

FoPI Flyer

August 2011

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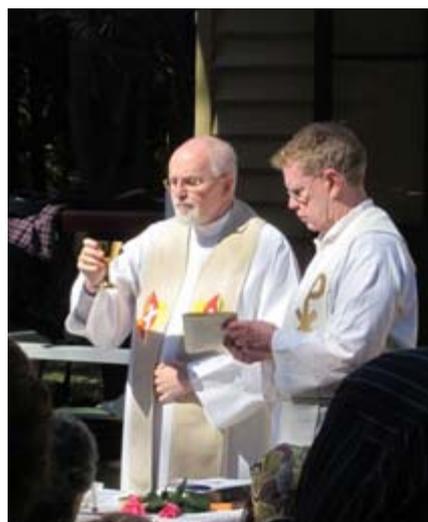
Restoration and rededication

1 How fitting that the newly restored Catholic church at the Lazaret on Peel Island be
 2 rededicated as St Damien's. It was named
 3 after Fr Damien who spent so much of his
 4 life looking after those afflicted with
 6 Hansen's Disease in Hawaii in the early
 6 20th Century, and had recently been
 6 proclaimed a saint by Pope Benedict XVI
 7 in 2009.



The Most Rev Bishop Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap. DD, Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane (pictured left) presided over the service with great sensitivity and empathy for those who once lived on the island.

Fr Frank O'Dea, parish priest (pictured left) of the Star of the Sea Catholic Parish (which covers Cleveland, Ormiston, Raby Bay, Thornlands and Stradbroke Island) provided assistance.



The day was organised with admirable efficiency by Trina Cambourne, Parish Mission Director, and was a multi-denominational service. All were thankful for the calm seas and the beautiful warm day. The only complaint was that the time to leave the island came around so quickly.

Left: Bishop Joseph Oudeman (L), Fr Frank O'Dea (R)



Restored with care

Brian Isaac, a very active FoPIA member has long been advocating and agitating for the Catholic church on Peel Island to be restored. As Scott Fowle, current FoPIA President recalls, when he first met Brian in 2007 was Brian's enthusiasm for the church to be refurbished, and over the years his enthusiasm has never wavered.

Another FoPIA member Gordon Wilson took up Brian's cause and contacted the local Catholic Parish of Cleveland to see if they'd be interested in the project.

The rededication service which was celebrated on Peel Island by Bishop Joseph Oudeman on Tuesday 2 August 2011 was the culmination of a lot of hard work.

Particular thanks go firstly to the Catholic Parish of Cleveland for appreciating the value of restoring this historic building, and assigning Syd Steele to manage the project.

A big *thank you* to John Hickey (master builder), Patrick Hickey (assistant) and Anthony Ryan (labourer) who gave of their time and professional expertise to restore this church. Thanks also to Bob Anderson (master painter and decorator), Tony Moore and Anthony Castelli (assistant painters).

Top: Looking dilapidated as a result of time and white ants (July 2010)
Centre: FoPIA members Rosaleen Carroll, Brian Isaac and Diane Hollands (Aug 2011)
Below: Gordon Wilson, John Hickey and Syd Steele with restored altar (Aug 2011)





A comment upon a very memorable morning.

"It was a beautiful day on the bay and the ceremony had a lovely sense of community; not only amongst those present but also with the many who were present in spirit, enjoying their liberation



from sadness and suffering. I stood in that gentle shade in the company of patients.

The ceremony was simple and moving. The Bishop had a particular way of speaking; he would pause, quite a long time for a pause, seemingly to gather his thoughts perhaps, but the effect was such that one had time to reflect upon his words and to relate them firstly to self, and then to the hundreds of souls who passed that way in years gone by in awful circumstances.

We forget, these days; leprosy affected people of all ages from all walks of life. And as Bishop Joseph remarked, it was a disease that society deemed to accompany moral failure. So much suffering."

