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Signed M. Pankhurst

Date 4-9-89

Interviewer Helen Finegan

REGIONAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION

TOPIC: THE HISTORY OF MORPETH
INTERVIEWER: HELEN FINEGAN
INTERVIEWEE: MILDRED PANKHURST
DATE: 28/8/89
LECTURER: Dr M. Henry

Interviewer: When did you live in the vicinity of Morpeth?

Interviewee: Well, I was born in 1914 and lived in Morpeth until I was twelve years old.

Interviewer: What school did you attend?

Interviewee: Morpeth public school.

Interviewer: And was it a fairly large school?

Interviewee: No. There was only about 150 when we went to school. We had four teachers.

Interviewer: Was that four teachers in the whole school?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So what did the female teachers teach?

Interviewee: Everything that you had to learn.

Interviewer: It was not just sewing or anything like that?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Was it mathematics?

Interviewee: Mathematics, yes.

Interviewer: How did you travel to school.

Interviewer: I walked. Sometimes I had a ride on a horse that they taught this horse to buck me off you see, the two girls riding on that horse, and they used to come up and call for me every morning.

Interviewer: How old were you when you started to work?

Interviewee: 14 I would say. I stayed home until I was in my early twenties and went into the army.

Interviewer: So what made you go into the army?

Interviewee: Oh, I just felt that I wanted to go, eh? I wanted to do something, you know of course everybody was patriotic and everybody was trying to work in the army and that. We had the bug didn't we? We all wanted to do things and I always wanted to be a nurse but I never thought I had the brains to do the exam and anyway I did do it afterwards.

Interviewer: Getting back to Morpeth's history, can you describe in your own words Morpeth's history?

Interviewee: Well,

Interviewer: Briefly,

Interviewee: Briefly, yes. Oh, well I think It was the first town of course. My great grandmother and my great aunt said that they used to ride down and row in the boats to Morpeth to do their shopping you know at the Campbell's store on the corner and the blacks used to throw the spears over their heads and they had to make certain that they rowed down the middle of the river so that they would be far enough away from the blacks because they would be on both sides of the river and they would throw the spears at them. That must have been frightening and so they came down there to do all the shopping and of course they made all their clothes by hand and aunt said that great great grandfather became a very wealthy man and he was a convict. Our great, great, great grandfather brought his son out to Australia and handed the property over to him after he died.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Interviewee: John Swan was one of the descendants who lives now at Dunmore House that is married to Uncle Malcolm Graham however Morpeth was the town of how many hotels?

Interviewer: Well, they said at one stage there were thirteen.

Interviewee: Oh, there was more than that. Did you say thirteen?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Oh, I think there was more than that.

Interviewer: But where would they put them?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: But I know there was that one right at the top, over the top of Queen's Wharf, you know up further towards the church houses, there were some of the church houses later on, now Dawsons lived there in a big two storey stone place. Well that was a hotel there and the other place that Analby's Inn where Dr Messmer is now, that was a hotel. Do you remember Harris hotel? That is where they

built Mills shop. When Mills came out of Campbell's Store they brought Harris Hotel and it was closed down. Now that hotel right down new Mills shop well it was new for us when we were going to school. Well, that is where Harris hotel used to be. I can always remember Mrs Harris sitting on the front verandah of a old stone place with a flat verandah, with all big flag stones all out the front and this Mrs Harris, two Mrs Harris I think they were and they used to sit out the front and there was Chambers House that was next door. Now, that must be Chambers old house.

Interviewer: Was the port of Morpeth freely used?

Interviewee: Oh, yes it was. The ships came up there all the time. The Archer did not go any further than Morpeth. They could not turn it around so they used to have to go down to Hinton down to the junction of the Paterson River and they had to turn in there see the Archer was so big and the Hunter was a big ship too. You know because it had to go to Sydney all the time to take all the produce down. I can remember my grandfather at Woodville, all the farms had their own wharves you see, and they would load the potatoes or the hay or such like on there, pumpkins and all those sort of things used to go down and they would come on to Morpeth and then they would go down to Millers Forest, they had a agency down there at one of Perretts Farms at Martin's Wharf and they would mow their hay. About two o'clock in the morning they would get up, at this brave hour, and mow the lucerne and then have it raked and made into bales by two o'clock to put on the boat at two o'clock and so that it would be in Sydney at six o'clock in the morning. All the dairy farmers in Sydney, you know some of our cousins had dairies in Sydney quite a few of them, and they used to come, that is what provided the milk for the city, and they would come into town and buy the hay straight off the ships and it was green lucerne hay you see and you could not keep it in the shed because it would burn, you know catch fire. I used to get frightened and dad used to get worried about sometimes about the hay getting hot and that it might be a bit green if he went into the shed.

