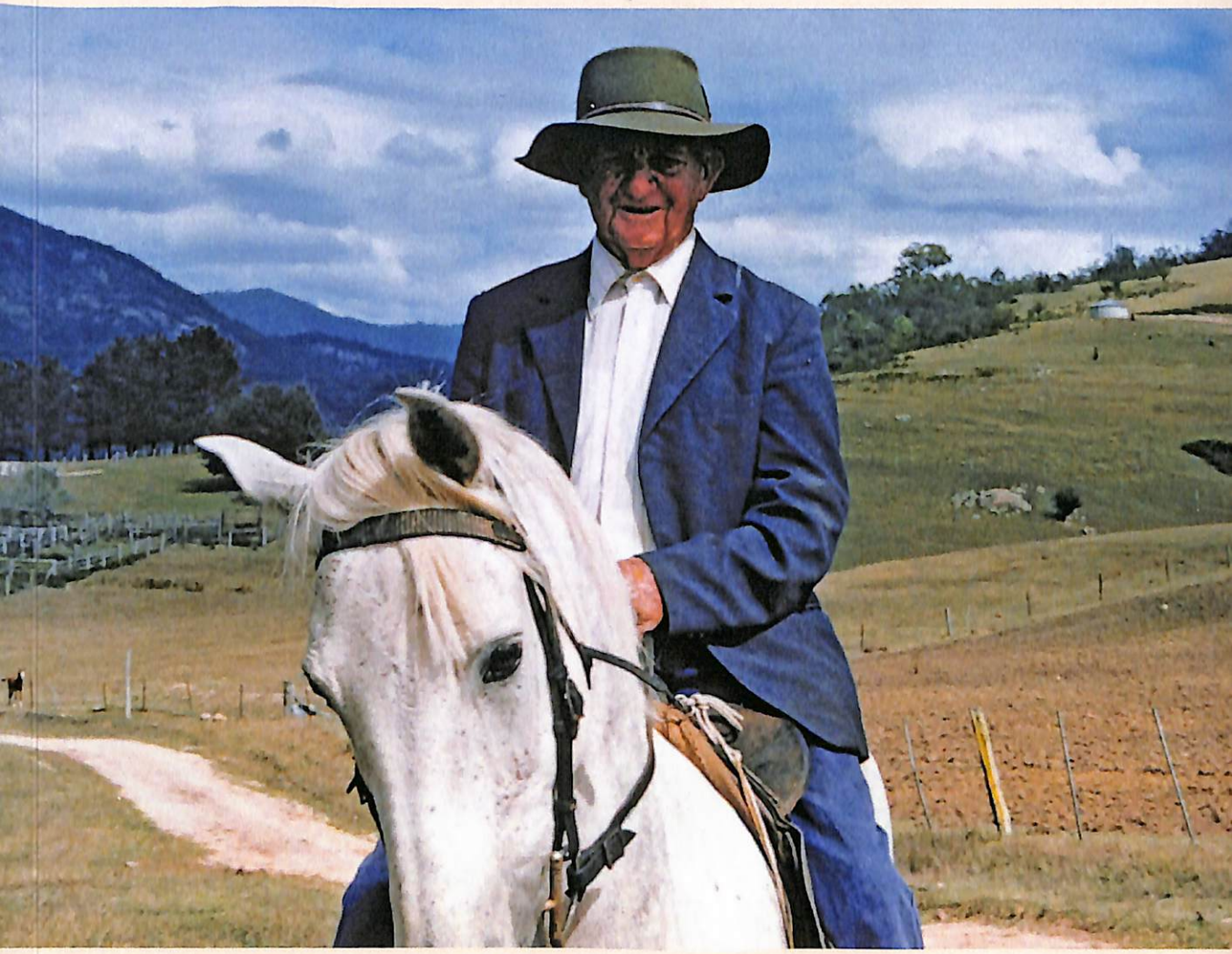
Tracks in the WILDERNESS



Historic bridle tracks in south east New South Wales

Cover illustration: Encamping for the night at the foot of the Maneroo Range of Mountains. Robert M Westmacott, 1834. State Library of NSW.

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In collaboration with horse riding families, Susan Dale Donaldson conducted the oral history program and transcribed the interviews. Sue Norman undertook the historical research and wrote the text for the book with guidance from the horse riders, particularly Richard Tarlinton and Catherine Lawler. Sue Feary edited the manuscript and the project was managed by Rob McKinnon from NPWS. GIS mapping was prepared by Toby Stewart, Jessica Scott and Rachel McInnes. The book was designed by Megan Luhrs and printed by Excell Printing in Pambula.

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NPWS would like to pay their respects to two key contributors who passed away before this publication was printed; Mr Reg Cootes of Bombala and Mr Fergus Thomson of Belowra. NPWS would like to thank their families for supporting the project and in particular for ensuring both Mr Cootes and Mr Thomson's sentiments were included.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this publication came from a commitment by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to improve communication with local communities about horse riding in national parks in the NPWS Far South Coast Region [the Region], which extends from Braidwood to Batemans Bay and south to the Victorian border (see Figure 1).[1] During meetings between NPWS and local horse riding groups to talk about what opportunities existed now and what they hoped for in the future, it became evident that interest in horse riding was not just about recreation but also about the considerable significance of the old bridle tracks to pioneering heritage and to cultural identity.

1 NPWS is part of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage within the Planning and Environment cluster of the NSW Government

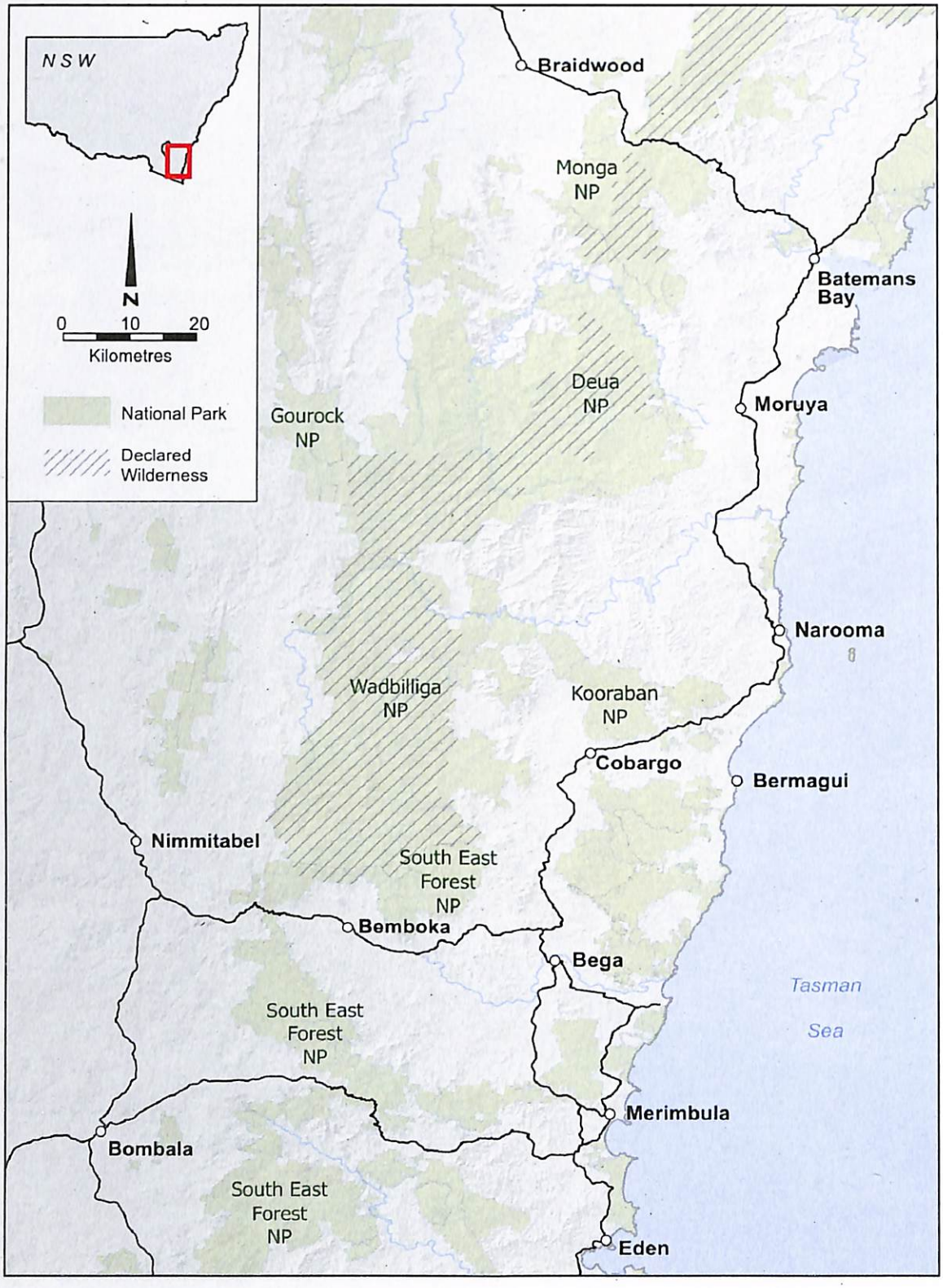


Figure 1: Map showing location of national parks in south east New South Wales. Source: NPWS.

The story of the pioneers has long been celebrated in Australian history and often the squatters and first settlers are acknowledged in names given to places in the landscape. Local libraries, museums and historical societies collect historic material and restore old buildings. Books and photographs preserve stories and the growth of interest in family history indicates an increasing fascination for what our forebears did. Forging new tracks, by foot, horse or bullock cart is deeply embedded in Australia's pioneering history and many continue to be used, remembered and valued today. This is particularly the case in the southeastern corner of NSW where the rugged and remote landscape was a real barrier to close settlement and development, allowing many of the old bridle tracks to remain intact and still able to be located in the landscape today.

What's happening in other places I don't know but here it's unique, there's no highways going across them, there's no little towns settled on them ... they're just there. – Catherine Lawler.

Many local horse riders who know of and continue to use the extensive network of bridle tracks, including those in national parks, became concerned when in 1999 large areas in the Region were nominated by environmental groups to be declared Wilderness Areas under the NSW Wilderness Act 1987.[2] Wilderness declarations restrict access to old bridle tracks as horses are not permitted in declared Wilderness Areas and many of the bridle tracks could not be used.

It wasn't until we realised we were going to lose them. I can't tell you the effect it had. They were always there. There was no threat, they were there and you could go for a ride... and then all of a sudden you're going to lose them. That was traumatic. You could show your family, your younger generation, all of a sudden it was gone and you thought of all these times you met all these old people and you had all the stories and took part in it yourself when you were young. That was the bad part once we knew we were going to lose it. – Catherine Lawler

2 For more information see http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parktypes/HowWildernessIsProtected.htm

In 2011 the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage announced there would be a trial use of designated bridle tracks in several Wilderness Areas across NSW, including within Deua and Monga National Parks in the NPWS Far South Coast Region.[3] The trials commenced in 2014 and are being evaluated.[4]

This book has been produced as part of a conversation between NPWS, the book's authors and descendants of early settlers in the region. In it are the stories in the landscape; yarns told on the tracks and in the remote settlements tucked in the hills between the tablelands and the coast in south east NSW. It celebrates the history of its modern inhabitants; how their family forebears moved through a remarkable landscape and developed a love for it that lingers today.

3 The Coalition came to power in 2011 and Robyn Parker was both the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage.

4 See http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/policies/HorseRidingTrial.htm

Setting up the project

When NPWS held meetings with local horse riding groups to discuss existing and future horse riding opportunities in local national parks, it became clear that old bridle tracks were an essential component of people's cultural identify and heritage (Figure 2).

I think it's incredibly significant having the length of heritage or involvement in an area; it becomes very personal I suppose. It becomes a really great love of your area. And what we did find was that being able to share it became really important. When you're walking and riding, you're talking... you're sharing stories. So, in not spending time here they're losing touch with it and the significance goes with that. But luckily we've got some really keen people – people, like Catherine, who has been working with a group of horse riders that have been really determined to make sure that that history isn't lost. It's got significance to where we've come from in two hundred years and where we'd like it to go in the future. The bush is people. I think we should share it... by sharing it you look after it. – Fergus Thomson

Figure 2: Local horse riders Brian Clarke, Neale Lavis and Jillian Atkinson at Carden's house at Wattlegrove on a memorial ride for Bob Carden. Photo: Julia Short

The work plan arising from the meetings identified two key tasks: a mapping component to place the knowledge of the tracks in the landscape, and an oral history project to document local knowledge of the bridle tracks and understand their importance to people. The maps appearing in this book have been compiled from several sources: historical records, old parish maps and information from the oral histories. People interviewed for the book were given hard copy maps on which they marked the tracks as best they could from their memories and local knowledge. Experts from NPWS then digitised the information onto base maps using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). From the mapping project the extent and number of tracks became clearer and at the time of writing this book 68 bridle tracks have been documented and 1537 km of tracks have been mapped.

NPWS initiated the oral history program in early 2014. Participants were selected by horse riding community groups with historical connections to tracks across the Region. Susan Donaldson conducted individual and group interviews with 16 people between May 2014 and September 2015 and these were transcribed and returned to interviewees for checking. Quotes taken from interviews and used in this book have been reviewed and approved by the interviewees. Biographies of contributors appear at the end of the book.

Sue Norman met with local horse riders Catherine Lawler and Richard Tarlinton to discuss what they wanted from the book. They requested a record of what life was like in the landscape, to engage the imagination of the reader and to be an educational resource for the national parks guardians of the land and for school children and to ensure the history is not forgotten.

The interviews showed there is no straightforward way of describing the tracks and perhaps the best way to understand them is to consider what traffic was using them and what was being transported. Many began as footpaths formed by Aboriginal people over millennia and used later by white settlers with their horses and bullocks. They were about finding the way through the bush, across rivers and gullies and along mountain ridges. Other tracks were constructed for pack horse trains; examples include the George's and Shoebridge tracks discussed later in the book.

From the beginning of the interviews there was clear acknowledgement that the origins of many tracks lay in their use by Aboriginal people as pathways pre-dating European exploration and settlement. It was clear that those who use the tracks today and are most passionate about their importance are descendants of the very first Europeans in the Region. Michael Green and Richard Tarlinton, who still ride the tracks, trace their family histories to the beginnings of white settlement in NSW. More about these families is in Chapter 3.

It was beyond the scope of the project to document all bridle tracks in south east NSW, instead the focus has been on those tracks that have accessible oral and written histories and are connected either partially or wholly with NPWS lands. The history of one of the early tracks which is still in use, the W D Tarlinton Track, was investigated in relatively more depth, to provide an historical context for other bridle tracks discussed in this book.

The book is chronological in its order, and the stories of the tracks are presented in the context of the historical theme of each chapter. The final chapter contains an overview and synthesis of all the information gathered during the oral history project.

Casuarina forest: Sue Norman 2014

CHAPTER 2
BEFORE THE YARRAMAN[5]

The culture of Aboriginal people was totally different, and this is what our own people don't really understand. They measure our culture against what is the European culture and how we should relate to that. But our culture was that no one is ever going to own the land, it belongs to everyone. The land is our mother; the land will look after us. It was the caring and sharing not only of each other but the land and the environment. That's the type of culture that was here. – Ossie Cruse[6]

Throughout Australia, ancient Aboriginal pathways have been the basis of transport corridors of white society, from the earliest bridle tracks to modern day highways. This chapter describes movement in pre-contact Aboriginal society and shows how horse riders understand the Aboriginal origins of the tracks they use.

Aboriginal people formed pathways between different places for many reasons. They travelled to and from hunting or fishing grounds, or places where plant foods were harvested or where raw materials such as stone and plant fibres could be obtained. Pathways took people to ceremonies or community gatherings where initiations took place, resources were traded, knowledge and lore exchanged and differences resolved. Many pathways reflected traditional storylines or songlines, linking sacred places and giving meaning to the landscape;

5 Eades (1976) describes yarraman [yirra:man] as a widespread Aboriginal word found in the NSW coastal Dharawal and Dhurga languages. It means horse.

6 Interview with Sue Norman, May 2016

'Walking tracks are similar to the pathways created by Biaame, the God. Everything comes from Biaame, the lore and all. Some walking tracks are more religious than every day bushwalking tracks, but they still get you from A to B. The tracks along the coast show you the easiest way to find food and a good place to camp. Other pathways lead you to ceremonial places, like the circular track starting at Mumbulla [Biamanga Mountain], to Gulaga Mountain, to Hanging Mountain, to Pigeon House Mountain, to a place near Goulbourn, Cooma and eventually Mount Kosciuszko'. – John Mumbler[7]

This country along the tablelands, escarpment and coast was always the land of tracks, walking tracks, worn over time by bare feet. Walking along the tracks took many forms. Often family groups walked together, gathering food and hunting as they went, perhaps as shown in Figure 3. Tracks could follow watercourses and grassy flats, leading to swamps where yam bulbs were ripening or follow ridges for quick shortcuts. Firesticks were carried so that fires could be lit to clear the path and to encourage green pick for grazing animals. At high points fire was used to signal to others in the group and to light the way. For example, Hanging Mountain (about 15 kms northwest of Bodalla) was a beacon site, where smoke signals sent messages to help people find their way between the Monaro and the coast (Bodalla Public School, 2012).

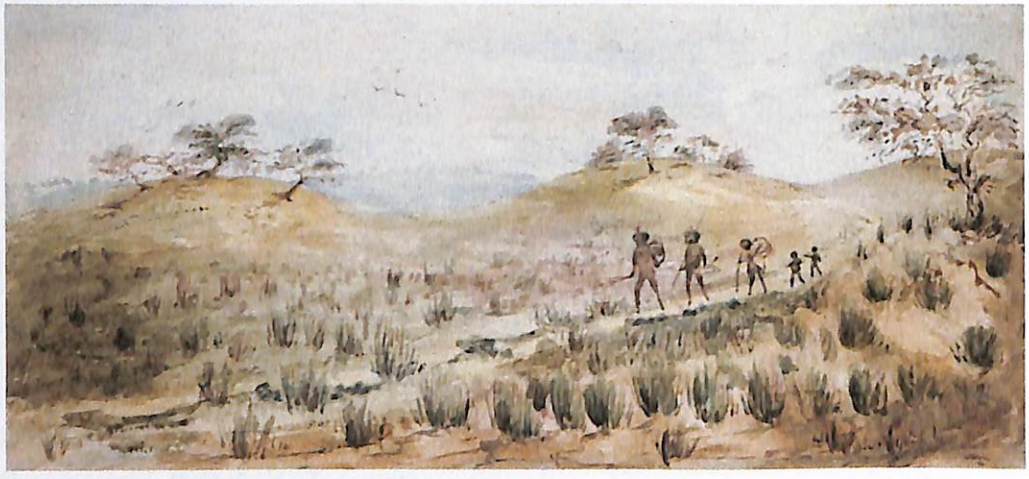


Figure 3: Aboriginal people walking through the scrub with spears and shields. William Anderson Cawthorne, South Australia 1840s. Source: State Library NSW

7 Most texts on Aboriginal society and culture talk about patterns of movement. Kabaila (2005) is specifically on Aboriginal pathways in the high country of south east Australia.

Campsites could be overnight stopovers or long-term homes where resources were more plentiful. An Aboriginal stone working site in the forest edge of the southern escarpment covers a large area, pointing to a long stay by many people over many years.

Mum and Dad always felt that Belowra was probably a meeting place for the Aboriginals between the coast and the tableland tribes. It must have always been a more open area, so that's why I think it must have been quite a place where the Aboriginals would've congregated and traded. – Jen Mathieson

Aboriginal oral traditions, historical records and archaeological research have shown that Aboriginal people of southeastern Australia walked through mountain passes, up creeks and gullies and along ridgelines, sometimes coming together to share seasonal feasts or participate in ceremonial activities (see Blay 2015). Their movements were closely related to the life cycle of the natural world, but also to cultural responsibilities and religious beliefs. One reason for visiting the Snowy Mountains in summer was to feast on bogong moths whose rich multitudes provided food for large ceremonial gatherings.

An Aboriginal fellow we had here was old Percy Davis and he used to talk about the Bogong moths and everything. Well, the only time you'll find a Bogong moth is back up in the mountains up there so obviously the people from here used to go up there. – Brian Clarke

In winter, whales occasionally beached on their journey back to the Antarctic, providing incidental food for large coastal gatherings or ceremonies.

Consistently throughout early colonial history, Aboriginal people were instrumental in using their traditional pathways to show settlers the way to new lands. In south east NSW, knowledge of the Aboriginal origins of family tracks was passed down through the generations of settlers.

The origins of the tracks, from our memories, from dad to grandfather saying they were always there, the Aborigines showed us through them, Aboriginals originally used them. We know this I suppose from the Aboriginals being at Kybeyan, and our family being at Greenbrook and Bemboka, we got snippets over the years about both cultures using the trails at the beginning of European settlement. – Michael Green

Richard Tarlinton's ancestor, W D Tarlinton, was guided by Aboriginal people in 1829 from the Shoalhaven River to present day Cobargo.

...he set off in the company of three blacks. Without doubt it would have been an Aboriginal walking trail that they followed, through the mountains and followed from one water point to the next.
– Richard Tarlinton

Charles Byrne's track between 'Wattlegrove' property and Belowra is believed to have Aboriginal origins.

From Wattlegrove to Belowra is 16 mile through the bush on a bridle track. That track was made by Charles Byrnes, but no doubt it would have been an Aboriginal trading track to start with. The coastal Aboriginal people would have gone through there to meet the people from the tablelands. – Catherine Lawler

The great importance of Aboriginal pathways in colonial settlement and expansion is reflected in the evolution of Nobbys Ridge track.

The Nobby's Ridge goes from Bemboka to Nimmitabel or Kybeyan. Originally people said it was the main Cooma -south coast link. The Brown Mountain Road was not there then. The Nobby's Ridge was a bridle track; it was the fastest access from Cooma to the south coast, and was used by Ryrie, George Augustus Robinson, and Lambie. They all used it coming from Nimmitabel for their survey work. They were doing government business, not moving cattle. Better roads and trucks took over in the 1960s, certainly by the 1970s, so until they got the trucks going to transport livestock with reliable roads, the tracks were being used until then. So there was the Aboriginal use, but from the early settlement it was used by, for example, Augustus [Robinson] and then up until 1960s. – Michael Green

Many pathways are still known and talked about among local Aboriginal communities. The Bundian way, a 350 kilometre journey from Mt Kosciuszko through the Monaro to the coastal plain at Twofold Bay near Eden is one of the best known local examples and has been extensively researched (Blay 2015). Once Aboriginal people showed sections of the Bundian Way to early white explorers and settlers it became important in the transport of goods and people and in settlement of the Monaro.[8]

Everything changed for Aboriginal people when the ships came and stayed on the shores of Warran (Sydney Cove) (Figure 4). Then, across the hills, the yarraman (horses) came with the white men. Aboriginal people of the south east at first acknowledged the white men as the guinj (ghosts) of dead family members. This recognition gave the newcomers a place in the world of the ancient society. But the white men with their yarraman were from a different society with different values.

8 See www.bundianway.com.au/ and http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.asp?ID=5060185 for more information

Manna gum *(Eucalyptus viminalis)* on the Upper Tuross – Sue Norman 2015

Chapter 3
SHIPS ACROSS THE WORLD

What happened when these people came to Australia? The land, the flora and fauna and the people they encountered were very different from what they knew (in ways that we are still discovering today). Picture the new settlers moving out from the settlement at Sydney Cove, initially reaching out into the ancient cultural landscape of the Aboriginal people, then engulfing it with the blanket of yarraman, cattle, flour and sugar, land grants and later, postal deliveries. The Aboriginal people were forced to make way for new settlement but the land made its own demands and wrought changes to the people who had newly settled there.

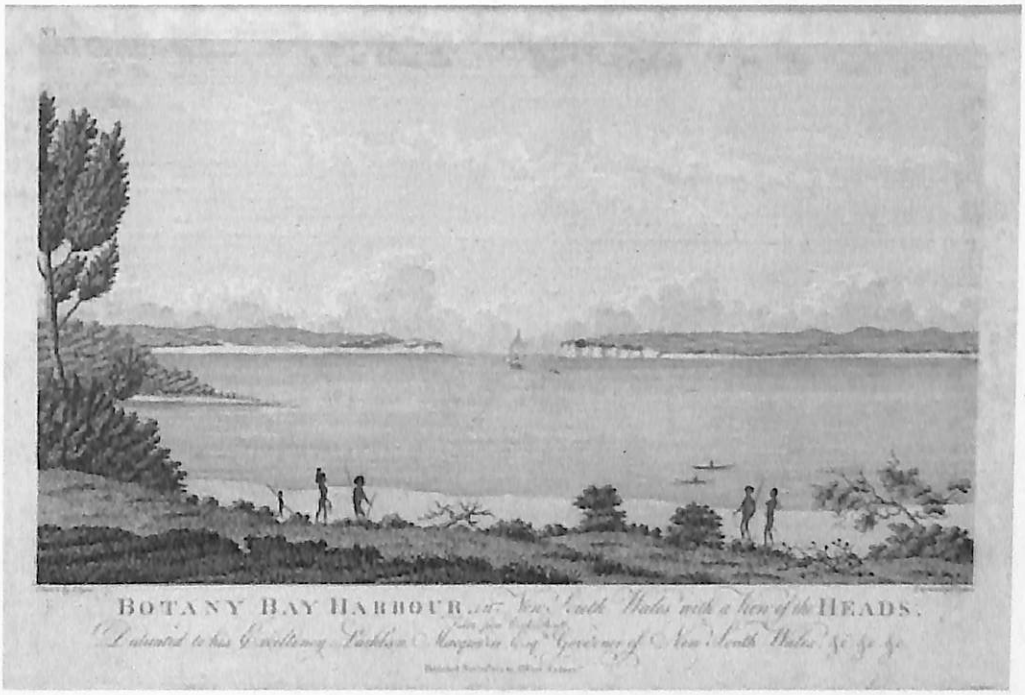


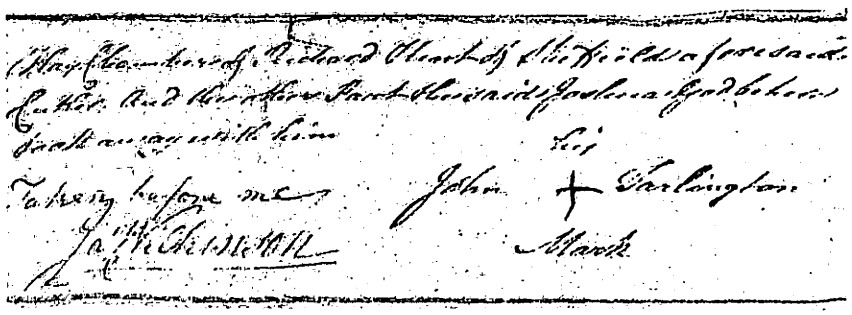
Figure 4: Botany Bay Harbour with view through the heads, 1813-1814. Richard Browne. State Library NSW

The stories of the settlers and explorers of south east NSW are just some examples of the people who came to Sydney Cove from all levels of British society. Some came from the land of their forefathers: farmers, millers and flax breakers. Others were from the cities and towns, and the military men and government officers were often veterans of the French and American wars. There were convicts too, who had fallen foul of society and, although most came from the poor and dispossessed, others were well-educated, political prisoners or professional criminals. All encountered unexpected opportunities in the new country and some were quick to take them up.

The following section recounts histories of four south east NSW families whose forefathers arrived in Australia in the 18th and early 19th Centuries. Their separate histories have come together in the south east, providing the historical framework for the bridle track stories told in this book.

Tarlinton family

Recorded as a knife-maker from Tutbury in Staffordshire, John Tarlington was transported for seven years after confessing to stealing from a warehouse (Figure 5). He was found guilty of grand larceny by the York Assizes (Courts of Law) in 1787 and arrived in New South Wales on the *Matilda*, part of the Third Fleet, in August 1791. The ten ships of the Third Fleet doubled the population of the settlement at Sydney Cove to about 4000.[9]



John Tarlinton's mark on the document containing his confession to stealing from a warehouse in Sheffield in 1787 (from Public Record Office, London, ASSI 42/10, XC 1576).

Figure 5: John Tarlington's confession. Source: McGowan (1991)

9 Here and elsewhere in the book, unless specified otherwise, 'population' refers to the non-Indigenous population, as Indigenous people were not included in the census until after the 1967 Referendum.

Aged 25, John Tarlington was selected to work at the farm settlement at Rose Hill (Parramatta) (Figure 6). He was put to work clearing farm land for a rapidly growing colony becoming dangerously short of food. Watkin Tench, a captain of the Marines from the First Fleet, made an inspection of the Rose Hill area in December 1791. He described a government farm where 500 men were employed from five in the morning until dusk with four hours break in the middle of the day. They were each expected to clear about half an acre of land a day and lived together in large huts. Food was so scarce that hut keepers had to be employed to prevent the convicts' salt rations from being stolen. Tench counted the stock at Rose Hill as two stallions, six mares and two colts as well as sixteen cows, two heifers and one bull calf (Flannery, 2011: 213-215). These had been brought out on the Third Fleet to replace the cattle lost from Sydney Cove in 1788.

At the end of 1791 the population of Rose Hill was 1625 of which 149 were women. Like others, John Tarlington experienced a year of hard work and hunger. The drought of the previous year and damaging storms destroyed crops and sickness and death stalked the new settlement. The arrival of sub-standard supplies from Madras did little to alleviate the problem.

