

PORT OF MARYBOROUGH

The Port of Maryborough, Queensland, was opened in 1847 and in 1859 it was declared a port of entry, meaning that overseas and intercolonial vessels could arrive and depart direct, although there appears to have been considerable uncertainty about the name of the port outside Queensland for some years. Customs officials elsewhere and such publications as the Mercantile Navy List frequently called the port "Wide Bay" well into the 1860's.

The native name of the stream upon which the port is situated was named Moonaboola River by Andrew Petrie, which he discovered on his boat trip in 1842 while looking for good grazing land suitable for sheep. Later Mr Joliffe R.N. became the superintendent for John Eales, a prominent land owner in the Hunter Valley, and brought a flock of sheep across the Darling Downs, blazing a track over the Brisbane Range to establish a head station near Tiaro. This venture was short-lived as the local aboriginal tribes took a liking to the taste of lamb.

George Furber became the first white settler on the south side of the river in 1847, where he set up a trading station and Inn. When Edgar Aldridge, Henry and Richard Palmer, Enoch Rudder and their party arrived in 1848, they crossed the river and settled on the north bank, which was later to be named the Wide Bay Village, now the Old Township Site.

The river became known as the Wide Bay River until after the untimely death of Mary Fitz Roy, Wife of the Governor of New South Wales at that time. To honour her memory Governor Fitz Roy renamed the stream, Mary, and the post office at the settlement was then called, Maryborough.

When the river became unnavigable to larger vessels a new township was surveyed by Surveyor Labatt in 1852 and in 1854 the small iron-hulled screw steamship WILLIAM MISKIN, built in 1852, 124 Tons discharged cargo at the Old Township and was possibly the first steamship to visit the Mary.

In 1856 the people officially moved down to the new township, where the port was established. Wool became an important commodity and exports through the port in 1860 totalled £107,000 with wool accounting for £98,000 of that figure and imports totalled £71,456. At this time Maryborough was the only port in the colony with a favourable trade balance. Within the next ten years which included the discovery of gold at Gympie and the commencement of the sugar industry, gold took the lead with £756,000, or nine tons, transported in a little over two years, while vessels totalling 163,532 tons visited the port during 1869. The gold was stored in the vault of the Bank of NSW. The building now used as the Heritage Centre was the second Bank of NSW to be built on this site.

Immigrant labour was needed and an advertisement inserted in the Wide Bay & Burnett Times in January 23, 1861 by Messrs Melville & Travis announced that they would be bringing out British migrants while another advertisement by Henry Hamburger said that he would support the emigration of German settlers. Of the migrants landed at Brisbane in 1862 from the ship SULDANHA, 160 came to Maryborough by the paddle steamer CLARENCE. The forty-two Germans among them had already been engaged for work on nearby sheep runs.

The first migrant ship to call direct at Maryborough was the barque ARIADNE (built in 1861 of 671 Tons. She arrived October 9 1862. This was the turning point for the Maryborough and Wide Bay Region and the number of passengers from the Ariadne swelled the population of Maryborough by one third.

Between 1863 and 1870 there were 3142 arrivals; from 1872 to 1880, 9164 arrived (of which 1762 were Germans and Scandinavians) and between 1881 and 1890, 7332 migrants landed. In all nearly 21000 migrants landed before direct calls were abandoned in 1900, although ships still bought passengers into the port until about 1912.

The Immigration Celebration planned for 29th, 30th September and 1st October 2012, to honour the arrival of the Ariadne 150 years ago, it is hoped, will be the first one to be celebrated each year afterwards, as each ship in each subsequent year will celebrate its 150th anniversary of its arrival into the Port of Maryborough.