

**REMOVAL
TO THE
NORTH-WEST
COAST OF
TASMANIA**



THE RIVER LEVEN SETTLEMENT

From the summit of Mount Roland the surveyor J.E. Calder could see nothing 'but one apparently boundless ocean of forests'. These dense forests impeded exploration so much that up until about 1848 the only European inhabitants in West Devon were the gangs of splitters who opened up rough tracks into the bush, and the occasional escaped convict who found his way there via the coastal beaches.

Messrs Adey and Goldie of the Van Diemen's Land Company explored the Leven River for about five miles from its mouth in 1826; Governor Arthur made an excursion in 1829 while visiting the VDL Company establishment at Circular Head; and George Robinson, the 'Conciliator' passed through in 1830.

N.L. Kentish, government surveyor, had cleared a track through the Forth and Leven forests in 1843 but the rivers and creeks remained impassable.

Crown Land was first offered for rental at the Leven on 1 July 1846. Alexander Clerke and E.B. Walker, both of Longford, were the first men to rent ground there. Clerke rented out 100 acres on the western side of the river to John Parsons. Part of another 100-acre parcel of land was rented out to William Smith. This land was between the mouth of the Gawler River and the future township.

In 1848 Andrew Risby settled on the east side of the river on land about a mile from the township, on what was to become known as the Castra Road. He was followed a few months later by W.B. Button. At about the same time the west side of the river was being settled by E.B. Walker, the Jowett brothers and William Smith. The latter, about 1849, moved to the east side of the river, in company with Mr Lynch, to settle on land belonging to Alexander Clerke.¹ The first crop planted was potatoes, and was shipped in small vessels for Melbourne. These small craft would sail up and into the Gawler, where James Fogg had his farm, and several miles further up the Leven River for palings.

In these early days it wasn't unknown for the cutter bringing stores to the settlement to be delayed. With rations low families lived on potatoes. No doubt there was great relief when the booming signal of the old cannonade, which lay on the river bank in the township for many

¹ Weekly Courier Wednesday 16 November 1927: Ulverstone and Surroundings: the days that were and are. Material for this article was supplied by W. McDonald, John Smith, and Miss Lynch.

years, was heard. The firing of the old gun was the signal to the district that a vessel had arrived.²

Mr. H.A. Nichols, writing of the splitters in the 1840s, elaborates on this story:

*The river Leven, where the town now is, was not inhabited. Boats arriving for timber loaded up the river, either about a mile up near Gawler Junction or at Manning's Jetty. As the splitters were in the bush, boats arriving with provisions and to load let them know by "bush telegraph." I will quote one instance just 81 years ago. Captain R. Tate came up the river in the early morning, stopped at Sandy Bay, some distance inland from the present wharf, and filled the water casks from a little creek. Meanwhile a cannon on the Leven bank was loaded with powder and fired. Up on the hill where Cr. Yaxley now resides, George Lewis, a young settler, hearing the gun report, mounted on top of a high stump and loudly cracked a stockwhip. This was heard away in the Gawler Valley by another settler and repeated by him, and so all the splitters and others were enabled to meet the vessel and get their supplies.*³

The discovery of gold at Bendigo in 1851 had created a trading boom—albeit short lived—in palings and farm produce (mainly potatoes) which encouraged settlers to West Devon. However many men were lured to the mainland and the Government of the day attempted to hold back the exodus with the introduction of the Pre-emptive Right regulations of 1851.

Under these regulations from one hundred acres to a maximum of six hundred and forty acres could be taken up conditional on paying thirty shillings per one hundred acres per year for ten years, after which land was to be paid for at £1 per acre. This meant that five hundred acres cost only £7 10s per year, and the land could be relinquished at any time. The maximum area was reduced to five hundred acres after a few months. The term of payment of rents did not commence until the blocks were surveyed.⁴

The Pre-emptive Right regulations were abolished in 1854 and under the new Waste Land Act of 1858 selectors could take any quantity of land not exceeding three hundred and twenty acres for agricultural purposes. Payment to be made in annual instalments over a period of years. Soon after this law came into force the survey of five-hundred-acre Pre-emptive Right blocks had been executed and a call was made on the lessees for payment of rent. This led to the forfeiture of nearly all the back blocks in West Leven.⁵

Paling cutters had been the first white men to build at the Leven: temporary huts in the bush, easy prey to the all-consuming flames of bush fires. Some of these men may have stayed on with the idea of settling permanently—the 26 houses or huts recorded in the Valuation Roll of 1858 were obviously not all built in that year.

When the first valuation roll was published in May 1858 most of the land taken up had been under the pre-emptive rights regulations. Land designated River Leven was west of the river, and made up of about 9,527 acres of land. Here there were only seven buildings—ranging from huts, to houses and offices, Occupiers of their land were Bishop, Parsons, Walker, Jowett (2), Clerke, and Manning.

² Ibid.

³ Advocate: Tuesday 21 November 1939 pg 5.

⁴ Fenton, James (1964 reprint) *Bush Life in Tasmania*.

⁵ Ibid.

Land taken up at River Gawler (seven blocks) was in parcels of 500 acres, Bernard Lynch and William Crabtree had both established houses on their blocks. The other settler was James Fogg who rented 400 acres from his mother Mrs Charlotte Dumaresq of Hadspen, part of 640 acres.

