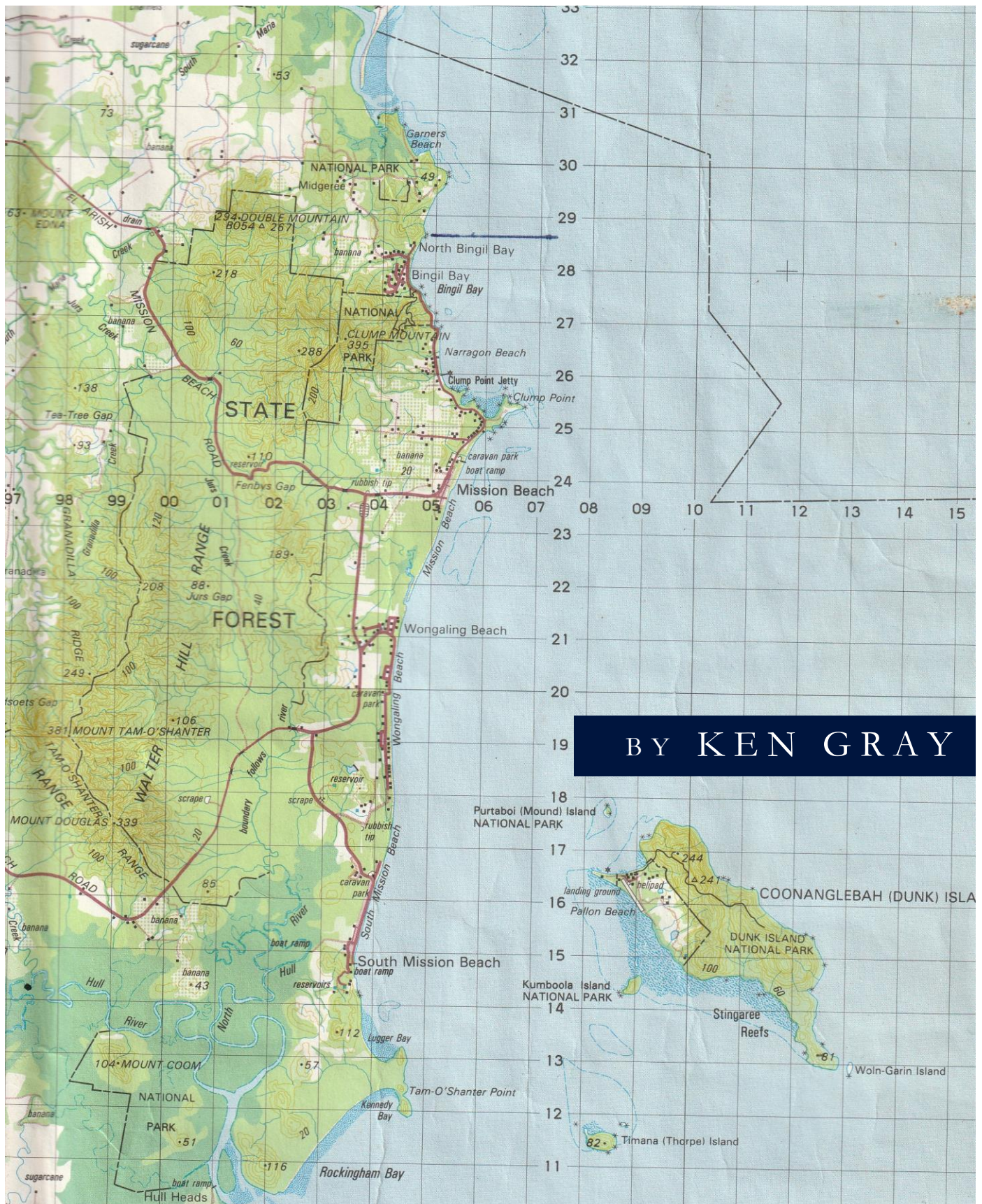


MISSION BEACH

ORIGIN OF OUR DISTRICT NAME



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Cover

Taken from Tully district map by the Royal Survey Corps, 1989, DEF/ARMY/10443. Series R631, Sheet 8062, Edition 2-AAS. 1:100,000 Topographic Survey. Tully Queensland.

