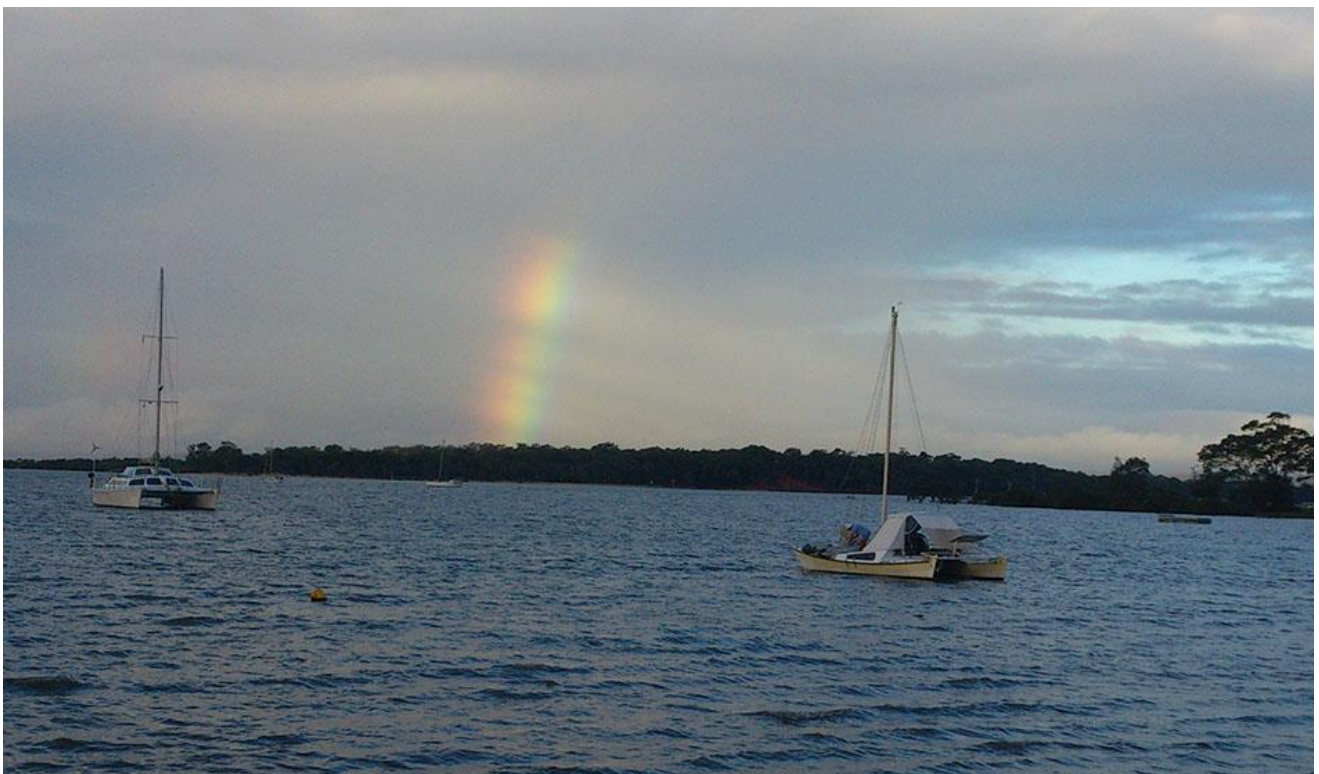


# Redland Libraries

## Redlands Coast *Timelines*

### Coochiemudlo Island



A rainbow over Coochiemudlo Island, seen from Wilson Esplanade Victoria Point, 2013

HP6553

***WARNING: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this document may contain the images and/or names of people who have passed away.***

Information and images from resources held in **Local History** Collections, Redland City Council Libraries.  
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**Coochiemudlo Island is the hidden gem of the Redlands Coast, our often-overlooked island.**

Kutchi-mudlo, meaning place of red stone.

It appears that Aboriginal people had not lived permanently on the island but visited it on a regular basis, collecting shellfish and other bush foods. Their occupation is evidenced in the stone tools, including scrapers, faceted stones and grindstones which have been found in the tidal flats on all sides of the island. Bungwall fern roots (pounded into flour and used to make a kind of bread) and the giant blue waterlily were valuable food sources.