The most populous area was described as east of the Gawler. Ten blocks were of 200 acres or more and seventeen blocks were from 128 acres down to 20 acres. These smaller blocks were mostly settled by genuine settlers who remained long in the district—Lewis, Elliott, McDonald, Farman, Lines, Brooks, and Williams.

Most of the 500-acre blocks were held by speculators, but William Mason of Longford, and the Clerke family, also of Longford, had already let farms to tenants. George McDonald the younger had purchased 640 acres in this part, keeping 128 acres for himself and selling four similar sized lots. This land would eventually be traversed by the Castra Road but was virgin forest in 1858.

Very little activity was taking place in the township. In May 1858 only eleven allotments had been sold and none of the owners had begun building.⁶ There was no store and supplies had to be ordered from Launceston and shipped to the Leven in the coastal traders.

Lack of roads hindered intending settlers: R.C. Gunn (at one time Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands) commented in 1860:

*I found that persons were greatly deterred from settling or taking lands west of the River Leven in consequence of the want of access or facility for passing the various rivers which empty themselves on the North Coast, and which can only be crossed at or about low tide.*⁷

Those settlers who retained their Pre-emptive Right blocks sometimes found themselves trapped in the forest and unable to get their produce to market because of the lack of public roads. James Fenton in his book *Bush Life in Tasmania* mentions the case of a six hundred and forty acre block, behind two other blocks, which was cut up into eight sections and occupied by as many selectors. When the time came to transport their produce into town, they found they had no right of way through the properties in front of theirs. They tried to force their way through and were summoned for trespass and found guilty. They were thereafter allowed access to the port on sufferance until 1864 when the road to Castra was laid down.

The Castra Road has a southerly direction from Ulverstone and was originally called the Slab [or Plank] Road. It was constructed of heavy slabs of split timber laid on a very imperfectly prepared foundation, and this subsiding in some places, and not in others, plus a certain amount of neglect, caused the timber to become very uneven and absolutely dangerous for traffic.⁸

The planks extended from the wharf at Ulverstone to opposite the old was the setting down of the Slab Road resulted in rapid alienation of the surrounding land and opened the way for the delivery of hundreds of thousands of palings to the Ulverstone wharves every year.

⁶ These allotments were situated between Water Street and Grove Street, and the Esplanade and Cross Street.

⁷ HAJ: Paper 7 Report of R.C. Gunn Friday 13 January 1860.

⁸ Examiner: Editorial Saturday 31 July 1880 pg 2.

THE FIRST SURVEY

The first survey of the town was undertaken in 1855 and the surveyor George Melrose of the Sappers and Miners, reported to Parliament that:

The eastern portion of the township of Ulverstone containing an area of about 552 acres situated of Bass Strait and River Leven, is for the most part a flat open plain. A portion of the south east corner is high land and capable of producing any sort of crop, but the remaining portion is very barren land. There is a small portion of a Rivulet crossing and re-crossing the East boundary capable of supplying a sufficiency of fresh water the whole year round. The River Leven is navigable for vessels of about 100 tons burden for about two miles up. Vessels from 30-40 tons can float five miles up. At dead low water in summer there are about two feet of water on the bar.⁹

Captain H. Butler Stoney was an early visitor to the area and records his impressions in *A Residence in Tasmania* in 1856:

Many settlers are established in comfortable clearings: and although the expense at first starting is very great, yet it fully repays the venture. The timber also is very fine and valuable, and a road has lately been surveyed through the forest, it is also proposed that a steamer shall call weekly at Ulverstone.

'Old Timer' who first came to the Leven in the early 1860s recalls:

There was neither wharf nor bridge. Wild ducks could be shot at what is now the back of the railway station, and kangaroo in Reibey Street. No streets were laid out. There was not one inch of made road, and where the town now stands with its comfortable homes and business premises was mostly the location of the noisy bull frog and the furtive bandicoot.¹⁰

On the perennial subject of the lack of roads he says: 'the only means of communication was by tracks cut through the dense forest and tracks just wide enough for a team of bullocks to get through with a dray.'¹¹

Within a few years of the passage of the Waste Land Act it became apparent to the Government that successful settlement depended on the provision of public works. On 17 October 1865 a contract was let for a new road through to Ulverstone to the site of the proposed bridge across the Leven. The bridge was near the site of the present Railway Bridge and crossed the river at a point of the river over 1000 feet wide:

It is a pile and timber Bridge constructed of the very best gum and stringy-bark timbers. About 160 piles have been driven, and 260,000 feet of planks and timbers used in its construction, with about 20 tons of wrought and 5 tons of cast iron.¹²

Ferry services were conducted across the river nearer the town.

⁹ TAHO: Melrose report 12 May 1855.

¹⁰ Examiner: Ulverstone Now and Then by *Old Timer*, Tuesday 13 November 1934 pg 5

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Newitt, L. (1988) *Convicts & Carriageways : Tasmanian road development until 1880*, pg 258.

The year 1866 was probably a typical one with natural and economic disasters causing hardships for some and offering a glimmer of hope for others who had faith in the future:

*Bushfires have been raging here ever since New Year's Day. So much excitement has prevailed in consequence that each one's attention was diverted from every other subject. Only those places escaped that were burned last year, for the simple reason that there was very little left upon them to encourage the flames.*¹³

Early in this year Scott's flour mill on the Clayton Rivulet became inactive. (The Mill had been established in October 1861.) During this period of inactivity farmers had to take their grain to Kelcey's Tidal Mill at the Mersey, which caused them no end of inconvenience. In January Scott's mill had narrowly escaped destruction in the bushfires; the drought was broken in April.¹⁴

At this time Messrs Raymond & Cummings of the Don were working on the construction of the bridge over the Leven River. This encouraged the building of a new house on the west bank which was intended to be a commercial premises. The first public house, the *Leven Inn*, on the eastern side of the river, had been licensed in December 1858.

