



NEW FARM AND DISTRICTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

JULY NEWSLETTER

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au



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June Meeting

Three generations and one hundred years a celebration

If anyone thought that road transportation might make for a dry old yarn they were badly mistaken. Phillip (Phil) Russell gave us a most lively overview of how this family owned and operated local business developed and prospered.

It all began in 1925 when his father, Roy, won a Dalgety and Co contract to deliver tins of petroleum to the Commonwealth Oil Refinery in Hastings Street near the old New Farm Wharf tram terminus. From Macquarie Street, Roy made deliveries in his spanking new Graham Brothers Dodge.

From humble beginnings ... Today, Russell Transport is the biggest family owned transport operation in Queensland. Four gallon oil tins became thirty gallon drums, and by the 1970s, bulk transportation meant larger and wider tanks. And a police escort, no less.

A Fleet of Kenworth trucks.



Apparatus for lifting steel deliveries.



The gleaming Kenworth - Russell's 500th truck and newest purchase.

Celebrating its centenary in June, the firm purchased a gleaming white Kenworth - Russell's 100th, and their 500th truck.

This is no 'trucks, trucks, trucks' story, however. It is one of family, locality and longevity, a serious oral history. Roy worked in the business until his 80th year; his wife Beryl until her 78th! While still a presence in the office, baby-boomer Phil supports daughter Julie at the helm.



Phil with his daughter Julie.

"There's longevity in whatever we do," Phil said. And all those years of hard work? It might just be "a bit contagious," he commented.

Phil entertained us with intertwined memories of life in New Farm. Imagine hitching a ride on a wool bale-carting steam locomotive - and the driver happily boiling the billy for your tea...

Such was life along that bustling prosperous stretch of the historic Teneriffe wharf and wool stores precinct. We were privileged to be taken on this afternoon's ride through time.

*Reporter:
Maria Shaw*



Meeting Photos

The presentation can be viewed online [HERE!](#)



George Cowin introduced Phil – both are former Presidents of the Qld Road Transport Association



Bruce and Kath Hermann, with daughter Kim and husband Jason, only the third accountant for Russell Transport in 100 years!



Tracey Hurren, Secretary



Phil with old friend John Godfrey, a Russell Transport driver for a few years



Acknowledgements

As always, thanks go to our wonderful meeting volunteers as well as:



Grace Grace MP
Member for McConnell
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VILLAGE VOICE
Your Trusted Voice



Brisbane City Council
Use of the Ron Muir
Meeting Room,
New Farm Library



Santina Musumeci of NFDHS with Phil, his childhood pal Ron Altmann, and Ron's wife, Mary

About the Society

Postal Address:

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Secretary: Tracey Hurren
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Immediate Past President Ross Garnett,
George Cowin, Rosalinda Pike, Ben Pritchard,
and Membership Secretary Bruna Burello-Day
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2025 Membership Fee:

\$20 per year or part thereof
Add \$15 for posted newsletter.
Apply for or renew membership:
www.newfarmhistorical.org.au/membership/

Newsletter Editor:

Kate Lockyer
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Meeting Photography:

Maria Shaw, with supplementary images by
respective contributors and others.

Date Claimers

Public meetings are held at 2.30pm at the Merthyr Road Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm, on the fourth Saturday of each month from February to November.

Entry fee: \$5 for members; \$10 for non-members (cash preferred).

Other events in coming months include:

- 17 July:** Monthly Afternoon Tea
19 July: New Date – Historical Walking Tour
of the Woolstores, led by Ben Pritchard
Book tickets [HERE](#)
19 - 20 July: Brisbane Open House
26 July: New Date – Historical Walking Tour
Mainly Moray, led by Gerard Benjamin
Book tickets [HERE](#)
26 July: Monthly Public Meeting
14 Aug: Monthly Afternoon Tea

After this month, only 4 meetings left for 2025 - don't miss them!
Mark these dates: 23 Aug (incl. AGM), 27 Sept, 25 Oct, 22 Nov.

July Presentation

Discover the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Digital Collections, a rich resource of historical photographs, documents, and manuscripts.

Speakers Jill Rogers and Dr Lyndal O'Gorman will provide an overview of this valuable archive.

Jill Rogers will highlight items specifically related to the early history of New Farm and its surrounding areas.

Dr Lyndal O'Gorman will share personal insights as a contributor, showcasing digitised 35mm slides from her family's collection that vividly capture scenes of New Farm and the district.

Their presentation will demonstrate the crucial role digital collections play in preserving history and fostering global access to knowledge.

