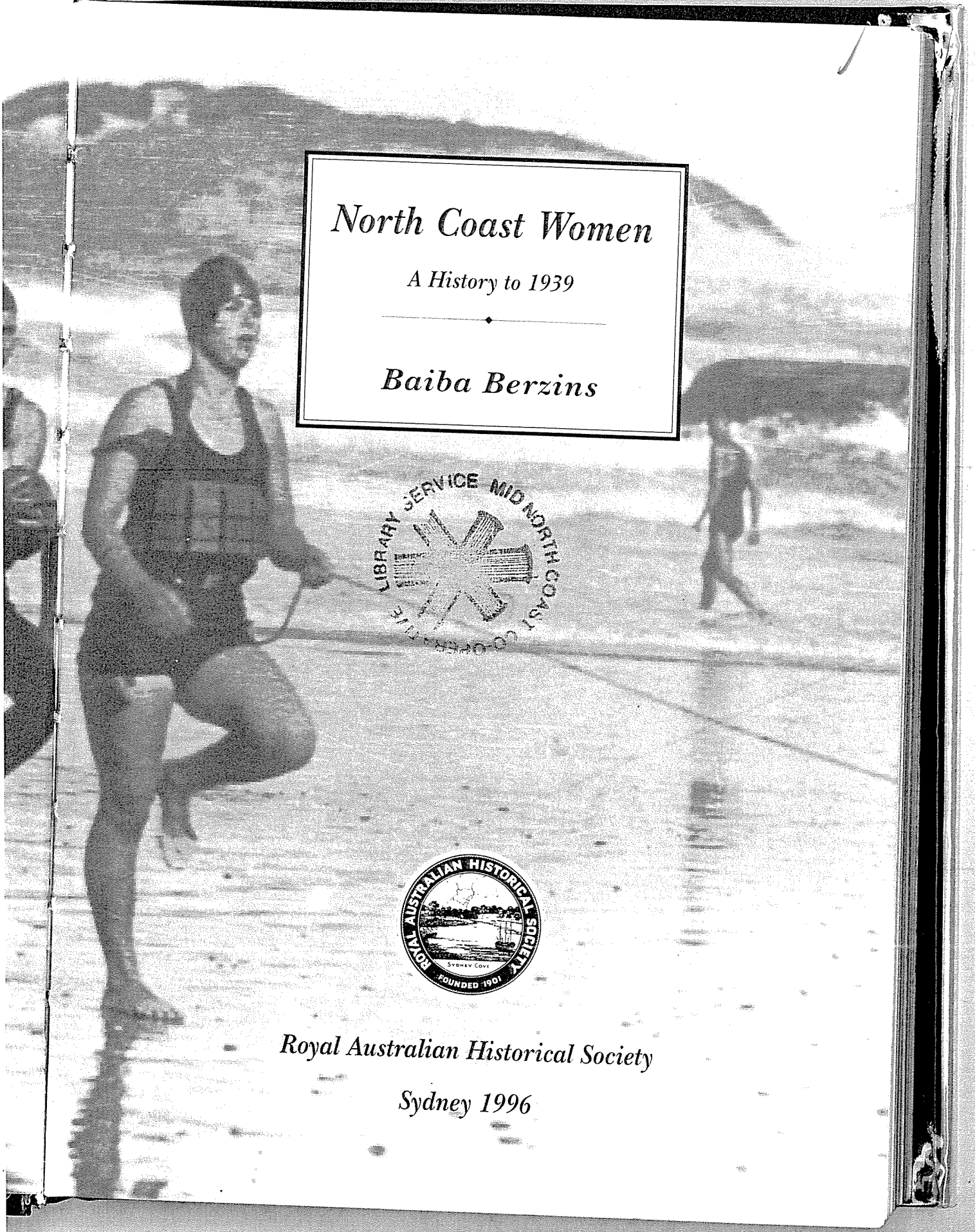


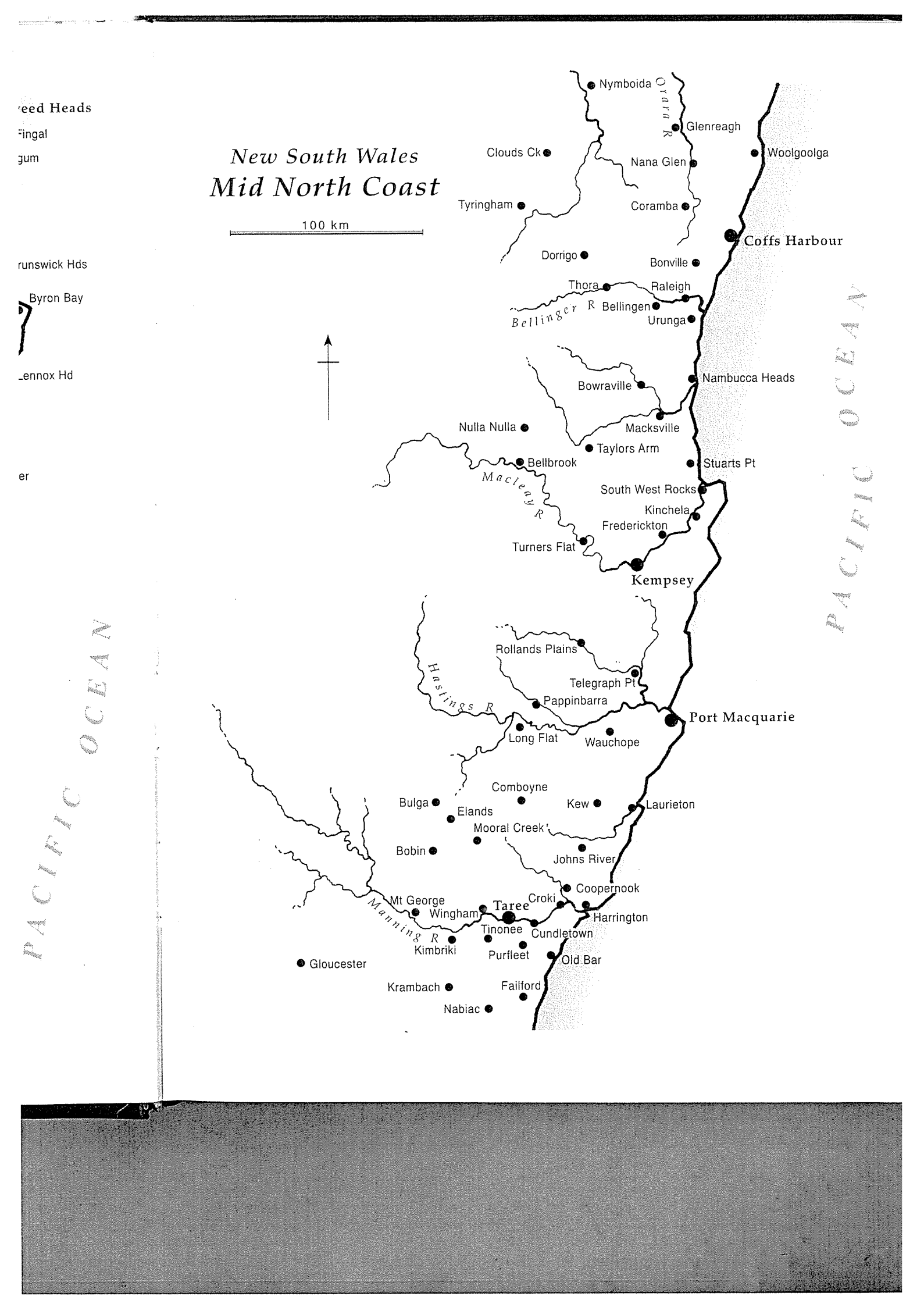
North Coast Women

A History to 1939

Baiba Berzins

Royal Australian Historical Society

Sydney 1996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Dorrigo
Bonville
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Raleigh
Bellinger R
Bellingen
Urunga
Nambucca Heads
Bowraville
Macksville
Nulla Nulla
Taylors Arm
Bellbrook
Stuarts Pt
Macleay R
South West Rocks
Kinchela
Frederickton
Turners Flat
Kempsey
Rollands Plains
Hastings R
Telegraph Pt
Pappinbarra
Port Macquarie
Long Flat
Wauchope
Comboyne
Bulga
Kew
Laurieton
Elands
Mooral Creek
Bobin
Johns River
Coopernook
Mt George
Croki
Taree
Wingham
Harrington
Tinonee
Cundletown
Manning R
Kimbriki
Purfleet
Old Bar
Gloucester
Krambach
Failford
Nabiac
PACIFIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN

Contents

Chapter 1

Country & town

1.1 Aboriginal life

When Granny Curtis was young she used to travel from Lismore to the Tweed ... that was their boundary ... They reckoned they were the richest tribe because they had everything. They had pippies from the sea, they had oysters, they had fish, they had plenty and they had wild birds.[1]

The Aboriginal peoples who inhabited the North Coast before contact lived in a rich and fruitful environment. They knew their country intimately and drew from it the spiritual and physical sustenance for their annual cycle of movement to the river flats and the coast in summer and inland in winter to the high forested land of the mountain ranges and the upper reaches of the rivers.

