

(A ten minute walk to the next viewing platform.)

#8 The Mackay Monster Fact or Fiction



Crocodiles usually called alligators were common in the Pioneer River in the late 19th century. Planters & Pastoralists engaged regularly in shooting parties. Animal losses were common but there were no reported human fatalities by crocodiles in the Pioneer. The largest recorded crocodile shot was 14ft 4in in 1887. (DM) This is nowhere near the 32ft length of the Mackay Monster.

(Follow footpath and stop in the open space just before the Catherine Freeman Walk sign.)

#9 The Presto

The Presto was the first ship to navigate the Pioneer River in 1862. It was John Mackay's supply ship from Rockhampton. The mouth of the Pioneer was difficult to see from the ocean and the Presto's first attempt saw it anchored off Cape Hillsborough. Mackay desperate for the much needed supplies located the ship on its second attempt at Cape Palmerston and helped navigate it to a site close to the Hospital Bridge.

(Follow the footpath to the fishing platform)

#10 Hospital Bridge (fishing platform)

The Hospital Bridge (Pioneer Bridge) was the first bridge across the Pioneer in 1877. The site was chosen to meet the needs of the sugar plantations on the northern side of the river. In 1903 and then again in 1937 new bridges were built because of flood damage. The 1958 & 1959 floods were especially damaging and in 2009 the Edmund Casey Bridge replaced it.

Mackay Conservation Group

Beautiful Walks

The Pioneer River Nature Appreciation and History Walk

(The Forgan Bridge, The Pioneer Promenade,
The Pioneer Environmental Walk, The
Catherine Freeman Walk to Hospital Bridge)

Sunday, 27 July 2014



In 1860, John Mackay leader of the first party of Europeans to enter the lands of the Yuibera people named the local river Mackay after his father, George. In 1862 HMS Pioneer, the government survey ship arrived and Commodore Burnett proposed to rename the river Pioneer in honour of his ship as there was already a Mackay River flowing into Rockingham Bay. Today this river is known as the Tully River.

*(Meeting Place for Pioneer River Nature & History Walk
Whale Bones)*

**Traditional owners of the Mackay area The Yuibera People.
Population estimate before European Settlement approx 2 000.**

#1 Blue Water Quay(2009) River view
The Pioneer River

The Pioneer River is one of the few blue water rivers in Australia. It has seven major tributaries; the longest being Cattle Creek & Blacks Creek. The river is 120km long and has one of the smallest catchment areas in Qld (1500 sq km).

In 1898 Cyclone Eline shortened the river's journey to the sea by 3.2 km and diverted the river mouth from near Illawong Beach to the present East Point.



1863 Port Mackay

The Pioneer is difficult to navigate because of its partly obscured river mouth, narrow channel and wide tidal range. A King Tide has a tidal range of 6.4 m. Only small craft with a draft of 7ft or less could enter the river at high tide. Wharves and warehouses were built along the river to service passengers and goods transferred from larger vessels off Flat Top Island. The river acted as a port until the opening of the man made Mackay Harbour in 1939.

(Using the lights cross Sydney St and meet under the large pink umbrella on the Promenade. Looking towards Northern end of Forgan Bridge)

#2 Cremorne

John Greenwood Barnes was the first non indigenous resident of North Mackay(1865). He was a horticulturalist and had planted 1,200 coconut trees and tropical fruit gardens by 1877. He was speared by members of the Yuribera as his plantings were on ceremonial lands.

Barnes survived and in 1884 built the Cremorne Hotel. The 1918 Cyclone severely damaged the Hotel and Gardens. Only a few coconut palms survived.

(Follow the Promenade to the next viewing area under the pink umbrella.)

#3 Forgan Bridge

The first Forgan Bridge was opened in 1938 to replace the original Sydney St Bridge (1887). The bridge was named in honour of Premier Forgan Smith's mother. The 1958 & 1959 floods weakened the bridge. In the 1958 floods Constable Ray Doyle died after striking his head on one of the bridge's concrete blocks attempting to rescue a man in difficulties on the Cremorne side. In 2011 a new bridge was built.

(Follow the Promenade past St Patrick's Church and College buildings to Macalister St.)

#4 Macalister Street Steps

The steps were built before the 1887 completion of the Sydney St Bridge by prisoners from the Cremorne Jail. It is believed that the stones for the steps were quarried from Quarry Hill. The steps were re discovered and cleared of council rubble and soil in 1991 by 4 pensioners; Fred Rose, Bob Hickson, Ray Mengle and Charlie Zaglas. Nina Keogh was also a volunteer.

(Follow the Promenade to the viewing area under a blue umbrella.)

#5 Sydney St Bridge (1887)

The Sydney St Bridge was completed in 1887 but not opened to traffic until 1888 with the completion of a Barnes Creek Bridge on the Northern side and bridge approaches on both sides of the river. The 1918 Cyclone severely damaged the bridge and it wasn't until 1921 that it was again opened to traffic. The bridge was replaced by the Forgan Bridge in 1938.

(Follow the footpath to the viewing platform opposite the Caneland multi storey car park)

#6 Fatal Shark Attack Rubbish Dump Creek (1939)

Frank Curvan (20) railway worker died after amputation of right leg.

(Follow River walk and stay on path until under the Ron Camm Bridge.(1980 &1998)

#7 Fatal Shark Attack Rockleigh 1956

Teenager Barry Keith Antonini died in ambulance of blood loss after a shark attack.