

# *The Royal Hotel Port Macquarie*



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commissioned by

Bayside Development Projects  
Port Macquarie  
2000

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This history of the Royal Hotel Port Macquarie was commissioned by Bayside Development Projects Pty. Ltd. We would like to thank David Morton and Jeff Gillespie of that company for their help and enthusiasm for this project.

Considerable assistance was given by the Port Macquarie Historical Society, particularly with regard to photographs. In particular we would like to thank Ralph Ferrett of the society for his courtesy and assistance, and for sharing his knowledge of historic Port Macquarie. We would also like to thank Linda Turner for sharing her knowledge of the events surrounding the sinking of the Wollangbar in 1943. Thanks are also due to David Bawden of Ray White Real Estate for his assistance with information on author Louis Becke.

John Appleton, consultant archaeologist for Bayside Development Projects was also most helpful at all stages of the writing of this history and we would like to thank him especially for a thorough proof-reading of the draft to ensure that the historical and archaeological evidence were reconcilable.

Research for this history was carried out at a number of repositories, all of whom responded very positively to the fact that there was a deadline for this project. Thanks are due to the staff of the Mitchell Library, and most especially the photographic section, the State Library of New South Wales, the State Archives of New South Wales, the Noel Butlin Archives centre at the Australian National University in Canberra and the Dixson Library at the University of New England, Armidale.

Special thanks are due to Jennifer Broomhead, Copyright and Permissions Librarian, State Library of New South Wales for permission to reproduce part of the Joseph Backler painting of Port Macquarie for the cover of this booklet. We would like to thank Ms Broomhead also for permission to use other photographs and sketches from the Mitchell Library collection.

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**ISBN 0 646 39303 0**

*Cover Illustration:* An oil painting of Port Macquarie attributed to Joseph Backler. It was presented to the Mitchell Library by Thomas Dick in memory of his parents. Permission to reproduce the painting for the cover of this booklet was granted by the Copyright Librarian, State Library of New South Wales.

Cover design by Terry Barnett, the Printery, University of New England. Printed at the Printery, University of New England, March 2000.

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# *Chapter 1*

## The Major's Dream

**I**t was just the sort of news a busy publican with a tourist pub right on the foreshore at Port Macquarie would not want to hear. It was December 1974, and Athol 'Happy' Coombes, licensee of the Royal Hotel, had stocked his establishment well for the holiday season. The corner room facing Horton Street and the Hastings River was piled high with cartons of cans and bottles of beer. Perhaps it was the heat, perhaps a manufacturing fault, but some of the cans began to explode and some of the bottles began to ooze. 'Happy' Coombes sent his barman Frank Yeo into the room to sort out the good from the bad, and to clean up the mess. "I was working in one corner of the room", Frank was to say some years later, "When suddenly the floor gave way beneath me maybe from the weight of the bottles and cans. I managed to grab hold of a floor joist to break the fall, then lowered myself to the ground".<sup>1</sup>

Frank picked himself up, dusted himself off and looked around in the dim light. He found himself in some ancient cellars with earth floors and brick walls. He had stepped (or rather fallen) back in time. Forgotten for the best part of a century, these cool dark musty cellars with their distinctive convict bricks were testament to a time when Port Macquarie was rather a different place from the tourist resort of the 1970s, when

the town was a place to escape from, not to. These were the cellars of a building which had been erected in the 1830s by a larger-than-life character with larger-than-life ambitions, Major Archibald Clunes Innes. Frank Yeo had uncovered the remnant of a marvellous history.

Archibald Clunes Innes, was born in 1800, at Thrumster Scotland into a military family, his father a major, his grandfather a colonel, and two brothers were to be killed in battle. Understandably he was destined for the army, an ensign at thirteen, a lieutenant at sixteen, a captain a year later. But soldiers need wars and it was Innes's misfortune to be born about a decade too late. Europe was at peace, the colonies were quiet, Britain was going about its business in a post-Waterloo glow of confidence. Young Innes had to be content with what he could get and, in 1824, he left England and went off to Van Diemen's land in charge of the guard on a convict ship. He was young enough, keen enough, charming enough to impress, and within eighteen months he was Aide-de-camp to the Acting Governor in Sydney. By late 1826 he had been made Commandant of the penal settlement at Port Macquarie.<sup>2</sup>

Two things happened to Innes at Port Macquarie. He fell in love with the place

and out of love with the army. Five years earlier, Port Macquarie had been chosen as a site for a penal settlement, a place of punishment for second offenders. Its greatest recommendation was its remoteness, accessible only by sea, surrounded by thick forest and rugged ranges. But the wild remoteness could be captivating in more ways than one. Surf pounded beaches, rivers curling their way to the sea, tall stands of timber, rich alluvial flats which promised fields of grain, and still lakes and backwaters were as romantic to the poetic English mind as the Cumberland Lakes and the Scottish highlands back home. Innes had been born into a generation that was in love with natural beauty, a generation that had coined the word 'picturesque'. The young soldier with a tinge of romance in his education was of a disposition to imagine a grander vision for himself and for this wonderful wild place.

But for Innes there was also that other grubbier world of guarding convicts, accounting the pennies, keeping an eye on the officers and men, tuning his sensitivities to his superiors in Sydney, and implementing dubious policies with the most reluctant of workers. Innes was not a great success as commandant. At a casual glance Port Macquarie could belie its reality. There was a substantial English Church on the hill, completed just after Innes arrived. There were military barracks, a brick Commissariat Store, a granary, all rather impressive buildings, but somewhat overstated because the labour to build them was free, and had to be kept continually occupied with suitable projects. But in a penal settlement there was always room for things to go wrong. By Easter 1827 Captain Innes was beginning to receive critical reports from the Governor in Sydney. And then, after only six months in the job, he was recalled. He was not in disgrace, in fact he was promoted to Brigade Major, but Port Macquarie could well have scarred his



*Captain (later Major) Archibald Clunes Innes as a young officer in the Buffs. (Courtesy Mitchell Library).*

memories and stunted his career. Major Innes, however, decided on a different course. Just over a year later he resigned from the army and sold his commission clutching nothing more than his empty title as he left. He would be 'the Major' for the rest of his life.

He moved back to Sydney, took up the position of Police Magistrate at Parramatta, and began an ardent courtship of Miss Margaret Macleay, daughter of the Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay, a fellow Scot. Major Innes and Miss Macleay were married in October 1829, at St. James' Church Sydney, in one of the most stylish weddings seen in the colony.<sup>3</sup> Her gracious manner and feminine accomplishments were the perfect foil to his charm, generosity and ambition. They made an excellent pair. Only months before, Governor Sir Ralph Darling had thrown the Port Macquarie area open to free settlement, and Major and Mrs Innes moved back to the wild remote land he had come to love. They were granted some splendid country back from the

township, and a fine farm down by the river. As a landed gentleman, Major Innes had a vision and realised it. On his primary grant, on the edge of a lake to the south of the township of Port Macquarie, he built a grand home, Lake Innes Cottage, with acres of manicured lawn sweeping up to a residence of classical proportions attended by some lavish outbuildings and detached wings in picturesque Gothic style. Here he would wait for the world to come to him and he had the charm and manners to pull it off. The great and the good did come to Port Macquarie to be entertained lavishly by the Major and his charming wife.

But his vision was not simply arcadian. Major Innes had economic hopes for the district and hitched his fortunes to the development of the town and its hinterland. He saw Port Macquarie as a great entrepôt where wool, sugar, cotton and cereals from prosperous farmlands and distant sheep runs would be loaded at the wharves and docks for trans-shipment to Sydney and London. He saw a busy harbour

and a bustling town, and he saw that he had the main role to play in making it all happen. A free town of Port Macquarie was surveyed in 1831, and Major Innes immediately applied for a grant of land 'for the convenience of shipping and landing articles to and from Sydney'.<sup>4</sup> On 12 August that year Governor Darling promised Innes a town allotment,<sup>5</sup> which was confirmed on 27 November 1832 as allotment 1 section 1 of the town,<sup>6</sup> a choice piece of land facing the government wharf. Here Innes erected what he later described as 'buildings to a considerable amount'.<sup>7</sup> These consisted of fine two storey brick stores facing the Hastings River and dominating the waterfront. The stores were certainly complete by July 1839 when artist Henry Allport did an ink and grey wash sketch of the wharf and the waterfront for Major Innes.<sup>8</sup> In all probability the building had been erected some years earlier and the best guess, in the absence of substantial evidence, is that the Major's stores were built in 1833 after the land had been confirmed as belonging to him. The building sketched by



*Henry Allport's ink and grey wash of the wharf and stores at Port Macquarie signed and dated July 1839 and inscribed with the words 'painted for Major Innes' (Courtesy Mitchell Library).*



*The oil painting of Port Macquarie attributed to Joseph Backler and probably executed in 1841 when the Royal Hotel was opened. Major Innes's hotel can be seen in the centre foreground with extensive verandahs along two sides. (Courtesy Mitchell Library).*

Allport was clearly divided into two sections, and this is confirmed by later photographs. To the east was a residence defined by five upstairs windows, separated from the stores by a through wall which contained a large fireplace. To the west of this wall were the stores defined by six upstairs windows. Underneath the stores was a set of cellars for cool storage, and it was these cellars that Frank Yeo discovered by accident almost a century and a half later.

A splendid oil painting of Port Macquarie only a couple of years later<sup>9</sup> shows a rather busy scene with the major's buildings now graced with verandahs on both the riverfront and Horton Street sides. These verandahs indicate a change of function from the original stores to a more commercial purpose, since verandahs are for the convenience of people and to the hindrance of loading and unloading goods. This painting is probably the first depiction of Major Innes's Royal Hotel which opened for business in July 1841 with Peter McNiven as the licensee.

