

Life·blood

(noun) a life-giving, vital, or animating element

The demolition of the meatworks chimney in 1964 signalled a new beginning for Gladstone.
Source: Queensland Alumina Limited collection.

Two-thirds of the local population depended directly or indirectly on the income from the meatworks. Taken in the 1930s this image gives an insight to life as a meatworker at the time.
Source: Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection.

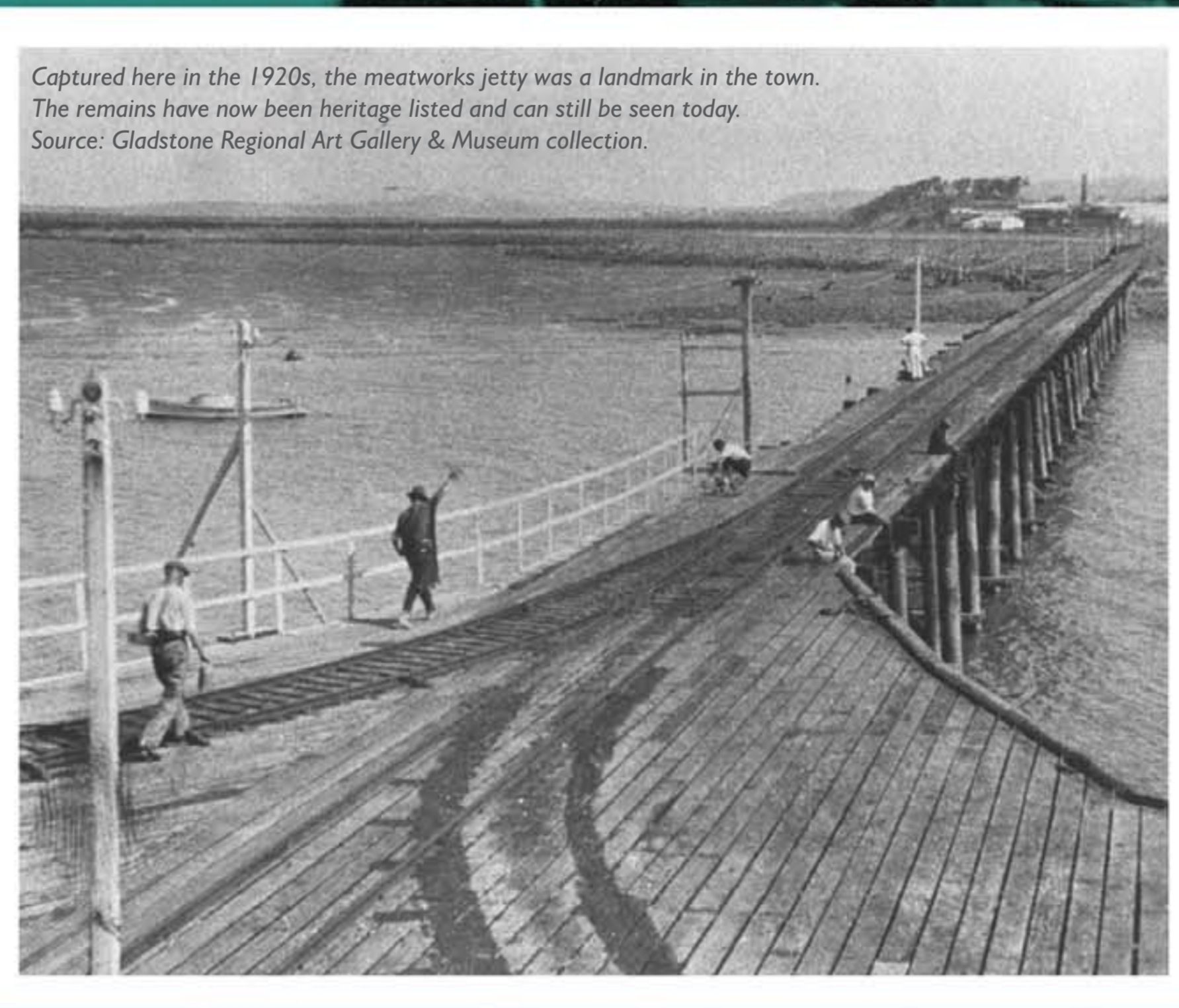


“I worked with men who had been there for fifty years, some of them sixty years. I could see them; their hearts were broken for they had nothing else. They knew nothing else but the meatworks and we never got a farthing out of it.”

Pers comm Bernard Curran, 1990.



Working conditions at the meatworks were fairly basic in the 1930s.
Source: Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection.



Captured here in the 1920s, the meatworks jetty was a landmark in the town. The remains have now been heritage listed and can still be seen today.
Source: Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection.



Cyril Golding was one of the first locals to assist with the demolition of the meatworks in 1964.
Source: Queensland Alumina Limited collection.

The Gladstone Meatworks at Parsons Point had been central to the Gladstone economy since opening its doors in 1896. Fortunes of the company fluctuated with the price of cattle and employment was highly erratic.

In 1934 an American firm Swifts took over the ownership and installed a cannery. Work peaked in 1954 and 60,000 head of cattle were processed however the plant did not keep abreast with modern technology and as the years progressed, activity declined. The meatworks remained closed for the 1958 season, which created considerable strain in the community. After the 1963 season rather than upgrading the facility a decision was made to cease all operations. This move sent workers and the town into a downward spiral creating a great deal of unrest amongst the tight-knit community.

The announcement came as a complete surprise to many in the town and there was a great deal of ill-feeling amongst residents, in particular, meatworkers. At the closure of the meatworks many rumours spread about what was in store for the township.

Finally on 18 April 1963 it was announced to the community in the local newspaper, the Observer, the site had been purchased for construction of the world's largest alumina plant by an international consortium operating under the name Queensland Alumina Limited.

The township of Gladstone was about to embark on a new beginning.