

Annerley Stephens History Group Inc. presents

Children of Stephens



An information and activity booklet about the
history of children's activities in the suburbs
of the former Stephens Shire

By Jarrah Pearce

Starting Our Adventure!

Being a child is lots of fun! You get to learn everything for the first time. There are so many adventures waiting to happen. A child's life begins at birth and many games are played all day until you are old enough to go to school. School is where children learn about the world they live in.



But what happens once the school bell rings and they get to go home?

Has every child's free time been the same?

This booklet will help you explore the activities that fill a child's day and the ways these activities have changed over time.

For the purpose of this booklet, we will be looking at the lives of children in and around the former Stephens Area. The **Stephens Shire** was a **division of Brisbane** from 1886 to 1924.¹

The map below shows the suburbs that used to be referred to as the Stephens Shire. These include: Annerley, Fairfield, Yeronga, Yeerongpilly, Tennyson, Tarragindi, Holland Park West, and parts of Greenslopes, Moorooka and Mt Gravatt west of Logan Road.²



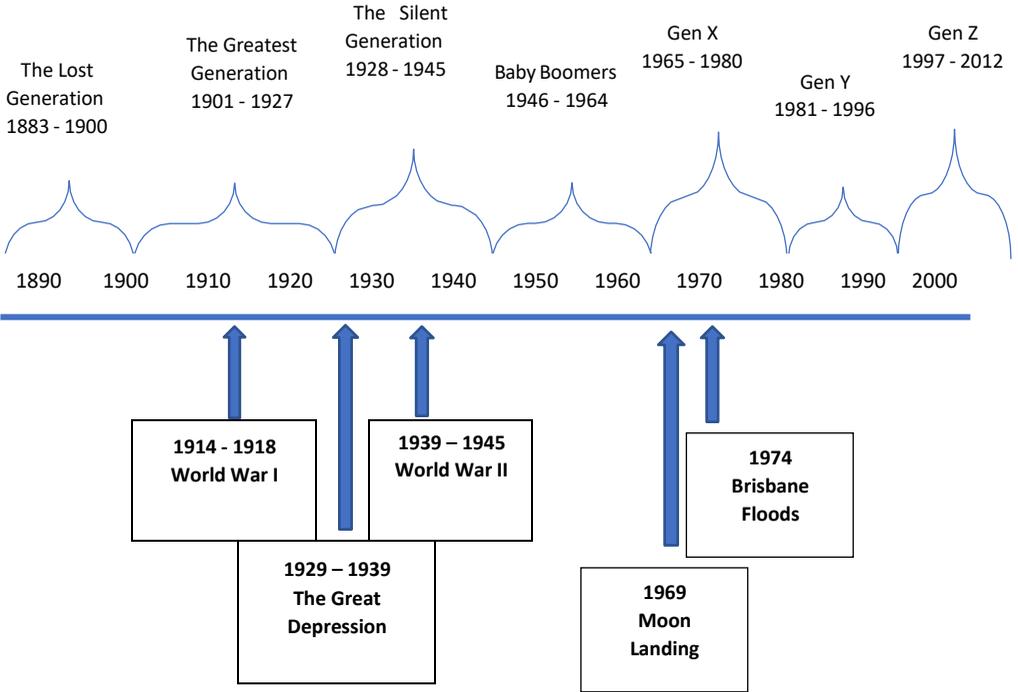
Map of Stephens Shire drawn by Denis Peel with pictures showing different parts of the area.

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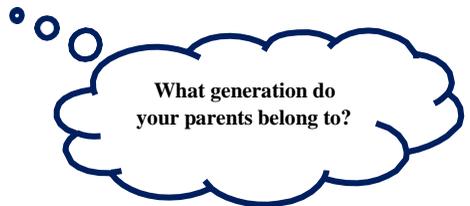
What on this map is different compared to what you see in this area today?

Do we have cows in Fairfield anymore?

Generations



When you are born you become a part of a generation. A generation is a group of people who exist at the same time who “share an experience of some historical events”.³ Being included in a generation is a way to unite people. This timeline shows the different generations between 1883 and 2012.



