

Burnett Heads Heritage Trail

'OAKS BEACH TO THE LIGHTHOUSES'

This Trail winds from the Oaks Beach through the former Burnett Heads Pilot Station Reserve, to both Lighthouses, relating the changing role and land tenure of the area.

The Burnett River is named after Surveyor James Charles Burnett, commissioned to survey the river by Governor Fitzroy in 1847, at the time the Sugar and Coffee Regulations Act provided opportunity for land selections in the Burnett Region, with timber getting secured by a special license. With the settlement of Bundaberg in 1867 river traffic plying cargo for the growing district prompted the need for navigational and piloting service's. Joseph Hughes was appointed Harbour Master, Police Magistrate & Chief of Customs at Bundaberg on 22nd June 1871 by the Department of Ports and Marinas. The Pilot Station Reserve at South Head, Burnett Heads was established with Thomas Clark appointed Pilot, along with his boat crew they were responsible for establishing and maintaining navigation aids and lighting at the mouth of the river to be exhibited each night. Tents sufficed until cottages, along with other infrastructure were erected to house them comfortably at South Head. The 'Lady Bowen' was the first vessel Pilot Clark brought up to the Wharves, which were located in the town reach of the Burnett River.



The original South Head Lighthouse was erected in 1873 (kerosene powered and converted to acetylene gas in 1932), the telegraph line from Bundaberg was completed in January 1875 thus enabling the Pilot to inform Bundaberg of incoming ship's and weather reports. Educational requirements for children of the reserve and farming selections resulted with the opening of the Burnett Heads Provisional School in 1878.

At this time the surveyed 'Town Reserve' of Burnett Heads, recorded as 'Wallace Town' consisted of 6 lots spanning between today's Mittelheuser and Moss Street's. The original land area of the Pilot Station Reserve spanned from South Head at the mouth of the Burnett River toward today's Zunker and Mittelheuser Streets. Progressing years and technology brought change to the Pilot Station Reserve. The opening of the Bulk Sugar Terminal/ Loading Facility, Wharves, associated buildings and infrastructure at Port Bundaberg on 20th September, 1958, was a proud achievement for the Bundaberg Harbour Board, the first tug boat 'Coral Sea' was provided by the Government, later purchased by the board in 1965.

The original lighthouse was replaced in 1971 by a taller, concrete, automatic lighthouse, sections of reserve land were excised for various purposes. South Head Lighthouse operations continued maintained by the Federal Government Department of Transport, Piloting responsibilities were transferred to the Gladstone Pilots Pool under the direction of a Regional Harbourmaster in 1989.

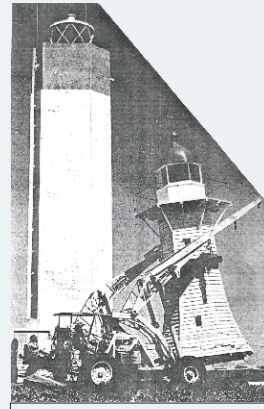


The maintaining of navigational lights, beacons, bouys and pilot transfer operations are currently performed by a crew working from the remaining Pilot Station Reserve land, employed by the Maritime Safety Queensland, an Agency of Queensland Transport. During 1998-2000 the remaining 3 homes on the reserve were sold for removal, future requirement's for the remaining reserve lands were un-decided.

No.17-- St John the Devine Church foundation stone was laid on 6th August 1939, although **not on** former Pilot Station Reserve land, but land gifted by Christian Mittelheuser, boasts listing in the 'Cultural Heritage List' of the Burnett Shire Council, 2005 Draft Plan, stating :-The structure is an excellent example of an intact 'Old English' revival style church, the only example remaining in Queensland.

No.18-- Historic South Head Lighthouse, Burnett Heads:-

was relocated in 1972 for preservation onto land set aside by Woongarra Shire Council 'Lighthouse Park', a project of the Bundaberg and District Historical and Museum Society assisted by the Burnett Heads Progress Association. Due to ongoing maintenance expenses the Historical Society transferred ownership to the Burnett Shire Council in August 1995, during 2000 a Government grant provided funds to council for restoration of this former Beacon of our Districts History. She was listed on the Queensland National Trust 'Register of Significant Places' in August 2002. This Lighthouse along with the former Pilot Station Reserve and the current South Head Lighthouse are tangible reminders of their significant role in the Maritime and Cultural Heritage of our District, associated with the evolution of sea transport and navigation along the Queensland Coast.



