

FOUNDED AS THE  
QUEENSLAND  
WATTLE DAY  
LEAGUE

1912

100

**Celebrating the Centenary of Open Minds**  
Growing with Brisbane : 1912-2012

Open Minds  1912-2012  
people supporting people



Title: Celebrating the Centenary of Open Minds  
Growing with Brisbane: 1912-2012.

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Cover photograph shows crowds on Queen Street  
during the ANZAC Day parade 1919.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. APE-020-01-0012)*



## Welcome to this centenary history of Open Minds.

We were formed as the Queensland Wattle Day League in 1912 and have been part of the fabric of Brisbane ever since.

Today we are a leading non-profit organisation providing community based support services to people living with mental illness, disability and acquired brain injury.

Over the last hundred years we have changed and developed while our city has transformed and grown. Our story is about many things, but most of all it is about growing with Brisbane.

**As we approached our centenary, the Board of Open Minds initiated a project to research our history. What we discovered is a fascinating story of the growth and development of our organisation that coincides with the growth and development of our city, and our strong association with the golden wattle which is part of the Australian coat of arms.**



Founded as the Queensland Wattle Day League, we first funded art scholarships then helped soldiers returning from World War One. After funding further scholarships, the organisation reinvented itself as a membership group to help disabled people. A workshop was run for 20 years before we became more focussed on mental health services and changed our name to Open Minds.

Along the way, we were helped by some prominent Brisbane people including Governors, Ministers and Mayors. But it is ordinary people who have ensured the organisation is still here to celebrate this important anniversary. The various Board members, staff, clients, family, funders and volunteers who shaped the Wattle League represent a group of remarkable people. Some of whom overcame significant challenges to make their contribution.

Our centenary is a chance to celebrate all that we have achieved, and is also a time to reflect on the challenges that our clients still face in establishing a life of choice, fulfilment and participation.

We began as the Wattle League and one of the characteristics of wattle is its capacity for resilience and regrowth. The history document you hold shows the resilience and regrowth of both this organisation and those with whom we work.

I am confident Open Minds will keep growing as it enters its second century of service.

***Mike Gilmour*** *Chair of Open Minds*

# Growing with Brisbane



1916



1925



1930

## THE 1910s

- 1912** The Queensland Wattle Day League is formed and aims to celebrate Wattle Day and establish an art scholarship.
- 1913** The first Queensland Wattle Day is held. The inaugural scholarship is won by sculptor, Daphne Mayo.
- 1917** A collection day is held to raise money for an orthopaedic ward for soldiers at Rosemount Hospital.

- 1912** Brisbane general strike begins.
- 1914** Lang Park (now the site of Suncorp Stadium) opens.
- 1916** First ANZAC Day parade is held in Brisbane.  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 39805)*

## THE 1920s

- 1920** Returned soldiers and their families remain a central concern and money is raised to help.
- 1922** The League collects over £1,100 for the Distressed Diggers Fund, which helps returned soldiers and their families.
- 1924** A £750 scholarship is awarded to Robert Percy Cummings, enabling him to study architecture in London.

- 1925** Twenty municipalities and shires are amalgamated to form the City of Brisbane. William Jolly is the first Mayor.  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 109729)*
- 1927** Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary opens.

## THE 1930s

- 1930** £500 given to Fathers Association from funds remaining in the Rosemount Hospital account.
- 1935** Long time Secretary of the League, Mrs Campbell, is awarded the Kings Silver Jubilee Medal for her work.
- 1936** The League introduces a new arts scholarship in conjunction with the Queensland Technical College.

- 1930** Brisbane City Hall and the Shrine of Remembrance in ANZAC Square are completed.  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 31184)*
- 1936** First set of traffic lights installed in the city.

# Growing with Brisbane: 1912-2012



1942



1954



1967

## THE 1940s

- 1941** Due to the Second World War, all proceeds for the year are donated to "patriotic" purposes.
- 1942** Jacqueline Boxall wins the £50 Art scholarship.
- 1944** League transfers £400 to an art group to continue the scholarships.
- 1940** Story Bridge completed.
- 1940** Cloudland Dance Hall opens in Bowen Hills.
- 1942** The city becomes South West Pacific HQ for General Douglas MacArthur.  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 99823)*

## THE 1950s

- 1952** A committee is formed to promote a revival of the League to help disabled people.
- 1954** The League is formally reconstituted on 29 September.
- 1959** Lady Cilento appointed as patron.
- 1954** Queen Elizabeth II visits Brisbane.  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 105648)*
- 1959** Queensland's centenary celebrations are held.

## THE 1960s

- 1962** The first sheltered workshop opens and provides employment and rehabilitation for disabled people.
- 1965** Name of the organisation is changed to Queensland Wattle League for the Disabled.
- 1968** Some of the workshop staff are transferred to a manufacturing company (Queensland Springs at Hockings Street) to undertake work on their premises.
- 1961** Clem Jones is elected Lord Mayor.
- 1964** The Beatles play Brisbane.
- 1968** Construction of the Riverside Expressway begins.
- 1968** Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen elected Queensland Premier.
- 1969** Tram network closes.  
*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-DVD5-24)*

## THE 1970s

- 1973** League begins to receive government financial help under the "Handicapped Persons Assistance Act".
- 1976** Printing equipment is bought to allow the workshop to expand operations in this area.
- 1977** Dr (now Sir) Llew Edwards appointed as Patron.
- 1973** First section of Pacific motorway opens.
- 1974** Serious flooding hits the city.
- 1978** Merivale Railway Bridge completed, linking South Brisbane with Roma Street Station.

# Growing with Brisbane: 1912-2012



1982



1996



2012

## THE 1980s

- 1982** Mrs Cottee elected Chairman of the League.
- 1986** The Disability Services Act brings new funding and opportunities for the League.
- 1987** Supported accommodation service is established.

- 1982** Commonwealth Games hosted in Brisbane.  
*(National Archives of Australia: A8746, KN22/11/82/108)*
- 1986** Original Gateway Bridge opens.
- 1988** Expo '88 held at South Bank.

## THE 1990s

- 1991** BEST (Brisbane Employment Support and Training) Personnel is established as a supported employment service.
- 1996** Wattle League begins working with Project 300 clients; a government scheme to help individuals move from institutional care to independent living in the community.
- 1999** The Earle Duus award is made for the first time.

- 1992** South Bank Parklands opens on the site of Expo '88.
- 1996** The first City Cat service begins operation.

## THE 2000s

- 2000** The Acquired Brain Injury Support Service is established.
- 2003** The Wattle League changes its name to Open Minds and moves to its current Annerley Road premises.
- 2007** Open Minds Personal Helpers & Mentors Program (PHaMs) projects begin.
- 2012** Open Minds celebrates its centenary.

- 2001** Goodwill Bridge opens.
- 2003** Brisbane Lions complete hat-trick of AFL titles.
- 2006** Green Bridge (now Eleanor Schonell Bridge) opens between Dutton Park and St Lucia.
- 2011** Serious flooding again affects Brisbane.

# The emergence of the Wattle Day Leagues

Before Federation in 1901, Australian patriotism was growing. It was noted that other countries had a flower or plant as their national symbol – England had its rose, Scotland had the thistle and Canada had recently adopted the maple leaf.

The emergence of wattle as Australia's emblem was initially championed by those interested in botany and nature. In 1899, a "Wattle Club" was formed in Victoria by naturalist, Mr Archibald James Campbell. For several years, the club organised bush outings on the 1st of September, the first day of spring.

In 1908, Campbell gave a talk in Melbourne and advocated honouring Wattle Day on that day each year. A Sydney Wattle Day League was created in 1909, and the following year saw the formation of Wattle Day Leagues in South Australia and Victoria. A Queensland League was created in 1912.

Wattle Day became an annual event, and wattle increased its connection with nationhood during World War One. By World War Two, most Leagues had run their course. They did, however, leave a lasting legacy. Today, the wattle tree and its colours of green and gold are recognised as symbols of Australia – both officially and in popular culture and sport.



Mr Archibald James Campbell  
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 44385)*



An early success was enjoyed  
with the addition of wattle on the  
Commonwealth Coat of Arms  
in 1912



*Wattle gained support as national flower for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was recognised as being present and prominent throughout Australia. Also, the bark was important commercially at the time as it was used in tanning processes. Perhaps most significantly, its flowering was seen as a sign of spring.*



# A Wattle League for Queensland in 1912

As Wattle Leagues were formed and captured the public imagination in other parts of Australia, a group of individuals and organisations decided to set up a Queensland version.

Mrs Josephine Papi is recognised as leading moves to mark Wattle Day in Queensland. Under her leadership, a meeting was held in the Town Hall on 4 October 1912. It was agreed that a Queensland branch of the Wattle Day League should be formed and money raised for the establishment of an arts scholarship. A public meeting was held on Monday 21 October which saw the official inauguration of the Queensland Wattle Day League.

The first Wattle Day in Queensland was held the following year on Saturday 16 August 1913. Volunteers collected and sold sprigs of wattle and badges at stalls mostly around Brisbane's inner city. Altogether, 15,000 badges were sold and £157 was raised.

## Art scholarships

In 1913, the League invited submissions for its inaugural scholarship which would be judged at the Royal Academy in London. Five entrants were considered for the prize which was ultimately awarded in 1914 to sculptor, Daphne Mayo. The scholarship provided for study in London, however the onset of World War One intervened and plans to send Mayo overseas were put on hold. She finally left in 1919 and, as we will see later, enjoyed a highly successful career.

**“The League is also anxious to have a large Queensland membership roll ... the chief efforts of its labours is that on one day in every year all people, rich and poor, shall proclaim themselves Australians and Australian Britons, and wear on that day the golden wattle as their emblem.”**

*Wattle League membership appeal 1914*

## Aims of the Queensland Wattle Day League

Official recognition of Golden Wattle as the floral emblem of Australia.

