

Cognitive Journeys to Cultural Identity: The Maclean Story

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And having been in Scotland ... we spent a couple of months there a couple of years ago ... a lot of the Scottish people aren't as identifiably Scottish or as interested ... as the people are here (Interviewee 12: 23/06/00, Maclean NSW)

Abstract

A track or pathway is the manifestation of a journey taken. In human landscape terms, each journey is both a measure of the start and end points of a wide variety of social and cultural processes that have operated to form each pathway, and is the requisite element for the maintenance and renewal of the fabric of each pathway. In this paper we consider the physical and cognitive journeys that are encoded within the fabric of Maclean, a small rural service town situated along the Clarence River in Northern New South Wales. In so doing, we reveal the social and cultural processes that have operated to currently manifest Maclean as "The Scottish Town in Australia". A largely contrived "Scottish" fabric - in association with recognisable, historic elements of the built environment of Maclean - alert us to, and enable inquiry of, the physical journey of the town from its establishment in 1862 as a small river port to its late twentieth century self-identification as a "Scottish Town". More importantly, however, this contrived fabric is a cue to the cognitive journey(s) of present residents to an imagined Scottish homeland significantly at odds with the actuality of contemporary Scottish experiences. Indeed, an historical narrative has been created for Maclean that reinforces and verifies the physical journey of the township, gives clarity and credence to current "Scottish icons", and enables both individual and collective cognitive journeys to this romanticised Scotland to be repeated, recycled and affirmed as the basis for the township's cultural identity. Furthermore, in the recent construction of the "Scottish cairn", the Scottish heritage of Maclean has been both memorialised and validated as solid fabric. In essence, the factual and the imagined past have been linked to the actions and emblems of the present in order to authenticate a Scottish Identity for Maclean. The permanence of the cairn provides substance to the myth, validates the dreaming, and provides the focal point for a geography and heritage of the imagination. The recognition of this imagined heritage has drawn our research on a contemplative journey where traditional models of fabric, as heritage to be managed, have been overshadowed by cultural geographical models of fabric as text, and most importantly to the recognition of fabric, however contrived, as concept and a cue to the social processes involved in community identification with place.

Introduction

Maclean is a small rural town situated along a wide reach of the lower Clarence River in northern New South Wales, Australia (Figure 1). However, on entering Maclean, either from the north or south, it is seen to be town embellished with tartan and other Scottish icons. Tartan is visible on telegraph poles, shop fronts and awnings, the uniforms of supermarket staff and school children, and numerous other seemingly incidental places. Bright banners line the main street announcing quotes from Robbie Burns, recipes for haggis, and the heraldic splendour of several Scottish clans (Figures 2 & 3). As a new resident to Maclean stated:

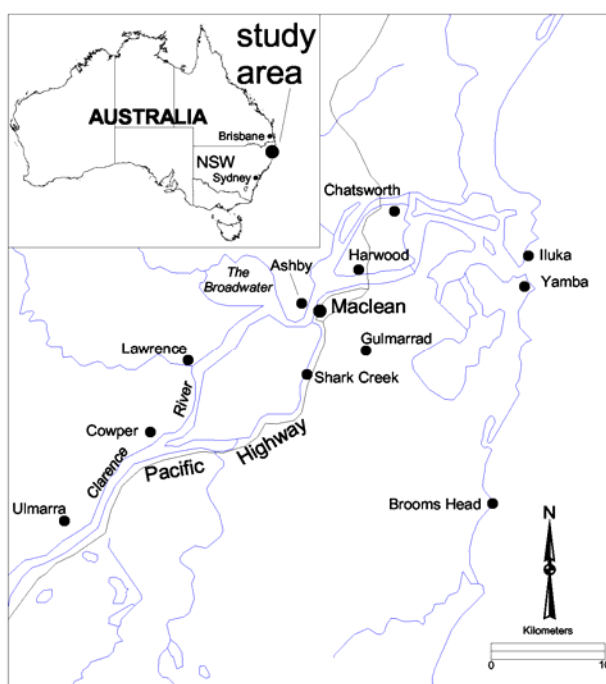


Figure 1 A location map of Maclean and its surrounding villages.

I guess you can't go past the Scottish theme, because as you drive into the town you know you are coming to the Scottish Town in Australia
(Interviewee 10: 24/6/2000).

It was one such unavoidably similar journey into the township of Maclean (since the town is only accessible through its main street) that provided the trigger for a research journey in which the authors have sought to investigate why the town is emphatic in its support and reinforcement of an apparently overtly touristic township identity focused on being “The Scottish Town in Australia”. In a previous paper (Boyd *et al.*, in press a) we have described and examined the history of the late twentieth century rise of Maclean “The Scottish Town in Australia”. In particular we have demonstrated that the current Scottish identity of Maclean is largely a consequence of a deliberate cultural choice made by civic and social activists within the town, principally during the 1980s when the Scottish Town in Australia Committee was formed. We have examined the reasons for this choice, and considered many of the cultural processes that have occurred to enable a “Big Scot” to be centrally situated with the physical and cognitive landscape of a contemporary rural Australian town. In this paper, using the results of a methodological approach that has incorporated both formal and semi-structured interviews with community members, classroom based exercises with Maclean High School history students; and the examination of relevant primary and secondary historical texts we provide the basis for an understanding of the cognitive journeys that link fabric, history, imagination, concept and community.



