



# NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

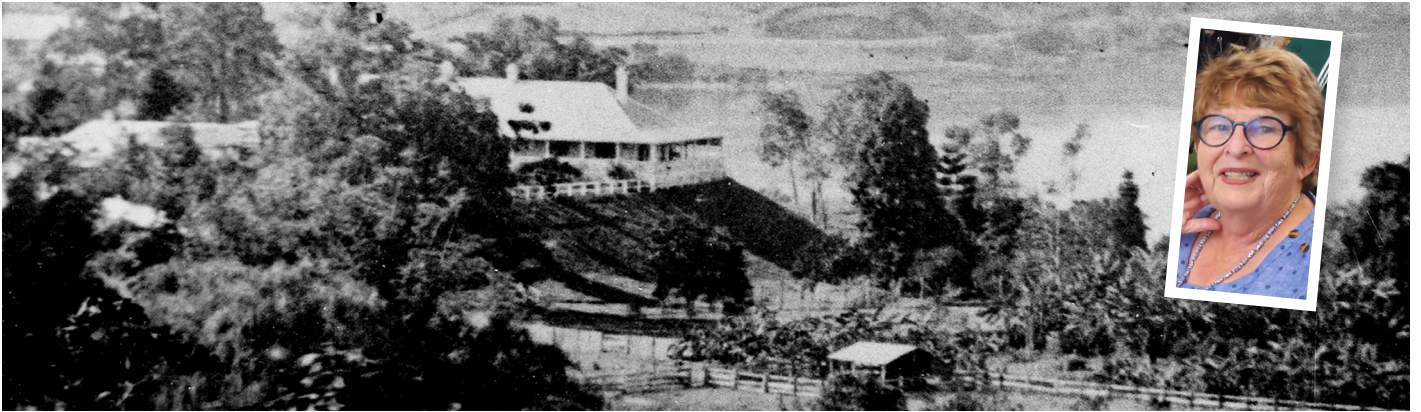
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NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2022

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## MARCH MEETING

### The people of Newstead House

**T**HE photo above of Newstead House ca 1872 shows fenced paddocks with banana(?) plants in what is now Newstead Park. This sets the scene for our first speaker for 2022: Brisbane historian Helen Gregory, who will tell us about “The People of Newstead House”.

“As well as the Leslie’s and all their connections, there is J.C. Wickham, James Clark the pearling king, and Harris the businessman whose daughter was the mother of a future Governor-General,” says Helen.

This topic is timely since the beautiful 176-year-old sandstone and timber home is currently enjoying a \$5M Qld Govt renovation.

It promises to be a most interesting meeting so please arrive early on Saturday, 26 March, 2.30-4.30pm, at the Uniting Church Centre at 52 Merthyr Rd. Afternoon tea will be provided. Bring along your friends. All are welcome.

*\*\* The all-important proviso is that under current Qld Health guidelines, unfortunately unvaccinated people are not permitted to attend this meeting. You will be required to use the Qld Check-in app and show your vaccination status.*

## UNKNOWN SAILOR FROM NEW FARM

### Long search has local connection

**T**HE case of the unknown sailor was the subject of a recent episode of Richard Fidler’s *Conversations* on ABC Radio.

In 2007, Dr Jeremy Austin, a DNA specialist, was asked by the Royal Australian Navy to help identify the remains of an unknown crewman on *HMAS Sydney* which had been sunk off the coast of Western Australia by a German raider in 1941. Every Australian crewman on board was lost.

Months after the battle, the remains of a sailor from *HMAS Sydney* were found floating on a liferaft near Christmas Island.

Using the best available forensic DNA technology, Jeremy embarked

on a 14-year quest to establish the identity of the man and to track down his surviving descendants.

By extraordinary luck, the crewman was identified as 21-year-old Able Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark of New Farm. The young man was the grandson of two of the suburb’s well-known figures, James Clark (the Pearl King) of Elystan Rd, and Tom Welsby of Gray St.

Listen again to the whole program [here](#).



**Grandparents’ homes:** Both grandfathers of Able Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark had built riverside homes in New Farm: Tom Welsby, Amity (above left, still in Gray St) and James Clark, Wybenia (once in Elystan Rd).

*Talk not of wasted affection; affection never was wasted... — Longfellow*

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Desley Garnett

**Unforgettable start to the year**

**G**REETINGS to members and friends of the Society. It has been an odd start to 2022 so I trust it will settle down and be a year to remember for lots of good reasons as well as for the experiences of a rise in covid infections, the floods, and the start of a war in the Ukraine.

