



# BURNIE: A THEMATIC HISTORY

Burnie City Council

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- A Time Series of Population Growth



## 1. Introduction

Founded in 1827 by the Van Diemen's Land Company, Emu Bay as it was originally known was the second permanent European settlement on the North West coast of Tasmania. Relatively little remains from these early days of settlement and development, yet the Burnie municipality has a rich and important history. The value of Burnie's history is not limited to the nineteenth century origins of the town and hinterland. Indeed, some of the municipality's most important events occurred in the recent past, when the town experienced dramatic growth and development, focussed on industry. It is this twentieth century history which gives Burnie a character different to other centres on the North West coast, and it is a story that is important to the whole of Tasmania.

Burnie is fortunate in having such a well documented history. The extensive works of Kerry Pink and others have thoroughly explored the people, places and events that have shaped the municipality. The purpose of this thematic history is not to reproduce these works. Rather, it provides an opportunity to identify those key themes which have been central to Burnie. Some of these stories have not previously been documented, and this study has benefited from consultation with the community to identify personal experiences and stories from Burnie's past. We kindly acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals and groups:

- ▶ Mr Patrick Earle;
- ▶ Mr Rodney Greene;
- ▶ Ms Patricia Boxhall;
- ▶ Mr Brian Rollins;
- ▶ The Burnie Historical Society;
- ▶ Mr Kim Simpson; and
- ▶ The people of Burnie who gave their time, ideas and thoughts.

This thematic history also forms part of a broader cultural heritage study which identifies the significant heritage places in the municipality and provides recommendations on how these places and values can be managed for future generations.



## 2. Timeline of Key Events

- 35,000 years - and probably longer** People have lived in Tasmania for at least 35,000 years, and possibly up to 70,000 years or longer. The area now known as Emu Bay fell within the territory of the Plairhekenillerplue band of the North People's Tribe. They knew the Bay as Burduway. The Noeteeler band occupied the Hampshire Hills area.
- 1798-99** Bass and Flinders named prominent landmarks on the North West coast, including Round Hill, Table Cape, Rocky Cape and Circular Head.
- 1823** Lieutenant Charles Browne Hardwick explored the coast, and ventured short distances inland where able. Captain John Rolland sought to find an overland route from the Westbury District to the North West coast, getting no further than Mount Rolland.
- 1824** Formation of the Van Diemen's Land Company (VDL Co.) in London.
- 1826** Advance party of VDL Co. explores the North West coast in search of arable land. 250,000 acres of land was selected in five blocks at Circular Head, Middlesex Plains, Hampshire Hill, Surrey Hills, and Woolnorth. Emu Bay was selected as the port to service the inland tracts.
- 8 May 1827** Henry Hellyer of the Company camped at Whalebone Creek, now Oakleigh Park. Work was begun on cutting the track from the coast through to Hampshire Hills. The Company constructed a store on Blackman's Point, with a jetty and crane.
- 1828** The first ten indentured servants of the VDL Co. arrived in Emu Bay. They were soon sent to the Hampshire and Surrey Hills.
- By 1829** Development at Emu Bay included the small wooden jetty, the store, five cottages, a small paddock and garden and a blacksmith's shop and sawpit. More substantial developments were taking place at the hill stations.
- 1830** George Augustus Robertson holds the first recorded religious service in Burnie.
- 1832** First recorded Christian burial in May 1832 at the back of the VDL Co. store. This was of Kickerterpoller a Tasmanian Aboriginal man.
- 1830s-c.1852** Operation of the Spring Street cemetery. Construction of the Burnie Technical College during the 1940s discovered graves on the site.
- 1843** VDL Co. initiates a tenant scheme to encourage settlement. The scheme brings 32 tenants to Emu Bay renting 4307 acres of land.  
First proper survey of the township was made of what remains most of Burnie's central business district.
- 1850-51** Construction of the first Anglican Church on the northern side of Wilmot Street, fronting Marine Terrace.



- 1852** Government Board of Education took over school, and local resident Mary Morris was appointed the first teacher.
- 1857** Establishment of the Emu Bay Road Trust.  
First recorded burial at View Road Cemetery. The cemetery was converted into Coronation Park in the 1950s and later impacted by the construction of the expressway.
- 1860s** First New Year's Day sports carnivals held, near the intersection of Marine Terrace and Spring Street.
- 1869** The first Primitive Methodist Church was constructed in Cattley Street. In 1891, a second, larger church was built alongside the original structure.
- 1873** Tin Mining commences at Mount Bischoff. The operation becomes the richest tin mine in the world. Burnie served as the Port and rail connection for the mine.  
Construction of iron girder jetty at the port.
- 1876** Opening of Christian Brethren Gospel Hall. A new Hall was built in 1915 and enlarged in 1930.
- 1878** Completion of wooden tramway from Mount Bischoff operations to Burnie.  
Local production of bricks commence at Captain William Jones' Uplands Farm. The brickworks closed in 1967.
- By 1881** The Burnie region had a population of 305 people.
- 1883** United Methodist Free Church built a small Church in Mount Street.
- 1883-84** Replacement of wooden tramway from Mount Bischoff with steel tracks and steam locomotives.
- 1885** Construction of a purpose built school building in Alexander Street.  
Completion of St George's Anglican Church on the corner of Cattley and Mount streets.  
Burnie Athletics Club formed.
- 1886** Burnie Athletic Club rented land in South Burnie from the VDL Co. to form sports fields and facilities.
- 1887** Resurvey the township.  
Burnie Athletic Club holds its first athletics carnival.
- 1888** First town hall was built on the corner of Cattley and Mount streets.
- 1890** Completion of the first breakwater at the port, extending some 565 feet into Emu Bay.



Construction of Wesleyan Methodist Church in Cattley Street. This building later became the site for the Salvation Army citadel, and later, the Country Women's Association.

- 1891** Burnie had a population of 981 people.  
Opening of St Mary's by the Sea Catholic Church.
- 1893** Establishment of the Emu Bay Butter Factory Company by Captain William Jones.
- 1896** Local resident Gilbert Greenhill donates land and constructs the Stowport School. The school closed in 1956.
- 1898** Burnie Town Board was established.
- 1900** Population less than 1,500 people.  
Wivenhoe Cemetery established, becoming Burnie's main cemetery and operating until 1976.
- 1901** Extension of Tasmanian Government Railway to Burnie.  
Completion of 600 foot Jones Pier.  
Completion of new United Methodist Church in Mount Street.  
Construction of the first Baptist Church in Mount Street. A new Baptist Church was completed in 1925.
- 1902** Burnie Town Board established a small gravity fed water system running from the Romaine Creek.
- 1903** Construction of the single room Mooreville School. The school served the populations of Mooreville, West Mooreville, and Poimena and closed in 1950.
- 1908** Formation of Emu Bay Municipal Council. One of the first achievements was the construction of a sewerage system.  
Construction of Presbyterian Church in Alexander Street.
- 1912** Construction of the Stella Maris Catholic School.  
Electricity arrives in Burnie.  
Burnie Council purchases the South Burnie Recreation Ground from the VDL Co.  
Council purchased 28 acres of land from the Anglican Church for the development of a sports facility, now known as West Park. By 1915, West Park was ready to become the new venue of the New Year's Day Carnival.  
Council purchased land adjoining the Town Hall to construct a new building called the Burnie Theatre, used at first for live shows, and later films.
- 1913-14** Council improved the West Park grounds and erected a grandstand on the



western side, large enough to hold 2000 people.

- 1914** First agricultural show held at Wivenhoe.
- 1916** Secondary education commences at the State School in Mount Street with an enrolment of 34 students.
- 1917** Burnie Tourist and Progress Association starts work on preserving the manferns and bush along the lower reaches of the Emu River, to become the Fern Glade reserve.
- 1918** Burnie Tourist Association began works on a Soldier's Memorial Avenue along the Bass Highway between the Emu River Bridge and the Wivenhoe Railway Crossing.  
  
Completion of the new concrete block breakwater, extending 1250 feet into the Bay.
- 1921** Completion of the 630 foot Ocean Pier.
- 1922** Extension of Tasmanian Government Railway from Burnie to Circular Head.
- 1924** Unveiling of war memorial at Oakleigh Beach. Expansions of the Bass Highway resulted in the memorial being relocated to Burnie Park in 1974.
- 1927** Burnie Council acquires the Oldaker farm, developed during the 1930s and 1940s to become Burnie Park.
- 1929** Completion of the Burnie High School with an opening enrolment of 140 students.
- 1931** Burnie's main theatre, the Star in Mount Street was constructed.
- 1932** Consecration of St David's Anglican Church at Cooe.
- 1937** The town had a population of 4000.  
  
Construction of the Association Pulp and Paper Mill (APPM), or 'the Mill' at South Burnie commences. The Mill opened the following year.
- 1945** Population had grown to 10,000 people.
- 1948-49** Construction of Burnie Technical College.
- 1949** Establishment of Australian Titan Products (Tioxide) producing titanium dioxide pigment for paint.
- 1950s-60s** The Mill and its subsidiaries directly employed around 3,500 people.
- 1955** Milan Vyhnaek established the Lactos Cheese on Surrey Road.
- 1956** Opening of new Salvation Army citadel in Ladbrooke Street.
- 1958** Completion of the new High School at Cooe.





- 1959** Marist College opens off Mooreville Road. Stella Maris school was later relocated to the site.  
First stage of Pet River Water Scheme completed.
- 1959-60** Major alterations were made to St George's Anglican Church.
- 1960s-70s** Major urban renewal 1960s and 1970s, notably around the Civic Centre and new fire brigade building, Supreme Court, Hellyer Regional Library, Commonwealth Offices, elderly citizens clubrooms, RSL and childcare facilities.
- 1964-1965** Construction of the Island Breakwater and major reclamations at the port.
- 1966** World first introduction at APPM of high-pressure wet-air oxidation for the purification of waste process liquors.
- 1969** Establishment of the North West Acid Plant at Wivenhoe producing sulphuric acid.
- 1963-1972** Closure of South Beach due to pollution from sewerage ocean outfalls.
- 1970s-1986** Major upgrades of the Bass Highway and construction of the expressway bypassing central Burnie.
- 1971** Export of woodchips from Burnie port commences.  
Construction of the Civic Centre commences.
- 1974** Opening of new technical college off Mooreville Road.  
Decision to incorporate Regional Art Gallery in the new Civic Centre.
- 1975** Dale B Elphinstone establishes his business manufacturing mining equipment in the 1980s. The success of the enterprise led to the company being acquired by Caterpillar in 2000.
- 1976** Construction of Hellyer College.
- 1977** Sesquicentenary of Burnie and erection of memorial obelisk to Henry Hellyer in Oakleigh Park.
- 1985** First Burnie Ten held.
- 1988** Burnie proclaimed a city by Queen Elizabeth II.
- 1992** The Mill attempted a restructure of the award rates resulting in the most protracted industrial dispute in the history of the Burnie.
- 1996** Closure of Tioxide.
- 1998** End of pulping operations at the Mill.
- 27 April 2007** Fire destroys the old Burnie High School.



**2009**

The National Trust recognises the Burnie Athletics Club and Carnival as one of Tasmania's top ten heritage icons.



## 3. Exploration and Contact

### 3.1 The Aboriginal People of the Region

The area now known as Emu Bay fell within the territory of the Plairhekenillerplue band of the North Tribe. They knew the Bay as Burduway. The territory of the North Tribe covered an area of some 4,700 square kilometres with 113 kilometres of coastline. It extended along the north coast from Port Sorell to west of Emu Bay. Inland, their country extended to the west of the Hampshire Hills to the south west corner of the Surrey Hills and then south of Black Bluff, Middlesex Plains and Mount Roland to the base of the Western Tiers.

The North Tribe consisted of four known bands: the Punnilerpanner at Port Sorell, the Pallitorre at Quamby Bluff, the Noeteeler in the Hampshire Hills and the Plairhekenillerplue at Emu Bay. In total, they numbered around two, to three hundred people.<sup>1</sup>

The country of the North Tribe contained the most important ochre mines in Tasmania, accessed by a system of well defined roads and lines of communications, kept open by firing. Likewise, the plains of the interior were kept open by firing, encouraging grazing animals like wombats, possums and emus for hunting, supplemented by plant foods. The harsh climate made the interior less habitable during the winter months, and the inland bands would move to the coast to collect birds, eggs, shellfish and plants. In the summer, as well as moving back inland, the people would travel to the country of the North West Tribe to take advantage of the seals and collect shells for necklaces from Robbins Island. In return for access to seals, the North Tribe provided access to the ochre mines for other Tasmanian groups.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.2 European Exploration

Isolated from the main settlement areas of Tasmania, the North West coast was not subject to the early exploration and settlement by Europeans as were other areas. Although not setting ashore, the coast had first been sighted during Bass and Flinders voyage of 1798-99, naming prominent landmarks including Round Hill, Table Cape, Rocky Cape and Circular Head.

By 1823, most of the known and valuable land in the colony had been allocated to settlers. In the search for more arable land, Lieutenant-Governor Sorell commissioned three expeditions to explore the region. The first was made in 1823 by Lieutenant Charles Browne Hardwicke, who explored the coast and ventured short distances inland where able. Hardwicke was not impressed by what he found. This was followed by Captain John Rolland's exploration, also during 1823. Rolland sought to find an overland route from the Westbury District to the North West coast. Despite two attempts, he got no further than the mountain that was to bear his name. The third exploration attempt was made by Lieutenant James Hobbs who circumnavigated Tasmania in 1824, and was unimpressed by the land between Cape Grim and Port Sorell.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these pessimistic reports on the suitability of the North West coast, assumptions were made that good grazing land would exist in the interior.

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan, L, *the Aboriginal Tasmanians*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996, p.22

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp.23-26

<sup>3</sup> Pink, K, *Campsite to City: a History of Burnie, 1827-2000*, Burnie City Council: Burnie, 2000, pp.2-3



The group that would test this assumption was the Van Diemen's Land Company (VDL Co.), an organisation responsible for the European settlement and development of the North West coast, and dominant in the history of Burnie.

The Company was formed in England to meet the demands of the English Midlands manufacturers for improved strains of fine wool. Both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were considered suitable areas for developing this wool industry. The aims of the Company were ambitious: bringing the land into production, importing purebred livestock, building roads and bridges, wharves and settlements, and encouraging the free settlement of the colony.<sup>4</sup>

In 1824 the Company applied for a grant of 500,000 acres in Van Diemen's Land. Tasmania's most suitable grazing land was located in the Midlands and on the East Coast. However, by 1824, the most desirable country had already been granted. Despite criticism of the area from earlier exploration, it was suggested that the North West coast might prove suitable for wool production, as well as other industries such as timber, fisheries, mining, and whaling. The Chief Agent of the company, Edward Curr supported the North West coast proposal.

Although applying for 500,000 acres, the Company was granted half of that amount on the North West coast. Lieutenant-Governor Arthur, fearing the monopoly and power of the Company, did not want the VDL Co. to impede the further settlement and development of the colony, and therefore located the grant away from settled areas. On the coast, the grant stretched from Cape Grim in the west, to Port Sorell in the east. The extent of the inland tract was yet to be determined.

In March 1826, an advance party of the Company arrived in Hobart. In addition to Curr, the group included Stephen Adey, Superintendent of the Land Grant; Henry Hellyer, Chief Surveyor and architect; Joseph Fossey and Clement Lorymer, surveyors; and Alexander Goldie, agriculturalist.

The advance party left Hobart in April, with bullocks, drays, horses and several men. Over the next five months, Curr and the surveyors explored the region from Port Sorell to Cape Grim, establishing temporary camps along the way. Their exploration was difficult with much of the land covered by tall Eucalypts, dense undergrowth and extensive tracts of rainforest. The party did discover small areas of open plains beside the river flats, interpreting these as healthy inland tracts of land suitable for grazing.

Considerable work was undertaken on surveying the grant of land, and establishing its boundaries. The 250,000 acres of land available to the Company was selected in five blocks at Circular Head, Middlesex Plains, Hampshire Hill, Surrey Hills, and Woolnorth. The Company established its headquarters at Circular Head.<sup>5</sup>

In his exploration of the inland tracts, Hellyer found what he thought would be excellent grazing land. Thousands of acres of lightly timbered land surrounding St Valentine's Peak, resulted in the selection of more than 200,000 acres of land adjoining the Surrey Hill, Hampshire Hill and Emu Bay allotments. Emu Bay was chosen as the port for what was thought to be valuable inland tracts of land.

Hellyer explored the Hills during late summer. His impressions were unrealistic on the suitability of the land for pastoralism. Hellyer found a resemblance to the clear savannah country of the Midlands. At the base of St Valentine's Peak, Hellyer named the area 'Old Park', finding similarities in the landscape to

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<sup>4</sup> Binks, CJ, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Launceston: Mary Fisher Bookshop, 1980, p.39

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp.40-41, 58



English Parks, with clear land, small clumps of trees, and undulating hills. The Hills were the only land that was located thought suitable, and Hellyer was confident they could carry sheep.<sup>6</sup>

Of his discoveries, Hellyer wrote of the Surrey Hills:

They resemble English enclosures in many respects, being bounded by brooks between each, with belts of beautiful shrubs in every vale.<sup>7</sup>

And of the Hampshire Hills:

They appear even more park-like than the Surrey Hills, and are handsomely clumped with trees.<sup>8</sup>

Surrey Hills was later visited by Fossey who was equally impressed by the landscape and its potential. Unfortunately, Curr did not request Goldie, the agriculturalist to undertake an assessment of the land to determine its agricultural potential. Instead, he authorised Hellyer to examine the coastline for a suitable site for a port and a road to connect to Surrey Hills. Hellyer first camped at Whalebone Creek, now Oakleigh Park on 8 May 1827, moving on to the Emu River two days later and beginning work on clearing an inland track. The work proved difficult, Hellyer noting 'a forest altogether unlike anything I have seen in the Island'.<sup>9</sup>

That winter, Curr visited the Surrey Hills. The difference in seasons resulted in Curr coming to a very different conclusion. The sub-alpine country was wet, cold and soggy, Curr concluding that the area 'can never be a first or even a second rate sheep pasture'.

