Deception Bay Heritage Trail
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For further information about Deception Bay’s heritage, please enquire at the Deception Bay Library adjacent to marker 6, Captain Cook Parade between Bayview Terrace and Endeavour Street.
Take a moment to step back in time to experience some of the stories and events that have taken place in Deception Bay.

Indigenous Australians have long had a deep association with this region. Their ancient stories and history have been handed down in pictorial representations and by word of mouth, and in recent years these have been verified by archaeologists through the dating of cultural heritage sites nearby.

The melting of the ice 10,000 years ago altered the landscape in this area, creating what you see today. Prior to that event, there were no Bribie, Moreton or Stradbroke islands. Instead, the Brisbane River meandered across countryside that is now Moreton Bay and emptied into the ocean between what are now Moreton and Bribie islands.

The arrival of the British in Deception Bay occurred as the result of an “accident”.

In 1823, Thomas Pamphlett, John Thompson and Richard Parsons, ex-convicts who had served their sentences, and John Finnegan a convict who was still to do so, were ordered to travel from Sydney by boat to Illawarra, south of Sydney, to collect cedar wood.

Instead, Pamphlett, Finnegan and Parsons ended up on Moreton Island (Thompson died en-route) and were rescued by Gubbi Gubbi people who nursed them back to health. The men’s explanation for the ultimate result of their journey was that they were “washed northwards in a cyclone”.

The Gubbi Gubbi - the traditional owners of the area - showed the castaways their tribal lands, including Deception Bay.

In September 1823, explorer John Oxley, who had been searching the coast for a suitable site for a new convict settlement, “rescued” Pamphlett and Finnegan. (Parsons was found further north about a year later). Pamphlett and Finnegan showed Oxley the area. As a consequence, the first penal colony in what was to become the State of Queensland was established at Redcliffe in 1824.

In 1825, the colony was moved to Brisbane and put under the charge of Captain Patrick Logan.

The push by Europeans for pastures and farmland began in earnest a few decades later. In the Deception Bay area, the British indulged in activities such as beekeeping, fishing and other rural pursuits.

For the Gubbi Gubbi and the Tumbal people south of the Pine River, this marked the end of the days of living off nature on fresh seafood and fruits of the forests.

Dr Eve Fesi
Gubbi Gubbi Traditional Owner
The Bancroft Baths

The two Bancroft Baths (the other bath is near marker 5) are Queensland heritage listed. The baths have an historical connection to the Bancroft family and their valuable contribution to science, as well as demonstrating the broader 19th Century belief in the health benefits of sea bathing. They are possibly the only examples of baths of this type cut out of sandstone rock along the Queensland coast. As towns became industrialised and more polluted, disease was thought to be caused by miasma (vaporous atmosphere). The clean, fresh air and water of the seaside became sought after as a 'cure' for 'miasmic diseases'. Due to its size, it is believed Joseph Bancroft also built the first bath for recreational use.

The Department of Primary Industries Southern Fisheries Centre, located on the shores of Deception Bay, was opened in 1972. The centre continued the tradition of research begun by the Bancrofts and was operated as a venture between the CSIRO and the Department of Primary Industries to research the different prawn species found along the east coast. After that project finished in 1974, the Department of Fisheries continued with many important research projects.

The Pictures in the Rocks

Sandstone is a sedimentary rock, created over time when layers of sand, silt and organic matter solidify. Water is able to seep through the rock, but it leaves traces of different chemicals behind which help to cement the rock's layers. As erosion takes place, various layers of sandstone weather in different ways leaving patterns of squares and circles in the rock.

Exposed rock patterns.
Timeline Heritage Consultants © 2009.

Bath (near marker 5) believed to have been excavated by Thomas Bancroft.
Courtesy of Thom Blake © 2004
Dr Joseph Bancroft’s House

As well as running his medical practice, Dr Joseph Bancroft had a property on Enoggera Creek, which he named Kelvin Grove (after many hours spent in the Botanical Gardens at Kelvin Grove in Glasgow while waiting to embark for Australia).

Joseph Bancroft first purchased 60ha of land on Burpengary Creek in 1881 and by 1890 he owned over 1,500ha. Bancroft was a member of the Acclimatisation Society (a forerunner of the CSIRO) and became an expert in agricultural diseases by conducting many experiments, such as trying to develop rust-resistant strains of wheat by testing more than 100 varieties. Rice was also trialled, being grown in the cleared tea tree swamps behind the current fisheries building. South Sea Islander labourers were employed to drain the swamps. Bancroft also became an expert in livestock diseases, and even experimented in cultivating pearls and oyster culture. Two ponds were cut in the rock for these experiments. Joseph made many significant zoological, botanical and medical discoveries, including that the wuchereria bancrofti parasitic worm caused elephantiasis. He was the first in Australia to describe lockjaw (tetanus) and tick paralysis and he hypothesised the germ theory of disease eight years before Louis Pasteur.

