



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

JULY 2021

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JUNE MEETING

Sewers of Brisbane

CESSPITS, Dummies but mainly Sewers were the topics of last month's talk by Col Hester from Urban Utilities, enjoyed by around 80 attendees.

Much of Col's comprehensive talk on the history of how Brisbane was sewered centred on the associated politics and economics. As we well know, when politics and economics meet over matters of infrastructure, there will be tears, and tears were shed aplenty when it came to replacing Brisbane's disease-inflicting cesspits and dunnies with sewers.

London's sewers were built from 1858 to 1870 with the main driving force being the disease caused by water supplies contaminated by sewage. So it was with Brisbane where the many local government bodies, through Brisbane Drainage and Sanitation Conferences of 1879, attempted unsuccessfully to develop solutions. It was not until the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage act of 1909 that progress began, leading to Gordon Thom's Sewerage plan of 1911.

Who would pay for the works and would funds be sought before the work began or only



when completed? Could there be savings by designing the system so that gravity did most of the work in moving sewage within the pipes thus avoiding expensive pumping? What were the options? Those were the political and economic issues to be dealt with and to be agreed upon across the many jurisdictions involved.



BY Austin Adams

A further issue regarded where the sewage would end up. Would it go to an ocean outfall and what treatment would be involved? It wasn't until 1914 that work eventually began. Then there were the issues of conflicts between the sewerage contractors and sewerage works employees, conflicts exacerbated by the labour shortages caused by the war.

In 1914 the Activated Sludge method of treating sewage was published with further developments being incorporated into Brisbane's treatment plant at Luggage Point, Pinkenba.

It wasn't until 1925 that the final system for Brisbane was operational but even then there were problems, not the least of which was the collapse of a sewer in Pinkenba in 1940.

In short, there were years of spadework before it could be said that Clem Jones changed Brisbane into a sewered city. Thanks, Col! [View the meeting online here.](#)



Progress: Col Hester: "What allows you to have a nice quality of life and not drop dead before you are one (reference to the terrible child mortality rate in early Brisbane town), is the fact of all these red lines here... and not just here. In Brisbane, there are 9,000 km of water and sewer mains..."

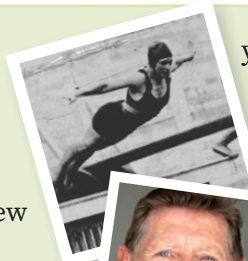
JULY MEETING

Swim, swim, swim, in Briz...

BRISBANE'S love affair with swimming from early colonial days to the present will be in focus at the July meeting of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society.

The speaker is to be Steve Capelin, a writer who is a member of the West End Making History Group. A book called *A Short History of Swimming in Brisbane*, a proposed collaboration between Steve and Matthew Wengert, is in the pipeline.

"The river was the site of early bathing, though mixed bathing and the irreverent behaviour of



young men was frowned upon," says Steve. "From that moment onwards and for the following 180 years, Brisbane has sought to create ever more sophisticated facilities."

Sure to be mentioned are the Mowbray Park baths (across from Oxlade Dr) and the Valley Baths where many New Farm children learned to swim.

The meeting is to take place at the Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm, on Saturday, 24 July, beginning at 2.30pm, and will be videoed. Arrive early to be sure of a seat. Afternoon tea will follow. All are welcome. \$5 (members \$4).

Bazalgette created a sewer system sized for London's needs of the 1870s — then doubled it to anticipate the future...

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ross Garnett

Staying flexible amid fluid times

WE were fortunate to hold our June meeting just a few days before we were locked down in Brisbane and before further restrictions were reinstated. Currently we are back from 100 allowed in the hall to just 50. It made me realise what a fluid state we are in with respect to the effect of the covid-19 pandemic. We need to be flexible enough to be able to respond to changes within a day.

To be able to comply with the covid-safe regulations as they exist at the time of each meeting, you will understand that when we meet the maximum allowable capacity of the hall, we may have to ask others who arrive for the meeting to view the recorded vimeo after the meeting instead of being present in person.

We have now acquired a Qld Government check-in QR code that will be used at all public meetings in future. We will still do our own check-in process so that we have a record of attendances, but please ensure that you have the Qld Government QR code reader app on your phone. If you do not have a smart phone, we will be able to check you in manually.



Our Annual General Meeting will be held at the August public meeting. Nominations forms for members of the committee will be available at the July meeting at the membership desk. I encourage you to consider nominating yourself or a fellow member for a specific committee position (President, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer) or as a general committee member. Nomination forms need to be in the hands of the secretary by 2 August to allow time for preparation for the AGM on 28 August.

I trust you found the last meeting regarding the sewerage of Brisbane interesting. Col was certainly passionate about a subject which most of us take for granted as part of life in Australia.

