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Christmas Island

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A STEP BACK IN TIME

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— Self-Guided Trail —



Christmas Island
A Natural Wonder

A STEP BACK IN TIME



Flying Fish Cove 1877.

On Christmas Day in 1643, Captain William Mynors of the East India Company vessel the Royal Mary named Christmas Island.

Christmas Island's history is short, tumultuous and unique. The community has been shaped by phosphate mining, different cultures, colonial and commercial interests, war, industrial unrest and a natural environment like no other.

For a small, remote island on the edge of the Indian Ocean, Christmas Island has been in the forefront of Australian politics; yet remains relatively unknown and retains a harmonious multi-cultural community in an irreplaceable setting.

It takes time for Christmas Island to reveal her secrets. So Take a Step Back in Time on this self-guided trail and discover Christmas Island stories in the historical township.

Other self-guided trails focus on the culture through *The Spirit of Christmas Island* and the mining history along *The Old Railway*.

These stories are interwoven, overlap and together provide a glimpse into the rich history and culture of Christmas Island.

Grab a map from the Visitor Centre and take a step back in time starting at Tai Jin House, Smith Point. The drive is all on made roads and should take 1-3 hours. The area between Smith Point and the Administrator's Residence can be walked.



Grab a map from the Visitor Centre.



Approximate duration
1 – 3 hours.



The drive is all on made roads.

1. SMITH POINT

Tai Jin House (locally known as Buck House) and surrounds provide a glimpse of colonialism and war.

On 6 June 1888 Captain William May of the *HMS Imperieuse* formally claimed Christmas Island for Great Britain. Christmas Island is valuable for its phosphate, a soil nutrient, and its strategic location.

From 1901 until 1995 this area was occupied by the senior government official on Christmas Island. The first being Lewis Clayton, the District Officer appointed by the British Government through the Straits Settlement administration in Singapore. His Chinese title was Tai Jin meaning 'the Great Man'.

The present Tai Jin House was built around 1936, in a tropical, colonial architecture style, replacing an earlier building. Above the main doorway is a replica of the notice board of annexation left by Captain May in 1888. The upper floor, a museum since 2008, was the residence and the ground floor an office and courtroom. Life was isolated for the top official; not only due to his role and the colonial attitudes of the time but it was difficult to physically leave the area along the steep, narrow path to Flying Fish Cove. In good weather, District Officers were able to walk down the cliffs to a row boat and go across to Flying Fish Cove. Even as late as the 1970s this was a European enclave unless people needed to service the house or were on official business.



Flying Fish Cove and TSS Islander 1961.



Holding Court.

World War Two came to Christmas Island as the Japanese wanted phosphate. The Island's defences included the six-inch naval gun manned by 25 Indian troops and five English soldiers, the small barracks and, on the escarpment above the gun emplacement, a concrete Command Post building.

In early 1942, European and Indian women and children and non-essential staff were evacuated. Submarine and aerial attacks and shelling from the sea in January through to early March 1942 indicated the Japanese were about to invade. The Indian troops garrisoned on the island staged a mutiny, murdered the British commanding officer and non-commissioned officers and imprisoned the remaining Europeans in the upper floor of Tai Jin House. The mutineers surrendered the Island on 31 March 1942 to an occupying force of 850 Japanese soldiers and construction staff. The Japanese quickly took over the fort, the phosphate plant and the empty European houses.

Occupation was a particularly difficult time for the Islanders from food shortages and forced labour. In December 1943 around 800 people were sent to Surabaya leaving about 500 people behind. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945 the remaining soldiers left and Christmas Island's war was over. It was time to rebuild.

After the war Christmas Island was again administered from Singapore. In 1948, the phosphate mine lease was taken over by the Australian and New Zealand governments who created the British Phosphate Commission and an expansion program started.



Children at 'Buck House'.



Sikh Police.

Things to do

- Wander through the museum at Tai Jin House, the Gun Emplacement and surrounding buildings.
- Walk to the Command Post on the path towards Territory Day Park behind the barracks.
- Join in the ANZAC Day dawn commemorations on 25 April each year at the flag poles. People gather at dawn to remember the fallen, the sacrifices and the futility of war. Lest we forget.
- Reflect at the Memorials to SIEV 221 and SIEV X near the traffic lights.
- Feel the power of Batu Gadja (the Elephant Stone) on the cliff face near the car park. It has been shaped by limestone over the millennia.

