

Mudgee As It Is

Transcript of article published in *The Mudgee Times*, Tuesday August 10, 1875

MUDGEE AS IT IS.

SITUATION AND GENERAL DISCRPTION

The town of Mudgee (32 deg. 40 min. S. lat., 149 deg. 38 min. E. long.) in the country of Phillip is a postal and principal township in the electoral and police district of Mudgee. It is situated on the Cudgegong River, and on the road from Sydney to the north-western districts. Reedy Creek is distant twenty miles S.W., and Lawson's Creek one mile E., Booble mountain stands twenty miles distant, and several other peaks, the principal of which are Mounts From, Buckaroo, and Sugar Loaf, lie to the E.W. and S.. The nearest towns, are – Gulgong, N.W., 18 miles ; Cudgegong, E. 22 miles ; Rylstone N., 35 miles ; Cassilis, N. 60 miles ; Guntawang, N.W., 16 miles ; Cobbora, N.W., 50 miles ; Mundooran, N.W. 70 miles ; Dubbo, N.W., 80 miles ; and Wellington, N.W., 60 miles. With Mundooran and the two rising towns beyond, Coonamble and Coonabarabran, distant 160 miles, and 135 miles respectively, there is communication by Cobb and Co.'s mail coach twice a week ; and the other places by horse or dray. With the metropolis, Sydney, 153 miles S.E., communication is by Cobb's daily mail coach to Wallerawang, 72 miles, the latter being the nearest point on the Great Western Railway line to the Mudgee Road. It may be noticed here that this district is separated from the metropolis by the Blue Mountain range, now crossed by the railway, in the face of what appeared to be an unsuperable difficulty. The "Zig Zag," by means of which the descent is made from a height of 3420 feet above the sea level of 1500 feet, the level of Mudgee, is a masterpiece of engineering, and is one of the "lions" which visitors to Sydney are taken to see. While referring to the railway we may add, that the importance of this rising district has been so fully recognised by the Government and Legislature, that a surveying party is now

exploring, to discover a practicable route for the extension of the line into Mudgee, when there is no doubt that an impetus will be given to the whole of the north-western district, second only to that which the discovery of goldfields did. Mudgee has a well conducted public hospital, supported by a Government endowment equal in money to public subscriptions. The demands upon it, caused mainly by the adjacent goldfields, have caused the erection of a new and more commodious building, situated in an admirable position, and capable of containing 35 beds, and to be fitted with every modern appliance. Two-thirds of the building, which in all will cost £6000, are nearly finished. There are in the town a Post and Money-order Office, which will shortly be removed from their temporary place to a new post-office being built adjoining the Telegraph Office. The Court-house, where the Assizes, Quarter, and Petty Sessions are held, has recently been enlarged and renovated, and from the central position of the town the calendars are generally heavy. The Assize Court is held every six months, presided over by one of the puisne judges ; the Quarters Sessions and District Court, three times a year, are presided over by Alfred McFarland, Esq., and the Police Court is held twice a week, the Police Magistrate, George Warburton, Esq., (who has just been superannuated) having presided, assisted occasionally by the following Justices of the Peace- Messrs. G. Rouse, C. C. Cox, Robert Lowe, N. P. Bayly. R. H. D. White, W. R. Blackman, Vivian Cox, S. S. Blackman, Hon. G. H. Cox, Francis Cox, J. D. Cox, C. W. Lawson, C. B. Lowe, Richard Rouse, James Keppie, and E. Tindale. The offices of Registrar, Clerk of Petty Sessions, and Land Agent, are filled by George Leary. The Sheriff's bailiff is Mr. Evan Richards, and the bailiff of the Small Debts Court is Mr. H. E. A. Wells. It will be seen by the foregoing that the district is well supplied with all the legal apparatus inseperable from the requirements of a large and populous

town. Of course there is a gaol, now undergoing considerable enlargement, not rendered so much necessary by an increase in the percentage of crime in the district, as by the daily increasing population of the surrounding towns. The other officials in the town are – Coroner, Mr. W. J. Henningham ; Returning-Officer, Dr. Wilson Ramsay ; Commissioner for Affidavits, Messrs. R. Johnson, G. Warburton, G. Leary, L. O. D. James, and H. N. P. Bayly. Licensed Surveyor, W. Anderson. Gaoler, J. Dick ; Matron, Mrs Dick ; Visiting Justice, G. Warburton.

