Nerang Heritage Walk

Discover Nerang’s history and heritage.

CITY OF GOLD COAST™
The Nerang Heritage Walk is a discovery and celebration of the rich history of this Gold Coast hinterland town straddling the beautiful Nerang River. It recognises those places of special heritage significance to the Gold Coast that have been entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.

It is also a celebration of other places that are important in the history of Nerang. Plaques, monuments, streets, parks and community organisations all combine in Nerang to tell the story of a river town shaped by a wealth of timber, rich river flats for agriculture, civic administration and the South Coast Railway.
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Prepared by City of Gold Coast Office of City Architect Heritage Unit, April 2017.
Special thanks to Councillor Peter Young, City of Gold Coast Local Studies Library, Qld Police Museum, Nerang Community Association Inc., State Library of Qld, Anne Panitz and Carol Randall. Map references are made throughout. See pages 24–29 for associated legend and maps.
Archaeological evidence indicates that Aboriginal people have lived in the Gold Coast region for tens of thousands of years. When early European settlers first arrived in the Nerang River region they found a complex network of Aboriginal family groups speaking a number of dialects of the Yugambeh language. Local Aboriginal people maintained strong connections with other clan groups throughout the broader regions of Moreton Bay and the upper reaches of the Brisbane River as well as throughout northern New South Wales.

Aboriginal people camped on the banks of rivers and along the coast where abundant resources provided a good living. Early European visitors noted that local people used a variety of technology in their daily lives, including canoes. In 1839 surveyor Robert Dixon began the first government survey of the Gold Coast. He named many of the regions natural features including the Barrow River, which was later re-named the Nerang River. It is suggested that the name ‘Nerang’ was chosen for the river to reflect the local Aboriginal word ‘neerang’ which means either little or a shovel nosed shark. The earliest maps and descriptions of the landscape indicate the floodplain of the Nerang River once supported dense forest and vine scrub as well as extensive freshwater swamps. In the hinterland areas, early descriptions note a region that is ‘wonderfully fertile and well watered’ with ‘rugged mountain scenery’ that ‘is unsurpassed in the Australian States’.1

Earthen circles, known as bora rings and used for initiation ceremonies, existed in the area until recent times. One was reported at the southern outskirts of Nerang, at the junction of Gilston Road and the Pacific Highway. Another was noted in the 1920s as being within the old Nerang showground that was located in Martin Street.

Non-Indigenous settlement brought alcohol and disease, as well as conflict and displacement of Yugambeh groups from traditional food sources as settlers acquired land for agriculture. The plight of the original inhabitants was recognised by authorities, but too often efforts to help fell short. Every year the government issued blankets to Aboriginal people and the Nerang police station was one of the distribution centres. In 1870 the German Lutheran Church of Queensland, led by the Rev. J. G. Haussman, his son, and a number of other representatives of the church, secured land for a mission on the western bank of the Nerang River at Advancetown. Known as the Nerang Creek Aboriginal Industrial Mission, its purpose was to Christianise and provide support to Yugambeh people, a process that had already begun at Haussman’s other mission at Bethesda near Beenleigh. Growing from an initial 100 acres (40.5 hectares) to an official reserve of over 5000 acres (2023 hectares), it was never a success, with only some minor clearing and building work occurring before the reserve was cancelled in 1879 and thrown open to selection for homestead leases.

Faced with many difficulties, some Aboriginal people found refuge in the rugged mountains of the hinterland, while others were employed as labour on the farms and in the timber industry and domestic service. On the coast, there were those who became involved in the fishing, oyster and tourism industries. Families were established that made important and enduring contributions to the development of the Gold Coast.
The township of Nerang was surveyed in 1865 by Martin Lavelle. A grid of streets was formed on the north-western side of the Nerang River and the streets named after various local personalities: Martin and Lavelle after the surveyor himself, White for the local pastoralist William Duckett White and Price for the local sugar cane farmer and manager of the Manchester Cotton Plantation Edmund Price. The first allotment in Nerang sold in 1866 to Benjamin Bathurst.

