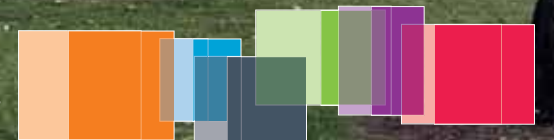


# *Memorial Park, Gympie*



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*Cover Page:*

*The Bandstand, Gympie Memorial Park, November 2020*

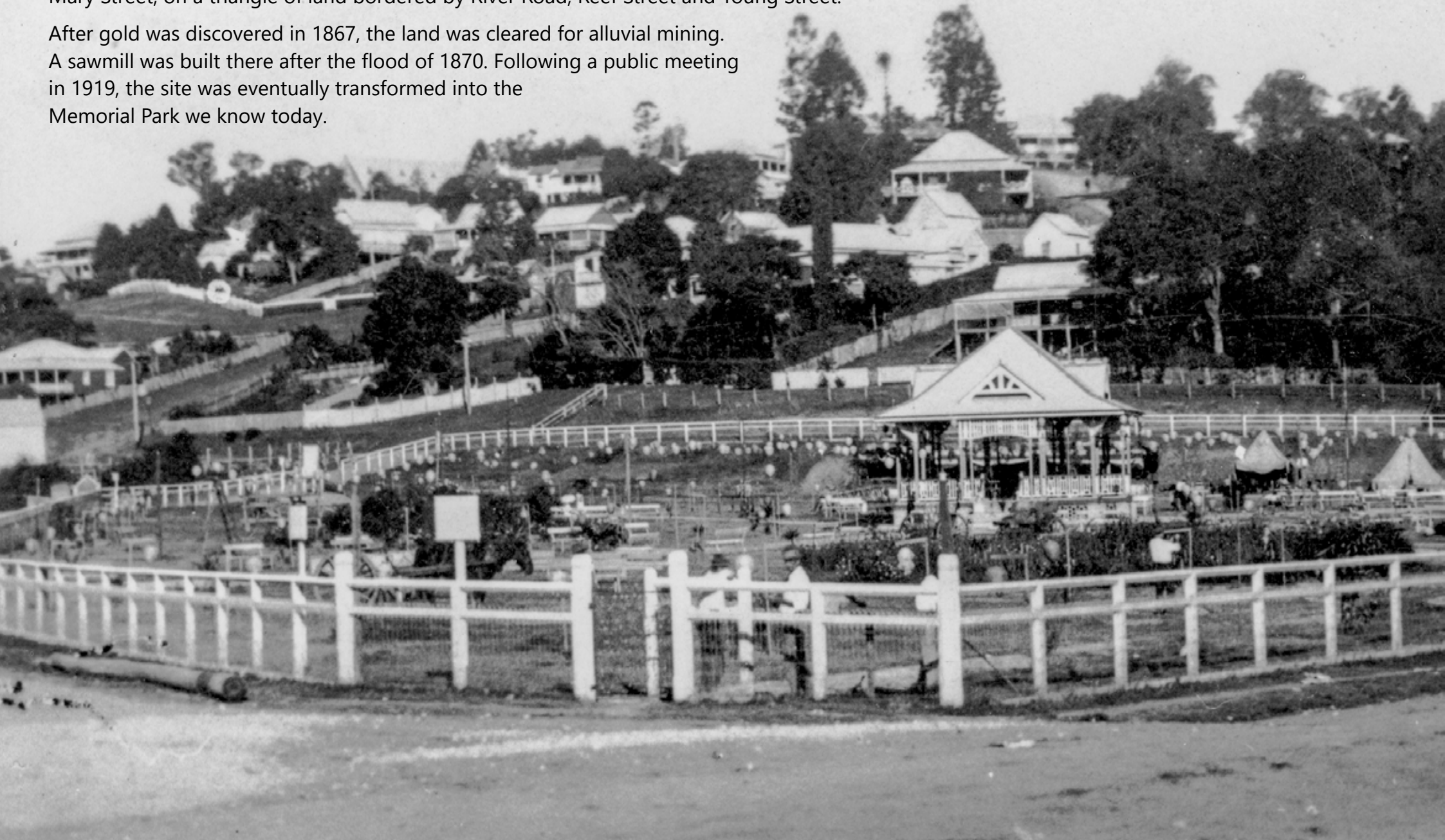


## *Memorial Park, Gympie*

Memorial Park is located on the traditional lands of the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi people.

Sitting in the heart of the city, it is only a few short steps away from Gympie's historic Mary Street, on a triangle of land bordered by River Road, Reef Street and Young Street.

After gold was discovered in 1867, the land was cleared for alluvial mining. A sawmill was built there after the flood of 1870. Following a public meeting in 1919, the site was eventually transformed into the Memorial Park we know today.





## *Gold Mining*

In 1867, gold was discovered and miners took up claims in the area stretching from the Mary River along to what is now Memorial Park. Trees were felled and a track was made - which is now River Road.

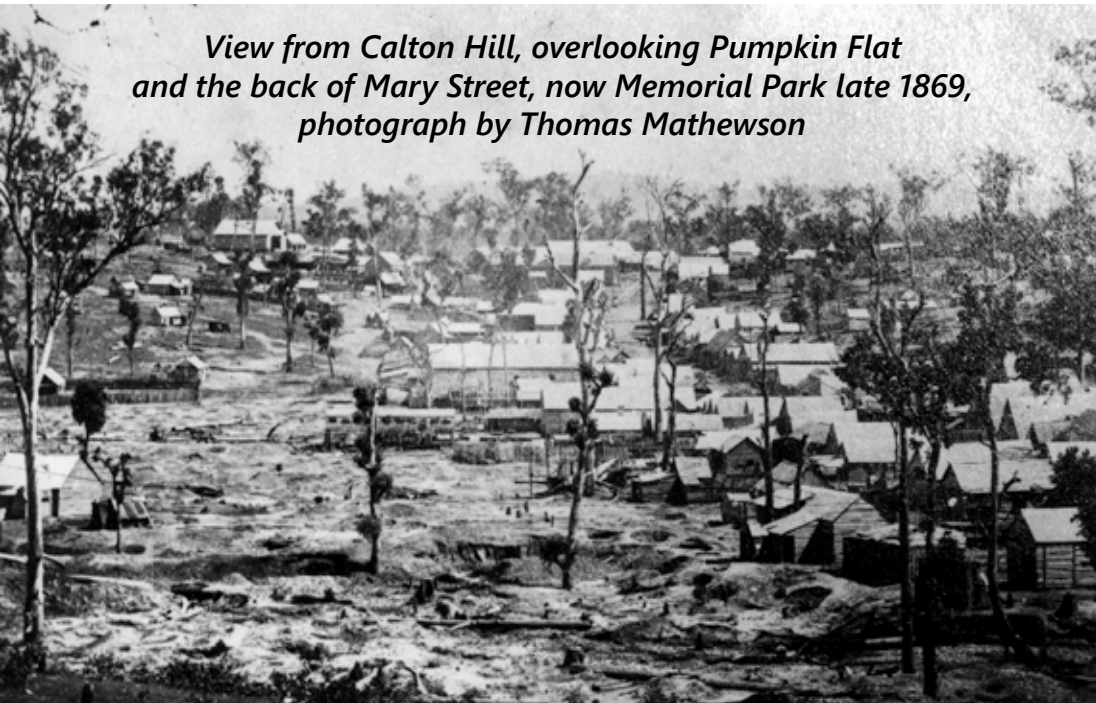
By mid-1868, the European diggers had abandoned their claims and Chinese miners took over and reworked the ground.

