



# NEW FARM & DISTRICTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September 2022

Vol XXVII No 8

## AUGUST MEETING

On the final winter Saturday of 2022, 85 amateur historians gathered to hear the Prince's Tale by professional historian and journalist, Robert Allen. This was a potted history of the Prince Consort Hotel in Wickham Street, the Valley. From its design by Richard Gailey in 1887 we followed its progress to the grand opening the following year, its eventual heritage listing and continued patronage today.



The hotel was originally named after Prince Albert, husband and consort of Queen Victoria. After a short period where it was renamed the Elephant and Wheelbarrow, the original name has recently been reinstated.

Over its 134 year life, cultural changes in the Valley have been reflected in the hotel. In the early days it was a drinking establishment and meeting place for patrons, Masons and Oddfellows. As the Valley's population grew with wharves and extended train lines, bedrooms and billiard rooms were added to accommodate travellers and salesmen. With the advent of electric trams in 1891 and the floods of 1893, retail business moved from South Brisbane to Fortitude Valley. Department stores opened and brought more business to the Prince Consort Hotel. In 1940 the Story Bridge opened and this also brought more patrons, including residents from the southside and American soldiers.

In the 1960's and 70's people moved to new housing in the suburbs, the department stores closed, trams stopped running and Wickham Street became a highway. The feel and purpose of the Valley changed.

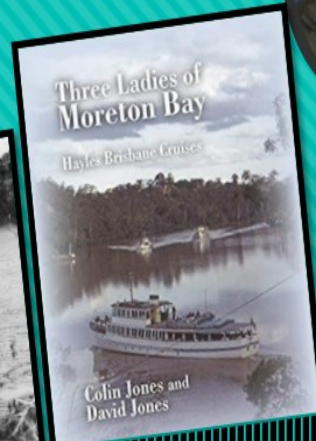
Fortunately a Labour government under Goss was elected in 1989 and the hotel was heritage listed, preventing its demise. After the Fitzgerald Inquiry in the late 1980s, a criminal element meant that Fortitude Valley was a place to be avoided. However, the Brisbane renewal plan at the same time allowed weekend markets and music venues to flourish. A major restoration occurred in 2020, retaining the original 134-year-old public bar, creating eight different venues in the hotel, and giving Brisbane and the Valley another piece of her heritage for all to admire and enjoy.

Joanna Phillips



New Farm and Districts Historical Society presents:

Speaker:  
David Jones



## Three Ladies of Moreton Bay: Mirimar, Mirabel and Mirana

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 2:30 pm

Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm

[www.newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au)  
Enquiries: 0409 498 403

“Three Ladies of Moreton Bay”, Mirimar, Mirana and Mirabel are well remembered by the people of Brisbane for their bay and river trips. Car access to the beaches was not as easy as it is today, and Hayles Launches provided a novel experience on the water for people whose life was otherwise shore-bound.

The story of the “Three Ladies of Moreton Bay” will bring back very happy memories of times spent aboard these vessels shared with others who are dear to you.

## A JOB WELL DONE

Gerard Benjamin was awarded Life Membership at the recent meeting of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society in recognition of 11 years as volunteer editor of the monthly newsletter. He was presented with an engraved glass sculpture to recognise his extraordinary service to the society. The newsletter is delivered each month to more than 1300 members and friends and has received many accolades over the years. The Society uses the newsletter as its main form of communication with members and friends and keeping us connected through the COVID times when meeting together was not possible. Over the years, the newsletter has helped many people connect to further information about their families and the residences of their forebears through letters to the editor in reply to items in the newsletter. Gerard has retired from the role of editor of the newsletter. He will continue to contribute to enhancing the historical knowledge of the historical society and its members and friends.



