

Briefing Document on the Histories of Nathan, Salisbury, and Moorooka for Urban Development Issues

For the

Southern Brisbane Suburban Forum

Citizens for Ethical and Environment Development

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this briefing document is to inform Southern Brisbane Suburban Forum, and the umbrella organisation, Citizens for Ethical and Environment Development, on the historical matters of Nathan, Salisbury, and Moorooka related to urban development issues.

Dr Neville Buch is the Director of the Brisbane Southside History Network (<https://bshn.org/>).

The Brisbane Southside History Network (BSHN) was formed on 28 September 2013. It is the organisation and meeting place for the purpose of the common history for all history and environmental groups within the area of the Brisbane Southside.

The Network (BSHN) provides a public-private business interface for the network of history groups and professional historians on the Brisbane Southside. It is formed as network of local history and environmental groups.

The area of the BSHN would be defined as all the area from the south bank of the Brisbane River between eastern bank of the Oxley Creek and the western bank of the Bulimba Creek, and as far south as the current Brisbane city boundary.

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PURPOSE

The purpose of the Brisbane Southside History Network (BSHN) is to be a 'meeting space' and the organisation there of, for:

- Fostering and promoting the common history shared across the Brisbane Southside;
- Provision, through the control of a Representatives Group, a public-private entity to deliver history services and products to the market (both government and private);
- Manage private investments in Network Projects, such as currently the Mapping clients), on behalf of the network, in ways to ensure costs and fair remunerations are financially covered;
- Brisbane History website and mapping program (including the Mapping Brisbane Southside History Sub-Project).

Each member group of BSHN has have representation on the Representatives Group which would own all network and business interests. All costs are covered by a not-for-profit scheme and ensure coverage of the costs for 1) Network administrative expenses, and 2) bursaries, mostly likely well under market rate in the first few years, for the Network services of professional historians at fee per hour work provided. In this way, the public status of the history group members is ensured, as well as the private business interests of professional historian contracted to the Network. The network would also seek private and public investments to assist in covering its network project costs.

RATIONALE

Current Government policy in funding history is based on the desire that history groups support projects from a mix-funding model, that is, public and community entities should not be completely reliant on the public purse but seek financial independency through public-private partnerships, bringing public ownership and market investment together. On that logic, professional historians have important role to play for family and local history organisations, where the integrity for both the voluntary ethic in history organisations, and the professional ethic for historians, can be maintained. There must be a choice exercised for a middle way in the new economy if two extreme options are to be avoided: the loss of volunteerism (history as only a hobby) or the loss of professional history (history at high disciplinary standards).

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The organisation of local history must take a different direction if it is to survive. The facts are straightforward. In the 1980s there were significant public investments in local history. Several Australian universities had provided centre for local history studies which had created a market in professional history. Today, most of those centres had gone, and the initial growth in membership of local history groups had significantly diminished in the last decade. During this time family histories had grown substantially, and have created new organisations, both not-for-profit family history organisations and profit-based online genealogical companies. When you look at the financial models of these organisations, they are public-private partnerships. There is a combination, with some services being free to the public and utilising volunteer labour, and some services being for a fee to private clients utilising professional assistance. The critical problem is that the professional assistance usually comes from those who are professionals in the work of online or community services, and who are not professionals in the work of the history discipline. Without the input from professional history (knowledge-base and skills from discipline training), the quality of the product is at the very least questionable. The different missions of family and local history organisations can be maintained, and their separate voluntary work can also be fostered, while, at the same time, a public-private partnership model can be created to ensure the delivery of histories of professional integrity and with economic sustainability for voluntary organisations.

COOPERS PLAINS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP (<https://coopersplainshistory.bshn.org/>)

For three decades, the members of the Coopers Plains Local History Group been dedicated to the production, preservation, and celebration of the histories that forms the local identity of the Coopers Plains region.

The general history of Coopers Plains takes up a large part of the south-central area of the Brisbane metropolis. The early convict outstation & rural community was one of the first non-indigenous settlements in the Moreton Bay province, along with Redcliffe, Edenglassie or the town of Brisbane as it became, and Nundah.

Members of the Coopers Plains Local History Group have used the Coopers Plains Municipal Library as their work base and storage site. In June 1989, a public meeting was held to float the

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idea of forming a local history group, and from early in 1990 this group formed and has been functioning since.

