



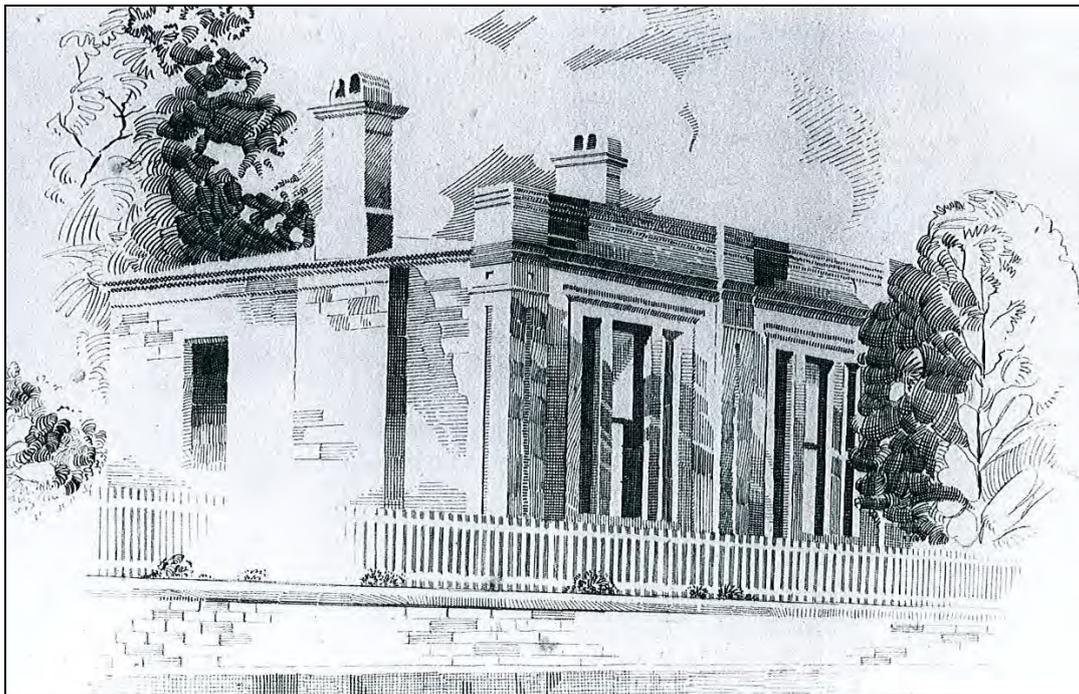
History and Heritage Series

EARLY HOMES (and Stories)

of the

United Service Club Queensland

Based on a presentation by COLONEL Dennis Scanlan, CSM, RFD, ADC – Club President 2010 -11,
the Club's history (*United Service Club Queensland: The First Century 1892-1992*,
by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton), and various websites.



These Background Notes have been prepared to enhance Members' appreciation of the Club through better awareness and understanding of selected aspects of the Club's rich history and heritage and the remarkable people who have contributed to its development over the years. We acknowledge that there are probably errors and omissions. **Please contact the Club if you have additional information or comments to assist the improvement of these notes.**

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed over time. They are intended as casual reading for use by Members only and should not be reproduced or distributed to non-members, to avoid any potential copyright issues.

Homes of the United Service Club Queensland

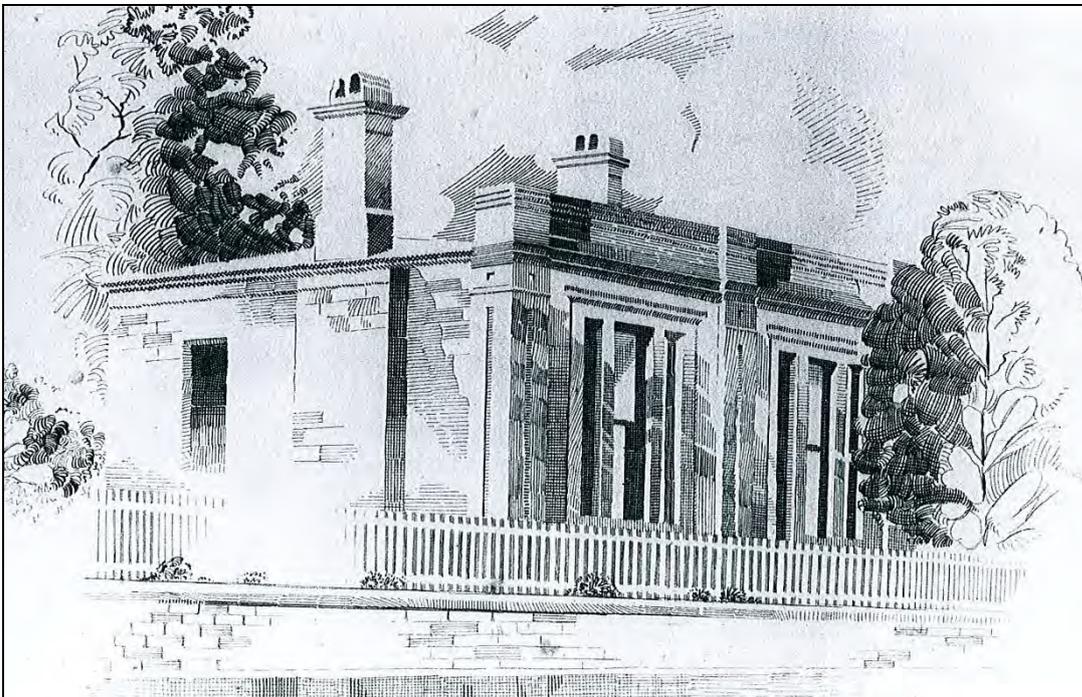
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Introduction

