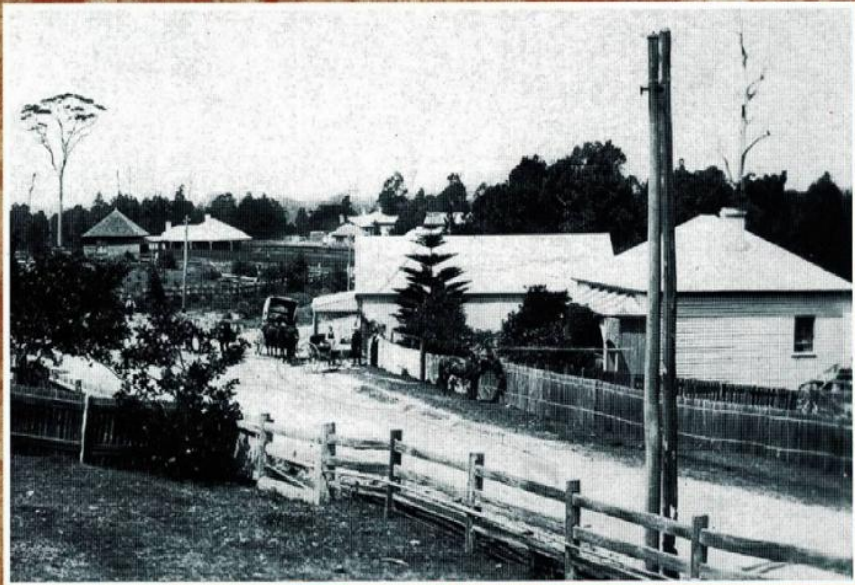


From Bullocks To Bypass

A local history of the NSW south coast village of Tomerong



Written and published
by
Margaret Blair



*From
Bullocks
to
Bypass*

A local history of the NSW
south coast village of Tomerong

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Tomerong, NSW

'From Bullocks to Bypass'

Researched, written and published by Margaret Blair, 2000.

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Dawn at Tomerong

*From Log Cabin to Wool Road,
From Bell field to Dent's Hill,
The bushland birds of Tomerong
At dawn with song do thrill.*

*A whip bird sounds a sharp alarm
For all the birds to hear
That, to the bush and o'er each farm,
Daylight is drawing near.*

*Kookaburras laughing loudly
Tell the birds to begin
Bringing forth their sweet notes proudly
With all mates joining in.*

*Night wanes, and day must follow.
From where trees and sky combine
The orb of great Apollo
Comes. Over all to shine.*

*Through trees his rays streaming
A flood of glory rare,
Gold rays of sunrise gleaming
For all the world to share.*

*The rising sun bringing forth
A day of peace for all
From the east, west, south and north,
Comes the enchanting call.*

*A moment, stop - and listen,
To nature's happy tune.
Watch the dewdrops glisten,
They disappear quite soon.*