There are about twenty hotels and public-houses, the principal of which are – the Royal, the Imperial, the Post Office, the Sydney, the Belmore, and the Club House. The banks are represented by branches of the Bank of New South Wales, Commercial, and Australian Joint Stock banks, and there are two Savings banks, one of which is the Government one, connected with the Post Office. There are also agencies for the Mutual Provident Society, the Mutual Life Association of Australasia, and the Colonial United, Norwich Union, Liverpool, and London, and Globe, and Victoria, Life and Fire Insurance Companies. The New South Wales Bible Society has also a branch ; and there is a Masonic (St. John's Lodge E.C.), and two Oddfellows Lodges, (The Loyal Sovereign, M.U.I.O.O., No. 4625, and the All Nations, G.U.O.O.F.) The martial ardour of the inhabitants is testified by the existence of a Volunteer Corps, commanded by Captain G. Davidson, and possessing a band. Temperance has its supporters in the lodges of the Good Templars ; the Sons of Temperance, and the Cadets of Temperance. There are also several Benefit Societies, a Building Society, and Orange Lodge, and a Branch of the Roman Catholic Guild. Two newspapers are published in Mudgee, each twice a week, the *Mudgee Times*, and the *Western Post*, and both are fairly supported.

Mudgee is a tolerably well built town, the principal one of the district, a mile square, with wide streets laid out at right angles, and, during the last five years a large number of brick buildings have been erected, some of which

have superseded the primitive erections of timber and iron. It has a number of substantial stores and shops, and most of them appear to be doing well.

Mudgee proper is incorporated, and the Municipality was proclaimed on February 21st 1860. It has a Mayor, (Mr. G. Davidson) and eight Aldermen, Messrs. G. D. Lane, W. Sherry, M. J. Sheppard, H. Crossing, G. Arnold, F. Tindall, T. Clark, and E. Daly. The Town Clerk, and Clerk of Works is Mr F. Lovejoy. There is also a rural Municipality, surrounding the town, called the Cudgegong Municipality, with a Mayor (Mr. W. Kellet jun.) and five Aldermen Messrs. W. Wilton, J. Newman, R. Lowe, G. H. Cox, and A. H. Cox. The Council Clerk and Clerk of Works is Mr. R. R. Hugbson. This is the largest municipality in the Colony, extending over an area of nearly 200 square miles. Last year the estimated value of rateable property was about £15,000, from which an income of £750 was derived, exclusive of Government aid to the amount of £187.

There is a Pastoral and Agricultural Association, and its fifteenth annual show last month was considered a great success so far as the quality of the exhibits is concerned. It possesses about eighty members, and is governed by a President, Mr. R. Lowe ; three Vice-Presidents, Messrs. G. H. Cox, C. C. Cox, and G. Rouse ; and a committee of twenty members, and Mr. W. C. Reynolds is the Secretary and Treasurer. Its receipts prior to the last show were £251, the whole of which was expended in prizes ; and during the past two years, some £500 has been expended in permanent improvements.

The School of Arts is admittedly one of the finest of the metropolis; and has a large hall, the only fault of which is, that it's acoustic properties are not good, and that it is badly fitted up for musical or other entertainments. The library is an extensive one, comprising some 4000 volumes, of mostly standard works, which are continually being added to. In addition to which, the reading room is daily supplied with the metropolitan, inter-colonial, local, and

principal country papers, and by each mail with the leading English periodicals. The Librarian is Mr. D. Cassin, and the management is entrusted to a President, Vice-President, and a Committee.

Mudgee possesses four steam flour mills constantly at work, viz., Chappell's, Dickson and Sons', Crossing and Co's, and Arnold's. Mudgee has also two tanneries, a soap and candle manufactory, two coach factories, and representatives of nearly every trade; while many of its stores and business places would not disgrace a city.

The Church of England is a large building, the want of architectural style of its exterior being made amends for by its interior. The congregation has, however, outgrown the accommodation it affords, and it has been proposed to dispose of it and erect a larger church on another site. The Venerable Archdeacon J. Gunther, who has been in the district about thirty three years, is the incumbent; and the Rev. F. W. Stretton, curate. The Roman Catholic "Presentation" Church is now being re-built of stone and enlarged, at a cost of £5050; and when it is completed will vie, for the beauty of design, with any edifice of the same description in the country districts. The Rev. John O'Donovan is the pastor. The Wesleyan Church is a very handsome building and the Rev. William Clarke is the present minister. A new Presbyterian Church (of which the Rev. A. McEwen is the minister) is being built, and the present church, which is too small for the congregation, will be converted into a schoolroom. Sunday schools are attached to all the churches we have mentioned. Of day schools, under the Council of Education, there are three, the Public School (Master – J. Dart; Mistress Miss Styles); the Church of England School (Master – H. Spier); and the Roman Catholic School (Master – C. Kevin). Some idea of the rapid increase in the population may be gained from the enlargement of the several buildings we have referred to, devoted to religious and educational purposes.

