

# Tuross Head - a brief history

**Tuross Head history started long ago.**

## **In the beginning:**

Tuross Head (and further north to Bingie Bingie Point) is located in a area known for its early Devonian granites around 410-390 million years old. Most notably is the Tuross Head tonalite and Bingie Bingie suite of gabbroic diorite.



Bingie Bingie Point is of major geological significance as it is where a complex association of two igneous rock types exists - granite (Tuross Head tonalite) and gabbroic diorite (Bingie Bingie suite).



The clear exposure of two differing igneous rock types and their relationship to each other in such a confined area is regarded as outstanding among exposures of igneous intrusive rocks in Australia.

Above: The lighter grey rock often containing magmatic fabric is tonalite and the darker grey rock is gabbroic diorite known as the Bingie Bingie suite. The rocks and dykes are formed from a volcanic eruption that cooled on the surface with an age of around 415 to 390 million years old.

## **Our Aboriginal history:**

The Brinja Yuin people occupied land from south of the Moruya River to the Wagonga Inlet. Their population was estimated to be about 1000-1500 prior to first European settlement in this area .

Traditional ceremonial activities reinforcing cultural beliefs and practices were conducted around the shores of Coila Lake. Many middens, open campsites and bora ceremonial grounds have been found.

Archaeological excavations in the area known as "the Narrows" between Coila and Tuross Lakes has revealed very dense concentrations of Aboriginal artefacts. The local aboriginal community appreciates the support and respect given by the general public to the protection of these site.

## **Our early pioneers:**

The first of the pioneer European settlers to Tuross Head as John Hawdon in 1832. Hawdon was a squatter with land holdings from Moruya to Bodalla and at the centre of his holdings was the home he built in 1860 over looking Tuross Lake. Hawdon In 1838/9 John Hawdon owned a small sailing cargo vessel named "Alligator" which he used for transporting goods up the coast. She had been built in 1835 in Hobart by William Williamson, whose ship building yard was to the East of Her Majesty's Ordinance Stores near Battery Point. Hawdon squatted on the Tuross Head peninsular however he had to give up the lands on the head when they were officially subdivided in 1860.

The next round of pioneer settler was in 1860 when Patrick Mylott and his wife Mary bought the Tuross Head holdings from the "Narrows" eastward. They built "Tuross House" overlooking the lakes and sea. The land was farmed until 1883 and then leased whilst Patrick Mylott and family moved to Sydney to expand his empire. He died in 1898 with Mary returning to Tuross Head to then sell the property to Hector McWilliam in 1925

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## Whose land was it before European settlement?

This area contains a combination of Aboriginal heritage values relating to traditional spirituality, travelling, working, living and resource collection. Large numbers of archaeological sites have been recorded.

Large numbers of archaeological sites have been recorded with concentrations around Meringo/Congo, Tuross Head and between Blackfellows Point and Potato Point.

The majority of archaeological sites are stone artefact assemblages, some of which are very extensive, such as at Congo. A number of large middens have been recorded on headlands and in dune fields behind beaches such. The contents of some middens indicate economies based on a wide range of resources, from the forests, oceans and wetlands.

The Yuin [Djuwin] tribal area (as recorded by Howitt in 1904) extends from the Shoalhaven River in the north, to Cape Howe in the south and west to the Great Dividing Range. According to local Aboriginal knowledge, thirteen sub tribal groupings exist within the Yuin tribal area. Yuin tribal subgroups with traditional links to this area include the Walbanga and Bringa.



## How did Tuross get its name?

On a linguistic level, the Coila and Tuross area is associated with the Dhurga language.

Within the Guyangal sub tribe anthropologist Howitt recorded number of clan divisions, one of which being the Bugelli Manji clan group occupying the Moruya district, north of Coila Lake. Whilst the term Manji is a grammatical suffix referring to a place in general, earlier references relating to the Bugelli Manji clan identify their range as being associated with the Moruya, Bergalia, Congo and Bingi areas, not far from Coila Lake and record alternative spelling for the same term such as Burgali, Borgalia, Bengalee, Birgalea, Bukelle, Bengalia, Bogalea and Bungully. Today, we know the area as Bergalia, immediately north of Tuross and south of Moruya. Other Aboriginal clan group and or place names recorded during the early settlement period include Canga [Congo], Moorooya [Moruya], **Terosse [Tuross]** and Bowdally [Bodalla].

## Other local names :

An article in the Sydney Morning Herald Saturday 28 April 1928 discussed the perverted place names of the south coast.

On the South Coast there are many names which are becoming entirely altered from their original pronunciation. For Instance. Kiama was always pronounced Ki-amma. never Ki-arma, as so often nowadays. Narooma is both spelled and pronounced incorrectly. In the old days it was spelt "Noorooma." and pro-nounced Noor-rma. The last two syllables being slurred together in that peculiar way the local aboriginals have, and the accent was abso-lutely on the first syllable. Bodalla, when it was taken up by John Hawdon, was called Botally by the local Brinja Yuin people, the accent again on the first syllable, and

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has gradually become Bodalla by later residents. Punkally has become Punkalla, while Trunkatabilly is now put on the maps as Trunkatabella. Kyla Park, another of the Hawdon holdings, has become, on the map, Coila, a particularly ugly perversion, probably attained by listening to assigned Irish servants of the family pronouncing the name Kyla.

## First contact— December 16th 1797

One contact site is recorded in this region. In the late 1790's, Coorall, then a young Aboriginal boy, provided an oral account of a ship passing by Tuross Point.

### The white man's 'great bird' brought terror to Tuross Aborigines - By NOEL WARRY

TRAVELLING south during an expedition which resulted in the discovery of Port Phillip Bay, George Bass stayed overnight at Tuross.

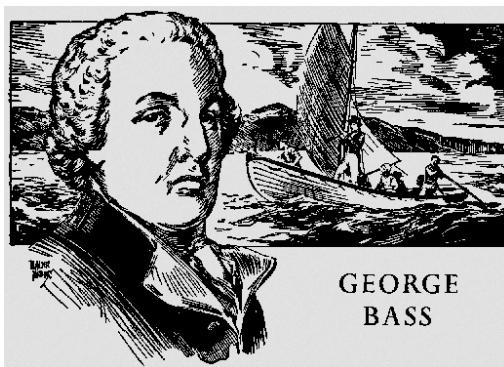
On the evening of Saturday, December 16, 1797, his whale boat stood off a point of land which he named Marka Point, the place now known as Potato Point. The next day he landed and walked to what we call Tuross Lake. For someone on his way to test the existence or otherwise of a sea lane between the Pacific and Indian oceans, this break in his journey was but an interlude. He recorded that the area was waterless and empty of human inhabitants.

