



FoPI Flyer

September - December 2009

In this edition

Mrs Doris Gabriel remembered	1
Working Bee updates	2
An unusual vintage	5
2009 Christmas party	5
Father Damien canonised	6
'Permanent' lazaret display at Fort Lytton NP	8

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Mrs Doris Gabriel remembered

Doris Isobel Gabriel was always known to her friends as Jonnie, a nick-name given to her by her father, and one she retained throughout her life. It was so typical of the person whose unaffected nature and readiness to help out where needed endeared her to so many. Jonnie revelled in helping out; whether it was on the Princess Alexandra Hospital's Women's Auxilliary, Ignatian's Musical Society, the Qld Light Opera Company, the Qld Conservatorium of Music, Savoyards or the Art's Theatre. She was always there when needed.

When I first began my researches into the history of Peel Island's Lazaret (way back in 1986) Jonnie Gabriel was the first person I interviewed. Johnnie, a former Theatre Sister had been married to the Late Doctor Morgan Gabriel, the Lazaret's last Resident Medical Officer from 1951 until 1959. As such, she had lived on Peel in the doctor's house during that time, and the couple raised their two children, Ruth and Bill, there, thus dispelling the myth that children could never remain on the island after birth because they were considered at risk of contracting the disease.

The Gabriels were always passionate about dispelling the stigma of leprosy and of leprosy (Hansen's Disease) patients. To their credit, they were always prepared to lead by their own example.

During their time at the Lazaret until its closure Jonnie and her husband amassed a great collection of memorabilia: photos, memories, stories, other contact people, and artifacts. All of these Jonnie was more than happy to share, not just with me, but also with the Friends of Peel Island, and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Much of the fine collection we have today is due to the generosity of Jonnie and Morgan Gabriel.

For this I am grateful, but most of all I am grateful for her friendship.

Peter Ludlow, 16.1.2010

Mrs Gabriel, gave a wonderful talk at the Queensland Museum (2007) about life on Peel Island.



Working Bee updates

Dear Members,

Just to bring you all up to date on what has been happening on the working bees since my last report.

The August working bee was cancelled, however the September working bee coincided with the visit to Peel Island, on Sunday 19th by the Inter Club Bay Cruise, as part of their annual week long cruise around Moreton Bay.

Most of the weekend was spent on preparing for the Sunday visit, however Peter Hubbert and I did find time on the Saturday to inspect the grape vines. The rangers had previously removed several trees and bushes and the area now is looking very good. Some of the wires and some posts had to be re-tensioned as these were damaged during the tree/bush removal process. See photo below.

For the Sunday visit by the boat club members, Peter Hubbert and myself were



Heritage grape vines staked out and now clearly marked. Photo Colleen Hubbert

trained in tour guiding by Roland Dowling with Peter Ludlow joining us as the fourth guide. The remaining FOPIA members Rosaleen Carroll on the beach selling books (9 Sold), Brian Isaac at the Lazaret perimeter check point and Colleen Hubbert being available to assist as required and take some photographs (see next page).

The group that I took around were amazed at how many of the buildings had survived and that they were being refurbished and maintained. I even had two ex Churchie boys who had been on a camp here in 1974. From the response I received from this group at the end of the tour, they all had enjoyed the experience and urged the QPWS and FOPIA to keep up the good work.

Hopefully, there will be more of these tours in the future and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved from QPWS and FOPIA who assisted in what was

a very successful day.

Regards,

Scott Fowle
Working bee
Coordinator



Great feedback was received on the Annual Inter Clubs Moreton Bay Cruise visit to Peel Island.

Mention was made of the tour in one of the Club's newsletter which included a comment on the visit to the Lazaret being the "highlight of this year's cruise". Thanks were listed in the mag. to Roland, Peter Ludlow and Scott for the guided tour.

Feedback has also been received from a member of the yacht club who personally asked me to convey his thanks to QPWS rangers and FoPIA - and said he had always wanted to visit the site.

Cheers - Rhonda

Walking up to the lazaret (left); and (below) the visitors getting at FoPIA's meeting point, and (bottom) some insights from Roland Dowling. Photos courtesy Colleen Hubbert



October working bee

A working bee was held on Peel Island in October 2009 with five volunteers willing to tackle many and varied tasks.

