



# A Heritage Walk in Inverell



Explore the Past...



## *Some background information...*

Inverell has developed remarkably since the first Europeans settled here in 1836. Compare the scene now with the recollections of David Jack, an early settler. He wrote, 'The plain was beautiful with here and there a small lagoon with rushes in them and many ducks and other wild fowl. There were no gullies on the plain then, and only cattle tracks. The Big Gully (Black Gully) was just beginning at the river. There was green grass all over the plain and ridges six or eight inches high and lots of fat cattle and horses. The grass was knee deep about two months after and ripe.' Inverell's story is almost a textbook example of the kind of thing that happened in other towns of inland NSW.

Inverell now has a population of about 12,000 but it started as a cattle station about six kilometres north of here in 1839. For decades the town area was simply known as the Green Swamp. As with the Aborigines before them, Europeans found the Green Swamp a good place to camp. Nearby there was a good crossing of the Macintyre River and the bullock teams which brought supplies could always find good feed. The town really began in 1853 when Colin Ross established a post office and store. However, the area had to wait another three years (1856) for a town plan to be surveyed and for some sort of order to start emerging from the collection of bark huts along the river bank.



*Grove Pioneer Homestead, Inverell Pioneer Village*

## *Follow in their footsteps...*



# *Starting at the Visitor Information Centre*

1. **The Bridge** which you see nearby is the third on that site. The first, built in 1876, was in need of replacement after only six years of use by pedestrians, mobs of travelling stock and vehicles. The foundations of that original bridge can still be seen when the river water is exceptionally clear. The second bridge was made of huge wooden girders on steel piers and was built to last right up into the age of very heavy vehicles. It was replaced by the present bridge in 1983.



*Construction on the current bridge*

2. **The Old Power Station.** Turn right along Campbell Street. The first building on your right was designed by local architect JF O'Connor this was built in 1910 to house a large diesel generator installed to produce electricity for the town. The building originally had a tall chimney on the left and a gabled roof with three central arched windows. When remodelled this roof line was removed.

The power station operated until 1950 when power was then purchased from the grid. A coal fired electricity station was opened in Ashford in 1958 and provided power until 1994. Even now we have a small hydro station powered by the outflow of Copeton Dam. The building has had several uses in recent years.

3. **The Water Treatment Plant** is a rather strange looking building built around what looks like two large round concrete tanks, and tanks they were. Until 1982 they were the centre of the town's water treatment plant. In that year Inverell

connected a far better supply from Copeton Dam. The old supply, which came from what is now Lake Inverell, required heavy treatment because it contained a great deal of lime and sediment.

4. **Inverell's second public school** is the plastered brick building with the gothic arch windows just beyond the library. It was opened in 1876 and within two years had an enrolment of 200. By the mid 1880's the enrolment had reached 300 with some pupils being accommodated in a tent on the lawn. Many children, here and elsewhere, missed out completely on schooling. It was not until after Henry Parkes' Public Instruction Act of 1884 guaranteed free, compulsory, secular education for all that Inverell Public School was built in 1887 with accommodation for 600 pupils. The building became known as the Band Hall, and was relocated to this site in 1922. For many years it was used by Bands as a practise venue and was restored in 1992.
5. **The Inverell Club** is the well maintained federation style building on the corner of Campbell and Evans Streets. It is one of the very few weatherboard buildings erected in central Inverell in the twentieth century. The club was first lit with acetylene gas and has two large billiard tables, a reading room and lounge. It was built in 1909 for a cost of \$7836.00
6. **The Inverell Art Gallery.** Admission here is by donation and a visit is definitely worthwhile. The gallery combines two separate earlier buildings. **A School of Arts (6a)** was first built in 1877 by the Mutual Improvement Society. In an era when many people received very little formal education, schools of arts and mechanics institutes established libraries, and were venues for lectures, debates and meetings, in this case up until 1937. The present building and its predecessor have also served as the council chamber's, as a limited circulation, a public library and as a technical college. **Butler Hall (6b)** is named after a former mayor of Inverell. For many years the hall served as a supper room for balls and other social events such as wedding receptions and for small exhibitions. Both these building were designed by local architect JF O'Connor.





