THE CENTRAL WEST

IN 1813, FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY of a route through the **Blue Mountains**, the government surveyor George Evans became the first European to enter the Central West region. Evans had been sent by Governor Lachlan Macquarie to find new agricultural lands and, although his first visit was limited to a brief reconnaissance, the report he gave was enthusiastic. Evans' initial evaluation has been a lasting one; agriculture has been a constant theme in the region's history.

At the time of Evans' survey, the Central West was home to several Aboriginal groups, including the Kawambarai, Wongaibon and, in particular, the Wiradjuri, one of the largest Aboriginal groupings in Australia. The region's Aboriginal heritage is apparent in the many place names of Aboriginal origin, forming a pleasant contrast to the other major source of names, the world of the colonial establishment.

By 1818, basic exploration of the region had been completed. Two expeditions established the main features of the region's southern portion. In 1815, Evans travelled south from **Bathurst** to the Lachlan River and in 1817, the surveyor-general John Oxley, accompanied by Evans, followed the Lachlan west to impenetrable swamps at a point near its junction with the Murrumbidgee River. The north was first explored in 1818 when Oxley and Evans followed the Macquarie River northwest for some distance before being stopped again by swamps (the Macquarie Marshes) and turning northeast. The many blanks left by these early expeditions were filled in over the next twenty years or so, mainly through the oft-forgotten efforts of stockmen in search of new grazing land or police on patrol.

Several exploring parties, including those led by Allan Cunningham (1823) and Capt John Forbes (1832) to the north and those of Charles Sturt (1828–29) and Thomas Mitchell (1835 and 1836) to the west, used the region as a springboard.

The first European settlers entered the region in 1815 on completion of Cox's road over the mountains. In the same year, **Bathurst** town site was established, making it the oldest settlement west of the Great Dividing Range. Macquarie favoured carefully controlled settlement and thus for the first few years settlers were few and land grants were difficult to obtain, limited in size and restricted to areas east of the Macquarie River. From 1821, more generous policies opened the region to less restricted settlement. By the 1840s most of the region had been settled, albeit sparsely, by squatters and stockmen. The few towns established, such as **Mudgee** and **Wellington**, were primarily government towns in origin, location and function.

While the squatters occupied good grazing country, the problem of access to outside markets proved a serious impediment to the region's economic development. Something of the region's social tensions can be deduced from the 1828 census, which described the region, called 'Bathurst and Wellington Valley', as having a total population of 2072 colonists. Of this number, only 133 were women older than 12 years of age and only 398, including children, did not have a convict background. The typical colonist in 1828 was a male assigned servant.

In 1851 the discovery of gold at what became known as the **Ophir** goldfield led to the first Australian gold rush. Prospectors came from around the world and for a time gold and the men seeking it dominated the life and economy of the Central West. The local economy boomed as the thousands of diggers were provisioned, outfitted and entertained; roads were built or improved to give access to the various goldfields and, most importantly, the

influx of new people created a new and freer social atmosphere. The Central West has had a number of gold rushes and goldfields, including the Turon (see Sofala) in the 1850s; Lambing Flat (see Young) and the Lachlan (see Forbes) in the 1860s; **Gulgong** and **Hill End** in the 1870s; and **Peak Hill** in the 1880s.

In contrast to the careful town planning of the first decades, the gold-rush period saw the appearance of instant towns, often in places most inaccessible and unsuitable for settlement. When a goldfield was played out, the diggers left for more promising prospects and the towns of **Ophir**, Tambaroora (see Hill End), **Sofala** and many others died or dwindled to quiet shadows of their former boisterous selves. However, a few gold-rush towns, such as **Young** and **Parkes**, survived the decline of their fields and became the commercial centres for their respective districts and their agricultural activity. Some of the people attracted to the region for its gold became merchants and businessmen or, following the 1861 selection acts, selectors on the land. The 1861 acts heralded a series of schemes to settle families on their own small farms, but these settlers often failed to make a living.

One problem faced by all agriculturists, squatters and selectors alike, was that of access to the lucrative markets of **Sydney** and its overseas shipping quays. The answer was the railway. With the completion of the zigzag line to **Lithgow** in 1869, the mountain barrier was overcome. In 1876 the railway reached **Bathurst** and by 1881 it had arrived at **Dubbo**. The building of railways and branch lines became and remained a major topic of political debate in the region until World War I.

