

anglican focus

The woman who spearheaded Mission to Seafarers: Amy Proctor

FEATURES

One woman's desire to help those in need, and honour her family's legacy, has led to hundreds of thousands of seafarers being helped for over a century in our Diocese



Photograph of the Proctor family located in the Chapel at the local Mission to Seafarers Centre, c.1912, with Mrs Amy Proctor (centre) and her daughter Amy (left) (Image courtesy of Heather Turner Volunteers Supervisor, Mission to Seafarers Brisbane)

Located in the Port of Brisbane Precinct, The Mission to Seafarers (MTS) provides welfare, pastoral and spiritual support to over 10,000 seafarers each year. While their mission is familiar to our Diocesan community, what is not as well-known is how the Brisbane branch of the MTS was established. It was the sheer will and determination of one woman, Amy Proctor, in 1892 that began this ongoing engagement with seafarers coming into our port.

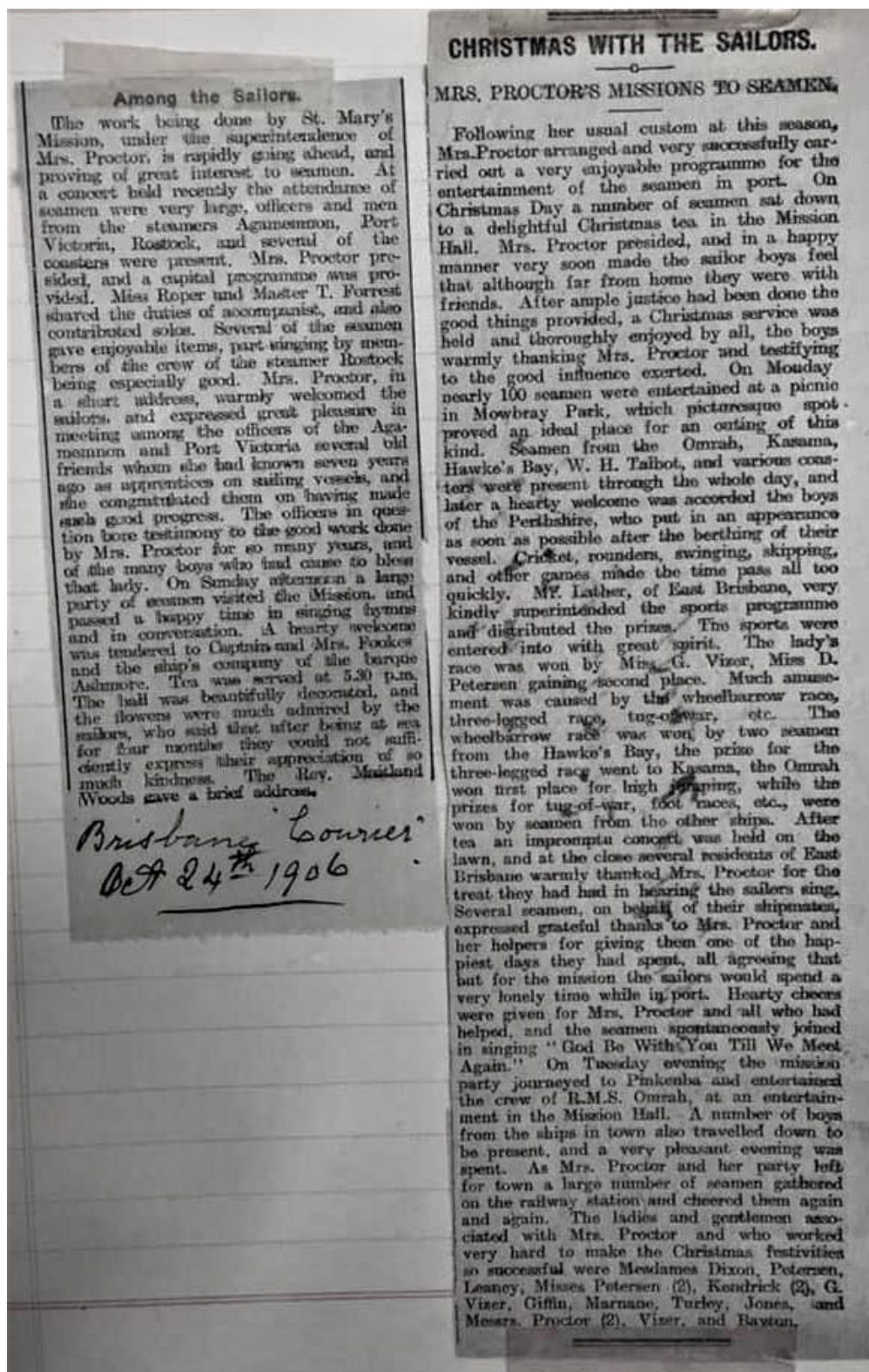
Amy Proctor was born Amy Martha Barrett in Dunedin New Zealand in 1866. In her mid-20s she arrived in Brisbane with her husband Percy Proctor. The Barretts had been an old Navy family from the Bristol region in the UK, and Amy believed that there needed to be a form of ministry to the many sailors coming into Brisbane at the time. She decided to form a committee of like-minded women and began setting up rooms to function as a clubhouse for these seafarers where concerts could be performed, Bible classes given, and even Sunday services held. While the idea was a noble one, due to outgrowing premises and being at the whim of landlords, what followed were two decades of moving from one facility to another in order to keep what became known as 'Mrs Proctor's Mission to Seamen' alive.



