Mill Street Park Fig

Other Names	Big Fig	
Street Address	Mill Street	Proserpine
Title Details/ GPS Coordinates	157HR687	

Historical Context

The town of Proserpine emerged following the establishment of a central sugar mill in the late 1890s. European settlement of the district began in the 1870s; the land was initially used to run cattle, but from the 1880s onward sugar cane estates, then farms, predominated. The central sugar mill – still in operation today – processed the first crush in 1897. The town of Proserpine was surveyed at this time and the Shire of Proserpine was created by 1910, two years after work on the railway between Proserpine and Bowen commenced.

It is claimed that police, who were stationed in the town from 1896, shackled prisoners to a log under the tree. The first police 'station' consisted of a tent and there was no gaol – hence the makeshift lock-up. An amusing anecdote illustrates the rudimentary police facilities. The constable chained two men to the log and then departed for the day. When he returned he found the log – and the men – were missing. They were soon discovered, drinking at the local hotel, having simply picked the log up and carried it with them.

The fig tree is located on land originally owned by the Proserpine Central Mill Company, which built the central mill. The company donated land from its holding for the police station and a post office; that prisoners were chained under the tree suggests that it was already relatively mature by the late 1890s and may predate European settlement. Thus the tree relates the early history of the settlement of Proserpine as a town, but also the importance of the sugar industry and the mill to the emergence of the town in the late nineteenth century.

Physical Description

The fig tree is located in Mill Street Park, close to the street front of Mill Street. The impressive mature fig tree has an approximate height of twelve meters and the canopy spreads around forty meters, overhanging the paved area at the front of the park. Around the base of the tree is a low dry stone wall encircling the trunk and masses of aerial and formed roots. The tree dominates the streetscape of Mill Street and provides shade for visitors to the park and also the rest area at the front.

Integrity	Good	Condition	Good
Statutory Listings	No statutory listings		
Non-Statutory Listings	No non-statutory listings		
Inspection Date	16/4/2014		

References

Kerr, John, 1997. Crystal Century. The History of Proserpine's Sugar Mill, its Farms and its People, Proserpine Cooperative Sugar Milling Association, Proserpine.

McClements, Mavis, 1974-75 "A Town Called Proserpine", Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, v. IX, n. 6.

Heritage Significance

Criteria	Definition
A	*The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region's history.*
Statement	The Mill Street Park Fig is important in demonstrating the evolution of the region's history, particularly the establishment of services such as police at a formative period of the town's history, and the importance of the central mill to the town of Proserpine, particularly as land for the police and post office (and therefore the fig) was donated by the Proserpine Central Mill Company in the late 1890s.
B	*The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the region's cultural heritage.*
Statement	The Mill Street Park Fig demonstrates a rare aspect of the region's history, as a particularly early tree that most likely predates the survey of the town of Proserpine.
E	*The place is important to the region because of its aesthetic significance*
Statement	The Mill Street Park Fig is important to the region because of its aesthetic significance, particularly as it represents a landmark in Mill Street given its size.

Location Map