HISTORY OF ABERDEEN

In 1828 Thomas Potter McQueen was granted 10,000 acres between Scone and Muswellbrook. He named this small township Aberdeen after his friend George Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen.

Segenhoe Inn was built in 1837 by Thomas Potter McQueen. The inn was built on his land named Segenhoe after the Segenhoe Manor in which he was born in Bedfordshire in 1791. It was built with five bedrooms - two large parlours, the landlord's family room, a small parlour, double room downstairs, there were two dormitories upstairs for the male and female servants. The inn also had a detached kitchen, a tap room and storeroom. The backyard consisted of a 30 acre paddock of pasture and a 10 acre paddock for green barley grown for the horses. In 1889 many years later the inn was the local hotel. In 1905 it became accommodation for travellers passing by and was named the Segenhoe Hotel. The name of the inn had changed a number of times since it was built. It was still named the Segenhoe Hotel in 1937 when travellers continued to stop to spend the night.

Just north of Aberdeen to the left is Blairmore Lane. This road takes you past Peter McIntyre's old Blairmore estate. The homestead on this estate dates back to 1836.

Further ahead near Kayuga is the oldest cemetery in the Upper Hunter dating back to when it was established during 1828.

By 1840 the steam-driven mill was built. In the early days many residents of Murrurundi would travel with their grain to this site. Just up past the mill was the old butter factory. Ruins of the factory still stand at the junction of McAdam Street and Rouchel Road.

Aberdeen Public School – In 1863, an application was made to establish a non-vested national school. The closest school for 7-14 year olds was either Scone or Muswellbrook and thus the school opened on 8th February, 1864 with an initial enrolment of 27 students. In 1964 the school celebrated its centenary and a booklet was made featuring the events that had happened over those last 100 years.

By 1866 there were two churches, a post office, a lock-up, a school, three inns and a few shops.

The Aberdeen Railway line was opened on 10 October 1870. On 10th June, 1926, the train disaster turned the railway line at Aberdeen upside down. The 'Sydney Mail' reported the deaths of four people with many others being injured. Locals volunteered their time to help search the wreckage for victims and assisted all through the night with accommodation for the injured that weren't taken to hospital. Nurses and doctors travelled from Murrurundi, Muswellbrook and Scone to help. It was reported that their time was valued by volunteers and tribute was also paid to the victims for their heroism during the night of the tragedy.

Aberdeen Police Station was first built in 1862 but was abolished between 1871 and 1872. In 1892 it was re-established. In 1908 another building was built being the Court House/Police Station. The Police Station still operates today but the Court House has long ceased operation.

The location of the Australian Chilling and Freezing Co. had not been of any importance. 361 acres of land was purchased for the company and the building began. It was completed in December 1891. Its first cargo of sheep and lambs was shipped in, in 1892. After all attempts to save the industry, the meatworks were shut down between the years of 1894 and 1896 when a drought overcame the area and a typhoid epidemic broke out. In 1904, after many more years of drought, the works were re-opened, but were closed again after five months due to the low rate of output and the farmers not handing over their stock as freely as anticipated. By 1914 the company had reopened and was reported to be more active than in the previous year while also meeting the standards of the shareholders in London. There were satisfactory markets and weather conditions in these early years. Years on they ventured into new areas such as beef, rabbits, pigs and butter. In 1923-4 the company was taken over by F J Walker and the meatworks were then modernised and the use of CO2 to transport the produce chilled was commenced. In 1939-40 new mutton slaughter house was built as well as the tallow house. In 1983 the company was then taken over by the Elders IXL Group but continued to trade under the same name until 1986 when it became the Aberdeen Beef Company. For the years up until October 1984 all livestock was processed for export and the domestic markets. From then only cattle were processed, graded, weighed, sliced, vacuum packed, blast frozen and stored for exportation and distribution. The story went on until its closure in April 1999 and the redundancy of its many employees. The closure impacted considerably on the town due to many families having to move elsewhere to find employment.

At the southern side of Aberdeen on the New England Highway stands an old sandstone house and small property called The Grange, this is classified by the National Trust and is a private residence.

