



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au  

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

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MARCH MEETING

The people of Newstead House

WHAT an achievement to welcome so many attendees to the first meeting for 2022. Congratulations, Desley, on a great start to the year.

The guest speaker was Helen Gregory, historian and former adjunct professor at University of Queensland, who touched on the renovation of Newstead House (due to finish in mid-2023), before taking us on a journey into the home's fascinating panorama of personalities.

Helen has been on the board of the Newstead House Trust and worked with the late David Gibson (former Curator) for many years to convince authorities about the cultural and historic importance of the house.

"People make places," says Helen, and Newstead House is a perfect example. She told the story of the house via a chronology of owners, residents and visitors, one of whom was the Governor of NSW, Sir Charles FitzRoy. During his stay, he made the unwelcome discovery of a black snake in his bed!

In case you are wondering about the age of the



Renovating our heritage: Top: Speaker Helen Gregory. Also Claire Moore (left) who is chair of the board of trustees of Newstead House, and Jen Garcia, Communications & Programming Manager at the house which is in the midst of a \$5M upgrade.

house, it is 176—having been built in 1846 for pastoralist Patrick Leslie. He didn't live there long. It passed to John Wickham, and then to George Harris from 1862. He bought it in 1866 and he lived there until 1890. The Harris period became known as the 'party years'. He spent about £20,000 annually on entertaining. Some partying! Temporary buildings were needed to cater for his guests (sometimes in the hundreds).

This is relevant since the decoration of the renovated house will reflect the 'party years' period. The roof has been replaced with Welsh slate tiles, and the accumulation of structural damage over the years is being addressed.

After Helen's address, there were short contributions from Claire Moore (retired Senator for Queensland) who is chair of the board of trustees of Newstead House; and Jen Garcia, who takes care of the day-to-day running of the House. She is looking forward to welcoming everyone back in 2023, especially groups of school children.

If you've ever been to Newstead

CONTINUED OVER



BY
Ann Sargeant

APRIL MEETING

Brisbane, a garrison town...

AFTER Pearl Harbour and the fall of Singapore, by August 1942 Brisbane had become a virtual garrison town with over two-thirds of the American land forces in Australia stationed here.

All up, it is estimated that one million American troops passed through Brisbane during 1942-1945.

"The resulting social disruption altered the lives of so many in Queensland's sleepy capital,

particularly young women," said Melanie Myers (pictured), the author of the novel *Meet Me at Lennon's*.

Melanie is our speaker in April and she will talk about the effects and legacy of this period—good and bad—when American forces 'occupied' Brisbane. All are welcome at the meeting which will be at the Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm, at 2.30pm on Saturday, 23 April. Sumptuous afternoon tea to follow. \$10 (members \$5).



PRESIDENT'S REPORT *Desley Garnett*

Almost full for first meeting

IT was encouraging to see just over 100 people at the first public meeting of 2022. It augurs well for this year. Thanks to all of the volunteers who are back helping the meetings to run smoothly.

Your committee has had discussions about the entry fee for the monthly meetings for some time, and at the committee meeting in March it was decided to revise the entry fee to attend these meetings due to increasing costs. The first meeting of the year seemed to be a good time to make the change, even though we recognised that there was little notice. Just to make it clear: financial members pay \$5 to attend meetings, while non-members pay \$10. The entry fee for our meetings has not changed for many years.

Covid has really upset attendances and therefore the memberships of some are not up to date. We encourage you to pay your 2021/2022 membership as soon as possible.

Societies such as ours rely on the commitment of members to volunteer for a variety of tasks, so please think about how you can 'do your bit' and offer your services to myself or any member of the committee. It would be great to have teams of people for a variety of



Stars at Lenlons: Film star Gary Cooper, Hollywood starlet Phyllis Brooks (centre) and American comedienne Una Merkel were in Brisbane in November 1943 as part of a tour to entertain troops in battle zones and forward areas. The entourage stayed at Lennon's Hotel and one of its waitresses said that Mr Cooper was "as nice as his pictures". Other stars visiting Brisbane included John Wayne and Jerry Lewis. (Photo courtesy of John Gates). **Interested in wartime Brisbane? See you at our April meeting.**

tasks so that we do not have to rely on the same few all of the time.

The Teneriffe Festival is on again! If you are thinking, "it doesn't seem long since the last one", you are correct. The 2021 festival was later in the year due to covid restrictions, and the plan for the future is for it to be held on the last Saturday in May each year, this year being 28th May.

