

FINGAL STREET TARRIGINDI

by Kathryn Watters

In years gone by it was common to name streets after people of some prominence who settled in the area. However, it seems that few accurate records existed before 1947 therefore origins of some street names may not be correct.

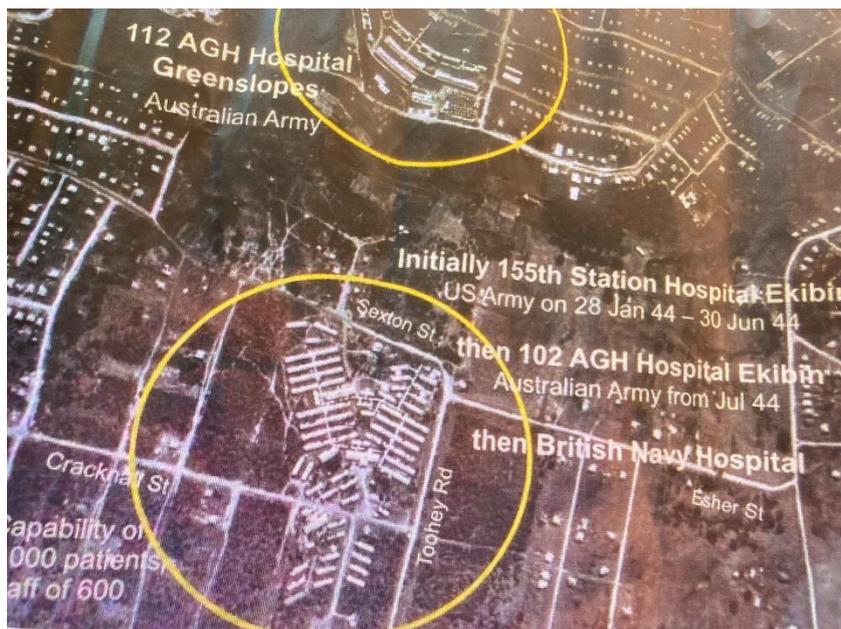
A History of Wellers Hill, Tarragindi and Ekibin 1850-1976 relates that Fingal Street should have been named Finger Street after the family of that name. Heinrich Finger, a farmer from Germany arrived in Australia in the 1860's. He purchased land bounded by Weller Road, Toohey Road and Esher Street and grew grapes and other fruits and made his own wine. Apparently, there are still some grape vines in backyards in the area, and members of the Finger family still live in the area.

In *Extracts from Works Committee – duplicated street names to be renamed 1939* Fingal Street is listed with (British Peerage) beside the name. There is a Fingal in Ireland, and an Earl of Fingall. However, we may never know the real origin of the name of Fingal Street. Before World War 2 Fingal Street was called 4th Avenue and the suburb was Ekibin. After 1976 the suburb of Ekibin and Fingal Street were absorbed by the suburb of Tarragindi.

Fingal Street begins at Sexton Street, and straddles Cracknell Road and Weller Road before ending at Toohey Road. During World War 2 the Ekibin Hospital was established in that area by the American Army (for mostly shell shocked soldiers), and later was used by the British Navy and Australian forces.

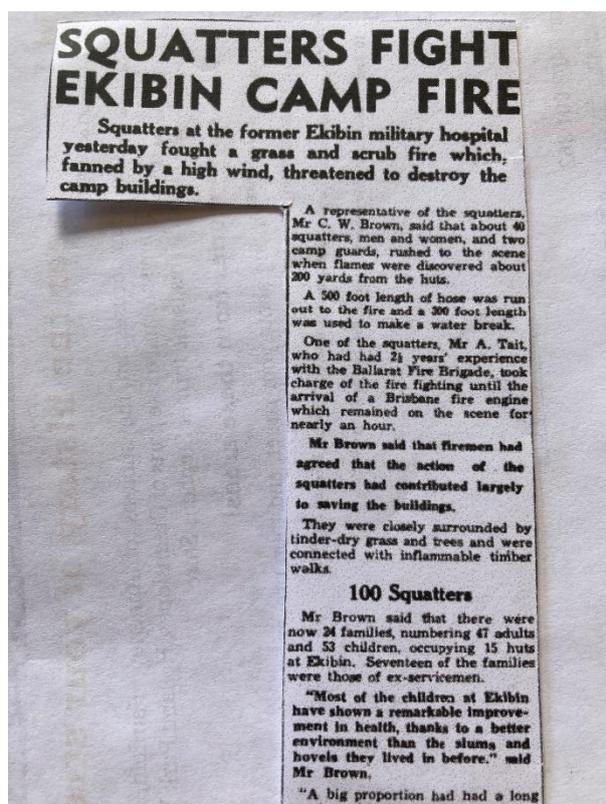
The hospital was bounded by Sexton Street to the north and Toohey Road to the east. It crossed Cracknell Road and covered parts of Effingham Street, Fingal Street, and Lutzow Street. About 124 buildings were erected. The hospital had 750 beds and was completely equipped with all services including wards, operating theatres and accommodation for staff, as well as water services, electric light and sewerage. Roads and paths were also constructed to connect the buildings. The morgue was in Fingal Street.

After the Holland Park Hospital was built between (Nursery, Seville and Logan roads,) and was completed in 1943, the Americans, British and Australian forces moved to there.



Ekibin Army Hospital

After the war squatters occupied the buildings on the Ekibin site forcing authorities to cut off essential services in an effort to get them to move on. The Housing Commission then used the buildings to accommodate displaced persons but eventually those that remained were all moved on to Victoria Park which had a larger housing camp.