The conversion of the old stores into the Royal Hotel was a sign of the Major's aspirations for Port Macquarie. The talk of the town in 1841 was a new road from Port Macquarie to New England. The road had been surveyed the previous year<sup>10</sup> and, under the enthusiastic patronage of Major Innes,<sup>11</sup> construction moved on apace throughout 1841. Innes talked up the road at every opportunity. He held pastoral properties himself on the highlands of New England and did everything he could to encourage his neighbours to send their wool to Port Macquarie, rather than by the more circuitous route to Maitland. By 1842 he was sending his first drayloads of wool down from New England.<sup>12</sup> Naturally he envisaged a growth in passenger traffic as Port Macquarie became the starting place for those wishing to travel to New England and beyond. Ships would bring more and more passengers from Sydney, and just across the way from the Queen's wharf was the major's new hotel, the Royal, its cellars stocked with good wines, its assembly rooms the natural meeting place for

fashionable society, and the open square in front of the building the site for more popular entertainment. The hotel opened with some fanfare on 1 July 1841 with the *Australian* newspaper in Sydney pronouncing Port Macquarie an unrivalled health resort, the Montpellier of New South Wales, whose benefits would be fully realised by a stay at the Royal Hotel with its extensive and commodious coach house and stabling.<sup>13</sup> This was the sort of hyperbole for which the major was renowned. There were few limits to his dreams, and no sooner was the Royal Hotel opened than he mortgaged the property for £5,000,<sup>14</sup> presumably to finance other schemes. Dreams fed off dreams. It was a risky business.

All this energy and enthusiasm took place as the shades of a deep economic depression were coming down. By the end of 1841, land sales were at a standstill in New South Wales. Immigration had dried up, wool prices had slumped and in the next few years pastoralists and merchants, borrowers and lenders, went to the wall in their scores.

Port Macquarie was particularly hard-hit by the 1840s depression. Convict transportation had ceased. There was no injection of government funds as in earlier times. High hopes for crops such as cotton, sugar, grapes and coffee came to nothing. The wool drays from New England never materialised. The road, though short as the crow flies, was too difficult. Innes was about the only New England squatter based in the valley of the Hastings River. The rest, the Dangars, Dumaresqs, Mosman, McIntyre, Campbell, Anderson and many others, had their principal interests in the Hunter Valley and looked to Singleton and Maitland as their entrepôts. Port Macquarie could not offer enough inducements. Added to this was the difficulty of the port itself. A dangerous bar blocked the entrance to the Hastings River, and contrary winds frequently blew across the river's mouth. There was still no regular

steamer service. Ships had been wrecked already, and many more were to come to grief. In the early days, there were many vigorous denials that the Hastings bar was dangerous. But the reality was that only shallow draft vessels could get into the little port. The economic depression made these realities quite stark.

As the depression worsened and times became exceedingly dull, prominent townspeople went down. Mrs Kinnear, who managed the accommodation side of the Royal Hotel as well as her own business interests, became insolvent and Dr Fattorini followed her to the Bankruptcy Court. By 1843 Major Innes was in financial difficulties raising a loan of £29,000 from the Macleays and Dumaresqs his relatives by marriage, and struggling to hold on to



*Governor Sir Charles FitzRoy who, with his wife Lady Mary, visited Major Innes at Lake Innes in 1847. Only a few months after returning to Sydney, Lady FitzRoy was killed in a carriage accident.*

the Lake Innes Estate, let alone his other holdings.<sup>15</sup> In 1847 nervous mortgagees forced the sale of the Royal Hotel, together with other lands in Sydney, to the Australian Trust Company.<sup>16</sup> The licence of the hotel lapsed and, for many years, the imposing building stood on the foreshore of Port Macquarie as a monument to dead aspirations.

Major Innes never recovered his fortunes. But while he held the Lake Innes Estate he was able to maintain that gracious affability which belied his financial state. Even as he was losing the Royal Hotel in 1847 he hosted the Governor of New South

Wales, Sir Charles FitzRoy and Lady FitzRoy, and the vice regal entourage at Lake Innes with a grace and generosity which was still easily recalled by old-timers sixty years later.<sup>17</sup> Loyal as always to his cherished dreams, he escorted the governor to New England along the Major's line of road. But the end was inevitable. He was forced to leave Lake Innes, which slowly fell into decay, and he became bankrupt in 1852. He was appointed Gold Commissioner at the Hanging Rock Goldfield near Nundle in the New England region, and later became Police Magistrate at Newcastle where he died in 1857, as old as the century which had only just passed half way.

## Chapter 2

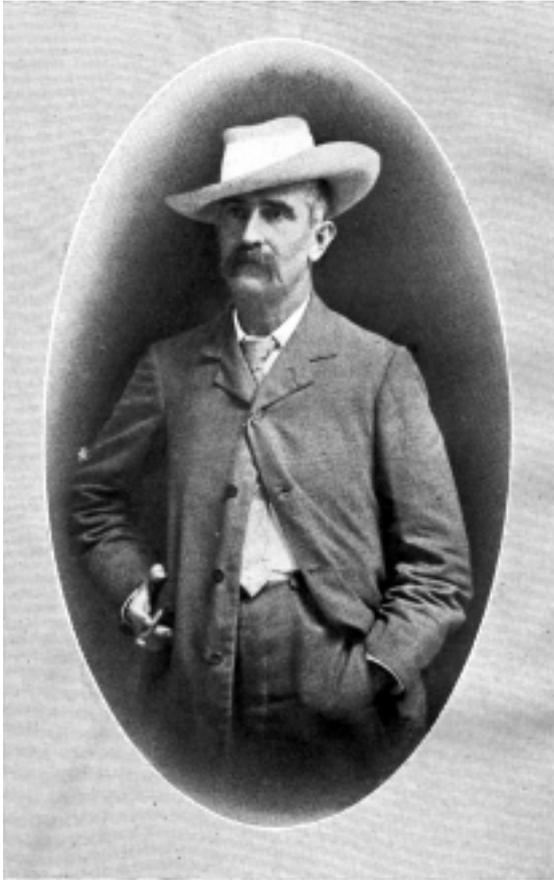
# Sleepy Hollow

On 18 June 1855 in an old brick house on the hill looking down on Port Macquarie, a young boy was born to Caroline Becke and her husband Frederick Becke, Clerk of Petty Sessions in the town. Christened George Lewis Becke, he was the youngest of six children. He grew up in Port Macquarie until his family moved to Sydney when he was twelve. In later life the young Port Macquarie lad was known as Louis Becke, renowned author of adventure tales of the South Pacific of whom the great James A. Michener was to say, 'If you want an honest, evocative, unpretentious and at times fearfully moving account of the Pacific in its heyday, you must read Louis Becke'.<sup>18</sup> In fact several of his books were written at Port Macquarie during a six month sojourn there in late 1895 early 1896.

Louis Becke sometimes mentioned his Port Macquarie childhood in his books. It was not a flattering picture. He referred to the town as 'Lots o' Time' and it clearly bored him. In one book he described Port Macquarie as that 'decayed, broken hearted little township with its great red brick church with squat tower and ruinous barracks'.<sup>19</sup> He wrote on another occasion that 'I have often thought that the town only wanted a small cathedral to make it the dullest and most God forsaken hole in the whole Australian continent. It was built by convict

hands in the days of the cruel System, and nothing but an earthquake or big fire will ever improve it.'<sup>20</sup> Others came to the same dramatic conclusion. Fifty years after Becke was born, a reporter for the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, suggested that 'Picturesque Port' would be infinitely improved if a cyclone came along and swept the old rookeries and tumbled down fences into the ocean.<sup>21</sup> Another travelling reporter, for the *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to Port Macquarie as the 'Sleepy Hollow of the North'.<sup>22</sup> Just like the fictional town of Sleepy Hollow in Washington Irving's gruesome story set in upper New York State, Port Macquarie had the quaint charm of the old fashioned, the shabbiness of a gentility long since gone, and the spectres from a brutal past.

After the heady days of the Major's reign, Port Macquarie had gone backwards. The gold rushes, the great days of wool, and later the agricultural boom had concentrated all colonial minds on the inland. Apart from the major ports like Sydney or Newcastle, the coastal towns of New South Wales found themselves in the doldrums for fifty or more years. Port Macquarie suffered an extra disadvantage. It was barely accessible, even from the sea. A special artist for the *Illustrated Sydney News* travelled on commission to Port Macquarie in 1891 and



*Louis Becke (1855-1913), a Port Macquarie lad made good. Many of his South Seas stories made reference to his Port Macquarie childhood in the 1850s and 1860s (Courtesy Dixon Library, University of New England).*

opened his article with a description of just how hard it was to get to the picturesque little town. The trip by rail to Hexham and then by coach to Port Macquarie was enough to rasp the nerves of any traveller. Approaching Port Macquarie by coastal steamer or sailing vessel might be more comfortable, provided the weather was good, but a contrary wind or tide could cause the boat to spend days trying to cross the bar. Even then the vessel had to thread its way past old wrecks to reach the wharf, and these 'ghosts' did nothing to build confidence for the traveller's return journey.<sup>23</sup>

The Royal Hotel, so prominently located next to the main wharf, followed the fluctuating fortunes of the town. After Major Innes's creditors had sold the building to the Australian Trust Company in 1847, the two wings, the Royal Hotel itself, and the semi-detached residence to the east, thereafter known as Beach House, had separate histories. For the next thirty years, the hotel was not often licensed. In the mid 1850s, John Williams and John Green held publicans' licences, and again in the early



*The Port Macquarie waterfront circa 1870. The Royal Hotel is on the left. Extensions have been added to the southern end of the building facing Horton Street. A sailing ship is moored near the town wharf. (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*

