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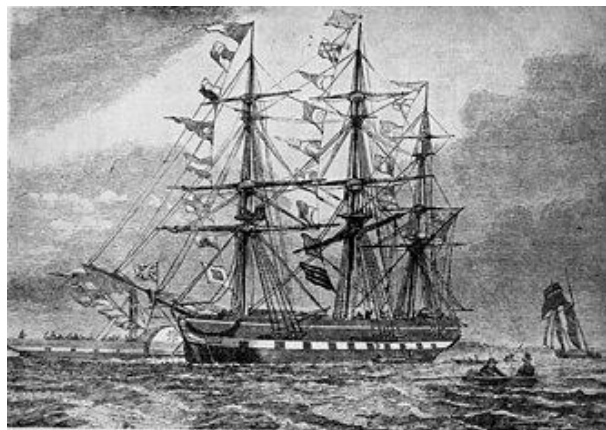
The Fielding Family of Buderim

by Bill Lavarack and Helene Cronin OAM

The name 'Fielding' is well known in Buderim's history. The family's first Australian member was John Fielding who migrated to Queensland in 1849 and to Buderim in about 1874. The family was to be involved in sugar milling, farming, real estate and shop keeping on Buderim for well over half a century. In this account we will be looking mostly at the four individuals who had most to do with Buderim history over three generations.

John Fielding was born in 1826 in Clitheroe, Lancashire. His parents were Thomas and Alice Fielding of Clitheroe. In 1848 John Fielding aged 23, boarded the SS *Fortitude* of 608 tons at Gravesend, England for the journey to Australia.

In 1848-9 the *Fortitude* was the first of three ships chartered by the Rev. Dr John Dunmore Lang to bring free immigrants to Brisbane, arriving on 21 January 1849.



Eagle Farm, Brisbane, Moreton Bay.
9th April, 1849
"All that Dr. Lang has said about the geniality of the climate and the fertility of the soil is perfectly true. There is no doubt but the cotton plant will grow amazingly. There are not two opinions on this subject, and as soon as the requisite machinery can be got for dressing it, there is no doubt that it will be entered into with spirit.
(Signed) "WILLIAM BULCOCK."

The Argus (Melbourne), 20 Feb. 1850.

Captained by John Christmas, she had departed Gravesend on 14 September 1848, arriving at Moreton Bay on 21 January 1849. The journey had been a long one and there were eight deaths during the passage (three adults and five children), and four births. This may sound tragic, but was not exceptional when compared with the voyage of the Ballinger family on SS *Glentanner* which had 23 deaths in 1850.¹ Fortitude Valley (where many of the immigrants settled), is named in honour of SS *Fortitude*.



Life on board the SS *Fortitude*. The caption reads 'Emigrants at Dinner'

The *Moreton Bay Courier* on 27 January, 1849 on page 2, reported that:

The Fortitude — This long-expected vessel arrived in the Bay on Saturday last, after a tedious voyage of 128 days from Gravesend, during the last twenty of which she has been coming from Bass's Straits. The immigrants, who have been placed under control of the Government, and rationed by the contractor consist of 82 male and 77 female adults and 97 children under fourteen years of age : in all, 256 souls.

It is likely John Fielding and Jane Bulcock already knew each other, or maybe it was a shipboard romance, but in any case, they were married in Brisbane on 18 May 1849. John and Jane selected land near Fortitude Valley at Eagle Farm and settled down.² They were to produce 11 children over the next 21 years - Elizabeth Alice, Jane, Naomi, Anne Wilkinson, Emma Greenwood, Thomas, Elizabeth Grandige, Ida Ellen, Robert Alfred, Herbert Victor and Charles Percival who died as young child in 1877. Worthy of mention is Robert who was killed in action in France aged 43 on 29 November, 1916 during the First World War. The second youngest, (Herbert 1870-1947), will be a major player in the story of the Fielding family on Buderim. It seems that Joseph Dixon was a regular visitor to the Fielding family at Eagle Farm in the 1870s and he married the oldest Fielding girl, Elizabeth, in 1873.

