



united service club

# history & heritage notes

## ARTWORKS:

### PAINTING of the “CAPTAIN’S HOUSE”

(former Drew residence)



**A delightful painting of an unusual house, hanging in the Moreton Room of the United Service Club.**

*We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.*

## THE "CAPTAIN'S HOUSE (aka THE DREW RESIDENCE)

### INTRODUCTION

Many Club members have remarked on the painting of an unusual water-front house hanging in the Moreton Room. Many have wondered about its location, its significance to the Club, have asked when and how we acquired it, and have commented on the house's unusual design.

You may be surprised to learn that the building still stands at Shorncliffe, and this Note aims to provide some background to its location, history, and the distinctive 'turret' on its uppermost level.

Unfortunately, this story is not complete - we have not yet been able to piece together details of its acquisition by the Club as our records are deficient and we are trying to get the oral history information from those who were around the Club at the time. If you know, please contact us.

We have gathered some details and photos from the property's Heritage Listing and some personal recollections and family history from a more recent owner.

### THE ARTIST

The painting is in acrylic and bears the signature of HF Bartlett in the bottom left-hand corner. The following biography is summarised from an article by Dot Whittington in *The Courier Mail* on Saturday 22 March 2014, a fortnight after his death. (The complete article is at **Attachment A**.)

Henry Francis Bartlett CMG OBE, diplomat, artist, and philanthropist, was born in London on 8 March 1916, and died in Brisbane on 17 February 2014. He spent the first 60 years of his life in England and exotic destinations around the world, but it would be hard to find a more passionate Queenslander than Henry Bartlett.

The British diplomat and his wife Amanda, first arrived in Brisbane in 1967, when he took up the post of British Deputy High Commissioner to Queensland and moved into the official residence, a double-storey mansion at Riverview Terrace, Hamilton.

Just over two years later, in July 1969, he was appointed Commercial Counsellor at the British Embassy in the Philippines and left Brisbane promising to return.

His last post was as British Ambassador to Paraguay and then in January, 1976, he kept his promise when he and Amanda settled in New Farm where he spent the last 37 years of his life.

Henry's life was as interesting as it was long. While his career took him around the world, it was his love of art that led him to enjoy and appreciate that world. "Painting fits very well with the sort of wandering life I have led because it leads me to be thoroughly interested in a place," he said in a *Women's Weekly* interview in 1967.

"Between diplomatic work and painting you cover practically every aspect of a country." It was his appreciation of light and colour and ability to see detail others might readily dismiss that was behind his great affection for Brisbane that began even as his ship headed into port through Pumicestone Passage.

Henry started painting as a 14-year-old at St Paul's School in London and later at university at Oxford where he also attended the Ruskin School of Drawing at the Ashmolean Museum of Fine Art and Archaeology. In 1947, Henry had his first show at the Galerie Charpentier in Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. This was followed by exhibitions at the London Gallery, the Royal Society of British Artists, New English Art Club and Leicester Galleries in England in the early 1950s.

He painted wherever his -career took him and had exhibitions in the Karger Gallery in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1957 and 1959, when he sold all but six of the 47 paintings exhibited; and at the Galeria Arte de Coleccionistas in Mexico City in 1962.

Henry also lived, worked and painted in Poland, New York, North Algeria and in Khorramshahr, Persia (Iran), before arriving in Brisbane. After three years surrounded by desert sands, he was delighted and captivated by all the green and the colourful flowers - and being able to drink water out of the tap, "a symbol of normality".

Henry loved the city's architecture, in particular the iron lace and houses on stilts, the likes of which he had never seen.

Henry was a traditional painter who paid close attention to detail. He loved the light and had a great awareness of contrasts.

