

# Celebrating Her First Half-Century: Queensland's Jubilee Carnival

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Queensland's Jubilee Carnival of 1909 was, according to Australia's Governor-General, Lord Dudley, 'the principal and most prominent feature in the series of festivities by which the people of Queensland are seeking to celebrate the jubilee of their existence'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, with the exception of the Carnival, the 'series of festivities' was rather lack-lustre, offering relatively little of substance to excite the attention of contemporaries or of later commentators. Offering a distraction from the political instability of the era – between 1907 and 1909, voters had gone to the state polls three times – the Jubilee Carnival reaffirmed and reinvigorated a story that had been told and retold each year at Brisbane's showgrounds for more than three decades. The particular power of the Carnival did not, therefore, derive from its status as a unique event that commemorated a defining moment in Queensland's development: the separation from New South Wales and the beginning of self-government in 1859. Instead, the significance of the Jubilee Carnival as the centrepiece of the 1909 celebrations depended on its effective alignment with Queensland's largest annual event, the Brisbane Exhibition, and on the resulting connections between the Carnival, the Exhibition and a narrative of successful colonisation that had been celebrated each year since the inaugural Brisbane Exhibition of 1876. For many non-Indigenous Queenslanders, it was a compelling story that resolutely ignored the unsavoury aspects of the state's past and present in favour of an uplifting account of a society in which perseverance, applied to nature's bounty in the interests of the British Empire, was rewarded. It was, above all, a story of progress – that most powerful of talismans for settler societies. The Jubilee Carnival thus reiterated a familiar story; in so doing, it confirmed the iconic status of the capital city's annual agricultural show and positioned the show's host, the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland (NAIAQ), as one of the state's most important organisations.

Festivals such as the Jubilee Carnival offer historians and other researchers opportunities to identify and explore how communities, and particularly their most influential citizens and institutions, choose to represent themselves in moments of public celebration. The processes behind their creation, as well as the festivals

themselves, offer insights into the groups whose achievements are being showcased. As large and complex events, festivals may be understood through different lenses. The Jubilee Carnival can, for example, be interpreted as a ‘once-in-a-half-century’ celebration of Queensland, and compared and contrasted with the state’s Centenary and Sesquicentenary celebrations. The following analysis instead situates the Carnival mainly within the history of Queensland’s most popular annual event, an agricultural show, and the dominant narrative that was expressed through that show, year in and year out. After outlining the preparations undertaken for the Carnival by the organisers of the Brisbane Exhibition, it focuses on the ways in which the Carnival conformed to and diverged from the typical Exhibition experience. Certainly, there were features of the 1909 Carnival that were peculiar to the Carnival rather than being part of the standard entertainment of Brisbane’s annual show. Nonetheless, the Carnival’s appeal, format and impact derived primarily from its status as the thirty-fourth Brisbane Exhibition.

### **The Jubilee Carnival: Context and Preparations**

The Jubilee Carnival exemplified the dominant values of and approaches to Queensland’s fiftieth anniversary: commitment to the ideology of progress; a specific focus on education, or at least instruction, despite the state’s reputation for only limited interest in this domain; and pragmatism – events and activities that were standard elements of the community’s calendar were branded as ‘Jubilee’ celebrations, a pattern that would be repeated for the state’s Centenary.<sup>2</sup> The Carnival itself was superimposed on the Brisbane Exhibition. As the state’s largest annual event and most important agricultural show, the Exhibition offered a ready-made and cost-effective focus for the 1909 celebrations. The Exhibition and the Carnival were held at the same time – 7 to 21 August – and on the same site, the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds. They became, in effect, a single event: the 1909 ‘annual show ... really was a huge jubilee carnival’.<sup>3</sup> From its creation in 1876, the Exhibition had promoted the centrality of progress and firmly situated itself as a major educational forum for the Queensland community. While each Brisbane show provided a snapshot of contemporary Queensland, and therefore focused predominantly on the present, it also provided an opportunity for commentators to reflect on how the event itself, and the community it represented, had evolved and to envisage an ever rosier future. The show could therefore easily accommodate the ‘historical’ dimensions of the 1909 celebrations; the role of history at the annual Brisbane Exhibitions and at the 1909 festivities was to highlight Queensland’s ‘phenomenal progress’ and to provide a blueprint against which Queenslanders could measure their achievements and plan for future advancement.<sup>4</sup>

