



OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

NEW FARM AND DISTRICTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au



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September Meeting

Contributor: Chrissy Layton

From Migrant Struggles to Business Triumphs 50 Years of Food, Family and Resilience

What began with a cobbler in post-war Europe has grown into a thriving family business. The iconic New Farm Deli at Merthyr Village now celebrates 50 years of flavour, resilience, and community.

Maria Anello (née Picerno), co-owner of the deli, was born in 1960 in Cagliari, a small southern Italian town shaped by post-war poverty. Her parents' story began with a cobbler's trade—"one grandfather made shoes, the other needed them". Farming, sacrifice, and seasonal work in France and Germany eventually led the family to migrate to Australia in 1970.

Adapting to life in Brisbane was challenging. School presented language barriers and grade-skipping created friendship obstacles, while early jobs sparked a lifelong connection to food retail.

At 17, the owner of the deli where Maria worked asked if her parents would be interested in buying the business. Maria, at that age, was not interested in this adventure, so didn't tell them—the secret came out when the owner approached her mother directly. With \$10,000 of Maria's savings and \$20,000 from her parents, the three Picerno family members became equal partners. Maria brought bookkeeping and English skills; her parents handled the manual work.

Food had always been central to family life. Maria fondly recalls baking cakes in secret and cooking for her family. In 1979, she met Vince Anello while filling in as a waitress at a wedding he was attending. They married in 1982, and Vince soon joined the business, bringing new ideas and a vision for growth.



Maria and Vince have put family at the centre of their business



The first store was small, but in 1991 they relocated to Merthyr Village, expanding into a café despite warnings it would fail. Defying the odds assisted with the aromas of bread, olives, and creatively named sandwiches like 'Vince's Vice', success came not from business plans but from listening to customers and serving them like family. The couple eventually bought out Maria's parents, who were hesitant about change. By 1992, they expanded again, offering sit-down meals.



Speaker Maria Anello did a Q&A with President Robert Allen

What began with six family members now employs around 90 staff. Maria's children, her "deli babies," have also joined the business, continuing the family legacy.

Despite its success, family remains the priority. The deli closes for Christmas and Easter so staff can rest and reconnect. "It's like one of our children," Maria says, "and everyone needs time to refresh."

Fifty years on, Maria credits their success to "being present, evolving, listening, staying humble, and knowing your community."

Next time you visit New Farm Deli, remember - behind every dish lies a story of sacrifice, unwavering family commitment, and the extraordinary journey of a business built with love, resilience, and generations of hard work.

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

Meeting Photos



Acknowledgements

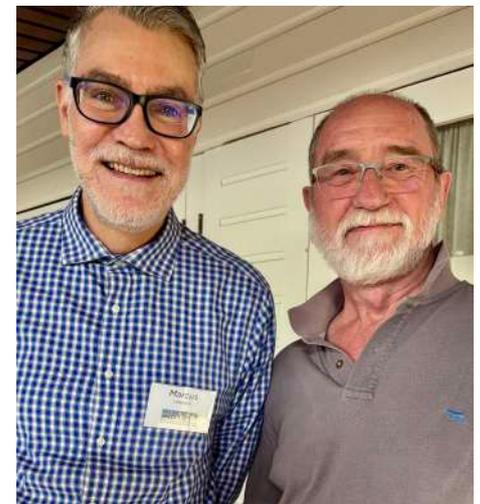
As always, thanks go to our wonderful meeting volunteers as well as:



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



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



About the Society

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Membership Secretary: Bruna Burello-Day
membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au

Committee Members:

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

Memberships:

Fee: \$20 per calendar year or part thereof. Add \$15 for posted newsletter. A new membership platform will be launched soon for 2026 renewals. Applications for new memberships for 2026 will be accepted from November. See page 5 and look out for emails in late October. Apply for or renew membership: www.newfarmhistorical.org.au/membership/

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Kate Lockyer
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Meeting Photography:

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



YOU'RE INVITED TO A

MEMBERS'
AFTERNOON TEA

Thursday 16 October 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
Text or leave message: 0417 190 675

October Presentation

Saving JFK in the South Pacific

On a moonless night in August 1943, a US torpedo boat commanded by Lt. John F Kennedy in the Solomon Islands was rammed by a Japanese destroyer. Clinging to wreckage, the eleven survivors struggled ashore on an uninhabited island. Missing, presumed dead, behind enemy lines with no food or water, and with several injured, the future looked bleak. Fortunately, Australian Coast-watcher Lt. Reg Evans witnessed the aftermath of the collision. Working under the eye of the Japanese military, in the next five days Evans and two Solomon Islander scouts located and rescued Kennedy and his crew. And the rest is history!

