

# Noccundra

Noccundra township is located 142 km west of Thargomindah on the banks of the Wilson River and contained within the pastoral holding of Nockatunga Station. The first Hotel in Noccundra was built around 1860. This building burned down, which was a common fate of early western Pubs. Interestingly, the Noccundra Hotel was established to service the local stations, to ensure their stockmen did not wander further afield into town. It was much later that it became a Cobb & Co stop. It is not unusual to have staff from the surrounding Oil and Gas fields staying in on site accommodation, nor is it unusual to see multiple road trains pulled up outside with their drivers' popping in for a quick meal. What can be a little off putting though is seeing a number of light aircraft parked beside the hotel, at the end of the airstrip.

[http://www.austracks.com.au/journal\\_entry/noccundra/](http://www.austracks.com.au/journal_entry/noccundra/)

The present Hotel was built in 1882 of sandstone, quarried from Mt Pool in New South Wales, and transported by Camel Train. The Noccundra Hotel is all that survives of the town today, and was listed by the National Trust in 1977. Some of the interesting characteristics of the building include the Gidgee timber used in the verandah, too hard to put nails into, so the roof is wired together. Local legend will have you believe the very low door frames were built to stop drunk stockmen from riding their horses into the bar, however, it is more likely they were built this way in a bid to control the

temperature inside the building.

The township of Noccundra was surveyed on the 6th August 1889, however the township never really came into being. The original Town Plan shows five streets – Wilson, Norman, Albert (named for Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband), Berteela, and Thungo. Wilson Street is now the Highway heading south to connect with the Silver City Highway in New South Wales. Thungo Street has disappeared, however Berteela, and Albert Streets, remnants of the Victorian era, are still in use today. The Town had forty-two, half-acre blocks, although three were resumed when the new Highway was built.

Much of the very old history of the town has been lost, however the current publican has a number of fascinating photo albums and scrap books of the area containing the more recent history.

The Grey Range forms a water-shed between the Wilson and the Bulloo Rivers. A large waterhole exists within the Wilson River adjacent to the Noccundra Hotel, and is referred to as the Noccundra Waterhole. South-west of Noccundra Waterhole, the course of the Wilson River spreads out, on its way across the plains. Today the Wilson River is a well-known fishing spot where Golden Perch (Yellow Belly), freshwater Catfish, and



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Spangled and Silver Perch can be caught. Yabbies are plentiful during the winter months of May to August.

Wilson River is a tributary of Cooper Creek. The River passes through the land belonging to Nockatunga Station, which was originally settled by the Drynan brothers in 1868. There is a complex relationship between stock movement, the artificial provision of water, and the development of the transport routes and settlement patterns in Outback regions. Historical and modern routes through the arid pastoral districts of Australia were dependent on the availability of water. The extensive system of travelling stock routes in western Queensland was made feasible by the discovery of water. Consequently, the Wilson River played a very large part in the settlement of the area. During the time of early exploration and settlement, the Wilson River Aboriginal Tribe, known as the Nockaburrawarry, lived in the area.

Throughout the year, Noccundra plays host to two major events, a campdraft, rodeo and gymkhana in October.

To contact the Noccundra Hotel:  
(07) 4655 4317

Andrew Hume's ill fated expedition, to rescue long term survivors of Leichhardt's 1848 expedition, perished of thirst to the west of Noccundra. Today a memorial to Hume is on the western side of the hotel.

An excerpt from <http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Hume-177>

