

PERSONAL MEMORIES STIRRED ON REMINISCENCE NIGHT

(Given at a meeting of the Society on 28 June 1973)

The reminiscence night held in 1972 was so encouraging that a similar night was set aside in the syllabus for this year. Members who attended were rewarded with some excellent material drawn from personal recollection.

The contribution of Miss C. E. Isbel was rich in description of Brisbane suburban life in the years after 1920, and for that reason is reported verbatim. For purposes of economy in space the reminiscences of Dr. Drury Clarke and Mr. S. D. Stephens are given in somewhat shorter form than that in which they delivered them.

COORPAROO DAYS RECALLED

MISS C. E. ISBEL, of Carina, Brisbane:

I feel, in the light of the conveniences and amenities supplied to today's citizens taking up their abode in a brand new area, that it would be of interest to discuss how people of fifty years and more ago fared in their new locations.

We moved to the Coorparoo area from East Brisbane in 1920 just after the Great War. My father was killed in that war and it was felt a change would be beneficial to my mother. Our home was called "St. Quentin" after the battle in which he died. At this time the tram had just been extended from Stone's Corner to Kirkland Avenue, and we had a walk of about ten minutes to get to it from the top of Wellington Street.

Settlement from Stone's Corner to Kirkland Avenue was fairly well built up, but beyond that was practically bush. My grand-father could remember well when the area where our house was built was grazing land for sheep. There were only a few isolated houses here and there, apart from the big estates. We had no electric light or water although we knew that both would be provided in about three years, so we used lamps and candles.

About three times in this period we had to syndicate with some others to have our tanks filled by the fire brigade at £5

a time, which was a considerable sum then, as no rain had fallen.

We lived on the side of a very steep hill leading to the old Hipwood Estate and the old house and the people belonging to it were there when we arrived. There was no kerbing or channelling or a made road. When it rained the street was cut in two places — in the middle and at the bottom — where there were small creeks and low bridges. Then we would have to use the street before ours — Shakespeare Street — which was the entry to the Hipwood Estate, and walk along their fence to get home. Even after many years, when the storm water drains were functioning I have had to use this street after a particularly heavy storm with the water following its old route despite the drains.

COLONIAL-STYLE HOUSE

We had no refrigeration or sewerage in those days. We had a butter cooler and a water safe which used to hang under the house for coolness. The house was what is now known as colonial but was high fashion in those days and was built for my mother by Carter Brothers. These builders built practically all the houses in the area at the time. It had verandahs nearly all the way around and the windows and doors could be left open in nearly any weather. Underneath provided a very convenient drying yard in bad weather.

I didn't appreciate it nearly as much as I should, until I moved to a modern brick house where the windows were not protected by a verandah and we had to install outside venetian blinds.

In the paddock opposite our old home the curlews used to come and call at night, and quite a few times our chickens were taken by a hawk. We had many fruit trees and my mother grew rosellas for jam, and peanuts and corn for us children, besides cultivating a fair-sized vegetable garden and quite a lovely flower garden. From the back of our house we could see the superstructure of ships going along the New Farm reach of the river, as there were no obstructions then as there are today. At night the lights of the city were quite beautiful.

On the shady side of our house pink crocuses came up every spring among the grass. They had not been planted but were wild and appeared every year.

A favourite recreation was to hike to White's Hill, with a wonderful view of the surrounding area, for a picnic and to catch lobbies in the clean waterholes abounding in the area.

BIG FAMILY ESTATES

In the Coorparoo area there were quite a few big estates not subdivided until long after we came. Actually they reminded me of English estates but on a much smaller scale.

There were the Hipwood Estate, Deshon's, Brentnall's, Nicklin's, Holdsworth's, Hill's, Watson's, Dent's, Craig's, Stoddart's to name some of them, also Evans' and James', and King's, Marriott's and Bennett's. Many of these names are perpetuated in the street names. Nearly all had quite big areas and had cows for their own use, and the children had ponies and dogs.

The Hipwood home was a big old wooden place with a lookout in the roof. Miss Hipwood one day invited my brother and me to go up into the loft in the roof and so to the lookout. The view was breathtaking as they were right at the crest and their property encompassed the whole circle of the hill. The house was pulled down and the land sold about 1928. Mr. Hipwood was one time Mayor of Brisbane.

