

## Local History Feature



# East Rotary Park

## Kendall's Flat, East Bundaberg

During the floods of Christmas 2010, the Kendall's Flat area was submerged on several occasions, causing extensive damage to the sporting grounds and local park.

East Rotary Park is a small park, with a big history to many people. It was an area first settled by Richard Kendall, one of Bundaberg's earliest pioneers, and then redeveloped 49 years ago by a very new and enthusiastic service club.

### A COMMUNITY PROJECT

In 1963, the newly chartered Bundaberg East Rotary Club decided to investigate the possibility of building a park for the Bundaberg residents as their first community project.

Given the name of the club, the park would be situated in East Bundaberg, and there was a piece of bush near Kennedy Bridge that seemed ideal.

In the Club Minutes it was recorded:

*The first major project undertaken by the new club, which has proved a very enduring one of which we may be justly proud, was our approach to City Council*

*signifying our willingness to work on and improve a piece of land for the general benefit of the city, if they would make the land available for such a project.<sup>1</sup>*

The Council made available to the Club the hillock and surroundings overlooking Kendall's Flat. At that time the area was so thickly covered by lantana and dense scrub, that most Bundaberg residents would not have even realised there was a small hill there.

Mayor Ald. C.J. Nielsen in 1966 remembered that "...when the council had been engaged in the early stages of reclamation work on the flats, the East Bundaberg Rotary Club had come to our assistance and begun clearing the densely covered land where the park now stands."<sup>2</sup>

One of the Rotary Club members was Eddie Langbecker, and he planned the original landscaping for the park after going through and selecting shade trees.

In October 1963, enthusiastic club members organised several working days with bulldozers, brush-hooks, machetes and other tools, to clear the scrub as the first phase of the park. In addition, the Council provided assistance by supplying soil to fill big hollows in the ground. This, however, did not go unnoticed by local residents.



### VANDALS WITH BULLDOZERS

Club Historian John Perry-Keane recalled in 1983: *When one looks now at this extensive sports complex, surely the best so near the Post Office in a city of comparable size, and realizes our project encouraged the commencement of this, it is hard to believe that shortly after we started, a person wrote a letter of complaint to the paper.<sup>3</sup>*

The letter was published under the heading *Vandals with Bulldozers*, but before the indignant club could formulate a suitable reply, Mayor C.J. Nielsen rushed to their defence by publicising the fact that this was a project being undertaken by a new Rotary Club for the benefit of the city, and with the knowledge and consent of the Council.

### DEVELOPING THE PARK

One of the centrepieces on display in the park when first opened was the plinthed cane locomotive *Old Germany*, presented by Mr S. Woodall of the Millaquin Sugar Co. Ltd. Also in the park was a German Wagon, used for carting cane in the early settlement days. The wagon was donated by Mr S. Scotney.

The Bundaberg RSL donated one of the two cannons, although no information is recorded about these pieces or where they went. With the purchase of playground equipment - a slide and swings - and incidental expenses, the total cost of building the park was costed at £321.1.6. This was financed entirely through the collection and sale by club members of waste-paper.<sup>4</sup>

### FINAL TOUCHES

Work continued over the next three years with landscaping and tree planting. Council Parks and Gardens Curator G. Wise was invaluable in his advice and assistance, and two trees still standing in the park were planted in memory of former Rotarians Mr F. Jones and Mr H. Knust, who were charter members of the East Bundaberg Rotary Club.

The Rotary Park sign was erected by Club members in May 1966, and East Rotary Park was officially handed over to Mayor Ald. C. J. Nielsen on May 17, 1966 at a special function. The Mayor said at the time



Clockwise from top:  
East Rotary Park just before official opening in 1966; Club raises funds for the park by collecting paper for recycling; Digging drainage pipes in 1965; *Old Germany* on its plinth ca1970s; *Old Germany* restored and working at the Botanical Gardens



“that he wanted to assure the club that the park would be kept in as good a condition as it was now. The park is a great asset to a large number of children, and the Council wanted to express their appreciation and admiration of the club’s fine work in moulding such a wonderful park and playground from a wilderness in only three years”.<sup>5</sup>

### PARK DECLINE

Over the years, many aspects of the original park changed. The guns were removed, and the locomotive *Old Germany*, built in Germany in 1914, was given to the Bundaberg Steam Tramway Preservation Society in 1987 and was restored in 1990 to become the star attraction at the Australian

Sugarcane Railway at the Botanical Gardens in Bundaberg.

The Park sign gradually rusted, and after the lengthy immersion in floodwaters in 2010, the park was in desperate need of some work.

### PARK UPGRADE

In 2009, East Bundaberg Rotary members began to talk about the condition of the park, and the importance of the park as the Club’s first Community Service project in Bundaberg. After the





2010 floods, offers of assistance from Rotary Clubs all around Australia resulted in three major donations towards the renovation and repair of East Rotary Park.

In February 2011, the Bundaberg East Rotary Club approached the Bundaberg Regional Council with a request to fund repairs to the park.

Initial investigations indicated that extensive sofffall and edging was needed, and the existing rides would need to be removed, bearings stripped, repaired and repainted. The water cooler needed replacing, as did the original sign. Initial costs were estimated at approximately \$10,000, and the Rotary Club and Council commenced work on the upgrade in May 2011.

Edging was installed and sofffall laid, and the children's rides, including the Cyclatron which had been built by a club member, were repaired and reinstalled in the park.

With donations from the Rotary Clubs of Hall, ACT, and Latrobe, Tasmania, further work was carried out installing a new water cooler, and extending sofffall around the tree in the centre of the park.

### SIGNS AND MORE SIGNS

As the 50th Anniversary of the Bundaberg East Rotary Club falls



Clockwise from top left:

Children play on the 'pedal whizzer' (Cyclatron) ca1980; the rusted sign after 46 years; rides removed for repair in 2011; sofffall and edging laid in mid 2011; repainted rides go back; removing the old sign in Feb 2012; East Rotary Park during 2010 floods; 2012.

in 2013, the Club decided to redesign the sign for East Rotary Park. At that stage they were only thinking of one sign. That was soon to change.

In January 2012, Bundaberg Regional Council received a request from Bruce Muller, the Gt Gt Grandson of Richard Kendall, that some kind of acknowledgement be given to his family as one of the early settlers of Bundaberg.

The request was passed on to the East Bundaberg Rotary Club, and the members decided to have two more signs constructed for East Rotary Park. One sign would describe the history of the







Kendall family in Bundaberg, and the other, the Club's history with East Rotary Park.

In February 2012 club members removed a piece of history, as the original sign installed in 1966 was pushed over and sent off for scrap metal.

Working with Bruce Muller, Bundaberg Regional Library provided images and collated them with the text from Bruce, and the information from the Bundaberg East Rotary Club, for the signs to be designed and constructed.

With a further donation from Rotary District 9570 flood funds, the signs were ready to be installed in July 2012, at a final cost of \$5,000.

**THE PARK COMPLETED**

The eventual upgrade and renovation of East Rotary Park cost Bundaberg East Rotary approximately \$20,000, and of that amount, \$10,000 was donated by Rotary Clubs in other parts of Australia.

The Kendall Family has a lasting monument to their contribution to the early history of Bundaberg, and the history of one of our community parks has been recorded for our heritage.

**Sue Gammon**

References:  
*Bundaberg News-Mail*  
 Various issues 1963-1966  
 Perry-Keane, John  
*A History of The Rotary Club of Bundaberg East*  
 May 1983.

Images:  
 All images *Picture Bundaberg Project*, donated by Bundaberg East Rotary Club.

