

## **Maitland (including Woodville)**

### **Major city in the heart of the Hunter Valley**

Maitland, located 163 km north of Sydney and 32 km north-west of Newcastle, is situated just 10 m above sea-level on flood plains adjacent the Hunter River. Consequently it has had 15 major floods during the era of European settlement (the first being recorded in 1819). The last was in 1955 when 11 were killed, prompting the construction of levies, spillways and flood channels to mitigate the effects. So prominent have floods been to the city's history that there is a major artistic presentation in the grounds of the Maitland Visitors' Centre.

Despite this proximity, the river has, unfortunately, not been thoughtfully incorporated into the townscape. The buildings which line High St, historic and attractive as many are, seem to hide the beauty of the river. Only the ideally located Chives Riverside Cafe, situated down a short alleyway which runs off the High St mall, makes use of the town's scenic potential by placing its seating under the shade of a large tree by the river.

Maitland was once the principal town of the Hunter Valley and consequently it has many historic buildings of considerable quality. Today, a local brickworks, light industry, tourism and an open-cut mine are the economic mainstays. Many residents now commute to the mines further north up the Hunter Valley and south to the Newcastle area.

The Gringgai clan of the Wanaruah Aboriginal people occupied the area prior to white settlement, calling it Boe-oon after a species of waterfowl. The Wanaruah had trade and ceremonial links with the Kamilaroi people. They favoured goannas as a food source, covering larger animals in hot ashes and stuffing them with grass. They also adopted burning off practices as the new shoots which emerged after fire attracted kangaroos which they surrounded and killed with clubs and spears (du-rane) barbed with sharp stones. They also used stone axes (mogo) made of hard volcanic rock bound to a wooden handle.

Lieutenant-Colonel Paterson of the NSW Corps explored the Hunter in 1801 and named the site of the future town Schanck's Forest Plains. Cedar-getters soon followed, calling it 'The Camp. Permanent European settlement commenced when Governor Macquarie opened the Lower Hunter up in the years 1818 to 1821. Eleven emancipated convicts were granted small plots of land as a reward for good behaviour and free settlers began to move in to what was renamed 'Wallis Plains' after the commandant of Newcastle.

The locals called the settlement Morgan's Plains after one of the earliest and best known of the convict settlers - Molly Morgan. In 1814, she was sentenced to a further seven years for the theft of some government cows and was sent to the harsh penal settlement for re-offenders at Newcastle. However, then in her fifties, she became the mistress of an official and around 1819, received 159 acres at Wallis Plains, that land constituting what is now the business district of Maitland. She opened Wallis Plains' first licensed establishment (a grog shanty) and extended her holdings.

Development was fostered by a bridge over Wallis Creek in 1827 and a road from Windsor in 1831. A government town had been planned by 1829 and substantial administrative buildings were erected. The government town was proclaimed as Maitland in 1833. When the other settlement became known as West Maitland in 1834 confusion arose. As a result the boundaries were clarified and the names East Maitland and West Maitland were adopted in 1835. The combined population the following year was 1163. The three neighbouring villages became an important focus of the river trade with a regular river steamer service operating along the Lower Hunter to Newcastle. Caroline Chisholm founded one of her Female Emigrants' Homes at East Maitland in 1842. The Maitland Mercury was established in 1843, making it one of the oldest surviving Australian newspapers.

Despite floods and a superior town plan West Maitland continued to outgrow the official settlement. Thus, in 1866, the West had 5694 people compared to about 2000 in the East. The former became the commercial centre and the latter the seat of administration.

Coal mining, which commenced around West Maitland in the 1870s, became increasingly important to the local economy. At one time 10 000 men were employed in the Maitland coalfields with over 5 million tons being produced in 1925 alone. It is believed that the first speedway race in the world was held at the local agricultural show that same year.

Declared municipalities in 1862-63 East and West Maitland, along with Morpeth, were merged as the City of Maitland in 1944. The postwar years saw an influx of migrants, particularly Poles, bringing new traditions and skills to the local community.

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### **Things to see:**

#### **Tourist Information Centre**

The Visitors' Information Centre at Maitland is located in Ministers Park at the corner of High Street and Les Darcy Drive (the New England Highway), tel: (02) 4931 2800. Look for the old steam train out the front and the 15 telegraph poles adjacent. Each reflects upon one of the 15 major floods which have wreaked havoc upon Maitland.