Initially, there was little interest in the township as it was too far off the main coach road from Brisbane, which went via Robert Muir’s sugar plantation at Benowa, where a hotel and post office were already established. Nerang did not develop until a new road was cleared and Cobb and Co. began thrice-weekly services from Coombabah in 1873. The Nerang Creek Post Office was moved to the township from Benowa in 1874. Two hotels were built, the short-lived Southern Cross Hotel (1872) in what is now Bischoff Park, and Benjamin Cockerill’s Royal Mail Hotel (1873) on the corner of Price and Lavelle Streets. Theodore Lennenberg opened the first store in 1874, which also became the post office.²

By 1876 Nerang had developed further, with an observer noting, ‘The town of Nerang is situated at the head of navigation of Nerang Creek…on the main road to the southern border…It is a Government township, having a court of petty sessions, lock-up and accommodation for two constables… There is a National School…with a large attendance… two stores, a hotel, butcher, saddler, baker, bootmaker… but strange to say, no blacksmith… and a considerable trade going on in timber… and last, but not least, the exceedingly rich land on the banks of the river.’³

The Star Hotel was built in 1878 in Price Street and, in 1880, Theodore Lennenberg’s private house was converted into a courthouse. Other improvements included a telegraph office (1876) and the first church, St. Margaret’s Church of England (1878). During the 1880s Nerang gained two more hotels, a new courthouse (1886), School of Arts (1886) and its first bank, the Bank of New South Wales (1884-85).
A large town area was surveyed in the expectation Nerang would grow to be an important settlement for the region. This was a slow process though as most business activity in the district was drawn to Southport. Another issue was that the large sugar and cotton plantations in the area dominated land use for a long period of time, and these were generally self-contained so there was little demand for services from Nerang. In the early 1870s, Henry Gilston Schneider and brothers William and Charles Philpott established Birribi plantation on Mooyumbin Creek. The estate had its own sugarmill and sawmill, and by the time of its sale in 1892 comprised 1055 acres (426 hectares).4 Like most sugar plantations in the district, Birribi relied heavily on indentured South Sea Islander labour. The estate would later be owned by the Weedon family. Another important land owner was Robert Vievers, who selected land for sugar cane growing on the eastern side of the river in 1867. To the south of the town, and also across the river, the Roessler Brothers, who ran a jam and pickle factory in Toowomba, established a large orchard on land that now includes the Nerang State High School.5

By 1901 the population of Nerang was recorded as 343, somewhat lower than other district centres at the time. Despite this, Nerang experienced steady growth and developed as a close knit community. In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, when the Gold Coast was rapidly expanding into the hinterland areas, Nerang entered a boom period and grew in importance with many of today’s modern services, and a civic administration centre, established in the town.

Today Nerang is a thriving town spread over both sides of the Nerang River and this gives it a unique urban character. Authentic historic buildings, continuity of land use and places of local heritage significance tell the story of the growth of a town, shaped by a rich agricultural history, civic administration, important rail links and one of the Gold Coast’s most critical historic transport routes, the Nerang River.
Qld Government map of central Nerang area, circa 1920s.
Community, civic and commercial places

Nerang is a town largely built on community action and public spiritedness. Pioneering families have given generously of their land in order to support the establishment of community places. The community responded with endless fundraising events to manage and maintain these places and community action to ensure important places of local heritage are conserved for future generations. Civic and commercial places have also played an important role in Nerang. The historic community, civic and commercial places in Nerang are celebrated for their place in the history of the town and are a tangible reminder of how this community has grown and developed over time.

Albert Shire Council Administration (former)

In 1879 the Queensland Government created a system of elected divisional boards covering most of Queensland to deliver many local services. Four of these—Nerang, Coomera, Beenleigh and Waterford—covered the Gold Coast hinterland region. In 1903 the divisions became shires, and in 1948 these and part of Tingoora Shire were amalgamated to form the Shire of Albert. It represented an area stretching from the Brisbane City Council boundary through the rural hinterland districts to the Queensland New South Wales border. The shire was named after Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria.7 At the time, the coastal strip of the Gold Coast (known then as the South Coast) was administered by a separate authority, the Town of the South Coast. Initially the Albert Shire administration was located in Southport, however as residential areas spread westward and Nerang grew, the Council voted to move their administration to Nerang.

Described as being ‘more like a palatial five-star hotel than a municipal office’,8 the new Albert Shire Council Administration Centre held the first monthly Council meeting on 22 January 1976. The building accommodated all the Council departments under one roof and at the time was set in 16 acres (6.5 hectares) described as a leafy glen.9 The building continues to be used by City of Gold Coast as well as a number of community groups and is now called Bicentennial Community Centre. A new administration centre was built nearby in 1986-87.
Ceramic House

Ceramic House was constructed in Nerang around 1919 as the family home of Robert Ekins Veivers, the grandson of Robert Veivers, one of the first European settlers in the Nerang district.