As experience proved, the region was not suited to fine wool production. The development of a pastoral industry at the inland hill stations proved a complete failure. In the first few years of establishment, thousands of sheep died during the winter.

Nonetheless, approval was given for the establishment of the port at Emu Bay. An order was made for a store to be erected on Blackman's Point, near the jetty, where a crane was installed to lift goods from the boats. In May 1827, Hellyer supervised the construction of the jetty, store, sawpit, a few hut and the clearing of land for the road to Surrey Hills.

The road work employed five men, constructing a muddy track, between 18-20 feet wide. The Surrey Hills Road was completed by the end of 1828. The road was later linked to a livestock track from Mole Creek and a bridle track along the coast from Emu Bay to Circular Head. With the completion of this inland route, the transport of personnel, livestock and equipment from the coast was possible. Pink writes that this route generally follows what is now Surrey Road, Marine Terrace, Old Surrey Road, and Mount Road as it travels through Romaine, Ridgely, Highclere and on to Hampshire.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.3 Contact with the North Tribe

In his recent work, McFarlane describes the tribes of the North West coast as being particularly vulnerable to the organised process of dispossession from their land, practiced by the VDL Co.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.6-7

<sup>7</sup> Binks, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.65

<sup>9</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p. 7

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, pp.4, 7, 8-9, 13

<sup>11</sup> McFarlane, I, *Beyond Awakening. The Aboriginal Tribes of North West Tasmania. A History*, Fullers Bookshop, Riawunna, Community, Place & Heritage Research Unit, Utas, 2008, p. xv



Although the VDL Co. Court in London directed that peaceful relationships be established with the Aborigines, the practice was completely different. On the ground, Curr had almost complete authority over the officers, indentured servants, convicts, and the Aborigines. Curr well understood the impact of his actions, writing in March 1826:

In taking a large tract of country for the necessary purposes of civilisation the original possessors will be deprived in a great degree of their hunting grounds.<sup>12</sup>

The four bands of the Tribe were confronted by the growing expansion of European settlement, resulting in an increase in violence and rapid loss of life. Some of this violence has been documented, in horrific description: a stock keeper shot 19 people with a swivel gun filled with nails; another shot a group of Aborigines whilst offering them food; others were killed with poisoned flour.<sup>13</sup>

The violence was met with resistance and retaliation. A stockman was killed whilst travelling on the road to the ochre mines; stock was killed or stolen, and huts were attacked. The Aborigines had also established their own chain of command by the end of 1828. The settlers were confronted by the Plairhekenillerplue led by a woman, Tarenerorerer, also known by the settlers as Walyer. Tarenerorerer spent time with local sealers where she learnt to use guns.<sup>14</sup> In 1828 she became a leader of the Emu Bay people, teaching them to use firearms. Tarenerorerer was known to stand on top a hill and order her men to attack the settlers, taunting them to come out of their huts. Ryan writes that Tarenerorerer also stalked George Augustus Robinson with the aim of killing him.<sup>15</sup>

Robinson recorded that if the stockmen of Emu Bay/Hampshire Hills saw Aborigines, they would shoot them. He wrote:

The children have witnessed the massacre of their parents and their relations carried away into captivity by these merciless invaders, their country has been taken from them and the kangaroos, their chief subsistence, have been slaughtered wholesale for the sale of paltry lucre. Can we wonder then at the hatred they bear to the white inhabitants? Their enmity is not the effect of a moment. Like a fire burning underground, it has burst forth. This flame of aboriginal resentment can and ought only to be extinguished by British benevolence.<sup>16</sup>

As part of his work to relocate the Tasmanian Aborigines, Robinson travelled through the Emu Bay area, documenting his journeys and encounters in his diary. On 9 July 1830, Robinson and his party left Circular head for Emu Bay, capturing Nicermeric near the Cam River who had previously run away from the VDL Co. Nicermeric was sent on to Launceston. This British 'benevolence' resulted in the eventual capture and relocation of the Tasmanian Aborigines to the Flinders Island mission.

The history of the North West coast Aborigines did not end with Robinson. Exiled on the Furneaux Islands, the Tasmanian Aborigines remained isolated from the mainland until the twentieth century. During the late 1930s some islanders returned to mainland Tasmania to take advantage of the greater employment opportunities brought on by the outbreak of war.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pp. xvi-xvii, 76

<sup>13</sup> Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.139

<sup>14</sup> Differing opinions have been given on Tarenerorerer's involvement with the sealers. Ryan writes that she had been had been abducted at Port Sorell by Aborigines and traded to the sealers for dogs and flour (Ryan, 1996: 141). However, McFarlane comes to a different conclusion, that Tarenerorerer was not traded to the sealers, but rather voluntarily joined them with members of her family, and was responsible for attacking Aborigines and white settlers alike (McFarlane, 2008: 119).

<sup>15</sup> Ryan, *op. cit.*, pp.139, 142

<sup>16</sup> GA Robinson, in *Friendly Mission*, NJB Plomley (ed), Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966, pp.202-203



The survival of the Tasmanian Aborigines came with at a great cost, with a loss of cultural identity, language and denial. However, defining Tasmanian Aboriginal identity is an ongoing process, requiring the continuation of cultural practices, visibility, and the re-examination of Tasmania's colonial and post-colonial history.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.291

## 4. A Developing Community

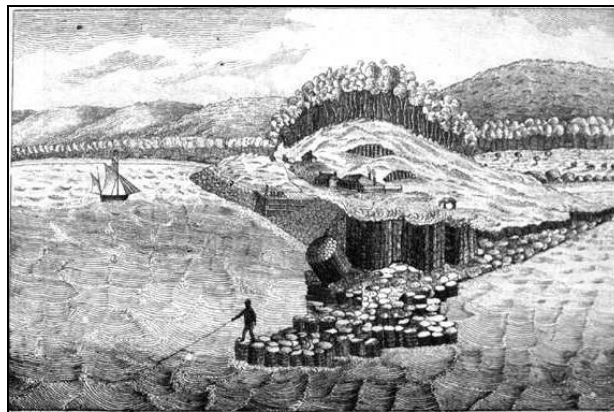
### 4.1 Establishing a Settlement

To work the vast tracts of land, the VDL Co. arranged for the migration of indentured servants from Britain. The Company advertised in local newspapers, and targeted agricultural areas such as Norfolk and Suffolk in search of servants. In 1828, the first ten European settlers arrived in Emu Bay. The skills of the servants were diverse, including sawyers and carpenters, a black smith, farm servants and brick layers. These first arrivals did not remain at Emu Bay, but were sent to the inland tracts at Hampshire and Surrey Hills.

The conditions of the labourers involved a six day work week. During summer, work commenced at seven, dinner at noon, work recommenced at one, and the day ended at six. On Sundays, the servants were compelled to attend two Church services. Holidays were provided for the Company's Charter Day, Christmas and Good Friday. The lack of holidays led to a dispute with the Company, with some servants refusing to work on Boxing Day. The Company also received assigned convicts to be used for splitting timber, fencing, shingle-splitting and rough building. The combination of the indentured servants and the assigned convicts formed the nucleus of the first company settlement.<sup>18</sup>

The impenetrable rainforests which clung to the coast made any development highly difficult. By 1829, the level of development at Emu Bay was still restricted to the small wooden jetty, the store, five cottages, a small paddock and garden and a blacksmith's shop and sawpit. More substantial developments were taking place at the hill stations. By 1831, Hampshire Hills had a superintendent's cottage and garden, store and office, nine cottages, barn, stables, cattle sheds, pig styes, stockyards and about seven miles of fencing.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 1 Emu Bay 1831**<sup>20</sup>



*Note the basalt columns, VDL Co. store on the point and the thick forests behind.*

<sup>18</sup> Lennox, G, 'The Van Diemen's Land Company servants per *Tranmere*, 1826', Basis for a paper to be delivered to the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 14 May 2000, pp.3-7

<sup>19</sup> Pink, K, *And Wealth for Toil. A History of North-West and Western Tasmania, 1825-1900*, Advocate Marketing Services, 1990, p.164

<sup>20</sup> *Van Diemen's Land Company's Emu Bay establishment from North, 1831*, State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, AUTAS001126076991





The failures of the VDL Co. resulted in Emu Bay and its port largely remaining stagnant. Desperate for some returns, the Company established a tenant scheme in 1843 to encourage rural settlement and hopefully eventually purchase of the densely forested lands at Emu Bay. The scheme failed to attract much interest in England, but was more attractive to settlers already in Van Diemen's Land, where the Company land was offered at cheaper rates than Crown land. The North West coast also offered opportunities to develop in areas of the island that had not already been alienated by European settlers. For the first time, the tenant scheme brought a substantial increase in the local population. By 1843, the scheme had attracted 32 tenants to Emu Bay renting 4307 acres of land. These farm sites varied in size but were generally less than 100 acres, and orientated towards Bass Strait.

Bringing the land into production was arduous. Each acre was estimated to contain between 20-30 large trees with dense scrub in between. Even once the trees were removed, their stumps continued to interrupt development. Early farming was largely focused on potatoes before diversifying into wheat and other gains. The potatoes proved particularly successful with the rich basalt soils and high rainfalls, becoming the mainstay of agricultural production.<sup>21</sup>

## 4.2 Origins of a Town

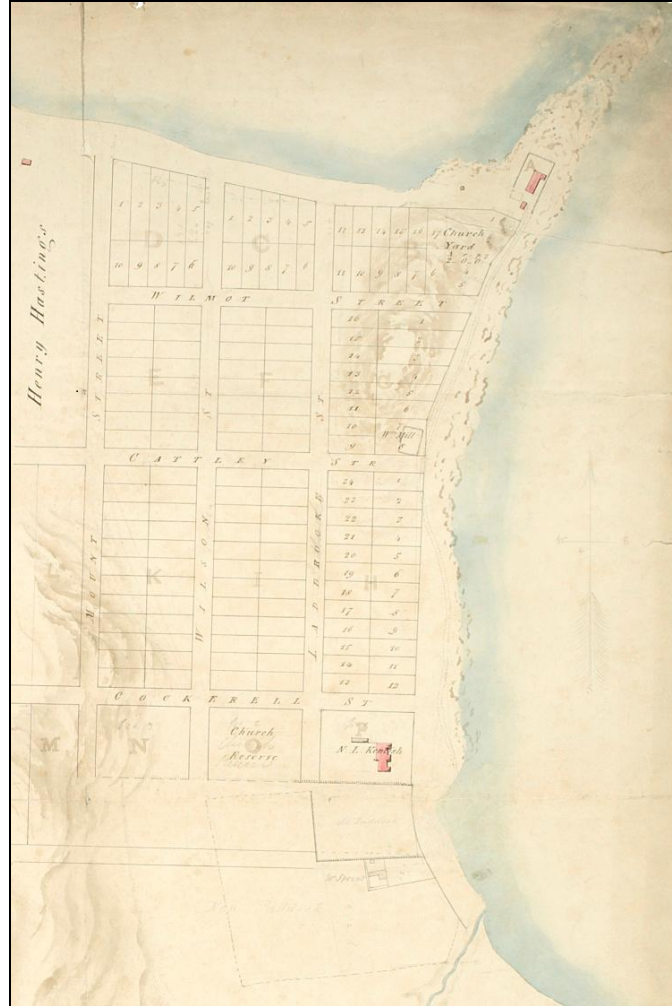
Little semblance of a town existed for the first few decades of establishment. The Company had its store and jetty on the point, and a few cottages and other buildings were scattered nearby. No town plan existed, nor were there any formalised roads, only rough tracks linking the few buildings.

The first proper survey of the township was made in 1843. The survey was centred on what is now the eastern section of Burnie's central business district, and the layout, and most of the street names remain familiar elements to this day, such as Mount, Cattley, Ladbrooke, and Wilson streets. What has changed though is the orientation of the streets. Kentish's 1843 plan depicts the minor built development of the VDL Co. that had occurred by this time, including the company store building on Blackman's Point, connected by the track running along the coast. This track was to become Marine Terrace, Burnie's first street. As a settlement dependent on water transport, the first sales of these town blocks occurred on Marine Terrace, with most of the properties being a quarter-acre in size.

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<sup>21</sup> Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.166

Figure 2 Detail from First Survey of Burnie, 1843<sup>22</sup>



Kentish's survey divided the township into blocks, with regular sized town allotments. Two church reserves were provided, at the north and south of the town. Although providing room for urban development, the town plan did not eventuate in a building boom. With the establishment of the Emu Bay Road Trust in 1857, Burnie was still a small village, with no made streets, wharves, bridges and a few timber dwelling and shops.<sup>23</sup>

What the sale of these town and country blocks did allow for was the later development of Burnie as a free enterprise district. Nonetheless progress was slow. In 1863, the town only contained seven houses, three hotels, and a population of about 50 people. Most of these early houses and other buildings were centred on Marine Terrace, the original road to the VDL Co. store and route to the port for most of the farming properties. The first footpaths were created in 1877 along Cattley Street, where the Burnie Institute was planning to erect a single storey Town Hall. Preparation of the site required the clearance of stumps and tree roots.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> AOT VDL 343/180, *Township of Burnie*, 1843

<sup>23</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.64

<sup>24</sup> Mercer, P, *Gateway to Progress. Centenary History of the Marine Board of Burnie*, Marine Board of Burnie: Burnie, 1969, p.24

**Figure 3** Looking to the town for the South East, c.1871<sup>25</sup>



Beyond the town, the greater Emu Bay area was still divided into farming allotments let by the VDL Co. At this time, Mount Street beyond the town was known as the 'New Country Road'. By 1881, the Burnie region still only had a population of 305 people, smaller than the younger towns further to the east such as Latrobe and Torquay (later known as Devonport).<sup>26</sup>

This lack of development in both the town and hinterland has been blamed on the control and position of the VDL Co., which still owned a large area of land, leased to farmers. The remainder of the land was managed directly by the Company. One commentator wrote that:

A general feeling prevails that the prosperity of the town and district is checked to a marked extent through the company monopolising such a large area. Many of the tenants have to pay high rents and in consequence they will only make the improvements stipulated in the agreement.<sup>27</sup>

The practices of the Company also inhibited growth. The company initiated a policy of only selling alternate blocks in the hope that this would increase the value of the remaining land. Its real effect though was to set back the progress of development in the town.

In 1887, it was necessary to resurvey the township. It was found that there was no accurate location of the streets, and Government Surveyor Stokell set about resurveying the town, setting large earthenware drainpipes at the intersection of the streets as reference points. The streets still consisted of sandy tracks.<sup>28</sup>

### **4.3 Developing a Centre**

It was during the late nineteenth century that Burnie began to mature as a settlement and a greater level of development began to occur. A key factor in this development was the discovery of tin at Mt Bischoff.

<sup>25</sup> AOT AB713/1/11867, Burnie from South East, c.1871

<sup>26</sup> Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.168-169

<sup>27</sup> Hoare, L, *Tasmanian Towns in Federation Times*, Sandford, 1998, p.41

<sup>28</sup> Mercer, P, *The Story of Burnie 1823 to 1910*, 1963, pp.57, 93

Burnie served as the Port and rail connection for this and later mines, bringing great wealth to the town. Wilson Street became the main commercial street, and the late nineteenth, early twentieth century streetscapes here, and in other parts of the Central Business District demonstrates this growth.

**Figure 4 Junction of Wilson and Cattley streets, looking west<sup>29</sup>**



This rapid development was noted by contemporaries. The August 1883 edition of *Church News* wrote of Burnie's progress:

New streets, new stores, new dwelling houses and new inhabitants have made a complete change in what was once reputed the dullest of dull townships.<sup>30</sup>

Although still behind other North West towns, by 1891, Burnie had a population of 981 people. The town featured 180 houses, several retailers, hotels, bank, school, post office, court house and several churches. The population clustered around this centre, with residential areas located on the low, flat lying areas around the town and along the coast at South Burnie, Wivenhoe, Parklands and Cooee. Richer residents had also begun to construct more impressive homes on the lower slopes of the surrounding hills, providing extensive views of the town and sea.

#### 4.4 Twentieth Century Expansion

Before Australian Pulp and Paper Mills (APPM), Burnie was a small town with a limited agricultural economy and port for the West Coast mines. The establishment of the Mill had an immediate and dramatic impact on Burnie and the municipality. It was the impetus for the growth of the population, economy and city. This is readily apparent in the population growth. In 1937, the town had a population of 4000. By 1945, this had grown to 10,000 people.

With such rapid growth in the number of people in the town, housing became a critical need. Before APPM, around 20 houses a year were being constructed. In 1938 alone, more than 260 houses were built. Inturn, both the building industry and local brick production grew, as well as the need for new suburban areas. More than 700 new residential blocks on Burnie's rural fringe were developed. This

<sup>29</sup> AOT, PH30/1/6311, Burnie

<sup>30</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.245



growth also required the expansion of public infrastructure, with sewerage extended to Wivenhoe, Upper Burnie and Cooee. Major changes also came to the city, with modern shops, offices and commercial buildings, designed using a new architectural language of Art Deco and functionalism.<sup>31</sup>

The Mill also constructed its own housing in Cunningham Street, South Burnie. The executive staff that migrated from Britain were housed on the top side of the road, while the bottom side was allocated to the foreman and the chief engineer. With the massive increase in population from the Mill, housing shortages were a problem, and a scheme was initiated for employees to build their own houses. The scheme was generous and required no deposit, and no repayments until completion. So acute was the housing shortage, that many workers lived in Ulverstone and Devonport and caught a special daily workmen's train to Burnie. Private developers also responded to the need for rapid housing, with subdivisions specifically marketed in response to the Mill. Two good examples are the Hillcrest and later Joyce's subdivision.

