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Buderim's First Houses 1870 to 1900

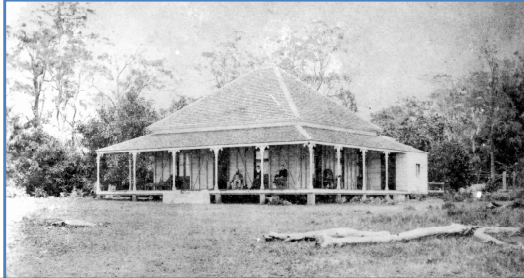
Bill Lavarack

Buderim was surveyed in 1869 and opened for selection in the latter half of that year. Prior to this no one owned property on Buderim, although there had been a timber industry since 1862 when Thomas Petrie cut a red cedar at the top of the hill on what is now Mooloolaba Road. William Pettigrew's cutters had been active felling red cedar, white beech and a few other species and there had been timber camps, but no private ownership of land. The pioneers in 1870 who selected blocks had to be at least 16 years old and a natural-born British subject or naturalised British subject; companies could not apply. Selection was competitive. If the applicant was successful, the selector paid the first year's rent and survey fee. The selection was not capable of being mortgaged or transferred (except in the case of death of the licensee). Selectors were subject to rules that required them to 'improve' the land within a set period of time or forfeit the selection. 'Improving' could involve constructing buildings, clearing timber, creating paddocks, building fences, and commencing farming of crops or animals (these conditions were often specified in great detail). Where a selector held several selections located close together, he could use residence on one as proof of residence for another; however, there were usually limits to the number of selections that a selector could hold in a particular lease area. Having fulfilled all conditions, the selector could apply for freehold of the selection after the payment of the final rent instalment and fees for the survey and the Deed of Grant.

So, for a settler confronted with a densely forested block, an early priority was to provide shelter for himself and his family, if present. In almost all cases this shelter would have been a simple hut made of slabs of timber, rough hewn with a broadaxe and saw, with a shingle roof and earth floor.



The slab hut shown (left) is of the more primitive type. Slab huts were adequate in the early stages, some were even quite comfortable, but soon wives and children arrived and the basic comforts of life were required. Joseph Dixon, the first to select a block, was a little unusual in that he initially built a slab hut in 1870, married in 1873 and constructed what we, today would consider a comfortable house for his wife in about 1883 – so the newly married couple lived in a slab hut for about ten years.



Two early Buderim houses built along similar lines. Several other houses were built on this pattern. Left: J.C. Dixon's 'Canambie' c. early 1880s. Right: J.K. Burnett's house, now Pioneer Cottage 1882.

It is difficult to know today who built the first house on Buderim as opposed to a rough hut. Thomas Ridley's house, built in the Box Street/Cogill Road area in 1872 is sometimes given credit as Buderim's first house, as opposed to a hut. There is a list of early settlers in 1870 and soon after, the first being Joseph Dixon. His house was named 'Canambie' and still is in use. But this is by no means the first house built on Buderim. While Pioneer Cottage and a few others are well documented, often all the records tell us is that, for example 'Thomas Ridley built a house in 1872'. The date is often missing as are the details of the building. There are excellent records for J.K. Burnett's house which consisted of a central hallway with two rooms on each side and surrounded by a wide, open veranda and a detached kitchen. This was a common plan for several early houses. Because of the scant records, this paper will concentrate on those building for which some details, and preferably, an image exist.

It appears possible that Dan Cogill's slab hut built at 1 Bell Rd could have been the first family home, but William Grigor may have a claim to the first real house. He had been cutting timber for Pettigrew on Buderim for a few years in 1870 when Buderim was opened to selection. He put his extensive experience to use and selected portion 50 of 80 acres, one of the best blocks on the mountain. Grigor cleared the land, sold the timber and built a small cottage where Amaroo Drive is now. According to historian Stuart Weir, it was built in 1870 from timber cut on Grigor's block and pit-sawn on the site. It had a shingle roof, faced north and had a detached kitchen at the rear and a veranda across the front. If it was built in 1870 as Weir claims, it must be a strong contender for the title of first house on Buderim. He did not move his family there permanently, living there with his sons, clearing the land and growing some cane. His wife remained at 'Bankfoot House' which they had built near the town of Glasshouse Mountains. Over a number of years from about 1877, he leased or sold off his land, and in the 1890s he had no remaining interests on Buderim.