This is also our regular meeting day, so the committee is looking into how we

can manage to have a presence at the Teneriffe Festival without affecting our monthly meeting. Your thoughts on this are welcome. Please drop us an email to info@newfarmhistorical.org.au or phone me on 0409 498 403.

I hope to see you on 23 April, just two days before ANZAC Day, when we will be thinking about the effect the presence of so many American servicemen had on Brisbane during World War II.

HEARTFELT THANKS

Veritable goldmine in Kent Street

In late 2020 and armed with the 1916 marriage certificate of her grandparents, Jo Dickson was in Kent St, New Farm, looking for numbers 199 (pictured) and 205, since these were the respective addresses of Gwen Mary Williams and Cecil Dickson, a clerk.

Later, Jo's cousin mentioned to her that Gwen Mary Williams' mother (hence Jo's great-grandmother) had conducted a maternity hospital in New Farm.

As it happened, about the same time as Jo was surveying Kent St, an article appeared in *My Village News* entitled, "Nurse Williams of St Aubrey's, Kent Street", relating how the Welsh-born matron had delivered so many babies locally.

"I found your article," wrote Jo to Gerard Benjamin, "and you have



provided a veritable goldmine of information."

"My cousin said that he would be surprised if he couldn't locate a photo of (Nurse) Sarah Jane, since in her later years she lived with his family in Tarragindi. It will be so exciting if she has left behind journals and letters. The family history ball is rolling..."

Your editor always appreciates receiving feedback, so many thanks to Jo. It is a pleasure to hear instances of how the past can make its contribution to the present. Meanwhile, you can read the Nurse Williams' article [here](#).

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

House, you may have been fascinated, as I was, with the basement rooms including a kitchen which dates to the home's earliest days.

If you have not visited Newstead House for a while, I hope that your curiosity has been piqued and that you will one day enjoy not only its historical significance but also its magnificent riverside location.

As Helen finished her address, she expressed her wish to one day soon being able to enjoy a cup of tea on its wide verandah overlooking the river. Let's be sure to join her. I for one can't wait to revisit Newstead House.

By the way, if the personalities of Newstead House's past seem ancient history, it's worth pointing out that there was at least one Harris descendant in the audience! **Thanks, Helen, for a great meeting.**

MEMORIES

Brief notes...

In response to the article in last month's newsletter about the identification of Thomas Welsby Clark as the Unknown Sailor from 1941, his niece Leigh Lehane (née Clark) from Canberra, records brief notes about her recollections of New Farm.

I HAVE many happy memories of visiting my grandparents Colin and Winnie Clark at *Amity* in Welsby St. [(James) Colin was a son of James Clark, the 'Pearl King', of *Wybenia* in Elystan Rd. His wife Marion (Winnie) was the daughter of Thomas Welsby (1858-1941) who built *Amity*].

A couple of other recollections: riding a rocking horse on the verandah of *Amity*; being dipped in the water by Winnie as she stood on the pontoon on the river; pretending to be dead under the horizontal bar in the garden (not very nice); the Maloneys living over the road in Welsby St [the Maloney family later owned *Coronet Court*]; the plaque marking the height of the 1893 flood; Winnie's distress over the loss of Tom on the *Sydney*; Uncle Jim Clark coming back from the war and living there. I remember when *Amity* was sold and I believe it was to the Colonial Sugar Refinery (1952).

All through this time, my family lived at *Bribie*, a large wooden house next door to *Wybenia*. Both houses were located between Elystan Road and Oxlade Drive.

I used to run wild with the Crawford boys who also lived in Elystan Rd. Their father was a solicitor and later became Alderman for Merthyr.



Next to *Wybenia*: A view of *Bribie* ca 1930, which James Clark, the Pearl King, built beside his own house, for his son James Colin Clark and his wife Marion (Winnie) nee Welsby. This couple had three sons, Arthur (Leigh Lehane's father), James, and Thomas Welsby Clark who was lost on *HMAS Sydney* in 1941 and has recently been identified as the Unknown Sailor.

I remember *Wybenia* being bought and later demolished by the spastic centre [Queensland Spastic Children's Welfare League, later known as the Cerebral Palsy Centre, now Choice, Passion, Life]. The centre also bought properties in Turner Ave on the other side of *Bribie*. The resulting noise from the traffic on a road along the *Wybenia* side fence, as well as from the school, made it impossible for Mum (ex-wife of Arthur Welsby Clark) to keep living there so she sold to the centre and the old house was soon demolished to make way for further centre buildings.

Mum then bought and lived in *Corinne* in Turner Avenue until she died.

Sincere thanks to Leigh Lehane for this valuable contribution.



