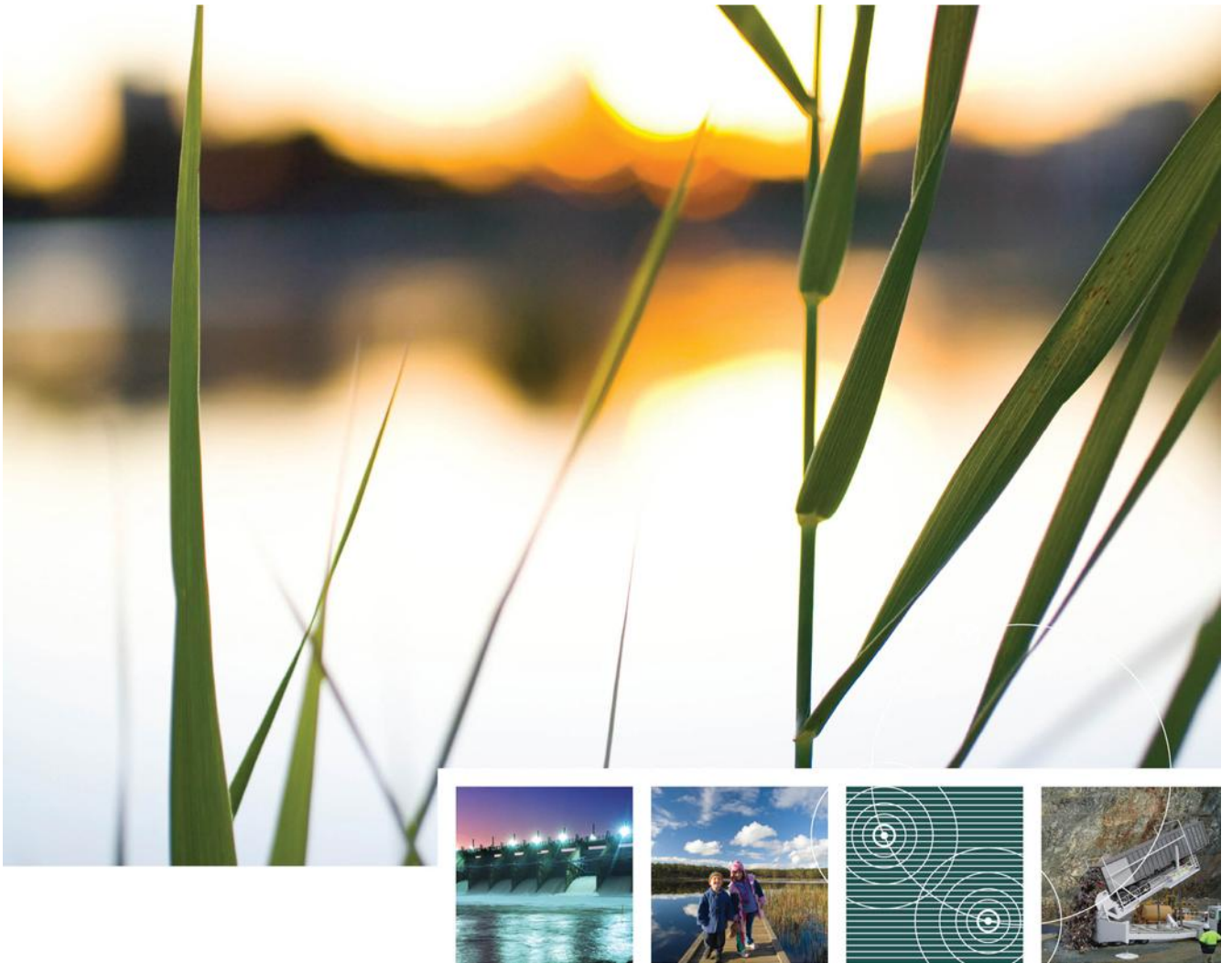


Appendix K

EUROPEAN CONTEXTUAL HISTORY REPORT



# Environmental Impact Statement European Contextual History

Surat Basin Rail Pty Ltd

11 September 2008

# European Contextual History

Prepared for

**Surat Basin Rail Pty Ltd**

Prepared by

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## 1.0 Introduction

The following discussion is not intended to be an exhaustive historical treatment of the present study area. It is based on library and archival research of relevant documents and secondary sources augmented substantially by discussions with local historical associations and limited site visits. The intent of this contextual history is to provide an historical overview of the broad areas under consideration. Further research and analysis of specific areas and sites may be required to assist with the assessment of particular cultural heritage issues arising in relation to the present project. All photographs used in this contextual history are from the John Oxley Library (JOL) online catalogue.

## 2.0 Surat Basin Rail

The proposed Surat Basin Rail (SBR) is approximately 210km in length and starts at a point on the Western Railway System near Wandoan travelling north towards Cracow where it joins the Moura Railway System near Banana. The preferred alignment follows a north-south course and is generally parallel to the major roads of the region and avoid urban areas where possible. Primarily the alignment passes through sparsely populated areas that are predominantly cleared for cattle grazing and breeding. The proposed corridor is wholly located within the Dawson River catchment and avoids the proposed Nathan Dam.