NAMING MISSION BEACH

Mission Beach is the gazetted name for the town located just south of Clump Point in north Queensland. It is also the unofficial name for the district which includes many population nodes (listed in order north to south):

- Midgeree Bar
- Maria Creeks
- Garners Beach
- Brookes Beach
- Bingil Bay
- Narragon Beach
- Mission Beach
- Wongaling Beach
- Dunk Island
- South Mission Beach
- Carmoo
- Bedarra Island



Mission Beach District (Clump Point middle left).

For almost all of time, the name for the district has been Djiru Country and that name is being recognized and used once again as we become more aware of our full history. The Aboriginal name for the main beach area is spelled in a number of ways by European historians eg Bhirriyeh¹ (Mackness) or Birreah (Jones). However, on checking with Leonard Andy of the Djiru, neither he nor the Old Djiru People before him have used that name for this area or beach so that was misinformation.

Captain Owen Stanley of the HMS *Rattlesnake* named Clump Point during his 1848 according to Dorothy Jones² who said in an earlier book that the person who named the point was not known.³ The district name of today, 'Mission Beach', was not widely used outside the local area until the 1950s as determined by citations from newspaper articles in the area back then.⁴ The first European name used was 'Clump Point' district for the northern sector of the district located in the Johnstone Shire. For the southern portion, which was in Cardwell Shire and had far fewer residents in early days, the most common name used was Hull River, Tully.

¹ Mackness, Constance. *Clump Point and District: An Historical Record*. G.K. Bolton Press, Cairns, 1983 revised edition page 75.

² Jones, Dorothy. *Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas: a history of the Johnstone Shire in 1973*. G. K. Bolton Printers, page 389.

³ Jones, Dorothy. *Cardwell Shire Story*. The Jacaranda Press, 1961, page 181.

⁴ Gray, Ken. *War and Beach*. September 2020, Draft2Digital, Place Names, page 20.

In 1926, the beach name was still in limbo and newspaper reports used various names such as *The Hull Beach*⁵ or *Tam O'Shanter Beach*.⁶ Later, some called the beach at Wongaling, *Whitings Beach* after a family of that name who had a holiday home there.

The district name became semi-official in September 1929 when Cardwell Shire Council⁷ passed a motion, *that finger posts at Skardon's corner be altered as directing people to Mission Beach instead of Clump Point as at present*.

The *Townsville Daily Bulletin* published a story on 5 May 1937 with a poem. They explained where Mission Beach was located, so obviously, Mission Beach was not commonly known at the time. Here is what they said, with one verse of the poem shown below:

The poem was written by a young Irish lad, who is at present living at Mission Beach, that part of the Queensland coast directly across from Dunk Island, well known as the home of the late E J Banfield.

*Red skies by Dunk Island
In sunset flames of gold.
Cloud galleons a-shimmer,
Each with rainbow-laden hold;
Reaches damp and gleaming,
The curlew's lonely speech –
Why these have been for ever
The charms of Mission Beach.*

Owen Barrett

Cardwell Shire Council (D. Ryland) surveyed the South Mission Beach area in 1939 after the roads were built to access the area. They named that part of the district, *Kenny* after John Martin Kenny the Superintendent of the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement from 1914 to 1918 and sold some lots from a subsequent small subdivision⁸ in December 1939. However, that name did not stick, and locally the townships were soon to be known as Mission Beach and South Mission Beach.

An analysis of *Trove* newspaper articles at the time shows that the most common locally used term for the district in 1943, especially for those from Tully or El Arish, was *The Beach*. This was confirmed in oral histories by locals living in the region at that time such as Don Wheatley and Noela Nissen.

