The 11 Mile for Sale

It was interesting to see the Commonwealth Land at the 11 Mile is now up for sale. The land is shown as Portion 1157 and Section 5122. In the early days it was shown as Portion 1157 and Section 60 and 67 although that could get confusing looking through the history of the land titles which is something I have been researching lately.

The land of course was Larrakia land, Larrakia people being the traditional owners around Darwin Harbour. Goyder was sent from SA to survey the Darwin region and the land was subdivided into sections. The map on the left is interesting as it is signed by Al Mitchell, who was one of Goyder’s surveyors, dated April 30th 1869. Goyder’s party had only landed in Darwin in February 1869 so they were certainly quick to survey Darwin and the hinterland. The map shows Section 67 and 60 and Portion 1157. It seems land was sold through a series of Land Grants. Section 67 was sold to Arthur Lloyd of Norwood, a Gentleman, in October 1871. He must have died in 1888 as the title was handed over to John Vereker Lloyd who was the executor. In 1893 the title was transferred to Priscilla Emelia Elizabeth Julia Owen wife of William Scott Owen, originally from Wales.

Richard Raglass from Tonsley in SA was granted title to Section 60 in 1871. A portion of this land was acquired by Hon Alfred Catt, Commissioner of Crown Lands it seems for the railway. The Hon Alfred Catt was a Parliamentarian in the SA Parliament. He was known for his support for extensions of the railways. Richard Raglass was a farmer and prospector (see photo with camels) but in his obituary on the 23rd April 1901 there was no mention about owning land in the north of Australia. The land was transferred to Richard’s son Charles Cobb Raglass, farmer, and John Monfried from Gumeracha in SA in July 1901. The man with the horses in the photograph (see over the page) is Charles Cobb Raglass taken in 1909. This piece of land seems to have been compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth in May 1931. It seems part of section 60 was acquired by the Commonwealth in 1940 and all of it was acquired in 1946. Section 67 was also acquired by the Commonwealth in 1946. There appears to be no evidence that any of the South Australian owners of this land ever visited Darwin to inspect their properties. Considering how quickly they obtained land in 1871, and as Goyder had only started surveying in 1869, perhaps they were our first land developers whose
Tradition carries on today.

In 1965 Section 60 and part of Section 67 became a receiving station for the RAAF. That land became Portion 1157. The remainder of section 67 remained as vacant Crown land. A smaller section of Section 60 on the northern side of the highway became Section 5122. Land further to the north was owned by the Navy and was called Coonawarra East. The RAAF receiving station stopped transmitting in 1987. The large aerials were later dismantled and removed and the only thing left now is the main building and a WWII Sydney Williams hut. Defence vacated the site in 2005.

The unimproved value of Portion 1157. Finally the latest valuation for Portion 1157 in 2014 was $13.2m so it will be interesting to see what the land is sold for considering that in 1871 Section 60 was sold for sixty pounds!

Presently this land is not zoned, as Commonwealth land is exempt, but whoever buys the land needs to know what it can be used for. Any potential purchaser surely would need to know what the land could be used for before buying. When I asked the Minister for Planning had the Government decided what the land could be used for he said ‘that will be up to the purchaser to determine’. As the Minister is the only one who can approve the zoning of land not the purchaser, that was a very strange answer. Defence state that this is primarily a matter for the new owner of the property and the local and state governments in the context of the existing land planning framework. Under the Northern Planning Scheme maps for Darwin and Palmerston both parcels are zoned as CA - No Planning Scheme Controls, due to the fact that they are owned by Commonwealth. Surely the government needs to say what is the Government policy regarding the future of this land before it is sold.
11 Mile and the Knuckey’s Lagoon Racecourse

Since researching the history of the 11 Mile I have found out some other interesting facts. The first one is the photo on the left. That was sent to me by Kaye Henderson from the Parliamentary Library, Darwin. The photo marks the occasion when the last transmitter was turned off at the 11 Mile Transmitter Station. The Transmitter Station was then to be moved to the new Robertson Barracks. Some people may recognise the personnel in the picture but most would recognise the shorts and long socks just like bus drivers used to wear or like I used to wear when working at Mitre 10, Howard Springs.

The second interesting item is the Knuckey’s Lagoon Racecourse. I had seen an historical picture showing races at Knuckey’s Lagoon but had no idea where this could have been until I came across this 1950’s map of Darwin while I was researching the history of the land at the 11 Mile. The map showed a race course to the west of what is now Robertson Barracks. There is a mention in the North Australian 19th March 1887 of a Knuckey’s Lagoon course but nothing else seems to have come of that. Picnic games and races were mentioned in some old newspapers in the mid 1930’s as having been held at Knuckey’s Lagoon. A photograph from the Parliamentary Library shows an Aboriginal rider at Knuckey’s Lagoon. There is even a motorcycle race at Knuckey’s Lagoon. It seems that the racecourse had an upgrade when the Army took over Fannie Bay racetrack during the war. The Knuckey’s Lagoon track became the ‘new’ track until 1952 when

Knuckey’s was spelt with an ‘s’ until it was removed by unknown nomenclature purists!!!

Before their meeting of 1888 the Northern Territory Racing Club expects to have a fine course of its own near Knuckey’s Lagoon, where a track can be made that would be second to no course in Australia.