



# HUMPYBONG TRAIL

## The site of Queensland's first European colony

This immediate area in and around Corsscadden Park was the first site to be occupied by Europeans in what would later become the colony of Queensland. In 1824, a penal colony was established just north of here, between a chain of waterholes and the seashore.

The site had been recommended for an initial colony by Surveyor-General John Oxley following his exploration of the area in 1823. It was chosen for its proximity to fresh water, land suitable for farming and grazing, abundant timber and ease of access by sea. Although Oxley ultimately saw the banks of the Brisbane River as better suited for a principal settlement, he believed this area would provide a valuable initial base, naval post and stores depot.

*Should it be deemed expedient to establish a Settlement in Moreton Bay, the Country in the vicinity of Red Cliff Point offers the best Site for an Establishment in the first instance.*  
Surveyor-General John Oxley, 1823

Arriving on the brig *Amity* on 12 September 1824 were some 30 convicts, the Commandant Lieutenant Henry Miller, Lieutenant James Butler, Surgeon and Commissariat Storekeeper Walter Scott, some 14 soldiers and numerous wives and children. The party landed on the beach just south of the mouth of this creek.

The colonists brought with them provisions for six months, including livestock, fruit trees, plants and seeds. Among the convicts were skilled workers chosen to help build the new penal colony – carpenters, sawyers and brickmakers. Many were volunteers hoping to earn a ticket-of-leave (freedom to live and work within the colony) for their hard work in building the colony.

Also aboard the *Amity* on the voyage were Surveyor-General John Oxley, Assistant Surveyor Robert Hoddle and botanist and explorer Allan Cunningham. The *First Settlement Memorial Wall* on Redcliffe Parade symbolises the sails of the *Amity*.

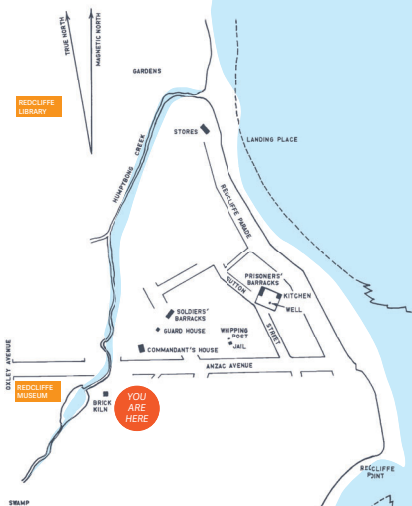
*I must not neglect to remark on the soldiers who had sown the seeds of cabbage, lettuce, turnips, French beans, pumpkins and others.*  
Allan Cunningham

Artwork:  
Ian Hansen  
*The Brig Amity*,  
1990  
Oil on canvas

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## LOCAL HISTORY

### Building the penal colony

Although official records are inconclusive, it is thought a timber weir was built near here to dam the creek and secure a water supply for the penal colony. The remains of a concrete weir constructed much later (probably late 1800s or early 1900s) can be seen about 100 metres upstream from here. This is thought to be the approximate site of the original convict weir.

It is thought a kiln was constructed nearby to fire bricks for building the settlement. The creek banks provided a good source of clay, while many Aboriginal shell middens in the area provided a ready source of quicklime for making mortar and concrete.

Among the buildings constructed in the area between here and the seashore were the Commandant's house, guardhouse, jail, soldier barracks, prisoner barracks and commissariat store.

The Commandant's house was brought on the *Amity* pre-assembled – like an early flatpack kit home. But of course some pieces were missing! The sawyers cut rafters and weatherboards from the many towering Blue Gums in the area.

**Map:**  
How the penal colony was laid out. This map shows where it is thought the buildings and structures of the 1824 penal colony were located. (Source: JG Steele 'Redcliffe in 1824' map, 1971.)

**Walk in the footsteps of Queensland's first colonists**  
Explore the sites of the former penal colony by following the Redcliffe Convict Heritage Trail.



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The story continues at the Redcliffe Museum 130m →

While you can't see any remains from the 1824 penal colony here today, a handful of artefacts – leg irons, bricks, glass and ceramic – have been found in this area and attributed to this brief yet formative period of colonial Queensland's history. You can see some of these artefacts, and learn more about life in the penal colony of 1824, at the Redcliffe Museum – just across the creek.