Cultivating a love of the plant amongst school children.

The planting and caretaking of wattle trees.

The establishment of an art scholarship.



*Collectors pictured at the stall at the (old) Town Hall on Brisbane's second Wattle Day, 24 July 1914. Scholarship winner, Daphne Mayo, dressed as a wattle maid, is at the front.*

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 191112)*



LEAGUE FOUNDER MRS PAPI (LEFT), PICTURED WITH MR SEABROOK,  
PRESIDENT FROM 1917-1920 AND MRS CAMPBELL THE LONG SERVING  
SECRETARY OF THE LEAGUE.

*(Photo: courtesy Susan Papi)*

## Brisbane in 1912

Brisbane was a very different place when the League was formed in 1912. In fact, the Brisbane boundaries of today were not created until 1925 when Greater Brisbane Council was established.

Before then, Brisbane and South Brisbane were separate authorities and many of the areas we know as suburbs were separate towns or shires including Windsor, Hamilton, Toowong, Coorparoo, Kedron and Stephens (which included Annerley, Yeronga and Greenslopes). Only the Victoria and Albert Bridges crossed the river, and the population was just 139,480 (1911 census).

### Brisbane general strike

After months of simmering trouble, the general strike began in 1912 when members of the Australian Tramway Association were dismissed after wearing union badges to work. The Railways Union went out in sympathy and eventually over 40 unions had joined the action.

During the protests, 25,000 workers marched from Trades Hall to Fortitude Valley while 50,000 watched. Police Commissioner William Cahill refused a permit for a further march on Friday 2 February. Despite this, 15,000 people gathered at Market Square and were charged at by police with batons.

The police action against peaceful protestors, many of them women and children on the footpath, was widely condemned and the event became known as “Baton Friday” and later “Black Friday”.

- 1.** A colour postcard showing Queen Street in 1912. On the right of the street, you can see Finney Isles store which was taken over by David Jones Ltd in 1955.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 194790)*

- 2.** On 6 July 1912, American aviator Arthur Burr Stone used the Showground Arena to take off and land a Metz Bleriot Monoplane for the first ever flight over Brisbane. The trip ended with the plane somersaulting on landing but the intrepid aviator escaped with scratches. Upwards of 8,000 spectators witnessed the event.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 60453)*

- 3.** Mounted police in Queen Street during the Brisbane general strike.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 10113-0001-0009)*

- 4.** Police gather in Albert Square during the Brisbane general strike.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 10113-0001-0019)*

1



2



3



4

# The Wattle League during the First World War

As the terrible impact of World War One became apparent, it was impossible for the League to ignore the plight of those returning from the conflict.

The League began raising war relief funds. In particular, they funded artificial limbs for injured soldiers who had to pay for limbs themselves. The compounded effects of injury, loss of income and additional medical expenses took a heavy toll on servicemen and their families, making buying a limb very difficult.

After sufficient funds were raised to provide limbs, it was agreed to fund a specialised Orthopaedic Unit at the Rosemount Military Hospital in Windsor. This task was aided by a decision by Federal Government in 1918 to fully fund replacement limbs, allowing the remaining balance of the artificial limb fund to be used for the hospital.

The new hospital was opened in October 1919, and provided a much needed rehabilitation facility for soldiers with a wide variety of injuries. The League continued to raise money for former soldiers and the upkeep of the hospital for quite some time after the end of the war.

In some ways, the League suffered from being taken off course from its original objectives by the war. From another point of view though, it was the war that made the League. Its patriotic message about wattle and nationhood chimed with the mood of the country at the time, and moved the League into a much more central position in the hearts and minds of Queenslanders.

## WARTIME FUNDRAISING

\*\*\*\*\*

⇌ 1915 ⇌

**£763 for the “Courier” Wounded Soldiers Fund and £762 for the Red Cross Recreation Hall at Kangaroo Point**

⇌ 1916 ⇌

**£736 to create the artificial limbs fund**

⇌ 1917 ⇌

**Over £1,100 to the “Franco-Queensland League of Help for the destitute women and children of France”**

⇌ 1917 & 1918 ⇌

**£3993 donated to Rosemount Hospital Orthopaedic Ward building**

⇌ 1919 ⇌

**A further £1,938 was raised for additional equipment and ongoing maintenance of the hospital**

\*\*\*\*\*

**The total of £9,292 above represents approximately \$648,000 in today’s money.**

“Australia has become a nation, she has had her baptism of blood and tears, and she, too, has her national emblem, the golden wattle blossom. It has been wisely chosen. It is indigenous to Australia, growing freely in every State. It is beloved by children as well as adults. It is attractive, fragrant, vigorous, free growing, useful and valuable commercially, and so expresses elementally the spirit of our national life.”

*Mrs J Kingsbury, President of the National Council of Women speaking at the annual meeting of the Wattle League, 1917.*



The Wattle League Committee photographed on a visit to Rosemount Hospital on 3 July 1919.  
Not all those present are named, but League President Mr Seabrook is in the front centre.  
Right of him is Mrs Campbell (Secretary), and immediately left of him is League founder, Mrs Papi.  
The two men in military uniform are Colonel Sutton (Principal Medical Officer for Queensland)  
and Major E V Meehan (Medical Officer of Rosemount).

*(Photo: courtesy Susan Papi)*

## Rosemount Hospital, Brisbane

The First World War resulted in many injured soldiers returning to Brisbane in need of treatment and rehabilitation. A large repatriation hospital was established in Windsor on the site of a former private home and, as we saw on the previous page, the Wattle League assisted by funding an Orthopaedic Ward at the facility. The original residence where the hospital was built dates from 1859, although a new brick residence that remains today was built shortly after this.

The property was initially lent to the Defence Department in World War One to be used as a hospital. New buildings were added in the grounds as additional wards and it was formally acquired by the government in 1926.

Rosemount continued in service as a military hospital right through and after World War Two, until Greenslopes Hospital became the main repatriation hospital in the 1950s. The Rosemount facility then became linked to the Royal Brisbane Hospital and provided geriatric and psychiatric support until the 1990s. Many of the added hospital buildings have gone, but from 2005 the main building has hosted a hospice.

*The ward funded by the League was opened in October 1919. A newspaper report on a tour given to Wattle League members at the time gives a sense of the treatments in operation:*

“The visitors were shown the needle baths, hot and cold baths, and whirlpool baths where the water is agitated and strikes against the limbs of the patient. Hot air and electricity are also a part of the treatment.”

They also saw the gymnasium, described as a:

“big room fitted with all sorts of gymnastic apparatus for very gently developing stiff limbs. Particularly interesting were the ingeniously devised machines for gradually rendering more flexible stiff knees, or ankles, or wrists that would not work easily. In order to demonstrate a patient sat in a chair fitted with elaborate metal parts. His thighs were held down fast by a portion of chain, and his ankles were put into stocks, so to speak, while, by turning a handle with his arm, he was able to gently exercise a stiff knee.”



**THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
WOULD SEE 416,809  
AUSTRALIAN MEN ENLIST,  
60,000 OF WHOM WOULD  
BE KILLED AND 156,000  
WOUNDED, GASSED OR  
TAKEN PRISONER.  
THIS FROM A POPULATION  
OF FEWER THAN FIVE  
MILLION.\***



Some of the rehabilitation equipment in use in the Orthopaedic Ward at Rosemount.

*(Australian War Memorial: H02251)*

*\* Australian War Memorial*



*Wattle League members at the opening of the Orthopaedic Ward*

(Photo: courtesy Susan Papi)

## The Wattle League scholarships

The work of the League from 1914 was marked by tension between the desire to assist returning soldiers from two world wars and the original aim of providing scholarships. In the end, the League enjoyed success on both fronts. It assisted many former soldiers but also helped launch the careers of a number of significant Queenslanders.



### Daphne Mayo

Due to the war, Daphne Mayo had to wait five years between winning her scholarship and finally departing for England in August 1919. She enrolled in the Royal Academy of Arts in London, where she won much praise and a number of awards. This success was enjoyed at a time when female sculptors and, indeed, successful Queensland artists were a rarity. As part of the conditions of her scholarship, Mayo sent work back to the League in Brisbane. These were displayed in the city and subsequently handed over to the Queensland Art Gallery.



Mayo's success was a source of huge pride for Queensland and Australia. The Mercury (a Hobart newspaper) summed up this feeling in an article on 5 February 1924:

*"In England, where competition is keen, and the population is so huge, it is only the first-rate people who become well known. This is chiefly why we have a justifiable feeling of pride when we hear of Australians distinguishing themselves on the other side of the world. It is interesting, therefore, to hear of the successful career of a young Queensland girl"*

On her return to Brisbane, a new City Hall was under construction. There was nobody better qualified in Queensland to take on the decorative Tympanum envisaged for the building. Mayo continued her career with a number of public commissions and private creations. In later years, she moved to Sydney but her final major public work was in Brisbane in 1964 when she completed the sculpture of Sir Thomas William Glasgow in Post Office Square.

# The Wattle League scholarships

In addition to her artistic works, Mayo was a tireless advocate for the arts and received an OBE in 1959. Mayo effectively retired from public life in 1973, before her death in Brisbane in 1982. Her work and her passion for the arts are still highly regarded, and Mayo was the subject of a major exhibition at Queensland Art Gallery in 2011.