He was also interested in the medicinal effects of native plants. He studied the dubosia hipwoodii tree, from which compounds were extracted that are still used today for anaesthesia and travel sickness medication. Visit the Bancroft Memorial, located at the ocean end of Clifford Avenue to find out more about this remarkable man and his family.
Matthew Flinders' chart showing the route taken by H.M. Sloop Investigator in 1799. Detail of Plate IX - East Coast Sheet II. Mitchell Library, Sydney.

As evidenced by this chart of Moreton Bay, Flinders sailed into the mouth of Deception Bay in 1799 however he makes no special mention of doing so in his log.

In 1823, John Oxley was instructed by Governor Brisbane to find a remote site for a convict settlement. Oxley mentions Deception Bay in his log, albeit fleetingly, while sailing between the peninsula and Bribie Island.
Local Industry

As Europeans moved into the area they took advantage of the natural resources on offer. As well as beekeeping and fishing, early pioneers were engaged in felling trees and transporting them on carts pulled by bullocks to meet the demand for timber in Brisbane and further afield. Some areas of land were cleared to create grassed areas for dairy and beef cattle.

Joseph Bancroft was not only a renowned medical researcher, but a significant pioneer in the field of food technology. He built a factory to make preserved beef in Deception Bay. As an 1869 article in The Queenslander newspaper described, the process of making Bancroft’s ‘Australian Pemmican Concentrated Beef’ involved meat first being cut off the bone, minced using steam power, and subsequently spread out on a metal surface heated by steam. Turning the meat, it was warmed by a fan until it became crisp and dry, with the excess fat being drained off. The meat was then ground, and canned. One pound of Bancroft’s Pemmican was equal to four pounds of fresh meat. The cans, once opened, could be left for ‘any length of time without the quality of the contents deteriorating’, as testimonials reported. One testimonial from Mr. W. M. MacGregor in the 1890s, stated the few tins he was making soup from ‘presented the flavour of fresh meat’, even after being opened for over a month. At the time the tins were over two years old, having been carried into the interior of Papua New Guinea several times.
Dr Thomas Bancroft’s House

Thomas Bancroft earned a reputation in his own right as an active scientist, botanist, doctor and photographer.

Thomas lived in a small house close to his parents before moving (c.1895) with his wife into a new home believed to be north-east of Seymour Street. He built wire-netted enclosures at the back of the house where he kept white rabbits for experimental work. On the mud flats, oyster beds were constructed which were naturally covered at high tide, and a bathing shed was erected near the edge of the water. A well was dug at the base of the cliffs, which provided fresh water for showers after swimming.

Thomas expanded on his father’s work in observing the causes of tropical disease, as well as conducting his own extensive flora and fauna research. He sent many specimens of fish and other marine animals to the Queensland and Australian Museums and donated over 1,000 plants to the Queensland Herbarium. He was the first to demonstrate how hookworm enter the human body and he provided evidence that the aedes aegypti mosquitoes were responsible for causing dengue fever. From 1899 to 1901 he caught and sent over 600 mosquitoes to Britain. Children used to catch mosquitoes for him; keeping them in matchboxes. He proposed the theory in 1896 that prickly pear, lantana and noogoora burr could be controlled by insects.

When the pemmican factory lost the contract with the British War Office in 1904, Thomas left the area. However, he continued his scientific endeavours, including investigating the lifecycle of Queensland lungfish (Neoceratodus forsteri).

Certificate of Merit from Edinburgh University awarded to Thomas Bancroft, recording the University Medal he won for Practical Botany 1878. Bancroft Family Collection.
The Second World War

During the Second World War, the 2nd/1st Machine Gun Battalion (2/1 MGB) was based at Deception Bay which became an army camp for around 3,000 soldiers including Australians recalled back from overseas after the Japanese entered the war in 1942. Local resident Viv Tucker recalls dramatic changes when Deception Bay became an army camp to retrain Australian troops for the war in the Pacific. The atmosphere of ‘total war’ and fear of invasion pervaded. Over 40 ships were sunk, with many more damaged, along the east coast during the war. Identification cards were required, even to go fishing in the bay. Viv also remembers local children collecting aluminium and rubber tyres for the war effort and playing war games with discarded bullets and helmets.

Both the Wallin & Lovekin families’ kiosks provided services for campers and soldiers throughout the Second World War. (Read more about the Wallin's Kiosk on sign 9)

Alf Lovekin first visited Deception Bay as a child with his parents. They were guests of Joseph Bancroft in 1885.

He built his first house around 1920 and opened a kiosk in 1939. During the Second World War his shop was designated an emergency food supplier for the army. Ellen Lovekin née Tucker (Nell), who married Alf in 1921, would often be up until midnight, serving soldiers tea and a slice of rainbow cake for five pence, and using 17 hams a week for her popular sandwiches.

