

MOOR HALL



LOCAL HISTORY FEATURE

Moor Hall



The story of Moor Hall is one which encompasses many aspects of Bundaberg history, from the Payne family to Alexander Walker and his purchase of the Bingera cattle station. It is also the story of a family who moved to Bundaberg from Brisbane, and found themselves caught up in the history and tradition of a beautiful house.

Greg Callaghan and his family saw an advertisement in the Courier-Mail in October 1996 for a home for sale near Bundaberg. The real estate advertisement mentioned a Queenslander near Bundaberg, backing onto the river with 60 acres of land.

F.W. PAYNE

The house purchased by the Callaghan family in 1997 was in fact Moor Hall, one of Bundaberg's oldest homesteads, which was built in the 1890s. Frederick William Payne was born in Essex, England, and emigrated to Australia as a young man in search of adventure, after obtaining a degree of Master of Laws and being admitted to the Inner Temple in London as a barrister. He was

readmitted as a barrister in Queensland, and settled in Bundaberg to practice as a solicitor in 1887.

Frederick Payne bought land on 307 Bourbong Street across from the old Mater Hospital, built a house and named it after his home in England. Moor Hall was set in beautiful gardens, with immaculate lawns and a fountain as a centerpiece. According to the Bundaberg Daily News of 1931, "...Mr Payne was an enthusiastic gardener and the grounds at his home in West Bundaberg were one of the showplaces of the city. Every morning, with his son Mr J.C. Payne, he was out doing the work so essential to the maintenance of a well-ordered garden."

Mr Payne was a well-respected member of the Bundaberg community and served many years as the Bundaberg City Council's City Solicitor. In later years, the legal firm of F.W. Payne became Payne and Payne His company F.W.Payne, was renamed Payne & Payne after he was joined in the practice by his son Jack Payne. After retirement Frederick Payne became a member of the committee of the School of Arts, and was an enthusiastic





supporter of Christ Church Anglican Church and Parish. Some years prior to his death, F.W.Payne purchased virgin land near the Elliott River, turning it into two cane farms – Alloway and Calavos. While many local farmers thought farming in scrub was a foolish venture, as the land was not considered suitable for cane, Alloway and Calavos became two of Millaquin’s best producing cane farms.

J.C. PAYNE

Moor Hall was the residence of the Payne family for many years, with son John (Jack) C. Payne taking over the family business until his sudden and tragic death in 1954. Jack Payne was awarded the Military Medal in World War I after being badly wounded in the face while saving an officer under fire. Like his father, Jack was an enthusiastic gardener, working in the gardens of Moor Hall every morning before going to the office. After World War II, grandson Fred Grose joined the firm, which became Payne & Grose, then in 1969, with the arrival of Graham Redhead, it changed

to Payne, Grose & Redhead. According to the Bundaberg News-Mail of 6 December 1954, Jack Payne was found by a neighbour next to his lawnmower at 3pm the previous day. It appeared that he had almost completed mowing the lawns of Moor Hall when his electric mower severed the power cord, which was lying in a pool of water.

Like his father, Jack Payne was respected and loved by the Bundaberg community. Mayor Fred Buss commented, *“The people of Bundaberg and district are very much the poorer for Mr Payne’s passing. In countless homes a deep sense of sorrow will be felt by those who honoured and admired his character and personality. His memory in this city will endure for generations as a Christian gentleman, gallant scholar, orator, wise counselor and loving friend to so many.”*

CHANGES

Jack Payne’s widow lived in Moor Hall for a number of years after his death, maintaining





the homestead and gardens, then moved away from Bundaberg.

The house was sold to Bundaberg Broadcasters, then in 1986, Stencraft Pty Ltd bought the homestead for \$10,000 and dismantled it by cutting it into 3 sections. The house was moved at a cost of \$21,000, to its present location on Bingera Station and reassembled.

One of the Directors of Stencraft, Mr Dan Murphy told the News-Mail that *“the house had been in an appalling condition when purchased, but its full potential was gradually being realized. Anything which is in any way faulty or damaged is being replaced, although the house still contains some beautiful red cedar paneling. The front door alone, which is red cedar, would be worth between \$1,000-\$5,000.”*

Stencraft had plans to restore Moor Hall to its former glory - a 60 square weatherboard and pine house with 14 rooms and a ballroom - with an allocated budget of \$100,000 for

restoration work. It would then be used for either a private residence or for other ventures. The new location lent itself to a wide variety of possibilities, with the property having river frontage and surrounded by 180 acres of gentle hills. The land on which Moor Hall is now situated is part of the historic Bingera Cattle Station.