The railway facilitated the development of important new agricultural industries, notably fruit growing and wheat farming. New non-agricultural industries were now possible as well, including iron works and coalmining at **Lithgow**. The towns of **Nyngan** and **Narromine** owe their establishment to the railway; others benefited from being junction or railhead towns. With the rail came new settlers, many to grow wheat. By 1901, the population was approximately 175 000. Local manufacturing industries, however, did not always benefit from the rail and the region lost something of its independence in such matters.
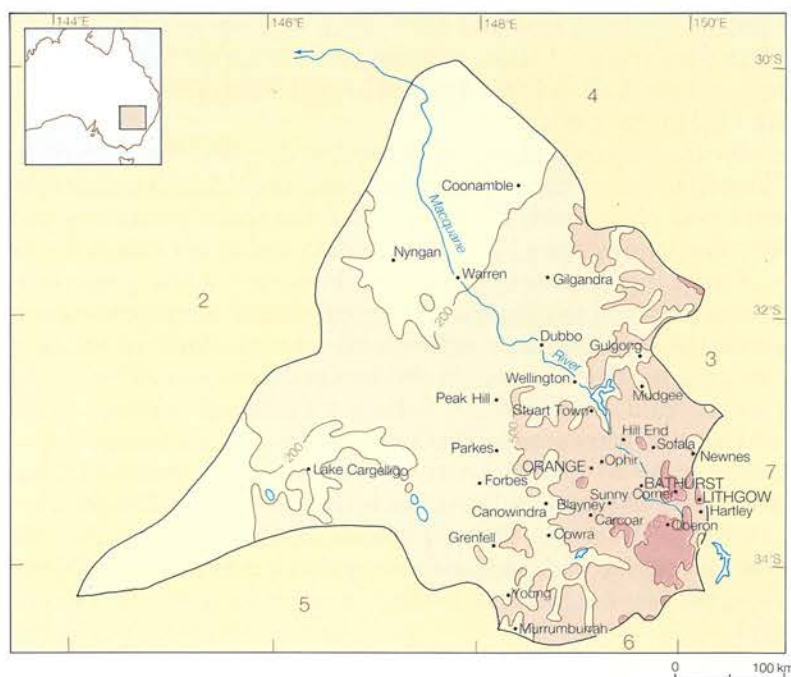
Since World War II, dramatic improvements in the region's roads and the increased use of motor transport have had an impact as significant as that of the railway. Easy access to the larger towns and cities has contributed to the further development of these communities, though at the expense of the smaller towns. In 1983 the population of the Central West was approximately 275 000, with two-thirds classified as urban.

For the first century of European settlement, the region could look to the land and its products, agricultural and mineral, to provide the fuel for development. Today, agriculture is still the mainstay of the regional economy, but its development has plateaued and the Central West is unlikely to see a population explosion parallel to the 1851 gold rush. Future economic growth will depend on the larger towns and cities. **Bathurst**, **Orange** and **Dubbo** have emerged as the chief and, at times, competing urban centres; all three have developed modestly successful service and light industrial bases. Lasting development, however, will have to be based on something more substantial than political promises, best exemplified by the Bathurst–Orange growth centre fiasco of the 1970s.

Robin McLachlan

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BATHURST [33°25'S 149°36'E]

Popn: 2252 (1851), 5030 (1871), 10 413 (1933), 16 938 (1961), 19 640 (1981). District named Bathurst Plains by the assistant surveyor-general George Evans in 1813 after Lord Bathurst, secretary of state for the colonies. Town named by Gov Lachlan Macquarie in 1815.

First inland settlement Evans was first European in area in 1813. Site selected and township proclaimed by Macquarie in 1815, Aust's first inland settlement. Starting point for inland exploration by Evans in 1815, John Oxley 1816–18, Allan Cunningham in 1823, and Charles Sturt in 1828. Gaol built in 1815. Sheep introduced to area and first wheat grown in 1816. Govt house (RNE) built in 1817 for Macquarie: one wing still stands. Martial law proclaimed in 1824 after clashes with Aborigs. Ten prisoners hanged in 1829 after rebellion of 80 convicts following flogging of one for bathing in view of governor and retinue. Town surveyed and gazetted in 1833. Holy Trinity Church at Kelso finished in 1835, oldest consecrated Anglican church in Aust. First Methodist chapel (RNE) built in 1837, later church (RNE) in 1860. Early courthouse and gaol built in 1849 on site of later courthouse.