Another thing we take for granted in Brisbane is being able to cool down in a healthy and well-maintained pool. This was not always the case, and our coming speaker, Steve Capelin, has researched swimming in Brisbane from the early days of settlement up to the modern provision of pools. It should be interesting to see photos of people swimming on the banks of the Brisbane River! What memories do you have of swimming as a child?

FROM THE ARCHIVES**Very first newsletter from NFDHS**

THIS rare copy of the very first newsletter of the fledging society is dated November 1994 and uses as its motif the Summerhouse Restaurant which once stood in New Farm Park adjacent to the Merthyr Croquet Club but burnt down in 2000.

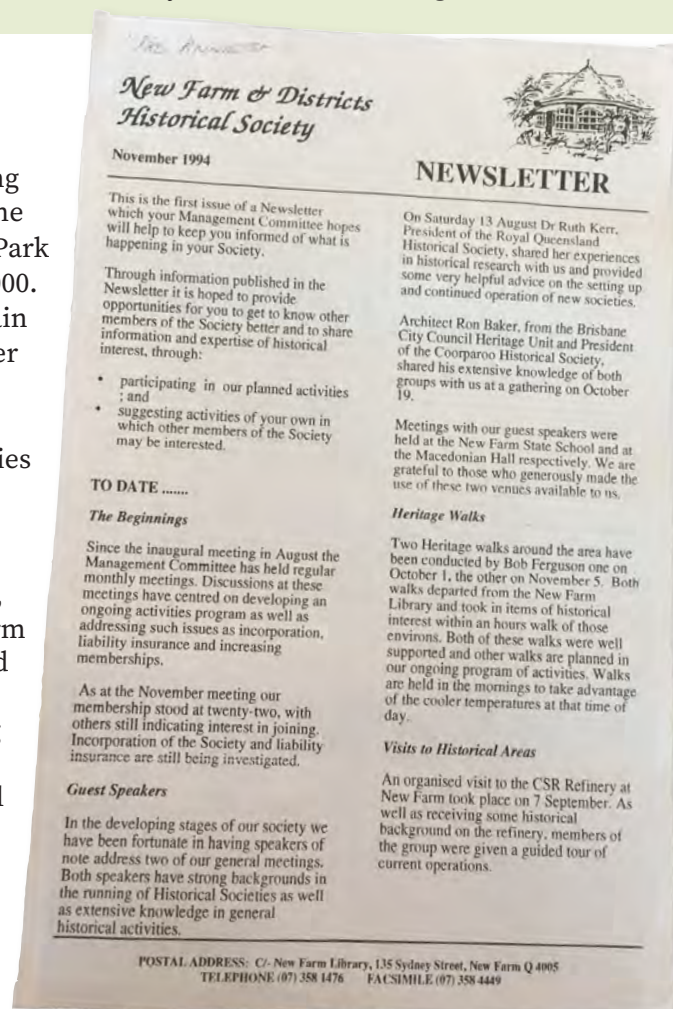
Back in 1994, the office bearers included Virginia Balmain (Vice-President) who is a current committee member. Other officeholders from 27 years ago included: Maureen Baillie (President), Rachel Cornock (Secretary), Bob Ferguson (Treasurer), Patricia Whyte (Memberships) and Penny Davies (Committee).

One item explained that Society member (and former local alderman), Beattie Dawson, was acting as go-between for former US sailor, Joe Sturak, who had been based at New Farm during World War II. Joe wanted to contact Mavis Booth of New Farm and Eileen Scott of Spring Hill, girls he knew in 1944.

A getting-to-know-you social was planned for Thursday, 8 December 1994, at the New Farm Bowls Club. The cost for food for the night was \$5.00, and the landline to ring had seven digits not eight.

WALKING TOUR

MORAY STREET has a wealth of historical sights to be seen on foot. Join the walking tour. Time: **Saturday 7 August, 9-11am**. Cost: \$22 (\$20 members). At the July meeting, book at the Membership Table, or email: info@newfarmhistorical.org.au.



ENQUIRIES TO NFDHS

KDS – We recently arrived in Brisbane and are very lucky to be living on beautiful Beeston St in Teneriffe. We learned that there is a Beeston Castle in Cheshire, and we wondered whether a native of Cheshire arrived in Brisbane and named the street after his or her homeland.

NFDHS – The street was named after Joseph Beeston (1848-1923) who had been company secretary at the Dath, Henderson, Bartholomew sawmills. The original mill was adjacent to Commercial Rd beside the current Teneriffe Ferry. By 1888, this mill, covering two allotments, had expanded to one covering 14 allotments with a 700 foot river frontage and its own wharf and shipping fleet.

