

A DISCOVERY GUIDE TO THE

Southport

HERITAGE WALK



THIS WALK BUILDS ON THE SUCCESS OF THE LABRADOR HERITAGE WALK, DEVELOPED IN 2007, AND INCLUDES MANY STORIES FROM SOUTHPORT'S RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

These memories were collected for Gold Coast City Council's oral history collection and through a "Call for Stories" competition held in 2008 and 2009. With a wealth of material to choose from, we have included the stories on text markers and totem poles. These memories illustrate the events that took place and the affection we hold for 'special' places. We hope you enjoy discovering them on your walk around Southport.

A joint initiative of



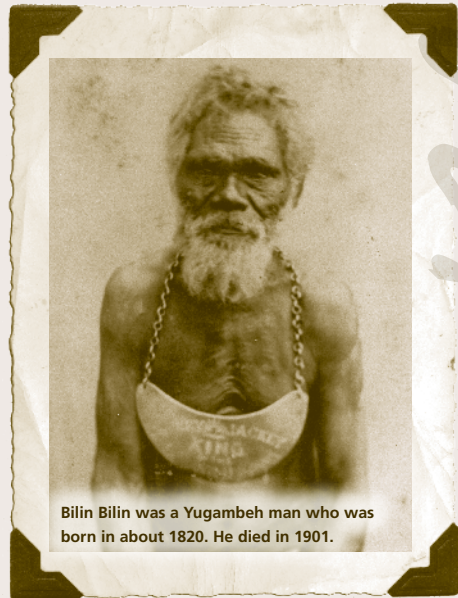
Queensland
Government



Gold Coast City Council

Southport was part of the territory of the Indigenous people of the Yugambeh language group. This extended south from Beenleigh along the coast to the Tweed and inland to the mountains. The language group was composed of a number of subgroups including the Kombumerri of the Gold Coast.

Abundant fish and shellfish, along with edible plants, provided a good food supply and a swamp near Matron and Sister Higman Park ensured both fresh water and wild duck.



Bilin Bilin was a Yugambeh man who was born in about 1820. He died in 1901.

CBD LOOP

30 minutes 2000 meters 2500 steps

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Theodore's Café | 10 Southport Catholic Church |
| 2 Birkbeck's Jewellers | 11 Skelton's Butchery |
| 3 Carey's Corner | 12 Former Railway Hotel |
| 4 Cecil Hotel | 13 Southport Railway Station |
| 5 Regent Theatre | 14 Former Carey's Store |
| 6 Former Queens Hotel | 15 Chelmsford Guest House |
| 7 Former Southport Town Hall | 16 Balclutha |
| 8 Former Ambulance | 17 Former Star of the Sea Convent |
| 9 Former Post Office | |

OWEN PARK EXTENSION

Return trip 1 hour 3260 meters and 4080 steps from Former Southport Town Hall totem.

- 18 St Peter's Anglican Church
- 19 St Hilda's School
- 20 Trinity Lutheran Church
- 21 Southport State School
- 22 Cemetery

BROADWATER PARKLANDS

Take a stroll around the parklands to discover:

- 23 Families and Aboriginal History
- 24 Sands of Time
- 25 Southport Pier Heritage
- 26 Bathing Costume History
- 27 Theatre Heritage



SOUTHPORT AS A *seaside* DESTINATION



Opening day for the Southport railway, 1884 13

ORIGINALLY known as Nerang Heads it seems reasonably certain that Southport was named after the town of the same name in Lancashire, England. The first land sales in 1874 were unsuccessful but in the following year land sold in the surveyed area from Queen Street to Loders Creek.

Southport was a popular seaside destination for Brisbane residents in the 1880s with people travelling to and from the village by horse drawn coach and steamer.

Once the railway was extended from Brisbane to Southport in 1889 visitors could easily access the still waters of the Broadwater for bathing. Surfing had not yet become a popular pastime but people still crossed the Nerang River by boat to access the beaches for picnics, beachcombing and paddling.

A SOUTHPORT OF NOTE

“ Southport is confidently expected to become eventually a watering place of some note, being of comparatively easy access from Brisbane, and possessing many features not shared by the watering places in Moreton Bay in present use.

Southport can be reached most readily by land from Brisbane, the distance being forty-five miles over an excellent road, Cobb and Co's coaches passing within three miles of the township.

The shores of the bay, at this point, are composed of undulating ridges with hard sandy beach, quite free from mangrove. The view from the proposed township embraces a long stretch of the bay northward, the island of Stradbroke in the background, immediately opposite is the Boat Passage through which a glimpse of the ocean is obtained.