Before the Second World War

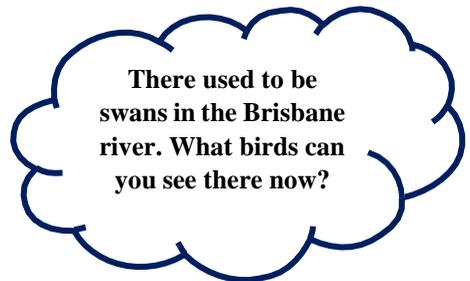
Children have grown up in this region of Brisbane for thousands of years. The Chepara peoples raised their children in this area and had many games that helped them learn and play. Tom Petrie's reminiscences talk about some of the games and activities that young Yuggera people participated in.

Swimming was a key activity especially because of the hot Queensland climate, so children would learn at a young age how to swim. Once they were old enough they could play water games like "**Marutchi**" otherwise called "**Black Swan**".⁴

Each person took turns at being "the swan". On their turn "the swan" would swim away from the shore and after a certain distance the rest of the players would chase behind and try to catch them. "The swan" would dive into the water and try to escape but if they were caught, the capturer would tap them on the head and take them back to shore.



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There used to be swans in the Brisbane river. What birds can you see there now?

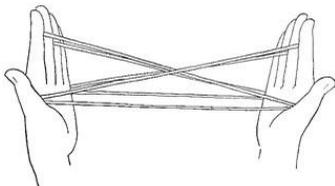
There were many games that Yuggera children played that were unique to their culture and the land they lived on. Some games included “**Purru Purru**” a team ball game and “**Murru Murru**” a spear accuracy game.⁵

There were several games that existed in both Yuggera culture and European culture. Skipping and cat’s cradle have been played by children for a long time. These games that were played before the Second World War are still remembered and enjoyed today.

Skipping has entertained kids for centuries. Jumping a vine or rope was a fun way to pass the time, develop skills, be a fun way to exercise and bond with other children.



Cat’s cradle is a game played by at least two children with a piece of string. They hold the string in their hands and pass it back and forth, grabbing different pieces each time to create shapes.



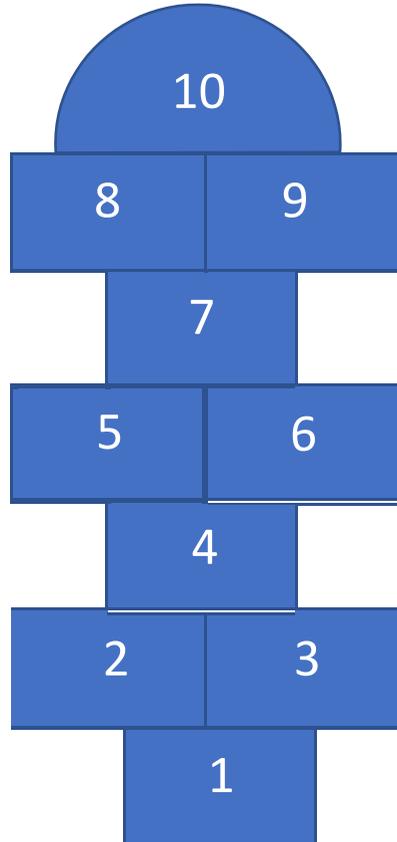
Hopscotch is another game that has been passed down over the years.

GAME TIME!

Hopscotch:

Using chalk, draw ten squares like this. The aim of this game is to hop in each square with one leg. At the pairs (2 and 3, 5 and 6, 8 and 9) jump with both feet so one is in each square. You will also need a marker which can be a bean bag, rock or something similar.

To start the game, throw the marker into the first square. Hop over this square and continue hopping to the end and back making sure not to jump in the square with the marker. Once you've completed this throw the marker into the next square and so on until the marker has been in every square.



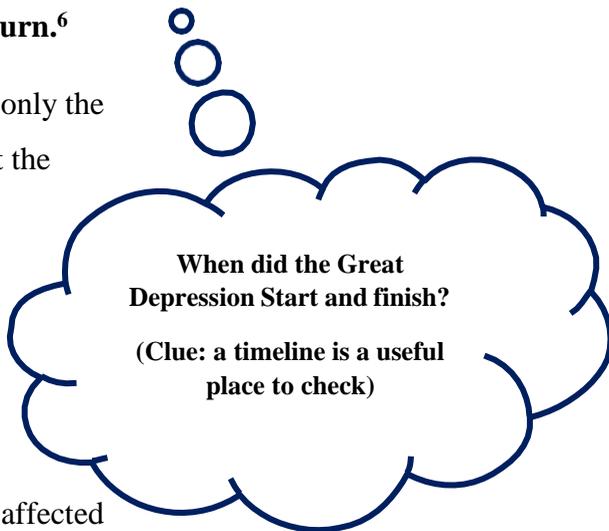
Children who grew up in the decades before the Second World War dealt with the costly effects of the Great Depression. The **Great Depression** was a decade of **economic downturn**.⁶

This affected not only the Stephens area but the entire world.