Robert Ekins Veivers served as a Private in World War I. He was 24 when he enlisted and he embarked from Sydney with his Unit, the 9th Battalion, on the Australian Transport A40 vessel Ceramic in April 1916. He was sent to France where he was wounded and hospitalised several times before being returned to Australia in July 1919.

Soon after Robert returned from World War I, he built a house on the corner of Connection Road and the Pacific Highway in what is now Arthur Earl Park. This was part of the original dairy farm owned by the Veivers family. He called the place Ceramic House. Robert married Edith Gladys Warrener in 1921 and they lived in Ceramic House where they raised their three children. During World War II Ceramic House held a high profile in Nerang where it served as a focal point for service personnel who camped in the local area. Edith died in 1974 and Robert died just over a decade later in 1986. Ceramic House was sold out of the Veivers family soon after this.

By 1995 the house was being used by Celebration House Churches as a community centre and place of worship and the building was sometimes referred to as ‘Celebration House’ or ‘Constitution House’. This continued for a short period before 1997 land resumptions for Pacific Highway upgrades saw the removal of Ceramic House from its original location. There was strong community support for the preservation of the historic house and the Nerang Community Association saw an opportunity to relocate Ceramic House to Bischof Pioneer Park to become a community space and visitor information centre.

Ceramic House was moved to Bischof Pioneer Park in 2003 by Gold Coast City Council. The Nerang Community Association and other community volunteers restored the house and in 2007 it opened as a community facility.

Ceramic House was entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register in 2010.
Nerang Cemetery

The Nerang Cemetery was gazetted as a cemetery reserve in 1878. It is one of the earliest cemetery reserves on the Gold Coast. The first burial was of Lucy Ann Cockerill, aged four years, who was buried on 28 June 1876 before the cemetery was officially gazetted.

The cemetery includes many graves of the pioneer settlers of the region including Laver, Hinze, Andrews, Cooper, and Guinea. It also includes the graves of well-known scientist Sydney Skertchley who was buried here in 1926 and Captain Walter Browne, first chairman of the Nerang Divisional Board, who died following a horse riding accident in 1901. At the time, The Queenslander reported that Captain Browne’s funeral drew the largest crowd that had ever attended a funeral at Nerang.12

Many of the historic burials in the cemetery have elaborate grave monument styles such as the obelisk, which was popular from the 1860s to the early 1900s. There are numerous variations of the upright slab including the gothic, semicircular, cross-surmounted and gabled styles, as well as horizontal slabs such as the desk and book style headstones. A number of examples of detailed iron picket grave fencing and pillars with metal pipe grave surrounds are also present in the cemetery.

There is one known historic Aboriginal burial. It is un-marked grave 469, in section one, of a man described as ‘Bob an Aboriginal’. It is recorded that he was buried in 1916 aged 92. However, it is likely he is Coomera Bob, a well-known man of the Nerang River people who died of old age at Nerang on 1 October 1913.13

Top: Nerang Cemetery, 2017. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast.

Left: 1901 grave monument of Captain Walter Browne and his wife Thomasine Browne in the obelisk style with elaborate decoration including a sword to symbolise a military career. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast.

Nerang Gaol (former)

The first Nerang police station was built on low-lying land close to the river in 1874. Following problems with flooding, a new police station was established in Price Street around 1880 and a lock-up was built on the site. Constructed as a small two-cell wooden building with a front verandah, it was used as a temporary holding facility rather than a permanent gaol.

The types of offenses that resulted in time done in the lock-up varied from petty thievery, disturbing the peace and absconding from hired service, to more serious crimes such as violent assault and murder. In a rural district such as Nerang, horse theft and the malicious wounding of livestock were common offenses with public drunkenness also a regular problem. It also held people waiting to be tried by the Police Magistrate or those being transferred to the criminal courts in Beenleigh or Brisbane. Very soon the gaol was deemed to be too small to cope with the number of prisoners although each cell could be crammed with up to four people with male and female prisoners separated.

Conditions in the lock-up were primitive. There were no windows, just two high-set barred apertures in each small cell, and holes drilled into the ceiling for ventilation. Some inmates whiled away the boredom by scratching graffiti on the wooden walls, and some of this can still be seen today.