Bird's eye view: This is only a small portion of a most valuable resource at SLQ, namely an aerial photo of the Valley and New Farm (1919). You will recognise St Patrick's Church in Morgant St, Fortitude Valley.

MARK YOUR DIARY

TOYS OF YESTERYEAR

Currently on display at Mieggunyah House Museum are some of the toys held in the collection. **Toys of Yesteryear** includes a 1904 set of Noah's Ark (a similar one was recently on Antiques Roadshow), a predecessor to Lego, and a collection of children's tea sets. The display will continue until June 2022. All are welcome at the Qld Women's Historical Association, 'Mieggunyah', 35 Jordan Tce, Bowen Hills • 07 3252 2979 • www.mieggunyah.org • On Facebook "Mieggunyah House Museum".

GSQ: WRITING MINI-SEMINAR

The Genealogical Society of Queensland (GSQ) is holding a writing mini-seminar via ZOOM, titled: "**Sharing family history: telling, writing**". Time: Saturday 4 June 2022, during 9am and 1pm AEST. The seminar has an Early Bird discounted offer which will end on 20 May 2022. All bookings must be made through our website Events page: <https://www.gsq.org.au/event/sharing-family-history-telling-writing/>

HERITAGE MATTERS

Newstead and Shafston: Brisbane's venerable riverine homes worth protecting



An application to build a 15-storey tower right beside Shafston House has been submitted. Being code assessable, it is not subject to public notification or appeal, however, BCC welcomes comments. If it goes ahead, Brisbane's 'odd' approach to heritage will be on display for the world during the 2032 Olympics.

AT the March meeting of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society, I enjoyed an excellent talk entitled 'The People of Newstead House' given by highly-regarded Brisbane historian Helen Gregory.

While most articles and conversations about Newstead House focus on the building and its beautiful setting, it is just as important to remember that the people who lived and worked there were integral in shaping its history.

I was interested in the topic as the history of Newstead House is closely intertwined with that of Shafston House which is currently under serious threat from developers. They are the only two surviving examples of the six original colonial riverine estates which still have a direct connection with the river.

Newstead House was built in 1846 and Shafston House (then Ravenscott) in 1851, making them the oldest and third oldest known houses in Brisbane. Newstead House and Shafston House are both located in a prominent position on top of a hill with manicured lawns sloping down to the river. They were built for people who made a difference to the development of Brisbane and Queensland.

Newstead House was built for Patrick Leslie, a Scottish settler and later a politician; Shafston House was built for the Rev. Robert Creyke, a

pioneer of the Church of England.

They have evolved in similar ways, starting off as a private residence for the gentry and becoming the home of some of Queensland's most prominent historical personalities.

Both were acquired by Government at about the same time (1918-1919) to serve various public roles. Newstead House was bought by the Brisbane City Council (BCC) to become public parkland and to accommodate the Superintendent of Parks. From late 1942 to the end of WWII it was occupied by the US Army Signal Corps.

Shafston House was used as a Kindergarten Training College (1913-18), a repatriation Anzac Hostel (1919-69), and a support base for the RAAF (1969-88).

A walk around each estate today is a walk through history, giving us a direct insight into the life of the early days of the colony. The various owners and tenants represent a 'Who's Who' of early Brisbane colonial days.

At Newstead House, the list is led by Patrick Leslie, pastoralist and politician; Capt. John C Wickham, Police Magistrate; Ratcliffe Pring, Attorney General; George Harris, entrepreneur and politician; Fergus McMaster, co-founder of Qantas; James Clark, the "Pearl King"; and Thomas Heaslop, grocery merchant and founder of the Heaslop empire. All left their mark on Newstead.

Notable personalities of Shafston House were Henry Stuart Russell, pastoralist and politician; Captain Louis Hope, grazier; Daniel Foley Roberts, solicitor; Gilbert Elliot, first Speaker of the Queensland Parliament; William Barker, grazier; Dr Henry Challinor; architects RS Dods and FDG Stanley; and James McConnel, a successful businessman who was born in Bulimba House, the second riverine estate.

The heritage value of these estates has been officially recognised for their historical, cultural and aesthetic significance.

Newstead House was the first heritage property in Queensland to be protected by an Act of Parliament (Newstead House Act 1939) when it was agreed that it should be public property and in trust for the people of Queensland for all time.

The Shafston House Estate was entered on the Register of the National Estate in 1978, and on the Qld Heritage Register in 2005.

Despite large reductions in the size of the original estates and many additions and alterations made over time to suit the requirements and uses of the various owners, the core of the main houses has not changed much. The remaining buildings and their unique location give us an important insight into the early development of Queensland and are a physical reminder of an important bygone era.

