



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



www.newfarmhistorical.org.au  

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2019

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JULY MEETING

Australia's Greek cafés, an early fast-food chain...

IN April 2018 George Symons held us enthralled with the history of his family's menswear business started by his paternal grandfather.

At our recent July meeting we were once again led on a humorous journey through history, this time that of the Greek café—beginning with the story of George's maternal grandfather, Michael Mangos, and his Mangos Oyster Café in Melbourne. Michael Mangos was from the same Greek island of Kastellorizo as were all of George's grandparents.

Michael Mangos was only 13 when his uncle, who had returned briefly to Greece, took young Michael back with him to work in Kalgoorlie. Michael put his savings from six years' work into a café but he had only been in it for three months when WWI broke out.

Although Greece was later neutral, at the outbreak of the war, it was seen as sympathising with the German side.

When Michael Mangos' café was destroyed by rioters without any compensation, Michael left to find work in Perth and Darwin, then in the canefields of Innisfail.



In 1921 he returned to Greece to marry George's grandmother, bringing her and other family members back to Melbourne. Here Michael, with his brothers, opened the Oriental Oyster Café in Windsor.



BY Austin Adams



When the brothers parted to start their own businesses, Michael changed the name of the café to the Mangos Oyster Café.

Almost every country town had a Greek restaurant providing food at all hours, particularly after the pub had closed. Those were the days when pubs had to close at 6pm which meant hungry patrons had to

find food elsewhere. This was often at a Greek café where they could order a predictable meal of fish and chips or a mixed grill, often at almost any time of the day. 'Meals All Hours' was a common sign seen at Greek cafés.

The Greek café was at the height of its popularity from the late 20s until the early 60s. By 1925, as Toni

Risson (pictured) tells us in her new book *Brisbane's Greek Cafés*, Brisbane had more than 70 Greek restaurants and cafés.

In the late 60s their decline began with the advent of television and of other sources of food after the end of the 6pm swill. The Mangos Café closed in 1972. Shortly after, George himself opened

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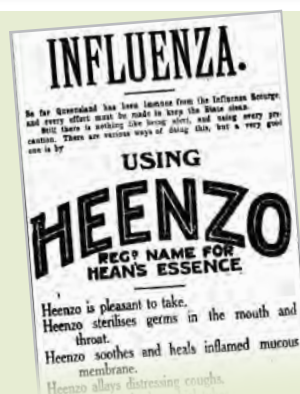
BIG SHOT FLU

Brisbane's flu crisis of 1919

The Spanish Flu epidemic of 1919 was the biggest killer in history and the deadliest disaster that Brisbane ever endured.

The newspapers of the day were full of solutions such as this one (right) from the Brisbane Courier of February 1919.

At the August meeting of the New Farm & Districts Historical Society, speaker Matthew Wengert will tell us about the extent of the



epidemic. He is an historical researcher and author of *City in Masks: How Brisbane fought the Spanish Flu*.

"Though the details are dramatic and sad, there's also an inspirational dimension which highlights the heroic work of doctors and nurses as well as the efforts of the authorities to stop the spread of the disease," said Matthew.

Come to meet Matthew on Saturday, 24 August, 2-4pm, at Merthyr Road Uniting Church Centre. Afternoon tea will be provided. Be sure to arrive early!

The perfection of a clock is not to go fast, but to be accurate... Luc de Clapiers



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Brisbane's first Greek Taverna serving Greek food.

For the original proprietor of any Greek café, an important task was to provide for their children, not only in the café business but through

advancement in the professions. George's uncle Peter, for example, studied medicine and was a surgeon, working at one time in Vietnam with Australian troops. He was

Taverna trio: Opening Brisbane's first Greek Taverna were George Symons from Kastellorizo, Spiro Levanes from Ithaca and Theo Patrick from Kythera.

team doctor for the Sydney Swans for 17 years.

In his inimitable style, George concluded by leaving this impressive audience laughing, then handed over to Dr Toni Risson who continued the Greek theme, by introducing her recent book *Brisbane's Greek Cafés*.

Toni also previewed the forthcoming display at the State Library of Queensland entitled "Meet Me at the Paragon", which documents the Greek Café Phenomenon across Australia. It runs from September 2019 to March 2020.

If any of your friends missed George's talk, he will be speaking at a meeting of National Seniors at Merthyr Road Uniting Centre on Wednesday, 2 October 2019.

Dr Toni Risson's book is available at www.tonirisson.com.au or may be ordered by phoning 0439 664 291.

NEWSREELS

SSO's 1812 request...

Harling back to the closing segment of the newsreel shown at our June meeting, it included a stirring rendition of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture played by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) under the baton of Eugene Goossens.