Gerard receiving his Life Membership Award

## WHAT IS IT?

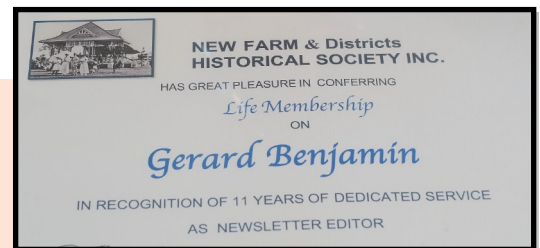


**Q:** This cost saving tool has been kept for 70 years since it was used on a farm. Do you know what it was used for?

**A:** Wooden boxes, used to pack fruit and vegetables, were branded by spray painting a stencil on their sides. Farmers put a blade in this tool and scraped off the old stencil, replacing it with their own brand.

## President's Report

As I write, it is just 3 days after the Annual General Meeting at which 85 people were present. Thank you for entrusting me with the role of President for another 12 months. We welcomed 2 new members to the committee – Bruna Burello Day and Robert Allen. We farewell Austin Adams and thanked him for his contribution to the committee.



With Gerard Benjamin retiring as Newsletter Editor after 11 years, we took the opportunity to award him Life Membership of the Society for his extraordinary contribution. This edition, we also welcome our new Editor. Thank you, Emma Golder, for volunteering your services. Please send your articles or photos for the newsletter to [info@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@newfarmhistorical.org.au).

By the time you receive this newsletter, the new committee will have already met and will be setting the priorities for the next 12 months. We welcome your ideas for projects the society could take on and we look for your offer to volunteer your time and expertise to lead or assist in various roles.

It's busy at the Saturday afternoon meetings with around 80 people present, so let's get together on Thursday afternoons for a cuppa and chat at the office at 135 Sydney St, New Farm. In particular, I invite all new members to visit us on Thursday 15th September around 2:30 pm.

Desley Garnett

## Living In History

You've heard of living history where people create scenes from the past to give us a sense of what it used to be like? Lace dresses and gas lanterns aside, how different is it to live in an historic home? In this series we visit some old houses in the district and ask the owners why they chose a life of Brasso and beeswax over straight walls and wipe down surfaces.

Firstly we meet the Bowmans who started married life in a 1914 Queenslander in Bulimba long before Bulimba became the fashionable suburb it is today. Over ten years they renovated without a finished plan. Hence the same wall was built and demolished three or maybe four times.

Their greatest regret was not purchasing Bulimba House when it sold in the 70's.

Coming full circle they have left modern houses behind and settled in the Winchcombe Carson building. What is it like to live in the Woolstores?

Beverley Bowman writes...

Over 56 years we have accumulated many pieces of older furniture which we have always managed to accommodate in our modern homes, including a brass kerosene lantern, not gas. Now we have found a home suitable to our style. High ceilings and space have always been a priority for us and here we have both those characteristics, as well as wonderful breezes from the river. In speaking with other residents, it is these two elements which influenced their choice.

An appreciation of a sense of history is also a common theme. The concept of living where a thriving business was first set up more than 100 years ago, with remnants of that enterprise contained in the building is of strong significance. As you walk through the three storey atrium, with its huge hardwood posts, you must appreciate the abilities of the architects and builders who constructed the building in 1911. Sometimes I imagine I can hear the bustle of the wool classes and the excitement of an auction.



### Someone knew something...

When the Woolstores were being redeveloped in the 90's a builder working on the site souvenired a bale hook. Knowing the Bowman's interest in antiques he gave it to them. Thirty years later they still have it and it's back where it came from.



As was usual at that time, timber was widely used. Windows in our Bulimba house were red cedar and silky oak. The posts and rafters in this building are constructed from hard wood trees of great size and age. They invite you to touch them as you walk by. While we regret the loss of the trees, we very much love our posts.

The joy of walking through a short lane to access our city's river boardwalk is a daily pleasure. So many dogs of all shapes and sizes, folk walking, running, cycling, scootering... Careful of the speedy ones. In the mornings, the sun across the water starts the day off well, with ferries moving smoothly up and down the river, occasional workboats making their earnest, steady way, even a gondola occasionally. So pleased we are to keep the wooden ferry operating between here and Bulimba. In the dusk and evenings there are cool summer breezes and the moonlight on the river is a delight. Restaurants and coffee shops are all close by, catering to our needs and the many dogs who have adapted to apartment living. Such a dog friendly suburb.