The miners established an area on River Road where the skate park is now. Here they produced vegetables and the area became known as Pumpkin Flat. All the while, they were still mining the gold claims in the Memorial Park area.

The flood of 1870 washed away most of this area and the alluvial mining declined, making way for another industry – sawmilling.



*Site of Memorial Park, c1867*



*View from Calton Hill, overlooking Pumpkin Flat and the back of Mary Street, now Memorial Park late 1869, photograph by Thomas Mathewson*



*Pumpkin Flat in flood*



## *Union Sawmill*

The Union Sawmill began in 1869 when William Ferguson, William Henderson and Robert Dath built the sawmill on allotments F8 and F9 in Mary Street. After the 1870 flood, the mill was rebuilt and over the next 47 years more mill buildings were erected behind Mary Street on the former alluvial diggings.

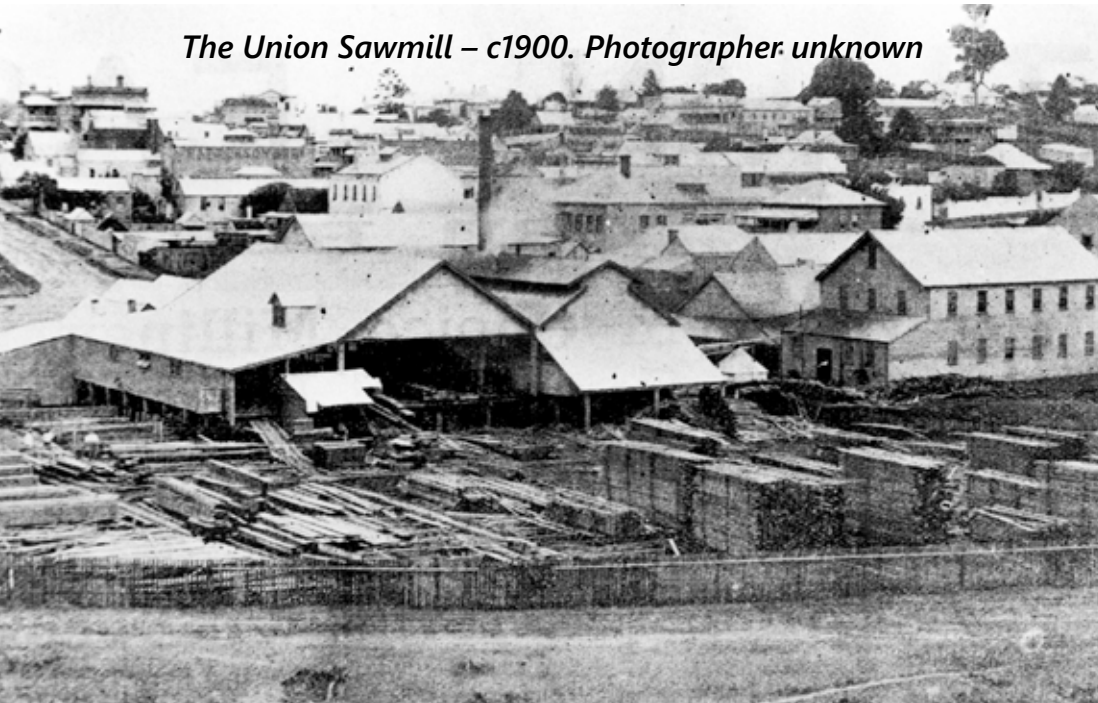
During 1917, the Ferguson & Co's Union Sawmill moved to the site of the former Phoenix Goldmine at One Mile – this is now the Council Depot in John Street. The move allowed logs to be received and sawn timber to be sent by rail on the newly opened Mary Valley Rail line.

After the sawmill moved, the River Road site became derelict until the end of World War I.

