

Coorparoo
& Heritage Group
Districts

Invites you to hear

Dr. Deborah Jordan

Speak about

Female Suffrage

In 1900, all Australian women received the Federal vote as part of Federation and in 1905, Queensland became the second-last Australian State to grant women the right to vote at State elections. The achievement was the result of events and efforts at local, national and international levels. In Queensland an important institution in the campaign was the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Its President was Elizabeth Brentnall - a Coorparoo resident. (An account of her life is told in the Group's July 2024 Newsletter) She first breached the topic of women's suffrage as a missionary activity for the organisation in 1888. Our speaker today will talk about the rich history of the campaign and significant women and organisations involved.

Dr. Deborah Jordan is an award winning professional historian who has published widely over several decades, and is the author of five books and editor of several more. Her latest book *Australian Women's Justice* traces the women involved in successful campaigns for votes for women and in the anti-war movements in Queensland from 1824 to 1919. She has worked at the Universities of Queensland, Flinders, and Adelaide and more recently Monash University as well as for the Department of Meteorology and for CSIRO. Her partnership Island Storytellers to host cultural festivals and publish selected works was formed several years ago on Quandamooka lands.

Come along and listen to Deb speak about the struggles women had in obtaining the right to vote. Deb will also have some of her books available for purchase.

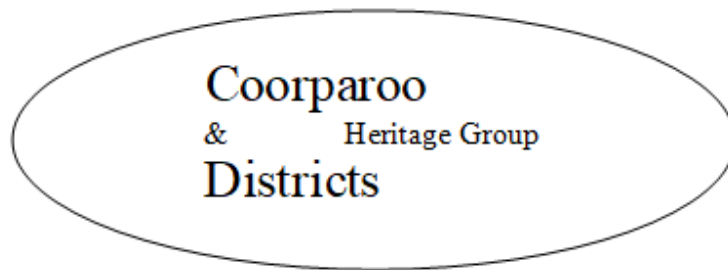
Where? **Kingsbury Room**
Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre
347 Old Cleveland Rd. Coorparoo

When? **Saturday 3 August 2024** at 2.00 pm

Non-members are welcome, but why not join our group? A small donation to offset hiring charges would be appreciated.

Contact President Ron Baker OAM 0412 944 095 Vice President Richard Jeffreys OAM 0411 511 369
Mail: Hon. Secretary. PO Box 263 Coorparoo Q 4151

This flyer kindly copied by the office of the Member for Greenslopes, Joe Kelly MP



JULY 2024 NEWSLETTER

Members and guests were both amused and informed about James Stone and the naming of Stones Corner, when Andrew Hill, the Great, Great Grandson of James Stone spoke to us at our June meeting. Andrew gave a well presented talk about James Stone to have a hotel that sold beer. Unfortunately, after numerous attempts to gain a liquor licence the best he was allowed to brew was Ginger Ale. He finally sold out and the new owner was granted a licence straight away. About 25 years ago Andrew reintroduced James Stone's Ginger Beer. Ironically, Andrew has recently obtained a license to brew and sell alcoholic Stones Ginger Beer. This beer is now being sold in the Stones Corner Hotel.

At our next meeting on 3 August, we will have Dr. Deborah Jordan speaking about Female Suffrage. Deborah is a professional historian who has undertaken considerable research about the struggle women had to gain the right to vote. Her latest book, just recently released, titled *Australian Women's Justice* tells of the struggle Australian women had to finally gain suffrage. The Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902 finally gave Australian women these voting rights. Deborah will have some of her books available for purchase.

The October excursion to New Farm has been planned and the route finalised, depending on the bus company being happy with the route, as there are a couple of narrow roads and a street lined with trees branching over the roadway which could affect the planned route. Afternoon Tea will be taken in a café opposite Ne Farm Park. We will need to know the number of passengers participating to determine the size of the coach required. This will determine the cost of the tour. A flyer advertising the tour will be released shortly. Members are urged to tell friends about the tour and hopefully encourage them to join the tour.

The committee is continuing its research for the location of former service stations. In the area Some former services stations are easy to locate as their structure still remains under a different use but others have been completely removed. The committee is urging members to provide the group with the location, name and hopefully a photograph of the service station. It will not matter if your information is the same as other members. With this information the group can prepare a comprehensive map showing the locations of these stations. Members contribution is valuable.

Work into researching further information on park naming is continuing. Many parks in our district have only the name of the park, usually named after some identity associated with the area. There are some parks or reserves that remain unnamed. If members know of a park without sufficient information, please let a committee member know. If you have any information on the person on which the park was named, also please let a committee member know.

We have sufficient speakers lined up for this year but are on the lookout for next year's speakers. If members have heard or know of speakers who would be suitable for our group, please let a committee member know and this will be followed up.