*Inverell Art Gallery, Evans Street  
Inverell*



*Inverell Town Hall, Evans Street  
Inverell*

7. **The Town Hall** with its ornate exterior, stage and gallery met a long standing need for a major venue. It was opened with a dinner, entertainment and a ball in 1905. In its early years the Town Hall was the venue for a travelling public entertainment nearly every week. Its annexe was the headquarters of Inverell Municipal Council and it even provided space for a tiny public library. Note the elaborate Victorian era features including the Corinthian style columns.
8. **The Royal Hotel** use to occupy this site. The double story green weatherboard building was on the corner opposite the Town Hall. Although this wooden structure is long gone it was once a popular place for the mining fraternity of the town.
9. **Inverell Post Office** is said to be on the site where the telegraph operator fled with his equipment to shelter from the 1872 flood. This building and two or three of the large old bank buildings have floors elevated above flood level. When the telegraph reached Inverell in 1868 Inverell became a more law abiding community, for prior to that time it was difficult to send or receive information about horse thieves and others who could probably feel relatively secure here. Surprisingly, as far back as 1890, letters posted in Sydney were usually delivered to Inverell only two days later.

*Explore Inverell's Pioneering Spirit...*



*Inverell Post Office, Otho Street  
Inverell*



*Inverell Court House, Otho Street  
Inverell*

10. **Inverell Court House** replaced a ramshackle building where, for a considerable time, people had to stand during proceedings because of the lack of furniture. When it was completed in 1887 the townspeople were pleasantly surprised at the new building's grandness and no less so when the clock tower was added two years later.

11. **Inverell Shire Chambers** are built on a foundation of compacted weathered granite four metres deep. The site was previously occupied by the Roman Catholic Church which had to be demolished because movement in the black soil cracked the walls crack. Here on the outskirts of the business area is a suite of modern buildings erected in the period after the Second World War. Before the centralisation of services and administration, the distribution of electricity over an area bigger than Tasmania was managed by **North West County Council (11a)**, diagonally opposite the Council Chambers.



*Presbyterian Church, Vivian Street  
Inverell*



*Taylor Memorial Uniting Church,  
Rivers Street, Inverell*



**12. Inverell's Street of Churches.** At the corner of Vivian and Rivers Streets is the stylish and modern **Roman Catholic Church. (12a).** Like the Council Chambers, the Roman Catholic Church is built on a deep, compacted foundation of sand. To the right is **The Church of Christ (12b).** Opposite Sinclair Park in Vivian Street is the **Presbyterian Church (12c)** Proceed north west along Vivian Street to Rivers Street. Turn right and opposite the park in Rivers Street is the **Taylor Memorial Uniting Church (12d)** which was built in 1904 and financed almost entirely by the gift of Thomas Taylor who had been a parishioner. In the next block along is the **Anglican Church (12e)** which was designed by a famous architect, Horbury Hunt. It is interesting to note that the sites of all of these churches were chosen partly because they are above the level of Inverell's 1872 flood.



*Bicentennial Memorial, Sinclair Park, Glen Innes Road Inverell*



*Scottish Cairn, Sinclair Park, Glen Innes Road Inverell*

**13. The Bicentennial Memorial.** Located in Sinclair Park, the Memorial exemplifies the community spirit of the individuals and organisations who freely gave their time, technical skills, labour and much of the material to create a permanent memorial to the historical genesis and the progressive development of the Inverell District prior to 1988. Special lighting allows the memorial to be viewed at night.

**14. The Scottish Cairn.** The Inverell Scottish Memorial Cairn, located in Sinclair Park, pays tribute to the district's pioneers, later generations and families whose endeavours have contributed to its success since the 1830's. Constructed as a joint Community Project, the Cairn was dedicated in 1999, the year in which the Shire Council adopted the Clan Mitchell Tartan, which is also worn by the students of Macintyre High School.

- 15. The Gallipoli Lone Pine** stands at the end of a strip of parkland and sporting facilities which occupy the lowest part of the Inverell's town area. This Lone Pine began when the First Australian Infantry Division launched major offensive in the Gallipoli Campaign at a place called Plateau 400. In this area all the trees had been cut to reinforce the trenches, but a single pine tree remained. The area then became known as Lone Pine.