Interviewer: Where did all the stock go? Did it go to Sydney?

Interviewee: Yes, it went Sydney and you know they say that in the early days they had the wool and that came out from Moree and all those places to Morpeth. That

is what brought especially afterwards because the railway, I am getting a bit ahead of myself I shouldn't talk about the railway yet because we are still on the ships, but with the shipping all the farmers sent their stuff by ship didn't they and all on the Paterson River. Oranges came from the Paterson, manderines and all those citrus fruits. My father was on a boat. He drove the factory launch~~s~~s carrying butter, milk and cream up the Paterson and William's River and we used to go on trips with him I never been on trips with him on the Williams but I had been quite a few times on the Paterson. Of course, we used to go up to our grandfathers and got off at the Wharf, Woodville Wharf. They had a great big high wharf for the ships that used to roll the bales of hay, they called it the Government Wharf, and then they had going down the side they had a slide. They carried one can (of cream or butter or milk) in one hand and in the other one they would put it down on the slide straight to Mr Atchison and my dad. It was very interesting. All the people came up to Morpeth in the very early days,

Interviewer: From Sydney?

Interviewee: The pioneers, yes. They got off the big ships in Sydney and they got on the ships and came up here into Raymond Terrace as well as Morpeth. They would go away by taking them in drays. All the German people came out at what one stage, I think about the 1850's the German people came, and they helped them out with the vineyards you see. Nearly all Branxton and up to Singleton there was the Bendies, I cannot remember all the names, I know Hoffmans etc. all lived up in that area and they all came out by ship. Some of the people, the Burgs so they were on the Seaham area and I think that is where the first vineyard was. The Irelands had the first vineyard on the Williams River and I think the old Mr Ireland had something to do with the Winchester Abbey. He was a Dean of the Abbey or something like that and he came to Australia and of course ministers were eventually given great grants of land. So he started the big vineyard and also next door to them was the Charmicheals. Mr Charmicheals had a very big vineyard and apparently he was driving his fiancée in a buggy after a few drinks and went driving around the property and oh, they had a very big grant of land because they were very wealthy people. Through some of his carelessness being drunk it capsized and his fiancée was killed. He chopped down all the vines and emptied

all the bottles out of the cellars. He found one fellow drinking the wine and he sacked him immediately. He then went off to war and was killed. Steggles brought one of their properties. There were two and the Ralstons and the Grahams, not the Grahams from Woodville - no relation to them. I think the Grahams had Felspar that was at Seaham and the other place was the Ralstons. Dad said that it was a terrific vineyard in those days. He used to often talk to us about what a wonderful man Mr Charmicheal was. Those people all came up by boat. There was an old Mr Smith at Raymond Terrace that had been a ship's captain and he would not deal off anybody that didn't get their groceries and things or their provisions brought up by boat,

Interviewer: To Morpeth?

Interviewee: No, to Raymond Terrace in those days you see nearly all the ships were built at Clarencetown.

Interviewer: William the Fourth was built...

Interviewee: Yes...The King family built the first ship on the Paterson River and it was the first ship built in Australia and it went over to China. My mother used to always thought that it was a wonderful thing. In the first place alot of people wrote up the histories and never mentioned the Kings because they didn't know about that. Since of course, Mrs Card was very pleased. I wrote a bit about this in the paper and Mrs Card was very pleased to hear that because it was her grandfather who had built the ship. Mum said they had a job launching it. They launched it down well a long way and of course it went into the Hunter from you know down that end of the Paterson River and went down into the Hunter to get it turned around I suppose.

Interviewer: Getting back to the question of the port of Morpeth, was very much coal exported?

Interviewee: No, I didn't know of any and we never saw any coal in those days.

Interviewer: Mostly produce?