Continuing our articles on prominent Coorparoo identities in this Newsletter we feature Elizabeth Brentnall, wife of Frederick Thomas Brentnall MLC. and the first Chairman of the Coorparoo Shire. Elizabeth Brentnall is an interesting woman in her own rights. Whilst this article is lengthy it is well worth reading. We thank Ruth Blair for researching this information.

Elizabeth Brentnall (1830-1909)

In the early days of the colony of Queensland two remarkable people came to settle in Coorparoo - Frederick and Elizabeth Brentnall. They became significant figures in the early history of Queensland. This is Elizabeth's story.

Elizabeth was born in 1830 in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, Frederick in 1834 in Riddings, Derbyshire, both of staunchly Wesleyan families. Elizabeth trained as a school teacher in the Glasgow Normal College. She taught in Wesleyan schools in Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, and Bacup, Lancashire, finally, in her early thirties, being appointed headmistress at Oldbury infants' school in the West Midlands.. In his PhD thesis on Elizabeth, John McCullough suggests that in her experience of the often hard life in these places we might find 'the root of her political, philosophical and temperance experiences'. [23] Frederick, entered the business world as a young man, in Ripley, Derbyshire; according to family memories, he had already become a Wesleyan preacher. (See his great-granddaughter's account referenced below.). In 1863 Frederick was sent to join the Wesleyan Conference of New South Wales and Queensland, based first of all in Wagga, then Mudgee and Windsor. We have no record of Frederick and Elizabeth's meeting - none of Elizabeth's personal papers survive - but it seems she followed Frederick to Sydney in 1866 and they married in 1867. Their daughter Flora was born in Mudgee in 1868 and Charlotte Amelia followed in Windsor in 1870.

The Brentnalls in their work in rural New South Wales were, by all accounts, an excellent team - as one can imagine: they were two lively, relatively young people with strongly developed social skills who had experienced in the North of England of a range of people and conditions. They were moved north from New South Wales to the young colony of Queensland and Frederick had the incumbency of Albert Street Methodist church from 1873-75. From 1876-77 he served on the Ipswich circuit and from 1878-80 the Ann Street circuit. In 1881, suffering from an infection of the throat, Frederick retired from active ministerial duties and in 1883 he resigned from the ministry, finally fully retiring from Church affairs in 1888. Meanwhile, taking up positions that led to his eventual success in property and business, he bought, in 1885, a significant parcel of land in Coorparoo, on the corner of Cavendish and Old Cleveland Roads. He built a large home, 'Eastleigh' (opposite what is now the Coorparoo School of Arts) for his family. The Brentnalls moved from a home on River Terrace to 'Eastleigh' in 1886. Frederick was becoming a man of substance. In 1886 he was nominated to the Legislative Council. Buying a considerable parcel of land away from the centre of the city showed foresight on his part. The nearest public transport was the train line to Wynnum - a mile walk - or a new tramway (1887) that terminated at Buranda. He played a large part in the development of the Coorparoo district. He became the first Chairman of the Coorparoo Shire Council, established in 1888, and was its Shire Clerk from 1888 to 1892.

While Frederick's stature in the Colony grew, Elizabeth was forging her own pathway in the community. 1885, the year of the move to 'Eastleigh', was clearly an important turning point for the Brentnalls. Elizabeth became the first President of the Queensland Women's Christian Temperance Union in that year and served until 1899, when she suffered a disabling accident to her kneecap. Such was her stature in the movement that she continued as Honorary President for life.

The WCTU originated in Ohio in the US in 1873, its purpose 'to create a sober and pure world by abstinence, purity and evangelical Christianity'.**[Wikipedia]** It became an international movement in 1883, so women of the Australian colonies were in tune with the wider world and quick to join -'early adopters' in today's parlance. John McCullough says of her: 'Elizabeth doesn't appear heroic and tended to shun the spotlight, but she was an important figure in the social and political development of Queensland.' **[34]** This influence came through her work within the WCTU, informed by her deep-rooted devotion to Methodism, imbued as it was with values of temperance, philanthropy, and the support and encouragement of women. Elizabeth had considerable management skills. McCullough writes that she was 'a stickler for proper voting and accounting procedures.' Elizabeth insisted on members paying attention to detail: 'she criticised bad management in some local Unions [i.e. WCT Unions], advocated parliamentary usage in meetings, and decided the WCTU needed to employ a paid office secretary.'**[164]** She also had a keen sense of history. Here is a letter - its existence bearing out her admonition - from the collection of WCTU documents in the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland:

Coorparoo, 18 September 1905

To W.C.T.U. of Queensland (State Convention)

While I have the duty of caring for the State WCTU records, I am anxious to impress upon each Union the great importance of preserving the records of our work. These will all be very valuable by-and-bye, when a history of W.C.T.U. work in Queensland comes to be written. See to it, that you appoint some sister, who will carefully preserve all books, records and documents. This is very important. I fear in the past, we have not given this matter the attention it deserves. Let me urge this without delay.-Yours cordially,

Eliz. Brentnall.**[164]**

It is thanks to this directive that we have detailed knowledge of the role of the WCTU, guided by Elizabeth, in the campaign for women's suffrage in Queensland, and through these documents can learn so much about the role of women in the life of their community. Her efforts were to be perhaps her most significant contribution to Queensland political and social life.