He held his first show since 1969 at the Verlie Just Town Gallery at the MacArthur Chambers in Queen St in September 1978. Others followed. In March 1981, his exhibition at the same gallery, titled *Aspects of Brisbane*, showed his love of the Brisbane landscape, "irregular and complicated" and with Story Bridge a favourite subject. At his 1985 exhibition at the Town Gallery, critics said he "gives his academic training a sharp shove by ignoring the topographical and including the off-beat extra which catches his eye" and that he identified "more than most native inhabitants with the city in which he has decided to make his home." His 1990 exhibition was also titled *Aspects of Brisbane* and, in 1994, he held his "eighth exhibition of gentle realist views of Brisbane" at the Town Gallery, continuing his "mission to -reawaken Brisbane people to the unconventional and often slightly down-at-heel subtropical beauty that surrounds them".

His paintings are held by Artbank, the Art Gallery of South Australia, QUT, Museum of Brisbane and Bendigo Art Gallery.

Henry and Amanda shared a love of the arts throughout their long life together. They joined the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art Foundation in 1980 and were active philanthropists. When his wife died in 2004, Henry established the Henry and Amanda Bartlett Trust for the Queensland Art Gallery. It has enabled the acquisition of many important works, with a special focus on historical Asian art.

Members of the Brisbane art community who remember him as a raconteur and simply "a delightful person to know". Henry has entrusted more than a hundred of his paintings to the care of close friend, local gallerist -Philip Bacon, who is planning a memorial exhibition in Henry's honour.

## **THE SUBJECT**

The building still stands at 20 Wharf Street Shorncliffe, on the banks of Cabbage Tree Creek. The house is privately-owned as a residence and was listed on the Queensland Heritage Register on 24 November 2000. Much of this detail and photographs are taken from the Heritage Listing at <https://environment.ehp.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602024#>.

This substantial timber residence with sub-floor, attic and tower, is understood to have been designed and constructed in the 1890s, possibly in three stages, by American carpenters and boat-builders Samuel Drew and his sons Albert Edward and Frederick William, as their family home.

As builders, the Drews erected many houses in the Sandgate/Shorncliffe district in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the peak of Sandgate/Shorncliffe's popularity as a seaside resort. They established a boat-building enterprise (mostly pleasure craft) on Cabbage Tree Creek behind 20 Wharf Street, and were well known in local sailing circles.

Samuel Drew, his wife Jane Harris and family emigrated to Australia from the USA in the mid-1880s, and by 1887 were resident in Sandgate. They had arrived during a colonial-wide economic boom and the local flurry of development which followed the opening of the railway line to Sandgate.



*Drew House 1998 (by Heritage Branch staff)*

Drew was a carpenter and boat-builder by trade and gained employment as foreman/carpenter at William Street's joinery works in Creek Street (now Palm Avenue), Sandgate, and in 1888 erected a house there, at the corner of Creek and Wharf Streets. From 1889 the land west of Street's Joinery Works, along Wharf Street, was made available as residential allotments.

Samuel Drew acquired title to an allotment backing onto Cabbage Tree Creek and fronting Wharf Street, in May-June 1890. According to Samuel Drew's descendants, over the next decade the Drews built their family home here in several stages: firstly the main bedrooms and sewing room, then the central section [including the tower. Stables, complete with bell tower, and a large boatshed which housed the family's boat building business, were erected prior to the construction of the third stage of the house

The Wharf Street property was transferred to four of his children in 1895: Mary Ellen, Elizabeth Jane, Albert Edward and Frederick William, then in 1905 [perhaps following Albert's purchase of the Creek Street property in 1904] back to Samuel, who on the same date nominated Mary Ellen and Elizabeth Jane Drew as trustees. Samuel Drew died in April 1907 and by 1911 his widow, Jane, was resident in the Wharf Street house, and his unmarried daughters remained there until their deaths in the mid-20th century.

In 1918-19 Samuel John Drew [Samuel Drew's youngest son] built a house for himself at 19 Wharf Street. He and his brother Albert Drew<sup>1</sup> maintained the family boat-building business from the boatshed at the rear of 20 Wharf Street until the 1930's depression, when Samuel moved to Toowoomba. Albert and fellow boat builder and relative, Theo Woodhead, constructed the last boat in 1948, the year in which Albert died.



