

# The Queensland Journal of Labour History

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The Brisbane Labour History Association



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**Front Cover Photo:** Grahame Garner photographed his family—wife Esme and children Bruce and Jillian—at the Hiroshima Day Rally in Brisbane, 1967.

See Photo Essay showcasing Grahame's work.

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No. 5, September 2007  
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# Editorial

## Janis Bailey

This issue celebrates, in a variety of ways, the contributions of women to labour history in Queensland. They are, for the most part, stories that tell the 'other' labour history; that is, not the history of unionised women (to which we hope to devote an issue in the near future) but rather of women not associated with the formal labour movement.

The three main articles all relate the histories of women close to the authors—their mothers, or their grandmothers. Claire Wagner's wonderful piece of social history tells the story of her mother, Elizabeth (Betty) Richardson, who became a ward of the state in 1909 when her mother died and her stockman father was unable to care for her and some of her siblings. Fostered with various families and then beginning hired service, Betty's experiences are a snapshot of life for this group of less-than-privileged children, subject to the vagaries of their foster families and their employers, over whom they had little or no choice. Claire's fine, unsentimental prose takes us into that period and Betty's experiences in a compelling fashion.

Doreen Wendt-Weir has chronicled in previous publications the social history of the Logan region, south-west of Brisbane. Her article in this issue, written in the first person, tells of the early life of her paternal grandmother Berthe Auguste Wendt (nee Stegemann) who

emigrated to Australia in 1884, aged 12, with her family, from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. She lived a hard-working farming life, giving birth to and bringing up six children. While Claire's mother Betty was at least schooled, Berthe spent only three weeks at school and did not learn to read or write until her children taught her sufficiently well so that she could read the Bible and the *Courier Mail*, and write a letter.

Both are stories of Australian stoicism and hard work, filling out the Australian bush legend of (mainly) male heroicism with some alternative accounts of life on the Queensland frontier, geographically and socially, in the first part of the twentieth century.

Connie Healy's story of her mother, Kate Lovegrove, is also a 'frontier' story. Not only did Kate live during her childhood in various North Queensland mining towns, she also inhabited a particular political frontier, in that she was a foundation member of the Queensland Housewives' League, which later became part of the Union of Australian Women.

The last major article is a photo essay featuring photographs taken by Grahame Garner. Compiled by Ted Riethmuller, himself a fine photographer and chronicler of activist occasions in Queensland, this lovely piece show-

cases pictures from marches of the 1960s in Brisbane. We are reminded of some of the foremost organisations of feminism's second wave and of the Cold War peace movement, including the Union of Australian Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the women's committees of some of the trade unions. The photos are a fresh and lively reminder of women's contribution to political culture and activism, and how events in the 1960s were such a seedbed for activism, and a ground in which many young women (and men) were radicalised. The aprons and other radical garments that women sewed for the various marches, with anti-nuclear signs and the dove of peace, link back hundreds of years to the wearing of political colours and radical garb of all kinds. I've taken the liberty of fast-forwarding to earlier this year, and the protests against the Talisman Saber 'war games' of the US and Australian armies in cen-

tral Queensland. One of Ted's own photographs (below) shows women activists once again subverting notions of femininity and genteel behaviour to make a serious point (read the fine print!). The work of faithful recorders of our social conditions, such as Grahame and Ted, and the availability of websites such as *flickr* and online picture archives like those of the National Library of Australia and Fryer Library, are very important for our communal memory.

The remainder of the issue is made up with the usual mix of book reviews, reports of BLHA functions, notices and of course the reports of National ASSLH President Lucy Taksa, and BLHA President Greg Mallory. We are particularly pleased that Jeff Rickertt has reminded us of the great asset that we have in the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland.

\* \* \* \* \*



**The CWA makes a point at the Talisman Saber protests,  
Central Queensland, 2007.**

(Photo Ted Riethmuller)

# Federal ASSLH President's Column

Lucy Taksa

The 'President's Column' aims to keep members of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) in touch with the Society's activities and to acquaint them with the work being done by the Federal Executive. It gives me great pleasure to provide a report on recent developments. In early July, the Melbourne Branch hosted an extremely successful conference. On behalf of the Society I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers, the Melbourne Branch and especially Peter Love and Julie Kimber, the other members of the Conference organising committee: Verity Burgmann, Phillip Deery, Stuart Macintyre, Sean Scalmer and those who supported them, Jackie Dickenson, Gabrielle Murphy, Margaret Walters and Nick Irving, for their hard work and dedication in helping to make this a memorable event. Their efforts help the Society to maintain its traditional links with the industrial and political wings of the labour movement, as well as scholars, students and activists. Congratulations are also extended to the Branch for the publication of the Conference proceedings, and to Julie Kimber, Peter Love and Phillip Deery as its Editors. Of course, thanks must also be extended to all those labour historians

and fellow travellers who presented papers and those who helped to support their research by attending the conference.

The Federal Executive meeting held at the Conference in Melbourne was especially pleased to welcome colleagues from New Zealand. Ray Markey and Peter Franks took the opportunity to report on the success of the Trans-Tasman Labour History Conference held in Auckland in January and its role in helping to foster closer links between the ASSLH and labour historians in New Zealand. The Federal Executive congratulated Ray and Peter on the success of the Trans-Tasman conference and we look forward to further collaborations in future. In recognising the importance of developing such international links, the meeting appointed Andrew Moore to investigate potential relationships with local and international affiliates, and to advise the Federal Executive on this matter.

Traditionally our conferences have been hosted by our Branches on a rotational basis. It was with great regret that the President of the Adelaide Branch, Louise Miller, recently informed the Federal Executive that the Branch

Executive decided that it was not, at the present time, in a position to provide the resources necessary to hold the next Conference. Accordingly, we will be investigating another location and I will report on developments in due course.

Prior to the Melbourne Conference, a number of important organisational decisions were taken to streamline the work done by members of the Executive and to ensure a greater balance in the work load. At the Executive meeting held on 31 May, office holders' duties and activities were reviewed and position descriptions of all the Executive Officers were produced to clarify role boundaries and expectations.

To lighten the load on the Secretary, while also creating a framework for better communication with and between the Branches and improving our capacity to update the Society website, the meeting decided to create two new formal positions on the Executive. Tony Harris kindly agreed to take on the new Branch Liaison Officer role in which capacity he will be responsible for the exchange and dissemination of information with the Branches and also the contact for matters relating to the Bede Nairn fund. Melanie Oppenheimer kindly agreed to take on the position of the Website Monitor and in this capacity she will liaise with the web manager and provide suggestions to the Executive on additional information and links, including extending links with other history organisations in Australia and elsewhere.

In a previous report I noted that the Federal Executive had resolved to un-

dertake a review of the ASSLH constitution. In order to ensure a collaborative approach based on maximum consultation with and involvement from Branches, the Executive meeting held in May decided to hold a special constitution review meeting at the Melbourne Conference. The meeting was held on 6 July and attended by members of the Federal Executive and Branch representatives. Past President Terry Irving was also invited to attend to provide input in recognition of his role in raising the need for a review some years ago. A representative from New Zealand also attended to create a firm foundation for trans-Tasman collaboration.

The meeting agreed that there was a need for specialist legal advice on the nature of federal incorporation vis-a-vis branch affiliate status and also in relation to the decision by a number of Branches to obtain separate incorporation in order to ensure legal protection. An appropriate lawyer was subsequently identified by the President and Vice President and advice has been sought. The meeting also agreed that once legal advice has been obtained the constitution will be examined with a view to identifying potential amendments, primarily on matters of branch and affiliate status, but also on other procedural matters.

Suggested amendments will be circulated via email to the Federal Executive, including Branch representatives, and proposals for amendments and/or changes will be presented to a Special General Meeting for discussion and approval.

\* \* \* \*

# BLHA President's Column

## Greg Mallory

The BLHA has been very busy in the past six months on a number of fronts. In July we conducted a seminar at the Brisbane Workers and Community Centre (BWCC) on the 1964-65 Mt Isa Dispute. This coincided with the play *Red Cap*, staged at La Boite Theatre. The event attracted around 100 people. Speakers included Fred Thompson, AMWU organiser at the time of the dispute, Bob Anderson who went to The Isa as a BWIU organiser to assist the Disputes Committee, and Keith De Lacy, former Queensland Treasurer and author of a novel on the Mt Isa dispute, *Blood Stains the Wattle*.

In September we were involved with a number of other groups in celebrating 40 years of the Great Civil Liberties March of 1967, also at the BWCC. Around 140 people attended including a large number of 'veterans' of the march. The gathering was addressed by, amongst others, Dan O'Neill and Brian Laver. The event has inspired a number of people to work on a number of historical projects associated with new left/student movement of the 1960s/70s. Two projects that are presently being undertaken are the research and writing

of a book and a commemorative plaque to be located on the University of Queensland campus.

Both the above events are reported at more length in this journal.

### **Folk/Labour History Event**

Plans are already underway for a second folk/labour event to be held in February 2008. This follows the *Rekindling the Flames of Discontent* event held in September 2006. Dale Jacobsen, the main organiser of our last event, has obtained sponsorship from the Queensland Council of Unions and the Woodford Folk Festival. We warmly acknowledge both organisations' support. A flyer is currently being prepared and will be widely distributed over the next three months. A mass distribution of flyers will occur at the Woodford Folk Festival.

### **Incorporation**

There have been significant developments in the incorporation issue. Over the past two years the BLHA has had discussions with the Federal Executive of the Australian Society for the Study



of Labour History (ASSLH) about this issue. Both organisations have taken legal advice and we have recently negotiated a position that suits both parties. We have sent a series of questions to the Federal Executive for clarification regarding a number of matters. I am currently in the process of developing a statement for members from the BLHA Executive about this issue, to support our recommendation to members that the BLHA not separately incorporate, but rather take advantage of the incorporated status of the ASSLH.

### **Season Greetings/Thanks/Next Year**

I take this opportunity to wish all members an enjoyable festive season. I also take the opportunity to thank the BLHA Executive and other members who have made 2007 a successful year. I would particularly like to single out Ted Riethmuller for his work as Secretary. Next year there are a number of projects under discussion. As well as the folk/labour event, there is the BLHA launch of *The Coalminers of Queensland, Vol.2: The Pete Thomas Essays*, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1948 Rail strike and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the eight-hour day in Queensland.

\* \* \* \*

# SEMINAR REPORT

## 1967 Civil Liberties March

**Greg Mallory**

### Then ...

The 1967 Civil Liberties March, from St. Lucia to the city, involved over 4000 participants. Over 100 demonstrators were arrested in Roma Street after a sit-down demonstration. According to many activists, this was the defining moment in the history of the student movement in Brisbane. Large demonstrations followed in subsequent years, which eventually led to Moratorium marches and the anti-Springbok demonstrations of the early 1970s and the right to march campaigns of the late 1970s.

### ... 40 years on, we still remember!

The event was celebrated at the Brisbane Workers Community Centre, Pad-



**Roma Street: Police make the first arrests**

(Photo Gary Redlich)

dington, on the evening of Friday 7 September The BLHA was one of the sponsors of this 40-year reunion. Over 140 people attended the event. A number of speeches were made by some of the key activists of the 1967 march, notably Dan O'Neill and Brian Laver. Others spoke briefly of their experiences and the general effect it had on 'politicising' them for the rest of their lives. The reunion was, to a large extent, a social occasion and Merv Partridge from the BWCC is planning to hold more events, where the issues arising from the March and other subsequent actions of students and workers of the 60s and 70s can be debated and analysed.