Figure 6: View of part of the town of Parramatta, 1813-1814. Richard Browne.
Source: State Library NSW

John Tarlington received his emancipation status in 1794 and two years later he married Catherine Jackson and a daughter was born shortly after. In March 1798, 30 Aboriginal people attacked his house and garden at Toongabbie, outside of Sydney, mortally spearing two servants and severely wounding John, his wife and a man called Malloy. Two of the Aboriginal men were killed and John Tarlington gave evidence at the murder trial that he had survived by hiding in the loft.[10]

Sometime after this John Tarlington acquired 160 acres at Prospect, west of Sydney, farming wheat, sheep and cattle. He had become a respectable citizen, but life in the early days of the colony was never far from its wild beginnings. In 1806 he was acquitted of the charge of murdering a neighbour's servant. Witness statements were confused and contradictory but it seems there was a night of wild drinking and rioting at a house in Prospect. Tarlington had gone there looking for his men and the neighbour, aiming to hit Tarlington, struck and killed his own servant.[11]

In 1811 after the death of his wife John Tarlington married Margaret Duggan. Margaret had arrived in 1804 aged 20 on the *Coromandel* and *Experiment* on a life sentence for stealing clothes. John accepted her five year old son William Duggan as his own. The farm at Prospect flourished as the colony grew. In the 1823-25 muster William is listed as a labourer and John as a landholder.[12]

By 1828 William Duggan Tarlinton had dropped the 'g' in his name and was managing his stepfather's leasehold at Krawarree, about 40 km south of Braidwood. In 1829 he travelled through to the rich land behind the far south coast, along what came to be known as the W D Tarlinton track.

The W D Tarlinton Track goes from Krawarree where he had property, down into Belowra, through Belowra, down the Tuross River to the Wandella Creek junction. Then up Wandella Creek to Wandella where Richard and June Tarlinton own the property now which is some of Tarlinton's original selection. – Catherine Lawler

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10 Historical Records of Australia Vol. 2 pp 419-20. https://archive.org/details/historicalrecord00aust

11 Sydney Gazette 7th June 1806

12 Baxter, C (ed.) 1999 General Muster - List of all inhabitants for years 1823, 1824, 1825. Australian Biographical and Genealogical Record, Sydney 1999 Sydney http://www.bda-online.org.au/files/MC1825_Muster.pdf

Bate family:

Samuel Bate arrived on board the William Pitt in 1805-6 with his wife, Sarah, newborn daughter Susan, a servant with her child and 119 female convicts. A failed soldier, he had been appointed Deputy Judge Advocate for the colony of Port Phillip but as this settlement had been abandoned by 1804 he was sent instead to the newly settled Hobart Town in Van Diemen's Land. When they arrived in Hobart there was no house ready for them and Sarah and her baby daughter immediately returned on the first ship back to England. Without the necessary Charter of Justice, Samuel Bate was only able to act as a magistrate presiding over convicts and bushrangers.[13] The wild frontier settlement of Hobart Town had a population of just 500, mostly prisoners. Corruption and drunkenness were rife and when Governor Lachlan Macquarie reported Samuel Bate as 'much addicted to low Company, totally Ignorant of Law, and a Very troublesome, ill-tempered Man', Bate was only one of a number of officials so described. In 1810 he married Matilda King by special licence a year after their daughter Sarah was born. He got into dispute with the Lieutenant Governor and was imprisoned in 1811 for insolent and disrespectful conduct. He was finally dismissed in 1814 and returned to England (Bate, 1987).

Samuel Bate was continually in debt but had good contacts with the establishment through his family, who were neighbours to a fellow member of the gentry, Sir Joseph Banks. Samuel's father had died leaving him a bequest of £4,000 and the children of Matilda and Samuel were able to benefit from an English education. In 1825 Samuel was sent back to Sydney as Surveyor of Distilleries with a salary of £400 a year. He and his sons set up the first silk farming venture in the colony (Bate, 1987).

His son, Henry Jefferson Bate, following the family tradition, energetically pursued business opportunities, at times flourishing but also appearing before the Insolvency Court many times over the years before selecting land on the slopes of Mt Dromedary (Gulaga), part of which later became the town of Tilba Tilba. His son, Samuel William Bate, also selected land in this area. Later chapters in this book show how the Bate family went on to have a strong influence on the development of the area.

13 The Charter of Justice took effect in New South Wales on 17 May 1824 and provided for creation of a Supreme Court of New South Wales and made limited provision for trial by jury.

Byrne family

Also arriving in 1806 was Hugh 'Vesty' Byrne, transported from Ireland to New South Wales on board the Tellicherry along with his wife Sarah (Figure 7). Hugh was a lieutenant to Michael Dwyer, the leader of the Wicklow rebels who held out for five years after the uprising of 1798 (Figure 8). They were members of the Society of United Irishmen made up of Catherineolics, Protestants and Dissenters who rebelled with the aim of removing British control from Irish affairs. Michael Dwyer and his four lieutenants finally agreed to a conditional surrender with the promise of exile to America but instead were sent to New South Wales and each given a grant of 100 acres along Cabramatta Creek.

In 1807 the exiles were arrested and charged with sedition, stirring up rebellion. They were cleared for lack of evidence but Governor Bligh had them arrested and sent to Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land.
Byrne sold his land and settled in the Illawarra region, south of Sydney.

Figure 7 Sarah Byrne nee Dwyer, mother of 17 children.
Source: www.myheritage.com

The 1828 Census shows Hugh and Sarah both aged 50, with eight surviving children, living at Airds on '210 acres, 163 acres cleared, 66 acres cultivated, 6 horses and 236 horned cattle.' Their eldest son, Charles, was later recorded in the Squatting Directory for NSW – 1865, as the leaseholder for 'Belowrie' – 1180 acres with 500 cattle. His son Charles J Byrne married W D Tarlinton's second daughter Mary and lived at Cadgee.[14]

The property called Belowra, it is a great big beautiful valley. It was once owned by Charles Byrne, and then Samuel W Bate. They were pastoralists on a grand scale as far as this district is concerned... The 'SW Bate Track' connects Tilba to Wattlegrove via Wagonga... From Wattlegrove it connects to the Cadgee Mountain trig and joins up with Charles Byrne track and onto Belowra. These two tracks; Charles Byrne would have used them before SW owned land in this area, they both go into one... We need to recognise both of these people; they both would have used these tracks to get to Belowra. – Catherine Lawler

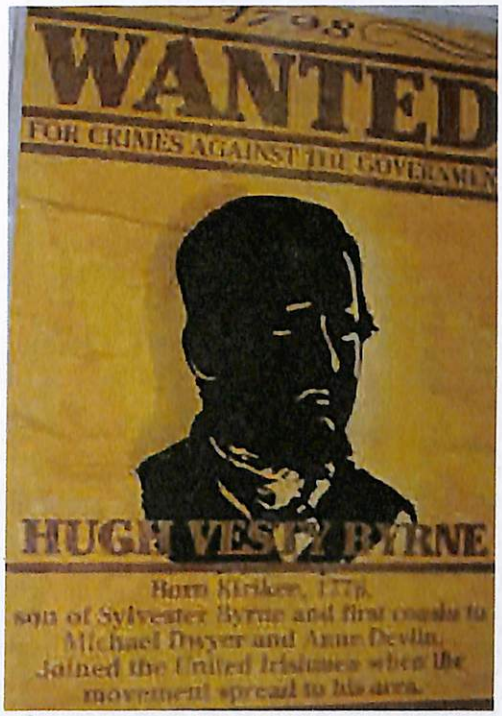

Figure 8: Poster for the capture of Hugh Vesty Byrne
Source: www.thetreeofus.net.au

14 Information about the Byrne family was found on these websites and Trove; www.bdm.gov.nsw.au http://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/michael-dwyer-of-imaal/ and www.convictrecords.com.au/

Green family

John Green was sentenced by the Warwick Assizes to life imprisonment for sheep stealing and arrived in Port Jackson on the Hadlow on Christmas day 1818. He was sent to Parramatta to work on the Windsor Road gangs. This would have been hard physical work for a 16 year old with cruel punishment for any misbehaviour. On his death those preparing John Green's body discovered his back was scarred from floggings, 'like a sheet of corrugated iron'. In 1827 John received his Ticket of Leave which meant he could work for wages. The document shows his birthdate as 1802; however his gravestone in the Bemboka cemetery gives his age at death as 99 making his date of birth 1789.

John left the road gangs in 1824 when he was assigned to Braidwood squatter Dr David Reid. In the 1828 census he is recorded as a labourer at Argyle and was later working for Dr Clifford at Numeralla when he received his conditional pardon.[15] In 1836 John Green, 'Grazier, Moneroo, single' applied for a licence to depasture 200 head of cattle and 5 horses. This was the five square mile property 'Doolondondoo' at the headwaters of the Tuross River.[16]

Doolondondoo is at the head of the Tuross River. That is where the first Green fellow came out as a convict ... How did he finish up at Kybeyan? Well as a convict, by that stage the better soil areas of the Maneroo were already taken up so there was vacant crown land and he had resources to take it up and we've had links ever since. From what we can work out he would have come up the Snowball. Tarlinton went down Woila Creek but John would have come up the Snowball given where he ended up. – Anthony Green

15 Sainty, M and Johnston, K. Census of NSW November 1828. Library of Australian History: Sydney.

16 The Doolondondoo Book, pp 7-31

John's sister, Mary Ann, with husband Frederick Alcock and five children aged from five to eighteen years travelled to South Australia as assisted immigrants in 1852 (Figure 9). There was a demand for workers with the end of transportation of convicts to New South Wales and an over-supply of workers in England. Frederick Alcock was recorded as an agricultural labourer and Mary Ann a field worker. The average wages for labourers was £22-10/- per annum with board and lodgings while women were paid about £16 a year. Compare this to the £400 a year paid to Samuel Bate. The Alcocks arrived at Doolondondoo two years later and within a year the two girls, Harriet and Ann Maria were married.

Figure 9: Mary Ann Alcock (nee Green) with son Walter in 1860.
Source: Doolondondoo Book

Mrs Alcock was John Green's sister; she came out in search of her brother and that's the Alcock connection. As far as I know, they finished up at Doolondondoo, where Anthony is now and where John Green started. Then they went to Tantawangalo then to Cooma, and thankfully they sold out at Springfield at the back of Nimmitabel and came here. Better climate! The family have also held onto Greenland since the early days, which is half way between Bemboka and Doolondondoo.
– Rowan Alcock

The histories of the tracks and the people associated with them are explored further through the different themes of the following chapters.

On the Kybean Road. Photo: Sue Norman

Chapter 4
They shared damper

It was custodianship of the land, it was looking after things. Everybody knew you're not going to last forever; you're going to die someday and why not leave it in good shape for everybody to use. So it's two worlds we live in and we're trying to exist in both and retain our culture too. I see we can retain our culture in three areas: there's respect, extended family, and caring and sharing. – Ossie Cruse.[17]

This chapter gives glimpses of a shared history in south east NSW; of Aboriginal people and new settlers living and learning from each other through conflict but also through cooperation.

Whether it is bridle tracks or whatever they [Aboriginal people] were happy to show people places. They were happy to show people up to the tableland, they never thought about this business of private ownership. You'll be the same as us; you'll hunt and gather; you'll share the country with us. That's the way the culture was. – Ossie Cruse[18]

The stories of settlement can be observed in the environmental history of the landscape. It has changed; almost two centuries of clearing the bush, the hard hooves of cattle and horses and introduced plants have changed the land in many ways. How to live on the land is as much of an issue today for white settlers as it was 200 years ago. Perhaps, by connecting with the changes experienced by the original people of the land we can better understand the settler story.

All the early documentation about the W D Tarlinton Track refers to open parkland, native pastures, the kangaroo grass and the Microlaena.[19] *I guess it relates back to the history of burning, like the continual burning by the Aboriginals, getting rid of that undergrowth.* – Richard Tarlinton

17 Interview with Sue Norman, May 2016

18 ibid

19 Microlaena stipoides or weeping grass is found throughout non-arid areas of Australia.

The people whose names are inscribed in the landscape: the pioneers of modern society, moved onto land that had for millennia been the home of Aboriginal people. All this happened quite quickly. From the 1820s the squatters were granted licences to run cattle on land from Sydney out to the south and the west and tracks were being used to connect to markets, ports and administrative centres. The stories of how grassy flats and permanent waterholes were found are often heroic but also tell of cooperation, of misunderstandings and just plain doggedness in the meeting of two cultures.

An insight into the often contradictory nature of the relationship between Aboriginal people and white settlers can be gleaned from responses to the request by the Colonial Secretary in 1826 for 'lists of Black Natives' living on settlers' properties. Some respondents were worried about large gatherings of Aboriginal men, fearing it was threatening their crops and stock and called for military support. Others described how useful Aboriginal people were in tracking bushrangers and working on the farms. They asked to be provided with brass plates with inscriptions for 'chiefs' of the various tribes to give as rewards to their Aboriginal workers.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the significance of Aboriginal pathways in Australia's history cannot be underestimated. Major Thomas Mitchell who was appointed Surveyor General in 1828 directed his surveyors to use Aboriginal guides and Aboriginal place names;

The first surveyor to come up the Deua River valley was in 1828. It's amazing that it was so early in our history. He was Peter Ogilvy, an assistant to Robert Hoddle who surveyed Araluen. Ogilvy went up the river as far as 36th parallel, beyond Bendethera and collected local place names. Bendethera was named in those days; it was called 'Benditheу'. The early surveyors must have communicated with the Aborigines to find out the names. Moodong Creek, Bier Creek, Woolla Creek, they're all named. – Peter Smith.

The story goes that Joseph George, who settled at Bendethera in 1863 employed an Aboriginal man known as 'Black Paddy' to blaze a track from Bendethera to Nerrigundah. This was used to supply the Gulph gold diggings with butter, meat, fruit and vegetables (see Chapter 6).

William Duggan Tarlinton described how he was shown the way to Cobargo by three Aboriginal men along what is now known as the Tarlinton track (see map at Figure 10).

In 1829 William Duggan Tarlinton came from a property called Oranmeir which was on the junction of the Shoalhaven River and the Jerrabatgulla Creek. He wanted more grazing land so he went exploring. Exploring seemed to be in his blood. As a child growing up in Prospect in Sydney, one of his neighbours was Lawson, of the Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson fame . No doubt those adventures were talked about somewhat and that inspired him to be an explorer. He was only maybe 20, 21 when he first came down here. So he was fairly keen and independent in those days. And he set off in the company of three blacks. Without doubt it would have been an Aboriginal walking trail that they followed, through the mountains and followed from one water point to the next. They camped at what is now the showground at Cobargo... it is recorded that they shared damper with the local natives. It wasn't until 1832 that he brought cattle back down on the same track which was marked by blazes on the trees (that he did in 1829) and they were followed each time by every other explorer and people in to this area. – Richard Tarlinton

Early records of the district have lists of Aboriginal people encountered by early travellers and ledgers of the government's annual blanket distributions to Aboriginal communities. These have been invaluable in providing names and tribal affiliations for people from which it can be conjectured that the three men who showed Tarlinton the way were three brothers; Orion (Tom Toole), Koitbe (Dick Toole) and Kotebirns. They were recorded as being from Belowra and were at 'Arnprior', Braidwood, employed by the Ryrie family in 1834 and in Bega in 1844 (Ellis, 1989).

John Jauncey who established an early run near Cobargo had travelled with Dick Toole previously when coming down through Kybeyan, the Tuross and Yowrie to Narira in 1833.

Figure 10: The W D Tarlinton Track and associated tracks. Source: NPWS.

Belowra is on the Tuross River in the centre of the route between the tablelands and the coast – the Tarlinton track. John Davidge has travelled on this track and sees the role of the guides as crucial to finding the way.

The Tarlinton Track would have been the black fellas' track; that would have been their track through to Bermagui. Why did he go up Wandella Creek when he was on the Tuross River? Wandella is only a smaller creek running into the Tuross, but he went up it, so those black fellas must've had a fair bit of influence on him, they must have been telling him that that was the place to go, to Cobargo, and they took him to Cobargo. – John Davidge

The squatters and early settlers clashed with the Aboriginal people when they denied them access to water, food sources, sacred sites, and country in general. The Aboriginal people of the south coast were noted for their fighting spirit and it is reported the reason W D Tarlinton travelled with Aboriginal guides was not just to find his way but also 'without whom it would be dangerous to travel, as the then wild natives were supposed to be treacherous' (Bayley, 1987). It is also reported that on this initial trip to the Cobargo area Tarlinton observed a 'fierce battle between the Monaro and coastal tribes. The former were victorious, but not before 60 from each side were killed' (McGowan, 1991). Reports usually tell of these types of battles having a very low death rate but there may have been extra pressure causing the Monaro tribe to move down to the coast as they were pushed out of their homelands by white settlement.

There are records of resistance to the spread of settlement such as the attack on John Tarlington at Toongabbie in 1798. In Bega the story of the 1832 murder of Michael Dunn, a hut keeper for squatter Henry Badgery, was published in local papers fifty years later. Hut keepers, often assigned convicts, were isolated on recently claimed land at the very edge of the frontier. The article describes the land 'all along the river where Mr Darcy now lives, was like a township belonging to the Black's camp.' Earlier Captain Rain of Bathurst sent the first cattle to the Bega district, putting up yards and a hut at Brogo, 'but the blacks hunted them and the cattle away.'[20] After Dunn was killed, Badgery's cattleman Bartley had to run for his life from many men chasing him with lighted torches. He was able to get to Wandella by following marked trees and, after his first meal in two days, he went on to Merricumbene Mountain where Badgery supplied him, 'a horse and saddle and sent four armed men with him to Bega to stay a week to watch with the Blacks... Three of the men returned to Braidwood, one stayed as a housekeeper. They left a musket and a sword...They remained there six years longer alone.'[21]

There is no report of further conflict but later accounts tell that 'they had muzzle loading guns, which the natives treated with great respect; these early whites were heavily outnumbered and could not have coped with a full scale tribal attack.'[22] Figure 11 shows Aboriginal people and settlers apparently co-inhabiting in the landscape.

20 Monaro Mercury and Cooma and Bombala Advertiser 11th July 1883

21 Wyndham Observer 1st December 1981

22 Harold Tarlinton, "The Story of Cobargo", Tales of the Far South Coast Volume 3, Bega Valley Shire 1986.

The opportunity to hear the story of these conflicts from the other side of the frontier is limited but in more recent times awareness of the existence of another side to the story has increased and historians have been scouring historical records to put names and faces to the Aboriginal resistance fighters. One example is Pemulwuy [Pimbloy] (Figure 12). He was active in the Prospect and Toongabbie areas, leading attacks on settlers' farms and crops in the 1790s and could well have led the attack on John Tarlington. Pemulwuy survived being shot and escaped while a captive in hospital. He continued to fight on and gained fame amongst his people for his resistance. Governor King issued a reward and an order to shoot on sight. Pemulwuy was killed in 1802 and his head was sent to England.

Figure 11: Encamping for the night at the foot of the Maneroo Range of Mountains. Robert M Westmacott, 1834. State Library NSW.[23]

23 It appears this was painted on Governor Bourke's journey from Twofold Bay to Monaro on the western side of Mt Imlay.

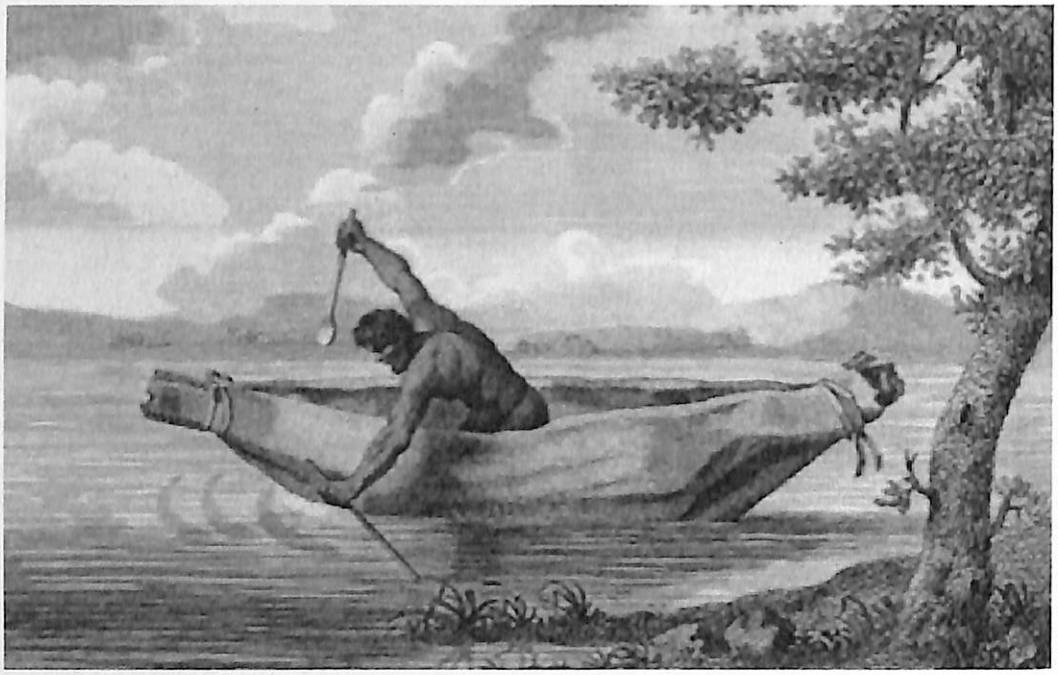

Figure 12: Pimbloy: Native of New Holland in a canoe of that country, 1804 by Samuel John Neele (1758-1824). Source: State Library of Victoria[24]

24 Engraving From The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery Performed in H. M. Vessel Lady Nelson, 1803-1804 by James Grant. Ref: Q80/18 State Library of Victoria

Today it might be difficult for some to think of this part of Australia as a place where Aboriginal people once vastly outnumbered the whites. The pioneers and their bark and slab huts and later the squatters' elegant homesteads with deep verandas and picket fences tend to be the enduring images of colonial history. Figure 13 shows one such property, Bredbatoura near Cobargo.

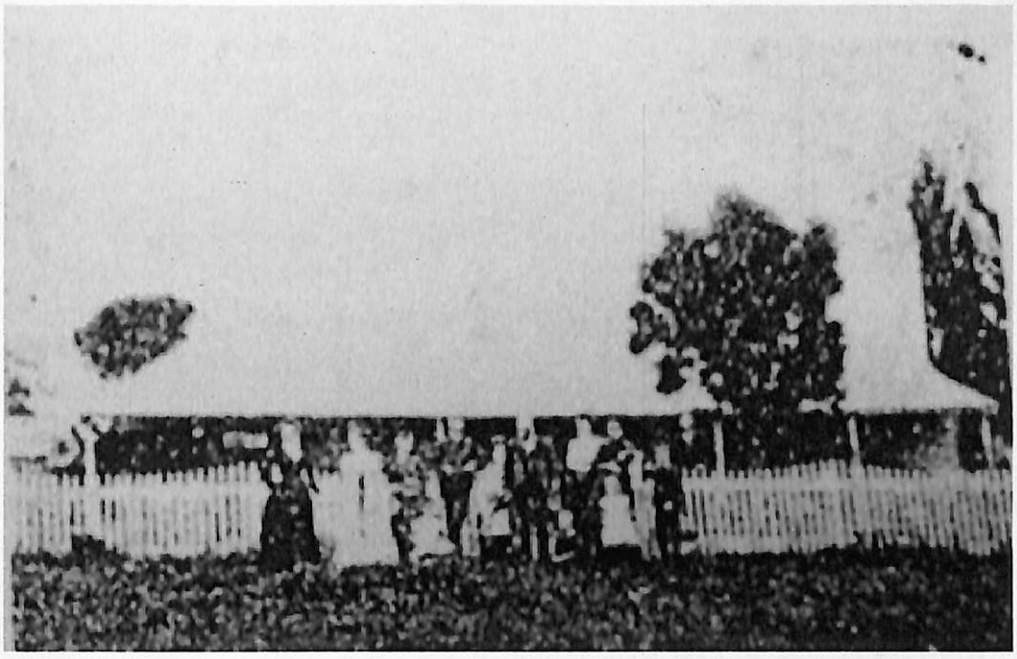

Figure 13: Bredbatoura in the days of its original owner, W D Tarlinton.
Source: Bayley (1946).

More often than not there were Aboriginal families living and working in the houses and on the farms. Aboriginal women and men were employed as herders of cattle and sheep, keeping birds and other animals away from crops, harvesting, shearing and sheep-washing and as household servants. Settler women were vastly outnumbered by men in the early days and there are many stories of Aboriginal women living with white men. The forebears of many present-day south coast Aboriginal families may have been referred to by Reverend Allan of Braidwood who in 1846 observed Aboriginal women living with convict shepherds and having children by them. He counted 'from fifteen to twenty half-castes of different ages, all following the habits of the Aborigines.'
(Egloff et al, 2005)

Family stories hand down glimpses of life with the Aboriginal people on the frontier. Ann Marie Alcock married James Green in 1855 and they lived on her uncle's claim Doolondondoo on the Monaro. Her granddaughter Ella Elphick wrote: 'Life must have been very primitive. My mother has told me tales of her mother, Ann Marie, showering hot coals around to scatter the black gins from her cooking fire' (Cumming and Clifford, 2008).

A story of William Tarlinton's wife at their hut in Brogo was published at her death in 1920. 'Then a young wife, her husband away to help his father muster cattle on a big run at Cobargo, Mrs Tarlinton was left alone with a young baby; but her husband, prior to leaving, arranged for a couple of aborigines who camped on the river bank nearby to keep an eye on the house.' When bushrangers come knocking on the door late at night the Aboriginal men come in through the back door and confronted them with a gun, saving the life of the white woman and her child.[25]

W D Tarlinton's great grandson, Harold Tarlinton, wrote the following memories for a collection of local histories.

These lean and muscular men worked long hours to build their early shelters, which gave them a certain amount of security from the natives, who were numerous, and who soon acquired a liking for the white man's fare, particularly sugar. If the huts were not securely fastened, items would be often found missing, and with no way of obtaining more, this side of Braidwood, every precaution had to be taken. Possums and squirrels were also troublesome. These stockmen must have endured great hardship and privation, as well as loneliness... Generally speaking, the natives were friendly and with the exchange of food and other items, they did not worry the newcomers. However, tribal quarrels did occur. ...There were many signs of aboriginal activity, particularly along the Murrabrine Creek where the gully extends north into the areas later called "Fairview". An aboriginal battle and burial ground was witnessed here by early stockmen and trees nearby had shields cut from their trunks.[26]

25 Delegate Argus, Thursday 25th March 1920

26 "The Story of Cobargo" by Harold Tarlinton, Tales of the Far South Coast Volume 3. Bega Valley Shire 1986

In 1870 the Sydney Morning Herald reported on the case brought against W D Tarlinton's daughter, Margaret, for the killing of her newborn daughter in April 1864. The accuser, Emily Wintle, had lived with the family for thirteen years. She described how Margaret and her sister, Elizabeth, covered up the birth of the baby while their parents were away in Sydney for around six weeks. Emily watched Elizabeth burying a black bundle in the garden and when she uncovered it found a dark skinned baby girl. She went on to tell the court that;

...there were several darkies camped on the station about the time, they used to go backwards and forwards to the house, the name of one of them was Dick Bolloway, another was named Briney, they had been on the station three or four years, they were half-castes, they were often skylarking with Margaret and Elizabeth Tarlinton. Mr Tarlinton once caught Margaret skylarking with Dick Bolloway, and he threatened to break her leg if he ever caught her skylarking with him again, this was before the child was born. I often saw the prisoner and Dick dragging one another about. Margaret bought Dick two white suits, and used to wash and iron them for him, she used also to mend his trousers when they required it.[27]

The murder case was brought six years after the event and the jury dismissed all charges and acquitted Margaret Gilbert *nee* Tarlinton 'without a stain on her character'. Emily Wintle was cross-examined about her moral standing and questioned why she reported the incident a few days after her husband's horse was impounded by W D Tarlinton.[28]

In 1877 Dick Bolloway was granted 56 acres of land at Turlinjah as one of a group of Aboriginal men who applied for land. He married Louisa Burrows and all his children were born at Turlinjah. Their descendants include the Stewart family, a large Aboriginal family on the south coast (Egloff et al, 2005).

27 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 and 16th May 1870.
28 ibid.

Elaine Thomas is an Aboriginal woman now living in Eden. She recounts her family story with connections to the Chinese settlers of Braidwood.

I belong to the Black Duck tribe. That's the whole tribe of Wallaga Lake. Black Duck, that's my totem. My nation's Yuin. Biderwals come from up the Monaro, there's old Chinese background, my great great grandmother was Chinese, and my mum's mother's father was a whaler at Eden, old William. When the whaling finished they drove cattle from Orbost through to Braidwood. Elaine Thomas[29]

Over the decades the children of the early white settlers grew up with the children of the original tribal people but the two groups were kept largely separate by ideas of social standing of the time and later official policies of segregation. Sport was one area where the skills of Aboriginal people were appreciated, with local newspapers running stories of the Tarlinton boys playing cricket against the team from Tilba which included the Pickalla lads from Wallaga Lake (Figure 14).

Figure 14: The Wallaga Lake Aboriginal cricket team with Mr Hockey. W H Corkhill collection, c 1900. National Library of Australia.

29 Elaine Thomson in Donaldson S 2011 Koori Heritage Stories Bega Valley Shire, far south coast NSW; 26

In the 1880s pressure was building to provide schools for local Aboriginal children who were being discriminated against in local schools. Merriman, an Aboriginal Elder, had been granted land in Turlinjah but when he realised the title would only last until his death he tried to find an alternative that would support his people into the future (Figure 15).

Merriman worked for Henry Jefferson Bate and was successful in persuading him to provide 330 acres to local Aboriginal people, which became the Aboriginal Reserve at Wallaga Lake. Aboriginal Reserve land was Crown Land administered by the Aborigines Protection Board (APB).[30] H.J. Bate was a member of the local committee of the APB that had control over the lives of the people who lived on the Wallaga Lake Reserve.

