

THE EARLY AUSTRALIANS

The grasslands and the forests of the Gladstone district provided subsistence to many Kungandan aboriginals (the people in the language of the Boyne River); groups included the Baiali, the Goeng and the Tuluwa (Toolooa) as well as the Byelle and Boongoolie. The main Aboriginal *group* in the Gladstone area is called the Goeng (alternatively spelt Koreng) whose traditional country extends from around Gladstone towards Bundaberg.

Early European explorers such as Flinders and King documented a people apparently living mainly off marine resources, including turtle, fish and oysters. However, Oxley, recording in November 1823, believed the area was deserted as he saw no sign of people or recent campsites. This apparent seasonally of hinter and coastal use could have been linked to the scarceness of freshwater close to the coast just prior to the wet season.

From archaeological evidence, European records and Aboriginal oral history it is apparent that large camps were located at the site of the present city of Gladstone, on the Calliope River, Curtis Island and Facing Island, and parts of the Boyne River.

Physical *evidence* of the Aborigines' early presence at Boyne Island can be seen in an axe made from stone, the head of which has been shaped by flaking away the outer layers. This artefact was discovered at the southernmost tip of South Trees Island. A small midden can be found on the narrow beach ridge on the eastern side of South Trees Island. The midden consists of mostly surface scatter of a single species (*telecopium telescopium*) with some individuals up to 5cm in the subsurface and covering an area of approximately 2 square metres. Archaeological surveys in the area have also recorded three shell middens near Wild Cattle Creek, which is south of Tannum Sands, and eight middens or artefact scatters on Facing Island.

EUROPEAN/ABORIGINAL CONTACT

Matthew Flinders was *the first* European recorded to sight Port Curtis in 1802. Landing at the South End of Curtis Island, Flinders' landing party encountered a hail of rocks and stones and in a response fired several musket shots at the local people.

Despite this start, relations between the Goeng and Europeans remained largely amicable throughout the period of marine exploration. It was not until *settlement* of the township of Gladstone in 1847 that hostile encounters between Aboriginal people and Europeans were recorded; and in 1853, a detachment of the Queensland Mounted Native Police was stationed at Gladstone. Subsequently, widespread and systematic destruction occurred of Aboriginal culture.

Brutality was manifold, with some European settlers from the Calliope diggings in 1865 complaining of actions by the native police against "inoffensive" local aboriginies.

In 1854 a *large Aboriginal camp* (200/300 people) was established at Barney Point close to the European settlement. Here, ceremonial activities and a 'traditional' lifestyle continued. By 1898, Roth, the Protector of Aborigines had found that the Goeng were mainly located at Miriam Vale, and, that the "native

camp" had been moved to Police Creek (Auckland Creek). It comprised mostly old men and women living in bark huts.

Aborigines vigorously *defended their land* with killings of white settlers at the Mount Larcom Station in 1855 and Miriam Vale Station in 1857. Chinamen, who had been imported by squatters to act as shepherds, were so scared by the ferocity and hostility of the Aborigines, that they deserted "en masse".

Despite the massacres and disease which decimated the local Aboriginal population, descendants have always lived in the area and maintained contacts and links with the land.

EUROPEAN EXPLORATION

Cook in 1770 failed to notice the mouth of the Boyne River and the harbour of Port Curtis on his voyage north; and, he passed the northern entrance to Port Curtis, between Curtis and Facing Islands, during the hours of darkness.

Matthew Flinders was the first European to sight the harbour and coastline of Port Curtis in 1802, whilst sailing in the Investigator on a voyage to circumnavigate Australia. In the ensuing 12 days, Flinders and the crew extensively mapped and explored the area.

In 1823 the Mermaid sailed into Port Curtis harbour with John *Oxley*, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, in search of a suitable site for a new convict settlement.

Oxley was not impressed with the area. The midges and mosquitoes drove the landing party to distraction and the steep stony hills south of Gladstone and down through Toolooa could neither "afford subsistence, nor supply the means of profitable labour for a large establishment".

Oxley was set to continue the voyage north to ascertain the suitability of Port Bowen as a site for the convict settlement, when John Uniacke, a member of Oxley's expedition, reported the sighting of a fresh water river, the mouth of which lay due south and could be seen from the ship.

