

Bushranger Thunderbolt, taking Uralla by storm?

a research conducted on the Thunderbolt place identity of Uralla



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Abstract

This thesis discusses how the Thunderbolt place identity is constructed in the small rural town of Uralla, located in the state of New South Wales in Australia. In the 1860s, Thunderbolt was a notorious bushranger, who was a professional robber in the North West region of New South Wales in the 1860s. He was a popular man back in the days because he rebelled against the government and never used any violence or harmed the poor. In 1870, Thunderbolt's life came to a sudden end when he was shot near Uralla by Constable Walker.

This thesis proposes to look at how the Thunderbolt place identity is constructed in Uralla. Methods used to research this question are primary data, consisting of interviews with key persons and observations and secondary data are used such as brochures, a tourism website and newspapers.

Since the 1870s, Uralla has been associated with Thunderbolt because it was the location of Thunderbolt's grave and his hideout. From the 1970s onwards, certain individuals' passion for Thunderbolt and their interest in using Thunderbolt for tourism purposes, has increasingly turned Uralla into Thunderbolt country. These individuals stimulated the council to start investing in Uralla's place promotion in the 1980s and nowadays the town attracts a reasonable number of tourists through this Thunderbolt identity.

This thesis researches which key actors have been responsible for constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country. It argues that there are power differences between these actors and that the active residents, historian and alternative storyteller have been largely responsible for constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt. They have done this through reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country, changing the physical appearance of Uralla and through communicating about Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

However, this thesis has also found that there are other sides to Uralla. The town is also known for its art galleries, antique shops, Anaiwan aboriginal community, bookshops and Merino wool production. These other elements in Uralla have, until recently, not been visible in the town's place promotion.

Nevertheless, Thunderbolt has not been overexploited in Uralla and in 2006, the Uralla Shire Council changed its tourism policy and started promoting the other identities of Uralla as well. This suggests that perhaps Uralla's singular place identity will be replaced by multiple place identities. It is possible for a place identity to change, but only time can tell whether such a change will happen in Uralla.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Uralla is a small rural town, consisting of 2,306 inhabitants (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001) and located in the state of New South Wales in Australia (see Figure 1.1). The town's name is derived from the aboriginal word 'Ooralla', which means meeting place (Anaiwan Elder).

Uralla is located on the New England Highway, the inland route from Sydney, New South Wales, to Brisbane, Queensland, and is therefore beneficial for businesses and tourism. Businesses see economic benefits in a location on the highway, as part of its customers are passing traffic and Uralla's tourism policy is based on a tourist that stops in Uralla for a rest who will then hopefully go into town to see its other sites (Present tourist office manager).

The wool industry and three foundries account for a large amount of employment in the town, as do other metal manufacturing businesses. In Uralla, the exciting days of the gold rushes have been replaced with a more relaxed atmosphere of bookshops, antique shops, art galleries and cafes. This laid-back atmosphere is a result of Uralla's proximity to Armidale, which means larger shopping chains have avoided the small town and as a result independent retailers have been thriving (Uralla website).



Figure 1.1 Map of Uralla's location in New South Wales, Australia (Armidale Tourism)

Uralla is probably best known as the location for many of the acts of the notorious bushranger Thunderbolt. Australia has had a long tradition of bushrangers or outlaws. Small landowners sympathised and identified with bushrangers, because they rebelled against the government

and were considered to be victims of circumstance. Bushrangers stood up for the poor and less powerful in society (Seal 1996).

During the first 100 years of white settlement, of all the bushrangers, Thunderbolt was on the loose for probably the longest period. Frederick Wordsworth Ward, known as Captain Thunderbolt, was born in Windsor, New South Wales, around 1836. In his youth Ward became well known for breaking and training horses and when he was 20 he first broke the law by stealing horses, for which he was imprisoned on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour (Seal 1996).

In 1860, Ward was released on a ticket-of-leave but was arrested again for failing to attend a 'muster' and was sent back to Cockatoo Island to serve the remainder of the original sentence. This time, Ward escaped from the island together with highway robber Fred Britton, helped by his wife Mary Ann Bugg. They headed north towards the New England area that Ward knew very well. The two men separated and Ward alone robbed the toll bar at Campbell's Hill near Maitland, and as a consequence officially began his career as a bushranger (Seal 1996).

Ward's specialty was stealing the finest racehorses, but he never used any violence and treated women and the poor with respect. He was said to have handed money back to those who needed it more than he did. These last characteristics coupled with the fact that he may not have been shot in 1870 made him a true outlaw hero (Seal 1996), depicted in many ballads:

"My name is Frederick Ward, I am a native of this isle; I rob the rich to feed the poor and make the children smile." (Williams 1987)

Since Thunderbolt's death, Uralla has been associated with Thunderbolt because it is the location of Thunderbolt's grave and hideout. Since the 1980s, the Uralla Shire Council has increasingly used Thunderbolt in its place promotion, for instance, a Thunderbolt statue was placed in the town centre and the Thunderbolt Festival was organised, which is still held annually. As a result, Uralla has more and more changed in to 'Thunderbolt country'. This raises questions such as: Why and how is Thunderbolt, a bushranger, used in Uralla's place promotion? Who were involved in picking this particular theme and what were the alternatives that could have been used instead of Thunderbolt? In short: how is the Thunderbolt place identity constructed in Uralla?

1.2 Context

Global economic, political, social and technological changes have had a major impact on rural areas, for instance old industries have disappeared causing unemployment and as a result younger people have moved away to cities. This has led to governments trying to find new ways of attracting income to these places by diversifying the rural economic base ((Butler et al. 1998). Consequently, rural places have increasingly been focusing on place promotion to take advantage of benefits such as additional income and employment opportunities. However, what works in one location might not be so successful in another (Walmsley 2003).

Previous research on place promotion in rural areas has often linked the concept to place identity, and has focused on fictitious (Paradis 2002) and ethnic themes (Schnell 2003), or even on festivals (Gibson and Davidson 2004; Brennan-Horley et al. 2007). In this thesis, the

Thunderbolt place identity, which has been partially constructed through place promotion, will be researched. It therefore links up to existing literature on place promotion in rural areas.

The scientific relevance of this thesis can be found in its focus. Previous research on place promotion in rural areas has often focused on a place identity that has been newly created, for instance, Tamworth was originally not Australia's 'country music capital' (Gibson and Davidson 2004). However, this research focuses on a place identity that already existed because in Uralla a particular element of its past has been chosen for place promotion purposes. Residents of Uralla might therefore react differently to this already existing place identity, than for instance residents of Tamworth to a newly created place identity.

The practical relevance of this thesis is that small rural places can gain an insight into how the process of place promotion works. It discusses which people are involved in the process of place promotion and how a theme is developed. It also looks at what problems may arise and how local residents react to such place promotion.

1.3 Research questions and methodology

In order to research the Thunderbolt identity in Uralla, the following main question has been contrived: How is the Thunderbolt place identity constructed in Uralla?

This main question will be answered through five sub-questions:

- How did Uralla as 'Thunderbolt country' come into being and which actors played a part in this?
- Why is Thunderbolt used in the place promotion of Uralla?
- How is the Thunderbolt identity created in Uralla?
- Which elements of Uralla are left out by constructing Uralla as 'Thunderbolt country'?
- How do the residents of Uralla feel about the Thunderbolt legend and its use in the place promotion of Uralla?

These questions have been answered through the collection of primary and secondary data. Primary data consist of interviews with key persons and observations. Secondary data are used to support primary data, for instance this thesis discusses brochures, a tourism website and newspapers.

1.4 Outline of thesis

Chapter 2 sets out the concepts of place, place identity and place promotion through a literature review. In chapter 3, the methodology used in this thesis is described in detail, while the following chapter, chapter 4, will describe the results of the research. The latter chapter is divided into three sections. Section 4.1 mentions the actors who created Thunderbolt country and their motives, in section 4.2 the way Thunderbolt country came into being is described and section 4.3 deals with the role of actors constructing Thunderbolt country. Chapter 5 consists of a discussion and limitations of this thesis while chapter 6 contains the conclusion and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

This thesis deals with how the Thunderbolt place identity is constructed in the town of Uralla. But before this can be researched, it is essential to gain a clear understanding of the concept of place identity. Because this concept is also linked to the concepts of place and place promotion, these will also be discussed in more detail. The chapter concludes by looking at existing research on the place promotion of rural areas, and how this thesis can contribute to filling gaps in the literature.

2.1 Place and place identity

“Human geography is the study of places. There is a general enthusiasm for the study of places, but there is little understanding of what the meaning of the word ‘place’ is. Place is both simple and complicated. It is common sense what place is, but it is quite hard to get beyond the common sense level in order to understand it thoroughly. Place is a contested concept and what it is that place means has been debated for decades in human geography, philosophy, planning, architecture and other disciplines.” (Cresswell 2004, p. 1).

In contemporary critical human geography, place is seen as ‘socially constructed’. This means that place is not natural and given, but a human construction. Two things are important in the social construction of place: meaning and materiality. People attribute meanings to places, but what meaning they actually attach to a place depends on their cultural background (Harvey 1996). For instance, someone from an upper class white background would describe the Bronx in New York as a rough place; a place which is not particularly safe. On the other hand, someone from a working class background, who lives in the Bronx, would call the same place ‘home’. To say a place is socially constructed is also to say that the materiality, the very fabric of place, is a product of society (Harvey 1996).

The current era is characterised by globalisation. Capital is free to move around the globe at the press of a button. People travel more frequently and for longer distances as well (Massey 1994). It is now possible to talk to someone at the other side of the world by telephone, wearing clothes made in China, while sitting in an Italian café - all at the same time. But where places become less important and less unique because of globalisation, place-making processes, such as regionalism, nationalism and the packaging of place, in order to attract tourists and their money, continue (Massey 1994).

Harvey (1996) argues that places are under threat by mobility of capital, mass communications and transportation. Since the ‘permanence’ of place is a form of fixed capital, tension exists with other forms of mobile capital. “People in places try to make their place different from other places and become more competitive (and maybe even exclusionary towards each other) in order to capture or keep capital investment. Within this process the selling of place, using advertising and image construction, has become more important.” (p. 297).

Nevertheless, Harvey mentions that in the midst of these processes of globalisation, the importance of place has increased. People long for a secure and bounded place in an unpredictable world. Harvey also describes place as having a fixed, singular identity that is defined in contrast to the ‘Other’ who is outside. For instance, the Guilford neighbourhood in Baltimore has a white, upper class identity. It is defined in contrast to the black community that live in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Places often seem to have a singular identity because the most dominant group in place picks a particular moment / location in time-space to define its identity. However according to Massey (1997), places can contain multiple identities and histories, while the identity of place is open to contestation. For example, the London Docklands have been contested in many ways. There is a conflict over its past (the nature of its 'heritage'), its present development and what its future should be.

A part of what has been mentioned can be summarised by Groote et al.'s (2000) six aspects of place identity:

1. Place identity is a social construct.
2. Place identity is based on its characteristics; on its distinguishing features.
3. Place identity is for a large part based on the past.
4. Place identity is disputable. Different actors with different goals ascribe different identities to a place. Actors who are powerful in terms of authority and/or resources can impose their dominant place identities at the expense of other actors.
5. Place identity is attributed within and characterised by the spatial context (location); and the socio-cultural context (norms and values of the society).
6. Place identity changes. The future construction of place identities are determined by the evolutionary path and unexpected events.

Place identity is used in place promotion to attract tourists and new residents or investors (Massey 1994). The way place promotion is used to attract tourists, new residents or investors is discussed in the following section.

2.2 Place promotion

The definition of place promotion has been described in many ways by the academic world. Gold and Ward (1994, p. 2) mention that "place promotion is the process in which publicity and marketing are consciously used to communicate selective images of geographic locations or areas to a target audience". Burgess (1990, p. 139-40) adds to this that "place promotion is a part of a culturally defined system of communication in which meanings are encoded and decoded by groups of producers and decoded in many different ways by the audiences for those products".

Place promotion has a long history. For instance, in colonial times Americans tried to persuade Europeans to migrate to the vast open spaces in the west of the United States. This was done by placing advertisements in west European and east coast American newspapers. The country was always described in an attractive manner: the land was fertile, the climate was healthy, the rivers were full of salmon and the concept of a drought was unknown (Lewis 1988).

Other examples of place promotion used in the past are the promotion of seaside resorts and historic towns. In advertisements, posters and brochures, seaside resorts claimed to have golden beaches, beautiful climates, welcoming hotels and lovely guest houses (Yates 1988), while historic towns were depicted as old and therefore associated with being cultural (Gold and Ward 1994).

Traditionally place promotion in western Europe was undertaken by the national government. This meant that while the advantages of places should be promoted, it should not be done at

the expense of neighbouring regions and communities. More recently a shift has taken place in this notion. National governments now hand over a part of their responsibilities to local governments, which encourage local authorities to get involved in the business of marketing places. Additionally, place promotion is now strongly influenced by the spread of the market principle (Gold and Ward 1994).

According to Ashworth and Voogd (Gold and Ward 1994), difficulties arise when marketing principles are applied to place. Places are not clearly defined products that can be sold to clearly defined customers. They are complex packages of goods, services and experiences that are consumed in many different ways. Often the same, very generalised, place-product is promoted to a varied consumer group.

Kotler et al. (1993) mention that “places are increasingly being packaged around a series of real or imagined cultural traditions and representations, often focussing on a particular interpretation of the enterprise history of a place, e.g. industrial history or a romanticised vision of heritage.” (p. 100). They see the packaging of places as an appropriate way to attract mobile capital.

Others are of the opinion that the packaging or commodification of places undermines the traditional multi-dimensional meanings of place (Gold and Ward 1994). If a place is commodified as a ‘heritage place’, things will change drastically in the place. For instance, hotels and shops have to be built especially for the heritage tourist. Consequently other aspects of that place will disappear, like the Saturday market, because they do not fit in the ‘heritage package’.

Nowadays places are increasingly promoted as having different aspects that appeal to different place consumers (Gold and Ward 1994). A city like Amsterdam is not just known for its old houses and canals, but also as a shopping city or as a city with marvellous art expositions on Van Gogh and Rembrandt.

An advantage of promoting a place in different ways is that conflicts between different actors can be avoided (Butler et al. 1998). If a place is known for its annual rodeo and the local government only focuses on its annual jazz festival in its place promotion; the rodeo business will miss out on a lot of income. This causes conflict. If local government focuses on both aspects of its place, both parties will be content.

Nevertheless, there is the risk that very confused place promotion messages are produced, especially if only a low budget is available for place promotion (Gold and Ward 1994).

The following section will describe how rural areas are increasingly focusing on place promotion (Butler et al. 1998).

2.3 Place promotion in rural areas

In the past decade, urban areas have regularly used place promotion. In the 1970s and 1980s many industrial and waterfront areas deteriorated due to deindustrialisation. Tourism was seen as a way of regenerating urban areas through the creation of urban leisure and tourism space - a process which appears almost universal in industrialised countries (Butler et al. 1998).

It is only in recent years that some rural areas have tried to develop and promote themselves to attract more tourists, investors and employees. The reason for this shift in policy has been attributed to changes that have taken place in the countryside. These changes were global in scale and consisted among other things of economic restructuring and a decreasing population (Butler et al. 1998; Walmsley 2003; Paradis 2002).

