



welcome

to

ROSS

WELCOME TO ROSS

There are only glimpses of Ross to be seen from the busy Midland Highway, the major north/south route in Tasmania. Those who make the detour to visit Ross will be rewarded with its rich heritage and charming village atmosphere.

Ross is prized as a tranquil haven from the daily grind. It's a magical place to break your journey or to stay a few days. Stroll the quiet streets, past beautiful sandstone buildings, as the sun filters through the magnificent elms. Absorb the history and browse the galleries, antique and craft shops. Re-fuel with coffee, traditional fare and tempting treats from the town's eateries.

We hope you can take the time to explore our village. You will find a map in the centre of this booklet to help you find your way around.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ROSS

The district was first officially surveyed by white man in 1807 when Charles Grimes, the Government Surveyor, traced sections of the Macquarie River. Governor Macquarie, inspired by the surveyor's findings, visited in 1811 and named the area Argyle Plains and the river Macquarie.

In 1812 a garrison of soldiers was established at the ford of the River to protect the development of the future town. Other buildings were soon built and in 1821 the settlement was proclaimed the town of Ross. Governor Macquarie gave Ross its name after the parliamentary seat of his friend, H M Buchanan, of Loch Lomond in Scotland. Ross was considered ideally situated being centrally located and easily accessible from north and south. The good flat country was ideal for farming and so for supplying food, and the Macquarie River provided a reliable water supply. Indeed in the early years of the colony, the Government operated a large farm in the district for agriculture and the breeding of draft oxen. It was broken up in 1830 and sold to private landholders.

The Macquarie River was originally crossed by a ford at Ross. In 1821 a low level bridge was built consisting of logs laid on stone buttresses and covered with earth and gravel. In 1836 this was replaced by the splendid sandstone bridge which is one of the historic features of Ross today (see page 4).

The military presence remained an important part of Ross for many of its early years and its influence can still be seen today. A number of the early buildings around the town have military origins and several streets are named after battles of the Napoleonic wars. Some of the military stationed at Ross in the early days were veterans of these campaigns.

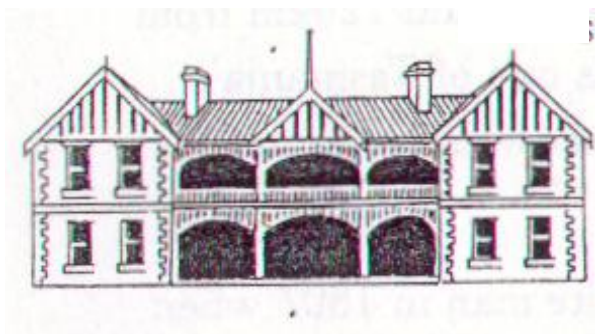
As Ross developed it became important not only as a garrison town but also as a coach horse change and livestock market. In 1826 it became the venue for the first Agricultural Show in the Midlands. These beginnings are evident in the coaching inns in the town and the fine properties in the surrounding districts.

TOUR OF ROSS

The scale of Ross makes it an ideal place to explore on foot. The features set out below cover a reasonable distance so use the map in the centre of this booklet to plan which parts of the village you wish to cover according to your available time and inclination.

The intersection of Church and Bridge Street is a good place to begin. It has been known for many years as **The Four Corners of Ross**. Each corner has been named to reflect the character of the building located on that corner.

1. THE MAN O' ROSS HOTEL - TEMPTATION



The Man O' Ross Hotel was established by William Sadler in 1835 and was well patronised in those turbulent days. The verandah and gable ends were added in the early 20th century. In the hotel gardens are several old freestone mileposts showing the mileage to Launceston in Roman numerals. The carvings were never completed nor the

milestones set in place.

2. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH - SALVATION

The corner was originally owned by the Bacon family and the building used as a store, residence, and bakery. It was converted to create the Church in 1920. The Church is generally locked but the key is available from the Ross Newsagency nearby so that you can view the interesting interior.



