

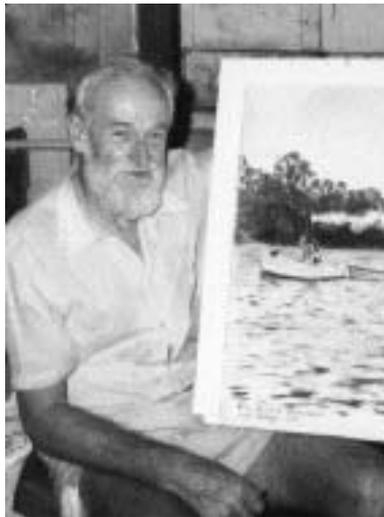


# fopi flyer

Volume 1, 2007

Friends of Peel Island Associated Inc.

PO Box 9019 | Cleveland DC Qld 4163 | ABN: 58 894 835 463 | Inc: IA29399 | [www.fopia.org.au](http://www.fopia.org.au)



## Obituary

Eric Reye passed away peacefully on Monday night 29.1.2007 in the Beenleigh Nursing Home. Though physically incapacitated for his last years, Eric's mind remained keen to the end. For one so used to the outdoor life, his immobility in a nursing home must have been a great frustration, but, in typical style, he accepted his lot philosophically and without complaint.

I like to remember Eric from my times with him on his boat *Coolooloa* on the mangrove flats at Redland Bay, eating peanuts, sipping his home-made mead, surrounded by his laboratory materials and discussing Moreton Bay's history of which, for me at least, Eric played such an important part.

All his life, Eric was a lover of boats and the Bay. From those of you who have read my books, you will recall his canoe trips from Brisbane to Southport and his search for the 'Spanish Galleon' which in itself has inspired many others to continue.

### In this edition

Vale, Eric Reye.....	1
Award to Simon Baltais.....	2
Lazaret centenary update.....	2
Congratulations Brad!.....	3
Artists on Peel Island.....	4
Amateur performers visit	
Peel Island 1950s.....	4
Recommended reading.....	5
Subscription renewal.....	5

Newsletter Editor: Rhonda Bryce  
Contributions are welcome.

[Rhonda\\_Bryce@hotmail.com](mailto:Rhonda_Bryce@hotmail.com)

After studying medicine at the University of Queensland, he was able to combine his yachting skills with his medicine when he became the Medical Officer for the Hansen's Disease (Leprosy) patients at Peel Island. While there he worked constantly to improve the conditions of the patients.

It was also on Peel that he was bitten by the bug—the biting midge actually—when trying to find its breeding habits. Entomology was soon to take over his whole life and he abandoned medicine in its favour, eventually becoming acknowledged as a world expert in the study of biting midges.

He was a source of much of our knowledge of Peel Island's Lazaret history and one of our last links with it. He was always willing to impart his great knowledge to others, and I for one am especially grateful for his generosity in supporting my Moreton Bay writings.

Peter Ludlow

## Lazaret Centenary update

Well we are now well and truly into 2007 and activity has been frantic. The Peel Island Lazaret Centenary Committee (PILCC) has met on numerous occasions and at various venues!

**Events planned for 2007 include:**

*History in Motion: 100 years of the Peel Island Lazaret .*

The talk is on Wednesday 2 May 12.30 pm – 1.30 pm Theatre, Level 2, Qld Museum, Southbank with Dr Jon Prangnell and Doris and Ruth Gabriel.

*going to the gums ~ the Lazaret on Peel Island*

This Exhibition will be opened at the Redland Museum on the evening of 31 May 2007 by Her Excellency, Ms Quentin Bryce, Governor of Queensland. Invitations to the official opening will be sent out to members in the near future.

The exhibition will be on display there from 1 July to 31 August. Planning, which includes approaching sources for corporate support, is underway for this exhibition to tour regional Queensland centres in 2008.