Figure 2 A windsail situated at the northern vehicular entrance of Maclean that proclaims the township to be “The Scottish Town in Australia”.
(Photograph M.Cotter)



Figure 3 Windsail featuring the noted Scottish poet Robert Burns in the Main Street of Maclean
(Photograph M. Cotter)



Figure 4 A postcard envelope purchased from the “Scottish Shop” in Maclean. This postcard features an image of the “Big Scot” billboard that is situated near Maclean on the Pacific Highway bypass of the town.

The aims of this paper are threefold: to describe how the admixture of a physical journey, contrived fabric and landscape setting drive and reinforce the pathways to an imagined Scotland; to reveal the numerous ways the community identifies with place; and to comment on the role of the contrived fabric as text, concept and prompt in maintaining the pathways to a cognitive journey.

Beginning the Journeys

The cognitive journeys to Scotland are grounded in the actual journey taken to Australia by disaffected Scottish Highlanders, particularly from the Isle of Skye, in the 1830s. These immigrants first settled in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales and then, after a series of floods, moved to the North Coast area in the 1850s (McSwan, 1992).

Once established in Maclean, these settlers subtly began to build a pathway to their lost homeland, by transplanting Scottish events and societies into their new environment. This pathway began to emerge in 1862, when the township was laid out and Alexander Cameron, the town's first businessman, started to erect many of the buildings still extant in the central business district. This building and town establishment phase largely ceased with the advent of World War 1 and it is hard to discern whether international events (such as the beginning of World War 1, the subsequent economic depression and /or the later advent of World War II) or local factors such as a general waning of interest in the town resulted in the disuse of the pathway to an imagined Scottish homeland. Events that marked this pathway include: the opening of the Free Presbyterian Church in 1867; the staging of the first Highland Gathering at nearby Murrayville in 1893; the formation of the Lower Clarence Caledonian Society in 1895; the formation of the Maclean Pipe Band in 1898; the raising of the Maclean Scottish Rifles 1899; and the erection of the Caledonian Hall in 1902 (Table 1). This of course is not a unique journey. Irish emigrants to Australia for example built similar pathways to Ireland, establishing Irish pipe bands, hand hurling clubs, and celebrating St Patrick's Day (McConville, 1987).

An additional pathway to an imagined Scottish homeland - and the manifestation of these imaginings as newly created town fabric within contemporary Maclean - began to slowly develop in the mid 1960's. It had, as its impetus the construction of a national highway bypass of the town and the recognisable nationwide civic movement to market individual township identities (Leiper, 1997). The cognitive journey to a new township identity did not initially use the physical cues (provided by either elements of the late 19th century built heritage or community established Scottish societies and festivals) to re-open the previously established pathway to an imagined Scotland. In fact, the people of Maclean initially wished to develop a pathway to the adjacent cane fields. A probable reason for this was the relative prosperity of the cane industry, and its almost ubiquitous presence within the surrounding district. In essence this cane field inspired journey to cultural identity was based upon the general situational and economic reality of the township at the time. Several ideas relating to the cane industry were pursued and included the construction of a "Big Sugar Cane Stalk" and/or "Big Sugar Cube" and associated theme park adjacent to the highway at the entrance to Maclean. Ultimately the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority (or its past equivalent) opposed the site for these "Big Things" and the general attempts to transpose the cane fields into an urban setting or theme park

environment were abandoned. Nevertheless, in 1974 the sugar cane industry received some attention with the introduction of the Cane Harvest Festival (Short, 1980).

It was not until 1986 that the renewal of the pathway to an imagined Scotland and to a Scottish Maclean began. At this time there was a community resurgence of interest in the development and implementation of an identifiable image for the Maclean township. It was based on the vision of a local businessman who took the contemporary community back to the early days of Maclean, when he said:

In the mid 1850s many Scottish migrants moved to this area. There is much history of Scots associated with the town and in fact, the town is named after a Scotsman. There is much Scottish tradition and ancestry associated with the area. The town has the oldest Highland Gathering in Australia. This ancestry can be built upon for the benefit of all our future descendants. (Scottish Town in Australia Committee, Minutes Foundation Meeting, 21st July, 1986).

As a result of his presentation to the Maclean community the Scottish Town in Australia (STiA) Committee was formed. It should be noted that this committee had no formal ties to the Chamber of Commerce, Lower Council Tourist Association or Maclean Shire Council. It was a more egalitarian group whose members saw themselves as working towards increasing the economic prosperity of the township and enhancing civic pride. Nevertheless the original members of the committee included much of the civic and Scottish religious establishment of the town and included members of the Lower Clarence Scottish Association, the Maclean Chamber of Commerce, the Clarence River Tourism Association, the Minister of the Free Kirk Church, a town planner, local press officers, and business people. Moreover the group was made up of expatriate Scots, Australians with Scottish ancestry and non-Scottish Australians who clearly identified that a township identity linked to a factual Scottish heritage that both was economically viable and acceptable to the wider community. Indeed an underlying theme of the township identity is its links to the hardworking, religiously devout and formerly victimised Scottish free settlers. This contrasts markedly with much of the convict settlement of eastern Australia and provides a relatively unique, socially acceptable and valued foundation for a town identity.

At the foundation meeting of the STiA Committee a concern was expressed that the actual Scottish theme could not be promoted until an “authentic atmosphere” was established. This is perhaps the reason why the STiA Committee asked a local historian to write the Scottish history of Maclean, which was duly published in November 1986 (McSwan, 1986). This history, superseded an earlier history of the town written by the same author, in which the towns ethnic origins including, it's Aboriginal, Irish and German settler connections, were more broadly reported (McSwan, 1976).