*Boat made by Albert Drew at the opening of the Sandgate Sailing Club, 1922*

In 1947, prior to Elizabeth's death in 1950, Samuel John Drew and his son Oliver, also a builder, repaired and repainted 20 Wharf Street in white and several different shades of grey, believed to be the original colours.

At this time, they removed an early hedge and fence, replacing them with a smaller wrought iron fence. As the original timber gates were in poor condition, replicas were constructed in their place. In 1952, 20 Wharf Street suffered slight damage by a cyclone, and decorative fretwork across the ridge of the tower was blown away.

Following Elizabeth Drew's death in 1957, the residence was transferred to Samuel John Drew and William Roy Drew [Samuel Drew's grandson]. As both had homes elsewhere, it was decided to convert the house into two flats to provide an income sufficient to pay the rates on what was effectively three blocks of land.

In 1966 the flats were reconverted to a single house and offered for sale, passing out of the Drew family in 1967. The large boatshed on Cabbage Tree Creek and the stables were demolished subsequently. In 1987-88 the house was raised slightly and the undercroft, which previously housed a bathroom, laundry, and two water tanks, was converted into a lounge/dining room area. The place remains a private residence.

A more-recent owner of the building (Michael Kleimeyer) and the current owner (Rob Watts) have provided some personal insights and additional information, which is at **Attachment B**.

## **ACQUISITION OF THE PAINTING**

Written on the back of the painting is: "Wharf Street Scarborough...Painted in acrylic... Exhibited Town Gallery Brisbane 1985". It seems reasonable to conclude that it came into the Club's possession after the 1985 exhibition.

We are seeking details of the acquisition of this painting by the United Service Club, as we have been unable to find any record of the circumstances. It is possible that the artist may have donated it to the Club to acknowledge Honorary Membership, or perhaps it was donated by another member, or maybe purchased by the Club Committee.

If you have any further information, please contact the Club so we can capture the history before it disappears in the mists of time.

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Drew, known locally as 'Skipper' Drew, was a foundation member of the Sandgate Yacht Club, established in 1912, and was well-known in local sailing circles. He won many sailing titles on Moreton Bay, in craft he had built himself.

## River City Charmed Diplomat

*The Courier Mail*, Saturday 22 March 2014

Byline: DOT WHITTINGTON

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He spent the first 60 years of his life in England and exotic destinations around the world, but it would be hard to find a more passionate Queenslander than Henry Bartlett.

The British diplomat and his wife Amanda, arrived in Brisbane in 1967, when he took up the post of British Deputy High Commissioner to Queensland and moved into the official residence, a double-storey mansion at Riverview Terrace, Hamilton.

Just over two years later, in July 1969, he was appointed Commercial Counsellor at the British Embassy in the Philippines and left Brisbane promising to return.

His last post was as British Ambassador to Paraguay and then in January, 1976, he kept his promise when he and Amanda settled in New Farm where he spent the last 37 years of his life.

Henry's life was as interesting as it was long. While his career took him around the world, it was his love of art that led him to enjoy and appreciate that world.

"Painting fits very well with the sort of wandering life I have led because it leads me to be thoroughly interested in a place," he said in a *Women's Weekly* interview in 1967.

"Between diplomatic work and painting you cover practically every aspect of a country." It was his appreciation of light and colour and ability to see detail others might readily dismiss that was behind his great affection for Brisbane that began even as his ship headed into port through Pumicestone Passage. On arrival he announced he was so impressed by the Glass House Mountains that he intended to paint them.

Henry started painting as a 14-year-old at St Paul's School in London, when he attended Saturday watercolour classes. He left school in 1934 for university at Oxford where he also attended the Ruskin School of Drawing at the Ashmolean Museum of Fine Art and Archaeology.

The school had recently introduced life drawing studies to its curriculum and at the end of one class he invited the young life model, Amanda Roy, to join him for coffee and, later, a wine. So began what was to be a happy 67-year union.

They were married in Paris in 1940 and, after Henry's graduation, spent four years in the French capital while Henry studied art, although he was to make his career in the British diplomatic corps.