Merging the Brisbane Exhibition and the centrepiece of the state’s fiftieth anniversary celebrations effectively confirmed the former as Queensland’s most important annual event. The NAIQA had first broached its ideas for celebrating the Jubilee to Premier William Kidston in 1907. Kidston’s interest in commemorating Queensland’s first half-century was tempered by his unwillingness to authorise major

expenditure on such an event and perhaps also by a history of friction between the NAIQA and successive state governments over whether the latter had failed to adequately resource Queensland's agricultural societies. The NAIQA's initial plan, for an international exhibition, would have cost an estimated £30,000.<sup>5</sup> The Association then devised a more modest option, involving a fortnight of celebrations at the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds; it, too, generated some concern. In February 1908, a local newspaper, the *Telegraph*, expressed reservations, fearing that two weeks of 'gaiety' would adversely affect commercial activity.<sup>6</sup>

In May, the NAIQA's Jubilee Committee presented the government with a set of fourteen recommendations for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, with a comparatively modest budget of £10,000 that would be met primarily from the NAIQA's own coffers and sponsors. Apart from advising that the celebrations should be held in August, 'including Exhibition week', the proposal encompassed four, sometimes overlapping, emphases: special competitions and displays; prize money; publicity; and the provision of sufficient space. The recommendations ranged from a choral competition with substantial prize money and a military and naval pageant featuring crews from any warships that were berthed in Brisbane to advertising the celebrations in 'America and the East'.<sup>7</sup> The Jubilee committee's proposal confidently assumed that the local community, Australia and indeed the world would be interested in Queensland's achievements. The final recommendation was acquisition of the Acclimatisation Society's grounds adjacent to the showgrounds, suggesting the NAIQA's willingness to use the 1909 celebrations to advance its own agenda; it had been attempting to secure the Acclimatisation Society's property since at least 1888. Self-interest and pride in Queensland's progress across the past half-century were both accommodated within the Association's proposal.

The *Brisbane Courier*, which published the recommendations, 'regretted that the celebration of the Jubilee of Queensland as a self-governing State will not be marked by an International Exhibition', but nonetheless professed satisfaction with the latest proposal: 'The annual Exhibition in Bowen Park is the finest thing of its kind in Australia, and could not be surpassed by any State in the Empire, and therefore only some expansion is necessary to make it worthy of Queensland's Jubilee year.' It regarded the NAIQA's ideas as appropriately ambitious: 'If they were otherwise they would be unworthy of Queensland's Jubilee year.'<sup>8</sup> Most – although not all – of the recommendations were implemented, at least in part; the show's organisers failed in their bid to gain permanent occupancy of the Acclimatisation Society's site but were able to use it during the Jubilee Carnival.

The NAIQA eagerly promoted the 1909 event to 'the peoples of Australasia', and promised a cornucopia of delights: 'we shall spare no pains to please the eyes and the hearts of all that come to help us celebrate our Jubilee'. It urged the other Australian states and New Zealand to display their achievements at the event while anticipating the opportunities to showcase Queensland. In a beautifully illustrated proclamation, measuring one metre in height (see Figure 1), the NAIQA declared:

We intend to show our own people what is being done within and without the State, and we desire to demonstrate to our Sister States

and to New Zealand what wealth lies in our fertile soil, in our ore and coal deposits, and in our forests.

We want to show visitors the excellence of our manufactures, and to see theirs; to exhibit the wondrous beauty of our native gems, and the glory of our scenery – tropical and sub-tropical. We shall put forth the finest of our live stock for their appreciation and criticism, and we shall hold a Competition for District Exhibits open to all. We want to impress the world with the size of our country, the worth of it, the beauty of it.<sup>9</sup>

In keeping with Brisbane Exhibition traditions, the Proclamation affirmed that: ‘The main object of the Carnival is, of course, an educational one’.<sup>10</sup>

The dominant theme of the combined Exhibition and Jubilee Carnival was the celebration, demonstration and promotion of the progress of Queensland, a theme that had been evident since the inaugural Brisbane Exhibition. That first show was a celebration of the colony for the colony, and an enthusiastic testament to Queensland’s progress since its separation from New South Wales in 1859. In 1876, local commentators had regarded the involvement of other Australian colonies – especially New South Wales – as proof of Queensland’s status as well as an opportunity to compare Queensland’s progress with that of the older colonies. In 1909, and with the federation of the Australian colonies part of the recent past, the Jubilee Carnival was promoted as an opportunity to emphasise yet again the progress of Queensland and simultaneously showcase the best outputs of the nation and neighbouring New Zealand. Organisers cordially invited the participation of ‘The peoples of Australasia [who] are earnestly invited to co-operate by appointing representatives and by sending exhibits to fully and fitly illustrate their resources, their industries, and their progress’.<sup>11</sup> For the NAIAQ, competition and collaboration were compatible concepts rather than contradictory ones.

