



NEWSTEAD HOUSE—FRONT VIEW.



THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NEWSTEAD HOUSE.

The Trustees are examining one of the tree stumps marked by Landsborough on his southward journey from the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1862. From left to right: The Secretary to the Trust (Mr. A. G. Davies), The Lord Mayor of Brisbane (Alderman J. B. Chandler), The Chairman of the Trust (Hon. F. A. Cooper, State Treasurer), and the President of the Historical Society (Mr. Fergus McMaster).

SIGNIFICANCE OF "NEWSTEAD."

Oldest Residence In Brisbane.

(By A. G. Davies).

This being a Newstead Souvenir issue of the Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland, intended to mark the taking over of Newstead House for the purposes of a historical museum, it seems appropriate that some historical sketch of the place should be given, together with a brief recital of the developments which led up to the Society's occupancy of the house. Newstead House derives its historical interest and importance chiefly from the fact that, between 1846 and 1859, it was the residence of Captain John Clements Wickham, R.N., the highest Government Official in Brisbane Town, and was the recognised centre of social hospitality. It only ceased to be such when Sir George Bowen arrived with much pomp and circumstance to occupy Brisbane's new Government House on Queensland's attainment of full Colony status. There is definite evidence that, during the years it served as the residence of Captain Wickham, it was known simply as "Newstead," and that it was not until it had passed into other ownership that the name "Newstead House" was given to it.

In point of antiquity, as well as in that of its romantic and historic associations generally, Newstead House, stands out in unchallengeable prominence in the city of Brisbane to-day. For that reason, it is most fitting that it should be preserved intact, and as far as possible unaltered, so that the present and future generations may see it in something like its original form and condition. This consideration doubtless actuated the Queensland Government and the Brisbane City Council in deciding upon such assistance as they have given to make this possible.

It is true that there is one structure in Brisbane—what is known as the "Observatory" on Wickham Terrace—which was built 20 years or more earlier than Newstead, but the two cases are hardly comparable. It also is true that there still are portions of more ancient buildings to be found in Brisbane—relics of the sinister days of convictism; but they all have been incorporated with structures of later origin, and are now more or less hiding themselves in shame from the eyes of the curious.

The most noteworthy of these is a portion of the old Commissariat Stores, built towards the end of Captain Logan's time; but which now forms merely the lower floors of the State Government Stores, between William Street and the river. It now is to be identified by an imposing plaque on which is engraved a Crown with the letters "G R" and the date "1829." Another remnant of stonework, which originally formed part of Brisbane's first hospital, is to be seen in the caretaker's cottage in the grounds of the Supreme Court. This hospital, as well as the old windmill (now called "the Observatory") and the Commissariat Stores were all products of the organising brain of the tyrannous and inhuman Captain Logan.

How Moreton Bay Was Named.

Seeing that Newstead House has now been set apart as the historical centre of the city of Brisbane—and indeed of the State of Queensland—brief references to the very earliest origins of Moreton Bay may not be out of place. It was the illustrious navigator, Captain James Cook, as far back as 1770, who, after having visited and named Port Jackson, in his famous ship, the "Endeavour," continued his northerly course up the eastern coast of Australia and discovered and named Moreton Bay. This he did in honour of the Earl of Moreton, who had been instrumental in bringing about Cook's expedition to the South Seas. Adverse winds prevented Captain Cook from making a thorough examination of the bay; but, by some intuitive process, he seems to have arrived at a belief that somewhere in the vicinity a river was to be found. For the guidance of other navigators who might feel disposed to survey its shores, therefore, he clearly marked his position on the chart, and recorded the fact that three hills were to be found just to the northward. On these hills he bestowed the name of the Glass Houses, and it is interesting to-day to realise that that designation was given to those hills contemporaneously with the naming of Moreton Bay.

Flinders In "Pumicestone River."

Moreton Bay remained a mere geographical expression for nearly 30 years until Captain Matthew Flinders was chosen by Governor Hunter, of New

South Wales, as commander of an expedition whose object was to discover, if possible, navigable streams flowing into the sea north of Port Jackson. On July 15, 1799, Flinders in the "Norfolk," a colonial sloop of 24 tons, dropped anchor in Moreton Bay in view of the Glass Houses. When an attempt was made to land on a low sandy shore, a clash occurred with the natives in which one or two of the aboriginals were wounded. This led Flinders to give the place the name "Skirmish Point," it being actually the southernmost point of Bribie Island. While searching for the river which Captain Cook had imagined was likely to be found emptying itself into the bay, Flinders entered the passage between Bribie Island and the mainland, and at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the stream for which he was looking, and he named it the "Pumicestone River."

