

Heritage Citation



Marchant Park

Key details

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| Also known as | Marchant's Paddock |
| Addresses | At 1105 Gympie Road, Aspley, Queensland 4034 |
| Type of place | Monument / memorial, Defence site, Park |
| Period | Interwar 1919-1939 |
| Lot plan | L1_SP288367; L2_SP288367 |
| Key dates | Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2003 Date of Citation — June 2008 |
| Criterion for listing | (A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (G) Social; (H) Historical association |

Soft-drink manufacturer and philanthropist George Marchant first proposed Marchant Park for public use in 1917, and in 1921, after Vellnagel's blacksmith business agreed to move across Gympie Road to a new location, the

park was officially opened. It contains a number of built heritage features including the Kedron Shire War Memorial Gates, opened in 1924, the Marchant Memorial, the cricket ovals constructed by the Warehouse Cricketers' Association in 1928, and the George Hastie Players Pavilion which was named after a founding member and long-serving secretary of the WCA. The park has continued to be a popular place for recreation and sporting events for successive generations of the Chermshire and wider Brisbane community for more than 80 years.

History

Irish settler Edward William Murphy first purchased the site, now containing Marchant Park, on 29 September 1868. Murphy paid ?186 for Portion 587 that comprised 504 acres of land in the Chermshire area then known as Downfall Creek being named after the nearest large watercourse. Portion 587 became known locally as Murphy's Paddock. After Murphy's death on 19 May 1881, the land passed to his spinster sister, Mary Murphy, of Sydney. On 10 February 1885, the title to Murphy's Paddock was transferred to Michael Ballinger of Brisbane. By December 1891, Murphy's Paddock had been subdivided, leaving Ballinger with the deed to the smaller allotment comprising 101 acres 2 roods 8.2 perches. By 1897, a road, later named after Murphy, ran through Murphy's Paddock to connect to Gympie Road.

At the northern corner of Murphy and Gympie Roads was a 4-acre block of land that contained a blacksmith shop run by a German migrant, August Christian Vellnagel. On 16 March 1897, William Henry Hacker purchased resubdivision 1 of subdivision 1 of Murphy's Paddock. The four-acre block had been bought by Vellnagel but registered in Hacker's name. Vellnagel commenced a blacksmith business on this site and "Vellnagel achieved a good reputation for shoeing horses".¹ On 3 February 1899, Vellnagel finally acquired the title deed to the block containing his house and blacksmith shop.

On 24 August 1899, George Marchant, the owner of a successful aerated waters factory, gained title to resubdivision 2 of Portion 587 that comprised 97 acres. This gave Marchant control of all of the land that was Murphy's Paddock, other than the 4 acres owned by Vellnagel. Marchant wanted the land to use as a spelling paddock for his company's horses. Thereafter the land became known locally as Marchant's Paddock. A man of considerable wealth, Marchant not only owned factories in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Newcastle but also held the world patent on a bottling machine. He was a philanthropist, contributing ?82,000 towards the construction of the Temperance Union's Canberra Hotel in the City, as well as donating to the Montrose Crippled Children's Home, the Kings Home for Soldiers, the Garden Home for the Aged, the City Mission Home, the Paddington Creche and Kindergarten and Chermshire's H.M. Wheller Gardens Settlement aged care facility.

After the declaration of war on the German Empire on 5 August 1914, 120 Australian Light Horsemen, from northern New South Wales, encamped at the northern end of Marchant's Paddock but later shifted across Murphy Road to butcher Alonzo Sparkes' paddock. This was the start of 'Military Training Camp Chermshire', an Army establishment that operated out of both paddocks from 1914 to 1918. Marchant's Paddock was used as a Remount Depot for the Queensland-raised 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment. Both it and Sparkes' Paddock "were ideal for the Light Horse as the land had largely been cleared of low scrub to allow both businessmen to use them as rest paddocks for their workhorses"². After the departure of 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment for overseas service on 14 September 1914, Marchant's Paddock remained a Remount Depot, with wild horses brought in by train to Zillmere Station and then herded up to the Camp. As well, during World War I, Marchant's Paddock was used as a training camp for the Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF) artillery and machine-gun units. Some temporary buildings were erected in Marchant's Paddock including a gun park for the artillery's 18 pounder

guns.

