expensive treatment works were found to be inadequate to cope with the wet weather and, much to the horror of town residents according to Yeates, wet weather runoff of raw sewage was reported to be flowing straight into Coffs Creek through a 'temporary' drain constructed by Council.[50]

Coffs Creek had always been a favourite place for recreation, including school swimming lessons and carnivals. Health fears, and the threat to tourism through pollution of a favourite waterway, were all raised early in the Coffs Harbour Shire's history of sewerage. The promised temporary drain was not removed and in 1993 Yeates referred to a PWD report which showed that four overflows discharged untreated sewage into the creek in times of systems overload.[51]

Despite some ongoing disquiet of those in close proximity to Coffs Creek, the demand to connect, collect and remove sewage from the town's rapidly growing residences from the late 1960s was given much higher priority than the question of disposal. During the northern beaches' outfall dispute, long term residents, councillors and politicians looked back with pride that Coffs Harbour was sewered before many outer Sydney suburbs, with a higher level of treatment than the city.

By the 1980s, sewerage was connected throughout Sydney suburbs as well as in the town of Coffs Harbour. Promises of connection had also been made to Coffs' growing northern beaches estates such as Emerald Beach. The protests against an outfall were therefore believed by some to be another example of the contradictory behaviour of recently arrived city dwellers. They found it unacceptable that Sydney people would come to Emerald Beach, partly to escape the pollution of Sydney's environs, but were then prepared to put up with the smell, environmental damage and potential health risks of pumpout and backyard septics. One local builder expressively relayed this sentiment to me:

---

[49] *The Advocate* 25/11/49 in Yeates 1993:10. Following on from this request 'the mission' at Wongala was eventually established in 1955.

[50] Yeates 1993:209.

[51] Ibid:211.

> Lots of people who were born in the area moved out of Emerald Beach because they couldn't stand all the crap [over the outfall protests]. City people complained and stopped the sewerage going through, but then they have their septics and their pumpouts running into the creeks.[52]

A common accusation from pro-outfall advocates of sewage being released into the streets by Emerald Beach residents, unwilling to pay for the sewage 'pumpout' trucks to take it away, constructed the place and its people as defiled within an otherwise modern, civilised community.[53] This rhetoric of defilement had earlier been applied to the living conditions of the alternative-lifestylers in Bellingen, who were often understood by locals to be uncivilised and dragging everyone backwards.

An outfall on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches

Sewerage is still one of the 'big ticket' items for the state government as it struggles with the so-called 'back-log sewage program', referring to the number of communities still needing to be sewered. It is one of the big financial burdens on government and as the lifestyle changes of the past thirty years have brought increasing pressures on fresh waterways and oceans, sewerage infrastructure has not kept pace.[54] Such infrastructure, or its lack, has both enabled and stalled the spread of urban growth into the countryside. As such, issues of sewage remain central to the competing visions of the sorts of places in which people want to live, visit, and invest in.

While discussions of sewerage needs on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches go back to the late 1960s, it was not until the early 1980s that real proposals began to take shape and community debate began. By that time the Shire Council was supporting proposals for major housing subdivisions and tourist resorts on a grand scale for the northern beaches. However the State Pollution Control Commission (SPCC) had made it clear to Council that none of this was possible without the extension of sewerage to the area.[55]

By 1982, only Woolgoolga was sewered on the northern beaches, serviced by a severely overloaded treatment works that emptied into nearby Willis Creek and periodically overflowed across the sand into the ocean, south of the town. On July 6

---

[52] Interview C 27.

[53] See debate on the Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill, Hansard, Legislative Assembly March 20th and 27th. (Those accusations towards individuals were vehemently denied).

[54] Interview T 55; Interview NT 59; Johnson and Rix 1993.

[55] *Advocate* 6/7/82; Binnie and Partners 1987 *Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: Environmental Impact Statement*, Prepared for Public Works Department NSW.

1982, the *Advocate* reported front page headlines that there was 'Go-ahead for northern sewerage'.[56] However, unlike Sawtell's outfall that was planned and built very rapidly with little if any public debate in the late 1970s, this confident announcement was to bog down into public outcry and politics over the next eighteen years.[57]

The proposal was for a secondary treatment works and disposal outlet to be built near Moonee to service the area between Macauleys Headland, just north of Coffs Harbour township, to Moonee. The villages of Emerald Beach and Sandy Beach would be joined later to an upgraded treatment works at Woolgoolga. Two projects on the lower northern beaches particularly concerned Council at the time. One was the development of a new town at Moonee, and the other was the development of the large international tourist resort at Charlesworth Bay, just beyond Macauleys Headland.

In the early 1980s, the permanent population of Moonee Beach was around three hundred people, doubling in number in peak season.[58] Council had been looking for an area to develop as the next urban centre. Problems with developing their first choice south of Coffs Harbour at North Boambee Valley had eventuated in the selection of Moonee as the next urban residential subdivision of the Coffs Harbour Shire. Initial plans for a town of 15,000 people later rose to a peak population of 20,000.[59] While the rush in the 1970s for urban land had stalled with the recession, growth to Coffs Harbour remained higher than the state average. Council argued that the need for new housing subdivision remained. This was also at a time of a slump in the building boom that had previously buoyed the region, motivating enthusiasm for new projects.

PWD was given the task of examining different options for the new sewerage system - both for the site of the treatment works and for disposal of the effluent. In December 1983 they handed down their report to Council. They strongly favoured a treatment site behind Green Bluff at Moonee and the dunes backing onto Sapphire Beach, with disposal through an ocean outfall rather than the alternative suggestion of dune absorption. Look-At-Me-Now Headland was also considered at the time, however

---

[56] *Advocate* 6/7/82:1.

[57] Interview T 55.

[58] In 1985 the permanent population was 350. Binnie and Partners 1987 *Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme*:4.23.

[59] *Advocate* 30/4/1982; Camp Scott Fuphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme.* New environmental planning regulation under the State Labor Government has reduced the area of land suitable for urban development at Moonee to a population of 'approximately 5,840 people' by 2021. Coffs Harbour City Council 1997:92.

Green Bluff was chosen because, the *Advocate* reported, it was the cheapest option. Council put the report on display for public comment and requested submissions.[60]

Public comment poured in over the next four months, the pages of the local paper regularly reporting updates, printing letters and stating editorial opinion. The public meeting held by Council to explain the proposal on December 14th, 1983, brought together a number of people who would follow the outfall issue over the coming years on the polarised sides of the debate. Some of the Look-At-Me-Now Headland protesters remember it as their first foray into local politics, and the beginning of a new environmental awareness. The editorial two days later expressed a series of issues that would be repeated over the history of the outfall dispute. It began with the engineering consensus, took up the public fear of ocean pollution and distrust of bureaucratic advice, and approved of residents' rights to be heard.

> Effluent is good for you, or if not you, then for the plant life in your coastal creeks, seems to be the message of the Department of Public Works for Moonee Beach and other northern beaches residents. That might be very well in theory, but the woman at the public meeting ... who related the tale about toilet paper in her ear causing an infection which sent her to hospital might not agree. She came from Maroubra to Moonee to avoid that sort of thing... But the department must be caught between two desires - to provide a sewerage treatment works, and to provide it cheaply. ... We have seen in Coffs Harbour in recent years the situation where sewerage treatment works have been forced to work beyond their planned capacities. ...[Residents] are the ones who have to live with it. Their wishes for their future, and the future of those who will come when they have negotiated the best deal they can, must be listened to.[61]

Three prominent protagonists in the later dispute were active at the meeting; Mark Wittleton, surfer and outfall opponent; Marnie Yeates, councillor and reuse activist; and John Smith, shire president and outfall advocate. In our interviews, Mark spoke at some length about the episode. He feels that many of those who became involved at Emerald Beach have forgotten, or are ignorant of, the lineage of the dispute back to December 1983.

Mark was then in his late twenties, a Ballina boy who had lived in the Coffs Harbour district for fifteen years and up behind Sapphire Beach with his wife, Loyce, for the previous ten years. As a devout surfer he had taken on the role of volunteer ranger for Council to help protect the Moonee environment. He and some friends had been trying to stop four-wheel drives ploughing up Green Bluff. They were shocked to

---

[60] *Advocate* 6/12/83; 9/12/83, 13/12/83.
[61] *Advocate* 16/12/83:4.

find out about the proposed siting of the outfall and treatment works at the Bluff, and although naive about the processes of community protest, they set about fighting the proposal. Mark became president of the 'Keep Moonee Pollution Free' committee, little knowing that the fight to stop an outfall on the northern beaches would swallow up much of the next decade of his life. He remembered:

> The very first thing that happened - the council said it [Green Bluff] was the preferred option and there would be a meeting in a week to consult and explain to the community what their plans were. Myself, Neville and Lindy Franklin straight away contacted Marnie Yeates who was a councillor, or alderman as they were called at that time, for her advice. She was living at Woolgoolga. We had a meeting with Marnie at the picnic table at the foreshore and she was very helpful. She gave us tips on what we should be doing so we ran off flyers. Those flyers were done on an old methylated spirits gadget, so the battle has been going a long time! We made sure that everybody knew; we gave them out at the reserve on the weekend and letter dropped in the village. We had a packed gallery at the council meeting; quite a noisy, rowdy meeting - a lot of outrage. And the outrage was compounded by the PWD engineer at the time, Ron Colly, who has since passed on. He was part of the old school. He was actually goading the audience. At that time the Coffs Harbour treatment works was a foul smelling thing and people were bringing that comparison up saying we don't want a foul smelling treatment works. He was saying - it's just seaweed you can smell. So anyway that was at the beginning of the Moonee battle.[62]

Marnie Yeates also remembered the Moonee dispute. She and her husband Neil built a holiday house on the headland at Woolgoolga in 1956 while they worked as academics at the University of New England, Armidale. They came to live on the headland permanently in December 1977 after they retired. Neil completed several books, amongst them a history of Woolgoolga and his two-volume history of Coffs Harbour. Marnie was first elected to Council in 1982, was twice re-elected, remaining there until the September 1991 elections at which she did not stand.

> *Jo*: Marnie, can we start with you telling me how you remember the events unfolding regarding the ocean outfall. *Marnie:* Well it really started many years ago when I was on the city council. As a botanist and biologist I suppose I was very interested in the natural environment and conservation, and because I had been so busy in my earlier academic and family life it was only after we retired that I really had time to get deeply involved in the conservation movement. The first proposal for the northern beaches' sewage disposal was that it would go off Moonee Headland [Green Bluff]. I knew Moonee Headland from bushwalks and general exploration and it's a lovely place. And I thought it was totally wrong that it should be chosen as a site for this disposal. There didn't seem to be any good reasons why it

---

[62] Interview T 2.

should be chosen although it was to serve the northern beaches and that it was handy to the likely site of the Moonee treatment works. A lot of other people obviously felt the same way I did, including Mark Wittleton who I remember from those early days. The committee was formed and there was an outcry about it. It gathered force from environmentalists coming to help and support us and the protest became a very strong movement, not only locally but throughout the Coffs Harbour Shire.[63]

John Smith was Shire President at the time and attended the meeting. He was very supportive of the need to sewer the northern beaches to build the prosperity of the Shire. As noted in chapter three, he regards the 1980s as having introduced to the area a destructive environmental activism.

Water and sewerage have been the two big, ongoing issues. Most of the tensions have been built on lies. *Reflecting back on the history of northern beaches sewage, he said:* By the early 1980s sewerage was becoming an issue for the northern beaches. Developments on the northern beaches to that time had no drainage or services. I remember hearing them advertising Emerald Beach and Sandy on the radio in Sydney in the early 60s. You could fly up for no charge if you put a deposit on the land. A lot of land was bought but there wasn't much building until the early 1980s. They were the very minimum of subdivisions. In the late 1970s the eastern side of the highway got water. Treatment works were to go into the southern side of Moonee behind the sand dunes with the effluent being discharged to the ocean. But there was an uprising and that plan was shelved.[64]

At that time the 'Keep Moonee Pollution-Free' campaign concentrated mainly on shifting the proposed siting of the treatment works to the other side of the Pacific Highway, away from the beaches and creeks, demanding better treatment and initially suggesting an extended ocean outfall.[65] Mark and his group knew little about sewage treatment and began a steep learning curve about the issues. Disposal by land was understood to be an alternative to an outfall and they began to look into reuse options.

PWD made clear their dismissal of such alternatives and told Council that there would be no support from government coffers to help pay for any of the other treatment site options as they were more expensive. Even then a government subsidy of 50 per cent to help sewer the northern beaches was said to be a number of years off, as the Coffs region was already benefiting from government help in augmenting the Coffs and

---

[63] Interview T 19.

[64] Interview NT 32.

[65] *Advocate* 14/2/84; Interview T 2.

Sawtell systems. Other schemes awaiting subsidy for construction were higher on the Department's list.[66] The question of who should pay for sewering the northern beaches became a weeping sore within community relations from the early 1980s, as each area from Sawtell to Woolgoolga was faced with rising rates to sewer or augment each other's systems.

As the 1983/4 campaign against the Moonee outfall quickly gained momentum, Council hastily sought alternatives to sewering the section of coast south of the village. They resurrected an earlier proposal to join the estate of Sapphire, and areas to its south, into the future augmented Coffs Harbour treatment works, thereby allowing the early go-ahead for the Charlesworth Bay tourist development and housing subdivision at Macauleys Headland.[67] After ongoing debate almost daily in the *Advocate*, bold front page headlines on March 21st 1984 proclaimed 'Sewerage: Moonee Abandoned'. The Council would look for another site for the treatment works, and as the Sapphire-south proposal was to go through, the outfall site would be moved from Green Bluff to a headland further north. The new Moonee township was put on hold and residents remained on pumpout while Council turned its attention to other issues.

Marnie now found her first support in Council for her requests to look into reuse and land disposal as alternatives to ocean outfalls, and investigations were begun. The *Advocate's* editor Howard Spencer approved the setting up of a committee in his editorial, saying that people wanted other options than ocean outfalls and it was time to find out more.[68] At the same time a new outfall site was being sought. While the 1983 PWD report had named Look-At-Me-Now Headland as another outfall option, increasing problems with the Woolgoolga treatment works found the SPCC suggesting the possibility of an outfall off Woolgoolga Headland.

On July 6th 1985, the *Advocate* reported that Council had adopted that headland for the outfall. It was to be the disposal point for what was now called the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme, taking in the area between Moonee Beach and Safety Beach, just north of Woolgoolga. The letters, petitions and campaigning began afresh further up the coast. Commenting on the decision Marnie said: 'I bet a lot of people

---

[66] *Advocate* 16/12/83; 14/2/84; 29/2/84.
[67] *Advocate* 8/2/84.
[68] *Advocate* 17/5/85.

thought that was a great joke that I had protested about Moonee and it was landed at Woolgoolga Headland'.[69]

Statements, commissions and shifting ground

Until the last months of 1986 the outfall dilemma was mainly localised to residents in the greater-Woolgoolga area and councillors struggling with the issues. However the *Advocate* kept the debate alive beyond the northern beaches through a regular smattering of letters on the issue. By October, northern beaches' sewerage was again front-page news in the Coffs Harbour Shire as independent studies and threats of court action to challenge the outfall were proposed.[70]

Arguments against an outfall at Woolgoolga Headland largely centred on two aspects. One was the potential harm to the underwater environment, with particular regard to coral communities off the headland and the proposed adjacent Solitary Islands Marine Park.[71] The other was fear of a loss of tourism through the stigma of an outfall.[72] Graham Russell, an activist for an outfall on the northern beaches, suggested a further reason. He remembered Woolgoolga protesters were angered that an outfall was to go off their headland when the major proposed growth of the area was at Moonee.[73]

Those advocating an outfall were satisfied that the proposed secondary treatment and diffusion method of effluent into the ocean would be safe. The stifling of northern beaches building development, through the inability of the overloaded Woolgoolga treatment works to accept any further population growth, spurred some in the town to argue for urgent action. Pollution of Willis Creek, into which poorly treated effluent entered from the current treatment works, was argued as a further reason to build the outfall.

As part of Council's incentive to get Woolgoolga residents on side, Coffs Harbour and Sawtell ratepayers now found themselves with a more direct interest in the issue. Council agreed to amalgamate the sewerage rates across the Shire, thus lowering Woolgoolga rates and raising those to the south. The *Advocate* reported the southern

---

[69] Interview T 19.

[70] *Advocate* 16/10/86; 22/10/86

[71] At this stage it was hoped that the Solitary Islands would be gazetted under the higher protection of Park status: this was downgraded to Reserve status in 1989.

[72] Interview C 56; *Advocate* 15/11/86 and the Woolgoolga *Advertiser*, October 1986 - April 1987.

[73] Interview T 40.

rate rise as $4.00 per household, lowering Woolgoolga rates by $43.00 per household.[74] This solidified rumbling complaints by some southern residents that they were subsidising cheap northern beaches' land.

In late October 1986 a meeting at Woolgoolga of between 450 and 500 people brought community anxiety firmly into the public arena. The local Woolgoolga newspaper, the *Advertiser*, reported that:

> They came in a mixed bag from babies to grandparents, students to parents, representing a myriad of factions, but united in that they shared a concern for their local area. But there was no doubt that the overwhelming majority did not want an outfall site straight off what is our best natural attraction, the coastline, whether it be Woolgoolga or the other suggested option, Emerald Beach.[75]

One of Council's responses to this public outcry was to commission a full EIS for the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme 'so', shire clerk Phil Harvey said, 'there is no chance of being challenged'.[76] As the PWD prepared to release the EIS in June 1987 for public submissions, the first of a succession of large anti-outfall demonstrations on the northern beaches was being organised. Saturday 13th June saw between 4,000 and 5,000 people march onto Woolgoolga Headland to 'Save our Sea'. Three and a half years after first commenting on sewage uproar on the northern beaches at Moonee, Spencer wrote that: 'Two things are becoming clear about sewerage proposals for this district - they have the capacity to stir the blood, and the public doesn't necessarily like them or even want them.'[77]

Despite 'concerted opposition' to the sewerage scheme, the EIS found there was no practical alternative to an outfall given the capacity required and the peak wet seasons the area experienced. The study preferred Woolgoolga Headland to Look-At-Me-Now because of cheaper costs, rejecting fears of environmental harm or damage to tourism.[78] This outcome did not stem public outcry. In response to ongoing community disquiet over an outfall, Labor Minister for Environment and Planning Bob Carr established a Commission of Inquiry in early December 1987. Two commissioners sat, William Simpson (presiding) and Kevin Cleland, taking submissions to February 1988. In April they brought down their findings that while an ocean outfall was indeed the

---

[74]*Advocate* 22/10/86:1.

[75] *Advertiser*, 4/11/86:7.

[76] *Advocate* 7/11/86:3.

[77] *Advocate* editorial 23/6/87:4.

[78] Binnie and Partners 1987 *Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme*.

only practical means of disposal, two compromises would be recommended. One was to increase treatment to tertiary level, and the second was to move the site to Emerald Beach.[79]

The commissioners' stated reasons for shifting the site to Look-At-Me-Now Headland at Emerald Beach concerned the coral communities at Woolgoolga, within the proposed Solitary Islands Marine Park. It was considered that no such sensitive marine communities were to be found around Look-At-Me-Now Headland, incorrectly believed to be outside the proposed park (see below). Few interviewees, pro-outfallers included, accepted this as the real reason. They were more convinced that Emerald Beach was seen to be a place of least resistance, with a small and presumably docile population.[80]

An outfall at Emerald Beach 1988-1995

For northern beaches resident, Cathy Wills, the decision to move the outfall from Woolgoolga was the last straw. '...Council passing the buck from Moonee first, to Woolgoolga, to Emerald Beach - it was well and truly time to take a stand. People had been all along - but it was really time'.[81]

Soon after Commissioner Simpson announced the decision to move the outfall, Mark Wittleton arrived on Carol and Dave Shorter's door in Emerald Beach to ask what they were going to do about it. The Shorters were amongst a group of residents who had protested at both Moonee and Woolgoolga. However Carol remembered that at the time they thought an outfall at Emerald Beach was now a *fait accompli*. Once Mark told them how his group had run the Moonee challenge, they realised a fight was possible.[82] With Mark and a few others they formed the STOP committee - Stop The Ocean Pollution - based on a Sydney committee of the same name and aims. Carol summarised the next three years of hard work leading up to October 1991.

> We were battling all the way - spending an enormous amount of time with the councillors trying to explain what our objections were and what we felt was more appropriate action. It's a whole saga... We would get a council in and they would say 'right, we are going to put in the outfall' and we would spend two years explaining and teaching the councillors and then bit by bit

[79] Simpson and Cleland 1988 *The Coffs Harbour City Council Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: A Commission of Inquiry pursuant to Section 119 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 197*, DEP

[80] Shorter 1992 STOP Committee press release, 'Comments on Wal Murray and Council Lobbying Dr. Peter MacDonald's Moonee Nature Reserve Bill' 28/2/1992 and see chapter four.

[81] Interview T 16.

[82] Interview T 15.

> we would finally get them to understand. We actually got, at one stage, all
> nine of the councillors voting unanimously to stop the outfall and to sort it
> out ... and then Wal Murray and the government stopped that and said that
> he would hold up funding. ... It would get to what appeared to be a
> resolution ... and then it would be back to zero and we would go slowly and
> progressively, patiently on.[83]

While STOP worked directly on the outfall at Emerald Beach, looking into alternatives and getting their cause publicised, Alph Williams formed a coalition of local environment groups to fight the outfall alongside other environmental issues current in the region (discussed in chapter three). His newly formed Coffs Harbour Environment Coalition, alongside STOP, organised the rally in the city mall on the 30th July 1989 that helped shift the issue into a broader arena.[84]

Ongoing community opposition to an outfall, and some strong anti-outfall and reuse activism on Council led by Marnie, brought a decision by Council in February 1990 to abandon the outfall at Look-At-Me-Now or anywhere else on the northern beaches. Instead, preparations were made to build a pipeline from Woolgoolga to Coffs Harbour, with outlet taps allowing access to the effluent for reuse, and final disposal of surplus effluent at the existing Coffs Harbour outfall. Sewage would be treated at an augmented Woolgoolga plant and a new plant on the western side of the Pacific Highway near Moonee.[85]

There was general anger amongst Coffs Harbour people that northern beaches effluent was to be pushed onto them. Naomi England reflected many bitter comments from Coffs Harbour residents about the outfall dispute. She told me that Emerald Beach people did not want it in their backyard and so they thought they could just pipe it down to Coffs - 'but why should we have all their sewerage?'[86]

Council's move prompted the establishment of a group of Coffs Harbour businessmen calling themselves the Concerned Silent Majority, to defend the need for an outfall on the northern beaches and oppose piping effluent back to Coffs Harbour.[87] On the northern beaches, Graham Russell headed the pro-outfall lobby through the

---

[83] Ibid.
[84] See the *Advocate* 29/7/89; 1/8/89.
[85] Coffs Harbour City Council 1992(a) 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package; Coffs Harbour City Council 1993 *1993 Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour*, ID327/68:3-4.
[86] Interview NT 25.
[87] Camp Scott Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme* vol 3 Appendices:Part 1.

Sandy Beach Progress Association, later helping establish the third pro-outfall group called RAGE - Rational Action against Green Extremism.

He and his family came to Sandy Beach from Orange in 1984, buying the general store. Previous work installing septic tanks, and experiencing their general failure to work adequately, meant he had become involved in the issue of sewerage on the northern beaches. He helped successfully lobby for connection of Sandy Beach to the Woolgoolga sewerage scheme in 1991.

> There were cases of giardia and everything here [in Sandy Beach before the sewerage]... So I was more or less elected as spokesman for the community with another couple of fellas and we did a lot of studying and going into it with an open mind and came out supporting an outfall... still cannot see how you can get away without an outfall. ...And all this argument ever was - was not in my back yard - that's all it ever was.[88]

Council's decision to abandon the Look-At-Me-Now outfall and build a pipeline to Coffs Harbour was not supported by the State Government. Wal Murray, National Party leader, Minister for Public Works and Deputy Premier, declined to subsidise any of the extra cost involved. Council subsequently abandoned that plan in late 1990 in favour of augmenting the sewerage plant at Woolgoolga and continuing to dispose of more highly treated effluent through Willis Creek. This met opposition from the SPCC who placed deadlines on the closure of Willis Creek because of high pollution levels. In June 1991, Murray advised Council that funding for the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme had been withdrawn.[89]

A few weeks prior to the September 1991 council elections, the SPCC demanded the closure of Willis Creek, withdrawing the licence to dispose of effluent into its waters. Anti-outfallers declared this to be a political move on behalf of the State Government to force the readoption of the outfall proposal, as they quickly reinstated temporary permission to discharge to Willis Creek once the elections were over and a majority pro-outfall council was returned.[90]

The elections returned seven candidates who subsequently supported an outfall and two anti-outfall candidates. After three years absence from Council, John Smith re-gained office and was elected mayor. The majority pro-outfall council, Wal Murray, and other outfall advocates declared this was a clear community mandate for an outfall.

---

[88] Interview T 40.
[89] Coffs Harbour City Council 1992a 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.
[90] *Advocate* 2/11/91; Shorter 1992 STOP Committee press release.

They would often, over the forthcoming years, repeat their assertions that democracy was being challenged by a small band of militant environmentalists who would not accept majority support for the outfall.[91]

Anti-outfall advocates declared that the campaigns of pro-outfall candidates had been heavily backed financially by developers and that the outfall was not the only issue on which councillors were elected.[92] They cited the support of thousands at their rallies as evidence of broad community support for their cause.

On October 8 1991, one of the first decisions of the new council was to overturn the previous council's abandonment of the outfall at Look-At-Me-Now.[93] The proposal for works on the Headland was for the laying of an underground pipeline across it, to connect to a tank buried into it. The need to blast and drill into the Headland added anxiety and conflicting reports on the safety of the procedure. The pipe would then be extended to a high-pressure outlet nozzle for rapid initial dilution, just below the surface. Based on the 1988 Commission of Inquiry, the treatment was to be tertiary level - a highly contested term because of the different levels of purity within that category.[94]

Council proceeded to immediately move contractors and bulldozers into Emerald Beach to lay the sewerage pipes. This action brought a swift response from anti-outfall activists who found themselves in frontline action before machinery and police. The first arrests of twenty-six people occurred on October 16th.[95] 'The Siege' at Emerald Beach, as protesters and the media came to identify this period, stretched on a week-day basis from October to mid December 1991, only halting when a court order stopped the bulldozers on the Headland.[96]

Local media followed events on a daily basis.[97] They were unable to keep up with the bombardment of letters from both camps. As the protests dragged on, attention

---

[91] 'From the Mayor's Desk' *Coffs Harbour Times* 14/12/91; McKeon 1991, Coffs Harbour City Council 1992(a) 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.

[92] Shorter 1992 Committee press release.

[93] Coffs Harbour City Council 1992(a) 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.

[94] Camp Scott Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme.*

[95] *Advocate* 18/10/91.

[96] *Advocate* 10/12/91; 19/12/91. See chapter six and Appendix.

[97] State and national media also took a great interest. The *Sydney Morning Herald* gave the issue much attention, joined by the *Sun Herald* and *Daily Telegraph Mirror*. The ABC's 7.30 Report and Channel 9's Hinch Report were amongst the television exposure. Great controversy was caused by exposure of the issue in large articles in *Penthouse* and *People* magazines.

was captured by 'The Big Poo', an eight meter long replica of a faeces.[98] Ian Cohen said it provided 'high-order theatre of the environment', meant to be a symbolic reminder that 'while flush toilet systems deliver maximum cleanliness and discretion at the personal end (no pun intended), they account for maximum filth in our rivers and oceans [sic]'.[99]

The Big Poo helped provide a focus for those who argued that the protesters did not understand the science or technology of the proposed tertiary treated outfall, confusing the treatment of Sydney outfalls with the proposal for Look-At-Me-Now. Murray typified the claim in a letter addressed to colleagues:

> There has been a large amount of misinformation circulated about the Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Sewerage Project... It is [the] stigma attached to the 3 major Sydney coastal treatment plants which has caused such emotive and misinformed debate in relation to country coastal outfalls.[100]

Council distributed a letter to householders called 'the Facts'. It was needed, John Smith wrote, because:

> Council is concerned over what appears to be a deliberate campaign to confuse the ocean outfall debate with erroneous information and mischievous claims. The facts must be separated from fiction if we are to overcome the divisive effect of this issue on our community.[101]

There was an ongoing level of basic ignorance about the technology of the proposed sewerage system amongst some sympathisers to the anti-outfall cause. Also the psychological sway of the perception that pollution was to enter an unspoiled ocean environment cannot be underestimated.

However the fears of more informed protesters of the Sydney example were not so easily dismissed. Revelations by Sydney media and anti-outfall activists through the late 1980s, of bureaucratic and political deceit in hiding and twisting information about sewage ocean pollution, supported growing community scepticism and distrust of relevant institutions.[102] For example the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre acknowledged the higher quality of effluent eventually proposed for Look-At-Me-Now, but voiced the fear of many when they said that unreported accidents continued to result in raw or partially treated sewage entering the ocean.[103]

---

[98] Amongst its other names it was known as the Big Turd, and Brad - after one of the engineers.
[99] Cohen 1996:225.
[100] Murray 1992 letter 'Re: Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill' sent to the Advocate 26/2/92.
[101] 'The Facts' n.d. (October) 1991, Coffs Harbour City Council.
[102] See Beder 1989;1998.
[103] Barlow 1993 'Submission to Commissioner of Inquiry re Proposed Ocean Outfall, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Emerald Beach' October.

The Mayor's comments in 'The Facts' media campaign, and his regular newspaper columns, brought a flurry of indignant letters from anti-outfallers claiming he was the one '...waging a campaign of mistruths, half truths and disinformation'.[104] There was much commentary on a divided community. While the evident polarisation could be read in the letters, it was not straightforward.

For example, while business lobbyists generally agreed with Council's decree that 'no growth means no new jobs', and that growth was 'now restricted because of the need for additional sewerage', there was dissension over an outfall.[105] For Real Estate Institute spokesman Ian Finn, there was no option other than an outfall on the northern beaches. He deplored what he saw as the no growth attitude of the anti-outfallers. Through their actions they were thwarting the 'Aussie dream' of ordinary working Australians to own their own home.[106] On the other hand editorial comment in November 1991 in the *Coffs Harbour Business Review*, and later the Chamber of Commerce, argued against the Look-At-Me-Now Headland outfall. They said the best outcome would be a pipeline back to the Coffs Harbour outfall on long-term economic, community and environmental grounds.[107]

Legal action in the Land and Environment Court was initiated by the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre and the newly established Coalition Against Ocean Outfalls Inc., just after work began at Emerald Beach. The Siege made daily headlines and pulled hundreds into protests they had never dreamed of being part of. These were vital stalling tactics. However it was the often tedious hard-slog of work keeping the issue in the courts by the Environment Centre and their lawyers that kept the issue alive.

The Environment Centre's argument was that the outfall was prohibited under zoning of part of the Headland. After an initial loss, the New South Wales Supreme Court of Appeal issued an injunction stopping outfall work at Emerald Beach on the 9th of December, pending its judgement. This was brought down on the 18th December, declaring that the construction of a pipeline on the Headland was indeed prohibited under the Local Environment Plan (LEP) and hence construction work was not resumed and the direct-action protests ceased.[108] Under the 1988 LEP, the Headland was zoned

---

[104] Kim and Greg Hawken 'Berate and Belittle', letter to the editor *Coffs Harbour Times* 21/12/91. See the Mayor's column *Coffs Harbour Times* 14/12/91.

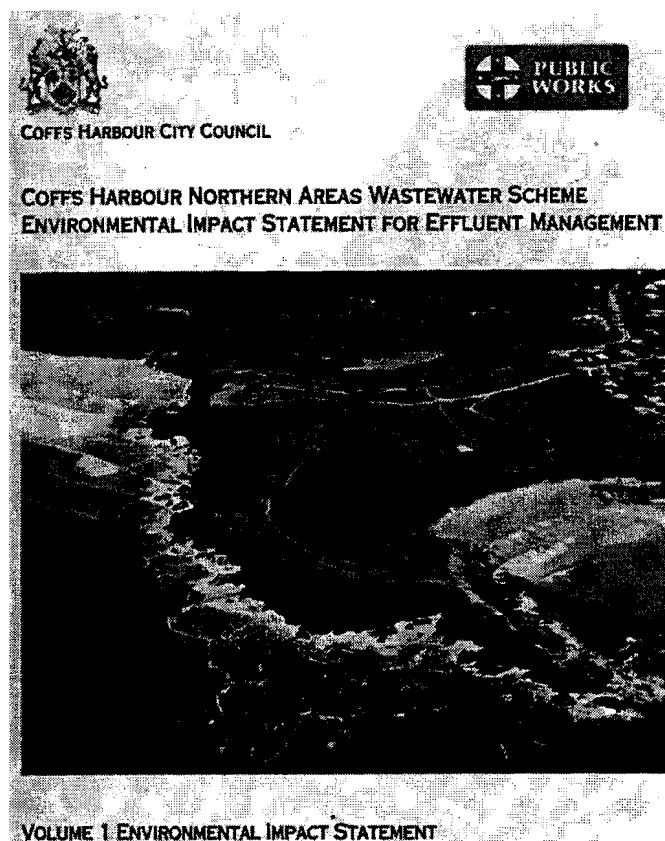[105] Coffs Harbour City Council 1992(b) 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.

[106] *Advocate* 7/11/91.

[107] *Coffs Harbour Business Review* November 1991 'Sewage outfall battle not over'.

[108] *Advocate* 2/11/91; 22/11/91; 10/12/91; 19/12/91.

6(a) Open Space. Construction of a pipeline was deemed illegal in this zoning through its incompatibility with its public recreational objectives. By this time, seven kilometres of pipes had been laid up to and onto the Headland.

To address this obstacle to building the outfall, Council and the Department of Planning resolved to rezone the Headland through the mechanism of an amended LEP. The Headland was subsequently rezoned 6(d) Open Space (Coastal Headland) which allowed for a development application to be lodged for the outfall to proceed, to which Council as the consenting authority duly gave its consent. These moves triggered the need for an EIS under the

Cover of the 1993 EIS (excluding authorship details of Camp, Scott and Furphy) showing LAMN Headland.

Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979, and anti-outfallers found themselves consumed in a new round of protests through submission writing.[109]

The lack of an EIS that specifically addressed Look-At-Me-Now Headland had always been of concern to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. They argued that the 1988 Commission of Inquiry had received incorrect advice, that while Woolgoolga Headland was identified for inclusion in the proposed Solitary Island Marine National Park, Look-At-Me-Now was to be excluded. 'The Service and the NSW Fisheries

---

[109] Camp, Scott, Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme*; numerous Minute Papers of the Department of Planning for example 28/9/94 'Minute Paper: Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. Consideration of Development Consent By the Minister Under Sections 89(1) and 101(8) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979, file G90/00215.

position had in fact been that the marine environments of both headlands should be included in the marine national park'.[110] The submission continued:

> Detailed planning for this park had not commenced at the time of the Inquiry. Accordingly, a comprehensive appraisal of the features, objectives of management and implication of the proposal were not put before the Inquiry. Additionally the Inquiry did not receive any substantial advice on the natural and cultural values of the terrestrial area of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.[111]

Chapter seven examines the environmental and heritage values of the Headland.