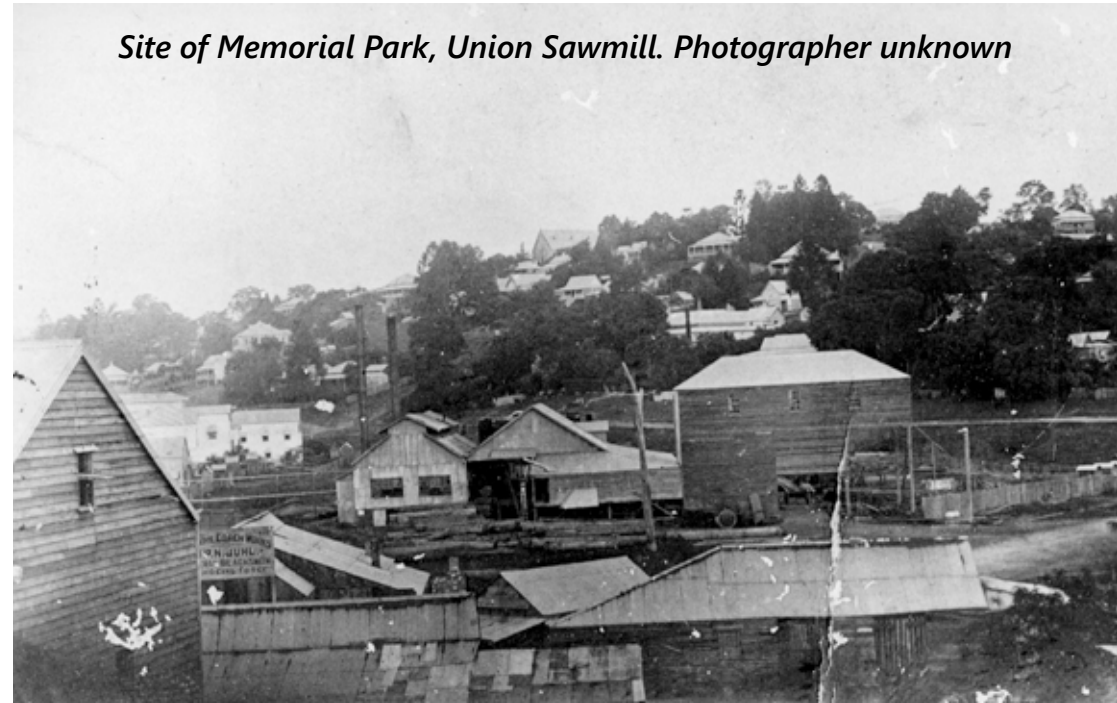
*Union Sawmill, c1872*



*The Union Sawmill – c1900. Photographer unknown*



*Site of Memorial Park, Union Sawmill. Photographer unknown*





## The Making of Memorial Park

It was January 1919 when the Gympie Mayor, Alderman Robert Stitt, presided over a community meeting to decide on a memorial to fallen soldiers. It was decided to establish a memorial as a lasting tribute to those citizens who had fallen during the Great War of 1914-1918 and the Boer War of 1899-1902.

It was Arthur Henderson (son of Union Sawmill owner, William Henderson) who suggested a memorial in the form of a park and announced that his family would donate the land that was the former site of the Union Sawmill.

At a public meeting on 26 March 1919, the Henderson offer was accepted and a committee was appointed to raise funds and supervise the project. The Brisbane City Council donated the services of Harry Moore to design the park, which included an electricity supply for the park at a time when electricity was just being introduced to Gympie.

### PROPOSED SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL.

GYMPIE, January 10.

The Mayor (Alderman R. Stitt) presided last night at a public meeting called to consider the form of a memorial to our fallen soldiers. Mr. C. Patterson suggested that a monument should be erected on a vacant piece of land at the top of Mary-street. Mr. A. A. Henderson said it had occurred to him and his family that the proposed memorial might take the form of a park, and with that idea in view, he was authorised to offer, on their behalf and in memory of their father, a site at the Union Sawmills enclosed by the river road and two gullies, between 2 and 3 acres in area, on condition that the land was made into a park as a memorial for the soldiers, to be vested in the City Council. It would be objected that the land was under flood mark, but there had been no water on it since 1897. Mr. Llewelyn appreciated Mr. Henderson's offer, but his idea was in the direction of endowing a scholarship, so that poor parents might be able to send their children to the University. After further discussion it was resolved to take steps to create a memorial to the fallen soldiers. The thanks of the meeting were accorded to Mr. Henderson and family for their offer, and it was decided to write to the Brisbane City Council, and try and obtain Mr. Moore's services to report on the scheme.

*Proposed soldiers' memorial,  
The Brisbane Courier,  
Saturday 11 January 1919, page 7*

### The Memorial Park.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING.

A meeting was held last night in the Town Hall, of the Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Park Executive. Mr. R. Rankin presided, and apologised for the Mayor (Ald. Sedgman) and Mr. V. H. Tozer. The resignation of Mr. A. G. D. Austin as a member of the Empire fete committee was received and was held over till next meeting. Messrs. N. Anderson and Son, whose property adjoins the proposed park, placed their land under offer to the committee. Messrs. R. Rankin, R. Stitt, and J. MacDonnell were appointed to negotiate with Mr. Anderson, and report at next meeting.

The committee appointed to collect donations reported having met with great success, individual donations up to £100 being promised.

Mr. Dawson was instructed to supervise the demolition and stacking of the buildings and timber on the site. All waste timber is to be sold, and the balance to be stacked and classified. What is required will be kept and the balance sold.

Mr. Dawson reported that he was well satisfied with the work done by the returned soldiers, and that the men were also satisfied with their work. The gift money from the Repatriation Fund, had not yet come to hand, but it was stated the City Council would foot the bill, until it was available.

Messrs. Tozer, Rankin and MacDonnell were appointed to collect donations in Mary Street. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Architects Institutes, in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney, asking for their assistance in getting a suitable design for the memorial gates at a cost of £600 to £800.

All the honorary district executives are to be asked to meet in the Town Hall on the 14th June, for the purpose of organising their districts for the collecting of donations, etc.

A vote of thanks to the chairman closed the meeting.

*The Memorial Park,  
Gympie Times,  
Saturday May 31 1919, page 5*

### Gympie Memorial Gardens.

The Gympie and Widgee District Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Committee recently wrote to the Brisbane City Council asking that its Parks Superintendent should be allowed to visit Gympie for the purpose of advising in connection with the laying out of Memorial Gardens. A report from the whole council in committee was submitted to the meeting of the Brisbane City Council, in which it was stated that, as only two or three week-end visits would be necessary, it had been agreed that Mr. Moore's services should be made available, the Gympie Memorial Committee to defray all expenses. In moving the adoption of the report, Alderman Raymond said he thought the City Council was to be congratulated on having a man like Mr. Moore, whose services were in such demand by other councils. The Deputy Mayor (Alderman M'Master) remarked that was the case with all the chief officers of the council, as the abilities of the town clerk and the city engineer had been recognised in the same way.

