



ballina 2035

Historical Influences and Elements

ballina major regional centre strategy



ballina major
regional centre
strategy

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First published July 2015 by Ballina Shire Council, 40 Cherry Street, Ballina NSW 2478.

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You are required to acknowledge that the material is provided from the Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy Historic Influences and Elements Report.

Acknowledgements

Council acknowledges the extensive community input provided towards the preparation of this document. Specifically, Council acknowledges the efforts of those who participated in the Futures Forum in May 2014, participants of the Civic Panel and Government Agency Reference Group, Council staff, various community groups and individuals who have provided ideas, comments and feedback.

Council also acknowledges the contribution of project consultants who prepared several specialist reports as documented in Section 1.

The roles of the elected Council and the BMRCs project team (consisting of Simon Scott, Skye McNamara, Klaus Kerzinger, Lachlan Sims, Suzanne Acret, Steve Barnier and Matthew Wood from Council's Strategic and Community Facilities Group) in delivering this document and the BMRCs project are also acknowledged.

Cover Image: Historic aerial photo of Ballina.

The Bundjalung peoples and Ballina

Ballina is the traditional Country of many Bundjalung families who have a heritage extending across thousands of generations; it lies within a broader geographic landscape known as the Bundjalung Nation. The borders of this nation are the tribal boundaries the Bundjalung clans understood and observed before Europeans permanently settled at Ballina from the 1840s. The natural features and landforms that make up the cultural landscape are understood by Bundjalung families to be the creations of their Dreamtime ancestors.

Bundjalung families record how, before the coming of the 'whiteman', they lived in harmony with the natural environment. Like other Indigenous cultures, the Bundjalung express that they belonged to the land and it to them. Country provided a wide variety of foods including, fish, crustaceans, mammals, birds, reptiles and vegetables and fruits. Shelters were made of timber, bark, branches and palms. Fire was used to cook food, and timber, rock and fibres to make tools and utensils with which to hunt, gather and prepare food.

Bundjalung clans frequently moved across Country in search of food and in response to seasonal change, as well as for ceremony. They travelled to other parts of the continent to meet with other Aboriginal groups for festivals. Culture and traditions evolved over many thousands of years with the passing down of knowledge from previous generations and adapting to environmental change. Cultural identity was tied to complex kin and tribal understandings.

In the late eighteenth century European colonisation and settlement began the dispossession of all Australian Indigenous peoples. For the Bundjalung peoples, throughout the mid to late-nineteenth century, dispossession was acutely felt. During these decades at Ballina, and in other parts of the shire, Bundjalung people were subject to various maltreatments and controls – this included violence.

The many controls to which Bundjalung peoples were subjected prevented, or restricted, their movement throughout their Country and the practice of cultural traditions. In the 1880s restrictions included the segregation of families onto government reserves located at Pimlico and Cabbage Tree Island, by the NSW colonial government. Throughout the twentieth century racism, which took root in the nineteenth century, kept Aboriginal people segregated or excluded from equal treatment in and by the 'white' community. Dispossession and segregation did not, however, permanently sever the Bundjalung peoples' connection to their cultural landscape.

Ballina, and its surrounding landscape, contains important Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and areas that hold the history of the Bundjalung peoples, from before and after European colonisation. Registered heritage sites and areas remain significant to the identity and culture of the shire's Aboriginal community. The importance of Bundjalung cultural heritage is increasingly understood and valued by the non-Aboriginal community. Descendants of the Bundjalung clans living in the Ballina Shire today, and elsewhere, continue to celebrate their custodianship of the area and their unique cultural identity; they are part of the oldest and continuing culture in the world.



Cabbage Tree Island School c. 1910s. In the 1880s the NSW government established the Aborigines Protection Board. Its policy of segregating Aboriginal people from 'white settlement' saw Cabbage Tree Island dedicated as an Aboriginal Station – on which many Bundjalung families lived from the late nineteenth century. Image Courtesy Richmond River Historical Society.

