

## **Echoes of the past time: Miss Lord and *Brisbane's Historic Homes***

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Between 16 January 1930 and 22 December 1932, a series of articles entitled *Brisbane's Historic Homes* appeared in the weekly *Queenslander* written by FE Lord. During this three-year series, 156 articles covered 180 residences, each entry buttressed with two or three photographs. Not only were exteriors and interiors of the houses described, but also their location, their various owners or tenants and their family connections. These chatty columns were penned by Florence Lord who, through her own personal associations, knew many of the owners and occupants. Over the years many researchers seeking information on Brisbane's older dwelling places have found these columns a welcome oasis on their journeys through Queensland history covering all three essential elements, landscape, place and society at a point halfway between the colony's origin and the present Q150 commemorations.

Probably during the late 1930s, members of the Historical Society of Queensland compiled a cutting book in which most of the *Queenslander* articles were pasted. The scrapbook with its index has provided ready access to Miss Lord's articles and the volume has become a valuable source particularly as the majority of Brisbane's substantial residences of the early 1930s were recorded. While original copies of the newspaper were snipped to provide the cuttings, the compilation obviously was a later undertaking than their publication as some articles appear out of order while amendments, which appeared as postscripts on a later date, have been reunited with the original subject. The photographs also were clipped directly from the journal and are much more cleanly defined than subsequent filmed and photocopied versions. Further, several pages devoted to much later descriptions of many of the houses subsequently were inserted in the volume after Miss Lord's versions. In a couple of instances, where the original Lord article was not available, typed copies were included. The pages of the cutting book were numbered and a photocopy produced although this facsimile does not contain all the later additions. Then an index was compiled and placed at the front of the book although, once again, this does not contain every entry. In 1971 a survey of the houses apparently was undertaken by Society members when annotations were made indicating whether the building still existed, its current use or its approximate date of demolition. Since then no further updates have occurred. Currently both the original and a photocopy are available for research purposes at the Royal Historical Society of Queensland and a photocopied version is at the John Oxley Library within the State Library of Queensland.

After the main series of articles in the *Queenslander*, during 1933 and 1934 an occasional story covered residences outside Brisbane. For example, one on *Ormiston House* at

Cleveland published on 12 January 1933 is in the scrapbook while the Joyner's *Samsonvale* account, which appeared on 4 May 1933, was missed. A shorter than usual report on Murphy's Creek was featured on 18 May 1933, then a photograph, attributed to Miss Lord, of Miss McDonald at a cottage at Eagle Heights, was published on 13 July 1933. The article on *Wolston*, included in the cutting book, was in the *Queenslander* on 7 September 1933. According to a letter from Miss Lord arranging a visit, a column on *Jimbour* on the Darling Downs was planned for insertion sometime in the second half of 1933 but the newspaper did not feature it that year.

Florence Eliza Lord was born on 22 July 1879 as the second daughter of seven children to William Lord and his wife Marianne Charlton McLean.<sup>1</sup> Her father, in turn, was the son of Queensland pioneer, Edward Lord, the manager of Evan Mackenzie's local empire during the 1840s.<sup>2</sup> This former Lancashire man and early resident of Kangaroo Point, established the family home, *Edenbank*, on the western ridge of the Point, next door to surveyor James Warner, overlooking the emerging township of Brisbane. Reputedly built by convicts around 1844, the house was the site of much hospitality including that extended to Ludwig Leichhardt with whom for a short time Edward Lord had been educated in Germany.<sup>3</sup> After the family's move to Drayton at the end of the decade, on 21 July 1851 Lord convened a meeting at the Bull's Head Inn which voted to bring German labourers directly to Moreton Bay. In 1854 he promoted opportunities opening up in the north-eastern part of New South Wales on a visit to Germany and during the next year nearly one thousand settlers from the Tauber River Valley arrived at Moreton Bay due to his efforts. No doubt, Miss Lord's love of local heritage grew from the wide acquaintanceships established by her family over three generations. At sometime during the 1930s she became a life member of the Historical Society of Queensland while it was based at Newstead House. During these years, able to view Queensland's oldest surviving home at close quarters, her interest in gracious houses and their families was developed even further. Though she contributed many lectures to the historical programme, only a few were published.<sup>4</sup> At some time during the later 1930s she relocated to Melbourne where in July 1942 she died, unmarried, aged sixty-two years.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland Registrar General, birth certificate, no. 1879/0976.