*Elevation*

## HUMPYBONG TRAIL

### How this place became 'Humpybong'

The Redcliffe penal colony was short-lived. The water source was insufficient for such a settlement, and the land proved difficult to farm. What's more, Oxley had predicted that a permanent colony would be better built on the banks of the Brisbane River.

Although large tracts of land had been cleared and numerous structures built, by May 1825 the penal colony was disbanded and relocated to the current site of central Brisbane. The Commandant's house was dismantled and relocated; the other buildings were abandoned.

This place subsequently came to earn the name 'Humpy Bong'. Derived from local Aboriginal language, as interpreted by early German missionaries, 'Humpy Bong' is said to mean 'dead houses'. For many years, the names 'Humpy Bong' and 'Redcliffe' were interchangeable for denoting the Peninsula. While 'Redcliffe' had become the preferred name by the late 1930s, this creek and a school 2 km south of here in Margate are still known as 'Humpybong'.

Following the relocation, this area remained unpopulated by Europeans until the 1860s, when the Peninsula was proclaimed an agricultural reserve by the government of the day. Many of the convict-made bricks and other materials were later reused. A whipping post remained until 1916.

### Then and now

Looking around the Redcliffe we know and love today, it's hard to imagine this place was once a prison! As idyllic as Redcliffe is to us, for a European of the 1820s, this was the edge of the known world. And without roads, running water, flyscreens and supermarkets, it was also a very challenging environment. Many convicts of the time – most of them petty thieves, stealing to survive – were cast into exile to such places.

More than 200 years have passed since this place became a penal colony. Today, people like you come here to enjoy the natural environment. Redcliffe today is a wonderfully multicultural and cosmopolitan community, and a naturally beautiful place to live, work and visit.

**Image:**  
*The prefabricated Commandant's house of 1824 Redcliffe was dismantled and re-erected in Brisbane Town in 1825 where it came to be known as the Engineer's cottage (pictured) – probably the new town's first timber building.*  
**Image:**  
*Queensland State Archives, Item ID ITM659630*

**Explore an illustrated timeline of Redcliffe**  
*See how this place has grown and evolved since prisoners arrived here in chains on the brig Amity in 1824.*



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## LOCAL HISTORY

### Why Corscadden Park?

George Hiram William Corscadden (1921–1992) was raised in Redcliffe and attended Humpybong State School and Brisbane State High School. He was the Redcliffe Town Council's first electrical apprentice, ultimately running a successful electrical business with his wife, Frances.

George enlisted with the Australian Army during World War II, serving with Z Special Unit – a reconnaissance and sabotage special force operating behind enemy lines in South-East Asia. He was a founding member of the Moreton Bay Boat Club and a longstanding member of local Rotary Clubs (serving as President and Secretary) and the Redcliffe Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society (serving as Vice-President and Trustee).

Several generations of Corscaddens lived in Dix Street – a stone's throw from here – for more than 100 years. George's father, Hiram Corscadden, ran a wood and fuel depot, proudly proclaiming:

*Firewood promptly delivered to all parts of the Peninsula, and house stumps, tent poles, etc., supplied.*

George's grandparents, Kate and George Corscadden, emigrated from Ireland in 1884, settling in Dix Street.

*Old Corscadden used to go down to tie up the boat. He had the wood depot in Dix Street and a large sprung cart. He used to bring luggage or goods off the boat as well and he'd deliver it to wherever they were going.*  
Jim Fortune, Redcliffe resident and builder, 2000

Public spaces like Corscadden Park are shaped and supported by local community groups and service clubs. As times change and communities evolve, so too do our public spaces. Over the years, this park has seen many uses, from gravel reserves to community gardens to mini golf.

Image:  
*Waiting at the jetty, c. 1900*  
George Corscadden Sr. (1854–1938) would meet the steamboats at the jetty to transport passengers and luggage.  
Photo: City of Moreton Bay, RLPC-001\001694

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Visit the Local History Room at Redcliffe Library  
500 metres up Oxley Avenue.



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