The surrounding country is flat to the N.W. and N., and ridgy in other directions abounding in rich iron ore, cannel [sp?] coal, or

bituminous shale. Gold can be obtained, more or less, in all parts of the district. There are also large quarries of stone nearly, if not quite, equal to the far famed Turkey stone and extensively used for sharpening edged tools. The geological formation is probably Devonian, connected with serpentine, charged with chromate of iron affected by green-stone, diorite, and trappean porphyritic whin-stone and folspar [sp?]. The population of Mudgee at the last census in 1871, was as follows – a total of males 7737, females 4161, made up as follows: County of Wellington – Municipal town of Mudgee, 930 males, 856 females; Merendee (village and goldfields), 151 males, 63 females; Village of Hargraves, 149 males, 82 females; Part of Cudgegong municipality, 731 males, 635 females; Rural, including gold-fields, 1867 males, 782 females. County of Phillip – Part of Cudgegong municipality, 534 males, 392 females; Gulgong gold-field, 2452 males, 776 females; Rural, including goldfields, 873 males, 578 females.

The Mudgee electoral district embraces the W. portion of the County of Phillip, and the N. portion of the County of Wellington, and is bounded on the N. from the confluence of Bylong Creek with the Goulburn River, by that river to its head in the Great Dividing range; by that range, and by Wialdra Creek to its confluence with the Cudgegong River; on the W. by the Cudgegong River to the confluence of Meroo Creek, to the head of Cudgegong Creek; thence on the E. by Cudgegong Creek to its confluence with the Cudgegong River; then in a line N. by compass, passing to the W. of the village of Dungaree, to the Great Dividing range, and by that range E. and the range forming the watershed of Bylong Creek to the confluence of that creek with the Goulburn river. The district is represented in the Legislative Council by the Hon. G. H. Cox; and in the Legislative Assembly by Mr Stephen S. Gould. A bill recently introduced into the Assembly, but not yet carried, contemplates the division of the electorate so as to permit the return of two members to the Assembly, instead of one only as at present.

We, having glance at the most prominent features of the town and district, may now refer to the more important industries, none of which is of greater prominence than

ITS PASTORAL INTEREST

The principal breeders in the district are – Messrs. N. P. Bayly (Havilah), G. H. Cox (Burrundulla), G. Rouse (Beau Desert), C. C. Cox (Broombee), R. Rouse (Guntawang), F. and A. Cox (Wallinga), E. K. Cox (Rawdon), C. W. Lawson (Puttabucca), C. B. Cowe (Goree), J. de V. Lamb (Berriwa), W. R. Blackman (Cullenbone), S. A. Blackman (Gooyal), R. W. Cox (Louee), and Mr W. B. Cadell (Tonabutta). It is almost unnecessary to remind our readers that Mudgee wool always realises the highest rates in the market, as compare with those obtained for clips from other parts of the colony. At the last London sales the highest price obtained for fleece was 42d. per lb, the owner of it obtaining for 113 bales, an average of 36 ½ d. per lb. For exceptional picked bales, still higher rates have been previously realised. The sheep of which the flocks of the breeders we have named are mainly composed are pure merinos; but certain portions of the district have been found well adapted for Southdowns, as some exhibited to the Show previously referred to conclusively proved. The latest statistics show, that the number of sheep depastured in this district, compared with the large numbers upon some runs in this, and the sister colonies of Victoria and Queensland, is insignificant, but it must be remembered that it is *quality* more than *quantity* for which the “Mudgee wools” have obtained their brilliant reputation all over the world.

Nor is it to sheep alone that the pastoral reputation of the district is due. We have amongst us some enthusiastic cattle breeders, and some of the best bred Durham cattle can be found in the paddocks of Messrs. R. Lowe, G. Rouse, J. D. Cox, and others. Neither is there a lack of “white-faced” cattle in the district, the Herefords of Messrs. G. H. Cox and G. Rouse, challenging the severest criticism. But recently, an imported bull costing £1000 was brought to

the district, and it was only one of many highly bred animals which have rendered Mudgee nearly as famous for its cattle as its sheep.