Weeds were pulled and grapevines weeded and mulched along with a clean up at the cemetery.

The cutting of the heritage rose taken in July by Colleen (right) was planted out the front of the Superintendents house. The parent plant stands nearby.

Brian, Diane and Colleen (below) tackled the weeds along the foreshore of Horse Shoe Bay. Asparagus Fern and Prickly Pear were pulled.



Scott and Peter worked on the sanding and reglazing of the french doors in the nurses quarters (picture below surely shows them after working ...).

All participants spent days of enjoyable jobs to help keep the Lazaret and the island in good shape.

Peter Hubbert



An unusual vintage

Last December at the Friends of Peel Island Christmas party held on the patio of Peter and Colleen Hubbard, I was very impressed by the array of grape vines growing above our heads. The many clusters of green grapes looked very tempting to eat but Colleen informed me that they were still unripe, and, being the black variety, still had to darken yet.



The remarkable thing, though, is that these grapes are being grown from cuttings taken from vines still flourishing in the bush at the Lazaret on Peel Island (see picture page 2).

In my researches on history of the island, I had been told by one of Peel's former patients that there had been an Italian patient incarcerated there who had grown the grapes as a hobby.

He probably wasn't thinking of posterity at the time, but I think if he were here today, he would be gratified that his labours were still giving us much pleasure – not just in tasting the fruit themselves, but in having this tangible link to a former time now past.

Peter Ludlow

2009 FoPI Christmas party



Once again Peter and Colleen Hubbert opened their home for FoPI members to enjoy our annual Christmas party.

Photos courtesy Peter Ludlow



First FoPI meeting of 2010

Monday 8 February, **Indigiscapes**
17 Runymede Road (off Redland Bay Road), Capalaba

WORLD NEWS

Father Damien canonised

On Sunday October 11th 2009 at the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI declared Father Damien of Molokai to be a saint.

Saint Damien de Veuster, as he will now be called, is well-known especially among people involved with the disease leprosy.

Father Damien pictured right, from a rare pencil sketch from December, 1888. He contracted leprosy and died in 1889.



Moloka'i, Hawaii Some 2,200 miles (3540km) southwest of California, in the heart of the Hawaiian islands, is the island of Molokai. Shaped somewhat like a fish (the locals say a shark) with its head facing east, its tail in the west and a dorsal fin rising from its back on the north shore.

That dorsal fin is the nearly flat, ten-square-mile (25.9 sq km) Makanalua Peninsula which juts into the Pacific below the world's highest sea cliffs. A place of stunning beauty, it's been blessed by nature's grandeur, and cursed by humanity's ignorance and fear.

Kalaupapa's reputation as a leprosy colony is well-known. Hansen's disease, the proper term for leprosy, is believed to have spread to Hawaii from China. The first documented case of leprosy occurred in 1848. Its rapid spread and unknown cure precipitated the urgent need for complete and total isolation.

Surrounded on three sides by the Pacific ocean and cut off from the rest of Molokai by 1600-foot (488m) sea cliffs, Kalaupapa provided the environment.

In early 1866, the first leprosy victims were shipped to Kalaupapa and existed for 7 years before Father Damien arrived. The area was void of all amenities. No buildings, shelters nor potable water were available. These first arrivals dwelled in rock enclosures, caves, and in the most rudimentary shacks, built of sticks and dried leaves.

Folklore and oral histories recall some of the horrors: the leprosy victims, arriving by ship, were sometimes told to jump overboard and swim for their lives. Occasionally a strong rope was run from the anchored ship to the shore, and they pulled themselves painfully through the high, salty waves, with legs and feet dangling below like bait on a fishing line.

The ship's crew would then throw into the water whatever supplies had been sent, relying on currents to carry them ashore or the exiles swimming to retrieve them.

In 1873, Father Damien deVeuster, aged 33, arrived at Kalaupapa. A Catholic missionary priest from Belgium, he served the leprosy

patients at Kalaupapa until his death. A most dedicated and driven man, Father Damien did more than simply administer the faith: he built



Taken after Damien had constructed most of the houses seen here, this photo shows the stark, barren peninsula and settlement at Kalawao in the 1880s.

