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NEW FARM & DISTRICTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

May 2023

Vol XXVIII No 4

APRIL REPORT by Maria Shaw

Vast, Empty and Almost undefended—Australia and the Pensacola Convoy
 With Anzac Day looming it was fitting that our April meeting heard Brian Martin's *Pensacola Convoy* address. Eighty-five of us took this opportunity to reflect on the radical adaptations required by great powers and small when war erupts while you're busy acting on wishful thinking and assumptions - on other plans. I for one noted the huge consequences of the decisions made by Allied leaders who often differed on goals or were in outright opposition to proposed responses. Today living on a peaceful continent without war raging throughout our region, it's easy to think that the outcome of war in the Pacific was inevitable.

It was never quite so assured in those years between the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 and 17 August, 1945. The Allied Plan 'A' had unravelled. New strategies were required fast. Imagine this: America's Pacific base had been decimated in the sneak attack; Australia's major fighting forces were in North Africa and Malaya; Japanese air, naval and land forces were establishing themselves through Asia and the islands of the Pacific. Japanese forces were moving further south.

Things had changed swiftly and radically. Indeed the U.S. Philippines base soon proved indefensible and surrendered to Japan. Throughout the Indo-Pacific Japan had strategically out-manoeuvred the allies. Is it any surprise then that the people of Brisbane lined the riverbanks to cheer the unscheduled arrival of this American convoy on 22 December 1941? The British wanted the U.S. troops, supplies and equipment sent to Singapore; Gen. MacArthur wanted them in the Philippines; some U.S. voices wanted a return to the U.S. Wisdom prevailed, however and the U.S. Convoy of four cruisers, two transports and two merchantmen (inc.1 Dutch ship was dispatched to safety in Brisbane).

On 22 December 1941 the convoy's arrival via Suva under the protection of the cruiser *USS Pensacola*, heralded the beginning of the American-Australian Alliance. Lennons Hotel became the temporary American HQ and officers' accommodation. Troops camped in tents at the Ascot and Hamilton racecourses. Throughout the war naval vessels refuelled at Newstead Wharf.* Do you remember those three huge oil storage tanks set against the rockface at Windsor? Oil was piped from here down to the wharves for refuelling.

Among locals watching these operations were our speaker and his father. Brian has maintained his interest in naval matters and these days researches "all things transportation". His depth of knowledge provided us with helpful clear and detailed maps of the evolving situation throughout the Pacific - essential to any understanding of such a crucial and geographically vast theatre of war.

With the fall of the Philippines, Douglas MacArthur was ordered to Australia and promoted to General, Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific. It was he who had remarked that this country was "vast, empty and almost undefended". The rest, as they say, is history.

*In commemoration of its significant contribution to our history and to eventual victory in the Pacific, Brisbane has proclaimed an area at Brett's Wharf, Hamilton, 'Pensacola Place' .



Guest Speaker Brian Martin

April Meeting Anzac Afternoon Tea



Meet the Members– Margaret Yeates



I fell in love with New Farm as a six year old when visiting from a tiny quiet town in Nth Queensland. The park, the trees, the buildings, the trams, the river and the pleasant bustle all fascinated me.

As soon as I left boarding school I went into a flat with other college students in Moreton St and we seemed to have a never ending party. That didn't seem to bother the neighbours as New Farm was even then the most cosmopolitan area of Brisbane and it was close to the action.


I continued to live in various flats for several years and married in the Holy Spirit Church which will always be special to me. These days I visit on any excuse as it is my favourite place to catch up with friends and locals or walk along the riverside.

Behind a near century-old local business, Rayners Meats, is the story of a family with deep roots in New Farm. Fay Rayner, now 93 years old, arrived in the suburb in 1948 from country Queensland to train as a teacher. Eventually she met and married Ken Rayner, the son of the Village butcher, established in the 1920s. In her presentation, Fay will share reminiscences of her 70 years in New Farm, assisted by her daughter and former journalist Janne (nee Rayner).



