



# NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au  

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2022 Vol. XXVIII, No. 1

## NOVEMBER MEETING

### 1880s parliament sees the light

**A**ROUND 90 were present at the last Society meeting for 2021 to hear Stuart Wallace (pictured right) en-light-en us about the coming of electric light to Brisbane.

A local resident, Stuart is a third-generation electrical engineer, a member of Engineering Heritage Qld, and a volunteer keen on preserving our early history of electric lighting.

He and another of our wonderful volunteers, Jim Simmers (pictured below), have long been involved in preserving this history, and this meant participating in a significant archaeological dig in Williams St, Brisbane, to excavate Edison tubes from 1884 that first carried a current from the generator to Parliament House. This permitted parliamentarians to dispense with gas-lighting. This innovative tubing had remained hidden until its recovery in 1989.

Thomas Edison was the key to this story of electricity, and Stuart brought to light little known facts about his contribution. For instance, it was vital to insulate the pipes against the likelihood of both fire and freezing. Edison experimented with myriad elements to achieve just the right combination to achieve this standard of insulation.

Even today Edison's genius is evident in our modern lighting products, such as our LED bulbs which still need the Edison screw, which is noted by the code E27 on the bulbs. When Edison died in 1931, President Hoover asked all Americans



to turn off their lights for one minute at 10 o'clock to commemorate his passing. Stuart showed many photos such as the one of a horse and cart delivery of wood to fuel the steam generator for our first Government Powerhouse. In 1882, eight arc lights illuminated Queen St, and this was the first use of public street lighting in Brisbane.



BY Ann Sargeant

The first buildings to receive an electric power supply included the Government Printing Office (1883), Parliament House (1886) and the GPO (1888).

Edward Campbell Barton, the Government Electrical Engineer (1886-88) who became known as the 'father' of electricity development in Qld, coordinated the introduction of the generation and supply of power.

Stuart told us a little about the 'battle of the currents', viz. the tussle between alternating current and direct current (AC/DC), the protagonists being Edison versus inventor Nikola Tesla and George Westinghouse. The latter's AC version won the day.

It's no surprise to learn that some people found it difficult to accept new technology. On a humorous note, Stuart showed a photo of the sign in Parliament House that warned people not to try to light the light bulb with a match, since they simply needed to turn the key on the wall...

Thank you, Stuart, for a most 'illuminating' explanation of how the light bulb first came to Brisbane so as to become an essential part of our lives. Enjoy the presentation [here](#).



## MORE ONLINE TALKS

### For your viewing pleasure...

**O**ur videographer Austin Adams has been going through the Society Archives and has recovered a number of recordings of talks given in earlier years.

These date from before the recent policy of recording meetings – which came about because covid conditions permitted only limited numbers at gatherings.

The first of these early talks is by Tamsin O'Connor (pictured) in 2010 about Coronet Court Flats, the

landmark apartment building at 995 Brunswick St. Enjoy viewing the talk [here](#). This link has also been placed on the Society's [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



Other talks that will become available in coming months include: Abbott Street; Thomas Welsby; Oxlade Brothers; and HMAS Moreton.

Many thanks to Austin for preparing these recordings so that they can easily be displayed on Vimeo.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Desley Garnett

**Meetings to begin in March**

**G**REETINGS to all in 2022! When Ross wrote his President's message for the February 2020 newsletter, there was no mention of coronavirus — but a year later when the March 2021 newsletter was distributed, we were very aware of being in the midst of a worldwide pandemic of coronavirus infections, hence several meetings in 2020 were cancelled.

Little did we suspect that by 2022 we would still be talking about *the virus*, or covid infections. These two years in the history of our own lives will never be forgotten! By way of another dramatic comparison, at the time of our last meeting in November 2021, the number of new infections in Queensland was *two*. As this newsletter goes to print (6/2/2022), daily infections have been decreasing but still stand at 5,746.

This is why, having listened to the advice of the Chief Health Officer and the Premier about the expected peak of infections and about staying home as much as possible, the committee has decided, in the interests of keeping us all as safe and healthy as possible, that *we will not commence monthly meetings until March*.