Although the alignment traverses areas that have a similar historical development, nuanced differences emerge. These are primarily based on administrative divisions fostered by successive Shire boards and Councils. For this reason the historical development of the northern section of the alignment will be considered through the record of the Banana Shire while the southern section will be viewed through that of the Taroom Shire. Notwithstanding the local government amalgamations that occurred in 2008, the historical reality of the Taroom this Shire has been an important factor in the development of European settlement in the southern portion of the proposed alignment.

## 3.0 Banana Shire

Situated in central Queensland the previous Banana Shire was bounded by the Shires of Duaringa, Mount Morgan, Fitzroy, Taroom, Eidsvold, Monto, and Calliope. It lies between the Calliope, Dawes and Auburn Ranges in the east and Dawson Range in the west and is divided by the Banana Range into the Dawson and Callide Valleys (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 2). As a rich farming, grazing, and mining region it remains sparsely populated with its population of 14,430 people occupying 15,755 km<sup>2</sup>.

Initial European occupation of the Banana Shire was by pastoralists and agriculturalists and, as a result, a number of small urban settlements evolved to support these industries. Towns such as Banana, Biloela, Rannes and Theodore acted as administrative centres and supply points for rural activities. An apocryphal tale is that the Shire is purported to have taken its name from a large yellowish colour bullock whose final resting place became known as Banana gully. This gully was where gold was first discovered in 1858 and a township of approximately 2,000 evolved, named Banana, a name eventually adopted when a divisional board was declared in 1880 (Power, 2002: 51). However, other evidence insists that the Leith-Hay brother's applied for a run they named "Bananah" in 1854 after the local Aboriginal word for running water (Perry, 2005: xvi).

The northern section of the Project begins near the town of Banana and follows the Leichhardt Highway south. It passes to the east of the town of Theodore and then follows the Dawson Valley and passes west of Cracow. It follows the Dawson Valley until it passes into Taroom Shire. This chosen alignment passes through areas of rural settlement that are closely linked with the histories of the towns of Banana, Theodore and Cracow.

### 3.1 Exploration and Early Settlement

Ludwig Leichhardt is credited with being the first European explorer to enter into the present day Banana Shire during his 1844 expedition. Leichhardt's trek uncovered vast swathes of potential farming land that was originally a part of the colony of New South Wales (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 2). Despite Leichhardt's sanguine expectations for the new lands he discovered, it took nearly ten years for settlement to take place in the area. In 1853 the Leith-Hay brothers took up what was the northern - most legal settlement in the colony of New South Wales when they occupied a large pastoral run near the present day town of Rannes (Perry, 2005: 10).

Settlement of the Banana Shire was given a significant boost when the Fitzroy and Port Curtis pastoral districts were declared by the New South Wales government in 1854 (Queensland Coke and Energy Pty Ltd, 2006: 11-5). A rush for land ensued. To the north of the present study area, the Archer brothers applied for a lease over an area to the east of Lake Farris, near present day Rockhampton, in August 1854, and on 10 August 1855 they landed a party there to settle the run they were later to call 'Gracemere' (McDonald & Rockhampton Council, 1995: 19).

In Banana Shire a similar pastoral settlement occurred. In 1854, A.H. and A. Brown took up 'Callide' and H.C. Corfield took up 'Mount Scorcica' and 'Prarie'. In 1855 the Leith-Hay brothers moved west and took up 'Bananah'. In 1856 James Reid became the owner of the lease over 'Camboon' and John Ross over 'Cracow', while in 1857 'Walloon' was taken over by Joseph Thompson (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 3). These settlements were large pastoral runs, sparsely populated and isolated from the rest of the fledgling colony and therefore had to be self-reliant. 'Bananah' for example, was over 200 square miles and contained a head station, several outstations and storehouses. The original pastoralists in the area grazed sheep as the wool clip could be transported to distant markets without fear of spoiling.

### 3.2 The Development of Settlement in the Nineteenth Century

As settlement of the area evolved, a mix of external and local factors influenced the pastoral and urban development of the present study area. These factors varied due to the suitability of the land for certain pastoral and agricultural activities, the discovery of precious minerals, and the creation of the separate colony of Queensland in 1859. This mix was vital. Pressures from all of these influences, plus a myriad of other factors, ensured changes in the urban settlement patterns and rural land uses effected the historical development of the area.

While many of the pastoral runs remained, they slowly began to switch from sheep to cattle production. Sheep raising was beset by various environmental problems. Most notably, the influx of sheep into the region quickly depleted reliable pasture which led to a decrease in productivity of sheep herds, which in turn increased the incidence of spear grass and related injuries (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 3). The mature seeds of spear grass consist of a thickened base and a spirally twisted awn that are known to penetrate livestock skin as well as mouth and eye membranes. This causes extreme discomfort to the animal and a subsequent loss of condition. Further to this, the seeds contaminate wool, as 'vegetative matter' results in a downgrade of its value.

Although Bananah remained a privately occupied pastoral run, a large waterhole on the property became a welcome camping spot for prospectors heading to the gold rush at Canoona, just outside of Rockhampton (Perry, 2005: 10). This field, 30km west of Rockhampton lured up to 15,000 prospectors into the region and many stayed in the area when they failed on the goldfields providing a ready supply of cheap farm labour (Queensland Coke and Energy Pty Ltd, 2006: 11-6). Some of these miners dispersed to other regions to try their luck and with the discovery of gold in the Banana Gully in 1858 a township of around 2,000 people developed near the site of the present day town (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 2). To cater for the growing population of the town, Banana was surveyed in 1860 and, at the first official sale on 5 June 1861, town lots sold briskly (Power, 2002: 51). With rumours of gold in the area spreading, the population of Banana continued to grow. To cater for the new residents, Robert Fitzpatrick opened a general store in 1861 and in 1862 a Court of Petty Sessions opened in Banana (Perry, 2005: 45).

