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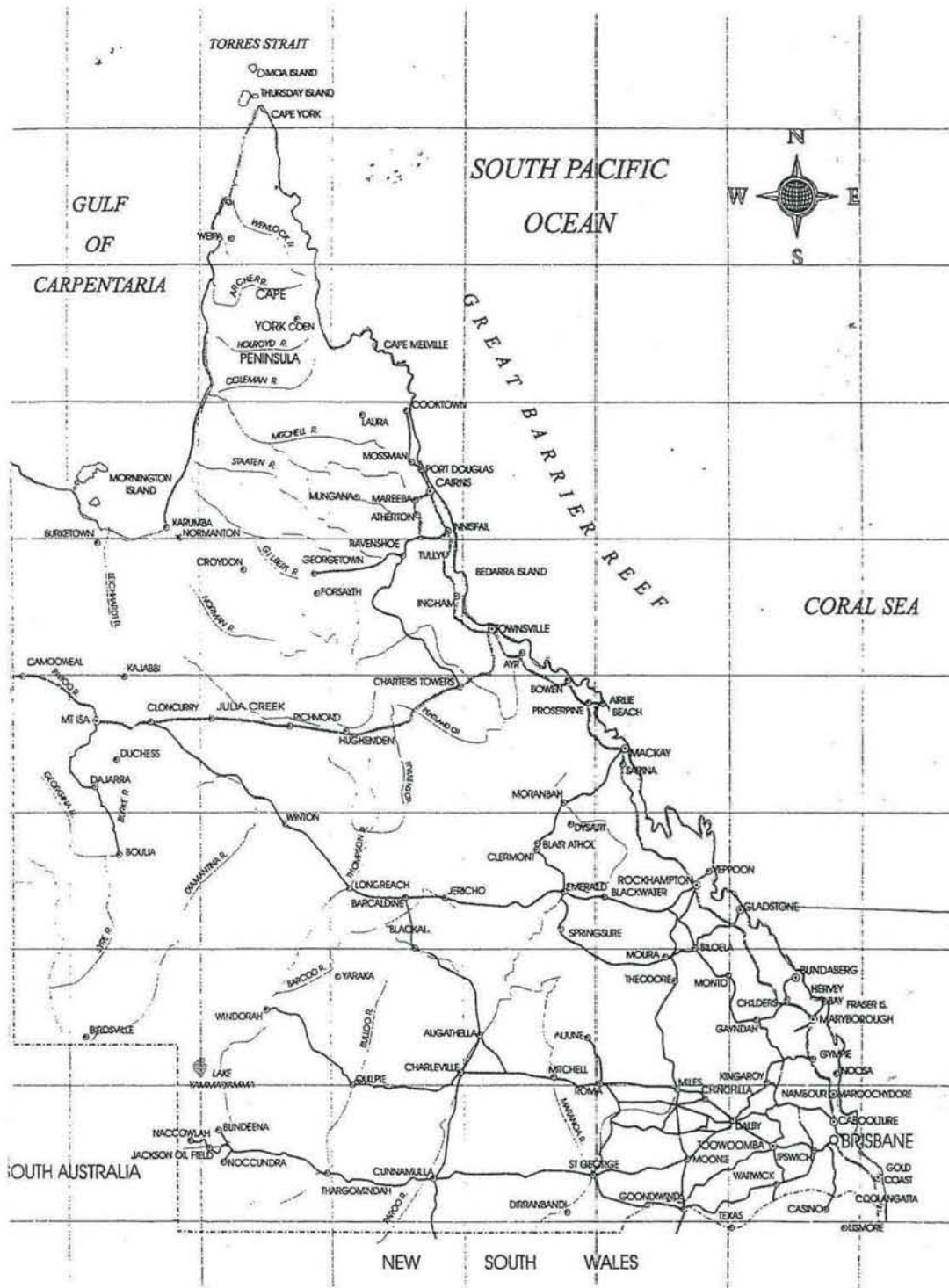
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Decline and Recovery of a Rural Coastal Town: Cooktown 1873-1999

Thesis submitted by  
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in April 2000

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
In History and Politics and History at James Cook University



Map of Queensland. (Cairns & Districts 1999/2000 Phone Directory)