The Carnival’s organisers also maintained a long-standing Exhibition practice of seeking the imprimatur of government support and the participation of state government departments, businesses and other organisations. The greater the diversity of groups and individuals participating in the event, the more powerful was the message that all sectors of Queensland society were united in their determination to create an ever more prosperous society. In April 1909, the Under-Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction informed head teachers in Brisbane that:

The Government has acceded to a request made by the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland that this Department arrange for an attractive Children’s display at the forthcoming Brisbane Jubilee Exhibition.

Mr Barlow [Minister for Public Instruction] invites your hearty co-operation in this matter and hopes that you will use your best efforts to secure the efficient training of the pupils so that the display may be worthy of the schools and of the Department.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 1: Queensland's Jubilee Carnival Proclamation

Source: National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an7649516.

Drawing on more than three decades of experience in organising Queensland's largest annual event, the NAIAQ created and then revelled in the opportunity to host the centrepiece of the state's Jubilee celebrations. It also consolidated its position as one of the most powerful organisations in the state, with its annual exhibition widely and publicly lauded as the quintessential expression of Queensland.

## **Just Another Show?**

The aims of the NAIAQ were realised and 'the results ... surpassed all expectations'.<sup>13</sup> There were record entries, record prize money and record crowds. By the opening day, and with the horticultural exhibits not yet counted, 7,058 entries had been registered – an increase of nearly a third over the 1908 show, which had itself attracted more entries than any previous Brisbane Exhibition.<sup>14</sup> The organisers subsequently noted that, on the basis of entries, the Brisbane event was the largest agricultural show in Australia that year.<sup>15</sup> Part of the allure of the show for competitors was the increased prize money, which exceeded £4,000. An estimated 236,000 people visited the show; Queensland's population was then 559,000. The *Brisbane Courier* reported gleefully on the temporary depopulation of rural towns as their inhabitants headed towards the show. Charleville, for example, was 'almost empty, as nearly every one appears to have gone to the Brisbane Exhibition'.<sup>16</sup>

While organisers could justifiably congratulate themselves on hosting a show that was bigger, and by extension better, than any previous Brisbane Exhibition, much of that success was based on a well-established formula of competitions, displays and entertainments. The Jubilee show, like its predecessors, fulfilled the NAIAQ's primary aim, as outlined in the organisation's 1875 constitution, to 'promote the development of the agricultural, pastoral, and industrial resources of the colony'.<sup>17</sup> Visitors could admire the best of Queensland's horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry and dogs; reflect on the development of the state's agricultural and mining industries; marvel at the exquisite needlework in women's industries; inspect the schoolwork section; examine the latest machinery; and wander past the intricate displays created by local businesses, some of which had been exhibiting their wares at the show since 1876. Large segments of the program in the main ring were identical to the program for previous shows: harness racing, showjumping competitions, woodchop contests and sheepdog trials. The 1909 show differed from its predecessors in scale, but much of its content was familiar to regular showgoers. As usual, for example, the Department of Agriculture and Stock occupied a 'court' or exhibition space but, in recognition of the Jubilee:

There has been a departure from the general method of laying out the court, as trophies of some of our export industries have been made, showing the development since the industries were started ... the statistics affixed to the different trophies show the progress of the industry in cycles from 1860 to the end of last year.<sup>18</sup>

In women's industries, two banners featured Jubilee motifs, 'one (in arasene daisy work, in a bold conventional design) showed "Jubilee Exhibition 1909", the other had representative flags of Britain and the Commonwealth in the centre, and grouped around this the flags of all nations'.<sup>19</sup> While the acknowledgement of the Jubilee was, of course, peculiar to the 1909 event, references to Queensland's position within the British Empire were standard features of each year's show.

