

... the first company in the world to successfully culture pearls without Japanese assistance ...



Local Bardi-Jawi man Aubrey Tigan, pearl technician 1971

LYNDON BROWN SHARES THE SECRET. Once he had mastered the art of pearl cultivation, he started training his colleagues. The first were local Indigenous men Tom Wiggan, Gordon Dixon and Aubrey Tigan. This created the unique situation in a global perspective where apart from the Japanese technicians, there was one white man and three aboriginal men that held the highly secretive intellectual property (IP) of pearl cultivation.

These three men and many others Lyndon would train, such as Peter Hunter, Andrew Sampi, and Robin Hunter, would go on to play pivotal roles in the growth of the Broome pearling industry.



Dean Browns home 1961

1959

AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIMENT.

Dean Brown's son Lyndon performs experiments on *Pinctada maxima* shell at Cygnet Bay, in an attempt to develop cultured-pearling techniques. At this time only the Japanese, who closely guard their secrets, could culture pearls.

1960

A WORLD FIRST.

Lyndon Brown has successfully cultured pearls and becomes the first non-Japanese to culture loose pearls commercially.

Dean Brown creates the first all-Australian cultured-pearl farming business, and is the first to be granted a licence by the WA Government.

1970

CYGNET BAY PEARLS OPENS BROOME'S FIRST CULTURED-PEARL SHOP opposite the Roebuck Hotel on Dampier Terrace.

1970

THE FIRST SHINJU QUEEN ADORNED IN CYGNET BAY PEARLS for the inaugural Broome Shinju Matsuri Festival of the Pearl.

1970

ADVANCING SAFETY Cygnet Bay Pearls is instrumental in advancing industry safety and efficiency with the introduction of modern neoprene wetsuits and diving equipment to replace the heavy canvas suit and copper helmet. It would be another 14 years before the entire industry followed suit.

1960 The second industry – *Pinctada maxima* cultured pearls

1960s

THE COMMON GATE REMOVED.

A fence was the physical symbol of an apartheid-like system, which made it illegal for Aboriginal people to live in Broome; they could only enter the town for work. Its removal marks a significant point in Broome's path to equality for its first people and now recognised traditional owners.

1961

PASPALLEY STARTS CULTURED PEARLING IN THE N.T.

Kununurra established - the Kimberley's second largest town.

1970

1973 FIRST MODERN FIBREGLASS PEARLING VESSEL.

Cygnet Bay Pearls launches *Cygnet Lass* in 1973, and leads the way in modernising the industry.

1977

KAILIS ENTERS PEARLING INDUSTRY.

Kailis invests in Broome Pearls, started by John Fox-Lowe and marine biologist Bill Reed.

Only two are still operating

There were many pearling companies operating in the mother of pearl shell industry, but only the Browns at Cygnet Bay and the Paspalleys in Darwin successfully transitioned to cultured pearl farming and are still producing today.

To find out more about the mother of pearl industry we recommend the Broome Museum and Yawuru's Jetty to Jetty app.