New Farm and Districts Historical Society presents:

RAYNER'S MEATS AND THE FAMILY BEHIND THE BUSINESS

The story of the near century old local business – Rayner's Meats in Brunswick St and the Rayner family's deep roots in New Farm.



Speaker: Fay Rayner assisted by Janne Hamilton

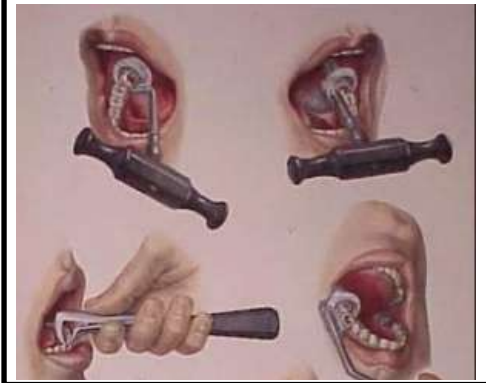



Saturday 20th May 2:30 pm
 Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm
www.newfarmhistorical.org.au
 Enquiries: 0409 498 403

What Is It?



A Fothergill Extractor Key. The extractor key is an instrument used in dentistry to remove diseased teeth. The extractor key was first mentioned in Alexander Monro's Medical Essays and Observations in 1742 but had been in use from about 1730. It remained in use into the 20th century when it was replaced by forceps.



Archbishop's Residence Fence Restoration



The beautiful sandstone and cast iron fence at the mansion on Brunswick St is undergoing a restoration. The original fence was rendered many years ago to prevent the rock from disintegrating from weather elements. Workmen are removing the old render in preparation for new. The metalwork will be repaired and repainted to preserve it.



President's Message May 2023

This month I want to focus on the Teneriffe Festival (27 th May) which has been held since 2010. Whilst the nature of the festival has changed over those years, the organisers still want to maintain the focus on the history of the suburb. The event was conceived to mark Teneriffe's officially becoming a suburb in its own right after 150 years, showcasing its rich heritage in Brisbane's history and celebrating its current lifestyle appeal. It had the tag-line "Wool, wool stores and wharves".

With the continuing emphasis on the significant history of the area, we as the historical society have an important part to play. We will again have a marquee where we display many photos of the area as it was – visitors to our stand like to compare them with those same sites as they are today. We also show a film of a 1956 tram ride from South Brisbane to New Farm Park that is of interest to young and old alike. (Not Teneriffe, but still of interest!)

So, on Saturday 27 th May, ... the marquee will be set up, the film ready to show ... all we need is some of our folk to be available to talk with passers-by. We will have newsletters and Information flyers available and will encourage folk to sign up to receive the newsletter and become members. Can you spare 2 hours between 10 am and 4 pm? Please let me know by emailing info@newfarmhistorical.org.au or phone me on 0409 498 403. Stuart is organising the bus tours of Teneriffe where the volunteer guides share historical information about sites as the restored BCC bus passes. Email us if you would like to be involved as a tour guide.

The other significant festival currently underway is the Australian Heritage Festival. You can find out about the Queensland activities at the National Trust Qld website <https://nationaltrustqld.org.au/what-we-do/heritage-festival>. There are some wonderful and interesting events waiting for you - start making plans for the events you want to attend!

Desley Garnett. President.



Members who grew up singing "God Save the King" sang it once again at our April meeting in preparation for the coronation.



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.

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Lost and Found: Uncovering History One House at a Time



Old houses were built to last with solid old growth timber, plaster walls and copper plumbing. They are more decorative with high ornate ceilings, elaborate windows and polished timber floors. An historic home is more than a place to live. They have a living history in which new owners suddenly find themselves immersed. Some owners wonder who lived here before? Who built it? What were they like?

Many house hunters love old houses and here that often means Queensland style homes. Built of similar materials in similar styles, how do you determine the differences? The process can be likened to detailing a family tree which is the more common project to undertake than finding the history of a house but as anyone who has done so can attest, it becomes a long-term hobby.

