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Buderim School Oval

by Bill Lavarack

Today Buderim has a population of over 35000, it has numerous apartment blocks, several retirement villages and heaven alone knows how many cars. Central Buderim is undoubtedly overcrowded with people leading busy lives. But somehow, right in the middle, is an oasis of green, in effect a real village green. The Buderim Mountain School Oval. It helps make the Central Business District liveable and, for seven decades, has been a focal point not only for countless school children, but also for cricket games and community events such as Australia Day celebrations.

Buderim was surveyed in 1870 and an area of about 20 acres (about 8 hectares) was set aside as a School Reserve. It spanned both sides of what is now Main Street. In the 1880s the area south of Main Street was allocated for community facilities – e.g. School of Arts, church, blacksmith and other stores and shops.¹ This left the School Reserve with over 10 acres. A decision must have been made in the early days of planning the school to place the buildings on the upper part of the sloping block and retain the lower part undeveloped at that stage.

The *Buderim Mountain State School Centenary 1875 – 1975* booklet carried a report: ‘Reminiscing with some old boys of around 1920’ which says in part:

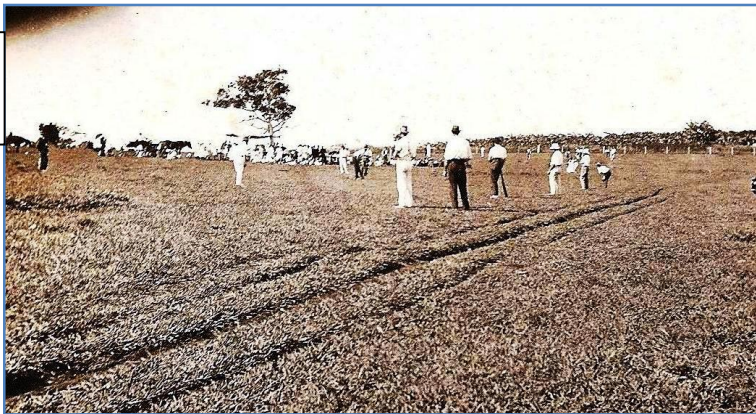
The present oval, (then known as the School Paddock), served as grazing for the horses of those pupils who rode to school and for the ‘Head’s’ cow and horse. The latter (‘Jerry’) stood about 17 hands and appeared to be a cross between a camel and a giraffe.

The paddock had a deep gully running through the middle and was rather overgrown, providing splendid cover for ‘Cowboys and Indians’ and such games.

¹ Stuart Weir, Historical/Industrial Site Record Card, 26 March 1983, held by BHS.

Cricket was played on various Buderim paddocks from 1896 or probably earlier, and Rugby Union (followed by Rugby League) from 1919.¹ There are records of a lawn tennis club as early as 1893, again probably earlier.

Primitive cricket conditions at Foote's paddock in the 1920s and 30s,
Photo: Buderim Historical Society.



All these sports were played on privately owned land such as Foote's paddock – there were no publically owned sports facilities. Conditions often were rather rough.

Between the wars there were at least two attempts to develop sporting grounds on the lower part of the school oval. In 1919 a committee was formed with the aim of having 2½ acres of the school reserve adjacent to the tram terminus set aside as an 'Anzac Memorial Park and sports ground'.² However it seems that nothing came of this. In the 1930s moves were underway to develop a 'Memorial Park' on the lower part of the school land. In the *Nambour Chronicle* of August 14, 1936, page 14, there is a report of a meeting of the 'Memorial Park and Recreation Reserve Committee' chaired by Councillor E. Middleton. Mr H.S. Lindsay was appointed president, Mr J. Neil honorary secretary/treasurer. Working bees were organised to prepare the area for sports such as cricket and football.



On September 25 1936, page 3, the *Nambour Chronicle* reported that 'Working bees have effected a clearance of the rubbish and undergrowth in the lower part of the school ground where it is intended to make a sports oval.' Ken Chadwick (born 1928) remembers playing football there in the early 1940s, saying that there was just enough room to squeeze a football field in because of the deep gully on the lower part of the oval, but apparently it was rather rough.

