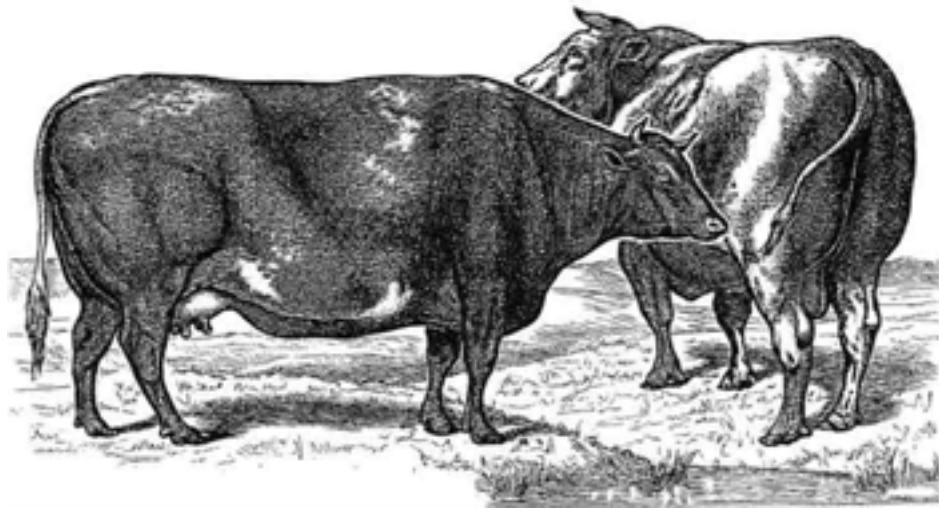


“BINGERA RUN”



Hall Cattle - Circa 1835 – Durham Shorthorns

*With extracts from J. T. (Trevor) Wearne's
Bingara 1827-1937*

Other Hall cattle runs
located in the map area

“Bingera Run”



Location Details:



Near Moree:	Acres
Weebollabolla Run..	44,800
Bullerue Run	15,680
Near Manilla:	Acres
Cuerindi Run	51,200
Mundowey Run	56,000
At Bingara.....	Acres
Bingera Run	38,000
Near Arimdale.....	Acres
Wallamumby Run...	115,000
Stoney Batter	138,240
Callaghans Swamp.	78,000
Near Glen Innes	Acres
Mt Mitchell Run.....	102,400

“Bingera Run”

An Introduction

The pioneers of the north-west of New South Wales in the 1830s were primarily families or individuals associated with cattle, and most came from the Hunter Valley. The young men who ventured out to establish new cattle runs for themselves, or their families, were mostly Australian born from farming families in the Hawkesbury River area. Sometimes referred to as “Currency Lads”, they were better known in the Hunter region as “Cornstalks”, which differentiated them from the landed gentry. The “Cornstalks” were shrewd and smart bush-men; many founded dynasties that often included the acquisition of valuable land from others who were perhaps of better social standing, but who lacked sufficient knowledge of the bush and stock, and as a consequence fell on hard financial times.

Of necessity, most of the younger members of various neighbouring families in the Upper Hunter Valley, who ventured forth over the Liverpool Ranges, banded together for their great adventure. If you carefully study the grouping of pioneering properties in different locations through the north-west you will generally discover the same group of family names associated with those properties. This banding together gave them the security and protection they needed in a sometimes hostile environment, and co-operation meant they could help each other through difficult times.

Bingera Run is a good example of a successful pioneering cattle run. It embraces the fundamental needs of such a property. The Hall family had already established a cattle run on the Namoi River near present day Manilla (Cuerindi Run), and Bingera Run would be a suitable distance from Cuerindi Run as a stepping stone to future properties beyond. Bingera Run occupied the whole of Stoddart’s Valley down to its frontage to the Gwydir River. This was an ideal location because the valley had a stream running down it’s length, an abundance of trees and steep mountains around all sides except the river frontage; therefore, cattle could be easily and safely contained with as little effort as possible because cattle do not wander too far from their drinking water and are not mountain climbers like goats or sheep. Being a deep but relatively narrow valley meant it was reasonably well protected from violent storms, had a verdant grassy floor and plenty of shelter for cattle. The new neighbours were also mainly members of their own group.

By the time the Hall family took up Bingera Run as a cattle station they had a well consolidated line of properties between there and the Sydney markets. They would go on to establish similar properties further north, north-west, through New England and on to large holdings located on the Balonne River, in present day Queensland.

My late friend, and ardent historian, Trevor Wearne (1900-1991) of Beaufort station, Bingara, suggested this account of Bingera Run. He had previously written a history of the town of Bingara and kindly gave me permission to quote from his work. Before this great man passed away he read a proof of this work and gave it his whole hearted endorsement.

Bert Howard
Pinemist Robertson NSW 2577
February 2009

“Bingera Run”

First White Settlers

It seems highly unlikely we will ever know the identity of the first white man to have set foot on the fertile soils surrounding the township of Bingara. In its pristine condition this general area, especially Stoddart's Valley, must have been a sight to behold.



Allan Cunningham

On his expedition of 1827 Allan Cunningham (1791-1839), botanist and explorer, leading a party of six convicts, became the first officially recorded white men to visit the area. They camped for the evening of May 20, 1827 on the left bank of the Gwydir River at the very spot where the township of Bingara now stands.

At this point of their outward journey, Cunningham and his men were an estimated 160 miles from any cattle stations. The nearest stations were located well to the south, in the Upper Hunter and Goulburn Valley regions. The following entry in Cunningham's Journal details their most unexpected findings:

“It was with no small surprise that the party observed at the head of Stoddart's Valley, so remote from any farming establishment, the faeces of horned cattle, two or three days old, as also the spot on which from eight to a dozen of these animals had reposed at a period so recent that the grassy blade, which was of long, luxuriant growth, had not yet recovered its upright position.”