Could there be an easier way? With a science degree, a love of architecture and over fifteen years as an historian, Marianne Taylor is a self-confessed “tragic history nerd” uncovering the secrets of houses Australia wide. She is one of a kind—the only house detective in Australia. Officially though her title is “architectural historian”.

Notably trained as a scientist with honours in chemistry, Marianne had an early love of history which led her to volunteer at the National Trust and the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. Finding a passion that captivated her, she studied further to achieve a Graduate Diploma of Local, Family and Applied History through the

University of New England, choosing heritage conservation, archeology and architectural history subjects as her focus areas. Work experience with the Environmental Protection Agency led to a temporary position and consequently a full-time position. Three years later in 2010 she undertook the enormous role of Heritage Strategist for Queensland Rail, overseeing the preservation of more than 500 sites including the restoration of Roma Street Train Station and a slew of tunnels, bridges and signals. The role was a proud achievement for our House Detective but aspirations to set up her own business could be suppressed no more and she relaunched herself as a private consultant who now is 80% focussed on uncovering the secrets of private dwellings.

Her first job, Bermeysyde at Highgate Hill, confirmed every hope Marianne had that she had made the right decision.



At first inspection she found an original gas light fitting still in situ, the old copper boiler and an underground cool storage cupboard. That the house had been extensively changed over the years since 1895/6 when it was originally

Lost and Found: Uncovering History One House at a Time contd...

constructed only incentivised our House Detective who then determined the core of the house, established the probable floorplan and figured out that access between floors was via a veranda staircase. Gratifyingly, after her work on the house was completed a photograph emerged which confirmed her report. Initial success and curious owners led to more work and 2022 was to date her busiest year.



Aerial maps pinpoint when a house was constructed

Marianne branched out interstate then nationwide to larger homes and rural properties, establishing a greater skill set. If inner city homes have very sketchy details of extensions recorded in the city archives, rural properties pose a far greater problem. Marianne has had to adapt, improvise and overcome on some projects but also acknowledges the role of luck. On a recent project in Bellingen she was turning up blanks until the granddaughter of the original owners surfaced after a single well directed message with a helpful family tree. A long term memory of the house provided a first hand account to assist her on her way.

Marianne is very generous with her knowledge and advises everybody to “have a go” at analysing a house. Her advice is to start by looking at the architectural style which will give you a rough idea of when it was built but the most concrete evidence will come from the Titles Office. The subdivision of a larger land parcel will indicate the intention of housing construction but this may happen over time and repeatedly. Several blocks may be owned by one person though when these are further subdivided there is a clearer indication that construction is imminent and often within a year or two a single dwelling will result. From here postal records,

census recordings, aerial photos, sewerage maps and building approvals start to tell a story.

It is her scientific background, double checking and evaluating, assessing of evidence, methodical referencing and lateral thinking that fill in the gaps. Using a professional eliminates some of the emotional aspect of investigation. Owners can be invested in small details they believe to be true on hearsay but are not able to be proven.

Marianne advises that easiest houses to research are the ones of wealthy families or very socially active families as their lives are reported in the newspapers and accessible through Trove. Trove makes fascinating reading with lengthy descriptions of dresses and floral decorations. Articles report bridge parties and bon voyages for extended overseas tours and make enchanting reading of a slower, grander time for present home owners.

The interest people had in their dwellings intensified during Covid when the family home became the focus of daily activities. Marianne was called to investigate increasingly more homes that were wider afield, necessitating the mastery of interstate data bases and evaluation of found evidence. Has she ever been completely stumped? No, she has never been able to find nothing about a house although sometimes luck has been pivotal. The investigation of a house seems as varied and fluid as the lives of old houses themselves. Never knowing where a project might take her or what she might find, there is one constant—Marianne does all her best thinking in the shower. The House Detective offers a program on her website advising on the

basics if you would like to try your own research or she available for consultation.