Sailing south they named the river '*Boyne*'. The origin of the name is unclear; but it is believed the name relates to the Battle of the Boyne fought between William III and James II, in Ireland, in 1690.

As they penetrated further and further upstream, the country and prolific wildlife of the river impressed the explorers. They saw different types of timber growing in small groves. There was a multitude of waterfowl, numerous fish and fresh water turtles.

By 1853 settlers had moved as far as 130 kms inland while still using Port Curtis to export wool and to import their requirements.

Pressure from the pastoralists to open up the area for grazing resulted in surveyor Francis MacCabe being commissioned in 1853 to survey the town of Gladstone and surrounding district.

COLONIZATION

William Gladstone, 1809-1898, after whom Gladstone was named, was four times Prime Minister of Britain. In March 1846, Gladstone gave Colonel *Barney*, a military engineer from Sydney, the charge of the proposed new colony to be called North

Australia. The Lord Auckland transported the pioneers to North Australia from Sydney.

The new colony was proclaimed in Gladstone on January 30, 1847. It stretched from just south of Frazer Island to Torres Strait and as far west as Amhem Land. Gladstone was the capital. It lasted ten weeks.

In addition to the privations and difficulties all pioneer settlers endured were the "three great devils... to contend with here -excessive heat, heavy rains and mosquitoes in millions. We are thus in constant misery... This mad expedition must ultimately be a failure for as I can judge, the place can never support itself'. Strong public opinion was mounted against a new penal colony because it was felt that the government was "felonising" instead of "colonising" North Australia. Finally, in 1847 when Lord Grey replaced Gladstone as Prime Minister, all plans for the new colony were abandoned.

In January 1854 Port Curtis was proclaimed a Pastoral District. The Hay brothers were the first Europeans to open up the country arriving with 40,000 sheep. Richard Hetherington, who was Gladstone's first mayor in 1863, grazed cattle on Boyne Island during the late 1850's.

Copper and gold were found in the district, and by the early 1860's mining was in full swing at the Calliope fields, and in 1862 Calliope was gazetted as a gold field, the first in the state.

The gold was mainly concentrated in an area near Canoona and although some excellent finds were made, it was not long before failure and disappointment were more common rewards. The diggers reached their peak by 1864 when 800 men were working on the field. This was responsible for a massive influx of 16,000 to the region, and, depleted Gladstone's population to twelve. By 1885 the number on the fields had dwindled to about twenty, but many others had stayed on to participate in the development of the region .

In 1863 Gladstone became a municipality. During this time cattle, sheep, hides, tallow, minerals and timber were exported from Gladstone. In 1896, the meatworks were erected at Parsons Point to provide an outlet for fat cattle from the Calliope Shire and the Central region. The meatworks operated until 1964 when it was demolished to make way for the alumina refinery.

Since 1964 Gladstone has developed as a major industrial centre with the construction of a number of major industries including a powerhouse, cyanide, clinker and chlorine plants. An aluminium smelter was opened on Boyne Island in 1982. Many have been expanded eg. the aluminium smelter was doubled in size in 1997, 1997 also saw the start on the Stuart Oil Shale project. During this period the port continued to expand handling coal and grain to become the fifth ranking port in Australia.

BOYNE ISLAND

Prior to 1978 and the construction of the smelter, Boyne Island was largely uninhabited except for a few seaside cottages, a school and field study centre and some earlier sand mining activity.

Earliest historical records of European settlement refer to the apparent existence of two old timber lined wells, said to have been found at South Trees Point, along with

the remains of a timber building and some stone work. The origin of these may be explained through correspondence dating from 1847, which referred to a party of four sinking wells on the site. South Trees Point is now the South Trees Island wharf, and, thus, this site would no longer be in existence.

On 22nd April 1862, the *Lilley* brothers applied to lease the Boyne Island run of an estimated 65sq kms. The initial lease was for 5 years with the rental charges of \$75. With the aim of grazing beef cattle on the property, the native vegetation was selectively cleared.