On the homeward leg of his journey, and in this same general area, Cunningham made a second unusual discovery and he reported:

“a shed of most temporary erection, 24 feet long by about 6 feet broad, and formed of 8 strong posts of young trees secured in the earth, supporting a horizontal wattled roof, slightly thatched with gum-tree bows, about 10 feet from the ground. Upon examination, it was evident that this had been set up by white men who knew well the use and application of the axe, and from the appearance of the ends of the timbers we judged it to have stood for 4 months.”

They also found several bark huts in this vicinity. Cunningham assumed the shed had been erected by convict cedar-cutters who had probably escaped from Port Macquarie, 165 miles to the south-east, joined a tribe of friendly natives, and were, by then, wandering at large with them in the bush. For some unexplained reason Cunningham did not associate this find with his earlier discovery of cattle traces in Stoddart's Valley. However Cunningham's assumption as to who had probably built the hut was reasonable.

There were numerous escapes from both Port Macquarie and Moreton Bay jails, and many of the escapees lived with the natives. One such person was Richard Craig, who escaped from Moreton Bay, and travelled south until he reached what is now the Clarence River. There he met another runaway, but what became of this second person is not recorded.

“Bingera Run”

Richard was accepted by the friendly natives and he lived with them for some years. They roamed and hunted a large area of country from the mouth of the Clarence River up to the tablelands above the headwaters of the Clarence and Nymboida Rivers, on what is now known as the Dorrigo-Guy Fawkes Plateau. In the summer months they hunted in the high country, and during the winter they hunted and fished the lower river reaches. In 1831 Richard Craig surrendered himself to the authorities. He bartered a pardon for himself in return for the wealth of information he possessed, enabling quick settlement of the rich Clarence River district.

So it would appear the first white men to have been in the Bingera district were most likely convict escapees living with friendly native tribes. Whether they obtained cattle by theft, or rounding up strays, or whether the cattle simply strayed there on their own account, will always be a mystery.

On their northward journey in 1827, Allan Cunningham and party headed in a northerly direction from the lush Namoi River flats near Manilla. They soon found themselves traversing *"most disappointing country"*. They encountered an endless succession of deep stony gullies and poor ridges covered with stunted ironbark. Eventually this gave way, only to be replaced by the monotonous sclerophyll forest cover of the Nandewar Ranges. Therefore one can understand the obvious delight Cunningham found in finally being able to report:

"We patiently pursued our way until the 19th, May, when, upon passing the parallel of thirty degrees we descended from some stony hills to the head of a beautiful, well watered valley, affording abundance of the richest pasturage and bounded on either side by a bold and elevated rocky range. This grassy vale we followed northerly about sixteen miles to it's termination at the left bank of a large river which, in seasons less unfavourable to vegetation, appeared evidently a stream of considerable magnitude."

Stoddart's Valley

The beautiful valley which so impressed Cunningham he named Stoddart's Valley, in honour of a friend who was an army staff officer. Cunningham led his party along the banks of a delightful clear stream running through the valley (Hall's Creek) until reaching where the stream ran into what we now call the Gwydir River. The party camped on the evening of 20 May, 1827 on the left bank of the Gwydir River at the very spot where the township of Bingera now stands. This locality is where the history of Bingera started.

The *"large river"* described by Cunningham in his journal that evening he mistakenly believed to be part of John Oxley's Peel River. Although many historians later scoffed at Cunningham over this incident, it is a reasonable mistake. Cunningham was aware of, and may even have carried a copy of, the map John Oxley's drew of the Peel River at Tamworth. This map showed the Peel travelling in a northerly direction towards Bingera, (where Oxley crossed the Peel it does travel north) and Oxley noted the river could go on for at least sixty miles. On the basis of this, the distance and direction of flow from Oxley's map indicated the Peel River could reach Bingera.

“Bingera Run”

Cunningham crossed just downstream from where the bridge now stands at Bingara on May 21, 1827, then led his party in a northerly direction where they travelled through country which in normal seasons is excellent grazing country, but, in the drought conditions then prevailing Cunningham was moved to write:-

"It was distressing to observe so much fine black soil-sound, dry and crumbling beneath the foot- as these plains possess, clothed, moreover, with an exuberant growth of grasses and herbage, languishing for rain, and without channels of sufficient depth and capacity...to retain water permanently throughout the year."

Cunningham's Return Journey

After reaching and naming the Darling Downs, Cunningham's party, both men and horses, were in no condition to tackle the rugged mountainous terrain to the east. He therefore returned on a course roughly parallel to his outward one and crossed his earlier tracks shortly before reaching the river he earlier mistook for Peel's River. Realising his mistake he named this river the *Gwydir*, in honour of his friend and benefactor, Lord Gwydir. It is coincidental that the word *Gwydir* is said to mean, in the local aboriginal language, *River with Red Banks*. Being such an impressive inland river the *Gwydir* was often referred to in pioneering days as the *Big River*.

After crossing the *Gwydir* and travelling south-west for a short distance Cunningham discovered another river which he named *Horton's River* in honour of a member of the House of Commons.

The Marked Tree

On 'Royal Oak' property, at Elcombe, where the *Gwydir* and *Horton* rivers join, is a lovely picturesque spot well worth the attention of any landscape painter. Right at the junction of the rivers stands a big gum tree on which, for many years, could be seen, cut into the wood of the tree, the letters A.C. above the numbers 1827. The elements over the ensuing years had, by 1985, almost obliterated the letters and numbers carved into the exposed wood. Local resident and historian Trevor Wearne carefully questioned old local people he considered best entitled to express an opinion, and he concluded that the carvings were most probably done by, or under the instructions of, Allan Cunningham.

Expedition Details Published

Cunningham published details of his 1827 expedition in the *Australian Quarterly Journal*, 1828, titled '*The late tour of A.Cunningham esq.*'. This means there was no secret about his discoveries by 1828. The long drought of 1825-1829, and the following flooding in 1830-1831, coupled with restrictive government policies, meant most pioneers would not have ventured beyond the Liverpool Plains until the early to mid 1830's.

