

President's Report 2010/11

Royal Historical Society of Queensland



I am pleased to present the 2010-11 Annual Report of The Royal Historical Society of Queensland. This year we celebrate 30 years occupancy of the Commissariat Store and we are grateful for this, and mindful of our role in promoting the study of Queensland history which includes our convict heritage.

I was re-elected President at the 2010 Annual General Meeting with Vice-Presidents Mr Manfred Cross and Mr Richard Morgan, and Councillors Ms Sasha Broughton, Mr William Elliott, Mrs Marilyn England, Dr Rebecca Ling, Dr John Mills, Professor John Pearn, and Mrs Jean Stewart. Dr Hilary Fisher was subsequently appointed Vice-President, and Mrs Janet Hogan to the Council. Dr Denver Beanland continued on the Council as Immediate Past President and has been an unfailing source of advice and support. Mr Barrie Rollason was reappointed Honorary Treasurer and his experience and guidance have been invaluable.

Dr Ruth Kerr was re-elected Honorary Secretary, and she has willingly shared her immense knowledge of the Society and has diligently produced Minutes of the Council meetings. She has been the Society's representative on the National Archives Consultative Forum. Ms Judy Rechner was reappointed to the positions of Honorary Librarian and Web Manager and has demonstrated great commitment to those roles. Later in the year Richard Morgan was reappointed to the board of Newstead House and we participated in a workshop about the maintenance and role of that body. Thanks are due to him and to Mrs Glenda Sheaffe who was reappointed as the Society's representative on the National Trust of Queensland.

In the course of the year John Mills resigned from the Council and thanks is due to him for his ideas for the wellbeing of the Society. Dr Robert Hogg was appointed to and served for some months on the Council and I record our appreciation for his work and his participation, especially on various Committees. Ms Helen McMonagle, who had

served on the Marketing Committee, was appointed to the Council. The Council has worked steadily and cohesively throughout the year on behalf of all members.



The year has been seriously interrupted by our forced evacuation from The Commissariat Store after serious damage to the building, and the collapse of the retaining wall below William Street, following torrential rain in January of this year. We were fortunate to be granted by the Government alternative office accommodation in The Mansions, George Street, and to have the use of the boardroom in National Trust House and we have enjoyed the great cooperation with National Trust Queensland and its President Mr Stephen Sheaffe.

Immediately after the evacuation and for a considerable period before communications were restored to us at the Mansions, the running of the Society depended almost entirely on a very few people. I would like to make special mention of our Hon Librarian Judy Rechner whose access to our databases was crucial, to our Manager Ms Christina

Michie whose mobile phone was a critical link; to receptionist Ms Valerie Blomer who spent many hours setting up and manning a temporary office; and to Ms Katherine Pharey who for much of the year maintained our financial records from home.



We returned to The Commissariat Store on 5 July, although repairs to the building and grounds continue. Conservation architect and RHSQ member Jinx Miles was of particular assistance to us during the evacuation and removal of spoil from the site, and during the restoration of the building. Mention should also be made of Mr Tom Fussell, Chief Architect, Project Services, who kept us informed and showed us every consideration.

MEMBERSHIP

Current membership of the Society is 508 including affiliations. There are 41 affiliated society members, 10 life members, 2 honorary life members, 38 member libraries and 2 corporate members.

A Membership Committee was formed during the year, chaired by Denver Beanland, and Ms Judith Murphy and Ms Diane Clancy have each served as

Membership Secretary. Our appreciation goes as well to Judy Rechner who has assisted with the membership database and the emailing of the Bulletin to members and to Ruth Kerr for following up and signing the membership letters. To make the accounting system easier to maintain it was decided that all memberships will now be paid by the one date. The committee has looked carefully at the member database and it is now believed to be accurate in all its detail. A new and attractive membership brochure was designed and has been distributed widely.

We have again benefited from the very generous bequest of our late member Mamie O'Keeffe, who was for many years Honorary Librarian of the Society, and a noted historian.

MANAGER

Kathryn Law filled the joint position of Manager and Museum Curator until her resignation at the end of 2010. Katy Law was a member of the Council until her appointment as Acting Manager. She contributed greatly to the running of the museum, and our liaison with other museums, and she was the Society's representative on the board of the Brisbane Living Heritage Network. Her youthful enthusiasm was a delight to us, and it is a matter of regret that the planned farewell party was delayed by the flood damage.

Christina Michie, then a recent volunteer, was appointed Acting Manager to replace Katy Law and on 7 April 2011 she was appointed Manager. At the same time Katherine Pharey was appointed Administration Officer, bringing considerable experience to the Society from her former position as part time bookkeeper assisting the Hon Treasurer. I would like to thank Christina Michie for her unflinching commitment to detail in every aspect of the day to day operations, and to thank Katherine Pharey for her commitment to maintaining the financial arrangements appropriately. Members should be aware that these roles were quite stressful while we were evacuated, and during the moves to and from the Mansions.

