

NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



NEWSLETTER NO. 14.

JANUARY 1990.

STARTING POINT

(Latest News and Views from the Editorial Staff)

With the hectic Christmas/New Year period behind us, it is now time to think of all those things we meant to get done but which, somehow, were missed in the rush. Bills that should have been paid, letters that should have been written, jobs that should have been done, N/N memberships that should have been renewed! Now is the time to dig out that renewal form and send it off.

This year is shaping up as an exciting one for the society; one not to be missed. We are about to publish our first booklet (The Progression of a Branch of the Dirleton Nisbets to Australia) which will, hopefully, be the first of many N/N contributions to the genealogical literature. Several social and educational events are planned and, of course, there will be plenty of news, views and who's whos in the newsletters.

Avoid disappointment, renew your membership now! (Dr. Ian T. Nisbet).

(NES)-BITS AND PIECES

(Snippets of General Interest from the Editorial Staff)

EDITH NESBIT (AUTHOR): Edith Nesbit was one of the greatest children's writers of the 20th century. Though known in her day for her poems, short stories and romantic novels, she is now remembered as the author of 'The Railway Children', 'The Treasure Seekers' and many other stories of magic and adventure. Her readers loved to think of her as a reassuringly aunt-like figure, but Julia Briggs (biographer) reveals her as a wilful, demanding and adventurous woman, a true Bohemian who broke all society's rules in her search for love. Earlier accounts of Edith Nesbit have presented her as the much-exploited and long-suffering victim of her husband Hubert Bland, a compulsive womaniser. The truth is more complex: an intense if unconsummated affair with George Bernard Shaw was followed by a series of love affairs with younger men. At the same time her closest friend, Alice Hoatson, moved into her home as house keeper and bore Hubert Bland two children, whom Edith brought up as her own.



A woodcut of E. Nesbit by Robert Bryden (1865-1939).

(Cont'd page 2).

Both the Blands were founder Fabians and among their friends were the Webbs, Eleanor Marx, Oliver Schreiner, H.G. Wells and towards the end of Edith's life, Noël Coward. Edith Nesbit's writings reflect her dynamic energy, her sense of fun and passionate joie de vivre.

[Adapted from the book "A Woman of Passion" The Life of Edith Nesbit, 1858-1924, by Julia Briggs, first published in 1987 in hard cover by Hutchinson and in paperback by Penguin.]

In his book 'The Life of Noel Coward', Cole Lesley devotes many paragraphs to Edith Nesbit. Coward is quoted as saying "I suppose, of all the writers I have ever read, Edith Nesbit has given me, over the years, the most complete satisfaction, and incidentally, a great deal of inspiration. I'm glad I knew her in the last days of her life".

Noel Coward had her complete works and had obviously been reading 'The Enchanted Castle' on the occasion of his death, for it was left on his bedside table, open half way through. It was his lifelong favourite. If he had ordained his end, he could not have arranged it better.
Material by Evelyn Clark of Eden Hills, S.A.

Editorial note: Edith Nesbit's uncle, Edward Planta Nesbit, emigrated to South Australia in 1849. Her brother Harry, his wife Jessie and the issue of brother Alfred, Anthony and Anthonia, also emigrated to Australia in the late 1800s. Edward Planta Nesbit is mentioned in the Biographical Index of South Australia 1836-1885 and his second son Edward Paris Nesbit merits one and a half pages in the Australian Directory of Biography, Vol II.
(See Feature Article Newsletter 13).

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FRANCIS NESBITT MCCRON, ACTOR: Better known as Francis Nesbitt, was born in Manchester England in 1809. He was educated by a clergyman near Cork, Ireland, and selected the profession of surgeon. Becoming weary of hospital experiences, he decided on the stage as the scene of his future labours. After travelling through England and filling a leading engagement with Mr. Alexander of Glasgow, his friends persuaded him to leave the stage and he returned to Ireland in 1840. At the end of that year he eloped with and married a young lady, the daughter of an old and respectable family. He arrived in Port Jackson (Sydney, Australia), January 7, 1841, bringing letters of introduction to Governor Gipps and others. Unable to obtain employment in commercial houses, he applied to the manager of the Victoria Theatre who refused an engagement. He then joined the police but never went on duty, for as soon as the circumstance became known to his friends they induced the manager of the Victoria Theatre to allow him to appear. His character was Pizarro. From that time until his death he held undisputed sway. He left Sydney in 1843, and took a tour round the colonies and in 1848 sailed for San Francisco, where, after a successful season, he went to the gold diggings. He returned to Sydney in 1852. After performing a short time in Victoria and whilst acting in Geelong in William Tell, he was carried from the stage in an almost insensible condition and conveyed to the hospital, where he died in 1853 aged 44 years. He was buried in the cemetery at Geelong, where Mr. G.V. Brooke in 1856 placed a monument over his grave.