“Bingera Run”

Pioneer Settlers

Family records of the Glennie family (early pioneers of the area) show that "Gineroi" Station was taken up near Bingara in 1836 by James Glennie of Singleton. It is only natural to assume that, in those days of '*first up, best dressed*', an area such as Stoddart's Valley, specifically reported on and described in such glowing terms by Cunningham, would be snapped up by the first land seeker who came upon it. Considering James Glennie would have had to travel through Stoddart's Valley to reach his selection, it is reasonable to assume Stoddart's Valley was already selected by the Halls.

Bingera Run

The Halls selected the full sixteen mile length of Stoddart's Valley from its head down to where it meets the *Gwydir*. Then, for good measure, they followed the Gwydir downstream for seven miles, using *Teatree Creek* as the western boundary, and taking up all the country between the river and the ranges to the south; almost 40,000 acres in all.

This new property was given the name of '*Bingera Station*'. Bingera was an aboriginal name for '*the place of a Shallow Crossing*'.

In the local aboriginal dialect words ending in '*ah*' or '*a*' indicate '*the place of*', and generally such *places* were close to permanent water and good camping sites. On the western side of Bingera Creek, or Hall's Creek as it is now known, three miles south of its confluence with the river, near where Bill O'Brien's "Errolston" homestead still stood in 1985, the Halls built the usual timber slab walled and bark roofed hut.

This was an ideal area for a cattle run. The surrounding mountains on three sides formed a natural barrier, and ample stock water in all seasons was available from a good creek along the center of the valley. This location helped overcome the usual problem facing settlers of their stock wandering, and mixing with stock from adjoining properties. The only open side fronted the Gwydir River, and here cattle would have mixed, but the neighbours, the Ogilvies, Robert Scott, James Glennie, Richard Wiseman and Archie Bell, being friends, would have co-operated sorting the stock. Henry Dangar (on Myall Creek Run) may have been another matter, as the Halls had no love for him.

In the issue of *The Colonist* newspaper dated June 30, 1836 there is an account of how two brothers of the Hall family were attacked by natives on the *Big River* in 1836 while setting up a new station. Although a number of writers have suggested this was near Moree, these events actually occurred on Bingera Run. The brothers are not individually identified in this article.

When the attack started, the brothers and some stockmen were able to gain some protection from within the hut they had built. Unfortunately, one stockman was caught in the open when the attack commenced. The report tells how this convict stockman was killed and terribly mutilated by the attacking aborigines. One of the Hall brothers, later identified in an article in *The Colonist* dated September 22, 1838 as Thomas Hall, suffered a spear wound to his shoulder, and another convict stockman was also wounded.

“Bingera Run”

It is not clear which aboriginal group carried out this savage attack on the pioneers. The Gwydir River, in the immediate area, formed the natural boundary between two native groups; the Kamilaroi on the Halls Creek side of the river, and the Weraerai on the Myall Creek side. Most early reports describe the Kamilaroi of that immediate area as being only few in number, and a peaceful tribe.

Little has been reported on the disposition of the Weraerai. It was in Weraerai territory that aboriginals were attacked by settlers at Myall Creek in 1838. This suggests it may possibly have been a marauding party from over the Gwydir in Weraerai country who attacked the pioneers at Cuerindi Run in 1836.

It is said that prior to the much publicised Myall Creek massacre, a party of aboriginals unprovoked, attacked and killed two Hall stockmen on *Cuerindi Run* on the *Namoi River* (near the present day town of Manilla) then made good their escape to Weraerai country when chased.

The lonely graves of these two stockmen, and the fencing they were working on when they were killed, are clearly shown on the survey map drawn by Assistant Government Surveyor J.V. Gorman, titled "*Trace of the Namoi River upwards from the junction with the Manilla River*" and transmitted to the Surveyor General on May 18, 1852.

Myall Creek Massacre

Henry Dangar's *Myall Creek Station* was located just to the north-west of present day Bingara. It was on this property that an estimated twenty-eight aboriginals were reported killed in 1838 by white men living in that region.

In recent years, with a revival of sympathy for aboriginal causes reminiscent of Governor Gipps views in 1838, there has been a profusion of writers who have come forward with their own particular versions of what happened at Myall Creek on June 10, 1838. Many of these accounts do not bring all the facts into consideration and tend to over simplify what was, in reality, quite a complex chain of events.

This was frontier country in 1838. For the most part the pioneers seemed to co-exist fairly peacefully with the main body of aborigines, the exception seems to have been a few hostile native groups. White pioneers and hostile natives confronted each other. There were no lawmen or soldiers on hand to protect the pioneering families of men, women and children. It was a time of attacks and reprisal. Both pioneers and hostile natives took whatever action each considered appropriate in the circumstances prevailing.

The leader of the party involved in the Myall Creek affair is said to have been John Fleming, aged twenty-two years, who was in charge of *Mungie Bundie Station* near present day Moree. John, and his party, called in at *Bingera Run* where they coerced Hall's head stockman, a man named James Oates, also known as Hall's Jemmy (Jamie), into joining up with them. James had come to the colony as a convict on board the ship *Larkin* in 1829 and had been assigned to George Hall of Pitt Town. By all accounts he was a mild mannered man who was respected by those who knew him. Thomas S. Hall gave evidence at both subsequent trials that James was '*a steady, correct man, particularly quiet and inoffensive*'.

“Bingera Run”

Although the trial was conducted in a properly constituted court, before a duly sworn jury, and the men acquitted, James and ten others were immediately detained by the court under orders from the Governor and made to face a second trial. At this second trial James and six others were found guilty, sentenced to hang, and duly hung.

The whole business of the second trial, and the hanging of the men, caused a great deal of ill feeling between those living on the frontiers and those responsible in government. The spirit of co-operation, so essential on the frontiers, was broken down between those on Myall Creek Station and their neighbours.