## Significant works by Daphne Mayo

- 1925 Bust of Sir Matthew Nathan, former Queensland Governor
- 1926 Frieze at Tattersall's Club
- 1927-30 Tympanum and concert hall frieze, Brisbane City Hall
- 1929-32 Queensland Women's War Memorial in ANZAC Square
- 1934 Panels at Mount Thompson Crematorium
- 1940-42 East doors at State Library of New South Wales
- 1959 Jolly swagman at Winton
- 1964 Statue of Major General Sir Thomas William Glasgow

OPPOSITE TOP:

*A young Mayo in 1914 with one of her early works – Winged Victory of Samothrace.*

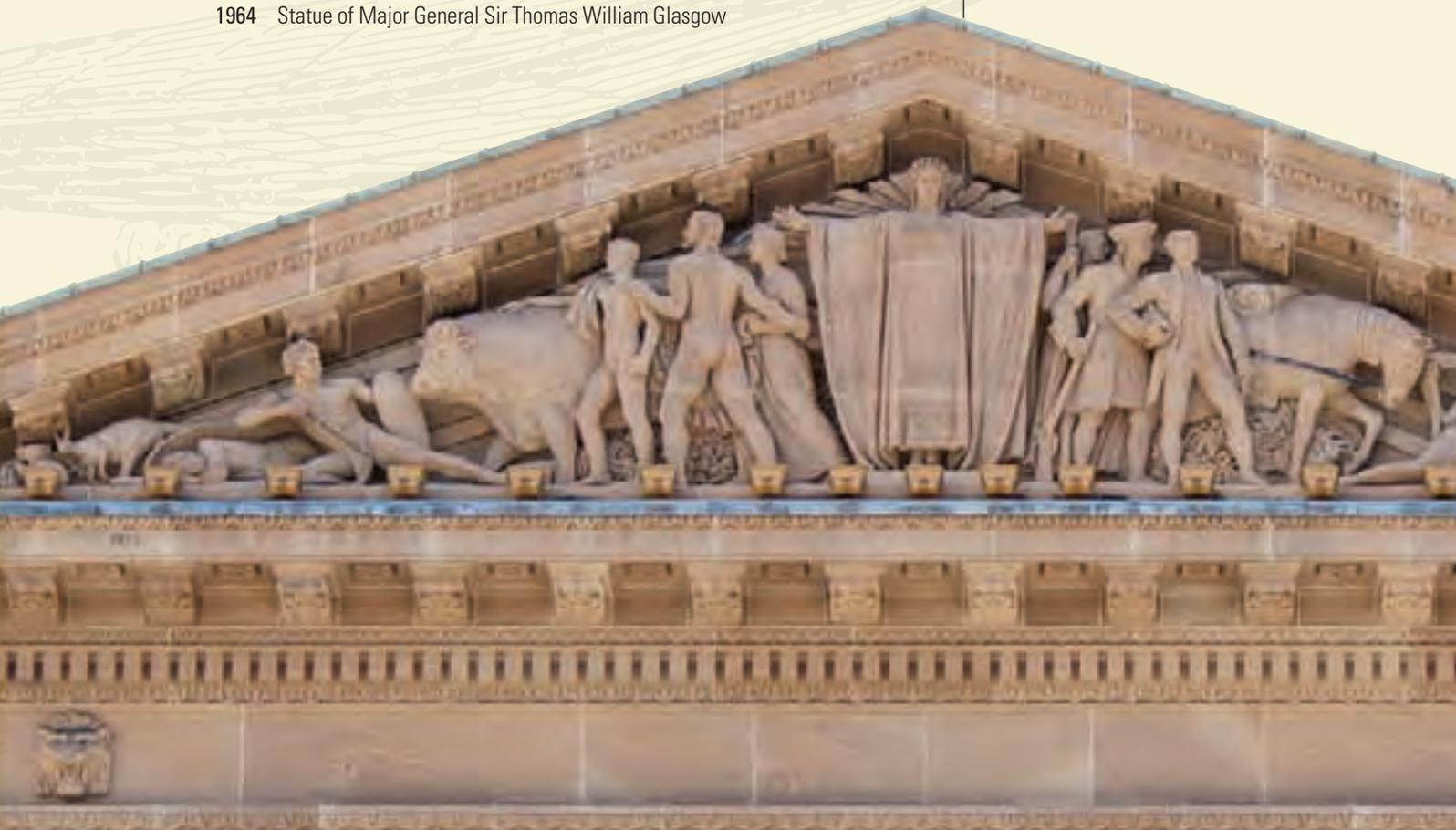
*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 72615)*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM:

*Daphne Mayo forwarded two sculptures as part of her scholarship requirements including this one, which was donated by the League to Queensland Art Gallery.*

BELOW:

*Detail of the Brisbane City Hall Tympanum.*



# The Wattle League scholarships

## Robert Percy Cummings

By 1924, the League was able to offer a second scholarship, which was won by Robert Percy Cummings enabling him to study for three years at the Architectural Association School in London. In 1927, he was awarded the Rome Scholarship in Architecture, and resided for two years at the British School in Rome, prior to working in London.

Cummings returned to Brisbane towards the end of 1930 and was later appointed Director of Architecture at the Central Technical College. He also worked in private practice as a partner in Lucas and Cummings. Their commissions included the First Church of Christ (North Quay) in 1939 and extensions to the Binna Burra Lodge in Lamington National Park.

Much of Cummings' later career took place at The University of Queensland, where he was Professor of Architecture from 1949.



# The Wattle League scholarships

## Further scholarships

Following Cummings' success, there was pressure for a third travelling scholarship but this never materialised. The Great Depression of the late twenties made fundraising difficult and also affected returned servicemen badly, meaning scholarship funds were directed to assist former soldiers.

Eventually, it became clear that the League would have to make do with a scholarship for study within Australia. Therefore, in 1936 the League introduced a new £50 arts scholarship in conjunction with the Queensland Technical College.

The following were awarded scholarships:

- ✿ **1937 & 38: Mr Wyclif Huston**
- ✿ **1939: Miss Betty Quelhurst**
- ✿ **1940: Miss Barbara Abbott Cottam**
- ✿ **1941: Miss Marie Ethel Young**
- ✿ **1942: Miss Jacqueline Boxall**

At least two of these recipients enjoyed success in the arts. Wyclif Huston won the Philip Muskett Prize twice (awarded by the director of the National Art Gallery). Also, Betty Quelhurst emerged as an art teacher and prominent artist. In 2000, she was featured in an exhibition at Queensland Art Gallery and at the Gold Coast City Art Gallery the following year.



Newspaper coverage of the 1942 Scholarship winner, which featured a recruiting poster for the AIF (Australian Imperial Force).

## City Hall construction

Built between 1920 and 1930, City Hall was once the tallest building in Brisbane. The site was chosen despite it being a swamp, mainly because it was largely council-owned land. Foundations had to go down 54 feet before reaching bedrock and a workman drowned during construction.

At the time, City Hall was one of the most expensive buildings in Australia, costing £1 million. As well as housing Council offices, it has hosted many famous guests and events including The Rolling Stones and Queen Elizabeth II.

The Tympanum was designed and carved by Wattle League scholarship winner, Daphne Mayo, and depicts European settlement in Queensland. It took more than two years to carve on site, during which time Mayo occupied a rooftop studio and even slept there some nights.



*Daphne Mayo carving the Tympanum of City Hall.*  
(UQ Fryer Library: UQFL 119)



*The site before construction began.*  
(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 123100)



*The foundation stone was laid in July 1920 by Edward, Prince of Wales – later King Edward VIII.*  
(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 201780)



The Tympanum was the last part of City Hall to be completed and the scaffolding can still be seen here. When King George Square was extended in the 1970s, the area was levelled, resulting in the removal of the original stone stairs that can be seen in front of the building.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 31184)*

# Wattle Day

From 1913 to the early 1940s, most of the fundraising activity for the League focussed on Wattle Day. Stalls were set up across the city and lady collectors offered sprigs of wattle or badges in return for a donation. Items such as flags, badges, sweets, souvenirs and fruit were also sold from the stalls.

Early collections were enhanced with car processions and prizes for the most effectively decorated cars. Wattle Day was quickly established in the minds of Queenslanders, and the decision to support returned soldiers during the First World War ensured a patriotic response. In later years, schools became central to the event, and by the mid twenties, income from schools had overtaken the takings from street collections.

A combination of ageing League membership, poor economic conditions and simply changes in society saw Wattle Day decline in popularity. By 1939, it was noted in the Courier Mail that no street collections were planned.

By that time though, the wattle and its green and gold colours had firmly implanted themselves in the minds of Australians. The day itself has also made a return in recent years and in 1992, the first of September was declared Wattle Day in a proclamation by the Governor-General.



The decline of Wattle Day was the subject of comment in *The Advertiser* (SA) in 1939. In the very year that World War Two began, the writer commented:

**“Wattle Day as one of our outward institutions has disappeared. Maybe the big national days born of the Great War have overshadowed it. Or perhaps Australians are too prone to take their country and its emblems for granted. That is not a comforting thought in days when the swastika and other symbols are being venerated almost to adoration in other parts of the world.”**



*Newspaper photograph of one of the decorated cars on Wattle Day 1916*



WATTLE DAY COLLECTORS IN 1914

*(Photo: courtesy Susan Papi)*

# Wattle Day

## Wattle Day in schools

Later Wattle Days saw efforts focussed more exclusively on schools and combined fundraising and promotion of the wattle to pupils. At its peak, 120,000 Wattle badges were ordered for the annual fundraising efforts, with over 100,000 of those going to schools. School children tended to donate one penny on Wattle Day and lessons were geared toward promoting the study of nature.

Brookfield History Society, as part of their own research, recorded lifetime resident, Edith Smith talking about Wattle Day when Upper Brookfield was still a farming community in the 1930s. She said:

*"There was always Wattle Day, when the wattles came out. The wattle flower and that; that was always a special day. It was always mentioned at school and you always took sprays of wattle to school to give to one another."*



Wattle Day at Upper Brookfield State School in 1930.  
(Photo courtesy of Brookfield History Society)



Wattle Day in schools carried on for a little longer than the street collections, even featuring on the front page of the Courier Mail in 1939.