However, to the people whose territory it was, the arrival of a whale boat under sail was a most dramatic event. Fifty years later, when Cooral, an Aboriginal friend, told it to him, a resident of Moruya wrote their version down.

When George Bass and his crew dropped anchor, Cooral, then a young boy, was asleep with his tribe on the cliff above the beach. At dawn, when every body woke up, they were dismayed to see an enormous white thing just out to sea, its wings spread as if for flight. After a hasty discussion they decided that a monster bird of some unearthly kind had come to pick them up like a hawk does its prey. They fled in terror. They did not stop until they sank exhausted in a gully of the stony creek near what we call Coila.

Even there they did not feel safe, for who knew if the great white bird was not hovering above them ready to strike, and they had nothing with which to defend themselves. In their panic they had left all their possessions, all their weapons and their food, behind them on the cliff top. The elders were the first to think beyond fright. They decided that a look-out should be posted to watch the lake and the bravest of the tribe should go back to see what had happened at their camp site. While everyone else crouched in silence, tired and hungry, a courageous little group returned to the sea.

Concealing themselves, they paused near the springs and scanned the horizon. There was nothing unusual to see. The monster was no longer there. After much debate they agreed they should walk along the beach to see if the great winged



Above: Bass would have landed on this South Tuross Beach



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thing had molested their camp site. Creeping cautiously along the high tide mark they bunched together when their leader suddenly stopped. On the sand were unmistakable signs of a canoe of some strange make having been pulled out of the water. Stranger still, there were prints of human feet and beside them others so weird as to be unbelievable. Footprints of two-legged creatures, without toes, prints such as they had never seen before.

Despite their fear they tracked the prints of the toeless creatures. But when the prints led towards the place where the tribe was hiding their dread intensified. The one thought that now possessed their minds was that some further horror had come among them. With all speed they hastened back to warn the others.

This further news caused more consternation and panic. Not only was the tribe at the mercy of a great bird which might swoop down on them at any moment, but now mysterious toeless beings were coming towards them on land.

They spent the day crouched under the trees. At night they huddled together for warmth. They had no fire, no food, no possum rugs to cover themselves and no weapons with which to defend" them selves. It is no wonder that an old man could remember with such detail all that happened during that terrible time. He could not recall how long they stayed there, but at last hunger and cold won over terror. The brave ones once more went back to the camp.

At last they reached the campsite. Nothing seemed to have been touched. Food and dilly bags still hung from the trees, weapons and rugs lay about undisturbed. They hastened to tell the others. Slightly reassured but still fearful, the tribe went back. They ate, collected their possessions, and then moved to another place. The big white bird was never seen again and there were no more sightings of toeless footprints. Life gradually returned to normal.

By the time Cooral and his peers attained manhood they had heard of similar happenings far to their north and of the coming of the spirits of men, turned white.

George Bass had recorded the area as uninhabited. To him it was just one more Uneventful day. Yet the memory of that momentous episode, the terror, the courage, so impressed the mind of a young boy that 60 years later he could still remember it in vivid detail.

*This article was printed in the Canberra Times, October 28th, 1989*

The **George Bass Marathon** is a phenomenal feat in today's high pressure sporting environment. It is the longest and toughest surfboat marathon in the world. The race was the brainchild of Bega Newspaper editor Curly Annabel as he came up with the concept of tracing part of the journey of early explorer Surgeon Commander George Bass in 1797.



Surgeon Commander Bass with a crew of 6-navel oarsman rowed a longboat not unlike surf's original double-ended clinker from Port Phillip down the NSW coast and around the southern end on Victoria mapping the coastline as they went.



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The livelihood of the local people depended more on fish and shellfish than red-blooded meat. Their shelters were rough and possum skin cloaks were the usual source of warmth and protection in winter. Physically they were very able, and there are first-hand accounts of the boys practising their spear throwing on rough bark discs bowled erratically along the ground. They achieved great skill.

## The arrival of the first European settlers

Pre 1831 there were few Europeans seen in the Yuin country south of Moruya. Up until 1831 there were no land squatters south of the Moruya River. In 1828 the southern boundary of the Limits of Location had been moved southwards to the north bank of the Moruya River. In 1829 Francis Flanagan was granted title to four square miles on the north bank of the river.

Flanagan was followed by John Hawdon. Hawdon had arrived from England in 1828. He had property at Sydney and in 1830 set up a squat at Bergalia but, being beyond the limits, could not gain title to the land. In 1831 he was granted land on the north bank of the river, upstream from Flanagan. He called the property Kiora and it too occupied 2560 acres or four square miles.

John Hawdon began moving his cattle south from Bergalia to Tuross Head where he established 'Kyla' in 1832 and then further south towards Bodalla where he discovered the lush pasture lands along the Tuross River.

Hawdon's attention was then focussed on Bodalla, where he had a mapped out a nice block of 13,000 acres, but he needed to borrow heavily to finance the purchase. He borrowed from the entrepreneur, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort. Mort entered into a partnership with Hawdon. They carried on for a while but, in the end, Mort bought Hawdon out and took over the property.

In 1860 Thomas Sutcliffe Mort took up 13,000 acres in Bodalla. An enlightened, if authoritarian personality, Mort established dairies all along the Tuross Valley. He established the cooperative Bodalla Cheese Factory, improved the welfare of his employees and pioneered the export of frozen meat to Europe. All of this meant that there was a high employment in the area.

## Aboriginal Reservations in the Tuross and Bodalla area

The once aboriginal landowners had moved freely from one place to another and camped at traditional locations up and down the coast as the seasons and food availability dictated. Following the acquisition of lands by pioneers this free movement of camping was no longer accepted. The government wanted aboriginals to move into reservations.