Benefits of tourism are that it creates income and employment for local people while it also pays for economic and social infrastructure, local resident amenities, encourages the development of other industrial sectors and contributes to the conservation of the environment and cultural resources (Butler et al. 1998).

However people often have unrealistic expectations about tourism's potential in rural areas, as not all of them have the resources and capabilities to attract tourists and generate repeat visits. What works in one location might not be so successful in another (Butler et al. 1988; Walmsley 2003).

Global trends and circumstances have caused places to seek redevelopment strategies rooted in tourist promotion, but local involvement is important as well. Local residents often encourage the manifestation of a theme in rural places. They come up with ideas which are eventually picked up by local government (Paradis 2002; Brennan-Horley et al. 2007). According to Walmsley (2003), local involvement in places is necessary but does not guarantee a success story.

Reactions of residents to the place promotion of their town may also change over time. In the start-up phase, residents are either unresponsive or respond negatively to such promotion, but after a while, when residents start seeing the economic benefits, they become more acceptant or positive. Nevertheless, identities of places are always contested. Opinions on how a town should be advertised, opinions on what theme should be used as a marker of place identity may differ (Paradis 2002, Gibson and Davidson 2004; Brennan-Horley et al. 2007).

Previous research on place promotion in rural areas has often linked the concept to place identity, and has focused on fictitious themes like 'UFO capital' Roswell (Paradis 2002), while others focus on the ethnicity of the majority of the towns residents, for instance 'Little Sweden' Lindsborg (Schnell 2003) and 'Celtic Country' Glen Innes (Bijker 2007). Other places even reinvent themselves through festivals like Tamworth, known for its annual Country and Western Music festival (Gibson and Davidson 2004) or Parkes, famed for its 'Elvis Revival Festival' (Brennan-Horley et al. 2007).

In this thesis, the Thunderbolt place identity, which has partially been constructed through place promotion, will be researched. It differs from previous studies on place promotion in the sense that Uralla's place identity was not newly created, like Tamworth's country music identity. Instead Uralla focuses on a place identity that already existed because a particular element of its past has been chosen for place promotion purposes.

Uralla is not the only town which focuses on a bushranger theme. In other areas where historical bushrangers operated, their stories are still told, either by local inhabitants or in the broader context of tourism and cultural heritage (Seal 1996). In Glenrowan for instance, located in Victoria Australia, the bushranger Ned Kelly is a major (if not the main) element in its destination image and tourist industry (Frost 2006). Ned Kelly is Australia's most famous bushranger and "the closest thing Australia has to a national hero" (Seal 1996, p.145).

This thesis will discuss how Uralla 'Thunderbolt country' came into being and which actors played a part in this. It will also try to uncover why Thunderbolt is used in Uralla, which elements are left out by constructing Uralla as 'Thunderbolt country' and how the residents of Uralla feel about the way Thunderbolt is being used in its place promotion.

In the next chapter, the methods used to research the Thunderbolt identity in Uralla will be discussed.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The research questions, mentioned in chapter 1, have been answered through the collection of primary and secondary data. Primary data consist of interviews with key persons and observations. Secondary data are used to support primary data, for instance this thesis discusses brochures, a tourism website and newspapers.

3.1 Primary data

Interviews

The purpose of this research is of an exploratory nature, therefore the main method used to research the Thunderbolt place identity of Uralla were interviews conducted with key actors that construct or have constructed Thunderbolt country. The same method was used in Tamworth (Gibson and Davidson 2004) and Parkes (Brennan-Horley et al. 2007), studies which also elaborate on concepts mentioned in this thesis, namely place promotion and place identity. Through the interviews with the key actors, the first three subquestions could be answered, namely how and why Thunderbolt country was constructed and who was responsible for its construction.

Other actors that were interviewed were actors that represented the 'other elements' in Uralla, elements that construct Uralla in a different way, and residents. Speaking to these actors helped answer the last subquestions, namely which elements of Uralla are left out by constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country and how residents feel about the Thunderbolt place identity.

What makes this research representative is the fact that key actors were interviewed, and it is presumed that they have a good insight into what issues are important in the respective group they represent. For instance, when the researcher interviewed the actor 'Artists', it was presumed that this actor spoke for the rest of the artists in Uralla. In this respect, conclusions can be drawn from this research.

In-depth interviews were preferred over surveys, because it was necessary to understand the whole process of creating Thunderbolt country in rich detail. In-depth interviews provide this detail because a far more wide-ranging discussion is possible and it offers more flexibility to take the discussion in various directions. Interviewees can construct their own accounts of their experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own words. The produced material is then analysed using a textual approach, relying on words and meanings, rather than statistics (Flowerdew and Martin 1997).

In-depth interviews have however been criticised in the academic world, because it is claimed the respondents' answers are biased by the researcher and that they are not objective (Flowerdew and Martin 1997). To avoid this and maximise the understanding of the research question, different sources and multiple methods were used, which are for a great part described in section 3.2 'Secondary data'.

The interviewees were approached through the process of 'snowballing', by which one contact helps recruit another contact, who in turn can put the researcher in touch with someone else (Flowerdew and Martin 1997). The first contacts were obtained through the supervisor behind this thesis, Prof. Walmsley, who advised the researcher to talk to people from the local government and McCrossin's Mill museum. Multiple initial contact points

were used - the first interviewees that were contacted were the president of the McCrossin's Mill museum and the present tourist officer - to make sure that the interviewees that were recruited did not come from a very narrow circle of like-minded people (Flowerdew and Martin 1997). After interviewing all respondents, the researcher came across the same names again which meant the snowball was saturated.

Different kinds of interviews were carried out because different information was needed from different actors. The actors that were interviewed can be divided into two groups, namely the actors that construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country and the actors that do not construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

Actors that were interviewed constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country:

- Arnold Goode, sheep and cattle farmer and local historian, 'Historian' actor.
- Barry Sinclair, president of ComputerBank New England and family historian, 'Alternative storyteller' actor.
- Paul Hobbs, present tourist office manager, 'Government' actor.
- Alex Pawlow, economic development officer works for council, 'Government' actor.
- Bev Niland, retired, used to work as a secretary for the council and was a bicentennial committee member, 'Government' actor.
- Beverly Stubberfield, owner of café and former tourist office manager actor, 'Government' actor.
- Kent Mayo, president of McCrossin's Mill museum, 'McCrossin's Mill museum' actor.
- Bill Upjohn, riding-school owner, 'Residents' actor.
- Schoolchildren year six from Uralla Central School, 'Residents' actor. Year six is the equivalent of the last year in primary school in the Dutch educational system.

Actors that were interviewed that do not construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country, for instance actors representing the 'other elements' and indifferent residents:

- Cathy Welsford, literacy consultant for the Department of Education and Training, feminist and Uralla Arts Council member, 'Feminists' and 'Artists' actor.
- Les Townsend, community consultant and Anaiwan elder, 'Koori' actor.
- Ross Burnet, owner of bookshop, 'Bookshops' actor.
- Michael Maratea, owner of antique shop, 'Antique shops' actor.
- John Tucer, manager of Lockheed Martin satellite tracking station and a newcomer in Uralla, 'Residents' actor.
- Schoolchildren year 11 and year 12 from Uralla Central School, 'Residents' actor. Year 11 and year 12 are the equivalent of the last two years in secondary school in the Dutch educational system.

Three examples of interviews that were conducted have been added to the appendices. Interviews one and two were included because they were held with actors representing the two groups mentioned above, namely the actors constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country, for instance the government and the actors not constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country, for instance the artists. A third interview was chosen because it differs slightly from interviews with other actors, since it concerns residents.

Observations

In this thesis, Uralla's built environment has also been carefully observed. Thunderbolt elements in this landscape were researched, for instance sites and signs using Thunderbolt

slogans, as well as the influence of the Thunderbolt theme on the total built environment of Uralla.

3.2 Secondary data

To research how people communicate about Uralla, a selection of brochures, websites and newspapers were analysed. Secondary data is important as it forms a context to the researched location, for instance on how the area is now and what it was like in the past (Flowerdew and Martin 1997). It has helped this research to understand more about important events in the creation of Thunderbolt country, for instance not one interviewee could give detailed information about what exactly happened in May 1970, when the Thunderbolt Centenary Week was held. This information was obtained by looking at old newspapers.

Brochures and website

In this thesis promotional texts in brochures and on a tourism website were analysed to see how they depicted Uralla, in particular, if Uralla was represented as Thunderbolt country. Images, texts, the amount of information on Thunderbolt and which Thunderbolt site was most portrayed, were researched.

Newspapers

Newspapers in this research have been used quantitatively (the number of stories) and mainly qualitatively (how they cover stories). Most newspapers were local such as *The Uralla Times* and *The Armidale Express*, as they report on Uralla as Thunderbolt country most often. In national newspapers, travel articles on Uralla were found and stories about Thunderbolt, using the alternative storyteller's version of events.

After conducting the interviews with respondents, it was clear which dates and topics were of importance in constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country. For instance, 1914 was an important year, for in that year the headstone was placed on Thunderbolt's grave. These dates were then looked up in newspapers, making use of the newspaper database in the Dixon Library at the University of New England.

The quantitative part of this research consisted of counting the amount of articles found on each topic. It appeared that some topics in creating Thunderbolt country were more reported on than other topics. The qualitative part of this research consisted of analysing how newspapers depicted Uralla in travel articles and how the media reported on Thunderbolt events and sites.

The next chapter depicts the results of the interviews, newspapers, observations, the website and brochures. Newspapers, brochures and the website are emphasised in section 4.3.3 'Communication about Uralla as Thunderbolt country' and observations are used more in section 4.3.2 'Thunderbolt changes the physical appearance of Uralla.'

Chapter 4 Constructing the Thunderbolt place identity of Uralla

This chapter discusses how the Thunderbolt place identity in Uralla is constructed. Key actors with different motives play a role in putting Uralla on the map as Thunderbolt country. They construct Thunderbolt country by reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country, for instance by visiting a Thunderbolt site and by changing the physical appearance of Uralla, for example by the placing of the Thunderbolt statue. Also, they communicate about Uralla as Thunderbolt country through numerous forms of representation (brochures, newspapers etc.).

However, not every actor or resident constructs the town as Thunderbolt country. They see Uralla in a different way and contest Thunderbolt country, for example by protesting against it, or are indifferent to the Thunderbolt identity.

4.1 Actors and their motives

In this section the different actors that play a role in creating Uralla as Thunderbolt country, and their motives, are described. Among these actors are the Uralla Shire Council and organisations concerned with the place promotion of Uralla, but also media organisations, businesses, tourists and residents. These actors will be discussed on the basis of an actor-network (see Figure 4.1).

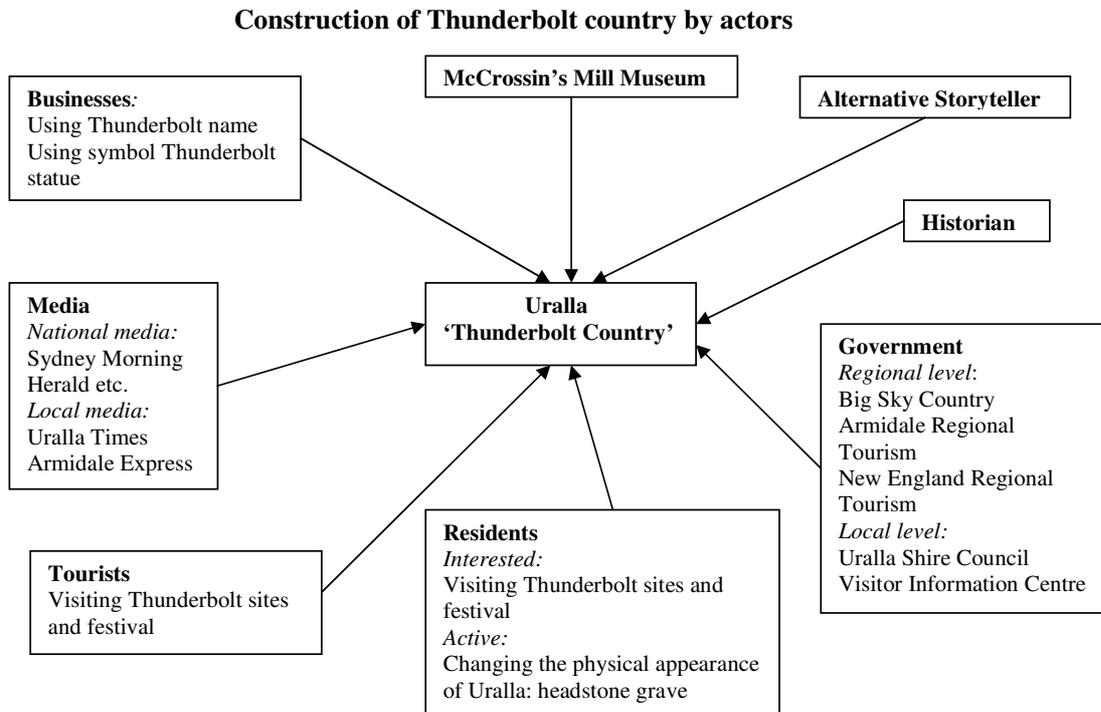


Figure 4.1 Actor-network through which Uralla is created and sustained as Thunderbolt country

4.1.1 Historian

The 'Historian' actor (see Figure 4.1) constructs Thunderbolt country by telling the official history of Thunderbolt in Uralla. The word 'official' is used to describe the history, because it is the generally accepted version of the history. The history is told by a historian - someone perceived as having scientific knowledge, therefore residents accept this story as being the 'true' story. Among other things, the history is based on police reports and newspapers of the period in which Thunderbolt died.

The historian is passionate about history and the Thunderbolt legend in particular. In the 1970s he researched Thunderbolt extensively. In May 1970, he helped Bob Cummins, the New England Regional Tourist Officer at the time who organised the Thunderbolt Centenary Week, conduct research on Thunderbolt. Cummins wrote a book about Fred Ward based on this research, *Thunderbolt*, which came out in 1988. The historian says that he finds it important to tell people about Thunderbolt, because he wants them to know the true story.

The historian also wants to tell the Thunderbolt story to keep Uralla 'livable', as he is concerned about the economic well-being of Uralla. He is a member of the Uralla Historical Society, an organisation which not only strives to tell Uralla's history through McCrossin's Mill museum, but also aims to keep Uralla's heritage intact. He helped open up this museum and set up a heritage walk for tourists, to further the development of tourism in Uralla.

4.1.2 Alternative storyteller

The 'Alternative Storyteller' actor (see Figure 4.1) plays a part in constructing Thunderbolt country by telling the alternative history of Thunderbolt in Uralla. The word 'alternative' is used to describe this history, because it is an alternative version of the official history. The ending of the official history is contested in this alternative history. Whereas the official history is accepted, this is not necessarily the case with the alternative history. People perceive it as 'controversial' and do not always agree with the history.