While Newstead House is a treasured public museum on public parkland, Shafston House is now privately owned and currently under threat from development. Its State Heritage listing covers the entire grounds including the former ward and ancillary buildings, the beautiful Gothic-style Shafston House, the trees, gardens and terraced lawn sloping down to the river.

Together these comprise a unique landmark icon which has been admired and loved by thousands of locals and visitors both from the river and New Farm opposite.

As a historically significant landmark property, Shafston House should be accorded the same protection as Newstead House and placed in trust for the use of current and future generations.

— Christa Gerard



Photos: Gerard Benjamin

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MANY THANKS TO
Grace Grace MP
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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: Desley Garnett • 0409 498 403 • drgarn@bigpond.net.au
Vice President: Malcolm Godfrey
Minutes Secretary: Virginia Balmain
Treasurer: Denise Buckby

Committee: Austin Adams,
Janetta Douglas and Ben Pritchard
Newsletter Editor: Gerard Benjamin
• ggerardb@bigpond.net.au

Epigrams succeed where epics fail... Persian proverb

archives



Doggett descendants revisit Arthur St

The 1870s brick house in Arthur St which once belonged to Mayor Harry Doggett (1853-1927) was featured in the Archives column in December 2021.

The story drew a reply from Gail Thorpe of Camp Hill, who explained that the cottage had played its part in the family heritage of her husband Gary. "Gary's great-grandfather was Arthur Wallace Rawlins Doggett, a cousin of Harry's," wrote Gail. Arthur lived at No. 50, across the road and just down a little from Doggett's Cottage.

From at least 1921, Arthur, a bricklayer, lived at No. 50 with his wife Elizabeth, and several of their six children: Clarence, a shopkeeper; Edwin, a clerk; Grace, a milliner; and Milly, a tailoress.

Milly married, moved to Cribb Island and had three sons. When she was expecting their fourth child,

the birth took place nearby at "The Laurels" Private Hospital in Brunswick St, hence the couple named their daughter Laurel.

As a girl, Gary's mother Laurel (now aged 89), would stay with her grandparents at No. 50 on weekends and during school holidays. "I knew every inch of that house," Laurel said, since she helped with the cleaning and washday chores each Monday, such as wiping the clothes lines before hanging out the washing, and grating the soap to put into the copper before it was lit for boiling the linen.

"On pension day, grandfather would put on his suit, and grandmother would get 'all dolled up' for the walk to the Valley Post Office. On Sundays, they would take their bath, then there was a roast dinner followed by apple tart. There were lemon drinks from the bush lemon tree, and fresh eggs from the chook run."

The article about Doggett's Cottage brought up lots more memories of No. 50, as well as the impulse to pay a visit to Harry Doggett's home at No. 35. Laurel used to visit "Aunty May" (Harry's daughter-in-law) and be shown the handicrafts that Aunty May had made for fetes, etc. Laurel remembers being fascinated with their pet rabbit and the goldfish pond in the backyard.



Doggett descendants (from left) Gary Thorpe, his uncle Keith Pretsel, and his mother Laurel (nee Pretsel), along with a photograph of Mayor Harry Doggett.

When Monty and Rita Schofield, the owners of Doggett's Cottage, were contacted, they generously welcomed a sentimental visit by Laurel, her 96-year-old brother Keith, and Laurel's son, Gary, and wife Gail. It was a step back in time for Laurel and Keith as they wandered from room to room, recalling more and more details of yesteryear.

When reminiscing about No. 50, Laurel said, "It's been a very long time since I've been in this street. I expected to see trucks from Grace Brothers Removals where the old house used to be." (This was because the firm frequently approached Arthur Doggett to sell to them as they needed extra parking space for their vehicles, having bought up the adjacent properties)

"Arthur wasn't interested and set the price at a million pounds as a laugh, so that they would leave him alone," said Laurel. After Arthur died in 1961 aged 94, the house was eventually sold by Arthur's son Eddie, though the selling price is long forgotten.

It amused the family to imagine that the street was actually named after Arthur. Alas it clearly honoured an earlier Arthur from around the 1870s. This was at a time when the neighbouring streets were called Jane (now Robertson) and John (Berwick).

The name Gary Thorpe may ring a bell with classical music listeners. Gary is the General Manager of Brisbane's well-known 4MBS-FM radio station which first went to air in March 1979.

MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN from
MY VILLAGE NEWS APRIL 2022

Arthur Doggett pictured in 1960. He was an early recipient of the Meals on Wheels service.





NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

Membership Form

Annual Membership – 1 September 2021 to 31st August 2022

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