

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Top: Peter Bortolin (left) et al creating Historic New Italy in the 1980s. Courtesy Joan Bortolin

Bottom: Capitano Pietro at 2019 Anniversary Day with Michele Grigoletti (who is, by the way, standing for a seat in the Italian Senate in the upcoming elections). Photo Peter Derrett



The front of the site will enjoy a lick of paint!

It is a very sad time in the world at the moment. The Queen of England had been such a constant presence. I know she wasn't allowed to be politically minded, but she kept tradition going.

Her reign is a direct contrast to Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who only led the country for 18 months before he resigned! An anxious time for Italians with elections coming up at the end of this month.

We have recently lost a founding member and a great friend to Historic New Italy, Peter Bortolin. He, with many other volunteers, helped build the mudbrick buildings. His charming smile beneath his Venezia cap, was often seen working the BBQ on Anniversary and Carnevale days. New Italy has always had a special place in the hearts of both Peter and his wife, Joan. It is reciprocated by all who have worked and celebrated at New Italy with you. Rest in peace, Peter.

But life goes on. It does make me anxious when old gives way to new, but no new ones are coming up the ranks to continue our traditions here at Historic New Italy. In the meantime, other than reflecting, we are getting on with the job.

Soon, after school holidays we are finally getting the front of the Museum painted as well as the Glass Art building. To compliment this we are going to refurbish the pathway in readiness for the covered walkway when we are successful with a grant. We have not been successful in

acquiring a grant so far but we will try yet again ...

Wildlife abounds in the grounds of Historic New Italy at the moment. They are awake after their winter slumber and are filled with the joys of Spring. From the cheeky Miner birds who help clean up the tables of the Café to an interesting new resident who has made Historic New Italy her home – Paola the Python! Recently seen trying to scale the mud brick walls of the pavilion to possibly feast on our nesting Welcome Swallows ...! The other day I had to coax her across the front of the gift shop and into the safety of the gardens beyond. I only hope visitors with dogs are understanding and keep their distance.

People are back on the move again and we have been quite busy which is lovely to see after all the COVID lockdowns. We hope to see you back here again soon.

Some date savers:

- **Sunday 9 October** - We will be having lunch with historian, **Pol Dalmau, from Barcelona University** who has been researching the expeditioners 3 month stay in Barcelona prior to them leaving on the "India". For more info see over page.
- **Sunday 23 October - 10-12 noon**
Historic New Italy Morning Tea get together
- **Sunday 6 November - 2022 NIMI AGM- 11am start**
- **Sunday 13 November - 7.30am start**
Park of Peace Working Bee

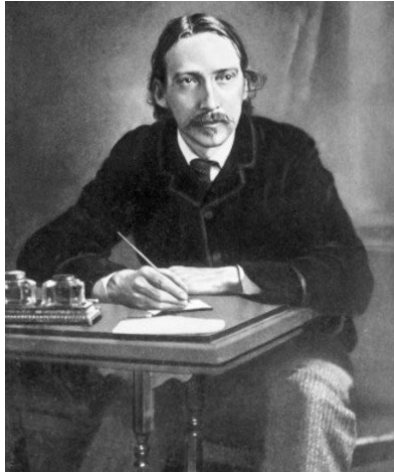
President - Gail Williams



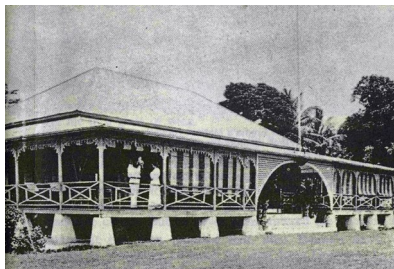
The Gift Shop, Paola the Python and evidence of Welcome Swallows!

MAX UECHTRITZ' STORIES FROM NEW BRITAIN: PART 3 'THE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON CONNECTION'

There's a Gunantambu connection to the legendary Robert Louis Stevenson. The author had been a close friend of Emma's father Jonas Coe in Samoa. When Stevenson died in 1894, Emma bought much of his furniture and shipped it to her home at Ralum. Among the items was the writing desk on which Stevenson penned 'Treasure Island', 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' and other classics.



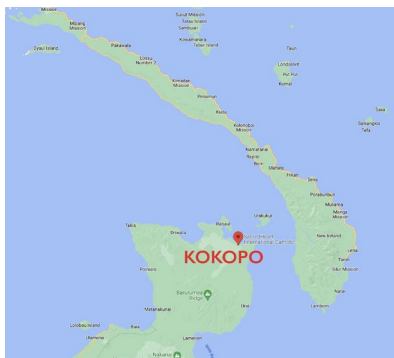
Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa



Gunantambu 1913



The remaining steps at Gunantambu



Kokopo. New Britain

Gunantambu had a hot water system and even an early version of air conditioning using palm fronds to fan cool air upwards from blocks of ice under the floorboards. It had a rifle club and a skittle alley. The compound featured hectares of manicured lawns and tropical shrubs in which nestled bungalows for guests or family members.