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**Dan O'Neill addresses the Forum**

(Photo Gordon Curtis)



**Kevin De Lacy,  
AM**



**Dr Robert ('Uncle Bob')  
Anderson**



**Mt Isa Strikers**

# SEMINAR REPORT

## 1964/65 Mt Isa Dispute

**Dale Jacobsen**

On Saturday 28 July, over a hundred people gathered at the Brisbane Workers Community Centre at Paddington to remember the dignity and determination of the workers who took part in the 1964/65 Mt Isa Mining dispute, and to discuss the lessons this dispute holds for today.

Ably chaired by Andrew Dettmer (State Secretary of AMWU), the forum was addressed in turn by Keith De Lacy (AM) whose book, *Blood Stains the Wattle*, a fictionalised but historically correct account of the dispute, was published in 2002; Karin Mayer, dramaturge and researcher for the musical, *Red Cap*, staged by La Boite Theatre as part of the Queensland Festival of Music; and Fred Thompson, Northern Organiser for the Amalgamated Engineering Union at the time of the dispute. Fred had travelled from Townsville to address the audience at the previous night's performance, and to speak at the Forum. Now aged 87, Fred has been 'retired' since 1980, but continues to work as a community activist and is regularly in demand as a speaker and voice of wise counsel.

Following a Welcome to Country, Dr Robert (Uncle Bob) Anderson told of his experiences during the dispute as a union delegate and State Organiser for the Building Workers Industrial Union. Singer/songwriter Griff Bignell per-

formed the Don Henderson song *Isa*, and told of how Hendo and his mate Geoff Wills, upon hearing of the dispute, lamented their inability to help – until Hendo said, 'Bugger this, let's go!' They tossed their guitars and some clothes into the car and drove straight to Mt Isa where they entertained the locked-out workers, writing songs as they went.

The afternoon was rounded off by the Combined Unions Choir in their inimitable fashion.

Events such as this Forum, jointly organised by BLHA, WorkLife and Just Peace, perform a necessary function in keeping alive the inside story of those who fought for conditions that many today take for granted.

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**Poster for the play *Red Cap***



**Clockwise from top:  
Combined Unions Choir;  
Karin Mayer, Dramaturge and  
Researcher, *Red Cap*;  
Griff Bignell;  
Andrew Dettmer, State  
Secretary, AMWU**



**Fred Thompson, Northern Organiser, Amalgamated Engineering Union at the time of the dispute**



**Speakers Karin Mayer, Uncle Bob Anderson, Ken De Lacy and Fred Thompson**



**Betty, the non-debutante. Studio portrait.**

# Deserving Orphans and the Housework Ethic

Claire Wagner

Traditional women's roles, according to Simone de Beauvoir, have been regarded as service, not for money but for love (as in tennis). This view was nowhere more explicit than in colonial Australia, when immigration propagandists urged that 'good servants make good wives'. But while there was concern to redress the shortage of women, England's upper servants, versed in sophisticated needlecraft and cookery, were less welcome than the maid-of-all-work, where disdain for superior housecrafts was fortified by puritanism. There was no training for the skivvy, who was required to do heavy cleaning, laundry and – incidentally – cooking.

Colonial mistresses were typically far less skilled than upper servants, according to R.E.N. Twopeny, writing in the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> He noted that households lacked the apprenticeships of the old-world servants' hierarchy, whereby senior retainers passed on skills. Inevitably, colonial mistresses were wont to stand on their self-made dignity and impose on their maids, and colonial housewifery was generally worse than mediocre: The Reverend Mr Twopeny, who liked his claret, lamented that it was almost unobtainable. He was also scathing about the gaudy taste of the newly-embourgeoised, and the dearth of bookcases.<sup>2</sup> There was an emphasis on outward display; he (or perhaps his wife) noted that the cheapest underwear sustained the most elaborate finery.

He was nonetheless pained that many

working-class girls preferred to work amidst grime and stress in factories and shops, and deplored their desire for 'independence' rather than the colonial version of the decorous domesticity befitting all females.

According to Catherine Spence, newcomers had to leave refinements behind. Her novel *Clara Morison*, published in 1854<sup>3</sup> describes the introduction to heavy housework as a colonial rite of passage. The gently reared heroine, who had never cleaned a grate, scrubbed a floor, emptied slops or boiled a copper, finds herself stranded, and must work as a maid for a rather obtuse employer who lodges her in the attic. When Mr Right appears proffering more of the same (plus pregnancy) she is reaccommodated and invited to sit in the parlour.

Spence approves of this ordeal as a means to egalitarian self-respect, whereby a servant could become a wife. Similarly, a quasi-egalitarian policy informed the training of Queensland's female orphans, as formulated some thirty years after Twopeny's work, with the same notion of domestic service as a means to womanly dignity.

## The 1911 Act

Queensland's State Children Act of 1911 replaced an antiquated system, which among other things had laid orphans open to abuse by carers or employers. It was as humane as could be reasonably devised.

Protestant orphans were placed in foster homes until the age of thirteen, then hired out, the girls as maids, the boys on farms. They were under control until



eighteen. Those hired received a small wage, with board, clothes and medical treatment; they were allowed pocket money, but most of their earnings were banked at interest by the Department and returned at age eighteen. Unplaceable children, usually disabled, stayed at the State orphanages in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville. Boys were less protected than girls, and were sometimes overworked and denied pocket money. Girls were if anything over-chaperoned, and officialdom propounded a future as respectable housewives whom anyone might marry, having modelled themselves on their employers.

### **The intake for 1909**

My mother, born Elizabeth Richardson in 1902 at Quart Pot Creek via Eromanga, experienced this rite of passage, beginning at the age of six with three of her five siblings. They were atypical ('mother dead, father unable to keep') representing 1.6 per cent of the intake for 1909, more typified by the abandoned, the maltreated, the disabled and the offspring of incest.

Their father was a stockman, and his family was a casualty of progress. They had left Quart Pot for Charleville in 1908 so that the children could go to school. Their mother, whose six children had been born at home, died of blood poisoning after childbirth in the well-equipped Charleville Hospital, when cross-infection was not understood.

They were relatively privileged — bush kids, sturdy and laconic. Their father was well known as a superior horseman out west, and they inherited a nose for

excellence. It was a matter of pride that he, an articulate veteran of the Shearers' Strike, remitted their board from various outback stations, where he rose to the level of manager. Betty, my mother, relayed one or two grievances to him, not without result. But such was her own pride that she refused to talk about her childhood until she was on her deathbed, aged ninety.

Throughout their time as wards the children were never out of the thoughts of their remote relatives, who remembered them decades later. They received letters, birthday presents, and a visit from their father at Exhibition time, when he over-indulged them. By 1915 they were able to meet at Christmas. The children were perhaps fortunate in being placed in the Brisbane district, close to policy-makers, whose approach was hands-on.

They became wards in July 1909, a time when major changes to policy and practice were being developed by the architect of the 1911 Act, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Ferguson. As the compiler of successive annual reports, he emerges as competent and committed, maintaining close contact with wards in a way possible in a small and open-textured community.

The new Diamantina Orphanage was completed at Woolloowin late in 1910, incorporating an Infants' Home from Sand gate, previously separate. Ferguson's reports developed a professional tone, eventually omitting reports from schoolteachers and 'lady visitors'. Until 1915 they featured photographs of institutions and inmates, including victims of abuse. After 1915, when uniformed alumni were featured, no more photographs were published.

Modern conveniences were noted, including a telephone at Woolloowin. Betty also rode in cars in days when it was a silvertail's privilege: regulations required that girls be escorted to and from the orphanage in a police vehicle. According to the reports the Department closely supervised placements, inquiring about the character of carers and employers, with regular inspections, when children were interviewed in private.

They were required to attend church, whereby a clergyman might also monitor their welfare. Following a new policy they were issued with ordinary clothes and not uniforms, the girls presenting in a dress, pinafore, black stockings and turkey-red bloomers. Once a year siblings were reunited at an outing on the Bay in the Government boat.

### **Dickensian reality**

Escorted by their father, the children arrived at Diamantina Orphanage on 5 July 1909. Pending completion of the Woolloowin building it shared premises with the Infants' Home at Sandgate. Betty recalled seeing the sea for the first time, and the many mosquitoes. Her brother Hugh gave a Dickensian account of teenaged girls unable to nurse their babies, who died and were buried without ceremony in the nearby swamp.

Mortality rates at the Home were indeed high. As first recorded in 1884 the rate was 50 per cent, in 1887 57 per cent. It dropped in the long term to 10 per cent in 1909, but enough for my uncle to observe. Some cover-ups probably underlay the 1911 legislation.<sup>4</sup>

Betty's eldest brother Jim, born in

1898, went to a farmer, one R. McLaran of Yangan, who denied him pocket money. By contrast Hugh, born in 1900, was boarded with the Scurr family, who wanted to adopt him. (He chose to return to the bush.)

Betty and her younger sister Myrtle were placed with a family known to theirs, the Boylands, who had a dairy at Coopers Plains. They were treated correctly but coldly, and Betty preferred the dogs and cows to the people. At the first Christmas she misbehaved and was excluded from the festivities – given a bun and sent down the paddock, now bordered by Boyland Road. Their board totalled 12 shillings a week. 'They just wanted the money,' Betty said. Sumptuous meals were laid on for the inspector W.T. Woolley, whom Betty disliked: like Princess Di, he felt he had to hug the underprivileged.

The two girls did well at Coopers Plains school, and were reported as well behaved and punctual. In 1912 the fifth and third classes were topped for most of the year by the State wards. The lady visitor, Mrs M.A. Fox, said that the children seemed very happy as they showed her their prizes.<sup>5</sup> The same report records a boy awarded a scholarship to Ipswich Grammar.<sup>6</sup> This was Hugh, but his father could not afford even the reduced expense. Betty was in her last days before she thought to tell me that her best subject had been English composition, prefiguring my own, but one would not have known from the inhibited style of the letters she wrote as an adult.

Otherwise Betty led a rural life, was strictly cared for, and lived on plain good food, which she could cook on a

wood stove. She could make preserves, milk a cow, rear and draw poultry.

The next foster carer was Mrs Amelia Hill at Esk, whose husband George had been a shipmate of her English grandfather. She was joined by her youngest sister Ivy, born in 1906. Mrs Hill was kind, but leaned on Betty as a prop on the way to church. The headmaster was a Squeers in days when girls and boys were caned alike. In the absence of a father, he caned the nine-year-old Ivy until a clergyman's son threatened to report him.

### **Officialdom's image**

In 1915, as Betty neared the end of her official childhood, she was under consideration for a bursary for Anglican orphans, covering two more years of schooling, as undertaken by the more privileged. In the event the money went to a boy. George Ferguson anguished over the waste of academic and other talent. Various impediments, including industrial legislation, kept boys from apprenticeships. As for the girls, he concurred with Twopeny.

The dignity of labour is not enhanced by decrying menial occupations, and the domestic side of the girl's nature is neglected at the expense of her future home, and sometimes, of her morality.<sup>7</sup>

The 1912 report included two studio portraits of daintily dressed girls in a parlour, one of them described as in service. A masculine conflation had the skivvy, by virtue of low pay, morphing into a chatelaine working for love, whose refined image sorted with roughened hands, genteelly gloved. Ferguson worried about 'Our Girls', feeling taxed

to the utmost to do what was best for thirteen-year-olds uninstructed in the facts of life, who might fall prey to the unscrupulous. He was considering an informative pamphlet, which would be 'better than nothing'.<sup>8</sup>

The adolescent Betty became a testy perfectionist as a cook, but remained a clumsy seamstress. A portrait of her own mother shows a teenager in a lace dress of her own making, having learned fine crafts in a convent. At Coopers Plains school Betty undertook the same tedious hemming imposed on me thirty years later. Fancywork was wowerishly dismissed, along with virtuosity. Starting with a knot was an affront to the work ethic. (I was to meet a Viennese whose firm had made clothes for the Habsburgs, who found this ridiculous.)

