

# Government House & Toowong Cemetery Day Trip



On Tuesday 11 May we set off for an inspection of Government House - "Fernberg" at Bardon.

Old Government House (now included in the QUT Campus in the Domain) was purpose-built for our first Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, when Queensland was declared a state separate from New South Wales in 1859. It was home to 11 Governors until 1910, when the building was incorporated into the newly-opened University of Queensland. "Fernberg" was leased as temporary premises for Governor Sir William McGregor while a new Government House was to be erected in Victoria Park. Because of financial restraints, this plan was abandoned and "Fernberg" was purchased as a permanent Government House in 1911.

"Fernberg" (German for 'distant mountain') was built in 1865 for Mr Johan Heussler, a German immigrant who achieved success in business, became a member of the Legislative Council, and at various times held posts as Consul for the Netherlands and Consul for Germany. Unfortunately, financial difficulties in 1872 saw the bank foreclose on his mortgage and the house was rented until purchased by Mr John Stevenson, a successful grazier and businessman, in 1882. Mr Stevenson, a Scots immigrant, extended the grounds and engaged architect, Richard Gailey, to extend the house by adding a northern wing and tower, while reorienting the entry from the western to the northern side of the building. The Stevenson family made a trip to Scotland whilst renovations were being carried out and they brought back with them a beautiful stained glass window depicting Robert the Bruce, which was installed at the landing of the staircase to the first floor.

The Stevensons led a busy social life but the economic depression and drought of the 1890s devastated their fortune and they lost possession of the house but continued to live there as tenants until, in 1901, the property was transferred to Miss Adelaide Palmer. It was purchased by the Queensland Government in 1911 for 10,000 pounds. We were treated to morning tea in the Investiture Room and then Valerie and I helped guide the party through the ground floor rooms and around the gardens. Unfortunately, we did not get to meet the Governor, Ms Penelope Wensley, as she was away touring the State.

After a light lunch at The Kookaburra Cafe in Paddington, we set off to visit the Toowong Cemetery. The largest cemetery in Queensland, Toowong was officially opened in 1875. By 1861 Brisbane's original burial ground at Paddington was fast becoming too small and surrounded by residential properties and a new site had to be found. There was some dissension over the site but Colonel Samuel Blackall, Queensland's second Governor, was a strong supporter of Toowong and, indeed, when his health started to fail, he chose his own burial plot on the highest knoll, overlooking the city. He was buried there on 3rd January, 1871 and six more burials were performed before the official opening. A very impressive headstone attests to the Governor's importance in those "Empire days." In the same area we were able to view the grave of Sir Anthony Musgrave, sixth Governor of Queensland, as well as several other prominent political and influential former citizens. Of particular interest to members of our party who are involved with Wolston House, was the large plot of the Goggs family. Buried there are patriarch Matthew Buscall Goggs, his wife, Anne, and several of their descendants. Matthew Goggs had intended that the family be buried on the property and had a mausoleum built a distance away from the house. Unfortunately, it was inundated in one of Brisbane's periodic floods and the bodies interred there were moved to the higher ground at Toowong. We would like to thank Hilda McLean for her guidance through the cemetery and the information she imparted, also Caitlyn for handling that large bus with ease and Valerie for another sterling piece of organisation.

*June James*