Centre for gold country Town grew rapidly after gold discov at **Ophir** in 1851 and in many other places in district in following yrs. Town proclaimed in 1852, incorporated as municipality in 1862. Original All Saints Anglican cathedral built in 1855. First permanent national school opened in 1858. St Michael and St John Roman Catholic cathedral opened in 1861. Cobb & Co headquarters and first service in NSW estab in 1862. Abercrombie House (originally Mt Pleasant, RNE) built 1870–78. St Stanislaus' College (RNE) opened in 1873, oldest Roman Catholic boarding school in Aust.

Rlwy station (RNE) built in 1876 when line from **Sydney** opened. Courthouse (RNE) completed in 1880, wings used as post and telegraph office.

Thriving provincial city Proclaimed a city in 1885. J.B. Chifley, prime minister 1945–49, born here in 1885, buried here in 1951. Gaol, third in Bathurst, completed in 1886 (RNE). Edgell's vegetable cannery estab in 1926. War memorial carillon dedicated in 1933. Mt Panorama motor racing circuit first used in 1938. Mitchell College of Advanced Education opened in 1970. All Saints Anglican cathedral opened in 1971 to replace earlier defective building. NSW govt announced scheme to develop Bathurst–Orange as decentralised development centre with federal backing in 1972, virtually at a standstill by the 1980s. Karingal Village recreation of goldfield at Mt Panorama opened in 1972. Much of central city in RNE conservation area.

BLAYNEY [33°31'S 149°16'E]

Popn: 122 (1871), 2694 (1981). District settled in the early 1840s. Village estab in 1843 on King's Plains. Rlwy opened in 1876. Became a municipality in 1882, amalgamated with shire in 1935. First cross-country rlwy in NSW opened between here and **Harden–Murrumburrah** in 1888. Settlement of Millthorpe to the northwest began as govt stock station in 1823, developed as farming centre 1840–80: listed on RNE.

CANOWINDRA [33°34'S 148°40'E]

Popn: 1716 (1933), 2271 (1947), 1720 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'camping place' or 'our home'. First European settler was James Collitts at Canoundra station in 1829, Canowindra Inn estab in 1849 and town grew around it. Town surveyed in 1860. Frank Gardiner's

gang of bushrangers, including Ben Hall, occupied town for 3 days in 1863, forcing 40 residents including policeman to join in a party at the local hotel. First lucerne grown in district in 1863; an important industry by the 1950s. Rlwy opened in 1888. Main street and its buildings classified by Nat T and listed as urban conservation area on RNE.

CARCOAR [33°36′S 149°08′E]
Popn: 303 (1851), 737 (1911), 277 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'frog' or *cah-co-ah* = 'kookaburra'. District explored by George Evans in 1815. Land granted to Thomas Icely in 1829: he took up Coombing c1831 and town proclaimed in 1839 to service his large agric undertakings in district. Courthouse built in 1842. St Paul's Anglican church (RNE) completed in 1848 to Edmund Blacket's design; second church consecrated west of **Blue Mountains**. Stables of Stoke House built by convicts in 1849. Aust's first daylight bank hold-up here at Commercial Bank in 1863. Second largest town west of Blue Mts until 1876 when surpassed by **Blayney** which gained rlwy then. Became a municipality in 1878, amalgamated with shire in 1935. Rlwy opened in 1888. Post office built in 1879, courthouse in 1882 (both RNE). Town declared a historic site by NSW govt in 1974: classified by Nat T, listed on RNE. Carcoar Dam on Belubula R completed in 1970.

COONAMBLE [30°57′S 148°25′E]
Popn: 209 (1871), 1680 (1901), 3280 (1911), 2567 (1947), 3396 (1966), 3090 (1981). Name: Aborig, meaning uncertain. Explorer John Oxley reached Castlereagh R at town site in 1818 and this became watering place and camp for stockmen. Charles Sturt passed through area in 1829. Land on each side of river reserved for future township in 1855. Town site surveyed in 1859. First public school estab in 1869. Police station and troopers' stables (now museum) built in 1870. General change from cattle to sheep in district by the 1870s. Incorporated as municipality in 1880. First artesian bore south of Darling River drilled here in 1894. Rlwy from **Dubbo** opened in 1903.

COWRA [33°49′S 148°42′E]
Popn: 193 (1861), 1546 (1891), 3981 (1911), 5473 (1947), 7900 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'the rocks' referring to granite outcrops overlooking town. First European settlers in district in 1831. Village founded in 1846, incorporated as municipality in 1888. Rlwy opened in 1886. Mass escape of Japanese from prisoner of war camp in 1944 resulted in 235 deaths, of which 4 were guards: another 378 escapees were recaptured within 9 days. Maintains only Japanese war cemetery in Aust.

