



# *Fallen Soldiers'* MEMORIAL STATUE

Around 3000 men from Bundaberg and District served in World War 1. Of these, almost 300 gave their lives for their country. The Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Statue at the intersection of Bourbong and Barolin Streets commemorates their sacrifice.

## **Conceiving the Idea**

The local Soldiers' Reception Committee initiated the idea of a memorial in Bundaberg. This committee consisted of M. Dunn (President), F. Haly (Treasurer), Lt. G. Mather (Secretary), W. Dunn, C.W. Buss, E.T. Amos, H.N. Thorburn, and L.H. Maynard.

Local architect F.H. (Frederic Herbert) Faircloth was commissioned to design the memorial. In 1919 a sketch of the memorial designed by Faircloth was put on display in the shop window of newsagent Mr D.C. Moore, and it attracted

quite a lot of attention and praise from Bundaberg residents.

### The Memorial's Foundations

The foundations were constructed by local contractor Mr W.P. Guthrie and the foundation stone was officially laid by General Sir William Birdwood, who was popularly known as "the Soul of ANZAC", on 15 May 1920.

Despite it being a damp day a crowd of several hundred attended, with the balconies of the Post Office and Royal Hotel also filled with spectators. The Bundaberg City Band played during the ceremony and Sir William presented a number of medals to returned soldiers, and spoke with mothers, widows and relatives of fallen soldiers.

On 13 October 1920 the tablet bearing the inscription of the laying of the foundation stone was laid in place, to much less fanfare.

### The Memorial

Bundaberg's Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Statue originally had a base of three chiselled trachyte steps. However, since the addition of the roundabout in 1992, only one of these steps is now visible. Resting on the steps is the die which is 1.8 metres (6 feet) square. The base is made of chiselled trachyte and at each corner is a pedestal of polished trachyte. On top of the pedestals are red granite pilasters which hold a polished granite frieze and a chiselled trachyte cornice. On each side of the die are panels of polished trachyte overlaid with red granite in which the names of the fallen have been cut and gilded.

The frieze contains the inscription "The Great War of 1914-18" and also the tribute. On top of the cornice is an octagonal base of chiselled trachyte holding a circular polished trachyte plinth, with a column of red granite, 60 centimetres (2 feet 3 inches) in diameter, finished in the Ionic style, sitting on these octagonal bases.

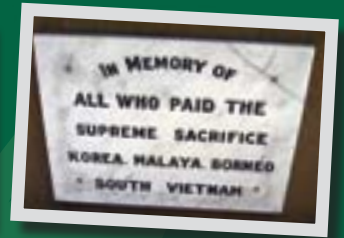
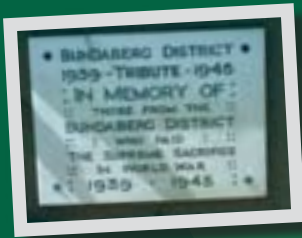
The Memorial stands approximately 12 metres high, including the statue. It cost a total of £1885/0/3. This total includes the cost of the statue, the foundations, the engraving, the architect fee, postage, clerical work, etc. As a result of the efforts of the Soldiers' Reception Committee, and the contributions of local people, when the memorial was unveiled it was entirely free of debt.

### The Digger Statue

Finally, at the top of the Memorial stands the Digger. The Digger is made of Carrara marble from Italy and stands on a base of white Ulam marble. A Mr Illingworth, who at the time was regarded as one of Australia's leading modellers, created a model of the Digger which was then sent to Messrs. Anselm, Odling and Sons in Carrara Italy, where "the finished statue came from the hands of one of the world's most famous sculptors!"

Carved from a solid two ton block of marble, the Digger is approximately 7 feet (2.1 metres) high and weighs approximately 1.5 tons. He is shown head bowed, resting on arms reversed, and with his left leg bent in a relaxed stance. The stump behind him is a





common means of support for digger memorial statues.

### Unique

The digger is the most popular form of memorial in Queensland. However, Bundaberg's memorial is unique in several ways.

The use of trachyte is quite unusual for Queensland memorials and is more commonly seen in memorials in New South Wales. Also uncommon to most digger memorial statues is that our Digger is shown carrying a backpack. Bundaberg's Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Statue is also only one of two in Queensland which remains intact in its original setting in an intersection (the other is in Aramac). It not only commemorates soldiers who fell in the First World War but it also recognises the only local soldier who lost his life in the Boer War, Lt. John Leask.