In traditional Aboriginal society women and men collaborated in the gathering of food. It was women's role to collect shellfish like oysters and freshwater mussels and the many different types of plant foods such as roots, seeds, tubers, yams, fruits and berries or delicacies such as turtle eggs. They also gathered firewood. Many plant foods could be eaten raw while others like the seeds of the Bunya pine were roasted or pounded into a cake. Even poisonous plants, such as the beans of the Moreton Bay chestnut and the roots of the cunjevoi, were made edible by pounding and then soaking to remove their toxicity.[2] Other toxic plants were used to stun the fish in waterholes and make them easy to catch.[3] Men typically hunted the larger animals but both sexes looked for wild honey, went fishing and gathered the smaller animals such as grubs, echidnas, snakes, lizards, goannas, freshwater turtles, bush turkeys and ducks. Everyone joined in 'drives' to capture the smaller marsupials like pademelons or to entrap fish in shallow river water or in the tidal estuaries. Plants that required cooking and meat and fish were generally broiled over an open fire or roasted on hot coals. Other methods were used. The Biripi for example steamed small marsupials wrapped in leaves or ti-tree bark in the hollow of

a scooped out ant hill while the Dainggatti used a ground pit.[4] The Galibal rolled echidnas in clay before baking them in the ashes so that the quills came off with the clay when cooked.[5]

Among women's tasks were the making of implements and containers. Plant gathering required tools like the bark or wooden platters known as coolamons and digging sticks, sometimes specially adapted to the food being sought as with the thin fire-hardened digging sticks used by Bundjalung women to dig out yams.[6] At Port Macquarie the Dainggatti women and children used pieces of wood with a flat end to dig for cockles on the beach.[7] Fish hooks were fashioned out of bone or shell. The inner rind of the bark of native hibiscus was soaked for three days and then chewed to make it flexible enough to twist into string which was used for fishing lines, dilly bags, fishing and hunting nets and net bags for carrying children. Dilly bags were also woven from rushes and grass fibres while water containers were made from the sheath of the leaf stalk of the Bangalow palm.[8] Women made rugs from possum skin and other furs by sewing them together using bone needles and animal sinew.[9] They also used skins and bark fibre for garments or made girdles out of fur. Nights were often spent out in the open but if camp was set up gunyahs were erected by placing sheets of stringybark over a sapling held up by two forked sticks.

Marriage was usually arranged at an early age and governed by strict rules about which groups could marry.[10] Among the Biripi for example there were four classes for marriage purposes for the women and four for the men. Childcare was women's responsibility and much time was spent nurturing children, teaching them skills and knowledge and playing with them. Women also tended to the needs of the aged and infirm.

The bonds between Aboriginal people, their physical environment and the natural species which inhabited it were maintained through rituals. Some ceremonies involved the whole group or tribe and women had particular roles in them. Other ceremonies, such as the initiation of girls into womanhood, were strictly women's business while women were excluded from men's ceremonies. The rituals and their meaning were handed down from generation to generation as were the knowledge and stories associated with special places, flora and fauna.

Aboriginal people lived in small groups within which everyone had a defined kinship to everyone else. These relationships entailed particular responsibilities and codes of behaviour which ensured the ordered working of the group and its cohesion. Each group had a recognised territory but contact was maintained with

other groups under certain conventions and for particular purposes. Conflict within or between groups was usually resolved by ritual methods.

Into this ordered world came the white people. The earliest visitors to the North Coast were the explorers by land and sea who sometimes made contact with Aboriginal groups but whose presence was always noticed and communicated to others. Escaped convicts also sometimes made their way into the area. Mary and William Bryant with their two children and seven fellow convicts made a daring escape to Timor in the Governor's cutter in 1791 and on their long row north they stopped in at places on the North Coast.[11] A group of thirteen convicts seized the brig *Trial* from Sydney Harbour in 1816 and sailed north until the vessel was wrecked at what is now Trial Bay. A white woman is alleged to have survived the wreck and to have lived with the Gumbainggir for fourteen years.[12] These were intermittent contacts which did not impact on traditional Aboriginal life. Much more frequent contact became unavoidable after the establishment of penal settlements at Port Macquarie (1821) and Moreton Bay (1824) and the development of cedar-getting along the Hastings, Manning and Macleay Rivers.

1.2 Convicts & settlers

Port Macquarie was set up as an establishment for recalcitrant convicts in 1821. Only two women convicts were sent there in the early years. A Female Factory was built in 1825 but most of the seven women sent there before 1830, some with husbands in the settlement, were employed as assigned servants. In 1830 Port Macquarie was opened to free settlement but it continued to be used as a place of detention and the Factory was not closed down until 1842.[1] From 1830 until its closure there were usually 24 to 29 women at the Factory, mostly brought from the Female Factory at Parramatta.[2] Some were 'generally old and past labor' such as the 20 transferred in July 1830.[3] Others were women the authorities regarded as difficult. Eliza Reynolds and Margaret Campbell, for example, were sent from Parramatta in 1837 because they would not remain in their assigned employment, preferring 'the Factory to private service;'[4] Johanna Brown (d 1869) was one of a group of twelve women sent in 1839 'to separate them from the bad connections they have formed'.[5]

At the Factory the women prisoners made clothes, worked in the government vegetable garden, cooked and did the laundry. When

cotton growing was tried in the early days of the settlement women prisoners had to pick the seeds out of the crop. They also heated soft iron in forges and beat it to produce the nails used in the woodwork of local buildings.[6] On Sundays the Factory women attended church in print dresses and white calico hoods; at work they wore large white aprons which had to be kept spotlessly clean.[7]

The principal use of the Factory women was as assigned labour to carry out domestic work for employers in the town or, after 1830, on the properties which developed rapidly out from Port Macquarie.[8] When Louisa McIntyre (nee Cross 1814-87) and her husband, Dr James McIntyre, the former medical officer at the goal, began farming at Rollands Plains in 1840 she had four assignees from the Factory to work for her as cook, laundress, housemaid and nursemaid.[9] They included Catherine McPhie (1816-84) who was 17 when sentenced for seven years in 1833 for robbery. After she received her ticket of leave she married a fellow convict, Robert Fisher, and they later farmed at Rollands Plains.[10] Even women officially regarded as unemployable were engaged to meet the demand for domestic labour at Port Macquarie. Sarah Piper (1789-1842), aged 40 when she was sentenced to life for stealing coats, was classified as 'not assignable because a cripple' on arrival in Sydney in 1829. She was transferred to Port Macquarie in 1830 where she later worked for the Warlters family, despite her disability.[11]

The convicts on assignment were visited by the military and were returned to gaol if they were unsatisfactory. Mary Furby was found to have 'conducted herself improperly' while working for the chaplain and she was punished by being made to pick oakum, the loose fibre used in repairing boats and obtained by taking old ropes to pieces.[12] Even harsher punishment was meted out to those who challenged the authorities. Catherine Donoghue (1811-35) and Ann Cahill were part of a group which abused the surgeon in 1833 when he approved a sentence of fifty lashes on two male prisoners. When they were brought to court they attacked him and the presiding magistrate. They both served twelve months hard labour at the Parramatta Female Factory.[13]

Not all of the convicts assigned to settlers came from Port Macquarie. William Wynter had four assigned servants including one woman, Catherine Millson (1774-1842), when he moved from Sydney to take up land on the Manning in 1830.[14] Mary Foster (later (1)Supple (2)Behan 1811-61), who was transported to Tasmania, was assigned to Andrew Baxter in 1836. She travelled with the Baxters to Sydney and then in 1839 to the Macleay. When Annie

Baxter (nee Hadden (2)Dawbin, 1816-1905) discovered that Mary had married their man servant John Supple she sent her back to Port Macquarie because, as a convict, she had not obtained the required permission. After months of trying, official permission was granted, the Supples married again and their child was christened. The dearth of good servants made Annie relent and accept the Supples back in late 1840 but differences continued and in 1841 they went over to another property.[15]

The wives of officers and men were the only other white women in early Port Macquarie except for women such as Jane McRoberts (b 1799), the wife of the schoolteacher, and Eliza Edwards (nee Winnicott), the matron of the Female Factory and the wife of the gaol watchhouse keeper.[16] After 1830 the number of free women increased significantly. Some ventured into business. Mrs Morgan, the wife of a convict, was allowed to open a store in 1834.[17] Georgina Kinnear (b 1781) and three children arrived from Scotland in 1838 following her convicted husband. In 1839 she set up a general store which provided a wide range of goods and services including a circulating library. She traded flamboyantly but unsuccessfully against the established commission agents. A later venture as manager of the 'magnificent' new Hotel Royal also foundered when she was unable to meet her debts and had to file for insolvency.[18]

Others invested in the property market. Ann Bird (later (1)Howe (2)Watt (3)Salmon 1803-43) came to Port Macquarie in 1836 after her lover and later husband William Watt had his ticket of leave transferred there. Ann, the daughter of a convict, was first married in 1821 to Robert Howe, the proprietor of the *Sydney Gazette* and the son of its founder. After Howe died in 1829 Ann took over and ran the newspaper for seven years. She proposed to transfer the *Gazette* to Port Macquarie but was unable to do so because of opposition from a creditor. Watt drowned in 1837 but Ann stayed on and in the same year purchased Glenrock Plains, a property of over 5000 acres on the Macleay, with the money she had derived from her share of the *Gazette*. She married again in 1840 to Thomas Salmon who retained ownership of the property after she died.[19]

The grandest establishment in the district was presided over by Margaret Innes (nee Macleay 1803-58), the daughter of the Colonial Secretary, and her husband Major Archibald Innes who had extensive landholdings and business interests as far as the Manning and New England.[20] At Lake Innes, a short distance from the town, they maintained a house which the Governor's aide considered 'as commodious and well-appointed as any English country house'.[21]

Here the traditions of the gentry were upheld: lavish entertainment and hospitality, the careful display of wealth and culture, genteel behaviour.[22] Annie Baxter considered Margaret to be 'fond of pomp and power' but it was her way of life.[23] She worked hard to maintain the contacts and the standards on which her family's social standing depended. She was an assiduous correspondent and a generous hostess and she carefully planned and supervised the running of the spacious twenty-two bedroom house and its profuse garden. In the evenings the dinner table 'glittered with glass and silver' in the glow of sparkling chandeliers and silver candelabra rose above tastefully arranged flowers. When everyone was seated the music started and 'Mrs Innes ordered the food to be served to one and which she considered best suited for one'.[24]

This style of life depended on servants. When Annabella Innes (later Boswell 1826-1916) first went to her uncle's house at Lake Innes in 1839 there were numerous servants. When Annabella returned in 1843 half the servants had been dismissed because the economic depression had affected the family's finances. Nevertheless the household still included maids for Margaret Innes and her daughters, two housemaids and a laundress, a butler, two footmen, a piper, two Spaniards who worked in the stables but appeared in livery if required and out-workers who maintained the fields, including the Halorans, a married couple who looked after the pigs and the poultry.[25] In the straitened circumstances of the late 1840s the women of the household themselves had to make cakes, sew, work in the garden and burn off, churn butter and look after the dairy. Yet even in the last years before leaving Lake Innes, Margaret had a personal maid, 'a very dark mullato looking girl named Lucy who always appeared neat and trim in her uniform' and other servants.[26] Lavish receptions were still occasionally held and the conventions of another world observed until bankruptcy in 1852 forced the family to abandon Lake Innes to the introduced bamboo and lantana which eventually overgrew it.