It was reported that Matthew Henry Hall spoke out in passion declaring “*Your bloody Irish laws won’t go down in this country.*” This reference to “Irish law” described the grossly unjust law enforcement in Ireland by the then British administration.

Even as far away as the Hawkesbury River, William Hall openly denounced his brother-in-law, William Johnston, who had been a jury member at the trial. For the first time a boundary fence was erected between Hall property and that occupied by William Johnston.

Licensing

One of the very first records of an application for leasehold lands in the area is dated December, 1836, when George Hall of Pitt Town applied for a license to occupy “*lands beyond the limits*”. By receipt No.39/39 George Hall gained a license to occupy the following runs until June 30, 1840 :

- (a) Currindi (*sic*) Run on the Namoi River
- (b) Bingera Run on the Big River (Gwydir)
- (c) Majors Station on the Lower Big River.

Receipt No.297 dated August 26, 1842 for a sum of ten pounds entitled The Estate of George Hall to occupy the runs described below for one year commencing July 1, 1842 :

- (a) Currindi (*sic*) Run in the District of Liverpool Plains.
- (b) Bingera Run in the District of Liverpool Plains.
- (c) Webollabolla in the District of Liverpool Plains.

The name of Majors Station, on the Lower Big River, as originally used by George Hall, derived that name from an aboriginal leader in that area who was friendly and became known as Hall's Major. After George's death the aboriginal name Weebollabolla was used by his sons to describe this run.

“Bingera Run”

Inspection Reports

The first official inspection report on Bingera Run is dated April, 1844 when Commissioner Roderick Mitchell reported on Bingareye (*sic*) Run. He stated the Lessee was Messrs. Hall and shows William S. Hall as being in charge. There were four persons on the property, four slab huts had been built, and they were running 2965 head of cattle. A footnote on the report reads:

"On our journey from Tamworth, then a cottage on the A.A.Company's Estate, to Lows station on the Gwydir River we passed through George Halls Bingareye run. The country was loose black soil, most part lightly timbered with a variety of grasses of which stock of all kinds are very fond."

There are three subsequent reports by Commissioner Mitchell. In 1845 he states W. S. Hall was again in charge. There were eight free persons and two in bondage on Bingera Run which was then carrying 3170 head of cattle. In 1847/8 he states there were seven horses and 3415 head of cattle, but there is no reference to the number of people. William S. Hall is once again listed as being in charge. The size of the Run stated in these reports is an area ten miles long and seven miles wide whereas in fact the Run was approximately sixteen miles in length with a seven mile frontage to the Gwydir but only averaging about three and a half to four miles in width over the whole property.

Estate of George Hall

George Hall (1764-1840) accidentally drowned in the Hawkesbury River on the October 26, 1840. After that time, leases or other freehold land-holdings, including the Bingera Run lease previously held in his name, were maintained by his sons under the Estate of George Hall. In the case of Bingera Run, two of George's sons, William and John, acted as lessees on behalf of their father's estate.

The Halls of Bingera Run

George Hall snr. had a son named William (1797-1871) and many historians have confused this William Hall, in relation to the occupation of Bingera Run, with William Smith Hall who was George Hall's grandson. William Smith Hall was the third eldest son of George's eldest son, George Smith Hall who resided in the Hawkesbury River region.

William Hall snr.

William Hall (1797-1871) was born in England and never married. He was the senior member of the Hall brothers, and active in helping establish family Hunter River properties. Some latter day family members suggest William may have been the brother who accompanied Thomas in 1836 when Bingera Run was first established, although careful research indicates it is more likely to have been Matthew Henry Hall from nearby Cuerindi Run who accompanied Thomas.

“Bingera Run”

William was the liaison between the Hunter and Hawkesbury properties before his father's death in 1840. After his father's death William felt obliged to stay in the Hawkesbury district for his remaining years administrating his father's estate and running the farm called 'Percy Place', located on a bend of the Hawkesbury near Pitt Town. It was a highly complex business. He would have spent much time negotiating leases, getting beef contracts, and arranging the shipping and marketing of wool, tallow, hides etc, from the runs. At the time Bingera Run was established William was very busy consolidating the massive land purchases he and his father had made in the Hunter Valley particularly in relation to Gundebri Station (near present day Merriwa) which then comprised some 28,000 acres of purchased land plus an almost equal amount of leased land.

While it is possible that, prior to his father's death, William may have ridden north to seek out new lands, it is recorded that William never saw the Balonne River properties. Considering the heavy demands on his time surely some doubts exist as to the physical presence he could be expected to have in the time consuming work involved of actually setting up the far flung properties in the north-west. It is more logical to consider this work was left to his younger brothers.

After the accidental death of his father in 1840, it was William's responsibility to renew registrations of the various properties held under George Hall's Estate. Because it was an estate two names were required on the registration. In the case of Bingera Run it was William and his brother John who signed the renewals. This was obviously done for convenience as both resided in the Hawkesbury region. So, William Hall snr did not, as some suggest, reside on Bingera Run. His nephew, William Smith Hall was the resident member of the family on that property.

Thomas Hall

Prolonged and careful studies suggest it was Thomas Simpson Hall (1808-1870), born in the colony, who was the leader of the younger Hall brothers, and other associated family members, and the person responsible for expansion and consolidation of the family business through the Liverpool Plains, New England, and into what is now Queensland.

William Hall Jnr.

William Smith Hall (1819-1894), was born in the Hawkesbury area on July 12, 1819. As was usual with this younger generation of Hall men, William was sent out to work on the cattle runs. The first record we have of his presence on Bingera Run is in the Gov. Gazette of 1844. At that time he was twenty-five years of age, which would seem to indicate he had probably been there for some years before the first official inspection was carried out in 1844. It is thought most probable he went to Bingera Run around 1838 to carry on operations after James Oates, who was head stockman, had been arrested for his part in the Myall Creek Massacre.