Six of the fourteen Aboriginal Reservations declared across the Eurobodalla Shire during this time were located in the Tuross area. In 1850 the Eurobodalla Reserve was established at Eurobodalla, west of Bodalla. In 1877 the government declared a further three; one at Blackfellows Point for Yarraro, one at Terouga Lake for Merriman and one at Tuross Lake for Richard Bolloway.

In 1878, a fifth reserve was declared at Tuross Lake for Neddy, and in 1880 a sixth reserve was set-aside at Turlinjah for Benson Wynoo who worked for John Hawdon.

One of the earliest written records identifying individual Aboriginal workers was by John Hawdon, who, along with Francis Flanagan, had taken up land in the Moruya area by 1830. In one of his letters, Hawdon refers to an Aboriginal man known as Benson as a 'faithful servant for many years'. He refers to two other

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men called Campbell and Walker in a similar way. On the advice of Aboriginal people who showed him the location of 'good grass and water', Hawdon later expanded his landholdings to include parcels in the Tuross Head and Bodalla area seeing John Hawdon also arrive in Tuross Head as its first farmer.

Aboriginal children from the reservations attended Turlinjah Public School. Richard Bolloway was born at Brou Lake in 1831. Elizabeth Jane Chapman and Rosa Bolloway were both born at Turilinjah in 1891 and 1873 respectively. Bodalla, Nerrigundah and Cadgee all contain Aboriginal burial places.

During the early 1900s, seasonal farm work along the Tuross River and the related holiday camps at nearby coastal locations such as Potato Point and Blackfella Point involved hundreds of Aboriginal families. Almost half of the heritage places associated with Aboriginal people's participation in the seasonal farm industry across the Eurobodalla are located along the Tuross River.

The farmlands stretched along the Tuross River, from the headwaters at Tuross Head, around Tuross Lake, upstream to Nerrigundah in the west. Coopers Island, also within Tuross Lake, was a major seasonal work place. Work camps evolved on or close by the farms where families worked. Pocket camps were also established in Bodalla in response to the available seasonal picking work. Additionally, sawmills were established at Potato Point and Nerrigundah. Both of these places employed Aboriginal people.

While Bodalla achieved renown as a major dairying centre in the late nineteenth century, the forestry and horticultural industries have also made significant contributions to its economic development. The important roles that Aboriginal people played in the expansion of the rural economy have, however, been largely neglected in the local histories of the South Coast.

The Tuross River farms at the 'back of Bodalla' hold vivid memories for present-day Aboriginal people living in the Eurobodalla Shire, many of whom spent much of their childhood years in and around the bean and pea fields. Bean and pea production began in the valley in the 1930s and provided work for Aboriginal people through to the constriction of the industry in the 1970s. The oral history record confirms that the majority of pickers were Aboriginal people, with South Coast families being joined in the picking fields by itinerant workers at the height of the season due to the large labour force needed to ensure that crops were picked in the best condition

Time off work was spent dancing at the Nerrigundah Barn, swimming at the Blue Hole at Nerrigundah, Singing at the Tally Ho Hall and watching movies at the Bodalla Hall. In this area holiday camps were frequented when the picking season came to an end and include Blackfellows Point, Potato Point, Brunderee Lake, Little Lake, Tuross Lake, Tuross Head, Coila Lake and Brou Lake. Many of these places align with traditionally utilised camping places and as such relate to heritage values associated with traditional spirituality, resource collection and travelling routes. The Schools at Cadgee, Turlinjah, Bodalla and Nerrigundah were all attended by Aboriginal children whose families worked on farms in the area.

Several petitions by residents in the mid/late 1800's requested the NSW Council of Education to establish a school for Tuross as with the nearest schools being at Bodalla and Bergalia, the children were growing up without an education. A site at Turlinjah about 1 km south from the intersection of Hector McWilliam Drive and the Princes Highway was surveyed by the Government Surveyor and granted in 1868 but funding for the school was unavailable at that time.

In 1876 John Hawdon of Kyla Park again appealed to the Council of Education stating the number of school children "have been more than doubled in the district and the want of Education more severely felt". The number of children listed in the appeal were: Patrick Mylott 6, Ernest Hawdon 2, William Knox 7,

Reginald H Barling 7, G.H.D.Goodin 11, J.H.Keet 1, Richard Dansey 2, Henry Chapman 2, Harriet Gibbs 5, Elijah Brown 5, Albert Smart 6, George Sly 6, Thomas Jones 6, John McLean 2, Thomas Davis 7, Edward Gray 7, Mortey Hayes 10, TOTAL 93. A further petition in 1877 by George Goodin stated "This is a poor neighbourhood and child after child is being sent to work or hired out, thus forever losing the chance of receiving even the simplest elements of education"

The Turlinjah "one teacher" school was eventually established in 1879. The children of Tuross, walked, rode horses or bikes to school daily until the school was closed about 1970. A wide track can still just be seen almost parallel to Hector McWilliam Drive extending across the Kyla Park (southern) grazing lands heading towards the school building which was unfortunately destroyed by fire in September 1982.

Three hectares of council land off Lake Street was inspected by the NSW Education Office about 1981 but it was determined that a need for a school in Tuross had somewhat been reduced owing to "the downturn in building activity and other economic constraints affecting local employment opportunities". Later investigations by the Department had found growing interest in the potential site but there the matter came to an end.



