

**George A. Buist (1859-1941): The Life and Times of a Mayor of Gympie, Queensland, Australia**  
**By His Cousin, Michael T. Tracy**

On Friday, 28 February 1941 the *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser Newspaper* published the following: "A resident of Gympie since 1883 [sic], Mr. George Alexander Buist, at one time Mayor of this City, and active in many public activities, died on Sunday afternoon last, at the age of 82 years... He was born in Cupar, Fifeshire, Scotland, on January 20, 1859. From January 1, 1915 to December 31, 1930 he occupied the position of Clerk of the Widgee Shire Council and at various periods was also Clerk of Bell's Bridge Board, Chairman of the Fire Brigade Board, a member of the Committee of the Gympie Centre Q.A.T.B., the Gympie Hospital and Chief of the Gympie Caledonian Society. The Boy Scout Movement was another of his interests, occupying the position of senior scoutmaster of the Gympie Boy Scouts Association. In Freemasonry the late Mr. Buist held the highest Masonic honours as a member of the Gympie Braemar Lodge U.G.L.Q. In early years in connection with Freemasonry in the Nambour district he was a frequent visitor and took a prominent part in lodge ceremonies."<sup>1</sup> George Buist married twice and had two children by his first wife who died at the age of 30. He was a well-respected citizen of Gympie. This then is the narrative of the life and times of George Alexander Buist.

**Early years**

George Alexander Buist was born on Thursday, 20 January 1859 in Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife, Scotland.<sup>2</sup> He was the twin of Jessie Lillias Buist who would later follow him to Queensland, Australia and reside quietly in nearby Nambour. George was the eighth child of John Buist, an innkeeper of Cupar, and Boswell Angus.

**Page 6.**

1859. BIRTHS in the Parish of Cupar in the County of Fife

No.	Surname, and Name (if given). Name, when given or altered in Baptism, or otherwise, after Registration of Birth.	When and Where Born, with Hour of Birth.	Sex.	Name, Surname, and Rank or Profession of Father.	Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Signature, Qualification, and Residence of Informant, if out of the House in which the Birth occurred.	When and Where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
10	Buist George Alexander	1859 January Cupar 20th 2.5 m. AM	m	John Buist	Boswell Buist	J. Buist Father	1859 February 8 of Cupar
				John Angus			M. G. G. G. Registrar

Fig.1. Birth Record of George A. Buist, 20 January 1859, Cupar Parish Records, Crown Copyright

Buist was listed in the 1861 Scotland Census for Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife as being 2 years of age.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser Newspaper*, 28 February 1941, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Birth Record of George Alexander Buist, 20 January 1859, Cupar Parish Records, Statutory Births 420/0000 0016

<sup>3</sup> 1861 Scotland Census for Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District Number 2, Page 1, Line 9

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the													[Page 1
Parish of <i>Cupar</i>		Quoad Sacra Parish of	Parliamentary Burgh of	Royal Burgh of <i>Cupar</i>	Town of <i>Cupar</i>	Village of							
No. of Schedule	Road, Street, &c. and No. or Name of House.	HOUSES Inhabited (or not)	Name and Surname of each Person.	Relation to Head of Family.	Condition.	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation.	Where Born.	Whether 1. Dead and Rank, 2. Blind, 3. Imbecile or Idiot, 4. Lunatic.	Number of Children from 5 to 15 attending School or being educated at Home.	Rooms with One or more Windows.	
						Male	Female						
1	<i>St. Catharines St</i>	1	<i>John Buist</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>44</i>		<i>Hotel Keeper &amp; Merchant</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>Elizabeth Buist</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>43</i>			<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>John</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>14</i>		<i>Book Clerk</i>	<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Thomas</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>17</i>		<i>Writer</i>	<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>8</i>		<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Mary</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>7</i>			<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Robert</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>6</i>			<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Hellen</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>5</i>			<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>George</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>2</i>			<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>Richard</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>2</i>			<i>Cupar</i>				
			<i>John Houston</i>	<i>Steward</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>62</i>		<i>General Clerant</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>Martha Houston</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>55</i>		<i>Widow</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>Ann Buist</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>22</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>William</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>17</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>James</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				
			<i>William McBrath</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>23</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Perthshire - Cameron</i>				

Fig.2. 1861 Scotland Census for Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife, Scotland listing George A. Buist (Line 9)

