

## 23 - DUNWICH: Benevolent Asylum Structures

<b>Street Address</b>	Junner Street, Dunwich (Ballow Park)
<b>GPS/RPD</b>	Lot 3 on CP865498
<b>Place Type</b>	Built



RCC, 2013.



Junner Street Park, Dunwich (RCC, 2013).

<b>Condition</b>	Poor	<b>Integrity</b>	Good
<b>Statutory Listings</b>	Local Heritage Place		
<b>Non-Statutory Listings</b>	No current listing		
<b>Inspection Date</b>	17/01/2017		

### Historical Context

The Dunwich Benevolent Asylum Structures located at Junner Street Park contains building foundations, trees, and other structures erected during the asylum years.

The Benevolent Society in Moreton Bay was established in 1844 as a citizen run charity. In 1861, the Queensland Government passed the Benevolent Asylum Act, which provided funds to transform hospital wards into these asylums. Prior to the formation of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum, the area was used as a convict out station from 1827-1831, a Catholic mission for the local Indigenous population from 1843-1847, and a quarantine station from 1850-64. The Dunwich Benevolent Asylum housed Queensland's poor and underprivileged, including the aged, infirm and individuals without access to required care from their families.[1]

In 1913, during a time of increasing patient numbers, the asylum expanded to include a police station, visitor centre, public hall, ancillary service buildings, ward buildings, tent accommodation and recreational facilities. Facilities here catered for live-in staff, including cooks, administration staff, and wardsmen.[2] Due to an overcrowded patient population and deteriorating health conditions on site, the asylum closed in 1947 after operating for over 80 years.

Of the Benevolent Asylum structures that remain in this location, the notable remnants include oversized recreational draughts boards, camphor laurel trees and fig trees planted during the asylum period, the foundations of the Victoria Hall (c.1897), a modern toilet block that serviced the hall, and the road and associated tramway that ran from the jetty to the men's mess hall.[3]

Victoria Hall was built in 1897 for the purpose of recreation and entertainment for those at the asylum. The hall served as a library that was mainly stocked by donations, as temporary accommodation for staff, and as a cinema for those at the asylum and the local Dunwich community.[4] It is unknown when the draughts boards were constructed, but speculation is that they were built in the early to mid twentieth century. The trees that remain were planted by inmates, staff and their families as part of a farming and gardening initiative at the asylum.[5] The pieces of the road that remain reveal the path that was taken from the jetty to the island, which was also used by campers and day trippers who were forced to journey through the asylum because of its proximity to the road.[6]

### Physical Description

This 5422 square metre park comprises an open grassy area on the northern and eastern boundaries and planted areas to the south and west. The Dunwich Public Hall (former Men's Mess Hall, QHR Place ID 601163) is to the east of the site. The foundations and remains of the compound may be further interpreted through careful archaeological excavation and examination. From the elevated position of this park there is a scenic view across the Public Reserve (QHR Place ID 602139) and out to the bay. Trees remain as part of the former asylum, as well as fragments of the former tramway and road that ran from the jetty to the island. This is a picturesque park and contributes to the gateway to Dunwich and the broader North Stradbroke Island from the jetty and ferry terminal.

### Statement of Significance

The Benevolent Asylum Structures located at the Junner Street park embody historical, rarity, scientific, representative and aesthetic heritage values. The site consists of remnants from the Benevolent Asylum and these fragments contribute to understandings of social policies and attitudes of the late nineteenth century. The established trees and hillside setting contribute to the landmark qualities and identify part of the layout of the asylum when it was functioning. Together with the Public Reserve and the Former Men's Mess Hall, these remnants remain in situ and are representative of the character of Dunwich when the Benevolent Asylum was operating.

**Criteria A** The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region's history.

The Benevolent Asylum Structures are historically significant as surviving elements of the former asylum, which reflects the evolution of development in Dunwich and the history of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum.

**Criteria B** The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the region's cultural heritage.

The asylum structures demonstrate rare aspects of Queensland's cultural heritage as they are surviving remnants of the only nineteenth century Benevolent Asylum known to have existed in Queensland. The site contains in situ elements relating to everyday life of the asylum inmates, most notably the former Victoria Hall, tramway, roadway and the draughts boards.

**Criteria C** The place has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the region's history.

The site has the potential to yield further information about the development and function of the Benevolent Asylum. These remaining structures are particularly important to the local area and contribute to the understanding of the asylum through their form and layout, in addition to other former asylum buildings that remain around Dunwich.

**Criteria D** The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of cultural places important to the region.

The establishment and administration of the Benevolent Asylum illustrates the social policies adopted by the Queensland Government of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to deal with those elderly, sick or disabled members of society who were unable to care for themselves. The remnants of the asylum contribute to understandings of the characteristics of how the asylum was run.

**Criteria E** The place is important to the region because of its aesthetic significance.

The site has aesthetic value as a public green space and forms part of the gateway into Dunwich. Views to and from the park and the established vegetation contribute to the visual qualities of the place.

### Primary Themes

10.0 Providing Health and Welfare Services

10.02 Caring for the homeless and destitute

### References

[1] RPS, Redland City Council – Heritage Citation, "Benevolent Asylum Structures," 2012.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Joseph B. Goodall, "Whom Nobody Owns: The Dunwich Benevolent Asylum, an Institutional Biography 1866-1946," PhD Thesis, The University of Queensland, 1992, p. 130, 214, 237.

[5] Ibid., p. 120.

[6] Ibid., p. 262.



*Benevolent Asylum Structures Remnants, Dunwich (AHS, 2016).*



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