¹ This was reported in Occasional Paper no 35.

² Genealogy Sunshine Coast, 2008, *People of Maroochy*, Genealogy Sunshine Coast, P.O. Box 1051, Nambour Queensland, 4560, 190 pages, page 66.

Nineteen year old Jane Bulcock, who we have already met, was travelling with her brother William and his wife Margaret in 1849. Sadly, William drowned six years later in 1855:

William Bulcock, a 36 year old farmer of Eagle Farm who had arrived on the 'Fortitude' in the September of 1848, had gone to fetch fresh water and didn't return. His hat was found floating on top of the water pool, and his body at the bottom in only two feet of water. This unfortunate young man suffered from epileptic fits and, at the Coroner's Inquest, it was thought he had taken a fit, fell into the water and drowned. William lies in eternal rest in one of the earliest known graves at this cemetery.¹

Joseph Dixon was the first to select land on Buderim in 1870 and grew sugar cane on the eastern end of Buderim Mountain. In 1875 John Fielding and his son in law Joseph Dixon, went into partnership and purchased Steven Fountain's abandoned sugar mill at Burpengary. They moved it by sea to Mooloolah Heads, then by wagon to Buderim and erected it on what is now Mill Road. John Fielding travelled back and forth between Brisbane and Buderim, staying with the Dixons when on Buderim.

Right: There is some doubt about this image which is labelled 'No.441 J. Fielding's home "Marimba"'. The setting fits well for a photo taken from Orme Road, with Mt. Coolum in the background, but the house is at lower altitude than the photographer and that does not seem right. Possibly it is John Fielding's 'slab hut' and not 'Marimba'. See next paragraph. Photo: BHS.

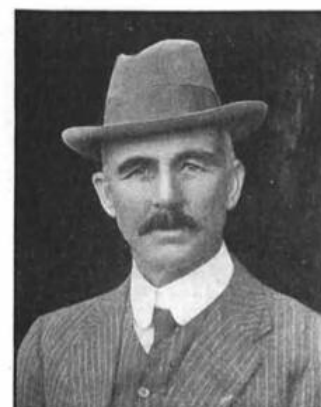


In the mid 1870s John obtained land by selection and by purchase on the northern slopes of Buderim, including the farm of pioneer Dan Cogill, and moved his family to Buderim. Within ten years he owned 500 acres of forested land on Buderim which he cleared and, on part of which, planted sugar cane.² He also farmed bananas and citrus. He built a slab hut on his land then, in 1885, he built a house named 'Marimba' on the corner of the present Jones and Orme Roads.

John Fielding died at 'Marimba' on 29 August 1890 aged 65 and was buried in the Buderim Cemetery.

Jane Fielding died on 15 September 1901 aged 72 and was buried in the Nundah Cemetery in Brisbane. On her death John Fielding's remains were taken to Brisbane and placed beside those of his wife.

Herbert Victor Fielding, commonly known as 'Bert', was born on 10 May 1870 while the family was living at Eagle Farm. Initially he worked as a teacher, then at the Government Savings Bank in Brisbane, but moved to Buderim to manage the family farm when his father, John, died in 1890. He lived with his mother in 'Marimba' and set about learning how to farm sugar cane and bananas and how to run cattle. After several years he had the largest banana plantation on the Mountain and, over the years, the family prospered, branching into citrus and coffee growing and removing the debt that had been on the property. Bert married Amelia Rose Bines (21 April 1878 - 18 February 1977) in 1904 and they had four children: William Norman, Herbert Francis, John Mervyn and Alice Roslyn.³



MR. HERBERT VICTOR FIELDING.

¹ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 31 March, 1855, page 2. (The cemetery mentioned is Nundah Cemetery.)

² *Genealogy Sunshine Coast*, 2008, page 66.

³ *Genealogy Sunshine Coast*, 2008, page 67.