Community support has been exceptional. Local Artist/Calligrapher, Ruth Venner, from MacLeay Island is producing the fabric drops for the display which will include a series of poems written by founding member of FoPI, Rosemary Opala. Rosemary's drawings will also be featured in the exhibition.

We are receiving outstanding assistance from Mrs Kath McNeilly, Chair of the Redland Museum and Mr Rick Thomason, Exhibitions Officer; and Ms Tracy Ryan, Local Historian, Redland Shire Council. Members of the North Stradbroke Island Museum and Mr Art Rentoul are also supportive.

## Well done Simon!

Simon Baltais—FoPI Foundation and Life Member—has been awarded the **Healthy Waterways Awards - Barambah Wines Waterways Champion Award** for 2007 .



Here's an extract from the press release from the EPA Minister, Lindy Nelson-Carr:

"Simon has been campaigning for environmental health tirelessly for the last 10 years and is a very worthy winner of the 2007 Healthy Waterways Champion Award.

"Simon is an active environmental campaigner, board member of Queensland Conservation Council, President of Sustainable Population Australia SEQ Branch, and Secretary for the WPSQ Bayside Branch, program manager for Moreton Bay Community Seagrass Watch and holds a position on the Coastal Protection Advisory Committee and many other organisations.

"He is to be congratulated for the time he gives to residents and community groups and the work he does to raise environmental awareness

The exhibition could not have gone ahead without the financial help from Cr Craig Ogilvie, Division 2 and Cr Debra Henry, Division 3 who have provided funding assistance through their Community Benefit Grants. The funds will provide for text panels, mounting and framing.

## *Replication of the 'Totems' from the lazaret*

A number of wonderful wooden carvings of fish, walaby and pineapple were carved by Bob Pela, a patient of the lazaret in the 1920s or 1930s. Mr Troy Robbins, professional sculptor and environmentalist, from Cleveland has been

approached to make replicas of the wood carvings to be put on display so the originals can be preserved in a more controlled environment.

Troy is excited about undertaking this work. He appreciates their heritage value and has strong regard for the original artist. An application for an RADF grant has been submitted. Efforts are being made to contact the Pela family through the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council. As well as trying to find the family, the Council send us their best wishes for the exhibition.

### *Talk at Redland Museum –28 June*

In conjunction with the display of our exhibition, Dr Hugo Ree, retired Qld Government advisor on Hansen's disease, will give a talk at the Redland Museum at 2.00 pm on Thursday 28 June 2007.

### *Artists in Residence Program – Griffith University*

Tracy Ryan and Rhonda Bryce met with Professors Pat Hoffie and Paul Turnbull and Dr Woodrow at the Queensland College of Art in March. Griffith University is very keen to have an artist in residence program for a few postgraduate students. Discussions are continu

### *Centenary Committee members*

- Gabrielle van Willigen (Chair)
- Rhonda Bryce (Secretary)
- Debra Henry
- Tracy Ryan
- Rosaleen Carroll

## Cruise to St Helena Island

A cruise from Raby Bay to St Helena will be held on **16 June 2007**. This is a full day trip with morning tea and a hot lunch with 2 spit roasts cooked on board.

The cost for the day is \$75.00 pp. A flyer will be forwarded to members shortly. The tour of the old prison site, with expert guides, will entail a 4 km walk. This is a joint venture between FoPI and the Qld Penal and Prisons Historical Assoc (QPPHA).



Artists Ruth Venner and Troy Robbins visit Peel Island with QPWS rangers Roland Dowling and Jacques Frugte on the MV *Limosa*.

### **Breaking News ...**

FoPI Executive Committee member Brad Cahoon has been nominated for the 2007 Queenslander of the Year Award for the time he contributes as a volunteer.

Well done Brad!

## Oral history project - Part 2

### Entertainers on Peel Island 1950s

**Pat & Richard Speechley** interviewed by Gabrielle van Willigen (FoPI, 26 October 2006)

The members of the Amateur Dramatic, Variety and Comedy Show (ADVACS) performed for the patients and staff of the lazaret in the 1950s.