Brothers Ben and Mark Smith from Inverell fought in the 3rd Battalion where Mark lost his life. Ben souvenired some pine cones from the single pine tree and sent them home to his mother. She successfully grew two seedlings. She presented one to the town of Inverell and the other to the parks and gardens section of the Dept. Of the Interior. This seedling was planted out by the Duke of Gloucester at the Australian War Memorial.

Inverell's original Lone Pine was felled in 2007 due to disease and another seedling planted in it's place. Many Lone Pine Trees now in Australia originated from the Inverell Tree and in fact many seedlings have been sent back over to Gallipoli for replanting.

- 16. The Inverell Convent** and school buildings were erected during the period 1909 to 1930 and feature large verandahs which are seldom seen on more recent buildings. The buildings were largely superseded by the construction of Holy Trinity School in 1963. For a time part of the property was used as accommodation for people with disabilities. Egan House in the convent grounds is now privately owned.
- 17. Byron Arcade**, when built, was the largest building in the north of NSW and contained 32 shops, a hall and a restaurant. It was one of the buildings erected to replace the fifteen destroyed in the fire of 1902 but by the time it was completed there were sufficient other new premises along Otho Street and the Byron Arcade never realised its' potential. The Byron Arcade was itself gutted by fire in the early hours of Australia Day 2010.

*Discover decades of design...*



18. **Otho Street** is named after the cook in surveyor Henderson's team which set out the town plan in 1856. Otho and Byron Streets tend to follow the highest land parallel to the river (natural levees) the street has undergone many changes. When the town was young most of the businesses were in Campbell Street until they were damaged or swept away in the 1872 flood. Then for many years all of the town's banks and most businesses faced Otho Street. Not having to buy expensive land, the banks erected very substantial brick premises but most of the other buildings were of wood, and Inverell with a poor water supply suffered several disastrous fires. The good outcome of these is the many fine facades, including the appropriately named Phoenix House, which now line Otho Street.
19. **The Oxford Hotel** opened in 1886 with every modern convenience (such as electric bells), stabling for 20 horses and a coach arch through which coaches to and from Glen Innes passed several times each day. The Oxford Hall at the back of the hotel could accommodate 400 to 500 people. The hall was demolished in 1911 and partly re-erected as a farm shed which still stands east of Inverell. Tom Roberts famous picture, 'Bailed Up', was painted partly in the Oxford Hall using one of the coaches as a model.



*Oxford Hotel, Otho Street Inverell*



*Jindabyne House, Otho Street, Inverell*

20. **The Red Shield Centre** started life in 1919 as the Rialto Theatre, Inverell's first movie house. This theatre, which could seat up to 1100 people, had a roof that could be opened to the stars on hot nights. Six pulleys were used to operate this roof.

21. **Jindabyne House**, presents a very fine facade facing the Oxford Hotel and the Red Shield Centre. It was built soon after a fire in 1902 completely destroyed 23 shops and businesses in 15 buildings. Similar facades and the very substantial old bank buildings contribute substantially to the fine appearance of Inverell's two main streets.
22. **The Imperial Hotel** Part of this building was constructed in 1889 for Thomas Mather, on the site of Ayers 1860's single story timber hotel. Mather's hotel, with its facade of triangular pediments and decorative scrolls, had 44 bedrooms. It once had iron lace verandahs that were also a feature of other local hotels. Many additions and alterations have taken place since it was first built including the addition of eight shops and six offices in 1929. In the ere when it was built an important part of the hotel's clientele consisted of commercial travellers and country people often stayed in town when they came to shop. However several VIPs have also stayed here including Prime Minister Menzies, Politicians Holt, Fadden, Evatt and Caldwell and sports personalities Frank Sedgmen and Lew Hoad. The politicians were here for the opening of the by election campaign for the seat of Gwydir in 1953.



*Imperial Hotel, Corner Otho & Byron Streets Inverell*



*Burge Brothers building & now the site of Best n Less*

23. **Burge Brothers building** is to the right on the corner of Byron and Vivian Streets. Stephen Burge was employed by storekeeper Colin Ross, eventually purchasing that business in 1889 and later moving it to this site. In the early decades of the twentieth



century the style of shopping in Inverell was very different from our pre-packaged, self service and checkout system. Inverell had about six department stores and the company that operated Burge Bros employed 102 people of whom 80 were counter staff. The first stage of this building was erected in 1874. It was enlarged in 1911 and reached its most impressive development in 1935. It became the only building in Inverell to have had a passenger lift to the upper floor which had a furniture department, offices and a tea room where ladies in from the country for a day's shopping could relax in style. Burge Bros remained in business until 1955.