In days when girls grew hair long enough to sit on, as did Betty, fine sewing was a preserve of leisured girls preparing glory boxes, but training for the future envisaged by officialdom did not concern Betty's employers. In the 1920s she joined the flappers who mocked glory boxes, cut her hair, bought off the peg, and found the wrong man to marry.

As she began hired service family circumstances changed. Her eldest sister Martha, never in care, had married and settled in Brisbane, where their father expected the girls to reunite under one roof. Myrtle joined her, but there was no room for Betty. Between hirings she stayed at Woolloowin, where at her father's insistence she had a short holiday. She observed that the Orphanage itself was exempt from the inspectors' scrutiny: the matron, she said, was very

cruel to the unplaceable wards.

Her employment brought her into the different world of affluent suburbia, initially as a home help, subsequently as a nursemaid. Her general impression was one of stupefying mediocrity. At best they were 'very ordinary' or 'a drink of water'.

### **'A nice type of girl'**

As 'a nice type of girl' Betty was not flattered at being placed with Brisbane's upper bourgeoisie, but with her nose for quality, gained a wry view of a smug and appetitive tone. The cooking was often the worst of British (coffee in a bottle, shredded lettuce in vinegar, too much meat, with cabbage boiled to leave a smell but no taste). They were not uniformly mediocre, but she never acknowledged who had taught her superior cookery, not to mention a grasp of formal etiquette that only stopped at the Table of Precedence. Most took her cooking as a gratuitous addition to routine housework.

Twopeny described the nursemaid as the least skilled and lowest ranked, though considered good enough for colonial children.<sup>9</sup> Here too, employers casually turned their children over to the maid, who (unlike the old-world nanny) had responsibility without authority. Betty observed undisciplined children who might kick a nursemaid with impunity, but unlike self-possessed bush kids, burnt themselves out, to become dull and conformist creatures of the Establishment. (Such a course might find a parallel in Margaret Mead's account of the Manus culture.)<sup>10</sup> Given that the affluent had a casual attitude to their children, the care

vouchsafed to orphans must have been read as a great favour.

There was no upstairs/downstairs distinction in the employers' households, an arrangement more gauche than egalitarian, though it minimised opportunity for seigniorial seduction. Apart from the under-used parlour there was no defined woman's domain. In some houses the maid's room was attached to the kitchen; in others it was partitioned on a veranda.

Hired girls declined to identify with the family. Living dissociated at close quarters, the maid observed privilege with the same kind of intimate class division that had made colonial family life unspeakably taboo, when servants became wives. Up to 1911 complaints recorded against hired girls had to do with sulking and 'passive resistance'. Passivity was acceptable only as sweet compliance. By contrast, the hired boys working outdoors with the family's menfolk might develop some camaraderie with them.<sup>11</sup>

On 24 November 1915, possibly carrying a pamphlet, Betty was hired out to Captain Alexander Junner, the Government skipper, whom she had met on an orphanage excursion; he had been an orphan himself, he told her. He and his wife were hospitable Scots, whose Hogmanay she was to remember. 'The Captain' had been the hero of a shipwreck in 1888.<sup>12</sup>

Her status was made clear on the first night, when she helped set the table. Where was her place? (In the kitchen.) But she found the household at Highgate Hill most interesting. The Captain raised a flag every morning and

scanned the river shipping with a telescope. He often came home with a sugarbag full of fish, a perquisite of office, and Betty learned a much-praised recipe for fish soup. When the house was advertised for sale in 1993 I took the opportunity to see it. Betty's room adjoined the kitchen, and the view of the next house was what the teenager saw until 12 January 1917, when she left.

She liked the family and kept in touch until the mid 1920s. But there had been an incident. Employers were made aware that 'abuses, however slight, were severely dealt with'.<sup>13</sup> After a mishap in the kitchen the daughter of the house had slapped Betty's face. A son told the parents, who exacted an apology, forestalling a Departmental complaint.

## **A lost youth**

Leaving the Junners, she spent only two months with W.J. Riches, a teacher at Gowrie Junction via Toowoomba. 'Boring' she wrote to her father, who reminded the Department of its policy not to send girls to isolated places; moreover, there was no accessible Anglican church.<sup>14</sup>

She spent six months with Mrs J. Price of Bardon, whose husband was a Federal public servant. Mrs Price urged her to join a church social group. She tried the YWCA, but could not return hospitality. 'I didn't want them patronising me'.

Betty had had no youth and lacked social accomplishments. Unlike her eldest sister she had never been to the races, could not ride, play cards or dance, and

saw social interchange as a matter of punctilious 'fitting in', as she suppressed the anarchic sentiments of the institutionalised. She knew the animal facts of life and the kitchen secrets of the elite, but lacked street sense, assuming that men were all gentlemanly protectors in the mould of the Captain and the Lieutenant Colonel.

She was with Mr J.W Castle of Beaudesert for a year, and left after the baby died. She had avoided his advances by spending a night outside, where she contracted bronchitis. She had a four-month holiday at Diamantina, helping with the administration and observing the matron's harshness. She hardly noticed the end of the war, she said.

Early in 1919 she was hired by Mr A.P. Deshon of Coorparoo, a bank officer. The bush daughter was probably floored by Mrs Deshon, a travelled sophisticate, who had 'played the violin before the Kaiser', but like the rest was ready to delegate child care, and undoubtedly bored by teenaged nursemaids.

Coorparoo was an outer suburb, an elite enclave of mansions surrounded by cow paddocks and vegetable gardens. 'I knew more about the bush than they did' she said scornfully. Well-heeled officials and businessmen pursued enlightened self-interest as land speculators, smiled upon by the local member and Colonial Treasurer, Walter Barnes. The Deshons could not have predicted that their nursemaid would marry his nephew within a decade.

## **A time of revolution**

In 1919 Betty's brother Jim returned



**Betty, envying 'flash clothes'.**

with the Light Horse from Palestine and France. In his Digger's uniform he went to McLaren at Yangan, and exacted his pocket money. Redress was on the way, and conceived in revolutionary terms.

Betty's manumission was preceded by urban/rural comedy, when Jim joined forces with Martha's husband, Harry Gillard, who was busying himself with Myrtle's moral welfare. Harry was a voluble activist in the Seamen's Union. Hugh, an AWU stalwart, called him a Pommy urger.

Harry objected to her working with 'toffs and Tories'. Jim was moved not by ideology but by rural custom. Betty had been required to take the house cow to a bull for serving, a task that was men's business out west, and taboo to young girls. The complaint was raised with the Department and passed on to the uncomprehending Deshons. Being accustomed to livestock Betty was more amused than not, but compounding Bolshevik rhetoric with English prudery, Harry told the Deshons that she was not only to be protected from such sights, but must not be allowed out at night. The Deshons told him to stay away, calling him a communist.

The prospect of freedom brought on floods of impatient tears until 23 March 1920, when Betty was discharged to her sister Martha. When the policeman arrived to escort her away. Mrs Deshon asked 'It hasn't been so bad, has it?' Free after eleven years Betty could say, grudgingly, 'You haven't been bad to me'.

But the family reunion was less than happy. Harry got on her nerves, lumping her in with his Marxist underclass

of dark mills, mean alleys and foul sweatshops. Martha was harassed by her noisy and increasing family, and her bush folkways were incompatible with urban airs and graces: they called her Lizzie and not Betty. She ran away before her eighteenth birthday.

She found an enjoyable job for which she was well qualified, as a children's nurse with the Blind Deaf and Dumb Institute. The Department kept her waiting for her savings, which totalled something like 50 pounds plus interest. Her first pay had been one shilling a week, rising to 6/6 at seventeen, with monthly pocket money rising from three to six pence a month.

## **Life on the margin**

A photograph taken soon after her birthday shows her with a fashionable friend, herself in the childish garb deemed suitable by Mrs Deshon — white dress, black stockings. At about this time Myrtle, chafing under Harry's strictures, wrote to her father denying she was going around with blokes, adding 'Dad, I want money'; Lizzie, she said, was going to spend her savings on flash clothes. Not long after a bare-shouldered studio portrait was taken, which the photographer put in his advertising display at Roma Street Station 'for years'.

Betty escaped to Sydney, relishing the cosmopolitan anonymity away from the censorious province. Before leaving she visited the Junners, who proudly told her that the Captain's old schoolmate, Ramsay Macdonald, was the Labour Prime Minister of England.

In Sydney she met and married a

Queenslander and in time returned. She had lost touch with her family but was surrounded by reminders of an un-avowed past. We lived at Taringa. The caning headmaster resurfaced at the school, where a plaque ascribed public works to one of the Deshons. One of her infant charges was a dancing partner of a girl next door, and we lived within sight of a house where Martha had served dinner at Christmas 1915. She knew, in anthropological detail, much about prominent families.

The Departmental files were destroyed at this time, apart from placement records, but the community was still small. Did she still avoid people in the street? In retrospect her street persona seems like a make-believe of some monumental matron as projected in the annual reports – overweight, upholstered in dark fabric, hatted and gloved. In middle age she complained of a marginal identity as a mere skivvy, notwithstanding labour-saving appliances and freedom from child care. She refused to teach me to cook, either jealous of her skill, or wishing to turn me from housewifery like the factory girls of her era.

Abrupt removal from family life left its scars on my mother, who scorned welfare rhetoric and accepted the age pension with distaste. She had been subject to some pharisaic discourse, and of the officials she met, she could respect only one, the accountant Mr Wilson, because he recorded her father's remittances. An inspector, W.K. Salton, observed:

A State that takes on deprived children is doing great work ... that if properly understood should make our fellow men and fellow women feel proud that the Almighty has put

it into the hearts of our legislators to devise such liberal things ... .<sup>15</sup>

Betty gave proof that adversity does not improve the character. While living in Sydney she engaged a State ward to help with her young family. Norma, whose mother was in gaol for bigamy, was permitted to accompany us to Brisbane, beyond NSW jurisdiction (which seems to have been casual). Betty bullied her with predictable results. With the street sophistication of an urban rat, Norma subverted the children, encouraging them to guy their parents. She left after my note about 'Her' was found.

### **Life and art**

Though Betty never became a reader, she appreciated the theme of David Copperfield. My first bookshelf included girlish staples – *Anne of Green Gables* and the *Pollyanna* series, about orphan fortunes up to the period of Betty's servitude. They are informed by North American optimism; a more astringent note is struck by Ethel Turner's *That Girl*, an Australian equivalent, but my mother was unable to see her situation as common enough to be a theme in popular literature.

Her long and perturbed life had noveletish aspects, not the least being the intrigues of two people, one an in-law, the other a sibling, who prevented her from meeting her father, who lived until 1954. There was just time for me to contact Hugh, and to reunite two octogenarian waifs before he died.

If she had received a bursary, she would have liked to study 'something artistic'. Back in Sydney, divorced in her fifties, she found herself on a congenial social



fringe which gave scope to a repressed natural wit. She spent time with theatre people, relishing their anarchic campy, along with the baroque anecdotes of a titled Englishwoman (bemused by Sydney socialites) who regaled her with tales of court presentations and haunted castles. She abandoned conventional dress for kaftans. One of her patchwork quilts was featured in Vogue magazine.

