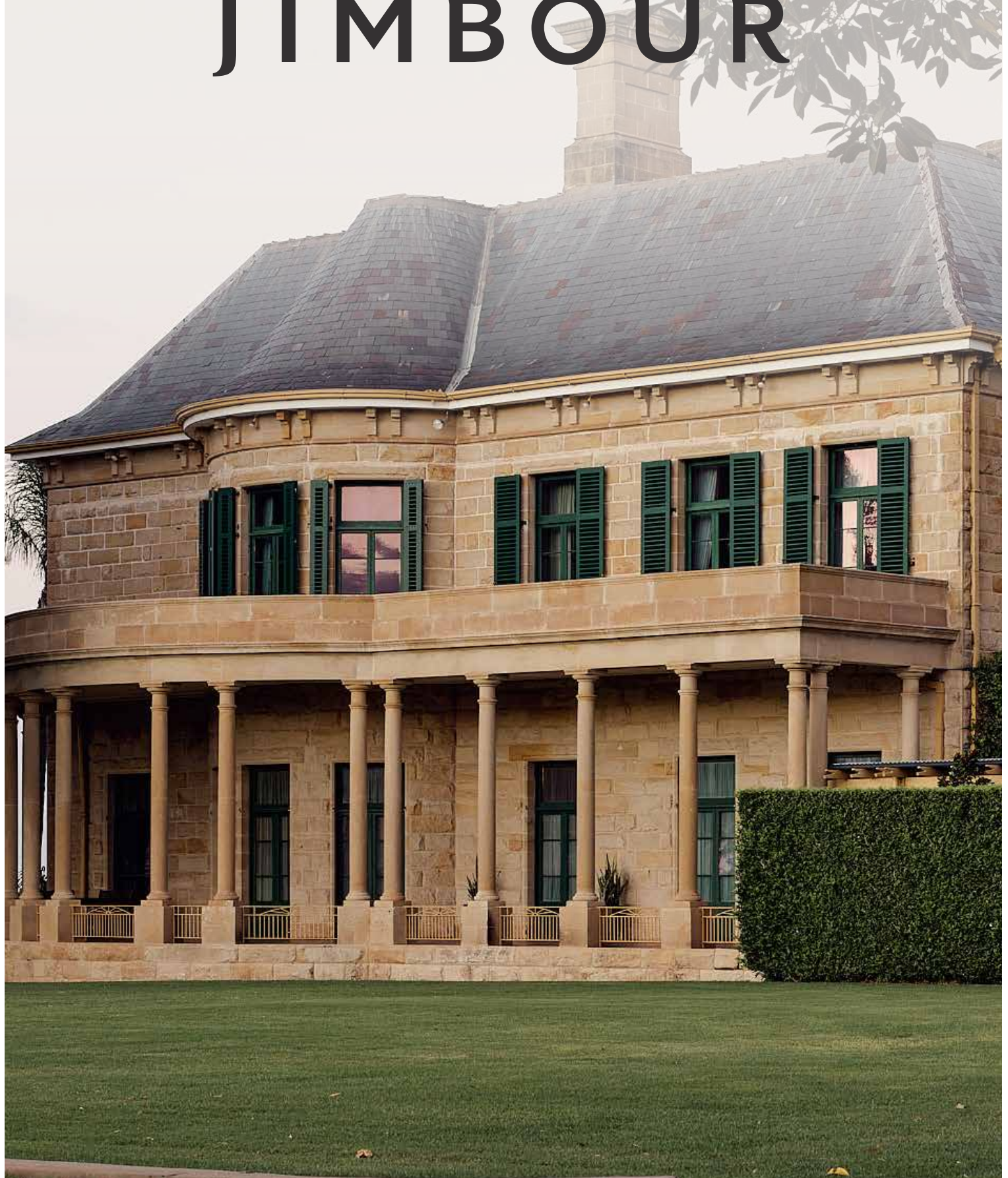


*The history of*  
**JIMBOUR**



# *The history of the Jimbour residence*

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the area was inhabited by members of the Barungam Aboriginal language group. Jimbour is an English language interpretation of the Aboriginal word Gimba, which meant “little white clouds” and was their interpretation of sheep (which they hadn’t previously experienced) moving over grasslands.



