

ROBERT HAYLES

1843 - 1926



Patriarch of a family with a long and proud association with Magnetic Island

Robert Hayles was born 27 December 1843 in London and migrated to Queensland in 1863.

By 1898, when he first visited Magnetic Island, he had worked on a sheep run, tried gold-mining, owned a hotel, been married twice and produced eleven children. He saw the potential of Magnetic Island as a holiday destination, so he looked for a suitable site for a hotel and bought from George Newman seventeen freehold blocks (four and a half acres) in Picnic Bay in 1899. On part of this he built the first hotel on Magnetic Island. Designed by architects Tunbridge and Tunbridge, it was a two-storey, wooden building – ‘large and commodious’ with eight bedrooms on the upper floor and on the lower, public and private bars, two bedrooms, a dining room and three parlours. The hotel burned to the ground on the night of Wednesday 21 July 1915. A water well is all that remains of this first hotel, its dancehall and its outhouses.

After building his Magnetic Hotel, Robert Hayles applied in January 1900 for a lease of two acres to construct a jetty, as it was ‘most difficult to land passengers’ and his steamer Bee was ‘of little or no use on account of the danger and difficulty of landing’. In August 1900 Hayles got the lease and built a jetty and ladies changeroom. At this time Hayles began a regular ferry service between Townsville and Magnetic Island.

In 1910 Hayles got a special lease for an acre block in front of his existing hotel, on what was part of a recreation reserve on the esplanade. He then built his second hotel on that ideal foreshore site.

In November 1919 eighty-three acres of land at Arcadia including the guesthouse, was registered to Robert Hayles, his daughter Mary Hislop and his sons Francis, Eustace Robert and Charles. In 1922 the Hayles became Arcadia Limited. In that same year Hayles Magnetic Island Limited was formed (Magnetic Hotel and the Picnic Bay land became company property) with E R (Bob) Hayles as the first managing director.

Robert Hayles moved to Brisbane but on a visit to Magnetic Island he suffered a stroke and died at Arcadia on 19 August 1926.

Researched and written by Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre Inc. (Magnetic Museum)



*Hayles' MV Malanda
CityLibraries Townsville, Local History Collection*



*Hotel Magnetic, Picnic Bay, 1906
CityLibraries Townsville, Local History Collection*



*Arcadia Guest House
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