New Farm and Districts Historical Society Inc

1893 flood in James St

NF Park 1972

QUT DIGITAL COLLECTIONS
Hear about this rich resource!
See some preserved images of
New Farm and Districts

Speakers:
Jill Rogers and Dr Lyndal O'Gorman

Saturday, 26 July, 2:30 pm

Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au
Enquiries: 0409 498 403



August Presentation

Coming up... Growing up in Amity House

Join Ruth Graham, CEO of the Society of Australian Genealogists, as she shares stories from her time living in Amity House, New Farm. Growing up with her father, who managed the CSR Sugar Refinery, Ruth offers a unique perspective on living in the suburb's industrial heart during the mid to late 1970s.

Discover the fascinating impact of having a paddock and a factory as your playground and with the Royal Australian Navy as neighbours and how this influenced her family's daily life and community interactions.

*Watercolour, Amity House
by Gladys Blundell. (NFDHS).*



President's Message



What exciting news about the grant from the Brisbane City Council for digitisation of our records and making them easily available to the public – read about it elsewhere in this newsletter!

Thanks to those involved in writing the extensive application for the grant, including obtaining

quotes for various aspects of the project. \$30,000 over 3 years! WOW!

Thanks also to Kate Lockyer for taking on the role of newsletter editor. Please support her with your articles or snippets of information – send to editor@newfarmhistorical.org.au. Thanks also to Bruna Burello-Day who has done such a fabulous job as newsletter editor over the past 2 years – we receive many comments about the quality of the society newsletter, so THANK YOU BRUNA!

Now... looking forward to the second half of the year... there will be many opportunities for each person to be

involved. We are very fortunate to have an experienced project manager in the person of secretary Tracey Hurren to manage our digitisation. She will be able to give us an update from time to time with a list of ways we can each assist. Please look for your special spot to be part of the project and raise your hand high!

Coming up in August is our Annual General Meeting at which annual reports are received and the committee for the next year is elected. Maybe there is someone who could take on the secretary role so that Tracey is free to manage the digitisation project. Is that you? If you have just an inkling of interest in assisting with the management of this vibrant society, please talk to me to ascertain more about being a committee member. Asking for information is not a commitment to a role! Nomination forms for being a committee member or for a specific role on the committee are available from me at president@newfarmhistorical.org.au or from secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au. You will need two people from within the society to support your nomination.

It's time to enjoy this first edition from the new editor, Kate!

Desley Garnett

Society Secures Grant

The Digitisation Project can begin!

We are pleased to announce that the New Farm and Districts Historical Society is the recipient of an Historical Organisation Assistance Grant Program for triennial funding from the Brisbane City Council.

As recipients of this grant, we will receive \$10,000 each year for three years. The first year's money is already in the bank so that means the work now begins in earnest. We will engage a company to do the scanning, but there is much for us to do – data entry, cataloguing, packing and sorting files, reviewing scanned images, reviewing oral history transcripts, policy development and more.

Secretary Tracey gave an overview of the application process and the project that we are about to embark on at the June meeting, and you can see the vimeo of that [HERE](#). More information will be shared very soon, including ways that you can be involved. Please contact Tracey at secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au to volunteer.



This grant is proudly supported by Brisbane City Council.



Getting to know you Afternoon Tea

Thursday 17th July 2025
2:30 pm
Ron Muir Room
New Farm Library
135 Sydney St, New Farm

An opportunity to meet other members over a cuppa.

Please rsvp to
president@newfarmhistorical.org.au
0409 498 403



I hope to meet you there!

Desley Garnett



Vimeo Update

Contributor: Austin Adams

Check out our showcase at the usual address [HERE](#).

This showcase will include Tracey Hurren's presentation about the BCC Grant, the presentation on Russell Transport, and an updated version of the talk by the Archbishop to include the photos I took at my visit to Wynberg.

And hey! There really, really is a bust of Caesar Augustus there (pictured left). It was the bust of Archbishop Duhig by Daphne Mayo that has gone elsewhere (unsure where).

Membership Matters

Reporter: Bruna Burello-Day
Membership Secretary

Soirée is a sweet and savoury success!

Twenty members and friends enjoyed getting to know one another while sampling a variety of tasty nibbles and assorted beverages at our first ever evening function, held on 26 June. Lively discussions arose, conversations flowed, and new friendships were formed via stories shared and connections discovered.



So engaging was the camaraderie that many were reluctant to leave! A big thank you goes to everyone who attended and made this a most successful event, and to the volunteers who provided the refreshments and helped set up and clear the room. We hope to host another soirée later in the year. Watch this space!



Did You Know?

- 1886 saw the start of a horse-drawn tramway system which travelled along Brunswick Street, New Farm.
- From 1897, tramlines were gradually electrified and by 1900 rails were laid to New Farm Wharf.
- The tram shelter shed (pictured) marked the terminus for New Farm Wharf and provided convenience for commuters transferring to the Hawthorne ferry.
- There were protests in 1923 when the interval between trams on the New Farm route increased from seven to 12 minutes.
- A tramline extension to New Farm Park was constructed in 1926.