¹³ Examiner: Saturday 27 January 1866 pg 3.

¹⁴ Examiner: Saturday 27 January 1866 pg 3, and Wednesday 18 April 1866 pg 3.

A HISTORY OF THE ROADS OF THE DISTRICT

This article, published in The Examiner on Wednesday 20 February 1929, gives us some idea of the experiences of the first settlers in the Leven district and the part that the McDonald, Sturzaker, and Fogg families played in developing the district.

Only those who have experienced the difficulties of roadless districts and bridgeless rivers can form any adequate idea of what was undergone by the early pioneers of this part of the state. To hear present-day folks grumbling at the bad roads endured by them as they flash hither and thither along the coastal main and bye roads in their fast motor cars, or with their motor lorry, speeding their way to market at any hour of the day or night, with tons of produce, to catch a rising market, gives an old-timer to pause as he compares the present high ways with, the "corduroys," "glue pots," and the miles of slush and slurry that was the track to be covered when a journey had to be made, willy nilly, in the days of auld lang syne. The conclusion arrived at by the aforesaid old-timer is that the new-timer knows nothing about bad roads, for the speed he now travels at, converts "bumps" into mountains and "ruts" into cavernous depths. The old slowly moving bullock dray and team made light of 'miles of really bad roads, or no roads really, only places where the road was intended to be, and in most instances is to be found to-day. Ulverstone-Castra Road Take the, old "slab road" that connected the rising town of Ulverstone with the then almost virginal Castra district as an instance, and there are more than a few living in the district now who have thrilling remembrances of trips along that alleged thorough fare.

Starting from near the Leven wharf, and traversing what is now known as Main-street, through a swampy, fiat country, on towards Sprent, a unique scheme was put into operation by the then Government to build up a highway for the people out of slabs of wood. The experiment for a time proved to be rather satisfactory, and a big improvement on the slush and slurry methods, which the more they were used the worse they became, especially where no deviation could be made to avoid the worst spots. The principle of the slab road was simply to take hewn slabs of green timber, each not less than 6in. wide or 4in. in thickness and 10ft. In length, laid closely side by side diagonally across the already cleared line of road. The slabs were supposedly to be kept in position by a strip of broken stones 2ft. wide and about 6in. in depth, placed at each end of the slabs, and for a time and in certain places the idea seemed to work out fairly well. The first section of the work, at the town end, was let to Mr. George McDonald, a local resident at the time, and for many years later, his contract extending some distance from the town. This was started in 1868. The next contract was secured by Mr. G. C. Brooke, who was later in business as a grocer in Charles-street, in Launceston, opposite where W. Hart and Son's business premises stand. This was completed in 1871, and Mr. James Fogg, a well-known Leven live wire, secured the next section, and so the slab road was built as far as the junction of the Castra and Gawler roads, some nine miles or so.

Coming of the Rubble Road: The main idea behind this roading policy was apparently to assist in the development of the Anglo-Indian reserve of some thousands of acres further south, and where several blocks had been taken up by retired Anglo-Indian officers, but the system of road making was perforce abandoned in favour of rubble roads, which formed the basis of the present roads of the district. Contractor Sweeney put down a rubble road as far as the junction of the Moreton road, near the Sprent township, about 1877. Mr. J. A. Fogg extended the metalling some two miles further, and so the work went on until it reached some 17 miles at Blackwood Park. Contractors engaged in this extension were Messrs. Walter J. Andrews (now an esteemed Penguin resident), T.C. Diprose, Crawford Bros., John Sturzaker and Sons, O'Byrne Bros., and others.



Photo: Daniels Mark James: Upper Leven and Dial Range 1909.¹⁵

More Modern Methods: Sometime early in the eighties the Government had had enough of the slab road, which was anything but safe to travel other, and needed constant attention, so it was decided to pull it all up and replace it with stone. The worst places were taken in hand first, and in time the slabs were all removed, and the present permanent and creditable roads laid down. The first contractors in this remaking were Messrs. Andrews and Diprose, the work including the removal of all slabs, and the substitution therefore of 12ft. of rubble and finely broken stone 9in. deep. This work was begun at Risby's bridge. Eventually the whole of the road was thus remodelled, the contractors including Messrs. S. Turner and Sons (in

¹⁵State Library of Victoria: Daniel, Mark James, Accession no: H92.200/778
http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/MAIN:Everything:SLV_VOYAGER1742704

1883), Crawford Bros. (in 1884), and so passed the memorable slab road. About the end of 1881 Mr. W. H. Cann, a Penguin pioneer, secured a contract from the Government to "grub and clear, form, and metal" road from where the present war memorial stands on the Esplanade to Pearl's corner, on the old slab road, and now known as Reibey-street. The locality was rough and swampy, with plenty of large trees and an abundance of scrub. The bottom was "pitched" with stones broken down to 5in., with a top metalling of stone broken to 4in. by the Government stone crusher, the first brought to the coast, and in charge of Mr. Nicholas Richards. The formation was 12ft. wide, and the stone for the job was carted from West Ulverstone by Messrs. Duncan McLaren and W. Rowlands, both still residents of Ulverstone, one believes. The stone for crushing was stacked near where Furner's Hotel now stands. Started on January 9, 1882; the road was completed before the winter set in.

