

# SOUTHERN HERITAGE DRIVE

## HISTORY OF SUGARCANE

During the 19th century, early settlers throughout the Far North Queensland region required agricultural crops for their personal nourishment, to sustain livestock and more importantly as a primary source of income. Over the past century, the sugar industry has played a historic role in the economic livelihood for several Far North Queensland centres. Sugarcane has continued to be the region's major agricultural crop for the Far North Queensland Region.

In 1879, a Chinese syndicate that was made up of 100 Chinese countrymen, made the initial attempt to grow sugar commercially in Cairns and established the Hop Wah sugarcane plantation. The Hop Wah Estate constructed the aptly named Pioneer Mill which began operations in 1882. However, in 1886 disaster struck when its mortgagees forced the mill into permanent closure.



In the course of time, the Pyramid Mill southwest of Gordonvale (1885 - 1890), closed through disaster and the Hambledon Mill (1883 - 1991) closing due to the pressure of urbanisation, technological advancements and economic pressure of the industry. The historic Mulgrave and Babinda Mills still operate today, and have incorporated significant advancements in equipment with improved sugar varieties and a stream lined workforce to remain viable in the current economic climate.



The Southern Heritage Drive is about 180 kilometres long. Allow 4 hours.

The drive begins at the Cairns Regional Council Administration Building which was built in 1998 & located on the corner of Spence & Draper Street.

### 1 CAIRNS BREWERY.

In 1925 a group of local business people established the Cairns Brewing Company which went into liquidation soon afterwards. A new company, Northern Australian Brewers took over in the late 1920s. The beer was popular with Far North Queenslanders and at times, the brewery employed up to 300 people. It was the first brewery to lift rationing restrictions after World War II. It closed in 1992. Note the mural which depicts the working of a brewery and is the first and largest single piece of artwork in Cairns.



On the right hand side of Draper Street you will see the remnants a timber mill which was another large employer of labour in Cairns.

### 2 CAIRNS TIMBER LTD.

Was founded in 1909 and took over two mills (Tom Griffiths & R.A Tills). It became one of the largest timber mills in Australia. In 1931 general manager George Douglas Gummow visited the United States & subsequently introduced a veneer mill. Until that time, practically no veneer slicing was done in Australia. The last log was sawn at the mill in 1966.



Continue driving down Draper Street & at the roundabout turn left into Kenny Street. The area on the right hand side now housing the large fuel tanks was known as

### 3 MALAY TOWN.

Originally Malays moved into this area around the turn of the century but by the 1920s there were several different nationalities living there, many in houses built on stilts. These have been captured in paintings done by renowned artist Donald Friend who also spent time at Malay Town. Gradually families moved away from the area & the remaining houses were demolished in the late 1950s.



Turn left into Bunda Street & proceed along. On the left hand side is the site of

### 4 GAS WORKS.

Built in 1899 supplying gas which was piped underground to street lights & commercial & domestic users. The gas was made from coal. In 1964 the plant was replaced by an LPG reforming plant for bottled gas. Note the remains of the large holding tank for the gas. On the 17th August 1987 there was a massive explosion & was the only serious accident to ever occur.



On the corner of Spence & Bunda Street is

### 5 CAPE YORK HOTEL.

Previously known as the National & built in 1926. The Tramway Hotel built in 1899 previously occupied the site.



Cross over Spence Street & drive along Bunda Street. Opposite the Railway Station you will see

### 6 187 BUNDA STREET.

Known as Pandella or sometimes, Bundella, an old guest house in the 1940s.



Continue along Bunda Street & then left into Mulgrave Road. On the left hand side you will see the Parramatta Park Showground.

### 7 CAIRNS SHOWGROUND.

Opened in 1931, the following year it was the site of an event known as the "Parramatta Park Riots". In 1932 local people dislodged a group of itinerant unemployed who had taken up residence in the grounds. Prior to 1931 the show had been held at the 4 mile (near Woree) & in North Cairns near the railway line.



Continue along the Bruce Highway. The area around the Stocklands Shopping Centre in Earlville was originally known as

### 8 HOP WAH ESTATE.

Where sugar was first grown in the Cairns region. A Chinese syndicate also operated the first northern sugar mill in this vicinity.



Continue south along the Bruce Highway. On the left hand side of the highway is

### 9 CANNON PARK RACE COURSE.

Cairns Jockey Club which has been operating from 1884 secured the land from William Cannon in 1909. After extensive clearing & draining, the track was opened in 1911. The original grandstand was replaced in 1971.



Continue south along the Bruce Highway until you come to the traffic lights at Edmonton (approx 7kms). Turn right & follow Mill Road to

### 10 SUGAR WORLD.

Which was the site of the Hambledon Sugar Mill. Thomas Swallow & F.T. Derham took up a large estate & planted sugar & erected a crushing mill here in 1882. The mill was taken over by CSR in the 1890s. It closed in 1991 & the old trees & scattered old machinery are all that remain of the original complex.



Retrace your steps back to the Bruce Highway. Turn right & proceed south along the highway until you reach Gordonvale. Turn off the highway into Cairns Road.