In 1914 Bert built the large architect-designed 'Buderim House' near the original house, but having received an offer he could not refuse, he sold it to Walter Oakes when near completion. This included the associated 45 acre banana plantation. The selling price was £90 per acre, excluding the house.¹ Walter Frank Oakes was a successful and well known engineer and builder of bridges from Lismore in New South Wales. Queensland Government records show Walter Oakes insisted that, before the 1915 purchase was finalised, a number of changes had to be made to the

weatherboard home. These included the addition of a tower, flagpole and a leadlight panel in the front door that read 'Buderim House' – three changes that still exist 100 years later. Among the many bridges Oakes designed and built were one over the McIntyre River at Goondiwindi and one over the Maroochy River at Yandina. This work kept him busy and he was often away, but his wife lived at Buderim House and the banana farm was leased out. An interesting story is given in a *Nambour Chronicle* article which states that Oakes used dynamite in each hole in which a banana sucker was planted, to loosen the soil.² It seems this was not successful possibly because it destroyed beneficial soil micro-organisms.

In August 1917 Oakes put Buderim House on the market. It didn't sell, as in July 1918, he advertised it again: *SALE OR LEASE, Buderim Mountain, new residence, 8 rooms, sleeping out verandas, lookout, gas, orchard. Banana plantation or grass land if required.*



Buderim House 1970.



Clitheroe House, possibly about 1930.

In 1914 Bert built 'Clitheroe House' which was a replica of 'Buderim House' but without the tower. It was named after his father's home town in England and became the family home. Both large houses built by Bert Fielding, are still in use today.

BUDERIM MOUNTAIN,

FIELDING ESTATE.

EASTER SALE OF TOWNSHIP ALLOTMENTS AND FARMS.

By Public Auction, on the Grounds on Easter Monday, April 13th, at 2 p.m.

20 Allotments, one quarter acre each, 4 Small Farms, 2½ acres each. Situated right in the centre of Buderim, surrounded by Orange Groves and Banana Plantations, the Beauty Spot of Queensland.

Close to Railway Station, School, School of Arts, and right where the Township of Buderim must grow. No place in Queensland has more to recommend it for health and tourists' resort, or for the city man's country residence than Buderim Mountain. Elevated (bracing atmosphere), yet overlooking the Ocean, and only about three miles from Maroochy, the popular seaside resort, and 67 miles from Brisbane when the tramline to Buderim now in course of construction is completed.

These Allotments are centrally situated, are Ideal Business or Building Sites, and they offer to investors the opportunity of acquiring Property that will become very valuable in the near future.

TERMS: One-fifth Cash; Balance, One, Two, and Three Years at 5 per cent.

LITHOS. ON APPLICATION.

MARTIN & BOURNE,

The *Brisbane Courier*, 21 March 1914. This illustrates Bert's growing business dealings.

¹ Anon, *History of 'Buderim House.'* Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser, 7 Dec., 1934, page 12.

² *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 'History of Buderim House'. 7 December, 1934, page 12.

FOR PRIVATE SALE.

"BUDERIM HOUSE,"

BUDERIM MOUNTAIN.

ONE OF THE FINEST GENTLEMAN'S RESIDENCES IN QUEENSLAND.