The commentator said that this music was "written for open air presentation to the accompaniment of cannon" and this is exactly as the SSO performed it back in 1950.



These movie clips are put together by Stuart Wallace, one of our members, and the 1812 Overture happens to be one of his favourite pieces.

To cut a long story short, the SSO heard that the society had shown the newsreel and since they did not have any video of Eugene Goossens conducting the SSO outdoors, they requested a copy.

As always, Stuart was happy to help out...

PLAQUE TOUR

#6 — London Woolstore



AS YOU GAZE at this stylish structure dating from 1912, you are admiring the work of famous Brisbane architect Robin Dods (1868-1920). If you count the number of bays, you will arrive at 24. The original building had only 16, but so prosperous was the company that the seamless expansion took place in 1924.

STREETSCAPE



Laundry in Harcourt Street: This view of Gates Hygienic Laundry, taken from Kent Street, dates from 1969 and comes courtesy of Gary Collett. The fine residence named Eroica (later destroyed by fire) is visible at the top right.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ross Garnett

Looking ahead to a new quarter century

ANOTHER year for the New Farm and Districts Historical Society ticks over this month, since it is 25 years since the first meeting of the inaugural committee.

A lot has changed in a quarter of a century, bearing out the truth of the song lyric: "From little things, big things grow".

Though we may be bigger in numbers, the enthusiasm for the history of this area in the story of early Brisbane was just as strong in the beginnings of the society. We truly owe a round of applause to those who put in all of the groundwork to establish the society and to begin recording the history of this fascinating peninsula. It's up to us to continue their good work. I wonder what snippets of history you hold that could add to our archives?

Have you been to visit 'Gerard', the new sculpture on the Teneriffe boardwalk? 'Gloria' the ewe has stood alone for the past seven years and has at last been joined by her mate. What a great way to honour the authors of our first and very successful publication *Reflections on New Farm*, as explained in



the article in the August edition of *My Village News*. Thanks to the Teneriffe Festival Committee for raising the funds needed to complete the sculpture.

The Historical Society has paid for the preparation of a new plaque to sit alongside the duo, thereby giving some background to these artworks. The Brisbane City Council paid for the installation, so it has been a team effort.

I look forward to seeing you at the August meeting when we will hold the Annual General Meeting. It will be brief, and will take place prior to our hearing from our guest speaker about the influenza epidemic from 100 years ago.

It could not be a more timely subject, considering that we are in the midst of a serious flu season in Queensland. How fortunate we are that the medical advances of the past 100 years allow us the measure of protection that immunisation offers.

Perhaps you have considered becoming a member of the committee? The minimum commitment of attending one short meeting per month could be weighed against the satisfaction of making your unique contribution as this Society heads into its next quarter century.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS NOW DUE

See Membership Form on page 6



SEPTEMBER MEETING

Making what's old new again...

The 1991 federal government initiative "Building Better Cities" prompted the creation of the Urban Renewal Task Force in Brisbane.

"It coincided with the city fathers wanting to find the buzz of the next Expo-type experience—and to once and for all throw off the shackles of being a big country town," says Ben Pritchard, who is to speak at the meeting in September of the New Farm & Districts Historical Society.

"Was it controversial and divisive, or the renaissance we had to have, to misquote Paul Keating?" asks Ben.

Come and be reminded of some of the things that have happened in the last 28 years and decide if it has Built a Better City.

You can declare your verdict when Ben addresses the meeting on Saturday, 28 September, 2-4pm, at Merthyr Road Uniting Church Centre. Afternoon tea will be provided. Bring along your friends. All are welcome.

New Farm and Districts Historical Society presents:



Poster: Desley Garnett

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VILLAGE NEWS

MANY THANKS TO
Grace Grace MP
Member for McConnell (07) 3719 7110
for photocopying the newsletter

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Kind words, looks, acts, warm hand-shakes—these are means of grace to those fighting unseen battles...

V | history
archives



When the new Wesleyan Church was opened in Brookes Street, The Valley, in 1889, anyone interested in its stained glass decoration would have learned that it mostly came from the famous Bavarian Royal Factory in Munich—but some was local.

A keen critic would have been hard-pressed to detect that it was the rose window and two flanking windows which had been crafted a little over a kilometre away.

The supplier was the partnership of Exton & Gough (est. 1882) working from their factory in Petrie's Bight.

Here, a visitor entering the artist's sanctum would see designs being worked out and small pieces of glass (of countless kinds and in all tints and shades) being painted.

The favourable result at Brookes Street led to Exton & Gough (soon just Exton) providing stained glass decoration for buildings and churches

throughout Queensland.

By the 1930s—when it came to paints, glass, and decorators' materials generally—Exton had been a household name in Queensland for 50 years.