# CAIRNS

## EXPLORE FURTHER.

### CAIRNS MUSEUM

Take the time to visit the Cairns Museum located on the corner of Shields and Lake Streets. The museum is housed in the historic Old School of Arts Building. The museum has a number of collections and provides a diversity of material. A small entry fee is charged as the museum is operated on a voluntary basis and receives no financial assistance. The museum also operates a souvenir and gift shop that has a wide selection of historical books, gifts and souvenirs. **The museum is open from 10am to 4pm Monday to Saturday and after hours by appointment. For further information contact (07) 40515582**

### MULGRAVE SETTLERS MUSEUM

Take a step back in time at the Mulgrave Settlers Museum located on Gordon Street, Gordonvale. The museum has a number of displays and information on the local history of the Gordonvale area. The Friends of Gordonvale have produced a detailed heritage walk for Gordonvale and has further information on the sugar industry mosaic. **The museum is open from 10am to 2pm Monday to Saturday and after hours by appointment. For further information contact (07) 40561810.**

### BABINDA INFORMATION CENTRE

Visit the Police Station, built in 1919, which is now the Centre for information on the local attractions, walking trails and the surrounding World Heritage National Parks. The centre also has a number of historical photographs on display. **The Babinda Information Centre is open from 9am to 4pm daily and is staffed by local volunteers. For more information contact (07) 4067 1008**

This guide to Southern Heritage Drive is provided by the Cairns Regional Council with the co-operation & assistance of the Cairns Historical Society & the FNQ Branch of the National Trust of Queensland.





Directly opposite of the Mulgrave Settlers Museum you will see the

**2 MULGRAVE CENTRAL MILL.**

A slow start to the establishment of the sugar industry saw the Pyramid Mill at Riverstone sold & removed to the Childers area. In 1896 the Mulgrave Mill was constructed by A & W Smith, & fitted out with machinery shipped from Glasgow. Despite numerous cyclones, wavering sugar prices throughout the 20th century, & modernisation, the Mill remains a solid icon for the local community. During the crushing season, the ever present chimney of steam signals the destination point for the still active cane trains.



Turn around & go back along Gordon Street & on the left hand side is historic town square known as

**3 NORMAN PARK.**

The Park originally functioned as a horse paddock for the Native Mounted Police Officers. During World War II the USA 503rd Parachuting Regiment used the area to construct parachute packing sheds, the floor of one of these forms the basis for the current tennis court. Today Norman Park is the focus of many local & regional community events. Monuments & memorials celebrating the history of the town can be found on the site including the ANZAC Memorial, World War II gun, W.S Howe Memorial Cairns & Bicentennial Butchers block to name a few.



Turn left at the corner of Gordon & Norman Street & proceed along

**4 NORMAN STREET.**

During the profitable decades of the 1910s



# GORDONVALE

& 1920s, commercial buildings, community facilities & homes were established. Many of these period buildings still form the Norman Street streetscape. When walking along Norman Street, you will see numerous colourful mosaics inlaid into the pavement, as well as sculptures which portray the history of Gordonvale.

Continue along Norman Street until you reach Muir Street. Turn left down Muir Street & on the left hand corner of Muir & Mill Street is

**5 ST MICHAELS CATHOLIC CHURCH.**

This impressive building typifying Romanesque design is a feature of Mill Street. Father Phelan & Michael Garvey (builder) worked cooperatively to see it's construction commence in 1934. This replaced the original Church, which was built in 1922.



Turn right down Mill Street, then right into Moller or Swan Street & left onto Riverstone Street, & to its intersection at the Bruce Highway. Proceed through the lights & along Riverstone Road for approximately 1.5 kms. On the right hand side you will locate

**6 RIVERSTONE HOUSE & ALLEY FAMILY GRAVES.**

In circa 1878 William Saunders Alley acquired land upstream of Gordonvale & named the area Riverstone. After fire destroyed the original Riverstone House in 1934, the current residence was constructed by his grandson Charlie. Restoration works in 1987 by the Alley family has revived Riverstone House to its former splendour. On the opposite side of the highway to the House, are the Alley Family Graves. This site marks the resting place of William & his wife Mary Alley, George & his wife Mary Ellen Alley, Sarah Blackwell, & Willie.



Backtrack your steps to the Bruce Highway. Turn right & proceed south along the highway until you reach Babinda. Turn right off the highway at Babinda immediately to the left is the

**1 BABINDA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE.**

This building was the police station, part of the police & court complex immediately to the north across Munro Street. The building was moved to its present site & converted to the Babinda Information Centre in 1995.



Drive along Munro Street & you will notice a number of buildings with Art Deco facades. On your left is the

**2 BABINDA HOTEL.**

The hotel was built by the Ryan Labour Government in 1917 as Queensland's only State Hotel, to control the sale of alcohol which was otherwise prohibited within the Babinda Sugar Works Area.