“Bingera Run”

William is recorded as being in charge on subsequent inspections by Commissioner Mitchell. In 1848 he made an application for land in his own right. He obtained a lease on Delungra Run which adjoined the northern side of Henry Dangar's Myall Creek Run and contained 16,000 acres. The township of Delungra now stands on what was once part of Delungra Run. About 1848 William also obtained a lease on another run, named Summerly, but no other details of this run have been found to date.

William travelled to the Hawkesbury in 1847 where he married his cousin, Elizabeth Fleming, on September 8. Elizabeth and William returned to take up residence on Bingera Run, but Elizabeth returned to the Hawkesbury the following year for the birth of her first child, Henry, born November 6, 1848. One can imagine the discomforts Elizabeth suffered on the long horseback ride to the Hawkesbury in the latter days of her pregnancy, just for the precaution of being home with her parents when she gave birth to her first child. She returned to Bingera Run as soon as possible after the birth and there, on May 2, 1851, her second son, named Roland, was born. These two sons would spend much of their later lives in the north west of New South Wales.

Disaster struck William's dreams when on May 8-9, 1851 his lease on Delungra Run was lost through a successful appeal lodged by Henry Dangar claiming the run should be part of his Myall Creek Run. Nothing more has been found regards Summerly Run and it is therefore thought William may have also lost this run about that time.

William did succeed in becoming the first publican of Bingera when he built the *Bingera Inn*. The first license was issued in his name on May 10, 1853 but we do not know how long the inn had been in operation before he obtained this license. Samuel Turner bought the inn on April 25, 1854.

How long William, Elizabeth, and their two sons remained at Bingera after the pub was sold is not known. They had returned to the Hawkesbury for the birth of their third child, Norman, on September 11, 1859. William and Elizabeth had another four sons and three daughters born after they left Bingera Run.

Government Gazette Listing

The N.S.W. government Gazette of 1848 lists :

HALL George, Estate of, per W. & J.Hall
Name of Run - Bingera
Estimated Area - 38,000 acres
Estimated Grazing Capabilities - 1,200 cattle.

Bounded on the north by the Gwydir or Big River for about 7 miles; on the west by a small creek about 2 1/2 miles; dividing this run from Ottley's or Scott's run; thence by the mountain dividing the Bingera Valley and the Gwydir or Horton River; on the south by the mountain dividing this run from Capel's; on the east by the mountain range to the Big River; and dividing this run from Hale's- extent 17 miles long by 3 1/2 miles wide, and will feed 1,200 head of cattle."

“Bingera Run”

1851 Discovery of Gold

Most early supplies reaching pioneers in the north-west came from stores based at Maitland. The lucrative supply businesses became concerned when gold was discovered in the southern part of the state. Many people from the north-west rushed to the southern goldfields. In an attempt to stem this loss of people, the Maitland Gold Committee was formed offering a substantial reward to anyone discovering gold in the north-west.

On July 30, 1851, the Maitland Mercury newspaper reported that gold had been found by A. Williams, J.P., at 'Keera', the station of Mr. McPherson (near Bingara), and a specimen had been sent to Sydney for appraisal.

In August that same year Ebenezer Hall found a nugget of gold on Cobidah (Cobbadah) Creek on Bingera Run. He applied to the Maitland Gold Committee for his reward.

In later days Ebenezer Hall would say that reporting his gold discovery was the worst day's work he had ever done. The rush of meat hungry miners it brought in amongst their grazing livestock on Bingera Run increased stock losses and it became almost impossible to obtain enough workmen for the property.

On September 1, 1851, Richard Bligh, Commissioner of Crown Lands at Warialda, reported he had visited Bingera Gold Fields. He sent ten specimens of rock from Oakey Creek, Cobidah and Bingera Creek (later Hall's Creek) to the Chief Commissioner.

On June 14, 1852, Richard Bligh reported another discovery on the Eastern head of Bingera Creek, fifteen miles from Bingera and fifteen miles from Cobidah, immediately adjacent to the spot where Ebenezer Hall had found his nugget of gold. Nineteen persons were at work on the diggings, some from Hanging Rock and Turon.

In the adjoining ridge-land to the east of and above Bingera Run there were further gold discoveries in 1852. This resulted in a settlement being formed which was originally called Bingera Diggings, but later renamed Upper Bingara.

Bingera Town Site

In 1852, a Government Surveyor named Galloway measured and set out the township site for Bingera. He paid heed to the general requirement that such townships be located at good river crossings where teamsters could have a regular stopover point on good feed and water. The site he chose took in portions of both the southern and northern banks of the river.

By 1853 William S.Hall built the first pub, the *Bingera Inn*. The next year, 1853, Patrick Read, an Irish emigrant, opened the first general store.

“Bingera Run”

The early commercial buildings were constructed in a similar fashion to the slab huts. At Bingera this meant they were built of large posts sunk in the ground at the corners with top and bottom wall plates morticed into these posts. The wall plates were axe or adzed to shape and had channels cut into them to house the thick, solid timber vertical wall slabs. The slabs were carefully shaped and firmly fitted against each other to keep out drafts and the weather. As the timbers seasoned these joints would open up, but cracks were soon sealed with an adobe type mud and straw mixture or greasy wool. Windows and door openings were left in the slabs and timber door and window frames made up and fitted. The doors were made from wide slabs of timber, approximately one and a half inches (38 mm) thick, which had been adzed to a reasonable level and regular thickness. Usually these doors had three horizontal 'ledgers' fitted with cross bracing between the 'ledgers'. The windows were similarly constructed before glass became available. Very little ironwork was needed in these early buildings. Wooden pegs were generally used to hold the timbers in place. The roofing material was invariably sheets of bark held down by fitted poles over timber rafters.