# Wattle Day

## Wattle Day outside Brisbane

Although Wattle Day was focussed on Brisbane, efforts were made to encourage other Queensland towns to take part. This met with varying degrees of success, but did see Wattle Day activities replicated in a number of areas over the years. A long lasting variant of the League operated in Rockhampton and donated money to what is now the RSPCA. That appears to be the only area in Queensland where a Wattle League operated for more than a few years.

Between 1914 and 1916, Wattle Day activities were reported in many country towns including Gatton, Toowoomba, Bundaberg, Crow's Nest, Maryborough, Marburg, Beenleigh, Charleville, Wynnum, Warwick, Toogoolawah and Mount Morgan.

In 1917 Mrs Williams, Vice President of the League, visited Cairns to encourage participation. Another 'tour' in 1922 saw Secretary Mrs Campbell travel with Mrs Williams to establish branches at Mount Morgan, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Kingaroy. The Women's Auxiliary of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors League in Maryborough agreed to act as a branch. Goomeri was also visited, where a branch had already been formed.

In the end though, it was really the schools activity that ensured a Queensland-wide reach for the League. Support from the Education Department meant all schools were encouraged to participate and lessons were devoted to nature and nationhood. Pupils also gave a donation for a badge and this became a vital source of income for the League.

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“Wattle Day, perhaps more than any other festival, is the one which makes a strong and direct appeal to patriotic sentiment, not only because of the associations which are brought to mind by the fragrant little flower which grows in luxuriance and variety in nearly every part of our island continent, but also because of the fine record of achievement which has been established by the Wattle Day League in collecting funds for commendable purposes.”

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*Brisbane Courier, 1922*

# The Great Depression

The Wall Street crash in October 1929 is traditionally seen as the beginning of the severe depression that affected the whole industrialised world. In fact, Australian unemployment was already at 10% before the crash but reached a peak in mid-1932 when almost 32% of Australians were out of work.

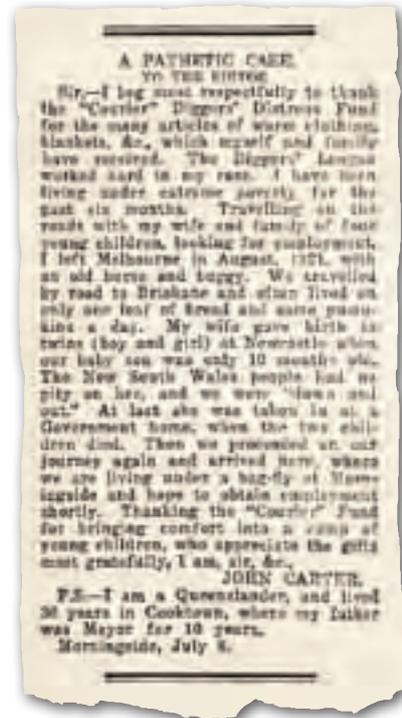
The impact on Australia was devastating. Many people lost their homes and were forced to live in makeshift dwellings. The resulting tensions led to political and social instability.

At the time, the Federal Government did not have a centralised unemployment assistance program, meaning those affected had to rely on relief from charities and uncoordinated government agencies. Public works projects were initiated to provide employment – usually involving manual labour like road building. Perhaps the most significant such project in Brisbane was the Story Bridge.

For the League, the impact on fundraising was stark, as Wattle Day income went from £1,100 in 1922 to just over £70 in 1930. The recession hit the poorest and the disabled hardest, meaning that injured former soldiers faced unimaginable difficulties. The League could not ignore their needs and could not justify funding art scholarships in the face of such need.



(State Library of Queensland, Image no. APA-063-0002-0002)



▲ The post-war years were hard for many former soldiers, as this letter to the Courier in 1922 shows.

◀ Yeronga Unemployment Camp pictured in 1926. Unable to pay their rent or mortgage, the only alternative for hundreds of people during the Great Depression was to set up a makeshift home in an unemployment camp. Many travelled across Australia looking for work.



*The Story Bridge was constructed between 1935 and 1940. The work provided years of employment for many men, as one of the governments' public works projects designed to ease the effects of the depression. It was named after John Douglas Story, a public servant who had advocated strongly for the construction of the bridge.*

*Other public works projects at the time included the Somerset Dam, the Hornibrook Bridge, the deep water harbour at Mackay and the University of Queensland's new site at St Lucia.*

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 7708-0001-0060)*

## The people behind the League

### *Mrs Josephine Papi*



Mrs Josephine Papi was the first Secretary of the Queensland Wattle Day League and is recognised as the driving force behind the establishment of a Wattle League in Queensland. She remained active in the organisation until shortly before her death in 1925.

The Papi family were prominent in Brisbane – Josephine was married to Dr Fernando Cantu Papi, who was a teacher and school inspector. Both were strongly community minded and Mrs Papi, in particular, was noted for her philanthropic work.

Before establishing the League, she was an enthusiastic fundraiser during the Boer War, raising money for the Brisbane Industrial Home and organising the first fancy dress ball for the Brisbane Children's Hospital.

She founded the South Brisbane Croquet Club in 1902, and the former South Brisbane croquet headquarters on Cordelia Street was named 'Josephine Papi House'.

### *Mrs Marie Campbell*



Marie Campbell was born in Denmark and arrived in Australia at the age of seven. She served as Wattle League Secretary for over 15 years and was the central figure in the organisation of Wattle Day; her collecting teams were regularly the most successful. As well as the League, Mrs Campbell worked for many other good causes and received a King George V Silver Jubilee Medal for her services.

Not only was Mrs Campbell central to the formation and early success of the League, she also played a vital role in the transition to a revived League in the 1950s, as we will shortly see.

She died at the age of 84 in 1954.

## The people behind the League

### *Mary & George Marchant*



Mary Marchant was an active Vice President of the Wattle League. She was married to businessman and philanthropist, George Marchant.

Together, they bought a ginger beer manufacturing business and invented a successful new bottling machine. A feature of their management was their care of the employees, with whom they shared the profits.

In 1899, they purchased the 100 acre paddock that is today's Marchant Park. When the Rev. Wheller was planning a garden settlement at Chermide, George donated 25 acres and £12,000. The family also gave \$82,000 to build the Prohibition League's Canberra hotel in inner-city Brisbane and supported the Queensland Society for Crippled Children by donating their home, Montrose in Taringa.

Mary died unexpectedly of a brain haemorrhage in December 1925. After George died in 1941, the remainder of their fortune was distributed among many charities.

*Thanks to Chermide and Districts Historical Society for this information.*



### *Mrs J Williams*



A name that appears regularly on the list of Wattle League office bearers is Mrs J Williams. She was a Vice President of the League from the start in 1912 and remained a Life President until 1944.

She was noted as an active temperance worker and represented the Women's Christian Temperance Union on the National Council of Women. She was also President and a Vice President of the National Council of Women and a member of the Brisbane Women's Club.

Mrs Williams was one of the first women to advocate the appointment of female Justices of the Peace, so it is fitting that she herself was appointed a JP in 1931.

## The people behind the League

### *Mr John Frederick Bailey* (President 1912–1917)



John Bailey chaired the 1912 public meeting that inaugurated the Queensland Wattle Day League, where he was elected as the first President. At the time, Bailey held a dual role as Government Botanist and Director of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens. He later went on to be Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

Bailey's family already had a long association with botany in Australia. His grandfather was the first colonial botanist in South Australia, while his father was colonial botanist for Queensland.

### *Mr George Kenilworth Seabrook* (President 1917–1920)



Elected in 1917 to succeed the first president Mr Bailey, G K Seabrook resigned due to “pressures of business” in 1920, but remained listed on the League Committee as a Lifetime Vice President until at least 1941. He was President of the League during the time it funded the Orthopaedic Ward at Rosemount Military Hospital.

Seabrook worked as an auditor and accountant at the Queensland Deposit Bank and Building Society. He also served as General Secretary of the Queensland Australian Natives Association.

### *Alderman Maurice Baldwin* (President 1920–1928)



Maurice Baldwin was President of the League between 1920 and his death in 1928. He was born in Brisbane in 1869 and was heavily associated with sport for much of his life. Baldwin played a prominent role in Rugby Union after his appointment as General Secretary of the Queensland Rugby Union in 1901.

Outside of sport, he was Secretary of the farewell and return committee for Queensland troops that fought in the Boer War and was elected to Hamilton Town Council in 1915.

## The people behind the League

*Mr Samuel Henry Richardson* OBE (President 1928–1931 & 1935–1944)



Samuel Richardson was elected President of the Wattle League on two separate occasions. He helped to found The Sailors' and Soldiers' Fathers' Association in 1918 and served as Honorary Secretary (later President) for over 20 years. The group was usually known as the Father's Association, with Richardson himself affectionately referred to as "dad". A press report states that his desire to help servicemen began when two of his sons went to war, and he himself was rejected for service, although as a dad he wanted to go. In 1936 he was awarded an OBE, at which time it was stated that the Association had already helped 75,600 men.

*Mr Percy Stanhope Hobday* (President 1931–1935)



Percy Hobday was born in Brisbane in 1879 and was the son of J P Hobday, an early Queensland artist. Percy also became an artist and primarily focused on landscapes and monotypes. He exhibited with the Queensland Art Society for 50 years from 1901 and served continuously on their committee from 1922 to 1947. While President of both the League and the Royal Queensland Art Society, Percy encouraged the Society to run a stall on Wattle Day 1932 to boost collections for a new scholarship. Daphne Mayo herself convened the group of women running the stall. After his death, his wife provided a bequest for the 'Hobday and Hingston Bursary' at the Queensland Art Gallery.

## Brisbane between the wars

As well as the construction of City Hall, the period between the First and Second World Wars saw the development of some key city landmarks including the Story, William Jolly and Walter Taylor Bridges.

This period saw local government amalgamation to form Greater Brisbane Council and significant increases in population. Although growing, Brisbane was not expanding as quickly as Sydney or Melbourne and was seen mostly as a port and administrative centre for the State. Manufacturing did feature in the economy, but it was rural production and mining that was most prominent. Huge amounts of wool, beef, sugar and wheat were produced and exported.