Rock oysters and crabs abound, and are readily obtainable at low tide; there are also in the vicinity extensive oyster beds... both whiting, bream, rockcod and other fish can be caught from the rocks in front of the township... Southport offers many inducements to persons wishing to really enjoy a trip to the seaside. [THE WEEK, 1876](#)

Marine Parade was lined with large and elegant guesthouses and hotels. Many of these establishments had their own guest bathing boxes which allowed private access to the water. Nuns from the Sisters of Mercy came to Southport in 1898 and they built their own bathing box which ensured their privacy. They commenced teaching at the Star of the Sea Convent in Marine Parade which amalgamated Balclutha, Southport's first house, into its convent, church and teaching complex. Balclutha was Southport's first house. Overlooking the Broadwater, it had a dining room, five bedrooms, kitchen pantry, box room, shower bath and stabling. It was built by Robert Tenant Johnston, an adventurous Scotsman and one of Southport's pioneers, in 1877.



Bathing Boxes 1900s

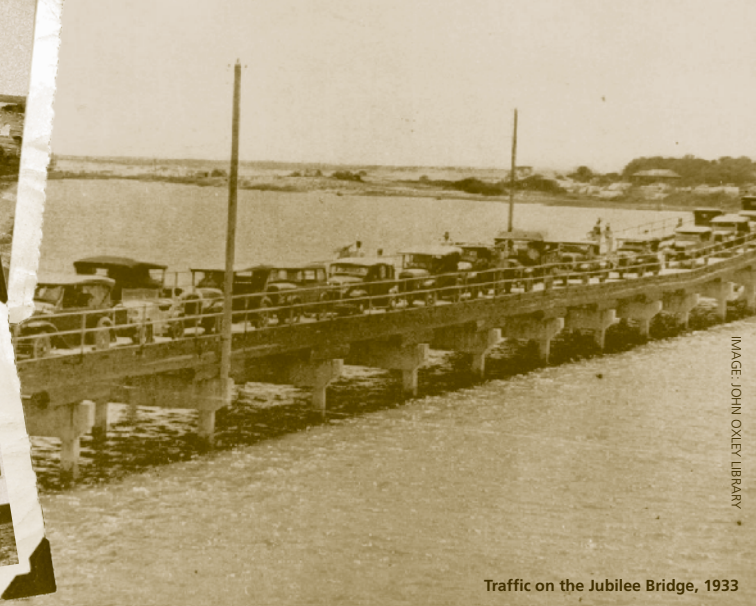


“ The Catholic nuns had a bathing box built on the water’s edge, opposite the Pacific Hotel, where they used to change and swim in the river. No-one else swam there as the main swimming area was near Tuesley’s Jetty, opposite Railway Street.

ALLAN BURROWS

Star of the Sea Convent, Est. 1898

17



Traffic on the Jubilee Bridge, 1933

IMAGE: JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY

Once the Jubilee Bridge was built over the Nerang River in 1925 access to the coast became easier and accommodation developed to meet demand. Car ownership was still rare but enough people had them to create weekend traffic jams!

Railway Hotel and street tree removal

12



STREET TREES in central Southport were prominent until 1928 when some were removed for bitumen road surfacing.

PAINTING: GLADYS FEDRICK

BALCLUTHA was Southport’s first house. Overlooking the Broadwater, it had a dining room, five bedrooms, kitchen pantry, box room, shower bath and stabling. It was built by Robert Tenant Johnston, an adventurous Scotsman and one of Southport’s pioneers, in 1877.



Balclutha 16

“ My father Bill and Uncle Joe Chandler used to tie their 12 foot clinker punt up to a channel beacon about 100 metres south of the pier baths and fish for Jew fish with live mullet obtained from the net fisherman, Mr Store. Most nights they would come home with a fish that they would hang on the Hills Hoist clothes line; the head was on the line and the tail on the ground. Every fourth or fifth night they would hook up with a shark and it would tow the boat up and down the Broadwater until they beached it on a sand bank. On one occasion they hooked a 16 foot tiger shark which towed them up to the Old Jubilee Bridge, back to the Grand hotel and then back to the front of the pier when they beached it on a sand bank. In those days the nuns from the Star of the Sea had bathing boxes of which there were several in front of the Old Pacific Hotel. They would swim across the channel to the sand bank in the middle. My father knowing what was in the channel was forever warning them. He was told “thank you Mr Chandler but the Lord will look after us”! My father not being too certain of this tied a dead eight foot grey nurse up to the steps of their bathing box. We never saw them swimming the channel again.

BILL CHANDLER



USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE YUGAMBEH MUSEUM LANGUAGE AND HERITAGE RESEARCH CENTRE.

