

# Coorong National Park

## Secrets

### Shacks along the Coorong

In early days and at their peak there were well over a hundred shacks along the Coorong. The first shacks were built by fishermen to provide shelter. With the introduction of better roads and later refrigeration some of these shacks were either let to run down or taken over as holiday shacks, with a couple still remaining as fishermen shacks. These are north of Mark Point. Some of the later shacks were built as annual holiday retreats by families after the war and not having the money to afford much, used whatever material was available at the time. Progressively over the years through various governments many shacks have slowly been pulled down.

The following extracts from *Tales of the Coorong* and *More Tales of the Coorong* compiled by E.Leta Padman describe living on the Coorong in the 1900's.

Mrs Tom Tyner (nee Dulcie Write) writes "Dulcie has memories of her early childhood spent in Coorong Cottage .... The house nearest the Coorong and close to Lake Alexandrina. It was during the 1920's when Jonny Morgan, a fisherman lived in a hut on Younghusband Peninsula, almost opposite Pelican Point... The hut was built from driftwood brought over from the ocean beach.... Jonny Morgan took his fish to Goolwa by boat for market. He also had a dinghy for running nets and weather permitting often visited the land side of the Coorong. Sometimes he took the Wright family across to the far side. There, in season they would gather the muntries which grew on the flats between the sandhills. The bushes creep low to the ground, have small creamy white flowers and berries which are green on one side and red on the other when they are ripe. Then it would be delicious muntries pie for tea, with lashings of cream."

"Dot and Clyde Wait ... Saw a tiny galvanised iron fisherman's shack on the shore of the Coorong. At the time it was empty but Clyde didn't rest until he found the owner and arranged the purchase. Many of you will have noticed the little hut about one kilometre south of Woods Well .... Dot's flowers and local native vegetation fed the bees which Clyde and Dot kept to swell their small income from the sale of fish, eggs, vegetables and honey..... Dot had a choice of bathrooms in her Shang-ri-la home. She had a shower rose (rose and hose) rigged on the branch of a peealla (coastal wattle) near the back door, or a tub at the front of the house near the waterline but lightly shrouded by shrubs."



Martin Yerve's shack at Nine Mile Point on the Coorong (courtesy State Library of South Australia)



A shack on Seven Mile Road in 2014.

### **When was the first shack built?**

It is unclear, but it is believed the first shacks were erected in the dunes during the early 1900's. Most of the remaining shacks were constructed in the 1950's & 60's however there are some from as early as the 1930's & 40's.

### **What are the shacks made out of?**

The very early shacks were constructed from driftwood sourced on the ocean beach and from any bits of metal sheet or other cladding that could be found. Some were clad from 44 gallon tar drums that were hammered out flat. Floors were often bare. More recent shacks are generally constructed from corrugated iron walls and roof and /or cement sheeting with concrete floor or pine floor boards over a timber frame.

### **Where can I see shacks?**

The remaining shacks can be found from Barker's Knoll near the Murray Mouth all the way as far south as Salt Creek. There are a number of shacks on Youngusband Peninsula that can only be accessed by boat, however most are located along the Kartoo Road between Long Point and Mark Point. A scattering can also be found along the Seven Mile Road and along the Princes Highway. Sadly, over the years many of the shacks have been demolished and their history forgotten.

### **Comments from a current shack owner:**

*"Where else could you find a more interesting and beautiful place than the Coorong? We have been coming here for nearly 40 years, firstly camping outside Shepherd's shack in a tent, then later we purchased a shack. There used to be two other shacks beside us on the Seven Mile Road, but unfortunately they have long gone, and it is disappointing to see others disappearing. We now travel nearly 6 hours to enjoy this place, with a waterfront view outside our front window, and the pelicans and seagulls along the shores. Fishing has always been part of our visits, and our recreational fishing licence allows us to go out in the boat and set a net, however, the Seven Mile area is not really suitable for line fishing. It is not far to boat across the Coorong to the ocean, where you can line fish off the sand, dig for cockles as the tide goes out, collect shells, or just go for a stroll along the beach. What better way to spend a holiday, going for walks along the Coorong, where at times the water looks like glass, and the sand hills across the other side reflect across the water, or just watching a magnificent sunset until the sun disappears behind the sand hills. It is also nice to catch up with the many "shackies" whose friendship spans over many years, and we look forward to Easter time each year, when the shacks are overflowing with families and visitors."*





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Leta Padmans books are available for purchase from The Chambers in Meningie and from the DEWNR Coorong National Park office at Noonameena.



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