



# NEW FARM & Districts HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au



**NEWSLETTER**

JULY 2020

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## **SOMEWHERE IN NEW FARM**

### Do you think it's a match?

**A**N enquiry was received from Nicholas Wood in his quest to locate the possible setting of a painting done in New Farm by Revd Henry C. George (oil on a concave timber disk).

The artistic rendition had been given to a Mrs Buchanan as a wedding present around 1902 by the minister. There was also a note saying that it was painted not too far from the wharves some years prior to 1902.

An obituary for the well-respected Rev. George (1857-1925) explained that he had been born on the goldfields in Ballarat, but returned at a young age with his parents to their native county of Cornwall. At the age of 14, Henry returned to Australia and trained in Adelaide for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry, later becoming a Congregational minister.

He served in churches around Australia, including in Brisbane (1870-90; 1919-1925) at Vulture Street, Cracknell Road and Redcliffe.



“He possessed artistic tastes of a high order, and devoted much of his leisure to painting,” stated an obituary.

If you turn to page 87 of *Reflections on New Farm*, the photograph taken from Bowen Terrace near where the Story Bridge later stood looks down the river past the quarry cliffs. It would be difficult not to imagine that this was the spot where Rev. Henry Charles George set up his easel some time before 1902.

“It’s certainly a treasure that I was lucky to find,” said Nicholas.

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

Ross Garnett

### When will the Society meet again?

**T**HAT is the question we have been asked many times! Our lives have been so different since March when we sadly saw the need to cancel our planned Old Time Movies event. After that, the restrictions meant no meetings. Now, with restrictions easing, we have planned a new way to continue sharing our interest in local history.

It will not be a return to ‘normal’ for the moment, rather we will recommence activities differently. Here is what you can look forward to:

THE OFFICE will be open on Thursday afternoons (from 9 July; 2-4pm) for you to drop in and have a chat, check out info in our records or even bring in new material for the archives — HOWEVER there will be space for only 20 people at a time in the Ron Muir Room. Please drop in and meet up again!

OUR FIRST PUBLIC MEETING post-COVID isolation



will be on Saturday 22 August when Jill Barker (left) will share information about the Japanese House in New Farm. This remarkable residence was pre-fabricated in Japan in 1886 and re-erected in New Farm (see “From Japan to New Farm”, May newsletter).

I am sure that you will want to hear more about this interesting topic — HOWEVER, it will be different!

Only 30 people will be able to attend the meeting at the hall. They will need to book ahead, and it is primarily for those unable to link-in via computer/tablet/phone/smart TV. This meeting will be videoed, so that those at home will be able to see it in real time (or later if they wish).

The August newsletter will have more info about either how to book your place at the hall, or to log in. Here’s an idea! Why not gather a few friends in your home for afternoon tea and watch together, for a different kind of sociable history afternoon!

## NICELY NOSTALGIC

Jim MacDonald

## The skilful art of plastered lettering

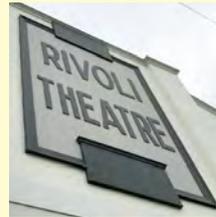
WHO remembers when there were two picture theatres in Brunswick Street, New Farm? In addition to the Astor (cnr Brunswick and Barker Sts, now the New Farm Six Cinemas), further towards the Valley, on the corner of Kent St, was the Earl's Court.

Originally an open air theatre from around 1911, aiming to take advantage of the 'Glorious Fresh Air wafted from the River reaches of New Farm', the Earl's Court was remodelled around 1919 and renamed the Rivoli, becoming one of the city's leading film theatres. It rivalled the Colosseum which had opened at 542 Brunswick St ca 1914, in a building which was formerly a skating rink.

Around 1932 the Rivoli became a dance venue. Some of these changes of activity were a desperate attempt to beat the intense competition of the Astor for the 3d/6p/shilling entertainment spend.

They all failed and the building was vacant for many years up to 1942 when the premises was requisitioned by the American military forces and became a high-security store for rubber tyres for their fleets of jeeps and trucks (rubber was only available for essential military purposes).

With the withdrawal of US forces from Australia at the end of the war, the building became vacant again. Over following years, it was occupied by a



dry cleaning business, then it was taken over by Vince Vitanza. It became a workshop for his tyre business and motor repairs emanating out of his service station on the corner of Kent and Brunswick Streets. These days, the building is an IGA store.

Despite the various usages, the Art Deco-esque lettering 'Rivoli Theatre' survives on both frontages.