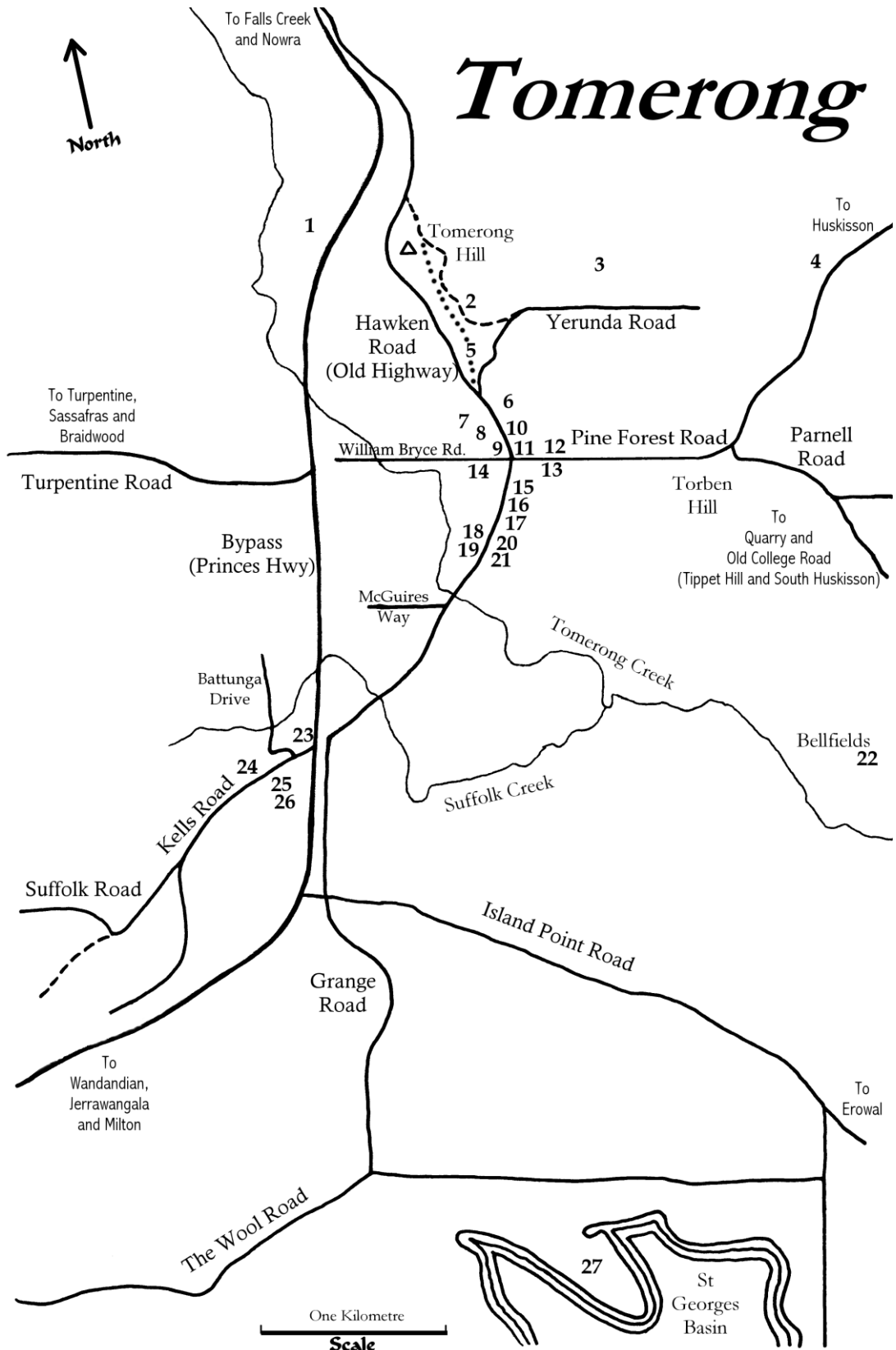
*Humans cannot match the sound
Of this alfresco singing.
Floating 'cross the frosty ground
Joy and pleasure bringing.*

*The currawongs and magpies
And parrots make their call:
Then from secluded earth mounds
The lyre birds mimic all.*

Key to Map

See the text for more precise details on buildings, institutions and sites.

1.	Old sandstone quarry	In use 1917	
2.	Main South Coast Road	c.1892-1929	
3.	Axe Handle Factory site	1919-1924	
4.	General cemetery	Gazetted 1890	
5.	Shoalhaven to Ulladulla Road	c.1855-1892	
6.	Northern cricket pitch site	c.1883-1951	
7.	Old racecourse site	c.1858-1904	
8.	Sawmill site	c.1951-1971	
9.	General Store	c.1882-2000	
10.	Butcher's/Fruit & Veg Shop	c.1930- / c.1960	
11.	Hotel and Bakery site	1857-1911, c.1912-1967	
12.	Private cemetery	c.1861-1890?	
13.	Shire Engineer's house	1908-	
14.	Boat building yard	c.1948-1969	
15.	Shire Clerk's house 'Bundor'	1908-	
16.	Clyde Shire Chamber's site	1908-c.1963	
17.	Post Office	1907-	(Established 1862)
18.	School of Arts	1926	
19.	Bush Fire Brigade	1991	(Established 1947)
20.	School	1862-	
21.	Church buildings	1887	(Established 1877)
22.	Quarry	1975	
23.	Creamery site	1895-1903	
24.	Sawmill sites	1909-1980s	
25.	Racecourse site	c.1944	
26.	Cricket pitch	1953	
27.	Pelican Point Park	1901	



