



NEW FARM AND DISTRICTS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

## SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au



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### August Meeting

Contributor: Rita Cleveland

#### Growing up at Amity House



Amity House, built by Thomas Welsby in 1892 and located in the street that bears his name, is an historic, heritage-listed riverfront property. There is much to know about this beautiful house during the time it was owned by the Welsby family.

Ruth Graham

The home was sold to the Colonial Sugar Refinery in 1952 as the residence of future CSR Managers. Ms Ruth Graham, the guest speaker, gave us a delightful first-hand account of growing up at Amity House in the 1970s.

Ruth's father was manager of CSR, and Ruth shared vivid memories of the house and living in New Farm. Her recollections took us into the rhythms of family and community life: attending New Farm State School, roaming the expansive park, riding bikes up and down the grand home's hallway on rainy days and having open access to the refinery.

Ruth and her brothers played in the huge mounds of sugar, as the refinery was open to them especially at weekends. Ruth recalled having a close-up view of the intricate engineering of the refinery as it evolved. While she was researching this presentation, she stumbled across some wonderful photos of her father 'hands-on' at the refinery. We were all moved by her discoveries.



The CSR Refinery

Ruth spoke of the nearby Queensland Naval Base (1932-1994). From Amity's windows, it was common to see a naval vessel moored in the river, ensuring an exciting sight for children, if not always for her mother. She shared some very interesting anecdotes about her family, including correspondence from her father's time as manager.

Although Ruth's childhood memories date back only a few decades, they describe a very different New Farm.

Her mother complained of the "distance" to the shops, a far cry from the bustling peninsula we know today. New Farm and districts, as we all know, has been transformed by a plethora of high-rise housing, restaurants, boutiques and supermarkets.



Amity House with its precious period features passed from Thomas Welsby to CSR in 1952

Ruth referred us to the State Library Archives and shared images from the Australian National University Archives. The audience showed their appreciation of Ruth's interesting presentation, with a couple of 'locals' adding to the history with their anecdotes. George Cowin referred to generations of his family who were responsible for the trucking of sugar in and out of the refinery. Ross Garnett told a story of the tussle between the long-standing residents and a very ambitious Brisbane City Council. When objecting to the development, the then Lord Mayor, Jim Soorley, threatened to close the roads!

Today Amity House is listed on the **Queensland Heritage Register (600264)** and remains the only surviving riverside home of its era in New Farm. Alongside the refurbished Refinery, now coveted residences, Amity stands as a proud reminder of the district's layered history. For a detailed account of Amity's architecture and heritage features, see Gerard Benjamin's *Homes with History On the New Farm Peninsula*, pp.59-61.

Ruth Graham is CEO of the Society of Australian Genealogists, overseeing offices, archives and the Family and History Research Centre and Library. More on the Society [HERE](#).

Watch Ruth's presentation online [HERE](#).

## August Meeting

### Annual General Meeting

Ms Tracey Hurren welcomed a large gathering for the August monthly meeting. This meeting combined our Annual General Meeting with a very engaging presentation from Ms Ruth Graham. Chairing the AGM was Ms Claire Moore who oversaw the 2024-25 reports and the announcement of the new committee.

A highlight of the proceedings was Member for McConnell Grace Grace's warm tribute to Mrs Desley Garnett who stepped down after four years as president. Members applauded her outstanding contribution, including guiding the Society through achievements such as developing a new logo and securing a digitisation grant.

A special tribute was paid to both Desley and her husband Ross who between them have dedicated twenty-one years to the presidency.

In stepping back from leadership, Desley assured us that she is looking forward to fresh ideas and won't be clinging to "the way we always did things".

All the reports for the Annual Meeting were endorsed and the new committee was confirmed.

*The new committee including office bearers are listed on page 4 of this newsletter.*

Watch the AGM [HERE](#).

