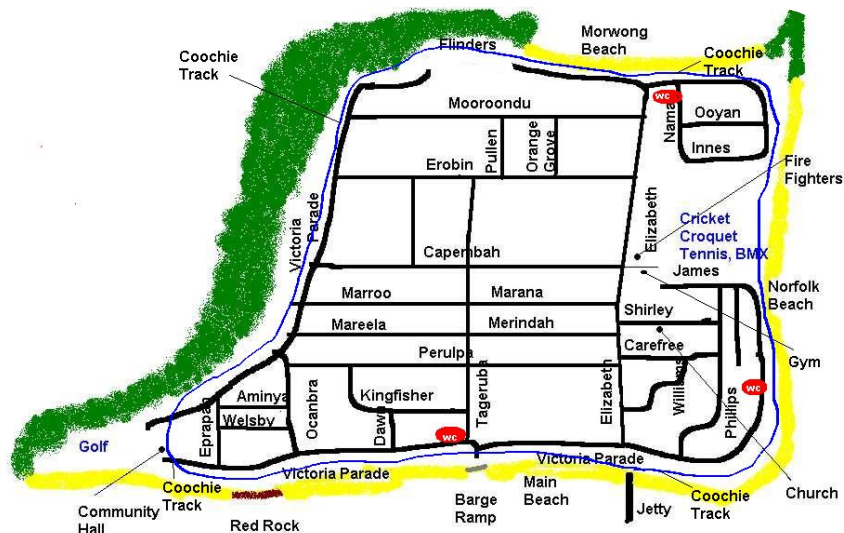


Trip Report

COOCHIE SKILLS DAY

Sunday 22 Jan 2012



Editor Graham Dredge

A good crowd turned up at Vic Point for Silvio's skills day, keen to get wet, learn and practice. There was a spread of skills from novice to experienced paddlers who all came with a learning objective in mind and a "give it a red hot go" attitude.

I remember coming along to the same event some four years earlier, Silvio leading with Towelly as 2IC, and coming away having tried all self and assisted rescue methods and absorbing everything I could from the shared knowledge and experience of club members.

It was much the same, this time round, even the weather kicked up a 15 knot + southerly and accompanying high frequency wind waves in the exposed waters skirting the usually hospitable island.

Before hitting the water, we assembled kayaks on the grass in front of the rigging area, checked gear and did a pre-launch intro and brief. Silvio, bless his soul, led us in some pretty cool stretching exercises designed to rust proof sea kayaker bodies. This was the first lesson and we hadn't even touched the water!

Coochiemudlo Island



Standing room only at Bribie Island with all the kayaks.

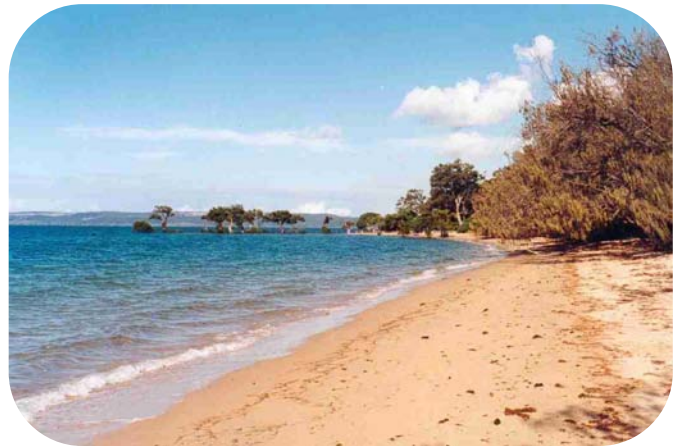


Coochiemudlo Island

Coochiemudlo Island is located within the Redland Shire in South-East Queensland, between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The island lies in Moreton Bay, where it's shallow beaches and mangroves are protected from the breakers of the South Pacific. The island is easily reached by a short ferry trip from Victoria Point. Although Coochie, as the island is known locally, is only 5 square kilometres in size, it boasts more than 4 Km of beautiful safe beaches, which are ideal for the kids. It has been called : 'the jewel of Moreton Bay'. The name 'Coochiemudlo' refers to the red rock pictured above. This dominant feature makes the island easily recognisable when seen from the mainland. In spite of 'mud' appearing in the name, there is only a little mangrove - the rest is beach.

Lesson 1: Stretching before paddling will prepare your body for action and help recovery.

We carried kayaks down the boat ramp and floated the group close by until we were all on the water. Lead and Tail End paddlers were appointed; experienced paddlers buddy up with less experienced / new comers and, our paddle signals restated. We headed across to the northwest side of the island with Trip Leader and guides amongst the paddlers as the southerly chop and wind buffeted kayaks.





Almost on cue, a paddler capsized not long after launch after a sideswipe from the chop dunked her in the bay. Her paddle buddy arrived beside her kayak and the first real skill test of the day ensued....

Are you OK? hang on to your kayak, move to the back of your kayak, push stern into the water (*while rescuer lifts the bow in 'T' form and empties water*), hold the deck lines and come back towards the cockpit..... hook your foot in the cockpit (*with rescuer fully committing their kayak*), pull yourself up head to stern and weight kept lowturn and drop bum into the cockpit.

Aaaahhh, take a few breaths as you reset your spray skirt and collect yourself (*while rescuer remains committed, assesses the paddler, kit and position to group*)

Again: Are you OK? Check their paddle and kit. Reinforce: forward stroke assists your balance and remember low brace if required.





