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THE ALUM

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The Early Days of Bulahdelah

Welcome to our Bulahdelah Newsletter. These articles will examine and share the history of the area. If you are interested in a piece of your history being published or have an idea for an article, please contact me through the office.

A newspaper article from 1954 discussed the origins of Bulahdelah. The author, C. McGregor, believed that the town's name conjured up images of a 'Blackfellow' town. In fact, McGregor stated that it was the original 'resting place for the Myall tribe, of the Great Australian Black'. He also stated that Bulahdelah 'means "where waters meet" or "the meeting of the waters"' and he felt that this was appropriate because 'the town is at the junction of Crawford and Myall Rivers, [and] short coastal streams' which all empty into the Myall Lakes. The town has a strong connection to the Aboriginal people.



Bulahdelah, in the history of white folk, came to be through 'a land grant to the East Australia Co. by the British Government for the raising of cattle' as the land was deemed to be 'eminently suitable' for cattle, according to the British. However, the Australian Heritage web site states that 'the Australian Agricultural Company (AAC) was granted an expansive parcel of land including the Bulahdelah area' in 1826. As it was deemed 'unsuitable for pastoralism', this section of the grant was given up by the AAC by 1830. McGregor's reference to the East Australia Co could have been meant to be the AAC as some of the founding members of the AAC were connected to the British East India Company. Is anyone aware of what is the correct version of this history? Do get in touch with me if you do and I will correct this through the next article.

The town had many industries in the early days, including timber, dairy farming, and mining. Their history will be explored in future articles, as well as that of the people.

The mountain 'was first recorded by John Oxley, a Crown Surveyor, in 1818'. It was initially known as 'Bulladella Mountain'. It was 'the northern boundary for convicts and

bonded persons'. The name, Alum Mountain, appears to be a local name only with Bulladella, or Bulladulla, Mountain the registered name.

According to the web site, *Bulahdelah: Heart of the Myall Lakes*, 'Bulladella Mountain was recognised as a potential mine site' from 1897 and was administered by the Department of Mines. The mountain 'was found to be the largest deposit of Alunite in the southern hemisphere', and some say the world! The rock consists of water (7.8%), alumina (34.7%), iron oxide (1%), potash (6.1%), sulphuric acid (32.3%), and silica (18.1%). Mining of alunite ceased in 1952.

McGregor described the view from 'Alum Mountain' as being 'a vista of valley, forest, winding river, and in the distance, the lakes, and beyond the Pacific Ocean with Broughton Island, the Meccas of schnapper and marlin fishermen, standing out in the blue of the ocean, [making it] a magnificent view'.

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