The old tin school sign discovered in a Milton antique shop in 2013



The corner of Queen and Vulcan Street, Moruya in 1888. On one corner stands Emmott's Beehive Store and opposite is the Moruya Courthouse. Source Moruya District Historical Society

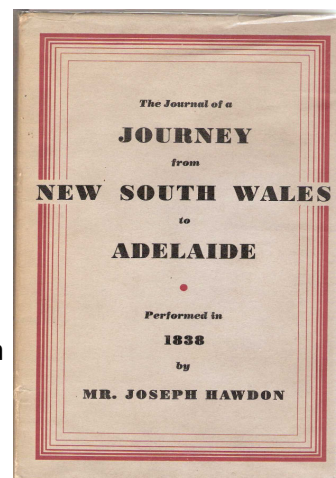


# The First European Settlers

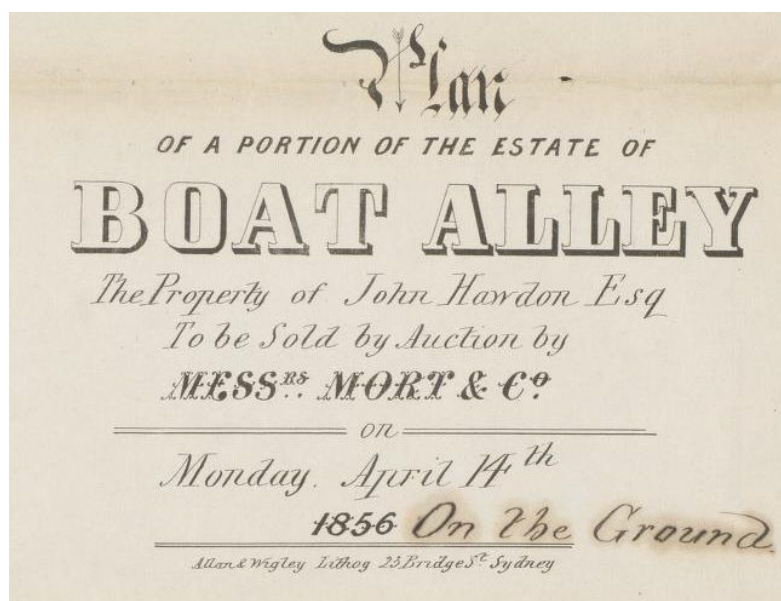
**John Hawdon [1801-1881]** came to Sydney with his wife and two sons in September 1828, where he rented a property, Elderslie, at the Cowpastures. He advised his younger brother Joseph Hawdon, (1813-1871) to join him. Joseph arrived in Sydney in November 1834 on board the "CHILDREN". Joseph is said to have brought considerable capital with him.

In 1836 Joseph Hawdon together with John Gardiner and John Hepburn made an overland journey to Melbourne with cattle, the first to come from New South Wales. He returned to Melbourne again in 1837, and in August took up land near the present site of Dandenong. About the end of that year the newly established South Australian settlement was threatened with famine, and Joseph Hawdon, who had returned to New South Wales, with Charles Bonney, drove 300 head of cattle from his brothers farms in Tuross, Moruya and Bergalia to Adelaide, where they arrived on 3 April 1838. Along the route they discovered a fine lake, which Hawdon named after Bonney - Lake Bonney. Charles Sturt, in an official report made in August 1838 said of this journey:

*"Messrs Hawdon and Bonney could not have taken a more direct line or shortened the journey more wisely".*



Meanwhile John Hawdon's attention had at first been focussed on Bodalla (known then as Boat Alley), where he had a mapped out a nice block of 13,000 acres. John Hawdon had employed managers and spent fourteen years pioneering agricultural development in the area to little success and he needed to borrow heavily to further finance his grand dream. He borrowed from the entrepreneur, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort. Mort entered into a partnership with Hawdon. They carried on for a while but, in the end, Mort bought



Hawdon out and took over the property. This left Hawdon with just Kyla, Bergalia and Kiora. A home, "Hawdon House", was built overlooking Tuross Lake and the land farmed from the highway to the Narrows and John Hawdon settled in to growing beef, dairy and vegetables for the ever demanding Sydney market.

Like Mort, John Hawdon invested in jetties and his own boat to transport his goods. At the time the pair had a stronghold on providing Sydney with its food supplies and Tuross Head played a role in being a perfect place to grow potatoes.

Starting back in the days of early Sydney, Tuross Lake was frequented by coastal luggers that would sail in through a far deeper river mouth and make their way up as far as Turlinjah where they would take on dairy and farm products grown on John Hawdon's "Kyla" farm and the extensive Bodalla Farm owned by TS Mort that is now the township of Bodalla.

Luggers were being built on the Tuross Lake from local timber to assist in the supply of produce to Sydney . Tuross Head played its part of being a perfect location to grow potatoes and the little cottage above the boatsheds was the home of the “Potato Overseer” . That cottage was originally the Araluen Police Station and was moved to Tuross in the late 1880’s after a new courthouse and police station was built in Araluen John Hawdon’s lands were passed down to his son Earnest Athol Hawdon.



Patrick Mylott and his wife Mary bought the bulk of the Tuross Head holdings from the “Narrows” eastward taking the land to the east of James Evans . They built “Tuross House” overlooking the lakes and sea. The land was farmed until 1883 and then leased whilst Patrick Mylott and family moved to Sydney to expand his empire. He died in 1898 with Mary returning to Tuross Head to then sell the property to Hector McWilliam in 1925

## **John Hawdon's legacy lives on** by Jocelyn Righton

Eurobodalla’s most renowned migrant, John Hawdon., and his wife Margaret, lived out their retirement years on their tranquil and idyllic property at Kyla Park at Tuross. He died on June 12, 1881, just a few days shy of his 80th birth. His obituary in the Moruya Examiner on June 18 said that "rarely since the settlement of white men on the Moruya River has so profound a sensation of sorrow been evoked as on the news of the death of John Hawdon Esq.

“Mr Hawdon was almost the last of a type of colonist who appeared in the field of Australian enterprise about 50 or 60 years ago and who, in a remarkable degree, tended to open up and develop the pastoral capabilities of this great continent...”

His wife Margaret survived her husband by five years. On October 29, 1886 she was buried beside John at Kiora. The Examiner reported that "those whom she has known and loved will say with heartfelt thankfulness that she passed from a state of trial to one of rest'. **Kyla Park Dairy Farm was passed to their fourth son, Ernest**, an accomplished maker of cheeses, who had married Elizabeth, the daughter of Moruya settlers Abraham and Elizabeth Emmott, in 1874.

Within a year of **John's death, in March 1882**, Ernest was approached by a Sydney firm on behalf of an interested purchaser of Kyla Park, Ernest stated that the lowest price acceptable was £10,000 cash, but the potential purchaser considered it "too high". Ernest's final response on the matter was “leave me to make my cheese in peace, I am well aware that it is the scenery, position and natural productiveness that renders it (Kyla Park) especially valuable”.