Geraldine



Fundraiser trip to Russell Island

Another successful fundraising trip, this time to Russell Island. Thanks to Scott Fowle and Gordon Wilson for organising, and for all who came along and had a great day. Also, many thanks to all those who donated prizes for the popular raffle, and Rosaleen for being a champion ticket seller:

- Grand View Hotel \$50 meal voucher
- Brad Cahoon 2 autographed books by Brisbane author Nick Earls
- Scott Fowle Handmade cushion from the Mandalay Centre of Care craft class
- FoPIA copy of *Going to the Gums*
- Gordon Wilson Double Cinema pass
- Colleen & Peter Hubbert Bottle of red wine

Some of the other trip highlights included morning tea and lunch at Aunty Alice's Cafe, a stop at Canaipa Point and the smooth bus trip around the island's highlights with excellent commentary from our local tour guide Phoebe DuPont. The other highlights were a visit to Mrs Fischer's memorial and of course, the museum. Our museum 'host' David Tardent provided the following information:

"The memorial is devoted to Gwendolyn wife of Jay Fischer who took up residence on Russell Island in 1906. They had 13 children and ran a ferry between 1920-30 transporting supplies, passengers and was the school boat (The Adelaide). This site is the only official grave on Russell and this monument was established around 2005, and is immaculately maintained (picture below).

The person responsible for Mrs Fischer's memorial and setting up the museum was Wendy Dorrington. The collection largely was a private one owned by the postmaster of the eighties Jim Batey with his wife Ruth who still lives on the island. Wendy obtained a grant from Redland City Council and the collection was purchased with Redland Museum at Cleveland being the "auspicing body for SMBIM" in 2006.

Members of SMBIM are members of the Redland Museum. We are sort of a sub branch of RMI (Redland Museum). I am the island delegate to the Board of Management at Cleveland with a fair bit of autonomy. Kay Ross and I are a 2 person committee."



Clockwise from below: Group at memorial to Gwendolyn Fischer; our destination; Dave Tardent from SMBIM with Rosaleen Carroll; remembering the (good) old days in the Russell Island Museum.
Photos G. van Willigen



The Southern Moreton Bay Islands Museum commissioned a DVD on the history of Russell Island as recalled by Ruth Batey. Copies are available from the Museum by contacting David Tardent (0414 383 047) or Kay Ross (3409 2085). The Museum is located at 55A Jackson Road, Russell Island 4184.

Jim & SMBI Museum P.O. Display 2006 (Museum opening)

Ruth delivering mail on Karragarra Island 1985

Local identity Ken Goodman speaks with Ruth Batey about her late husband Jim and the Batey Collection which was acquired for SMBI Museum. Together they operated the Russell Island Post Office and Southern Moreton Bay Islands postal run for eight years during the 1980's. The interview gives a fascinating insight into some of their stories during the 30 years spent on the islands.

This DVD is the first in a series for the Southern Moreton Bay Islands Museum on our history, the collections and it's many contributors.

Southern Moreton Bay Islands Museum presents
'A chat with Ruth Batey'

Produced by Bayside Multimedia for The Southern Moreton Bay Islands Museum
Email: productions@baysidemultimedia.com.au
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Friends of Peel Island Hats for sale.

Stand out from the crowd with one of our hats. From Left to Right: Base Ball Hat \$8-00 , Bucket Hat \$10-00 and the Brimmed Hat \$15-00.

Contact Scott Fowle if you'd like to purchase one: **PO Box 9019 Cleveland DC 4163** or our email address friendsofpeel@gmail.com



The following article was distributed to everyone on the trip to Peel for the rededication ceremony. It is a reprint from the FoPI Flyer May 2004. The information was provided by Donna Bennett from research undertaken by her students at the Moreton Institute of TAFE at Alexandra Hills.

