NEW FARM AND DISTRICTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

www.newfarmhistorical.org.au

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October Meeting

Contributor: Gerard Benjamin

A constitution for a new age, and retail from an earlier age...



Even if a second AGM is not everyone's cup of tea as the main agenda for a monthly meeting, especially on a rainy day, remarkably more than 80 attended our October meeting, first to enjoy the newsreel (Highlights of 1966: Goodbye Menzies, Hello LBJ, Welcome Decimal Currency), then to participate in the formalities with Claire Moore kindly officiating.

President Robert Allen and Secretary Tracey Hurren explained the need to update the Society's 2005 Constitution so as to bring it in line with current legislation and contemporary modes of communication.

This project represented a prodigious effort by the hardworking committee, and funding from the Brisbane City Council so as to underwrite the necessary outlays was very much appreciated.

Treasurer Denise Buckby offered the financial report, then the all-important motion for the new Constitution was opened for discussion. There being no questions, the motion was put, and agreement was unanimous. Congratulations NF&DHS on accomplishing a new Constitution!

This left time for Robert Allen to provide an absorbing overview of Thomas Charles Beirne, the man behind the iconic TC Beirne department store in the Valley, drawing on research following his being awarded a 2026 Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame Fellowship for his project, "T.C Beirne and the House of the People".

Thomas Charles Beirne, the third child of eight, was born in rural Ireland in 1860. As an apprenticed draper, he shone at bookkeeping.



Archbishop of Brisbane James Duhig and TC Beirne in 1935.
Photo courtesy of Fryer Library

At the age of 24, he migrated to Melbourne and worked in retail. Moving to Brisbane, in 1891 he bought three adjoining shops in Brunswick Street and here the real story began.



TC Beirne Fortitude Valley store in 1911.
Photo courtesy of Queensland State Archives

He had married Anne Kavanagh in 1887 and they had 10 children, only five daughters of whom survived. The family lived briefly in Moray Street before acquiring a stately home in Hendra now known as Glengariff.

TC Beirne was a strong supporter of the Catholic Church and enjoyed a long friendship with Archbishop James Duhig. It was through a bequest from TCB in 1936 that the Law School at the University of Queensland was established.

Robert concluded by saying that he hoped that he had whetted the audience's appetite for learning more about the "enigmatic Thomas Charles Beirne".

POSTSCRIPT: How many in the audience at some stage had worked in department stores? At afternoon tea, two members chanced to discover that they had both, at different times, enjoyed vacation work as students, not at TC Beirne, but at McDonnell & East in George Street.

You can watch a recording of the presentation online **HERE**.



Thomas Charles Beirne 1936 caricature by Noel Counihan.
Photo courtesy of State Library of Queensland

Meeting Photos

The presentation can be viewed online **HERE**!




















Acknowledgements

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



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

Brisbane City Council
The Brisbane City Council's Historical and Organisational Grant has supported the development of our new Constitution

BRISBANE CITY

Dedicated to a better Brisbane

About the Society

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Treasurer: Denise Buckby

Committee Members:

Desley Garnett, Ben Pritchard, Judi Jabour, Linda Whatman and Bruna Burello-Day (Membership Secretary).

Memberships:

2027 Fee: $22 per calendar year or part thereof. Add $18.50 for prepaid postage of optional printed newsletter. Applications for 2027 will be accepted from December 2026.

Enquiries: As a new application and renewal process is currently being implemented, please contact the Membership Secretary for advice: membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au

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Maria Shaw



November Presentation

Memories of the California



Arthur and George outside California Cafe in 1992

Arthur Apostolos and his siblings grew up in and around the California Café, a Fortitude Valley landmark.

Operated by his parents George and Eleni for almost four decades, it was famous for its legendary breakfasts, mixed grills, laminex tables and the assorted characters who frequented it.

This, the final meeting of the year, will conclude with a special pre-Christmas afternoon tea.
All welcome.

Date: Saturday, November 28, 2:30pm
Location: Uniting Church Centre,
52 Merthyr Road, New Farm
Enquiries: 0437 280 104

Entry fee (includes afternoon tea):
$5 for members;
$10 for non-members.

Community News

Spotted in the cutting in James Street

This cable route marker (a metal plaque on a concrete block), one of two located in James Street below New Farm State School, drew the attention of eagle-eyed Society members Andrew Moore and Roman Bond.