➔ NEXT STOP

Flying Fish Cove – Take the narrow road towards Flying Fish Cove and the Kampong, watch out for the only traffic lights on Christmas Island.

🔊 HISTORICAL TALE

The Unknown Sailor

A body on a small Carley float (life-raft) was spotted near Flying Fish Cove on 6 February 1942. The man's body had no identification and was buried in the Old European cemetery after a brief service with a Sikh policeman playing the last post. The body has since been identified as being from the *HMAS Sydney* which sunk off the Western Australian coast on 19 November 1941 in a battle with the German raider *Kormoran*. The body was exhumed in 2006 and taken to Sydney in an unsuccessful attempt to identify him. His remains were reburied in the Geraldton War cemetery on 19 November 2008, 67 years after the sinking of the *HMAS Sydney*.



Loading phosphate 1961.

2. FLYING FISH COVE

For most of the year Flying Fish Cove is a safe and natural harbour. At other times the sea is very rough. The port is the gateway to Christmas Island for people, cargo and phosphate.

Flying Fish Cove was the site of the first settlement in November 1888 when the Clunies-Ross family, from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands asserted their claims to the Island's resources. They remained until mining commenced in 1899. The family had previously set up temporary camps to collect timber, soil and food.

The naturalist Dr John Murray, during the 1872-76 *HMS Challenger* oceanographic expedition, postulated that Christmas Island could be rich in phosphate. Rock samples collected during the 1887 *HMS Flying Fish* and the *HMS Egeria* expeditions showed this to be correct. This changed the Island's future and left a few place names – Murray Road, Flying Fish Cove and Egeria Point.

The first samples of phosphate were sent to Murray in 1895. In 1897 the Christmas Island Phosphate Company was formed and continued operations until World War Two. The European managers and overseers recruited a workforce of mainly Chinese and Malay workers initially through the British colony of Singapore.

Between 1900 and November 1918, 1.5 million tons, or 2% of the world's phosphate production was shipped through Flying Fish Cove. This was all dug by hand.

The well-used boat ramp was constructed during the Japanese occupation.

The cantilevers were built in 1963 and are still used to fill ships with phosphate for export.

The Cove was the social hub, and many long term residents remember the Satay Club and the Boat Club. The remains of the Boat Club are visible near the kayak racks.

The Jetty was extended in 2013/14 to enhance border security and safety for offloading people from vessels. The jetty is mainly used by small boats and for recreation.



The Boat Club.

Things to do

- Spend some time at Flying Fish Cove taking in the jetty, the water and the facilities.

➔ NEXT STOP

It's a short drive along Jalan Pantai (Malay for Beach Road) to the Kampong. Park near the shops.

3. KAMPONG

The residential area, known as the Kampong (Malay for village) is adjacent to the port. This was the place of the first settlement, originally called Edinburgh Settlement until New Settlement (now Settlement) commenced around 1928.

Malays were recruited from what is known today as Indonesia and Malaysia. Most Malay men were employed by the port and marine services. The men built koleks (canoes) from wood of the *Gyrocarpus americanus* (helicopter tree) and fished the waters in the Cove to feed their families.



The Kampong and koleks on the beach 1961.



Married Quarters 1950s.



Kampong kids 1970s.

The original Kampong houses were made of thatch and timber. By the 1930s about half the men were married with families which helped them to establish roots and to be 'islanders'.

The Madrassa (Islamic School) and grocery store at the rear of the Kampong, are in residential buildings of the post-war era. Behind the Madrassa is a building relocated from the Cocos Padang in the 1970s.

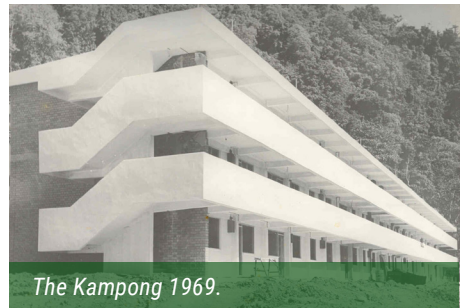
The Kampong was rebuilt to Singapore Housing Development Board specification and completed in 1970. These flats rehoused the Malay workers and their families who lived at the Kampong and the Cocos Padang.