In one of the bungalows lived Emma and Phebe's mother, Joana Le'utu Taletale Coe. She was from the royal Malietoa family of Samoa and the first wife of U.S. Consul to Apia, Jonas Coe. It was through this bloodline that Emma was formally pronounced Princess Tui Malietoa in Samoa.

Le'utu left Samoa in the 1880s to join her daughters, various stepdaughters and nieces in New Britain. She is buried in one of the family cemeteries, outside of Kokopo.

The Gunantambu steps must have seemed a stairway to a 'heaven' of sorts for guests. Some of them wrote about 18 course dinners, served off gold settings over three days. The revelry included the famous Samoan "Siva" dance, led by Phebe Parkinson with her vivacious daughters and nieces.

Legend has it that drunken warship officers once convinced Emma to emulate the exploits of courtesan actress Lillie Langtry – lover of the Prince of Wales and future King Edward

VII - by bathing in champagne. In this unverified Ralum version, the bath was a giant clam shell.

It was far from all revelry in those tough and often dangerous times for both settlers and locals. A brother of Emma and Phebe, John Coe, was killed by tribesmen on Nuguria Island. Queen Emma sent her lover and life soulmate, Captain Augustino Stalio, to avenge the murder and he, too, was slain. Several of Phebe Parkinson's sons died of disease. Phebe and two of her nieces died as internees in Japanese prison camps during WW2.

Queen Emma sold her holdings and left New Guinea in 1911. She died in Monte Carlo, Monaco in 1913. Gunantambu and the Parkinson's beautiful old homestead at Kuradui were occupied by the Japanese during the war and destroyed in American bombing raids.

In the decades since, the Ralum Club and then the Gazelle International hotel were built on the Gunantambu site. The bungalow's front steps are in the hotel grounds while the remnants of the massive staircase border the Ralum golf course. Two pillars at the top of the steps have also survived.

After a concerted collaboration of local stakeholders to save the steps, sections will be rebuilt in sympathy with the original structure and the remnants. Photos from the 1920s show the steps topping large base cascading down the hill, not visible today due to landfill. It is hoped that oversight will be by the National Museum and Art Gallery (NMG) of PNG which has carriage of all national relics.

Descendants would provide historical guidance: in particular Wayne Uechtritz (Lae) and Kalo Fainu Uechtritz and Kurt Diercke (both Kokopo) live in PNG.

Kurt Diercke (ancestor was Helene "Nellie" Parkinson Queen Emma's niece): "As Richard and Phebe Parkinson's great-great grandson who now resides a couple of hundred metres away in Kokopo with my wife Lucie, we would be very humbled to see this story retained. Preserving Queen Emma's steps keeps another layer of history alive. It reiterates prosperity, determination, vision and hope and the strength and courage of women."

The eldest Parkinson daughter Louise arrived from Samoa as a child in 1882. Now married and settled with family in NZ. Her great granddaughter Sandra Mulcock said: "We are all proud of our ancestral connection to Queen Emma but her steps are so much more than a family relic. It's a tangible part of the historical tapestry of PNG, including the folklore of the people of New Britain and the islands."

Sydney executive Tyrone Dodds is a direct descendant of Queen Emma through her son JMC Coe Forsayth said: "The establishment of commercial trade and agriculture by Queen Emma was integral to the rich heritage of New Britain, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. The steps are a remnant of her legacy."

Saving the steps was a dream of late Tolai cultural historian and Gunantuna elder, Gideon Kakabin, who at the time of his 2018 death was also working on a proposal to build a replica of Gunantambu on the grounds of Kokopo war museum. Kakabin was an ardent advocate of recording and preserving the inextricably linked history of colonial settlers and the people of the islands.

UPCOMING EVENTS



VISIT BY SPANISH HISTORIAN, POL DALMAU | SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER

Dr Pol Dalmau, history professor at **Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona** will be visiting the New Italy Museum on 9 October to share information from Spanish, French and Filipino archives about the Italian families who settled New Italy from 1882. Dr Dalmau's research will add yet another layer to the story of New Italy. Part of that story encompasses the time when hundreds of hopeful Italian emigrants assembled in Barcelona waiting to embark for an island paradise in the South Pacific. Sadly, they and many others were being misled by the promoter of this venture, a French aristocrat M. Charles du Breil, the Marquis De Ray. While investors lost their money, many of the Italian emigrants lost their lives on the voyage from Barcelona and later at Port Breton in New Ireland. The survivors were rescued, taken to Sydney and from 1882 commenced a settlement in what became known as New Italy.

NIMI is hosting a lunch at the New Italy Museum on Sunday 9 October where Consultant Historian, Dr Jo Kijas, will facilitate an information session with Dr Dalmau. All are welcome but places are limited – BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL.

12noon for 12.30pm | Cost \$20/head – pay at the door.

To secure a seat call 0414 673 933 OR email info@newitaly.org.au

Dr Dalmau's research is supported by a "Leonardo Grant for Researchers and Cultural Creators, BBVA Foundation". For project information go to: <https://www.redleonardo.es/beneficiario/pol-dalmau-palet/>

HISTORIC NEW ITALY MORNING TEA GET TOGETHER - 10AM TO 12 NOON, SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER



Come and find out about Historic New Italy, its history, facilities and its many exciting projects. Brief tours and talks will be available through the Museum, Pavilion and the grounds. Enjoy a chat, a cup of tea and sample some delicious cakes with us. Hosted by NIMI - volunteers who keep your Museum site functioning and keep your history alive!