Although the gold rush ended suddenly, Banana remained the most significant settlement in the area and by 1864, of the 519 residents in the district, 76 resided in the town. Banana's importance to regional communication was heralded when a telegraph link to the town was completed in the same year. This prominent role continued and by 1868 the town was "well serviced and several substantial buildings had been erected" (Perry, 2005: 46). As the town's population grew to 120 the Banana State School was opened in 1874 to service part of the district's population of 800 (Perry, 2005: 47).

During the gold rush at Banana, the area around the shire continued to be retained for larger pastoral runs; however the nature of this settlement was changing. Following the separation of Queensland from New South Wales, the new colony's administrators sought to encourage more migrants. This ushered in land reforms. Under the 1864 *Crowns Lands Act* (Queensland), many of the larger pastoral runs throughout the colony were consolidated, resumed and further subdivided to entice new settlers to take up productive land (Woodside, 1997: 10). Further reforms in 1884 had the "most effect" on the Callide Valley as large runs were divided and reapportioned bringing increasing numbers of farmers and their families to the area (Perry, 2005: 23).

This continued growth ensured that Banana was the natural choice as the administrative centre for the newly formed Banana Divisional Board. Following the creation of this board by the Queensland Colonial government in 1879, their first meeting took place in the Court House at Banana on 15 March 1880 (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 6). As it was the Divisional Board headquarters, Banana continued to grow. By end of the nineteenth century the former bush camp and gold rush settlement had grown into a "busy little town with its public buildings in good condition" and a population that reached 110 by 1902 (Perry, 2005: 48).

### **3.3 Banana Shire Until 1945**

In the first four decades of the twentieth century Banana Shire witnessed a number of changes in its administrative structure, settlement patterns and land use. Government programs and infrastructure development combined with the discovery of gold at Cracow to see the establishment of new towns to service new land uses. This period also witnessed the decline of the Banana township. Throughout the period, the creation of social and communal services was heavily reliant upon fluctuating population numbers in the towns and government initiatives.

With the advent of the twentieth century Banana remained the administrative hub of the Banana Shire. Correspondingly the town could boast a range of services. These included the establishment of a town water service using bore water in 1914 and sanitary services in 1918 (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980, pp. 10-11). In addition the Banana State School had 35 students in 1902 and the town supported two tennis clubs. The importance of Banana as the hub for the population of the shire was confirmed with the establishment of a Queensland Bush Nursing Association service in the town in 1917 (Perry, 2005, pp. 49-50).





**Figure L.1: Peaceful rural view of the town of Banana, 1924 (JOL 13817)**

Agricultural settlement and productivity in the study area was augmented considerably by two important developments – the Dawson Valley Irrigation Scheme and the eradication of the prickly pear with the introduction of the *Cactoblastis* moth. Speculating on the untapped value of the land along the Dawson Valley for agricultural cultivation, the Queensland government, led by Premier E.G. Theodore, purchased Mr Woolrych's 'Woolthorpe' grazing station to instigate the Dawson Valley Irrigation Scheme in the early 1920s (<Theodore>, 1962). Under the scheme the large pastoral holdings were subdivided into 5 ha blocks and farmers from New South Wales and Victoria were enticed to take up the allotments that were supplied with water from the Dawson Weir and had small houses already constructed on them.

To service these farms the town of Theodore was built on a green fieldsite. Built on a site originally known as Castle Creek, there is some inconclusive evidence that Theodore was designed by (later Sir) Walter Burley Griffin. It is certain that the town was named in honour of the Premier Theodore in recognition of his work to establish the settlement ("Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1925 Vol 3", 1925: 243). A community quickly developed. On 8 December 1923, the town held its first race meeting, and the following year Waller and Son opened a store and the town's first post office began operation (<Theodore>, 1962). The entire area covered by the Dawson Valley Irrigation scheme was detached from the Banana Shire and placed under the administration of the officer of the Commission of Irrigation and Water Supply (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 13).



**Figure L.2: The Boulevard, Theodore, Queensland, 1930s. This planned town was built on a greenfield site to administer and service the Dawson Valley Irrigation Project (JOL ban00094)**

In other parts of the study area farming had been severely affected by the prickly pear. Declared a noxious weed in Queensland in 1893, the prickly pear had infested approximately 58 million acres of land in the state by 1920 making most of it useless for agricultural purposes (EPA 2008b). However with the introduction of the *Cactoblastis* moth in 1928 (Fox, 1959: 128), Queensland agriculture was able to celebrate the eradication of this pest weed by 1933 and saw large portions of the state transformed into viable agricultural land (EPA 2008b). This development saw an increase in the amount of tenable land in the Banana Shire and helped support the development of the region (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 4).