<sup>2</sup> For Lord's association with Evan Mackenzie, see John Mackenzie-Smith, *Moreton Bay Scots, 1841-59*, Brisbane, Church Archivists' Press, p. 48 and p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> If these workers were convicts, they would have been employed as ticket-of-leave labourers, not as prisoners. The majority of convicts serving colonial sentences had been evacuated from the district on 9 May 1839 with a few NSW convicted herdsmen and agricultural labourers retained only until the end of that year. After that either those who had been freed with some type of indulgence or pardon, or a few still serving original sentences for crimes committed in Great Britain, were in the area.

<sup>4</sup> Although the Historical Society of Queensland had commenced in 1913, between 1928 and 1935 the Society's journal which generally reproduced the papers delivered at meetings was not published. Also, as the journal often listed office-holders, it has not been possible to verify the exact year when

When the series appeared in the *Queenslander* the illustrations were separate to the descriptions of the residences as they appeared in a pictorial insert in the middle of each magazine. For the first five months, the articles appeared in the second part of the paper, usually on page fifty but then late in May 1930, they were placed on or around page seven for the next five months. By November 1930, they could be found on page forty-six although from June 1931 they were moved to page thirty-four or thirty-five until the end of 1932 when they ceased. Similar changes were made to the placement of the photographs starting around pages thirty-nine to forty-one, then for a year from November 1930 at around page thirty-seven, before finally settling on page twenty-eight. Obviously this movement was at the whim or decision of the paper's editorial staff.

Another editorial resolution was to list each submission with Roman numerals. This led to all sorts of confusion. Sometimes the number of the article did not correspond with that on the photo caption, or it was not changed from that of the week before, or simply the sheer complexity totally bemused the typesetter. For example, on a couple of occasions a letter was missed such as following one numbered LXVI (66), the next number reverted to LXII (62) and then continued from there. Again after CXXII (122), the subsequent article appeared as CXIII (113) which again threw out any chronological order. Number 125 was attributed CXVIX (a non-existent configuration). After number 142 all attempts to use Roman numerals were abandoned. Because of the confusion generated by the published and other imposed numbering on the articles such as in the cutting book, the easiest way to most accurately identify each house is by the publication date and page number in the appropriate issue of the *Queenslander*.

The duplication of properties bearing the same name caused a further challenge within the cutting book as the article for 27 February 1930 dealt with *Montpelier*, the house owned by the O'Reillys and later the Cowlshaws at Bowen Hills while that for 18 September 1930 covered the *Montpelier* at Kangaroo Point which was home to the Collins, Murray-Prior, Holland and McLennan families over the years. The compilation confuses these two and the annotations are not helpful.

The microfilm of the *Queenslander* is readily available at the State Library of Queensland but even this can be frustrating as page 41 for the issue of 20 March 1930 was missed during filming so the article on *Folkestone* at Bowen Hills cannot be seen there although the proposed digitised version should correct this oversight. Also it must be noted that when

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Miss Lord became a life member. RHSQ, vol. 2, no. 4 was published in March 1928 while vol. 2, no. 5 did not appear until November 1935. I thank Manfred Cross for verification of this reference.

<sup>5</sup> Victorian Registrar General, death certificate no. 1942/6329. *Courier Mail*, 23 July 1942, carried a notice of death but no obituary, nor could one be found in any other Brisbane or Melbourne newspapers.

viewing the films, the value of these columns lose much of their energy when placed among so many other newsworthy and picturesque items. This most impressive characteristic certainly is reinforced by the cutting book collection.

