A brief history of the area
The first Australians on the plateau were people of the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Nation. Cedar getters were the first Europeans to arrive in the area in 1857, moving in from the west. By 1895 most of the accessible cedar had been cut out and the timber getters moved on to hoop pine and other softwoods. Closer settlement was encouraged by various Land Acts, especially the Crown Lands (Amendment) Act of 1905, which was specifically tabled with the closer settlement of Dorrigio in mind. The NSW State Government legislated to survey and sell small blocks of 100 to 300 acres on the Dorrigio Plateau. A series of requirements, including virtual clear-felling, enabled very cheap conditional purchase.

Fires were a common problem in the early 1900s, destroying houses, mills and property. The big fire of 1915 blew in from Deervale, 22km west of Dorrigio, right to the township. Dairy cattle and mixed farming competed with the needs of sawmills for timbered country. The preservation of timber reserves in State Forests, since 1916, ensured an on-going supply to feed the 20 or so mills around the Plateau that operated until the 1960s. Large areas of country to the north and north-east of Dorrigio are managed as State Forests, whilst significant areas are now protected in National Parks. Most of the former small dairy farms are now utilised for beef production and potato farming.

Hydro-electric scheme
In 1922, one of the first public Hydro-electric schemes in mainland Australia was constructed on the Biedsdown River near Dangar Falls. Two 150 horsepower turbines were later supported by three diesel generators. A narrow race took water from a weir behind Dorrigio abattoir for 2.8km, discharging into a pipe-head reservoir. From there, a wooden pressure pipe, bound with wire, carried the water down a vertical height of 80m to the powerhouse (as in the photo). It’s this drop that generated the force to drive the turbines.

Primarily built to meet the demands of the then butter factory, it also supplied electricity to homes, mills and other businesses. Suffering reduced flow in dry times and some devastating floods, especially in 1950, it was turned off in favour of supply from the Nymboida power station in 1955. Now on private land.

Dorrigio Heritage WALKING TRAIL

Don Dorrigio and Guy Fawkes Historical Museum
Corner Myrtle and Cudgery Street
Opening Hours: 11am – 3pm Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday and during NSW school holidays.
Phone: 02 6657 1956
Email: dorrigiomuseum@y7mail.com

The full story of many of these buildings can be found at the museum.

Visitor Information Centres
Bellingen Shire
Pacific Highway, Urunga
Phone: 02 6655 5711

Coffs Coast
35 Pacific Hwy, Coffs Harbour
Phone: 02 6648 4990

Waterfall Way Centre
Hyde Street, Bellingen
Phone: 02 6655 5322

Dorrigio Rainforest Centre
Dome Road, Dorrigio
Phone: 02 6657 2309

Dorrigio
Hickory Street, Dorrigio
Phone: 02 6657 2486

contact@destinationdorrigo.com
www.destinationdorrigo.com

DORRIGO POWER HOUSE
Start: The Visitor Information Centre


2. Department Store – The store was built in its current location in 1927 as the J.H. Davis Store. Rotary map of the district on wall – 1961 – local artists.

3. Soldiers War Memorial – 1921. To commemorate the Fallen of all Wars.

4. Looking West down Cudgery Street is a row of four shop fronts circa 1930, all brick construction with parapets and awnings stepping down the gentle slope. Typical Post-Edwardian style, now rare in the Shire, they support the streetscape for the adjoining Hotel.

5. Heritage Hotel Dorrigo – 1925. Built for Licensee Michael Feros and in continued family ownership. Excellent example of hotel architecture of the period. (See Hotel website for more info)

6. The Old Gazette Theatre – Named The Old Gazette Theatre because the original building, built in 1913-14 by the Harrigan Brothers, was built to house the office and machinery of the Don Dorrigo Gazette Newspaper. In 1976 the building was completely demolished and rebuilt by the Dorrigo Drama Club Inc.

7. The site of the first Post Office in Dorrigo township in 1905. The RSL Club now occupies the site.

8. Looking west, down Cedar Street, one can see the Police Station and Court House, part of the early Dorrigo township.

9. Dorrigo Public School and Gardens – Original school site from 1906, with significant trees laid out to modulate the spaces and levels in the ground. Refreshed in 1980 as a modern open plan complex, designed to fit into the environment.


11. Heritage Gardens – In the early 1970s this previously weed infested area was transformed into these beautiful gardens. Community groups and individuals, together with Bellingen Shire Council have continued the maintenance. Note the Pioneer Axeman Memorial, several plaques to Dorrigo identities and the Pond, which was the original water supply for the Heritage Hotel.


13. Houses 29 & 31 Hickory Street. Outstanding examples of a typical 1940s design and amongst the first brick houses to be built in the Shire and the only examples of the type recorded in the Shire. Relatively few houses were built in Australia in the 1940s, and good examples of this style are now becoming rare in all areas.

14. Bakery – Built in 1948. The HR in the brickwork stands for Hopwood Brothers, specialist bakery builders. There are 30,000 bricks in the ovens with 22 tons of sand above and 13 tons of sand below for insulation.

15. The second Post Office in Dorrigo – built in 1913. The local newspaper, the Don Dorrigo Gazette wrote: "...we might congratulate the government on having erected such a picturesque edifice in this town."

16. 50 Hickory St. Built in 1910. This building was fully restored in 2000, with assistance from Bellingen Shire Council’s Local Heritage Fund.

17. Coronation Park Pioneer Memorial Log – This enormous Tallowwood log was sourced from the local area. It commemorates the significance of the timber industry in Dorrigo’s history and contains enough super feet of timber to build a small cottage.

18. The Don Dorrigo Gazette and Guy Fawkes Advocate is Australia’s only remaining hot metal letterpress newspaper, printed on an Heidelberg Zylinder Automat Press, in operation. This newspaper has been providing news for Dorrigo since 1910. The printing is located at the rear of this building. Inspections can be arranged by appointment. Please contact the Editor – 6657 2010.