Sub. 1 of Re-sub. 2 of Sub. 3 of Por. 47, containing 25 Acres 1 Rood 14 Perches, with Magnificent Gentleman's Residence, replete with every modern convenience, artistically designed, situated on the summit of Buderim Mountain, commanding one of the finest panoramic ocean and mountain scenes in the world. The residence is built of the very best material, and consists of Large Combined Sitting and Dining Room, 25 x 16; Breakfast-room, 16 x 12; Front Bedroom, 16 x 14; No. 2 Bedroom, 14 x 14; No. 3 Bedroom, 14 x 12; No. 4 Bedroom, 14 x 10; Office, 10 x 10; Lobby, 12 x 12; Kitchen, 12 x 12; Bathroom, 8 x 6; very wide verandas on three sides, that on the west side being closed in by leadlight windows; beautiful leadlight designs throughout the house. Underneath the House is the Laundry, 40 x 16, Cement Floor and Drains, Brick Chimney, with set-in Copper and Tubs. Water and Air Gas laid on throughout the house. There is also an Outlook Tower, 8 x 8, which commands a view that would be hard to beat anywhere. Turf Lawn and Nice Garden, with about 1 acre of natural scrub. There are also large Fruit-packing and Case-making Rooms, 3 Stall Stables, Man's Cottage, Cow Bail and Yards, &c., all designed by architect, and built by Brisbane Contractor. CULTIVATION.—18 to 20 Acres under Bananas, as follows: About 4 acres, 3 years old, in full bearing; about 9 acres 18 months old, in full bearing; about 6 acres, 9 months old, will be bearing in the Spring. This Plantation has been laid out with great care and uniformity, and is so designed as to enable easy cultivation. It is almost level, there being just enough fall to ensure ideal drainage. The property has a long frontage to main Buderim road, and is splendidly suited for subdivision. There is permanent spring water, suitable for irrigation. The Buderim Tramway connects with North Coast Railway at Palmwoods, and runs within 1½ miles of "Buderim House" and Beautiful Ocean Beach only 4 miles distant.

PRICE, £6500. TERMS ARRANGED.

For Further Particulars and Arrangements to Inspect, see

W. R. MOON, FARM SPECIALIST

(As Sole Agent),

33 TOWN HALL, BRISBANE.

(Any Agent introducing Buyer will be recognised for half the net Commission.)

This advertisement from *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 August 1917, placed by Oakes, gives a good description of what was then the ultimate house on Buderim.

Bert had a dairy farm and piggery between the school and 'Clitheroe House'.¹

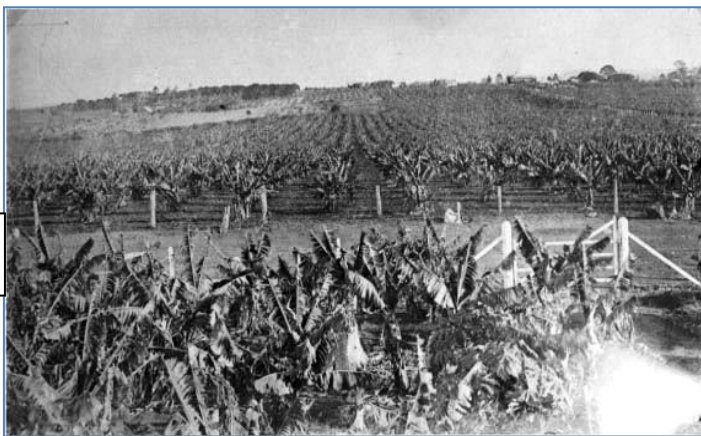
Around 1917 Herbert sold 'Marimba' to John Hector Gore-Jones from Childers, who was a cane inspector for CSR's Mill. At 'Buderim House' Oakes did not make a success of the plantation and sold it back to Hebert in 1925 and he rented it out, before selling to H.J. Murphy in 1927. In 1932 'Marimba', a Buderim landmark, was sold to Dr Hugh Shaw who lived there and used a part as his surgery.

'Buderim House' was used to house the Duke of Gloucester and his party on the royal visit in 1934.

¹ This statement made in a manuscript document about the Fielding family, probably by Stuart Weir, no date, held by Buderim Historical Society, page 2.

‘Clitheroe’ became the family centre of Bert’s growing farming and real estate business. By 1930 Herbert Fielding was the largest land holder and developer on Buderim.¹

Herbert Fielding’s banana plantation.
(Photo BHS).



