



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au  

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

Vol. XXVII, No. 1

NOVEMBER MEETING

Insightful heads-up on flood patterns

DR Margaret Cook (pictured), our speaker at last November's meeting and author of *River with a City Problem*, received a warm welcome especially from those who enjoy hearing someone speak with authority on a subject which they endorse passionately. Charles Darwin and the Laws of Evolution must have been delighted with her as one of our river's staunchest advocates.



Building on a flood plain? Really? Whoever thought that was a good idea? As one of my teachers said, the definition of stupidity is repeatedly performing the same tasks and expecting different results—plus, as someone quipped over afternoon tea, “Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should.”

Whatever the social and economic factors governing Brisbane's founding, the fact of its being established in the middle of a flood plain was clearly well down on the list of priorities—with

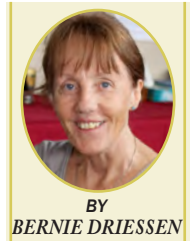
the concomitant disaster of several serious floods. Instead of later learning from the mistakes, the blame was usually assigned elsewhere.

Looking ahead, it is clear that what is really needed is strong government at several levels working closely with experts—such as Margaret—in order to mitigate the likely losses from future flooding.

History shows that human thinking and behaviour can evolve, and our speaker is eternally optimistic that we can get it right eventually. Accordingly, I recommend viewing Margaret's talk (available [here](#)).

It's humorous and uplifting with an accent on joy and hope. Copies of her book are available from [UQP](#). Many thanks, Margaret. Above all, keep your head above water!

A plaudit is also due to well-known property commentator Patrick Dixon (pictured) who offered a passionate view about the shortfalls of government policy regarding the river—after which he introduced our speaker. Patrick kindly made available copies of his superb book *River: 150 years of Brisbane River Housing* as lucky door prizes.



BY
BERNIE DRIESSEN

FEBRUARY MEETING

The allure of being aloft

THIS occupation combines style, the thrill of flying, the joy of travel—and the need to keep one's cool under all circumstances. No wonder the role of air hostess (these days flight attendant) continues to fascinate the public imagination.

For this reason, the Society's first speaker for 2021 is to be ex-stewardess Libbie Escolme-Schmidt OAM whose book *Glamour in the Skies*—with its multitude of stories—amounts to an engrossing history of the British Airways air hostess.

“The anecdotes are full of humour,” says Libbie, “and the experiences range from administering oxygen to passengers flying over the Andes, to serving French champagne on Concorde.”



Libbie was born in the Queensland outback then taught in PNG, before flying for three years with BOAC (later British Airways) after which she served at BOAC's Training School.

Longtime locals will remember that New Farm was always popular with aircrew, either in

hostels (e.g. TAA opened a 15-room hostel in Bowen Terrace for eight pilots and six hostesses in March 1953) or in flats.

The meeting is to take place on Saturday, 27 February, 2-4pm. There will be room for 100 attendees, and a slimmed-down afternoon tea will be available. All are welcome. Entry: \$5 (members \$4). The presentation will be videoed.

Copies of Libbie's book will be available. It is noteworthy that its Foreword is by novelist Frederick Forsyth, author of *Day of the Jackal*.

Live life as if it is rigged in your favour. — Rumi



Lighthouse Depot: *MV Cape Moreton* moored at the Commonwealth Government Lighthouse Service Depot wharf at the western end of Merthyr Rd in the early 1970s, with Maxwell St residences providing an architectural backdrop (photo: Peter Chapman). A recent aerial view (courtesy of Austin Adams) shows the same site which is now occupied by River Gallery Apartments.

NICELY NOSTALGIC

Jim MacDonald

Anchor recalls the lighthouse depot

A large anchor on the riverwalk near the end of Merthyr Road, is the only remaining clue that the site was once occupied by the Commonwealth Government Lighthouse Service Depot.

The installation, on the river below Maxwell St and just across from Evans Deakin's shipyard, dated from 1928 and included several storage sheds and an administrative facility. The site was entered from Merthyr Rd, just opposite the end of Griffith St. The river frontage had a wharf and mooring piles.