The top line, "C.E.L. Co. Ltd", refers to the City Electric Light Co., which was in competition with the City Council's project to open, in 1928, the New Farm Powerhouse. In 1927, underground cabling of the New Farm and Valley area (including James Street) by the Council ran to "4,000 route yards excavated... and 12,000 yards of cable laid and covered".



Perhaps the two James Street "C.E.L. Co. Ltd." route markers date from this period? Further elucidation from readers is welcomed.

Contributor:
Gerard Benjamin

President's Message



Welcome to the last NF&DHS newsletter for 2026. My thanks to our editor Kate and her contributors for maintaining such a high standard throughout the year.

I thank the membership for unanimously endorsing our new constitution at the October meeting, adopting the 2025/26 financial reports and affirming our new auditor for 2026/27.

I also thank my fellow management committee members and our legal expert Lesleigh Mayes for all their hard work drafting our new constitution and again acknowledge the financial help provided by the Brisbane City Council under our Historical Organisations Assistance Grant.

We now have an updated, modern governing document which will stand us in good stead for years to come. The new constitution has been uploaded to our website and we now await its ratification by the Office of Fair Trading.

The speedy resolution of our formal business enabled me to give a brief talk about Fortitude Valley businessman Thomas Charles Beirne, whose 1902 flagship store still stands in Brunswick Street. It was nice to hear people's memories of the store. I remain on the lookout for further examples of Beirne-branded goods and recollections from anyone who worked or shopped there. Please email me on **rallen3@iinet.net.au** if you can assist.

Looking ahead to our November 28 meeting, Arthur Apostolos will be talking to us about his memories growing up at the iconic California Café, which was a much-loved Valley institution for several decades from 1947.

We will also be celebrating the end of the year with a special pre-Christmas afternoon tea and asking for donations and non-perishable items for the Holy Trinity Church Pantry. Please see the article about the pantry and its valuable work elsewhere in the newsletter. I hope to see you there.

Robert Allen
President NF&DHS

Letter to the Editor

Beirne connections

I read with interest the news of a presentation by Robert Allen on that great Irishman, TC Beirne. My grandmother, Rose Neller (née Fairon) had a connection to TC. Rose, born in Jericho in 1885, was the daughter of Henry Fairon, a remittance man from Armagh, who worked on the construction of Queensland railways in the 1880s.

I have no first-hand knowledge on the matter (Rose died in 1942) but my mum, Stella Leonie Brown, told me that Rose had an agreement to make gloves which were sold in TC Beirne's store in the Valley. Apparently, this arrangement continued up until the Depression, when demand went out the door, along with people's spending power.

Given the Queensland climate did not require the type of winter gloves we wear in Canberra's winter, I assume the gloves Rose made were those white gloves which were known in our home as "dress gloves".

I would love to know more about the Beirne "sub-contracting" system amongst the Irish diaspora.

Bill Brown
Canberra

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:

13 Nov - 5 Dec:	Agatha Christie's 'The Unexpected Guest' by Nash Theatre. Book **HERE**.
19 Nov:	Members' Afternoon Tea
19 Nov:	Historian Ben Macintyre - Redwood: The Spy Who Saved The World. Book **HERE**.
26 Nov:	'Suitable Migrants': Dutch Migration to QLD 1947-1970. Free lecture at Queensland Museum More info **HERE**.
26-30 Nov:	ΝΟΣΤΟΙ | Homecomings: Stories of the Ionian Island Diaspora in Queensland at UQ RD Milns Antiquities Museum. More info **HERE**.
28 Nov:	Monthly Society Meeting
28 Nov:	The Room hosted by Rebecca Levingston: Live interviews at the Powerhouse. Book **HERE**.
12 Dec:	Musical Meditations with Camerata at the Powerhouse. Book **HERE**.

Community News

Story Bridge memories

Society member Linda Zaklikowski has shared a recollection of her family's ties to the Story Bridge, originally published in shorter form in the Brisbane City Council's October 2026 edition of Living in Brisbane in response to a callout for residents to share their Story Bridge Memories.

My parents, Erwin & Gertrude Zaklikowski, immigrated to Australia in 1950 from Poland and Germany respectively. They arrived on the MV Harry Taylor, a US Army Ship, into Newcastle and were then sent to the Greta Immigration Camp. After a few months they were then offered jobs in Queensland and came north on the train to Brisbane, arriving at Roma Street Station and then transferred to the Yungaba Immigration Centre, located under the Story Bridge.