The progress of the Ulverstone and Leven districts has continued to this day, and much could be written about other phases of its early growth and development of its timber resources, palings, staves, and pioneers in other parts of the district, such as the Motton, Preston, and Gunn's Plains districts, some of the very best properties on the coast being located in these sections. Regarding one of these roads, the Motton road, William Elliott formed and ditched the present road from the sale yards, in Lovett street to the Gravel Hill Church, and another well-known contractor, the late William Jacklyn, grubbed, cleared, and formed the deviation at Revell's Hill, just over the Gawler bridge, the contract extending as far as the junction of the road to Manning's jetty, an important road in the early days of the settlement. In 1883 the brothers Ellis, (Sulphur Creek) contracted for and constructed some two miles of the Motton road to the junction of Allison road. Dan Sweeney was another contractor on this road, these roads being all 17ft. wide, and one thinks that such roads were really welcomed as a boon and a blessing, and not, as too often nowadays, subjects for a growl.

CHRISTIANITY AND EDUCATION TAKE HOLD

A small but vigorous Anglican congregation worked towards the establishment of a permanent place of worship; a service was held occasionally in Mr McDonald's store, [sic] conducted by the Reverend Mr Martin. Mrs Fogg and Mrs McDonald conducted the first Sunday school in the old Watch-House near the present Railway Bridge and Divine Service was held at Mr Fogg's old store on the Esplanade.¹⁶ Services were held in a grain store, bags of grain serving for pews, and a violin for organ.¹⁷



Holy Trinity Church, circa 1900.

On 26 October 1868 Archdeacon Reibey, assisted by the Reverend's E.P. Adams and C.B. Brome, opened the Church of the Holy Trinity.

Built of local hardwood timber donated by Mr Frampton of *Cornhill*, Gawler, the original church was erected in grounds fronting on Leven Street (the site of the present cemetery). It consisted of chancel, nave, porch, and belfry and was capable of accommodating over one hundred people. The interior furnishings were built of Blackwood.¹⁸ The building was moved to its present position in 1893 although it had originally been planned to re-site it in Badger

¹⁶ Church News: January 1869 pg 202. The reference to Mr McDonald's store is most likely an error, although services may have been held at the hotel.

¹⁷ Advocate: Tuesday 1 August 1911 pg 4.

¹⁸ Church News: January 1869 pg 202.

Street; it was later enlarged.¹⁹ The allotment fronting the Esplanade was given by James Philosopher Smith.²⁰



Holy Trinity Church with J.A. Fogg's store (with the gables) in the middle distance.

H.A. Nicholls²¹ has this to say on events leading up to the establishment of the school:

In the 'sixties, Charles Bythesea Brome came as a missionary of the Church of England. He soon found work among the scattered families, and early realised the tragedy of growing families with no chance of education. In November, 1867, he was fully ordained priest by the Bishop of Tasmania and almost his first work was a canvass of every family within six miles to get a school. He walked daily, miles along the tracks, and wrote the Government asking for help. The Government at that time would not erect a school unless the residents first of all subscribed in cash and forwarded to Hobart Town, one third of the estimated cost of the building. In those days news of the outside world filtered in long months after the happening, but was none the less enjoyably received. For instance, the first year an hotel was opened at Ulverstone, one day a group of people assembled to be told that Britain and America had been united by cable, and a copy of the first message flashed across was read, as follows: —

“Europe and America united by telegraph. Glory to God in the Highest on Earth, peace and goodwill towards men.” And it is stated that John Sturzaker, who is still in the land of the living, said briefly: “We will be next.” And a dozen years later it was so.

During 1868, Mr. Brome aroused enough interest to get a public meeting called, and was himself appointed honorary secretary. Early in 1869 he was able to send particulars to the Government, and received promises. Other meetings followed, and then was convened what may be termed the first parents' association. The first school board was nominated, and those present subscribed freely. The only survivor of that gathering of parents is John Sturzaker. Then Mr. Brome was able to notify the Government that if tenders were called, the local contribution was ready. The school board then nominated Rev. C.B. Brome, Rev. J.J. Moore (later Archdeacon), Rev. Walter Matherson (Independent minister, ordained in England, 1849), Edward Brooks, Evan Walker, James Alfred Fogg.

¹⁹ North West Post: Thursday 26 January 1893; Advocate: Thursday 25 November 1948 pg 4.

²⁰ Advocate: Thursday 25 November 1948 pg 4.

²¹ Advocate: Ulverstone State School, Some Early History, by H.A. Nicholls., Monday 29 December 1924 pg 8.

Upon receipt in Hobart of notice that the money was in hand, tenders were called, closing 1 September 1869. Three were received, and that of Mr. Geo. Heaton, at £135, accepted, Mr. Brome forwarding the one-third (£45) to the Government in Hobart. As soon as finished, Mr. R. Rawson was appointed schoolmaster, with his wife as assistant, and the school was opened on July 26, 1870.

My research shows that the Ulverstone School was opened, as stated above, on 26 July 1870 with Mr Rawson from Winkleigh in charge following two years of negotiations that began with an application from Mr Frith to use the Watch-House for a school.