Samuel W Bate who purchased Belowra was my great grandfather. He apparently used to ride all over the place and select land. SW took his daughter Hope; she used to ride on the saddle with him. She was an amazing lady, lovely lady. She was my grandmother's sister... I remember when I was young, we'd stay with my grandmother in Tilba and she had an Aboriginal man cut her wood. He was a wonderful man. I think his name was Gundy Davis. I just remember him as a lovely man. Her house was not in the town, but as you come into Central Tilba at the turnoff there's a big old home up on the hill called 'Yaringah'. – Jen Mathieson

Figure 15: Aboriginal group at Wallaga Lake, Merriman is the second man from the right. William Corkhill c1900 National Library of Australia

30 The Aborigines Protection Board in NSW was established in 1883, following pressure from both landowners and Aboriginal people regarding the need for land for Aboriginal people to live on. Many Aboriginal reserves were established on crown land throughout NSW. See Goodall (2008) for more information on the APB.

Hope Bate had been raised with local Aboriginal people working on the Bate's farm and in her old age talked of the traditional Aboriginal stories she had been told as a child , about the landscape of Gulaga Mountain and about the greedy boys who were turned into off-shore rocky reefs south of Bermagui.[31]

In 1983, most of the old reserve was handed back to the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council and today most Aboriginal families of the region either live in or have connections with the 'Koori Village' at Wallaga Lake (Donaldson and Feary, 2102).

My mother was Iris Brindle, she was a Ngarigo woman. Her father, Alec Brindle, was born at Jindabyne and he was a black tracker who worked for the police in Bombala, Cooma and Dalgety. My father was Reg Walker, a Walbunja man born at Wallaga Lake. His mother was Mary Jane Johnson from Broulee and his father was Edward Walker. Edward was born at Kianga in 1815 and died at Wallaga Lake in 1900. Edward's father was Tunungrabran from Moruya. Granny Mary, Mary Jane's mother, was Mary O'Brien from Majors Creek. Mary Jane and Edward Walker lived at Wallaga Lake Mission where they had Dad in 1908. They lived there until they got work at Hilltop Farm, Tilba. Dad also worked with the bullock carriers transporting goods between Tilba and Batemans Bay. – Deanna Davison[32]

The pioneering period of Australian history, often called the contact period, is the shared history of white settlers and Aboriginal people. There are many examples of how Aboriginal people worked on the land, still aligning with their traditional country, and lived closely with the white settlers from the very first. They were not land owners in line with English law, although demands for land rights and land ownership were made by local Aboriginal people early in history. Dick Bollaway and Merriman are examples of this. The descendants of both the black and white pioneers still live in the region today and carry their own histories within their families.

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31 Personal Communication, Gar Brett, 1984

32 Deanna Davison in Donaldson S 2011 Koori Heritage Stories Bega Valley Shire, far south coast NSW: 13

In the stories about the tracks in this remote country Aboriginal perceptions and experiences are still recorded in the landscape and this offers a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate a shared history.

My mother and father, Zeta Andy and Les Mongta, married at the Church of England in Tilba Tilba in 1930. Zeta's father was Bob Andy, a well-known tracker and her mother was Mary Ellen Piety, an Aboriginal midwife who worked at the Corkhill's farm in Tilba Tilba. I remember travelling with Uncle Gundy out to Belowra. Gundy Davis and Bob Andy drove cattle between Belowra and Bodalla. They knew the area well. They showed me a traditional stone quarry where stones for knives, axes and spearheads were sourced and made. In the 1940's our family camped and worked at the Lavis's farm along the Tuross River. We picked peas and bean and went fishing. Grandfather Bob Andy was a ploughman, every farm needed one. They used the Clydesdale horses to pull the plough. I remember having the task of picking up the rocks behind them. Bob Andy told me that generations of Koori families camped along the same river. Today I live in Bodalla not far from where my grandmother, Kitty Sutton was speared because her mother ran away with a white man. – Lionel Mongta[33]

33 Lionel Mongta in Donaldson S 2008 Aboriginal men and women's heritage: Eurobodalla, Moruya, NSW: 53 – 54.

View west from Brian Clarke's house, towards Kiora Cheese Factory.
Photo: Susan Donaldson

Chapter 5
Spread throughout the district

First white settlement of south east NSW followed a sequence of explorers, bushrangers, squatters, surveyors and police. After 1850 it was prospectors, miners, bushrangers and settlers. These stages mirrored the story of Australia's white settlement as a whole as the frontier was broached with a combination of lawlessness and regulation. The stories of the tracks and the people who used them are held within the context of this history and it is by looking at these details that the history comes alive. This chapter follows the stories of the people introduced in previous chapters, who settled in the south east.

In the early 1800s the early settlers, both free and freed, were given land in the hope that the colony would be able to feed itself and prosper. Together with many other factors, droughts and floods were always an impediment to successful agriculture, and Governor King helped private farmers by issue of seed, tools, sheep and rations. He increased the size of land grants and made reservations for pasturage adjacent to them. John Tarlington received grants of land in Prospect and was required to sell his wheat and meat to the government stores. He applied for compensation for the government resumption of some of that land for use as a quarry and claimed 200 acres of land known as Tallaganda at the confluence of the Oranmeir (Jerrabutgulla) Creek and the Shoalhaven River.

As the colony grew, demand for land to farm and graze increased. Tickets-of-occupation were issued in 1822 enabling land to be immediately occupied without a preliminary survey. Grantees were required to maintain one convict labourer, free of expense to the Crown, for every 100 acres (40 ha). Governor Brisbane began selling crown lands within a 200 mile radius of Sydney at five shillings an acre. In the last six months of 1825 more than 500,000 acres were sold. A land title system, police protection and road networks were restricted to these nineteen counties, the southernmost of which were Murray and St Vincent (Figure 16).

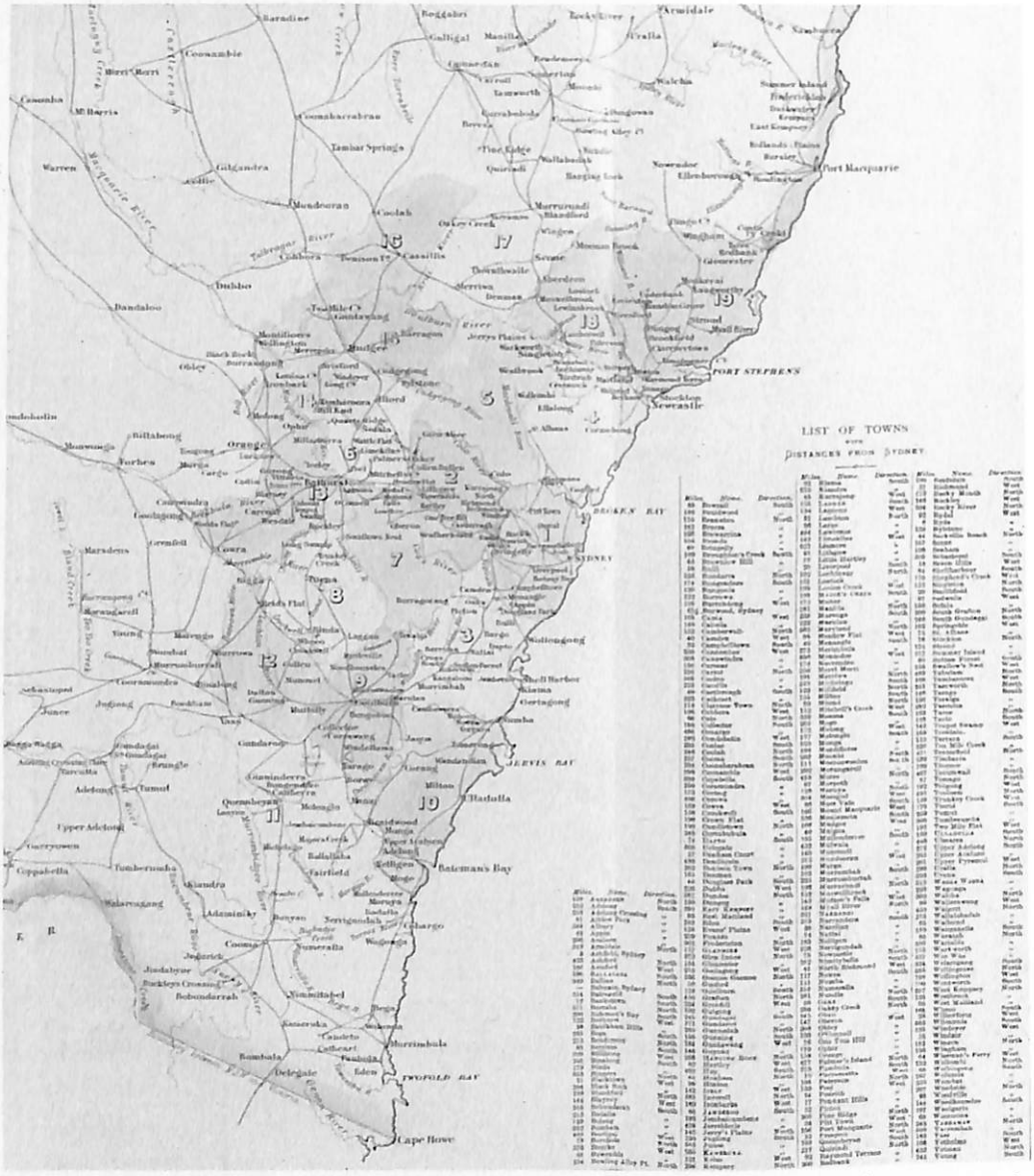

Figure 16: Atlas of the settled counties of New South Wales, Wentworth, Lang, Hovell and Hume, Bennett, Mitchell, Wells, the Rev. W.B. Clarke and W. Wilkins.1872.
National Library of Australia

Gangs of convicts were taken from working on public roads and hired to settlers to clear land to raise revenue for the government. After working on road gangs for six years the convict, John Green, was assigned to Braidwood squatter, Dr David Reid, who had the southernmost grant at that time. As the first to settle the area Reid 'advised and accompanied many interested settlers in rides to the newly discovered area southwards' (Ellis, 1997) and purchased 2000 acres of land himself in the headwaters of Jembaicumbene Creek.

The next Governor, Ralph Darling (1825-31), established a Land Board to examine applicants' claims, which allowed grants only to bona fide settlers in proportion to their capital wealth. The main roads leading out of Sydney were improved and this encouraged further expansion of the settlement. In 1828 a dispute over extra field staff for the Surveyor-General, Major Mitchell, delayed the surveying of settlers' land. Tarlington's land swap at Tallaganda was delayed by this dispute and may have provided further impetus for the exploration further south.

Between 1831 and 1837, revenue and exports almost doubled in NSW and unauthorised squatting outside the nineteen counties was common. In 1836 the Crown Lands Occupation Act provided for annual occupation licences for running cattle, horses and sheep on unsurveyed runs beyond the limits of location administered by commissioners of crown lands. W D Tarlinton is listed as the licence holder for Bredbatoura near Cobargo and John Green was successful in gaining such a licence for five square miles at Doolondondoo (Figure 17).

The Green family started at Doolondondoo at Kybeyan, from the 1830s. John Green was well established by 1836- he had buildings and cultivations, not far after W D Tarlinton really, the south east was opening up. – Michael Green

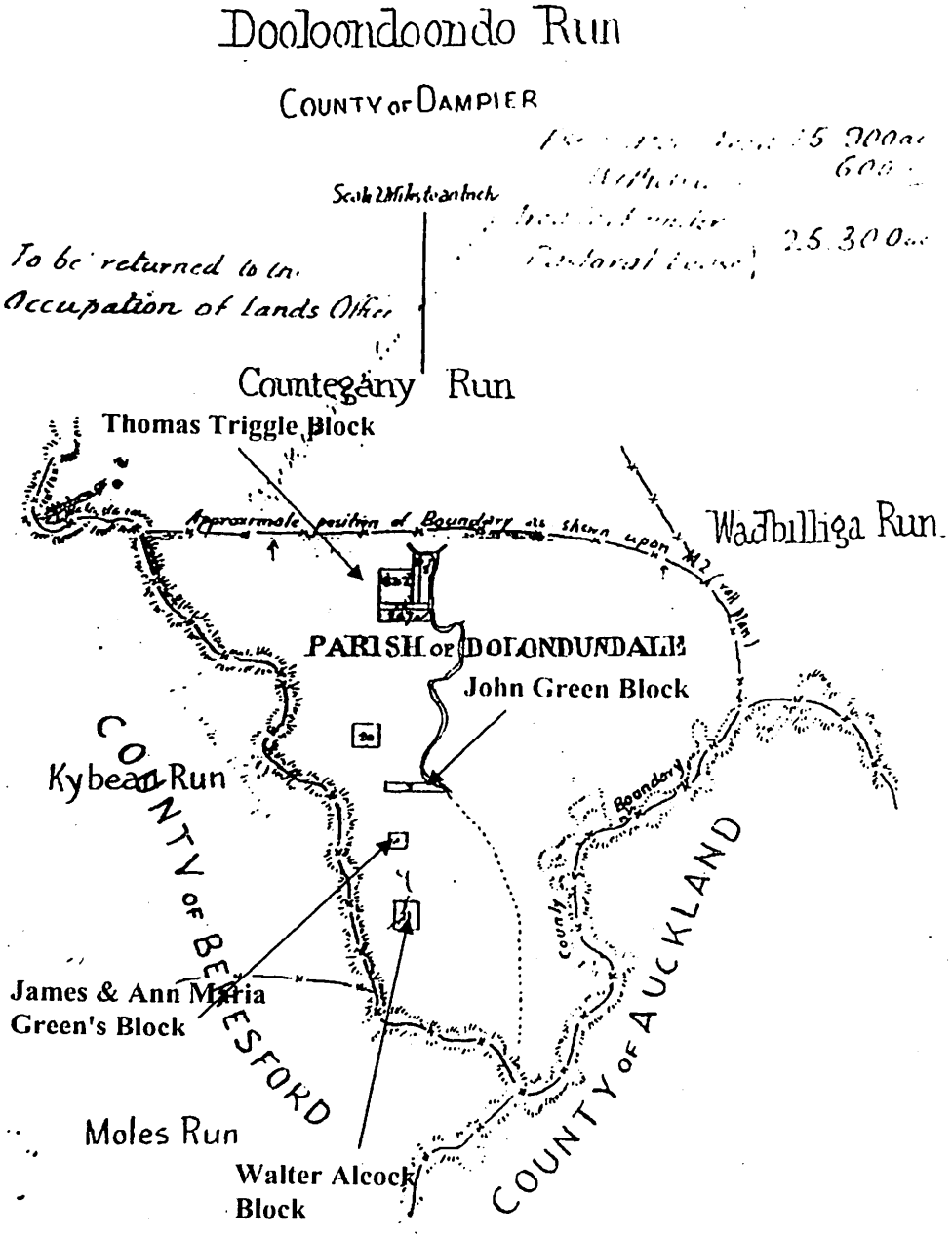

Figure 17: Map of Doolondondoo. Source: The Doolondondoo Book

Governor Bourke wanted to develop towns and permanent settlements and in 1834 he sought authority for a township to be established at Twofold Bay to bring law and a port for transporting the wool of the southern squatters to Sydney. The colonial office didn't want settlement to become too spread out from Sydney and rejected the request. A record of Bourke's trip to Twofold Bay and inland is held at the State Library in the paintings of Captain Robert Westmacott, who was Bourke's private secretary (Figure 18).

In 1839 Governor Gipps established Land Commissioners' positions and a police force in districts outside the nineteen counties. An annual tax was imposed on landholders to help cover the cost of maintaining a police force; one penny per sheep, three pence per head for cattle and six pence for horses. This along with the ten pound licence fee was expected to raise about twelve thousand pounds a year. In the Monaroo district, which included southern NSW into Victoria, the Commissioner was J M Lambie. His duties were 'to keep control over grazing establishments, prevent collision between men in charge of such establishments and aborigines and collect fees' (Campbell, 1968). He had a small force of mounted constables called Border Police.

Markets were good and the colony continued to spread quickly. In 1839 there were 7000 horses, 3700 cattle, 1.3 million sheep and close to 700 licenced stations in the outside districts. Governor Gipps wrote: 'As well might it be attempted to confine the Arabs of the desert within a circle, traced upon their sands, as to confine the graziers or wool-growers of New South Wales within any bounds that can possibly be assigned to them' (Campbell, 1968).

The first pastoral boom ended in a depression due to a drought between 1837 and 1842. Transportation of convicts to NSW ended in 1840 and international markets for wool fell as both America and Britain suffered recessions. In August 1843 Governor Gipps sent a dispatch referring to the economic collapse; 'Real property is scarcely saleable at any price.' Stock prices were down to a half or a third of sales three years before. But by 1844 the records show there was a settler population of almost 10,000 in the outside districts running 15,000 horses, half a million cattle and three million sheep.[34]

34 See http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/

Squatters started pressuring government for greater security of tenure saying they needed this to provide improvements on the land and to build schools and churches. An Order in Council was issued in March 1847 giving the squatters in 'unsettled lands' leaseholds of 14 years with rights of pre-emption. Between 1838 and 1846 the population of New South Wales almost doubled to reach more than 190,000.[35]

Figure 18: Twofold Bay, Robert Marsh Westmacott 1834. Source: State Library NSW.

35 ibid

Further growth in population came with the discovery of gold and in 1861 the New South Wales settler population grew to 350,000 people. The total for all the colonies was just over one million with Victoria accounting for half that number. The cry, 'unlock the land' put pressure on the colonial governments to free up land for selection. In New South Wales the Robertson Land Acts were intended to 'preserve old rights while granting new ones'.[36]

From the start of 1861 any person could purchase between 40 and 320 acres of crown land with a deposit of 25% of the purchase price with the balance to be paid in three years. Improvements and effective residence had to be shown. Squatters had to act quickly to secure title to the lands they held and large families were an advantage to keep ownership in the one name;

36 The Crown Lands or Robertson Land Acts of 1861 were designed to break the domination of the squatters and offer land to those with more limited means.

W D Tarlinton's cattle [herd] was spread throughout the district, supervised by stockmen who had stringy bark huts here, there and everywhere. I know from oral history the first hut in Wandella was down on what we call 'the swamp'. Tarlinton himself didn't actually settle here. Wandella was part of his holdings and when the Crowns Land Act came in about 1861, that Robertson's Act, those holdings were purchased as they were surveyed. W D Tarlinton rode from Bredbatoura through to the Moruya Courthouse, to purchase this Wandella property in parcels for a pound an acre in those days. That's where we are today, all these years later. W D Tarlinton's son James became the owner eventually –that was my great-great grandfather, James had share-farmed it out then and it wasn't until 1961 that my father Roy took it on and farmed it. Now it belongs to my wife June and I. It's important for me to stay here because of the historical link and it's a nice place to live, and we've done alright here. We've managed to pay our bills and raise our family. – Richard Tarlinton

The 1850s and 60s brought the gold rush to the region and provided a booming new market for settlers and squatters alike. In August 1851 gold was found in Araluen and the rush spread when it was found in Majors Creek in October. The Braidwood goldfields, which included Araluen, were the biggest producers of gold in NSW for six of the ten years to 1869 (Figure 19). Araluen was booming. In 1864 there were 48 licenced publicans in the main street which stretched over four miles in length. The population of Araluen alone was 3500 and supplies had to come from surrounding properties. Chaff and store goods were supplied from Braidwood and other goods came up from Moruya along the river with the common problem of floods closing the tracks. It's reported that at one time four to five hundred packhorses were on the Araluen to Moruya road, bringing corn, potatoes, chaff and butter.[37]

Gold discoveries in the region continued into the 1890s with Nerrigundah and Tilba gold fields employing large populations of miners and providing ready markets for local produce.

37 Smith, Peter C. The Clarke Gang - Outlawed, Outcast and Forgotten.

What we call the 'Charles Byrne Track' goes from Cadgee, around Cadgee Trig and onto Belowra. Charles Byrne had Belowra established when gold was discovered in Nerrigundah, in the 1860s. So he set up before that. He made his money because he supplied bullocks to Nerrigundah. Charles Byrne was also here at Cadgee where we are today. So he was using the bridle tracks to take beef from Cadgee and Belowra to Nerrigundah to feed gold miners. He owned Belowra but he had people managing in there, in particular AG Sutherland, Super Sutherland's father. – Catherine Lawler

Towns grew up around the pastoral selections and populations expanded as families from the first settlers grew. This was often remarked in newspaper obituaries in the 1880s and 90s.

The funeral of Mr W D Tarlinton J P took place at Cobargo on October 19th, 1893 when 78 buggies and 250 horsemen joined in the procession to the deceased gentleman's resting place. Mr Tarlinton was the pioneer of the Cobargo district, and for years occupied a prominent position in public affairs throughout the district. He was 87 years old and left a family of 6 sons, 4 daughters, 81 grandchildren and 27 great grandchildren.[38]

Figure 19: View of the Araluen Goldfields 1866 George Lacy.
Sydney Illustrated News 16/7/1866

38 Australian Town and Country Journal. 28th October 1893 p 16

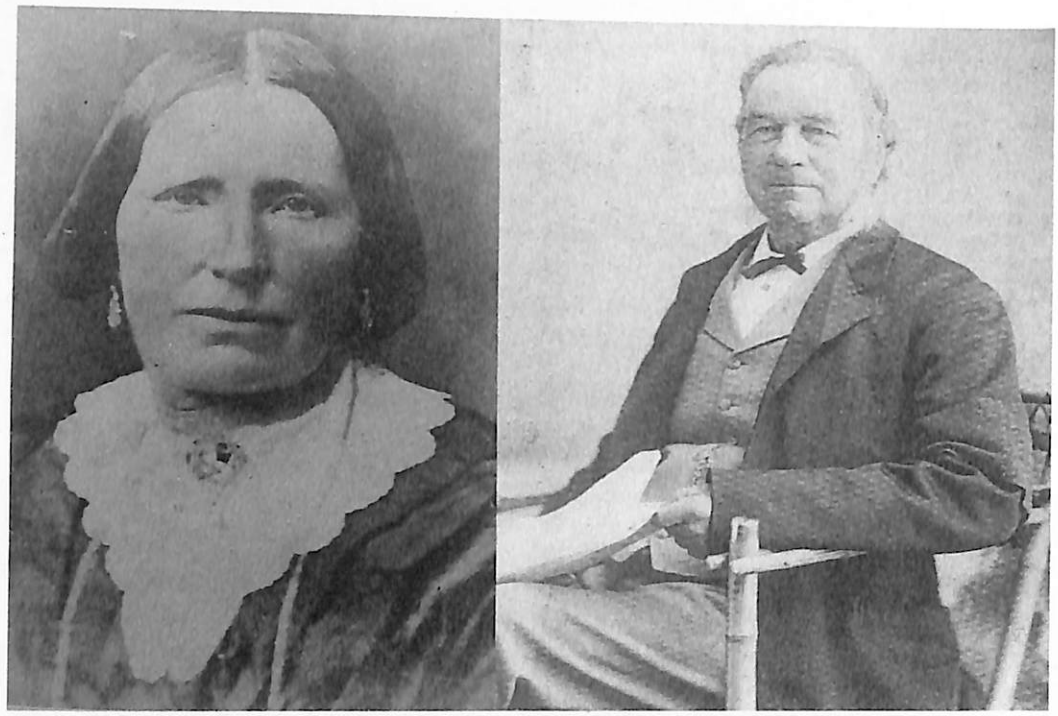

Figure 20: W D Tarlinton and his wife Mary (*nee* Saunders).[39]

39 Michael McGowan, *The Tarlintons in Australia*

William Duggan Tarlinton settled in the Cobargo region and owned all 'the land from the Brogo to the Tuross, a distance of thirty miles (Bayley, 1946). (Figure 20). These holdings included 9,600 acres at Bredbatoura and another 20,000 acres which included Cadjangarry and Brogo. This extended from Caroon Mountain Range to Brogo River, and covered almost the whole of the valley. W D Tarlinton divided the land between his sons and daughters and they continued their father's role of developing their properties and being active in the settler communities in the region. The obituary below was for John Tarlinton JP.

Deceased was the eldest son of the late Mr W. D. Tarlinton JP of Bredbatoura, Cobargo and was born at Prospect, in the historic Parramatta district, on Sept 19th, 1831. He thus saw the light first early in the history of this country. After residing there for some time he removed with his parents to the Braidwood district, where he was educated by a private tutor. When 18 years of age, his parents removed to the Cobargo district, which was which was occupied by the Aboriginal people.

He embarked, with his father and brothers, in cattle raising pursuits, and frequently trekked to Victoria – in the days when Ballarat and Bendigo shed their golden harvests – with fat stock. He could relate many thrilling incidents of those stirring days. In 1860 his father presented him with a portion of his estate at Cobargo, being a prescriptive right of 260 acres, and Mr Tarlinton gradually added to this area until he accumulated estates aggregating some thousands of acres, comprising properties at Cobargo, Wandella, Double Creek, Bega, Numbugga and Monaro. He also held a property at his birth-place.[40]

Henry Jefferson Bate selected bushland on the slopes of Mount Dromedary in 1868 and called it 'Mountain View'. The village of Tilba Tilba later developed on part of his property (Pacey and Hoyer, 1995). Henry's son Samuel W Bate selected the adjacent property to the north and part of this was later to become the village of Central Tilba (Pacey and Hoyer, 1995). The ABC Cheese factory was built on SW Bate's land in the 1890s and dairying continues to be an important local industry.

The Bate family was and continues to be a prominent family in the area (Figures 21 and 22).

40 Southern Star. 19/6/1907

Figure 21: Four generations of the Bate family 1890s
William Henry Corkhill National Library of Australia

My great grandfather, S.W.Bate (Samuel William), along with his brother, R.M.Bate (Richard Mossop) and father H.J.Bate (Henry Jefferson) settled the Tilba district. He was really the one that opened up all of this country from Cadgee to the Belowra Valley and further abroad. My grandmother was SW's daughter, Emily Francis, who was always know as 'Kath'. She married Edwin Thomson. On their marriages, her sisters names became Hurley, Miller and Warlow-Davies and as SW's sons had no children, the Bate name ceased on this line of the family. But the daughters did so the name changed to Miller, Thomson and Warlow-Davies. Dad, Douglas Thomson, was the next in line. Douglas was the first one of the family to actually live at Belowra. He ran what they called 'the estate' after SW Bate's death. He started to build this house and then he married Gleam [Helena Scott]. They had to pack horse in then; there was no road, so they were the first of the family to live in Belowra. It was probably about 1936 when they came in. But they were packing goods long before that. They were making butter and cream and there were dairies here. They used to pack that to Cobargo, so that would have been turn of the century I'm guessing. – Fergus Thomson

Figure 22: The S W Bate family c.1890.
William Corkhill Collection, National Library of Australia

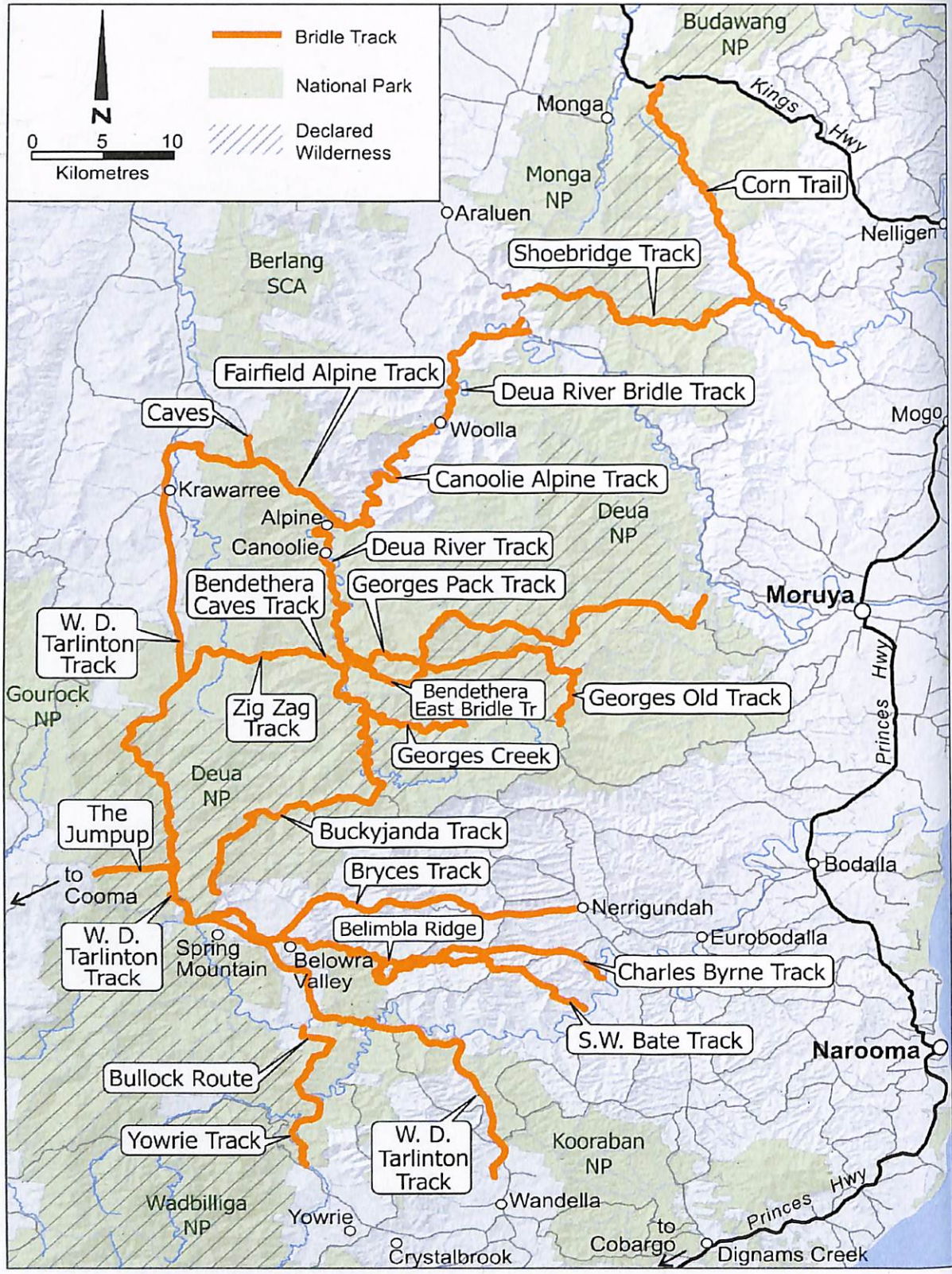

Figure 23: Mapped and/or known tracks in the Deua-Wadbilliga National Parks.
Source: NPWS

Chapter 6
Those tracks were the lifeblood - Stories of the early days

They drove pigs all the way to Moruya to load onto the steam ships. They took the pigs out from Canoolie and from Bendethera. They raised a family in there (Canoolie); they did well. Grandfather Rankin's diary tells about all the pigs, bacon, and turkey that they sold. They were selling them to all sorts of people 'so many bushels of corn to someone', that would have been up the mountain. Those tracks were the life bloodfor those people going out. This is way back in the 1800s.
– Catherine Lawler

Since the opening of the way into the south east in the 1820s the settlers and their descendants continued to use bridle tracks and larger roads in their daily lives, which was mainly cattle and sheep grazing, dairying, and raising pigs and turkeys. Sawmills dotted the forest and sleeper cutting, wattle bark stripping and rabbit trapping were reliable money earners when seasons were bad.

