

A short history of early

Gin Gin



Bank of NSW Gin Gin premises, 1918.

This year Gin Gin will celebrate its 130th birthday. The town takes its date of birth from the establishment of local government in the area, which first occurred when the Kolan Divisional Board was formed on 11 November 1879. As the town and its surrounds grew, the Shire of Kolan was established on 31 March 1903.

The Stations

The beginnings of European settlement in the area occurred around 1847-1848 when Gregory Blaxland (youngest son of Blue Mountains explorer Gregory Blaxland) and William Forster brought 30,000 sheep and 800 cattle up from the Clarence River area of New South Wales. They settled on a large property in the southern area of the (later) Kolan Shire which they named Tirroan.

Gregory Blaxland was killed in 1850 and in 1854 Forster left to enter politics in New South Wales. The station was sold (exactly when is unknown) to Arthur and Alfred Brown who renamed it Gingin, either because they came from Gingin in Western Australia, or from the Aboriginal word *chin chin* meaning "thick scrub". It was still running sheep at this stage but the next owner, Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, gradually made the change from sheep to cattle.

Not only was Tirroan/Gingin Station the first settlement in the area, it also produced three colonial Premiers. At various times Gingin Station was owned by William Forster (Premier of NSW, 1859-1860), Sir Thomas Mcllwraith (Premier of Qld, 1879-1883, 1888, and



1893), and Sir Arthur Palmer (Premier of Queensland, 1870-1874).

In 1849, soon after Blaxland and Forster settled Tirroan (Gingin) Station, Walla Station was settled by Dr J and Archibald McMurdo Thompson. George Rankin also formed Wonbah in 1849. William and James Landsborough took up Tennifering (around the Goodnight Scrub) and Monduran in 1850, and in that same year J. Blackman settled Kolonga. Molangool was also taken up around this time, and these stations were to define the basic boundaries of the later Shire of Kolan.

Gin Gin Takes Shape

The original boundaries of the Division were the Burnett Range to the west, the Dawes and Watalgan Ranges to the north, the Burnett River to the south,

Main Street of Gin Gin





Gin Gin State School

and the sea to the east. Geographically these were fairly obvious boundaries. However, the large area and the resulting diverse interests proved untenable, and in 1886 the Gooburrum Divisional Board was formed from the eastern part of the Division.

A township at Gin Gin was not always a certainty as both Walla and Monduran were considered as sites for the establishment of a town. The town of Gin Gin had its beginnings in 1874 when the Electric Telegraph Department connected lines to Bundaberg and Gladstone at Gin Gin (which it spelt as two words in accordance with Government practice, unlike the Station which was spelt as one word). Amusingly, Sir Thomas McIlwraith objected to the Government's spelling of Gin Gin as he was charged for two words in his telegrams. He insisted the name of his Station was spelt Gingin and he should be charged for only one word. Incidentally, some sources refer to Gin Gin being more correctly, or later known as, Albany. Unfortunately, solid evidence of the why and when

in relation to this name, could not be located in time for publication.

Vital in determining the need for a town in the first place was the building of the railways which enabled access, goods transport and settlement by new residents. The building of the Bundaberg-Mt Perry line (Mt Perry being a burgeoning copper mining town at the time) during the 1870s and 1880s boosted the region's population and provided more impetus for the establishment of a town as a service centre.

Gin Gin's Development

In 1881 the census records Gin Gin as a town for the first time, with 35 residents. By 1886 the population had risen to 78 and in 1891 it was 148. Gin Gin was growing and was rapidly asserting itself as the 'capital' of the shire. 1901 saw 11.7% (222 residents) of the shire's population living in Gin Gin. In 1933 it had jumped to 15.6% (450 residents), and in 1954 it was up to 22.9% (573 residents).

By 1879 the emerging town supported two public houses (pub/boardinghouse) due the significant traffic on the

Bundaberg-Mt Perry Road and the Maryborough-Gladstone Road. And by 1900 many businesses had opened to support the needs of the area's residents. Businesses present in Gin Gin around 1900 include blacksmiths, a post office, grocers, a barber, a bank, a soft drink factory, nursing homes, a doctor, a baker, etc. It was important to establish necessary and quality facilities and services in order to attract even more residents to Gin Gin.

Further testimony to Gin Gin's growth and future prospects may be seen in the establishment of a school at Gin Gin to educate the area's young people. The school (later Gin Gin State School) opened in 1882 as a one-teacher school and was originally in a building near the current Gin Gin Post Office. It was later moved and has been sited in May Street for around 120 years. In the early days the school provided for both primary school and high school students.

Of course Gin Gin didn't develop just as a business centre. It also met the social needs of the district. The School of Arts opened in 1883 and offered many of the town's social activities. Gin Gin's first library – the School of Arts subscription library – was an important service for the residents who patronised it well. Sporting activities were also catered for with cricket, tennis, and rifle shooting some of the first sporting clubs to form.

Milestones

From small beginnings Gin Gin has developed proudly to celebrate its centenary in 1979, and in 2009 its 130th birthday. The pioneers did a great deal in paving the way for Gin Gin's development. Looking back at its successful transition from fledgling community to vibrant town, one can appreciate the sacrifices, challenges, and joys which contributed to the Gin Gin we know today.

References

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Peta Browne

Bundaberg Regional Library

Picnic near Gin Gin



Gin Gin Hospital



Gin Gin Hotel

