In a letter dated 21 April 1891, written by Sir Samuel Griffith to Lady Musgrave, he said:

The best part of it all was that I had the Lucinda in Sydney and was able to entertain the other delegates on board of her occasionally. She was very much admired. All the hard revision work was done on board, far away from Sydney.

These words refer to the final stage of the 1891 drafting of the Australian constitution, the event in which the Queensland Government yacht, the Lucinda, figured so prominently. This display marks the centenary of the major step which was taken towards putting into writing the constitution of Australia on board that ship on the Hawkesbury River from 27 to 29 March 1891. Further, this exhibition has been mounted to coincide with the presentation, this evening, of the Clem Lack Memorial oration entitled “The Great Provincial: Sir Samuel Griffith and the Making of the Australian Constitution”. This year the oration will be delivered by the historian, Professor Geoffrey Bolton.

The centrepiece of the display is the splendid metre long model of the Lucinda which has been made by Mr Dean Claflin of Balmain Model Shipyards in Sydney. His interest in building models of ships

This is a revised text of Sir Walter’s opening speech, omitting certain remarks especially appropriate to the event.
is said to have been prompted by seeing a near relative destroying for firewood some ship models which had been precious family heirlooms passed down from the early days of whaling in North America. Since the age of ten he has been building ship models and commissioning minatures in order to recreate the vessels of earlier times. As well as the model of the *Lucinda*, I understand that members of the society have been involved in finding and assembling the artefacts, photographs and documentary material about the ship which, together with five watercolours by Mr Don Braben, make up this fascinating display.

The importance of the yacht *Lucinda* in Queensland, and indeed in the history of Australia, dervies very largly from the fact that it was used by Sir Samuel Griffith. She was a steel paddle boat, built in 1884 to the order of the Griffith administration by W. Denny & Brothers of Dumbarton. According to a newspaper report in November 1923 she was said to have been built for a total cost of about twenty thousand pounds but apparently was sold for scrap nearly forty years later for only four hundred pounds. This was an unfitting and unhappy end to this important and stylish vessel. Indeed, a newspaper article of 21st October, 1970 reported a member of the Queensland parliament as saying that the skeleton of the *Lucinda* was rotting on the mudbanks of Bishop Island at the mouth of the Brisbane River. One should treat newspaper reports of this sort with considerable caution, but it may well have been a fair description of the situation at that time.

However, the details of the life of Sir Samuel Griffith have been researched with greater care than have most newspaper reports and so we can be reasonably confident about the details of that eminent jurist’s biography. Sir Samuel Griffith was born in Wales in 1845, the son of a Congregational Minister who emigrated to Australia with his family in 1854. He matriculated at Sydney University when he was fifteen and three years later completed his B.A. with first class honours in Classics, Mathematics and Natural Science, and obtained his M.A. in 1870. He built up a good practice at the bar in Brisbane, and entered the Legislative Assembly in 1871. He became Attorney-General three years later and Premier in 1883. He was returned as Premier and Colonial Secretary largely on his policy of prohibiting the importation of Kanaka labour from the Pacific Islands. The system of engaging black labour was full of abuses and large numbers of the islanders were kidnapped — a disreputable practice known as “black birding”.

Griffith’s government was defeated by Sir Thomas McIlwraith in 1888, but Griffith became Premier again in August 1890 in a coalition ministry with McIlwraith which lasted until March 1893 when he retired from politics to become Chief Justice. So it was during this
latter period of Griffith's time as premier that the *Lucinda* earned so important a place in Australian history.

The vessel's fame is associated with the National Australasian Convention of 1891 presided over by Sir Henry Parkes with Sir Samuel Griffith as Vice President. The delegates to that convention for Queensland were Macrossan, McIlwraith, Donaldson, Ruthledge and Griffith from the Legislative Assembly, and Thynne and Macdonald-Paterson from the Legislative Council.

This convention was empowered to report upon an adequate scheme for a Federal Constitution and was convened on 2 March 1891. The delegates represented the spectrum of major political views of the time. In order to facilitate the process of drafting a constitution, in short, to frame the initial drafts of a bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia, three committees were formed — a Constitutional Committee, a Finance Committee and a Judiciary Committee, the latter two reporting to the Constitutional Committee. After several revisions, it was the final stage of drafting which was completed on board the *Lucinda* on the Hawkesbury from 27 to 29 March — Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday.