Deshon's old home is now part of Loreto Convent in Cavendish Road. Mr. Brentnall was a member of Parliament and his home stood at the corner of Old Cleveland Road and Cavendish Road in extensive grounds. It was cut up about 1925 and the Coorparoo junction began to take shape as it is today. The Holdsworth home and estate were opposite Brentnall's on the other side of Old Cleveland Road. For many years the family kept their home block, and it is just comparatively recently that the land was acquired for Myer's store and the shopping centre was able to be developed on that side of Old Cleveland Road.

Both of the Nicklin homes are still standing. The older one became the Queen Alexandra Home for girls and is now the Coorparoo School of Food. The other stands in Shakespeare Street. The older home belonged to the two of the Nicklin family who were drowned when the *Quetta* was wrecked near Thursday Island. Their daughter, who lived for many years with her brother in the home in Shakespeare Street, was saved from this wreck. I knew her quite well and have heard her tell the story of the many hours she was in the water and her subsequent rescue. She was Mrs. Horsley when I knew her. The former Premier of Queensland, Sir Francis Nicklin, was her nephew.

The Hills' family residence in Cavendish Road has been demolished and units put up. Miss Dorothy Hill, a professor at the University of Queensland, is one of this family. The old Watson home opposite still stands, but I understand has been sold for units. Mr. Watson was Insurance Commis-

sioner for some years and his two sons are Wickham Terrace specialists. Watson Street in what is now Camp Hill was named after his father.

The Evans estate and home have become the site of the Roman Catholic church in Cavendish Road. Colonel Evans was the founder of Evans, Deakin and he and his family were well known in the area. Mr. R. M. King was a member of Parliament for the electorate for many years and his home still stands in Chatsworth Road.

Mr. Marriott had twelve acres in what is now Camp Hill but was then known as Coorparoo, and his daughter, now 96 years old, is well known to me and has many interesting tales to tell of the old days. A street is named after him. Most of these people were either business or professional men.

A RECLUSE: A "HAUNTED HOUSE"

Another interesting person I would like to mention is an artist who lived in a little hut at the corner of Macaulay and Noela Streets. He was there when we went out in the 1920s. The hut was very small and covered with vines. He was a recluse and didn't seem to want any human companionship. I wasn't allowed anywhere near, anyway, as I was a little girl but eventually my brothers who were much older made friends with him and he would show them his pictures. I believe they were very good. None of us ever heard his name. It was very unusual in those days that a man would shut himself up with his paintings. Today this would excite no comment. The man died and a modern home was built on the site.

The area even had an old house that was supposed to be haunted. It is on the corner of Warilda and Martha Streets, now Camp Hill. The story goes that a man shot himself in one of the rooms. This was long before there were many people in the area. The house was shunned for years and no-one would go near it. At last it was purchased by the Skirving family for a fairly modest sum because of its associations and they restored and lived in it for many years. It is now one of the loveliest homes in the locality with beautiful grounds, and I believe was at one time leased to the American consul.

The Methodist Church is the oldest church in the area, having been established in 1886. The first church was timber with a shingle roof and bell tower mostly in the Gothic tradition. Members of my mother's family used to

ride over from Mount Gravatt for the services. It is now a fine brick building and many distinguished men have been members of its congregation — business leaders, doctors, lawyers, Parliamentarians, senior public servants, teachers, and so on.

The Shire Hall, also in Cavendish Road, was used as such until the advent of Greater Brisbane merged all the shires. I can remember my mother paying rates there. It was widely used for concerts, rose shows, etc., and some of our roses won prizes and the cards were proudly kept. It is still in use for dances and is still, so far as I know, a library.

When I look at the district today and visualise the changes that have occurred, I find it hard to believe that in my own lifetime I have seen practically all the area from Kirkland Avenue, Coorparoo to Carina and beyond built to what it is. Indeed, in the Coorparoo-Cavendish Road area a second rebuilding is going on, with units springing up everywhere. Maybe when I am too old to cope with a house I shall return to the scenes of my childhood in a unit.