DUBBO [32°15′S 148°38′E]
Popn: 47 (1851), 3199 (1881), 9545 (1947), 17 900 (1971), 23 986 (1981). Name: Aborig *tubbo* = 'red earth' or 'head covering'. District explored by surveyor John Oxley in 1818; settled by Europeans in 1824. Settlement grew around store opened on banks of Macquarie River by Jean Serisier in 1841. Village proclaimed in 1849, first land sale in 1850. Important stopping place on stock route south to Vic. Commercial Hotel, town's

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Although the Official road guide to NSW *(c1934) extolled Bathurst as 'Only Four Hours from Sydney by Excellent State Highways' most Sydneysiders visiting the city still travelled by train.*
SPEARRITT COLLECTION

second, built in 1859. Proclaimed a municipality in 1872. *Daily Liberal* newspaper founded in 1874, *Dubbo Advertiser* in 1875. Former gaol built in 1876. Rlwy opened in 1881. Courthouse (RNE) built 1886–90. Soldier settlement in district after World War II. Became a city in 1966. Gaol closed in 1966, now a museum. Western Plains Zoo opened in 1977, first major zoo built in Aust for 60 yrs, first in Aust to adopt open-range principle. City has grown rapidly since the 1960s, largely as result of aggressive marketing as commercial and industrial site by local organisations.

FORBES [33°23′S 148°02′E]
Popn: 124 (1861), 2191 (1881), 5949 (1947), 8029 (1981). Possibly named after Francis Forbes, first chief justice of NSW, 1823–37. Known as Black Ridge; name given to first post office opened in 1861. John Oxley reached site of town in 1817. Town founded and proclaimed in 1861 due to gold rush of about 30 000 diggers: 8.9m g

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of alluvial gold won in first 2 yrs. Albion Hotel (RNE) built in 1861, reputed to have had largest bar takings in Aust in the 1860s: present building in use from 1889–93. Popn had fallen to 3500 people by 1863. Bushranger Ben Hall shot in district in 1865, grave in Forbes. Incorporated as municipality in 1870. Flour mill built in 1872. First sheepdog trial in Aust, perhaps first in world, held here in 1872. Present post office built 1879–81, courthouse in 1880, town hall in 1890–91 (all RNE). Rlwy opened in 1893. Lachlan Vintage Village brings together goldfields buildings from 1850–1900.

GILGANDRA [31°42′S 148°41′E]

Popn: 2207 (1911), 2700 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'long waterhole'. First 'coo-ee march' of volunteers in World War I started from Gilgandra in 1915. Land settlement in district after World War II. At Breelong to southeast, murder of 2 women and 3 children in 1900 by Aborig Governor brothers and Jacky Underwood: over 2000 police involved in manhunt.

GRENFELL [33°53′S 148°11′E]

Popn: 1657 (1871), 745 (1891), 3007 (1911), 2070 (1981). Named after district gold commissioner T.G. Grenfell, killed by bushrangers at **Narromine** in 1866. Land in district taken up in the 1830s. Town grew around Emu Creek diggings where gold discov in 1866, leading to rush in 1867. Writer Henry Lawson born here in 1867. Presbyterian church built in 1868. Highest gold production of any area in NSW in 1870–71, but declined by mid-1870s. Town became agric and pastoral centre. Rlwy opened in 1901.

GULGONG [32°20′S 149°34′E]

Popn: 1212 (1881), 1723 (1933), 1396 (1961), 1740 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'deep waterhole'. European settlement followed cattle runs in district. Gulgong goldfield gazetted in 1866, payable gold found in 1869, further large gold discovery in 1870. Town surveyed in 1870. Popn of approx 20 000 in area by 1872, but gold yield and popn falling by 1880. Over 15.5m g of gold recovered between 1870 and 1880. Former Times Bakery houses museum including Holtermann collection of photographs of life on the goldfields in the 1870s. Prince of Wales Opera House (RNE) opened in 1871. Became a municipality in 1876, absorbed into shire in 1940. Police station built in 1879–80. Rlwy opened in 1909. Golden Gate flour mill built in 1913, still operating (Nat T). Declared a Nat T conservation area in 1975.