The scrapbook with its index has provided access to Miss Lord's articles and the volume has become a valuable source particularly as the majority of Brisbane's substantial residences of the early 1930s were recorded. Miss Lord worked diligently, writing in longhand and independently travelling around by bus, tram and train. She aimed for honesty but being so reliant on her friendly network and inflexible publishing deadlines, she obviously did not always have the opportunity, means, or desire, to refer to primary documents including title deeds which would have revealed mortgages and official changes of ownership. Her method was first of all to depict the landscape and views, then to describe the buildings, inside and out. Intermingled among these reports were stories of the families who had witnessed or were responsible for any developments. Accounts of these people usually were recounted in the first person especially if the columnist had associations with either the families or the place. Persons who supplied information, moreover were generally named, or Miss Lord cited one of her favourite reference texts, like Spencer Browne's *A Journalist's Memoirs* and Nehemiah Bartley's *Opals and Agates*, sources which she accepted quite uncritically.

Miss Lord started her series with *Newstead* which, given its role in the history of Brisbane as well as being her workplace, was most appropriate. From there on the choice seemed to be quite random. Perhaps the order of appearance depended on her access to the places, the time it took for her to research the backgrounds, or even may have been prompted by reader interest. While the same suburb may be used successively for two or even three weeks, the spread throughout the entire city area was exhaustive. A city residence might be featured one week to be followed by Ascot, Kangaroo Point, Kedron or Corinda, over the next editions.

A sample of Miss Lord's reporting of location can be found in the article on *Sidney House*, Toowong, originally owned by the Finneys of the department store, Finney Isles, and in 2009, on the site of the ABC Studios at Toowong which probably will be sold shortly.

Situating 'where the languid current steals past', is Sidney House, Toowong, its triangular shaped grounds adjoining some other properties that turn River-road from its course by the river bank. Facing the east it views the river lengthways, and straight ahead is seen the curve of River-road. Looking to the left, as the train nears Toowong station from the city, Sidney House, with its slate roof and high chimneys, is conspicuous amongst its tall trees, and contrasts with the more modern houses round it.<sup>6</sup>

Another part of Brisbane is illustrated to advantage in the introduction to the Flower family home of *Kirkston* at Windsor-Newmarket.

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<sup>6</sup> *Sidney House*, Toowong, *Queenslander*, 29 January 1931, pp. 46/37. [The first page number refers to the article, and the second to the pictures.]

Glimpses of this fine home, as it stands on its commanding height, are obtained between and above its wealth of surrounding trees as one travels along Lutwyche-road, and its view is panoramic. The accompanying view, snapped between two over-arching trees, was obtained from the balcony on the southern side, and shows the Bulimba Reach of the river in the middle distance, the heights of Bowen Hills with, to each side of them and against the distant skyline, Mt Gravatt and White's Hill. In the foreground is a part of Windsor. Eildon Hill is round to the right, and from the front of the house one gets a glorious view of the Taylor Range and Mt Nebo, with Newmarket, spread out to our near view below, the high parts of Nundah, and then Ascot further round to the right, bounded by Moreton Island, with a gleam of the sea below it. A glorious picture indeed on a bright day, with the island clothed in a dress of delicate misty blue.<sup>7</sup>

Moving on to comment upon the exterior aspect of a residence, Miss Lord revealed a knowledge of basic architecture and an appreciation only gained by personal investigation. Her exploration of Drury's *Hawstead* at New Farm also indicated small changes which had taken place over the years.

This fine old bungalow is built of brick, and originally, slates covered its sloping roof. These were removed later and rolled iron placed there instead. Wide verandas encompass the house on three sides - as is the style of most of these old bungalows, relieved by a gabled porch in front, reached by a set of stone steps - and a spacious one of quadrangular shape on the northern side, with sets of steps on each side of it. Beneath the corner veranda-room, with wooden outer walls, is a large stone cellar, and brick pillars support the spacious dwelling.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly when giving her version of *Beerwah* on Gregory Terrace, her account brims with detailed observations.