Interested in helping us at Historic New Italy - come along and find out more. Your support and input is always appreciated!! **All Welcome!**

2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER - 11AM START

Members will receive an invitation to our 2022 AGM with this newsletter.

An important part of the AGM is the election of committee members. These are the people who manage your Museums and your association's activities and, generally, "get things done". Fresh ideas, additional expertise and enthusiasm for pursuing the ideals of your association are vital. Please do not assume that all current committee members will be re-nominating for the committee.

We look forward to catching up with everyone and invite you to join us for lunch after the meeting (catered by the 'Tastes of New Italy' Café).

PARK OF PEACE WORKING BEE - SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER



Giacomo Piccoli and Park of Peace I & II

The Park of Peace requires some seasonal tender loving care. Please join us for a working bee! The trees in the Park need to be mulched, pruned and fertilised. Starting early around 7.30am Sunday 13 November, finishing for lunch in the Café afterwards.

Many will be familiar with the history of the Park of Peace. Giacomo Piccoli established a 'Park of Peace' on his selection at New Italy. After the New Italy Museum site was established in the early 1980s, the tradition of planting a tree on Anniversary Day continued in what became the new Park of Peace. Today it's a peaceful adjunct to the New Italy experience. **As above, your support and energy is very welcome!**

THE HALL'S ACOUSTICS TESTED



An unnamed travelling musician dropped into check out the acoustics in the New Italy Hall. It sounded pretty good to the Museum Monday group!

NEW BANNERS



New banners greet northbound travellers as they near Historic New Italy. Look for them on your next visit!



Visitor Feedback
"GREAT COFFEE STOP
WITH CLEAN FACILITIES
AND INTERESTING ITALIAN
MIGRANT STORIES AND
ARTEFACTS."
Poh Ling Lee

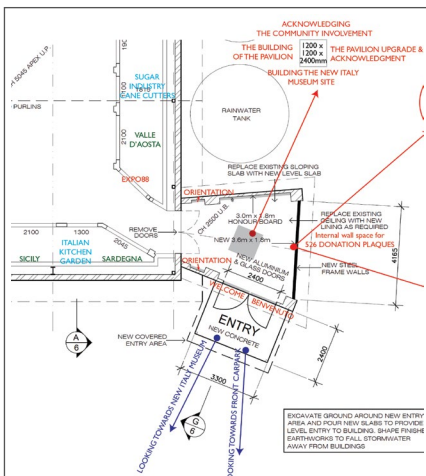
THE CASA VECCHIA GIFT SHOP



Dare I say it, but Christmas is just around the corner and we are well stocked with new items. We have recently received a shipment from Axis Toys. An Australian company who imports quality books and toys from Europe and beyond. They supply us with a lot of age-related educational merchandise made in Italy. Start your Christmas shopping now! Unfortunately, we are still closed on Tuesdays due to lack of volunteers. **If you would like to join our happy band of shop volunteers, then please contact ...**

Gail Williams • giftshop@newitaly.org.au

ITALIAN PAVILION



While we await the outcomes from various grant applications, we are pulling together a fundraising plan to support the Italian Pavilion upgrade. Costing this huge project is a massive job in itself. Still waiting on several quotes. From there we can use the projected budget to put in place some targeted fundraising.

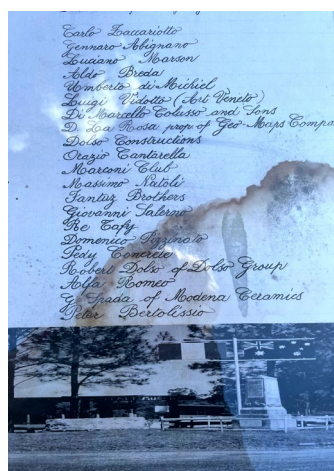
We are looking at changing the Pacific Highway Entry to face south towards the front carpark and across to the Museum entry. The sealed front wall will become another acknowledgements wall. Thank you Peter Blackwood for this brilliant suggestion and thank you to Carl Cadonetti for the revised plans.

If you would like to join the Italian Pavilion Reference Group or simply receive updates, please email OR go to the Historic New Italy website -

www.newitaly.org.au/new-italy-museum-complex/the-italian-pavillion/

Leonie Lane • museums@newitaly.org.au

NEW ITALY MUSEUM



On 16 September, New Italy Museum volunteers joined other Northern Rivers Museums at the wonderful Lawrence Museum for the AMaGA Far North Coast Chapter meeting. Tegan Anthes, conservator and heritage educator, ran an excellent and very topical training workshop ‘Dealing with Mould’, useful for all our Museums especially after the floods and weather events of this year. We applied learned skills to various items from the different museum collections. From New Italy, we had a sad water-damaged, mould-affected framed acknowledgement poster handwritten by Floriano Volpato. More work required!

Leonie Lane • museums@newitaly.org.au



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