



# FOPIA Newsletter

December 2018

Editor - Peter Ludlow

## A memorable Christmas at the Lazaret

Each Christmas, it was the custom for the men to decorate their common room for the season's festivities. As well as the usual paper streamers etc, this involved the cutting of various eucalypts from the surrounding bush to be used as Christmas trees.

The common room contained a new piano and, during the festive season, there was even more carousing and singing than normal.

One year in the early 1940s, Christmas came and went but the decorations were left up for some weeks afterwards and the cut eucalypts in the common room became tinder dry.

One night, without warning, the room caught fire. Although the alarm was raised, without water, there was nothing anyone could do to extinguish the blaze.



Male patient's common room 1940s (Photo Eric Reye)

The cause of the fire was never known but many suspected the blaze to be deliberately lit by a reclusive couple of patients whose huts were adjacent to the hall and who were known to be annoyed by the noise of the singing and piano playing of the Christmas revellers.

It would have been an easy matter to set a match to the dried eucalyptus leaves in the room and escape before the fire took hold.

The real loss was the new piano. It too was destroyed in the blaze.

Extract from "Alex" reminiscences as recorded in Peter Ludlow's book, *"Peel Island Paradise or Prison"*

## FOPIA's Christmas Lunch - Saturday, 15th December, 2018



This year the Friends of Peel Island again held its annual Christmas Lunch on the side verandah at Cleveland's Sands Hotel.

The side verandah proved to be an ideal setting as it was protected from the noise from the main eating area and the Poinciana tree outside provided welcome shade from the Summer sun.

Fifteen members and friends attended the Sand's scrumptious food and finished with a portion of Christmas Pudding served with Vanilla Custard, Brandy Custard and Cream.

In all, it was a delightful afternoon.



# Merry Christmas and all the best for 2019!