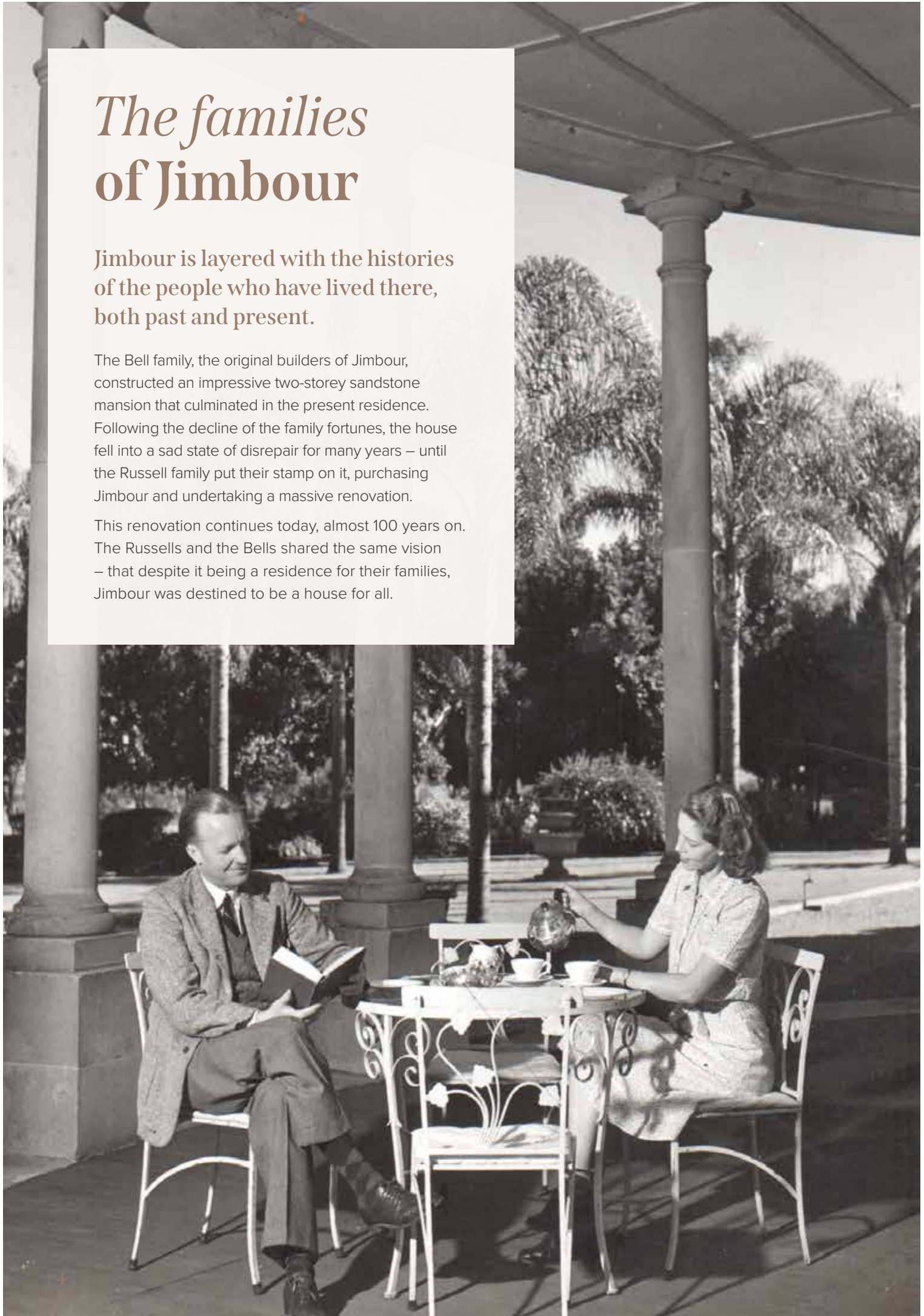


# *The families of Jimbour*

**Jimbour is layered with the histories of the people who have lived there, both past and present.**

The Bell family, the original builders of Jimbour, constructed an impressive two-storey sandstone mansion that culminated in the present residence. Following the decline of the family fortunes, the house fell into a sad state of disrepair for many years – until the Russell family put their stamp on it, purchasing Jimbour and undertaking a massive renovation.

This renovation continues today, almost 100 years on. The Russells and the Bells shared the same vision – that despite it being a residence for their families, Jimbour was destined to be a house for all.





