

# TUROSS HEAD

The information in this pdf file is from the historical plaques you will find at locations around Tuross Head

## Tuross Head Historical Development

Tuross Head Peninsula has been continuously occupied by humans for at least the last 6,000 to 7,000 years. Aboriginal occupation of the Tuross Peninsula and particularly the Tuross Lakes area appears to have been both intense and consistent for the majority of this time as is indicated by the size, depth and apparent antiquity of middens and stone knapping sites. The local 'Brinja Yuin' are reputed to have numbered between 120 and 150 persons pre-European settlement <sup>a</sup> within the Tuross Peninsula.

The Tuross River flows from its headwaters in the Wadbilliga National Park to the sea at Tuross. Its name is derived from the local Aboriginal place name for Tuross (Terosse). From the mid-1830s until the mid-1870s the Tuross Head area was primarily used for farming, relying on maritime services for movement of produce to market. These [pioneering farmers](#) opened up the area for future development. However, in 1865 a steam driven sawmill was erected in the Tuross Head area. In 1871 timber from this mill was used in the construction of the Sydney GPO. A ship belonging to the mill, 'Maid of the Mill', was used to transport the timber to Sydney.

By the start of the First World War (WW1) Tuross Head was a small village connected to the main highway by a dirt road. Although recognised for good fishing it was also acknowledged as an ideal summer holiday spot. However it took considerable time and effort to get to there as the train from Sydney stopped at Nowra and it then took two days by horse drawn conveyance or bicycle to reach the village.

With the growth of motor vehicle ownership tourists were able to access the village more conveniently. From the end of WW1 until the start of WW2, holiday makers and fishermen became the economic base for the town's development, especially as the town population in 1940 was only about 40 residents. At that time the community facilities for the holiday makers were very limited and most lived in tents along the river front and around the river front and around the lakes entrance during the summer. During this period Tuross Head had the first house block subdivisions, cottages were built and a shop, a bakery, a Post Office and a dairy were established.

Following WW2 the number of holiday makers grew very rapidly. Tuross continued to develop community facilities, including a community hall and sporting facilities. When rationing was removed at the end of the 1940s the numbers of summer tourist/holiday makers and people fishing grew very rapidly as did the town. The favourite camping area was from Sandy Point, Lavender Bay and along Nelson Parade. Every summer there would be a sea of canvas tents set up with holiday makers enjoying the fishing, surfing and boating on Tuross Lake.

Today the basis of the town's economy is still the holiday makers and fishermen as well as a growing population of permanent residents many of whom are retirees.



Above: Tuross holdings from Parish of Congo Map, County of Dampier.

To search for other Parish maps go to

[http://www.lpi.nsw.gov.au/mapping\\_and\\_imagery/parish\\_maps](http://www.lpi.nsw.gov.au/mapping_and_imagery/parish_maps)

## John Hawdon (1801-1881)

[John Hawdon](#) arrived in Australia from England in 1828 with his wife and two sons. After leasing 'Elderslie' near Camden he received a land grant on the northern banks of the Moruya River at Kiora where he built a substantial Georgian homestead which still stands today. Wanting more land he also squatted on land south of the Moruya River which covered the area of Congo, Bergalia, and Tuross Head. The whole property was referred to as Bergalia.

Over the period 1832 until 1848 John Hawdon made several attempts to have the Governor grant him title to all or part of Bergalia. In 1843 he also established a squatting station at Bodalla (known then as Boat Alley) where he employed managers to run cattle and establish a dairy. With changes to the legislation in 1847 John Hawdon was able to secure a Crown Lease of 30,000 acres with a right to buy. However, to purchase and develop this land he needed to obtain finance and mortgaged the property to businessman Thomas Sutcliffe Mort (1816-1878). Hawdon's lack of adequate capital eventually led to Thomas Mort taking over Bodalla. Eventually John Hawdon settled on two properties, his original grant at Kiora and at Tuross Head, where he named his property 'Kyla Park'.

John Hawdon and his wife Margaret, lived out their retirement years on their tranquil and idyllic property at [Kyla Park](#). He died on June 12, 1881. Margaret survived her husband by five years.

Today John Hawdon's former Kyla Park land comprises 4 cluster housing developments, a local community recreational area, with the remaining of the 'Kyla Park' rural lands being devoted to livestock grazing and perpetually protected by a heritage listing.

Across the road you would be looking down on the Heritage Grazing Fields; Tuross Lake is immediately visible in the foreground with Gulaga Mountain rising on the horizon to the South. Gulaga has special significance to the local indigenous 'Yuin' people.

[\*John Hawdon's boat the 'Alligator'\*](#)

## **Patrick Mylott (1838-1899)**

[Patrick Mylott](#) arrived in Australia in 1861, later working on the Bodalla Estate for Thomas Sutcliffe Mort. In 1864 he married Mary Heffernan in the Moruya Roman Catholic Church. He purchased his Tuross Head land under the conditional purchase scheme and eventually acquired 875 acres bounded on the west by John Hawdon's Kyla Park land and to the east by the Pacific Ocean.