HARDEN–MURRUMBURRAH
[34°32′S 148°22′E]

Popn: 182 (1871), 1620 (1881), 2851 (1933), 2595 (1947), 2727 (1954), 2070 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'two waterholes'. Officially known as Murrimboola, popularly as Murrumburrah until name changed to latter c1880. Area opened to squatting by Hamilton Hume's 1824 journey. Gold discov in area in 1856. Town gazetted and blocks sold in 1858. Mail service began in 1860. Flour mill opened in the 1860s. First school estab in 1862–63. St Mary's Roman Catholic church built in 1868. All large runs broken up by 1879, first butter factory in district in 1891. Harden, then Murrumburrah

North, estab as rlwy centre in 1877. Courthouse built in 1880. Municipality of Murrumburrah formed in 1890 with neighbouring settlement of Harden as one of wards: merged with shire in 1975. By the early 1900s Harden's commercial area had outgrown that of Murrumburrah. Bonyeo property opened for soldier settlement from 1947.

HARTLEY [33°32′S 150°11′E]

Popn: 88 (1851), 552 (1911), 99 (1961). Area known as Vale of Clwydd. Important stopping place at foot of Victoria Pass on newly completed road to **Bathurst** from 1814. Collit's Inn (RNE) opened in c1823. Town founded in 1834, gazetted in 1838. District occupied by emancipists in the 1830s. Courthouse (RNE), first west of **Blue Mountains**, built by convicts, opened in 1837, closed in 1887. Gold found in area by Paul Strzelecki in 1839 but told to keep quiet by Gov Gipps; second find by Rev W.B. Clarke in 1841. Rosedale (RNE, formerly Victoria Inn) built in 1839; St Bernard's Roman Catholic church (RNE) in 1842; Trahlee in 1845. Post office built in 1846, oldest still operating in Aust. Former Royal Hotel (RNE) built in 1846; Anglican church (RNE) in 1858–59. Town now under care of NSW Nat Pks Service, listed on RNE. Two companies formed to mine oil-shale at Hartley Vale in 1866, amalgamated in 1873.

HILL END [33°01′S 149°26′E]

Popn: 716 (1871), 1223 (1881), 464 (1911), 129 (1966). Known as Bald Hill until c1867. John Oxley explored district in 1818. Settled by Europeans in the 1820s–30s. Gold discov in 1851, canvas town grew around diggings. Tambaroora goldfield also active by 1852–53. Mainly alluvial gold won in the 1850s–60s. Total of some 21.8m g of gold mined on field, second highest yield of any NSW goldfield. Former Rising Sun Inn (RNE) built c1851. First gold stamp battery set up here in 1856 by Alpha Mining Co. Older part of town surveyed in 1860. Renewed activity with new finds in 1871: about 224 companies floated to mine area 1871–73. With twin town of Tambaroora, district had peak popn of approx 30 000 in 1872, with 50 hotels to quench their collective thirst. St Paul's Presbyterian church (RNE), Royal Hotel (RNE) and hospital (now museum) all built in 1872. Largest mass of gold ever discov found here in 1872 — 235 143 g. Gold yields were declining and popn falling by 1874. Mining virtually ceased in the mid-1870s; limited activity in the 1920s–30s; renewed exploration in the 1980s may lead to new mining activity. Declared a historic site in 1967, administered by NSW Nat Pks Service, listed on RNE. First large gold nugget (weighing almost 40 000 g) found in NSW discov at Hargraves to north in 1851.

LAKE CARGELLIGO [33°17′S 146°24′E]

Popn: 166 (1881), 1240 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'large lake'. Known as Cargelligo, 'Lake' added in 1919. Reached and named Regents Lake by John Oxley while tracing Lachlan R in 1817. First European settler was Francis Oakes who took up Gagelluga run c1842, later renamed Cargelligo. Gold discov in area in 1873

The main street of Lithgow two months after the end of
World War II. Pix, 6 October 1945.
MAGAZINE PROMOTIONS

leading to development of village gazetted in 1879. Mining virtually over by 1881. Village proclaimed in 1885. Lake became storage area to regulate flow of Lachlan R in 1902. Rlwy opened in 1917, leading to expansion of agric.