# The Bell Family

**Thomas Bell, a native of Northern Ireland, came to Australia with his family in 1829 and purchased Jimbour – at the time known as Gimba – for the sum of 3,200 pounds. After establishing a flock of 11,000 sheep and 700 head of mixed cattle, Jimbour became the first fully stocked station on the Darling Downs.**

Thomas left the management of the station to an Englishman named Henry Dennis; however, Henry drowned in 1847 when his ship “Sovereign” sank in Moreton Bay. After his death, Thomas took over management of the station with his three sons: Joshua Peter Bell, John Alexander Bell and Marmaduke Bell.

When Thomas Bell died in 1874, his son Joshua Peter took over and became the manager of the station. The Jimbour sheep, cattle and horse studs established by Joshua Peter were in high demand at this time with many new stations being developed, and Jimbour became a hallmark of Queensland’s early pastoral history.

Joshua Peter built two homesteads on the station – the the Bluestone building in 1870, and the remarkable residence that we have come to know as Jimbour House.

It was a modern, ambitious build in its day – a grand stone house with a touch of European splendour rising out of the harsh Australian landscape. The house was intended to support Joshua Peter’s rising political career.

In 1861 Joshua Peter married Margaret Dorsey and they had six children: Joshua Thomas, William, Colin, a baby girl who died in infancy, Oswald and Maida. With the exception of Joshua Thomas, all were born at Jimbour.

Joshua Peter made his mark on parliament in 1863 as the first Member for West Moreton, four years after the separation of Queensland from New South Wales. In 1864 he was appointed Treasurer in the Herbert Ministry, and four years later he won the seat of Northern Downs (known today as Dalby), which he represented until 1879.

Joshua Peter’s career was said to be characterised by his strength, integrity and honorable dealings. He occupied many executive positions in his time, including Minister for Lands, Speaker, President of the Legislative Council and finally, acting Governor of Queensland. He was knighted in 1879.

Sir Joshua Peter and his family moved into the residence in 1877. His son, Joshua Thomas, followed in his father’s political footsteps and was elected as the member for Dalby, a position he held for 18 years.

In 1881, Sir Joshua Peter died suddenly in Brisbane. Before his death, Sir Joshua Peter separated ownership of Jimbour House from the station and merged his pastoral interests with those of Sir Thomas Mcllwraith to form the Darling Downs and Western Lands Company. This merger appeared to mark the decline of the Bell’s fortunes and, following a series of disasters in addition to his sudden passing and that of his son, Joshua Thomas, in 1911, Jimbour House was sold in 1912 and fell into ruins – until the present owners, the Russell family, rescued it.



# The Russell Family

**The Russell family became associated with Jimbour House in 1923 when Wilfred Adams Russell, an innovator of the pastoral industry, and his wife Millicent Russell, daughter of a prominent horse and cattle studmaster, purchased the property.**

At the time it was in a state of disrepair – what was once a grand estate had become a series of empty rooms with fallen ceilings. There was no original furniture and the gardens, once the pride of the countryside, were a wilderness. Wilfred and Millicent set about restoring the property which had been neglected for so long.

After extensive renovations, the Russell family returned the home to its former grandeur and marked the re-opening of Jimbour House with a fundraising ceremony for Dalby Hospital in November 1925. This commitment to work for the wellbeing of the community was carried throughout the Russell family.

Married in 1901, Wilfred and Millicent raised five children: Muriel Frances, Joan Millicent, Henry Edward, Charles Wilfred and Eileen Marian. Henry died in infancy.

In 1926 Wilfred was elected to state parliament as the Member for Dalby and played a prominent role in the life of the district. Wilfred donated 1200 acres in the Bunya Mountains to the public, which remains a public reserve maintained by the Westerd Downs Regional Council.

In that same year, the west of Queensland was in the throes of severe drought, and adistment areas were few and far between. Wilfred constructed several large motor vans and used them to convey sheep from drought stricken areas to fresh pastures, thus pioneering the transport of stock by motor vehicle.

After Wilfred's death, management of Jimbour passed to his son Charles Russell and Charles' wife Hillary, who loved the place dearly. Under Charles' expertise the property continued to develop agriculturally, even through the great economic depression.

Continuing the connection between Jimbour and Queensland politics, Charles was elected to state parliament as a member for Dalby in 1947. He entered Federal Parliament in 1949 as Minister for Maranoa, a position he held until 1951.

After Charles' death in 1977, his wife Hilary continued to live at and care for Jimbour House for a further 20 years, with the help of her son Alec. Hilary continued to play a leading role in the community, including sharing Jimbour with the Arts Council which provided an opportunity for many to experience the area's cultural heritage. Hilary ensured the grounds were for everyone, and it remains that way to this day. She was honoured for her contributions in 1979 when she was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Hilary left Jimbour to live in Brisbane in 1997, where she died in 2001.