Theodore was not the only new town founded in the Banana Shire prior to World War II. The small town of Cracow evolved in 1916 on John Ross' original pastoral lease after the discovery of gold (Power, 2002: 39). However, initial growth was slow. But by 1931, at the height of the great depression, the discovery of gold at Boughyard Creek instigated the "last major gold rush" in Australia as desperate men trekked to the field in search of relief from the debilitating effects of the financial downturn. By September 1932 it was claimed there were:

*2000 people, 70 commercial and professional enterprises, 4 stores, 8 restaurants and 13 sly grog shops, and an open-air Hessian dance floor ... [where] in the absence of sufficient ladies, brawny men danced with each other...*

In a bid to impose order on what had been to this point haphazard growth and development, the town was surveyed in February 1932 and 174 allotments were offered for sale in November of the same year (Perry, 2005: 107). A report on the goldfield at Cracow in 1933 opined that although there were "economically important gold-bearing deposits" in Cracow, the quality of the lodes varied widely (Hills, 1933). This cast some doubt as to the viability of the town in the future.



**Figure L.3: Land sale at Golden Mile store, Cracow, Queensland. It took some time for the town of Cracow to be surveyed after gold was discovered, but lots sold briskly in the booming mining town (JOL ban00085)**

At the same time as the towns of Theodore and Cracow were founded and expanding, the township of Banana was experiencing a rapid decline. Although closer settlement had bought about a growth in the Shire's population, the decision to bypass Banana on the rail line from Rockhampton saw its suitability as an administrative and commercial hub for the region diminish rapidly. Consequently, the Shire administrative centre was moved to Rannes and by the 1930 the shire clerk described Banana as "a town of the past" with a population of only 36 people (Perry, 2005: 50). So dramatic was the population decline, that in 1935 the local school was closed.

### 3.4 Banana Shire After World War II

World War II had dramatic effects on the Banana Shire and the study area. Mobilization of troops within the shire and efforts to resettle returning servicemen after the war continued to influence Banana Shire's development following the cessation of hostilities. During and after the war the Shire and study area maintained its rural land use, although mining began in several locations throughout the district adding to its economic diversity. After 1945 the fortunes of the three major settlements in the study area, Banana, Theodore and Cracow, varied considerably.

During World War II, the Shire of Banana found a great deal of its resources directed to the war effort while many of its local industries were slowed by the loss of men to the armed forces. Cracow was most affected. Although by 1940 the town had grown to become the largest in the shire, with the advent of World War II the smaller mines in and around the town ceased operation and the largest employer in town, the Golden Plateau No Liability mine, was left with a skeleton crew as the town's population plunged to 400 (Perry, 2005: 109). Other mining operations were similarly effected. The provision of public and social services was curtailed due to war time exigencies with much of the Shire's financial and plant resources directed to the construction of defence roads for the transportation of troops and materials heading north from Brisbane for the war effort (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 23).

Following the War the growth of Theodore into a prosperous service town for the surrounding agricultural settlement continued. The community spirit of the town was evident when the population banded together to ensure the continued operation of the local hotel by forming the first hotel cooperative in Queensland. This community spirit was even more in evidence by 1962 when the town could boast a variety of clubs including Bowls, Golf, Football, Cricket, Tennis, Indoor Tennis, Basketball, Water skiing, Rural youth, and Athletic and a population sizeable enough to warrant Church of England, Methodist, and Roman Catholic parishes with their own churches in town (<*Theodore*>, 1962).

A tremendous boon for the region came with the establishment of the Brigalow Research Station outside Theodore in 1965 (*Brigalow Research Station*, 1968). This station was founded to “research and monitor” the massive changes farming activities brought to the typology and land use of the region by the introduction of farming and to promote ways to effectively clear and manage former Brigalow land (Loxton, 2002: 2).

Buoyed by the successful farming in the region the town of Theodore maintained an independent identity despite being amalgamated back into the Banana Shire in the years after the war. By 1971 the town’s population reached 589 and a decade later there were 643 residents in Theodore alone (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 13). In 1985 the town still had its own hospital service that admitted 320 patients for the year despite attempts by the Banana Shire to decommission some of the hospital’s services. (*Banana Hospital Board*, 1985). Pointing to its importance as a hub for the region the Theodore State School catered for 226 students from years 1-10 in 1993 despite the population of the town being only 502 in 1991 (Gutteridge Hasins and Davey Pty Ltd, 1996: 13).

Cracow on the other hand experienced a continuous decline almost from the outset of World War II. With the cessation of hostilities, Golden Plateau re-opened its Klondyke mine in 1950. As a result the school had grown to 40 pupils and the town had euchre, rifle and basketball clubs and a bowling green and club all subsidized by the Golden Plateau to provide entertainment for its employees. Despite this initial optimism the mine closed in 1976 (Perry, 2005: 110) and by 1980 the town had “been reduced to a very few people” (*A Century of Local Government*, 1980: 23). During the 1980s there were intermittent plans to reopen the gold mine in town and the Cracow Gold company was profitably processing tailings from the old mines using new technology during the mid 1980s (Blanch & Ford, 1985). Sedimentary Holdings began underground mining during this period and managed to extract 8741 ounces of gold in the opening four months of the 1987 financial year (“Sedimentary Reports Good Production”, 1987). However, despite Sedimentary’s continued operation in the town, it did not have a dramatic effect on settlement numbers nor the town’s vitality and urban development.