COMMITTEES

The work of the many committees of the Society must be acknowledged and thanks is given to the many members and volunteers who serve on them. Each committee through its chairperson reports regularly to the Council, and this has provided a very strong network and ensures no aspect of the Society is overlooked. Email communication has proved invaluable in this regard. The Committees are:

Awards

The John Kerr Medal of Distinction was awarded jointly by the Society and the Professional Historians Association (Qld) to Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Bolton from Western Australia, described in the citation as one of Australia's eminent historians. Dr Judith McKay was nominated for and appointed to the Queensland Heritage Council. Dr Ruth Kerr was appointed an Honorary Life Member at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

Building

Jean Stewart has given valuable assistance as chair of the Building Committee. This role has now been assumed by the Manager who has liaised with the Department of Public Works in regard to ongoing issues, and the new issues resulting from the structural damage.

Grants

The Grants Committee, through Grants Coordinator Rebecca Ling, has again, and with considerable effort, brought in welcome funding. This included \$21,777.73 plus GST from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, to be used for office equipment. Another grant, of \$993.30, has been received from the Lord Mayor Councillor Graham Quirk, through the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund for the purpose of buying a new computer, and further applications have been prepared.

Library Committee

Chaired by Jean Stewart, the committee has continued to maintain the reference service. The

Research queries for the period since the last AGM are 179. Nearly all are by email. The queries between January and August were dealt with by the members of the library team from home because the Library was inaccessible, and special efforts were made to sort and organise the collection. Since the re-opening the Clearance Book table has been re-activated and has had a good turnover. Books have been supplied for sale at various events, notably the two presentations in the State Library of Queensland, the Macarthur Museum and the Toowong Cemetery Day for the re-enactment of the burial of Governor Blackall. Expert appraisal of certain library items has been received, and conservation of some of these is under consideration.



Members Jinx Miles and Judith McKay regularly monitored the Welsby Library during the evacuation. An inspection by expert staff from the Queensland State Archives revealed that there has been no damage to the Library during the damage and restoration to the building. I would like to thank the State Archivist for immediate offer of help to relocate the Library to temporary storage at Runcorn should the need arise.

Special mention must be made of the Hon Librarian Judy Rechner for her dedication to maintaining the library catalogue. It was very much with her help and the considerable databases on her personal computer that the Society was held together immediately after the flood.

Marketing and Communications

The committee, chaired by Bill Elliott, has worked hard to promote the Society and the Museum. They have worked with Cr Amanda Cooper and the Brisbane City Council to try to delineate an 'historic precinct' in the William Street and George Street areas, enlisting the support of other stakeholders. The Committee has furthered the idea of venue hire, and of appropriate merchandise.

Museum Committee

Chaired by Marilyn England the committee has continued to photograph and catalogue the whole museum collection, and this included items on loan to Newstead House. Mention should be made of the many hours contributed by Dr Graeme Nicholson to the restoration and reframing of many of the large photographs and art works.



Mr Ken Jewell has spent many hours arranging long term loans of some of the Society's furniture for display at Glengallan Homestead, and on the rearrangement of the museum storage space in National Trust House in compliance with the fire regulations. Mr David Rex has repaired and made fit for presentation and use many of the Society's possessions.

The Society was pleased to be invited once again

by our Patron to mount a small display at Government House on Australia Day and this attracted keen interest. Once again members gave time to ensure the success of this undertaking.

Former Honorary Museum Curator, Janice Hess (2005-08) was reappointed Honorary Museum Curator to replace Katy Law. The museum programme, and particularly the Chinese Exhibition was severely interrupted by the evacuation, but thanks to the dedication of Janice Hess and Assistant Curator Robyn Stephenson, a reduced programme was possible at the Mansions. Exhibitions were planned and were able to be set up at the Store soon after the Society returned.

The museum programme is only possible through the efforts made by the dedicated, and talented volunteer guides and I would like to thank them all. Many have made an extraordinary commitment to the Society in length of service and this has been noted and appreciated. Ms Megan Hess has again helped us generously with artwork for the museum exhibitions.