More explicitly: **There will be no meeting of the New Farm & Districts Historical Society in February.**

I have put together a list of interesting speakers for 2022 knowing that, though we must make plans, there may be changes that are dictated by the covid situation at the time of the planned meeting.

So, folks, we do look forward to another interesting

year of meetings and the opportunities to share knowledge of the history of New Farm, its surrounding districts and greater Brisbane.

It's time to mark the fourth Saturday of each month in your diaries as 'busy', because you plan to focus on history that afternoon.

We will continue to record the meetings and make them available on the website. The office in Sydney St will be open on Thursday afternoons, 2-4pm from 3rd February, and I invite you will come in and have a chat during that time.

On a sad note, we convey our condolences to the family of June Tregear who died on 19 January aged 92. Up until relatively recently June had been a regular attendee at meetings, having been a member from the Society's earliest days. Her late brother-in-law Tom Morrison had been a very early President of NFDHS. *Vale June*.

Lastly, sincere congratulations to Sr Anne Hetherington who was recently awarded an OAM. Sr Anne was our guest speaker last October. The accolade acknowledges her service in many fields including to the Catholic Historical Society, and her pivotal role in establishing the Mercy Heritage Centre.



**Dynamic duo:** Grateful thanks go to locals Natalie Blair (left) and Emma Golder who proved to be culinary angels, their cake-baking and sandwich-making guaranteeing a sumptuous afternoon tea at our last meeting for 2021.

**MEMORABILIA****Merthyr Rd shop**

**S**ociety member Don Doherty from Mooloolaba kindly supplied this photograph and explained that in the 1920s his mother's family moved from Mt Morgan to keep the shop at 170 Merthyr Rd on the corner with Hawthorne St.

The living quarters were above the shop which sold stationery, Kodak camera supplies and fancy goods. One of the shop signs at the front stated, "You will enjoy Nestle's Milk and Non-Milk Chocolate". The shop served refreshments and meals at tables.

One of the awning supports was painted as a barber's pole suggesting that patrons could also avail themselves of a haircut.

In the photo, Don's maternal grandmother, Lillian Humphreys,



stands beside the Buick, while her husband John, in the back seat holding onto his hat, never learned to drive nor ever owned a car.

"I'd never seen these photos

until recently, when a second cousin loaned me three boxes of family memorabilia, letters, documents, photos, and newspaper cuttings. A cornucopia of memories!" said Don.

## STREET NAMES



## Aldermen offer their names for posterity

At a meeting of the council of the city of Brisbane in September 1904, which addressed the rationalisation of street names, aldermen were amused with the consequences having streets named after themselves.

Inspiring the mirth was a petition from residents of Victoria Street, Fortitude Valley, protesting against its proposed alteration to "Doggett Street" honouring Alderman Harry Doggett.

The report continued:

*Alderman Morse objected to his name going on a street, and stated that until he got the report he had not been aware of the change of names.*

*Alderman Crase: Is it because it is a small street? (Laughter.)*

*Alderman Morse (smiling): I object to my name being placed upon an insignificant street. (Loud laughter.) ...*

*Alderman Crase: Do you wish Morse Street to be taken back?*

*Alderman Morse: Yes!*

*Alderman Crase: Make it "Re-Morse"? (Laughter.)*

*The Mayor (Thomas Rees) remarked that he had found his street was a back lane. (Laughter.)*

*Alderman Morse: "I get enough ridicule in the city without having my name put on a street."*

Aldermen Crase and Morse indeed had their names attached to thoroughfares in the locality.

Crase St is off Kingsholme St, Teneriffe. Originally from Cornwall, John Crase (1837-1919) was an ironworker who went into business in Brisbane and became mayor in 1906. Morse St is off Chester St, Fortitude Valley. William Morse (1864-1944) was a prominent city solicitor.

*Brisbane Courier, 13 Sept 1904, p. 6.*



**New Park Plaque:** Visitors to Teneriffe Park now have the added benefit of an historical plaque which provides more context about when and how this remarkable pocket of woodland survived from when houses were first built locally in the 1860s. The plaque was the initiative of the Teneriffe Park Bushcare Group which, since the 1990s, has sought to preserve this bushland haven for bird and animal life for the enjoyment of all. Spokesperson Virginia Russell said, "Thanks to the Bushcare volunteers and Habitat Brisbane (Brisbane City Council), this bushland gem has survived. The plaques are a welcome reminder of how this came about."

