

Wardell Walkabout 2010

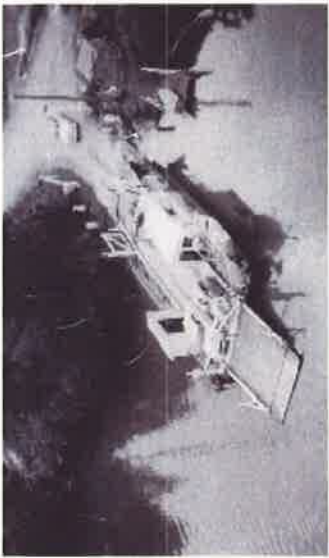


On 26 August 1828 Captain Henry Rous anchored the naval frigate HMS Rainbow at the mouth of the river which he named after the Duke of Richmond. With two Lieutenants he used a ship's tender to navigate the river as far as the Tukean Swamp. They noted thick undergrowth, tall palm trees and the dwellings of some Aborigines.

In the 1850s Wardell was a cedar getters settlement known as "Blackwall" where two sawmills operated and the river trade flourished. The place name was later changed to Wardell in preference for the Aboriginal name Bingal. Cedar harvesting, milling and shipping were the main occupations from 1843 and the river was the highway for commerce and personal travel. In 1859 the Town of Wardell was gazetted. It was a busy place with four hotels and two sawmills. As the availability of red cedar diminished, so the opportunity arose for the planting of sugar cane. Sugar remains the main industry that supports this area today.

1. Wardell Post Office.

A post office had been operating on the Southern bank since 1870, but opened here on the North side in 1875. Siegfried Sohn was the first postmaster. Telegraph facilities were established in 1879. 13,398 letters were handled in 1883 and the first telephone was installed in 1909. In 1919 the first telephone exchange was operating with ten subscribers. By 1967 there were 3 telephonists by day and one at night for the 188 subscribers.




Wardell Ferry on Northern approach c 1960



St Patrick's Church centenary 13 Nov 2010.



Wardell Police Station.



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2. Carter's Mill.

Carter's first mill was burnt down in the early 1880's but he rebuilt the mill. A writer for The Town and Country Journal observed in 1881 that 'The establishment is the finest on the river, and the machinery equal to any found in Sydney'. The mill also provided joinery and glazing services, and employed up to 40 men.

3. The Police Station.

The Wardell Station was opened in 1876. There was no lock up. Anyone disorderly was chained to a tree on the river bank. The first constable was Mr Beck and his uniform was normal clothing with a black hat and a purple band. Later a slab cell was built and painted black; it was known locally as "The Tar Pot."

4. Mayley House.

This Edwardian Art Nouveau style house was built by the Lunley family in 1910. The 100 year old building was moved here when the Pacific Highway was built. It is now a fully licensed restaurant devoted to fine dining in an elegant setting. Here stood Lunley's Butchery which supplied meat to the community for many years.

5. Wardell Brigade Fire Station.

Farmers and local residents banded together to fight fires. What equipment they had was stored under the stage in the Memorial Hall. In 1974 Tintenbar Council provided a trailer that was towed by local farmers and in November that year a branch of the Bush Fire Brigade was formed. The station now has 2 fire trucks to cover the Blackwall Area and deals with fires, storm damage and major traffic accidents.

6. Wardell Ferry.

For over sixty years, residents and travellers relied on the Wardell Ferry to cross the river. Initially privately owned, then operated by Tintenbar Shire until its removal in 1964, the Ferry accommodated people, animals and vehicles. Residents relied on the Ferry to get produce to markets, children to school and to go to church.

7. Bartlett's Wharf.

At one time a flotilla of row boats visited Bartlett's Store weekly for the Governmentally contracted supplies. The ration was 4 oz tea, 2lbs sugar and 4lbs flour per capita for each aborigine. Many residents bought mail order household goods from Sydney and had them delivered. In 1842 Mr Bartlett was a saddle and harness maker in

Wardell and in 1884 he purchased Mr. Seigfried Sohn's 1870s store. He conducted his general store and shipping agency for 35 years until 1919 and sold it to H.C. Burgett. The Bartlett family was one of the oldest and most highly respected in the Lower Richmond.

8. Government Wharf.

The North Coast Steam Company used this wharf. Steam ships made frequent trips between Wardell and Sydney bringing machinery and farming equipment. Returning steamers carried a variety of goods including locally caught fish packed in ice, sugar, hauled by horse teams from Rous, tallow, hides and timber.

9. Bartlett's/Attewell's Store.

Bartlett's Cash Store operated here for many years until 1958 when Geoff and Beverly Attewell bought the store from the Parry and Edwards partnership. They ran a successful business until 1992.

10. Fig Trees

The fig tree on this island, and those running down Sinclair Street that you will soon walk beneath, were planted to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI and in honour of servicemen who lost their lives in the 1st World War. The names of those planting the trees are listed and held by the Blackwall Historical Society.

11. Bank

Queensland National Bank of Australia opened in Wardell 1922 and closed 1949. From 1949 The National Bank of Australia opened twice weekly as an Agency of the Ballina Branch; reduced to 1 day a week for two hours 'till closure on 10th April 1990. It is now a private residence.

12. Royal Hotel

The Royal Hotel had three locations in Wardell. The 1st was opposite today's site 1873 - 1880. The second was on the river bank in front of the present hotel from 1880 to 1928 and in 1929 the present building was erected.

13. St Patrick's

The present church was built in 1910 and celebrates its centenary on 13 November this year. The Presbytery, which is now the Wardell Community Centre, had been built in 1904. A convent was built for the Nuns in 1912 and the old church converted into a school. The school flourished until the building of the Pacific Highway.

14. Axford House

Robert G Axford was a foundation executive officer of the Wardell Literary Institute School of Arts, through the years when the Wardell Memorial Hall was built. His plumbing business, based opposite the Royal Hotel, served the district for more than three decades. Ethel M. Axford was with the Wardell Red Cross through the years of the 1st and 2nd World Wars. She was a trusty member of the local Methodist Church.

15. Ruddle Service Station.

A busy service station and shop until the opening of the Wardell Bridge on 10 April 1964 necessitated the moving of the business to the site of the current BP Service Station. In 1991 the then owners Sue and John Wardrobe bought the Attewell's news-agency and combined that with the BP Service Station.

16. Richmond River Cane Growers Assn.

Sugar is the area's most important industry and the Association is the body that represents the growers. In the early days, cane was planted by hand and harvested by itinerate cane cutters. It was then hauled to derricks on the river bank and loaded into barges for transport to the mill at Broadwater. Australian is now one of the world's most efficient sugar producers.

17. St Barnabas Anglican Church.

The first church was built of timber in 1879. It was moved in 1897 and replaced by the present church in 1920. It is a heritage listed building and is a War Memorial with the pulpit given by the Women's Guild in memory of the fallen in World War 1.

18. Star Hotel.

This two storey hotel was built in 1878 by James Schofield Brown and was burnt down about 1896. It was one of four hotels that served a busy town. James was a champion wood chopper and won awards for Irish and Highland dancing.

19. Wardell Public School.

Wardell Public School opened in 1867. Heroes of the Great War 1914-1919 Honour roll is located in the Wardell Public School.

20. Wardell Memorial Hall.

Built in 1929 by members of the Wardell Literary Institute.