In the south and south-east of the island, Portion 535 and 445 were amongst the first blocks to be selected under the Crown's Alienation Act of 1868. C. Hedley and J. Dawson were the original selectors of these portions, and they cleared the land to allow the grazing of beef cattle.

From the 1880's, fruit growing became one of the main activities on the island. A timber mill, which was erected in the south-west corner of the island, was operated well into this century. With all the commercial activity, it was decided to establish a wharf reserve at the mouth of the Boyne River along the eastern periphery of Portion 527 from where timber, fruit and other agricultural products could be shipped.

During 1888, Hedley sold his selection (Portion 535) to William Wyndham. Migrating to Australia from England in 1850, Wyndham worked to establish a large orchard on his property which he named 'Carnym' (reportedly an Aboriginal name meaning sand). The seeds of the mango trees in Portion 535 were supposedly exported from India and include a number of different varieties. Pineapples, originally brought out from Kew Gardens, were to be grown on the island by three generations of the Wyndham family.

Wyndham died in 1898 and his body was first buried in the orchard to the rear of the house on Carnym. However, his daughter later had the grave relocated to its present site on the ridge crest towards the west of Portion 535. The grave site is marked by a large granite boulder, estimated to weigh 1.5 tonnes, which was shipped from Magnetic Island and hauled to its present site by a bullock team.

Another very early resident was Uriah *Hoddinott*. He sailed to Boyne Island from Rockhampton in 1910 with Gertrude Pratt and their children, surviving a weeklong shipwreck in the Narrows.

During early times, communication between the island and the mainland was dependent on boats crossing the tidal channels of South Trees Inlet. Older residents on the island also recall using Lily's Crossing to the north of the island, at low water, to gain access to the mainland and Gladstone. 1976 saw Boyne Island's first bridge across South Trees Inlet replacing the often washed away causeway.

Looking through a list of the *early property owners* in Boyne Island is like reading the current street map. The *Malpas* family owned approximately 250 hectares of land located on what is now the Boyne Tannum Country Club and the Red Mud Dam. The *Handley* family organised the first mail run. The Tarcoola area was owned by Tony and Francis Salgado. The Edward's family built a holiday cottage on land between the John Oxley bridge and Arthur Street. The *Sayre* family arrived on the island in 1950 establishing, besides a farm, a shop on Bluewater Drive from where they rented cabins, caravans and boats. Richmond established a dairying and small crop farm on land bordered by Bray Park and Arthur Street. The area opposite Bray Park was the lighthouse reserve, with David Bray responsible for lighting the first

kerosene lamps in 1900, in 1951, Bob Hoddinott assumed this responsibility.

The communities of Boyne Island and Tannum Sands evolved quite separately from each other and the river marked the boundary between two rival townships. It was not until the John Oxley bridge was opened in October 1980 that the two shared any sort of common ground or viewpoint. To this day, old-timers remain fiercely loyal to either one or the other.

TANNUM SANDS

Two houses on land adjacent to Peter's Park were the only ones at Tannum until land became available for sale in October 1934. A big crowd of four people attended the auction for the 27 allotments which sold at an average price of \$56 each.

Arthur Mann is the only buyer of the original four who still owns his allotment. During the 1920's Arthur and his party of day-trippers would ride ten miles from their farm through the bush to the beach at Tannum and never see another person.

Tannum was not frequented by Gladstone residents in the early years because of the limited access across the river and the long distance to be travelled by horse and buggy. It was not until the advent of the motor car that the area became a popular spot for camping and picnicking.

SCHOOLS

Around 1913, eight children attended the first school on Boyne Island.

Of simple bush architecture, 'school' was a lean-to situated on the bank of the gully opposite the present site of St Luke's Church. It comprised four posts with a weather-board back and galvanised iron roof. Stools and a desk stood along the back. School was on Saturday only. The first church services were also held here by Rev. Johnson, a Church of England minister.

Work commenced on the present St. Luke's Church in 1921, was completed in 1924 and stands on land donated by Mr & Mrs Handley. From 1951 until 1955, the church was used as a provisional school, subsequently a building was transported from the Monto area and rebuilt on 2.4 ha of land donated by Mrs. Handley. Opened in 1956, that building became the foundation building of the Environmental Education Centre in 1977.