Enthusiastic media accounts tended to imbue every achievement of the 1909 show with the gloss of the Jubilee celebrations, but many of those reports conformed to long-established patterns for describing and assessing the annual show in almost overwhelming detail. Since 1876, the boosterism that characterised much of the media coverage had been tempered by more critical evaluations. Commitment to the ideal of progress meant that entries that were seen as proof of Queensland's achievements received lavish praise, while exhibits and industries that failed to meet expectations were subjected to harsh criticisms. In 1909, for example, the district exhibits were the 'finest seen in Australia'.<sup>20</sup> Some competitors, however, according to the local press, had failed to reach the required standard: 'With the exception of the fairs in the pens, the show of beef cattle was disappointing; and much below what many visitors to the Show would have been justified in expecting at a Jubilee Exhibition.'<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding such blemishes, the theme of ongoing material prosperity through successful exploitation of the land and its resources was a predominant and familiar one. In 1909, as in previous years, this aspect was highlighted in press coverage: 'in every part of the large building visitors saw the evidence of progress made in the work of turning to good account the treasures given to Queensland in her mines, orchards, farms, stock, and pastoral areas. To those who saw the Exhibition for the first time the experience was a veritable revelation.'<sup>22</sup> The district exhibits competition attracted particular praise for providing 'such valuable advertisements of the fertility and fruitfulness of the State'.<sup>23</sup>

Commitment to the idea of progress informed almost every aspect of the Exhibition, including its competition categories, the government and commercial displays, and the opening ceremony.<sup>24</sup> The address of welcome to the Governor-General, for example, emphasised that the show was itself an example of progress, for 'each succeeding year has been marked by an improvement on its predecessor'. The statement continued:

We have endeavoured, with exhibits of agricultural products, minerals, and stock, to show the phenomenal progress that has followed the work of our pioneers, who fifty years ago were settlers in primitive dwellings on the spot now occupied by the city of which we are all proud. The dense scrub of former days has given way to modern buildings; the bullock wagon has been displaced by railways, which are daily extending into lands of splendid promise; and the hordes of blacks who fifty years ago were masters of the lands have been supplanted by white settlers, who are energetically developing the land ... We are proud of our State, of its prosperity, and of its progress.<sup>25</sup>

The Governor-General's reply echoed the same theme of progress: 'all the Empire, and especially all Australia, rejoices with you to-day, and confidently hopes that the notable advancement which Queensland has made during the last half-century is but a harbinger of the prosperity that is destined to be hers in the years to come'.<sup>26</sup> The Governor-General continued to wax lyrical about Queensland at the official luncheon. After emphasising the privations suffered by 'pioneers' and praising '50 years of strenuous endeavour and solid achievement', he declared that 'the name of Queensland can be added to that long list of territories which stand as everlasting monuments to the unswerving determination and colonising genius of the British race'.<sup>27</sup>

Declarations that many of the competition sections at the 1909 show were bigger, brighter, of finer quality, better attended and, in general, superior to the achievements of previous years may have been reasonably accurate – the numbers of entries in most categories, for example, were higher than the previous year – but such claims about the Exhibition had been made with predictable regularity year after year. In 1877, there was excitement over 'the largest selection of machinery in Australia'.<sup>28</sup> In 1909, the machinery section 'was much larger at this year's show than in any previous year ... It was easily the most varied and representative collection yet shown at Bowen Park, and as an illustration of the enterprise of local firms and manufacturers it conveyed its own significant lesson'.<sup>29</sup> The fireworks displays also attracted enthusiastic descriptions, even before they were held. The *Brisbane Courier* informed its readers that: 'The final tableau, a fine portrait of the King, shown through a screen of fire representing the Barron Falls, flanked by batteries of Roman candles, and accompanied by the simultaneous discharge of a hundred rockets, is anticipated to prove the finest pyrotechnic effort ever attempted in Queensland'.<sup>30</sup>

## **Beyond the Annual Show?**

In contrast to the previous year's Brisbane Exhibition, which had been held over six days, the Jubilee show stretched across a fortnight. According to the Exhibition's promotional material, five main activities distinguished the 1909 Jubilee event from the standard Brisbane Exhibition: the Australasian Athletics Championships; the musical and literary competitions; the children's display; performances by 'Saltbush Bill', the 'champion stockwhip cracker in the Commonwealth'; and the naval, military and police tournament. In addition, other standard features of the Exhibition were branded as part of the Jubilee Carnival. The sheepdog trials, the wood chop, sideshows and the 'grand, glorious and magnificent fireworks displays' variously appeared in the Exhibition catalogue beneath the headings 'Queensland Jubilee Celebrations', 'At Queensland's Jubilee Carnival' and 'Jubilee Celebrations of Queensland'.<sup>31</sup> Local media accounts insisted that these standard features were, in fact, unique to the 1909 event. In its description of the sideshows, the *Brisbane Courier* averred: 'Never in the previous history of the association was there such a supply of novel and startling entertainments'.<sup>32</sup> Visitors could enjoy 'clean fun



