

THE STORY OF BRIBIE ISLAND

Aboriginal presence in this area spans thousands of years. The island formed when seas broke through the northern end of a long sandy peninsula between 1822 and 1839. The name Bribie was first documented for this area as early as 1835.

Free settlement followed the end of convict transportation in 1839, and by 1859 Queensland separated from NSW. A few pioneers came for the fish and oysters in the Pumicestone Passage but did not live here. By the 1880's if someone went "bush" or was missing, they were said to be "Down at Bribie".

Archibald Meston, a famous explorer, anthropologist and politician, wrote in 1891 ...



"Bribie Island is the meanest piece of country in Australia, a howling desert of fit tree swamps, rank vegetation and unimaginable cussedness"

In February 1893 the greatest daily rainfall ever recorded anywhere in Australia fell on Pumicestone Passage, silting it up and ending its use as a commercial waterway.

However, by the 1920's Bribie Island had become a great destination for mass tourism, with more weekend visitors here than lived in the whole Shire.

In 1937 **Thomas Welsby**, historian & businessman wrote the book

"Bribie the Basket Maker"

He created a feel-good legend about a convict who ran away to marry an island Princess, far from the reality of the penal colony for the worst of the worst, twice convicted, and incorrigible convicts.

Ian Fairweather, most famous resident, world-renowned recluse artist summed up his views of life here in the 1960's when he said.....



"There may be better places than the sunset strip of Bribie Island, but it's good enough for me"

BRIBIE ISLAND HISTORY

THE FIRST 100 YEARS

- 1770 Cpt. Cook sailed past and named the **Glass Houses**.
- 1799 First white man, **Matthew Flinders with Bongaree**, landed here.
- 1823 Three castaway convicts from Sydney washed ashore on Moreton Island & lived with **Joondoobarrie** native people of Bribie Island.
- 1824 Oxley lands 29 convicts at Redcliffe, but soon relocated the new **Moreton Bay Penal Colony** to the Brisbane River.
- 1839 Convict transport to Brisbane ended & pioneers move into area.
- 1840 About 800 Aboriginal natives lived on Bribie Island.
- 1859 Queensland's first **Aboriginal Reserve** established on Bribie Island.
- 1887 Settlers start fish factory, cattle, honey & oystering on Bribie.
- 1897 **Kal Ma Kuta**, the last Bribie Joondoobarrie native, died at Ningi.

THE EARLY RESIDENTS

- 1901 First holiday visitors came on excursion boats from Brisbane.
- 1911 **Steamship 'Koopa'** began regular trips carrying 1200 passengers daily to a newly built jetty at Bongaree.
- 1918 'Hall & Bestmann' opened **first store** to cater to the many campers & "Twelve Apostles" holiday huts built on the foreshore.
- 1924 First school opened and **first road** constructed across the island.
- 1930 Bribie had only **50 residents** & thousands of weekly tourists.
- 1933 **Bribie Island Surf Club** established, the first on Sunshine Coast.
- 1937 **Thomas Welsby** wrote **'Bribie the Basket Maker'** creating a legend.
- 1939 **First Hotel** built at Woorim just as World War 2 starts.
- 1942 Fort Bribie built as part of the **Brisbane Line** defences, & thousands of US & Australian troops stationed and trained on Bribie beaches.

THE ISLAND DEVELOPS

- 1947 Life returns to normal, new residents build homes & start businesses. **A car ferry starts operation** from Toorbul Point to Bongaree.
- 1953 Electricity connected to Bribie, new shops & cinema opens.
- World famous artist **Ian Fairweather** came to live here in grass hut.
- 1963 **Bribie Island bridge** opens with unexpected \$1 toll lasting 12 years.
- 1977 Government plans for **Racetrack** and **Alitrip** rejected.
- 1989 **Bribie Island National Park** declared.



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More than 200 years of Bribie Island History

Bongaree



Self Guided Walkabout

Proudly sponsored by



ROTARY CLUB of BRIBIE ISLAND

CRADLE SITE OF QUEENSLAND

In 1770 James Cook sailed the 'Endeavour' up the east coast of Australia, sighted & named the Glass Houses and Cape Moreton. By 1788, the "First Fleet" of Convicts and free settlers arrived in Sydney and exploration began, looking for large rivers on the eastern coastline. Just 11 years after the first fleet, **Matthew Flinders** and Bongaree arrived here aboard the sloop 'Norfolk', marking the beginning of recorded history for this island.



Replica of the sloop 'Norfolk'

The first 100 years saw a handful of white men come here to live with the aboriginal people of the Joondoobarrie tribe.

Before the 1859 separation of Queensland from NSW, Aboriginal numbers had declined rapidly. Despite the first Aboriginal Reserve being established on Bribie in 1887, by the turn of the century, the last of them had died.

