

THE
HIDDEN
GEM

Copmanhurst

The heart of Upper Clarence Country.

By Justine McClymont. Photographed for *Clarity* by Gary Parker.

About 25km north-west of Grafton set amongst rolling farmlands and sandstone country is a little village called Copmanhurst. It has a pub and a general store – the trademarks of all good country villages – along with a public school, war memorial, hall, heritage museum, recreation grounds, parks, police station and historic churches.

As you drive over the hill into Copmanhurst, there's a sense that time slows down. It's one of those places that makes you long for a simpler time, without all the hustle and bustle of busy, modern life. No doubt this is part of the appeal for

the generations of cattle farmers on the land and relative newcomers (how many years till you can call yourself a local?!) who have been drawn to the village life or their own bush block.

With a population of about 400 people, Copmanhurst is a stone's throw from the Clarence River and the location of this historic village is no coincidence. Back in the day it was a thriving township with the river a vital route for transporting wool and maize to Grafton and beyond. Copmanhurst once had its own butcher, baker, blacksmith and saddlery, along with a

hospital, bank, butter factory and tea rooms. There was also a creamery out at Upper Copmanhurst to the west of Copmanhurst village, near the old church on the road out to Lilydale.

In the 1800s and early 1900s a wharf at the end of Lawrence Street was used for loading produce from the farms and stations of the district onto the riverboats. With the transition to road transport the wharf is now just a distant memory, with this stretch of the Upper Clarence better known today for more leisurely river activities like fishing, canoeing, picnics and camping.



THE REST POINT HOTEL

This is Copmanhurst's watering hole, where locals meet to shoot the breeze. It's a traditional country pub where you'll be sure to hear some of the tallest fishing tales in the Valley. But out here there's a fair chance the stories are true. Copmanhurst is the gateway to the rugged Upper Clarence River which boasts some of the finest bass fishing in the country

with properties like The Gorge and Wave Hill Station providing a mecca for fishing.

The hallway tells stories of days gone by with a collection of black and white photos. "This isn't the original pub on this site," says Marcus Chad the publican of the Rest Point Hotel. "The first pub burnt down years ago. It was actually set on fire,

by the actress Sigrid Thornton's grandfather. She came up here when they were filming the TV show *Who Do You Think You Are*."

It turns out that this isn't just a tall tale, with the original pub falling victim to fire in 1931 before being rebuilt as the single story building that stands today.

INSIDE INFO: *The Rest Point Hotel* has pub lunches every day and dinner on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. It has a main bar, lounge, beer garden, deck with lovely rural views and live music Friday nights and Sunday arvos. There's a self-contained cabin if you want to stay a little longer. Phone **(02) 6647 3125** for bookings.



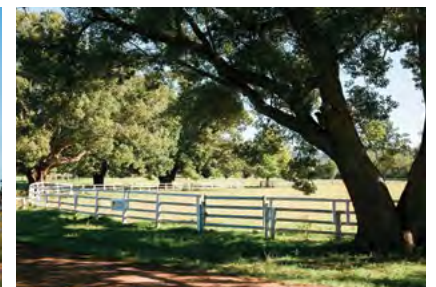
COPMANHURST GENERAL STORE & POST OFFICE

This is the only store in town and is the last stop for supplies before heading further west. It's open 7 days a week and sells basic groceries, newspapers, confectionary, drinks, ice, takeaways and coffee. Drop in and say g'day to John and crew.



COPMANHURST RECREATION RESERVE

This reserve on the western side of the village has facilities for tennis, cricket, horseriding clubs, camp draft and cutting, along with toilets and amenities. The big shady trees provide a quiet and peaceful spot for a picnic, but it's a different story come event time when people flock to the area for the annual Campdraft to showcase their horseriding skills.





COPMANHURST SADDLERY MUSEUM

Just up the road from the General Store and next to the school is the tiny Copmanhurst Saddlery Museum which pays tribute to the history of the area. Don Frame, one of the museum volunteers, grew up in Copmanhurst and went to school in the village. He says the museum wasn't always next

to the school. "It used to be at the top of the hill across the road from the Anglican church," Don says. "It was the old saddler's building, but in later years it was moved down here next to the school."

On the wall of the museum is a photo of the saddler Burt Leighton. As if time hasn't moved in

a century, his chair and workbench are still in the museum, along with a handwritten ledger from the early 1900s.

These are just a few of the treasured photos and memorabilia on display at this fabulous and authentic museum.

INSIDE INFO: *The Copmanhurst Saddlery Museum* is open every 4th Sunday of the month from 1-3pm or by appointment. You can pick up a copy of the Copmanhurst Historic Drive map from the museum which covers 31 historic sites and buildings. Contact **0478 239 274** for bookings and enquiries.



STAY A WHILE:

The Rest Point Hotel has a self-contained cabin. Phone **(02) 6647 3125** for bookings.

Camping is available at the **Copmanhurst Recreation Reserve** for \$5 per person (pay at the General Store). For enquiries and bookings phone **0427 449 783**.

Primitive camping is also available at the river end of **Lawrence Street** and at **Lilydale Bridge**. For enquiries phone **1300 886 235**.

Camping and accommodation is available at **The Gorge** www.theclarencegorge.com **Wave Hill Station** www.wavehillfarmstay.com.au

EVENTS:

Hayden Grebert Memorial Bass Classic

16-17 September 2017

Copmanhurst Campdraft

23-24 September 2017