When Joseph Beeston died in 1923 at Corinda, obituaries spoke of his broad experience in the timber industry and that "his predominant characteristics of integrity and uprightness, had endeared him in a circle where he would be greatly missed."

As coincidence would have it, he was born (son of a carpenter) in Stockport in Cheshire, around 34 miles from Beeston Castle. At the age of 12, he was a hooker (i.e. used hooks) in a printing works. When he was 17 he emigrated, and married in Brisbane a decade later.

If you can offer anything further about Joseph Beeston, please email: info@newfarmhistorical.org.au.

PM – Are the Adsett shoe repairers connected with the Adsett family described in your May 2021 newsletter?

Noel Adsett – J.Y. Adsett (Jim) owned a well-known chain of shoe repair workshops in Brisbane suburbs in the 1950s until about the end of the century. He served in the AIF during World War II.

A descendant of Aaron Adsett, James Young Adsett was born in Nambour in 1920 and died in Brisbane in 2010. His father (Sgt Joe Adsett) was a WWI veteran. Jim's eldest son was the founding partner of the architectural firm Thompson Adsett Architects with headquarters in Brisbane and branches throughout Australia and overseas.

ROBERTS FAMILY, MERTHYR RD



Long Gone: Ranza ca 1899 was the home of Presbyterian minister Rev. Walter Roberts and family. The house faced Merthyr Rd and was on the corner with Abbott St, a site today occupied by a 1970s apartment block (15A Abbott St) named Merthyr Castle.

Garb from Yesteryear: Rev. Roberts is pictured with his two daughters: Maggie (1) and Chris (4), along with Maggie's future sisters-in-law: Althea (2) and Adeline Fewings (3). At centre is 'Nurse Henry', likely to be 'Nurse E. Henry' who was appointed matron of Longreach Hospital in 1910. Seated at front is 'Nurse Burns'. This could be Martha Burns, who, after nursing at the Brisbane Hospital, became Queensland's first female dentist, served in WWI, and headed an emergency committee in 1919 to deal with New Farm cases of the Spanish Flu. These remarkable photos come courtesy of Lester Harding, grandson of Adeline Fewings, later Harding.



BOOK REVIEW

Editor's book a joy to read...

At our June meeting, Gerard Benjamin made a brief announcement to say that his latest book *William & Leonora Monk*, a family history, has been named 2021 winner of the Family History Book Award made annually by the Queensland Family History Society.

William and Leonora were Gerard's great-great-grandparents who migrated from England in 1857. Gerard's book describes their life and times in Queensland and then follows their descendants as they made their mark in regional Queensland over the next century and more.

The author was blessed to have a wealth of letters and papers written by his ancestors and he has supplemented this with meticulous research—which means that Gerard not only gives personal details of his ancestors but places them in the context of the times and brings it all alive. The judges said that he won the award because the book "flowed", and this is so true and it is a joy to read. – *Stuart Wallace*



IN THE VIEWFINDER

Taking happy society snaps...

LORRAINE always regarded the social and fashion photographer for the *New York Times*, the late Bill Cunningham, as a luminary in the photography firmament — as he sped around the city on his Schwinn bicycle balancing a Nikon and a coffee, while keeping appointments to report on fashion trends and high-society charity soirees.

Translating this to Brisbane means for Lorraine dashing directly from an air hostess reunion in the city, to a NFDHS meeting at New Farm, hoping like anything that the memory on the phone wasn't maxed out ahead of another batch of photographs.

Her volunteering with the Society began at the February 2021 meeting when she had much in common with the guest speaker, Libbie Escolme-Schmidt OAM.

Both are members of the Qantas Flight Hostess Club which is open to those who were employed as air hostesses with international airlines.

Lorraine commenced her airline career with TAA (1969-1972) before moving across the Tasman to fly with Air New Zealand during 1972 to 1977.

During her 12 years with the airlines, she took postings in Melbourne, Lae in Papua New Guinea, and then Sydney. In 1981 as sales manager of Air Queensland Travel World in Ann St, she joined the crew of the 1981 Gooney Bird Tours — which meant 14 days at a time on a DC3 in Outback Queensland, the Northern Territory and Gulf Country, so as to manage ground operations.

"My camera was always at hand. When on board, I loved snapping away, including at the magnificent cloud formations. Flying low over Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) on the DC3 enabled me to take spectacular photos of the heart of this beautiful land," she said.

Lorraine's extensive photographic collection means that she has been able to contribute lots of memories, via these images, to several Airline Facebook pages.



Coming onboard as photographer at our monthly meetings is Lorraine Nothling, a former air hostess. Here she tells us a little more about herself, including of her earlier New Farm connection.



"I even have photographs of New Farm from the early 1970s, when I would visit a TAA friend who lived at Coronet Court in Brunswick Street.