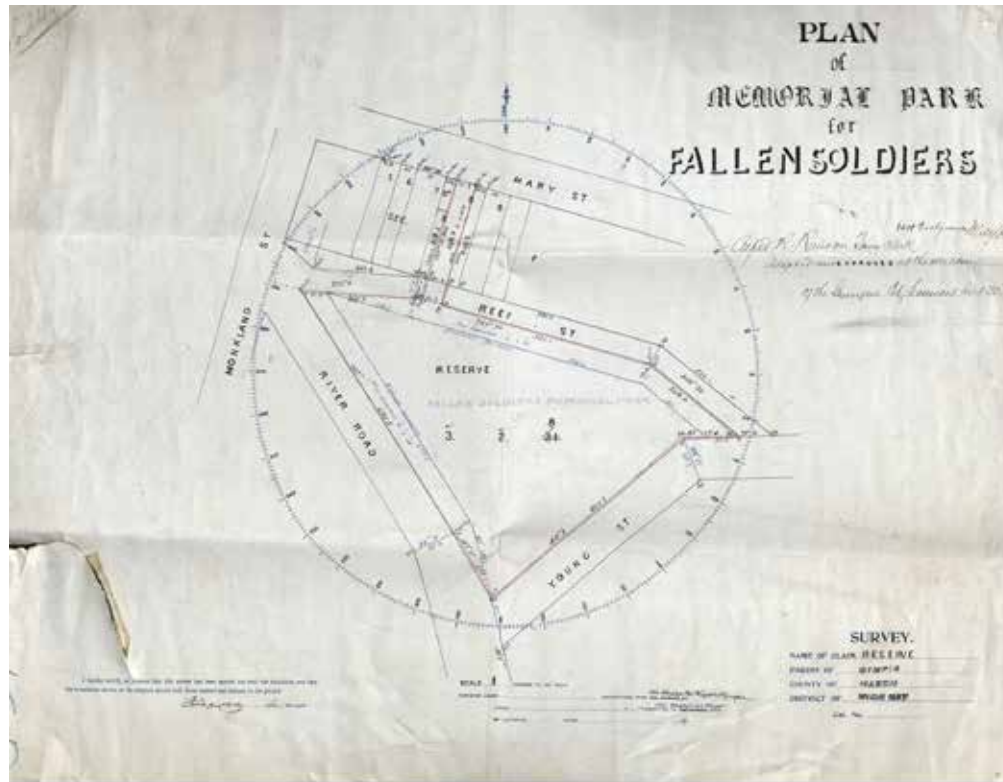
*Gympie Memorial Gardens,  
Gympie Times,  
Tuesday 15 July 1919, page 6*



In June 1919, contractor Newell Kent Dawson was appointed to supervise the clearing and levelling of the old sawmill site. This task employed returning soldiers, who were paid £3/4/- for a 44 hour week. Moore's design was ready in July, and construction work continued steadily.

The Nash Gully drain across the park was domed and covered, paths and gardens were laid out, and a timber and wire fence was erected around the park perimeter to protect plantings from wandering cattle and goats.

*Note: The Reef Street side of this fence was removed in 1944, and subsequently the whole park perimeter was laid open as it is today.*



Surveyors plan of Memorial Park 1919

#### DOMING NASH'S GULLY DRAIN.

From the Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Park Executive, asking if the Council is prepared to consider the question of doming the balance of the drain through the park grounds on the £ for £ basis, on the same terms regarding the employment of returned men. The distance would be about 320ft.

Ald. Stewart said it was a great opportunity for the Council. There was no doubt that after the Park was finished, it would be handed over to the Council, and in the meantime the members of the Committee were working very hard, and if the Council could only see its way to provide the money for the doming, much more would be done. In any case the work would have to be done later on. He moved that if the Council can see its way to continue doming, the work be done as requested and a complete job made of the doming. He said the Council should agree to the conditions even if they had to do a little with their funds.

Ald. Macdonnell said he would like to support the suggestion. They would not always have the opportunity they now had. They would have to do the drain some time. The town was getting congested, and would concentrate. He would like to see the Council consider the proposal favourably, as they would get £ for £ to do the drain. He took it that the flower garden of Gympie would be the park and that the Queen's Park would be a sports ground.

Ald. Weller said the whole of the Council was in sympathy with the idea, and if the drain was not covered now, it would be at some future time. He would support the pro-

posal as long as funds were available.

Ald. Thomas said the facts placed before them with regard to the Council's financial position were not of the best, and the Works Committee were inclined to go a little steady as the finances required assistance. He would like to carry the matter over till their finances were better. They had heard the letter from Mr. Garrick, and it was to some extent, correct. He (Ald. Thomas) realised that this was a prosperous community and before long they would be out of the difficulties Mr. Garrick foresaw. He

long they would be out of the difficulties Mr. Garrick foresaw. He thought the proposal was worthy of consideration as the Park Executive was prepared to pay half. Much as he would like to see it go ahead, he felt they were under an obligation to the ratepayers. He thought it would be better to wait a while.

Ald. Foster said he would not oppose the proposal but he felt they were going a little bit too far. You certainly thought they must go slower.

Ald. Hughes said that seeing the mover and seconder of the motion were on the Finance Committee that might alter the position. They must take into consideration the financial position. The £300 was a big item. No doubt all the Aldermen had come to the time when they had to let an opportunity slip by and this was one of them. He thought they should allow the proposal to stand over till the New Year, and see that the men released from the Park, were put to look after the roads.

Ald. Macdonnell said the Park Committee had offered to contribute half the cost of the drain amounting to £320, so the cost to the Council would only be £160. There was not a shadow of a doubt that the work would have to be done within 12 months, even if the Council had to pay the whole cost. It would be bad financing to hold the matter over. The Memorial Park Executive were now in the financial position when they could set aside £160 to cover the drain, but the money might not always be available.

Ald. Thomas said every Alderman realised the opportunity, but in their present financial position, could the Finance Committee tell them where the money was to come from.

Ald. Macdonnell: When the rates come in.

Ald. Thomas suggested that the motion be altered as if put in its present form, it would suffer defeat.

Ald. Stewart said he hoped the proposal would not be shelved. When the drain was finished, there was a lot of terracing work to be done, which would cost a lot of money afterwards. If the doming was done, the Park Committee would see the money was collected to do the terracing. The Park would be handed over to them as it should be as a memorial to their fallen soldiers.

The Mayor said the Memorial Park Executive was in a much better financial position than the City Council, and he thought it was a most inopportune time to approach the Council. He certainly was favourable

Doming Nash's Gully, Gympie Times, Thursday 4 December 1919, page 2

## The Bandstand

Brisbane City Council donated the services of its architect A. H. (Alfred Herbert) Foster, to design a bandstand for the park. Foster also designed the bandstand in New Farm Park in Brisbane.