During their one week stay at the Centre, they walked across the Story Bridge to Fortitude Valley to go the shops and pick up some personal items and look around the city. This was their very first introduction to the landmark that would become a longstanding landmark in their lives.

After six months in Gayndah picking citrus fruit, they arrived back in Brisbane once again, this time staying at the Colmslie Immigration Hostel for a short time. They found new accommodation in the Valley and then every Sunday they would walk to church and then down to the New Farm Park. This was an area they felt a real connection with. It was close to the city and Valley, shops, work and schools – and so they bought their first and only home in New Farm.



Veronika, Erwin, and Dolores Zaklikowski, circa 1958. Photo courtesy of Linda Zaklikowski.

The Story Bridge has always been there in the background for the whole family. Back in the day, the Story Bridge was the only bridge that we used to travel around Brisbane to visit friends on the other side of the river, go to the German Club at Kangaroo Point, Sunday drives down to Redland Bay to pick strawberries or have a picnic. Their three daughters (Dolores, Veronika and Linda), went to All Hallows School where they would see the Story Bridge every day as they sat to eat lunch out on the lawn. Growing up, Linda always remembers when they would drive up Bowen Terrace and turn left directly onto the bridge, and coming home being scared thinking that cars would crash into them from behind because they didn't see the car stopped at the northern end to turn right down Bowen Terrace!

Whenever we went anywhere for a drive, the Story Bridge has always been our landmark to know that we were close to home. To this day whenever Gertrude (98) sees the Story Bridge, even the top from a distance, she blesses herself and says, "Thank goodness we are home!"

Community News

25 years of Brisbane Living Heritage

This November, Brisbane Living Heritage is celebrating a very special milestone — 25 years! What began as a Brisbane City Council initiative has grown, with the council's continued support, into the independent, community-led organisation they are proud to be today.

To mark the occasion, they're gathering on Sunday, 29 November, 5pm–7pm, at Newstead House — one of their inaugural member organisations, and a fitting place to celebrate 25 years of connection across Brisbane's heritage community. Refreshments will be provided by Cuisine on Cue, so come along, relax and reconnect with fellow members and friends. Join them as they look back on a proud history, and look ahead to what's next.

Tickets can be purchased **HERE**.

Local Authors

As this Society well knows, New Farm is home to many authors, writing in various genres.

Just last month, Adeline Abbott (the pen name at once identifies her as a New Farmer) published a murder mystery book called 'The Brunswick Street Bookshop' which features many recognisable New Farm locations.

This month, children's book author Michele Raineri will launch the third book in her series 'The Abbott Street Adventures' titled 'Back to Beethoven'. The trilogy is aimed at readers aged 8–11. Raineri will hold a book launch at 10am, Nov 21, at Fourth Wall Arts, 540 Queen St.

Ian Kemish AM is a former Australian diplomat whose first book, 'The Consul', offered a personal perspective on Australia's foreign affairs challenges. Published this year, his mystery novel 'Two Islands' draws on his diplomatic work in the Balkans and strong family links to Scotland.

Membership Matters

Contributor: Bruna Burello-Day
Membership Secretary

Member updates

The fact that 84+ people chose to attend our reconvened AGM indicates just how highly regarded our Society is. I think we can add to our reputation as "the best Historical Society in Queensland" that we conduct the best AGMs! Our thanks go to all our regular attendees and also to those whom we had not seen for quite a while. We hope you will become regulars again.

The November meeting promises to be a very special one, not only because of the topic and guest speaker, but also because we are planning an even grander afternoon tea. Expect some Christmas treats to be included!

Please remember to bring goodies for our "empty" Christmas tree. As you place your donation of non-perishable items under the tree, take an ornament from those supplied and place it on the tree so that by the end of the afternoon, the tree will be "full" as will the space around and under it!

Members Monthly Afternoon Tea



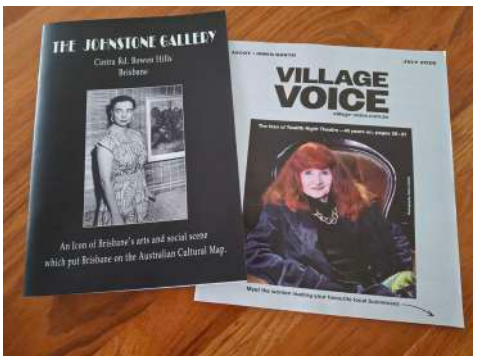
It was very gratifying to have so many join the October afternoon tea on the 15th. Some sixteen people attended – old, new, and prospective members and visitors. All were impressed with what President Robert had to say about the Society's aims, activities, projects, successes and plans for the future. Conversation was varied and lively and refreshments plentiful.