The EIS was described by one Department of Planning minute paper as 'generally of a good standard'. However it also showed that a number of the alternatives were 'quite reasonable', even given 'tacit support by Government agencies.' It went on to say that 'The EIS does not demonstrate that the proposal is the most appropriate solution, and given the extent of community concern, this must be viewed as a deficiency in the EIS.'[112] The EIS did however conclude that Look-At-Me-Now outfall was the most cost-effective proposal (in relation to other available options left open) and that it was safe on technical, health and environmental grounds.[113]

The EIS did not subdue community concerns or anger over an outfall. Council's next step in 1993 was to request a Commission of Inquiry. Commissioner Mark Carleton was appointed in September, bringing down his report in March 1994. There was much debate within anti-outfall ranks on whether to participate in what many regarded as a cynical political exercise with a predetermined outcome.[114] The majority decision was to participate, and the Commissioner often found himself with large audiences when the public hearings were held between 9th November and 23rd December 1993. He acknowledged there was 'significant' and 'genuine' opposition to an ocean outfall, but concluded that:

---

[110] National Parks and Wildlife Service 1993 'Submission by National Parks and Wildlife Service 21 October 1993' to *Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look- At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour,* October 1993, Appendix 11:2.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Department of Planning 25/8/93 Minute Paper 'Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme-Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland.' file no. G90/00215: p2.

[113] Camp, Scott, Furphy 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme.*

[114] Eg Interviews T 4; T21.

...LAMN ocean disposal of effluent overcomes the risks to public health, the environmental risks and other potential impacts of concern to various parties. On cost alone, LAMN is the most preferred and acceptable solution based on public interest considerations. The adoption of any other alternatives would place the community at risk and in a difficult position.[115]

In the meantime the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre challenged the amended LEP in the Land and Environment Court on the grounds that it did not comply with the Regional Environment Plan (REP). Judge Pearlman declared that while the LEP did contravene the REP in a number of places, the LEP remained valid. Concerned that this set a dangerous precedent for broader environmental issues, as well as for Look-At-Me-Now Headland, the Centre appealed but the challenge was lost. In 1995 a further case was pending, arguing that Aboriginal and environmental issues had been ignored, when Labor won state office and stopped the outfall.

One consistent finding from all the above reports was reflected in a Department of Planning minute paper in late 1994 that: 'While considerable objections exist to the outfall, there is no information to suggest the outfall is technically unacceptable.'[116] While this confident statement masks the consistent challenge by public and professional submissions regarding technical issues, more compelling for a number of protesters was that technical acceptability of ocean disposal was no longer good enough.

God's washing machine or time for a rethink?

Two phrases disseminated at the time of the debate over an outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland reflected opposing philosophies that each side could either uphold or deride. John Smith is credited with the colourful phrase that the ocean is 'god's washing machine'.[117] While this phrase reflected his renowned tendency to understand issues through religious insight, it also reflected the broadly held engineering, scientific and common sense understanding of the ocean's ability to integrate effluent into its natural

---

[115] Carleton 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing: Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour.* Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning: pxiv.

[116] Department of Planning 29/9/94 'Minute Paper: Consideration of Development Consent By the Minister Under Sections 89(1) and 101(8) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 For Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland'. DEP file G90/00215: p4.

[117] I was introduced to the phrase early in my discussions with people by Marnie Yeates and later by Mike Secomb. Many others have repeated the phrase.

ecosystem without undue harm. The other phrase is credited to Dave Shorter that:
'sometime, somewhere, someone has to put a stop to using the ocean as a dump for
disposing of our waste'.[118] This phrase reflected a new-found desire, for many, to seek
alternatives to the long accepted disposal of sewage effluent into the sea.

Beyond the arguments of the EIS and Commission of Inquiry that Look-At-Me-
Now outfall was the most economical option, both found that the level of treatment
proposed meant there would be little or no effect on the ocean environment, or have
adverse health effects. The monitoring program of the Coffs Harbour outfall begun in
1986 by UNE academics, S.D.Smith and Rod Simpson, was often referred to by outfall
advocates. They argued that changes attributable to the outfall were relatively small and
localised, hence predicting that better treatment would produce even smaller effect at
Look-At-Me-Now.[119]

For many of the anti-outfallers who thoroughly educated themselves about the
issues, the technical and scientific evidence advocating an outfall did not convince them
of either the health or environmental safety, or long-term viability of the proposal.
Prevailing scientific views and cost were also not necessarily the most important issues
to them. Through evidence from experts and their own research, they believed it was
now time to take up the rapidly developing new technologies in sewage disposal and
look for environmentally viable alternatives to outfall disposal. If that meant delays in
sewering or higher costs, they believed it was worth it for long-term sustainable
futures.[120]

Their proposals for wetlands, membrane filtration through the company
MEMTEC to further purify water so that it could be disposed of in any environment and
sand filtration, were deemed too expensive, untested or not viable in times of heavy
rainfall. However water restrictions because of drought during the period of debate

---

[118] Shorter 1992 STOP Committee press release.
[119] Smith and Simpson 1990 *Monitoring Programme for Benthic Communities at Headlands in the Coffs
Harbour Region: Second Annual Report.* Prepared for Public Works Department and Coffs Harbour
City Council.
[120] Barlow 1993 'Submission to Commissioner of Inquiry re Proposed Ocean Outfall'; Shorter 1992 STOP
Committee press release.

aided their arguments in a public context, that fresh water should be reused rather than enter salt-water environments.[121]

They also put up proposals for a decentralised village scheme where the community would take responsibility locally for their own sewage.[122] In this they were not alone on the North Coast. In 1991 the communities of Nimbin, near Lismore and Pacific Palms, near Myall Lakes, were also arguing against the instalment of centralised sewerage in favour of decentralised village schemes. At Nimbin, despite a supportive council, PWD would not support the subsidy needed because it was not a centralised system. At Pacific Palms, the council pushed ahead with a centralised scheme, without which further residential development would have been curtailed.[123]
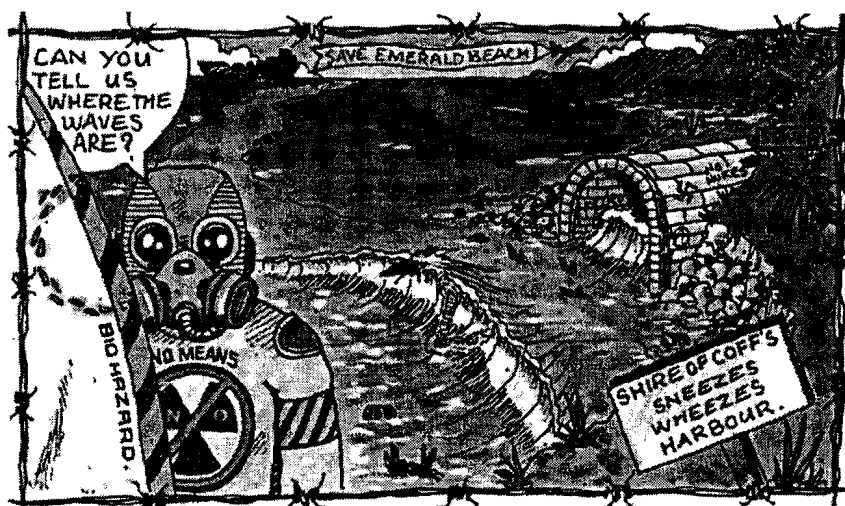
This image of sewerage from a national surfing magazine focused on the other end of sewage disposal, a far cry from the celebratory image of the hygienic white toilet in Simmonds pluming add of 1960: Underground Surf 1994:87.

A centralised sewerage scheme has eventuated on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches. In October 2000, nine years after people stood in front of bulldozers to stop the outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, residents of Surf Street held a 'Poo Party' to

---

[121] Carleton 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster*; Barlow, Clowes and Smithers 1993 'Submission to Coffs Harbour City Council: Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement for Effluent Management'. Coffs Harbour Environment Centre Inc.; Barlow 1993 'Submission to Commissioner of Inquiry re Proposed Ocean Outfall'.

[122] Williams and Tozer nd 'Decentralised Village Scheme For Emerald Beach'..

[123] Crennan 1992.

celebrate the first connections in Emerald Beach to the sewerage. The new Sewerage Treatment Plant on the west side of the Pacific Highway, at Lower Bucca/Moonee, is treating the sewage and pumping it back to Woolgoolga until the new regional sewerage scheme is built.

The plan to sewer the area has returned, in part, to the construction of forty-one kilometres of pipeline from the northern beaches to Coffs Harbour. The estimated 1999 cost of the new regional strategy is $170 million. It includes the sewering of Emerald Beach and Moonee and the last unsewered villages of Arrawarra and Mullaway further north. It will expand and update all the existing treatment facilities across the Shire coast and includes the building of the new plant at Lower Bucca/Moonee, building storage reservoirs at Woolgoolga to hold reuse water and developing reuse strategies and projects. As a regional strategy it also includes the closure of the existing two shoreline outfalls at Sawtell and Coffs Harbour and the Woolgoolga outfall into Willis Creek/Flat Rock, building a deep-sea outfall one and a half kilometres off the coast into Boambee Bay.[124]

After the subsidy from government is taken into account, according to the 2000 EIS, this will mean the annual sewerage rate will rise by $25.00 per household, increased at a rate of $5.00 per household, per year, over five years. Research and demonstration projects for reuse are major components of the expenditure. It is expected the outfall will only be needed at times of the highest rainfall. The EIS states that decreasing the discharge of effluent into the water 'is seen by many members of the community as a desirable objective', providing the 'justification for expenditure to encourage reuse'.[125]

However conflict over sewerage remains. For Brian Beckett, Deputy Mayor at the time of the Look-At-Me-Now outfall episode, the cost increase from two million dollars at Look-At-Me-Now to the new strategy is a travesty. Broadly reflecting the views of a number of people in Coffs Harbour, he finds three issues in the wake of the defeat of the Look-At-Me-Now Headland outfall particularly galling.

He believes the greatly increased cost of the sewerage scheme, even with the government subsidy, is too much to bear for the Coffs Harbour community. Secondly he feels that the State Labor Government has forced an unnecessarily high quality

---

[124] Consulting Environment Engineers 2000 *Coffs Harbour Sewerage Strategy Environmental Impact Statement:* Volume 1, *EIS Report* Part 1, Environmental Engineers Association.

treatment of effluent, now being produced from the new Bucca/Moonee treatment plant, onto a small community. He argues this is especially infuriating when compared to ongoing acceptance of primary treatment of much of Sydney's effluent. He believes the Carr government forced Council into reuse, to which he is opposed because of viruses that cannot be screened out, and effects of the seasonal high rainfall. And thirdly he feels that the NIMBY accusation is well founded against the Emerald Beach protesters, demonstrated by their current acceptance of Willis Creek as the unofficial outfall for northern beaches effluent.[126]

On the opposite pole, Alph Williams has continued to champion reuse in Council and in the community. He believes he is going to prove those who said you cannot have reuse in a wet climate thoroughly wrong. His confidence is great that the demand for reuse on the northern beaches will mean no effluent will flow back down the pipe to Coffs Harbour. He provided the example of a Woolgoolga farmer already successfully growing tomatoes hydroponically with safely screened reuse water, and high interest from the intensive horticultural farmers of the area growing crops such as avocadoes and bananas.[127] He believes that by the time the outfall is built, Coffs Harbour will be pumping all its effluent north.

....

Beyond the technical and economic debates over the feasibility and cost of alternatives to an outfall, the sewage debate highlighted a series of competing social and historical factors within the diversifying community of Coffs Harbour. For Kerry Shipman, whose feelings of loss for a worthwhile rural lifestyle were conveyed in chapter two, the outfall dispute focused 'a convergence of awareness'. In his analysis, on one side of the debate were those old settlers grappling with the loss of their familiar little town under the weight of new settlement, compounded with economic restructuring that had brought fragmentation, financial loss and disempowerment to many of them. On the opposite side were those who had come to look for new possibilities.[128]

---

[125] Ibid:2-26.
[126] Brian Beckett pers. comm. 23/3/2001.
[127] The main interest in March 2001 was from the large group of predominantly Indian farmers- the 'Condon Road Fruit Growers'. Alph Williams pers. comm. 27/3/2001.
[128] Kerry Shipman pers comm. 30/3/2001.

There is an array of diverse and competing interpretation of the struggle which joins Kerry's analysis. Some argue it was founded in the undemocratic grab for power of the green lobby, while others argue it was about the battle to retain power of the old development-hungry elite. However one understands the deeper motivations for the outfall dispute, the debate moves beyond the ability to flush human waste off-site. The following chapter takes as its focus the two months of 'the Siege' at the end of 1991, to tell some of the different stories people hold around the outfall dispute at Emerald Beach.

CHAPTER SIX

SIEGE STORIES

People tie themselves to places in a myriad of ways, for example through physical manifestations etched into and onto the landscape, ceremonies and commemorations and through the stories they tell of those places. The telling of stories, and the power to have them heard, helps construct places in the visions and images of the tellers. Hence they are powerful in the history making of places and like all history, there is never just one true story. No place has only one set of meanings.

'Telling stories' has many connotations, for example the passing down of knowledge, the entertainment of audiences, the spreading of untruths and lies. A story, according to one of the 1998 Macquarie dictionary's ten definitions, is 'a narration of a series of events'.[1] Many historians now explore the concept of story telling as part of the cultural production of history making, going beyond the belief in the possibility of the one true story, while not retreating from the belief in honesty in the history-telling process. Telling stories of a contested domain remains as multi-varied as any definition of what a story, and history, might be.

The outfall crisis on Coffs Harbour's northern beaches spread over two decades, with the battle over Look-At-Me-Now Headland stretching between 1988 and 1995. Despite this lengthy period, the bulk of stories told about the dispute by all parties refer to the two months of direct action on site at Emerald Beach between October and December 1991.

This period came to be know in the media and by the protesters as 'the Siege', as police, bulldozers, and anti-outfall supporters from around the North Coast descended on the village. It was commemorated annually in October for a number of years after the events of late 1991. For many of the anti-outfall activists, their participation in the Siege tied them more closely to the place and people of Emerald Beach. The events also served to alienate pro-outfallers in the village and supported the rhetoric of a divided community within the Coffs Harbour Shire.

---

[1] *Macquarie Concise Dictionary* 1998:1151.

Six stories are presented in this chapter which reflect some of the diversity of concerns, interests and activities which directly or indirectly focus back onto those weeks. Three are from pro-outfallers and three from anti-outfallers. The events of the Siege created the circumstances for people to voice and act upon issues that had long been brewing on the North Coast in the last third of the twentieth century.

Each story stakes a claim in place, whether by right of length of residence, being a good but victimised worker, a decent and law-abiding protester, a rational supporter for a healthy community, or campaigner for the common person. Questions of environmental acceptability and the measure and meaning of pollution run through most people's siege stories. However stronger still, the siege stories reflect more on people's relationships between each other and their sense of their rights in place.

These stories are not claimed to be representative of all sides of the dispute, or covering all the range of issues involved. Rather, the selection of stories shows how memories of events take on symbolic significance and circulate explanations. I could have chosen a number of other stories, emphasising different themes such as the wealth of material on social movements, their gendered nuances and social outrage which are embedded within people's stories about the Siege.

However this is a thesis about internal migration and place contestation, therefore I chose stories, and the emphasis within those stories, that had particular resonance to such concerns. For example the contested nature of people's rights to claim and act in place, thus helping create the sort of place they wanted to live in, circulate through the fluid definitions of local and newcomer, insider and outsider and questions of belonging.

The city/country divide is part of this concern, as is the ongoing contested meaning of growth and development. People's world views and experience clashed at Emerald Beach. The predominantly white, middle-class demographic of the Emerald Beach protesters fits the overall profile of the move to the coast. Class hostility was implicit in the relations between contractors on site and protesters, a sourness that still looms in the stories of non-protesting tradesmen around at the time. It is also raised in the contested definition of who might be the 'ordinary people' inhabiting the siege stories.

The stories chosen also reflect one or more of the central themes that I often heard repeated over the years I lived in the Coffs Harbour region. The title of each story

echoes one of those themes. While each story taps into a collective memory of events and motivations amongst particular groups, they also tell the individuals' stories of the episode.

My aim in presenting these stories, one after the other, is to allow protagonists to tell their own understandings of events. My reflections at the end of the chapter draw on the broad array of siege stories I have heard as historian observer, and resident insider/outsider. There is no single, coherent story to tell of the weeks of direct action at Emerald Beach. Read together, the stories below tell of a more fractured reality with as many interpretations of meanings and messages as there are readers.

The Siege - an overview

The two months of direct action at Emerald Beach was followed daily in the local paper, the *Advocate*. One week after a new council voted on the 8th October to reinstate the outfall at LAMN Headland, bulldozers moved into the village.

The first arrests of 26 people were made on the 16th October. On October 22nd, the *Advocate* reported that the previous day 500-700 people were waiting at the Bluff Road work site by 7am where an anti-outfall meeting proceeded.[1].

Anti-outfallers set about organising their blockade and were ready to meet an early morning police raid on their camp on the 28th October. The next day the *Advocate* reported that more than 200 predominantly local protesters - 'men and women, young and old' - had blocked access to the work site. They were met by 'a wall of police' - 'Four police dogs and their handlers from the Police Dog Squad in Sydney were also present', reported to have been brought in to protect the equipment. The Police Inspector said 'We intend to ensure that the council is permitted to go about its lawful work...'. A protester camping at the site reported that police moved in just after 5am, wearing balaclavas, 'para-military clothes and brandishing machetes and bolt-cutters...'. The Mayor, who came to address the protesters, announced that he had a mandate to construct the outfall.[2]

After this event, supporters from outside the village, including the ferals, started to join local residents. The *Advocate* reported on the 30th October that from the previous day, those protesters who refused police orders to move on would be charged under the Crimes Act with 'Watch and Beset' or 'Intimidation'. A total of 120 arrests and 308 charges were laid.[3]

An injunction stopping work throughout the first weeks of November was lifted on the 21st November after the Land and Environment Court dismissed the anti-outfallers case against the council. On the 26th November the *Advocate* reported the largest police contingent yet of 48 police from outside the region. The outfall protests took over the front page for the following two days with accusations of excessive force coming from both sides.

Protesters remained on site until the 9th December when a Court of Appeals injunction stopped the bulldozers, but not before they dug two unattached pipes into the middle of the Headland. Work never resumed as the Court of Appeals declared on the 18th December that Council had 'acted illegally' in approving an outfall at LAMN and the direct-action protests ceased after this time.[4]

1. See the Appendix.
2. *Advocate* 29/10/91:1
3. Charge Sheets enclosed in letter from Stephen Green to the Commander, LAMN primary sources.
4. *Advocate* 19/12/91:1

OUTFALL PROTEST:
POLICE ARREST 50

Above: This view of the protests on the 27th November by Bob Weeks was repeated in all the local papers. (LAMN Arts Project Committee 2000:65);
Left: Page one of the *Advocate*, 29/10/91
Bottom: Page one of the *Advocate*, 27/11/91.

Advocate coverage of the Emerald Beach 'Siege'.

STORY ONE: Ten Minuters

Interview with Margaret Beckett and Brian Beckett: 26th May 1998, Bruxner Park Road, Coffs Harbour.

> Margaret and Brian live on the side of a banana clad hill just north of Coffs Harbour, with sweeping views up and down the coastline. Margaret came to live in Coffs Harbour in 1959, marrying Brian who has always lived there. Brian was a councillor and deputy mayor at the time of the outfall, and a staunch supporter and friend of the mayor, John Smith. They remain very angry over the outfall issue, believing that the newly arrived city people should have had more respect for the views of long term Coffs Harbour residents who were in favour of the sewerage scheme. Our interview was not taped and hence is retold here in the third person. However the words are those of the Becketts', drawn from detailed notes that I took as we talked and returned to the Becketts for editing.

Margaret came to Coffs Harbour when the township was just a little place. She was a Sydney person, although she'd spent a few years before that as a school teacher at Bellingen. She remembers one occasion in the Bellingen general store, where the other teachers were fingering the goods and talking in their uppity city ways. Looking across the store she saw the local shop keeper glaring at them. It was then that she learned about the local/newcomer division and the ways the city girls saw themselves as superior. Margaret didn't want to see herself in this way and she became very aware of the city slicker attitude of superiority over the people born in the local area, or its long-time residents.

She felt that change came so quickly to Coffs in the 1970s. They sold their banana plantation and converted their grazing land on the highway into a caravan park. This was because their rates had increased so steeply and they hadn't been allowed to subdivide their land. The increasing tourist trade meant a caravan park seemed the best option. She remembers the first three to four years as happy ones in the park. The same families would come each year and some families lived there.

But things started to change rapidly after Labor got into federal government in 1972. The atmosphere changed in the caravan park. Labor policy allowed a problem dropout population to grow who could survive on the dole. The residents changed as people came in greater numbers from the city, with no ideas of getting work. The change in the park was reflected across Coffs. The park became unpleasant. Young people were living together out of wedlock and with a young family themselves, they felt this was a bad influence on their own children. They asked some residents to leave. In the end it became too bad and they sold the park and bought holiday flats.

I asked how people felt about this influx of tourists and new settlers. Margaret said that even Brian didn't like it at first, as the character of their town changed. She said that once you always knew everyone in town. For example, Saturday morning shopping would take hours because of all the people to stop and talk to. When you walked down the street you nodded at everyone, and if there was someone you didn't know - you'd stop the next person and ask them who that person was. Someone would know who they were, where they'd moved from, whose house they'd bought. Then, Coffs was a big village.

Brian believes that there is certainly a wedge between the country and the city. Both groups need the other, but the country is ignored by the city. That gap is not narrowing. In Coffs the new people think it's their place. The older residents were happy to see new people come and the place grow. When it came to the outfall [which would have allowed population growth] he could have understood it if the old residents had wanted to stop growth because they felt the place was growing too big. But all the older people he talked to were in favour of the outfall. It's the 'Johnny Come Latelys' who are opposed to growth. They don't have the right to demand their wishes over the top of the wishes of the long-time residents.

Why should they come here and stop growth, Brian asked. If they wanted no growth they should go to Nana Glen or somewhere, although perhaps the same arguments could be put out there. He felt that you can't stop still - you either have to go backwards or go forwards. There is a certain population figure that creates growth and prosperity and he wanted the children of the town to be able to get work.

Brian said that growth has brought good doctors, good shops and other signs of progress to Coffs. In earlier times Grafton was the big centre where people from Coffs had to go if they wanted something. Now people from Grafton come to Coffs. Growth has brought better facilities. Coffs went from a tiny hamlet to a modern city and the people who lived there - the older residents- approved of that growth. There have been many arguments about a greedy council allowing ever more development, but that development has brought more services to Coffs, more money, and such things as more education facilities.

As our conversation progressed, Margaret said that it would be obvious by now that she remains very angry about the whole issue. She is very angry that new residents of the past ten years, the ten minute residents, would come and demand the halting of

the outfall and the slowing of growth. It should have been up to the long-time residents to say what should happen - those who had worked here, brought up their children, contributed to the community. Those are the people who have the right to say what should happen in the region, not those who just arrived. The anti-outfall people wanted to stop growth, possibly because they didn't want the place to change. And yet people don't recognise change. For example they think the forest in Bruxner Park is virgin - but the top sections used to be quite bald as they were clear-felled for a sawmill site.

Margaret was proud to talk about her greenie characteristics, which went back to the 1970s. She said she has been a long-time avid composter and recycler and feels she is one of the original environmentalists. Because of this she asked Brian to look into all the alternatives to putting an outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. A number of alternatives were quickly seen not to be viable. For example the idea of creating wetlands was becoming increasingly problematic with the increase in Ross River fever and other mosquito carrying infections. And, she said, no one took into account the different topography or the differences in rainfall between Coffs Harbour and other examples of functioning wetlands.

She had friends with whom she no longer has contact due to the outfall. There were those who were adamant that the outfall would bring destruction of the Headland and environment. However, people wouldn't go out and look at the place or listen to the explanations of the proposal. They wouldn't listen to the scientific and professional evidence being given. Margaret said that she really didn't talk much about it any more because it was still upsetting.

One example was that people believed that blasting of the Headland could lead to its destruction. However Council had professional advice on that - the highly accurate methods used which allowed one to blast narrow chambers in Sydney right next to other buildings. Margaret was fully confident that no collapse of the Headland due to blasting was imminent. Many opponents of the outfall were suspicious of the bureaucracy and professionals. One man from Woolgoolga told her that he didn't believe the bureaucracy could promise that things would work as they believed.

People used to ring their home crying in fear of what was happening to them out at Emerald Beach [at the time of the Siege]. If they supported the outfall going through - they were harassed. One of Margaret's friends left Emerald Beach because of the hostility and danger. Her small son was cut by glass - not badly- from a window that

had been broken by rocks thrown at it by anti-outfallers. Tyres were slashed. People were scared.

Margaret described the protest as a very well organised, military style campaign, run by a few people only. She said she could name about twenty people who were the active organisers and agitators. Margaret and Brian had a solicitor friend who lived out there who would go and see what was happening. They had walkie-talkies and were highly organised for early morning events. They had groups to write letters - and they bombarded the media and politicians with letters. That's when Margaret learned about the power of writing to politicians. And, she said, the media really won the day for the anti-outfallers.

Brian said the consequence of the Look-At-Me-Now outfall not going through has been that development on the northern beaches was stopped. The green government under Carr has brought in environmental laws that have stifled development. The government has gone environmentally mad. For some individuals with small holdings, the halting of the outfall could have sent them bankrupt. For many years Coffs was growing faster than Port Macquarie and Ballina. Now both are growing faster than Coffs.

The Council would have built it if it hadn't been for the Carr government's win. The anti-outfall protest was a very well run campaign but Council would not have backed down. The average person in Coffs, the developers, builders and business people just wanted the outfall built. Coffs and Sawtell people have been paying for the northern beaches for long enough.

STORY TWO: Destroying a way of life.

Interview with Mark Ingelby, Linda Ingelby and Mark Wittleton; 24th April 1998, Emerald Beach.

> Mark, Linda and Mark W. are friends from the early days of the outfall battle coming to
> Emerald Beach in the late 1980s. Mark and Linda live in Emerald Beach with their two children
> and Mark W. lives with his family back down the highway on the northern beaches. Mark and
> Mark spearheaded the early anti-outfall activities with a few others at Emerald Beach. They both
> had jobs which allowed them to work on the campaign in the daytime - living in houses, as Mark
> W described it, where the phones never stopped. Linda, with Sue Quigley, did much of the
> catering for the regular bbq's held to raise funds and keep spirits high. Asked for some of the
> memories of the protests that came to mind, Linda said making lentil patties - they were coming
> out of her ears. The organisation and months of the Siege at Emerald Beach wore them to the
> core. Their story is edited from our longer taped interview.

Jo: When did you [Mark and Linda] come to Emerald Beach, or have you been here forever? *Mark I:* No, we moved here in 1982. We basically went all the way from Nowra right through to Noosa looking at all the places we thought we'd like to live. We narrowed it down to two places, Forster and Coffs, and we chose here. At that stage we thought Coffs had a bit more to offer in the way of a hospital and education and everything for when we had kids, 'cause we knew we weren't far off having kids. We also spent a fair bit of time around here [Emerald Beach], coming back twice. We really loved it and decided - yep - we'd move here.

Linda: We thought - oh look at this, pretty neat - three beaches, 'back beach' good for surfing. He wasn't interested in surfing, more swimming and fishing. Surfing had got too crowded in Sydney so he pretty much gave it away. *Mark I:* And then when we moved up here the surfing all just came flooding back. We decided we were definitely going to stay. Couldn't get work here so we bought a business to be able to stay, and that was it. We've been here ever since rather than leave 'cause I just love the place.

Jo: So you're not planning on moving? *Mark I:* Maybe when we retire we'd move somewhere, but only to a place with a better surf break. *Linda:* Well that's not really important to me. *Jo:* Is the beach important to you too Linda? *Linda:* Oh sure. At that time it was especially - bringing up young children. I walk every morning and I used to walk over all the beaches and headlands. *Mark I:* Still do. *Linda:* Well I have to go a different route now because of National Parks where I can't take the dog. But before - when I was allowed to take the dog - I went that way.

Mark I: There are no major crowds here; good quality surf all the time. You've got the islands off the coast which make this part of the coast pretty unique and more attractive generally to look at. And the mountains being really close too which also, I reckon, puts it in the same ball park as Byron Bay in that regard. *Mark W:* Well we have more forest cover than Byron Bay - beautiful trees and nice rolling hills. But the mentality of the population up there is more conservation minded. *Mark I:* Which is ridiculous because there is a lot more to lose around here and yet we are still stuck in this old Coffs Harbour redneck 'I was here before you' mentality.

Linda: Another thing I think in the beginning that drew us to this place was that it was only fifteen minutes to Coffs Harbour by car. Coffs Harbour people think we live out in the sticks and that's great - they can stay there - because you know, it keeps the crowds away. And for us ex-Sydney people, even though we moved out of Sydney sixteen years ago, it's just an easy drive into town.

Mark and Linda felt that when they first moved to Emerald Beach the village was more of a close knit community and that was lost for a while in the mid 80s. However once the outfall issue arose, it rekindled that strong community feel.

Mark I: The outfall polarised it all again. See, I probably wouldn't have known you before the outfall debacle Jo or Mark. [To Mark W.] - you and I met pretty much through it. *Mark W:* We actually met the first time in Moonee days. *Linda:* We marched in the Woolgoolga outfall protest as well.

Mark I: [In the early days of the outfall proposal coming to Emerald Beach] a lot of people just believed it wasn't going to happen. You couldn't get a commitment out of them. *Mark W:* or they believed the opposite - that you couldn't beat them and there was no point fighting it.

Jo: So what was it that drove you to work so hard on something like that? *Linda:* Destroying a way of life. *Jo:* Why would it have destroyed a way of life? *Linda:* It was like a string effect. Not just for us, but thinking - well- if they put one in there [Emerald Beach] they could put one in off Sandy Beach headland and as the population grew, there would be all these little outfalls. Having come from Sydney and seen what's done down there - and on the Central Coast which is a better example - the populations just grew enormously because they could just spew more sewage out.

Mark W: The thing that kept me going was the public works engineers. If maybe they had been upfront and honest with us, they might have been able to convince us.

But there were certain things - blatant lies - like the overflows, and so many things like the currents on the headlands. They'd be telling us that the currents would go out to sea, but the surfers know - we know where the currents go.

Jo: So how did the whole thing sort of impact onto you? *Mark I:* Oh it drove us mad really. *Jo:* Does it still have any impact or has it all gone? *Mark I:* No, it's in the back of your mind. Every time I go for a surf at Shellys I look at it and I suppose you get the warm inner glow.

The sound of car horns, blown by people driving around the district, was the signal that bulldozing and other work was starting for the day on the protest site.

Mark I: The one thing that a lot of people would probably attest to is after the protests and arrests and everything else, that when you heard somebody holding the car horn on it would make your guts churn. Nobody used to like the old drive around the suburb with the hand on the horn because it meant you had to get out of bed early and wind up getting arrested or what ever else. A lot of people hated that.

Linda: Because we live on the road which the trucks and the tractors came up to get to the work site, it even got to the stage where you would hear the Cleanaway [pumpout] truck coming up the road, and you'd sit there thinking - 'Oh no'.

Mark W: How about the ladies' coffee morning Linda? *Linda:* Oh yeah that was funny. *Jo:* Tell me about that. *Linda:* I organised a group of these ladies - mums and their kids, lots of prams - and we met in our front yards and we had some trees across the front at that stage. So we stood behind them until we made sure - we knew there was a convoy of trucks coming to the compound. So when the six of them turned into our street we just quietly walked into the middle of the road and it took a very long time for them to get through. So we got very good at delaying tactics without getting arrested.

Jo: So what did you know of Coffs and its reputation for development and progress issues before you came here? *Linda:* We came with our heads buried in the sand. We were just young twenty-year-olds that came to this area because it was a nice place to live. We knew nothing of the politics. *Mark I:* Not interested in politics at all. We came up here purely because it was a beautiful bit of coast, nice climate.

Mark I: What's the old adage - you're not a local till you've lived here for eleven or twelve years? That's what we were told, and then all of a sudden one of the old locals said that to me and I said to him one day: 'I've been here eleven, nearly twelve years', and he said: 'Oh well, now you're just a blow in'. It didn't make any difference to me.

We were aware of the attitude but it didn't worry us until you really fall foul of it and see what it's capable of and how far its tentacles extend.

At the end of the interview: Jo: Is there anything else you want to add? *Linda:* The initial reason we came here is still valid today. *Mark I:* It's still a nice clean, beautiful place that's not quite as crowded as some. The people in the community are good people. Still let your kids wander around the streets. There was no way I was going to bring up kids in Sydney. I had spent a fair bit of my life in cities but I always remember the best part of my life as a child was when I wasn't in the cities. That was why I wasn't going to have kids in the city - why I looked all up and down the coast and had to have somewhere that was out of the city.

STORY THREE: Just doing me job

Interview with Glen Shipman: 29th April 1999, Coffs Harbour

> Glen has lived all his life in the Coffs Harbour region except for some time away on the railways. He grew up on a dairy farm at Nana Glen and came into Coffs to work in his teens. He remembers the timber yards at the Jetty piled high with logs ready to go on the ships that docked there. Coffs was a place where there were always as many jobs as you wanted to take on. After the railways he worked in explosives, bulldozing and eventually started his own earth-moving company. At the time of the outfall he owned his own equipment and was subletting to the contractor working out at Emerald Beach. By 1991, however, Coffs Harbour had joined the rest of Australia in recession. After the outfall he sold his equipment and moved into security work where he remains today. Glen's story is edited from a longer taped interview.

Jo: Do you remember when the northern beaches' subdivisions went in? *Glen:* Yeah - little places, but then they grew up. They were only little shanty towns - fishing – holidays - little gravel roads. Land was reasonably cheap. A lot of people moved from town - a lot of people come in from Victoria. The developers took on with the subdivisions and housing and industrial sites. We lost a lot with the [loss of the] port etc, but all this other changed too. We lost one section and gained in another.

Jo: Did you know about what was going on out at Emerald Beach before you got involved? *Glen:* Well I'd heard what was going on out there, but it wasn't in a big way. I knew there was a few demonstrations and that out there. Me job was to go out there with earthmoving equipment and trucks just to do the proper roads - put service roads in for pipelines, cart material in. There was a big compound put in – and they just hindered our work until eventually it was stopped. *Jo:* You mean the protesters? *Glen:* Yeah. They just hindered and hindered. I just believe that they won - they won it- they didn't want it in their back yard but they didn't care where else it went. They're the only ones that suffered 'cause they didn't get their sewerage on and it's still going on now - it's a real mess.

We discussed who was out there protesting. I asked about the ferals. Well I reckon every demonstration I've seen – TV etc- I reckon the same people have been there. Like in the bush - timber - up around Dorrigo – that kind of people. But as I said [earlier] there was a massive lot of locals – their human chains – stood there and bad mouthed ya. But they were never in the confrontations with ya. Alph Williams who just stood for the Labor party – he was leading them.

But I mean to say - not a lot of work was around at that time. You know - it was hurtin'. I was lucky 'cause I owned me truck - but those who didn't own earthmovers,

well they just said 'see you later fellas' - 'no more contract'. Some guys had bought machinery to do that job.

Jo: For yourself - that didn't put you out of work? *Glen:* No it didn't. I had planned for six months work though, and it was six months I didn't get. It was worth a lot and I had to go and find other work. And I'd lost contracts prior to that because I took that one on. But when I did take it on I never ever dreamt that we'd have that trouble – we just thought it was a pipeline going through.

Jo: There hadn't been anything like that around Coffs before? *Glen:* Not like that. It happened in the bush – but not this scale. There were doctors [out there] – there were a lot of people from here who knew me as a kid - older women who knew me as a kid- they were there - they knew who you were. *Jo:* So there were Coffs Harbour people there as well? *Glen:* Oh yeah - they came from everywhere.