The current Mosque was built by the British Phosphate Commissioners to support the Malay community. The Malay Club, a former residence, is an important cultural organisation and place for meetings and gatherings.

The Kampong retains a village like feel with the enclosed central area surrounded by the Singapore style flats and is still the heart of the Malay community.

Things to do

- Park at the shops and experience the history in this residential area.



The Kampong 1969.



The Mosque 15 November 1938.

➔ NEXT STOP

Take the short, steep hill to the Post Office and a large open space known as the Post Office Padang (Malay for open space).

4. POST OFFICE PADANG AND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

In the 1900's, the Post Office Padang (park) was a recreation area with a large house nearby for a European manager, a Europeans only swimming pool and on the slopes were vegetable gardens and a fledgling coffee plantation. The police station, gaol and a Sikh temple were nearby.

The European Manager's house was built high above the Padang in the early 1920s and was later converted into the European Club. The building was last used as a social venue in the mid 2000s and then left to decay.

The Post Office is built where a wireless station once stood. Next to the Post Office was a swimming pool, built in 1927. Initially this was for Europeans only. By the 1980s it was open to all, marking a move away from earlier segregation. The pool was an important venue for island kids until the new pool at the Recreation Centre opened in 2005.

Across the road is a large building, built in 1926 as the main mine office. The mine used to provide all the services to the Island. The building has played a significant role in the life of Christmas Island also being a post office, welfare office and a bank. It is now government offices.



The Post Office Padang (park).

Things to do

- Reflect on the hardships of Japanese occupation in World War Two at the plaque in the Post Office Padang.
- Discover Christmas Island stamps at the Post Office.

➔ NEXT STOP

A few metres along the road is the Roundabout. Drive through to the Visitor Centre or safely pull up on the side of the road.



Swimming Pool 1952.



The original mine office. On the left is the wireless station and swimming pool.

! INTERESTING FACT

The governance arrangements for the Territory of Christmas Island are complex.

On 1 October 1958 Christmas Island became a Territory of Australia but did not automatically receive the same rights and laws which operated on the mainland.

Christmas Island is administered by the Australian Government based in Canberra, around 5,000 km away. Residents vote in the Northern Territory electorate of Lingiari, just under 3,000km away. Since 1992 West Australian laws apply. Prior to this Singapore laws applied, however, the last Singapore law was cancelled as late as 2001. The first Shire Council was elected in 1993, replacing the Christmas Island Assembly and Services Corporation. The Shire provides a range of local government services.



5. THE ROUNDABOUT

This is arguably the most isolated roundabout in the world. All traffic between the coastal terrace and the next plateau passes through this point. It makes it an ideal place for the community blackboard, the original social media.

The series of two story units on the right just after the roundabout are known as the Roundabout Flats. The flats were built in 1941 as the living quarters for Asian clerks and accountants. Their size, location and layout shows aspects of the class and racial social structures which were prevalent of the time when compared with the housing provided to the Europeans.

During the Japanese occupation in World War Two (March 1942- August 1945) European prisoners of war were temporarily housed in the Roundabout Flats. After the war, the buildings were again used for Asian staff quarters until the 1970's. Since the 1990s the buildings have been private homes.

The other buildings in this area were built by the mine.

Things to do

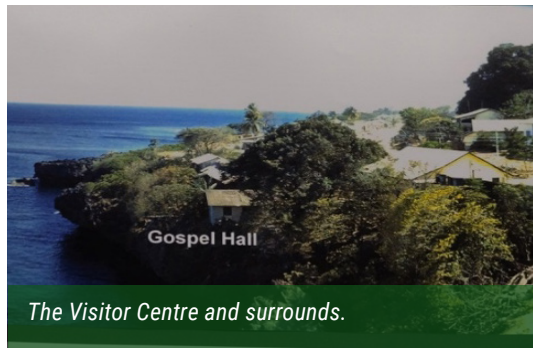
- Leave a comment on the blackboard.
- In the dry season it is possible to see the remains of a stone phosphate hopper at the cliff just after the Roundabout Flats.