On the stations and farms established out from Port Macquarie and in the new areas of settlement on the Manning and the Macleay, conditions were very different. Maria Kemp and her husband Major William Kemp moved with their family in 1840 to Boonanghii, a cattle station on the Macleay, after he, like many officers, resigned his commission. Their new home had seven rooms but the walls were upright slabs, the windows were unglazed and closed with 'boarded shutters', the verandah was of plain earth and the bark roof 'was very faulty, letting in rain with every shower, so that our poor piano suffered and was ultimately spoiled'.[27] The

facilities were basic. The house was swept with brooms made from twigs. The large open fireplace in the kitchen was fuelled by huge logs which lasted up to a week. Three legged pots hung from the crosspiece over the fire for boiling, there was a camp oven for baking and a pan with a long handle for frying. Damper was baked in the hot ashes. The household grew its own melons and vegetables and corn was a staple of the family's diet. They produced their own milk, butter and cheese, made bread from grain they grew and slaughtered and salted their own meat. Wild turkey and sugarbag (honey from wild bees) which the Aborigines brought them provided a welcome change of diet.[28]

The phasing out of the convict system dried up the supply of convict domestic servants and the depression dampened the demand. In 1836 there were 61 female convicts in Macquarie County but by 1846 there were only 13 and in 1851 there was only one. Caroline Chisholm set up a branch of her Home for Female Immigrants in Port Macquarie in 1842[29] and work was found in the area for some immigrants such as Ann Kelly (later Mills 1823-74), an Irish girl who came to Australia with her sister Peggy in 1842.[30] There were however only 38 women domestic servants in the County of Macquarie in 1846. Louisa McIntyre, who had always had servants to wait on her, began dairying with the help of her six daughters, two sons and a young nephew when she moved out to Limeburners Creek after her husband died in 1853. She found 'her new sphere in life was not without its rewards her own health had improved and that of her family'.[31]

The Kemps lived 45 miles from Port Macquarie which they visited every six weeks for mail, later changing to Kempsey when stores were established there. The station was isolated but the family had a social life. The older children rode over to other stations and visited for several days or rode into Port Macquarie for a dance, 'crinoline wires round our waists, collapsed and tied; our dresses [in] a valise strapped to the pommel'.[32] As more white people came to the locality dances were held on the property. The visitors camped out for two nights and dined at long trestle tables groaning with food. There was dancing in the evenings and a riding party during the day.[33]

Other women led much more isolated lives. Mary Allan (1798-1863), newly arrived from London, had an Irish girl, Bridget Kennedy (later May) to help her during her first four years after the family settled at Kimbriki in 1851. Her only 'society','so very different to anything she had been used to', consisted of three other white women: Ann Andrews (c1818-82) and her sister-in-law

Mrs George McPherson, the wives of station owners, and Isabella Kelly (1802-72), the only single woman landholder on the Manning. Even more isolated was the wife of one of the station hands who acted as cook 'and looked after us' when Mary's son John subsequently took up a run at Cooplacurripa.[34]

Psychological as well as physical isolation was the terrible fate of Annie Chapman (nee Wilson) for the 25 years she lived on the Macleay after her marriage in 1852. She married to please her family but all of them, except for one brother who later deprived her of her inheritance, drowned at sea on the night of the wedding. She was trapped in an unhappy marriage and disliked by her in-laws. She and the children were often unwell, her husband was frequently away for long periods, the servants did not provide the companionship she needed and she was frightened of the Aborigines who were often around the house. The Chapman's property was devastated by floods and their finances by debt, including debt to Annie's mother-in-law, Ann Chapman (nee Chenhall), a widow who in the 1860s and 1870s was the lessee of several runs in the Macleay district.[35]

As a single woman Isabella Kelly aroused suspicion and resentment. An Irishwoman of considerable independent means, she first visited Sydney in 1834 but returned in 1837 and invested all her money in real estate, including 895 acres at Mount George which she stocked with cattle and pedigree horses. She is alleged to have been harsh in her treatment of assigned convicts but some employees spoke favourably of her. An accomplished horsewoman and a crack shot, Isabella kept close control over her stock and her property especially since the police refused to assist her in tracking down suspected cattle duffers. On one occasion she is reported to have single-handedly overcome a bushranging gang which had stolen her money and a pistol. In 1841 she had part of her land surveyed for a proposed township but the townsites attracted few buyers and the George Inn, which she planned to turn into an accommodation house and licensed premises, was burnt down, allegedly deliberately, and Isabella moved to a second property at Brimbin Creek.

In 1854 Isabella took a neighbour, Charles Skerrett, to court for stealing her cattle by deceit. He was imprisoned but began perjury proceedings against her after his release. In 1859 she was found guilty and sentenced to a year in Darlinghurst Gaol although the documents on which the charges were based were forgeries. During her incarceration Skerrett disposed of her cattle and horses and her financial standing was destroyed. Isabella was released

Isabella Kelly (1802-1872), the only single woman landholder on the Manning in the mid-nineteenth century (Manning Valley Historical Society, Wingham).

after five months but her health had suffered badly. In 1863 a Select Committee of the NSW Legislative Assembly found a serious miscarriage of justice and granted her an absolute pardon and 1000 pounds compensation. She claimed her stock was valued at 10 000 pounds at the time of her imprisonment, a claim disputed in a residents' petition which attributed her losses to her own 'wilful conduct'. She was unable to resume her operations on the Manning and retired to Sydney where she was cared for in her old age by the Sisters of Charity.[36]

During the first years of Port Macquarie there were skirmishes between Aborigines and parties cutting timber for the settlement. By the mid-1820s relations had improved but contact brought diseases to which Aborigines were susceptible and many died in late 1831 from smallpox.[37] Contact however was unavoidable and the Aborigines developed ways of handling it as the growth of settlement affected their traditional sites and food sources. Although Aborigines 'were not encouraged to come about the house' at Lake Innes they had access to the lake and Murrigat and his wife Ellen brought fish and sometimes wild duck and wood pigeons for the household.[38] Margaret Innes tried 'rearing and educating' two part-Aboriginal girls but let them go because they kept taking things to give to their own people.[39] Heath Hall, a ticket of leave man, fathered a child in the 1840s by Collumbul, the wife of Kanguini. He ensured that the child Wattern was clothed and fed and provided shelter, food and drink for the family when they came to town from Rollands Plains.[40]

Many of the early settlers up country had good relationships with the Aborigines. The Kemps were regularly visited by Aboriginal groups who knew the area and its resources intimately. Although friendly towards the newcomers and occasionally working for the family the Aborigines resisted all attempts to make them 'useful', preferring instead to conduct their own lives: 'we children would wander to them and find all were gone and no traces left'.[41] Early settlers on the Manning such as the Wynters and the family of Thomas New also experienced no difficulties: 'they used to come in and out of the kitchen as they liked'.[42]

As their traditional lands were encroached on and their migratory patterns disrupted the Aborigines took to the upper reaches of the rivers. Some resisted the occupation of their lands by spearing settlers and stealing their sheep, cattle and supplies. The whites in the upper Macleay and Manning and on the ranges responded with massacres and poisonings in the 1840s and 1850s. The retaliations, some involving the use of the Native Police,[43] resulted in the slaughter of hundreds of Aboriginal men, women and children, with often few survivors from a particular group. After the massacre at Sheep Station Bluff in the early 1840s a baby girl was found alive; she was raised by the Thompsons of Towel Creek station and became known as Tillie Thompson. On one occasion Aborigines abducted a white woman, Margaret Duffety (1818-84) from Yarrawal station, possibly in revenge for the illtreatment of Aborigines by her husband, the head stockman. She was held unharmed for three weeks but was freed by a raid in which

police and other men shot the group whose members were involved in her abduction.[44]

The expansion of settlement however also brought Aborigines and whites into closer relationships. When Ellen Kemp (later Young) went to work on her brothers' property on the Macleay in the 1850s she was frightened when two Aborigines employed there seemed to threaten her. In her panic she ran at them with an axe and drove them away but later reflected that 'I blamed myself for my fear'.[45] At Moonaba on the upper Macleay in the 1860s the Holtons, a family which has remained in the area to the present day, worked for the Ducat family. Mrs Holton helped in the kitchen. She also taught the Ducat girls to swim, an invaluable skill for life in the bush but one which few Europeans then possessed.[46]

1.3 Camp & station life

As cedar was cut out from the Hastings and Manning Rivers, the cedar-getters moved further north. Aborigines along the coast were familiar with white men because of the many escaped convicts from Moreton Bay who lived for varying periods of time with native tribes. Cedar-getting involved much greater contact but it did not substantially endanger traditional Aboriginal hunting grounds and in many areas relations between Aboriginal people and the itinerant cedar-getters were not hostile.[1] There were nevertheless violent encounters. Tensions arose when Aborigines resisted the white presence on their lands or when Aborigines prized the timbermen's axes or other possessions. There were also instances of cedar-getters interfering with Aboriginal women and consequent retaliations by both sides.[2] The reprisals were bloody. In 1846 over 100 people were brutally slaughtered because of the alleged involvement of their clan in the murder of station hands at Virginia station [3] while on the Tweed that year an expedition to revenge the murder of two sawyers on Ngarabal land resulted in the death of one woman and the wounding of several men.[4]