After the gaol was donated to the Albert Australia Day Foundation Inc. in 1987, it was moved to the grounds of the Carrara Sports Stadium. Then, in 2010, it was temporarily transferred to Heritage Park at Pimpama. In 2015 it was returned to Nerang, placed within the Country Paradise Parklands site and re-painted in its original colour scheme. The Nerang lock-up is the oldest surviving building in Nerang.
Nerang Hall (formerly the Nerang School of Arts)

Described in 1888 as ‘an ornament to the town’, the Nerang School of Arts (as it was then known) was constructed in 1886 on the corner of Ferry and Cotton Streets.

Local landowner, pioneer and president of the Nerang School of Arts for many years, Mr William Henry Spencer, recognised the importance of this community place and earmarked a portion of his land in Price Street as more suitable location for the building. In September 1929, William Henry’s children, William Stanley Spencer and Janet Elizabeth Spencer, donated this parcel of land to the community for the School of Arts. The Nerang School of Arts Committee began working towards the realisation of a larger school of arts on the site.

In 1931, the School of Arts building was moved to the Price Street site, re-erected and extended. A record crowd of around 400 people attended the re-opening which was overseen by Mr T.F. Plunkett, M.L.A, the then Member for Albert.

During his opening speech, Mr Plunkett noted that the fine building ‘was an indication that the people were showing great public spiritedness.’

For over 130 years the School of Arts has been a centre for community activities including concerts, dances, balls and meetings. It was important during World War II and used extensively during this time for soldier farewells and wartime fundraising. In 1946, the first Anzac Day community ceremony in Nerang was held at the School of Arts.

Despite problems during the late 1940s which threatened to close the School of Arts, the community rallied in support of the building and it survived. In the 1970s the School of Arts Committee became the Nerang Community Hall Association and this group has provided for the continued use of this historic hall.

The historic importance of the Nerang Hall was recognised in 2010 when it was entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.

Nerang State School

Following the introduction of the Queensland Education Act in 1875 the Nerang State School was opened with an enrolment of 47 students and Mr Thomas Johnson as the head teacher.

At the 1930 school break up day, the Reverend V.H. Whitehouse noted that the children were cheerful, enthusiastic and happy. His visit to Nerang State School inspired him to say ‘that Queensland had indeed reason to be proud of its splendid children who would undoubtedly grow up to be…estimable citizens in every way.’

The Nerang State School participated in the then Queensland Education Department Forest Project Clubs program. In 1941 the school forestry plot had 97 trees including examples of the Loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*) and Caribbean pine (*Pinus caribaea*).

The benefits of a school forestry project were noted in an article in the *South Coast Bulletin* in 1949: ‘Thus, at a school which boasts a forest project, children read avidly the literature of trees; they approach the subject of arithmetic with renewed interest when they are required to measure heights and girths, and calculate content in superficial feet; they are interested in geography which tells them of other countries producing the same types of trees grown in their own forest plot…’ The forestry plot was a credit to the school and remnants of the plot can still be seen today in the school grounds.

The school grew slowly with the surrounding population and additional buildings were added to the school over the years to accommodate rising enrolments. Today, Nerang State School has an enrolment of almost 500 students and is pivotal in the Nerang community.
Nerang War Memorial

The original cenotaph was located in front of the Nerang Soldiers’ Memorial Hall, known locally as the Nerang Diggers’ Hall. The Nerang RSL sub-branch had established the Diggers’ Hall, a precursor to the present day Nerang RSL, on Railway Department land in Station Street, Nerang. It was opened in 1948 with a ceremony, including music from Mr G. Panitz’s Nerang Town Band and described as an asset to the Nerang district. In 1950, the South Coast Bulletin reported that practically all the residents of Nerang and district attended the Anzac commemoration at the Memorial Hall.

In 1953 Mr D. Ross and Mr H. Hogarth donated a new cenotaph to the Nerang RSL. The sandstone obelisk had been cut from Numinbah stone and mounted on a two tiered stone base with a square concrete foundation. The RSL added a bronze tablet which read ‘To the Fallen’. During the dedication of the obelisk, Reverand R. Everitt asked that the stone remind the living that there is, in the Nerang community, a tradition of service.

