

HISTORY IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOUNTAINS

A journey through the history of the Sapphire Coast

Part 6 – The Towns - Pambula



Pambula

(Town map on the last page)

The name Pambula is derived from its Thawa language name pronounced "Panboola", meaning 'twin waters'. The suffix 'bula' or 'boola' is seen in the names of other places in the region. For example Merimbula, that means 'twin lakes'. Many of the Aboriginal names for places on this part of the coast have been retained or reinstated – Gulaga Mountain was called Mt Dromedary by Captain Cook when he sailed up this coast.

The Imlay Brothers, Peter, George and Alexander, settled in this area in the 1830s, taking up land on the Pambula Flats for agriculture. Agriculture is still the dominant land use here.

Although initially laid out by Surveyor Townsend in 1843, Pambula was not proclaimed a town with its new name until 1885. The main land uses were grazing and agriculture. Initially people lived in tents along stock routes but these were replaced by slab and bark huts, then by more permanent buildings, houses, blacksmith huts and hotels. Pambula had five licensed hotels by 1856 and the foundation stone for the courthouse was laid in 1860.

Surveyor Townsend originally planned the village of Pambula on the flats near the river and the first school and churches were built there. However, because of frequent flooding the village was relocated to its present site on higher ground. The flooding still occurs today and major road works are required to keep the Princes Highway open.



Midshipman John Lloyd C1806, from "John Lloyd RN of the Grange", by H. S. Bazley

John Lloyd and The Grange

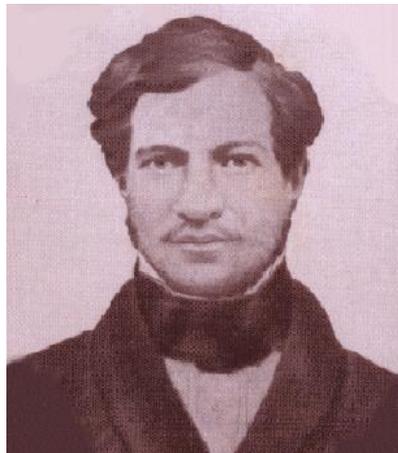
Captain John Lloyd, Royal Navy, acquired land in 1844 using his severance pay on leaving the Royal Navy. He entered the Navy at just 12 years of age, and at 14, fought in the Battle of Trafalgar. Captain Lloyd built 'The Grange', a stately colonial home still standing on the hill in South Pambula near the river. A section of 'The Grange' has been refurbished as a restaurant.



The Grange

Lloyd employed two local men to construct his homestead, but it is likely that he also had two convicts assigned to him who may have worked on the building. Stone for the two storey residence was reputed to have been carried out from Devon (England) as ship's ballast. Although commanding in appearance from the exterior, the building is of a very simple design inside, the two floors being divided into four rooms each, separated by an eight-foot wide hallway running down the centre.

Just below the house was a large water hole popular with the Aboriginal people, and, according to later recollections, was the site of many battles between local groups and neighbouring Monaro Aboriginals who came down to coast during the winter months. According to oral history, this was also the site of a massacre of Aboriginals, when the waterhole was poisoned.



Syms Covington

Syms Covington

John Lloyd invited Syms Covington to move to Pambula. When he was 15 years old Covington joined Charles Darwin on his second survey expedition in the *HMS Beagle* as a fiddler and cabin boy. As well as working as a servant and general secretary writing out Darwin's records of investigations, Covington became Darwin's assistant as a collector, hunter and taxidermist. Covington kept a personal journal of his impressions of the voyage that includes accounts ranging from daily mundane tasks to his impressions of the lands and the people he encountered. His journal is a

valuable perspective that supplements Darwin's *Journal and Remarks*, better known as *The Voyage of the Beagle*.



Charles Darwin

Voyage of the Beagle 1831-1836

After the *Beagle* returned in 1836, Covington became Darwin's manservant and continued his duties. Covington's collection of bird specimens was to prove invaluable because he had taken care to record on the label, the place each specimen had been taken (unlike Darwin). His careful labelling enabled each of Darwin's finches to be identified with a specific island in the Galapagos Islands. Covington remained in Darwin's service until 25 February 1839. He then decided to emigrate, and was given a personal reference from Darwin in a letter dated 29 May 1839.

Records indicate that Covington landed in Sydney in 1840. He married Eliza Twyford and drew on his naval connections to find employment, and by 1843 was working as a clerk at the Sydney coal depot of the Australian Agricultural Company. Around 1844 the family, with their first two sons, accepted the invitation of Captain Lloyd and moved to the south coast property at Pambula.