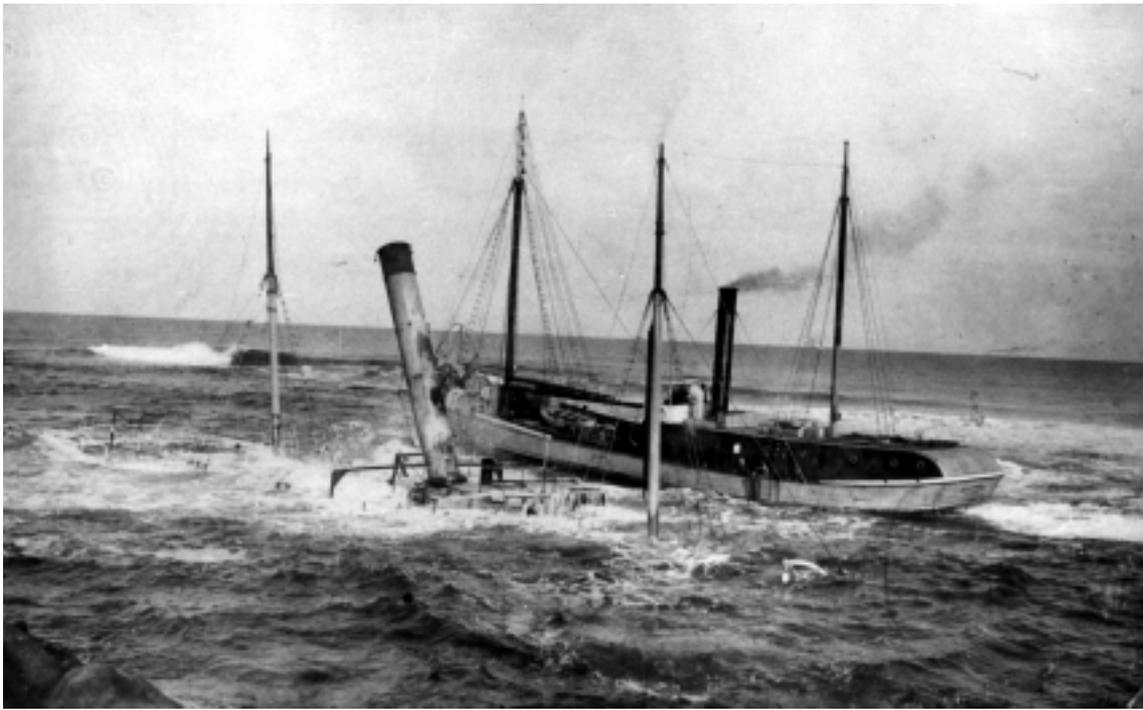
1870s Thomas Neads and Christopher Doyle took out licences, always in the name of the Royal Hotel. But it was not until the late 1870s that the building regained a publican's licence and thereafter traded almost continuously as the Royal Hotel. In those doldrum years it is not certain to what use the building was put. In 1869 the property was sold to James Butler, a builder, for the very modest sum of £500, and he immediately took out a mortgage.<sup>24</sup> This almost certainly suggests that some form of rebuilding took place, and old photographs clearly show an extension of the hotel to the south beyond the chimneys which marked the end of the building in the Major's time. But despite this investment, the hotel functioned only briefly as licensed premises from 1870 to 1872. In 1873 a special reporter for the *Sydney Mail* reported that the Royal Hotel, a monster building almost as large as its namesake in Sydney, was by then closed,<sup>25</sup> and in this forlorn state complemented the vacant and crumbling brick buildings all along the waterfront. Many years later the *Armidale Express*

summed up the checkered career of the Royal Hotel, claiming quite accurately, that 'the premises were too large for such a town as Port Macquarie and never paid. It had a great number of tenants from time to time, but the rent obtained would hardly suffice to keep it in repair'.<sup>26</sup>

Beach House, the semi-detached residence to the east fronting the river but under the same roof as the hotel, was more fully occupied. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s its size and position would have made it a desirable residence, and provided there was a tenant, it was probably rented out. In February 1869 Beach House was sold to Charles Watt,<sup>27</sup> who intended to run it as a boarding house, but died of intemperance only four days after the sale.<sup>28</sup> After three years of running Beach House as a guest house, his wife Mary sold the premises to John Row and William Ewan who were storekeepers. However, within a year they were in financial difficulties and the property and goods were assigned to their creditors.<sup>29</sup> By the early 1880s Beach House was used



A particularly clear photograph of the Royal Hotel taken by Thomas Dick probably in the late 1870s. The whitewashed section is the Royal Hotel, the brick section beyond to the left is Beach House. The additions of 1869 can be seen clearly to the right of the two chimneys (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).



*The perennial problem for Port Macquarie in the nineteenth century. The steamer Burrawong has foundered on the bar. The little steamer Boambée is negotiating its way past the wreck (Courtesy Mitchell Library).*

by a Mr. and Mrs. Waugh as a boarding school and by 1886 had reverted to rental accommodation, its tenant being Mr. Willis, the District Inspector of Schools.<sup>30</sup>

The histories of Beach House and the Royal Hotel reflect the economic stagnation of Port Macquarie in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. However, there was a slight upturn in the local economy in the early 1880s. The population was increasing,<sup>31</sup> and this was probably due to an increase in both the timber industry and the beginning of a fishing industry and oyster cultivation.<sup>32</sup> There was also an increase in building activity.<sup>33</sup> But this was no boom. As one visitor to Port Macquarie noted in 1882, ‘the town as a whole is in a state of decay – a relic and a ruin of departed glory.’<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the ‘monster’ building by the wharf was beginning to see better days. Michael Williams held a publican’s licence from 1878 to 1880 and was succeeded by John McDonnough. In 1883 the Royal Hotel was sold to a farmer named Patrick O’Neill<sup>35</sup> who, one year later,

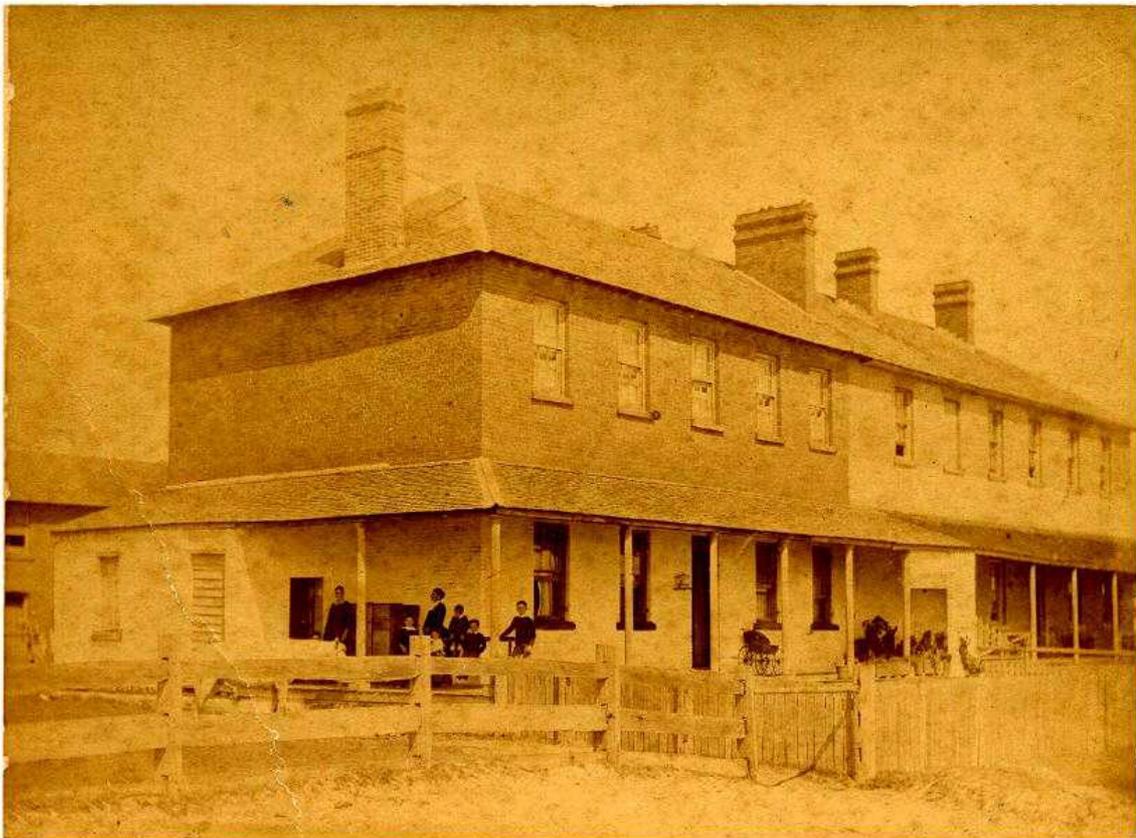
took out a mortgage for £300 with the Bank of New South Wales.<sup>36</sup> O’Neill seemed to be expressing a vote of confidence in the town. He invested in improvements for the old hotel, including a fine cast iron balcony to overlook the harbour.<sup>37</sup> The renovation seemed to attract interest and in June 1886 Patrick O’Neill signed contracts to sell the hotel to a Sydney landowner, Dr. Edwin Bottrell, who also made arrangements to purchase Beach House.<sup>38</sup>

