



# NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

[www.newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au)  

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

Vol. XXVII, No. 2



**We're back!** At the society's inaugural meeting for 2021, attendees were entertained by Stewart Free on the keyboard, and in addition to our guest speaker, appreciated addresses by Denise Buckby (100 years of Rotary) and Desley Garnett (New Farm State School's invitation for anecdotes), followed by afternoon tea.

## FEBRUARY MEETING

### The Accidental Stewardess

**N**INETY-THREE lucky passengers went on an adventurous flight with Libbie Escolme-Schmidt OAM at our meeting on Saturday 27 February. Libbie captured our imagination with her real-life stories as a stewardess with BOAC.

It is difficult to pick a favourite tale but the idea of children returning to boarding school in England from abroad with their pets, sticks in my mind. Today, we cannot even imagine being on a flight with any animal but Libbie dealt with many animal incidents. Most appealing was the plight of a boy losing his mouse, yes, a mouse—and that mouse was discovered burrowed in a plate of mashed potato.

Libbie said that she found the mouse escapees difficult to deal with, but she felt fine attending to hamsters... Just imagine the panic that would ensue on a flight these days.

Oh! Then there is the story of the Snake Dancer's missing snake! Like to know more? These stories are in Libbie's book, *Glamour in the Skies*.

Of course, there was glamour in the skies as Libbie's photos from her flying days revealed. As pictured above, deportment training was essential (that's Libbie on the left), plus the placement of dishes on the tray had to become second nature.

Uniform styles developed from 'military' to

'elegance' over time. Some bright spark even designed a lightweight 'paper dress' uniform.

What a nice thought it would be to curl up with Libbie's book and laugh along with her through all her wonderful memories,

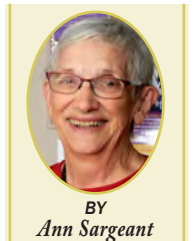
even the ones that rebounded on her—such as the episode when the pilot gave her binoculars so that she could view the Southern Cross constellation because it was her flight home to Australia. Well, pranks still exist today, thank heavens, but only later did she realise that she had two 'black eyes' because they had put boot polish on the binocular rims.

Libbie took all this in her stride and her abilities were recognised since she became a trainer for recruit attendants.

So much has changed in the workplace and the aviation world and Libbie's keen observations about the people and the situations that she experienced in the air offer much food for thought.

Libbie's humour and insights brought her flying days alive for us, and when we eventually fly again, we are likely to be on the lookout for bizarre events that might offer a chuckle or two.

Perhaps we might experience a customs breach such as the story about the myna bird and its boiled egg? No, probably not. Maybe we might witness something like camels circling a plane followed by the sacrificing of a sheep for good fortune? No, probably not. Thank you, Libbie. You are such a good storyteller and it's obvious that this reviewer loved your address.



BY  
Ann Sargeant



*Flying may not be all plain sailing, but the fun of it is worth the price... — Amelia Earhart*

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Ross Garnett

**The buzz of near capacity...**

**I**T was a near capacity hall for the February meeting and it felt good to be back as the New Farm Historical Society community. There was a buzz of conversation as we enjoyed afternoon tea together after such an interesting meeting.

The video recording of the meeting will not be available on the website, but if you were not able to be present on the day, you can come to the Society Office at the Ron Muir Room on a Thursday afternoon 2-4pm. Please contact me to make an arrangement to see it.

Have you ever wondered what records the Historical Society holds in the archives? You are welcome to come to the Office on a Thursday afternoon to read some of the interesting historical information. Ross and Stuart are there each Thursday.

Do you have some information that you can make available to others by donating it to our archives? Sometimes we hear that family members do not appreciate all that history that you have stored and

say, "When you are gone, we will put it in the tip." Don't let that happen to your valuable newspaper clips, old photos, stories, etc! Please donate the items to our archives or to the State Library of Queensland, or at least put a note with them for when your family is sorting through your treasured possessions.



