

Gracemere Lagoon's Fascinating History

Changes over time

Over the decades members of the Archer family noticed the wetland was changing. Rare fish species and water loving plants disappeared, water quality declined and erosion was filling the lagoon with silt. Vegetation on adjoining creeks was also vanishing.⁵

To preserve the wetland for future generations we must look after the whole landscape.

Aboriginal people

The Warabura clan of the Darumbal language group claimed the territory around Gracemere. The name 'wara' comes from a wild guava tree that grew in the area.¹

Large flocks of birds, fish and other wildlife at Padygole (Gracemere Lagoon) made the area an important hunting site for thousands of years. The wetland was also a meeting place and used for ceremonies.

Grindstones that were used to grind nardoo before baking can still be found around the Lagoon.² Please do not remove any stones that you find as it is important that they remain at the site.

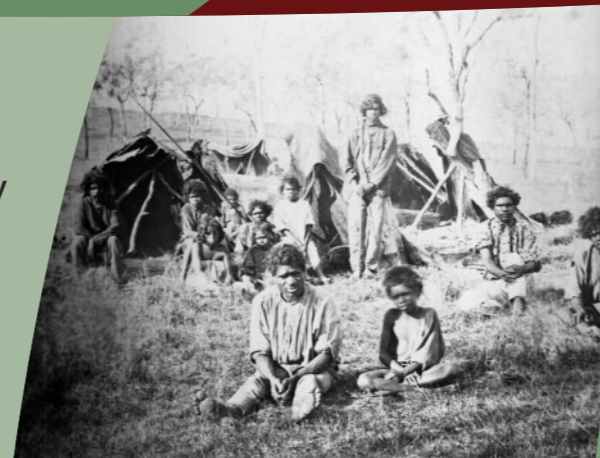


Photo courtesy Capricornia CQ Collection, CQU Library
Aborigines of the Warabura clan at a campsite near the stockyards of Gracemere Homestead.



Photo courtesy The State of Queensland (NRM&E)



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Up to 12 000 beef cattle were run on Gracemere. At one time a large dairy also operated and sugarcane was trialled.

The Archer brothers named the lagoon Farris after a Norwegian lake. It was later renamed Gracemere after their sister-in-law, Grace while 'mere' is a word meaning lagoon.

Heritage listed homestead

The National Trust listed Gracemere Homestead shows the character of pastoral homesteads of a bygone era. Gracemere Homestead is not open to the public.

The garden was designed with formal sections, stone walls and avenues of trees. Plant stock was brought from the Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens.



Photo courtesy Capricornia CQ Collection, CQU Library
The dining room at the Homestead is decorated with carved wooden items and family portraits.

Pioneering history

Charles and William Archer discovered the "magnificent sheet of water" of Gracemere Lagoon on 7th May 1853.³ They were the first European settlers in the area and introduced sheep and then cattle.

Did you know?

- Soils around Gracemere supported a large pineapple industry and many market gardens in the early 1900s.
- Granite quarried from the area was used for steps on Rockhampton Town Hall.
- Gracemere Saleyards, located beside the Reserve, opened in 1953 after moving from the Rockhampton Showgrounds.

References

1. McDonald, L. 1995 *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*, 2nd ed, Rockhampton City Council.
2. Lindsay, L. 2007 www.asgap.org.au (Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants) Capricornia Cuisine: Bush Tucker in Central Queensland.
3. Archer, C. 1813-1862 *Charles Archer's Diary: Eidsvold to Farris 1853*
4. Queensland Government. 2007 www.epa.qld.gov.au (Queensland Heritage Register) Gracemere Homestead.
5. McDonald, L. 1999 *Over Earth and Ocean: the Archers of Tolderodden and Gracemere*. University of Queensland Press, Central Queensland University Press.

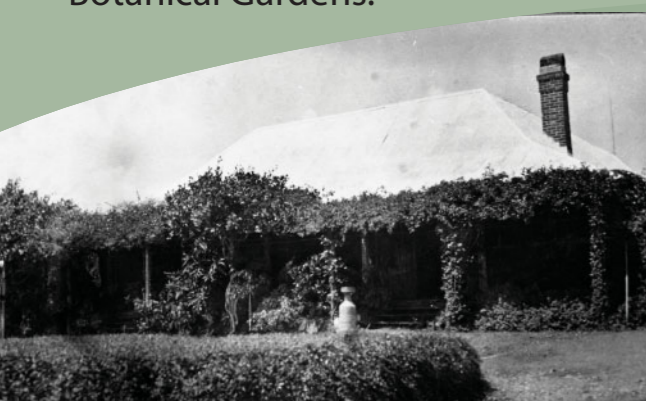


Photo courtesy Capricornia CQ Collection, CQU Library

The timber slab building was constructed in 1858 of local ironbark timber. Extensions to the house used Burdekin Plum.⁴ This picture was taken in 1917.



Photo courtesy Capricornia CQ Collection, CQU Library

As many as 16 different varieties of bougainvillea could be found in the garden with some covering the house as pictured here in 1997.



Photo courtesy Capricornia CQ Collection, CQU Library

The Archer family built a boathouse and jetty at the Lagoon. The water provided lots of opportunities for swimming and boating as shown here in 1885.

Restoration project jointly supported by



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