

South Sea Islanders

A remarkable feature of the district is the continuing presence of South Sea Islander Australians, whose ancestors first came to the district in the 1880s as indentured labourers, to work upon local sugar plantations. Most had previous experience on Queensland plantations, and would originally have been recruited in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia or New Guinea by traders, some of whose questionable practices in the 1860s had led to their description as “blackbirders”. Following direct intervention from Britain, the recruitment trade was far better controlled and inspected by the 1880s and many labourers returned time and time again to work in Australia. They were highly regarded for their stamina, eagerness to work and cheerful disposition. William Julius, and later the Robbs, employed many of these labourers, and their long term employment, marriage to British citizens, or acquisition of land exempted many from compulsory deportation after Federation in 1901 and the introduction of a “White Australia” policy. Their strong presence in local community life, especially within the Methodist Church and sporting bodies, has long been a remarkable feature of the district.

Sand Mining

Along with other districts of northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland, the Tweed Coast profited from the boom in mineral sands mining which developed after 1939 and continued well into the 1970s. Rutile, zircon and titanium, amongst other minerals, were initially highly valued defence industry minerals during World War II and were mined by dredging operations between Fingal and Kingscliff, and along the beach south of Cudgen Creek. Much of the coastal dune country was transformed by this industry.

In its wake also came an influx of population, roads, bridges, electricity, reticulated water supply, stores, civic amenities, and perhaps most importantly, the Kingscliff Public School, which opened its doors in 1957.

Tourism

Cudgen Headland first gained a reputation for its safe creek and surf bathing amongst local farmers and Tweed Valley residents. However by the 1920s, better roads and bridges saw the arrival of the first real ‘tourists’, mostly visitors from Queensland who enjoyed the village atmosphere of the town, camping in increasing numbers along Marine Parade at Christmas and Easter each year. The reputation of Kingscliff as a family resort has only grown with the years, epitomised by the town’s flourishing public beachfront holiday parks. Over the past ten years Kingscliff has been transformed into a sophisticated coastal town with the addition of attractive street landscaping, gourmet cafes, restaurants, first class accommodation and boutique shops along Marine Parade. Kingscliff Village, in Pearl Street, offers modern drive-in shopping facilities. New businesses continue to move into the town, and apartment construction is flourishing, as new residents, especially retirees, flock to the region.

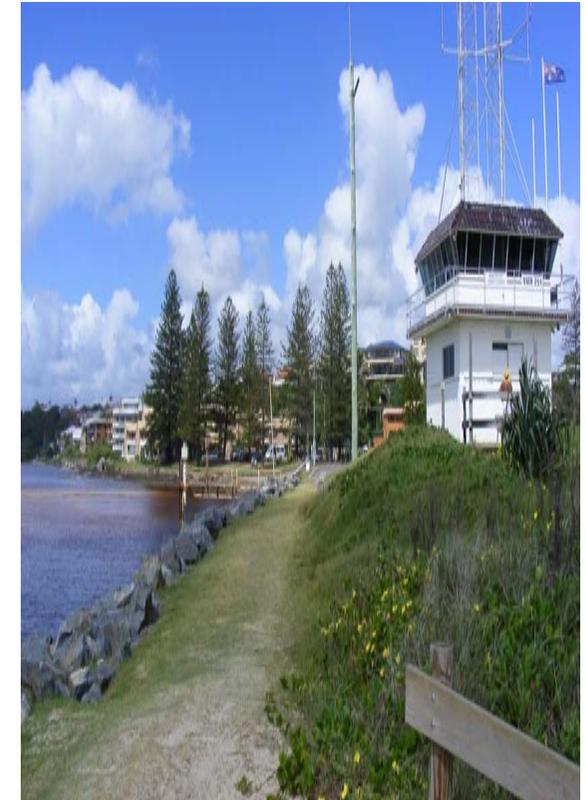
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Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained herein is correct.
In the case of any errors noted please contact 02 6674 9500

Walk or Cycle through Kingscliff’s History



STAY TRIM & KEEP FIT WITH EASY EXERCISE

The series of brochures on Historic Walks of Tweed Shire are for information purposes only. Please consult your doctor or health professional before undertaking any historical walk to ensure the activity is appropriate for you.

Kingscliff – Past and Present

Kingscliff is a small NSW seaside town with a population of approximately 7,500 (2008). It is located at approx. latitude 28°S and longitude 153°E and is 840 kms north of Sydney and 120 kms south of Brisbane.