Fifteen days were spent by Flinders in exploring one of the Glass House Mountains, and in cruising in the waters of Moreton Bay. It was then that he sighted the point to which the name "Redcliffe" was given; but after this he sailed again northward fully satisfied that no river of importance intersected the coast in the vicinity of Moreton Bay. Flinders discovered and named Port Curtis and afterwards voyaged north to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Oxley and the "Mermaid."

Twenty years and more passed before any further exploration of the coast of Southern Queensland was made. Lieutenant John Oxley, R.N., in the cutter "Mermaid" left Sydney on October 23rd, 1823, with instructions to look for a suitable spot for a penal establishment on what was then described as the coast of "Northern Australia." With this end in view Oxley went first to Port Curtis but came to the conclusion that there was no site there which was suitable for such a settlement. He then sailed southward, and anchored in Moreton Bay on November 25th, 1823. A week later the "Mermaid" entered the mouth of a fresh water river.

It is interesting to recall that the slight eminence on which Newstead House now stands has a history dating back to a time prior to the day on which the site for Brisbane Town was chosen. Tradition has it that in September, 1824, after starting with a party

for his second exploration of the Brisbane River in the cutter "Mermaid," Lieut. Oxley ordered a camp to be pitched on the river bank somewhere between Newstead and the foot of Toorak Road. After partaking of an early breakfast next morning the explorers proceeded up the river, and the name "Breakfast Creek" was given to the stream on whose banks the "inner man" had been thus refreshed. Other explanations of the origin of the name "Breakfast Creek" have been advanced, but none can be accepted with any certainty. Whether Oxley and his companions were the first to set eyes on that particular spot is, however, open to doubt. Indeed, in the accepted story of the wanderings of the three castaways—Parsons, Pamphlett and Finnegan—early in 1823, there is strong presumptive evidence that they must have passed over the area now known as Newstead Park. Be that as it may, it is an unquestionable fact that Oxley's party camped there in the following year, under circumstances already explained.

"Built for Patrick Leslie."

Although there is indirect evidence establishing the fact that the building of Newstead House was definitely completed in 1846 there has been some doubt as to who was its actual builder. Mrs. George Leslie, the wife of one of the earliest pioneers of the Darling Downs and a sister-in-law of Captain Wickham, says in her diary, which has been preserved, that the house was built by Mr. Patrick Leslie. This is supported by an article in the "Courier" of December 28th, 1926, in which Mrs. Comber, a daughter of Captain Wickham, is quoted as making a similar assertion. At the time Mrs. Comber—who was the widow of Admiral H. W. Comber—made this statement she was 80 years of age. Mrs. Comber had been born in Brisbane and spent her earliest years at "Newstead." Mr. J. O. Bourne, an old-time resident of Brisbane, is reported to have said that the house was built by Mr. Andrew Petrie, Senr., and that may have been literally true as Mr. Petrie may have built it for Mr. Patrick Leslie. Official records show that the land upon which Newstead House now stands was included originally in Eastern Suburban Allotment 62, comprising 25 acres, which was granted to John Clements Wickham, R.N., described as being then a resident of South Brisbane, on the 19th July,

1845, for the sum of £37/10/-. On the same date the adjoining allotments 63 and 64, comprising about 35 acres, were granted to William Leslie, of Warthill, Aberdeenshire, for the sum of £51. Records relating to subsequent subdivisions serve to establish definitely the fact that it was on allotment 63 that "Newstead" was built. Another record in the Titles Office, which has a direct bearing on the question as to who was the builder, and who was the original owner, is that which makes known the fact that William Leslie conveyed his property (allotments 63 and 64) to John Clements Wickham, by contract dated August 2nd, 1847, the consideration being £1,000 for the land and improvements thereon. This seems to suggest the probability that the house was built by one of the Leslie brothers and sold to Captain Wickham either before or very soon after its completion. There are good grounds for believing that after Captain Wickham's departure from Brisbane in 1859 "Newstead" was used by Mr. Patrick Leslie as his town residence for a few years.

Bishop Tyrrel's Visit.

Strangely enough, although the "Moreton Bay Courier" was established in June, 1846, the year in which "Newstead" is believed to have been built, no direct reference to the building is to be found in the newspaper during 1846 or 1847. In June, 1848, Dr. William Tyrrel, Lord Bishop of Newcastle, paid a visit to Moreton Bay, which was in his diocese. The "Courier," in recording Dr. Tyrrel's visit, said that after his arrival by the s.s. "Tamar" he was "conducted by Captain Wickham to the Government Cottage," and it adds that the Bishop "shortly after his arrival at the Government Cottage, left in a gig for the picturesque residence of Captain Wickham, situated on the river about two miles from the settlement, where he has been invited to take up his abode during the period he remains in this neighbourhood." Some writers on the early history of Moreton Bay have suggested that "Newstead" was known originally as the "Government Cottage," but this extract from the newspaper shows that the two buildings were quite distinct from one another.