Did you know that the Society has a Facebook page? A recent contributor, 'Jason', wrote, "Just wanted to share some pics. My grandfather gave me this book about 30 years ago. It's about the planning, the cost and the why behind the Story Bridge. It was very special to my grandfather and it's like yesterday he showed it to me..."

Facebook is a great tool for sharing history! A word of thanks here to Society member Ron Altmann for the wonderful contributions he makes from his FB site ([New Farm History](#)) to ours ([New Farm & Districts Historical Society](#)). DO take the time to check both out. DO you have something special to share?

Lastly, sincere thanks to Lorraine Nothling, an attendee at our February meeting (and former TAA hostess), who helped with photography at short notice.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR****Open House: SUN 21 MARCH**

Dear Editor,

**W**E are about to start renovating our home Khandallah (pictured) at **463 Bowen Terrace** (cnr Moreton St) after its long life as converted units.

The house started as a residence for William Sutton, his wife Emmeline (née Fowles), and their two daughters, Alma and Roma. It was designed by TR Hall. It was converted to flats/units in the late 1930s (we think). We plan to bring it back to being a family residence for our two daughters, preserving as much of the house upstairs as possible.



We are wondering if members of the historical society would like to visit the house before the remediation process starts.

We would be happy to make it 'open house' on **Sunday, 21st March,**

**10-11am**, welcoming anyone who wished to see through the home. Needless to say, it's a very old house with some uneven levels and stairs, hence care would need to be taken by visitors.

We look forward to meeting whoever wishes to have a closer look at Khandallah on 21st March.

— Regards, Liz and Paul

**A HOUSE LONG GONE**

On the site of the Glenfalloch high-rise units at 172 Oxlade Dr. (built 1962), was once this home on the corner with Sydney St. It was owned by the Ward family in the 1940s. Alice Ward was a keen photographer and her note on the reverse of this photo reads: "This is the back of our house; the back faces the street, and the front, the river." More of her photos recording wartime river activity are kept at the State Library of Qld, including the photo of the Canberra (see p. 4). – SLQ 27539-0001-0005.

**ENQUIRIES TO NFDHS**

1. PD, a PhD candidate in architecture at UQ, sought information about **Nos. 64 and 76 Commercial Rd, Teneriffe**, as part of a comparative study of modern buildings from the mid-1930s to mid/late-1950s in Brisbane.
2. JB requested to be put in contact with last month's enquirer J-AR, regarding **Stephen, the elder brother of James Clark**, 'the Pearl King' of Elystan Road. "I am distantly related to James, and provided quite a few photos from my grandfather... for the 2014 book *The Pearl King*," she wrote.
3. Margaret Davidson, Admin/Enrolment Officer at **New Farm State School**, is working on the history of New Farm School, especially post-1976. Any information/anecdotes would be welcome.
4. NN requested any image of the old **State School for Spastic children in Oxlade Dr**, since he worked at the school in 1981.



**50s architecture:** Former James Hardie showrooms at 64 Commercial Rd, Newstead c1954/55.

5. BB, whose great-grandfather George Brown founded the hardware company **Brown and Broad**, responded to the photo in the February NFDHS Newsletter (p 3). He was interested in whether the supplier of the photo had any more photos or information.
6. Justin Barrett, whose interiors business is opening at **730 Brunswick St**, requested old images of Brunswick St near Annie St.
7. FdL sought information about the history of **63 Chester St, Teneriffe**,

as well as the adjoining property **260 Kent St** (thought to have once been the tennis court for 63 Chester St).

