



1954 The Royal Visit



It was Bundaberg's most fleeting and eagerly anticipated event—the arrival of the newest monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, on Thursday March 11, 1954. The Royal Entourage arrived by plane at 11:20am, and were gone by 1:20pm, en route to their next regional destination Oakey.

Preparations

The brevity of the visit did not deter our City Council though, from arranging as much pomp and circumstance as they could — especially since preparations for the royal visit began as far back as August the preceding year.

A local Service Club sponsored a garden competition to encourage residents along the proposed route to “brighten their gardens”, and the Council was pleased to report that “...*apart from only one or two exceptions, everyone who had been asked to decorate their premises had agreed to do so.*”



Union Bank in Quay St decorated for Queen's visit.

Picture Bundaberg Collection

The residents of Norville erected an arch across Kensington Street reading “*Farewell, God bless you ; from the residents of Norville*”.

Isis Shire representatives also built an arch at the airport gates with a three foot high crown on top of stalks of cane, with best wishes from the residents of Isis District.



4BU premises decorated for Queen's visit.

The *Bundaberg News Mail* joined in with 57 articles about the forthcoming event, in the 40 days before the visit. The week before, the paper published daily hints for residents on how to cope with the whole experience

DO'S, DON'TS FOR THURSDAY

The Mayor (Ald. F. H. Buss) yesterday issued a list of “Do's” and “Don'ts” for the Royal visit on Thursday:

Cheer to the utmost and show your enthusiasm by “lifting the roof,” he said.

But remember — don't break the white lines; interference could cause delay and there is no time for this.

Don't throw flowers, flags or anything else. This could be a real menace and injure the Queen.

If you use newspapers to sit on, pick them up. Don't leave them lying about.

Do exactly as the police say.

A THOUGHT FOR MARCH 11

Today's thought for the Queen's visit.

The responsibility of displaying a mark of loyalty and affection towards the Queen does not rest solely with householders and business premises.

At yesterday's rehearsal at the Showgrounds of the civic reception to the Queen, a young school girl was wearing red, white and blue ribbon in her plaits.

Many cars were decorated with similar ribbon and ornaments bearing Crowns and the inscription “EHR” were prominent.



Dress Rehearsals

The City held two Dress Rehearsals before the Queen's visit—one for the schoolchildren and one for the officials. Friday 5 March saw children from all the schools in Bundaberg, over 2000, practice the blocks they would form in the centre of the ring.

CHILDREN REHEARSE TODAY FOR ROYAL VISIT

In addition, a local schoolgirl Dorothy Grier, got to be the Queen in the mock royal car that drove carefully through each of the lanes, to make sure they were wide enough. And of course there was the Duke of Edinburgh in attendance as well, played by senior boy prefect Harry Londy.

Mayor Buss was proud of the fact that *“ It would be the first time in Queensland that children would take part in the civic reception. From what he had read and heard of visits to other places so far ...in most cases the Queen attended other gatherings to see the children, but in Bundaberg children would be present when he when he presented his address of welcome, and the children would hear her reply.”*



Morganville, Mt Perry and Gladstone. Over 5000 people were on the trains, and most had returned home by 9 pm that same night.

The Sunday before the Queen's visit, a full scale dress rehearsal was held at the Bundaberg Showgrounds. The complete Royal reception procedure was run through numerous times until it was faultless.

As the headline suggests, the people taking part were so carried away by the spectacle, they rose to their feet and cheered the stand-in Royals as they left the showgrounds at the end of the rehearsal. Mayor Buss interrupted the proceedings on several occasions to check the handshakes of several of the Aldermen—those who had some fault with their shake were asked to go over the procedure again. This time, the stand-in Queen was Mrs L. Cochrane, and the Duke was represented by Mr G.L. Buss.

The excitement through the District was so strong that Mayor Buss had to issue a statement to the press that the Showgrounds would be closed on Wednesday night to the public, to prevent people spending the night there to ensure good positions for the ceremony.

10 trains arrived early Thursday morning, from Maryborough, Gympie, Isis, Monto, Kingaroy,



Arrival of the Queen

As the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh left Brisbane Airport at 10:40am on Thursday March 11, the crowd of almost 30,000 people already at the Bundaberg Showgrounds cheered wildly. The progress of the flight to Bundaberg was being broadcast in the Showgrounds, and to the 10,000 people waiting at the Bundaberg Airport.