Despite the hardships of camp life and although women were not involved in felling the timber many cedar-getters had wives and families living with them.[5] Most of the sawyers on the Macleay, Nambucca and Bellinger in the 1840s had some form of family life and the pattern was repeated elsewhere.[6] Steve King and Joe Maguire were accompanied by their wives and children when they arrived on the Richmond in 1842 to cut cedar.[7] Margaret Benson (nee Walsh) married an ex-convict cedar-getter in Sydney in 1836 and went with him to the Bellinger and in 1846 to the Tweed where

she gave birth to two children before he died in the early 1850s.[8] By 1863 there were about twenty cedar-getters on the Tweed, all of whom had little huts and most of whom had wives and families.[9]

The women often had to manage by themselves when the men left for long periods to move further into the forest in search of timber. Martha Wood (nee Ford) met her husband John at Gundurimba and they went to Sydney to be married in 1848 since there was no local minister. When they returned they settled in Lismore, then a small settlement with a large Aboriginal population. Her husband went away for weeks at a time cutting cedar and returned only briefly for rations while she cared for the children and ran the household. During the flood of 1861 she had to move out of the house with her three day old baby and then tackle the mud and dirt left behind. When John died in 1856 Martha was left with four children, the youngest of whom was 11 months.[10] Rosanna Lane (nee Morgan 1831-1924), who was transported to Tasmania in about 1848, came to the Richmond with her husband in the 1850s. She had thirteen children and was frequently left alone with them when the men went to cut timber. She acted as a midwife for Aboriginal and white women as well as growing produce for her family and selling the surplus.[11]

Glimpses of life in a timber camp at Emigrant Creek in the Big Scrub inland from Ballina are recorded in the diary of Richard Glascott, a cedar cutter in the 1860s and 1870s. Mrs Glascott and other women gave birth to their children in the camp, generally assisted by each other. When their child was seriously ill the Glascotts took it to the doctor at Ballina. Stores were obtained in town but the camp was also visited by Jewish pedlars. Older children, including girls, helped with the getting and hauling of timber. The difficulties of life in the camp told on some relationships. The diary records three violent domestic quarrels, the last of which had a very drastic consequence: '26 December [1866] ... Sam Napp quarrelling again today with his wife [Margaret] and knocked the corner out of his house'.[12]

Although many workers in the early cedar-getting industry were itinerant others stayed to live on the North Coast, including some who made very significant contributions to the development of the area. Magdalen Yabsley (nee Ryder 1812-96) and her young daughter Jane travelled out from England and in October 1840 joined her husband William who had come to the Clarence two years earlier and found work as a pitman. William, originally a shipwright, soon found employment in his trade and later set up his own shipyard and began dealing in timber. In 1843 the family

moved to the Richmond, settling first at Ballina and then in 1849 at The Junction, which later became Coraki. William became the leading shipbuilder on the North Coast and a successful timber merchant and storekeeper. Magdalen and the nine children who survived infancy all took an active part in the family's enterprises.[13] Mary Boyd (nee Murray c1833-72) arrived on the Tweed in 1850 with her husband Thomas who planned to cut cedar for the Boyd family timber business. He soon became a successful dealer and they settled at the port. Here they built a house which also provided accommodation for travellers. It was later rebuilt and, with the first hotel licence in Tweed Heads, became Tattersalls Hotel.[14] Bridget Smith (nee Burke b 1819) was married in 1850 to Paddy Smith, one of the first sawyers on the Tweed. They travelled to Southport from Brisbane by whaleboat and reached the Tweed by going along the beaches, eventually settling at Terranora. Besides cutting cedar, Paddy was hired by Samuel Gray and later by Joshua Bray to help on their properties and Bridget acted as housekeeper to Joshua before he married.[15]

In the 1840s squatters coming by sea and up river or inland from New England took up vast cattle runs on the upper Clarence and Richmond. The establishment of the stations brought confrontation with the Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional lands they were set up and whose way of life they disrupted. A few days after Hannah King (nee Barrett c1813-89), her husband William and their five children arrived at Ward Stephens' property at Back Creek, Aborigines appeared on a hill behind their little hut and 'began rolling stones down, several striking it'. They were kept away by a show of guns and next day peace was effected with the aid of Aborigines from the head station.[16] Elsewhere however there were indiscriminate massacres of Aboriginal people by armed attack as at Tabulam in 1841, Boyd River in 1845 and Virginia station in 1846 and by the poisoning of flour supplies as at Tooloom in 1848.[17]

The pastoralists often went up country first to secure a property and to set up accommodation for their families. Jane Cruden Wilson (1802-91) and her merchant husband William, bankrupted by the depression, set out with their six children for the Richmond River in 1844. For a year while her husband searched for good squatting land, Jane and the children lived in a hut on the riverbank at Ballina. In 1845, with all their worldly possessions, they travelled up river by raft to their new home on a station which Jane named Lismore. It was in every sense a great distance from the London society she had grown up in.[18]

Ellen Bundock (nee Ogilvie 1817-98) stayed with her parents at their station at Merton on the Hunter after her husband Wellington went north in 1843 to establish Wyangarie station on the upper Richmond. She saw her husband only twice before 1846 when they travelled with their two children, a nurse and a housemaid to Grafton. Here they were told that Aborigines had burnt down their house, stolen a lot of sheep and killed the overseer. In fact the cook accidentally burnt down the house, the overseer was killed by a horse and the Aborigines took just a few sheep in the 'general upset'. Ellen and the children went to live with her brother Edward Ogilvie at his property Yulgilbar on the Clarence until a new house was completed at Wyangerie.[19] For the next eighteen years Ellen went no further than Yulgilbar or to see Jane Wilson at Lismore but Wyangerie was 'always busy' with friends and relatives staying for long periods or coming over to celebrate occasions such as Christmas.[20]

At Keelgyrah on the upper Richmond in the 1840s Mrs Wyndham and her husband slept in a dray fitted with a tent and there were little 'gunyahs' for their children.[21] The Wyndhams lived there for only a year but the settlers who intended to stay built establishments of substance. The Bundocks in 1846 had a five roomed slab cottage with a separate kitchen and the single men and married couples they employed had their own bark huts. The shingle roof coloured and flavoured the run-off with tannin so all water for washing and drinking was obtained from the river using a slide and water casks. In later years extra rooms and cottages and a new kitchen made of brick were added, the shingled roofs were covered with galvanised iron and galvanised tanks and later an underground tank provided a ready supply of water.[22]

When Fanny Chauvel (nee Adams b 1842), the daughter of the secretary to the Lord Bishop of Australia, came to Tabulam homestead after her marriage in 1862 it was a 'low, deeply-verandahed Australian style' dwelling constructed of cedar, with many huts and barns around. As the family increased the house was added to.[23] Fanny's nearest friend and neighbour was Theodosia Ogilvie (nee de Burgh 1838-86) of Yulgilbar. The daughter of a rector in County Dublin, Theodosia was married to Edward Ogilvie in 1858 and came out to Australia with him. At first they lived in a little cottage but in 1865 they moved into the house popularly known as Yulgilbar Castle, a two storey building with an internal courtyard and a deep front verandah constructed from stone mined on the property and with doors, stairs and floors of locally felled cedar.[24] Yulgilbar 'was run on English lines' [25] and

Mistress and Aboriginal servant, Ettrick homestead, c1872. Photograph by JW Lindt (National Library of Australia, Album 62).

when the Countess of Belmore, the Governor's wife, visited in 1870 she was astonished to find that something so 'like an English house' existed in New South Wales.[26]

The pastoral stations provided employment for women domestic servants. The Barker brothers at Ettrick Forest station on the upper Richmond River were particularly pleased in 1845 to get a 'she-cook', an Irishwoman married to one of their ticket of leave men. Her Catholicism meant vegetarian meals on Fridays but her meals were a welcome change from the plain cooking of the previously male cooks.[27] Many Irish immigrant girls went to stations from the depot at Grafton. Margaret Devlin (later Kerrison 1832-1905) had the misfortune to be made pregnant by her employer's son but her sister Sarah (later Baldwin c1830-72) married a station hand.[28]

The goldrushes of the 1850s dried up the supply of labour and forced out some squatters. The Bundocks, like many of their neighbours, brought out German immigrants to work on three year contracts for them.[29] Their wives and daughters often did domestic work on the stations but communication was difficult. The Tindals at Ramornie in the late 1850s communicated with their German cook in 'signs and broken English and Deutsches'.[30] In the mid 1850s when the new owner of Tunstall station hired Swiss and German workers and put them into houses with no furniture or cooking facilities, Mary Garrard (nee Mortimer

Ponjam Mundine of Tabulam station, c1900 (Mary Ralston and West of the Range Historical Society).

1810-73), the wife of the previous owner, translated for them and helped in resolving their grievances.[31]

Other women were employed as shepherds or hutkeepers. Sarah Little (nee Rowland 1834-1915) arrived in Australia with her father in 1844 at the age of ten and assisted him when he became a shepherd at Ettrick.[32] Gregory Blaxland engaged Sarah Pegg and her husband Peter for his sheep run on the Clarence after they arrived in Sydney in 1844 with their six children. Peter drowned but Sarah stayed on and when Blaxland transferred his interests to Queensland she travelled north for nine months to Tirroan Station with her children despite suffering serious injury from a cart accident along the way.[33] Bridget Mallet (nee Nagle (2)McDonald) took on a hutkeeper's job to support her five children after her husband Robert died in 1849; her eldest son Edward, aged nine, was engaged as a shepherd.[34]

Annie Cravigan (nee Francis 1836-1930) was the hutkeeper at Tuckombil station while her husband William was the manager there from 1862 to 1879. She received a salary of 25 pounds a year. She arrived with two children and while there had eight more. The family's provisions came from Sydney but they also depended on Annie sewing clothes and making soap and candles. She looked after the establishment during her husband's frequent absences and helped out when additional labour had to be taken on for killing the cattle and salting the beef.[35]