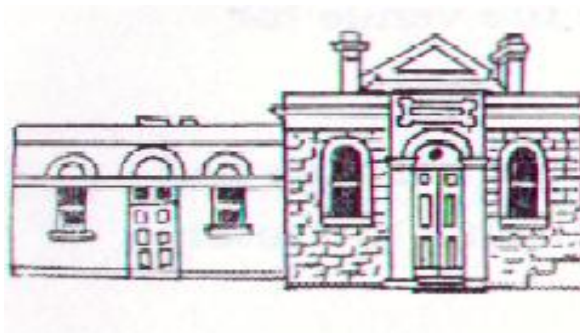
3. THE TOWN GAOL - DAMNATION



The town watch house was built in the 1830s on this corner. It is now an elegant private residence with a much-admired garden. The building incorporates the old police building in its western end.

4. THE TOWN HALL - RECREATION

With its sandstone paving and mounting block in front, the Town Hall was once the scene of much township entertainment. The façade of the Council Chambers, which adjoins the Town Hall, was originally part of the residence of the Governor of the Prison and dates from the 1830s.



It has been suggested that there is a fifth corner of Ross which should be named 'Commemoration':

5. WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorial commemorates the young men of the district who served their country in times of war. The earliest is the memorial to trooper Albert Edward Fitzallen, a blacksmith from Ross who died, aged 20, in 1902 on service in the Boer War. His two brothers also served.

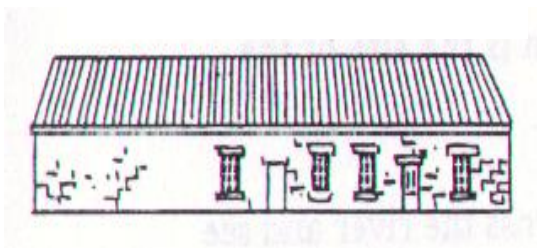
The 15 pound field gun is also a relic from the Boer War. It was one of six delivered to N.S.W. just prior to the war and is one of two now in Australia. It is a bit of a mystery how it came to be in Ross.



The World War I Memorial, topped by a statue of an infantryman, was unveiled in the 1920's and is unusual in that it includes rank. Other plaques list servicemen of World War II and the Korean War. A plaque also recognises Lewis McGee, born at Ross, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Passchendaele in WW1. He was living at Avoca with his wife and daughter, and working as an engine driver on the railways, when he enlisted in 1916.

Carry on exploring some of the other treasures of Ross:

6. **THE BARRACKS** was built to house the soldiers who were responsible for maintaining law and order during the early settlement of Ross. In 1831 there was one officer, one sergeant and eighteen men stationed at Ross. Daniel Herbert, one of the convict stonemasons responsible for the Ross Bridge (8), married Mary Witherington here in 1835. The Barracks is now a private residence.



7. THE OLD TANNERY. In the grounds of the Ross Caravan Park part of the old Tannery survives. It has been converted to provide cabin-style accommodation.

8. THE ROSS BRIDGE. Linked stone bollards along Bridge Street lead to the Ross Bridge, one of Australia's finest historical monuments. It was constructed on the orders of Lt. Governor Arthur, following the failure of the original bridge after damaging floods. The Bridge was designed by Government Architect and Engineer John Lee Archer, whose other work includes Anglesea Barracks, Parliament House, and the Penitentiary Chapel in Hobart, and St George's Church in Battery Point.

Work began in the early 1830s but both the materials and the convict labour could often be found on other building projects around the village. In exasperation the



authorities brought in convict stonemasons Daniel Herbert and James Colbeck with the incentive of pardons if the bridge was successfully completed. After about 15 months the bridge was finished and it was opened in 1836. The unique feature of the Ross Bridge is the 186 carved arch stones which depict Celtic symbols, animals and notable personalities of the day. What is believed to be a self-portrait of Daniel Herbert can be found on the southern side of the Bridge on the arch nearest to the eastern bank. Replicas of several of the carvings can be viewed in the History Museum at the Tasmanian Wool Centre (No 14).

9. THE OLD STABLES, on the hillside just south of the bridge, were a part of the early military establishment in the town. The stables, along with the cowshed and the chicken house are all built into the side of the hill with the natural rock providing part of the structure. The manger in the cowshed is carved from the rock. Further up the hill the square structure was a water reservoir.