Foreword

Some months ago when I received an invitation from Margaret Blair to write the foreword to her book on Tomerong history, 'From Bullocks to Bypass', I felt it was one of the greatest things I had ever experienced and that feeling has not waned.

My first reaction was, Why me? and then I thought; I had driven a bullock team for the first thirteen years of my working life and had owned, for over thirty years previously, a 177acre portion of land, which has been partly absorbed by the bypass. At one time I was one of the larger landowners in the area, holding in excess of 1200 acres. I, together with all my siblings attended school at Tomerong, as had all my nine children. Also I was fortunate to be able to take an active executive role in most organisations in the village. In all I have lived over 70 years in the district, over 50 of those at Tomerong. Hence, I came to answer the question, Why me? by realising that my life story is a small part of the story of Tomerong.

Margaret and her husband Ray were married in the 1980s and built their home in Tomerong. They have two children, Lisa and Daniel, who attend Tomerong Public School and at this busy stage of her life Margaret, with strong support from Ray, decided to collate and write the history of Tomerong.

To record history as it happens is quite an undertaking, but to delve back a century or so is a mammoth task. Margaret has spared no effort in years of research, interviews, travelling and expense to bring together this story. This book will be of intense interest to people living in Tomerong, to those who have lived there, or have friends or relatives who have lived or had some interest in the area and its surrounds. It provides much detail of the different facets of life pursued over the years at Tomerong and is a fine example of how proper research can result in a very readable story. The photographs or pictures used give a real 'true to life' insight into the customs and living conditions of the various generations. Such a book will be an education for future generations and would be an asset for any public or private library.

The first chapter, Geography, sets the scene for the history of the region. Apparently over 30 archaeological sites were found around Tomerong, while the size of the huge trees, the discovery of coal over 100 years ago and the origin of the name Currumbene captures the reader's curiosity.

Those readers, whose ancestors lived in, and shaped the early happenings of the district, will find great appeal and interest in the chapter on land. Apparently the shortage of surveyors created some problems. Many of the family names we know today were among the early settlers of the land and a number of their family trees have been well researched and recorded.

Naturally the roads story is one of concern for every generation – never quite adequate for the day on hand. The building of roads plays an integral part in the development of an area and so, a community, and in the early days, wet weather caused enormous problems. The story of the roads from the early days up to the bypass is full of interest.

The industry and commerce section explains the reality of the farming, milling and associated offshoot history. It is like an encyclopaedia of answers for example who owned the store after Mr ?, when did that mill start operating? How was farming conducted? The progress and development of industry at Tomerong, particularly the timber industry, brings to mind the immense cycle from axe to chainsaw, bullocks to crawler tractors, steam engines to powerful electric motors, wood stove to microwave.

I suppose 'School Days' will attract the special attention of all readers. Somehow those years in each of our lives come back to us with different memories from time to time. It seemed to me that many of the early teachers were also landowners as their names can be seen on most of the land maps of Tomerong and surrounds. While much emphasis is placed on the need for a good education in today's society, it is quite evident that many early residents, some of whom were well educated, also regarded education with high priority.

Most of the Presbyterians around Nowra are familiar with the name of Rev. W Grant so it is of interest to read that he conducted the first service in the Tomerong Church Hall in 1877 and the first service in the Tomerong Union Church in 1887. Many activities of church interest, through to the late 1900s, are described in the book. The division in the church between the Good Templars and

others makes for some very interesting reading.