Our next afternoon tea, to be held on Thursday 19th November, will be the last one for the year. As always it will be held in the Ron Muir Room from 2.30pm.It will have a festive and celebratory flavour. Please see the invitation elsewhere in this newsletter. Everyone is welcome, but please rsvp at: **membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au** for catering purposes.



Weekly Office Open Hours at the Ron Muir Room

We are fortunate to have a small office available for our exclusive use as well as access to the Ron Muir Room attached to it to hold our regular events. Often, on a Thursday when our Office is open to the public, various visitors drop in to enquire about or donate any number of things. Last week we had a visit from Lewis Savage who is a stalwart of the Twelfth Night Theatre since 1990 and has been in the theatre business forever! Lewis brought along some copies of a publication "The Johnstone Gallery". The Gallery is notable for the fact that its owner, Marjorie Johnstone, donated the land for the theatre in 1967 envisioning an arts enclave.



A limited number of the booklets, along with copies of the July 2026 Ascot and Inner North Village Voice featuring an article celebrating 40 years of the Twelfth Night Theatre, will be available for collection at our November meeting. Fortunately, there were a few other members in attendance and we were fascinated by the stories that Lewis recounted. Thank you, Lewis, for your visit, and for gifting us these important items. We hope to see you again soon.

It's these sorts of encounters that prompted Ron Altmann – who has a very long association with New Farm and is the founder and Administrator of our sister Facebook page **New Farm History** – to remark, "There's always someone interesting to talk to and plenty to talk about at these "drop in" sessions."

Please note that our Office will be open for the last time this year on Thursday 26th November and will reopen on Thursday 4th February 2027 at the usual time of 2-4pm.

Membership renewal time will soon be here, and new members are always welcome

In early December, current members can expect to receive an emailed reminder to renew their membership accompanied by an invoice. Members will be charged $22.00 for renewal, and this is the amount payable using the "**PAY NOW**" button, as seen in **Example 1**.

Membership Matters Cont.

Details

Description	Quantity	Price	Tax	Total
Membership Renewal	1.0	$22.00	$0.00	$22.00
		Sub Total		$22.00 AUD
		Tax		$0.00 AUD
		Total		**$22.00 AUD**
		Amount Due		$22.00 AUD

Example 1

We encourage you to use the "PAY NOW" button which will be on the bottom left-hand corner of the invoice. As members renew their membership for 2027, the renewal invoice will note that by paying their renewal, members confirm they have read and agree to comply with the Society's Code of Conduct, which was introduced at the AGM and is supported by our new constitution. A copy of the Code will be available **HERE**.

If you have been paying for a printed newsletter to be posted there will be an additional item included, i.e. prepaid postage ($18.50 for the year – an increase from $17.00 in line with the recent Australia Post increases). That means that you will be charged the total amount of $40.50, as in **Example 2**.

You will not be able to break up the amount and pay only the membership fee if you no longer wish to receive the posted newsletter.

Details

Description	Quantity	Price	Tax	Total
Membership Renewal	1.0	$22.00	$0.00	$22.00
Prepaid Postage	1.0	$18.50	$0.00	$18.50
		Sub Total		$40.50 AUD
		Tax		$0.00 AUD
		Total		**$40.50 AUD**
		Amount Due		$40.50 AUD

Example 2

To avoid any hitches, please advise me at **membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au** as soon as possible if you no longer wish to receive the printed newsletter but wish to pay only the membership renewal fee.

Lapsed members (whose memberships expired in December 2025 or earlier) and prospective new members are also encouraged to renew or apply. Please see the volunteers at the Memberships Table before the start of the November meeting for advice on how to go about this. I will be available to answer queries at the meeting. You are welcome at any time to email me at **membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au** if you have any concerns.