By 1871 he is listed as being 12 years of age and attending school.<sup>4</sup>

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the													[Page 1
Civil Parish of <i>Cupar</i>		Quoad sacra Parish of	Parliamentary Burgh of	Royal Burgh of <i>Cupar</i>	Police Burgh of <i>Cupar</i>	Town of <i>Cupar</i>	Village or Hamlet of						
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME OF HOUSE.	HOUSES Inhabited (or not)	NAME and Surname of each Person.	RELATION to Head of Family.	CON-DITION.	AGE of		Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION.	WHERE BORN.	Whether 1. Dead and Rank, 2. Blind, 3. Imbecile or Idiot, 4. Lunatic.	Number of Children from 5 to 15 attending School or being educated at Home.	Rooms with One or more Windows.	
						Male	Female						
1	<i>St. Catharines St</i>	1	<i>John Buist</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>54</i>		<i>Hotel Keeper</i>	<i>Fife - Cameron</i>				
			<i>Barwell Do</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>52</i>			<i>Fife - Cameron</i>				
			<i>Thomas Do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>27</i>		<i>Writer</i>	<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Elizabeth Do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>19</i>			<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Mary H Do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>17</i>			<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Robert Do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>16</i>			<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Helen Do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>12</i>		<i>Scholar</i>	<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Isabel Do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>12</i>			<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>George Do</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>12</i>			<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Marcella Tullis</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>55</i>		<i>Widow</i>	<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Marion Ferras</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>46</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Elizabeth Macgregor</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>46</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Fife - Cupar</i>				
			<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>Servant</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>45</i>		<i>Housemaid</i>	<i>Fife - Cameron</i>				

Fig.3. 1871 Scotland Census for Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife, Scotland listing George A. Buist (Line 9)

### London, England

By 1881 George had left Cupar and relocated to Hampstead, London, England and was working for his eldest brother John Buist as a broker in his company, Buist Brothers which was a cork merchant and wine import establishment. This is evidenced by the 1881 England Census for Hampstead, London, England which lists George as being 22 years of age and working as a broker.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 1871 Scotland Census for Cupar, Cupar Parish, Fife, Scotland; Enumeration District Number 2, Page 1, Line 9

<sup>5</sup> 1881 England Census for Hampstead, London, England; Enumeration District Number 38, Page 38, Line 28



During the early days after his arrival at Gympie, Buist was a mining speculator. Gympie is famous for its gold field. He was a mining speculator for many years until the gold rush in Gympie faded around 1926-27. Buist also accepted a position with the One Mile Sawmill as the company's Secretary. The first available record appeared in the *Gympie Times Newspaper* of Thursday, 24 November 1887 in which Buist was appointed Accountant and Official Liquidator of the North Wilmot Gold Mining Company on Wednesday, 23 November 1887.<sup>7</sup>

### **Marriage and Family life**

George Buist met and later married Martha Latimer on Wednesday, 9 March 1887 at the bride's home in Gympie.<sup>8</sup> The *Gympie Times Newspaper* of Tuesday, 15 March 1887 stated: "On the 9<sup>th</sup> inst., at the residence of the bride's parents, Gympie by the Rev. F.W. Roberta, George Alexander, youngest son of Mr. John Buist, St. Andrews, Fifeshire, Scotland, to Martha, third daughter of Mr. Richard Latimer."<sup>9</sup> Buist had purchased a residence on Crescent Road in Gympie where the couple resided.<sup>10</sup> The couple had two children who were born in Gympie. They were:

Irene Boswell Adelaide born on Monday, 19 December 1887<sup>11</sup> and died in 1970;

Martha Latimer born on Wednesday, 25 December 1889<sup>12</sup> and died on Thursday, 13 February 1890.<sup>13</sup>

### **Death of Martha Buist**

Shortly after the birth of their second daughter Martha became seriously ill. She died on Friday, 27 December 1889 at her residence of complications from childbirth at the age of 30.<sup>14</sup> Her funeral notice was published in the *Gympie Times Newspaper* dated Saturday, 28 December 1889: "The Friends of Mr. George A. Buist, are respectfully invited to attend the Funeral of his deceased wife, to move from his residence, Crescent Road, This Day (Saturday) at 4 p.m. Ambrose and Asmussen Undertakers."<sup>15</sup> She was buried in the Gympie Cemetery (Methodist Selected, Row 4, Plot 49) on Saturday, 28 December 1889. Their infant daughter Martha died soon after.