Margaret has a special talent for communicating with people of all ages and of appreciating the diversity of the ways of life of those she interviews. Her description of the various social and sporting activities of this little village is full of personalities and anecdotes. She really achieves a closeness between the reader and those who were actively involved in the sporting and social life of Tomerong. From the Debating Societies of the late 1800s to the woodchopping of today, all has been thoroughly researched with a number of actual results from early cricket matches even included.

I often told each of my family to try to be an ordinary person and, if they tried hard enough, they may become an extraordinary person. Well, here in Margaret Blair, we have an extraordinary person with a talent that would be hard to equal, displaying facts with intelligence, accuracy and compassionate warmth in this comprehensive picture of the history of Tomerong.

Ian McKinnon
September 2000

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Preface

To any modern-day visitor Tomerong must appear to be a quiet village slightly off the beaten track close to Shoalhaven's growth areas. The village hides its history well. At one stage or another, Tomerong was the commercial and civic centre for the area south of Falls Creek, north of Milton and east to the Bay. For those living on the Bay, and places west, mail was collected and supplies were obtained in the village. This was where they worshipped, where their children attended school, where they voted, and where they could obtain refreshment and land transport to places further afield. The growth of villages along the Bay and around St Georges Basin would occur as Tomerong lost its importance and became the tranquil place we know and love today.

Tomerong, in my childhood, was just a place we passed through on the way to Nowra or Sydney. I came to live here in 1983 and, like most, have been involved in various community organisations. It was during the time that I was Secretary of the School of Arts, which was approaching its 70th birthday, that I came to realise that no published account of the history of the village was available, and other histories of the Shoalhaven contained little mention of Tomerong. Hence this book.

When I first commenced researching this work over five years ago I had no idea the task would be so large. Although a small community, we have a long and interesting history and whilst I have no family connections to the area sometimes the research has been so intense that I feel I know many of the early settlers better than some of the present inhabitants. One most pleasing aspect has been the reaction of the people I have interviewed. They have accepted me into their homes like one of their own and provided detailed information and encouragement. Their enthusiasm and assistance made the task of research much easier and more enjoyable.

I have endeavoured to accurately and comprehensively portray the history of Tomerong. Like any local history, its compilation is restricted to what has been recorded and what has been remembered. If there is one regret, it is that this compilation was not undertaken earlier. Whilst public records are more easily accessed than ever before, I have no doubt that many relevant memories have been lost as those who held them have passed on. Nevertheless, I feel our early pioneers would be happy with the result. Hopefully this publication will also spur on others to ensure that family and local history is recorded and preserved for future generations.

After reading the text one may be forgiven for thinking that women did not play a significant role in the development of the area. This is far from the situation. Women were important contributors but were often unpaid and sometimes unseen workers. As well as running the household they would act as nurses and midwives. In the event of social gatherings they were behind-the-scene organisers providing suppers and decorations. They taught without remuneration, ran local charitable institutions, and often continued to run the husband's business after his death. Whilst little information was recorded, their contribution must not be underestimated.

If this book offends anyone then this was not my intention. Every endeavour has been made to ensure that the information provided is correct by verifying verbal accounts with primary sources. As the subject matter concerns a very specific area, in many cases no primary records exist. Consequently a substantial reliance has been placed on secondary sources such as newspaper reports, interviews and published reference works. Where relevant, every effort has been made to trace the original source material contained in this book for copyright permission. Where unsuccessful, I would be pleased to hear from any author/publisher to rectify any omission.

I have not ceased collecting information. If this account spurs your memory, if you come across some old photographs, indeed, if anything is discovered which could add to our history please contact me. This is also true of family history. Whilst I have not concentrated on family history, the genealogical aspects of a small settlement cannot be ignored. I have much data on the local families and I intend to continue this research, although at a more comfortable pace. I have also obtained copies of many local photographs. Unfortunately it has not been possible to display all of these in this book. However, if sufficient interest is shown, and copyright permission is obtained, it may be possible to produce a pictorial history book of Tomerong.