Today, their son David, together with David's wife Deborah (until her passing in 2011), carry forward the Jimbour tradition.

David has maintained the historic connection of Jimbour with public life, serving as President of the National Party at Queensland and Federal levels, and Vice President of the Federal Liberal Party following the merger of the National and Liberal Parties in Queensland. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1986.

In 2010 David was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun with Gold Rays and Neck Ribbon for services to Australia Japan relations. In 2012 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to Australian politics, taxation law, legal education and the community.

In 2000, at a function commemorating the 75th anniversary of the re-opening of Jimbour by his grandparents and launching the property's new ventures in wine and tourism, David said:

*"If there could be anything which could detract from this evening, it is the absence of the one other person whose labours over the years have made Jimbour what it is today. In the whole of the history of Jimbour, no one – not Lady Bell, not my grandparents, or even my father (who runs a close second at 45 years) – exceeds my mother's period of residence here of 53 years.*

*As many of you will know, recent years have been far less kind to Mother than her service to Jimbour, family and community warranted, and she did not feel well enough to make the journey to join us this evening."*

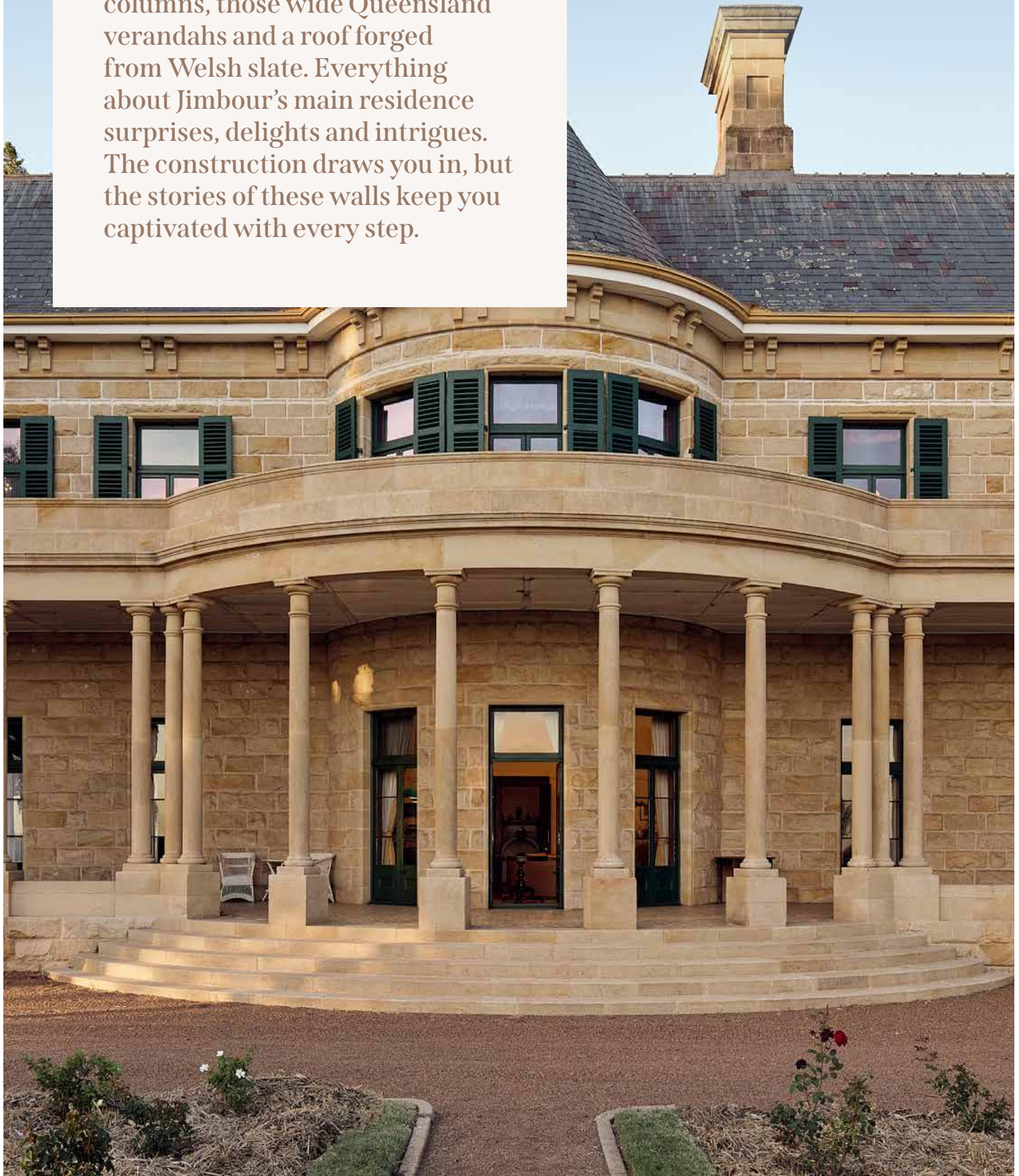
Hilary Russell sent a message to the gathering in her absence:

**“One can only hope that there will always be loving dwellers in this place, prepared to exert themselves and see that the House and garden are given the time, attention and loving care that they merit and so richly repay.”**



# Property

A vision sprung from the plains in 1875 - ornate French doors, Tuscan columns, those wide Queensland verandahs and a roof forged from Welsh slate. Everything about Jimbour's main residence surprises, delights and intrigues. The construction draws you in, but the stories of these walls keep you captivated with every step.





## Construction

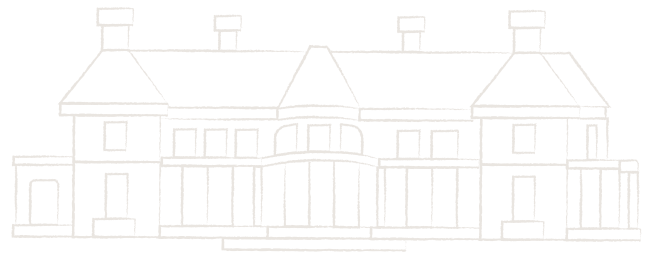
Building work on the present Jimbour residence began in 1875 and was completed two years later at a cost of 30,000 pounds.

The house was designed by prominent Brisbane-based architects Richard Suter and Annesley Voysey, with Joseph de Warren acting as principal building contractor. Building proceeded under the direction of Harry Ensor, who supervised the entire building operations from start to finish.

Jimbour was modern in its day, with gas produced from coal mined on the property and water pumped from Queensland's first windmill to the Water Tower. The architecture is not what you would expect to find from an 18th century build, with slender Tuscan columns at the front entrance, ornate French doors, wide verandahs and a roof made from imported Welsh slate. The property was a lavish two-storey building set amongst extensive gardens and a number of auxiliary buildings, of which three still remain and are in use today.

While the design was of European influence, the main residence incorporated materials from the local region in its build. Cedar was obtained from the nearby Bunya Mountains; timbers included spotted gum, blue gum, ironbark, bunya, cypress, hoop pine and some satin wood; lime was all burnt from limestone found within a mile of the property; and sandstone was procured from Bunjinnie, about 10km away.

While the main residence was undergoing construction, the Bell family resided in the Bluestone building, which now serves as an administration centre and provides additional accommodation.



## Features

The house was designed on a lavish scale, with every focus point designed with a view, from the garden arches to the second floor windows.

With a floor space of 23,000 square feet, there are 24 rooms (depending on how you count them), elaborate chandeliers, heavy cornices and high ceilings.

With no record of the initial furniture, the Russell family set about restoring as much of the home's character as possible. In fact, one of the original ceilings remains, and two of the original mirrors from the Bell family were tracked down (it took seven people to carry one mirror!). The grape leaf artwork detailing the mirrors even matches the artwork on the drawing room chimney piece below it.

The interior of the house opens to a long, wide corridor, which runs the full length of the building, both upstairs and downstairs, with each room running off it. With a fireplace in nearly every room, the house is reminiscent of an English country house.

The home also has its mysteries. When wallpaper was removed from one of the bedroom walls, it uncovered two spectacular pencil drawings hidden underneath. Nobody knows for certain who the artist was, however both drawings are today preserved and proudly on display in the house.

In addition to the drawings, there are other historic works of art in the residence – including a connection to Florence Nightingale herself. The very bedside table that Florence Nightingale once owned sits in the drawing room, with her portrait adorning the wall above it. On the bedside table lies a book with a simple inscription to her godchild, who was Mrs Russell's mother.

With the family quarters upstairs, downstairs was made for entertaining – the house often the centre of musical evenings and charity functions – with various reception rooms, a billiard room and a large, grand entrance hall.

