

# **History of The Basin**

## **Chapter 12**

### **Recreation Reserves and Parks**

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## Summary

This chapter details the history of Recreation Reserves and Parks in The Basin.

Wicks Memorial Reserve is situated on the corner of The Basin-Olinda Road and Wicks Road and is named in memory of the Wicks family. It was created in 1942 when the Shire of Ferntree Gully purchased 9 acres of land from Emily Wicks.

Batterham Reserve is situated on Miller Road and is named in memory of Rowley Batterham who originally owned the land the reserve is located on. The reserve is home to The Basin Football Club and The Batterham Tennis Club.

Mortiboy Reserve is situated on the corner of Stewart Street and Augusta Road and is named in memory of Mr. Ted Mortiboy who originally owned the land the reserve is situated on. The land for Mortiboy Reserve was purchased from Ted Mortiboy by the Knox Council in the mid 1970's.

Grumont Reserve is situated at the end of Stanley Street. It was created in 1974 when the Goodwin Estate was established. The name "Grumont" is in recognition of George Grumont, a resident of The Basin for over 60 years.

Gravenstein Reserve is situated on Gravenstein Crescent and was created in 1974 when the Goodwin Estate was established.

The Triangle is the area of land bounded by Forest Road, Mountain Highway and Church Street.

### Recreation Reserves and Parks

#### Wicks Memorial Reserve

Wicks Memorial Reserve is situated on the corner of The Basin-Olinda Road and Wicks Road and is named in memory of the Wicks family, who had considerable influence in the early development of The Basin.

The land for Wicks Reserve was purchased by the Ferntree Gully Council in 1942. The Shire Secretary at that time (Mr Dance) inspected the area with Mr Bert Chandler and an approach was made to Emily Wicks to purchase the land. Emily was the daughter of the land owner John Wicks who was the son of Edmund Wicks, the original selector of the land. The land proved suitable, the Wicks family agreed and the land was purchased. Contrary to general opinion, the original Wicks homestead was not on this land.

The scheme for the nine acres was to develop a park, and an attempt was made to establish an oval for The Basin's use. A group of people worked quite hard to establish the park, and a member, Mr. Les Greenwell, did a deal of timber clearing. Drainage problems arose and, upon the proclamation of Batterham Reserve, interest declined in using this site for an oval.

In 1965, the Knox Shire called for the election of a controlling committee and made a financial grant for earthworks. A picnic ground was established in 1968. The Council offered to build a pavilion & toilets if the Committee laid pipes to bring water from the north boundary to the site for the pavilion. This was completed with the help of Barry Alexanderson and his tractor.

The Council then built an excellent rotunda with provision for seating up to 75 people and included four barbecues. Later improvements have included roofing the outside barbecue, installing playground equipment and picnic tables and creating nature walks.

Members of early committees were Randall Robinson, Bill Major, Arthur Jackson and Eric Johnson.

The reserve is a popular spot for family groups and social clubs who come from all over Melbourne, especially in November and December, to enjoy the open spaces and fresh air.

Wicks Reserve has been recognised as having wildflowers and indigenous plant species that have local significance. The reserve is a large area of remnant sclerophyll forest, unique areas of

heath land and open grassed picnic areas. The reserve contains species of flora that are significant in Knox, including Swamp She-Oak, Scented Paperbark and the Small Grass Tree. The area is also home to the uncommon Sword-grass Brown Butterfly, as well as supporting a large diversity of bird and small mammal species.

In the 1980's, it was recognised that the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly was locally threatened due to loss of habitat. In particular, its larval food plant *Gahnia Sieberiana* (commonly known as Sword-grass or Red-fruited Saw-edge). The Sword-grass Brown Butterfly is dependent on habitat which contains the Red-fruited Saw-edge. This is the only food plant of the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly.