At Hillcrest, a subdivision was made for 82 housing blocks. The Hillcrest Estate was offered for sale in 1928, some ten years before the Mill actually existed, but a demonstration of the optimism towards the Mill. In advertising the sale, the subdivision plan promised that:

Workmen's homes will be required, hundreds of them, and hundreds of homes for other folk. Land in Burnie is the best investment offering in the Commonwealth. The releasing of this Estate marks an epoch in Burnie's history.<sup>32</sup>

The Hillcrest Estate appears to have been overly ambitious, as only part of the subdivision appears to have been developed, namely the streets around Bell, Payne and Stirling streets.

A later example was the 1941 subdivision of Joyce's Estate in Brooklyn, using Melbourne street names like Collins, Exhibition, Spencer and Flinders streets and promoted as being close to the Mill. This new building boom greatly extended the size of the town, with new suburbs developing and consolidating beyond the hilly escarpment into areas like Hillcrest, Upper Burnie, Montello and Acton. It is these post-war housing areas that characterise so much of Burnie's built development. Predominantly, modest working classes areas, these houses were also built in response to post-war shortages in materials. A local response was the extensive use of formwork concrete bricks, readily available from the Goliath cement works at Railton.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp.175-176

<sup>32</sup> Brady, JF, *Hillcrest Estate – Burnie, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Subdivisions*, 1928

**Figure 5 Mid-Twentieth Century View, looking East<sup>33</sup>**



The late 1960s and 1970s was also a period of substantial urban development in Burnie, notably around the Civic Centre bound by Alexander, Wilmot, William and Jones streets. As part of this broader renewal, the city gained a new fire brigade building, Supreme Court, Hellyer Regional Library, Commonwealth Offices, elderly citizens' clubrooms, RSL and childcare facilities.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> AOT, AB713/1/6048, Burnie

<sup>34</sup> R Law, Oral History, QVMAG, Tape 1996 OH 303b Side A; Joyce's Estate – Burnie; Close to the proposed paper pulp works



## 5. Transport

### 5.1 Transportation

With thick rainforests and scrub extending down to the coast, all early transport to and from Emu Bay was by the sea. Bridle tracks were developed along the coast, but no bridges existed over the creeks and rivers, and crossing these barriers was a real risk.

One of the first developments of the VDL Co. was the establishment of the Surrey Hills Road. Beginning in 1827, Hellyer and a small gang began to clear a bullock trail through the impenetrable forests surrounding Emu Bay and extending some 30 or more miles inland. This was the first cleared road on the North West coast. The surrounding rainforests made the route unreliable and impassable for most months of the year. However, its real value came as acting as a stock route from the settled districts of the north to the interior of the North West coast.<sup>35</sup>

Another early land route was the 'New Country Road' leading from the port to the farmlands in the hills behind the Bay. In 1863 the road extended no further than 'three mile line', a surveyed line, beyond which the VDL Co. discouraged settlement. This road was extended in 1873, becoming known as Mount Road, and allowing settlement of the hinterland. It also became the chief route from Burnie to Mount Bischoff.<sup>36</sup>

By the 1880s, a sandy track followed the coast to the east and west of Burnie, and was being travelled by regular coach services. In turn, coaches were replaced by buses and private cars. The road to Launceston was macadamised in 1885. Already servicing the West Coast from Burnie, the extension of the Government Railway to the town in 1901, and later to Circular Head in 1922, made Burnie the centre of a regional rail network from the early twentieth century.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.162

<sup>36</sup> *The Advocate*, 12 December 1934, p.10

<sup>37</sup> Mercer, P, *Gateway to Progress. Centenary History of the Marine Board of Burnie*, Marine Board of Burnie: Burnie, 1969, p.69

**Figure 6 Travelling on the Coast Road, c.1880<sup>38</sup>**



*Note the image of the Bridge in the inset. The bow-arched form of this timber bridge was repeated in the current concrete bridge over the Emu River in 1940.*

Distinct from other North West towns which relied on agriculture, Burnie's late nineteenth century growth can be credited to the tin mining boom at Mount Bischoff and further afield. Mining commenced at Mount Bischoff in 1873 and became the world's most productive tin mine. It also commenced a key period of mineral exploration and exploitation in Tasmania.

At first, the tin was transported by bullocks along the overland track from the Hampshire and Surrey Hills, but a more permanent and reliable solution was required to meet the growing production from the world's richest tin mine. In 1875, the VDL Co. began works on constructing a horse drawn tramway from Waratah to Burnie, over a distance of some 45 miles. At the coast, the line extended to the port and a station was erected near Spring Street, and a large stable block was built nearby. This first permanent transport solution ensured Burnie's role as a major port for the shipping of West Coast minerals, a role that continues to this day. The tramway opened in 1878, but was soon found to be inadequate. From 1883-84, the wooden horse drawn tramway was replaced by a 3ft 6in gauge steel railway to be powered by steam locomotives. This reliable and more efficient system was of great benefit to the West Coast settlements, and to Burnie itself, particularly when linked with the north coastal Government railway in 1901, giving Burnie a direct connection with Launceston and Hobart.<sup>39</sup>

In 1887 the VDL Co. sold the railway to the Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff Railway Company. The decline in production at Mount Bischoff threatened the success of the railway, and it was extended to the further fields of Zeehan, Dundas, Mt Read and Rosebery under the operation of the Emu Bay Railway Company. Cooking for the workmen constructing the line was Jessie Mawby, accompanied by her eleven children. The completed connection ensured that Burnie retained a major share of the economic benefits from the mining, and the railway company played a major role in both the town and the port. Its

<sup>38</sup> AOT PH30/1/1242, c.1880

<sup>39</sup> Mercer, *Gateway to Progress*, pp.171-173





foundry and engineering workshops in South Burnie had become the largest employer in Burnie by the early twentieth century.<sup>40</sup>

Burnie's industry, including the Emu Bay Railway Company played a role in the war effort on the home front during World War Two. The Company carried out extensive munitions production, as well acting as direct contractors and sub-contractors for the Transport Department.

In meeting the demand, the Railway Company worked almost continuous shifts during the early years of the war. The works carried out included producing a large quantity of machine tool parts for all classes of lathes, shaping machines and drop hammers, construction of a five-ton crane, sets of trolley wheels and axles for the use in other factories, panel bridging, pontoons, anchor windlasses, winches, equipment for the Tasmania Shipbuilding Board and casting of moulds for ammunition factories.

All the patterns for this work were made by the Railway Company and all castings were produced in its foundry. All the castings were machined in their workshops with the exception of one or two of the extremely large items.

Like other urban places throughout Tasmania, Burnie faced new challenges from traffic and transport during the mid to late twentieth century. In May 1962, the town received its first pedestrian operated traffic lights outside the High and Primary Schools, and four years later, parking meters were installed in the main shopping area. The first traffic lights were in place on the key intersections of Wilson/Cattley and Mount/Wilmot streets in 1972.

However, it was mid-twentieth century population explosions and the large scale advent of private motor vehicle ownership that have made the greatest changes to local transport. The most controversial of these changes was the expansion of the Bass Highway and Expressway. Expanding the highway from two to four lanes resulted in the loss of some beach area at South Burnie, but the most difficult issue was how to navigate around the central business district. Lengthy arguments ensued during the late 1960s and early 1970s, dividing the community on the best route. The Government promoted the idea by stressing the danger of the current roads, and tried to argue that an expressway would help local business, have little effect on nearby residences, and enhance the appearance of the town by adjacent landscaping.<sup>41</sup>

The expressway was developed in two stages, the first four lanes were opened in June 1979, and the final stage was completed in 1986. The route bypassed the centre of the town to the west, requiring the acquisition of seventeen acres of valuable real estate, demolition of about 70 houses and buildings from the inner urban area, and the construction of a series of cuttings and overpasses. The expressway also had a substantial impact on the View Street cemetery, requiring the exhumation and relocation of human remains.<sup>42</sup>

## 5.2 The Port of Burnie

Burnie owes its very existence to its port. The VDL Co. chose this as the location for a settlement to service its vast inland tracts of land. Although the Hampshire and Surrey Hills failed to deliver wealth from wool, the coastal port was to eventually grow into one of Australia's most important.

<sup>40</sup> Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, pp.174-175; Simpson, pers. comm

<sup>41</sup> *A Proposal to Construct an Arterial Expressway through Burnie*, 1965, pp.1-2

<sup>42</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.153-158



Some of the first developments in Emu Bay occurred at the Port with the construction of a wooden store and a small log crib jetty at Blackman's Point. The first jetty also proved inadequate and landings were made on Table Rock, a flat natural projection of Blackman's Point. The Government also recognised the value and potential of the port. In 1827-1828, Assistant Surveyor John Helder Wedge reported that Emu Bay was one of the few areas on the North West coast where there was potential for a deepwater port.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these natural advantages, there was very little development of the port while the VDL Co. managed the region. This did not begin to change until the 1850s when the Company began selling its rural and town blocks. The small community became increasingly worried that Burnie was being bypassed by the other ports on the Inglis and Cam Rivers. In response, a committee of local identities was formed in 1850 to investigate and raise funds for the construction of a breakwater pier from Blackmans Point and replace the unsatisfactory jetty. Delays in construction followed, and passengers and cargo continued to disembark on the flat area of Blackmans Reef, while neighbouring ports prospered. In the early days, the transport of agricultural goods, particularly potatoes was of particular importance, a trade that was to continue well into the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup>

Although an iron girder jetty was constructed in 1873, remarkably little development came from these early proposals to improve the port. It was not until the massive developments at Mount Bischoff tin mine was established that the need for adequate wharf facilities became pressing. An appeal was made to the Government for improvements, and in 1882 an engineering assessment recommended a 700 foot breakwater extension to the jetty, to be constructed using the sloping concrete block system. Works began in 1885 with quarrying of the basalt from Blackman's Point, and in April the following year, the old VDL Co store, the oldest building in Burnie was demolished to make way for the breakwater style pier. The costs for the breakwater blew out, but by 1890, the structure extended some 565 feet into the bay. Known originally as Emu Pier, and later, the McGaw Pier, this structure was recognised as a major engineering achievement, and was the first of many developments resulting in Burnie becoming the major port on the North West coast, a role that has developed to become one of the most important deepwater ports in Tasmania.<sup>45</sup>

With a massive growth in trade by the end of the nineteenth century, the breakwater soon became inadequate to meet demand, and in 1899, the Marine Board decided to construct a new 600 foot wooden wharf on the leeward side of the breakwater. Works were completed in 1901, and the pier was named the Jones pier, in recognition of Burnie's most important and successful businessman, Captain William Jones, who had also served as the first Harbour Master and was the long time Warden of the Marine Board. On completion, the status of the port was greatly enhanced, coming of age during the early 1900s when trade reached nearly 70,000 tons by 1910. The extension of the Tasmanian Government Railway to Burnie in 1901 only cemented the position and importance of the port.

Major works were again undertaken in 1912 with the construction of a new concrete block breakwater, extending 1250 feet into the Bay. Completed in 1918, the more sheltered waters allowed for the construction of a new wharf alongside. This wharf, the Ocean Pier was completed in 1921 and was 630 feet in length. Further expansions were commenced in 1929 to cater for the transport of zinc

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<sup>43</sup> Mercer, *The Story of Burnie*, p.21; Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.164

<sup>44</sup> Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.178-179

<sup>45</sup> Mercer, *Gateway to Progress*, pp.51-52, 69; Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.180-181; Mercer, *The Story of Burnie*, 1963, p.57

concentrates from the West Coast mines. The onset of the Great Depression delayed the completion of the new pier until 1936.<sup>46</sup>

**Figure 7 Constructing the Breakwater<sup>47</sup>**



By the mid-1930s, the Port consisted of three wharves: Ocean Wharf, Jones Pier and McGaw Pier. With extension and modernisation, these structures formed the backbone of the port's facilities until the 1960s. The largest export commodity of the early to mid-twentieth century was potatoes for the Sydney market. These were transported to Burnie by road and rail from the outlying districts before being loaded on ships for the mainland markets. The trade reached its height during the 1940s and 50s when at certain periods, more than 30,000 bags a week were being shipped from Burnie. This trade found new markets during World War Two when American ships would load potatoes for American bases throughout the Pacific. Owing to the high humidity of the Pacific, special crates were constructed to prevent the potatoes from rotting during transportation.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.99-103. The Pioneer Village Museum retains a cask used for the carting of cement for the 1918 wharf.

<sup>47</sup> AOT, PH30/1/8435, Burnie Breakwater

<sup>48</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.107; pers. comm, consultation session, 9 May 2009

**Figure 8 Grading Potatoes on the Wharf<sup>49</sup>**



Like nearly all other aspects of Burnie, the development of the Mill also brought large scale changes to the port. Plans commenced to expand the port in 1937, but the onset of the War delayed works in constructing major breakwater extensions. It was not until the 1950s that this expansion became crucial. Detailed investigations were carried out and it was determined that the best solution was to construct a massive 1600 foot long island breakwater to provide sheltered berths when strong north easterly winds blew. This massive engineering achievement was constructed in 1964-65, at a cost of just over \$6 million. The Island breakwater proved a success. Associated with this development was the reclamation of foreshore areas to meet the new practices of roll-on, roll-off container shipping practices, and the massive growth in maritime transport during the 1960s. Through dredging and reconstruction of the piers, almost 30 hectares of land was reclaimed. These works did however bring a sense of loss. Gone was the close relationship which existed between the town and its port. Oakleigh Beach in South Burnie was also one of the casualties of the reclamation.<sup>50</sup>

Expansion and changes in technology and practices continued throughout the late twentieth century. In the 1990s, the port made great advances in shipping frequency, tonnage, infrastructure and waterfront reform. It has consolidated its position today as Tasmania's largest general cargo port. Today, the port continues to service the West Coast mines and handles most types of bulk shipping including, minerals, fuels, woodchips and logs, as well as containerised consumables. The export of forest products is an important operation of the port.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> AOT, AB713/1/3685, Burnie Wharf

<sup>50</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.107-109

<sup>51</sup> Pink, K, *A Vision Accomplished. Port of Burnie, 1970-1995*, Burnie Port Authority: Burnie, 1995, p.178; [http://www.tasports.com.au/port\\_services/burnie\\_info.html](http://www.tasports.com.au/port_services/burnie_info.html)



## 6. Working

### 6.1 Early Industries

Like other parts of the North West, Burnie's early industries were focussed on forestry and agriculture. The vast forests of the region were the earliest resource to be utilised. In other areas of the North West, hardwood forests were being felled during the 1840s and 50s by timber splitters, but at Emu Bay, the VDL Co. planned to develop the land for farming and the timber was destroyed to clear the land. A strong local demand for timbers did not eventuate until the construction by the VDL Co. of the wooden tramline to the Mount Bischoff tin mine. Timber export to the mainland later developed, and a sawmill was erected in 1905 at the Emu Bay Railway Company complex at South Burnie. This mill continued to operate until 1926, before going out of business due to competition from the local firm Cumming Bros.

Dairying and milk processing was another of these important early industries. In the 1890s, the highly enterprising Captain William Jones established the Emu Bay Butter Factory Company on his Uplands Farm, to the west of the Cooe Creek. Production of butter and cheese began in 1893. Other dairies soon followed. In 1910 the North Western Co-operative Dairy Company constructed a new three storey weatherboard factory near the corner of Marine Terrace and Spring Street, replaced in 1928 by a new brick building and the amalgamation with other local cooperatives.

Not only was Captain Jones' farm a valuable dairying property, good quality clay was also found. The clay was found suitable for brick making which commenced in 1878. The red bricks produced by Jones were used in many of Burnie's buildings, including the Town Hall, St George's and the Star of the Sea churches, two banks, and his own home 'Menai'. The operation was purchased by the VDL Co. in 1909, later acquired by APPM. It was from this site that the almost 4 million bricks were produced for the construction of the Mill buildings. The brickworks closed in 1967 when the clay was exhausted.<sup>52</sup>

### 6.2 Major Twentieth Century Developments

A 1926 article in the *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail* described the Burnie municipality as having the 'hallmarks of prosperity', prominent as an agricultural centre and known for its potatoes and butter production. The article continued that 'Burnie claims to have a destiny greater than she has already achieved'.<sup>53</sup> This prediction proved correct.

In few places, is the impact of industry as evident as in Burnie. The role of the Mill is dominant in this story. The growth and development of Burnie can be divided into two periods: before and after the establishment of Association Pulp and Paper Mills (APPM).

In 1881, with a population of only 305 people, Burnie was well behind other North West towns. The first real impetus to large growth came with the Mount Bischoff mining boom of the 1880s and 1890s. With the connection of rail between Zeehan and the port of Burnie, mining, rail and subsequent trade brought significant economic developments to the Burnie business community. Although not resulting in substantial employment opportunities, by 1901, the population had grown to just under 1,500 people. Some local business also responded with ingenuity to this boom. An interesting connection exists between Burnie businessman, Edward Evans a boot maker and retailer, and the development of the

<sup>52</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp. 194, 197, 200-202

<sup>53</sup> *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, 11 August 1926, pp.32-33



mining industry. Evans designed and patented a boot specifically for miners on the rugged and damp West Coast. The design proved successful, was registered at the NSW Patents Office and became known throughout Australia.<sup>54</sup>

Central to the story of the establishment of APPM was Gerald Mussen. Mussen first visited Burnie in 1908 in search of investment opportunities. Here, he met with the manager of the VDL Co., which still owned and was trying to sell its vast inland holdings, which were only being used for sawlog production.