A few days later came an event which many residents of Port Macquarie would remember for the rest of their lives.<sup>39</sup> It was three o’clock in the morning of Thursday 17 June 1886. Among the guests at the Royal Hotel were some school teachers who, later in the morning, were to sit for their promotions examinations at Beach House, the home of the District Inspector Of Schools, Mr. Willis. One of the young teachers, Frederick Stainer from Kempsey, was woken by the presence of smoke in his bedroom. He raised the alarm and the publican, Patrick O’Neill, quickly

discovered that the storeroom and billiard room were on fire. No sooner was this discovered than a flask of spirits exploded and the fire began to spread rapidly. The flames shot up to the upper storey and soon had hold of the roof. Everyone was evacuated from the hotel and from Beach House, and because there was a number of young men staying at the hotel, it was possible to rescue much of the furniture. Mr. Willis had virtually all his furniture and belongings saved from Beach House. But nothing could save the grand old building. Flashover occurred, and the building burned from one end to the other, tempered only by drizzling rain. The roof gave way with a roar, some sections of wall collapsed and part of the new cast iron balcony fell back into the flames, where the heat was so intense that the cast iron glowed white and fused with lumps of gravel near where it fell.<sup>40</sup> By morning both the Royal Hotel and Beach House were gone. Only the shell

of the walls remained, and the ruins smouldered for many days.<sup>41</sup>

The Royal Hotel was insured with the United Insurance Company for £1200 and the stock and furniture were insured for a further £600.<sup>42</sup> This fact, when revealed raised suspicions, and rumours began to fly. It was claimed that the publican and his wife had removed a quantity of furniture and personal effects before the fire was noticed,<sup>43</sup> and that Patrick O'Neill had taken a quantity of rum from the cellar and placed it in the spirit room where the fire had broken out.<sup>44</sup> Patrick and Annie O'Neill were duly arrested and committed to take their trial at Central Criminal Court in Sydney in September 1886.<sup>45</sup> At the trial it was revealed that the main prosecution witness, a servant girl at the Royal Hotel, had a grudge against the O'Neills, and that, since the hotel had already been sold and the contracts signed, O'Neill had nothing to



*Beach House (the unwhitewashed section of the building to the left) in September 1884 when it was a school run by Mr and Mrs Waugh. It, too, was destroyed in the fire of 1886. (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*



*The new Royal Hotel which rose from the ashes of the old building in 1887. The new building stood on the footings of the old (including Beach House). (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*

gain. With this evidence Patrick and Annie O'Neill were acquitted.<sup>46</sup>

Dr Bottrell, the hapless owner, now had a smoking ruin on his hands, together with the insurance money. Twelve hundred pounds would finance a building as large as the old complex, but it would not be lavish. Nonetheless the money would suffice. Port Macquarie was not a boom town, and although some building activity had taken place in the mid 1880s, the town lacked basic infrastructure like a brick-making facility. It was not until September 1886, when the new hotel project was about to get underway, that a brick-making business was set up.<sup>47</sup> For these reasons, the rebuilding was modest. The old cellar walls had not been greatly damaged in the fire and served as the foundations for the new hotel, but the cellars themselves were filled with rubble and sealed off. Some of the old walls in the north eastern section of the building, furthest from where the fire started, were retained, and can be seen today. The new hotel rose on the footprints of the old building (including the Beach House section). After

the disruption of a major flood in the Hastings in February 1887,<sup>48</sup> the new building was well underway by April.<sup>49</sup> In May 1887 the plasterer, Mr Nichols, arrived from Sydney indicating that much of the exterior brickwork was complete. He stayed on the job until completion and was responsible for putting the date '1887' on the pediments.<sup>50</sup>

The building opened without fanfare. It was grand in its scale but plain in its decoration. The parapet walls supported a couple of plain pediments and the almost obligatory array of classical urns silhouetted against the skyline. But otherwise the walls were plain and the windows lacked the effusive decoration which was so popular in the late 1880s. The major exterior feature was the stretch of verandahs and balconies which wrapped around two sides of the building. They had been executed in a simple mimosa pattern, again on the restrained side. Sumptuous decoration is costly and the new Royal Hotel displayed some frugality.

The new publican had an eye to the latest trends. By 1888 the Royal Hotel was providing skating rink facilities, skating being all the rage at the time.<sup>51</sup> The following year Dr. Bottrell sold his interest for £3500 to Frank Williams, a professional publican with experience in other parts of the colony.<sup>52</sup> The new owner and publican advertised his establishment as splendidly situated with magnificent views of the ocean. The rooms were lofty and well ventilated, and the furniture was entirely new throughout. Frank Williams encouraged boarders and commercial travellers, both of

whom were mainstays of many country hotels at this time, and promised good meals, nice clean beds, plunge and shower baths, billiard rooms and the very best stabling under the auspices of an experienced groom.<sup>53</sup> Frank Williams remained at the Royal Hotel for twenty years, eventually being forced to sell due to default on his mortgage in 1908.<sup>54</sup> But despite an inauspicious departure, he was the one responsible for establishing the Royal Hotel as a major and permanent feature of Port Macquarie.

## *Chapter 3*

# The Lure of the Sea

The sea had always defined Port Macquarie. The remote coast had determined the establishment of a penal settlement. The seascapes and forests conjured up Major Innes's romantic sense of place. The river mouth had determined the push to make Port Macquarie a major port, and the Hastings bar had thwarted and confined that aspiration. The government wharf determined the development of the town. Horton Street, leading up from the wharf, became the main street. The post office was located near the wharf for obvious convenience, and two of the town's main hotels, the Royal and the Shamrock Tavern (later the Macquarie) were in the immediate vicinity of lower Horton Street. But the Royal had prime position and, together with the wharf and the post office, defined the perimeters of an open space which became known as Town Green. It has lost some of its importance in the twentieth century as sea-borne traffic declined to insignificance, but once it was a major open space for the town.

Originally this open space served the practical purpose of a turning circle for carriages and drays loading and unloading at the wharf. When a steamer was in port it would have been quite a busy spot. But it soon acquired another importance. The wharf and adjacent reserve were where visiting dignitaries were welcomed and

farewelled. So the town green became the site of civic receptions in much the same way as town bands and mayoral parties gathered at the railway stations of inland towns whenever an important visitor was about to arrive. After the visit of Governor Sir Charles FitzRoy in 1847, Port Macquarie did not have too many visiting dignitaries, but, at the end of the nineteenth century, the political spotlight turned on the town as the electorate of the Hastings and Macleay began to figure prominently in the nation's affairs.

In September 1898, the Premier of New South Wales, George Reid (later Australia's third Prime Minister), and government ministers, Paddy Crick and John See visited Port Macquarie to campaign against the Leader of the Opposition, Edmund Barton (later to become Australia's first Prime Minister), who was standing for the seat of Hastings and Macleay. The premier arrived by steamer unexpectedly, putting in a brief appearance of a few hours before heading off to Kempsey. He was welcomed at the wharf by the mayor and a good crowd before being taken to the Royal Hotel.<sup>55</sup> Two days later the two ministers arrived and were put up at the Royal, where a small civic reception was held.<sup>56</sup> The efforts of the government, however, were to no avail. The election was won a few days later by Barton. His campaign committee



*The little tug boat Thistle carrying the local member Edmund Barton (top deck, in front of the right side edge of the funnel) into Port Macquarie. He is accompanied by the town band and other dignitaries. It is July 1899, and in less than two years, Edmund Barton will become the first Prime Minister of Australia (Courtesy Mitchell Library).*

celebrated throughout the day in one of the hotels with speeches and toasts, and in late afternoon, accompanied by 40 ladies (who, it must be remembered, could not vote in 1898), they made their way down to the wharf. The company, together with the town band, boarded the little tug boat, Thistle, and chugged out to sea to greet the coastal steamer, Burrawong, which was conveying the victorious Edmund Barton from Kempsey back to Sydney. Heavy seas prevented the two boats coming near each other, but the passengers on the overcrowded tug cheered heartily, the town band struck up 'Hail the Conquering Hero Comes', the little tug boat tossed and pitched, and the bigger steamer passed majestically by, taking its famous passenger on to his destiny.<sup>57</sup> This was old style electioneering.

Hotels and publicans figured very prominently in community life in the first half of the twentieth century. Hotels were not just pot houses as their opponents

claimed. They provided a range of services to their community. In fact it was the very successes of the temperance advocates in reducing the number of liquor licences dramatically, that caused the surviving hotels to become larger and more diverse in their operations. As seen in the examples above, hotels had a political role to play in most towns because they not only provided virtually the only decent accommodation for visitors, but their balconies and bars were good for impromptu speeches and celebrations. Hotels also became major sponsors of sport from the late nineteenth century, and offered venues where men could gather to discuss cricket and football. The local hotel was probably the only place in town with kitchens large enough and staff experienced enough to put on banquets, a favourite form of entertainment. Small lounges and function rooms provided meeting places for many social clubs, and still other sporting, charitable and political clubs were given opportunities to raise



*Two views of the Royal Hotel when Elizabeth Halpin was the owner. The first is in 1908 when her brother-in-law was licensee and the second in 1919 when her husband was publican (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*

money amongst drinkers at the bar. Many hotels made a special pitch for commercial travellers and provided regular room bookings and sample rooms where they could display their wares. This was the typical hotel which emerged in the early twentieth century, and under Frank Williams's management from 1888 to 1908, the Royal Hotel became just such an establishment.

In 1908 Mrs. Elizabeth Halpin purchased the Royal Hotel, and her brother-in-law Thomas Porteus became her first publican, succeeded by her husband William Halpin. The Halpins were a hotel family. William had already been the publican of the Club Hotel. He had been responsible in 1903 for a rather remarkable spectacle in Port Macquarie. He organised a night-time sporting carnival on the town green in front of the Royal and Club Hotels. The evening's proceedings were lit by acetylene gas, and over 350 people gathered for the

entertainment. Within two years acetylene street lamps were installed in Port Macquarie.<sup>58</sup>

During this period the north coast railway line reached Wauchope in 1915 and Kempsey in 1917.<sup>59</sup> This made an enormous difference to Port Macquarie. For the first time the town was easily accessible, and began to realise the full potential of its magnificent setting. Promotional writers began to proclaim Port Macquarie as the 'sanatorium of the north coast', and a 'land of octogenarians' where long life was to be expected.<sup>60</sup> But more importantly, there was the lure of the sea.