Interviewee: Yes, it was mostly produce. Well, I know what we did see, the timber trucks. Lots of timber used to come but whether it went on the ships I don't know but I can tell you alot of the names of the ships: The Anna Maria, would that be alright?

Interviewer: Yes, keep going.

Interviewee: The Waraneen, the Archer, the Paterson the Guthrie and the Gwyder.

Interviewer: Do you remember the ship named The Sophia Jane?

Interviewee: Oh no. That was well before my time. I think the Sophia Jane brought most of the pioneers to Australia. One of the first English ships that probably brought, I was going to say probably convicts, but they were not convicts that came by her ship I don't think.

Interviewer: The first settlers?

Interviewee: The first settlers, yes. Alot of those people you know as said before they went by dray all the way up north, north-west and everywhere, they must have been brave people.

Interviewer: Looking at Morpeth's history in general can you remember any old famous buildings that were standing and may still be standing?

Interviewee: Yes. Oh well, the police station, the courthouse, Campbell's store, The School of Arts, St. James Church where we were all christened there so we ought to remember it.

Interviewer: Can you remember any stories about these buildings?

Interviewee: What kind of stories?

Interviewer: Oh I don't know, anything?

Interviewee: Mr Clark worked at Campbell's and Mr Ralph Clarke, Billy Clarke's father, was the manager. His great grandfather was my great great grandfather's one of his friends and he drove the punt across the Paterson River. They had to do this from Lemongrove across to Old Banks on the opposite sides of the river, over Woodville side of the river. I didn't know this that Bill Clarke took me to school and we went off to school and we had been friends all our lives and we didn't know all this was in our family history all about the Clarkes and the Swans. Apparently they were some of the early settlers in Paterson and there was a Lt. Ralph Clarke who came to Australia in the first fleet so I don't know whether there was any connection with them but he went back to England anyhow but this other Ralph Clarke there have been

generations of Ralph Clarke's still living in Morpeth.

Interviewer: Are there any generations of Lt. Close?

Interviewee: No. There is not. Apparently the Greens from Lochinvar and you know, Joyce Green the one that lives up on Campbell's Hill there, that's how Green Street got its name I think that Mrs Close was a Green, no relation to us.

Interviewer: In fact, it was called Green Hills before Morpeth?

Interviewee: Yes that's right.

Interviewer: And before that it was named an Aboriginal name, Iluluang.

Interviewee: Yes that's right. I seen that in history books. Of course, I am in the Maitland Historical Society. You know I suppose we had it drummed into us when we were tiny kids all our lives and our grandfather and my great aunt told me most of the stories.

Interviewer: What kind of shops or factories were operating at the earliest time that you can remember?

Interviewee: Well, the earliest time I can remember was going up to Campbell's shop and Mr Mullens used to work there. I can remember him being in Campbell's shop well I was very little but I can remember one time when the Mills came back after Campbell's went. Mr and Mrs Mills had that shop and Mrs Mill made me a black and white checked dress. We used to have a dentist, Mr Tracey.

Interviewer: Was there a blacksmith?

Interviewee: Oh there was how many blacksmiths? There was Worbeys, Tobbins, and across the road there was a Mr Searles. Nobody else.

Interviewer: And what Factories or Foundries were there?

Interviewee: Foundries were Sims, D. Sims and Sons. Mr Duncan Sims. They were people from England and most of the men when I was young worked at Sims or the factories.

Interviewer: What did they do, what kind of factory was it?

Interviewee: Oh, they made stoves, they made farm machinery and what else did they make? Oh, all sorts of things. Oh, I know all the wrought iron that used to be

around the houses. Yes, all that lovely wrought iron was made, most of it made by them. They made hay presses and all sorts of farm machinery.

Interviewer: Did you or did you not attend church?

Interviewee: Oh at St. James, Morpeth, yes. Sunday School at St. James.

Interviewer: Was it a large church?

Interviewee: Not really large.

Interviewer: Did you have a male or a female minister?

Interviewee: Oh male, yes. It was unheard of for women.

Interviewer: What was the situation like in Morpeth in the days of the depression?