By 1997 press reports claimed that Cracow had “died and had become only a faint ghost of its former self” (“The Ghosts of Tomorrow”, 1997). In 1999 Fred Brophy, one of the last boxing tent promoters in Australia, bought the Cracow Hotel and was hoping to attract visitors back to the town with occasional boxing troupe nights (“The Ghost and Mr Brophy”, 1999). Sedimentary Holdings continued operations and explorations in the town lead to a discovery of a “massive” gold ore near the town (“Cracow Find is Extended”, 1999). As a result of this find gold mining in Cracow received a significant boost in 2003 when Newcrest Mining allied with Sedimentary began developing a new, larger mine in the town that lead to it producing its first gold in 2004 (“Miners Get Cracow up and Running”, 2003). By 2007 the underground gold mine at Cracow was a joint venture between Newcrest and Lion Selection that produced 116,000 ounces of gold and had forecast reserves to keep the mine operational until 2013 (Sharples, 2007).

The town of Banana also experienced fluctuating fortunes in the years after World War II. Since the town was bypassed by the railway to Rockhampton in the 1930s, Banana has experienced a continual decline in population and importance. During the 1960s the town did undergo a small revival. With the opening of the Moura coalfield to the north some population increases occurred with this leading to the re-opening of the school in 1960 with 35 pupils; a number which steadily grew as the decade passed and the coalfields proved to be productive (Perry, 2005: 110). With the introduction of mains electricity in 1969 more residents were convinced to build houses in town and the growing residential population saw the re-opening of the Uniting Church in town that same year (Perry, 2005: 111). However, services in the town continued to lag behind in Banana and this restricted the urbanization of the town. It was not until 2001 that the town received its first reticulated water supply (“Fresh Water for Banana”, 2001). As a sign of the town’s relative vitality the 2006 Annual Report of the Banana State School recorded an enrolment of 62 students.

As a part of the local government amalgamations undertaken by the Queensland State Government in March 2008, the Shire of Banana expanded to include northern parts of the Taroom Shire. This process may further alter the social, economic, and cultural make up of the towns in the region and shows the continued importance of government interventions in the fabric and organization of the region.



## 4.0 Taroom Shire

Located within the heart of Queensland's Brigalow belt the Taroom Shire's geographical and geological features have been a major determinant of the shire's economic, social, and historical development. Originally settled as a pastoral district, farming continues to be the most important land use in the Shire; however, there are also a number of national parks which adds to the Shire's aesthetic appeal. The Shire's main transport route is the Leichhardt Highway which passes through the towns of Taroom and Wandoan and provides residents and businesses with a connection to Toowoomba and Brisbane. Currently the shire encompasses 18645 km<sup>2</sup> and according to 2004 estimates had a population of 2550.

### 4.1 Early Exploration and Settlement

Like its northern neighbour Banana, Ludwig Leichhardt was the first European to enter into the present day Shire during his 1844 expedition (Fox, 1959: 13). Leichhardt passed through the area in November, 1844 and blazed a mark on a tree, "LL 1844", which stands in the main street of the current day town of Taroom (Environmental Protection Agency, 2008b). This tree along with the Leichhardt Highway that travels in some parts along the same route the explorer and his party followed on their original journey commemorates the expedition and its contribution to the exploration and subsequent settlement of this area.



**Figure L.4: A 1914 photograph of the tree blazed by Leichhardt in Taroom during his 1844 exploration (JOL46535)**

Like other parts of the present day state of Queensland discovered by Leichhardt, the area had to wait nearly ten years for settlement by European pioneers. When the New South Wales government declared the district opened though, a land 'rush' ensued. William Turner was listed as the first licensee of the 'Taroom' run in 1845 (Fox, 1959: 21) and in 1849 Herbert Salwey and Percival Sydney Francis tendered for a run of 23,000 acres that they originally called 'Chumma', but they were later to rename 'Juandah' (Juandah Heritage Society, 2001: 16). These two runs became instrumental in the history of Taroom Shire as both contained the locations of the future towns of Taroom and Juandah (later Wandoan) respectively and it is these towns that have been the basis for settlement in the Shire.

A number of other pastoral runs were also taken up in this period. These included John Windeyer's 'Walliba', which he occupied in mid 1845 in the name of his father the Sydney magistrate Charles Windeyer (Juandah Heritage Society, 2001: 8), Robert Miller and William Turner's 'Kinnoul' (1853), James Mark's 'Lilyvale' (1853), Sir Charles Nicholson's 'Lower Palm Tree Creek' (1854) and Charles Bell's 'Bungaban' (1854) among a host of others (Rechner, 2005: 11-21). Most of the early pastoralists drove large flocks of sheep overland from the New England district to stock their sprawling runs (Fox, 1959: 40). The scale of farming was significant. There is, for example, evidence that by 1854 the Juandah run had approximately 10,000 sheep on the property (Woodside, 1997: 16).

Although these pastoral runs were self sufficient, a number of communal social services began to appear almost from the outset of European settlement. The town of Taroom appeared on maps as early as 1856 when it was known as 'Bonner's Nob' after a shepherd who was known to camp on this high point overlooking the surrounding countryside (Fox, 1959: 31). With the failure of the gold rushes in Canoona and also Banana, Bonner's Nob experienced a population growth and by 1856 had a public house, blacksmith shop, general store, police station and lock up and visiting clergy from Roma and Gayndah to satiate the town's spiritual needs (*Taroom State School*, 1971: 3). The Southern region was centred on the Juandah Homestead.