In 1914, just before the outbreak of World War I, Kodak Australia launched a Happy Moments Contest when they invited families to send in snapshots of their 'happy moments'. Children and animals were, of course, the most popular subjects, but the judges could not help but comment on the very large number of seaside and boating photographs. A cultural phenomenon was emerging. Paid holidays, less restrictive beachwear, the image of the bronzed body, the joy and increasing safety of swimming, much easier access to beaches, amateur fishing, all went together to create the 'seaside resort'. Port Macquarie was ideal, and the Royal Hotel was ideally situated.

The Royal slowly began to prosper. Its history after the First World War was typical of many New South Wales hotels. After her husband died, an ageing Elizabeth Halpin retired from the hotel game, leased her property and sold the publican's licence. From now on she would only draw a rent from the premises. The new style publican was a professional working within a lease and moving from hotel to hotel around the state. In order to finance their operations publicans frequently borrowed the necessary money from the breweries, and the breweries in turn demanded that the hotel be tied to their product. By 1921 the Royal Hotel was

leased for ten years to publican Jim McKay, formerly of the Picton Arms Hotel, who had borrowed his capital from Tooth & Co. The brewery tied the hotel, and the Royal became a Tooth's pub.<sup>61</sup> In the typical new arrangement, there was room for the owner, the licensee and the brewer all to draw a profit from the operation of an hotel.

The Royal Hotel came on the market several times in the 1920s, although it was never actually sold. Mrs. Halpin's asking price for the building was £6,000, wise heads said £4,500 would be more like it, and the purchase price for the licence, lease, stock, good will and furniture was another £4,300. All up, this was a much more valuable hotel than the one Frank Williams had purchased in 1889,<sup>62</sup> and reflects the growing prosperity of Port Macquarie and the hotel industry.

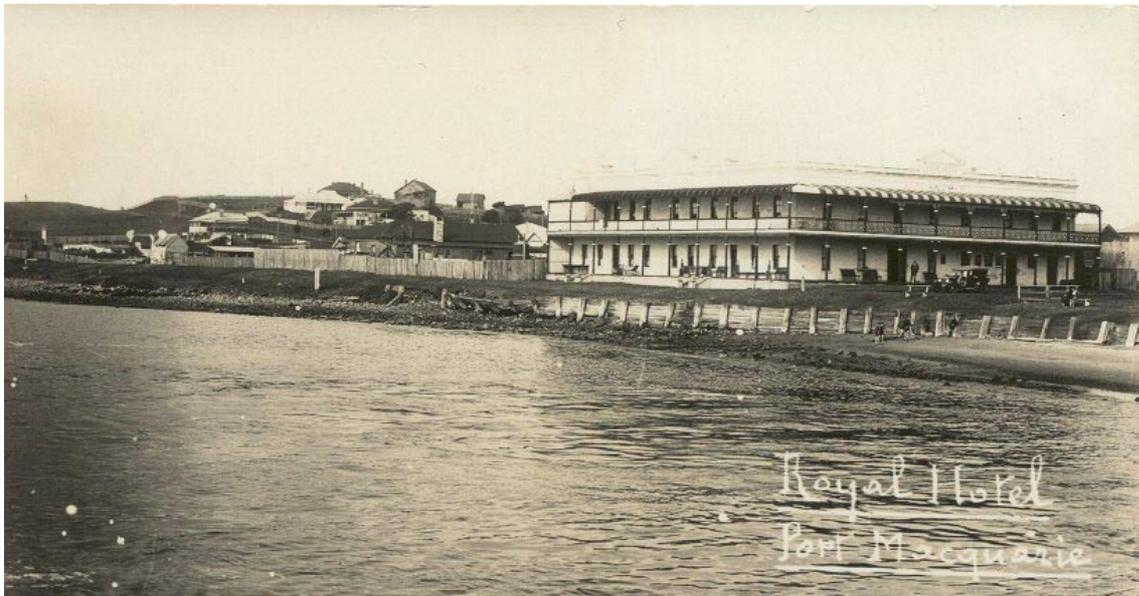
By the 1920s, hotels were under far greater restrictions than ever before. In 1916, following a drunken riot of young army recruits in Liverpool and central Sydney, six o'clock closing was imposed on all hotels in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It was a temporary war time

measure that was to last for another forty years. The wowsers called for ever tougher licensing restrictions, and local licensing boards kept a strict eye on hotels, as did the Board of Health and the increasingly powerful local governments. The threat for non-compliance was the loss of the annual licence. Again the Royal Hotel serves as an example. In 1924, just before the licence came up for renewal the local Licensing Inspector, Sgt. John Duff of the Port Macquarie Police, demanded that the publican repaint the entire outside of the hotel, repair the roof to prevent leaks, demolish all old buildings and structures near the kitchen, and erect a suitable lavatory in the yard. On top of this the Board of Health required that guttering and downpipes be replaced, the bathroom be relocated, the drainage system be overhauled, a grease trap be provided at the kitchen, the toilet seats be repaired to comply with the relevant ordinance, and chemical closets be installed to reduce the danger from flies.<sup>63</sup> All this had to be done promptly.

When Elizabeth Halpin died in 1928 the hotel was valued at the conservative sum of £5,600.<sup>64</sup> The Royal Hotel then consisted

*The Royal Hotel in the late 1920s - a solid well-kept establishment in a town that was increasingly conscious of its image as a tourist resort offering seaside holidays (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society)*





*Three views of the Royal Hotel. Above: a good panorama of the hotel in the late 1920s (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*

*Left: The Royal Hotel in a late afternoon sun in 1931, the year after Jack McGann took over as publican. Note the array of hanging baskets (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society)..*

*Below: A less usual view of the Royal Hotel from the east taken in 1931 (Courtesy Mitchell Library)*

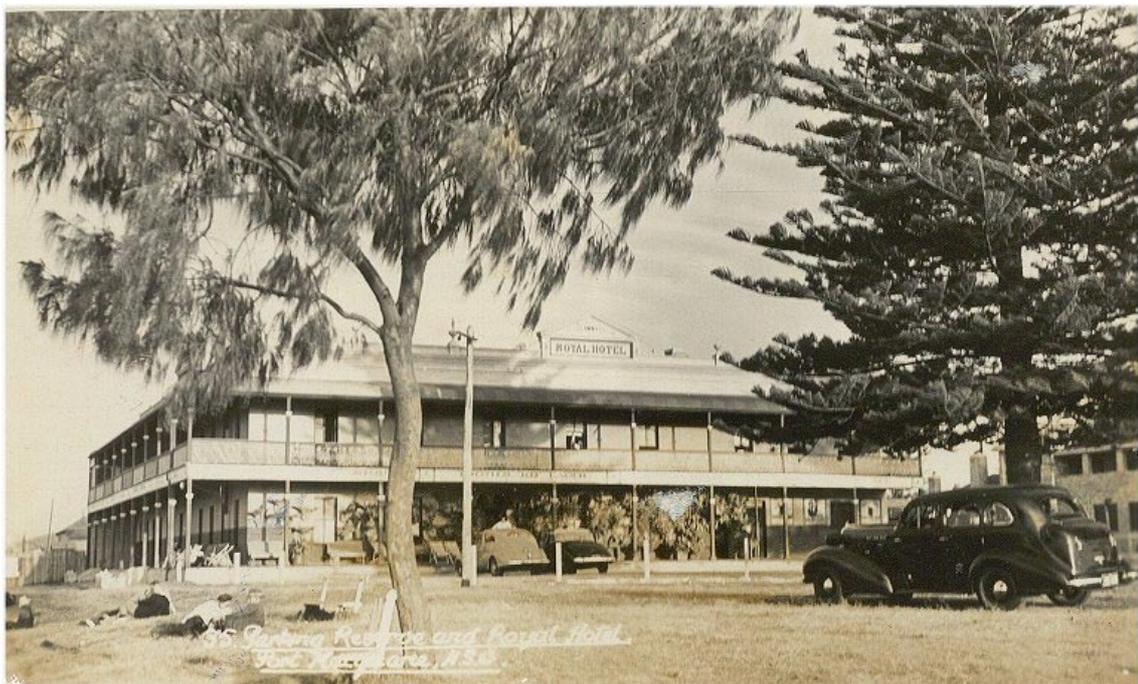


of 31 rooms with old stables and garages, and was generally considered to be in need of major renovation. The estate passed to Mrs Halpin's children, her son, Jack McGann, taking over the licence and eventually buying out his sisters in 1935 after a protracted and bitter family dispute. The settlement price for the sale of the hotel was £10,500.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the Great Depression the Royal Hotel fared well despite the quite usual reduction of beer sales by fifty percent between 1928 and 1931.<sup>66</sup> There seemed to be no distress stories associated with the publican or the owners, and the hotel was increasing substantially in value despite its age. The reason lies in the fact that Port Macquarie was progressing as a tourist town, and a new road from Walcha to Port Macquarie, more or less along the major's old line, was being constructed.<sup>67</sup> It was expected that this would make 'Port' a popular destination for New Englanders in winter. Thus the town was growing, but it only had three hotels, the Royal the Club and the Commercial. When the town was allocated its licences back in the 1880s it had been 'sleepy

hollow', but it was very hard thereafter to get a new licence anywhere in New South Wales. Port Macquarie had too few hotels by the mid 1930s, and it was difficult to get accommodation in the town in summer.<sup>68</sup> Those hotels which did operate were doing rather nicely.