Maybe this plastered feature was precast in a mould offsite... or perhaps a skilled plasterer, working on a scaffold, exercised his talent to form the letters with the 'hawk' in his left hand and the 'float' in his right. Tamsin O'Connor thinks that architect Max Strickland possibly used precast moulds to produce the feature panels on the exterior walls of Coronet Court further down Brunswick Street.

In a coming issue, this column will consider the whys and wherefores of the name 'Hamel' which appears on another frontage in Brunswick Street.

## COMMENT TO THE EDITOR

## Spanish flu article...

I was interested in your piece in the last newsletter on the Spanish Flu (June 2020). A recent episode on ABC-TV's *Australian Story* on the same subject also showed the camps at Wallangarra as mentioned in your article. It can be seen via [iView](#) or on [Youtube](#). – Jock Schmelzer

## BOOK REVIEW

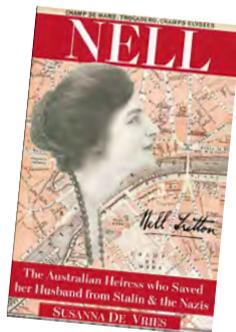
## Nell Tritton courts drama

Subtitled 'The Australian Heiress who saved her husband from Stalin and the Nazis,' Susanna de Vries' book *Nell* is the story of Lydia Ellen (Nell) Tritton (1899-1946), the third of the six children of Fred and Eliza Tritton, a name made famous by the Brisbane department store that Fred established.

Nell had the benefit of her father's belief that daughters as well as sons should be educated. As a result Nell became the first female cadet journalist for Brisbane's *Daily Mail* and then moved to the *Sydney Guardian* and *The Triad*. In 1925 she realised her dream of spending a year in Paris so as to learn to speak French as fluently as a Parisian.

It is in Paris that Nell lives the life she has always wanted, much assisted by a trust fund set up by her father for her and her siblings. Nell becomes involved with the thriving artistic and literary movements in Paris following The Great War. It is also where she meets exiled Russians who have fled to Paris following the Russian Revolution and Lenin's ascent to power.

Those interested in this period of Russia politics, as well



*Nell* by  
Susanna De Vries  
Boolarong Press –  
\$34.99 PB

Review: C. Wallace

as the spying and assassinations that occurred in Russia and among the Russian expat communities, will find this story absorbing.

After an unsuccessful marriage to an ex-Russian soldier, Nell married Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881-1970), the former Russian Prime Minister (who happens to be on Stalin's death list). This phase of Nell's life guarantees plenty of drama and intrigue especially in the years leading up to and during WWII.

There is the gripping vignette of Kerensky patrolling the verandahs of the Tritton home, historic Elderslie in Adelaide Street, Clayfield, with revolver in hand. Stalin had just ordered Trotsky's assassination (in Mexico) and Nell's husband feared he would be next.

I enjoyed reading about the origins of the Tritton family. Also, having been an expat myself, I could empathise with Nell in that the pull of home does not diminish even if you are loving your life in Paris, London and the USA.

*“By her marriage to Alexander Kerensky, famous figure of the Russian Revolution, a pretty Australian girl, Nell Tritton, has made the headlines all over the world. An attractive brunette with brown eyes and a trim figure, she has become the wife of a man whose name will have a prominent place in history for all time...”*

**TENERIFFE MEMORIES**

**Almost next door on Walker Avenue**

**B**OOMARRA at 5 Walker Ave (corner of Teneriffe Drive), was purchased by Jean's father Lionel McCray from his friend George Kimber about 1946-47. Lionel had always enjoyed visiting the Kimbers' home, and loved the views, its proximity to the city and the ideal north-east aspect. He told George, "If ever you're looking to sell, please give me first refusal". Some years later, when the Kimbers were moving to Sydney, George did just that.

The McCray family moved there when Jean was eight and her brother Alan was six. Jean lived there until she married in 1959. Alan lived there until 1964 when he married Diana Hoare, the girl almost next door.

**Boomarra and Chahorra**

Boomarra was built on what had previously been the tennis court belonging to Teneriffe House. It was Tudor in style and from upstairs were good views taking in the Brisbane River from Teneriffe to Hamilton hill. Closer to home, the two large, functioning gas storage tanks were visible at Newstead, as were the many wool store buildings and the wharves at Teneriffe and New Farm.