The Club has occupied its current premises for almost 70 years and these premises are now synonymous with the Club, so today's Members may not be aware of that our current premises are our sixth home since the Club was founded in 1892.¹ This Note outlines the Club's previous homes and provides a few glimpses of early Club life over the years.

William Street (1893-1899)

The first building the Club occupied in 1893 was in William Street Brisbane and was provided (along with a grant of £50 per year) by the Queensland Colonial Government. Members' fees were half a guinea per year and it is thought that there were 61 foundation members (from approximately 150 officers in the Brisbane area).



The Club's first home in William Street

In the global context, 1893 was a year of peace but the British public were mourning the death of Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson; in the Colony, the shearer's strike was only recent, the local economy was experiencing a depression, Queensland trains were lit with gas lamps for the first time, Jackie Howe set a world record by shearing 321 sheep in one day, and Brisbane and Ipswich were about to be stricken by disastrous foods in 1893.

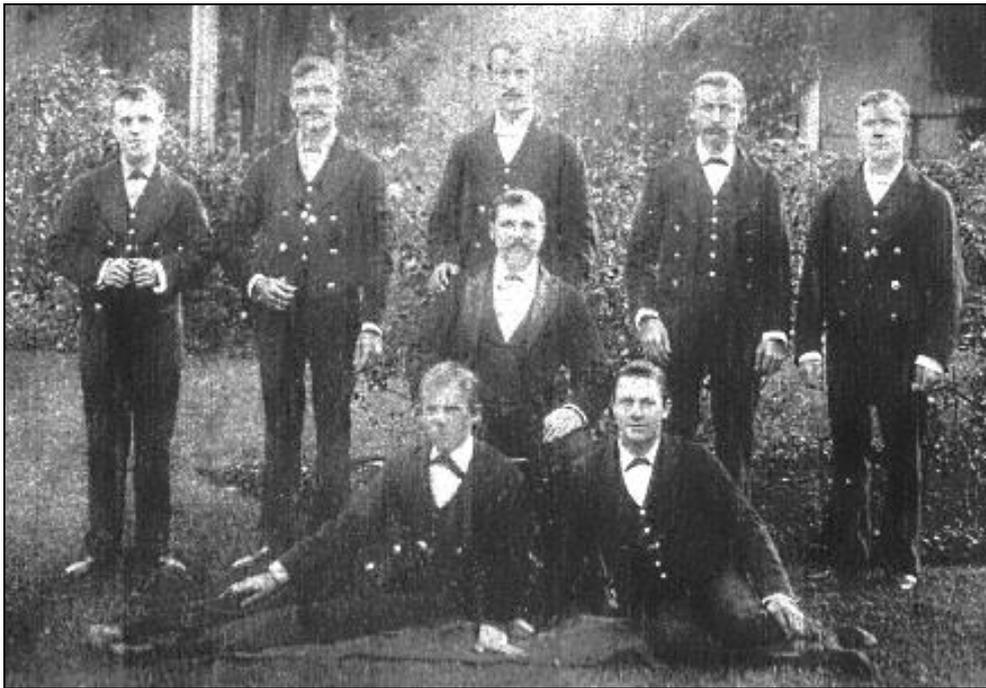
Brisbane had grown to 100,000 people from 5,000 in 1859 (the year of Separation from the colony of New South Wales). Its streets were paved with wooden blocks and lit by gas lamps, with transport provided by horse-drawn trams.

The building provided by the Colonial Government was a small, old building that was once the office of the Colonial Secretary. There was an entrance via a lane from George Street with the main

¹ The United Service Club Queensland was established as a military officers club on the 22 December 1892 by Major General John Owen RA, Commandant of the Queensland Defence Force. It was modelled on the United Service Club in London that was formed in 1816 by the Duke of Wellington soon after Waterloo. The London club has since closed but its premises, located at 116 Pall Mall London, still exist and is currently occupied by the Institute of Company Directors.

entrance from William Street up a flight of stone steps. It was thought to have originally been a private residence as it had a bow window onto William Street.