The Name of Kingscliff

Kingscliff has been known by several names in the past. Surveyor Robert Dixon named Kingscliff Hill “Sutherland Point” in 1840, in honour of the Duke of Sutherland, one of Britain’s wealthiest and most influential noblemen. In the early years of European settlement the locality was known as “Cudgen Headland”, however an early property owner or developer subdivided some of the “Headland” land as the “Kingscliff Estate”, first auctioned in 1915. By 1927 the Postmaster-General’s Department had adopted the name “Kingscliff” to avoid confusion with mail addressed to nearby “Cudgen”, however the older name persisted until World War II, and Kingscliff beach is still patrolled by the Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club. The origin of the name “Kingscliff” remains unknown.. It may relate to a beach suburb of Brighton in England, or have been a variation of the popular Victorian resort “Queenscliff”

Early Years: Aboriginal History

For thousands of years before European settlement the Aboriginal people lived in tribal camps scattered throughout what is today the Far North Coast of New South Wales. The low-lying area where much of the township of Kingscliff is today was very swampy and mosquito-infested. This ground would not have been conducive to the tribes setting up their camps. There is evidence however of camps around the foreshore of Cudgen Creek as this area was rich in flora and fauna. Here they gathered berries, hunted and fished. Possibly some families inhabited the higher ground around Kingscliff and Cudgen.

The healthy diet and lifestyle of these people resulted in tall, physically strong folk who had no cause to move great distances in search of food, as there was a local abundance of fish, oysters, prawns, pippies, birds, marsupials, lizards, yams and berries. There is evidence however that they travelled to the Bunya Mountains, north-west of Toowoomba, for the periodic bunya nut gathering and feasting.

Europeans

Exploration

The first recorded European visitors to the Tweed Coast were Captain James Cook and those aboard *HMS Endeavour*, which sailed past on 16 May 1770, leaving the names Mount Warning (known to the Aborigines as *Wollumbin*) and Point Danger as reference points for dangerous reefs off the coast.

John Oxley and the crew of the *Mermaid* landed on an island off the Tweed Coast in late October 1823 which he named Turtle Island (renamed Cook’s Island by Captain Rous in 1828). Oxley discovered and named the Tweed River and travelled a short distance upstream, at least as far Chinderah. Both he and John Uniacke recorded the first sight of local Aborigines.

The establishment of a convict settlement at Moreton Bay in 1824 would lead to the first direct European contact with local people, as convict escapees attempted to reach Port Macquarie or Sydney along the coast. A short-lived military post was established at Point Danger in 1828-9 in an attempt to halt this exodus. However, it would be Surveyor Robert Dixon and a party of men from Brisbane who placed the future Kingscliff on the map, establishing a survey post on Kingscliff Hill, which Dixon named firstly Lagoon Point, and then Point Sutherland, in June 1840.

Settlement

The first Europeans to settle in the Tweed Valley were cedar getters who established a small camp on Terranora Creek in the mid-1840s. Although some timber was no doubt cut on the Cudgen plateau in these early days, it would be the agricultural (and horticultural) potential of Cudgen’s rich volcanic soils which would attract the first selectors in the 1860s. William Guilfoyle and his sons established a famous tropical nursery there after 1865, experimenting with a great variety of crops, trees and fruit – including sugar. Long after the Guilfoyles had left the district their pioneering efforts as sugar growers had paid off. Sugar had become a staple crop on the Tweed, with Robert Cazalar establishing a primitive mill near Cudgen Creek and William Julius constructing a larger, more sophisticated mill at Cudgen. Later acquired by the Robb family, the mill operated until 1912 when it was acquired by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Much of the Cudgen Mill’s machinery was moved to the C.S.R. mill at Condong, established in 1879/80 and still operating today. For many years the Company’s tramways continued taking local farmer’s cane to the Chinderah wharf, for shipment by punt to Condong mill, and the Cudgen mill’s brick chimney dominated the landscape until its demolition in 1962,. The sale of the C.S.R. Company’s Cudgen lands allowed many small farmers to acquire land, including several whose descendants still cultivate the rich Cudgen lands. The Company also sold its “Kingscliff” beachside estate lands, one of the first coastal subdivisions, in 1915.

Bananas and dairying have both flourished in the district, but have generally been superseded by small crop farming upon some of Australia’s richest soils. Amongst other crops, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, flowers, corn, peas, beans, capsicums and avocados flourish in the district.