10. From the top of the hill you look down over the site of the first Ross Bridge, some 200m upstream of the present bridge. It was made of logs laid on stone and was replaced after being repeatedly damaged by floods. A little further upstream again is the site of the original ford.

From this hillside one may look west across the river and see **ROSENEATH**, the property on which Sam Page's stables stood. Sam Page operated a coach service between Hobart and Launceston, and Ross was one of the locations he used for changing horses.

Immediately north of Roseneath was the **ROSS RACECOURSE**. It is said that the first race meeting in Tasmania was held here in 1827 and was reported to last for four days. The last meetings were held in the 1930's. This area was also used as an early army camp site.

Looking south, on the far side of the Highway is the site where **HORTON COLLEGE** once stood and just to the east is the historic farming property **SOMERCOTES** (see page 12). Nearby are the private historic properties of **BEAUFONT**, **WETMORE**, **LOCHIEL** and **MONA VALE**.

11. THE UNITING CHURCH formerly the Methodist Church was opened in 1885



and is built of local stone from the Beaufront quarries. The beautiful interior includes two fine stained glass windows, a ribbed ceiling of Oregon pine, Blackwood pews and a font enhanced by the heads of 8 carved cherubim. The photo on the southern wall shows the tapestry depicting the 'Tree of Life' designed by John Coburn and woven in Aubusson France from the finest Australian merino wool. The original is now displayed in the

History Museum of the Tasmanian Wool Centre (14). Other examples of Coburn's work can be seen hanging in The Sydney Opera House and The Kennedy Centre, Washington D.C.

12. THE DRILL HALL was completed in 1908 and it was used for the training of the militia and volunteers of the Commonwealth Defence Force. Soon after Federation, when the Defence Forces came under the control of the Commonwealth, many drill halls were built in Tasmania. It was a period of concerns about rising militarism in Europe as well as the conflicts in Asia, and a system of compulsory training was introduced for boys as young as twelve. The Drill Hall is now the home of Classwood.

13. ORDERLY ROOMS built in the 1830's. This old cottage was the first headquarters of the imperial troops when Ross was a garrison town. It is now a private residence.



14. TASMANIAN WOOL CENTRE was created as a non-profit organisation in 1988 to celebrate the importance of the wool industry in Tasmania and to highlight the historical significance of Ross as one of Tasmania's earliest rural settlements. The Tasmanian Wool Centre is

now one of Tasmania's most popular tourist attractions, receiving over 70,000 visitors annually.

Stroll around the History Museum & Wool Exhibition and acquaint yourself with the wonders of Tasmanian wool, together with other interesting features of a by-gone era. Also make time to browse the range of high quality Tasmanian made woollen products and craft in the retail area.



The Tasmanian Wool Centre is part of the Tasmanian Visitor Information Network and offers a state-wide accommodation and attraction booking service. The Centre also operates guided tours around the Ross Village for pre-booked groups.

15. MEMORIAL LIBRARY, BILLIARD AND RECREATION ROOMS

The library was originally the headquarters of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps whose crest (3 cannons and a shield) are carved above the lintel of the door. The original building dates from 1836, while the recreation and billiard rooms were added as a memorial to the soldiers of World War II. In the 1840s the ordnance store also housed the office of the visiting magistrate



dealing with convict misdemeanours.

16. The picturesque **ROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL** was built in about 1875 and officially opened in 1877. It was closed in 1999 due to falling pupil numbers.

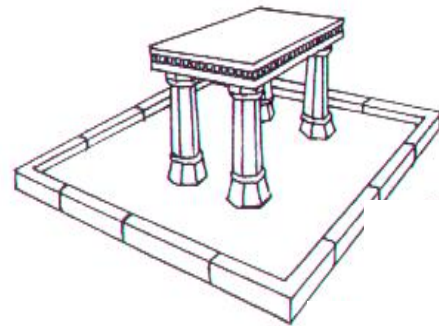


17. **THE FEMALE FACTORY SITE.** In the early days of Ross this site was used to house male convicts working on the Ross Bridge and on the Hobart to Launceston Road. Between 1848 and 1854 the site operated as the Ross Female Factory, housing female convicts and their babies. It was a hiring depot where women worked carding and spinning wool and sewing and knitting before being hired out to the surrounding properties as domestic servants. It was also a punishment station where female convicts who had committed new offences were sent for punishment. This might have involved the heavy labour of working in the laundry or periods in the solitary confinement cells. The site also contained a chapel to help in the reformation of the women. Part of the existing building on the site was originally the assistant superintendent's and overseer's cottages. Viewing the building from the side, you can

see what would have been the original façade of one of these cottages. Further information is available from the Tasmanian Wool Centre (14).