Interviewee: It was pretty bad. You see in 1930 they used to, we were living out on the farm then, come to our place with no boots. You know, they didn't even have much food. They used to give ten shillings a week or twelve shillings a week depending on what they used to do. There was a fellow working for us and his name was Clifford Zinn and he came from South Africa and he was trained for a doctor, he was training to be a doctor and he wanted to get away from it because he didn't want to do that. I feel that there is a Clifford Zinn in Sydney that was the head man in the Telecom, do you remember? And there is another Inns too just recently in the head of something playing on the news today. Now I bet anything that they are probably his sons. Well, he came to our place and had in his arm three suits as he came up over the Hawkesbury River and the train was coming so they had to quickly get down and hang down, this was on the railway bridge they were coming across, because the other bridge was not there in those days (they had to come across the Wiseman's Ferry and any traffic that came otherwise the railway bridge, or the planks were on their path). They had to drop down and hang on to those while the train went over the top of them and when the train were over the top of them they could pull themselves up and sneak on. He threw some of his clothes into the Hawkesbury River because he couldn't carry them. When he arrived at our place he arrived in a great big heavy tweed suit and it was boiling hot weather. Anyhow dad said that if any fellows that came to our place they were coming to work on the farm, but not without good

boots. That was the first thing he used to was buy them a pair of boots. Get them made at Paynes in Maitland for thirteen shillings a pair and they were hand-made and you know he used to pick the leather and he used to have all the boy's boots made there. Those fellows that were on the dole in those days they had no boots. They think the depression is on today but nothing is like what it was in those days. They were lucky to get anything to eat. They got the dole. One friend of ours said, Mr Paget of Miller's Forest, well I think I will go on the dole, because you can sleep in for breakfast and you can have two meals a day! That was his idea of earning a good time. But anyhow the poor beggars they didn't get much at all.

Interviewer: You talk alot about males, what about females how did they cope?

Interviewee: Well, females in those days did alright because the women only did housework or something like that. Mum had young girls working for her they used to wash up and mind the baby and that sort of thing for her, twelve shillings a week they used to get. Of course twelve shillings a week in those days would be as good as what the average girl would get today in an office job. I think it would be the same. They did alright, I think. You know, money was very scarce in those days and you could buy an awful lot of things.

Interviewer: Can you remember when Maitland and its districts were flooded?

Interviewee: Oh yes, many floods. We used to go down the Black Road and that used to always have water laying over that road so much. I hardly remember it being dry very often. There seemed to have been alot of floods. Well, in the 1930's flood was when my father moved from one place to another place at Miller's Forest (it was a very big farm we went on to) and there was a flood, 1930 flood, before got into the house the flood came and we had some of the flood people up living in the house because there was nobody there in the empty house. The boys and dad went down and got them in the boats. Dad was in charge of the flood boats from our top part of the world (Miller's Forest) and the boys used to help him go rowing down to see if all the people were alright and if anyone had water in their houses you know for them to have to get out. My aunt, and all of our relations had to get out and most of them had to climb up onto the roof because water got in their

house and they didn't know what was going to happen to them and they started singing out and dad heard them and it was out of dad's part to go and help but anyhow they went down to see them but they nearly tipped over a fence in the middle of a tree at Miller's Forrest and we went over this creek and the boat was balancing just like that. Dad said that he thought it was the end of the lot of us. Anyhow they managed to get it off the fence and got away alright but they used to have to row all around to see if the people were alright.

Interviewer: I don't know if you have ever heard about a little baby being.....

Interviewee: In the 1920 flood?

Interviewer: Yes, and the name was Dorothy Flood?

Interviewee: They called her Flood, yes.

Interviewer: They didn't know where her parents were.

Interviewee: She came down on a stack of hay.

Interviewee: You know, that was a wonderful thing wasn't it. I think it was in Maitland they found her. It must have been around there somewhere, near the Stockers garages. Mum said that Stockers farm used to come out onto High Street there where their garage is now and mum's uncle his farm was next door to Stockers so they called it Pott's Point there and people say that is the bend actually I suppose it is near the bend but it is not called that it was called Potts Point but it joins Bolwarra of course. And then we had another flood in 1930 flood, then we had a terrible drought and in 1931 we had another flood which was quite as bad. Of course, the really big one was in 1940 and 1949 and 1955 were big also. I came home from the army, 1946 was another big flood, that was when my father died and we were wondering what we were going to do and how we were going to have the funeral if anything happened. Anyhow the flood had gone down quite a bit. Vic had to go up as he had his cattle here somewhere and he came up and stayed overnight at the hospital but it was terrible then in 1946. Beverly Green took bad down at Miller's Forest and she was only a little girl and she had a twisted bowel and they had bring her up on the army duck over all the flood. It was a bad business then and Dr Klien was staying at the Maitland hospital and he was

frightened that he didn't want to operate on her because it could have been the pains that was pneumonia and he didn't know whether to start an operation or not. Anyway she did end up with the operation and it ended up being a twisted bowel. She was very lucky that she was able to get over it.