Oystering at Bribie was Queensland's largest industry in 1890's. After 1911 Bribie Island became a unique destination for mass tourism, and, by 1942 played a key role in the wartime defences of Australia.

Although many things have changed, there are still many interesting reminders of those formative years.

This Heritage Walk is designed to bring some of that rich history to "life" by showing and telling just a little bit about some of the people and places that make this the.....

Cradle site of Queensland

OUR TOWN WAS NAMED FOR

Bongaree

Bongaree, (or Bungaree, Boungaree... there were many spellings) was born before the "First Fleet" came to Sydney in 1788. He related well to the newcomers and when both were 25 years of age, **Matthew Flinders** and Bongaree sailed north to explore.

In 1799 Bongaree, Flinders and crew, aboard the sloop 'Norfolk', spent 2 weeks exploring Moreton Bay, and a week here among the local Joondoobarrie people.

With Flinders, in 1802, aboard HMS *Investigator*, Bongaree became the first aboriginal to circumnavigate the continent when it was first named 'Australia'.

In 1815 Governor Macquarie, gave him land in Sydney and a brass plate engraved: **'Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe'**. In 1817 he accompanied Phillip Parker King, the Governors son, to North Western Australia and met many distant tribes.

In Colonial Sydney he dressed in a succession of military and naval uniforms given by Governors, and became the subject of at least 17 portraits.

He had a gift for humour and mimicry, especially 'taking off' past, but never current Governors. Troops saluted him and he returned their recognition. The Royal Navy invited him to live at Garden Island and he received a daily ration.

He outlived six wives, and his friend Matthew Flinders by 16 years. He died in 1830 and was buried at Rose Bay next to his late Queen "Gooseberry".



Local Aboriginals 1890

113 years after his first landing here, the name of **BONGAREE** was gazetted for this settlement in 1912.

HERITAGE WALK

This self-guided walk starts and finishes at the Jetty and visits 16 different sites. The complete walk can be done in an hour or so, and can be done in two parts. Sites 1 to 7 and then sites 7 to 16 with a break for lunch or a drink in between.

When you do the walk**REMEMBER**

Wear a **HAT**, Carry **WATER**, Take **CAMERA**, Don't **RUSH**

This brochure, is designed and prepared by:

Barry Clark, Tutor in Local History at Bribie Island University of the Third Age and long term Rotarian.
Warwick Outram, a 35 year resident and author of several books on Bribie History.

There are 3 other **HERITAGE PLAQUES** on the approach to the Jetty 1 and at Site 2 showing photos and stories about the memorable days of the 1920's.



Bongaree jetty and Heritage Plaque

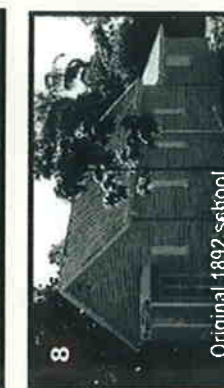
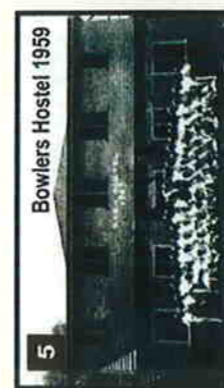
Other interesting aspects of Bribie Island history can also be heard at 3 **"Talking Monuments"** located at Banksia Beach, Sylvan Beach and the Community Arts centre.

"It might not be too much to claim Pumicestone Passage and Bribie Island contain more history, written and unwritten, than any other place in Queensland."

"The claim certainly would be difficult to disprove."

Stan Tutti, Sunshine Coast historian.

Bongaree Walkabout



1 BONGAREE JETTY
Built in 1911, the SS Koopa started island tourist trips, and by the 1920's thousands came to Bribie Island to camp and fish. After World War 2, cars could cross the Passage by barge, and by early 1960's Brisbane boat trips stopped, and the Bribie Toll Bridge opened in 1963.

2 WELSBY PARADE
In 1918, beach huts were built along this foreshore, and by 1929 the Bowls Club started for just 30 residents and the many visitors. The road is named after Thomas Welsby, Moreton Bay historian who wrote the legend 'Bribie the Basket Maker' after the 1937 'Depression' to re-establish tourism.

3 SHIRLEY CREEK BRIDGE
In 1923, Bill Shirley built the first road from the Jetty to the Ocean Beach. The Shirley family ran a bus service and a Guest House. Bill became the first Honorary Councillor, and a bridge here was his first achievement in 1933. WW1 veteran 'Jimmy No legs' lived in the white Cottage you can see across the creek.

4 THE HILL
The water tower stands on what was the highest point on Bribie Island but was progressively leveled to create the Bowls Club, Caravan Park and fill swamps.