One of the main construction timbers available at Bingera was Cypress Pine. This is reasonably easy timber to work while "green", and has the advantage of being highly resistant to attack by termites. Its one major drawback is that it contains highly volatile resins, and once a building constructed of Cypress Pine caught alight there was little chance of saving it.

In 1855 a post office was opened on the goldfield diggings (Upper Bingera) catering for the miners. There were a few European miners, but some three hundred and fifty Chinese. The latter used the mail service to regularly send out their gold.

A horseback mail service called at this post office once a week on its route between Tamworth and Warialda. The twenty-seven residents of the township of Bingera would not get their own post office until 1862.

Crown Lands Occupation Act

In 1861 Sir John Robertson put forward the Crown Lands Occupation Act to satisfy the increasing demand for small parcels of land. The Act was adopted, and this meant an individual could select and purchase a parcel of Crown Land between forty and three hundred and twenty acres, in multiples of forty acres, even if such land was already held on lease by other persons.

Generally speaking there was little response to this Act until some time after Torrens Title was introduced in 1874 making freehold title of land a reality, and offering permanent security of tenure to purchasers. As the Hall family had sold their interests in Bingera Run before 1874 this meant they would have encountered little trouble with selectors.

Ultimately *Free Settlers*, as they were called, did select blocks, usually of either forty or eighty acres size, fronting the Gwydir and Hall's Creek. This constituted some of the best land on Bingera Run. The Closer Settlement Act which began in 1895 imposed further impositions on squatters holding large tracts of land; this is most probably one reason for the eventual breaking up of Bingera Run into small freehold blocks around 1896.

“Bingera Run”

1862 - A Big Year

1862 saw a number of important firsts for Bingera. The town population was listed as less than ninety people. The first Post Office was opened with Matthew C. White as Postmaster and he was paid the princely sum of twelve pounds (\$24) per year. After maintaining their own private school for the three previous years, the townspeople finally saw the opening of their first Public School. In August the first Police Watch House & Lock-Up was completed, although it had to be replaced within several years due to inadequacies in the construction which allowed wall slabs of the lock-up to be easily removed.

Those locked up soon found they could raise the vertical wall slabs up into the excessive gap in the top plate rebate and then slip the lower edge of the slab out of the bottom plate rebate and affect their escape.

The small town population was no doubt augmented at times by the 1,376 men and 529 nine women shown to be on the Bingera Diggings in 1861. There were only two pubs in the area at that time, the previously mentioned *Bingera Inn* and the *Diggers Arms*, which was a rough bush pub at Bingera Diggings and licensed to George Hammond. One can imagine Saturday nights were pretty lively and rather rowdy times then.

In the period 1866 to 1870 there were other hotels opened. These included Robert Munson's *Riverview Hotel*, Stephen Hogg's *Commercial Hotel*, Mary Ann Mallon's *Post Office Hotel*, and Andrew Case's *Royal Hotel* (originally licensed by Stephen Hogg).

Cattle Dogs

The famous cattle dog breed originated by Thomas Hall at "Dartbrook Station" in 1840, were at first known as Hall's Heelers but were later called Blue Heelers. These dogs were used on *Bingera Run* and by Hall drovers moving cattle to and from the many other family cattle runs. After Thomas Hall's death in 1870, and the sale of Hall properties in 1873, many cattle men took up breeding these dogs.

At the beginning of the 20th century, at Bingera, a man named Harry Hillier maintained a breeding program of dogs he claimed were pure Hall blood. His pups were outstanding in every way and would begin to 'heel' before they were three months old. There was great demand for dogs of 'Harry Hillier's Breed' as they were called. During the disastrous flood of 1910 the flood waters rose quickly during the night and around midnight a great force of water swept through Harry's camp. His dogs were chained at their kennels, and despite desperate and heroic attempts to rescue them, all the dogs were drowned in the swirling flood waters.

Unfortunately no one else locally had kept breeding stock. With the death of his last grand old dog from old age in the mid "twenties" the Hillier strain disappeared. Fortunately the pure bred Hall dogs had been introduced to such a wide number of diverse Hall properties that later famous breeders, such as Berenice & Bernie Walters of "Woolleston Kennels" at Bargo, could claim they bred champion show dogs and working stock from Hall bloodlines as late as the 1980's.



“Bingera Run”

Ecological Changes

It is difficult, perhaps almost impossible, for anyone to form an accurate mental picture of what the valley looked like when Bingera Run was first settled. It would have been vastly different to today. The introduction of cattle and horses would have brought the first real changes to country unused to heavy beasts with cloven hooves. However, further major changes would have occurred with the influx of the large number of gold miners clearing the land, digging the ground, using the creek, and building huts etc.

The original white settlers did little in the way of clearing trees except around their immediate hut areas. Consequently they did very little to alter the general character of the land they occupied. They did not overgraze the pastures, nor did they physically alter the terrain. After the land passed from their hands it eventually became subdivided into smaller blocks. This created an increased density of population of both people and stock, thereby adding greatly to the strains on the environment. Inevitably this led to vast changes in the forestry and ground covers of each area.

The Aboriginals

Before the coming of the white man, the aboriginals hunted, fished and camped on this land for thousands of years. The area supported a wide range of small marsupials such as the Scrub Wallabies, Rock Wallabies, Swamp Wallabies, Kangaroo Rats, and Paddy Melons etc. These small animals were an easy food source for the aboriginals. Also present was a vast array of bird life. To facilitate ease of hunting, the aboriginals used fire to control the underbrush. This created open forest country which was conducive to good hunting of small game. Early reports state there were only a small number of aboriginals living in the general area of Bingera Run when the white man first arrived.

In time, and as the numbers of white men increased during the latter part of the 1800's, the aboriginals began to drift away. Those who did remain became progressively more and more dependant on handouts of food and supplies from the white man. This meant that the land management and hunting previously practised by the aborigines ceased. This changed the long standing balance, and the small marsupials bred in ever increasing numbers until they reached plague proportions.