Interviewer: Was their tension around the community when Australia was at war?

Interviewee: Oh yes, I should think there would have been. Everybody worked hard for the war. There was always something on every day. We had at Miller's Forest we had to learn first aid and all that sort of thing. I remember when we went up to Lochinvar and the Japs came into the war they had to pick out all the men to help burn the country out, because they thought the Japs would come in and they had everything planned. They were even going to take the cattle out through the mountains out there over to Lochinvar but I know dad was one that was directing the cattle because they said that he knew the country so well. All the local boys, or most of them did.

Interviewer: Getting back to the history of Morpeth again, what type of public transport was available for the people and was the Morpeth line still existing in your younger days?

Interviewee: Oh yes. It's not that many years since it went off, thirty five years ago. But you know, in the very early days, from the history books I have read, different men ran horse drawn coaches and they led the people to the ships and they also met the ships in Newcastle and brought them up to here. Bowthorne was one of the early settled places and the Sparkes family, an old Maitland family, they had the biggest grant of land right down near Hexham somewhere right up to Thornton.

Interviewer: Did you personally know Les Darcy, the renowned boxing champion?

Interviewee: No, I didn't. I know his brother because his brother was married to a cousin of mine. My mother went to school with him. Apparently mum's cousin's father used to have a blacksmith's shop near the Belmore Bridge practically on the banks of the river there and he used to make all the farm machinery and all that sort of thing too. Anyhow, Charlie Butler worked with his father and Les Darcy worked for Uncle Willie too and he

taught Charlie to box. When Charlie was I think over in France in the first world war, he said that saved his life; something that Les Darcy had taught him. When they used to have their lunch hour in their lunchtime, it wouldn't have been an hour in those days they were never allowed that much time off, apparently he taught Charlie alot of tricks in a fighting game and so it saved Charlie's life over there so he was very lucky.

Interviewer: With the closure of factories, the railway line and destruction of some of the buildings, what effect did these things have on the towns?

Interviewee: Oh, it must have had a bad effect. People went away from there to work. When I was a child there was so many men working on the wharves at Morpeth and the railway had quite a few men working and down at the factory at Sims, that's when I was a child and so therefore the town was fairly good in those days because when the railway came to Morpeth it was supposed to be the best paying railway in the state because of the taking away of the hay. So when this line went away, gradually the ships went away.

Interviewer: Why do you think alot of these buildings and the railways closed down?

Interviewee: What was that question again?

Interviewer: Why do you think all these factories, I mean suddenly the town went quiet?

Interviewee: Well, what happened down at the wharves there were lots of Prescott sheds that had stacked the hay and would go off to Sydney later on. These were Sydney companies and they came up to Morpeth to build these sheds there were sheds all around the place with hay stored in them. Some of those were pulled down but yet there is one down at the wharves still there and I think they have a kitchen place in there now. In a Morpeth factory, well a fellow works down there where he brought some kind of engineering business which they sell bolts and all sorts of things like that and of course the factories got there produce store and that belongs to the Hunter Valley Dairy Company and so that alot of the buildings were taken up with different things. Sims was all pulled down.

Interviewer: In your opinion do you think that considerable changes have been made in Morpeth in contrast to the days at the beginning of this century for

example are there more or less farmers and residents?

Interviewee: More or less farmers, I don't know. I suppose the farms are still working and are still going as good farms, some wonderful farms around that Hinton side and apparently now the Wrights used to make the best brooms in Morpeth and they were so darn heavy that you could hardly carry them. I don't know whether this fellow, he has only been experimenting on them, but he starting to grow millet again. Everybody grew millet didn't they and nobody grows millet at all now. Now when you are going around the farms. I was with my son one day, Les, and he said that is saccharin but I said no that's millet and he doesn't know one thing from another because he is only young and he had not seen those things growing. That's what the local boys used to do. All the town boys used to come out and cut the millet and that was a way of earning a living. Oh, and it wasn't just the town boys alot of young boys from Duckenfield from the farms up there they had one or two stay at home and the rest would go off getting jobs cutting millet and picking potatoes and all those different jobs.