The official name for the district, as shown on the government 1 mile to 1 inch survey map⁹ in 1943, was still *Clump Point District*. Mission Beach was not a town in 1943. Its population was at

⁵ Tully Items, *The Hull Beach*, *Cairns Post*, accessed on Trove, February 2022 at:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/40544291?searchTerm=The%20Hull%20Beach>

⁶ *Clump Point*, *Tourist Route*, *Cairns Post*, 7 July 1926, accessed on Trove, February 2022 at:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/40546362?searchTerm=Clump%20Point.%20Tourist%20Route.%20Tam%20O%27Shanter%20Beach>

⁷ *Cardwell Shire Council*, *Cairns Post*, 23 September 1929, accessed on Trove, February 2022 at:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/40688568?searchTerm=Mission%20Beach>

⁸ Jones, Dorothy, *Cardwell Shire Story*. The Jacaranda Press, 1961, page 394.

⁹ Queensland Government Open Data Portal, *Historical Topographic Maps, 1 mile military series, 1925 – 1964*, accessed August 2021 at: https://gisservices.information.qld.gov.au/arcgis/rest/directories/historicalseans/topo_scans/pre/topo-map-1mile-military-line-colour-clump-point-1943-20pc.jpg

best 50 people¹⁰ then, probably less, as people were encouraged to leave the area during the early years of the Pacific War. The beach was marked on the map then as *Mission Beach* and that has been the name ever since for the entire length of the beach from Clump Point in the north to its southern most point at the village of South Mission Beach.

The main road for travel north-south through the district was the El Arish-North Hull Road. This went from west of Fenby's Gap and cut across to today's *Licuala Walk* to meet Tully-Clump Point Road. The main road has relocated east and the old El Arish-North Hull Road is no longer used.

Perhaps the most reliable way of determining what names were used for the district over time is to analyse the addresses people used when enrolling for elections. That shows a clear pattern. For the Johnstone Shire residents in the north part of the district, *Clump Point* was the address used by the vast majority of residents up to the 1943 election. One resident (Mary Unsworth) used the term, *Narragon* for her address way back in 1903. That is a current term used for part of the district. In the four elections during the 1920s, all residents identified as living at *Clump Point*. In 1930, Eric (S. A. E.) Alexander was the first on electoral rolls to say he lived at *Bingil Bay*. In 1943, three people stated *Mission Beach* as their address (William and Ellen David and James Murray). Two said they lived in *Bingil Bay* and one said, *Garners Beach*. 18 said *Clump Point*, so things were starting to change but *Clump Point* was still the most common name used. In 1949, the transition started with 12 saying *Clump Point*, 2 *Bingil Bay*, 7 *Mission Beach* and 2 *North Mission Beach*.

That change advanced further in the 1954 election enrolments: 16 *Clump Point*; 15 *Mission Beach*; 6 *North Mission Beach*; 4 *Garners Beach* and 1 *Bingil Bay*.

A similar change occurred in Cardwell Shire at the south end of the district. The most common address given there was an island address such as *Dunk Island*, *Bedarra Island* or even *Timana Island* and sometimes it was *Dunk Island, via Tully*. The next most common address was *Hull River, Tully* and occasionally some said they lived at *Clump Point*. The first ones to enrol as living at *Mission Beach, Tully* were Alfred and Florence Wheatley in 1943. By 1954, it was predominantly an island address or *Mission Beach, Tully* or *North Mission Beach, Tully* and three said *South Mission Beach, Tully* that year.

Florence Wheatley was the first to enrol as *Mission Beach* without adding *Tully* in 1954.

