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Captain George Burrows – a Pillar of the Buderim Community

by Bill Lavarack and Helene Cronin

George Edward Burrows (13/11/1875 – 17/8/1944) is described in his obituary as a ‘well known and highly esteemed Buderim personality’. Always known as ‘Captain Burrows’, he was involved in numerous community groups and played an important role in Buderim life between the Wars. He was born in 1875 in Poona (now known as ‘Pune’) India, the son of British Indian Army Brigadier General George Reynolds Scott Burrows (1827 – 1917). He was educated at Wellington College (England). After joining the British Army he served in India, retiring from the service in 1910 with the rank of Captain. He married Aileen O’Dwyer (10/4/1885 – 7/8/1954) of South Brisbane, in Brisbane on 24 March 1911.¹ The couple moved to Buderim in early 1912.²

In 1912 he purchased a fruit farm which he named ‘Mt Verno’³. This was situated on what is now Mayfield Street.

The Burrows house, ‘Mt Verno’ about 1915. Captain George and Mrs Aileen Burrows pictured.



The house, which still stands in modified form, is behind the present Manawee Nursery. The main crop would have been citrus. Along with almost everyone else on Buderim, he was a farmer and he was prominent in the Queensland Farmer’s Union. This was just one of numerous community groups on which he served.

¹ *Figaro*, 30 March, 1911.

² *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 25 August, 1944, page 5, Obituary Captain G.E. Burrows.

³ Mt Verno is a snow capped mountain in Greece

During the First World War, many men in Buderim and other places volunteered for active service, but were rejected as unfit. George Burrows, although in his late thirties and a former Army officer, was one of those rejected on medical grounds. There was widespread public outrage at men who did not volunteer for war service, and those rejected were sometimes unfairly subject to public abuse. In response to this, the Buderim honour board in the War Memorial Hall commemorating those who served, was updated in August 1919 to include 18 men (including 'G. Burrows') who volunteered but were rejected as medically unfit.



In 1917 all was not going favourably for the allies in the War and there was fierce debate in Australia about the introduction of conscription (e.g. see anti-conscription poster left). Referenda on the matter were held in 1916 and 1917 and both were won by the 'anti-conscription' lobby. Meetings for or against were held in many places including Buderim. In one such meeting held in Ernest Middleton's Tea Rooms, Captain Burrows was in the chair and spoke in favour of conscription despite some loud interjections from the rear of the hall. The meeting strongly supported his position,¹

Captain Gorge Burrows had wide-ranging interests. He was heavily involved in community affairs, sport, art and music. He held positions in the following: the Buderim Show, Buderim Branch of the RACQ, the Buderim Progress Association, he was president of the Maroochy Council of Progress Associations & Affiliated Associations in 1938, secretary of the Maroochy Philharmonic Society, secretary of the Buderim Benefit Committee, president of the Buderim Tennis Club, secretary of the Lilley Branch of the Queensland Farmers Union. In 1914 he was appointed as a Magistrate for Buderim Mountain.² Sport and music were his passions. He and his wife Aileen were a major force in the Nambour Philharmonic Society in the 1930s and he was secretary for several years. He also formed a local Buderim group known as the Regency Players Jazz Orchestra which played at dances and concerts in the School of Arts.

As a sportsman he was a long term player for the local tennis club and was president in 1924, As an example of tennis on Buderim and the associated social life, there is a report in the *Nambour Chronicle* of 5 November 1926 page 3, of a match on Saturday 30 October between the Buderim Central Tennis Club and Bli Bli. On the Sunday of the same weekend Buderim played a match against Mr E. Thurlowe's team from Brisbane on the court at Birdwood House.

Although usually a player for the local team, on this occasion Captain Burrows was not one of the Buderim players. However he was leader of the Regency Players Jazz Orchestra which provided the music for a benefit dance for the Tennis Club on the Saturday night. A sum of £10 was raised.



Building a new bowling green near Captain Burrows' house in 1919 (See below). Note the large boulders that had to be removed to get a level surface. Almost certainly Captain Burrows on the left. Photo taken from Burrows' house. Thanks to Mark McCudden for this image which originally came from the Queensland State Heritage Library.

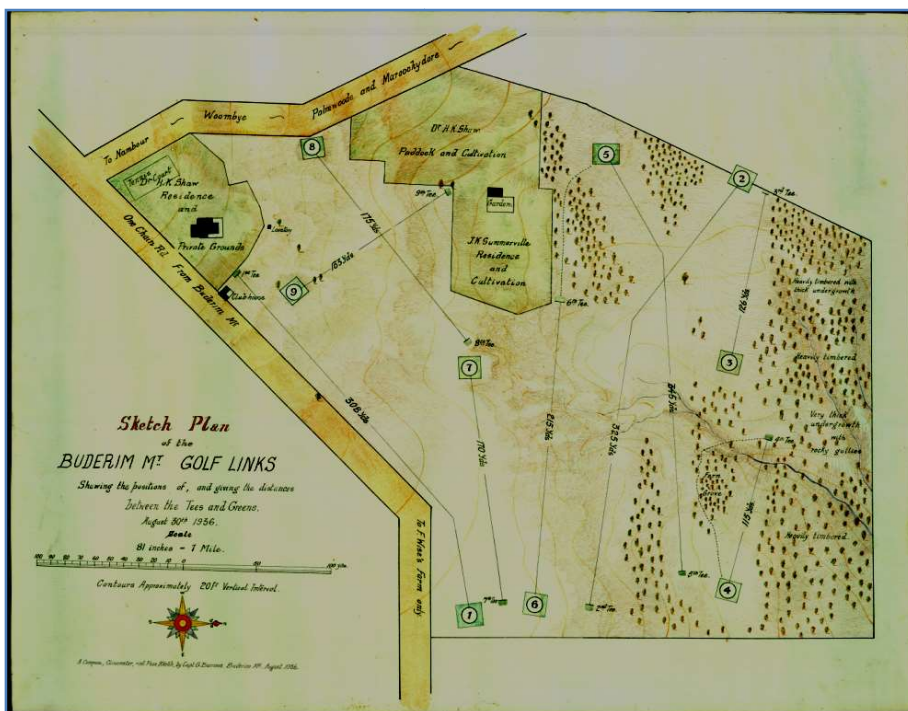
¹ *Courier Mail*, 14 December, 1917, Buderim, 13 December 1917.