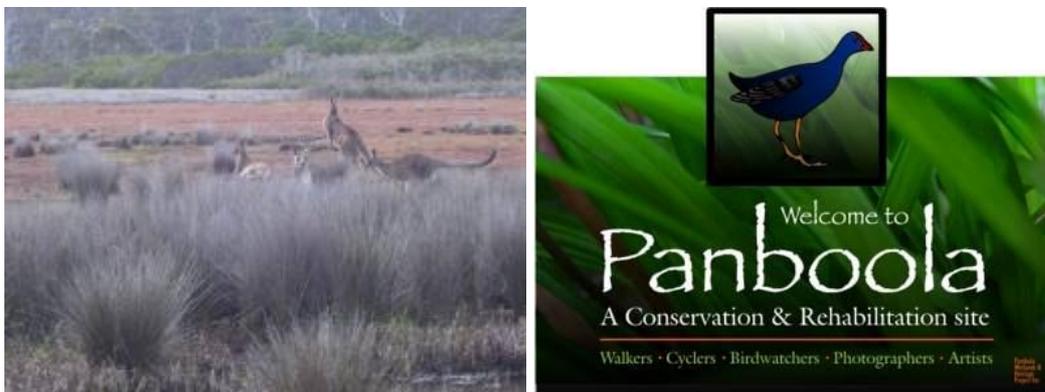
Covington continued to correspond with Darwin, who sent him the gift of a replacement ear trumpet to help with Covington's increasing deafness, supposedly the result of his shooting of specimens for Darwin. In response to Darwin's request for local specimens, Covington and his eldest son collected a large number of barnacles at nearby Twofold Bay. Darwin's letter of 23 November 1850 expressed his delight in receiving the box, which included particularly unusual species. This contributed to the extensive studies of barnacles that established Darwin as a biologist.

Covington became Postmaster of Pambula in 1854 and later managed an inn. He died in 1861 of 'paralysis' at only 47 years old. Covington's house still stands and is currently a gallery open to the public.



Covington's House and gallery

Panboola Wetlands



The Panboola wetlands

The original site for the Pambula town has now been returned to nature. Panboola is a 77 hectare area of floodplain managed by the Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project in conjunction with the Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Reserve Trust.

Since 1997 changes in ownership and use of this land led to the restoration of Panboola as it might have originally been. Panboola is being rehabilitated as a wetland for the purposes of nature conservation, protection and restoration of habitat for birds and other indigenous flora and fauna, and for community education and outdoor enjoyment. Fresh water billabongs lead to saline areas within and around the former racecourse, then through salt marsh and mangroves to the tidal Pambula River beyond. A system of walking tracks is being developed.

Pambula Goldfield

When gold was discovered near Pambula in 1889, small shantytowns grew up around the diggings. The Pambula Goldfield is listed on the Register of the National Estate. The area is unusual in that it contains many diverse mining remains in a relatively compact area. These include examples of mining technology that are rare in Australia.

Yowaka and Pipeclay Creek village sites, with their range of mining, processing and living areas, demonstrate well the various characteristics of a gold mining area.

In 1888 gold was discovered on Mount Gahan in what is now part of the Nullica State Forest. In the rush that followed, claims were staked all around the discovery site. Shafts were sunk 100m or more and drives were cut in all directions. These mines were abandoned, never to be reopened. They survive virtually as they were when abandoned at the end of the 19th century. In the early years of the 20th century, a fourth lode was discovered well to the south. This was the 'Brass Knocker', worked successfully from 1911 to 1912 and on and off during the 1920s and 1930s.

To get to the Pambula Goldfield turn west off Nethercote Road after the Pipeclay Creek crossing. There are three major weirs situated on Pipeclay Creek, the largest about 50m wide and the smallest 10m wide. They are made of brick and are still in excellent condition. An impressive water reticulation system once supplied water to various machinery sites. Mud brick processing vats and many building sites lie hidden in the undergrowth among the debris left behind. Massive flywheels, steam pistons and other relics can be seen near the Faulkiner workings. Much of the ore crushing took place here in a two-storey building and the brick kiln is an example of fine craftsmanship. Flying foxes carried ore to this and other locations 1,500ft down a 400ft elevation, from the Mount Gahan Mine to the lower areas of Pipeclay Creek. On the Mount Gahan Ridge, which has commanding views of Pambula, a number of major shafts hundreds of feet deep dot the hillside. It was here that the Yowaka village was situated. The hillsides have flattened plots, stone foundations and fireplaces - the remains of what had been the bustling community of homes, shops and pubs of a generation of pioneers. Hundreds of building sites can be discerned crowding the ridge. The Pambula Goldfield was at its most active from 1889 until World War 1.



Pambula Heritage Walk

Pambula village has retained many fine old buildings and a walk through the streets and a drive around the surrounding area will invoke a sense of Australia's pioneer past. Of course, the uses of the buildings have changed. There are now art galleries, clothing shops, an artisan bakery, coffee houses (one in a converted bank that is an extensive providore), a wholefoods store and other special interest shops.

Courthouse, Police Station and Cell Block



Former Pambula Courthouse, police station and cell block

Listed on the Register of the National Estate, the former Pambula Court House, Police Station and Cell Block are important for their role in the administration of justice in Pambula from the time the site was first used for a lock-up in 1859, until the closure of the courthouse in 1984.

The complex of buildings has a long association with the social history of Pambula and, despite being no longer used for its original purpose, continues to be of social value to the local community as a centre for the study of family history and for community group meetings.

Oaklands Homestead



Oaklands homestead

'Oaklands' homestead is listed on the New South Wales Heritage Register because it is a rare example of an intact colonial homestead from the late Georgian period. The main homestead, built in 1842, together with its outbuildings and immediate garden, is one of the oldest buildings in the Bega Valley and one of the earliest surviving colonial houses on the New South Wales south coast. It is mentioned here because of its significance to the state and the region, but because it is privately owned, it is not open to the public. It can be seen from a distance from 'The Grange' (Lloyd's house, described above).



Pambula district (Google Earth)