Contributor: Rita Cleveland



Desley Garnett, Grace Grace MP and Robert Allen

## Community News

### Unveiling of the Coastwatchers memorial plaque

The network of coastwatchers scattered across the islands north of Australia during WWII played a key role in slowing the Japanese advance and saving countless lives.

The work of this brave and intrepid band of individuals was given special recognition on August 10 at Newstead House, with a ceremony to mark the unveiling of a plaque on the Newstead Riverwalk.

Lord Mayor Adrian Schinner performed the honours and introduced the main speaker, Dr Betty Lee. Dr Lee is a grand-niece of Naval Commander Eric Feldt who was instrumental in organising the network. His story is told in Dr Lee's book, 'Right Man, Right Place, Worst Time'.

Dr Lee explained that Commander Feldt's mantra to these volunteers on the islands was, "Your role is to watch and report, not to fight".

Local resident and author, retired Senator Brett Mason, has a sobering personal connection and was MC. An uncle of his mother, 32-year-old Lieutenant Frank Barrett DCM, was a coastwatcher killed when captured by the Japanese.

Brett Mason's 2023 book, 'Saving Lieutenant Kennedy', details the story of how Australian coastwatcher Reg Evans rescued the 26-year-old future president.

The plaque includes a remarkable endorsement from WWII US naval commander, Admiral William F 'Bull' Halsey: "The Coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific."

It also bears the names of 36 Coastwatchers who were

killed while carrying out their perilous duties: "They watched and warned and died that we might live".

Commander Feldt and his wife Nancy lived at times in New Farm. Following their marriage in 1933, they resided at Marlborough Flats in Moreton Street, then later at Roseview Apartments overlooking New Farm Park.

It took considerable community advocacy by key campaigner, John Gates, and others to achieve this plaque, which now joins several others around the Pacific.

It is fitting that the new plaque is near to the one dedicated to submariners. As a book about this critical period for Australia during WWII eloquently states, "Submariners and coastwatchers developed a deep mutual admiration, since they had a lot in common. They were members of elite, unorthodox, and motivated forces. They operated far behind enemy lines. Cut off from support, they relied completely on their comrades. Their achievements were out of all proportion to their small forces."

*The privately-funded plaque is positioned on the gazebo 150m along the Riverwalk, south of Newstead Park.*



## Meeting Photos



## Acknowledgements

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

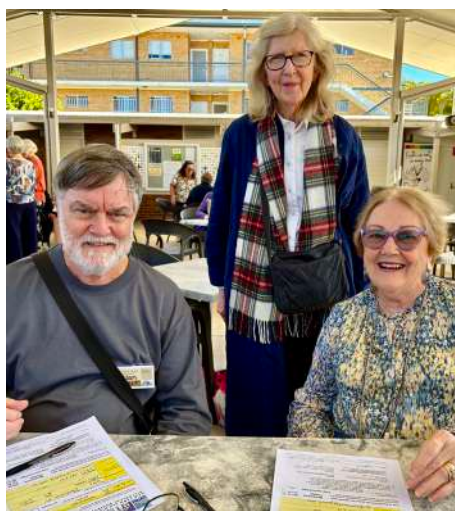


Grace Grace MP  
Member for McConnell  
(07) 3145 9100  
Newsletter  
printing

**VILLAGE  
VOICE**  
Your Trusted Voice



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



## About the Society

### Contact Details:

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Email: [info@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

Website: [www.newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au)

Office: Ron Muir Room, next to  
New Farm Library, 135 Sydney Street

### Office Opening Hours:

Every Thursday 2-4pm, February to November

### Office Bearers:

**President:** Robert Allen

0437 280 104

[president@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:president@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

**Secretary:** Tracey Hurren

[secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

**Treasurer:** Denise Buckby

**Membership Secretary:** Bruna Burello-Day

[membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

### Committee Members:

Immediate Past President Desley Garnett,  
Ben Pritchard, George Cowin, Judi Jabour and  
Linda Whatman.