So the property, originally a squattage in 1832, remained in the Hawdon family's possession for another 91 years, a total of 141 years. As well as continuing production at his well known Cheese Factory, Ernest contracted to supply sheep for construction workers on the transatlantic telegraph line being built from Adelaide to Port Darwin, a matter of "no little difficulty". "The work was effectually performed and after arriving at Port Darwin he returned by himself to Adelaide, a distance of some 1500 miles, at times being in great danger from hostile blacks,"

Bright's disease forced Ernest and Elizabeth and their five surviving children to move to Sydney in 1892 but he succumbed just three months later. **Kyla Park farm eventually passed to their fourth son, Leslie,** who was only 12 when his father died. Elizabeth died in 1934 aged 90 at "Beverley", Moruya, the home of her son Ernest.

Ernest and Elizabeth's first son, John Emmett Hawdon, was president of Eurobodalla Shire for about four years and laid the foundation stone for the Shire Chambers in 1913. **When Leslie died in 1938. Kyla Park passed to his only son, Ernest Athol,** who eventually sold the entire Kyla Park farm to Camenae Corporation in 1973.

The original house, sited on the hill over-looking the area now occupied by the Tuross Lake Caravan Park, had years previously been moved to where No 8 Hawdons Cove. Kyla Park, now stands. The house's granite brick-lined water well still exists, as do garden sites (one where beans were grown for Yates Seeds), dams, fences, building remains, an old road from Kyla Park to Turlinjah, and Monterey pines planted by Leslie. In the late 1970s Camenae subdivided the old farm into four parts: "The Clusters" were for residential development (50 hectares), the sports and recreation area (11 ha), the fore-shore reserve (36ha), and five grazing lots (192ha). In the Deed of Agreement between Cameriae and council, the grazing lands were dedicated to the community of Tuross as "an area of unique characteristics for the visual benefit of members of the general public" but in 2000 council told residents at a public meeting that changes to the Local Environment Plan and NSW state Government laws meant that council now owned the lands - not the community.

Council's efforts to subdivide and sell the lands for possible industrial, commercial and residential development fell flat through courageous efforts on the part of residents, who were adamant "It's our land, leave it alone!".

In February 2003, councillors voted unanimously for the lands to be included in council's Rural LEP as



heritage lands and to be listed on council's Heritage Register. The five lots, now categorised as an area of cultural significance through the historical use of the land for grazing by the Hawdon family, are still used for grazing and, most importantly, are protected for future generations.

Above In this photo, most probably taken shortly after Ernest Hawdon's death in 1892, are his children (back) Leslie Dampier, Ernest Edmonstone. (seated) John, his widow Elizabeth, Margaret and William Werg

*This article was published in the BAY POST MORUYA EXAMINER ☐ October 30. 2013 and reprinted with kind permission of the author*



## Patrick Mylott [1838-1899]

Patrick MYLOTT was born in 1838 in Cloncormack, County Mayo, Ireland. His wife Mary HEFFERNAN was born 15 Aug 1839 in Suirville, County Tipperary, Ireland. They were married on 16 Nov 1864 in Broulee, Moruya, NSW

Beyond the “Narrows” the rest of the headland had been subdivided by the NSW Registrar General and the lots on the Tuross Headland were purchased by Patrick Mylott with a loan from Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd. Patrick Mylott built “Tuross House” in 1870, on the ridge overlooking Tuross Lake, Coila Lake and the Tasman Sea.

His daughter Eva was born in September 16, 1875 in Tuross House. Discovering his daughters rich contralto voice at a young age, Mylott leased his farm in 1883 to George Smart and moved to Sydney to invest in a Sydney wholesale liquor firm.

Eva first went to Madame Christine, an internationally known Canadian opera singer turned nun, then to the teacher Kowalski. She matured slowly but in 1897 was a rising young star in the Sydney Musical world. Encouraged by the great Melba; Eva was to leave for Europe in 1902

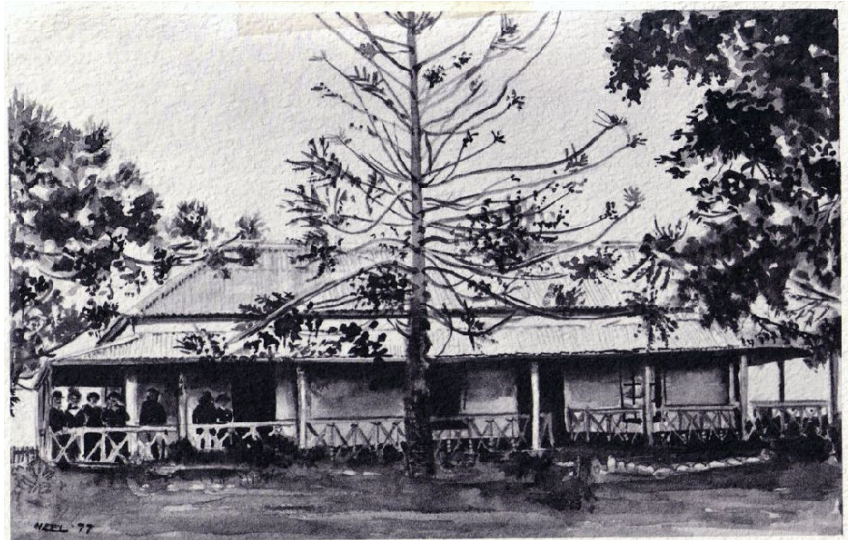
Patrick Mylott built “Tuross House” high on the ridge that overlooks Tuross Lake, Coila Lake, The Great Dividing Range to the west and the Tasman Sea to the east.

When Patrick Mylott died in 16 July 1899 his widow terminated George Smart’s lease on the Tuross Head farm and henceforth worked it herself with the aid of a farm manager securing ownership from the bank in 1904 She then sold the land to Hector McWilliam in 1924/1925.