Amy Proctor (*Queensland Figaro*, 30 August 1906, p.18, Courtesy of TROVE)

The mission's first home was in small rooms in Elizabeth Street, behind the GPO. Shortly after they moved to 301 Queen Street, they shifted to the YMCA headquarters in Brisbane. While not a Diocesan organisation, Mrs Proctor was an Anglican herself, and was delighted when St Mary's, Kangaroo Point offered their hall for her

mission. For many years afterwards, Mrs Proctor's institution was known as 'St Mary's Mission to Seamen', even after it had left the cliffs of Kangaroo Point. The final move as an independent body came around 1903, when it was decided that the coastal eastern suburb of Pinkenba would be a more suitable location because the Orient Line mail steamers had begun docking there.



A clipping of a newspaper report speaking of 'St Mary's Mission' – 24 October 1906 (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)

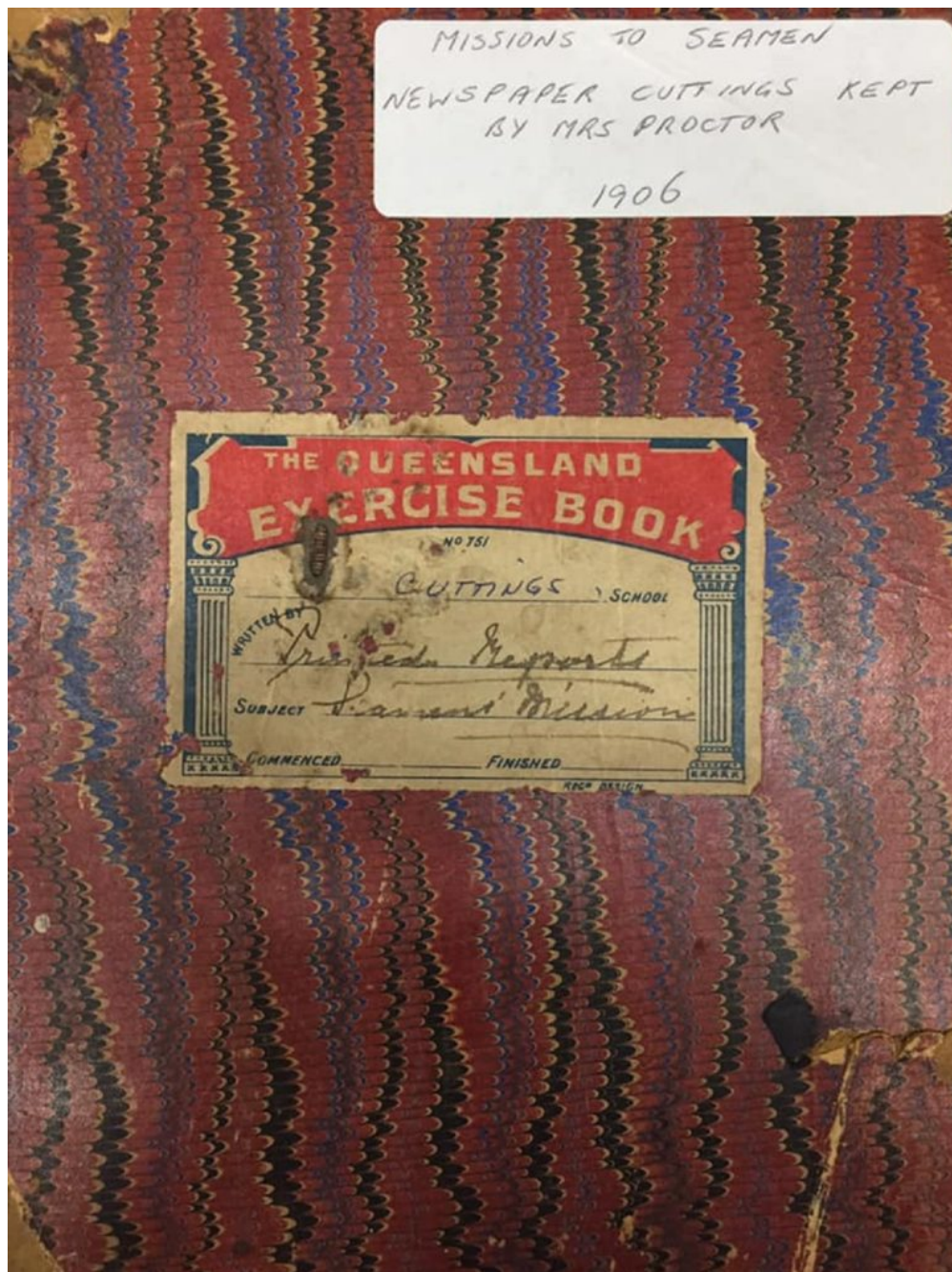
Amy Proctor worked with her daughter, also called Amy, and engaged in untiring efforts for the welfare of sailors. In a small biography of Amy Proctor we have here in the Records and Archives Centre, her daughter, by now Amy McDowell, states:

“She always took the services, preached the sermon and played the hymns herself, besides carrying on all the rest of the work. She received thousands of letters of appreciation from sailors and parents.”

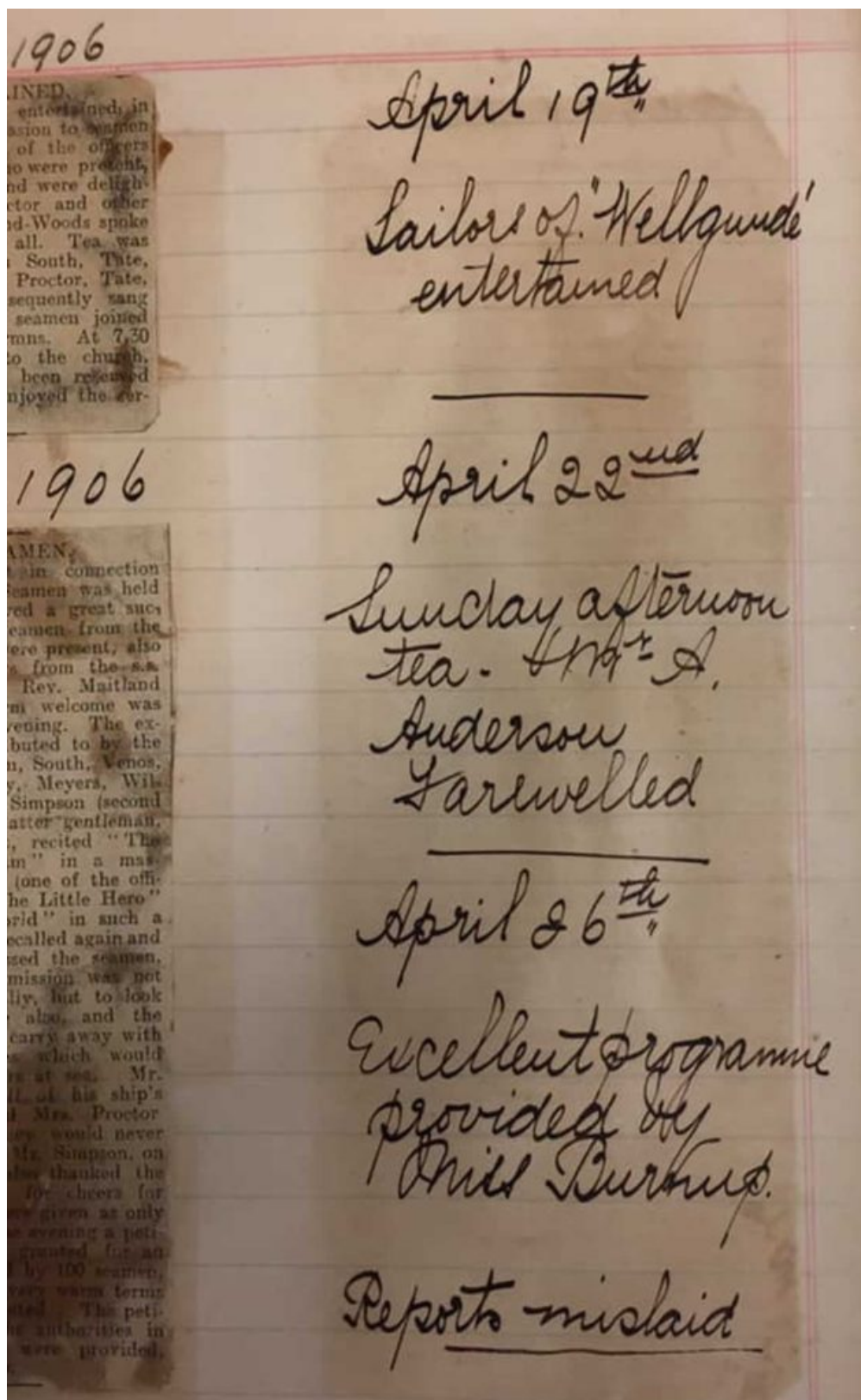
Indeed, upon her death, these letters were found to have been kept, and were still in her possession. An obituary on Mrs Proctor in *The Courier* on 5 June 1931, remarked on her long-term association with St Mary's, Kangaroo Point, and noted that she had a passion for teaching the boys' Bible class there, which she conducted for many years.