It was in the late seventies that Mr John Petrie built Beerwah, and I believe that the foundations alone cost £2000 - foundations strong enough to support a house of several stories. Beerwah is only of one story, but large and commodious, built of plaster-faced bricks, on which is stamped the name 'Petrie', with a high main roof and a gable at each side, all covered, at the present time, in corrugated iron. A conspicuous feature of this old house is its high twin chimneys at each end of the main roof. The original house contains about fourteen rooms.<sup>9</sup>

When some of the interior decoration was described, it is hard to accept that some years later they were ruthlessly redeveloped. One example, near the Botanic Gardens in the city centre, was *Barham* in Alice Street, the home of the FH Harts and the Finnegans, among others. Mrs Finnegan, the proprietress of the Hotel Cecil and the Bellevue Hotel, and her daughters travelled extensively and their home reflected distant destinations.

The walls are papered in panels. Those in the drawing room, on the right-hand side of the hall, are edged with ornamental gilding, and would almost pass for large picture frames. Hanging in these panels are paintings mostly, among them being three perfect gems. Thrown out in vivid relief from a background of deepest black are small figures executed in the daintiest of water colours, and representing classical characters, no doubt. These are copies of some that form a dado in a house unearthed at Pompeii, and executed by the artist, V. Bisogna. ... Hanging from the drawing-room ceiling is a thing of exquisite workmanship, a Venetian glass chandelier, with pendant blue daffodils.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Kirkston, Windsor-Newmarket, *Queenslander*, 6 August 1931, pp. 35/28.

<sup>8</sup> *Hawstead*, New Farm, *Queenslander*, 4 June 1931, pp. 46/37.

<sup>9</sup> *Beerwah*, Gregory Terrace, *Queenslander*, 5 March 1931, pp. 46/37.

<sup>10</sup> *Barham*, Alice Street, Brisbane City, *Queenslander*, 12 June 1930, pp. 7/41.

Miss Lord's written images of *Hilderstone* at Kangaroo Point projected the practicalities of daily living in these, often imposing, structures.

Following the usual plan in those old homes, the rooms are all large with high ceilings, and there is some fine old cedar in the fittings. In all I think there are seven beautiful marble mantelpieces. The hall is wide and arched in the middle, and there is also a set of folding doors, of cedar, for the purpose of making the hall into two compartments if necessary. What Mrs Finimore uses now as a dining-room was used as a ballroom in the Goertzes' time. The kitchen premises are in a one-storied wing at the back, and there is another wing of one story on the western side of the house.<sup>11</sup>

Although the emphasis is directed towards the houses, a reader might be forgiven for wondering whether Miss Lord's main interest really centred upon those who lived in them. The newspaper's editors would have delighted in this splash of society gossip on their women's pages, no doubt beaming approval of the almost reverent tones the reporter employed. She explained the residents' connections by marriage, most usefully giving the pre-marital name of many of the women, designating their links to other siblings or relatives and, in turn, to their homes. She was scrupulous about including titles, military ranks, status and overseas linkages. Inaccuracies must have stimulated cries of concern from her friends or the public, as regular corrections to earlier articles were appended a couple of weeks later, most referring to the people rather than mistakes about the house plans or rooms.