Bundaberg News Mail Photograph, 1972



This heritage brochure has been funded by a Regional Arts Development Fund grant through the Burnett Shire Council. I am grateful and proud to record this piece of Burnett Heads Heritage.. My thanks also to those who have provided information and photographs..
 Marge Kidd, Burnett Heads, Queensland.
 email - margaattheheads@yahoo.com.au
 Copyright-2006.
 Designed and Printed by Classic Design & Print



No.15-- Burnett Heads Boat Harbour. During 1969 plans to create a Boat Harbour instigated by The Burnett Heads Progress Association followed a similar proposal by Bargara. After considering both proposals the State Government announced in April 1970 that the harbour at Burnett Heads was approved in principle. Works began in February 1973 commissioned by the Department of Harbours and Marine with the project undertaken by the then Bundaberg Harbour Board. Construction of the training wall progressed with works on a public jetty and boat ramp commenced during 1981. Foreshore land was engulfed with dredge spoil, this reclaimed land now houses the Burnett Heads Marina Buildings with the Blue Water Club and Volunteer Marine Rescue buildings verging that of the original foreshore. The Boat Harbour and Foreshore lands spanning towards the Lighthouse have not reached full potential, this rests with the future which surely will unfold a Marine Style Haven of which to be proud.

No.16--At this point we reach the former Recreation Reserve excised from Pilot Reserve land on which the following are sited.

The Original Shelter Shed, within the bounds of **Lighthouse Caravan Park,** excised in 1955 by the former Woongarra Shire Council as a reserve for camping and the **Cricket Shed,** resisted to it's present position. Both sheds were favoured spots during sporting events where sprawling trees offered a mantle of shade. Tennis Courts are located adjacent to **CWA (Country Women's Association) Park** which has nestled within a stone surrounded drinking fountain bearing a marble plaque dedicated in 1953 to the memory of Mr. Robert Somerville, for his community involvement.

Jack Norgate Oval, named in 1991 to recognise Jack Norgate's involvement with the former Burnett Heads 'Saints' Australian Rules Football Club established in 1972 (since disbanded). During 2000 courtesy of a Regional Arts Development Fund Grant, their team photographs were restored and re-framed for permanent display in the Burnett Heads Community Hall, this coincided with a reunion of former team members and supporters.

Burnett Heads Community Hall -- old and new --

The original Burnett Heads Progress Association Hall, formerly barracks from Qunaba Mill at Mon Repos, was re-located as a community project in 1932, opposite the Blue Water Club. The hall was again relocated during 1962 to the car park site of our present hall, disrepair resulted in this hall being condemned by the Shire Council in 1984. The rear section of our present hall, The Burnett Heads Sports Complex, an initiative of the Burnett Heads Sports Building Committee (associated with the Saint's AFL Club) stood alone from 1978. Burnett Heads Progress Association took over the existing Sports Complex Building, assets, undertakings and liabilities of the Burnett Heads Sports Building Committee and with Government Funding the front section of our present hall was erected and officially opened on 30th November 1985.



Burnett Heads Progress and Sports Assn. Inc. Photograph.

Rural Fire Brigade and State Emergency Service and Telstra Depot building's are located on Reserve land excised during 1965 the first Fire Depot a former Bargara Brigade's shed was acquired in 1966. This building outgrew requirements, thus new headquarters were officially opened on August 19th 1995 in conjunction with an extension to the existing State Emergency Service headquarters building.