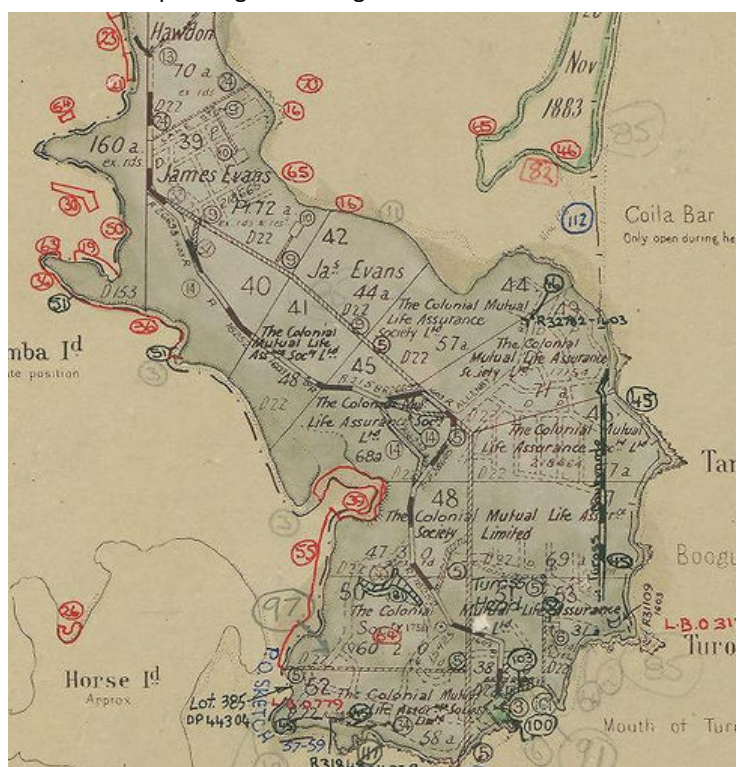
The Mylott family, having held the 875 acres since about 1870, sold it to Hector McWilliam in 1925.



Above: Patrick Mylott



Above: a painting of the original Tuross House

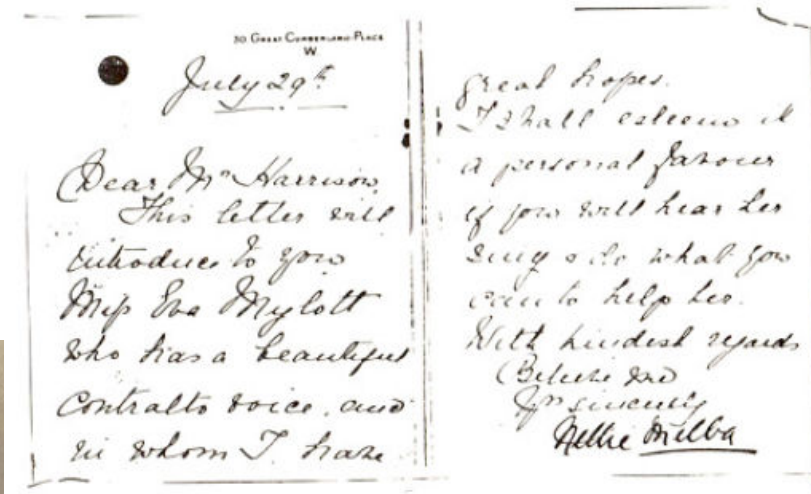




## The making of a star—Eva Mylott

Nellie Melba had one more Australian concert to complete. Her rest had ensured that her voice was in perfect condition. It had also allowed her to indulge in other activities. The day of her final concert, she arranged to meet a young Australian contralto, Eva Mylott. Eva was journeying to Europe soon after to further her career and was thrilled to meet Australia's greatest soprano. Melba furnished her with an introduction to Madame Marchesi, Melba's Parisian teacher. Miss Mylott gratefully accepted the introduction and Melba arranged to meet her in Europe the next year. Eva appeared at the Metropolitan Opera with Nellie Melba in 1914.

As well as being a well known singer of her time, Eva Mylott is perhaps better known today as being Mel Gibson's, the Australian actor's grandmother.



A monument was erected in Jutland Avenue at Eva Mylott Reserve by the Tuross Head community commemorating Eva Mylott—Contralto—the plaque is affixed to a piece of Moruya Granite.

To offer an idea of this era in the history of Tuross the following article is an enlightening read.

## ***A Tour to the South. FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.***

**Australian Town and Country Journal—Saturday 28 October 1871**

Source : <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/70469820>

*I LEFT Kyla Park on the following morning, in company with Mr. Ernest Hawdon, and after following the road for a few miles we passed the head of the Tuross Lake, and turned to our left by a side track which led to the Tuross Steam Saw-mills, situate about two hundred from the lake.*

*The Tuross Steam Saw-mills are interesting from the fact that they are owned and successfully carried on by four working men, viz., Messrs. Goodin, Hicks (brothers) and E. Brown. These mills are thus most economically worked, and have been in operation for the past five years. The proprietors, on the occasion of my visit, were just completing an order for the now General Post-office, Sydney, in the shape of boxwood joists from 14 to 20 feet measurement. The principal work however, now being carried on is the construction of ketch of fifty-five tons register. It is being built under the immediate supervision of Captain Fletcher, who has long navigated the Pacific and other oceans in vessels of his own.*

*On the same side of the lake two other boats were lying, the May ketch, loading timber from the mills and produce also from the district, for Sydney, as the cutter Maid of the Mill, the property of the proprietors of the saw-mills. The machinery of the steam saw-mills consists of a 14-horse power engine and boiler, working large vertical frames.*

*Leaving these mills, and Mr. Ernest Hawdon shortly afterwards with many thanks, I continued my journey alone, and three miles further entered the great Bodalla Estate, belonging to that enterprising and public-spirited colonist, T. S. Mort. Esq.*

*This estate is what the auctioneers might justly call "a truly magnificent property," but as it has been well described before, I will only give a brief outline of what came under my notice in my rambles through it, with Mr W. E. Mort, who is at present in charge at Bodalla. The first cleared lands come to are coiled Trunketabella, and have erected on them comfortable houses with barns, and also gardens attached. These are now used as fattening farms, though formerly used to agricultural purposes.*

*About a mile beyond these farms is the Tuross River, which flows into the lake of the same name. A punt is used for crossing at this point, and it is under the lesseeship of Mr. George Slawson. About a mile and a-half beyond the punt we came to the Bodalla Post-office and store, the latter well supplied with the varied requirements of the district. Mr. Charles Brice is storekeeper and postmaster, and he also keeps an accommodation house for travellers, where they may rely upon being well treated.*

*I should mention that a few miles above, or at the back of Mr. Brice's store, there is another place worthy of note, which is visible from Kyla Park. It is called Horse Island, and once was surrounded by the Tuross Lake. As islands could not be taken up under the Free Selection Act, a narrow neck of land mysteriously arose before a land selection day, which connected the island with the main land, and thus became open for free selection, and was accordingly taken up by Mr. Brice, senior, who has now formed a capital farm on it.*



## Hector Roderick McWilliam [1877-1974]

### The following is the story of Hector McWilliam told through some of the recollections of his daughter, Jessie Overgaard

Tuross Estate was bought from Mary Mylott by Hector McWilliam over several years from 1923 to 1926. Hector was then aged 48. At the time the property was under the management of Mr Stockman.