Patrick Mylott built his family home known as 'Tuross House' on the ridge looking eastwards over his property to the Ocean and westwards to the mountains. He died in Tuross Head in 1899, leaving the house to his wife. Subsequently this pioneer homestead was purchased by Hector McWilliam in 1924 and still remains in use today in Coral Crescent. The surrounding land has been subdivided for housing.

To further his children's education and in particular the singing talent of his daughter [Eva](#), the family moved to Sydney and leased the farm for a number of years. Eva was later encouraged in her singing by Nellie Melba and went on to pursue a successful singing career in America.

Patrick Mylott's son Patrick established [Mylott's bakery](#) on the western corner of Queen and Vulcan Street Moruya in 1914. This family bakery business was finally closed in 2006.

[\*Patrick's Mylott's Bankruptcy\*](#)

## Hector McWilliam (1877-1974)



In 1920 Hector McWilliam, a Wagga Wagga real estate agent, holidayed at Tuross Head and was so impressed with the area he proceeded to negotiate the purchase of all the headland area owned by Mary Mylott. This sale included the historic homestead 'Tuross House', which had been built by her husband Patrick Mylott in 1870.

Hector McWilliam saw the future of Tuross as a great tourist resort. He planned a [subdivision](#) of holiday house blocks and immediately began to invest in advertising and promotion, producing a printed brochure and a short movie to attract potential buyers from Canberra and Sydney. Tuross House, built by Patrick Mylott, which still stands today, became Hector McWilliam's home which he also ran as a boarding house. He named the streets in this subdivision after British Naval victories and Military heroes.

Hector McWilliam was interested in Norfolk pines but he was advised that Tuross was not a suitable environment for this type of pine. He went ahead and planted eight seedlings which grew successfully. From this stock he then propagated his own trees, ending up with over 200 trees around the village and headland which are now an iconic feature of Tuross Head.

A stone cairn memorial to Hector McWilliam was built by his son-in-law Harry Overgaard and is located in the Norfolk pine plantation at Birdwood Circle.





# Maritime History of Tuross Head

## Shipping

Transporting the farm produce and timber of the area was vital to the success of the development of Tuross. Like all coastal communities in the 1900's Tuross relied on coastal vessels to get goods to market and to obtain supplies from Sydney.

[The Illawarra Steam Navigation Company](#) serviced the south coast of New South Wales from 1858 but only their smaller vessels entered Tuross Lake. In 1863 the company advertised '**Steam to the Tuross River and Gulph Diggings**' (Nerrigundah). However in the smaller print it stated you would travel to Batemans Bay on the large Steamer 'Kembla' and then transfer to the shallower draught steamer 'Mynora' destined for Tuross.

Both the Tuross sawmills had their own boats for transporting their timber to market. The 'Maid of the Mill' was owned by the Goodin & Hicks Mill and the ketch 'Mary Ann' by the Goodlet and Co. Mill. These were both typical small coastal traders of under 26 tons. The '[Moses Fletcher](#)', a larger vessel of 55 tons and 84 feet in length was then built at the Goodin and Hicks Mill near Turlinjah. However a deep channel needed to be dug to successfully launch her on the high tide.

Negotiating the Tuross entrance was always difficult. Occasionally the shifting sand of the bar at the entrance to the river closed the lake trapping shipping inside. Another factor was that often heavy seas made it risky to attempt to enter or exit the lake across the sandbar. The entrance sandbar siltation was regularly scoured by river floods such as 1870 which enabled extensive commercial use of the River. However, the growth in agricultural cultivation up river finally increased river siltation. This together with the effect of the 1891 flood ensured that the commercial community sought alternative shipping facilities and never returned to the Tuross River.

## Tuross Boatsheds



Boating on Tuross Lake

The Tuross boatshed era began in 1913 when the Crown gave leases for sheds and jetties to be built. Over the years the boatsheds have evolved from places where boat and fishing gear was stored into various enterprises. Boat hire, supply of fishing needs and in most recent years, waterfront meals and accommodation, have served the recreational needs of locals and visitors to Tuross Head.

Although their scope has changed, two boatsheds have been in operation over the years. These are:

- The Boatshed (commonly referred to as Mackenzies' Boatshed) was originally built in 1938 to service fisherman and their boats. Subsequently it became known as O'Brian's Boatshed, now Tuross Boatshed.
- Tiedmans Boatshed which became Laing's Boatshed.

Mr Albert Laing came to Tuross Head on long service leave from the City of Sydney Fire Brigade in the 1940's to fish and prawn for three months at Lavender Point. Over the following years the Laings enjoyed holidays in Tuross. In circa 1947 the family noticed that Tiedemann's boatshed was being auctioned and subsequently bought it.

In 1959 a new fleet of Laing's rental boats arrived in Tuross Head. These 'putt putt' motor boats were a famous drawcard for Tuross Head and remained in service until the closure of the boatshed in the late 1990's. The out of service boats remained at the wharf until 2008, with the last remaining Laing boat leaving the boatshed on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010.