The members of this group, over the years, have gathered information, photographs, maps and oral histories of Coopers Plains, Salisbury, Rocklea, Acacia Ridge and Archerfield – the five Brisbane suburbs that now make up the original Cowper's Plains. The Brisbane suburbs of Robertson and Macgregor were added to the CPLHG's areas of interest in 2011. Publications have also included the histories of Nathan Heights-Nathan. There is also a shared responsibilities for Moorooka between the Annerley Stephens History Group (a folksy and weak Moorooka LH organisation also periodically exists).

Books and booklets on these suburbs have been compiled and an ever-growing collection of the area's past is maintained in the Coopers Plains Library.

The Local Area Collection in the library gives public access to some of the Coopers Plains Local History Group's collection and a display case within the library helps create public interest in the history of the local area. Members of the CPLHG assist local schools, community groups and researchers upon request. If our members can assist with the history of these areas, please make contact.

During 2011 the Coopers Plains Local History Group began to increase their use and access to electronic databases and internet technologies. Monthly CPLHG Newsletters are now emailed out to those with internet linkages and a CPLHG website and scanning of photographs and documents, a long-term process, are underway.

Currently CPLHG existed as an online interaction on the BSHN site and the Facebook discussion group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/250449248402425>)

The following is the professional history work of Dr Neville Buch in the CPLHG. Much of the current publications in the local histories are folksy and lacking in professional history skills. Dr Ray Kerkhove and Dr Neville Buch have research and written on the local histories – Dr

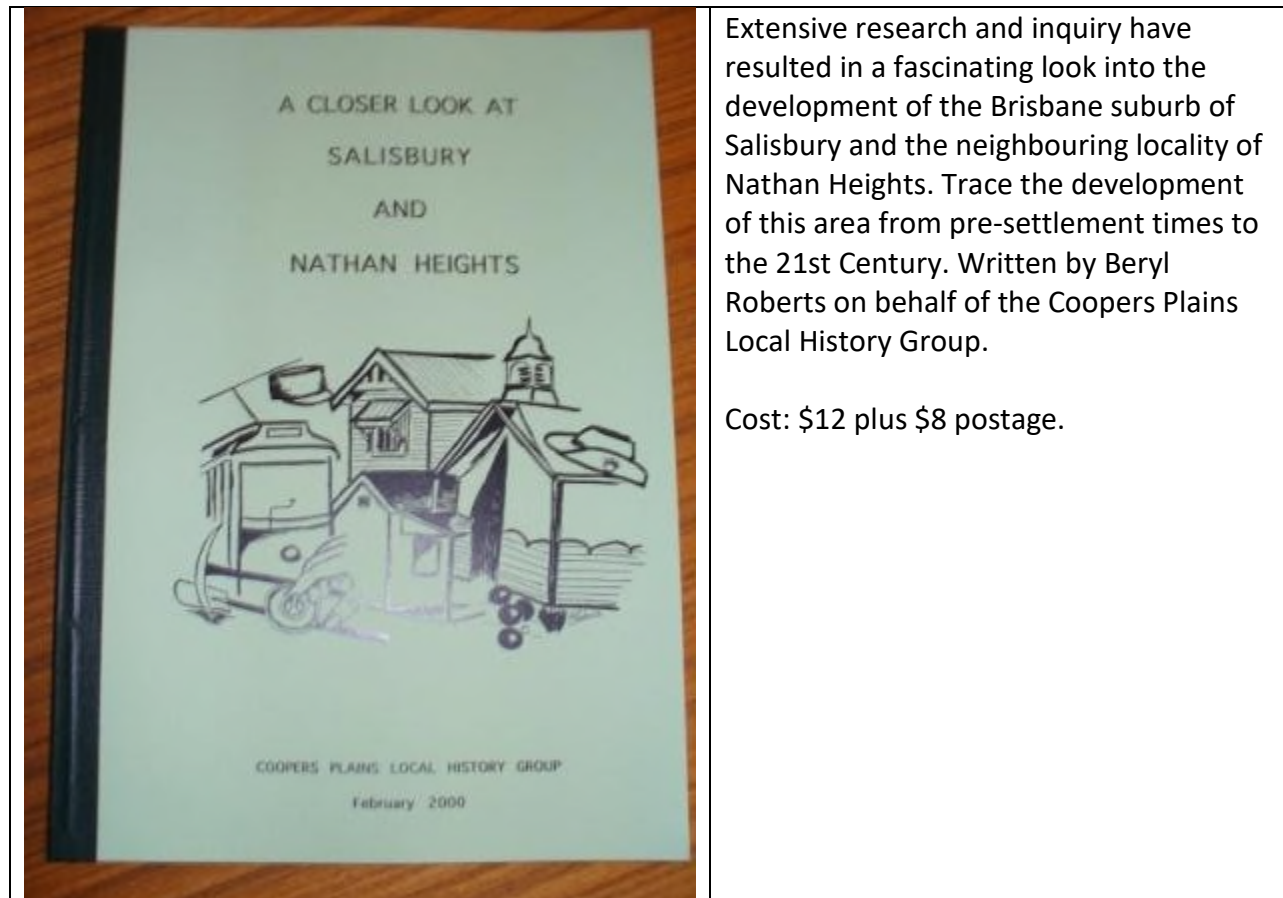
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Kerkhove on the Aboriginal histories and Dr Buch on the urban histories. There are yet to be decent history publications for Nathan, Salisbury, and Moorooka. The existing publication for these areas is below-par as far as the scholarship is concerned (e.g., academic local history centres and well-established heritage societies such as the Royal Historical Society of Queensland). Dr Buch has published commentaries on the urban histories for these areas in his publications on the Stephens-Annerley district.