A series of display boards contain explanatory text relating to various aspects of the town's heritage. There are also a series of booklets detailing the heritage buildings of the area - covering (a) Maitland (Central Precinct) (b) Maitland (Eastern Precinct) (c) East Maitland and (d) Morpeth.

#### **Courthouse**

At the corner of High St and Sempill St is the town's elegant Victorian courthouse and police station, built of dressed sandstone with a large clock tower topped by a copper-clad dome and a fine courtyard. It was designed by W.L. Vernon (then the first NSW Government Architect) and completed in 1895.

#### **Walka Waterworks Complex**

Turn right into Sempill St which heads north as Oakhampton Rd. After about 3 km turn left into Scobies Lane which leads to the Walka Waterworks complex. One of the largest and most intact 19th-century industrial complexes in the Hunter Valley, it was classified by the National Trust in 1976 and restored and reopened in the 1980s. Far more attractive than a modern equivalent, its distinguishing features are the fine Italianate architecture and ornate brickwork of the pumphouse, the striking chimney, the large storage area, the old sandstone wall enclosing the sizeable reservoir, which is full of waterbirds, and the working model of the original pump which is on display inside the main pumphouse.

The complex is open seven days from 7.00 a.m. to dusk and serves a number of valuable purposes. It has an outdoor museum display with an emphasis on the early days of the waterworks and its related Victorian-era technologies. It is a wilderness and recreation reserve with 12 km of walking and cycling trails, plenty of birdlife for birdwatchers, as well as camping, picnic and barbecue facilities. Mini-steam and diesel trains operate every Sunday along a 2-km track, the lake is used by model yacht enthusiasts, and there is live music every Sunday afternoon (currently the emphasis is on country music).

The Waterworks is a significant community facility which hosts many diverse community events and entertainments, such as vintage motorcycle and automobile displays and dancing displays (everything from belly dancing to line dancing). A folk music festival, held in June 2004, looks likely to become an annual event and the site is also a major focus of the annual Steamfest celebrations in April, which draw around 5000 people to the complex, where they can enjoy the mini-trains, steam boats on the reservoir, music, camel and pony rides etc.

The cost of entry is \$3 per car and everything else is free, except the train rides (\$2 per turn) and the food which is available from the shop. For further information ring (02) 4932 0522, (0407) 919 851 or the Maitland Tourist Office on (02) 4931 2800. They have their own website, which can be found at <http://www.walkawaterworks.org.au> (email [tgscons@rivernet.com.au](mailto:tgscons@rivernet.com.au)).

The Waterworks was constructed between 1879 and 1885 as part of the first water supply scheme for Newcastle. The water was pumped from Dickson's Falls on the Hunter to Walka Lagoon using engines supplied by James Watt in England. It was the first permanent, clean water supply and, at the time, the largest industrial complex in the Hunter Valley. However demand continually outstripped supply and Chichester Dam was constructed in 1913. Walka thence became a back-up supply and was closed in 1931. A power station operated on the site between 1951 and 1978.

#### **Regent St and Cintra**

Regent Street is a classified urban conservation area full of lovely old houses, the most striking of which are the

monumental mansions 'Benhome' at no.30 (now the headquarters of the Maitland Benevolent Society) and Cintra (no. 34), a beautiful and imposing two-storey Classical Revival house set in spacious grounds with fine gardens. It was designed by William Pender and built in Maitland's boom period (1880) of rendered brick. The second wing was added in 1887, making 31 rooms now full of furnishings accumulated by the Long family from the turn of the century.

The house has extensive and intricate cast-iron lacework and Corinthian columns and a tower capped with cast-iron decoration. The tall gates open onto a gravelled carriage loop driveway which leads to gabled sandstock brick stables. It is classified by the National Trust and, although not open to the public, can be viewed from the roadside.

### **Family Hotel**

The Family Hotel, at 605 High St, is the oldest hotel in West Maitland. It was erected c.1860 as a coaching inn and is a building of considerable character with a fine, friendly and respectable atmosphere and inexpensive accommodation. It is undergoing renovation by the current owners who have also uncovered the old sandstone and brick cellars which can be inspected and for which they have development plans.

### **Aberglassyn House**

Built in the early 1840s it is an outstanding two-storey colonial sandstone mansion designed by John Verge and situated on 12 acres overlooking a bend in the river. It has a beautiful circular sandstone staircase with a dome overhead, marble fireplaces, cedar joinery and vast, vaulted, stone-flagged cellars. Located to the west of town, in Aberglassyn Lane (off Aberglassyn Road), it is no longer open to the public.