Elizabeth's interest in the campaign for women's suffrage was fuelled by the strong social concerns and promotion of women's rights and the importance of families within Methodism. The pursuit of temperance by the WCTU was rooted in these Methodist values and women's

suffrage was seen as a way to foster those values by having women's voices in the parliament. This is sometimes referred to as 'expedient' feminism. In 1894 Elizabeth wrote, in a WCTU document:

As you know, the women of New Zealand have gained the Franchise, and have already made themselves heard, through the ballot box, on the drink question. Their deportment under these new conditions, and the use they made of their privileges would greatly affect the granting of electoral rights to the women of the other colonics.,[171]

And she goes on to quote from the *Australian Brewers' Journal* in support of her argument(!):

In New Zealand, as all are aware, women now have votes, and the general election, just over, has sent a lot of faddists to parliament, who will make it unpleasant for the liquor trade-which will have to fight for its existence. The woman-franchise people will, no doubt, make a great effort to introduce this into other colonies, but it is to be hoped they will not succeed. [172]

Elizabeth seems, however, in McCullough's research, to have come to a more general belief in the rights and dignity of women.

Soon after the establishment of the Queensland branch of the WCTU under her Presidency Elizabeth urged acceptance of suffrage for women as a mission of the organisation. She first raised the issue in 1887 and in 1891, a Women's Suffrage Department was created within the Union, under the leadership of Charlotte Eleanor Trundle. This Department worked closely with the Women's Equal Franchise Association to develop suffrage petitions (women and men, separately), submitted to the Queensland Parliament in 1894. (**See link below to the Petitions website.**) Federally, Australian women earned the right to vote in 1902 but women's suffrage was not achieved in Queensland until 1905 (almost twenty years after Elizabeth inaugurated the WCTU's important involvement). Frederick had been part of a formidable opposition to the women's vote, based on a firm belief that only property owners should have the franchise and he was particularly concerned that the extension of the right both to a broader community and to women would mean the end of the 'plural vote', i.e. one property, one vote, hence the right of an owner of multiple properties to vote multiple times. The story of the fight for women's suffrage in Queensland is a rich and complex one. Elizabeth wasn't at the forefront of the movement, but a respected, indefatigable and important figure in the background. And Frederick eventually came around to supporting his wife on this issue, campaigning for the postal vote when Elizabeth was confined to a wheelchair following her accident.

Elizabeth had many other significant charitable roles in the Brisbane community, including the Lady Bowen Hospital (a 'lying-in' hospital), the Brisbane Industrial Home (a home and employment for 'fallen' and 'friendless' women), the Lady Musgrave Lodge (a home for immigrant and young working women), the Governesses' Home (a home and employment agency for governesses and lady workers), the YWCA (the first YWCA in Queensland was established in Rockhampton in 1888) and the Sailors' Mission (a recreation hall for sailors).

[Wikipedia]

Elizabeth's was a multi-faceted life. Her life of philanthropy and leadership, rooted in her deeply felt Methodist faith, went hand in glove with the elevated position the Brentnalls occupied in Brisbane society. McCullough describes them 'moving easily in vice-regal circles', Elizabeth's name appearing in newspaper accounts of vice-regal events, down to a description of what she was wearing (*plus ça change*): 'a black costume, with bonnet trimmed with jet and lace'. [160-161] But she was also passionate about home and family. Elizabeth's close friend from the South Australian WCTU, Elizabeth Webb Nicholls, wrote of her visit to the Brentnalls:

Mrs Brentnall's home life is very delightful. I had the privilege of being her guest for several weeks, and fully endorse the tribute of a friend who said Mrs Brentnall is the embodiment of courtesy. Her house is well managed; good order, good taste, careful attention to details, with a blessed absence of 'fussiness' being as manifest as in her public work. She is a good wife, a considerate mistress, and a wise and tender mother; and her two daughters (her only children) co-operate in all her labours. [157]

Elizabeth had two loving and supportive daughters. Flora (Mrs Edgar B. Harris) and Charlotte both contributed to the work of the WCTU, Flora inheriting her mother's leadership skills in various activities of the Union.

