

**Coorparoo  
& Heritage Group  
Districts**

Invites you to hear

**Pat Comben AM**

Speak about

**Politicians and other animals I have met**

Pat Comben migrated from the UK to Australia over 50 years ago. As with Tommy Ryan, the subject of one of his most recent books, "Tommy Ryan & the Birth of Labor", following his arrival in Australia, Pat worked on the land in Central Qld as a stockman. After graduating from the University of Qld, Pat was elected in 1983, as the ALP Member for the Brisbane seat of Windsor in the State Parliament of Qld. Later serving as Minister for Heritage & Environment & for Education, Pat retired from political life in 1995.

With his writing having been a cherished second vocation, often upon natural history topics, Pat has published four books during his retirement.

Pat was awarded an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) in the 2008 Australian Day Honours.

Come along and listen to Pat speak about his interesting career.

**Where? Kingsbury Room,**

**Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre**

**347 Old Cleveland Rd. Coorparoo**

**When? Saturday 7 December 2024 at 2.00 pm**

Everybody is welcome, but why not become a member? A small donation to offset hiring charges are always appreciated.

Contact: President Ron Baker OAM 0412 944 095

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**NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER**

The Virtual Bus Tour of New Farm at our October meeting worked out to be better than actually travelling by coach around the area. We were able to go down streets that a coach could not travel such as where the tree canopy was too low or down narrow streets such as Teneriffe Drive. We were able to stop outside the buildings and not worry about holding up traffic in Brunswick Street or Moray Street. The cost of hiring a coach is now becoming too expensive and if any more bus trips are planned then virtual tours should be considered. It is also very pleasing to announce that the new lapel microphone worked well and everyone could hear clearly.

Pat Comber AM will be our speaker for the December meeting. Pat is a former parliamentarian and Minister, both in parliament and in the church. He was also deeply involved with the National Trust of Queensland and an environmentalist. His talk "Politicians and other animals I have met" should be very interesting. This is also our Christmas meeting so we will be having our Christmas raffle. We hope to have prizes donated by our political representatives from Federal, Queensland and Brisbane City Council. We have also applied for a grant under the Lord Mayor's Seniors Christmas Donation. If successful we will use the funds to purchase food and Christmas cheer. As in previous years we will invite members of the Annerley Stephens History Group to attend.

The Eris Jolly Library still needs someone to look after the books going out and coming in. We have a register but it is not being well maintained. You don't have to be a librarian. Your task is only to put out a selection of books and sit at the library desk until the meeting starts. Please contact a committee member if you are interested. A catalogue of all the group's holdings is kept in the library at Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre.

No one has responded to the request for locations of former service station sites. There are many around. Some are quite evident while others have been removed completely and new development has occurred on the site. We are trying to compile a map showing where these stations were located. It doesn't matter if you include the names of stations you think someone else will list. The more responses the better. Do you have any old photos of service stations? Some people don't realise they have them but often the service station may be in the background of some other object such as family members, friends or possibly a car. The contribution of members is extremely valuable.

Your committee is considering the speakers for next year. A speaker on the Chinese influence of the area around Coorparoo and someone to speak on the Boy Scouting movement in the district are currently being sought. As next year will be the Centenary of the formation of the Greater Brisbane City Council, we will have someone speaking about the Coorparoo Shire Council before it amalgamated with other town and shire councils to form the new City Council on 1 October in 1925. Your committee is always willing to accept suggestions for other speakers you may know about. Remember this is your group.

Helen Hastie has resigned from the committee. Paul Barry has agreed to be the group's secretary. There are still places on the committee if any one would like to give it a try. Why not come along to a committee meeting to see how it works before making a commitment.

Our group participated in the Senior's Expo, conducted by City Councillors Fiona Cunningham (Coorparoo) and Krista Adams (Holland Park) at the Weller's Hill Bowls Club on 31 October. There were many community groups and organisations, each having a table to display relevant information about

themselves. Our group had a display of photographs about Coorparoo Junction pre 1970. This display generated a considerable amount of interest, and hopefully attracted some new members.

Continuing our articles on Coorparoo identities in this Newsletter we feature the late Joe Lewis who passed away recently. Joe was not only a barber, but a magician who liked to show off his skills whenever he had the opportunity.