Wongaling Creek was named as such on the 1943 survey map (and is now sometimes referred to as *Porters Creek* near the mouth). *Wongaling Beach* was not a name used for a settlement or a beach back then. *South Mission Beach* was not a name used on the 1943 government survey maps either, yet it was a village name in common use locally in Tully by then.¹¹ The only name assigned to the area known today as *South Mission Beach* on the 1943 map was *Old Mission Station*, marking the location of the 1914 government Hull River Aboriginal Settlement. This was called *the Mission* by locals and by historian Dorothy Jones,¹² but it was always a penal reserve not a religion-based mission.¹³ It

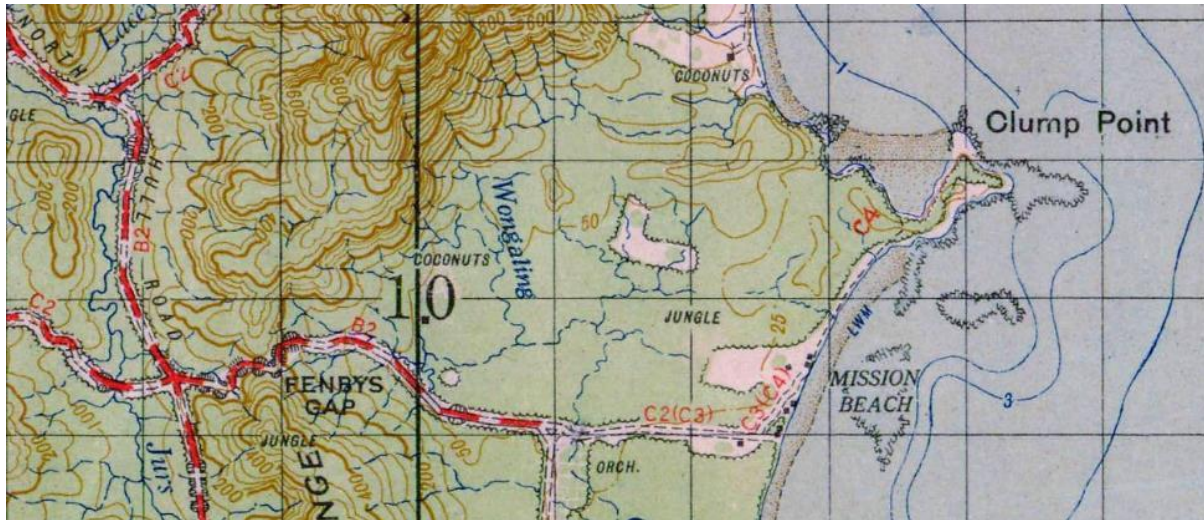
¹⁰ Gray, Ken. *War and Beach*. September 2020, Draft2Digital, Population, page 24.

¹¹ Nissen, Noela (nee Ronan). Oral history interview with Ken Gray 2020.

¹² Jones, Dorothy. *Cardwell Shire Story*. The Jacaranda Press, 1961, page 304.

¹³ Pedley, Helen. *A Brief History of Mission Beach*, page 5, accessed August 2021 at: <https://www.cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1947/brief-history-of-mission-beach>

was a 2,900 acre reserve and a settlement where Aboriginal people were taken, often forcibly, in accord with the 1897 *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*.¹⁴



Zoomed section of 1943 map showing the small settlement of Mission Beach with nine buildings marked.

Gazetting names for the main Mission Beach villages or population centres occurred much later. Mission Beach and Bingil Bay names were gazetted on 1 December 1961, South Mission Beach on 1 November 1963 and Wongaling Beach¹⁵ on 1 April 1966. Some parts of Mission Beach, like Carmoo, Garners Beach and Maria Creeks, were not gazetted until 21 January 2000. Narragon Beach was only gazetted (as a beach name) in November 2018 and was commonly known by locals as *Mackness Beach* earlier on. Constance Mackness had asked for it to be changed to Narragon after a local Aboriginal hero and the Council of the day agreed to the name change yet failed to gazette it. This was researched in *Trove* by Ken Gray in 2018 and discussed with *Queensland Place Names* in 2020. *Queensland Place Names* agreed to restore the proper Aboriginal name and have it gazetted. Before that, the beach was incorrectly named *Warragon Beach* on the *Queensland Place Names*¹⁶ website and on *Google Earth*.