The staff of the Club at that time was led by Head Steward, Arthur Holyoak.



Arthur Holyoak is in the centre of this photo.

It was the Club's home for about six years until it was demolished to make way for progress, ie the construction of the sandstone Executive Building.

Queen Street (1899-1900)

In 1899 the Government provided temporary premises in Queen Street almost opposite the current GPO. The image below shows Queen Street in front of the GPO just a few years before the Club moved there in 1899.



Looking west along Queen Street with the GPO on the left, c1895

It was from the Queen Street location that the first Club members departed for the South African War (Boer War).

Crowds of 25,000 to 30,000, the largest Brisbane had ever seen, lined the parade routes to farewell the seven Queensland contingents totalling 3,000 men. The majority of the contingent's 110 officers were Club members².



Queensland's contingent marching east along Queen Street

Sometime prior to 1900 the Club changed its name to '*United Service Institution of Queensland*' and it became known as *the Institution*.³

The removal of the word *Club* from the title it is believed happened to minimise the connotations of elitism and privilege and to emphasise the educational role of the Club so as to continue to attract the Government grant⁴.

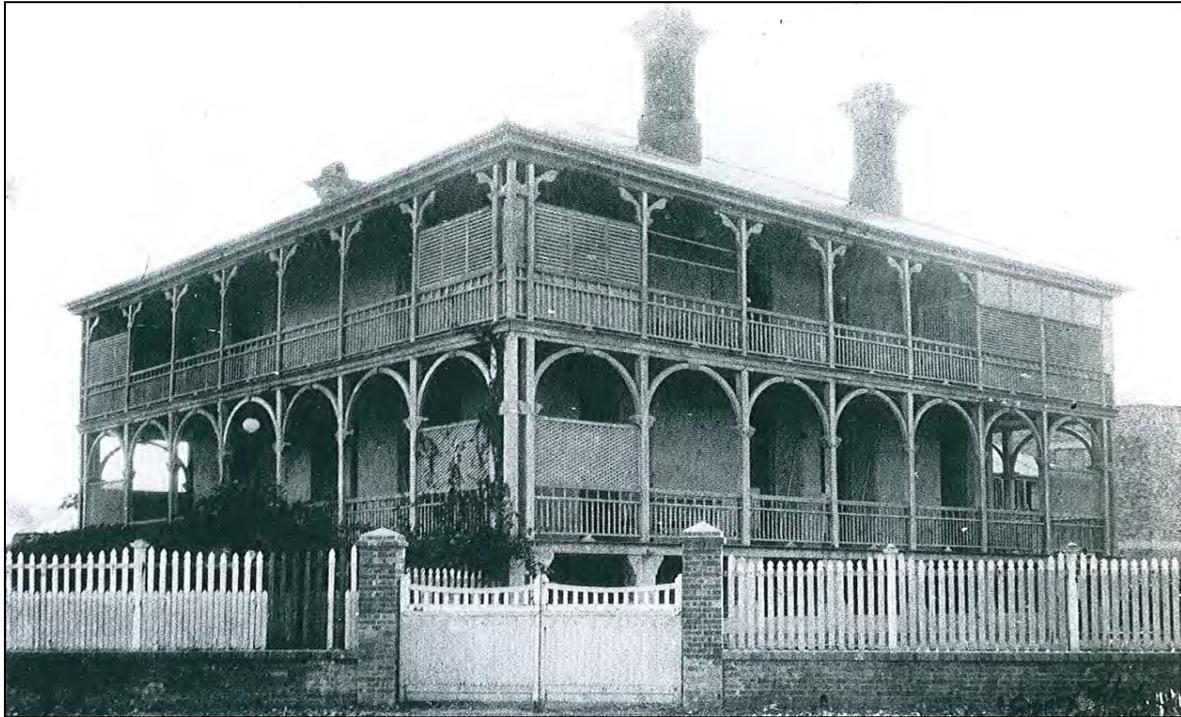
² They included Lieutenant CG Gehrman, a member of the 5th Queensland Imperial Bushman distinguished by koala-skin puggarees (hat bands), and the first contingent of Queensland Mounted Infantry included the then Captain HG Chauvel, later General Sir Harry Chauvel.

³ It is thought that the brass plate now displayed outside and next to our front door has been brought from earlier buildings and has been modified over the years with a separate plate reading 'Club' affixed to cover-up the word 'Institute'.

⁴ The new Labour Party had an increasing presence in parliament and it's probable that its members would not have much affection for an officers' club.