In 1947, Henry had his first show at the Galerie Charpentier in Rue du Faubourg-Saint -Honoré. This was followed by exhibitions at the London -Gallery, the Royal Society of British Artists, New English Art Club and Leicester Galleries in England in the early 1950s.

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Henry also lived, worked and painted in Poland, New York, North Algeria and in Khorramshahr, Persia (Iran), before arriving in Brisbane.

After three years surrounded by desert sands, he was delighted and captivated by all the green and the colourful flowers - and being able to drink water out of the tap, "a symbol of normality".

Henry loved the city's architecture, in particular the iron lace and houses on stilts, the likes of which he had never seen.

"What is so paradoxical is that all the ironwork was sent out as ballast from England. The ships were going to take back wool and the ironwork was terribly cheap. Cast iron used to be a penny a pound. It came to Australia in quantity," he mused.

"Now it is scarce in England because most of it was melted down during the war. It is used more effectively in Queensland than in England, where it was generally painted black. It looks fabulous here painted white." After five weeks' leave in Britain in 1968, their first trip home in two years, the Bartletts returned to Brisbane with renewed fervour. "Brisbane is the most wonderful city in the world and most Brisbaneites don't realise it," Henry said at the time.

They would go to Noosa -National Park on weekends and stroll along deserted beaches, once again all fodder for his art.

His first exhibition opened on 28 April 1969 at the Design Arts Centre in Elizabeth St, with 34 paintings reviewed as being full of colour and vitality.

"I've found people in Australia are more interested in art than any other country except France," he said. "I don't think Brisbane has been fully done. You see all these elderly men in shorts. You don't see them anywhere else I've been. They're just as exotic as Mexicans in their -national costumes."

When Henry left Brisbane in 1969 to take a post as Commercial Counsellor at the British Embassy in Manila, he declared he had lived in nine countries, visited 50 and Queenslanders were "the friendliest of the lot".

"They are congenial, agreeable and interested and the young have great respect for the elders, many of whom lead very active lives," he said in an interview. "Where else can you read about an 84-year-old man playing a smashing game of bowls or a woman of 103 playing a vigorous game of croquet? This is the type of environment in which we want to live." True to his word, the Bartletts returned to Queensland in January 1976, this time as migrants.

Sir Zelman Cowen, chairman of the board of governors of the newly-formed Utah Foundation, announced Henry as its executive officer. He was based in Eagle St and they lived in an apartment at New Farm.

Henry's job was to evaluate requests for grants from the foundation launched with a Utah Development Company donation of \$400,000 to "advance the welfare of the Australian community".

He had put his name on the waiting list at Tattersall's Club- and, within two years, was a trustee of the Queensland Art Gallery and the Queensland Cultural Centre Trust and honorary secretary of the Queensland Festival of the Arts.

He and Amanda were also prominent figures on Brisbane's social scene. In all, Henry spent 13 years as the executive officer for the Utah Foundation.

In the days when Brisbane was still considered a country town by southern capitals, Henry was a great defender, describing reports of Brisbane being a cultural desert as "absolute balderdash". Henry held his first show since 1969 at the Verlie Just Town Gallery at the MacArthur Chambers in Queen St in September 1978. Others followed. In March 1981, his exhibition at the same gallery, titled Aspects of Brisbane, showed his love of the Brisbane landscape, "irregular and complicated" and with Story Bridge a favourite subject.

Henry was a traditional painter who paid close attention to detail. He loved the light and had a great awareness of contrasts.

At his 1985 exhibition at the Town Gallery, critics said he "gives his academic training a sharp shove by ignoring the topographical and including the off-beat extra which catches his eye" and that he identified "more than most native inhabitants with the city in which he has decided to make his home." His 1990 exhibition was also titled Aspects of Brisbane and, in 1994, he held his "eighth exhibition of gentle realist views of Brisbane" at the Town Gallery, continuing his "mission to - reawaken Brisbane people to the unconventional and often slightly down-at-heel subtropical beauty that surrounds them".

His paintings are held by Artbank, the Art Gallery of South Australia, QUT, Museum of Brisbane and Bendigo Art Gallery.