No one was better placed to witness the angry grief of a grandson whose father had died, sitting with the raging child in silence practised over a lifetime. The last time I saw my mother I spoke of her hidden history, and asked if she had thought her daughters so shallow as to mock an orphan. She bit her lip and smiled, like a child caught out. There was nothing more to be said.

## Endnotes

**Abbreviation:** State Children Department (SCD)

1. R.E.N. Twopeny, *Town life in Australia*, Elliott Stock, London, 1883.
2. *ibid*, p. 40 ff.
3. Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison: A tale of South Australia during the gold fever*, (facs), Wakefield Press, 1994.
4. Home Secretary's Department, *Annual Report of the Inspector of Orphanages*, 1909, p. 8.
5. SCD, *Annual Report*, 1912, p. 20.
6. *ibid*, p. 14.
7. SCD, *Annual Report*, 1912, p.13.
8. *ibid*, p. 7.
9. Twopeny, *Town life in Australia*, p. 54.
10. Margaret Mead, *Growing up in New Guinea*, Various eds.
11. Shirleene Robinson, 'Full of passive resistance? The employment of female State Children in Queensland 1865-1911', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 90, no. 2, p. 175 ff.

12. *Queenslander*, 3 March 1888 .
13. SCD, *Annual Report*, 1911.
14. *ibid*, 1916, p. 12.
15. *ibid*, 1913, p. 19.



**The author and her mother.**

# **Berthe's Story: Tales of a Grandmother**

**Doreen Wendt-Weir**

It was hard on father as well. Mother could not see that. I was only three when the baby Gottholt and my toddler sister Vreni died from diphtheria. It happened so quickly, just a few days. Their hearts gave out, or they couldn't breathe through the thick membrane in their throats. I only know that Mother's heart broke, and she was in pain, physical pain. She had been pregnant, or breastfeeding, or both, for twelve years, ever since she conceived her oldest son Wilhelm, and was now bereft of sucking, with breasts engorged and hard with waiting milk, and getting worse hour by hour.

Mother asked me would I suckle her. She pleaded, and it was hard for her, because she was forced to look at my pockmarked face. I was only six weeks old when I contracted smallpox from my grandmother Karoline who died from the disease that swept Germany in 1875. I must have been strong, because I survived. Even though she had prayed to God to let me live (when Father was praying to the same God to let me die), Mother found my disfigurement very difficult to confront. So I suckled Mother's breasts. I remember the warm, sweet milk in my mouth, and she put her arms around me. Her tears of grief never ceased, and they fell on my face. I wished they would take away the ugly scars, but it was impossible.

Worse was to come. As I was contentedly sucking at the firm, blue-veined breast, my eleven-year-old brother

Wilhelm, apple of Mother's eye, opened the heavy front door of our small shepherd's cottage in Schleswig-Holstein, and came into our living room. As usual, he had been helping Father in the field.

'Mutti,' he said, 'my throat hurts.'

I can still picture Wilhelm in the striped woollen cap that Mother had knitted for him that winter, and can feel even now the stiff horror in her body as Wilhelm said those words. Mother and Father did what they could. Some red flannel wrapped around his neck, a few drops of kerosene on a teaspoonful of sugar, some hot potato soup in front of the blazing hearth, but all to no avail. My parents buried Wilhelm with the two babies, and Mother's gloom descended. She did not speak or smile. No tears even. Nothing. She went about her work, her chores, but remained grim and silent. It was even whispered that Mother might be losing her mind! Months later, Father found her with the lambs, the lambs that Wilhelm had doted on, weeping inconsolably. He knew then that Mother would recover, but he made up his mind to emigrate to Queensland. He had heard about it since the visit of Heussler, the agent. A warm climate, they said. You could grow two crops a year. And the rest of the family might be safe. Besides, there he could worship according to our faith. They told us that. It all took nine years, with Mother resisting the whole time.

I was so happy to go to school when I was eight. Pauline was four years older. Because she had been for some years at school, she was now kept at home to see to the tasks while our parents worked in the field. But she was flighty,

even then. Looking in Mother's looking-glass all the time, turning her head this way and that, tossing her pretty fair curls. I know. I saw her many times as I plaited my straight dark hair. I wanted the glass also, just to see my hair, not my face, but Pauline got her way. She always did. Mother adored her, and forgave her the sloppy household, the hungry little ones.

I had only been at school for three weeks, when Pauline complained she did not like housework, and I was kept at home in her place. I remember my front teeth had fallen out, and I tried to smile as Pauline danced off to school again. I had heard my parents talking. Pauline had prospects, they said, she can make a good marriage. Who will look at Berthe? How I hated my face! I knew I was better at schoolwork than Pauline, better than all of them, but I was 'the ugly duckling', fit only for housework. Father would pat me on the head when he came home and would say, 'You are doing a nice job, little one. Isn't she, Mother?' And Mother would nod. Sometimes his blue eyes were wet as he spoke, and I could feel my own blue eyes, so like his, grow sad. But not for long. I had too much work to do.

When I was eleven, in 1883, the official letter came. We were soon to prepare for departure to our new country. What a hustle and a bustle there was! New suits were made for the boys. My sister and I were given new plaid dresses. Mother looked perhaps a little less grim in her new bonnet. But we must be vaccinated against smallpox. I stood in line with the others who were emigrating, feeling nervous as I waited my turn to have my arm pricked and the cowpox

solution dropped onto it. The old doctor looked up as I approached and pushed me roughly along, telling me I would not be needing any needle pricks. He called me a poor little lady, shaking his head. His expression was the same as the one I had seen on Mother's face so often, and I was reminded of the marks on my face that Mother could not accept. Did they remind her of too much, too much that was painful?

We left Schleswig-Holstein, travelled to the mouth of the Elbe by ship, and across the North Sea to Plymouth where we boarded the Duke of Devonshire. We arrived in Brisbane in 1884. Ours was the first steam ship to travel up the Brisbane River. At least there was some sort of settlement when we arrived. Queen Street was a dirt road, but a busy place. My father was given a grant of ten acres of land, as promised, at Pimpama. But it was so infested with sandflies and mosquitoes, in a tea-tree swamp, that we had to pack up our tents and leave, go back to my uncle's place at Eight Mile Plains. He helped Father find and buy the land at Buccan, near the Village of Logan.

Pauline and I were put to work in my uncle's guesthouse in Albert Street. It was called 'The Bushman's Home'. She was sixteen and pretty and was given a smart black dress with a frilly white apron to wear in the dining room. She had an admirer almost immediately, Karl Eschenhagen, who took her for pleasant walks, around the river and up to Gregory Terrace where he wanted to build a good house. I was told to clean the bedrooms, empty the slops. My uniform was grey so you wouldn't see the dirt, but it was comfortable. I was twelve.

A squatter came to stay, a friend of my uncle. He shouted at me, thought I was deaf because I could not speak much English.

‘Bloody Krauts,’ he said, ‘the place is full of ‘em. What happened to your face?’

I told as best as I could about the small-pox, and he nodded. One evening this squatter was much the worse for strong liquor, had been entertaining country friends, and disgraced himself in the bedroom. He lost control of his bladder, his bowels; vomited everywhere. He asked me to clean it up before my uncle found out. I got the Lysol that they put on the dead rats, and scrubbed every surface in the room, the mattress, pillow, lamp, dresser, the floor. I got rid of the stink. He gave me a five pound note, a princely sum, ten weeks’ wages, for my silence. I hid it from Pauline, who shared the bed with me, and gave the crisp, blue note to Father when my parents visited. Mother thought I must have stolen it. They put it towards the house they were building at Buccan. My uncle helped Father with some money too.

When the house was finished, I was needed on the farm. Father always said I was a good worker. Mother and I would walk beside father as he ploughed. He had a single furrow plough with two broad handles which he guided as it was pulled by the horse. We would toss seed potatoes or corn into the furrow as the earth fell into it. Or we would follow on, hoeing enough earth to cover the seeds well. We sent some of our produce to Brisbane by steamer. There used to be a wharf at Buccan, Reichy’s Wharf, as well as the

one at Logan Village, three miles away. There was a rafting ground on the other side of the river. The timber-getters used to raft their big logs to Pettigrew’s Mill in Brisbane, float them all the way.

The sun made me brown, and the pock-marks faded. I felt as one with the soil that we tilled. I felt strong. Father bought me a Singer sewing machine for my fourteenth birthday. It was gratitude, he said, for the gift of five pounds that was so important to them at the time. I did the mending for Mother. We were doing well, with smoked hams and sides of bacon in the pantry, plenty of milk, eggs and butter, and fodder for the animals. There were orange trees and potatoes. Mother ventured a smile now and then.

The church was our salvation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church at Bethania, which had been built by those Germans who were in 1864 offloaded on the banks of the Logan River by the Black Diamond, as a thunderstorm was looming. The vessel promptly turned around for the voyage back to Moreton Bay in order to catch the tide and avoid damage to the ship. The poor people had only their bed sheets for shelter, slung over bushes, all of their possessions out in the driving rain, and the women and children crying as they were drenched. But they survived and worked hard on their small lots.

Andreas Holzheimer made the bricks for the church in his own kilns, and the men cut the inside timber at Tygum. The beams are all hand-adzed. We lived by our faith. The pastor at Bethania would sometimes ride over, or we would load up the German wagon for special occasions and take all morning

to get to church. There was a tiny pulpit suspended over the altar where the pastor would stand as he preached his gospel of fear to us. I wondered would God save him if the pulpit crashed down, it seemed so fragile and small. He had to bow his head as he entered by the low-slung, high door.

The flood of 1887 almost ruined us. We lost everything, all the bacon and hams, all Mother's keepsakes, her 'Schatzkiste', the keepsakes from the old country. With the floodwaters lapping at the house foundations, we were lucky to escape at night up the hill, past the Reserve, to safe ground. I took my sewing machine. Brother Edward took Father's gun, and lucky he did. When dawn broke, we could see the Smith family lower down the hill, on the roof of their house, wailing, as the floodwaters swept about them. The father had been gassed in the coalmine at Buccan just months before, his wife now heavy with child. Edward fired three shots, which alerted the people at Logan Village. In time, a boat was sent out, which rescued them. They later said all they had to eat while they were on the roof was a pumpkin that floated by. We lived on warm milk straight from the cows' udders.

When the floodwaters had subsided, Father found a saucer, and I found in the mud a cup with 'The Master's Cup' written on it in gold, a wedding present to my parents from the boss in Germany. That's all we ever found, search as we may for 'The Mistress' Cup', but Mother seemed very grateful to me.

'This is your father's,' she said, holding the cup, 'and we are his.' She seemed to look at me differently after the flood, as

if I were somehow comely, no longer repulsive to her.

I could see that it was a world dominated by men. Only men's opinions were asked. And I had such a lot to say, but shut my mouth. Father's friends would visit, and they would sit and discuss the problems of being German in this country, while Mother and I waited on them, gave them mettwurst and schwartzbrot. They took little notice of me, save to look sometimes at my pitted face. I could tell what they were thinking as their gaze lingered. They felt sorry for me. If they had known what was in my mind, they would have only felt anger. I wanted to shout at them, 'What about me? I am all that you complain of, and more! I am a woman, who has no say, will not be listened to. Can I not have ambition? As well, I am ugly, marked for life!'