I think they were poisoned into it - into believing it was worse than it would have been. I still to this day don't believe it would have been a problem. But you tried to get ya trucks in there to work - ya couldn't work. You were blocked from the road. Ya had tripods. You'd have people jump on ya truck. You'd get blokes who'd jump out of the bush and you'd put ya brakes on real quick - and you'd have someone on ya blind side and they'd jump off and they'd make believe you'd run over them - said you'd assaulted them. They done wicked things to you to try and stop ya, and we were only the meat in the sandwich.

Jo: What other kinds of things did they do? *Glen:* They put logs across the road – or this big rock which you'd have to come and clean up. People would jump out of bushes. It'd take ya two hours to get from down the street, down the bottom there to the top. They just walked - and while they were moving ya couldn't do a thing about it and they just had ya blocked off. And you'd take a load away and come back and they'd do it again to ya.

Jo: So it was a pretty effective slowing method? *Glen:* Oh yeah! (laughs a bit) And we'd get cranky – give them a bit of a budge with the truck. You could get through, but you'd kill somebody so you just had to ease up. They'd sing songs and carry on when you went up the road. If it [hadn't finished when it did] something would've happened. It's like the bush - we'd had enough. We had to make a living. We just couldn't afford our gear tied up like that. When ya got a truck and ya got people in front - well a truck like I had - idling and long, real slow gear change - you get motor

damage, gear box damage, 'cause you were just idling. Ya had to keep moving with them. Then they'd pull up and we'd think - ok, let them get fifty yards ahead. And we'd be in convoy - four or five trucks - and we'd be all locked up. And then they'd stop as soon as we stopped.

We weren't on an hourly rate - we were on a contract rate. I was on an hourly rate with me machines - but if I was told to put in a contract to shift such and such many thousand meters – I had to move it. But if I was taking all day to move just a bit of it - well I was falling behind. No wonder we were getting frustrated.

Jo: Were there contractors who lost their business? *Glen:* A couple of them went over - lost out bad. 'Cause you go in and buy some equipment at $300,000 - set yourself up - and ya contract stops- and ya gotta find other work and there isn't any. I was lucky 'cause I owned me own equipment - but the main contractor did buy a lot of his own equipment too.

There was people there I knew - standing there on the road saying 'what are you doing Shipo? Why are you doing this?' They're asking me the question!! They were ex policemen - people who lived around the place - people who just wanted to be a nuisance. But they weren't the ferals - they were local people. And it got pretty bad – people that ya knew. And when me vehicle was in town and doing other work they'd target ya – 'oh he worked out at Emerald/ Look-At-Me-Now'. It even come back to the point to find work they made it difficult 'cause of that – they bad mouthed ya – even though I always classed meself as a good grader worker and I had good men workin' for me. It went on for years after. For a long time after - all of us who was out there – all the contractors and sub-contractors – we all got it.

It got really personal - got really bad ya know. Years later - they called us destroyers and all that out there. The tensions are still there today. *Jo:* Yeah - in what ways? *Glen:* I got a bloke who come round here to do some work a couple of years ago - from Emerald Beach - and we had a heated discussion about that 'cause he knew I'd been out there and I knew he'd been out there. He said 'maybe I shouldn't be here'? I said 'I got ya to do a job for me and I didn't know who ya were'. He said 'no – we had our problems out there.' 'Yeah I know - but you got a job here now- I can't hunt ya for

that reason even though you are probably one of the ones helped cost me a lot of money.' He said 'no - I find a lot of that problem when I'm going around doing me jobs.' He was copping it both ways too. So - we give them a hard time - they give us a hard time. It just goes to show that it didn't die down that quick - and I was only a bloke trying to make a living.

STORY FOUR: The People's fight

Interview with Alph Williams; 3rd November 1996: Emerald Beach

Alph lives near the top of Dammeral Cresent in Emerald Beach, with north facing views across the beaches to distant headlands, and his back door facing onto the street which gave traffic access to Look-At-Me-Now Headland. An American with Australian citizenship, and high school teacher in the area since the mid 1970s, Alph became the public face of the anti-outfall protesters. His part brought him enduring enmity and bitterness amongst the pro-outfall lobby and both staunch defenders and some antagonists amongst the anti-outfallers. Few amongst their ranks, however, could deny his pivotal role in the campaign that unfolded from the days of the Siege through to the Carr Government's decision to halt the outfall. Alph's edited story comes from our taped interview.

Jo: Why and how did you come to be involved in the whole Emerald Beach saga? *Alph:* I had left Coffs in 1982, '83 and I came back in July 1987. I bought the block [where he now lives] knowing this issue was up and running. I was involved for a number of reasons. I think a lot of it was simply the idea of empowerment of the common person.

I came back here and the Look-At-Me-Now issue had just started. We had a number of meetings down at the caravan park. Initially STOP was formed - at that stage I became involved. They did some terrific work with getting the issue profiled, but I really felt that as long as we remained an Emerald Beach concern we weren't going to do very well. At that time there were a number of other issues popping. So - if we could get all these people together, not just for the Look-At-Me-Now issue, but for all these issues, and lobby that way - and of course that's what we did [the 1989 rally in Coffs Harbour].

By late 1991 the issue had come to a head - the bulldozers were here. We had done a lot of preliminary work. I was on the Trades and Labor Council. I had support from them. I had support from the Teachers Federation. So we had a number of groups that were very much against the outfall.

Anyway - work started. We immediately tried to get a court action going. Up until that stage there had only been about twenty-six arrests. The Land and Environment Court upheld the Mayor and we went to appeal - and that's when the fight really sort of hit the ground.

So that weekend we actually set ourselves up. Somebody brought down two-way radios and all sorts of things for us to use. So we had a communication relay set up, we had maps set up, we were very, very well organised. The Sunday night we pre-

agreed to shift radio channels in case we were being monitored etc. I set the alarm for three in the morning - people slept the night downstairs. I had the scanner on - I could hear people calling for cabs and such like, but all of a sudden I'm overhearing McDonald's voice, the police sergeant.

I rocketed out of bed - it was about four am. I radioed them [down at the site] - they were aware of what was going on, and I started the phone tree. Two people would call another two - so we could access an amazing number of people - a couple of hundred in five minutes. It didn't come as a surprise [that the police action would start] this early, but it came as a surprise that they were wearing balaclavas and had machetes.

So by the time I had finished the calls I could actually see the cars rolling down the road and hear the horns blowing. And by the time I got down there, there were already a couple of hundred people down there. I think the police were stunned by the fact that we could organise it so quickly.

Anyway this went on for some weeks - the arrests. Sometimes it would slow down, sometimes it was rainy days and nothing would happen, but most of the time the pressure was on. We would hold barbecues every Friday, fundraisings, meetings every day - every morning at seven am and every afternoon at five pm - to organise the strategy and tell people what was happening.

People were intimidated, a few people lost their jobs, people were insulted. There were strip searches that took place; there was definite intimidation - there was no doubt about it. And of course I can understand that. They wanted us to stop what we were doing. There were years - I don't think anyone realised this - where I couldn't go and have a drink in a bar. There were enormous amounts of threats.

I don't want to face it again and I don't think anybody wants to face that again. The fact that they [the community] did it, and the fact that it involved an enormous camaraderie of neighbours that vaguely knew each other, the fact that it gave an enormous sense of identity and spirit to the place - was one of the benefits from it. But it was an enormously hard fight.

The Siege went on for some time. Towards the end our numbers had fallen because people who had been arrested were given court orders not to appear near the Headland or the morning meetings. At this time there seemed to be more police than residents.

During this time at morning meetings when I was addressing the residents, I was tired - we were all tired - and I looked at them and said, 'We'll beat them in the end because we are smarter than they are'. It's one of the things Bill Wilman, a local resident, fondly remembers about the morning meetings. And I think we were smarter than they were. They used unlimited power to get what they wanted to get, and of course it didn't work. They didn't think things out; they became oppressive and that pissed people off.

You can't slap people around and throw them in the back of paddy wagons and turn around and say - trust me! They had already blown it. They blew it - October 16th 1991 - with the first arrest. The argument [from Council] was 'look - if it's going to hurt something, we'll tell them that - and we'll compensate them somehow.' There was this whole idea of arrogance - 'look I'm manager, I know what the hell I'm doing - and you people are plebs.'

I always said we largely owe this victory to John Smith because of the way he handled it. Because he pipped off people so badly. The other thing he did though, was when he did that - he pushed me into the public perception of the rival. When somebody puts their feet down and says, 'I'm not wearing this shit any more' - I don't think its extreme - I just think it's standing up. But it's often branded as radical. I think what happened is that the extreme and radical actions of Council pushed that kind of response - and that was the public perception at the time [that the anti-outfall supporters were radical]. I think that dwindled as time went on.

One of the things unique about this issue was that it was a community issue. It wasn't particularly a sole green issue. I got accused of being a green, but I'm not a green. I believe in the environment, but I also believe in people and I believe in the idea of empowerment. And I think it was probably that, as much as the outfall thing, that motivated me.

There were people who would have seen the same sort of action taking place somewhere else and would have found it very difficult to empathise with people [in those protests], although they certainly would now. We were the bad guys, or certainly seen as the bad guys by certain people in the community, and they began to understand what it was like to wear those shoes as well.

So that was a huge learning and growing process. And I thought at that time that there were some overwhelming - some really nice things occurred. A lot of prejudices

and intolerances were dropped. Probably some of them have re-occurred again, but during that time - and I suppose it's like war - they were dropped. I know apparently there was a thing against a couple of the homosexuals who are here - and at the same time there were others who said - no, they were with us, they were part of us, they fought like hell with us. And they did. I thought that was a magic thing to happen.

Jo: Do you have any idea what percentage of people in Emerald Beach itself would have been on side*? Alph:* I've no idea of the percentage. Mind you, we had times - we had 3,000 on the Headland. A lot of people who lived here would have liked to support us but they had to go to work. But others came up here anyway and came up before work - that happened. It's hard. Certainly there were people at Emerald that were dead set against it and just wanted the sewage on - regardless.

It's an enormous sort of heat - inspirational - the fact that people say 'well, shit it can be done'. My father came out [from America] in 1989 and walked along the Headland one day. He said 'you can't beat them' and I said 'just watch me'. You know, it's people of that generation - and certainly from the working class - that thought you can't beat money. But I think it's important to people to understand that - you can. So all those things are pluses. I can't think of any negatives.

I do think that the people out here really suffered - they went through a lot of hardship, hate and animosity from the overall community. But they eventually grew from the experience. And, let's face it, up to date they were proven right. So it's important.

I suppose it's like anything else. You get what you put into something. People put everything into this.

STORY FIVE: The appropriate thing to do

Interview with Brian Nolan and Celia Nolan: 5th February 1998, Emerald Beach

> Celia and Brian bought the land they now live on across the road from Emerald Beach itself in 1975. They were planning for their retirement but then decided to come and live there while still busy in their working lives, moving up from Sydney in 1980. Celia ran her medical practice in Coffs Harbour, with a branch in Emerald Beach, while Brian commuted to his Sydney medical practice for another ten years. As the Siege wore on they found themselves estranged from the growing community solidarity of the village because they felt an outfall was the proper course of action at that time. Their story is edited from our longer taped interview.

Jo: Why [did you choose] Emerald Beach? *Brian:* It was just an attractive beachy area - remote - there weren't many people here - this was a perfect block. It was pretty clear, with subsequent building, one would never find something quite like it again – by the beach - right on the edge of a little recreation reserve. And when we decided to build a house here I mowed it – or prepared it - and encouraged the lawn to grow here, and over a few years we had a complete lawn over this part of the reserve. *Celia:* Yes I'd forgotten that.

Brian: We'd been looking for several years before that, up the coast. Here was virtually everything that one hoped for in retirement - those normal things. *Jo:* What are those normal things? *Celia:* Climate is one of them. *Brian:* To live by the seaside where I could have a boat and fish. Agreeable weather, suitable latitude.

Jo: Tell me about the sewerage issue as you remember it developing. *Celia:* Because of the pumpout system and its regular costs, we all hoped that once the population grew that that service, as well as curbing and guttering, would come. But it was all at the time that there was a lot of publicity about the sewerage system in Sydney - a lot of talk about raw or maybe only primary effluent going into the sea. And so I think people here were fearful that that is what we were going to get. At that time there developed the ideas of not having outfalls or trying to use reuse more.

Celia described their own interest and research into reuse practices when they were holidaying in Rotorua. She then returned to the topic of Emerald Beach. And I'm not sure at what point they started to talk about tertiary treated effluent being part of the deal - but it was fairly early, certainly before the election because I remember that it was *the* main issue of those council elections [September 1991]. I seem to remember that actually councillor John Smith - who none of us liked - was the only one to make a very clear statement about what he thought was the appropriate thing to do, which was

to use tertiary treated effluent to an ocean outfall. And from that time on they were talking about highly treated effluent.

Brian: Then the council had some of their people look into an appropriate place and decided that an outfall site at Look-At-Me-Now would be the most appropriate place. You have to also realise, in those early days when we first came here, that maybe half of the houses here did not have a pumpout collection system. They had their own septic tank system which overflowed into trenches on their land. And always in this area there was evidence of it - you could smell it and frequently see it - running along our little drains by the street - evidence of overflow from either septic tanks or the holding tank of the pumpout system. For years there was no way of knowing how long it might be before the place was sewered.

Jo: What was your feeling about numbers – those anti or pro the outfall, or didn't care? *Celia:* Well, you know, it was a subject that became very heated. And a lot of people were afraid to say - you had that impression. I used to come up with my thing: 'oh well, it's tertiary treated effluent and the prevailing wind is from the north east and the tide, sorry current, is predominantly north to south. So why should we be worried about treated effluent going there?' But people were wary of saying what they thought - and because I said these sort of things people would say to me on the quiet, while walking along the beach, that they agreed with me but wouldn't say so to anybody else.

So it was tricky. And I did write a letter to the paper trying to put my reasonable view – saying I saw it as a compromise, a reasonable compromise, to get a sewerage system for the community in an area where, because of the poor soil and the heavy rainfalls, other methods of sewerage were not suitable and complete reuse would be unlikely to be possible. Anyway the next day or day after someone threw bricks on our roof – it might have been a coincidence but we decided to go quiet on writing letters.

Brian: You might have revealed some of your thoughts too in your submission to the EIS. Anyway, friends used to come and stay with us from Sydney and one in particular was a fairly senior person to do with waterways and water standards etc in Sydney. He was one of the scientific people and he knew the technological features of treated sewage. And he confirmed our opinion that at that time, the most appropriate thing to solve our problems of the non-existence of sewerage throughout the area, was that the place should be sewered and the effluent should be taken to the nearest ocean

outfall. It being understood too, at that time, that the effluent produced would be as pure as it could - which it hasn't been improved much since then.

Celia: It was at a time when people were realising a lot of the problems about these things. *Brian:* Environmental awareness was just getting big, big. We are talking about adults who had become aware of their environments in the 60s and 70s – and this is a whole new world. However, the technology of disposal of sewage hadn't moved anywhere near as much as people's awareness of desirable and undesirable means of doing these things. Lots of people had become aware of the wonderful things that can be done in many aspects of our environment, [but] it was simplistic, I believe, in the minds of many of those people, to imagine that the solution could only be to reuse it somewhere. Lots of their ideas were unbelievable - unreal- why don't we pump it over the mountains!

My reasons for believing it was an appropriate thing to do were based on my understanding of the physical principles of dilution - dispersal of these in large bodies of water etc – things one learned about when one did public health in a medical education. I couldn't find any argument that this was an atrocious thing to do. The alternatives – that there was no sewerage - seemed to me as being much worse.

And then another serious problem which arose at the time - the implications of having that outfall were misrepresented by many of the more vigorous of the protesters. I could have lived with a bit of exaggeration of the ill effects that might eventuate by putting that stuff out there - but it became more than that - untruths, lies, gross misrepresentation to such an extent that for me personally, it made me totally unable to have any sympathy with that form of protest.

Jo: Why was council so intent on putting it out here? *Brian*: Nothing else could have made so much sense – *Celia*: in terms of developing and servicing this area. *Brian:* Mind you, just in case we are giving the impression that we found that putting sewage – however well treated- into the ocean or any other waterway, a good thing to do - that's not the case - not at all. It's an unavoidable requirement of urbanisation. Having sewage running in the streets is not acceptable in terms of modern urban development.

The big question – the only real question seeing as there are no other alternatives is - is this harmful or not? And one has to take that view and arrive at a decision as well as one possibly can. And I always felt that I arrived at the conclusion

that I did by considering many things that lots of other people would not have considered – would not have been familiar with.

Mind you it's not all settled yet. I wonder occasionally if it will ever really be forgotten here. But we seem to be taking one side of the argument which was contrary to the vast majority of the residents. *Celia:* No – I think in another ten years with new people it will all be forgotten - if there is some sewerage!

Brian: We didn't at any time toy with the idea of going somewhere else. [However] one felt a quite profound disappointment with the behaviour of so many people with whom one hoped to be one of in a community.

STORY SIX: Ordinary People

Interview with Lee Cahill, Greg Cahill and Cathy Wills: 8th February 1996, Emerald Beach.

Lee and Greg have lived in Emerald Beach since 1976, originally coming from Sydney to escape the pollution and crowds of city living. Cathy came from Sydney around 1983 and lives with Sam in the rural hinterland behind Emerald Beach. They were philosophically opposed to outfalls after living in Sydney and had deliberately moved north to surfing beaches free of outfalls. They all became heavily involved in the anti-outfall protests at Emerald Beach for its duration through to 1995. During the Siege, Greg came back and forth from work. Cathy was working two jobs and took time off without pay. She and Lee spent the weeks of the Siege at the site of the action. This edited story comes from our taped interview.

Jo: Why did you become involved in the outfall dispute? *Lee:* I was instantly horrified about an outfall at Look-At-Me-Now. I guess there was a bit of nimbyism in it - not just an outfall but that it would be out on Look-At-Me-Now - it was an absolute abhorrence. *Greg:* I must admit that I started off being a bit of a doubting-thomas because there did seem to be a lot of nimby in it. I was never sure what they were going to do with the sewage once they decided against an outfall. So I guess I dragged my feet a little bit to start with, didn't I. *Lee:* Yes you did.

Jo: So what changed? *Greg:* It's just as it came closer, people were talking about more options - the chance that there is a better way of doing it. *They talked about early protest activities prior to the Siege, such as trying to stop surveyors on the Headland.* *Greg:* We weren't very active in those days. We didn't know how to picket things and we more or less let them through.

Jo: Once it started, what were the images and events/stories that particularly come to you? *Cathy:* The very first morning that they started work down on the sand dunes – you remember that? *Lee:* Across from Carol's? Yes yes, because I'd been at Carol's that day. *Cathy:* Well there weren't a huge amount of people but quite a lot of people - and everybody thought it was a bit of a joke really, I think. I don't think anyone took it that seriously - but the police started arrests then. *Lee:* I sort of stood there but when the police asked me to move, I did and I was soooo nervous, 'cause others were saying - just go down to delay - delay.

Lee: [referring to a few days later] That was when you and I got arrested, wasn't it Cathy? That day Cathy was one of the first who leapt over and into the ditch. *Cathy:* I just stood there shaking. *Jo:* Why were you both so nervous? *Lee:* Oh, well - because I'd never had anything to do with policemen - socially, antisocially, or in any shape or

form. Having been a reasonably law-abiding person and only been pulled up for going through a stop sign once – that'd been my only contact with a policeman so they were rather strange beings anyhow!

Cathy: And that was a really interesting part too. A lot of the people were older people. And as Lee said, you know, you spend your life trying to stay within the framework of what's right and what's wrong - trying to not even get a parking ticket – and here you are faced with breaking the law, being arrested.

Jo: What do you think gave people that amount of strength to be able to do those things? *Lee*: I think we were sprinkled with fairy dust! Everybody acted most peculiarly for three months. *Cathy*: Well because it was just - everybody knew the outfall just wasn't the right thing to do - it really wasn't you know. And it came to the point where the council was really trying to bulldoze something through that wasn't right. It was against the people's wishes. It was an environmental disaster, even what they were doing as far as the bulldozing went, let alone putting more pollution into the ocean. People's beliefs were so strong about it.

Lee: And the more policemen, the more determined the people became I think. I guess the stubborn qualities in human beings really started to come out, because people were outraged about the way ordinary people were being treated. *Cathy*: and because they wanted to protect the environment. *Lee*: Of course - but I think there was a certain amount of outrage from ordinary people - as well as environmental concerns. *Cathy*: All of that.

Greg: I think pictures of people being dragged off into paddy vans really stirred a lot of people up. *Lee*: Well there were some really bad scenes. The ferals were probably a lot more philosophical about the treatment they received from the police than the locals. *Greg*: Well of course they'd probably dealt with it before and knew what to expect and of course we didn't. *Cathy*: Yeah - we were all pretty naive weren't we.

Cathy: There was a fair amount of intimidation too. It always seemed there was a police presence - at the fundraisers - where you'd never seen them before. There was this fellow with a camera and he was always poking it in people's faces. He was really trying to shake people up. *Lee*: It was hugely depressing - picking on people - people like [a young mother]. The woman policeman got her aside and told her that if she didn't

stop going down there with the baby, they'd be taking the child away because she wasn't a responsible mother.

Lee: There was the riot police, there was the dog squad, the - what are they called - SWAT. *Greg:* That was the morning... *Lee:* Yes - we knew it was going to happen. We had this signal that as soon as we heard the horns down the street it would mean the police, or equipment, was going to start working. Greg was on early shift at work - six am start - so that meant the alarm went at five o'clock. So we had just woken up and it was still pitch dark – and we could hear the horns. So we thought 'o oh - I think this really means it'. So Greg and I just leapt in the car with our hand on the horn and everyone was down there by 5.30, 6 o'clock. It was just incredible.

Cathy: The police had balaclavas and machetes and German Shepherds. *Lee:* - but it was just incredible that by six o'clock when the light came up there were probably 2 or 300 locals there. *They discussed which the 'first day' of the Siege was. Lee breaks in:* ... my idea is that the beginning of the actual siege started the day that we all got down there at dawn.

Cathy: [reflecting on the arrests] Alph kept telling us - 'you are not breaking the law - the council is breaking the law. This is 6a zoning on the Headland. They have no right to be putting pipes up to the Headland when they are not allowed to put public utilities on public recreation land.' I don't know if any of us really took that in. All we knew was council shouldn't be doing it.

The Advocate - it seemed to us it was very pro-outfall. And it seemed as though the [Coffs Harbour] community was trying to be turned against the people at Emerald Beach and the anti-outfallers. *Lee:* It was an incredible community commitment [from Emerald Beach]. *Cathy:* A positive thing which brought the community, or a lot of the community, together. *Lee:* Oh look, I have just so many close friends - well Cathy for starters- and heaps of other people around who we are just so close with now, that we wouldn't have even known them to say g'day to.

Jo: And the personal impacts? *Lee:* Do you mean leaving scars or anything? *Jo:* Well, if that's what people thought. *Lee:* No, I think it was enlightening and a positive thing overall, especially considering it is one of the few environmental things which has had a happy outcome - *Greg:* in the long run. *Lee:* I guess it would have been a lot harder to wear if we'd lost.

Cathy: It's probably made people more cynical about government - local government in particular. *Lee*: Oh yes - and the police force for sure. *Cathy*: Financially it was pretty hard on people.

Lee: You used to wake up in the morning with a sick feeling in your stomach. You didn't think - oh great it's another new day; more - oh no, I have to get up and face it again. *Cathy*: Yep, it was pretty wearing. People lost a lot of weight - all that tramping up and down the sand dunes.

Telling Stories

Stories are powerful tools in the construction of knowledge and history making. While they may often be a poor source of accurate dates, times and numbers, they are powerful bearers of individual and community feeling. The siege stories told above express only a fraction of each individual's larger stories of the outfall crisis, and the larger community pool of stories to be heard and told. However they provide some insight into the complex brew of feelings that remain about the episode.

The story tellers in my project come from a specific group of participants. They were obviously the people, for one reason or another, with whom I crossed paths. For example each of the participants above, and the vast majority of those I interviewed, remain resident in the area. There are a whole swag of different stories to be told by those who have since left the region. There were others who declined to speak to me because of ongoing trauma associated with memories of the dispute, fear of retribution within the community, disinterest, or a belief that their stories were not worth telling. No doubt there are others who would have liked to tell me their stories if we'd met. The story tellers in my project were willing participants and hence are memory holders and shapers of the community.

The stories people tell of the outfall dispute therefore help make up a part of the history telling of the region, and are in themselves embroiled in their own process of history making. Each of the participants' stories has been shaped into a narrative, as the more formal process of history writing is also shaped in narrative.[2] This is achieved in at least two ways. Firstly, as the editor of these stories I have been integral to this process. Each interview was originally between 5,000 and 8,000 words and I have edited them down to around 1,500 words to form a narrative conjoining themes that were dispersed, returned to, circled around. This has been a collaborative process with all participants, where they have done final editing if they felt their stories needed greater or less emphasis on particular issues.

Secondly however, each of the stories was well thought through before I ever came to speak to people. Oral stories, especially delivered through interviews, are rarely careless ramblings, but more often thoroughly analysed and refined over months and

---

[2] LaCapra 1983; White 1987.

years through cogitation, conversation, letter and submission writing, political lobbying, complaint and debate.[3]

Over a period of five years I listened to people's stories about the outfall - in forty-nine formal interviews and at least as many chats at the beach, on the street, in shops, in planes, over coffees, breakfasts and dinners, from the northern beaches and Coffs Harbour to Sydney and beyond. In listening to stories it became apparent that within those retold to me, each social grouping with an interest in the outfall had also melded a set of stories that became part of the social memory of its individuals.[4] As Ann Curthoys made clear in her exploration of the Vietnam Anti-war Movement in Australia, participants' memories are 'constructed from an amalgam of personal memory with popular and academic imagination'.[5]

In Coffs Harbour, popular memory of the Look-At-Me-Now outfall dispute included stories circulated about particular events, and printed material aiding the submission writing and political argument distributed amongst the ranks of anti and pro-outfall activists. In a public forum the media provided the main representations of the issue through local and broader newspaper coverage, national magazines, television coverage locally and state wide in news and current affairs, all of which have been stored by protagonists on videos and in scrapbooks.[6]

Each social group who claimed some interest in the dispute has constructed a different 'Emerald Beach'.[7] Emerald Beach, as the physical place that inhabits the siege stories, conjures up different images and attendant representations. For some it is the site of personal enlightenment through politicisation, or a valiant environmental victory. For others it represents the site of moral and social disorder and decay. It is symbolic of a changed world for many - a disempowering new one for some; a disquieting distrust of institutions for others. David Harvey says: 'Struggles over representation [of places]

---

[3] Goodall 1987; Darian-Smith and Hamilton 1994.

[4] See Fentress and Wickham 1992; Tonkin 1992; Hamilton 1994 on social or collective memory and Sturken 1997 for what she calls cultural memory.

[5] Curthoys 1994:114.

[6] Mention has been made of the northern beaches dispute in the academic accounts of Beder 1989; Bonyhady 1993 and an article by Pearson 1995, although these would have had little if any influence on the collective memory. Many people, however, have read Ian Cohen's 1996 chapter on the LAMN dispute in his book *Green Fire*, causing some consternation amongst anti-outfallers that he has taken too much credit for what they see as their solely-locally organised dispute.

[7] See Curthoys 1994.

are ... as fiercely fought and as fundamental to the activities of place construction as bricks and mortar.[8]

Particular stories circulate within pro and anti-outfall ranks that have come to symbolise divergent understandings of the events of late 1991. Amongst pro-outfallers, a window in a child's bedroom broken by anti-outfallers is one such story. The village in which this happened, the actual perpetrators and whether or not the child was cut by glass from the broken window, varies. But the reason the story is told remains consistent - to highlight the violence that the anti-outfallers were claimed to be capable of, in turn providing evidence that these were radicals who were not part of the ordinary stock of residents.

Somewhere in most anti-outfallers' stories is raised the image of police carrying machetes, and Alsatian dogs brought into the protests. While some stories give a sense of the dogs at most of the protests, roaming the site, they were only present at the dawn raid. However the very presence of police dogs symbolised for the tellers their shock and outrage at their treatment by police, and their council who was seen to have initiated actions against them, as ordinary law-abiding citizens with no prior record of criminal or police offences. The machetes were carried to help clear the tea-tree and bush in the surprise raid. However they were seen to be out of place and utterly foreign in a 'civilised' country, perhaps unconsciously associated with the brutality of places like Rwanda.[9]

The same stories also have different meanings amongst different groups. For example the dawn raid of the police on the protesters camp is mentioned in stories from all sides. Similar metaphors of war are enlisted. For pro-outfallers, this is evidence of a militaristic style campaign against the outfall, organised by a small minority of dangerous people. For anti-outfallers, it is proudly repeated as evidence of an organised leadership supported by active and willing foot soldiers, ready to the call.

Protagonists

The common experience of being caught up in the direct action of the dispute at Emerald Beach delivered strange alliances across disparate groups amongst the anti-

---

[8] Harvey 1993:23.
[9] Sibley 1995.

outfallers in ways that were not repeated amongst pro-outfall ranks. However this did not mean that the anti and pro-outfallers formed two united and harmonious groups.

There were internal divisions amongst anti-outfallers around gender and political strategy. Beyond the similarities of middle class, 'white' upbringings of many of the protesters, there were deep gulfs in such areas as political and ideological philosophies, experiences in political actions and in lifestyle choices between alternates, ferals and those living more urban lives. Their motivations varied and shifted over time; some more concerned about a local and globalising environmental agenda, some galvanised into action through anger over their treatment by police and Council, some concerned over spreading suburban development encroaching on their place. (See chapter four for a detailed demographic outline of Emerald Beach protesters.)

Aboriginal people made up a separate grouping from the Emerald Beach protesters, with an interest in fighting an outfall off the Headland. While environmental activism had impacted onto a growing percentage of the Coffs Harbour populace by the late 1980s, as witnessed in the outfall protests, a similar strength of direct activism amongst Aboriginal locals around heritage issues had not as yet taken hold. According to Ken Craig, a Coffs-born indigenous man, the era of local Aboriginal elders' confidence to have a direct presence in such an issue was still to come. 'If the Look-At-Me-Now Headland ocean outfall issue happened today then you'd have Elders up there on site.'[10] Chapter seven explores some of these issues, including internal differences within the ranks of anti-outfallers over the meanings and implications of the claim that Look-At-Me-Now Headland was a place of indigenous significance.

Pro-outfall advocates were even more disparate, with few internal linkages. The most powerful were a group of high-profile businessmen, developers and councillors. It was generally left to the councillors and a smattering of the businessmen, predominantly in real estate, to make public comment beyond the letter section of the local papers in favour of the outfall. Brian Beckett said that it was very disappointing that 'despite the fact that large landowners and developers on the North Coast condemned Council for not pushing the outfall through, they gave little active support to Council.'[11]

---

[10] Interview NT 74.
[11] Interview NT 35. Also Interview T 55.

On the northern beaches a number of landowners had either held on to, or bought land for the purposes of subdivision. However the ongoing stagnation of subdivision for housing development, due to a lack of sewerage, brought looming economic troubles or stasis in their prospects of economic gain. Commenting on the consequences of the outfall defeat, Brian said: 'People have been stopped from developing their land. There are lots waiting and it has hurt people badly.'[12]

Public Works Department (PWD) engineers and council employees were two groups often assumed to be predominantly pro-outfall. However council staff had mixed views, but often felt unable to make any public declaration either for or against the outfall in deference to the strong pro-outfall stance of councillors.[13] Two Coffs Harbour engineers, Ernie Armstrong and John Tozer, did make their stance against ocean outfalls public, while other engineers made little public comment.

The public face of the PWD engineers was Warren Fowler, Acting Regional Manager for the Mid-North Coast, who had lived in Coffs since 1977. He believed his confidence that the outfall was the safest and most effective means of providing much needed sewerage to the region was shared by most of his colleagues. He felt the protesters did not understand the technological arguments, and that engineering expertise was denigrated. However the PWD, as a state bureaucracy, often found themselves in a tense relationship with Local Government in Coffs Harbour, and often not in agreement with councillors' handling of the sewerage crisis.[14]

Another disparate grouping of outfall supporters were those who had direct contact with the protesters, either because they lived at Emerald Beach or were working there on the protest site. They strongly disapproved of the direct-action strategies and those who took part. There was a lot of sympathy for the council labourers and contractors working on site from non-protesting old locals and Coffs Harbour residents. The building boom of the 1970s and mid 80s that accompanied the new settlers had allowed many long-term local men new opportunities to make successful livings, as rural employment rapidly shrank with global restructuring, and unemployment rates skyrocketed.

---

[12] Interview NT 35.
[13] Pers.comm 5/5/97; 22/3/99.
[14] Interview T55.

However, the 1990/91 Australia-wide recession hit Coffs Harbour particularly hard, coming as it did in the wake of the phenomenal rates of building development. In coinciding with the outfall dispute, which stopped local employment in hard times, the Emerald Beach protesters were often represented as the new, city people with selfish interests.

Some of those outfall supporters were people who had little interest in the environmental or technical questions of sewage. However, they did not necessarily have much sympathy with the big business or real estate concerns of the first pro-outfall group above, nor the tactics of the council and its mayor. One woman who has always lived in Coffs Harbour, and who started out supporting the outfall, suggested that as the dispute dragged on suspicions of old locals towards the 'blow-in' Mayor helped shift some of those people to start listening to the protesters.[15]

Tensions between long-term residents and recent settlers were hardly new or unique to the countryside, as the studies of Gray, Dempsey and others discussed in chapter two highlighted. The community shock and trauma activated through the direct-action protests at Emerald Beach served to draw out many simmering pressures which were now given voice. For example, the six stories of outfall protagonists raise some of the diverse and conflicting elements intrinsic to the processes of internal migration and place contestation, as they were manifest in the last third of the twentieth century on the North Coast.

Conflicting understandings of growth and development, lifestyle choices and personal investment in the community, were keenly articulated by all sides of the dispute. The Becketts' story in the Ten Minuters reflected the concern of many long-term Coffs Harbour residents about the consequences of the outfall dispute on individual and community prospects of wealth and prosperity of the region. This was understood to largely rest with strong, ongoing growth in population that the new patterns of internal migration had brought to the coast. In turn, this was seen to require affordable housing through new land subdivision and continuing growth in resort development, alongside other tourism.

For them, the other side to the population shift to the coastal countryside was the new moral and social danger posed by particular groups from the city. The Emerald

---

[15] Interview C 22.

Beach protesters were seen to encapsulate an array of these dangers such as selfish interests of newcomers to protect their own backyards, and harbouring jobless, dirty and sexually immoral ferals. Margaret's story echoed the sentiments of a number of stories retold to me, arguing that people's rights to act in place was contingent on the length of residence, and hence their investment, in the community. The length of residence of most of the new settlers at Emerald Beach, and the nomadic ferals, was understood to disqualify them from legitimately speaking and acting at Look-At-Me-Now.

The Inglebys in *Destroying a way of life* were typical of a number of Emerald Beach protesters, being recent settlers of the previous ten years and coming from Sydney to make new lives in the region. They deliberately chose Emerald Beach in their search for the best place to raise a family and provide themselves with the best lifestyle of their choice, buying a business to enable them to stay.

They shared the positive images of safety, community and fresh air in the countryside with long-term residents like Margaret. However their understandings of growth and development were diametrically opposed to the Becketts', believing an outfall would destroy the very lifestyle that had attracted their migration and settlement to the area in the first place. Outfalls, for them, meant ocean pollution and uncapped population growth in a region they believed could not sustain either.