In early January we decided to cancel the February meeting because of the uncertainty of the spread of covid 19 infections in Brisbane. Little did we know that a meeting on that day would have been impossible due to the extraordinary rain event that we were experiencing then.

I am sure there will be many of you who have been severely affected by flood waters and I do give you my sincere wishes for a rapid recovery. We were fortunate that, though the waters rose in Sydney Street, they did not reach the level of the Society's office which houses our archives.

The question we need to ask now is: How will we record this historical event for New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead and other close suburbs? Maybe you would like to write about your experience? Maybe send

some photos that you have taken around the area? Maybe you could record an audio story on your phone and send it to us? Maybe you have some screenshots of what you have seen on social media? You may have other ideas. It would be great to receive your contributions to the society via email on: [info@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@newfarmhistorical.org.au).

We have an interesting line-up of speakers for the rest of the year, the first of whom will be Helen Gregory talking about 'The people of Newstead House'.

This stately house has overlooked Breakfast Creek and the Brisbane River when they have become muddy and swollen during the various previous floods recorded in the home's 176-year history. We will hear more about the interesting people connected with Newstead House on 26th March.



**Library support:** Society president Desley Garnett offers her very best wishes to Nadja Bielmeier (left), the Team Leader at New Farm Library, who this month starts her new job at Hamilton Library. Nadja has always offered her full support to the Society's endeavours.

**CAN YOU HELP?****More about the Hammills**

In last month's newsletter, the article about Stephen Hammill of Harcourt St inspired a reply from Cathie Sherwood, another Hammill descendant. She was able to update some of the information offered by Bill Brown from Canberra.

**S**tephen Hammill married Mary Ryan (not Rose) on 31 December 1854 (not 1856). She was the only daughter of David and Honora Ryan from Bansha, in Tipperary. The Ryan family arrived in Brisbane in 1852 (not 1853). Two of Mary's brothers were Michael and William Ryan, cordial and soft drink manufacturers.

Stephen did operate a quarry with Thomas Jones, though Thomas did not marry Stephen's sister but instead his cousin Catherine Hammill. Her parents were James Hammill and Catherine Devine.

Stephen Hammill's sister was Mary who married John Sexton whose family arrived in 1859 on the *Shackamaxon*.

Rose, the great-grandmother of Bill Brown, was the sister of my great-grandmother Honora (Nora) Hammill. Nora married Thomas Ruddell whose brother Richard Ruddell was the first mayor of Bundaberg.

**WHOLESALE RECOLLECTION****Harding Brothers, once of Doggett St**

**T**hese days, the building on the corner of Proe and Doggett Sts is occupied by the Salvation Army, but it was originally a warehouse constructed for Harding Brothers Wholesale Merchants in 1952-3 in order to supplement their Roma St premises.

To celebrate the opening, the December 1953 issue of *The Retailer*, spelt out some details of the history of the firm. Twenty-two years earlier in 1931, from under the 'Old Home' at Dean St, Toowong, brothers Chris and the late George Harding started making and selling cleansers and polishes. It was considered that this new 12,000 sqft warehouse would allow better service to the 1,500 stores that the company supplied, which stretched from Brisbane to Gympie, Coolangatta and Dalby.

This photo comes courtesy of Lester Harding of Enoggera, son of Chris Harding. The brothers were grandsons of the Queensland Justice G.R. Harding (1838-95) whose second wife Isabella Smellie Harding (nee Grahame) once lived at "Edgeroi" at 170 Bowen Tce (cnr with Harcourt St). That house, dating from 1908 and since demolished, had been designed by Claude W. Chambers.

## NEW BOOK

## Early Brisbane photographers

Photographers have made a significant contribution towards our understanding and interpretation of Brisbane's past by recording the people and places around them.

That is why historian Brian Rough has compiled a book containing the biographies of the commercial photographers operating in the city between 1855 and 1901.

The book is entitled: *Capturing Brisbane: the City's first photographers 1855 to 1901*.

"In my earlier career working with the city's



heritage structures, it was always exciting to find an historical image of the building being researched, though dating it accurately was always problematic," said Brian.

"This project provides one of the important research criteria - the accurate history of the photographers - and should prove useful to anyone trying to date early Brisbane photographs."

More information and details about how to purchase the book are available at: <http://www.capturingbrisbane.com>.



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Cafe, a safe bet...

LAST month's photo of the Merthyr Cafe stirred Jim MacDonald's memories of the building in the 1940s.