Interviewer: Residents, do you think there are less residents or more?

Interviewee: No oh, there is more. There is alot more houses, see there are all those houses at the top end of James Street. I didn't think there would be any more room for houses in Morpeth. Now, what was a well laid out, it was a well laid out town. It was alot better than Maitland, that was never laid out. You know Maitland was only bullock trucks that is why Maitland has got such a long main street.

Interviewer: Well, I think that is about it.

Helen Finegan
Australian History
Dr M. Henry
Handed in: 6/9/89

This taped interview covers the history of Norpeth's childhood days of the interviewee, Mildred Pankhurst, to her present day recollections. The interviewee's interpretation of Norpeth's history generalises around its port, other wharves along the main rivers (the Hunter, Paterson and the Williams) and the trading [survived] between Norpeth and the rest of the colony.

SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT

OF MILDRED PANKHURST

Mrs Pankhurst is in her early eighties and to this present date she is an active member of the Maitland Historical Society. She has a wonderful memory of her childhood days attending Norpeth Public school [and] other memories right up to the time she joins the army. Although she was away working she still visited Norpeth on a number of eventual occasions. She is able to recall Norpeth's heyday when it was a busy town with an array of hotels and visitors [which] were the sailors from the ships anchored at the port. She can also remember how the men worked at the ports and on the ships.

Mrs Pankhurst reminisced the days when the magnificent steam ships came to the port of Norpeth. These ships assisted the settlers and markets with the trading of goods between Sydney and Norpeth. Also Mrs Pankhurst's father worked on a boat which delivered milk, butter and other dairy products to a lot of private ports along the Paterson and Williams River; she also went along with her father on these trips.

Mrs Pankhurst's family recollection is quite astounding. She was able to recollect alot of stories her Great Aunt had told her. This taped interview covers the history of Morpeth from the early childhood days of the Interviewee, Mildred Pankhurst, to her present day recollections. The interviewee's interpretation of Morpeth's history generates around its port, other wharves along the main rivers (the Hunter, Paterson and the Williams) and the trading [succumbed] between Morpeth and the rest of the colony.

There. The inns and hotels accommodated the new settlers and Mrs Pankhurst is in her early eighties and to this present date she is an active member of the Maitland Historical Society. She has a wonderful memory of her childhood days attending Morpeth Public school ^{and} other memories right up to the time she joins the ¹ army. Although she was away working she still visited Morpeth on a number of eventful occasions. She is able to recall Morpeth's heydays where it was a busy town with so many inns, hotels and visitors (which were the sailors from the ships anchored at the port). She can also remember how the men worked at the ports and on the ships.

the allies. Another boat of survival was significant at the Mrs Pankhurst reminisced ¹ the days when the magnificent steam ships came to the port of Morpeth. These ships assisted the settlers and markets with the trading of goods between Sydney and Morpeth. Also Mrs Pankhurst's father worked on a boat which delivered milk, butter and other dairy products to alot of private ports along the Paterson and Williams River; she also went along with her father on these trips.

Mrs Pankhurst's family recollection is quite astounding. She was able to recollect alot of stories her Great Aunt had told her about the early days when the town was a growing settlement.

Mrs Pankhurst remembered quite plainly the types of buildings that were standing and those that still exist. Alot of shops were situated in Morpeth and according to the interviewee, people travelled by boats to Morpeth to do their shopping and trading there. The inns and hotels accommodated the new settlers and the visiting sailors that arrived by the trading ships.

| After Morpeth formed a new settlement within the colony, the people of the town faced harsh battles in the years of the depression, droughts, flood and wars. The majority of people survived on the farms by working and growing their own food. The people of its community formed a close bond at the times when the world was at war. The community formed organizations and helped fellow citizens by making products for the rest of the country and they also sent products made by local factories overseas to the allies. Another bond of survival was significant at the times when Morpeth and the surrounding districts were flooded. Again organized groups were formed to help those people who were stranded in floods.