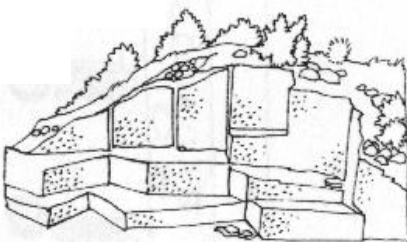
18. ROMAN CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN CEMETERIES: Here you will see the names of many of the district's pioneer families including some from the large properties of the district. Some of the names can still be found among the present day residents of Ross. The original Church of England built about (1835) stood between the stone wall of the cemetery and the existing walkway.

19. THE ORIGINAL BURIAL GROUND is located on a windswept hill overlooking Ross and the surrounding countryside, much of which was originally part of the Government Farm. Many of the stones date from the 1830s and 40s and some have been attributed to Daniel Herbert who was responsible for the carvings on the Ross Bridge.



Herbert's own grave is here, marked by a table-top tombstone he designed for his son who died in infancy in 1846. An urn based on original drawings has been reproduced for the top of the tombstone. A replica of the tombstone is on display in the Tasmanian Wool Centre (No 14). There is also a substantial monument built as a memorial to two young children of the McCracken family who both died on the 3rd June 1853 from scarlet fever. Another stone honours Phillip Maher who served in the Waterloo campaign and completed his military career as barrack sergeant at Ross.

20. OLD QUARRIES This is one of several quarries in the area where convicts worked the sandstone for which the district and its buildings are famous. This particular quarry is a rarity in that it still shows the working face.



and back to the village.....

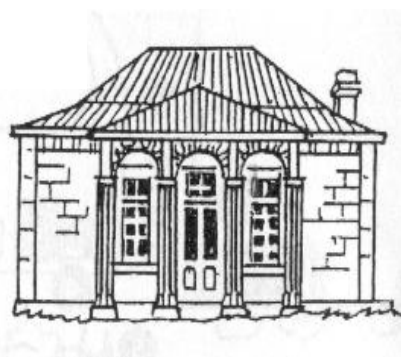
21. STONE COTTAGES The southernmost of these two cottages next to the Catholic Church was originally owned by the Bacon Family and consequently is known as Bacon's Cottage. The Bacons were stonemasons and bricklayers who arrived in Hobart in 1833. They worked on properties around the district such as Beaufront and Mona Vale. The second cottage was the first Ross Post Office. Mail bags were received from the street via an opening into the cellar. A blacksmiths shop was believed to be in the driveway beside the Newsagency.

22. THE STABLES OF THE SCOTCH THISTLE INN date from the late 1830's. They were used to stable coach horses in its time as a Coaching Inn.

23. THE SCOTCH THISTLE INN was built in the early 1830's and first licensed in 1840 as a Coaching Inn. It has operated as a store, school, hospital and restaurant. It is now a private residence.



24. THE OLD ROSS GENERAL STORE AND TEAROOMS. Originally the home of the Standaloft family, it was converted to a shop in 1880.



25. THE ROSS POST OFFICE built in 1896, has ornamental cast iron columns supporting the roof overhang. Just outside is a sandstone mounting block which helped riders to mount their horses. Also note the stamp vending machines and the old post boxes.

26. This cottage, known as **THE SHIELINGS** was originally a two room residential stone cottage from the 1830's.

27. HUDSON COTTAGE, circa 1850, typifies architecture of this period.

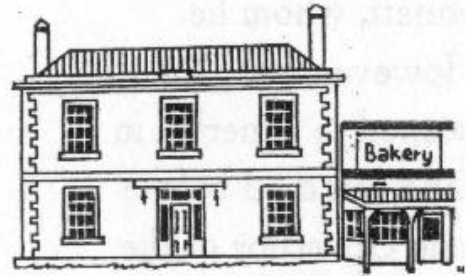
28. ST. JOHNS SUNDAY SCHOOL was rebuilt in 1902, replacing the original church school built in 1847. In front is a sandstone laundry trough which came from the Ross Female Factory Site.