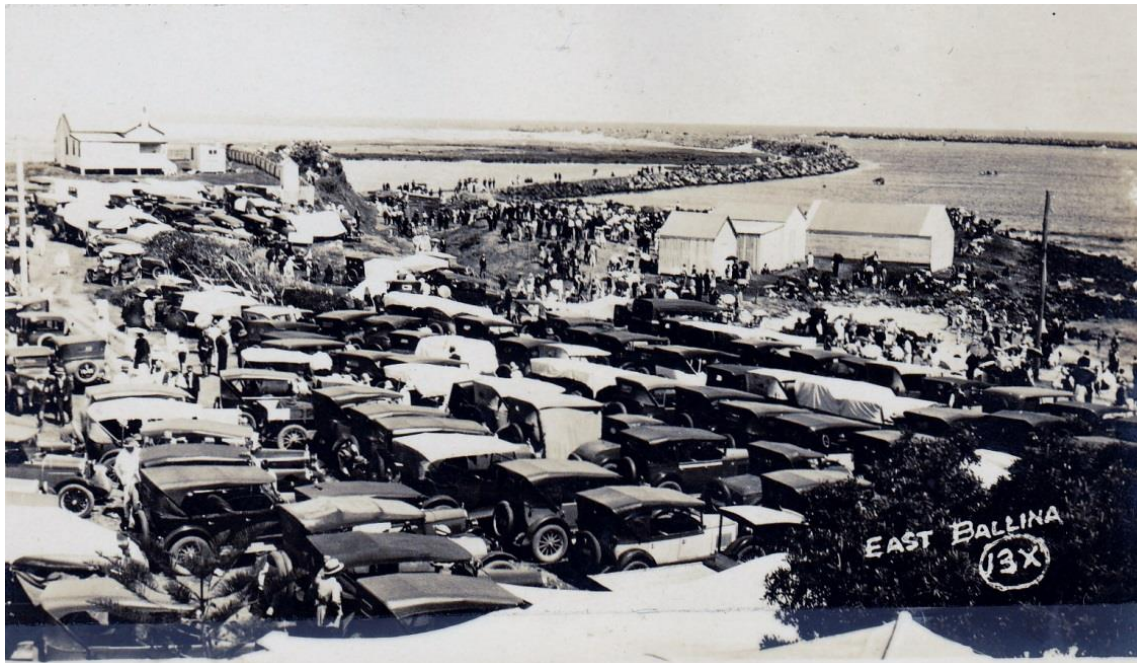
The historic environment at Ballina

Ballina sits on the northern bank of the Richmond River, just upstream from its mouth and confluence with North Creek. Historically, the river setting influenced the town's location and layout, as well as the lives of the many generations of people who had association with it.

The river ecosystem itself shaped adjacent environments, especially the alluvial floodplains that extended along its edges and supported coastal rainforests. It was the point at which the heavy rains that sustained the 'Big Scrub', once covering much of the high ground across the shire, drained. Similarly, the adjacent ocean environment created the coastline's dune systems, moulded by cyclical tidal movement and past climate change events.

Over time, both the Bundjalung peoples' custodianship and European settlement of the shire has shaped, and reshaped, the natural environment. European settlement, however, saw the physical environment altered more intensely and rapidly than ever before.

While some of the first Europeans to traverse the Bundjalung peoples' territory marvelled at its 'beauty' and extent, this perspective was largely subordinate to the primary interest of 'progressing' the colony, and later the nation, economically. Overall, the native vegetation was considered a hindrance to European farming and development; it was believed to render the land unproductive. Conversely, the Bundjalung peoples better understood the environment as a complete ecosystem of which they were a part, they lived with it and according to its seasonal rhythms. It satisfied their physical and spiritual needs. The formation and stories of the river are important to the Bundjalung peoples' cultural identity.



