

HISTORY OF BUSS PARK

LOCAL HISTORY FEATURE

THE HISTORY  
*of*  
**BUSS  
PARK**





## AN 'EYE-SORE'

**T**he Market Square, soon to be known as Buss Park, on the corner of Bourbong and Maryborough Streets, had been attracting attention regarding the need for enhancement since at least mid-1929. On Friday 1 November 1929 The Bundaberg Daily News and Mail proclaimed: "...that the Market Square is an "eye-sore" to the beauty of the City needs no elaboration. Visitors to the City, on alighting at the station and walking through the main business thoroughfare, are struck by the bareness of this centrally situated block of land."

## SCHOOL & RETURNED SOLDIERS

In the early 1870s this area of land was designated as a school reserve and was the site of Bundaberg's first educational facilities. However, the reserve had sat empty since the end of World War II, apart from occasional use for Church Fetes. After

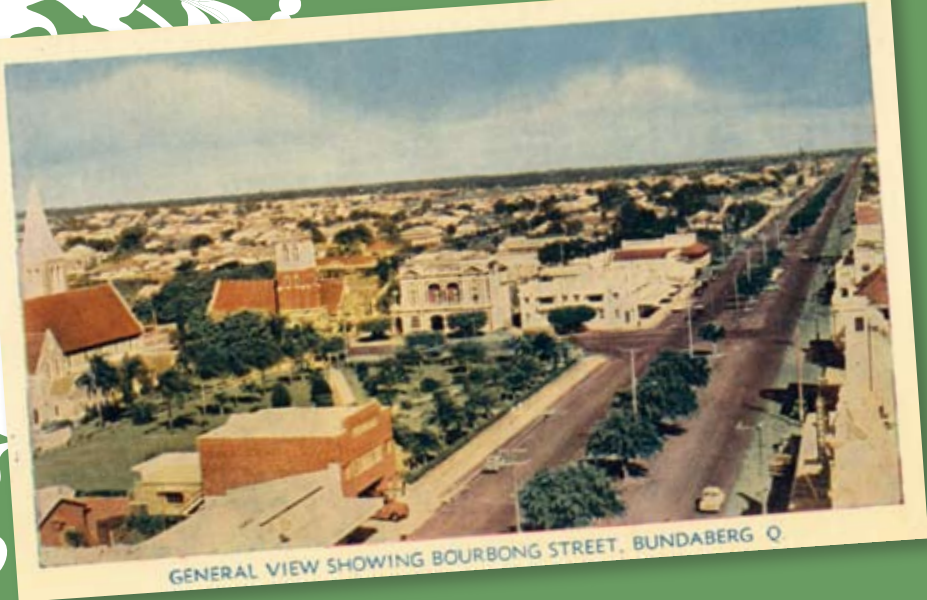
the War it was given to the returned soldiers so they could erect a Memorial Hall. This never eventuated and the Council thus decided to undergo the process of having the land handed back, so that it could be used by the whole city.

A special meeting of Council was held on Friday 17 January 1930 to discuss the future of the Market Square and the suggestion that had been made to turn the area into a public park.

## CHARLES HORACE BUSS

Mr Charles Horace Buss, (usually known as Horace), very generously offered to donate to the City a sum of £500 for the purpose of city beautification in general, although he favoured the option of turning the Market Square into a park.

Horace Buss was born in Bundaberg in 1880, the son of Frederic (co-founder of Buss & Turner department store) and Maria Buss. He served on the Gooburrum Shire Council as a Councillor between 1912 and 1930, and was Chairman of the Council from 1927-1930.



## BUILDING THE PARK

Plans for the new park, prepared by overseer Mr W. G. Parker, were reviewed by Mr Buss and Council's Parks Committee on Friday 31 January 1930. They revealed tennis courts in the south-east corner, a fountain in the centre of the park which would display a brass tablet commemorating Hinkler's flight from England to Bundaberg, two paths crossing the park, lawn and flower beds, and a rock wall surrounding the area. A sundial would also be added.

Horace Buss forwarded his cheque for £500 to Council on 21 February 1930 and work was started on the park on Monday 10 March 1930. The first task was to dig the trenches for the water supply to the fountains. Two fountains for drinking water were to be erected along with the display fountain in the centre of the park.

By Saturday 15 March the area was being ploughed ready for the introduction of lawn and flower beds. Work on erecting the central display fountain began on Thursday 17 July 1930.

The Church of England had applied to the Council for permission to build tennis courts on the Market Reserve in June 1929. It was agreed at the Council meeting on 31 October 1929 that the Church could build courts in the south-east corner of the reserve. The courts were erected by Mr Nash and his men and were first used on Saturday 18 October 1930.

## PROBLEMS

Everything progressed quite well with the building of the new park, except for two recurrent problems – vandalism and nut grass.

An incident in April 1930 saw a vandal damage the new brick wall surrounding the park and etch his initials into the cement, while a further incident in May resulted in shrubs being pulled out of the ground and stray cattle being let into the park. The Mayor (Ald. B. McLean) closed the park to the public until it was fully completed.