Another application, from the Reverend C.B. Brome, resulted in the Board of Education agreeing to the establishment of a school providing the district met a third of the cost.²² Three tenders were received and the lowest of £135 received from Mr George Heaton was accepted on 27 November 1869.

On welcoming the school-master the usual round of speeches was followed, in the evening, by an entertainment 'at Mr M'Donald's Assembly Room.' Some 'creditable music was rendered by amateur performers, with humorous readings by Mr E.B. Walker, and lastly some legerdemain perpetrated by Mr J. Fogg, to the astonishment of all the youngsters.'²³

The tiny school was sparsely furnished - four desks and four forms being provided. Mr Nicholls goes on to say:

The teacher resided in a two-roomed paling building, until lately standing at the rear of Chestnut Villa, in Leven street...When the school closed in July 1876, it was because so many families had moved away to the tin mines, either at Bischoff or the East Coast, also because a good deal of sickness prevailed.

Horse-racing was a popular entertainment! Races were conducted on the beach between the Forth and Leven. They were an annual event and the Levenites would build a grandstand just above high-water mark for their convenience. Booths and sideshows of all descriptions used to be erected on the sands, and people came from miles around. Very often bullocks were used for racing and often provided the leading event of the day.²⁴

Legend has it that the first race that ever took place on the Leven was one between two bullocks on the beach, one of which was ridden by "our respected townsman, Mr J.A. Fogg." Mr Fogg's mount unfortunately ran off into the bush, throwing his rider and breaking his arm, thereby necessitating the services of Dr Walker.²⁵

²² TAHO: Education Department files.

²³ Examiner: Thursday 4 August 1870 pg 4 c1.

²⁴ Tasmanian Mail: Thursday 21 July 1910.

²⁵ North West Post: Thursday 21 January 1892, pg 3.



TOWNSHIP PROCLAIMED

U lverstone was proclaimed a town on 9 July 1872 but even as late as 1877 'the settlers were but few, owing to the lack of roads and the cost of clearing the woodland, estimated to be £50 an acre'.²⁶ Richard Hilder (Advocate 1908) suggests that these forests were the primary reason for the alienation of land in the district especially of that area around the Castra Road where sawmills were later established to cope with the timber which was unsuitable for piling production.

Alexander Clerke of *Mountford*, near Longford, was responsible for what was 'almost a township' on the Esplanade near the original bridge. It consisted of cottages, shops, a large produce store, and a building for ship-chandlery purposes, and he intended to 'carry on ship-building'.²⁷

The Slab Road was proving to be the trading thoroughfare of the district. James Fogg and Messrs Scarr and Dixon had long been established on the Esplanade near McDonald's *Leven Inn* (the first hotel in the district, licensed 1858) and were joined in 1876 by Joshua Stones's bakery and butcher's shop. Mr Ellis of Westbury had opened a general store (complete with plate glass windows) on the junction of the Esplanade and the Slab Road, and Thomas Button of Launceston and the Forth had opened his tannery on the outskirts of the town.²⁸

Enterprising men were always sure that better times were ahead. Mr R. Rawson converted his premises into an area for receiving and preserving all kinds of fruit capable of being made into jam.²⁹

A few months later builder, Mr Dooley junr, completed a contract for the construction of premises for the 'telegraph and postal business', with a room opposite intended for use as a public library.³⁰ These public buildings were demolished in May 1888 and the business of the Post Office was carried on in a nearby cottage until the completion of a more substantial building in 1890.

While the jam factory was in operation the Levenites were able to supplement their incomes by the sale of surplus fruit but lack of decent roads caused the collapse of the industry after only two seasons.³¹

²⁶ Bethell, L.S. (1957) *The Story of Port Dalrymple: Life and work in northern Tasmania*, pg 173.

²⁷ Examiner: Saturday 20 February 1875 pg 3 c3.

²⁸ Examiner: Monday 13 June 1876 pg 4 c1.

²⁹ Examiner: Saturday 24 February 1877 pg 6 c3.

³⁰ Examiner: Thursday 12 April 1877 pg 3.

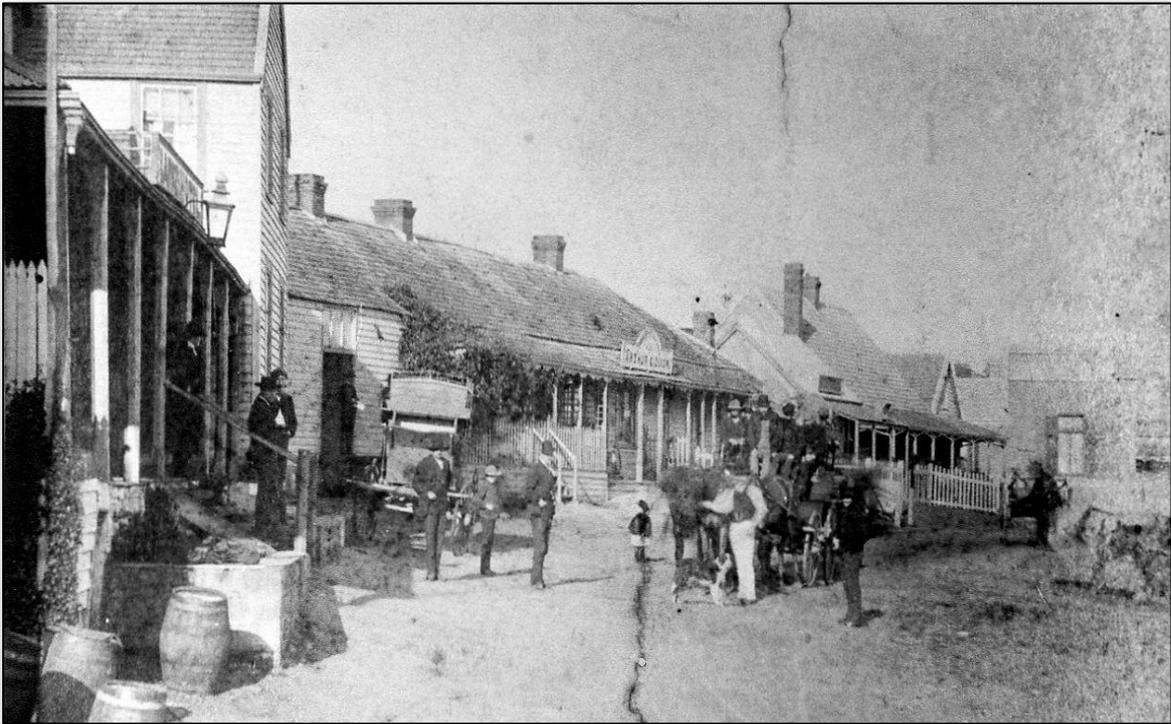
³¹ Examiner: Monday 11 October 1880 pg 3 c6.