Ballina residents flock to Shaws Bay to celebrate the centenary of Captain Henry Rous' 'discovery' of the Richmond River. Historically, both the ocean and the river had a strong influence on shaping the lives of Ballina residents. This image shows the extent of the breakwall, constructed from the 1890s, to tame Ballina's dangerous bar that hindered ships entering its port. In later decades, as the reliance on river transport declined, both the ocean and the river were popular for public recreation. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

Despite the Europeans' contrasting views on the value of the natural environment, the first settlers to come to Ballina relied on the ocean and the river for their survival; ships took timber and other produce from, and brought goods and people to, the town. The appointment of a river Pilot at Ballina, and the positioning of a lighthouse on the hill above Lighthouse Beach, in the early decades of settlement reflected the importance Europeans placed on ocean and river transport. The town was soon referred to as the Port of Ballina and business established along the riverfront.



Enjoying the sun and a dip at Lighthouse Beach, c. 1940s. From the early decades of the twentieth century, the beach significantly influenced how many residents spent their leisure time at Ballina. Courtesy Alstonville Plateau Historical Society.

The breakwall at Ballina is also testament to the past importance of the ocean and river to Europeans. In an attempt to address the dangerous conditions of the Ballina bar in 1885 the State Government commissioned Sir John Coode to examine and make recommendations on improving its safety record. Coode's investigation resulted in the construction of the north and south breakwater to 'confine [the river's] wide estuary into a comparatively narrow channel a few hundred yards in length, than the ebb current [would] scour out a channel' deep enough for vessels to cross.

With the advent of road transport and increasing car ownership, from the 1910s onwards, reliance on river and ocean transport gradually declined. As this occurred the number of businesses located along the riverfront shrank and the main orientation of commercial enterprise in the town was to front River Street. The economic value of the river and the ocean had diminished and its recreation and social value emerged.

Nineteenth century settlement at Ballina by Europeans

Commencing in the early 1840s, individuals and families of Anglo-Celtic and other European backgrounds dominated nineteenth century migration to the Ballina Shire. Changes to land legislation that gradually opened up the land for settlement were the key triggers for this historic movement of people, which saw timber and agricultural industries emerge.

Several families engaged in cedar cutting were the first Europeans to 'settle' at Ballina. The arrival of this group in 1842 coincided with the changes that enabled colonists to utilise Crown land beyond the Clarence River under lease or licensed permission, and before it was officially surveyed. Their arrival also followed a preliminary reconnaissance to the area by a smaller party of cedar-cutters. Setting out from the Clarence River district, these men first travelled overland and with bullock teams to the Richmond River near Casino; from here they launched a whaleboat and rowed to the river mouth at Ballina. After inspecting the Ballina bar the group swiftly returned to the Clarence where they gathered together their families and supplies before returning by sailboat.



Aerial view of Shaws Bay (foreground) and Ballina Island c. mid-twentieth century. This image shows the spatial relationship between the earliest European settlement at Shaws Bay and Ballina Island. Image Courtesy Ballina Shire Council.

Within several years of the first cedar-families arriving at Ballina a small settlement developed at the present day Shaws Bay; it boasted small wooden huts, contained sawpits and was dotted with stacks of cedar awaiting shipment to Sydney or Melbourne. A gradual increase in cutters arriving on the Richmond River soon led to the development of another cedar-camp on the riverbank, in the vicinity of present day Norton and Martin Streets. Into the early-1850s the Ballina cedar settlements began to service other cedar camps that had established along the larger tributaries of the river. This included at Duck and Emigrant Creeks (Uralba and Tintenbar) and further up-stream at Blackwall (Wardell).

Throughout the 1850s, as the number of cedar camps on the Richmond steadily increased, other settlers came to the area to take advantage of the economic opportunities that the cedar cutting trade spurred. Sawyers, storekeepers, hoteliers, river-traders, shipwrights and their workers were among the many occupations the burgeoning cedar-camps began the support of. Clergy-men and teachers arrived to guide and instruct the spiritual and intellectual development of the settlers and their children. The European settlement of the town began to diversify.

In the early 1860s the Robertson Land Acts triggered a new wave of European migration to the Ballina Shire. This period of migration was dominated by farming families, as the 1860s Acts enabled any colonist to 'select', or obtain, land providing that their chosen tracts were occupied and 'improved'. These selections were considerably smaller in scale than the prior and dominant land-tenure-arrangement of the 'squatter's run' and resulted in what was referred to as 'closer settlement' (i.e. higher density settlement).