The Aberdeen Hotel was built in 1900 for C E Peachey. In the early 1900's he installed acetylene gas which was used to light the building. During 1913 parts of the building were damaged by fire but were later fixed during the reconstruction of the building.

In 1902 the Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902 established a roll of names of all who were eligible to vote during Parliamentary elections. State and Electoral boundaries were drawn up and Aberdeen was in the Hunter Division of New South Wales. The roll featured 447 names of not only Aberdeen residents but residents eligible from the surrounding rural areas such as Rouchel, Segenhoe and Sandy Creek just to name a few.

By 1903 the small township had grown. It was now home to two hotels and its employees; two general stores and a small grocery store. The Australian Chilling and Freezing Company was the main employer in the town. Employees included a freezing manager, two accountants, two clerks, a stock buyer, three engineers, three engine drivers, a gatekeeper and two firemen. Also, there were the labourers and the specialists to each section. The town had its own baker, blacksmiths, tin smiths and carpenters along with a watch maker, a carter, contractors and a few farmers and stockmen.

Along Segenhoe Road, the road branches into two different directions to the right the road will take you across the Allan Bridge which crosses the Pages River. Further along this road is Kia-Ora Stud which was founded in 1912. This stud has been home to many past Melbourne Cup winners.

George Smith Hall was granted the Dartbrook Estate where large cattle runs were established. It was on this estate that his son, Thomas, was looking to breed a working dog for the properties. He bred a blue merle Scotch collie with a native dingo which produced the Blue Heeler so named because of the colour of its coat and because of the constant nipping at the cattle heels.

Dartbrook road was the only road north of Aberdeen until the New England Highway was constructed to up past Murrurundi.

By 1918, the town had three stores, four specialist vendors, three hotels, two banks and one newspaper. Many Aberdeen residents at this time were employed at the Australia Chilling and Freezing Co.

Lake Glenbawn was named after a property that stood on what is now the bottom of the dam. The dam was created by building a wall to stop the water from flowing and as a consequence the small village of Brushy Hill that was once standing in and around the foothills of the surrounding mountains was inundated with water. It is now home to many species of fish and along the shorelines abound native animals such as kangaroos and wallabies as well as a vast variety of birdlife. The area below the wall that is known as the Central Area was built between 1954 and 1957 to help

regulate the flow of water into the Hunter River and usage of water for stock, and for domestic and irrigation requirements for the areas south of Lake Glenbawn.

Amongst all the history of Aberdeen stood buildings that unfortunately were burnt or demolished, there were blacksmiths and millers and not to forget the fire brigade, post masters, constables and the many families who were responsible for the day-to-day running of Aberdeen back in those early years.

St Joseph's High School – The opening of the meatworks in Aberdeen in 1892 bought an increase in population to the area and a great need for an established Catholic School. Catholic education began in 1896 when four Sisters of St Joseph from Lochinvar arrived at the request of Bishop James Murray.

The first convent was a small rented cottage overlooking the Hunter River. This was replaced following the purchase of Brooderlin's property at the rear of the Church grounds.

The seeds for the boarding school were sown when the Sisters took in one small boy whose mother had died. Then another who was lonely and eventually a few more were taken in. It became necessary to make extensions to the convent building. In the following years the number of boarders increased rapidly. By 1929 plans were made to update and extend the boarding facilities, but because of the Depression and World War 11 these extensions were not completed til May 1951. Up until this time St Thomas' wooden church and the verandahs were used for classrooms. The swimming pool was constructed in 1962. Many students passed through the boarding school but because of falling enrolments and the decline in the need for boarding facilities, it was decided to close the primary school in 1971, and reopen it, as a regional High School, to serve the needs of the Catholic Community in the parishes of Denman, Merriwa, Murrurundi, Scone and Muswellbrook.

The high school opened in 1972 with a staff of five and an enrolment of 53 students in Year 7. The first Year 12 class sat for the Higher School Certificate in 1977. Since then the enrolment has increased to over 600.

One of the great assets of this school is the picturesque grounds on which it is situated. The extensive views of green fields, cattle grazing, the Hunter River and distant mountains provide a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

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