NATHAN

The main CPLHG publication is Beryl Robert's edited:

A Closer Look at Salisbury and Nathan Heights



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In the BSHN's Mapping Brisbane History Project, Stage 4.2 Study Areas are relevant (<https://mappingbrisbanehistory.com.au/stages-of-research/stage-4/stage-4-02>). Nathan is picked up in Area 10. Salisbury-Nathan.

Dr Buch has unpublished history material on Nathan including mapping, aerial photography, and urban plans. The 1952 Brisbane City Council Green Belt Plan is particularly relevant, and Dr Buch has the materials, notations, and summary presentation done in the Sunnybank District History Group.

One observation in the 'No Regrets' publication related to the urban histories of the area is the practice of Council to chop-down street-scape trees and, from the Annerley ridge, suburban land clearing, in the mid-century, meant travelling on the tram towards Chardons Corner, there were many places where a broad view could be captured of Wellers Hill, Mount Gravatt, and the Nathan Range.¹

Dr Kerkhove argued and noted by Dr Buch as important part of the urban history, there existed in the living memory of the late nineteenth century old tournament grounds in what is now the suburb of Fairfield, and an Aboriginal camp in what is now the intersection of Evans and Toohey Roads, Salisbury.² Another flourished at the Rocky Waterholes (Rocklea). This may, on surface thinking, might appear unimportant to the urban history but this belies an understanding of urban landscape, as if cities appear magically. The strength of the Nathan-North Salisbury-Rocklea vales speak to the importance of planning with understanding of values in watercourses, rock formations, and green spaces, as well as pathways, as in roadways based the legacy of Aboriginal tracking.

¹ Neville Buch. *No Regrets in the Evening of Life: The History of Junction Park State School (1888-2013)*. Boolarong Press, 2015, p. 254.

² No Regrets. pp. 3-4

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SALISBURY

A new edition of a “Closer Look at Salisbury” is available from Beryl Roberts.

In the BSHN’s Mapping Brisbane History Project, Stage 4.2 Study Areas are relevant (<https://mappingbrisbanehistory.com.au/stages-of-research/stage-4/stage-4-02>). Salisbury is picked up in 10. Salisbury-Nathan.

Dr Buch demonstrates the importance of understanding the landscape of the Brisbane Southside urban development in the early twentieth century.³ The suburbs opened as new real estates at the opening of the South Coast Line in 1884-5: Fairfield, Yeronga, Yeerongpilly, Moorooka, Rocklea, Salisbury, Coopers Plains, Banoon, Sunnybank, Runcorn, Fruit Grove, and Kuraby. The towns, though, do not get going until the first decades of the twentieth century. Annerley was the thriving urban business precinct on Ipswich Road. It served not only the immediate district, but acted as the main urban hub, on the city’s outer south, for the rural satellite hamlets (e.g., Moorooka), villages (e.g., Salisbury), and towns (e.g., Rocklea, Coopers Plains, Sunnybank) located on or nearby the roads southward to Ipswich or Mount Lindsay.