Chahorra at 11 Walker Ave was purchased by Diana's father Joe Hoare about 1939-1940 when her older brother David was a baby. Diana lived there until she married Jean's brother Alan in 1964. David and Diana have four younger siblings born after the war ended, so there were eight in the family.

Originally the house was called Kamage but Joe Hoare renamed it Chahorra after a mountain peak on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Joe's hobby was gardening so he grew flowers in the front garden and cultivated a large productive garden behind the house, growing lots of vegetables and fruit. His produce included avocados (before Brisbane folk had ever seen

*Sisters-in-law Diana McCray (nee Hoare) & Jean Weeks (nee McCray) grew up on Walker Avenue during the 1940s-60s and relate vivid details of life in the area.*



or heard of them), custard apples, persimmons, asparagus and sweet corn. Diana recalls having home-grown leeks on toast on some Sunday evenings.

A neighbour in Walker Ave was Guy L'Estrange who made a wonderful go-cart for Diana's older brother David. It became David's pride and joy. He and Jean's brother Alan were good friends and had a great time racing their carts down the hill on Teneriffe Drive before dragging them back to the top for another turn. It was

Diana's job to stand at the corner where the split level road started at Walker Ave and call out "Car!" very loudly to warn the boys of any approaching traffic.

Phone numbers were etched on the telegraph poles outside the properties they serviced. Diana's phone number was L1637 and Jean's L4253.

Diana and Jean both found, when asked where they lived, that they had to explain exactly where Teneriffe was located since many people had never heard of it. "Do you mean Tennyson?" some asked. To avoid confusion, it was easier to say "I live at Teneriffe; it's near New Farm". Everyone knew that suburb. Teneriffe back then was not the 'designated address' that it is today.

**Wartime**

Among Diana's earliest memories of living in Walker Ave were the gun emplacements (guarding the wharves) on the lower side of the split-level road. At the time, she thought the guns were real but later found out that they were wooden replicas.

After serving in New Guinea during WWII, Joe Hoare spent time in the Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital recovering from the malaria that he had contracted.

Diana's mother was advised to evacuate the family to the country, but she refused. Diana recalls her having



difficulty keeping the windows of the home blacked out at night. "My aunt (my mother's sister) who was a nurse at what is now the Royal Brisbane Hospital, came to live with us and I remember the two women sharing the job of using the push-mower to keep the lawn tidy.

"Our family had an air raid shelter in the vegetable garden which was shared with another family. Rough steps led down into it and the walls were all of concrete.

"After the war, my father sometimes walked to work and at other times drove the car. Sometimes he forgot that he'd driven the car that day and walked home!

"He and David built a pigeon house in our backyard for David's homing pigeons. We also had a large incinerator on a very safe, concreted area. It was half the size of the garage. We enjoyed lighting the fire!

"Teneriffe Park was not really a 'park' at that time, just a wilderness area. My siblings and I played there and it was also on the route we took each day to New Farm State School. We would walk into Mackellar Street, down through the park and up Beeston Street to the back entrance of the school.

"There was a huge Bunya tree at the top of Teneriffe Park which had horizontal spikes going up its trunk forming a ladder. At the top there was a lookout which must have been used during the war for surveilling activity down river towards Moreton Bay. The spikes are still visible in the tree trunk."

#### **Bicycle errand**

"One of my jobs, as the eldest girl, was riding my bicycle to a butcher's shop in New Farm to buy the meat for our family of eight. My older brother David and I shared this job on alternate weeks.

"I had to go down the road to the lower end of Walker Avenue, carry my bicycle down a flight of steps to Macquarie Street alongside the wharves and continue riding around to the butcher shop in Merthyr Road. The train tracks crossed over the road in this area too, so I had to be careful not to get the bicycle stuck in them as I rode along. I was told not to speak to the wharfies or anyone else who approached me. I was just to keep on riding!

"One day on my return trip home with the meat, my wheel became stuck in the train tracks and everything fell off the bike. I skinned my knees and felt very flustered. It was all a disaster! Someone came to help me and my heart was racing. I had to get the meat back on the bike and then carry it all up the stairs to get home again. Of course, it was a wharfie who came to my aid..."

"We always walked to and from New Farm State School, and although we were given money for the tram fare to attend swimming lessons at the Valley Baths or go to meetings such as Brownies, Girl Guides or Scouts at Holy Trinity Church Hall in Wickham Street, we would walk there instead. Sometimes we'd catch a Bulimba Ferry tram home and walk up the hill, but often we'd walk home from the Baths to keep the tram fare - 3d - to spend later..."