Adapted from "The Bedside Books of Colonial Days" by J.H. Heaton.
Material by Dot and Colin Nesbit of Ascot Vale, Victoria.

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NOTABLE N/Ns: From Webster's Biographical Dictionary. First Edition 1943.

NISBET, Robert Hogg, 1879-1961, American landscape painter and etcher, b. Providence, T.I.

NISBETT or NESBITT, Louisa Cranstoun, 1812? - 1858. English comedy actress; m. (1831) Capt. J.A. Nisbett (Killed 1831); won acclaim in Sheridan
(Cont'd page 3).

Knowle's "The Love Chase", the original Lady Gay Spanker in London Assurance. She married (1844) Sir William Boothby and returned to the stage after his death in 1846 to play Lady Teazle.

NOTABLE N/Ns: From Biography Almanac, First Edition (1981) Edited Annie Brewer.

NESBIT, Edith (Bland) English childrens author, b. Aug., 19, 1858 London, d. May 4, 1924 Kent, England. (See pages 1 & 2 this newsletter).

NESBIT, Evelyn, American actress, b. 1885, d. Jan. 18, 1967 in Santa Monica, Ca., U.S.A. Note: We have much information on Evelyn Nesbit.

NESBITT, Cathleen, English actress, b. Nov. 24, 1889 in Cheshire, England.

SOCIETY NEWS

NESBITT/NISBET SOCIETY, THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: Twenty one members attended the Third Annual General Meeting which was held at 'St Abbs', 26 Walnut Road, North Balwyn.

The meeting was followed by our guest speaker, Wing Commander Jonah Franklin-Jones, who presented an interesting talk on Heraldry. Those in attendance came away more enlightened on the subject.

Members will have received the Report and Financial Statement for the year ended August 31, 1989; Dues are Due, and an Invitation for members to pass on to other prospective/aspiring members.

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NO WRINKLES: Members will be pleased to note that they've received this newsletter unfolded and in first class condition ready for filing for posterity. The decision is in no way influenced by the fact that the editor is thus saved the process of folding.

* * *

CHRISTMAS SUPPER PARTY, DECEMBER 2nd, 1989: This year's Christmas Supper Party, at the home of Ian and Joy Nisbet, was well attended by some 23 N/N's with numerous apologies recorded. Once the guests were lubricated on champagne, orange juice or a combination thereof, Ian M. briefly recollected the 1989 N/N events and indicated 1990 proposals to date.

With the formalities completed Joy Nisbet introduced a "carol singing" session with a recitation. Lesley Nisbet on the piano kept the chorale, as led by Joy, in tune (that is when agreement could be reached on the "proper" tune - what do you expect from a bunch who can't agree on the spelling of their surname?)

Whilst partaking of another delightful supper prepared by the social committee, raffle tickets were sold for a draw of two prizes. The miniature standard rose (admired by all) was won by Elyse Classon and the Scotch Whisky by Elsie Judd (that's right, none by the executive committee). The raffle raised \$90 to cover costs for the night. (Gary R. Nisbet).

* * *

GATHERING AT BERWICKSHIRE SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1990: Lord and Lady Home have once again invited the N/N Society to hold their 1990 gathering at the Hirsell, Coldstream, Berwickshire. Please mark this date in your diary.

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U.K. WELCOME FIRST NORTHERN IRELAND MEMBER: The N/N Society, U.K. branch are delighted to welcome their first Northern Ireland member; James Nesbitt of 7 Adelaide Avenue, Whitehead, County Antrim. They are hoping that membership (Cont'd page 4).

secretary, Bob Nesbitt will be successful in recruiting more members from the Emerald Isle. We wish Bob much success in his recruiting and welcome James to the Worldwide Clan.

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AUSTRALIAN ARTICLES RECEIVE U.K. COVERAGE: Our articles in N/L 12 which told of Miss Gertrude Nesbitt's 107th birthday and the tour by Graeme and Catherine Nisbet featured in the U.K. Newsletter, Autumn 1989 edition. Thank you William Nesbitt, U.K. Newsletter Editor.

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DONATION: Honorary member Bill Kelsey of Panama City, Florida, U.S.A. sent his usual generous donation of \$US25 (\$A31.28), for which we are very grateful.

FEATURE ARTICLE

(This section is reserved for full length articles of general interest)

This article, in two parts, is a good read. It is condensed from the privately produced book 'Nisbet 1987', by T. Ronald Nisbet and Thomas Nisbet (U.K. N/N Society Member). The authors are cousins, Ron in Menlo Park, California, and Tom in Berkshire, England. The introduction is Ron's contribution.