and merriment' in Katzenjammer Castle; explore the Fun Gallery, Concentric Maze and House of Trouble; ride the Helter Skelter and Ferris Wheel; and try their skill against Living Targets.<sup>33</sup>

The Australasian Athletics Championships and the musical and literary competitions were the most obviously 'new' features of the 1909 event, temporarily extending the Brisbane Exhibition's long-standing commitment to celebrating excellence in primary production, manufacturing, the domestic realm, creative arts and schoolwork, to encompass other domains of endeavour. Prior to 1909, apart from equestrian contests and a few competitions in the schools section, the Exhibition had not included contests for sport or the performing arts. The Australasian Athletics Championships included track, field and cycling events, and concluded with the Championship of Australasia marathon, which was 'Open to Members of any recognised amateur Athletic Association in the world'. The organisers were delighted to inform the potential audience that 'the New South Wales, Victorian, New Zealand, South Australian, Tasmanian, and Queensland Athletic Associations have undertaken to be adequately represented at these sports, and will contest for colonial supremacy'.<sup>34</sup> The hyperbole that surrounded the Jubilee Carnival reached its apogee in descriptions of the sports contests. Feted as 'Australia's Olympic Games', the event represented 'one of the finest gatherings of amateur athletes that the continent has seen' and gave local audiences the chance to see 'a splendid gathering of Australia's athletic manhood'. Queenslanders were assured that their state had 'the hottest team that she has ever put into the field'.<sup>35</sup>

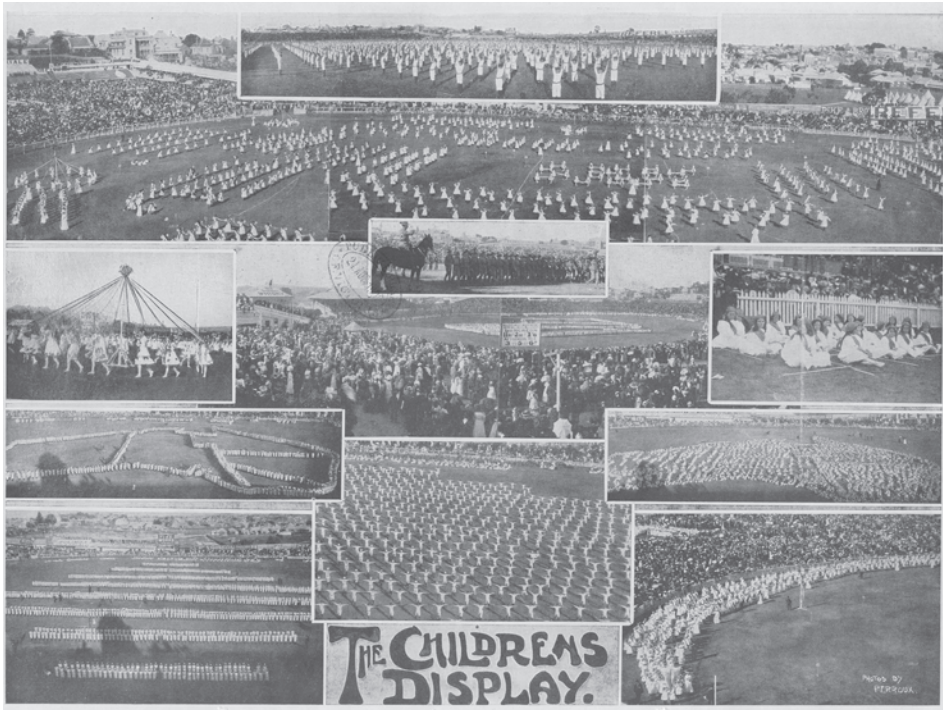
The 'Grand Musical and Literary Competitions' offered prize money of more than £400, including a first prize of £100, the Paling Challenge Cup and a gold medal for the conductor in the Grand Open Choral Contest. There were more than 1,000 entries in total. Competitors came from across Queensland; New South Wales was also represented. The vocal section included choral contests, quartets, duets and solos; there was also a category for humorous songs with the proviso that the lyrics had to be approved by the organising committee at least one week before the competition. Solos on the piano, violin, cello, cornet, euphonium, slide trombone and tenor horn made up the instrumental section. The elocution and literary strand of the competition included short stories, essays on the topic of 'Immigration and land settlement in relation to Queensland', poems, recitations, prepared orations and impromptu speeches. Competitors were divided on the basis of age and gender, with the juvenile section catering for girls and boys with instrumental, vocal, choral, orchestral, elocution and physical drill contests. Preliminary rounds were held in the Exhibition Hall, the NAIAQ's offices at the Courier Building and at the Temperance Hall. On 21 August, the final day of the Jubilee Carnival, the Exhibition Concert Hall hosted a Grand Final Concert which featured the 'Winners of the Principal Events' and included the presentation of prizes.<sup>36</sup> The decision to include music and literary competitions in the Jubilee carnival suggested a deliberate effort to incorporate as many varieties of achievement as possible in the celebrations. The greatest focus of the annual Exhibition was on evidence of economic progress, but cultural achievements were also valued. Attendance at the concerts was, however, disappointing. While an estimated 15,000 people jostled