We are also lucky enough to have in the collection a scrapbook that Mrs Proctor kept in 1906. Not

only does this contain important clippings providing dates and context for her work, the book also contains hand-written notes. On 19 April 1906, for instance, she writes, in her beautiful hand, of farewelling the ship *Wellgunde*. This was a fully-rigged German vessel that went on to be captured in World War I.



Cover of Amy Proctor's scrapbook from 1906
(Image courtesy of the Records and Archives
Centre, ACSQ)



Handwritten notes by Amy Proctor within the 1906 scrapbook (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)

In 1914 the then Archdeacon of Brisbane, Henry Le Fanu, wrote in the *Yearbook* that the Mission to Seamen was now 'officially connected' to the Brisbane Diocese. It is not certain exactly why this step was taken. Mrs Proctor was said to have had failing health, perhaps from overwork, and it has also been written that she had rather bad anxiety as her sons were fighting in the war. Whatever the reason, the now Bishop Le Fanu promised to find a building for the work of the mission, and Amy Proctor stayed on as Superintendent. She resigned in 1916, only a few months before the first Seaman's Institute building was opened in Fortitude Valley, near Brisbane's CBD. Mrs Proctor kept a keen interest in the mission, and saw another new building, this time in Macrossan Street in Petrie Bight, open in 1926, after road widening in Fortitude Valley necessitated a move.

HOME MISSION FUND.

REPORT,

Presented to Synod June 16th, 1914.

The Committee of the Home Mission Fund presents to Synod the following report for the year ending March 31st, 1914:—

The year has been a successful one, improvements being recorded both in the number of subscribers and offerings. Last year the total income was £1,972 6s. 1d., in which were included two bequests amounting to £300. This year the total income amounted to £1,914 9s., in which were no bequests, showing an increase of £242 2s. 11d. on normal receipts.

While the Committee feels that Synod is to be congratulated upon the improvement shown, it is still felt that the words of last year's report have lost none of their force: "That Churchmen, generally, have yet to learn how essential to the development and extension of the Church a well-filled treasury is—and the Home Mission Fund is the war chest of this Diocese"

The sum of £217 17s. 9d. has been allocated to the Clergy Central Sustentation Fund (Capital Account), and £170 9s. 4d. to the Income Account of that Fund; while £253 6s. 6d. has gone to Church Extension Fund (A), and £81 to the Mission Chaplains Fund.

