

Editorial

This issue of *Queensland Review* is dedicated to the memory of historian Helen Taylor (1941–2006), whose imaginative initiatives to bring history and heritage to a broad audience changed the way the people of Brisbane think about their past. The majority of the contributors to this issue knew Helen Taylor well from her university days onwards, but the articles have been selected for their connections with Helen's particular interests and approaches to history.

Helen Taylor studied and worked at both Griffith University and the University of Queensland, but became 'the people's historian' (as Malcolm Thomis has dubbed her) during her fourteen years as a historian at the Brisbane City Council, from 1990 to 2004. In this role, Helen combined scholarly rigour with a capacity to perceive history as lived experience, using interdisciplinary and multimedia formats to reach new audiences. For the Brisbane City Council, she produced a number of memorable social history exhibitions with Brisbane City Gallery Director Frank McBride, including *Brisbane Remembers: The Home Front, 1939–1945* (1995), *Brisbane 100 Stories* (1997), *Afraid of the Dark* (1999) and *The Million Pound Town Hall* (2000). She also initiated the Local History Grants Program and Brisbane's Living Heritage Network, and was a driving force in the establishment in 2002 of the Museum of Brisbane. As Curator of Social History at the new Museum of Brisbane, she was responsible for the major opening exhibition *Bite the Blue Sky: Brisbane Beginnings*. The cover of this issue shows Helen Taylor receiving the Lord Mayor's Award for Excellence — which she shared with colleague Frank McBride — from Lord Mayor Jim Soorley in 1995.

Last year, the Brisbane City Council's Chief Executive Officer, Jude Munro, instigated a process that enabled Helen's Council colleagues and historians from Brisbane's universities and historical societies to participate in the discussion of appropriate forms of commemoration of Helen Taylor's outstanding contribution as a historian of Brisbane. Three initiatives were approved by Council. One is this special issue of *Queensland Review*, which is dedicated to Helen and includes a biographical essay by distinguished historian Malcolm Thomis, Professor Emeritus at the University of Queensland. *Queensland Review* is a production of the two universities that were close to Helen's heart: it is edited at Griffith University and published by the University of Queensland Press. The Council also renamed the Museum of Brisbane's Memory Theatre the Helen Taylor Theatre. Helen helped to formulate the theatre's multimedia production, which explores Brisbane's history through its people and their stories. A ceremony of rededication of the Memory Theatre was held on 8 April 2008, in the presence of Helen's family. Finally, the Brisbane City Council has established the Lord Mayor's Helen Taylor Award for Local History, a \$10,000 annual award supporting the production of work that

further understanding of the history or heritage of Brisbane by making it more accessible. These three diverse initiatives of the Brisbane City Council ensure the enduring recognition of Helen Taylor's contribution to Brisbane's history and heritage.

If there is a single theme of this special Helen Taylor issue of *Queensland Review*, it is that of historians listening to the lived experience of people, and making sense of how that experience was shaped by historical circumstances such as colonisation and the Depression, or institutions like Wolston Park and Fantome Island. The contributors supplement traditional historical methodologies by drawing on oral history, surviving personal memoirs and ephemera to recover aspects of the past which are otherwise inaccessible. Helen loved to collect fragments of everyday life, which enabled her to understand people on their own terms; she had a gift for using these insights to enliven the dry theory and scholarship of academic history. Having been born during World War II, she had a particular fascination for that period of history, and especially its effects on the lives of women and upon her home state. No doubt Helen's experience of taking up university studies as a mature-age student, and while a mother with young children, strengthened her love of women's history. She also had a knack for putting at ease those who felt excluded and ignored. These papers explore the experiences of those whose histories are often overlooked, including Indigenous people, women, children and institutionalised people. This is history that is alive to local particularities, but knitted into broader themes and contexts; in that sense, they pay tribute to Helen's work.

The issue opens with a biographical essay by Malcolm Thomis, 'Helen Taylor: The People's Historian', which argues that Helen made a unique contribution by giving us a democratic form of history. Even Helen's closest friends and colleagues will be surprised at the range of activities revealed here, although Thomis eschews any claim to comprehensive coverage of them. By focusing on a few exemplary projects, Thomis demonstrates how Helen Taylor's personal and intellectual qualities enabled her to seize the opportunity provided by her job as a public historian with the Brisbane City Council to transform the relationship of the people of Brisbane with their past.

In 'Women on the South-East Queensland Frontier', Libby Connors turns her attention to the under-researched history of Indigenous women. Through a close and critical reading of the primary sources, and by using the insights of contemporary scholarship on whiteness, Connors attempts to see Indigenous women of the early colonial period on their own terms. This approach enables Connors to offer a new interpretation of the political contestations and the shifts of power in Indigenous communities during the European influx into the Moreton Bay settlement in the 1840s and 1850s. She argues that the evidence that Indigenous women were prepared to cooperate with Europeans at times, and to engage readily in inter-racial and inter-tribal conflict at others, demonstrates a continuous history of Indigenous sovereignty in the region.

