

History of Palm Island

In 1912 Palm Island became a Holiday Resort for tourists, there were two resorts situated on the Island, at Butler Vale (now known as Butler Bay), and Casement, (old Catholic School Grounds).

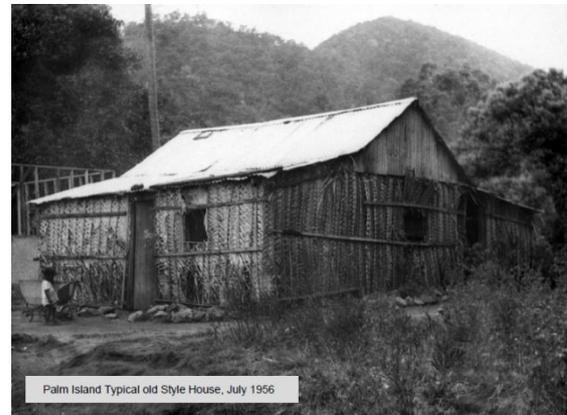
Palm Island was gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve in 1914; Chief Protector J.W. Bleakley designated a specific role to Palm Island as 'a penitentiary for troublesome cases'. The establishment of Palm Island was part of a wider, national attempt to control the locals by taking control of all aspects of Aboriginal lives at a time now known as the "Protection Era". In every state and territory, laws were passed governing where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could live.

Representatives from over 40 tribes were displaced and sent to Palm Island for a variety of reasons including it being used as a prison camp for troublemakers at other locations and the destruction of the Hull River Mission at Tully. More than forty different language groups were sent to Palm, locating their camps in areas to mirror their positions on the mainland. The enforcement of so many tribes living in one place has generally been cited as a major cause of unrest on Palm over the years.

Palm became exile and punishment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who disobeyed these strict laws, or refused to comply with Government policy. During this time people worked for rations and not wages.

The Island's first superintendent, Robert Henry Curry, a returned serviceman, set about establishing control and instructed residents to clear the land, housing himself in a tent on the beach. White residents, schoolteachers, storekeepers, and other staff were housed in 'the white' section, in homes built by Aboriginal residents. Following construction of

Mango Avenue by the Hull River people, it was subsequently declared 'out of bounds' to all who were not white, with gates barring access at each end of the road.



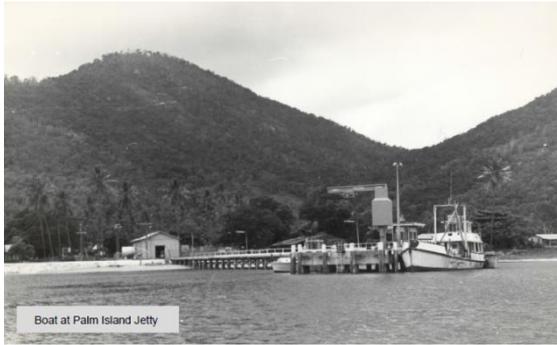
(Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, 2013)

Apartheid-like arrangements of space and design extended to the schools, with a 'white school' for the children of officials and 'a Native school' on opposite sides of the road. Children were separated from parents, and women from men, by confinement to dormitories.

By 1919 a jail was established on Palm to confine those who breached the stringent reserve regulations. The authority of Curry and all subsequent superintendents was reinforced by a team of police who operated as a private, military force. 'Speaking out' or practicing Aboriginal culture and languages resulted in disciplinary action and retribution.

By the 1920's Curry had a reputation as a 'benevolent dictator' and a diligent worker. His efforts to establish a football team, movie theatre, brass band and weekly corroborees were widely appreciated.

History of Palm Island



Yet others felt the force of his domination, with lengthy imprisonments, public humiliations and floggings of those he perceived as threatening his control. His ultimate punishment was to exile individuals to nearby Eclipse Island with only bread and water, and hoping they would slowly starve to death.

People tried to catch fish with their bare hands. Despite shark infested waters, many braved the dangerous channel crossing back to Palm while others made their way to the mainland using improvised canoes.

Conflicts with other white staff and the death of his wife in childbirth, culminated in a breakdown and a rampage by Superintendent Curry in 1930. Having destroyed the main settlement, Curry was shot by an Aboriginal name, Peter Pryor, on the orders of white officials. Peter Pryor was later forced to serve time on a murder charge.

Explosive event Roy Bartlam, an ex-policeman, Superintendent in 1953 was renowned for his sadistic and brutal control and enforcement of apartheid. He strictly enforced a morning roll call of all residents on the island. Those who were late were jailed for two weeks. All residents, including the elderly and pregnant women, were forced to work 30 hours per week with rations their only payment. Another grievance during Bartlam's rule was the distribution of rations people were forced to queue for leftovers.

Although wages and apartheid conditions were the major causes of the strike, the immediate trigger was Bartlam's decision to deport one Albie Geia. Geia had committed the offence of disobeying the European overseer, Croker.

When Geia refused to leave, the community rallied behind him declaring a strike on June 10, 1957.

For five days the strikers controlled the island. The strike was eventually broken through dawn raids on the homes of community leaders. The men and their families, manacled in leg irons, were led to a military patrol boat. The men remained in chains throughout the journey with guns pointed towards them; the strike leaders were exiled to mainland reserves.

History of Palm Island

List of Clan Groups

1938 Norman Tindale an anthropologist and entomologist visited Palm Island, he record and photographed the Aboriginal people, collecting significant and cultural material.

His records were of languages and the tribes that were sent to Palm Island, in his documents he has recorded over more than 40 different tribes that were sent to Palm Island.

The Majority of people were sent from the Hull River mission, following the lethal cyclone that destroyed the Mission, The information he has collected included genealogies of the Aboriginal Families that were sent to Palm Island.

Descendants of the Clan Groups below still reside on Palm Island, and a few have return back to their Traditional homeland across North Queensland.

Kona:nin	Wik-	Wara kamai	Kandju	Ajabaoa
Ma: Mu	Dat:ava	Karindi	Rinurinu	Kokolamalam
(Mam:u)	Wulguru-	Ji:man	Koko-	a
Juru	kaba	Duri	imudji	Mingin
Warumunju	Wanji	Agwamen	Gia	Kalkaduna
Daro	Jukula	Koa	Bul"ukuipa	Idindji
Wakaja	Nawagi	Wera(g)era	n	Tja:pukai
Kundjan	Widi	i	Kungara	Muluritji
Djankan	Garawa	Koko mini	Ankamuti	Wakaman
Muntianan	Walangame	Ganulu	A:rap	Djirubal
Windawinda	Keramai	Warunu	Lardi:l	Bara:ra
a	Biria	Wanjuru	Daun	Cashmere
Olkel	Kokojelandj	Galali	Katanji	tribe
Bijai	i	Walar	Maula	Maijabi
Dagalan	Wangan	Batala	Pakadji	Koke njekodi
Natjan	Bandjin	Ombila	Jalana	Maikutun
Wik-	Dalani	Kabi-Kabi	Ka-wadji	Maikudung
Munjlian	Kulyai	Kukatji	Mit:aka	
	Bara:ne			