8. BB, whose 3g-grandfather **Stephen Hammill** (d. 1899) lived at 118 Harcourt St, requested photos and information. BB thought that he may have been connected with a Mr Jones regarding quarrying in Jane St (later Robertson St), Fortitude Valley. Thomas Jones wed Stephen's sister Catherine.
9. SL sought any historical details and photos of the Queenslander (ca 1890) at **203 Kent St**.
10. Inquiry from LH (UK) regarding his grandfather **Francis (Frank) l'on Bennett** who died at Merthyr House, Moray St, in 1947. Frank had a daughter Patricia. LH asked whether the Society's book *Homes With History on the New Farm Peninsula* offered more information about Merthyr.

If you can help with any of these queries, please email: [info@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@newfarmhistorical.org.au).

**MARCH MEETING**

**The birth of Anzac Day**

At our March meeting, historian, presenter and teacher, Mark Cryle (pictured), will explore the origins of Anzac Day. He speaks with authority since it was the subject of his PhD, plus in 2016 he was awarded a Q Anzac 100 Fellowship from the State Library of Queensland.

All would agree that Anzac Day is the country's most significant national day and that it is capable of generating powerful emotional responses from Australians.

"On the other hand," says Mark, "when the commemoration took shape during the traumatic years of WWI, it was an event which generated mixed feelings, especially as the horror of war



dragged on."

Since Mark is also a musician and songwriter, his presentation promises to feature a tune or two...

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



**Down to business:** George Cowin and Lyn Dyne compare respective ancestral notes at the February meeting. Each has been connected with enduring New Farm businesses: Cowin's Transport of Villers St, and Dyne's metal works in Oxlade Drive. Lyn is assembling a history of Dyne & Co of which her late husband Ken was the last managing director.

**VALE DONAL AND BEV**

OUR condolences go to Una, the widow of Donal O'Sullivan, who died in January. We also offer condolences to the family of Beverley 'Tootsie' Hobbs (Bowen), once of Terrace St, who passed away in February.

## RIVERINE RECOLLECTION

## Sights and sounds of Humbug...

My favourites were the naval craft from all across the world. The sailors would line the decks, standing at attention in full dress uniforms as the ships sailed up the river.

There were British and American submarines, patrol boats (some built locally), a French corvette, destroyers or frigates with big gun turrets, and once even an incredibly noisy military hovercraft.

Tugs and excursion ferries were in abundance. I thought the ferry, *Mirana*, which sailed to Dunwich, was much better than the *Miramar*, chosen by my sister Viv, which took day trippers to Redcliffe. At night, the singing and music on these boats could be heard long before they passed by our house.

The tugs *Forceful* and *Carlock* were identical except for the life rings stored externally behind the bridge of the *Forceful*. The steam tugs billowed black smoke, much to the annoyance of my mother on washing day. New Farm was a dirty suburb then.

Some of the strangest looking vessels were the dredges. The older ones had conveyor belts of buckets set from the bows to high above the deck near the bridge. Later, the vacuum dredges which replaced them looked very bland with virtually no superstructure apart from the bridge.

I used to get excited when the whaling mothership came in for its annual refit accompanied by the whale chasers. As a nine-year-old, I was fascinated by the harpoon guns on the bows of the chasers. In those days, we used to holiday at Point Lookout and we always saw lots of whales breaching. It never occurred to me as a child that the small whale chasers would almost exterminate the whale population off Tangalooma.

For some reason, my family never walked around Merthyr Park to watch the launching of ships at Evans Deakin at Kangaroo Point. However, the ships, when commissioned, were exciting to watch as they sailed by. Being empty, they sat high in the water partially exposing their propellers which thrashed the water as the tugs pulled them downstream. One of the last constructions of the shipyard was a floating oil rig which had to be dragged downstream by three or four tugs.

Light-house tenders were mentioned in a recent NFDHS newsletter. We saw the early versions, namely *John Oxley* and later *Matthew Flinders*. As I remember, the *John Oxley* was steam-powered and always appeared to me as having a permanent list to port. Steam-powered ships were very quiet, while their diesel-powered replacements seemed to rumble and rattle.