After just three years, we feel right about our building and environment, very pleased to have made our move. As we walk through the imposing facade, we enter a building which wears its industrial heritage with pride, honest and strong.

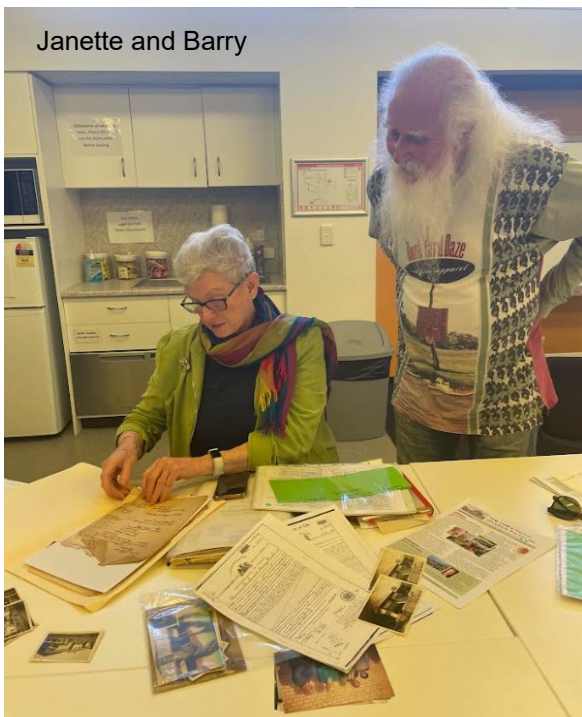


**From left clockwise.** Heavy timbers, each one once an entire tree, are as integral to the structure as the aesthetic.

The kerosene lamp thought to be missing parts and kept in storage for more than thirty years turned out to be complete and very beautiful.

The Winchcombe Carson façade unchanged since 1911.

## Welcome New Member

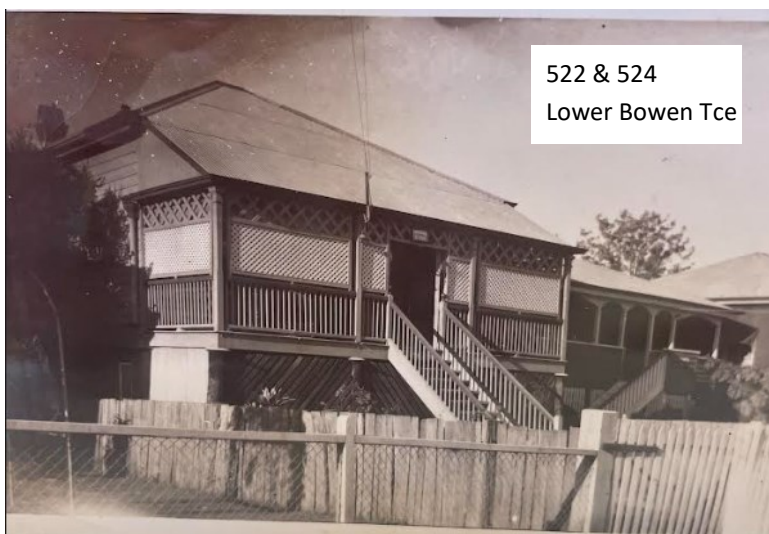


Janette and Barry

Janette Whiteway contacted the NFDHS asking if anyone could help with information relating to her family dairy farm in Lower Bowen Terrace. A call was put out to members for information and Barry came to her assistance as the next door neighbour of her grandparents, friend to her uncle and owner of one of two houses built on the site. Meeting up in the society headquarters they swapped stories, photos and goosebumps. Janette started researching her family history in 1984 when her parents were soon to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. In 1987 she gave her mother an exercise book for Christmas with a simple request written inside for her to record her stories. Her mum filled the book. We welcome Janette to the society as a new member and look forward to much more of this story to emerge, including extracts from her mother's records.

