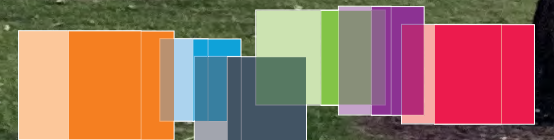


Memorial Park, Gympie



First published 2021 by Gympie Regional Council

This edition published June 2026

PO Box 155, Gympie Queensland 4570 Australia

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Cover Page:

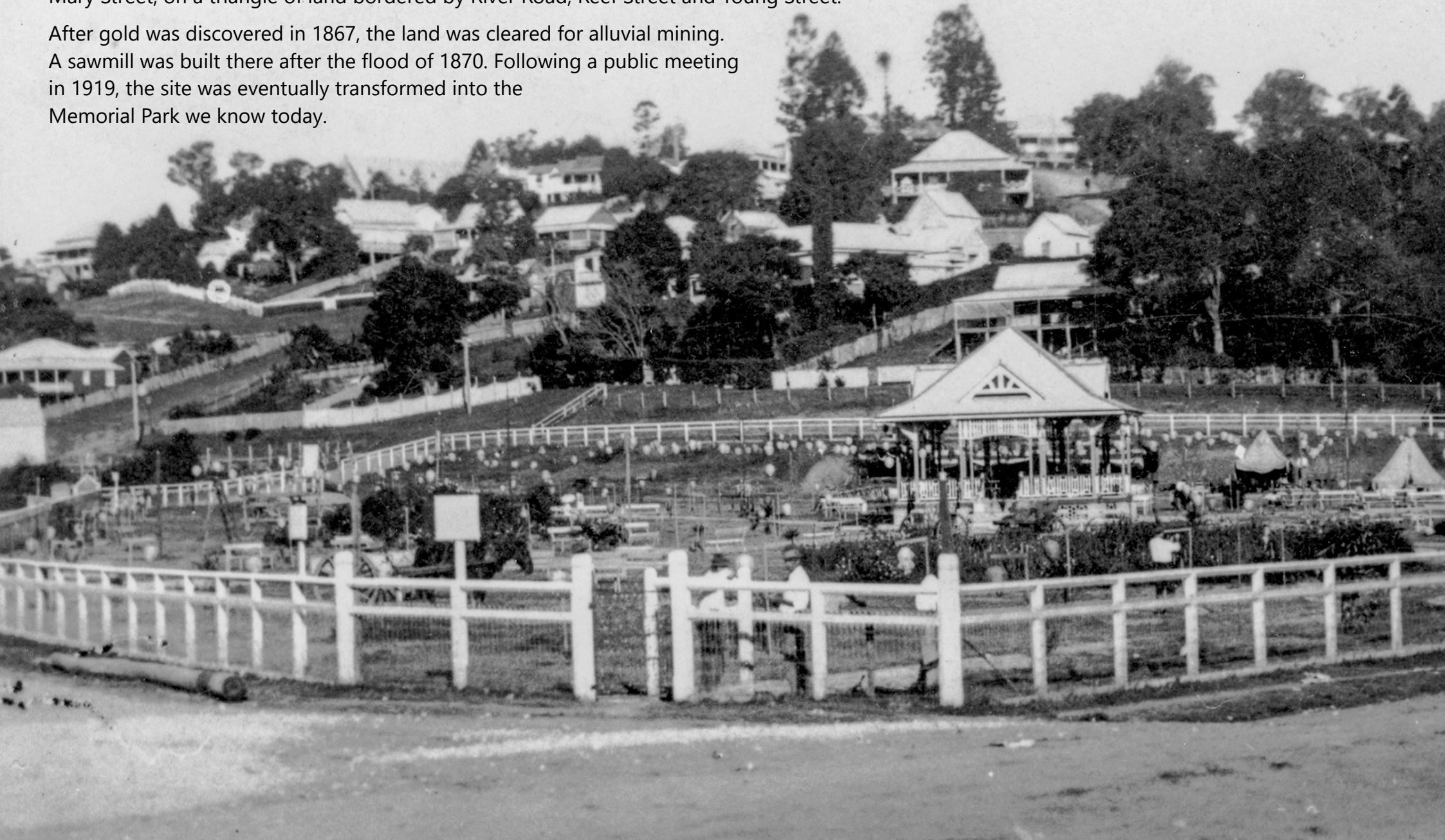
The Bandstand, Gympie Memorial Park, November 2020

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.

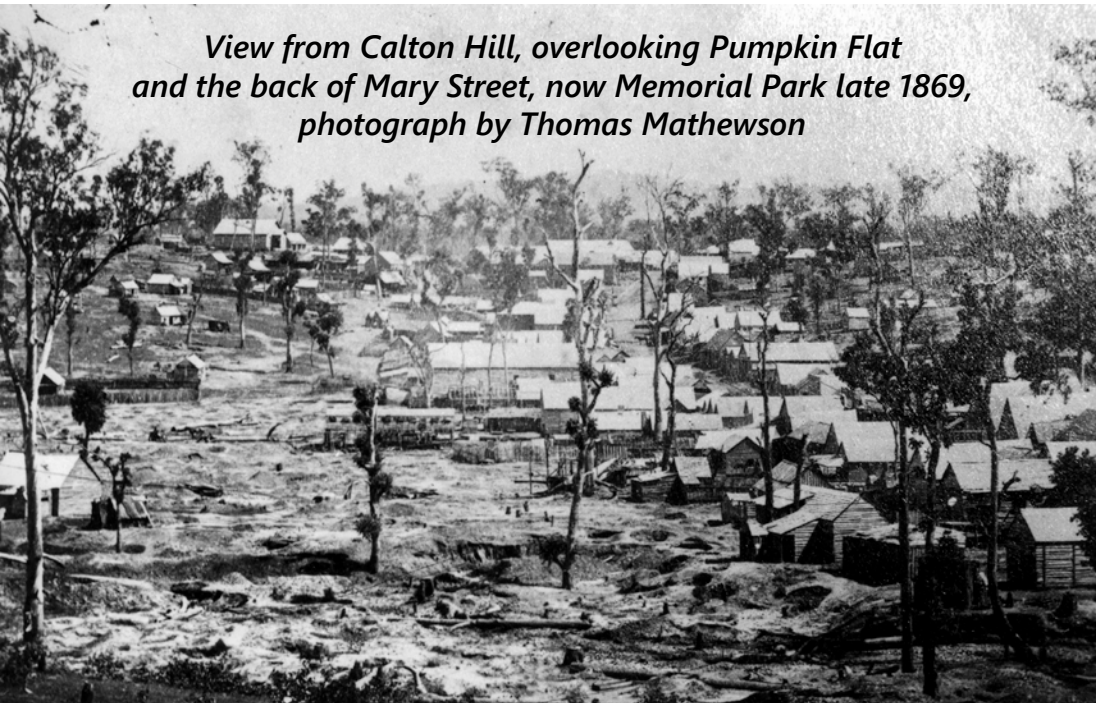
By mid-1868, the European diggers had abandoned their claims and Chinese miners took over and reworked the ground.