The alternative storyteller is a family relation of Fred Ward. His great grandfather William James Sinclair was married to Esther Edwards, who was the daughter of Fred Ward's sister Sarah Edwards (born a Ward). He is a family historian and researched Thunderbolt for fifteen years. The alternative story teller is passionate about Thunderbolt, not only because it concerns his family, but more importantly, because he wants people to know the truth about Thunderbolt. He is also interested in tourism and the promotion of Uralla because it contributes to the economic well-being of Uralla, by attracting visitors and new residents to the town.

4.1.3 McCrossin's Mill Museum

McCrossin's Mill is a local museum in Uralla and one of the town's main attractions. Representing the 'McCrossin's Mill museum' actor (see Figure 4.1), the president of the museum was interviewed. The museum is managed by volunteers from the Uralla Historical Society, which was formed in 1979 with the intention of buying the mill, restoring it to its former glory and changing it into a museum and function centre. The museum has two exhibitions on Thunderbolt, including paintings about his death and artefacts of the man himself.

Through the museum, the Uralla Historical Society wants to tell Uralla's history to people. Thunderbolt is used in the museum, because he is an important element in Uralla's history. The president of the museum mentioned that he finds it important to tell the true story about

Thunderbolt to people – this would be the official history and not the alternative version of the official history. Thunderbolt is also the main reason why local and regional visitors come to the museum. By attracting visitors, the museum contributes to the economic well-being of Uralla.

4.1.4 Government

The ‘Government’ actor (see Figure 4.1) consists of local and regional levels. Each level can be divided into different organisations.

Local level

On a local scale, the Uralla Shire Council and the Visitor Information Centre are engaged with the promotion of Uralla. These two organisations have continuously influenced the way Thunderbolt country is constructed. They are mentioned separately because the tourist office manager, who manages the Visitor Information Centre, works independently from the council.

Representing the Visitor Information Centre, the former tourist office manager and present tourist office manager were interviewed. The tourist office manager puts his own mark upon Uralla’s promotion, for instance by managing the town’s website, but also works together with the council on tourism as he or she is a representative of the tourism committee. The main motive of the present tourist office manager is to attract tourists to Uralla. Thunderbolt does just that. Tourists spend money in Uralla and tourism therefore influences the economic well-being of Uralla in a positive way.

The Uralla Shire Council consists of nine councillors; among these councillors are the mayor and the deputy major. Before the opening of the Visitor Information Centre, only one committee was concerned with tourism while there was no independent tourist office manager. The council’s motive for using Thunderbolt in Uralla’s promotion is similar to the tourist office manager’s motive: attracting people to Uralla to stimulate Uralla’s economic well-being.

Nowadays, the economic development officer, the tourism committee and the destination committee all have a big influence on how Uralla is promoted. Representing the Uralla Shire Council, the economic development officer of Uralla and a former bicentennial committee member were interviewed.

The economic development officer not only attracts businesses to Uralla, but is also responsible for the branding and marketing of Uralla. He is currently updating the Uralla Township Marketing Plan (2005), which will be available later in 2007. The economic development officer is also a member of the destination committee and tourism committee and works together with the tourist office manager.

Committees in Uralla often consist of two actors: the government (Uralla Shire Council) and residents. The reason why the council works with committees is because it allows them to use the council’s public liability insurance. Small committees are otherwise not capable of raising the financial premiums for a coverage of 20 million dollars (Historian).

Currently, two committees are concerned with the promotion of Uralla: the destination committee and the tourism committee. The destination committee is a committee of the

council, but residents have a considerable say in it. This committee makes recommendations to the tourism committee.

The tourism committee consists of the following representatives: the tourist office manager, the economic development officer, a representative from the destination committee, two councillors and the mayor. This committee makes recommendations to the council about the strategic direction and budget of tourism activities, but the council has the final say on tourism matters.

The council's motive for using Thunderbolt in tourism has already been discussed. Motives of residents in committees, whom will be called 'active residents' from now on, are to attract tourists and as a result to attract income to Uralla. They differ from other residents in the sense that they actively want to do something to stimulate Uralla's economic well-being instead of passively 'watching from the sidelines'.

Regional level

On a regional scale, two tourism organisations market Uralla as Thunderbolt country, namely Big Sky Country and Armidale Regional Tourism (see Figure 4.1). Big Sky Country is a collaboration between places in the New England/North West region of New South Wales. Its motives for promoting Uralla, and using the Thunderbolt legend, are to attract tourists and income to Uralla and the surrounding region.

Armidale Regional Tourism came in to being in 2003 and is a collaboration between Armidale, Uralla, Walcha and Guyra. A few councillors and the tourist office manager of Uralla are involved in this organisation. Because these places work together, more money is available to develop and promote tourism through advertising. Its motives for promoting Uralla, are similar to those of Big Sky Country.

In the 1970s, Uralla was promoted by the New England Regional Tourism organisation, which was based in Armidale, a university town near Uralla. The New England Regional Tourist officer, Bob Cummins, played an important role in constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country. The New England Regional Tourism organisation's motives for promoting the town were similar to those of the present regional tourism organisations.

4.1.5 Residents

The 'Residents' actor (see Figure 4.1) constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country in different ways. This actor can be split up into two groups of residents. The first group of residents, the 'interested residents', visit Thunderbolt sites and as such are reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country. They are interested in local history, want to teach their children about local history or want to show family and friends tourist attractions of Uralla. Some residents see Thunderbolt more as just an element of history, and they identify with him because they know stories about him from family members that had encounters with him in the early days. Representing this first group of residents, schoolchildren of year six and a riding-school owner were interviewed.

The second group of residents, the 'active residents', construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country by taking it a step further than just being interested in local history. They are either involved in a committee concerned with the promotion of Uralla, discussed previously, or take a special interest in Thunderbolt and have, for instance, changed the appearance of Uralla by placing a headstone on Thunderbolt's grave.

Representing this second group of residents are Mr. A.I. Crapp, who placed the headstone on Thunderbolt's grave, and Peter Phillips, who sold the first Thunderbolt souvenirs in Uralla. Representatives of other actors can also be incorporated into this group, for instance the historian, alternative storyteller, a former bicentennial committee member and the president of McCrossin's Mill museum. As these actors are all also residents of Uralla they can be categorised as having multiple roles: as an active resident as well as a separate actor. Representatives of the 'Businesses' actor, also carry out this double role.

4.1.6 Tourists

The 'Tourists' actor (see Figure 4.1) constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country in similar ways as the first group of residents. They visit Thunderbolt sites because they are interested in the history of Thunderbolt or Uralla and as such are reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country. However, some may also run into Thunderbolt sites by coincidence, while visiting Uralla for special events for example or by travelling on Bridge Street, the section of the New England Highway that goes through Uralla (see Figure 4.4). The town has cafes, a public toilet and picnic grounds, so often drivers take a rest in Uralla during their long drive from Sydney to Brisbane or the other way around.

4.1.7 Media

The 'Media' actor (see Figure 4.1) consists of local and national media. Local media, like *The Armidale Express*, report on a regular basis about Uralla or Thunderbolt, which is associated with Uralla. Their motive is to sell as many newspapers as possible by informing people about what events are happening in the region or what attractions there are to be seen. They also achieve this by printing controversial stories, like the alternative history of Thunderbolt.

In national media, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Uralla or Thunderbolt, which is associated with Uralla, are barely mentioned. However, interest in Uralla by the national media has increased since 2001, when the alternative storyteller came out with his alternative version of the official history. Motives of the national media are similar to the local media.

4.1.8 Businesses

The 'Businesses' actor (see Figure 4.1) benefits from tourism in Uralla because tourists spend money in their businesses during their stay in Uralla or by visiting attractions. Their motive is therefore purely economic.

4.2 Constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country

This section will look at how Thunderbolt country was constructed in the past and how it is currently maintained. Key actors construct Thunderbolt country by reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country, for instance by visiting a Thunderbolt site and by changing the physical appearance of Uralla, for example by the placing of the Thunderbolt statue. Also, they communicate about Uralla as Thunderbolt country through numerous forms of representation (brochures, newspapers etc.).

This section will be discussed on the basis of a timeline (see Figure 4.2), which marks the most important dates in the construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country. These dates will be discussed in chronological order. A section of the map of Uralla, including the location of different Thunderbolt sites, has also been added to this section (see Figure 4.4).

Timeline construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country

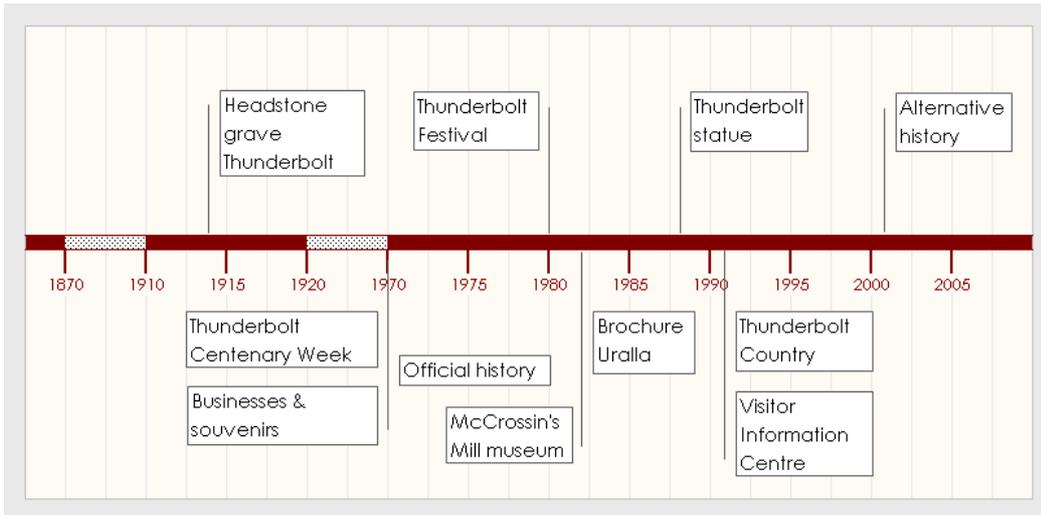


Figure 4.2 Construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country timeline

4.2.1 Headstone on Thunderbolt's grave (1914)

In 1914, Mr. A.I. Crapp (see Figure 4.2), the historian's great uncle, marked the grave of Thunderbolt with a headstone (see Figure 4.3 and 4.4) and thus changed something in the physical appearance of Uralla. Mr. Crapp, an active resident in Uralla, had no intention of honouring a criminal, he simply wanted to mark a historical fact. In those times, many people were drawn to the grave of Thunderbolt out of curiosity, but often could not find it because the grave was only marked by a wooden cross (*The Uralla Times*, June 29 and July 18, 1914).



Figure 4.3 Headstone Thunderbolt's grave (www.uralla.com)

To raise funds for the erection of the headstone, Mr. Crapp organised a local concert. Unfortunately the residents of Uralla were not interested in going to the concert because they were against 'honouring a criminal'. In the end, Mr Crapp paid the majority of the costs for the headstone (*The Uralla Times*, August 15, 1914).

The placing of a headstone on Thunderbolt's grave by an active resident was the start of the construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country. Before 1914, people already knew about Thunderbolt and visited the grave, but by marking Thunderbolt's grave it was made more permanent and visible to the public. As more tourists and residents of Uralla visited the grave, the link between Uralla and Thunderbolt country became more emphasised.

Between 1914 and 1970, the only Thunderbolt site that tourists could visit was the grave of Thunderbolt. Someone left a tin box on the grave in 1920 and tourists would leave letters in this box directed to Thunderbolt. These letters were often quite rude, therefore the council felt obliged to remove the box from the grave in 1938. The Thunderbolt rock, the place outside Uralla where Thunderbolt used to hide and where he had a good view in either direction to detect approaching mail coaches, was on private property until 1979; there was a fence around the property to keep curious people away (Historian).

4.2.2 Thunderbolt Centenary Week (1970)

In 1970, Mr. Bob Cummins, the New England Regional tourist officer, came up with the idea for the Thunderbolt Centenary Week (see Figure 4.2) and he was responsible for organising the event. The Thunderbolt celebrations committee was formed to oversee the celebrations – it was in fact the first committee to carry the 'Thunderbolt name'.

The reasons for organising the Centenary Week were to honour Constable Walker, the policeman that shot Thunderbolt 100 years ago in May 1870, as well as attract tourists to the area (*The Uralla Times*, May 28, 1970). The physical appearance of Uralla changed temporarily into Thunderbolt country because of this event, to be exact for 10 days, and included, among other things, a re-enactment of Thunderbolt's death, the unveiling of an official plaque for Constable Walker, a street procession with vintage cars and floats, the New England Gold Panning Championships and a Colonial Ball (*The Uralla Times*, May 14, 1970).

Visitors of the event were not only Uralla residents, but actually the majority of visitors were former residents who drove great distances to get to Uralla (*Northern Daily Leader*, May 20, 1970). Residents of Uralla and tourists participated in Thunderbolt practices while visiting the festival, such as watching the re-enactment of Thunderbolt's death, decorating shop windows or even participating in the re-enactment.

The media played an extensive role in this event by communicating to people about the event to its readers. Not just local media from Uralla and Armidale reported on the event, but also media from the region and state took an interest in the Centenary Week.

The Thunderbolt Centenary Week has been crucial in the construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country, because it was the first time that Thunderbolt was deliberately used for tourism purposes in Uralla and therefore the first time that Thunderbolt was very much visible in Uralla. It gave tourism a boost in the sense that Uralla never attracted this many tourists before and it influenced individuals to invest time in Thunderbolt tourism.

Map of Uralla



Figure 4.4 Uralla map with Thunderbolt locations (Uralla website, edited by author)

4.2.3 Official history (1970)

Since May 1970, the official history of Thunderbolt came in to being, based on police reports and newspapers of the period that Thunderbolt died. It has been told by various people in the last 137 years, but presently the history is told by the historian in Uralla. He started researching Thunderbolt in 1970 together with Bob Cummins (see Figure 4.2), as mentioned in section 4.1.1 'Historian', therefore this year has been chosen as the year in which the historian started telling the official history. It is important to mention the conclusion of this history, because the conclusion is contested by the alternative storyteller. Both the conclusion of the official as well as the alternative history are depicted in figure 4.5.

The historian constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country through communicating this story to residents of Uralla, for instance to schoolchildren who even call him 'Mr. Thunderbolt'. He is successful in telling this history, because he is a well-known person in town and there is always somebody who wants to hear a story. In the 1970s, before the Visitor Information

Centre came in to being, the historian welcomed tourists in Uralla and told them stories about the town including the official history of Thunderbolt.

The official history has also been used in the McCrossin's Mill museum, through Thunderbolt exhibitions, and the Visitor Information Centre, which communicates the history to tourists through brochures and stories told by the present tourist office manager.