Today, the Brisbane City Council’s thinking is too piecemeal, counter to the historical urban development. Planners appear ignorant on interconnectivity or wilfully being unprofessional if political reason or others. The modern southern suburbs of Fairfield, Yeronga, Buranda (Thompson Estate), Annerley, and even Rocklea and Moorooka, are linked to the old concept of the South Brisbane district.⁴

An example of the interconnectivity in historic government planning is that the State Government drew up war precautions and evacuations plans in 1942 which was able to thinking through issues in a whole-of-Brisbane-Southside approach.⁵ State schools – Junction Park, Coorparoo, Greenslopes, Weller’s Hill, and Yeronga, were located in Zone C, areas which was thought considered comparatively safe. Bulimba State School, which was close to what one would have thought to be a significant target area on the river, was in Zone B, determined as

³ No Regrets. p. 95.

⁴ No Regrets. p. 249.

⁵ No Regrets. p. 333.

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being in less dangerous areas. Schools in Zone A, regarded as being in the most dangerous areas, included the state schools at Cooper's Plains, Dutton Park, Dutton Park Opportunity, East Brisbane, Moorooka, Rocklea, Salisbury, South Brisbane, South Brisbane Intermediate, and West End. Such historic planning shows how inadequate the Council's neighbourhood planning is thinking through dangers and risks. Not that there is a threat of military invasion, but the dangers and risks in the landscapes cannot be constraint in precinct thinking.

MOOROOKA

In the BSHN's Mapping Brisbane History Project, Stage 4.2 Study Areas are relevant (<https://mappingbrisbanehistory.com.au/stages-of-research/stage-4/stage-4-02>). Moorooka is picked up in Areas Areas 8. Moorooka-Tarragindi (formerly pilot) and 9. Rocklea-Yeerongpilly-Moorooka.

In 1937 the tram tracks reached out to Moorooka, and then during the war years, extended out to Compo (Evans) Road, Salisbury.⁶ It signalled the post-war (II) urban sprawl into former military encampment area of Moorooka, extending from the post-war (I) sprawl in the Chardon's Corner end of Moorooka. The pre-war (I) small, developed area was the Moorooka hamlet and it had very few institutions.⁷ Most of the Moorooka area was still bushland, with paddocks for dairy farms east of Beaudesert Road. There was the railway station on Ipswich Road; the Crown Hotel, managed by Sarah Baird; and the Moorooka Police Station (built in 1915) in Hamilton Street, with Arnold Saunders in charge and Constable Devere an officer. There was also the Oddfellows' Hall, where meetings for various organisations from both the Rocklea and Annerley districts were held. These included the Annerley District Fraternity in Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (M.U.I.O.O.F.), known as the Loyal Pride of Rocklea Lodge (organised by Howard Dunn) and the Moorooka Branch of the Nationalist Party. (organised by William O'Connor). The socio-political description here was repeated in Salisbury, Coopers Plains, Sunnybank, and Runcorn. Moorooka became a second business hub linking the other areas, with Annerley retaining a primary precinct role. It would change in the early 1970s with the construction of the Westfield complex in Upper Mount Gravatt and immediate pressures on Kessels Road.

⁶ No Regrets. p. 242.

⁷ Neville Buch. Local History Beyond Appearance: To the hearts and minds of those who lived through World War I in the Stephens Shire, in *Stephens and War: A History of Annerley and surrounding suburbs during war times*, Annerley Stephens History Group Inc., 2020. p. 75.