At the time, short fibred Eucalypts were not considered suitable for pulp production. During the 1920s, the Commonwealth began to experiment with Eucalypts, and found a successful process for finding value in the pulp. Several companies were interested in developing an Australian pulp industry, and sites in Tasmania and on the mainland were considered. However, the advantages of Burnie for industrial development were clear. Mussen later told the people of Burnie that:

I saw how extraordinarily suitable Burnie was as a centre for a pulp and paper industry if such a thing should eventually become possible. Burnie from the outset possessed the supply of wood needed not only at Surrey Hills, but extending east and west; a very good water supply in the Emu River; a town already peopled to put employees into the industry; a deep water port; cheap electric power and situated about the middle of the Commonwealth, and thus eminently suitable for a distributing centre.<sup>55</sup>

A partnership was formed in 1924, and 125,000 acres of the Surrey Hills tracts was purchased. The South Burnie site was also bought, at this time a swampy area with an inlet flowing into Emu Bay, but in an enviable location near the Highway and the Emu Bay and Tasmanian Government Railways. One resident recalls that prior to its construction, flathead and eels could be caught in the creek flowing into the Bay. The Government also assisted the enterprise with a special Bill giving the group rights to reserved timber. So keen was the local community to have the mill built that one resident was reporting as saying that if they decided to build it in the graveyard, no one would complain.<sup>56</sup>

Several hundred people were employed in the construction of the Mill. The first Mill buildings were massive. The main structure was 964 feet in length and varied between 150 to 220 feet in width, averaging 50 feet in height. One local recalled that the length of the building was the same as the *Queen Mary*. When construction began on 27 August 1938, the site employed nearly 500 staff, with 200 people in the bush supplying the logs for processing. At first, the Mill used imported pulp, but by early 1939 the bleached eucalypt soda pulp was being used as the major component of its printing and writing papers.<sup>57</sup>

Even at this early date, the importance of the Mill was being recognised nationally as the first commercial scale producer of paper manufactured from 100% eucalyptus pulp. The Mill originally consisted of two main components. Firstly, the pulp mill, which through the soda method, processed the woodchips to make the pulp. The pulp was then processed by the beaters in the separate paper mill to make paper of different grades. Over time a massive complex of buildings developed for administration, production and packaging.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Burnie Pioneer Village Museum Significance Assessment: 84

<sup>55</sup> Jamieson, A, 'Gerald Mussen – background and life', private notes, p.3

<sup>56</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.175, 177; Pers. comm, consultation session, 9 May 2009

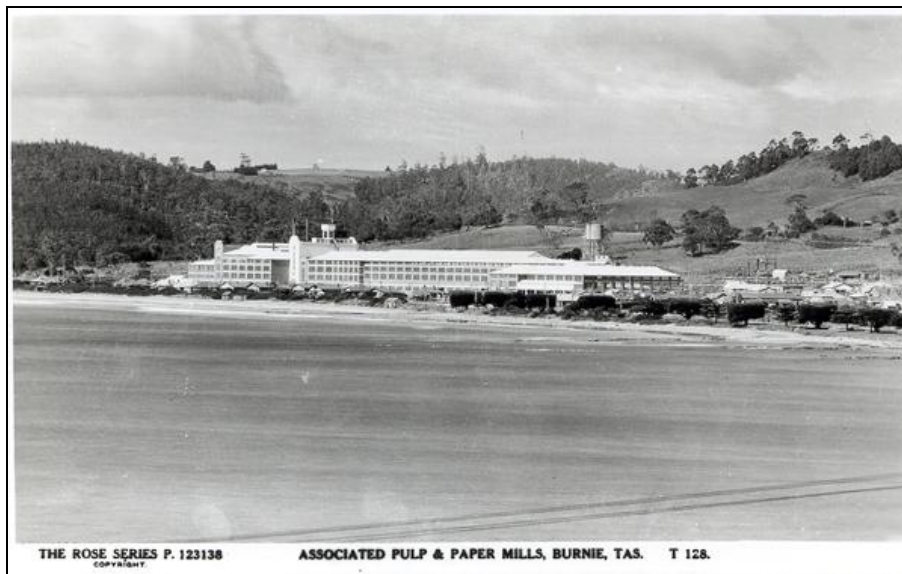
<sup>57</sup> Samuel, E, 'Australia Makes Paper', *Walkabout*, 1 February 1940, pp.1-20; Law, *op. cit*; Technology in Australia 1788-1988, <http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/247.html>

<sup>58</sup> Samuel, E, 'Australia Makes Paper', *Walkabout*, 1 February 1940, pp.1-20

By the 1950s-60s, the Mill and its subsidiaries directly employed around 3,500 people. The Mill was also the first major employer of women in the municipality, with more than 400 women working in the finishing rooms, inspecting the quality of the paper.

The Mill began with one machine in operation, producing 15,000 tons a year. In 1940, this expanded to a second machine and by 1960, nine machines were in operation. The production of APPM also diversified into fine paper and hardboard production, with four mills processing high quality logs for the building and furniture industry.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 9 View of the Mill<sup>60</sup>**



From the 1950s to 1980s, four mills were operating at South Burnie, creating a variety of paper and timber products. Initially, timber was also used to power the boilers, and for the first 15 years, wood was supplied by contractors. By the 1950s, the Mill was using 64 million super feet of timber a year. Although timber was plentiful, supplies to the Mill often ran low, especially during World War Two, given the lack of labour and petrol rationing.

With these restraints, APPM entered the timber supply market in the early 1950s, constructing major transport routes and many spur roads between the Hampshire and Surrey Hills blocks, purchasing additional land and commencing plantations of Radiata pine.

The 1950s and 60s were the height of the paper industry. During this time, the town had a population of around 10,000 people. Consistent with Mussen's ideas on the role of industry and the corporation, the Mill had a very active role in the recreation, social activities and welfare of its employees. Numerous welfare initiatives such as health care, low interest housing and scholarships were available to employees and their families. A Hard Luck fund was also established which provided no-interest loans to employees in times of stress. Social activities such as picnics, children's balls and a variety of sporting activities filled the calendar. These schemes were considered the most original and advanced in Australia.

<sup>59</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.176

<sup>60</sup> Burnie: APPM Collection of Postcards, State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, au-7-0016-124373234



Social facilities were also provided on the Mill site with the completion of the Services Building in 1943. The building included the canteen, dining room, first aid stations for men and women, dental clinic, doctor's rooms, gymnasium, women's change room and the Council office. The canteen had a polished myrtle floor and was used for dances and balls. On the night that it opened, over 600 attended. The Burnie Mill was also notable for its technological advancement and innovation. In 1966 Charles Saul successfully introduced high-pressure wet-air oxidation for the purification for recycling of waste process liquors, a world first for the paper industry.<sup>61</sup>

By the late 1950s, the South Burnie site had reached its development capacity, and new facilities were developed at Wesley Vale for particle board production. It was also the Mill that developed in 1971 the export of wood chips, with the chip pile now a prominent local landmark.

From 1975 to 1985, \$107 million was invested in upgrading and modernising the Mill to increase its viability. Although assisting in maintaining the profit of the company, this modernisation resulted in job losses. The company was purchased in 1983 by North Broken Hill. This purchase resulted in a restructure of the Burnie operations and the closure of the East Mill and the hardboard mill. With these changes, production reached a record on 130,000 tons in 1986, however employment had fallen to less than 1,300 staff.

The early 1990s recession had a great impact on Burnie. In 1992, the company attempted a restructure of the award rates in response to international pressures and a loss of revenue. The result was the most protracted industrial dispute in the history of the Burnie and the closure of the Mill for almost three months. This bitter clash between workers and management resulted in violence, arrests and a loss of company loyalty. The strike was one of Australia's most divisive industrial disputes, gaining national media attention, with picket lines, strike breakers and sabotage of the Fern Glade pumping station. The strong support of sections of the community proved difficult for the company. A negotiated outcome was eventually reached, however with no real winners.

Another company takeover took place in 1993. The Burnie Mill was seen as outdated and inefficient, resulting in the closure of the Number 3 machine in 1994 and in 1998, the end of pulping operations. This resulted in the loss of 200 jobs. In response, one of Burnie's largest protests took place, with over 1000 people attending. Nonetheless, the closure went ahead in October 1998.<sup>62</sup>

Today, the Mill is owned by Australian Paper, producing up to 130,000 tonnes of paper a year in a range of copy, laser and offset printing papers as well as coating base for the Wesley Vale Mill operations. Once again, the future of the Mill is uncertain. The ongoing takeovers and restructures mean that Mill jobs are continuously at risk.<sup>63</sup>

Although for decades, the Mill and other industries bought security, prosperity and employment, it was not without cost, primarily the impact on the local environment. Burnie became one of Australia's most polluted cities, with thick plumes of smoke and ocean outfalls having a massive effect on the

<sup>61</sup> Jamieson, *op. cit.*, p.4; Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.182; B. E. Kennedy, 'Mussen, Sir Gerald (1872 - 1960)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp 653-654; Smith, P, 'Chemists and Chemistry', Alexander, A. (ed.), *Companion to Tasmanian History*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2006

<sup>62</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.184, 186-187; Baker, D, *Batons and Blockades. Policing Industrial Disputes in Australasia*, Victoria, 2005, pp.83, 100; Hanson, D, *APPM Strike in Burnie: a Case Study*, the Business School, University of Tasmania, Launceston, 1993

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.australianpaper.com.au/mills\\_wv\\_b.htm](http://www.australianpaper.com.au/mills_wv_b.htm); North West Braces for More Job Losses, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/18/2494251.htm>



environment and quality of the life for residents. Yet for decades, the people lived with the pollution. People still swam in the sea despite the black liquor pollution and the woodchips on the beach. Another simply recalled: ‘we pinched our noses when we rode by’. Indeed, the pollution brought some people benefits. When the wind blew from the east bringing in the foul odours, the workers at the mill were given extra pay because of the difficult conditions. The situation gained national media attention in the 1990s and this external attention raised questions locally on whether the pollution was acceptable. Great gains have been made recently in changing Burnie’s identity as a dirty industrial city to a clean and inviting place for locals and visitors alike. These improvements have led to a renewed sense of pride and appreciation in the community for the natural environment and the attractiveness of their city in its coastal location.<sup>64</sup>

The Mill of course was not the only major industry in Burnie. Another early and major manufacturer was Australian Titan Products, later known as Tioxide. Heybridge was chosen as the site because of the availability of sulphuric acid, cheap electricity, local Tasmanian coal, water and the deep-water port. The site also allowed direct discharge of effluents into Bass Strait. Tioxide began operations in 1949 at Heybridge, producing titanium dioxide pigment. The factory initially produced 1500 tons of pigment in 1949, growing to over 35,000 tons by 1988. It was Tioxide that was responsible for creating the infamous discoloured sea caused by the ocean discharge. Economic factors caused closure of the plant in 1996, and the factory was demolished by 1998.<sup>65</sup>

**Figure 10 Packing the Titanium Oxide, c.1960<sup>66</sup>**



<sup>64</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.200; Pers. comm., 9 May 2009; Law, *op. cit.*

<sup>65</sup> Huntsman Tioxide, *From British Titan Products to Huntsman Tioxide. A Company History: 1930 to 2000*, Huntsman Tioxide, 2000, p.39; Summers, M, ‘Tioxide’, in Alexander, A, (ed.) *Companion to Tasmanian History*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2006

<sup>66</sup> AOT PH30/1/9042, Tioxide

Perhaps less well known, but highly controversial was the North West Acid Plant at Wivenhoe: then the largest plant of its type in the world. From its inception in 1969, the plant suffered from continuing technical, economic and environmental problems. Operating for only ten years, the plant produced sulphuric acid from iron pyrite and copper. The acid plant was located close to a residential area, and despite a 400 foot exhaust stack, fumes killed trees, damaged washing and settled on houses. Within months of starting operations, the community had organised the Emu Valley Pollution Fighters Group.<sup>67</sup>

More recent, and diverse industries have also become important within Burnie and more broadly. One of the greatest successes was that of Milan Vyhnalek, a Czech refugee and dairy technologist who established the Lactos Cheese Factory. Vyhnalek started his Surrey Road production in 1955, and was one of the first to produce specialty cheeses, which had an initial and immediate market with the increased migrant population. Lactos eventually grew to become the largest manufacturer of specialty cheeses in Australia and a major exporter. The company had a policy of employing migrants, especially Czech escapees, even into the 1980s. Vyhnalek ended his association with Lactos during the 1980s. He went on to establish a model Lactos dairy farm near Smithton, operating as both a working farm and tourism attraction.<sup>68</sup>

**Figure 11 Lactos Factory, Surrey Hills Road<sup>69</sup>**



Another local success story is Caterpillar-Elphinstone. The company was established in 1975 by local resident, Dale B Elphinstone, who began manufacturing mining equipment. The success of the enterprise led to the company being acquired by Caterpillar in 2000 and employing hundreds in its operations.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.189-191

<sup>68</sup> Cassidy, J, 'Lactos Cheese Factory', in Alexander, A, (ed.) *Companion to Tasmanian History*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2006; Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.193

<sup>69</sup> AOT AB713/1/11127, Lactos Factory

<sup>70</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.191-192; [http://www.tco.asn.au/oac/community\\_history.cgi?oacID=12&articleID=181097](http://www.tco.asn.au/oac/community_history.cgi?oacID=12&articleID=181097)



## 7. Educating

### 7.1 The Evolution of Education in Burnie

With a small population, no schools had been established in Burnie before 1850. Those parents who could afford it, and saw the need, would send their children to the other settled areas. The Anglican Church later assisted financially in offering classes in Burnie. The first part time teacher was Dr Mills, the VDL Co. surgeon at Emu Bay. These first classes were held in a building on North Terrace near the corner with Alexander Street.

The Government Board of Education took over the school in 1852, employing one teacher to instruct the 20 students. The first teacher was Mary Morris, a local of Emu Bay. Morris undertook her teaching training in Londonderry, Ireland. On their arrival in Tasmania, Mary and her husband leased a property to the east of the Cooe Creek. In addition to farming, Mary taught her own and neighbour's children. At the death of her husband, Mary was the only trained educator in Emu Bay, and from the 1860s to the late 1870s, she taught hundreds of local children. Her school was later transferred to Wilmot Street, where she was helped by two assistant teachers. Her term as teacher ended following a visit from an inspector from the Board of Education. The Inspector disapproved of her use of Irish text books, and some months later she was dismissed from her position.

Her role was taken over by Grace Johnstone, a former assistant. The mining boom of Mount Bischoff resulted in population growth in Burnie. By the 1870s, a bigger building was needed and a house was acquired for the 122 students of the Burnie Public School. A purpose built building was constructed in 1885 in Alexander Street for £1266, now the site of the Harris Print Centre.

The school continued to grow, expanding its buildings in 1902, and in 1915 with the opening of the Intermediate High School. The combination of the Public and Intermediate schools brought the student population to 400.<sup>71</sup>

With the growth and development of the Central Business District and the construction of the Bass Highway expressway through Alexander Street, The Burnie Primary School was relocated in the late 1970s to a new site on 11 acres of land on Van Diemen's Land Crescent off Mooreville Road.

Secondary education was out of reach for many of Burnie's predominantly working class population. William Parker-Listner MA established the first High School in Burnie in 1916. At its opening, the school had only 34 students and a staff of three. The classes operated out of two rooms of the State School in Mount Street. Most students had previously attended the State School, and entrance to the higher level came via an entrance exam.<sup>72</sup>

The school offered classes in English, history, geography, French, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, physics, and physiology. A strong culture of athletics and social clubs also developed, with teams in cricket, football, tennis, women's baseball, hockey, swimming, and social groups for the Junior Red Cross.

By 1918, the school was attracting students from as far as Queenstown, Tullah, Waratah, Sulphur Creek, Penguin and Ridgely. However, these early achievements were impeded when influenza broke out in

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<sup>71</sup> Pink, *op. cit.*, pp. 221, 223

<sup>72</sup> Wilson, G, *Burnie High School 1916-1991*, Burnie: Burnie High School Mothers' Club, 1991, p.5



August and the school was closed. Classes recommenced in September, and precautions taken to avoid the spread of sickness, including daily disinfection and ventilation of the building, the continual change of rooms, and the prohibition of more than six students attending any one lesson in the same room. These restrictions were lifted by October, but the number of enrolments was down.<sup>73</sup>

By 1923, conditions at the High School were crowded, and by 1927, the school had almost outgrown its temporary site at the State School.<sup>74</sup> It was not until the late 1920s with increased secondary student numbers that local lobbying resulted in a purpose built high school building. The construction of the High School was announced by Joseph Lyons, Premier and Education Minister in March 1928. In his speech to the Burnie community he stated:

We are going to erect here, at Burnie, on a magnificent site, a school that for appearance will beat anything we have to the present.<sup>75</sup>

The foundation for the High School at West Park was laid on 1 June 1928. The School was officially opened in March the following year by the Minister for Education, Mr HS Baker in the presence of local and state dignitaries and more than 250 students, parents and old scholars. The opening of the school received broad coverage in *the Advocate*. In his speech the Minister gave special attention to the 'splendid buildings' of the school and their ideal location and surroundings. Mrs Enid Lyons, who grew up and was educated in Burnie, attended the opening on behalf of her husband, the Premier. In her speech she emphasised the progress of Burnie and the district, and the architectural beauty of the building. Of this beauty, *the Advocate* described the building as 'striking' with a 'handsome façade and neatly-built tower, ... visible from all directions.'