Tracks connected primary producers to markets including the boom and bust markets of the southern gold fields. They led to coastal towns and ports with steamship links to big cities. Tracks gave access to dances, race meetings and other social opportunities and government communications. Networks of tracks allowed different routes to be taken to avoid floods when the weather turned bad or shortcuts over mountains for return journeys. Over the years different tracks went in and out of use and bustling centres of commerce faded back into quiet backblocks. Around the Araluen valley good roads were put through the steep country to protect coaches transporting gold from bushranger attack. Figure 23 shows known and/or mapped tracks in the northern and central sections of the Deua-Wadbilliga region.

The Tarlinton Track was an important link between the coast and the tablelands and took about three days to travel the full distance on horseback. It was used for many reasons, one being movement of thousands of head of cattle.

I think the cattle he traded were the cattle he bred and reared in this district – he brought them down originally and then they bred up from here. And other people would have brought cattle in too – down that same track, over the years to establish their own herds.
The cattle were being moved along the W D Tarlinton Track, either to private sale or to the butcher shops in the Eurobodalla area and the Nerrigundah area to feed all the miners that were in those areas. They didn't actually sell calves in those days; they sold what was known as fat bullocks, like 2-3 year old cattle and there weren't as many cattle – the stocking rates weren't as high as they are these days.
– Richard Tarlinton

It was also important for public business and attending social events.

The W D Tarlinton Track was also used for the movement of public business. Like if you wanted to post a letter or do any government business there would have been one in Braidwood – you would have had to go to the government office there... When you wanted supplies you had to send a letter to a supply shop in Sydney and arrange for it to be transported to Bermagui and a letter would be sent back telling when it would be expected to arrive. And you'd have to be there to gather your goods. Bermagui was the main port for here.

There's recorded history of the Sutherlands, the first generation of W D Tarlinton's grandkids, attending social dances in Braidwood and marrying girls from up that way so they would have travelled on a portion of the Tarlinton Track. They would have accessed the track from Yowrie to Belowra up the Barren Jumbo Mountain. It's a separate track, it links Yowrie to Belowra. They'd travel that way and then they would have travelled to the end of Belowra Valley and then Woila Creek then straight up there. It's the most direct route and the route most suitable for horses as well because it followed the water. It's not that far really – it's only a couple of hundred k's. – Richard Tarlinton

Soon after W D Tarlinton moved from Prospect to Oranmeir in 1832 he applied for a licence to operate a public house called the Travellers' Home. Travellers were constantly moving through from Braidwood to the coast and they needed a place to stop and rest, especially in the winter when they could be caught out in sudden freezing rain and snowstorms. Twenty years later he and the family moved onto the property at Bredbatoura near Cobargo and established a port at Bermagui.

Figure 24: View from the Shoebridge Track into Araluen Valley.
Photo courtesy Julia Short

Gold opened up the pastoral south east bringing thousands of new people to the area. The Araluen gold fields started in 1851 and transport routes were needed to bring in supplies. One of these, the Shoebridge Track, was a short-lived but very important connection between Lower Araluen and the Corn Track to the north east (Figure 24 previous page). Historian Peter Smith who has written an account of the Clarke brothers, bushrangers of the upper Shoalhaven and Deua Rivers, describes the track;

The Shoebridge Track was put through as a pack track and the recognised way of getting goods through to the goldfields was on pack horses. It was considered the wet weather route. The Shoebridge Track started at Mudmelong on the Araluen Creek about ten kilometres from Araluen. It was a well-constructed pack track that gave communication with Sydney via the port of Nelligan on the Clyde River. Basically the track fell in to disuse after the Moruya track was made into a dray road around 1870. The person who was responsible for putting the track in was a store-keeper named Thomas Shoebridge. The idea of the track for him, of course, was to bring goods to his store for sale to the local diggers. He appears to have over extended himself and went broke and had to sell his store. After Shoebridge sold the store it became the Commercial Hotel and was stuck up by the Clarke gang four times.

It was the scene of a famous incident there where the Clarkes actually captured four police and stole their firearms and that's how they originally equipped themselves with the best firearms available. Another time, later, the police came along and they thought the Clarkes were on their way to rob the place again. They were eager to restore the police prestige and hid waiting in the bar. When the bushrangers failed to appear they prepared to depart. As the police were leaving, the police sergeant's rifle accidentally discharged and shot the publican's brother and killed him. I'd say the Shoebridge Track was used for possibly even less than ten years. Once the road improved from Moruya and Braidwood the major part of the goods came in from there. Luckily the Shoebridge Track was so well constructed it can still be travelled today by horse-back or foot. – Peter Smith

Further south, the goldfields of Nerrigundah on the Tuross River were developed shortly after the Araluen fields. Many early settlers suddenly had a rich market right on their doorstep and tracks were blazed to transport supplies through.

The other one they used a lot in the earlier days was from the Belowra Valley, down to Nerrigundah. During the gold times cattle were taken from Belowra to Nerrigundah where they were butchered to supply meat to the goldfields. It's probably where my great-grandfather made most of his money supplying meat for the gold fields... some went looking for gold and some went and made money out of the gold miners. – Fergus Thomson

I've got a good account of how the bushrangers used another of the bridle tracks when they were returning from Nerrigundah after shooting Constable O'Grady. The Police were sent down to intercept the bushrangers when they came up the track. Now when you know the area, and they talk about coming from Belowra back up the track to The Badja, there's only one track and that's the W D Tarlinton Track. I have this intriguing account by a policeman of how they were trying to find the track and they couldn't find it. They finally got someone to show them the track. Anyway they got lost. Back then and still today you need local knowledge to find your way around. The tracks are still for those in the know. – Peter Smith

Gold attracted many diverse groups; people came from America and almost every European country and from China. Cantonese merchants organised the passage of hundreds of Chinese diggers at a time. They gathered in separate settlements at Mudmelong in Lower Araluen, Jembaicumbene and Long Flat near Majors Creek. In 1861 there were 1,335 Chinese out of a total male population of 4,427 on the goldfields around Braidwood. In that year a petition was drawn up in Majors Creek calling for the government to prohibit the admission of more Chinese to the colony and requesting their withdrawal from the goldfields. There were 365 signatures on the petition (Ellis, 1997: 87). After the alluvial gold ran out many Chinese returned home but some remained and their work is seen throughout the countryside in post and rail fences, road construction and market gardens.

There is what we call the 'Pig Pen' on the Yowrie Track over Barren Jumbo Mountain. When the Chinese were here after the gold petered out in 1866 they were employed to clear the land. They used to walk a pig out to Yowrie-Cobargo for Chinese New Year. They were walking a pig over and it started to farrow on the way. They couldn't move it so they built all these rocks up around like a little yard or pen to hold it. The rocks are still there today. We always said, 'well you know, we'll have a cup of tea at the Pig Pen'. – Fergus Thomson

Tracks around Bendethera and Deua River

John Rankin came out from Edinburgh in Scotland to New South Wales on the Herald in 1844 and he first selected land at Berlang near Majors Creek after 1861 when the Robertson Land Acts Act came in. His son, Allan, married Catherine Ryan in Braidwood in 1884 and together they raised a family at Canoolie. Iree was born in December 1902 in Araluen and was brought home on horseback. 'My older sister was five then and she rode but Mum carried me. That twenty-five miles through the bush was a long way for a little girl to ride but it had to be done' (McCarron, 1983).

Figure 25: Catherine Rankin as a young woman. Source: McAdoo (1983).

My mother was Silvia Rankin and her parents, Allan Rankin and Catherine Rankin [nee Ryan], were pioneer settlers on the property now known as Canoolie, on the Deua River. My mother was the second youngest of 7 and she was born in 1900. The Georges were at Bendethera, the Rankin family at Canoolie and the Blanchard's at Alpine. My grandparents were there at Canoolie for 57 years. The Georges Pack Track is the most important to me. It goes from Moruya to Bendethera, then from Bendethera 7 to 9 miles down the Deua River to Canoolie, down to Alpine and then you can keep coming down the Deua River to Woolla, then from Woolla to Araluen. From Alpine you can go straight up the mountain to Fairfield/ Krawarree. I didn't use the Georges Pack Track a lot, but for my mother, aunties, uncles and grandfather this track was their life line, them and the Georges. There was no road into Bendethera until 1960, and that was only a dozer taken down the hill.
– Catherine Lawler (Figures 25 and 26)

Figure 26: Catherine Rankin in old age with her daughters.
Source: McAdoo (1983).

The Rankins raised cattle, pigs and turkeys. There got to be so many turkeys that they decided to take them to market to sell.

They drove them and drove them but they couldn't get them to where the wanted to go because it got dark and they wanted to roost in the trees. Well Dad and sister had to wait till daylight to get them off the trees and start again. And off they went. It must have been some sight to see the horses and a mob of turkeys. They took them twelve miles up to Krawarree and the truck would have met them and taken them on from there (McCarron, 1983).

The Rankin family moved into Moruya in 1939 and Allan died two years later. His son continued to run cattle at Bendethera:

I can remember Allan Rankin Junior; he was the one that took over from the Georges. When I left school I was an apprentice butcher and old Allan used to come in probably 10 days or a fortnight before he was going in to Bendethera to muster and he said "Well boys" he said, "I'm going to Bendethera. I want some corn meat". So, in those days they only ever killed bullocks and we used to get these briskets... they'd probably weigh, oh, 15 pound. And we used to roll them and corn them –well it was quite a common thing in those days, it was sweet meat. They'd be in the brine for about a week, 8 days, and then we'd put them up on the table and salt them. And it was just like a log, no bones, just meat. Anyway we'd cut them for him – he'd probably have a couple of them. And what we used to do then, we'd put a string in them for him. Every one we cut we'd put a string in and tie a knot in it so he could tie that in the river and just let the water run over it to try and get the salt and that out of it. And then when he was cooking it he'd have to throw the water out about 4 or 5 times because it was that salty that you wouldn't be able to eat it.

He'd pack that into Bendethera and he'd keep that in his meat safe and it'd just stay good, like it was raw meat, it would stay good salted. And he'd just leave it rolled up and whoever was in there helping him muster or anything like that... that was his meat. See in 1939 Allan Rankin Jnr bought Bendethera for £500. '64 the Eurobodalla Shire Council constructed the road, '68 a major bushfire went through Bendethera and burnt down the homestead and '81 Bendethera was acquired by the National Parks. – Brian Clarke

They took their cattle from Bendethera to Coondella Hut. They let them have water and settle down and then the next morning, drove them into the Burra Creek where Jack Millikin owned land in the 1930s. If they were droving cattle it would take two days. Coondella Hut is the holding paddock for the overnight trip. Then they used to drop them into Burra Creek and let them go and they'd pick them up down in The Burra and the next two days with some quiet cattle would lead them down to Moruya.

They try and get you to work in there, but it was all pleasure. Old Jack would say anything to get us into Bendethera; 'now I want to do that fence line'! Alright Jack we'll go and give you a hand. After riding in he'd say 'I think we'll leave it 'till tomorrow, it's going to be too bloody hot today' or 'we'll leave it 'till this afternoon' and this afternoon comes 'no I think tomorrow'. I've had a beautiful life with them old fellows, great fun. – Kerry Reid

Allan and Catherine's daughter Kathleen and her family moved from their two-roomed slab hut on the Deua River in the 1940s with help from neighbour Jack Dempsey who wrote this account;

The date was set and I went along with five pack horses, stayed there for the night and packed up the next morning. Some packs were bedclothes etc. others were personal things wrapped in paper and packed in boxes. All loads had to be balanced, the same weight on each side. One horse was given over to corn on both sides and two bags with chooks on top. The chooks had their heads pulled out through slits in the bags. I brought the pigs. It was a very hot day and at every river crossing or so we had to splash water in the heads of the chooks. They had their beaks open and were very hot. I think we lost two.

Joseph George was the son of convict parents, John George and Hannah [Ann] Stubbs, born in 1833 in Sydney. He married Mary Hart, a descendant of convict parents Michael Hart and Mary Irving, in Majors Creek in 1855 and eight years later they settled in Bendethera. There they ran a farm and raised a family of nine sons and four daughters.

A story about how Joseph George discovered the Bendethera Valley, home of the famous Bendethera Caves, was published in a local newspaper in 1930.

Mr George was originally the owner of 150 pack horses with which he used to pack maize and other goods from Moruya to Araluen in the early days when the town boasted 38 hotels. He was informed of the existence of the Bendethera flats by a blackfellow and decided to investigate. On his way up the Deua River he was surprised to discover another black and his gin in the company of a white man in charge of horses and when they saw Mr George coming they saddled up and set off at full speed up the river. Mr George also set sail to see what was doing and after running them down he discovered hobbled out on one of the river flats a mare that had been stolen from him some time previously, and it was to get this mare out of sight that the blacks made off.[41]

The same article bemoans the condition of the caves without a caretaker to protect the beautiful limestone formations from vandalism and theft. The writer tells a story about the Aboriginal use of the caves and that Con Creek is named for the local Aboriginal word for 'good' due to the healthy properties of the water rising in limestone country.

In the early days the caves were visited by many parties on horseback coming mostly from the Araluen and Krawarree side. The old Bendethera homestead pulsating with life, extended the hand of welcome to distinguished visitors.

The spectacular beauty of these remote areas began to be appreciated by city people and Bendethera became well known as a bushwalking mecca with the caves as the highlight. The Bendethera Main Cave and surrounds were reserved for public recreation in 1896 and the cave contains signatures dating from the 1890s including many early family names of the district. Early environmentalist, Myles Dunphy, and artist Roy Davis first walked into the caves in 1920. Roy made a sketch of the house at Canoolie and presented it to the Rankin family in appreciation of their hospitality (Figure 27). The family still treasure this record of their old homestead.

41 Shoalhaven News and South Coast District Advertiser 14/6/1930

Figure 27: Roy Davis' 1920 sketch of Rankin's at Canoolie.
Source: Smith (2009).

The bush walkers use to go out there to the Bendethera caves. Some of them would arrive out there with a bit of chocolate, they had no idea. Most of them were city people. Heaps of them stayed with the Georges, heaps of them stayed with my grandparents and my aunts and that, and those people would go back to Sydney and keep in touch with Mum's family, they'd send photos back when they got married and send magazines back for them to read. Aunty Kathleen went to Sydney and stayed with Myles Dunphy and family. They took her around. Even when grandmother and grandfather came to Moruya to live, people would come and visit them there. So, lifelong friendships were formed from two completely different lifestyles. – Catherine Lawler (Figure 28)

The isolation of the remote farms was sometimes hard to endure, especially for the women. They would travel miles to have a chance to socialise with other women or to dance. You rarely hear of a woman hermit.

I loved the bush, I loved the history of it and the George's were good people. What was that one that used to come into town of a night? Maryanne ran away from home. Ended up at Millikin's on the Deua River, she'd walk through all night. Mary used to run away from home 'cause she was out there isolated. The Millikin boys would wake up in the morning and there she is talking to their mum. She would have gone on the Coondella, on the George's Pack track, stay a couple of days and then be gone, back. The women used to ride from Alpine up to Bendethera, across to Coondella bridle tracks and in to Moruya for the dances, in one day. The Rankin girls were good horsewomen. Unbelievable how they did it. – Kerry Reid

Figure 28: Bushwalkers heading to Bendethera Caves, L to R: Jeane, Jessie, Mrs [Catherine] Rankin, Jim George, Mr [Allan] Rankin, Miss Iree and Miss Kathleen, c.1920, Canoolie. Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler[42]

42 Catherine pointed out the reactions of the old people to the young women's shorts- something shocking in those days!

The bridle tracks are about droving cattle and other goods. Mum and others in her era used the tracks for social occasions, but as for Bob and I, only sometimes. Everywhere had a dance hall, a little church, a hall and a tennis court. You can still seem them today all over the place, something left of a tennis court or hall. Mum and her sisters used to ride up the Canoolie Track from Alpine to Fairfield for dances. As Aunty Vera said, there were Byrnes boys, so they'd always let them know when there was a dance on and the Byrnes boys needed the Rankin girls as much as the girls needed the boys as dance partners! – Catherine Lawler (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Vera Rankin in Deua River with Khaki the horse. 1920s.
Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler

In the 1920s Nellie Davis built herself, her son Everid and daughter Neta, a house of split timber and corrugated iron at Woolla on the Deua River. There they lived an isolated life, with two later children- Vernon and Myrtle - running a cattle station with chooks, a dairy cow, fruit trees and vegetables for their own use. It was a hard and lonely life as Neta told well-known Australian author Jackie French (Figure 30).

Sometimes I'd hate being shut up in here. I'd long to get out. My mother and I never saw eye to eye. You didn't have the freedom in those days. We didn't have the money. I've always been strong: strong above average. My father fed me on beef, three meals a day sometimes. I can lift 300 pounds, put it up on a cart or a dray. Some men can drag 300 pounds. I work all day and through the night and the next day too without a meal if I have to; if that's the way things have to be. There's nothing a man can do that I can't.

It was all horseback in the early days. We got our first vehicle in the fifties. We'd walk the cattle up to Braidwood to sell them. It's a two day ride. We'd ride up the river to Alpine to pick the fruit or over to Canoolie.[43]

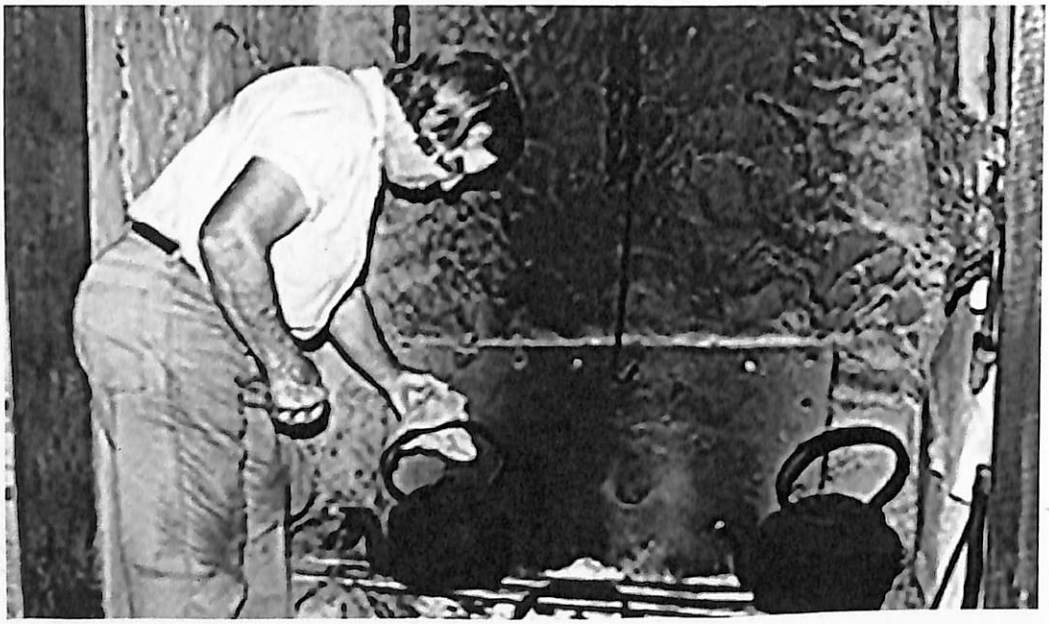

Figure 30: Neta Davis Deua River Woman[44]

43 Reproduced with permission from Jackie French

44 Chris Woodland www.simplyaustralia.net 2009

The Davis' built a shed on Moodong Creek about nine kilometres from 'The Junction' of the Deua River and Araluen Creek near the Araluen Road (Figure 31). They could collect supplies left there and pack them out to Woolla by horse. In the forties Neta and Myrtle built a hut on the north side of the creek which served as a halfway house if the creek was running too deep to cross. Neta lived at Woolla until her death in 1990 aged eighty.

There are five things you have to learn if your life is to mean anything. You get them in the open spaces, by being in the bush alone; fear, sorrow, loneliness, success and love. You have to learn these things. You have to really understand. Most people never even begin. I met a man down at the creek one day. He said, 'I'm jack of Sydney. I just had to get out.' I knew what he meant. I knew it in my heart. He had to get away to heal. I see a lot of people like that. They come from the cities. They have to get out to feel again, to see things.[45]

Figure 31: Myrtle Collett at the old garage at Moodong Creek.
Source: Smith (2009).

45 Reproduced with permission from Jackie French

Before motorised vehicles, goods and passengers were transported on roads in horse-drawn coaches. Brian Clarke has a good knowledge of many types of these vehicles.

My paternal grandfather he was the coach driver from Bodalla to Tilba, in the mail coach with the horses. I don't remember him, he died before I was born but they were based at Coila. He started off his career apparently from Bungendore; he was reared and born in Bungendore. His name was William Clarke; he drove the coaches from Bungendore to Araluen. Apparently he had 7 and 8 in hand coming down over Araluen Mountain on the Araluen Road there now where they come down over the mountain, but it's pretty steep.

He married Eliza Grey and they owned the property at Coila and then he drove the coaches from Bodalla to Tilba. They were mail coaches and passenger coaches. They'd have a contract; you had to put a tender in every year or every 3 years or 4 years to do a job. Actually I've got his coach whip in there. It's beautiful. He would have travelled on the old highway around the back of Wagonga. This was before all the bridges so they had to go inland to avoid the rivers. Dad never ever talked a lot about him, but Old Jack reckons, you could set your clock on him going past the camp of an afternoon, they were camped out with the bullocks, they were timber cutters. – Brian Clarke (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Brian Clark with his grandfather, William Clarke's, coach whip; Moruya 2014. Photo: Susan Donaldson

Once a regular steamer service developed between the south coast and Sydney in 1857-58 both small and large properties were run as dairy farms supplying cheese factories throughout the region. Making cheese was a way of preserving the farm produce so it could be transported to city markets. Brian Clarke grew up at Kiora, inland from Moruya.

Conway Irwin my maternal grandfather had the cheese factory here at Kiora. There was about four HaW Don farms and three farms of Collett's supplying the Kiora factory with milk and then all the way up the river. I think there was about, thirty something-odd suppliers. They just made cheese, like a big cheese. That was our job, brother and I of a morning before we went to school, we'd have to go over and help turn the cheese. They used to put it on the boat it would all go through to Sydney. They'd cart the cheese from here to the Moruya town wharf.

The suppliers they come from right up the river some of them. What they used to do, the one's further up, they'd milk real early in the morning and they might bring it down the river five or six miles to another bloke – and he'd only have a horse and cart or a horse and dray or something and they'd put them on him. And when I say supplier, some of them were only supplying a can of milk or half a can of milk but that was what they had and they'd take a bit of whey home and they'd feed their pigs. They never had any money but they existed and they reared big families. They'd bring the milk in ten gallon cans, containers. They used to use drays or sulkies, a lot of them used sulkies. When one of them only had one or two cans it's a lot quicker with the sulky. But the big farms they'd probably bring two loads of a morning but they'd have two horses pulling the drays – they were full loads. They'd be milking probably up to eighty or a hundred cows. – Brian Clarke

Tracks around Bombala and the southern section of the region

The Farrell family worked on the Nungatta property close to the NSW/ Victorian border. This was the property first settled by Alexander Weatherhead in the 1840s. The Farrells once owned Fulligan's, north of Nungatta, where dairy milk was made into butter and sent to market.

Dad worked at Nungatta when I was born and I went to School at Burragate. I remember we had Farrell's Fire Trail coming into Fulligan's; we owned Fulligan's at one stage. There's a bridle track going from Fulligan's to Burragate; the Burragate, Wog Wog Fire Trail follows Deep Creek down. It went down Deep Creek and came out at Rocklea, the property our grandfather owned where you cross the Towamba River. There used to be a butter factory at Fulligan's and they used to pack the butter out down this creek about one hundred years ago; it was only wide enough for a pack horse. I used to travel that a fair bit driving cattle to Burragate and before that we'd snig wattlebark out of there with bullock teams. – William Farrell (Figure 33).

This country was not as rich as the Bega valley to the north and more remote. People supplemented their holdings by using large areas of Crown Land to run cattle and dairy cows.

There were a lot of horse trails; people rode the bush all the time. People drove cattle from Rocky Hall to Wog Wog.

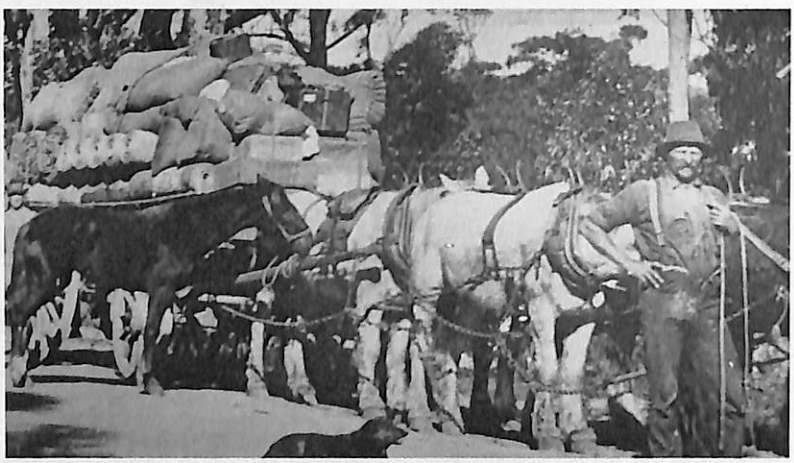

Figure 33: William Farrell's great uncle Jim Beasley taking a load on the Towamba Road 1910. Photo courtesy William Farrell.

They would come through off the Burragate road with dairy cows, and they had yards built along the way but they didn't own it. It was Crown Land country in those days, but they might've had some kind of a lease, grass leases they were called. It'd be a hundred years ago. It was before the war. They'd milk the cows until they run out of grass and then move on to the next yard. They must have made butter by hand I suppose and packed it out – it wouldn't be milk in those days. They probably only had about fifteen or twenty cows and they'd be milking them by hand.

Dad was a bullock driver some of the time. I even had a bit of a go of it, when I was a young fella. Dad used to cut railway sleepers, strip wattlebark, and trap rabbits. When I was going to school, in the school holidays we helped him do that. My uncle and grandfather had no cars; they rode horses. They'd ride horses in to Burragate and then catch a mail bus. A bus went 6 days a week to Bega; it went through Wyndham to Bega. – William Farrell

Wool was carted from the sheep stations on the Monaro to the coastal steamer port at Merimbula. Aboriginal woman, Cecilia Bond was born in 1910 on the Aboriginal reserve at Delegate and she remembers her grandfather and uncles working with the bullock teams and bringing back oysters for the family to share. They were the first oysters Cecilia had seen and she thought they were rocks.