THE PASSING OF BILL JUDKINS

MR. S. D. STEPHENS, of Ormiston:

So far as I can gather Bill Judkins fought in the Indian Mutiny and after his discharge migrated to Queensland and for a time worked on the Gympie goldfield. He later did casual work, generally for a few shillings a week and tucker. He was just an ordinary man, with an ordinary man's faults, and typical of many who came and went across the Australian scene in earlier times.

Driving home from Gympie to Brooloo in John Grainger's wagon (some say dray) he fell under a wheel and was badly crushed. He was taken to John and Paddy Ahern's home, where he died a few hours later. As it was something to have a dead man around the place, the news soon spread in the district, and the police at Gympie were notified.

Most of the local male population found a place in the drama. One of the foremost was David Lane, a real hardcase Son of Erin, who immediately took over and became Master of Ceremonies. It was decided to make a coffin out of silky oak slabs. And a site for a grave was selected at a place known as Anderson's Rise; as David suggested, it was close to where the poor old fellow was killed.

When the policeman arrived and viewed the corpse he was

armed with a certificate of death, a form of burial service, and a large bottle of overproof rum — of which David had the most to drink, and, from then on, the most to say.

John Ahern had a buckboard that was to become the hearse, and two very good horses, a black and a bay that he usually drove. He also had another black horse that was not so good, but David suggested that it was only right and proper to use the two black horses. And that was decided.

The cavalcade then started. But it was in no way solemn, for there was much excitement and talking. All those following the hearse were men, and they were on horseback. On the way to Anderson's Rise was a very steep hill and the younger horse played up and would not pull properly, jibbed and backed down the hill. Some say they tried a second time. This caused some delay, but David suggested they "get a run on, and lay on the whip". His advice was tried, with the result that the horses jumped ahead with a jerk, and the coffin fell to the ground.

The horses, relieved of the weight, rushed up and over the hill. The coffin was manhandled and again loaded on the hearse, and eventually Anderson's Rise was reached. Then the rum bottle was produced again and all had a swig. John Ahern read the burial service and even David declared he had made a good job of it.

A very large hole had been dug, enough to bury a bullock. A pole had been cut, and a real argument occurred as to whether it should be placed at the head or the foot, but David again won the day by declaring, "By all means put it at his feet, so that if old Bill tries to climb out he won't bump his head."

There were many helpers to fill in the grave. The policeman was hardly mentioned, but when the grave was filled he handed the remnants of the rum to David, who gave the last toast, prefacing it with: "Well Bill, you weren't such a bad poor old _____."

The funeral party then broke up and went to their respective homes.

The grave is now unmarked, as the pole was soon pushed over by cattle and horses rubbing against it. But a few locals can still show you its position. The day of the funeral was a red-letter day to those who attended it. All have now passed on, but I believe the story will be told for generations.

Brooloo really has a cemetery, but it has not been used for many years.

A SEARCH REWARDED

DR. DRURY CLARKE, of Brisbane:

During a search in Sydney and Hobart to find the name of the ship in which my ancestor F. A. Blackman had come to Australia, I came upon facts concerning the passage of arrivals in the settlement days. Frederick Archibald Blackman had come to Australia in the 1850's, his father J. B. Blackman having arrived in 1833. From the Mitchell Library in Sydney I was able to get details of the first shipping lists, which contained a wealth of material concerning the early unassisted passages — vessel — master — sailing date, arrival, numbers and names of steerage, etc.

In the lists from 1830-1836 there was mention of the ship the *Sir John Rae Reid*, which arrived at Port Jackson in 1833 on 16 September, having left London on 6 May 1833. The passengers' names included those of Mr. Blackman and family.

The passenger list as a whole was full of interest. There were merchants returning to Sydney from London; surveyors from Hobart; Captain D. Wentworth and wife (one of the ancestors of Rex King). There were 16 steerage from England, four steerage from Hobart — servants, valets, etc.

In Hobart I was aided by an archivist who helped with details of Captain Haig and his ship the *Sir John Rae Reid*. The Captain eventually settled in Hobart where his house is now a folklore museum on Battery Hill. Whilst visiting this museum some time ago I was delighted to find in the entrance hall a painting of the *Sir John Rae Reid* — a ship with which I now felt some sort of bond through my great-great-grandfather.