

A Brief History of Bathurst



From the traditional custodians of the land, the Wiradjuri people, to the arrival of European settlers, the gold rush, and its growth into a thriving regional city, Bathurst has played an important role in New South Wales development.

- The Wiradjuri People** For over 40,000 years prior to the arrival of European settlers, the Wiradjuri people lived on the lands of the three rivers - the Wambuul (Macquarie), the Calare (Lachlan) and the Murrumbidgee. The Bathurst region was a part of these traditional lands, and the Wiradjuri maintain a deep and enduring connection to Country to the present day.
- 1813** After Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth navigated a route across the Blue Mountains Governor Lachlan Macquarie assigned the task of surveying a route to the inland to government deputy-surveyor George Evans.
- 1815** On 14 May 1814 William Cox set out from Emu Plains to build a road to the Bathurst Plains, completing it in just 6 months. Governor Lachlan Macquarie declared the townsite of Bathurst on Sunday, 7 May 1815.
- 1823** First specks of gold discovered in Fish River but not reported for the concern it would start an early gold rush.
- 1824** The expansion of the European settlement into traditional Wiradjuri lands led to conflict between the two groups. The warrior Windradyne led the Wiradjuri against those who would occupy their land. Martial Law was declared on August 14 by Governor Brisbane and was not repealed until December of that year. This was a dark and bloody period; one described at the time by the 'Sydney Gazette' as a "war of extermination".
- 1828** First post office west of the Blue Mountains established in Bathurst.
- 1830** Bushrangers known as the Ribbon Gang roamed the region, triggering the Bathurst Rebellion. Ten members of the gang were captured at Abercrombie Caves, tried and hanged for their crimes in November.
- 1833** Town plans were drawn up, and the first blocks of land were sold on the western side of the river.
- 1835** Holy Trinity Church, Kelso was the first church built west of the Blue Mountains and first used for worship at Easter.
- 1836** Charles Darwin journeyed as far inland as Bathurst on his visit to Australia. A plaque in Machattie Park commemorates his visit.
- 1851** Discovery of payable gold at Ophir saw Bathurst develop as a prosperous regional centre. Subsequent discoveries at Hill End, Sofala and Wattle Flat were responsible for further expansion of the gold rush.
- 1855** Dension Bridge was built over the Macquarie River, allowing easier access to the city. Prior to the installation of this bridge a punt was used to ferry people and goods across the river.
- 1862** Cobb & Co. headquarters moved from Victoria to Bathurst bringing better transport services and employment for the town and region. The municipality of Bathurst was gazetted.
- 1863** Bathurst Council's first election was held, and Richard Young Cousins became the first mayor. Ben Hall's gang raided the town, holding up the gunsmith and tried to steal a racehorse.
- 1867** St Stanislaus' College founded. It is the oldest Catholic boys' boarding and day school in Australia.
- 1870s** Abercrombie House was built by Bathurst pioneer James Stewart. It is listed on the National Trust (NSW) register and is a heritage treasure of the region.

- 1872** Largest piece of reef gold on record was found near Hill End by Holtermann and Beyer.
- 1875** Mother Mary McKillop travelled to Perthville to visit the Sisters of St Joseph.
- 1876** Main western railway line reached Bathurst opening the region leading to the development of an area called Milltown with its own school, police station and shops. Bathurst Town Hall and Council Chambers were built.
- 1877** The Post Office and Telegraph Office were established in buildings that later formed the wings of the Bathurst Court House (completed in 1880).
- 1878** Bathurst Show was moved to its present location after having been first held at O'Connell in 1860. Many of the current pavilions were built at this time. First purpose built public school opened in Howick Street.
- 1880** New Bathurst Court House opened in July and Bathurst Hospital opened in November.
- 1882** First telephone connections.
- 1885** Bathurst proclaimed a city. Future Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley born in Bathurst.
- 1895** Bathurst Experimental Farm established on the area that is now Charles Sturt University to provide agricultural education.
- 1896** People's Federal Convention was held in Bathurst giving citizens the opportunity to express their opinions on federation. First x-ray for medical purposes in Australia was taken by Father James Slattery at St Stanislaus' College.
- 1910** Lord Kitchener visited Bathurst to unveil the Boer War Memorial.
- 1914** First Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix held at Yetholme.
- 1922** Bathurst's 2nd hospital St Vincent's was opened at Gorman's Hill.
- 1924** Introduction of electricity to the city led to the installation of the ornate streetlamps that can be seen throughout the CBD.
- 1926** Gordon Edgell established a small cannery that grew to become one of Australia's best known food producers.
- 1928** New ambulance station built with funds raised entirely by the local community was officially opened.
- 1929** Community fundraising led to work commencing on the War Memorial Carillon.
- 1933** The Carillon was dedicated on Armistice Day. Winburndale Dam was officially opened as Bathurst's water supply.
- 1934** A competition was held to rename the Bald Hills and the name 'Mount Panorama' proposed by Kathleen Walsh was chosen. The traditional Wiradjuri name 'Wahluu' was not considered.
- 1937** Commercial Radio station 2BS begins broadcasting.
- 1938** Mount Panorama motor racing circuit (and scenic drive) was officially opened on 17 March. Car and motorcycle racing commenced on Mount Panorama at Easter.
- 1940** Bathurst Army Camp on Limekilns Road was established to train troops for overseas service in WWII. HMAS Bathurst, the first of 60 Australian minesweepers for use in WWII, was commissioned in Sydney on 6 December.
- 1942** Military airport was established at Raglan, becoming a civil facility in 1947. Australian Defence Industry munitions factory opened on the Blayney Road. After the war it was used for clothing and footwear manufacture.
- 1947** Construction of Chifley Dam commenced on the Campbell River.