During WWII, Brisbane 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 occurs in the Pacific, this book is inspired by that legacy.



Speaker:
Brett Mason

Saturday 25th October 2:30 pm

Uniting Church Centre, 52 Merthyr Rd, New Farm

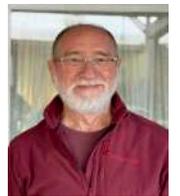
www.newfarmhistorical.org.au
Enquiries: 0437 280 104

November Presentation

Coming up... Brisbane's early roller skating rinks

At our November meeting Andrew Darbyshire will present his research on 'rinking', the introduction of roller skating to Brisbane in the 1880s. The local populace flocked to this new recreational activity, cashed up investors responding quickly to provide new facilities. The initial rink at New Farm was operational only a whisker behind the opening of the first purpose-built skating rink in the centre of Brisbane.

The history of two New Farm venues will feature in the talk.



Figaro, April 1888. Source: NLA Trove

President's Message



It was great to see so many come along to hear Maria Anello talk about 50 years of her New Farm Deli at the September meeting. The 'in conversation' format made a change from our usual meeting setup and seemed to work well. Maria's passion and commitment was infectious as she described a journey that began with her arrival in Australia as a ten-year-old in 1970 and is still unfolding more than five decades later.

A reminder that our tech wizard Austin records, edits and uploads all of our guest talks to the internet for you to watch at your leisure. You can find more than 60 of them online at vimeo.com/showcase/8485721.

New and existing members alike are invited to come along to our monthly members' afternoon tea on Thursday October 16 from 2:30pm. The venue is the Ron Muir Room next to the New Farm Library. To help with catering please RSVP to Bruna at membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au.

The year is quickly coming to a close and the committee have been turning our minds to next year's events.

We have a few ideas already but I'm keen to hear about the speakers, events and stories you'd like to see, hear and read next year. Please email me at president@newfarmhistorical.org.au with your thoughts.

Brisbane Living Heritage (BLH) is the peak organisation for almost a hundred local museums, galleries, institutional members and history groups like ours. I attended the BLH's Annual General Meeting recently and I'm pleased to advise that Melissa Hoedel, our society's nominated director on the BLH board, will be its new chair. I came to know Melissa well when she ran Brisbane Open House and I look forward to working closely with her in her new role. You can find out about BLH and its members' upcoming activities at brisbanelivingheritage.org.

I hope to see many of you at our next meeting on October 25, when society member and former Senator Brett Mason will relate the story of how future US President John F. Kennedy was saved from Japanese capture by an Australian Coastwatcher and Solomon Island scouts in August 1943. It promises to be a fascinating presentation.

Robert Allen



More Icons of Brisbane

Sunday 26th October, 2025
GT 125 Theatre, St Joseph's College,
285 Gregory Terrace

Following the Icons of Brisbane event that was held in 2023, we are investigating some more Brisbane citizens who have made significant contributions to Brisbane life. This event looks at six people, some of whom may be better known than others, and asks the question 'Can we consider them icons of Brisbane?'



- | | |
|---------|---|
| 12.30pm | Registration and book shop |
| 1.00pm | Jacqui Donegan, Sr Angela Mary Doyle R.S.M. <i>In conversation with a living icon</i> |
| 1.30pm | Lisa Jones (for Barry Shaw), Cecilia McNally, <i>Duchess of Spring Hill</i> |
| 2.00pm | Robert Allen, <i>TC Beirne: Businessman, Philanthropist, Politician</i> |
| 2.30pm | Afternoon Tea and book shop |
| 3.00pm | Deborah van der Plaats, <i>Robin Gibson (1930 – 2014) and architecture in everyday pursuits</i> |
| 3.30pm | Richard Blundell, <i>Walking with Daphne Mayo</i> |
| 4.00pm | Paul Sayer, <i>Sir Zelman Cowen: Renaissance Man and a giant in the worlds of academia, diplomacy and the law</i> |

General Admission \$15.00 BHG Members \$10.00

Booking essential – By email/EFT brisbanehistoryevents@gmail.com. Include attendees names. Funds transfer to Brisbane History Group, Westpac, BSB 734 000, A/C 093887. Use your family name in the reference. **By Humanitix** <https://events.humanitix.com/more-icons-of-brisbane>

Or contact Linda Mackay 3368 1828

Membership Matters

Contributor: Bruna Burello-Day
Membership Secretary

Word is spreading

What an outstanding turnout at the September meeting! Around 125 heads were counted, making it another full house. Had we not had such fierce competition from a certain football game in Melbourne, it would definitely have been standing room only!