The issue of differentiating long-time locals and new settlers was not Glen's concern in *Just doing me job*. In his story, locals were all those who lived in the area, amongst whom were people he had known all his life. His ongoing anger at the protesters is no less palpable than the Becketts, but is directed differently. The protesters stopped him working and earning his living.

Postwar internal migration to the rural coast brought an increasing diversification in class background. This was brought sharply into focus at Emerald Beach between council labourers and contractors, and many of the protesters. Stark divisions cannot be made because there were tradespeople, builders and country born amongst the protesters, and city bred amongst the workers on site. However there was a gulf in worldviews between Glen's working-class, country-bred background and the middle-class, city backgrounds of a number of the protesters.

Like the timber workers who have spoken to Don Watson and Ade Peace, Glen talked about the denigration of his local knowledge and denial or ignorance of his

expertise in his field.[16] A fiercely individualist, male culture requiring hard work to get by in tough economic times, was reflected in the stories of Glen and other workers. One builder, who has lived in the area all his life, set up an opposition between his constant, daily work routine and Emerald Beach people: 'who sit on the headland and smell the flowers'.[17] In many ways the workers on site were more foreign to some of the protesters than were the ferals.

Paul Kelly has talked about the 'end of certainty' that economic restructuring, as it escalated through the 1980s, brought to people's lives.[18] Individuals and groups have been differently equipped to face these new pressures, where the skills of the rural working class in many areas have been devalued and lost relevance. The Emerald Beach dispute became a focus for much wider economic and cultural changes that left many long-term local country people feeling economically and socially disempowered in their place.

The shifting focus in work skills, intellectual knowledge and societal concerns in the last third of the twentieth century is placed into sharp relief when comparing Glen and Alph. Both proud Labor Party supporters, they represented the yawning gulf in places between traditional Labor and new Labor. Despite Alph's credentials amongst particular unions in championing the anti-outfall protests at Emerald Beach, he came to be seen by many local Labour supporters as having deserted the working man. His sympathies towards environmental issues and community diversity reflected the contested, shifting focus of the Labor Party in the 1980s and 90s.[19]

In *The people's fight*, Alph established a common thread reflected in many of the stories of protesting Emerald Beach residents - that the dispute forged community solidarity across social differences which was a rewarding outcome of a traumatic episode. His story claimed the dispute as a solidly local event - organised, led and manned - which helped draw protesters into a closer sense of belonging to the area. The very actions of the protesters that many saw as proof of not-belonging, were for others the means of forging intense, long-term relationships with the place and people of the region.

---

[16] Watson 1990; Peace 1996, 1998.
[17] Interview C 27.
[18] Kelly 1994.
[19] Ibid; Taylor 1993.

For the Nolans' in *The appropriate thing to do,* their stance in favour of an outfall created them as outsiders over that period, in the place they had made their personal investment. Their belief that the outfall provided a rational, scientific solution to the health and environmental dangers of the unsewered village was reflected in the array of bureaucratic documents produced over the history of the dispute. For Brian, it was also an affront that the very people with whom he believed he had sufficient regard to belong in a community had proved irrational in their style of protest that was beyond the pale.

The middle classness of many of the protesters has worked both for and against them. As chapter four indicated, many Emerald Beach protesters self identified as middle class, and some have clearly recognised this as providing them with greater confidence and skills to act. The protesters whose stories appear in this chapter reflect the pride and sometimes the exhilaration, through tough times, that many now feel in their efforts to stop the outfall. But there were other people who could not bring themselves to be interviewed as they felt ongoing deep distress at their treatment within the broader community, and by the institutions that they had been brought up to believe worked for law-abiding people like themselves. To find themselves portrayed as the harbingers of moral and democratic decay has politicised some, and left bitterness and deep scars with others.

For Lee, Greg and Cathy in the final story, *Ordinary People,* their belief in the environmental soundness of their campaign was tinged with a different affront. While each of them had a slightly different focus and emphasis on the reasons for their source of strength in new circumstances - for Cathy the environment and for Lee their treatment by law-enforcement agencies - their world has been changed by their engagement in direct action. Most profoundly, a sense of disquiet and awakening to a less comfortable world has given them a different insight into the world they live in.

The question remains about who the *ordinary people* are. Just as *normal* is a relative term that presents particular lifestyles as naturalised, rather than the socially constructed reality of their making, *ordinary* works in the same way. Many protesters were appalled that a *good* mother could be threatened with the removal of her child as intimidation to stop her protesting. This was not in the realms of ordinary to most of the protesters, while for example, many Aboriginal people have historically experienced this reality as part of their ordinary lives. Arrest was another feature alien to most

protesters' life experiences, in comparison to other social groups historically targeted and exposed to such normalised behaviours.

....

By the late 1980s the convergence of new environmental awareness, new local and global economic imperatives and recognition of accelerated population pressures on the North Coast, saw competing interests in places erupting up and down the coast. Tensions over sewerage were not confined to Coffs Harbour, and questions of spreading suburbs along the rural coastline and large tourist developments were alive in a number of communities. However Emerald Beach was the only coastal community to take up drawn-out, direct-action protest.

A particular amalgamation of circumstances goes some way to explaining why this happened. As previous chapters have outlined, the sewerage issue had been fermenting on the northern beaches for nearly a decade prior to the Siege, and so had an explicit local history that pulled in people from around the region. As chapter four outlined, Emerald Beach had attracted a collection of formally educated, middle class residents who had settled in the late 1970s and early 80s at the height of the lifestyle move out of the southern metropolitan cities. They used their skills effectively in the ongoing political and media campaigns. And a particular combination of individuals on the polarised sides of the dispute charged the protests with added energy. A clash of cultures that came with new settlement, economic and generational change, all added to the explosive mix.

The place itself also mattered. Integral to many of the resident-protesters stories is that they chose Emerald Beach after a lengthy search up and down the coast. Its enclosed village structure, its beaches and off shore islands and mountain backdrop all contributed to their choice, as they in turn helped shape its landscape. And the headlands mattered. While for some of the protesters Look-At-Me-Now was 'just another headland', for others it became the material embodiment of the social, environmental and cultural issues that emerged for them through their protest action. The concluding chapter looks to the place of Look-At-Me-Now Headland and the ways that places are imbued as material, cultural and social constructions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LANDSCAPES OF LOOK-AT-ME-NOW HEADLAND

On a warm, sodden north-coast morning in January 1999, about fifty people gathered to hear Minister for the Environment, Pam Allen, officially open the new paved walkway around Look-At-Me-Now Headland. The spectators were mostly Emerald Beach locals who had fought the outfall, as well as a few official guests and an imposing Aboriginal man whose arrival sent ripples of interest around the gathering. Local resident activist and community worker, Dee Wallace, welcomed Ms Allen. In her speech she remembered her first walk on the Headland as a new resident in 1987, stunned by the wildflowers and the 'feeling' of the place - she said a lot of people talked about the feeling of the Headland. To her it felt like 'walking on the back of a giant whale'.[1]

Dee spoke about the residents' environmental struggle to save the Headland, which was enhanced by their discovery of its rich Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history. As she turned to address Pam Allen 'on behalf of all Emerald Beach residents' - the call came from a small group on the hill that she was *not* speaking for all of them.

These were anti-outfallers who had come to make their protest against the restrictions that now prohibited their dogs in the Headland precinct. The recent gazettal of a Nature Reserve over the whole headland meant they could no longer walk their dogs through their favourite haunts. They had mounted a campaign to request a fenced excision through the ecologically poorest section of the reserve to access the beaches, but this had been refused. The irony for them, on this day supposed to celebrate their hard won struggle to save the Headland, was that the victory meant the place had changed irrevocably for them. The reception to this disruptive stand from some of their previous partners-in-protest was angry and heated. Look-At-Me-Now remained a contested site.

....

Ocean headlands are variously amalgamated hillocks of rock and vegetation that protrude into the sea. This is hardly a technically accurate or poetic description, but one that most readers might recognise. Any general agreement, however, ends there. What

we see when we look at those formations, what stories we tell of them and meanings we invest in them, how we feel about them and seek to use them, varies between individuals, within and between social and cultural groups, as well as over time. It is out of these different ways of seeing, feeling, narrating and understanding that landscapes are constructed.

Look-At-Me-Now! Even the name demands attention. Headlands are vantage points for viewing other places, but this headland calls for the gaze to be turned on to itself. It particularly demands an awareness of time. There is an urgency to this call to Look At Me Now, and the suggestion that a series of looks, a sequence of repeated observations, might offer different conclusions each time. *What do you see when you look at me this time?*

The Headland was the physical and symbolic site which focused the attention of the diverse array of local anti and pro-outfall advocates, indigenous interests, outsider police and feral presence, Australian and international surfers and the local and state media spotlight throughout the first half of the 1990s. It was the physical landscape through which pipes were laid and on which bulldozers were challenged, the imagined place of a pristine land and sea environment and a cultural landscape holding within it a myriad of competing stories.

After the Siege, two issues in particular focused media, political and local attention onto the Headland in the ongoing outfall dispute. One was the environment where attention turned to rare flora on the Headland, coupled with ongoing debate over allowing an outfall to release effluent into the waters of the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve.

The second issue focused on claims that the Headland was a special place for Gumbaingirr and other North Coast indigenous people. Local Aboriginal people formed a third grouping of interested participants apart from the anti and pro-outfall lobbies, maintaining their separation from the anti-outfallers. Historian Tom Griffiths says: 'Aborigines and the environment: these are the two great historical revolutions of our generation'.[2]

Look-At-Me-Now Headland stands as a prime example of the anxieties and exhilarations, threats and promises, ignorance and education evoked by environmental

---

[1] Dee Wallace, LAMN Headland, 28/1/99. Notes taken by me and in my possession.

and indigenous issues at the end of the twentieth century in settled Australia. This chapter turns its attention to the Headland as a landscape constructed out of the dynamic mix of ongoing colonial relations, histories of the frantic rate of postwar migration to the area and of the physical place itself. At the start of a new century, questions arise about how we might imagine a postcolonial landscape. The chapter concludes with such a discussion, suggesting that the diversity of stories revealed in the Headland landscape through the outfall dispute goes some way to envisioning such a place.

The Headland

Headlands have their own histories bound up in their physical form, leading to various cultural, social and economic uses, sometimes in competition. They have symbolic value that reflects back onto human relationships - the unique and individual finger of land stretching into the ocean which, however, remains ever joined to the mainland.[3] Headlands are landscape features that are noticed and valued in a number of different forums.

On many North Coast headlands, extensive shell middens indicate prodigious use by Aboriginal people prior to white occupation. They afforded expansive views in all directions where enemies and friends could be watched for, and schools of mullet spotted. In their saddles and secluded bays the same headlands gave shelter. They feature in the creation stories of the great ancestral heroes and were often a central location in a triangle of sites for initiation ceremonies.[4]

Their aesthetic value in settler society was also noted from early in the twentieth century. They were often the only coastal features noted in the North Coast tourist guides while the promotional focus of the region remained on the hinterland scenery of

---

[2] Griffiths in Read 2000:178.
[3] Thank you to Annie Bolitho for this insight.
[4] Interview T 51.

mountain and stream.[5] They retained their prominence as tourism's gaze turned coastwards, a typical publication in 1987 enthusing about the area's '...mixture of sweeping beaches [and] scenic headlands...'[6]

As planners from the 1960s came to rank landscapes for their aesthetic values, based on individual perception in their response to a particular scene, the coastal strip around Coffs Harbour delivered high ranking because of its numerous headlands.[7] Barbara Hannah, prominent researcher in the area at the time, highlighted the 'high coast' of closely-spaced rocky headlands around the Coffs Harbour Shire, with their 'attractive picnicking, camping and building sites' for the growing tourist trade.[8]

Look-At-Me-Now Headland has its own characteristics that have shaped people's relationships with the area. It is one of the biggest of eleven headlands in a twenty-seven kilometre stretch between Coffs Harbour and Woolgoolga, and was described at the time of the outfall dispute by a Local Environment Study as 'one of the largest and most complex undeveloped headlands on the North Coast'.[9] Its local history is bound up in its physical form as it protrudes further into the Pacific Ocean than its immediate neighbours, providing better views, better waves and better access to the ocean.

The stories of Ben Holder, long time Emerald Beach resident and local historian, are filled with sagas of fishing adventures off the Headland. Betty Quirk remembered that word would spread around Emerald Beach that one of the Holders or Skinners had a shark on his line off the Headland. People would gather to watch the long battle to defeat and haul the shark ashore.[10] Steve Hart, a Coffs Harbour Gumbaynggir man, remembered it as the place that sheltered the empty beaches to which he headed with his Dad as a kid to trawl the sand for pipis.[11]

---

[5] See chapter three. For example Government Tourist Bureau 1902 *Pleasure Trips by Rail in the South Coast Districts of Queensland and the Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney and Queensland; NSW Government Tourist Bureau 1912 *The North Coast Tourist District of New South Wales: Noble Streams, Lush Meadows and Forest Stretches*, Sydney.

[6] Brown 1987 *Beautiful Coffs Harbour and Districts*, Bathurst, no page nos.

[7] Cosgrove 1998; NSW Planning and Environment Commission 1980 *Landscape Analysis*, State Planning Authority.

[8] Hannah 1968a:3.

[9] Smyth 1992 *Local Environment Study: Look At Me Now Headland*, Albany St, Coffs Harbour (for City Council):p17.

[10] Holder 1984; Interview T26; Interview C63.

[11] Interview C 63.

The Headland has two caves, one at the front facing east and one to its south western side, and has a myriad of nooks and crannies, rock pools and little inlets. A rocky outcrop at its tip is joined to the Headland by 'the Pole', craftily set in place by the Holders and Skinners in 1963 at such an angle so as to dissuade all but the most practiced local fishermen venturing across it to better fishing grounds.[12] The Headland shelters the small sandy cove of Shelly Beach (also known as Serenity Beach or Little Shellys) on one side, while on the other it sets the waves on course to wash onto the northern section of Moonee Beach which the surfers call Shellys.
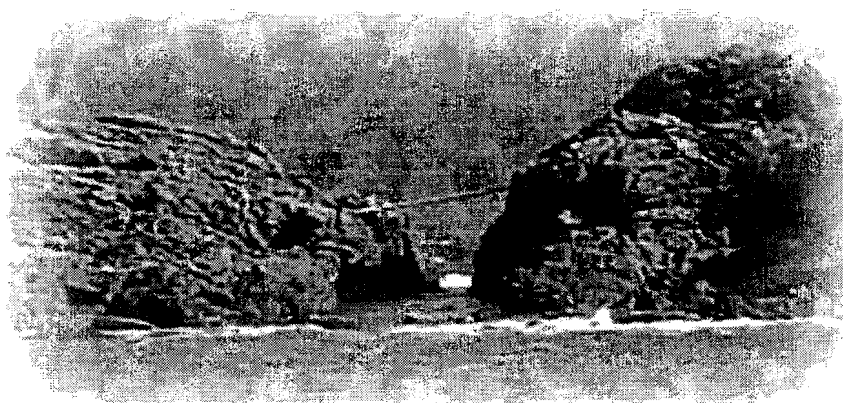
The Pole. Photo by Rod Sims 1998.

Environmental historian Donald Worster said landscapes must be discovered as well as invented.[13] I asked fourteen year old Kimberley Martyn to describe the Headland for me, conjuring up an idyllic scene.

> It's a big headland, heaps of grass and it has plenty of nice trees - I don't know their name - but a special kind of beach tree... and there are a lot of pandanus down at Little Shellys... The water is always so crystal there, it's beautiful. ...Perfect waves, perfect water... There is always wildlife there, always. There are heaps of old bush trees down there and plenty of little lizards up on the Headland. Plenty of shells and crabs along the rocks. Dolphins - we've spotted whales out to sea before, plus big fish and sharks.[14]

The front cave was a special place for Gumbaingirr male initiation, and should still not be approached by women. It is also the source of stories about the keeping place of Gumbaingirr ancestors' gold and the misdemeanours of some young women who

---

[12] Holder 1984:151.
[13] Worster 1994.
[14] Interview T 18.

should not have tampered with it.[15] The south-west facing cave is a favoured place for non-Aboriginal locals to explore and escape the summer heat.

By the early 1960s the Headland was the cause of tension between farmers and surfers, as makeshift roads were built across private property to get as close to the waves as possible.[16] It quickly gained fame amongst surfers as its prominence provided some of the only decent waves when a northerly was blowing, and the best left handers with a northerly swell. Renowned for generally not wanting to walk far to their best sites, surfers helped other sightseers turn Look-At-Me-Now Headland into a ploughed-up mess of tracks and viewing car parks throughout the 1970s and 80s.

In the early 1990s the last of the tracks were closed off as a result of attempts to build the outfall off the Headland, and people on foot with their dogs took over, ever on the lookout for the whales and dolphins. For most Coffs Harbour people living beyond the northern beaches, however, they had never heard of Look-At-Me-Now Headland prior to the outfall dispute.[17]

Landscape

As with any term that is widely used across various discourses, landscape has a long history with different and sometimes competing meanings. Its more recent meanings emerging out of cultural and humanist geography have greatly influenced our understanding of the concept.

An earlier geographic idea of landscape as the static result of the intermixing of nature and human, which could then be objectively assessed through scientific processes, has been challenged by cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove's much paraphrased understanding of landscape as an 'ideologically-charged and very complex cultural product'.[18] In turn, environmental historians such as Worster and Richard White challenged what they regarded as the excesses of post-structural textual readings where

---

[15] Kuskie suggested it was Yuludara's cave, the great ancestral creator of the North Coast, while Heron suggested it was a rain-making site. Heron said it made little difference which story was more accurate as the cave remained the bearer of highly significant stories. Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, Report to the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, prepared for Coffs Harbour City Council and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council; Interview C 64.

[16] Holder 1984.

[17] Interviews C 22;T 37; C 41.

[18] Cosgrove 1998:11.

landscapes became merely cultural inventions, divorced from the natural environments which have taken an active role in their creation.[19]

What is often agreed upon amongst historians, geographers and others is that landscape is something observed. George Seddon said:

> "Landscape" is a way of looking at a terrain: it is a perceptual term, not an objective reality. If you doubt this, try asking a farmer and a city bank manager to describe the same paddock - the "same" landscape will turn out to be very different.[20]

Barbara Bender explicitly reminds us that this is a western, middle-class conception of landscape, where the position of the viewer is privileged, constructing an ego-centred landscape of views and vistas.[21] Landscape must therefore always be contextualised, as the ego-centred view is neither shared by all other cultural groups, nor consistent over time and place. Otherwise we maintain a colonising process which regards the modern European 'viewpoint' as natural and the assumed way of understanding landscape.

Indigenous and settler landscapes: layers of history.

The contested landscape of Look-At-Me-Now has both indigenous and settler histories. Material and oral evidence of its Aboriginal history was recovered, and made public, through the legal processes of the outfall dispute. In 1993, based on archaeological evidence and oral testimony from local indigenous people and early settler histories, Yaygir academic Ron Heron was jointly commissioned by the Coffs Harbour City Council and the Local Aboriginal Land Council to further investigate the indigenous significance of the Headland (see below).

He determined that the Headland was indeed a site of great anthropological significance. In his report, Heron argued that the previous silence of Gumbaingirr and neighbouring Yaygir people surrounding the creation stories of Look-At-Me-Now was due partly to the powerful spirits associated with the Headland, and partly to a colonial history that had silenced the older knowledge holders.[22]

---

[19] Cronon 1990; White 1990; Worster 1990.
[20] Sedden 1997:1.
[21] Bender 1993.
[22] Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*

The process of constructing a settler landscape over the top of an indigenous landscape of Look-At-Me-Now Headland began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ben Holder's father married into the Skinner family who first came to farm in the vicinity of the Headland in the 1880s. In his research, Ben found that by 1882 the Headland was known as 'Look at me Now', about the same time as the naming of Fiddaman Creek to its north, but later than Moonee Creek to its south.[23]

Many have written about naming as a powerful, colonising practice of writing over, and possessing, already owned landscapes.[24] However rather than the erasure of previous histories, Cosgrove talked about the layering of cultural meaning onto landscapes.[25] This echoes an indigenous understanding of land as holding within it the creating forces which become apparent in the visual world, rather than a surface understanding of viewing landscape. Indigenous histories, for example, can therefore re-emerge to tell a different story of a landscape, as happened in the early 1990s at Look-At-Me-Now.

The non-Aboriginal farming families brought in practices that changed the surface of the Headland. Their bullocks ate out the undergrowth between the paper barks on its fringes and trampled the low growth on the Headland. Ben arrived as a young child with his family in 1942, the Holders taking up land amongst the paper barks backing onto Fiddaman Creek. He described a bare, eaten-out landscape around the Headland where low woody scrub now stands in thick profusion.[26]

In the old Skinner stories passed on to Ben, a few Gumbaingirr families still camped on the Headland until the 1930s. The Headland and its beaches also provided the holiday escape for the extended Skinner family from their inland farms at Glenreagh, Nana Glen, Bucca Creek and Coramba. Ben remembered that:

> Around Christmas - I've never seen them but I have seen some of the stumps when I was a kid where they built their little humpies - they would bring old iron or old planks or pick wood up on the beach where they made little shacks on the hill [Look-At-Me-Now]. ... and on that slope at the top of the hill back down to Shellys beach all the little humpies were all the way around that hill.

---

[23] Holder 1984:6. A number of different stories exist to explain its name. The most persistent one amongst the Skinners is of an English visitor who constantly used the phrase. During a picnic at Shelly Beach, where the Skinner boys got sick of his flirting with the girls, they fixed it so that he was splattered with mud during a horse ride. He is reputed to have said to the girls - 'look at me now'!

[24] Carter 1987; Morphy 1993.

[25] Cosgrove 1998.

[26] Interview T 26.

The Skinners had many children and it was a busy place with a little school and dance hall. However, Ben said:

> By 1950 all that had been cut 'cause the kids started to grow up and move away [in search of jobs], plus they had transport by then. Roads were better by then and buses were around 'cause in the early days you had to ride horses everywhere.[27]

The Headland was then rarely visited by anyone except occasional fisher people and campers who knew the farming families whose fenced land encircled it. In the 1950s the Skinner's started selling portions of their land surrounding Look-At-Me-Now for holiday shacks and in 1962, Parks Development began the process of subdividing the land into the Emerald Beach Estate.[28] This set the stage for a new wave of migration that sowed the seeds of new and competing visions of place.

A contested headland.

Look-At-Me-Now first gained public exposure as a contested site in 1973, when it was prominent in a State Planning Authority (SPA) fold-out booklet called *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales*. In describing the Headland, which was by now riddled with car tracks, the caption of the photograph read: 'the result of unplanned activities - vehicle tracks everywhere on headland'.[29] Concern focused on the aesthetic value of landscape beauty for coming generations, on a state wide basis.

Some local residents were also distressed at the impact of the 'abuse' by vehicles, turning the Headland indiscriminately into a car park. According to Ben, who was concerned about irresponsible user access across private property, 'no headland anywhere on the coast has had the vehicular pressure that "Look At Me Now" has had'. It was a case of 'open slaughter'.[30] In February 1984, *Advocate* headlines read 'Look-At-Me-Now! It's a damn shame', with claims that the Headland was unique and one of the most endangered on the Mid-North Coast on environmental grounds.[31]

LAMN Headland. SPA document 1973: fold-out booklet.

---

[27] Ibid

[28] See chapter four.

[29] State Planning Authority 1973 *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales: Proposed by the State Governmen,* SPA :npn.

[30] Holder 1984:189.

[31] *Advocate* 3/2/84:1.

The result of unplanned activities – vehicle tracks everywhere on headland.

Most long-time residents are now happy that Look-At-Me-Now and neighbouring Dammerels Headland are no longer degraded, track-marked quagmires. But at the time not all residents or users of the headlands were so anxious about their state. Some remember the days when you could drive right to the end of Look-At-Me-Now to go fishing, or the long, easy days of chatting and eating beside the car on top of the Headland while checking out the waves.

People described a sense of freedom in these activities, such as filling the four-wheel drive with all the gear for the day and driving around the back of the Headland onto the long stretch of Moonee Beach.[32]

But instead of the controlled vehicle access which Ben thought Council should have provided, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS or the Service) closed the beach access in 1985, and the fencing which was built as part of the outfall plans prevented cars parking on the Headland from 1991. For some, this loss of access was the

---

[32] For example Interview NT 67; Interview T 30.

final straw in a long line of changes resulting from the increasing population, and they sought other places to live.[33]

The landowners' clash with surfers also raised local ire. As noted, prior to the early 1980s, vehicle access to the Headland and the waves was across private land. Ben said:

> There were two or three big gatherings over here trying to reach an agreement about going on to the property as the people didn't want to stop them [surfers] having access to the beaches; all they wanted to do was keep the gates shut. [The surfers] would come through and leave the gates open for their mates coming behind, then their mates would stop and talk to someone for half an hour before they would come - and all that time the gates were open and then all the cattle would get out.[34]

Stephen Green, a lawyer active against the outfall, added to this story.

> When I first heard about Look-At-Me-Now Headland, it was called a different name, simply 'Shellys'. It was in the late 1960s or early 1970s when one 'Gravel' Cummings related the story about how he and two other surfers had stumbled across a classic spot north of Coffs Harbour, through a gate, across a green field and beyond an incredible headland, where deserted left-handers peeled in glassy perfection. The story goes that this emerald paradise had a down side, related to the gate and the man who approached Gravel and his two accomplices with a gun. But as ET brought a tear to the eye of the toughest amongst us, those perfect left-handers despatched the gunslinger for his surfboard and four surfers spent that day and the following week in surfers' paradise.[35]

In his local history, Ben reported on a dispute over a proposed development at the back of the Headland in 1978, introducing a number of issues that would again be raised in 1991.[36] At that time a Sydney company named Okuru was ready to build a caravan park, motel and restaurant on land they had owned since 1963 (portion 43), which incorporated access to the Headland. The Headland itself had been gazetted as Public Recreation in October 1974, and Coffs Harbour Council was its trustee.[37] An active group of Emerald Beach residents successfully protested against the development on the grounds of disturbance to their lifestyle and in favour of establishing easier public access to the Headland and its beaches.

---

[33] See chapter four.
[34] Interview T 26.
[35] Green 1994:2
[36] Holder 1984.
[37] Smyth 1992 Local Environment Study.

The development application was the subject of much bitter controversy. Ben, a supporter of the plan, pointed out in letters to Council that one of the members of Okuru had been holidaying near Look-At-Me-Now for sixteen years and hence knew the area well. This he juxtaposed with views of the majority of Emerald Beach protesters who, he said, were new residents solely concerned with their own welfare.[38]

He raised questions about the destruction of the native trees and wildlife through clearing for housing on the new estate, and would join the anti-outfall protesters in 1991 through his environmental concerns. With its high unemployment rates and outflow of its young people to the city in search of work, Ben argued that Okuru's development would bring jobs to the local community and public recreational facilities such as tennis courts and a small golf course.[39]

Reverend Barry Harris, one of the new residents, led the protests. He and his family had lived in the region for a number of years and had searched carefully before buying their land, especially as it was relatively expensive. He was horrified to find the peaceful haven into which he had recently moved was to be threatened with a tourist development right on his doorstep.[40]
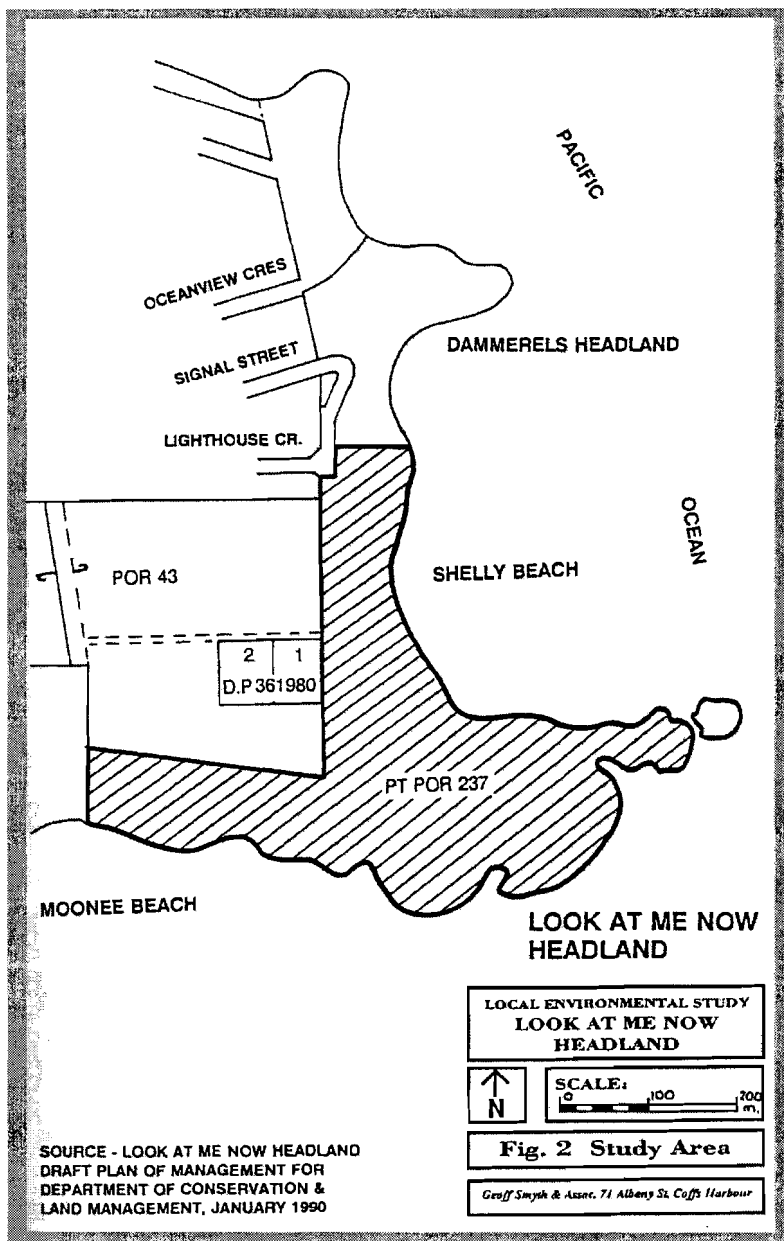
Standing on his balcony twenty-one years later, we looked across the low scrubby landscape where the development was planned to go, and out to the Headland. The view was unobstructed by any buildings as the area is now open public space. Although Barry plays golf regularly, he is more than happy to drive out of the village to play.

This conflict over development in the village was an early forerunner of the complex issues coming to bear on the North Coast. These included the acceleration of permanent new settlers moving into small local communities, the consequential tensions between development, lifestyle and environmental issues, high unemployment rates and the contestation over belongingness to place.

---

[38] Holder 1984: pp190-91.
[39] Ibid
[40] Interview T 53.

SOURCE - LOOK AT ME NOW HEADLAND
DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT FOR
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION &
LAND MANAGEMENT, JANUARY 1990

*Barry Harris' house borders portion 43 and Lighthouse Crescent.
(Reproduced from Smyth 1992:5a). Below, the photo is taken from
LAMN Headland, looking across Shelly Beach to Lighthouse Crescent.
Photo courtesy of Rod Sims 1996.*

A neglected headland

The view from Barry's balcony remains uncluttered by buildings today because Okuru's land was resumed by the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP), under the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme originally set up by Nigel Ashton and the SPA.[41] The acquisition was first agreed to in 1980 and the land eventually resumed in 1983.[42] At the time, the land was transferred to the Lands Department as a holding place because, according to Ashley Love from the NPWS, the DEP believed they could not own land.[43]

The intention for the resumption of the land was two-fold. The portion east of Moonee Creek was to be incorporated into the Moonee Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The remainder, which included the Headland itself, would be 'disposed of subject to the view of National Parks and Wildlife Service being obtained prior to disposal of action'.[44]

However the transfer from the Lands Department to NPWS did not occur until 1995, after the outfall issue was finally settled. From the time of resumption nothing was done about the degraded state of the Headland, prompting the *Advocate* in 1990 to dub it 'the neglected headland', by which time the Department of Conservation and Land Management had begun developing a Plan of Management for the place.[45]

It took until the late 1980s for the Service to begin strenuous attempts through the DEP to have the land transferred to them. By 1989 they had revised their earlier position, seeking to include all the land in question, including the Headland, under their estate.[46] I asked Ashley Love why it had taken so long for their interest to be aroused. Ashley started work in the NPWS regional office in Grafton in 1983 and was central to the Service's concern over Look-At-Me-Now Headland from the late 1980s.

[41] See chapter three.
[42] See Holder 1984:191 where he has reproduced the gazettal notice. The three-year delay in acquiring the land reputedly brought much anxiety to the land owner.
[43] Interview NT 61.
[44] Bedford, Letter from the Minister of Environment and Planning, 13th June 1980, in Department of Planning Minute Paper, 17/12/90:3. Eric Bedford was Minister for Planning and Environment at the time of writing the instructions for the land. Moonee Nature Reserve was gazetted in 1976 under an earlier, Council lead move, to protect the remaining unmined section of Moonee Beach from sandmining.
[45] Advocate 12/12/90; Allen 1990 *Look-At-Me-Now Headland Draft Plan of Management,* Prepared for the Department of Conservation and Land Management.
[46] National Parks and Wildlife Service 1993 'Submission by National Parks and Wildlife Service 21 October 1993' to *Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look- At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour,* October 1993.

Ashley said that indeed the Service had procrastinated in taking up the mantle of care and ownership of the Headland from 1980. The responsibilities of the Service were to protect, manage and research native flora and fauna, and under the amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act in 1974, Aboriginal 'relics' had been included.[47] However Look-At-Me-Now had been acquired under quite different criteria - scenic beauty rather than natural or cultural heritage values. Ashley said the Service had never undertaken an assessment of the Headland prior to the late 1980s, and saw it more as a management nightmare with its vehicle access issues and degraded landscape.[48]

However, by that time a number of issues had come to their notice and they began their own research. With the revival of interest in a Marine Park for the Solitary Islands, the Service became more interested in Look-At-Me-Now Headland and its beach access as a good land base for management and interpretation of the Park.[49] They belatedly came to dispute the incorrect information from the 1987 Commission of Inquiry that Look-At-Me-Now would not be included in the Park, which had left the door open for the commissioners' recommendation to shift the outfall from Woolgoolga to Look-At-Me-Now.[50]

The Service also became aware of cultural heritage aspects of relevance to their responsibilities. They started to learn of the indigenous stories associated with the Headland (see below) and were introduced to Ben Holder who showed them his large collection of Aboriginal artefacts, some of which were found in the eroded vehicle tracks on top of the Headland. They were also shown a damaged replica of a semaphore pole on Dammerels Headland, used for signalling the lighthouse on South Solitary Island, and the graves above Shelly Beach of nineteenth-century shipwreck victims. All were seen as important interpretive aids in relation to the proposed Marine Park.[51]

[47] Interview NT 61; Byrne et al 2001.
[48] Interview NT 61.
[49] See chapter three.
[50] Simpson and Cleland 1988 *The Coffs Harbour City Council Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: A Commission of Inquiry pursuant to Section 119 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning; National Parks and Wildlife Service 1993 'Submission'.
[51] Interview NT 61; National Parks and Wildlife Service 1993 'Submission'.