Table 1: Timeline of important historical and contemporary events that have occurred in the township of Maclean. (Sources: Bain *pers. com.*, 2000; Buckley, 1984; Butterworth, 1992; Cousins, 1933; Maclean Historical Society, 1998, 1999; Maclean Shire Council, 1989, 1999; McSwan, 1976, 1986, 1992, *pers. com.*, 2000; Scottish Town in Australia Committee, 1986-1996; Rackham *pers. com.*, 2000; Short 1980; University of New England-Northern Rivers, 1992) .

<p>1862 Alexander Cameron selects land on the site of Maclean township</p> <p>1867 Opening of the Free Presbyterian Church</p> <p>1885 Post Office adopted the name Maclean (formerly Rocky Mouth)</p> <p>1893 Formation of Lower Clarence Caledonian Society</p> <p>First Highland Gathering</p> <p>1898 Maclean Pipe Band formed</p> <p>1899 Raising of the Maclean company of the Scottish Rifles</p> <p>1901 Seventy-four members of the Maclean Scottish Rifles performed at the Sydney Federation celebrations</p> <p>1902 Caledonian Hall erected</p> <p>1907 Maclean Chamber of Commerce formed</p> <p>1911 Maclean Scottish Rifles disbanded</p> <p>1951 Maclean Intermediate High School opened</p> <p>1953 First Venetian Carnival (an initiative of the Maclean Intermediate High School)</p> <p>1961 Maclean High School opened (girls uniform featured the Maclean Hunting Tartan)</p> <p>1966 Pacific Highway Bypass of Maclean occurs</p> <p>1969 Maclean Historical Society builds Museum</p> <p>1972 'Our Town Project' undertaken to explore the idea of new town image for Maclean</p> <p>1974 First Cane Harvest Festival</p> <p>1984 Reformation of the Maclean Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>1986 July Public Meeting to promote the town of Maclean as 'The Scottish Town in Australia'</p> <p>-August formation of The Scottish Town in Australia Committee (STiAC)</p> <p>-November publication of Maclean, The Scottish Connection by E. McSwan</p> <p>1988 Scottish Bicentennial Ball and Scottish Debutant</p> <p>Ball initiated by the STiAC</p> <p>-Dedication of the Bicentennial Cairn in Herb Stanford Park and</p>	<p>proclamation of Maclean as 'The Scottish Town in Australia'</p> <p>-Town Precinct Heritage walk developed and associated plaques produced by the STiAC</p> <p>-Maclean Shire Council allows street signs to be produced in both Gaelic and English</p> <p>1989 Scottish Shop opened by STiAC</p> <p>-Maclean Shire Local Environmental Study published without reference to the area's Scottish heritage but with mention of the rural and indigenous history</p> <p>1990 July 1st, Tartan Day celebrated by STiAC</p> <p>-First issue of "What's on in Maclean" produced</p> <p>1992 Maclean Precinct Study undertaken by J Butterworth to beautify and conserve the town centre (known as the Butterworth Plan)</p> <p>-Maclean Shire Tourism Case Study undertaken (and resultant document makes no mention of the Scottish heritage of Maclean)</p> <p>-First Windsail Banners erected in Main Street by the STiAC</p> <p>1993 Ex-Services club weekly flag lowering ceremony initiated to commemorate the fallen (the flag is lowered to the sounds of a Piper)</p> <p>-Links between Portree, on the Isle of Skye, and Maclean established</p> <p>1994 Construction of the Pioneers Memorial Wall and Walkway at Herb Stanford Park</p> <p>1995 First Kirkin' 'O' The Tartan Service held in Herb Stanford Park by the STiAC</p> <p>1997 STiAC presents Maclean Dress Tartan Kilt to Information Officer at Maclean Shire Council</p> <p>1998 Maclean Heritage 2001 Main Street Project launched</p> <p>-BBC filmed Maclean as part of a series on Scottish Settlements outside Scotland</p> <p>2000 Maclean Shire Council adopts Town Centre Development Control Plan</p>
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Maintaining and Renewing the Cognitive Journeys: Sails, Stories, Sounds and Sentiments

While it was not the overt intention of the STiA Committee to create an exclusive journey, the pathway was definitely geared towards emphasising the noble qualities of the Scottish and Scotland and appealed to those who had a Scottish ancestry, some special affiliation with Scotland, or a predilection for things Scottish. However unlike the activities of the early Scottish settlers, which were aimed at those belong to the Scottish societies and often had an ecclesiastical nature, the activities undertaken by the STiA Committee where aimed at the general public and were of a more secular nature. The STiA Committee, as shown in Table 1, used an assortment of events and cues to maintain and renew the pathway to an imagined Scotland. For example visual cues ranged through: the billboard of the kilt-clad girl playing the bagpipes (Figure 4), windsails¹ displaying Scottish motifs taken directly from Scottish tea towels, street signs in both English and Gaelic, to a Council information officer wearing a kilt to work, were scattered around the Maclean township.

The cognitive journey towards an imagined Scotland was also renewed with the revival of specific events such as the Scottish Debutant Ball, Bobbie Burns Suppers, and the celebration of St Andrews Day. Subtle marketing strategies were also employed to extend the pathways to Scotland with the outdoor “Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan” ceremony lengthening the Highland Gathering, held on the Easter Weekend, from a two-day to a three-day event. The introduction of the Tartan Day celebration, on the 1st July, also extended Scottish events throughout the year. The Scottish Corner shop, which opened in 1989, was intended to be a “Maclean-orientated” tourist facility but in reality it was a very Scottish venture with Scottish highland music playing from speakers outside the shop and most stock displaying Scottish emblems and themes. The committee’s aim was to open the shop on weekdays, thus producing yet another year round Scottish pathway.

