

Historic Sale – Peter Synan OAM - Sale Historian

Sale's rich history and heritage is everywhere to be seen in its streetscapes and landscapes.

Ancient stately gum trees, a remnant of eucalypt forests that pre-date European settlement, are still to be admired in places such as the Sale Primary School (No 545), Our Lady of Sion Convent, York Street, or Glen Campbell Court to the north of Sale.

One of Gippsland's best known explorers, Isle of Skye man, Angus McMillan, discovered the Sale Plains over 1840-1841 on his journeys south from the Monaro in search of fresh pastures and a port. His achievement is memorialised by a stone cairn in McMillan Park, unveiled in 1927.

The Sale Plains were quickly occupied by pastoralists, at first mostly by Scots, who took up vast tracts of grazing lands. Some of them expressed their wealth and good fortune in grand country mansions. Examples of these are *Kilmany Park*, *Fulham Park*, *Nambrok House* and *Holey Plain*, all a short drive to the west of Sale.

Sale, originally called Flooding Creek, grew in the 1860s to be the main town in Gippsland with substantial buildings serving an extensive rural area. The former red-brick walled Sale Gaol, now fatally modified, still has its imposing stone portals; the classically designed Court Houses in Foster Street, one originally a Magistrate's Court and the other a Supreme Court for a circuit judge, are intact; and the 1865 built Sale Powder Magazine on the southern outskirts of Sale, built for the Gippsland gold mining industry, has been faithfully restored. The original, purpose-built post office has not survived, though a replica of its clock tower, housing the original clock and wrought-iron balustrade, is located in the Sale Mall.

Sale became the centre for church administration and for church-run boarding schools. The Cathedral Church of St Paul in Cunninghame Street and the beautifully proportioned Bishopscourt, off Raglan Street, evoke a strong Anglican presence. Likewise, St Mary's, the gothic revival Catholic Cathedral in Foster Street, the superb French-influenced Convent of Our Lady of Sion in York Street and St Patrick's College in Pearson Street are testament to a vigorous Irish-Catholic presence.

The grand Sale Mechanics' Institute, although now modified, still stands in York Street as part of the Sale (Secondary) College complex. This building has significance beyond Sale - when a new school in 1907 called the Sale Continuation and Agricultural High School first occupied its upstairs rooms it became, with Warrnambool Agricultural High School, the first state-run secondary school in Country Victoria.

Local government has had a long history in Sale. The Sale Borough Council of 1863 was the first borough to be proclaimed in Gippsland, Its original purpose-built chambers form today part of the Foster Street Sale Museum run by the Sale Historical Society. For those interested in a deeper investigation of Sale's history and heritage, a visit to the Sale Museum and to the Sale Family History headquarters in Macalister Street would be rewarding. A visit to the Gippsland Armed Forces Museum, just a few kilometres to the west of the town, close to the West Sale Aerodrome and TAFE College is also worthwhile.

The Sale Borough Council celebrated its golden jubilee in 1913 with the building of a hexagonal-shaped band rotunda in Victoria Park. Other landmarks in this park are the Coronation Gates of 1937, the Duke of Gloucester's oak tree planted in 1934, and most striking of all, the brick water tower designed by notable Australian architect-engineer, John Grainger.

The Sale Botanic Gardens, gazetted 1860, has many outstanding specimen trees and today is the oldest public gardens designed on a grand scale anywhere in Gippsland. The gardens overlook Lake Guthridge, named after Sale's first mayor, Nehemiah Guthridge.

Sale's early economic strength in Gippsland owed much to its transport system, road, water and railway. The main road from Melbourne passes through Sale and Pearson's Bridge enabled it to cross the Thomson River on the western outskirts. This bridge has now been demolished but a recently built cable-stayed pedestrian bridge nearby is a graceful reminder of the earlier crossing.

Shipping came into Sale through the Gippsland Lakes and rivers and the Sale Canal, built between 1886-1890. This made Sale an important inland port. Only vestiges of the early port facilities remain, but the artificial waterways – canal and swinging basin – form a picturesque setting and are a reminder of Sale's early function as a transport centre.

The Swing Bridge, south of Sale at the junction of the Thomson and Latrobe River is Sale's most important historical drawcard. The bridge, completed in 1883, and also designed by John Grainger, opens mechanically on a horizontal plane, pivoting on centre piers. It is the oldest, largely unmodified, operational swing bridge of its kind in Australia.

The first railway into Gippsland terminated at Sale until the late 1880s. The Reeve Street Signal Box and nearby gates and signals are reminders of this railway history

The business centre of Sale began in Foster Street and southern Raymond Street and early streetscapes can still be viewed there.

There are many other public and private buildings, including houses, which provide a glimpse of Sale from times past.

Peter Synan – February 2013