



RHSQ

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

THE RHSQ

# Bulletin

*81 years of continuous publication*

JULY 2023 No. 886

The newsletter of The Royal Historical Society of Queensland  
Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM  
Governor of Queensland

President: Dr Denver Beanland AM  
Website: [www.queenslandhistory.org](http://www.queenslandhistory.org)

## NORTH QUEENSLAND SANDALWOOD



CARGO SANDALWOOD AT COOKTOWN.

P51128 RHSQ Digital Photo

Much has been written about the beautiful, valuable cabinet timbers taken from the tropical forests of North Queensland. Sandalwood was another valuable timber found there. Prized for its scented wood and the oil extracted from its roots, it was exported in large quantities to China and other Asian countries. The best timber was reserved for making decorative boxes in all sizes. It was reported that, by 1900, sandalwood was fetching up to the equivalent of \$300 a ton. While there was a small

industry at Aurukun on western Cape York, eastern Cape York, from west of Cooktown to Lockhart River, Hays Creek and the Princess Charlotte Bay and Portland Roads areas, was the centre of sandalwood operations. Logs were floated down the Lockhart River or taken by packhorse to Cooktown. Another export option was by Burns Philp ships loading at Thursday Island and other mainland ports. Hugh Giblet was the legendary ‘king’ of the sandalwood industry, developing a successful business for over 15 years until his death in 1923. His life story went far beyond the cutting and shipping of sandalwood to include service in the A.I.F. during World War One.

This account just skims the surface of the fascinating, convoluted history of the North Queensland sandalwood industry. For more in-depth coverage, see for example, Geoff Wharton, “The Sandalwood Industry on Cape York Peninsula from the 1890s to the 1920s”, St. Lucia, PHAQ Conference, 2009; Lennie Wallace, “Sandalwood, Pearls and Other Goodies”, *Northern Sun*, April & July 2003; John. C. Hay in association with J.D. and R.S. Kerr, *Sam Elliott The Lone Wolf*, Mareeba, 2002.

## President’s Report

The next Wednesday Lecture by The Royal Historical Society of Queensland will occur on Wednesday 12 July 2023 at the Commissariat Store, 115 William Street, Brisbane between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm. The topic the 100 years of the Queensland Country Women’s Association (QCWA) will be delivered by Mrs Sheila Campbell, QCWA President. The Wednesday Lecture in August which falls during the Royal National Show will not be held again this year. The next Wednesday Lecture after July will be on 13 September at the Commissariat Store between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm. Bookings are essential for all the above events on the RHSQ website under ‘Events’ through ‘Eventbrite’, with a small charge for non-members.

The Society is holding its Oxley conference on 9 September 2023 at the Commissariat Store commencing at 9.25 am. The half-day conference, with Morning Tea, will focus on Oxley’s European discovery of the Brisbane River. The entry fee will be \$25 for members and \$35 for non-members. Again, bookings are essential for this event on the RHSQ website under ‘Events’ through ‘Eventbrite.’

The Queensland Day Dinner held at Tattersall’s Club was a great success with those attending having an enjoyable and pleasant time. Congratulations to recipient of the John and Ruth Kerr Medal for Distinction in historiography, historical research and writing Professor Emeritus Maurice French. Owing to his inability to attend the function, presentation will be made to Professor French on another suitable occasion later in the year by Dr Ruth Kerr OAM.

The outstandingly, historically significant furniture that belonged to Robert and Alice Pollock has been restored and is in the process of going on display in the Commissariat Store. The Pollocks were wealthy proprietors of the Lady Mary Gold Mine at Gympie. The paintings by Oscar Friström will soon be conserved and once that is complete there will be a wine and cheese evening opening to which all members will be invited. Meanwhile, members may view the completed work. The Society is appreciative for the grant for this work from the Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The RHSQ is also appreciative of Art Sofa Upholstery who undertook the upholstery work on the furniture. In addition, a special thanks to Art Sofa who restored the fabric on the ‘State Chair’, a Victorian era throne-like chair, at no cost to the Society. Further, our thanks to Frank von Brunschot Fine Furniture for restoring the yellowwood timber of this-eleven piece, elaborately carved, drawing room suite. For more details search the RHSQ site on e-Hive. However, there are still two chairs from the collection, a grandfather, and a grandmother chair, that remain to be restored for which the Society is seeking sponsors. Anyone interested please contact the Society.