Transport and communication links were vital to the development of the district. In 1856 a weekly mail run to Taroom from Condamine was begun and although discontinued in 1858 it was resumed again as a weekly run in 1859 until the frequency increased to bi-weekly coach services in 1888 (Rechner, 2005: 208). During this period there was no official post office, but the first official post master at Taroom was Mr Zerbe who was appointed in 1867 with a salary of £50 per annum (*Taroom Post Office History*, 1986: 1). Although there was no official town at Juandah, the head station acted as a defacto stopping point for travellers and a receiving point for mail and other communications in the southern portion of the region. One of the first roads into the district was marked from Ipswich during the 1860s and this aided communication and commercial links between the district and the rest of the colony (Fox, 1959: 41). To further assist transport and communication throughout the district a bridge was built over the Juandah Creek to Taroom in 1864 (Fox, 1959: 7).

Although large pastoral runs had dominated land use and settlement patterns in the district, with the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859, various land reforms changed the development of the region. Under the 1884 *Crown Lands Act* the size of many of the large runs was diluted as they were resumed and sub-divided to encourage closer settlement (Woodside, 1997: 12). The strategy worked successfully. Between 1864 and 1902 the population of the region nearly doubled as pioneers and speculators were attracted to the region to farm what appeared to be fertile land (Fox, 1959: 63). However, the unsuitability of sheep for the grazing land in the region and the depression in wool prices of the 1870s, which was exacerbated by over borrowing by lease holders, saw many properties fail (Rechner, 2005: 60). Nonetheless the land reforms continued and in the 1890s many of the large runs that had been granted 21 year leases began to be affected by the 1884 *Crown Lands Act* and they too were resumed and further subdivided (Rechner, 2005: 64-65).

Following the tribulations of the 1870s, many New South Wales pastoralists began to invest in properties in Queensland; the Taroom district was one of the beneficiaries of this move. Able to acquire failing runs as a result of the land reforms, these men switched to cattle and established properties that were overseen by managers (Fox, 1959: 52). This was partially responsible for the population growth that took place in the area. As a result social services proliferated. The Taroom School was founded in April 1871 (Taroom Shire Council, 1965) while school aged children in the Juandah area continued to be educated using private tutors and governesses (Wandoan State School, 1986: 2). The town of Taroom was well served by a number of doctors from the earliest days of its founding, and this care was formalized in 1896 with the founding of the Taroom Voluntary Hospital (Rechner, 2005: 213). Most importantly, the Taroom Divisional Board was founded in 1879 with the town of Taroom acting as the administrative centre for the shire (Fox, 1959: 74). At the time the board was founded the district population had reached 1015 (Rechner, 2005: 114).

## 4.2 Early Twentieth Century Development

At the outset of the twentieth century the Taroom Division was typified by pastoral land use and sparse settlement patterns. Taroom remained the largest and most important town in the Division as it was the administrative centre and the hub of many social services. However, with the extension of the rail line from Miles to Juandah what had, until that point, been little more than homesteads developed into an important settlement and urban centre. As the population and settlement patterns of the region continued to fluctuate, so too did the fortunes and social service provisions of the two towns.

As a part of state government's reforms in 1902 the Taroom Divisional Board officially became the Taroom Shire Council on 31 March 1903 with a total land area of 4.60 million acres (Rechner, 2005: 117). As a result of its status as the administrative hub of the shire, businesses in Taroom included two hotels, two blacksmiths, two butchers, three general stores, a boot maker, a saddler, chemist, and stock and station agent (Rechner, 2005: 136). The new council's most pressing concern was drought. This "most disastrous [drought] since pastoral occupation had begun" in the Taroom Shire began to have dramatic effects on farming and settlement in the district (Fox, 1959: 61). Exacerbating these problems was the spread of cattle tick and the presence of the ubiquitous prickly pear on pastoral runs and smaller farms throughout the region. Although the cattle tick was not controlled until the construction of dips in Wandoan and Taroom in 1914 and prickly pear would not be conquered until 1933, by 1909 large number of settlers were again attracted to the area's agricultural potential (Woodside, 1997: 27).



**Figure I.5: Transport and communication in the district was still rudimentary in the early part of the twentieth century as show by the 1910 photograph taken on the road between Taroom and Juandah (JOL 4383)**

The most important development for the Shire in the opening decades of the twentieth century came with the extension of the railway line from Miles to Juandah in 1913 (*Taroom Post Office History*, 1986: 4). Officially opened in 1914, the rail line saw the development of what was originally known as the town of Juandah as the urban centre of the southern part of the Shire. Although the new town was named after the pastoral run, the station was a few kilometres to the north of the original head station allowing it room to grow. Prior to this the homestead had acted as the centre of settlement in the area, but in the early 1900s the Juandah holding was again broken up for closer settlement (Juandah Heritage Society, 2001: 57). During this process a town was surveyed in 1902 in anticipation of the railway line. However, it was not until the line was completed in 1913 that town blocks were sold at this site (Rechner, 2005: 151-52).

With the completion of the rail link, the town of Juandah began to grow and thrive. In 1911 a school had been established in the old Juandah Homestead store for the seven school-aged children in the region.