Conclusion official history	Conclusion alternative history
<p data-bbox="175 481 654 705">On May 25, 1870, the bushranger Thunderbolt robbed John and Liza Blanch near their Inn, then Coghlan and eventually an Italian hawker called Cappusotti. Cappusotti was sent away by Thunderbolt, but decided to alert the police instead.</p> <p data-bbox="175 728 654 952">Constable Walker pursued Thunderbolt and shot him dead at Kentucky creek. The body was brought to Blanch's Inn on May 26; an inquiry was called to determine the cause of death. Fred Ward, known as Thunderbolt, was buried in the Uralla cemetery.</p>	<p data-bbox="710 481 1189 705">Fred Ward was not killed near Uralla on May 25, 1870. It was his older brother William (known as Harry). Harry had spent several months in the Uralla area as 'Thunderbolt'. Over 300 people viewed the body identifying the body as that of 'Thunderbolt', and not as Fred Ward.</p> <p data-bbox="710 728 1189 1019">Three days after Fred Ward 'was shot' by the police, two policemen saw his horse Combo at a race meeting in Glen Innes. They saw Ward leave with the horse. The police chased him, but Thunderbolt escaped. The police reported back to Armidale about this incident, but they were told to forget their report, as Thunderbolt was already dead.</p> <p data-bbox="710 1041 1189 1332">After attending his own brother's funeral dressed as a woman, Fred Ward stayed at his sister's house. After six weeks he collected all his earnings from his caves and hiding places in the New England area and left for San Francisco by boat, possibly with a female companion. From there he moved to Canada, dying in the early 1900s.</p>

Figure 4.5 The conclusion of the official and alternative history of Thunderbolt

4.2.4 Businesses and merchandise (1970)

From the 1970s until the present day, businesses (see Figure 4.2) have used the Thunderbolt name to attract clients (see Figure 4.6). The first business that changed its name was the Imperial Hotel in 1970. Bob Cummins, the New England Regional tourist officer at the time, persuaded the owner to change the Inn's name in to 'Thunderbolt Inn hotel' to attract more tourists. Other businesses that used Thunderbolt's name did so spontaneously, for instance, Thunderbolt Country Kitchen or the Thunderbolt Pie Company (Historian). These businesses were opened by active residents.

An interviewee commented on this topic:

“The council did not encourage entrepreneurship in Uralla. People started these businesses because they thought there was money in it. [...] Motels and other businesses jumped on the bandwagon. A few years ago Thunderbolt Country Kitchen was established, using the Thunderbolt theme to attract people.” (Present tourist office manager)

Businesses have not only used the name of Thunderbolt, but the Thunderbolt statue, erected in 1988, has also been frequently used. For instance Country Road Caravan Park, Thunderbolt Inn hotel, Uralla Printers and McCrossin’s Mill museum all use this symbol on flyers or in *The Uralla Wordsworth*, a community newspaper, to advertise themselves.



Figure 4.6 Business using the ‘Thunderbolt name’ (picture by author)

From the 1970s onwards, Thunderbolt souvenirs (see Figure 4.2) have been sold by Peter Phillips, an active resident, in ‘Peter Phillips-Sports & Toys’ shop. Phillips sells Thunderbolt spoons, postcards, stickers, pins and magnets. Before the statue was placed in Uralla, the pictures used on souvenirs were mainly of the grave and rock; but after 1988 the statue has become the dominant image on souvenirs (Former bicentennial committee member). Nowadays, the Visitor Information Centre also sells Thunderbolt souvenirs, stocked from Phillips’ shop.

In 2002 the ‘Thunderbolt pie’ came in to being, first put up for sale at a bakery in Uralla, presently available at the Thunderbolt Pie company (see Figure 4.6). The alternative storyteller came up with the idea for this pie to promote Uralla. He persuaded a Chinese couple, who owned the bakery, to make a recipe for a spicy meat pie and to name it ‘Thunderbolt pie’. The Chinese couple were to tell people that their relatives had lived in Uralla since the 1860s, which was not the case, and that Thunderbolt himself had eaten this famous pie back in the days. The pie was a huge success and attracted a lot of attention from local and national media. Journalists reported about it in newspapers and on television. This resulted in an increase in tourists visiting Uralla, all wanting to taste a piece of Thunderbolt pie (Alternative storyteller).

Businesses, products and souvenirs have had an effect on the physical appearance of Uralla. While walking down Bridge Street, the Thunderbolt name can be seen several times on signs and in shop windows. Tourists and residents participate in Thunderbolt practices, while buying these products or going into these businesses because of the Thunderbolt name. The media have communicated extensively to people about Uralla as Thunderbolt country while reporting on the Thunderbolt Pie.

4.2.5 Thunderbolt Festival (1980)

After the Centenary Week, the council, with encouragement by active residents, gradually started to invest time and money in the place promotion of Uralla. The historian mentioned that Thunderbolt was mainly used instead of other elements in Uralla, because Uralla had always been known as Thunderbolt country and therefore it was not necessary to create a new identity for Uralla's place promotion.

One of the first initiatives by the council to construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country, was the Thunderbolt Festival in 1980 (see Figure 4.2). This event was initially organised by the Thunderbolt Festival committee. The festival's name has changed during the years from Thunderbolt Festival, to Thunderbolt Spring Fest and presently it is called the Thunderbolt Country Fair & Talent Quest (Historian).

The festival is held each year on the second Saturday of November in Uralla. It started out quite low key, intended for Uralla residents and perhaps people from surrounding towns, but has extended during the years and nowadays attracts people from all over the region. Presently, the festival not only features a street parade and re-enactment of Thunderbolt's death, but also talent quests, battle of the bands, market stalls, fireworks and many other events. The festival also promotes local businesses, for instance the bookshop and antique stores.



Figure 4.7 Riding-school owner as Thunderbolt next to the Thunderbolt statue (picture by present tourist office manager)

The Thunderbolt Festival is one of the most important community events held in Uralla, therefore it attracts a lot of people. Tourists and residents of Uralla participate in Thunderbolt

practices by visiting the festival. For instance, interested residents, like the riding-school owner, re-enacts the role of Thunderbolt every year in the street parade (see Figure 4.7). Even indifferent residents visit the festival because it is a community event or their company sponsors the event and they have to be present at the festival (Newcomer).

The Thunderbolt Festival, the successor to the 1970s' Thunderbolt Centenary Week, constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country on a yearly basis. Nowadays the festival may be more focused on other elements, but the re-enactment of Thunderbolt's death and the street parade are still popular events. The festival continues to use the 'Thunderbolt name'. Local media such as *The Armidale Express* communicate to people about the festival; in this way Uralla as Thunderbolt country is further emphasised.

4.2.6 McCrossin's Mill museum (1982)

McCrossin's Mill Museum (see Figure 4.2 and 4.4) was launched in 1982 by the Uralla Historical Society, a group of active residents. The Society decided to structure the museum around local themes, for instance attention was paid to the Chinese who worked on the Rocky River goldfields near Uralla in the 1850s, to Uralla's War heroes and of course to the legend of Thunderbolt. Thunderbolt was and is the main attraction of the museum (Historian).

The exhibition on Thunderbolt has changed during the years. Presently there are two exhibitions about Thunderbolt in the museum. On the ground floor an exhibition is on display with nine paintings of the 'Death of Thunderbolt', painted by Phillip Pomroy (see Figure 4.8), who has a fascination for the legends surrounding the life and death of Thunderbolt. These paintings were purchased by the Uralla Shire Council in 1995 and are leased by the museum (President of the museum). The president of the museum emphasises Uralla as Thunderbolt country by giving a weekly talk to groups of tourists and school classes about the paintings, and how Thunderbolt came to his end.



Figure 4.8 'Death of Thunderbolt' paintings (picture by author)

On the top floor, the 'Thunderbolt – Life & Legend' exhibition is displayed, containing authentic artefacts including Thunderbolt's pistols and the table on which Thunderbolt's dead body had been displayed for all residents of Uralla to see. The exhibition is the museum's

most significant and popular exhibition. Both the historian and the president of the museum did extensive research for the exhibition, and it was then checked and confirmed by a professional, Peter Tonkin of 3-D Projects in Sydney, before inclusion (President of the museum).

As such, the exhibition is based on the official history of Thunderbolt, presently told by the historian. This history is communicated to visitors through the exhibitions, and because the history is told in a museum owned by the Uralla Historical Society, the visitors perceive it as being true. Another aspect of the museum that highlights the importance of Thunderbolt is that most displays are about Thunderbolt. When entering the building, the first exhibition on display are the paintings on Thunderbolt, while the last one displays Thunderbolt artefacts. So the story of Thunderbolt stays with the visitor throughout their visit to the museum.

McCrossin's Mill museum was the first new Thunderbolt site created in Uralla, following the use of the Thunderbolt grave site and rock in tourism. It differs from the Thunderbolt Centenary Week and Thunderbolt Festival in that the museum changed the physical appearance of Uralla permanently instead of being a temporary annual change.

Although the exterior of the building does not explicitly mention that it is a Thunderbolt site, the vast majority of museum visitors know beforehand that they can see displays about Thunderbolt, because it is a museum about local history and they obtain information about the museum on the internet or from the Visitor Information Centre.

The museum attracts tourists and residents, who participate in Thunderbolt practices by setting eyes on the Thunderbolt displays or buying a Thunderbolt souvenir, for instance 'The death of Thunderbolt paintings' postcards from the museum.

4.2.7 Brochure Uralla (1982)

In 1982, the council was spurred on by a group of active residents to produce the first full-colour brochure of Uralla (see Figure 4.2). The residents involved in the project had been interested in tourism since the 1970s and included the historian, who told stories to tourists about the history of Uralla and Thunderbolt and Peter Phillips and his wife Helen, who sold souvenirs and told tourists the location of Thunderbolt sites in Uralla in their shop. Also the former bicentennial committee member was involved, who was an employee of the Council Chambers at the time and welcomed tourists at her desk in the Chambers (Former bicentennial committee member).

Before this brochure came out, there were already black and white typed leaflets of Uralla's history and attractions, made by the historian, but these were produced on a small scale. The full-colour brochure was the first significant brochure that appeared in Uralla (Former bicentennial committee member). This brochure constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country because half of the brochure focuses on Thunderbolt and therefore it can be perceived that Thunderbolt is the most important element of Uralla. The history included in the brochure uses the official history as told by the historian.

The information in this brochure is communicated to residents of Uralla and tourists. By reading the brochure they pick up that Uralla is Thunderbolt country and as a consequence the majority of them participate in Thunderbolt practices, by visiting a site that is mentioned in the brochure. In subsequent years, the Uralla brochure has changed frequently but Thunderbolt has always been dominant in the brochure.

4.2.8 Thunderbolt statue (1988)

In 1988, Australia celebrated its bicentenary year, the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet to Australia, and consequently the beginning of European settlement. In Uralla, the council appointed the bicentennial committee to organise and oversee the celebrations. The committee could also apply for financial assistance to the NSW Bicentennial Council, for a project to be carried out in Uralla in 1988. Among the committee's members were the historian, the former bicentennial committee and the riding-school owner.



Several projects were submitted, but eventually the NSW Bicentennial Council approved \$70,000 to be granted to a project of a life-sized statue of Thunderbolt on a horse (see Figures 4.2 and 4.9). The former bicentennial committee member, an active resident, played an essential role in the development of this project for a statue, because besides being the secretary of the bicentennial committee, she was also a leader of the first Uralla Brownie Pack. It was one of these girls, Debbie O'Brien, who came up with the idea for a statue because she thought Thunderbolt was the most famous part of Uralla's history and that a statue of him would attract people to Uralla (Niland 2007).

Figure 4.9 Thunderbolt Statue (www.uralla.com)

The statue, designed by Denis Adams and unveiled in 1988, caused quite a stir in Uralla, but also across the state and nationwide. The media communicated to people extensively about the statue, and thus were constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country. They picked up on the controversial element of the statue, namely that a great deal of Uralla residents found it a waste of money to honour a criminal. The media also wondered why the money was not used for something more worthy instead, like the restoration of the library building in Uralla

Some comments made in the media mentioned that it was a disgrace that Constable Walker was never honoured in Uralla, but these reporters had obviously forgotten that Walker was honoured in 1970 by the unveiling of an official plaque, nowadays in the shadow of the more prominent Thunderbolt statue, during the Thunderbolt Centenary Week (Historian).

Since 1988, with negative feelings about the statue having tempered, more and more people have come to accept it (Former bicentennial committee member). The statue attracts a vast amount of people to Uralla. Residents and tourists visiting the statue participate in Thunderbolt practices for instance by taking pictures of the statue.

The statue has changed the physical appearance of Uralla, because it is very much prominently placed on Bridge Street (see Figure 4.4). It has also become the most dominant symbol of Uralla and has been used in brochures, souvenirs, postcards, advertisements for businesses and on billboards next to the highway. A book about the 'Story of the Statue' is in the making, written by the former bicentennial committee member.

4.2.9 Thunderbolt Country slogan (1991)

In the late 1980s, the 'Thunderbolt Country' slogan was already in use, for instance on the Uralla brochure. But in July 1991, the tourism committee accepted the slogan as the official Uralla Tourism Committee slogan (see Figure 4.2). This slogan is sometimes accompanied by a picture of Thunderbolt on a horse (Historian). From 1991 until now, the slogan has been used on brochures, souvenirs, postcards and on signs in Uralla (see Figure 4.10), for instance next to the highway or at the Visitor Information Centre.

Uralla as Thunderbolt country is reinforced through this slogan, because it is communicated to people through brochures, souvenirs, postcards and on signs. The signs have changed the physical appearance of Uralla and people are reminded that they are in Uralla Thunderbolt country on a regular basis.



Figure 4.10 The 'Thunderbolt Country' slogan on a sign where highway enters Uralla (picture by author)

4.2.10 Visitor Information Centre (1991)

In 1991, the council opened the Visitor Information Centre (see Figure 4.2 and 4.4) and appointed the first tourist office manager to run it. It was built next to the highway and was combined with a café where tourists could take a break after a long drive and hopefully pay a visit to the centre as well (Former tourist office manager). It may have changed the physical appearance of Uralla, but not necessarily constructed the town as Thunderbolt country. Only if one takes a closer look at the building, a sign or sticker on the door might be noticed, welcoming you to 'Uralla, Thunderbolt country'.

The Visitor Information Centre is a focal point to go to for tourists who want information on Uralla or on Thunderbolt. It offers Thunderbolt brochures and souvenirs and the centre is decorated with Thunderbolt memorabilia. The tourist office managers also tell visitors Thunderbolt stories, if they are interested, and manage a website on which information about Thunderbolt can be found. As a result, Thunderbolt country is constructed through communication to people via the tourist office manager, website, brochures, souvenirs and posters.

The amount of information available on Thunderbolt in the Visitor Information Centre, depends on which tourist office manager is on duty and in what direction the council's tourism policy is heading. The present tourist office manager has a passion for Thunderbolt and has therefore stimulated Thunderbolt tourism:

“Thunderbolt is the longest established matter in Uralla. Thunderbolt stops people; they visit the grave, the rock and statue.” (Present tourist office manager)

The former tourist office manager commented that the council had chosen to promote Thunderbolt because he was an icon and there was not much else to promote. However, she had wanted to emphasise other elements of Uralla as well, which is why the Uralla brochure that came out in the late nineties, during the time that she worked in the Visitor Centre, contained much more other elements than it had in the previous brochures. The brochure is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.3 ‘Communication about Uralla as Thunderbolt country’.

Since 2001, the present tourist office manager has told visitors the official history and the alternative version of the official history in the Visitor Information Centre. He emphasises Uralla as Thunderbolt country, in which different stories surrounding the legend of Thunderbolt exist. The different stories are a point of interest to tourists, because they are attracted to the mystique and intrigue surrounding Thunderbolt. Tourists are interested to find out that Fred Ward was possibly not the person shot by Constable Walker and buried as Thunderbolt in the grave in the old Uralla cemetery, but that it was his brother, Harry (Former bicentennial committee member).