Despite the depressed conditions those few settlers and particularly their children could still throw off their cares and enjoy themselves immensely at 'cricket, running, jumping, and kiss-in-the-ring, etc' or be observed at the annual school picnic 'tripping it on the light fantastic toe, to the music of Mr Sturzaker's violin.'

Four or five miles along the Castra Road Colonel Shaw's son operated saw and flour mills on Serpentine Creek. Much of the timber used for the inside of the flour mill was Sassafras. The mill was completed in July 1874. Reid Bros sawmill a few miles beyond Mr Shaw's was steam driven.

The first show 'of stock and implements' was held in December 1877.³²

October 1880 saw the opening of the Wesleyan Church in Reibey Street at a time when building had not commenced in that part of the town, excepting for the Independent Chapel which was built in 1877, two hundred yards to the east.³³



The Sea View Hotel (left) with Scarr & Dixon's store to the right of the photograph taken in the 1880s.

The building of a Town Hall for the Ulverstone Farmers Club commenced in Reibey Street in 1882. It was a 'most creditable building, outside and in, and besides an elegant public room, with platform and stage accessories, has a nice little reading room and library'.

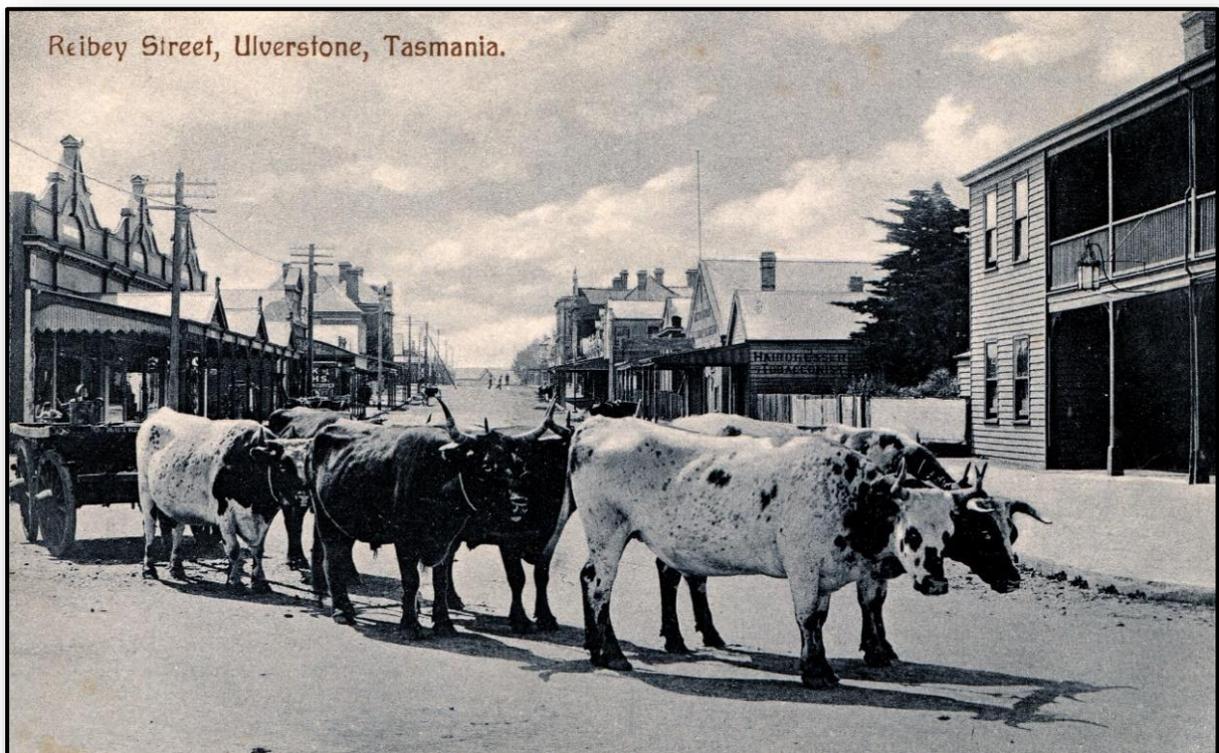
³² Examiner: Thursday 13 December 1877 pg 3.