"Don't tell Her Majesty, but being the Queen's Pilot is only one of Tom's accomplishments. Even so, he still had to be prodded, reminded and otherwise pushed into writing this".

FROM MODEL 'T' TO JET LINER

by Capt. Thomas Nisbet, O.B.E., D.F.C.

From the dog's viewpoint it was mandatory. He knew Minnie, and as we raced past his kennel she was in front, so the big Alsation leapt to her defence by taking a piece out of me. The wounds were more emotional than physical, but the dog's viewpoint was furthest from my mind as I howled my head off. Minnie was six; I was five. Maybe I learned something about interception. Or seniority. I certainly learned that chasing girls can be hazardous.

My affections however, were focussed elsewhere - on a certain Model T. My uncle Jim Stanners, a butcher, had a van, a black Model T Ford. I was utterly fascinated with it. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, his rounds took him across the moors, and I always tried to accompany him. I was eight years old, and he was very fond of me. Neither traffic nor police were present on the moors, so before I'd reached my ninth birthday, I could drive. It was the most exciting and delightful experience of my life, and the Model T's epicyclic gear system with its complicated formula for manipulating the three foot-pedals and three hand controls, made it all the more endearing.

The Model T did something very special for me. It gave me a feeling for machinery. It's a feeling that has never left me. If I was good to the machine, it was good to me. The Model T rewarded that kind of thinking by taking you where you wanted to go, and when.

At Prestwick - we had moved from Shotts for my mother's health - my grandfather (Nisbet) promised to build me a boat. "A real boat?" I asked, incredulously, "with sails and a rudder?" A week later, I was asking him when it would be ready. He said he was very busy, but pretty soon he would be starting it. Shortly afterwards, quite suddenly he died. Numbed by the loss and the disappointment, I learned something new; to expect the unexpected; the hardening process had begun!

Academically but not financially qualified for University, I considered myself fortunate in getting a job with the Commercial Bank - a job with a secure

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future and a pension at the end. It was before my sixteenth birthday, and after my apprenticeship at 30, 40 and 50 pound a year, the great day came when I was to be appointed to the permanent staff. I thought there was some mistake, that they meant 165 not 65 pounds per annum, but alas, no. Meanwhile, I'd learned that the bank wouldn't allow you to get married until you were earning 200 pounds a year, i.e. age 28/30. The hardening process again!

Another examination put me in London with the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, for two years "In The Foreign Staff Pool". The bank had 44 branches East of Suez, and one's first posting out of the pool was for 5 years, then a furlough of nine months. After the Munich crisis (1938) had passed, 18 of the 20 in the Scottish contingent of the Foreign Staff Pool were in an army reserve, and when war broke out in September 1939, I went off to the Adastral House (R.A.F) and volunteered for service as a pilot. They couldn't oblige, but did agree to give me an early call-up. Very few of the 20 in our little group made it through the war.

After a long wait, I got started on my flying training in 1940. It was an exhilarating experience, and I had visions of Spitfires, and the nonchalance that was the hallmark of fighter pilots. My instructor was a tall Canadian, who drove me hard and gave me little sympathy - so I thought. One day I happened to overhear a conversation between him and my flight commander, about what type of flying would suit the various trainees - reconnaissance, torpedo bomber, coastal patrol, fighters, bombers etc. I sat very still and waited...

"Nisbet is one of yours, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is!"

"Applied for a fighter squadron posting. What do you think?"

"No" said my instructor. "No, waste of a good bomber pilot."

The Flight Commander agreed, and my dream quietly evaporated. I realised however, why my instructor had made me spend hours 'under the hood'. By flying 'blind' on those primitive instruments I was developing skills for which I was to be very thankful in the future.

Memories of the school are still vivid and intense. All pilots remember the feeling of going solo for the first time!

It was the custom for one group to start the day by taking off in 'V' formation, and one day I watched as the first group took up position and started their run coming directly towards me. I paid little attention until I noticed that they weren't lifting off. Something was wrong. This wasn't the time for analysis so I dived into a nearby ditch just as the planes roared past, crashing through hedges and fences. The crews survived, but two people on the ground were killed. The Flight Commander had made every mistake in the book: he had used a short run when a long run was available, in conditions of no wind, towards obstructions and buildings, carrying a full load of two pilots, in formation (which precludes the use of full power) and there was hoar frost on the wings.

My respect for the man in authority began to rest on the man himself rather than the position he held. I was beginning to separate the men from the boys.