George and his daughter Irene continued to reside on Crescent Road until about 1905 when they moved to Flynn's Road on Ashford's Hill. Jessie Buist, a sister of George, moved in with them at about the same time to help raise Irene. George continued working as a mining investor.

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<sup>7</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 24 November 1887, p. 2

<sup>8</sup> Marriage Record of George A. Buist, 9 March 1887, Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>9</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 15 March 1887, p. 2

<sup>10</sup> Australia Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>11</sup> Birth Record of Irene Boswell Adelaide Buist, 19 December 1887, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>12</sup> Birth Record of Martha Latimer Buist, 25 December 1889, Australia, Birth Index, 1788-1922. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>13</sup> Death Record of Martha Latimer Buist, 13 February 1890, Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>14</sup> Death Record of Martha Buist, 27 December 1889, Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>15</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 28 December 1889, p.2

## Politics

According to the *Gympie Times Newspaper* dated Saturday, 23 January 1904 George A. Buist was nominated for the Town Council as Alderman.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently he ultimately won his first political race at the age of 45. He would serve for only a few months and resigned his position on Saturday, 11 June 1904.<sup>17</sup>

Buist would not stay long out of politics however. He was again nominated on Tuesday, 6 February 1906 to fill an Aldermanic vacancy on the Gympie Town Council at their regular meeting.<sup>18</sup> The *Gympie Times Newspaper* published the meetings the Aldermen attended from Tuesday, 6 February 1906 until Wednesday, 6 February 1907 of which there were 23 total meetings and Alderman Buist attended them all.<sup>19</sup>

<b>Meetings held, and Attendance of Aldermen for the last Municipal Year.</b>					
<b>Ordinary 20.</b>		<b>Special Meetings 3.</b>		<b>Total 23.</b>	
ALDERMAN SAMUEL JOHN ASHFORD .....	21	ALDERMAN RICHARD HUTTON ELLIOTT .....	23		
.. WALTER GEORGE AMBROSE .....	20	.. GEORGE FREDERICK LISTER ..	21		
.. GEORGE ALEXANDER BUIST .....	23	.. ALFRED GEORGE RAMSEY .....	19		
.. WILLIAM EDWARD BURBIDGE ..	23	.. DAVID ELDER REID .....	13		
.. EDGAR BENJAMIN DAVIDSON ..	18				
Council Chambers, February 6, 1907.				ALFRED R. RANSON, Town Clerk.	

Fig.6. 1906-07 Yearly Meetings of the Aldermen of Gympie, *Gympie Times Newspaper*, Saturday, 30 March 1907

## Mayor of Gympie

A Mayor, in the early days of Gympie, was elected by a majority of the City Council members for a term of one year. By late 1907 Buist decided to let it be known that he was interested in the position. At the time he was a leader of the People's Progressive League which consisted of Anti-Socialists. Buist was the convener of the League's meetings and appointer of their nominees. He was subsequently nominated and elected Mayor of Gympie. His term ran from Monday, 20 January 1908 until Wednesday, 20 January 1909.

Buist worked with various Aldermen of the City Council to improve the roads and water pipes to the residences of Gympie during his term in office as Mayor. Reprinted below is the 1908 city budget which shows the reader what was improved and the costs of such projects.

<sup>16</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 23 January 1904, p. 3

<sup>17</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 11 June 1904, p. 2

<sup>18</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 30 January 1906, p. 2

<sup>19</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 30 March 1907, p. 4



**No. 2 ACCOUNT.**

1907. RECEIPTS.			
To	£	s.	d.
To Cheque, State Treasurer—	1,000	0	0
August	...	...	...
November	2,000	0	0
	3,000	0	0
	£3,000	0	0

EXPENDITURE.			
By Works as per Schedule—	£	s.	d.
Channon Street	6	14	11
River Road	2	17	6
Crescent Road	...	...	...
McVay's Road	11	16	0
Noosa Road	81	2	3
Asphalting Account	19	15	5
Smith's Road	60	6	6
Power Street	3	17	2
Mellor Street	5	1	8
Pengelly's Bridge	428	15	9
Cement Account	122	5	3
Ray Street	9	0	8
Geordie Road	1	16	6
Lawrence Street	30	16	1
One-Mile Road	2	17	6
Contingencies Account	1	19	0
	791	19	8
„ Balance, Royal Bank	2,208	0	4
	£3,000	0	0