The city was expanding outwards. Queenslanders and cheaper tin bungalows were still the dominant style, but newer brick and fibro constructions were gaining in popularity. City suburbanisation was aided by the effective tram network. Perhaps as a result of the financial depression, interest in apartments grew in the 1930s. Kangaroo Point and Highgate Hill amongst other areas saw a growing number of this type of dwelling.



Opening of the William Jolly Bridge (initially the Grey Street Bridge) in March 1932.  
(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 191069)



As Mayor between 1925–1931, William Jolly was influential in developing the road system to take account of increasing car ownership, drainage improvements, purchase of parklands and the construction of the Grey Street Bridge (subsequently renamed in his honour).

He was largely responsible for the establishment of the Victoria Park Golf Club which was built on land freed by the decision to build the University at St Lucia.

(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 109729)



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1. Crowds on Queen Street, ANZAC Day, 1919 – the first after armistice.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. APE-020-01-0012)*

2. In 1936, the first set of traffic lights were installed at the intersection of Ann, Upper Albert and Roma Streets.

*(Picture courtesy of Queensland Police Museum)*

3. Although the traffic was getting faster, political life looks to have been a bit slower as the 1939 election campaign stops for tea!

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 105810)*

## Changing times for the Wattle League

After success with scholarships and wartime fundraising, the League faced more difficult times from the mid-1920s. Lack of collectors and poor economic conditions saw Wattle Day collections decline, and by 1930 it was being suggested the street collections should be stopped. In fact, the collections did continue for a while longer, finally ending in 1938, when it was decided to rely on schools income and other donations.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 could not fail to impact on the work of the League. Money was donated to relief agencies but the fundraising heights of World War One were not to be repeated. By that time, the active League membership had dwindled and many were advanced in years.

The League used remaining funds to continue to provide scholarships at Queensland Technical College. In order to ensure the continuation of the scholarships, the League approached another organisation – the recently formed Half Dozen Group of Artists. The artists group agreed to carry on awarding the scholarships using nearly £400 of League money.

This period could easily have been the end of the Queensland League. In some ways, it had run its course – wattle was firmly established in the hearts and minds of Australians, support for the arts was developing and other organisations were supporting the needs of soldiers injured in World War Two.

Fortunately, however, the achievements of the Queensland Wattle Day League were not forgotten and the baton was soon handed to a new generation.



A clipping from *The Brisbane Courier*, Thursday 7 July, 1932



The Wattle League Committee pictured in 1921.

In the following years, the number of active members began to decline.

Mrs Papi on the left (front) passed away in November 1925. Mr Godfrey Rivers, a founding member and tutor of Daphne Mayo passed away in February that year and Mrs Marchant died unexpectedly in December 1925. In 1928, the sitting Chairperson of the League, Maurice Baldwin (pictured in the front row) also died. The loss of so many key members undoubtedly had an impact on the organisation.

## World War Two in Brisbane

Brisbane played a vital role in World War Two as the conflict spread throughout the Pacific region. Shortly after American entry to the war, US forces began arriving in Brisbane. The first convoy's troops in December 1941 were billeted at Eagle Farm. Soon, Sandgate, Petrie and Strathpine housed major air force bases and warships and submarines occupied the Brisbane River at New Farm.

City offices and university buildings at St Lucia became military headquarters. Private homes, schools and other buildings were taken over for military use. Brisbane became the Headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of the forces in the region. He occupied the AMP building (now MacArthur Chambers) and lived in apartments on the top floor of Lennon's Hotel on George Street. The city was a staging post for troops moving North and an estimated two million passed through at a time when the population was little over 300,000.

The strains on the city were significant, especially in terms of transport, accommodation and food supplies. The better pay and rations of the Americans, and their success with Australian ladies, led to huge tensions. This culminated in the infamous two day Battle of Brisbane, when locals, Australian soldiers and US troops clashed. The fighting resulted in the death of an Australian soldier, although the event was heavily censored by authorities.



*Soldiers celebrating VJ day in 1945 in Brisbane. Coincidentally, the offices they are climbing are those of the solicitor son of Mrs Papi – the founder of the Wattle League.*

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 201318)*

*American G.I.s in Charlotte Street, Brisbane, 1942*

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 99823)*





A poignant photograph from 12 October 1945 shows Mrs Wright on the wharf waiting for her son to disembark from a ship. Her son was a prisoner of war and she is holding a banner with his name against her umbrella.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 43462)*

## Post-war Wattle League

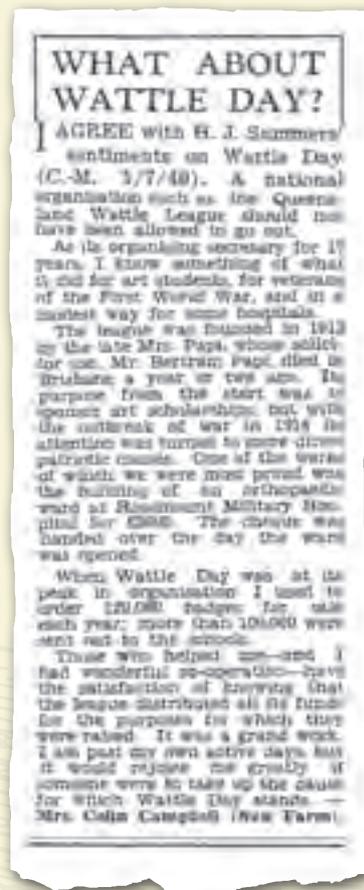
Although the scholarship continued to be awarded by the Half Dozen Group of Artists, the wider aims of the League in terms of social welfare or promotion of wattle were not continued when the war ended. This prompted retired Secretary of the League, Mrs Campbell, to write a letter to the Courier Mail in 1949 highlighting the good work done by the League in the past. Pressure like this paid off, and in 1952, Miss Doris Thain sponsored the formation of a committee to re-establish the League.

Thain was concerned with the welfare of disabled people, and worked with Josephine Hickey (who had previously been a resident of Montrose Home for Crippled Children) to revive the League. It was proposed that the new League would focus on the needs of “handicapped people”.

The League was formally reconstituted at a meeting on 29 September 1954, and quickly received many calls for advice and assistance. However, problems with the constitution brought the League to a temporary halt in November 1955. A revised constitution proved more robust, and the only further change came in 1965, when it was decided to change the name of the Queensland Wattle League to add the words “for the disabled”.

Initially, it was hoped to build a “home” to plug a gap in provision which saw very limited options for handicapped people once they reached the age of 16 and left facilities like the Montrose Home. These plans changed over time and the League instead set up a sheltered workshop to provide employment.

Finance was a dominant issue. Approaches were made for government funding but these were not successful leaving the League reliant on money from board members and other donations.



Letter from Mrs Campbell,  
Courier Mail, 5 July 1949

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An early success came in 1959 when the League played a central role in the formation of a peak body for the sector in Queensland. Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) remains an important part of the Queensland social service landscape to this day.

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## Post-war Brisbane

Money was scarce in the immediate post-war period, yet it was a time when Brisbane was in much need of investment. Some roads remained unsealed, many homes still relied on rain water and outhouses were still in use as the sewage system struggled to keep up with city growth.

Priority was first given to the construction of Tennyson Powerhouse and upgrading the power station in New Farm Park to meet the growing electricity demand. Over time, the city skyline began to change, and in 1960, Brisbane's first modern apartment block, Torbreck, was completed at Highgate Hill.

Development accelerated with the election of Clem Jones as Lord Mayor in 1961 and it was the transport network that showed the most visible change. One of the largest fires in Brisbane history in September 1962 destroyed the Paddington tram depot and hastened the demise of the tram network as some routes had to be switched to buses.

Construction of the Riverside Expressway began in 1968 as part of a master plan for city transport. That plan dealt the final blow to the tram network and originally envisaged closure of most of the suburban railway lines and an extended freeway network that would have seen much of Woolloongabba disappear to make way for road interchanges.



1. Suburbs we know today looked a bit different. Here, firemen are on their way to fight a blaze at Mount Gravatt in the 1940s.

*(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 7708-0001-0075)*

2. Tram at Highgate Hill in 1967.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-DVD5-24)*

3. The Brisbane skyline in the late 1950s showing that City Hall was still one of the tallest buildings.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-B54-12502)*

4. The huge fire at the Paddington tram depot in September 1962 destroyed 65 trams – at least a fifth of the total tram stock. The depot was on the side of a hill and supported by a large number of timber supports. A few trams were saved before the power cut out, but as the fire raged, many trams crashed to the ground through the floor.

Neither the trams nor the depot were insured. Older trams were brought back into service but a number of routes were converted to diesel buses. The perceived greater flexibility of buses and the loss of so many trams helped justify the final closure of the tram system on 13 April 1969.

The depot site was cleared and is now the site of "Paddington Central" shopping centre.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-S35-9311215)*



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# The Wattle League Workshop

The work of the 'new' League formed in 1952 came to be dominated by the establishment and running of a sheltered workshop. Ahead of their time, the Wattle League saw employment as the best long term solution to the difficulties faced by their disabled members.

The search for suitable premises took some time, but in April 1962 a workshop was opened in part of a store building in the Roma Street Railway Yard, entered from Countess Street. They quickly moved to another nearby Queensland Rail facility accessed from College Road in 1964.

Workshop tasks included wood and metal work, manufacture of items such as toys and commercial typing, collation and duplication. The later years of the 1960s saw a gradual increase in the numbers of workshop attendees and this period also saw some workshop staff working onsite with a mattress manufacturing company (Queensland Springs at Hocking Street, South Brisbane).