Jack McGann got out of the publican business just after he gained possession of the Royal Hotel, selling the licence in 1936 to a professional publican, Bob Stanfield from the Petersham Inn in Sydney.<sup>69</sup> Stanfield was a dynamic publican, the sort of person many would call 'a natural'. He immediately asked Tooth & Co. to support him financially in renovating the old hotel, and by 1937 he had modernised the bar with tiles on the wall and under the counter and new linoleum on the floors. He cut new windows to allow more light into the bar and installed a good refrigeration system. Within no time he had the old hotel in excellent order.<sup>70</sup> Stanfield was to stay at the Royal Hotel for eleven years enjoying the recovery after the Great Depression and enduring all the uncertainties of the Second

*This is about 1937 and prosperity has returned especially to the hotel industry and to seaside resorts. A generation of young Australians was getting used to the sea as a place of relaxation and happy times. (Courtesy Port Macquarie Historical Society).*





*Mr and Mrs Bob Stanfield of the Royal Hotel christen the new surf boat Ace II for the Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club. Pubs were major sponsors of local sport and other community organisations (Courtesy Mitchell Library, Government Printing Office Collection).*

World War. He arranged a tie with Tooth & Co. and always kept 'on side' with the directors. Typically he referred to Mr. Burt and Mr. Watson as Selby and Tom (which few other publicans dared to do), and each Christmas and Easter he would send them a crate of fresh local lobsters or a bag of oysters.<sup>71</sup> He fully involved himself in community affairs and one of his first activities was to raise money for a surf boat for the fledgling Port Macquarie Surf Lifesaving Club.

In the meantime, Jack McGann entered into negotiations to sell the Royal Hotel which his family had owned for over thirty years. In-house speculation at Tooth & Co. valued the hotel at £13,500 and by 1940 McGann had found a buyer. Before the sale Port Macquarie was described as:

A very prosperous [town], with a large district population, both are increasing fast, and it is one of the most populous and favored seaside

resorts in New South Wales. The Oxley Highway runs right through now to Port Macquarie, all the hotels and boarding houses are always full both in Summer and Winter, as many of the New England people make it a practice now to spend the winter there to avoid the extreme cold of their climate.<sup>72</sup>

This was no 'sleepy hollow'. The major's dream of a vibrant seaside town had been realised one hundred years later.

The new owner of the Royal Hotel was Alf Byrnes, another local who also owned the newly rebuilt Macquarie Hotel next to the Royal and the Star and Hastings Hotels in Wauchope.<sup>73</sup> Bob Stanfield continued as his publican at the Royal. Byrnes was lucky to have had an experienced publican with good connections in the difficult days of World War II. Apart from the normal war time rationing, the tourist industry along the coast was hit hard, especially after Japan entered the war in December 1941. Bob

Stanfield referred to that Christmas as a 'complete dud'.<sup>74</sup> He was continually short of staff throughout the war, and in 1944 his old office clerk died of heart failure in the hotel office, 'just bent his head in the chair and went off peacefully'.<sup>75</sup> One particularly notable feat of Bob Stanfield during the war was the building of the tuppenny road. This gave access to Flynn's Beach and was built privately under Bob Stanfield's supervision. He raised £560 for the project by putting all small change from bar sales into a money box. Customers who tendered 1/- for a small packet of cigarettes were asked to contribute the tuppence change to the road's cost. The road was opened by the Minister for Lands in April 1945.<sup>76</sup>

The most dramatic event for Port Macquarie and the Royal Hotel during the war occurred on 29 April 1943. The coastal steamer Wollangbar was on its way from Byron Bay to Sydney with a large consignment of butter and a general cargo. At 10.15 a.m. it was struck on the port side by two torpedoes launched from a Japanese submarine off the coast near Crescent Head. The ship sank very quickly. Of the crew of 37 only five survived. An RAAF Catalina sighted the survivors in the water, and flew on to Port Macquarie where the pilot dropped a message on the town wharf. A local fishing boat went out and picked up the five survivors and brought them in to Port Macquarie. Two went straight to hospital, one, Frank Emson, having extensive burns from standing next to a steam pipe when the torpedo struck fracturing the pipe and scalding him badly on the face. The three uninjured survivors were initially brought to Town Green. When

news circulated around the town that the survivors from a torpedoed ship were coming in, the women of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (who were catering for an afternoon tea at the Presbyterian Ladies' Flower Show) immediately took their afternoon tea down to Town Green for the survivors. However, the publican of the Royal Hotel, Bob Stanfield, had already offered them the seaman's right – a nip of rum, and being seamen they preferred the ration of rum to the tea and sandwiches. Fifty two years later the event was commemorated in Port Macquarie. On the anniversary, 29 April 1995, Mr Frank Emson, the man who had been so badly scalded and had missed out on his drop of rum in 1943 because he was in hospital, was taken to the Royal Hotel and shouted a complimentary glass of the old sailors' drink.<sup>77</sup>

Bob Stanfield retired from the Royal Hotel in 1948, the *United Liquor Vendors Association Review* paying warm tribute to him as a great community worker, drawing attention to his raising £6,000 for the local hospital and £4,000 for the Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club.<sup>78</sup> Stanfield retired to a home he had built four miles out of Port Macquarie. The new publican was Robert Byrnes, son of the owner Alf Byrnes.<sup>79</sup> The Byrnes family, reconstituted as Macquarie Hotels Pty Ltd in 1958 held the hotel until 1961. In September of that year they sold all four of their Port Macquarie and Wauchope Hotels to Tom Bryant of Kiama who, already owning two hotels, thus became the biggest country hotel owner in New South Wales. The purchase price for the four hotels was £325,000.<sup>80</sup>

## *Chapter 4*

# A Major Resort

The 1950s and 1960s were a mixed blessing for the hotel industry. On the one hand wartime rationing had become a memory by the early 1950s, and six o'clock closing was repealed in New South Wales in 1955. But there were new challenges. With poker machines legalised in New South Wales in September 1956, licensed clubs became a real threat. Pubs found it difficult to match the facilities offered to club members, and the number of clubs rose exponentially. The popularity and spread of motels in the 1960s devastated the accommodation side of the hotel business. A variety of new liquor outlets such as licensed restaurants and liquor shops added another challenge to an industry that needed to change rapidly just to keep up. Pubs tried to modernise to keep up and old hotels were definitely out of favour. In the 1950s A. G. Byrnes, or 'A. G.' as he was affectionately known, removed all the iron lace verandahs from the Royal and replaced them along the Horton Street frontage with a long cantilevered awning. On the river-bank side he extended the ground floor considerably to make a new entrance and modern lounge bar facilities.<sup>81</sup> But he was still running an old style country pub, pitched at the working man and the sportsman.<sup>82</sup>

Port Macquarie was on the eve of its golden days. The 1960s brought in a new surfing craze that made the lure of the beach

irresistible for a generation of young people. A sub-culture with its own music, dress, language and lifestyle emerged. As well there was an older generation which had learned to love the sea in the 1930s. For them a beachside holiday was the only holiday, and thoughts of retirement turned to sun surf and sand. Beach towns became a locus for investment with Waikiki and Malibu in the United States as the apogee of a sun drenched leisure community and Surfers Paradise showing the way to rapid fortune in Australia. Port Macquarie fitted the bill nicely as a major seaside resort. Hotel owners had to think of their asset differently. Mixed drinking, relaxed comfortable atmospheres, nightly entertainment, good accommodation and quality service were the goals to aim for. The old style pub was slowly yielding.

The change of ownership of the Royal Hotel in 1961 gave a good insight into the old 'pub culture', so strong, yet destined to wane. In those days, Australian men knew their beer and how to drink it. The ritual of the shout was just one aspect of pub culture. A die-hard loyalty to a brand of beer, a type of drinkers' tribalism, was another. This tribalism was, of course, fostered by the breweries. In 1961 Port Macquarie drank Grafton beer. When Tom Bryant came on the scene he changed the Royal and the Macquarie to Tooths beer. There was a



*The Royal Hotel in the early 1960s. Modernism was all the rage and the hotel had been stripped of its lace cast iron and graced with a thin line cantilevered awning and brick facade at street level. This was the fate of many commercial buildings in many country towns in the 1960s. (Courtesy Tooth & Co, and Noel Butlin Archives Centre).*

revolt. As one 'hard case' put it, 'I've been drinking Grafton beer since I was a kid. Would rather drink lemonade than this Tooths piss.' At the Royal Hotel the staff were very uncooperative during the change over from Grafton beer to Tooths, and on the eve of the dread day a sign went up on the bar: 'Wear your black armbands tomorrow, the good beer will be going off and Tooths piss will be on.' Grafton Brewery stirred the pot by giving all staff at the Royal and Macquarie Hotels two dozen bottles of their best, and by way of thanks, staff at the Royal used some underhanded tactics to sabotage the new beer.<sup>83</sup> The change-over was far from smooth.

During their tenure, the Bryant family executed some significant changes to the building. They did so in a booming local economy. The year 1965 set new records for building applications by Port Macquarie Municipal Council with nearly £800,000 of

new developments.<sup>84</sup> A new Bowling Club was built, extensions were made to the High School, a new ambulance station was erected, two motel projects were completed, and retirement homes were underway at both Port Macquarie and Wauchope.<sup>85</sup> The holiday seasons now saw regular influxes of visitors so that most accommodation would be booked out months in advance and the best accommodation would be booked years ahead.<sup>86</sup> By the end of that confident year of 1965 it was even announced that Port Macquarie had featured on a popular television travel program in the United States.<sup>87</sup>

Among the building approvals for 1965 was a plan by the Bryant family to bring forward the first floor of the Royal Hotel facing the river in line with the ground floor which had been extended by A. G. Byrnes some years earlier.<sup>88</sup> The old bedrooms along that side of the hotel were

now replaced with 17 modern suites each with large plate glass windows looking out over the water.<sup>89</sup> All these extensions and renovations were done in a modernist style, and the hotel lost all its architectural merit. An inventory of the Royal Hotel in 1966 showed that it contained a public bar, a saloon bar and a beer garden. There was also a dining room and kitchen and a guests' sitting room as well as 16 guest bedrooms. Upstairs, there was a three bedroom private flat for the manager.<sup>90</sup> This was a make-shift resort hotel which had never quite outgrown the old country pub stage. It was some 80 years old, and heavily altered. The next two decades would see considerable pressure for demolition and redevelopment of the site.

