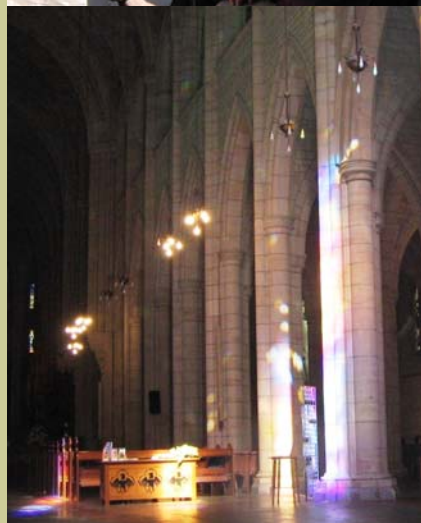


# GOVERNORS AND GARGOYLES



"Governors and Gargoyles" Valerie promised us and that is what we found on our July day trip. This time we did not leave Brisbane but made use of the city's free "Red Bus Loop" service to take us between Old Government House and St John's Anglican Cathedral.

After meeting at Old Government House and enjoying morning tea in the sunny Courtyard, we were taken on a guided tour of the newly-renovated building, which was purpose-built as a Vice-Regal residence when Queensland was separated from New South Wales in 1859. The first occupant was Sir George Bowen and it was home to eleven Governors until 1910, when it was acquired by the newly-established University of Queensland. The Governor, his family and staff were relocated to "Fernberg" which has been Government House ever since.

When the building was no longer needed by the University, it was handed over to the National Trust in a rather dilapidated condition and valiant efforts were made by the Trust, with very little money, to repair the ravages of time. Now, thanks to the efforts of QUT and a grant of \$15m from the State Government, the beautiful heritage building can be enjoyed by Queenslanders and visitors for generations. The house is open to the public as a museum, complete with interpretive displays; the grand reception rooms are available for hire and the upstairs bedrooms house an exhibition of the works of renowned Queensland artist, William Robinson. The 1872 kitchen now serves as the Old Government House Tea Room.

A ride on the Red Bus took us to Wharf Street and a short walk found us at St John's Cathedral. A tasty, fresh lunch was waiting for us there and afterwards we were divided into two groups for a guided walk around the building.

In 1885, when Bishop Wm. Webber was appointed 3rd Bishop of Brisbane, the city had a population of about 40,000 but he saw its potential and worked hard over the next 20 years to fulfill his dream of a fine cathedral to serve a growing ministry. The foundation stone was laid by the Duke of York in 1901 and work proceeded in stages, as money became available, until the cathedral was finally completed in 2009.

The design is a mixture of French and English Victorian Gothic Revival styles. The architect was John Longborough Pearson. Brisbane tuff, used for the external walls, is from suburban Brisbane, while all internal walls and ceilings are built of sandstone from Helidon. Because of the labour-intensive construction and ever-rising costs, St John's is likely to be the last neo-Gothic building to be completed in the world.

Our very knowledgeable guide explained the details of construction, together with the history of organ, pulpit, choir stalls, stained glass windows and the cathedral bells. Our attention was also directed to nearby "The Deanery," a house built in 1953 for a Dr John Hobbs. The house was, for a short time, occupied by Governor George Bowen and it was from its verandah that the Governor proclaimed the State of Queensland in 1859.

Thank you, Valerie, for showing us some history in our own back yard!

*June James*

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