In 1917, before the end of the Great War, George Marchant offered to donate his paddock to the Kedron Shire Council for use as a park. Marchant placed, as a major condition of his donation, the requirement that Vellnagel's land also had to be acquired by the shire council. This would allow the whole area bounded by Gympie, Murphy and Ellison Roads (Murphy's original paddock) to become a park. Marchant also asked the Council to pay him £200 compensation for the caretaker's cottage that he had built in his paddock.

On 20 March 1917, the Kedron Shire Council decided to resume Vellnagel's land. Council did try and buy two acres of land from Sparkes' Paddock but Alonzo Sparkes refused to sell though he did offer to donate one acre from his paddock to help in the negotiations with Vellnagel. The Council offered ?150 for Vellnagel's four acres, a further ?75 for loss of business plus one acre at the corner of Short Street and Gympie Road, to where they would move his blacksmith's shop and house free of charge. Vellnagel had a thriving business of 20 years and a family home with improvements such as crops and fruit trees on his land, so he rejected this offer.

After the resumption notice was advertised in the local newspapers, Vellnagel attended a Council meeting on the 21 May 1917, where he presented a written objection to the resumption of his land. As well, a number of ratepayers, led by Councillor Ruskin, pushed for a rejection of Marchant's offer of land. Vellnagel probably found himself in a difficult situation as World War I was reaching a climax. There was some anti-German sentiment within the local districts as they contained many farmers who had migrated from Germany in the nineteenth century. Vellnagel possibly felt bullied not only by the stipulation that he had to shift his blacksmith business and family home but also by the inadequate compensation package being offered by the Council. So he refused to move and make way for the park.

Several public meetings followed. A plan to relocate Vellnagel to a nearby Council Reserve set aside for a public hall was declared illegal. On 3 September 1918, the Council expanded its offer to include the digging of a well on any site accepted by Vellnagel, as well as allowing "him to remove all his crops and any flowers or shrubs he chooses."³ As well, the Council formed a Park Committee and also decided to indemnify any Council officers, should the matter end up in the court.

The controversy dragged on into the post-World War I period. At the Council meeting of 13 March 1919, controversy was raging over how the Shire could raise the ?1,000 needed to outfit a new park, plus compensate both Marchant and Vellnagel. While the former Chairman of the Council had arranged a ?1,000 loan from the state government, this had never been approved by the rest of the Council and so was described by some councillors as "a dirty, underhand business"⁴. By 1 February 1921, Marchant was threatening to withdraw his offer of land by 1 July, if the issue of moving Vellnagel off his land had not been resolved.

At this time, the Council had changed its offer of compensation to Vellnagel. He was offered 3 acres, 2 roods and 20 perches of land bordering Downfall Creek and directly across Gympie Road from his existing site, but no money. Vellnagel was given until 3 March 1921 to accept the Council's offer. On 2 March, Vellnagel grudgingly accepted the land swap but he also requested ?300 compensation for loss of business and cultivation, deprivation of fruit trees and personal inconvenience. The Council accepted Vellnagel's request on 8 March 1921. On 12 April 1921, Isaac White was awarded a contract for ?180 to shift Vellnagel's house, blacksmith shop and other improvements across Gympie Road. Vellnagel left behind a row of pine trees along Gympie Road. These were incorporated into the new park, which was to be named Marchant Park.

First thought of placing a war memorial at Marchant Park seems to have been in July 1917 when the Kedron War Council wrote to Kedron Shire Council asking them to consider opening Marchant Park on 29 September 1917 as it was "their special day of effort in aid of the Repatriation Fund". But because of the acquisition problems, the Council declined. At the Council meeting of 13 March 1919, a number of shire war memorial ideas were discussed, including a memorial stone at either the intersection of Hamilton and Gympie Roads or outside of the

Shire Hall, a memorial circular water trough, memorial marble tablets for the Zillmere and Aspley schools and for Zillmere Railway Station. Later a Kedron War Memorial Committee was formed with the explicit purpose of building a war memorial but had not made much headway, for in June 1920:

*A committee of citizens representing the Kedron Shire War Memorial Committee waited on the Council and expressed their inability to bring to a successful issue the undertaking for the erection of a War Memorial in the Shire, and asked Council to take over the duties. It was finally decided, after some of the committee had been heard on the matter [... indecipherable word], that the Council take over the responsibility.*⁵

