

April 2025

Vol. 22 No. 2

Newsletter



Opening hours: Every Sunday 10am – 2pm
Or by appointment.

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(Mudgeeraba Heritage Centre)

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Committee formed June 2001; Incorporated November 2001;
Dedication and official opening 9 October 2004

President's Patter

Hello Everyone

I hope you all weathered the weather, it sure tested everyone. What a wet month March was. The museum came through unscathed except for extremely wet grounds.

In March we said goodbye to our dear friend George O'Brien. He will be very much missed by us at the museum for his stories, music, jokes and presence, and to the whole community of Mudgeeraba. R I P George. Our thoughts are with his wife, Denise and family.

We have already had 2 schools visit, and the rest of May is fully booked with schools.

Happy Easter to you all. Once again, our volunteers have been keeping the doors open and battling the effects of the wet weather.

Joan

We are on Facebook and Instagram -
GC Hinterland Heritage Museum - please like us
and spread the word

In memory of the late George O'Brien, OAM

George was a true gentleman, a man of action willing to get his hands dirty and a great community leader.

George was a much-loved Principal of Mudgeeraba State School, commencing there in 1985 until his retirement in 1996. As a schoolteacher and education leader he transformed lives and provided a lasting legacy to our community.

He was a member of the Lions Club for over 50 years, many of them in Mudgeeraba.

George was a poet, and his poetry lifted the community when he recited his own work – a lasting legacy to the community.

George was a musician. He participated in the Hinterland Community Band as a member of the horn section. He trained the next generation of buglers. Young people were tutored by him to play The Last Post. His love of music was legendary.

He was a patron of the Mudgeeraba Show.

He volunteered at the Gold Coast Hinterland Heritage Museum, helping out whenever there was a need. We remember the enjoyment that students and visitors alike felt when he entertained them with his music and poetry. Even when he was no longer able to visit as a volunteer we would be asked 'Where is Mr O'Brien?' He was one in a million.

The Gold Coast Hinterland Heritage Museum would like to pass on to George's family our thoughts and love.

We will miss you George and all you have done for us at the Museum.

George's significant achievements

Led the team to build the hall and swimming pool at Labrador State School and the swimming pool at Mudgeeraba State School.

Led the team to build the Mudgeeraba Memorial and founded the Mudgeeraba ANZAC Day sunset ceremony.

George also raised funds through the community to rebuild the Mudgeeraba /Springbrook Memorial Hall.

Patron and founding member of Mudgeeraba RSL.

Bugler at ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies across Queensland for over 60 years.

Played bugle at Menin Gate Evening Ceremony – Ypres, Belgium and donated two bugles to the local buglers from the Mudgeeraba Community.

Represented Lions International in Timor Leste by supporting eye specialists.

Significant Awards

Albert Shire Council – Proclamation of Honour – 1992

Premier's Award – Senior Citizens Week – 1992

Rotary International – Paul Harris Fellowship (Highest Award) – 1992

Lions International – Melvin Jones Fellowship (Highest Award)

Australian Light Horse – Mudgeeraba – Bugler – 1988

Mudgeeraba Show Society – President; Patron; Life Member – 2008

Hinterland Community Band – Musician; Founding Member; Life Member

John Franklin Fellowship Trust – Founding Chairman

Queen's Birthday Honours – Order of Australia Medal (OAM) – 1995

International Year of the Volunteer – Local Hero Award – 2001.



Extract from “Journeys to Sugaropolis – The Australian South Sea Islander Story of the Gold Coast Region” City of Gold Coast publication.

Helensvale, Benowa, Bundall – these are names of Gold Coast suburbs today, but did you know that originally, they were sugar plantations? Few people are aware that the Australian sugar industry actually began in Southeast Queensland. And it could not have happened without South Sea Islanders.

In the 1860s government regulations permitted sugar blocks of between 320 and 1280 acres to be located within 10 kilometres of the sea or a navigable river. They attracted retired military officers, well-educated sons of British gentry, planters with experience in the West Indies or Southern United States and businessmen who had acquired wealth during the Australian gold rushes.

It was quickly confirmed that sugar was a viable crop for Queensland conditions and in the southeast numerous sugar plantations and farms appeared, causing the district to be dubbed ‘Sugaropolis’.

Although there were many smaller farms also growing sugarcane, the large plantations accounted for the bulk of sugar production. They were mainly located along the region’s five navigable rivers: the Logan, Albert, Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang. The rivers acted as highways allowing vessels to take sugar to Brisbane and bring in supplies.