The Visitor Information Centre, or tourist office manager, might also inspire tourists to take part in Thunderbolt practices, for example visiting Thunderbolt sites or the festival.

4.2.11 The alternative version of the official history (2001)

Since Thunderbolt's death in 1870, different stories have surrounded the legend of Thunderbolt, especially stories concerning his death. For instance, people have claimed in the past that Fred Ward never was Thunderbolt, but that Fred Britten was Thunderbolt and that he escaped to Canada (Rixon 1948). People in favour of the official history have always made counter claims to these alternative versions of the official history (Thurgood 1996)

This has also been the case with the story of the alternative storyteller (see Figure 4.2). In 2001, the alternative storyteller came out with his version of the story. People immediately reacted to his story, claiming it was untrue. The conclusion of the official history is contested in the alternative history.

The alternative storyteller constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country by communicating his story (see Figure 4.5) to residents of Uralla, for instance to schoolchildren, and through the media, who have shown an extensive interest in him. On his website he criticises the official history and upholds his own theory point by point (Sinclair 2000). He came out with the story in 2001 when he was working in the Visitor Information Centre together with the present tourist office manager, and he could therefore also communicate the alternative history to tourists through the Visitor Information Centre.

The alternative storyteller also constructed Uralla as Thunderbolt country by coming up with the idea of a Thunderbolt pie in 2002, as described in section 4.2.4 ‘Businesses and

merchandise (1970)', and inspired Queensland country music star Graham Rodger to write a song about the life and death of Thunderbolt and calling his new CD 'Thunderbolt'. The alternative storyteller was involved in designing the cover for the album, which depicts the riding-school owner as Thunderbolt together with his grandson, who plays Constable Walker, and Graham Rodger as himself. The media have reported on the CD and associated the Thunderbolt song with Uralla, creating Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

4.3 Role of actors constructing Thunderbolt country

This section discusses what role actors play in constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country. Actors construct Thunderbolt country by reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country, for instance by visiting a Thunderbolt site and by changing the physical appearance of Uralla, for example by the placing of a statue of Thunderbolt. Also, they communicate about Uralla as Thunderbolt country through numerous forms of representation (brochures, newspapers etc.).

Other actors do not construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country, but construct the town as a different place. They contest Thunderbolt country, for example by protesting against it or because they are indifferent to the Thunderbolt identity.

Before the different roles of the actors are discussed it is necessary to examine the balance of power between actors first, because the most powerful actors create the Thunderbolt place identity.

4.3.1 Balance of power between actors

As mentioned in section 4.1, different actors have constructed Uralla as Thunderbolt country and were successful in doing so, precisely because they were responsible for determining the dominant place identity of Uralla - the Thunderbolt place identity. They are therefore the most powerful actors in Uralla.

However, among these actors differences in power exist. One actor may have more influence in constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country, than another. An examination of section 4.2, 'Constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country' certainly suggests that the government is the most powerful actor.

The Uralla Shire Council was responsible for organising the Thunderbolt Festival, producing the Uralla brochure, the placement of the Thunderbolt statue, assigning Uralla the slogan 'Thunderbolt Country' and opening up the Visitor Information Centre. On a regional level, the Thunderbolt Centenary Week was organised by the New England Regional tourist officer Bob Cummins.

However, it is important to remember that a lot of these initiatives were developed by committees of the council, and in particular by enthusiastic active residents in these committees. For instance, the statue was pushed by the former bicentennial committee member and it was an idea that came from a little girl. Another example is the Uralla brochure, which was an idea of a former bicentennial committee member who had seen this type of brochure in other towns, and it was developed by Peter and Helen Phillips, the historian and herself.

It can therefore be concluded that active residents are the most powerful in creating Uralla as Thunderbolt country. This view is reinforced if one looks at the other initiatives described in

section 4.2. Projects such as the headstone on the grave or businesses using the Thunderbolt name, have all been pushed through by active residents.

As well as active residents, the historian and alternative storyteller should be mentioned separately as dominant actors. It is their stories that are essential to the creation of Uralla as Thunderbolt country, since they decide what is communicated to people about Thunderbolt. For instance, every time the town is mentioned as Thunderbolt country in the media, their stories are mentioned. Every time someone visits Uralla, they are confronted with both stories, either by visiting the museum or by going to the Visitor Information Centre.

What most of these dominant actors - the active residents, historian and alternative storyteller – have in common is that they are for the most part white, male individuals. The former bicentennial committee member is the exception as she is female.

However, the backgrounds of the dominant actors do differ; they come from different classes, have different educational levels, are born in different places and do different jobs. For instance, some are born in Uralla while others are from such faraway places as Sydney. Some have a university background and others never pursued further education. Every actor has a different job, for instance one used to be head of a school, another is the owner of a property. The only group whose background is unknown, were the owners of the Thunderbolt businesses.

So why exactly do active residents, the historian and the alternative storyteller construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country? As discussed in section 4.1 ‘Actors and their motives’, their motives vary. For some it is their passion for Thunderbolt and the desire to tell the true story about Thunderbolt, so that visitors can be informed about local history. For others it is simply a way to bring in tourists, and as a consequence stimulate the economic well-being of Uralla. These actors are to a certain extent all promoters of Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

An interviewee confirmed the role of active residents:

“Thunderbolt has been used in tourism in the past, because of individuals like [the alternative storyteller] and [the historian] pushing their passion for Thunderbolt.” (Economic development officer)

Actors that have not been mentioned in this section as dominant actors are the interested residents, tourists and the media. These actors are not included because they do not play a dominant part in the creation of any one particular event or site. For instance, tourists and interested residents play a part in visiting all Thunderbolt sites and events and as such are reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country.

The media meanwhile plays a part in communicating about all sites and events. The media have communicated mostly about the statue and the alternative history, because the site and story have a controversial aspect to it because residents opposed the statue, while the alternative history contests the official history.

It is actually quite remarkable that the council does not appear to be the most dominant actor in Uralla, but that active residents contribute the most to the construction of Thunderbolt country.

A possible explanation for this could be that tourism is conducted on a small scale and it is therefore not an important issue for the council. Tourism certainly has an impact on the local economy, even though measuring the exact dollar figures is difficult because statistics are only available for the number of visitors going to the Visitor Information Centre - 13,000 people visit the Visitor Information Centre on average each year. However, Uralla is not entirely dependent on tourism. Major industries in Uralla, in order of significance, are: agriculture, retail and education (Economic development officer). Tourism may generate a fair bit of secondary income, but Uralla will never attract as many tourists as destinations such as the Gold Coast - mostly because of its inland location.

4.3.2 Thunderbolt changes the physical appearance of Uralla

As discussed in section 4.2, actors construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country. They do this, among other things, by altering the physical appearance of Uralla. Different Thunderbolt sites are visible in Uralla such as the statue, the rock and the grave while indirect sites such as signs with the Thunderbolt slogan and businesses are also using the Thunderbolt name (see Figure 4.4 for the location of direct sites).

However, the site which has probably had the most impact on the physical appearance of Uralla is the Thunderbolt statue. There are four main reasons which can explain the importance of the statue:

Firstly, when entering Uralla through Bridge Street, the statue is the only Thunderbolt site that directly catches the eye. Other direct Thunderbolt sites, by comparison, are located outside the centre.

Secondly, besides affecting the physical appearance of Uralla in a single location, the statue also appears in other locations such as on signs in town, brochures, souvenirs, postcards, advertisements for businesses and on billboards out of town. It has become the symbol of the town.

Thirdly, as mentioned in section 4.2.8 'Thunderbolt statue (1988)', the statue is the most contested Thunderbolt site in Uralla. Every respondent that was interviewed had a strong opinion on the statue, either they loved it or hated it. A respondent commented:

"It is typically Australian to honour a bushranger instead of the police. We have a long history of not liking the police. [...] Beer cans are often put in Thunderbolt's hand and I have seen Thunderbolt dressed in women's clothes before." (Newcomer)

This quote seems to indicate that the statue is also sometimes a target of ridicule.

And lastly, the media picked up extensively on the controversy surrounding the statue in 1988. No other Thunderbolt site has attracted this much media attention.

Nevertheless when looking at the complete picture of Uralla's streetscape, other elements that represent the town, such as galleries, antique shops, cafes and heritage buildings, are more dominant than the Thunderbolt sites. It may even come as a surprise that Uralla has such an artistic, cultural vibe to it – the town has even been called the 'Paddington¹ of Armidale'

¹ Paddington is a Sydney residential area with Victorian terrace houses and numerous art galleries. The area deteriorated rapidly following the Second World War but it has since been upgraded.

(Mayo 2002). This cultural atmosphere can be explained by the close proximity of the town to the university town of Armidale.

It would seem that Thunderbolt has not been exploited to the maximum in Uralla. For instance, the Thunderbolt name is not present in every street, Thunderbolt souvenirs are not available in each shop and not every Thunderbolt site is exploited, like Kentucky Creek where Thunderbolt was shot (Alternative storyteller). The Thunderbolt sites are just moderately noticeable in the physical appearance of Uralla and are largely based in Bridge Street.

4.3.3 Communication about Uralla as Thunderbolt country

The mentioning of Uralla in such diverse media as brochures, newspapers, websites or travel magazines, is often in the context of Thunderbolt. As mentioned in section 4.3.1 'Balance of power between actors', the story used about Thunderbolt in these different sources, are the stories of the historian and alternative storyteller. These actors play the most important part in determining what is communicated to people about Thunderbolt and therefore construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country. Their stories are also used in the museum and the Visitor Information Centre.

To research how people communicate about Uralla, a selection of brochures, websites and newspapers were analysed.

Brochures

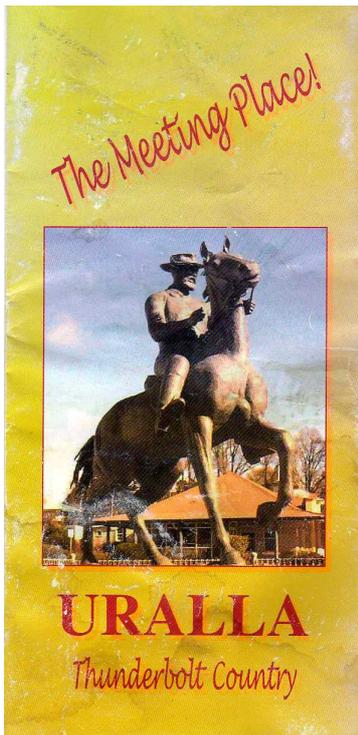
Brochures about Uralla, or brochures containing information about Uralla, are available on a local and regional level. First local brochures will be discussed, after which regional brochures are analysed.

In Uralla, the council has published a general brochure about the town. As discussed in section 4.2.7 'Brochure Uralla (1982)', the brochure was first published in 1982 and has changed several times during the years. Four brochures were looked at, each from different time periods: brochure one was from the late 1980s, brochure two from the early nineties, brochure three was from the late nineties and brochure four is used presently.

In all the brochures, Thunderbolt was prominently present, for instance the statue of Thunderbolt was printed on the cover of all brochures (see Figure 4.11). However, brochures one and two's coverage on Thunderbolt comprises approximately half the brochure, while it is only a third for the later brochures since they focus more on other elements of Uralla and its surroundings, such as museums, bookshops, nature, antique shops and art galleries. It can therefore be concluded that on a local level, Uralla has started to focus more on promoting the town in a broader context.

On a regional level, Armidale Regional Tourism and Big Sky Country have published different types of brochures.

Armidale Regional Tourism produced four scenic drives concerning Uralla, a visitors guide and street maps of Armidale, Guyra, Walcha and Uralla. In all brochures, Uralla is depicted as a place consisting of art, crafts, antiques, tearooms and coffee shops. Thunderbolt is merely an element in a broader context. If, for example, one would follow scenic drive 19: 'Culture, Wilderness and Heritage', it would not be immediately clear that it was a drive through Thunderbolt country.



The most dominant description of Uralla used in these scenic drives, is:

“Uralla is known as a haven for crafts people and artists. The heady days of the gold rushes have been replaced with the relaxing atmosphere of bookshops, antique shops, tearooms and coffee lounges.” (Armidale Regional Tourism)

Big Sky Country published a map of the ‘Big Sky region’ including drives, events, description of the place, services in places and ‘must sees and must dos’. In the description about Uralla only the museum is mentioned as ‘the home of Thunderbolt memorabilia’; it is furthermore depicted as a rural place, located in the countryside with beautiful natural surroundings and different museums. Just like the Armidale Regional Tourism brochures, Thunderbolt is not the most prominent attraction of Uralla.

Figure 4.11 Uralla brochure early nineties (picture by historian)

Website Uralla Tourism

The official tourism website (www.uralla.com) is an important website about Uralla. It is the first website that appears for the search term ‘Uralla’ on Google. The website is managed by the tourist office manager and is an informative source meant for tourists.

On the site’s home page, the only thing that pertains to Thunderbolt is the slogan ‘Thunderbolt country’. More striking than this slogan is a picture of Gostwyck Chapel, located 20 km from Uralla, covered with Virginia creeper. Thunderbolt sites are mentioned under the hyperlink ‘heritage’, which can be found under the hyperlink ‘attractions’. Other attractions that are mentioned as hyperlinks are antiques, clubs, galleries, horse riding, local layabouts, museums, nature and specialty shops. Therefore, it would seem that also for this website, Thunderbolt is not promoted as the town’s main draw.

Newspapers

When the media report about Thunderbolt, its sites and events, about travelling to Uralla, it constructs Uralla as Thunderbolt country. In a sample of newspaper articles researched for this thesis, often the stories of both the historian and the alternative storyteller are mentioned.

An example of a travel article is 'In search of a legend' (Holland 2003), in which Uralla is linked to Thunderbolt country:

"It was the promise of tracking a bushranger's life, all the way to his grave, that charmed and intrigued my six-year-old, Matthew. 'Why did he steal, Mum? Is this where they buried him, Mum?' [...] And so his cute but incessant questions continued and never let up, until they were answered by as many Thunderbolt-related attractions as we could find in the former gold-mining village of Uralla".

Following this quote, all Thunderbolt related sites or merchandise are mentioned - even the consumption of a Thunderbolt pie. While discussing the Thunderbolt grave, the two stories of the alternative storyteller and the historian are mentioned:

"Uralla local and Thunderbolt's great great nephew, the [alternative storyteller], claims that it was actually Fred's half brother Harry who was shot by Walker that May day in 1870. [...] Counteracting the Alternative storyteller's claim is [the historian] who says 300 locals viewed the body and the consensus was that it was Fred".

Nevertheless, at the end of the article other elements of Uralla are also mentioned, for instance its bookshops, antique stores, museums, bushwalking, fossicking, panning for gold and national parks.

Newspapers also report on Thunderbolt sites and events. In a sample of newspapers researched for this thesis, articles about the placing of the headstone on Thunderbolt's grave, the Thunderbolt Centenary Week, the Thunderbolt statue and the emergence of the alternative story were analysed. These articles were used to see how the media reported on such sites and events.