With the property came "Tuross House", the once family residence of Patrick Mylott which had been built in 1870. The house consisted of a stone building with a weatherboard wing. The big Norfolk Island pine had the top branches cut off by Stockman's step-son, Arthur Tiedemann, who used to race his sister on their ponies from school to see who could climb the highest up the tree.

There was no electric light, so candles and oil lamps were used. Cooking was done on a huge double fuel stove. Hector McWilliam had a large kitchen, dining room and general store added so that it could be run as a boarding house by Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Mitchell. The store only kept essentials and took orders for bread.

The original toilet was made from timber washed up by sea from a shipwreck (2 people could sit side by side on 2 open portholes over a deep pit). Roads were really only tracks (very rough) and Carmy Berriman used to bring the mail down from Turlinjah twice a week on horseback. From the turn off at the main road into Tuross House there were four wooden gates which had to be opened and shut by all. The remains of an orchard planted by the Mylotts were in front of the house with only a pear and quince tree were left.

Bed sheeting was bought for the boarding house by Hector in 100 yard rolls, cut but not hemmed, consequently they frayed under the severe coastal winds and there were cotton threads wrapped around trees for miles.

Christmas of **1923** saw exceptional rain, all roads were cut, no one could leave Tuross or any resort south of Tuross. During the years following (1923-1930) Hector began to develop Tuross as a holiday resort. He was very interested in English history and named all the roads after British Battles and Admirals.

**1926** Jessie and her sister Jean took over the running of the boarding house with the help of Mrs. Mayes (cook) and "George", a little old man who did the washing up. He lived in a room attached to the fowl shed. Fred Davis, a local fisherman, lived in a small bush camp on Tuross Lake and in return for looking after the place while Dad was away he was allowed, for six pound a week, to rent the "Barn" (previously the cream room when the property was a dairy - at that time the separated milk ran down an open trough to the piggery below). The old piggery bales were where the Hector McWilliam Drive now passes.



Fred's parents joined him in the "Barn" together with their 20 cats which preyed heavily on many beautiful birds. One day when Fred and his parents were away Hector mixed strychnine in a large bowl of milk, locked two old favourite cats in a shed and watched the rest of them clean up the bowl and walk away purring, He later found out that milk was the only antidote !!

Some of the first visitors to Tuross (where the fishing was great at that time;) were Mr, & Mrs. Saggars and family, Tom Royds and his two sisters, the Laing family, the Morton, Tiedemann and Black families and many others from the Braidwood district. They all had to call at "Tuross House" to ask permission to camp on the property and to secure drinking water. The water had to be hand pumped from the huge tank under the house to the tank on the verandah near the store



The Berriman Clan 1926

A few years after the first subdivision was granted, cottages started to spring up, and as the population grew so did the need for a school bus. The very old school bus had a hole in the floor, resulting in the children being covered in dust on arrival at school. The roads, or tracks were still very rough.

Tennis Courts were built about **1926** in Jellicoe Rd, and Fred Davis was employed to poison the weeds. This he did, but, unfortunately he chipped them out, threw them outside the gate, and Hector's cattle promptly ate them and died. About the same time a nine hole golf course was also started. An annual Gold Cup Tournament was held.



The Jellicoe Road Tennis Court

Jessie and Jean were still running the boarding house in the summer **1927** when the Scoutmaster from Moruya, Harry Overgaard, called in if he could bring forty Boy Scouts to camp in the bush, by Coila Lake, for a month. Christmas week was extremely busy and at "Tuross House" the hostesses were sleeping in tents as



The Tuross House store 1930's

boarders occupied all the bedrooms. The scouts gave a concert for all the guests and many of the campers. The Scoutmaster, Harry, had a beautiful tenor voice, which helped win Jessie's heart.

Harry, who was "First Aid Officer" at Moruya Granite Quarry, (where stone for the Sydney Harbour Bridge was being cut by Scottish and Italian stone masons), became a





Harry

frequent visitor to Tuross House, arriving on his beautiful horse "Black Bess". A two year courtship resulted in the marriage of Harry and Jessie in August, 1929.

The campers complained about a lack of meat deliveries so Harry bought a sheep from Les Hawdon, killed and cut it up himself with a tomahawk and sold it to campers who said the meat was excellent but asked why were there so many bones in it?



Jessie and Harry

About this time Carmy Berriman, the mailman, married Elsa Tiedemann whose family had bought land on Jutland Avenue and built a house and store with a small Post Office. Elsa ran the Post Office and store for many years.

Hector had started on a mammoth program of tree planting from his first days when he purchased Tuross. Hector had a dream of Tuross Head becoming a seaside resort.