When I had worked in my uncle's guesthouse, cleaning the bedrooms where I would not be seen, the squatters would come in with their grand ways, their big talk, so high and mighty. It was women who did the work, waited on them, polished their boots, washed and ironed their clothes. It wasn't just the work, it was the attitude. They were better than we were, so they thought. Even my own beloved father and my brothers put themselves above all women. Perhaps the fact that I was scarred and felt low about myself gave me time, in my secluded mind-world, to think about the position of women. I knew that Mother and I were just as smart as the men in our family. They were not unkind to us and our place was recognised. But it was lower than a man's. Mother was in charge of the house, but she deferred to father. He

owned the farm. Any money was banked in his name. Mother owned nothing. That's how it was. No woman was allowed to vote. Not even the Governor's wife.

We heard about some city women who were objecting to their unsung plight, but it was all a long way from Logan Village. We were told about those women who went to gaol for demanding equality with men. They went on hunger strikes, so the newspapers said, and were force-fed. It reminded me of the geese that we fattened for Christmas in the Old Country. A good centrepiece for the table, plumped up for the kill. Mother would make me push the mash down the goose's neck with my finger, ram it down its throat, until I had filled its craw. Until it was quite fed up. Those poor women! I suppose they were drawing attention to their cause, but it seemed to me a strange way to do it. We were always so grateful for any food that was placed in front of us.

Another German family, the Wendts, lived on the other side of the Logan River, at Logan Reserve. They came out twenty years before we did. The flood of '87 brought us closer together. The father rowed over to see how we had fared. Over the years, one of them would sometimes bring some pumpkins, or we would take some oranges over to them. They were good people, very devout. One of the sons, Hermann, a fine, strapping fellow, used to watch me sew on my machine. His mother sewed everything by hand. We talked, and became good friends. We laughed and joked together. I gave as good as I got. I knew as much as he did about farming. Sometimes I thought I knew more, but I did not say so. I did not give

my face a thought, or the plain clothes I wore. Or my plain hairstyle, pulled back into a bun.

When I first started blushing at Hermann's words, I realised he meant more than friendship to me. Father noticed it, and I heard him and Mother talking.

'Do you think Hermann is keen on Berthe, the way he comes over so often?' asked Father.

'A handsome fellow like him! Why should he look at Berthe, with all those marks still?'

'You never know...I don't want to see her hurt,' Father replied.

How I wished I had a pretty face, and time to put my hair in rags as Pauline did; a new blouse perhaps. They asked me if I would like to help Pauline in Brisbane, help her with the children, just for a while. I knew they needed me on the farm, but I said I would like to go. The next time Hermann rowed over, I was gone. Father said he didn't stay long, just found out where I was.

There we were one evening, the three children and I, in the garden at Pauline and Karl's comfortable home high on Gregory terrace, when this fellow rode up on his horse. It was Hermann! Come to see me! Pauline made him welcome. Every three weeks, he would take half of Saturday to ride into Brisbane, stay for two nights, then after leaving very early, get home in time for the milking on Monday. When I was twenty-two, he asked Father's permission to marry me. Just fancy! The one they thought would never be looked at, would never have

much of a chance, was going to marry Hermann Wendt! My intended groom said he was not much interested in city girls, just liked me the way I was, and I was not to change!

Hermann said we would marry in one year's time. He needed to save some money. But as the weeks went by, he grew restless, as I knew men could.

'I can't stand it,' he would say, 'you must marry me now. I cannot wait.' At our wedding in the little church at Bethania, I was surprised when his father got up to sign the register for my new husband.

'What is this?' I demanded. 'Why do you not sign for yourself?'

'Because I am not yet of age,' he replied shamefully. 'I am only twenty. I thought if I told you, you would not marry me.' I was quite bewildered that a man with such an adequate moustache with good, waxed handlebars, could be so young.

Hermann was a lusty man. I know the Bible tells us to submit to our husbands. And I have always been a good and willing wife. But I did not submit. I said, 'Come to me, darling!' and there is a difference. To submit means I am lesser, that I have a master. To join with my husband in marital love makes me equal, and that's what I am. I try to obey the word of God, to agree with what the Bible tells me, that the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. That is how I have been brought up. But there are two areas in which I keep my own opinion. I don't submit if I can help it; and I do like a little bit of ham now and then.

You know the Good Book tells us not to eat the flesh of the swine. I don't think it does me any harm and I am sure God forgives me.

I have always thought that country-women are more independent than a lot of those in the city. After all, I contributed to the household, worked alongside my husband. From the start, I skinned the calves that we would eat, cobbled the corn and husked the imphi. Hermann was too busy with the ploughing, the reaping, the clearing, the ring-barking. We all helped with the milking. When it was too dark in the evening to work anymore outside, my husband would churn the cream to butter for me as we chatted in the kitchen, as I worked. It was his relaxation, just sitting and turning the handle.

Once, after giving birth during the night, I got up and skinned a calf the next morning. Hermann killed and butchered it for me. I could not kill a young animal while my own baby cried for my attention. The midwife would advise me to stay in bed for two weeks after delivery, with one extra day for each preceding child, but that was impossible. All right for city women or maybe the English gentry, but not for us German farmers, not for me. There was too much work to be done.

Work in the fields began early and ended late. We sold our produce in Brisbane, and what money we made was quickly changed for groceries, drapery and other necessary wants. To visit Brisbane meant a trip of twenty-seven miles over the roughest of tracks. When we were first married, we often walked, we had no dray. We would stay overnight with my cousins at Eight

Mile Plains. Because I did not ride, we would carry our produce in and our purchases out. When times got better, our means of journeying was by German wagon, a vehicle that shook every bone in our bodies. And the trip took six hours. But with all the hardships, those years were happy times.

I had six children in six years. The last one, my son Harry, was a difficult birth. I was in labour all night, screaming with pain. I was told his face came first, not the nape of his neck as was normal. And he weighed ten pounds! The neighbour's wife helped me to deliver. My husband had gone to get her from the other side of the river, walked to her home and rowed her back in the boat; then they rode the two horses he had ready. After it was all over, Hermann came into the bedroom to see me and our new son.

'I don't know about you, Berthe,' he said sadly, 'but I cannot go through that again. From now on, I am going to turn my face to the wall.' I knew that would be impossible, but I didn't say so. I just nodded, I was so tired. Poor Hermann!

A travelling salesman used to call on us once a year. He had samples of dress material, catalogues on household items, flannel shirts and dungarees, kerosene lamps and the like. He used to arrive at our place early, and I would give him breakfast. He treated us well. Once, he had just enjoyed the scrambled eggs I had cooked for him and asked, as he always did, if I had any more children. There was another of course, and he asked how old he was. When I replied that my son was just a few hours old, he went outside and was sick! Wasted the eggs that I could ill

afford to give him!

The same fellow, Buddy Bishop, called some time after Harry's birth. The commercial traveller was a cheery fellow, good to talk to. Hermann said he had the gift of the gab.

'Any more children?' Buddy asked. When I told him I now had one more than I did last year, he was appalled.

'Good God, woman,' he said, 'you can't go on like this!' And he gave me a 'wrinkle', told us what to do. You couldn't be lazy, couldn't just lie there afterwards. Hermann could, but I had to get up, do it right there and then. A solution of weak Condry's Crystals. We had no more children, just the four who survived.

I told my young sister, Hedwig, about the 'wrinkle'. She was the great lady, married to a squatter, and had already given birth seven times. Her husband was demanding, he was a station owner no less, who thought women were there for one thing. But it was of no use. She didn't like getting up straight away, and waited until morning. They went on to have thirteen children, and nine survived.

At least my husband considered me. Not like another German woman, who was hoeing in the seed potatoes alongside her husband when her waters broke with her third child, and she felt the onset of labour. She told her husband she must leave her work to deliver the baby.

'I've got to go to the house!' she cried, 'the baby's coming!'



‘Well, don’t be long,’ he replied, hardly looking up from his toil, ‘the potatoes have to be hoed!’

Life was not easy for a farmer’s wife. We worked in the fields and we still had our household chores. Then there was the childbearing and all the problems that go with it. We risked our lives by getting married. All the bladder infections that go with marital love; the kidney diseases that follow in pregnancy; the miscarriages. The graveyards hold many a young mother who died in childbirth or as a result of it. The men needed us to satisfy their need. My husband had not many pleasures in life, except, as he used to say, that and his nice hot cup of tea. But we all wanted marriage. What sort of life was it as a single woman, an Old Maid? Just drudgery, no status at all. Nobody.

Because I had attended school for only three weeks, I could not read or write. This was a great sadness for me. When my eldest child first went to school, I asked her on her return home to show me what she had done at school. Her slate was full of pothooks this way and that, but I was impatient to write! Each evening, I asked her to teach me what she had learned that day. With time, I managed to form letters, then words, and when my youngest, Harry, left school on his fourteenth birthday, I could read the Bible, and could write a simple letter. We had the Courier Mail delivered twice weekly to the railway station, and sometimes I could not wait for Hermann to saddle up the horse. I would walk down the rough track in my long dress, down the long hill, I was so eager to read the paper. My husband relied on me for the news, even though he had been to school and could read

and write. He had too much work to do and was not a good scholar. He left that sort of thing to the women.

We could not just run to the doctor when we were unwell. It took hours to go to Brisbane in the buggy, and it cost money we did not have. We just suffered in silence most of the time, and hoped we would get better. When I was in my forties, my womb started to swell. I thought I was having another baby! There was no movement, however, and no baby arrived. My abdomen just got bigger and I finally went to the doctor who said I had a tumour. I was put in Toxteth Hospital in Brisbane where Doctor Hirschfield operated on me. The growth was as big as a cat! But I lost so much blood, and was so near death, that they got me out of the operating theatre as quickly as possible. To die in there meant an enquiry. So I was never stitched up, no time for that. A big, tight binder held the sides of the wound together.

I was wheeled hurriedly to my room. On my deathbed, I wanted Hermann to promise me he would not re-marry. I wanted him to myself in Heaven. He listened as I struggled to speak.

‘I can’t promise you that, Berthe,’ he replied, as his tears fell on my face, ‘I’m a man...’ I pleaded in my weakened voice, as he patted my hand, but he was steadfast, even though I was dying. So, according to the nurses, I got better to spite him!

\* \* \* \*

Living until she was ninety-seven, Berthe died in 1969, having outlived her husband by 25 years.

Pauline was widowed when her husband blew his brains out on the Indooroopilly Bridge (from the effects of debt from too much wine and women), leaving her with three teenaged children, debts and a run-down restaurant in Queen Street. She went on to become

very successful and purchased another house on Gregory Terrace, which remains as Cliveden Mansions today, where the family lived for some time.

\* \* \* \*



**Berthe, in her 90s, with great-grandchildren.**



**Kate Lovegrove (nee Parkinson) on the right, with her sister (and tennis partner) Charlotte Easter Parkinson.**

# **Kate Lovegrove (nee Parkinson): Her Story**

**Connie Healy**

Kate Lovegrove (nee Parkinson), my mother, came from a Queensland pioneering family. Her mother, Charlotte, was born at Coomera on 1 August 1853, the daughter of William and Mary Binstead. The Binstead and Donald families are recorded as the first settlers in the Upper Coomera District. Arthur Binstead, grandfather to Charlotte Binstead and one of his sons, George Binstead, who came from Bosham in West Sussex, England, were convicted for machine breaking (a political crime) and transported to Australia in November 1830 for 14 years for their participation in the Swing Riots. The Binsteads were sawyers who lived in the town yet lent support to the struggles of the agricultural labourers and this largely accounted for the severity of their sentences. Both were granted free pardons in 1837 but conditions attached to the pardons did not provide for free passage back to England. Money was collected in England and Arthur's wife Maria and her three youngest children joined them in Australia. One of the three children was my great grandfather William Alfred Binstead who later lived in the Coomera. Despite the pardon, the Binstead family never revealed their secret shame of a convict background, now fully revealed.