## HISTORY OF BUSS PARK

This unfortunately didn't prevent further vandalism, as in September a vandal or vandals removed large numbers of flowers from the park. The gates of the park had been locked due to the earlier incidents. However, people were jumping the wall to take a shortcut from one street to the other. The Mayor advised that police had been notified and offenders would be dealt with.

Perhaps a more frustrating problem was the nut grass which continually overtook the blue couch which had been planted. The Bundaberg Daily Times reported that "...as fast as the nut grass is removed it grows again, and constitutes a continual nuisance."<sup>1</sup>

### LIGHTING THE PARK

The generous donation by Horace Buss inspired another donation towards the new park. This time it was in the form of a letter to Council from the Electric Supply Co. offering to erect lights in the park so as to prevent the aesthetic of the park being spoilt by overhead wires. The lights were to be iron or concrete standards with fancy lanterns and 100 watt lamps. This offer was

accepted and in October 1930 the Parks and Electric Lighting Committee, along with the manager of the Electric Light Co., inspected the park to ascertain where the three lights were to be placed.

***"...the park was illuminated by three powerful lights, and presented a very pleasing spectacle."***

On 15 December 1930 the Bundaberg Daily Times reported that the standards had been erected the previous day and that on that evening "...the park was illuminated by three powerful lights, and presented a very pleasing spectacle."

### OFFICIAL OPENING...& CLOSURE!

Buss Park was officially opened on Saturday 20 December 1930. Alderman J. Grimwood, Chairman of the Parks Committee, was charged with officially opening the park and the ceremony took place near the central display fountain. During his address Alderman Grimwood officially named the

park "Buss Park" in honour of Mr Horace Buss whose donation had made the transformation possible. Horace Buss, who was present at the ceremony, remarked that he was happy the park was appreciated.





Some minor controversy surrounded the opening of the park due to the decision to keep the park closed from dusk until dawn in order to prevent vandalism. In the Editorial of the Bundaberg Daily Times on the morning of the opening ceremony the Editor asserted his view that the park should be kept open so as to discourage vandalism by populating the park with honest citizens.



Ald. Grimwood in his address to those at the opening ceremony commented upon the above criticism in the press. He promised that once the park was established it would be opened at night. He stated that "...parents should impress upon their children the need for good behavior in a public park, and if this were done it would not be necessary to keep the park closed during the hours of darkness."

## CHANGES TO THE PARK



Buss Park would not remain exactly as it was designed in 1929-30. Over time some features would be removed and new features would be added. One of the first changes involved the sundial. This would make way, in 1936, for a memorial to Bert Hinkler. A paved approach to the Memorial would also be added.



It is believed that the rock wall surrounding Buss Park was removed sometime after construction of the Civic Centre was completed in 1962, and the hedge which also edged the park was removed in October 1963. This was done in order to open up the park and give a better view from the street. Council also elected to widen the gateway at the Maryborough Street gate to Buss Park in October 1963 after the gardens curator, Mr E. G. Wise, recommended it be removed as it narrowed the pathway.

## HINKLER MEMORIAL – LOCAL APATHY

The Hinkler Memorial Fund, to which the people of Australia could contribute, with the aim of establishing a suitable memorial to the beloved aviator in Bundaberg, was set up after Hinkler's death in 1933. The response however, especially in Bundaberg, was sluggish.

Only twelve people attended a meeting, called to discuss the form the memorial should take, on 19 June 1934. A Mr W. G. Gibson compared the lack of interest from Bundaberg in honouring their local hero to the wonderful tribute the Italian people had made and stated, "I cannot help feeling that Bundaberg has not done what it should have done towards this memorial."

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The suggestion was put forward by Rev. A. H. Osborn of Christ Church at this same meeting that the memorial be erected in Buss Park and that a competition be called for designs. At another public meeting on 10 July 1934 these suggestions were endorsed. It was decided that the memorial would be placed on the site where the sundial stood and that it would be a symbolic memorial rather than a likeness of Hinkler.

When the fund closed on June 30 1934 it contained less than £500. Over half of the donations had come from outside Bundaberg, and both Gooburru and Woongarra Shires had declined to donate. The Bundaberg Daily Times, on 6 July 1934, published a copy of the scathing article which had appeared in that week's issue of

the Australian Women's Weekly, castigating the lack of local donations and local interest in the project.

The Queensland Government had offered to match the donations collected on a £1 for £1 basis. Even though not quite £500 had been raised, the Mayor advised in the public meeting on 10 July, that the Government would be asked to match the donations with a grant of £500.

The Memorial, in the form of a "Greek Temple", or perhaps more accurately a "Grecian altar", was officially unveiled on Thursday 30 July 1936 by the Governor-General Lord Gowrie. Made of dark grey axed granite from the Gracemere quarry near Rockhampton, its base measures 26ft 8in by 19ft 2in and it is 6ft in height. Mr R. P. Cummings of Brisbane was the architect and it was erected by Mr A. A. Armitage of Bourong Street. On it are three inscriptions detailing Hinkler's career.

## PICTURESQUE

Thanks to our civic forefathers Buss Park was transformed from an "eyesore" to "*...one of the most picturesque little spots in the city.*"

Many thanks to Picture Bundaberg contributors for images in this article

### **Peta Browne**

- *Bundaberg Library*

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