Also at this meeting, notice was received that the new Australian War Memorial Museum, in Canberra, was preparing a list of memorials planned or already erected throughout Australia. The following month, in July 1920, the Council received a further public deputation about the erection of a war memorial in the Shire. In September, the War Memorial Committee asked Council for permission to erect a soldiers' memorial in Marchant Park and recommended that the Council peg out roads in the park, "to enable the committee to permanently fix the position of the memorial".⁶

At the same time, the Bald Hills War Memorial Committee had approached the State Trophy Commission and successfully secured a captured heavy machine gun and bipod for its proposed John Street war memorial. The Bald Hills Progress Association had already planted a row of pine trees, in 1919, in honour of Ernst Feuerriegel, the first soldier from the Bald Hills district killed in World War I⁷. After learning of the Bald Hills success, Kedron Shire applied for a war trophy. There had been a heated debate as to whether the Bald Hills trophy was meant for Bald Hills alone or the whole of Kedron Shire. The debate ended with support for the Bald Hills case but an application was made for two artillery guns for Kedron Shire⁸.

The debate seems to have inspired further action on the proposed war memorial for, in November 1920, the Council Chairman moved "to erect a memorial to represent the whole shire and that as soon as the form has been decided upon particulars will be forwarded" to the Australian War Museum in Canberra⁹. The Kedron Shire War Memorial Committee was replaced by the Kedron Shire Anzac Day Committee, which was formed in March 1921. Kedron Shire Council began fund-raising for the erection of the proposed war memorial gates. The Council donated ?30 and a further ?445 was raised through public subscription to pay for the total cost of £475 for the sandstone gateposts, iron gates and four marble tablets. One of the prominent local identities involved with the war memorial project was builder Walter Scott Barrett, the treasurer of the Aspley Progress Association¹⁰.

On Saturday, 3 May 1924, the former commander of the 1st Division (1st AIF), General Sir William Glasgow officially unveiled the Kedron Shire War Memorial Gates at the entrance to the new Marchant Park. Among the other dignitaries, who were present, were Mr. D.S.J. Barker (presiding), Mr. W. Kelso M.L.A., Kedron Shire Councillor Marquis and the Reverend S. MacDonald. Two marble tablets on the gate posts listed the names of the 273 men from Kedron Shire who had enlisted during World War I, a third tablet listed the names of the 53 local men who had died during the war, while a fourth tablet listed the names of the five local men who had enlisted to fight in the Boer War. General Glasgow stated "that he knew the district well for a strongly patriotic place" and that as "a trooper in the mounted infantry long ago, he had served in Kedron, and many happy memories had he of it."¹¹

Kedron Shire Council was incorporated into the new Greater Brisbane City Council (BCC) in 1925. Marchant Park along with the Kedron Shire Quarry at 41 Turner Road, Kedron and Lutwyche Cemetery at 418 Gympie Road, Kedron, remain the only places that had been operated by the former Kedron Shire Council. So Marchant Park passed under the control of the BCC. The BCC connected town water to Marchant Park in December 1928.

That year, Marchant Park was leased to the Warehouse Cricketers' Association (WCA) for £5 per wicket per season, plus £123 for the construction of two dressing sheds towards which the Council would contribute labour costs. The lease was for 10 years from 22 September 1928 to 22 September 1938. The terms of the lease

stipulated that the WCA would not interfere with the right of public access to the park, other than when a game was in progress, and that it could only be used for cricket, with “no dissolute or disreputable behaviour”, nor “games of chance”¹². Sabbath days were to be observed, alcohol prohibited, and “no offensive trade, business occupation or calling” could be carried out at the park. The Returned Soldiers, Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA, later the RSL) could use the park for 14 days a year, upon notifying the Warehouse Cricketers’ Association. In return, the BCC agreed to clear away the tree stumps on the site that possibly were left after trees were felled at Military Training Camp Chermside. In order to complete the tree stump removal, in 1930 the WCA applied for a grant under the Unemployment Relief Scheme that operated during the Great Depression (1929-39).