On the middle level of the Commissariat Store we are also replacing the displays with new displays from our significant museum collection. Members are invited to call in and browse the new displays

To improve the operating systems which the Society currently has, we are in the process of installing an updated point of sale system in addition to a new telephone. The new systems will allow the Society to operate much more efficiently and effectively.

Group tours of the Commissariat Store Museum are encouraged by the various community groups. If you are aware of any group that would like to undertake a tour, please have them contact the Society. Of course, we continue to encourage individual tours of the Museum open Tuesday to Friday between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm.

I look forward to meeting members and visitors at forthcoming events.

Denver Beanland  
President

## Queensland Report

(Collected by Ruth Kerr from personal Queensland contacts, Affiliated Societies, Newspapers and Department of Environment and Heritage Protection official notifications)

**Cooktown** – Mr Dick Kellaway who lived in the former Bank of New South Wales building when it was a bank during World War II revisited Cooktown in May 2023. The *Cape York Weekly* made a feature article on 16 May 2023 of his visit to the building which is currently for sale. Now 92 Dick Kellaway recalled that when his father who was manager of the bank and the family moved to the bank building in 1937 the main street was dirt and there was no running water or power in the former Bank of New South Wales. They used to have to pump up water from tanks at the bottom to the mezzanine floor to have a cold shower. Cooktown was almost a ghost town in the 1930s and 40s, with only a few hundred residents, many of whom were evacuated during World War II.

Mr Kellaway remembered there being many derelict houses and boys commandeered a house for each of them to play in. He said “There used to be a lot of custard apple and tamarind trees which we used to eat. We would go fishing in the bay and catch grunter. There was no road, of course (to Cairns). There were two services, one was by plane which took an hour and I got airsick and the other was by boat and took a day and I got seasick – so I did not like leaving town very much. I remember we used to picnic on Grassy Hill with my mother, but it was mostly cleared and we used to be down in the area near where the powder magazine is.” He also recalled his father picking up parcels of gold from the Palmer River, collecting them at the airport and weighing and valuing them at the bank. The historic building was built in 1891 as the Queensland National Bank, was bought by the Bank of New South Wales in 1934 and has been heritage listed since 1994. The bank building has recently been sold to Victorians who plan to open a café on the ground floor and have accommodation upstairs. The building still contains the cedar furniture from when it was a bank.

The Kellaways were among the first residents to leave town as the threat of invasion from the north during World War II intensified, and were transferred to Cooroy in 1941, where they lived for over 15 years. The Kellaway family has recently donated photographs of Cooktown during their time there to the Cooktown Historical Society.

**Longreach** - Two 52-year-old Queensland-built, 2000 class ‘Silver Bullet’ railmotors (lightweight railcars) are boosting tourism by bringing the enjoyment of rail to outback Queensland. The 17-metre long ‘Silver Bullet’ railmotors were built in 1971 for passenger services on Brisbane’s southside and the North Coast Line to Gympie and Bundaberg. Longreach-based Outback Rail Adventures’ facilities, including workshop and storage area and rail sidings, have been officially opened by assistant tourism minister Michael Healy MP. A \$2.7 million state government tourism infrastructure project supports Silver Bullet railmotors RM2034 and RM2036 on day trips across the flood plains of the Thompson River, Ilfracombe and sunset dinner tours to the Darr River. Outback Rail Adventures is an initiative of Alan and Sue Smith, owners of Outback AussiTours, which has been operating for more than 35 years. (Facebook - [Outback Rail AdventureSilver Bullettourism](#) – Queensland Rail Media Clips – 25 May 2023)