Built in 1988, the Bicentennial Cairn, (Figure 5) has become the recent focus for the maintenance and renewal of the multiple cognitive journeys to an imagined Scotland. Its obvious physical permanence, and recent association with the ‘Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan’ ceremony held on Easter Sunday, enabled the Scottish heritage of Maclean to be memorialised and validated. In fact the cairn is mentioned and photographed more frequently by residents and high school students (Boyd *et al*, in press b) than the historical Free Presbyterian Church built in 1867 (McSwan, 1986). Moreover, the obvious physical permanence of the Cairn serves to indicate a pathway that is enduring rather than temporary or whimsical (Auster, 1995). Further development at the cairn site is unashamedly directed at taking tourists and residents towards a cognitive journey to the past. This occurred after one STiA Committee member visited Tasmania where he saw a list of all the battles involving Australian soldiers cemented into the footpath leading to an RSL (Returned Serviceman’s League) Club and decided that this idea could be used in Maclean:

I thought, well up at the Cairn we could put coats of arms and Clan crests around the bottom of the Cairn so that tourists could identity themselves with settling families on the Lower Clarence. And this has been done now.

¹ Windsail is the term used by STiA Committee members to describe the street banners. It is a term which lends itself to the notion of a journey.

And I have seen people come to the Park up there and walk around and they have done as I expected. They have identified themselves with families Stewart's, or McPherson's or Iron's around that Cairn. I think this is keeping our forbearers and our settlers before the people and they can associate themselves with the original settlers. (Interviewee 13: 23/6/2000 Maclean)

The Committee also used ceremonial and aural cues such as lowering the flag every Thursday night, at the RSL Club, to the sound of the pipes, and broadcasting of Scottish Highland music from outside the Scottish shop to indicate the pathways to Scotland. It is possible that the Committee was aware of the way sounds reverberate within the township of Maclean. In this regard two interviewees, with no prompting by the interviewers, mentioned the echoing of sounds within Maclean. The older interviewee told of how he would hear, in his youth, the sounds of the blacksmiths and the girls playing pianos at the Catholic school when he sat on his grandma's veranda. A second interviewee, who was new to the town, said that you could hear someone playing the pipes all around town. For her:

the sound just echoed and seemed to filter through the towns alleys, almost as if the town had been designed for that purpose (Interviewee 10: 24/6/2000 Maclean).

The intertwining of personal experience and the elements of an imagined journey to Scotland as suggested above was further revealed in semi-structured interviews with over twenty residents. For example one long term, resident stated his experiences of the Highland Gathering:

It's like a family reunion at Easter time...I try and come as often as I can...One year I came and met some school mates from thirty years ago...you come once a year to see people you haven't seen for 12 months (Interviewee 5, 24/06/00).

Likewise another long term resident stated that the Highland gathering was a favourite event in Maclean with the reason for liking it being that it "must be in the blood" (*i.e.* being Australian born but of Scottish descent). This interviewee also associated the Highland Gathering with a personal memory in which as a five year old he had become lost after following on foot behind Marching Pipers for some considerable distance along the Main Street.

In the research team's view it seems that the cognitive journeys to an imagined Scotland are maintained primarily through the memories and continuing associations of the adult community and to a lesser degree by the newly created "Scottish" festivals, fabric and events. Moreover the aims of the STiA Committee to include the whole community in current activities may continue to maintain these cognitive journeys by allowing the creation of a new set of memories each year. For the High School students, however, because of a lack of enthusiasm for and/or participation in current Scottish events (to a greater or lesser degree) the journey appears stimulated by the created fabric, the signifiers.

Maintaining and Renewing the Cognitive Journeys: River, Mountain, and Mist

The research team also learnt from interviewees that, in their opinion, both the physical setting and mists of Maclean mirrored the landscape and mists of Scotland (Figure 6). This linking of Maclean with an imagined Scottish landscape in turn strengthened their journey to Scotland. We can only speculate that this journey ended in Portree on the Isle of Skye, a town which is now the sister city to Maclean (Figure 7). The residents of Maclean are not alone in viewing the landscape symbolically as Verrocchio (in press) explains colonial artists painted the landscapes of Victoria in the Romantic notion of a European wilderness and according to Taylor (2000) the social memories of West Australians are framed by the climatic notion that the “sun always shines on Perth”. For some Maclean residents they simply see that:

The hills and scenery around here is very similar to what you get in Ireland and Scotland and even parts of England like the Lakes District. We’ve had visitors here from Scotland who have said “this is so like home” and “I feel so completely at home here”. The only thing that is different is perhaps the vegetation (Interviewee 7: 24/6/2000 Maclean).

Likewise newspaper articles continue to confirm the connection between the physical setting of Maclean and Scotland, with a visitor (an expatriate Scot who arrived in Australia in 1979) to the 2001 Maclean Highland Gathering being quoted in the local paper as saying:

The first year I arrived in Australia I came and it reminded me of home, of Scotland. For that reason I come here every year (Coastal Views 19/4/2001, p 6).

Even more specifically one of our interviewees told us how she had asked an older resident (an Australian with Scottish ancestry) why he thought the Scottish migrants settled in Maclean and she recounted the story that:

He took me out the back of his place and he said ‘now look at that’. And I looked out and saw the mountains and the water ... the river. And he said, “It’s the mountains and the lochs and it looks like home, it looks like Scotland and they came here because it looks like Scotland”.. And from his place though it does look like a winding loch to me (Interviewee 10: 24/6/2000 Maclean).