Barges carrying coal for the New Farm power house or gravel from river dredging were common. The Riverside

coal barges were large imposing craft and usually had a dedicated tug to push them. Quite small boats would push the gravel barges and each had its own peculiar engine sound. One in particular had two huge silencers built on its upper deck yet it was the loudest of them all.

Among the oddities was *Cementco* which brought in coral from Moreton Bay for making cement. It was one of the largest craft to regularly ply the river. While its engines were almost silent, they made a really low frequency vibration that rattled the crystal in mum's china cabinet. *Cementco* was superseded by *Darra*, a larger ship which had its engines positioned on the stern like gigantic outboard motors.

My Saturday sleep-ins were often interrupted by the rowing shells from the Church of England Grammar School with a cox bawling, "stroke, stroke," through his megaphone. Occasionally, a regatta was held on the Humbug Reach.

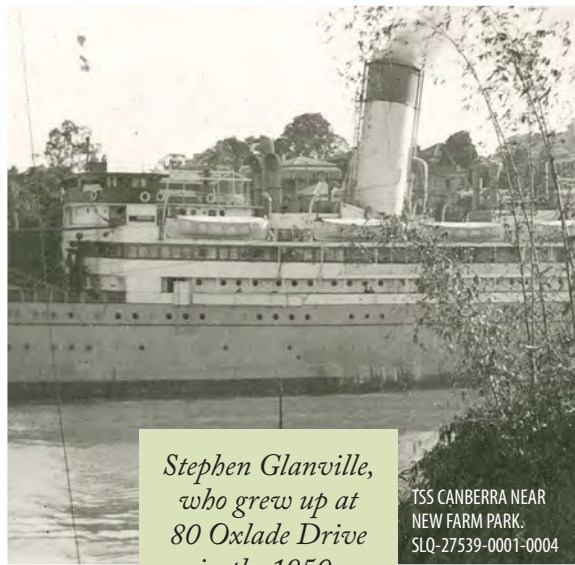
Another 'regular' appeared each Christmas Eve when Santa sailed up the river waving at all the girls and boys who were still awake. The promotional event was sponsored by a local radio station but we felt our Christmas was not complete without it.

The water police used to be stationed under the Story Bridge where the Howard Smith Wharf complex is today. A macabre spectacle would sometimes play out when the police had to undertake search and rescue. It was not uncommon for people to commit suicide or drown in the river while swimming or fishing. When this happened, the police launch was sent

out to retrieve the body. We could always tell when they were successful as the launch would return to base towing a dinghy with a very, very long bow rope. Presumably, the body was in the dinghy and the police officers kept it as far away from their boat as possible.

As a final anecdote, I must mention the collision of a Golden Mile Ferry and a gravel barge. The Golden Mile ferries were the forerunners of the City Cat services and sailed from Mowbray Park and Sydney Street into the city. They sailed at a leisurely pace just like the recent City Hoppers.

One evening, as the captain of a Golden Mile ferry cruised along the Humbug Reach, he began counting the day's takings. He must have been distracted for some time but as there were usually few craft on the river at this hour it normally would not matter. Suddenly, the neighbourhood was alerted by frantic blasts of a boat's hooter followed by a loud bang as the ferry collided with a gravel barge. Fortunately, both boats were strongly built and while they were damaged, neither sank.



*Stephen Glanville, who grew up at 80 Oxlade Drive in the 1950s and 60s, loved watching marine craft of all shapes and sizes on the Humbug Reach. He was prompted to contribute these recollections after reading in the last newsletter (p. 4) about Ken Morris's website.*

TSS CANBERRA NEAR  
NEW FARM PARK.  
SLQ-27539-0001-0004



For more information about Libbie's book, please visit: [www.libbieescolmeschmidt.com](http://www.libbieescolmeschmidt.com)

**Photos:** Ron Altmann, Gerard Benjamin, Lorraine Nothing

**Design and Layout:** G. Benjamin



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

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*Reading brings us unknown friends... — Honore de Balzac*

V | lifestyle

archives



*Celebrity comings and goings at Holyrood on the Moray-Merthyr corner*

If diners at the Moray Cafe could turn the clock back 110 years, they would be fascinated by the showbiz comings and goings at the house once occupying that spot.