*DEATH OF HUME. THE EXPLORER. The Sydney Daily Telegraph of 12th Sept. says : — Some fresh and interesting light has just been thrown upon the mystery enshrouding the death of the explorer Andrew Hume. Mr. C. Armand Want has kindly called at our office and supplied the following particulars of how he found Hume's remains. The explorer was known to have started on the last journey from a station belonging to Mr. Hughes at Hooktonga, and thence Mr. Want proceeded on his search for him. The explorer would seem then to have taken a road to the right, in the direction of Wilson's Creek, and towards the mountains thereabout, forming the watershed of the district. He appears to have followed the creek about eighty miles, and then to have crossed at a point about midway between Nickollera and Nickondra. On one side of this stream were several waterholes, and during the route taken the explorer was seldom more than a mile from a watercourse, but unhappily he was not on the proper side of the stream to meet with it. Mr. Thompson, a member of Hume's party, was aware of the explorer's position, and he imparted the information to Mr. Want, who managed to save his life at Nockaburrowa, and at this time Mr. O'Hare was of the party. On gaining this information, Mr. Want immediately started in search of the explorer, accompanied by his youthful but experienced black tracker, Captain. With him were also Mr. Elbury, of JStockalonga, and Mr. Dunn, Inspector of Police at Thargaminda. All went out together, but failed to distinguish the footsteps of the lost man from the native tracks. Eventually, however, the long experience of Mr. Want had stood him in good stead, and he succeeded in getting upon the path which Hume had evidently taken. It would seem that the explorer had no idea of his situation, and that he had crossed the Wilson while searching for it, and then proceeded eighteen or twenty miles to the Wippo Creek. The whole journey was made in the wrong direction, and constantly from, and not towards water, from which at times Hume cannot have been more than a quarter of a mile away. In his desperation the explorer was reduced to dire distress, and he had to kill his horse to slake his raging thirst. He seems to have taken off his boots, hence the difficulty of finding his tracks, and also his clothes. After a prolonged march Mr. Want found the explorer dead underneath a gicrgio tree, life apparently having been extinct only a very few hours.*



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### **The Old Noccundra Store**

To the west of the Hotel, beside the Amenities Block lies the stone ruins of the old Store. The Store was established at Noccundra by 1891, and was run by James MacColl, who supplied goods to the surrounding Stations. The supplies were purchased from Adelaide, and the goods were then freighted from Adelaide to Cockburn by Rail, and from Cockburn were sent north to Noccundra by Camel Train. The Camel Train was owned by Nockatunga Station and driven by a well-known Afghan named Sedeek Balooch.

The Store also served as a Post Office. A copy of an Order by James MacColl on 24th April 1891 requests:

2 Tons of Flour  
1 Ton of Fine Salt  
½ Dozen Cases of Tomato Sauce  
½ Dozen Cases of Mixed Jams

All of these supplies came from Adelaide by rail, and then Camel Train.

Sometime after 1936, the Public Bar was moved from the Main Hotel building and housed in the old Store. This arrangement was still in place in 1960. However, the Public Bar was back within the premises of the main Hotel building by 1974.

In 1923, the Store was made into a cottage for the daughter of William Crouch, Isobel, when she

married. William and Lena Crouch raised nine children at Noccundra, after arriving here in 1909. Three of these children were born in a back room of the Hotel. The Old Store building has since lost its roof and the walls have collapsed and crumbled.

### **The History of Noccundra Police Station**

Two Police Constables were removed from the Station of Nockatunga to the township at Noccundra in the Warrego District on 1st May 1895 and resided in rented premises. The Noccundra Police Station, in the rented premises, was officially opened on 23rd May 1895. The combined Police Station/Barracks was erected in November 1899. The building was constructed out of hardwood and had a galvanized iron roof. It contained a Living room, Constables room, Kitchen, and a Cell. Separate from the Station was a Tracker's hut, Saddle room, and two Tents. The cost for the building was £165.7.10 (one hundred and sixty five pounds, seven shillings and ten pence).

The site of the Station covered two acres, and the separate Police Paddock covered 800 acres. The Paddock was unfenced and watered permanently by the Wilson River. The only communication available was by Coach. Noccundra Police Station closed on 1st January 1961. At the time of closure the following was written by the Police Inspector:

"Noccundra is the most isolated station in this district. It is situated 381 road miles south-west of Charleville and joins Thargomindah to the east, Eromanga to the north-west, and to the west, it takes in the South Australian border, a distance of 185 miles away and the New South Wales border, a distance of 137 miles to the south.

It has a population of five adults and one child in the township, and the population of the division is said to be about 180. There are three buildings in the township, namely the police station, a dance hall and one hotel. The Flying Doctor from Charleville calls once each month and apart from this service there are no other amenities available. The township depends on Nockatunga Station for its supply of stores and beef. Bread is home made and vegetable is available during the winter months.

There are twelve holdings, which carry 36,000 head of cattle and 2,000 horses. There is no other industry apart from grazing. The annual rainfall is about seven inches, but extreme drought conditions prevail at the present time. The area of the division is 20,000 square miles.

Signed: Inspector of Police"



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