Further interconnections between landscape, contemporary fabric and an imagined Scotland were drawn to our attention by one resident. He told us that the cairn had been built in just the right place because from Herb Stanford Park you had such a beautiful view of the river (Interviewee 12: 23/6/2000 Maclean). It should be noted that the ephemeral fogs or mist over the Clarence River on winter mornings, direct some residents to imagine Scotland, equally one Glen Innes resident, visiting the Maclean Highland Festival in 2000, stated that it was in fact the mists at the Celtic Festival in Glen Innes that really took one back to Scotland.

Alternative Cognitive Journeys: To the River and Cane fields

While our explorations would suggest that the Scottish pathways, consolidated by a range of very visual fabric, landscape setting, memories and events form the basis for

many contemporary journeys to an imagined Scotland, they are not the only journeys taken by the community. Often interviewees took us on several journeys in the one interview. They would start with the Scottish journeys and leading onto other journeys, which often centred on pathways to the river and/or cane fields.

For example two Aboriginal sisters, who were brought up on Ulugundahi Island, (situated in the Clarence just opposite the township of Maclean), were asked what they thought about the Scottish identity of the township of Maclean. They replied in a humorous manner that they acknowledged their Scottish heritage:

We have some Scottish heritage ... now we have white mans names ... we had our cultural Aboriginal names... but we took names like Randells, Lauries, Camerons, Williams and Walkers ... we are probably a tribe from them people ... It doesn't make any difference to (us) ... you walk down the street across the park to the Boulevard and you hear the Scottish music ... and it's really nice to hear ... at the highland gathering I could sit all day and watch the girls dance. And when all the bands got together and marched around the showground it was a beautiful sight"
(Interviewee 22: 5/7/2000 Yamba).

While the sisters accepted and acknowledged the Scottish journeys, and were particularly impressed by the theatre and pageantry of the Highland gathering and festivals that marked the pathways, it was the river that took them to Maclean's past. The river was linked to their ancestral stories, particular the story of the very spiteful old Dirrangun woman who tried to stop its flow; and it was the river that provided fond childhood memories of rowing regattas involving family members, and pastimes spent fishing, prawning and swimming.

Despite the vivid memories of Maclean held by the Indigenous people there is little evidence of an Indigenous presence to be found touristic fabric of Maclean, although an increasing number of books and articles tell the stories and show the pathways to the history of the Yaegl² people (Heron, 1991; Heron, in press; Kijas et al, 1998; Smith, 1990; Walker, 1989). Likewise the Lower Clarence Aboriginal community instigated a project, in 1992, which resulted in the Lower Clarence Aboriginal Tourist Site Drive. Thirteen sites line a pathway telling the stories of the Yaegl people (Anon, 1996). Also interviewees, with both aboriginal and non-aboriginal backgrounds, told us about the famous, local, Aboriginal athlete Rocky Laurie³. Thus while the journey to the Yaegl people seems well signposted to the Indigenous community as yet it has not become part of the Maclean identity. With some irony we note that the Aborigines of the Clarence Valley are documented to have built rock cairns (McBryde, 1974).

² Yaegl is the name given to the aboriginal people who lived in the Lower Clarence.

³ Rocky Laurie was a sprinter, sculler, swimmer, first rate cricketer and rugby league winger. His life is reviewed by Howland & Lee. (1985).



Figure 5 The Scottish Bicentennial cairn in Herb Stanford Park, Maclean. (Photograph M.Cotter)



Figure 6 The Clarence river and surrounding countryside viewed from the township of Maclean. (Photograph M.Cotter)