"Government Cottage," during the Convict regime, served as the quarters of the Commandant, and was situated in William Street on the site now

occupied by the Government Printing Office. When Captain Wickham arrived at Moreton Bay in January, 1843, to enter on his duties as police magistrate, he and his wife (to whom he had been only recently married) took up their residence at the Government Cottage. Mrs. Wickham was a daughter of Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur, of "The Vineyard," Parramatta, N.S.W. Two of her sisters were married to the two brothers (Patrick and George Leslie) and both of them were frequent visitors at Newstead House. It was three years later that Captain and Mrs. Wickham took up their residence at "Newstead."

"Newstead" had a very close connection with the pastoral pioneers of Moreton Bay; because, in addition to its having been built originally for Mr. Patrick Leslie, as stated by Mrs. George Leslie, the same lady asserts that the house was practically a replica of the Canning Downs homestead, which also was built for the Leslie brothers. Indeed, so complete is the resemblance between the two structures that any further proof is hardly needed. The opinion has been expressed that "Newstead" is one of the best examples of the early colonial style of architecture, embracing many features favoured by Lachlan Macquarie when Governor of New South Wales. It can be seen to-day as when first built—a long substantial and roomy structure with spacious, cool verandahs commanding a view of the most extensive reaches of the river.

Lavish Hospitality Dispensed.

During the thirteen years of Captain Wickham's residence in "Newstead," it was really an unofficial Government House at which hospitality was dispensed on a lavish scale. Nehemiah Bartley, in "Opals and Agates," says Captain Wickham "gave good dinners and balls," and he hints at glamorous scenes in which the youth and beauty of Brisbane and the pastoral areas, revelled under brilliant candelabra in the gay dances of the early Victorian years. Many exalted personages, naval and military officers, and highly placed officials from Sydney and visitors from overseas, were entertained as guests at "Newstead." The visit of Sir Charles Fitzroy, Governor of New South Wales, early in 1854, was made the occasion of a very special display of almost princely entertainment.

The Separation of Queensland from New South Wales, and the appointment of Sir George Ferguson Bowen as the first Governor of the new Northern State, brought Captain Wickham's official connection with Queensland to an end. He left for Sydney, where he embarked on the sailing ship *Duncan Dunbar* for London. He died suddenly from apoplexy in Biarritz, Southern France, on January 6, 1864. Captain Wickham was twice married, his first wife having died in Sydney in 1852. Five years later he married Miss Ellen Deering, a daughter of an Irish Q.C., who afterwards became a judge.

Lieutenant-Colonel John Charles Wickham, of the Royal Engineers, a grandson of Captain Wickham, paid a visit to Brisbane in 1933; and, during his stay, presented to the Historical Society a brass tablet in memory of his grandfather, on which are recorded the facts relating to his occupancy of "Newstead," and the official positions he had filled in Brisbane. This tablet was affixed to the outer wall of the house, and was unveiled by His Excellency the Governor (Sir Leslie Wilson) on September 23, 1933.

Distinguished Naval Officer.

Captain Wickham had had a distinguished career in the Royal Navy before he came to Moreton Bay to take up a magisterial position. In 1837, H.M.S. *Beagle*, which previously had been engaged in a survey of the coast of South America, under the command of Lieut. Phillip Parker King, was recommissioned under Captain Wickham for the survey of Bass and Torres Straits and portions of North Western Australia. His work, while thus engaged, was of the greatest value; and, in 1839, he carried out further explorations on the coasts of eastern and northern Australia. His most notable achievements included the discovery of the Adelaide River and the discovery and charting of Port Darwin and Bynoe Harbour and the Victoria River. Later, however, Captain Wickham was compelled by ill health to hand over his command to Captain J. Lort Stokes, and to return to England. Captain Wickham's nautical experience was turned to profitable account even after his appointment as Police Magistrate in Moreton Bay. In 1846 he carried out a survey of Moreton Bay and, in the following year, in conjunc-

tion with Captain Owen Stanley, supervised the laying of the buoys for the northern entrance to the port of Brisbane.

The Name Newstead.

The name Newstead is derived from that of Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire. When Henry VIII abolished the monasteries in England, the Abbey of Newstead became the property of the Byron family. In 1643 the family was raised to the peerage and the last of the family to bear the title was Lord George Gordon Byron, the famous poet, who died at Missolonghi, in Western Greece, in 1824. After his death the estate passed into other hands. It is interesting to recall that Newstead Abbey at one time was in the possession of the family of the late Lady Chermside, whose husband was Governor of Queensland from 1902 to 1904. The Rectory of Newstead, early in the 19th century, was held by a Reverend John Wickham, though there is no available evidence as to what was this clergyman's relationship to the owner of Newstead Abbey.