These estates were run as self-contained villages, which could include a manager’s residence, stables, blacksmith, worker’s barracks, carpenter’s house, stores, and buildings which housed the mill, and perhaps a distillery. The mill-house and bagging store were generally located near a wharf. Much of the land was enclosed with post and rail fence and then subdivided into cultivation and grazing paddocks with a killing yard for the plantation’s meat supply. A sawmill often adjoined the sugar mill, cutting wood for the Brisbane market. Larger plantations generally maintained a river steamer, cutter or a small fleet of punts for transport.

South Sea Islanders did much of the heavy manual labour involved in clearing the land, fencing, building drains and roads and harvesting the sugarcane. They also helped the milling operations and at W K Witty’s

plantations of Yatala and Yellowwood were noted as skilful drivers of the punts that brought the cane to the mill. A small number worked as sugar boilers.

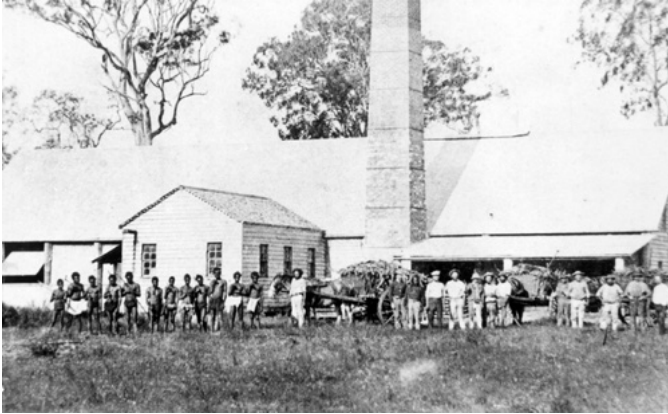
The plantations of the Gold Coast usually employed gangs of up to 60-70 people in their fields. For instance, Arthur Robinson's 1280-acre Helensvale Plantation on the Coomera River employed 58 South Sea Islanders and 16 Europeans in 1885. In the same year David Fullerton's 1196-acre Bundall Plantation at the mouth of the Nerang River employed 60 South Sea Islanders and 15 Europeans. Further upstream from Bundall, Robert Muir's 1100-acre Benowa Plantation employed 69 South Sea Islanders and 30 Europeans. By the early 1880s it was reported that all the sugar manufacturing in the Gold Coast region was being done by islanders under the supervision of European managers. When the Queensland Census was taken in 1881, there were 454 South Sea Islanders in the Gold Coast and Logan regions, representing 11 per cent of the total population including 25 women, 15 working as domestic servants and 10 engaged as agricultural labourers.

Smaller gangs of South Sea Islanders were also widely employed on the sugar farms of the region. Near Muir's estate was the farm of Edward Cooper at Carrara. Called 'Birribon', this was a holding of around 120 acres. It didn't have its own mill and sent cane to Muir's mill for crushing. It was run as a family enterprise, with Edward being assisted by his wife Lena and brothers Roland and Herbert. Apart from sugarcane the estate also grew corn, potatoes, bananas, and other crops. While one or two European workers were employed, the rest of the workforce consisted of South Sea Islanders who lived in a hut which the brothers thatched with cane tops. Edward Cooper's surviving diaries from the early 1880s provide a rare glimpse into life on a sugar farm and show a more casual relationship between the islander workers and their European employers that was the norm on larger estates. Although the South Sea Islanders employed at 'Birribon' undertook heavy manual labour such as scrub clearing, weeding and cutting cane, the three Cooper brothers also worked alongside them in the fields, doing the same arduous duties as well as the ploughing and forming of drains.

Edwards entry from Friday 9 March 1883, for instance, says:
I ploughing in Carrara and Bertie dropping potatoes. Islanders cutting down weeds for potatoes. Rolie cutting potatoes and brushing in

afternoon. I went to township in morning to get plough share done. Bertie went to post in evening. Fine weather rather warm.

On Monday 4 June, it was reported that:
We falling scrub all day. Islanders brushing scrub fine weather. Frost in morning. Bertie went to post.



Bundall Sugar Mill



Benowa Sugar Mill

Images courtesy of City of Gold Coast Local Studies Collection

From “Belonging Here” – An A to Z of stories about place drawn from the City of Gold Coast Oral History Collection, 2017.

Page 70 – Veivers Homestead – It was all dairying in those days.

In 1859, six members of the Veivers family, including brothers David (1837-1910), Robert (1832-1871) and John (1839-1904), emigrated to Brisbane from Scotland aboard the ‘Glentanner’. The Veivers brothers were following in the footsteps of their uncle, Walter Hill, a famous botanist, who, amongst other great deeds, is reputedly responsible for introducing the mango and growing the first commercial macadamia crop in the world. The Veivers moved to south-east Queensland and the family are recognised as Gold Coast pioneers.

