

## WHITTLE STREET, MOOROOKA, 4105

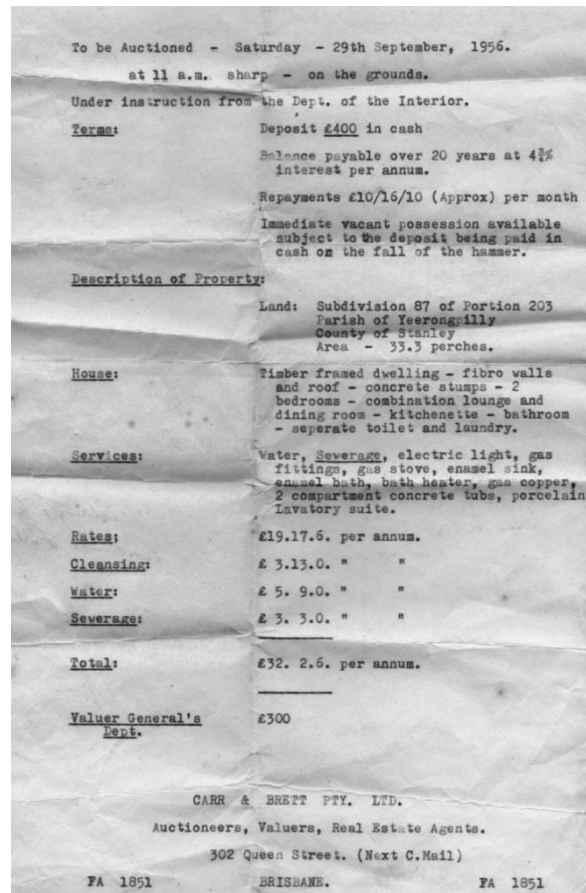
By Audrey Warner

On the 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1956, my then fiancé and I bought a small worker's dwelling at 15 Whittle Street, Moorooka, at an auction on the site, and lived there from our marriage in December, 1956, until Easter, 1998.

Whittle Street was, and still is, a fairly short one with six houses on the eastern side plus one facing Fegen Drive and, on the opposite side two between Fegen Drive and Currey Avenue and another three from Currey Avenue to the northern end of Whittle Street. At the time, our house was the last in the dead end street and adjoined a large area of bush land. Whittle Street was bitumen, but just outside our house the turnaround was still dirt.

We bought the small two bedroom home from the Department of the Interior at an auction in 1956 for the price of £2445 for a few reasons; firstly, it was close to the industrial area which was important because my husband was a boilermaker; secondly it was one of the few areas in Brisbane that were sewered; and thirdly, we had enough money for a deposit and the repayments were reasonable. Our house was originally part of the "Cottage Project" when 100 cottages were built by 1944 and 200 by the end of the war in 1945. At the time it was a modern housing estate for married war workers and planned as a post-war housing estate.

*The latest town planning principles were used to design the street grid of the Cottage Project. The whole estate was to have carefully laid-out roads and footpaths, concrete stormwater drains, reticulated sewerage plus water main, gas and electricity connections. Each timber cottage sat on low concrete stumps. Roofs were of terracotta or asbestos tiles. Heating both internally and externally was provided through a combination of asbestos cement or fibrous plaster. The Cottage Project would also provide sports playing fields, children's playgrounds, individual gardens and plenty of tree plantings. Half the cottages were designed as 3-bedroom homes, while the rest had two bedrooms. All cottages were provided with a sleep-out space and a verandah.<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> [www.ww2places.qld.gov.au](http://www.ww2places.qld.gov.au)

For all the years we lived in Whittle Street, we believed it had been named after Sir Frank Whittle, inventor of the jet engine, and it wasn't until I began writing for this project that I read in the Brisbane City Council Streets of Remembrance that it had been named after *John Woods Whittle (1882-1946) who served in the Navy before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force in August 1915. In early 1917, he was a sergeant with the 12th Battalion attacking the Germans withdrawing to the Hindenberg line. Whittle successfully captured a machine-gun post to win the Distinguished Conduct Medal. A few months later, Whittle led his platoon in a diversionary attack on the village of Boursies and then advance to Lagnicourt. At Lagnicourt, he attacked the enemy, bringing up a machine-gun, single-handedly killing the crew and capturing the gun. For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on these two occasions, Sergeant Whittle was awarded the Victoria Cross on 4 October 1917.*

We moved in to our home on returning from our honeymoon on Bribie Island,. We were told that many of the neighbours had rented their houses from the Department of the Interior for years, then were able to purchase them at a reduced price. Many of the ladies in the area worked at the spinning mill in the nearby industrial area and for a number of years we were the youngest residents in the street. The position of the house meant we could walk to what was then known as the Moorvale Shopping Centre to do our weekly shopping – dragging a carrier on wheels along with us.

Even closer were a convenience shop and a butcher shop in Fegen Drive just east of Beaudesert Road. The convenience shop was run by an English couple, the parents of a young lad who would go on to become a well-known musician – Billy Thorpe. Outside the shops was a mail box and just up the road a telephone box. Not many people had telephones installed in their homes although our next door neighbours, the Ludeke family,



had one which we were able to use in an emergency.

The grounds of the houses were quite large suburban blocks – ours was 33 and a third perches – and nearly everyone had a chook pen in the back yard and a family pet of some kind. This photo was taken looking from the back of our house to the Kneale home facing Fegen Drive in the mid 1950s.



Our home was also quite close to the Moorooka State School which came in very handy as our five children arrived. Their arrival also entailed adding extensions to our two bedroom house, bits at a time, until it was quite a large house.

The very large area of bush next to us was War Service land and in the late 1950s was cleared to make way for housing, which

Showing War Service Area next to 15 Whittle St in 1975

meant that Whittle Street then ran on to the newly formed Scherger Street. We had really enjoyed living next to the bush especially watching the bird life and having blue wrens alighting on our window sills and kookaburras sitting on the clothes line; our family are all still bird lovers. We didn't appreciate the occasional snake, especially if it was a red bellied black, or the foxes who would burrow under the fence to take our chickens.

The clearing of the bush brought a new set of problems as in the first heavy rain, with all the trees removed, the bare dirt turned into a deluge of mud running down the hill, flooding our back yard and carrying on down the street invading the back yards and some interiors of another four houses. We lost a tall fence, a newly erected brick BBQ and picnic tables and the car in our garage had mud right into the interior and needed to be dug out. Luckily the car survived, but the BBQ is probably still under there somewhere. Once drainage was installed in the new housing estate there was no recurrence.

The forty-three years we spent in Whittle Street were mostly happy ones as we watched our children grow, attending Moorooka Primary School then Yeronga State High School where I was employed as a Teacher Aide from 1974 to 1999. One of our daughters met a young Fairfield lad while they were at Yeronga High and they went on to marry and still live in Moorooka.

Although my husband and I moved to Cleveland in 1998, Moorooka will always be remembered with fondness as I also grew up there and feel as though my story is a very small part of its history.