For children growing up in the suburbs on the southside of Brisbane, money affected

what toys they had to play with and therefore the games they played focused on using their imagination.

On special days like birthdays or Christmas, children might have received small presents that they cherished.

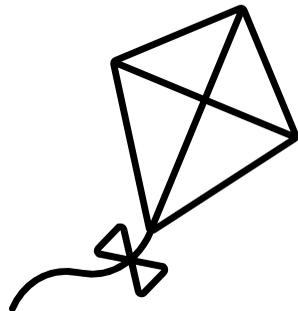




Dolls were a popular toy for young children. This is a doll owned by Lucy Stirling who was born in 1922.⁷

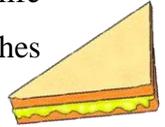
This doll is over 90 years old and was a sense of joy, comfort, learning and company for Lucy growing up.

An easy toy children used to make were kites. All you need to make a kite are two straight sticks, some string, newspaper and glue. Once the kite was ready the kids in the neighbourhood would go to the park or a vacant block and try to get their kites to fly. Some children would get competitive and try to use their flying kite to knock the others out of the sky.⁸



During the War

When the war began in 1939, the lives of children in Brisbane changed. The Great Depression through the 30s had already made money hard to come by. The war affected this even more with the prices of everyday life increasing significantly. This meant that school lunches were simple like vegemite or jam sandwiches.⁹



Tuckshop had not been introduced to schools yet, so mothers would pack lunches for their children every day. While tuckshops did not exist, there was a pie man who used to sell pies on a Friday at Yeronga State School. In fact, there were two pie men at one stage, one sold round pies and the other sold square pies. Jeanette Wiley remembers the round pie man singing a song to the children to get them to buy his pies and not the square ones.¹⁰

“Maxim’s pies are full of flies, maggots in the corner.”

Despite the rhyme, both pie shops were fondly remembered as a treat growing up.



This area of Brisbane looked very different during the war. There were still big lots of land, most blocks were **32 perches** which is approximately the size of two basketball courts. There were also big farm spaces in these suburbs where people raised animals.

Cows were a popular farm animal as they produced milk. If you owned a cow like the Baddiley family did, you had a constant supply of free milk but as a kid, Dave's chore was to milk the cow daily.¹¹ For families that did not have a cow, certain farms collected a large supply and delivered it on the back of a horse drawn cart to all of the houses in their area.



Being a kid is all about playing and discovering. One of the best ways to do this is to play games. Over the years, there have been many different games that kids have entertained themselves with. These changed depending on what you could play with. Not everyone could afford lots of toys so imagination was key to having fun.

A lot of a child's time was spent outside. Dave Baddiley used to spend his free time down by the Brisbane river.¹² He would go fishing and climb trees. Dave even had a special stick he used to catch harmless tree snakes!

Remember snakes can be **dangerous** and **venomous**.

Name some other animals that can be found in and around the Brisbane River.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

GAME TIME!

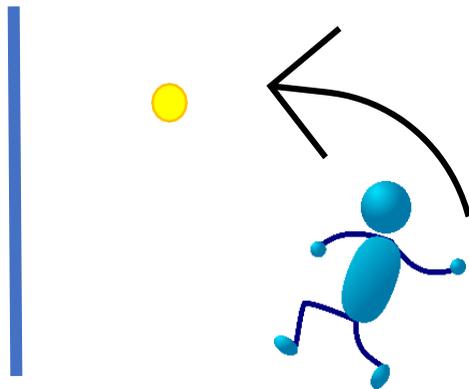
Beam:

Using a tennis or handball, throw it against a wall aiming for a high point and then try to catch it. Once this is easy to do the challenges begin.

Now while the ball is bouncing off the wall, try to clap your hands under one leg in time to catch the ball.