And in August 1988 the Service became aware of a rare plant recently found on the Headland - 'an undescribed species' of the ground orchid Zieria.[52] In his vegetation report to the PWD on the Headland, Alex Floyd reported this find. After examination of nineteen other headlands along the coast, he established that the species was only to be found on LAMN and the neighbouring headlands of Dammerels and Bare Bluff.[53] The plant subsequently became the first species of endangered plant in New South Wales to undergo a recovery plan.[54]

These discoveries made the Service rethink the natural and cultural values associated with the Headland, now believing that it should be incorporated into the adjoining Moonee Nature Reserve. However the outfall issue had turned its full focus onto Look-At-Me-Now and the Lands Department was not about to forfeit its ownership of the Headland. Ashley considered it was probably a case of desperation - 'they were running out of headlands, there weren't any left to turn to'.[55]

Pristine waters: The politics of nature

Despite National Park's burgeoning interest in the environmental significance of the area, Look-At-Me-Now did not easily fit the wilderness-protection criteria that had come to engage the mainstream environment movement from the 1980s.[56] While individuals from the Wilderness Society and The Australian Conservation Foundation made high profile contributions to the anti-outfall cause, the organisations themselves showed little interest or support.[57] Sewage was seen to be more of a health issue, and the urban landscape in the vicinity of the Headland was not conducive to the environment movement's national campaign focus on 'wilderness'.[58]

---

[52] Gillooly nd. Director NPWS, Letter to the Minister for Environment: subject 'Addition of Crown Land on Look-At-Me-Now Headland and Dammerels Headland to the adjoining Moonee Beach Nature Reserve.'

[53] Floyd 1988 Vegetation Assessment and Restoration, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, for PWD. In 1991 Floyd reported on the find of austral toadflax (Thesium australe) on the Headland, another threatened plant, but with a widespread distribution on east coast headlands. Floyd 1991 Vegetation Survey of Proposed Pipeline Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Prepared for Public Works; and see Clemesha nd 'The Rare Plants on Look At Me Now', unpublished paper.

[54] Griffiths 1992 Zieria prostrata ms: Species Recovery Plan, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program Project No. 195, NPWS.

[55] Interview NT 61.

[56] Hutton and Connors 1999.

[57] For example Bob Brown and Peter Garrett were significant supporters.

[58] See Di Chiro 1995 for a critique of modern environmentalism that ignores environmental health issues in its emphasis on wilderness values.

Nevertheless, most of the anti-outfall supporters with whom I have spoken saw the outfall dispute unambiguously as an environmental issue. Don Clinch is one representative of older supporters who told me that it was the first time they had given any consideration to environmental issues. Speaking of his wife Shirley, he said:

> The outfall issue has seen her ideas about the world change - and for example she has become really keen on recycling and thinking about environmental issues since then. It really has changed aspects of our lives.[59]

In fact for many supporters it was the first time they had confronted environmental issues. They felt they were part of a fight to save one of Australia's significant natural places, at their own back door, and for all Australians. For Dee Wallace, her foray into the outfall fight was a turning point. Shortly after arriving to live in Emerald Beach from a high powered professional life in Sydney, she remembers Carol Shorter ringing around to find someone to help in the Environment Centre.

> I said 'Oh yeah' - not knowing what it was all about. That changed my life again. I had never particularly thought much about the environment. I mean you just go to work, you turn your tap on, you turn your lights on, and don't think much about it. But it opened up this whole new aspect - new perspective on life which has had a very big impact on me and what I am doing now. I am very much a community-based woman now and it really started because of that outfall. So, in one way, it's been a way for me to look into myself and my life and how I have misused the planet - and how I'm trying to make that better for me and the rest of the community.[60]

The Headland itself came to grab environmental attention through concerns over rare plants, impact on fauna especially endangered nesting birds, the impact of building the outfall on its physical character, rezoning and vegetation restoration.[61] For many, however, it was the ocean pounding onto its rocky ledges that focused the environmental arguments of anti and pro-outfallers alike.

For those who believed the outfall was a safe option, they had confidence in the scientific and engineering evidence that the effluent would be of a high enough quality to be safe to the marine environment. Many argued that the septic outflows and pumpout runoffs that had heavily polluted Fiddaman Creek, and ran out into the ocean at Emerald Beach, was an environmental travesty.

---

[59] Interview C 43.

[60] Interview T 16.

[61] The 1993 Commission of Inquiry reviewed past concerns and added new ones; Carleton 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing: Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour.* Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning.

Supporters of the outfall regarded it as a great contradiction that people could act to stop the outfall, but put up with this pollution. One locally-born man angrily told me that the pollution levels recorded in the local paper for Emerald Beach were consistently higher than other places, and that the creek smelt of septic when you crossed it after rains.[62] This was confirmed by a council report that found its faecal e. coli readings were far higher than other coastal creeks in the area, including in other unsewered areas.[63]

For others, however, the travesty was the idea of deliberately emptying effluent into the waters off the Headland. A group of older surfers staunchly maintained their rage against an outfall on environmental grounds, many having deliberately moved away from Sydney outfalls. A farmer from Moree, who had settled in Emerald Beach in the early 1980s, said to me one day that it was the worst idea to put an outfall into that 'pristine coastline'.[64]

The perception of a pristine coastal and riverine environment of the North Coast is cherished by many of its residents, and economically valued for its new settler promotion and tourist trade. Reflecting this, Coffs Harbour Shire's northern neighbour changed its name in 2000 to *Pristine Waters*. A comment often repeated on the North Coast is that the very environments that attract new migrants and tourists are in danger of ruin as a consequence of their popularity.[65] However there is no simple agreement on how to quantify the concept of a pristine, natural environment or how it should be utilised.

Despite a common western conception that separates out the human from nature, Raymond Williams says that '...the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history'.[66] In popular idiom, people often define nature by what it is assumed not to be - that it is not artificial, meaning 'man made'. However we only know nature through the lens of our time, place, culture, class, gender and other human ways of understanding, and we often mistake, ignore or cover over the part that human history plays.[67] Rather than an essence, untouched by human intervention, environmental historian William Cronon says: '[i]deas of nature never exist outside a

---

[62] Interview C 27.

[63] Coffs Harbour City Council 1997 *Local Environmental Study*: p23.

[64] Interview C 65.

[65] Wigham 1970,1975; Prater and Day 1981; Coffs Harbour City Council 1996a *Coffs Harbour Urban Development Strategy*; 1997 *Local Environmental Study*.

[66] Williams 1980:67.

[67] Griffiths 1991.

cultural context, and the meanings we assign to nature cannot help reflecting that context'.[68]

Beyond the rocks, waves, trees and birds, people differ in the ways they understand nature. Some landscapes are seen to be more authentically natural than others, but there is no agreement about what that might be. While certain forest landscapes are perceived to be pristine wilderness devoid of human intrusion, on which is often bestowed greater value within sections of society, other sections see those same places as full of human history of work and custodianship.[69] On the North Coast the same ocean scapes spoken about in similar language evoking the wonders of nature, may be utilised in very different ways - vegetation clearing to provide the views for passing tourists, or secreted into hidden spots for only the knowing to enjoy. Nature, how ever it is read, is often the place where people go to fulfill their dreams.[70] But what one person sees as the ideal of nature may be anathema to another.

Nature is big business in a place like Coffs Harbour. The same argument that the outfall dispute was creating a poor reputation of ocean pollution for Coffs, therefore threatening its environmental attractions, was argued from both sides of the anti and pro outfall camps. Brian Beckett argued that an outfall was necessary to ensure the health of the community and its much-desired tourists. He blamed anti-outfallers for creating misinformation that turned away prospective tourists, telling his story of sitting beside a passenger on a Melbourne flight who said he was sorry that Coffs Harbour's waters were so polluted through sewage.[71] The Environment Centre used the same concerns over reputation to argue that tourists would not come to Coffs Harbour because outfalls are associated with pollution and 'disastrous environmental consequences'.[72]

The degree to which the Headland environment was understood to be a valued place was also highly contested, seen to be an ugly scarred landscape by some and a wild natural place by others. For some, its natural values were enhanced by indigenous claims that it was a special place in their cosmology. The environment and Aboriginal

---

[68] Cronon 1995b:35.

[69] Watson 1990; Griffith 1992; Cronon 1995a.

[70] Cronon 1995a:51.

[71] Interview NT 35.

[72] Barlow et.al. 1993 'Submission to Coffs Harbour City Council: Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement for Effluent Management'. Coffs Harbour Environment Centre Inc.(unpublished):p34.

issues are often uncritically interlinked. The land remains a central focus of contemporary Aboriginal social, cultural and political lives and the rest of this chapter focuses on the processes of revealing Look-At-Me-Now Headland as an indigenous place. But rather than uncritically conjoining the two, indigenous and environment, I will attempt to unpack some of the assumptions which prevail where the politics of environmental protest and indigenous issues meet.

Towards recognition of Look-At-Me-Now as an indigenous place

From 1987 onwards, the question of whether or not Look-At-Me-Now Headland held special significance to indigenous people was raised with sporadic, but minimal, interest by non-Aboriginal participants in the outfall dispute. For one local Gumbaynggir woman, this was a fairly nonsensical query as it was obvious to her that all the coastal headlands of the northern beaches were significant because of their intensive occupation in earlier times. She knew this through stories handed down, and the evidence of extensive artefact sites in the area. How, therefore, could Look-At-Me-Now ever have been thought to have no significance?[73] The process of publicly revealing this significance for indigenous locals was not, however, so clear cut.

Two events alerted the general public to the Headland's indigenous significance, both coming late in the proceedings of the dispute. The first event was at the 1993 Commission of Inquiry into the outfall issue, requested by the City Council.[74] On behalf of local Aboriginal people Richard Dacker, chair of the Coffs Harbour and Districts Local Aboriginal Land Council, fronted the Commission with the claim that Look-At-Me-Now was indeed a place of great mythological and anthropological significance. As a consequence, Commissioner Mark Carleton recommended that an anthropological report on the Headland be conducted.[75]

The second public alert came as an outcome of this intervention, with the release of Ron Heron's report in late 1994. Heron, a Yaygir academic in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies at Southern Cross University Lismore, substantiated Dacker's claims and supported the Land Council's declaration that the Headland be proclaimed

---

[73] Sue Gillen pers. comm. 23/8/00.
[74] See chapter five and Appendix.
[75] Carleton 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster.*

an Aboriginal Place under the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife (Aboriginal Ownership) Act 1974.*[76]

The general silence on indigenous interests in the Headland until this time can, in part, be traced back to the consultative process for the Woolgoolga Headland proposal. In the 1987 EIS into that proposal, there was some consultation with Gumbaingirr people. Mention was made of Look-At-Me-Now at the time, and a brief letter written in 1989 by the Local Aboriginal Land Council was enclosed in the appendices of the second EIS in 1993. The letter indicated that Gumbaingirr would not oppose an outfall at the Headland. It stated that the works at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, 'although a very important site to the Gumbangarra descendants... would not effect the Headland or its spiritual meaning to Aboriginals [sic]'.[77]

This was taken by the City Council and the PWD to imply Aboriginal consent. No further consultation was made with Aboriginal people over the Look-At-Me-Now proposal until the 1993 Commission recommended the anthropological report. Anti-outfallers often refer to the letter as evidence of a general Aboriginal disinterest in the outfall and ignorance about the Headland's significance, prior to the Inquiry.

It was important that the Gumbaingirr elders approached in 1989 were from Corindi (the Garby Elders), north of Woolgoolga. Dacker suggested they had different conceptions of significant sites in the area, and that their modern day public interests largely stopped at Arrawarra Headland to the north of Look-At-Me-Now.[78] (It is now recognised at the Land Council that the interests of the Garby Elders reach down to Moonee.) Heron offered a different explanation. He said elders from around the region, including his Yaygir relatives, always knew it as a sacred place and that therefore they had to stay away from it under Aboriginal Law.[79]

Heron's discussions with northern Gumbaingirr people revealed a high level of fear towards non-Aboriginal society from older people, and therefore a general suspicion about the consequences of talking out against decision making in the

---

[76] Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*

[77] Anthony Perkins (secretary of the Land Council) in Camp Scott Furphy Pty Ltd. 1993 *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement for Effluent Management,* March, Prepared for Public Works Department: Vol 3 (2) Appendix 16.

[78] Advocate 28/4/94; Perkins 1997.

[79] Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*

mainstream-white world. This led to their silence on such controversial matters as the outfall dispute, and to Ron promising their anonymity in his report.

> The odd ones who knew about it didn't want to talk much about it - because it was on the news every night - it was a controversial issue and they felt that if their name was going to be put into a report - the media was going to pester them. You can't blame them (laughs) - the media was terrible! ...But a lot of them had their old ways of thinking - that the police are going to badger them - local government is going to crack down on them... that sort of thing.[80]

For Tony Perkins, the Gumbaingirr author of the 1989 letter as secretary of the Land Council at the time, not enough consultation was done by all concerned, including Dacker and Heron. Tony said:

> It got taken over by a larger political agenda and it left out the views of the local Garby Elders. ...We always talked about the importance of the site and the Headland itself. The importance of the Headland is totally, totally correct. However we didn't see the pipeline across the Headland as a long-term danger. It wasn't a question of digging up the whole Headland, but a single pipeline which we would have had some control over where it would go... We were worried for the whole area that was in great danger from the growing population. For example, Fiddamans Creek is also an important place, but it was seriously polluted.[81]

Of central importance to the Corindi people's reasons for not challenging the outfall at Look-At-Me-Now was their own history around the issue of sewage. By the early 1970s a number of people were living in housing beyond Corindi Lake, while others still chose to camp near the lake's shore where their families had lived since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However the local council had them removed from their living sites partly on the pretext that their lack of toilets would pollute the lake. The lake (which they knew as Pipeclay Lake) had been their bountiful food source on which they had survived and engaged in their cultural and social life, but was now heavily polluted with septic.[82] Tony commented:

> There was a lot of blame going on where the campers were told they were helping pollute the lake because they didn't have toilets. But in 1972 there were only about twenty people living there, whereas in the 1940s there were about a hundred people. And the lake wasn't polluted then at all. They dug their toilet pits into the sand and didn't pollute the Lake.[83]

---

[80] Interview T 51; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*
[81] Interview NT 72.
[82] Interview C 48; Burke 1997; Yarrawarra Place Stories 2000a.
[83] Interview NT 72.

In reality the pollution came from encroaching holiday establishments and new settlers moving into the area, bringing the consequential pressures of septic tanks that overran into the Lake.[84] This poisoned and killed the fish life. In the Yarrawarra Place Stories collection, Tony said:

> Back in the 60s we didn't even have voting rights but you could see that it was going wrong. You could see things dying off in the lake but no-one was interested, as long as they built their house or road or put a pipe in to drain everything, that was good enough. They didn't understand what pollution, or protection was.[85]

Rather than a lack of interest in the outfall dispute, the Corindi group who were approached in 1989 about Look-At-Me-Now Headland had their own ideas about sewage. A lack of sewerage had been used against them as another colonising tool of dispossession, and had been the central factor in killing their precious lake.

By the early 1990s, new management in both the Local Aboriginal Land Council and NPWS were reviewing the significance of the Headland. Pamela Westwood, a newly arrived anti-outfall activist, had also started research and writing on the indigenous significance of the immediate area.[86] Documented oral Aboriginal sources, early ethnographic texts and local settler histories gave a clear picture of the Headland being part of the powerful cosmological landscape of the immediate area and the Mid-North Coast. Archaeological evidence pointed to sites that had provided rich material significance in the near vicinity of the Headland (discussed below).[87]

Prior to Dacker's appearance at the Commission, the Land Council commissioned their own archaeological report in 1993 after finding the previous reports for the two EIS's inadequate.[88] Peter Kuskie's report did not differ substantially regarding the archaeological evidence of Helen Brayshaw's 1987 report. However he

---

[84] Burke 1997; Dallas and Morris 1994 *Archaeological and Anthropological Study of an Option of the Corindi Beach Sewerage Scheme*, Report to NSW Public Works Department.

[85] Yarrawarra Place Stories, 2000a:38.

[86] Westwood 1993 'The site known as the Look At Me Now Headland is sacred to the speakers of the Gumbaynggirr language', unpublished paper.

[87] England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society', unpublished notes, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society; Buchanan interview with England; Holder 1984; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland*; Interview NT 9.

[88] Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland*; Brayshaw 1987 'Investigation of Proposed Sewerage Outfall Locations North of Coffs Harbour, NSW' March 1987 in *1993 Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour*, Primary Submission by Coffs Harbour City Council, Volume 3; Brayshaw and Byrne 1993 'Assessment of the Archaeology of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour, NSW: Report to Coffs City Water Projects, Public Works Department, Coffs Harbour', PWD.

challenged Brayshaw's statement that there were no Aboriginal mythological sites to be affected by an outfall on Look-At-Me-Now, especially as it appeared only one elder had been consulted and he came from outside the local region.[89] Kuskie had different information about the Headland that indicated its powerful mythological significance, and he recommended that an anthropological survey be carried out.

Armed with this evidence, Dacker made his submission to the Inquiry. He told the Commissioner that the stories associated with the Headland were to do with the power of the clever men, especially with relation to the front cave, and that it was a site of creation stories for the Gumbaingirr people. Dacker recounted that in their cosmology, Look-At-Me-Now Headland and neighbouring Dammerels Headland are associated with the creation of the sea. Two sisters revenged themselves against the advances of the great creating Ancestor, Yuladara, beating the ground with their sticks and making the seas rise, cutting him off from his land to the east which are now the Solitary Islands, and creating the surrounding headlands.[90] The local paper declared that the Land Council 'has thrown a spanner in the Emerald Beach outfall bandwagon by declaring that it is a sacred site'.[91]

Despite the Commissioner's call for an anthropological report, and the Council's employment of Heron to carry it out, Carleton brought down his findings in favour of an outfall months before the report could be finished. In his own report, Carleton said there was no firm evidence that the Headland was significant to the Aboriginal community.[92] Through continuing action in the Land and Environment Court, the anti-outfall lobbyists were able to hold off the City Council and bulldozers, and Heron's report was released in November 1994.

Referring, amongst others, to the nineteenth-century observer AC MacDougall, local historian George England and the translation work of Father Morelli of the Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group, Heron extended Dacker's story of Yuladara's exploits. After touching on stories of Yuludara and his wife Gawngganba, outlined in this thesis in chapter one, Heron's report followed McDougall's story.

> *Yuludarra* led his tribe of Aborigines from their country across the mountains to fight the tribe occupying that land... On the journey *Yuludarra* caught and

---

[89] Brayshaw 1987 'Investigation of Proposed Sewerage Outfall': p1.
[90] Interview NT 60.
[91] Advocate 20/10/93:1.
[92] Carleton 1994 *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster*; Advocate 12/4/94; Appendix.

beat two young women, who in revenge walked away, and finding two straight sticks growing in the ground, cut one for each of them, and then beat the ground which made a humming hollow sound. The place was called *Cunnurigin,* a spot where the lighthouse signal is situated,[93] near Weegoolga. After this, the two young women parted, one going north, the other going south, both kept travelling in the opposite direction, until they met again at the other end of the country, or at the extreme corner where it is said they now are represented by two rocks... Those who started the fight, having conquered their enemies, returned rejoicing, throwing their spears, boomerangs, etc. On noticing that one of the boomerangs made a splash in the water, one of them said, "What! Is that my boomerang in the water"... the throwers then went to get their boomerangs, but found that the ocean had covered up what was dry land before they had gone on their fighting expedition; they were so scared at this that they rushed back in a heap and called out water! They cried with terror at finding the water had cut them off from returning to their homes or to their own hunting ground... [Then they made a rope from the entrails of Turgaree - native bear..] The warriors led by *Yuludarra* then crossed over safely, and they saw nothing more of the tribe they had attacked and defeated. The earth was once covered with water, except at Bellira Mira, a very high mountain at the head of Bucca Creek, [Mt Coramba], Upper Maro, which was formed by many mountains or hills being piled one upon another. To this, those of the Aborigines who could fled, and were saved from drowning.[94]

Phil Harvey, Coffs Harbour Council's General Manager, said Heron's findings were a 'surprise' and were a 'major complication' that couldn't be ignored.[95] Referring to the stories revealed in his report, Ron said they were:

> ... stories that I'm sure the Coffs Harbour Council thought that people like me were making up - so you had to put where you got that information from. These stories were known about - and I was just bringing them to the fore.[96]

In the lead up to the 1995 New South Wales election the State Liberal/ National Party, which had previously been so supportive of the Coffs Harbour Council, became overtly more ambivalent. In December 1994 the National's Deputy Premier and Minister for Public Works, Ian Armstrong, asked the council to look into alternatives to an outfall at Look-At-Me-Now, given Heron's report on the indigenous significance of the Headland.[97]

---

[93] In Heron's text he suggested this place was LAMN Headland, instead of Dammeral Headland where the signal station had been situated until the 1920s. However his Aboriginal informants had referred to LAMN in their stories.

[94] AC McDougall in Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland*:pp20-21. See Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992 for a discussion on the use of the colonial source of MacDougall.

[95] Advocate 1/12/93:1.

[96] Interview T 51.

[97] Advocate 6/12/94; Armstrong 1994 Deputy Premier of NWS, Media Release 'Coffs City Council Asked to Investigate Other Sewerage Options', December 5, 1994.

From the time of Dacker's appearance before the Commission, non-Aboriginal protagonists in the outfall issue became more interested in local Aboriginal issues. One of the central ways people construct meanings in a place is through narratives which come to influence their own stories of belonging, attachment and rights in place. A series of narratives about Aboriginal people impacted onto the non-Aboriginal protagonists at the local level, reaching far beyond the local. The legacy of two hundred years of academic and popular discourses about Aborigines remained manifest in the outfall-protagonist's understandings of indigenous issues. This was regardless of whether people were sympathetic or hostile to the idea of the Headland retaining and delivering up stories of an indigenous place at the end of the twentieth century.

Constructing Aboriginality: Narratives of the 'real' Aborigine

Many non-Aboriginal Australians have recently tried to understand what is regarded as a revitalisation of pride in Aboriginal cultures in settled Australia. In doing so they have been deeply affected by an older, highly influential anthropological tradition which continues to construct the authentic Aboriginal subject as desert dwelling, at one with 'nature' and living in a time warp. This static construction, portraying Aboriginal people as an homogenous grouping based on 'traditional' cultures, has infused the academic, legal and popular discourse about Aboriginal cultures and society.[98]

Environmentalists are one broad and diverse grouping who have been deeply challenged in their understandings of Aboriginal cultures and their traditional and historical relationship to the land.[99] In the scant dealing of indigenous issues in his 1993 examination of Australian environmentalism, Elim Papadakis typically reiterated the generalised assertion that 'the attitude of Aboriginals to their environment can best be characterised as a practical *and* caring one' (original emphasis).[100] This appeal to the myth of indigenous peoples as natural conservationists fails to understand that knowledge about land, and people's relationship to it, is cultural rather than inherent.

In late twentieth-century Australia, many environmentalists found it hard to accept an historical construction of contemporary, post 'traditional' Aboriginality that

---

[98]Amongst the many discussions around this argument see Beckett 1988; Attwood 1992; Cowlishaw 1992; Hollinsworth (and responses) 1992; Byrne et al 2001.

[99] See Rowse 1993; Rose 1996; Langton 2000.

[100] Papadakis 1993.

encompassed the consequences of colonialism, racism, self-determination and continual cultural invention common to all human groups.[101] In 1961 the anthropologist Ronald Berndt described a continuum of Aboriginality that holds sway in popular belief today. He suggested that at one end there were those Aboriginal people coming into contact with Europeans for the first time, and at the other were those who were in the process of:

> ...merging entirely with the dominant group - the Europeans. About the middle of this continuum, there comes a point when the life of the people concerned is no longer meaningful in traditional Aboriginal terms, but is becoming meaningful only or predominantly in European terms, *with the consequent receding of Aboriginal elements* (emphasis added).[102]

For Berndt, the only people who could legitimately call themselves Aboriginal were those largely untouched by the contemporary world. This perception clearly implied that Aboriginal people were not extended the right to cultural complexity and dynamism assumed by other groups such as Europeans without, in the process, relinquishing their Aboriginality. However, Heather Goodall says: 'It has now been conclusively and repeatedly demonstrated that Aboriginal cultural tradition is subject to change and creative reinterpretation, precisely because it has the vitality of any living culture in being able to engage with changing circumstances'.[103]

The idea that indigenous people of settled Australia have maintained a distinctive Aboriginal culture which infuses elements of both traditionally oriented Aboriginal cultures, and contemporary dominant Anglo/European Australian cultures, is anathema to Berndt's constructions of the authentic Aboriginal subject.[104] For those people who have sought to sympathetically understand Aboriginal claims in settled Australia, deep contradictions often arise. A romanticised, essentialising and inert understanding of Aboriginality has often informed them, leaving them vulnerable to misunderstanding and ignorance in dealing with contemporary political issues.

A flawed assumption that indigenous people in their pre-contact world were without 'politics' has also informed public perception, leading to a view that contemporary Aboriginal politics is purely driven by a europeanised agenda.[105]

---

[101] Byrne et al 2001.
[102] Berndt 1963.
[103] Goodall 2000:32.
[104] See Gelder and Jacobs 1988.
[105] See Chase 1981.

Perceived deviation from the 'cultural' to strategic attempts to negotiate for material gains, are often seen to be selling out and taking on European (read negative, materialist) attributes.

Stark differentiation may be made about good and deviant Aboriginal behaviour which misunderstands, simplifies and misconceives the realities and priorities of contemporary Aboriginal communities, their traditions and their histories.[106] Such constructions were evident amongst some of the outfall protagonists in their responses to Aboriginal claims of ongoing interest in the Coffs Harbour area.

Ambiguity and anxiety amongst anti-outfallers

Dacker's appearance came as a surprise to many anti-outfall protesters who believed the local Aboriginal community had little knowledge or interest in the Headland. However, when one of the anti-outfall organisers approached the Land Council for information, he was told that local Aboriginal people had wondered why no one had bothered to approach them before.[107]

The battle over the Headland is popularly understood by participants and observers to be clearly divided into two camps: between those for and those against the outfall. However local Aboriginal people made up a third and separate group, maintaining a strict separation from the anti-outfall lobby and declaring their need to be autonomous in their demands to seek protection of the Headland from possible physical and spiritual desecration.[108]

No doubt there were a variety of reactions to the Aboriginal heritage claims amongst pro-outfall sympathisers. I am interested here, however, to briefly discuss the ambivalent responses to be found amongst those sympathetic to the anti-outfall cause because it is within their ranks that Aboriginal arguments are often incorrectly merged.

Local anti-outfallers responded to the Aboriginal claims of significance of the Headland in diverse ways. A few believed it was not helpful to their cause because of the notion that any site could be fraudulently chosen for such claims, and one would only be complicating or indeed threatening the respectable nature of their own claims. Some were worried that property ownership near the Headland could be threatened by a

---

[106] See Griffiths 1994.
[107] Interview C 8.
[108] Interview NT 9; Interview C 8.

successful claim.[109] There was some outright hostility to local Aborigines, perceived to be without culture and just getting on a political bandwagon. Others, whilst not wishing to think too deeply about the issue, were grateful for the added weight of the Aboriginal declaration in trying to save the Headland.[110]

For many however, the public declaration by Aboriginal people of the spiritual significance of the Headland infused it, as the physical site of the conflict, with greater meaning and importance - and their battle took on new dimensions. Carol Shorter always thought the Headland was a 'place of significance', and the revelation that it was 'spiritually significant' for Aboriginal people confirmed for her that it was a 'special place.'[111]

Now some of the protesters felt they were helping save a part of the heritage of Indigenous Australians - for most it was the first time they felt they had actively supported Aboriginal rights. Their own pre-existing emotional and spiritual connections to the Headland were enhanced. Amongst some, there was also a celebration in what they saw as a renewed Aboriginal confidence to pursue their rights and responsibilities in protecting land.

However it was not an easy path towards collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous efforts to fight an outfall off the Headland. The relationships that were formed between members of each group were fragile and distanced. For a number of the Emerald Beach protesters with an interest in social equity issues, the strict separation and distance maintained by the Aboriginal communities was confusing and disappointing. Their sympathies were inherent as part of their wider political beliefs of equality and justice, entwined historically in the underlying connections between the collective action and social movements of the 1970s and 80s. However they had little or no understanding of the history of the local Aboriginal communities, or of the wider struggles of indigenous people in Australia outside of this vague, unexamined sympathy.

They were unsure where to look or who to talk to about the specifics of the Aboriginal issues. Such ignorance and confusion was seldom viewed with much sympathy by Aboriginal people, whose daily battle with racism and ignorance led them

---

[109] There seems to have been some confusion, given the recent Mabo judgement, that the Land Council's claim was a native title claim.

[110] People alerted me to these different views through informal conversations.

[111] Interview T 15.

to argue that non-Aboriginals must take on the responsibility of educating themselves. Mark Wittleton, who did a lot of liaison with the Land Council, said:

> Maybe some people who had tried to deal with Richard [Dacker] found him hard to get on with - he wasn't always friendly or necessarily polite - and that put some people off him. They weren't used to dealing with angry Aboriginal people.[112]

It is a very fragile base on which to mount alliances between groups with very different histories, and possibly intent on different outcomes once the initial battle had been won. For some anti-outfallers, this fragile sympathy was shattered when the Aboriginal Land Council was thought to be making land deals with Mayor John Smith, at the possible expense of the spiritual endorsement of the Headland. Dismay at the thought of selling out for europeanised material gain created cynicism amongst some of the protesters, with little understanding or investigation into the 'land deal' accusation.[113]

For its part the Land Council, which headed the Aboriginal push for recognition of the Aboriginal significance of the Headland, was very clear on the separation of causes. From the time of the public declaration that the Headland had great heritage significance to Aboriginal people, and hence their public involvement in the outfall issue, the Land Council made it explicit that under no circumstances were they in a joint protest.[114]

Richard Dacker said that, speaking from his personal opinion, the Land Council learnt to be suspicious of the motives of the non-Aboriginal groups who came to ally themselves to their causes. He argued that Aboriginal people had to remain separate so as to maintain the Culture's credibility. Richard thought they should not be seen to automatically get in the way of development, and they did not want to be part of non-Aboriginal people using them and jumping on the backs of Aboriginal issues.[115]

Most of the anti-outfall organisers were equally intent on maintaining a separation for a series of different reasons. For some, this was to avoid any accusations from their protractors that they were exploiting, coercing or manipulating the heritage claims of the Aboriginal community for their own battle. There was a general understanding amongst the group that the battle needed to be continued on a number of fronts and no one possibility was counted on. For others there was a fear that after all

---

[112] Interview C 8.
[113] Interviews C 8; NT 9 amongst others.
[114]Dacker in *Advocate* 28/4/94.

these years of battling alone for the Headland, the Aboriginal issues would overshadow their struggle and take the glory in the hoped-for victory.[116]

The few anti-outfall individuals who gave some explicit priority to the Aboriginal heritage issues had little active support, and were engulfed in court battles and the ongoing fight with the City Council. However there was now a new layer for most people to contend with - that of living, indigenous meaning embedded in the Headland that had previously been unknown, but was now hard to ignore by anti-outfallers and Coffs Harbour people more generally.

An absent presence: The influence of local historian George England

One of the reasons for the general surprise amongst people in Coffs Harbour towards the Aboriginal declaration of significance in Look-At-Me-Now Headland was that local knowledge categorically denied the contemporary existence of traditional indigenous interests in the Coffs Harbour area. I learnt this as a newcomer early in my move to Coffs Harbour, not just as the newly arrived history lecturer, but through everyday conversation. As I began to ask direct questions of non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal issues in the area, I was told that in early colonial times Aboriginal people just passed through but did not live in the area, and that those Aboriginal people now resident were all from other places with no traditional claims to the area.

Such local white mythology is ignorant of, or misunderstands, the complex territorial issues that extend beyond the immediate Coffs Harbour area. These give certain ownership rights and interests to other Gumbaingirr, whose territory stretches north to incorporate Corindi people and south to Nambucca, as well as to other North Coast groups such as the Dhan-gadi.[117] Further it ignores the historical reasons including killings, disease, and voluntary movement in search of safe haven, which drove traditional owners from the area to Urunga and other places in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It further disenfranchises the local indigenous families who claim traditional ownership in the immediate Coffs Harbour area.[118]

One influential source that helped authorise the denial of contemporary Aboriginal interests in Coffs Harbour came from the prolific local historian, George

---

[115] Interview NT 9.
[116] Interviews C 5; C 8; T 10.
[117] Morris 1989; Perkins 1997; Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group 1992.
[118] Interview NT 60; see chapters one and two.

England. However it is also his records and research that aided the retrieval of knowledge about indigenous significance in relation to the Look-At-Me-Now Headland dispute. Much of England's extensive archive of oral and written material, which includes handwritten notes on Aboriginal matters, was kept with Mrs England until her death in 2000 and was frequently accessed at her home for academic study.[119] England's seminal influence on the historical representations of the Coffs Harbour region warrants closer examination of his work.

England was deeply interested in Aboriginal lifestyles of pre-colonial times and Gumbaynggir stories of landmarks, place names and animals which he reproduced in a series of newspaper articles.[120] His knowledge and records were sought after by outside groups and individual academics on Gumbaingirr heritage. In 1956 the National Trust requested all the information he had about the location of Aboriginal middens in the area.[121] In 1972 he wrote a piece on the Arrawarra Fish Traps, indicating they were of Aboriginal origins. He then retracted this in 1973 following requests for further information from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, claiming them to be built by a non-Aboriginal man. This set up a debate within the local newspaper over who built them - people coming down on both sides.[122]

He was at hand to assist UNE archaeologist Isabel McBryde in her retrieval to Armidale and Canberra of artefacts from the Moonee Axe Factory in the late 1960s and again in 1972 (see below).[123] He had already helped the South Australian visitor, Dr North, in his earlier explorations of the site that eventuated in holdings of Gumbaingirr artefacts in the Museum of South Australia.[124]

---

[119] As noted in my acknowledgments, I was one of those number. I spent many days at the table in the sunroom combing through his files, drinking tea with Mrs England and hearing her stories of the variety of people who had searched the files before me at the same desk. The files now reside with the Coffs Harbour Historical Society Museum.

[120] He used the spelling 'Kumbaingeri'. His main informants were men he grew up with from the broad Nambucca region. The *Advocate* ran a series of his articles in the late 1960s and early 1970s; eg see 21/8/68; 10/1/73.

[121] England 1956 letter sent to National Trust by G.E.England 5th October Coffs Harbour Historical Musuem.

[122] England 1956 'letter'; 1972 'The Arrawarra Fish Traps' unpublished notes; 1973 Letter sent to F.D.McCarthy, Principle of the AIAS Sep 1973 CHHSM: *Opinion*, 14/10/81. National Parks files in their Coffs Harbour office follow the debate.

[123] See Brayshaw and Byrne 1993 'Assessment of the Archaeology of Look-At-Me-Now Headland' and Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*

[124] North 1964.

Much of his information came from the stories of living Gumbaynggir men with whom he had grown up around Valla Beach, south of Coffs Harbour, and for whom he had respect. His silence on his knowledge of contemporary Aboriginal attachments to place, according to one Gumbaynggir man, was partly because the old men had sworn him to secrecy.[125] However England also firmly believed, as was the dominant philosophy of the time, that assimilation of Aboriginal people in settled Australia could only be achieved with the consequential loss of Aboriginal cultural features.