The Nerang RSL eventually moved from the Station Street site and in 1983 they opened their new building in Nerang Street, just across the river from their original home. The obelisk was moved sometime before this and re-sited in Bischof Pioneer Park. Anzac Day commemorations were held in the park at the cenotaph for many years. The Nerang War Memorial was relocated again, in 1991, to the RSL and continues to be the focus of Nerang Anzac Day commemorations.
Preece House

In 1943 Ada Preece (nee Kelsey) and her husband William (Bill) Henry Preece purchased the land on the corner of Price and White Streets, Nerang. Their son, William Kelsey, was born in 1945 and a few years later, around 1948, they built their family home on the property.

Bill Preece was a World War II veteran and worked as a contractor supplying timber electricity supply poles. After Bill passed away Ada, who became known as Granny Preece, resided in the home until her death in the late 1990s. Members of the Preece family continued to live in the house until around 2000.

After the house had remained vacant for some time the community expressed concern that the house may be lost. The Nerang Community Association generated support to keep the building in recognition of the long term association of the house and the family with the Nerang community. In 2004 the property was purchased by City of Gold Coast. The house was relocated to Bischof Pioneer Park in 2006 and the Nerang Community Association, along with other community volunteers, worked to restore the house for community use.

Preece House was entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register in 2010.
The Commercial Hotel

The Commercial Hotel, erected by Robert Hope, opened in 1884 on the corner of Price and Ferry Streets, Nerang. Another hotel, the Queen’s Hotel, was erected on the other side of the river close to the railway station in 1888. At the time the Commercial Hotel was considered the most impressive; it was a substantial building which contained 13 bedrooms, four parlors, a commercial room, bar, kitchen, a large dining room and stables. The Logan Witness described the structure in 1884 as a ‘grand one, and its addition makes Nerang have a more townshiplike appearance that it had hitherto.’

In 1930, the hotel was destroyed by a devastating fire. At the time, the Commercial Hotel was owned by Mr and Mrs Black, who also owned the nearby Star Hotel. They decided to move the Star Hotel and re-erect it on the Price Street site and rename it the Commercial Hotel.

A new Commercial Hotel was designed in 1975, Nerang’s centenary year, by Mr John Lynch and constructed by Classical Development Pty Ltd. It featured in the Queensland Master Builder magazine in 1976 and was described as having a skilful design and contemporary façade that took advantage of the one acre site. The old Commercial Hotel was left in-situ while the new hotel was built but was demolished soon after.

The Commercial Hotel, Nerang, circa 1890s. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Commercial Hotel, Price Street, Nerang, circa 1930s. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Commercial Hotel, Price Street, Nerang, 1970. The distinctive roof line of the current Commercial Hotel can be seen in the far left of the image. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Commercial Hotel, 2017. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast.
Timber, river, roads and rail

The commercial centre of Nerang has traditionally been divided by the Nerang River. Some services and infrastructure, like the Nerang Railway Station and the original RSL Memorial Hall, were established on the eastern side of the river. Other places, like the Nerang State School, the Nerang Wharf and the Albert Shire Administration developed on the western side of the river. This pattern of development is a reflection of the two principle transport routes in the town – the railway and river transport. Access to good, all-weather transport routes has always been critical for developing communities and both were essential for the economic development of Nerang and historically supported the early industries of timber, sugar, cotton and dairy farming.

Maid of Sker

The Maid of Sker is an iron hulled paddle steamer, built in 1884 at the Brisbane shipyards of Evans Anderson Phelan and Co. The Maid of Sker was built for Charles Philpot, one of the founders of an early timber mill and sugar plantation in Nerang. Under Charles Philpot’s ownership the Maid of Sker was used to transport timber from his Nerang timber mill to Brisbane and to service his nearby sugar plantation, Birribi.

The Kleinschmidt family purchased the Maid of Sker in 1893 and began transporting general cargo and sometimes passengers between Brisbane and Nerang. The vessel became an important economic link for Nerang. It was a regular sight on the Nerang River and became a legendary part of the history of Nerang.

The Maid of Sker was retired from service in 1974 and the Kleinschmidt family donated the vessel to Council. In 1976, the vessel was moved to Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang and restored by volunteers. The Maid of Sker was relocated within the park to its current site in 2003. Further restoration works were carried out by the Friends of the Maid of Sker group and other community organisations, with assistance from engineers.27

In 2011 the Maid of Sker was entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register for its historic significance and rarity. It is the only known surviving trading vessel from this region.

Conservation works on the Maid of Sker were carried out in 2016 to ensure that this important vessel continues to be a part of the history of the Gold Coast.
Historic Nerang Wharf site and river transport

In 1879 The Logan Witness newspaper reported that ‘Nerang is going ahead very well – a new wharf and goods shed has just been completed.’

