

RHSQ

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

THE RHSQ

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OUTSTANDING HISTORICAL DETECTIVE WORK Able Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark

Following is a report about an outstanding piece of detective work by Elizabeth Nunn, RHSQ Councillor, Researcher and Cataloguer:



On 19 November 2021, the eightieth anniversary of the sinking of HMAS Sydney, the identity of “The Unknown Sailor” was revealed. His was the only body recovered after the sinking of the vessel, and he was identified as Able Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark.

The announcement revealing his name was included in news services throughout Australia and included details about his Clark family.

There is, however, more to Thomas Clark’s story – a detail that connects him to The Royal Historical Society of Queensland.

Thomas’s maternal grandfather was Thomas Welsby – a foundation member of the Society who also occupied the positions of Vice-President and President. And, the Welsby Library was named in his

honour, because his bequeathed collection of books and papers formed the foundation of the Society’s library.

Some further details of Able Seaman Clark follow, written by *Commander Greg Swinden, RAN*:

Thomas Welsby Clark was born in the Brisbane suburb of New Farm, Queensland on 28 January 1920; the third son of James Colin Clark and Marion Clark (née Welsby). His father was a grazier who was the eldest son of James Clark, an orphan, who, as the result of hard work and wise business investments in the pearling industry, had risen from abject poverty to become one of the richest men in Queensland. Thomas's mother descended from Scottish immigrants who had arrived in Victoria in the early 1850s.

Thomas was educated at Slade School in Warwick, Queensland but also spent time working on the family properties and their Brisbane oyster leases. He was an excellent swimmer and a keen yachtsman. Upon leaving school he became an accountant in Brisbane, and on 14 March 1939 enlisted in the Militia (Army Reserve) as a private in the Queensland Cameron Highlanders. He was discharged from the Militia on 19 August 1940 in order to join the Royal Australian Navy. His elder brothers, Arthur and James, served in the Army and Air Force respectively.

Thomas Clark joined the Royal Australian Naval Reserve on 23 August 1940 and was posted to the anti-submarine training school, HMAS Rushcutter in Sydney, where he completed training as a Submarine Detector. On completion of his training he served as an Ordinary Seaman in the anti-submarine training ship HMAS St Giles, based in Sydney Harbour. Thomas was promoted Acting Able Seaman on 15 July 1941 before completing a short period of training at HMAS Cerberus, the RAN's premier training depot in Victoria, during July-August 1941.

On completion of that training he joined the light cruiser HMAS Sydney (II) in August 1941. At that time Sydney was tasked with conducting patrol and escort work on the Australia station, escorting such famous troopships as the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth in southern Australian waters throughout early September. In late September 1941 the cruiser began operating off the Western Australian coast, escorting convoys from Fremantle to the Sunda Strait in the Netherlands East Indies. There Sydney would hand the convoy over to other Allied warships that would then continue escorting the ships to Singapore.



RAN Photo

HMAS Sydney II

President's Report

This April issue of the Bulletin celebrates its 80th anniversary, it was launched in April 1942. It has been a continuous publication since that time. Congratulation to editor Graeme Nicholson and all of those involved with the *Bulletin* over the eight decades.

The next Wednesday Lecture will be held on 13 April at the Commissariat Store between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm entitled *An Historical Overview of the Queensland Ambulance* presented by Dr Michael (Mick) Davis AM. Dr Mick Davis AM retired from the Queensland Ambulance Service in 2013 after 50 years of service in operational and management roles.

On Wednesday 11 May 2022 Stephen Sheaffe will present a lecture on *Lady Cilento – a Pioneer in Child and Maternal Health*. Stephen is a barrister and the immediate past president of the Society. Lady Cilento hardly needs any introduction as she was a pioneer female medical practitioner. She was also a pioneer in the fields of 'mothercraft' and was known as 'medical mother'.

All are welcome to Wednesday Lectures on the second Wednesday of the month between 12.30pm and 1.30pm. All RHSQ events must be booked through Eventbrite which is on the RHSQ website under 'events' where there is further information on all forthcoming activities.

Our next conference *Hidden Toils – The Contribution of Chinese Australians to the Early Development of Queensland* will be held on Saturday 28 May 2022 at the Commissariat Store, 115 William Street, City. It will be an all-day conference held in collaboration with Chinese Heritage in North Australia Inc commencing at 9 am. Again, all those wishing to attend must book through Eventbrite which is on the RHSQ website under 'events' where there is further information on all forthcoming activities.

The Society's annual Queensland Day Dinner will be held this year on Monday 6 June 2022 at Tattersall's Club, 215 Queen Street, Brisbane with drinks at 6.30 pm followed by a 7.00 pm commencement. The cost this year will be members of the RHSQ \$145 and non-members \$155. Bookings through Eventbrite which is on the RHSQ website under 'events'.