## CAN YOU HELP?

## Stephen Hammill, Harcourt St

BILL BROWN from Canberra who receives this newsletter ("it's an excellent publication"), requests any info regarding his 2g-grandfather Stephen Hammill who lived at 118 Harcourt St.

Stephen was born in Seragh, Co Clare, ca 1827, and may have arrived in Brisbane around 1847. He married Rose Ryan in 1856. The Ryan family arrived from Tipperary on the "Argyle" in 1853 and settled in John St, Kangaroo Point.

It was said that Stephen was short of stature, and reputedly had "short arms and long pockets". Though he was a good, honest manual worker, he secured several brawling convictions. When he purchased 118 Harcourt St is unknown.

At one stage, Stephen operated a quarry in Jane St, Fortitude Valley (renamed Robertson St), a short distance from his home. His business partner was a Welsh ex-convict named Thomas Jones, who married Stephen's sister.

The newspaper records that on 20 June 1899 Stephen collapsed and died in Harcourt St of a heart attack, only 100 yds from his home.

The executor of Stephen's estate was Mr Henry Fairon, Bill Brown's great-grandfather, who had married Stephen's daughter Rose in 1876 at St Stephen's Cathedral.

In a newspaper advert in 1901, Mr Fairon was seeking a tenant for 118 Harcourt St: "The Cottage, which is comparatively new, contains five rooms, kitchen, and verandas back and front."

Bill Brown would be grateful for any information about the quarry in the (former) Jane St, Fortitude Valley; or info about the house at 118 Harcourt St, New Farm; or indeed any insights into the Hammill family of New Farm.

## PERILOUS TIMES

## 1941: US view of Brisbane

From the official U.S. Army history of WWII:

From Moreton Bay, a sheet of blue water broken by small green islands and edged by palm-fringed yellow beaches, Brisbane is 14 miles up the Brisbane River.

As the *Pensacola* and her convoy steamed upriver, the men at the rails saw cheering crowds along the banks. This was because they were the first US soldiers on Australian soil, at a time when Japanese forces were seen to threaten Australia. The strongest and only battle-hardened Australian Army units were involved in the North African and Malayan campaigns.

A city of some 300,000 people, Brisbane is set in an amphitheatre of greenish-blue hills. It sprawled for miles on either side of the river, the two portions connected by bridges and small darting ferry launches. There were a few tall granite buildings and smoking factories, but the city was somehow reminiscent of a frontier town in the Wild West, with pillared porticos extending over sidewalks in the business section, and low corrugated iron roofs covering warehouse sheds. The men at the rails saw palms everywhere, and strange flowers in the public gardens.

Strangest of all, a few days before Christmas it was midsummer in Australia. For Brisbane, halfway down the eastern coast, is subtropical, lying between the sparsely settled tropical north and the great cities of Sydney and Melbourne on the more moderate southeastern coast.



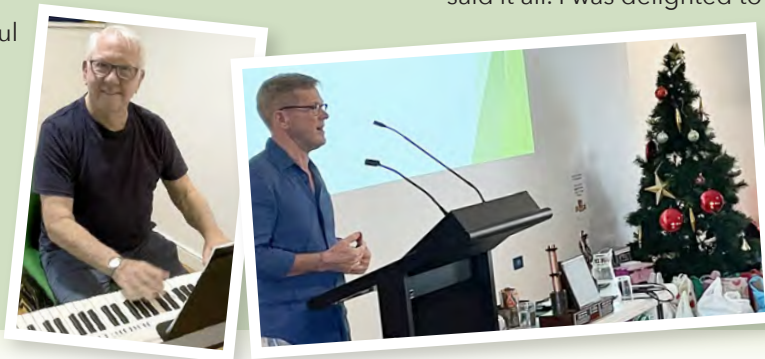
**EMPTY CHRISTMAS TREE**

**Looks of gratitude said it all...**

Society Vice-President Malcolm Godfrey was welcomed warmly by Father Rodney Wolff and the helpers at Holy Trinity Pantry last November, when he delivered 26 bags brimming with useful nonperishable goods of all kinds.