Want a challenge? Try:

1. Clap under one leg
2. Hop on one leg
3. Touch the ground and jump
4. Spin around



Post-War Era

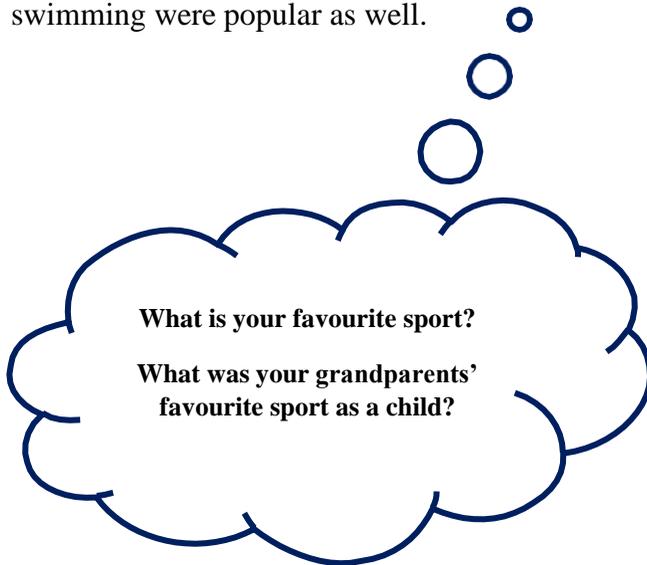
The end of the war saw the start of the baby boom. **Baby boomers** are a generation of children born between 1946 and 1964.¹³ In the suburbs around Annerley, children developed a close sense of community in the growing suburbs. Children would play in the streets with their neighbours and friends.

Billy carts were a popular homemade toy for children during these decades. There was an unspoken competition between fathers as to who could make the best trolley.¹⁴ They were a small box on wheels with a long handle attached that you used to carry around objects and supplies for adventures. They also doubled as a fun vehicle that the kids sat in and raced down the hills and steep streets.



Sports are a great way for kids to exercise, play and learn new skills. Within the Annerley, Tarragindi, Moorooka, Fairfield and Yeronga areas there have been numerous sports clubs that children were able to join. While some kids only participated in sports at school, many spent their afternoons and weekends practicing their technique. Tennis was the most common sport in the Stephens area. Robyn Jenkinson (nee Hubner) grew up in Fairfield where her grandparents had built a tennis court in their backyard!¹⁵

However, that was not the only sport. Cricket, rugby and swimming were popular as well.



Fancy dress balls were a big deal for kids growing up. Children dressed up in their homemade costumes and headed down to the local Scouts or church hall with their families. Everyone lined up and paraded their costumes to music.¹⁶ Below are some photos of Jeanette Wiley in fancy dress.¹⁷ The first photo was taken at the Yeronga Scouts Hall.



One of the major differences between childhood before the 21st century and now is the way that a child's world has expanded. Unlike now where we use cars to drive most places, kids used to walk almost everywhere! This was okay because everything you needed was in walking distance.

Wendie Robinson Hirsch grew up on Park Road. She could walk down the street to school every morning. Behind her house was the church and church hall where a lot of social events and Sunday School was held. A small walk downhill led to the local corner store where Wendie went from an early age to buy the essential groceries. Just across the road was the Yeronga Memorial Park where Wendie could play with her friends.

Even though the main parts of childhood were in and around this area, there were occasions where Wendie caught the bus to places further away. She went to Girl Guides in a park near the South Brisbane Cemetery where her father helped build the Guides hut. On a Saturday morning Wendie caught the bus to Fairfield where she had her tennis lessons.¹⁸

Wendie's World

Church and
Church hall

Wendie's
family home

Scouts Hall

Corner
Store

Yeronga
Memorial Park



Piano Lessons
held at the end
of park road

Yeronga State
School

What is your
neighbourhood like?

Can you draw it?

Clubs:

There are several different clubs in the Stephens area that accommodate for the variety of interests that kids have. A lot of these came into existence during the 1940s and 1950s. Some notable clubs in the area were the **Yeronga Scouts**, the **Boys and Girls Brigade**, **Girl Guides** and the **Girl's Friendly Society**. These clubs taught children many useful and creative skills like how to cook damper on a fire and how to macrame.

Count the club badges on the shirt below.

Are you in any clubs?