Private Jim Moody, of the 2/1 MGB, one of the soldiers retrained here, smuggled the battalion’s unofficial mascot, Horrie, an Egyptian Terrier cross into Australia. Although Horrie did not visit Deception Bay, it’s worth finding out more about Horrie at the Australian War Memorial website: www.awm.gov.au
A Special Place

The Gubbi Gubbi people had camped along the foreshore area for many thousands of years while they harvested the natural bounty of the land and ocean. John Uniacke, as a member of Oxley’s expedition in 1823, observed the women weaving a net or basket from rushes, used to carry fish or any other useful found objects. He also described larger nets used for fishing, made from the abundant Green Kurrajong (Hibiscus heterophyllus), as being ‘...difficult to distinguish from nets made of hemp’. Even bigger nets from the Green Kurrajong were used to catch kangaroos. Also called the Native Rosella, or Native or Queensland Sorrel, the fibre was used to make nets, and the young shoots, leaves and roots were eaten raw, while the flowers (buds) were eaten raw or cooked. In colonial times the buds were made into rosella jam, a use which continues today.

By 1897 most of the Gubbi Gubbi, along with the rest of the Queensland Indigenous population, were forcibly removed after the passing of The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897.

Today, this spot is the venue for festivities on the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Day of Commemoration (NAIDOC).

Deception Bay is also home to people of many nationalities - from the Pacific Islands, Indigenous Australians from other areas, as well people from the British Isles, Europe, New Zealand, New Guinea and Asia.
Campground

William Wallin bought land in 1905 and established his kiosk near the popular campground reserve just south of this site. Around 1928/9 his son Oliver (also known as Ollie or Ollie) took over the kiosk and re-established the Post Office. In 1930 he installed a telephone link to Burpengary with the line strung up in the trees; Oliver also divined a well at the campsite. Next to their kiosk the Wallins built a hall and picture theatre. The hall was 36ft x 24ft (approx. 11m x 7.32m) and, as a newspaper article reported at the time, it was ‘...floored with the best quality crows ash, which is recognised as the best timber for dance hall floors.’ Over 200 people attended the grand opening of the hall for a ‘Guy Fawkes Ball’, complete with fireworks. The hall was destroyed by fire in 1986.

The Wallins had a generator which lit up the kiosk internally and powered a single external light, dim by today’s standards, as a guide for small craft out on the Bay at night. Campers and most residents used kerosene lamps. The Wallins were up at dawn milking cows, hiring boats, renting campsites on the reserve and their private campground which included their two small red cottages, looking after the cricket ground and servicing the public bathing boxes and toilets. Oliver was also the honorary fauna and fisheries officer. The Wallins were kept busy during World War Two, catering for the soldiers and holiday makers coming to the Bay.

Viola and George Turnbull continued to run the kiosk until it closed on 17 October 2004, almost 100 years after William Wallin began the business.
Early Settlers

Many early settlers contributed to the establishment of the Deception Bay area and, although it is impossible to name and acknowledge all of them, here are just some of the families who made the Bay what it is today.

It is believed that Joseph Poulney who had logged Deception Bay from the 1870s to service his Enoggera Sawmills may have influenced Alexander Clugston to settle here. Clugston selected several portions of land which he cleared and planted with orange trees. He also established the first post office in 1884 on the coastal track to Gympie where fresh water lagoons fed Saltwater Creek.

Bert Lipscombe took over the post office running it until 1905, when he became Superintendent of the Cherbourg Aboriginal reserve. His son, Percy, stayed in the area, running a dairy until the early 1970s.

Fred Pedwell, who as a boy assisted Bancroft with his mosquito research, set up a farm on 532 acres of the Bancroft land when it was subdivided between 1904 and 1916. Fred was a ‘bush builder’, so-called for his use of rough timber in the houses he constructed. A short man, a distinguishing feature of the houses he built was the low doorways. One house he built out of wood salvaged from the 1893 floods was later bought by the Tucker family.

John Tucker had worked with Poulney at his sawmill, and had holidayed in the Bay for many years before settling permanently in the early 1900s.

Poulney's bullock teams haul logs from the forest.
Poulney Family Collection.
Living Together

Some Gubbi Gubbi people continued to live in the area for a period after Deception Bay was settled by Europeans in the 1800s. By this time Joseph and Thomas Bancroft observed the Gubbi Gubbi people interacting with Europeans, trading food to supplement decreasing traditional food sources. An indigenous man called Sam, who was also known as Sammy Bell lived in his ‘gunya’ at Deception Bay. According to local stories he made a shelter from saplings and tin which was located just south of the dividing fence on Thomas Bancroft’s property. Sam died in 1913 and is buried in nearby Redcliffe Cemetery.

