



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au  

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020

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PAINTING IN THE PARK

Have easel, will fascinate...

AN artist at his easel is guaranteed to attract the curious, and that's why there was a steady arrival of onlookers when David Hinchliffe took up his brush last Sunday in New Farm Park. Indeed New Farm's gain was France's loss, since if the times had not been constrained by an epidemic, David would have been conducting a workshop in picturesque Cotignac in Provence.

As it was, at 10am on the Sunday, and equipped simply with an easel, director's chair, an esky of



acrylics and a blank canvas, David found a spot near picturesque trees. By 2pm, the work was complete, and the signature affixed.

This week of painting came about as a result of David's recently being appointed 'Artist in

Residence' by the website: newfarmpark.com.au.

A visit to New Farm Park is worthwhile any time, made more so by seeing an artist at work. David finishes his week on Saturday, 6 June (10am-2pm).

REFLECTING ON PHONES

Stuart Wallace

From chunky to multifunctional...

WHILE safely practising physical distancing at home I am on my phone watching a video of my little grandson. Of course I couldn't help thinking how cute he looks but I also thought how wonderful it is that I could do this and how far phones have come in my lifetime.

The first phones I remember were black chunky objects with a rotary dial. Not everyone had one, so there were plenty of public phone boxes with A and B buttons. It was evolution, but each new advance seemed like a revolution—so next came these swank coloured phones that were all rounded and literally, were the talk of the town.

It's funny also that phones then generated phone tables and of course, there was only one phone in the house; and it took several months to get connected! At work, we had similar handsets but connected through a plug-in switchboard. Our switchboard operator (Debbie Switchgirl) could recognise clients' voices and knew who they would want to talk to: "Hello Mr Smith, shall I put you through to Mr Jones?"

The next revolution meant buttons instead of dials, and then came mobile phones. Even though they were the size of a shoe, they were quite a status symbol but as always, there were some drawbacks.



I was nearby when Alan Bond's luxury yacht was impounded and his lawyer came down to the dock complete with a mobile phone which plugged into his car's power outlet. There were several phone calls over the next hour until all was resolved. Unfortunately, when the lawyer tried to start his car, the phone had flattened the car battery!

Next I remember small handheld phones with a screen that just showed the number called, but as the screens grew larger, they began to show more and more information such as a 'phone book' and a calendar. The next model for me was a Blackberry, which was not only a phone but was able to send and receive emails as well. Wow!

Fairly soon all mobile phones had email capability as well as messaging—and with all the new features being added it became like the car industry with each maker bringing out a new model every year. Of course, you had to keep up with the Joneses, and I remember a serious conversation with a friend just after cameras were added to phones. Someone asked the obvious question: "Why would anyone want a camera on their phone?"

Now back to my video of my grandson. It also made me ask myself just how many functions do I have on my phone? You know, phone, camera, chat, torch, calendar, etc. I was surprised to count up to 92—but then, how many do you have? — *Thanks to Stuart, who usually operated the computer at the back... when we used to have monthly meetings.*



Flyer lands: English journalist and adventurer Brian Milton took 59 days to fly his microlight “Dalgety Flyer” from London to Sydney for the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations. On Australia Day he landed in New Farm Park! Were you there? What do you remember of the event (pictured above)? [Peter Rasey](#) would like to hear from you.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Ross Garnett

Light at the end of the tunnel, but not yet enough for a meeting...

SINCE early March we have been leading our lives very differently from the usual pace—which has been a pleasant break in many ways—but we are now wanting to get back to some of the activities we have been missing.

Unfortunately, we are still not able to open our office on Thursday afternoons as the Ron Muir Room next to the library will not be available until the next COVID stage.

We are looking forward to being able to welcome people to come for conversations about your experiences in the past few months, and also about your memories about life in New Farm over your lifetime. We hope to use these afternoons (2–4 pm) to record some oral histories about New Farm for our archives. Meantime, why not put pen to paper to note down your memories? Lots of dot points are useful if you do not want to write a long story.

Do you remember a microlight aircraft (Dalgety Flyer) landing in New Farm Park on Australia Day 1988 (photo above)? There is more information [here](#).