On 19 July 1799, Matthew Flinders landed on Coochiemudlo Island in his search for a navigable river in the southern part of Moreton Bay. The next attempt at exploring southern Moreton Bay occurred under the direction of the Commandant of the Penal Colony of Moreton Bay, Captain Patrick Logan. In 1826 he explored the river that was to later bear his name. He was accompanied on many exploratory trips by Ensign Joseph Innes, who was acting engineer of the Moreton Bay settlement during 1827. In 1830 Captain Logan was on another exploration expedition when he was mysteriously murdered.



Robert Dixon's map 1842

NLA

In 1840 surveyor Robert Dixon was commissioned to undertake the first trigonometric survey of the Moreton Bay region. He used Mount Scott on Stradbroke Island as his base.

He named Coochiemudlo as Innes Island, as well as naming Macleay and Russell Island, Victoria Point and Pt Halloran. Cleveland was nominated as the proposed port for Moreton Bay.

Many of the placenames of the area are those given by the Aboriginal inhabitants. The region around Redland Bay was home to Koobenpul or Coonbenpil clan who spoke the Jandai language. At that time the surveyor general Thomas Mitchell encouraged surveyors to use the local Aboriginal placenames, however Coochiemudlo was the only place to ultimately retain its Aboriginal place name.

The **Bobbiwinta Corroboree** commemorated the death of a native (date unknown) near Coochiemudlo Island, as described in the *Redlands Centenary Souvenir 1850 – 1950*:

“Bobbiwinta was a noted swimmer and fisher, near Coochi Mudlo in Moreton Bay. He had dived in after a turtle, but found it too large for him to bring to the surface unaided. Two of his friends went over to help him, and the turtle was hoisted into the canoe. Only when the excitement died down did they realise that Bobbiwinta was missing, and the appearance of a large shark close by was the only clue to his fate.

The natives were profoundly affected by the occurrence, not only by the death of a comrade, but also by the mystery of his disappearance. One night a man of the Pine River had a 'dream' and the outcome was the Bobbiwinta Corroboree. The "theme song" rang as though the man under the water appealed for help, pitifully, pleadingly, all in vain: *My oar is bad, my oar is bad - send me my boat. I am sitting*

*here waiting, jump over for me, friends! Jump over for me, friends!* This would be repeated over and over again, with all manner of action to illustrate the theme”.

During the 1840s land around the penal settlement of Moreton Bay was being opened up by squatters.

In 1945 John Dunmore Lang visited Moreton Bay and was impressed with the potential of the place. He instigated an emigration program designed to encourage industrious Protestants to come to the area and engage in cotton and sugar growing, with a view to the eventual declaration of Moreton Bay as a separate colony.

Victoria Point was surveyed in 1859. In 1860 the land was offered for sale but none sold immediately. Surveyor William Fryar bought the choice blocks on either side of Victoria Point headland later in 1860. Surveyor Lavelle noted '*Coogeemoodlo Island (meaning red rock)*'.

There were only three people listed as living in Victoria Point in the 1868 Post Office Directories. They were farmers Maria Dawson and J Scragg and bullock driver William Nutt. In 1889 the land was subdivided and half went to William Nutt and half to his neighbour, Daniel Colburn. Early leaseholder Joseph Clark's daughter Mary married Daniel Colburn of Victoria Point in 1864. Colburn selected Portion 42 in 1871. Their daughter Mary married Doug Morton in 1923 and lived on Coochiemudlo until 1967.

In 1885 the island was surveyed again, and subdivisions were undertaken to the west of Elizabeth Street, then in May 1886 the area was advertised for sale. It would seem that most purchases at that time were speculative.

The first white settlers on the island were Henry and his son Norman "Boxer" Wright who lived in a permanent campsite under the cotton tree on the south-east corner of the island from 1895. This was the site of aboriginal fish traps from earlier times. Norman was a young teenager at the time and he had learned about bush tucker from the local aboriginals camped at Victoria Point. The Wrights raised pigs and fished and lived a subsistence life for three years.

Norman was later to go on and establish a boat building business in Bulimba and become a champion yachtsman, sailing *Gretel and Dame Patti* in the Americas Cup.