Our reputation is clearly gaining momentum, attracting visitors from far and wide. We were delighted to welcome former New Farm residents and members - a couple visiting from Los Angeles, as well as guests from Melbourne and Mackay. Members travelled from, to name a few locations, Buderim, Samford, Ipswich, Nathan, Belmont, Camp Hill, Carina Heights, Morningside, Chermside, Ascot and, naturally, from our extended region. Several residents of Rendu Towers at Newstead also enjoyed the occasion.

And, of course, our star attraction, Maria Anello, did not disappoint. With President Robert's thoughtfully considered questions and encouragement, Maria shared the fascinating story of how she and her family came to establish the iconic New Farm Deli and keep it going over its 50-year history. The conversational format of the presentation elicited many appreciative comments.

Our catering team were kept very busy tending to the many who stayed to enjoy yet another sumptuous afternoon tea. The food disappeared quickly. Extra tables and chairs were needed to accommodate the happy crowd. Thanks must go to all our hard-working volunteers at the coalface and behind the scenes who make this wonderful social gathering possible.

Our 2025-2026 Committee

A very rare occurrence was having all our new committee members in one place (other than at a committee meeting) thus providing a perfect photo opportunity. However, as was quipped by one of them, "it was like herding cats", with yours truly being the most difficult to pin down! But we did manage to come together long enough for Maria Shaw to take a snap or two for posterity.

Our reputation continues to flourish with word being spread further by new committee member, Judi Jabour, who has taken on the role of social media co-ordinator. Judi has been doing a wonderful job promoting our society and we have been receiving some great feedback. Do check our Facebook page, and like and share the posts to get the word out even further.

Here we are, from left to right: Bruna Burello-Day (Membership Secretary); Tracey Hurren (Secretary); George Cowin; Robert Allen (President); Desley Garnett (Immediate Past President); Denise Buckby (Treasurer); Judi Jabour, Linda Whatman and Ben Pritchard. ►



Some Rendu residents paid us a visit

Membership renewals in 2026: Moving to TidyHQ (Online payment option)

To maintain our current membership numbers, it is vital for members to renew their memberships promptly. The NF&DHS Committee has trialled the Australian-based member management platform TidyHQ and has agreed to use it for 2026 renewals. Our society goals are simple: reduce volunteer admin, speed up payments and receipting, and keep member records accurate.

From late October, you'll receive your 2026 membership invoice by email. If your contact details remain the same, then just click the secure payment link (embedded in the invoice) to pay your 2026 fees by credit or debit card. An instant email receipt will be issued once the payment is complete.

Need a hand trying this new process? Not a problem – our Membership Secretary and Treasurer are happy to help via phone, email or in person at our next members' meetings.

Prefer not to pay online? That's absolutely okay – **cash, cheque, and bank transfer** will still be accepted though we hope a number of members will, in time, prefer the automated payment process.



The smiling faces of our new team

Walking Tour

Contributor: Rita Cleveland

Linking with our past... Newstead and Breakfast Creek walk

On a beautiful morning last month, an enthusiastic group of members joined our resident historian, Gerard Benjamin, at Gasworks to share insights of this area's past.

The walk included stories of Newstead's more recent history, especially its burgeoning development, as well as stories of the early days and the families who influenced Newstead's former place in the history. We were able to see the plaque recently installed along the Boardwalk which pays homage to the role that the Coastwatchers played in WWII. (See last month's newsletter.)

Of course, the beautiful Newstead House was a special feature of our walk with its stunning views from all angles. Well, perhaps we could reserve our enthusiasm with the western view that takes in the Mercedes Benz headquarters and Bunnings!! Gerard had us all fixed on the history of this grand home and we breathed more easily to know how much it is loved as it continues to undergo timely renovations.

Next, the walk took us across the busy intersection to the Breakfast Creek Hotel. I think we all marvelled at this historic building that still holds the French Renaissance features from its construction in 1889. Gerard showed us the water levels from the series of floods through this area,

the most significant being the flood of 1893, inundating the hotel to the height of 2.4 metres.

Finally, we wandered past the Chinese Temple. It was built in 1886 and was a very important location for many of the Cantonese settlers who had come from southern China and managed the market gardens in the area. The materials that are such wonderful features of the construction were imported by a well-known merchant of the time.

The last section of the walk took us to a charming part of the creek where there has been a continuing history of boat building since 1909.