If you would like to see artist David Hinchliffe at work in New Farm Park, Saturday, 6 June (10am–2pm) is to be the last of the seven days he has spent capturing on canvas some of the park’s prettiest vistas.

Your committee is ‘putting on their thinking caps’ for creative ways by which we will be able to recommence public meetings on the fourth Saturday of each month, while still working within COVID guidelines—so look for further information in later newsletters.

NICELY NOSTALGIC

Jim MacDonald

Break the glass :: Press the button

WHO remembers the red and white pedestal which stood at many strategic points around the suburban streets. It was of cast iron construction about 1.5m tall. On top was a box shaped unit not unlike a letter box with a gable shaped top. It was painted red and white with the words, “Fire Alarm — Break glass and press button”. This was wire-connected to the main city fire station which was situated on the corner of Ann and Creek Streets in the city. The result was the summoning of a fire tender truck and crew to the point of activation.

Remember that up to the late 1940s a telephone in a private residence was more unusual than normal. Of course, this was way ahead of “dial triple-0”, let alone a phone that could be carried around.

Now where were fire alarms manufactured? Right here in New Farm. Yes, Matthews Fire Alarm Manufacturing was at 77 Annie Street at the bottom of the hill on the left hand side as you travelled up towards the Astor Theatre on Brunswick Street. There was a residence and smallish production building. It had a most wonderful rubbish/junk heap near the front alignment through which they permitted the scavengers of New Farm State School to trawl. I still have a large magnet or two from that magic site.

In the earliest days of this Society, a prominent member was Fred Matthews, brother of inventor Ernest. As Fred explained in 1974, “My brother was the patenter of Matthews Automatic Fire Protection System and occupied the factory in Annie Street in 1916. In 1923, the Matthews Fire Alarm Company was incorporated with the purpose of marketing his invention.

“My brother was awarded first prize for his fire alarm exhibit in the 1911 Brisbane Exhibition. Mr John E Hinton, the superintendent of the Brisbane Fire Brigade, was a firm friend and encouraged him in the development of his fire alarm patents.”

Alert to Alarms: Ernest Costin Matthews AMIE (Aust), pictured at the RNA Exhibit in Brisbane, 1913, was the founder of Matthews Fire Alarm Pty Ltd (1923).



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**NZ telegram boy...**

Jim MacDonald's article last month ("Who remembers 'the telegram'?", NFDHS News, May 2020, p. 2) brought back memories of being a 'telegram boy' in Tauranga, New Zealand, in the mid-1950s. I was aged about 12 and delivered telegrams a few afternoons after school.

There were 'long runs' out to the suburbs and 'short runs' around town. We had a small leather satchel, and hoped (if good news) we may get a tip of three pence.

The message came in on a printed tape and these were cut into lengths and pasted onto the yellow telegram forms (you could have fancy forms for the congratulatory type of messages). Morse code messages were sent to outer and country post offices.

We provided our own bicycle and were paid a 'bicycle allowance' of 1/25th of our pay for 'wear and tear'.

I also earned money by mowing lawns, delivering groceries on the bicycle with a big wicker basket in front with a small wheel, and selling 'race books' around town before the local horse race meeting.

When older and at college, we got work on the local wharf as 'seagulls'—casual labourers who hung around in case they were short of regular wharfies. It was hard work handling general cargo from shop to shed on trolleys and carts, but for us the pay was great. Once we were paid even though the ship was still coming up the harbour!

— Ken Morris

Mr Wright's sister Matilda...

I was particularly interested to read last month's article about the floods of 1890 and 1893 ("New Farm's canal, the solution to flooding?", NFDHS Newsletter, May 2020, p. 6), because the man whose house at Norris's Point floated away was the brother of my great-grandmother, Matilda Clara Hannah Wright.

Matilda married William Granville Norris. She and her brother Harry were two of the 12 children of Alfred Samuel Wright and Matilda Bryant who came to Queensland on the *Chaseley* in 1849.

As a Wright and a Norris descendant, my family has had a long association with New Farm. Incidentally, we were always told that when the Wright house was washed away, the precious family piano finished up in a tree — however, we never heard how it was retrieved!

