

LOCAL HISTORY FEATURE

Lakeland Playland

Drive across the Causeway at Bargara today, and on either side is water—beach on one side, lake on the other. Jump back to the eighties, and instead of just a lake, there was a thriving leisure area, with jet boats, paddle boats, mini golf and a water slide under construction.

This was Lakeland Playland, and no doubt many Bundaberg residents will have fond memories of taking their children and visitors on a paddle round the lake.

Beginnings

When the Causeway was originally built in the late 60s, water gradually built up in the lake area, killing off the mangroves as the mudflats developed. The Bargara Golf Club owned a small area of land at the southern end of the Causeway, and also the creek area near Kelly's Beach. Former owner Garnet Buss had given the Moneys Creek property to the Golf Club to be used for recreational purposes.

Bundaberg Sign writer Lynn Price had built a Jet Boat which ran in only 12 inches of water, and together with partner Gordon Dick approached the Golf Club to lease the mudflats and lake area by the Causeway for the boats. They were given a 10 year lease on the condition that all improvements needed were to be at their own cost.

In 1972 Lynn and Gordon began preparations for their fun park Lakeland Playland. The lake area was cleared of all the dead mangroves, leaving the healthy ones in place. Part of the bank was bulldozed and leveled to make a car park, leaving the higher ground for a Kiosk and shed, in case of flooding. Large boulders were also relocated on the southern side of the Causeway, beside the car park edge of the road.





Motor Boats and Paddle Boats

The clearing of the lake area and adjacent banks took until early 1973, and Lakeland Playland opened operating one motorboat and a rescue boat. The business was open each weekend, and during school and public holidays. The first boats on the lake were Lynn's motor boats, which had been tested by friends and family in the surf at Kelly's Beach to make sure they were thoroughly seaworthy.



Lynn Price gradually built up his fleet with five more motor boats. Each of the boats had to pass a safety inspection by the Department of Harbour and Marines, as well as conform to standards and be registered. Lynn then expanded his fleet by adding four Paddle Boats for people who enjoyed a more leisurely cruise around the lake. Like the motor boats, all the paddle boats were designed and built by Lynn.



Doughnuts and Chips

The Kiosk was constructed and opened for business in Easter 1974, providing customers with, as you can see by the sign, doughnuts, hot chips and soft drinks. In addition, tourists could purchase ice creams, milkshakes, sandwiches, pies and potato chips. The most popular offering though was by far the doughnuts. Well before the days of automated doughnut machines, these doughnuts were pushed out into the oil and turned and removed by hand, then dusted with sugar.



The Kiosk was at this time the only fast food outlet at Kelly's Beach, and proved a popular spot with both beachgoers and those on the lake. The area around the Causeway was not as densely inhabited as it is now, and many Lakeland customers strolled down the beach to buy fast food, as did passing traffic over the Causeway.





Anyone for Golf?

Once the motor boats and paddle boats were running smoothly, it was decided to add another tourist attraction to the Lakeland Playland area—a Mini Golf.

Like the boats, this was designed by Lynn and Gordon and built by both men over a period of months with the help of assorted family members. To encourage families to spend time at the Playland, two barbecues were also constructed for public use—one in the Mini Golf area and another in front of the boating area.



Once the Mini Golf was open for business and proving popular, Lynn and Gordon investigated what other attractions they could add to the Playland area. An obvious choice was a waterslide, and once again, the men looked at design and construction with a view to building it themselves.



Competition

By now it was the 1980s, and vending vans had been allowed to set up and sell hot food on both sides of Kellys Creek. This proved to be serious competition for Lakeland Playland, with tourists preferring to buy at closer vendors rather than walk across the Causeway to the Kiosk.

In addition, the lease for the property had gradually increased as Bargara became more popular with families. Both factors meant that the Playland was not as profitable as it once was, and before the waterslide could be finished, the decision was made to close the business forever.

After 15 years of bringing enjoyment to hundreds of families living or visiting Bargara, Lakeland Playland finally closed in 1987. Today, there is no sign that the golf, kiosk or waterslide was ever there—only the cleared lake remains as a testament of Lynn and Ailsa Price and Gordon Dick's hard work.

Sue Gammon

Many thanks to Lynn and Ailsa Price for information and photographs about Lakeland Playland.