Malcolm also handed Fr Wolff an envelope with the Society's generous cash donations (\$165).

All of these



bountiful offerings had been left under the Empty Christmas Tree at the Society's final meeting for 2021.

The Pantry provides for needy local citizens in the Valley and surrounds in a very considered way, and is a key feature of Holy Trinity Anglican Parish.

"The look of gratitude on the faces of the staff there said it all. I was delighted to pass on our very warm wishes, in a practical way, for this Festive Season," said Malcolm.

Thanks Malcolm, and thanks also to our pianist Stewart Free for his rousing renditions of "Hark the Herald Angels" and "We Wish you a Merry Christmas".

**Photos:** Gerard Benjamin, Chris Derrick

**Design and Layout:** G. Benjamin



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Member for McConnel (07) 3145 9100  
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*You can't make sense of the present, unless a part of you lives in the past... — Robert Harris*

V | news

archives



**GERARD BENJAMIN**

*Early connections at Doggett's Cottage in Arthur St*

Monty and Rita Schofield enjoyed renovating old homes then selling them on. The two-story brick house in the prime spot of 35 Arthur St was just another acquisition. After the couple moved in, they realised that they liked its high ceilings, solidity and quality workmanship, so they kept it. That was more than 50 years ago.

"It had been divided into about half a dozen little businesses," said Rita. "One supplied typing, another supplied flowers."

Known as Doggett's Cottage the house came with a maid's room, its own spring-fed well accessed by a hand pump, and stables (now the garage).

It dates from 1876 and was named for its long-time owner, Harry Doggett, a builder who also served for almost 20 years as a council alderman, and was Mayor of Brisbane in 1913.

Harry was one of the ten surviving children of bricklayer John Doggett and his wife Mary Ann. The family had emigrated from England in the early 1860s when Harry was nine years old. Their family home was at the Valley end of James St.

In the 1880s, Harry's younger brother Mark built at 276 Harcourt St, some of its decorative brick features being similar to those of the Arthur St house. Mark was later a President of the Queensland Master Builders' Association.

The family's imprint on the locality was further cemented when, in 1904, a general renaming of streets saw Victoria St become Doggett St.

If Harry Doggett were to visit his old home in Arthur St today, he could well be pleasantly edified that Monty and Rita appreciate its workmanship and have furnished the residence with artefacts which complement the heritage ambience.

Monty learned his trade of coppersmithing at the Australasian United Steam Navigation Co. (AUSN) working on ships and in shipyards. His later job at the Queensland Museum meant maintaining and restoring antiquarian exhibits, whether machinery tractors, steam engines or old aircraft. If a part could not be sourced, then Monty would make it.



Left: The Cottage in Arthur St, once owned by Harry Doggett, Mayor of Brisbane.



Right: Monty and Rita Schofield, longtime owners of Doggett's Cottage

In furnishing Doggett's Cottage, Monty and Rita enjoyed visiting antique shops near and far in order to find just the right bygone pieces to fit in with the home's character.

As the talk moves to family history, Monty happens to say, "My forebears once owned the land near Gasworks at Newstead." This statement almost makes a local historian's heart skip a beat. Sure enough, Monty continues, "My mother was Lucy Childs."

The profundity of this is that from the 1850s, the Childs' family owned more than two acres between current day Gasworks and Newstead House. It was said that at their Beulah farm, "a plough was first used in free times in Queensland soil."

Thomas Childs and family came from Somerset and had arrived in

1849 on the Fortitude, one of the three ships bringing skilled Protestant workers organised by the Rev. John Dunmore Lang.

A later plan to subdivide the part of Beulah farm adjacent to today's Skyring Terrace included a track to be named Childs Street.

Alas, Childs Street did not make it into the street directory in Newstead—but it did in Nudgee, since David Childs, son of Thomas, established in 1866 the vineyard and winery (Toombul Vineyards) at the end of Childs Rd which ran between the cemetery and the orphanage.

We can imagine that were Harry Doggett still alive, he would be fascinated by the fact that Monty's forebears had arrived in the colony almost 15 years before he did.

MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN from  
MY VILLAGE NEWS DECEMBER 2021





# NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

## Membership Form

Annual Membership – 1 September 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022

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  
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