Elizabeth died from peritonitis in 1909 with her family by her side, at 'Eastleigh'. At her funeral there were 'politicians from both houses of parliament, members of the judiciary, a large contingent of clergy, representatives of local Government, numerous delegates from the Brisbane business community, philanthropic societies, the Clerk of the Legislative Council, a knight of the realm, and assorted others.' [157] The 'assorted others' would have included her many friends from the WCTU and other organisations, and, we might hope, some of the many people she had helped. A subsequent memorial service was held in the Albert Street Methodist (now Uniting) Church - both the church and Brisbane being very different places from when the Brentnalls arrived in 1873. (Not the least of the changes being that the inner city streets were finally all paved.[148]) The Rev. Dr Youngman's eulogy considers the love and esteem in which she was held:

But now many feel that a light has gone out, and a bright particular star, by which it was possible to shape a course through the darkness, over the desert or melancholy sea, has been extinguished. One sweet instrument has been made silent in the orchestra, and life's music can never be so full, rich, harmonious again. Not here, but elsewhere, will all the broken strings of the harp be re-united. [268]

An obituary described her as 'a woman of large heart [who] had cultivated a world-wide sympathy, was throughly cosmopolitan in her outlook upon life, and [whose] influence would live on.' [Wikipedia]

To end this brief story of a truly remarkable woman and pillar of the Coorparoo community, here are words from her great-granddaughter, Frances Crick:

Elizabeth was a leader of women, eminently capable and with fine organisational ability, she possessed a strong and persuasive personality. Unlike Frederick, who was held in awe (and respect) she was a gentle and loving person. Her grandfather had held lands in Scotland, and fought for Bonnie Prince Charlie. When Mrs Leavitt came to Brisbane in 1885 to establish the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Queensland, she chose Elizabeth as its first president, a task which she carried out with great distinction until forced to resign her active work when confined to a wheelchair in 1899. From then until her death (she had been created Honorary Life President) she exercised a wonderful ministry to WCTU women all over Australia with her letters of encouragement and guidance.

Notes.

Sources.

The principal source is John McCullough's excellent PhD thesis: *Elizabeth Brentnall (1830-1909: Educator, Feminist, Suffragist and Philanthropist)*. **Page references throughout are to this source.** The thesis is available online through the University of Queensland Library, but access is restricted. It may be made available through the Fryer Library at UQ, on appointment. See UQ Library Special Collections for information on access. <https://web.library.uq.edu.au/library-services/special-collections>. It is regrettable that this thesis is not more readily available and it is an important record of Elizabeth's life and of the context of a young colony in which she lived most of her life.

John McCullough also contributed an account of Elizabeth's life with special focus on her work. See 'Elizabeth Brentnall', Fryer Folios Vol.4 No.3, 2009. Pp. 22-24. (This is open access.)

Wikipedia has a helpful page on Elizabeth Brentnall.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Brentnall

For information on Frederick Brentnall see the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brentnall-frederick-thomas-3050>

Frances Crick. Elizabeth and Frederick's great-granddaughter, Frances Crick, wrote a memoir about her great-grandparents. It is available in the CDHG archive. Contact Ron Baker for access.

Dr Deborah Jordan has been a great help in my preparation of this piece on Elizabeth. She has recently published a book on the movement for women's suffrage in Queensland: *Australian Women's Justice: Settler Colonisation and the Queensland Vote*. (Routledge, 2024) She will speak to the CDHG group in August 2024.

For further on female suffrage in Queensland see also:

John McCullough, *The Suffragists. One Hundred Years of Women's Suffrage in Queensland*. (Central Queensland University Press, 2005)

The searchable list of signatories to the men's and women's suffrage petitions of 1894 is available at: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Visit-and-learn/History/Womens-Suffrage/Signatories-to-the-Womens-Suffrage-Petitions>

The documents of the QWCTU can be consulted by appointment at Fryer Library, U of Queensland:

<https://manuscripts.library.uq.edu.au/index.php/womens-christian-temperance-union-of-queensland>

Photos.

Elizabeth Brentnall Centre, her daughter Flora (Mrs E.B. Harris) back right and WCTU friends.



(Source: Wikipedia 'Elizabeth Brentnall': Photo from Lomer, A. Members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Brisbane, 1901 (2004): Digitised Copy Print from OM93-02 Ipswich Cutting Book. - John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland
Front Row: [Mrs Carvosso](#) (President), Mrs Brentnall (Treasurer), Mrs Murray (Honourable Secretary). Back Row: Mrs T. Bryce (Hon. Treasurer), Mrs E. B. Harris (Vice-President-at-Large)

Elizabeth Brentnall. Grave stone, Balmoral Cemetery. (Source: McCullough, *Elizabeth Brentnall* - PhD thesis. See notes.)



Plate 53. Elizabeth's headstone in Bulimba cemetery, Brisbane. Photograph by the author, 2007.