While researching common usage of names in the press, we found that they used the term, *Mission Beach*, in a few isolated cases pre-war, yet it was the name *Clump Point* that was used most often for this area. Mentions of *Clump Point* in the press peaked in 1935 when much was said about road access and building or funding the new roads to the area. It was not until 1947 that the name *Mission Beach* started to be mentioned more widely in the press.¹⁷

Long-term local, Noela Nissen¹⁸ (nee Ronan) recalls her Tully family's holiday-home at *South Mission Beach* back in 1947. By then, a few Tully families had beach homes there, and they all used the term, *South Mission Beach*, or just *The Beach* to describe the place.

¹⁴ Pentecost, Philip. Indigenous Cultural Significance Assessment Mission Beach, FNQ NRM Ltd October 2007, page 25. Accessed August 2020 at: <https://www.wettropicsplan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Indigenous-cultural-significance-assessment.pdf>

¹⁵ Queensland Place Names accessed July 2021 at: <https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/qld/environment/land/place-names/search>

¹⁶ Queensland Place Names accessed July 2021 at: https://www.resources.qld.gov.au/qld/environment/land/place-names/search#/search=Narragon%20Beach&types=0&place=Narragon_Beach50276

¹⁷ Gray, Ken. *War and Beach*. September 2020, Draft2Digital, Place Names page 22.

¹⁸ Nissen, Noela (nee Ronan). Oral history interview with Ken Gray 2020.

In the 1960s, Constance Mackness¹⁹ of the Mission Beach-Bingil Bay Progress Association made a case for the district to come under one name and proposed the use of the name, *Breeya*, which was her simplified spelling for what she believed was the original Aboriginal name for the area. However, Djiru people today state that this is not a Djiru name.

Mackness²⁰ said in 1968:

The two 'Missions' should get together, and then make fresh requests to the Powers-That-Be [to use the Aboriginal name].

That idea of one name had some merit but did not gain momentum. In the 1980s, there was renewed local debate on the name, and some residents approached the two Councils asking them to make all three main township names one; *Mission Beach*. However, the Queensland Board of Place Names rejected the request and maintained the three separate township names: Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach.

Where does *Mission Beach District* begin and end? The map below is an approximate map of the boundaries of Djiru Country depicting the Traditional Lands of the Djiru people. That also includes a broader areas of El Arish and Merryburn.

There is no official map defining the Mission Beach district, but if we draw a yellow dashed line as shown below, the area to the east of the line is Mission Beach. It includes some nearshore islands such as Purtaboi, Dunk, Timana and Bedarra. Many people in that area relate to living at *Mission Beach* when speaking to people interstate yet may add their specific village or location name within it.

¹⁹ Mackness, Constance. *Clump Point and District: An Historical Record*. G.K> Bolton Press, Cairns, 1983 revised edition, page 76.

²⁰ Mackness, Constance. *Clump Point and District: An Historical Record*. G.K. Bolton Press, Cairns, 1983 revised edition, page 76.



Map created from Google Earth.

In summary

- For almost all of time, the name for the broader district has been Djiru Country and that name is being recognized once again as we become aware of our full history.
- The beach has been known mostly (for its entire length) as *Mission Beach* since 1914 and has had no other European name apart from rare references to *The Hull Beach* and *Tam O'Shanter Beach* or *Whitings Beach*.
- The district was initially named by Europeans as *Clump Point* and in time it slowly became *Mission Beach* through common usage due to the brief presence of the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement (1914 – 1918) which was referred to as a 'mission' in error.
- The southernmost village was named *Kenny* in 1939 by the surveyor of the first subdivision there, after John Kenny the superintendent of the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement, but locals never used the name and eventually Council gazetted it as *South Mission Beach*.

The way our district was named by European people was neither planned nor official; locals decided it for themselves and that is typical of our town. It was also based on a false assumption; that the Hulls River Aboriginal Settlement was a 'mission'.

Rumours have always been a big part of Mission Beach, so maybe the name fits us and our history quite neatly.