



Editor - Peter Ludlow

Accessing Peel Island - Part 1



Peel Island showing former jetty sites

Recently, the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning has established a committee, the "Peel Island (Teerk Roo Ra) Access Project", focusing on possible future access to the island. It may now be an appropriate time to look at the history of former points of access. My earliest reference is to the Quarantine Station's stone jetty and is contained in the following extract from "The Week" of January 1, 1876:

"On the beach below (the Bluff) at the most convenient landing place, the foundation of a capital jetty has been formed, and carried out fully a hundred yards into the Bay, the material used being the shingle and boulders lying around. The boulders and the largest of the flat stones being fitted together for the purpose of an outer casing, and the middle is filled up with smaller pebbles. Even now, at low water, this jetty is exceedingly convenient, and the judicious expenditure of £50 or so under the Superintendent's direction, when immigrant ships are in quarantine, would make a jetty suitable for all the purposes required, and one which could be used at any state of the tide."

Stone Jetty in 1885 (Photo: RQHS)



A letter from the Prisons Department of 30/5/1893 is also of interest. In answer to a request for prison labour to complete the building of the stone jetty at the Quarantine Station (the foundations of which were mentioned in "The Week" above) the writer agrees that prison labour is possible but suggests that, rather than use prisoners from nearby St Helena Island as previously proposed, instead, 50 short-term prisoners from Brisbane Prison be used, the reason being that so few prisoners were available from

St Helena. The writer also expresses some concern that the prisoners might utilise the remoteness of Peel Island to try to escape, and suggests that a concrete cell block be first erected to house them. No confirmation has been found that the proposals of this letter were carried out, but the cell block does exist. The jetty was completed and, as rumour has it, by prisoners. It appears quite feasible that the jetty was completed by prison labour and that they also built the concrete cell block (This same cell block was to be used in later years to house the disorderly inebriates, when they were housed on Peel from 1910 to 1916).

To help protect the jetty from the south easters, the hulk of the disused dredge "Platypus" was positioned off the jetty in 1926. The jetty can be seen to the right of the picture. Note the cleared area on the Bluff, the site of Peel's former quarantine station.



Later, from 1907, the jetty was used as the main access point for the island's Lazaret. This was replaced by the wooden western jetty in 1956.

"Platypus" off Peel 1926
(Photo: Ralph Munro)



Stone Jetty c.1950
(Photo: Terry Gwynne Jones, SLQ)



Stone Jetty - 11.11.2006
(Photo: Peter Ludlow)