At its construction, the school consisted of five classrooms, a science room, staff facilities and an open quadrangle. Already the benefit of the new school resulted in new enrolments, expanding from 100, to 140 students, many boarding in town.<sup>76</sup>

The Great Depression restricted access to High School education to those who could afford it. In 1932-33, school fees for students 14 or over were set at £1.10 per term. It was not until 1935 that the Tasmanian Government abolished school fees, although the costs of books and uniforms still made High School prohibitively expensive for many.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p.25

<sup>74</sup> The site was later demolished for the development of Loughrans.

<sup>75</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.225

<sup>76</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p.5; *The Advocate*, 14 March 1929, p.6

<sup>77</sup> Pink, K, *Campsite to City: a History of Burnie, 1827-2000*, Burnie City Council: Burnie, 2000, p.225

**Figure 12 The Old Burnie High School<sup>78</sup>**



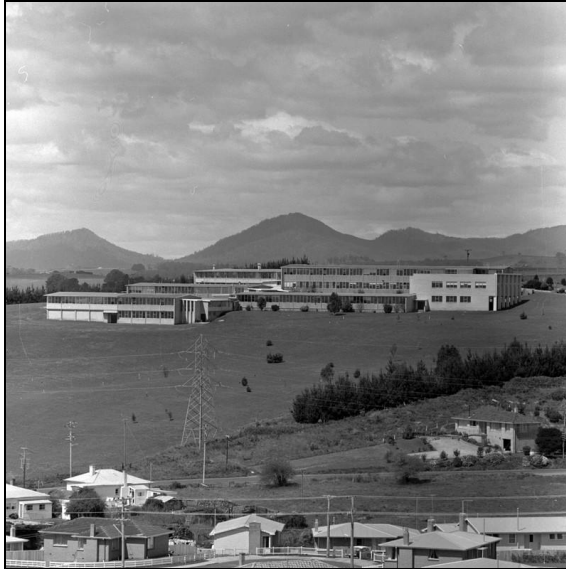
With the establishment of APPM, enrolments grew strongly during the 1940s and 50s. In 1939, the school had approximately 200 students. This had grown to more than 600 by 1959. With increased numbers, the facilities were expanded: a domestic science block was built in the 1940s, and post-World War Two, more class rooms and an assembly hall were constructed. By the 1950s, the West Park site had reached its capacity. Already, the school had purchased the former adjacent Anglican rectory nearby to use as class rooms. The Government acquired 50 acres of land at Cooe for the construction of a new Burnie High School, and in 1955, £285,000 was voted towards its construction. Despite the funds, delays occurred in the construction of the school. In response, numbers at the West Park site continued to grow and unheated and unlit former Army Mussett huts were brought to the site to provide temporary class room accommodation.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> AOT AB713/1/8496, High School

<sup>79</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.225-227

**Figure 13 The New High School: Parklands<sup>80</sup>**



The new High School opened in 1958 with an enrolment of 450 students. Despite the new school, the administrators faced the continuing problem of a lack of room, resulting in an almost continued process of expansion. It was not until 1976 and the construction of Hellyer College that the situation improved.

Plans to construct this purpose built secondary college building began in the early 1970s, with work beginning in 1973 on the \$3 million building. Hellyer College opened in 1976 with 450 students, and has continued to grow.<sup>81</sup>

With the construction of the new High School, the old West Park site was used as the Burnie Junior High School, with an enrolment of 350 students. Later, the old High School building became the location of Adult Education activities in Burnie. Located so close to the beach, one story relates how penguins later established themselves under the building, making so much noise, that evening classes were almost impossible to be heard.<sup>82</sup>

Plans and works were nearly complete for the transformation of the old High School to become the new home of the Creative Paper Company and the Burnie Visitor Information Centre. Shortly before completion of the works, the building was tragically destroyed by a fire on 27 April 2007. The building was a landmark in Burnie: historically, socially and physically. The loss of the building caused a true sense of loss and sadness, and highlighted the importance of heritage to the municipality. Burnie Council has collected stories and memories related to the building. The former Domestic Science building is the only remaining structure on the site.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> AOT AB713/1/12347/2, Parklands High School

<sup>81</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.225-227

<sup>82</sup> Pers. comm.

<sup>83</sup> Remains of Burnie High School building demolished <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/05/08/1917233.htm>; pers. comm, consultation sessions 8-9 May 2009



## 7.2 Private Schools

A number of small private schools were also established in Burnie, during the late nineteenth century, reflecting the growth in population. Between the late 1880s to 1912, Burnie had nearly 20 private schools, prominent examples including the Burnie Higher School, Queen's Grammar School and the Burnie Model School. The majority of these were small institutions, run in either church halls or private houses. Most had closed by 1910 with the establishment of rail connections to larger boarding schools in Launceston and Hobart.

Catholic education has also had a long and continuing tradition in Burnie. Classes for Catholic children were provided since 1862, but it was to take decades for a Catholic education system to be formalised. This began in 1900 with the construction of the convent at the Star of Sea Church for the nuns from the Convent of Mercy. With a large Catholic population, the Stella Maris School had an enrolment of 90 pupils, and the convent continued to be used until 1912, when a three room school building was completed. In the 1920s, the School was known for its attention to languages and commercial practice. Stella Maris continued to expand and grow during the twentieth century. By the 1950s, the school had an enrolment of 500 pupils in the severely overcrowded site. Although the site continued to expand, by the mid-1970s it was declared a 'disaster area' by the Federal Government and funds were sought to build a new school on the grounds of Marist College. This new school opened in 1978.<sup>84</sup>

Secondary Catholic education for boys was not provided until 1959. Until this time, parents sent their sons to the public high schools, or enrolled them in the secondary colleges in Hobart and Launceston. In 1955, the Church acquired 70 acres of land between Mooreville and Brickport roads. Part of the land was subdivided for private development, however the majority of the land was retained for establishing the first boarding school on the North West coast under the care of the Marist Order. The School opened in 1959. Major changes occurred in 1972 when Marist College combined with Stella Marist to become coeducational.<sup>85</sup>

## 7.3 Technical Education

Technical education also developed in Burnie during the mid twentieth century. During the late 1930s, the only technical education was training through apprenticeships with local businesses and the High School offering some electrical and carpentry trade courses. However, with the establishment of the paper industry, a need grew for technically skilled employees. A local deputation met with Premier Ogilvie in 1937 to put a case for the establishment of a technical college.

Land on the corner of Spring Street was purchased from the VDL Co. in 1940 and plans for the buildings prepared by Public Works Department architect, Sydney Blythe, who designed many public buildings in Tasmania at this time. A Parliamentary Committee investigated the issue in 1940, finding the costs of erecting the college would come to £12,300, with a variety of workshops and teaching areas across the site. In addition, evidence was given by community representatives and businesses which were generally supportive of the proposal, offering continued to support, should the College be constructed. The Commonwealth provided an offer of a free loan for machinery and equipment to the value of £10,000 for training the students in the making of munitions.

<sup>84</sup> Catchpole, H, *The Mercy Ministry in Burnie. A Brief Account of the Life and Work of the Sisters of Mercy in Burnie over the 100 years since their arrival in 1900*, Burnie, 2000, pp.1, 4, 23-25, 34

<sup>85</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.224, 230-233



The Standing Committee concluded that with the rapid growth of Burnie, it was appropriate for a technical school to be constructed, and approval was given in January 1941. However, the onset of World War Two delayed the construction of the College. A shortage of money, works and materials resulted in delays and the site was progressively developed between 1941 to 1949.

The Technical College also played a role in the war effort as the first buildings erected in 1941 were the workshops, which were needed as soon as possible so that the munitions works could commence. During construction, human remains from the old VDL Co. cemetery were discovered. The main College block was built between 1948-49, by local prominent firm, Carter and Peace. Again, human remains were discovered. On the laying of the foundation stone in 1948, Premier Cosgrove said the institution serving the needs for technical education in Burnie should be regarded as a college, rather than a school providing education to a high standard and across a wide field. The Director of Education, CE Fletcher, said that the provision of the technical college was 'probably the high water mark in Burnie's education', and that after primary and secondary schooling, the Education Department was establishing a real 'university for the people'.

Because of increased enrolments, the College continued to expand over the next 20 years, and in 1968 a major extension was constructed on the eastern elevation of the College. Despite this, the Spring Street site remained too small, and plans were made to construct a new college on 50 acres of land on Mooreville Road. The former Technical College continues to provide educational roles, as the location of Adult Education.<sup>86</sup>

The move to Mooreville Road for technical education was made in the early 1970s, with Prime Minister Gough Whitlam opening the new college in 1974. Despite this achievement, it took more than ten years for the Burnie College of Technical Education to be completed, at a cost of 9.6 million. At its opening in 1989, the college accommodated 2,500 students, growing to 3370 by the year 2000.

The former Spring Street site continues to provide educational roles, as the location of Adult Education.<sup>87</sup>

## 7.4 Higher Education

Moves towards university education in Burnie began in the 1960s, when the University of Tasmania accepted an offer from Lloyd Harris and Adult Education. Situated in Mooreville Rd, Burnie, the campus began in 1995 as a modest study centre supporting students living in rural north-west Tasmania. Over the past 12 years, UTAS Cradle Coast has transformed into a fully fledged campus, home to a growing community of students and staff and two internationally recognised research institutes. The campus is close to the UTAS Rural Clinical School and supported by strong links with community.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Portside and Van Diemen's Land Company Cemetery, 1-3 Spring Street (including part of Spring and Wilson Streets), Burnie, Tasmanian Heritage Register entry 10894

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.229-230

<sup>88</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.230





## 8. Governing and Providing Services

### 8.1 Local Government

The evolution of local government in Tasmania began in 1827 with the division of the colony into Police Districts under the control of a Police Magistrate. Although focussed on convict administration and punishment, the system was gradually supplemented in the mid, to late nineteenth century by rural municipalities, road trusts and town boards.

In 1852, elected road trusts were established in settled areas to collect rates for the construction and maintenance of roads, a service previously provided by the convict workforce. In 1858, Tasmania introduced a system of voluntary incorporation into Rural Municipalities. The public reception of this system was mixed. For some areas, the costs of establishing the municipalities and the collection of rates was unattractive. Burnie was one of these districts that chose not to incorporate, instead establishing a range of organisations such as a Town Board, and Road and Water Trusts which provided some of the services of local government.<sup>89</sup>

At Burnie, the role of the VDL Co led to a somewhat different pattern of early administration. Instead of creating a local municipality, a range of organisations such as a Town Board, Road and Water and Water Trusts were established, which provided some of the services of local government. The Emu Bay Road Trust was established in 1857, a role previously provided by the VDL Co. at Stanley. A vast area of land was included in the Trust's jurisdiction, stretching from Emu Bay to Deloraine. Because it covered such a large area of land, local residents at Emu Bay and the VDL Co. pushed for a separate Emu Bay Road District. These aims were achieved, and Emu Bay was proclaimed a Road District, representing the beginning of Local Government in Burnie.

The first elections did not occur until 1859, with the members being from the prominent society figures: farmers and businessmen. This first Road District had a troubled early history, with infighting, factionalism and disputes over the election of procedures resulting in the resignation of the trustees. As a result, meetings were only held sporadically, and it was not until 1862 with the election of a new Trust that the group began to function effectively. In 1865, the Road District took on the role of supervising Government grants for the main roads, leading to the formation of the East Emu Bay Board of Works, and later the Emu Bay Main Roads Board.

In 1898, the Burnie Town Board was established, and later a Rural Road Trust. With a small population and limited elector base, the membership of these groups was virtually identical. By 1906, Burnie was served by three authorities providing local government services: the Town Board responsible for the town area; the Road Trust, addressing the country district; and the Main Road District, responsible for the Main Coastal Road. This variety of groups led to duplication and inefficiencies. The inconsistent and complex nature of this voluntary system resulted in the abolition in 1906 of these voluntary bodies and the formation of municipal local governments, including in the Burnie area.

The old Trusts and Boards came to an end in 1908 and were replaced with the Municipal Council. The first item of business for the Council was changing the name of Emu Bay to Burnie. The item was deferred, and not formally changed until 1932.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.41-42

<sup>90</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.47-49

The Burnie municipal boundaries were defined by the watercourses, the Leven and Cam rivers, rather than population. This system largely remained until 1993 when through amalgamation, the number of local municipal areas was reduced to 29.<sup>91</sup>

**Figure 14 Burnie Town Hall and Library**<sup>92</sup>



As Pink writes, the first election for the Emu Bay municipality was a ‘fight between town and country’. The responsibilities of the council included town sewerage, beautification of Burnie, attracting tourists, the establishment of parks and recreation grounds, and fire insurance. There was little public interest in the new administration, with only 765 votes out of a total electorate of 1328.

Special mention goes to Warden Francis Tallack, who served two terms, first between 1911-1912, and secondly in 1915. As a carpenter, Tallack was responsible for building the town. Prominent examples of his work includes the Bay View and Central hotels, numerous business premises, private houses, and the reconstruction of much of the west side of Wilson Street when it was destroyed by fire at the turn of the twentieth century. Tallack is credited as being the ‘architect of Burnie’, both in the design and construction of buildings, but also municipal development more generally.

Richard Hilder served as Warden during the Great Depression, as well as acting as Warden of the Marine Board and having involvement in numerous agricultural organisations. A lasting legacy of Hilder’s term was the construction of Hilder Parade on North Terrace. This Council project of reclaiming the sand dunes and transforming it into park lands was a source of unemployment relief and remains a popular local landmark.<sup>93</sup>

## 8.2 Providing Services

By 1908, the development of civil infrastructure was limited, with inadequate water supply, limited lighting, no sewerage, and dusty streets. The townships first water supply came from the natural spring on the hills of South Burnie. Later, in 1902, the Burnie Town Board established a small gravity fed water

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, pp.41-44, 46

<sup>92</sup> Burnie Collection of Postcards, State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, au-7-0016-125141267

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, pp.50, 53



system running from the Romaine Creek. This system involved the construction of two dams on the Creek and 2.5 miles of pipe.

Throughout the twentieth century, Burnie suffered from inadequate water supply issues. By 1930, the small Romaine Creek system was insufficient to supply the demands of the town, and a pumping station was constructed on the Emu River at Fern Glade. The pumping station remains today. From here, the water was pumped to two reservoirs, although the system proved expensive and was known for the poor quality of its water.

Burnie's most ambitious, and successful but controversial water supply system was the development of the Pet River Scheme. The concept of damming the Pet River had first been mooted in 1939, but the high costs of such a measure delayed any progress until the 1950s. Faced with critical water shortages and rationing, the Burnie Council approved the scheme in 1951, but against extreme opposition, including a petition signed by 600 residents and a protest meeting held in 1955. Public concern was centred on the adequacy of the water supply, the geological conditions of the site, and the quality of the water that would result.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the criticism the Burnie Council pressed on with works in response to the critical water shortages. The construction proved highly difficult, and the first stage was not completed until 1959. By 1960, water shortages remained critical, and to avoid retrenchments at APPM, water restrictions were put in place. The dam wall at Pet River was raised by 6 metres in 1966, and a limited number of water meters installed to measure consumption. This was followed in 1969 by the full roll out of meters to reduce wastage.

The scheme has been described as Burnie Council's single greatest achievement of its first seventy years, and has now been incorporated into the North West Regional Water Scheme.

The first infrastructure works to be undertaken by the new municipal council was the development of a sewerage system in 1908, with the connection of 30 houses and business in the town. The sewerage scheme cost £10,000 and Burnie became one of the first provincial towns in Australia to establish such a scheme. Early twentieth century progress on expanding the scheme throughout Burnie was slow and stalled by the Great Depression. By the 1960s and in spite of rapid population and development growth, the majority of Burnie remained on septic systems. With new subdivisions such as Ocean Vista, Cooee, Upper Parklands, Brooklyn, Montello and Upper Burnie, the town had 13 sea outfalls discharging untreated sewerage directly into Bass Strait. The effect of these outfalls was disastrous on the local environment, with the closure of the South Burnie Beach in 1963, not reopening again until 1972. In response to this problem, a massive sewerage works program was initiated with 37,000 feet of sewerage pipes laid out and the construction of pumping stations and waste treatment plants.

Ideas to supply Burnie with electricity had begun as early as 1892, with a plan to construct a hydro electric scheme across the Emu River. This scheme did not eventuate, but if it had, Burnie would have become the first town in Australia to be lit by hydroelectricity.<sup>95</sup>

Electric power first arrived in Burnie in 1912. This resulted from the decision of the Marine Board of Burnie to construct a second breakwater, which created a major demand for power, as the Board decided to run the machinery on electric power rather than use steam power. Two diesel engines capable of producing 440 volts of power were installed in a brick powerhouse, and the excess electricity

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p.70

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, pp.67, 66-67, 73



was sold to the Burnie Council. Electricity poles and lines were laid out through the town, and by June 1912, the system was ready to start generating and supplying electricity. The Council also constructed its own Power Station behind the Council Chambers in Jones Street. In 1929, the Hydro Electric Commission took over power supply in Tasmania, although the Burnie Council continued to supply electricity until 1940.<sup>96</sup>

### 8.3 Providing Health Care

Although served by early doctors, midwives, and nurses, the provision of formal health care came late to Burnie. The town did not get a general hospital until 1932 when Doctors Fleming and Martin established the private Darwin Hospital in Alexander Street. Prior to this, medical services were provided by general practices, and hospitals in Latrobe and Wynyard. In addition to a small operating theatre, the Darwin Hospital mainly provided maternity services.