The purpose of the organisation was to provide service and supplies to the manned and unmanned lighthouses all the way up the Queensland Coast to Thursday Island and around into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Some of the exotic destinations included Cape Moreton, Yellow Patch, Double Island Point, Sandy Cape, Lady Elliot Island, Bustard Head, Cape Capricorn, North Reef, Pine Islet, Dent Island and Cape Cleveland.

I remember seeing a service ship *MV Cape Don* loading up and finally departing for weeks away visiting these far-flung outposts.

The young observer couldn't help but notice the derricks which did the hard work of loading and unloading. Across the deck was at least one 'DUKW', an amphibious vehicle which was capable of travelling through water after being unloaded then driving ashore and travelling overland to where the supplies were to be delivered and stored.

This slip provided backup and changeover of unmanned light ships such as the 'Break Sea Spit'. This 'dumb ship' (no engine) was anchored at the northern end of the Spit about 20 miles north of Fraser Island's northern tip.

By the 1970s, it was 'game over' for this service and site. Shipping came to be guided by unmanned radio beacons. The site is now occupied by the stylish River Gallery Apartments. Next time you're passing, pause to examine that large anchor. Meanwhile the old *MV Cape Don* was decommissioned in the 1990s and languishes at the Coal Loader Wharf at Balls Head in Sydney.



Anticipating the future: Many thanks to Col Dewar for this dramatic view of the Breakfast Creek Road premises of the sawmilling company Brown & Broad Ltd (est 1898). Clearly visible is the gas ring (now Gasworks Plaza), as well as the gasworks plant itself (the chimneyed building in the distant left). When these carters lined up with their timber deliveries, little could they have imagined that over a century later, the scene would be echoed by the line of hardware-laden vehicles coursing out of a building just 600 metres further along Breakfast Creek Road.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ross Garnett

We are off to a flying start in 2021...

WELCOME to the first newsletter of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society for 2021 that signals that we are about to start our activities.

2020, a year never to be forgotten, saw many of our regular activities cancelled. Nevertheless, we took up the challenge of keeping history 'alive' by filming the four meetings in the latter part of the year and they are still available for viewing at www.newfarmhistorical.org.au.

Feedback has been positive, and this kind of response has been echoed by many: "The videos are just excellent! A great adaptation in challenging times."

This has been a much-appreciated outcome in a period that saw a considerable slowing of many of the usual activities of the society. Gerard managed to still find plenty of interesting information for the newsletter each month and I am sure we all applaud that regular connection.

The good news is that, according to current covid-safe recommendations, we can welcome 100 people at our meetings in the Uniting Church Warner Hall—so we will not need to book a seat. The proviso is that since health recommendations can change very quickly, our plans are made with flexibility in mind.

Here, it is worth adding an historical note about January 2021 'when the masks came out in Brisbane'. The 72-hour covid lockdown (Fri 8 to Mon 11) meant that even taking exercise outside required a mask.

At our meetings in 2021, afternoon tea arrangements will be scaled down from the banquet that we came to enjoy, but there will still be the opportunity to socialise over a cuppa!

We have been working on engaging some interesting speakers on a variety of topics, so be sure to read the newsletter each month to check what is coming up. I know that many of you would agree with this kind of sentiment: "I come every month because there is such a variety of quality speakers to enjoy". The meetings will continue to be recorded and will be available on the website within a few days of each meeting so you never need to miss out.



To start the year, we go flying! I am sure you will have many memories of your flights over the years and the experiences that stick with you as a child or an adult. Many young women aspired to the glamour of air hostessing—and indeed many of them lived in New Farm.

Libbie Escolme-Schmidt will share an insider's view of that allure at the February meeting. This is sure to spark the interest of many, especially former cabin crew.

If you do not have the ability to join us via an online connection, you will be very welcome to attend in person at the normal venue. If you do decide to attend in person, there will of course be procedures to be followed, as you are discovering almost everywhere you go now.

Lastly, the pandemic has clearly stirred the interest of many in researching their forebears. A brief summary (page 4) illustrates the variety and extent of enquiries directed to the Society about people and places of the past in New Farm.