His history writing was securely framed within a discourse of the lost and the vanishing. He collected and recorded stories of his Aboriginal contemporaries, such as Harry Buchanan, Lambert Waddy, Amos Harvie, Albert Nixon and Harry Kelly, now seen as highly significant to local Aboriginal people.[126] However he tended to have greater faith in anthropologists like A.P.Elkin, rather than in his contemporary informants. For example, he followed Elkin's understanding regarding particular food taboos, despite being told by Harry Buchanan that such taboos had not been used on the Mid-North Coast.[127]

There was nothing in England's history writing suggesting a meaningful, contemporary Aboriginal presence in the landscape, other than as 'relics' of archaeological remains or as Dreamtime stories of an age believed to have all but vanished. As archaeologist Denis Byrne argued, part of the colonial project was to naturalise the presence of settler Australians in the land, and it was helpful if indigenous Australians were either absent or out of sight. This was achieved by either marginalising them to reserves and missions, or constructing heritage landscapes where the historical traces of Aboriginal people's post-1788 experiences were rendered invisible.[128]

There was no explanation in England's texts about why, prior to 1940, most Aboriginal people had physically disappeared from the Coffs Harbour area.[129] Instead, in his talks and notes through the 1960s and 70s, he stated that no Aboriginal people of the area remained alive except a couple of elderly people at Nambucca and Bellingen.

---

[125] Interview C 63.

[126] Reference to these men are made in England 1968 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory'; 1969 'Notes compiled for a visit to a Bora Ground at Yellow Rock Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society on 20th April, 1969' and other documents in the England files, and a taped interview with Harry Buchanan.

[127] England nd 'Aborigines and Settlers' and Buchanan interview.

[128] Byrne 1998, 2001.

Those Aboriginal people residing in Coffs Harbour were, he said, all from other North Coast groups such as the 'Daingetti' and Richmond area, thereby clearly placing such people as much outsiders as the troublesome city settlers to come, but with fewer rights.[130]

His only explanation for their absence was a note in 1968 that: 'The coastal tribes disappeared over forty years ago. White man's illnesses, mainly measles, killed them off'.[131] As noted by Barry Morris, this statement 'obscures more than it reveals about frontier violence'.[132] In the local context, England's narrative remains a powerful example of a broader national and international discourse which naturalised colonisation, dispossession and displacement, fuelling what Jean O'Brien called in the American example, the myth of the vanishing Indian.[133]

England's 1968 passage comes from an unpublished document which is referenced in almost all archaeological, anthropological and historical papers from the early 1990s on the Gumbaingirr from Sawtell to Corindi. It is titled 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory'.[134] England, on behalf of the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society, delivered the paper as a lecture to over 250 members and friends at the site of the Moonee Axe Factory.[135]

The axe factory was in the northern corner of Moonee Beach, near the base of Look-At-Me-Now Headland. At that time it was incorporated into rows of sandhills of up to forty-feet high, but was destroyed by sandmining in 1972. W.A. Rogers, who had documented the site, wrote that:

> ... a sand-mining enterprise has moved in and completely wiped out the ancient Moonee midden. Not a dune, not a sea-shell, and not an implement remains to

[129] England 1968 'Notes'. However Ken Craig says that there were always some Aboriginal people moving through the camps around Coffs throughout this period. See Interview 74 and chapter two.

[130] England 'Aboriginal File' nd and 'Notes by GE England 1960s' in CHHSM.

[131] England 1968 'Notes': p7.

[132] Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach: Part Two: Anthropology Study* (of Dallas and Morris), Report to NSW Public Works Department: p8.

[133] O'Brien 1999.

[134] For example Cane 1988 *The Red Rock Mob: Aboriginal Relationships with the Red Rock- Corindi Area, NSW*. A Report to the Grafton Lands Office; Morris 1994 *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach*; Heron 1994 *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland* and Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland*. But not in Brayshaw 1987 'Investigation of Proposed Sewerage Outfall Locations' or Brayshaw and Byrne 1993 'Assessment of the Archaeology of Look-At-Me-Now Headland'.

[135] See Rogers 1977.

show the spot which was so important to the Aboriginal tribes for thousands of years.[136]

England's paper outlined the plentiful and diverse food sources in the Moonee area, as well as the abundant materials for tool making. It abbreviated what he referred to as the 'legend' of 'Ulitarra' (Yuladara) from the 1900 account of A.C. McDougall, and told stories from 'Pioneer Skinner' and England's Gumbaynggir informants about events that had occurred on the camp grounds behind the axe factory.[137] It clearly identified the headlands and hinterland in the vicinity of Emerald Beach as highly significant in the lives of the Gumbaingirr and other North Coast groups. He told the gathered crowd:

> There are indications that certain places along the coast had a special importance in the lore and mythology of the aborigines... The local scene has a greater number of legends associated with it... One old man told me that it was a 'very powerful place' in the legends of the early folk. Unfortunately, most of these legends have been lost, but there are small scraps of stories which indicate the beliefs of the early folk who belonged here.[138]

This paper was crucial in helping publicly to reveal indigenous significance of the area around Look-At-Me-Now Headland. On the one hand the style of England's history telling rendered invisible a continuing and contemporary indigenous presence in the Coffs Harbour landscape. However his interest in Aboriginal stories and pre-contact history, at a time when few other non-Aboriginal people showed any interest, has also aided the re-emergence into public view of the indigenous claims of their custodianship and rightful place in the area. It is not that people have fabricated readings into England's writing and interviews of things that are not there.[139] Rather, his research can be read now in different ways with new insights and interests.

Indigenous concerns in the Headland

While establishing both a re-emergent and continuing indigenous interest in the place, of course there is no single story to tell of indigenous meanings in, and about, Look-At-Me-Now Headland. For Tony Perkins it was yet another example of the denigration and misunderstanding of local northern Gumbaingirr knowledge, and ignorance of their history and place in the landscape.

---

[136] Ibid:15; also see Kuskie 1993 *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland.*

[137] McDougall 1900 'Manners, customs and legends of the Coombangree Tribe' in *Science of Man* 3(7):116-117, 3(9):145-146.

[138] England 1968 'Notes': p1.

[139] A significant example is his interview in the late 60s or early 70s with Nambucca elder, Harry Buchanan.

In his view the focus narrowed too much onto Look-At-Me-Now, and as a consequence placed other important areas in danger from sewage pollution and indiscriminate population expansion. Rather than the threat of desecration to a site, sewerage had the potential to protect Aboriginal values in the land. He did not wish to diminish the mythological significance of the Headland which their stories incorporated, but rather draw attention to the whole area.

> The whole area was known in long stretches and not chunked up into little bits like it is today. For example the whole area around Emerald Beach was all known as Moonee - for miles. The hinterland was joined into the coast, so that bora grounds inland were connected to Moonee, just like the bora ground at Holloways road is [near Woolgoolga], not just the one close by at Rifle Range near Emerald Beach. The *whole* of Moonee was a very important area.[140]

Tony felt that the 1989 Land Council had raised the importance of the area which people hadn't previously known or thought about. 'After that, though, it became a hammering tool all the way... It got taken over by a larger political agenda of Aboriginal politics'.[141]

For Richard Dacker, the Headland had a broad regional, political significance in revitalising cultural pride and indigenous visibility in Coffs Harbour. He said he had support from a number of indigenous elders from around Nambucca and Kempsey, some who knew the stories about the Headland and others who thought it was vital to relearn them.[142]

Richard is a Dhan-gadi man from Port Macquarie. His people also live by the sea and have connections to the Coffs area. He explained to me that when he went to the Commission of Inquiry he told them about his own cultural feelings about the land, and how the sky, land and water are so tied in together for Aboriginal people who live near the sea. He described to the Commissioner the ongoing significance of stories to Aboriginal people as they explain how life was created - both human and landscape features.[143]

The Headland became part of a broader political and social map in publicly re-staking an indigenous claim in the contemporary landscape of settled Australia. It was also important in helping some indigenous people move beyond 'the old ways of

---

[140] Interview NT 72.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Interview NT 9.

thinking' which Ron Heron had found amongst his sources. For Ken Craig, a local-born Coffs man of Far-North Coast indigenous ancestry, Look-At-Me-Now was important in educating everyone in the community about Aboriginal issues.

> In the early 90s Aboriginal people still generally left the running of political life up to the Land Council to do what was needed to protect the Aboriginal heritage and cultural interests of the district. Now the Elders have much more to do with issues and they take a much more prominent role in the community. If Look-At-Me-Now Headland ocean outfall happened today then you'd have Elders up there on site. Look-At-Me-Now was important in raising awareness of Aboriginal issues in the whole community... Council had been notorious in going ahead with developments and brushing off Aboriginal concerns. These days Council is much more aware of their responsibilities to protect Aboriginal significant sites and are working with the Aboriginal community on many issues.[144]

Despite the differing, and at times conflicting approaches to the Headland between the 1989 Land Council, expressed by Tony Perkins, and that of the 1993 Land Council under Richard Dacker, certain commonalities also existed. The importance of stories in the land remained central. The particular stories embedded in the Headland locale were indeed often 'small scraps' gleaned from a variety of oral and written sources, which publicly re-emerged through the outfall dispute. However, maintaining the cultural format of explaining the world through stories embedded in the land has persisted amongst Aboriginal people in settled Australia. Goodall refers to this as 'the practice of "tradition" as process,' where 'the continuation of the expectation that land would be meaningful' is carried through.

> This understanding of tradition as process is quite different from the frequent definition of 'tradition' as content, as a fixed body of knowledge or a set of unchanging closed narratives, which are both unchanging and separated from the past.[145]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, as non-indigenous people are re-challenged by contemporary indigenous cultures that only partially reflect the stereotypes of pre-colonial traditions, what might a postcolonial landscape look like? There is no one answer - that is a start. It looks different to different people because it holds within it a variety of coexisting and competing histories, meanings, uses, ideologies and dreams.

---

[143] Ibid.

[144] Interview NT 74.

[145] Goodall 2000:32; also see Merlan 1998.

Look-At-Me-Now: A postcolonial landscape?

Postcoloniality has developed as a complex web of thinking over the past two decades in confronting 'the painful history of silencing, in other words colonialism...'[146] Despite all the pitfalls and limitations in the use of the term 'postcolonial', it remains a potently useful description of settler nations like Australia.[147] They have histories as colonial outposts of European imperialism still finding their place in a 'new land', at the same time as being colonisers of the original owners of those same places.[148] The term therefore is not used in the sense of meaning being past colonialism, because no such state exists in a place like Australia. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settlers including non-Anglo's, are yet to reach any agreement on how to share this place. However it can be used in a hopeful sense of recognising silenced but no less existing histories and the ways they impact back onto all of us.

> For the recognition of other histories, of other people, languages and sounds, of other ways of dwelling in the same space that have been consigned to the shadows, obliterated by the bright light of the unswerving beam of 'progress', also invokes the recognition of their place, however obscured and repressed, in the very constitution of our own histories and culture; in our national and individual identities, in our psychic and social selves.[149]

There are certain ways of thinking about a postcolonial landscape that Look-At-Me-Now can offer up. It is surely one where the layers of stories embedded in the physical place can be acknowledged, laid out and argued over in their complexity and variety, rather than attempting to erase and silence competing stories.

On the 20th September 2000, some Emerald Beach residents held a 'Poo Party' to celebrate the first connections to the new sewerage lines. Pro and anti-outfall residents bantered across beer and biscuits, sharing tales with new residents who had inherited the septic tanks and smells from the pumpout trucks common to all Emerald Beach residents. The night before, the local television news replayed old footage of the demonstrators and the angry words of pro-outfallers, nine years younger.[150]

The stories from all sides of the non-Aboriginal fence are re-run and it is accepted and assumed that they will clash and blur and overlap and contrast each other in their variety. A postcolonial landscape is one that acknowledges these non-Aboriginal

---

[146] Jacobs 1996:29.
[147] See McClintock 1992 on terminology.
[148] Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989; Hodge and Mishra 1990; Ashroft et al 1995; Jacobs 1996.
[149] Chambers 1996:49.
[150] Prime Local News 19/9/00.

stories in their diversity. It also must acknowledge that there are living indigenous stories to be told of those same places, and that Aboriginal stories also come in all shades, clashing and contrasting in their variety.

While Richard Dacker, on behalf of the Local Land Council in 1993, reintroduced the heritage significance of the Headland of contemporary Aboriginal people to the rest of the Coffs Harbour community, the Corindi people had introduced the reality that Aboriginal groups do not necessarily think or act alike, and that their histories pull up different explanations for actions. Aboriginal individuals and groups must also be allowed the normative expectation of diverse stories assumed amongst non-Aboriginal people, without an automatic reaction that someone is being un-Aboriginal, inauthentic, selling-out.

There is no point in pretending that non-Aboriginal people cannot, and do not have meaningful attachments to this land, or that their attachments necessarily need be denigrated in comparison to a deeper attachment of Aboriginal Australians.[151] This thesis has outlined stories from both anti and pro-outfallers, and other non-Aboriginal people, which reveal deep attachments to the region that are emotional, sometimes deemed spiritual and are certainly real.

The history of dispossession and dislocation of many Aboriginal people from their ancestors' traditional country also means that there can be no easy assumption of Aboriginal attachment to particular places.[152] And just like the non-Aboriginal migrants to places like Coffs Harbour, Aboriginal people also make new attachments to new localities where they seek to find their place. This makes them no less Aboriginal.

In claiming, establishing and contesting their belonging in places, people tell stories about those places. Stories, whoever tells them, are fluid things which should not be expected to be caught and fixed forever. In a postcolonial landscape it should be understood, for example, that Aboriginal people often tell the same stories differently between themselves, with different layers revealed depending on the teller and the listener, where there is no one rigid version. At Look-At-Me-Now, northern Gumbaingirr people from Corindi do not call the great ancestral hero of Dacker and Heron's story Yuladara, but Mindi.

---

[151] See Read 2000 compared to Tacey 1995.
[152] Beckett 1996.

The physical headland and the non-human creatures that inhabit its rocks, waters and sky, remain beyond any static, determined universal explanation of their meaning to us, or our obligation to them. We will, as Cronon says, continue to argue about such things forever. 'But if we listen closely, we human beings can learn a great deal from the tales we tell of such places'.[153]

A postcolonial landscape can recognise both the reality and rights in difference, diversity and plurality, while also recognising that it can never look the same as before - the different stories and their histories in meeting are 'modified' in some ways.[154] There should be no suggestion here of an easy melting pot of communal connection which shies away from the reality that many stories are not offered to be shared or translated, and that the tilt of power relations still makes any notion of modification or 'hybridity' an abhorrence for some.[155] Political intractability, power, hurt and grief cannot be simply stood aside. They remain. However Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti's introduction to their book *The Post-colonial question* holds well:

> But under common skies and before divided horizons, the exposure to differences, division and worldly alterity can encourage in us all an attempt to seek a response, and a responsibility, in the insistent, ultimately interminable, reworking of the knowledge and culture, hence power and politics, that constitutes our sense of being.[156]

....

At the beginning of the Look-At-Me-Now walkway a four-sided information panel tells selected stories of the Headland. The facer panel provides a general introduction to National Parks and their role in the place. The side next to the walkway tells an environmental story of the flora and fauna to be found around the Headland. As one walks back up the path you face the panel telling the stories of Yuludara/ Mindi's exploits across the landscape which brought the sisters' retribution and the creation of the sea and land as we see it today. And if you keep walking around the stand to a fourth side you will find photos and stories of the anti-outfall protests.

The stand contains its own silences, for example stories of pro-outfallers or much about the City Council that believed the prosperity of the region hinged on an

---

[153] Cronon 1995b:56.
[154] Chambers 1996:49.
[155] Huggins, Huggins and Jacobs 1995.
[156] Chambers and Curti, 1996, pxii.

outfall there. And its National Parks insignia clearly signals a further exclusion - no dogs.

The paved walkway dug into the Headland tells its own story which challenges any lingering notion of this place being an untouched, pristine place. While the cars have gone and the surface vegetation has slowly grown into and over the tracks, the scars left by the unearthed sewerage pipes through the middle of the Headland will remain for a long while yet as a physical reminder of the outfall dispute. The whales and dolphins and kites all come and go to remind us that nothing is exclusively a human story.

A postcolonial landscape might be argued to be emerging at Look-At-Me-Now. The same place has a number of different custodians, inheritors and owners, a number of whom are being acknowledged. In a place where migration, settlement and competing claims of belonging have been intense, an ongoing dialogue of co-habitation grows out of the Headland stories. The process has been haltingly begun, and can easily be undone. Places and the stories that inhabit them are not fixed entities. The wins and losses that are seen to be taken are unstable and buoyant at the same time, and constantly under scrutiny.

CONCLUSION

UNSETTLED PLACES

The spectre of sewage raises fears of pollution and filth invading environments otherwise perceived as pristine and clean. Sewage is a potent symbol of dirt and dirt, as Mary Douglas indicates, is not an inherent quality but a cultural, social and hence historical understanding of matter out of place. She goes on to argue that '...the whole universe is harnessed to men's attempts to force one another into good citizenship'.[1] In the unsettled times of community conflict at the end of the 1980s in the Coffs Harbour Shire, sewage became a compelling metaphor for an array of conflicting claims over good citizenship as residents sought to make the place in their own imaginings of the warm coastal countryside.

It is taken-for-granted amongst anti-outfall protesters that the 1988 decision to move the sewerage outfall for the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme, from Woolgoolga Headland to Emerald Beach, was a last resort after years of fighting over its positioning. Regardless of official scoffs at such a suggestion, they believe Emerald Beach was chosen because it was a small and relatively isolated village, considered to have a docile population. It is now history that authorities who hoped to quietly install Coffs Harbour's third ocean outfall off Look-At-Me-Now Headland were in for a drawn-out battle.

The eruption of the direct-action protests at Emerald Beach in October 1991 happened because of a complexity of interconnections between place, time and people. The place mattered. The topography and design of the Emerald Beach estate led a number of protesters to deliberately choose to settle there. The enclosed structure of the subdivision, with its nucleus of small businesses near the beach, helped construct a village feel that provided a visual promise of community. The beaches, headlands, off-shore islands and mountain backdrop provided an aesthetically diverse landscape which many considered of archetypal coastal beauty.

These new settlers chose the northern beaches because they were less developed than the coastline to the south or immediate north of Coffs Harbour, and because the

---

[1] Douglas 1970:13.

area was neither Coffs Harbour or Woolgoolga but close to the amenities of both. Different people gravitate to different places for different reasons. People made deliberate choices to go to, and stay at, Emerald Beach that went beyond land prices and despite a lack of sewerage. In turn their actions helped shape the place in their visions.

It mattered when they went. The majority of resident protesters arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s, at the height of the migration pattern called counterurbanisation. People made calculated lifestyle choices about a pollution-free environment, a safe place to raise children or to retire and a yearning for community, all of which the positive myths of countryside promised. These decisions were made in an area known for its skyrocketing unemployment rates, where residents chose lifestyle over wealth-creation. It was before the sharp rise in housing prices in Sydney that has enabled some to profit in the gap between real estate values in the city and the country, and has driven out some later migrants looking for more affordable places to live. The timing also mattered because of the growing tensions between environmental and development concerns in the midst of the 1980s economic boom and bust.

And the people mattered. Individual characteristics of the most prominent antagonists, especially of the pro-outfall mayor John Smith and the anti-outfall leader Alph Williams, provided incentive, rage, sheer determination and bloodymindedness for those on all sides. Beyond individuals, the post-1970s history of internal migration to the Coffs Harbour Shire brought together an increasingly diversified community grappling with rapid social and economic change. Representations of the dispute along dichotomised lines of country insiders against city outsiders, masks much more complex dynamics. However it does speak to some of the different worldviews between middle class city-bred newcomers and older country residents who met in conflict in the transforming countryside.

A group of people so often left out of analyses of the outfall dispute, reflecting broader conceptions of the settled countryside as a white place, were Aboriginal locals. Their input was less overt but had profound impact on the outcome of the dispute in their claims that the Headland was of great significance to them. The idea that indigenous people could successfully lay ongoing claims of custodianship in the region challenged white assumptions.

By investigating a history of the Look-At-Me-Now Headland outfall dispute I provided insights into a tumultuous local event, which can only be fully understood

within its historical, global context. At the centre of the dispute were contested uses of the coastal countryside that were reflected in global patterns of population shifts around the industrialised world.

Global forces have always impacted the rural North Coast since colonisation, where local places have never been completely isolated and fixed. For example the processes of colonial settlement were driven by international capitalism and the north coast colonists' views of indigenous owners were moulded by over four centuries of imperial history.

I showed that the diverse visions that drove usage on the Mid-North Coast had long historical lineages. For example the enduring rural mythology of countrymindedness enabled the symbolism of social pollution that some felt city newcomers, harbouring transgressors, had brought to a previously moral, law abiding, compassionate country township. At the same time it also countered the settler mythology of a lack of Aboriginal belonging in Coffs Harbour through the re-emergence of Aboriginal visibility in the landscape.

By exploring a history of internal migration from the first intensive wave of new settlers to the study region, I also exposed the shifting focus on the Mid-North Coast landscape. From the first wave of non-Aboriginal migration centred on its rural hinterland, its back to the sea, new settlers moved onto the coastline in the postwar period creating the impetus for coastal estates and the need for expanded sewage infrastructure. Landscapes, as has been much discussed, are not neutral planes that are seen and understood over time in the same way by all. In the postwar period and escalating from the 1970s, the cultural and economic shifts, which facilitated the valuing of places on the warm coastline as interesting and alluring, have been reflected internationally.

The acceleration of globalisation from the 1970s brought increasing pressures on the coastal countryside, both physically through the rapid population increase and socially through an increasing diversity of people. As economic restructuring picked up pace in the local region, witnessed in the landscape as dairy farms were taken over for housing blocks and new horticultural crops, the international nature of this shift was reflected in Halfacree's naming of the post-productionist countryside.[2] New

---

[2] Halfacree 1997.

environmental ethics and actions, and shifting lifestyle choices that underlay tensions at Look-At-Me-Now Headland in the 1990s, were global trends.

However, despite the similar economic, social, cultural and environmental pressures coming to bear along the warm eastern coastline of Australia in the last three decades of the twentieth century, only Emerald Beach exploded into direct-action protest. Here the combination of place, time and people constructed a unique local history within its global context.

The drawn-out battle over sewerage infrastructure, and the two months of 'siege' at Emerald Beach, has had profound significance within the local Coffs Harbour community with ongoing regional implications. The outcome which halted an outfall on the northern beaches stopped large areas of land being subdivided into urban development, affecting the population growth for the whole Shire, and has seen the State Government target Coffs Harbour as its model in producing state-of-the-art sewage facilities at substantial cost.

For some this has been a travesty believed to have stifled economic prosperity, enabling rival coastal regions to profit. For others it has been a triumph of environmental sense regarding ocean pollution and viable population density, while some just sigh in relief that their village atmosphere has been largely unsullied. The dispute has had long-term personal ramifications, economically, politically and socially.

Therefore despite the imperative to understand the global networks that have accelerated and changed in the past decades to indelibly mark local places, it is clear that no places are identical or have uniform histories. Local histories are where global influences have been shaped by local place and people to reveal unique stories, never detached from the world beyond, but not reducible to it. In focusing my historical account of internal migration and place contestation on a specific local place and event, I join other historians, geographers and anthropologists who argue that it is not possible to understand the complexity and diversity of our world without the close contextual study of local places.

My study has argued for the importance in understanding patterns of internal migration. Discrete waves of internal migration bring different groups of people to places and with them different pressures on communities and environments, changing over time. The particular patterns are neither easy to forecast, nor their outcomes necessarily predictable. Beyond the statistical analysis of migration into and out of

northern New South Wales from the 1970s, there remains a dearth of historical and ethnographic research about the diversifying communities of the Mid-North Coast.

For example my study alluded to diversity within the Coffs Harbour Shire in people's choice of residence, let alone the choices that took some people to Ballina or Port Macquarie. Those who chose Emerald Beach in the early 1980s wanted different things from those who chose Korora, Coffs Harbour or Toormina. They will have changed again in the late 1990s. These internal complexities are vital to forward planning in community services and cultural needs, understanding political alignments and community crises.

Contestation over local places provides moments that clearly expose underlying tensions which may otherwise remain less visible. My historical reading of the sewage crisis that erupted at Emerald Beach opened up a significant local episode that also revealed trajectories of social, cultural and economic conflicts brewing in other places similarly impacted by the population shift to the coast.

While people's siege stories told of particular events as they were seen to occur at Emerald Beach, they also linked into broader historical and community issues alive at the time. Their stories highlighted the diverse cultural and class readings of the area that had escalated with the population shift and helped construct broader competing narratives of belonging to the region.

Common to a number of the comments from people I met, still angered by the actions of the protesters at Emerald Beach, were statements of allegiance to country values and to the town and region. Earning the right to belong in such stories is expressed through one's loyalty to the place, tied to certain constructions of country versus city values. One of the things the Emerald Beach protesters were seen to do was present Coffs Harbour in a bad light to the outside world - as environmentally soiled. This was seen to break down any sense of loyalty to the town and the region, hence invalidating any claims of belonging to the place.

In contrast, amongst the stories of Emerald Beach protesters was an eagerness to demonstrate that their actions not only saved an ocean environment from potential harm, but also allowed the whole area breathing space to consider the type of development wanted. They talked about their sense of responsibility to the area to which they came to live. Some talked about a reciprocal process where the very action of fighting the outfall brought a deeper sense of attachment to Emerald Beach and the

region. For many, putting themselves on the line, politically and physically in a highly charged social environment, earned them the right to call the Coffs Harbour Shire their place.

Stories that people told of the outfall dispute, and the ways they constructed their narratives, acted to validate their sense of belonging and sometimes defined a lack of belonging of others. They are important in constructing arguments of rights to speak and act on behalf of those places in highly contested ways, and they have to be understood as political statements and not as inherent rights.

Both the dichotomised stories about selfish city newcomers, or of heroic environmental saviours, dissolve and cover over the complexity of local histories of the dispute within its global networks. The Coffs Harbour Shire is not the same place in the wake of the sewage dispute. My history of the dispute may help us to reconceptualise the idea of place away from one as bounded, stable and enclosed. In our condition of 'unsettled settledness'[3] in postcolonial Australia, as the coastal countryside continues to diversify, such open conceptions of place make spaces for cohabitation possible.

---

[3] Jacobs 1997:505.

Appendix

Dates: Northern Beaches Sewerage Dispute 1982-1995

July 1982	Proposal for northern beaches sewerage is announced, to be built at Moonee Beach
December 1983	Public council meeting to explain Moonee scheme
March 1984	Moonee sewerage scheme is abandoned after public outcry
July 1985	Woolgoolga Headland is adopted as the preferred site
October 1986	The Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme is adopted with a proposed outfall off Woolgoolga Headland servicing Safety Beach to Moonee
June 1987	The EIS for this scheme is published
June 13th 1987	'Save our Sea' rally against an outfall on Woolgoolga Headland
December 1987-Februrary 1988	Commission of Inquiry into the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme at Woolgoolga
April 1988	As a result of the Inquiry the outfall site for the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme moves to Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Emerald Beach
July 1989	Coffs Harbour Environment Coalition Rally, Coffs Harbour
November 1989	As part of a commission by the Department of Conservation and Land Management to prepare a Draft Management Plan for LAMN, John Allen and Associates hold a seminar of community, local government and other interested participants
February 1990	Council abandons the outfall proposal at Emerald Beach after sustained community pressure. The Effluent Utilisation Task Force is established to examine effluent re-use in the Coffs Harbour/Ulmurra Shires
June 1990	On the recommendation of the Task Force, Council plans to pipe effluent from the Woolgoolga plant to the augmented Coffs Harbour outfall with re-use taps on route
October 1990	Council abandons the idea of the pipeline when the State Liberal/National party government declines to subsidise the extra costs involved
June 1991	Wal Murray, Minister for Public Works and Deputy Premier, announces the withdrawal of funds for the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme
September 1991	A new council is elected with a majority of councillors in favour of an outfall at LAMN
October 8th 1991	Council reinstates an outfall at LAMN State funds are reinstated in October
October 16th 1991	First arrests are made at Emerald Beach
November 1991	LAMN Plan of Management is adopted

December 9th 1991	NSW Supreme Court of Appeal issues an injunction stopping outfall work at Emerald Beach
December 18th 1991	Court of Appeal declares the outfall and associated works are prohibited under the 6(a) Open Space (Existing) zoning of the Headland under the 1988 Local Environment Plan (LEP)
May 1992	A Local Environment Study for LAMN Headland, prepared for Council as part of the process to rezone the Headland, is published
September 1992	94 submissions are made to Council with regard to rezoning through the Draft LEP (LAMN Headland)
October 1992	The Headland is rezoned 6(d) Open Space (Coastal Headland) under the amended LEP Number 21 Coffs Harbour, enabling future outfall work to proceed. An EIS is required
June 1992	A Working Party is formed as part of the EIS investigation to examine disposal of effluent on the northern beaches
February 21st 1993	'Human chain' rally link arms around LAMN Headland
April 1993	Camp Scott Furphy's EIS on the Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme at LAMN Headland is adopted by Council
May-July 1993	The Development application and EIS for the LAMN proposal are exhibited and 764 submissions are received in response
August 1993	The Coffs Harbour Environment Centre's application to the Land and Environment Court arguing the amended LEP does not comply with the Regional Environment Plan is lost. They appeal and two more cases over zoning follow. Council requests the Minister for Planning to order a Public Inquiry into the LAMN proposal
November -December 1993	Commissioner Mark Carleton holds 19 days of public hearings over 2 sessions and receives 221 submissions to the Inquiry
March 1994	Commissioner Carleton hands down his findings in favour of an outfall at LAMN
October 1994	Labour opposition announces it will scrape the proposed outfall if elected at the forthcoming state elections
November 1994	Ron Heron's archaeological report is released, claiming LAMN Headland is a place of great mythological and anthropological significance to local Aboriginal people with which an outfall is incompatible
April 1995	State elections see a new Labour government voted in. The Coffs Harbour Environment Centre's Appeal is stopped in court with the news that Labour will not proceed with an outfall at LAMN Headland

Sources: *Advocate*; Binnie (1987); Symth (1992); Camp Scott Furphy (1993); Carleton (1994); Heron (1994).

Bibliography

Contents

Abbreviations

CHCC: Coffs Harbour City Council

CHCL: Coffs Harbour City Library

CHDLALC: Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council

DL: Dixon Library, New South Wales

LAMN Collection: Look-At-Me-Now Collection

ML: Mitchell Library, New South Wales

nd: no date

NPWS:CH: National Parks and Wildlife Service: Coffs Harbour Office

SLNSW: State Library of New South Wales

PWD: Public Works Department

Yarrawarra Corp: Yarrawarra Corporation, Corindi Beach NSW

Notes

Primary sources:
* Contemporary non-government publications are included under 1) General Publications.
* Reports have been referenced in the footnotes in abbreviated notations that refer to the date of publication and the organisation or department that initiated them. They have been included in the bibliography under the initiating organisation.

Secondary sources:
* Secondary sources have been referenced in the footnotes with the author's last name and date of publication. Full referencing details are presented in the bibliography.

Primary Sources

1) General Publications: Books and Articles

Australian National Trust (1982) *Coastal Headland Survey of New South Wales*, Australian National Trust. [ML]

Brown, Robert and Associates (1987) *Beautiful Coffs Harbour and Districts*, Bathurst. [ML]

C.D.P. (1908) 'Sun-Baking, Surf- Bathing, and Camp Life in New South Wales' in *The Red Funnel*, April, pp 268-271.

Comyns, T.W. (1916) *The Nambucca River in 1916 Embracing Macksville, Bowraville, Taylor's Arm, Nambucca Heads, Deep Crook: Rising Centres in a Glorious Fertile and Picturesque District with a Splendid Future*, no publisher. [ML]

_____ (n.d.) [c.1917] *The Guide to the Dorrigo Shire in 1917*, no publisher. [ML]

Cousins, Arthur (1933) *The Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Shakespeare Head Press Ltd, Australia.

Curlewis, Jean (1929) 'The Race on the Sands: Showing What Surf and Sun Are Doing for the Inhabitants of the Australian Coastline' in *The Home*, March, pp22-32,72.

Ellis, Ulrich (1933) *New Australian States*, Endeavour Press, Sydney.

Ellis, Ulrich (1965) *The Battle for Decentralisation: Northern Districts Lose 48,000 Potential Citizens in Ten Years*, New England New State Movement.

Harris, Phil (1907) 'Surf-Bathing in New South Wales' in *The Red Funnel*, August 1st, 5(1):1-7.

Henderson, John (1851) *Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales with Pictures of Squatting and of Life in the Bush. An Account of the Climate, Productions, and Natural History of the Colony, and of the Manners and Customs of the Natives, with Advice to Emigrants, etc.*, W.Shoberl, London. [ML]

Hodgkinson, Clement (1844) *Australia from Port Macquarie to Morton Bay: with Descriptions of the Natives, their Manners and Customs; the Geology, Natural Productions, Fertility, and Resources of that Region; first explored and Surveyed by Order of the Colonial Government, by Clement Hodgkinson*, T&W Boone, London. [ML]

Maiden, J.H. (1894) 'The Dorrigo Forest Reserve' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp 218-223. [ML]

Marks, George (1911) 'The Dorrigo' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp 277-90. [ML]

McDougall, A.C. (1900) 'Manners, customs and legends of the Coombangree Tribe' in *Science of Man* 3(7):116-117, 3(9):145-146. [ML]

North Coast Steam and Navigation Company (1900) *Handbook and Guide to the Northern Rivers of New South Wales and the towns thereof*, Builer Printing and Publishing Works.

_____ (1909) *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers Districts of New South Wales*, Websdale, Sydney, 2nd edition. [ML]

_____ (1920) *The North Coast Guide: to the Northern Coastal and Rivers Districts of New South Wales*, Websdale, Sydney, 3rd edition. [ML]

O'Grady, J.E. (1913) 'Coffs Harbour and Dorrigo' in *The Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, pp29-41. [ML]

Overall, Albert V.E. compiler, (1925) *North Coast and Northern Tablelands of NSW: The Most Salubrious Climate and Scenery in the State: the Paradise of NSW, District*

Exhibit, August 1925, With Compliments of the North Coast Agricultural Societies Association of New South Wales, Brisbane Royal National Show, 1925, Tweed Daily, Murwillimbah. [ML]

Page, Earl et. al. eds, (1920) *Australian Subdivision: Effect on Development: The Case for Northern New South Wales,* Examiner Printing Works, Glen Innes. [ML]

Sydney Mail Annual (1938) *The Sydney Mail Annual: Australia's Beautiful Scenery,* October1. [Sawtell Historical Society]

2) Federal Government Sources

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *Regional Population Growth: Australia and New Zealand 2000-2001,* Catalogue number 3218.0 Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts (1991) *The Injured Coastline: Protection of the Coastal Environment,* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra. [SLNSW]

National Institute for Economic and Industry Research (1998) *1998 State of the Regions Report,* National Institute for Economic and Industry Research for the Australian Local Government Association, Canberra. [SLNSW]

_____ (2001) *State of the Regions Report,* National Institute for Economic and Industry Research for the Australian Local Government Association, Canberra. [SLNSW]

3) State Government Sources (NSW)

The main holdings for materials relating to the LAMN ocean outfall dispute are the Coffs Harbour City Council, the Coffs Harbour City Library and relevant government department archives. I also accessed relevant primary materials through two other sources.

(a). The LAMN Collection of many boxes was part of the material evidence used by the Coffs Harbour Environment Centre in their court cases against the LAMN Headland ocean outfall proposal. The collection was loaned to me over the period of my research. At the time of writing, the materials are in the process of negotiation for archiving at the Coffs Harbour City Library. These materials are indicated in the bibliography as: [LAMN Collection].

