

## PRIVATE VILLAGE TWENTIETH CENTURY TOWN

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Communities, like people, seek an identity; seek to understand those qualities that make them unique and set them apart from others. To understand themselves they need to ask the big questions: Who are we? How did we evolve? What is our vision? What is our future? Answers can often be found in history.

A part of Kandos' uniqueness is its beginning as a private village. "What's that?" I hear you ask. According to the Geographical Names Board a private village is one established and run by a private company.

There are a number of towns in NSW that lay claim to their beginnings as private villages, including Bowral, Tamworth and Berry. That is not surprising given that the first commercial premises in country NSW – inns and hotels, blacksmiths and bakers, general and produce stores - often began on private land. These serviced the land-holder, his family and workers, coaches, travellers and road builders. Some developed into villages and were officially gazetted and then grew into towns.

Kandos had a different beginning as a private village. It didn't grow along the wayside; it was planted. It was envisioned and planned. A group of entrepreneurs recognised that natural deposits of limestone, shale and coal near a railway line could produce a cement industry. They floated a company 'The NSW Cement Lime and Coal Co Ltd' with a capital of £200,000 in £1 shares, invested their money, purchased land, selected a site for the industrial complex, employed workers, built the industrial infrastructure, employed local surveyor James Dawson to plan and survey a town, named their town Kandos, organised rail, telephone and postal facilities, marketed their grand vision and held their first auction of town blocks.

At this stage it was a private village. While the company had sold blocks of land to private individuals, that land was within company freehold land in the vicinity of the works and the company was responsible for the overall maintenance of the town.

There were a number of private mining villages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in New South Wales but most of them have been swallowed up by large towns such as Newcastle, Cessnock, Wollongong and Lithgow. My superficial research suggests these villages were usually ad hoc, and the companies provided few facilities for the workers and demonstrated little concern for their welfare. Kandos is rare in its beginnings as a private village because it has remained a distinct town and was watched over by the company for close to a century.

There seems no doubt that the cement company had always expected that as Kandos grew it would eventually be declared an urban area and either come under the management of Rylstone Shire or establish its own council. It was inevitable as Kandos spread beyond

company boundaries. Local grazier and entrepreneur T H Lloyd sub-divided some of his land into town blocks on the western side of the railway line and auctioned it off; and the Crown also sold off residential blocks.

Rylstone Shire Council certainly saw the benefits of increasing its income and influence. Within a year of the first land auction, in October 1916, the *Mudgee Guardian* reported, “The local council intends applying to have Kandos made an urban area”. According to the Geographical Names Board Kandos was proclaimed an urban area on 11 January 1918. This enabled Rylstone Shire to collect rates from Kandos residents, provide a sewage collection service, maintain streets, regulate health and building, and generally take responsibility for the town.

However neither the residents nor the company were satisfied with Rylstone Shire and were keen to establish a local council. “Mr F S Richards superintendent of the Kandos Cement company...has made a special study of the subject and is a keen advocate of local autonomy,” reported the *Kandos Star* in September 1919. A town meeting was called. “In the event of being successful in establishing a local council of our own instead of being governed by outsiders who have no stake in the township it would save the continual wrangling and disputes that now take place between the people of Kandos and the shire government in Rylstone.”

Unfortunately within a week it was realised that under the provisions of a new government bill on incorporation, “a new municipality cannot be constituted unless it has a population of 3000 and an average density of one per acre” and an annual income of £3000.

With its proclamation as an urban area, the town of Kandos achieved adult status but the company did not desert it. Rather it took on the role of paternal benefactor. Over the next decade the company installed electric lighting (concrete pillars, wiring and lamps) to Angus Avenue (though the Shire made an annual payment for the electricity). In 1926 electricity was extended to all houses and streets in both towns but at a cheaper rate for Kandos residents.

An overhead bridge was constructed for which the company paid two thirds of the cost. They continued to provide water for the town, initially from the company reservoir and later through pipes from the weir they constructed on the Cudgegong River (Dunns Swamp). Mr Cant’s beautiful gardens were open to residents as well as sporting facilities including tennis courts and bowling green. Much of the infrastructure of the town was built with assistance from the company including the Angus Memorial Hall (which became the cinema), Simpkins Park and Kandos Sports Ground, the swimming pool, community hall and scouts hall.

The company’s imprint is on many houses and buildings in Kandos. In the early years they took out a patent and produced building bricks of ash and cement. Some of these were sold to townspeople at a reduced cost, others donated for buildings such as the Methodist Church.

Over almost a century that the cement works operated in Kandos the company provided financial and emotional support. The manager’s house, looking down over the cement works

on one side, and the town on the other, can be seen as a symbol of the company's benevolence – overseeing its industry and looking out for its workers.

Kandos also gets its identity as a twentieth century town. Why is that important? Identity as a twentieth century town sets Kandos apart. I have identified only four other twentieth century towns in NSW: Quandialla, Cabramurra, Leeton and Griffith. Kandos' uniqueness was recognised in 2012 when the Twentieth Century Heritage Society included the town in its Mudgee tour.

Most of the public buildings and businesses were built in the first feverish decades of Kandos' growth. They reveal some distinctive architectural features of that period and highlight materials associated with the town such as cement and cement bricks. They also reflect what Kandos is and how it came to be. Our iconic buildings are a focus for community identity and pride. They give us "a sense of place".

The Rotunda, built entirely of Kandos cement, and thus a striking advertisement for the cement industry, is a handsome temple-like structure in the classical revival style, with domed roof, Grecian columns, octagonal shape and wrought-iron balustrade.

The most imposing building in Kandos is the former Methodist Church (now the Museum). It was built in 1919 by Floyd Richards, Superintendent of the works, designed and erected in the Californian mission style of his home town church in America, and again made entirely of cement. On 28 May 1920 it was described: "The new Methodist church, built in tabernacle design with its snow-white exterior and situated on an eminence, is a landmark for many miles around."

In my opinion the most beautiful building in Kandos, the former Good Samaritan Convent tucked away in Fleming Street, which I described in an earlier history article, is sadly, rarely discovered by visitors to the town. It is an architectural gem in the Spanish Mission Style with handsome arches, gothic pillars and wide verandahs.

As far as I can establish the only building in Kandos which is not twentieth century is the rubble stone building completed in 1884, formerly Coomber school and now used as a Principal's residence.

Names are very much tied to identity, whether a person or place. A name brings a person or place more clearly into focus. The meaning of a name or the story behind a name has evocative appeal. The story of how Candos got its name has been repeated often. Bruce Fleming in *History of Kandos* (1984) explains that James Angus' daughter grouped the first letters of the names of the company officials together and came up with a proposed town name of Candos. The name, carefully chosen, is forever associated with its company roots. As are the street names on the surveyed area for the first land sale.

There has been a suggestion that the original spelling of the town's name was Chandos. The evidence indicates otherwise. On 15 January 1914 the *Mudgee Guardian* in an item headed "Candos" reported "For better or worse the new mining township has been christened as above...The plan of survey of the proposed new cement town at Coomber to be known as

“Candos” was laid on the table by the clerk showing the streets and other details.” For more than a year this name appeared in every newspaper item up to March 11 1915 when the *Mudgee Guardian* reported, “You are required to spell the industrial centre known hitherto as Candos with a K instead of a C.” Post Office records show that the Secretary of the Post Master General had sent approval for the name Kandos instead of Candos on the 26 February.

The town of Kandos is planted deeply in its cement company history and twentieth century architecture, a unique cultural heritage and source of community pride. The closing of the cement works has meant Kandos has to look towards a different future. Perhaps in this Centenary year Kandos will find direction in its history.