

History of "The Rocks"

Timeline

*1842 – 1853 – 1859 – 1860 – 1861 – 1868 – 1872 – 1874 – 1878 – 1887 –
1891 – 1904 – 1906 – 1909 – 1911 – 1921 – 1930 – 1969 – 1979 – 2001 –
2003 -*

The Rocks (original property name) is located at the heart of the earliest European settlement on the Sunshine Coast.

1842

A proclamation issued by Governor Gipps, in 1842, directed that no licences be granted to occupy land, or cut timber in the lands where the Bunya Bunya tree was found.

The Gipps proclamation was enforced in the area between the Maroochy and Mooloolah Rivers and on the Blackall Range. Consequently no runs were taken up and no timber licenses were granted in that area until Queensland became a separate colony.

1853

Daniel and Zacharias Skyring were granted leases to two cattle runs, "Canando" and "Yandina", both of which had a frontage to the Muru Kutchi Dha (Maroochydore – place of black swans)

The Rocks is on the eastern side of the Canando Run and the western corner of the Yandina Homestead.

1859

Queensland becomes a separate colony.

1860

Following the enactment of the new land laws, Edmund Lander applied for a run called Mooloolah Back Plains in May 1861 and by 1862 he had established an out station on the area across the river from "The Rocks" now covered with cane.

1861

In a report on the Maroochy River dated 23 April 1861, Lieutenant G P Heath RN Marine Surveyor wrote "The timber is at present being cut about 18 miles up the river (The Rocks) Cedar, Beech, Flooded Gum, Bunya and Mountain Pine are very plentiful, especially the Beech".

1868

Under the provision of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868, cattle runs were opened up to selection. James Low selected 330 acres Lander's Station.

1872

Ned Browne became Manager of Yandina Station and stayed on until 1900. At this time, the historical conflict with the Aborigines at Lake Weyba occurred, remembered today by Murdering Creek Road.

Yandina Station became the way station enroute to Gympie Gold fields.

1874

Edward Browne was born at Yandina Station.

1878

The Rocks was selected by Peter Stevans, as a homestead of 150 acres.

At this time, timber getting was the main industry. The logs were dragged by bullock teams to the river banks and rafted downstream to the mouth of the river, then either dragged across country or towed by sea to Mooloolaba and transport to Pettigrew's mill in Brisbane by small steamers.

1887

Just down steam a few metres from where "The Rocks Function Centre" now operates, Peter Stevans erected a wharf and store.

This wharf was at the limit of navigation for small paddlewheel steamers, such as the "Tandora Rajah" which provided the main transport link with Brisbane.

1891

The rail link with Brisbane is opened ending the need for the steamers.

1904

Edward Browne, a teamster and timber getter, purchased The Rocks from the widow of Peter Stevans.

1906

Ed Browne builds the Queensland homestead on the Maroochy River, still found on site.

When the last timber, suitable for milling, was finally cut out, dairying and Banana growing started on the homestead.

1909

William Coulson commenced a mail, passenger and goods service from Yandina to Bli Bli this was later extended to Maroochydoore by motor boat.

1911

The Moreton Central sugar mill tramway was extended to the Maroochy River and the sugar industry development rapidly along the banks of the river. The

cane was loaded on to the tram trucks in the field, moved over portable tram line to the river bank where the trucks were loaded onto punts and transported down river to the tram terminus.

1921

The Yandina Coolum road bridge was built across the north Maroochy River.

1930

A train bridge was built across the river and the tramline was slowly extended on both side of the River.

1969

Cessation of river transport.

1970

Dairy, banana and timber industries die out and the river flats are fully utilised by the sugar cane industry.

2001

The Rocks property purchased by Richard Sohrab Stedman. Restoration of the Restaurant buildings commence.

2003

As a consequence of declining world prices for sugar.... Moreton central sugar mill, Nambour (at the time owned by Bundaberg Sugar) closed on the 3rd December leaving 200 cane farmers, some of who had been farming cane for 3 generations, wondering what to do.

Cane farmers removed tram tracks removed from properties.

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Restoration of the "Browne House" commences.

In the beginning
Origins of the name "Yandina"
The First Residents
The Yandina Creek Bora Ring
Middens on the Riverbank
The Bunya Feast
A Helping Hand
The Landforms & Aboriginal Myth

In the beginning

Aborigines of the Yandina District belonged to the Gubbi Gubbi language group. This language group consisted of a number of tribes including the Nalbo, Kabi, Dallambra and Undanbi. The basic unit of Aboriginal society was a tribe of up to seventy people owning their homeland and governing themselves. Tribes in turn would belong to a language belong to language group.

The areas east and west of the present day Yandina railway line, were occupied by the Undanbi and Nalbo respectively.

Origins of the name "Yandina"

For many place names of Aboriginal origin, there is a choice of different meanings as there is no accurate written word, just oral history. Yandina town is one of these place names.

There is a general consensus that the original name of the area in the Gubbi Gubbi language was "Koongalba" which could have meant, "place of small water" referring to the rock reef that acts as a ford and river crossing "The Rocks" or it could have meant, "place of clean water" referring to the point where the river is no longer tidal and has only fresh water.

The name, however, may have originated from journeying Turrubal language group of the south, near Brisbane that travelled to the Yandina Creek area. In this language group "Yandina" means "to go on foot" (yan, go; dinna, on foot). Again referring to the rock reef that acts as a ford and river crossing (The Rocks).

The other theory is that Yandina was a work used by the Kabi tribe to indicate that something is finished or gone forever. There was a Kabi legend that once the sea came up and covered the area around Yandina Creek until the wallum country rose up again and the sea retreated. Their campsites, which had been used for centuries, were of no more use them; they were Yandina or "gone forever".