### **West Maitland (Central Precinct)**

#### **Railway Station**

Maitland Railway Station is located just past the roundabout at the southernmost end of Church St. The line arrived at East Maitland in 1857 amidst much hoopla and reached West Maitland the following year. The original station was further east. The current Italianate-style building dates from about 1880.

#### **Church St**

The Grand Junction Hotel (1916) and 'Sherbourne', an excellent 19th century building of Italianate design, have finely detailed facades. By comparison, Maitland Public School (1899) possesses a solid, austere, rational and somewhat impersonal design.

### **Grossman House Museum and Brough House**

Inverted mirror images of one another these two delightful red-brick Victorian townhouses were built at the same time (1860-61) by Samuel Owens (who named Brough House after his wife's maiden name) and Isaac Beckett. Owens and Beckett had established a large general business in Maitland's High St in 1838. Both feature cedar joinery, marble fireplaces, sandstone quoins, two-storey verandahs with Doric columns below and, above, intricate cast-iron lacework, shuttered windows and French doors.

Grossman House became a girls' school for some years (it is named after the first principal) and has been restored, filled with period furniture and opened as a museum, open weekends from 1.30 p.m. - 4.30 p.m. or by appointment, tel: (02) 4933 6452. There is a guided tour and a small admission fee.

### **St Mary's Rectory**

Over the road is St Mary's Rectory (1880-81), a fine building with elaborate ornamentation. The detailed, decorative Gothic Revival sandstone church was designed by Edmund Blacket and its construction (1860-67) overseen by J. Horbury Hunt. Note that the stone tracery is different on each of the windows. Blacket also designed the furnishings such as the complementary tracery panels of the pulpit and reading desk. The bell is from Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral. The quite remarkable tower and spire were added in 1885-86 and dominate the city skyline.

### **High Street**

High Street, with its civic and commercial buildings, is classified by the National Trust. It was originally a bullock track around which the settlement grew in a piecemeal and unplanned fashion. The land then belonged to Molly Morgan.

A number of the shop facades are interesting and the original dates and business names are still on some of the upper storeys. Of particular interest are the interior of Jakemans Pharmacy (no.452), and numbers 473 (built 1858), 427

(now Mather's), 395, 360 and 363 (now Pizza Haven). The section between Bourke St and Ken Tubman Drive is particularly strong.

At the corner of Church and High Sts is a relic from the past, a 'Blackboy' horse hitching post from the United States, made in the 1880s and initially erected outside the post office in 1886. It has been on the present site since 1892.

The ANZ Bank building is one of the town's architectural highlights. A rare colonial example of a Byzantine design it was built in 1869 and features round-headed windows and a two-storey arcaded verandah which bends around the corner into Elgin St.

At the eastern end of the mall is a mosaic map set in the paving which is based on a very old and incomplete original in the Mitchell Library which provides a general outline of West Maitland in its early days.

Adjacent is the post office (1881), a two-storey rendered brick building designed by James Barnet with arcaded verandahs and a bell-clock tower.

The very substantial Methodist (now Uniting) Church was built in 1858 to a sober, unornamented but by no means plain or uninteresting design, reflecting the values of the church at that time.

### **The Catholic Group**

Opposite, on the corner with Cathedral St, is St John's. Built in 1922 as a Catholic Hall it became a Pro Cathedral in 1933 but has been closed since being severely damaged by the 1989 earthquake. Further down Cathedral St are the imposing Italianate Bishop's residence and old St John's, a Gothic Revival design by Mortimer Lewis. Initially a humble church it was built between 1844 and 1846 but was extended and upgraded to cathedral status in 1866 as the town grew. It closed when the Pro Cathedral opened in 1933, became the parish hall then, after the earthquake, became, once again, the cathedral. Its most distinctive feature is the tower capped with merlons and finials.

### **West Maitland (Eastern Precinct)**

#### **Presbyterian Church Group - Free Church Street**

Free Church St runs parallel with Cathedral St. One of Maitland's oldest surviving churches the Scots Presbyterian Church was erected in the late 1840s. It is an unornamented building of rendered brick. The Gothic leadlight windows were added this century. The hall dates from 1927. The two-storey brick manse, with its stone window lintels, was built in 1850. It served as a school from 1855.