ENQUIRIES TO NFDHS

1. MM wrote regarding **Dr. T.J. Brooke-Kelly** who, in October 1915, purchased a residence called Holyrood on the NW corner of Merthyr Rd and Moray St. The request was for photos.
2. CW, a resident at **29 Sydney St**, sought details of the site, and perhaps a picture of the original dwelling.
3. CB was keen to know where in Harcourt St a house named **Ebury** was situated. It was the home of a great-grandfather named W. Hume who, in 1913, was listed as a blacksmith in Harcourt St. Later Mr Hume worked as a blacksmith in Ann St before eventually moving to Boondall.
4. A firm of solicitors asked if there was any information on record about **Kinvarra**, at 112 Moray St (corner with Langshaw St).
5. LD informed the society that she was preparing a book about the metal work business **Dyne & Co (Pty) Limited** which once was situated at 112 Oxlade Dr for many decades before closing in 1983.
6. Davina Jackson of Sydney requested images of local heritage buildings for possible inclusion in her forthcoming book on the **history of Australian architecture**.
7. EG was interested in the **three identical villas** on Merthyr Rd near the corner with Bowen Tce (see the picture above).
8. Society member KM asked if anything was known about the **sewerage tunnel** under the river from Norman Park to New Farm near Oxlade Dr dating from ca 1918.
9. JM was interested in **Michael and Bridget Lavelle**. He was a plasterer and contractor who built the substantial home Direenatra at 113 Browne St around 1888.
10. DH wrote on behalf of the body corporate of the apartment building at **102 Oxlade Dr** seeking historical information and photos about the building.
11. MM sought information about **Henry Malcolm McCallum** and wife Isabella who lived in Annie St in the early 1900s. MM also asked if any records show that the McCallum family may have been connected with the house on the corner of Bowen Tce and Bowen St.
12. JP, a cultural heritage consultant, sought information about **135 James St**, which was once conducted as St Clair's School.
13. J-AR wrote seeking information about **Stephen, the elder brother of James Clark**, 'the Pearl King' of Elystan Road. Both were sons of Captain Adam Clark. The writer's husband is a descendant of Stephen Clark.
14. LD from Adelaide, who had attended NFSS, planned to visit New Farm to seek details about her own family history. She also wished to donate several items of historical material connected with her Grade 7 teacher **Martin Haley** (also a poet) to the Fryer Library at UQ. Her trip was postponed because of the epidemic.
15. Ahead of the 2021 school year, **Kay Bradley**, Deputy Principal at NFSS, enquired about historical sites which could be included in the 'Amazing Race around New Farm', an initiative involving staff in teams finding clues against the clock.
16. Discussion with JS who had lived at **46 Browne St** for 36 years. He was an opera singer and actor then taught stagecraft to opera singers at the Conservatorium of Music. His wife had been a master wigmaker at Opera Qld.

If you can help with any of these queries, please email: info@newfarmhistorical.org.au.



THREE SNIPPETS

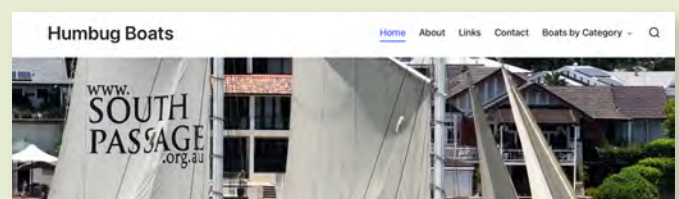
Were **Catalina flying boats** connected with the river at New Farm, asked RM (NFDHS Newsletter, Sept 2020, p. 4)? There's still no definitive answer but Society member Margaret Kent offers this: "We came from Caboolture to Brisbane for the first Ekka after the war (1946). It was my first trip to Brisbane, and my mother took my sister and brother for a joyride in a Catalina, while I stayed with an aunt in Newmarket.

"They reported being violently ill—from the time they took off until when they touched down! Believe me, I would have preferred to go on the flight and even be violently sick rather than to have missed out..."

Congratulations to NFDHS member Lesley Syngé who, in November 2020, had the good fortune to win the Arts Central Qld **Lorna McDonald essay prize** (for the

second time) for her study of an immigrant from Italy named Fortunato who arrived at Broken Hill in 1913 then moved to Mount Morgan and Rockhampton. The essay may be viewed at: tinyurl.com/y55s2j9x.

Those interested in boats, particularly on the **Humbug Reach** of the river, will appreciate the great initiative by Oxlade Dr resident Ken Morris who has a dress circle riverine view. His new website: www.humbugboats.com.au will keep you apprised of all sorts of marine activity and includes everything from kayaks to ketches.





