

## A historical memory from George Street – F.A. Perkins B.Sc. (Agr.) (Hons.) 1897-1976

The entomologist, Athol Perkins, was a man of many parts. I knew him only in the early 1950s when various scattered sections of the University of Queensland were very gradually “moving to St Lucia”, as new buildings were completed\*. He had an office in the University Bookshop, where I occasionally helped with sales in my student days. To set the scene, the Bookshop was still located in part of the old Government House building at the bottom end of George Street, nearest to the big fig tree.



University of Queensland, George St. Brisbane. In the 1950s. The bookshop and Mr Perkins's office were on the far right-hand side (Commercial postcard from 1927).



A more distant view of UQ, George St, in 1927. The big fig tree was smaller then, and large buildings now occupy the open areas in the foreground. Taken by Les Carter B.A.

There was an outdoor wire enclosure behind the building, where some of the recently-arrived giant cane toads could be watched as lunchtime entertainment. The roomy public toilets were nearby, still with empty hoppers that had been used to contain sawdust in earlier days. Once a year, the University Procession, with all its floats and tomfoolery by students representing their various faculties, wended its way up George Street and around parts of the CBD. The use of the various existing and newer buildings by several other organisations, including QUT, was far in the future.

Mr Perkins always seemed very busy, dashing in and out. I knew that he was in charge of the Bookshop and the University Press, as well as lecturing in entomology in the Faculty of Science. I recently discovered\*\* that he had actually founded the Bookshop and University Press and had lectured in entomology at UQ since 1926. He had continued as Head of the new Department of Entomology from 1952 until his retirement in 1965. He and Pat (Dr Elizabeth N.) Marks\*\*\*, had collaborated for many years on studies of mosquitoes, particularly as malaria vectors.

But he had not been otherwise idle. According to the same archives of the Entomological Society of Queensland, he had also been the Dean of Science at UQ and Treasurer of the UQ Staff Association, and in his spare time had founded the Entomological Society of Queensland itself. He served it in various capacities, including as President, over many years. The Society's biennial memorial lecture honours his contribution. And he was also Secretary of The Royal Society of Queensland for some years including 1935.

One wonders at how many people it would now take to manage all these separate responsibilities? Seven senior staff (Professors or Associate Professors) were listed in 2019 for the Entomology section of the School of Biological Sciences alone.

Looking back, only two years after Mr Perkins was appointed to UQ in 1926, my parents graduated from UQ with B.A. degrees. In those days, photos of individual graduates in each faculty were pictured over several pages of *The Queenslander*. Many of the graduates, particularly the men, went on to become important figures in Queensland history, without more than a first degree. The women had rather fewer opportunities, but some succeeded impressively and made their mark.

Fewer of us now have memories of those happy days when academic expectations and pressures were less intense. Most of us only really studied hard in “swot vac” just before the end-of-semester exams, in the virtual absence of continuous assessments. Being students did not restrict us from having simple, inexpensive fun at a range of University activities in our spare time with new, good friends, often from other faculties, and quite frequently finding lifetime partners. The good old days!

\*<https://www.qhatlas.com.au/map/st-lucia-c1950>

\*\*(<https://www.esq.org.au/archive/HistoricalPages/PerkinsFA.html>)

\*\*\*Former President of The Royal Society of Queensland.

Elwyn Hegarty, 25/03/2019