The Burnett Heads Progress and Sports Association Inc. Executive Committee of 1998; initiated the move to acquire the remaining Pilot Station Reserve land for community recreation purposes. A submission presented to Local and Government Authorities for the transfer of the remaining Reserve land, followed by extensive lobbying, resulted with notification on March 15th 2001, that 10 hectares of Lot 58 had been dedicated as a Reserve for Public Recreation, with the Burnett Shire Council as Trustees, with Lot 57 of the reserve supporting the operational lighthouse and associated buildings retained by the Dept. of Transport. Following the formation of a Burnett Heads Foreshore Committee in 2000, a concept plan was formatted to develop the former reserve land as parklands. **'SOUTH HEAD PARKLAND'** was the name adopted by Burnett Shire Council in November 2001.

A Queensland Government, Regional Centres Program (RCP) to Burnett Shire Council in 2004 funded the undertaking of a 'Turtle Trail' walkway to link Burnett Heads to Bargara through Mon Repos. Works proposed at Burnett Heads were the provision of concrete pathway's from Oaks Beach through South Head and Jack Strathdee Memorial Parklands onto the town centre, the inclusion of toilets, barbecues, shelters, playgrounds, playing fields, car-parks, up-grading of the lagoon, with a Welcome Vista proposed for the corner of Neill St. and The Sea Esplanade. Future improvements are proposed when funds are available.

South Head Parklands were officially opened by Burnett Shire Council Mayor Raymond Duffy on Saturday 10th December 2005.



The Trail Starts --No.1--OAKS BEACH, named for the once abundant She Oak Trees, is a valuable nesting location for loggerhead turtle's with regular monitoring during the season by local volunteers and Mon Repos Turtle Centre. The groyne wall was established as a community project during the 1970's to encourage the build up of sand to replace the gravelly beach.



Orr/ Hay Family photograph.

Between Scott and McKenzie Streets during the late 1880s and 1928 the Ocean and Lighthouse Hotels advertised in Bundaberg Newspapers promoting sea views, accommodation, liquors and fine meals. Both Hotels succumbed to fire, following the Lighthouse Hotel fire in 1928, the proprietor purchased Mrs Annie Orr's Hotel at Mount Perry, it was relocated to the Town Reserve, Zunker Street, deemed the site for future development. The Lighthouse Hotel (although modified) remains on site today, an Icon of Burnett Heads.

Number 3--Kath Nielson Park recognises Mrs. Annie Kathlene (Kath) Nielson's contribution to Burnett Heads organisations. Kath's husband Garvey was Coxswain at the Pilot Station Reserve during 1952-1979.

We now enter original Pilot Station Reserve land area.

No.4--Coral Coast Community Kindergarten formerly Burnett Heads Community Kindergarten was built on land excised from the Reserve during 1985, a proud community project funded by Government subsidies and fundraising.

Number 5--Jack Strathdee Memorial Park excised from the Reserve in March 1973 as a park for public recreation purposes is named after Mr Jack Strathdee, a pioneering family member, Woongarra Shire Councilor 1956-1982 and member of the Progress Association from 1932-1986.

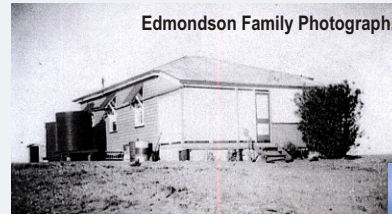
No.6--The SKATEBOWL for the youth of Burnett Heads, progressed by the Burnett Heads Progress Assn./Community Group & Burnett Shire Council was officially opened in Jack Strathdee Memorial Park on October 20th 2002.

No.7-- The residential land to the left of the Lagoon bounded by Brewer, Jones, Neil, & Zunker Streets, referred to in the 1920-40 era as 'Stoney Hill' was grazing land for Reserve families cattle. Along with Kelly, Lighthouse & Hampson Streets reminders of early years are retained with Streets named after some of the Reserve's personal.

No.8--The Oceanic Pipeline Pump Station, operational since 2005 pumps sea water through the Oceanic Pipeline to the Aquaculture Precinct at Port Bundaberg.

South Head Parklands, at this junction of the 2 pathway's the gravel path takes in the Piloting and Lighthouse heritage points of the reserve.