As children we thought this was a really funny story, but it would not have been so amusing when you were actually in the middle of the flood like poor old Harry and Alice! Thanks for a very interesting newsletter.

— Shirley (Norris) Moreland OAM

Straightening the river: great minds...

THE article about the three cyclonic episodes in 1893 reminded me why my great-grandparents built their residence on top of the hill at 40 Villiers Street.

It also took me back to 1956 when I worked as a

draughtsman for the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland. Part of our chores was to draw up plans of the streets of Brisbane so as to delineate where underground cabling could be laid.

While engaged in the work you had time to contemplate. One idea was to straighten out the Brisbane River to make a straight canal for the swift flow of water to the sea. Without any knowledge of other people's thoughts on this matter, it seemed to be a feasible idea in 1956 if there was a will by government to do it.

Isn't it strange how old ideas come to people's minds when viewing the same repetitive problem around them.

— George Cowin

Oxlade Drive in the 50s

THANKS for the May newsletter. I found the articles interesting. Regarding the flying boat photo, there was a reserved landing area in the river for flying boats (Hamilton, I believe) so this aircraft must have taxied up the river from there, perhaps to moor somewhere in town. I note that the Story Bridge was still under construction.

At the river bank I could see no stone wall. My father was told that the first river wall was built around wartime because of the erosion caused by USN destroyers rushing by. The stones were initially loosely laid, hence easily dislodged by vandals. They were also perfect for garden edges. The wall was later rebuilt and mortared.

I was puzzled by pylons along the river's edge, which had gone when we arrived in 1954 to live at 80 Oxlade Drive. When I was a kid, there was a small sandy beach adjacent to Dynes. Stone blocks had been thrown in the mud possibly to stabilise the river edge.

These days, mangroves line the bank at this spot, whereas back then the river edge was overgrown, and locals tried to convince the council to mow the grass so as to make Merthyr Park usable by the public.

— Steve Glanville



River views: (Top) A portion of the 1937 photo showing the New Farm riverbank adjacent to Dynes on Oxlade Drive. (Above) Norris's Point ca. 1900, site of Harry Wright's house which was swept away in the 1893 flood.

BOOK REVIEW

On the beat: Colonial Brisbane's mean streets

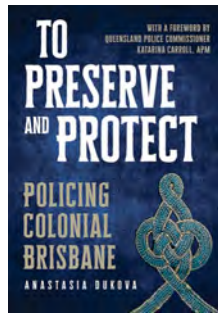
Anastasia Dukova's scholarly work tells the intriguing story of colonial Brisbane through the history of six people.

They're not simply cases; they're stories of flesh and blood. There are tales of domination, autocracy, despotism, despair, crime and hope.

Some of the stories could be about any of us living and trying to survive in that frontier time from 1828 to the nearly 1900s.

One of the colourful characters, Peter 'Duff' Murphy, was transported from Ireland for larceny, gained his freedom, joined the police and rose to become the District Constable of Kangaroo Point. After repeated intoxication offences and fines he resigned.

Regarding Murphy's duties at Kangaroo Point, Dukova writes, "...the daily policing routine consisted of dealing with drunkards, catching thieves and apprehending 'leavers' without permits, with an occasional ghastly murder".



To Preserve and Protect

by Anastasia Dukova
UQP – \$32.99 PB
Review: A. Nonn

One of those murders was that of Robert Cox for which an innocent man William Fyfe was hanged. Dukova does not spell it out but it is likely that Murphy's evidence contributed to Cox's conviction.

We are also not told of Patrick Mayne's deathbed confession to the murder. Murphy's harsh successors vied with each other for acts of gratuitous rule-by-the-lash cruelty. When they were not meting out rude justice they were playing cat and mouse with the criminal element.

One such serial offender was Charles 'Dubious' Durant described as "...a seasoned sinner with a bad record as long as a Tram Trust suburban section".

No less colourful was Susan Hegarty a.k.a. M'Gowan, an 18-year-old denizen of Albert Street who is described as a lady of negotiable affections and is reported as "idle, profligate, sexually depraved and vain".

This book gives us a peek into a world far from the abstract concepts of fairness, justice and truth. It's a thoroughly thought-provoking read.