The Committee feels that without the self-denying work the collectors of the Home Mission Fund throughout the Diocese are doing, such results would not have been obtained, and records its appreciation of their labours.

The earnings from the Women's Shelter show a falling-off of £56 13s. 10d. owing to an increased number of really poor (and, therefore, free) cases. The maintenance account, however, discloses a decrease of £58 15s. 4d., and thus the proportion between income and expenditure of the Shelter remains much the same as that of last year. £100 has been paid off the building account, reducing the building debt to £300.

The Mission to Seamen is now officially connected with the Diocese, and has been helped this year by the Home Mission Fund. It is to be hoped that the Church will, as soon as possible, secure her own buildings for this work. The size of the Port of Brisbane fully warrants such a step.

May 8th, 1914.

H. F. LE FANU,
Chairman.

Bishop Le Fanu announcing in the 1914 Yearbook that the Diocese and the Mission to Seamen were now connected (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)



The Seaman's Institute, located in Fortitude Valley, taken in 1917 (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)

Amy Proctor passed away in June 1931 at her home in Wellington Street, East Brisbane. The July

1931 parish paper of All Saints' Church, Wickham Terrace, states:

"She began this work at her own desire, and because she saw clearly the need of the mother hand to the wandering sons of the sea...under her great love and courage the work grew..."

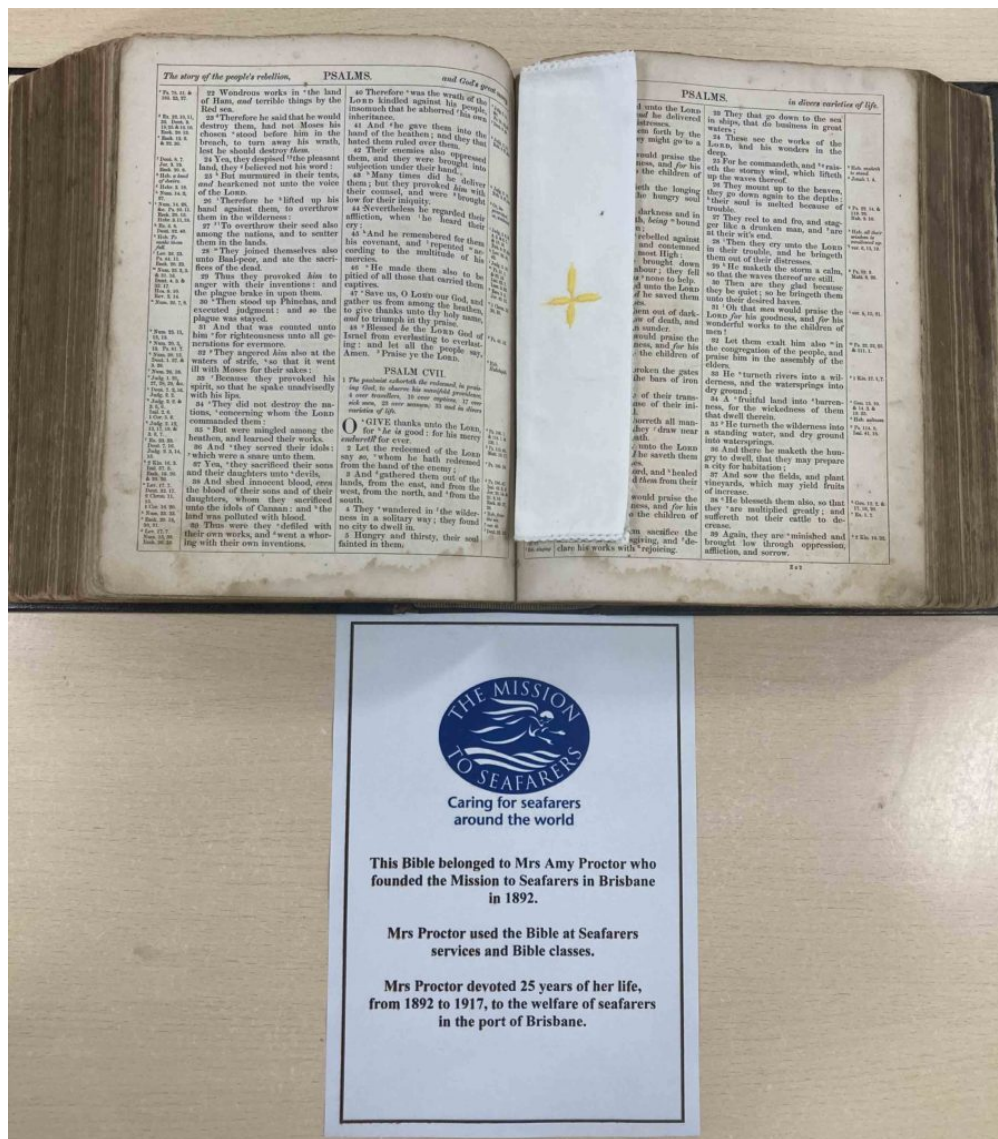
Her death was reported in *Sea Breezes*, a monthly magazine devoted to worldwide shipping. This prompted a J. Blackburn, the Master of the *SS Irwell*, to write to the magazine in December of 1931 and state:

"As I spent my last afternoon and evening with Mrs Proctor before I left Brisbane I have a feeling of sorrow when I read of the passing of a lady who was a dear friend to all seafarers regardless of class, and who was held in affectionate regard by everybody with whom she came in contact."

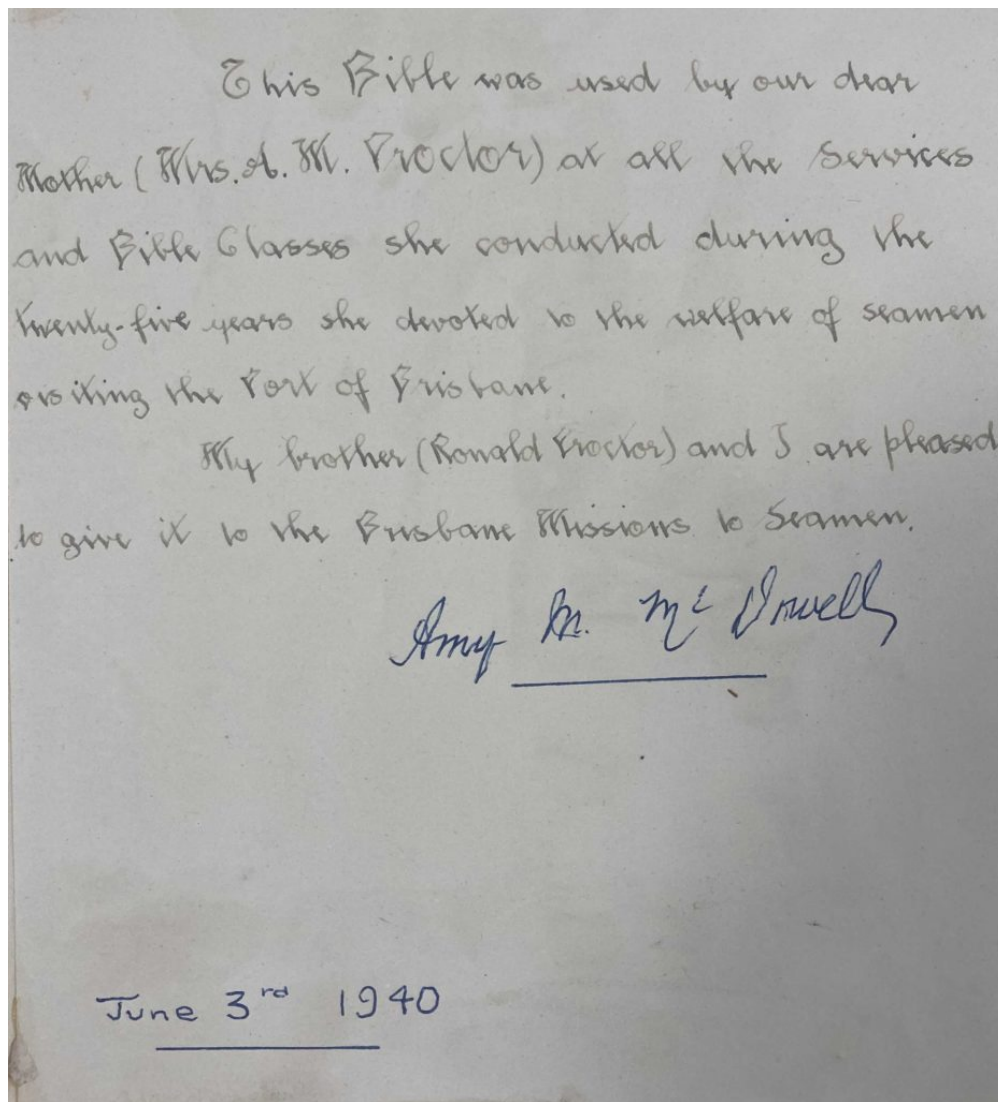
He had been in Brisbane in 1903, and had been presented with a book by Amy Proctor, inscribed with her best wishes.