A key figure in Burnie's early healthcare was Blanche Clare. Clare arrived in Burnie about 1920, establishing and working as head nursing sister at a number of private hospitals, and later as matron of the Darwin hospital until her retirement in the 1950s. Clare had a close relationship with the Lyons, travelling to Melbourne to deliver their eleventh child, and later working as a nanny to their large family. Clare was awarded an MBE for her services to nursing, and was responsible for the delivery of hundreds of babies in Burnie.

The massive twentieth century growth of Burnie placed increased pressure on the already limited health services in the town. The need for a general public hospital was pressing. The Government approved the proposal after World War Two and £125,000 was voted towards the construction of a hospital to provide outpatient, midwife, general, medical and surgical services. The foundation was laid in 1948, and the maternity ward opened in 1951, followed later by the general wards. Despite this achievement, the hospital had the highest bed occupancy rate, and fastest bed turnaround in Tasmania. The new hospital was soon insufficient to meet the needs of the community.

Several options were considered, but eventually it was decided to build a new hospital at the existing South Burnie site. The first eastern wing of the North West General Hospital opened in 1969. The construction however, did not remove the need for a new regional hospital on the north west coast. In 1988, the North West Private Hospital was constructed off Brickport Road with 165 beds. It was here that the Tasmanian Government decided to construct the new 165 bed General Hospital, the facility opening in 1995.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, pp.67-68

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, pp.205-213



## 9. Cultural Life

### 9.1 Religion in the Community

Burnie today has numerous churches and religious groups. However, from the establishment of the settlement at Emu Bay in 1827, it took 25 years until a purpose built religious building was constructed. The first church building was a small timber Anglican chapel. Prior to this, religious worship took place in private homes, with the occasional services from visiting preachers. The VDL Co. was anxious to encourage religious worship because of its moral benefits, and the first services were probably held by the company surgeon, Dr Hutchison. However, the isolation of the region made formal services difficult.

The first recorded religious service in Burnie was conducted by George Augustus Robertson, Secretary and occasional preacher of the Bethel Union Society. The service was held in August 1830 at the company store, with later meetings at the inland stations at the Surrey and Hampshire Hills. Representatives of other religious groups followed. In 1832 and 1833, visiting Quakers, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker held services, and the Congregational Minister, Reverend Waterfield visited Emu Bay in 1843. The first Anglican Chaplain to be appointed to the region, who was based at Circular Head, arrived in 1841. However, because of the size of the region, visits to Emu Bay by the Reverend Grigg were infrequent.<sup>98</sup>

The poor state of social morals in the small community were commented on, with the *Launceston Advertiser* recording that 'sly grog selling and its usual consequences prevail to a frightful extent'. This resulted in moves to construct an Anglican Church began in the mid-1840s. A subscription was started to raise funds, and a petition presented to the VDL Co. for the erection of a Church. The Company granted land on the 'Rocky Hill', on the northern side of Wilmot Street, and fronting Marine Terrace, later to become known as 'Church Hill'.

The exact date of the construction of this Church is unknown, although Pink writes that it was probably between 1850-51. The Church was built by local carpenter, shipwright and hotelier, Thomas Wiseman. Although completed and dedicated to St George, because of the failure to transfer the land to the Church authorities, the building was not consecrated by the Bishop until 1855. The small chapel remained until the 1880s, when the Church and the hill itself were destroyed by quarrying to construct the first breakwater in the bay.<sup>99</sup>

The first rector to be appointed to St George's was the Reverend Zachary Pocock. Reverend Pocock's time at Burnie was troubled and filled with conflict. In addition to his desecration of a local cemetery, Pocock was perceived as being arrogant and provocative, even resorting to physical altercation. As a result, attendance at the Chapel fell and locals petitioned the Bishop for Pocock's removal. Pocock left Emu Bay in 1866, and was replaced by the popular Reverend Richard Smith. Under Smith's direction, attendance at Church increased.<sup>100</sup>

Moves to erect a larger, more imposing Anglican Church began in 1882, a time when the municipality was growing in response to the mining boom. Land was acquired on the corner of Mount and Cattley

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, pp.239-240

<sup>99</sup> Pink, K, *A Place to Worship. A History of St George's Anglican Church Burnie*, 1984

<sup>100</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.241-242

Streets, in exchange for Church Hill. A building fund was established and the VDL Co. donated timber and bricks from Captain Jones' brickyard.

The foundation stone was laid on 1 February 1884, although because of a lack of funds and delays in getting materials shipped from Melbourne, the nave of the Church was not completed until December 1885. An unusual feature of St George's was that the Church did not have pews, but rather around 200 individual chairs which remained until the 1930s.<sup>101</sup>

**Figure 15 St George's Church**<sup>102</sup>



To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the Church in 1934, memorial stained glass windows were installed in recognition of former rectors and prominent members of the community. The post-war years witnessed substantial growth in Burnie and it was realised that the existing church building was insufficient to meet the needs of the parish. In 1959-60, major alterations were made to St George's. These alterations resulted in the almost total demolition of the existing Church and the reconstruction of the Church on a larger scale. Reopening in 1960, the expansion had cost more than £31,000.

Beyond St George's in central Burnie, the most substantial Anglican Church in the municipality is St David's at Cooe. The building was designed by Louis Williams, who was also responsible for Holy Trinity at Ulverstone. Regarded as one of Tasmania's most attractive brick churches, the building was erected following a £4000 donation by Anna-Maria Boston as a memorial to her only child. The Church was consecrated in 1932, and Cooe made a separate parish in 1950. Tragedy struck St David's in 1998, when it was extensively damaged by an arsonist attack. Substantial renovations were required to bring the church back to its former glory.<sup>103</sup>

The Roman Catholic community has also had a long history in Burnie. It was served by visiting priests, until 1849 when Father Burke arrived. Land was sought from the VDL Co. for the erection of a church, with land eventually being donated on the corner of Marine Terrace and Cattley Street. The small wooden St Saviour's church was erected on the site.

<sup>101</sup> Pink, *A Place to Worship*, pp.22-23

<sup>102</sup> Burnie Collection of Postcards, State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, au-7-0016-125141267

<sup>103</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.246-247

The North West coast became a separate parish in 1883. Controversially, the then priest, Father O'Callaghan sold the Cattley Street land in order to raise funds for a larger church. O'Callaghan selected a two acre site at the bottom end of Mount Street, then, on the outskirts of the town. The brick St Mary's by the Sea Church was constructed in 1890 by Thomas Kenner. The original budget for the building was £1665, although on the opening of the church in 1891, the cost had grown to £2600, with £250 still owing.

St Mary's by the Sea was opened by Archbishop Murphy, who described the Church as 'the most commodious and beautiful Church along the coast – or perhaps anywhere outside Hobart or Launceston'. The opening was widely attended, by both Catholics and Protestants alike. Following the service, a performance was given by the Waratah Dramatic Club to raise church funds.<sup>104</sup>

**Figure 16 St Mary's by the Sea**<sup>105</sup>



In 1889, the ministry at Burnie was taken over by Father Hayes, who is recalled as a 'living legend'. During his time, churches were also built at Somerset, Waratah, Magnet and Tullah. The pressing need for education was also addressed with the Sisters of Mercy establishing a convent school, completed in 1912. In 1930, Father Hayes donated stained glass windows to the Church. Purchased in Italy for £300, the windows are considered among the finest in Tasmania.

Originally, the Mount Street site was considered too far from the centre of Burnie. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the urban growth of Burnie placed St Mary's under threat. In the 1970s, the proposed route for the Bass Highway expressway would have resulted in the destruction of the Church. The Church authorities initially decided to sell the Mount Street property and construct a new Church at the Marist College site. Proposals were made to use the old church site for a retail development. The church was placed on the market but failed to sell, and the original decision to dispose of the site was abandoned. Instead, extensive refurbishments were made to the church, in time for its centenary celebrations in 1991.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Catchpole, H, *The Mercy Ministry in Burnie. A Brief Account of the Life and Work of the Sisters of Mercy in Burnie over the 100 years since their arrival in 1900*, Burnie, 2000, p.4; Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.248

<sup>105</sup> Burnie Collection of Postcards, State Library of Tasmania, Tasmaniana Library, au-7-0016-125141267

<sup>106</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.250



Methodism arrived in Burnie in 1868 with the extension of the Penguin Mission. Over the coming decades, the various forms of Methodism were established in Burnie. The first services were held in private homes until a site was secured for the construction of purpose built church. Again, the VDL Co. provided land for the construction of a church. A site was secured on Cattley Street, and the first Primitive Methodist Church was constructed in 1869. The cost of the small, simple timber structure was £50. The Church was later improved, and in 1891, a second, larger church was built alongside the original structure.

In 1883 the United Methodist Free Church established its ministry in Burnie, building a small Church in Mount Street, between Wilmot and Cattley streets. In 1890, Wesleyan Methodists built a small brick Church in Cattley Street. This building later became the site for the Salvation Army citadel in Burnie, and later, the Country Women's Association acquired the property.

Pink notes that the three Methodist churches had a friendly relationship, and sought to unify. This was achieved in 1900 when the groups joined, and plans begun to construct a new United Methodist Church on the site of property owned by the Primitive Methodists in Mount Street. The new United Methodist Church was completed in 1901 at a cost of £1700 and designed by AE Luttrell of Devonport. Luttrell went on to have a successful career in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Church constructed in 1901 remained virtually unchanged until 1958, when extensive modifications were made to the building. The older Primitive Church was moved to the rear of the new Church, being used for Sunday School classes. With the construction of the new building, the United Free and Wesleyan Methodists sold their sites.<sup>107</sup>

Presbyterian ministers began visiting Burnie during the late-nineteenth century. A Home Mission was established in the town in 1908, and the following year, a small brick Church was built in Alexander Street, near the Fire Brigade.

In 1974, the Presbyterian and Methodist groups joined, to form the United Burnie Parish, later to become the Uniting Church, following the joining of the Congregationalists. With the unification of the church groups, the Presbyterian Church building in Alexander Street became redundant, and was acquired by the Fire Brigade to become the Equipment Division of the service.<sup>108</sup>

As Pink writes, the Salvation Army had an 'unfortunate introduction' to Burnie. In the late nineteenth century, Captain Tom Gibbs and his wife arrived in northern Tasmania, and established a local Corp. The Burnie headquarters were set up in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Mount Street. The services of Captain Gibbs and his wife found a ready audience, however it was later discovered they were frauds and not connected with the Salvation Army, leading to the closure of the Chapel. Gibbs was later arrested for bigamy.

The scandal caused by Gibbs' actions set back the cause of the Salvation Army in Burnie. The genuine Salvation Army established their operations in Burnie in 1900, as an outpost of the Wynyard Corps. The group was headed by Captain O'Brien, who was the first female preacher in Burnie. Operating from a temporary site in Mount Street, the Salvation Army struggled to find a permanent site. The Salvation Army borrowed £100, and in 1910 purchased the empty Wesleyan Chapel in Cattley Street. Due to a lack of funds, the debt was not paid back until 1932. By 1951, the existing site was proving too small for the needs of the Army, and land was purchased in Ladbrooke Street for the construction of a new Citadel. The new building was constructed between 1954-1955, with more than £2000 raised towards its

<sup>107</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *History of Methodism in Burnie. Specially Compiled for the Centenary Celebrations, August 3-11, 1968*, Burnie: 1968, pp.8-12; Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.250-253

<sup>108</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.254





construction. The building was erected by local members of the Army, opening in 1956 and acclaimed at the time as one of the most modern in Tasmania. Although able to meet worship needs, the Ladbroke Street site was too limited to provide the social welfare services of the Salvation Army and in 1977 a site was purchased in Wilson Street. Later, further sites were purchased in Burnie to provide crisis accommodation.<sup>109</sup>

In 1899, a group of Burnie locals met at the Town Hall with a view to establishing a Baptist Church in the town. Their plans came to fruition, and Pastor Wood began to hold services in the Town Hall and the old Primitive Methodist Chapel.

Funds were raised locally for the purchase of land in Mount Street and the erection of a purpose built Church. Opening in 1901, the congregation built a weatherboard church on the site with an adjoining two-storey brick manse for £420.

By 1925, this weatherboard church proved too small for the growing congregation and calls were made for the erection of a brick building capable of holding more than 350 worshippers. The foundation stone was laid in 1925 by JT Soundy, President of the Baptist Union in Tasmania, and the old wooden church was moved to the rear of the block for use as a Sunday school. Constructed almost entirely by the voluntary labour of the parishioners, the new Church was completed in 1925 at a cost of £1675. The old Church was then converted to form vestries, a kindergarten and kitchen.<sup>110</sup>

The Christian Brethren began services in Burnie in 1875 with the meeting of a small group at the home of George Atkinson, son-in-law of Chartist convict, Zephaniah Williams. A committee was formed for the purposes of constructing a Gospel Hall. Their work was assisted by James 'Philosopher' Smith, who discovered tin at Mount Bischoff. Smith was deeply religious and donated land in Mount Street for the Hall. In 1875, the three trustees called for tenders for the construction of a simple timber building. The Hall was opened in 1876, at a cost of some £25. At first, conditions were primitive, with no floor and unlined walls. Over the years the building was improved, and sometimes used as a school.

On the death of Smith, his widow donated further land in order to construct a bigger, brick hall alongside the original timber structure. The hall was built in 1915 at a cost of £900, and was enlarged in 1930.<sup>111</sup>

The first service of the Seventh Day Adventists was held in the Town Hall in 1921. Some 20 members attended, and services continued at the Town Hall until 1925 when land was purchased in Wilmot Street, where a small weatherboard church was erected in 1927. The Wilmot Street site continued to be used by the Adventists until the 1960s when it was learned that the land would be required for the Bass Highway expressway. In response, land was purchased at West Park Grove in 1969 for the construction of a new and bigger church.

A Lutheran community was established in Burnie following World War Two and the arrival of numbers of European immigrants. In 1958 the Lutheran Church Council purchased a partially erected house in Tattersall Street which they completed for the purposes of a Church and Sunday school. A new Lutheran Church was built in 1985 off Mooreville Road.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints came to Burnie in the mid-1950s with the arrival of Don Wooley and his family. They were followed later by two American missionaries and services were at first

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p.2

<sup>110</sup> Rowston, L, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. A History of the Burnie Baptist Church 1899-1999*, Burnie Baptist Church, 1999, p.15

<sup>111</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.256-257



held in the Country Women's Association Hall. The numbers of parishioners began to increase, and services were transferred to the Upper Burnie Memorial Hall until a purpose built Church was built in 1963 at Montello, the first on the North West coast.<sup>112</sup>

## 9.2 Places of Burial

The first recorded Christian burial at Emu Bay was in May 1832. It was that of Kickerterpoller, an Aboriginal man who was part of George Augustus Robinson's mission work. Kickerterpoller had previously been baptised by Robinson and a coffin was made for him by Anthony Cottrell, also in employ of the mission. Kickerterpoller was buried at the back of the VDL Co. store. A log fence was erected around the grave.<sup>113</sup>

The VDL Co. went on to establish a formal cemetery of approximately a quarter of an acre near the junction of what was to become Spring and Wilson Streets. It is unknown when this cemetery was established. Like the Anglican Church, the cemetery was never consecrated because the properties had not been transferred to the Church authorities. Because of the wet nature of the site, the Spring Street site only operated until about 1852 when it was abandoned in favour of a new cemetery on View Road. In 1858, the Justice of the Peace, George Rouse wrote that the cemetery contained nearly 30 graves. Over the coming years, the Spring Street cemetery was repeatedly impacted upon by development. This began at an early date. The land on which the cemetery was located was rented by the Reverend Pocock. Pocock removed the majority of the cemetery fence and began using the land for agricultural purposes, including ploughing up the graves and cultivating the surface. Local residents were outraged by these actions and petitioned the Bishop against Pocock. A request was made to the VDL Co. for the site to be properly fenced, to prevent the reoccurrence of such events.

Despite these concerns, the cemetery continued to be developed. By 1904, the site was being used by Chinese market gardeners who found a large portion of a headstone whilst working the land. Later, road works disturbed human remains and the remnants of a blackwood coffin. The next major disturbance occurred in the 1940s with the construction of the Burnie Technical College and associated buildings. During excavation of the site, human remains and two coffins were found on the site.<sup>114</sup>

Burnie's first consecrated cemetery was located at the bottom of View Road. Operating as a general cemetery for all denominations, the first recorded burial at View Road occurred in 1857. The cemetery contained approximately 180 graves, including some of Burnie's prominent pioneers. Many memorials were made from wood which eventually decayed, although stone monuments continued to survive. Like other urban cemeteries throughout Tasmania, the View Road cemetery eventually fell into disrepair and the monuments were relocated to the western boundary, for the conversion into Coronation Park in the 1950s. These monuments have subsequently been relocated to the Pioneer Village Museum. Like other sites in Burnie, the View Road cemetery was impacted on by the construction of the Bass Highway.