NEXT STOP

Staying on Gaze Rd along the coastal terrace, the next stop is the Visitor Centre, just past the phosphate silos which are fed by the overhead conveyor belt.

6. VISITOR CENTRE

Gaze Road, named after Alfred Gaze and his son Harold who both served as General Managers of the British Phosphate Commissioners, has undergone many changes. Having once been the centre for services and utilities with a thriving community, it is now a laid-back commercial, tourism and residential area.



The brightly decorated building has been the Visitor Centre since 1994. Previously, it was a mandors' (Chinese overseers) club, a Eurasian staff club and a youth club. More notoriously it is near the site of the White House, the Island brothel, where Japanese and Chinese prostitutes lived.

A Gospel Hall occupied the lookout below the Visitor Centre.

The small beach below, known as Isabel Beach is named after the wife of Sir John Murray, the founding father of Christmas Island.

Across the road is the main supermarket. It was built by the mining company as the Trade Store, on the same site was the Kongs store run by the labour



contractor. Here, in December 1919 there was a riot by the coolies against the Island's Chinese Manager. Two coolies were shot dead by the Sikh police.

When the mine closed in 1987, the Trade Store was transferred to the Christmas Island Assembly and Services Corporation (the predecessor of the Shire) and then transferred to private ownership in 1994.

Next to the supermarket are derelict buildings. The large double storied building, was constructed for the Chinese clerks and mandors around 1910. It is known as the Virgins' Castle as it was later used as the quarters for single Asian women.

The small roofless building was a privately owned residence on the Island until the mid 1990s. It was owned by the Chinese labour contractor and shows the wealth and power in controlling virtually all aspects of the indentured labourers' lives until the practice ceased in the 1930s. The labourers worked in harsh conditions to pay off their debts. From the beginning the majority of Christmas Islanders were, and still are, of Chinese origin.

In the car park was a butcher and next to this was an open air cinema,

now the bakery. Further along is the Chinese Literary Association (CLA) built in the 1950s by the British Phosphate Commissioners. The CLA was formed at the end of World War Two and has been important to maintain the Chinese culture and a place for workers to meet.

Things to do

- Take a look inside the Visitor Centre to see how the interior has been adapted, find out the latest happenings and grab some souvenirs.
- Walk to the lookout and Isabel Beach.
- See if the small Chinese museum across the road from the CLA is open and take a look inside.



➔ NEXT STOP

Along Gaze Rd, turn left onto the Gaze Road Service Rd to the Tea Gardens park next to the Police Station.



Gaze Rd 1963.

7. THE TEA GARDENS

Gaze Rd towards the Tea Gardens was traditionally the centre for the Chinese community and the main services area. Most of the current houses along Gaze Rd were built in the 1950s and are now private residences or shops.

The first hospital was built along these cliffs in the 1900s and was known as the Beri Beri Hospital. Life was difficult for the early inhabitants with long and hot work days, unsanitary living conditions, poor diet and inadequate water. Beri Beri, a lack of thiamine (vitamin B1), was a common illness across Asia and caused over 600 deaths during 1900 to 1904 on Christmas Island. The cause was not known at the time. The Chinese workers believed their illness was due to wind blowing up from their feet into their body. The real cause was a diet of polished (white) rice. The death rate was reduced

when a better diet, including rice with husks, was introduced.

A railway line ran along Gaze Rd from the Cocos Padang. On both sides of the railway line were coolie quarters, each building capable of holding 16 men. In the late 1930s until World War Two, the Chinese gathered to socialise, eat, drink and gamble on wooden tables under a corrugated iron roof at the Tea Gardens, located near the current fuel tanks.



*40 Houses and 20 Houses in 1951.
The Buildings were removed following
the 1988 Cyclone.*

Cinema was important for the community. The first small building on the ocean side after the CLA was a store room for films. The second small building was the projection room for an open air cinema. Under British law the pictures started with the British National Anthem followed by movies in Malay, Chinese, English or Hindi.

