



The Beginning of the End

1929

The Great Depression saw the mother of pearl fishing industry go into decline.

1939

During WWII the industry was shut down when all luggers were impounded by the Australian Government for fear that the Japanese would seize them.

1949

The advent of plastics sees the end of the demand for mother of pearl for buttons. The 1922 Pearling Act is repealed and cultured pearling is legalised.

If there was a moment that marked the end of mother of pearl fishing as an industry, this was it.

The first industry – Pinctada maxima pearlshell

1912

POWER & INFLUENCE.

Because of the power and influence of the pearlshell industry, Broome was the only town in the country exempt from the White Australia policy, to allow for the employment of the predominantly Asian crew that manned the luggers, hence Broome's Chinatown.

1920

1920-1922

CULTURED PEARLING MADE ILLEGAL

Captain Gregory attempted to culture pearls to the south of Broome, only to be shut down by the pearling masters. His attempts triggered the 1922 Pearling Act, which prohibited anyone in Western Australia from producing cultured pearls, in order to protect the lucrative mother of pearl industry. Thus the Japanese continued to dominate the global cultured-pearl industry.

1930

The first industry –

Forty years later, when Dean Brown established the first all-Australian cultured pearling company and applied for the first cultured-pearling licence, the government officer handed Dean the pearl nuclei that had been sitting in a safe since being confiscated from Captain Gregory and his Japanese pearl technicians.