More than just a family home, Jimbour was designed to be shared with the community, and it remains this way today.

# Garden

The restoration of Jimbour extends well beyond the house. Beyond the entrance gates, the house is enveloped by gardens of timeless beauty which, for a garden historian, are a visual evolution of horticultural design from the 1870s to present day.

The Bell family left a legacy to Jimbour in the trees they planted - particularly three Moreton Bay figs. They also laid out the basic plan of the southern garden - a central round garden, two triangular lawns, and the current gravel driveways. However at that time there was not much water available, and an extensive garden was not attempted. It wasn't until the property was purchased by the Russell family that the history of Jimbour's garden began.

With the assistance of Brisbane landscape gardener Harry Stokes in 1924, the basic plan of the garden as it is today was laid out – a central rose garden, lawns with palms and shrubs, and garden beds. A row of olive trees was planted along the southern stone wall (today chrysanthemums are planted in their place) as well as tropical figs, bauhinias, macadamias and colourful bougainvilleas. The Douglas firs, silky oaks and Queen palms date from this time.

In the 1930s, two large wooden pergolas were added, and the rose garden was divided into the four quadrants seen today.

The gravel driveway was constructed from the front gate to the water tower, with jacarandas and shrubs planted along both sides. Ivy was planted near the pillars on the front verandah, and three fountains were added to the front lawns.

Beyond the rose garden lies a low stone wall, built by Joshua Peter Bell to define the original southern boundary of the garden. In 1950 the swimming pool and wading pool were built and the garden now extends beyond this wall. Grape vines were planted along the sides, citrus orchards were planted to the east and west of the swimming pool, and pomme fruits are on the western side.

The Russell family developed the property's agriculture in the 1950s and '60s, and new facilities were constructed, such as grain silos, feedlots and piggeries. The poultry yard was relocated from the north-east



corner of the garden to just outside it. Ivy was removed from the front pillars in the 1970s and lawns were planted alongside a new fence on the eastern, northern and western sides.

In 2004 the garden increased in size again when the original kitchen garden was relocated to outside the former eastern boundary fence, known today as the Millicent Russell Garden. Watermelons, pumpkins, zucchini, squash, beetroots, cucumbers and unusual heritage herbs and vegetables are all seasonally grown, and all produce is used in the house kitchen or by station staff. Surplus material is fed to the garden's poultry.

In 2005 the amphitheatre was constructed.

From 2005 to 2008, the northern gardens were designed by Mappins in Brisbane's West End, with garden designer Darryl Mappin working closely with David's wife, Deborah, to design and plant species that enhance and complement the unusual architecture. It was Deborah's eye for aesthetics and understanding of architecture that led to the northern garden being awarded a commendation by the Australian Institute of Architects.

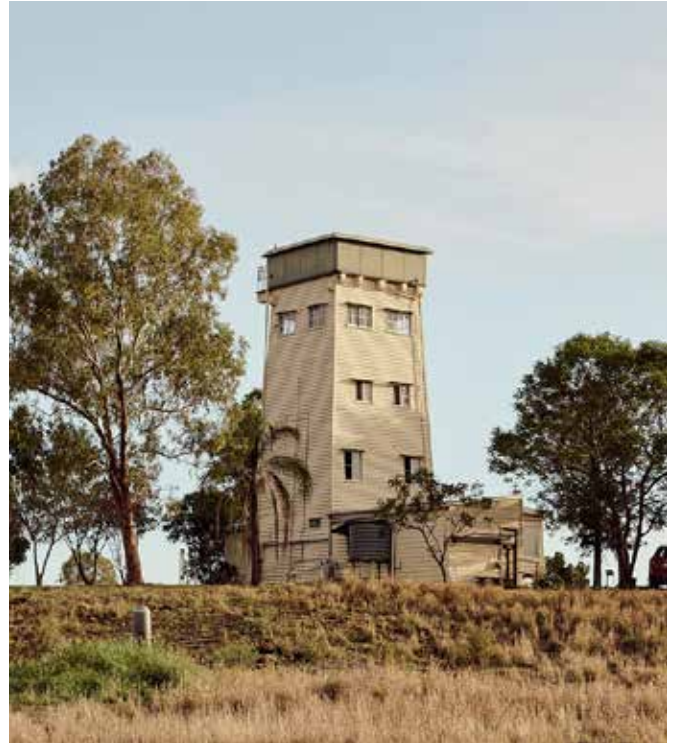
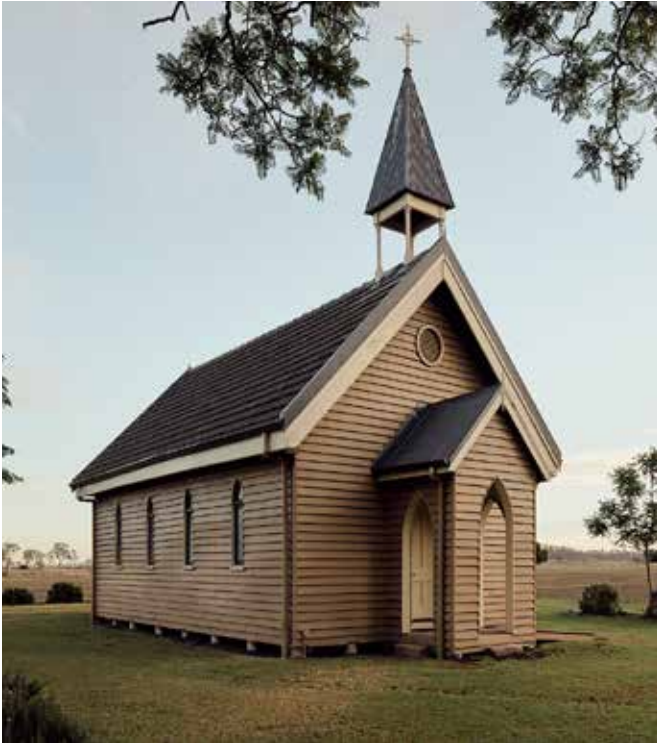
In 2011, the northern garden and the newly erected Summer House to the south of the Millicent Russell Garden were dedicated in Deborah Russell's memory.