**Savannahlander Rail Motor Trip from Cairns to Forsyth and return** – Ruth Kerr travelled on the Savannahlander rail trip from 14 to 17 June with 28 passengers and presented commentary on the history of the railway and mining and social and economic aspects of the area. The Savannahlander trip is operated by a private company, Cairns Kuranda Steam Limited Partnership. Multiple stops are made along the trip including on Stoney Creek Bridge in front of those falls on the Barron Gorge railway to Kuranda. The attached photo was taken on the Stoney Creek bridge. The train consisted of railmotors 2026 and 2028. Railmotor 2026 was 60 years old on 14 June, which was celebrated with a cake at the Sandy Tate River. The whole trip covers three railway systems, all constructed originally to service the mining industry – the Cairns railway as far as Mareeba, the Mareeba to Chillagoe railway constructed under the *Mareeba to Chillagoe Railway Act 1897* and the Etheridge railway from Almaden to Forsyth constructed between 1907 and 1910 under the *Etheridge Railway Act 1906*. The Mareeba to Chillagoe section was built to the highest engineering standards of the three under engineer, Archibald Smith Frew. He also oversaw the Etheridge railway construction where economy was paramount because the Chillagoe Company funding it needed the line to source copper for its smelters at Chillagoe.

The two drivers and guides, Hamish and Wil alternated along the trip. Hamish is a former Queensland Rail driver and has worked in other states as well. He provides information on the operation of the railmotors and how the railway operates. Wil has worked in zoos and comments on wildlife and plants and has had Indigenous cultural awareness training to assist in speaking on those aspects of the landscape and society.



**Ruth Kerr and the Savannahlander train on Stoney Creek Falls bridge on 14 June 2023.  
(Photo taken by Savannahlander crew member Hamish Withington)**



**Remains of Chillagoe smelters. 14 June 2023. (Photo taken by Ruth Kerr)**



**Savannahlander Train (RM 2026 and 2028) crossing the Rocky Tate River. 16 June 2023.  
(Photo taken by Ruth Kerr)**





**The former station master's house at Forsayth. It was designed by Archibald Frew and has special architectural features to allow the flow of air through the ceiling. 16 June 2023.**

**(Photo taken by Ruth Kerr)**

The country is very dry beyond the end of the Tinaroo Dam Irrigation Area which stops just east of Boonmoo, west of Dimbulah. The agricultural industry west of Mareeba is extensive and varied – sugar cane, coffee, grape vines, limes, avocados, mangoes.

En route passengers stay at hotels and motels in Almaden or Chillagoe, Forsayth and Mount Surprise. There are now numerous other opportunities for outback experiences near Mount Surprise and Forsayth as well – Undarra Lava Tubes, Cobbold Gorge, Talaroo hot springs – together with Chillagoe caves visits and the town visit. People are collected from the train and bused to the sites so the numbers on the train varies over the sections between Mount Surprise and Forsayth. Einasleigh hotel has had some refurbishment and train travellers visit the Copperfield Gorge nearby. Lunches were provided to train travellers at Almaden, Mount Surprise and Einasleigh. Morning and Afternoon Teas are provided at the Sandy Tate River, Camp Blackwood on the top of the Newcastle Range between Einasleigh and Forsayth and by the Dimbulah Historical Society in the Dimbulah railway station.

Ruth also visited the Cairns, Chillagoe, Dimbulah, Tolga and Cooktown Historical Societies on her Savannahlander and separate touring travels in north Queensland. They are all flourishing and receiving many tourist visitors.

## **Library and Research Report**

Research enquiries: material for a family biography of John Murtagh Macrossan; history of colonial currency (following on from another researcher's enquiry); confirmation of a family member's RHSQ membership some decades ago; history and possible photos of Fairview Reception Lounge which operated at Bowen Hills for many years; sources for a school project on the 1842 Kilcoy poisoning; access to the Library's digital photo collection; permission to use RHSQ photo of World War Two soldier from Moggill; permission to quote passages from Queensland History Journal for forthcoming publication. Request from Charles Sturt University for Master of Education: Teacher Librarianship course students to visit and experience the work of the Library and its Research Services. Visitors to the Library were: seeking photos of Brisbane streets at ground level; doing a survey of the library's digital photos; and researching convicts absconding from the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement. Destination Brisbane Consortium (our landlord) is proposing to project storytelling images on to the riverside frontage of the Commissariat Store and the adjacent former DPI building. We have been asked to provide images and information on the history of the Commissariat Store from its beginning. Ethan Clark-Kistowski, who did research for his Honours thesis at the RHSQ Library, wrote to thank the library team and to forward a copy of his thesis, for which he received First Class Honours.