Your Council at its recent meeting approved the purchase of the e-Hive Cataloguing/Collection Management System on which to store details of the Society's Museum Collection. As members are aware, the RHSQ has an outstandingly significant museum collection. Unfortunately, the current system is broken and no longer suitable on which to maintain the museum collection.

Entitled *Queensland's Earliest Surveyors – who, what and where* the Society's first conference for the year, held on Saturday 12 February, was sold out, a great success. On behalf of the Society our thanks and appreciation go to Elizabeth Nunn as the convenor and the speakers for putting in the work to make the conference such a success.

This was followed on the 18 February 2022 by Dr Heather Clarke's, the culture of convict dance, *Dancing in Fetters – the Musical* performed by Phillip's Dog. It was a wonderful evening of joy and entertainment. Some 16 people participate in the performance as musicians, dancers, singers and actors. On 9 February, Heather Clarke was the first Wednesday Lecture speaker of the year on convict dance. Heather and her display which was in the Commissariat Store for several months now go on tour around the nation. Join in the RHSQ's many occasions in which to greet and meet new and not so new faces. I look forward to meeting members and visitors at forthcoming events.

Denver Beanland,
President.

Queensland Report

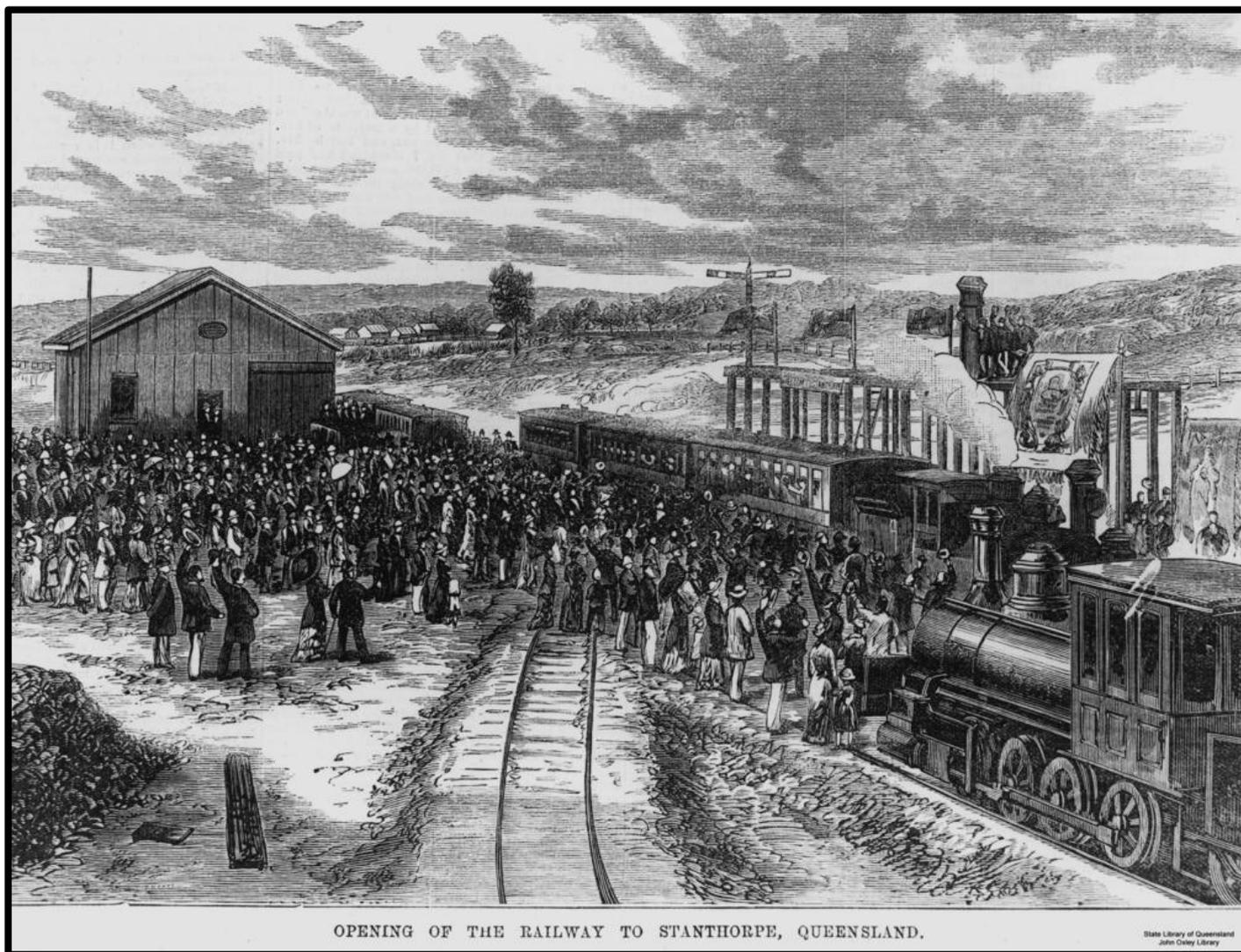
(Collected by Ruth Kerr from personal Queensland contacts, Affiliated Societies, Newspapers and Department of Environment and Heritage Protection official notifications)