(b). The Advocate's journalist, Michael Secomb, holds a large file on the correspondence that was sent to him by all parties throughout the history of the LAMN outfall dispute. The file was made available to me and is in the possession of the Advocate. These materials are indicated as: [Advocate file].

(a) *Unpublished: State Government (NSW)*
Department of Planning / Environment and Planning

Bedford, Eric (1980) Letter from the Minister of Environment and Planning, 13th June 1980, in Department of Planning Minute Paper, 17/12/90:3. [LAMN Collection]

Department of Planning (17/12/90) Minute Paper 'Look-At-Me-Now Headland Draft Plan of Management' file no 79/11421(Z)8; 87/2189(Z)1, Grafton. [LAMN Collection]

Department of Planning (25/8/93) Minute Paper 'Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme- Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland.' file no. G90/00215, Grafton. [LAMN Collection]

Department of Planning (28/9/94) 'Minute Paper: Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. Consideration of Development Consent By the Minister Under Sections 89(1) and 101(8) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979, file G90/00215, Grafton. [LAMN Collection]

Department of Planning (29/9/94) 'Minute Paper: Consideration of Development Consent By the Minister Under Sections 89(1) and 101(8) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 For Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland. file G90/00215, Grafton. [LAMN Collection]

Gillooly, W.J. (n.d.) Director NPWS, Letter to the Minister for Environment: subject 'Addition of Crown Land on Look-At-Me-Now Headland and Dammerels Headland to the adjoining Moonee Beach Nature Reserve.' [LAMN Collection]

(b) Published: State Government Publications (NSW)
Hansard
Legislative Assembly Friday 20th March 1992 'Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill' Second Reading, pp1605-1623.
Legislative Assembly Friday 27th March 1992 'Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill' Second Reading, pp2193-2211.

By government department of origin:

Department of Agriculture
NSW Agriculture (1996) *Agricultural Land Classification in the Orara-Bucca Valley and Bonville-Crossmaglen Areas of Coffs Harbour City, Coffs Harbour Rural Lands Review-Stage 2- Draft*, January. [CHCL]
Department of Conservation and Land Management
Allen J. and Associates (1990) *Look-At-Me-Now Headland Draft Plan of Management*, Prepared for the Department of Conservation and Land Management. [CHCC]
Department of Lands
Allen, John and Associates (1990) *Look-At-Me-Now Headland Draft Plan of Management*, Prepared for the Department of Lands. [CHCC]
Cane, Scott (1988) *The Red Rock Mob: Aboriginal Relationships with the Red Rock-Corindi Area, NSW*. A Report to the Grafton Lands Office.
Department of Planning/ Environment and Planning
Department of Planning (1989) *North Coast Population and Development Monitor*, Grafton Office, Issue 10, July. [LAMN Collection]
Department of Public Works
Appleton, John and Wendy Beck and Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation (1995) *The archaeological investigation of the site of the proposed Corindi Sewerage Scheme north of Coffs Harbour, Mid North Coast, NSW*. Prepared for Department of Public Works and Services Client Services Division. [Yarrawarra Corp]
Binnie and Partners (1987) *Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: Environmental Impact Statement*, Prepared for Public Works Department NSW on behalf of Coffs Harbour Shire Council. [CHCC/CHCL]
Brayshaw, Helen and Denis Byrne (1993) 'Assessment of the Archaeology of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour, NSW: Report to Coffs City Water Projects, Public Works Department, Coffs Harbour', November 1993. [CHCC]
Camp Scott Furphy Pty Ltd (1993) *Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement for Effluent Management*, March, Prepared for

Public Works Department of NSW on behalf of Coffs Harbour City Council. [CHCC/CHCL]

Dallas, Mary and Barry Morris (1994) *Archaeological and Anthropological Study of an Option of the Corindi Beach Sewerage Scheme*, Report to NSW Public Works Department, Coffs Harbour. (Parts 1 and 2) [Yarrawarra Corp]

Floyd, A. G. (1988) Vegetation Assessment and Restoration, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, September. [LAMN Collection]

_____ (1991) Vegetation Survey of Proposed Pipeline Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Prepared for Public Works, October. [LAMN Collection]

McCotter, Mitchell (1989) *Coffs Harbour Water Supply: Planning of the New Water Supply Scheme: Environmental Impact Statement*, for Public Works Department on behalf of Coffs Harbour City Council, December.

Morris, Barry (1994) *The Gumgaingirr Peoples of Corindi Beach: Part Two: Anthropology Study* (of Dallas and Morris), Report to NSW Public Works Department, Coffs Harbour [Yarrawarra Corp].

Smith S.D.A and R.D. Simpson (1990) *Monitoring Programme for Benthic Communities at Headlands in the Coffs Harbour Region: Second Annual Report.* Prepared for Public Works Department and Coffs Harbour City Council, January. [CHCC]

Department of Tourism

NSW Department of Tourism (1976) *Mid-North Coast Residential Attitude Survey.* [ML]

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (1996) *Rural Settlement: Guidelines on Rural Settlement on the North Coast of New South Wales*, NSW State Department of Urban Planning. [ML]

Government Tourist Bureau

Government Tourist Bureau Sydney (nd) *Pleasure Trips by Rail in the South Coast Districts of Queensland and the Northern Rivers of New South Wales,* Government Tourist Bureau Sydney in conjunction with the Commissioner for Railways, Queensland. [ML]

Government Tourist Bureau, Sydney and Commission of Railways, Queensland. (c1902) *Pleasure Trips by Rail in the South Coast Districts of Queensland and the Northern Rivers of New South Wales*, Sydney and Queensland. [ML]

HFC Robinson Ltd (nd) *Official Guide to Northern NSW: With Through Routes to and from Brisbane: In Detailed 'Road-before-you' Maps,* NSW Government Tourist Bureau and National Roads and Motorists Association of NSW. [ML]

New South Wales Government Tourist Bureau (1912) *The North Coast Tourist District of New South Wales: Noble Streams, Lush Meadows and Forest Stretches*, Sydney. [ML]

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Ahoy, Cheryl and Dee Murphy (1994) *A Preliminary Investigation of Aboriginal Values in the North East Forests:* A Report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. NSW Aboriginal Heritage Branch. [Yarrawarra Corp]

Creamer, Howard (1984) *A Gift of the Dreaming*, National Parks and Wildlife Sydney. [ML]

Griffith, Stephan (1992) *Zieria prostrata ms: Species Recovery Plan*, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program Project No. 195, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. [NPWS:CH]

Lardener, Margaret (1999) Text from the National Parks and Wildlife Service's information board on Gumbaingirr mythology, LAMN Headland [on site at LAMN Headland, Emerald Beach].

National Parks and Wildlife Service (1991) *The Biology and Management of Austral Toadfax (Thesium australe) in NSW*. [LAMN Collection]

National Parks and Wildlife Service (1993) 'Submission by National Parks and Wildlife Service 21 October 1993' to *Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall at Look- At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour*, October 1993. [NPWS:CH/LAMN Collection]

New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (1995) *Understanding Old Growth Forests in Australia: Identifying and Mapping Old Growth Forests in New South Wales: Draft*, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests and Resources and Conservations Assessment Council, August. [NPWS:CH]

Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning

Carleton, Mark (1994) *Report to the Honourable Robert Webster, Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing: Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Ocean Outfall at Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour*. Office of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning, March. [CHCC]

Simpson, William and Kevin Cleland (1988) *The Coffs Harbour City Council Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme: A Commission of Inquiry pursuant to Section 119 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning. [CHCC]

State Planing Authority

NSW Planning and Environment Commission (1975) *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales: Report by the Inter-Departmental Committee*, 30th June 1975 in 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110. [DL]

NSW Planning and Environment Commission (1980) *Landscape Analysis*, Working Paper 12, Coffs Harbour Coastal Planning Study. [ML]

State Planning Authority of New South Wales (1965) *Preserving A Heritage* in 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110. [DL]

State Planing Authority (1966) 'Premature Subdivision in NSW' in SPA News vol 7(1) in 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110. [DL]

State Planing Authority (1973) *Protection of Coastal Lands in New South Wales: Proposed by the State Government*, State Planning Authority of New South Wales, ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110. [DL]

4) Local Government Sources

Materials accessed through the Coffs Harbour City Council

Coffs Harbour City Council

Brayshaw, Helen (1987) 'Investigation of Proposed Sewerage Outfall Locations North of Coffs Harbour, NSW' March 1987 in *1993 Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour*, Primary Submission by Coffs Harbour City Council, Volume 3.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1988a) *Coffs Harbour Annual Report of the Year 1987: Coffs Harbour Bicentennial Activities*, Showcase Publications, St Leonards.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1988b) *Coffs Harbour City 1988: Year Book*, Showcase Publications, St Leonards.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1992a) 'Coffs Harbour' Information Package.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1992b) 'Coffs Harbour's Sewerage System' information pamphlet.

Coffs Harbour City Council, compiler (1993) *1993 Commission of Inquiry Proposed Ocean Outfall Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Coffs Harbour: Responses to Questions addressed to Council and certain experts during and after the primary session; Part 1*.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1994) *Population Profile*.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1996a) *Coffs Harbour Urban Development Strategy*, August.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1996b) *Community Profile 1995/1996*, Area Assistance Scheme.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1997) *Local Environmental Study*, May 1997.

Coffs Harbour City Council (1999) *Population Profile*.

Heron, Ron (1994) *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, prepared for Coffs Harbour City Council and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Kinhill Engineers (1991) *Coffs Harbour Economic Study*, Coffs Harbour City Council.

Smyth, Geoff and Associates: Urban & Rural Planning Consultants (1992) *Local Environment Study: Look At Me Now Headland*, Albany St, Coffs Harbour.

'The Facts' (n.d.) [October 1991], Coffs Harbour City Council.

5). Non government manuscript material

Manuscript material held in the Dixon Library, New South Wales.

'The Nigel Ashton Papers' ML MSS 6004, Coastal Planning Issues Boxes 1, 5 and 10

Ashton, Nigel (1977) 'Talk to Landscape Architects, 18/5/77 " On Developing a Planning Strategy for Coastal NSW"' in 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110.

_____ (1976) 'Coastal Protection in New South Wales' 24/6/76.

Freestone, Robert. compiler (1994) 'The Nigel Ashton Papers', ML MSS 6004, Box 1, 1/C.

State Planning Authority of New South Wales (1965) 'Report: North Coast Survey 1965' ML MSS 6004, Box 10, Series 3 B/1-B/8, folder 3/B/4 110.

(Also see State Planning Authority in Published State Government Sources above)

'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57 and 58 (60)

Newspaper articles on the Middle Head Sand mining protests 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 58 (60).

'The Battle for Beaches and Forests' (1978) poster published by 'Save out Beaches and Forests Committee' in 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57 (60).

Trussell, Kent (nd) Bowraville, 'Save Middle Head Beach' in *Maggies Farm* in 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57 (60).

TWF Parkhouse 'Paper Presented for the 10th Annual State Conference of the Association for Environmental Education, May 1986'. Yarrahapinni Ecology Study Centre, 'Middle Head' Rainbow Archive ML MSS5057. Add-on 1916 57 (60).

6). Other Bureaucratic and LAMN Sources

(a) *Unpublished sources*
<u>Letters and submissions regarding LAMN Headland ocean outfall dispute</u>
Materials noted to be in my possession will be handed over to the Coffs Harbour City Librarian to be included in the LAMN Collection.

Allan, Pam (1994) Shadow Minister for Planning and Environment, Media Release 'Armstrong Can't Be Trusted on Outfall', December 5, 1994. [Advocate File].

Armstrong, Ian (1994) Deputy Premier of NWS, Media Release 'Coffs City Council Asked to Investigate Other Sewerage Options', December 5, 1994. [Advocate File].

Barlow, Paige (1993) 'Submission to Commissioner of Inquiry re Proposed Ocean Outfall, Look-At-Me-Now Headland, Emerald Beach' October. [LAMN Collection]

Barlow, Paige, Richard Clowes and Gavin Smithers (1993) 'Submission to Coffs Harbour City Council: Coffs Harbour Northern Areas Wastewater Scheme Environmental Impact Statement for Effluent Management'. Coffs Harbour Environment Centre Inc. [LAMN Collection]

Charge Sheets: Green, Stephen, Solicitor and Attorney at Law, letter to The Commander, Legal Services re Loo-At-Me-Now Headland Charge Cases Coffs Harbour, 10 January 1992. [in my possession].

Clemesha, Steve (nd) 'The Rare Plants on Look At Me Now', unpublished paper [LAMN Collection].

Coffs Harbour City Council (1992) 'Message from the Mayor' March 2, 1992. [Advocate file]

Coffs Harbour City Council (1992) 'Media Release: Coffs Delegation Tackles Macquarie Street' March 4, 1992. [Advocate file]

'Emerald Beach Action Line Master List': phone tree of anti-outfall protesters [in my possession]

Murray, Wal (1992) Press Release 'Re: Moonee Beach Nature Reserve Bill' February 26, 1992 [Advocate File]

Rayward, Forster (1992) Press release to the editor: *The Advocate*, October 15, 1992. [Advocate File]

Shorter, David (1992) STOP Committee press release. 'Comments on Wal Murray and Council Lobbying Dr. Peter MacDonald's Moonee Nature Reserve Bill' 28/2/1992. [Advocate File]

Ulitarra Society (1989) Submission From the Ulitarra Society Inc to the Inquiry Into Protection of the Coastal Environment, September 1989. [LAMN Collection]

Westwood, Pamela (1993) 'The site known as the Look At Me Now Headland is sacred to the speakers of the Gumbaynggirr language', unpublished paper. [LAMN Collection]

Williams, Alph and John Tozer (n.d.) 'Decentralised Village Scheme For Emerald Beach'. [LAMN Collection]

<u>Other material</u>

Pike, Trevor (1989) Letter to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts on behalf of the Three Valleys Branch of the National Parks Association, August 1989 [in my possession].

'Brief Notes on Fruit Australia' 1989. [in my possession]

(b) *Published materials*

Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council

Heron, Ron (1994) *Anthropological Importance of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, prepared for Coffs Harbour City Council and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Kuskie, Peter (1993) *Archaeological Values of Look-At-Me-Now Headland, North of Coffs Harbour, NSW*, Report to the Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council. [LAMN Collection]

Other

Consulting Environmental Engineers (2000) *Coffs Harbour Sewerage Strategy Environmental Impact Statement:* Volume 1, *EIS Report* Part 1, Environmental Engineers Association CEENA [CHCC/CHCL].

Munday, Edmund Lawrence (1998) Submission of EIS for Emerald Beach Earthworks, Waterbody System and Residential Development, Pridel Investments Pty Ltd, Maclean. [CHCC]

7) Local Historical Sources

(a) *Unpublished sources*

Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society and Museum

At the time of accessing George England's archive, it was held at his wife Naomi England's home. They have since been archived in the Coffs Harbour Historical Society and Museum.

England, George (1956) letter sent to National Trust by G.E.England 5th October.

_____ (nd:a) 'Local Aborigines: Notes by G.E.England 1960s': unpublished notes.

_____ (nd:b) 'Aborigines and Settlers', unpublished notes.

_____ (1968) 'Notes Prepared for an Excursion to the Moonee Aboriginal Axe Factory Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society', unpublished notes, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society.

_____ (1969) 'Notes compiled for a visit to a Bora Ground at Yellow Rock Organised by the Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society on 20th April, 1969', unpublished notes.

_____ (1972) 'The Arrawarra Fish Traps' unpublished notes.

_____ (1973) Letter sent to F.D.McCarthy, Principle of the AIAS Sep 1973

Harvie, Walter (c.1927) 'Tribal Fight at Bongol' typed copy of Harvie's notes with comment by George England.

Other

Corindi Parents and Citizens Association (1984) *Centenary Book 1884-1984*, Corindi Public School, in my possession.

Quirk, John (1968) 'History of Emerald Beach', unpublished manuscript in the possession of Mrs Betty Quirk.

Swain, Jenny (1995) 'Draft Conservation Plan: Meemagagongoin St Mary's Waterhole', Department of Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology, University of New England, Armidale. [Yarrawarra Corp]

(b) *Published Sources*

Coffs Harbour Historical Society

Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society (n.d.) *Time Chart of Coffs Harbour District: Resource Notes.* (Prepared for the Bicentenary).

England, George (n.d.) *The Beacon Mines*, typeset Mrs. Naomi England.

Sawtell Historical Society
Bonnie Bonville (c1925) *Bonnie Bonville* Real Estate poster.

8) Newspapers and media videos

(a) *Newspapers and journals referred to*
Bundagen newsletters, in possession of Andy Bullock Bundagen Community.
Advocate (Coffs Harbour)
Advertiser (Woolgoolga)
Coffs Harbour Business Review
North Coast Times, then called *Coffs Harbour Times,* then called *Holiday Coast Times.*
*Opinion (*amalgamated with the Advocate)
People Magazine
Penthouse
Sydney Morning Herald
Voice of the North,
Underground Surf

(b) *videos*
Prime local news 19/9/00, in my possession.
Rubbo, Michael (1998) *the* man *whose still there.* [1978 Film Australia] 1998 update, Australian Broadcasting Commission.
Sandman P.S. (1991) *Risk Hazard Outrage: Formula for Effective Risk Communication,* American Industrial Hygiene Association, Program 1 & 2. [LAMN Collection]
Stick it up 'em productions (1996) video Emerald Beach: *Smith and Murray V Courageous - Spirit.* [LAMN Collection]

(c) *audio tapes/CD*
Garrett, Kirsten (1995) 'The Feral Peril' *Background Briefing,* ABC Radio National audio tape. 29/1/95.
Small, Judy (1990) *Snapshot,* Craft Maid Music, Australia.

9) Interviews and conversations

(a) *Interviews conducted by other people*
Buchanan, Harry (nd: prior to 1970) taped interview with George England, in Coffs Harbour Historical Society Museum.
Cambell Mark (1996) interview with Adele Wessell 2/1/96, in my possession.
England, Naomi (1987) interview with Lesley Gibbs, 23/2/87 in Coffs Harbour Historical Museum.
Perkins, Tony (1998) taped interview with Vanessa Ross, in my possession.

(b) *Interviews conducted by Jo Kijas between 1996 and 2001.*
This is a record of all interviews and notes taken from extended relevant conversations. The majority of participants were happy for their names to be recorded. However some were not. Therefore the system below has been devised to establish time and place of interviews and conversations, while allowing some people to remain anonymous. The tapes and notes remain in the possession of the author until such time as a suitable archive is established in the Coffs Harbour City Library.

'T' indicates an interview that was taped.
'NT' indicates an interview that was not taped. Extensive notes were taken at the time,
later being written out in full detail, which participants edited.
'C' indicates an extended conversation that was noted either at the time or shortly
afterwards.

C 1 LAMN Arts Project Group, Emerald Beach, 9/11/95
T 2-3 Mark Wittleton, Coffs Harbour, 4/12/95 + 5/12/95
T 4 Keith Walker, Emerald Beach, 11/12/95
C 5 Alph Williams, Emerald Beach, 7/1/96
T 6 Norma and Ron Bourne, Emerald Beach, 9/1/96
T 7 Lee Cahill, Greg Cahill and Cathy Wills; Emerald Beach, 8/2/96
C 8 Mark Wittleton, Coffs Harbour, 12/2/96
NT 9 Richard Dacker, Coffs Harbour, 15/2/96
T 10 George Ray, Emerald Beach, 3/3/96
NT 11 Mark Campbell, Nymboida, 29/3/96
T 12 Norma Wood, Coffs Harbour, 24/5/96
T 13 Alph Williams, Emerald Beach, 8/11/96
T 14 Robyn Howell, Lismore, 12/11/96
T 15 Carol Shorter, Emerald Beach, 17/1/97
T 16 Dee Wallace, Emerald Beach, 21/1/97
T 17 Bob and Sheryl Southwell, Emerald Beach, 23/1/97
T 18 Rae, Richard, Kimberley and Kate Martyn, Woolgoolga, 23/1/97
T 19 Marnie Yates, Woolgoolga, 24/1/97
T 20 Mike and Sue Manns, Emerald Beach, 2/6/97
T 21 Graham Ashton, Mullaway, 22/11/97
C 22 Woolgoolga, 15/11/97
C 23 Naomi England, Coffs Harbour, 5/2/98
T 24 Celia and Brian Nolan, Emerald Beach, 5/2/98
NT 25 Naomi England, Coffs Harbour, 12/2/98
T 26 Ben Holder, Emerald Beach, 13/2/98
C 27 Peter Clarke, Emerald Beach, 14/2/98
T 28 Doug Hoschke, Upper Orara, 30/3/98
T 29 Grace Small with Anne Beasley, Upper Orara, 30/3/98
T 30 Betty Quirk, Emerald Beach, 7/4/98
T 31 Win Hulbert, Sawtell, 8/4/98
NT 32 John Smith, Coffs Harbour, 19/4/98
T 33 Mark Ingelby, Linda Ingleby and Mark Wittleton, Emerald Beach, 23/4/98
T 34 David Bailey, Coffs Harbour, 28/4/98
NT 35 Margaret and Brian Beckett, Bruxner Park Road, 26/5/98
C 36 Peter Jackson, Coffs-Sydney fight, 4/6/98.
T 37 Kerry Shipman, Dorrigo, 2/2/99
T 38 Rod Sims, Emerald Beach, 20/2/99
T 39 David Hollinsworth, Adelaide, February 1999
T 40 Graham Russell, Sandy Beach, 22/3/99
C 41 Barry Wilks, Coffs Harbour, 23/3/99
T 42 Emerald Beach, 23/3/99
C 43 Don Clinch, 24/3/99, Woolgoolga
NT 44 Pat and Alan Manns, Emerald Beach, 25/3/99
C 45 Mike Secomb, Coffs Harbour, 26/3/99

T 46 Joe Plewenski and Susannah Rosen, Emerald Beach, 7/4/99
NT 47 Garry Nehl, Coffs Harbour, 9/4/99
C 48 Dee Murhpy, Yarrawarra, 11/4/99
NT 49 Hugh Saddleton, Coffs Harbour, 13/4/99
C 50 Wayne Hardy, Coffs Harbour, 14/4/99
T 51 Ron Heron, Nimbin, 18/4/99
T 52 Glen Shipman, Coffs Harbour, 29/4/99
T 53 Barry Harris, Emerald Beach, 15/5/99
T 54 Susie Hope, Emerald Beach, 16/6/99
T 55 Warren Fowler, Korora, 24/6/99
C 56 Greg Hawkin, telephone conversation, 25/6/99
T 57 Bob Prater, Wollongong, 14/10/99
NT 58 Sharon Beder, Wollongong, 7/12/99
NT 59 Pam Allen, Sydney, 27/1/00
NT 60 David Kennedy, Coffs Harbour, 15/3/00
NT 61 Ashley Love, Coffs Harbour, 27/4/00
C 62 Ronnie Herbert, The Gallows, 4/5/00
C 63 Steve Hart, Coffs Harbour, 27/6/00
C 64 Ron Heron, Lismore, 25/8/00
C 65 Berry Quirk and Malcolm, Emerald Beach, 29/8/00
NT 66 Joan and Jack Bracewell, Emerald Beach, 30/8/00
NT 67 Denis Smith, Sydney, 31/8/00
NT 68 Roger Price, Coffs Harbour, 7/9/00
NT 69 Don Clinch, Woolgoolga; 8/11/00
NT 70 Heather McKinnon, Fridays Creek, 24/3/01
NT 71 Denis Byrne, Sydney, 12/5/01
NT 72 Tony Perkins, Yarrawarra, 29/6/01
NT 73 Rea Rossiter, Woolgoolga, 3/7/01
NT 74 Ken Craig, Coffs Harbour, 2/7/01

Secondary Sources

Aitkin, Don (1972) *The Country Party in New South Wales*, Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Aitkin, Don (1985)' "Countrymindedness" -The Spread of an Idea' in *Australian Cultural History*, 4:34-41.

Alston, Margaret (1995) *Women on the Land: The Hidden Heart of Rural Australia*, UNSW Press, Kensington.

Appadurai Arjun (1996) *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* Minneapolis.

Arthur, Jay (1999) 'The Eighth Day of Creation' in Michael Williams ed., *Imaginary Homelands: The Dubious Cartographies of Australian Identity, Journal of Australian Studies*, 61:66-74.

Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989) *The Empire Strikes Back: theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, Routledge, London.

Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin eds, (1995) *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London.

Attwood, Bain (1992) 'Introduction' in Bain Attwood and John Arnold eds, *Power. Knowledge and Aborigines, Journal of Australian Studies*, LaTrobe University Press, pp i-xvi.

Attwood Bain, Winifred Burrage, Alan Burrage and Elsie Stokes (1994) *A Life Together, A Life Apart: A History of Relations Between Europeans and Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Barnes, Trevor and James Duncan eds, (1992) *Writing Worlds: discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, Routledge, London.

Barwick, Diane (1962) 'Economic absorption without assimilation? The case of some Melbourne part-Aboriginal families' in *Oceania*, 38(1):18-23.

_____ (1981) 'Writing Aboriginal history: comments on a book and its reviewers' in *Canberra Anthropology*, 4(2):74-86.

_____ (1971) 'Changes in the Aboriginal Population of Victoria, 1863-1966' in D.J.Mulvaney and J.Golson, eds, *Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia'*, Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Baxter, Annie (1984) '"But What, Oh, What Can I Do?" Journal at Yesabba, 1843-4' in Lucy Frost, ed., *No Place For a Nervous Lady: Voices From the Australian Bush*, Ringwood.

Bawden, Thomas (1997) *The Bawden Lectures June 1886; July 1886; August 1888: the First Fifty Years of Settlement on the Clarence*. From the Records in the Clarence River Historical Society with Index and Notes by R.C.Law. (fifth edition)

Beasely, Anne (1998) '"I had a dream...": Bananas, Tourism and Entrepreneurs - A History of the Big Banana' in Johanna Kijas, Jenny Ledgar and Anne Beasley, eds, *Past Lives Fresh Views: Histories of the Mid North Coast*, Coffs Harbour.

Becker Alice (n.d.) *Grace Roberts: Her Life Her Mystery Her Dreaming*, Northern Rivers College Press, Lismore.

Beckett, Jeremy (1958) 'Marginal Men: A Study of Two Half Caste Aborigines' in *Oceania*, XXIX:91-108.

Beckett Jeremy ed., (1988) *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, Canberra.

Beckett, Jeremy (1996) 'Against Nostalgia: Place and Memory in Myles Lalor's Oral History' in *Oceania*, 66(4): 312-322.

Beder, Sharon (1989) *Toxic Fish and Sewer Surfing: How Deceit and Collusion are Destroying our Great Beaches*, Department of Science and Technology Studies, University of Wollongong.

_____ (1998) *The New Engineer: Management and Professional Responsibility in a Changing World,* Macmillan Education Australia, South Yarra.

_____ (1995) 'SLAPPs - Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation: Coming to a Controversy Near You', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, 72(3):22-29.

_____ (1997) 'Technological Paradigms: The Case of Sewerage Engineering' in *Technology Studies: The Technology Journal with Open Peer Commentaries,* 4(2):167-189.

_____ (1990) 'Early Environmentalists and the Battle Against Sewers in Sydney', in *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, 76(1):27-44.

Beer Andrew, Andrew Bolam and Alavic Maude (1994) *Beyond the Capitals: Urban Growth in Regional Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Bell, Martin (1992) *Internal Migration in Australia 1981-1986*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Bell, Martin (1995) *Internal Migration in Australia 1986-1991: Overview Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Belshaw, J. (1978) 'Population distribution and the pattern of seasonal movement in northern NSW' in Isabel McByde ed., *Records of Times Past: Ethnohistorical Essays on the Culture and Ecology of the New England Tribes,* Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Bender, Barbara (1993) 'Introduction: Landscape - Meaning and Action' in her ed., *Landscapes: Politics and Perspective,* Berg, Oxford, pp1-18.

Berndt Ronald, (1963) 'Groups with Minimal European Association', in Helen Sheils ed., *Australian Aboriginal Studies: A Symposium of Papers Presented at the 1961 Research Conference*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Berzins, Baiba (1996) *North Coast Women: A History to 1939,* Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney.

Best, H.E. (1959) 'The Basic Requirements of a Tourist Industry' in Department of Adult Education, *Proceedings of Conference "Planning for Tourist Development on the North Coast" Grafton-August 7,8,9 1959*, Clarence Regional Office, Department of Adult Education, University of New England.

Bhatti, Rashmere and Verne A. Dusenbery eds, (2001) Punjabi Sikh Communities in Australia Woolgoolga Neighbourhood Centre Inc Bananacoast Printers.

Birrell, Bob (1999) 'Residential Relocation in Sydney and the NSW Coast Over the Period 1991 to 1996' in *People and Place*, 7(2):33- 43.

Blomfield, Geoffrey (1981) *Baal Belbora: the End of the Dancing*, APCOL, Chippendale.

Bolton, Geoffrey (1992) *Spoils and Spoilers: A history of Australians shaping their environment,* Allen&Unwin, North Sydney, 2nd edition.

Bonyhady, Tim (1993) *Places Worth Keeping: Conservationists, politics and the law*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards.

Bonyhady, Tim and Tom Griffiths (2002) *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia,* UNSW Press, Sydney.

Booth, Douglas (1997) 'Nudes in the Sand and Perverts in the Dunes' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, 53:170-182.

Bordier, Etienne (1987) *A Swiss Settler in Australia: The Diary of Etienne Bordier 1849-1851*, edited by Kenneth Dutton and Denis Rowe, Auchmuty Library Publication no.6, University of Newcastle.

Boswell, Annabella (1981) *Annabella Boswell's Journal: An Account of Early Port Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

Boyle Peter and Keith Halfacree, eds, (1998) *Migration into Rural Areas: Theories and Issues*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester

Bramble, Kim and Bella Sagmeister (1998) 'Landscapes: An Environmental History of Place in the Hastings River Region' in Johanna Kijas, Jenny Ledgar and Anne Beasley, eds, *Past Lives, Fresh Views: Histories of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales*, Coffs Harbour.

Brown, Nicolas (1996) 'A Place at the Coast' in *Eureka Street*, 6(9): 42-44.

Brown, Norman O. (1985) *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* with an introduction by Christopher Lasch, Second Edition, Weleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut.

Burgmann, Verity (1993) *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.

Burke, Alex (1995) 'Bush Wacked' in *Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, Dec. 30.

Burke, Heather (1997) *The History of Archaeology of Corindi Lake: A joint project between the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation and the University of New England*, Australian Foundation for Cultures and the Humanities.

Burke, Terry (1996) 'Inter-regional migration' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp 103-107.

Burnely, Ian (1985) 'Constraints and opportunities in the ecology of immigrant settlement' in Millecent Poole, Philip de Lacey and Bikkar Randhawa eds, *Australia in Transition : Culture and life possibilities*, HJB, North Ryde, pp 141-147.

Burnley, Ian (1988) 'Population turnaround and the peopling of the countryside? Migration from Sydney to country districts of New South Wales' in *Australian Geographer*, 19(2):268-83.

Burton, Rosemary (1995) *Travel Geography*, Pitman Publishing, London.

Byrne, Denis (1989) *Cultural Resource Overview: Aboriginal Sites in the Northern Region, NSW: Report to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW)*.

Byrne, Denis (1998) 'Deep Nation: Australia's Acquisition of an Indigenous Past' in *Aboriginal History*, 20:82-107.

Byrne Denis, Helen Brayshaw and Tracy Ireland (2001) *Social Significance: a discussion paper*, Research Unit, Cultural Heritage Branch, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Hurstville.

Cambell, Valerie (1978) 'Two fish traps located on the mid-north coast of New South Wales' in Isabel McByde, ed., *Records of Times past: Ethnohistorical essays on the culture and ecology of the New England tribes*, Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Camm J.R.and John McQuilton eds (1987) *Australians: A Historical Atlas*, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, Broadway 5554.

Campbell, Mary (1970) 'Our Vanishing Coast' in Frank Wigham ed., *Coastal Development: Papers from a Seminar on The Future of the Australian Coastline*, Department of University Extension University of New England and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Grafton, pp2-7.

Carter, Erica, James Donald and Judith Squires, eds, (1993) *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location,* Lawrence&Wishart, London.

Carter, Paul. (1988) *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, University of Chicago Press.

Castles, Stephen and Mark Miller (1993) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Macmillan Press, Houndmills.

Chambers, Iain (1996) 'Signs of silence, lines of listening' in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti eds, *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies Divided Horizons*, London, Routledge, pp47-62.

Chambers Iain and Lidia Curti eds, (1996) *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies Divided Horizons*, Routledge, London.

Champion, A.G., ed., (1989) *Counterurbanisation: The Changing Pace and Nature of Population Deconcentration*, Edward Arnold, London.

Chase Athol (1981) 'Empty Vessels and Loud Noises: Views about Aboriginality Today' in *Social Alternatives*, 2(2), pp 23-27.

Ching, Barbara and Gerald Creed eds, (1997) *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Heritage*, Routledge, New York.

Clark R.G and I.R. McPhail (1973) *A Preliminary Examination of the Urban System and Alternative Forms of Local Government of Coffs Harbour and District*, Research Series in Applied Geography no. 37, University of New England, November.

Cloke, Paul and Jo Little, eds, (1997) *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, Routledge, London.

Cock, Peter (1976) *Alternative Australia: Communities of the Future*, Quartet, Melbourne.

Cohen, Bill (1987) *To My Delight: The autobiography of Bill Cohen. A grandson of the Gumbangarri*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Cohen, Ian (1996) *Green Fire*, Angas and Robertson/ Harper Collins, Pymble.

Corindi Parents and Citizens Association (1984) *Centenary Book 1884-1984*, Corindi Public School.

Cosgrove, Denis E. (1998) *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press.

Costar, Brian and Dennis Woodward (1985) *Country to National: Australian Rural Politics and Beyond.* George Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Cowlishaw, Gillian (1992) 'Studying Aborigines: Changing Canons in Anthropology and History' in Bain Attwood and John Arnold eds, *Power. Knowledge and Aborigines, Journal of Australian Studies*, LaTrobe University Press, pp 20-31.

Craig, Ken (2001) 'An attractive place to live' in Johanna Kijas with Fay Kijas eds, *Changing Places: Stories of Coffs Harbour's transforming countryside,* Deakin University Printers, Geelong, pp 71-74.

Craik, Jennifer (1991) *Resorting to Tourism: Cultural Policies for Tourist Development in Australia*, Allen & Unwin.

Crennan, Leonie (1992) *Waste in Troubled Waters: A Case Study For Alternative Sewage Treatment*, Environmental Studies Working Paper 22, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

Creswell, Tim (1996) *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Cronon, William (1983) *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England*, Hill&Wang, New York.

_____ (1990) 'Modes of prophecy and production: placing nature in history' in *Journal of American History*, 76:1123-31.

_____ (1992) 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative' in *Journal of American History*, 78 (4):1347-1376.

_____ ed., (1995a) *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York.

_____ William (1995b) 'Introduction: In Search of Nature' in his ed, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, pp 23-56.

_____ William (1995c) 'The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature' in his ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York, pp69-90.

Crowley Frank ed., (1980) *Colonial Australia 1875- 1900. A Documentary History of Australia 3*, Thomas Nelson, West Melbourne.

Curthoys, Ann (1994) '"Vietnam": Public Memory of an Anti-War Movement' in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton eds, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp113-134.

_____ (1999) 'Expulsion, Exodus and Exile' in Michael Williams (ed) *Imaginary Homelands: The Dubious Cartographies of Australian Identity*, Journal of Australian Studies, 61:1-18.