The Red-fruited Saw-edge as its name suggests, has sharp, cutting strap like leaves. When fruiting, the bright red seeds are conspicuous, hanging down from the old flower stem. It is a plant species found in wet and swampy forests. This type of habitat occurs in small isolated pockets within the City of Knox and in particular in Wicks Reserve.

Sword-grass Brown Butterflies can be seen flying on sunny days in the warmer months, between November and March. They are typically seen flying around the Red-fruited Saw-edge. After mating, eggs are laid singly on the Red-fruited Saw-edge. Once the eggs hatch, the leaves of the Red-fruited Saw-edge becomes food for the developing caterpillar.

In the 1990's, a number of voluntary groups undertook planting of the Red-fruited Saw-edge in Wicks Reserve in an effort to increase the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly population.

#### Batterham Reserve

Batterham Reserve is situated on Miller Road and is named in memory of Rowley Batterham who originally owned the land the reserve is located on.

At the turn of the 20th century the land now occupied by Batterham Reserve was owned by J. J. Miller. The area which was fairly swampy was covered with Swamp Gum, Appletree Box and a variety of shrubs, indigenous ferns and ti-tree. J. J. Miller had the area cleared and drained and used it to train trotting horses for many years.

Some time around 1912 John Maguire bought fifty acres of land once owned by J. J. Miller which included what is now Batterham Park.

## Recreation Reserves and Parks

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Also, at this time three young male members of the Batterham family, who had recently been orphaned, went to live with Mr and Mrs John Maguire as foster children. Each of the three Batterham boys served in the Army during the First World War and on returning the youngest, Rowley, married, and continued to work for John Maguire; he bought the fifty acres from John Maguire a short time later.

In 1927, Boronia Church of Christ formed a cricket team, and Rowley, who was a member, offered his bottom paddock as their home ground. The efforts of a number of working bees saw a lysterfield sand wicket constructed and this was used continuously until the outbreak of war in 1939.

After the war the Church of Christ continued to use the lower paddock as a member of the newly formed Ferntree Gully and District Cricket Association.

In 1947, Rowley decided to subdivide his property and Don Maguire was instrumental in having the Shire of Ferntree Gully purchase a 12 ½ acre area, which is now Batterham Reserve, to be used as a sporting development site.

Fergus Chandler was approached by the Committee of Management to submit a landscape design for the entire area. Fergus did this free of charge, complete with a tree planting program. His design formed the basis for the layout of the Reserve which we see today.

In early 1951, the Boronia Church of Christ were told by the Ferntree Gully and District Cricket Association to construct a concrete pitch to conform to match standards. It was decided to clear the orchard to the South of the lower ground and lay the pitch on the new oval. This was done and this ground was used for the 1951-1952 Cricket season.

The Basin Football Club began using the Reserve in 1948 after the proposed site of Wicks Reserve proved unsuitable. South West of the lower oval (beside the dam from which the football was frequently retrieved) was a bark and paling hut built by a working bee. This was used for the first two or three seasons and was supplemented by a tent supplied by Arthur Cooper.

Later on the Reserve had a need for club rooms for the sporting bodies which used the facility and so Jack Wallace organised plans and a

pavilion was built on the southern side of the reserve midway between the two ovals.

This "tin shed" served for many years until a new brick pavilion was opened in 1979. The new pavilion was opened by the Mayor of Knox Cr. Marie Wallace and Mrs Batterham, widow of Rowley. Three of her daughters were also present. The building was named The D P Maguire Pavilion in recognition of Don Maguire's contribution as a member of the reserve committee for more than 33 years. In 1990 a new brick store-room and scoreboard were opened and named in honour of Arthur Cooper who had served the reserve committee for more than forty years.

In 1960 an area towards Millers Road was levelled and covered with crushed rock and salamander and was used for some years for netball. An even greater need for Tennis Courts arose however and it was decided that as the interest in Basketball had waned, the area would be used to construct two tennis courts. The Batterham Tennis Club was formed and has used the facilities ever since.