The Memorial is also an unusual example of architect F.H. Faircloth's work. He is more commonly associated with being "responsible for almost every major building in Bundaberg"<sup>2</sup> and the rebuilding of Childers after the 1902 fire.

### ANZAC Day 1921

Despite the Memorial not being fully completed (the statue of the Digger still had not arrived from Italy), ANZAC Day services in 1921 took place at the site of the Memorial, then consisting only of the base and column.

### Arrival and Placement of the Statue

The statue arrived in Bundaberg on Tuesday 5 July 1921 by the s.s. *Tinana*. Messrs. Keys Bros. carted the statue

from the wharves to the vacant block opposite the Post Office.

*For the purpose of lifting the figure... Messrs. Keys Bros. have erected a pole fitted with the necessary tackle alongside the column, and when making the lift this will be tilted at such an angle as will ensure that the figure will be easily swung into position. It is interesting to note in this connection that the pole that is being used was once the mast of the s.s. Nelson which ship it will be remembered, sprang aleak [sic] and was washed ashore and wrecked on the rocks adjacent to Mr O. J. Gruter's cottage at the Sandhills [Bargara].<sup>3</sup>*

The digger was placed on top of the column on Thursday 7 July 1921. The raising of the statue was watched by a crowd of about 500 spectators, including many amateur photographers.

### The Unveiling Ceremony

The unveiling ceremony took place on Saturday 30 July 1921. All returned soldiers were requested to attend in uniform and next of kin of fallen soldiers were asked to apply for a pass which allowed them access to seating in a special enclosure. Limited seating was also available on the Post Office balconies at a cost of 2/-. Souvenir buttons portraying the statue in miniature were sold for 1/- each.

Major General Charles Henry Brand was invited to officially unveil the new memorial. Born in Ipswich, the Major trained as a teacher and for a time taught at Central Boy's School and North Bundaberg School. He served in the Boer

War and the First World War before going into politics after his retirement from the military in 1933.

For the ceremony the statue was draped with the Union Jack and Australian flags and when Major General Brand was ready to unveil, he simply released the pin holding the flags. A minute's silence was observed, three shots were fired by the firing party, and then Bugler Steptoe played the Last Post.

After the official unveiling the Fallen Soldiers' Memorial Statue was handed over to the Bundaberg City Council as trustees.

### Other Commemorations

In addition to the inscription for Boer War soldier Lt. Leask, a plaque honouring district women who served in the Australian Defence Forces was placed beside the memorial in 1993. It was presented by the Bundaberg & District Ex Servicewomen's Association.

### Site of the Statue

Back in late 1962 the position of the memorial was causing some consternation to Bundaberg motorists. The introduction of a new "diamond turn" regulation at intersections around the city meant that some felt the monument

created a traffic hazard by taking up too much space in the intersection. Traffic lights were installed and were eventually replaced by a roundabout in 1992 as part of the CBD's beautification project.

### Current Times

The memorial is listed on the Queensland Heritage Register and on the Register of the National Estate (Australian Heritage Database). It is the site of memorial services in the City each ANZAC Day.

*Images from the Picture Bundaberg collection, donated by Doug Rattray, P. D. Johnson and D. Strathdee.*

### Peta Browne

*Bundaberg Regional Library*

References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Bundaberg Daily News*, 30 July 1921.
- <sup>2</sup> Watson, D. & McKay, J. 1994. *Queensland Architects of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.
- <sup>3</sup> *Bundaberg Daily News*, 6 July 1921.  
*Bundaberg Daily News*, 14 Oct 1920; 15-17 May 1920; 6 Jul – 1 Aug 1921.  
*Bundaberg Mail*, 14 Oct 1920; 15 May 1920; 8 Jul – 1 Aug 1921.  
*Bundaberg News Mail*, 2 Oct – 4 Dec 1962; 12-15 Jan 1963; 26 Sep 1963; 13-14 Nov 1992.  
McIvor, Shirley & Trevor. 1994. *Salute the Brave.... Australian Heritage Database* – <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/index.html>  
*Queensland Heritage Register* – <http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/chims/basicSearch.html>  
*Australian Dictionary of Biography Online* – <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au>