However, with the relocation of the urban centre to the newly surveyed town a new school was built and opened in 1915 (Rechner, 2005: 238-239). As the rail link was used primarily for transporting cattle to market, a co-operative sale yards and cattle tick dip was established in the town in 1914. Other commercial enterprises followed. A hotel opposite the railway station was the first business to open in the new town and it was soon followed by a butchers shop, billiard hall and Bill O'Sullivan's general store (Fox, 1959). In the years prior to World War II the town had a bakery, bank, stock and station agency, store, café, hotel, two motor garages, and a Bank of NSW agency opened in the town in 1934 (Rechner, 2005: 155). To avoid confusion with the town of Jundah the town's name was changed to Wandoan in 1926 and it has retained this demarcation ever since (Rechner, 2005: 153).



**Figure L.6: Opening of the new Juandah State School, 1918. With the completion of the railway line to Juandah in 1914 the town began to thrive (JOL 153147)**

Although there were plans for the rail line to be extended to Taroom, these plans were never carried to fruition and Wandoan's status and wealth "benefited greatly" mainly at the expense of Taroom (Fox, 1959: 110). During this period commercial enterprise continued in Taroom and it remained the Shire's administrative centre, but its development was retarded somewhat by the lack of a rail link (Rechner, 2005: 138-145). Businesses such as the *Taroom Hotel*, a fruit shop, drapery and hardware, butcher shop, the Australian Bank of Commerce (opened 1914), and the Popular Café (opened 1929) contributed to the active social and business life in the town (Rechner, 2005: 145-148). Nonetheless, the town's growth was modest. Indicative of this slowed growth was the fact that the local school premises "were in a dreadful condition" during the 1930s as enrolments began to dip and funds for its repair were not forthcoming (Rechner, 2005: 234).





**Figure L.7: The Popular Café in Taroom, shown here in 1930, serviced the town and its surrounding hinterland (JOL60727).**

Like many shires in the region Taroom benefited greatly from the introduction of the *Cactoblastis* moth to eradicate Prickly Pear from 1928 onwards (Fox, 1959: 125). Eggs for this moth were imported from South America and after some testing and screening, cultured eggs were distributed to various land holders and farmers through the Taroom Shire council offices (Environmental Protection Agency, 2008a). In 1928 the moth played “havoc with the pear” (Rechner, 2005: 93). By the early 1930s the *Cactoblastis* had done its job successfully and many farmers in the area found that the land in their selection was excellent for farming. Although this raised new prospects for increased agricultural and pastoral productivity that would attract more wealth and possible further urban development to the shire, the advent of World War II meant that growth and development of the shire was halted.

### **4.3 Development After World War II**

Following the end of World War II the Shire of Taroom benefited from a number of government sponsored initiatives and yet still found itself under-serviced in terms of infrastructure. While the shire remained relatively isolated, community and urban development in the towns of Taroom and Wandoan continued. Social infrastructure such as schools, sporting clubs, and volunteer activities were complemented and supported by commercial developments. In the opening years of the 2000s the Taroom Shire faces the reality of no longer being a separate entity as a result of the state wide local government amalgamation process – the northern section amalgamated with Banana and the southern region becoming a part of Dalby Regional Council.

A few years after the close of World War II the area around Wandoan was selected as the host of what became “the largest soldier settlement scheme in the State” (Rechner, 2005: 94). Under this scheme former servicemen who had been discharged honourably from any branch of the Australian Armed Services were eligible to enter a draw for a mixed farming block of approximately 1300 acres (Ryan & Harper, 1983). Although a similar scheme at the end of World War I in places such as Stanthorpe and the Sunshine Coast had been a “costly failure” this did not deter the state government (Johnson, 2002: 414). Settlement took place in two stages around Wandoan, with 31 families arriving in the area in 1952 and a further 89 families taking up their blocks in 1954 (Ryan & Harper, 1983: 3). There were a host of conditions attached to the scheme – the most onerous of which was to clear the dense Brigalow scrub that was endemic to much of the region.

The addition of these new soldier settlement families to the area around Wandoan saw increased demand for and patronage of many social services. In the 1950s the town was described as “a thriving progressive centre” with many successful businesses and community clubs (Rechner, 2005: 157). The

most notable communal institution was the RSL. By 1960 the Wandoan branch had 68 members, primarily drawn from the new 'Soldier Settlers'.

However, a host of new clubs were formed including the Pony, Rochedale Tennis, Wandoan Golf, and sports clubs (Ryan & Harper, 1983: 19). In addition by 1961 the town had its own electricity supply, three churches, a Bank of NSW branch, Shire Hall, CWA restroom, dry cleaning business, several garages, post office, hospital outpatients department, sports ground and Masonic hall (Rechner, 2005: 158). The Wandoan State School, whose numbers had dipped to 15 in 1951, expanded so rapidly that a number of bus runs were instituted during the 1950s to accommodate children from rural area. By 1960 the school's enrolment had grown to 284 pupils (Rechner, 2005: 240)

During the same period Taroom was also benefiting from government sponsored farm improvement schemes. Prior to this however, the provision of electricity in 1952 bought modern comforts to the town and encouraged settlement in the town and its immediate surrounds. In 1959 the "great potential" of the region was beginning to be realized with attempts to control Brigalow through a number of government initiatives including the creation of the Brigalow Research Station near Theodore in the Banana Shire (Fox, 1959: 162). The combination of modern conveniences and the diffusion of knowledge about controlling Brigalow scrub helped bring about closer settlement with grain growing gaining prominence. The growth in the local population both in the town and the hinterland meant that a new school building was opened in 1958 to replace the existing one as enrolment numbers steadily rose in line with population increases (*Taroom State School*, 1971: 6).