Morpeth today, is still a town that survives on the memories of the past. Eventhough, it is not as busy when it was a popular settlement surrounded by its own port, it now consists of old

antique stores, art galleries, old dwellings built at the time
of settlement and is populated with local farmers. '

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Helen Finegan
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REGIONAL HISTORY RESEARCH PAPER

TOPIC:

HISTORY OF MORPETH

SUMMARY

This paper deals with the history of Morpeth. It elapses back to the beginning of its settlement to this present date. It also comprises of some information about its surrounding districts and how the town became so heavily populated, back in the early days of settlement, due to the tremendous trading capabilities of the port of Morpeth. Comparing it to those busy, prosperous days, the town of Morpeth is now described as a quiet, sleeping town, wakening up to its vast history in order to survive historically.

The history of Morpeth's settlement gathers back to the early part of the 18th Century. It originated as a private town back in 1822 where it was owned by Lieutenant E. Close of the 48th Regiment due to his new appointment as Officer-in-Charge of Public Works in Newcastle. Morpeth initially grew as a small town to a densely populated settlement because of its adequate location. It began as the "head of navigation of the Hunter River"¹, developing as the port for the Hunter River mainly due to its "comparative ease of navigation from Newcastle"².

The land originally chosen for settlement by Lt. Close in the vicinity of Morpeth consisted of sandstone ridges and useless swamps. After complaints to the Governor of the colony, Lt. Close was offered a grant of land which consisted of river flats situated seven miles along the Hunter River and back to what was to become East Maitland. Lt. Close named his piece of property Illaluang, which was the Aboriginal name for the area. Later it became Green Hills and then finally named Morpeth.

In the early 1800's, Morpeth was a town which serviced the early settlers. With the arrival of convicts landing in Sydney,

¹Newspaper article in the Newcastle Herald, Reliving Morpeth's heyday, (p. unknown).

²D'Ombraïn, A.F. Historic Buildings of Maitland, District: Maitland, Morpeth, Raymond Terrace, Stroud & Ellalong areas, 1981, p.6.

Morpeth began as a place where some of the convicts were passed on to their assigned masters and immigrants were granted properties within certain areas and assigned to employers. The settlers helped the town and the Hunter Valley to expand quite dramatically over a period of time because they were forced to settle into uncontrolled territory with their herds and flocks. "By Proclamation in the Government Gazette dated January 4th, 1866, Morpeth, on the petition of 151 persons resident in the district was proclaimed a Municipality"³.

The port of Morpeth "had developed in 1827-1830"⁴, because there were no railway links so there was an advent of vessels that sailed up the Hunter River carrying cargo and passengers, who were discharged at Morpeth. This trip was arduous for some sailors who had to use the tide as far as it could carry them, tying up and waiting for the next incoming tide, or with rowing boats out towing, or with a rope ashore and those on board keeping the vessel in the channel. Most vessels returned produce consisting mainly of wool, hides and tallow back to markets. Around this era, Morpeth began as a trading port for the new settlers.

In 1831, an event took place that was to have an enormous impact on the colony and in particular, the Hunter Valley. The 'Sophia

³Morpeth Progress Association. The Morpeth Story, 1821-1971.

⁴Ibid.

Jane' had been sent to Capetown, where it was placed on sale by her builders and Captain Biddulph. It failed to attract a satisfactory bid. They decided to sail to Australia and offer her for sale and was immediately sold and placed on the Sydney to Morpeth run where it became Australia's first ocean-going steamer. This method of transport by the 'Sophia Jane' proved to be a saving in time and in terms of economy compared to the time-consuming drays which travelled to Sydney in 17 days, in contrast to the ships taking only 13 hours to travel. This event marked the Hunter Valley in this part of the century, far ahead of the rest of the colony in terms of trading capabilities and economic values. This result produced market settlers flocking to the area of Morpeth.

The 'Sophia Jane' was followed a few months later by William the Fourth which was the first steamship built in the colony. An ex-convict built this ship in Clarencetown. Incidentally, there were two paddle wheel steamships trading last century between the Sydney to Morpeth run who were named 'Maitland'. Maitland is at present a surrounds the district of Morpeth.