The placement of a headstone on Thunderbolt's grave in 1914, did not attract a lot of media attention. A few short articles were published on the topic in which just the facts were summed up. It becomes clear in the articles, that at the time, the majority of Uralla residents had negative feelings about the headstone, since hardly anyone visited a local concert that was held to raise funds for the erection of the headstone. To make it clear to readers that Mr. Crapp had good intentions, it is repeated several times that he marked the grave because it was a historical fact and not because he wanted to honour Thunderbolt (*The Uralla Times*, June 29, July 18 and August 15, 1914).

The Thunderbolt Centenary Week was the first tourism event organised around the Thunderbolt theme. It attracted a lot of media attention. Some of the controversial themes discussed in the articles included alternative versions of the official history, claiming that Fred Ward was not Thunderbolt, and the fact that the Centenary Week, was held in the same year as the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook. Honouring a criminal could possibly overshadow the commemoration of a proper hero (*The Sunday Mail*, June 22, 1969).

However it must also be said that several articles emphasised the positive aspects of the Centenary Week, for instance it is mentioned that the Thunderbolt Centenary Week is about honouring Constable Walker and about giving tourism in Uralla an impulse (*The Uralla Times*, May 28, 1970).

It would seem that the residents of Uralla have changed their opinion on Thunderbolt since 1914, for it is discussed that even though Constable Walker had been honoured during the

Centenary Week, people rooted for Thunderbolt during the re-enactment. The commissioner of the Police, Mr. Allan, commented on this in *The Uralla Times* (28 May, 1970):

“ [...] during the re-enactment the support of the crowd was definitely with Thunderbolt, particularly with the children. I heard cries of ‘Go on Thunderbolt.’ [...] and finally when the policeman did his duty, ‘Oh! Wasn’t that cold-blooded of him, mum.’”

As noted in section 4.2.8 ‘Thunderbolt statue (1988)’, the media reported on the statue extensively - mostly because it had a controversial aspect to it as a lot of people were against ‘honouring a criminal’. The media’s coverage on the statue was mostly done in a negative way, focusing on people that were against the statue. For instance, *The Armidale Express* published an article (February 12, 1988) headed ‘Statue an insult’. Bob Cummins, organiser of the Thunderbolt Centenary Week was quoted:

“Uralla's Bicentenary project, the statue of Thunderbolt, has been described as an insult to the people of the town. The erection of a \$70,000 statue to the bushranger has been slated by author-historian, Bob Cummins. He says he is hostile to the idea of erecting a statue which represents Thunderbolt (Fred Ward) as ‘the King of Australia. I regard it as dishonouring the people of Uralla,’ he said.”

Some newspapers supported the statue, since the statue would attract more tourists. Quoted from *The Armidale Express* (March 29, 1985):

"There seems little doubt that Uralla will benefit in the long run. One wonders if those people so opposed to the Thunderbolt statue will knock back any tourist spending which it attracts to Uralla and the district. We think not."

The alternative storyteller came out with his alternative version of the official history in 2001. Since then, he has attracted a lot of attention from the media, for instance from local papers, as *The Armidale Express*, to magazines as *Outback* magazine and he has even been on TV several times. Newspaper articles concerning the alternative storyteller are accompanied by outspoken headlines, for instance, ‘Thunderbolt identity controversy deepens’ (*The Armidale Express*, July 16, 2004) or ‘Dead man dancing’ with underneath the text: ‘Captain Thunderbolt seen partying weeks after burial.’ (*The Armidale Express*, November 16, 2001)

According to the alternative storyteller, journalists approach him and find him through his website. However, there are other reasons why he might be of interest to the media. Firstly, the alternative story was different from other versions. It claimed that Harry, Fred Ward’s brother, was shot dead on May 25 in 1870 and that he lay in the cemetery and not Fred Ward. Barry says Fred Ward was Thunderbolt, not Fred Britten, and he was the one that escaped to Canada.

Secondly, the alternative storyteller is related to Thunderbolt and, thirdly, he manages a website, which can easily be found on the internet, in which he criticises the official history and upholds his own theory point by point (Sinclair 2000). No one has criticised the official history in such an extensive way before.

In conclusion, all articles about different Thunderbolt events and sites mention how tourism can benefit from these initiatives. However, Thunderbolt sites and events are more often connected to controversy, for instance by mentioning the different stories surrounding the legend or questioning the site that is being placed, or event that is taking place.

Reports about residents' attitudes towards Thunderbolt in newspapers vary: in 1914 residents were mainly against Thunderbolt, while in 1970 residents were for the most part in favour of Thunderbolt and in 1988 it was the other way around again. Media attention for Thunderbolt sites and events has increased during the years, which has, among other things, to do with the larger role that the media presently play in contemporary society compared to the early days.

4.3.4 But what about the other elements in Uralla?

Uralla is not only known for Thunderbolt, but also for other elements that were important in its past (and some that still are), while some elements have just come into being in the present. Elements in Uralla's past that were important in actually creating Uralla are the Anaiwan aboriginal community, the original inhabitants of Uralla, pastoral settlers like Henry Dangar and Edward Gostwyck Cory that came to the town in the 1830s and the many fortune seekers from China, who came to find gold at Rocky River near Uralla in 1856 (Handley 1970).

Nowadays, Uralla is also renowned for its super-fine and ultra-fine Merino wool, foundries, museums, Alma Park, heritage buildings and the beautiful National Parks surrounding Uralla. Larger shopping chains have avoided the small town and independent retailers such as an antiquarian book store, numerous art galleries, antique stores and cafes have survived (Uralla website).

Actors representing these 'other elements', are less powerful than actors creating Thunderbolt country, because the way they perceive Uralla's place identity has until recently not been visible, for instance in Uralla's place promotion. They do not construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country, but construct Uralla as a different place.

This part of the thesis is based on the interviews with actors that represent the other element, for instance with the 'Feminists', 'Artists', 'Bookshops', 'Antique shops' and 'Koori' actors.

Representing the 'Feminists' actor, a feminist who organised a women's comedy festival in Armidale, a university town near Uralla, was interviewed. She was also interviewed as a representative of the 'Artists' actor, because she is involved in the Uralla Arts Council. For over 25 years, Uralla has had a thriving community of artists and potters, stimulated by proximity to university town Armidale, which is visible in Uralla through its many art galleries.

Ten years ago, the Uralla Arts Council was formed by volunteers and it encourages all artists in the area to exhibit and become involved in local projects both professionally and on behalf of the community. This committee is an example of how Uralla is promoted in a different way than as Thunderbolt country.

Representing the 'Bookshops' actor, a second-hand bookshop owner who owns the only bookshop in Uralla was interviewed. Important reasons for establishing this bookshop in Uralla were that it is situated on Bridge Street and can take advantage of passing traffic, while the town is also near Armidale. Every year the bookshop owner organises the Uralla Book Fair, by which 16 booksellers offer their ware to people from all over the region. By promoting Uralla through this book fair, he promotes the town in a different way than as Thunderbolt Country. Representing the 'Antique shops' actor, an antique shop owner was interviewed. There are numerous antique shops in Uralla for reasons similar to the bookshop.

Representing the 'Koori' actor, an elder from the Anaiwan community was interviewed. In this thesis, 'Koori' will be mentioned instead of 'aboriginal', because the Anaiwan community prefer to be called Koori. There are three elders amongst the Koori people in Uralla. Elders are peacekeepers, bridge builders between Koori and non-Koori and a good example to their people.

The Koori differ from other actors in the sense that they are the original inhabitants of Uralla and are the only actor that has been around for a long time. Their case should therefore be examined in more detail.

180 Koori people live in Uralla today, seven percent of the total population, and they consist of Anaiwan people and 'transit people' from other regions surrounding Uralla. Their presence is barely noticed in the physical appearance of the town. Only when one takes a closer look, two murals painted on walls in Bridge Street and a small exhibition in the McCrossin's Mill museum devoted to the Anaiwan community can be found.

The elder mentioned that the Uralla Shire Council does acknowledge the Anaiwan community as the traditional owners; they always mention this at festivities. However, he would like them to pay more attention to the Anaiwan community in other ways, for example by naming a street after the community, or by opening up more Anaiwan sites to the public. It would help Anaiwan history to continue as most of it is not written down and the older members of the community often keep things to themselves.

The Anaiwan people have a special connection to Thunderbolt. The elder commented on this:

"We worship Thunderbolt, he dared go against the colony at the same time Koori people were oppressed. We would have liked to do the same; Thunderbolt did what we could not do'.

Also, Thunderbolt actually had a relationship with a Koori woman, Mary Ann Bugg. Her father was an English shepherd, who was sent to Australia for stealing meat, where he married a Koori woman. Mary Ann met Fred Ward and became one of only two female bushrangers in Australia, helping Thunderbolt to keep up his job for the longest time any bushranger in Australia has (Alternative storyteller).

Despite this connection, the Koori do not like the fact that Uralla is known as Thunderbolt country and that this is emphasised in tourism. They feel Uralla should be known as 'Anaiwan country'.

All representatives of the actors agreed on the fact that tourism, or place promotion, in Uralla has focused too much on Thunderbolt in the last couple of decades. They would rather see other elements of Uralla promoted, for instance the art galleries or antique shops. It is fine that Thunderbolt is promoted, but he should just be an element in a broader context. Every interviewee stood up for the organisation they represented, for instance the bookshop owner commented:

"Thunderbolt is ok, as an element, but we should not rely on him. Uralla should become a 'second-hand books centre', this would bring in more people and it is more substantial. The Thunderbolt festival is a local party, people do not come from far to go to the festival. The Book Fair attracts people from Sydney and Brisbane."

The question what Uralla should promote that has been left out of its current place promotion, was also asked to representatives of other actors. The respondents all gave very different answers, namely: nature, art galleries, cafes, antique shops, bookshops, Gostwyck bridge, Brass and Iron lace foundry, heritage walk, Alma Park, Goldmining, Merino sheep and cattle, Anaiwan community and the Chinese. So it can be concluded that Uralla consists of a lot of other elements besides Thunderbolt, but that not one element is dominantly mentioned as being left out.

Recent developments

As mentioned in the previous section, things have been changing recently in tourism in Uralla, as tourism organisations are going beyond the Thunderbolt legend and have begun to increase their focus on the other elements of Uralla.

Since 2006, the Uralla Shire Council has also started to change its tourism policy as suggested by the destination committee. The committee decided that Thunderbolt would still be used in tourism in the future, but that it should be an element in a wider context. It made the decision to increase its focus on National Parks, cafes, art galleries, history, bird watching and other attractions.

This new tourism policy has already been put to work in a poster campaign for Uralla, using a new slogan. Every poster consists of the slogan: 'Find....in Uralla' (see Figure 4.12). On the dots different elements of Uralla are noted. In figure 4.12, two posters that were photographed in the Visitor Information Centre are depicted, which advertises antique shops ('Find a bargain') and the McCrossin's Mill museum ('Find the past'). The economic development officer also disclosed that he is working on a series of brochures at the moment, for instance on antiques and art galleries, which contain a map and information on each business.

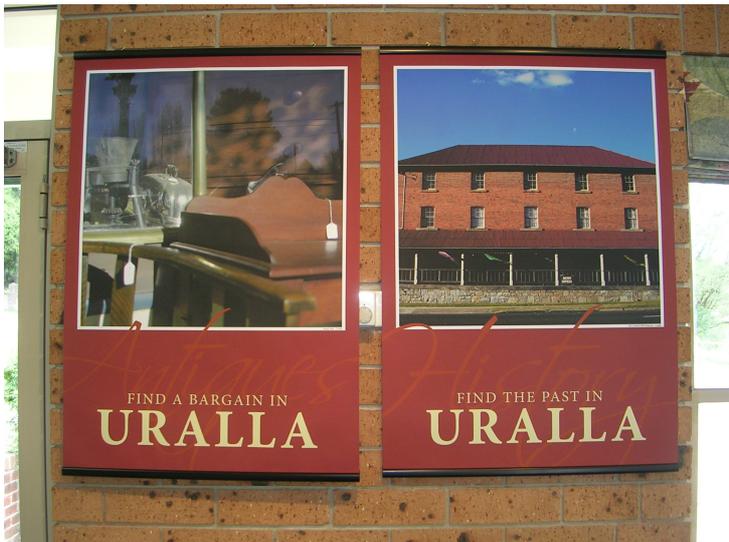


Figure 4.12 Poster campaign "Find....in Uralla" (picture by author)

Actors representing the other elements have also managed to attract more attention to themselves in the last couple of years through the organisation of events. For instance, the bookshop owner started the annual Uralla Book Fair and the feminist organises the Uralla

Youth Fest, an art festival for children. By promoting these initiatives, Uralla has been put on the map as a different place than Thunderbolt country. The media have also picked up on these new events and communicate about these other elements to its readers.

However, not every actor representing the other elements is visible in the physical appearance of Uralla, in the council's new tourism policy or is reported on in the media. There are power differences between these actors as well. For instance, the artists are more visible in town, because they are represented by the Uralla Arts Council, a powerful committee and in the physical appearance of Uralla, because of the three galleries located on Bridge Street. They have also been promoted in the new tourism policy of the council. The Koori are less powerful and, as a result, less visible, because the major Koori site, Mount Yarrowyck, is located outside of Uralla and other sites are not open to the public. They do not attract a lot of attention from the media and, with the exception of Mount Yarrowyck, are not mentioned in the new tourism policy of the council.

4.3.5 Residents views: a hero or criminal on a horse?

The following section is based on the interviews with all representatives of the different actors, because they are all residents of Uralla. The representatives of the actors were firstly asked questions on their views of the Thunderbolt legend, if they see him as a part of their identity, and what they think about use of the legend in Uralla's promotion. Secondly, they were asked how other residents of Uralla feel about these topics. In this order the actors and residents will now be discussed.

Actors

Thunderbolt tourism

Actors that construct Thunderbolt country do not mind that it is created as such for tourism purposes. They see Thunderbolt as an unique thing, a way to attract tourists, and consequently attract income to Uralla. A school student in year 11/12, an interested resident, commented on this, saying: "Thunderbolt is Uralla's only claim to fame." It is not strange that these actors feel this way about Thunderbolt country, since they are the actors that construct Thunderbolt country.

The feminist, bookshop owner, the newcomer and the economic development officer all think that Thunderbolt's role in tourism promotion should be reduced and that other elements of Uralla should receive more attention. Most of the actors that feel this way are actors representing the other elements of Uralla. They stand up for the organisation they represent and do their own bit to widen the appeal of Uralla as something beyond Thunderbolt. The newcomer, a resident that has just moved to Uralla three years ago, also feels the same, but perhaps this is because he is also a member of the Uralla Arts Council.

The economic development officer is the exception in this group of other elements, since he is working for the 'government' actor and 'belongs' to the group of actors that construct Thunderbolt country. However, the council's tourism policy has changed in 2006 and he has been the initiator of this change in the destination committee.

The elder of the Anaiwan community and the antique shop owner are both representatives of the other elements and see the promotion of Uralla as Thunderbolt country in a negative light, but for different reasons. The elder does not like the idea of Thunderbolt country and would

rather Uralla be known as ‘Anaiwan country’. The antique shop owner sees Thunderbolt country as an easy way to capitalise on tourism:

“Thunderbolt country is artificial. Before the statue was unveiled in 1988 there was no Thunderbolt country. I am embarrassed that people use Thunderbolt to cash in on tourists. [...] Thunderbolt meant nothing; but it became something because of tourism. People identify with him nowadays.”