In contrast to the activities of the cedar-cutters, farming and its associated settlement drastically transformed the landscape, as land was slowly cleared of much of its natural vegetation to grow crops and raise livestock. Early farming activity to establish on Ballina Island and at West Ballina included mixed-cropping, sugar cane production, dairying and cattle grazing. Like the earlier cedar-settlements, in turn the expansion of farming spurred the eventual movement of other people, business and services to the town.

The historic survey and development of Ballina in the colonial era

In 1845, several years after Europeans settled at Ballina, the first government survey of the Richmond River district was made by Surveyor James Burnett. The establishment of a cedar-cutters' camp at the mouth of the river in 1842 had led to the survey. In 1855, another survey of the Ballina area was commenced by Assistant-Surveyor Frederick S. Peppercorne; it became the plan according to which the town was developed into the twentieth century. Despite the extension of Ballina's current day residential and commercial footprint beyond Peppercorne's nineteenth century survey, features he imposed remain visible in the town centre and the earliest residential areas established. These include the layout of streets according to a grid system, as well as their wide set nature and orientation east west and north south.



Aerial view of Ballina Island looking east, 1925. Norton Street is seen one block in from the vacant land shown at the very top of the image. In the mid-nineteenth century it was an important thoroughfare linking North Creek and the main arm of the Richmond River. Business and government services also located along Norton Street in these decades. Image Courtesy Ballina Shire Council.

Peppercorne's historic sketches indicated the location of the 'town of Woolwich' at Shaws Bay and 'suburbs' on the southeast portion of the present day Ballina Island. These drawings reflected the concentrated settlement activity established by the first cedar cutters at Shaws Bay. Into the 1850s, and with the emergence of a second cedar camp on Ballina Island, settlement activity established along Norton Street, which was situated between the cedar camps at Shaws Bay and on Ballina Island. Consequently, the development of the town became increasingly focused in this location. Peppercorne's completed survey led to the first sale of land on Ballina Island in November 1857.

Throughout the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s Norton Street remained the preferred location of many businesses and services and served as an important thoroughfare. During these decades postal services operated from Norton Street. A government wharf was constructed at the northern end of Norton Street, given the deep channel that occurred there. Incoming goods to Ballina, intended for transport to small settlements up-stream, were offloaded from sea-going vessels at the north-end of Norton Street wharf; these were then reloaded onto river craft at the southern end for delivery. The Anglicans established their church on Norton Street in the 1880s; and for those of all Christian faiths located on the Island Norton Street was the route taken by funeral processions to get to the north wharf where caskets were placed onto a punt and rowed across the river to the Pioneer Cemetery for burial.

With the continued growth of the population, as well as its associated farming and commercial activity in the town and surrounds, by the late nineteenth century most business activity was concentrated along River Street, or its adjacent riverfront. Given the low lying nature of Ballina Island, land along the riverfront was 'filled' with shell or sand to encourage the drainage of both tidal and flood waters that frequently spilled into the town. The establishment of additional government wharf facilities on the riverfront catered to the growing river-traffic the burgeoning settlement supported.

Also during these decades government services relocated or located on River Street – notably postal, telegraph and law and order services. These changes saw the still standing historic Post Office and Court House buildings erected. Private commercial enterprises that established along River Street during this era were made from weatherboard and other timbers, sourced and milled locally. Among these were hotels, inns and general stores. Located directly on the riverfront were shipping and factory-based business.



Procession along River Street, heading west c. 1890s. The image shows a neat row of timber shops fronting River Street. As Ballina grew in population in the nineteenth century business and government services became concentrated along River Street. Image Courtesy Ballina Shire Council.