Aubigny, 293 North Quay (1900-1904)

After a year or so in Queen Street the Club moved to 'Aubigny' in 1900, again provided by the Colonial Government. This was a gracious building and very comfortable quarters, situated at the northern end of North Quay, not far from today's William Jolly Bridge.



'Aubigny', 293 North Quay, home of the Institution circa 1900-1904

It had previously been the home of the Honourable Patrick Perkins, the proprietor of the Milton brewery prior to the Victorian brewer Castlemaine Brewery acquiring a controlling interest⁵.

There were adequate facilities for enjoying a drink and lunch cooked by the steward's wife, and a library. But it did not have a billiard table. That deficiency was soon rectified by raising funds to a total of £130 through the issue of debentures (from £5 upwards) to members, and surprisingly, these were fully subscribed in ten minutes.

The Head Steward Arthur Holyoak resided with his family at the Club. Sadly, while living at the Club Arthur's daughter, Eileen Dorothy Holyoak died from meningitis at the tender age of 4 years and 2 months (see extract of her Death Certificate below).

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Queensland DEATH CERTIFICATE | | 6807899 REGISTRATION NUMBER 1901/ 1730 |
| (For use in case of deceased, obliteration, removal, addition or "Criminal Code".) | DECEASED | |
| | Name and surname | <i>Eileen Dorothy Holyoak</i> |
| Occupation | <i>Infant</i> | |
| Sex and Age. | <i>Female 4 years 2 months</i> | |
| Date of Death | <i>7 October 1901</i> | |
| Place of Death | <i>"Aubigny" North Quay</i> | |
| Where born and, if not born in Australia, period of residence in Australia. | <i>Brisbane, Queensland</i> | |
| | PARENTS | |
| Name and surname of father | <i>Arthur Holyoak</i> | |
| Occupation | <i>Steward</i> | |
| Name and maiden surname of mother | <i>Bridget Kelliher</i> | |

Extract of Eileen Holyoak's Death Certificate

⁵ It was then known for years as Castlemaine Perkins Brewery.

In March 1901 the new Commonwealth of Australia took control of all naval and military forces. It refused to provide premises for the Institution as had been done by the Colonial Government (the Queensland Government had provided premises and £50 grant pre year).

Fortunately the grant was increased to £100 per year and was continued. This grant this assisted the Institution to pay the rent of its next premises at 21 North Quay.

The Club moved from 'Aubigny' in 1905, but the building had an interesting life after the institution had moved out. Soon after the Club vacated the building the Sisters of Mercy established Brisbane's first Mater Private Hospital there in 1906.



'Aubigny' as Mater Hospital c 1906.

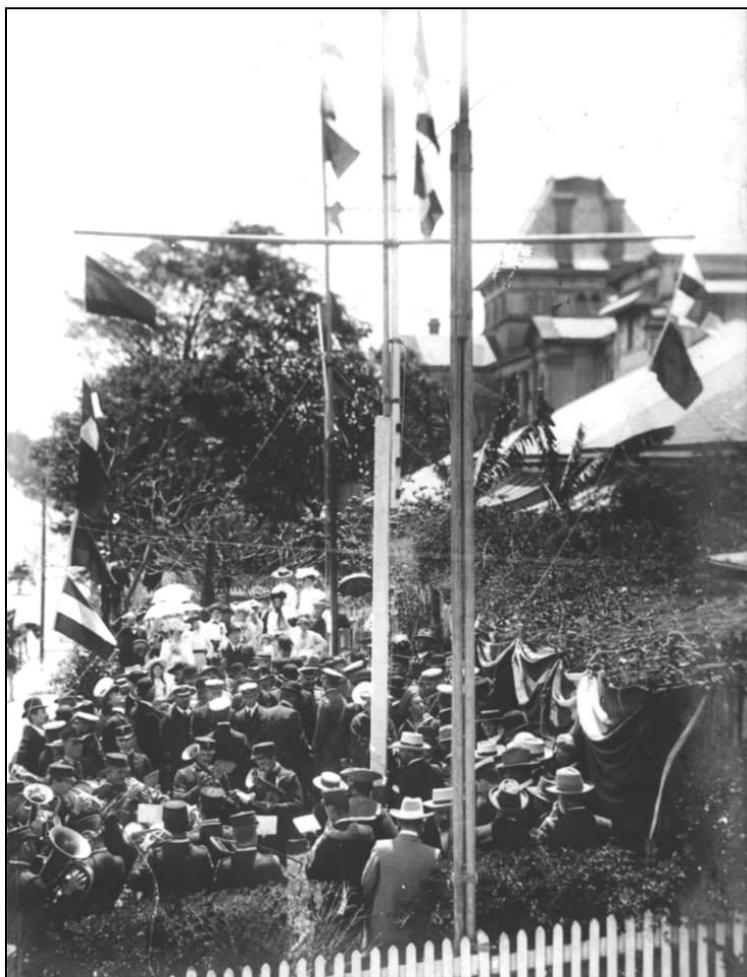
Aubigny was eventually demolished as part of the northern approaches to the William Jolly Bridge c 1929.