Contributor: Connie Hamer

June meeting scores another century

Around 100 members (85%) and visitors (15%) arrived to hear Phil Russell speak about his family's business which notched up 100 years in 2025 and continues to operate with the third generation of the Russell family now involved in its management. We were treated to an entertaining trip down memory lane by keen Society member, Phil, who grew up in New Farm. Phil is obviously still much involved in the business of which he is rightly proud, even though he says, "I still turn up for work, but I don't have to do anything!" Congratulations to all at Russell Transport for such a significant contribution to the Queensland transport industry and to Queensland's economic development – and keep up the good work!



At the meeting we acquired one new membership application and two renewals, making our total current membership a healthy 246. If you haven't joined or renewed already, there is still time to make the \$20 investment worthwhile. You will get half-price entry to all five remaining meetings this year (a saving of \$25) and significant discounts for historical walks and tours. The \$5 member entry price includes a pretty special afternoon tea! You will not be disappointed with the presentations coming up in the remainder of the year.



Source: An historical plaque located at the corner of Merthyr Road and Gray Street, near Freshwater Apartments, New Farm.

Membership Matters

Reporter: Bruna Burello-Day
Membership Secretary

A significant birthday celebration

We were delighted and honoured that Bev Bergstrum chose to attend our meeting on the very day of her 94th birthday. Ever since Bev discovered the Society, she has been a very enthusiastic member who attends whenever she can with her daughter, Elaine, who travels from Boondall to collect her mum from her home at Wavell Heights to travel to New Farm.

Bev very much enjoys the presentations which often spark memories of her growing up in Villiers Street, New Farm, and she relishes the opportunity to reminisce with others at the afternoon tea. An added bonus this time was that Bev's son, Ken, visiting from Melbourne, also attended.



While 94 candles couldn't fit on the cake that Desley had baked, there were enough for Bev to blow out after an exuberant rendition of "Happy Birthday" by the audience to Stewart Free's always excellent musical accompaniment, followed by generous applause.

Best wishes for the year ahead, Bev!

Bev would like to thank all the members for their kindness on her 94th Birthday and making it a very special day for her.

And at the other end of the scale – a surprise addition to our membership. Is this a first for the Society?

The average age of our membership has plummeted with the arrival in April of our newest (honorary) member. Little Sophia has snatched the title of "Youngest Member" from her mother, Jessica Yule, who we discovered was the youngest financial member of the Society at our 30th anniversary meeting in June last year.

Sophia is also the first grandchild for the Yule family. Jessica and her dad, Robert, were regular attendees at our meetings, but we haven't seen them much lately. I guess parental and grandparental duties take precedence these days. Let's hope mum and granddad encourage Sophia to take a keen interest in our history as she gets older, just as they have done. Welcome to the world little one, and congratulations to all the family, from all of us!



Proud and happy mum, Jess, holding her delightful bundle of joy, Sophia.

Community News

St Michael's silent film screening

Bryan and Sandra Pearson spoke to attendees of the June meeting to advise that St Michael and All Angels Church now incorporates an event space which is the venue for their upcoming fundraising event.

St Michael's, built in 1958-59 and designed by Conrad and Gargett, is heritage listed. It was conceived as a memorial church to those who had died in the two world wars.

It has many links to the past, including the former New Farm fire bell and its own columbarium. The Anglican parish has had a presence on this site for over 100 years.

Silent film tickets [HERE!](#)



Further information on the church can be found on the BCC Heritage Register [HERE](#).

Left: Bryan and Sandra Pearson from St Michael and All Angels Church

Members' Stories

Barbershop cuts at a good clip

I would like to reflect on my younger years in New Farm when I had to go to the male barber for a haircut. Down near the New Farm Wharf ferry, there were two barbers, both named Bill.

In a shop three doors from James Street in Merthyr Road was (Gentleman) Bill Randal who lived in Welsby Street. He was a soft-spoken man who was well respected by his clientele. He operated with electric hair clippers and had a large neat shop. He used to walk up to the shop from home and there was always someone waiting to be served. He operated there for many years until he had to retire due to bad health.

The other barber operated a small shop two doors from Hawthorne Street in Merthyr Road towards the ferry. His name was Bill (surname unknown) and was an ex-Army barber. He operated with just hand clippers and scissors, as he did in the Army. There were no fancy cuts available with him; everyone got the same just short back and sides. He did not charge as much as Bill Randal. You could get a shave if you were game, but that was all.

Us kids had a problem in that in his haste to cut our hair he sometimes pulled the hair out by the roots with the hand clippers. So, to overcome us wiggling around, he used to clamp his hand on the top of our head and hold us firmly in place and never listened to our cries of pain. You got a hair cut in two or three minutes.