•••

Twenty-six-year-old Robert Skerrett Exton (1852-1921) arrived in the colony from Lincolnshire in the late 1870s, and in May 1879, at All Saints Church, Wickham Terrace (beneath the oldest stained glass windows in Queensland), he married Irish lass, Elizabeth Rosetta Robinson.

Perhaps they had met a year before in Sydney at the fancy dress Calico Ball attended by around 500 guests.

It had been hosted by Lady Robinson and her husband (Elizabeth's cousin), the Rt Hon. Hercules Robinson, Governor of NSW—who dressed as Captain Cook for the occasion.

The Extons soon moved to Teneriffe, and some time between 1883 and 1893, their family home Cluna was built at 278 Harcourt Street, four doors from Chester Street.

It was complemented by a sizeable garden.



R.S. Exton has his hand on the pillar at Exton & Gough's store near the corner of Queen and Adelaide Streets in 1884.

Its coaching shed, adjacent to the property's back entrance onto the laneway (Small Street), sparks one to imagine the horse-drawn days of yore.

Several of the Extons' six children were born at home in Harcourt Street.

In 1886, as a keen man of business, Exton ran for municipal office but was just pipped to fill a vacancy on the Booroodabin (No. 1 Div.) Divisional Board.

In the late 1890s, the Extons' next door neighbour in the quaint little brick cottage at No. 276 was builder Mark Doggett (1860-1938).

By 1907, Exton's success was clear to all, courtesy of architect Claude W. Chambers' classical design of the firm's new city office.

The brick facade proclaiming "R.S. Exton & Co." still stands at 333 Ann Street.

Visitors to Cluna likely included artistic and gifted employees such as George Oxlade, Charles Lancaster and William Bustard.

George Oxlade (1848-1910) was a signwriter for Exton & Gough in the 1880s, then started his own painting and decorating business, Oxlade Brothers, which still operates in Fortitude Valley.

C.H. Lancaster (1886-1959) was manager of the stained glass department of Exton's when W. Bustard (1894-1973) was chief designer.

Both are regarded as accomplished Queensland artists.

Lancaster's lead-lighting embellishes Coronet Court at 995 Brunswick Street, while at Holy Spirit Church, William Bustard executed the magnificent mural painting of angels and cherubs in the sanctuary.

His stained glass work may be seen at St Michael's and All Angels Church.

Another facet of the Exton character was manifested in Harriette (1887-1951), the youngest of the Exton children.

After training as a doctor, she married Dr Paul Voss whose father was a long-revered Rockhampton doctor.

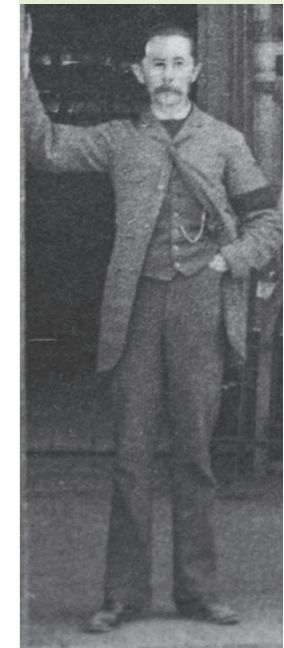
She devoted herself to community work in support of her husband, and came to be described as "one of the best known and best loved personalities in Central Queensland."

NEXT MEETING of the New Farm & Districts Historical Society: Saturday 24 August, 2-4pm. Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd. Matthew Wengert will speak about the 1919 Spanish Flu Epidemic.

MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN
from MY VILLAGE NEWS
August 2019



Cluna, once the Exton family home, at 278 Harcourt Street, pictured in 1928 and in 2019.





NEW FARM & *Districts* HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

Membership Form

Annual Membership – 1 September 2019 to 31st August 2020

Type of Membership	New	Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> contact info unchanged
			<input type="checkbox"/> updated info below
Name:			
Residential Address:			P/Code:
Postal Address:			P/Code:
Telephone:	Work/Mobile:	Home:	
Email:			
Photo permission	Photographs taken at public meetings may be published in newsletters and on social media		

I can volunteer in the following ways:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming at meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Collect Oral Histories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set up / clear up of room | <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with archives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT support at meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Write short historical items for website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with afternoon tea | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advise on new technology | |

Membership Cost: \$10

Signed:..... Date:.....

Payment method:

- Bank Transfer: to New Farm and Districts Historical Society Inc.
BSB 034065 - Account Number 146217 – Reference: MEMB and your surname. Please post or email completed form
- cheque or money order payable to: **New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc.**
- Cash at public meeting or Society Office

Post to: PO Box 1141
New Farm QLD 4005

Email to: info@newfarmhistorical.org.au

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Receipt No:	Date:	Treasurer:
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