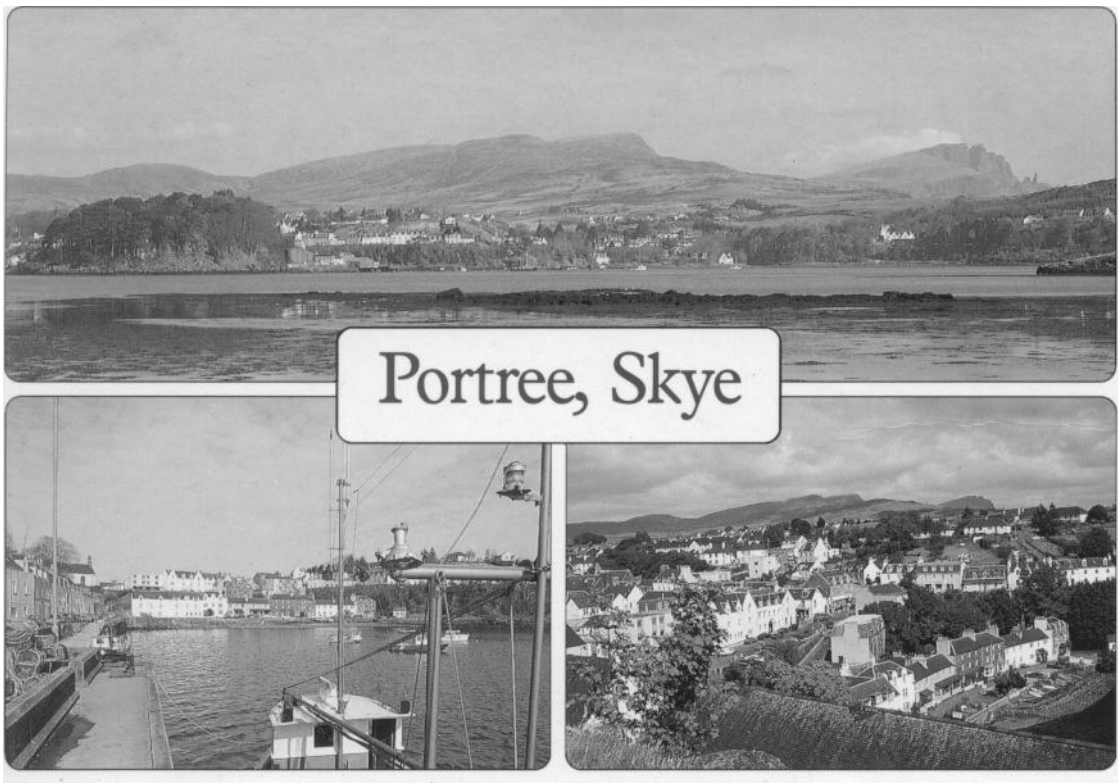


Figure 7 Postcard views of the landscape around Maclean's sister city, Portree, Isle of Skye, Scotland.

Other residents and High School students mentioned the river as a special feature of the Maclean landscape and hence part of the Maclean identity. This is not surprising as researchers, studying landscape preference, have indicated that water bodies appeal to many (Bourassa, 1991). For some the river, and its association with the acclaimed rower Henry Searle, holds the key to the real identity of Maclean:

I still think that the history of this town is based on the river and it is an absolutely beautiful stretch of the river and it is totally under utilised And getting back to history, Henry Searle⁴ is a historic figure and I ask people who he is and they don't know... and yet he is one of the historic figures of Australia and that is something that has never been highlighted ... (Interviewee 21: 23/6/2000 Maclean)

River journeys were linked to specific activities such as rowing, fishing, the Venetian Festivals of the 1960s and 1970s, the recent Power Boat Regatta, and the early history of the town as a port. As one interviewee said:

"The river is so wide and deep here it would take big sailing boats and streamers ...and they would go up river loading produce...in the old days too the cane harvest went on the river and I remember cream boats coming up from Iluka to the big butter factory at Grafton" (Interviewee 7: 23/6/2000 Maclean).

So too for one Maclean High School student his Primary School logo more accurately reflects his perception of MacLean's cultural identity and heritage. The logo he described as having a

Trawler on the river, and underneath a fish is swimming – a bream, the trawlers got its nets out and then cane is growing on the sides of the river (Interviewee 26: 23/6/2000 Maclean).

One other commonly recounted journey is to the cane fields, indicating that while the "Big Sugar Cube" and /or Big Sugar Stalk" were abandoned as cues to a dominant civic identity in the 1960s sections of the community still sees the cane industry as part of Maclean's identity. The pathway to the cane fields is illuminated by the cane fires as one resident said:

...when they light the cane fires it is spectacular ...and when I have guests here I take them out specifically to see them and they are amazed... (Interviewee1: 24/6/2000 Maclean).

However, this same interviewee indicated that the pathway to the cane fields would be less obviously signposted when the new practice of not burning the cane is introduced. In fact, the diminishing number of visual cues to the cane fields was noted in the 1989 Maclean Shire Local Environmental Study which said " *the phasing out of the cane cutters, the derricks and the punts will remove some of the picturesque*

⁴ Henry Searle was a famous rower, who grew up on Esk Island near Iluka on the Lower Clarence. He held the World Sculling title between 1888-1889, dying tragically on his return to Australia in 1889 (McSwan, 1992)

elements from the cane harvest scene” (Maclean Shire Council, 1989). While visual cues were often cited by interviewees as important stepping stones to the cane field’s personal reminiscences of involvement with the Cane Harvest Festival were also discussed. The following quote gives an insight why the young, in particular, considered the night of the Cane Harvest Festival parade so much fun:

We used to have a basketball float in that and I remember getting into trouble from the police officers for throwing water bombs and things like that. They were the best of nights ...we used to run amuck. They had the crowning of the cane harvest queen. And I remember that there were no water bombs left in town the night of the cane festival (Interviewee 2: 20/11/2000).

While the STiA Committee has acknowledged in its publications that there are other pathways to the river and cane fields they have not chosen to incorporate them into the contemporary fabric of Maclean. Nevertheless, in their publication “Maclean the Scottish Town in Australia”(c 1999) they note that, Maclean is also “*the base of a large fishing industry*” and “*the southern gateway to the sugar industry*”. The publications even highlight the fact that Australia’s oldest working sugar mill is situated at Harwood just down the road.

Future Journeys

The research team considers that the STiA Committee has built a dominant pathway to a Scottish civic identity and that, in general, local residents and tourists are happy to take the cognitive journeys to this imagined Scotland. The immediate future of this pathway looks bright as the new Master Plan, commissioned by Maclean Shire Council, for the beautification of the main street in Maclean, incorporates the Scottish thistle into metal panels which will be used to screen areas around cafes (Figure 8).

