



# FOPIA Newsletter

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Editor - Peter Ludlow

## William Simmons' Lost Paintings

In 1989, while the late Ray Cowie was Peel Island's Redland Shire Council Ranger and living at The Bluff, he was contacted by an elderly lady by the name of Ivy Rowell. She had information for him about her involvement with Peel Island. I think she had reached that age where she was reviewing her life before she died (much as I am now!)

Ray contacted me and I drove him out to visit Ivy at her home. Ivy was a wealth of

information. It transpired that she was the daughter of George Jackson, the Chief Attendant (Superintendent) of the Inebriate Home at Peel between 1910 and 1916.



*Ivy Rowell with one of the Paintings*

One of his patients, William Simmons, presented George with five oil paintings that he had completed while in his care. Ivy still had these paintings in her possession. As you can see from the photo, the unframed painting was very dark. Ivy told us that this was from all the smoke from mangrove leaves they burnt in their house to keep the mosquitoes at bay.

Ivy provided us with the information I was to later use in my "Of Drunkards and Rock Pools" chapter in my "Moreton Bay People" book and for an important part of the Hilda Finger chapter. Ray invited her back to Peel to revisit the site of her former home and she was very pleased to accept.





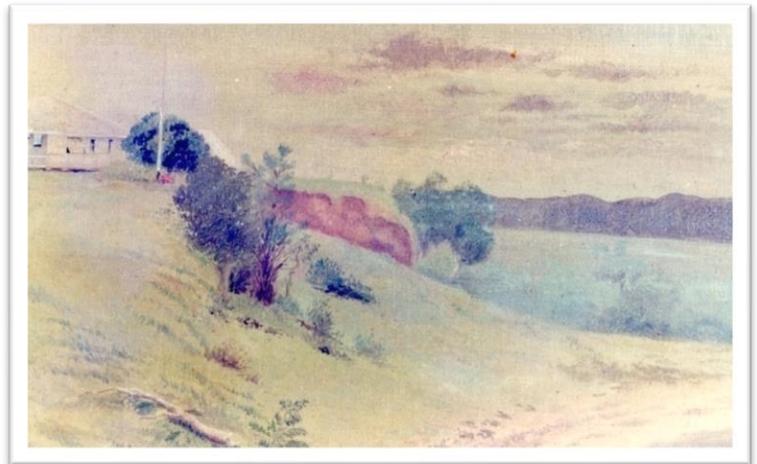
Ivy died a short time later and her son, John, scattered her ashes in Platypus Bay, a spot she had always loved since playing there as a 4 year old child. I think Ray may have had a part in the ceremony.

As a token of his respect for Ray's help to him and to his mother, John Rowell had the five Simmons' paintings cleaned of their soot, framed and inscribed with a dedication. I am not sure of the inscription, but I think it mentioned Ray.

Ray always maintained that John presented the paintings to him personally and not to any organisation. This has now been reconfirmed by his wife, Nola.

After Ray and Nola left Peel, they rented a house at Lamb Island and throughout our many visits to them my wife, Phyllis, and I saw the paintings hanging on the wall. After Nola and Ray split up, I never revisited the Lamb Island house again and do not know the circumstances under which Ray left.

If Ray did leave the paintings on the wall and the house was later sold with them still on the wall, the new owner would have inherited them. As they were not a fixture on the wall, I don't know if they legally became theirs.



The current ownership of the paintings is uncertain, but, in my opinion, if the paintings are ever recovered, I would hope that they are presented to QPWS and QYAC (as joint custodians of Peel Island) and nobody else.



*All photos are courtesy of the late Ray Cowie - The Picture above is Bird Island and The Bluff, above right is the Flagpole and Superintendent's House*

Written by Peter Ludlow