### Membership Fee:

\$20 per calendar year or part thereof.

Add \$15 for posted newsletter.

Apply for or renew membership:

[www.newfarmhistorical.org.au/membership/](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au/membership/)

### Newsletter Editor:

Kate Lockyer

[editor@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:editor@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

### Meeting Photography:

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



YOU'RE INVITED TO A  
MEMBERS'  
GETTING TO KNOW YOU  
AFTERNOON TEA

Thursday 18 September 2025  
2:30pm  
Ron Muir Room  
New Farm Library  
135 Sydney Street, New Farm

This is an opportunity to meet other members  
over a cuppa. I hope to meet you there!

Robert Allen  
President

RSVP to [membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au)

Text or leave message: 0417 190 675

## September Presentation

### New Farm Deli marks 50 years

The iconic New Farm Deli at Merthyr Village has been trading for 50 years, making it Brisbane's oldest Italian cafe. Owners Maria and Vince Anello and their children have run the deli continuously for almost all of that time, with the ongoing support of countless staff and the loyalty of customers old and new. Maria will join us in conversation at our September meeting to discuss how the family business started and how it has grown and changed over the years.



New Farm and Districts Historical Society Inc

**New Farm Deli celebrates 50 years**

**Brisbane's oldest and most authentic Italian Deli**



**Speaker:**  
Maria Anello

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 2:30 pm**

Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm

[www.newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://www.newfarmhistorical.org.au)  
Enquiries: 0409 498 403

## October Presentation

### Coming up... Saving JFK

On a moonless night in August 1943, a US torpedo boat commanded by Lt John F Kennedy on patrol in Solomon Islands was rammed by a Japanese destroyer. Left clinging to wreckage within sight of Japanese encampments, the eleven surviving members of Kennedy's crew eventually struggled ashore on a small uninhabited island. Missing, presumed dead, behind enemy lines, with no food or water, and with several injured, the future looked bleak for the shipwrecked Americans. Fortunately, Australian 'coast watcher' Lt Reg Evans witnessed the immediate aftermath of the collision from his nearby jungle hideaway. Working under the searching eye of the Japanese military, over the next five days Evans and two Solomon Islander scouts located Kennedy and his crew and ensured their rescue. And the rest, they say, is history!

During WWII, Brisbane was a garrison city and hosted the US armed forces. In particular, 100m from the window in the Teneriffe apartment of the speaker for October, Brett Mason, was the US submarine base. While most of the action in his book *Saving Lieutenant Kennedy* and in this presentation takes place in the Pacific, this book is inspired by that legacy.



## President's Message



There was a great roll up for our Annual General Meeting, which belied the conventional wisdom that people avoid AGMs in case they get saddled with a job they don't want!

I'd like to thank the membership for your vote of support as the society's new president.

I take on this task with some trepidation. Together, Desley and her husband Ross have led our society for 21 of the past 31 years and much of our success is due to their hard work. Fortunately, Desley will remain on the committee as immediate past president after four years of selfless service as our president.

I also thank continuing committee members Tracey, Denise, Bruna, George and Ben for your ongoing service. A special thank you to retiring member Rosalinda and a warm welcome to new members Judi and Linda. There are profiles on Judi and Linda in the members' section of this newsletter. Between us all, I hope we bring a good blend of experience and new blood to the running of the society.

## Past President's Message



I want to express my thanks to the committee members and all the members for the support given to me for the past four years.

I took on the role rather reluctantly following on from my husband Ross who was always an ideas man for new things for the society to try.

I have learned so much in those four years. I have reflected on how my leadership style commenced way back in my teenage years with courses and practical experience in leading youth groups in the church. Over the years, both paid work and volunteer work, various courses, experiences and mentorship helped me to learn new skills. No experience is ever wasted, whether it seems to be positive or negative at the time. Now, as I approach the status of being an octogenarian, I am still learning to adapt to a changing world. No longer do we do things the way we have always done them! New computer programs make various jobs easier (once we have learned how to use them) and, in a small way, I am discovering how Artificial Intelligence can be our friend!