LITHGOW [33°29′S 150°09′E]

Popn: 2112 (1881), 6991 (1911), 15 128 (1954), 12 793 (1981). Possibly named after William Lithgow, first auditor-general. First grant in district in 1824. Flour mill built in 1837. Paul Strzelecki recorded auriferous pyrites in area in 1839, coal discov in 1841. Eskbank House (RNE) built in 1842; Bel Avon in 1845 as Cobb & Co changing station. Rlwy opened in 1869 on completion of the Great Zigzag down escarpment to east of town, hailed worldwide as an engineering marvel: used until 10 tunnels built in 1910; partially reopened as tourist line in recent yrs. Coalmining followed later in 1869: rapid expansion of coal production 1876–89, seven collieries by 1901. Pottery (kiln site RNE) estab in 1875; four brickworks in operation by 1889, closed in 1908. Iron ores first processed at Eskbank Iron Works (site RNE) estab in 1875; first galvanising and corrugating plant in Aust installed in 1894; Aust's first (open-hearth) steel produced in 1900. Municipality incorporated in 1889, became a city in 1945. Blast furnace opened in 1907, second in 1913. Steel plant and rolling mills expanded in 1917, but iron and steel making gradually moved to **Port Kembla** 1928–30. Pastoralist and merchant T.S. Mort estab freezing works in 1873. Commonwealth Oil Corporation ran oil-shale mining venture 1905–22, but not successful. Small arms factory

opened in 1912. Bowenfels to southwest settled in the 1830s: Cooerwull built in 1849, Somerset House originally built as inn c1840. Wallerawang Power Station to northwest opened in 1959, new underground coalmine in 1983.

MUDGEE [32°35′S 149°35′E]

Popn: 292 (1851), 1507 (1861), 3621 (1911), 6015 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'nest among hills'. Area first explored by Europeans in 1821, settled by George and Henry Cox in 1821–22. Village surveyed in 1836, gazetted in 1838, but previous settlement at Menah, 3.2 km northwest. Some of large properties subdivided for tenant farms c1851. Roman Catholic presbytery built in 1852. First vines in area planted c1855; Craigmoor vineyard estab in 1858. St Mary's Roman Catholic church built in 1857, post office in 1860, police station c1860, courthouse and Mechanics Institute in 1861 (all RNE). Became a municipality in 1860, amalgamated with shire in 1975. Gold discov in district at Eurunderee and elsewhere in the 1850s–70s. Rlwy opened in 1884 (station RNE). Butter factory founded in 1888. Regional abattoirs opened in 1965. Havilah run to east first taken up in the 1850s: homestead (RNE) built c1870.

NARROMINE [32°13′S 148°16′E]

Popn: 931 (1901), 2228 (1911), 1617 (1933), 2994 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'man carrying honey'. Thomas Raine and W.C. Wentworth held Narromine station in 1840, property sold in 1870. Township estab before opening of rlwy in 1882. Oldest country aeroclub in

Aust formed soon after World War I. Airforce training centre in World War II. Soldier settlement in area in 1946. Vegetables, sorghum and cotton now grown on irrigation area supplied from Burrendong Dam and opened in 1967.

NEWNES [33°11'S 150°14'E]

Popn: 1652 (1911), 339 (1933). Named after a London publisher, George Newnes. Rlwy and large plant (coke ovens RNE) opened c1911 by Commonwealth Oil Corporation to work oil-shale deposits, but closed in 1913. Reopened 1914–23. Oil-shale mining and treatment works opened at Glen Davis in district in 1939, produced 3 per cent of Aust's petrol during World War II: closed in 1953.

NYNGAN [31°33'S 147°14'E]

Popn: 1355 (1891), 2584 (1966), 2359 (1976), 2485 (1981). Name: Aborig = 'mussel' or 'crayfish'. Assistant surveyor Dixon passed nearby in 1833; explorer Thomas Mitchell camped in area in 1835. First European settlers in the 1840s: trouble with Aborigs led to govt cancelling all pastoral licences beyond Derribong run in 1845. Town site was a coach terminus by 1858. Police station estab and village surveyed and declared in 1866. Township estab in 1882 during construction of **Dubbo** to **Bourke** rlwy which opened to Nyngan in 1883, but much of popn moved when construction finished. Municipality declared in 1891. Govt experimental farm estab in 1910.