#### **Music lessons**

When Jean was nine, once a week her father would drive her into town on his way to work and drop her off near King George Square. At 8am she had a half-hour music lesson on the first floor of the Tivoli Building, which in those days was in Albert Street opposite the City Hall in King George Square.

Jean continued: "At 8:30 after the lesson, I'd walk up to Queen Street where I had a choice of three trams, all of which went along Brunswick Street, terminating at New Farm Park or New Farm Ferry or New Farm Wharf. I'd get off near Balfour Street and hurry down Heal Street to school arriving by 9am just in time for the daily Parade, before lessons began.

"Domestic Science at NFSS was offered as a subject but there were no facilities at the school. Students had to walk up to Brunswick St and travel by tram to West End to attend classes there. Being the last class of the day, it finished at 3pm, so afterwards we all caught public transport to our homes, carrying whatever we had cooked in class, as well as our usual school bag of books.

"Biscuits were easy to carry but our cooking was sometimes more complicated than that. We were often told to bring a casserole dish for the next week's class as we were going to prepare part of a main meal or a dessert. Then, it was very difficult managing a Pyrex casserole dish of warm food wrapped in a tea-towel sling, plus a school bag, while boarding or leaving a tram, paying the fare, etc., then walking up a hill to arrive home! There were no plastic bags in those days, so many children must have had disasters with leaking food. I certainly had a few..."

Both Diana and Jean recalled the steam ships docked at the wharves below their houses. They often belched black smoke which carried up the hill on the breeze. Teneriffe was quite an industrial area at the time. Most housewives were frustrated in their attempts to keep a clean house and have washing which was not covered in soot while hanging on the line to dry. Many a dash was made to bring the washing in when the smoke started drifting up the hill.

#### **Guy Fawkes Night**

"One of the highlights of the year was Guy Fawkes night when we had a party. Diana and David always joined us," said Jean. "My father would bring home an old pair of grey overalls stuffed with straw and crackers. The legs and sleeves were tied at the ends with string. He would prop the figure up in the middle of the yard and we would light some fireworks - Catherine Wheels, Sparklers, Double Bungers and strings of very small Tom Thumbs which we threw on to the ground where they jumped all over the place while they were going off.

"It was quite legal to have fireworks back then. Of course, we were always well supervised. Eventually, with great excitement, we'd set the Guy alight. More crackers went off with lots of noise! After that, we'd have something to eat then enjoy a game of Hide & Seek..."

#### **Vehicle road-testing on the hill**

After school, Jean and Alan sometimes practised tennis by standing on the road in Teneriffe Drive and hitting tennis balls against the high porphyry wall.

Jean: "We had to be constantly listening for cars and motorbikes which were often 'road tested' up the hill at quite a speed, after they'd been serviced at Brookes St Motors in Fortitude Valley or Morgan & Wacker Motorcycles."

*This is part of a longer interview. Many thanks to Diana & Jean.*

**PARK'S PAINT FEST**

**Artist to return to NFP**

**I**T was an initiative of Chris Derrick who heads up the website for iconic New Farm Park, that saw David Hinchliffe appointed the Park's official AiR (Artist in Residence).

As a result, David kindly agreed to spend each day from Sunday 31 May until Saturday 6 June painting various park vistas.

As the accomplished artist worked at his easel to bring park scenes to life on canvas, he was in almost continuous conversation with the myriad visitors, sightseers and fellow artists who happened along.

How did the artist feel about the experience? Very positively, according his FaceBook post shortly afterwards:

*I have been to many parks around the world over the last 65 years and I have to say (of course with no bias at all) my local New Farm Park has to be the best park in the world.*

*Well, that's the way I feel after having spent seven continuous days painting out in the open. I'll be back in the park later this year for Jacaranda season when the palette will be PURPLE.*



**Artist in Residence:** Seven days of painting, seven different park locations and plenty of visitors. The artist's apron (right) could qualify as an abstract in its own right, while the finale of each painting was applying the all important signature (below).



