

Penguin's Story

History tells that Abel Jans Tasman was the first European to visit Tasmania, in 1642, naming it Van Diemen's Land after the governor general of the Dutch East Indies. 1856 saw it officially renamed Tasmania.

But it wasn't till 1803 that it was first settled, as a convict colony on the Derwent River at Risdon. This followed very closely upon expeditions to the island from both English and French interests.

Roughly heart-shaped, the 68000 square kilometre island, one-third the size of Victoria, is 296km long and 70-315km wide. Almost 40% of the land mass is protected as national parks and reserves with half of this World Heritage Listed.

Tasmania is home to half a million people where today our major industries are mining, agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, forestry and tourism.

Penguin was so named because of its abundance of little penguins and was one of the last North West districts to be settled. Its first land was purchased in 1861 with the town gazetted in 1875. Trade began when the wharf was built in 1870 making Penguin a significant port town shipping timber across to Victoria's gold rush, and later minerals. Penguin's beachside silver mine opened in 1870 but failed soon after as did Neptune mine.

The arrival of rail in 1901 wrought a sudden decline in shipping. Passenger rail ceased in 1978 though daily freight rail from Burnie continues.

1907 saw our first shire council elected, which lasted till 1993 when it merged with Ulverstone creating our now Central Coast Council. The electricity was turned on in 1927.

The Great War drew 107 from our small population of 1124 of which 26 never returned. A remarkable contribution.

The Big Penguin was unveiled in 1975, exactly a century after our town was proclaimed.

Nowadays there's a quirkiness about our little seaside town of about 3500 people given its unique name. Tourism is vibrant and we strive to make your stopover welcoming. There is so much to see and do in our neck of the woods, with a story to be told around every corner. Just where will our stories take you?