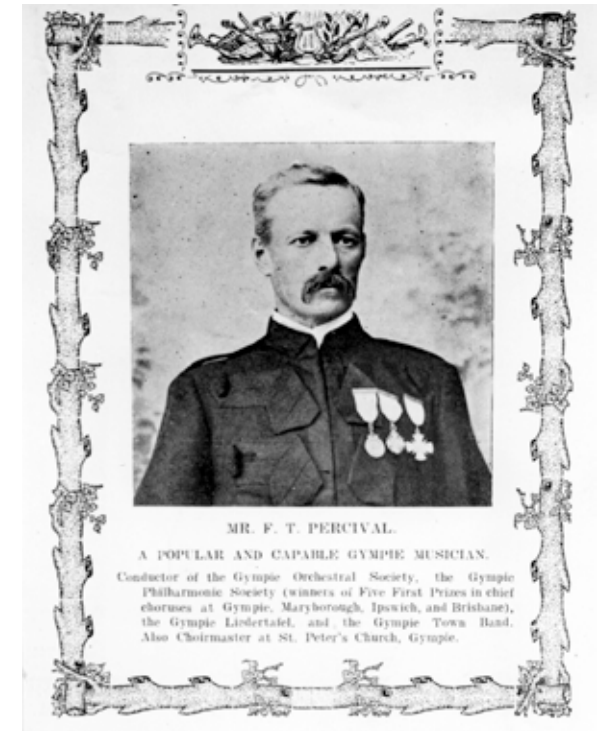
As well as serving as a war memorial, this structure honours a popular local band master, F.T. (Frederick Thomas) Percival, who had died in 1907.

In September 1919, a tender for construction of the bandstand was awarded to Thomas James Dale, who completed it at a cost of £550/3/-.

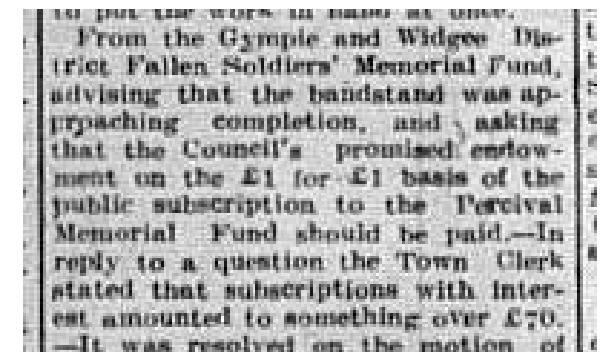
The bandstand became a popular spot for the people of Gympie.



Bandstand, Memorial Park, c1920's, photograph J.H. Foster



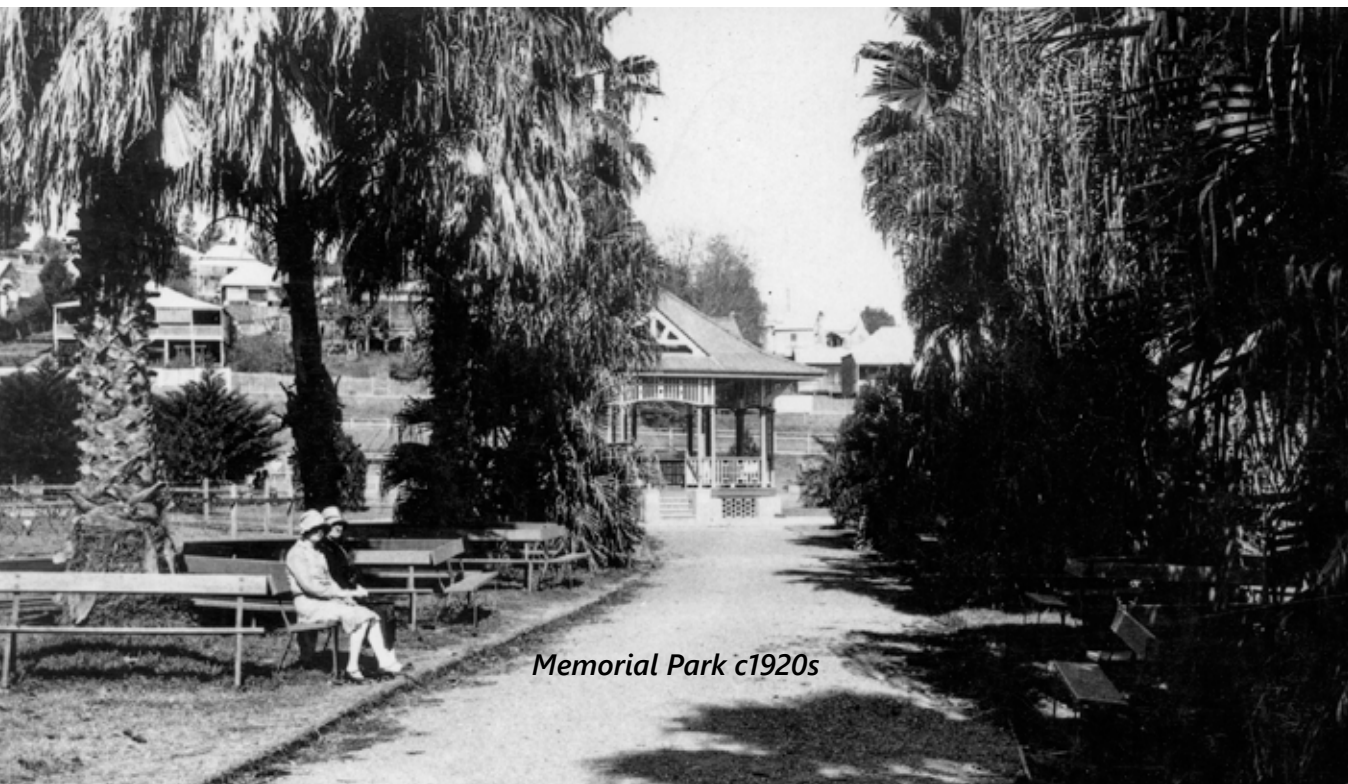
F.T. Percival, conductor, musician, Gympie Orchestral Society, Gympie Philharmonic, Gympie Town Band



