

A BIT OF TUROSS HISTORY

From the Moruya & District Historical Society compiled by Helen Townend

TUROSS LAKE CLOSURES: A submission by Mr. Ernest Hawdon of Kyla Park, son of John Hawdon, to a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the difficulties of trading outside local boundaries/markets caused by the lack of shipping facilities; dated 12th OCTOBER 1891, stated:

He "has known the mouth of the Tuross (River) to have been practicable as a ford for ten years at a stretch; this was as near as he can recollect between 1850 and 1860; about 1860 the entrance was absolutely closed with sand; about this time a great flood occurred during a season of very heavy and continuous rain all over the colony; this cleared out the entrance and left it navigable;

The lake was after that used for some time by sailing vessels; this was before Mr. Mort owned Bodalla; much potato cultivation was done on Bodalla then, the crop being taken away by these vessels, but when the entrance suddenly closed the then crop was lost as it could not be got away; during his experience he has known this entrance to have been closed completely three times and he does not believe that it can be relied on as a navigable channel for any length of time, as during his experience he has known it to have been fordable hundreds of times either on the bar or on the inner crossing;

As his property adjoins this (Tuross) lake, his place, Kyla Park, being within half-a-mile of the site of the proposed wharf at Turlinjah, the lake would be of great advantage to him if communication could be obtained by this route, but he is convinced that no dependence can be placed upon it; while the passage is open, if a boat traded to Turlinjah, he would certainly make use of it; in his judgement a jetty is required at Turlinjah for use of the water communication along 15 miles of the Tuross River which is navigable for punts; a deal of fencing stuff is procurable up the river, and bark which would be brought down if there were any facilities for landing it alongside the road; sleepers and other timber which abounds higher up the river could also be brought down; points out also that there are extensive oyster leases on the lake, which was at one time leased throughout its extent, for which facilities for landing are needed

TUROSS RIVER POWER STATION: Sufficient water flows in 1951 caused debate re the possibility of constructing a hydro-electric power station on the Tuross River. Seeking a suitable dam site, Mr J Beale MLA, Councillor Doug Thomson and the Shire's consulting engineer Mr G. Davey, climbed to the top of a trig station near Belowra, 2300 feet high from where they able to view the tableland, Moruya, Narooma, Montague Island and the country around Tuross Falls. From here the Tuross River was running below at 300 feet above sea level through a gorge 2000 feet deep.

If a dam site could be found, it was envisaged the 15,000 kW power station could be put in the gorge below the Falls, about 12 miles from Cobargo and 15 from Bodalla. A tunnel from the dam to the power station would be necessary at a cost of £500,000 for two miles. The power station itself would cost £1 million. If both the power station and tunnel could be constructed at these costs it was expected the

power generated would be much cheaper than from either the Snowy scheme or the then present and projected Bega Valley hydro-electric schemes

ST. DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. According to historical records, this Church was actually built in 1869 at Nerrigundah i.e one year after the government had laid out the town site of Nerrigundah in response to the influx of the gold rush population.

In 1953 it was taken down and re-erected on its present site on Hector McWilliam Drive in Tuross by Athol Hawdon and his workforce. Using local rebuilding skills and techniques, all of the sound material of the old Church was used and the outside weatherboards were reversed (turned inside out) when the Church was re-erected.

So historic St.David's Church has served the Presbyterian community of two townships for nearly one hundred and forty years. Its architectural style is described as "Victorian Gothic Carpenter" and it is listed on the Shire's Heritage Register.

The adjoining Church Hall was completed in just over eight months, constructed mostly by voluntary labour and officially opened on 1st March 1997. The hall was named the "Athol Hawdon Memorial Hall" to commemorate the life of Athol who was for over forty years the Session Clerk of the Parish of Moruya/Narooma which includes the Tuross congregation.

THE SCHOOL CHILDREN OF TUROSS haven't always had to travel outside of their district to attend school. Several petitions by residents in the mid/late 1800's requested the NSW Council of Education to establish a school for Tuross as with the nearest schools being at Bodalla and Bergalia, the children were growing up without an education. A site at Turlinjah about 1 km south from the intersection of Hector McWilliam Drive and the Highway was surveyed by the Government Surveyor and granted in 1868 but funding for the school was unavailable at that time.

In 1876 John Hawdon of Kyla Park again appealed to the Council of Education stating the number of school children "have been more than doubled in the district and the want of Education more severely felt". The number of children listed in the appeal were: Patrick Mylott 6, Ernest Hawdon 2, William Knox 7, Reginald H Barling 7, G.H.D.Goodin 11, J.H.Keet 1, Richard Dansey 2, Henry Chapman 2, Harriet Gibbs 5, Erijah Brown 5, Albert Smart 6, George Sly 6, Thomas Jones 6, John McLean 2, Thomas Davis 7, Edward Gray 7, Mortey Hayes 10, TOTAL 93. A further petition in 1877 by George Goodin stated "This is a poor neighbourhood and child after child is being sent to work or hired out, thus forever losing the chance of receiving even the simplest elements of education"

The Turlinjah "one teacher" school was eventually established in 1879. The children of Tuross, walked, rode horses or bikes to school daily until the school was closed about 1970. A wide track can still just be seen almost parallel to Hector McWilliam Drive extending across the Kyla Park (southern) grazing lands heading towards the school building which was unfortunately destroyed by fire in September 1982.

Three hectares of council land off Lake Street was inspected by the NSW Education Office about 1981 but it was determined that a need for a school in Tuross had somewhat been reduced owing to "the downturn in building activity and other economic constraints affecting local employment opportunities". Later investigations by the Department had found growing interest in the potential site but there the matter seems to have come to an end.