ALEXANDER WALKER AND BINGERA STATION

Alexander Walker was one of the earliest settlers in the Bundaberg area, having established himself as both proprietor of the first hotel in Gayndah, and a successful businessman around the town. He had emigrated from Scotland to NSW in 1848, employed as a Doctor's assistant on board the ship “Emperor”, which also carried Bundaberg pioneers John and Gavin Steuart.

Richard Purves Marshall had originally leased Bingera 1, 2 and 3 in 1854, but had never stocked the runs and paid only one year's rent. Alexander Walker then bought the Bingera runs as they overlapped his existing property

Right: Pram in nursery
Facing page left: Ceiling detail,
Facing page middle: Chandelier,
Facing page right: Table in foyer.



Branyen (now Branyan), and stocked and settled Bingera Station in 1859. After his death from a fall from a horse in 1879, Bingera Station was inherited by his son Alexander Christie Walker and subsequently remained in the Walker family until the 1980s.

MOOR HALL RESOLD

The Walker family sold the land along Walkers Road in 1985, and Stencraft split the property into large blocks of land between 60-180 acres, for residential sale. Shortly after the restoration of Moor Hall, it was sold privately and used as a Waterski School for about a year. The advertisement in the Sunshine Coast newspapers described it as: "...four large bedrooms, formal lounge and dining room area, sunroom and family casual dining, office and feature kitchen...also a separate self-contained caretaker's cottage, and 180 acres with river frontage"

This description would change very shortly, when the house was sold again and purchased by Ray Shadbolt, who split the property into 3 sixty acre allotments. Moor Hall remained on the old homestead site overlooking the Burnett River and once more came up for sale in 1996, when the Callaghan family purchased the property.

Greg and Rosemary Callaghan moved from Brisbane to Bundaberg in 1999, after letting Moor Hall to several tenants over the intervening years. The house was cleaned, and the gardens extensively landscaped, with an avenue of trees planted leading up to the property. The original iron roof vent was found abandoned in one of the paddocks with other rubbish, and carefully transported to Cooroy to be restored, then refitted on the roof of the house. This roof vent can be seen clearly in the sketch of Moor Hall which appeared in *From Two Pens*.

In the years since the Callaghans moved here and opened the Tradewinds Bakery on Woondooma Street, they have become used to odd coincidences and stories regarding Moor Hall.



CHARLES HAZZARD

Greg Callaghan recalls attending his first auction in Bundaberg at Ray Whites to buy some car parts, only to be told by his wife and son that there was a picture of Moor Hall on display. Inside the auctioneers was a collection of seven Charles Hazzard paintings being sold as a job lot, and one of the paintings was of Moor Hall shortly after its restoration.

According to Bundaberg Arts Centre's Exhibitions Officer Bianca Acimovic, Charles Hazzard is a Bundaberg painter of some significance, and became a member of the Bundaberg Art Society in 1948. Charles was a skilled draftsman, and became a passionate watercolourist, spending many weekends driving around in his Austen 7 painting local scenery.

Presumably Charles Hazzard was commissioned at some stage to paint Moor Hall, as locals remember seeing the painting in the front living room at Moor Hall. The Callaghans bid on the painting individually but were not initially successful, although managed to buy it some time later privately. The painting is back on the wall in the living room at Moor Hall now, after many years absence.

GHOSTS?

Many would agree that an historic home is not really historic unless it comes with a ghost or two. Whether you are a believer or not – and Greg and Rose were in the latter group – many odd incidents over the years have yet to be explained.

Unexplained incidents around the house over the years have mystified the owners –

- cupboard doors too high to reach in the kitchen are regularly found open after being shut tightly with brooms.
- pots and pans are heard rattling in the

kitchen in the middle of the night, with no-one there when investigated.

- music from the 20s and 30s is heard playing faintly through the house on quiet nights.
- the side doors to the house, with barrel bolts, are found unlocked when the owners return home.

The Callaghans have no firm thoughts on their extra guest in the house – they believe it adds character to the old homestead, and after all, there's plenty of room for everyone in Moor Hall.

Over the years they have researched the origins of the house and the Payne family, as well as scouring sales and yards for furniture that will enhance the interior. Moor Hall and its history has become an interest and a passion, and Greg believes it is important to preserve the house, not just for their family, but as a significant piece of Bundaberg's heritage.

Many thanks to Greg and Rosemary Callaghan for sharing their story of Moor Hall, and allowing photographs to be taken. Thanks also to Fred Grose for photos and information regarding the Payne family, and the Bundaberg Arts Centre and Bundaberg Historical Museum for additional information.

The illustration of Moor Hall is from the book From Two Pens, by Trevor Lyons and N. Rackemann, published by Glovers Printing Works. This book is now out of print.

Sue Gammon

- Bundaberg Library

References

Bundaberg News Mail, various issues, 1931-1986.
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