### **JOE LEWIS “The Barber Magician”**

Joe was born in Brisbane on 20 August 1930 and was named Patrick Joseph Lewis. However, at the age of 10 years his aunt insisted that he be called Joe and the legend began.

At the age of 12 Joe went to St. James Catholic College at Fortitude Valley. At that time, he was likened to the American World Heavy-weight Boxing Champion, Joe Louis, and the boys at school all wanted to fight him. As he was continually being picked on, he decided to go to a Boxing Club and learnt boxing to defend himself.

Joe's father was a travelling Country Bookmaker, Card Shark and a Two-Up expert and this caused the family to move around considerably. While living in Bundaberg at the age of 15 Joe's father told him that the local barber was looking for an apprentice. Joe immediately jumped at the chance as he did not like school, and with a trade he would not starve.

When Joe was 20, he moved to Mt. Isa when the local barber retired to work in the mines and his father purchased the business for Joe. However, after two years in Mt. Isa, Joe decided to head for Alice Springs via Tennant Creek where he met his future wife Iris and they both moved to Alice Springs. In Alice Springs, while honing his Magical skills, he became a prominent Bookmaker and had his own Barber shop. He also started a gym and trained a number of Aboriginals and other local boys boxing. He also started a Gymnastics class for the youth of Alice Springs. In addition, Joe joined a Drama group and acted in a number of plays, but his main love was performing Magic shows.

When he started to develop health issues his doctor advised him to leave Alice Springs so he sold the family home and the whole family moved to Brisbane arriving in December 1966. In Brisbane he rented a house and was able to get plenty of barbering work before he started working for Alf Balaam, a barber at 175 Cavendish Road Coorparoo. This barber shop was located near the Cavendish and Old Cleveland Roads intersection and next to Caves Cycles and then Bruce Hunter's Pharmacy on the corner. After a few years Joe offered to buy Alf's shop and Alf agreed. In January 1970 Joe took on his son Jim as an apprentice. The shop was decorated with magic posters and paraphernalia and Joe was quick to show a card trick whenever a client asked and quite often even when they didn't ask. Joe and Jim were often written up in the newspaper as the Father & Son Barbers and Magicians.

Joe and Iris separated and then divorced around 1976. Joe was also a good dancer and would attend 60/40 dances all around Brisbane. On one Friday night in 1978 Joe and his son Jim went to a dance at the Blind Hall at South Brisbane. It was there where he met Doreen and they danced all night. They became inseparable and Joe married Doreen in 1979. Joe then moved into Doreen's home at Silkstone.

The complex where Joe's shop was located was demolished in 1986 without notice, so Joe had to relocate to another premises. He found rental space in an Auto- Electrical business next to the Myer complex at the corner of Old Cleveland and Cavendish Roads. Joe and Jim were then cutting hair amongst batteries and starter motors etc. After 6 years, Myer advised the owner, Keith Fidler, that he would have to leave as Myer had found another renter willing to pay triple the rent. Joe then moved his business to Shop 1 on Tarlina Lane.

At the age of 50 Joe took up running to get fit and competed in a few Fun Runs. He also competed in athletic events and won numerous races. At the age of 80 he won the 5000m and 10,000m the Australian Championship for his age bracket. To stay fit he also did 1,000 push-ups a day doing 50 at a time, throughout the day. He stopped running at 88 years after a fall at home when he cracked a few ribs. He did however continue to do his push ups daily.

After cutting hair for 50 years, Joe semi-retired but still cut hair two mornings a week and also on Saturday mornings for his special clients who wanted his services. Jim continued on until the early 2020's when the Hair Dressing salon finally closed its door.

Following a fall down the stairs of his property he was rushed to the Ipswich Hospital. When he was being taken away in the ambulance he called out to his wife, "Sweetie, get me my deck of playing cards". He entertained the paramedics with his card tricks. Soon after being admitted into the hospital, he asked the doctor if he could go home. The doctor wanted him to stay overnight for observation. Somehow, he managed to go home the next day. Three days after his 94<sup>th</sup> birthday it was believed that he suffered a stroke but was reluctant to go to hospital. While being taken to hospital he once again asked Doreen for his playing cards. He wowed the nurses with his tricks. Sadly, as the weeks went by he started to deteriorate and found his last days in Palliative Care.

Joe passed away on Wednesday, 2 October 2024 and was cremated.