As part of the digitisation project, I have looked at how minutes were recorded before computers and correspondence was handwritten and posted.

I often say to people who ask about our society's success that we try to do four or five things really well, rather than 20 things half well. These include arranging lively meetings and interesting speakers, our guided walks, our publications and our great afternoon teas. Focusing on these things takes a lot of work but as well as the committee we have a great team of volunteers who help make our meetings run smoothly every month.

Speaking of meetings, our next one on September 27 promises to be very interesting. Italians and food have long been synonymous with life in New Farm. Maria Anello, owner of the New Farm Deli and Café, will join us in conversation to discuss fifty years running her landmark business. I'm sure it will be an entertaining event.

Finally, a reminder that the society's website contains much useful information about upcoming meetings, walks and other events, as well as links to past newsletters and recordings of previous meetings. You can find it at [newfarmhistorical.org.au](http://newfarmhistorical.org.au).

*Robert Allen*

Then computers were introduced and we all started to learn how to use them. I wonder how committees functioned without email and the ability to search the internet for information. We live in a fast-moving world where we communicate with each other quickly through email. At the end of the last century we were going to our post boxes each day to look for mail; now we check our inboxes and can respond that same day. What a wonderful time to be alive and still learning!

Thank you everyone, for trusting me to be the president of this society for the past four years. It gives me great pleasure to see the sense of community and belonging at our Saturday meetings – busy bees at their posts, each contributing to the good of the whole, and many folk enjoying being together and sharing stories and friendship.

There is a great group of people volunteering their time, knowledge and expertise as committee members, and you can trust they will lead the society well, still with your support. The strength and success of the society lies in the participation of so many members working together to achieve the aim as stated in our Charter:

*Research, record and promote the history of the New Farm, Teneriffe, Newstead, Fortitude Valley and Bowen Hills district.*

I give a hearty endorsement of the new President Robert and all of the committee members.

*Desley Garnett*

## Membership Matters

Contributor: Bruna Burello-Day  
Membership Secretary

### Changing of the guard

As Membership Secretary, I add my congratulations and thanks to outgoing president, **Desley**, for her unwavering dedication to her role. Desley's calm, collaborative approach ensured the society progressed significantly under her leadership. Her new role as immediate past president will ensure a smooth transition and be an invaluable support. Desley, enjoy your newfound and well-earned extra time for yourself and family!

Congratulations to newly elected president, **Robert**, who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. His infectious enthusiasm and energy are sure to make for a very productive time for the society. The success of our first committee meeting under his stewardship augurs well for the next twelve months.



Rosalinda Pike

Farewell and thank you to Rosalinda Pike, who has stepped down from the committee, but not from her continuing invaluable involvement in the Society. We will miss her at our committee meetings, but she will still be contributing mightily by staffing the Membership Table at our monthly meetings, helping with the digitisation project, and providing treats on Thursday afternoons during our Office Open Hours.

We warmly welcome a former society member and a brand-new member who both immediately stepped up to join the committee. We look forward to their enthusiastic participation and fresh ideas. Overall, it promises to be a most productive time ahead, not forgetting that we stand on the shoulders of those who preceded us. Onwards and upwards!

### Attendance surging

Attendance at our meetings continues to amaze! Approximately 125 people, including 20 non-members, attended our August meeting and AGM, a figure that is possibly an AGM record. This turnout is a testament to the enthusiasm for what the Society offers and is a gratifying result for our hard-working committee and volunteers.

Membership is also growing, with 12 new members (seven new, and five renewals) in August. We now have 258 current financial members. We encourage members to renew their membership for 2026 before the year's end.