30. This rubble stone building, built circa 1830, is an excellent example of early colonial architecture. Opposite is the residence of the first Postmaster in Ross, Christopher Hall.

31. This fine residence was once the home of Dr McNamara who came to Ross in 1843 as Assistant Colonial Surgeon to take charge of the local Hospital. The wall beside the front door still carries the marks where this gentleman's plate was fastened.

32. MACQUARIE HOUSE & STORE: The land was granted to William Carter in 1846 for the purpose of building a store and dwelling. The store once supplied the district and during the construction of the main line railway in 1875, the railway gangs were also supplied with produce. Six generations of the Davis family have lived here.

33. SHERWOOD CASTLE was built circa 1832 as a Coaching Inn and was licensed in 1833. It is now **THE ROSS BAKERY INN**. The building is well known to Japanese visitors as one of the settings used in the animated movie 'Kiki's Special Delivery'. The bakery still uses the original wood fired oven.



34. ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH was consecrated in 1869. It was built from the stone of the original Church of England, (1835), which was located to the south of the cemetery. The original church had to be demolished due to failure of the foundations. The interior has beautiful stained glass windows, a fine oak lectern and Caen stone pulpit which was presented by the Kermode family of nearby Mona Vale. The organ is over 100 years old and the spire is 50 feet high.



35. ST. JOHN'S CHURCH RECTORY was built at the turn of the century. It is now a private residence and Village Fine Arts.

36. DANIEL HERBERT, a stonemason famous for his work on the Ross Bridge, is believed to have lived in this small stone cottage by the Macquarie River.

37. THE ORIGINAL SEXTON'S COTTAGE was also used as the Rectory for some years. It is worth noting its beautifully carved, pointed window in the western gable end.

38. FORGET-ME-NOT COTTAGE dates from the late 1840's and is thought to have been a stopover for the coachmen plying between Launceston and Hobart. The stable can still be seen at the rear. There are many more excellent examples of original stone cottages between here and the railway line.

39. This cottage was once the home of **THOMAS MEAGHER**, who was one of the group known as the Young Irelanders. He was transported to Van Diemen's Land after taking part in a failed uprising (1849) to overthrow British rule in Ireland. He, along with several of his comrades was convicted of treason and sentenced to death. Political pressure resulted in the sentences being commuted to transportation for life. These were gentlemen prisoners from relatively privileged backgrounds and once in Van Diemen's Land were offered special paroles provided they lived in separate districts, did not meet and promised not to escape. Meagher was first sent to Campbell Town but requested permission to move to Ross where he lived with 'a maid of all work and a legion of flies' and that the town has '30 to 40 houses and a military barracks before the door of which soldiers yawn and smoke all day'. While in Ross he rode and hunted with fellow-countryman Dr McNamara (see No 31). He was also an admired orator and speech-writer, and assisted Mr Kermode of Mona Vale with his election address. He also kept a boat on Lake Sorell and built a house there. While in Ross he married Catherine Bennett, who was governess for Dr and Mrs Hall and whom he rescued when her buggy overturned just south of Ross. In 1852 Meagher escaped to America where he became leader of the Irish Brigade, a regiment of the Union Army during the American Civil War. After serving for over a year as Acting Governor of Montana, U.S.A., he drowned in 1867 in a boating accident on the Missouri River. After Meagher's escape, Catherine lived in Ireland with her in-laws but died at the age of 22.

40. THE METHODIST SUNDAY SCHOOL is a charming Georgian building dating from 1827. In the grounds are the remains of foundations of the original Methodist Chapel and some very old headstones, as early as 1819.

41. Like the other town cemeteries the **METHODIST CEMETERY** has some beautiful and interesting old headstones. One tells the story of Alexander McCracken, the foreman of public works, who died in 1863 trying to cross the flooded Macquarie River to obtain the mail. He paid the price for his belief that 'the mail must get through'.

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Tasmanian Wool Centre