Pat had been a member in the early 1950s but left for a time after contracting polio. Richard was encouraged to join and met Pat when she returned in 1953. They eventually got engaged one Sunday after doing three shows including one at Boggo Road gaol. They once took Pat's mother across to Peel Island with the group where she sat in the audience and enjoyed the show.

**Members** came from all over Brisbane, and included among others Richard's sister Dorothy Speechley, Margaret Toft, Jim Clydesdale, Morrie Neilson, Doug Gibney, June Jackson, John Brennan, Lionel Hansen and Ralph Phone.

**Costumes** – all made by the women in the group. A few would source the materials and these would be distributed to the others. The men would do the props (such as back drops).

**Rehearsal** – usually only once a week. Sometimes that meant performance numbers were put together or practiced on the journey to a show. Everyone was versatile, being able to do a number of different things. Richard was a dancer, having danced in the Queensland Ballet company so had some formal experience in performing. He helped choreograph some of the dances. Pat danced prior to contracting polio, and both could sing.

**Contact with patients** – The group wasn't worried about going to Peel Island and interacting with the patients with leprosy although there was a fear of the disease in the

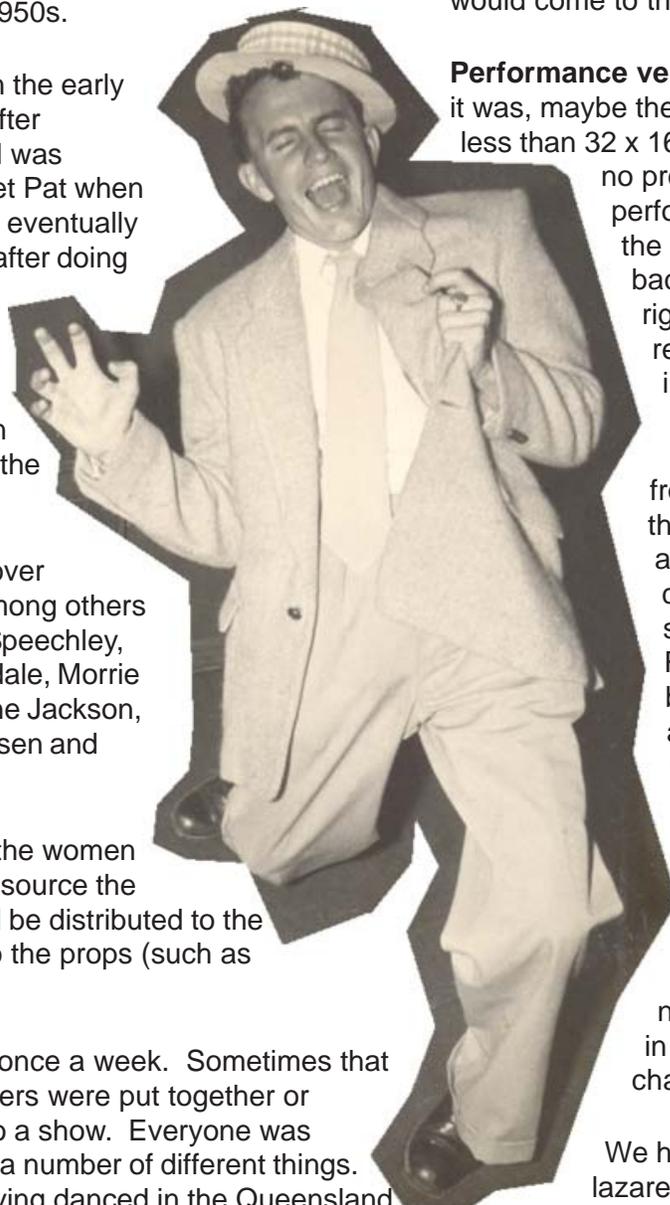
community. If Doctor Gabriel (medical superintendent of the lazaret) thought it was safe for his wife and two small children to be on the island then it would be fine for them. The patients were very accepting of the group, and we were quite relaxed with them. Richard remembers shaking their hands. They had a chance to chat with the patients. Mrs Gabriel and the children would come to the show.