Photos: A. Adams, G. Benjamin

Design and Layout: G. Benjamin



MANY THANKS TO
Grace Grace MP
Member for McConnel (07) 3145 9100
for photocopying the newsletter

New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc • The Office is located at the front of the Ron Muir Meeting Room, New Farm Library, right behind the green bench @ 135 Sydney Street. • *Office Open Hours:* Every Thursday 2-4pm
Postal Address: PO Box 1141 NEW FARM 4005 • **Email:** info@newfarmhistorical.org.au

President: Ross Garnett • 0409 498 402 • drgarn@bigpond.net.au
Vice President: Malcolm Godfrey
Secretary: Santina Musumeci
Treasurer: Denise Buckby

Committee: Austin Adams, Terry Beer, and Ben Wieland
Newsletter Editor: Gerard Benjamin
• ggerardb@bigpond.net.au

Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray. — Rumi

V | news

archives



The well-dressed legend of Coronet Court

Long before today's abundance of cyclists and scooterists, Cecily Jenkin cut quite a figure around New Farm on her red three-wheeler.

With a large rear shopping basket, she could pick up items with ease at Merthyr Village and pedal all around the suburb. Indeed, she was still riding the trusty trike in her late 90s.

Cecily's home was Flat 2 at Coronet Court at 995 Brunswick St. She and her husband Clem and their two children had moved there in the late 60s from Spring Hill, where they had kept a boarding house.

At Coronet, the Jenkins helped around the building with the rents, the banking and managing maintenance. When Clem died, these tasks were taken over by Cecily. Before long, the then landlady of Coronet Gloria O'Connor (aunt

of one of the current owners, Tamsin O'Connor) came to depend increasingly on Cecily's efficiency.

While all of this was going on, Cecily was running the Tropical Inn Tea Lounge, upstairs at 648 Ann St in the Valley. It was a nicely appointed haven relished by shoppers at the nearby emporia of McWhirters and T.C. Beirne.

Cecily offered Devonshire Teas, and there was also 'free entertainment', which was Valley code for fortune telling. A favourite psychic was Claude, who divined destinies by consulting a deck of playing cards.

Each morning after Cecily picked up her standing order for scones and cakes from the Village Cake Shop at 81 Merthyr Rd, she caught the bus to the Valley, then climbed the stairs to her Tea Lounge which was at the rear of the first floor.

Cecily's establishment was not the only occupant of the building, which was a few doors towards the city from the Royal George Hotel: a ground floor nightclub came alive at night and, in the front room upstairs, a private gambling den.

When she arrived in the mornings, Cecily was not the type to be intimidated either by whatever remained of the previous night's goings-on or by any shady types

she may have encountered.

Always smartly attired, you could guess that she had once done some modelling from the way she comported herself. No wonder she loved participating in 'Fashions on the Field' at Eagle Farm and Doomben. Once, as a local winner, she was flown to the Melbourne Cup.

"Mrs Jenkin had lots of big wins in the fashion stakes, often out-classing a much younger and wealthier field," said Tamsin O'Connor.

"Her collection of hats must have been one of the finest in Brisbane. She trimmed many of them herself. She was the best op-shopper I have ever known."

When Cecily died in 2019, aged 97, recollections about her abounded. Her daughter remembered the sentimental trip to Sydney to visit the places of Cecily's childhood.

Cecily's perception as a seven-year-old that the family lived near The Rocks close to the Harbour was confirmed.

She found the house, and, despite her daughter's hesitation, Cecily walked through the gate and knocked on the door. Her daughter needn't have worried.

The owner welcomed her mother's request to wander through the house. Sure enough, at an upper window,



(Left) Even on her tricycle, Mrs Jenkin was a picture of deportment. (Right) Mrs Jenkin had lots of big wins in the fashion stakes.

Cecily found the view that she'd always remembered: a perfect vista of the harbour – though in her day, the pylons for the new bridge were still under construction.

In the foyer of Coronet Court a collection of commemorative pictures has been arranged. Outside her old flat is to be placed a photograph of Cecily, ensuring that her contribution to the building and its community is not just remembered, but cherished.



MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN from
MY VILLAGE NEWS
JANUARY 2021