"It was then a 'cafe' serving meals to mainly American servicemen stationed nearby. Walking home from New Farm State School past this cafe, one would always encounter queues of men waiting to get in and perhaps enjoy something different from what was served in their Army or Navy messes. The queue would trail up Hawthorne St as men awaited a vacant table.

"I understand the cafe set a time limit for the meal, since demand was so great - and yes, the barber shop adjoining the cafe was still there - except that its principal activity was not cutting hair.

"Society member Bernard Carroll once noted that the SP operation could offer men somewhere to put their money on a horse. Good old New Farm: always full of surprises and endeavour," says Jim.

*N.B. The Brisbane architect E.P. Trewern (1895-1959) designed several stylish homes in New Farm, and in 1924 he also designed this shop and dwelling for Susan Quirk. The builder was W.R. Gaskill & Son. (Photo courtesy Don Doherty)*



**Amateur classic:** The event inspiring this well-dressed crowd at a spot corresponding with present-day Griffith St was the rowing classic, Henley-on-Brisbane. The date was Saturday 12 April 1913 and Chief Justice Sir Samuel Griffith had made available the grounds of his home, Merthyr, off Moray St. This is one of the Taylor Family Photographs, a collection of glass plate negatives discovered in 1979 under a house in Christie St, Kangaroo Pt. The prominent residence across the river left of centre is the heritage-listed Shafston House at 23 Castlebar St, Kangaroo Pt. (UQFL537, Series 3682 Image 33)

**REMINISCENCE**

**Scenes from boyhood**

*Sometimes stories from someone else's family history can start you thinking about your own. When John Gates of Hamilton (who had grown up in Harcourt St, Teneriffe) had a closer look at Gerard Benjamin's recent book "William and Leonora Monk", it started stirring the memories. Here is a sample...*

**I** REMEMBER going with Mum and Dad to purchase furniture which meant visiting Rosenstengels and Bell Bros.

Then there was St Patrick's School in Kemp Place, and St Patrick' Church in the Valley where Fr M Egan, an Irishman who had come via New York, was a firebrand in his sermons and was known to fist-fight some Communist activists.

His sister donated a Chrysler left-hand drive two-door with woven rattan cane-style seat covers as the prize in a fundraiser.

I went to St Joseph's on Gregory Tce in the tram from Commercial Rd, and got off at the Brunswick St corner. Walking down Brunswick St, there was a fellow on the corner of Wickham St outside the

Bank of NSW who sold papers. Above him was a manned signal box to change the tram points, with one line going to New Farm, another towards the hospital and the other down Wickham St.

I went with my Dad to see a car mechanic whose workshop was in Alfred St, The Valley. He was also the agent for sales and servicing of Lanchester cars. One day, Mrs Bonney, the famous pilot, brought her car in.

Nearby was the Bennett Chain Works, a noisy, smoky hellhole-like building.

My grandmother's house is still there, nearly across the road from St Joseph's, Gregory Terrace, being the second house on the left in Hipwood St. One of my aunts lived in Billet St. The college pool now occupies

the spot where her house once stood. Another aunt lived just off Victoria Street, and across the road was a huge house that became the Officer's Quarters for the Dutch Navy.

— *Best Wishes, John Gates*



**Food and books on offer:** A spot on Brunswick St outside the Brunswick Hotel currently offers a 'Street Pantry' and 'Street Library', thoughtfully offering some free sustenance for both body and mind. Congratulations to those behind this initiative.



**Water, water, everywhere:** At the New Farm Powerhouse, reality was reflecting art, while further down on the Teneriffe riverwalk, this pic from Kerry and Kathryn came with the caption: "Lucky our sheep are on Flood Watch"...



**Photos:** Chris Derrick, Gerard Benjamin

**Design and Layout:** G. Benjamin



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*They know enough who know how to learn... — Henry Adams*

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archives



**GERARD BENJAMIN**

*Ermabrae: Sunflower Estate's doctorly past*

The austere-looking Sunflower Estate boarding house, on the corner of Brunswick and Harcourt Sts, gives little clue to its yesteryear architectural treasures of the high ceilings, spacious rooms and stylish fireplaces which merit the residence's listing as a Local Heritage Place.

Its story begins in 1902 when Bundaberg luminary and local state member, Michael Duffy, made a gift of this prized piece of real estate to his eldest daughter as a wedding present.

Margaret Duffy's beau was Dr Ernest Kerr Scott, the Edinburgh-trained son of a missionary who was practising medicine nearby at 477 Brunswick St.

