

South Sea Redlanders

Do you know much about the South Sea Islanders who were transported to Queensland in the era 1863 to 1902?

Our current exhibition *Acknowledging South Sea Redlanders* will be of interest to you. It commemorates the 150th anniversary of the arrival of these islanders in the Redlands. It is in the Dunn Wing of the Museum and provides an insight into the lives of the Islanders who worked on the cotton and sugar plantations in the Redlands. This insight is provided by original letters dating from the 19th century, maps, numerous photos of the labourers, the plantations on which they worked, the homesteads on these plantations, anecdotes from Redlanders who recalled these Islanders and one of the Museum's two plantation bells, which were used to tell the workers when to start work and when to finish. The relationship between master and servant, sometimes harsh but often compassionate, is also revealed.

At right we see one of the workers' huts with a group of Islanders gathered in front of it. This particular hut looks fairly comfortable and

indicates that many of these South Sea Islanders were well treated and quite content with their life here in the Redlands.



Captain Louis Hope features in the exhibition. By 1863 this enterprising British gentleman had planted 20 acres of sugar cane on his property in Wellington Street, Ormiston. By 1864 he had

achieved two significant things: the construction of Ormiston House and the production of the first commercial sugar in Queensland. A large photo of his sugar mill, taken in 1871 and seen on the left, features in the exhibition, together with a photo of Louis himself. South Sea Islanders, also called Kanakas, were employed to work in the mill. Here on the left is a photo of the mill and its workers. There is also in the exhibition a photo of St. Andrew's church, which was on Louis' property and was constructed with the help of Kanaka labour.



The plantation bell in the exhibition was on the property of Mr. Daniel Colburn at Victoria Point and was called "The Victoria Point Clock" because it was used to tell the workers when to start work and when to sign off for the day. This "clock" rang at 8 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. every day for nearly 60 years, between 1860 and 1918. Bells were needed on the plantations, as not only were the workers spread out in the fields on the various properties, but they did not wear watches and had no access to a clock!



This is a sketch of a Redland property in 1884 and features 5 labourers working in a field. It comes from an advertisement by John Cameron for an auction of land in Redland Bay to take place on 10th November, 1884. It features in the exhibition on the original advertisement and also on the name plate of the exhibition.

Ormiston House was started in 1862 and is situated at 277 Wellington Street, Ormiston. Louis Hope named it after one of his ancestral homes in Scotland. Here is a photo of it below.



The exhibition will remain until the end of September. It offers a great chance to access information on a little known subject.

SANDRA DAVIS.