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.

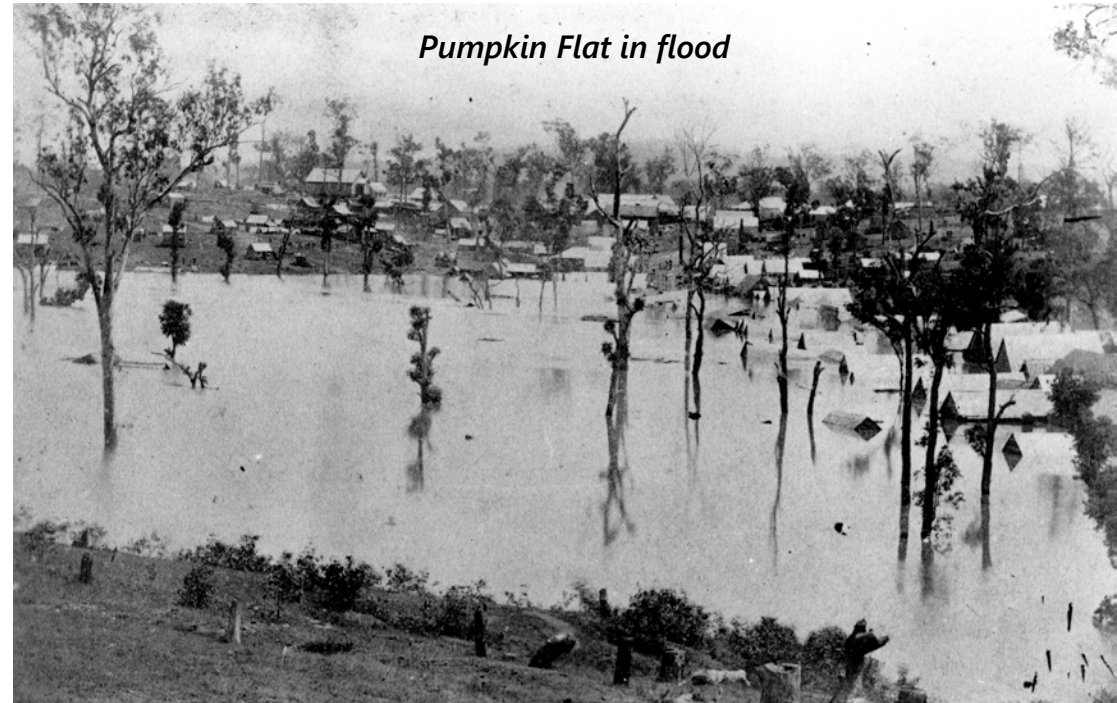
The flood of 1870 washed away most of this area and the alluvial mining declined, making way for another industry – sawmilling.



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.

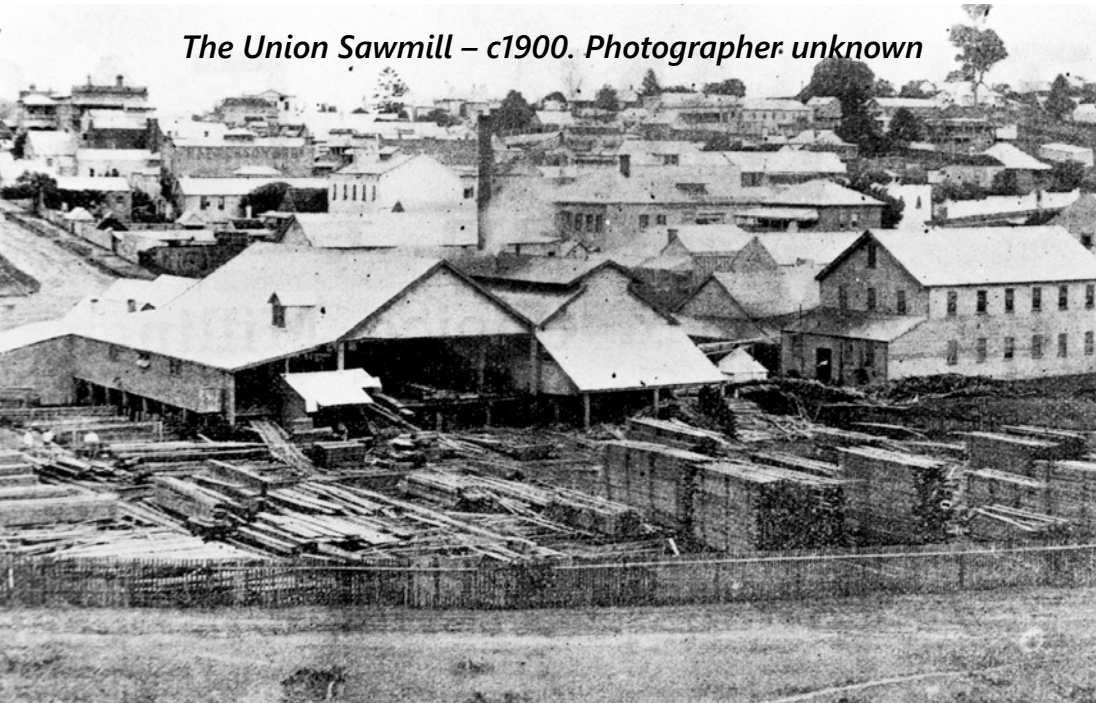
During 1917, the Ferguson & Co's Union Sawmill moved to the site of the former Phoenix Goldmine at One Mile – this is now the Council Depot in John Street. The move allowed logs to be received and sawn timber to be sent by rail on the newly opened Mary Valley Rail line.