My grandfather Jack Farrell and his brother and my great-grandfather, carted wool with bullock teams out of Corrowong Station the other side of Delegate. They went out from Delegate to Bombala to Cathcart and over Big Jack Mountain to Rocky Hall, and then back through to Wyndham, then to Merimbula; it was loaded on boats at Merimbula. They also carted a lot of wattlebark stripped around Wyndham and Rocky Hall. It was chopped and bagged in those days. They stacked it on bullock wagons, anything up to five tonnes. The wagons had four wooden wheels with steel around the outside of them. They went from Wyndham. I think the bark mill was at Eden. It was used to tan hides at tanneries. I know they also carted sawn timber off the top of Mt Darragh; there was a saw mill there. – William Farrell

The back of Fulligan's, Wog Wog Station, belongs to the Forestry now. Dad's father used to run bullocks in that country. We ran cattle up at Campbell's Swamp. I've seen remnants of one of the yards, they might be gone now. It was timber, just split posts and an old two rail fence. They would've split the timber, cut the timber where they camped and made the yards there. I suppose they had some sort of a cart and carted their gear and they would've had pack horses. They'd have a draught horse and a cart. We went in on a horse. There were no roads in there.
– William Farrell

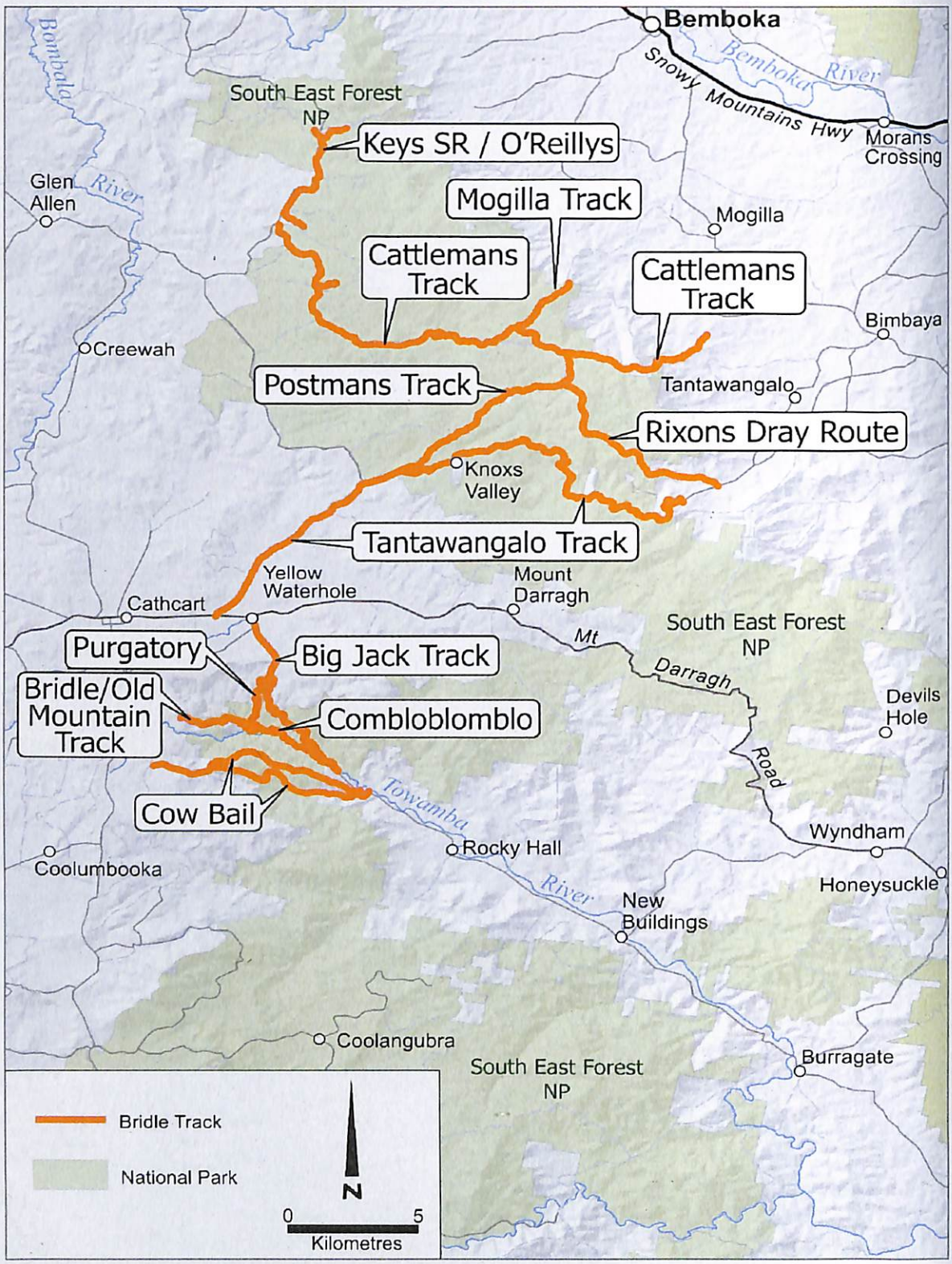

Figure 34: Mapped tracks in the southern section of the region.
Source: NPWS

Another track down from the escarpment was used in the time of Benjamin Boyd in the 1840s to bring cattle and sheep down from his vast holdings in the southern Monaro to the port he developed at Boydtown (see Figure 34).

The Cow Bail Track connected the southern end of the Monaro to the coast. From the bottom of the Big Jack Mountain the trail is still usable up the mountain until you reach the forestry land. The trail then can't be traced because of forestry operations until you get closer to Bombala between Bindaree and Bucky Springs where the trail is visible in places through the heath. The trail diverted at different times because of wet weather. There are still the remains of chimneys on the lower part of the trail. Where the chimneys are there's the remains of an old paddock where they used to put the teams of horses or the teams of bullocks out there for a night on their way. Now old Pat Farrell was one of the last blokes to use bullocks on this one, but in my days I've never heard of them using these ones over here. He would have been taking wool and that sort of thing down from Bombala down to Merimbula.
In the same area there are bunkers and tank traps and also a small fort on the other side of the valley when it was expected that we may get invaded. Now the tank traps were like a heap of logs stacked on top of each other so they couldn't climb over. – David Girvan

Closer to the border with Victoria, smuggler's routes were developed to avoid excise charged at border posts. Cattle could be also be shifted between different regions and sold with new brands.

In the early days before stock transport were introduced cattle from the Monaro would be drove to Port Phillip Bay. Cattle from Bombala, Cooma, Jindabyne and surrounding areas would meet up and head down the Barry Way and onto the Snowy River. When reaching the border the cattle would have to go through a set of Government run toll yards, ear marked and a fee would have to be paid before entering Victoria. It didn't take long for the drovers to work out that they could split the mob in half take one half through the yards and pay for them and the other half they'd take up the Nine Mile at Pinch River to Ingeegoodbee where the cattle would be ear marked in another set of yards [ear marking pliers supplied by the Government illegally]. Three days later the cattle would meet up further down the line at Sugar Buggan and continue the journey. The Government got wind of the procedures going on and placed a trooper on a hill overlooking the Nine Mile to stop this activity happening. Even today this hill is still named as Mt Trooper. – David Girvan

Many many years ago cattle used to go missing off the coast and they were never found in saleyards anywhere down the coast. At the same time a lot of cattle went missing in the Snowy Mountains and were rounded up. Now they were never sold around Cooma. They were never found anywhere. What used to happen down the coast they used to put the cattle out in the mountains in the spring. What used to happen before the cattle got a chance to spread out through the mountains they were rounded up, both ends and the cattle were driven from the Snowy through Cooma through to Countegany and the cattle from the coast were driven up through Belowra to Countegany and they were swapped over. As soon as the cattle got back in the mountains they were branded with the brands and after six months their brand marks healed over. Now the cattle from the coast ended up in saleyards in Tumut and the cattle from the mountains ended up at saleyards at Bega. It had one person co-ordinate both ways. – Colin Schaefer

After the First World War the boys were all away and the bullocks were stock piling. They mustered them all up and drove them to Wagga. They took them up the Ugly Mountain, across to Cooma and out to Wagga from there. They started as calves in the dairy farms in Bemboka and were dumped in the bush in what is now the Brogo Wilderness. They would have mustered them up with horses and dogs. You can't muster that country like you muster in a paddock. You have to put yourself in the right place at the right time, if you thought there was cattle about, camp the night and light a fire and the cattle will always come to the smoke the next morning. – Michael Green

A military role for tracks

When the Second World War broke out the vulnerability of Australia's east coast became apparent, being thinly populated with many small coves and beaches suitable for enemy landings. The south east tracks provided a connection to Canberra and so had to be defended.

You had people sitting over on Brown Mountain. They had blokes stationed there with a radio and as soon as the Japanese hit the coast they were to blow it. Even the Macquarie Pass is the same and Pooh Bear Corner on the Clyde Mountain was the end of that tunnel. They had quite a massive amount of explosives there too. It wasn't just a little charge. She was few tons in there so she would have made a big hole in the side of the mountain. – Colin Schaefer

There was a fellow Jim Sturgiss and in the Second World War they got him to go in the army and survey all the tracks from the Tablelands to the coast, from around Nowra all the way down. I know that he got down to Bendethera. The army would have copies of all those surveyed tracks. – Terry Hart

Major Jim Sturgiss lived in the Sassafras region near Nowra and stayed on in the Army Reserve after serving in the First World War.[46] He re-enlisted at the start of the Second World War and was given the responsibility of surveying all the bridle tracks between the south coast and the Monaro. Later in the war Jim was given charge of the Bega Camp and he surveyed tracks between Bega and the Victorian border. Patrols of the region were also conducted but didn't come across any landing parties, seeing only a few submarines off the coast.

There was of course sparse population scattered throughout the ranges. We would usually stop and chat. They were typical of the lifestyle of the time. On the surface one might wonder how their dairying might sustain them, but the air was often laden with the fragrance of illicit alcohol. We said our good-days and continued on our way (Sneddon, 1995:67).[47]

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46 Sassafras is a small hamlet in the coastal ranges west of Jervis Bay

47 Interview with Jim Sturgiss

Local farmers were valued for their local knowledge and called upon to help out the war effort to defend the country.

The 50 acres, is on the Razorback Fire Trail. The other interesting thing about that track, it was identified as the emergency escape route in the 1940s [for] when the Japanese invaded, apparently the army surveyed it. It was the direct link from Cobargo to Yowie, to Tuross, and was surveyed as the emergency escape route during the Second World War. That is the bottom end of the Razorback. – Michael Green

In the war years there was a man came with army horses, lovely bay horses, and beautiful gear. He came to Cadgee to see Dad and Dad had to take him all out through the mountains. He never said until after the war was over but the army thought there was either a sympathiser or spy; there was someone out in the mountains behind, probably even behind Belowra, sending signals out to sea out to a Japanese sub. So that was one time when local knowledge was needed. And the other time I remember my father going to a meeting and he was one that was selected to lead – because there had to be a burnt earth policy; you had to take everything with you; your chooks, your goats, your sheep, your cattle. And they were taking everything from the coast to the tablelands to get away from the Japanese invasion.
– Catherine Lawler

After the war, things changed in the remote areas. Private properties were cut up for soldier settlements bringing new people into the area, often without much understanding of the local environment and how to manage it. Another big change was the increasing use of bulldozers for clearing land and for making roads and dams, which opened up the country even more.

Everything was changing after the war years, Belowra was cut up for soldier settlement, Dad was upset by it, but I was devastated because I loved Belowra, I still love Belowra. I had my parents pretty worried, I was determined to marry a soldier settler so I could go back to Belowra! But anyway that didn't work out. The government took over a lot of big properties that they thought may not have been producing enough. It was not just at Belowra, it happened all over the place, all over NSW. They would put soldier settlers on the land, so the soldiers were given land and the owners were compensated but probably not to the right value. Then they were given the place, and they just couldn't cope, because, I'd say, those old stockman, in particular, my father Basil Carden and Super Sutherland, they did what we know now as mosaic burning. They kept the bush burnt and the cattle run in the bush all through the winter. The new settlers did not keep up their burning; it all went by the board. To get back to the solider settlers, they did not have a hope in making a living off the land they were given because they did not burn it. Not just here, there are stories like this all over. Belowra as an example, the soldier settler families did not have a hope of making a good living there, because they did not have enough land.
– Catherine Lawler

Wandella Creek. Photo: Sue Norman

Chapter 7
Back then it was the road

In those days communication was only by people riding horseback; I'd like to show you part of our bridle track here at Woolla and show you how well made it is. We talk about these tracks, some of them were routes that would go up over ridges and you'd have to know your way through. But others were very well made tracks. They went from, something like the Shoebridge Track, which was constructed with government funds, and with passing bays for pack horses, to just an animal track. And then in the middle range you've got the track that went up the river here, which is properly benched on steep slopes. I could take you to a place just down here where you can see where it's been cut and filled. And therefore to do that, there must have been, fairly regular traffic going up and down the river. So back then it was the road. – Peter Smith

What do the tracks look like, what were they like when in use and how did they change over time? Perhaps the best way to understand the tracks is to consider what traffic was using them, what was being transported and how they were maintained.

The Tarlinton track would have been quite easy to ride it and they would have taken the easiest path and they would have followed the cattle tracks around the contours of the ridges and back to water. So in the easier country it would have been quite open but in the steeper, more rugged sections it would have naturally closed in and narrowed down to like a bridle track, about 1.5 metres wide, zig-zagging around trees here and there and then they would have hit the open country again, it'd be easier going.
– Richard Tarlinton

A bridle trail was probably two metres wide; most of the bridle trails were between properties. We always referred to them actually as bridle tracks but the one that shows on the map as The George's, is a pack track. And the same with The Shoebridge Track – it was really made to pack things in. They were access to those properties. They made sure that they could pack on them if they wanted to.
– Brian Clark

After settlements were established the tracks were used to keep in touch with markets, family and friends, government offices and work opportunities. Because of the remoteness and ruggedness of the land, selected bridle tracks and pack horses were the only way to get around. Animals were driven to market on foot and tracks were made to access markets as they developed.

Vehicles associated with horses and bullocks were drays, wagons, coaches and slides. These were used well into the twentieth century in the more remote areas.

The old tip drays, or drays, they were the big heavy, wagons – they were work wagons; they used them to cart anything heavy. They used one or two horses, sometimes three. They might have two horses in the pole in the front and then one in front of them again, or most of the drays they were just with the shafts and they'd have one horse sometimes two horses. They might put another horse in front if they were really big loads (Figure 35).

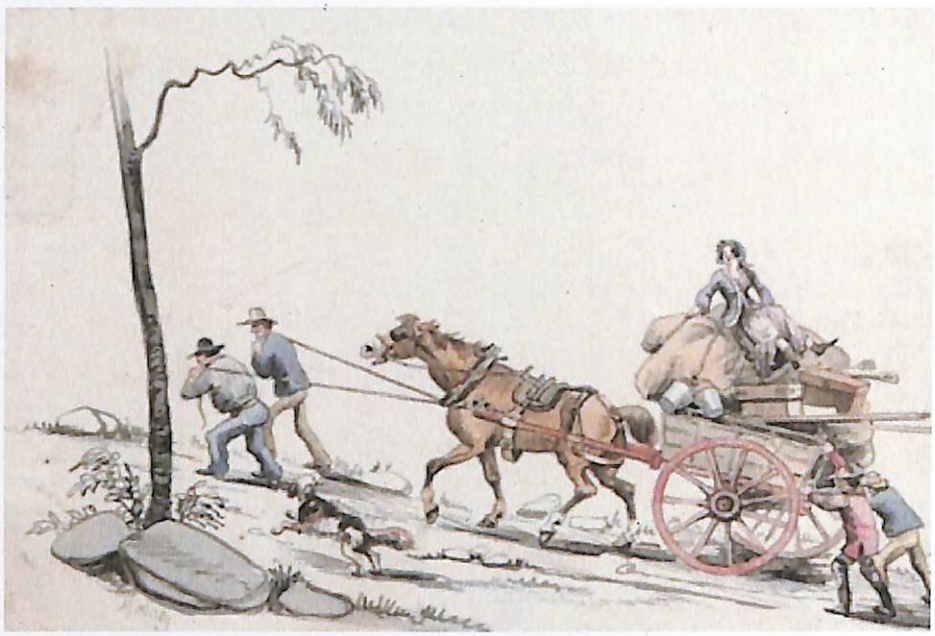


Figure 35: George Lacy Oh my goodness gracious, I'll be off. Hold on Poll, my girl, all right! c. 1860. Source: National Library of Australia

Figure 36: George Lacy Bullock Team c.1860.
Source: National Library of Australia

The old wagons, they were a bit like the wool wagons; great big wheels. They never used those a lot; they used them probably more at Araluen and the goldfields, but they never used them a lot on the farms... They were designed to carry big loads of say corn or dirt or firewood. The bullock teams they were different again, you used those on the big wagons. Old Jack used to tell me about when they were taking the logs in the Mitchell's Mill, which was in Narooma, and they used to take them to the head of the Wagonga Inlet. The logs are still there where they used to use [them] for skids. The bullocks used to bring the logs out of the bush. They had what they called a jinker; sometimes they'd drag them on chains. [When] they used to use the wagons they'd have a pole on them rigged up so they could pull them with the bullock team. And they had a brake system on them, so they wouldn't run up over them (Figure 36).

And then the other thing that they used a lot, particularly around the farms, for just running around, was a slide. Now most of the slides, all they were was a forked stick, just like a wishbone on a chook. And they'd put planks across it, like to make a deck... The only trouble is they had no brakes, but on the front of it they'd put a hook in there so they could hook a horse's shivel bar on it. And they used those a terrible lot, around the farms for moving different stuff - carrying water, particularly water, they'd have drums on them and they'd just, take it down to the river, fill up the drums, pull them up to the house and leave them there then.

Coaches had to use the roads. Well they had a coach road going through to Araluen like up the river but that sort of didn't work too good because of the floods and that's why they put The Shoebridge in. The coach road went from Moruya to Araluen, but I think they said there was something like twenty two crossings they had to cross the river... well you imagine with the flooding what it would be like. But apparently the road, this Araluen road now, it very much followed the old coach road. They just couldn't get supplies to them there see there was a big population in Araluen then. There was a coach road that went from Sydney to Melbourne. – Brian Clark

Logs were tied to the back of the vehicle to help with braking on steep hills. The first dray down the mountain from Araluen on its own wheels was in 1834 when Alexander Weatherhead and his wife travelled down to work for John HaW Don at Bergalia near Moruya. The mountain was very steep and 'they slung not a sapling but a good sized tree behind the dray' (Weatherhead, 1984).

Bush skills and bush men – Super Sutherland

Once a track was found the successful use of it depended on the bush skills of the horsemen and women. Experience would teach the folly of taking the wrong route. They were alone and a wrong turn could add days and miles of effort to the cost of horses, riders and stock.
Those old bush men were so good that they would find the best route possible; droving cattle and loaded pack horses they will not go straight up a hill. They go 'gap jumping'; they go from ridge to ridge and through the gaps. If you went today, you would not find a better track, nor a better way or a more direct route. They had the knack of doing that. It is important that we realise that and keep those tracks preserved.
– Catherine Lawler

One of the bush men remembered fondly by locals is *Super Sutherland.* Super was the grandson of W D Tarlinton's first child Sarah and Daniel Sutherland, who worked as a stockman for Tarlinton on the Wadbilliga and Yowrie holdings. Super lived at Spring Mountain at the northern tip of the Belowra valley and would travel up the Wadbilliga River to connect with the road at Yowrie to get supplies and sell stock (Figure 37). He built rock cairns at his resting spots, by adding a rock each time he stopped;

The butcher from Cobargo would come out to Yowrie. He'd buy the rabbit skins and he'd also bring any orders, like the groceries. That is the track that Super used the most. Yowrie to Belowra, we talk about it as the 'Yowrie Track', but it will go down on the map as Barren Jumbo Track. That is the Barren Jumbo Track from Belowra over the Yowrie. There are rock cairns on the Barren Jumbo track from Belowra to Yowrie, Super did them too. There are some in different places; anywhere you'd stop to give the cattle a spell.
– Catherine Lawler

On the ridge going down to Belowra there's a monument of stone where Super used to boil his billy. He'd put a stone on a stone every time he boiled his billy. It used to be on the track but I was told that a bulldozer had flattened it when they done the track. It's a bit sad isn't it? If they were well versed in the history of it then it will be preserved. It related back to that certain person that used that trail for droving. It was a stopping point, a half-way point to give his horses and cattle a rest and while they rested he had a cup of tea, he boiled the billy. And when it was time to move again he put a stone on a stone and it marked a certain point. If the area was more populated well somebody probably would have built a shelter there, who knows?
– Richard Tarlinton

Figure 37: Douglas Thomson, Dick Peisley and Super Sutherland at Wadbilliga 1946. Photo courtesy Fergus Thomson

Super Sutherland was famous for his sardine tins tacked to trees. Everywhere Super went, he'd eat sardines as they were easy to pack, and use the sardine tin for virtually everything. Seeing a sardine tin in a tree was a good indicator where Super had been, as he used them to mark tracks. He also used them as soap dishes and candle holders.
– Yvonne Thomson

Super Sutherland was my grandmother's brother. The last thing old Super ever said to me when he was in Bega Hospital before he died, was "I bet you haven't been up Woila Creek yet"? I can remember him telling me, "When you're going up the ridge" he said "you keep Breakfast Creek on the right". Righto Super! That was in August in the year he died, he never come out of hospital. The following March I organised a team and we went out back to Belowra with the pack horses and we headed up Woila Creek. We followed Woila Creek up and there's a spot up there, Burns got a little strip of private land up there in the middle of the National Park, we camped there the night and the next day we rode up towards Euranbene Mountain. We're walking and scratching around looking for this damn track 'cause we tried to go straight up – it didn't work that way, you had to go up Breakfast Creek and then come back up the side.

Up the top on the Euranbene Mountain, when we first went there, there was the biggest blaze I've ever seen on a tree. It would have been the best part of fifteen, eighteen inches wide and it could have been anything up to two foot long. And the thing was, on that particular tree, it had a blaze on the side of the tree which meant that that tree is where you turned.... But that tree's disappeared over the years and no one seems to know what happened to it. It must have blown over. You'll see the track it's worn in a little bit and if the people are using it you can see where they have been. If people stop using it, then it grows over and goes out of sight. But mostly where a tracks going there's always a bit of a gap through where the track has always been and that's what I always mainly look for, the gaps. – John Davidge

Marking tracks

'The Bemboka Tree' is a route marker, there are three different tracks, the Carriage Drive, the Georges Gully to Nimmitabel, and Nobby's Ridge; they all go off that tree. It is a pretty significant old tree it is at the cross road. We often meet at the Bemboka tree. – Rowan Alcock

On the Belowra-Nerrigundah Track there was a big ant bed and it was hollowed out and if there was bad weather they'd just shelter in the ant bed. It was fairly big and it was there forever, but when they were logging out there one day the bulldozer operator decided he was going to knock it over. That was one of our landmarks, we would use it as a reference point, and say "oh, it was just near the ant bed" or "it was just near the leaning tree". – Fergus Thomson

Tracks were often marked with blazes cut into the bark of trees. These blazes would have been fresh and clear to the men who followed the W D Tarlinton track to the rich country of the Bega valley just a year after he first came down.

A blaze is up high you know, it is at eye level when you are mounted on a horse. To see a mark on a tree, you have to have your eye in. You blazed a track, you marked the trees. The marks were made with a good sharp axe, a big deep cut right through into the sap. The bark has grown around the blazes. The marks were not too regular, you need to remember that they were proper Bushmen, and once they'd get onto a ridge you're going to stay on the ridge for a while, then they'd see a blaze to mark a turn off, sometimes the blaze would be on both sides of the ridge. If you came to a real steep place you'd start looking for a blaze. A blaze doesn't hurt the tree, the explorers were blazing trees. – Catherine Lawler

Other markers on tracks can show where to turn and to direct the rider into areas they wouldn't otherwise go when finding the way;

On top of Ugly Mountain down towards the Billy Can, there is a stone arrow. You are on top of a fairly sharp ridge and you look to the east and it's a jungle and the arrow points to go into the jungle, because you wouldn't otherwise. That is a permanent mark, but I suppose but if the wrong wombat scratched there I'd be gone. I don't know who made it, it has been there forever. – *Michael Green*

Track markers are vulnerable to disappearing over time and now the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and satellite tracking helps locate tracks with more certainty.

Tackling Brown Mountain – the Green and Alcock families

Many of the tracks shown in Figure 38 below owe their origins to settlement and movement of the Green and Alcock families, especially their movements over the coastal range to the far south coast.

The Green/Alcock families still own properties leading south from John Green's original land selection at Doolondondoo at the head of the Tuross River. Rowan Alcock's great-great grandfather, Arthur Alcock, bought or leased 15,000 acres at Greenland in 1857. Greenland is on the escarpment named by GA Robinson in 1844 because it was as 'cold as Greenland'. In 1906 Arthur's son, Charles Arnold (CA), bought Crystal Brook at the foot of Brown Mountain.

When CA still owned Greenland, he and his family would spend winter on Crystal Brook at Bemboka and then the summer at Greenland. The family travelled up and down the mountain by horse and buggy using the Carriage Drive.[48] (Figure 39).

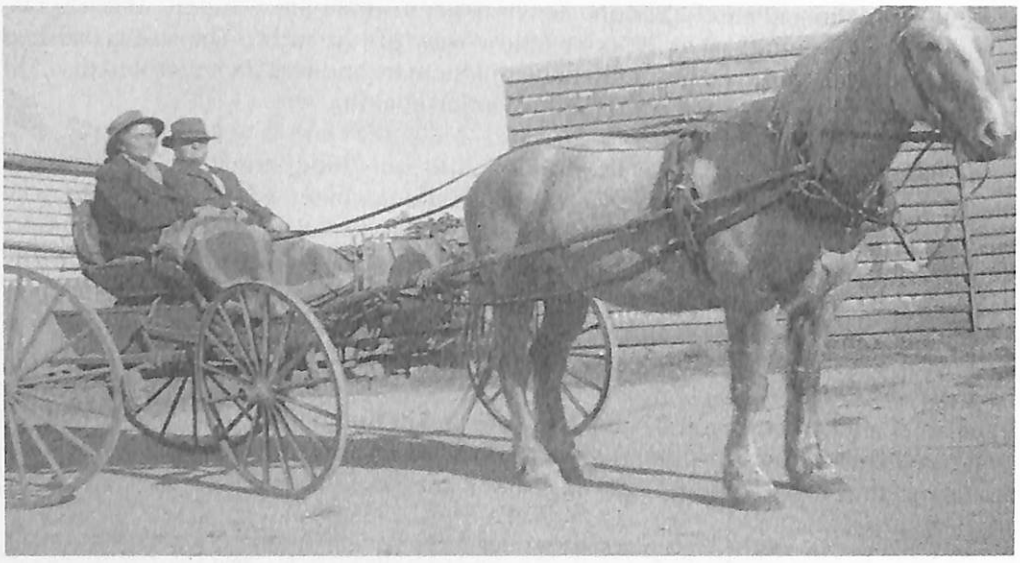


Figure 39: Charles Alcock and friend in Bemboka.
Source: Alcock (2006)

48 Betty Robinson's notes in Crystal Brook Bemboka 1906 -2006 Robin Alcock.

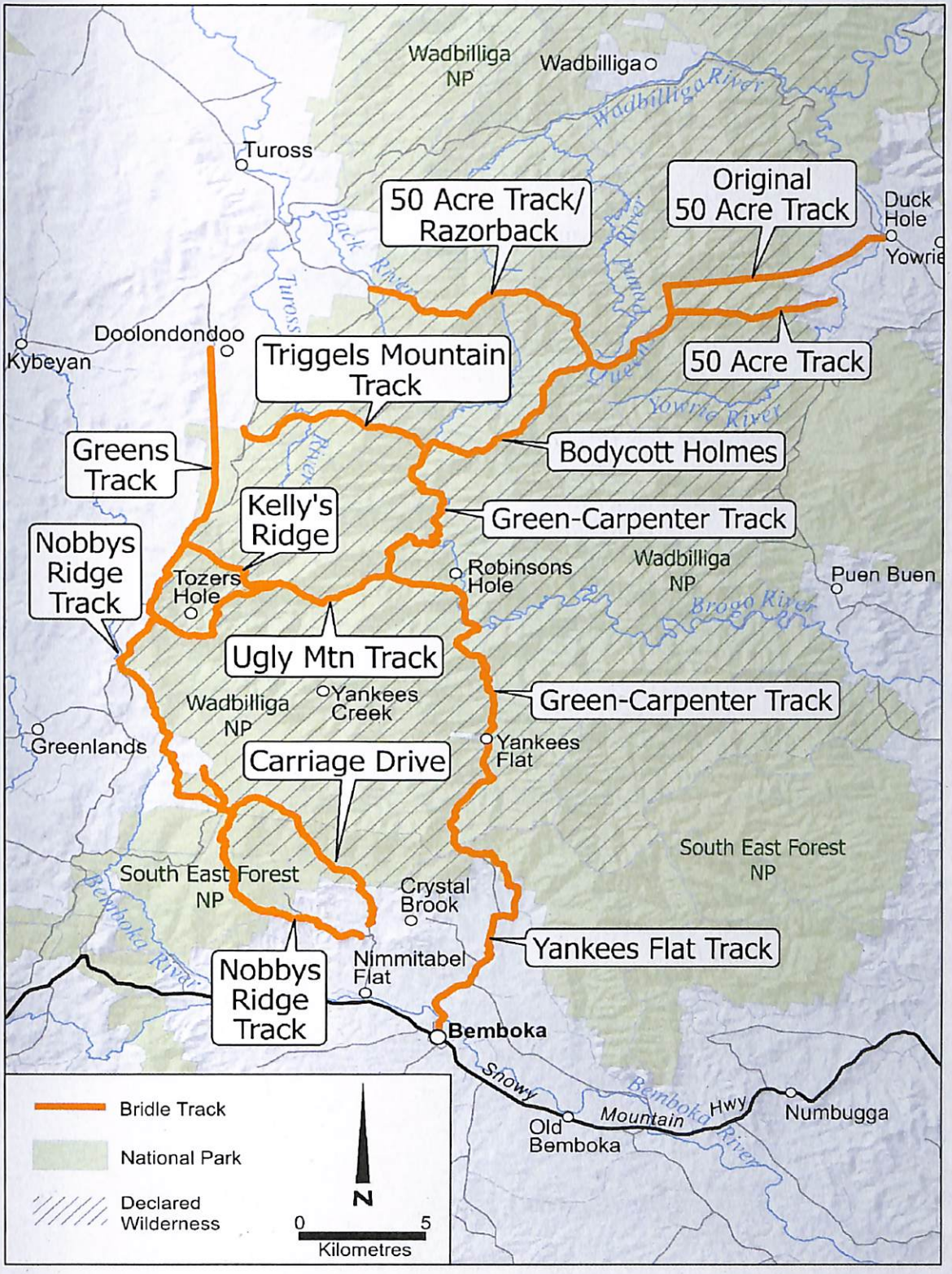


Figure 38: Map of Doolondondoo-Bemboka area. Source: NPWS

Before the road over Brown Mountain was put in a network of tracks was used, and continued to be used after (see Figure 38 for map of tracks):

The Nobby's Ridge goes from Bemboka to Nimmitabel or Kybeyan. Originally people said it was the main Cooma -south coast link. The Brown Mountain Road was not there then. The Nobby's Ridge was a bridle track; it was the fastest access from Cooma to the south coast, and was used by Ryrie, George Augustus Robinson, and Lambie. They all used it coming from Nimmitabel for their survey work. They were doing government business, not moving cattle. Better roads and trucks took over in the 1960s, certainly by the 1970s, so until they got the trucks going to transport livestock with reliable roads, the tracks were being used until then. So there was the Aboriginal use, but from the early settlement it was used by, for example, Augustus [Robinson] and then up until 1960s. – Michael Green

George Augustus [Robinson] said he went across 'Werrinook Ridge'. We used to call it 'Green's Track' and these fellas called it 'Alcock's Track'! Jonas Alcock was the last of the boat people, he came out in the boat when he was ten and he lived until the 1930s. He had a property near here too. So it was also called 'Jonas's Track', it was simply named by the people who were using it at the time. It had one hundred and fifty, sixty years of traffic, horses and cattle. – Rowan Alcock

In 1930, 17 year old Stan Alcock took the wrong turn coming down Brown Mountain from Kybeyan to Bemboka, missing the valley and coming down onto the Brogo River. Over the next four days hundreds of volunteers from all over the district scoured the mountains on horseback and on foot. One of the searchers, Mr John Darcy, said 'that they had covered over thirty miles in some of the roughest country he had ever travelled over.' Stan found his own way back to Crystal Brook and was discovered sleeping on the verandah of the old house. The community put on a Welcome Social and Presentation for Stan at the Bemboka Hall with three orchestras providing the music and a new saddle inscribed with tributes was presented to Stan for 'the Australian grit demonstrated while he was lost on the bush.'[49]

49 Betty Robinson's notes in Crystal Brook Bemboka 1906 -2006 Robin Alcock.

The Brown Mountain route, established in 1860 as a bridle track, was upgraded in 1889 to accommodate vehicles, following local lobbying (Platts, 1989). (Figure 40).