On expedition, it is recorded that Tom Petrie had identified the area as Yandina which meant "small place of water" referring to the rock reef that acts as a ford and river crossing (The Rocks).

The First Residents

Aborigines have resided in Australia for more than 60 thousand years, although it is thought that the Gubbi Gubbi language group has lived in the Yandina area for the last 20 thousand years.

Aborigines are famous for their hunter gatherer skills as well as being extremely in tune with their natural environment. Their hunting practices and fire-stick farming sustained their resources and the environment. Around Yandina, there was an abundance of natural resources.

More information is available at the "Yandina & District Historical Society" or "A Short History of Maroochyshire".

The Yandina Creek Bora Ring

Until the late 1970's, the outline of a traditional Baro Ring was found at Yandina Creek signifying that the Aborigines gathered there on social and ceremonial occasions. Their customs of burial were maintained into the 1880s.

The Bora Ring was the stage for one of the most important ceremonies of the Aboriginal culture. It was here that the young men were initiated into the tribal laws and customs that formed the basis of their way of life. The country in which they lived was harsh and the laws that were imposed upon the men and women of the tribe ensured their continuing survival in this environment. Both girls and boys had to pass through an initiation ceremony, but by far the most exacting and important was the Bora ceremony for the young men of the tribe. A boy's childhood was carefree but once he passed through the Bora Ring, he had to accept all the responsibilities of manhood. The initiation ceremonies varied from tribe to tribe and no details of the Yandina Creek Bora Ring are known, however it was common that the knocking out of teeth, circumcision and scaring of body parts constituted some of the tests that had to be passed by young men.

Middens on the Riverbank

There is evidence of middens on the banks of the Maroochy River where Aborigines had great feasts of shellfish. The word "midden" means rubbish dump and a shell midden is a place where debris from eating shellfish has accumulated. Shell middens can also contain such things as bones of fish, birds and mammals used for food and tools made from stone, shell or bone. Shell middens provide a lot of information about Aboriginal activities in the past. The types of shells present can indicate the season the aquatic habitat being used when the site was occupied. Different types of shells can indicate different habitats being used or changes in the diet of time.

The Bunya Feast

Every 3 years, Aborigines from various language groups and tribes journeyed to Blackall Range for a 'corroboree' which included a feasting on Bunya nuts, exchanging of goods, initiating of young men, organised competition fights and dance performances. This was one of their ways of unifying their culture.

A Helping Hand

Aborigines helped to establish European settlements in the district. They helped the timber-getter to find the trees suitable for milling and helped in the felling. Settlers employed them to cut firewood, punt goods on the river, clear land and mind children as well as perform some household tasks.

Early explorers like Andrew Petrie who ventured into the Blackall Range in the west were shown pathways and food sources among which were Bunya nuts. The makers of the Brisbane to Gympie road, completed in 1868, were helped by Aborigines who thereafter maintained the telegraph line route.

With the coming of the Europeans, life became very difficult for the Aboriginal inhabitants of the district. They could no longer pursue their nomadic way of life. In 1897, the Government legislated that people of Aboriginal descent were to live on land especially set aside for them. Most of those living in the Yandina district were resettled on Fraser and Stradbroke Islands.

Those taken to Fraser Island were later taken to a reserve at Cherbourg in the South Burnett. In 1996 a number of descendants of the Undanbi and Nalbo peoples have returned to live in the Yandina District.

The Landforms and Aboriginal Myth

The Yandina area is blessed with natural beauty and dramatic landforms. The two most dominant landmarks are Mt Ninderry and Mt Coolum. Both have a prominent place in the Aboriginal myth:

" ... long ago in the Dreamtime, a beautiful maiden named Maroochy was loved by Coolum, a handsome young warrior. Another warrior, Ninderry, wanted Maroochy for himself and tried to steal her away. Coolum challenged Ninderry to a duel and they fought.

The two warriors attacked each other with such ferocity that the earth trembled and the ocean roared, the birds took flight and the koalas and kangaroos hid in fear, until at last, Ninderry, with a mighty blow of his club, killed the warrior Coolum.

The Creator, known to the Undanbi tribe as Birral, was so moved by their love and courage, that he turned their fallen bodies into mighty stone mountains, as a monument for their bravery.

The grief stricken Maroochy fled high into the hills and wept so copiously that her tears formed the Maroochy river.

Those tears will flow forever, while the majestic monoliths of Mt Coolum and Mt Ninderry stand against the sun, gazing down on the river and out to sea, remembering the beautiful maiden they loved."

The Rocks, Yandina

The historical property of The Rocks is named after the rock reef that stretches across the Maroochy River. Located 25 kilometres from the river mouth, The Rocks was the natural navigable head of the river for early explorers.

Originally located and diarised by Andrew Petrie in 1842, the rock reef was a significant river crossing point for indigenous Aborigines.

When freeholding was made legal, Peter Stevans was first proprietor in 1878. Edward Browne, son of Ned Browne, the first Manager of Yandina Cattle Station, purchased the property in 1904. The property stayed in the Browne family until purchased in 2001 by Richard Sohrab Stedman.

Property overview / Information summary – Design Gallery at The Rocks

Located at 1410 Yandina-Coolum Road, Yandina, Queensland

1906 Historic Queenslander “Browne House”

- 300m2 upstairs (approx.)
- 240m2 downstairs (approx.)

Strategically located with excellent access between Noosa, Mooloolaba, Eumundi and the Hinterland on the Yandina-Coolum Road, connecting Bruce Highway and the Sunshine Coast Motorway.

This is an idyllic location and setting on the Maroochy River.