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

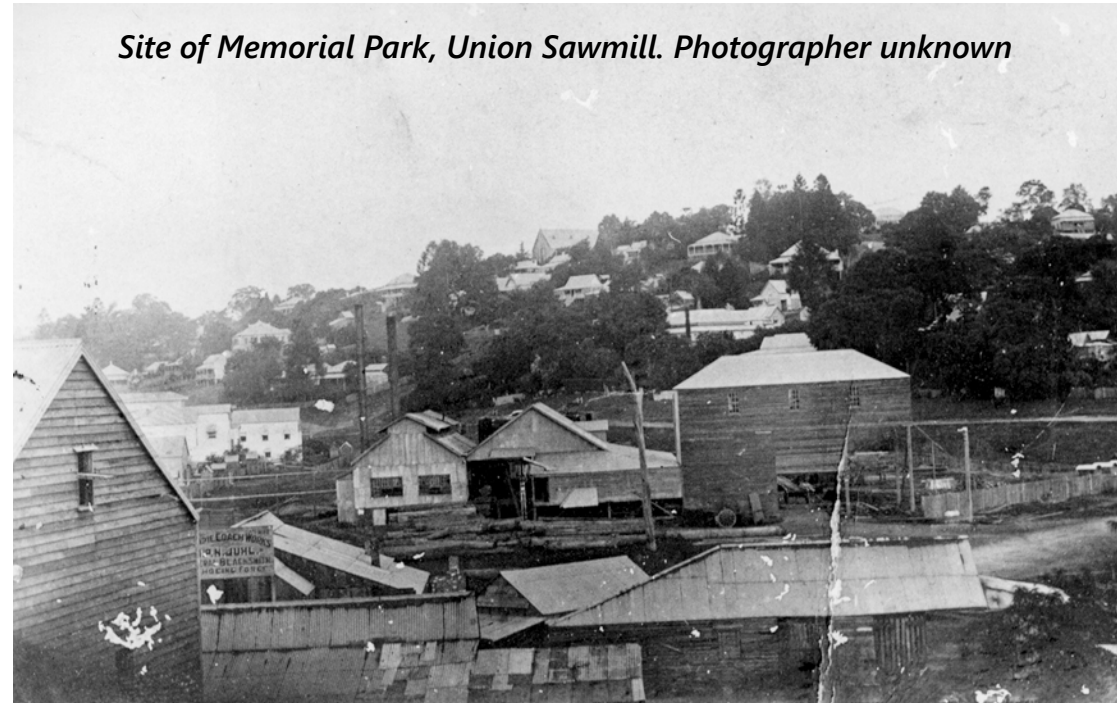
Union Sawmill, c1872



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.

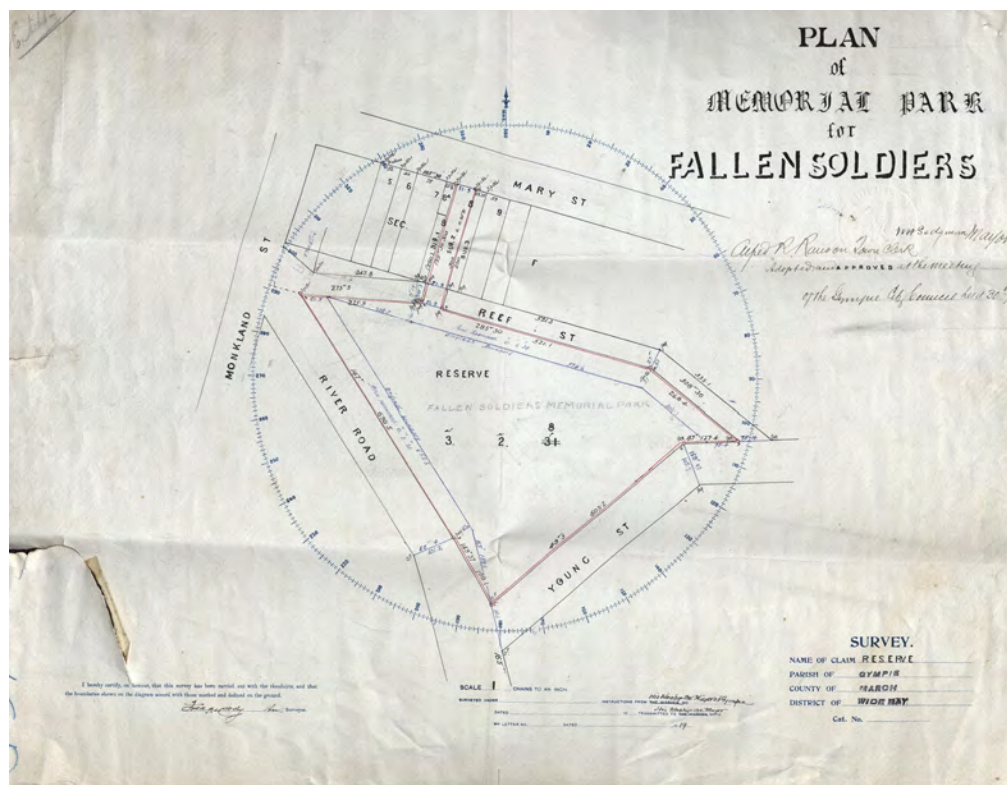
The Gympie and Widgee District Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Committee recently wrote to the Brisbane City Council asking that its Parks Superintendent should be allowed to visit Gympie for the purpose of advising in connection with the laying out of Memorial Gardens. A report from the whole council in committee 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 dip a little into 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 lower 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 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 night after 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 had 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 Executive.

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.