The Queensland Art Gallery is currently displaying paintings of Breakfast Creek rendered by artists Frank Sherrin and Betty Quelhurst. Here are the respective links in case you can't make it to the Exhibition at QAG: www.collection.qagoma.qld.gov.au/objects/32340; www.collection.qagoma.qld.gov.au/objects/8753



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:

- 15 Oct:** The Australian dream? with Tim Ross at the State Library of Queensland. Book [HERE](#).
- 16 Oct:** Members' Afternoon Tea
- 19 Oct:** Step into History with Karl & Gertrude Langer at Wolston Farmhouse. Book [HERE](#).
- 22 Oct:** In Conversation with Dame Quentin Bryce at Brisbane Powerhouse. Book [HERE](#).
- 25 Oct:** Monthly Society Meeting
- 30 Oct:** Heritage talks: Queensland tastes at the State Library of Queensland. Book [HERE](#).
- Until 9 Nov:** Brisbane Portrait Prize Exhibition at State Library of Queensland. Free admission.
- Tuesdays:** Queens Wharf & Government Precinct Heritage Walking Tour. Book [HERE](#).

Only one 2025 meeting left after this month on Nov 22.



Moored at Breakfast Creek

Useful Links

Brisbane Living Heritage:
www.brisbanelivingheritage.org

State Library of Queensland:
www.slq.qld.gov.au

Royal Historical Society of Queensland:
www.queenslandhistory.org

Genealogical Society of Queensland Inc:
www.gsq.org.au

Community News

Contributor: George Cowin

Stories in Stone - the complexities of managing cemeteries

NF&DHS Committee member George Cowin attended a conference earlier this year on the topic of cemeteries.

I attended a conference on Saturday, 16 August, organised by the Stories in Stone committee in partnership with Brisbane Living Heritage at the Old Hamilton Town Hall: 'Stories in Stone' (Cemetery Heritage and History 2025).

While it is not a topic that everyone would be interested in, I found it intriguing in the complexities of issues involved in dealing with the burial of citizens of communities throughout the world. All communities face these issues and handle them in different ways.

The conference fielded topics presented by wonderful speakers and covered:

- Bringing communities to life among the graves – social media engagement, community and cemetery care.
- A case study – the benefits of students taking part in cemetery and grave clean-ups, and, 'Repairing the vandalism' – a Toowoomba case study.
- Uncovering the layers of cemetery history.
- Unique information from cemetery research.
- The search for the missing Wolston Park patients – what happened to the cemeteries and remains?
- Cemeteries reimagined – interpreting cemeteries as heritage places.
- Stardust, Wish me luck, and other stories – Live performances in cemeteries (with music).
- Why does the Brisbane City Council have so many cemeteries?
- The next 100 years.

The organising committee of Jenny Clarke, Jess Parker and Chris Dawson managed the whole event to perfection

Community News

When the Wind Blew: a new Australian production

This is a heartwarming family musical set in the Australian bush telling the story of a young sugar glider, playing at Stagehouse Theatre in Stafford from 6 - 8 Nov.

Featuring a cast of 40 adults and children and a live orchestra, this story by Paula-Mary Camilleri and Eli J Ball is produced by Shine Performing Arts Academy.

Book your tickets [HERE](#).

finishing exactly on time and providing catering and breaks throughout the day to satisfy all attendees.

While all topics were of interest, one particular subject that got my attention was the case study in Toowoomba, that has a recurring theme in all communities. The situation involved a pair of lads who trashed graves in the Toowoomba Cemetery. The lads were apprehended and prosecuted in court.

However, the lads were brought under a community programme where a group gently addressed the issue by bringing the lads before people and friends of the deceased people in these graves and made them understand the devastation they caused to these families. One particular case was a young girl who had only been buried two days earlier and the family was still grieving badly. There was a noticeable reaction from one of the lads from the paternal way this was conducted and it is hoped that his attitude to life may have changed forever.

Now as part of the case study, there was a project established to repair and restore most of the damage done. This entailed organising a working group to manage and carry out a schedule of action, contacting the families of the deceased persons in the graves, raising funds to carry out most the work needed, arranging for stone masonry repairs at a TAFE College, engaging a stone mason to supervise the work, organising a transport company to transport the masonry from and back to the cemetery, dealing with local government regulations and many other incidental issues involved.

This was a mammoth task and is ongoing to this day. Other vandalism in communities does not necessarily get attended to like this and cemeteries are not equipped to rectify this devastation. It is a credit to the people involved. It is a slow and laborious exercise and attrition in supporters is a constant hazard.

So, while it was a dry subject to be involved with, I found it very interesting.