The government wharf had been established to support the river trade which was critical to Nerang and other settlements along the Nerang River. River trade supported the early timber and sugar industries in Nerang as well as providing a way for local farmers to move their produce to markets. Many vessels traded on the Nerang River and used the Nerang Wharf including steamers such as the Lorna Doon, Leone, Louisa, SS Iris and the Maid of Sker.

The wharf was the responsibility of the divisional board and by 1881 a tariff was in operation at the wharf. A shed was also constructed to store perishable goods. At the time, the community appear to be happy with the establishment of the wharf and its operation and it was reported that ‘affairs in connection with the wharf are all that can be wished.’

Although the wharf is now gone, a small concrete slab in River Park on the bank of the Nerang River denotes the former location.
Panitz Bridge

In 1878, the then Premier Mr John Douglas, made the journey from Brisbane to Nerang to perform the formal opening of the first Nerang Bridge, which was situated at the southern end of Nerang Street. The bridge was christened with a bottle of the best ‘Piper’ (champagne) and a large procession crossed the new bridge in celebration. A decade later, this bridge was in disrepair and a new bridge was planned. There was much community and political discussion about where the new bridge should be constructed. At a ratepayers’ meeting in 1888 it was also pointed out that ‘the situation of the old bridge suited the requirements ten years ago, but it was altogether too far round, and certainly a more direct route was required.’ At the time Ferry Street was suggested as the better option for the bridge location.

The new bridge was constructed at Ferry Street in 1890 and described as a ‘pleasant feature at the end of the town.’ By 1895, though, the bridge was closed and over the subsequent years deteriorated despite ongoing repairs. A new ‘A class’ composite bridge was constructed at the Ferry Street site in 1937.

In 2000 the Department of Main Roads named the bridge Panitz Bridge in honour of Councillor Peter Panitz and his contribution to the Nerang Community. He served on both the former Albert Shire Council and the Gold Coast City Council, was band master for the Gold Coast City Band and President of the Nerang State School P & C for 20 years. A plaque was unveiled by the then Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Mr Steve Bredhauer and Mrs Anne Panitz and can be seen today at the entry to the bridge in Bischof Pioneer Park. The bridge also provides a symbolic link between the two sides of Nerang.
Station Street and the old Nerang Railway Station

The aptly named Station Street was home to the Nerang Railway Station, a part of the South Coast railway line which opened in 1885. Initially the line ran from Brisbane to Beenleigh, with the section from Ernest Junction to Nerang opening in 1889. At the time, this was a critical piece of infrastructure for the South Coast (now known as the Gold Coast), and provided a modern, speedy transport system to support the local farmers and timber merchants. Nerang had its own engine which travelled to and from Ernest Junction to connect with the Southport-Brisbane trains.

The South Coast Railway was constructed at great expense to the government on the premise that the region would quickly grow into a highly populated agricultural region. This never eventuated to the extent expected by the government and this, combined with the rise of the motor vehicle, saw the South Coast Railway line close in 1961.

Along with the namesake of Station Street, some examples of the buildings that grew up along the street adjacent to the Nerang Railway Station can still be seen today. The image below (top left) shows the current Veterinary Services building as it was in 1925. Today the original Nerang Railway Station building can be seen at the Gold Coast Hinterland Heritage Museum at Mudgeeraba.

Station Street, Nerang looking south, circa 1925, showing the current Veterinary Services building. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Station Street, Nerang looking north, circa 1940. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Nerang Railway Station, 1960, not long before the line closed in 1961. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.

Nerang Railway Station, 1934. Image courtesy City of Gold Coast Libraries Local Studies Collection.
Working plan and section for Nerang railway station. Image courtesy of Queensland Railways.
Timbergetter tree stump

In the mid-1880s a meeting of timber getters was held in Nerang. Around 60 teams engaged in the timber trade in the Nerang district at the time were represented to discuss proposed new timber regulations that they felt had the potential to cripple the timber interests of the district.34 The number of representatives at this meeting gives an indication of the importance of the timber industry for Nerang at the time.

