



NEW FARM & *Districts* HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AUGUST 2009

Presented by Ross Garnett

It gives me much pleasure to present my fifth annual report as President of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society.

This has been an exciting and busy year as we have celebrated 15 years of operation as a Society. We commend Councillor Hinchliffe for leading a walk of historic sites in New Farm in June 1994, which then led to the establishment of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society. In the past year, as an enthusiastic “15 year old teenager”, we ventured into the world of publishing, and established our own website. More about those things later.

Committee: I want to start by acknowledging the commitment of members of the committee over the past year. This past year has required a great commitment to serving the Society.

Beryl Wogan, our treasurer, left us in November 2008 and proved to be a very difficult act to follow. Many thanks to Beryl who for some time took on the double role of Treasurer and Secretary with her usual enthusiasm and organization. We had some time without an official treasurer until Kim Ferguson agreed to take on the role. She undertook to catch up the financial records and we thank her for her work over a couple of months. Then Brooke Noble came to our rescue as a replacement treasurer, but unfortunately she has been transferred and will be leaving the area in September. Our thanks to Brooke for getting our financial affairs back on track.

Our Vice President, Gordon Neilsen left the committee late in 2008, after what was a long and much appreciated stint of duty. We thank you Gordon for your contribution to the Society, especially those elegantly written reports of the Society's meetings. Another long term member of the Committee who has acted as Secretary, Membership Secretary, email contact and most knowledgeable New Farmite, Bruna Burello-Day, has been a fantastic hard working ambassador for the Society. Bruna has decided not to stand for re-election this year and she will be greatly missed.

Early in 2009 Phil Evans agreed to serve as a committee member, so we end this 2008/2009 year with the following committee:

President: Ross Garnett

Secretary: Lois Kennedy

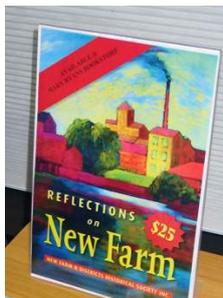
Treasurer: Brooke Noble

Committee members: Susan White, Bruna Burello-Day and Phil Evans

Other volunteers: There are just a few members who “man” the office every Thursday afternoon, and in particular we thank Isabel Davis for her faithfulness in this task and in folding, addressing and delivering newsletters. A necessary task for any Historical Society is keeping the items in the archives in an orderly manner, and we record special thanks to Nancy Weir, Isabel Davis and Lois Kennedy who have been invaluable in helping to organize our materials. Desley Garnett has been acting in the role of Newsletter Editor for the past 12 months and we thank her for keeping all the members informed about the activities of the Society.

Membership and attendances: Our membership has grown over the past year, due in no small part to the enthusiasm generated by *Reflections on New Farm*. We out-grew the capacity of the Ron Muir Room, and from November 2008 have been meeting at the Merthyr Road Uniting Church. This has proven to be an excellent venue with the facilities we need and a comfortable area for meeting up with friends over afternoon tea. Our attendances at monthly meetings over the past year have ranged from 40 to 120 and now are regularly 50-60.

Website: In July this year, the website for the Society was launched. Many thanks to Susan White who worked with Philipp Hartle of Interactive Focus to design the website. It can be found at www.newfarmhistorical.org



Reflections on New Farm: Our first venture into publishing has been an unprecedented success. Gloria Grant and Gerard Benjamin spent several months studying the Historical Society Archives' collection of oral history interviews, interviewing long time residents, and pouring over electoral rolls, postal directories, survey plans, old newspapers and books. They then wove all the information they gathered into a 176 page book liberally illustrated with around 160 photos. People have been asking for a book about the

history of New Farm for a long time and at last it has been achieved.

Thank you, Gloria and Gerard for such an outstanding book.

The committee took a real step out in faith in ordering the printing of 2000 copies and that vision has been more than vindicated with almost all 2000 copies sold in 9 months. A second print run of 1000 has been ordered. The book has been sold directly through the society and at the following outlets: Mary Ryan's New Farm, New Farm Editions, Mary Ryan's Bulimba, State Library Bookshop, Museum of Brisbane Bookshop, The Book Bank (Toowong), Avid Reader (West End), the Newsagent in Bowen Hills and Edwin Clarke's stall at Powerhouse Markets. We thank all of these outlets for assisting us in selling our book.



Our special thanks and congratulations must go to Chris Purdy, owner of Mary Ryan's New Farm Bookstore for the sale of over 1000 books. It has been on the best-seller list there for many months. The Committee decided to recognise this milestone with a plaque which will be presented to Chris very soon. Marketing the book has taken a lot of time and creative thinking, and we thank Gloria and Gerard for being prepared to go over and above the duty of compilers in signing hundreds of copies over many months. Everyone loves to have a book signed by the authors. We were grateful to an anonymous donor for paying for the printing of bookmarks that have been used as an advertising tool for the book.



Shirley Miller kindly allowed us to use her colourful painting of the Powerhouse on the front cover and we thank her for that generosity. There is no doubt that the striking cover has had a lot to do with catching the eye of people browsing in bookshops. Philippa Webb and Gladys Blundell kindly gave permission to feature their paintings on the back cover and we are grateful to them for their contribution to our book.