She was recognised during her lifetime for her incredible efforts, receiving gifts from the Duke and Duchess of York, later to become King George V and Queen Mary, a plaque from the Lords of the Admiralty in London, and even a gold anchor brooch set with diamonds and rubies from the 'Sailors and Friends of the Seamen's Institute'.

Even now, 89 years after her death, her presence is still very much felt. Mrs Proctor's daughter, Mrs Amy McDowell, donated the family bible to the mission and it can be seen, to this day, in the MTS Chapel at Fisherman Island.



The Bible of Amy Proctor, donated by her daughter, located in the Chapel at the local Mission to Seafarers Centre (Image courtesy of Heather Turner, Volunteers Supervisor, Mission to Seafarers Brisbane)



The inscription inside the Bible of Amy Proctor located in the Chapel at the local Mission to Seafarers Centre – donated 3 June 1940 (Image courtesy of Heather Turner Volunteers Supervisor, Mission to Seafarers Brisbane)



Photograph of the Proctor family located in the Chapel at the local Mission to Seafarers Centre, c.1912 (Image courtesy of Heather Turner Volunteers Supervisor, Mission to Seafarers Brisbane)

In 1978 the Proctor family dedicated a stained-glass window in St John's Cathedral to Amy, with a plaque commemorating her work with seafarers.





Design for the stained-glass window located in St John's Cathedral and dedicated in 1978 (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)

More recently, on 23 August 2017, the Mission to Seafarers celebrated their 125th anniversary. Invited to the event were the descendants of Amy Proctor, who came from all around Australia and met with Archbishop Phillip Aspinall.



Descendants of Amy Proctor with Archbishop Phillip Aspinall at the 125th Anniversary of Mission to Seafarers Brisbane (Image courtesy of Mission to Seafarers Brisbane)

It is fitting to recognise that one woman's desire to help those in need, and honour her family's legacy, has led to hundreds of thousands of seafarers being helped for over a century.



The plaque below the stained-glass window in St John's Cathedral, dedicated to Amy Proctor by her family (Image courtesy of the Records and Archives Centre, ACSQ)

Budget fails on infrastructure – but social housing is ready to go

NEWS

The slow rollout of construction projects from Tuesday's Budget shows that we should be investing in social housing, says Anglicare Australia



The slow rollout of construction projects from Tuesday's Budget shows that we should be investing in social housing, says Anglicare Australia.

"For months, experts and economists have been calling on the Government to boost the economy with social housing. Now we're seeing why," Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said.

"It turns out that 90 percent of the infrastructure projects from Tuesday's Budget aren't ready to get off the ground. Around two thirds can't get going

until 2022. That isn't going to fire up the economy or get people back to work fast enough.

"Social housing is ready to go now. Almost 10,000 homes can start construction in the next year – and over 6,000 are ready to go within six months. This should be a no-brainer."

Ms Chambers said that social housing will boost the economy while tackling Australia's housing crisis.

"Even before the downturn, Australia had a shortfall of 400,000 social and affordable rentals across the country. Now thousands more people are being pushed into poverty and homelessness.

"Social housing is the best way to tackle that crisis. It will offer relief for people who are on the brink of homelessness. It also boosts GDP, and creates construction jobs for the regions that need them most. These projects are shovel-ready – and they're shovel-worthy."

Ms Chambers said the Budget's payments to first home buyers and renovators won't stimulate the economy or tackle the housing crisis.

"Giving cash to people who are already buying homes won't stimulate the economy. Money for renovations is also failing to boost jobs in construction.

"There is no time to waste. Social housing projects will bring more jobs than renovations, and they can get off the ground more quickly than roads or rail. Most importantly, they offer badly needed help to the people who need it.

"The Government says it wants a jobs-led recovery. It's not too late to put its money where its mouth is and fund social housing."