Successful applications for government subsidies in the 1970s allowed much needed investment in the physical set up and in the training and wages of the workers. Partly as a result of the grants, some changes were made to the workshops. Hockings Street remained as a Sheltered Workshop, while College Road became an Activity Therapy Centre (ATC). In essence, the Sheltered Workshop was more employment-focussed, while the Activity Centre had more emphasis on social, recreational and therapy programmes.

The workshop at Queensland Springs continued throughout the 1970s, but closed its doors at the end of 1980. The Activity Therapy Centre changed and developed over the years. It eventually became a "small business" in 1991 after Government funding ended and the League decided to maintain a service for clients who could not sustain mainstream employment.



*Walking aids developed as a key product line following an initial enquiry by the Geriatric Unit of the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Hundreds were manufactured and sold over the years.*

## The Wattle League Workshop



The small business that developed from the Activity Therapy Centre specialised in services for business – such as processing monthly statements, invoices and promotional literature.

In 2001 the small business adopted the name “Stuff it” before the service was transferred to another company (Work Solutions) in 2004.



## Roma Street

The Roma Street area has been important to the city for many years and it is believed that prior to European arrival, Aboriginal people had used the land for meetings and ceremonies.

Before the current parkland was created, the area and surroundings had been home to a railway goods yard, an orphanage, a power station, gas works, markets and the original site of Brisbane Grammar School. During World War Two, air raid shelters were built in what is now the Upper Parkland.

When rail freight handling moved to Acacia Ridge in 1991, Roma Street Station was redeveloped, and a large portion of the Roma Street yards was no longer required. That land was integrated with the existing Albert Park, and Roma Street Parkland opened in 2001.



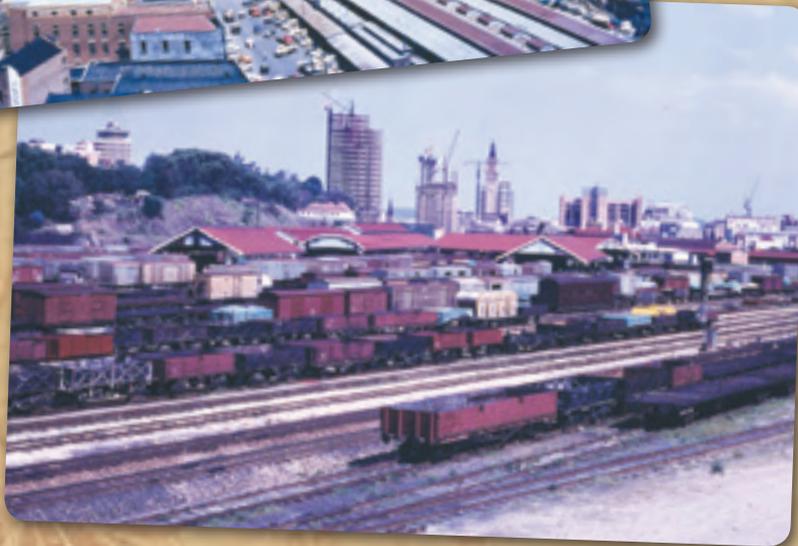
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1. Countess Street power station in 1923, with the railway yards in the background. This station originally powered the tram network, and was demolished soon after this photograph was taken, as newer stations took over.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-B120-30922)*

2. The markets pictured in 1950. They were established on the corner of Turbot and Roma Streets in 1881, and served the city until the current site at Rocklea opened in 1964.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-B54-38056)*

3. The markets are in the foreground of this picture taken from City Hall in 1956.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-S35-9311034)*

4. Roma Street railway yard in 1968 – the Wattle League Workshop may well have been in one of the buildings pictured! Note also the clock tower of City Hall slowly being surrounded by taller buildings.

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-S35-9310967)*

# The people behind the League

## The Cilento family

A number of members of the prominent Brisbane Cilento family have been involved with the Wattle League over the years. Lady Cilento was appointed as patron in 1958 and two of her children also enjoyed an association with the League.

Prior to being appointed as patron, her daughter, Margaret Cilento, won the 1947 Wattle League art scholarship during the time the scholarships were being organised by the Half Dozen Group of Artists. Margaret went on to have a notable artistic career. Later, her son, Dr David Cilento, was a member of the Wattle League board from 1976 to 1978, serving as President in his final year.

During the course of our research, we made contact with another of Lady Cilento's daughters, Dr Ruth Cilento. She told us:

*"The League was a tower of strength to many people in the early Queensland history since there were no social services in those days. My sister Margaret Cilento who became a well known artist, received a bursary from the League after the war, to continue her studies.*

*My mother Lady Cilento who was a patron of the League for some years was also a philanthropist in the medical and sociology fields all through her long life ... I am delighted that Open Minds is continuing the ethos of care for those in need."*



Lady Phyllis Cilento

# The people behind the League

## **Doris and George Thain**

Doris Thain was the driving force behind the re-establishment of the League in 1952 and served as President and Secretary, a post she held at the time of her death in 1962.

Her brother, William George Thain was also a very important figure in the League as Secretary and Treasurer, before becoming Chairman between 1961 and 1975. He provided significant financial assistance to the League in the early years through cash loans and donations. He also lent office space and equipment, and continued to be involved with the organisation right up to his death in 1979. George's wife (Jean) was also a Board member.

## **Mrs Blackman**



Mrs Blackman's husband Jim was an ex-serviceman who unfortunately suffered a heart attack in 1968. During his recovery he attended the League workshop from 1970. She recalls her husband enjoying the League and particularly liked the feeling of "going to work".

Mrs Blackman joined the board in 1976, becoming Chairman in 1979. She helped keep the organisation going during a difficult financial time.

## **Madeline Cottee**



As Chairman for much of the 1980s, Mrs Cottee steered the organisation through challenges that could easily have seen the League fold. Those who remember her at the time describe her energetic fundraising, which ranged from selling cakes to making approaches to government bodies. She also

spent many hours each week at the League with clients, families and staff.

Sadly, Mrs Cottee passed away during the writing of this document, but speaking in a 2010 interview, she downplayed the role she played in revitalising the organisation, merely commenting she was: "doing a necessary job that happened sometimes to work."

# The people behind the League

## Three generations of the Stewart family

The Stewart family are unique in our history in having an involvement that spans three generations.

Ted Stewart convened the organisation between 1989 and 2009. His father Sir Edward Stewart was patron of the Wattle League for over 25 years and Ted's grandfather arranged for meals to be supplied to Wattle Day collectors at the Criterion Hotel in 1916.

Ted's father, Sir Edward, was a prominent and successful Brisbane businessman. At various times, he owned or operated the Criterion, the Albion, the Hamilton and the Highway Hotel at Rocklea, where Queensland's first drive-through bottle shop was developed. Sir Edward

also expanded their catering operations, handling catering at Eagle Farm racecourse, and the beverages at the 1982 Commonwealth Games. He received a knighthood for services to his industry and the community at Buckingham Palace in 1980.

His period as patron overlapped with his son, Ted, becoming a board member of the League. Ted was appointed a Director in November 1986 and assumed the Chairmanship in 1989. During his 20 years as Chair, the organisation underwent the most dramatic changes in its history, with a change in name, new headquarters, and a massive growth in the range and number of services offered.

Ted remains closely involved with the family business that still involves hospitality and property investment.



*Ted Stewart meets Susan Papi – the wife of the late Adrian Papi, the grandson of League founder Josephine Papi.*

# The people behind the League

## Pat Keating



Pat Keating is 79 years old and as a long standing recipient of our services, he knows more about the Wattle League than most of the current staff!

Pat started coming to the Wattle League in the 1970s, when his father was sick in hospital, and social workers who became involved with the family suggested Pat would benefit from attending the workshop run by the League.

Pat recalls:

“I started in 1972 at the sheltered workshop at Normanby, across the road from the Grammar. We used to make pegs, pack screws, do bits of paperwork like folding road safety leaflets. The workshop was in old railway huts at the back of Roma Street Station. The Walkers were running the place and then we got a new Manager, Mr Hawkins. He helped get some government money for the League.”

Pat has an amazing memory for his work colleagues and some of the people who ran the League. He remembers board member Mrs Blackman getting involved with the League:

“I worked with Jimmy, Mrs Blackman’s husband. Then she went onto the Board and got her friend Mrs Cottee involved as well.”

He also remembers some of the changes that happened over the years:

“There was another workshop for a while at Hockings Street. They did heavier work like making springs and walking aids.”

When asked what kept him going to the League all these years, Pat says he enjoyed attending and added:

“I met all types of people which was very interesting.”

Pat worked for nearly 30 years until his retirement, and now lives in a nursing home. He still receives support from Open Minds, maintaining a relationship that stretches over 40 years of our history.

Pat’s story merely gives a flavour of the many, many clients and family members who have and continue to play a vital role in the running of the organisation.