The only late road in this area that wasn't Aboriginal was the Brown Mountain Rd. Green and Alcock, Hammond and Triggle did the initial finding of here, over the Brown Mountain, around 1857. There was a hundred quid put out to find a trafficable road between Nimmitabel and Bemboka. 1887 they put that in, around then it was either built or surveyed. They constructed it to link Tathra to the railway at Nimmitabel. The Nimmitabel Railway Station was not open when the Brown Mountain Rd was, but the Cooma one was. It wasn't long after that the Nimmitabel Railway Station opened. There is a photo of the barbeque when they opened the Brown Mountain Rd; they had a bullock on a split. They would have been tough and chewy! - Anthony Green

Figure 40: Celebrations for the opening of the Brown Mountain Road 1887.
Source: Cooma Monaro Express 4/10/1973.

Hiding from society

People on the fringes of society could hide away in isolated areas until their past caught up with them or disaster struck. Their graves are landmarks and the relevant section of that track is sometimes associated with events that led to the demise of the person.

There is a story about tribal retribution for breaking social laws in Aboriginal society that has been passed down through the pioneer families (Figure 41):

At the junction of Wandella and the Tuross Rivers there's a grave – Port Philip Neddy. Well he got knocked on the head there because he stole a woman. Apparently. I've ridden past a few times. It's right where the Wandella runs in to the Tuross and it's just up on the eastern side of the Wandella and the southern side of the Tuross. In that corner there. That's where Tarlinton is supposed to have gone up Wandella.
– John Davidge

Figure 41: Port Phillip Neddy's grave. Photo courtesy NPWS

Naming tracks

Camps and locations along the tracks were often named after memorable events that occurred there; 'Print Ass Flat' up there on Nobby Track, now the story where that name came from was one of our mutual great, great uncles, his horse bucked and pelted him and when he landed he landed on the seat of his pants, and it is a little boggy flat... anyway there was a big impression of his bum in the flat. That was in the spring and came in a dry summer and there was an impression of his bum! That was on the Nobby. To ride past there, no matter who's with you, you tell them that story and have a laugh when you ride across Print Ass Flat, remembering someone. That uncle was born in 1880, so that happened a long time ago. It sounds bad laughing at someone's misfortune, but there wouldn't be a hundred metres that one of us doesn't have a memory of something happening there, good bad or indifferent. Whether it's a crooked horn bullock got down over the edge and a black and white dog went down and bit him on the leg.
– Michael Green

Over the years many tracks were named after people or events that occurred along their length. Tracks named after people capture the history of the area and the different people who used them.
Georges Pack Track was named for the Georges family that settled at Bendethera from the 1863. Shoebridge was the store owner at Araluen and built the track to carry stores from Nelligen to the gold fields. The Charles Byrne track was used by Charles Byrne in the 1850s and later by SW Bate to shift cattle between properties they owned at Belowra, Cadgee and Tilba and to market in Braidwood. The Jump Up, also known as the Badja Track went straight up the mountains to the west of Belowra to Nimmitabel and Cooma.

There is bridle track at Cathcart, called the Cow Bail Track that goes to the coast road to Rocky Hall. It starts at Woolangubra Inn and heads down to Rocky Hall, to the south. They bought the goods from Eden to Cathcart, and onto Bombala. The Cow Bail was wide enough for bullock wagons. It used to be the old link from the coast to the tablelands with the bullock team. There are a few old chimneys along it where they had a camp overnight and had their horses in yards. You can see the stone work still today. It was used for general cargo, food and things from the deep sea-port at Eden, or any port along the coast.

There was also the Postman's Track over to the Snowy, just below the junction of the Maclaughlin and the Snowy. It comes towards Bombala. My brother in law used to talk about it, he called it the Postman's Bridle Track, they delivered mail on it I suppose. – Reg Cootes

The 'Carriage Drive' was last used in 1948 to travel between Crystal Brook and Greenland, my grandfather had both properties and they'd travel between the two - summer and winter. They'd travel cattle between the two and take all their clothes and mattresses. My uncle said that in 1942 they took the dairy herd up there, they milked it the morning down here and stripped the dairy plant out and walked the dairy herd out to Greenland. The Carriage Drive and Nobby track link up, up the top. There is 'Kapok Flat' where a bullock ripped into a mattress and deposited kapok all around. We've always said 'Lambie's Flat' on the Nobby, he camped there and would leave his sulky up there and ride his horse down the mountain to Bemboka; he would have been surveying all the properties as he was the Crown Land Surveyor. – Rowan Alcock

The other significant story was when my family's sheep were missing. In those days Police somehow got involved in the search and the policeman was carrying a pistol and they were camping for the night and they didn't have any water so he walked down the hill to try and find some water... and in the process of going down and back he realised he lost his pistol and apparently it was incredibly significant – you must never lose your pistol. They searched for a long time but he couldn't find it. That is how it became to be called Policeman's Gap.
– Fergus Thomson

Battling the elements and the cattle

The weather could change quickly at the edge of the escarpment. The people on the tracks drove mobs of cattle or sheep through steep mountainous country where sudden storms or snow were a constant threat. Precipitous gullies could suddenly turn into raging creeks blocking the way for travellers. It was dangerous and hard work.

Say they go in from Bemboka to Robinsons Holle, it comes in pouring rain then a hell of a flood, there's no way you could get back to Bemboka. So you go over Ugly Mountain to Doolondondoo. Nobby Ridge and Carriage Drive are pretty much flood-proof, but if you are going into Robinsons Holle, your floods are very savage. We've got radar now and we still get it wrong, so a hundred years ago you didn't know what the weather was going to do tomorrow. – Michael Green

The Slaughterhouse Trail is on Rance, Dan's property. My father-in-law, Joyce's dad, he had leasehold country there. My wife Joyce grew up out there. There is a track going through Bosses Gully, down to the junction of the Snowy and the Maclaughlin, or the Quidong, to Bungarby. In those days the Jindabyne Dam was not in and the Snowy was a major river. You could go through on a sunny morning and during the day the ice would melt and become unpassable in flood before the day ended, so it flooded not due to rain but due to snow melt. It raged through. The Slaughterhouse track goes into a steep gully where two mountains come together and in the gully in between you cross the creek twenty-nine times. It was rugged so the horse had to be good on his feet. There were annual picnic races at Bungarby. My wife Joyce rode from Rance through Bosses Gully and over to the races, it would have taken them four or five hours. – Reg Cootes

In times of drought, the cattle [would be] taken out to Belowra for agistment. Dad worked for the Sam Bate Estate, not for the man. John Bate and Douglas Thomson were left as the executors. John lived in Bodalla, at Central Farm. Sometimes he bought good horses and cattle and sometime he didn't. One time he bought cattle and sold them to Harry Grigg out at Krawarree near Braidwood on the W D Tarlinton Track. Dad and Bob fixed the yards up near Woila Creek. They took the bullocks Harry had bought that far that night after a lot of trouble. These bullocks wouldn't drive and wouldn't travel. It is hard on horses, dogs, and stockmen. They won't walk out, they just won't go. They got them to the yards and through the night they stampeded six mile back to Belowra! To the day he died Bob would talk about the sound of the cattle stampeding.

They came back to Belowra the next morning, and found the cattle stuck in a corner. Super Sutherland and Jessly Thomson, Super's brother in law, they were there trapping rabbits. They offered to help. Super and Jessly had only intended to help them some of the wa y, but they had so much trouble. Heading up the mountain it started to rain, then sleet, then it turned into snow. They got to a swamp called Wambagugga, Harry Grigg owned that as well as Khan Yunis Station. Dad always said they thought they'd be lame horses, because they had a build-up of snow on their shoes. One hoof would clear of shoe while the other three built up. When they got to Khan Unis Super's hands were frozen. There was never a meal so welcome as the meal Mrs Grigg had for them.
– Catherine Lawler

Keeping the tracks open

Regular use of the tracks ensured they remained open and passable. Riders had to commit to a continuous effort to maintain tracks. It could be simply breaking small branches while riding by or cutting fallen trees or rebuilding retaining walls and clearing drains;

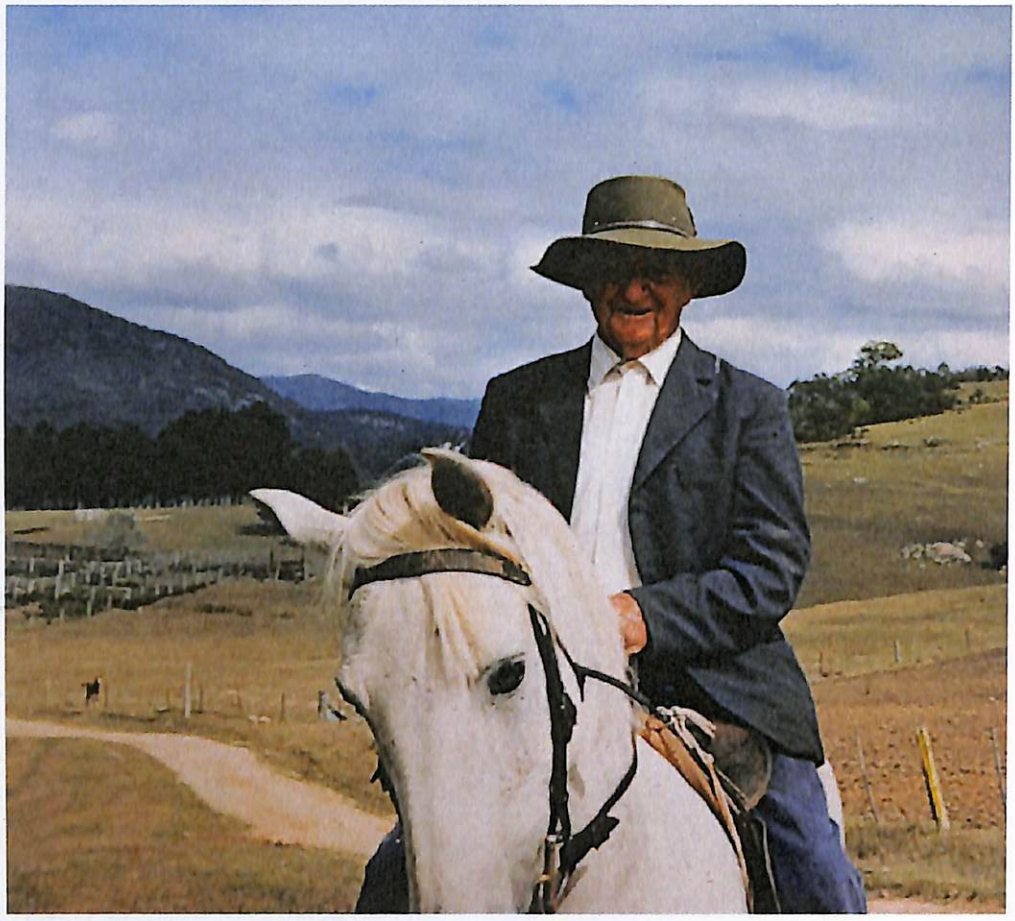
I'd say all bush-men take very great pride in their hats – I suppose I should put the bush-women in there too. But now I've seen them clearing tracks and it's [at] head height. But now hang on a minute; I'm on a big horse and I'm up there so it really made, I can't say a tunnel, but that sort of effect. You could see the track because it was kept open. There were no limbs across it where you had to do that... And always, going along, just going along you'd do that with your hand. That stopped that little twig becoming a big limb that was going to go across there. And many times you were riding in the night, so the track had to be so wide and clear of branches at head height when you're on a big horse.
– Catherine Lawler

We used to maintain the bush, which is really different to what it is now. There were hundreds of head of cattle running through from Nerrigundah in this catchment. The only reason you could do it was we used to maintain it- we used to burn it and get green pick for the cattle. You'd take the cattle out at the end of winter and you'd drop a match and you'd come back in the spring and it'd be good. Cattle are really smart; they know where it's warm. So you could always go to a certain ridge and you'd know the cattle will go there to camp of a night as it's warm. Also water played a part and where you'd burned there'd be good feed. You'd have some old cattle that'd been there for years and they educated the younger cattle. It was generational with the cattle, and generational with the people that were working them.
– Fergus Thomson

In some cases maintenance of the bridle tracks was taken on by local government who paid local residents to ensure they remained clear. Nellie Davis and Allan Rankin were paid £10 a year to maintain the track along the Deua River.

In the 1930s, so people said, council used to pay people to clear the track. Jimmy Clullee's father Bill; that was one of his jobs. Council used to pay their workers, to go through there and clear it with the Georges who were left here. They maintained it in the depression times.
– Kerry Reid

Parts of the original W D Tarlinton track then formed a road, back in the gold rush days, and the Shire had maintained it, down to the junction of the Wandella Creek and then on to Cadgee. It's still a gazetted road and it's called Wattle Grove Road I believe. They maintained it for horse and buggy because it was the main thoroughfare to Eurobodalla and Nerrigundah from Cobargo and Bega areas. It became a postal route in those days... the mail service developed, between Bega and Moruya. Before that is was just a bridle trail, the Tarlinton bridle trail.
– Richard Tarlinton



Super Sutherland at Belowra, March 1988.
Photo: Yvonne Thomson

Chapter 8
Everything we did was on a horse: Living memories from the tracks.

The horses were just our everyday life. You used to get up in the morning and put a feed in their nosebag. I don't think we spoilt them but we certainly looked after our horses. You know if you were going around your rabbit traps you caught the horse and fed it and then you went around your traps. Everything we did was on a horse.

– Fergus Thomson

When you're on a horse and you have that connection. It's very different to walking somewhere. Well, it's still lovely and it's still nice I admit. I don't know there's something special I suppose again because of our history with how the whole place was settled. It was by horse of course, there was no other way, in those days and when my great grandfather went out there, there was no other way but by horse. So everyone who was there in those days went by horse. Most of our visitors came that way on horses, but not many people came out by car, so it was just part of our life when we were young.

– Jen Mathieson

A bridle track is only as good as the horse and rider using it. Relying on a living creature for transport developed a sympathy and sensitivity to the needs of each other on the journey:

When you're a long way from home the horse is your only means of transport. You have to think of what's best for him before you think of what's best for you. You need to have a bond with your horse because you don't want him to nick off on you and leave you stranded. And you need to look after his welfare first and foremost, because your welfare depends on his welfare. So you always pick a safe area to ride, as far as possible. You don't endanger them to any great extent – and that's regardless of whether its wombat holes or quicksand in a river shift.
– Richard Tarlinton

The stories of the tracks survive in the living memories of the people connected to them some of whom had their stories recorded for this book. They grew up on remote properties in a corner of the Australia that was slow to develop. The southern section of the Princes Highway along the east coast between Sydney and Melbourne was unsealed until the late 1960s. Catherine Lawler is a descendant of the Rankins of Canoolie and grew up in Belowra, Wattlegrove and Cadgee. Her father worked for the Samuel Bate estate, the owners of Belowra and all the leasehold land around, and the family, mother Sylvia with Catherine and her brother Bob, lived between Belowra and Wattlegrove:

Dad in the Depression he went to Belowra trapping rabbits. He first worked on the Neringla station at the back of Araluen then went to Belowra. He and a mate, Les Jeffery from Moruya, got a fencing contract at Belowra. The stockman out there, Jack O'Mara, was getting old and Dad got the job as head stockman. [He] went out there in 1934; I was only two at the time. We stayed at Belowra a little while because there was only the old hut with two rooms and a stringy bark roof. Then we came to Wattlegrove, just down on the Tuross River.
– Catherine Lawler

Transporting supplies and people between the two locations was done by pack horse along the Charles Byrne track and the SW Bate track before the road was put in:

A string of pack horses was loaded with all that you needed, there was no road so you had everything from the butcher and baker in Bodalla, who'd come to the post office at Cadgee. Once a week the butcher could bring the bread and meat, and the following week the baker would do likewise. That is where you'd get your paper from. So we went there once a week. We'd stay at Belowra for a week or more at a time. Mum would stay at Belowra if it was really busy and if the men needed meals when they came in. Otherwise she'd be at Wattlegrove. At branding or weaning time, she'd be cooking out there on an open fire, no stove, only camp ovens and whatever. And we got the water from the creek, lots of billies and kettles and camp ovens. She cooked, stewed or baked meals, there would always be cold corn meat. She could get a meal, it didn't matter.

There were no phones, so people would just turn up and she would feed then. We didn't eat rabbit, but if a visitor came from Sydney and they shot a rabbit, mum would cook it for them. We always just ate beef and when we were at Wattlegrove we grew our own pigs, and grew our own vegetables. You did everything the hard way. I knew the Sam Bate Track back to front. From 1936 to after the war, I used it a lot. It was the most direct way, and the best way, to Belowra from Wattlegrove. If you stopped to boil the billy or the quart pot, it would take a good six hours at pack horse pace. You could do it faster if you needed.

One particular time, Dad and I came with pack horses. We left Belowra before daylight. We went through Nerrigundah to pick up the meat and the bread that the butcher from Bodalla would bring out. We got to Wattlegrove and we collected potatoes, pumpkins, whatever was grown there, and packed that fresh produce. We always had a good garden. When we were there packing up, a man called Jack Motby arrived and he and Dad talked for too long. Before we got to the other side of what is now the Belowra Road, it got dark. I was riding Bob's good grey horse called 'Joker' and you could get an empty chaff bag and put a water melon or a pumpkin and put it over the back of the saddle, so you'd have pumpkins balanced one either side of the saddle. But it got dark and we had another 12 mile to go at least. By the time we got going up Belowra Creek in the dark, I am telling you now, Joker was grey and I could not see his ears.

When we got to Belowra Mum and Bob came out with a hurricane lamp, I must have been cold and stiff and sore, and Bob came over to help me get off and he saw that I had a water melon each side and he said 'god almighty you'll have the back cut off him', meaning that I would have given the horse a sore back. But the next day his horse, Joker, was fine. The whole way up I was thinking how proud Mum and Bob would be to get the water melons! – Catherine Lawler.

Catherine and her brother rode their ponies the twelve miles from Wattlegrove to Cadgee to attend the school there (Figure 42). When Bob left school to work at Belowra with his father, Catherine was sent to St Mary's at Moruya, staying with her aunt in town. By the time she left school at fourteen the family had moved to Cadgee.

Once I left school in 1947 I was happy to come back and work at Cadgee. We didn't just do cattle work at Cadgee, but I loved cattle, so did Dad, so did Bob. We grew a lot of crops, corn, peas, beans, you name it we grew it. Our heart was in the cattle work. People would come at branding and mustering time. It was work but it was good fun riding the horses and working with the dogs. There was nothing like the cattle work. Dad loved the bush and that's where I got it from, he was a good bushman. It gets in your blood and nothing else takes its place.
– Catherine Lawler

Figure 42: Catherine Lawler with her brother Bob.
Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler

Families living at the edge of the escarpment relied on horses and the ability to ride was valued and admired. Horses were vital for droving and transporting both riders and loads. The personality of each horse could have an influence on the behaviour of its owner.

Jack Mylott told me a story. Dad was going to work at the Moruya granite quarry and he was riding the horse through town [Moruya]. He was carrying an axe and the horse started to buck at the intersection between Queen Street and Vulcan. Jack said, 'your father never let go of the axe, he just rode him out'. The horse bucked and Dad rode him until he stopped bucking. Others would have thrown the axe.
– Catherine Lawler

Once we were bringing in cattle down the river, droving from Belowra to Wattlegrove and Mum was riding a beautiful buckskin mare that we had. Bob, I have never seen anyone use a whip like Bob could, I could hold a piece of paper and he could cut it close to my hand. We were forcing the cattle across the river and this mare she was going to roll and Mum said, 'Bob, whatever shall I do?' He didn't say a word and as he went past he went chop round this mare's hind quarters with his whip and she went across the river like a hydrofoil. It probably wasn't very funny for Mum, but it was hilarious for Bob and I.

All sorts of things would happen, you'd have trouble especially if you're driving weak hungry cattle and it would be a long, long way. But you'd see all sorts of wildlife; the dingoes would follow you along. Belowra has a lot of swamps and bogs. In dry times that was the only green pick. If the cattle were starved and hungry in times of drought, they'd get bogged. Toby was a good old draught horse, you'd put the harness on Toby and put a rope on the beast's horns and get the horse to pull the beast out onto the hard ground. They were very ungrateful; you'd get them out and often they'd charge at you or go back into the bog! Once there was a calf that was too weak to travel and had ticks and things and I remember putting him on the front of the saddle, across the horse's neck, we did all those sort of things, we didn't think anything of it.
– Catherine Lawler

Catherine and her brother Bob were often travelling the bridle tracks alone; there was no way of contacting their mother to let them know where they were and why they were late. No phones – and no mobile reception still! (Figure 43).

I think about it now as a mother, gee she must have been worried plenty of times. Sometimes I returned on my own, or mustering on my own or travelling from Wattlegrove to Belowra on my own, she had no way of ever knowing if we got there. I got lost once, we were going to Wandella one day and across Wandella Creek and into Inskips. I was riding Joker, Bob's horse, Dad was a fair way in front, Joker turned off and started bringing me back home. I didn't know as I didn't know the track well enough. It must have been a while before Dad had missed me. Dad tracked where I turned off and found me, there was only one of two ways to go. The horse started to go home, he was cunning and he had been there a hundred times, and he decided he get home sooner rather than going to Wandella with the cattle! If the horse is any good at all, they will bring you out somewhere. They follow their own steps if you don't pull them about. But if you pull them about they get confused, like a kid. You have to let it go. – Catherine Lawler

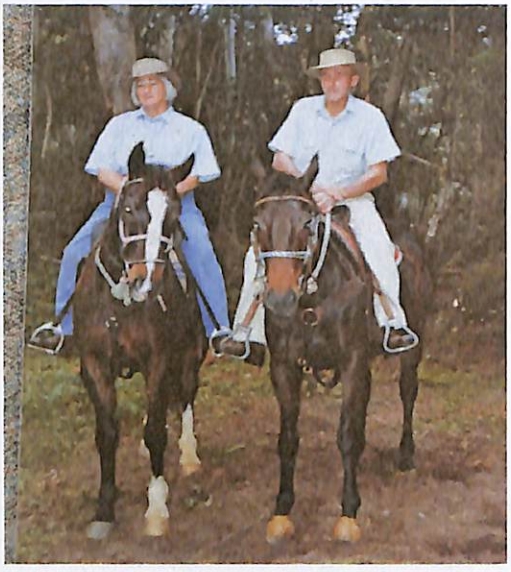


Figure 43: Catherine Lawler and her brother Bob in later years.
Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler

Kerry Reid was born in 1939 in a one-room slab home at The Burra, west of Moruya. He was only seven years old when his father died and his mother had to move around with the children and life was hard. Kerry married Phyllis Robinson and in 1966 they were able to buy the original block at The Burra and build a shack on it. Kerry has a special connection with Bendethera and first walked there with a mate in the 1950s. He has continued to go out on the Georges Pack Track throughout his life, taking his family for holidays every Easter for 14 years and often going out to see the Bendethera wattle covering the hills (Figure 44).

We married and then I had six children in seven and a half years, I can tell you it was wild. In 1966, I was eight months pregnant with Cherree, and Kerry borrowed this horse; in fact they called it a rogue horse because it had been with the rodeo group. He'd just got on it and it's bucking down the paddock and gone out of sight. Heaven only knew what was going to happen. Anyway about four hours later he comes in and he's going, with Jack Millikin, to take this horse to Bendethera. He got on the horse next morning, and then I had to go quietly on both sides and put his feet in the stirrups, then as he started to go out the little gate the horse started bucking again so down the road with one stirrup and boot going off – down the road goes Kerry on the horse. And he just called 'meet me at the other side of the hill'. I drive out, heap of kids in the car, stop the car, go up to the horse, put the stirrup in, put boot on and Kerry's foot in and then he rides off to The Burra to go to Bendethera. That same trip Kerry and Jack Millikin ended up getting flooded in because they went from Bendethera down to Alpine, rode down across all the creeks and Jack had a pack of dogs. This horse of Kerry's who was bucking and everything became the best horse. He was eating out of the top of Kerry's hat in the end. We loved that horse. In 1966 we bought the horse and he became 'Sonny'. – Phyllis Reid

Figure 44: Bendethera wattle or blue bush, Acacia covenyi, Deua National Park.
Photo courtesy NPWS

Growing up in the bush

Fergus Thomson and his older sister Jen Mathieson grew up on Belowra when their father Douglas Thomson and mother Gleam moved out there before the war to manage the SW Bate estate.

They brought everything in and it wasn't always directly there; it was down the Wandella Creek. When one of the Sutherland twins died they took the body down that way. Household things like Mum's first refrigerator came in on a slide or a bullock team.

Figure 45: Gleam Thomson and Syd Hill 1938- first kerosene fridge on a dray, Belowra. Photo courtesy Fergus Thomson

The track to Yowrie was the one we used most. That was the stock route over Barren Jumbo Mountain. That was the one Mum used to ride most with Dad, with the pack horse until they got the road into Belowra. Droving stock from Belowra to the Cobargo sale yards would take 3 days. Often the first night was 'The Junction', a Travelling Stock Reserve at the junction of the Yowrie and the Wadbilliga Rivers. It's just over the mountain, halfway to Yowrie. Super Sutherland's monument is nearby. – Fergus Thomson

Jen spent all her time at Belowra, doing her early schooling by correspondence, before going to the Church of England Grammar School in Canberra. Jen's father took her on her first cattle drive at age six from Belowra to Yowrie.

I don't think he [Dad] ever treated me differently to my brothers; I have to admit I desperately wanted to be a boy because I had a brother who was two years older and a brother two years younger. Though I had an older sister, who's four years older than me, but she had gone away to boarding school and she didn't seem to be doing quite the things we were doing. I just wanted to do whatever the boys did. And so I'd help with whatever was going in the paddocks and just did the boy's things. I considered myself as good as the boys. I didn't doubt and Dad never treated me any differently either. I was used to doing stock work, sheep work and cattle work. I knew how to do it all. I don't think, even though I was only little, I always knew what I had to do and how to do it. – Jen Mathieson

The work of droving cattle and sheep was an exciting time for youngsters; they got to travel the tracks to new places and experience an adventure that was part of the glamour of a bushman's life. Both Fergus and Jen told stories about a droving trip they did as children from Belowra to Pepper Creek on the tablelands to collect a mob of sheep.

Dad had bought a mob of sheep so we rode from Belowra up the Badja Mountain to Pepper Creek to pick them up. It's probably the most significant in that I remember it because I got my first pair of boots! We were going to be out there for the best part of a week, so Mum and Dad gave me a pair of riding boots. There was my father, myself and my sister, Jennifer. We had a bloke working for us, Horace Ramsey, he went with us. That's the first time I'd ever actually saddled a horse. I asked Horace to saddle my horse and he said "Mate, if you can't saddle your horse you stay here". Imagine a seven year old trying to reach up and get a saddle on.