**RESERVES ACCOUNT.**

1907. RECEIPTS.			
To	£	s.	d.
To Bank Balance, 31st December, 1906	1	1	10
„ Cash Rent of Grounds	9	7	0
„ Government Subsidy	226	7	6
„ Material and General Repairs	11	5	0
„ Donations Account	9	6	0
„ City Council Donation	160	0	0
	£407	7	4

EXPENDITURE.			
By Cash, General Expenses	£	s.	d.
Plant Account, Purchase of Horse Rake	10	10	9
„ General Repairs, Wages	227	12	6
„ Material and General Repairs	37	5	5
„ Horse-feed Account	19	18	10
„ Contract Fencing	86	1	4
„ Printing, Advertising, and Stationery	0	11	0
„ Insurance Account	3	16	9
„ Workers' Compensation Act	2	7	0
„ Bank Balance, 31st December, 1907	67	11	9
	£407	7	4

**RATES STRUCK FOR THE YEAR.**

A General Rate of 3d. in the £ on the Capital Value of all Rateable Property was struck on the 18th March, 1907.

A Lighting Rate of 1d. in the £ on the Capital Value of all Rateable Property within a prescribed area was struck on the 18th March, 1907.

A Loan Rate of 1d. in the £ on the Capital Value of all Rateable Property was struck on the 18th March, 1907.

A Health Rate of 1d. in the £ on the Capital Value of all Rateable Property was struck on the 18th March, 1907.

A Sanitary Order of 18s. 6d. per pan per annum for Fortnightly Services and 11s. 6d. per pan per annum for Fortnightly Services was struck on the 18th March, 1907.

ALFRED R. RANSON, Town Clerk.

Council Chambers, 24th January, 1908.

Examined and found correct, 26th February, 1908.

GEO. F. SCOTT, Auditor.  
G. A. BUIST, Mayor.

8th April, 1908.  
1259

**GYMPIE WATER AUTHORITY.**

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE for the Year ended 31st December, 1907.**

1907. RECEIPTS.			
To	£	s.	d.
To Cash on Hand 31st December, 1906	24	0	0
„ Bank Balance, 31st December, 1906	196	12	6
„ Water Rates and Sale of Water by Meter Measurement	4,118	19	4
„ Sale of Water from Stand Pipes	1	4	11
„ Plumbers' License Fees	3	3	0
„ Printing and Advertising—Sale of Permits Book	0	3	6
„ General Repairs	0	7	3
„ Sale of Pipe	1	6	0
„ Construction Account	40	16	5
„ Bank Balance, 31st December, 1907	1,064	18	10
„ Add Outstanding Cheques	14	15	10
	£5,466	7	10

**EXPENDITURE.**

By	£	s.	d.
By Pumping Station Plant, Tange Pump	15	0	0
„ Cash—			
General Expenses	8	11	1
Printing and Advertising	29	12	10
Petty Cash Expenditure	10	3	4
Professional Services	5	5	0
Telephone Service Account	8	12	6
Fire Insurance	8	15	3
Workers' Compensation Act	9	15	9
	80	15	9
„ Works, Pumping Station—			
Stores and Material	111	2	8
General Repairs	58	13	4
Fuel Account	575	6	6
	740	2	6
„ Town Mains Upkeep and Repairs to Pipe Track—			
Construction Account, Cootharaba and Ashfords Hills and Kelihers Hill	1,454	12	2
Stores and Material	38	15	7
General Repairs	58	2	7
	1,551	10	4
„ Maintenance of Reservoir	32	15	8
„ Salaries Account—			
Pumping Station—			
Chief Engineer W. Bush	72	0	0
Chief Engineer E. Rigby	106	3	4
Fireman R. Neill	162	1	8
Fireman J. Tennant	159	0	0
Labourer T. O'Neill	63	15	0
Superintendent A. W. Watt	182	0	0
Office—			
Town Clerk	65	0	0
Assistant Rate Collector H. Bennett	26	0	0
Rate Collector J. Bennett	5	0	0
The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Expenses	25	0	0
G. F. Scott, L. G. Auditor	25	4	0
	891	4	0
„ Repayment Waterworks Loans—			
Interest	1,644	0	6
Redemption	509	14	4
	2,153	14	10
„ Cash on Hand, 31st December, 1907	1	4	9
	£5,466	7	10

**LIABILITIES AND ASSETS.**

1907. LIABILITIES.			
To	£	s.	d.
To Government Balances—Water Works Loans	40,756	0	9
„ Interest, Government in Arrear	1,519	6	8
„ Bank Balance	1,079	14	8
	£43,655	2	1

ASSETS.			
By	£	s.	d.
By Cash on Hand, 31st December, 1907	1	4	9
„ Pumping Plant, Pipe, Mains, Reservoir, and Cottages	28,523	7	1
„ Superintendent's Cottage	48	16	0
„ Rates in Arrear—			
Water	1,408	1	10
Water by Meter Measurement	890	13	10
	1,798	15	8
„ Balance, Liabilities over Assets	13,282	18	7
	£43,655	2	1

ALFRED R. RANSON, Town Clerk.