Some technicalities in the text require explanation. I have deliberately reproduced historical

quotations complete with any spelling and grammatical errors and without any 'sic' remarks (the perception of correct spelling and grammar also varies with history). The inclusion of these quotations, I feel, provides a personal connection with the past and helps to provide interest in what could otherwise be simply a chronological reproduction of historical facts. With respect to geographical names I have used the modern spelling unless quoted from the original source. Even Tomerong was spelt five different ways (through belief or error) before its spelling was standardised. This is understandable as not all of its early inhabitants could read or write and the mix of accents would not have helped. Consequently, the same place name, where quoted, may be spelt different ways in the text. Examples include Bherwerre, Bherewarrie, Jerrawangala, Jeniwangalie, and Jerouangla. In each case the true name is identifiable.

The end of each chapter includes a comprehensive list of sources, which are referenced in the text by a superscript numeral at the end of most paragraphs. Most paragraphs have been compiled from more than one source. Where a paragraph is not referenced it can be assumed, in most cases, that the source or sources are the same as the next referenced paragraph, or is from one or more of the primary references identified in the notes.

The reasons for the punctilious referencing of sources are varied. For one, I have not lived this history and have had to rely on mainly documented evidence and interviews, but not even our oldest resident has been an adult for much more than one third of the era since settlement. As this history is very localised it is unlikely that a project such as this will ever be undertaken again. The list of sources will enable those who wish to conduct further research (eg. family history), or those who dispute my findings, to locate the source for further information. If anyone finds any errors I would be grateful to receive advice.

Lastly, I hope you enjoy reading *'From Bullocks to Bypass'* and may it provide you as much interest as it has given me in researching and compiling.

Margaret Blair
Tomerong
22 October 2000

Acknowledgments

I have many people to thank for their contributions and support in preparing this history. If I have missed any person then I sincerely apologise. First and foremost I would like to express my wholehearted appreciation to my wonderful soul mate and friend, my husband. Ray has been, at times, my severest critic and at all times my constant source of assistance, encouragement and inspiration. My children also deserve much credit for their patience and understanding over the last five years. Secondly, my sincere appreciation goes to Robert Grant and Ian McKinnon. Rob tirelessly proofread the manuscripts and provided valuable advice and probing questions that helped to remove some of the rough edges. If there are any remaining mistakes these are likely to be from my tinkering post proofreading. Ian, and his wife Theresa, have been most supportive. Ian's unquestioning enthusiasm for the project and his delight in preparing the foreword was a further source of inspiration.

A personal thanks is extended to the following who have provided valuable input and support: John Abernethy, Audrey Anderson, Ken Barham, Phillip & Jeanette Bailey, Chris Boyd (Dept. of Education & Training), Lesley Broomfield, Beryl Bryce, Colin & Pam Bryce, Tanya Bryce, Alan Clark (Shoalhaven Historical Society), Neil Dallinger, Robert Daly, Leith Davis, Toby Davis, Gail Dawson, Gerry Eastgate, Margaret Edler, John Flett and Staff (Urban Projects' Planner- Shoalhaven Local Heritage Assistance Fund), Robyn Florance (Shoalhaven Historical Society), Dorothy Gillis, Geoff Hadrill (Reference Library - Shoalhaven City Council), Sue Harlum, Meg Healey, John Herbert, Dulcie & Norman Hood, Reg & Merle Ison, Antony Ivansmith, Steve Johnson, Joan Judd, George Jones, Charlie Kells, June Kemp, Lesley & Roger Kerlake, Jennifer Kyte, Shirley Laird (Pyree Family History Centre), Brian Lefoe (NSW RTA), Joy Linsley, David McGuire, Jean McGuire, Ken & Jean McGuire, Lorna McGuire, Nancy McGuire, Bill & Shirley McKinnon, Ron & Ruth McKinnon, Steve McKinnon, Bob McLean (Shoalhaven City Council), Wes MacPherson (NSW CALM), Jan Malloy (NSW RTA), Mary McPherson (Dept. of Education & Training), Margaret Mathie, June Milne, Bindi Morgan, John Morris (and Public School staff), Arthur Murray, Wayne Norris, Lindsay Parnell, Keith Parnell, Ken & Natalie Parnell, Maree Patane, John M Pepper, Mervyn & Rita Pepper, Evelyn Pettigrew, Peter Price (Allen, Price & Associates), Don Ruming, Helen Ruttley (Shoalhaven Historical Society), Betty Schutz, Chris Schutz, Colin Schutz, Doug Schutz, Dulcie Schutz, Bill Simpkin, Win Sinclair, Jennifer Smith, Trevor Smith, Valerie Smith, Henry Suffolk, Jim Suffolk, Lorraine Taylor, Phillip Vincent, Jack Wallace, Myra Walsh, Selwyn Watt, Annie Watt, Inez Wray, Jason Wikman (HMAS Albatross Met. Section), Shirley Wood (Australian Red Cross, NSW), Richard Woods (Deputy Fire Control Officer Shoalhaven Council), Gary & Glad Worthy and Dick Young.