Other improvements to the facilities at the reserve include the installation of floodlights to assist with night football training and the total reconstruction of the lower oval to transform it into a high standard ground. This reconstruction included a new boundary fence containing a reticulated water system for summer watering. A program for the planting of ornamental and other trees to Fergus Chandler's original plan greatly enhanced the parkland effect of the reserve.

The sporting facilities of the reserve are heavily used, particularly the ovals, with not only the Basin teams using them, but also local schools and social groups booking them when they are available.

With two ovals offering good facilities, five tennis courts with lights and good club houses and toilets, Batterham Reserve has come a long way from the days when Don Maguire would use his draught horses to mow the lower oval before cricket matches. The decision by the old Ferntree Gully Council to purchase the land for future development of sporting facilities has certainly been vindicated.

### **Mortiboy Reserve**

Mortiboy Reserve is situated on the corner of Stewart Street and Augusta Road and is named in memory of Mr Ted Mortiboy who originally

owned the land the reserve is situated on. The land for Mortiboy Reserve was purchased from Ted Mortiboy by the Knox Council in the mid 1970's.

Ted, a keen scouter, bought 4 blocks of land in Stuart Street in the 1920's and often brought his troop, the 6th Malvern Scouts, there for weekend camps. A bunkhouse was built and many a pleasant weekend enjoyed. Camp fire "sing-songs", and the appearance of "The Ghost of Sassafras" on initiation nights were features of these outings.

Ted and his scouts rushed to the scene of the first Boronia level crossing accident on 27 April 1926, there to render assistance to the injured survivors of that gory affair.

On Mortiboy Reserve is a circle of pine trees, each one having been planted as a seedling by a scout on being awarded his Patrol Leaders stripes.

In later years the bunkhouse on the property was loaned to 1st The Basin Scouters as a meeting place. This facility greatly assisted group planning and training in those early days.

Ted became the proprietor of the Wine Saloon in Mountain Highway, Bayswater.

Ted also was President of The Basin Progress Association President and once stood for Ferntree Gully Council against Brigadier Inglis of the Salvation Army, but as Ted explained the "Devil drink" (he was by then wine saloon proprietor) had little chance against the Salvation Army.

Mortiboy Reserve is relatively small and undeveloped.

### **Grumont Reserve**

Grumont Reserve is situated at the end of Stanley Street. It was created in 1974 when the Goodwin Estate was established.

The name "Grumont" is in recognition of George Grumont, a resident of The Basin for over 60 years who contributed much to the development of the area.

George arrived in The Basin in 1911 with his parents and older sister. His father took up the position as gardener at Ferndale. George was heavily involved in many local activities including The Basin Tennis Club, the Basin Badminton Club and The Basin Progress Association.

### **Gravenstein Reserve**

Gravenstein Reserve is situated on Gravenstein Crescent. It was created in 1974 when the

Goodwin Estate was established in the area once used as an apple orchard. The name "Gravenstein" follows the naming of areas in the estate after types of apples.

The reserve is relatively undeveloped, but is well used.

### **The Triangle**

The area of land known as "The Triangle" is the land bounded by Forest Road, Mountain Highway and Church Street. It was part of a subdivision in the early 1920's as part of Chandler's Hill Estate and a few homes and shops were built on the allotments created. The Basin Progress Association fought for many years to have this area declared and converted to a "passive park".

Development of The Triangle is detailed in Chapter 8 - Voluntary Organisations.

### **Sources of Information**

- "The Basin Centenary booklet" - Ron Ikin.
- "Fire on the Hill, Flowers on the Valley" - Rick Coxhill.
- Boronia & The Basin Community News for information on the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly.
- Newsletter of the Sword-grass Brown Butterfly Project.
- Current and former residents. In particular, Don Maguire and Graham Moore for Wicks Reserve information. Jim and Barbara Stephens for general help and information.

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