Grey Street Bridge (now William Jolly Bridge) under construction c1929, looking upstream

21 North Quay (1905-1914)

The Club moved to at building at the opposite end of North Quay in 1905, to premises with an address of 21 North Quay.



*Trafalgar Day at 21 North Quay in 1905.
The 'turret' of the old Supreme Court building is in the background.*

The commemoration of the Centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1905 was a big occasion. The Club History⁶ book records that:

One memorable occasion at No 21 North Quay was the Institution's celebration on 21 October 1905, of the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

The committee went to great trouble to ensure the correctness of every detail, even to the extent of having special smaller than standard naval signal flags made because of the limited space available to display Nelson's famous message on the three masts, complete with cross trees, which had been erected in front of the club house.

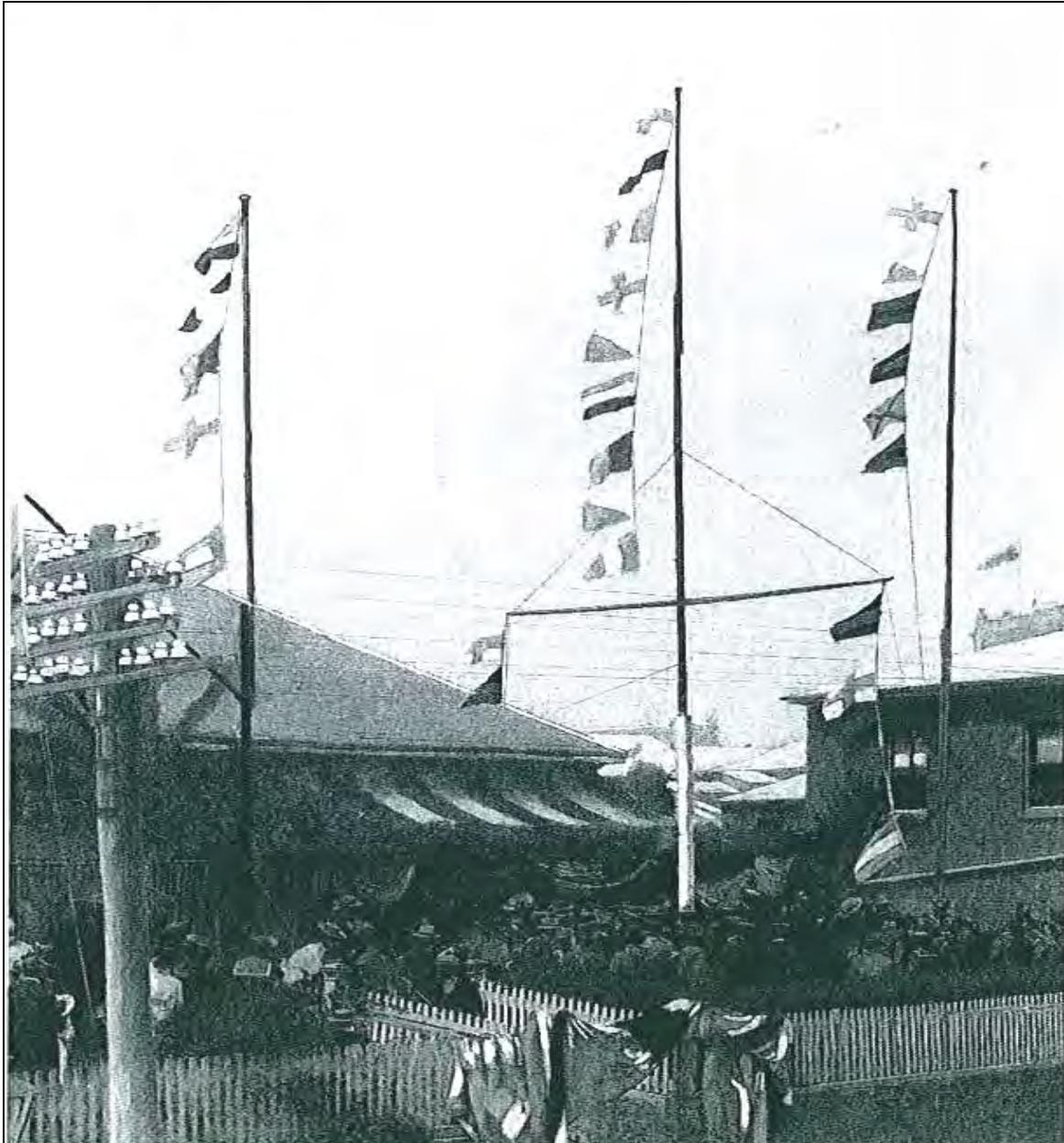
Precisely at noon on the day, before a large crowd of members and honourable citizens, the order to hoist the signal was given by Lieutenant MGG Pascoe, a grandson of Flag Lieutenant Pascoe who gave the original order on 'HMS Victory' exactly 100 years earlier.

