



**NEW FARM & Districts
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC**

*Gathering information from the past ...
Preserving it for the future.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AUGUST 2020

Presented by Ross Garnett

I present to you the annual report of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society for the 2019-2020 year. This is my sixteenth report as President of the Society.

This past year has been an unusual one with Government restrictions put on large gatherings due to the Corona virus pandemic. Meetings were held in September, October and November 2019 and in February 2020. The meetings from March to July 2020 had to be cancelled. However, in August it was decided to hold a 'hybrid' meeting with numbers restricted to 50 in the hall and the meeting live-streamed via YouTube.

One of the valuable and unexpected outcomes of the restriction on numbers physically present has been to make the video of the meeting available on the website for anyone to view, thus reaching people who would not normally be able to attend a meeting and having it available long-term on the website.

Committee: The dedicated committee has met monthly and I wish to thank each person for their support. Several meetings were held virtually using the ZOOM platform which proved effective for those months when meeting in person was restricted and the Brisbane City Council had closed the use of the meeting room.

President: Ross Garnett

Vice President:

Secretary: Bernadette Driessen

Treasurer: Denise Buckby

Committee Members: Ben Wieland, Austin Adams and Malcolm Godfrey, Terry Beer (from June)

Public meetings: Public meetings were held August to November in 2019 and in February 2020. The implications of the expanding global pandemic caused the committee to cancel the planned Theatre afternoon in March 2020 and the upcoming monthly meetings until it was declared safe by the Government to

meet in big groups again. The quality speakers that we have enjoyed are all passionate about their topics of interest and we thank them for sharing their knowledge and passion with us at no charge to the society.

As Government restrictions were eased, the committee considered how to resume public meetings in line with the Government restrictions and the Uniting Church hiring guidelines. The Warner Hall will hold a maximum of 50 people while meeting physical distancing measures and the committee submitted a COVID-safe plan to the Uniting Church before meetings could recommence. It was decided to recommence as "hybrid" meetings – up to 50 people physically present and have the meeting live-streamed on YouTube. To enable this live-streaming, the committee engaged Synergy Video (Brett Greig) to undertake the technical work of filming and live-streaming at the cost of \$550 per meeting.

This Annual Report really relates to the the year August 2019 to July 2020, but in the interest of informing the members and friends of the Society, I will report on decisions made following the successful August meeting. Because we have not yet identified people within the Society with the expertise to undertake filming the meeting, the committee decided to continue to pay for the services of Synergy Video for the next 3 meetings and take the opportunity for some members of the Society to learn how to do the filming and preparing the video for loading to the website.

Society office: Volunteers have staffed the Society office each Thursday afternoon from 2 pm to 4 pm except for the months of April to July 2020. We often have members of the public come in to share information or to seek information. Looking forward, there is a need for more volunteers to assist in this way. We are grateful to the Brisbane City Council and the New Farm Library staff for assisting the society with the provision of an office and space to meet with the public.

The office staff of Grace Grace MP have very efficiently and willingly done the printing of newsletters and posters and we thank them for assisting the society in this way. We are grateful to all of the politicians who represent this area in Local, State and Federal Governments for their active interest in our Historical Society.

Newsletters: We keep in touch with our members (over 200) and friends (over 1000 on the email list) through our monthly newsletter. Thank you to Gerard Benjamin for continuing to produce the newsletter each month, especially during the pandemic restrictions – it is an important way of keeping in touch with our members. We often receive notes of appreciation for the interesting newsletters. Thanks to our members who write reports of our meetings for the newsletter and others who write articles from time to time. About 90 people

receive a physical copy of the newsletter by post each month thanks to Jim MacDonald, Stuart Wallace, Barry Martin, Michael Zalewski and Anita Garnett for assisting with folding newsletters and envelope-stuffing for postage during the year.

Handling enquiries: During the time of the pandemic isolation, we seemed to receive more enquiries than usual for information. Perhaps people had more time to be thinking about investigating their family and property history. Our aim is to empower people to do their own research and we do this by giving what information we know as well as some guidance on how to research further for themselves. Enquiries are often forwarded to members of the Society who may have information to share on the subject or are encouraged to visit the archives to look for information. I wish to particularly acknowledge the work of Gerard Benjamin for his assistance with helping enquirers. From time to time we have members of the public who offer information and photos that can be added to our archives for which we are grateful. Articles in the newsletter often stimulate people to share more information about the subject. Thanks to Stuart Wallace for monitoring the society email account.

FaceBook is an increasingly effective way of gathering and sharing historical information. Thanks to Ron Altman who moderates the Society Facebook page that receives postings from many people who share their photos and memories.

Volunteer roles:

Societies such as ours continue to operate only because of the tasks undertaken by a team of volunteers. We are grateful to some 30 people who volunteer their time to assist:

- at our monthly meetings (welcoming, AV, music, memberships and book sales, lucky door prizes, photography, preparing announcement slides)
- at the office on Thursdays (being available to the public who drop into the office, accessing archives, assisting enquirers)
- with the newsletter (writing meeting reports and other articles, editing, folding and delivering newsletters)
- in promoting the society at public events e.g. Teneriffe Festival
- in maintaining a social media presence.

Other projects:

- Unfortunately the Teneriffe Festival was cancelled for 2020 due to the pandemic, so we missed our usual opportunity to meet the public and let them know of the activities of the Society.
- **Book Sales** of *Reflections on New Farm*, *Tides of Teneriffe* and *Homes with History* continue through Mary Ryan Bookshop (New Farm), New Farm Editions, the State Library Bookshop and at the monthly meetings.
- The **Historical Plaques** Project is a continuing project, but no new plaques have been erected in the past 12 months.

Monthly meetings: Meetings up until the time of the restriction attracted over 100 people each month and have covered an interesting variety of topics as follows:

August 2019: City in Masks: How Brisbane fought the Spanish Flu – Matthew Wengert	September 2019: Urban Renewal of New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead – Ben Pritchard	October 2019: Brisbane Bricks – Virginia Russell and Joanne Heath
November 2019: Sir Samuel Griffith – Douglas Drummond	February 2020: Aviatrix Loren Bonney – Janet Marshall	March – July 2020 meetings cancelled due to the COVID pandemic

Christmas Donations: At the November 2019 meeting, members donated non-perishable foods and cash to 3RD SPACE – a local organisation that supports homeless and vulnerable people in the community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all members for their interest in the tasks of gathering and preserving history – what a wealth of knowledge amongst our members! We just need to get it all written down before the memories are lost.

Ross Garnett

New Farm & Districts Historical Society Inc

The Office is located at the front of the Ron Muir Meeting Room, New Farm Library, right behind the green bench @ 135 Sydney Street.

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August 2020