"There are snaps taken at two TAA/Ansett PNG Reunions held at the Riverside Functions venue on Oxlade Drive, and a fun reunion picnic way back in the 1980s held in New Farm Park," she said.

When she returned to Brisbane in late 1977 hoping to join Qantas, instead Lorraine found herself across the table from the state manager of

the Miss Australia Quest, which meant working for a period at the Cerebral Palsy League in Oxlade Dr.

"Our fundraising team would often meet for a working lunch in New Farm Park."

Years later, she returned to the fundraising industry working on the Queensland Woman of the Year Quest. As quest manager Lorraine and her team recruited and managed 200 fundraisers whose efforts brought in

\$800,000 for MS.

Her fundraising industry positions have meant working for a great variety of organisations and institutions, such as the then Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, and the Sydney Adventist Hospital where she received her largest major gift ever: \$1.25M.

Later, as fundraising manager of RSL Care for six years, Lorraine travelled extensively visiting retirement villages in Queensland and NSW. "I met with hundreds of ex-servicemen and women. I heard the most extraordinary stories of their experiences in war zones," she said.

What does Lorraine make of volunteering her time to take photos at society meetings? "It's fun," she says. "The guest speakers are interesting and I love the chatter at afternoon tea. I enjoy capturing creative angles when happily obliging members smile into my camera each month."

For Lorraine, it may be a pale reflection of New Yorker Bill Cunningham's frenetic activity, but she might enjoy knowing that the newsletter 'photos page' is where most readers go first. Thank you, Lorraine!



Photos: Lorraine Nothing

Design and Layout: G. Benjamin



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

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GERARD BENJAMIN

The Roebuck sisters of Alroy, Moray St

When Margaret and Eliza Roebuck took up residence at 174 Moray St, their famous neighbour opposite, Sir Samuel Griffith, had been drafting the constitution for an Australian federation, and was once again Premier of Queensland.

The spinster sisters, now in their 50s, had something a little different in their accents. “We’re of Scottish descent and born in India,” was the answer. “Our father, a major in the East India Company Army, died suddenly on duty in 1846. Our poor mother was expecting their 14th child. “In the end, only four survived, given the rigours facing military families in India. She had no choice but to take us back to Scotland to live with our grandmother in Edinburgh.

“That could not be a lasting solution, so it meant coming to Queensland

where our mother’s brother, James Andrew, had been on the land at Jondaryan station.

“To cut a long story short, we endured the deaths of both our brother and mother near Ipswich in the 1880s, followed by our sister’s demise in 1892.”

That was the year that they found Alroy in Moray St. The house had been built four years earlier and the vendor was the bank manager, Edward Marks (likely after whom Marks later Mark St was named).

The nicely-finished villa, with its seven rooms, kitchen, servant’s room, pantry, stables and coachhouse, might have felt a little too large for just the sisters and their servant.

Perhaps their acquaintance with a nearby Scots family (Rev and Mrs Roberts of Ranza, cnr Merthyr, Abbott and Reginald streets) led to the idea that their daughters, Margaret and Christina (aged 20 and 15 in 1892), might conduct their “Misses Roberts School” from Alroy.

This would provide the cachet of a Moray St address. This arrangement appears to have continued until an announcement in 1901 that their school would close, but that one of the Miss Roberts would continue tuition for girls at Ranza.

The Roebucks’ neighbours next door to the south were also Scots. William



Alroy at 174 Moray St ca 1904. The two women on the verandah at the left could well be Eliza and Margaret Roebuck. Photo: (SLQ)

Stevenson was a builder from Glasgow. Perhaps his daughter Jeanette helped with tuition at Alroy, since in 1901, she began conducting her own school. Her father built her a schoolhouse behind the Stevenson family home. With the help of two sisters and a niece, the New Farm Private School was to continue until the mid-’60s.

In 1917, when Margaret Roebuck died, Eliza sold Alroy and moved to Mosman in Sydney to be close to her niece, and there she died in 1925.

The Roebuck chapter at Alroy could well have been forgotten but for a visit in August 2020 to the New Farm & Districts Historical Society by Sally Reynolds. She had collected photos

and documents relating to the New Farm house when collating her late husband’s papers, since the niece in Mosman had been his grandmother. On another of Sally’s visits to Brisbane, your columnist accompanied her on a walking tour of Moray St.

“It’s a pity that the Roebuck sisters’ house did not survive,” Sally said as we progressed along the street.

However, she was surprised and delighted when it was pointed out that though the current residence at 174 Moray St seemed much more recent than the 1904 photo, there – behind the closed-in verandahs – was the original house!

Right: Drawing room, Alroy, ca 1917 – Courtesy Sally Reynolds



MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN
from MY VILLAGE NEWS
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