GAME TIME!

Fly:

Fly is a game that children played across several decades and was a way to challenge your own skills while making strategic moves to win.



To play you gather 5-10 sticks and lay them out, one after the other roughly a foot apart. Each person would take turns to jump in between each stick then at the end jump as far as you can and freeze where you land. Then you get to choose one of the sticks to be moved to the spot where you landed.

If your feet touch a stick or you take more than one step between each stick then you are out. Continue to play until one person is left and they win the game.¹⁹

Children are an important part of a community. The games they play build friendships and connect people. Another important part of building a community is the way we reach out to the vulnerable or isolated and make everyone feel included.

Through the years there have been many activities that children have participated in as a way of connecting to people. The ABC ran a program called “The School of the Air”. This was a radio program that kids growing up in remote places could listen to as their version of school. In the late 1950s the ABC organised for “various kids from various schools” to audition for their choir.²⁰ Desley Soden passed her audition and once a month joined the choir to record songs that were broadcasted over the radio. Their voices reached many students and gave the rural

children the opportunity to practice their singing skills.



A particular event that has been a part of childhood for those in and around Brisbane is the Royal Queensland Show, commonly known as the Ekka. This event used to be called the Brisbane Exhibition and has been around since 1876. There was no entry fee for children which meant that everyone had the opportunity to go.

Many children have fond memories of seeing the animals, watching the woodchopping competitions and receiving a show bag. Through the mid twentieth century, showbags were a sample bag of local produce and products. Darryl Soden also fondly remembers watching trotting races in the main arena. This event consisted of horses racing with trolleys attached to the back that the jockey would ride in.²¹





In Sideshow Alley kids got to share in the thrill of each ride with all of their friends and family that came along. The evening was finished with a spectacular show of fireworks.

What are your favourite things to do at the Ekka?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

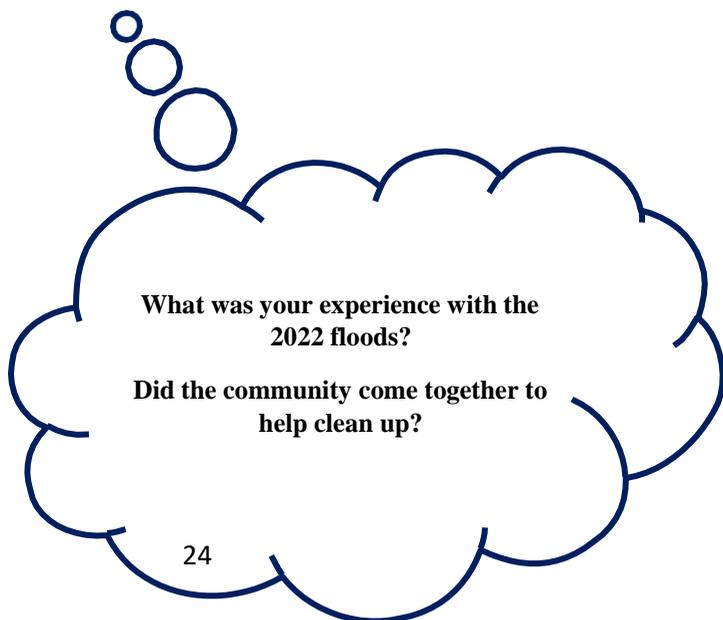
Ask an older relative what are their favourite things to do at the Ekka?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How are they the same or different?

Water has always been a big part of growing up in Brisbane as we have the majestic Brisbane river. One fun activity that children did in their free time was to go fishing. Most kids used a hand reel or small nets to catch fish and yabbies. Children growing up around the Stephens area have experienced the highs and lows of growing up around water especially during flood season.

In the 1974 floods, Aunty Deb Sandy played in the flood waters with her siblings. She was a strong swimmer from going to the local pool where she would play and practice her strokes.²² After the floods, families banded together to help clear up the mess that had been left behind.