Burnie's main cemetery is located at Wivenhoe, the location of some 4000 graves. The site was selected in 1890, but was not used until 1900 when the first burial of an infant took place. The Wivenhoe Cemetery is the resting place of many of Burnie's early pioneers, and prominent citizens. This includes Captain William Jones, master mariner and entrepreneur who was Burnie's most successful

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, p.258

<sup>113</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p.608

<sup>114</sup> Portside and Van Diemen's Land Company Cemetery, 1-3 Spring Street (including part of Spring and Wilson Streets), Burnie, Tasmanian Heritage Register entry 10894



businessman in the late nineteenth century. Jessie Rooke is also buried at the cemetery. Heavily involved with the British Women's Bible and Prayer Union in Sydney, she later she joined the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Jessie moved to Tasmania in the 1890s with her family, where she formed the Burnie branch of the WCTU and became president in 1894. She became State President of that organisation in 1898, and was heavily involved in the National Council of Women. Rooke also played a vital role in the development of the Tasmania Women's Suffrage League. The Wivenhoe Cemetery remained the only burial place until the opening of the Burnie Lawn Cemetery in 1976 by the Burnie Council.<sup>115</sup>

### 9.3 Remembering the Fallen

Burnie has chosen various ways to remember its contributions to past conflicts. During 1918 and 1919, many communities around Tasmania created 'soldiers' avenues', 'avenues of honour' and 'memorial avenues' to commemorate the dead and acknowledge the efforts of those who had enlisted for service during the Great War.

It is not clear how the movement began, however the State Branch of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia was prominent in 1917 in first suggesting the planting of Hobart's memorial avenue. They may also have promoted it generally around the State. The idea for local avenues also came from a variety of local organisations: sometimes the local council, more often the local tourism or progress association and often special local committees. Many avenues were partly or fully funded by donations though in many places local councils provided either trees or timber for tree guards. Most memorial avenues involved placing nameplates on the individual trees or tree guards.

Burnie had its own Soldiers' Avenue, what was believed to be the first avenue to be completed in Tasmania. Through the efforts of the Burnie Tourist Association, works began in 1918. Progressive plantings were undertaken by volunteers and soldier's families along the Bass Highway between the Emu River Bridge and the Wivenhoe Railway Crossing. Further trees were planted at West Beach. The trees were planted in memory of soldiers from the municipality, and Wivenhoe in particular. At the opening of the Avenue, the Warden thanked the community and asked that they 'teach their children to revere the trees, as each one of them was planted to the memory of a hero'.

In planting the trees, the Tourist Association had a dual purpose. Firstly, as a memorial, and secondly, to improve the appearance of the entrance to Burnie. The Association also planned to attach metal discs to the trees bearing the name of the soldier it commemorated.<sup>116</sup>

Moves for a formal, more traditional memorial to Burnie's War dead began in the early 1920s. At the time, Burnie was one of the few North West towns without a memorial, other than the avenue of trees. A combination of newspaper editorials and public meetings led to the formation of the Emu Bay Soldier's Memorial project. The initial concept for the memorial was a cement arch in Wilson Street. Through public donation, £200 had been raised by May 1922. However, at this time, different plans emerged for the location and design of the memorial.

<sup>115</sup> Gardam, F, 'Jessie Spink Rooke', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Supplementary Volume, Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp 341-342; Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.258

<sup>116</sup> [http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/other\\_burnie.html](http://www.soldierswalk.org.au/other_burnie.html), *The Mercury*, 8 July 1918 p.2; *The Advocate and Times*, 14 May 1918 p.3; *The Advocate and Times*, 4 June 1918, p.3; *The Advocate and Times*, 12 June 1918, p.3; *The Examiner*, 8 July 1918, p.2; *The Examiner*, 9 July 1918, p.4



In June of the following year, a special meeting was held, approving the erection of a granite obelisk memorial, supported on a basalt base. The planned location for the monument was in front of Oakleigh House at Oakleigh Beach. The land for the memorial was donated by the VDL Co. who also donated the basalt from their quarry on Blackman's Point. The granite and engraving was undertaken by Launceston stonemason, S Wilson.

Fundraising continued and £550 was collected, allowing construction to begin. The memorial was unveiled on 17 February 1924. The *Advocate* covered the opening ceremony, describing it as 'an important event in the history of Burnie', and a 'most impressive ceremony'. Special attention was given to the prominent location of the memorial, being visible by boat, rail and road. Several hundred people attended the unveiling ceremony, with £263 collected at the event for ongoing maintenance. The opening was officiated by various dignitaries including politicians, Church representatives and local groups. The largest contingent was made up of returned servicemen. Although the speeches noted Burnie's contribution to the war and links with the British Empire, it was also noted that for many, the memorial would have a special, personal meaning. The monument was unveiled by Mrs Richard Hilder, the mother of three soldiers.

The location at Oakleigh Beach proved to be only temporary. The 1970 plans to widen the road as part of the development of the Bass Highway required the resumption of the land. It was originally planned to construct a new monument. However, the RSL requested that the original memorial be relocated to Burnie Park. The monument was unveiled on ANZAC day, 1974. It now commemorates the contributions of the armed forces in later conflicts. Commemorative rose gardens have also been planted at the site.<sup>117</sup>

#### 9.4 Playing Sport

Sport has played a major historical role in the history of Burnie. The first sporting carnivals were held on New Year's Day in the early 1860s. The only available cleared and relatively flat land was on the foreshore near the intersection of Marine Terrace and Spring Street. Here foot racing was held, as well as entertainment for the children with running, high jumps, pole-vaulting, and horse jumping. The oldest sporting organisation in Burnie the Burnie Athletic Club, which arranged the first New Year's Carnival in 1887. The Carnival began with small picnic sports, running, cycling, and wood chopping. This first carnival also included a 130 yard race, the forerunner to the Burnie Gift. Over time, the Carnival and the Burnie Gift has grown into a major sporting event, second only the Stawell Gift (in Victoria) on the Australian professional athletic calendar.<sup>118</sup>

Burnie's first permanent sports ground was at South Burnie. The Burnie Athletic Club rented the land from the VDL Co. in 1886 and cleared the land for sports fields and facilities. The first Carnival was held in 1887, and within a few years had become Burnie's main sporting event, and popular social occasion with special trains transporting people from Waratah and other west coast towns. The 1891 Carnival attracted more than 1000 spectators, the largest crowd ever assembled in the town. By the turn of the century, the Burnie Carnival was the main athletic event in Tasmania. The importance of the event was recognised in 2009 with the National Trust awarding the Burnie Athletics Club and Carnival as one of Tasmania's top ten heritage icons. This award recognises the Club and Carnival for its enormous

<sup>117</sup> *The Advocate*, 18 February 1924, p.4; Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.69

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p.277; <http://www.nationaltrusttas.org.au/icons.htm>

contribution to sport for over 121 years, and its prominence in Tasmania's annual program of Carnivals for running, wood chopping and cycling.

In 1912, Council purchased the South Burnie Recreation Ground from the VDL Co. for £2,000. However, already by this time, the need for a larger venue was being investigated, and in 1912, Council also purchased 28 acres of land from the Anglican Church to the west of the town for the development of a sports facility. Through the volunteer efforts of the Athletics Club, and cricket, football and bowls clubs, the tea-tree swamp was cleared, and the land levelled and grassed. During 1913-14, Council improved the grounds and erected a grandstand on the western side, large enough to hold 2000 people. By 1915, West Park was ready to become the new venue of the New Year's Day Carnival. In combination with its sports ground, the facility also included bowling greens and croquet and tennis lawns. According to the *Examiner*, its prominent coastal location put the ground 'in a position without favourable comparison in the Commonwealth.'<sup>119</sup>

**Figure 17 The Grandstand at West Park**<sup>120</sup>



Although West Park became the centre of sports in the town, the South Burnie Recreation Ground continued to evolve in its facilities and uses. During the twentieth century, South Burnie became a major residential area, and the South Burnie ground provided a valuable recreational space. In 1927 a community hall was established on the site, and over the decades the ground was used for a variety of sports including football, cricket, hockey, tennis, and in 1952, lawn bowls. Located nearby the Mill, the Bowls Club became very popular with Mill workers, as it was the closest licensed facility. Female employees from the Mill also used the recreation ground when they established a football team.<sup>121</sup>

A more recent recreational event of prominence is the Burnie Ten. First held in 1985, the Burnie Ten is a footrace which is recognised for its importance to Australian athletics as the ten-kilometre championship

<sup>119</sup>Pink, K, *The Carnival. A Centenary History of the Burnie Athletic Club*, Burnie Athletic Club, Burnie: 1986, pp.2-3, 16-17

<sup>120</sup> AOT PH40/1/155, West Park

<sup>121</sup> Pers. comm, 9 May 2009



of the nation, with a rich prize pool. The event was initiated as a means of raising the image of the city, and has become a highly popular event, which contributes significantly to Burnie's national profile.<sup>122</sup>

## 9.5 Enjoying the Natural World

For most of the twentieth century, Burnie was characterised as a major industrial centre with a highly polluted environment. However, this was not always the case, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Burnie was recognised for its stunning setting and mild climate and promoted as 'Beautiful Burnie'.

For example, in 1897 in a description of Burnie, it was noted that there was 'nothing finer in the colony than the drive along the road' from Penguin to Burnie. With its stunning coast, cliffs, coves, scenery and flora, the author found a similarity with the scenery of Scotland. The same author also noted that within the town, there were regular row houses along the foreshore and 'snug-looking' villas on the hills, with the whole affect being like a 'model summer resort' with an unsurpassed climate and opportunities for outdoor recreation.<sup>123</sup>

A similar promotion was made in 1908 where the town was described as 'a charming Tourism Resort' where visitors:

Will find in Burnie all that nature provides to ease the troubled mind and sooth the nerves. Along the beautiful sandy shores the evergreen boobyalla affords it sheltering canopy, and to sit and rest amongst the rocks the tired visitor gains Nature's greatest invigorator from the health-giving sea breezes.<sup>124</sup>

Burnie has several important parks and reserves. The first area to be protected for its natural beauty was Fern Glade. At a time when much land was being cleared for agriculture and development, in 1917 the Burnie Tourist and Progress Association began work on preserving the manferns and bush along the lower reaches of the Emu River. With a view to developing the area as a tourism attraction, the Association also cleared a track to the site and developed a picnic ground. The site quickly became popular with visitors, resulting in improvements to the tracks and a weekend bus service. By the 1970s, Fern Glade was so popular that the track was extended for a further 3 kilometres.<sup>125</sup>

Within central Burnie, the most important park is Burnie Park. Before it became a park, the site was part of two farms. By the early twentieth century, its central location made the land increasingly valuable. In 1927, the land was subdivided, but the Council recognised that it would be a great loss to develop what was already a natural park, particularly since the town did not have any public park. Council purchased most of the land in 1927, but not without some opposition from locals who considered the money could be better spent on urgent works. Nonetheless, Council continued with its plan, and a track was cleared along the Creek, and during the 1930s and 40s a large area was fenced for an animal enclosure, at one time containing wallabies, Tasmanian Devils, monkeys, birds and fish. The animal enclosure was later converted to tennis courts, and later a car park. Today, Burnie Park contains mature exotic trees and plants, the relocated Burnie Inn (the oldest building in the municipality), walking paths, Oldaker Falls and the War Memorials.

<sup>122</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, p.286

<sup>123</sup> Hoare, L, *Tasmanian Towns in Federation Times*, Sandford, 1998, pp.38, 40

<sup>124</sup> *Beautiful Burnie: the Gateway to of the Garden Island and the Liverpool of Tasmania*, Burnie Council, 1908, p.9

<sup>125</sup> Pink, *op. cit.*, pp.144-145



Another park, with particular historical interest is Oakleigh Park, in South Burnie. The park was the site where Hellyer first camped on 8 May 1827. The site was later developed in 1875 by the VDL Co. as the company's headquarters, and renamed Oakleigh. The park contains several commemorative structures, notably the obelisk to Henry Hellyer, erected in 1977 in recognition of Burnie's sesquicentenary. In 1990, the park came under threat from Port activities. These moves were controversial, and a committee was formed to save the park, initiating Australia's first Citizens Initiated Referendum, which overwhelmingly demonstrated the community's desire to retain the park. Through Council efforts, an alternative was found to the Port's requirements, and the park remains intact today. The community has consistently shown the regard it holds for its parks and reserves: as places of recreation, relaxation, and appreciation of the natural environment.<sup>126</sup>

## 9.6 Shows and Theatres

The Burnie Show has long been a prominent event in the community's social calendar. A group of farmers and businessmen formed the Burnie Agricultural and Pastoral Society in 1913. The first item of business was to find a location for the Show, a difficult decision given the lack of unoccupied flat land near the town.

An unattractive site in Wivenhoe, previously used as gravel pits was finally chosen, and Council took out a 99 year lease of the area for use as a recreational ground. The site was quickly developed, with removal of tree stumps, the filling of holes, and fencing. A grandstand from the Montello Race Track was moved to the Wivenhoe site, and the first agricultural show was held on 30 September 1914. The Wivenhoe ground also became Burnie's racing venue. Despite some problems with the venue, the first show was a resounding success. From these beginnings, the show has become the central event for the display of the district's rural accomplishments, as well as the display of handcrafts. From its earliest days, the Show has also been a popular community function, one long time resident describing it as the 'event of the year'. Although attractions like Harry Poulson's Fighting Tent no longer visit, its displays, exhibitions, and the ever popular sideshow remain a drawcard for the crowds.

Burnie has a proud tradition of arts and performances. Yet, until the first town hall was built in the early 1880s, there was no designated public hall or meeting space. A small brick hall was constructed, and later incorporated into the larger and attractive Town Hall built in 1888. With this, Burnie was able to host travelling theatre groups. Further small and large extensions were made to the Town Hall during the early twentieth century, and in 1912, the Council purchased adjoining land to construct a new building called the Burnie Theatre, used at first for live shows, and later films. In 1931, Burnie's main theatre, the Star in Mount Street was constructed. With its elaborate Spanish Mission style façade, the new theatre seated 1500 people and gave Burnie the most modern theatre in Tasmania. The theatre was also used for other uses, such as balls, when all the seats would be removed. These balls were a very important part of the social calendar and also used for fundraising, as occurred during World War Two. The Star theatre remained Burnie's key cultural centre until the construction of the Civic Centre. In 1976, the old Town Hall and theatre were sold to GH Fitzgerald and Co. for the development of the department store. Controversially, this development resulted in the demolition of the old Town Hall and its prominent clock tower, added as a memorial to Captain William Jones 'the King of Burnie'.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, pp.146-149; pers. comm, consultation sessions, 8-9 May 2009

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, pp.142-144; pers. comm, consultation session, 8 May 2009

**Figure 18 The Star Theatre**<sup>128</sup>



In the 1970s, Council began developing its state of the art Civic Centre. At first, the proposal was for the development of a performing arts space. These plans were later changed to incorporate a centre for the visual arts. With reworking of the design, the plan succeeded and Burnie was able to gain one of Australia's best regional art galleries. The Burnie Civic Centre is now recognised as one of Australia's best regional facilities of its type.

Also located at the Civic Centre is the Pioneer Village Museum. The Museum had its origins in the work of Peter Mercer. A collector and historian, Mercer moved to East Ridgley in 1954 where he ran a farm with his brother. The farm also provided the location for displaying Mercer's growing collection, and its particular focus on the history and heritage of the North West Coast. Within a few years, the museum was gaining attention and popularity with visitors. By 1956, it was the largest private museum in Tasmania.

The collection soon outgrew its location, and Mercer unsuccessfully tried to offer it to the Burnie Council. In 1969, Mercer again tried to offer the collection, and this time, by a narrow vote, Council agreed to accept. The Pioneer Village Museum opened at its new site at the Civic Precinct in 1971. Key to this early development was the indoor streetscape, presenting a moment in time from 1890-1910 – Australia's first indoor village. By 1975, the Museum had the highest attendance numbers of any fee paying museum in Tasmania.