This real scenario drove home a couple of important lessons

Lesson 2: (for all paddlers) Good forward stroke enables boat and paddler balance; ready for low brace as required.

Lesson 3: Easy access to whistle to alert group of situation (in this case rescuer's whistle was buried deep in PFD pocket and was difficult to recover).

After a breather paddling continued towards Coochie and some hoped for protection in the lee of the island. However, not long after the initial capsizing a second dunking occurred with a prompt assisted rescue. Whilst the rescue was performed the group rafted up and waited near the fringing mangroves.





Despite two unceremonious dunks, our rescuee was calm and collected and still very keen to keep going! To be certain however, we kept the rescue kayak at her side and hooked a towline, committing a 500 meter tow of the two kayaks through the washing machine and into the calmer waters on the leeward side of the island.

We grouped up with the rest of the pod and after some debriefing and also observations noted by Tanya, a further lesson was recognised. We realised that our dunked paddler had sat with knees together during the crossing, rather than apart and under the combing, which would have improved her stability. So...

Lesson 4: Boat contact and fit – ensure you have right contact with your kayak, utilising combing, thigh braces and pads to fit out to your needs and enhance stability



Now it was time for everyone to practice and test our own rescue skills!

The first drill we covered was assisted rescues. Silvio led us through some demonstrations and we then buddied up and practiced with our partners, taking turns to rescue and be rescued.

By the time everyone had capsized, been rescued and then assisted a rescue themselves a couple of times, we needed to warm up.

The forward stroke was broken down on the water and demonstrated, before we all followed one another in a rather large circle – first anti-clockwise than clockwise, focusing on the catch and stroke as we paddled. We continued our focus on forward stroke as we paddled around the corner to a sheltered beach where we stopped for morning tea and our next skills test – self-rescue techniques.



Here we focused attention on Cowboy or back deck re-entry and the paddle float self-recue methods for this group. The third self rescue method, the Re-enter and Roll was also demonstrated and practiced by a couple of the participants.

A bit over an hour practicing these methods and we were ready for lunch. We packed up and paddled in a tight group around the eastern corner of the island back into exposed waters with the steady wind buffeting paddlers as we headed to our lunch spot at the picnic tables near the main beach.

Our final session covered towing methods and the various tow lines and hook up methods that could be adopted in various scenarios. Very useful for those paddlers in the group who did not yet carry a tow line.



We paddled back across to Victoria Point and after cleaning up headed up to the shop for cold drinks and coffee.

All very satisfied (no matter what skill level) that we had learnt something from the day's activities. Thanks very much to Silvio for leading the day and to the paddlers who attended for their enthusiastic contributions.

Thanks to Dredgy for the Trip Report and photos.

History of Coochiemudlo Island

We can safely say that Coochiemudlo was visited on a regular basis by the local aborigines who belonged to the Koobenpul clan. The traces which they have left to us include the middens close to Morwong Beach and a few stone artefacts which can be seen in the Redlands Museum in Cleveland. We cannot tell when they first visited Coochie, or whether Coochie was ever inhabited for any length of time.

As is the case with everywhere else on this continent we know a disproportionately large amount about the relatively short time-span since the European settlement of Coochie.

The first European to set foot on Coochiemudlo was Mathew Flinders on July 19, 1799, a fact which we Coochiemudlans celebrate every year with our national holiday, Flinders Day, upon which, there is a period costume re-enactment of Mathew Flinders landing on what is now known as Norfolk Beach and a craft market so that visitors can support local industries. It is well worth a visit if you happen to be anywhere nearby on the day. It usually takes place on the third Sunday in July, but please check local guides beforehand.

When Coochie was first surveyed in the 1840s, it was referred to as Innes Island. Thankfully this name was dropped some time later and instead of being named after a nondescript town on the other side of the globe, or some meanwhile long-forgotten servant of a British monarch, Coochie was allowed to retain its aboriginal name kutschi-mudlo, meaning "red rock" in the Jandai language of the local aborigines; this being the island's prominent feature when seen from the mainland.

The first white inhabitants were Henry Wright and his son Norman who lived on Coochiemudlo for three years from 1895. Unfortunately, there is no mention of whether Mrs. Wright ever shared in the male members of her family's enthusiasm for their frugal lifestyle of living on bush tucker and keeping pigs.

In 1918, Doug Morton leased an area between what is now Elizabeth Street and Norfolk Beach after returning from World War I. He and his wife, a local girl from the well-known eponymous Colburn family of Point Halloran, (Colburn Avenue, Victoria Point), made a good living in the 1930s from farming on Coochie and in later years their crops were even taken to be sold in Brisbane.

During the 1940s, Claire and Gerald Elliot established a banana plantation, the remains of which can still be seen today and around 1944, the first of many future 'weekenders' was established by the Brisbane eye specialist, Dr. Allan Henry.

The coochiemudlan contribution to World War II was to provide a training ground for divisions of the Royal Australian Engineers before their deployment to the PNG coastline. Their training ground was in the melaleuca wetlands which form one of the boundaries of today's golf course. It is not recorded whether they ever had a 'hole in one' of their water carriers.

Coochiemudlo has seen many changes over the past 200 years; the most dramatic of which being the increase in population. The successively exponentiation rate of development starting with some bloke and his son living on berries in the late nineteenth century to the 300 or so who today permanently call the island their home was inevitable given Coochiemudlo's natural attractions.