That night Lieutenant Commander W Harris RNR gave a lecture on the Battle to members and Lieutenant Pascoe displayed naval trophies which had come to him from his grandfather.

⁶ *United Service Club Queensland: The First Century 1892-1992*, by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton

It is interesting to note that on that occasion members' wives had not been forgotten; they were accommodated at the ladies club next door. A photograph of the premises at No 21 North Quay on this occasion, enlarged and coloured by Captain P Stanhope Hobday⁷, is still in possession of the Club.

The watercolour of the occasion hangs above the rear stairs of the Club today.



*The centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar, 21 North Quay, 1905.
(from a photograph by Captain P Stanhope Hobday)*

The Annual Dinner in 1909 was enhanced by the presence of both their Excellences, the Earl of Dudley (Governor General) and Sir Thomas Carmichael (Governor of Victoria).

⁷ Captain Percy Stanhope Hobday, honorary librarian to the Institution and a talented photographer and caricaturist.

In 1910, there was a visit, together with the customary gift to the Club of a signed portrait, by the great Field Marshal Lord Kitchener⁸.



Field Marshal Haratio Herbert Kitchener KG KCB OM KCMG

The modestly increasing membership was testing the capacity of the premises. To increase library space, the honorary secretary and his roll-top desk and bookcase were moved into the dining room.

In the same year it was decided to deposit £200 of the year's surplus into a savings bank account as the nucleus of a building fund. This was the first small step towards eventual ownership of our own club rooms.

In January 1912, there was a general strike that originated with a dispute within the Brisbane Tramway Company. On 18 January about 10,000 people massed in Market Square (now King George Square) to show solidarity with the tramway men and on 30 January 20,000 workers went on strike including police. The Premier and the Police Commissioner responded by swearing-in special constables, including many retired military and naval officers.

All non-members were made Honorary Members for the duration, and although commodities were soon in short supply the secretary had a permit which gave the Institution priority in the purchase of food and drink. It became one of the few places in town where a hard-working special constable could quench his thirst and have a bite to eat. Trading results were good in that period.

The president (Lieutenant Colonel GH Hopkins) lived a few doors away and provided emergency accommodation for about 20 members each night.

⁸ Field Marshal Haratio Herbert Kitchener KG KCB OM KCMG (24 Jun 1850-5 Jun 1916). First Earl of Khartoum and Broome. He later became Britain's Secretary of State for War (a Cabinet Minister) until he was killed when the warship taking him to a conference in Russia struck a mine.

70 George Street (1914-1947)

In May 1914 the Club purchased a block of land at 70 George Street from the Electric Light Company for £1,600.

Contract price for the building was £2,498. Plans were immediately prepared for a modestly-sized but solid and presentable building. The plans included foundations to support the addition of a second floor if required.

A new single story brick club house was built on the land that year (1914). The timing was fortuitous because the Great War broke out on 4 August with consequent manpower shortages and the prohibition of non-essential building projects.

This was the first building the Club owned. It was to be the centre of the Club's life for the next 33 years.



70 George Street (c 1929 after the second storey had been added).

It has been difficult to pinpoint the precise location where our building stood as it was demolished when the precinct was redeveloped. It is believed that it is just visible in the 1971 photograph below. The photo looks north along George Street with the (now-demolished) Bellvue Hotel in the left foreground and The Mansions (now restored) in the middle left. The old USC building is thought to be the one this side of and adjacent to the furthest white building next to the State Government high-rise (ie near the distant street-tree).



George Street looking north from opposite the Bellvue Hotel (left), 1971.

The Club's previous home is just visible between the two white buildings this side of the Government high-rise building

Not much is known about the activities during the war or the immediate post-war period, but there was an increase in membership in 1919-1920 and beyond as the many officers commissioned during the war returned to Queensland.

In August 1920, the Prince of Wales⁹ was persuaded to pay a brief visit to the Institution, at short notice (there had been a muddle in the invitations and the preparation of the Prince's schedule). Arrangements were made to inform every member available by telephone, and there was a big muster and the function passed off successfully. As was the custom, HRH presented a signed photograph of himself to the Club.

⁹ Edward VIII was born on 23 June 1894. He served with the Commonwealth Forces in World War I and later visited Australia as the Prince of Wales in 1920. His was one of the most popular of royal visits to Australia. Journeying on the royal yacht *Renown*, he visited all Australian states. The Prince arrived in Australia in Melbourne on 27 May and departed from the country on 18 August 1920.