Continue along Munro Street & on the corner of Munro Street & School Street is the

**3 MUNRO THEATRE.**

This theatre was built in 1955, replacing an earlier cinema, Beattie's Theatre, which was destroyed by fire in 1942. Original details such as cinema doors & ticket office window are still intact.



Turn right into School Street & then left into Church Street. At the end of Church Street is

**4 NURSES QUARTERS.**

A hospital was established in Babinda in 1923. Cairns architect Sidney Barnes was commissioned to draw up plans for the nurses' quarters. The present building was completed in 1950 & is now significant for its innovative postwar design. Also in the hospital grounds is the timber morgue of 1926, the oldest building on the site, & the only building of this design surviving in Queensland.



Turn into Knowles Street & then right into Munro Street. Continue along Munro Street onto Boulders Road. It is approximately 6kms to the Boulders.

**5 THE BOULDERS.**

The Boulders are a popular scenic attraction & are the subject of an Aboriginal legend. Babinda Creek has claimed many lives & can pose a risk to unwary visitors.



Backtrack your steps to Munro Street & turn right into School Street then left into Eastwood Street.

**6 MILL HOUSES.**

Many of the houses along Eastwood street were built soon after the mill began crushing in 1915 & express the character of early Babinda.



Turn left into Mill Street & then right into Munro Street. On your left is

**7 BABINDA MUNICIPAL LIBRARY.**

Formerly the School of Arts built in 1915 although severely damaged in the 1918 cyclone. The present building was built to replace it & incorporates some of the original building.



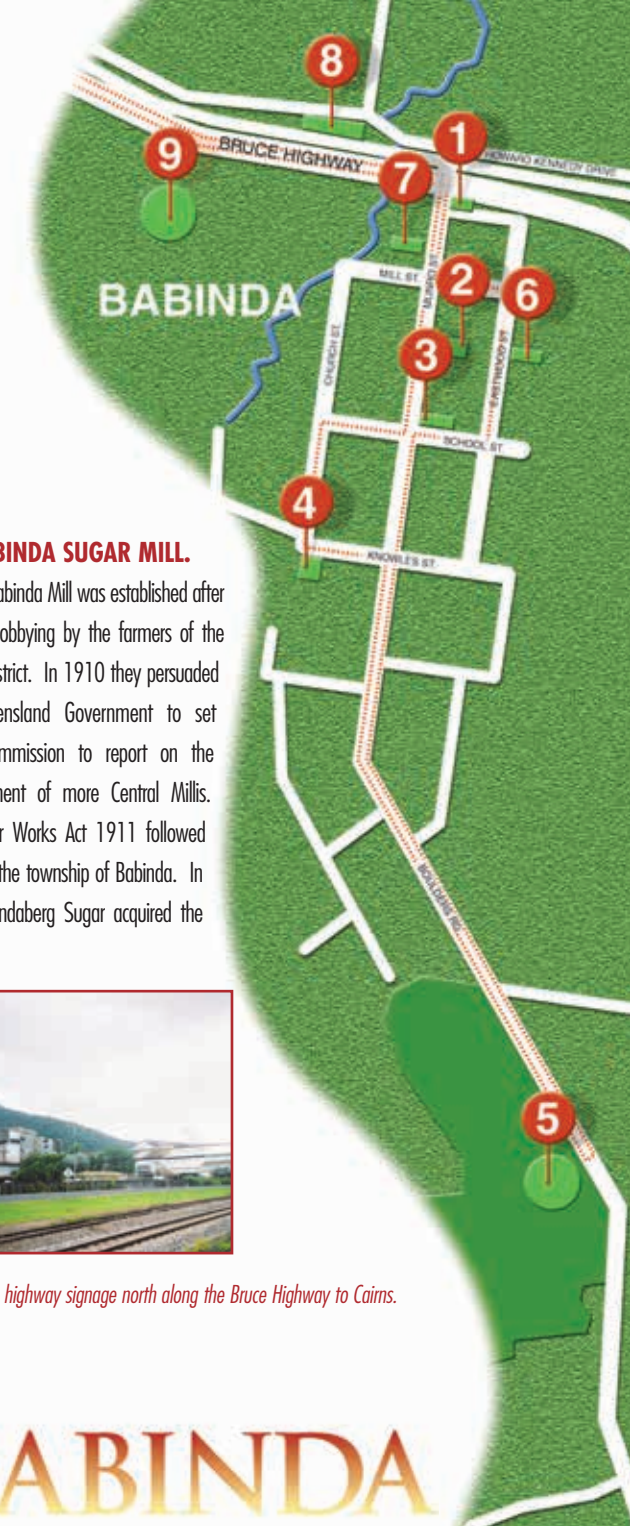
Cross the Bruce Highway to

**8 BABINDA RAILWAY STATION.**

The railway from Cairns was opened from Gordonvale to Babinda in July 1911. The railway station is the oldest building surviving in Babinda. It was a standard design for government stations in North Queensland.



Continue back onto the Bruce Highway & drive north past the



# BABINDA

Follow the highway signage north along the Bruce Highway to Cairns.



# SOUTHERN HERITAGE

Drive