Donations: our thanks for the following donations to the library; Julie Benders for *Queensland Centenary, The First Hundred Years*; Lee Beanland for *History of Sandy Creek(Allan), Valley Belles, and Life Through a Coloured Window*; Helen Best for RHSQ member Dr Jennifer Harrison’s latest book, the very interesting and comprehensively researched *Fettered Frontier: Founding the Moreton Bay Settlement, The First Four Years 1822-1826*. Copies are available from the publisher, Brisbane History Group; Kay Cohen for *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes*. It is written by RHSQ members Rod and Robyn Sullivan who have delivered several papers to the Society on the Irish in Queensland. Commissioned by the Queensland Irish Association to celebrate its 100-year anniversary, the book relates the story of the Association’s establishment, overcoming the intense sectarian divides in Queensland in the late 1880s and early 1900s, financial and membership issues, and its development into an enduring centre for Irish culture and history. If you wish to purchase a copy, email sales@queenslandirish.com. The Moggill Historical Society has offered to donate any of its publications our Library does not already have. My apology to author Yvonne Evans for omitting the title of her book she has donated. It is *To Far-Flung Places*. This month, we welcomed new volunteer Skye. She is a history student at Queensland University and at present is assisting with research enquiries and our on-going photo digitisation project.

Nora Nathan Sculptures: We were very pleased to be invited by Shirley Williams of the Sharing Stories Foundation team to take part in a video covering stories of the sculptures and Nora Nathan’s family. Shirley is a descendant of Nora Nathan and was one of her family members who came to the Commissariat Store in April to see the sculptures and to share family information with us.

Queensland 2-mile and 4-mile series maps/plans: After completing an assessment of the maps, plans and panoramas at our Stafford storage, specialist Dr. Ian Hadwen has started assessing similar items held in 14 map drawers in the library. We are considering de-accessioning these comprehensive series. If any member is interested in them, please let us know.

Photos from 1940s on: Would members who have photos from this period like to donate to the library? While we have hundreds of photos from the colonial era and up to the 1940s, we do not have a great number from later years. For research and publication purposes, photos need to have a date and location, and names of any people in the photos

Kay Cohen

<u>IMPORTANT EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS</u>	<u>NEW MEMBERS</u>
<u>JULY</u>	
<p><b>Wednesday 12 July, Talk, 12.30 – 1.30</b> ‘The 100 years of the Queensland Country Women’s Association (QCWA)’ will be delivered by Mrs Sheila Campbell, QCWA President.</p> <p><b>Thursday 13 July, Council Meeting.</b></p> <p><b>Saturday 15 July, Bulletin Deadline.</b></p>	<p>Graham Blackman, Lowood</p> <p>Tamsin O’Connor, New Farm</p>

Contact Details	Bulletin Articles Only	Subscriptions
Manager: Hannah Orchard	Editor: Dr Graeme Nicholson OAM	Ordinary Member: \$ 75.00
ABN: 34 217 251 028	A/Editor: Gloria Nicholson	Partner of Member: \$ 25.00
Phone: 07 3221 4198	Phone: 07 3221 4198	Junior Member (U18): \$ 13.00
Fax: 07 3221 4698	Fax: 07 3221 4698	Full-time Student (U25): \$ 38.00
email: info@queenslandhistory.org.au	email: info@queenslandhistory.org.au	Affiliated Society: \$ 63.00
website: www.queenslandhistory.org	The Society acknowledges financial assistance from: Commonwealth Government Heritage Grants; Qld Government Gambling Community Benefit Fund; Lord Mayor Adrian Shrinner, The Lord Mayor’s Suburban Initiative Fund; Brisbane City Council; Our Honorary Auditor, Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd; Queensland X-Ray.	Library Member: \$ 75.00
Address: 115 William Street, Brisbane Postal: The Royal Historical Society of Queensland, PO Box 12057, Brisbane, George Street, 4003		Corporate member: \$ 315.00
		Life Membership - Purchased after 10 Years as a Member \$ 5,500.00