### **High Street Continued**

The triple-storey former CBC Bank, designed by G.A. Mansfield, is an Italianate Classical Revival building which dates from 1887. Down Victoria St is the Masonic Lodge (no.5), designed by local architect J.W. Pender and built in 1886-87. It has an unusual Arabic facade with ornamented gable. Next door is the brick terrace house 'Inverness' (1880s). Back on High St is the highly ornamental facade of the Maitland Cultural Centre, one of Pender's most impressive works. Just beyond it is Maitland's first Congregational Church, built to a Victorian Gothic design between 1854 and 1857. It became a drama theatre in 1964.

Over the road is the impressive Italianate town hall built in 1888-90 to a symmetrical design consisting of a central tower flanked by two wings with ornamental columns supporting pediments over the ground-floor windows. The 'Town Hall Cafe' (c.1850), with its original facade, is typical of the timber shops which then stood in High St.

### **Maitland Regional Gallery**

Further down the road, at 230 High St, is the Regional Gallery, tel: (02) 4934 9859.

### **Bourke St**

Running southwards off High St is Bourke St which contains a number of fine historical residences particularly between Ken Tubman Drive and Olive St. Originally owned by the wealthier members of the local community the best are probably at numbers 28 (c.1870s) and 60 (c.1850).

### **Wallis Creek Bridge**

On the western banks of Wallis Creek near the bridge are Walli House (3 High St) and Bridge House (1 High St). Bridge House, one of Maitland's oldest buildings, is a small Georgian stuccoed stone-and-brick farmhouse with cedar columns, flagged verandah, paned windows and panelled door, built c. 1830, with the help of his wife's legacy,

by ex-convict Samuel Clift who purchased the property in 1826 and became a noted landholder. His descendants still occupy the house. The tiny timber cottage is thought to be Clift's original homestead. The stone rubble hut to one side was probably the residence of the bridge's toll keeper.

Next door is Walli House (c.1850s) which was built either as Clift's third house or for a son. It is a large two-storey stone-and-brick building. Although the rear of the house is in original condition, poorly chosen alterations and additions were made in the 20th century (notably the front pillars). The fittings are of cedar from the banks of Wallis Creek. There are several outbuildings to the rear of the house (servants' quarters, store and kitchen).

## **East Maitland**

### **John Smith and Caroline Chisholm**

On the far side of the bridge are two buildings built by John Smith. One of the original eleven ex-convict grantees he became a noted local businessman. Probably the original Black Horse Inn, the building at 46 Newcastle St is thought to date from the 1820s. 'Englefield' is a Georgian structure built in 1837 which became the new Black Horse Inn in the 1840s. Smith's flour mill began operations in 1844 and the building (a timber ground storey topped by a stone second storey) is located at 99 Newcastle St (by the corner with Mill St).

Also in Mill St is Caroline Chisholm Cottage, built in 1840. It became an immigrants' home set up by Caroline Chisholm in 1842. However, its medical services were so in demand that it became a hospital until a new building was erected for that purpose at West Maitland in 1846. The original shingled roof still lies beneath the iron.

### **Melbourne Street**

On the corner of Newcastle and Melbourne Sts is the Bank of Australasia building (1882), designed by J.W. Pender to an Italianate design with Doric columns about the doorway and ionic pilasters to the upper floor (now Fry's Furniture Store).

At 48 Melbourne St is the old George and Dragon Inn that dates back to the 1830s. Now a restaurant with accommodation for diners it is open in the evenings from Wednesday to Sunday, tel: (02) 4933 7272. At the corner of Melbourne and Lawes Sts is the mid-Victorian three storey Farmer Hotel, with stables.

### **Gaol and Courthouse**

The gaol, situated in John St, was designed by Mortimer Lewis and completed in 1848. It consists essentially of a pair of two-storey buildings with gatehouse, cells and outer wall and is still in operation. This was the site of the state's last official flogging in 1905.

No longer used for correctional purposes, the gaol now offers guided tours, sleepovers and a venue for corporate functions, tel: 02 4936 6610 (email [maitlandgaol@bigpond.com](mailto:maitlandgaol@bigpond.com)).

The brick-and-stone Neo-Classical courthouse opposite looks down with authority on the township from its hilltop position. It was built around 1860 upon a design of Alexander Dawson. The facade of the central courtroom features a gable with a clock in the pediment. There are two flanking wings, an arcaded porch and terracotta roofing.