OBERON [33°41'S 149°52'E]

Popn: 102 (1881), 1937 (1981). Named after king of the fairies in Shakespeare's *Midsummer night's dream*. European settlement in district began in the 1820s along Fish and Campbell rivers; permanent European settlement of town area from 1837. Gold discov on Fish R by surveyor McBrien in 1823, although mining not until much later; some mining until c1875. First post office in area opened at Fish R in 1835. Village proclaimed in 1863. Copper mine and smelter on Wiseman's Creek from 1876, silver rush there in the 1880s. Pea-growing industry estab in 1906. Forestry in district began in the 1930s after pines first planted at Gurnang prison farm in 1930. Hardwoods important since World War II. Pineboard factory estab in 1959. Rockley to west in valley surveyed by George Evans in 1813; land granted from 1818. Village proclaimed in 1851 after opening of copper and gold mines in 1848, now classified by Nat T and RNE: Methodist church built in 1858, flour mill in 1864, Anglican church and police station in 1867. Jenolan Caves to southeast first explored by Europeans in 1838, opened to public in 1866.

OPHIR [33°13'S 149°11'E]

Popn: 73 (1911), 106 (1961). Named after ancient city of Middle East fabled for its gold by Edward Hargreaves in 1851. Mineralogist William Tipple Smith found gold in 1848 but find concealed by govt. Further finds by Lister and Toms in 1851 led to first large-scale payable goldfield in Aust: their partner Hargraves named find Ophir Field. Copper worked at Lewis Ponds in the 1860s–70s; silver, lead and zinc 1881–91.

ORANGE [33°16'S 149°07'E]

Popn: 28 (1851), 1456 (1871), 5263 (1911), 13 780 (1947), 22 196 (1966), 27 626 (1981). Name first used for parish by Thomas Mitchell in 1829, named after Prince of Orange. Sections of area earlier known as Blackman's Swamp and Frederick's Valley. Surveyor John Oxley camped in area in 1817–18. Track through future town site opened in 1823 between **Bathurst** and **Wellington**. First known legal landholder in area in 1827, although some permissive occupancy from 1823. Village reserve marked out in 1829. The Brickmakers' Arms Inn opened in 1832. Mitchell climbed Mt Canobolas in 1835. First wheat in district grown c1839; centre for district wheat industry by c1866. Village gazetted in 1835, town lots sold in 1848. Steam flour mill, first store and Methodist church estab in 1848; court of petty sessions and post office in 1849. Small farms began in the 1850s and, together with discovery of copper in spur of Canobolas Range and gold finds at **Ophir** and elsewhere, led to growth of village. Public school opened in 1853. Endsleigh built in 1858. Became a municipality in 1860, a town in 1885, a city in 1946. First newspaper published in 1861. Poet A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson born nearby in 1864. First hospital estab in 1867. St Joseph's Church (RNE) begun in 1870. Gas supply from 1876. Saleyards built in 1878, replaced in 1936. Rlwy opened in 1877. Post office and Holy Trinity Church built in 1879, public school in 1880, courthouse in 1882–83 (all RNE). Fruit growing became an important industry from c1886. Large meatworks opened c1930, Macquarie Worsted Mills in 1925, and bulk petrol depot in 1928. With **Bathurst**, designated growth centre by state and federal govts in 1972, but plans largely shelved within a few yrs. Severe bushfires in district in 1985. Central conservation area listed on RNE. Gold found at Lucknow to southeast in 1851, second payable find in Aust: mined until 1954. Cadia township laid out for copper mines c1865 after mine opened in 1858. Town soon declined, although mine operated again nearby 1905–17. Copper worked at Lewis Ponds in the 1860s–70s; silver, lead and zinc 1888–91.

PARKES [33°07'S 148°11'E]

Popn: 1961 (1881), 5846 (1933), 9047 (1981). Named after Henry Parkes, NSW politician, in 1873. Previously

Main street of Sofala. The local stores are reminiscent of the gold-rush days of the 1850s. Photograph by Reg Morrison.
WELDON TRANNIES

known as Currajong or Bushman's. Earliest European settlers in 1835, but little settlement in district until gold discov in 1862. Initial rush largely over by 1867. Bushman's goldmine discov in 1871, leading to area becoming one of richest gold producers in NSW and influx of approx 10000 diggers. Municipality incorporated in 1883. Rlwy opened in 1893. Present courthouse (RNE) built 1895–98. Some goldmining until 1951. Radio telescope outside town opened in 1961; enabled first discovery of pulsar stars outside Milky Way in 1981. Became important rlwy centre with completion of standard-gauge line from **Sydney** to **Perth** in 1969. Copper deposits discov in district in 1980.

PEAK HILL [32°43′S 148°13′E]

Popn: 1107 (1901), 1734 (1911), 1144 (1947), 1451 (1961), 1037 (1981). Gold rush of 1889 led to development of town: two large open-cut goldmines worked; closed 1908 and 1917. Surveyed in 1889, became a municipality in 1894. Rlwy opened in 1914.