My next stop was the Service Flying Training School (S.F.T.S.) at Cranwell, learning to fly twin engined machines by day and night. Pupil pilots at Cranwell wore a white flash in their caps - quite a status symbol! Their quarters were full, so I had to go along with the 'other ranks'. My initial displeasure changed when I discovered the advantage I had inadvertently acquired. The 'irks' quickly adopted me as 'their U/T pilot' and they helped me in all sorts of ways. There were two fitters who lent me their text-books to help with my engine exams, and a parachute-packer ready with a declaration that my parachute needed repacking, if I happened to be late for duty. And there was an orderly-room clerk who kept me informed about the course I was taking - who was being recommended for commissioned rank, and so on. How to play brag, solo; how to get back into camp undiscovered when you were late. Education covers a lot of subjects, and it was great!

I had won my wings and was being commissioned as a Pilot Officer. On my last day I was alone in the barracks, so I changed into my officer's uniform

(Cont'd page 6).

and left hurriedly, hoping not to meet my erstwhile mates. But it was not to be. Four of them sauntering along, suddenly pulled themselves up and marched to attention, giving me a very smart salute, which I returned, all of us grinning hugely. "Goodbye and thanks" I said. There was a lump in my throat as they replied, "Good luck sir." (This article concludes in N/L 15).

WANTED

(Members' Searches)

NESBITT, John Henry, b. c1865, Melrose, Scotland, the son of John and Margaret Nesbitt, nee (Leiffal?). John Henry Nesbitt's first wife died in 1889 leaving him with two children. He married Marion Caldwell on 20th July 1892 at The Manse, Clifton Hill, Melbourne. I am seeking information on John and Marion Nesbitt and their descendants.

Contact Mrs. Laurie Rands, c/o 9 Matai Road, Woburn, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand.

Editorial Note: The above information appeared in the profile with a letter from Mrs. Laurie Rands, at the time living at Canberra, A.C.T. It is somewhat of a coincidence that the next profile opened by secretary Ian G. Nisbet; that of Donald R. Nesbitt of Frenchs Forest, N.S.W. showed John Henry Nesbitt as his emigrant ancestor, believed to have been born in Melrose, Scotland. Needless to say that Laurie and Don have been informed of the 'link'. Once again we can say "It's A Small World".

FOUND

HENRY NISBET and George Turner, members of The London Missionary Society (LMS), were landed in 1842, at Port Resolution on Tana, an island at the southern end of the islands which go to make up the New Hebrides, to the east of Australia. Latitude 20 deg. south, the same as Townsville, Queensland. They were newly arrived in the Pacific having just completed a crash course in 'missionary experience' in Samoa.

The Rev. John Williams had landed three Samoans on Tana shortly before his fateful landing in 1839 at Eromanga, an Island close by to the north of Tana.

In 1840 the LMS placed two more Samoans on Tana, believing that the island was decidedly hopeful. One was later found dead and the others suffering from malaria. 'They appear to be very uneasy, unhappy and painfully anxious to return to their native land.' (They were apparently left there.) When the LMS vessel returned in 1841 another teacher had died, but the LMS pressed on.

An epidemic of dysentery hit the island in 1843 and Nisbet and Turner, accused of being sorcerers, were held responsible. Some two thousand Tanese, urged on by the local disease makers, who feared the missionaries supposed power of evil to be greater than their own, angrily descended upon the mission station. Nisbet, Turner, their families and the Samoan teachers fled from the island on a whaling vessel that fortuitously appeared in the bay.

From the book 'Where the Waves Fall', A New South Sea Islands History From First Settlement To Colonial Rule, by K.R. Howe, 1984.

Material by Lorna O'Brien of the A.C.T.

Editorial note: Was Henry Nisbet a resident Australian? Can anyone claim him? Maybe our English cousins can find a connection.

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DAME NELLIE MELBA THE COLORATURA SOPRANO, THE NESBIT CONNECTION: Dame Nellie was no doubt Australia's most famous singer. She was born Nellie Porter Mitchell at Melbourne in 1861 and died aged 70 years in Melbourne, 1931. She was, by all accounts, at her brilliant best at her European farewell - her finale - at Covent Garden in June 8, 1926 at the age of 65. She married Charles Nesbit Armstrong at Brisbane, Queensland in 1882.

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When she began her serious singing career she changed her surname to Melba after Melbourne, the town of her birth. She became a Dame at the end of W.W. 1.

Her husband, Charles Nesbit Armstrong (b. 1858) was the sixth son of an Irish Baronet and managed a sugar mill at Marian near McKay, Queensland. He was an adventurer, having been an apprentice on a sailing ship, a jackaroo, and a keen horseman who lived among the bush people. He had all the necessary ingredients of a romantic. However, they were divorced in 1900 when their son George was aged 17 years.