**Performance venue** – not sure of which building it was, maybe the chapel? It was quite small – less than 32 x 16 feet. There was no stage, and no proper dressing rooms. The performers would get changed out the back of the building "back to back". Sometimes a sheet was rigged up for privacy. Richard remembers standing out the back in his underwear.

To 'exit the stage and re-enter from the other side' required going through a door to outside, running around the back of the venue and coming in through another door, slightly out of breath. Once Richard was required to come back on whistling which was almost impossible because he was puffing from the run.

There weren't many patients – no more than 20, plus staff. They seemed to be in good spirits. The performers would be at one end of the room, and a number of the patients would be in recliners rather than sitting up in chairs.

We had a pianist, and used the lazaret's upright piano – so maybe that suggests the performances were in the hall. We also had June Jackson on accordion and she doubled as one of the girls in the chorus. Most of us did two or three things, though none of us were brilliant. However Collin Briggs is on 4BC radio –



Johnny Ray impersonator - Doug Gibney (above)  
Photo: R. Speechley 1950s



"Bank of the Nile" (l-r) Roy Peacock, Jim Blydesdale, Morrie Nielson

Photo: R. Speechley 1950s

he was a tenor and left Brisbane to join the New Zealand opera company – he had a good voice. He may have been on Peel Island.



Waiting for train at Cleveland Station after performing on Peel Island..

Photo: R. Speechley 1950s

The steam train to Cleveland left from South Brisbane station rather than Roma Street or Central as at that time there was no rail bridge crossing the river from the City to South Brisbane and on to Cleveland. The government provided free transportation to the various government institutions that ADVACS was performing at such as the psychiatric hospital at Goodna which had the best theatre – it was nearly as good as a few in town and could fit 1200 people, patients and staff.

The demand for ADVACS's type of amateur show declined as televisions were provided in government institutions giving patients regular entertainment.

### Reading List:

#### *Moreton Bay*

Peter Ludlow – *Moreton Bay Reflections*, 2007 (this is hot off the press)

Thom Blake, Robert Riddel Architect, *Peel Island Lazzaret Conservation Plan*, 1993

June Berthelsen, *The Lost Years A Story of Leprosy*  
Bay Journal [www.bayjournal.com.au/joomla/](http://www.bayjournal.com.au/joomla/)

For history buffs there is a migration story on the Bay Journal web site: **ARTEMISIA London to Australia**  
From 'The Illustrated London News', August 12th, 1848 \_

#### *Fiction:*

For young readers:

Kate Taylor – *Lighthouse Ghost* (8 12 years) and *A Spoonful of Zucchero* (set on Peel Island)

#### *Environment*

Peter Andrews – *Back from the Brink* (a farmer 's story of how he has revitalised his land)

Norm Duke – *Australia's Mangroves*

### **Subscriptions** (due annually - 30 June)

Payment, with the detail slip, to:

**Treasurer, PO Box 1015, Slacks creek, 4127.**

FULL MEMBERSHIP: \$26 (\$10 joining fee and \$16 annual subs) Full Membership is available to people aged 18 years and over and entitles the member to full voting rights of FoPIA.

PENSIONER, STUDENT & JUNIOR: \$17 (\$5 joining fee and \$12 annual subs) Pensioner & Student Membership entitles the member to full voting right in FoPIA. Junior Membership is a non-voting membership available to people under the age of 18 years.

ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP: \$50 (\$10 joining fee and \$40 annual subs.) Organisation Membership is available to organizations (incorporated or otherwise) and entitles the organization to one voting rights in FoPIA.