Jenny Graham

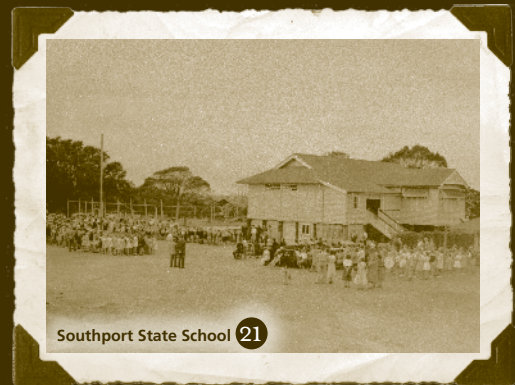
SALTWATER PEOPLE

Aboriginal matriarch, Jenny Graham also known as Jenny Drumley (nee' McGussy c1860-1943), her husband Andrew Graham and their eleven children were among the few families who were able to remain on the coast. Many of their descendants still live on the Gold Coast.

“ Southport is where the Aboriginal elders of the Yugambah people grew up including my mother, Patricia O'Connor, and her many cousins. Her generation have told me many stories of Southport, including traditional foods, early coastal life and Aboriginal language terms of the local community.

RORY O'CONNOR

SOUTHPORT AS A *service* CENTRE



Southport State School 21

SOUTHPORT was the service centre for the Gold Coast until the late 1960s, and a range of schools, shops, health, legal and telecommunications facilities were available. In 1880 the Southport State School commenced operations in a small building in Lawson Street. Over the years additions were made and a high school was established in 1916. Goyle-Lea school was established by Mrs Davenport and her daughter in 1883 and was bought by the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane in 1912 who renamed it St Hilda's. The Southport School was established by an Anglican minister, the Reverend Horace Henry Dixon in 1901. In 1981 the former Pacific Cable Station buildings were



St Hilda's 19



AMERICAN SERVICEMEN

convalescing at TSS
during WW2.

In 1943 and 1944 the 153 Station Hospital was one of the units stationed at The Southport School during the Second World War. Another was the 166 Station Hospital which took over a number of the School's buildings for use. On 2 April 1943 a crew of Civilian Construction Corp workers, under the supervision of the Allied Works Council, established a bivouac area on the hospital grounds and began construction of new buildings to expand the hospital facilities.

CAREY'S CORNER 3

“Carey's Corner Store. “Cash and Carry”. Mum's family owned it. It had a verandah all around the corner of Nerang and Scarborough Street and a wooden floor that echoed when you walked on it. It had everything. The flour and sugar came in big bulk bags and they used to weigh it up with a set of scales and weights to put into brown paper bags. One pound of this. One pound of that.

ERICA BATES



THEODORE'S CAFÉ 1

“Theodore's was a very long building divided into 3 parts—a milk bar at the Nerang St. entrance, behind this was a sit down café and behind that was a function room. My sister had her wedding reception there. Overhead were wall to wall material fans.

BEV LLOYD



BULLETIN ARCADE

The Bulletin printery was demolished in 1956 to make way for an arcade of 14 shops, running from Scarborough Street to Nerang Street. The ambitious project took three years to complete.

THE CLOCK TOWER

The memorial clock tower was built in 1953 and situated on the intersection of Nerang and Scarborough Streets. The clock tower was a citizen's monument for local men who fell during the World Wars. When it was erected on Anzac Day a flock of pelicans flew in a v for victory formation overhead when the mayor formally accepted the clock.

THE SOUTHPORT AMBULANCE CENTRE 8

This service was established in 1919 for the area from Coomera to Burleigh Heads. A voluntary committee raised sufficient funds to build an ambulance station which became available to Percy Raby, the first superintendent, and the station's leased car—a Ford. The station opened on 2 December 1922.



SUPERINTENDENT OFFICER

Percy Raby and possibly his wife Annie Raby pictured with an ambulance vehicle, Southport Ambulance Centre 1919–1920.



Opening of the Southport Town Hall 7

TOWN HALL

The town expressed its confidence in the future when it constructed the Southport Town Hall in 1935. The town hall was built in the modern Art Deco architectural style which immediately made it, and the progressive Council, a talking point. The heritage listed building remains an important example of Art Deco in Queensland. The Southport Town Hall served as the Council Chamber and administrative offices for four local authorities until the amalgamation of a number of coastal town councils led to the formation of the South Coast Town Council in 1949. From 1950 until 1959 it became the administrative centre for the Gold Coast Town Council before the town council changed its name to the Gold Coast City Council.

HOTELS AND THEATRES

From the 1880s through to the 1930s Southport boasted more hotels than it has today. The hotels provided the holidaymakers with full board, along with the health benefits of the sea air and the pleasures of bathing. In 1905 Southport had six large hotels – the Grand, the Pacific and the Southport along the waterfront, and the Railway, Scottish Prince and the Queen in the commercial district. None remain in their original form today.