The editorial staff have been aware of the Nesbit connection for some time. If there is anyone among our members who can tell us more, please do so by writing to the editor.

Based on information contained in the book 'Famous Australians - Nellie Melba', by Nancy Irvine. Hodden Australia Series.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY: A group of thirty friends and family members celebrated the 60th wedding anniversary of Frank and Hazel Batterham (nee Nesbit) at the home of Zoe, their daughter-in-law, at McCrae on the Mornington Peninsula on November 26, 1989. The celebration was a surprise. Hazel and Frank were invited to attend a birthday party for Joanna, Zoe's daughter. Helen and I were among those who attended to wish them both many more years of happiness together. Hazel is a member of my Nesbit family and we made contact very soon after the formation of the N/N Society - Australia and have since been in constant touch. **Editor.**

BIRTH

THE CLAN EXPANDS: Congratulations to Patrick John and Leanne Maree Nesbitt of Lilyfield, N.S.W. A son, Patrick Joseph, was born on June 22nd, 1989.

MISCELLANY

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U.K. and U.S.A. Newsletter Editor, Lt. Col. William Nesbitt has discovered during his travels, a butcher in Denmark named Nesbitt and an novelist Luigi Nesbitt. Shouldn't that be Nesbitto?

OBITUARIES

We are saddened to learn of the passing of the following, and offer our condolences.

Berna Nisbet of Reservoir, Victoria, who died suddenly on December 28th. Berna is survived by her husband, William (Bill) and daughters Judith, Leanne, Kathryn and Michelle. A service was held at the Lutheran Church, City Road, South Melbourne on January 3rd; the church which Berna had attended and supported for many years. The service was attended by a large group of family and friends. The Society was represented by President, Ian M. Nisbet and Editor, Bruce Nesbit.

Berna and sister Pearl (both South Australians) married the brothers William and Thomas Nisbet from Victoria. Both families have been active members of the society and have been represented at the many functions held since its conception in 1986.

John Nesbitt (father of member, Jack Nesbitt of Paynesville, Victoria) who died on January 14th, aged 94 years. John was predeceased by his wife, Florence, to whom he was married for 68 years. (See Newsletter number 4).

.....NOTICEBOARD.....

(Upcoming Events in the Local and Overseas Calendar)

- 1990 Feb. 8 Executive Meeting.
- " Mar. Autumn Picnic. (Date and venue to be notified)
- " Apr. Newsletter No. 15.
- " May 26 Hirsell Gathering. (Refer article page 3).
- " Jun. Social Function.
- " Jul. Newsletter No. 16.
- " Aug. Social Function.
- " Sep. Annual General Meeting.
- " Oct. Newsletter No. 17.
- " Dec. Christmas Gathering.
- 1991 Jan. Newsletter No. 18.
- " Mar/Apr Country Gathering.
- " Apr. Newsletter No. 19.

GENERAL COMMITTEE:

PRESIDENT Ian M. Nisbet, A.M., 26 Walnut Road, Nth. Balwyn, 3104, Vic., Aust.
 SECRETARY Ian G. Nisbet, 1 St. Johns Parade, Kew, 3101, Vic., Aust.
 TREASURER Peter Watson, 30 Mitchell Road, Box Hill North, 3129, Vic., Aust.
 EDITOR/ARCHIVIST Bruce Nesbit, P.O. Box 84 Bundoora, 3083, Vic., Aust.
 BOARD MEMBERS Dr. Ian T. Nisbet, Gavin M. Nisbet, Graeme Nisbet,
 Lyndell Watson, Karen Nisbet.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:

Bruce Nesbit, Dr. Ian T. Nisbet, Gary R. Nisbet, Karen E. Nisbet.

EDUCATION/INFORMATION COMMITTEE:

Heather Ames, Ian G. Nisbet, Gary R. Nisbet.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE:

Joy Nisbet, Gwen Marsham, Heather Ames, Lyndell Watson, Merryn Nisbet, Lesley Nisbet, Elyse Classon, Diana Dimattina, Barbara Leslie, Helen Nesbit, Catherine Nisbet.

REGIONAL OFFICERS:

George Nesbitt	110 Ardross Street, Ardross, 6153, Western Aust.
Brian S. Nesbitt	14 Davitt Close, Isaacs, 2607, A.C.T., Aust.
James E. Nisbet	53 Yeo Street, Cremorne, 2090, N.S.W., Aust.

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The Nesbitt/Nisbet Society is a Worldwide Clan Society