Among the visitors were Miss Ethel Buckley (“Australia’s premier comedienne”), who, it was said in 1913, “now travels with quite a staff... including her maid, her chauffeur, the pony she rides in The Cowboy and the Squaw, the horse she uses in Under Two Flags, two grooms, a king parrot, and a pet canary.”

This star of the stage was a good friend of the Scottish home-owning couple, actress Jane Miller and her up-and-coming theatre manager husband Alexander, who preferred the cachet of being known as A. Marshall Miller.

Their home, named Holyrood

to evoke the palace in Edinburgh, was built in 1911. The architect was T.R. Hall whose firm later designed the Brisbane City Hall.

The house commanded the Moray-Merthyr corner and included all the mod-cons, including two dressing rooms, large billiard room and generous servant’s room. The garage, tennis court and garden took up the rest of the half-acre.

Mr Miller was president of the Kinellan Cricket Club and his wife was a leading spirit in the Brisbane Red Cross Society.

At a Children’s Ball in the Exhibition Hall before the Governor’s wife, Mrs Miller (in “honey coloured satin, with richly headed net overdress, relieved with touches of black”) watched while their daughter won the girl’s prize strikingly costumed as an Indian girl.

When A. Marshall Miller accepted an interstate promotion in 1915, Holyrood House went on the market as the “most complete and modern residence in New Farm”. The new owner was the popular Dr Thomas Brooke-Kelly, about whom the newspaper was apt to wax lyrical: “Debonair, genial, clever, fashionable... a professional darling of this city’s haute monde.”

Meanwhile, in 1917, in Sydney, the Millers very publicly went their separate ways. The actress was under close scrutiny by the court



LEFT: Holyrood House, pictured in 1913, commanded the Moray St-Merthyr Rd corner (now the Moray Cafe). MIDDLE: Marshall Miller pictured in 1923 when he began working with Fox Film Corporation. RIGHT: Miss Ethel Buckley, Australia’s leading comedienne. ca. 1920.

reporters: “Mrs Miller was... a good style of woman, and as well-preserved as many another woman 10 years younger (she was 39)... she stepped into the witness-box beneath a mammoth red straw hat.”

Mr A. Marshall Miller was back in Brisbane in 1922 as manager of the Cremorne Theatre (owned by John McCallum, whose son John married fellow actor Googie Withers). Miller became one of the most experienced men in the Australian film business and later worked for Fox Film Corporation. Looking back, who but a film man would name a house sounding so like “Hollywood”?

In 1919, Holyrood became “Birr” after the town in Ireland from which the new owners – the Ocliffe family, noted Western pastoralists – originated.

Fast forward to 1951 when the

home’s then owner, Dr Henry Dolman, put the property on the market. The auction of its contents attracted hundreds eager to bid for antiques, china, and period furniture in walnut, mahogany, and cedar.

The new owners, having paid £7500 (ca. \$330,000 today), were the Sesta family who operated the famous Christie’s Cafe in Queen St.

Come 1960, the old home made way for an innovation in this part of New Farm: shops, combined with flats and office space. On the very corner was the Carramar Coffee Lounge, a great meeting place with its fountain on the footpath. Most Italians in Brisbane knew the spot, because upstairs was the Italian Consulate — but that’s another story.

MONTHLY ARCHIVES COLUMN from  
MY VILLAGE NEWS  
MARCH 2021

*“Ever since I moved to New Farm in 2006, I have been looking for a large home, with steps down the front angled at the corner of the block. In the 1940s as a young child I visited it with my father who had worked out west a lot as a wool classer. What a great surprise when I read My Village News and discovered the article about that home... Thank you, MD.”*