The Aboriginal people whose lands the pastoralists occupied continued to reside there and many sought to maintain their traditional way of life while co-existing with the pastoralists. Queybaum and Jackie Gridi with their wives and children moved on to Lismore station soon after the Wilsons arrived.[36] At Yulgilbar Edward Ogilvie established peace with the local people, learnt their language, respected their lifestyle and customs and allowed them to live on the property. In time Aborigines began to be employed on the station in exchange for supplies, blankets and clothing. Aboriginal women were used as shepherds in the 1850s and were later employed in laundry and cleaning work.[37] At Wyangerie Ellen and the Bundock children learnt the local Bundjalung dialect and close relations developed between the family and the Aboriginal people who lived and worked there.[38] After Mary Johnson (nee Baker b 1849) went with her stockman husband to Wyangerie in 1875 she made dresses for the Aboriginal women there in return for help with housework and childcare.[39] On many of the other large cattle stations such as Gordonbrook and Dyraaba [40] similar paternalistic relationships evolved: the local Aboriginal commu-

Aborigines at Wyangerie station, c1890s. Photograph by Charles Kerry (National Library of Australia, Kerry Photograph 568).

nity became part of the station settlement and the Aborigines' camp became the source of stockmen and domestic help, without which, as Michael Bruxner observed, 'things would have been much more difficult'.[41]

The complex social relations of women with their employers, the non-Aboriginal staff and the station Aborigines are illustrated in a story about Tabulam station during World War 1. Myra Henry (nee Everson b c1900) worked there as a cook for Emily Barnes (nee Crommelin 1871-1934) and her husband Robert, their children and an aunt, Miss Bell. Myra shared morning and afternoon tea with 'her family': the gardener, head stockman, yardman and mail message boy. Another girl Nellie was later employed to do the cooking while Myra attended to house duties. The families of the Aboriginal stockmen lived separately and some of the women were employed to do the household washing and cleaning. Myra thought the station 'a very friendly place'. Emily Barnes made jam and Miss Bell helped cook tarts and biscuits in the kitchen. In summer the family took Myra on holiday with them to Brunswick Heads and taught her to swim. Nevertheless when the Barnes daughters decided to have a double wedding, Myra knew her place on the

periphery of the event: she and Nellie helped the caterers and were 'privileged' to hear some of the speeches. The Aborigines were served refreshments on the lawn and later the men danced a corroboree for the guests while the women and children provided music by beating billy cans and dishes.[42]

Free selection led to the break-up of the big cattle stations such as Lismore station which the widowed Mary Girard (nee Hayes c1807-76) bought in 1865. She also purchased Dungarubba and she and her sons managed both properties through severe floods and financial difficulties. Competition with selectors reduced Lismore to half its former size and led Mary to select nearby properties in order to run her cattle but she continued her pastoral operations until shortly before her death.[43]

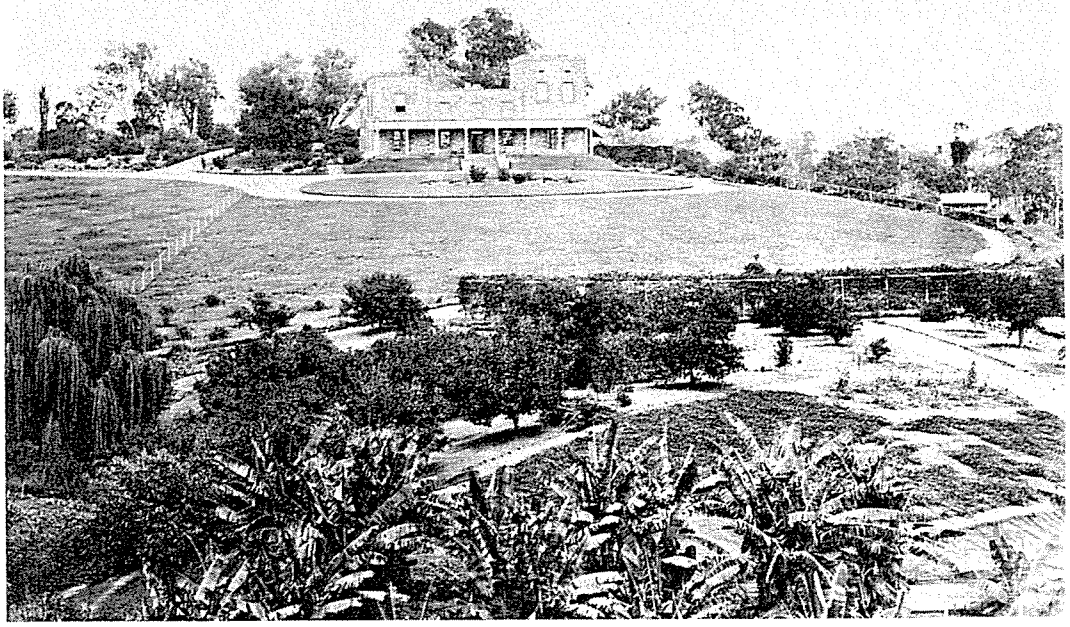
Many of the stations on the upper Clarence and upper Richmond, such as Bonalbo, were not affected until much later. Jane Robertson (nee Robertson 1812-76), whose husband died soon after they arrived in Sydney in 1861, went on to Sandilands station with her children and nurse-companion Una Coe (1819-68). Because of a dispute with her brothers over its purchase she moved to Bonalbo. Here Jane kept a gracious home but she and her daughters did much of the hard work of cooking in camp ovens and of washing, starching and ironing. When they acquired wooden washboards they were delighted: 'they saved our hands a little'.[44] Like many other station women, Jane had a magnificent garden, designed by a Kew-trained gardener, where she grew English and tropical flowers. Jane partly reared and educated Tommy Hinett, an Aboriginal boy born at the station in about 1855,[45] and his family worked for the Robertsons.[46] Hospitable to callers, Jane also acted as a local nurse and midwife but tragically she herself died from appendicitis when help could not be obtained in time.[47] Drought forced the Robertsons to sell Bonalbo in 1878 although they continued to live there until Margaret and Donald McIntyre, the first free selectors, arrived in 1888.[48]

The Ogilvies of Yulgilbar went to England in 1883 where Theodosia, crippled by the birth of her eleventh and last child, died in 1886. Edward Ogilvie returned with his second wife Alice in 1890 and during his lifetime managed to stave off the division of the property. By the 1900s however selectors had moved on to many of its former outstations. After Edward died in 1896 Yulgilbar was left in trust to his daughter Mabel Lillingston (nee Ogilvie 1866-1925). Until 1914, when the Lillingstons went to live in London, Yulgilbar remained a grand establishment with numerous servants and farm workers. It had its own workshops, killing

yards and vegetable garden and several outstations staffed by married men. After finishing university, Mabel's daughter Jessie (later Street 1889-1970) set up a dairy and introduced the district to the testing of milk for cream content.[49]

Many of the servants had long connections with Yulgilbar. Emily Klenk (b 1876) and Christina James (b 1878), who were both born at Yulgilbar and later worked there as maids, were the daughters of Christina Stenmark (nee MacFarlane 1854-1934), who was Theodosia's maid and also dressmaker for many of the Yulgilbar staff.[50] Elizabeth Saville (1854-1929) was the daughter of English immigrants who worked at Yulgilbar from 1855 until 1860 and she herself was working there when she married carpenter Charles Matterson in the 1870s.[51] Mary Jane Townsend was born at Yulgilbar in 1877 where her parents were employed at Broadwater outstation. Her parents left for their own selection at Busbys Flat but her mother died soon after and at the age of eleven Mary Jane went back to Yulgilbar to be nursemaid to the son of the manager. She stayed there until she married Fred Winterton in 1894.[52]

The Lillingstons returned to Australia in 1921 but the house was in a bad state of repair, the garden was a wilderness and experienced servants were difficult to obtain.[53] When Mabel died in 1925



Yugilbar, c1872. Photograph by JW Lindt (National Library of Australia, Album 62).

the property passed to her son Edward. He refused to honour an agreement whereby his sisters were to acquire a half share of the estate and an unsuccessful court challenge resulted in the sale of the property in 1926. The drains choked, the ceilings fell in, the cedar architraves and staircase were ripped out 'and Yulgilbar Castle became a ruin'.[54]

1.4 Farm life

Agriculture was slow to develop on the North Coast until the introduction of free selection in 1861. Selectors in great numbers then quickly moved into the lower Clarence and Macleay, the Nambucca, the Bellinger, the Orara, the Richmond and the Tweed. Less accessible areas such as Coffs Harbour and the Brunswick began to be settled in the 1880s while the stations around what is now Kyogle were cut up for closer settlement only around the turn of the twentieth century and the mountainous plateau country of the Bulga and the Comboyne was not available for farming until the early twentieth century.

In the early years of free selection there was much land speculation and dummies were used to protect large holdings or to build up sizeable properties. In 1883 an enquiry into free selection found that Maria Meanley (nee Newton (2)White 1823-87) had 'selected' 200 acres in the parish of Wiangaree in the interests of her old friends the Bundocks but that the landholdings of other women on the Clarence were 'bona fide'.[1] At Tweed Heads Eliza McGregor's father put 40 acres in her name in 1874 but forgot to transfer it to himself when she turned 21. Eliza successfully claimed the property but she died soon after her marriage to William Wilson and he became the sole owner.[2]

Many of the early selectors were immigrants from the British Isles. Faced with disasters such as the potato blight in Ireland they sought a better future in Australia. Margaret Mainey (nee Connors 1817-1901) came to Australia from Ireland with her husband Edward in 1841. They settled at Dungog and raised nine children before Edward died in 1861. Margaret and the children moved to Turners Flat near Kempsey where they obtained 220 acres in 1863. The family farmed the property and also cut and sold cedar.[3] In some areas there were concentrations of immigrants from the same country and of the same religion. On the Macleay in 1871 for example there were some 1500 Roman Catholics,[4] the majority of Irish origin. Large numbers of Highlanders, driven off the land in Scotland by the clearances, settled on the lower Clarence and

established both Free Presbyterian and Roman Catholic communities.[5]

Other young women were brought out under the immigration schemes of the mid-nineteenth century. Mrs James Freeman (nee Crick 1839-1922), the daughter of workers on large estates in Cambridgeshire, came to Australia in 1858 when she was eighteen. She was placed in the Immigration Barracks but after a month of compulsory service she went to work for the overseer of Cundle Plains on the Manning. There she married and a year later Mrs Freeman and her husband decided to head for the Hastings. A wooden slide was constructed for their belongings and yoked to two bullocks. They struggled through five days of almost continuous rain as they made their way north. They had planned to settle at King Creek but after setting up a bark hut and commencing clearing they discovered that the wrong land had been taken up. They then moved to a property on Bull Island in the Wilson River.[6]