Successive Ownerships.

Although Captain Wickham died in 1864 it was not until three years later that the trustees in his estate (P. G. King and R. R. Mackenzie) conveyed the property embracing Eastern Suburban allotments 62, 63 and 64 to George Harris, merchant, of Brisbane, the purchase price being £4,000. In 1876 Newstead House, and the surrounding lands, became the property of the late Mr. James Taylor, though Mr. and Mrs. George Harris were in residence there continuously from 1867 to 1888, during which time they dispensed hospitality on a most generous scale. In 1876, or shortly after, the late Mr. James Taylor subdivided the land into about 200 allotments, retaining for himself 11 acres, including the portion on which the house stood. In 1888 the Newstead property was transferred to the Land Bank of Queensland Ltd. In the following year there was a further subdivision of the property; and the portion on which the house stood passed into the hands of the Federal Building Land and Investment Society Ltd. This Society in 1891 sold it to the late William Perry (Perry Brothers) and from the latter's executors and trustees, Messrs. Lysaght Brothers and Coy. Ltd. pur-

chased it in 1898. Some years before this Newstead had been for a time the residence of the late Mr. James Clark, of pearling fame. Mrs. Caroline Amelia Heaslop owned the property in 1908, and from her the Council of the City of Brisbane purchased it in 1918.

Home for Historical Society.

The existence of the Historical Society of Queensland has been a chequered one—largely the record of a valiant struggle by a comparatively few enthusiasts to carry on in the face of lukewarm support and adverse circumstances. The inaugural meeting of the Society was held on August 21st, 1913, at which it was reported that 100 persons had enrolled as original members. His Excellency Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Queensland, occupied the Chair at that meeting, the first President of the Society being the late Sir Arthur Morgan. The Society's activities, however, were disorganised by the outbreak of the first World War in August, 1914. During the ensuing ten year period meetings of members of the Society were held at intervals, more or less irregular. After the Brisbane Centenary Celebrations in 1924 the Society was for a time in a state of suspended animation. It, however, was reorganised towards the end of 1928, but had no settled headquarters, its meetings being held at various places. For a time it had the use of a room in the City Hall for the storage of its books, documents, etc.

The idea of Newstead House being made available for the Society's purposes was first mooted at the annual meeting on August 28th, 1931, which took the form of an At Home, held at the residence of Mr. E. A. Hawkins, "Beaufort Hill," Clayfield. The first suggestion of Newstead House being so used came from Mr. M. P. Campbell, then an alderman of the Brisbane City Council, and it was heartily supported by Mr. W. G. King and others present. Mainly through the advocacy of Alderman Campbell at a meeting of the City Council, and the support of the then Lord Mayor (Alderman J. W. Greene) an agreement was reached by which the Historical Society was given the use of three rooms in Newstead House under a 21 years' lease at a peppercorn rent. The rooms were officially handed over to the Society, of which Mr. Inigo Jones was then president, by the

Lord Mayor on May 30th, 1932. A suggestion that Newstead House should be handed over to the Historical Society with a view to the establishment there of a permanent historical museum, was made by His Excellency the Governor (Sir Leslie Wilson) in December, 1934, and this was heartily welcomed by the President (Mr. Inigo Jones) and members of the Society. On numerous public occasions it was advocated by His Excellency and by prominent citizens. In March, 1938, a special committee was appointed by the Historical Society with instructions to prepare a draft scheme for the creation of a trust to control the proposed museum, and subsequently a deputation comprising Sir Raphael Cilento (vice-president of the Society) Alderman A. Laurie and Mr. A. G. Davies (honorary secretary) waited upon the Premier (the Hon. W. Forgan Smith) to ask for financial assistance towards carrying the proposals into effect. Negotiations followed between the Historical Society and the State Treasurer (the Hon. F. A. Cooper) who had been deputed by the Premier to deal with the matter. At a meeting of the Brisbane City Council on February 28th, 1939, a resolution was carried, that Newstead House be placed under a Trust "for the use and enjoyment of the Historical Society of Queensland for all time." It was suggested that the trustees should be three in number, one representative of the Government, one of the City Council and one of the Historical Society. By an Order-in-Council published in the Government Gazette of February 24th, 1940, the Board of Trustees was constituted as follows:—The Honourable F. A. Cooper (State Treasurer) to be Chairman of the Board, and representative of the Government; The Honourable A. J. Jones (Lord Mayor) as representative of the Brisbane City Council; and Mr. Fergus McMaster (President of the Historical Society) as representative of the Society. Extensive repairs to the building were carried out the cost of which was shared between the Government and the City Council.