Eventually six pitches were completed, making Marchant Park a major amateur cricket facility around Brisbane. The WCA now leases an area of 101 acres, 2 roods and 8 perches, virtually all of the old Marchant’s Paddock. But it had to survive a challenge, supported by Mr Harry Moore, the BCC Parks Superintendent and other notables, when application was made for nine-hole golf course in 1928-29. The BCC refused the application ostensibly on the grounds of the quantity of green timber that would need to be destroyed in order to build the fairways. The George Hastie Cricket Pavilion was erected in the memory of the long-serving secretary and founding member of the WCA. In 1936, a severe storm swept across the park dragging one shed off its stumps and smashing the other, leading to a dispute between the Council and cricketers about who was responsible for the costs of repair work.

During World War Two (1939-45), Marchant Park was utilised as a component of the Chermside Army Camp that was established across Ellison Road (in Sparkes’ Paddock) on 7 October 1940. Marchant Park was designated as “Camp Area “J” and, because it was a public space containing important cricket facilities, the park was to be used only for training purposes. No Army buildings were placed in the park, but, by the end of the war in 1945, vehicle training had caused some damage to the park’s cricket pitches.

George Hastie Players Pavilion

A rectangular, freestanding single-skin timber hiproofed pavilion with a projecting gabled porch, the players’ pavilion provides perimeter seating for players and a scorers’ table centre front.

Marchant Memorial

A squat rectangular monolith of quarry-faced granite set in the narrow oblong garden near the memorial gate entrance on Murphy Road commemorates the donation of land for the park by George Marchant in 1921.

The Kedron Shire War Memorial Gates were badly vandalised around 1972 and one of the marble tablets was smashed. Due to the efforts of the Chermside & Districts Historical Society, particularly research work undertaken by Pat O’Shea, the names of the servicemen on the destroyed tablet were rediscovered. A new tablet was produced and was positioned on the Kedron Shire War Memorial Gates at a ceremony held on 30 August 2003. Another mindless vandal attack on the Memorial Gates’ marble tablets, in early 2005, resulted in \$480 damage that was repaired by the BCC. A detailed report about the maintenance and repair of the Memorial Gates was prepared by the BCC in October 2005. Damage to the Memorial Gates piers by a BCC bus resulted in another repair report prepared in July 2006.

An arson attack occurred on the WCA’s facilities at Marchant Park on 25 April 2006. While a storage shed, containing a mower, a pitch roller and other WCA equipment was destroyed, the George Hastie Cricket Pavilion remained undamaged.

Description

Listed sites within the park are the Kedron Shire War Memorial Gates, the George Marchant Memorial cairn and the George Hastie Cricket Pavilion.

Marchant Park has retained its original boundaries from the proposal made by George Marchant in 1917.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history as a mid-19th century agricultural selection converted into an early 20th sportsground and recreational park.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage for the Memorial Gates, that as a commemorative structure erected as an enduring record of the Boer War and the Great War.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as an extensive parkland dedicated to the playing of the game of cricket.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

designed and laid-out as a collection of dedicated playing fields for the game of cricket.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a cluster of cricket ovals with associated sightboards, sheds and pavilions and scattered perimeter and clumped vegetation offering extensive vistas within and across the site.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

for the Memorial Gates, that as a sacred and special place for commemorating the involvement of the district in the Boer War and the Great War.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a sportsground dedicated to the game of cricket and as the home ground for the Warehouse Cricket Association.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a park named for George Marchant in recognition of his generosity in donating the land for the park.

References

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3. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 3 September 1918
4. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 28 February 1919
5. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 6 June 1920
6. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 7 September 1920
7. Shaw, B. (comp.), *Bald Hills Heritage Tour* (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1993)
8. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 5 October 1920
9. Kedron Shire Council, *Minutes of Meetings*, 2 November 1920
10. Teague, David, *The History of Aspley*, (Brisbane: Colonial Press, 1972)
11. The Courier Mail, “A War Memorial – Kedron’s Tribute Opened”, 5 May 1924
12. Brisbane City Council Archives, Marchant Park file 13470/15/1, Memo Agreement, 2 November 1928
13. Brisbane City Council, *City Assets Study – Marchant Park Conservation Management Study*, (Brisbane: Brisbane City Council, April 2002)
14. Keays, Sue, and Ford, Jack, *A Brief Military History of Geebung/Zillmere – Building a Tradition of Military Training in the Geebung/Zillmere District* (report prepared for the Brisbane City Council & the Geebung/Zillmere RSL), (Brisbane: Keays & Ford, 1997)
15. *The Queenslander*, 10 May 1924
16. *The Courier Mail*, 26 April 2006

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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