Ellison Reef Saved

45th Anniversary

1967 - 2012

Invitation to Ellison Reef

The birthplace of the Great Barrier Reef conservation campaign in 1967

SUNDAY 14th OCTOBER 2012

Original diver Eddie Hegerl, boat-owner Perry Harvey and friends are returning to Ellison Reef, now part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area, to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the first coral battleground.

Above; John & Alison Busst 1968 (State Library of Victoria).

Right Ellison Reef (AIMS)

- **Boats depart Clump Point 9.30am. Tickets $110-$150 including lunch.** Possibly some cheaper seats, weather-dependent. Seats are limited. BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL.
- **Or take your own boat.** Kurrimine and Cowley ramps are closest. Please advise Coast Guard and be responsible for your own safety and the marine environment.
- A**fternoon tea at John Busst's home Ninney Rise.** Seats are limited. BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL.

3.30pm
Bingil Bay
Afternoon tea at Ninney Rise, the heritage-listed headquarters of the 1960s Save the Reef (and rain-forest) campaign

Map not to scale

5pm
Ninney Point
Stroll to Judith Wright's plaque on the headland and contem-plate the reef's next 45 years

9 30am Clump Point
Boat departs for Ellison Reef
Returns 2pm

11am
Ellison Reef
Join people who, 45 years ago, proved Ellison Reef was alive and set the legal precedent for not mining the Great Barrier Reef

BOOKINGS;

Mission Beach Visitor Information Centre, (07)4068 7099, info@missionbeachtourism.com

"… John Büsst had discovered a limestone mining application for removal of coral from Ellison Reef, offshore from Innisfail, advertised in the local papers. The WPSQ Innisfail branch had lodged an objection. Would we do so too? We did … The fight was on". "It was the first stroke in a battle that was to occupy our minds and time for years ahead. The grounds for objection were twofold: first, the danger to Ellison Reef itself , but further, the danger of establishing a legal precedent for mining that could lead to widespread commercial exploitation of the whole of the reef".

"This was the first application for coral mining in Reef areas, and as such it had an importance far beyond its immediate aspect.

The Ellison Reef application offered a perfect opportunity for scientists to testify on the vulnerability of the reef. The university replied that 'Ellison Reef is dead and the University would not oppose the granting of the lease'. It was obviously important to establish that Ellison Reef was not dead. The Littoral Society were young men with no money to speak of, but they were experienced divers and some of them already had qualifications as biologists and marine collectors. They were willing to go north and organise a dive on Ellison Reef and a count of species. A local boat-owner named Perry Harvey was organising transport out to Ellison. Eddie Hegerl and the team managed to identify 88 species of live coral, 60 species of molluscs and 190 species of fish. We certainly had our evidence that Ellison was no 'dead reef'.

Cairns man Mr. Donald Forbes' intention to lease a reef off Mourilyan Harbour to obtain lime is whipping up a storm of protest in North Queensland wild life preservation circles.

Headed by Mr. J. H. Busst, of Bingil Bay, it is likely to lead to emphatic objections from Brisbane and Sydney universities and conservation authorities in Canberra.

Cairns Post 28th August 1967

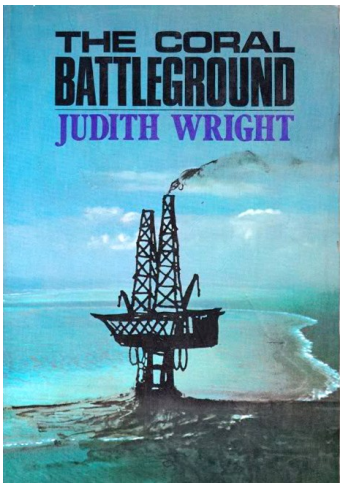
"This appears to be an extremely important matter," Mr. Busst has told Mr. Fielder.

"If granted, this could set a precedent for the complete exploitation of the whole Barrier Reef by major mining and chemical companies which could prove disastrous to the delicately balanced ecology of the whole reef.

ELLISON REEF REPORT

This report is the result of a survey of Ellison Reef undertaken by the Queensland Littoral Society during 29th Oct. – 2nd Nov., 19th and 23rd Nov., 1967. The Society feels that the survey is of importance in view of the fact that an application to mine coral sand and rubble from Ellison Reef has been lodged with the Queensland State Department of Mines.

Perhaps as important as the evidence itself was the public interest we had managed to create. The case for the Reef's future, the dangers of exploiting it, the need for research, the threats ahead, the Crown of Thorns plague – all were star news. The case closed in something of a blaze of public interest. The Queensland Mines Minister, Camm, had finally refused the application. The Ellison Reef case was over; a precedent had been established, not for mining the Great Barrier Reef, but for <u>not</u> mining it…" *(Judith Wright 1977 Abridged)*



Above; Eddie Hegerl (left) with John Büsst (centre). L**eft; ;** Len Webb, Don Henry and David Allworth with the plaque dedicated to John Büsst at Bingil Bay (WPSQ 1982).
Right; Cover of Judith Wright's 'The Coral Battleground.

"Ninney Rise is significant as the base from which the artist and environmentalist John Büsst organized the 'Save the Reef' and other important environmental campaigns during the 1960s and early 1970s. Set within the landscape being fought for, it was a meeting place for the campaigners and scientists involved with him in these efforts and became a focal point for all their struggles. These deeply contentious campaigns were supported by local and international scientists and aimed to protect the Great Barrier Reef and the area's tropical rainforests from development and mining pressures. As influential in the formation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and to the eventual declaration of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, these campaigns demonstrate the history of Queensland's environmental conservation movement with Büsst's home at Bingil Bay a key place associated with this activism."
(Queensland Heritage Register 2010)
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Above; Perry and Brenda Harvey at Ninney Rise. **Left**; Margaret Thorsborne in Save the Reef t-shirt with John Büsst self-portrait and Judith Wright plaque. (Courtesy Liz Gallie)

"Some of us who worked in Brisbane had not even seen the Reef. John Büsst, of course, knew it well. I myself had seen only a very small part of it, in the fringing reef of Lady Elliott Island many years before the battle started. But when I thought of the Reef, it was symbolised for me in one image that still stays in my mind. On a still blue summer day, with the ultramarine sea scarcely splashing the edge of the fringing reef, I was bending over a single small pool among the corals. Above it, dozens of small clams spread their velvety lips, patterned in blues and fawns, violets, reds and chocolate browns, not one of them like another. In it, sea-anemones drifted long white tentacles above the clean sand, and peacock-blue fish, only inches long, darted in and out of coral branches of all shapes and colours. One blue sea-star lay on the sand floor. The water was so clear that every detail of the pool's crannies and their inhabitants was vivid, and every movement could be seen through its translucence. In the centre of the pool, as if on a stage, swayed a dancing creature of crimson and yellow, rippling all over like a wind-blown shawl.

That was the Spanish Dancer, known to scientists as one of the nudibranchs, a shell-less mollusc. But for me it became an inner image of the spirit of the Reef itself.

As the battle for the Reef progressed, all of us who were fighting to keep those crystal waters from sacrilege became welded in a very deep companionship, and that in itself helped to keep us at work. But perhaps all of us had some such image to hold and to inspire us when we thought of the shadow that menaced the Reef." *Judith Wright, 1977)*

Right; Ellison Reef (AIMS)

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