

HUNSTANTON

The fourth in a series of stories on the heritage of our AMAQ.

“Hunstanton”, currently part of the precinct of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Medical Association, was erected circa 1914 for William Mandeville Ellis L'Estrange, a prominent electrical engineer who arrived in Queensland in 1887.

Originally from England, William L'Estrange became fascinated with Australia during his first visit, when his purpose was to survey the Lamington National Forest. He found the people of Australia, and their lifestyle, so interesting that he returned later with his wife, to settle and raise a family.

Family records note that from the late 1870s until the early 1980s, L'Estrange worked as an assistant to the Surveyor for the Logan District, during which time he also owned and farmed land in the Upper Coomera district. In 1893, L'Estrange commenced work with Edward Barton of the electrical firm Barton and White. In 1896, he left Australia to study in England and Germany, later working for the General Electric Company in the United States of America.

In 1900, L'Estrange married Mary Emmeline Alder, daughter of E H Alder, Chief Inspector of Public Works for Queensland. L'Estrange had acquired the land on which “Hunstanton” was erected by mid 1914.

Although the architect of “Hunstanton” is not known, family records speculate that the house was possibly designed by either L'Estrange or Barton, a relative of L'Estrange. The stone for the house was reportedly quarried at The Gap. It is understood that the verandah, hall and other indoor tiles were imported from either Italy or France, whilst the roof tiles bear the imprint of their manufacture in Marseilles, France.

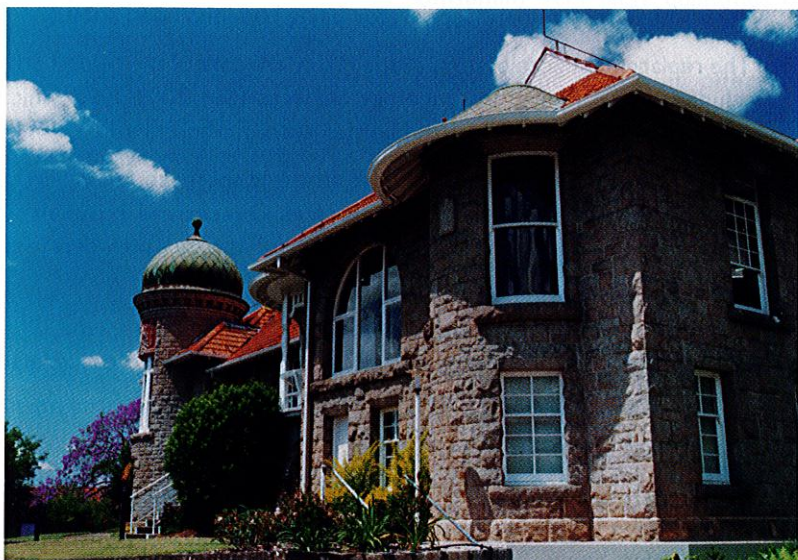
Family history records that the L'Estranges moved to “Hunstanton” circa 1916.

Mrs L'Estrange had a strong fear of fire, so her husband designed and built a “fireproof” home. Built of granite, with lightning conductors on the roof, and with the extensive use of concrete and tiles, the house did prove to be “fireproof” during one incident.

The maid had accidentally left an iron on in the room directly below the master bedroom. It wasn't until the next morning that the children, opening the door to get their toys, discovered the whole interior of the room had been gutted by the fire, which had not spread to any other area of the house.

L'Estrange House had its own electricity generator, because although William L'Estrange was the General Manager of “The Electric Company”, at 1.5 kilometres outside Brisbane, the house was “situated so far out of town, it couldn't be connected to the town (electricity) supply”.

In 1929, L'Estrange sold “Hunstanton” to Brisbane medical practitioner Dr James Vincent Duhig, nephew of Archbishop Duhig. Duhig had studied medicine at Sydney University prior to serving as a medical officer in the Australian Imperial Forces from 1917 to 1919. Following the war, Duhig studied pathology at King's College Hospital in London, before returning to Australia where he practised as a pathologist from 1920 and established pathology laboratories at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital



also in 1920 and at the Brisbane General Hospital in 1924. Duhig is described as being a militant campaigner for the establishment of a medical school at the University of Queensland, and in 1938, he became the first Professor of Pathology at the University. Duhig also founded the Red Cross Blood Bank in Queensland.