In 1918 Doug Morton leased the eastern part of the Coochiemudlo Island. He had fought in World War I and was set up on a five-acre farm on the extreme south west corner by a benefactor. Doug had studied agriculture at Gatton College and was keen to start his own place. He also held special leases on the adjoining sandy point which contained many brackish lagoons.



The Colburns were farming at Point Halloran at that time and Daniel Colburn used to swim cattle across to graze on Coochiemudlo. He invited Doug home for a meal and introduced him to his daughter Mary. They married in 1923 and had their honeymoon on Coochiemudlo.

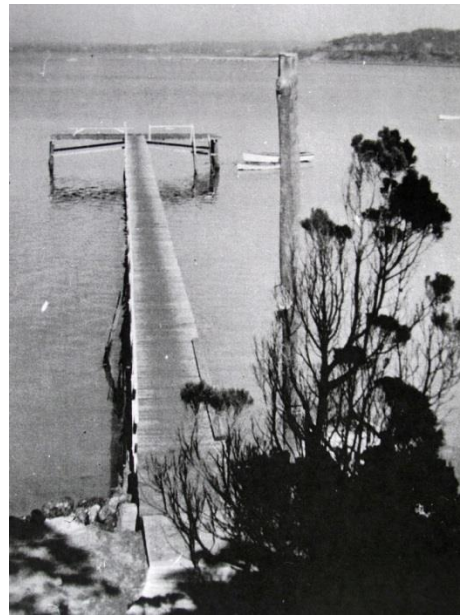
Jetty at Victoria Point built by Doug Morton. Daniel Colburn's car – the first in Victoria Point. HP5760



During the 1930s Captain John Burke's boats would come to collect the produce to take to the Brisbane Markets. They would also bring salted meat in casks to the island. In later years the crops, which consisted of tomatoes, custard apples, pineapples, bananas, passionfruit and carrots were rowed across to Victoria Point and taken by carrier to Brisbane.

Jetty built on Coochiemudlo by Doug Morton

HP6358



The Mortons also kept dairy cattle and pigs. Fresh water was always a problem on Coochiemudlo as many of the wells sunk all turned out to have brackish water. When the water was scarce, Mary Morton had to haul the family's dirty laundry down to the swamp and wash it there. She hung it out on lines strung between the trees.

In around 1925 the Phillips family moved to the island and cleared an area near the jetty. Son William Phillips operated a transport business and built houses on the island. He also built a jetty off Victoria Parade c1940s, and pulled it down in 1961. Phillips sold his land to Alfred Grant and it was subdivided into the Golden Sands estate, bordered by Elizabeth Street, Victoria Esplanade and Parade. The streets were named after members of the family: James, Shirley and William, and Phillips. Carefree Street is named after their boat.

Another family who lived on Coochiemudlo during the 1940s were the Elliots who purchased a rundown property in 1944. Claire and Gerald Elliot eventually established a banana plantation. Other residents, Mr and Mrs Alf Smith, had an orchard of custard apples, avocados and pecan nuts. Bill James had a citrus orchard, and Brisbane eye specialist Dr Allan Henry had a weekend cottage. The Osborne family had a cottage nearby and shortly after the war Ella Lowrey, Janet Clark and Vivienne Bridges built a house from two army huts on the island.

In November 1941, a new tourist resort venture began on Coochiemudlo Island, whereby visitors could travel by launch from Brisbane to a new jetty, which Doug Morton had built on the western side at a cost of £200. *"A horse drawn trolley which travels over wooden rails transports visitors from the jetty to the base of the plateau, passing through lightly timbered country. From the trolley access is gained to the top of the plateau through the Kyber Pass to Douglas Morton's farm".*

Doug had dug the cutting which he named the *Kyber Pass* and he also built the rail line, which was nearly a kilometre long. The little trolley could seat six on each side and was pulled by the Morton's horse "Pilot". The launch was called the *Lookout* and it travelled from Brisbane to Amity and across to Coochiemudlo and then back to Brisbane. It ran on Thursdays and Sundays.