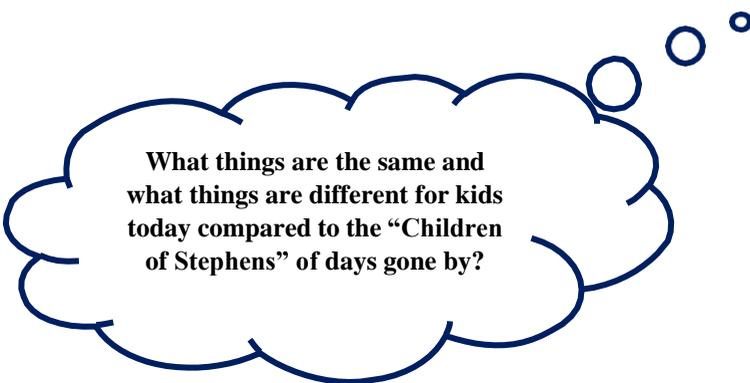


The End of Our Adventure

This booklet has shown the different ways children have played over the years. Each generation has had to adapt to different ways of playing depending on what they had and where they were.

The life of a child shapes the person they grow up to be. Having fun and using your imagination helps create memories that last a lifetime.

A lot has changed in the way children use their free time. What has stayed the same is the way children create the foundation of community. By knowing your neighbour and participating in sports, clubs and events, kids were able to connect with the people around them.



What things are the same and what things are different for kids today compared to the “Children of Stephens” of days gone by?

The Next Adventure Begins

Here are some questions to keep you exploring the history of children's activities.

Question 1.

What toys and board games were popular in the mid twentieth century?

Question 2.

A popular instrument in the 1950s for a child was a fife.

What is a fife and can you draw it?

Acknowledgements



Lucy Stirling grew up in Thompson's Estate which is now Greenslopes and turns 100 in December 2022.



Dave Baddiley grew up in Yeronga and had a passion for sailing and ballroom dancing with his wife Joy.



Jeanette Wiley grew up in Moorooka and loved exploring and fishing with her dad on holiday.



Desley and Darryl Soden grew up in Moorooka. Darryl loved swimming at the YMCA and Desley still has a doll house she used to play with.



Wendie Robinson Hirsch grew up in Yeronga and enjoyed playing tennis. She fondly remembers seeing Queen Elizabeth in 1954