In October 1955, Duhig offered “Hunstanton” for sale to the then Queensland Branch of the British Medical Association (BMA). Following Duhig's offer, the Association purchased “Hunstanton” renaming it “BMA House”. It is possible that a factor influencing the Association's decision was the location of “Hunstanton” in close proximity to the city and the Brisbane Hospital and Medical School. A brief article in the Courier Mail of 1 December 1955 made public the deal and was accompanied by a photograph of the house. Some minor alterations were made to the interior and the move to the house was made by the BMA in January/February 1957. The formal opening was combined with Dr Felix Arden's President's At Home in September of that year.

The first meeting of the Association in its new premises was held in December

1957. The name of the building was changed to AMA House in 1963, reflecting the change from the BMA to the Australian Medical Association.

A hall and additional office space was required by the early 1960s and plans were prepared for a new building to the northwest of AMA House. The new building was connected to AMA House via a walkway, and was officially opened in 1965, becoming the main administration building for the AMA.

The name of the building has now reverted to “Hunstanton”. The AMAQ continues to use “Hunstanton” as a venue for meetings and functions. The AMAQ President's office and a library/archive are also located in the building.

“Hunstanton” is a two storied house with external faces clad in rough-cut granite. The building is on the highest part of the block, facing north-east, with expansive views of the surrounding suburbs. “Hunstanton” is asymmetrically arranged, with a T-shaped plan running east west. The northern elevation features a distinctive circular tower at the eastern end, protruding over the roof line. The tower, which is a feature of the house, is roofed with an onion shaped copper tiled dome, surmounted by a simple finial. At the eastern end of the northern facade, is a full length projecting circular bay, similar in size and scale to the tower at the other end. The eastern facade features a rectangular oriel window on the first storey.

The first floor of the building forms the original principal living and dining space, and the lower floor housed a garage or carriage storage, the kitchen and possibly servants' quarters. The first floor of the house had a reasonably open plan, which later walls have disguised to some extent. A large verandah on the north side of the house and a breezeway through the house to a morning room form the open spaces, which are



different in treatment to the rooms. The lower floor is a more rudimentary space, with lower ceilings, very little decorative treatment and plain concrete dividing walls. The house adjoins a more recent building, the current AMAQ headquarters, via a walkway from an existing opening on the first floor.

Although the years have taken their toll on “Hunstanton”, AMAQ is doing its best to restore the house to its former glory. The building is a place of cultural heritage significance and has considerable aesthetic value with the external massing, material and detailing combining to create a picturesque quality. The construction technique, including

the steel members used in the framing and granite cladding is unusual for a house of the 1910s. “Hunstanton” was approved by the Heritage Council for entry into the Heritage Register on 26 May 1995.

References:-

Queensland Heritage Register 1995, File No 601358
Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, 1995, correspondence to AMAQ
AMAQ Bulletin, 1991, “History of AMA House”

by Susan Wareham

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2000

QUEENSLAND
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



PREMIER SERIES

Saturday 14 October 8pm

Tuomas Ollila conductor
Stephanie McCallum piano
ADAMS *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*
SIBELIUS *Symphony No. 6 in D minor*
KATS-CHERNIN *Piano Concerto World Premiere*
TCHAIKOVSKY *Francesca da Rimini - Fantasy after Dante*
BOOKINGS: QTIX 136 246

MEET THE COMPOSER

Wednesday 18 October 8pm

QSO Studios, 53 Ferry Road, West End
ABC Classic FM New Music Australia Broadcast
Graham Abbott conductor
Experience adventurous performances of new music by young Australian composers Brett Dean and Dominik Karski. Live interviews with Dean and Karski will be broadcast live on ABC Classic FM's *National Music Australia* program.
BOOKINGS: 3377 5000

WINE, WOMEN AND SONG MUSIC ON SUNDAYS

Sunday 5 November 11.30am

Concert Hall, QPAC
Featuring Michael Morgan, conductor,
Amelia Farrugia, soprano, Peter Axford,
baritone, Colin Fox, presenter
Program includes NICOLAI, J. STRAUSS
II, MENDELSSOHN, PUCCINI, MOZART,
THOMAS, VERDI, MASSENET, LEHAR,
GOUNOD, SAINT-SAENS
BOOKINGS: QTIX 136 246

PREMIER SERIES

Saturday 18 November 8pm

Concert Hall, QPAC
Marin Alsop conductor
Stephen Hough piano
HARRIS *Symphony No. 3*
SAINT-SAENS *Piano Concerto No. 4 in C minor*
RACHMANINOV *Symphonic Dances*
BOOKINGS: QTIX 136 246