This section of our remarks would be incomplete without reference to the equine race. For blood horses the district is noted, having produced as it has many racers which have proved their quality by the stakes they have won. And prominent amongst those who have been the means of enriching the blood of the local studs by expensive animals, may be mentioned Messrs. G. Rouse, G. H. Cox, R. Rouse, and J. T. Tindale. The last named gentleman recently gave what was equal to £2500 for the “Duke of Athol,” (imported) whose sire was the celebrated English horse, Blair Athol; but we regret to add that a few weeks ago the animal was stolen, and brutally and maliciously destroyed. As a proof of the great interest taken in the breeding of horses in the district, a movement has been made to recoup Mr Tindale for his great loss, and the subscriptions are so liberal, that it is expected that the gentleman will be placed in a position to bring to the district a still better horse, if such is possible. The above remarks will also apply to the draught horses in the district. Having briefly referred to the pastoral interest, the next that claims attention is that of

THE GOLD-FIELDS.

The year 1851 was a memorable one for the colony generally, but especially for the Mudgee district. The discovery of gold at the rivers Turon and Meroo, and at Ophir, in the County of Wellington, depopulated not only Mudgee, but attracted thousands from all parts of the colony, as well as from the neighbouring colonies. Ophir is the oldest goldfield in New South Wales, the precious metal having been first discovered by Mr. Hargraves in the bed of the Summer Hill Creek, and only a few days ago the Legislative voted that gentleman a life annuity of £250 per annum, in addition to a considerable sum with which he was previously rewarded. Early in the year following Mr. Hargrave’s discovery, the Government Geologist, Mr. S. Stutchbury, writing from

Wialdra Creek, on the Cudgong River, furnished the Government with an exhaustive report upon a survey he had made in the Mudgee district, and from the following extracts it will be seen that he actually indicated the existence of the great gold-fields which many years afterwards were discovered. The report is lengthy, and we can merely quote the following paragraphs:-

After reporting his explorations on the Cudgong from Yambie to Pine-bone Creek, and on the Two Mile Flat and Creek, he says:-

“Having returned to Guntawang. I have executed the course of the Cudgong upwards as far as Mudgee, and found that many fine samples of gold has been obtained by Mr. Henry Bayly, at Cloudy Bay, near to his own residence, Beaudesert: not only was it obtained of large size in bed of the river previous to the floods but subsequently in the flats and small creeks of the neighbourhood. This is undoubtedly drift gold, for the flat lands consist of coal [massare?] sandstone, which has filled in the ancient gully or ravine, extending itself across the Cudgong, and is again exhibited and quarried for building purposes about five miles up McDonald’s Creek, while in the parallel branch of Broomba, or Crooked Creek, limestone has been quarried.

“The range around being schistose and highly quartziferous, may account for the gold being found in considerable quantity; there is gold also in the Eurindurry or Pipeclay Creek, the embouchure of which is at Wilbertree. Lawson’s Creek, a considerable tributary of the Cudgong passes through a country which I have no doubt is highly auriferous, and upon trial in several places above whose limestone is marked upon the map, gold as found in every dishful of earth. I was informed by Mr. Nicholas Bayly, that he obtained a considerable quantity from a hole in the granite rock, which across the creek about twelve miles above the junction, and also that is occurred generally throughout the flat lands.

“I have again examined a considerable portion of the upper part of the Meroo River and its tributaries from the ranges on the north, having previously visited the lower part from the south. I saw abundant evidence of the riches of the river, not withstanding its high flooded state, especially at Richardson’s Point, Point Pure and other places lately named by the miners, the tributaries Long Creek, Devil’s Hole, Campbell’s Creek, Nuggetty

Gully, and other places now far famed, engaged my attention. Near to Campbell’s Creek on the road from Potter’s old station to Nuggetty Gully, also to some gold working lately discovered., there eager, scattered about, [masses?] of decompressed quartz, rich in sulphuret of antimony, the variety called ‘Jasonite with yellow’ oxide of antimony. I did not find the load, but there can be no doubt but it may be found in considerable quantity:- independently of its commercial value, it is interesting from it being frequently an accompanying metal with gold.