Caloundra – On New Year's Day 1904 local residents held an afternoon social gathering at the late Robert Bulcock's home. In 1882 Bulcock, a well-known politician and landowner, had built an observation tower on the highest point of his land in Caloundra in support of national security during the Russian scare. Residents of Meridian Plains inland from Caloundra joined them. Eight horsemen had come down along the beaches from Mooloolaba. They passed the wreck of the SS *Dicky* beached in 1893 and still intact. Another point of interest was the Caloundra Lighthouse which was built in 1896 with wooden frame and galvanised iron cladding. There was a visitors' book to sign. (Article by Audienne Blyth, a member of Nambour Historical Museum, *Your Time Magazine*, January 2022, pp. 8-9)

Glenapp near Rathdowney – The Signal Box has been restored. A welcome sign has been erected by local heritage group, ‘The Glenapp Boys’. A photograph of it was published on the back cover of the February 2022 *Railway Digest* showing Journey Beyond’s *Great Southern* train going south.

Maroochy River Islands – Lion Island near Chambers Island was used as a camp by Charles and Maggie Brown in the 1880s when they were rafting logs from Yandina to Eudlo Creek and Cotton Tree. The island was washed away in the early twentieth century. William Parsons kept goats on Channel Island. He used the goats to make cheese and provide fresh meat. (*Sunny Coast Times*, January 2022, p. 14)

Stanthorpe railway station opened on 3 May 1881 when the southern line opened from Warwick. The station building is still in existence and serves the Downs Explorer (formerly Southern Downs Steam Railway). Photographs of the station and railway activities were featured in the local newspaper on 17 February including one of the opening day. (*Stanthorpe Today*, 17 February 2022)



State Library of Queensland, John Oxley Library Photo SLQ. Neg 21415

Library and Research Report

As with many other people and services, we have been adversely affected by the recent floods. Now the water has receded, we wish everyone a safe recovery. A much-reduced number of research enquiries were received during this period. They were: history of a house in Morningside; Aboriginal scarred trees with Jagera Daran Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Body; Walter Hill, Superintendent of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens; the 1872 Trip of the Government Steamer 'Kate' (photo below) to the Torres Strait for SBS program *Who Do You Think You Are?* We have welcomed a new volunteer, Bo – Zhang. Before coming to Brisbane, she worked at the Beijing National Library, among other such institutions in China. The items which comprise the Percy Hobday Collection, donated to the Library by Hobday many years ago, chart the working lives of artists in Brisbane in the early 20th Century and the formation of the Brisbane Art Gallery. They also detail the artistic

careers of Hobday and his sister Augusta. Bo – Am is bringing order to this somewhat untidily-stored collection prior to digitizing the content.

Kay Cohen



State Library of Queensland Photo

Queensland Government paddle steamer 'Kate' and the 'Black Swan' ahead at Gladstone in central Qld, ca. 1870

The 'Kate' was used as a steam yacht by the Queensland Government from 1864 to 1884. When the vessel was replaced by the Government steamer 'Lucinda' in 1884, the 'Kate' was chiefly employed in harbour and river work. In 1890 the 'Kate' was thoroughly overhauled and began a new career opening up trade between Brisbane and the Richmond River. On the 11th of November the 'Kate' left Howard Smith and Sons' Wharf, Brisbane, under River Pilot W.J. Brown, bound for the Richmond River with several passengers and a cargo of produce and coal. The vessel was waiting at the Pile Lighthouse for the lighthouse keeper to send out a boat for the pilot, whose services were no longer required.