Council Chambers, 24th January, 1908.

Examined and found correct, 26th February, 1908.

GEO. F. SCOTT, Auditor.  
G. A. BUIST, Mayor.

8th April, 1908.  
1260

**SHIRE OF BALMORAL.**

**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE for the Year ended 31st December, 1907.**

RECEIPTS.			
To	£	s.	d.
To General Rates—			
Division 1—			
Gross	949	14	7
Discount	16	4	5
	933	10	2
Division 2—			
Gross	1,135	7	2
Discount	19	11	10
	1,115	16	4
Division 3—			
Gross	869	8	0
Discount	13	1	0
	856	7	0

Fig. 7. 1908 Gympie City Budget, Queensland Government Gazette

To summarize his term in office the Mayor gave a year-end report to the City Council members. On Thursday, 28 January 1909 the *Gympie Times Newspaper* published his report by stating: "The Mayor then read the following report. Gentlemen, following the custom of my predecessors, I beg to place before you my report of the work of the Council and Gympie Water Authority during my term of office, this being the last meeting before vacating the chair and retiring from Municipal work, as I have decided not to seek re-election this year... During my term of office not one complaint has been recorded against any servant or officer of the Council, although some of their duties have been arduous and liable to friction with the ratepayers when certain duties have to be performed, and you will, I think, agree with me that the heads of the several departments are very capable men, and would be difficult to replace, and knowing the amount of work they have to do, and the efficient manner it is carried out, I cannot but place on record my appreciation of same, and thank them for the assistance given to myself and Alderman at all times. Finally, a word of praise is due and our thanks noted to the Press for the able manner in which the proceedings of our meetings have been reported. Gentlemen, I now conclude my report and thank you for the kind consideration, loyalty, and assistance rendered to me during the past year, and trust that you will have a prosperous and pleasant year before you."<sup>20</sup>



*Fig.8. George A. Buist as Mayor of Gympie, 1908, Photograph Courtesy of the Gympie Family History Society*

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<sup>20</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 28 January 1909, p. 4

## One More Campaign

Nine months after retiring from local government, George Buist decided to run again for Alderman representing the People's Progressive League. On Tuesday, 7 September 1909 the *Gympie Times Newspaper* reported: "A well-attended and enthusiastic meeting of the Gympie branch of the People's Progressive League, held tonight, endorsed the candidature of Messrs. George A. Buist and George H. Mackay for Gympie in the government interest. Mr. Buist, who has been a resident of the field for 26 years, was for 18 years secretary of the One Mile Sawmill. He then became interested in mining affairs, and met with a fair amount of success. He has always taken a keen interest in political matters and held the position of President of the Anti-Socialist League for a number of years, and was first President of the Gympie branch of the People's Progressive League as well as honorary organizer. He was twice elected as alderman of the City Council, and was Mayor for a term. He is a member of the Hospital Committee, Fire Brigade and Ambulance Brigade..."<sup>21</sup>

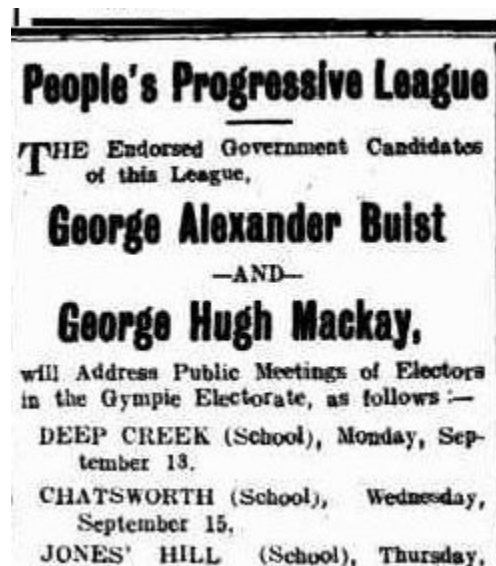


Fig.9. George A. Buist Advertisement, 9 September 1909, *Gympie Times Newspaper*

Buist campaigned aggressively around Gympie with many speaking engagements and attended other political functions. Ultimately he lost the election garnishing 1,991 votes.<sup>22</sup>