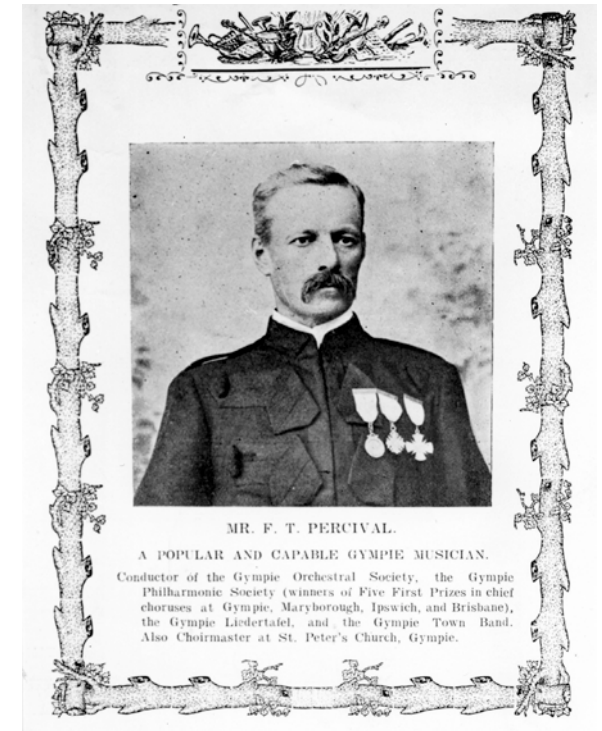
As well as serving as a war memorial, this structure honours a popular local band master, F.T. (Frederick Thomas) Percival, who had died in 1907.

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/-.

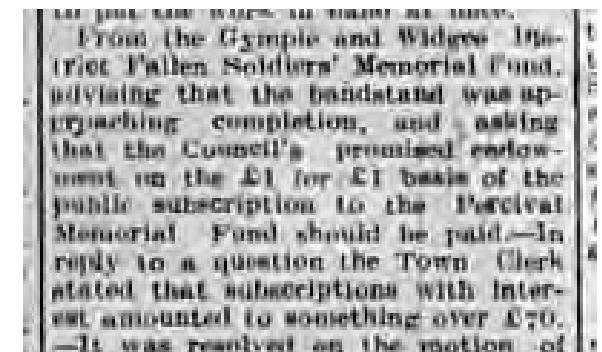
The bandstand became a popular spot for the people of Gympie.



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



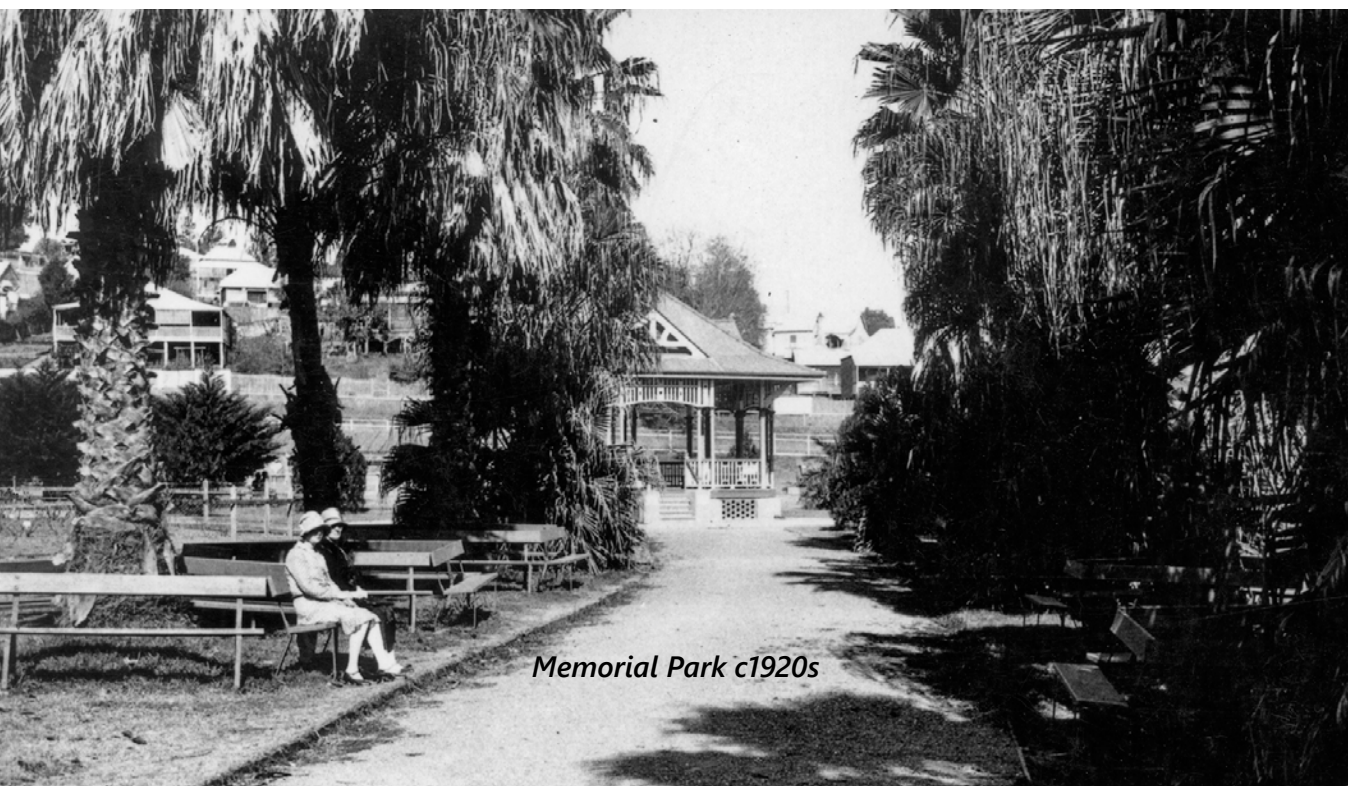
F.T. Percival, conductor, musician, Gympie Orchestral Society, Gympie Philharmonic, Gympie Town Band