³³ Examiner: Saturday 14 July 1877 pg 3 c3, and Saturday 23 October 1880 pg 1 Supplement.

In the next decade with better roads and the advance of the railway the population of the district began to grow. The s.s. *Devon*, as well as coastal vessels, called weekly, and the schooner *Lily* traded regularly between the Leven, Melbourne, and Adelaide.

In the *Through Tasmania* series of 1884 the *Tasmanian Mail* has this to say of the town:

*Ulverstone is pleasantly placed near the sea. It is not remarkable for well kept streets, but it is a pretty place notwithstanding. The main road is good of course, and though the slab-road with or without springs will give the sensation of violent palsy if you ride in a vehicle, you may walk there without filling your boots with sand, an undertaking not warranted in most of the thoroughfares. The houses and stores are spacious and nice looking, with cool verandahs, white paint, and pretty gardens. There are two hotels, a courthouse, a very handsome school - one of the best in the colony in every sense. The Church of England and Wesleyan Primitive Methodist and Congregational bodies have places of worship.*³⁴



Postcard: Author's collection.

In the same year (1884) Ulverstone was exporting agricultural produce, Blackwood, split timber, and hides and skins from T. Button's tannery, which was situated on Serpentine Creek [now Button's Creek] a couple of hundred yards off the main road. Still on the subject of the *Slab Road Wanderer* made the following pointed comment:

³⁴ Mercury: Supplement *Through Tasmania* No. 32., Tuesday 8 April 1884 pg 1.

*The government have called for tenders for a whole eleven chains of the old Plank Road to be metalled from the wharf upwards, which still leaves about thirty chains of the old planks to keep people in remembrance of rough times.*³⁵

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

In 1885 the *Examiner* newspaper ran a series of articles entitled: *Wanderings on the North West Coast*. In his 18 July article the correspondent had reached Ulverstone and had this to say:

Starting from Ulverstone, the township at the mouth of the River Leven, I was pleased to note the great improvement made here. Not many years since the only building on the township was the public-house kept by the late Mr McDonald, but now you find excellent stores and many nicely built houses. The Town Hall is a fine roomy structure, and is a good sign of progress. The Police buildings, judging from outward appearances, are neither handsome nor convenient. The new bridge in course of construction is an improvement on the old, but in my opinion stone piers would have been preferable to wooden piles, which we know will only last a few years, as the teredo will eat all within its reach.

Two years later (1887) the *Examiner's Rural Tasmania* feature adds the following to the picture:

*...tanning, sawing, smith's work, coach building, corrugated iron-work, saddlery, boot and shoe-making on a large scale, joinery and a number of minor industries find employment for a goodly number of people. Most coast towns have their banks, solicitor's offices, and watch-makers shops. In these Ulverstone is up to the mark.*³⁶

At the close of April 1888 that 'handsome pile' being constructed for G. & A. Ellis in Main Street, 'opposite their present place of business', was nearing completion. With the building of the store the Ellis's introduced a feature new to Ulverstone —asphalted pathway.³⁷ The Oddfellows Hall was also nearing completion at this time.

Ellis's store was ready for occupation in early December and the *Post* considered the cedar and Huon pine counters in the lower storey to be one of the 'best bits of workmanship of the kind ever done in the colony'. They were the work of Mr A. Rafflet who was employed by the firm as a cabinet-maker.³⁸

The roller-skating craze reached Ulverstone on 6 June 1888 when a Mr Webb opened a rink in the upper storey of Messrs Crawford Bros store and was soon followed by others. Catering for leisure time activities was obviously considered lucrative by the town's entrepreneurs for by

³⁵ *Examiner: Stray Notes*. Monday 24 November 1884 pg 3.

³⁶ *Examiner: Rural Tasmania*, No. 12 Saturday 12 November 1887 pg 2 Supplement.

³⁷ *North West Post*: Saturday 28 April 1888 pg 3.

³⁸ *North West Post*: Tuesday 11 December 1888 pg 2.

19 July of the same year the *Post* records that no less than three new billiards rooms were in course of erection at Ulverstone.³⁹

Mr J. McHugh's pottery establishment, the *Leven Pottery Works*, was in the process of construction in November 1888 and production was underway by March 1889:

*The building in which the work is carried on is a fairly large one, and is built of paling. Inside there is a brick furnace ready for burning and glazing the pottery, while all around the building stand shelves loaded with flower pots and other fancy articles, which are drying preparatory to burning.*⁴⁰

Articles produced included butter pans capable of holding 70 lb of butter, butter coolers, bread pans, garden pots, jugs, jars, candlesticks, and milk dishes.⁴¹ McHugh also went into partnership with the Lynch Brothers and established a brick, tile and pipe manufacturing business about a mile from North Motton on the Lower Gawler Road where there was an excellent supply of clay.⁴²

Messrs Chapman and Son commenced business as the town's first monumental and general masons in Mr Pearl's yard at the corner of Main and Reibey Streets in March 1889. Stone of various descriptions was imported from Ross, Don, and Footscray.⁴³

The town developed along the river front and the majority of businesses and shops were located on Crescent Street and Main Street until the arrival of the railway in 1890. From about this time many businesses gradually transferred to Reibey Street. The Queen Anne style Court House and Public Offices were erected on the corner of Reibey and King Edward Streets in 1890 and were ready for business in April 1891⁴⁴ (and were demolished in 1962). At this time there were few buildings in Reibey Street.