² *The Week (Brisbane)*, 9 October, 1914, New Magistrates Quarterly List.

Captain George Burrows attempted to start a lawn bowling club on land near his house (see above). A meeting to form a bowls club on Buderim was held in March 1919 and Mr T. Thompson was elected president and Captain G. Burrows secretary. The green was built on Captain Burrows' land beside his house, situated behind the present site of Manawee Nursery. Work on the green started in 1919 but it was necessary to blast large rocks which were just below the soil surface and progress was slow (see photo on previous page). The *Nambour Chronicle* of August 15 1919 reports on poor attendance at working bees to build the green. On Saturday September 20 a meeting was told

that the earthworks were complete and all that was needed was rain. The joining fee was set at £2/2/- with an annual fee of £1/1/-. The green was completed and a practice match was held on Saturday 6 February 1921.

However the club seems to have petered out as on February 10 1923, a meeting was held to wind up the business of the club. Later the cleared area was used as a tennis court.



While Captain Burrows is only occasionally on record as a golfer, he became involved when the Buderim Golf Club was forced to move from its location on Gloucester Road to land made available by Dr H. K. Shaw on his property 'Marimba'. He demonstrated significant surveying and drafting skills by preparing a large-scale contour plan of the course (see above).¹ The extremely steep nature of the area must have involved considerable expertise in surveying. The original plan was donated to the Buderim Historical Society by the Neuendorf family.

Above left: plan of the new golf course drawn by Captain Burrows in 1936.



Captain Burrows and Aileen were dedicated music lovers.

A musical evening at Burrows' house. Left to right: Bill Bell, Bob Nelson, Captain Burrows.

They regularly attended meetings of the Maroochy Philharmonic Society in Nambour in the 1930s. Captain Burrows was deputy conductor, orchestral, of the Society in 1933 and, from

¹ This beautiful map can be seen on the wall of Pioneer Cottage on Buderim. The small scale map presented above does not give due credit to the full-size map in Pioneer Cottage.

1931 to 1934 (possibly for a longer period), he was general secretary. The Society performed light operas such as Gilbert and Sullivan, at Nambour and at other local centres including Woombye, Palmwoods, Maleny and Buderim. On one occasion Captain Burrows with his wife Aileen and Mrs H. Spencer Roberts performed as an instrumental trio, receiving a great reception.¹ Fellow Buderim residents Misses Kitty and Belle Crosby were also prominent in several productions of the Society.

Another talent of this extraordinary man was painting with oils. He regularly exhibited in the Buderim Show, on one occasion in 1921 winning three first prizes including two for oil paintings. Does anyone have a Captain Burrows painting?

Beverley Lavarack (then Beverley Bell) lived with her parents, as a young girl, in a house on Gloucester Road behind the Burrows' residence. She clearly remembers several visits to the widowed Mrs Burrows, on one occasion to listen to a crackling short wave radio broadcast of Queen Elizabeth's wedding in 1947. One of her lasting memories of the Burrows' house is of a tiger skin including the head, complete with glass eyes. Also the, then unusual, aroma of coffee brewing,²



Captain George Burrows and Mrs Aileen Burrows. Left: about 1920; Right: about 1940.

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Captain George Edward Burrows passed away on 17 August 1944 following a sudden collapse. He was buried in the Buderim Lawn Cemetery on 25 August after a service at St John's Church of England, Nambour. Mrs Aileen Burrows passed away on 7 August 1954 in Brisbane and, after a service at St Joseph's Church Nambour, was buried with her late husband in the Buderim Lawn Cemetery. A plaque commemorating 'Captain Burrows late 2nd East Lancashire Regiment' is attached to the grave.

Acknowledgements

Most of the photographs are from the collection of the Buderim Historical Society except as detailed in the text.

Some of the information on Captain Burrows' life was obtained from Helene Cronin's, *Buderim's Great War Effort 1914 – 1918*, publ. in 2015 by Helene Cronin, Buderim.

Other details were sourced from the National Library of Australia's online database 'Trov'.

¹ *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 17 April, 1931, page 6, Splendid Reception at Palmwoods.

² Although Buderim had been noted for the production of coffee beans in the past, coffee was not a common beverage amongst locals at the time.