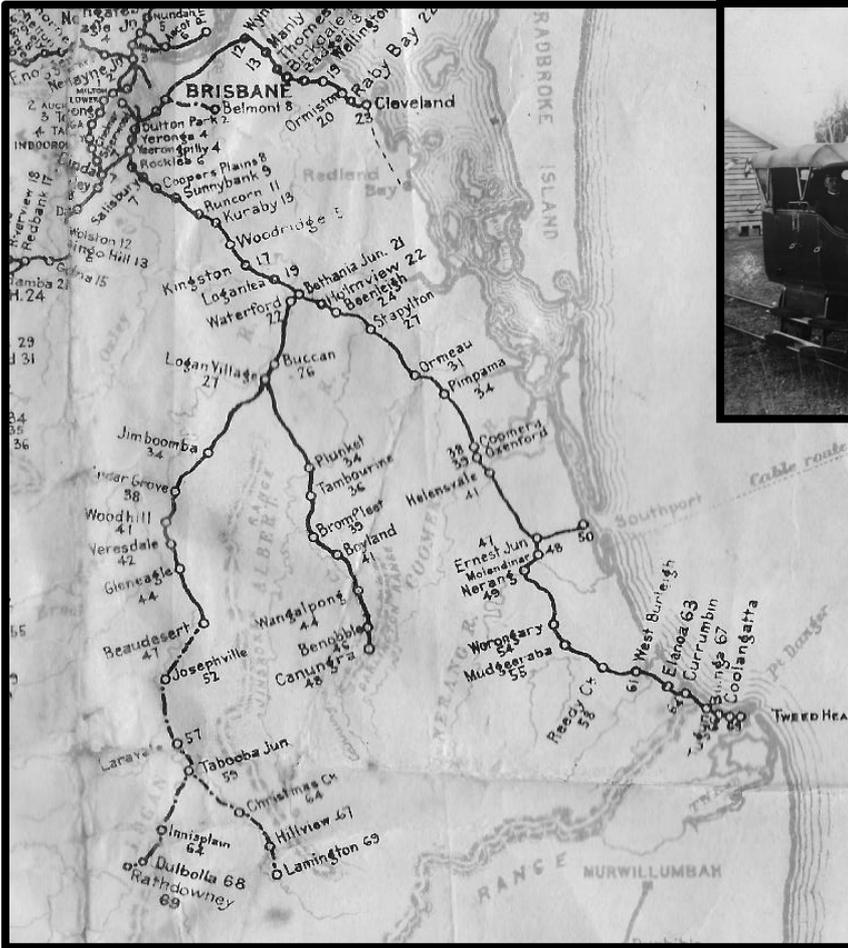
The 'Burwah', a coastal steamer, not seeing the 'Kate' in the dark, struck the 'Kate' stern-on, penetrated the engineer's room, and cut into the deck to a distance of about 2ft. The 'Kate' then sank in approximately 20 minutes. All hands were saved. However, all personal effects were lost and only a boat and oar were recovered. The 'Burwah' did not sustain very serious damage. She had a rent in her starboard bow about 12 ft in length by about 8 in. in breadth. This was patched with a spare plate during the night, so that the vessel was enabled to continue her voyage in the morning. The Marine Board found that the collision was caused by an insufficient look-out on the 'Burwah'.

Beenleigh and District Railways

The Beenleigh District had four different railways up to 1960. The first was the line to Beenleigh which opened in 1885 and extended to Southport in 1889 and eventually to Tweed Heads (Coolangatta) in 1903. Second, was the branch line from Bethania to Beaudesert; the first section opening in 1885 with the line being completed in 1888/1889; further extensions to this line went to Rathdowney and Lamington. Third, was the Logan Village to Canungra branch line opened in 1915 with an extension from Canungra built to service Lahey's timber enterprise. The fourth was the narrow-gauge railway built at the Rocky Point Sugar plantation in 1923.

A railway from Logan Village to Canungra was first proposed in 1900 with a survey commissioned in 1908. In 1911 the Queensland Government decided to construct the Canungra branch line from Logan Village railway station to Canungra. Construction began in 1913 and the line opened to Canungra on 2 July 1915. Timber traffic started to decline from 1923 and most of the timber in the area had been cut by the 1940s. There

was substantial traffic on the line during the Pacific War after the Jungle Warfare Training Centre opened at Canungra in November 1942. Traffic declined after World War II, and the line closed on 1 June 1955.



June 1922, The Governor ↑
arriving by rail motor at
Tambourine station on the
Canungra line.

Queensland Railways Map.
A 1923 Map Showing
Railways in the Beenleigh
District
←

<u>IMPORTANT EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS</u>	<u>NEW MEMBERS</u>	
<u>APRIL</u>		
<p>Wednesday 13 April, Talk 12.30-1.30 <i>An Historical Overview of the Queensland Ambulance</i> presented by Dr Michael (Mick) Davis AM.</p> <p>Thursday 14 April, Council Meeting</p> <p>Friday 15 April, Bulletin deadline.</p>	<p>Chris Dawson</p> <p>Beverley Wood</p>	<p>Fairfield</p> <p>Carlton VIC</p>

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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.	Library Member: \$ 75.00
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		Life Membership - Purchased after 10 Years as a Member \$ 5,500.00