

Cross Smith St. at the lights turn left, then right into Belgrave St.

6. After passing the Hotel Kempsey note the bottle shop which was once the Australian Joint Stock Chartered Bank. The present owners have handled the alterations sympathetically and the top storey is now motel accommodation.

A plaque on the front of the building gives a brief history. The bank was designed by John Sulman (later Sir John) and built in 1891.

Across the Street was the Victoria Theatre. Kempsey once boasted five theatres.

Next door was the Macleay Chronicle Newspaper Office.

Continue west along Belgrave St.

Note the Kempsey Mall which replaces a block of small shops. The stained glass from one of the shops (Lane's Pharmacy) has been incorporated in the entrance to the arcade.

Cross Stuart St. continue alongside Services Club Park.

Local services club members cleared this park, the playing fields and those across the street after the devastating floods of 1949/50. The Council purchased the land to help home and business owners to relocate out of the flood path.

Cross Holman St.

Continue to the caravan park where the Methodist Church stood prior to being extensively damaged in the same floods. The church was demolished and rebuilt in Tozer St. West Kempsey.

The double storey Municipal Council Chambers once stood in Chapple Park. The attractive building was demolished and the Council is now housed in Elbow St. West Kempsey.

Chapple Park is also the site for the McElhone

Memorial Baths, opened in 1938. The 33m facility became part of the Olympic complex in 1968. The pool was substantially funded by the local community. The NSW Country Swimming Titles were held here in 1981 and 1996.

Turn and retrace your steps east in Belgrave St. Cross to carpark. Your car should be in sight

Information for items mentioned in this 'Walk in History' may be found at The Macleay River Historical Society Inc. Museum and Resource Centre



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

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MACLEAY RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

is a resource centre and promotes the study of local history. The centre houses material such as maps, photographs, textiles, documents and files on the history of early settlers.

Museum open 10am - 4pm

Step back in time - Visit the Settler's Cottage  
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KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL  
supporting the heritage of the Macleay



HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



step back in

time



Walks in History

CENTRAL KEMPSEY

MACLEAY RIVER

This is a footpath walk only. Except for public buildings, you do not have permission to enter gardens or houses

From the south, travel west taking the left lane from the traffic lights into Belgrave Street. Go through the shopping centre and park in the Caltex Car Park (ample unrestricted parking). Estimated time for this walk is 30 - 40 minutes

Heritage Listed Items

Walk across Sydney Street to the playing fields. Prior to the devastating floods in 1949 and 1950 this area was occupied by

residences and business houses, including a steam laundry and the Egg Board Depot.

*Turn left and walk alongside the netball courts and playing fields.*

See Junior Farmer Club plaque erected in 1964.

Note the flood embankment which was built around the town to keep minor flood waters out of the town centre. The railway line to the west was lifted after the viaduct was washed away in the 1949/50 floods. The railway bridge and viaduct underwent major repairs and rebuilding.

Downstream from the railway bridge a shipyard was established by three shipbuilders from Scotland, John Ferrier, William Malcolm, and Alex Newton. Their holding was called [Scotchtown](#) and dated from 1836 when Captain Newton received a licence to cut timber and build ships. These vessels carried timber out of the valley and took part in the coastal and overseas shipping trade.

*Turn left at the T-intersection. You are now in Eden St. Walk to the bowling greens.*

**1. Kempsey's first Bowling Club** faced Eden St.; it was established in 1921. The club now extends through to Austral St.

This residential area is known as "[The Verge Estate](#)" after John Verge, a prominent landholder in the Macleay valley who owned this land. Verge was a noted architect. His buildings catered for all the needs of the time from beautiful mansions such as Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney to places of worship. There are no examples of his work in Kempsey. The Verge Estate was not settled until 1917 and the land was then subdivided into residential blocks. The surrounding streets are named after members of his family.

*Cross Eden St. and walk towards the river.*

You are now looking directly across the Macleay River to the site where [Enoch William Rudder](#), the founder of Kempsey settled in 1836. He purchased

812 acres (328 hectares) and subdivided part of his estate into a private town that he named Kempsey. The land reminded him of the town of Kempsey on the Severn River in Worcestershire, England.

*Turn left at the boat ramp.*

Follow the pavers north under the traffic bridge, opened in 1959 to replace the first traffic bridge located just a little way downstream. The first bridge was the largest timber truss bridge in Australia and was opened on Easter Monday 1900.

Prior to the wooden bridge a ferry crossed the river at this site. Passengers had to pay for a passage so many folk used their own boats and rowed across.

On your way see trees planted by the Riverbank Beautification Committee in 1987.

The Rotary Club of West Kempsey has erected three interpretive signs as part of the Macleay Valley Heritage Trail.

*Continue walking downstream.*

You will come to Preens Engineering Works. This was the site of the [North Coast Steam Navigation Company's office and wharf](#). Goods and passengers in and out of Kempsey were carried by ships prior to the railway service arriving in 1917.

You are now facing Woolworths Supermarket. This is the site where [Foley Brothers](#) opened a butter factory in 1897. An elevator crossed over the road carrying boxes of butter to load on to the ships.

*Turn left into Forth St., walk uphill then right into Woolworths carpark. Turn left.*

**🏠 2. See the old Presbyterian School and Church** in the carpark. William Smith donated an allotment to the Presbyterian Church trustees on condition that a school was built. The school was opened in 1863 and also used as a place of worship. The cement-rendered brick building was opened in 1890 and used for church services until

1984 when a new church was built across the river. The church has a State Heritage listing.

Note the historical marker above the door of the old school. This is marker no 6 placed there by the Macleay River Historical Society.

*Walk to the footpath (Smith St.) and turn left. Cross Forth St. at the traffic lights.*

**3. See the Macleay Hotel** where once the [Royal Hotel](#) stood in all its splendour. Built in 1895 the Royal provided superior accommodation for travellers. At the rear of the hotel across York Lane there were stables for horses and space for vehicles. Sample rooms were available for commercial travellers to display their wares to their clients. Beside the hotel was the elegant [Theatre Royal](#) built as a theatre the same year.

The western side of Smith St. has suffered three separate fires: the first in 1907 when the buildings from the [Wesleyan Church](#) (where the ANZ Bank stands) to the Centre Point Arcade were razed to the ground; [Anderson's Store](#) on the corner of Forth and Smith Streets was burnt down during a flood in 1928; the third fire saw the [Macleay Cooperative](#) (now Centre Point Arcade) destroyed in 1964.

Across Smith Street see [Colonial Building](#) built for the Colonial Mutual Company in 1927.

*Continue along Smith St. to the Post Office.*

**4. You will pass Harvey's Furniture Store**, a trader on this site since 1890. The present building was erected in 1907. See the pressed metal ceiling over the pavement.

**🏠 5. The Post Office** is listed on the State Heritage, National Trust and National Estate Registers. It is described as "a high Victorian Classical Post Office with strongly rusticated rendered brick on the ground floor and corner clock tower. A well proportioned public building which is an important element in the townscape". It was opened on March 23rd 1886.