The crowds along the route to the Showgrounds were 20 deep in places, with an estimated 30,000

people in the route between the General Hospital, and the corner of Maryborough and Woongarra Streets.

The Queen even directed the driver of the Royal Humber to slow down even further than six miles per hour, because of the number of people along the streets. The Editorial the following day in the *Bundaberg News-Mail* felt however that some sections of the crowd had not given their



Queen Elizabeth is greeted by Mayor Fred Buss on arrival at the Airport



Greeting the crowds at the Bundaberg Showgrounds

GREETINGS...

TO-DAY WE HONOUR WITH LOYALTY AND AFFECTION THE ARRIVAL OF OUR WELL-BELOVED QUEEN ELIZABETH II AND H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH. TO COMMEMORATE THE HISTORIC OCCASION OF THIS ROYAL TOUR THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF STEFFENSEN'S MAN'S SHOP JOIN WITH THE PEOPLE OF BUNDABERG AND DISTRICT IN WELCOMING THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES TO BUNDABERG.

THIS VISIT SHALL LONG REMAIN AS AN EVENT OF PROUD IMPORTANCE TO OUR CITY AND BE CHERISHED FOR THE OPPORTUNITY IT PROVIDES TO AFFIRM OUR LOYALTY, EXPRESS OUR FAITH, AND WISH HER MAJESTY AND HER HUSBAND, LONG LIFE.

God Save The Queen

STEFFENSEN'S
MAN'S SHOP

Greetings

WE, WHO WITH THE PEOPLE OF BUNDABERG ARE PRIVILEGED TO WELCOME THE ROYAL COUPLE TO OUR CITY THIS DAY, ARE PROUD TO PAY SPECIAL TRIBUTE ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT OCCASION.

WE DO SO BY THIS PUBLIC AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH, LOYALTY and DEVOTION.

Long Live The
Queen

Reddan
AND
Mellor



WELCOME to Her Most Gracious Majesty QUEEN ELIZABETH II and His Royal Highness THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

We, the Management and Staff of G. N. Yared and The Busy Corner, join with the citizens of our city in expressing our affectionate loyalty to our Sovereign, and pray from the depth of our hearts—GOD SAVE OUR QUEEN, and the Members of the Royal Family.

Y A R E D'S
AND THE BUSY CORNER

best welcome, remarking:

"Perhaps on sections of the Royal progress cheering could have been more enthusiastic, but cheering is not, of course, the final measure of sincerity. There can be no suggestion our welcome was any less warm than in other parts. We are by nature undemonstrative but just as still water runs deep so did the emotions of those who did not cheer—as quite a few moist eyes testified."

Civic Reception

The Royal progress was 10 minutes late entering the Showgrounds, although time was later made up by cutting the number of times the car made a circuit of the main ring. A broadcast of the progress through Bundaberg was warmly received by the waiting crowds, with enthusiastic clapping whenever a well-known name or city landmark was mentioned.

As the Humber turned into the Showgrounds at 12:40pm, the crowd went wild with cheering and flags waving, and the 47th Battalion Pipers forming a guard of honour on the ramp leading to the oval. Crowds stood as the Royal couple ascended the dais, and the official ceremony began with the Bundaberg Municipal Band playing the national anthem as the crowd joined in.

Mayor Fred Buss then presented the Councillors and their wives to the Queen, along with invited representatives from community and service groups. After the official welcome from the Mayor, his daughter Bettina, 5½ years old, presented the Queen with a bouquet of flowers. After the Civic Reception, the Queen and Duke transferred to the Royal Landrover, and began the slow circuit of the oval to inspect the rows of school children and youth organizations who had travelled across the Wide Bay to see the Queen.

The children had assembled in Barber Park, and been marched in formation to the Showgrounds, except for the younger ages, who had remained in the shady areas of the Park until the last moment.

All groups however, were assembled by 11:00 in the main ring arena, with thousands of children in their allotted positions, from Boy Scouts to Junior Red Cross.