Our September presentation, Maria Anello's reflections on her family's 50 years with the New Farm Deli and Café, has generated significant interest. We expect another large crowd, so arrive early to secure a good seat for the 2:30pm start. Don't forget to wear your name badge!

Judi Jabour & Linda Whatman ►

**Judi Jabour** has lived in New Farm with her partner Linda for over 20 years. For nearly a decade, Judi worked in the office of local state member, Grace Grace MP. It was through this work that Judi formed a professional relationship with members of the NF&DHS.



"I've known most of the Committee members for many years now, and I've seen firsthand the passion and dedication they bring to NF&DHS. In particular, I look forward to catching up with former Presidents Ross and Desley Garnett, the backbone of the Historical Society, to listen to their thoughts and ideas for the next year ahead."

**Linda Whatman** has lived and worked in and around New Farm for over 20 years.

"My love for the area began when I lived in a woolstore apartment on Arthur Street, Teneriffe. Its soaring ceilings and timber posts gave me a deep appreciation for our neighbourhood's history." That appreciation grew through Ben Pritchard's local history tours and years working in Fortitude Valley, the CBD, and Newstead, and now living in New Farm. These experiences showed the need to balance heritage with thoughtful development.

Beyond the woolstores, one of Linda's favourite places is the Brisbane Powerhouse. "Having worked in the energy sector for over a decade, I admire both its industrial past and its transformation into a cultural hub."

## 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 each month from February to November.

Entry fee: \$5 for members; \$10 for non-members.

Other events include:

**18 Sep:** Members' Getting to Know You Afternoon Tea

**20 Sep:** Newstead & Breakfast Creek Historical Walk, led by Gerard Benjamin. Book [HERE](#).

**20 Sep:** Genealogical Society QLD 'Record as you Go', online workshop. Book [HERE](#).

**27 Sep:** Monthly Society Meeting

**1 Oct:** Brisbane 100: One City Together (Free Public Event)

**11 Oct:** Greater Brisbane Centenary History Conference. Book [HERE](#).

**Tuesdays:** Queens Wharf & Government Precinct Heritage Walking Tour. Book [HERE](#).

After this month, only two 2025 meetings left: 25 Oct, 22 Nov.

## Membership Matters

Contributor: Rita Cleveland

### A Focus on Younger Members

On a recent walk along Bowen Terrace and Moray Street, I found myself struck not only by Gerard Benjamin's engaging stories of our local history, but also by the make-up of the group. There were a surprising number of young people, many not yet members of our Society. One young man, a Year 11 student from Fortitude Valley State Secondary College, was there with his brother and parents. Gerard, being his volunteer guide in the school's innovative mentor program, had alerted him to the walk. After the event Gerard received the young man's feedback.

"History has been a personal interest of mine. I really enjoyed the walk. New Farm is an interesting area historically and I was able to learn quite a bit. The pace was leisurely and the experience was enjoyable. My brother pointed to the story of the person (Mr Stevenson) who built a school for his daughter to conduct (The New

Farm Private School) as one he remembered fondly... I never realised how many important buildings were in the area and how many are still standing today."

I was intrigued by these comments, and it sparked an idea: What motivates our younger members to join our New Farm and Districts Historical Society? As a result, I have spoken with three younger members, Emma, Mathew and Chrissy about their impressions since joining.



The diverse walking tour company

### Emma Butterworth

An architect with a passion for heritage conservation, Emma first encountered the NFDHS through Gerard's walks. Her interest in preserving buildings — and the stories they hold — made membership a natural next step. Emma has postgraduate qualifications in heritage conservation.



### Mathew Kirk

Mathew is a graduate of Griffith University and works in his chosen field of Information Technology. Mathew has always been drawn to the human stories behind places. He first heard about the Society at the Teneriffe Festival and was impressed by its dedication to local heritage. With a young daughter, he wants her "to grow up knowing where she comes from and to appreciate the sacrifices and stories that made her world possible."



