

## Morton's shed and a walk on the *wild side* with Bruce Wollstein

The fifth September 2018 was a cool and wet morning but the much need rain wasn't going to defer an opportunity to see an unassuming structure closely connected to one of Coochiemudlo's pioneer families.

Bruce Wollstein moved to Coochiemudlo in 1993 buying (in old lingo) a 40 perch block sited at the junction of Victoria Parade West, Perulpa and Deanbilla streets. The land was once part of 60 perches owned by Doug and Mary Morton and the site of the family's last residence before they left Coochie for Karragarra Island.



Sometime in the early 1960s the house that the Mortons built burnt down forcing them to move into a small shed put up in the yard beside the smouldering ruins of their once home.



The shed is still there and while it's showing some age, a closer look reveals a snapshot in time with its ledged and sheeted style doors on the front and side.



Signs of an earlier era imbue the property for instance the patchwork path around Bruce's house that he put down is from leftover concrete which originally came from the Morton's two wheel track driveway. Shell and coral fragments in the old cement hint of how Mr Morton must have drawn from local materials to mix the cement.



The garden offers a mix of fruit bearing trees such as mulberry and lemonade, and natives like *Glochidion ferdinandi*, (commonly known as cheese tree) grevilleas, some self-seeded jacarandas, lavender about 20 years old, and much more.

An avid weeder, Bruce knows the western side of the island like the back of his hand so it was a natural progression to stroll down to the golf course and out to the far south-western corner of the island. I asked Bruce what brought him to Coochiemudlo. Having grown up around Beaudesert, the island, the bay waters and the diversity of vegetation could not have been a greater contrast to what he was familiar with. Back in the 1960s when Bruce first started visiting the island, a ride on the ferry cost threepence (3d) each way or 2 and a half cents in new money. It was only a matter of time and multiple trips to Coochie that his love of the soft grey mangroves, *Avicennia marina*, typically found in estuarine country, drew him in for good.

As one walks across the golf course the waterways between the third and fourth fairways offer another glimpse of Morton family history. A row of indiscernible posts sticking up out of the water are all that

remain of a raised walkway which must have once borne tourists and cargo from the beach to the steps leading up to the Morton's first home. This would be in the vicinity of Aminya Gardens, the two story home next to Seminara Apartments on Victoria Parade South.



Following the white sandy beach on the SW corner heading north but keeping to the high tide mark, a world of mangrove forest takes over. The river mangrove, *Aegiceras corniculatum*, was in bloom – its tiny white flowers are not unlike jasmine.



Walking through the mangroves is an extraordinary experience and despite the lamentable rubbish washing in, the island's quieter western coastline presents a healthy and unique sanctuary. Remnants of history can be found even in the mangrove fringe. These posts are further south to more well known boardwalk that runs outward from near Morton's steps.



It pays to look up and down frequently when walking through the bush otherwise we could have missed the swarm of bees buzzing in and out of a tree hollow. Leaving the mangroves we made our way through the bush onto the golf course adjacent to fairway No. 2. Once in the clear we headed north up Victoria Parade West to Morton's steps.

A closer look on the corners of the steps shows signs of a pipe hand rail that Mr Morton must have included when he first built the stairway. The rails are long gone and the steps are quite steep and uneven so it pays to tread carefully.

What a fascinating morning it was. I've known Bruce for a few years but regrettably never took the time to get beyond normal pleasantries. Delving into Coochie's history is a wake-up call to notice anew. I read this phrase somewhere so I can't take credit for it, "when people tell you a story, it's like they're singing you a song". This is so true. Thank you Bruce.



*Written by Christine Leonard, with acknowledgement to Bruce Wollstein*