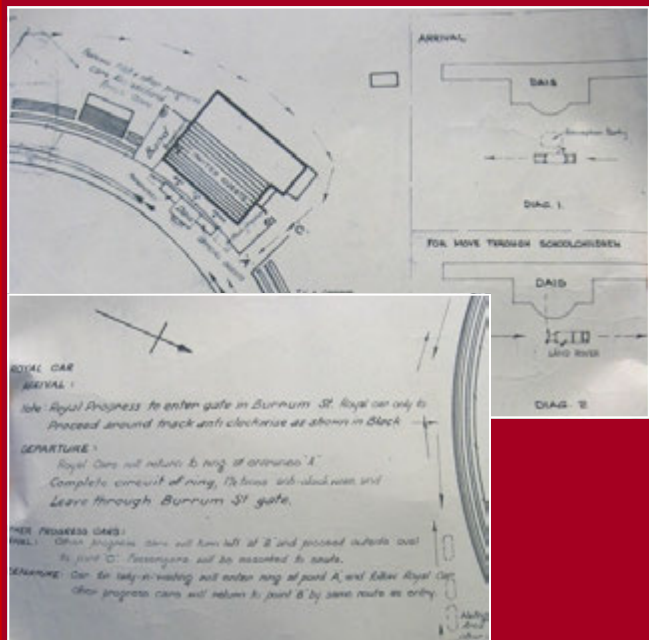
After a fifteen minute drive through the cheering



Ald. D. Rattray and Mrs Rattray are presented to the Queen.



Mayor Buss' daughter Bettina presents the Queen with a bouquet.



Royal Tour Plans for the Bundaberg Showgrounds with VIP seating and plan of Queen's arrival and departure.



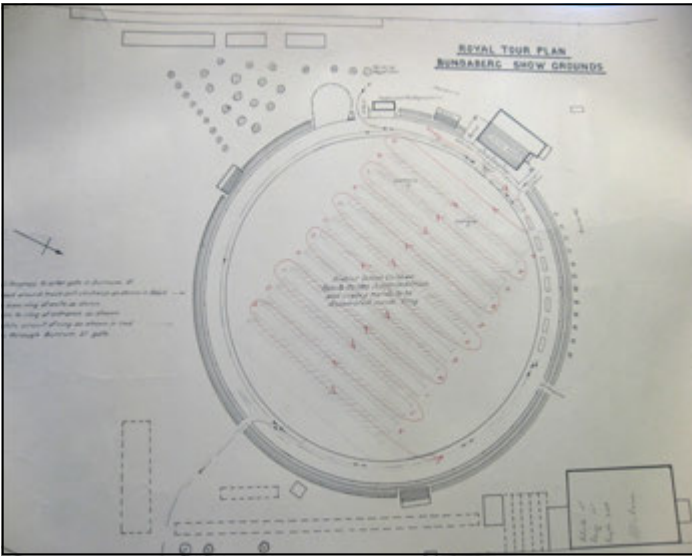
children, the Queen and the Duke transferred back to the Humber tourer, and along with their escorts, departed the Showgrounds for the drive back to the Airport.

On returning to the Airport, the royal couple were met by a crowd of 15,000 people to see them off. Before boarding the flight to Oakey, the Queen said to Mayor Buss and State Treasurer Mr Walsh: " I thank you and the people of Bundaberg and district for your lovely welcome. We enjoyed the flight over Bundaberg, enabling us to see your lovely city and district. The green canefields and variegated colour made a splendid sight from the plane."



The Queen's final comment was to Mayor Buss about Bundaberg rum—she asked where it was distilled, and whether he liked to drink it. Never one to miss an opportunity, Mayor Buss quickly replied that he did, but that it was too dear and cost one shilling a nip when it should only cost one penny, because of excise duty from the Government. Apparently the Royal couple were very amused with his reply... The Queen and Duke then entered the aircraft, turned for one last wave to the crowd, and left for the next stage of the Royal tour.

The Queen and Duke greeting schoolchildren as they drove through the rows in the arena of the Bundaberg Showgrounds.



Mayor Buss remarked in the *Bundaberg News-Mail* the next day, "...he was never so proud in his life of the courtesy of the Bundaberg people and district and the wonderful enthusiasm they had shown for the Queen's visit .". The Editor of the paper agreed, writing " Our greatest day is over. Bundaberg can happily settle down to routine existence complacent in its self satisfaction with a job well done, and stimulated with a memory time will never erase."

Sue Gammon

References:
Bundaberg News-Mail
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 Godwin, S. 2000. *100 Years of News—Bundaberg in the 1900s*.
Royal Visit Bundaberg Booklet, 1954.

Plan of the Circuit through the rows of children on the Showground Arena.

Images:
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