A building application data card from the Archives. The card contains handwritten information in blue ink. At the top, it says "MURRAY AND ASSOCIATES OF LAUREL - 'GARDEN CITY'". Below that, there are several sections with fields for "NAME", "ADDRESS", "SUBDIVISION", "DATE", "TIME", "MATERIAL", "REMARKS", and "APPROVED FOR". The card is filled with detailed notes and dates, including "1918-1919" and "1920-1921".

Building application Data stored at the archives on cards.



Gerard Benjamin

Growing up in Villiers Street: Bev Bergstrum's recollections

At the age of 91, Bev Bergstrum (nee Strong; pictured) had no hesitation about recording, for the Historical Society, her memories of growing up in New Farm. Her six closely-written pages of recollections paint a charming picture of life centred on 106 Villiers St, near the corner of Kingsholme St. Bev's parents had moved there from the country just before Bev was born in 1931.



At the age of 91, Bev Bergstrum (nee Strong; pictured) had no hesitation about recording, for the Historical Society, her memories of growing up in New Farm. Her six closely-written pages of recollections paint a charming picture of life centred on 106 Villiers St, near the corner of Kingsholme St. Bev's parents had moved there from the country just before Bev was born in 1931.

The house even had a river view. It was the Depression and finding work was hard. Mrs Hockings next door had a hotelier brother who catered for Doomben and Albion Park races. When she offered Bev's mother work on race day, she jumped at the chance. "She was paid something like one shilling for the day, an amount not to be scoffed at," wrote Bev. Best of all, it would be ongoing—plus there was an objective in mind: "My mother wanted to upgrade to an electric iron."

Bev was only two when a new friend, Joan Kiely, arrived. In an accident while working on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Joan's father had lost a leg. He was a carpenter and luckily found work locally building wool stores.

Down towards Macquarie St lived Mrs Loughery with her Irish lilt. Each morning she walked her cows up to a paddock above Annie St, before later bringing them down for milking underneath her house.

"There was a paddock on Macquarie St, and during the war, trenches were dug there and we children had fun playing in and out of them," writes Bev.

"Opposite New Farm Wharf, Mrs McEwen's shop sold papers and general items. When the Americans

arrived, practically every store was turned into a hamburger shop."

Ice, milk and bread came to the house via horse-and-cart traders, usually with treats for the children. The horse droppings were just the thing for a neighbour's garden.

If the family needed bread on Thursday (no delivery that day), Bev would walk to McMahons in Terrace St for a loaf fresh from the oven—then pick at the crust all the way home.

She knew all the shops in the area, including the one in Merthyr Rd where young Max Wiley not only gave Bev a cone-shaped packet of broken biscuits but always added 'one whole cream biscuit'. "Sadly, he didn't come home, killed in action. All my life I have never forgotten his kindness to a little girl," recalled Bev.

Other names came to mind: Monica Cryan's father was a bodybuilder (motor car door

repairs), and Mr Les Richmond from Charles St was the talented organist at the Regent Theatre.

Before turning five, Bev had started at Holy Spirit when classes were held in a big old Queenslander before the new building was finished. After she left school, she was one of more than 80 debutantes at a grand ball at Cloudland presided over by Cardinal Spellman of New York.

Naturally Bev has question marks about some details—and here, resources such as Trove and Ancestry often assist. For instance, the 'kind young man' was RAAF Sgt Maxwell Wyllie whose widowed mother lived at 116 Sydney St. After being shot down in July 1942, he bailed out and was taken prisoner. Sadly, months later, in an attempted escape, he was fatally shot near Krakow where he is buried.

Thanks to Bev for offering this valuable snapshot of an earlier era.



The view from 106 Villiers, showing the house on the corner with Kingsholme St, and the river beyond.



106 Villiers St today (above) enjoys city views (below)




MANY THANKS TO

Grace Grace MP

Member for
McConnel

(07) 3145 9100




MY **VILLAGE**
news



Coles New Farm for the generous supply of afternoon tea at monthly meetings.