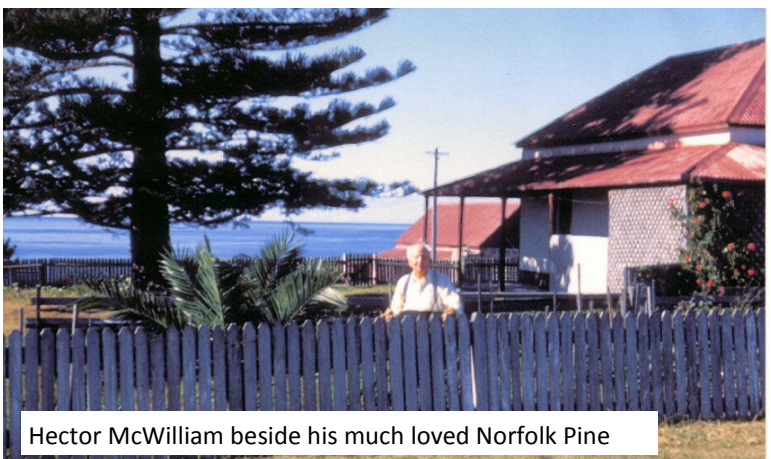
The Jutland Ave shop

## The magnificent Norfolk Island pines

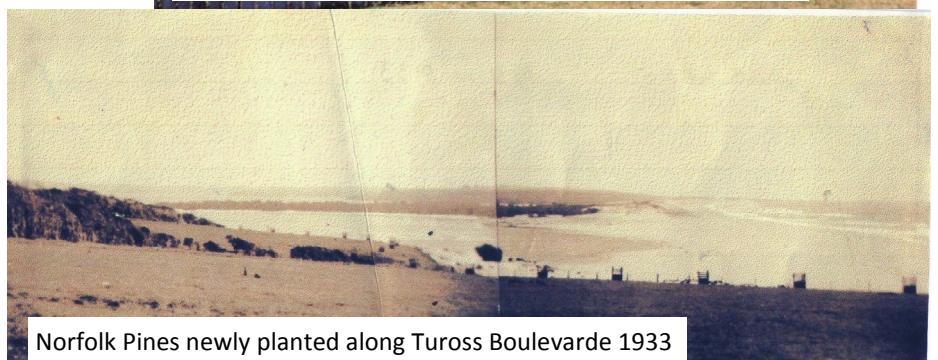
Hector raised and planted are a lasting testimonial to thirty years of hard work. He first started with eight seedlings he sourced from Norfolk Island he found he could propagate his own when he noticed seedlings growing in guttering at Tuross House from seeds which had dropped off the mature Norfolk Pine adjacent to the house.

This led to his extensive cultivation of the seeds from the old tree and subsequent planting out. These young seedlings had to be watered frequently so a horse drawn water cart was purchased and trees over the whole estate were watered every few days.

Harry often did this job on weekends. Strong tree guards had to be built around each of the young trees to prevent damage from the cattle and sheep that were being agisted on Tuross by Les Hawdon. Each year weeds had to be chipped out and it was many years before the trees survived without constant attention. Apart from the eight original seedlings the hundreds of Norfolk Pines have all originated



Hector McWilliam beside his much loved Norfolk Pine



Norfolk Pines newly planted along Tuross Boulevard 1933



from the one original tree.

**1929** saw the closure of the boarding house with the onset of the depression and growth in Tuross slowed considerably. Harry and Jessie ran the boarding house for a while in 1932/1933 but again it closed and became vacant. "Tuross House" became the target for vandalism until after WW2 when Hector moved to Tuross permanently in 1946. He found the house completely stripped of windows, doors and everything which could be removed. Starting from scratch he gradually restored the house to his home and continued his subdivision and his beloved tree planting.



**In the early 1960's** Hector dedicated the area of land for a bowling green and club house and the Tuross Lakes Bowling Club came into existence. Water for the greens was always a problem and after battling for many years with insufficient water, Harry, together with an assistant, dug a large hole which a soak drained and supplied just enough water to keep the greens alive. When water was eventually laid on to Tuross Head the problem was overcome.

Hector on the bowling green—note the Mother Norfolk Pine on the hill

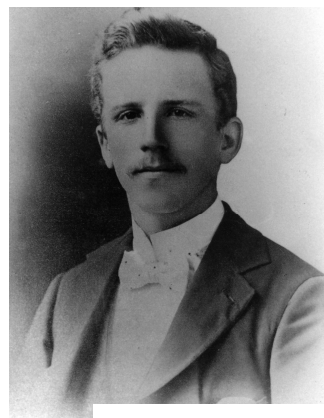


Hector also donated several blocks of land to the Presbyterian Church, enough for a permanent church, a Manse and Sunday School.

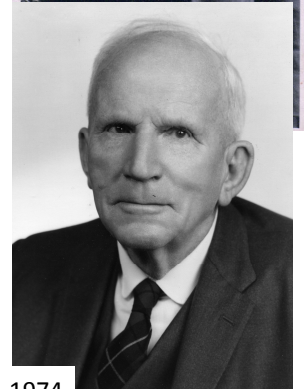
The present church, according to historical records, was actually built in 1869 at Nerrigundah and brought relocated in 1953. Earnest Athol Hawdon, son of John Hawdon, also being involved in the process.



*The above is as told to: Keith Lennon, long time resident and keen local historian who interviewed Jessie in the 1980's*



Hector McWilliam 1877-1974





**Hector McWilliam was the master of promotion.**

**In 1927 Hector made a movie called "Beautiful Tuross" and showed it all around NSW**

This original 16mm film was shot around Tuross. It was made to help Hector market his new 1926 Tuross subdivision in Sydney and Canberra. It was made just a few years after 16mm cameras were released for the home market and were still rare in Australia. The 16mm was introduced by Kodak in about 1923, so four years on, here was Hector using one to promote Tuross Head.

In all, it was nearly half an hour long and was made to showcase the resort that Hector was hoping to create. It was shown far and wide around the state to encourage tourists (and land buyers) to the area. The film presents a wonderful glimpse into the era at the time, the people, the clothing, the sports and the natural attractions of the area.

A poster and brochures from the time show Mr McWilliam wanted his money a little more quickly than today's working-life mortgages allow. "Terms 20 per cent deposit, balance in 10, half-yearly instalments, with interest at five per cent," the brochures said."

But little has changed since 1927 in real estate hype.

Hector McWilliam described Tuross's "reputation among Motorists (who deserved a capital letter) as the most entrancing spot on the Australian Coastline (which also deserved a capital). "Tuross is being placed on the market for the first time," he said.

"The early completion of Canberra and the establishment of the Federal Parliament there make the possibilities of Tuross apparent at a glance. Tuross is the nearest first-class tourist resort to Canberra, about five hours' easy run by motor. Tuross has not been spoilt by the establishment of any industries or Sawmills such as disfigure some of our other noted resorts. It will undoubtedly be the greatest tourist resort in New South Wales."

An edited version is can be seen on the [www.turosshead.org](http://www.turosshead.org) website and a DVD copy of the original is available from the Moruya Historical Society