for the best positions to enjoy the fireworks display at the showgrounds on the first Saturday evening, there was no difficulty in securing excellent seats at the Exhibition Hall on the same night for the music and elocution contests. As the *Brisbane Courier* explained, 'there were too many other attractions'.<sup>37</sup>

The children's display, held in the main ring on the first Saturday of the Carnival, featured more than 2,500 children from Brisbane schools. While the decision to involve only children based in Brisbane facilitated the organisation of this mass event, it was an odd choice, given the Exhibition's emphasis on rural Queenslanders and industries.<sup>38</sup> Beginning at 3.10 p.m., a total of 1,200 girls from 24 state schools performed a series of callisthenics, including scarf, wand and wreath drills, club swinging and maypole dancing. At 3.50 they were replaced by 1,500 boys who demonstrated a set of nine exercises, beginning with 'swinging the arms', followed by 'bending and stretching the body' and finishing with 'general practice'. At 4.30 p.m. the boys and girls created a 'Living Map of Australia'. The boys formed the outline of Australia and the state boundaries while the girls filled in the states, the colours of their sateen sashes and caps forming blocks of colour for each of the five mainland states. Queensland was maroon, New South Wales blue, Victoria gold, South Australia green and Western Australia pink. Tasmania was not included in the living map. National and imperial sentiments were easily combined: 'The waving of Union Jacks in the southern corner was the signal for "Rule Britannia," and in full-throated chorus the old battle hymn of Empire rang over the arena.'<sup>39</sup> The children's display ended with a 'Grand March Off' at 4.45 p.m., which provided an opportunity to symbolically affirm Queensland's pre-eminent role at her Jubilee celebrations; the boys were instructed to 'form fours and leaving from Cape York march out to leave the grounds', followed by the girls with 'Queensland leading'.<sup>40</sup>

Displays by the armed forces and police had been a feature of the Brisbane Exhibition since the artillery salute fired at the first show in 1876. The 1909 naval, military and police tournament was more extensive than previous Exhibition sections for members of the police and armed forces, with alarm, obstacle and rescue races, tent pegging, an artillery driving competition, tug-of-war and displays by cadets. In the Gretna Green race, competitors on horseback raced to where their wives 'anxiously await them with a register'. Each competitor dismounted and signed the register. Husband and wife then rode on the same horse back to the starting point.<sup>41</sup> Like many other 'Jubilee' elements of the 1909 show, the tournament could, by virtue of its size, be branded a special feature of the Carnival, but it could equally well be understood as simply the most recent expression of a long-standing Exhibition tradition.