Mr Morton began selling fresh fruit salad and cream to the tourists as well as selling the fresh fruit and vegetables from the farm. Doug Morton had built a little fern house where the tourists could sit and have Devonshire teas. It became a very popular tourist spot until the government requisitioned the boat for war purposes and the day trips had to stop.

## World War II

During World War II the MM-B 43 Water Transport (Landing Craft) Company were stationed on Coochiemudlo to train for their role in moving personnel around the coastline of New Guinea. The water transport training centre was initially established at Victoria Point in 1943 and training was conducted between the mainland and Coochiemudlo. The 43rd Company moved to Coochiemudlo Island late in 1943 and it included some now well-known men; Captain Nigel Bowen, who was to become attorney General for Australia and Chief Justice of the High Court. Captain Frank Packer joined the company in New Guinea and was recognised later for his services to the newspaper industry. Lieutenant Ninian Steven served on Coochiemudlo and was to become a Governor General of Australia. All three have been knighted for their services since the war.

The camp on Coochiemudlo was situated in the melaleuca forest on the western side of the island. The site is now the fairway of the 9th hole of the Golf Course. Tents were set up and the soldiers were plagued with mosquitos and sand flies. The six landing craft barges assigned to the Company were beached on the south-western side of the island. They also had an American amphibious DUKW and the only two amphibious jeeps in the Australian Army. They also had a truck and a few dinghies. A cook house and canteen were built initially of corrugated iron and timber but later rebuilt with handmade bricks. An ablutions block containing 15 thunderboxes over a large trench was also built. It was regularly burnt off with dieseline. However, someone mistakenly used petrol on one occasion with disastrous results.

The men would often visit neighbouring settlements of Redland Bay and Victoria Point, particularly to attend church on Sundays. Some would visit the White and Muller families as the Whites had a small church on their property. Others attended the Methodist church in Redland Bay.

## Timber, telephones and tourism; post war



After the war Alf Ashton used to cut down the cypress trees on Coochiemudlo and transport them across to Victoria Point where they would be loaded onto a Blitz truck and transport them to the sawmill in Cleveland.

Hauling logs from Coochiemudlo Island, c1950 HP0894

Party line telephones were installed in 1948 and Doug Morton carried the mail to the island on his boat from 1946. He also ran an unofficial ferry service. In 1959 Dick Whitehall bought Doug Morton's boat *Koorooloo* and began the first official weekend ferry service. Regular daily services did not commence until mid-1968. In 1961 Alfred Grant and Richard Marsh subdivided Coochiemudlo into about 700 allotments. Many families from Brisbane purchased land and built holiday houses although at that time there was no water or electricity and no rates to pay. Redland Shire Council assumed management of the island in 1962. During the late 1960s and early 70s two new ferries were added to the fleet and timetables were upgraded. Dick Whitehall's son Warren joined the ferry service in 1977 and during those years many social outings were organised on the bay.

## Water, power and a new jetty - 1970s

In December 1969 plans were being prepared for a new government jetty which was estimated to cost \$36,000.44. It was officially opened in June 1971 by Shire Chairman E G W Wood and the old timber jetty was decommissioned at the same time. In 2014 this 'new' jetty was demolished and replaced with a new ferry terminal.

Planning for water reticulation did not take place until late in 1970. The pipes were laid and the project was completed in October 1971. By 1975 Coochiemudlo residents were agitating to have electricity connected and had approached the S E A with a scheme guaranteeing support from land holders, most of which lived in Brisbane. Land owners would need to pay \$30,000 per annum (or \$6 per week per resident) for a guaranteed 6 years, which was a heavy burden financially. Coochiemudlo got electricity in late 1978.

### **Storm - 1973**

A freak storm which tore through the southern suburbs of Brisbane on Sunday 4 November 1973 caused extensive damage on Coochiemudlo including flattening trees, un-roofing houses, overturning boats and blocking roads.

### **Norfolk Beach named - 1977**

A plaque was unveiled on Coochiemudlo Island by Federal member David Jull in July 1977. Shire Chairman Mr EGW Wood officially named the eastern beach, Norfolk Beach.

However objections to the naming were made by the Queensland Placenames Board because the correct process of allocating new names had not been followed.