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



Memorial Park, Christmas 1922



Memorial Park c1920s

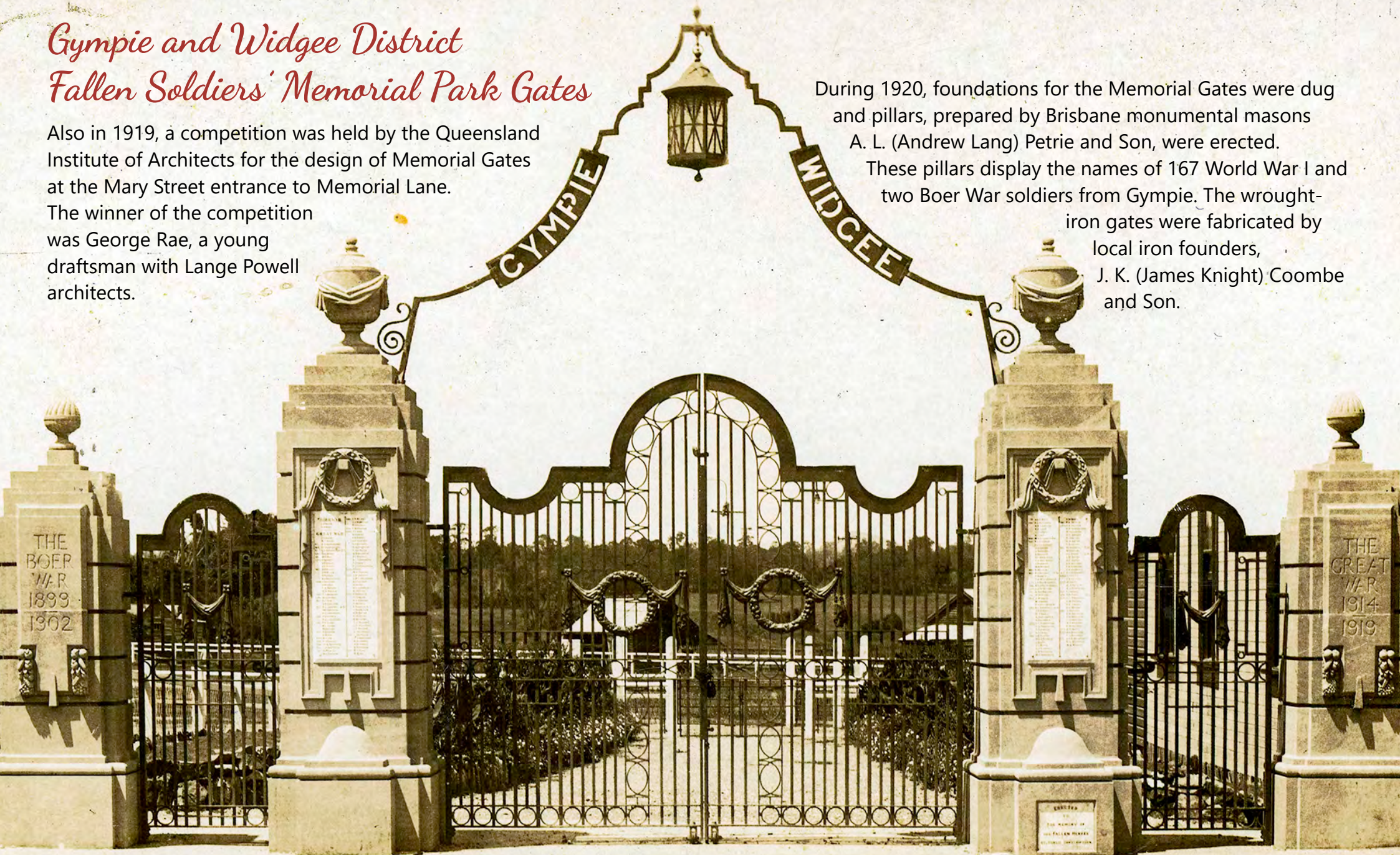


Bandstand, Memorial Park, 1920, possibly Barrett family

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.



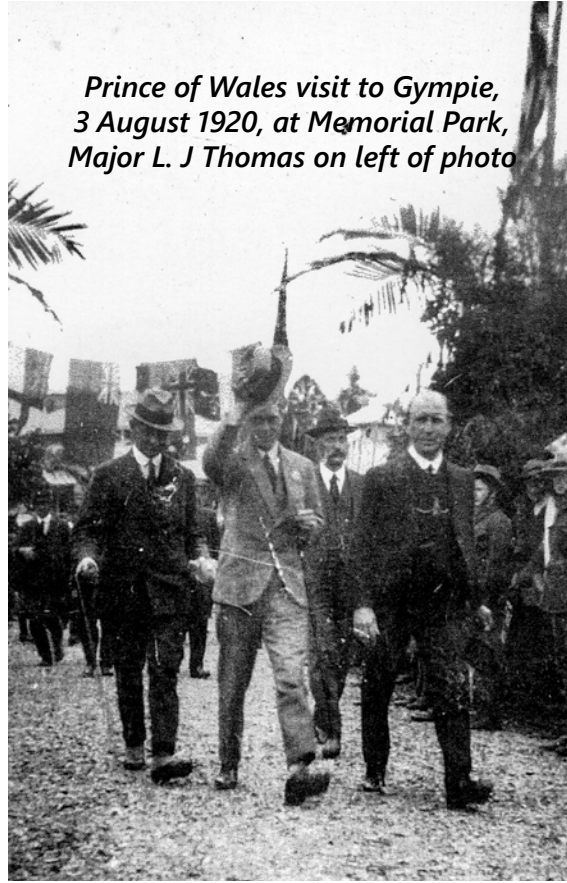
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**GYMPIE & WIDGEE DISTRICT FALLEN
SOLDIERS MEMORIAL PARK GATES.**