Nineteenth and twentieth century industry and business at Ballina

The mid-to-late nineteenth century decades saw a pattern of family-based industry and trade establish at Ballina. Timber getting was the first commercial industry to develop; first cedar then other endemic hard and soft woods were taken from the Big Scrub. Aside from timber-cutting families, the timber industry supported other related-business – such as shipping and ship maintenance. In turn, other types of enterprise were induced to set up to service a growing settlement in the town. Early traders to the town were predominantly of the mercantile middle-class, some of whom had followed the spread of European settlement from the Clarence, or other rivers further south of it.



Thomas Mobbs General Store, date unknown. Mobbs' General Store was among various enterprises to locate on the river front in the mid-to-late nineteenth century; it faced the river given its role in the early transportation of goods and people to and from the town. Later business owned by the Mobbs family came to face River Street as road transport grew in importance. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

From the 1860s when 'vacant' land was opened up to 'free selection' in, and beyond, Ballina commercial agriculture took hold. First maize and sugar cane was grown along the alluvial floodplains; dairying then emerged predominantly in red-soil areas where the *paspalum* pastures it flourished on grew best. Into the twentieth century timber trading and agriculture (largely dairying) combined as the mainstay industries that were commercially tied to Ballina. By this time cedar was exhausted but other local trees – including rosewood, teak, pine & beech – were in high demand. Small goods and service trades locating along River Street now supported timber workers and farmers living in rural communities in the shire. Both these industries, however, were highly visible in Ballina.

The dairy industry's successes led to the opening of the Ballina Co-operative on the river-front in 1900. In tandem with producing butter, the Ballina factory processed bacon. The raising of pigs in association with producing milk was a common feature of dairy farming, as pigs were fed the skim milk that was a by-product of butter making. From 1929 the factory was owned by Norco and operated until 1945. At this time sawn-timber was needed for local houses, churches and halls. Its demand saw the Bagot brothers establish Bagot's Mill at the junction of the Richmond River and Fishery Creek. It operated until 1964 and was an employer of a significant number of the town's boys and men.

The predominant pattern of family-owned enterprise established in the nineteenth century persisted to the mid-decades of the twentieth century. The enduring presence of this pattern reflected that, across this era, a relatively static and homogenous population of families had established in the shire. While the population had nuanced differences, such as allegiance to distinctive faiths, overall it shared uniform values and aspirations. Into the decades following WWII, however, things began to change.

During these 1950s and 1960s the rural population began to decline in number for the first time since Europeans came to the district. Rural residents drifted to large towns and cities in search of employment. The success of the dairy industry had created an oversupply of dairy products with falling prices attributing to the population shift. These decades also brought a greater number of holidaymakers to regional areas, enabled by increasing car ownership. The growth in domestic tourism in turn, and in part, influenced the permanent movement of city-folk to regional centres; high living costs pushed people away from the city and past holiday experiences pulled them to regional centres.



River Street looking west from its eastern end c. 1910s. Painted timber shop facades demonstrate the number and variety of small business that operated in the town centre until recent decades. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

Into the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by the population changes emanating from the post-war decades, Ballina had begun to transform from a small coastal town to a regional growth area. In turn, these developments influenced the introduction of non-local, multi-national business to the town; among those to first establish was Woolworths in the 1970s. Despite the introduction of chain and multi-national business from this era, a significant number of small and locally owned businesses continue to operate in the town.

Nineteenth and twentieth century cultural life at Ballina

Across the nineteenth, and until the mid-twentieth century, religion, sport and other social traditions, together with the outdoors, predominantly shaped the cultural life of Ballina's European settlers. Into the second half of the twentieth century, while sporting traditions and outdoor activities became increasingly popular cultural pastimes, the influence of historic religious and social traditions had begun to wane. For the remainder of the twentieth century sport and outdoor pursuits retained their popularity. In addition, recent decades have seen the growth and diversification of the population, as well as the influences that shaped its interests and values. These shifts in cultural life combined has resulted in a broadening of the community's cultural life, which has been unprecedented.

With the town's early European settlers predominantly originating from England, Scotland and Ireland, all the major Christian traditions – Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Methodism and Roman Catholicism – established a strong presence in Ballina from the mid-nineteenth century. In common with settler communities elsewhere, religion had profound influence on the town's residents. It shaped the routine of their day-to-day lives. Many families began, or ended, each day in prayer and strictly followed the tradition of dedicating one whole day in the week – the Sabbath – to taking rest. Before the building of churches, clergy established in the town. They held services in settler's homes, outdoors or in public buildings.