Some settlers were emigrants from European countries. Many Germans were brought to the Grafton area in the 1850s through the agency of William Kirchner who recruited workers for his soap and candle factory and his sawmill as well as arranging labour for many of the pastoral stations.[7] After serving out their contracts some of the Germans went on the land. Anna Eggert (nee Hagen 1820-89) came to Yulgilbar in 1859 with her husband and two children when he was recruited in Hamburg to work on the construction of the 'castle'.[8] In 1866 they were naturalised so that they could own land. They selected on the lower Clarence, first at Southgate in 1866 and later at Tyndale in the 1880s.[9]

Settlers already on the North Coast sought for better opportunities as new areas opened up. Annie Campbell (nee Cameron (1) Cameron 1861-1964) was born near Wingham but her parents, influenced by a former neighbour's talk of a 'Garden of Eden', moved the family north to the Richmond in 1878. The party also included Annie's aunt and husband and their five young children. From Lismore they started for McLeans Ridges, eight miles to the east, with a dray for their belongings and a horse and gig to carry the women and younger children. 'We Camerons were able to walk and we were like the children of Israel marching to the Promised Land'.[10]

The end of these journeys meant the beginning of new lives but the reality of the 'Promised Land' was often grim and it usually meant being far from friends and family and in unfamiliar surroundings. The son of Mrs Byrne recorded her first impressions of the Tweed in the early 1870s: 'When our rowboat landed us

amongst the weeds and filth on the bank and we had fought our way up to a small shack of split slabs on walls, and roof incapable of keeping out the rain, and we were confronted with the filth of vermin, the look of despair on my mother's face was a clear-cut verdict of her summing up. But she had unbounded courage'.[11]

The first task for the early selectors was to begin clearing the land and to set up accommodation. The simplest housing was a bark shelter or a tent but the most common was a hut built out of materials at hand. Emma Argent (nee Marsh) and her husband Allen, English immigrants who arrived in 1855, settled in 1868 on 160 acres at Bowraville which Allen had selected. He cleared the land and constructed a hut, a barn and outhouses before returning for his family. The hut was typical of the accommodation of many early settlers. It measured 12 x 14 feet, had split slab walls, a bark roof and a dirt floor. There were two rooms with a skillion (lean-to) at the back which provided separate sleeping areas for the boys and for the girls and babies in their family of eleven children.[12]

Many selectors had large families and while the children were young their mothers usually had to cope with nurturing and rearing them single-handedly. From an early age daughters were involved in the responsibilities of childcare. Alice Clark (nee Hughes 1825-91) and her husband Thomas took up land at Ulmarra in 1857 and then at Woodford Island in 1861. They had twelve children and Alice's daughters helped her to look after the younger ones. When the oldest ones married the job of looking after the one year old baby Margaret fell to her five year old sister Alice.[13] Sometimes female relatives were able to help out. Isabella McKay (1820-1914) came from Scotland in 1863 to help her sister and brother-in-law Catherine and Alexander Bain at their property Letterewe on the Hastings. She had her own home there and reared cows and grew fruit and vegetables to raise an income. When Duncan Bain's wife died in 1884 Isabella, aged over 60, looked after their six small children and she later helped with the eight children of his second marriage to Margaret Mackay (1862-1916).[14]

The burden of the household tasks also fell on the women of the family. Many involved heavy physical labour and most had to be carried out with minimal facilities. Water for household purposes or the vegetable garden had to be brought to the house from nearby streams or raised from a well. It was often more convenient to do the washing at the riverbank. Mary Ann Hoschke (nee Drew 1856-1923) and the wives of the other settlers on the Orara in the late 1880s used to have a communal weekly washing day by the

Clearing scrub on the Tweed River 1907. Kerry and Co photograph (Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW Small Picture File).

river. This was also an opportunity for socialising and sharing the minding of the younger children. It was a day out but not a day off for Mary Ann had to wash for herself, her husband and thirteen children. The women had a tin for boiling the clothes and tubs for scrubbing them in. The clothes were then rinsed in the river and wrung by hand. As the laundry dried on the lawyer vines the children also received their weekly scrub in warm water.[15]

Clothes were home made and had to last so mending, patching, darning and remaking were constant occupations. Many women sewed by hand although sewing machines began to be used in the 1860s and 1870s.[16] With her large family of ten children Barbara Mackay (1813-95) of Rollands Plains was 'for ever sewing on the primitive machine of that time with her head bent forward'.[17] Even a relatively well-off settler such as Gertrude Bray (nee Nixon 1846-1938) at Kynnumboon on the Tweed, who was able to employ a woman to scrub and wash, made all the clothes for her thirteen children.[18]

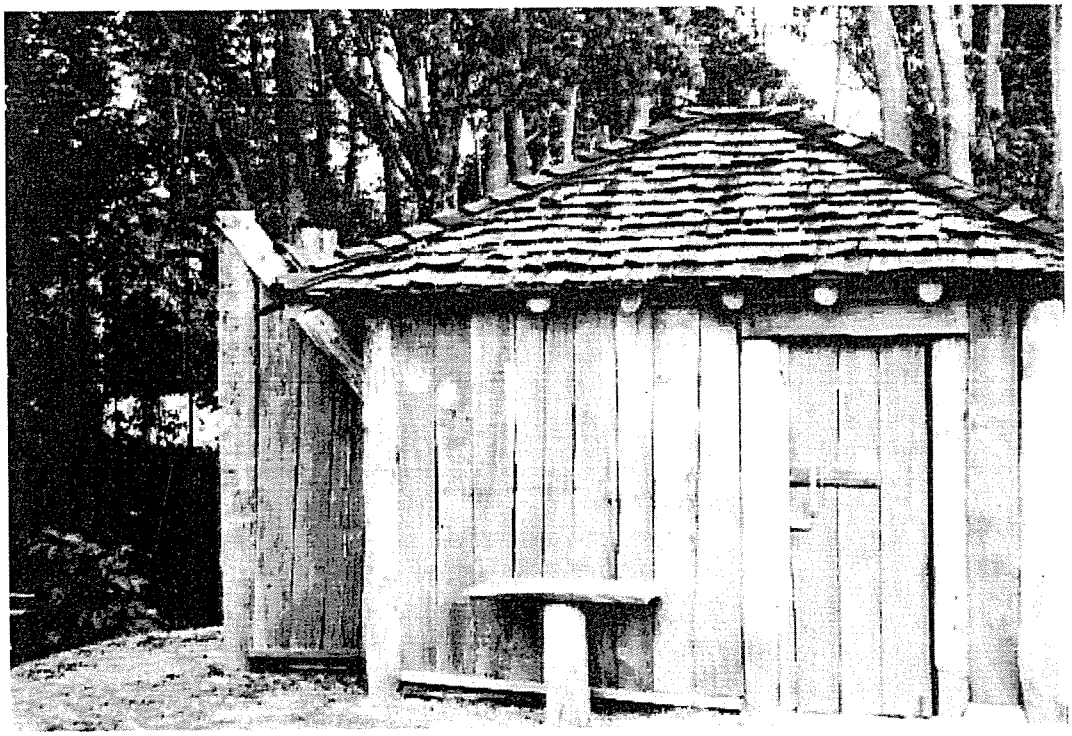
Cooking was sometimes done over an open fire but most of the early huts had an internal fireplace. Heavy cast iron camp ovens and deep pots were used for cooking while kettles or water

fountains were suspended inside the chimney or sat on the hob and provided hot water when needed. The preparation of cooking ingredients had to be done at home so women spent much time at tasks such as husking and grinding corn, making butter, pulverising arrowroot and making jams and preserves.

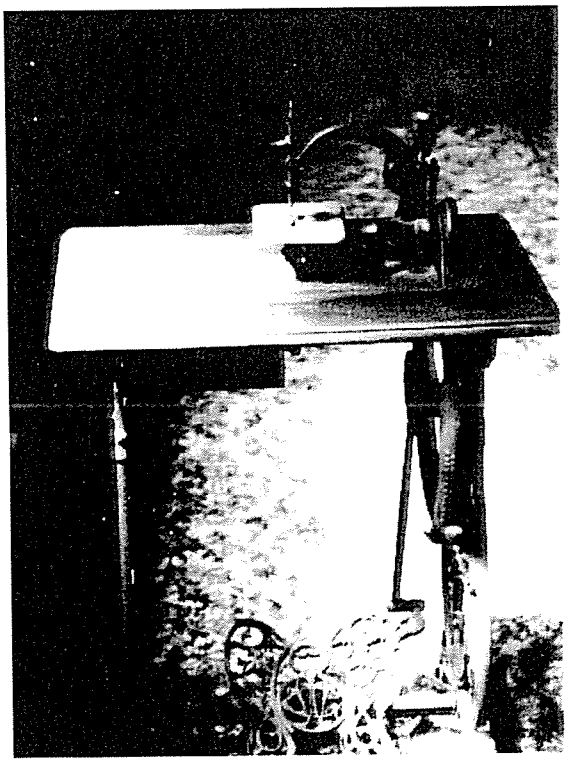
Stocks of basic food items like flour, sugar, salt and tea were usually bought but most other food was produced on the farm, often by the women of the family, from their own crops, poultry, pigs and cows. Corn, potatoes and pumpkin were staple food crops. In the Marks family, which settled on the Tweed in the 1870s, the daughters did the hard work of breaking up the hill to plant potatoes.[19] Rebecca Rishworth (nee Fowler 1845-1909) who lived on a small selection at Lindendale in 1875 with her husband Francois and their eight children planted an enormous variety of fruits and vegetables and did much of the garden work such as 'hoeing up for cabbages' as well as looking after the poultry and the pigs.[20] Cattle and pigs were usually raised for cash so native animals such as pademelons, brush turkeys and pigeons were shot and trapped for meat. Animal fat was saved for cooking and for making slush lamps and was rendered down for soap.