As would be expected, these gracious residences were the homes of Brisbane's leaders in all fields of activity around the city, and Miss Lord painstakingly recorded ancestry, present relations and their roles. When accounting for the occupants of *Erica* at Coorparoo, she explained:

Mr T.M. King and his old friend, Mr Parry Okeden, were the first Queenslanders to receive the decoration of I.S.O. ... Mr and Mrs King had a large family who were brought up alongside the Deshons, at Kemendine, so it was not surprising that a marriage took place between a son of the Deshons and a daughter of the Kings. The other married daughters are Mrs P.A. Blundell, Mrs L.H. Smith, and Mrs G.H. Austin. Two single daughters - the Misses Amy and Eileen King - are sisters in the nursing profession. Both of them served through the war, and were decorated, the latter being badly wounded. In addition to Mr R.M. King, the Minister for Public Instruction, there are Mr F.H. King and Mr John King.<sup>12</sup>

On occasions, the amount of detail became overwhelming as in this case when exploring the occupants of *Wunkoo* at Hamilton.

Mrs Brownlow Cole's first husband was her sister's brother-in-law, Mr Tom Perkins. Mr Brownlow Cole was a Devonshire man, and after his marriage to the widow of Mr Tom Perkins, he took her to England, where, in the historic town of Oxford, her one child, Miss Nell Cole, was born.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Hilderstone*, Kangaroo Point, *Queenslander*, 18 December 1930, pp. 46/37.

<sup>12</sup> *Erica*, Coorparoo, *Queenslander*, 14 April 1932, pp. 34/28.

<sup>13</sup> *Wunkoo*, Hamilton, *Queenslander*, 17 December 1931, pp. 35/23.

Further, any connections to Miss Lord's own family was revealed as indicated by these two short extracts. The first is taken from her article on *Bertholme*, presently the home of the Moreton Club at New Farm.

She [Mrs Booker of Maryborough] was, I understand, the mother of Mr C. and the late Mr E.G. Booker, and was known to be a great reader; and that her taste in literature was one of the best was borne out in her choice of a gift to her friend, my late governess.<sup>14</sup>

The second instance appeared in the column concerning *Kirkston* at Lutwyche.

The late Mr John Flower's brother, Mr C A Flower, then of Durham Downs station, in the Roma district, was an ever welcome visitor to the writer's station home, and a congenial 'pal' of her late father.<sup>15</sup>

As society people moved around Brisbane, the country and overseas, their homes often were leased to people with similar backgrounds, many waiting to purchase or to renovate their own houses. A useful explanation of tenancy changes appeared in the account of Patrick Perkins' North Quay establishment, *Aubigny*. Miss Lord became fascinated with the usage of a small building in the grounds which the original owner, Mr Samuel Davis, 'a man of standing in the Jewish fraternity' had erected in 1870 as the first synagogue in Brisbane and which, during the Perkins ownership, became a billiard room.

In 1899, owing to a very serious illness, Mrs Perkins was advised to move to a less moist locality, and the Government of the day rented the house and used it as offices for the Criminal Investigation Department, and the ex-Synagogue, ex-billiard room, became their photography department. When this department was moved into new offices the late Rev. Mother Patrick, in about the year 1906, rented *Aubigny* from Mrs Perkins ... in order to start her newest venture, the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and the already historic little brick building in the grounds became the hospital chapel. Mother Patrick's venture turning out a success, *Aubigny* became too small for the purpose for which she had rented it, so the present spacious hospital in South Brisbane was built. Then about 1911 or 1912 the Sisters of Mercy purchased *Aubigny* and started a hostel for girls there, and changed the name to Loretto ... The historic room is now the maids' quarters for the hostel.<sup>16</sup>

The listing of owners and lessees alone, stretching from when each house was built up to the time of the articles, is comprehensive and offers many insights on social mobility, especially as the period encompassed well-reported bank crashes and bankruptcies which seriously affected even the most superior residents.

Frequently Miss Lord, mimicking her guides, Spencer Browne and Bartley, ended her descriptive passages with a couple of lines of poetry or incorporated some quotations within her text. Local wordsmiths as well as the most popular Victorian poets were included but generally the authors were not named. She liked the affected emotion of lines such as:

Dreams and echoes of the past time  
Waken in our memory's thrill  
Showing by their silent teaching,  
Time is onward marching still.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Bertholme*, New Farm, *Queenslander*, 4 December 1930, pp. 46/27.

