Rural communities

Viable rural communities are essential to life on the land.

Without the support and sense of belonging to a local community, people could not survive the harsh conditions and isolation of rural and remote areas. Community events and institutions have always been a mainstay of country life and help to overcome the loneliness felt by many on the land. Regional festivals, social and sporting events, as well as institutions such as the local church or school help to build close-knit communities and punctuate a hardworking year with much needed entertainment and social contact.

Agricultural societies and shows are a way of bringing rural communities together and have become a feature of rural life. Whether local regional shows or Sydney’s famous Royal Easter Show, they are an opportunity to showcase regional livestock and produce. To many people, especially those in remote areas, the local show constitutes the highlight of the year and is a focal point for the whole community.

Organizations such as the Country Women’s Association help to improve welfare and conditions for country women and their families. Medical services such as the Bush Nursing Association of NSW and the Royal Flying Doctor Service have made a real difference in improving health facilities and services in rural and remote areas.

The role of education and involvement of young people in rural societies and youth groups is important, as they are the future of rural life in Australia. Sadly, the exodus of young people leaving rural communities has always been a problem.

Even though over 60 percent of Australians currently live in capital cities, as a nation Australia still recognises a close affinity to the unique landscape of the countryside and to those who live on the land. The cultural mythology of ‘life on the land’ is a pervasive one, represented in our literature, music and folklore. A. B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson’s iconic poem The Man from Snowy River, Dorothea Mackellar’s My Country [1], and Jack O’Hagan’s song Along the Road to Gundagai - are all ingrained in our national psyche.

Community events

Community events are a way of bringing local people together and boosting morale in rural areas. Particularly for isolated families, recreational events are an opportunity to connect with neighbours and offer a much needed social outlet for rural folk. Weddings, dances, concerts, picnic races and sporting events - are often an opportunity for locals to get dressed in their finest, exchange gossip and enjoy a respite from the hardworking year.

“The late bounteous season has put the people in good heart”
- Agricultural Shows - Cootamundra, SMH, 17 Sept 1913

More organized events such as local shows, processions or commemorative events involve the whole community in activities. ‘Back to town’ events, popular in the first half of the 20th century, were a way to celebrate an area’s achievements and encourage former residents to return home for the festivities, which usually included street parades, sporting demonstrations and carnival events.

Social occasions
Picnic group on Federation Day at Bunker Creek above Whipstick Station - White Cliffs, NSW 1 January 1901

Call # At Work and Play - 06773 [6]
Digital ID: bcp_06773

View collection item detail [7]

bp_01162h.jpg [8]
Peace celebrations, 55th Btn CF display - Albert Park, Cootamundra, NSW 23 November 1918

Call # At Work and Play - 01162 [9]
Digital ID: bcp_06773
View collection item detail [10]
Bachelors' Ball - Cootamundra Town Hall, NSW 22 September 1920

Call # At Work and Play - 01448 [12]

Digital ID: bcp_01448

View collection item detail [13]

hood_12861h.jpg [14]
Yass races March 1936
Call # Home and Away - 12861 [15]
Digital ID: hood_12861
View collection item detail [16]

bcp_01695h.jpg [17]
Wedding performed by Reverend Mohnam (with beard) - Coramba, NSW Call # At Work and Play - 01695 [18]
Digital ID: bcp_01695
View collection item detail [19]
Victory celebrations - Wingham, NSW 12 November 1918

Call # At Work and Play - 01570 [21]
Digital ID: bcp_01570
View collection item detail [22]

bcp_01044h.jpg [23]
Presbyterian Church annual concert party produced by Reverend C J F Goy - Cootamundra Town Hall, NSW

Digital ID: bcp_01044
View collection item detail

bcp_03766h.jpg
Massed bands parading across railway line at Liverpool Street - Scone, NSW 26 October 1907
Call # At Work and Play - 03766 [27]
Digital ID: bcp_03766
View collection item detail [28]

bcp_01239h.jpg [29]
At Cootamundra Show - Cootamundra, NSW

View collection item detail
Back to town events

In the first half of the 20th century, many rural municipalities held 'Back to town' events to commemorate the founding of an area and to encourage old residents back to their hometown. Celebrations usually included a variety of events – from grand street过程ions and historical pageants, to carnival attractions and exhibition sporting matches. Local dignitaries would attend and the whole town would participate. Such events promoted the area, as well as boosting morale amongst the local community.