Completion of the bandstand, Gympie Times, Thursday December 4 1919, page 2



*Memorial Park, Christmas 1922*



*Memorial Park c1920s*



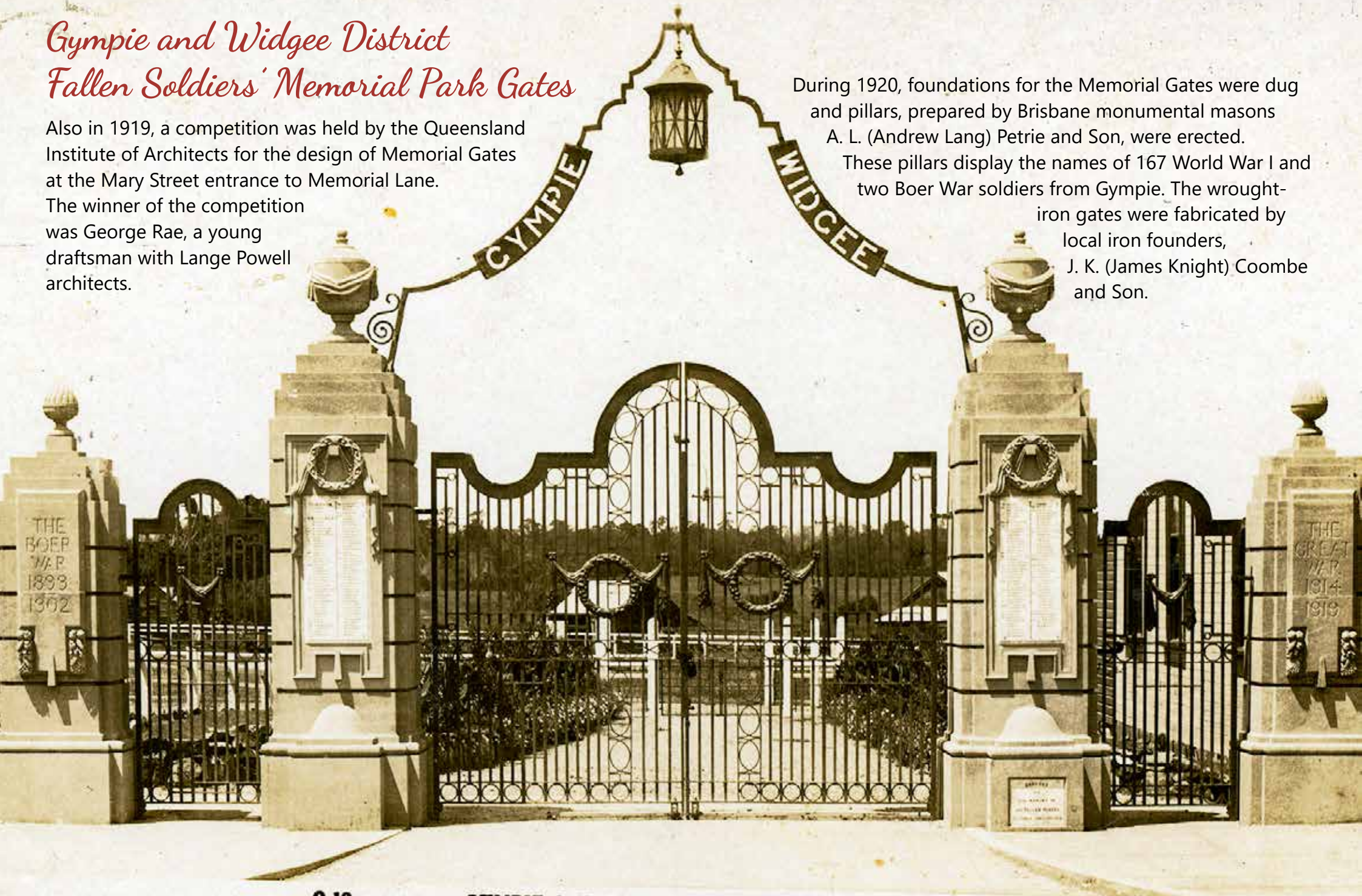
*Bandstand, Memorial Park, 1920, possibly Barrett family*



## *Gympie and Widgee District Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Park Gates*

Also in 1919, a competition was held by the Queensland Institute of Architects for the design of Memorial Gates at the Mary Street entrance to Memorial Lane. The winner of the competition was George Rae, a young draftsman with Lange Powell architects.

During 1920, foundations for the Memorial Gates were dug and pillars, prepared by Brisbane monumental masons A. L. (Andrew Lang) Petrie and Son, were erected. These pillars display the names of 167 World War I and two Boer War soldiers from Gympie. The wrought-iron gates were fabricated by local iron founders, J. K. (James Knight) Coombe and Son.



Q.13.

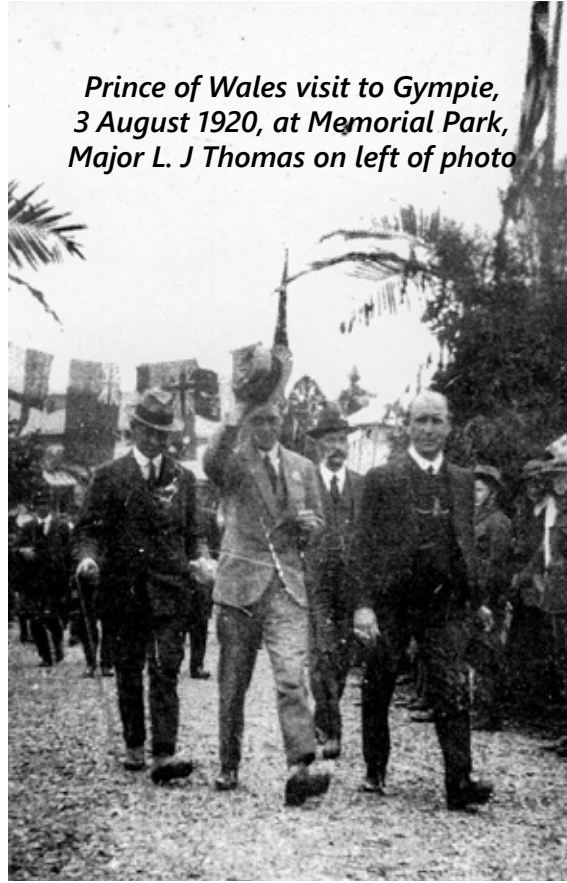
**GYMPIE & WIDGEE DISTRICT FALLEN  
SOLDIERS MEMORIAL PARK GATES.**



## *The Prince's Visit*

Memorial Lane, Memorial Park and the bandstand were ready for the brief visit, on 3 August 1920, of Edward, Prince of Wales. The Prince arrived in Gympie by train and was driven by car through cheering crowds to Memorial Park. At the bandstand, he was formally welcomed and made a short speech, before returning to the railway station through Memorial Lane. To avoid giving offence by accepting some invitations and declining others, the Prince had decided not to 'open' any war memorials on his Australian tour, and the official opening of Memorial Park had to wait.