The Bryant family, trading as E. T. Bryant Investments sold the Royal in 1971 to Mainline Investments Pty Ltd. It was during the tenure of this company that the

old cellars were discovered in the manner outlined at the start of this story. In 1977 the hotel was sold again to Loudin Pty Ltd, and pressure for redevelopment grew. Loudin put in a major proposal to demolish the old pub and build a modern resort hotel at Flynn's Beach but the local council refused the application.<sup>91</sup> Eventually there was no radical redevelopment.

Port Macquarie had lost many of its historic buildings during the boom years since 1960, and what was left was increasingly valued. Even as early as 1959, Mr Lloyd Sommerlad MLC referred to Port Macquarie in the New South Wales Parliament explaining that it had an asset which no other similar seaside resort could match, and that was its historic buildings.<sup>92</sup> By the mid 1960s there was an active historical society and museum in the town and many shared Mr Sommerlad's view that history was an integral part of tourism. From

*The Royal Hotel in 1973. This photograph of a rather shabby and characterless hotel with decidedly unattractive surrounds indicates why there might have been considerable pressure for complete redevelopment of the site in the 1970s. Commercial pressures in the 1960s had seen the extension of the hotel on the riverfront side to provide modern facilities. The automobile ruled, and all these renovations were made to capture the custom of the motoring tourist (Courtesy Tooth & Co. and Noel Butlin Archives Centre).*



the moment of their discovery in 1974, the old cellars beneath the Royal Hotel sparked keen historical interest both locally and in the wider heritage movement.

The 1994 Development Control Plan forced recognition of the above-ground structure as one of the few nineteenth century commercial buildings still operating in the district. In 1996, the then owners agreed to sell half the block, including the Royal Hotel, the Macquarie Motel and the Heather Heath House building.

The old hotel was sold without its licence to Bayside Developments a local development company that was established in 1994 by David Morton, Jeff Gillespie and Peter Mattlick. The group has prided itself on striving to deliver direct economic and social benefits to the Port Macquarie and Hastings community through all of its

projects. The Group has been instrumental in transforming the Port Macquarie CBD through its involvement with the Town Centre Master Plan Committee which is chaired by David Morton.

As the twentieth century drew to a close Bayside Developments, the current owners, put forward a proposal which proved to be highly controversial. The centrepiece of their plan was the restoration of the much altered Royal Hotel to return it to its Victorian grace and dignity. Essential to the proposal was the development on the site of an eight storey resort hotel. There was some doubt that the restoration of the old hotel would take place, but this became stage one of the development and was completed by December 1999.

The restoration was undertaken at a cost of \$2.5 million in consultation with

**Below Left:** Workmen in the vicinity of the old main entrance with its beautiful cedar staircase just evident in the photograph. **Below right:** The insertion of new doorways into the fabric of the old building. In some parts of the building the old brickwork could be dated to the 1830s.





Restoration of the old building by Bayside Developments underway in 1999. **Above:** The verandahs are about to be re-erected on the outside of the building after a forty year absence. A mimosa pattern is being used for the iron lace. **Below Left:** The restored building facing Horton Street, the sweep of its verandahs as impressive as it had been one hundred years ago. **Below right:** Detail of the iron lace and balcony posts.



heritage consultants and was overseen by an archaeologist to ensure items of historical and cultural significance were preserved. Of particular significance is the cedar staircase in the foyer that has been restored to its original condition, as well as cellars and corridors beneath the building. The old Royal Hotel no longer operates as a hotel. Instead it accommodates two restaurants, nite club, gift shop, ice creamery, fish and chip shop and several commercial offices. The Royal Hotel is now included in local guided tours of the town's historic sites.

Part of the restoration project involved the construction of a new commercial building on the site in Horton Street. The building was designed to be sympathetic to the Royal Hotel. It was named the Barton Mews in honour of Sir Edmund Barton, local MLA for the Macleay Hastings electorate and later first Prime Minister of Australia.

The establishment of the various businesses associated with the project has resulted in the creation of 60 new jobs in the local community, again fulfilling

Bayside's objective of delivering direct economic and social benefit to the local community.

As the project was nearing completion, the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Bob Carr, was approached and agreed enthusiastically to open the restored building, travelling to Port Macquarie to perform the task on 2 March 2000, almost 170 years after Major Innes had built his stores with their vast brick cellars underneath.

Premier Carr praised the \$2.5 million Royal Hotel refurbishment and the subsequent stage two development of a major Sheraton Hotel on an adjacent site. 'It's a terrific complex', he said, and as he looked out across Town Green towards the Hastings River, he said of the Royal Hotel surroundings, 'It lifts the spirits standing here and looking at decent urban design'.

The premier also praised the City of Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce, the council and the business community for the

*The Royal Hotel Port Macquarie as it looked at the very end of the twentieth century (in December 1999) after restoration and reconstruction by Bayside Developments.*



Town Centre Master Plan which he described as a model for other communities in regional New South Wales. The plan had been a catalyst for growth with over \$100 million in private sector development underway.

With such evidence to hand, Premier Carr was prepared to give his support for Port Macquarie's bid to become the regional capital of the north coast. As he stood on the verandah of the Royal Hotel he encouraged civic and business leaders to 'build on the comparative advantages you have - the heritage, the tourist appeal, the beauty of the natural area and your interest in good urban design.' Over the course of 170 years the Royal Hotel had seen the changes unfurl - from the convict days and the Major's grand ambitions, through the isolated era of sleepy hollow, to the slow but steady emergence of Port Macquarie as a major leisure resort and regional capital.

The development of the site continues into its next phase. Bayside Developments

recently announced that Starwood Hotels and Resorts would manage their next project in Port Macquarie. Located on the site next to the Royal Hotel, the Four Points Sheraton Port Macquarie will be commenced in May 2000 and have a total cost of \$25 million. Again the project has been designed to add significant value to the local community by continuing to strengthen the local tourist industry, by creating employment (approximately 80 jobs on completion) and by improving the overall public amenities available to the community. Due for completion in late 2001, the development will comprise 101 hotel rooms, 28 serviced apartments, restaurants, conference/function facilities and commercial space.

The involvement of Starwood Hotels will put Port Macquarie on the world map, since this new hotel will be one of 700 hotels they manage around the world. The new hotel project brings the total value of construction projects by Bayside Developments to around \$60 million.

*Bayside Development directors David Morton (left) and Jeff Gillespie (right) with the Premier of New South Wales the Hon. Bob Carr, Cr Wayne Richards and Shooters Party MLC John Tingle at the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the opening of the restored Royal Hotel on 2 March 2000.*





*An artist's impression of the completed Royal Hotel development with a major hotel of international standard on the site. The Royal Hotel retains its prominence on the foreshore, a reminder of Port Macquarie's long and colourful history.*

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> 'New Historical Find Lauded', *Port Macquarie News*, 19 June 1975, p. 1 and 'Convict Built Rooms below Royal Hotel, *North Coast Magazine*, 3 July 1983, Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc., file 151/14.
- <sup>2</sup> Frank O'Grady, 'Archibald Clunes Innes', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 53, Part 3, September 1967, p. 196.
- <sup>3</sup> E. Flowers, 'Archibald Clunes Innes' in Douglas Pike (ed.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 2, 1788-1850, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>4</sup> Archibald C. Innes to the Colonial Secretary, 5 February 1831, bundled with 41/6395, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence re Land, Box 103, AONSW 2/7889.
- <sup>5</sup> Alexander Macleay to T. L. Mitchell, 12 August 1831, bundled as above.
- <sup>6</sup> A. C. Innes to the Colonial Secretary 20 November 1832, bundled as above.
- <sup>7</sup> Archibald C. Innes to the Colonial Secretary, 3 July 1841, bundled as above.
- <sup>8</sup> Henry Curzon Allport, 'Port Macquarie from the Steam Wharf' July 1839 in his Sketches of Port Macquarie, Mitchell Library PXD 86.
- <sup>9</sup> J. Backler (attributed) Port Macquarie, oil on canvas dated 1832? Mitchell Library. The painting was donated by Thomas Dick in memory of his parents and the date 1832 was on a brass plaque on the frame, not on the painting itself. 1832 would seem too early, and the presence of verandahs suggests that it was painted after the Allport sketch which was known to have been executed in July 1839. The Backler painting, probably shows the Major's buildings after conversion to the Royal Hotel and therefore a more likely date is 1841.
- <sup>10</sup> *Australian*, 8 February 1840, p. 3
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Sydney Gazette*, 12 March 1842, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup> *Australian*, 10 July 1841, p. 3
- <sup>14</sup> Mortgage, Archibald Clunes Innes and Margaret Innes (releasing dower) to Hastings Elwin, Alexander Macleay, Thomas Barker, John Lamb and Richard Jones, 5 October 1841, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book X No. 705.
- <sup>15</sup> Frank Rogers (ed.), *Port Macquarie: A History to 1850*, Hastings District Historical Society, Port Macquarie, 1982, p. 127.
- <sup>16</sup> Conveyance, Hastings Elwin, Alexander Macleay, Thomas Barker, John Lamb and Richard Jones (with the consent of Archibald Clunes Innes) to the Australian Trust Co., 24 June 1847, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Register, Book 111 No. 948.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Along the North Coast', Mitchell Library Newspaper Clippings, Vol. 1, pp. 139-140 (from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1904).
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in the introduction to Louis Becke, *South Sea Supercargo* (A. Grove Day ed.), Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, n.d., p.11.
- <sup>19</sup> Louis Becke, 'Bay of Fundy Days' in *Notes from my South Sea Log*, T. Werner Laurie, London, 1905, p.1.
- <sup>20</sup> 'Night' in *Notes from my South Sea Log*, p. 38 quoted in A. Grove Day, *Louis Becke*, Twayne Publisher, New York, 1966, pp. 21-22.
- <sup>21</sup> 'Port Macquarie', *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner*, 2 September 1905 in Mitchell Library Newspaper Cuttings, Vol. 4, pp. 141-142.
- <sup>22</sup> 'Along the North Coast', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1904, Mitchell Library Newspaper Cuttings, Vol. 1, pp. 139-140.
- <sup>23</sup> 'Sketches at Port Macquarie', *Illustrated Sydney News*, 12 September 1891, p. 8.
- <sup>24</sup> Conveyance, Edward Bennett to James Butler 25 October 1869, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 116 No 475, and Mortgage, James Butler to Edward Meeres, 25 October 1869, Book 116 No. 476.
- <sup>25</sup> 'The Tourist', *Sydney Mail*, 18 October 1873, p. 497.
- <sup>26</sup> 'Fire at Port Macquarie', *Armidale Express*, 25 June 1886, p. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> Conveyance, Edward Bennett to Charles Watt, 6 February 1869, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 112 No 398.
- <sup>28</sup> Death Certificate of Charles Watt, died 10 February 1869, Primary Application Packet 32928, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, AONSW K26496
- <sup>29</sup> Assignment for the benefit of Creditors, John Batholemew Hoare, James Wallis, James Ewan and John Fraser & Co. trustees for the creditors of J. Rowe and W. G. Ewan, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 123 No 325.
- <sup>30</sup> 'Northern Notes', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 25 June 1886, p. 6.
- <sup>31</sup> 'Port Macquarie', *Town and Country Journal*, 20 March 1886, p. 589
- <sup>32</sup> 'Northern River Townships of New South Wales',