For decades, the timber industry had been critical to the economy of the Nerang district although by 1885 it had been noted at the timber getters meeting that ‘all the cedar on these rivers that is get-at-able with horse or bullock teams has been removed years ago’.34 By 1909 the booming Nerang timber industry was referred to as being in the ‘olden days’, a time when many thousands of feet of pine, cedar and beech were removed from the districts forests. At that time, three sawmills were in operation in the district; Roesslers’ in Nerang and Yaun’s and Smith’s at Upper Nerang.36 Around 1927 F.W.G. Smekel established a sawmill in Nerang.37

The huge tree stump at the entrance to the Nerang Aquatic Centre has examples of timber getter plank holes in the trunk and is a vivid reminder of both the rich forests that used to thrive in the district and the importance of the timber industry in the early economy of Nerang.
Weedon’s Crossing

Weedon's Crossing is named for the Weedon family who were adjacent landowners. Weedon’s Crossing has always been used as shallow river crossing but it was also a gravel reserve.

In 1935 the illegal removal of gravel from Weedon’s Crossing made headlines in the South Coast Bulletin. The crossing, and therefore the gravel, was under the control of the then Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and after a survey of the damage the crossing was noted as being in ‘an undesirable condition…not without some danger to traffic at night.’ The unauthorised removal of gravel was also considered a dangerous interference with the roadway and steps were taken to prevent further removals.

Weedon’s Crossing has also played a big role in the water supply for the Gold Coast. In 1937, a weir was suggested at the crossing to enlarge the water supply to support the Southport sewerage scheme. The weir was eventually completed in the mid-1940s. In 1948-49 over 275,389,500 gallons (approximately 1,251,945,497 litres) were pumped by the station. The weir also served as a more reliable roadway across the Nerang River. It was not until 1991 that a new pre-stressed, high level concrete bridge was constructed over Weedon’s Crossing.
Maps

Central town walk map

The central town walk explores the community, civic and commercial places at the heart of Nerang. There are reminders of when this place was the seat of the Albert Shire Council, historic family homes that now serve the community, reminders of the river trade and a war memorial that has had a number of homes.

Central town walk places

1. Abert Shire Council Administration (former)
2. Nerang State School
3. Historic Nerang Wharf site
4. Maid of Sker (LHR0055)
5. The Commercial Hotel
6. Nerang Hall (LHR0042)
7. Ceramic House (LHR0049)
8. Preece House (LHR0043)
9. Nerang War Memorial
10. Timbergetter Tree Stump
11. Nerang Cemetery

Note: The LHR number denotes that the place is entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.
Timber, river, roads and rail map

The timber, river, roads and rail walk explores the places that are related to key transport routes and early economic needs in Nerang. The pattern of development in Nerang is itself a reflection of transport routes in the town. There are reminders of early river crossing sites, roads named after key transport sites, the legendary Maid of Sker and a nod to the rich timber industry of the area.

Timber, river, roads and rail walk places

1. Station Street and the old Nerang Railway Station Site
2. Panitz Bridge
3. Maid of Sker (LHR0055)
4. Historic Nerang Wharf site and River Transport
5. Timbergetter Tree Stump
6. Weedon’s Crossing

Note: The LHR number denotes that the place is entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.
Nerang tour walk map

The full tour walk explores all the places on the Nerang Heritage Walk from the former Albert Shire Council Administration building to the old Nerang Gaol at Country Paradise Parklands and across the Nerang River to historic Station Street. It provides an opportunity to experience almost every part of Nerang’s rich history.

Nerang tour walk places

1. Albert Shire Council Administration (Former)
2. Nerang State School
3. Historic Nerang Wharf site
4. Panitz Bridge
5. Station Street and the old Nerang Railway Station
6. Maid of Sker (LHR0055)
7. The Commercial Hotel
8. Nerang Hall (LHR0042)
9. Ceramic House (LHR0049)
10. Preece House (LHR0043)
11. Nerang War Memorial
12. Timbergetter Tree Stump
13. Nerang Cemetery
14. Weedon’s Crossing
15. Nerang Gaol (former)

Note: The LHR number denotes that the place is entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.
Further resources


For more information visit www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/thegoldcoast/heritage-walks-trails-26558.html

Endnotes:


10 National Archives of Australia, NAA: B2455, VEIVERS ROBERT EKINS.


Nerang Heritage Walk

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Acknowledgements

Prepared by City of Gold Coast Office of City Architect, Heritage Unit. Valuable information, images and assistance has been provided by City of Gold Coast Libraries, Local Studies Collection.
For more information
P 1300 GOLDCOAST (1300 465 326)
W cityofgoldcoast.com.au