Henry and Amanda shared a love of the arts throughout their long life together. They joined the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art Foundation in 1980 and were active philanthropists.

During the 1990s, he was a common sight walking from New Farm to swim at the Tattersalls' Club pool each morning. He would then visit the art gallery before walking home.

When his "darling Amanda" died in 2004, Henry established the Henry and Amanda Bartlett Trust for the Queensland Art Gallery. It has enabled the acquisition of many important works, with a special focus on historical Asian art.

"He made an extraordinarily generous bequest to the gallery, one of the most significant in its history," QAGoMA Director Chris Saines said.

"So concerned was he about its settlement that, seven years ago, he engaged an actuary to work out his life expectancy, the prediction of which he handsomely outlived! Henry once apologised that, in doing so, he was preventing the gallery from inheriting his bequest." The Bartlett Trust's gifts to the gallery total 91 works of art, a brilliant and far-reaching legacy.

Although he had no family, Henry is greatly missed by members of the Brisbane art community who remember him as a raconteur and simply "a delightful person to know". Henry has entrusted more than a hundred of his paintings to the care of close friend, local gallerist -Philip Bacon, who is planning a memorial exhibition in Henry's honour.



A former owner of the building which is the subject of the painting, Michael Kleimeyer, has provided some personal insights and additional information,:

*This is a collation of my knowledge on the property, and what I have gained from my father, Karl Kleimeyer, (the former owner) also.*

*The home was built in 1882 and owned by American's from Wisconsin.*

*The turret at the top of the property has always had much controversy surrounding its purpose. The reason it was built though is quite a simple story. The original owners used to cross the creek into the wetlands using a Bark Canoe, which would give them easier access for travelling into the city. Towards the end of the day, the household would be up in the turret waiting until they could see them travelling through the wetlands, so they knew when to begin preparing dinner.*

*The home has often been referred to as 'The Captains House', which is why I have heard stories about how the turret was built to look out to sea. However, I do remember as a little child up in the turret that I couldn't see out to sea, as the cliff of Shorncliffe is quite high, and blocks the view. This name 'The Captains House', is better understood leading into this next part of history with the home.*

*Not many people know this, but at the back of the house there is a slip way. This is where we built our boat 'Carlo' in the early 1980's. The slip way is not very visible anymore, due to the growth of the mangroves and build-up of mud. In the 1920's and 1930's, the property and this slipway was used for the sailing club. I do think that the Yacht Club would have originally been behind the property, as I have seen a few photos of all the sailing boats moored in the creek by the property. There was a large shed on the property during the time, where sailing boats were built, and the slip way used for putting them into the water. I think it was this period where people may have formed the impression that the house was The Captains House.*

*In the late 1960's, two spinsters (The Hutchinson's) owned the property, and converted it into three or four flats. Before they sold it to my family in 1976, they converted it back into a home, and replaced all the floors as there was a termite problem.*

*In the late 1970's the home was put into The National Trust, and my Grandmother (Esme Kleimeyer) was presented with a plaque, as my father was overseas in Papua New Guinea running his businesses.*

*I have fond memories of living in the home. The home was fairly symmetrical. On each side there were two oversized bedrooms. The front bedrooms both opened out onto a lounge room and the front deck, with a hallway in the middle separating each side, and a bathroom on each side at the back. The kitchen was in the middle of the back of the home, and stairs up to the top levels of the home and finally the turret. The north-western sides lounge room had an original fireplace in it.*

*My father raised the home 2 feet in 1988 and built in underneath. This was a large open plan living area with a new kitchen, bathroom and fireplace that connected through the flue of the upstairs original fireplace.*

*We sold the home in 2000.*

The current owner (Rob Watts) has advised that when he acquired the property it was painted white and when he was scraping off the paint prior to repainting, he discovered that it was an older form of 'whitewash' comprising linseed oil and calcium carbonate that produced a hard, ceramic-like surface, and he decided to leave it as is.

He is also researching the age of the bunya tree planted outside the fence, shown in the painting slightly left of centre).