**Design & Layout:** Gerard Benjamin

**Photography:** G. Benjamin, C. Derrick



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*Speak ill of no man, but speak all the good you know of everybody... — B. Franklin*

**BOOKS** published by the New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc.

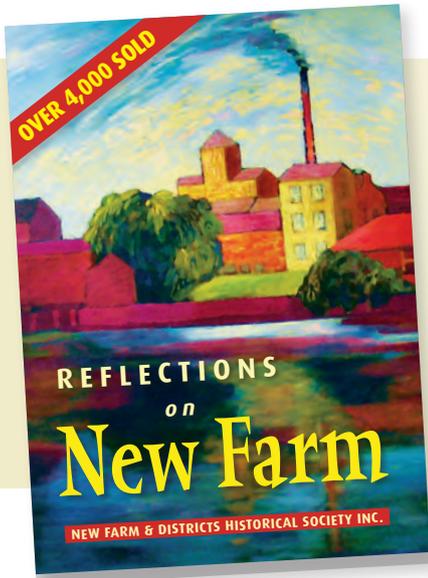
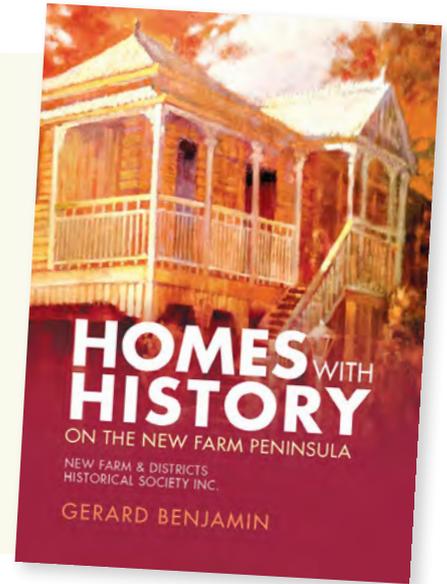
**Homes with History — on the New Farm Peninsula**

by Gerard Benjamin

This enthralling snapshot of more than 20 local homes notes architectural details, but its main focus is on *people*—those who built the houses, the architects who designed them, and the successive residents and families who occupied and adapted them.

When launching the book, the former Governor of Queensland Penelope Wensley said, “The individual stories are absorbing... All who take the time to read the book will enjoy the parade of personalities that passes through its pages...”

160pp, illustrated in colour; includes five letters (1848-52) of James Gibbon  
PAPERBACK, \$35; HARDBACK, \$59.50.



**Reflections on New Farm**

compiled by Gerard Benjamin & Gloria Grant

This book has sold more than 3,000 copies, and is an indispensable reference about New Farm’s past, with enlightening insights about the suburb’s notable places, people, landmarks and events — particularly through the eyes of long-time residents who remember how it used to be... With 35 chapters and over 150 photos or graphics, you’ll relish these valuable personal recollections and wonderful stories.

PAPERBACK, 2008, 176pp. ISBN: 9780980586800 — \$25

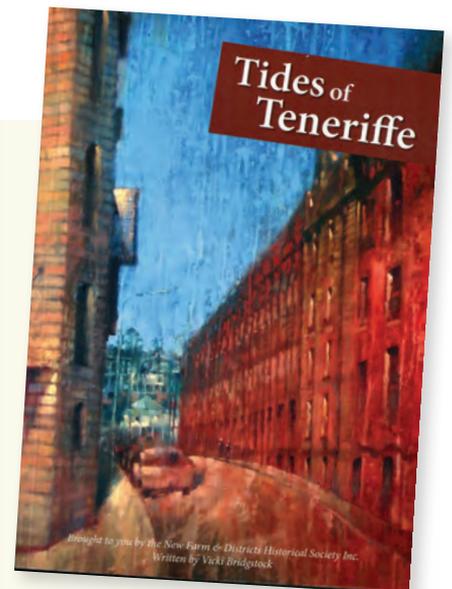
**Tides of Teneriffe**

by Vicki Bridgstock

How Teneriffe has changed—from being a colonial outpost, when its wool and sugar wharves were the centre of Queensland’s economic boom, to being a bustling inner city suburb in its own right.

Vicki’s book puts you in the flow of Teneriffe’s past and local memories, and features historic images and never-before published photos of life in Teneriffe. Hear the hidden voices and stories behind this choice spot in Brisbane’s heartland.

PAPERBACK, 2009, 72pp. • ISBN: 9780980586817 — \$20



The three books are available from local bookshops in New Farm, as well as from the State Library of Queensland Library Shop. Alternatively, the books may be purchased from the New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc. Phone (07) 3254 1449 or email: [info@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@newfarmhistorical.org.au) • [www.newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au)

*Reading one book is like eating one potato chip...*