Edward ascended the throne on 20 January 1936 after the death of his father, George V. Before the end of the year, however, he took the unprecedented step of abdicating so that he could marry a twice divorced American woman, Mrs Wallis Simpson



HRH The Prince of Wales in 1920

An Honour Board¹⁰ to commemorate the 22 members who had been killed in the Great War was commissioned. It was designed signed by Club Member (and Government Architect) Lieutenant Colonel T Pye, carved by a local artist, and unveiled by the Governor (His Excellency, The Right Honourable Lieutenant Colonel Sir Matthew Nathan) on 13 August 1924. Today it hangs just inside our front door.

There was another Royal visit to the Club in 1927, by His Royal Highness The Duke of York¹¹. This was the second visit to the Club by a future King within a space of seven years. HRH had also travelled to Australasia on the Royal Yacht *Renown* and his tour included the opening of the then new Parliament House in Canberra on 19 May 1927.



HRH The Duke of York leaving the Club in 1927.

¹⁰ See separate Note in this series for more details.

¹¹ On the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, the Duke and Duchess came to the throne as George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and parents of our present Queen.

To accommodate the increasing membership, a second story was added to the George Street Club house in 1929, with the builder's quote at £2,000.

Also that year it is believed that the Club acquired the much-loved navigation lights from the cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, famous for vanquishing the German raider *Emden* at Cocos Island in 1914. Engineer Lieutenant Commander HS Platt purchased them for the Club 'in the south'. They are now mounted on the port and starboard sides of the front entrance to our current premises in Wickham Terrace.



HMAS Sydney's navigation lights today.

The committee was challenged by the need to manage credit provided to members and their debts during the Great Depression. The Members were not necessarily the most affluent in society but they placed much importance on the Club and their membership.

A notable guest in 1931 was Captain CWA Scott after his record-breaking solo flight from England.

Indicative of the acclaim afforded to pioneer aviators was the action of the Club (a totally male domain), in inviting Miss Amy Johnston to luncheon on 31 May 1931 after her epic flight from England.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes books, signed the Visitors' Book as *A. Conan Doyle, Massachusetts, USA* on 13 December 1931 (he had migrated from England to the USA). The circumstances of his visit are a mystery and his military connections are not obvious. Perhaps he was visiting Australia in relation to his interest in spiritualism at that stage of his life. One newspaper reported: *Spiritualism in Australia is stimulated by the visit of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.*

The Depression was a factor in a net loss of 33 members for 1932/33 and for a decrease in sales. Notwithstanding the economic environment, the Club's 1933 annual ball was a glittering success, with an attendance of 676, and guests including the Governor General, Governor, and the Prime Minister.

In 1934, in addition to the Annual Ball, the Club arranged a Royal Ball with His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester as principal guest. It was a daunting task, as it was staged in the top floor of the Australian Estate Company's wool stores at New Farm, with much volunteer effort to remove the wool and then clean and convert the place to a temporary ball room.

The Club improvements completed in 1937 included replacement of the rear roof (with fibro-cement sheeting due to the shortage of roofing iron), a sound-proof telephone booth, a most-modern refrigerator for the bar, and four new earthenware spittoons for members use.

Poker machines had been used in the bar for a number of years. In 1938 they were removed from the bar and never used again. Membership now totalled 499. In 1939 the Club committee wrote to the Prime Minister offering the facilities of the Club if needed for the war effort.

The early 40's were difficult for the Club due to rationing of beer, the club's dwindling supply of whiskey, and an increase in the number of members on active service. In June 1941 the Club purchased a four-valve radio, probably so members could keep abreast of war news.

