

Grahame Garner (1928-2015)

by Ted Riethmuller

Grahame Garner served his time as a fitter and turner and went to sea as a ship's engineer. After he married he worked in the Tramways Workshop in Brisbane. Grahame is seen in this photo taken when he was working at the Tramways as a young man. Grahame is on the right standing next to Ross Colcott, a boilermaker and comrade.



Grahame was a particularly capable person, good with his hands (and fists — a pugnacious little guy, wouldn't take a backwards step) and could write a decent pamphlet as well.

When he took up the camera, his good eye together with superb hand-eye coordination, plus his ability to master the technical side, meant he was very successful as an amateur photographer.

Apart from photos of political demonstrations he took glamour photos and photos of the ballet. This latter subject matter appealed to Grahame because of the technical challenges. Cameras weren't as "clever" in those days as they are now and taking good photos demanded a lot of skill in the days when film and shutter speeds were much slower. He also took photos for *The Guardian*, the CPA weekly paper in Queensland until it folded.

We remember Grahame in particular for his hundreds of photos taken at marches, rallies and political events between 1963 and 1971. Last time I checked, there were scans of about 200 of Grahame's photographs available online on UQ eSpace.

Unfortunately Grahame lost many of his photos, prints and negatives in a house fire but thankfully his negatives with political subject matter survived in an outside shed.

Grahame realised the historical value of his photographs, so I helped him negotiate with the Fryer library as a suitable depository. He ended up donating everything he had of historical relevance complete with copyright.

Grahame donated 74 rolls of film which would be somewhere between 1500 and 2600 individual photographs depending on whether the rolls were 24 or 36 exposures. I estimate that about 6 or 7 hundred of these would be decent shots and important as an archival resource. Of these, about 100 would be worthy of display as objects of art. I would like to see Fryer properly scan and Photoshop the best ones to be part of the historical record.

Grahame Garner is still alive living in a nursing home but unfortunately his once active and incisive mind has let him down. Here's a photo of Grahame taken a few years ago before he had to move into a home.



We are indebted to Grahame for his wonderful photographs that will help the history of the 1960s and 1970s struggles live on.

Years ago, I knew him in the CPA (an organisation he came to emphatically reject) and have been quite close to him in recent years. He had a lot of knowledge and a good memory and could tell a good story. A lot of what he had to offer is unfortunately lost but at least we have his photographs of the struggles of the 60s and 70s.



Eureka Awards presented to both Grahame and Esme Garner at a ceremony at The Paddington Workers' and Community Centre on 26 February 2011.

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