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## Abstract

Cooktown can claim with justification that it occupies the site of the first known European settlement on the east coast of Australia. In 1770 James Cook and the crew of the *Endeavour* spent forty-eight days on the bank of what is now the Endeavour River, repairing damage caused to the ship when it struck a reef. A small settlement was erected to house the crew while they made the ship seaworthy. After Cook left, the area returned to the custodianship of its Aboriginal inhabitants until 1873, when a port was established to service the Palmer River gold field. The new settlement was called Cooks Town, but this was soon changed to Cooktown. For the next ten years it was one of the most important port towns in Queensland, with over sixty tons of gold sent over the wharves.

The recent phenomenon of the globalisation of the world economy, coupled with economic rationalism, has led to a reduction of services to rural communities in Australia. In effect, many of these small towns have declined as a result of reduced employment in the service sector, and lowering commodity prices. However, rural decline is not new. Following the minerals boom in Colonial Queensland, many towns associated with mining declined or disappeared as their primary source of income diminished. This applied also to port towns like Cooktown, which were established to service mining fields. When it was unable to find a sufficiently lucrative alternative source of trade to replace gold, the town steadily declined. However, Cooktown was offered a new lease of life when the tourism industry expanded in Queensland following the Second World War. It was able to capitalise on its unique place in Australian history, and its natural attributes of benign climate and proximity to the Great Barrier Reef, to provide the impetus for a tourism driven economic recovery.

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**List of Abbreviations**

A.U.S.N. Co.	Australasian United Steam Navigation Company
C.R.E.B.	Cairns Regional Electricity Board
D.C.A.	Department of Civil Aviation
M.H.R.	Member of the House of Representatives
M.L.A.	Member of the Legislative Assembly
Pers. comm.	Personal Communication
Q.A.T.B.	Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade.
Q.G.G.	Queensland Government Gazette
Q.P.D.	Queensland Parliamentary Debates
Q.P.P.	Queensland Parliamentary Papers
Q.S.A.	Queensland State Archives
Q.V.P.	Queensland Votes and Proceedings

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**Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references given.

16/03/2001

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## Table of Historical Measures

### Conversion Table - Imperial to Metric

Length:		
1 inch (in)		= 2.54 centimetres (cm)
1 foot (ft)		= 30.48 cm
1 mile		= 1.609 kilometres (km)
Area:		
1 square foot		= 929.030 square cm
1 acre		= 4046.856 sq m = .4046 hectares (9ha)
Weight:		
1 ounce (oz) avoirdupois		= 28.349 grams (gr)
1 oz troy		= 31.1 gr
1 pound (lb)		= 543.5924 gr
1 hundredweight (cwt)		= 50.8032 kilograms (kg)
1 ton (long)		= 1018.18 kg = 1.018 tonnes
1 ton (short)		= 907.2 kg
Liquid:		
1 gallon		= 4.546 litres (l)
Rainfall:		
1 inch		= 25.4 millimetres (mm)
Temperature:		
32° Fahrenheit		= 0.0° Celsius
Barometric Pressure		
1 inch		= 33.86 millibars (mb) or hectopascals (hPa)

### Imperial Measurements

Length and Area:		
12 inches		= 1 foot
3 feet		= 1 yard
5280 feet		= 1 mile
66 feet		= 1 chain
100 links		= 1 chain
25 links		= 1 rod
8 furlongs		= 1 mile
640 acres		= 1 square mile
Weight:		
24 grains		= 1 pennyweight (dwt)
20 pennyweights		= 1 troy ounce
12 ounces troy		= 1 pound troy = .82286 pounds
avoirdupois		
12 ounces (avoirdupois)		= 1 pound
112 pounds avoirdupois		= 1 hundredweight (cwt)
20 hundredweight		= 1 ton
2240 pounds		= 1 ton (long)
2000 pounds		= 1 ton (short)
Liquid:		
8 pints		= 1 gallon
4 quarts		= 1 gallon
Currency:		
12 pence (12d)		= 1 shilling (1/-)
20 shillings		= 1 pound (£1)
2 pounds 10 shillings and six pence would be written £2-10-6		
2 shillings and ninepence would be written 2/9		