*(Photo: Imago Photography)*

## The League in the 1970s - first Government support

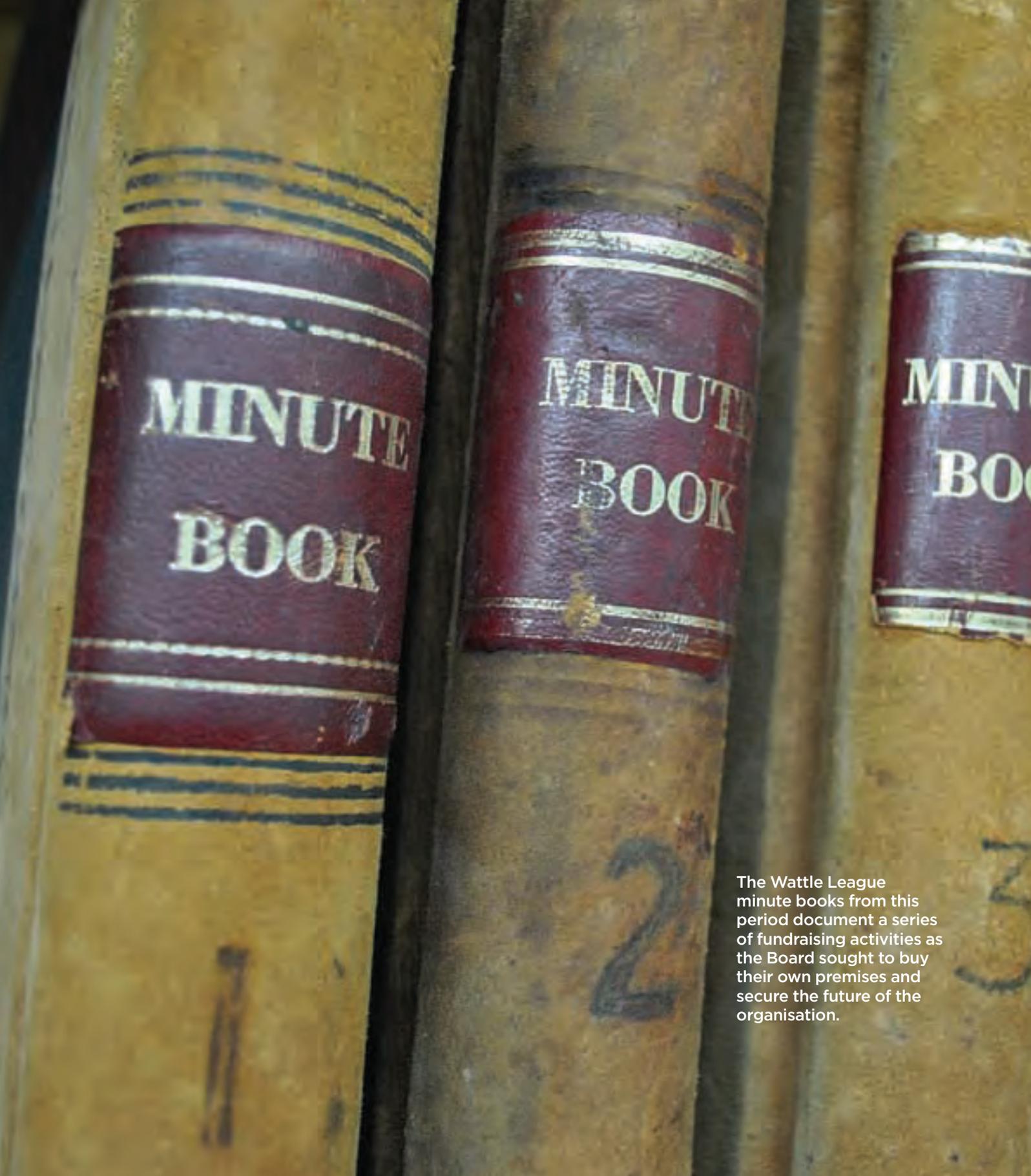
The 1970s started positively for the League, with the offices and workshop working at full capacity and finances stable. New opportunities came in the form of grants from government and by 1974, the first money had been received and helped cover rent, wages, equipment and training fees.

The subsidies received for the workshop activity allowed a closer focus on future development of the League, and a 'building fund' was established to help secure better premises. In the meantime, a warehouse building in South Brisbane was rented, and the organisation moved the Activity Therapy Centre there in 1975.

The work of the Therapy Centre continued to grow and develop as skills programmes became more established. An Occupational Therapist was hired, and classes were organised in a wide variety of subjects from sewing and cooking, to caring for pets.

The late 1970s were more difficult, as the poor economic conditions of the time and increases in rent ate into reserves. The League engaged a fundraiser and tried a wide range of activities to bring money in to the organisation. Client outings and activities continued though, and a commemorative wattle grove planting received television coverage during Wattle Week in 1979.





MINUTE  
BOOK

MINUTE  
BOOK

MINUTE  
BOOK

The Wattle League  
minute books from this  
period document a series  
of fundraising activities as  
the Board sought to buy  
their own premises and  
secure the future of the  
organisation.

## 1970s Brisbane

The 1970s were a time of huge change in the city. The skyline changed as the city grew upwards, and a number of historic buildings were demolished in the name of progress. With Joh Bjelke-Petersen at the helm in State Government, Brisbane saw largely unchecked growth and rising political tension.

Tragedy also struck in the form of the 1973 Whisky Au Go Go fire, where 15 people died, and the 1974 floods when 14 perished.



*The Whisky Au Go Go fire in Fortitude Valley killed 15 people in the early hours of Thursday 8 March 1973. Two drums of diesel fuel were deliberately ignited, and grease was said to have been spread over the rear fire escape. Two men were arrested and subsequently convicted, the jury believing the fire was lit as part of an extortion campaign.*

January 1974 saw the worst flooding in the city during the 20th century, as continual, heavy rain fell for three weeks. On top of this came tropical cyclone “Wanda”, which hit north of Brisbane on 24 January and deposited enormous quantities of water during the Australia Day weekend.

The floods peaked at 6.6 metres and nearly 7,000 homes were inundated. 14 people lost their lives.



*Flooding in CBD taken from Holman Street – note the cranes as the city grows upwards but also City Hall still just visible. There is also a wharf remaining on the riverfront before the Pacific Motorway was completed.*

*(Brisbane City Council: BCC-CD56-06)*

The demolition of the Bellevue Hotel in 1979 was symbolic of the Bjelke-Petersen Government approach to progress. The National Trust urged the retention of the 1880s three-storey Hotel on the corner of George and Alice streets and opposite Parliament House. Famous guests had included Frank Sinatra, Katharine Hepburn, Nat ‘King’ Cole and Louis Armstrong.

Just three days after cabinet approval for demolition, bulldozers moved in at night to completely demolish the hotel despite a growing crowd of protesters.

The Government argued at the time that the cost of renovating the building was simply too high. The same approach and the same demolition company would go on to tear down the Cloudland Ballroom at Bowen Hills in 1982.



The Bellevue Hotel pictured in 1933  
(State Library of Queensland, Image no. 79175)

## Wattle League survival and growth

There is no doubt that the start of the 1980s saw the League at a low point, and the long term viability of the organisation was in serious doubt.

The League effectively retrenched to survive, and the Sheltered Workshop at Queensland Springs closed in 1980. The lack of sufficient government funding or donations for the workshop meant it was not viable. Payment of wages was suspended in March 1982, and the League ran without a General Manager for a time.

In 1983, Mrs Madeline Cottee was elected as Chairman – she proved to be a vital figure in securing the future of the League. Mrs Cottee worked tirelessly to highlight the needs of the organisation, encourage donations and build relations with government.

Around the same time, a new fundraiser, Warren Tapp, was appointed. He organised a fundraising dinner at City Hall with comedian, actor and writer, Campbell McComas. This event gives a significant boost to the finances.

The work of the Activity Therapy Centre continued throughout this time, using a programme of training, education, basic living skills and recreation. Despite the difficulties being faced by the League, it was this type of work, and the experience gained, that laid the foundations for much of what Open Minds does today.

In the later years of the 1980s, the Disability Services Act brought new funding but also required changes to the Activity Therapy Centre as discussed earlier.

So, despite all of the challenges, by the end of the 1980s and the end of Mrs Cottee's Chairmanship, the finances of the League had been transformed and it was able to report a significant surplus.

Chairman's AGM address 1980:

**"...the affairs of the Association continue to be governed by our inability to accumulate adequate funds."**



Although Madeline Cottee (right) stepped down as Chairman in 1989, she remained involved with the League for many years after. Here she is pictured with former Queensland Premier Anna Bligh at the Earle Duus Awards ceremony in 2001.

## The world comes to Brisbane

Just as the 1980s saw a slow transformation in the fortunes of the Wattle League, the decade can also be seen as the era that Brisbane really came of age as a global city. The Commonwealth Games in 1982 and the World Expo in 1988 attracted millions of visitors and acted as a catalyst for development.

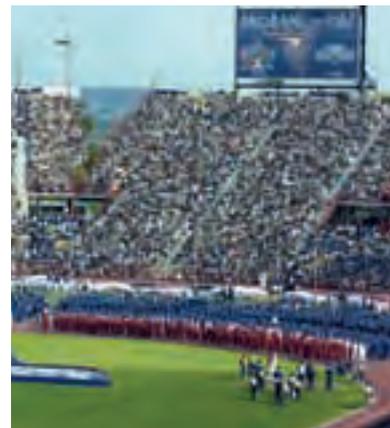
The mascot for the games was Matilda the kangaroo. A giant mechanical Matilda was pulled around the stadium at the opening ceremony winking at the crowd. After the Games she moved to Wet 'n' Wild and was exhibited there until recently. She now resides near Kybong beside a service station that shares her name!

The South Bank site was largely derelict before Expo after years of industrial use. Large sails were erected to protect visitors from the sun, a monorail was built to transport visitors around the site and the 88 metre skyneedle was constructed. Around 100 pavilions represented many nations and regions, while corporate presences included IBM and Ford.

The most visible legacy of Expo 88 is the South Bank Parklands, which were constructed on the site after the event. The Parklands include the Peace Pagoda, which was part of the Nepalese presence, and the River Stage and Suncorp Piazza, which were Expo performing arts venues.



NAA: AB746, KN22/1/192/108



Brisbane City Council: BCC: C120-2790

*The Commonwealth Games brought 45 Commonwealth nations to Brisbane. QEII Stadium hosted the opening ceremony as well as the athletics and archery competitions. Other events were held at the Sleeman Sports Complex in Chandler, while the Bruce Highway was used for cycling. Griffith University campus was the athlete's village.*



*World Expo 88 was held between April and October, with the theme “Leisure in the Age of Technology”. It was part of bicentennial celebrations and attracted over 15 million visitors.*

*Brisbane City Council: BCC-T120M-1529-3*

## Becoming Open Minds

The Queensland Wattle League started the 1990s in a far stronger position than the start of the previous decade. By this stage, the League was already developing the expertise and services that are recognisable in Open Minds today.