To add to the already growing population and land development, it was announced in 1967 that areas around Taroom would be opened for settlement as a part of the Fitzroy Basin Brigalow Development Scheme (Rechner, 2005: 111). Although there were a number modern conveniences and substantial modernisation in and around Taroom, life on the Brigalow settlements was reminiscent of pioneer days. Many farmers and their families lived in simple huts without electricity and running water until they had established themselves on the land (Rechner, 2005: 110). Despite these hardships, the Fitzroy Basin Brigalow Scheme was the "most successful of any Queensland land scheme" and it contributed to the growth and communal development of Taroom and its surrounding hinterland (Rechner, 2005: 112).

During the first decades after the end of World War II the agricultural and pastoral output of the Taroom Shire continued to increase. By 1965 Taroom Shire was responsible for £3,246,000 of agricultural production; consisting of £2,518,000 Pastoral, £690,000 agricultural, and £38,000 of forestry related products. The Shire's beef production meant it had the third highest beef cattle population of all Queensland Shires with 226,669 head. In addition Taroom produced 1,425,345 bushels of sorghum and 1,071,906 bushels of wheat in 1963/64 (Taroom Shire Council, 1965). During the 1960s three timber mills were operating in Wandoan adding to the town's economic base and providing reliable employment for residents (Rechner, 2005: 159). In what was to prove an important move, Taroom Shire took over the management of the saleyards in the 1960s and the income was a source of valuable revenue in the 1970s for the shire.

Much of the wealth developed in the shire in the 1970s and 1980s was directed toward the development of communal assets. Wandoan was completely sewerred in 1971 (Woodside, 1997: 104) and swimming pools were completed in Taroom and Wandoan at approximately \$100,000 each in 1970 (Rechner, 2005: 125). In 1971 the enrolment at the Taroom State School was 148 primary school students and 65 secondary school students (*Taroom State School*, 1971: 6). The growing population of Wandoan and its relatively young population lead to the opening of a pre-school in the town in October 1975 (Wandoan State School, 1986: 20). For the financial year 1975-76, 64,339 cattle passed through the saleyards showing that the region remained predominantly occupied with pastoral activities (Rechner, 2005: 163).

This prosperity continued into the 1980s. In 1985 the Wandoan State School received \$1268 in library grants from the state government in recognition of its programs and importance to the local community (Wandoan State School, 1986: 23) and the Wandoan Cultural Centre opened in December 1987 to provide a venue for a myriad of community functions (Rechner, 2005: 127). In 1987 Wildmans opened a \$1.3 million timber mill outside of Wandoan, that is still operating after changing hands several times (Rechner, 2005: 160). In 1999 this mill was one of a number of mills in western Queensland that were

recipients of state government assistance to ensure their continued survival and financial viability (Koch, 1999).

One of the most important developments in the Taroom Shire in the closing decade of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty first century has been the continued prospects of viable coal deposits outside of Wandoan. Knowledge of coal seams in the Surat Basin existed for “many years (Rechner, 2005: 319) and various prospecting licenses were issued during the 1970s and 1980s to companies allowing them to search for and possibly exploit the coal lodes. However, none came to fruition. In 2003 the Swiss resources group Xstrata was active in the region heightening the possibility that a major coal mine would be developed (Rechner, 2005: 320). The possibility of major population growth and infrastructure developments has seen increased investment interest in Wandoan (Sinclair, 2007). At the same time, the area around Taroom did not benefit from such speculation and development in the area remained somewhat stagnant.

## 5.0 Conclusion

From their original settlements as pastoral districts the Banana and Taroom Shires have been shaped by agricultural industries. The pattern and success of rural land use in both Shires can be understood by the historical development of the towns that emerged to act as economic, social, and administrative hubs for the surrounding hinterland. Banana, Theodore, Taroom, and Wandoan have been heavily reliant upon the success of farming in their hinterland – often times this success has been supported by government initiatives such as the Dawson Valley Irrigation Scheme. Although ancillary industries such as timber milling and gold mining in Cracow have proven beneficial to the region, they have not displaced agriculture as the primary source of employment and prosperity in the district.

In more recent times however, the possibility of coal exploitation in the area around Wandoan and Taroom has seen investment and interest in the towns increase. Already the effects of coal mining is helping revive the town of Banana and there exists the possibility that future mineral exploitation may have similar effects on other communities in the area. The possible change in the settlement patterns of these towns is important. These towns have been central to the historical development of the region and have a continuing cultural significance.

Although these towns remain important elements in the area’s cultural history and contemporary identity, the area’s rural amenity remains its dominant feature. Agricultural land use remains not only the dominant economic practice in the study area, but also the most enduring and important social practice. The dominant land use and settlement patterns remain influenced by the historic experiences and practices of the region; and as such are a tangible reflection of the study area, past. Many of these pastoral holdings are still utilized for agricultural or pastoral production that coheres with much of the area’s historical development and land use patterns making them socially, culturally, and historically significant.

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