During the 1880s, each of the Christian faiths present in Ballina built churches. Across the late nineteenth century decades also, many social gatherings were organised according to religious affiliations, including dances, suppers and fund raising events. Member and community based organisations popularly patronised by residents, such as the Masonic Lodge and Ladies Guilds, had their origins in particular religious traditions. Even some European sports held across the first century of settlement – such as rugby, golf and horse racing – had religious traces given the strong correlation between the faiths observed by residents and their hereditary background. Rugby had English, golf Scottish and horse racing Irish connections. The sports days held at Clement Park were often part of community celebration days. These stemmed from traditions such as Empire Day (English) and St Patrick's Day (Irish). At sports and other community celebration days crowds were entertained by the Ballina Band; another of the town's social traditions.



Ballina residents celebrate May Day at Clement Park with a maypole dance c. 1890s-1900s. Clement Park was host to numerous community events and celebrations from the late nineteenth century and across much of the twentieth century. Social gatherings among town residents at Clement Park and was a common cultural activity in these decades. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

The influence of the natural environment on the early cultural life of Europeans at Ballina was also profound. At first, nature was 'battled' with, as settlers worked hard to exploit or clear its endemic vegetation to establish new livelihoods. Not until the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century was nature popularly enjoyed for leisure. It was during this era that picnics at waterfalls and other scenic spots gained popularity. The advent of surf-bathing in the early twentieth century established it as one of the most widely enjoyed cultural pastimes by residents, which persists to the present day. South Ballina Beach was initially utilised, but from the 1920s Lighthouse Beach became the main surf-bathing spot. The construction of its first clubhouse at the base of the headland in 1932 cemented its popularity, which grew throughout the 1950s and 1960s – arguably its heyday. Across all these decades surf carnivals were held, which eventually included Miss Sun Girl competitions. Some community celebration days also involved beach-based activities, such as sand castle competitions.

Given the popularity the beach gained, from the 1920s at Shaws Bay an area was formalised to accommodate local-families who holidayed in tents. The 'old quarry holes', created by the gouging out of the columnar basalt used to build the breakwall, provided an alternative to swimming in the surf. Such became the appeal of temporarily living at the beach in the warmer months that a dance venue was established at Shaws Bay in the 1930s – The Waterfront Dance Hall. Into the 1940s and 1950s 'the Waterfront' was a draw card for young people especially. The diminished influence of religion on daily-life during this era increasingly saw most young people mix at these dances. The post-war decades saw American-culture begin to infiltrate the cultural-life of young people as well; it influenced the popularity of the Roxy Theatre that established in the 1960s on River Street.



Cars and tents at Shaws Bay 1920s. From the 1910s Shaws Bay began to grow in popularity as a place for camping and swimming. Image Courtesy Richmond River Historical Society.

From the 1970s and 1980s Ballina's demographic profile began to change significantly, which resulted largely from the arrival of a 'sea-change' population. Consequently, again new cultural influences were introduced to the community. In recent decades, as the general population gained access to higher levels of education and internet technology broadened household influences to readily embrace global issues and ideas, younger generations who have stayed or returned to the community contributed to its outlook also. The cultural life and values Ballina residents now seek and hold is markedly diverse.



The beach has long been part of the culture and character of Ballina.

Sea-change: the context of recent decades of population growth at Ballina

In recent decades the Ballina Shire has experienced a new wave of population growth that reshaped it from a small coastal town to a regional growth centre. This change in population has predominantly stemmed from internal migration trends – the movement of people from within the country from one place to another (as opposed to an increased birth rate or international migration). The two decades from 1986 to 2006 marked a high point in the recent increase in population at Ballina. This increase co-incided with a broader internal migration trend of the movement of people from cities to regional centres, as well as from inland areas to the coast. Ballina's coastal environment has seen it become one of several localities in the region to which so-called sea-changers have migrated in search of a more affordable lifestyle and to retire.