In particular, the move away from running a workshop toward supporting individual clients to find and maintain work was very important. So too, was the growth in managing accommodation and housing support. Not only did this shape future Wattle League employment and support services, these new services also gave the League experience that would be vital when the Project 300 (P300) programme was created.

P300 aimed to assist a target number of 300 people from Queensland psychiatric hospitals to live independently. By 2000, the Wattle League P300 service had grown to support over 40 clients in the transition to independent living. This growth continued and in 2012, Open Minds is the largest P300 service provider in Queensland.

Around the same time as the start of P300 (1996), the Wattle League was notified of a legacy from the estate of Mr Earle Duus. Using some of the money, an award scheme in Duus' name was created that is still awarded during Mental Health Week.

Over time, the League identified itself more and more as a body specialising in mental health. This culminated in the name change to Open Minds in 2003. The name was seen as summing up the approach and outlook of the organisation.



*In 2002, a redeveloped Chester Road block is opened. The land was donated by Council and the building costs met by the League.*



80th Anniversary party in 1992

# Growing with Brisbane

Below is the site of the Open Minds Woolloongabba office as it appears today. The main picture is the same location in 1949.



Brisbane City Council: BCC-354-489



JOINERY

TIMBER  
HARDWARE  
GLASS

KING

# Growing with Brisbane

Brisbane taken from South Bank around 1912 (main picture), and from the same point in 2012.



State Library of Queensland: image no. 38865



## One hundred years in perspective

There are not many Australian organisations that can claim one hundred years of service. The fact that Open Minds thrives today is a testament to the organisation's resilience and ability to reinvent itself as times change.

The long list of services now provided by Open Minds would be unrecognisable to the founders of the Wattle League. However, many of the principles that underpin the work would strike a chord, and the slogan 'people supporting people' could be applied to the work of the League during the First World War just as readily as it applies to the work of Open Minds today. In fact, the history is really all about people and their commitment to a better life for fellow citizens.

In the early years, the Queensland Wattle League responded to needs of people affected by war. The reformed Wattle League for the Disabled in the 1950s focused on disability of all types, and led the way in providing meaningful work for those who found it difficult to gain employment elsewhere. The Activity Therapy Centre founded in the 1970s undoubtedly provided a sense of belonging for those who attended. The experience gained led Open Minds to its clear focus on mental health and the services it operates today.

Along the way, the organisation helped launch some very successful artistic careers through scholarships. The careers of both Daphne Mayo and Robert Cummings were launched with the support of the League, and many others benefited from the later scholarships provided with the Technical College.

Reading through the history of the Wattle League also shows the contribution made by some remarkable women – from founder, Mrs Papi, and long-time secretary, Mrs Campbell, to Mrs Cottee who turned the organisation around in the 1980s.

We also see the dedication and determination of Doris Thain to revive the Wattle League in the fifties.

Many others could be mentioned, and it should not be forgotten that families and carers have played a central role in the activities of the organisation across its history – as board members, as volunteers and as funders.

This has been a fascinating project to work on, and I am proud to have been able to research, write and present this publication as a summary of the first hundred years of an amazing Brisbane organisation.

*Tom Roberts*

Centenary Project Officer



1. A number of events have been held to celebrate our centenary involving staff and clients.
2. Open Minds Chair Mike Gilmour pictured in 2012 with Tracy Davis MP, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (centre) and Kris Sargeant, Open Minds CEO at the centenary year launch held at the Queensland State Library. *(Photo: Imago Photography)*
3. Clients and staff enjoy the centenary year launch event at the State Library. *(Photo: Imago Photography)*

## Presidents / Chairs

1912–1917

**Mr John Frederick Bailey**

1917–1920

**Mr George Kenilworth Seabrook**

1920–1928

**Alderman Maurice Baldwin**

1929–1931

**Mr Samuel Henry Richardson**

1931–1935

**Mr Percy Stanhope Hobday**

1935–1944

**Mr Samuel Henry Richardson**

1952–1953

**Miss Josephine Hickey**

1954–1956

**Miss Doris Myrtle Thain**

1958–1959

**Dr. John Alexander Shanasy**

1959–1960

**Mr Alexander Harry Borgeaud**

1960–1961

**Rev. Ivan Wells Alcorn**

1961–1975

**Mr William George Thain**

1975–1978

**Mr Adrian David Warat**

1978–1982

**Mrs Joan Blackman**

1983–1989

**Mrs Madeline Cottee**

1989–2009

**Mr Ted Stewart**

2009–

**Mr Mike Gilmour**

## Patrons

1912–1914

**Governor Sir William MacGregor and  
Lady MacGregor**

1916–1920

**Governor Major Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams and  
Lady Goold-Adams**

1920–1925

**Governor Lieutenant Colonel Sir Matthew Nathan\***

1926–1927

**Lieutenant-Governor Hon. William Lennon**

1927–1932

**Governor Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Herbert  
John Goodwin and Lady Goodwin**

1932–1944

**Governor Colonel Sir Leslie Orme Wilson and  
Lady Wilson**

1958–1960

**Lady Phylis Cilento**

1960–1975

**Honourable Sir George Francis Reuben Nicklin**

1977–1980

**Sir Llew Edwards**

1982–2006

**Sir Edward Jackson Stewart**

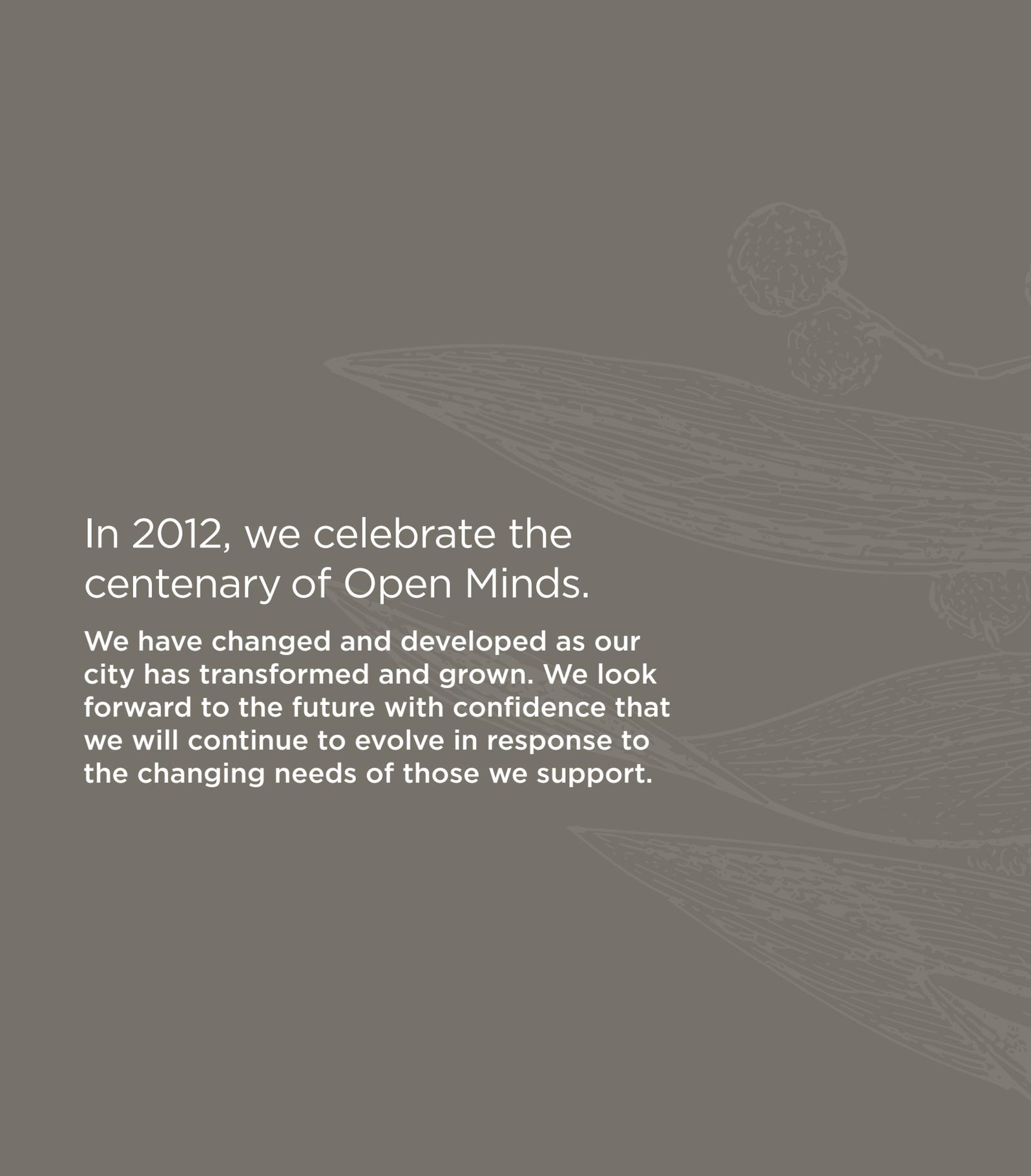
*\*Sir Matthew Nathan was appointed life patron in 1925 (died 1939)*

# The Board of Open Minds as at 1 November 2012



*Left to right*

**Prof Paul Mazerolle**  
**Claude Huddy**  
**Ted Stewart**  
**Dr Madonna Tucker**  
**Mike Gilmour (*Chair*)**  
**Melanie Nicholson**  
**Lynn Smart**  
**Dr Margaret Steinberg AM**



In 2012, we celebrate the  
centenary of Open Minds.

We have changed and developed as our  
city has transformed and grown. We look  
forward to the future with confidence that  
we will continue to evolve in response to  
the changing needs of those we support.



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## People supporting people

Open Minds would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who assisted in the preparation of this centenary publication.