"Walk down Albert Street on any night in the week, if you care to venture through its suffocatingly significant aroma of opium and insanitation, and among its prowling gangs of wolf-like larrikins, and its filthy swarm of cursing slatters..." THE BOOMERANG, 14 JANUARY 1888

NEW CHAPTER

History in mind

NEXT door to the Garnetts' shop in James Street was a large seven-bedroom house at 148-152, accommodating a family with 10 children.

More than a decade ago, that house was divided into two allotments so as to place side by side a five-bedroom and a two-bedroom house, both renovated.

Years ago, the house at No. 150 (next to the Yoga Studio which was the Garnett store) burnt down, and the fire also damaged No. 148. Arising from the ashes of the house destroyed at No. 150, has been new luxury residence.

Ross's grandparents lived at No. 160 on the lower side of the shop and this was where Ross lived as a baby until his parents built a residence at the back of the shop. Ross's mother lived at 160 for many years after the shop was sold.

Someone decided to name the new home project at No. 150 'Garnett on James' so as to anchor it to the history of the location. Chapter five of *Reflections on New Farm* relates the Garnett family's contribution to this part of James Street.



GOOD READING

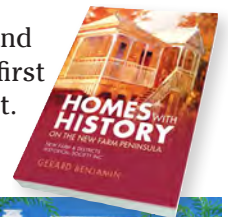
Bowen Terrace home with history

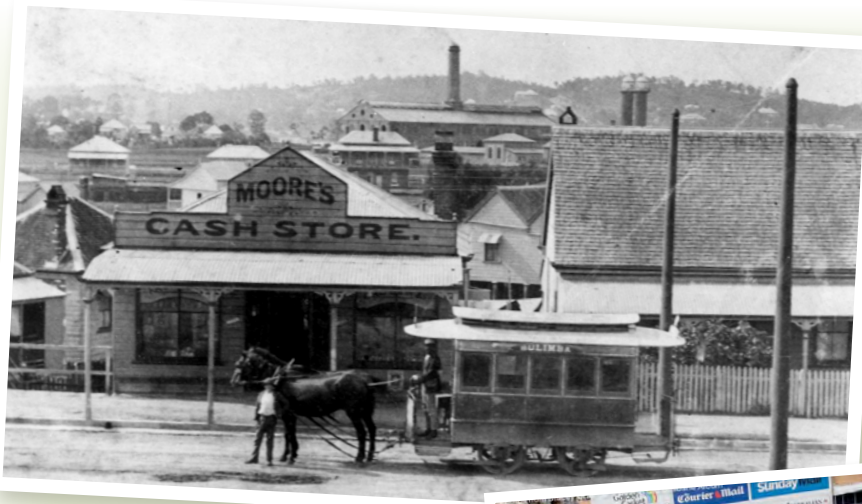
THE impressive residence *Sandford* at 595 Lower Bowen Tce was in the news in March 1945 when its late owner, Mrs Arena Massie Muller, wife of George Gustav Gottlieb Rudolph Muller, left the sizeable estate of £25,159 (\$1.8M today).

The house dates from ca. 1903 and the property's title deed shows its first holder from 1844 to be William Kent.

The Mullers commissioned an grand residence, with a two-entry formal front staircase and wide verandahs. Internally, its living/dining room has decorative columns dividing the areas. The home lent itself to grand parties and soirees where the musical talent of Arena and her family could be enjoyed by many.

Artist Philippa Webb and her husband, who bought this house together with their daughter and son-in-law, are only the third owners of the property. There's more about *Sandford* in the popular local history book *Homes with History*, which is available from the Society or at New Farm Editions and Mary Ryan's New Farm.





Old Bulimba rails: Above: The horse-drawn Bulimba tram (heading to the town from the Bulimba Ferry) is pictured in front of Moore's Cash Store in Commercial Road, Fortitude Valley, ca. 1894. The Newstead Gasworks plant with the large chimney looms in the background (SLQ 17984). Below: The Paddington tram about to leave the Bulimba (Teneriffe) ferry terminus.



