



Rock of AGES

Located 23 km south of Bathurst, the historic village of Rockley is one of those rare places where nothing seems to have changed for more than a century.

The first European in the district was surveyor George Evans who crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813. By 1818 land was granted to William Lawson (of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson fame).

The town site was held as a stock reserve until early 1829 when Governor Darling granted it as part of a parcel of 1920 acres, to Captain Watson Augustus Steel who named it "Rockley" after his birthplace in Wiltshire England.

Rockley opened as a township in 1848 after a copper mine was opened eight km from town. At the same time, the discovery of gold drew prospectors and by the 1860s the town had swelled to about 3000 people. This prosperity is reflected in the churches and public buildings.

Around the turn of the century the copper mine closed and the population of the town declined. The result is near-perfect preservation, which has resulted in the whole village being listed by the National Trust. [CWL](#)

1. *St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church (1870), pictured, and St Peter's Anglican Church (1867) were both designed by prominent Bathurst architect Edward Gell, who was also responsible for a number of important buildings in Bathurst, including the gates of Bathurst Gaol.*

2. *The Club House Hotel, built in 1872, is a popular meeting spot for both the locals and tourists.*

3. *Many people believe the humble railway engine driver, Ben Chifley, was the last "man of the people" Prime Minister Australia ever had. For three years, from 1937-1940, he drove across from Bathurst each fortnight to preside over the Abercrombie Shire Council as its president. The Shire Council building still stands – a handsome reminder of a man whose only desire was to serve his constituents.*

4. *The Rockley Mill, built in 1864, is now the local museum. It dominates the town's streetscape with displays of historic mill machinery, historic clothing, old police records and old newspapers.*

5. *St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church.*

6. *The Rockley School of Arts, built in 1890.*

