

History Bytes

SALTER OVAL, BUNDABERG



*Queensland Country v. South Africa,
25-26 November 1952
(bun01512).*

Salter Oval is the name of the main oval at the West End Recreation Reserve bordered by Takalvan, Walker, White, and Avoca Streets. Surprisingly the reserve started life early on in Bundaberg's history - the *Bundaberg & Mount Perry Mail* of 24 April 1883 mentioned:

It is some years since the Progress Committee...induced the Government to proclaim a reserve at the West End as a battle ground for the aspiring willow knights. Since then...no action has been taken to utilise the reserve or reclaim it from its primitive state. It is now proposed to get this land vested in trustees...

Trustees for the 10-acre reserve were appointed by 17 February 1885 according to a report in the same newspaper.

In the 1920s the Bundaberg Cricket Association began talking about the need for turf wickets. Not everyone appeared to be in favour and the costs to lay and maintain the wickets were of concern. Towards the end of the 1929/30 season the Mayor called a public meeting to discuss providing turf wickets but the response was underwhelming. The Bundaberg Cricket Association decided to provide materials and source donations for two turf wickets and one practice wicket. They were of the belief turf wickets were necessary for quality cricket to develop in Bundaberg.

These turf wickets were officially opened by the Mayor, Alderman B. McLean, on Saturday 15 October 1932. A game between North Queensland and Bundaberg had begun on Friday 14 October, and the opening ceremony took place at 2pm on Saturday during a break in play. It was the first time a turf wicket was used in Bundaberg.

Unfortunately, after all the effort that went into establishing the turf wickets they were allowed to deteriorate, and the Association went back to concrete wickets during the second world war. But the Bundaberg Cricket Association rallied again and had new turf wickets laid for the 1948/49 season. They were used for the first time about a month into the season on 23-24 October 1948.

*...a battle ground for the
aspiring willow knights...*

Plans were made to have the Queensland State team come to Bundaberg to play the Bundaberg side on 21 November 1948 as an official opening for the turf wickets. But first they had to guarantee gate takings of £110. Bundaberg got behind their cricketers and the match took place. Mr G.A. Buss, Patron of the Bundaberg Cricket Association, declared the new wickets open after the lunch break.



Salter Oval in background, with Australian Army tents in foreground during flood relief efforts, Feb 2013. (Photo: Bundaberg Regional Council).

West End/Salter Oval has played host to a few international teams too...

25-26 Nov 1952: Queensland Country v. South Africa

18 Dec 1982: Queensland v. New Zealand

29 Dec 1991: Queensland v. West Indies

1 Jan 1995: Queensland v. Zimbabwe

John Robert Salter

Salter Oval was named in honour of John Robert Salter who was born in Torbanlea c1905. After the end of his schooling he worked in the Burrum coal mines before moving to Bundaberg around 1940. He owned and operated Salter's Cordial Works on the corner of Walla and Woondooma Streets (currently the site of The Attic Furniture) for twenty years.



Salter's Cordial Works, Corner Walla & Woondooma Streets (bun01368).

Salter was very civic-minded and involved in the community. He was first elected to Council in 1949 and went on to become Deputy Mayor in 1958, a position he held for six years. He ran for Mayor in 1964 but was defeated. In 1960 Salter ran for the State seat of Bundaberg against E.J. Walsh and only very narrowly missed winning the seat.

Apart from his political interests Salter was also very involved in cultural and sporting organisations. In the 1930s in Howard he had played in the brass section of the Howard Town Band and he continued his musical pursuits in Bundaberg as vice-president of both the Municipal and Federal bands. He was also actively involved with cricket, rugby league, diving, women's basketball, bowls, and the marching girls association.

He passed away at the Bundaberg Hospital on 30 July 1969, aged 64.

Peta Browne, Bundaberg Regional Libraries

References:

Bundaberg Daily Times, 14-17 Oct 1932.

Bundaberg Daily News & Mail, 15-17 Oct 1932.

Bundaberg News Mail, Aug-Nov 1948; Oct-Nov 1952; 31 Jul - 1 Aug 1969.

Bundaberg: a history from the newspapers 1862-1903, Volume 3. Bundaberg Genealogical Association, 2009.

Rackemann, Nev. 1997. *It's not 'over' yet: a history of the Bundaberg Cricket Association, Bundaberg Cricket Association Centenary 1897-1997*. Nev Rackemann and the Bundaberg Cricket Association.

The Cricket Archive, <http://stats.thecricketer.com/Grounds/52.html>

Photos:

Picture Bundaberg, except where noted.