ARCHAEOLOGY ON TRACK

Commercial Road unearthing

But for an historically-minded passerby who put the photo (above centre) on Facebook in the last week of May, the intriguing find of tram tracks beneath Commercial Road, Teneriffe, may have been missed by the general public.

The works were being carried out as part of the upgrade of the intersection with Doggett Street.

On hand in order to monitor any finds, and in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council, was an archaeologist/cultural heritage specialist from the construction firm. Uncovered were metal rails and wooden sleepers. Their dating is unknown at this stage but the earliest rails to be laid down in Commercial Road (once known as Bulimba Road) were in late 1887.

The establishment of this line followed a clamour in the newspaper that the 'unfinished section of the tramway' between the Waterloo Hotel and the (Bulimba) Ferry should be completed quickly. By the following year, trams on this section were passing "every few minutes".



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All you need to paint is a few tools, a little instruction, and a vision in your mind... — B. Ross

archives



Unwelcome arrival in 1919: Spanish Flu

Mrs Helen Anderson probably enjoyed the 'London Gossip' column in *The Queenslander* because it reminded her of when her daughter was studying music there before the war.

Mind you, the current column of 21 September 1918 (probably six weeks out of date) had the writer trying to reconcile London's fresh air and sunny weather with the Spanish influenza which was running rife and afflicting thousands.

"It's a most mysterious visitation. It has been impossible to get a doctor as they are overworked attending the war wounded, and so many are taken for the Front," the columnist continued.

Mrs W.S. Anderson and her Scots-born husband, a businessman, lived at Myora at 306 Lower Kent St, Teneriffe.

She was on the committee of the Brisbane Hospital because of her work with the Red Cross and the Soldiers' Comfort Fund. She was also president of the Queensland Women's Electoral League.

The next sentence in the columnist's report no doubt brought Mrs Anderson right back to what was preoccupying the committee: "I trust [the influenza] won't get as far as Queensland, for its inconvenience to business alone is quite extraordinary, and one hears of whole households being ill, and even dying."

For the civic and medical authorities in Queensland, the Spanish flu was an approaching storm cloud. Speculation was rife and committee members felt hamstrung by a lack of solid information.

On the one hand, the 'learned minds in Sydney' said that it wouldn't reach that city for another two months, yet how was it to be handled if it arrived since there were so few medical papers on the subject.

Most worrying were the returning soldiers. "What about the report from August (1918) that 200 soldiers in Victoria are laid low with what they think is the Spanish flu?" another committee member may have asked.

By the start of 1919, the question for Queensland was not if, but when.

By mid-February, the Kangaroo Point branch of the Red Cross began gathering articles that would be needed in an outbreak.

A 'border barrier' was established and travellers returning to Brisbane by rail underwent seven days quarantine in tents at Wallangarra on the border.

Public events in Brisbane for later in the year were being cancelled, and ships were under suspicion. A steamer at South Brisbane was put under 'isolation conditions' when a dubious illness occurred on board. Waterside workers and 'coalies' immediately knocked off.

On May 3 came the headline: "Influenza Outbreak in Brisbane. Highly Infectious Type." Ten days later, 903 cases had been registered.

By the end of May, the Women's Emergency Corps mobilised local branches. Mrs Anderson was chosen to be leader in the Teneriffe and Kingsholme area.

Homes were visited and the streets were patrolled (often by boy scouts) to check whether the need was for a doctor or nurse, or else food and beef tea. A room at St Michael and All Angels' Church in Brunswick St served as an all-day depot for the distribution of donated food.

After such a sustained all-round

effort, good news came on July 8, 1919. The Queensland Cabinet lifted all restrictions. Schools were open once more. Mrs Anderson was awarded an MBE for her war work.

Comparisons: Queensland's first case was notified in Brisbane on May 3, 1919; by June 30 there were 20,699 cases; the Queenslanders who died from influenza in 1919 numbered 830. As of 20 May 2020, the total number of cases in Queensland was 1058; and deaths, six.



Insert above: Mrs Helen Anderson of Teneriffe. Above & below: Train travellers in quarantine at Wallangarra on the border in 1919.

MONTHLY
HISTORY
COLUMN
from
MY VILLAGE
NEWS
JUNE 2020

