At its peak, Hillgrove was as big as nearby Armidale. It had a hospital, hydro-electricity, schools, six pubs, four churches, a newspaper, a technical college, Australia’s best brass band and one brick building, the post office. More than three thousand people called it home in its heyday.

A town rapidly developed reaching a population peak of 3,500 persons in 1898, at which time there were two banks and a mining exchange, six hotels, two billiard saloons, four churches, two schools, six general stores, a courthouse, butcher, baker, police station, a cottage hospital, school of arts, cordial factory, racecourse, cricketing oval, a number of boarding houses, a masonic lodge, debating society, pharmacies, temperance league, oyster saloon, technical college and two local newspapers (the Hillgrove Guardian and New England Democrat).

In the case of Hillgrove it has elicited so many comments that the comment section of the entry is longer than the original information provided by Aussie Towns.

There are two reasons for this heightened interest: (a) little competition and (b) clearly in the case of Hillgrove, people researching their family history.
Hillgrove (which travellers should stop off at if they are driving between Dorrigo and Armidale - I suspect that people doing their family history hit a brick wall if one of their distant relatives headed off to the district in search of gold ) is a genuinely fascinating mining town which, when the mines were operating, had a population of over 3,500 and today has a population of less than 100.

It is a cautionary tale of mining. Once the mine is exhausted so, too, is the town’s raison d’etre … and consequently everyone leaves.

Part of the unique charm of Hillgrove is that when the mines closed down, in 1921, there was no sentimentality. They simply removed most of the houses and shops and rebuilt them in Armidale.

Today there is a simple map which shows where all the houses once were – they are now open paddocks with a few sheep or cattle happily grazing where once there was a house and a family – and it is easy, and fun, to wander around the town and go “Oh so that was where the blacksmith was. Look that was where the Catholic Church was once located.”

It is, at this time when we are coming to the end of another mining boom, a reminder of the transient nature of mining. If the price of gold goes high enough there will be some wild-eyed fossicker who reckons there’s still a fortune in the area and, maybe just maybe, Hillgrove will rise again.

Glen Innes Examiner (NSW : 1908 - 1954), Thursday 17 January 1924, page 4

CLAIM AGAINST SHIRE

Mr J. H. Davidson, Lambs Valley wrote the Severn Shire on Tuesday claiming damages for losses due, as he alleged, to carelessness of council employees in burning off blackberries

Damages asked were to compensate the writer as he had practically arranged to lease the property which was burnt out, also the damage to fences etc The president said the onus was on the writer; Cr. Pettit said he travelled the road after the fire, and an employee said he did not light the fire "It is a job to find out who started these fires, as there other one discovered a short distance awav " he added. The letter was received on the motion of Cr. Fraser.

Hillgrove then had four churches, six hotels, two schools, a school of arts, a hospital, several banks, a stock exchange, a court house, police station, a recreation ground, a technical college, debating society, a temperance league and a cordial factory. The town also printed its own local paper, the *Hillgrove Guardian*. In 1895 it became the first town in Australia to be supplied with power by means of hydro-electricity which operated from Gara Gorge to the west.