Exports from Morpeth rivalled any port within Australia. The town provided a very high employment rate and became a vibrant, bustling frontier town. At one stage it boasted the largest store outside Sydney. It also allowed a continual stream of land traffic to come and go allowing such transportation as bullock waggons to bring produce and take back supplies and equipment to

markets. "An official ~~se~~sensus of traffic, taken in the 1850's, passing out of Morpeth between noon and 1pm was: 14 bullock waggons, 27 drays and 17 private conveyances, along a road built by an iron gang"⁵.

The town thrived with many inhabitants in around the 1850's. As well as the town having 635 inhabitants, it also yielded an episcopal church, a chapel, a ladies school, two day schools, inns, mills, factories and many other large stores. Custom offices were established about the same time. In Largs, a surrounding district of Morpeth, ~~it~~ houses one of the first of four public schools built in Australia established under the National System in 1848 and is still continually operating. Also in 1848, the jail situated in Maitland, near Morpeth, received its first unwilling guests and "the last flogging was that of Henry Clark on April 15, 1905"⁶.

A renowned boxer, Les Darcy, had lived in Morpeth and had worked in a blacksmith's shop there. He died in 1917, after his last fight, and his funeral was the largest ever to be attended by those people living in and around Maitland who respected him.]

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It was reported to be "the most wonderful ever to be seen in the district"⁷.

The railway came to Morpeth in 1864 which travelled wool, wheat and coal to the port allowing exports to increase. Although the railway assisted those who needed money to work and allowed increases in export, there was some controversy with this line as it was thought that it was depriving Newcastle of the wool trade. By 1953, the Morpeth line finally closed with the "advent of lorries and buses and sealed road and modern transport impedimenta sealed the fate of the line"⁸. The Department of Public Works depot now occupies the site of the once popular railway station.

With the closures of factories, foundries and the railway line, Morpeth soon became, through a lack of business also, "a sleepy residential annex to the surrounding city of Maitland"⁹. At one stage as Morpeth was expanding, Maitland was a non-existent town but now the towns have reversed in terms of popularity and

⁷A Town to be Laid Out, Maitland 1829-1979, Mercury Print, Maitland, p.23.

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"The little river township has thrived, but the proprietor wanted business tact and drove trade to West Maitland instead of encouraging it to Morpeth. No doubt that if the late Lt. Close had properly laid out his estate and sold every other allotment, and let the others on building leases a fine Revenue would be enjoyed by his survivors"¹⁰.

Also with the introduction of motor vehicles, lorries, new railway links being set up elsewhere in the colony to transport all sorts of goods to other parts rather than by the old traditional shipping methods such as the Morpeth to Sydney steamship run. Therefore, people moved away from the town into other areas of the colony which began to thrive, such as Newcastle and even Maitland grew as an annex to the once popular town.

Although these days, the town thrives on its historical and heyday past with most of its historical buildings, such as Closebourne House built by Lt. Close, still standing for inspections by the general public. Today, the surrounding districts of Morpeth ought to be proud of the town for flourishing so quickly back in the pioneer days which resulted in the great build up of settlement and trading for its region.

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Helen Finegan
Australian History
Dr M. Henry
Handed in: 6/9/89

This paper deals with the history of Morpeth. It begins back to the beginning of its settlement to this present date. It also contains a number of maps about its surrounding districts and how the town has developed over the years back in the early days of settlement. See on the numerous trading capabilities of the port of Morpeth.

REGIONAL HISTORY RESEARCH PAPER

TOPIC:

HISTORY OF MORPETH

These days, perhaps today, the town of Morpeth is now described as a quiet, sleepy town, whereas up to its very history, it used to be a busy port.

SUMMARY

The history of Morpeth's settlement goes back to the early part of the 18th Century. This paper deals with the history of Morpeth. It elapses back to the beginning of its settlement to this present date. It also comprises of some information about its surrounding districts and how the town became so heavily populated, back in the early days of settlement, due to the tremendous trading capabilities of the port of Morpeth. Comparing it to those busy, prosperous days, the town of Morpeth is now described as a quiet, sleeping town, wakening up to its vast history' in order to survive historically.

... of ... by Lt. Clove in the vicinity of Morpeth ... After completion of the colony, Lt. Clove was offered a grant of land which consisted of river flats situated seven miles along the Hunter River ... to become Earl Halliday. Lt. Clove named his place of property Ellalong, which was the Aboriginal name for the river, later it became Great Hills and was finally named Morpeth.

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