Every year islanders re-enact the arrival of the Norfolk



Annual Flinders landing re-enactment, 1990 HP8036

### **Restaurant, hall and new ferries – mid 1980s**

The next major development on the island was the establishment of the Aminya Gardens Restaurant in November 1979. Funding was allocated for a new community hall in 1985. A night time water taxi commenced operation during Expo 88 when the need arose to transport people home late at night, and the *Island Link* barge service was operating at that time. Warren Whitehall surrendered his ferry licence in May 1993 and the Victoria Point Water Bus Company took over the ferry service to Coochiemudlo.



Aminya Gardens restaurant, 1981

HP0206





In 1999 a replica of HMS Norfolk was used for the first time, in the annual Flinders landing re-enactment. HP8045

### **Emerald Fringe**

The Island's 'Emerald Fringe' was added to Redland City Council's schedule of local heritage places in 2019, thereby recognising the significance of the fringe to Redlands Coast heritage. The fringe is a natural green zone that encircles the island.

**Sources:**

- Mary Howells: *Places of the Redlands*
- Tracy Ryan: *Redlands master timeline 1770 – 2010*
- Cleveland Shire Council: Minutes and Rates records
- Tingalpa Shire Council: Minutes and Rates records
- Redland Shire Council: Minutes and Rates records
- Rural Press: Redland Times and Bayside Bulletin
- Redland Libraries: Local History Collections including Oral Histories and Images
- Queensland State Library
- Queensland State Archives
- National Library of Australia: Trove
- National Archives of Australia
- Queensland Births, Deaths & Marriages
- Historical Title Deeds
- Post Office directories
- Ancestry Library edition
- Redland City Council Cemeteries Register
- Queensland Heritage Register
- Queensland Government historical maps and aerial imagery
- Other sources as noted in document

The document has been prepared for general reading rather than as an academic document. For that reason, referencing has not been included in it.

However, all research has been thoroughly and diligently undertaken to academic standards by using primary sources as much as possible; existing academic papers, theses, and books; and by cross-checking information across more than one source. Personal recollections from memoirs or Oral Histories have all been cross-checked against historical records unless otherwise stated.

Detailed references are available on request.

**Names and places, and language:**

Names, places and language have been included as recorded in their original context. While every effort has been made to avoid offensive material, historical records reflect the norm that existed at that time, and it is important that they are reproduced truthfully.



**Aboriginal Place names are acknowledged:**

<b>Cullen Cullen</b>	- Wellington Point, Birkdale & Thorneside
<b>Erobin</b>	- King Island
<b>Nandeebie or Indillie</b>	- Cleveland, Thornlands, Ormiston, Alexandra Hills
<b>Doobawah</b>	- Raby Bay
<b>Quandamooka</b>	- Moreton Bay
<b>Kapallaba</b>	- Capalaba
<b>Joonggabbin</b>	- Sheldon
<b>Jungalpin or Tungipin</b>	- Mount Cotton
<b>Talwalpin</b>	- Redland Bay
<b>Warrer Warrer</b>	- Victoria Point
<b>Erapa</b>	- Pinklands
<b>Minjerribah</b>	- Stradbroke Island
<b>Canaipa</b>	- Russell Island
<b>Jencoomercha</b>	- Macleay Island
<b>Goochie mudlo</b>	- Coochiemudlo Island
<b>Ngudooroo</b>	- Lamb Island
<b>Tindappah</b>	- Garden Island
<b>Teerk Roo Ra</b>	- Peel Island
<b>Noogoon</b>	- St Helena Island
<b>Milwarpin</b>	- Green Island
<b>Mubanbila</b>	- Bird Island
<b>Guwawanewa</b>	- Goat Island
<b>Perulpa</b>	- Perulpa Island
<b>Karragarra</b>	- Karragarra Island
<b>Mulgumpin</b>	- Moreton Island
<b>Pulan</b>	- Amity Point
<b>Mooloombah</b>	- Point Lookout
<b>Goompi</b>	- Dunwich
<b>Karboora</b>	- Blue Lake
<b>Bummiera</b>	- Brown Lake

To find more information about some of the stories included in this timeline, search in the library catalogue via the [Local History](#) link or by clicking on the **Libraries** or **Discover Redlands Coast** link on the Redland City Council website <https://www.redland.qld.gov.au> and following the links to Local History.