Peel Island Lazaret religious sites

For the purpose of assessment, a group of eight students from Moreton Institute of TAFE studying the Diploma in Conservation and Land Management elected to conduct a field investigation into the significance of the religious sites of the Peel Island Lazaret. The three sites researched were the Catholic church (hut 37), the remains/site of the Anglican church, and the lazaret cemetery. This was carried out on the island on March 29/30, 2004 with the permission of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and assistance from Ranger Brad White.

Previous to this, several weeks of initial research into the sites and the lazaret was conducted to collect relevant information and base line data for this investigation. Sources of information included the Qld State Archives, State Library, Anglican Church Archives, Qld Department of Health, QPWS Peel Island records, several organisations associated with the island and various published books. Interviews and correspondence with Moreton Bay historian, Peter Ludlow, and former lazaret nurse, Rosemary Opala were also carried out.

The following is a general overview of each site and any relevant and interesting information discovered about its significance.

Anglican Church

- The Anglican Church was built in 1909, in the early years of the Lazaret
- It was constructed partially out of materials from demolished buildings from nearby Stradbroke Island. The coloured patients of the lazaret compound carried out this work. These included people from Melanesia and Friday Island.
- It was built in close proximity to the coloured compound. Records show the original letter of request for the church in December 1908 to the Home Secretary's Office was requested by mainly the coloured people of

the lazaret. "so to enable their lives (to be) a little more bearable in their enforced confinement upon the island" was stated in one of these letters.

- Archive records show several letters of correspondence were written on this matter as they encountered many difficulties with receiving a sufficient supply of timber from the authorities to complete the construction.
- The church was initially intended to be a non-sectarian church, but through the years it was recognised as an Anglican place of worship.
- It was later known as the *Church of the Good Samaritan*
- In approximately 1948 a wedding service was carried out at the church between two leprosy patients
- Several carved wooden posts were erected at the front of the church about 1920 by the coloured patients. They represent a kangaroo, pineapple, coconut and a phallus. Two fish carvings were later added in the 1930s.
- In June 1928, patients volunteered to build a vestry to be added onto the church for the convenience of the visiting Rev. Cannon Miles and other clergy.
- The Church was dismantled and removed in 1959, the closure of the lazaret and the timber was apparently relocated to Moreton Island. (A telephone call from Frank Boyce has confirmed that he removed the church building and re-erected it at Karingal on Moreton Island).
- The only remnants of the church at Peel are several of these carvings, wooden stumps and some remaining trees/shrubs from the garden, and posts marking the church yard boundary.

Catholic Church

- Was constructed in 1907 and was once a hut for several female Aboriginal patients.

- After the Aboriginal patients were shifted to Fantome Island, it was shifted using a sled from its position near the male compound to near the surgery and later enlarged.
- It was used as a common room for men for many years until it was converted to a Catholic Church.
- A raised platform, altar, and the nails where the Stations of the Cross once hung are all that is present today to show its use as a church.
- The whereabouts of the cross is unknown but the stone relic from the altar was removed to Manly Parish.
- Father Gabriel Nolan visited Peel once a month and conducted Mass for the patients. Patients were not allowed to receive wine from the Chalice for fear of cross-infection, they were only offered the bread.
- The church has partially been restored as it was re-roofed and restumped in 1994 by QPWS.

Cemetery

- The cemetery is located 130m behind the lazaret and is now partially overrun with vegetation.
- There are approximately 250 graves within the cemetery, with 60 defined with iron markers and timber constructions.
- Most of the memorials are in a fragile and deteriorated condition due to the effects of weather, fire, and previous vandalism.
- Upon investigation, there seems to be several areas defining the cemetery. It is possibly sectioned into a quarantine area that was relocated from the quarantine (eastern) side of the island; possible indigenous remains which are marked out by sea shells; and the later section which holds graves of better construction and quality.
- Urgent conservation and restoration is required for the site and graves. This represents the resting place of many suffering patients who lived a large portion of their life in detainment.