

## SOME HISTORY OF CUNGULLA

The following information is taken from an article in the Townsville Bulletin "Living North" column by Terry Butts - October 7 1993.

Cungulla, perched right at the mouth of the Haughton River system, simply means in Aboriginal language - holiday.

The first white man to set foot in the region was said to be James Morrell who as the sole survivor from the barque *Peruvian* shipwrecked on Miranda Shoals in 1846.

After 42 days he floated to shore at Cape Cleveland and for the next 17 years lived with the local Aborigines, who apparently treated him as their king.

Morrell was eventually found by a surveying party near Brandon. He was taken to Bowen where he married. It is interesting to note too that Morell acted as interpreter for Dalrymple's exploring party in 1864, in which Richard Haughton was also a member and who lent his name to the river.

It was soon after this that Giru emerged as a sugar-producing area and the growers discovered Cungulla, just a 20 minute trip up the Haughton, as an ideal holiday camp.

According to the records, the first hut built had "four posts and a kerosene tin roof covered in blady grass".

Word spread and soon more huts were built on the shorefront. But it seems the Cungulla residents, many of the squatters in the early days, were fiercely protective of their little utopia.

It goes right back to a character named German Jack who lived on the settlement and fished for his living. He used to deter "outsiders" by marching them off the settlement with the encouragement of a loaded .303.

When war broke out, German Jack and his countryman, Freddy Martyn, were interned and apparently never returned.

The war years saw considerable action at Cungulla which was used as a training base for American service-men

preparing for the battle of Coral Sea and, for a time, the Australian Light Horse Regiment.

All fishing boats were ordered out of the water for fear the Japanese might invade and use them.

Frank Randall, legendary international speedcar ace and one-time Townsville motor mechanic, after whom one of the main streets of Cungulla is named, made a significant contribution to the holiday township. He built the first ice works beside his hut on Empress Close. Frank died of a stroke aged 67.

After the war there was a rush for hut sites on the beachfront. Squatters were there in abundance and at one time it was recorded that, of 186 huts, only 60 had leases.

In the late '60s the Thuringowa council, the locals, and owners of adjoining land became embroiled in a dispute over roads, maintenance and access to the beach.

It reached a crises in 1979 when Rex Goodsell, owner of the property "Eden" which residents and visitors to Cungulla traversed, placed an advertisement in the Townsville Bulletin informing them that their only access was by sea.

Things gradually improved and on a drive down John Dory Street, Whiting Court and down the Esplanade today, you might get the impression Cungulla - the holiday township - is in the middle of a building boom.

The fish might not be biting as often and the barra might not be as tasty or as large as the catch of yesteryear. But so what.

The transformation from kerosene-can capital of the Cleveland coast is as rapid as it is welcome to the permanents. There is electric lights, eskys, and septic tanks, four wheel drives and powered boats.

A far cry from the days of tin roofs, open sides, mosquito nets and stretcher beds.

*(If you have some stories, photos or history of Cungulla please share them. Send them to the TACT team)*