Women were also involved in growing the principal commercial crops such as maize and sugarcane. Noting women husking corn on farms along the Clarence until 9 or 10 o'clock at night, one observer commented: 'I used to wonder how these women could do their domestic duties as well as the barn and field work'.[21] Mrs Dwyer of Rileys Hill near Coraki, a canegrower in the late 1860s, received sugar for her own use as payment from the mill for her crop.[22] On their cane farm in the late 1860s Mrs Bale of Wombah trimmed the cane and placed it in the roller which her husband had constructed for crushing it.[23]

Some women had to fend for themselves. Catherine Ann Dornan (1826-66) and her husband Charles had six children after they went to the Macleay in 1845. Their property was not very productive so in 1852 Charles went to seek his luck on the goldfields but never returned. Catherine, with a newly born baby, had to manage the property with the assistance of her children, the oldest of whom was twelve. She re-married but died at the age of forty from a heart attack.[24] The death of her first husband in 1865 left Elizabeth Eggert (nee Watson 1835-1935) with three young daughters. In 1869 Elizabeth married Heinrich Eggert, a Wauchope farmer and teamster. She had four more children by him before he mysteriously disappeared. In order to make ends meet she worked as a farm labourer, digging potatoes and hoeing corn, some of



Replica of settler's hut, Brunswick Valley Historical Society, Mullumbimby.



Annie Barling's sewing machine. After her marriage in 1877, Annie went to live at Springhill, Casino. The sewing machine is on display at the Casino and District Historical Society.

which she received as payment. She looked after her youngest children by taking them to the fields with her.[25] Mary Fenn (nee Fox c1834-95) moved to Port Macquarie in 1856 with her first husband John Platt. They had eight children before he died in 1870. Two years later Mary married John Fenn, a successful winegrower and civic notable. He died in 1883 and Mary with her two eldest sons took over the running of the vineyard and winery.[26]

To help the family finances or to have goods for barter many women developed home industries. Mary Trotter (nee Tilston 1799-1881) and her husband Thomas came out to Australia in 1836 and settled on the Manning in 1852. There were eleven children in the family but Mary managed to make cheese for sale and the proceeds enabled the family to buy a property.[27] Mrs James Gurney (1831-1906) and her daughters ran the selection at Figtree Valley, which she and her husband took up in 1862, after he was incapacitated and later died. They lost their first crops to floods but continued to grow corn and raise pigs for the Port Macquarie and Sydney markets as well as for their own needs. Butter was made on the farm and bartered in Port Macquarie for food and clothes.[28]

Some of the early selectors prospered but rural life for many was harsh and stressful. The selectors often lacked capital and their blocks were frequently too small and unsuitable for the crops which they tried to grow. Jane Rankin (nee Waters 1831-70) came to Australia in 1849 with her husband George and the four children of his first marriage. In Australia they had seven children of their own and in 1863 moved up to Grafton and then to a leased farm at Carrs Creek. George was killed three months later. The family was penniless. The scrub land they had cleared proved unsuitable for the wheat which rusted and was never harvested and their potato crop spoiled in the heat. Jane put the two oldest girls, 14 and 11, out to service and apprenticed two of the boys. She married again in 1864 to Thomas Kane and had four more children but died at the age of forty.[29]

Despite their hard work the returns for many of the selectors were modest or poor. Mrs Freeman and her husband did not often visit Port Macquarie because they lacked 'suitable' clothes and their children sometimes had to go to bed while their clothes were being washed, dried and mended.[30] In the letters which she wrote to her sister Elizabeth from 1875 to 1882 Mary Jane Mackay (nee Grace d 1882), simply but tellingly reveals the hardships, poverty and illness which she and her neighbours in the Bowraville area endured: the men were out working timber for weeks at a time, lack of transport isolated women even from relatives living close by,

many people in the district came down with dysentery, supplies were scarce and money was short, women were burdened by the cares of 'to manny' children and physically weakened by difficult births.[31]

Agricultural settlement brought selectors into close contact with the Aborigines whose lands they were clearing and cultivating. There were two Aboriginal camps in the Bowraville area, one close to their home, when the Argents selected in 1868. The Aborigines exchanged fish and honey for the clothing, flour and tobacco of the white settlers.[32] Elizabeth Cox, who settled at Lower Tomki in 1868 and who also worked as a midwife in the area, is reputed to have learnt the local Aboriginal dialect and to have employed Aborigines.[33] When Sarah MacPherson (nee Cameron, 1806-99) and her sons settled on the Orara in the 1860s large groups of Aborigines used to camp at what is now known as McPhersons Crossing.[34] By the late 1880s they were helping Orara settlers such as the Hoschkes to clear the scrub. [35]

Sarah MacPherson of McPhersons Crossing (John Redman).

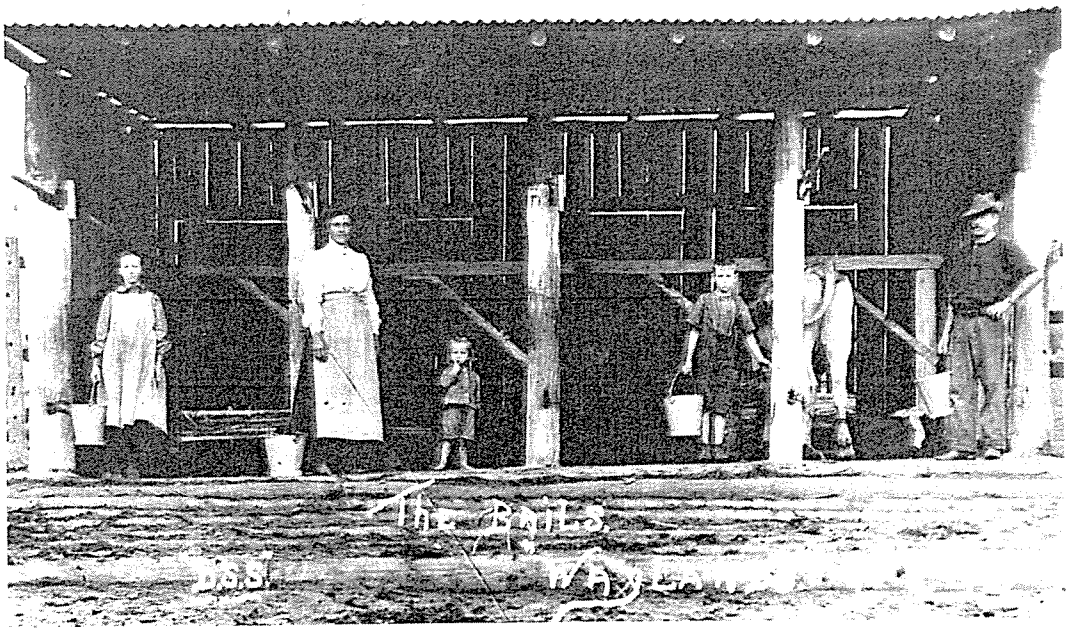
Many Aboriginal families on the North Coast became settlers themselves. On the upper Macleay sympathetic families in the area offered Aboriginal groups shelter, protected them from punitive raids, and used Aboriginal labour to clear the land in return for rations. From the 1880s onwards the North Coast had a large number of areas reserved for Aboriginal occupation, often at the request of missionaries or the Aborigines themselves. Nulla Nulla reserve at Bellbrook was notified in 1882 and in subsequent years a number of Aboriginal families cleared the land and built houses, among them Essie Kelly (nee Mills) and her husband Richard. In order to get the farm going Richard share-farmed on another property and took people out shooting while growing produce and raising animals with the help of his family on their land. Essie worked for the crippled Mrs Schmidt, one of the local German women.[36] Farming on Bellbrook ended in the 1930s when managers were installed on the reserve and the Aboriginal population of the surrounding countryside was forced to live there. The women were employed in domestic work on local properties or in the town while the men got farm work. In 1938 it was proposed that the Aborigines at Bellbrook be moved south to Forster but there was strong opposition to the plan from both Aborigines and whites and it was abandoned.[37]

Jim Linwood and John Mosely, the sons of an Aboriginal woman and German Verge, the son of an early settler, were given permission in 1883 to farm on Fattorini Island in the Macleay. They worked with their families to clear the land and to buy equipment,

drawing rations from a local storekeeper who had a lien on their crops. When the Moselys moved to farm at Old Burnt Bridge in 1893 the Linwoods stayed on the island where they were joined by other Aboriginal families. The massive reduction of reserve land on the North Coast from the early 1910s onwards deprived many Aborigines on farms of their livelihood. Fattorini Island was revoked as a reserve in 1925 and the Linwoods were left impoverished when the land was sold to a local farmer. Other families lost their properties when land on the reserves was leased out to white farmers.[38]

The pressure for land grew enormously with the development of the dairy industry. Maize had provided small returns for many farmers because the Sydney market was often glutted while the growing of sugar cane eventually proved viable only in the north-east of the North Coast where big mills were built by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. The establishment of a network of co-operative butter factories from the end of the nineteenth century onwards provided a new opportunity for existing North Coast farmers and brought thousands more settlers. Many were South Coast dairyfarmers like Emma McPaul (nee Blacker 1867-1945) and her husband John who left their dairy farm near Bega in 1906 after enduring drought and a rabbit plague. With their eight children they travelled by coach, boat and train to Mullumbimby.[39] Drought also led Jane Clancy, her husband John and their five children to leave Booligal on the Lachlan for a selection on the Dorrigo, which they reached after travelling for six weeks in a covered wagon in 1906.[40] Other new settlers came from overseas, especially from the British Isles. The Jones family from Wales who arrived on the Bulga in January 1923 hoped that a change of climate would improve Mr Jones' health. As they travelled up to the plateau, Connie Jones (later Jenkins) realized that 'it was a strange new life' which her urban bred parents and family were embarking upon: 'It was wild country to us and seemed to challenge us as we travelled slowly through'.[41]