Mark Finnane's 'Wolston Park Hospital, 1865–2001: A Retrospect' arose out of a collaborative project between Griffith University and Queensland Health's

West Moreton Health Service District, with funding support from the Australian Research Council. The Museum of Brisbane's recent exhibition, *Remembering Goodna: Stories from a Queensland Mental Hospital*, and Radio National's three-part series, *Up the Line to Goodna: Stories from Inside the Asylum*, arose out of the same project to explore the complex history of Queensland's earliest and best-known public institution for mentally ill and intellectually disabled people. While the exhibition and radio program look at the institution through the experiences of those who lived and worked there, Finnane's paper investigates the institutional history of Wolston Park in the context of changing political environments, medical practices and public attitudes.

In 'Queensland's Black Leper Colony', Geoffrey Genever explores another, much less well-known public institution, a leprosarium for Indigenous people which operated on Fantome Island in the Palm group of islands off Townsville from 1940 to 1973. Genever reveals that Indigenous leprosy sufferers were still being forcibly transported, isolated and treated at a time when the international medical consensus rejected the need for isolation, and new treatment regimes were available for white patients in Queensland. While he finds no evidence for the persistent suspicion in some Indigenous communities that Fantome Island patients were used as guinea pigs to test new leprosy treatments, Genever suggests that fear of forced removal and total isolation may have assisted in the very thing that the policy was meant to combat — the spread of the disease — by driving leprosy sufferers into hiding.

Raymond Evans, one of the best-known historians of Queensland and author of the acclaimed *A History of Queensland* (2007), reveals himself in 'A Queensland Reader: Discovering the Queensland Writer' to be as well versed in Queensland literature as he is in Queensland history. (As anyone over the age of 50 who attended primary school in this state would recognise, the title contains a pun on the anthologies once used in schools.) Evans reflects on the 'readerly milieu' that characterised Queensland in his youth — a milieu that devalued local creativity — and chronicles the shock and delight of his discovery of a great tradition of Queensland writing through the work of Vance Palmer, Zora Cross, David Malouf and Tom Shapcott. Queensland, he argues, has always been 'a hard, intractable place' for writers, and the state's literary history is an uncomfortable bedfellow of the history of the state's material development. Returning the forgotten creators to memory offers a glimmer of hope in what has been 'experienced pre-eminently as an *anti-cultural State*'.

In 'The Portrait of James Mayne: A Short History', Bernadette Turner dismantles one of the many myths surrounding the Mayne family: that for many years the University of Queensland failed to display the portrait of one of its most significant donors, James Mayne, in a place of honour. Turner unravels the history of the university's commissioning of the portrait from artist Melville Haysom and the complex history of its display. For many years, the university lacked adequate facilities for housing its Art Museum, including Melville Haysom's portrait of James Mayne. Today, however, the portrait of James Mayne hangs beside that of his sister Mary Emelia Mayne in a building named after these two major benefactors.

The outcomes of a study involving 60 participants who responded to interviews and questionnaires about their experiences of leisure as children during the Great Depression are presented by Carolyn Leach in 'The Leisure Pursuits of Brisbane Children'. Leach uses a broad definition of leisure to capture all the activities experienced as pleasurable by the respondents, ranging from listening to the radio to walking to the Botanic Gardens for a free concert. She finds that the Depression did not significantly alter the leisure pursuits of children, but that the children of its victims were often unable to participate in commercial leisure activities, or even school activities that required payment: some 70 years on, many still recall a real and painful sense of deprivation.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of Expo '88, and the final paper in this issue addresses this seminal event in Brisbane's recent past. In "Brisbane Will Never Be the Same": Tasting Change at World Expo '88', Donna Lee Brien takes stock of the event's immediate and longer term impact on Brisbane, with particular emphasis on culinary matters. Expo '88 ushered in lifestyle changes such as extended opening hours and outdoor eating facilities, and also provided the opportunity for visitors to sample the food of many different countries. Brien points out, moreover, that the redevelopment of the Expo site as the Southbank precinct retains many features reminiscent of Expo '88, including the presence of a number of restaurants, cafés and takeaway outlets offering a wide range of ethnic cuisines.

The issue concludes with reviews of two volumes of poetry by David Malouf (*Typewriter Music* and *Revolving Days*), Simon Cleary's debut novel *The Comfort of Figs*, Jonathan Richards' *The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police*, and Joanne Scott and Ross Laurie's *Showtime: A History of the Brisbane Exhibition*. *Showtime* was launched on 24 July at the opening of the Museum of Brisbane's *10 Days in August* — a social history exhibition in the tradition that Helen Taylor did so much to develop.

Finally, I acknowledge with gratitude the Brisbane City Council's support for this issue of *Queensland Review*. I would also like to thank four of Helen Taylor's friends and colleagues for their efforts to ensure that her work be recognised in an enduring way, and for their assistance in the production of this special issue of the journal: independent historian Bernadette Turner; Noeline Hall, formerly of the University of Queensland; Libby Connors, of the University of Southern Queensland; and Carmel Black, of the Heritage Unit in the Brisbane City Council's City Planning and Sustainability division.

Vale Helen.

— Belinda McKay