George Atkinson and his brother Tom leased William Grigor's house from about 1895 to 1905 when the remaining property was sold to James Lindsay. Grigor's house was demolished in 1910 by Arch Lindsay who built a new house on the site, but it too, is now gone.

George Atkinson and family at the front of the Grigor house c. 1905

Thomas Ridley is often credited with building Buderim's first house in 1872, but was it earlier than William Grigor's house made of pit-sawn timber, which Stuart Weir says, was built in 1870? Ridley's site was between the present Box Street and Cogill Road. Ridley did not remain on Buderim for long and Joseph Dixon managed his affairs in his absence. He rented his house to John Kerle Burnett and his family in 1876. No description or illustration of the house appears to exist.

John Caton and his wife were among the first settlers on Buderim taking up land in 1871. John selected land which stretched from the present Old Post Office to Townsend Road. He built a house similar to 'Canambie' and Pioneer Cottage in the early 1870s. This must have been one of the earliest buildings other than those of simple slab construction. His house was demolished by George Atkinson, who built new house in front of the old one in 1913.

Fred and Harriet Townsend came to Buderim from Ledbury, Somerset, in 1882 on the S.S. *Compta*. Fred was a blacksmith and Harriet was a niece of one of Buderim's earliest settlers, John Caton, their sponsor.



Original Buderim Townsend house, Burnett Street.
L to R: Minnie, Harriet, George Caton, Stanley and Edith.

Caton made land available and helped them build a small house opposite the present Lion's Lookout. Later the Townsends built a new house near the corner of Townsend Road and Burnett Street.

T.J. (John) Ballinger was the eldest son of Charles Ballinger of Mooloolah (his property was upstream near the bridge, not at Mooloolah Heads). In 1870 Charles selected portion 57 of 130 acres which stretched from the present Ballinger Road to the what is now Crosby Hill Road. He gave part to his son John (T.J.) who built a hut near where the Tavern is now in 1871, and married in the same year. Soon after their marriage they built a small house 'Clifton Cottage' on the same site. 'Clifton Cottage' had four rooms, a front veranda and a detached kitchen. It was constructed from local timber was and similar to several other houses of this time. It must have been amongst the earliest built on Buderim. In about 1878 to 1880, T.J. divided his land and sold blocks to J.K. Burnett, Wallace Burnett and Ernest Burnett.

William Guy was the second person to select a block on Buderim in 1870. Soon after, he built a house described by Joseph Tainton as 'a spacious bungalow ... of pit-sawn timber and one of the first houses on Buderim'. This was in the present Guy Avenue. It was originally a typical local house with four rooms and a central corridor, constructed from pit-sawn beech and hoop pine. In 1891 it was extended and lifted on high stumps.. The house was denied heritage listing in 2016 and was threatened with being demolished, but with new owners, it now seems safe. The modified house, pictured right, is still standing.



Guy's house 'Calrossie' in Guy Avenue, photo taken in 1980, built in the 1870s and modified in 1891.

'Ryhope' was originally the residence of James Lindsay junior who came to Buderim with his father, about 1875. Constructed from local pit-sawn timbers, about 1885, it was located in what is now Amaroo Drive. In 1930 it was converted into a boarding



house and run by two of Lindsay's daughters. The photo (above) was taken about 1920s. It was moved from Buderim to Cambooya, Queensland in 1993.

In 1870 William Pettigrew selected a block of 540 acres on the eastern end of Buderim Mountain in the area that is now Fountain Road. It is recorded that Stephen Fountain purchased Pettigrew's block including a house, probably about 1875, and later became Buderim's largest banana grower. A



photograph (left) shows Fountain's house as a large building. It is likely that Pettigrew's original house would have been modest as he did not live there permanently and had a house at Alexandra Headland as well as his Brisbane residence. Pettigrew's Buderim house must have been amongst the earliest on Buderim. To complete the story, Fountain presumably demolished the old house and built a large house probably about 1880. He sold the property to Joseph Foote in 1907 and

he named it 'Mons Mari'. Joseph Foote demolished the house in 1913 due to white ants and replaced it with a larger house which still stands.

John Kerle Burnett came to Buderim in 1876 followed by his family later that year. He rented Tom Ridley's house and worked at both Buderim's sugar mills at different times. In about 1878 he purchased land from T.J. Ballinger and built a four-room cottage with surrounding veranda in 1882 See page 2. This house is now Buderim's museum 'Pioneer Cottage'. In 1887 he built Buderim's first store.