<sup>15</sup> *Kirkston*, Lutwyche, *Queenslander*, 6 August 1931, pp. 35/28.

<sup>16</sup> *Aubigny*, North Quay, *Queenslander*, 11 December 1930, pp. 46/37.

<sup>17</sup> *The Old Valley Rectory (now Burworth)*, Fortitude Valley, *Queenslander*, 26 March 1931, pp. 46/37.

On other occasions, any verse which had even the slightest reference to a house-name or location, no matter how obscure, was co-opted:

Fring, Wing and Ivanhoe  
For striking of a blow  
Hampden did forego  
And glad he could escape so.

Using this quotation as an introduction to a column Miss Lord narrated how, after an early ancestor of 'British patriot' John Hampden lost these three properties in an altercation with the Black Prince, his better known descendant suggested *Ivanhoe* as a title to Sir Walter Scott. Then she, not too convincingly, chronicled how in distant Queensland in 1883 another totally unrelated Scotsman, James Boyne Hall, named his Enoggera house in tribute to that author's work.<sup>18</sup>

For the article on Simeon Lord's *Highmead* in Upper Roma Street later purchased by Benjamin Cribb, she suggested, with apparently little authority and even less aptitude, that these few lines by George Essex Evans may have contributed to the name of his villa, reusing an identical phrase she previously had employed when describing Sidney House, similarly on the river Brisbane.

... far below  
Winds rippling by:  
As, like a creeping snake with curve and sweep,  
The languid current steals past mead and peak.<sup>19</sup>

Although employing poetic devices may not have been as successful as her useful descriptions, it is obvious that Miss Lord, reflecting her times, enjoyed sentimentality which showed due deference to the past as well as providing pen-pictures.

We will not speak of years tonight  
For what have years to bring  
But larger floods of love and light  
And sweeter songs to sing.<sup>20</sup>

Nearly eighty years after the publication of Miss Lord's narratives, what is the value of all this industry? Firstly, looking back over 150 years since the establishment of the colony of Queensland, practically all of Brisbane's major homes and their potentially important owners and residents for the first half of this period were recorded for posterity by the busy pen of Miss Florence E Lord. For present day researchers her outpourings provide comprehensive assessments around which to frame their work. While it is clear that Miss Lord did not wish to embarrass either her informants or audiences, despite the regularly published corrections, her claims sometimes raised questions of accuracy. This observation, found in a 1953 letter

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<sup>18</sup> *Ivanhoe*, Enoggera, *Queenslander*, 21 May 1931, pp. 46/37.

<sup>19</sup> *Highmead*, Upper Roma Street, Brisbane City, *Queenslander*, 18 June 1931, pp. 35/21.

<sup>20</sup> *The Retreat and Cairnsville*, Petrie Bight, *Queenslander*, 25 June 1931, pp. 35/28.

written by Sydney May of the Place Names Board, confirmed the need to exercise caution. 'Miss Lord had some very fixed ideas on some of their [place] names but was not reliable'.<sup>21</sup>

The usefulness and sheer amount of information contained in the articles and the accompanying illustrations deserve better access so recently Paul Sayer and I have undertaken a complete survey of these articles and devised an index which has listed the date of publication, sorted out the convoluted numbering system, identified each and every house, determined the suburb where it was located, noted all owners and tenants, tied this information to the page numbers in the *Queenslander* for both the article and the image and also indicated the pagination used in the cutting book. We plan to publish this probably in 2010.

In her own inimitable, affectionate, well-mannered style, Miss FE Lord's journey through the history of south-eastern Queensland and the capital engagingly reconstructs the landscape, the place and its society, from colonial times through to the 1930s. Few other documentary sources cover so long a period or reflect so much of the character of our current heritage.

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<sup>21</sup> RHSQ, correspondence on Murphy's Creek, Sydney May, 5 February 1953.

