

Mrs. Vivienne Lyons – Who was she?

When you drive along **Empress Close in Cungulla** you will pass by **Vivienne Lyons Park**. Who was Vivienne Lyons? The short answer is that she was an early **Cungulla** pioneer who took up the original block of land in what is now known as the “**Little Beach**” end of town. This is where **Empress Close** is located. Her original block is located at **45 Empress Close** and is currently owned by **Brad and Marilyn Hogg**. Back in **1991**, shortly before she died **Mrs Lyons** wrote down her memories of her time at **Cungulla**. Here is what she wrote:

I came to **Giru** in **1931**. Soon after that my father **Reg Blee** came to stay with me for most of the time. He built a flattie (small wood flat bottomed boat) and spent much of his time in the river fishing and rowing. He decided that it would be nice to have a place built at the beach which is now called **Cungulla**. I went to the **Lands Department** to ask for a lease. It was suggested that I go to “**Big Beach**” where allotments were already being leased. I explained that only on a very big tide would we be able to take our boat from **Pussycat Creek** (near **Giru**) all the way to **Big Beach**. On all other occasions we would have to anchor at **Doughboy Creek** and walk (impossible for Dad, a semi invalid) or wait for the next tide. So I put a cross on the map to show the spot that Dad had selected and I was granted a special lease in the name of **Vivienne Kathleen Diggins Lyons**. This was over **50** years ago now.

The spot was cleared and Dad built a shed. We had a wood stove, a hanging safe and a table and chairs made from bush timber. Our family spent all our holidays here. We had tents and folding stretchers and we brought all of our drinking water with us. For a long time we had this part of the beach all to ourselves. We were very isolated with dense **lantana** growing all around. When a fisherman named **Jim Blues** built a hut just down from us we would have to walk down to the beach to be able to see it.

The boat that Dad built, the “**Trixie**” was a slow, comfortable boat. We rarely beat the tide, so we would anchor at **Doughboy**. While we walked to the shed dad

would row the flattie along the gutter which ran all the way across the front of the beach (Cungulla) and was deep enough even at low tide. At the next high tide Dad would anchor the “**Trixie**” out from the shed. It was many years before we went to the beach by road. **Bernie Meehan** allowed us through his property “**St. Heliers**” and this was certainly more convenient than travelling by boat. There were wet weather roads and dry weather roads. Even during the wet season we were able to skirt the worst parts and rarely became bogged. Groups of vehicles tended to travel the road together in order to assist one another.

It was a pleasant drive of about an hour and a half from Giru with plenty of birds and animals to be seen. The road passed through where **Mrs Spottiswood** had once lived and stands of mango, tamarind and other trees are still there to be seen. After **Bernie Meehan** sold the new owner **Rex Goodsell** created many problems with his locked gates and his \$60 per year for the keys.

The second lease at our end of Cungulla was granted to **Jim Blues**. He erected a wooden hut not far from ours and began fishing for a living. He sold out in 1948. My brother **Gordon Blee** bought his hut (39 Empress Close) and boat and Frank Randell bought his fish trap licences. **Doug Stanborough** brought a small house down to the beach and erected it next to **Gordon Blee’s** hut. This is now 38 Empress Close. **Frank Randell** and **George Ansell** both had places at Big Beach but these were being washed into the sea, so they shifted down near us.

Then the first section of land was surveyed into 13 allotments and these were soon leased and built on. Cungulla came into being with 30 year leases, and we are now into our second 30 year lease. Our shed and **Blee’s** and **Stanborough’s** huts were too close to the sea and had to be moved back onto the newly surveyed allotments. **Why some of the streets of Cungulla were not named after some of the original occupiers rather than fish I cannot imagine.** With the exception of three these originals or their families still occupy their allotments. Gradually more sections of land were opened up until the Esplanade and the street behind were all allotments. Then nothing happened for years. People were asking for a lease and when they got no satisfaction from the Land’s Department they began squatting.

Eventually, after a long time another section was opened up and 40 odd allotments were offered for auction. Bitumen streets were laid to these allotments. The first attempt to bring electricity failed but the second was successful. Telecom laid the telephone to those who requested it and water was piped from Giru to all allotments. Those desiring water paid for their meter to be installed. Allotments are now freehold and the old leasehold allotments can be converted to freehold. I applied many times from the early days right through to the 80's for permission to freehold my allotment. The Lands Department always refused with a promise to let me know if they changed their policy

In those early days the land valuations were around \$2250. In 1987 it rose to \$12000 and my last valuation was around \$20000. From one lonely cross on the map we now have a thriving, energetic fishing village. **Alas, we still have no boat ramp.** I have seen the development at Cungulla happening in three stages.

Stage 1: Camping with tents, kerosene and carbide lights with a payment of £1 per annum to the Lands Department and no Council rates.

Stage 2: Huts, water tanks, wood stoves, kerosene refrigerators, gas lights, outside loos and payment of \$30 per annum to the Lands Department and low Council rates. Access was through **Goodsell's** locked gates with paid keys.

Stage 3: Homes, fully equipped with electricity, phones, town water and septic systems. \$500 paid to the Lands Department plus substantial Council rates. Access is via an open council road that we are all familiar with and what a disaster it has been during some wet seasons.

Vivienne Lyons 27/08/1991.

Note: Vivienne Lyons (nee Blee) was married to Kev Lyons who was a Giru cane farmer. She was the mother to four children, Kevin Lyons (deceased), Beryl Renwick, Delma O'Brien and Alan Lyons. Her sister in law Anne Blee still owns the Blee property at 39 Empress Close and her niece Glenda McCloskey lives in the very area first settled by Vivienne Lyons.