*Prince of Wales visit to Gympie,  
3 August 1920, at Memorial Park,  
Major L. J Thomas on left of photo*



*Prince of Wales leaving Memorial Park, 3 August 1920*



*Prince of Wales reception in Memorial Park, 3 August 1920*

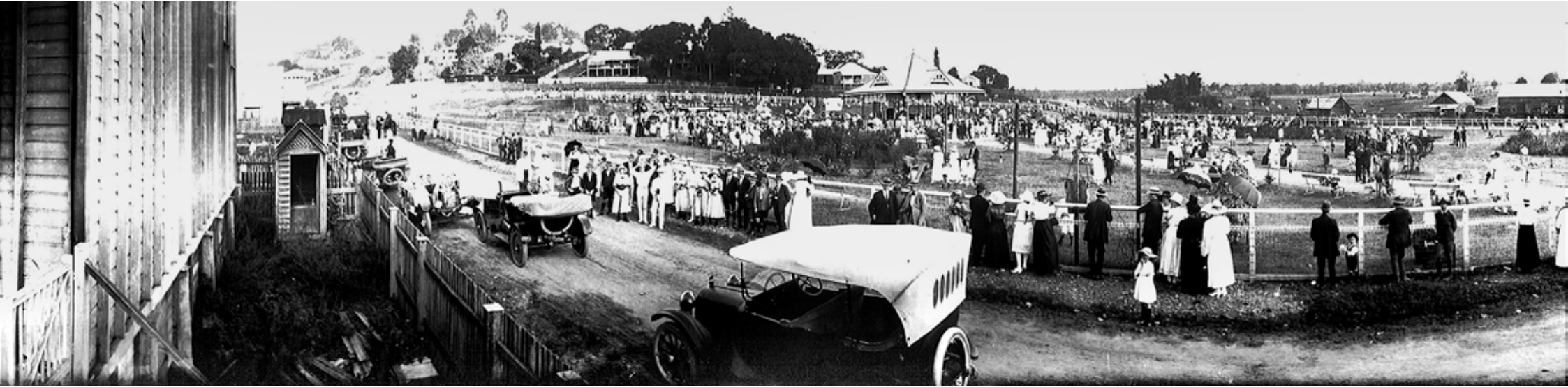
*The Prince in Gympie.  
Leaving Memorial Park.  
3-8-20*



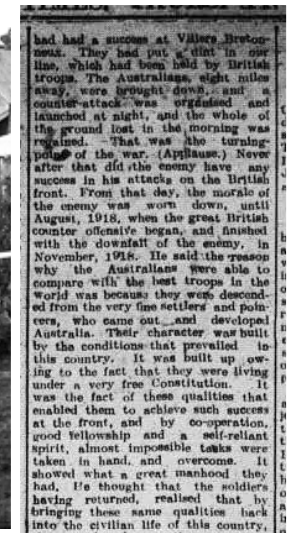
## *The Official Opening*

On 9 February 1921, the trustees handed Memorial Park and Memorial Lane over to the Gympie City Council. Public support had been generous. £5,587/7/7 had been raised and the project was completed, free of debt, at a cost of £5507/7/7. Thomas Watts, a Welsh miner, was appointed the first caretaker of the Park. He was succeeded by his son, Thomas Watts, Jr.

The project was officially opened by Gympie's popular war hero, Major-General Sir William Glasgow, on Wednesday, 20 April 1921. This event was accompanied by a procession, a carnival, a concert and several days of celebrations.





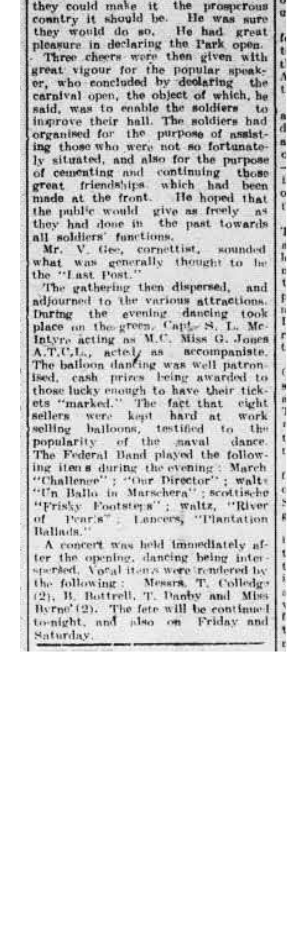


The whole scene was a pretty and animated one, the League having gone to considerable expense to procure an effective decorative lighting scheme. This has been done with Japanese lanterns ranged in orderly rows along the fence, and diagonally overhead across the Park. A number are lit in the ordinary way with candles, but the majority form a covering for electric light bulbs.

The procession, which immediately preceded the opening of the Carnival was among the best of its kind yet held in Gympie, and a large crowd lined Macartney street. A little of the effect was marred by portion of the procession, a number of the sets, breaking off and entering through the Park gates, while the remainder "carried on" round the corner, and then moved up the laneway parallel to the Park.

The procession was marshalled by Mr. Douglas Woodrow, and towards 8 o'clock, having assumed large proportions, moved from the Town Hall to the accompaniment of, and headed by the Federal Band, under the conductorship of Mr. G. Jefferson, plugging the march "Wabunga." A number of senior cadets acted as torch-bearers, with coloured flares. These were prepared by Mr. W. E. Hurbidge, and provided a welcome illumination.

The following competitive sets took part in the procession— "Serviettes" Misses Chaik, Smalley, T. Butler, Wood, and P. Henderson, and Messrs. R. J. Smith, A. Shambler, H. Grimley and B. Mackay. This set paraded in novel attire, table-cloths forming a large part of their costume, with serviettes for head-dress; "Sun-flowers," Mesdames Carlyon, Chorley, Dean, and Mimmley, Carlyon, and Messrs. D. Bright, Wynne, Barlow, and Robinson. As the name indicates the character taken was that of a sunflower, their general appearance being decidedly effective. There was one children's set, the "Cherry Ripe" the following children taking part— Marjorie Cox, Mary Harris, Edith Parris, Maureen Lochran, and Jessie Lochan.