- 24. Hong Yuen's** is a classic example of the way Chinese immigrants contributed to the development of regional Australia. Mr Harry Fay snr, who was born of Chinese parents in Sydney became owner of Hong Yuen's general store in 1899, later opening branches in Bingara and elsewhere. The growth of the business is shown by the dates on the facade. A major factor in Hong Yuen's growth and continued success has been a long standing emphasis on service to customers and the community and now, by a preparedness to change and adapt to the modern business environment, Hong Yuen is now currently IGA.

Cross Byron Street to the northern side and turn left.

- 25. The site of Inverell's first church building** was down past the taxi rank close to the river (Big W car park) It was a small wooden building with a square tower at one end. Erected in 1859 was badly damaged by the 1872 flood, causing the Presbyterians to move to their present site on higher ground. A Chinese market garden operated close to the river on land beyond Woolworth's until the early 1940's.

- 26. The General Merchant** is Inverell's oldest commercial building. It was erected by F.B Mulligan as a shop in 1867. The favoured construction material throughout the 1800's was wood because it could withstand some movement of the black soil beneath. However, people still wanted the appearance of stone and managed to achieve this by milling very wide boards as you see them on this two storey building. As fewer large trees became available weatherboards became narrower as you can see on houses built in the second half of the twentieth century.

**Other buildings typical of Inverell's pioneering era** are the double story cafe/restaurant next to Premier with its wide ashlar weatherboards and **various shops (8a)**, complete with verandah posts, near the corner of Byron and Lawrence Streets. What is probably ***Inverell's oldest building (8b)*** is the tiny wooden cottage in Oliver Street next to the RSM Bowling Club. (See location of these buildings on the map.)

- 27. The old Bank of NSW** is the 2 storey, Victorian Italianate style verandahed building facing down Otho Street. Designed in 1886, it was superseded as a bank in 1960 and then became the Council Chambers until the new chambers were built in 1983. Having foundations 4 metres deep and made of 300 000 bricks, the building shows no sign of structural deterioration.



*The Old Bank of NSW, Byron Street Inverell*



*Pastoral Chambers, Byron Street, Inverell*

- 28. Pastoral Chambers** is where the town's first telegraph office was located and is on the site of a lane that used to continue from Otho Street right down to the river. However, in 1914 the whole block from the lane to Coles was destroyed by fire. Borthwick and Butler, solicitors, decided to rebuild on their own and an adjacent block. The enlarged building, Pastoral Chambers, was partly occupied by the Australian Bank of Commerce. The magnificent counter of the present bookshop is from that bank. The building also has two very large strongrooms which were incorporated partly as a result of the fire experience. The name, Pastoral Chambers, probably reflects the interests of John Borthwick who was a solicitor and large scale landholder.





