

# Transport

**'Currajong' has seen enormous changes in transport since it was built in 1888.**

## **Before the motor car and aeroplane**

The horse was the most common means of transport when 'Currajong' was built. Drays drawn by teams of horses or bullocks were used for hauling heavy loads. Coaches pulled by 4 or 5 horses carried people and mail. Sulkies, spring carts and other light vehicles pulled by one or two horses were used for private transport.

When the Mackenzie family moved into 'Currajong' in 1888, Mr Mackenzie might have ridden to work at the bank on horseback, driven a sulky pulled by a

horse, or he could have walked up to Charters Towers Road and caught a horse bus. Horse buses then ran regularly from the Rising Sun to the wharves in east Flinders Street. If he needed a cab (or we now say 'taxi'), there were a number of horse-drawn Brougham cabs.

To go to school, the Mackenzie children would have walked through the Endymion Lagoons area (now Anderson Park) to the tiny single-storeyed timber Mundingburra School. To visit their grandparents on the Herbert River or in Toowoomba, the children



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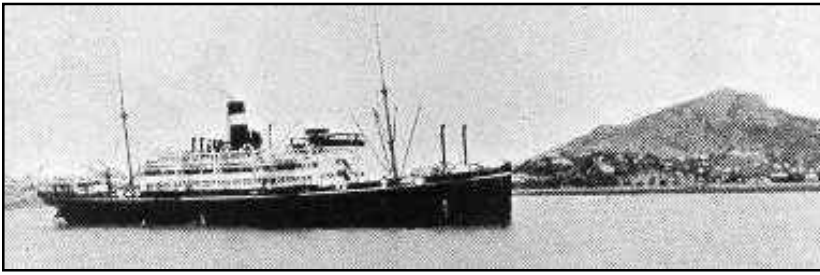
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Horse-drawn drays on Harvey Range



Coastal steamer,  
Townsville harbour

would have travelled by one of the small coastal steamers that plied from Townsville to the smaller ports in the north, or on one of the steamers that voyaged regularly to southern ports.

### Rail travel

The only railway in 1888 was the Great Northern Railway that ran to Ravenswood, Charters Towers or Hughenden. There was no railway along the coast between Brisbane and Townsville until December 1923.

### Shipping through Townsville port

All supplies not grown or made in the north, and also the mail, were brought to Townsville by ship. The goods were unloaded and stored in warehouses of firms such as Burns Philp & Co., Aplin, Brown & Co. and Brodziak & Rodgers — you can still

Horse-drawn vehicles,  
Flinders St, about 1924



see the premises of these firms in Flinders Street today.

Goods from the warehouses were loaded on to the railway for delivery to other towns on the rail lines, or onto small steamers for shipping to other coastal ports.

For places not served by the railway or coastal ports, goods were loaded on to drays drawn by teams of horses or bullocks and transported by road.

In 1901, when Mrs Hunt was living in 'Currajong', a short railway line was built from Townsville to Ayr to carry sugar from the Burdekin area to Townsville port. But northern ports were still served by coastal steamers until the railway line from Townsville to Cairns opened in 1924. Even then, some goods were still conveyed by coastal steamers until the 1950s.

### Overseas travel

When Mr and Mrs Hunt returned to England before 1900 for a holiday, they took one of the many international passenger steamers that called regularly at Townsville. At that time ships used the route via Torres Strait and the East Indies (now called Indonesia) to Singapore; then on to Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka), and through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea to England.

However, by 1920 this route was not used so much. International steamships sailed from Sydney via southern ports to Fremantle, and thence via South Africa or the Suez Canal. If Townsville passengers



wished to visit England and Europe, they took the coastal steamer to Sydney, and then transferred to an overseas passenger liner. After 1923 they could travel by train from Townsville to Sydney, but coastal vessels continued to provide passenger services in the 1940s –even after World War II.



Mr Page's De Dion, 1901

### The age of the motor car

In 1901 Mr Page introduced the first motor car, a De Dion, to Townsville. By that time the bicycle had become a popular mode of transport. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century horses were used less, though it was some years before the motor car became the common vehicle for transport.

Early biplane aircraft at Townsville, about 1920

The first motor buses arrived in 1912. By then many of the wealthier people had motor cars, but Mrs Hunt never owned a car at 'Currajong'. She preferred to hire a car and chauffeur. It was not until the era of the Fanning and Ferguson families in the 1920s and 30s that the owners of 'Currajong' had cars. During World War II large numbers of military vehicles were stationed around 'Currajong'.

### Air travel

The first aeroplane to visit Townsville landed at Cluden Racecourse in 1913. But it was nearly twenty more years before aeroplanes were used regularly for transport.

By 1930 regular flights connected Townsville with Brisbane. In August 1930, after Mr and Mrs Fanning left 'Currajong', their daughter Mary (the late Mrs Woolrych) travelled by air with her baby son Geoffrey to visit his grandparents. At that time he was the youngest air passenger from north Queensland.



### By flying boat to England

By 1938 Townsville had become a port of call on the international flying boat route from London to Sydney.

Qantas Empire Airways (as QANTAS was then known) operated a fleet of flying boats, providing a regular service between Sydney and Singapore, where passengers transferred to Imperial Airways (now British Airways) for the rest of the flight to England. So Townsville had an international airport long before the present international terminal was built.

The flying boats landed in the harbour and taxied into Ross Creek

where the passengers were brought ashore by launch to a landing near the end of The Strand.

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So 'Currajong' takes us from the age of horse- and bullock-drawn drays, and early steam trains and steamers, to aeroplanes.

On its present site great ore trains drawn by 3000 hp diesel engines pass nearby, all types of modern motor cars pass along the roads, and jet-powered aircraft soar overhead.

In only a century the old house has witnessed truly astonishing changes.

Refuelling an Imperial Airways flying boat in Townsville harbour, about 1939