### Chrissy Layton

Chrissy is a freelance journalist and public servant with Queensland Health. Also introduced to the Society through Gerard's walks, she has a long-standing love of storytelling. Chrissy has written widely on people, places, and events, and will soon be covering a Keith Urban concert! Chrissy is looking forward to exchanging lots of stories with long term members.



**A Brand-New Walking Tour:** A new tour led by Gerard on September 20 will take place around Newstead House and the Breakfast Creek area. Meet inside the Gasometer at 8:30am to start the 90-minute stroll ending with a well-earned cuppa overlooking Breakfast Creek. Find out more and book [HERE](#).

### Common Threads

In our conversations, several themes emerged:

- Each felt warmly welcomed at their first meeting.
- They were impressed by the Society's strong attendance.
- They value membership despite their busy lives.
- They share a deep love of stories. Mathew noted that "many in my generation are rediscovering history in more personal ways through family heritage, community archives, or even digital storytelling."
- All agreed that younger people are interested in history.

### Looking Ahead

Emma, Mathew and Chrissy all relish hearing stories of people and places. As Mathew put it: "There's something powerful about someone describing the same streets you walk today, but through the lens of decades past". They also join with purpose, supporting the Society's mission to preserve local heritage. When asked how we might attract more young members, they were unanimous: don't be afraid to give younger members a role — whether in telling stories, sharing perspectives, or engaging with themes.

One thing we can do right now? Now that we recognise a few of our younger members, let's look out for them at the meetings and invite them to sit, chat, and share their views of the streets we all call home.

## Share your Memories

### Catholic Order of Nursing Sisters

*A message from longtime society member, Rita Malone.*

Hello readers and fellow members of NF&DHS. I am seeking the help of any reader or member who may remember the Catholic Order of Nursing Sisters, Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor, nicknamed "the Brown Sisters" because they wore long brown cloaks. They began in New Farm in 1956 when their aid was badly needed amongst the sick and poor at a time when New Farm was not the high-profile affluent suburb it is today.

Their address was a lovely old Queenslander home at 407 Bowen Terrace, New Farm, and they raised needed money once a year with a Gift Day in August.

I, Rita Malone, am a first cousin of Sister Pat Malone who ministered in New Farm for many, many years and I now live in New Farm. I and a second cousin, Pat Gardner, who is Sister Pat's niece, believe these sisters should be remembered in the history of New Farm.



407 Bowen Terrace, c 2010, residence of the Brown Sisters, New Farm.  
Source: Ray White

Sister Pat is now 92, retired, and living in the Order's Mother House in Coogee, Sydney.

We would be grateful to anyone who has personal memories of these Sisters if they would share their stories about the Sisters' service in New Farm.

I can be contacted by email at [marionritamalone1934@gmail.com](mailto:marionritamalone1934@gmail.com) or by phone at 07 3254 3778.

Many Thanks,  
Rita Malone



## Digitisation Update

NFDHS Secretary, Tracey Hurren, reports good progress has been made on Phase 1 following the August 5 and August 31 working bee. Tracey sends her appreciation to all who have taken up roles within the working groups – files, oral histories, videos, books and paintings. This groundwork will now provide an overview from which to plan the next phase.

Sounds a bit dry & administrative? Not a bit of it! The Ron Muir Room has been buzzing with our endeavours, delicious offerings have appeared and we've had the satisfaction of working towards a shared outcome.

Anyone wanting to assist is welcome to drop by the Ron Muir Room, New Farm Library, during open hours from 2pm - 5pm Thursday. No specific skills are required. Please email Tracey at [secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au](mailto:secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au) to let her know you'd like to help.

Thanks to everyone for your efforts. It's great to see a once daunting undertaking beginning to take shape. Come along and be part of this great big collaborative project.

*Contributor: Maria Shaw*



## Celebrate the Centenary

Enjoy activities and displays that demonstrate how much has changed in the last 100 years since the amalgamation of the towns and councils into one body.