Mary Ranger (wife of the Tram driver). In the background is the school oval. Note the football goal posts to the right of the picture. Probably about 1935. *Photo: Buderim Historical Society.*

So, the school paddock passed into the years of the Second World War largely unchanged over some 70 years since the first white settlers arrived. The passing years had seen sporting and community events being held on private property as there was no public area suitable for events requiring open space such as cricket and football, or for carnivals and the like.

The shock of the War years precipitated major changes in the Buderim community – none of more significance than the formation of the Buderim War Memorial Community Centre. In the final months of the War in 1945, the Buderim community considered how they should mark the end of hostilities and the sacrifice many of its men and women had made. They concluded that Buderim

¹ Bill Lavarack, 2012, *History of Sport on Buderim – the First Hundred Years*, publ. Bill Lavarack, Buderim.

² *Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, May 9, 1919, p. 4, Buderim.

should move into the future as a community and they lobbied for improved roads and communications. Foremost was recognition of their returning servicemen and women. Prominent in this process was the Buderim War Memorial Association. How should these returning people be honoured? A concept was adopted that, rather than a statue or shrine which many other communities were considering, Buderim should opt for a 'living memorial'. A major aim would be to provide sporting and recreational facilities on Buderim to be used by returning servicemen and women and the community. Prominent movers in the community included Dr H.K. Shaw, Bill Chadwick, school principal Mr. George Ott and George Burnett. The motto was 'Service to commemorate Sacrifice'. From this grew the Buderim War Memorial Community Centre (BWMCC)¹ which, over the years, sponsored and encouraged, among many other things, a billiards club, a croquet club, a cricket club and a tennis club.

An immediate need was identified for a sporting oval in central Buderim which was not on private property. The obvious contender was the school paddock and after negotiations the Education Department agreed to lease the paddock to the BWMCC as a school and community recreation ground. As mentioned previously, the area was rough with a few gullies including one large, deep example. A few games of rugby league had been played there, but the available flat ground was very narrow and rough. It was clear that a bulldozer would be required to construct a large, relatively level sporting field.



The school oval and tennis courts in about 1935. The low vegetation on the left indicates the presence of gullies, one of them large and deep. The shed on the right is part of the original Buderim Tram infrastructure. *Photo: Buderim Historical Society.*

Bulldozers were hard to come by immediately after the War. Eventually a D4 was hired and work commenced. In order to have a suitably large playing area the lower of the two school tennis courts was bulldozed and the gullies filled. A great deal of voluntary community labour went into the development of the field in 1947 and 1948 and there are records of Henry Iscak, Rufus Egholm, Tylie Hancock and many others (including Henry's horse 'Tarzan') spending weekends there. In addition to 'Tarzan', the first bulldozer to work on Buderim was enlisted at a cost of £500. One report puts the total cost of developing the oval at £1000. The gullies were filled with anything that came to hand including old horse-drawn farm machinery, the derelict guards-van and carriage from the tramway and rocks and logs. There was a hiccup when heavy rain washed out much of the work and it had to be done again at an additional cost of £400.² The new oval with a concrete cricket

¹ HESSIE LINDSELL, 1999, *The Buderim Community 1870-1999*, report held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

² BILL LAVARACK, 2012, *History of Sport on Buderim – the First Hundred Years*, publ. Bill Lavarack, Buderim.

pitch was completed in 1948 along with two tennis courts. Some years later the lease of the oval and tennis courts reverted to the school.

Over the following years the School Oval (no longer ‘the Horse Paddock’) has had a prominent place in the Buderim Community. The cricket club flourished as did the tennis club, in fact the author scored a century on the oval in 1964 and also played several seasons with the tennis club. In addition it became a venue for community events such as Australia Day celebrations, ANZAC Day marches and the 150th anniversary of Buderim’s beginning in 2012. The cricket field and tennis courts are still in use today by both the school and the community, but the major senior sporting competitions are now held elsewhere, although a junior cricket competition is still using the oval and a netball team is making use of the tennis courts.



The School Oval – not only a school playground, also a community asset.

Upper: Junior cricket in 2016.

Lower: B150. Celebrations for Buderim’s 150th birthday 2012.

Photos: Bill Lavarack