Number 9--The Edna Strub Walk. This gravel path commenced in July 2003 replacing the 'Cow Trail' from the Kindergarten to the current Lighthouse. The Reserve held a special place in Edna's heart, who along with husband Eric were long term residents involved in community affairs.



Edmondson Family Photograph.

Harry Edmondson was a boatman/ light-keeper during the 1940-50's. The bench was donated in 2003 in memory of Harry and Hilda Edmondson by their family.

The 4 original homes were relocated after being replaced by 3 high set timber Queenslander style homes during the 1940-50 era.

The following Recollections of the Pilot Station Reserve during the 1920 - 40 era were related by Clarence Kelly who grew up on the Reserve where his father Tom was a boatman/light-keeper:----

The land offered very few trees with sand-hills close to the foreshore, the fenced area offered entry through 2 gates referred to as 'The Top and Bottom Gate's'. Situated between and adjacent to the original foreshore houses and the lighthouse were a long timber Jetty, the Stevenson Screen (Weather Station), Flagstaff, Signal House with telephone and storage/paint sheds. Weather reports, including tide height's, wind strength and rain recordings were relayed to Bundaberg daily via telephone, this remained an important role with ensuing years. During daylight hours, shipping relied on a system of navigation aids displayed from the Flagstaff.

A concrete slab remains on site bearing an inscription by pilot, 'J. W Oaks, 20th May 1939'

Number 10-- The Edmondson Family Park Bench marks the location where the family lived in one of the Reserve's 4 original low set timber houses (pictured) the Pilots house was set back a way.



Former Coxswains house whilst on the reserve, 1999. K & T Kelly photograph.



Harry Edmondson and Tom Kelly, once a week they went up river to refill the river beacon lamps with kerosene clean the glass and trim the wicks. Edmondson Family Photograph, 1952.

The long timber jetty adjacent to the lighthouse extended northward allowing river access at all tides. At the end, 2 clinker built, timber whale boats (1 large, 1 small) used for piloting duties, attending to navigation aids and collecting stores were housed using the Davit Radial Type launching apparatus cradle. Arriving Schooners/ Steamers/Ships were required to anchor 3 miles out, two boatmen would row the Pilot out in the large boat to meet the vessel where he would scale the side by way of a rope ladder, a treacherous duty especially during rough seas. The arrival of the first motor launch the 'SAOTI' in 1933 superseded the role of the larger whale boat and the jetty which eventually fell into disrepair.

Number 11-- The Boat Shed, an adjunct to the jetty originally faced north, it was realigned to its present position where a ramp with a rail line provided a means to launch the row boat. The pilot launch was moored at the end of the north wall across the river (preceding the formation of the Boat Harbour), thus the smaller boat sufficed for the boatman to row the pilot to the launch to motor out to vessels requiring entry in to the river----



1940/50's Postcard from B & L Somerville collection, preceding the formation of the Burnett Heads Boat Harbour retaining wall. Included with permission of Murray Views Pty. Ltd.

Today this shed is a base for the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, Shark Operations Depot. Adjacent is another of the reserves original storage shed's.



Bundaberg News Mail Photograph, 1971

Number 12-- SOUTH HEAD Lighthouse/ Base of original Lighthouse.

Bundaberg building firm, S.C. Lohse and Co; won the \$41,853 contract to erect a new lighthouse in 1971. The base of the original lighthouse remains following it being re-sited to Lighthouse Park in 1972. South Head Lighthouse is currently maintained by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, it is one of 2 Australian Cospas Sarsat satellite ground receiver stations, the original light housing is to be restored and incorporated into a welcome vista in Jack Strathdee Park.

Number 13- Gorman Park, adjacent to Kelly Street, is named in recognition of Mr. Daniel Gorman, appointed pilot at South Head, Burnett Heads in 1915.

Number 14-- Maritime Safety Queensland Building in Lighthouse Street is currently used by Maritime Safety Qld; for storage of equipment to maintain navigation aids in the region. Adjacent stands the original Flagstaff, re-sited from the foreshore for preservation. At the corner of Hampson and Lighthouse Streets near the coconut tree, sites where the 3 high set Queenslander homes of the Pilot, Coxswain and Boatman were located.