Thomas and Mary Sheils with their three children (Mary, Ellen and John) arrived in Moreton Bay on 3 October 1883 and set foot on land in Brisbane on October 4. A majority of the passengers were from Scotland and travelled on assisted passage. The family first went to the Lutwyche area where Thomas obtained work as an iron moulder. From arrival to 1885/87 the family remained at Lutwyche. Young John died a month after the family arrived in Brisbane and then the first child born here, Jane, died at 13 months. Another child, Margaret Jane, known as Jane, was born in June 1885 in Lutwyche.

After this the Post Office Directory notes Thomas and Mary living in "Kingsholme Street, right hand side between Brown and Villiers Streets". They seem to have stayed there, Tom still registered as a moulder, until 1896 when he resurfaces at Oxley with employment as a bacon curer. The simplest explanation for the change of employ would be to make more money to buy a property for his family. Barry was able to provide deed documents to prove that this ensued. The couple called the house at 522 Bowen Terrace 'Tweedside Cottage', reminiscent of the area of Scotland from where they came. The



property was to become a small dairy, supplying locally. The year was 1901. When Janette revisited her mother's journal she found later reference to the dairy.

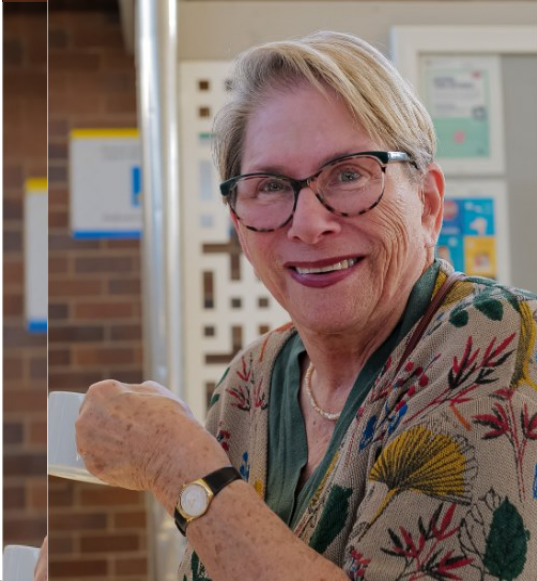
*"While this house (18 Bowen Tce) was being built the Johnsons (mum and her mother and step father) lived in the storeroom of the dairy under the house at 522 Lower Bowen Terrace. The dairy business by this stage had been sold to Bell Bros."*

By the 1920's they sold the block next door, 524 Bowen Terrace, where Barry lives today. Thomas Shiels would have been in his late 50's to early 60's by this time. After his wife died he went to live with his daughter Jane Johnson and her family. Jane bought the house from her siblings upon the death of Thomas and converted it to flats, renaming it MEVTRA. These letters stand for Mum, Edna, Vera, Tom, Roy and Alec, Jane's embracement of the next generation and new life for the old house.

Next time Janette kindly shares extracts from her mother's recollections...



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**New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc.** The office is located at the front of the Ron Muir Meeting Room beside New Farm Library. 135 Sydney St  
Office hours Thursday 2-4pm.  
Postal Address: PO Box 1141 NEW FARM 4005.  
Email: info@newfarmhistorical.org.au

**President** Desley Garnett 0409 498 403  
president@newfarmhistorical.org.au  
**Vice President** Malcolm Godfrey

**Minutes Secretary** Virginia Balmain  
**Committee** Ben Pritchard, Bruna Burello-Day, Robert Allen

**Treasurer** Denise Buckby  
**Newsletter Editor** Emma Golder  
goodasgolder@gmail.com

# Historical Walking Tours of New Farm and District

**Newstead and Bowen Hills: Cloudland, homes, a theatre and a church**

**Sat, Sep 10, 8:30 AM**

Gasworks Plaza • Newstead, QLD

Starts at A\$20.00

New Farm & Districts Historical Society

g 40 followers



**Twilight Walking Tour - Discover New Farm's Art Deco gems**

**Sat, Sep 17, 3:30 PM**

New Farm Park • New Farm, QLD

Starts at A\$20.98

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**Woolstores and Warships**

**Sun, Sep 25, 2:00 PM**

Macquarie Street & Beeston Street • Teneriffe, QLD

Starts at A\$20.00

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g 40 followers



## Testimonial

My wife and I are extremely grateful to Santina for the wonderful Art Deco tour of New Farm she conducted today. We were part of a group of about 20 enthusiastic participants who eagerly followed Santina around the streets of New Farm hanging on every word of her thoroughly researched stories and facts about some of the best examples of Brisbane's Art Deco architecture. Santina's knowledge and enthusiasm for the topic made this so engaging for us. I would highly recommend this tour. BB