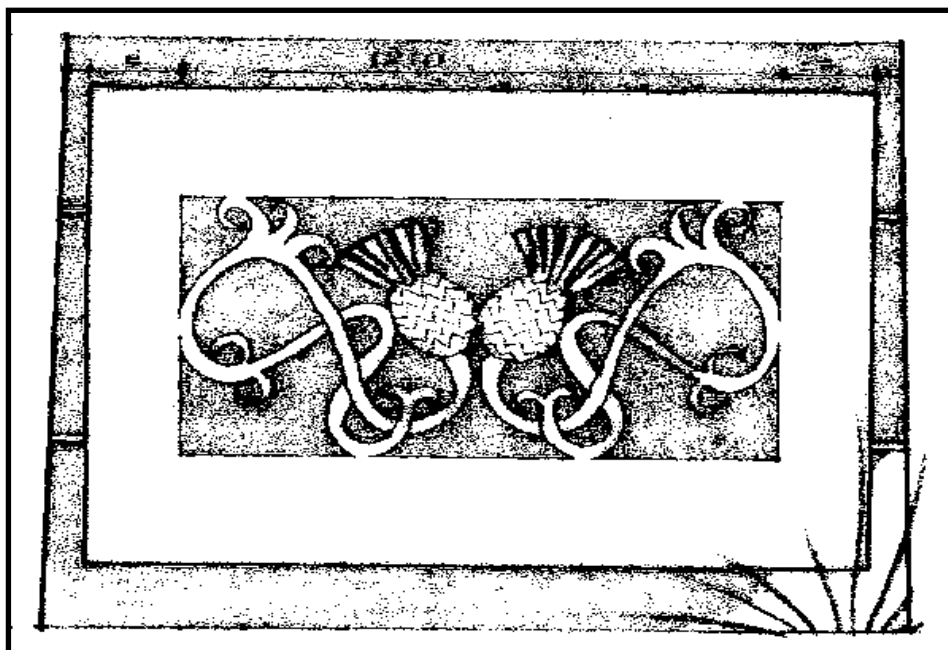


Figure 8 Thistle design, proposed and drawn by Linda Wright, for screens to be constructed as part of the “Maclean Main Street Beautification Works 2001”.
(Maclean Shire Council)

As noted above the researchers suggest that one reason why this journey has persisted is that, unlike the city of Newcastle, it is a journey built upon a past that is not “dubious”, not based upon a dirty, ugly industrial town or deprived convict settlement as Dunn *et al.* (1995) has suggested for Newcastle. It is a journey full of positive images: strong men with independent spirit still speaking the Gaelic, pretty girls playing music and dancing, unusual food, poetry, and monuments all situated in a picturesque rural countryside.

It still remains to be seen how durable these Scottish journeys will be. Much of the contrived fabric is ephemeral, paint will fade on the telegraph poles and billboards, the banners and flags will deteriorate and even places like the Scottish shop will close if a continuing supply of volunteers cannot be found. Moreover the Free Presbyterian Church has an ageing congregation hence, the influence of the ritual and the ecclesiastical in the Scottish traditions of Maclean is likely to diminish. The question remains, therefore how long will local residents be prepared to be part of the team that maintains the Scottish story? To some extent the maintenance of the journeys will depend on the strength of the link between the perceived economic prosperity of the town and the Scottish identity. Yet, it must be acknowledged that some contemporary fabric such as the cairn will persist for some time and continue to support the idea that Maclean is “The Scottish Town in Australia.”

The STiA Committee has indicated that they believe the strength of this Scottish journey will rest with a younger generation. As the opening speaker at the 2001 Highland Gathering said:

The number of young pipers, both boys and girls, and dancers and drummers here is just great to see...but we need to make sure we pass on what we know, so that they learn from us about their heritage (Coastal Views 19/4/2001).

Nevertheless our work with Maclean High School students has reflected ambivalence towards the Scottish *leitmotif* that pervades the town (Boyd *et al.*, in press b). Our study revealed that the students acknowledged the recently introduced Scottish elements in the town but that they had little knowledge of any substantive links between fabric and history. Hence it seems likely that the Scottish identity will only be retained by reputation, rather than by substance. Whereas some of the fabric will be short lived the continuing support for Maclean, the “Scottish Town in Australia”, is more likely to be based on the strength of acceptance of the idea rather than on the historical and personal reality of associations or journeys between Maclean and Scotland. In essence, the fabric will remain important as signifier. It will lose its direct link to the signified, the real tangible link with another part of the world, thereby adopting perhaps a truer value association as a signifier of the late 20th century revival of the Scottish identity. The current Maclean youth are effectively redefining the journey, taking short cuts and creating new starting points: in the first steps of their journey there are no links with Scotland, but the *a priori* acceptance of the idea of Maclean as “The Scottish Town in Australia”. So long as this acceptance is current, the journey is maintained.

Another possible pointer to the future directions of a Maclean identity and the persistence of its current “Scottishness” may be found in the candid responses of 34

adult interviewees. During short, five-minute interviews with local residents, the questions were asked What do you like about Maclean? And does Maclean have a cultural identity? Interviewees indicated that there were a variety of factors that they liked about Maclean. Eighteen responses mentioned the friendly community and fifteen responses mentioned the surrounding environment: the scenery, National Parks, the river, and the natural surroundings. Responses to the second question (Table 2) support the observation that the Scottish identity is the current dominant identity of Maclean. Yet responses also revealed that Maclean is recognised to have other identities, which have the potential to break through the current, historically based, Scottish identity to become a town reflecting the river or cane fields.

Table 2: Responses to the Question Does Maclean have a Cultural Identity?

<i>Identity: Type(s)</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Scottish	12
Scottish/ Cane	1
Cane/River	1
Scottish /Cane/River	1
Small Country Town	5
Diverse (non specific)	2
Scottish/Aboriginal	1
Scottish/German	1
Historic buildings/river	1
Fishing	3
No identity	3

The Research Journey

It must be said, that each member of the research team has, in the course of this work, indulged in his or her own journeys. In keeping with current practice (Cloke *et al.*, 1994), the study of Maclean has required some self-reflection; questioning interests and motives, prior experience and its influence on approaches and outcomes, and of personal expectations. Our individual and collective characters, have undoubtedly, played roles in our unfolding of the journeys described here and our interaction with Maclean and its journeys have undoubtedly also reshaped our future journeys of exploration (Figure 9).