## Clerk of the Widgee Shire Council

The Shire of Widgee was located in the rural areas surrounding the town of Gympie but did not include the town itself and had its separate local government area. Buist was appointed Clerk of the Widgee Shire Council on Friday, 1 January 1915.<sup>23</sup> He would serve in this capacity until Wednesday, 31 December 1930 when he retired.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Brisbane Courier Newspaper*, 7 September 1909, p. 5

<sup>22</sup> *Brisbane Courier Newspaper*, 15 September 1909, p. 5

<sup>23</sup> *Nambour Chronicle & North Coast Advertiser Newspaper*, 28 February 1941, p. 5

<sup>24</sup> *Nambour Chronicle & North Coast Advertiser Newspaper*, 28 February 1941, p. 5





*Fig.10. George A. Buist (Standing second from right) in 1916-17, Photograph Courtesy of the Gympie Family History Society*



*Fig.11. Widgee Shire Council Chambers, Gympie, Australia, Photograph Courtesy of the Queensland Heritage Register*

As Mayor, Buist was present in May of 1908, for the opening of the Bell's Bridge which spans the Mary River approximately eight miles outside of Gympie. Eight years after its opening the maintenance and control came under the jurisdiction of the Widgee Shire Council. The Council created the Bell's Bridge Board and George Buist was appointed as the Board's first Clerk.

### **Purchase of a Fruit Farm**

In September of 1904 George Buist purchased a 120 acre fruit farm outside of Gympie. According to the *Gympie Times Newspaper* of Saturday, 10 June 1905: "Mr. George Buist, who for many years was the Secretary of the One Mile Sawmill Company in Gympie, and took a keen interest in many public matters in this town, took possession last September of a fruit farm, that he had purchased, on the right hand bank of the Six Mile Creek, not far from the 'Nine Mile' Bridge... Mr. Buist keeps an open house, and has issued a standing invitation to his neighbours to come in any night and read the newspapers and magazines which lie on the table of the sitting room."<sup>25</sup>

### **A Freemason**

Shortly after arriving in Gympie, Buist became affiliated with the Prince Leopold Freemason Lodge. He was listed as the Secretary of the Lodge as early as July of 1885.<sup>26</sup> George Buist was one of the first officers of the Lodge Braemar in Gympie. He held many honors of the Lodge since it was opened in Gympie in 1894. In the Historical Sketch of Gympie written in 1927 Buist is "the oldest surviving active member in Gympie, and still takes a keen interest in the work."<sup>27</sup>

### **Marriage**

Buist had been a widower for almost 29 years when he met Sarah Lawson of Gympie. Little is known of her. They were married on Wednesday, 8 October 1919 in Gympie.<sup>28</sup> The couple purchased a residence on Gladstone Street on Calton Hill where George lived for the rest of his life.

### **Gympie Boy Scouts**

The Gympie Boy Scouts were formed in 1910. Buist became associated with the group early in its history when he was appointed scoutmaster on Saturday, 10 June 1911.<sup>29</sup> On Friday, 18 October 1912 Buist was promoted to the rank of senior scoutmaster.<sup>30</sup>

In a letter to the *Gympie Times Newspaper* which was published in the paper on Saturday, 23 November 1912 he wrote: "D.S.M. [District Scout Master] Aspinall visited the 1<sup>st</sup> Gympie Troop, King's Own, at their weekly parade, and read a letter written by H.R.H. Princess Christian expressive of her appreciation of the Scout movement. The writer delivered a lecture on camping, explaining the best sites for camps, pitching and striking of tents, erection of huts and shelters, camp sanitation, etc. Corporal Deacon satisfactorily passed the tracking test. Last Saturday was spent in the bush tracking

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<sup>25</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 10 June 1905, p. 6

<sup>26</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 28 July 1885, p. 2

<sup>27</sup> Historical Sketch of Gympie, 1867-1927. p. 102

<sup>28</sup> Marriage Record of George A. Buist, 8 October 1919, Australia, Marriage Index, 1788-1950. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>29</sup> *Brisbane Courier Newspaper*, 10 June 1911, p. 14