Sometime in the late 1870's, early one very hot summer, an horrific bushfire raged through this country. Shortly thereafter came good rains, and the scrub and underbrush grew in such profusion that several thousand acres of good grazing country was lost. This gave the small marsupials plenty of ground cover, allowing them to breed in ever increasing numbers. From the 1880's through to the end of the century the infestations were so great that these small animals denuded the landscape in their search for food.



“Bingera Run”

They were finally brought under some control at the turn of the century by fencing with wallaby netting wire, and the animals were driven into yard traps in these fences and killed. Some incentive was offered in eradicating the excess of native animals by a government payment of two pence per scalp.

Foxes

The fox had been introduced into the colony, and as it became established in this area it finally ended the plague. The cure may have been worse than the complaint; the fox wiped out all the marsupials smaller than the Swamp Wallaby and then brought about the extinction, in the area, of native birds like the Plains Turkey, the Brolga, and the Curlew. The numbers of Scrub or Bush Turkey and most other ground birds were also greatly depleted by the fox.

Native Birds **The original native birds mentioned included:**

Plains Turkey (*ardeotis australis*)

Really a Bustard. Also called the Wild Turkey. This elegant bird is now practically extinct in the east, south-east and south to south-west of Australia. Likes open country and there are good numbers on Cape York Peninsular, the Barkley Tablelands and in the Kimberley region. This species is also found in New Guinea. A large bird - the males can have a wingspan of near 2.3 metres, females near 2 metres. They are usually silent birds but can utter a low booming sound during the breeding season (springtime) or a loud sound during display. They are ground feeders and nesters.

Curlew (*burhinus magnirostris*)

Also called Bush Stone Plovers, or Bush Stone Curlews. Once common throughout most of Australia. Now rare or extinct in closely settled areas. Well camouflaged by their plumage when among shadows of trees or shaded areas of ground cover where they remain perfectly still if threatened and are extremely difficult to see. They issue a loud mournful wailing call sounding like *wee-looo* or *wer-looo*, and are mostly heard at night. They are noisy during the breeding season (August-January) or when there are



signs of rain approaching.



“Bingera Run”

Brush Turkey (*alectura latham*)

Also known as the Scrub Turkey. A mound builder, like the Mallee Fowl etc. Once more widely distributed, now still in fair numbers from the tip of Cape York down the east coast to the Manning River. Also found in adjacent highlands and dense scrub just west of the Great Dividing Range. The male builds a compacted mound of leaf material with soil being added to the top layer. Virtually the mound is a compost heap which generates heat to incubate the eggs and maintains a temperature of around 33 degrees Celsius. Both sexes have a red head with a throat ruffle of yellow colour, and the body is dull black with grey tipped underside feathers. Bird fanciers would like to see more protective measures taken to ensure the long time survival of this native bird.

Brolga (*grus rubicundus*)

Also called the Australian Crane, Native Companion or Curaduck. Now distributed through northern and eastern Australia in coastal areas, also found in New Guinea, a vagrant in New Zealand and the Coral Sea Islands. They prefer wetlands or swampy areas. A stately, long legged bird which is well known for its dancing and is much featured in advertisements for its graceful flight. In unison pairs make call sounds like *garooooo*. At dawn they sometimes make calls like *kaweee-kreee-kurr-kurr-kurr-kurr*. Once thought to be the only true Crane in Australia but it is now thought the Sarus Crane (*grus antigone*) is also Australian.



Cypress Pine

The native Cypress Pine (*callitris robusta, glauca & columellaris*) once grew over a widespread area of the colony. In his book titled *The Upper Mooki* (now rare), the author, H.R. Carter, describes how the pioneers mostly used Cypress for their early rough bush buildings. The reason given is that Cypress deterred termites and was readily available and easier to work with axes, adzes, mauls, wedges, and other hand tools, than the alternative native hardwoods available.

Other old writings mention the *pine scrub*, and describe it as being dense in many locations through the north- west, particularly on the high ground. Local historian, Trevor Wearne, showed the author, in 1991, certain spots around Bingara where the Cypress were growing back. There were impenetrable forests of Cypress at several locations where the trees were some twenty five feet in height with straight trunks approximately six inches in diameter. The trees were spaced only about nine inches apart.

In the back country to the north of Manilla and up the Namoi Valley in 1991 many new clumps of Cypress became established, especially in the hilly country. Previously the cattle or sheep grazed on the seedlings of the Cypress. By 1991 the farmers were experiencing difficulties, the drought had been long upon them and loan repayments to the banks became a real problem. On many properties there was practically no stock grazing. Without stock to keep the seedlings under control, the Cypress grew quickly.

“Bingera Run”

Rabbits

Probably the worst ecological catastrophe was the introduction of rabbits. By 1908 there were only minor numbers of rabbits in the Bingera area. Narrabri was suffering plague proportions but Bingera was isolated by the rabbit-proof fence. The 1910 floods tore away great sections of this fence and the rabbits poured through to Bingera. The farmers had no real measures to control this pest. The poisons they used also killed the natural fauna. By 1917 the position was critical and they were experiencing what was called a *Rabbit Drought*, meaning the rabbits had eaten all the grass and small vegetation and even ringbarked many small trees. Full control over these pests would not be forthcoming until the introduction of the insect borne disease *myxomatosis* in an effective form in 1950. It is ironic that during the depression years many a country table would have been bare except for some *Underground Mutton*, as rabbit was often referred to. Trade in rabbit skins became brisk and the trapping of rabbits became the only source of income for many Australians.

Prickly Pear

To add to the farmer and graziers woes in the early 1920's the Prickly Pear took over much good country around Bingera. A member of the cactus family, this blight on the landscape covered in excess of twenty million hectares of northern New South Wales and Queensland forcing many people off their properties.