We left from here [Belowra], went the first night to the top end hut – the old Top End. We camped the night there and then we went from there to Badja Springs... It was a long day's ride with a pack horse. We camped out up there. It was interesting because we had dinner that night on this property and it was the first time in my life I'd eaten brussel sprouts! We then met the drovers who were bringing the sheep down to us, next morning at Pepper Creek. It's a travelling stock reserve on the Cooma-Braidwood Rd. And so we met them there and we took over. I think about 350 in the mob. There was a day from there down to the Jump Up and a day from the Jump Up to the poplar trees at Woila, just this side of Woila Creek. And a day back to the hut and then another day or so back here to Belowra. So for a seven year old it was a big trip. This was way back in the 1950s. – Fergus Thomson

Figure 46: Super Sutherland and Horace Ramsey at Ramsey's 90th birthday, Old Belowra, February 1989. Photo courtesy Fergus Thomson

Dad took Ferg and myself up to the Badja, up the Jump-up when Ferg was about seven and I was about nine. It was a really big trip. It was August, it was freezing, I can remember we stayed at Super's Hut up at Haydon's, we used to call the paddock 'Haydon's' it was up in the bush, up the top end of Belowra, for the first night and then we rode up the Badja and to Countegany. We packed up our gear on pack horses. We stayed the night there. We started with a tent the first night, but it was only a little tent and I know Ferg and I slept in the tent, Dad and Ramsey, Ramsey was also with us, they couldn't fit in the tent, but I can remember the next morning it was so cold we went down to have a wash, we had to break the ice in the creek to have a wash. It was freezing (Figure 46).

We picked up the sheep and we rode them down the mountain, we had a couple of nights to get down, but because some of them were ewes and a couple of them lambed. I had to carry the lambs on my horse that were just born because they couldn't keep up through the bush. Oh it was slow and I can remember to cross Woila Creek we'd toss the first few sheep in the water, you'd be tossing them in and they'd swim back and we'd toss them in again until they all decided to swim across. I think there was about 300 sheep, I can't remember but it was pretty tiresome getting them to cross the creek and we had to cross it something like six times.

But it was great, I loved it. I came back and said to my Mother 'I'm going to marry a drover'. Yes, it was just a wonderful trip. I think it teaches resilience, I didn't go just to tag along, I went to help, to be part of that trip, so it's the responsibility that I had on that trip. I had the responsibility to help to get the sheep down. To carry the lambs that were born and to have a role in that; I suppose I've always been a very responsible person and I think probably because I've always been given that responsibility quite early. – Jen Mathieson

I first drove cattle along part of the W D Tarlington track in the late 1930s and long after that. It was Dad and I and Bob. We'd take probably only thirty cattle, not very many at the time. We'd stay with the Welsh's at Wandella and put the cattle in a paddock there. Or we might be lucky enough to make it to Wilgo to the Travelling Stock Reserve. You'd need at least two days; the cattle would drink on the way and get a mouthful here and there. And then, when the road starts, they poke along either side. Once you go to Wandella it was civilization and a fence either side. If it wasn't a really good fence, they get in with the neighbours cattle and you needed good horses and dogs to cut them out. We'd leave the cattle in the sale yards behind the hotel at Cobargo. Everyone came at the same time; everyone knew when the sales were on. It was about monthly in those days. We were selling Bate Estate cattle, so Dad didn't get the money for the cattle. The trip home was lots quicker you could trot and canter all the way it only took a few hours. – Catherine Lawler

Making money

Wild dogs and dingos have always been a threat to stock in the more remote areas. Trapping dingos and rabbits was a good way to supplement the family income and there were expert trappers who made a living travelling around properties and providing a valued service to the graziers. Other ways of making extra money were cutting wattle bark for tanning hides and distilling eucalyptus oil (Figure 47).

We originally had Mal Cody who came from Queanbeyan but he was a great dingo trapper and I often used to go round his dingo traps with him. This would've been 1961 because my parents couldn't afford to send me back to school so I came home and did correspondence school for the 4th year of high school and I used to go riding through the mountains checking and setting dingo traps. They were just day trips from Belowra. He had traps set everywhere and whether he actually ever went right to Wadbilliga but around that sort of area, and to Brass Knocker, certainly we went on those tracks. After Mal Cody it was Horace Ramsey that became the Dingo Trapper, so I often went with Horace after that. – Jen Mathieson

I have been with Jack Millikin many times into Bendethera, Alpine, Woolla, and Araluen, there was always many true stories of what was going on. Rabbits, you've never seen so many rabbits, coloured rabbits, inbred and hundreds of goannas. – Kerry Reid.

Rabbits bought big changes in the Belowra Valley. Before the Depression there were no rabbits. Horace Ramsey said they used to say 'the rabbits are at the top of the mountain', and 'the rabbits are at Belimbla' and then 'the rabbits were in the valley'. Rabbits became really prolific which brought rabbit trappers into the valley, trapping for their skins. Les Jeffries and others were making big money. Horace Ramsey said he was making twenty-six pound a fortnight; that was a lot of money. They'd go around their traps three times a day and the rabbits would be fighting to get in there! Judging from the money that Ramsey said he was making, I reckon that you wouldn't have made that out of a beast. He said rabbit skins and wattlebark were big money.
– Fergus Thomson

I can remember between the three of us we stripped a ton of wattle bark which was quite a big thing. It was a big truck load. It took us a long period of time. We used to go from the house at Belowra, we used to go up to what we called Bishops Creek mostly. I suppose it's only two or three kilometres we only walked but we had our axes. We stripped it and then we'd leave it there to dry and then stack it and eventually we sold it to the Mostyns in Moruya. Dad must have got the truck to come out and get it for us. They had a factory up towards the hospital. I can remember I think it was thirty pounds it was sold for. I just remember the joy of getting all this money; I thought gosh money. Then I wasted it, I absolutely wasted it. I bought a green plastic Christmas tree in Tilba and afterwards I saw this farm set and I really wanted and I'd spent the money. To this day I can remember being so sad that I'd just didn't have that money to buy it. I've still got half of the Christmas tree. It was such a lesson for me not to spend my money. – Jen Mathieson

I was born in '42. I was riding horses in the mid 40's and my first recollections of riding a horse was Mum putting me on a draught horse and sent me up the river above Yowrie, Dad was making eucalyptus at the time and I took the draught horse up there. After the war years that was a pretty big industry, that eucalyptus – they made it in a lot of areas. I was living with my mother and father, Jack and Joan, at Yowrie. And then we moved to a place called Duck Hole and Dad was still making eucalyptus further up the river. I used to ride a pony down to my grandmothers a couple of a times a week, down to the post office, pick up the mail and ride down there. At that stage of the game I would've only been five and I'd ride the pony down there on my own.
– John Davidge

Figure 47: Ted Bradley arriving at Neringla with a load of wattle bark from Wyanbene, March 1941. Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler

Making do

Families would make their own fun, sometimes going months without visiting a town, and there were no phones, no television, and no internet. They were largely self-sufficient in entertainment as well as food. Reg Cootes grew up in the very south of the region and they often took stock across the border into Gippsland, Victoria.

I was born in Bombala 8th June 1926. I grew up in Quidong, near the junction of the Bombala and Delegate Rivers. That is the Quidong property. My family has owned it since the early 1900s. I grew up on a horse, in the 1920s there was motors cars then. We'd come into Bombala twice a year from Quidong, we never had many ice creams. 1926 the train line opened up to Bombala, it was the end of the line. The train came from Cooma, it was a big deal at the time. They transported passengers and goods by train. There was an old saying at the shop in Bombala, if they didn't have something, 'it'd be over at the railway station, unloaded.' The line is still there to Cooma, but it is in disrepair, it closed in the early 1980s.

We used to ride from Quidong Homestead when we were young people to the junction of the Quidong and the Snowy, just on a bush track, a bridle track before my time. I don't know what it was called. There was a mineral mine in the area, Belmore Mining Company. It was just over the river actually.

I have seen a pack saddle in my younger days. In 1940, there was a major drought here at Bombala and a man at Cann River had a lot of lease country right out to Wingan. At Mountain Top out near Rockton there was a Travelling Stock Reserve where you put your stock in overnight. When I was fourteen, me and my stepfather, we put the stock onto the reserve and my mother set me up with a tent and some pyjamas. The man came through at night, Percy Ventry was his name, and in the morning we had breakfast. He set up my horse in the morning and when I got back from doing something he put my pyjamas on my pony, on the front legs of the pony. He didn't know what they were so he put them on the horse! That was a practical joke I suppose you'd call it.

We were taking the cattle to Cann River and then they went over the Drummer Mountain towards the coast, they went through the bush. He knew it like the back of this hand. We took a couple of hundred head of cattle, all different owners. The cattle had come from around Bombala, we took it to Cann River and put them in the bush. Percy Ventry and I rode back on the horses and came back the next day. We travelled on the main road; it was only a dirt track, now it is the Cann River Rd [Monaro Highway.] It took us two days to return, and I only had my rain coat. We transported sheep on foot, droving, from Quidong to Bombala. There weren't much sales done, they were taken out and shorn and put back in again. Then the wool was taken out on truck, it went to Sydney on the railway line, from Bombala. Horse and cart was before my days.
– Reg Cootes

Doing the census

Every five years a census was taken of people living throughout the country. Fergus Thomson was given the job of visiting people at home which entailed a lot of kilometres riding around and meeting people in their tucked-away properties.

It would have been in the early '60's I did the first census collection and the area I had was fairly big in those days. It picked up Woolla and all of that area in the bottom end of Bendethera and I had to find a track in. I borrowed a Land Rover to get in there and find the various people. Miss Davis, Nellie was still in the old house at Woolla when I went there and her daughter, Neta. It's a long while since I've used those names. We had a cup of tea and talked – it was fantastic. The track into Woolla is the Deua River Track. My area came all the way back down and picked up places like Brassknocker which is on the southern side of the Tuross River. There was no road into Brassknocker and I had to ride in on a horse. I used the Yowrie track and I dropped off Barren Jumbo Mountain into Brassknocke. It took me a lot of days – not many car miles but a lot of horse miles. They didn't really have a bracket that fitted me!
– Fergus Thomson

Reminiscing

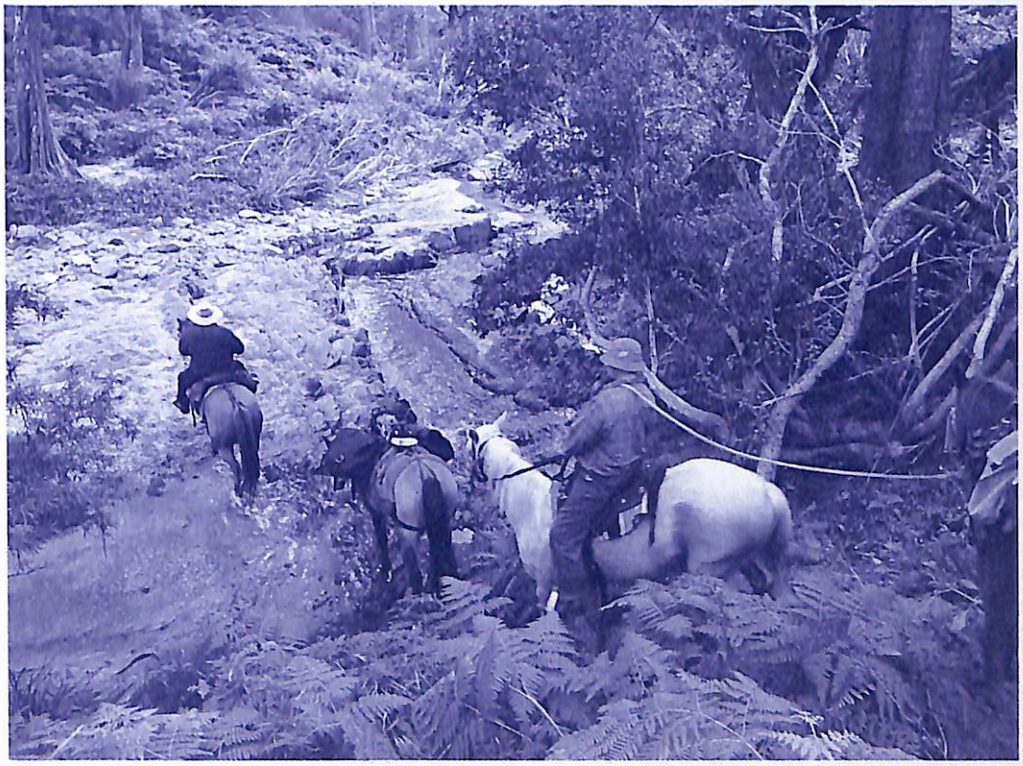
The people whose memories were recorded for the project showed a strong connection to the land they grew up on and the lives they lived there. They spoke of the joy of being in the bush. The clean mountain air, crystal creeks and streams and towering forests all around. Work was hard but straightforward. Worries of the past no longer weighed on the mind and it was not hard to remember the good times and forget the bad.

Life was so free. We could just go and saddle a horse and go for a ride. You could go for a swim in the river, we could wander around. Mum and Dad allowed us to be free to wander because, we were responsible, we had to milk the cows and so we worked, they trusted us. But it's just that the land I grew up on is so dear, I don't know what it is that feeling that you belong to it somehow, it does call you or something. I think it's part of who you are, it's not just your life story but it's part of who you are by how it's created you.
– Jen Mathieson

Helena (Nellie) Davis house [showing where the original fireplace has been boarded up], Woolla, originally built around 1925.

Chapter 9
Suddenly we're the old timers - connections with the past and responsibilities for the future...

When Colin Sutherland and Richard Tarlinton wanted to ride from Yowrie to Braidwood they suddenly found out that there was no one there to remind them of where the old tracks went and what was the best way to get back up on to the Monaro. All the things that had been taken for granted; they suddenly found that we were the old timers and there was no one else to go back to. I think that surprised Richard and Colin. We used to talk about the old timers and the old timers were us – and it happened so quickly! Simple things like, where did the track go? When you went over that ridge there, where did it go after that? Well, have a look for a sardine tin that's been stuck in a tree!
– Fergus Thomson



Growing up in the remote beautiful landscape of the mountains, rivers and forests was a life-shaping experience for many of the people interviewed for this book. When they returned to their remote childhood homes or to ride the tracks they were observed to 'light up' and the years would fall away. Some places would become almost mythic for the younger generation after hearing about them for so many years. One such place for Eugene Collins was known as Robinson's Hölle. This was first recorded in 1850s by colonial geologist, Reverend W B Clarke, who defined Hölle as a German word meaning 'a deep, dark mysterious place' or purgatory. Clarke identified mineral deposits there which were subsequently mined and the area was also used to raise cattle before it became part of the Brogo wilderness area.

The Greens and Carpenters – Carpenters were another family from halfway down the road, they had dairy farms here. And the young blokes used to have cattle out in Robinson's Holle, fifteen, twenty steers out there in the spring and let them go, because they couldn't go anywhere. And they'd go back the following winter or spring and pick them up and bring them out and sell them. We'd ride out to there and stay overnight and just have a look around and there's old mines out there so we'd have a bit of a look around them. It was just more of a challenge for the horses and for us to go out and it was always a sort of a – not actually religious but a sort of a secret spot, you know like a Boys Own little camp. All the old blokes used to talk about it... and I eventually got 'round to getting' out there to have a look. I've probably been out there a dozen times now. But most of those I walk out.

We camped at Robinson's Holle on the junction of Robinson's River and Brogo River and it's just beautiful. The waterholes there are as big as this room and bloody ten foot deep... and so clean, I've never seen water so clean anywhere. You could lay this on the bottom of the hole and still read it. It's just gorgeous and there's one every... four hundred or five hundred metres you come across another one. In the summertime we go over there and we took our boys over there as a sort of a boy's introductory thing. And we swim and you just walk up the river in a pair of bloody swimmers and that's about it, and watch out for snakes, and swim every hole. It's sort of almost a religious thing to do... and the kids loved it. – Eugene Collins

Over time custodianship of the land has changed from small-scale Aboriginal societies living with the seasons, to cattle and sheep farmers ranging through crown land and now managed by a government agency with responsibilities to protect natural environments. This situation has come about through changes in community attitudes and needs, encouraged by the work of early bush walker environmentalists such as Myles and Milo Dunphy.

All the bushwalkers would go to Bendethera Caves and they would stay with my grandparents at Canoolie or with the George's depending on which way they went in. Myles Dunphy has been here to Cadgee to visit mum. Myles and Milo and Dexter had cups of tea here too. They thought a lot of my grandparents. Aunty Kathleen in particular! When it became wilderness, a National Park is ok, but Myles Dunphy, in his wildest dreams would not have thought that he would be stopping Allan and Catherine Rankin's children, grandchildren and greats from riding out there. – Catherine Lawler (Figure 48).

Figure 48: Catherine Rankin and her horse Bloss at Canoolie.
Photo courtesy Catherine Lawler.

In recent decades, some of the land selected or squatted on by the forebears of today's horse riders has since been 'selected' by the government, responding to the interests and values of very different times. Today the south east corner is home to many large national parks, nature reserves and declared Wilderness Areas. Horse riding is a regulated activity in national parks and it is not permitted in declared Wilderness Areas.

Figure 49: Bendethera, Deua National Park
Photo courtesy Julia Short

Many of the people who provided their stories for this book are members of Access for All, a lobby group dedicated to gaining 'responsible access for all to our national parks and bush heritage.' They have a web site and regular meetings and have published the book, The Deua River Track, complied by Peter Smith which gives a detailed account of the track following the Deua River to Bendethera.[50] This group is in consultation with NPWS about the horse riding trials in selected declared Wilderness Areas (Figure 49).

Access for All is getting a lot better relationship with National Parks with regards to track maintenance. The one thing we are not asking for is a $100,000 grant to open the trails up. If we can use our traditional methods on those traditional trails, that will do. Record them and GPS them and record oral histories. The significance of the Bemboka tree, I'd never thought of it as significant. We need traditional use and maintenance otherwise they'll be lost. Swap the chain saw for the match and a lot depends on the time of year. Burning is the traditional way to maintain the tracks, but we use the chainsaw as a last resort. It is not worth lighting fires these days, with the eye in the sky, with a puff of smoke the helicopters would come over and you'd have hand cuffs on. We need to get back to the traditional usage, given our limited use. A lot of common sense is coming into there now with Access for All.
– Michael Green

Many local horse riders are concerned that access restrictions will mean they won't be able to stay connected to their heritage or pass on their legacies. Most wish to see the trails stay open and maintained so they can continue to be used by horse riders.

I love our area with its many horse trails. I am so lucky to have been able to ride the same trails all around the Eurobodalla and beyond – The Corn Trail up the Clyde Mountain, The Shoebridge, around Araluen, Nelligen, Coondella, Yowrie, Cobargo, Narooma, from Bendethera to Alpine, Woolla, Moodong Creek out to Griggs and Merricumbene, Yadbora, Braidwood, Eurobodalla, Nerrigundah, up the Zig Zag to the Tablelands and the beautiful Snowy Mountains area. Even though all places now have roads to them, we need to keep all the horse trails open, no matter where. They were the only trails in the 1800s and are part of our heritage. – Phyllis Reid

50 http://www.accessforall.asn.au/

With the wilderness declaration they cut every bridle track from the coast to the tablelands. For example, you can go on the Georges Pack Track from Moruya to Bendethera and then back up the Zig Zag to the tablelands and pick up the Tarlinton Track and go right through to Cobargo. But with wilderness they cut a section in this track, so that means the track is completely useless. You can't ride out a few kms up the road and then come to a sign saying "Wilderness area" and then you turn around and you've got to ride back home again. You want to be able to go through. They're all inter-linked. You could do a complete circle, you could ride up the Shoebridge Track and up the Deua River Track and up over the top and down Tarlinton Track and back into Cobargo if you wanted to. Or you can ride out The Georges Pack Track and come back down the Deua Track. But with the wilderness you only having this little section at each end and the piece in the middle missing, it's like going up the Princes Highway and not be able to go past Ulladulla. I just hope more people get out and do it.
– John Davidge (Figure 50)

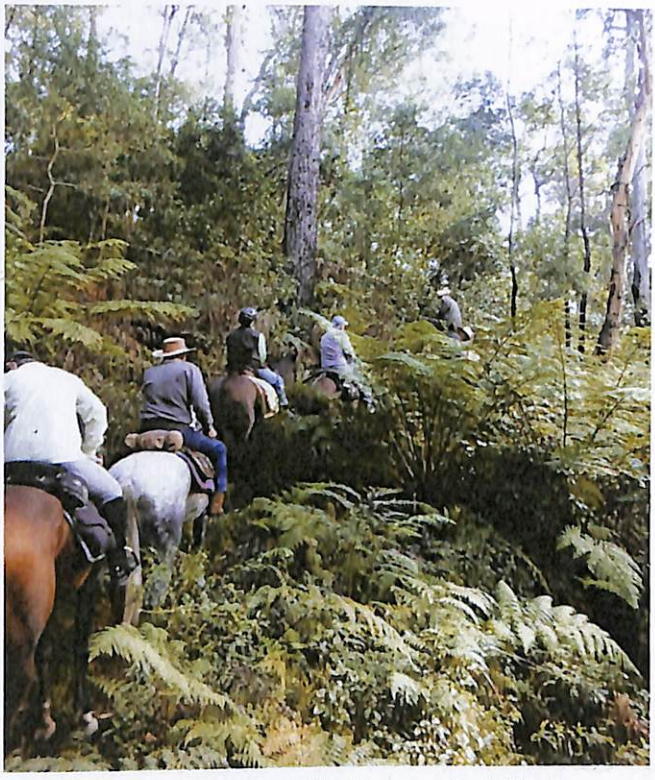


Figure 50: Riders on the Georges Pack Track.
Photo courtesy John Davidge

Just keep the bridle tracks alive. Just keep them alive, because they were Aboriginal trading tracks and then white people took over and this country was opened up by white man on horseback to a great extent and I don't think we should lose that. We are in a unique position here to do that, because, there is no way now you can go [from]Goulburn to Coopers Creek on the track that the Duracks used but you can go from Moruya to Bendethera on the Georges Pack Track. You can go from Runnyford through to Araluen on the Shoebridge Track. Once you get to Araluen you can on up to Bendethera, or up to Alpine. From Alpine you can go back up the top of the mountain the way they used to, to Krawarree. [If you] continue up to Bendethera, you can go up the Zig Zag track onto to the tablelands and connect with the W D Tarlinton, down through Belowra out to Cobargo. Because a great deal is [State] forest and National Park they can be kept open and alive and maybe, not in my life time, later on it could be the greatest asset that we've got. – Catherine Lawler

As well as keeping tracks open, there are places of interest along the tracks that the horse riders believe could be protected and preserved as living heritage to celebrate the lives of the old graziers. Some sections of the tracks have been rediscovered by riders and some have been re-established as recreational rides.

Super's old hut is out at Spring Mountain, Belowra, just above where the Myrtle Creek Track starts. Well that's where he moved the hut to; it was originally on a block belonging to Byrne's. How did he do it? I suppose he just pulled it all down and put some more posts in the ground and rebuilt it. Probably those days, in the late 1960s, he used to drive a little jeep and he probably had a little trailer on the back of it. Super had a grazing lease in the area and burnt it a lot to make the grass grow. They used to control thousands of acres all around their leases. From what I can gather people would only be paying the rent on a few acres but then they'd probably have access to thousands, that's how they used to work them old fellas. Now the Parks took Spring Mountain over in the 70s but that was Super's last hut that he built. The old hut was sitting there with a big lean on it and inside was the iron bed still there, a pair of boots under it. There was the billy can and things still hanging up. There was even a rope. He had a bit of a yard out the back where he used to yard cattle and the big rope there that he'd be pulling calves up to mark calves... it was still all hanging up in the hut, everything was just there like as he'd walked out of it. We cleared all around it when we were there. – John Davidge (Figure 51).

The only section of the Tarlinton Track I've used continuously is from Wandella to the Tuross River. It wasn't until ten years ago that a friend of mine in the trail riding club, Roger Cullen and I made a point of establishing that bridle trail again for riding purposes, for recreation. It was the Cobargo Horse and Trail Riders; which we're both members of. So we set about exploring that area over several weeks and flagging it – and it was an awful lot of walking and sometimes we got totally lost and we realised we were in the totally wrong area. And other times we found it, but it was very interesting when we got back on the right track it all became very obvious to where it went. It just followed the creek flats from one flat to the next; it's just a matter of finding access up the creek banks on to those flats and establishing the best way for those horses. And once we were there we could find old blaze marks, old logs that had been cut off, side cuts- where the road had gone. It's still very evident today. And the odd horse shoe we found. We soon realised that this track had been used extensively. We followed Wandella Creek to the junction of the Tuross. It takes roughly three hours to ride it in each direction. It's approximately eighteen kilometres one way. It's easily done in a day. It's a buffer zone between National Parks and Forestry. – Richard Tarlinton (Figure 52).

Figure 51: Super Sutherland's hut at Spring Mountain. Photo courtesy John Davidge

Figure 52: Wandella creek crossing. Photo: Julia Short.

Any of the tracks down the river I loved riding. It's just a beautiful track to ride. Down the river, especially down the river from Bendethera to Alpine, that's one thing I want to do before I get too old, is ride it again. I loved it ever since I was a kid. I didn't go out there for work. I went there to help Jack, but everyone would say it was a pleasure to go out with Jack, I have great memories. There's one of the water races that we fiddled around with on a weekend with Jack Millikin, John Mehl and Terry Heffernan at Bendethera and got working. The Georges irrigated the flats, it was amazing that it worked and irrigated again after so many years. That's at Bendethera of course.

Jack was told by Allan Rankin, Allan was out there before Jack, and he said what they used to do was feed the turkeys to the bottom of the Zig Zag mountain. They'd take them up to the top the next day and then they'd take them over to Khan Yunis and put them on a cart the next day for the miners on the gold fields. The Zig Zag was lost for years 'till my son Kerry Junior, Bob Greig, Brian Clarke, Glen and Phyllis and I walked it there. We knew it was there. – Kerry Reid

If the tracks are mapped and restored there is a belief they could be marked on the ground so they could be used into the future. Richard Tarlinton is passionate about the track taken by his ancestor, W D Tarlinton, which he sees as bringing white settlement into the Bega valley (Figure 53).

Given the entire history of this area relates back to that main thoroughfare through the bush, it's up to us to document it and have it there for future generations. I'd like to see anyone and everyone use the W D Tarlinton Track. I'd just like it to be used full stop and marked and maintained only to the extent of what's necessary to be able to ride a horse through it or bushwalk it and because there is so many creek crossings, it's probably pretty unsuitable to try and do too much development on it because the creek is constantly changing and therefore the track would change slightly here and there. So as far as too much development goes it's pretty unfeasible, but just to have it marked so that people can find their way, markers either on the ground or nailed to trees. Something simple, something cost effective and something that's reasonably permanent.

There's not anyone alive I'm aware of that would know exactly where the Tarlinton Track is. There are a few people like Catherine Lawler and John Davidge who would have an extremely good idea of where it is and would be able to find it without any trouble at all. And point me in the right direction I think I could pretty much find it too – it's just a matter of common sense and a bit of bush skill and you can pick it up where they went. Hopefully in the near future I'll be able to do it.
– Richard Tarlinton

Figure 53: Warren Solway, Colin Sutherland and Richard Tarlinton, descendants of W D Tarlinton, at Yowrie before departing for Belowra on the W D Tarlinton track 1990. Photo courtesy Richard Tarlinton

I think the Georges, the Tarlinton Track, and Shoebridge too; they should be made tourist attractions. They should be made like the Corn Trail, the walking track as well. If the Parks and with the help of say, Access for All and the riding clubs and bushwalkers, if they can go through now and mark that track reasonably well... that would be good. But, I think it's a wonderful tourist attraction because this hinterland in here, like you've got Diamond Creek, you've got the waterfall too, you've got Coondella , a beautiful creek and everything down through there, the rainforest the whole lot... the Deua River track, from Bendethera down to Alpine to Araluen, the Deua River Track that one, it's a beautiful track. If you're keen on bushwalking, you'll get your feet wet a couple of times but it's a lovely track. – Brian Clark (Figure 54).

Figure 54: Deua River crossing. Photo courtesy Peter Smith

Tracks simply disappear if they are not maintained and used. This raises the issue of maintenance; how is it to be done and who would be doing it?

Now we are having the devil's own job finding some of these tracks now, you are only going to be riding through there, maybe three times a year. Now, when there were pack horses, it was being used fortnight, weekly, monthly, not only by riding horses and pack horse, but cattle too. But like the Georges Pack Track, they are having a hard time finding sections of it. If all those hundred head of cattle and heaps of pack horses, Georges had thirty-seven pack horses at one stage cause they had wattle bark to pack as well, so they didn't do too much damage, approximately two meters wide across thousands and thousands of hectares of bush. – Catherine Lawler

The head of the Carriage Drive is all Brogo Wilderness, which rules and regulations say we are not allowed in there with a horse and if we can't get in there on a horse then we can't maintain it. And if we don't use it, it will disappear. One summer bush fire, five years later with regrowth, you'd have no idea, even with a GPS, where to go.

It is trebly hard, with a log over a track, if you had a chain saw with you, you can snip it off and away you go, but if you have to slide on your bum trying to get around the tree, it is too hard, no fun with a horse. If we were there with a pack horse, with a good axe and a chain saw we could keep those tracks up. There is a couple of fellows I was talking to earlier in the winter, they are adamant, they are very experienced bush riders in Kosciusko down in Victoria, they're saying that our policy - we stick to the exact track, because with the less usage, the more we detour around the head of a track all of a sudden we have no track. We have to make it a rule that we stay on that track and if there is a log in front blocking us, get the chain saw, cut it off and stay on the tack. We will lose them because we don't have the usage, get your match under the tree and burn off out of the way, don't go around it.

