

Alligator Creek Meatworks, 1917, showing the buildings, chimney stacks, and wharves. (State Library of Queensland, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Alligator Creek

Sources:

G. C. Bolton, **A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920**.

Queensland Places: *Alligator Creek*

Wikipedia: *Alligator Creek, Queensland (Townsville)*

The rural/residential locality of **Alligator Creek**, about 30 kilometres southeast of Townsville in Bindal country, is named after the creek that rises in the Mount Elliot *massif* and flows into Cleveland Bay. The creek forms the western boundary of the 55,300-ha Bowling Green Bay National Park.

Archaeological sites associated with the area's traditional owners date back to 10,000 BP, and the Bindal people hosted shipwrecked sailor James Morrill for much of his time as a castaway between 1846 and 1863.

After European settlement, the Queensland Meat Export Company established a short-lived meatworks on Alligator Creek in 1879. The North Queensland Meat Export Company restarted the works ten years later as a boiling-down operation, beginning with an annual intake of about twelve thousand cattle.

It subsequently switched to exporting frozen beef using machinery from the cyclone-damaged works on Poole Island in Port Denison, processing over fifty thousand head by 1898.

A 1919 industrial dispute at the works escalated to the point where several leaders of the Meatworkers Union were arrested; a crowd of unionists gathered at Townsville's Tree of Knowledge moved on to the Townsville watch house on the evening of 29 June *ostensibly to encourage the arrested men with a rendition of 'The Red Flag'. Many of the police were disabled with the influenza epidemic then raging throughout Queensland, but five of those who remained barricaded the lock-up and sat tight whilst the crowd gave three groans for the police and threw stones on the galvanised-iron roof. A sergeant went out to parley, but before half-a-dozen sentences had been exchanged somebody threw a punch at him, and there was the sound of a shot. Believing his superior to be wounded, an impetuous young constable grabbed a rifle and fired off a shot into the crowd, to be answered by return fire and a massed rush by the demonstrators, who began tearing down the lock-up fence. It was not until the police fired their revolvers into the crowd, wounding nine men, that the attack ceased and the mob gradually dispersed*. G. C. Bolton, **A Thousand Miles Away**, pp. 313-4)

After another update with a prefabricated structure in 1914, the meatworks closed in 1966, along with the nearby township of Oolbun's post office.