# The 'derring-do' doctor of Merthyr Rd

archives



**GERARD BENJAMIN**

AJR was a young man in his 30s who liked fast cars (he bought the newest Paige roadster in 1927), fast boats (his 14ft hydroplane Skee-Jee could clock 35mph on Milton Reach in 1928), fast pups (he ran a successful string of racing greyhounds), and big boats (his palatial 94ft Stradbroke II, the 'Queen of Queensland Yachts', built at Newstead in 1928, was the largest privately-owned motor yacht of the day).

'Derring-do' might have been AJR's middle name. In January 1928, he was keen to boat at speed up the Queensland coast in Skee-Jee, yet another wild exploit which had his friends "frowning their brows". Two years later, accompanied by a cinematographer, he wanted to make a film about several islands on the Great Barrier Reef.

As a black belt in jiu jitsu (judo), AJR gave a talk and a demonstration at Tattersall's Club in Brisbane, was filmed showing members of the police force its merits, and boasted that he could uncover the reported 'Jack the Ripper' who was terrorising Dusseldorf in 1929. His approach? Dress as a woman. "I could carry a revolver secreted in the upper part of my silk stockings," he told the reporter, plus his jiu jitsu would come in handy.

The enterprising AJR also came up with the remarkable scheme of establishing a modern Paradise in the Pacific. He wanted to finance 14 honeymoon couples (from Australia and New Zealand) who would farm around 24 acres each on Sunday Island, situated 600 miles north of Auckland. The peopling of this new Eden was a "sporting adventure" with him. As he told one reporter, he "pictures a new, sturdy, perhaps even a perfect, race growing up under his supervision."

This eccentric individual was Dr Arthur John "Jack" Ross (ca 1893-1971) who practised in Edward St, Brisbane, and also, from 1935, at 1 Merthyr Rd, New Farm, when the charming Old English style villa named "The Moorings", overlooking the river, was

completed for Ross and his wife by prominent architect, Mervyn Rylance.

The medico, born in the West Indies, was the son of J.C. Ross, a merchant who traded in the Orient. Jack had learned jiu jitsu as a teenager in Japan and China and was considered to be the founder of this martial art in Brisbane.

The doctor's father had been established in Japan for 31 years, and was as frank as his son about expressing his views in print. Five months after the Japanese began the invasion of Manchuria, Mr Ross opined (in 1932): "The Japanese control of Manchuria... would be for the better of all nations concerned."

Meanwhile, in November 1934, following a six-month stay in Japan, Jack Ross lauded the merits of 'Japan's new car, the Datsun'. "It was rather like a Baby Austin or a Triumph in build," he told the newspaper.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbour, suspicion naturally fell upon someone so familiar with Japan and fluent in its language. Adding this to the doctor's boating skill, his knowledge of the Queensland coast, and his house being just across from a key dockyard, and it was no wonder that, as a possible



The Moorings, the Old English style home completed in 1934 for Dr and Mrs A.J. Ross, overlooks the river at Merthyr Rd.

'agent of influence', Dr ('Jappy') Ross was interned for two years.

There is much more to this flamboyant character than meets the eye, as two Brisbane authors have highlighted. Whatever the judgement upon the man, the desirable home that he commissioned in the 1930s continues to enhance the entrance to the New Farm Riverwalk.

MANY THANKS TO

**Grace Grace MP**

Member for McConnel

(07) 3145 9100

For printing the newsletter



**MY VILLAGE**  
news



**Coles New**

**Farm** for the

generous

supply of

afternoon tea

at monthly

meetings.