Our truck drivers went to him for their haircuts because he was the fastest barber around. They maintained that they could drive down Hawthorne Street, jump out of their truck, race around the corner, and by the time the truck passed the front of the barber shop, they could jump into the truck and drive off to their delivery. Bill was a scallywag and I think he had an SP Book going in the back of the shop.

There were other barbers around New Farm but these two served many tram riders and ferry commuters or wharf workers, plus locals.

*George Cowin
Cowins Transport*

Membership Matters

Congratulations to Helen Gregory



Congratulations to our member, Helen Gregory, on receiving the prestigious John and Ruth Kerr Medal for Distinction in historiography, historical research, and writing Australian history. The award, presented by the the Royal Historical Society of Queensland in conjunction with the Professional Historians' Association, recognises excellence in the field.

Helen has published many commissioned histories, including *A History of the Queensland Law Society*, *A History of the Brisbane River*, *Brisbane Mater Hospitals*, and *Brisbane Then and Now*. She has also contributed to major historical exhibitions at the Museum of Brisbane and the State Library of Queensland.

As the founder of the Brisbane History Group and the Professional Historians' Association of Queensland, Helen has shaped the practice of recording history in our state. She also served as a director of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, actively protecting Queensland's heritage. Many will know of Helen from her engaging 'Slices of History' segments on ABC Radio.

Helen's love of history began unexpectedly during her medical studies at UQ, when she took an elective in the History of Western Civilisation and realised, "This is for me!" She completed her first year of Medicine before switching and achieving a First Class Honours degree in History.

A passionate advocate for communities uncovering their local stories, Helen spoke at one of our New Farm gatherings three years ago, noting that the New Farm and Districts Historical Society was actively living out this vision. She is now a committed member, encouraging us all to remain curious, track local stories, and share them with others. This approach, Helen says, encourages community interest, particularly as many families are exploring their own family origins.

We are fortunate to have many leading historians in our New Farm branch, and Helen looks forward to continuing her partnerships within our community.

Helen, we look forward to your continued contributions to NFDHS. For now, we warmly congratulate you on this well-deserved award, which honours your lifelong dedication to recording and protecting our history. We wish you well with your future projects — we know they will be a valuable contribution to our shared story.

Reporter: Rita Cleveland

SLQ Report

New Farm and its Italian Settlers

Below is the SLQ Ask Us response to my recent request to the State Library concerning the nature and impact of Italian migration in New Farm. The summary was supported by a long list of books, articles and other options.

Given the recent Festa della Repubblica - the Italian Republic Day on 2nd June - and the celebration of all things Italian, here is Librarian Michaela O'Neil's interesting summary.

Reporter: Maria Shaw

"In short summary, Italian migrants were drawn to opportunities in the sugar industry and other sectors, which led to settlement in New Farm which at the time, was at first a not-so-popular suburb built of simple timber houses.

Italian families saw the opportunity of this location near the river and bought many Queensland houses in the area. The family lived upstairs and the area downstairs was built-in with rooms for temporary accommodation.

This was for farm workers who spent the sugar cane and banana seasons in Far North Queensland and came to live in their Italian communities during the off season, travelling to Brisbane by train. There was also a connection to Stanthorpe fruit farms and their seasonal workers, and to Italian fruit shops in Brisbane.

Unfortunately, the 1974 flood flooded the Queenslander homes and many Italian families decided from then on to build brick homes in outer suburbs like Aspley and Kenmore away from flood zones.

Fortitude Valley was the business hub for Italian immigrants, while New Farm became the first preferred residential area.

Social clubs, gatherings and events were always important to the Italian community as was the Catholic Church."



The society celebrated Italian month at the June meeting, representing the Republic of Italy in the best tradition - biscotti and chocolate salami!

True or False?

Contributor: Connie Hamer

1. Sir Samuel Walker Griffith (1845-1920), first Chief Justice of the High Court and twice Premier of Queensland, lived in New Farm.
2. In 1879-1880, Sir and Lady Griffith built a grand house, Merthyr, on Moray Street, New Farm.
3. The Merthyr property was named after Griffith's birthplace Merthyr Tydfil in Wales.
4. The original Merthyr property was subdivided, resulting in street names, Griffith and Llewellyn (Llewellyn after Griffith's son who died in 1901, aged 'about 29').

Answers: True! True! True! True!

Source: Benjamin, Gerard and Grant, Gloria, New Farm and Districts Historical Society Inc., *Reflections on New Farm*, Brisbane, 2008. (Chapter 2 – Prime Spot from the Start)



Samuel Walker Griffith (1845-1920), by Crown Studios, 1903-19
National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an23398523