*The Model of the Lucinda created by Mr Dean Claflin on display in March 1991*
In his biography of Griffith, the late Roger Joyce records that Sir Samuel and six of his colleagues sailed on the "Lucinda" to work over the Easter Period. These included a drafting sub-committee made up of Griffith, Kingston, Barton and Inglis Clark who was suffering with influenza. Among those who embarked on the evening of Good Friday were the Queenslander Thynne, the South Australian Downer and the Victorian Wrixton, and a fourth guest, Bernhard Wise, who was not a delegate but a close friend of Griffith. A letter from Griffith indicates that the conditions at sea were not absolutely ideal. He wrote:

‘On Friday we went to the Hawkesbury. There was too much swell on outside for work. We did not get into smooth water till lunch time; and then we anchored in a most lovely place called Refuge Bay.’

More than twenty years later Wise said:

The occasional missing of the happiest turn of phrase by the distinguished draftsmen may have been due to the sea sickness which followed the surreptitious heading of the steamer out to sea and the rise of a wind before she could return to harbour.

Despite these conditions, the work was of exceptional quality. In The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth published in 1901, Quick and Garran stated:

The real work of the convention was now practically finished; for although the subsequent discussion in committee occupies nearly half the printed volume of debates, not half a dozen substantial amendments were made . . . a good number of amendments were moved; but so well had the constitutional committee gauged the sense of the convention that these were nearly all defeated.

Griffith’s pre-eminent role in bringing the constitution into this workable form has been widely recognised, and the important but lesser role played by other members of the sub-committee such as Inglis Clark is also widely acknowledged. It is a shame then, after a Queensland Premier played such a central role in the 1891 convention, that subsequent Queensland politicians failed to take any part in the actual framing of the constitution.

In the conclusion of the introduction to their excellent book on the Constitution, Quick and Garran not only summarized what the framers of the Constitution achieved, but they also capture the spirit of the times and the ideals which stirred them:

During the past century the foundations of Australian nationhood have been laid; with the new century will begin the task of building the superstructure. Political barriers have been broken down, and the constitutional compact which, politically speaking, creates the Australian people, has been framed, accepted, and established. But
all this is only the beginning. The new national institutions of Australia have to be tested in the fire of experience; provincial jealousies have to be obliterated; national sentiment has to be consolidated; the fields of national legislation and national administration have to be occupied.

Australian statesmanship and patriotism, which have proved equal to the task of constructing the Constitution, and of creating a new nation within the empire, are now face to face with the greater and more responsible task of welding into a harmonious whole the elements of national unity, and of guiding the Australian people to their destiny — a destiny which, it may be hoped, will always be linked with that of the mighty empire of which they form a part.

While being at the centre of the action to draft a bill for an Australian constitution, the *Lucinda* was constantly in the background of other important historic events. For example, shortly after Griffith was again made Premier in 1890, he decided during the Marine Officers' Strike to use the Government ships, *Otter* and *Lucinda* to carry mail to northern Queensland ports in place of the commercial coasting vessels which were strike bound. Then, during the Shearers' Strike of 1891, Griffith, who was in Sydney at the time for the convention on the Constitution, while on board the *Lucinda*, wrote several telegrams and despatches to Tozer, his Colonial Secretary, regarding the actions which the government should take in that long-running and violent dispute.

In December of the preceding year, Griffith had also sailed north in the *Lucinda* to gather information on the Planters' problems regarding the sugar price and the need for replacement labour on the sugar plantations after the cessation of the importation of Kanaka labourers. All these events were significant for the influence which they were to have on the subsequent course of Queensland history, and historians in writing about them almost invariably mention the presence of the *Lucinda* playing its part, quietly, in the background.

I congratulate the president and members of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland on mounting this display in order to remind us all of the central role this graceful vessel played as host for the final stage of the drafting of the Australian constitution. The *Lucinda* fulfilled her role as a means of transportation, as a pleasure yacht, and as a workhorse for the governors, premiers and ministers of several Queensland governments during an important stage of this state's history. While so doing, she carved a niche not only in the history books, but in the affections of all students of Queensland History.