Identity

Several representatives of actors that construct Thunderbolt country, the historian, alternative storyteller, the riding-school owner and school children of year six, also see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity. The alternative storyteller and the historian have a special bond with Thunderbolt, because they grew up with family stories about him. The historian’s great grand mother, for example, had encounters with Thunderbolt and his wife’s grandfather had even given Fred a cup of tea back in the days. The alternative storyteller is even more drawn to the legend because of his family connection.

The riding-school owner sees Thunderbolt as a part of his identity, because he grew up with him and used to visit the rock and grave with his parents. He also mentioned that re-enacting Thunderbolt for 20 years and the subsequent association with Thunderbolt by Uralla residents, has made this bond stronger. The riding-school owner confirms what the antique shop owner mentioned, namely that Uralla has always been known as Thunderbolt country, but since its promotion for tourism purposes people have become more interested in Thunderbolt.

Schoolchildren of year six and year 11/12 think very differently about Thunderbolt. The year six children all thought Thunderbolt was very important, because there was a statue of him in town and they had done a research project on him at school in year three. It is part of the New South Wales curriculum for primary school students to focus on local history, which means that children in Uralla Central School go on an excursion to the grave and museum in year three and have to do research on him on the internet and by talking to local historians. In high school, no attention is paid to Thunderbolt and children are more used to having the legend around, so that the majority of them are indifferent to the legend.

The elder of the Anaiwan community would not go as far as to say that Thunderbolt is a part of his identity, but he mentioned that the Koori people do have a special connection with Thunderbolt for reasons discussed in section 4.3.4 ‘But what about the other elements in Uralla?’. In particular, he has a special bond with Thunderbolt, because he knows family stories about Thunderbolt, concerning ‘a fling’ his grandmother’s sister had with Thunderbolt at Hanging Rock.

However, it would seem that the majority of the actors, including some actors that construct Uralla as Thunderbolt country, do not see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity. These people, for instance the former bicentennial committee member, just see Thunderbolt as a way to attract tourists and income to Uralla.

The newcomer, feminist and the antique shop owner all see Thunderbolt in a negative light. They perceive Thunderbolt as a criminal who never worked for his money and can not understand why Thunderbolt is honoured as a hero in Uralla.

The feminist has protested against Thunderbolt by writing a song about him and performing it in a comedic way with her friend as a duo, calling themselves the 'Wild Women of Uralla', at different events such as the Thunderbolt Spring Fair.

In her protest song (see Figure 4.13) she reminds people that Thunderbolt was just a criminal and that his companion Mary Ann Bugg, was an intelligent woman, who taught Thunderbolt to read and write. She was a bushranger herself and should have been the one to be honoured, but no one really knows about her in Uralla.

In the chorus, she mentions the huge fruit and animal statues often found in towns in Australia, for instance the big banana in Coffs Harbour, and that Uralla is known for its statue of a criminal. The feminist hopes to raise public awareness through comedy and her song. She calls herself an 'assertive protester'.

Now the outlaw had a partner and Mary was her name,
She would read her man the news and they'd laugh about his fame,
She was educated, well informed in local and political,
But there's no monument to her how bloody hypocritical?,
Some towns honour founding mothers, other pioneers,
Up here we honour criminals, silk purses from sows' ears,
'Cause history makes it colourful and brings the town a buck,
If you're asking our opinion it's history run amok,

Chorus

You've seen the Dog on the Tuckerbox, you've seen the Big Merino,
And there's Big Bananas, Giant Prawns and the Apple down at Batlow,
But here in old Uralla is the icon of the north,
It's like nothing you've ever seen before: The Criminal on the Horse!

Figure 4.13 A couplet and the chorus of 'The Uralla Song' (written by the feminist)

The media picked up on the feminist's Thunderbolt protest song and an article was published about it in national newspaper *Weekend Australian* (October 13, 2001).

Residents

Thunderbolt tourism

The majority of town residents are indifferent to Thunderbolt country and do not have an opinion on the use of Thunderbolt in the place promotion of Uralla. Some people, that are indifferent to Thunderbolt, have never even visited the sites. They might go to the Thunderbolt festival, not because of the Thunderbolt related events held at the festival, but because it is a community event.

A small group of people are opposed to Thunderbolt country, but do not protest against it. They just complain about it and are therefore 'passively opposed'. For instance, a few years

ago Walcha Road was changed into Thunderbolt's Way. People still do not accept that the road is named after a criminal. The present tourist office manager commented on this:

“Thunderbolt's Way was proclaimed in 1990 by three Shires. It is a promotional road, it used to be called Walcha Road. People that live on Thunderbolt's Way still call it Walcha Road, they refuse to call it Thunderbolt's Way.”

The former tourist office manager, who was the first tourist office manager of Uralla, used to be looked upon negatively by residents for promoting Thunderbolt. The alternative storyteller confirms this and commented:

“A lot of locals object to Thunderbolt, because up to recently it was a disgrace to be related to a convict in Australia. People are not happy that I push Thunderbolt to promote the town.”

Residents that are opposed to Thunderbolt country, have complained the most about the statue of Thunderbolt, which was picked up by the media as mentioned in section 4.3.3 'Communication about Uralla as Thunderbolt country'.

Since 1988 however, opinions of residents opposed to Thunderbolt country, have tempered, possibly because residents have gotten more used to it (Former bicentennial committee member). The riding-school owner confirms this by stating that in the eyes of residents the villain Thunderbolt has slowly been changing into a Robin Hood type character, which has increased their sympathy.

And of course there are those residents who do not seem to mind that Uralla is known as Thunderbolt country. It is the interested and active residents, as mentioned in section 4.1.5 'Residents', that have reproduced the town as Thunderbolt country by visiting the Thunderbolt sites and events and participating in Thunderbolt practices. They have grown up with Thunderbolt and see it as a part of local history. Some of them would probably see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity.

Identity

The majority of Uralla's residents who are indifferent to Thunderbolt country, do not see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity. They just see Thunderbolt as a tourism stunt, something that can attract tourists and income to Uralla. The older generation in Uralla however often see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity. The president of the museum commented on this:

“Residents today see Thunderbolt just as a tourism stunt. Stories about Thunderbolt are not being told anymore because they have died out, because of the influence of television. Old people do see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity, because they do know the stories. [...] It used to be a part of the Uralla folklore.”

The feminist confirmed this and mentioned that when her dad visits her, he always stops at the Thunderbolt grave in the cemetery because it means something to him, for he has grown up with Thunderbolt stories told by his family and in local history at school.

This chapter discussed how the Thunderbolt place identity in Uralla is and was constructed by key actors. They constructed Thunderbolt country by reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country, by changing the physical appearance of Uralla, and by communicating about Uralla as Thunderbolt country. However, not every actor or resident constructs the town as

Thunderbolt country. They see Uralla in a different way and contest Thunderbolt country, for example by protesting against it, or are indifferent to the Thunderbolt identity.

The following chapter contains a discussion of these results interweaved with existing studies and limitations of this thesis. This will be done by answering the subquestions mentioned in chapter 1.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter is a bridge between chapter 4 and chapter 6. It consists of the interpretations of the results, including references to other academic work, and discusses the answers to the subquestions mentioned in chapter 1. At the end of this chapter, the limitations of this thesis are mentioned.

5.1 How did Uralla as ‘Thunderbolt country’ come into being and which actors played a part in this?

How did Thunderbolt country come in to being?

Since 1870, Uralla has been associated with Thunderbolt. People have been aware of the existence of Thunderbolt’s grave and rock in Uralla and have visited these sites out of curiosity (Historian). When a headstone was placed on Thunderbolt’s grave 1914, a modest start was made in the construction of Thunderbolt country. The grave and rock of Thunderbolt were the only signs of Thunderbolt’s presence until 1970.

In 1970, Thunderbolt was used for tourism purposes for the first time, as part of the successful Thunderbolt Centenary Week. This resulted in Uralla becoming increasingly associated with Thunderbolt country. Individuals, such as the historian and those involved with the opening of the McCrossin’s Mill museum, began to notice that the Thunderbolt theme could attract additional income to Uralla through tourism.

In the 1980s, Thunderbolt’s presence began to affect the physical appearance of Uralla and more people found themselves becoming involved in reproducing Thunderbolt country, due to the increasing number of Thunderbolt sites that could be visited. Around this time, the council gradually started using Thunderbolt in the place promotion of Uralla.

The council organised the Thunderbolt festival in 1980 and produced the first full-colour brochure of Uralla in 1982, which depicted Uralla as Thunderbolt country. In the late 1980s, the Thunderbolt statue was placed in the centre of Uralla, which became the symbol of the town, while in 1991 the council opened the Visitor Information Centre, which became a focal point for tourists looking for information on Thunderbolt. The ‘Thunderbolt Country’ slogan also came into being around this time.

In 2001, the last important phase in the creation of Thunderbolt country commenced. The alternative storyteller added a new dimension to the official story by creating the alternative history. From that moment on, everything that was told about Thunderbolt, always came in two versions: the official and alternative history.

Who created Thunderbolt country?

The actors responsible for creating Thunderbolt country have been summarised in figure 5.1, which chronologically depicts who these actors are and the level of power they hold in constructing Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

Timeline and actors creating Thunderbolt country

Year	Thunderbolt site or event:	Created by actor:	Organisation/individual:	Further defined as:
1914	Headstone Thunderbolt grave	Residents	A.I. Crapp	Active resident
1970	Thunderbolt Centenary Week	Government	Bob Cummins	Regional level: New England
1970	Businesses and merchandise	Businesses	Peter Phillips and others	Active residents
1970	Official history	Historian	Historian	Active resident
1980	Thunderbolt Festival	Government	Council: Thunderbolt Festival committee	Local level: Council and active residents
1982	McCrossin's Mill museum	McCrossin's Mill museum	Uralla Historical Society	Active residents
1982	Promotional brochure for Uralla	Government	Council	Local level: Council and active residents
1988	Thunderbolt statue	Government	Council: Bicentennial committee	Local level: Council and active residents
1991	Thunderbolt Country slogan	Government	Council: Tourism committee	Local level: Council and active residents
1991	Visitor Information Centre	Government	Council	Local level: Council
2001	Alternative history	Alternative storyteller	Alternative storyteller	Active resident

Figure 5.1 Timeline and actors creating Thunderbolt country

The actors that have constructed Thunderbolt country are: residents, government, businesses, historian, McCrossin's Mill museum and the alternative storyteller.

Actors that are not included in figure 5.1 are interested residents, tourists and the media. These actors are not included because they do not play a dominant part in the creation of any one particular event or site. For instance, tourists and interested residents play a part in visiting all sites and events and as such are reproducing the town as Thunderbolt country. So they could be included for all events and sites mentioned in figure 5.1. The media meanwhile plays a part in communicating about all sites and events, and therefore could also be included for every site or event.

The actors mentioned as constructing Thunderbolt country are powerful, precisely because they have been able to determine the dominant Thunderbolt place identity of Uralla. However, there are power differences between these actors. The most powerful actors are the active residents, the historian and the alternative storyteller. Active residents are mentioned only once in figure 5.1, however if a closer look is taken at the 'Further defined as' column, it

becomes clear that they play a far bigger part in this. The historian and alternative storyteller are mentioned separately as dominant actor, because they determine what is communicated to people about Thunderbolt.

Most Western societies places often reflect the cultural values and interests of white, wealthy, male, bourgeois, heterosexual, able bodied people (Holloway and Hubbard 2001, p. 178), which is partly applicable to Uralla where dominant actors that construct the Thunderbolt identity are mainly white and male individuals. However, contrary to the literature, the dominant actors in Uralla all differ through their backgrounds, such as educational level, place of birth, class and jobs.

Literature researched for this thesis states that powerful actors in terms of authority and/or resources can impose their dominant place identities at the expense of other actors (Groote et al. 2000). However, in the case of Uralla this seems different as the most powerful actor in terms of authority is the Uralla Shire Council, but it is actually the active residents, historian and alternative storyteller who contribute the most to the construction of Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

A possible explanation for this could be that tourism in Uralla is currently on a small scale and it is therefore not seen as an important issue for the council. More significant sectors in the town are agriculture, retail and education, therefore Uralla is not entirely dependent on tourism. Tourism may generate a fair bit of secondary income, but Uralla will never attract as many tourists as destinations such as the Gold Coast - mostly because of its inland location.

5.2 Why is Thunderbolt used in the place promotion of Uralla?

The representatives of actors responded in different ways to this question. For instance, the historian mentioned that Uralla had always been known as Thunderbolt country and therefore it was not necessary to create a new identity for Uralla's place promotion. Uralla is therefore the site of an 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm 1983), where a particular image, in this case Thunderbolt, has been linked to a particular imagined historic past, but assumed to have been ever present.

The council has used this particular element of the past in its place promotion, probably because it was an easy choice since Uralla had been known for its Thunderbolt identity ever since the 1870s. Of course the town has been known for other elements as well, but these elements were not as obvious because the Thunderbolt place identity has been determined by dominant actors since the 1870s.

The present tourist office manager argued that Thunderbolt was an icon and a unique attraction, which had to be used for tourism purposes, while the former tourist office manager stated that the council thought that there was not much else to promote in Uralla.

So when did the council become involved in the promotion of Uralla as Thunderbolt country and what were its motivations? According to the literature, local residents often encourage the manifestation of a theme in rural places. They come up with ideas which are eventually picked up by the local government (Paradis 2002; Brennan-Horley et al. 2007).

This has also been the case in Uralla. After the Thunderbolt Centenary Week, the council was spurred on by active residents and gradually started investing in the place promotion of

Uralla, as it was a way to attract tourists and additional income to Uralla. These residents had a passion for Thunderbolt and had a feeling that the legend could be used for tourism purposes.

Uralla is different than other places in the sense that the council did not need to focus on tourism because of challenges faced by other rural areas, for instance economic restructuring or a decreasing population (Butler et al, 1998; Walmsley 2003; Paradis 2002). The population has been stable for years and will probably not decrease in the future, because Uralla is a popular place of residence for people that work in Armidale (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007). The wool industry is still the most significant sector in Uralla and it is therefore not yet necessary for Uralla to develop a large tourism industry.

5.3 How is the Thunderbolt identity created in Uralla?

This thesis argues that the Thunderbolt identity in Uralla is constructed by dominant actors who reproduce the town as Thunderbolt country, change the physical appearance of the town and communicate about Uralla as Thunderbolt country .

Physical appearance of Uralla

Places are increasingly being commodified around a series of real and imagined cultural traditions (Kotler et al. 1993, p.100). This commodifying, often emphasised through the built environment, has happened on a small scale in Uralla. However, Thunderbolt is not dominant in the streetscape and the theme has not been exploited to the maximum.

In Uralla, the Thunderbolt identity is visible in the built environment through the presence of direct Thunderbolt sites such as the statue, rock and the grave; as well as through indirect sites like signs with the Thunderbolt slogan and businesses using the Thunderbolt name, such as the Thunderbolt Country Kitchen.