The foundations of the Asian swimming pool are still visible along the cliff tops. The pool was destroyed in 1988 by a cyclone.

The Tea Gardens park is located on a former residential area known as the 40-houses. Many locals call this area the Police Padang due to the location next to the Police Station.

The remnants of industry and the rail transport link between the base of the incline and the wharf can be glimpsed but perhaps the most visible is the concrete pad of the old power station on the other side of the road and behind it the incline.

Things to do

- Peek inside the 1950s buildings at the shops at Temple Court.
- Look at the art in the Tea Gardens, and enjoy the sunset or a BBQ.

➔ NEXT STOP

Continue along the Service Rd to the Barracks.



Asian Swimming Pool 1960s.

8. THE BARRACKS

At the start of the Barracks precinct is the Police Station. Built in the late 1950s, it was originally the living quarters for single male teachers and other government employees until converted to a Police Station in 1963.

The first contingent of Sikh Police arrived from Singapore with the first European District Office in 1901. Police were recruited from Singapore until the 1980s. They enforced Singapore laws and many lived in the neighbouring Barracks.

The Barracks show the social status of the government employees in comparison to European employees of the mining company. The Barracks were partially destroyed in the 1988 cyclone and left derelict for around five years. The government then offered them to people to repair and eventually to purchase for shops and homes.

Things to do

- Wander through the Barracks shops.

→ NEXT STOP

Look across to the Cocos Padang.



The Barracks 1957.

9. COCOS PADANG (previously Kampong Cocos Baru – the new Cocos Village)

The Cocos Padang Lodge is the remains of the buildings which housed workers, including those recruited from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands during the 1950s and 1960s rebuilding program. The form of the Standard Asian Labourers Barracks built by the British Phosphate Company is easy to see. Sleeping and living areas at the front with a separate kitchen and ablutions block at the rear connected by a covered breezeway.

In the late 1960s, when the British Phosphate Commissioners ended the labour contract scheme and employed European tradesmen, many Cocos Malays and other residents of this area were rehoused at the Kampong. The building then became a Scout Hall.

After many years of neglect the building was renovated and reopened as tourist accommodation in 2014 retaining its original character and form.

The Cocos Padang is at the base of the Incline and was near to the railway shunting yard between 1915 and the mid 1950s. Trains were loaded at the incline and then travelled to the port via the Roundabout and behind the Kampong.



Settlement 1941.

➔ NEXT STOP

At the end of the Service Rd turn left onto Tampa View then right along the sea front to see the Old Hospital Group.



SIEV 221 15 December 2010 (*The Australian*).

10. TAMPA VIEW

Christmas Island has been in the international and national spotlight due to the immigration detention centre and associated policies but would rather be known for its vibrant community, rich history, many cultures and unique nature.

In August 2001 an international diplomatic dispute brewed after the Norwegian Cargo ship *Tampa* rescued 438 Afghan asylum seekers from a distressed fishing vessel in international waters near Christmas

Island. The Australian government refused the *Tampa* entry and deployed the military to board the ship. After a lengthy standoff most asylum seekers were shipped to Nauru and held in detention, prior to eventual resettlement.

Since then Christmas Island has received many people arriving by boat to seek asylum. An immigration detention centre was opened in 2005 and has housed many asylum seekers and others who have been placed in immigration detention.



The Tampa Christmas Island 2001.

Tragedy struck in the early hours of 15 December 2010 when a small asylum seeker boat known as SIEV 221 (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel) struck the cliffs at Tampa View in wild seas. Many lives were lost, however, 42 people were rescued due to the efforts of the Navy, emergency services and the local community.

11. THE OLD HOSPITAL GROUP

The buildings along this strip are part of the old hospital, which was run by the British Phosphate Commissioners.

This complex consists of buildings erected between the 1930s and 1970. It is an example of a hospital that grew and changed over time to provide facilities to serve the small, isolated population. Facilities included wards, nurses quarters, laboratory, x-ray and surgical theatres, morgue and dental clinic.

To have been born at the Old Hospital is a sense of pride amongst the older Christmas Islanders.

The buildings were damaged in the 1988 cyclone and the hospital closed in 1995 after a new one opened at Phosphate Hill.