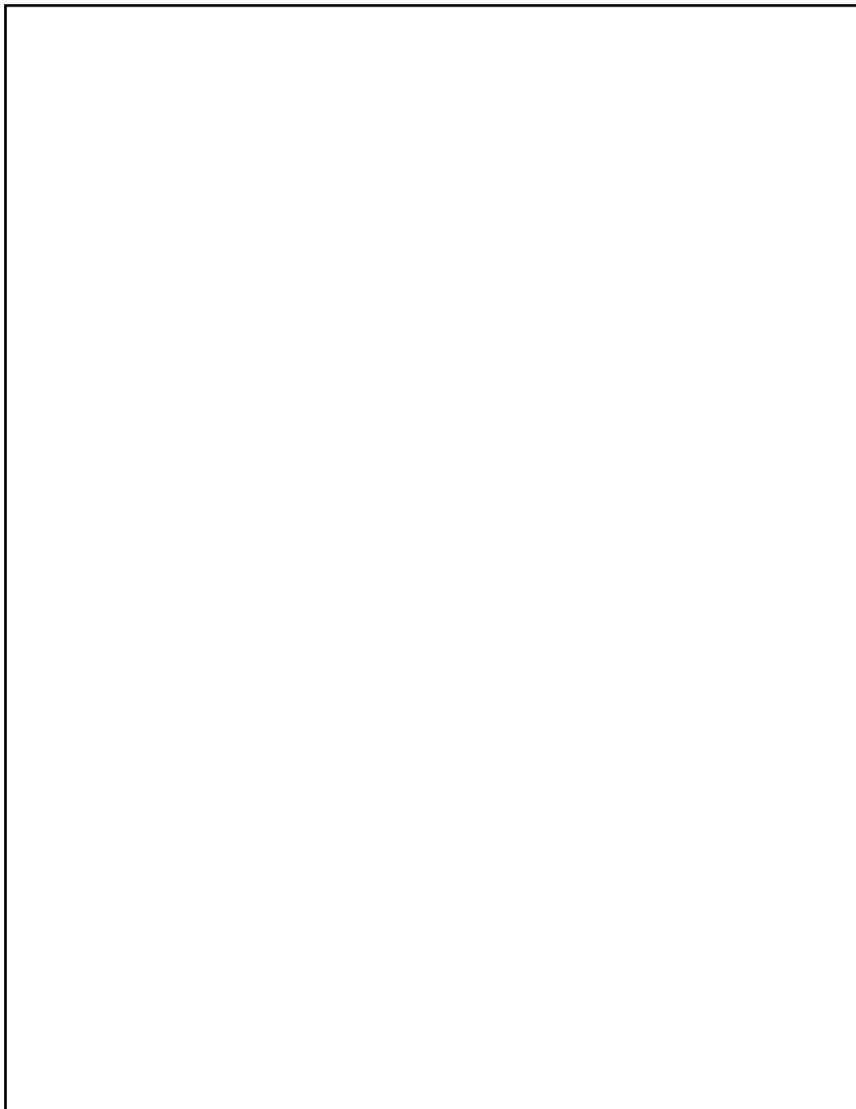


Aunty Deb Sandy grew up in New Farm and used to visit her Aunty and cousins in Annerley.

Thank you to the interviewees who took the time to share their stories. Thank you to Robyn Jenkinson (nee Hubner) and Kit Watters for sharing their written stories. Also thanks to the members of the Annerley Stephens History Group who provided ideas and support through this process. Finally, thank you to Pauline, Denis and Kate for their support, guidance, ideas and editing.

Jarrah Pearce completed an Australian Catholic University Internship Program with Annerley-Stephens History Group Inc. in 2022.

Use this page to draw a map of your neighbourhood



Endnotes

- ¹ Stories of Stephens p. 8-10.
- ² Annerley-Stephens History Group Inc., "Home," <https://annerleystephenshistory.org/>.
- ³ Yoshie Nakai, "Why We Study Generations," *Industrial and organizational psychology* 8, no. 3 (2015): p. 331.
- ⁴ Contance Campbell Petrie, *Tom Petrie's reminiscences of early Queensland dating from 1937* (Brisbane: Watson, Ferguson & Co., 1904, p. 111.
- ⁵ Petrie, *Tom Petrie's reminiscences*, p. 109.
- ⁶ Lee E. Ohanian, "The Great Recession in the Shadow of the Great Depression: A Review Essay on Hall of Mirrors: The Great Depression, the Great Recession, and the Uses and Misuses of History, by Barry Eichengreen." *Journal of Economic Literature* 55, no. 4 (2017): p. 1583.
- ⁷ Lucy Stirling, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 14, 2022.
- ⁸ Dave Baddiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 8, 2022.
- ⁹ Jeanette Wiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 14, 2022.
- ¹⁰ Jeanette Wiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 14, 2022.
- ¹¹ Dave Baddiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 8, 2022.
- ¹² Dave Baddiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 8, 2022.
- ¹³ Jeanette Wiley, *Baby Boomers*, p. 1.
- ¹⁴ Jeanette Wiley, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 14, 2022.
- ¹⁵ Robyn Jenkinson (nee Hubner), *Five Generations of the Hubner Family Lineage*, p. 9.
- ¹⁶ Wendie Robinson Hirsch, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 13, 2022.
- ¹⁷ Photos from Jeanette Wiley.
- ¹⁸ Wendie Robinson Hirsch, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 13, 2022.

¹⁹ Wendie Robinson Hirsch, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 13, 2022.

²⁰ Desley Soden, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 28, 2022.

²¹ Darryl Soden, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 28, 2022.

²² Aunty Deb Sandy, interviewed by Jarrah Pearce, September 29, 2022.

Photos used:

1. Cover photo courtesy of Wendie Robinson Hirsch from Robinson Park.
2. Map by Denis Peel with added icons from Word online stock images.
3. Pg 11. *Three Milkmen Pose with Horse and Cart in Highgate Hill, Brisbane, Ca. 1914.* (2004).
4. Pg 16. Two photos courtesy of Jeanette Wiley.
5. Pg 18. Department of Mapping and Surveying, part of Map of Moorooka, 1980.
6. Pg 19. Photo of Wendie Robinson Hirsch's Badges.
7. Pg 22. Truth. *John Davidson, Anthony Jeffery and David Jeffery at the Brisbane Exhibition, 1949, 2011, 28118* Sunday Truth and Sunday Sun Newspaper Photographic Negatives.
8. Pg 27. Photos of interviewees taken by Jarrah Pearce, Denis Peel, Pauline Peel and Kate Dyson.
9. All cartoons and icons sourced from Word online stock images.