



Editor - Peter Ludlow

"BOHEMIA"

An Agnew Family Odyssey

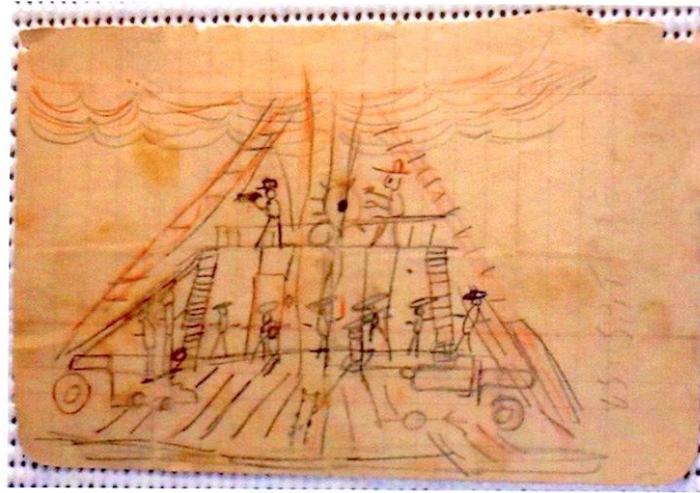
The association of the Agnew family with Moreton Bay began with the appointment of Philip Palmer Agnew as a Government Clerk and Telegraph Officer at the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum (Old People's Home) in 1894, a position he held until his retirement in 1917. Philip became involved in the production of musical productions at the newly opened Victoria Hall for the Residents of the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum and the Lazaret (Leprosarium), which was to the south of Dunwich. The cast consisted of the members of his family, inmates, and community. He named the troupe 'The Koompie Minstrels'. The Agnew's home was called "Bohemia", a name well suited to the family's artistic talents.



Noel 'Laddie' Agnew entertains his sister - Courtesy of the Agnew Family

The Agnews' world was rocked when their youngest son Noel, or 'Laddie' as he was affectionately known, contracted leprosy (Hansen's Disease). This proved a catalyst for the sufferers on Stradbroke Island to be relocated to Peel Island in 1907 for fear the disease would spread to the greater island population. Noel was to become one of the first and longest serving patients in the lazaret's 52 year history.

He used his time in forced isolation to record a highly detailed record of the bird life of Peel Island (76 species in total) which was published in the RAQU Journal *The Emu* in 1913. A further list was published in *The Emu* in 1921.



"U.S.S. Spitfire" drawn by 8-year-old Laddie

From a stage sketch by Noel Agnew - Courtesy of the Agnew Family

Between 1921 and 1923, a brief remission from the disease enabled Noel to return to his family in Dunwich. Unfortunately, the symptoms returned, and eventually the disease claimed his eyesight, the use of his hands and finally he became bedridden. Laddie died in 1937 and was buried in the Peel Island cemetery.

Philip Palmer Agnew died in 1937, three months after the death of his son, Noel.



Agnew Family at the opening of "Bohemia" - Photo by Peter Ludlow

The exhibition, which honours several generations of the pioneering, artistic and benevolent Agnew family, continues at the Redland Museum through until the end of February 2018.

Article By: Peter Ludlow