Kate Parkinson was born on 30 May 1883 at Coomera, Queensland, third

eldest of the five children (four girls and one boy) of Charlotte and Frederick Philip Parkinson. Kate's father Frederick migrated from Preston, Lancashire arriving in Brisbane on 28 June 1871<sup>1</sup> aged 19 years. Kate married Eric Orde Lovegrove, born at Crookwell, New South Wales in 1889 in Maryborough Queensland in 1916 prior to his enlistment to fight overseas in World War One. He never recovered psychologically from the effects of the terrible years in the trenches in France. He died in Sydney on 27 April 1951 aged 62 years. He had aged prematurely having suffered from a heart condition for his last ten years. My mother and father had been separated for about 10 years before his death. Kate died in Brisbane on 13 September 1962 aged 79 years.

Kate's father Frederick worked in the Education Department as a teacher, but later transferred to the Justice Department and was appointed a Mining Warden and Police Magistrate, working in this capacity for over 30 years in the principal gold and mineral fields of Queensland. He wrote *The Queensland Miners Guide*,<sup>2</sup> a text that was intended as information to simplify the Miners' Act for working miners.

With her family, my mother lived at one time at all the mining towns in North Queensland, including Maytown (1885-87) (my grandmother is said to have been the first white woman to ever live there), Charters Towers (1889-92, 1902-5), Croydon (1894-7), George-town (Etheridge) (1898-1900), Gympie (1900-01), Herberton (1906-09) and Townsville (1909-1912). The family lived at Maryborough (1913-21), but my mother left home about this time. Her father finally retired in Marybor-

ough and came to live in Brisbane in 1922.

My mother told us a little about her life in these frontier towns. As a middle class family they were in a privileged position. To help with the household chores – washing, cleaning, sewing and child minding in which all the girls participated as they grew older – they had a number of domestic servants. There was of course a yardman, an Aborigine, and a maid whom my mother said was named ‘Topsy’ because of her curly hair (she was probably of South Sea Island origin) and I recall that she spoke of a Chinese servant. As the girls grew older my mother said they had a wonderful time as they enjoyed balls and dances, afternoon tea parties, church bazaars and such-like. Charters Towers, she said, was known as ‘The World’ and every Saturday night the whole town would dress in their very best clothes and parade down the main street exchanging greetings with their friends.

Kate (also known as Kitty) and her three sisters were keen tennis players and they all won the singles and doubles championships of the North Queensland Tennis Association at different times. At age 15, Kate won her first championship in Charters Towers. This was in 1898, the year that her father despatched the last gold escort from Georgetown. She was twice successful in winning the singles championship of North Queensland in Townsville. With her sister Easter Parkinson, she took part in an interstate tournament for the first time in 1913. They were successful in winning the doubles championship. Kate also defeated Miss Dight, one of the strongest of the New South Wales players, to win the ladies singles handicap at Auchenflower, Bris-

bane.<sup>3</sup> In 1915 she and Easter won the Queensland Open Grass Court Championships.<sup>4</sup> Kate also won the Australian Tennis Championships (doubles) with Mrs Forde at this time.<sup>5</sup> Photos taken at the time show them dressed in white neck to ankle dresses, stockings, white shoes and hats with veils tied under the chin to protect their complexions!



### **Kate in Action Playing Tennis in North Queensland**

My mother never went to school but was educated at home by her Aunt Emily, a fact that she regretted all her life. Denied an education at school by her well-educated father (the only son Virgil was sent away to Armidale for his schooling) she was determined that her three girls should receive the education that she had never gained. Despite economic hardship, we were all sent to

high school – the Brisbane Girls Grammar School.

Kate was a bit of a rebel, apparently, and sought some measure of independence. She broke off an engagement to a young man and later left home about 1913 when in her late twenties to train as a typist. She then worked in an office. She was following the trend of a small number of middle-class women who began to enter white-collar and professional occupations from the middle of the nineteenth century. An elder sister Florence was registered as a nurse on 18 April 1917, and later became a sugar chemist; she was, I believe, the first woman in Queensland to work in a sugar mill. For most of the nineteenth century middle-class women, unless in straightened circumstances, worked at home.<sup>6</sup>

Despite her diminutive size (barely five foot tall) my mother was a woman of great strength and determination. During the Depression years in the 1930s when my father was unemployed, along with one-third of the Australian workforce, they organised a flower-selling business catering for the main hotels and restaurants in Brisbane. My father hand-ploughed our household land as well as an allotment leased from the local doctor (Dr Chauncey) on which he grew flowers and vegetables. As children we picked the flowers and vegetables and sometimes sold them to neighbouring residents. We often took a trip to Darra in a truck with a friend of my father. There we picked ‘gum tips’ from the surrounding bushland. In those days there were few houses in Darra. Before school we helped our mother carry the flowers to the railway station and into town. Later when the

demand for flowers was greater as the business grew, my father and mother negotiated with a family in Sunnybank to purchase large quantities of Iceland poppies that were grown there. These were added to our own flowers such as Shasta daisies, coreopsis and gerberas. My mother sorted the flowers and took them to the various clients. The vestibules of the Wintergarden and Regent theatres were beautified by the huge bowls of flowers which graced the entrance and the stone steps which led to the second level – all supplied by our hard-working mother and family.

Even in old age, my mother was cheerful, bright and full of the joy of living and eager to help others. She recognized the evil of war but understood the need to defeat Fascism. She enrolled every household in the Bowen Hills streets where we lived in the War Bonds Scheme. During these years she became known and loved by many Australian servicemen (and others from overseas as well) as she welcomed them to our home with a good meal and some cheery advice.

Having endured hardship and struggle in her own life, she was anxious to help create the conditions for a better life for all and was foremost in the founding of the Queensland Housewives’ League. This was the forerunner of the Union of Australian Women whose activity for equal rights and equal status for women, for peace and a better life represented her outlook on life. A photograph (over the page) reflecting her warm and caring nature appeared in one issue of their journal *Our Women*.

\* \* \* \*

## Endnotes

1. Frederick P. Parkinson arrived in Australia on the ship Ramsay (short ship): Master E. Hunt. It departed London on 13 March 1871 and arrived in Brisbane on 28 June 1871. He was aged 19 years (Landing Order 413, Single Male. Registered No. 1, page 14, vol. 2 [IMM-114]). He is shown on the electoral roll of 1874 as being a resident in Coomera. Prior to this date there is no record of him being at Coomera.
2. Held at the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. Published in 1911.
3. *The Sydney Mail*, p. 13 (cutting, date unknown).
4. Queensland Lawn Tennis Association, *A Century of Queensland Tennis*, QLTA Cen-

tenary 1888-1988, Sunshine Publications, Brisbane, 1988, p. 88.

5. Information supplied by Kate during her lifetime to Mrs. F. Buckley, my sister. Neither the Queensland Lawn Tennis Association nor Tennis Australia can confirm this, as their records of Australian Women's Championships only commence in 1922. But Tennis Australia advises that Australian Championships were held in Brisbane in 1911 and 1915, Perth 1913, Melbourne 1914 and Sydney 1922.

6. Margaret Anderson, 'Good Strong Girls Colonial Women and Work', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992, p. 421

\* \* \* \*

**MRS. KATE LOVEGROVE**, who celebrated her 70th birthday in May, is a foundation member of the Queensland Housewives' League, established in 1947 and now incorporated in the U.A.W.

Mrs. Lovegrove was active in the small group of women responsible for the formation of the first Branch, Fortitude Valley.

Since then the U.A.W. has grown considerably, as the pictorial page, "What the U.A.W. Means to Me" (page 11) demonstrates.



# The Women's Movement of the 1960s: A Photo Essay

Grahame Garner

Compiled by Ted Riethmuller

Grahame Garner was a fitter and turner by trade. During the 1940s and 50s he went to sea as a ship's engineer. Back on shore he worked in various metal shops including the tramways workshops and the shipyards. Militant unionism was in his blood and this led him to become a formidable rank and file activist.

Grahame's interests were wide and fortunately for labour history he was a fine self-taught photographer who used his skills to document May Day marches, peace marches and anti-war protests between 1963 and 1971. Due to illness and the loss of his cameras and photographic equipment when his house was burnt down, his photography came to an end.



**Women marching during a demonstration for peace, 1964.**





**Peace March 1963. Union of Australian Women (UAW) marchers with their placards. The UAW was active in most progressive movements of the period.**



**Peace March, Sunday afternoon, 5 April 1964.**



**Peace March, 5 April 1964. UAW members at Highgate Hill.**

**Peace March, 5 April 1964.**





**Hiroshima Day 1964. Women were often members of both the UAW and the Queensland Peace Committee and their children marched with their parents or in groups organised by their parents.**



**Hiroshima Day 1964. The UAW banner.**



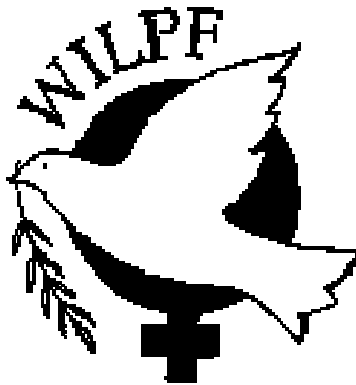
**Aldermaston Peace March, Easter 1965, from Ipswich to Brisbane. A CND organisation was created in Brisbane, inspired by the British CND. Women's Committees, attached to militant unions, were active in Peace as well as industrial issues.**



**Aldermaston Peace March, Easter 1965. Two UAW members carry small banners. Large ones were banned.**



**Aldermaston Peace March, Easter 1965. Marchers are near the Ipswich Amateur Turf Club.**





**No War Toys Campaign, 1960s. The UAW and WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) conducted campaigns against war toys.**



**May Day 1967. Women's groups such as the UAW and the women's committees of militant trade unions were able to appeal for support from trade unions for such issues as equal pay.**

# Researching Labour History: Fryer Library and its Collections

**Jeff Rickertt**

The Fryer Library at The University of Queensland continues to build on its reputation as a centre for labour history research. In 2006 hundreds of Fryer items found their way into the Museum of Brisbane's *Taking to the Streets* exhibition, while this year the library's collections gave up many of the facts featured in *Red Cap*, La Boite Theatre Company's dramatisation of the Mt Isa Mines lockout of 1964-65.

Fryer has much to offer historians of radical and working class Queensland. They can, for instance, delve into the records of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU), one of the State's oldest and most significant industrial unions. Comprising some 100 boxes of minutes, reports, Arbitration and Court transcripts and award determinations, this collection traverses the history of the union's Queensland branch from 1907 to 1997. It is one of several union collections available.

Alternatively, they can scour the TLC collection (which alone runs to 606 boxes), or the records of the Queensland branch of the Communist Party or the various other Left political formations represented. Or they can fossick through any number of personal

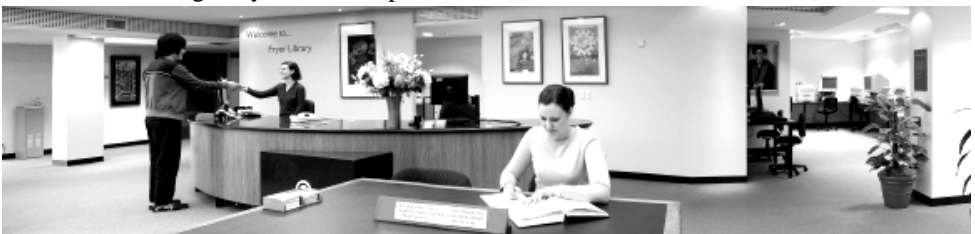
collections accumulated by individual reformers, rebels and revolutionaries.