Recent population growth in the shire contrasts historically with the late nineteenth population changes that resulted from the making of new legislation to enable the closer settlement of people on rural land. This reform drew farming families to the district and saw the establishment and growth of the shire's rural communities and villages. The impact of the shire's expanding rural community on Ballina at this time was largely economic, as these communities demanded the specialist goods and services that had developed at the town of Ballina. In turn, the development of goods and services in Ballina saw the town's population increase.

Into the twentieth century, the rural population continued to rise steadily throughout the shire. It was buoyed by the success of the local dairy industry that established from the 1880s and grew its production up until WWII. The stability of the shire's rural population during this era bucked a downward population trend occurring in other parts of the state, which had commenced at the beginning of the century and stemmed from the 1890s depression. Consequently, rural populations began moving to cities to find employment and this co-incided with an expanding international migration to Sydney and Melbourne, encouraged by governments to spur economic growth.

From the immediate post-WWII decades, however, the rural population of the northern rivers was in decline as the dairy industry faced the problem of an oversupply of products and a consequent downturn in their value. The mechanisation of dairy production from the late 1960s also added somewhat to its reduced demand for labour. Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s the industry faced further adjustments as it transitioned from a focus on producing dairy goods – notably butter – to the sale of bulk milk. These developments and increasing regulation of the industry became too onerous for many farmers and resulted in their abandonment of the industry. Many dairy farms, on the plateau especially, were turned over to horticulture – including avocado and macadamia nut production. Relative to the dairy industry, horticulture was highly mechanised and did not require the size of labour force the dairy industry once supported.

The movement of people from the city in the 1960s and 1970s began the reversal of the effects of the declining rural population on regional centres; those moving from the city, however, were now predominantly settling in urban areas. The 1960s and 1970s also saw growth in tourism at Ballina and this exposure resulted in an increased interest in the town. By the 1980s new settlers were arriving in significant numbers to the shire, the decade began a flow of people that between 1986 and 2006 saw a 60 per cent increase in the population; with the largest proportionate growth occurring between 1986 and 1996. This period marked an era of increasing living costs and high interest rates that pushed many families away from cities to regional centres to realise a more affordable lifestyle. Retirees were also among new settlers and, on the whole from 2005, with the 'baby-boomer' generation reaching retirement age, this cohort has been a significant proportion of Ballina's most recent new residents.

The Ballina town centre's historic cultural landscape

The Ballina town centre contains layered histories of the natural and human influences that have shaped it to the present day – these entail a cultural landscape. Only some of these histories, however, are evident in remaining historic fabric or material culture. The Bundjalung peoples' historic connection with the land on which Ballina is situated has arguably left the least visible or tangible traces. The natural landscape and its innate attributes, or the features that have built up over time due to interaction with it, such as shell middens or other archaeological deposits, are representative of the town's known Aboriginal heritage sites. Still standing historic buildings and other structures represent the history of European settlement. Features in the cultural landscape also demonstrate vestiges of the historic coming together of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures at Ballina.

Aboriginal cultural heritage sites located throughout the broader Ballina Shire are estimated to date from at least 6,000 years ago, or c. 4000 BC. Varying in their nature, Ballina's Aboriginal heritage sites encapsulate historic knowledge of the day-to-day lives of Bundjalung clans prior to European settlement, as well as their spiritual and ceremonial life. These sites also have a legacy that extends well beyond the town's built heritage, of which the oldest structure dates from 1879 – the Ballina lighthouse situated atop an escarpment outcrop on the very edge of town and historically referred to as North Head. Regardless of the difference in the linear age of Aboriginal and European heritage sites and places, each embody the particular heritage of Ballina.

The locality of Shaws Bay is where Europeans first established a settlement at Ballina; before this it was a place where Bundjalung clans camped, located convenient to both fresh water and the resources of the river and ocean that were sustaining. The Shaws Bay area was also the locality at which the East Ballina Massacre took place. It marked a low point in the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. The recent declaration of the East Ballina Aboriginal Place by the NSW Government formally acknowledged this history.

