

## Changes in the Murray Districts 1918 –2018

By Mervyn Beacham and the Murray Districts Historical Society

All photos courtesy of the Mervyn Beacham and the Historic Society.

1. Dairying virtually ceased, now only about 3- 5 Commercial Dairies in Shire. Mainly fat stock now.
2. Browne's Cheese factory in West Coolup opened post WW2 and has now closed.
3. Pinjarra, North Dandalup and Dwellingup Railway Stations are now unmanned. There used to be Station Masters, Railway Refreshment Rooms at Pinjarra, Barrack's for changeover of train staff, Railway houses for Per Way workers and families. The goods shed has been replaced by motor transport delivering directly.
4. The Hills line used to run from Pinjarra to Narrogin. Hotham Railway Tourist Railway volunteers have taken over the Hills line from Alumina Junction to Etmilyn, a siding east of Dwellingup.
5. Murray Districts Hospital built late 1952 was well patronised by the whole district including Mandurah. Dwellingup had its own Hospital to cater for the Mill workers etc. As Mandurah rose in population in the mid 80's to early 90's the Murray Districts Hospital degraded to Geriatric and Palliative care facility. Dwellingup Hospital burned down in 1961 and wasn't replaced.
6. 1896 a School was built in Henry Street, this closed in August 1921, when the present School was built in McLarty Road, 1952 became a Junior High School and had an Agricultural Studies wing, this however transferred to Harvey. In 1959 a Primary School was built on the Corner of Dixon and Roe streets. In 1967 the Junior High School became a Senior High School. Pinjarra used to cater for Mandurah children travelling in up to 11 buses before Senior Schools were commenced in Mandurah.
7. One of the most dramatic changes of lifestyle came with the establishment of the Alcoa Alumina Refinery, commissioned in 1972 and the various mine sites in the Darling escarpment. Late 1960's Alcoa bought up several farms on the out skirts of Pinjarra to enable them to have a reasonable buffer zone between them and the town. They also had built the suburb of Carcoola AKA North Pinjarra to house the workers. Alcoa was also responsible for the natural gas to be brought to the region primarily for their use and later reticulated to Carcoola, Pinjarra and Mandurah.
8. Initially Alcoa had a use local labour policy until the locals were absorbed then opened up the labour market. After a while a lot of the workers living at Carcoola relocated to Mandurah and later again a lot relocated to acreage on the outskirts of Mandurah.
9. The timber industry petered out especially after the Dwellingup fire 20 – 24 Jan 1961. The Forestry department saw many changes from 1980 onwards to where it is now mainly concerned with Eco-Tourism.
10. Two separate canal subdivisions were built in South Yunderup and a recent housing estate Austin Lakes, has a Junior School, a High School and Shopping precinct on what was the swampy bush paddock of Murray Location 17. Many new housing estates have been established throughout the Murray Shire at the expense of farming land.
11. A mineral sands company is removing various mineral sands from north of North Dandalup. This is being trucked down to Picton for processing before being exported. This work must be completed before the owners can subdivide the land for small acreage farmlets. The Murray Shire has a policy of trying to stay rural. MZI offer Community grants for local organisations.
12. The Murray Shire is a very important Equine district. This includes Racing, Pacing, Equestrian Clubs, Pony Clubs, Riding for the Disabled, Horse Studs and the Dwellingup Oval is the headquarters of a Carriage Club. Coolup has the beginnings of a District Equestrian Venue modelled upon Tamworth.
13. Fairbridge Farm School by the 1980's was no longer used as a home for British migrant children parked whilst their parents looked for work and established a home. This was a far cry from the original intent of housing orphans sent out to learn farming skills and make a new start in life. Life was harsh early on and recriminations are surfacing now. Fairbridge Chapel is still used for weddings and funerals. Cottages have been renovated and are used for Artists in residence, Cultural events and a venue for a

film recently. Alcoa built a training room out there which is used for offsite meetings and training. The Chapel roof needs roof repairs and a fund has been set up.

14. Murray Districts has a Dog Kennel subdivision at Nambelup, however this serves to benefit Mandurah which has the Dog Racing Venue.
15. The Peel Regional Industrial Area is in the process of being formalised, it is being planned for Lakes road east of the Forrest Highway and will service Mandurah as well as Pinjarra.
16. Plans are in the pipeline for a heavy vehicle bypass road for the town of Pinjarra. It will only happen in sections. At a recent Local Government referendum majority were for the proposal now it is subject to Government funding and will take at least 4 years to happen, by then Main Roads projections indicate Pinjarra will be at gridlock. The Forrest Highway made quite a difference for a while, however the trucks went back to using the South West Highway as there were less cars on it.
17. Shopping changed from single use locally owned shops to a Multi-National shopping centre which attracts shoppers from the edge of Mandurah and surrounding towns. Although the profits do not stay in the town, some Community grants are available upon application.
18. Post WW1 the surviving soldiers came back to a depressed community, little employment, given enough material to have a mass-produced suit made for 35 shillings (\$3.50). They also brought the "Spanish Flu" back with them and passed it on. Fishing industry was carried on by the old and the young. "Sleeper cutters" were discouraged from returning to their trade as the Conservator of Forests considered it wasteful, milling was far more efficient. Motor vehicles were on the rise which aided tourism however burdened the Local Roads Boards with the need for better roads.

### Changes to the Copper Kettle





“In my opinion the greatest change in the last 100 years was the relationship between Pinjarra and Mandurah, when in August 1949 Mandurah seceded from the Murray Roads Board. Mandurah’s population was around 1200 people swelling to 7000 in holiday times and was considered too much of a burden for Pinjarra to handle from so far away.”

These observations were supplied by Mrs Lyn Oliver and Mr. Mervyn Beacham Members of the Murray Districts Historical Society.

An excellent reference book to consider for fleshing out details is: -

### **Murray and Mandurah**

A sequel history of the Old Murray District of Western Australia

By Ronald Richards, A former History Teacher at Pinjarra Senior High School.

**Murray Districts Historical Society** Henry Street Pinjarra (Pinjarra Historical Precinct)  
Photographic Displays, open 11:00 to 15:00 Fri, Sat and Sun.

This sequence shows the changes in the Mechanics Institute Hall, single building, doubled, turned into Tom the Cheaps and finally incorporated in the new shopping centre with not a skerrick of the original building.