The book was formally launched by Grace Grace, MP, State Member for Brisbane Central at the November meeting of the Society. A special event with David Hinchliffe and author Venero Armano was held at Mary Ryan's New Farm Bookstore and following week to showcase the book to the New Farm Community.

Marketing: This year I have spent a lot of time marketing both *Reflections on New Farm* and the Society in general. David Hinchliffe represented the Society as a guest on *Music Lover's Choice* on 4 MBS. The book has also featured in Village News, The Independent, Brisbane News, Phil Smith's Saturday morning show on 612 ABC and 4BC.



Our biggest feature was a segment on Brisbane Extra presented by Doug Murray. Thanks to Margaret Gilmour for the use of her home for filming and to others who participated in the filming: Gloria Grant, Gerard Benjamin, Florence O'Brien, Lorraine Tomlinson and myself reliving my



days as the grocer's son.

Our monthly meetings have been marketed through posters and we thank Desley Garnett for preparing those each month. Thanks also to those who take posters to display in the community and in their blocks of units.

The Brisbane City Council gives community groups the opportunity to advertise their events on screen on the CityCats and we have been able to take advantage of that service each month.



Both the Village News and The Independent newspapers give the Society generous advertising and articles about our events that we could not possibly afford to pay for each month, and we are very grateful for their support. Village News regularly features articles of historic interest, often written by a member of our Society. Thanks to Judy Bell, Gloria Grant and Gerard Benjamin for writing these articles.

The Society had a stall at the Brisbane Heritage Expo in May and we thank those who volunteered their time to promote our activities there.

Teneriffe book: Our second venture into publishing is nearing completion. Vicki Bridgstock has written a book, *Tales of Teneriffe*, which recalls some of the history of Teneriffe and is at the final stages of editing by Rosemary Lancaster of Bookera Services. This has been made possible by a grant from the Brisbane City Council's Suburban Initiative Fund and it is expected that it will be published before the end of 2009. One of David Hinchliffe's paintings will feature on the cover of this book which I am sure will also be very popular.

Other projects: We have several other projects underway.

- NF&DHS agreed to act as official sponsor for the BCC grant to Dee Martin for a project entitled *Under the Counter*. It will be a web-based history of 4 corner stores in New Farm.
- There is a small group of people working with Councillor David Hinchliffe on a project to identify sites of heritage interest in New Farm. The aim is to become more proactive in the identification and listing of local heritage sites and to encourage New Farm residents to nominate buildings and places for consideration by Council for listing on council's heritage register.
- Locating plaques on 10 heritage listed sites (some of the more prominent buildings) across the area to record some of the history of the sites. This will be funded through the Brisbane City Council.
- Preservation of the Society's archived materials. Technology has caught up with us, and cassette players and videos are fast becoming history, so we are working on having our oral histories, video and print materials digitally recorded and preserved for the future.

Monthly meetings: An interesting variety of topics have been covered at the monthly meetings as follows:

<p>August 2008: “Behind the Scenes with the New Farm Book” – Gloria Grant and Gerard Benjamin gave us a preview of what was to come”</p>	<p>September 2008: “An illustrated history of Toowong Cemetery” presented by Hilda Maclean</p>	<p>October 2008: “The chronological sequence of the discovery and settlement of Australia” – Edwin Clarke told his story with the aid of old maps.</p>
<p>November 2008: Entertainment by Elizabeth Jeffs, followed by the launch of <i>Reflections on New Farm</i> by Grace Grace, MP, member for Brisbane Central. About 120 people attended this grand event</p>	<p>February 2009: Astor Picture Show Revisited. We attempted to re-create going to the movies many years back by showing film and advertisements from the National Film and Sound Archives. Jim Clinch entertained about 100 people on the Theatre Organ and Chris Holden led us in singing some old favourites</p>	<p>March 2009: Dr Rod Fisher: “The Sesquicentenary of Queensland” - how the image of Brisbane was conveyed by line-drawings including sketches, prints, letter-papers, publications, maps, advertisements, bills, seals, medallions, printing-presses, a necklace and even a sword. Local flautist Sophie Manoharan entertained us prior to the meeting</p>
<p>April 2009: “To the Ladies of World War II” - Author Estelle Pinney about her experiences as part of the workforce of women who supported the war effort in our very own city</p>	<p>May 2009: “The Italian Story” – several people relayed their memories of growing up as Italians in New Farm.</p>	<p>June 2009: “The Ride of Your Life” – Peter Hyde from the Tramways Museum spoke about the history of trams in Brisbane.</p>
<p>July 2009: “Electric Light Reaches Brisbane – at Last” – retired engineer Jim Simmers talked about the history of bringing electricity to the suburbs</p>		

Donation to Marysville Historical Society: We were moved by the story of the tragic bushfires in Victoria in February and it was decided to donate all door money and donations at the Feb 28, 2009 meeting to the Marysville Historical Society. \$500 was sent to the Royal Victorian Historical Society to hold in trust for Marysville Historical Society until such time re-establishment of their organisation occurs.

Christmas Donation: As is our custom, members gave donations at our November meeting and these were given to *Footprints*, an organisation that assists those in need in the New Farm Community.

As you can see, it has been a busy but satisfying year as we have worked together to keep the history of New Farm and Districts alive in the minds of its residents and beyond.

Ross Garnett
August 2009