Further, the Shaws Bay landscape holds the formative history of the establishment of the Harbour Pilot in 1859. Easton Park is a remaining tangible reminder of the Pilot at Shaws Bay, its namesake being the man who initially took up this post. The Richmond Pilot Vessel, housed at the Ballina Naval and Maritime Museum, also signifies the history of the Pilot at Ballina. A second timber vessel housed at the museum, the Florrie, symbolises the river's long shipping history.

In addition, Shaws Bay is where Ballina's oldest surviving residential dwelling is located – Fenwick House (c 1888). Unlike most of Ballina's other historic vernacular houses, it was built in the Victorian Italian style and under the instruction of Thomas Fenwick who had a colourful and lifelong association with the town, the river and its shipping history. The construction of the breakwall from the 1890s established it as another key feature of the historic Shaws Bay. Nearby at the Pioneer Cemetery, Ballina's earliest European residents are commemorated, along with one Aboriginal person, its earliest burial dates from 1853 and the last 1915.

Ballina Court House c. 1890s. The still standing colonial-era court house building tells of the development of law and order in the town. It is also the site from where Aboriginal people received food rations and blankets from the NSW Government in the late nineteenth century decades. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.



Ballina Island demonstrates the histories of many other aspects of Ballina's nineteenth and twentieth century past. In the 1890s, the island itself was forged by the fabrication of a canal connecting North Creek and the Richmond River to enable the secure transport of cane punts to the Sugar Mill upstream at Broadwater. Dating from the 1880s, the iconic Court House and Post Office buildings at the eastern end of River Street demonstrate the early growth of essential government services in the town. The Court House is another site that embodies Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shared history. From the Court House on the Queen's Birthday each year NSW Government issue blankets and rations were given to Bundjalung families living on the fringe, or out, of town. This gesture was established in connection with the nineteenth century belief that Aboriginal people were a dying-race, with blankets and rations given to ease their perceived 'demise'.

Historic commercial buildings located in the Ballina town centre predominantly date from different eras across the twentieth century, reflecting that River Street has seen distinct architectural changes since the early decades of settlement. The most dramatic change was its transformation from a timber dominated streetscape (dating from the 1860s) to a masonry, or brick, streetscape into the twentieth century. Historic Norton Street includes the spectacular Federation-era timber home Brundah (1908), along with a number of other historic timber houses on Norton Street and Ballina Island. It reflects the once abundant supply of commercial timber in the district. Built in the late 1920s the Ballina Manor, first established as a Methodist boarding school for girls, continues to have a conspicuous presence on Norton Street.



The Federation home located on Norton Street known as *Brundah*, c. 1900s. Brundah is recognised for its heritage values and demonstrates an example of Ballina's vernacular historic timber housing. The use of timber to construct housing in the town from the mid-nineteenth century reflected the abundance of timber available at the time. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

The establishment and early history of local government in the town is embodied within the 'old' Council Chambers on Cherry Street. Adjacent the chambers is the (second) Ballina Fire Station building, which dates from the 1930s. The former fire station was constructed from timber, the latter (and present) of red brick to aesthetically sympathise with the Council Chambers building. Other lasting brick buildings on Ballina Island include churches and of the Christian denominations to historically establish in the town – Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic – the Presbyterian and Methodist maintain heritage buildings just on, and under, a century old. In the 1920s, adjacent the old Council Chambers and the Presbyterian Church a memorial grove of trees was planted to commemorate the town's lost lives during WWI. Though it has been substantially replanted recently, the grove marks the profound impact war had on the Ballina community. Other significant trees on Ballina Island are the Norfolk Island Pines in the grounds of the old Chambers, which also commemorate WWI men.

In the last decade, the contribution of both the tangible and intangible past to the present character and cultural life of the town was recognised by residents who participated in heritage study and cultural plan processes undertaken by Council.



Ballina circa 1928 – 1930. Image Courtesy Ballina Library History Room.

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The Bundjalung peoples and Ballina

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