A walk on the wild side with a connection to our Society

Here's a shout out to Society member, Neil Wilson (centre in the photo below), who was one of five "HeartFITers" among 15 walkers who took part in the **Queensland Brain Institute's Steps for Dementia Research** charity trek — a five-day adventure along Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

The trek raised funds for the Peter Hilton Alzheimer's Research Endowment Fund at the Queensland Brain Institute, supporting vital dementia research. Bruce Collins, who founded HeartFIT* some 12 years ago and is an avid supporter of QBI, remarks, "These 'ordinary' people doing 'extraordinary' things are doing exactly what the health, wellbeing and longevity experts encourage us to do as we age — stay active, embrace new challenges, find purpose and contribute to something bigger than ourselves. It's not just about adding years to our lives but adding LIFE to our years!".

Neil says, "This is my fourth trek – I find it a great way to combine helping brain research towards understanding – and hopefully eliminating – dementia, together with improving my physical wellbeing and enjoying the company of like-minded friends."

This was the reason Neil could not attend our October meeting and why he submitted the only proxy received in relation to the vote on our new Constitution. Well done to you, Neil, and to your fellow trekkers!

*For those who are unaware, HeartFIT is a mature age fitness program with multiple venues around Brisbane and was introduced to New Farm via a demonstration at our February 2024 meeting. From its first session in May that year, it has amassed a huge following with three sessions weekly at the Merthyr Road Uniting Church Centre and a fourth in the pipeline. Neil normally attends at Cannon Hill. If you haven't heard of HeartFIT, see what it's all about **HERE**.



Steps for Dementia Research charity trek. Photo courtesy of Bruce Collins

Membership Matters Cont.

Seeking new Catering Organiser for our monthly public meetings

Sadly, Ann Sargeant is stepping down from her role as coordinator of catering after several years. Ann has been amazing, along with the volunteers who give hands-on help or donate items, in ensuring that we conclude our meetings with a wonderful afternoon tea with plenty of variety. We can't thank Ann enough for her dedication to the task which she fulfils every month with good humour, and without fuss or ceremony.

We are now seeking one or two people to take over this role. Ann will still be actively involved in the kitchen at the meetings. I'm sure she'll be happy to give advice to whoever takes on this task. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer to coordinate afternoon tea, please contact me at **membership@newfarmhistorical.org.au**, or see Ann or me at the November meeting. The role could also be shared between two people coordinating on alternate months.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

As this is the last newsletter for 2026, I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their enthusiastic support of the Society through their membership. We finish the year with a very respectable 271 financial members, including 5 Life Members. I have enjoyed the camaraderie at the meetings, be it at the MRUCC or at the Ron Muir Room, and it has been my privilege to have been your Membership Secretary in this very active and productive year.

I wish you all a peaceful and joyful festive season and look forward to your company in the new year when we will again endeavour to bring you the quality activities to which you have become accustomed.

We'd like to hear from you

We welcome stories and anecdotes from our members. If you'd like to be featured in our "Meet the Member" articles, email **editor@newfarmhistorical.org.au**.

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

Queensland Women's Historical Association:
www.miegunyah.org

Christmas Aid



Helping Holy Trinity Pantry at Christmas

The Holy Trinity Anglican Church Pantry in Fortitude Valley provides food parcels, emergency relief for overdue essential bills and a weekly cooked meal for many of the area's residents in need.

This year, the pantry expects to spend over $20,000 on groceries for food parcels, and more than $45,000 to help pay late bills.

For the past few years, the Society has been helping the Holy Trinity Church's pantry at Christmas time by providing dry goods, toiletries and cash donations for their important work.

Members and guests are asked to bring non-perishable items or cash donations along to our November 28 meeting for delivery to the Holy Trinity volunteer pantry team.

COLD PRODUCTS
Frozen Bread
Frozen Meal
DRY SHELF PRODUCTS
UHT Milk (1L)
Weet-bix/Cereal
Tea
Sugar
Rice
Pasta
Packet Soup
Jam
Vegemite
Peanut Butter
Coffee
Pasta Sauce
Two-minute Noodles
Sweet Biscuits
Savoury Biscuits
TOILETRIES
Tampons: regular / large *(circle one)*
Sanitary Pads / Liners *(circle one)*

TOILETRIES
Toilet Roll
Bar of Soap
Shampoo
Deodorant
Toothbrush+Toothpaste *(combined)*
Female Hygiene
TINNED FOOD
Beans: 4Bean, Kidney, Cannellini
Chickpeas / Lentils
Green Beans
Corn
Peas and Carrots
Beetroot
Tomatoes
Fruit
Meat & Veg Meal
Soup
Spaghetti
Baked Beans
Tuna
Ham

Trinity Pantry list of possible donation items