### **Day Street**

'Roseneath', a two-storey brick building, was opened in 1845 as the Victoria Inn. It features large timber columns made from whole logs, marble fireplaces and cedar joinery. In the 1850s it was owned by Samuel Clift's son George who established a fine rose garden, hence its name.

### **Goonoobah**

Turn right into King St where you will find the quite enormous 'Goonoobah' built in 1841 for George Furber who owned two local inns, including the George and Dragon. A hall once ran the length of the building with about 20 adjoining rooms.

### **Banks Street**

Banks Street's buildings include the Literary Institute (1859), a meeting place for the local council in the 1860s, and Eckford's Cottage (no.36) which, with its turned timber columns, dates from 1845. It is built on the site of the first Eckford home (1818). One of the first ex-convict settlers in Wallis Plains, John Eckford was the son of Newcastle's first harbour pilot.

At no. 40 is a Georgian mansion which started its life in 1857 as the Red Lion Inn on the site of an older version of the same hotel. At Banks and Newcastle Sts is a park which contains Hew Cottage, an old 19th-century slab hut found under a weatherboard exterior.

### **The St Peter's Complex**

The Lands Office first opened in St Peter's Parish Hall, which is located a little further along Banks St. It was built in the early 1840s of sandstock brick. A single-storey building it has three dormer windows and a cedar ceiling in a herringbone pattern.

It is possible to walk through the church grounds to St Peter's Church which sits with a fine view along William St to the courthouse in the distance. The church was designed by Edmund Blacket in 1875 but executed and altered by his son Cyril. A Gothic Revival church it was built in 1886 of decorated sandstone with beautifully crafted stained-glass windows, furniture and fittings. Highlights are the pulpit of carved alabaster and marble (a memorial to the Eckford family), which was imported from Italy, and the mosaic floor. The single-storey rectory adjacent dates from 1860 with a large verandah and shuttered French windows.

### **Stockade Hill**

A little further south along William St is Stockade Hill, the site of the first schoolhouse (1829) which doubled as a chapel. Nearby in Wallis St is 'Oldholme' a Georgian brick cottage built in the mid-1830s for the town's police magistrates, including Edward Day, a popular official involved in the arrests of those involved in the Aboriginal massacre at Myall Creek and of the bushranging gang of Teddy Davis ('The Jewboy'). There is a memorial window in his honour at St Peter's.

### **Bolwarra Lookout**

Little attempt has been made to render this a beautiful spot but there are sweeping views from the north over the city and the river flats which surround it.

Bolwarra is at the western edge of the area known as Paterson's Plains which stretched along the northern bank of the Hunter from this point eastwards to the junction of the Hunter and Paterson Rivers just east of Morpeth.

Although a few farmers had been allowed to undertake some farming in the area the first permanent settlers were 12 ex-convicts authorised in 1818 as part of the same settlement plan which permitted the initial 11 to settle on the other side of the river at what is now Maitland.

### **All Saints Church, Woodville**

All Saints Church (1863-64), an unmistakable stone rubble building with a rustic feel adjacent a road which heads off to Paterson. It is a small Gothic Revival church of good quality with arched lancet windows. The porch, with its leadlight windows, was added in 1924 after general restoration work in 1922. The general store on the other corner dates from the 1860s.

Woodville started its colonial existence as a land grant to John Galt Smith in 1823. A village was in existence by the 1850s. It grew up around the river where a punt ferried passengers to and fro, approximately on the spot where Dunmore Bridge now stands. The first bridge was built in 1863. A cottage once stood adjacent for the lift operator who also had the task of sweeping the bridge in the days of horse power.

### **Les Darcy Memorial**

2.4 km north of the Woodville School of Arts, to the left, is a small and ill-marked grove (keep your eyes peeled) containing a memorial cairn to noted Australian boxer Les Darcy who was born here. At the time his father was working as a share farmer on what was the Stradbroke property. Darcy attained considerable local notoriety with a remarkable early record and was much feted in Maitland.

However the issue of service in the First World War ruined his career. He came under considerable fire from the Australian press and from politicians when he did not initially volunteer. Darcy was a Catholic and the Church opposed conscription. He left Australia for the United States without a passport in 1916 as a conscription referendum approached. He found himself banned from fighting in the USA for political reasons as that country was on the cusp of entering the war itself. He died of pneumonia in May 1917, one month after enlisting in Memphis.

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