The heritage values are retained in the tourism and residential redevelopments which date from the early 2000's.



Doctor and Matron at the Old Hospital 1952.

➔ NEXT STOP

Back on Gaze Rd turn left, then second left at Rocky Point Cres to the Administrator's Residence at 6 Rocky Point Cres.

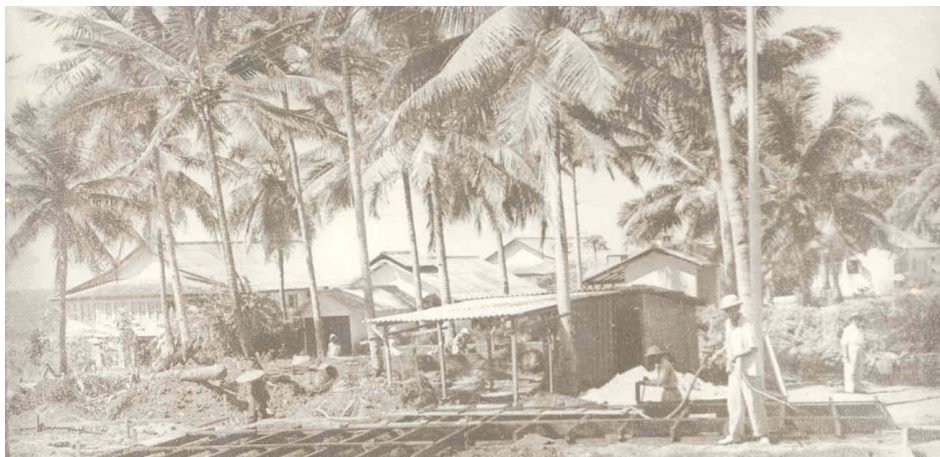
12. THE ADMINISTRATOR'S RESIDENCE

Along Gaze Rd and the short loop of Rocky Point Cres the variety of houses used by Europeans employed by the mine can be seen, including married quarters (MQ), visitor quarters (VQ) and single quarters (SQ). Most were built in the 1950s but some date back to the 1930s. The houses and gardens were maintained by the mine until it closed in 1988.

The European women on Christmas Island generally had a good and sheltered life during the period 1900 to 1941. There were never more than 30 Europeans including ten women at any one time. Each family had servants and an amah (nurse) to look after the small children. Most shared the prejudices and assumptions of racial superiority of the people of the British Empire. Dinner parties,

social events, excursions and some community work (teaching English) kept the women entertained. But, some never liked the isolation and separation from their older children and homes back in England.

An example of a pre-war bungalow is the Administrator's Residence, previously known MQ6 and before that Bungalow Number 18. Built in the 1930s by the Christmas Island Phosphate Company this large residence is indicative of the class, racial and social structures of the day. Asian domestic servants were housed in the quarters attached to the building while the Europeans occupied the main house. It was occupied by the Japanese during World War Two.



Single quarters being built in Settlement 1955.



Inside Bungalow 18 1937.

The building has evolved to show the changing lifestyles but has retained some of its original form and status of its occupants.

It is home to the Administrator of the Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. This is an appointed position and is the most senior Australian government official on Christmas Island. The position was created in 1968. Although the role has evolved it continues the tradition of government being represented by an appointed Official Representative or District Officer.

➔ NEXT STOP

Back to the roundabout, around the roundabout and take Murray Rd up the hill to the Shire Offices at the George Fam Centre.



Outside Bungalow 18 1937.



European School 1951.

13. THE GEORGE FAM CENTRE

The Shire of Christmas Island offices are housed in the George Fam Centre, the former Asian School. The building was named in 1991 after the headmaster Fam Choo Beng (known as George Fam) who served between 1957 and 1970.

In keeping with the times, schools were segregated. The first school was opened in 1929 at Flying Fish Cove (where the marine building now sits) with four Malay students taught by a Malay Boatman. In 1930 the phosphate company built an English School with thirty Asian pupils under a Chinese teacher from the Singapore Education Department. This was replaced by the Asian School in 1951 for 150 students with six classrooms, office and canteen. Lessons were in English based on the Singapore curriculum. In 1961 the Christmas Island Asian School was built at Drumsite.