Fryer's smorgasbord of labour movement and radical holdings includes the items listed on the following page. Access to this material is not restricted to university staff and students. All researchers are welcome to visit and view what's on offer.

Prospective collection donors are welcome too, and, if visiting in person, will quickly be shown to a comfortable chair. Any items or collections with ongoing historical and research value in the field of Queensland history are of interest, including personal papers, diaries, records of non-government organisations, political ephemera, photographs and oral history recordings. Fryer also accepts books, especially if they are rare or carry the author's signature or some other significant annotation. Copies of your own arrest warrants, bail conditions and records of interview will generally be accepted as well, providing the matters are not still outstanding.

For more information about Fryer Library, its collections and its collecting habits, visit the library's website at [www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/](http://www.library.uq.edu.au/fryer/) or contact the Manager, Mark Cryle, at [m.cryle@library.uq.edu.au](mailto:m.cryle@library.uq.edu.au) or on 3365 6205. The library is on level 4, Duhig Building, St Lucia campus.

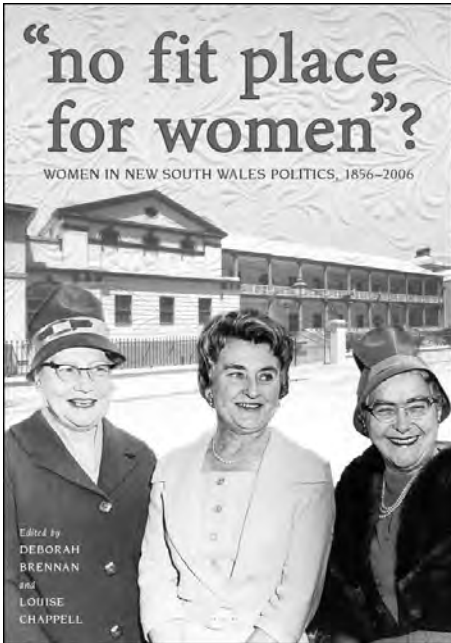
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## Fryer Library: A Sample of Its Labour History Collections

<i>Collection Name</i>	<i>Collection Number</i>
<b>Australasian Meat Industry Employees 'Union</b>	UQFL427
<b>Australian Building Construction Employees ' and Builders 'Labourers 'Federation</b>	UQFL166
<b>Bacon, Eva</b>	UQFL241
<b>Bowden, Warren U</b>	QFL290
<b>Building Workers 'Industrial Union of Australia</b>	UQFL199
<b>Campbell, Judith</b>	F3338
<b>Cane Toad Times</b>	UQFL403
<b>Communist Party of Australia</b>	UQFL234
<b>Crawford, Jim</b>	UQFL301
<b>Dalton-Morgan, Geoffrey</b>	F3235
<b>Dickson, Bruce</b>	UQFL395
<b>D Urso, S. (Salvatore)</b>	UQFL72
<b>Fabian Society</b>	UQFL170
<b>Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association of A'asia</b>	UQFL159
<b>Garner, Grahame</b>	F3400
<b>Grey, Peter</b>	F1124
<b>Harris, W. J. H.</b>	UQFL106
<b>Healy, Constance</b>	UQFL191
<b>Henderson, Jim</b>	UQFL267
<b>Laver, Brian</b>	F3149
<b>Leeks, Ron</b>	UQFL399
<b>Marchisotti, Daisy</b>	UQFL156
<b>McFarlane, Marie</b>	UQFL281
<b>McMurchy, Megan</b>	F846
<b>Morrow, Bill</b>	UQFL30
<b>Murphy, D.J. (Denis Joseph)</b>	UQFL129
<b>Noonuccal, Oodgeroo</b>	UQFL84
<b>O Neill, Dan</b>	UQFL132
<b>People's Book Shop (Brisbane, Qld.)</b>	F2242
<b>Plunkett, Mark</b>	UQFL338
<b>Queensland Council for Civil Liberties</b>	UQFL240
<b>Schlick, Werner</b>	UQFL347
<b>Self-Management Group</b>	F2460
<b>Stewart, Jenny</b>	UQFL408
<b>Thomas, Kath</b>	UQFL175
<b>Thompson, Mitch</b>	UQFL186
<b>Trades and Labor Council of Queensland</b>	UQFL118
<b>Union of Australian Women</b>	UQFL193
<b>University of Queensland Union</b>	UQFL194
<b>Weir, Greg</b>	UQFL249
<b>Williams, Heather</b>	UQFL413
<b>Wills, Nancy</b>	UQFL304
<b>Women's International League for Peace and Freedom</b>	UQFL251



Review of

**‘No Fit Place for Women’?  
Women in New South Wales  
Politics, 1856-2006**

**By Deborah Brennan and  
Louise Chappell (eds)**

University of NSW Press,  
Sydney, 2006

\$49.95, hardback, 320 pp.

With an excellent history on the role of *Queensland* women in politics already published (John McCulloch’s 2005 *The Suffragists and the Legislators*), this is the second of what may hopefully be a string of such books giving tribute to the role of women in all states and terri-

tories. Jointly edited by Deborah Brennan and Louise Chappell, the book contains ten chapters from 16 authors, covering a diverse range of topics that explore the involvement of women in New South Wales politics.

As the book’s introductory chapter points out, more than a quarter of the Emma Labor Government’s members are women, with five of 21 Ministers being women. The first woman – Millicent Preston-Stanley – took her seat in 1925, in the Legislative Assembly, although the Parliament’s history dated back to 1856 and women won the vote in 1902. While the current figures are promising, only 83 of 2000 NSW MPs – from 1925 to 2005 – have been women.

Some of the contributions focus on women’s engagement with the major political institutions: Parliament, the bureaucracy and political parties. Each of the major political parties is covered: the Coalition parties (Don Harwin and Jenny Gardiner), the ALP (Rebecca Huntley and Janet Ramsay), and women in independent and minor parties (Ariadne Vromen, Anika Gauja and Rodney Smith). Deborah Brennan’s chapter gives useful broad statistics, and looks at the inaugural speeches of women parliamentarians. Louise Chappell looks at women’s role within the bureaucracy. Other chapters examine women’s engagement at more grassroots levels: government advisory committees (Sue Goodwin) and the women’s movement (Marian Sawyer with Jasmina Brankovich and Gail Radford), for instance. Jenny Donovan’s contribution gives an overview of the struggle for women’s suffrage, paying due recognition to the contests between women’s groups along the way, as well as to the persistence of those who fought for over 50 years to achieve suffrage.

A particularly lively chapter is Janet Ramsey's analysis of contests over representations of women in NSW politics, using domestic violence politics and policy as the context in which to explore such representations. This exploration is contextualised within the generally late 'discovery' of domestic violence by Western feminists. While the NSW women's movement did not identify this as an issue until a 1973 meeting organised by WEL and Sydney Women's Liberation groups, the first Australian women's shelter, Elsie, opened in Glebe the following year, and by 1982 amendments to the Crimes Act to take into account domestic violence were supported by what Ramsay describes as 'rare unanimity across party lines'.

Non-party women's organisations receive particular attention in Marian Sawyer's chapter, 'Generations of Advocacy'. She uses the case studies of the Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV) and the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL). The former, founded in 1921, 'handed over the torch' to WEL in 1982 (WEL had been founded 10 years previously). Non-party organisations are also covered by Sarah Maddison's valuable chapter on young feminists, which is a useful incursion into the domain of identity politics and the 'generation wars'.

Three underpinning themes guide analysis: the gendered nature of political institutions, and feminists' challenges to unequal political power relations; the notion of political 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (the former norm-breaking rather than rule-breaking); and the notion of an 'activist continuum' between insiders and outsiders, with the two arenas facilitating each other, rather than being

viewed as dichotomous.

The success of women in NSW politics—as elsewhere—has been not merely to infiltrate political institutions and take an active part, but also to 'extend the boundaries of what has been considered "political" in the discipline of political science' (citing Karen Beckwith, on p.11). Politically active feminists have placed on the public agenda many issues previously dubbed 'private', such as domestic violence, reproductive rights and workplace rights. We now take it for granted that these issues are legitimate political matters, but it was not always so.

The book is well indexed and well footnoted, and has some lively visual material. It is modestly priced for a beautifully produced hardback.

Alas, no book of this kind can be completely comprehensive: the role of trade union women is recognised in the chapter on ALP women, naturally, and receives a brief mention in another chapter, but apart from this the role of union women in political life is not mentioned.

In all, the book makes a highly readable contribution to our knowledge of women in Australian politics.

**Janis Bailey**

\* \* \* \*

Review of

**A Fantastic Dad and his  
Romantic Daughter**

**By Mairi McKenzie**

Orders to the author on  
(08) 9371 8521

\$30, hardback, 378 pp.

Mairi Mackenzie has led a long life full of personal triumph. This engaging book covers many aspects of working class life in Western Australia in the pre and post war years and like the best of such writings is an amalgam of family, social and labour history.

It is also a personal memoir and this is what adds depth and richness to her story, but it is the wonderful description of family life and her affectionate homage to her father that readers will remember most vividly. Although the worldly accomplishments of Mairi's father brought him no fame beyond his circle of friends, comrades and family, the affection and loyalty of the author, the eldest of his eight children, would have been a crowning glory of a long and productive life that men achieving more conventional success and material goods should envy.

Her father, Thomas Wignal, a carpenter by trade, was an active trade unionist and a communist. He immigrated to Australia in 1912 and was followed by his wife-to-be some time after. Times were hard and he worked where he could in the

back blocks. By the time the family came to Perth in 1924 they had six children. Two more followed and although Tom was working in his trade, with eight children it was still a struggle. Mairi's mother was sickly but brave and cheerful. Then tragedy struck. Her mother died. The eldest of the children, the twins, were ten years old and the youngest was 15 months. The family managed with the help of family, friends and neighbours, to stick together even though some of the children were cared for by others. Readers became aware that a sense of neighbourly responsibility and solidarity from their extended family allowed them to remain intact as a family.

When Mairi was 13, she was obliged to leave school and become the housemother. She liked and was good at school but leaving meant that the family could all be together again. No doubt the experience and skills she attained in her new role served her better than mere book learning. The description of the noisy chaos and anarchic family life dominated by children is full of charm and the example of the father being obliged to buy enamel plates because of the breakages during washing up says a lot. Tom Wignal survived it by patience and philosophy, only occasionally needing respite. After all, he had his job and political work to escape. Mairi's descriptions of domestic matters are full of important detail and social historians, irrespective of whether they share the political interests of the author, will find a goldmine of information in the book.

When she grew older she herself joined in political activity (Katharine Susannah Pritchard was an older comrade) and her book has much of interest to labour historians. History from the memory of those who made it, including from the rank and file, offers insights not accessible through

the diligent perusal of old documents alone.

Apart from the importance of the book as history, Mairi's personal accounts of defining stages in her life are written with great insight and literary skill. She movingly describes how she and her siblings hid in a shed when the father failed to return after going to visit their mother in hospital the previous night, and then their reaction to a neighbour's news that their mother had died. Less fraught are her descriptions of falling in love and then the disappointment of not experiencing marital bliss on the first night of the honeymoon. This disappointment was totally forgotten when her hopes and expectations were joyfully achieved the next day and her optimistic approach to life was vindicated.