Maintenance of the trail was always done with fire, if there was a log in the way, you'd burn it. Without fear of contradiction, burning the country freshens it up, that's where your livestock, cattle and, kangaroos, they will always come to burnt country. They will come back for a feed. It was a fire protection too. There are trees there now fallen on the track that we can't touch. Fire kept the access open and safe and certainly for the Aboriginals it was to maintain a food source. – Michael Green

It will become over grown and become just a line on map. And in another ten years when we stop going there and our kids stop going there, you won't know where it is. One bush fire through there will cover up cut logs or other markers of the trail and then it will become just another piece of bush. It's too important for that. – Rowan Alcock

My argument is if you want to maintain something, you have to use it. It's the same as the National Trust policy with old houses. They want people to live in them and to use them... If the tracks are used, they'll be maintained. They're part of our heritage and we should preserve our history. If we just forget about the tracks we may as well forget about the history of Moruya, Braidwood and Araluen as well. It was all connected through tracks and it was the tracks that enabled the country to be developed. The tracks are an important part of our history; you can't just cut bits off. – Peter Smith

Eugene Collins saw some potential problems with keeping the tracks open. He grew up in Bemboka, the fifth generation of his family to farm the region. After studying for a forestry degree he went on to become an active member of the Tantawangalo Catchment Protection Association working in the late 1980s and 1990s to protect old growth forests from woodchipping. He is concerned about the impact of larger-scale horse use of the wilderness area without proper monitoring especially if it leads to trail bikes using and abusing the bridle tracks if they are opened up.

You can still use it... I've always been in two minds about letting horses out there because I have been out there before on foot and found a horrible bloody mess where the horses have come down....
So that sort of jaded my view of whether we should take horses out there but having ridden horses out there myself I know the value of it. It's a real challenge to take your horse out there. I found it a really difficult thing to do, even though it was a great adventure. So I wouldn't begrudge that to the horse riders to do that but my idea would be that because it's such a pristine area, the horses should be probably yarded and just fed clean grain or something for a day or two before just to flush their systems out so they don't carry fireweed or lovegrass, and get that established out there. – Eugene Collins

This also raises the question of whether opening up horse tracks in designated Wilderness Areas defeats the principle of wilderness because it will let in trail bike riders and provide easy access for feral predators such as foxes.

You'd like to think we could have a hundred metre easement on either side of these tracks and don't touch. Logging, motor bikes, rubbish. Logging is the one I'd fear the most. – Michael Green

Horse riders also realised the risk of promoting their cultural heritage to the public. When talking about their favourite tracks some horse riders were concerned that they could lose their special places through opening them up to general knowledge.

We don't want them to use the Carriage Drive, it is our bloody track, we aren't sharing that one. You'd have to pass the test first. Some idiot would start to bring motor bikes in there, someone else would try and dump their rubbish, some bloke would decide it was better as a bush fire trail and run a dozer over it. As much as we love bull dozers, we don't want them on our tracks. – Rowan Alcock

Others wanted the heritage of the tracks to be recorded and recognised. Richard Tarlinton is very keen for local schoolchildren to learn about the history of the bridle tracks.

I'd like to see the bridle tracks documented in some form and making it part of a study course at school, part of the curriculum, if you had a booklet or a series of printed material and you handed it to kids in year 5 or 6 or something and said, now this is our local history... Even if they've never seen a horse and have no interest in horses or cattle or bushwalking, they're still going to learn how the region developed.

If a child learns his local history in the classroom then he feels like a local, he grows up like a local and he forms an identity with the region. He's not one of these "I've got no idea" kids – it gives them a base, it gives them a grounding in the local area and the area then becomes home to them. And they form a relationship with the country then, with the land. Then, whether they're inclined to be outdoors people or not, they'll still remember what they learned... They'll still have that grounding of where they grew up and went to school and what the history of that area was, they will remember it and pass it on.
– Richard Tarlinton

I think the Parks need to make it a significant part of the Plan of Management. To show the ancient tracks and the more modern tracks that were used by both the Aboriginal people and the European settlers. And I'd like to see some signage at major tracks – to mark them. A few spots could be thought about. You could get the name out there – eg "W D Tarlinton Track" and a marker that can link to anything... you can Google it and find out the history behind it. – Yvonne Thomson

Those interviewed had opinions about management of Wilderness Areas more generally, believing there was something to be learned from Aboriginal and historical land management for future management of the national parks.

Fire has been used to manage the Australian environment for thousands of years and it is recognised that Aboriginal use of fire was deliberate and done for a range of reasons, including promotion of green pick to attract grazing marsupials that were hunted for food and skins (Jones, 1967). Cattlemen in the bush also used fire to bring up the fresh green grasses and to keep the country open for mustering. Today NPWS conducts hazard reduction burns to keep down fuel loads and reduce the risk of wildfires which can be devastating to towns and settlements located close to forest areas. Michael Green has been a long-time campaigner for the right to carry on managing the land as his ancestors did.

The immediate threat is the wilderness declaration where they say we can't bring a horse along and every year that goes past we are not dropping matches. If I say 'burning' people think Section 44 fires; dropping matches is a way of saying - when we were dropping matches all the time, we never came through without burning something but people never knew we were burning because there wasn't the volume of fuel and it never created a bush fire. – Michael Green

Figure 55: Wadbilliga Mountain. Photo: Sue Norman

The tall misty forests, steep gullies and rocky creeks that make up this landscape between the tablelands and the coast carry the stories and marks of human societies over many thousands of years into the more recent past of white settlement (Figure 55). The tracks into this country are a way to connect with these stories.

Unfortunately people arriving don't think to check and say "What's important? What's significant?" ... for people who have been there for years it's incredibly significant. We've tried to argue that that European heritage is as important as Aboriginal heritage or any other and it's significant and should be protected. – Fergus Thomson

Riding the tracks is like going to church, it is church experience. A recharge; it was all very social like church except you're in the bush. – Anthony Green

Australia is moving at a fairly fast pace and those old farming methods are long gone and there's no real connection to that part of primary industry anymore. With National Parks being the body in charge of all this area now it's up to them to learn it too and we'll support them every bit we can. – Richard Tarlinton

Chapter 10
Summing up

The stories of the people interviewed for this project have given historical, social and intensely personal perspectives on the network of bridle tracks across the region. The information gathered and presented in this book was reviewed and analysed as part of the broader bridle tracks project (Donaldson, 2015) and a summary is presented in this chapter.

The table opposite shows the connections between bridle track and the oral history records, noting that not all the listed tracks are discussed in the book.

Horse riding at Nerringundah. *Photo: Julia Short*

INTERVIEWEE	DATE	BRIDLE TRACKS MENTIONED
Brian Clarke	18.7.2014	Georges Pack Track, Tarlinton, Burra to Bergalia
Catherine Lawler	14.5.2014	Tarlinton, Georges Pack Track, SW Bates, Charles Byrne, Belowra to Bendethera, Barren Jumbo/'Yowrie Track'.
David Girvan	28.8.2014	Rocky Hall to Rockton; Cowbail; Nungatta; Wog Mountain; Cobargo to Cathcart.
Eugene Collins	28.08.2014	Robinsons Holle; Postmans; Cattlemans; Werrinook Track.
Fergus Thomson	16.7.2014	Cooma to Belowra, Tarlinton, Belowra to Nerrigundah, Green Hills, Spring Creek, Myrtle Creek, Running Creek
Jen Mathieson	09.09.2015	Belowra, Barren Jumbo Track, Green Hills, Wadbilliga,
John Davidge	16.7.2014	The Shoebridge, Tarlinton, Wadbilliga Track, Barren Jumbo Track/ 'Yowrie Track', Myrtle Creek Track.
Michael Green, Rowan Alcock & Anthony Green	26.8.2014	Carriage Dr, Yankee Flat, Nobbys Ridge, Pearsons, 50 Acres, Bodycotts, Robinson Holle, Georges Gully to Nimmitabel, Longhorn, Keys, Tantawangalo, Kellys Ridge
Peter Smith	27.7.2014	Deua River, Georges Pack Track, Moruya to Araluen, The Shoebridge, The zig-zag.
Phyllis & Kerry Reid	14.09.2015	Bendethera/Georges Pack Track.
Reg Cootes	27&28.8.2014	The Cowbail; The Postmans Track; Quidong to the Snowy River; Bosses Gully Track; Robinson's Track; Bombala to Cann River; Eden to Nungatta.
Richard Tarlinton	26.8.2014	Tarlinton, Quaama to Cooma; Yowrie to Belowra.
William Farrell	28.08.2014	Deep Creek; Beattie's to Rocky Hall Rd; Burragate to Timbillica via Towamba; Cathcart to Bucky Springs; Rocky Hall to Wog Wog.

Key heritage themes from oral histories

The NSW Heritage Council has 38 historical themes under the broad categories of transport, communication, leisure, agriculture, technology, labour, migration and cultural landscapes. Donaldson (2015) has assessed each of the bridle tracks, using information from the oral history project and identified eight main themes represented by the bridle tracks and their history. The analysis below shows which bridle tracks best represent the different themes.

1. Aboriginal cultures interacting with other cultures

Examples of this theme include the track between Moruya and Araluen [which became a pack track from Kiora to Araluen in the 1860s, then a dray route in the 1870s and is now in part Araluen Rd]; The Deua River Track [which became a pack track used by settler families to access Bendethera, Araluen and beyond]; Georges Pack Track [which was relied upon by the George family to transport goods from Bendethera to Moruya]; Nobbys Ridge Track [which became an important link between Cooma and the south coast before the Brown Mountain bridle track was established in 1860]; The Carriage Drive [used to shift cattle between Crystal Brook and Greenlands properties]; and the W D Tarlinton Track [Aboriginal people led W D Tarlinton from the tablelands to the coast on an existing track in 1829 in search of pasture].

Other intercultural interactions / elements include Port Phillip Neddy's grave on the W D Tarlinton Track at the junction of the Wandella and Tuross Rivers; Mr George paid 'Black Paddy' an Aboriginal, to blaze a track between Nerrigundah and Bendethera; and a 'couple' of Aboriginal graves at Bendethera in the vicinity of the Georges Pack Track marked by rocks.

It is also thought by many of the interviewees that burning practises undertaken by early settlers managing lands for cattle reflected or utilised the traditional knowledge passed onto them by local Aboriginal people.

2. Exploration

A number of the tracks utilised in the early settlement period are strongly associated with discovery and exploration. The best example of this in south east Australia is the track used by W D Tarlinton in 1829 from Oranmeir [property at the junction of the Shoalhaven River and Jerrabattgulla Creek] to the Cobargo showground. As a young man Tarlinton was inspired by an acquaintance, William Lawson, who crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813 under similar conditions. Both explorers were led by Aboriginal guides on pre-existing pathways.

3. Industry

This is the most common theme in the region as most of the bridle tracks relate to activities associated with the breeding, raising, processing and distribution of livestock.

The Charles Byrne Track is synonymous with Charles Byrne shifting cattle in the 1850s between properties he owned at Tilba, Cadgee and Belowra. The track known as the Charles Byrne Track today links Cadgee and Belowra.

Following on from Charles Byrne, SW Bate Track utilised the tracks once used by Byrne to shift cattle between properties in the Cadgee – Belowra area. The SW Bate Track, as it is known today links Cadgee with Belowra via Cadgee Mountain. This track continued to be used throughout the 1900s by SW Bate and his workers, including Catherine Lawler's father, to shift cattle and by local families for social occasions.

The Wadbilliga Track extends between Yowrie and Wadbilliga mainly following the Wadbilliga River, with links to Wadbilliga Hole, Myrtle Creek and the Woila Creek /Tuross River junction. The track was used in the 1950s by the Sutherland family who shifted cattle from Yowrie to their bush lease at Wadbilliga for the winter.

Whilst the entire length of the W D Tarlinton Track is synonymous with the development of the pastoral industry across south east NSW from 1829 onwards, the southern extent of the track between Cobargo and Belowra continued to be used for pastoral associated activities until the late 1970s. Since then the track has been used for recreational purposes, social networking and maintaining historical connections.

As late as 2003, part of the track linking Belowra to Cooma via 'The Jump Up', [aka 'The Badja Track', or 'The Woila Track'], was used to shift sheep out of Belowra by the Thomson family.

The Green Hills Track from Kybeyan [Wadbilliga the property] through Wadbilliga to Belowra was used by Tarlinton to shift cattle to his property called 'Green Hills' until 1963.

The Pearsons Track was used by the Pearson family who had property at Nunnock River. They used the track to move cattle as an alternative route to the Nobby Track depending on conditions / state of each track.

The Carriage Drive was used up until 1948 by the Alcock family to seasonally shift dairy cattle and goods between two properties, Crystal Brook and Greenlands. The 'Bemboka tree' marks the intersection of three tracks, The Carriage Drive, The Georges Gully to Nimmitabel Track and the Nobbys Track. It had a sign on it pointing to Bemboka and Michael Green's father replaced it in 1970 because it was rotten.

Yankee Flat network of tracks was used to shift cattle and bullocks around the region until the 1970s.

Bemboka to Robinsons Holle links up with networks around Yankees Flat, Ugly Mountain and 50 Acres. If flooded in, return was via Doolondondoo property at Kybeyan [head of Tuross River]. The tracks were used for pastoral related activities and are used for recreational purposes today.

Robinsons Track was used to shift cattle from Robinson's property at Candelo to Bombala.

The 50 Acres Track links Cobargo and Yowrie and Doolondondoo [property at head of Tuross River], used since John Green selected Doolondondoo around 1834 – 1836. The tracks were used for pastoral related activities and are used for recreational purposes today.

The Deep Creek Pack Track provided a link between a Fulligan's Flat property with 'Rocklea', a property on the Towamba River, near Burragate. The track follows Deep Creek in part and was originally used in the early 1900s by the Farrell family to 'pack out' butter from the butter factory at Fulligan's to Burragate. In the mid-1900s the track was used by bullock teams [owned by Jack Farrell] to cart wattle bark and for driving cattle between properties.

Oral history suggests that the eastern extent of the Georges Pack Track was used in relation to production of cheese at Kiora, not far from Moruya. Dozens of farms in the local area supplied the factory with milk to make cheese which was transported into Moruya on the Georges Pack Track, to the Moruya Warf and shipped off to Sydney.

Tracks associated with non-pastoral industries include part of the W D Tarlinton Track near Belowra, used in the 1930s by Les Jeffers to trap and sell rabbits and by others to access wattle in order to strip the bark for sale.

The track between Beattie [property] and Rocky Hall Rd near Burragate was used by the Farrell family in the 1950s to transport wattle bark using bullock teams.

The O'Riley Track, previously known as the Longhorn Track, was put in by Alexander Robinson with a dozer. He had a hut in there, and logged timber.

The track from Belowra to Nerrigundah, via Belimbla and the 'Kurrajong Cutting' was established in the 1860s to take mining machinery to Belimbla. It was later used to supply goods to miners at Nerrigundah and by 1940s after it was improved by Super Sutherland who used it to shift bullocks from Belowra to Nerrigundah.

The Yankee Flat network of tracks was used for gold prospecting and the development of gold mines in the 1930s. WB Clark was in there looking for minerals.

The track between Quidong and the Snowy River was used by Belmore Mining Company in the early 1930s in relation to mining operations at Quidong and for recreation by local landholders to access the Snowy River. The Georges at Bendethera irrigated crops including wheat and packed them out to the tablelands; it was taken to Goulburn by truck to be made into flour at the mill. Presumably they utilised the Zig Zag Track out of Bendethera on these occasions.

4. Environmental and cultural landscape

There are a multitude of tangible/ physical elements across the landscape demonstrating the interactions people had with the environment. These features include the stone cairn markers, the rock retaining walls, blazed trees, a landscape maintained by fire. Not so obvious are the intangible values, the elements that have no physical presence, the names, the stories, the experiences, the knowledge of the environment, the relationship between a horse and its owner, the familial associations with place, the historical connections. These tangible and intangible features associated with the bridle track network across the south east, combine to create an important environmental and cultural landscape.

Important elements of the environmental and cultural landscape relate to:

- The use of fire to maintain landscapes.
- Meeting, sleeping and resting places that were given names and relied upon.
- Blazed trees used later by the surveyors of the tracks.
- Stone cairns created and relied upon to give direction or to tell a story.
- Huts built, used, shifted, and rebuilt depending on local needs.
- Stone walls constructed to give form to graded pack tracks.
- Pig pens constructed out of rocks to hold pigs overnight on commercial trips to the sale yards.
- Places that were given names based on remarkable events.
- Man-made signs giving direction.
- Natural landmarks such as mountains, ant beds, river junctions, also giving direction.
- Other evidence of human use, e.g. cut logs, sardine cans, remains of discarded wagons, ringbarked trees.
- Water races constructed to irrigate crops
- Cuttings and worn tracks.
- Graves

5. Transport

From the 1830s, the W D Tarlinton Track became the 'highway' commonly used to bring cattle to coast for breeding / supplying meat to gold miners, used for postal delivery / ordering supplies between Braidwood and the sea port at Bermagui. This was the road to Cobargo.

The Nobbys Ridge Track was the main road between Cooma and the south coast prior to Brown Mountain Road being established in the 1860s.

The Cow Bail Trail originally a stockman's route was upgraded in part by Benjamin Boyd in 1843 to provide a direct link between his coastal development at Boydtown and his Monaro properties. Used to transport general cargo from the coastal port at Eden, inland to towns including Cathcart and Bombala; main thoroughfare late 1800s, through the early 1900s. Parts of this track are used today for recreational horse riding and 4W Ding.

On a smaller scale, the Carriage Drive was also used to shift people and their goods.

6. Government and administration

The Nobbys Ridge Track was used for government business by Ryrie, Robinson and Lambie to access the region. Robinson said he went across 'Werrinook Ridge', thought to be on the Nobbys Ridge Track which extends between The Nobby [a property at Bemboka] to Nimmitabel or Doolondondoo [a property at Kybeyan, at the head of Tuross River]. When surveying properties as Crown Land Surveyor, Lambie would leave his sulky 'up the top' of the Nobby's Ridge Track and ride his horse down to Bemboka. Today this place is locally known as 'Lambies Flat'.

The section of the W D Tarlinton over the Badja was used by Constable O'Grady when searching for bush rangers out of Nerrigundah.

In the 1960s Fergus Thomson used part of the W D Tarlinton Track, the Deua River Track and the Yowrie Track to undertake a national census for the government.

Nellie Davis was paid £10 a year by the government to maintain [sections of] the Deua River Track. Alan Rankin also had a contract to maintain the tracks.

The Postmans Track was the main route for the transport of mail from the Monaro in the 1800s: Government Geologist, Rev. W B Clarke noted the original track in 1851 as the extremely rugged track used by the postman. Records show a weekly packhorse mail service ran until 1875 carrying mail from Cooma to the coast via the Postmans Track.

Parts of the W D Tarlinton Track became formed roads, for instance, the section that is now Wattle Grove Rd. The government maintained it for horse and buggy because it was the main thoroughfare to Eurobodalla and Nerrigundah from Cobargo and Bega areas during the gold rush era. It then became a postal route and there was a post office at Cadgee. There was also a post office at Fairfield, which had a telephone, along the north western end of the W D Tarlinton Track. Brian Clarke's paternal grandfather William Clarke drove the horse drawn coaches from Bungendore to Araluen down over Araluen Mountain along what is now the Araluen Road. The Araluen Rd was formed along the pre-existing walking track and bridle track linking Moruya and Araluen. Later Clarke had the contract for mail and passenger coaches between Bodalla to Tilba via Wagonga, along part of the W D Tarlinton Track, which became the 'inland highway' avoiding large coastal river mouths.

The 50 Acres Track links Cobargo and Yowrie and Doolondondoo [property at head of Tuross River]. The track was surveyed as the identified emergency escape route during WW2.

Along the Cowbail Track there are bunkers, tank traps and a fort on lower part of track. During World War Two Major Jim Sturgiss was sent in charge of a survey party of the Coastal Patrol to identify and survey the bridle tracks. Catherine Lawler recalls Sturgiss staying at Wattlegrove when her father showed him the tracks around the local area and Super Sutherland showed him those in the Cobargo, Yowie and Brogo areas. These tracks are part of the W D Tarlinton Track and associated network.

7. Leisure

The section of the W D Tarlinton Track between Yowrie and Belowra known as the 'Barren Jumbo Track' or 'The Yowrie Track' was used in the late 1800s by the Sutherlands [W D Tarlinton's grandchildren] to attend social dances in Braidwood. To the present day this track is used by descendants of the Tarlinton family for recreation purposes and to maintain their historical connection to the track.

The Slaughterhouse or Boss's Gully Track was used annually by owners of Rance property at Slaughterhouse to travel on horseback to Bungarbee via Bosses Gully for picnic races. The trip took 4 or 5 hours.

It is this theme which endures today, expressed by activities associated with recreational horse riding.

8. Persons

A number of bridle tracks across south east NSW relate to activities identifiable with individuals, families and community groups. Some tracks are associated with certain family groups and known only to them. Some tracks are synonymous with key individuals who had strong historical associations with certain tracks and the tracks were named after them.

Tracks associated with key individuals include;

- ***W D Tarlinton Track***
- ***S.W. Bate Track***
- ***Charles Byrne's Track***
- ***Barren Jumbo or Yowrie Track - not named after but strongly associated with Super Sutherland***

Tracks associated with identifiable family groups include:

- ***Georges Pack Track***
- ***Pearson's Track***
- ***Keys Track***
- ***Robinson's Track***
- ***The Carriage Drive is closely associated with the Alcock /Green family;***
- ***The Deep Creek Track is closely associated with the Farrell family.***

Biographies of contributors

The oral history excerpts throughout the book have been taken from recorded oral histories provided by the following contributors who were selected by the horse riding community. Although not all interested individuals or families were able to be included, the oral histories that have been collected reflect the essential feelings, activities and connections the horse riding community have with the bridle tracks across south east NSW.

Brian Clarke was raised in the Moruya area where he continues to live today. He has family connections to the Kiora area. Brian is familiar with the bridle tracks across the region being a keen horse rider.

Fergus Thomson lived his entire life on one of SW Bate's holdings, at Belowra. Throughout his life he rode the bridle tracks for stock work and business, in later life he walked them for recreation.

Yvonne Thomson nee Rutledge grew up in southern Sydney and as a child used to camp at Belimbla with her family. In 1978 she married Fergus Thomson and has lived at Belowra ever since. Yvonne has been on National Parks Advisory Committees for many years.

Jen Mathieson nee Thomson grew up at Belowra using the bridle tracks in the Belowra – Yowrie area for work and recreation. Jen's great grandfather was S.W. Bate who purchased Belowra in the early 1900s. Jen has fond memories of growing up on a horse in the Belowra area.

Catherine Lawler grew up in the Belowra – Wattlegrove –Cadgee area, where she used the bridle tracks daily. Catherine's grandparents, Allan and Catherine Rankin, were pioneer settlers on the property now known as 'Canoolie', on the Deua River bridle track. Today, Catherine resides at Cadgee and enjoys sharing family stories about the bridle tracks across the region.

Peter Smith is a historian with a keen interest in early Australian history including that associated with bush rangers and bridle tracks. He lives with his wife at Woolla on the Deua River. As a horse rider and bushwalker Peter frequently explores his local environment and enjoys sharing it with others.

Michael Green has family connections to the Kybeyan area, at the head of the Tuross River, stretching back to the 1830s when his ancestor John Green, a former convict, took up land at 'Doolondondoo'. Michael holds extensive knowledge about the bridle tracks in the Wadbilliga-Bemboka -Nimmitabel area.

Richard Tarlinton is the great-great grandson of William Duggan Tarlinton. Richard and his family reside on one of the original Tarlinton landholdings at Wandella, and continue to ride on bridle tracks across the region.

Biographies of contributors (cont'd)

John Davidge has family connections associated with the W D Tarlinton Track. His grandmother Jessie Sutherland was born and raised in the Belowra-Yowrie area where John spent much of his childhood. John continues to ride on the historical bridle tracks and enjoys sharing his knowledge with others.

Eugene Collins' family were one of the original European migrants to the Candelo-Bemboka area arriving in the early 1860s and farming in the area until the present day. Eugene lives in Bemboka and continues to explore the wilderness on the bridle tracks, mainly on foot these days.

Kerry Reid was born in 1939 when his family lived at Burra Creek, Moruya. Throughout his life Kerry and his family have explored the bridle tracks across the region. His most cherished track is the Georges Pack Track between Moruya and Bendethera.

Phyllis Reid grew up in Narooma and has lived in Moruya most of her life with her husband Kerry. Phyllis and her family have spent a lot of time riding horses on bridle tracks for recreation across the region.

Terry Hart grew up in Braidwood. He has family connections through his mother to the Rankins, and through his father to Michael Hart, who settled at Jerrabattgulla in the early 1800s. The Hart family continue to use the bridle tracks in and around Braidwood, Alpine, Bendethera and Fairfield to shift cattle and for pleasure.

Colin Schaefer grew up at Tuross, in the Kybeyan area. His grandfather and father roamed all over the Wadbilliga area. Col is very familiar with the bridle track from the Wadbilliga crossing into Yowrie.

Mr Reg Cootes grew up in the 1930s on a property at Quidong near the junction of the Bombala and Delegate River. He remembers riding on old bridle tracks, from Quidong Homestead to the junction of the Quidong and Snowy Rivers.

Anthony Green has maintained the Green family link to 'Doolondondoo' in the Kybean area. Anthony is passionate about maintaining the heritage value of the bridle tracks in the Wadbilliga-Bemboka-Nimmitabel area.

William Farrell grew up in the Nungatta - Burragate area, working on a number of bridle tracks in the area. His grandfather Jack Farrell was a bullock driver in the early 1900s, carting wool and other goods around the region. Today, William resides in Bombala.

David Girvan grew up in Bombala, riding horses for work and pleasure. He mustered cattle around the region and into the Alpine - Snowy Mountain country. Today, David has a love for recreational horse riding on the old bridle tracks across the Monaro.

Rowan Alcock is a descendant of the Green – Alcock family. Rowan continues to reside on a portion of the family's original land grant, at 'Crystal Brook', near Bemboka.

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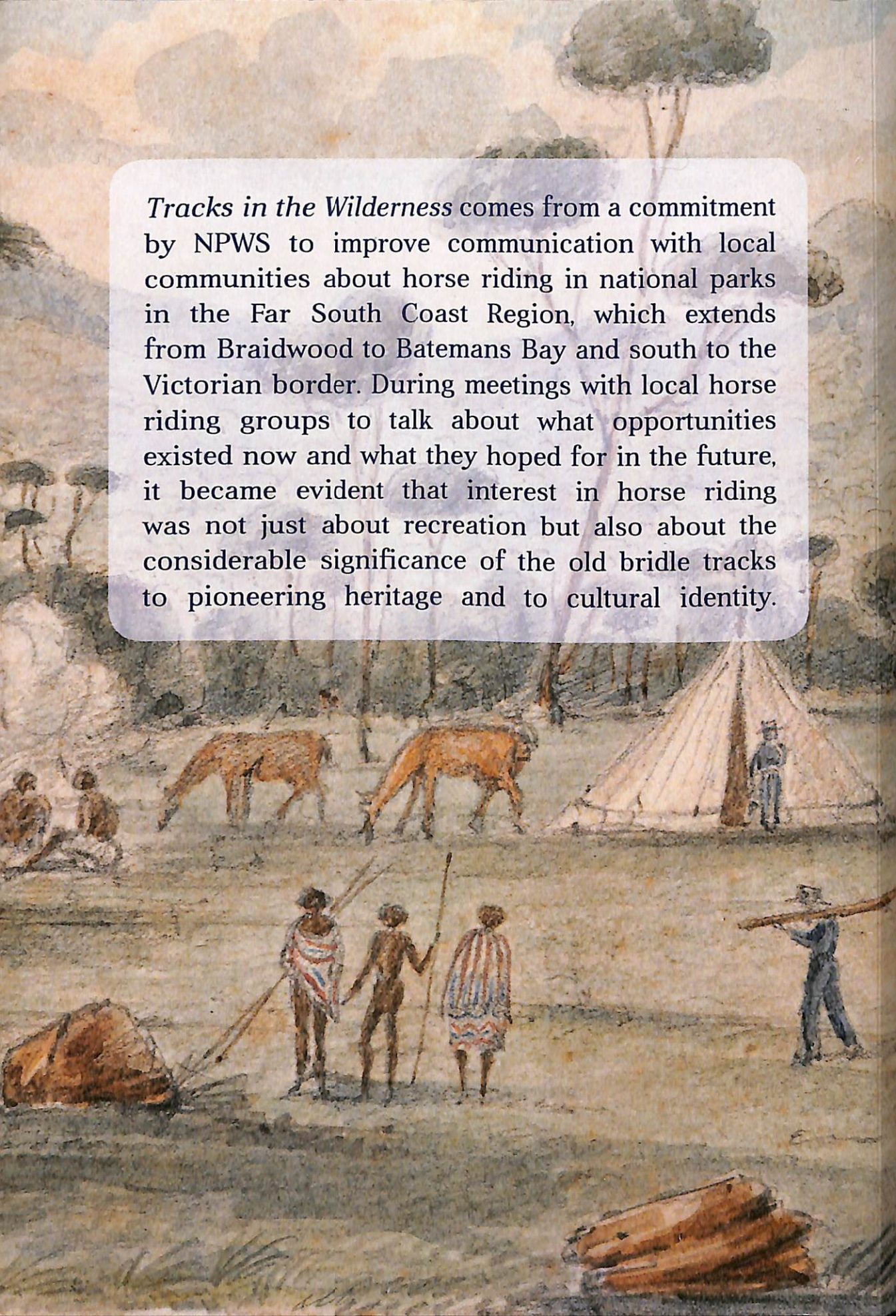
Back cover illustration: (detail)
Encamping for the night at the foot
of the Maneroo Range of Mountains.
Robert M Westmacott, 1834.
State Library of NSW.



Tracks in the Wilderness comes from a commitment by NPWS to improve communication with local communities about horse riding in national parks in the Far South Coast Region, which extends from Braidwood to Batemans Bay and south to the Victorian border. During meetings with local horse riding groups to talk about what opportunities existed now and what they hoped for in the future, it became evident that interest in horse riding was not just about recreation but also about the considerable significance of the old bridle tracks to pioneering heritage and to cultural identity.