Mowbray's *Tasmanian Guide Book* for 1890 states:

The Railway station is in the heart of the town, close to the public offices, town hall, numerous business premises, hotels, etc. Inter-colonial and coastal trading vessels lie up at the wharf, which is close to the principal part of the town. The bridge on the main road is a lengthy structure, built on piles. There is a beautiful beach on the east side of the Leven, where interesting varieties of shells and seaweed can be gathered.

C. Napier Bell, in an article published in the *Weekly Press*, Christchurch, New Zealand says:

The river at high water is a wide stately stream; along its right bank the town is built, and the wharves along the shore have schooners and ketches lying at them loading the vast piles of palings, sawn timber, blackwood logs, and bags of potatoes ready for shipment... The river is crossed by a fine pile bridge, at the end

³⁹ North West Post: Thursday 19 July 1888 pg 2 c5.

⁴⁰ North West Post: *Local Industry* Thursday 14 March 1889 pg 2 c4.

⁴¹ North West Post: *Coast Industries* Thursday 16 January 1890 pg 2 c6.

⁴² Coastal News: Saturday 20 September 1890 pg 2 c5; Saturday 4 October 1890; North West Post Saturday 15 August 1891.

⁴³ North West Post: *A New Industry*. Tuesday 19 March 1889 pg 2 c5.

⁴⁴ Coastal News: Saturday 11 April 1891 pg 9.

of which is the town of Ulverstone, a thriving, and discontented town, the subject of the complaint being as usual the shallow depth of the bar...

In 1891 the population of the town was 1,100 and there were new local industries —four sawmills, a flour mill, two brickyards, a tannery, a cordial factory, and a pottery. The bridge, by then ramshackle, had to be rebuilt and new inland roads had been made. Mr W.L. Webb commenced the manufacture of starch in July 1891 with satisfactory results.⁴⁵

In May 1893 a 'long-felt want to the gentlemen of this district' was remedied with the official opening of the Gentlemen's Club. It was to be an institution that would provide opportunity for 'social intercourse and mutual recreations during the long winter evenings'.⁴⁶



Reibey Street, Ulverstone ca 1900.⁴⁷

'Excellent stores, and nicely built houses' there may have been but on New Year's Day 1897 it was still possible for a bushfire to break out on some vacant allotments on the border of the town and 'threaten the destruction of the Anglican Church, the Convent, and some private buildings'.⁴⁸

The gale of 19 May 1893 blew down the Wesleyan Church and this was replaced by a brick building.

⁴⁵ Coastal News: Saturday 4 July 1891 pg 2 c4.

⁴⁶ Examiner: Wednesday 17 May 1893 pg 6.

⁴⁷ Libraries Tasmania: NS869/1/309 Photo James Chandler (NG1231)

⁴⁸ Examiner: Monday 4 January 1897 pg 3.

As mentioned, the Anglicans were at this time considering putting up a new church, the present one being 'badly situated and far too small'.⁴⁹

The West Devon Cheese and Butter Co. Ltd opened its doors on Monday 4 December 1893. The primary object of the company was to purchase milk or cream to be manufactured into butter and cheese and in the event of the supply of butter exceeding the demand for home consumption to export the surplus. The profits were to be distributed amongst the suppliers.⁵⁰

At the turn of the century Ulverstone, as the terminus of the railway, was the centre of an agricultural, pastoral, and potato-growing area, with a population of 6,600 for the district and 1,200 for the township. Potteries, brickfields, sawmills, and flour mills were still active.

A tree planting took place in Badger Street, renamed Victoria Street, to celebrate the 60th year of the reign of Queen Victoria. Trees were planted from the railway station to the beach by scholars attending the State School, under the direction of the headmaster, Mr F.A. Finch, and each pupil was presented with a medal to mark the Jubilee. Amongst those who assisted were Messrs H. McDonald, George and Stanley Ellis, R. Sharp, and G.A. Marshall.:

...Mr. M'Donald planted the blue gum opposite Ocean View Guest House. Mr. Sharp says he well remembers the ceremony of renaming the street, which was performed by the late Mr. H. G. K. Wells from a stand erected on a vacant allotment on which now stands the residence of Mr. N. Hawkins, near the intersection of Victoria and Main streets. Trees in King Edward street were planted at a later date. Mr. M'Donald says that when the trees were planted motor-cars were hardly thought of. The mode of conveyance then was by horse or bullock drawn drays and chaise carts. He agreed yesterday that the old trees had become a menace to traffic, and must give way to advancing times. He thought the trees should be replaced by shrubs or palms, the latter being his choice.⁵¹

The Leven had come a long way since George McDonald the younger, wife and two children, had ventured there in 1857, becoming the first businessman in the town. With George came his parents, and siblings, setting themselves up on their property, *Green Hills*, on what was to become the Castra Road; part of the slowly developing River Leven district; pioneers of a fertile farming district and successful coast

⁴⁹ Examiner: Thursday 3 August 1893 pg 3; Mercury: Wednesday 31 May 1893, pg 2.

⁵⁰ Coastal News: Friday 8 December 1893 pg 2.

⁵¹ Advocate: Friday 2 September 1949, pg 10. For an account of this event see North West Post: Thursday 24 June 1897, pg 2.