In 1925 C.W.F. Kleeman owned a bakery near the corner of Gloucester Road and Main Street which he sold to ‘Crack and Co’, a company consisting of Norman Fielding and Alf Crack, with Herbert Fielding as the ‘silent partner’ who financed this purchase.² On 25 March 1926 the bakery narrowly survived a fire which destroyed the adjoining store. Between 1926 and 1930, there was no store on the corner of Gloucester Road, partly because of the nearby John Waters’ store. In June 1929 James Salway purchased the corner block from Sion Singh and in August that year subdivided it and sold part (37.9 perches) to Crack & Co. (including Bert Fielding). In 1930 Crack & Co built a general store on the corner. This was to become known to the locals as ‘the Top Shop’ and was operated by Norman Fielding.³ The bakery was then in a small building attached to the side of the general store and operated by Alf Crack.

In 1934 Herbert Fielding purchased a building which, almost half a century earlier, was J.K. Burnett’s original Buderim store, which had opened in 1887. Bert moved the building back and opened a new store on the Main Street site near the corner of Ballinger Road. Norman Fielding took over this store from his father and it became known to the locals as ‘the Bottom Shop’, as opposed to the store on the corner of Gloucester Road which was ‘the Top Shop’. The Bottom Shop was largely operated as a convenience for Fielding’s customers from the western end of Buderim, who didn’t want to walk up the hill to the Top Shop. This included workers on lunch break from the Ginger Factory.

In the 1950s Norman sold the Bottom Shop to T.E. Woodriff who opened ‘Woodriff’s Electrical Goods Store’ there. It was then sold to Tom and Joyce Simper who opened Buderim’s first newsagency on the site. About this time Norman Fielding built a row of shops to the east of this shop and made them available for lease.



Left: The ‘Top Shop’. Locals in front of the Top Shop in 1935. Left to right – Ben Ede, Eddie Bell, Len Sorensen, Laurie Bell, Tom Atkinson, Rick Sorensen, Billy Iscak, Henry Iscak. *Photo Glynda Jones,*
Right: The bottom Shop (with an awning) and the small ES&A Bank beside it. About 1960.
(*Photo: Buderim Historical Society.*)

¹This statement made in a manuscript document about the Fielding family, probably by Stuart Weir, no date, held by Buderim Historical Society.

² *Brisbane Courier*, April 29, 1925, p. 11.

³ Bill Lavarack and Helene Cronin, 2023, *Buderim Shops - Central Business Area 1870 to 1970*, Occasional Paper no. 10, page 14.

In 1931 Bert made land straddling Gloucester Road available for lease and a nine hole golf course was established there. However in 1936 he required the land be returned and the course closed. It was replaced by one on nearby steep land owned by Dr H.V. Shaw.¹

Herbert (Bert) Victor Fielding died on 18 February 1947 aged 76 and was buried in Buderim Lawn Cemetery. He played a major part in property development and business on Buderim

Amelia Rose Fielding died on 4 May 1977 aged 99 and was buried beside her husband Bert.

Two of Herbert Fielding's four children lived most of their lives away from Buderim and two were closely associated with the community over the years.

Dr John (Jack) Mervyn Fielding (1910-1995) did not have a major part in the story of Buderim, but made a name for himself as a notable forestry scientist of Buderim origin. He worked extensively in Australia and overseas. A major interest was in the breeding of radiata pine, carrying out pioneering research on tree breeding for which he received the degree of MSc Forestry, and later, the prestigious honour of being awarded a Doctorate in Science (DSc) in 1964. During the War he flew in Beaufighters in the South West Pacific and was shot down and subsequently rescued from the sea. After retirement he returned to Buderim.²

Alice Fielding (1915- 2014) married Dr Lansell Leonard Grimmett. Alice was a talented piano player and a music teacher in her younger years. At one stage she worked as a receptionist for Dr H.V. Shaw. The Grimmetts had four children: John Lansell, Roslyn Edith, Margaret Ruth and David Francis. Alice lived on Buderim in her declining years and died at the age of 98.

Bert Fielding's two Buderim-based sons William Norman and Herbert Francis, led successful, but different lives.

Norman Fielding 1905-1975 (known variously as 'William', 'Bill' or 'Norman') went about his business in the stores passed to him by his father, quietly and efficiently. At Buderim, on 22 April 1942, William Norman enlisted for WWII, joining the 6 Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps on Buderim. He was aged 36 and gave his occupation as Storekeeper & Baker. He was discharged on 12 December 1944.