Mon 19 Aug 1946 – *The Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. 1872 – 1947)*

My Aunt Lucy still lives in Fingal Street, at the Sexton Street end. She turned 100 in December 2022 and has lived in her house for 69 years. During those years she has seen many changes. Lucy spoke to me in 2002 about the housing camp and about some of her experiences as a new arrival in Fingal Street in 1953.

“When we came in 1953, opposite us was the rest of the housing camp.....War Service had demolished the hospital and built homes from Shaftesbury Street through to one side of Fingal Street. The rest of the camp, from the other side of Fingal Street to Toohey Road was left as the housing camp.”

It seems that on that side of Fingal Street War Service didn't want to build any more homes, so as the housing camp buildings were removed around 1955/56 that land was privately sold. Lucy told me that, “each block averaged between one to two thousand pounds, and we were all worried on our side of the street that rates and everything would go up equal to the other side of the street but luckily there really wasn't much change.”

The Ekibin Memorial Park on Cracknell Road between Fingal and Lutzow Streets commemorates the establishment of the hospital as well as the housing camp.



Ekibin Memorial Park signage

Between the 1st and 2nd World Wars Tarragindi was very much a rural area. There was a chapel which was built in the early 1900s but no schools, no public hall or any other church buildings. The electric tram on Ipswich Road reached Yeronga Park in 1915 and was extended to the Salisbury munitions works in 1940 which meant by then most of Tarragindi could be reached by tram.

Tarragindi is located approximately 6km south from the Brisbane CBD. The area is hilly, with mostly residential housing and is a leafy green suburb that is family friendly. The 1954 census showed 6813 people living in Tarragindi. The 2016 census showed 10,779, and the 2021 census – 11,035. Fingal Street became a residential street in the 1950s and 60s.

Lucy relates that:

“We came in 1953.... we paid one hundred and twenty-three pounds for our block of ground of 27 perches” (about 683 Sq metres). During our talk in 2002 Lucy mentioned that the current valuation for her land was \$140,000 so now it is probably around \$800,000 or more.

“The house.... the timber for the house was hardwood which was brought down from Gympie..... altogether, with War Service - the house and land were all put together and then we had to pay a deposit on that – and forty-five years to pay the house off, on an interest rate of three and one quarter percent. The house cost - with the land - about two thousand three hundred pounds”.

“When we came here there was an ordinary dirt road and we had no drainage. We had a sump in the backyard.... connected to a grease trap, which had to be cleaned out every so often. The sump would overflow if there was a lot of rain.....we had a manhole in our yard which was taking the drainage from the housing camp.” One of the laundries and the clothes lines from the camp were directly outside our front fence”.

Even though the hospital and then the housing camp opposite Lucy’s house had roads, paths as well as sewerage; all put in place by the American Army, it seems that a bitumen road and curbing, as well as sewerage only came to the residents of Fingal Street in the 1960s.



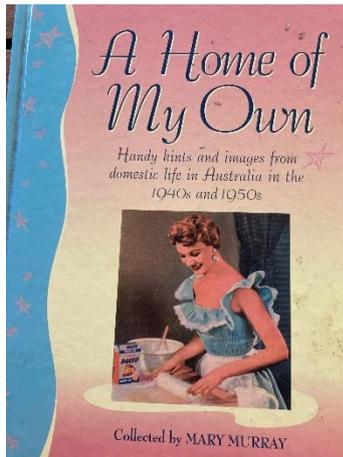
Lucy remembers that:

“Transport wasn’t very good.... we walked the kids to school (Wellers Hill State School) – there was really no transport for them. A bus eventually came along Sexton Street but it still seemed quicker to walk. A bus used to go down Cracknell Road.... around once an hour.”

Stop 39 on the 113 bus route is Fingal Street. I checked the timetable for the 113 bus and it still comes once an hour at certain times of the day. In our interview in 2002 Lucy told me that she felt that “now we have one of the best bus services in Brisbane” so it must have improved over the 69 years that she has been living there.

Although women were employed during the war, when the war ended most were relegated back to the kitchen. Up until the late 1970’s most women stayed at home while the husband worked. Lucy told me that that was how it was in Fingal Street.

“Most of the men in the street were employed and the basic wage was around five pound a week. Out of that you paid your bills, bought the groceries, and enjoyed simple entertainment at home with family and neighbours. There wasn’t much money left to do much else”.



At her end of Fingal Street, Lucy and her friend further up the street are the only original residents. Many of the post war homes are still there but many have been knocked down and two homes built on the one block with smaller yards and of course less mowing. The only non-residential building I could find is at 195 Fingal Street which was the Tarragindi Squash Centre from 1972 until 1994 when Tarragindi Fitness took over the address.

I think the difference between living in Fingal Street now and living in Fingal Street then is probably because even though most women were at home and men were the bread winners there was very little disposable income to splash around. Like most post-war residential streets people had friends and relatives come to visit or they visited them. It was a luxury to own a car or go on a holiday. A trip to the local picture theatre was a weekend treat.

Lucy's comments at the end of our talk in 2002 were - "we're getting notices in the mail and phone calls all the time asking if we want to sell because this is such a great area. it's an area now that everybody wants to live in". Twenty- one years later, that hasn't changed.

Fingal Steet like many other residential streets is constantly changing for better or worse and Lucy has seen it all.



Fingal Street as it is now.

REFERENCES

“A History of Wellers Hill, Tarragindi and Ekibin 1850-1976”.

“Extracts from Works Committee – Duplicated street names to be renamed...1939”.

“Ekibin Hospital, Ekibin Brisbane, Qld during WW11”.

Memories of Brisbane Oral History, 1950s. Interview with Aunty Lucy in 2002.