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



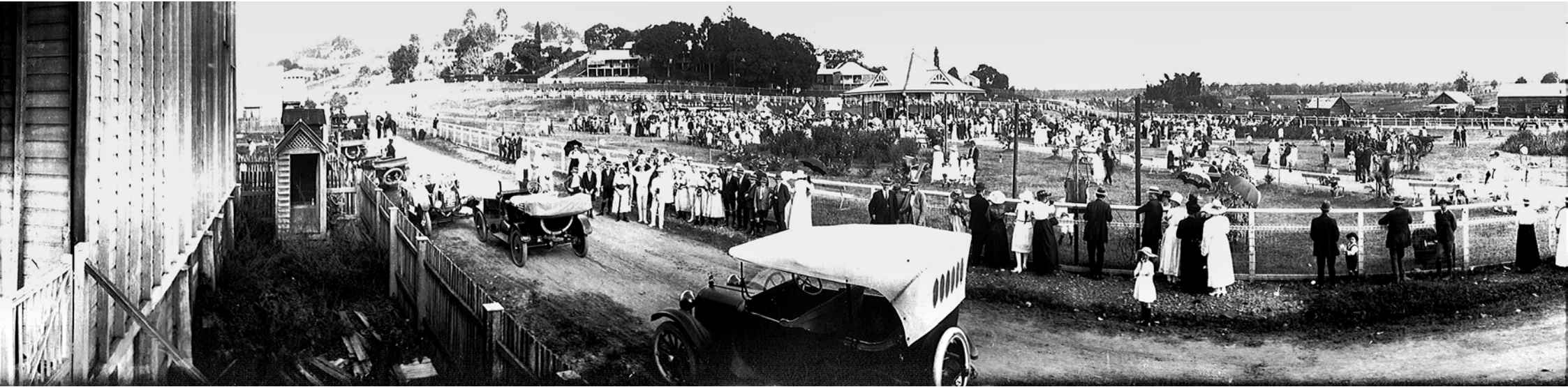
Prince of Wales reception in Memorial Park, 3 August 1920

*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.

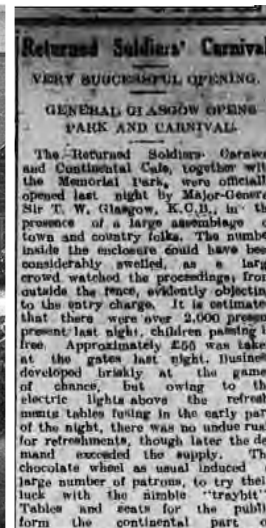




On Saturday, 23 April 1921, the pioneer aviator Bert Hinkler, whose grandparents lived in Gympie, flew low over Memorial Park before landing at the showgrounds at Southside. His Avro Baby aeroplane was towed to Memorial Park and displayed there for several days.



Bert Hinkler's plane, Memorial Park 1921



Returned Soldiers Carnival

VERY SUCCESSFUL OPENING.

GENERAL GLASGOW OPENS PARK AND CARNIVAL.

The Returned Soldiers' Carnival and Continental Cafe, together with the Memorial Park, were officially opened last night by Major-General Sir T. W. Glasgow, K.C.B., in the presence of a large assembly of town and country folk. The number inside the enclosure could have been considerably swelled, as a large crowd watched the proceedings from outside the fence, evidently objecting to the entry charge. It is estimated that there were over 2,000 present last night, children passing in free. Approximately £50 was taken at the gates last night. Business developed briskly at the games of chance, but owing to the electric lights above the refreshment tables being in the early part of the night, there was no undue rush for refreshments, though later the demand exceeded the supply. The chocolate wheel as usual induced a large number of patrons, to try their luck with the simple "traybill". Tables and seats for the public form the continental part of the entertainment, being modelled after the manner of the Parisian and Berlin beer gardens.

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 hung 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 large crowds lined Mary 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, playing the march "Westbury." A number of senior cadets acted as torch-bearers, with coloured flames. These were prepared by Mrs. W. E. Burbridge, and provided a welcome illumination.

The following competitive sets took part in the procession—"Servicemen" (Misses Chink, Smalley, I. Butler-Wood, and P. Henderson, and Messrs. R. J. Smith, A. Shumler, R. Grimley and H. Mackay). These set paraded in novel attire, tablecloths forming a large part of their costume, with serviettes for handkerchiefs. "Sunflowers"—Madeline Carlson, Chorney, Dean, and Miss Carlson, and Messrs. D. Enright, Wayne, Parlow, and Robinson. As the name indicates the character taken was that of a sunflower, their general appearance being decidedly effeminate. There was one children's set, the "Cherry Ripe" the following children taking part—Marjorie Cox, Mary Harman, Edith Parkins, Maureen Lochran, and Josephine Lockman.

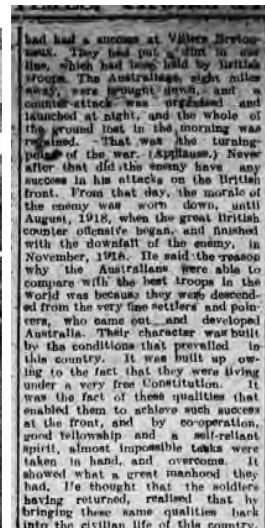
...Mavis Henderson and Ivy McCallough; "Tollwings"—Leslie Carlson and Cecil Chorney; "Mexican Band"—Mr. A. E. Lindholt; "A Day"—Phyllis Colbert; "Lions"—Mr. Fielding. The latter was attired in the picturesque costume of the seventeenth century, with peruke. Voting took place on these sets and characters during the evening, and the results will probably be announced to-night.

The following organisations also took part in the procession, in full regalia—Ancient Order of Foresters, Royal Victoria, M.T.O.O.F., Brails, Protestant Alliance, Boy Scouts, and W.C.T.U. A number of the scouts acted as bearers for the W.C.T.U. The Fire Brigade and Gympie Ambulance were also represented.

Arrived at the Park, the bandstand was made the rendezvous, and from this "colony of vanguard" the gathering was addressed by Sir T. W. Glasgow. The following were accommodated on the bandstand—Major R. Christie, D.S.O., A. Chisholm, D.S.O., G. Kirkcaldy, D.S.O., the Mayor (A.M. Thomson), and Ald. Stewart. Still, Mr. Macdonnell, the Town Clerk (Mr. A. H. Hanson), Messrs. T. Dunstan, M.L.A., T. Danby (late secretary Gympie branch H.S.), and S. I. W. P. Watts (secretary Gympie Memorial Park Committee); and the members of the Federal Band.

