

# Hungerford

**The tiny border town made famous by Henry Lawson's short story.**

*'One of the hungriest cleared roads in New South Wales runs to within a couple of miles of Hungerford, and stops there; then you strike through the scrub to the town. There is no distant prospect of Hungerford - you don't see the town till you are quite close to it, and then two or three white-washed galvanised-iron roofs start out of the mulga.*

*'They say that a past Ministry commenced to clear the road from Bourke, under the impression that Hungerford was an important place, and went on, with the blindness peculiar to governments, till they got to within two miles of the town. Then they ran short of rum and rations, and sent a man on to get them, and make inquiries. The member never came back, and two more were sent to find him - or Hungerford. Three days later the two returned in an exhausted condition, and submitted a motion of want-of-confidence, which was lost. Then the whole House went on and was lost also. Strange to relate, that Government was never missed.*

*'However, we found Hungerford and camped there for a day. The town is right on the Queensland border, and an interprovincial rabbit-proof fence - with rabbits on both sides of it - runs across the main street...*

*'Hungerford consists of two houses and a humpy in New South Wales, and five houses in Queensland. Characteristically enough, both the pubs are in Queensland. We got a glass of sour yeast at one and paid sixpence for it - we had asked for English ale.*

*'The post office is in New South Wales, and the police-barracks in Bananaland. The police cannot do anything if there's a row going on across the street in New South Wales, except to send to Brisbane and have an extradition warrant applied for; and they don't do much if there's a row in Queensland. Most of the rows are across the border, where the pubs are.'*

This extract from Henry Lawson's famous sketch 'Hungerford' which appeared in *While the Billy Boils* (published in 1896) was written after Lawson had visited the town in the summer of 1892-1893. Today the sketch is probably this tiny town's one claim to fame.

Not much has changed since this short story was penned... the road from Hungerford to Thargomindah however is now a



well maintained gravel road, and there is only one pub left in Queensland.

Hungerford is located 164 km south of Thargomindah, near the Paroo River on the Queensland/New South Wales Border, and still has a Border Gate, which doubles as the Wild Dog/Dingo Barrier Fence.

The population of Hungerford fluctuates, however the town currently has approximately ten residents.

The town gets its name from Irish pioneer pastoralist, Thomas Hungerford who settled the area.

The Royal Mail Hotel was established in 1873, and from 1875 was a Staging Post for Cobb & Co Coaches. The Hotel was constructed of corrugated iron, which was transported over 200 km from New South Wales on bush tracks. It is the original building, which is still in use to this day.

The Royal Mail was originally a Cobb & Co Staging Post where weary horses and travellers gained some respite from the road, heat and infrequent floods. The Royal Mail, as it was in the past, is still a meeting place for the locals, families, shearers, stockmen, and a resting place for travellers who all enjoy the homely,

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unsophisticated, friendly feel of this iconic Outback Pub. Many visitors use the Royal Mail Hotel as a base for visits to the Currawinya National Park.

Accommodation is available at the Royal Mail Hotel, and the town also has a Caravan Park and a sealed Airstrip. Every second year, Hungerford hosts the Best Field Day in South West Queensland and North West New South Wales. With stall operators coming from as far away as Toowoomba and Dubbo to show their wares.

However, the towns' premier event, held in October each year is the sports day. A horse and motorbike gymkhana with participants travelling from around Queensland and New South Wales. Like so many Outback events, it is an event that needs to be seen to be believed.

Hungerford is not generally seen as a destination in its own right, more as a community to pass through on your way somewhere else...it is half way between Bourke and Thargomindah on the Dowling Track, but is also part of an interesting loop from Cunnamulla, through Currawinya National Park and north to Thargomindah. These roads are generally well maintained gravel, however it is worth checking road conditions before you venture out.

As with many country towns, each person plays many roles. In Hungerford, the Publican also doubles as the Postie...

If you are coming through, contact the Hotel on  
(07) 4655 4093

### **Currawinya National Park**

Currawinya National Park, just 67 km from Hungerford was gazetted in 1991. This 151,300 hectare park

features two large bodies of water - Lake Numalla, freshwater, and Lake Wyara, a salt lake. Currawinya National Park is a very popular birdwatching area and includes the rare freckled duck and many other species.

Relics of the pastoral occupation since the 1860s are scattered throughout the park. The old Caiwarro Homestead site is of particular interest to heritage enthusiasts. Here the remains of numerous buildings, machinery and a levee bank create a picture of life in the past.

The Greater Bilby has disappeared from nearly 90% of its former range in Queensland. An ambitious project to re-introduce the bilby to parts of its former range is being conducted within the Bulloo Shire at Currawinya National Park.

Fishing is permitted along the Paroo River at Hungerford and at Currawinya National Park, only a few kilometres from Hungerford.

Bait sourced from the area must be used; no bait is to be brought into the area.

Please see ranger staff at the Currawinya National Park for information regarding fishing in the national park.

More information on Currawinya National Park can be found at;

<http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks/currawinya/>



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