**CHINESE
IN QUEENSLAND**

CHINESE ON THE ROAD TO THE PALMER

ALL JOHN CRUICK LIBRARY AND NO. 12000 POSTER, DESIGNED BY MEGAN HESS

COMMISSARIAT STORE MUSEUM
115 WILLIAM STREET BRISBANE
(OPPOSITE CONRAD TREASURY HOTEL)
EXHIBITION CLOSURE 31ST DEC 2010

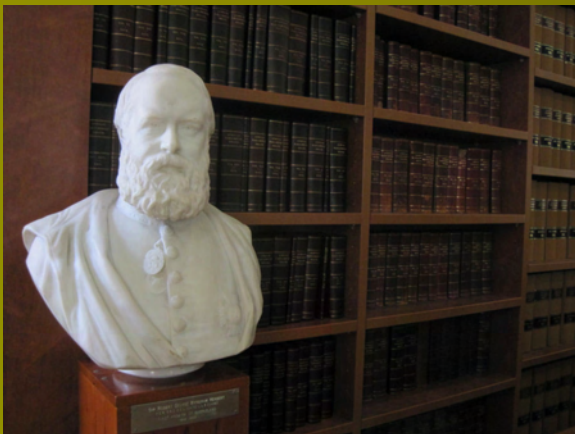
OPEN
TUESDAY TO FRIDAY
10:00AM - 4:00PM
ADMISSION BY DONATION
PH 07 3225 4198

The opening of the museum to the public is made possible to a large extent through the generous

time given by our volunteer receptionists and we are grateful to them all. I would like to mention in particular Mrs Valerie Blomer who put in many extra hours during our evacuation. The number of visitor tickets sold and of school groups was severely reduced.

Programme Committee

Chaired by Manfred Cross the committee has arranged a full programme of lectures, and secured various venues to accommodate our changed circumstances. Participation in the inaugural Brisbane Open House in October was most successful. Further At Homes were planned, with the November At Home well attended and with fine presentations including those on the Queensland Turf Club and on the Hon Robert Herbert, whose bust was then moved to be displayed in the Welsby Library.



We enjoyed a visit from our Patron, Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley, Governor of Queensland, for the December launch of Dr Louis Pigott's book about Brisbane ornithologist Silvester Diggles.

At Homes became Not at Homes, and we were unable to celebrate properly the 150th anniversary of the first telegraph, sent from a temporary office in the Store, as it is we who were in a temporary office, in The Mansions.

The Burke and Wills Seminar commemorated 150 years since the party returned to the Dig Tree near Innamincka, and the legacy of the search parties. The Society as Trustee of the Dig Tree Reserve had

attempted to visit the site in April but the trip was cancelled owing to heavy rain. Excellent lecturers, including Dr Dave Phoenix, President of the Burke and Wills Association, contributed to the Seminar and some of these papers have been put forward for inclusion in the Journal. The State Library of Queensland made an auditorium available to us, without charge, and thanks must go to them for their generous response then and hosting our Not at Home, celebrating Gympie Gold and particularly the Pollock legacy. On this occasion as well the venue arranged for us, at no cost, with the assistance of Simon Farley, Client Services.

The Military At Home was held at the MacArthur Museum, at a reduced rate which enabled us to make a small profit, as well as enjoying a tour and then the excellent papers about our military heritage. The July At Home was cancelled as the Store not available.

As Queensland's peak history body we have looked to our connections throughout the State, and a tour to Toowoomba was well supported and enabled us to visit a member society. We appreciated the new museum technology at the Cobb & Co Museum.



Members of the Programme Committee have visited the site of the Agricultural Establishment and Women's Prison at Eagle Farm, with Jennifer Harrison and Dr John Steele and are working on a possible plan for greater public awareness of the site.

Tonight we look forward to the Clem Lack Oration to be presented by Dr Robert Riddel.

HISTORY WEEK

The Queensland Day Dinner was at the Queensland Club and attracted record numbers. I thank the Queensland State Archivist Janet Prowse for her continued and very generous sponsorship of this event. Senior Vice-President Manfred Cross spoke about the forthcoming centenary in 2013.

PUBLICATIONS

The sustained effort of Honorary Editor Margaret Kowald and the Assistant Editors Ruth Kerr and Val Donovan has been admirable and much appreciated. I would like to thank the Editorial Board, and also those who, anonymously, assist the editors by providing peer reviews. The Queensland History Journal has been produced on time, within budget, and is yet again a fine body of work. The introduction of colour images was well received.

The Bulletin under Honorary Editor Graeme Nicholson has been produced regularly and efficiently, with excellent use of limited space, and I thank proof reader Ms Marjorie Shackleton for her valuable assistance. I thank also the Federal Member for Brisbane for her generous assistance with the printing of the Bulletin for some months, without cost, while we had no photocopying facility. The postage cost of the Bulletin has been reduced significantly with a greater proportion of members receiving the emailed version.

WEBSITE

The website had been updated regularly by Judy Rechner, with care and innovation. I would like to thank Mr Andrew Darbyshire for the fine art work he has produced for the website, and particularly for the flyers he has produced on many occasions. Andrew's help with the ever more complicated technology has been appreciated.

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

I would like to express appreciation to Professor Don Garden, President of the FAHS for consideration shown to this Society throughout the year. A member of RHSQ, Emeritus Professor Kay Saunders was awarded a Fellowship of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, nominated by this Society.

This concludes my report for 2011.

Thank you.

Carolyn Nolan

8 September 2011



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