The European primary school students were taught separately at the Tom Paterson building at Settlement. The building was named for Tom Paterson (1923-1986) who was an Administrator. The building was converted to a preschool for all children in 1975.

The Asian and European Schools merged in 1975 when teachers from mainland Australia arrived and taught an Australian curriculum.

In 2019, there were around 250 students at the main campus of the Christmas Island District High School at Drumsite and the kindergarten at the Tom Paterson Centre in Settlement. The school is well regarded in meeting the needs of its students through academic, vocational, social and cultural programs.

A Technical Training Centre opened in 1967 at Poon Saan.

Behind the water tank is the Incline. This was used to carry phosphate by a cable gravity system down to the Settlement level, then shunted through the coolie lines to storage and drying sheds above Isabel Beach before despatch overseas. Prior to 1958 it was the main carriageway for people between Drumsite and Settlement. Refer to the *Old Railway Journey* for more information.

Things to do

- Walk up the Incline to Silver City.

➔ NEXT STOP

Back on Murray Rd continue up the hill to Poon Saan and stop opposite the Outdoor Cinema.



George Fam and students 1950s.



Students 1977.

14. POON SAAN

At the top of the hill is the residential area of Poon Saan. Poon Saan is a Chinese expression for half hill.

At the top of the hill, the buildings on the right are the Singapore style Poon Saan flats, developed as part of the Asian housing program. The program started in 1968, under the supervision of the Singapore Housing Board, to provide accommodation for the influx of mine workers from South-East Asia and to relocate the families from South Point. The flats are now in private ownership. The many rooftop dishes were added in 2016/2017 to enable access to internet delivered by satellite.

Further along on the right, is the Christmas Island Outdoor Cinema. Since the 1930s movies have played a key role in island life. This cinema was built in the 1970s and still operates, even in the rain! The venue was a key meeting point for the workers that eventually led to the formation of the Union of Christmas Island Workers (UCIW) on 21 March 1975. The first General Secretary was school teacher Michael Grimes (died November 2019), who later became the Administrator between 1992 and 1994.

The UCIW sought to secure equity between the pay, and conditions of Christmas Island Asian workers and those of workers on the Australian mainland. Although Christmas Island had been part of Australia for almost



Chinese married staff quarters at Poon Saan early 1970s.



Christmas Island Outdoor Cinema being built early 1970s.

20 years the conditions, pay and citizenship laws were not aligned. In 1979 the passionate and energetic Gordon Bennet (1944-1991) was appointed as the General Secretary of the UCIW. After many meetings, negotiations, promises and effort it finally took a 13-day hunger strike by six members of the UCIW on the grounds of Parliament House in Canberra for meaningful changes to begin.

A monument near the car park marks the original site of the Union Office. The UCIW still exists with its premises at the Poon Saan shops and continues to play a role in the fortunes and politics of Christmas Island.

Along Poon Saan Rd is the Poon Saan Club, built by the British Phosphate Commissioners in the late 1960s as a gathering place for the Chinese community. It remains an important social hub for meetings, playing traditional Chinese games and for cultural events such as Chinese New Year and the Hungry Ghost Festival.

Things to do

- Stop at the car park across the road from the Cinema at San Chye Loh and take a look around.

➔ NEXT STOP

Continue along Murray Rd to Drumsite. Take a left turn and a quick right turn onto Lam Lok Loh.



The Jap House 1977.

15. DRUMSITE

Continuing along Murray Rd is Drumsite, named after the huge drum which held the cable for the gravity-based Incline. The area was established in conjunction with the construction of the Incline and railway systems between 1910 and 1920. It was a mixed residential settlement for skilled railway workers and mechanics who worked under European supervisors.

Modern units for government workers were built in the early 2010s to cater for the increased housing demand due to the immigration detention centre activities.

Of note is the private residence on Lam Lok Loh, built in 1930. It was officially known as Bungalow 702 but mostly it is called the 'Jap House'. The Jap House is an example of colonial Singapore-style architecture and is one of the few pre-war buildings to survive in this area. The building symbolises the wartime history of the island as it was taken over by the Japanese occupying forces in 1942 as a residence and radio station. Previously it was used by the Phosphate Company to house European staff. In 1975 it was home to Michael Grimes (first Secretary General of the UCIW) and family.