5 BOWLERS HOSTEL
'Inn Bongaree' was originally a hostel for visiting bowlers from the 1930's and the 'Thrift Shop' in Second Ave was the first volunteer fire station.

6 FIRST AVENUE
Originally Campbell Rd when built in 1923, and planned as a 4 lane road and tramway to Woomim. This corner store, originally a butchers shop, overlooked the original town centre. A few other shops here and across the road served campers who pitched tents along the waterfront, between the roads, and on 'the Hill' where the library and bowls club now stand.

7 BRIBIE'S FIRST SHOP
Arty Bestmann, the first real resident of the island, lived on this corner from about 1903, kept bees, grazed cattle and hosted occasional visitors. Alfred Hall, a Brisbane grocer, built a 'weekender' next door and began bringing provisions for the few residents. When tourism became popular 'Hall and Bestmann' brought the first car to Bongaree in 1919 and built a large general store on this corner site in 1921

8 THE GRAND STREET
Tree lined Banya St contains some of the most significant buildings of the early settlement. At the Foster St intersection is the first Anglican church, built in 1928 by Bill Shirley. For many years the largest hall in the shire 'Anembo', opposite was the site of the first private electricity generator in the 1940's, before Caboothure had electricity.

A house which originally stood on the SW corner became the temporary 'pub' for several years when the military took over the hotel at Woomim in 1941. On the other corner stands a unique round house built in 1950's by the Tesch family. Ivan Tesch ran the first car ferry service, first cinema, ice works, electronic repairs. His wife Clare played organ in the Anglican church for over 60 years. A small hall at 25 Banya Street started life in 1892 as a school in Deception Bay, was moved to Narangba in 1910, then sold to the Bribie Methodist's and sited here in 1924. It was a church for 62 years and 1986 became the Masonic Centre.

9 COUNGEAU HOUSE
Built around 1916 for the Coungeau family, on the hilltop at No. 34, it was the grandest home on the island. Norm Coungeau was a Brisbane wine merchant and his wife Emily was a poet, artist, songwriter and wrote Australia's first opera 'Australis'. They left their home to the Anglican Church as a holiday retreat for Ministers. An American Commander used the house in WW2. Later 'Toc H' purchased it from the church to use as a holiday home for the underprivileged and disabled.

10 DAVIES NOVELTY GARDENS
The S/E corner of Campbell St was the site of 'Davies Guest House' from the 1920's. Famous for it's ornamental trees and novelty gardens. There were many boarding houses in this area and many fine Bribie Island Pine trees remain.

11 DIRECTIONS - SITE 10 TO SITE 11
Down Campbell St across Toorbul St to Bongaree Bowls Club, turn left, then right beside bowling greens. Left fork through the trees to see an example of original Bribie scrub & swamp country. Follow the track over the creek and round to the sealed road, then down to the waterfront where you turn left. Continue along the waterfront, across 50 meters of the sandy foreshore beyond the parking area, to the AFA If wet go via Toorbul St. & Spowers St. roadways

12 AMATEUR FISHERMAN'S ASSN. of QLD
Founded 1904, the first Anglers Assn. established it's headquarters here on Bribie Island. Many notable residents, including Campbell and Welsby, were directors and world famous author and fisherman Zane Grey proclaimed it one of the best fishing spots in the world. For over 100 years anglers and conservationists have stayed in the dormitory and collected a huge number of unique specimens from the Bay. The first Curator was the scientist J. Douglas Ogilby and his collection was on display in a café by the jetty from the 1950's.

13 SOUTH ESPLANADE
Since the 1920's, this wonderful seafront Esplanade was the site for many large and popular guesthouses. Mostly replaced by modern units, a few original houses remain. Proprietors would meet boats at the jetty and carry luggage across the creek and along the sand tracks. After 1945 another boat service operated from Scarborough to Bribie mooring at a small wooden jetty south of the creek.

14 WILLIAMS CREEK
Originally known as Campbells Creek after Campbell family who did oystering in the 1890's and operated a general store beside this creek in the 1920's. In those days the creek was much larger providing a small boat harbour and dugongs were brought in for processing. Reg Campbell was one of many who ran tourist hire boats at Bongaree, and this creek area was a popular camping site from 1912

15 FLINDERS MEMORIAL
This memorial records Flinders and Bongaree landing at the beach below here in 1799 which he named Skirmish Point. The plaque shows a replica of Flinders very accurate map of the Bay, used by later explorers such as Bingle and Oxley, who established the Brisbane Penal Colony.

16 BRENNAN PARK AND SHOPS
This park was a popular tent campsite for sixty years until 1974. Brennan's ran a General Store across the road, and today's Post Office is the site of Ormiston's Shop in the 1920's. A variety of small shops in Toorbul Street provided campers, tourists and the few residents with their basic needs. A Chemist operated from a small hut in this park and drinking water was brought by ship from Brisbane.