My thanks also to the staff of the following organisations who have provided patience, assistance and, in some cases, copyright approval: Australia Post, Australian Archives - Canberra, Australian Archives - Chester Hill, Australian Copyright Council, Australian War Memorial, IP Australia - Patent Office, National Library of Australia, NSW Land Titles Office, NSW Department of Information Technology and Management - Land Information Centre, NSW Department of Land & Water Conservation - Nowra District Office, NSW Roads & Traffic Authority - Wollongong, NSW Department of Education & Training, NSW State Archives - The Rocks, NSW State Archives - Kingswood, Pyree Family History Centre, Royal Australian Historical Society, Shoalhaven City Library, Shoalhaven Historical Society, State Forests of NSW, The Australian Red Cross and The State Library of NSW.

Lastly, I would like to thank those volunteers who have assisted in organising the book launch. Whilst more names will undoubtedly be added to the list, the helpers have included (where not mentioned above): Michelle and Bruce Drover, Fay Hay, Jenny Blackmore, David Blair, and members of the Rural Fire Service, the P&C Association, and the School of Arts. Thank you Tomerong!

Abbreviations

References that are commonly used have been abbreviated in the notes at the end of each chapter as follows:

AONSW	Archives of New South Wales	P&C	P&C Minutes or Corr.
AWM	Australian War Memorial	S&NN	Shoalhaven & Nowra News
CSM	Clyde Shire Minutes	SCR	South Coast Register
IM	Illawarra Mercury	SCM	School Council Minutes
KI	Kiama Independent	SN	Shoalhaven News
NAA	National Archives of Australia	SHS	Shoalhaven Historical Society
NL	News or Nowra Leader	ST	Shoalhaven Telegraph
NN	Nowra News		

Without providing an encyclopaedic list of imperial to metric conversions, the following data may be helpful in understanding some of the values given in the text.

1' (foot)	=	12" (inches)	=	30.5 cm
1 yard	=	3 feet	=	0.914 m
1 rod	=	1 perch	=	5.5 yards = 5.03 m
1 chain	=	22 yards	=	66 feet = 20.117 m
1 mile	=	1760 yards	=	1.61 km
1 super foot	=	12" x 12" x 1"		
100 super foot	~	12' log of 12 ^π diameter		
1 rood	=	40 square rods	=	¼ acre
1 acre	=	4 roods	=	0.405 ha
1lb (pound)			=	454 g
1 gallon			=	4.55 litres
1d (penny)			=	0.83 cents
1s (shilling)	=	12 pence	=	10 cents
£1 (pound)	=	20 shillings	=	\$2
£1-1 s (guinea)			=	\$2-10

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For more information on Tomerong's History go to

<https://tomerong.home.exetel.com.au/history/>

or email

tomerongpast@gmail.com