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homes, churches and coffins; arranged for medical services and funding from Honolulu, and became a parent to his diseased wards.

Damien contracted the disease, and after 16 years of selfless service, died in 1889. In 1886, Brother Joseph Dutton arrived at Kalaupapa to assist Father Damien. Dutton, an energetic and dedicated missionary priest, assumed many of the duties Damien was unable to perform as his leprosy progressed.

Mother Marianne, another revered servant, devoted 29 years on the peninsula as an administrator, nurse and educator. She spent her life on the go, even as her age climbed well into the seventies. She died in 1918. In 1977, Pope Paul VI declared Father Damien to be venerable, the first of three steps that lead to sainthood. Pope John Paul II declared Damien blessed in 1995, the second step before canonization as a saint. Canonization occurred October 2009 - Father Damien is now Saint Damien de Veuster.

With the advent of sulfone drugs in the 1940s, the disease was put in remission and the sufferers are no longer contagious. The fewer than 100 former patients remaining on the peninsula are free to travel or relocate elsewhere, but most have chosen to remain where they have lived for so long.

The few cars on the peninsula travel at a top speed of five miles per hour, as there is nowhere to go and no reason to hurry. A broad smile and a friendly wave of the hand are commonplace and integral to the lifestyle.

At Kalaupapa are the administration building, post office, book store, fire station, never-used jail and of course the hospital which, considering the size of the population, is one of the best staffed and equipped in Hawaii.

In the center of the village stands the large town meeting hall, with a big blackboard nailed on its front and some chalk hanging nearby, just in case a message for someone needs to be written.

While Kalaupapa is now a National Historic Site, it is also the home of the few former patients who chose to remain there. So access, is by law, strictly regulated.

Unless you are invited by one of the residents, you must take the tour offered by Damien Tours of Kalaupapa (about \$40.00). The peninsula can be reached by air or by way of the trail from upper Molokai. Visitors can hike in and out or ride one of the Molokai mules. Visitors must be at least 16 years old..



Today, the trail from Topside Molokai to Kalaupapa is traveled by mule, by hikers, and on foot by some of the workers at the settlement. Hugging the nearly perpendicular cliffs, the trail is over three miles (5km) long and descends 1,600 feet (488m) to the peninsula. Along its course are 26 switchbacks that corkscrew in and out of canyons and ravines.

There is also a small airstrip at the northern edge of the peninsula, used daily to bring in food, supplies and visitors.

Once a year in the summer, when the seas are calm, a barge from Honolulu anchors at Kalaupapa, delivering thousands of pounds of rice, cases of beer, drums of gasoline and supplies to stock the grocery store and hospital.

Article extracted from

www.molokai-aloa.com/molokai/kala.html

Australian connection

Molokai the film about Father Damien, and starring Australia's David Wenham was released in 1999 to favourable reviews.

Set on location at Molokai, David Wenham lived with the patients there for four months during the filming.

'Permanent' lazaret display at Fort Lytton NP

Visitors to Fort Lytton National Park can now enjoy even more history than before. Since the end of 2009 FoPI's "going to the gums" exhibition has been on display in two rooms of the old dining hall. Throughout the year there are numerous events - either for the general public, or private meetings - held at Fort Lytton.

On each occasion visitors will have the opportunity to stop and appreciate the collection of artifacts, photographs, copies of historic documents and information boards.

Rick Thomason, the exhibition's original curator at the Redland Museum kindly redesigned the exhibition for the new space. FoPI members and Fort Lytton staff rolled up their sleeves, got out their ladders, drills and sewing machines, and did the rest.

QPWS were also very lucky to obtain some old display cases from the RNA Show Association for us to use. They are from a similar era to when the lazaret was in operation, and really help make the display such a success.

Our thanks to Roland Dowling (QPWS) for allowing FoPI use of the two rooms.

All photos courtesy Rhonda Bryce



Rick Thomason getting stuck into creative arrangements.



Scott Fowle (above) being handy with a drill helping hang curtains. The entrance banner (right), art by Ruth Venner.



Newly acquired exhibition cabinet with a display of artifacts.



Gabrielle making curtains.