Queens Hotel, Est. 1885 6



1st Cecil Hotel, Est. 1908 4



Chelmsford Guest House, 1908—1961 15



Regnant theatre, c1912—1965 5

Southport also enjoyed three cinemas. The Pier Theatre located on the Southport Pier and the Savoy and Regent Theatres (originally the 'Regnant') in Nerang Street. The Regent was located on the southern side of Davenport Street, which has since been formed into a road. The natural slope created perfect viewing for the 1000 patrons, and some found the slope ideal for rolling lollies down the aisles!

“ As a young girl in the early 60s I remember the absolute treat, as a family, was going to the Pier theatre in Southport. In the hot summer months it was fabulous as they would open up all the doors along the sides of the building and you could gaze out onto the water.

ANNE LITTLEJOHN

SOUTHPORT spreading OUT



Southport Show Chief Steward
Mr W. Mulcahy judging a rooster in 1952

THE AGRICULTURAL and Horticultural Society purchased Owen Park for the annual Southport Show and moved from their original home at the Recreation Reserve in Lawson Street (now Woodroffe Park) in 1919. The Society named the park after a prominent citizen E.H. Owen in 1933.

The show continued at the grounds until 1941 when the site was requisitioned and used by the armed forces until 1945 when the war ended. The show continued in this location until 1989 when it moved to Parklands. From 1994 Owen Park became the final resting place for many of Southport's heritage buildings which were displaced by development.



Southport show

“ I was a member of the Southport State School fife band started by Mr. Roy Rose in the early 1950's. We marched in Anzac and Spring Parades and performed at Gold Coast shows. We had a Christmas break-up picnic at Owen Park each year catered for by the Mothers Auxiliary.

BEV LLOYD

IMAGE: JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY

THE DRILL HALL

The heritage listed Drill Hall was built in 1890 on the original Recreation Reserve. The hall was used for the training and organisation of volunteer defense units at a time when Queensland, as a colony, was responsible for its own defense. The hall was used by the military forces during both world wars and until 1988. It is now used by a number of community groups.

SOUTHPORT GENERAL CEMETERY 22

The cemetery is located on the early route into Southport but it was also near the railway line which ran at the back of the former showground site at Owen Park. The earliest known grave is that of a male pensioner named Joab who was killed by lightning in 1878. The cemetery covers an area of approximately six hectares and it was gazetted in July 1880. The oldest graves are at the top of the hill in the centre of the cemetery. The earliest graves were possibly marked with wooden crosses but headstones also include those made of Italian marble, and Australian sandstone and granite.



Johnston and Freeman's hearse, operating from
Nind Street, Southport, Queensland, circa 1925

SOUTHPORT'S MONUMENTAL MASON

“ My husband's name was Peter Dunn and he was the only monumental mason in Southport, but he used to have competition from Brisbane. He could do marble work and he made all his own terrazzo. He could grind it and do the inscriptions but he never did any of the carvings. They were done by the big Brisbane firms.

STELLA DUNN

OUR THANKS

The Southport Heritage Walk was funded by the Queensland Government Community Renewal program with additional funds and project management from Gold Coast City Council.

Thanks also to:

- Councillor Dawn Crichlow
- Gold Coast City Council Office of City Architect and Heritage
- Gold Coast City Council Local Studies Library
- State Library of Queensland - John Oxley Library
- Gold Coast Historical Museum
- Gladys Fedrick, artist, whose impressions can be seen on the photo markers
- The many people who enriched this walk by sharing their stories, especially the Kombumerri of the Gold Coast.

ENJOYING YOUR WALK

Please note the distance of each walk and allow plenty of time.

Taking your dog (on a leash, of course) or walking with a friend will increase your enjoyment. Take drinking water with you. Wear comfortable shoes, sun smart clothing, a broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen. Look both ways and take care when crossing the road.

Gold Coast City Council is determined to preserve and maintain the special character of this area. If you notice graffiti or maintenance problems on your walk, please report them.

Graffiti Hotline: 5581 7998 Parks Maintenance: 5581 7967

AIM FOR 10,000 STEPS A DAY

Get up, get out and get active – every step counts! Use the Southport Heritage Walk to help you reach 10,000 steps a day to enjoy better health. To help you keep track, the distance of each walk is provided in steps as well as metres. You can also keep count of your daily steps by borrowing a pedometer from your local Gold Coast City Council library.

Further information on the history of Southport and other areas can be found at the Gold Coast City Council's Local Studies Library in Southport. An insight into the indigenous history of this area can be found at the Yugambah Museum and Heritage Research Centre in Beenleigh.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SOUTHPORT?

Visit our website

www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/heritagewalks

A joint initiative of