S.W. Short and family came to Buderim in 1877. He leased 20 acres from James Lindsay on the western side of Lindsay Road approximately opposite the present Quiet Valley Crescent and built a house. It was a modest low-set cottage with a shingled roof, a lean-to veranda on the front and a detached kitchen at the rear. He later bought the property from Lindsay. No photos appear to exist.

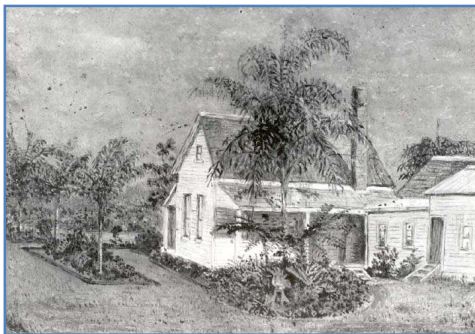


Harry Board came to Buderim from England in about 1880. He grew coffee, but was better known as a builder. He was a carpenter and pit sawyer, skills in demand in the growing community of Buderim in the 1880s. It is not certain when he built his house on William Street, but it was most likely soon after he arrived in the late 1870s or early 80s. He assisted Joseph Dixon and J.K. Burnett build their houses both of which are still in use. He also built Buderim's first school. His original house was moved in 1991 and is now the popular 'Harry's Restaurant'.

Price Jones and his family came to Buderim from Wales in 1881 and selected land at Horseshoe Bend where he built a house from pit-sawn timber in the 1880s. It was burned down about 1887 and he built a better house on the same site a year or so later (see right). Price was proud of his Welsh heritage and named a house that he later built on Gloucester Road in the early 1900s 'Brynhyfryd' meaning 'House on the Hill'.



Dr Arthur Barrow was born in 1848 in Barbados and completed his medical degree in London. He travelled to Australia twice, arriving for the second time in 1890 and worked in Warwick up to about 1894. He came to Buderim in 1895 and purchased a house on William Street next to Harry Board's house (see right). According to The Sunshine Coast Library it was one of the first built on Buderim. He returned to England in 1911 and died soon after. (Thanks to Helene Cronin for the background information on Dr Barrow.)



Gustav Riebe came to Buderim in 1882 after a failed cane growing experience on Meridan Plains. He took up Portion 46 of 80 acres on Buderim's north side and was the first on Buderim to grow coffee. He built a house in 1882. The house later became derelict but is now being restored by Peter Wise. He sold his property to F.H. Wise for £800 in 1900. The land is still farmed by the Wise family.

Gustav Riebe's house as it was in the 1880s. He named his house 'Palmyra'. From a painting by Riebe.

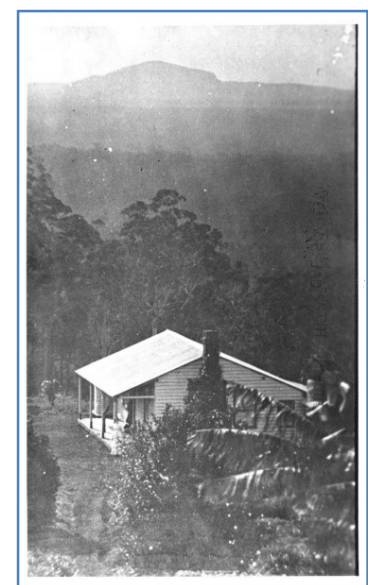


William Fawcett Bell junior (Bill Bell) born in England in 1872, came to Buderim with his family in 1884 (right with his daughter Ivy about 1910). He built a four-room cottage on Burnett Street across from Townsend Road in 1898. After the death of his wife Minnie in 1900 shortly after childbirth, he rented his house and lived with his in-laws the Townsends and his baby daughter



Ivy. He returned to the cottage and had it extensively renovated in the 1930s to accommodate his daughter and her family (William and Ivy Chadwick). In 1982 the cottage was removed to make way for a block of town houses.

John Fielding was a Buderim pioneer, coming to Buderim soon after it was opened for selection in 1870. In partnership with his soon-to-be son in law Joseph Dixon, he built Buderim's first sugar mill in Mill Road. He was the father of a family of Fieldings who were Buderim identities. Probably in the mid to late 1880s he built a house which he named 'Marimba' on the north eastern slopes of Buderim overlooking Mt Coolum (see right)¹. He died there in 1890. His son Herbert built a new house on Orme Road in about 1904. He retained the name 'Marimba'. This house was later purchased by Dr H.V. Shaw.