SOFALA [33°05′S 149°41′E]

Popn: 528 (1856), 1646 (1861), 644 (1871), 93 (1961). Named c1853 after goldmining district in Mozambique. Gold discov in 1851, large tent town with police commissioner followed later that yr. Royal Hotel and store built c1851. Unrest on Turon valley fields over gold licences in 1853. Courthouse built 1857–66, post office in 1870. Settlement listed on RNE.

STUART TOWN [32°48′S 149°05′E]

Popn: 547 (1911), 256 (1966). Named after Alexander Stuart, premier of NSW, 1883–85. Earlier called Ironbark, made famous by 'Banjo' Paterson's poem 'The man from Ironbark'. Gold discov in 1849. Some 4.4m g of gold produced 1875–1914. First gold dredge in NSW used here from 1899, gold dredged until 1958. Diggings otherwise closed in 1914. Robert Askin, NSW premier, born here in 1901.

SUNNY CORNER [33°23′S 149°53′E]

Popn: 260 (1911), 121 (1954). Name from search for camping spot by Scott brothers in the 1850s. Town gazetted and named Mitchell in 1885, officially renamed Sunny Corner in 1887, but school known as Mitchell until 1899. Post office opened in 1862, police station in 1863. First school opened in 1864. At height of gold rush 13 or 14 crushing machines in township. Silver ore discov in Winterton Reef in 1881. First large-scale silver smelting in NSW began here in 1884. Over £891 000 worth of silver alone extracted 1885–96. In 1885 there were 768 men working mines, only 100 by 1896 when last mine closed. First School of Mines and Industries in NSW opened here in 1886, but failed due to lack of public support. Further production 1917–22 because of high silver prices following World War I. Gold discov at nearby Dark Corner in the 1860s, mine

abandoned c1900. Sunny Corner reafforestation scheme begun in 1946–47 and timber industry became prominent.

WARREN [31°41′S 147°51′E]

Popn: 159 (1871), 1828 (1954), 1505 (1961), 2077 (1981). Name: Aborig *warrien*, *wurrena* or similar, of uncertain meaning. First European settlers in district in 1839. Warren run taken up in 1841, police station on property 1845–49. Town site surveyed in 1860; allotments sold, post office estab and site gazetted in 1861. School opened in 1867, first Anglican church c1875, first courthouse in 1874. Large amounts of wool carried through town in the 1890s. Town incorporated in 1895: in 1908 became first local govt body in world to rate on unimproved capital value basis. Warren Weir built in 1896. Artesian water supply scheme for town began in 1897. Rlwy opened in 1898 and became important railhead. Cotton production under irrigation became important in the 1970s.

WELLINGTON [32°32′S 148°58′E]

Popn: 29 (1851), 1340 (1881), 2984 (1901), 5825 (1966), 5280 (1981). Named after Duke of Wellington by John Oxley who explored valley in 1817. Convict settlement estab in 1823 as first European settlement west of **Bathurst**. Used as base in 1828 by Charles Sturt when exploring inland river systems. Thomas Mitchell's map of Wellington valley was first Aust geological map published. Weekly postal service to **Sydney** began in 1838. First village founded privately by J.B. Montefiore and built with convict labour; govt township gazetted in 1846. Cobb & Co service began in 1865. Municipality incorporated in 1879. Rlwy opened in 1880. Work began on Burrendong Dam upstream on Macquarie River in 1946, suspended 1952–58, finally completed in 1967. Wellington Caves discov by Europeans in 1830, opened for tours in 1870. Vineyards estab in area 1968–74.

YOUNG [34°17′S 148°19′E]

Popn: 792 (1871), 3619 (1911), 6906 (1981). Earlier known as Lambing Flat, renamed to honour gov of NSW, John Young, when town surveyed in 1861. Burrangorang station taken up in 1826 and flats where town later grew used for lambing. Burrangong goldfield discov in 1860. Series of riots on goldfields directed against Chinese in 1860–61 caused Riot Act to be read and Royal Artillery to be called out; also led, in part, to Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill and Gold Fields Bill. Gaol (later technical college, RNE) built in 1876. Became municipality in 1882, merged with shire in 1980. Rlwy station (RNE) built in 1885, former courthouse (RNE) 1884–86. Soldier settlement in district after World War I. First cool store opened in 1930, area became known for fruit growing, particularly cherries.