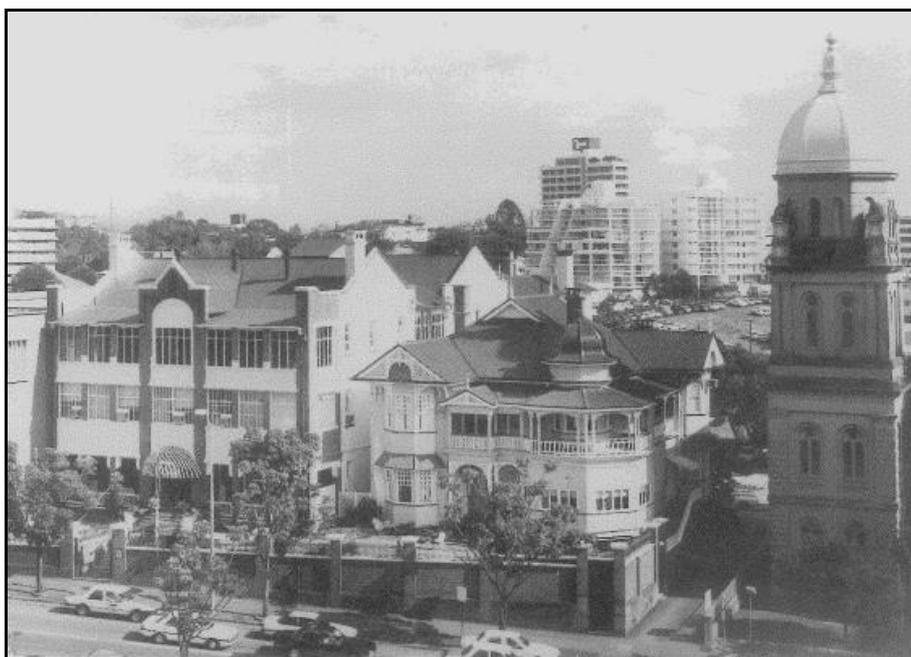
After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 suddenly Australia and particularly Brisbane were suddenly no longer remote from the war. There was an influx of American officers to Brisbane and they were offered honorary membership of the Club.

This had a beneficial effect on our finances. At the conclusion of hostilities in 1945 the Club was in a strong financial position having a large numbers of new members, honorary members and visitors. It was observed long afterwards: *During the war, with the help of the Americans, we drank the Club into a sound financial position.*

The existing Club House was now clearly too small to cater for the expanding membership following demobilisation. New premises were required. It was said at the time that the Club needed: *A well situated building providing ample space, comfort, overnight accommodation and having a dignity befitting the status of the Club.*

183 Wickham Terrace (1947 to present)

In 1946, under the Presidency of Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Little and with a membership of now 1200, the Club purchased our current club buildings, 'Montpelier' and the 'Green House', at 173-183 Wickham Terrace.



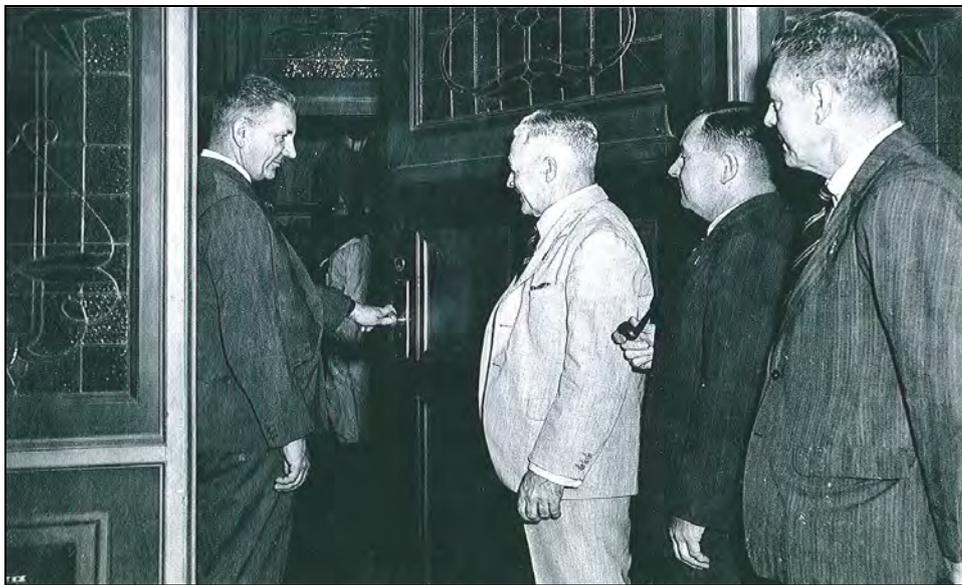
Club premises c 1985

(Note that the Green House and 'Montpelier' were not then joined as they are now. The verandahs were probably extended in the next round of improvements.)

There was some work to finalise negotiations with the lessee of 'Montpelier' and to prepare the buildings for use by the Club. There was apparently, a function to say farewell to the old premises in George Street before moving into the new premises in Wickham Terrace.



Farewell to 70 George Street



Entering 183 Wickham Terrace

The Club opened at Wickham Terrace 26 May 1947.

The buildings have been progressively modified and improved over the years.

Both our buildings have since been heritage listed, as both are important in demonstrating the evolution of Wickham Terrace as an elite street of middle class boarding houses, residences, schools, clubs, medical rooms and private hospitals - a pattern of development which commenced in the 1860s and continued well into the 20th century.

Modifications and improvements have been made over the years, but we close this Note at this point.

For additional information about our current premises, see two other Notes in this series; one continues the story of the acquisition and move to our Wickham Terrace home (*Buildings. History. Current Premises*), and one outlines their heritage aspects of our current buildings (*Buildings. History. Current Premises. Early History and Heritage*).