It is not certain how many South Sea Islanders worked in the Bay area between 1885 and 1904, but it is known that Joseph Bancroft made use of South Sea Islander labour to dig drainage canals to the north of the Bay - these are still known locally as Kanaka Cuts. Indentured labour may also have been employed to cut marine pools and baths out of the sandstone rocks. The Queensland Labour Trade was wound down under the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901.

Throughout its history, the Deception Bay community has demonstrated an inclusive capacity to accept cultural diversity. The Deception Bay Maoto Fono/Samoan meeting hut is remarkable as the only one of its type built outside Samoa. The meeting hut, which is used by people from various cultures, is a wonderful example of people from many nations living together.
Webster’s **Boondar**

Alexander Brand Webster had a business interest in the Brisbane Tug & Steamship Company which, among other enterprises, operated the excursion steamer the Koopa which plied the waters of Moreton Bay for over 40 years.

Webster’s holiday house was called **Boondar** after what he believed was an indigenous name meaning kangaroo. **Boondar** was a typical gentleman’s seaside residence in proximity to Brisbane - a high-set weatherboard Queenslander with a central brick fireplace. A survey of the property in 2000 recognised it to be surrounded by a garden containing an ornamental lake, mature bunya, fig and mango trees as well as a bamboo clump, guavas, roses and clivias. A section of the split rail fence had survived and the grand driveway leading up to the house was lined with camphor laurels. A dense stand of cotton trees separated the house garden from the esplanade. A boatshed was built on the foreshore and a channel cut for access to deep water.

Despite it being only a holiday house, Alexander Webster took an interest in the local Deception Bay community. He established the first life saving patrols at the Bay in 1924, and, in 1929, also constructed a bowling green and tennis court for public use.
A Place of Plentiful Food

Christopher Eipper, writing in the 1840s, described how collecting food was an important central part of indigenous lives. Fishing parties would go out at night or daybreak, while time was also spent mending nets, sharpening spears and carving or making waddies (clubs). Dillies (or bags) were made from long stringy grass and, by twisting the fibre from the inner bark of trees over the knees; nets were made from the twine.

In 1891 Christopher Watson observed preparation of the Bungwal fern, an essential carbohydrate in their diet. The Bungwal root was dug up, washed and roasted. It was then cut up and pounded between two round stones. Watson reported the fern had a nutty flavour and a reputation for being very nutritious.

Shell middens, like those along the Bay, have been found throughout Australia. A midden is an archaeological term describing a deposit of material representing occupational, usually mealtime, debris. In coastal areas this is composed predominantly of shell with small amounts of bone, charcoal and stone artefacts. Midden shells are usually only a few selected, relatively available species and are mostly mature specimens. By comparison, naturally occurring beach shell deposits contain juvenile specimens, water worn shells and deep sea species which lie out of gathering range.
Local government in this area

The region currently administered by the Moreton Bay Regional Council was first sighted by James Cook in 1770 and Matthew Flinders in 1799. It was more extensively explored by Surveyor-General John Oxley in 1823. Oxley’s favourable report led to the establishment of the Moreton Bay penal colony at Redcliffe in 1824. With the removal of the convict settlement to Brisbane the following year, the region was left virtually untouched until free settlement commenced in 1842.

Exploration in the Moreton Bay Region followed a familiar pattern with early pastoralists claiming large tracts of land for their sheep and cattle. Simultaneously, timber getters entered the region in search of red cedar and other valuable timbers.

Commencing only a couple of decades later, land was progressively surveyed and sold for mixed farming, including early experimentation with the growth of cotton and sugar.

By the 1890s, dairying was emerging as the mainstay of the region. The associated development of small towns and the building of infrastructure permitted the growth of a variety of primary and secondary industries to service the growing population.

By this time, the transformation of several small villages into seaside resorts had commenced at Redcliffe, Deception Bay and Bribie Island. The provision of better roads and regular coastal shipping services during the early 20th century facilitated the growth of these resorts.

Local government commenced in 1879 with the formation of the Caboolture Divisional Board which encompassed not only all of today’s Moreton Bay region, but also much of the Sunshine Coast. The breakaway Pine and Redcliffe Divisions were separately constituted in 1888, reducing the size of the Caboolture Division. History turned full circle in 2008 with the amalgamation of Redcliffe City Council, Caboolture Shire Council and Pine Rivers Shire Council creating Moreton Bay Regional Council.

Council’s commitment to serving its diverse communities in sustainable ways includes the delivery of cultural, arts and heritage programs and services. Heritage trails are regarded as a valuable addition to understanding how our shared past influences the present and has the potential to influence the future.
Moreton Bay Regional Council gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the past and present members of the Deception Bay community towards the research and delivery of the Deception Bay Heritage Trail project.