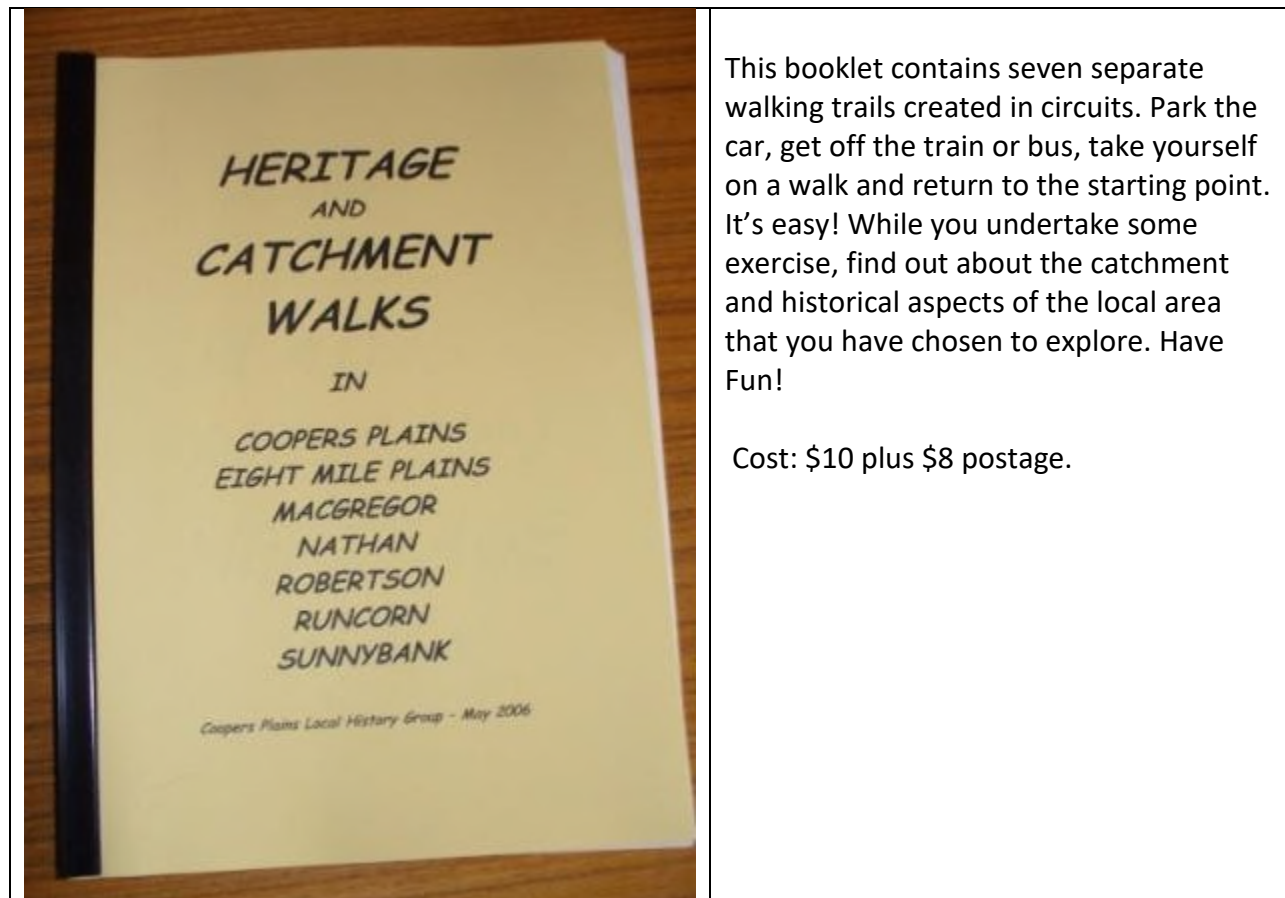
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Unlike Nathan and Salisbury 'white breadbox' appearance, Moorooka's post-war (I) history is linked to migration. It began in the late 1940s, with post-war southern and eastern European refugee families; Russian, Italian, Greek, and other communities, living in Moorooka public housing estates. The more recent Sudanese and Ethiopian presence in Moorooka is not different to the earlier history in these broad terms of the urban history.

HERITAGE WALKS/TOURS

The main CPLHG publication is Beryl Robert's edited:

Heritage and Catchment Walks in: Coopers Plains, Eight Mile Plains, Macgregor, Nathan, Robertson, Runcorn, Sunnybank.



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Heritage is not particularly helpful in discussions with Council. Heritage perspectives are much more complex and contested than the average Brisbane resident realises. It is a mystery as to why Council planners are so under-educated on the subject. Heritage listing is not the main issue in understanding heritage and urban development proposals.

David Lowenthal, *the* global authority on heritage is too ignored, no doubt for the political reasoning of Council.⁸ It is not just that nostalgia is a gas-lighting technique for Council planners and public relations, but there is a lack of honesty about the urban histories and its interconnectivity. Heritage walks and tours does not cut it as a critical understanding of the urban histories and the relationship to proposed urban development on the landscape.

In order that neighbourhoods have *informed* choices and voices the professional urban histories need to be publicly delivered.

⁸ David Lowenthal, (1996). *The heritage crusade and the spoils of history*. Viking, London; David Lowenthal, (2015). *The past is a foreign country - revisited* (Revised and updated edition). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; New York; David Lowenthal, (2019). *Quest for the unity of knowledge*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London ; New York.