“Having carefully examined the Cudgong River from its confluence with the Macquarie. I have no hesitation (not withstanding its having been but slightly worked, at distant points up to the present time) in stating my belief, that the whole course of it is replete with gold; that very many of its smaller tributaries, together with the dry diggings of their accompanying flat lands and swamps, will supply room for thousands of adventurers for many years to come; and that, during the period of cessation which will ensure consequent upon the ill ranged mode of working in this the infamy of Australian gold mining, in localities that have proved highly productive, but supposed by the majority to be worked out, will be returned to at a future time, and again yield large profits.”

The gold mining around Mudgee is both alluvial and quartz, the nearest diggings being Pipeclay, six miles; Budgee Budgee about the same distance; Frome’s Creek and rat’s Castle, from six to eight miles; Windeyer, fifteen miles; Avisford, twenty miles; and Clarke’s Creek (Devil’s Hole), Long Creek, Nuggetty Gully, Merrendee, and Hargraves, all at about twenty miles distance. Most of the above-named diggings have, it is said, been in mining *parlance* “worked out” but the fact that a large number of miners are now profitably engaged upon them negatives the supposition, and gives force to the belief entertained by many old and experienced residents, that rich reefs exist in some of the localities. The brilliant results from the Gulgong, Canadian, and Home Rule goldfields, during the past five years has, undoubtedly, tendered to divert attention from the older fields we have referred to, but there can be no doubt that a reaction will sooner or later set in, through which the auriferous deposits in the district will be more fully developed. The rewards recently offered by the

Government for the discovery of goldfields capable of employing 500 miners and upwards, cannot fail to have a most reviving effect upon this industry. Some idea may be formed of the value of the Gulgong goldfield (which includes the Home Hale and Canadian) when we state that for the year ending 31st March, 1874, the gold forwarded thence by escort was 131,126 os., valued at £506, 10s. There have been several attempts to operate upon known auriferous lands on the banks of the Cudgegong by means of hydraulic sluicing, but the results have not been commensurate with the outlay of capital, but quite as great as the incapacity with which the works were managed would justify. Neither have the majority of the reefs yielded a fair return for the outlay upon them ; one of the disturbing influences being the large percentage of silver, and consequently low value of gold. Recently, however, some reefs have been worked which encourage the belief that the district does possess payable auriferous reefs, notably the British Lion reef, near Merrendee, which yields 2 ½ os. Of gold (worth 65s. per os.) to the ton; and another reef near Gulgong has assisted in showing that quartz may yet be expected to play an important part in the history of the district. Second to neither of the two above named industries is.

THE AGRICULTURAL INTEREST

and it is probable that in no part of the Colony is richer land to be found than upon the river flats of the Cudgegong River, and its tributaries. It is true that they are liable to be flooded, but as a rule the destruction of crops is nothing compared with the devastating effects caused by the rising of the northern rivers, the Hawkesbury and Hunter. Indian corn (maize) grows luxuriantly, and in a good season eighty bushels to the acre, is not an uncommon harvest. The Mudgee lucerne hay has as high a reputation in its way as the wool has, and recently was sold in Sydney at £9 10s. per ton, thus enabling the grower who would have sold at 35s. per ton at the stack, to pay £6 or £7 per ton for carriage by bullock and horse teams to the railway station, and trainage, and yet make a profit. Wheat also yields a fair average crop, and

the same may be said of almost every cereal, fruit, and vegetable. At the end of last year there were in the district of Mudgee 622 land-holders, and the quantity of land under cultivation was 10,245 acres. The quantity of land enclosed but not cultivated, was 59,222 acres, and the quantity of land not enclosed 101,082 acres. The quantity of land under crops was 10,245 acres, the produce being – wheat, maize, &c., 136,229 bushels; potatoes, 698 tons ; hay, 3057 tons ; wine, 1209 gallons. The horses, horned cattle, sheep, and pigs in the district numbered 100,779. In short, the resources of the district are unlimited, and it only needs to be connected by rail with Sydney to develop them.

Our task is ended. We have endeavoured to furnish a description of the Mudgee district which will stand now, and for aye, any test as to its truthfulness. Compiled in haste, it's only faults will be those of omission ; but should some reader at the Great Exhibition in Philadelphia honour us by perusing it, he may rest assured that we have endeavoured to “nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice,” but rather to convey a fair and impartial description (necessarily brief) of what we believe will, in time, be one of the finest centres of population and industry in this colony.