<sup>30</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 22 October 1912, p. 4

and dispatch running, the Scouts displaying an ever-increasing degree of resourcefulness in the art of concealment. Scout Strugnell most ingeniously foiled the searchers, for on being searched, he in a casual way took part of an apple from his pocket then commenced enveloping the edible portion, throwing away the core in which was concealed the undiscovered missive. I could enumerate other examples equally meritorious, but for obvious reasons refrain from giving publicity to same. G.A. Buist, S.S.M.”<sup>31</sup>

When World War I broke out, George Buist was actively involved in the local defense movement of getting local men of Gympie to enlist. According to the *Gympie Times Newspaper* of Thursday, 10 September 1914: “Mr. George A. Buist [proposed] that all present who are not members of rifle clubs and the citizens generally be requested to join the rifle club during the duration of the war and that the rifle club be asked to take action to get instructions to drill members.”<sup>32</sup>

Buist would also supply personal letters of his family in Cupar, Fife, Scotland to the *Gympie Times Newspaper* explaining how Scotland is preparing for war that he asked to be published. Obliging, the newspaper published a column entitled: “Preparations in Scotland. Letters from Great Britain, now being received in Australia, tell mainly of the stirring events of the war and the effect which it is having on the people there. Mr. G.A. Buist supplied the following extracts from letters from relatives in Cupar, Fife, Scotland, which show what war means to those near the seat of trouble: ‘Cupar is now just like a garrison town. It is the depot for the military, and all this has taken place in a short week. The Bell Baxter has something like 200 men housed in it, the Academy school, halls, granaries, and in every hole and corner are to be found our defenders. Nearly every big house has two or three officers, whom they have to put up. If you have bedrooms you have to accommodate them when requested. They commandeer carts or anything that is needed. Cupar is considered the most suitable place in Scotland for mobilizing... Dividends are not to be paid owing to money stringency, so the war will affect everybody... Guns are rattling past with innumerable horsemen, and whilst I am writing the Red Cross Ambulance van with three horses has rattled past, and returned with some yeomen come to grief. Our county hall is the hospital, and lots of young ladies are employed nursing the injured... Many of the shops are open all Sunday for the convenience of the troops... Our railways are taken up by the Government, so our station master can never tell when to expect a train. Of course we are afraid of our bridges, and at Wormit the inhabitants have had to come out of their houses, and they are blocked up with sand bags. I do hope all this will not be required.’”<sup>33</sup>

### Later years

As mentioned previously, George Buist was very active as a Freemason and as a Senior Scout Master with the Boy Scouts even in his later years. He lived a quiet life with his wife on Gladstone Street. The *Telegraph Newspaper* on Friday, 18 August 1939 reported: “Mr. George A. Buist a former Mayor of Gympie and ex-clerk of the Widgee Shire Council was knocked down by a motor car in Mary Street, Gympie last night. Mr. Buist who received head injuries as a result of striking the road was attended by a doctor and taken to his house.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 23 November 1912, p. 5

<sup>32</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 10 September 1914, p. 2

<sup>33</sup> *Gympie Times Newspaper*, 6 October 1914, p. 3

<sup>34</sup> *Telegraph Newspaper*, 18 August 1939, p. 11



## Death of George A. Buist

George A. Buist died on Sunday, 23 February 1941 at the age of 82 at his residence on Gladstone Street in Gympie.<sup>35</sup> His funeral notice was published in the *Courier-Mail Newspaper* the following day on Monday, 24 February 1941 and reads: "Buist. The Relatives and Friends of Mrs. G.A. Buist, Mr. and Mrs. C. Lawson, and Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Peepall (Gympie) are respectfully invited to attend the Funeral of her beloved Husband and their Uncle, Mr. George Alexander Buist, to move from the Funeral Parlour, Gympie, this (Monday) afternoon at 4:15 o'clock for the Gympie Cemetery. Jack Cornes, Funeral Director, Gympie."<sup>36</sup> George A. Buist was buried next to his first wife, Martha in the Gympie Cemetery (Methodist Selected, Row 4, Plot 49) on Monday, 24 February 1941 in Gympie in an unmarked grave.



*Fig.12. Unmarked graves of George and Martha Buist, Gympie Cemetery, Gympie, Queensland, Australia, Photograph Courtesy of the Gympie Cemetery Trust*

The *Nambour Chronicle & North Coast Advertiser Newspaper* published a death notice of George A. Buist on Friday, 28 February 1941 and is reprinted below.