Additionally, the area surrounding the Bell family monument, Water Tower and Chapel have all been landscaped and planted with bottle trees, jacarandas, silky oaks and figs.

Behind the back garden lies a historical display in the old workshop and stables, as well as the impressive aircraft hangar and a private airstrip.

Today, the gardens are open to the public 7 days a week. Explore the magnificent homestead and its history through the surrounding gardens and ancient trees.





## *Outbuildings*

**Like other large pastoral properties at the time, a small village was established at the station homestead, consisting of a church, a school, a butcher, a blacksmith, a water tower, a general store, a men's quarters and housing for married employees.**

Over 200 people lived and worked on the property, and 45 shepherds tended to 300,000 sheep. When the Bell fortune collapsed, most of these buildings were demolished and the village was moved to its present location, 2km west of Jimbour.

Three of these buildings still remain and are in use today: the Station Store, the Chapel and the Water Tower.

### **THE STATION STORE**

To the west of the main residence lies the Station Store, built around 1864 and designed by Queensland architect Benjamin Backhouse. This sandstone building was used as the station store for many years, stocking grocery items, clothing, boots and other requirements for the station residents. As the workforce declined, the store became adapted for residential purposes.

Today the store is an important part of the outbuildings that, together with the house and gardens, comprise the cultural significance of Jimbour.

### **THE CHAPEL**

West of the main house is the timber Chapel, an outbuilding that predates the house. The Chapel also doubled as the first Jimbour school and cinema for villagers – just one example of the community involvement integral to the Bell and Russell families.

The interior of the Chapel contains eight icons created by Brisbane icon writer William Lawrence: St Agnes, the patron saint of the wool industry; St Lawrence, the patron saint of winemakers, representations of the two great Churches of Constantinople; Hagia Sophia, representing holy wisdom; Hagia Eirene, representing holy peace; St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, representing the Bell family origins; St David, the patron saint of Wales; St Charles, former King of England for whom Hilary Russell's ancestors fought in the English Civil War; and St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland.

### **THE WATER TOWER**

The Water Tower at the entrance was erected in 1868, a few years before the homestead. The 40-foot tower was supplied with water from Queensland's first windmill and provided pressurised water to the entire station settlement. In 1956 it was converted into a residence and later, for a time, the property's cellar door.

Today, it remains an integral part of Jimbour's water supply system and acts as the starting point of the Living History Walk.



### THE BLUESTONE BUILDING

The Bluestone Building was the third dwelling to be built at Jimbour Station (the first, a small hut for Henry Dennis; the second, a wooden slab house for Richard Scougall). Built by Thomas Bell in the late 1860s, the cottage is reminiscent of an English farmhouse, where rooms were arranged lineally and stock was housed under the same roof as the staff.