Most other buildings in this area date from the 1950s and 1960s and were used by the mine workers and Asian Teachers. Most of the buildings are now in private ownership.

➔ NEXT STOP

Turn right onto Golden Bosun Rd, a short drive until right onto Nursery Rd next to the National Park Headquarters and across the small bridge to the building on the right.

16. VLU2 RADIO STATION

Just after the small bridge on the right, is the radio station VLU2 in a former residence built by the British Phosphate Commission. In 1986 the TV and radio services were broadcast from this building then known as the Ham Shack. Community radio 6RCI (named in the early 2000s) continues to be broadcast from the building.

Technology has always been important in reaching the outside world. The wireless and radio stations were originally in the Settlement area at the Post Office Padang. Between 1935-1941 the wireless station had three Asian operators and were in regular contact by morse code to Singapore and passing ships. People also had wireless sets tuned to the BBC to keep abreast of world news.

During World War Two radio was a vital link to learn about world events. On 15 February 1942 (the fall of



Singapore) the Singapore wireless station failed to answer calls, isolating Christmas Island. With the threat of occupation the Japanese beamed radio messages to the Island warning of reprisals for any act of sabotage. To ensure contact with the outside world a small radio was hidden at Grants Well. People risked their lives to listen to the news every week which provided an important link to the outside world during the occupation.



Wireless House at the Post Office Padang 1929.

By the 1980s the radio station had moved to Phosphate Hill and provided a phone service to replace the telexes which were delivered across the Island. People had to book the phone service in advance and were able to make short calls. By the mid 1980s landlines were installed and a 3-digit phone number used which related to the house number. This evolved into the standard (08) 9164 8xxx pattern used today. Mobile phones arrived in 2005 and were issued as 043 921 5xxx with some of the numbers still in use.

Television was originally broadcast from the Cocos Padang using shows from the Mining Television Network. By the 1990s four-week old ABC shows were shown using VHS tapes. This was replaced by TV delivered by satellites.

➔ NEXT STOP

Follow the road along to Territory Day Park.



Territory Day Celebrations 1970.



Territory Day Celebrations 2018.



Territory Day Celebrations 2018.



Territory Day Celebrations 1970.

17. TERRITORY DAY PARK

Territory Day Park was named in 1988 as part of the thirty year celebrations of becoming a Territory.

The park was covered in jungle until the 1960s when it was used for 'chooks' (chickens). Youngsters who lived nearby used to collect eggs for their families. Some would even put coconuts on the nearby phosphate conveyor belt, before it was covered, just for fun!

At about the same time part of the park was used by the mine as a nursery to grow trees to rehabilitate the mined areas. This work is continued by the Christmas Island National Park.

After the war Christmas Island continued to be part of the Colony of Singapore until 31 December 1957 when it became a separate Crown Colony. This enabled the phosphate rich island to be retained in 'British' hands upon Singapore gaining independence.

On 1 October 1958, sovereignty was transferred, the Australian flag was

raised at a small ceremony at Tai Jin House and the Island became Australia's ninth external Territory.

To compensate Singapore for lost phosphate royalties a sum of £2.33 million (Malayan \$20 million) was paid which has led to the mistaken belief that Singapore sold Christmas Island to Australia.

All are welcome to join Christmas Islanders on the first Monday of October every year to celebrate Territory Day.

Things to do

- View Flying Fish Cove and Tai Jin House.
- Take the short nature walk on the left of the car park.

➔ NEXT STOP

This is the end of the trail which has been a glimpse into the stories of Christmas Island and how the people and place have shaped this proud island community.





PROVIDE



Christmas Island

A *Natural* Wonder



Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Produced by the Christmas Island Tourism Association with support from the Australian Government. 2019

Photos are from the Collection of the National Archives of Australia, Christmas Island Past and Present and personal collections.

For more information:

 christmas.net.au

 [ChristmasIslandTourism](https://www.facebook.com/ChristmasIslandTourism)

 [ChristmasIsland](https://www.instagram.com/ChristmasIsland)

Other self-guided trails:

