



NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au



NEWSLETTER

JULY 2022

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JUNE MEETING

Dovercourt: its remarkable history

ALMOST 80 attendees enjoyed the talk by Harold Peacock (pictured) including three whose families were connected with the house, and one who had actually lived there.

It's worth noting that Harold is a 'detectorist' dedicated to unearthing metallic valuables with his Minelab VTX 3030, and he first came into the orbit of the Society when Ross and Desley Garnett asked him to scan the ground at their Browne St house before its sale in 2020.

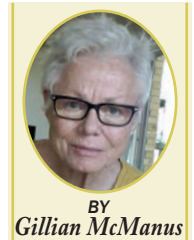
Though he found nothing, not even a 1930 Australian penny, the end result was an invitation to him to speak about *Dovercourt*, the historic residence at Sherwood Rd, Toowong. On this subject, he demonstrated his accomplished skill for unearthing intriguing social history. No wonder the home's panorama of owners and human dramas merited a book!

Over the ensuing 160 years (from the property's purchase in 1861 by John Colling), *Dovercourt* hosted a microcosm of Queensland history, which included a colonial architect, church minister, town mayor, schoolmaster, military officers, lawyers, judges and society hostesses. Many had close connections to Queensland premiers and community leaders. Even the family of commissioner John Bigge, whose recommendation was the catalyst for Brisbane itself, played a very personal role for almost a century.



The home owes its founding to English architect William Henry Ellerker, a name which rings a bell in this area, since he also designed Teneriffe House for James Gibbon.

Fast forward to 1867 when well known Brisbane auctioneer Arthur Martin managed the sale of *Dovercourt*



BY
Gillian McManus

to Walter Henshaw Snelling, his new son-in-law. Mr Snelling retained 'Dover Court Cottage' for the next 20 years although neither he nor his family lived there. This is the second link with Teneriffe House—which has been owned by the Snelling family for aeons.

Moving ahead to 1930 and the new owner of *Dovercourt* was Matthew Francis Bigge whose family had played a central role in the Australian colonies since 1819.

In 1933, Matthew Bigge married Eveline Julia Griffith 'Judith' Brown, and they eventually resided at *Dovercourt* in 1950. Judith was the grand-daughter of the former Queensland premier Sir Samuel Griffith.

Thanks to Judith several items once belonging to her celebrated grandfather at *Merthyr* (once in Moray St) made their way to *Dovercourt*, including the magnificent ballroom chandelier and the upright piano.

Learn much more about *Dovercourt* by viewing the presentation online [here](#). Thanks Harold, for a most engrossing account of a grand home.

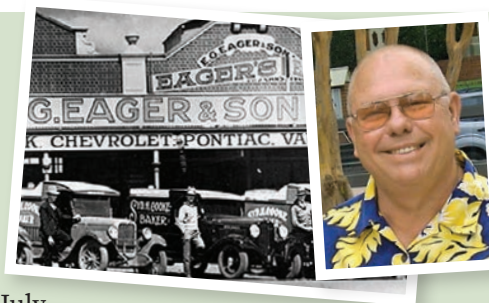
JULY MEETING

Lost Brisbane site invaluable

IF a picture is worth a thousand words, then John McDonnell's Lost Brisbane Facebook Community site, which is chock-full of images of yore, is worth its weight in gold.

John (pictured), who can often be heard on Radio ABC 612, is to be guest speaker at the July meeting of the New Farm & Districts Historical Society.

"I created Lost Brisbane in 2011 as a tribute to my father and grandfather, who told me so many stories about their childhoods in Brisbane," said John. "After



being overseas for 16 years, I returned to Brisbane in 2004 to find a city I could hardly recognise, so began my fascination with what life must have been like. The Lost Brisbane site is the result..."

Come and enjoy John's address to be held at the Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm, on Saturday, 23 July at 2.30pm. Afternoon tea is not to be missed! \$10 (members \$5). All welcome.

There are no strangers here; Only friends you haven't yet met... WB Yeats

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Desley Garnett

Society membership numbers grow

WHAT a pleasure at our June meeting to be able to announce that our **current membership** for the 2021-2022 year had passed 200! These are people who believe enough in what our Society stands for and undertakes, to want to clearly identify as a member. Thank you for standing with us in... *Collecting information from the past... Preserving it for the future.*

The total of **new members** in 2022 exceeds 50, 10 of those from our display stands at the election day polling booth and at the Teneriffe Festival. These are important activities for our volunteers to be involved in as they are simple ways for us to communicate with the local community and give them an insight into the rich history of this peninsula. I do hope we can all get to know each other over the coming months. In particular, new members who could not come to afternoon tea on 30 June are invited to join me on 14 July at 2.30 pm in the Ron Muir Room next to the New Farm Library.

The **historical walking tours** are another tool in our communication/marketing strategy. Our magnificent Brisbane Winter weather is ideal for walking tours, so we have scheduled several during these cooler months when the sun is toasty warm and not too severe as far as sun damage is concerned. (Sun screen is, of course, recommended even in Winter.) After a successful Art Deco in New Farm tour conducted by Santina, we have been contacted by a Brisbane Secondary College to conduct a similar tour for Year 9 students doing a unit on architecture. This will be a great opportunity to introduce these young people to seeing these houses as much more than just their architecture. There are many stories to be told about the people as well. See page four in this newsletter about the when and where of future walks.



Happy Historical Walkers: Tour leader Santina (front row, second from left) recently led more than 20 participants past exotic Art Deco locations in New Farm. Spots included Coronet Court, Elystan Court, Santa Barbara, Elron Court, Blairmore, Julius Street, and many more. The Art Deco walk is to be repeated on 20 August. Keen on taking a closer look at local history? See p. 4 for more walks and dates.

Lastly, I want to give you advanced notice about the **annual general meeting on 27 August**. Each AGM, all positions are declared vacant and we will be calling for nominations for the positions of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and several committee members. You might like to consider nominating for one of the positions, so please ask for more information about the roles.

As well as committee positions, we are also looking for a new **newsletter editor**. As mentioned in the last newsletter, Gerard Benjamin is retiring from this role that he has undertaken so diligently and expertly for the past 12 years. We have some ideas about how we can make the transition to a new editor, so please have a conversation with Desley as soon as possible if you see yourself fitting into continuing to produce an interesting newsletter as a communication tool with our members and friends. Also contact me if you want more information or have some ideas on finding a new editor. — Desley :: president@newfarmhistorical.org.au

FROM NFH FACEBOOK**Transformation on Mark St**

SOCIETY MEMBER **Ron Altmann** scouts for interesting photos and stories to feature on his "New Farm History" FB site, making it a mine of information—which in turn attracts comments from near and far.

This item about an attractive renovation at 5-7 Mark Street, New Farm, is one such example. It originally appeared on John Prpic's "Passing Time" FB site.

The two flats were built ca 1940 with a driveway down either side leading to a detached building in the centre of the large backyard which housed cars and laundry. Around June 2012, one of the flats was listed for rent at \$45,000 p.a.

Come August 2018, after being with one owner for 45



years, the property was sold for \$2.35M. Next followed the stylish conversion into the single dwelling as pictured.

One response to the original "Passing Time" posting came from JF: "OMG. I used to live in number 7!"

TXT TO EDITOR

Astor: Casting call for Colin...

IN 1955 there was a casting call for the movie *Smiley* at the Astor Theatre and my friend Colin Petersen was there. They turned him down at first and Colin went home. He changed out of the terylene suit and put some dirty clothes on and went back to the theatre to see what was happening. The director saw him and asked him to read a scene. He got the part of Smiley and the rest is history... — *Russell Davey (musician)*

N.B. The film had a "record-breaking box office career in Australia", plus enjoyed success in the UK.



Cinema vibe continues: Top: That's Colin on the left. Almost 30 years earlier (in 1928), the who's who of Brisbane car dealers gathered for their convention at the Astor, now New Farm Cinemas, 701 Brunswick St (cnr Barker St).

NEW BOOK

Utopian-Dystopian Brisbane

DR William (Bill) Metcalf, a long-term member of NFDHS, has just had his latest book released. *Brisbane: Utopian Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares* highlights little-known, peculiar aspects of Brisbane's colourful and highly contested history.

This book reveals eleven authors from the 19th and 20th centuries who wrote about how wonderful, 'utopian', Brisbane could become—or how dreadful, 'dystopian', it could also become.

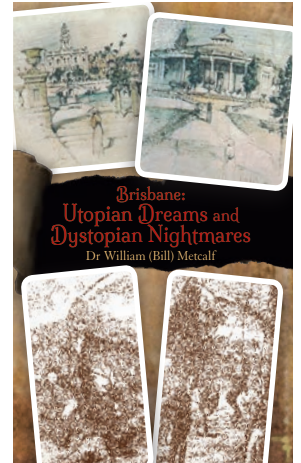
Some writers imagined a future utopian Brisbane where inequality has been eliminated, where everyone is prosperous, living in the most beautiful city with wide, tree-lined boulevards, wonderful opera-houses and museums, bubbling fountains and grand squares. They saw Brisbane becoming the centre of the civilised world, a model for humanity. Several authors and their stories had a New Farm link.