In 1950 Norman's 'bottom shop' became the centre for The Union Bank of Australia who visited each Friday from 10 to 11:30 am, and Solicitors Messrs Thynne & Goodwin who consulted at the store every Thursday from 1:30 to 3 pm. In addition Norman owned rental houses at Mooloolaba.

Right: Norman Fielding with Sarah Edna 'Dolly' Giesemann, about 1926.



¹ Lavarack, Bill, 2020, *History of Sport in Buderim Revised Edition, the First Hundred Years*, publ. Dr P.S. ('Bill') Lavarack, lavarack@westnet.com.au

² Alan Brown and Ken Aldridge, 2025, 'Fielding, John Mervyn (Jack) (1910–1995)', Obituaries Australia, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/fielding-john-mervyn-jack-18393/text30041>, accessed 26 May 2025.



Left: Norman Fielding between the Giesemann sisters, Tilly on the left, Dolly on the right.

Buderim school children how to swim. Beverley, the wife of author Bill Lavarack, remembers May running learn to swim lessons in the Mooloolah River in the early 1950s near the Fish Board jetty. Mayfield Street is named after May. They had two daughters, Roslyn June and Lynette Ann.

Herbert Francis (Frank) Fielding (1907-2007) lived to be 100 years old. He attended Brisbane Boys College. At his father's insistence he then spent five years working in a bank before returning to work at his real love - farming. He married Gladys Williamson (1915-1998) in 1947 after five years of courtship interrupted by the War. They were devoted Methodists and their church was central to their lives.

Frank was deeply involved in the Buderim community, including being a founder and, for ten years, treasurer of the local Ambulance Committee. He served as a committee member of several community bodies including the Show Society and the School of Arts Committee. He was a keen sportsman and helped establish the Buderim Bowls Club. He played for the Buderim Cricket and Football teams.¹ He was a stalwart of the Buderim Uniting Church.²



Frank Fielding beside the evaporating pan from the original Buderim sugar mill. Photo BHS.

Frank and Gladys lived most of their married lives at 30 Orme Road. A plaque was placed there to commemorate Frank and Gladys Fielding. They had no children.

Herbert Francis (Frank) Fielding lived to five weeks after his 100th birthday, passing away on 2 December 2007, active almost until the last. Both Frank and Gladys were cremated and their ashes scattered near the family home at Orme Road

Gladys Fielding died on 21 August 1998 aged 83. a year after their 50th wedding anniversary.

William Norman Fielding died on 7 April 1975 aged 69 and was buried in the Buderim Cemetery.

Lucy May Fielding died on 13 February 1989 at the age of 74 and was buried beside her husband in the Buderim Cemetery.

¹ Lavarack, Bill, 2020, History of Sport in Buderim Revised Edition, the First Hundred Years, publ. Dr P.S. ('Bill') Lavarack, lavarack@westnet.com.au

² The Uniting Church was formed in 1977 by the merger of the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Union.

FURTHER READING

Anon, *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 7 December 1934, page 12, History of 'Buderim House'.

Anon, no date, *Fielding*, ms 6 pages typewritten text, possibly by Stuart Weir, held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

Helene Cronin, *Timber, Trains Turmoil – A History of Buderim and its Tramway*, 2019, researched, written and published by Helene Cronin OAM for the Buderim – Palmwoods Heritage Tramway Inc., 642 pages.

Genealogy Sunshine Coast, 2008, *People of Maroochy*, Genealogy. Sunshine Coast, P.O. Box 1051, Nambour, Queensland, 4560, 190 pages, pages 66-68 in particular.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Roslyn Bull, daughter of Alice Grimmett, for information about the family after the War. In particular the date of Gladys Fielding's death was 21 August 1989, not 27 August, as recorded on the plaque at the Buderim Cemetery.



Fielding Park, on the corner of Ferguson Avenue and Golf Street, Buderim.