- 1948** The former army camp on Limekilns Road became home for thousands of displaced persons from Europe. Over 80,000 people had passed through the gates when it closed in 1952.
- 1951** State Funeral held for former Prime Minister Ben Chifley (1945 - 1949) at St. Michael and St. John Cathedral after his death in Canberra on 13 June.
The Bathurst Teachers' College was established on the site of the Bathurst Experimental Farm.
- 1954** Thousands lined the streets to see Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip on their first visit to the city.
- 1956** Chifley Dam completed with a capacity of 16,000 million litres.
- 1963** First endurance race, the Armstrong 500, was held at Mount Panorama.
- 1965** Bathurst celebrated its sesquicentenary.
- 1967** Bathurst City Hall opened to cater for live performances.
- 1969** Mitchell College of Advanced Education established on the site of Teachers' College.
Automatic telephone exchange began operating.
- 1970** Clyde Industries began building railway locomotive engines at Kelso.
- 1974** Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation was established to encourage business growth.
- 1976** Bathurst's second high school called Kelso High School had its beginnings in South Bathurst and moved to Kelso at the beginning of 1978.
Central Mapping Authority relocated from Sydney and continues to carry out mapping operations today.
- 1978** Mitchell Conservatorium was established.
- 1982** Queen Elizabeth II made her second visit to the city.
- 1988** Bicentennial River Park with its heritage wall commemorating early settlers was installed alongside the Macquarie River.
- 1989** Mitchell College of Advanced Education became the Bathurst campus of Charles Sturt University.
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery is the first regional purpose-built gallery in NSW with a collection dating back to 1955.
- 1991** A sister city relationship with Ohkuma in Japan began and still exists today despite the town being evacuated with the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that damaged the nearby Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plant.
Renovations and extensions to the 30-year-old city hall saw the birth of Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre - one of the finest centres in regional NSW.
Inaugural National Cool Climate Wine Show conducted by Bathurst Regional Vignerons Association.
- 1995** First 12 hour production car race discontinued.
- 2000** BandTown comes to Bathurst. International marching bands were billeted and practiced in the city for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.
- 2001** Upgrade of Chifley Dam wall increased its capacity to 30,800 million litres providing Bathurst with a secure water supply.
- 2002** 1st 24 hour race held at Mount Panorama.
- 2003** Major upgrades to pit facilities and spectator access carried out at Mount Panorama.
- 2004** Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum showcasing Professor Warren Somerville's world-renowned collection opens to the public in July.
On 26 May Bathurst City Council was amalgamated with most of the surrounding Evans Shire to form Bathurst Regional Council.

- 2006** HMAS Bathurst II, an Armidale class patrol boat, was officially commissioned on 10 February in a ceremony in Darwin. Its crew had been awarded 'Freedom of Entry' to the city of Bathurst on 11 November the same year.
- 2007** Bathurst 12 Hour race returned to Mount Panorama in April with events in following years taking place in February.
- 2015** Bathurst celebrated its 200th birthday on 7 May with the unveiling of the Bicentennial Flagstaff commemorating Governor Macquarie's proclamation of the town site of Bathurst in 1815. Dual naming of Mount Panorama/Wahluu was gazetted by the Geographical Names Board.
- 2020** Elton John performed at Carrington Park Bathurst during his final Australian tour - Farewell Yellow Brick Road Tour.
Bathurst Railway Museum opens to the public housed in an original 1909 Railway Institute building.
- 2021** Dual naming of the Macquarie/Wambuul River was gazetted by the Geographical Names Board.
- 2023** Bathurst played host to the World Athletics Cross Country Championship for long distance runners of all ages.

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