This building served as the Bell family residence until the present Jimbour was ready for occupancy in 1877. Today it is now used as staff quarters.

### THE BELL FAMILY MONUMENT

Also dating back to the Station's early period is the Bell Memorial, located to the south of the Water Tower. The monument was erected by the Bell family in honour of Sir Joshua Peter Bell following his sudden death in 1881. A further tablet was added in 1911 in memory of his son, Joshua Thomas Bell. In 2002 a tablet was added in memory of Lady Bell.

### THE RAAF MUSTANG PROPELLOR

Between the Water Tower and the Chapel is an 'Aeroproducts Airscrew', which was originally fitted to a RAAF Mustang P-51K Fighter Aircraft. Mustangs

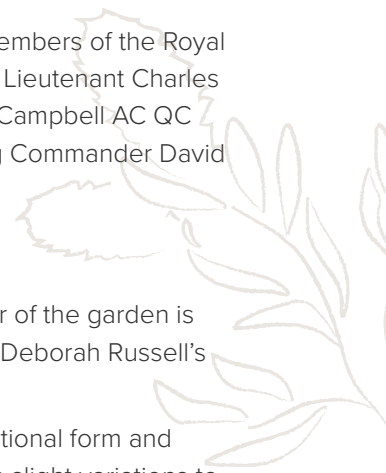
were flown from 1945 to 1955 by members of the Royal Australian Air Force, in which Flight Lieutenant Charles Russell, Air Commodore Sir Walter Campbell AC QC (Deborah Russell's father) and Wing Commander David Russell AM RFD QC all served.

### THE SUMMER HOUSE

Located at the south-eastern corner of the garden is the Summer House, constructed in Deborah Russell's memory in 2012.

The structure incorporates the traditional form and detailing of the main house but with slight variations to express its modernity. Features such as the sandstone posts and timber-louvered valence panels are similar to the existing detail on the northern verandah of the main house; the simpler Quad-profile guttering is used in lieu of the more elaborate Ogee-profile guttering on the main house; sandstone veneer is incorporated into the base instead of ashlar sandstone; square-dressed timber fascias are used in lieu of the beaded fascias; and a simple, square-dressed handrail is detailed in lieu of the moulded handrail detail of the main house.

By incorporating these material and detail variations, modernity is achieved while still maintaining the form and style of a Victorian-era rural homestead setting.







# Area

**The first European to explore the area around Jimbour was Allan Cunningham in 1827. By 1840 part of the Darling Downs had been settled by the Leslie Brothers.**

Jimbour was one of the first great properties of the Darling Downs, covering 90,000 hectares from the Bunya Mountains in the north-east to the Condamine river in the south-west. Today it has been downsized to a very substantial 5,000 hectares.

In addition to Jimbour house and gardens, there is plenty to see and do in the region.

## THE BUNYA MOUNTAINS

Located just 40 minutes from Jimbour, the Bunya Mountains National Park occupies over 11,500 hectares of the Great Dividing Range, a substantial part of which was donated by Wilfred Russell.

Discover fertile plains, rainforests and plenty of wildlife along the Bunya Mountains Drive. Numerous walking tracks allow visitors to pass through huge bunya pines and along creek gullies to waterfalls. Stop at the township and check out the local arts and crafts, grab a cup of coffee and some homemade fudge, and look out for the swamp wallabies and the Bunya Mountains ringtail possum.

A day visit to Jimbour with its gardens and Living History Walk and a packed lunch and accommodation in the Bunya Mountains makes an ideal combination.

## DALBY

Located 211km west of Brisbane and 80km west of Toowoomba, and around 3 hours' drive from the Gold and Sunshine Coast areas, Dalby is a rural town with all the facilities of the city. On the list of Dalby's must-sees includes the Regional Art Gallery, Heritage Trail, Aboriginal murals, Pioneer Park Museum or, for those who are a little more adventurous, take an instructional flight in a glider at the Soaring Club.

## TOOWOOMBA

Known as Queensland's Garden City, Toowoomba lies on the crest of the Great Dividing Range. Just over one hour's drive from Jimbour, pack a picnic and relax in the city's many parks and public gardens, tree-lined streets and proud displays of vibrant greenery and colour.

## JIMBOUR CEMETERY

Of historical interest is the restored Jimbour cemetery. Although it has not been used since the 19th century, many of the original inhabitants of Jimbour are buried here, including Samuel and Harriet Grimley, who were superintendent of the Jimbour store and the Jimbour postmistress.

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