Other writers depicted Brisbane as having been annihilated, violently wiped off the face of the earth except for a few stone ruins overgrown with lantana. These dystopian images saw Brisbane residents enslaved in a racial, civil-war nightmare, beset with poverty and 'ethnic-cleansing' violence, their lives being precarious at best.

What led to these utopian and dystopian visions? Who were the visionaries? What do they tell us about a little-known part of Brisbane's quirky history?

Brisbane: Utopian Dreams and Dystopian Nightmares is the history of a wonderful or dreadful Brisbane that never eventuated—but could have. This well-illustrated book reveals all in a witty, sometimes disturbing way.

Available from Boolarong Press or at BHGBooks2022@gmail.com



CONNECTIONS

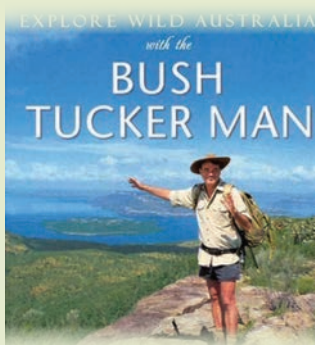
Name rings bush tucker bell

THE query about a photo which was received from Sandra Hiddins in Townsville (June newsletter, "Wellington House, Bowen Tce", p. 4) generated much interest, including curiosity about the name Hiddins.

Viewers of *The Bush Tucker Man* (ABC-TV, 1990s) recalled its host Les Hiddins with his characteristic Akubra hat.

The name certainly rang a bell with Tim Derrick from Kenmore who recalled that 50 years before, he and Les, both attached to the Intelligence section at 6 Battalion HQ, shared a tent when on army service as conscripts.

Could there be any connection between the



inquirer from Townsville and the Bush Tucker Man? When your Editor put the question to Sandra Hiddins, back came the reply, "I do indeed know Les—rather well in fact—as he's my husband." As a result, Tim and Les soon reconnected over the phone.

Sandra explains that Les is still interested in history and the outback. For instance, one story

on his [website](#) enables you to ponder the incredible possibility of a Dutch settlement 200km south-west of Alice Springs dating from well before Captain Cook.

"We headed off to that very remote area a few years back," wrote Sandra. "We hoped to find that elusive Dutch Guilder buried in the sand... but haven't managed it yet."



Heading for Montreal: A view of Chester St, with Teneriffe Dr. (formerly Wilson's Dr.) off to the left. The stylish house with the wrap-around verandah and turret once belonged to sawmill owner Robert Dath. The next owner was Edward McGuinness, formerly of Gympie. He was a lucky speculator in Gympie mines and also made successful land investments in the city of Vancouver, British Columbia. He died in 1912. His widow apparently named the residence "Montreal" after the city she most liked on their honeymoon decades earlier. The stone wall survives with heritage-listing. – *The Queenslander*, 12 Aug 1922, p. 26.



Morse Street Development: Julia of Teneriffe contacted the Society to express her concern about a Development Application (for 152 units) which has been submitted for Morse St, Newstead, just behind James St. "It proposes the demolition of several old industrial workshops. Comment on the DA closes on 12 July," she said. Unfortunately the Society has no information about the history of those buildings. Very close to the relevant site, the building pictured still bears faint signwriting for 'Austral Motors Pty Limited' and 'Farsley Motors'. Both businesses were once connected with the Tooth family (see *Reflections on New Farm*).

GSQ PRESENTATIONS

The Genealogical Society of Queensland (GSQ) is holding two special presentations in July and August.

SHAUNA HICKS presents: *'Researching the tail end of England: Cornwall, Devon, Somerset & Dorset'* – Saturday, 16 July 2022 at 9:00am AEST.

CHRIS PATON presents: *'Records of Daily Life in Ireland'* – Tuesday evening, 23 August 2022 at 7:00pm AEST.

Bookings for both presentations can only be made on our GSQ webpage: <https://www.gsq.org.au/gsq-events/>. For more information, feel free to contact Maureen Cavanagh :: mncav@hotmail.com

HISTORICAL WALKS

The Society is pleased to be offering HISTORICAL WALKS in the local area during July, August and September. You are invited to book and pay for the walks online via Eventbrite. Should you prefer not to use this method, please either email the Society on info@newfarmhistorical.org.au, or enquire at the next meeting, or phone for further information.

JULY

NEW FARM – OXLADE DRIVE & BEYOND:
9am, Saturday 9 July 2022

GERARD BENJAMIN will be your guide as you half-circle the peninsular (via Oxlade Dr, Maxwell & Moreton Sts) viewing locations of note for their architecture and social history. Tickets: \$30 (members \$20). Book via NFDHS or online at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).

JULY

TENERIFFE WOOLSTORES: 9am, Saturday 30 July 2022

BEN PRITCHARD will lead a leisurely walk around Teneriffe to discover the story and the secrets of the woolstores that have dominated the suburb for over 100 years – and it's not just about wool! Tickets: \$30 (members \$20). Book via NFDHS or online at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).

AUGUST

DISCOVER NEW FARM'S ART DECO GEMS:
9am, Saturday 20 August 2022

SANTINA MUSUMECI has a passion for the Art Deco style, and she will conduct you past a selection of the suburb's 'in vogue' homes and flat complexes, many designed by leading architects of the day. Tickets: \$30 (members \$20). Book via NFDHS or online at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).

SEPTEMBER

BOWEN HILLS – WHERE CLOUDLAND WAS ONCE TOP SPOT:
8:30am, Saturday 10 September 2022

GERARD BENJAMIN will be your guide for a closer look at Bowen Hills, once home of magical Cloudland Ballroom. Also to be seen: beautiful homes, a theatre, a church and lots more. Tickets: \$30 (members \$20). Book via NFDHS or online at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).



Photos: Gerard Benjamin, Santina Musumeci, Jack Wheeler

Design and Layout: G. Benjamin



MANY THANKS TO
Grace Grace MP
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Committee: Austin Adams and Ben Pritchard
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A good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit... — Milton

V | news

archives



GERARD BENJAMIN

After 25 years, at last it became 'Smithy's Drive'

At 10.14am on Saturday 9 June 1928, Charles Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross touched down on the grass at Eagle Farm after the epic, pioneering 11,600km flight across the Pacific.

A crowd of 10,000 thronged to see "Smithy" and crewmen Charles Ulm, Harry Lyon and James Warner as they boarded a Dodge open tourer (from Austral Motors) and headed to City Hall.

At the corner of Riverside Tce and the Hamilton Rd (as it was then called), the entourage paused so that the aviator could point out to his crew where the house in which he had been born once stood.

The previous year, Kingsford Smith and Ulm had flown around Australia in record time. Kingsford Smith was gradually becoming a household name and people remembered their connections with the family.

My mother's great-uncle, Surveyor Monk (of Kuranda railway fame), in 1887 stood against R.A. Kingsford, the aviator's grandfather, for the mayoralty of Cairns.

In Rockhampton the surveyor's mother had known William C. Smith who had once been among the town's bank managers. Years earlier he had married Miss Kingsford. Charles, their seventh child, was born in 1897.

It was because of my father that Smithy was revered when I was growing up. Sunday afternoon drives to the old Eagle Farm airport usually included a walk around The Southern Cross memorial.

I assumed that the plane was a replica since the fabric-covered airframe looked so flimsy. It was a shock to learn that it was the real thing.



En route to their reception at the Brisbane City Hall, (from left) Charles Kingsford Smith, Harry Lyon [navigator] and James Warner [radio operator], with Charles Ulm seated in front. – SLQ 135100

Only years later, when compiling my father's memoirs, did I understand why he so esteemed the aviator.

In July 1932 when my father was a nine-year-old, Kingsford Smith, billed as "the world's greatest flyer", arrived in Rockhampton for a civic welcome.

Later, a silent film about the cross-Pacific flight was shown with the star flyer supplying the "talkie" part.

Also on offer were joy flights.

As my father wrote: "My mate Doug and I decided it would do no harm to suggest to our parents that we take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Contrary to expectations they agreed, and that afternoon, Mum, Dad, Doug and I piled into the trusty old Dodge and drove out to Connor Park Aerodrome".

"I found myself seated in the cabin of the famous Southern Cross only a few feet away from the great man himself, being interviewed by a reporter from the local Morning Bulletin," he wrote.

My father's reaction was probably echoed by many other lucky Aussies of the era: "The joy-flight, although only 15 minutes, was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life."

Little could the youthful Keith

Benjamin imagine that just over three years later, Smithy's luck would run out off the coast of Burma on a flight from England, where his plane crashed in November 1935.

In 1938, one idea of honouring the aviator was to rename Riverview Tce but World War II interrupted deliberations. At last in 1953, Hamilton Rd was redesignated and the headline would read, "It's Smithy's Drive now."

The 7km stretch of road was considered a fitting tribute to the man who conquered the track from Oakland in California, via Hawaii and Suva, to Brisbane, with a flying time of 83 hours and 38 minutes.

Fast forward to the rejuvenated Kingsford Smith Drive, which has been well enhanced by landscaping and tree-planting. Come 2028, with its centenary of Smithy's heroic flight, those trees are likely to look as if they had always been there.

MONTHLY HISTORY COLUMN
from MY VILLAGE NEWS
(Inner North)
NOVEMBER 2020