HINKLES HAIROLAIN



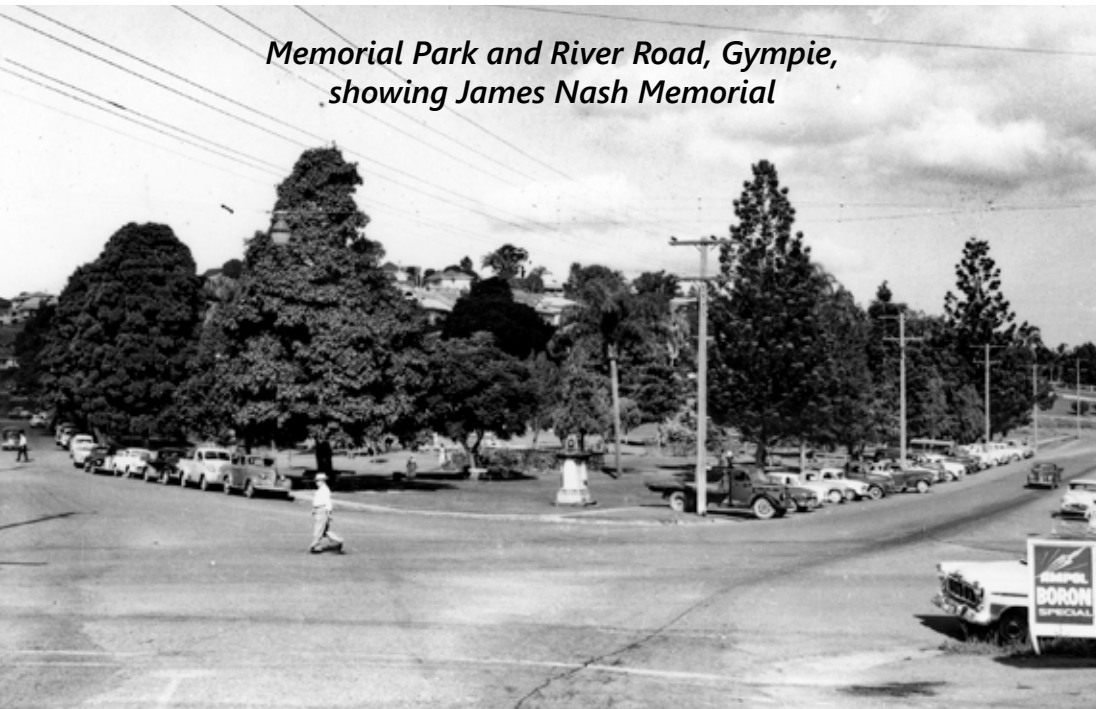
On 1 April 1921, war trophies in the form of captured field guns arrived in Gympie. Three of these guns, supplied by the Commonwealth Government, became features along the Young Street side of Memorial Park. In 1946, after an accident in which a young boy had his finger crushed while playing on one of the guns, the Gympie City Council removed them from the Park and disposed of them.

In April 1939, the base of a memorial fountain that had been erected in 1915 to honour Gympie's discoverer, James Nash, was moved from near the Gympie Town Hall to the corner of Reef Street and River Road in Memorial Park, where it remains today.

In 1940, after the outbreak of World War II, underground air raid shelters accommodating up to thirty people were dug in Memorial Park, adjacent to the bandstand. In a reminder of early goldmining, they were walled in like shafts, reinforced by concrete, roofed in timber and covered over with earth. After the war they were filled in.



*Betty Carswell and Joan McCormack  
on a gun in Memorial Park*



*Memorial Park and River Road, Gympie,  
showing James Nash Memorial*



*Memorial Park fernery, c1950s*



## *The Monuments in the Park*

In Memorial Park on Remembrance Day, 11 November 1988, Colonel Colin Townsend unveiled a plaque to honour servicemen and women who served in post-World War II conflicts.

The plaque, which is mounted on a six-tonne sandstone block carved with a cross, was dedicated by P.V. Kenny. It is surrounded by a circled wall that is dedicated to those who served in Korea, Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam. Each of the pavers is inscribed with the relevant places of conflict.



*Vietnam Memorial unveiling, 1988*





Another stone monument is dedicated to the memory of two national servicemen who lost their lives during active service in Borneo and Vietnam.

### Peace Pole

During the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, a 2.5 metre Peace Pole was installed in the park dedicated to the volunteers of Cooloola.





On Monday 7 June 2021, a monument and plaque honouring First Nations service men and women was unveiled by Aunty Lillian Burke.

The monument honours the thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service men and women who have fought for and defended Australia in military service. The First Nations people's military contribution and cultural heritage has not always been duly recognised.

The unveiling was commemorated with a smoking ceremony, songs, formal addresses by military personnel and The Ode read by Uncle Eric Law AM, a Wakka Wakka man and Vietnam veteran.

*The reconciliation initiative was proudly supported by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships through the Celebrating Reconciliation Small Grants Program.*





# Floods

Memorial Park has survived many floods over the last 100 years, the largest being in February 2022 where the flood height reached 22.91 metres.



*Memorial Park in flood 20 April 1928  
– taken from Young Street*



*Aerial view of city centre and Memorial Park  
during the 1955 flood*



*Memorial Park in flood June 1983*



*Memorial Park in flood 26 April 1989  
– photograph by Les Priddy*



*Memorial Park in flood February 1999*



*Memorial Park in flood 10 January 2011  
– photograph by Greg Weir*



*Memorial Park in flood, 26 February 2022*





## *Time Capsule*

On Queensland Day 1999, to commemorate Queensland Day and the new millennia, Mayor Mick Venardos and Councillor Annette Reilly buried a time capsule near the bandstand. The capsule is set to open on 7 June 2099.

Now in its second century, Memorial Park remains a vital and much-loved icon of the Gympie region. On a location steeped in the city's gold-mining history, right next to the central business district, the park commemorates those who served their country in wartime while providing a peaceful, welcoming environment – a place where locals and visitors can enjoy a picnic lunch, the shade of the bandstand or a leisurely stroll among the trees and birdlife.