The Veivers name is associated with sportsmen and politicians and has been used to dedicate parks and street names. Charlie Veivers is the great grandson of John Veivers who took out leases on a number of blocks and by 1879 was able to purchase them. He received a Deed of Grant for 80 acres on Worongary Creek, 207 acres on Mudgeeraba Creek and 386 acres ‘south of Nerang’ in the Merrimac area at this time.

The Merrimac area was called ‘Talgai’ and a homestead of the same name was built on the property. Harold Veivers, father of Charlie, later expanded the Veivers family holdings before selling ‘Talgai’ to developers in 1972. Faerie Park at Merrimac is the site of the original homestead and garden.

My father, Harold, was a dairyman at Talgai and I was born and brought up there. Faerie Park is where the homestead once stood. My grandfather, John, was known as ‘Fardie’ who was the sone of the first pioneer also called John. He dairied first and then my father continued. It was all dairying in those days. All round the whole Merrimac area was cows because the milk factory used to be out there. I worked at the milk factory later when I was about 20. Around about 33 dairy farmers supplied milk to that factory. Quite a few of them came from the Mudgeeraba area although a few locals sent milk to the milk factory in Southport. Dad retired from dairying in about the 1960s. That’s when my brother took over and the farm eventually sold.

The homestead had two pine trees, which came from the Bunya Mountains, and they were planted by the early Veivers. The house had four big bedrooms, virtually 11-foot ceilings, the old-fashioned type, big lounge room and of course the walkway to the kitchen. The kitchen was a dirt floor.

The fig trees were there, at least three different varieties, more fig trees than that there. I can remember three fig trees at least in my younger days that died and rotted out and since we sold the farm at least three more fig trees have disappeared.

They were used to run fencing wire across for mum's clothesline and we used to cut saplings out of the bush saplings out of the bush paddock to use them to prop the wire up because, if the wire was low enough for mum to hang the clothing on, it was dangerous for horse riding. The tree I carved my initials on in 1942, which is only a quarter of the tree it used to be with rot over the years, had fruit larger than a golf ball. We were always climbing around the trees and we'd probably we just received a pocketknife in our Christmas stocking.

CHARLIE VEIVERS



Veivers family in front of 'Talgai' homestead, circa 1900.

*A single
poppy
has the
soul of a
thousand
heroes
and the tears
of a million
loved ones.*



Lest We Forget

April 25th

Management Committee 2024

Joan Rudd [President], Anne Panitz [Secretary]. Sue Mills [Treasurer, Registrar, Newsletter] Jack Rudd, Brian Cox, George O'Brien, Lenore Crouch, Neil Sands, Pam Sands, Peter Jones, Carol Jones, Warren Davis, Tom Cowper, Lloyd Mills, , Odette Dalton.

Meetings held 3rd Sunday of each month on site.

Our aim is to collect and preserve historical and heritage material illustrating the growth and development of the Hinterland Region of the Gold Coast from the original pioneering days until today. We plan to arrange and describe these materials and make them accessible to the general public on a regular basis as well as providing educational programs where possible to increase public awareness and appreciation of the Gold Coast Hinterland region's history and development. Members of the Management Committee have connections with pioneering families in the district.

"Friends of the Museum" is for anyone who shares our same interest in preserving the history of our region and is interested in assisting with the set-up and operation of the museum. Further details on the 'Friends' and application form may be obtained from the secretary.

Diary Dates - subject to change without notice

APRIL 2025

6 – Museum open 10am-2pm
13 – Museum open 10am-2pm
20 – CLOSED
25 – Anzac Day
27 – Museum open 10am-2pm

MAY 2025

4 – Museum open 10am-2pm
6 – Marymount
8 – Marymount
11 – Museum open 10am-2pm
13 – Mudgeeraba Creek SS
14 – Mudgeeraba Creek SS
18 – Museum open 10am-2pm
18 – Mudgeeraba Street Party
19 – Caningeraba SS

20 – Caningeraba SS

22 – Caningeraba SS

25 – Museum open 10am-2pm

25 – Bad Virtue Productions filming

TBA

30 – Estia Health

JUNE 2025

1 – Museum open 10am-2pm

8 – Museum open 10am-2pm

15 – Museum open 10am-2pm

17 – Labrador SS

19 – Labrador SS

22 – Museum open

28 – Mudgeeraba Show

29 – Museum open 10am-2pm

29 – Mudgeeraba Show

The Museum Committee would like to thank the Council of the City of Gold Coast for their continued support of the Museum through Whole of City Funding and rate reduction.