Similarly, Jubilee medals, rosettes and souvenirs distinguished the 1909 show from its predecessors while simultaneously continuing a tradition established at the first Brisbane Exhibition – providing tangible rewards for successful competitors. The state government provided 50 gold medals, 100 silver medals and 100 bronze medals for the NAIAQ to award. Decisions on which sections should receive which medals primarily reflected a long-standing hierarchy of Exhibition sections, tempered by an acknowledgement of some of the 'Jubilee' activities. The sections for horses



**Figure 2: The children's display, including the 'Living Map of Australia', *Queenslander*, 21 August 1909**

*Source:* State Library of Queensland.

and cattle secured almost half of the gold medals, one-quarter of the silver medals and a handful of bronze medals. The popular district exhibits competition and the industrial machinery section accounted for a further 31 medals, including nine gold. The athletics competition and the marathon race also received gold, silver and bronze medals. Other sections were less fortunate: schools, women's work, artisans, fish, and food and drink were among the sections that received silver and bronze medals only. Perhaps surprisingly, the naval and military events were also restricted to silver and bronze. Medal recipients received special rosettes as well as the usual prize ribbons. Competitors at the Exhibition could request an 'Illuminated Jubilee Diploma' at a cost of one shilling for adults and sixpence for children.<sup>42</sup> Visitors could also acquire a memento. Individuals who signed the Jubilee Book at the Queensland Tourists' Bureau stand at the show and paid a fee of one shilling received 'a Jubilee Souvenir certifying that you were present at the Jubilee Celebrations'. The person's name and the date of their visit were inscribed on the Souvenir, which:

Carries with it the signature of His Excellency Earl Dudley, Mr. J. Macdonald (Chairman), and Mr. C.A. Arvier (Secretary). The colours used in the printing of the Souvenir are the Governor-General's, viz.,

violet and straw. The centrepiece is a gothic pedestal with a bust of the late Queen Victoria thereon, the seal of the National Association is stamped on the left hand corner, and a facsimile of the Jubilee Medal, presented by the Government of Queensland, appears thereon.<sup>43</sup>

The Governor-General's participation in 1909 did mark the beginning of a new pattern for the show: for the following three decades, Queensland's Governor and Australia's Governor-General would alternate at the official opening ceremony. As a gesture of its recognition of the importance of the Jubilee, the federal government sent a senior minister, the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs, as its representative at the 1909 show. The opening ceremony in 1909 otherwise followed a long-established pattern, although the numbers of dignitaries and spectators exceeded those of previous years. The Premier, other Queensland parliamentarians, representatives of the city council and military officers were present. As previously noted, both the address of welcome and the Governor-General's response relied on the idea of progress. Queensland's annual agricultural shows were themselves regarded as proof of the state's advancement: 'No better criterion is afforded regarding the progress of the State than in the annual exhibitions.'<sup>44</sup> The Brisbane Exhibition itself embodied the most esteemed values of the state whose products and progress it showcased:

Measured by any recognised test – whether by the increased prize money, or the increased entries, or the increased membership, or the increased gate receipts – the advance made by the National Exhibition in Brisbane has been year by year along progressive lines, reflecting in a striking way the growing prosperity of the producing and manufacturing interests of the whole State.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

Regarded as the quintessential expression of and demonstration of Queensland's achievements and values, the Brisbane Exhibition proved a popular centrepiece for the festivities that marked the fiftieth anniversary of Queensland's separation from New South Wales. Superimposing the Jubilee Carnival on the state's largest annual agricultural show provided the state government with an easy and cost-effective celebration. It also reiterated the importance of the Exhibition and its host, the NAIAQ, to Queensland. The Brisbane Exhibition celebrated a particular version of Queensland. The Jubilee Carnival adopted and endorsed that account and, in the process, affirmed the Exhibition's centrality to the community's sense of identity. The enthusiasm with which Queenslanders greeted their annual show year after year, and the popularity of the Jubilee Carnival in 1909, partly reflected enjoyment of the entertainment provided by the show – as a once-a-year event, the Brisbane Exhibition offered a welcome diversion from daily realities and, in 1909, the Australasian Athletics Championships, the children's display and other 'Jubilee' features extended the Exhibition's usual variety of amusements.

Additionally, however, the show's – and by extension the Jubilee Carnival's – appeal also derived from the extent to which the version of Queensland that was presented at the Exhibition both conformed to and shaped many Queenslanders' aspirations and understanding of themselves and their community.

The version of Queensland that the Brisbane Exhibition presented so consistently year after year, including during 1909, was a story of unrelenting certitude in the righteousness of colonisation and utter confidence that ongoing cultural, educational and above all material progress was Queensland's birthright and destiny. Queensland, according to this account, was a land of unlimited productive capacities, and Queenslanders, as proud members of the British Empire, were the people who could release those capacities. It was a demanding endeavour, as demonstrated by the rigours endured by the 'pioneers' whose achievements were praised at the Jubilee Carnival's opening ceremony, but it was also an enterprise that promised economic rewards and moral fulfilment. This was a society, the story claimed, that revelled in competition, as exemplified in the contests of the Brisbane Exhibition and Jubilee Carnival, but was united in its determination to improve itself. The narrative of Queensland relied on and glorified the ideal of progress.