The Mayor, in introducing Senator Sir T. W. Glasgow, said the Gympie City Council, together with the returned soldiers, had seen fit to invite to Gympie one of their own, in the person of Major-General Glasgow, to officially declare the Park open on behalf of the Gympie City Council, and also the Band Carnival on behalf of the Returned Soldiers. There was no need for comment on the fine park they had. He thought the Park stood almost unequalled in Queensland.

Senator Sir T. W. Glasgow, who said he had to apologise for the absence of Mr. Mackay M.H.L., but the latter wished to express through the speaker his good wishes for the success of the function. He was certain from what he saw that night, that success was assured for the Carnival. After thanking the Mayor and Councilors for inviting him to be present, he congratulated the Memorial Park Committee on the fine result of their labours. He especially referred to the self-sacrificing work of the secretary, Mr. W. P. Watts, (Hon. Sec.), and also the laying out of the Park, which was the work of Mr. Harry Moore. The amount spent on the Park to date had been £25,750, and it had been moreover, opened free of debt. He thought this spoke volumes for the liberal way in which the people of Gympie and district had responded. He was sure the reason the public had responded was because they wished to show their very great appreciation of the work of the men at the front. They also wished to place on record their appreciation of the sacrifices of these men, who gave their all, and in whose memory this park was dedicated. (Applause.) He thought it was appropriate that the ceremony was taking place on the eve of the anniversary of two great events in the late war. One of these was the 25th of April, 1915, when the Australians and New Zealanders undertook what looked to be an impossible task, and that with a very short period of training. They had been able to accomplish what would have been a most difficult task for the most experienced and trained troops in the world. That day heralded the birth of a new nation, Australia. The nation having been born, the occasion brought with it great responsibilities, and he thought the people who came after them, should realize that it was up to them to maintain what the Australians on the 25th of April, 1915, had gained. He was sure that all the rising generation, whom they saw memorials, such as this, would realize what great responsibilities rested on them. The second event he referred to was the 25th of April, 1918, on the morning of that day, the enemy



had had a success at Villers Bretonneux. They had put a firm in one line, which had been held by British troops. The Australians, eight miles away, were brought down, and a counter-attack was organized and launched at night, and the whole of the ground in the morning was regained. That was also turning-point of the war. (Applause.) Never after that did the enemy have any success in his attacks on the British front. From that day, the morale of the enemy was worn down, until August, 1918, when the great British counter-offensive began and finished with the downfall of the enemy, in November, 1918. He said the reason why the Australians were able to compare with the best troops in the world was because they were descended from the very fine settlers and pioneers, who came out and developed Australia. Their character was built by the conditions that prevailed in this country. It was built up owing to the fact that they were living under a very free Constitution. It was the fact of these qualities that enabled them to achieve such success at the front, and by co-operation, good fellowship and a self-reliant spirit, almost impossible tasks were taken in hand, and overcome. It showed what a great manhood they had. He thought that the soldiers having returned, realised that by bringing these same qualities back into the civilian life of this country, they could make it the prosperous country it should be. He was sure they would do so. He had great pleasure in declaring the Park open.

Three cheers were then given with great vigour for the popular speaker, who concluded by declaring the carnival open, the object of which, he said, was to enable the soldiers to improve their skill. The soldiers had organised for the purpose of assisting those who were not so fortunately situated, and also for the purpose of cementing and continuing these great friendships which had been made at the front. He hoped that the public would give as freely as they had done in the past towards all soldiers' functions.

Mr. V. Ger, cornettist, announced what was generally thought to be the "Last Post." The gathering then dispersed, and adjourned to the various attractions. During the evening dancing took place on the green. Mr. S. E. McIntyre, acting as M.C., Miss G. Jones A.T.C.J., acted as accompanist. The balloon dancing was well patronised, cash prizes being awarded to those lucky enough to have their tickets "marked." The fact that night sellers were kept hard at work selling balloons, testified to the popularity of the naval dance. The Federal Band played the following items during the evening: "March 'Challenge'"; "Our Director"; waltz "In Ballie in Marschera"; scottische "Frisby Footsteps"; waltz, "River of Peace"; dances, "Plantation Ballads."

A concert was held immediately after the opening, dancing being interspersed. Vocal items were rendered by the following: Messrs. T. Colledge (2), R. Bostrell, M. Burns, and Miss Byrne (2). The fate will be continued to-night, and also on Friday and Saturday.

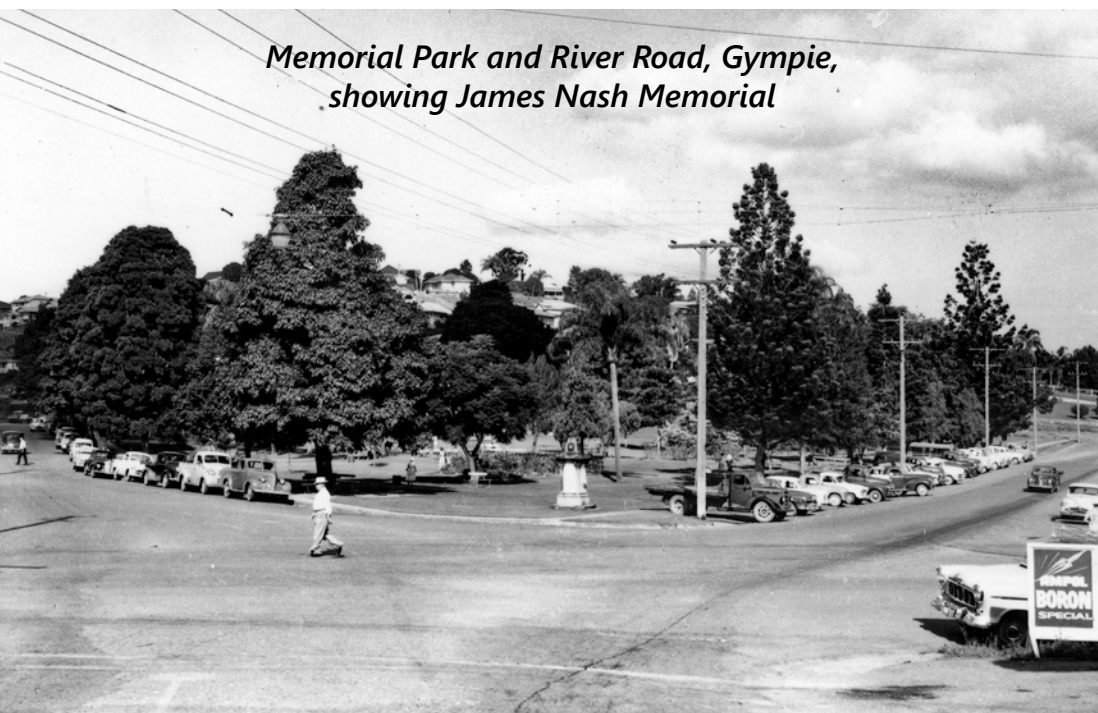
On 1 April 1921, war trophies in the form of captured field guns arrived in Gympie. Three of these guns, supplied by the Commonwealth Government, became features along the Young Street side of Memorial Park. In 1946, after an accident in which a young boy had his finger crushed while playing on one of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