The Visitor Information Centre and McCrossin's Mill museum do not appear to be Thunderbolt sites on the exterior, but when entering these buildings it is apparent that they actually are. McCrossin's Mill museum sells Thunderbolt memorabilia, and has two exhibits about Thunderbolt. The Visitor Information Centre has brochures on Thunderbolt and visitors can buy Thunderbolt souvenirs.

Once a year, Uralla is further emphasised as Thunderbolt country through the Thunderbolt festival. A Thunderbolt actor joins in on the street parade and a re-enactment of Thunderbolt is staged in the park.

The most visible Thunderbolt site in Uralla is the Thunderbolt statue. When entering Uralla and driving through Bridge Street, it directly catches your eye. It has also been used on signs, brochures, souvenirs, postcards, advertisements for businesses and on billboards next to the highway.

Communication

The mentioning of Uralla in such diverse media as brochures, newspapers, websites or travel magazines, is often in the context of Thunderbolt. These stories often mention both the historian's official history and the alternative storyteller's alternative history.

The selection of brochures and the website that were researched in this thesis illustrate Uralla as a place of different elements, where the presence of cafes, heritage buildings and art galleries are just as likely to be able to attract tourists as the Thunderbolt legend. The exception was the local brochure of Uralla, which mainly depicts Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

The selection of newspaper articles researched, presented Uralla as Thunderbolt country, which seems logical because most of these articles concerned Thunderbolt and its sites and events. Newspaper articles containing other elements representing Uralla, for instance bookshops or artists, were not researched. However, it must be said that travel articles about Uralla mostly depict it as Thunderbolt country.

Thunderbolt country is also communicated to people through signs in town, for instance signs with the slogan 'Thunderbolt Country', the signs on Thunderbolt businesses and through McCrossin's Mill museum and the Visitor Information Centre.

According to Burgess (1990), place promotion is the process in which publicity and marketing are consciously used to communicate selective images of geographic locations or areas to a target audience (p. 139-40). For Uralla this certainly seems to be the case. Local marketing material and newspaper articles about travelling to Uralla mainly depict the town as Thunderbolt country. Nevertheless, regional tourism organisations have chosen a different route and have shown Uralla to be a place of many attractions, but even then the same elements are repeated time after time.

Reproducing Uralla as Thunderbolt country

Tourists and residents emphasise the Thunderbolt identity in Uralla through certain behaviours, for instance by visiting a Thunderbolt site or event, participating in an event like the Thunderbolt street parade, buying a Thunderbolt souvenir, eating a Thunderbolt pie at the Thunderbolt pie company and listening to a story about Thunderbolt told by the historian. As such they are reproducing Uralla as Thunderbolt country.

5.4 Which elements of Uralla are left out by constructing Uralla as 'Thunderbolt country'?

As said by Groote et al. (2000), different actors with different goals ascribe different identities to a place and actors who are powerful can impose their dominant place identities at the expense of other actors. The feminists, artists, bookshops, antique shops and Koori actors, who represent the other elements in Uralla, see the identity of Uralla in different ways but are less powerful than the dominant actors creating Thunderbolt country. The way they perceive Uralla's place identity has, until recently, not been visible in the town's place promotion.

However, it should be stressed that the less dominant position of the 'other elements' does not mean that they are not visible in Uralla. This can be explained through the following arguments:

Firstly, when looking at the complete picture of Uralla's streetscape, other elements that represent the town, such as galleries, antique shops, cafes and heritage buildings, appear to be more dominant than the Thunderbolt sites.

Secondly, the actors representing the other elements have attracted more attention to themselves in the last couple of years through the organisation of events. The media have also picked up on these new events and communicate about these other elements to its readers.

Thirdly, Uralla's local tourism policy has been changing. Places are increasingly promoted as having different aspects that appeal to different place consumers (Gold and Ward 1994). The same can be said of Uralla, which has since 2006 been promoted by the council as a place with different elements, in which Thunderbolt is just one of the elements. The economic development officer confirmed this by stating that Uralla not only wants to attract Thunderbolt fans, but also nature lovers, antique shoppers etc.

Fourthly, when all representatives of actors were asked if they felt that anything was left out of the place promotion of Uralla they gave very diverse answers, with not one element sticking out.

However, critical observations can be added to these arguments. Not every other element in Uralla is so strong as to put itself in the spotlight, for instance the Koori are less visible in Uralla as there are no major Anaiwan sites in town and the media does not pay a lot of attention to them.

Also, changes in local tourism policy will take time to carry out and at the moment Uralla is still predominantly Thunderbolt country in its local place promotion. The council has not included every other element in their policy, for instance the Anaiwan community are not mentioned, apart from Mount Yarrowyck.

5.5 How do the residents of Uralla feel about the Thunderbolt legend and how it is used in the place promotion of Uralla?

Actors and residents differ in their opinion on Thunderbolt country. Most actors have positive views on the Thunderbolt identity of Uralla, but most residents are indifferent to it. This difference can be explained because most respondents were actors constructing Thunderbolt country and obviously they would agree on the existence of Thunderbolt country.

The 'other elements' actors are the group that appear to have the most issues with the prominence of Thunderbolt in Uralla's place promotion and would rather see Thunderbolt as an element in a broader context. The Koori actor, represented by the Anaiwan elder, is contradictory in the sense that Thunderbolt means something to the Anaiwan people, but he does not like Thunderbolt's dominant presence in Uralla because he feels it should be Anaiwan country.

It could be expected that the actors that construct Thunderbolt country, also see Thunderbolt as an important part of their identity, but this appeared not to be the case. The majority of actors see the benefits of using Thunderbolt for tourism purposes, but do not see him as a part of their identity. The majority of residents also do not see Thunderbolt as an important part of their identity.

If actors or residents see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity, they mostly grew up in Uralla or belong to the older generation that has heard stories about Thunderbolt from family members. These stories are rarely told nowadays. The exception seems to be the schoolchildren of year six, who actually do see Thunderbolt as part of their identity but this

could be explained by the fact that they recently visited Thunderbolt sites during a school excursion or with their parents.

Identities of place are always contested in place (Brennan-Horley et al.2007; Gibson and Davidson 2004). This also occurs in Uralla, where there were a few actors who were opposed to the use of the Thunderbolt legend, mainly because they saw him as a criminal. One actor, the feminist, took this opposition further by singing a protest song about Thunderbolt in her comedy show. A small group of residents in Uralla also opposed to Thunderbolt for the same reasons, but they have just left it at complaining.

Complaints about Thunderbolt country were at its peak in 1988, when the statue was placed, but have since tempered somewhat, presumably because people have become used to the legend of Thunderbolt being around. This is confirmed in the literature from Paradis (2002), Gibson and Davidson (2004) as well as Brennan-Horley et al. (2007) who mention that in the start-up phase residents are either unresponsive or negative about place promotion, as was the case with respondents during the time the statue was placed in Uralla, and after a while residents become more acceptant or positive, which corresponds to the situation in Uralla now.

5.6 Limitations

Only a short period of time was reserved for the execution of this research in Uralla, so it was not possible to do a more thorough research on the Thunderbolt place identity. For example, if more time had been available, resident surveys or a detailed content analysis on brochures, newspapers and websites could have been conducted.

Also, since a year the council has been focusing on other elements than just Thunderbolt in Uralla. In regional brochures this focus has already been visible since the early 2000s. The change in the council's tourism policy could have perhaps influenced the interviewees because they may have been more positive about Uralla's place promotion than previously. This makes this research more difficult to compare to other studies, since the towns mentioned in those studies are mainly focused on one theme.

The majority of the representatives of actors that were interviewed, did not grow up in Uralla, but came for instance from cities such as Sydney and Brisbane. In this thesis it was stated that residents that grew up in Uralla, often see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity. The fact that most representatives of actors did not grow up in Uralla, could have influenced the conclusion that most actors and residents of Uralla do not see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to understand how the Thunderbolt place identity of Uralla was constructed. This will be attempted by answering the main question. At the end of this chapter, recommendations for further research are mentioned.

6.1 Main question

The main question of this thesis is: 'how is the Thunderbolt place identity constructed in Uralla?' This will now be answered by using the information that was discussed in chapter 5.

Since 1870, Uralla has been associated with Thunderbolt because it was the location of Thunderbolt's grave and rock. However, from the 1970s onwards, certain individuals' passion for Thunderbolt and their interest in using Thunderbolt for tourism purposes, has increasingly turned Uralla into Thunderbolt country. Not only has the way people communicate about Uralla as Thunderbolt country increased, but the number of Thunderbolt sites have multiplied and as a result the number of people reproducing Uralla as Thunderbolt country have grown.

These individuals, active residents and the historian, stimulated the council to start investing in Thunderbolt country in the 1980s and nowadays Uralla attracts a reasonable number of tourists through this Thunderbolt identity.

Nevertheless, Uralla has also managed to retain its laidback atmosphere. Thunderbolt has not been overexploited and the other elements of Uralla, for instance cafes, heritage buildings and art galleries, are still visible. However, some other elements are more dominantly present than other elements. In 2006, the Uralla Shire Council changed its tourism policy and started promoting these other elements as well. This suggests that perhaps Uralla's singular place identity will be replaced by multiple place identities. It is possible for a place identity to change (Grootte et al 2000), but only time can tell whether such a change will happen in Uralla.

6.2 Further research

A recommendation for further research could be to conduct a more thorough research on the impact of the Thunderbolt legend on Uralla, since little is known about the exact figures of tourists coming to the town. Does Thunderbolt really work, does it attract tourists? A way to collect these results would be to survey businesses in Uralla as well as investigate why tourists choose to visit the town and what impact the council's promotion may have had.

It would also be interesting to compare Glenrowan to Uralla, as Glenrowan's place promotion is based on a bushranger that happens to be Australia's national hero (Seal 1996). Would residents accept a bushranger that is a national hero more than a bushranger that is just locally known? Or are residents more opposed to Ned Kelly because he is more exploited in Glenrowan, than Thunderbolt is in Uralla?

Seal (1996) suggests that there are parallels and similarities between Great Britain, America and Australia when it comes to the outlaw hero tradition. For instance, outlaws in these countries stick to certain guidelines as never robbing and harming the poor. To link this study with the concept of place promotion, more research could be conducted in towns that use outlaws or bushrangers as a theme in their place promotion in these countries. It would be

interesting to see if there are similarities in the way place promotion is set up and if residents react the same to this place promotion in the different countries.

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Appendices

Interview One: conducted with a member of the Uralla Shire Council

Personal info

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How long have you been living in Uralla?
3. What is your function, what tasks do you do?

Promotion

4. When did tourist promotion start in Uralla (by the Shire)?
5. Why did it start?
6. What themes were used to promote Uralla in past times?
7. Who decides how Uralla is promoted nowadays?
8. How is Uralla promoted for tourism nowadays (fossicking-thunderbolt-woolshed-satellites etc.)?
9. At what type of tourist is promotion aimed nowadays? What age group / level of education (the grey nomads)?
10. On a whole can you say that tourist promotion is working in Uralla? Does the Thunderbolt brand attract people?

Thunderbolt

11. Why is the Captain Thunderbolt legend used in the promotion of Uralla?
12. Uralla's promotion is also aimed at other things than Thunderbolt (fossicking etc.). Why is Thunderbolt still the main thing in promoting Uralla?
13. Who thought of using Thunderbolt in Uralla's promotion?
14. When did the Shire first start using Thunderbolt in the promotion of Uralla?
15. What is done by the Shire to highlight Thunderbolt in Uralla's promotion? (Thunderbolt festival, statue, souvenirs, shops, museum, statue, walks?)
16. When was the term 'Uralla Thunderbolt capital / country' introduced in Uralla's promotion?
17. Has Uralla always been seen as the 'Captain Thunderbolt capital' since Fred Ward's death in 1870?

18. Do you know how locals feel about the use of the legend in Uralla's promotion? That they are seen as residents of the 'Thunderbolt capital'?
19. Do you know of residents that are opposed to Thunderbolt and its use in the promotion of Uralla?
20. Why are these residents opposed to using Thunderbolts legend in promotion activities?
21. Do residents of Uralla see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity?

Rural decline

22. Australia has a problem of population decline in rural areas. Did the same problem take place in Uralla? When did this problem take place?
23. Uralla wasn't a thriving place 30 years ago. Was tourism used to change this situation? What did the Shire do about these problems?
24. When did Uralla start changing in to the place it is now?
25. Who were the key persons involved in making the town a better place? The Shire, other individuals or organisations?
26. How do you see the future of Uralla? A decline of its population? Do you think tourism (promotion) could prevent this problem? Can you think of other solutions?

Interview Two: conducted with an actor representing an 'other element'

Personal info

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How long have you been living in Uralla?
3. How long have you had a business in Uralla?
4. Why did you start up a business in Uralla?
5. Are you involved in any clubs, committees or other activities in Uralla?

Thunderbolt

6. What do you think about the Thunderbolt legend? Does it mean something to you? Is it a part of your identity?
7. Do you know if locals in Uralla see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity? Do they see themselves as residents of Thunderbolt country?

8. Have you visited the Thunderbolt sites or done anything else (visit the festival, museum) concerning Thunderbolt?
9. What is your opinion on the statue?
10. What do you think of how the Thunderbolt legend is being used in Uralla's promotion?
11. Do you think that Uralla should also promote other things? What have they left out? What other bits of history should be highlighted?
12. How do locals feel about the use of Thunderbolt in Uralla's promotion? Do you know of locals that are opposed to the use of the legend in Uralla's promotion? Why are they opposed to it?

Promotion / business

13. The Shire has stopped focusing on mainly Thunderbolt and is also promoting other attractions in Uralla, for instance antique shops, art etc. Have you noticed this happening? Are you involved in this new broader promotion?
14. Has the Shire promoted your business?
15. Were you ever asked to do something on the Thunderbolt theme (put up posters, sell souvenirs, be a part in festival)?
16. Do you think tourist promotion is working in Uralla? Does it help your business?
17. Did you notice more tourists visiting your store during the years? What type of tourist visits your store?
18. Can you tell me something about the Chamber of Commerce in Uralla? Are they concerned with Uralla's promotion?

Rural decline

19. Has Uralla changed a lot in the last 30 years? How did it change?
20. Who were involved?
21. Does tourism keep Uralla the way it is now?

Interview Three: conducted with a resident

1. Where are you originally from?
2. How long have you been living in Uralla?
3. What is your job?

4. Are you involved in any clubs, committees or other activities in Uralla?

Thunderbolt

5. Does Thunderbolt mean something to you? Is it a part of your identity?
6. Do you know if locals in Uralla see Thunderbolt as a part of their identity? Do they see themselves as residents of Thunderbolt country?
7. Have you visited the Thunderbolt sites or done anything else (visit the festival, museum) concerning Thunderbolt since you've lived here? Had you visited these sites before coming to Uralla?
8. What do you think of how the Thunderbolt legend is being used in Uralla's promotion?
9. What is your opinion on the statue?
10. How do other locals feel about the use of Thunderbolt in Uralla's promotion? Do you know of locals newcomers that are opposed to the use of the legend in Uralla's promotion? Why are they opposed to it?
11. Do you think that Uralla should also promote other things? What have they left out? What other bits of history should be highlighted?