## Notes

- 1 *Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1909: 10.
- 2 Apart from the Jubilee Carnival, the most important element of the 1909 celebrations was the inauguration of the University of Queensland. The *Brisbane Courier*, *Queenslander*, *Truth* and *Week* all included features on the history of Queensland. The two major anniversary publications, both of which appeared the following year, were E.J.T. Barton (ed.), *Jubilee History of Queensland: A Record of Political, Industrial and Social Development* (Brisbane: H.J. Diddams and Co., 1910) and Government of Queensland, *Our First Half Century: A Review of Queensland Progress* (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1910). The latter publication included a description of the 1909 Brisbane Exhibition.
- 3 NAIQA, statement by the Association's Chair at the annual general meeting, February 1910, minute books, John Oxley Library (JOL) OM.AB/1/11.
- 4 The phrase 'phenomenal progress' was part of the address of welcome to the Governor-General at the official opening ceremony, *Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1909: 9.
- 5 Based on *Brisbane Courier*, 29 May 1908, p.6; Peter Schlenker, 'The Exhibition: A History of the Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland, 1875–1974', Master of Arts thesis, University of Queensland, 1975, 43–44; and a search of indexes of inwards correspondence to the Queensland Premier's Department at Queensland State Archives; unfortunately, the correspondence itself has not been located.
- 6 NAIQA, clipping from *Telegraph*, 9 February 1909, minute book, JOL OM.AB/1/11.
- 7 NAIQA, Minutes of meeting 28 May 1908, minute book, JOL OM. AB1/11; *Brisbane Courier*, 29 May 1908: 6.
- 8 *Brisbane Courier*, 29 May 1908: 4.
- 9 NAIQA, Queensland's Jubilee Carnival Proclamation, National Library of Australia (NLA).
- 10 NAIQA, Queensland's Jubilee Carnival Proclamation.
- 11 NAIQA, Queensland's Jubilee Carnival Proclamation.
- 12 Memorandum from Under-Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction to Head Teachers, 2 April 1909, No. 09/5275, Queensland State Archives (QSA).

- 13 NAIQA, Chairman's report, 3 September 1909, JOL OM.AB/1/11.
- 14 *Brisbane Courier*, 9 August 1909: 9.
- 15 NAIQA, Annual Report, 1909, 11–12. The Sydney show attracted more visitors, however.
- 16 *Brisbane Courier*, 13 August 1909: 10.
- 17 NAIQA, Constitution, 1875.
- 18 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 9.
- 19 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 9.
- 20 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 10.
- 21 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 11.
- 22 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 August 1909: 9.
- 23 *Brisbane Courier*, 13 August 1909: 9.
- 24 The apparently obvious exception to this statement is the provision of entertainment and food at the Exhibition, although across the years even these elements of the annual show were sometimes judged according to their introduction of new technologies and evidence of improved efficiency.
- 25 *Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1909: 9.
- 26 *Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1909: 9.
- 27 *Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1909: 10.
- 28 *Queenslander*, 25 August 1877: 23.
- 29 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 9.
- 30 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 August 1909: 11.
- 31 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: xxv–liii, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 32 *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1909: 9.
- 33 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: liii, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 34 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: xxxv, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 35 *Brisbane Courier*, 18 August 1909: 9.
- 36 *Queensland's Jubilee Celebrations: Grand Musical and Literary Competitions Programme*, JOL OM.AB/6/39.
- 37 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 August 1909: 9.
- 38 Children from rural Queensland appeared as a specific group in the main ring on Tuesday, in the country children's competition and the country children's military cadet competition. No details have been found about the decision to restrict the living map to Brisbane children.
- 39 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 August 1909: 9.
- 40 Instructions for schools taking part in the children's display, 1909, QSA ID996793.
- 41 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: 310–20, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 42 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: xlv, lxii, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 43 *Queensland's Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue*, 1909: li, JOL OM.AB/6/37.
- 44 *Queenslander*, 14 August, 1909: 3.
- 45 *Brisbane Courier*, 9 August 1909: 9.

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