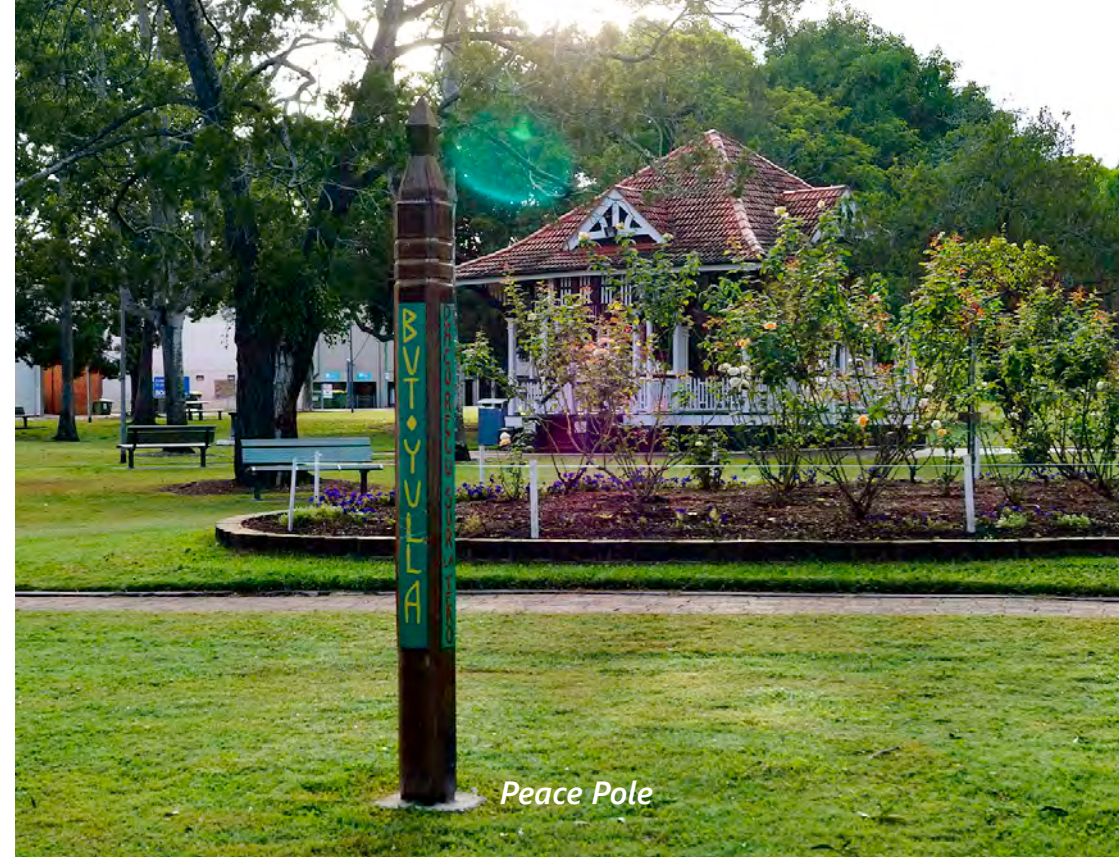
Vietnam Memorial unveiling, 1988



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.



Peace Pole



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.



Memorial Flame

A new memorial flame was installed on the eastern side of Memorial Park as part of a \$2million upgrade. The relocation of the flame from Memorial Lane and the upgrade to the park was funded through the Gympie RSL and the Australian Federal Government's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, and the Arts.

The Memorial Flame was inspired by the Rising Sun Badge of the Australian Army. Art Deco in style, the eight bronze ray beams emanate from the eternal flame in a 2 metre diameter. The shape is divided into eight sections with the rays made up of bronze and stainless steel. Arrows are etched into the steel to represent the sparkling of the sun and moving forward into the future with hope.

The eternal flame helps us remember the sacrifice of those who died during service.



Image courtesy of Mal Dodt



Memorial Lane

Memorial Lane was also upgraded at the Reef Street entrance.

The original flame was removed and the laneway is now an avenue recognising those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Memorial Pillars

April 2026 saw the completion of the final phase of the RSL Memorial Park Project. The project's completion includes the installation of the RSL Service Values Pillars.

The inspiration and symbolism for the memorial pillars comes from a transformation of the control, sacrifice and chaos of war into peace, compassion and unity. The four pillars are represented by the service values — mateship, endurance, sacrifice and courage. Each pillar has engraved words and phrases inspired by each value to evoke meaning, emotion and storytelling - both told and untold.

The crosses on each of the pillars are symbolic of the fallen, evoking the idea of a cenotaph — a grave without a body — representative of those Missing in Action.



Memorial Pillars at Night



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.



Queensland Day 1999 - '140 Years On'

This capsule was stored for posterity
on 7th June 1999 by Cr Mick Venardos,
Mayor of Cooloola Shire Council.

The contents of which were contributed
by the Council and the citizens
of Cooloola Shire.

To be opened in 100 years-7th June 2099.

I hope we have left our community a better place.