Daley, Louise Tiffany (1966*) Men and a River: A History of the Richmond River District 1828-1895*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Dargavel, John (1994) 'Constructing Australia's forests in the image of capital' in Stephen Dovers ed., *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*. Oxford University Press, Australia, pp80-98

Darian-Smith Kate and Paula Hamilton eds, (1994) *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Davidson, Jim and Peter Spearritt eds, (2000) *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Press, Victoria.

Davidson R. and L. Reed (1984) *Aboriginal Studies on the North Coast of NSW: A Bibliography of Source Material*, North Coast Institute of Aboriginal Community Education, Lismore.

Davis, Kylie (1992) 'Water Board blamed for high pollution' in *The Weekend Australian*, April 18-19.

Davison, Graeme (1989) 'The Parochial Past: Changing uses of Australian Local History' in *The Future of the Past? Australian History After the Bicentenary*, Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Conference with Affiliated Societies, Nowra, pp 5-19.

DeLepervanche, Marie (1984) *Indians in a White Australia: An account of race, class and Indian immigration to eastern Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Dempsey, Ken (1990) *Smalltown: A Study of Social Inequality, Cohesion and Belonging*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Department of Adult Education UNE (1959) *Proceedings of Conference "Planning for Tourist Development on the North Coast" Grafton-August 7,8,9 1959*, Clarence Regional Office, Department of Adult Education University of New England.

Devery, J. (1962) *Longmans Australian Geographies: The North Coast of NSW no16*, Longman, Victoria.

Di Chiro, Giovanna (1995) 'Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environmental Justice' in William Cronon ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, pp298-320.

Dingle, Tony and Carolyn Rassmussen (1991) *Vital Connections: Melbourne and its Board of Works 1891-1991*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne.

Douglas, Mary (1970) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Penguin Books, Middlesex.

Douglas, Maureen and Rohan Clark (1978) *Population and Building Trends and Forecasts for the New England and North Coast Regions*, Department of Geography, UNE, Armidale.

Drew, Philip (1994) *The Coast Dwellers: Australians Living on the Edge*, Penguin Books.

Drysdale, Russell (1991) 'Aged migration to Coastal and Inland Centres in NSW' in *Australian Geographical Studies*, 29(2):268-284.

Duncan C.J. and W.R. Epps (1992) 'The demise of 'countrymindedness': New players or changing values in Australian rural politics?' in *Political Geography Quarterly*, 11(5):430-448.

Dutton A.F. (1959) 'Problems of a North Coast Tourist Industry' in *Proceedings of Conference "Planning for Tourist Development on the North Coast" Grafton-August 7,8,9 1959*, Clarence Regional Office, Department of Adult Education, University of New England.

Dutton I.M., R. Derrett, K Luckie, W.E. Boyd and S Knox, eds, (1994) *'Images From the Edge!': Landscape and Lifestyle Choices for the Northern Rivers Region of NSW*. Faculty of Resource Science and Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

Edwards, W.H. (1988) *An Introduction to Aboriginal Studies*, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls.

Elliot, Roger (1998) 'The Northern Separatist Movement of New South Wales', unpublished paper, Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour, in my possession.

England, George (1976) *The Coffs Harbour Story*, Central North Coast Newspaper, Coffs Harbour.

Epps, Roger and Tony Sorenson (1993) 'Introduction' in T.Sorenson and R.Epps eds, *Prospects and Policies For Rural Australia*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne.

Evans Raymond, Kay Saunders and Katherine Cronin (1975) *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

Fahey, Eric (1976) *The Settlement of Guy Fawkes & Dorrigo*, Central North Coast Newspaper Co., Coffs Harbour.

Fardell, Neeta (1998) 'Nymboida River A Precious Resource: A Brief History of the River and its Catchment Area' in Johanna Kijas, Jenny Ledgar and Anne Beasley eds, *Past Lives Fresh Views: Histories of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales*, Coffs Harbour.

Fentress, James and Chris Wickham (1992) *Social Memory*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Fielding, Tony (1998) 'Counterurbanisation and social class' in Peter Boyle and Keith Halfacree eds, *Migration into Rural Areas: Theories and Issues*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, pp 41-60.

Gaddes, Alex (1990) *Red Cedar Our Heritage: A Personal Account of the Lives and Times of the Men and Women Who Worked in the Red Cedar Industry*, Wyndham Observer.

Gale, Fay (1988) 'Urbanisation' in James Jupp ed., *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Gammage, Bill (1991) 'A Dynamic of Local History' in *Peripheral Visions: Essays on Australian Regional and Local History*, James Cook University, Townsville, pp 1-7.

Garden, Don ed., (1993) *Created Landscapes: Historians and the Environment*, The History Institute, Victoria

Gelder, Ken and Jane Jacobs (1995) '"Talking out of place": Authorizing the Aboriginal sacred in postcolonial Australia' in *Cultural Studies* 9(1):150-160.

317

_____ (1998) *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South.

Gerad, John W. (1984) *"from Pastures Green to the Silver Screen": A 20th Century Autobiography*, Advocate/Opinion, Coffs Harbour.

Gilbert, Alan D. (1987) 'Cities and Suburbs' in Ann Curthoys, A.W.Martin and Tim Rowse eds, *Australians from 1939*, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, pp77-98.

Goodall, Heather (1987) 'Aboriginal History and the Politics of Information Control' in *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 9:17-33.

_____ (1995) 'New South Wales' in Ann McGrath ed., *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp 55-120.

_____ (1996) *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

_____ (1999a) 'Telling Country: Memory, Modernity and Narratives in Rural Australia' in *History Workshop Journal*, 47:161-189.

_____ (1999b) 'Contesting Changes on the Paroo and Its Sister Rivers' in R.T. Kinsford ed., *A Free-flowing River: the Ecology of the Paroo River*, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney, pp179-200.

_____ (2000) ''Fixing the past: Modernity, tradition and memory in rural Australia' in *UTS Review: Localising Modernities*, 6(1):20-40.

Goodall, Heather and Damian Lucas (1997) 'Country stories: Oral history and sustainability research' in Australian Association for Social Research, *Sustainability and Social Research: Proceedings of 1997 Conference of the Australian Association for Social Research*, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

Gray, Ian (1991) *Politics in Place: Social Power Relations in an Australian Country Town*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Green, Stephen (1994) 'Look At Me Now Headland: A Social Impact' unpublished paper in my possession.

Griffiths, Gareth (1994) 'The Myth of Authenticity' in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson eds, *DeScibing Empire*, Routledge, London.

Griffiths, Tom (1987) 'Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in our History- Making' in *Australian Cultural History*, 6:18-32.

_____ (1991) 'History and Natural History: Conservation Movements in Conflict?' in J. Rickard and Peter Spearritt eds, *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, Melbourne University Press/Australian Historical Studies, Melbourne, pp16-32.

_____ (1992) *Secrets of the Forest: Discovery History in Melbourne's Ash Range*, Sydney.

_____ (1996) *Hunters and Collectors: the Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press

Griffiths, Tom and Libby Robin eds, (1997) *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Grimshaw Patricia, Chris McConville and E. McEwen eds, (1988) *Families in Colonial Australia*, Allen&Unwin, Sydney.

Grimshaw Patricia, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartley (1994) *Creating A Nation*, McPhee Gribble, Penguin Books, Victoria.

Gumbaynggir Language and Cultural Group (1992) *Gumbaynggirr Yuludarra (Gumbaynggir Dreaming) Vol 1: The Stories of Uncle Harry Buchanan*, Gumbaynggirr Language and Cultural Group, Coffs Harbour.

Halfacree, Keith (1997) 'Contrasting Roles for the Post-Productivist Countryside: A postmodern perspective on counter urbanisation' in P.Cloke and J.Little eds,

Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality, Routledge.

Hall, John (1999) 'Private memories, public perceptions: Italian prisoners of war in northern New South Wales' in *Limina*, 5:40-61.

Hall, C. Michael (1995) *Introduction to Tourism in Australia: Impacts, Planning and Development*, Longman, Melbourne.

Hallam, Sylvia (1975) *Fire and Hearth; a study of Aboriginal usage and European usurpation in south-western Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Hamilton, Neil and Doug Cocks (1996) 'Coastal Growth and the Environment' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp182-191

Hamilton, Paula (1994) 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History' in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton eds, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp 9-32.

Hancock, W.K. (1972) *Discovering Monaro: A study of man's impact on his environment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hannah, Barbara (1968a) *Land Use of the North Coast of New South Wales*, Research Series in Applied Geography No 15, September, Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Hannah, Barbara (1968b) *The Landscapes of the North Coast of New South Wales*, Research Series in Applied Geography No 14, June, Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Hannah, Barbara (1968c) *The North Coast of New South Wales: Preservation, Conflict and Potential*, Research Series in Applied Geography No 16, September, Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Hannah, Barbara (1970) 'Population growth and resort development' in Frank Wigham ed., *Coastal Development: Papers from a seminar on the future of the Australian coastline*, Department of University Extension University of New England and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Grafton, pp16-21.

Hannah, Helen (1986) *Forest Giants: Timber Getting in the NSW Forests 1800-1985*. Forestry Commission of NSW.

Harloe Michael, C.G. Pickvance and John Urry eds, (1990) *Place, Policy and Politics: Do Localities Matter?* Unwin Hyman, London, pp187-204.

Harms, John (1998) 'Jackie Huggins' in *Who Will Look After the Children? Journal of Australian Studies*, 59, pp53-65.

Harvey, David (1989) *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

_____ (1993) 'From space to place and back again: Reflections on the condition of postmodernity' in Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putman, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner eds, *Mapping the Futures: Local cultures, global changes*, Routledge, London, pp 3-29.

Heathcote, R.L. (1965) *Back of Bourke: A study of land appraisal and settlement in semi-arid Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Henderson, Krimhilde (1980) 'Farm and Forest on the Dorrigo: A Historical - Ecological Study of Land Use Conflict in Northern New South Wales.' PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley.

Henry, Rosita (1994) 'Kuranda at War: Contested Space and the Politics of the Market Place' in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 5(3):294-305.

Heron, Ron (1993) *My Aboriginal People and Our Culture. Aspects of Aboriginal Culture of the Lower Clarence Valley.* A Report prepared for the Lower Clarence Aboriginal Youth Service, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Services and Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

Hodge Bob and Vijay Mishra (1990) *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian literature and the postcolonial mind,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Holder, Ben. 1984. *The History of the Coastal Strip known as 'Look-At-Me-Now': Moonee Creek Settlement (100 years); the Skinner Family and Descendants,* Ben Holder, Emerald Beach.

Hollinsworth David (1992) 'Discourses on Aboriginality and the politics of identity in urban Australia' in *Oceania,* 63(2).

Horin, Adele (1985) 'Bellingen 1978: a clash of culture' in Rob Pullen ed., *The Way We Are: A National Portrait by the National Times,* Unwin Paperbacks, Sydney, pp 39-46.

Horne, Julia (1991) 'Travelling through the Romantic Landscapes of the Blue Mountains' in *Travellers, Journeys, Tourists: Australian Cultural History,* 10:84-98.

Huggins, Jackie, Rita Huggins and Jane Jacobs (1995) 'Kooramindanjie: Place and the Postcolonial' in *History Workshop Journal* 39:165-181.

Hugo, Graeme (1989) 'Australia: The spatial concentration of the turnaround' in A.G. Champion ed., *Counterurbanisation: The Changing Pace and Nature of Population Deconcentration,* Edward Arnold, London, pp 62-82.

_____ (1996) 'Counterurbanisation' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia,* Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp126-146.

Hugo, Graeme and Martin Bell (1998) 'The hypothesis of welfare-led migration to rural areas: The Australian case' in Peter Boyle and Keith Halfacree eds, *Migration into Rural Areas: Theories and Issues,* John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, pp107-133.

Hume, D. (1981) 'NSW State Planning Policies on Rural Subdivision and Hamlet Development: A Personal View' in Bob Prater and Richard Day eds, *Planning on the North Coast: Proceedings of a Conference held at Valla Park, April 2/3, 1981* Department of Continuing Education Coffs Harbour and Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Hutton, Drew and Libby Connors (1999) *A History of the Australian Environment Movement,* Cambridge University Press.

Jackson, Peter and Jan Penrose eds, (1993) *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation,* UCL Press, London.

Jacobs, Jane M. (1996) *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City,* Routledge, London.

_____ (1997) 'The Consequences of Ruins: Contemplations on Social Memory and Loss of Place in Australia' in *Journal of Historical Geography,* 23(4):500-505.

Jeans, D.N. (1972) *An Historical Geography of New South Wales to 1901,* Reed Education, Sydney

Jenkins, Lesley (1993) *Power of the Land/Il Potere Della Terra: A Social History of Italian Settlement in Lismore/Una storia delle attivita dell* Œinsediamento Italiano di Lismore Northern Star Printery, Lismore.

Johnson, Michael and Stephen Rix eds, (1993) *Water in Australia: Managing Economic, Environmental and Community Reform,* Pluto Press and the Public Sector Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Jones, Michael (1986) *A Sunny Place for Shady People: The Real Gold Coast Story,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Juppenlatz, Morris (1959) 'An Experiment in Freedom: the Gold Coast' in *Proceedings of Conference "Planning for Tourist Development on the North Coast" Grafton-August 7,8,9 1959*, Clarence Regional Office, Department of Adult Education, University of New England.

Kannegieter, Tim (1992) 'Radical rethink needed on water' in *Civil Engineer Australia*, 2:20-23.

Kass, Terry. (1989) *Regional History of the North Coast: A discussion paper based on a study prepared by Terry Kass for the NSW Department of Planning*. Department of Planning, Grafton.

Keith, Michael and Steve Pike (1993) 'Introduction Part 1: the politics of place' in their eds, *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Routledge, London, pp 1-21.

Kelly Paul (1994) *The End of Certainty: Power, Politics and Business in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, revised edition.

Kijas Johanna, Jenny Ledgar and Anne Beasley eds, (1998) *Past Lives Fresh Views: Histories of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales*, Coffs Harbour.

Kijas Johanna with Fay Kijas eds, (2001) *Changing Places: Stories of Coffs Harbour's transforming countryside,* Deakin University Printers, Geelong.

LaCapra, Dominick (1983) *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Languages*, New York.

LAMN Arts Project Committee (2000) *Look At Me Now: A Community Under Siege*, LAMN Arts Project Committee, Emerald Beach.

Lane, K.H. (1978) 'Carved trees and initiation ceremonies on the Nambucca River' in Isabel McBryde ed., *Records of times past: Ethnohistorical essays on the culture and ecology of the New England tribes,* Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Langford, Ruby (1994) *My Bundjalung People*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

Langton, Marcia (1995) 'Art, wilderness and *terra nullius*' in *Ecopolitics IX Conference papers and resolutions*, Northern Land Council.

_____ (2000) 'Burning questions: emerging environmental issues for Indigenous peoples in Northern Australia', *Chain Reaction* Summer 1999-2000, 81:25-27.

Lawrence Geoffrey, Frank Vanclay and B.Furze eds, (1992) *Agriculture, Environment and Society: Contemporary Issues for Australia,* Macmillan, Melbourne.

Lawrence Geoffrey, Kristen Lyons and Salim Momtaz eds, (1996) *Social Change in Rural Australia*, Rural Social and Economic Research Centre, Central Queensland University.

Lawrence Geoffrey and Ian Grey (2001) *A Future for Regional Australia: Escaping Global Misfortune*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ledgar, Jenny (1998) 'Working their grandparents; garden: A history of settlement on Ulgundahi Island 1880-1980' in Johanna Kijas, Jenny Ledgar and Ann Beasley eds *Past Lives Fresh Views: Histories of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales*, Coffs Harbour.

Lefebvre, Henry (1991) *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (1974), Blackwell, Oxford.

Lines, William J. (1991) *Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia,* Allen & Unwin.

Lloyd, Clem (1993) 'The delivery of sewage and waste treatment in services in Australia' in Michael Johnson and Stephen Rix eds, (1993) *Water in Australia: Managing Economic, Environmental and Community Reform*, Pluto Press and the Public Sector Research Centre, University of New South Wales, pp 59-84.

Macquarie Concise Dictionary (1998) The Macquarie Library Pty Ltd., Macquarie University, third edition.

Martin, A.W. (1987) 'The Country' in Ann Curthoys, A.W.Martin and Tim Rowse eds, *Australians From 1939*, Fairfax, Syme &Weldon, Sydney, pp 99-117.

Massey, Doreen (1993a) 'Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place' in Jon Bird et al *Mapping the Futures: Local Culture, Global Change*, Routledge, London, pp59-69.

_____ (1993b) 'Politics and Space/Time' in Michael Keith and Steve Pike (eds) *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Routledge, London, pp141-161.

_____ (1994a) *Space, Place and Gender*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

_____ (1994b) 'Double Articulation: A Place in the World' in Angelika Bammer ed., *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp110-121.

_____ (1995) 'Places and Their Pasts' in *History Workshop Journal*, 39:182-192.

Massey, Doreen and Pat Jess eds, (1995) *A Place in the World?: Places, Cultures and Globalisation*, The Open University, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Mayne, A.J.C. (1982) *Fever, Squalor and Vice: Sanitation and Social Policy in Victorian Sydney*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia Press.

McBryde, Isabel (1974) *Aboriginal Prehistory in New England*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.

_____ ed., (1978) *Records of Times Past: Ethnohistorical Essays on the Culture and Ecology of the New England Tribes*, Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

McClintock, Anne (1992) 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism"', in *Social Text*, 10 (2/ 3): 84-98.

McGrath, Ann (1987) *Born in the Cattle*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

_____ (2000) 'Challenging Australian History: Discovering New Narratives Conference. National Library 14-15 April 2000' in *AHA Bulletin*, 90:64-67.

McGrath, Ann ed., (1995) *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

McGregor, Craig (1966) *Profile of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood.

McKeon, Paul (1991) 'Outfall Anarchy?' in *Enterprise: Journal of the Coffs Harbour Chamber of Commerce*, 2(5), Nov.1:5.

McLachlan, Iaen (1988) *Place of Banishment: Port Macquarie 1818 to 1832*, Hale & Iremonger, Marrickville.

McTavish, Maxine (1997) 'More Than One Hundred Years of Tourism in Byron Bay', unpublished paper towards Honours in Tourism, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

Medcalf, Rory (1993) *Rivers of Blood: Massacres of the Northern Rivers Aborigines and their resistance to the white occupation 1838-1870*, 2nd edition, Northern Star, Lismore.

Medcalfe, Rod (1981) 'NSW North Coast 81: A Special Survey Compiled by Rod Metcalfe' in *Australian Financial Review*, 1st September, Supplementary pp1-15.

Meethan, Kevin (1996) 'Place, Image and Power: Brighton as a Resort' in Tom Selwyn ed., *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth Making in Tourism*, Wiley & Sons, Chichester.

Mercer, David (1992) 'Conflicting Ideologies' in Jeremy Smith ed., *The Unique Continent*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

Merlan, Francesca (1998) *Caging the Rainbow: Places, Politics and Aborigines in a North Australian Town*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.

Miller, Simon (1995) 'Urban Dreams and Rural Reality: Land and Landscape in English Culture, 190-45.' In *Rural History*, 6(1):89-102.

Miller, William Ian (1998) *The Anatomy of Disgust*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Moore, Donald (1998) 'Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands' in *Cultural Anthropology*, 13(3):344-381.

Morris, Barry (1989) *Domestication Resistance: The Dhan-gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, Oxford.

Morris, Meaghan (1998) *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis.

Mosley, Geoff (1978) 'History of Wilderness Reserve Idea in Australia' in his ed., *Australia's Wilderness: Conservation Progress and Plans: Proceedings of the First National Wilderness Conference, Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, Oct 21-23, 1977.* Australian Conservation Foundation.

_____ (1994) 'Reconciling the Interests of Two Cultures: A Testing Time for the Wilderness Conservation Movement' in Will Barton (ed). *Wilderness- The Future: Papers from the Fourth National Wilderness Conference, 1993*, envirobooks, Sydney.

Munday, Edmund Lawrence (1998) Submission of EIS for Emerald Beach Earthworks, Waterbody System and Residential Development, Pridel Investments Pty Ltd, Maclean.

Murdock, Jonathon and Terry Marsden (1994) *Reconstituting Rurality: Class, Community and Power in the Development Process*, UCL Press, London.

Murphy, Peter (1981) 'Patterns of coastal retirement migration' in Anna Howe ed., *Towards an Older Australia: Readings in Social Gerontology*, University of Queensland Press, pp301-314.

Murphy, Peter and Robert Zehner (1988) 'Satisfaction with sunbelt migration' in *Australian Geographical Studies*, 26(2):320-334.

Murray, Michael (1994) 'Ferals: The Call of the Wild' in *Simply Living*, 77:52-59.

Nambucca District Historical Society (1969) *Short History*, Guardian News Print, Macksville.

Newsome, Colin (1993) *Outlawed Bushranger Black Tommy*, Colin Newsome, Glen Innes.

Newton, Peter and Martin Bell (1996) 'Mobility and Change: Australia in the 1990s' in their eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp1-18.

Newton, Peter and Martin Bell eds, (1996) *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra

Neyland, Beth and Hal Kendig (1996) 'Retirement Migration to the Coast' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp364-377.

Nichols, Rod (1975) 'Towards a Coastal Planning Strategy' in Frank Wigham ed., *Our Vanishing Coast: Coastal Development From Now to the Year 2000*, Department of Continuing Education, University of New England, Coffs Harbour.

North, W.I. (1964) 'Aboriginal Factory Sites at Moonee Beach, New South Wales' in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, 14 (4), 633-642.

O'Brien, Jean (1999) '"They are so frequently shifting their place of residence": land and the construction of social place of Indians in colonial Massachusetts', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, eds, *Empire and Others: British Encounters with*

indigenous peoples 1600 - 1850, The Neale Colloquium in British History Series, University College London Press, London, pp204 - 216.

Orara High School (1979) *Images: A Pictorial History of Coffs Harbour*, Orara High School.

Painter, Martin (1987) *Steering the Modern State: Changes in Central Coordination in Three Australian State Governments*, Sydney University Press.

Papadakis, Elim (1993) *Politics and the Environment: the Australian Experience*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.

Peace, Ade (1996) '"Loggers are environmentalists too". Towards an ethnography of environmental dispute, Rural New South Wales 1994/1995' in *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 7(1):43-60.

_____ (1998) 'Anatomy of a blockade: Towards an ethnography of environmental dispute Part 2, Rural New South Wales 1996' in *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 10(2):144-162.

Pearson, Linda (1995) 'Planning and Land Use Decision-Making at State and Local Level: The Look-At-Me-Now Headland Ocean Outfall' in *Environmental and Planning Law Journal*, 12(3):221-230.

Perkins, Robert and Alistair Thomson eds (1998) *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London.

Perkins, Tony (1997) *Past and Present Public Lands Uses By Gumbaingirr Knowledgeholders, Corindi Beach*, Yarrawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Corindi.

Pigram, John (1987) *Tourism in Coffs Harbour: Attitudes, Perceptions and Implications*, North Coast Regional Office, Department of Continuing Education, University of New England, Coffs Harbour.

Piper, Gwen (1980) *My One Fourteen Millionth Share*, Temnor Publications, West Ryde.

Pollard, Heather (1996) 'Seasonal and Permanent Moves among the Elderly' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp 378- 391.

Powell J.M. (1976) *Environmental Management in Australia 1788-1914. Guardians Improvers and Profit: An Introductory Survey*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

_____ (1988) *An Historical Geography of Modern Australia: The Restive Fringe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

_____ (1994) 'Strangers and Lovers: Disputing the Legacy of Environmental History' in Livio Dobrez ed., *Identifying Australia in Postmodern Times*, Bibliotech, Australian National University, pp87 -103.

Prater R, C. McIntosh and A. Currey eds, (1987) *North Coast Outlook Conference: The Regional Rural Economy: Coffs Harbour 13-14 August 1987*, Department of Agriculture New South Wales, The University of New England, Armidale.

Prater, Bob and Richard Day eds, (1981) *Planning on the North Coast: Proceedings of a Conference held at Valla Park, April 2/3, 1981* Department of Continuing Education Coffs Harbour and Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Pratt, Mary Louise (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London.

Pred, Allan (1986) *Place, Practice and Structure: Social and Spatial Transformation in Southern Sweden: 1750-1850*, Polity Press, Oxford.

Prosser, Gary (1997) 'The Development of Tourist Destinations in Australia: A Comparative Analysis of the Gold Coast and Coffs Harbour' in Richard Teare,

Bonnie Canziani and Graham Brown eds, *Global Directions: New Strategies For Hospitality and Tourism*, Cassell, pp305-332.

Rapoport, Amos ed., (1972) *Australia as Human Setting*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Read, Peter (1984) *Down There With Me on Cowra Mission*, Pergamon Press, Sydney.

_____ (1992) 'The look of the rocks and the grass and the hills: a rural life site on the south coast of New South Wales', in *Voices*, Winter:37-48.

_____ (1996) *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places*, Cambridge University Press.

_____ (2000) *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Reay, Marie ed., (1964) *Aborigines Now: New Perspectives in the Study of Aboriginal Communities*, Angas and Robertson, Sydney.

Recher, Harry (1970) 'Do We Need More National Parks' in Frank Wigham ed., *Coastal Development: Papers from a Seminar on The Future of the Australian Coastline*, Department of University Extension University of New England and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Grafton, pp 22-31.

Reece, Robert (1974) *Aborigines and Colonists*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.

Robertson, Lindsay (1970) 'Planning for Coastal Development and Conservation' in Frank Wigham ed., *Coastal Development: Papers from a Seminar on The Future of the Australian Coastline*, Department of University Extension University of New England and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Grafton, pp41-46.

Robin, Libby (1998) *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South.

Rogers, W.A. (1975) *Aboriginal Industry Site at Sandy's Beach Mid North Coast, NSW*, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society, Publication no.10.

_____ (1977) *Aboriginal Stone Implements from Moonee Beach, Mid North Coast, New South Wales*, Coffs Harbour and District Historical Society, Publication no. 12.

Rolls, Eric (1981) *A Million Wild Acres*, Melbourne.

_____ (1993) 'The north coast story', in his *From Forest to Sea: Australia's Changing Environment*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, pp125 -160.

_____ (1994) 'Poisoning Paradise', in *The Independent: Australia's National Quality Monthly*, Dec. 1993/Jan 1994:37-41.

Rose, Deborah Bird (1996) *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness*, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Rowland, D.T (1979) *Internal Migration in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Rowland, Don (1996) 'Migration of the Aged' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp348-363.

Rowse, Tim (1993) 'Actors in a Landscape' in his *After Mabo: Interpreting Indigenous Traditions*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

Ryan, JS (1988) *The Land of Ulitarra: early records of the Aborigines of the mid-north coast of New South Wales*, NSW Department of Education, Lismore.

Sabine, Nigel (1970) 'An Ethnohistory of the Clarence Valley', BA Honours thesis, University of New England, Armidale.

Salt, Bernard (2001) *The Big Shift: Welcome to the Third Australian Culture. The Bernard Salt Report*, Hardie Grant Books, South Yarra.

Samuel, Raphael and Paul Thompson (1990) 'Introduction' in their eds, *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge, London.

Sant, Morgan (1993) 'Coastal Settlement Systems and Counter- Urbanisation in NSW' in *Australian Planner*, 31(2):108-113.

Saunders Kay and Raymond Evans (1992) *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich publishers, Sydney.

Saunders, Kay (1995) 'Down on the farm: Italian POW's in Australia 1941/47', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 46:20-33.

_____ (1998) 'Specimens of Superb Manhood: the Lifesaver as National Icon' in *Journal of Australian Studies*, 56:97-105.

Schaffer, Kay (1988) *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Secomb, Michael (1986) *Red and Gold to Green Grass: The Early History of the Upper Orara Valley*, Upper Orara-Karangi Centenary Association, Coffs Harbour.

Seddon, George (1972) *Sense of Place: A response to an environment*, University of Western Australian Press, Perth.

_____ (1997) *Landprints: Reflections on Place and Landscape*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

Shelaimoff, T (1986) *Sunbelt Migration: Coffs Harbour Shire Immigration Survey*, Department of Environment and Planning, Sydney.

Shiell, Annette and Ann Stephen (1992) *The Lie of the Land*, Monash University, Clayton.

Short, John Rennie (1991) *Imagined Country: Environment, culture and society*, Routledge, London.

Short, Kevin (1980) *Echoes of the Clarence*, International Colour Productions, Stanthorpe.

Sibley, David (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, Routledge, London.

Sinclair, Paul (2001) *The Murray: A River and its People*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Smith, Bernard (1960) *European Vision and the south Pacific 1768-1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Sorenson, Tony and Roger Epps eds, (1993) *Prospects and Policies for Rural Australia*, Longman Cheshire.

Souvenir of the Back to Dorrigo Celebration September 26 - October 5 1953: (1953) *Where Beauty and Progress Abound: The Dorrigo and Guy Fawkes Plateau*, Grafton Office Supplies.

Strang, Veronica (1997) *Uncommon Ground: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values*, Beg, Oxford.

Stokes, Geoffrey (2000) 'One Nation and Australian Populism' in Michael Leach, Geoffrey Stokes and Ian Ward eds, *The Rise and Fall of One Nation*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, pp23-41.

Sturken, Marita (1997) *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The Aids Epidemic, And the Politics of Remembering*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Tacy, David (1995) *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia*, Harper Collins, Victoria.

Taylor, Alison Louise (1981) *Retreat or Advance: New Settlers and Alternative Lifestyles in the Rainbow Region*, Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Taylor, John and Martin Bell (1996) 'Mobility among Indigenous Australians' in Peter Newton and Martin Bell eds, *Population Shift: Mobility and Change in Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service Press, Canberra, pp392-411.

Taylor, Liz compiler (1993) *Labour in Power*, ABC, Sydney.

Taylor, Mike (1982) 'NSW North Coast '82" A special survey compiled by Mike Taylor' in *Australian Financial Review*, 6th September, Supplementary pp1-16.

Taylor, Rebe (2002) 'Lubra Creek' in Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths eds, (2002) *Words for Country: Landscape and Language in Australia,* UNSW Press, Sydney, pp14-29.

Teather, Elizabeth (1992) 'Remote Rural Women's Ideologies, Spaces and Networks: Country Women's Association of New South Wales, 1922-1992', in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 28(3):369-390.

Thorps, Peter (1981) 'Local Government Land Development: Some Experiences' in Bob Prater and Richard Day eds, *Planning on the North Coast: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Valla Park April 2/3.1981,* pp97-104.

Townsend, Norma (1988) '"A Strange, Wild Set"? Cedar-Cutters on the Macleay, Nambucca and Bellinger Rivers, 1838-1848' in *Labour History*, 55: 9-12.

_____ (1993) *Valley of the Crooked River: European Settlement on the Nambucca,* NSWU Press, Sydney.

Toyne, Phillip (1994) *The Reluctant Nation: Environment, law and politics in Australia*, ABC Books, Sydney.

Urry, John (1990) *The Tourist Gaze*, Sage Publications, London.

Vane, N. (1981) 'Agriculture, Land Use and Planning Conflicts' in Bob Prater and Richard Day eds, *Planning on the North Coast: Proceedings of a Conference held at Valla Park, April 2/3,* Department of Continuing Education Coffs Harbour and Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale.

Verrall Derek, Ian Ward and Peter Hay (1985) 'Community, country, party: roots of rural conservatism' in Brian Costar and Dennis Woodward eds, *Country to National: Australian Rural Politics and Beyond*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Walker, Della (1989) *Me and You: The Life of Della Walker,* as told to Tina Coutts, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Walmsley D.J, W.R Epps and C.J. Duncan (1995) *The New South Wales North Coast 1986-1991: Who Moved where, Why and with What Effect?*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Walmsley D.J. ed., (1990) *Change and Adjustment in Northern NSW*, Department of Geography and Planning, University of New England, Armidale.

Wark, McKenzie (1999) *celebrities, culture and cyberspace: the light on the hill in the postmodern world*, Pluto Press, Annandale.

Washington, Geoff (1975) 'Planning for Coastal Development' in Frank Wigham ed., *Our Vanishing Coast: Coastal Development From Now to the Year 2000,* Department of Continuing Education, University of New England, Coffs Harbour.

Watson, Don (1990) *Fighting Over the Forests*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Webb, Elizabeth (1998) *Glenreagh A Town of Promise: A History of the Glenreagh, Tallawudjah and Sherwood Districts*, Tree Frog Productions, Grafton.

Weinand H.C. and D.A.M Lea (1990) 'The Movers and the Stayers: Changes in Population in Northeastern NSW' in Walmsley, D.J. ed., (1990) *Change and Adjustment in Northern NSW*, Department of Geography and Planning, University of New England, Armidale.

Wessell, Adele (1996) 'Going Tribal: Appropriation or Resistance?' unpublished paper in my possession.

White, Hayden (1978) *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

_____ (1987) *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Understanding*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

White, Richard (1985) 'American Environmental History: the Development of a New Historical Field' in *Pacific Historical Review*, 54:1-19.

_____ (1990) 'Environmental history, ecology, and meaning' in *Journal of American History*, 76:1111-16.

Whittaker, Mark (1996) 'Just don't call us Ferals' in *The Australian Magazine*, February pp 17-18.

Wigham, Frank ed., (1970) *Coastal Development: Papers from a Seminar on The Future of the Australian Coastline*, Department of University Extension University of New England and the National Trust of Australia (NSW), Grafton.

_____ (1975) *Our Vanishing Coast: Coastal Development From Now to the Year 2000*, Department of Continuing Education, University of New England, Coffs Harbour.

Wild, R. (1972) *Bradstow: A Study of Status, Class and Power in a Small Australian Town*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

Williams, Michael (1974) *The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A study in the historical geography of Australia*, Academic Press, London.

Williams, Raymond (1973) *The Country and the City*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

_____ (1980) *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, NLB, London.

Wittleton, Mark (2001) 'A Surfers tale' in Johanna Kijas with Fay Kijas eds, *Changing Places: Stories of Coffs Harbour's transforming countryside*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, pp 98-99.

Women's Day (1972) 'The Big Country is Calling Big Business' in *Women's Day*, July 3.

Worster, Donald (1988) 'Appendix: Doing Environmental History' in his ed., *The Ends of the Earth*, Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, pp 289-232.

_____ (1990) 'Seeing beyond culture' in *Journal of American History* 76:1142-47.

_____ (1993) *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, Oxford.

_____ (1994) *An Unsettled Country: Changing Landscapes of the American West*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.

Wright, Judith (1991) 'The Broken Lines' in her *Born of the Conquerors: Selected Essays*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Wulff, Maryann and Martin Bell (1997) *Internal Migration, Social Welfare and Settlement Patterns: Impacts on Households and Communities*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Canberra.

Yarrawarra Place Stories (1999) *Arrawarra: meeting place*, Book one, University of New England printery, Armidale.

Yarrawarra Place Stories (2000a) *'No man's land': Camps at Corindi Lake south*, Book two, University of New England printery, Armidale.

Yarrawarra Place Stories (2000b) *The Old Camp: Corindi Lake north*, Book three, University of New England printery, Armidale.

Yarrawarra Place Stories (2000c) *Red Rock: camping and exchange*, Book four, University of New England printery, Armidale.

Yarwood, A.T. and M.J. Knowling (1982) *Race Relations in Australia*, North Ryde.

Yeates, Neil (1982) *Woolgoolga Past and Present: the History of a Village, North Coast NSW,* Advocate-Opinion Press, Coffs Harbour.

———— (1990) *Coffs Harbour* Vol 1: Pre-1888 to 1945. Bananacoast Printers, Coffs Harbour.

———— (1993) *Coffs Harbour* Vol 11: 1946 to 1964. Bananacoast Printers, Coffs Harbour.