In 1884 William Fawcett Bell with his wife Mary and family came to Buderim from England, sponsored by James Lindsay. William took up a rather poor piece of land (portion 9V of 120 acres) on Buderim's southern slopes. In that year he built a typical small cottage of pit-sawn

¹ There may be some doubt about this image which is labelled 'No. 441 J. Fielding's home "Marimba"', but the setting fits perfectly for a photo taken from Orme Road, with Mt Coolum in the background.

timber with front veranda, shingle roof and detached kitchen (no photo exists.) Old mango trees mark the site near Crosby Hill Road. When his farm failed he worked at the sugar mill as a plumber.

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Typical early houses. Through the 1880s house design seems not to have changed greatly, but there was a trend in the 90s for more well to do owners to enclose verandas or to extend, as evidenced by the Lindsay's 'Rhyope' and the Guy's 'Calrossie'.

We are fortunate in having images of four of the Burnett brothers' houses. These photographs show the two favourite types, the major difference being in the presence of a surrounding veranda on the more 'up market' examples. The 'lesser' examples have a front veranda only. Virtually all have a central corridor with two rooms on either side. Both types had a detached kitchen at the rear.



Burnett houses of early Buderim

The early Buderim houses were built with local timbers, mostly beech, red cedar, hoop pine and flooded gum or tallowwood, in the period 1875 to 1900.

The roofs were shingles made of local hardwood, replaced in the early 20th Century with corrugated iron. In most cases there was a detached kitchen at the rear due to the risk of fire.

The more 'up-market' houses had a veranda on all sides which could later be partially enclosed. The walls were usually pit-sawn beech as was the floor. The doors and window fittings were red cedar.

Often there was no particular bathroom. Baths were taken in a tub in the kitchen.

Note that the dates given below are of the year each was photographed, not the year of construction which is not known (except for J.K Burnett's house which was built in 1882). Most likely all were built in the period 1880 to 1890.

Upper is that of John Kerle Burnett, about 1884.

Next below is that of Ernest J. Burnett, 1895.

Next below is that of Henry Octavius Burnett, 1888.

Lowest is that of W. Wallace Burnett, 1896.

Sources

Photographs

All the photographs are from the Buderim Historical Society collection.

Stuart Weir

The information in this paper is largely from the research of the late Stuart Weir. He researched and wrote a series simply titled 'Pioneers', which is held by the Buderim Historical Society Inc. Those in the Pioneer series consulted included: John Atkinson; Gustav Riebe; Harry Board; Tom Ridley; William Grigor; John Caton; T.J. Ballinger.

Stuart Weir also produced a series of cards about features of old Buderim, largely concerning the history of old houses. These were in a series titled 'Queensland Historical and Industrial Archaeology Research Group' which was part of the Queensland Museum. These cards are in a wooden box in the Museum Room of Pioneer Cottage. The titles of these record cards consulted included:

- Site of S.W. Short's House, Buderim;
- Tom Atkinson's House, Buderim.
- William Grigor's House, Buderim.
- William Bell senior's house site.

Other sources

Joan Hogarth 2006, *Pioneer Cottage The House that Buderim Saved*, published by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

Ivy Chadwick, no date, *The Townsend Family*, typescript held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

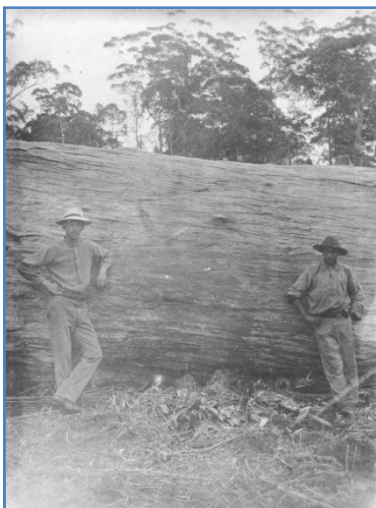
Joseph Tainton, no date, *Memoirs of Buderim*, typescript, held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

Buderim Historical Society, no date, *Pioneer Cottage, Buderim, Queensland*, softback, 8 pages.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Helene Cronin for advice on several matters.

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While rainforest timbers such as white beech and red cedar were prominent in early houses, hardwoods also were widely used.

Left: here Jim Guy and Billy Muckan stand beside a giant flooded gum that was felled near the present reservoir.

Local hardwoods like this from the western part of the mountain, including flooded gum and tallowwood, were used in the frames and in the shingles on Buderim houses.