Within a year of their marriage in Bundaberg in June 1902, the couple moved into their magnificent new two-story brick home. Its front verandahs

offered commanding views of the river towards Hamilton, and the house was approached through a classical entranceway at the street corner.

The couple combined their names and the Scottish word for hillside to come up with 'Ermabrae'. and for almost 40 years, it was to be not only their home but also where the GP consulted with patients.

Several nearby private hospitals called upon his services and countless Brisbane birth notices of the era, after announcing the arrival, attached a line such as "Dr. Kerr Scott and Nurse ?? in attendance".

Long-time local Ron Grant whose family lived at Wellington House, 368 Bowen Tce, said during an oral history interview in 2002, "Dr Kerr Scott brought each and every one of my family into the world."

The couple were prominent in the Congregational Church, the Temperance Movement and the Bible Society, while the doctor served as patron of the New Farm Bowls Club and Merthyr (Soccer) Football Club. Their two sons, Wilton and Eric, were born at Ermabrae.

The family must have had occasional visits from Mrs Kerr Scott's younger brother George, since when staying with them, he liked to enter the "Write a Title" competition in the



The Sunflower Estate boarding house at 539 Brunswick St was originally Ermabrae (pictured ca 1930).



Truth newspaper. Winning entries (bringing £1 each) included "This is so sodden", and "Making a spectacle of themselves after a few glasses".

One afternoon in early October 1928 must have given the family a grave shock. A fire broke out in a boarding house further down Harcourt St and it spread to The Laurels Private Hospital which was just across Brunswick St from Ermabrae. Four women and five babies were rescued and relocated. The heat of the fire, which lasted an hour, was so profound that it badly blistered the paint on Ermabrae.

In the aftermath of that fire, the cleared site became, in 1929, Avalon Flats, a thoroughly 'modern' design by architects Hall & Prentice, who were soon to draw up the plans for the new Brisbane City Hall.

In 1936, the doctor and his

wife travelled to England and the continent, and he recorded some impressions since last being there 33 years before, when, for instance, "there was not a motor car to be seen in the streets of London, and in Paris only a few."

"Motor vehicles were now so numerous in England as to create an almost insoluble problem for the authorities," he wrote.

Mrs Kerr Scott passed away in 1945, so Ermabrae was put on the market in 1950. Under its new owners it became Kerry Court boarding house. In 1953 came news of the death of Dr Ernest Kerr Scott, described as the "well-known Brisbane physician and philanthropic worker."

Around 1971, the former Ermabrae became known as Sunflower Estate ("offering single rooms to let"), a name retained to this day.

MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN from MY VILLAGE NEWS JANUARY 2022



At the end of a dark night, there is light...

## Covid requirements for attending public meetings

Under current Qld Health guidelines, you will be asked to use the Check In Qld app and show proof of COVID-19 vaccination or evidence of medical contraindication by before entering the meeting. Vaccination is a requirement for attending.

## Meeting Topics

You might be interested to see the topics that will be covered at our meetings this year – be sure to mark the dates in your diary now.

DATE	TOPIC
26 March 2022 Speaker: Helen Gregory	The People of Newstead House
23 April 2022 Speaker: Melanie Myers	Meet Me at Lennon's: the effects and legacy of when the Americans occupied Brisbane, particularly for young women.
28 May 2022 Speaker: Boyd Brown	Brown and Broad Timber Merchants in Newstead, and the contribution of George Brown to life in Brisbane.
25 June 2022 Speaker: Harold Peacock	<i>Dovercourt</i> in Toowong and its connections to Merthyr House
23 July 2022 Speaker: John MacDonald	Lost Brisbane: Images of New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead
27 August 2022 Speaker: Robert Allen	The Prince's Tale: The history of a Valley icon (Prince Consort Hotel)
24 September 2022 Speaker: David Jones	Three ladies of Moreton Bay: <i>Mirimar</i> , <i>Mirabel</i> and <i>Mirana</i>
22 October 2022 Speaker: Betty Lee	Right man, right place, worst time – Commander Eric Feldt, His life and His Coastwatchers
26 November 2022 Speaker: Kristina Olsson	Growing up in New Farm – Reflections on my 'true home'

**Some Projects on the agenda for this year. Ask about how you can be involved.**

- Digitising the Historical Society archives
- Learning more about street names and their connections to history
- Discovering more about the indigenous history of Bink-in-ba
- Updating the website
- Displaying the collection of paintings by Gladys Blundell in buildings around New Farm
- QR Codes on existing plaques with link to website
- Conducting and documenting walks of historical interest

Do you have other suggestions? Please share your time and your expertise.