Of its kind, this is a very good book. Read it for the history and read it for the pleasure of listening to a story of a life well lived.

**Ted Riethmuller**

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Janis Bailey** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Industrial Relations at Griffith University. Her research interests include union strategy and culture. Before moving to Queensland in 2002, she taught at the University of WA and Edith Cowan University in Perth, and on the committee of the Perth Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. She worked as a union industrial officer in the 1980s and 90s for various blue- and white-collar unions in Perth.

**Helen Ester** is currently a sessional lecturer in politics and is completing a PhD on contemporary political journalism with the Centre for Governance and Public Policy at Griffith University.

**Connie Healy** worked in trade union offices and at the University of Queensland. She is twice married: her first husband, an air force navigator, was killed in World War Two; her second was Queensland Trades and Labour Council Secretary 1943-52. Her book *Defiance: Political Theatre in Brisbane 1930-1962* was published in 2000, and she contributed five articles to *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History* (2004). Awards include the 1992 Denis J. Murphy Memorial Scholarship, University of Queensland and in 2001 the Centenary Medal 'For distinguished service to industrial relations'.

**Greg Mallory** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Industrial Relations at Griffith University. His book, *Uncharted Waters: Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*, was published in 2005. He has co-authored *The Coalminers of Queensland, Vol 2: The Pete Thomas Essays* with Pete Thomas,

shortly to be published. Greg is writing a brief history of the Brisbane Rugby League competition, to be launched in 2009.

**Jeff Rickertt** is a librarian with Fryer Library at the University of Queensland.

**Lucy Taksa** is Associate Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at the University of New South Wales, and before that was Head of the School of Organisation and Management. She is Director of the UNSW Industrial Relations Research Centre and was appointed Chair of the State Records NSW Board on February 2007. Her current work focuses on labour and industrial heritage and the history of Sydney's Eveleigh railway workshops. She was Associate Editor of *Labour History* for ten years, until 2004.

**Claire Wagner** is a writer and editor. As a journalist in Sydney she specialised in environmental matters and wrote for *Nation* and *Australian Financial Review*. At Sydney University she took Arts and Town Planning and on retiring to Brisbane took a Classics degree at the University of Queensland.

**Doreen Wendt-Weir** is a trained nurse and artist with a BA (Hons) in Creative Writing from Griffith University. Her books *Life on the Logan* and *Barefoot in Logan Village* were published in 1988 and 2003 respectively, and *Sex in Your Seventies* in 2006. Her family has farmed for four generations in the Logan area. Doreen has four children, and lives on Tamborine Mountain in a house named 'Birkenfelde', after her grandparents' house.

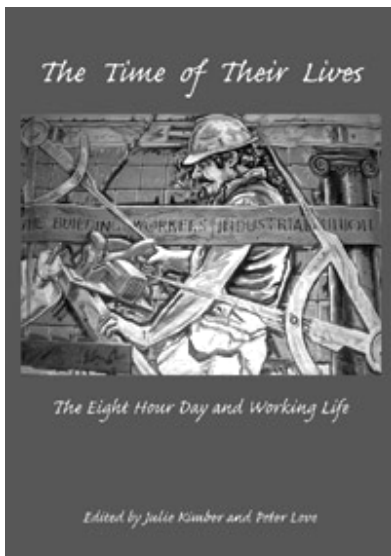
# Noticeboard

## NEW BOOK FROM MELBOURNE LABOUR HISTORY BRANCH

### **The Time of Their Lives: The Eight Hour Day and Working Life**

Edited by Julie Kimber and Peter Love

On 21 April 1856 Melbourne building workers won an industry-wide agreement to establish the Eight Hour Day. In the 150 years since then the slogan 'Eight Hours Labour, Eight Hours Recreation, Eight Hours Rest' has symbolised workers' efforts to take control over the time of their lives and, in doing so, strike an equitable balance between work, rest and play. This book offers historical perspectives on that continuing campaign, to give readers a long-term context for our current debates over the work/life balance and power in the workplace.



Contributors: Margo Beasley, Lyn Beaton, Drew Cottle, Angela Keys and Helen Masterman-Smith, Charles Fahey and John Lack, Patricia Grimshaw, Nell Musgrove and Shurlee Swain, Claire Higgins, Rob Hitchcock, Julie Kimber and Peter Love, Ben Maddison, Val Noone, Bobbie Oliver, Mikael Ottosson and Calle Rosengren, Jeff Rich, Kerry Taylor, and Barbara Webster.

Published in 2007 by the Melbourne Branch,  
Australian Society for the Study of Labour  
History. Cost: \$24;  
jkimber@swin.edu.au or plove@swin.edu.au.

## REMEMBERING ERIC FRY AND BOB GOLLAN

Two founders of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History—Eric Fry and Bob (Robin) Gollan—passed away in October 2007. They encouraged the interest of many people in labour history, involvement in the ASSLH, and the formation and development of the ASSLH's national journal, *Labour History*. The May 2008 issue of *Labour History* will be dedicated to Eric and Bob and will contain reminiscences of their personal qualities and their many achievements.

## 90th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WARWICK EGG INCIDENT

In late November, 1917, Prime Minister Billy Hughes embarked on a tour of Queensland to promote the cause of conscription. Hughes had moved from opposition to conscription, to wholehearted endorsement. As he began his tour, he was greeted by a rowdy crowd at Warwick. 'An egg thrown from the crowd missed him and broke upon the platform rails. The odour it gave off quickly cleared a space about it. A second one, better aimed, broke upon the Prime Minister's hat and knocked it off ....' (*The Argus*, 30 November 1917). Different accounts reported that 'The Prime Minister ... set out on a tirade of abuse' and that 'the Prime Minister .... was hustled and jostled by men twice his size in the crowd'. The upshot was that Hughes attempted to ensure that a local in the crowd, Pat Brosnan, be charged for 'creating a disturbance'. When the police did not do so, Hughes complained to Queensland Premier Ryan. Following this incident, Hughes established the Federal Police Force. As Brian Fitzhardinge put it: 'From the Warwick egg was hatched the Commonwealth Police Force!'



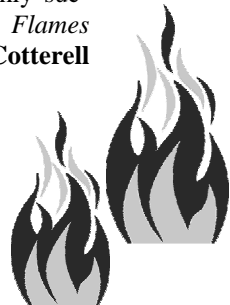
The 90th Anniversary of this incident will be celebrated as follows:

**WHEN:** 23-25 November 2007  
**WHERE:** Warwick.  
**ENQUIRIES:** Julie Conway 07 3348 6347;  
email: [jconway@technet2000.com.au](mailto:jconway@technet2000.com.au)

## ANOTHER REKINDLING THE FLAMES CONCERT

The Brisbane Labour History Association will reprise its highly successful concert of late last year with a second *Rekindling the Flames of Discontent* concert featuring **Margret Roadknight, Leah Cotterell** and **Helen Rowe**.

**WHEN:** Saturday 9 Feb 2008 (7.00 pm)  
**WHERE:** East Brisbane Bowls Club  
**COST:** \$15 (\$12 concession)  
**ENQUIRIES:** Dale Jacobsen 07 5494 4046;  
email: [sr.music@bigpond.com](mailto:sr.music@bigpond.com)  
**SUPPORTERS:** Queensland Council of Unions and  
Woodford Folk Festival





## SUBSCRIBE TO LABOUR HISTORY - THE NATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSLH



*Labour History* (ISSN: 0023 6942) is an internationally recognised journal and part of the prestigious History Co-operative of the University of Illinois. It is published twice a year, in November and May, by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History – a non-profit organisation.

Members of the Brisbane Labour History Association who are not already receiving *Labour History* are encouraged to subscribe – the full rate for individuals is \$50.00 (concession rate for students/unwaged is \$35.00). New subscribers to *Labour History* receive the current year's journals and a free back issue of their choice.

Your support of the journal as a subscriber makes it possible for *Labour History* to continue to promote and publish labour history research in Australia and beyond. Please send for our *Guidelines* if you are interested in contributing to the journal.

The November 2007 issue commemorates the centenary of the Harvester Judgement with a thematic section that focuses on the transcripts of significant twentieth century federal and state arbitration cases (including Justice Higgins's famous case itself). These transcripts provide great insights into wages, conditions and the industrial relations tactics of both employers and unions. Mark Hearn examines the discourses of nation embedded in the 1912 Fruitpickers case and the 1919 Clothing Trades case, exploring the gendered dimensions of Higgins's approach to citizenship. W.M. Robbins and Ian Harris uncover the theatrical dimensions of the early Commonwealth Arbitration Court. Thalia Anthony's important study of the 1965 'Equal' Wage Case for Aboriginal Station Workers is a valuable and insightful contribution to the labour history of Indigenous people. Papers on the meaning of skill (by Ben Maddison), employer strategy in the early days of the WA goldmining industry (by Naomi Segal), the effect of tribunals on workplace mobilisation (Sandra Cockfield), the organisation of sewerage workers in Sydney (by Peter Sheldon) and a listing of NSW tribunals and their surviving records (Christine Yeats) complete this wonderful collection. Other articles, book reviews, research reports, conference reports and obituaries add to the mix. For \$17.50 (the cost per issue) this must be the best value around for anyone wanting a stimulating read in labour history!

You can subscribe from the secure website – [www.asslh.org.au](http://www.asslh.org.au); or by faxing your credit card details to (02) 9371 4729; or by posting a cheque made out to Labour History or credit card info to: **Labour History, Economics & Business Building H69, University of Sydney NSW 2006**

Enquiries: Tel: 02 9351 3786 Fax: 02 9351 4729 Email: Margaret Walters at [m.walters@econ.usyd.edu.au](mailto:m.walters@econ.usyd.edu.au). Contents, abstracts and prices of back issues are available from the web site [www.asslh.org.au](http://www.asslh.org.au) or on application to Margaret Walters.

## **The Brisbane Labour History Association**

The Brisbane Labour History Association was formed in 1990 to encourage and promote the study, teaching, research and publication of labour history and the preservation of labour archives. There are no limits on the study of labour history and the diverse membership reflects many different areas of concern.

The Association is affiliated with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. The Association organises seminars, lectures, meetings, conferences and publications on themes of labour history. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations who subscribe to the Association's objectives.

### **Editorial Policy**

*The Queensland Journal of Labour History* is a journal of labour and social history with a particular emphasis on Queensland history. The history of labour, the classic social movement, is central to our concerns, as are the histories of newer social movements. This journal is committed to the view that history has a social purpose. It publishes articles which, in Ian Turner's words, engage our sympathies, affect present circumstances and suggest answers to present problems. In the words of the Association's slogan, 'The Past is Always with Us'. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Association or the Editors. The Journal's Editorial Board is the Committee of the BLHA, chaired by the President.

### **Notes for Contributors**

The *Journal* is published in March and September. Articles of up to 4000 words may be accepted; shorter contributions are encouraged. First person accounts of labour history are particularly welcome. Reports on exhibitions, seminars and research projects are sought, as are book reviews and photo essays. Obtain a copy of the Editorial Guidelines before submission.

Contributions should be made in hard copy to the Society's post office box and (if possible) digital format via email, to the Secretary's email address (see inside front cover). Hard copies should be typed, double-spaced, on single-sided A4 bond paper, with a margin of at least 3 cm. Please number the pages. Two (2) copies of each manuscript are required. Please ensure all contact details are given, including phone numbers and an email address.

Please advise if you have ideas for graphics (photographs, maps, drawings, cartoons, etc) that might accompany your article if accepted for publication.

# The Queensland Journal of Labour History

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