The Library holds many souvenir booklets published for these events. Ranging from small leaflets to more elaborate publications, the illustrated souvenirs usually included early histories of the local area, churches, schools and organisations, images of buildings and landmarks, as well as advertisements for local businesses. This Back to Goulburn souvenir featured an illustration by artist D. H. Souter which was used as the main logo for the Goulburn centenary celebrations in 1920. Souter's image of a dog arriving by train highlights the role railways had in country towns such as Goulburn, opening up rural areas for settlement and farming.

Back to Goulburn centenary celebrations

![Goulburn Souvenir](a4919001h.jpg)
Our First Century
1820 - 1920

By E. H. Dudley

It was on October 25th, 1820, that Explorer Oxley first camped on the plain of "Mulwarra," and it was in the same year that Governor Macquarie named that plain "Goulburn." And it is on October 25th, 1920, that Goulburn celebrates her hundredth birthday. In those three pregnant facts the reader has a city history in a nutshell. But the story which lies between is one of the most fascinating in the lifetime of a continent.

In the brief space at our disposal it is impossible to tell the full story of Goulburn. Nevertheless, it is still appealing, even if necessarily condensed. Oxley found the Goulburn Plains a pleasant camping ground; a place of running waters and fertile flats, fringed in wooded heights. His tent was pitched on the slope, just at the junction of two rivers, the Wollondilly and the Mulwarree, near where the Fitzroy Bridge now stands. From the gentle eminence he could see the bold contours of Rocky Hill, the heavily timbered flats where Eastgrove now stands, and, westward, the trees which then covered the western slopes of the future city's area.

But the land was empty of settlement for the greater part, though it is on


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Call # 92/1578 [34]

Digital ID: a4919003

View collection item detail [39]

a4919004h.jpg [40]
Still the city grew. The old ox-wagon had long given place to the stage coach; the "iron horse" followed, and with the advent of the railway, a new impetus was given to trade and commerce. Tanneries, boot factories, meat preserving works, stores of all descriptions grew and flourished, and so the community of to-day took shape. The beautiful cathedrals, for which our town is famous, were built; the schools, which to-day make Goulburn a great educational centre, were opened, following on the lines laid down by such masters as Samuel Harborme Becher and others. The founding of the Municipality followed as a natural corollary, and Goulburn blossomed forth as a solid country town.

Then came a period of depression. The financial crisis of 1893 shook the whole Colony to its foundations, and Goulburn felt the shock. But the natural resources of the district were too rich for this to be more than a passing phase in our first century. Nevertheless, the city received a set-back; and a curious result followed. The pessimist, who prated that no good thing could be obtained outside of Sydney, came into being, and the cult he preached affected local trade for years. Then came 1910, and light broke through the clouds. A new generation, who knew not Jeremiah, took hold of the reins of Commerce and Trade, and the closing decade of the century was one of prosperity. Empty streets were filled with buildings. Auburn Street was beautified by the addition of finer shops and plate-glass windows, and the civic pride, without which no town can truly live, became a real and glowing thing. Finally, early in 1918, a local journalist, delving among early records, discovered the facts which were to lead up to the great Centenary Movement. The result is seen to-day.
Call # 92/1578 [34]
Digital ID: a4919005
View collection item detail [43]
Back to town events captured the hearts of current and former residents alike. Long-time Cootamundra local J. D. Sueur penned a poem for the occasion which featured in the souvenir publication: ‘Back to Cootamundra Celebrations’, 1926.

Send a message to our kindred / In it, state the joy we seek,
'Tis the pleasure of their presence / Back to Cootamundra Week.

Ask them back to see the old town – / Show the many deeds we’ve done,
Then they’ll see the hand ne’er tired / Of the work which they begun …

Inspiring not only poetry, but music as well, ‘Bathurst – my old home town’ was a song arrangement of J. Naughton Harris’ poem, especially written for the Back to Bathurst week in 1924. The nostalgic lyrics recall his hometown of years gone by.

…When the velvet night is falling / In my heart where e’er I roam
I can hear the dream bells calling / From my far Australian home
They enthral my soul completely / with their changeful melody
Bathurst church bells chiming sweetly / In my home across the sea

Back to Bathurst in the morning / When the rosy sheen of dawn glows
‘Ere the bush birds hail the day / I’ll be well upon my way
For I know my old home town will welcome me…

Bathurst – my old home town. Sheet music, 1926

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[34] https://search.sl.nsw.gov.au/permalink/f/lg5tom/SLNSW_ALMA21107439150002626