The parliamentary member for the Bingera area, Mr. W. E. Wearne, proposed the *Prickly Pear Destruction Bill* in 1924 and had the bill passed through parliament without opposition. The ensuing Prickly Pear Board imported 2,750 eggs of the *Cactoblastis Moth* from Buenos Aires in 1925. The larvae of the moth live inside the Prickly Pear and consume it. Breeding colonies of the moth were established at various centres, including Moree, and by 1929 sufficient eggs were available to distribute amongst some six million acres of infested country in northern New South Wales.

By 1940 the moths had done their work and the Prickly Pear menace had ended.

In the early days of infestation various poisons had been used to try and control Prickly Pear, including such toxic mixes as one called Roberts Pear Poison, a lethal mixture of arsenic and sulphuric acid which was sprayed onto the plants. It is recorded the workmen's clothes would barely last a fortnight and apart from the mixture being dangerous to the operator it was also very expensive.

All of the toxins used in trying to control various pests, which often had no real success in their objective, also had a horrific effect on the innocent natural flora and fauna. In turn all of these circumstances had a detrimental effect on the countryside as a whole, and would have changed the general character of such prime real estate as Bingera Run.

“Bingera Run”

Sale of Bingera Run

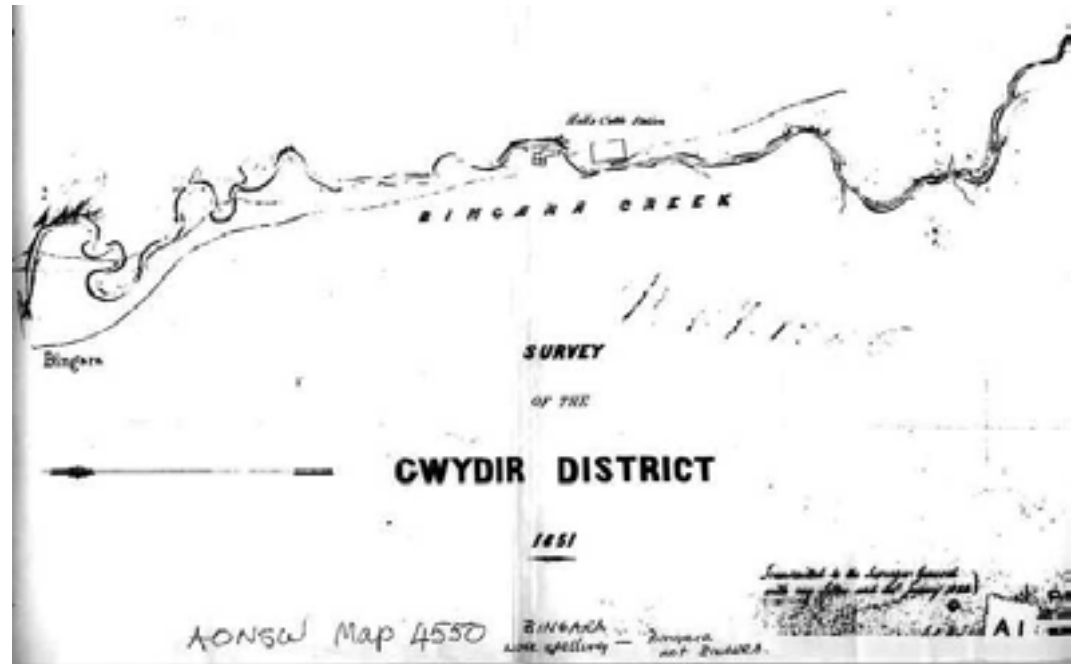
The Town & Country Journal of February 22, 1873 (p.252) advertised various Hall properties for sale by auction. The portion referring to Bingera Run is as follows :

LOT 2 - BINGERA STATION

together with about 2500 head of mixed cattle, more or less, to be mustered and delivered. This splendid breeding and fattening station is situated in the Gwydir district, and adjoins the well known runs of Messrs. Crowley and Capel. It consists of open forest land, and is abundantly watered by the Big River and Bingera Creek in all seasons. The improvements consist of a hut, yards, etc. This run is admirably adapted for a breeding station, the abundance of grass and permanency of water giving it capabilities for more than double the number of cattle that are now on it. Stores, etc., to be taken at valuation. Bingera contains about 44,800 acres. Annual rental 54 pounds per annum.

Terms in future advertisements. Full particulars can be had on application, either personally or by letter, to the auctioneer.

G. M. PITT Grenville's Rooms. Sydney.



G.M. Pitt reported in the Sydney Morning Herald that he sold Bingera Station, on account the Hall Estate, on March 26, 1873. The purchaser was named as C. McDonell who paid three pounds seven shillings and sixpence (\$6.75) per head for 2,500 cattle. As usual the property went with the sale of the stock; stores were always taken at valuation. At some time after this initial sale, Mr. Alexander McIntosh purchased Bingera Station, however it is noted the Commercial Bank took over the property in 1896 and it was subdivided and sold off in smaller parcels.

“Bingera Run”

Bingera becomes Bingara

The original white man's spelling of Bingera, using an *e* after the *g*, has been claimed to have remained in force until 1889 when the Council of the newly incorporated town had the spelling changed to its present form. It appears there was another town named Bingera further north, in what is now Queensland, and mail meant for one town was continually going to the other. To overcome this problem they changed the name of Bingera on the Gwydir to Bingara. However, the survey of Bingara Creek (Halls Creek) as shown at right is dated 1851 and it clearly shows the spelling of Bingara for both the creek and the area set aside for the township. Note that this survey also shows the location of the original Head Station.

Conclusion

As *Bingera Run* was split up and sold off another important chapter of Australian colonial history ended. Fortunately localised books like Trevor Wearne's *Bingara 1827-1937* were honestly written to record much of this history, and for this we must all be grateful. As technology increases, the role of computers in accessing and processing information means some errors or omissions will continue to be found in relation to earlier writings. This current work is offered as ancillary to, and an update of, earlier works related to *Bingera Run* and the history of the Bingara district.

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