*Capital Theatre now currently  
Coles Inverell*



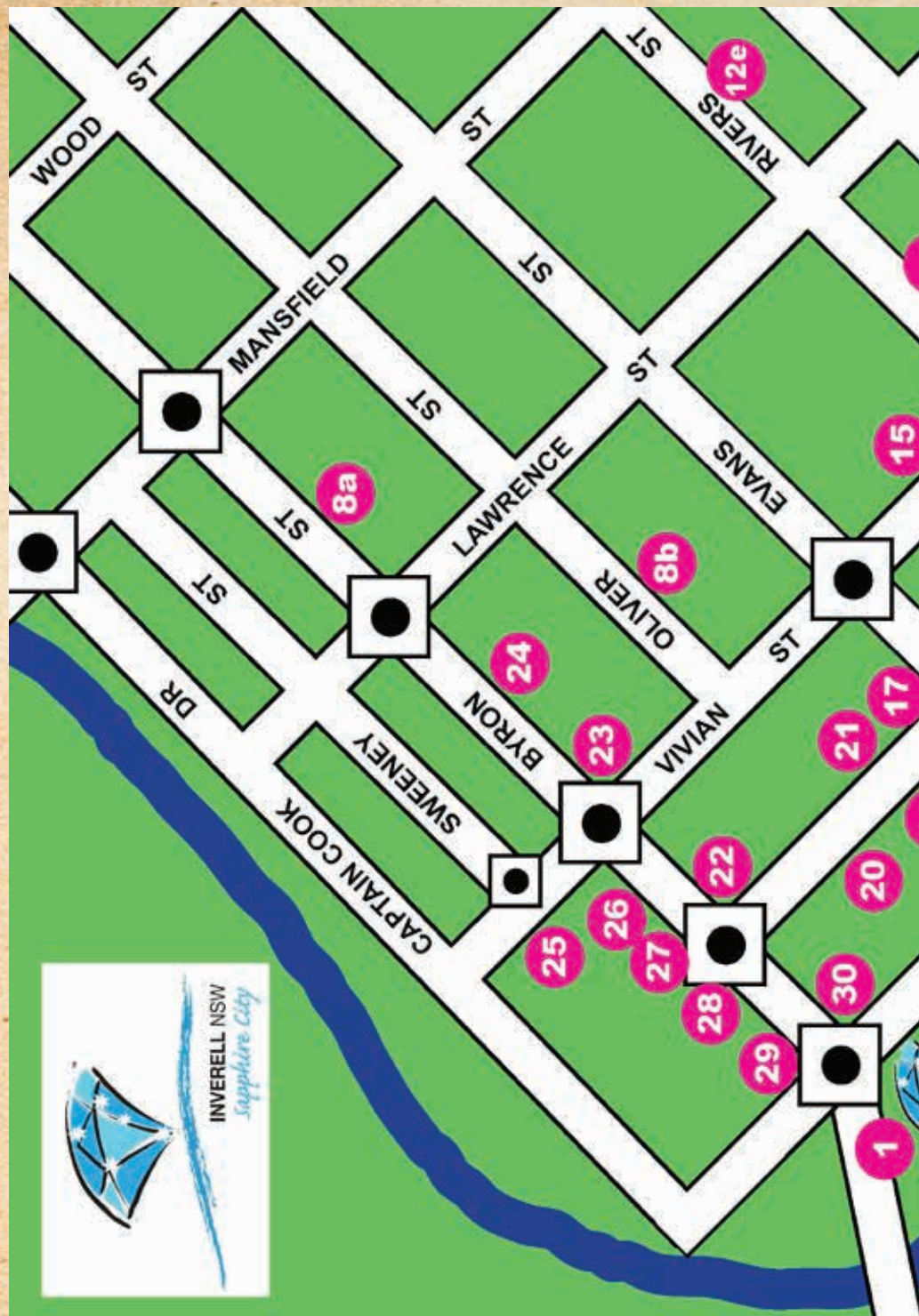
*Empire Hotel, Campbell Street,  
Inverell*

**29. Coles Supermarket** is on the site of a very fine theatre which had inside cast plaster decorations and chandelier. It could seat 1450 people and operated from 1927 to its closure in 1975. The site had previously been occupied by Colin Ross's store, home and a flour mill constructed in 1860's. In 1865 Colin Ross put in plate glass windows, probably the first in Inverell. *So the ladies could inspect all the paraphernalia of their wondrous wardrobes tastefully laid out.* Where the glass came from and how it was transported to Inverell remains a mystery. In 1889 Stephen Burge, a successful businessman from Parramatta, enlarged and re roofed the store as well as adding to its range of goods for sale. Eventually the Burge family built a new two storey emporium at the corner of Byron and Vivian Streets. Just inside Coles main entrance is a fragment of the basalt rock wall from the theatre. The rear of this site is the location of the first Inverell show held in 1868.

**30. The Empire Hotel** is the only building in the business area to retain its cast iron lace verandah and it provides a very attractive entrance to the town centre. Just at the rear of the hotel you will see the specially designed roof to admit light to the billiard room.

*Arthur MacAlpine original compiler of these notes would like to acknowledge his reliance on Elizabeth Wiedemann's A.M. two books, 'World of Its Own' and 'Holding Its Own.' Brochure created and designed by Tourism Inverell with help and guidance from the Inverell District Family History Group and its dedicated volunteers.*

*Enjoy...*







*Adventure awaits.....*



**Inverell Visitor Information Centre**

Campbell Street, Inverell

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