With a very strong culture of music and performing arts, the Civic Centre is also a place strongly valued by the community. The Civic Centre also plays host to local productions. Burnie is noted for its high participation in music, both at an educational and performances. The city has a Highland Pipe Band, Brass Band, Concert Band and Youth Band.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> AOT PH30/1/6704, Star Theatre

<sup>129</sup> Pink, *Campsite to City*, pp.80-82, 122-129; pers. comm, consultation session, 8-9 May 2009





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Appendix A  
Time Series of Population Growth

Figure 19 Population Centres, c.1830

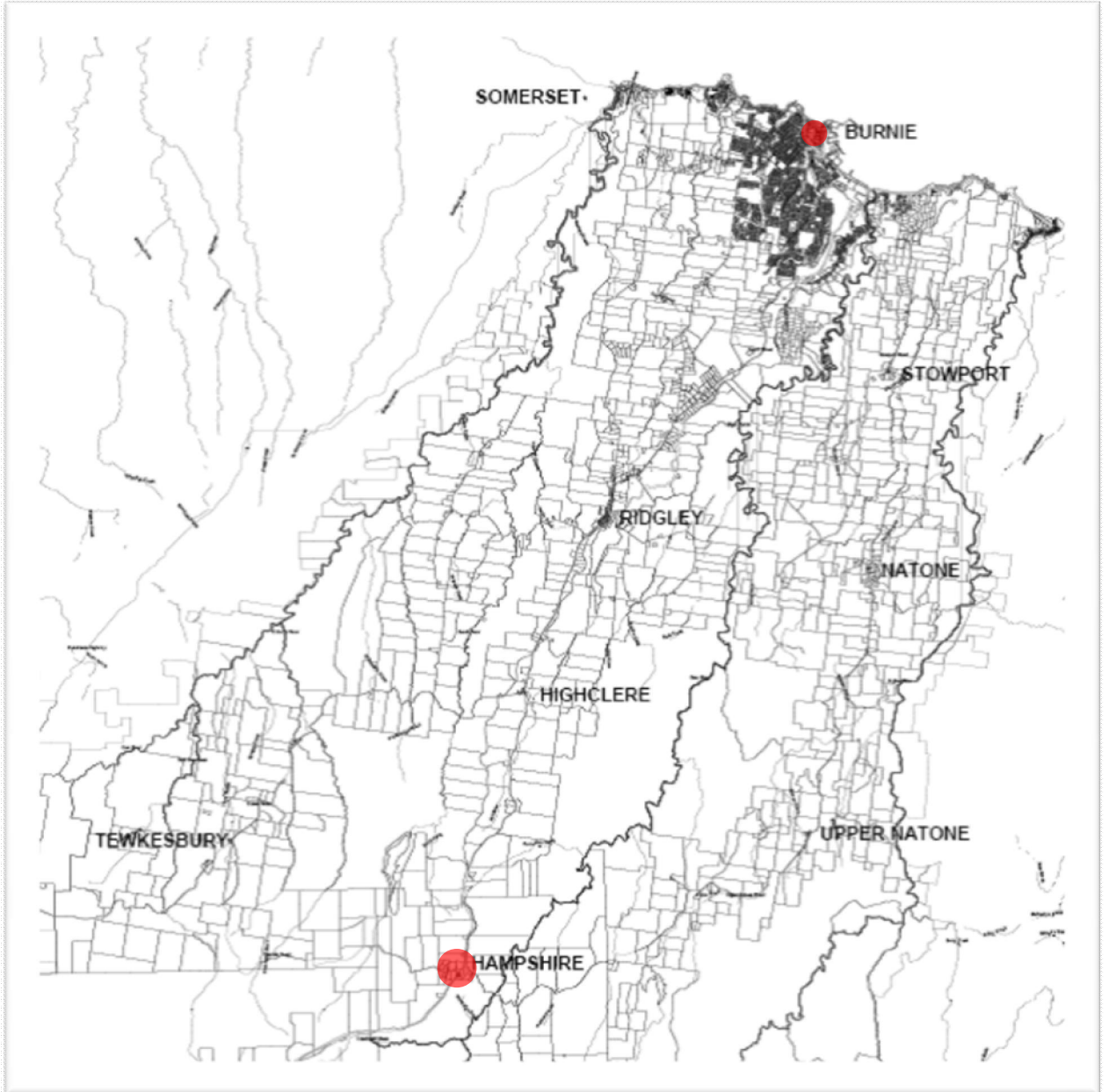


Figure 20 Population 1881, 300 people

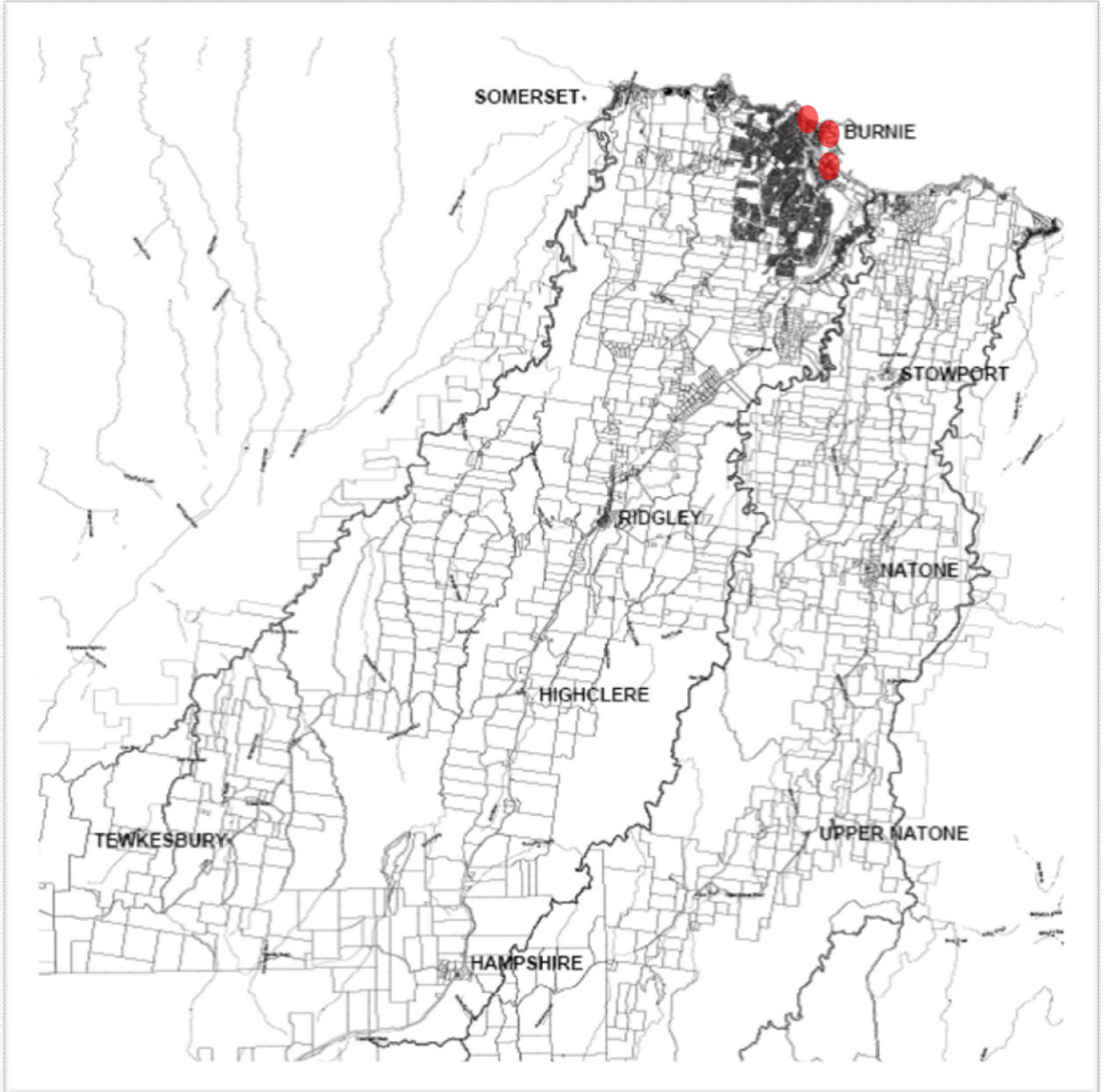


Figure 21 Population 1901, less than 1500 people

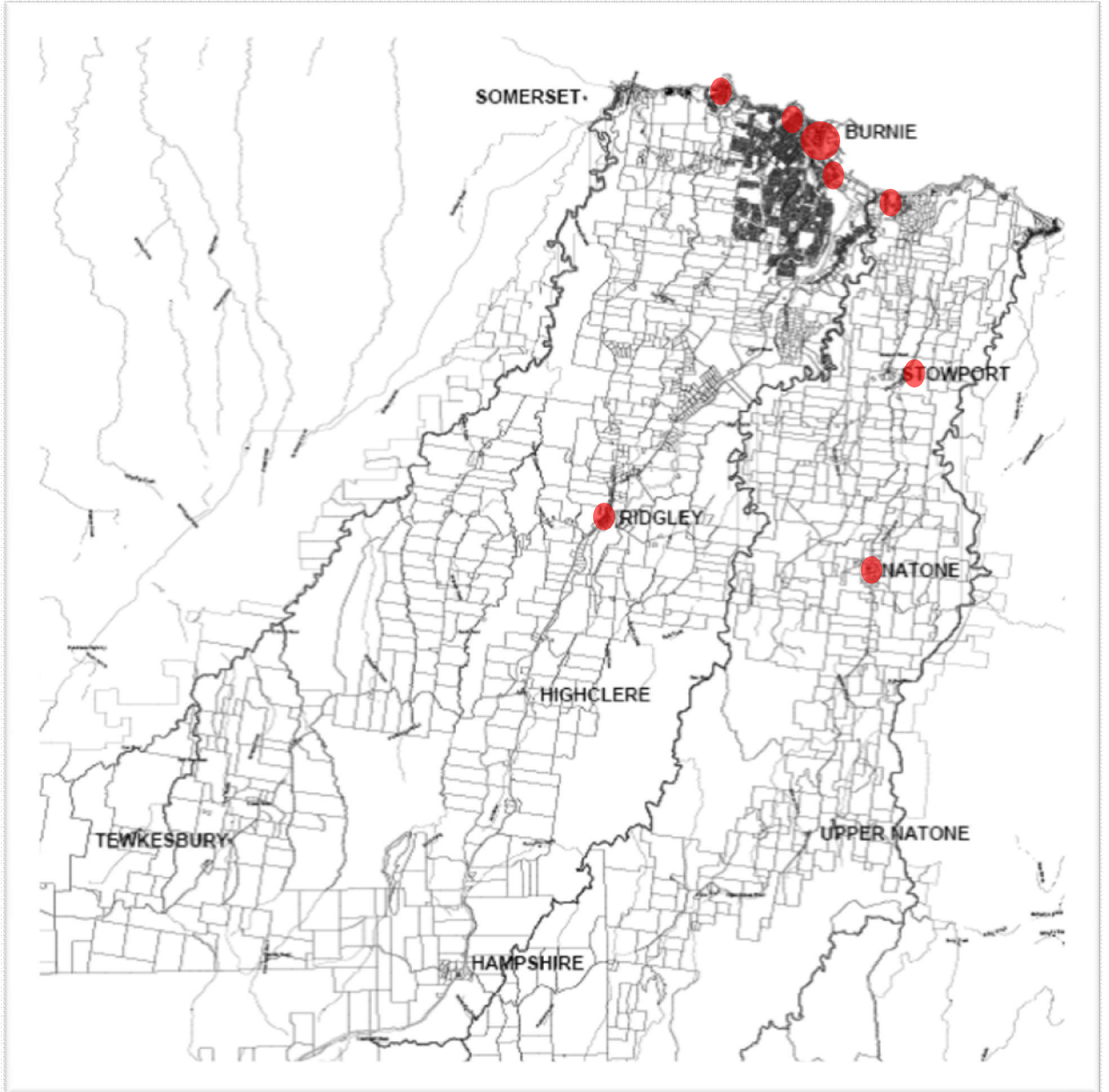




Figure 22 Population 1945, 10,000 people

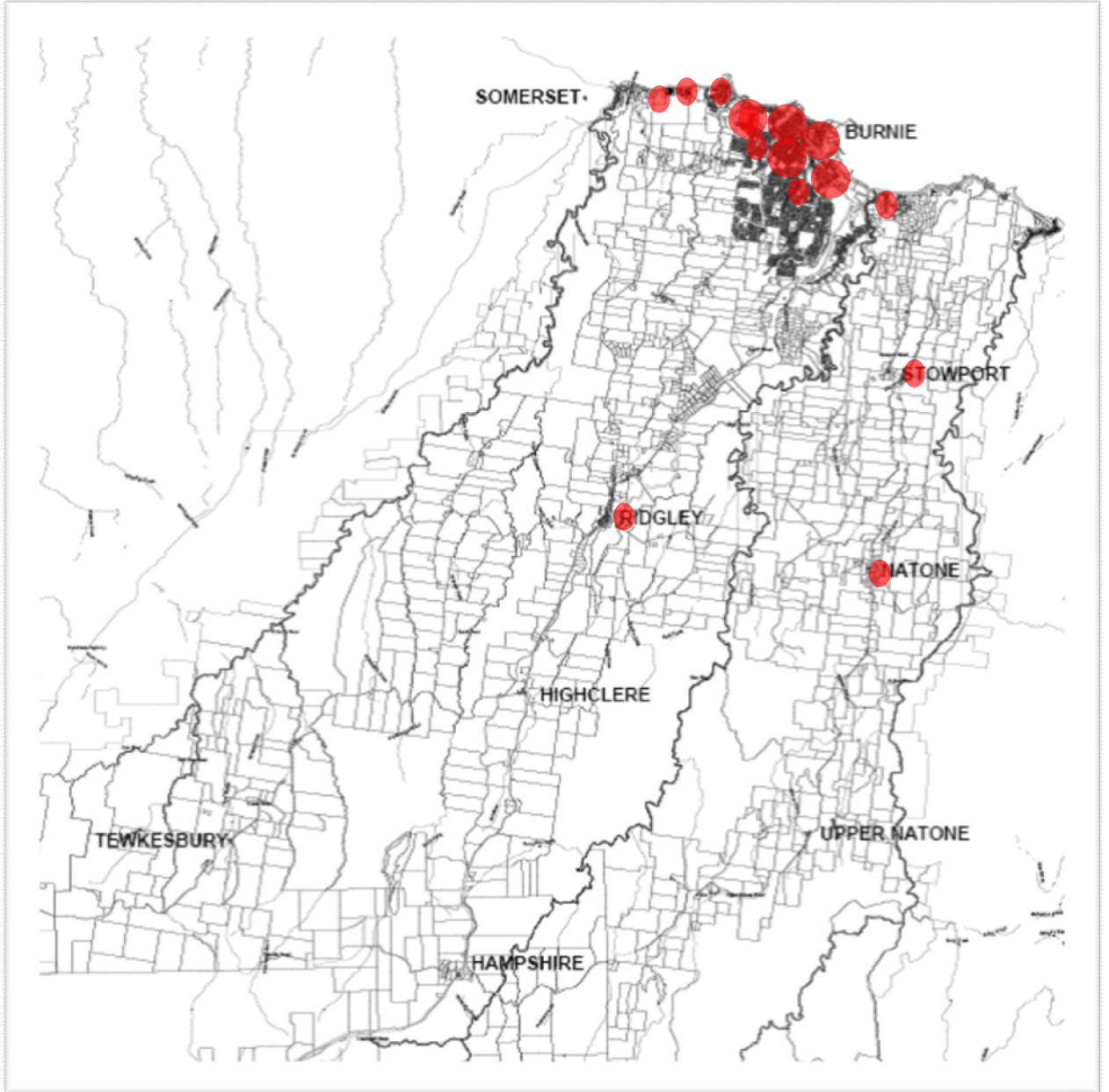
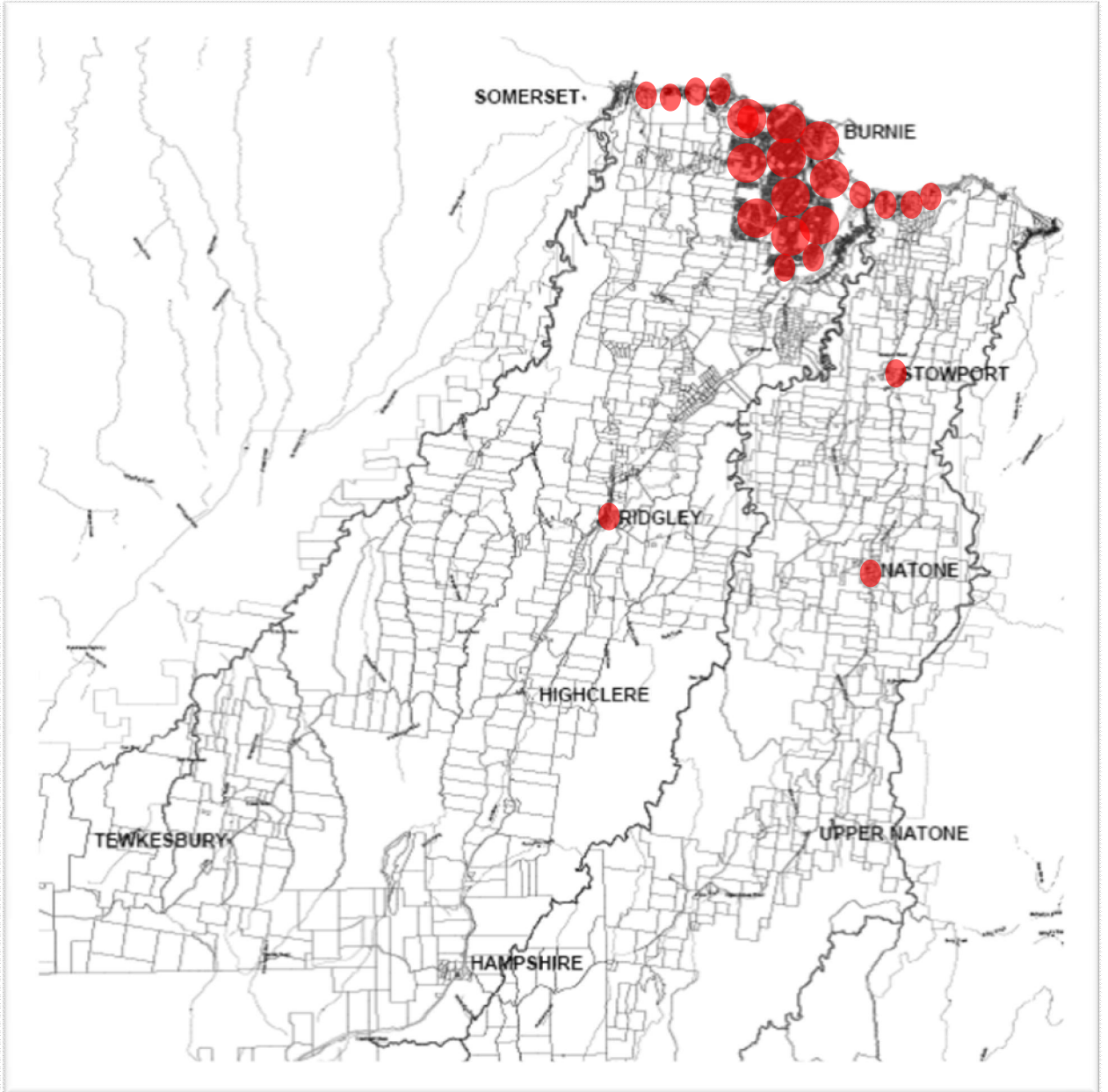


Figure 23 Population 2009: 19,234 people





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