Dairying was a profitable industry for those with farms in the fertile river valleys but in areas of poorer land it brought hard work and few financial rewards. Before milking machines and power driven separators were introduced dairying was very much a 'DMK' operation: 'Dad, Mum and kids'.[42] All available hands were needed for milking several hours every morning and every evening all year round. Children learnt to milk as early as five years of age and milking before and after school was part of most dairy farm children's experience.[43] In Queenie Mainey's family at Turners Flat



The Bails, Wayland, Byrill Creek via Uki, 1912. L to r: Lily Way, Elsie Way, William Way jnr, Charlie Way, William Way. Photograph by Doug Solomons (Dot Lange).

in the 1920s the children were expected to feed the calves and wash out the bails as well as helping with the milking. In the afternoons they had to drive the cows in ahead of them as they came home from school.[44] During the 1930s depression Wilhelmina Garland's (b 1899) seven daughters helped with the hand milking of the herd of 100 cows on the family's sharefarm at Cundletown. She rated them 'the best dairyers'.[45] In families where there was no one to mind babies and toddlers during milking time they were brought along to the dairy and placed in a box or a packing case in order to keep them safe and out of the way.[46]

The often poor rewards from dairying meant that many women had to look after the farm while their husbands earnt money in other ways such as mining or timber hauling. Sarah Boyd's (nee Jarrett b 1896) family came to the Richmond in 1905 and rented a farm near Newrybar but her father was unhappy about the arrangement and the family bought a property near Beenleigh. Her mother and the twelve children looked after the farm while her father worked as a builder to pay off the mortgage.[47] Mrs Bowtell and her children did the milking on their farm at Wingham during the 1910s and 1920s even though she, a city bred woman, was terrified of cows. Her daughters helped their father to snig the logs which he felled on their property and which, sold for railway sleepers, supplied much needed income.[48] During the depressions

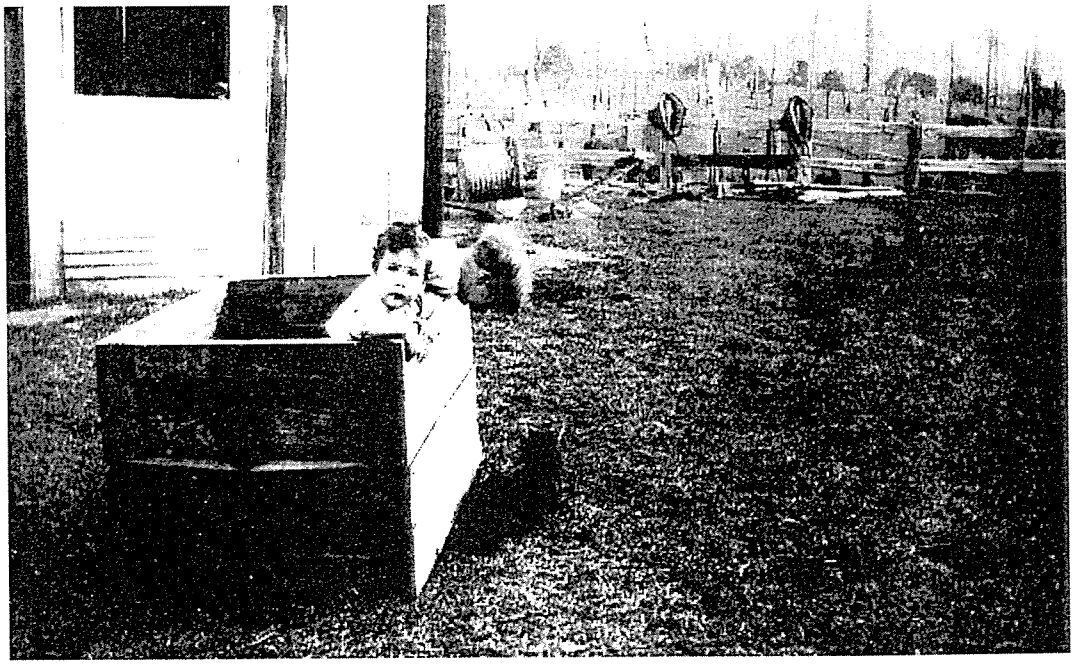
and wartime many women had to manage on their own. After Catherine Argue (c1860-c1952) and her husband Robert came to Mullumbimby in 1893 to establish a dairy farm she was often alone while her husband was away all week working. During World War 1 her daughter Dorothy (b 1897) stood in for her brother who had enlisted and during World War 2 Dorothy ran the farm after her father died.[49]

Although dairying was widespread many other industries were tried on the North Coast. The women of the New Italy settlement established near Woodburn in 1882 undertook a variety of farm occupations while their menfolk worked on the neighbouring cane fields. The settlement became self-sufficient with its own vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens, producing foods such as those which Kate Hankinson (nee Capelin b 1890) recalled eating as a child: lettuce, bacon, home-made bread and salami, meat preserved in brine and plum pudding. Six of the New Italy women including Piot Piccoli (nee Bortobet b 1822) raised silkworms and spun silk fabric which won them an exhibition medal in 1892 but a bad harvest the following year and the loss of government sponsorship led to the collapse of the industry. Many of the men earnt an income by sleeper cutting as did some of the women, most notably Mrs Filicietti (nee Battistuzzi) who was reputedly very skilled with an axe and a saw and at squaring sleepers.[50] The soil at New Italy was poor and in the long term most of the ventures which the community tried did not succeed. Many people left the settlement including Angelina Sanotti (nee Battistuzzi 1869-1941) who married in New Italy and worked hard with her husband Peter to make a go of their farm before deciding to move out to a dairy farm at South Gundurimba in 1904.[51]

Daughters and wives were an integral part of many enterprises. Jessy Daley (nee Coombes b 1919), a 'disappointment' to her parents because she was their third daughter, became her father's 'right hand man' on their farm near Port Macquarie until she left to join the post office in 1940 while Dallas Shelley (nee Kemp) often went out fishing with her father, the only year round commercial ocean fisherman at South West Rocks in the 1920s.[52] Susanna Wade (nee Duck 1867-1962) and her husband Harry cleared timber and split shingles and palings to earn an income after they moved to Herons Creek south of Wauchope in 1892.[53] Gwen Pearce's (nee Whitney) parents took up dairying near Bonalbo in 1916 but switched to butchering in 1924. She skinned and cleaned the carcasses, cleaned out the slaughter yard, salted the hides and helped with general farm work such as fencing.[54]

Women were also involved in the banana industry which proved viable around Coffs Harbour and on the Tweed. Jessie Tulk's (b 1907) mother established one of the first banana plantations in the Coffs Harbour area in the 1920s, felling the timber, stacking and burning it, putting in the plants. She chipped the plantation by hand and when the bananas were ready she carried them down on her back.[55] The family of Phyllis Corowa (b 1920), whose mother was Aboriginal and whose father had been brought to Australia during blackbirding days, moved to Eungella near Murwillumbah in 1930 where they sharefarmed bananas. The older children helped by chipping weeds, growing vegetables and raising fowls.[56] Maria Martinelli (b 1918) was born in the United States but came to Australia from Italy in 1934 to help her father on the banana farm he had established near Lismore ten years earlier. She married in 1936 and came to the Uki district in 1942. She carried her children up the slope to where she had to chip and plant by hand: 'no machinery them days'.[57]

Even on more prosperous properties women often took an active part in their running and management. Alexander Armstrong selected land at Disputed Plains in 1866 and, adding to it in the names of his eleven children, eventually held about 40 000 acres. Three daughters remained on the estate and did not marry: Kate (d 1922), Margaret (d 1945) and Rebecca (1850-1925). All three were excellent horsewomen, skilled musterers and shrewd businesswomen.[58] The parents of Isabella Grieve (nee Wilson b c1865)



Helen and Yvonne Jarvis, Eungai Creek, 1927. 'The box was used as a playpen while mother was helping with the milking'. Photograph by CR Jarvis (Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW At Work and Play, 04502).

took up land at The Risk, northwest of Kyogle in 1869. Isabella selected land on the opposite bank of the Richmond in 1884 and had a hut built on it. The same year she met James Grieve, part-proprietor of the *Richmond River Express*, and married him. They lived in Casino for about twenty years but then moved back to her property at The Risk to take up dairy farming and pig raising. They were the first in the district to use milking machines. They prospered and became prominent racehorse breeders.[59]

Aboriginal women were employed by the Armstrongs at Disputed Plains and also on many of the smaller properties on the North Coast. 'Inside work' was often kept from Aboriginal women and some employers insisted on them 'feeding outside', away from the house.[60] Others were considerate towards their Aboriginal employees. Ivy Bain (nee Martin), who married in 1911 and went to live on a dairy farm at Wauchope, engaged Mrs Morcom to do the washing once a week. Mrs Morcom was paid for her work, she and the children were fed and she was given produce to take home.[61]

Domestic work or seasonal farm labour became the main employment opportunities for rural Aborigines whether they lived on reserves, in unofficial camps or on the properties of sympathetic farmers. Dick Kelly's parents moved up river from Yellow Rock reserve near Urunga in 1922 to live on the property of the Spillets in return for his father working for them. Being on private property gave them protection from Smithers, the manager of the reserve, who sought to take away the oldest Kelly girls to the 'dormitory' on the reserve.[62] Marie Edwards (b c1917) with her parents, ten siblings, her grandmother and an aunt and her husband lived in a camp at Corindi on land leased by a white farmer. Until she left in the early 1930s Marie earnt money by milking and by doing washing and ironing with her mother for a family in town.[63]

In newly opened areas there was no one to help and farm life was hard on women. Maria McMillan (b 1897), whose family came to the Richmond in the late 1890s, remembered her mother saying: 'If that log could speak it could tell you I've been standing on that log at eleven o'clock at night rinsing my washing'.[64] For Caroline Mills, who selected at Bonalbo with several of her sons after her husband died in 1899, it was 'the absence of a neighbour's light' which made it so difficult to endure the primitive housing, the periods of incessant rain, the mould and mildew, the screaming of curlews, the crying of koalas and the howling of dingoes in the night.[65] Natural disasters also brought heartache. During the big