At the outset our journey was triggered by the visual – the townscape, its fabric and its images⁵. While we have not commented here much on the townscape *per se*, it should be noted that following an earlier visit to Maclean the team was struck by two seemingly contradictory characteristics of the town's main street. First, as is common in many Australian rural towns with a wealthier past than present, the town has a rich vernacular architecture, with samples of styles from the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century. This richness initially seemed to us to be undervalued and of considerable potential value to those concerned with the development of civic pride⁶.

⁵ The images appeared initially to us to resemble pictures commonly found on Scottish tea towels. We later learnt that in fact the artist commissioned to paint the windsails had worked from Scottish tea towels.

⁶ During the course of the study we discovered that in fact the Maclean Shire Council had taken several initiatives that acknowledged the significance of its Main Street. In 1992 Council had commissioned



Figure 9 Maria Cotter, member of the research team, interviewing Mrs Hazel Deeming at the Maclean Services Club. (Courtesy of *Coastal Views* 29/6/2000).

The second characteristic was the collection of what seemed to be quirky Scottish images – notably the windsails and their tea towel based imagery. At this stage the team pondered the question of why the town did not look to the rich built fabric to the same extent as it seemed to look at its ephemeral imagery. We essentially began to make enquiry as to which journey the town had embarked upon.

At this stage, our own personal journeys need to be admitted. Boyd, as a new Scottish Australian, brought his own knowledge of Scotland to the study of Maclean. The contrast between the substantial, but slightly crumbling built heritage and a Scottish imagery looking remarkably like the toffee box and music-hall varieties of Scotland perpetuated for tourists in the Trossacks, Pitlochry and other popular destinations in Scotland, was, to Boyd startling and somewhat puzzling. Especially when cane fields enclose the town, reflecting a typical setting for coastal rural towns in northern New South Wales. However, working within an intellectual framework of social construction (Penrose & Jackson, 1993), Boyd's response was not to question validity or authenticity. Here was a very real expression of Scottishness, which, while not according well with Boyd's own lived experience of Scottishness, was well held and, presumably, understood as an essential and vital part of Maclean's civic identity.

the Butterworth Plan which focused on revitalising the town and its historic buildings. Since then Council has employed a Heritage Adviser, and instigated a Maclean Heritage Main street Project. This project provides some funding for works associated with restoring of facades and verandahs in the main street and the repainting of buildings in period colours (Maclean Shire Council, 1999b)

The two other team members – Gardiner and Cotter, have quite different journeys. Gardiner is a third generation Australian with a part Scottish heritage, her grandfather having arrived in Sydney from Turriff in Scotland in 1885. Brought up in Sydney during the 1950s and 1960s, Gardiner knew little about the development of civic identity in small, rural towns. Cotter, on the other hand, is a 7th generation Australian with ancestry linked both to the 2nd Fleet and free settling German vigneron of the 1860s. She has an Australian Catholic background and was brought up in several small, western New South Wales country towns in the 1970s and 1980s. In terms of scholarly traditions and backgrounds both have degrees in the physical sciences but in recent years Gardiner has been involved in the sphere of State-managed cultural heritage process and local government planning, with a focus on community and social values. Cotter is actively pursuing her archaeological studies and the construction of ideas surrounding the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage resources and brings yet another perspective to the study.

It is this combination of Australian and Scottish backgrounds, of personal experience, age differentials and scholarly tradition that coloured our approach to the issues of Scottish identity and its multi-faceted expression at Maclean. We were equally able to consider the material, social and cultural. With an *a priori* assumption that the links with Scotland – the journeys we discuss here – are real, and each of these realities may be defined in more ways than by simple historic fact. Thus we were open and, through various perspectives, able to visualise some of the various journeys articulated in Maclean. It is thus that the texts we use – the fabric, the visual, verbal, written, etc – are diverse. We consider them all to be signifiers and accept all as valid: questions of authenticity are irrelevant. This has been an important travelling rule and allowed us to explore by-ways that individually we may have been ignored.

Conclusions

Our research has given us a better understanding of the interconnections between the building of a cultural identity, contemporary fabric, memories, landscape and the cultural histories of the Maclean residents. It has taken us on a contemplative journey which has shown that the contemporary fabric of Maclean is important in the identification of civic identity but only as signposts and mementos of the journey, rather than as the central reason for the journey. In our view the cognitive journeys taken by the residents of Maclean were predominantly maintained by their personal memories and engagement with present and past events; and their ability to create a metaphor of Scotland within their physical surroundings. However several cultural processes are seen to be important.

In particular the roles of signifiers – the many contemporary fabrics – are critical to the understanding of the Scottish identity and some may have long-term significance. What they signify is, nevertheless, fluid. While, for previous and parts of the present generation, the signifiers reflect real links or cultural journeys with a real geographical Scotland, for emerging and future generations, this may be less so. Yet the signifiers remain important. If so, it is likely that this importance arises from a change in the signified: the **idea** of Maclean as “The Scottish Town in Australia” will supplant any historical fact of the past of Maclean and its community. This shift in the understanding of a history-based identity emphasises the importance of “heritage”, as a device for articulating social and cultural identity. Our journey has taken us from a

potentially limited history-based fabric of heritage, to a potentially sustainable and sustaining heritage grounded in cultural identity.

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