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<sup>35</sup> Death Record of George A. Buist, 23 February 1941, Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010

<sup>36</sup> *Courier-Mail Newspaper*, 24 February 1941, p. 14

## DEATH OF MR. G. A. BUIST.

### Former Mayor of Gympie.

A resident of Gympie since 1883, Mr. George Alexander Buist, at one time Mayor of the City, and active in many public activities, died on Sunday afternoon last, at the age of 82 years. The late Mr. Buist was a twin brother of the late Miss J. L. Buist, who for some years was a resident of Nambour, and died seven years ago. He was born in Cupar, Fifeshire, Scotland, on January 20, 1859. From January 1, 1915, to December 31, 1930, he occupied the position of Clerk of the Widgee Shire Council and at various periods was also Clerk of Bell's Bridge Board, Chairman of the Fire Brigade Board, a member of the committee of the Gympie Centre Q.A.T.B., the Gympie Hospital, and Chief of the Gympie Caledonian Society. The Boy Scout Movement was also another of his interests, occupying the position of senior scoutmaster of the Gympie Boy Scouts Association. In Freemasonry the late Mr. Buist held the highest Masonic honours as a member of the Gympie Braemar Lodge U.G.L.Q. In early years in connection with Freemasonry in the Nambour district he was a fairly frequent visitor and took a prominent part in lodge ceremonies.

The late Mr. Buist was first married in Gympie in 1887 to Miss Martha Latimer, who died in 1889. In October, 1919, he married in Gympie Miss Sarah Lawson, who survives him. He also leaves a daughter, Miss Irene Buist, by his first marriage.

*Fig.13. Death notice of George A. Buist, 28 February 1941, Nambour Chronicle & North Coast Advertiser Newspaper*

### Sarah Buist

Sarah Buist continued to reside at her residence on Gladstone Street in Gympie. She met and later married George Henry Armstrong on Friday, 1 June 1945 in the Gympie Presbyterian Church at Gympie.<sup>37</sup> No further information is known about Sarah Armstrong.

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<sup>37</sup> Marriage Record of Sarah Buist, 1 June 1945, Australia Marriage Index, 1788-1950. Ancestry.com. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010



George Alexander Buist left his native Cupar, Fifeshire, Scotland at the age of 25 and traveled to Queensland, Australia with his brother. Buist settled in the small town of Gympie, famous for its gold field and began working for the One Mile Sawmill as the company's Secretary. Soon he was appointed Accountant and Liquidator of the North Wilmot Gold Mining Company and was a mining speculator and investor. George Buist was also in those early days a Freemason and became affiliated with the Prince Leopold Freemason Lodge in Gympie holding the position of Secretary. He would remain associated with the organization for the rest of his life and was the oldest surviving active member of the Lodge Braemar in Gympie.

Buist married Martha Latimer and they had two children: Irene and Martha. He lost his wife after only 3 years of marriage and remained a widower for 29 years when he met and later married Sarah Lawson also of Gympie. They would remain married for the next 22 years until his death in 1941.

His life experiences also included politics and he first entered the political arena filling an Aldermanic vacancy on the Gympie City Council. He would successfully be elected twice as Alderman and subsequently become Mayor of Gympie for one term in 1908-09. He was the only Buist family member to hold the position of Mayor of a town. His most notable achievement came in 1915 when he was appointed Clerk of the Widgee Shire Council. He served in that capacity until 1930 when he retired.

Buist was also active in the Gympie Boy Scouts and served first as a scoutmaster and a year later was appointed to the rank of senior scoutmaster. Like many of his pursuits his affiliation with the Boy Scouts was life-long. George Alexander Buist was actively involved in service to his fellow citizens of Gympie by enlisting in other organizations such as Chairman of the Fire Brigade Board, the Gympie Hospital and was the Chief of the Gympie Caledonian Society. This man of many interests was also a devoted husband and father. He was also devoted to the citizens of Gympie and upon the purchase of a large fruit farm outside of Gympie he kept an open house for all his neighbors to enter and read his papers and magazines at any time of day.

George Buist never forgot his native Cupar, Fifeshire, Scotland and during the onset of the First World War published his personal family letters to him informing the citizens of Gympie what could happen in Australia. Fife can be very proud of one of its native sons, George Alexander Buist. He is warmly commemorated here in grateful esteem and recognition by his cousin, Michael T. Tracy. This work is dedicated to the Memory of George Alexander Buist.

*Memoratus in aeternum* (Forever Remembered)

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