- Town and Country Journal*, 22 May 1886, p. 1088.
- <sup>33</sup> 'Port Macquarie', *Town and Country Journal*, 20 March 1886, p. 589.
- <sup>34</sup> 'Sketches of Travel', *Town and Country Journal*, 9 September 1882, p. 507.
- <sup>35</sup> Conveyance, Patrick Daniher to Patrick O'Neill, 20 September 1883, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 293 No 808.
- <sup>36</sup> Mortgage, Patrick O'Neill to Bank of New South Wales, 20 September 1884, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 296 No 692.
- <sup>37</sup> 'Port Macquarie', *Town and Country Journal*, 25 July 1885, p. 172.
- <sup>38</sup> Statutory Declaration of Edwin Horace Trudgeon Bottrell, August 1901, Primary Application Packet 32928, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, AONSW K26496.
- <sup>39</sup> Statutory Declaration of John Joseph McInherney, 8 October 1936, Primary Application Packet 32928, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, AONSW K26496.
- <sup>40</sup> A panel of fire-affected lace cast iron was found in the cellars of the Royal Hotel a century later.
- <sup>41</sup> 'The Royal Hotel Port Macquarie Burnt', *Maitland Mercury*, 24 June 1886, p. 6.
- <sup>42</sup> 'Disastrous Conflagration', *Macleay Argus*, 19 June 1886, p. 2.
- <sup>43</sup> Central Criminal Court – Alleged Arson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1886, p. 6.
- <sup>44</sup> Central Criminal Court – Alleged Arson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1886, p. 4.
- <sup>45</sup> *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate*, 16 August 1886, p. 7.
- <sup>46</sup> Central Criminal Court – Alleged Arson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1886, p. 4.
- <sup>47</sup> 'Port Macquarie' *Town and Country Journal*, 11 September 1886, p. 537.
- <sup>48</sup> 'Flood at Port Macquarie' *Macleay Argus*, 16 February 1887, p. 2.
- <sup>49</sup> 'Port Macquarie' *Macleay Argus*, 16 April 1887, p. 3.
- <sup>50</sup> From miscellaneous notes kept at the Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc.
- <sup>51</sup> 'Rinkomania', *Port Macquarie News*, 11 August 1888, p. 2.
- <sup>52</sup> Conveyance, Edwin Horace Trudgeon Bottrell to Francis Williams, 13 January 1889, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 421 No 947.
- <sup>53</sup> 'Royal Hotel Port Macquarie', *Port Macquarie News*, 22 January 1889, p. 1.
- <sup>54</sup> Conveyance by forced sale, Edwin Horace Trudgeon Bottrell to Elizabeth Halpin, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 866 No 500.
- <sup>55</sup> 'The Premier at Port Macquarie', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 September 1898, pp. 5-6.
- <sup>56</sup> 'The Hastings-Macleay Election', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 1898, p. 8.
- <sup>57</sup> 'Election at Port Macquarie – Great Excitement', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 September 1898, p. 6.
- <sup>58</sup> John Moyes and Gilbert Mant, *A Town Called Port: A Port Macquarie Hastings Valley Walkabout*, Moyman Books, Port Macquarie, 1986, pp. 16-17.
- <sup>59</sup> Appendix XIV, New South Wales Government Railways and Tramways: Report of the Commissioners for the Year ended 30 June 1923, *New South Wales Parliamentary Papers*, 1923, Vol. III, Government Printer, Sydney, 1923.
- <sup>60</sup> Harry Krantz, *Port Macquarie: The Sanatorium of the North Coast*, no publication details, no date, no pagination.
- <sup>61</sup> Murrel & Co., Hotel and Business Brokers to Tooth & Co. Ltd, 12 July 1921, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.
- <sup>62</sup> W. H. Sheridan, solicitor to Tooth & Co., 19 July 1923 and Chas O. Smithers & Co., solicitors to Tooth & Co., 16 September 1924, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.
- <sup>63</sup> John Duff, to Mr. T. Rosenbaum, 8 September 1924, Tooth & Co. records as above.
- <sup>64</sup> Form of Affidavit 'D', Stamp Duties Office, Death Duties Branch, Deceased Estate File 36422, Elizabeth Halpin, AONSW 20/1289. See also the valuation of the Clerk Of Petty Sessions Port Macquarie for £9,000 and that of valuer W. Landregan for £6,200.
- <sup>65</sup> Conveyance, John Shanley McGann and Jane Kathleen McGann, executors of the will of Elizabeth Halpin to John Shanley McGann 3 July 1935, Land Titles Office of New South Wales, Old System Registers, Book 1724 No. 543.
- <sup>66</sup> "'Royal' Hotel, Port Macquarie, 11 July 1934, Tooth & Co. records as above.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> Charles A. Hall & Fowler Hotel Business Brokers and Valuers to Tooth & Co., 22 October 1935, Tooth & Co., records as above.
- <sup>69</sup> Tooth & Co to Smithers Warren & Lyons, 26 June

1936, Country Hotel Properties File, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/9439.

<sup>70</sup> Report: Royal Hotel Port Macquarie, 16 September 1936, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>71</sup> See Received Telegram to Selby Burt, 27 October 1938 and Bob Stanfield to Mr. T. Watson, 13 December 1939, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>72</sup> Landers & Cantrell, auctioneers to Tooth & Co., 10 January 1940, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>73</sup> Royal Hotel, Port Macquarie, 18 December 1940, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>74</sup> R. Stanfield to Selby Burt, (received 4 August 1942), Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>75</sup> R. Stanfield to Morrie, 1 March 1944, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>76</sup> *Sunday Sun*, 20 April 1945, in Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>77</sup> The story was told by Lynda Turner of the Port Macquarie Historical Society and the Port Macquarie Maritime Museum. The details were recorded by John Ferry.

<sup>78</sup> Hotelkeeper praised at Port Macquarie, *U.L.V.A. Review*, 21 April 1948, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> 'Royal Hotel Port Macquarie', 10 June 1948, Country Manager's Correspondence, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4780.

<sup>80</sup> '£325,000 in Hotels Deal', newspaper clipping dated 8 August 1961, Port Macquarie General Matters, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4776.

<sup>81</sup> Yellow Cards, Royal Hotel Port Macquarie (1949-1959), Tooth & Company Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60.

<sup>82</sup> 'Leading Townsman has passed on: Death of Mr A. G. Byrnes' *Port Macquarie News*, 3 September 1959, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Mr S. Payne, Report on Visit to Port Macquarie and Wauchope, 29 September 1961 to 2 October 1961, Port Macquarie General Matters, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/4776.

<sup>84</sup> 'New Records Set in Building Figures, *Port Macquarie News*, 13 January 1966, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> 'Close of another Year', *Port Macquarie News*, 30 December 1965, p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> 'Spending Spree: Holiday Crowds Herald Christmas, *Port Macquarie News*, 23 December 1965, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Port Macq. Film on U.S. Television, *Port Macquarie News*, 6 January, 1966, p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> 'Buildings Approved', *Port Macquarie News*, 21 September 1965, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Yellow Cards, Royal Hotel Port Macquarie (1959-1969), Tooth & Company Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60.

<sup>90</sup> Inventory of "Royal" Hotel, Port Macquarie N.S.W. as at 15 September 1966, Country Hotel Properties File, Tooth & Co. Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60/9439.

<sup>91</sup> Yellow Cards, Royal Hotel Port Macquarie (1969-1979), Tooth & Company Records, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, N60.

<sup>92</sup> 'MLC Refers to Port Macquarie in Legislative Council', *Port Macquarie News*, 3 September 1959, p. 1.

