

QFHS INC. FAMILY HISTORY BOOK AWARD 2025

The QFHS Family History Book Award has now been running for 33 years. Well over two hundred books have been added to the Society's library because of this competition. Those books are all available for lending and some are on our website in digital form.

This year's entries, in alphabetical order, were:

- *May The Cane Prosper – A Queensland Story* by Pene Greet & Avis-Ann Ballard
- *Playing a Poor Hand Well - A Family Story Across Several Generations* by Anne Hetherington
- *Queensland's Sugar King - The Zammit Legacy* by Catherine Smith
- *Substance and Shadows* by Jennifer Vivian-Smith

Our judges, Janice Cooper, Kirsten Perris and Alexandra Daw diligently considered the four entries and decided the award on points. Each entry brought its own strengths to the competition. To do well, the author needs to tell an engaging story with a large Queensland component and pay particular attention to things like layout, citations, index, bibliography, privacy and copyright. Readability, English expression, clarity, accuracy, maps, charts and pleasing images round out the desirable attributes.

May The Cane Prosper is a beautifully crafted book which resulted from a trans-Tasman collaboration on documenting the many family photographs that NZ based Pene had accumulated over her lifetime. Avis-Ann brought her research skills to the project and was able to identify photo subjects and provide back stories. Pene's words tied the stories to the pictures. With the aid of a graphic designer friend, Tim, they produced a result which would be the envy of any family. I would urge anyone contemplating designing their own book to examine this one particularly for layout ideas. However, best to add an index and a bibliography which this book was missing.

Playing a Poor Hand Well is an engaging, fluent and accessible set of stories of Anne's ancestors. The title is a nod to her ancestors' modest origins abroad and the success and prosperity that eventually came with effort.

Anne's book follows eight lines from Ireland, Scotland, England and Germany and includes memoir elements for later families.

Substance and Shadows contains stories of Jennifer's ancestors arriving in Victoria and Tasmania during the nineteenth century. Jennifer's Queensland component is mostly memoir. Jennifer has a conversational style and she blends aspects of her ancestors lives with her research journey.

Queensland's Sugar King is a book that we encountered at our inaugural 'Meet the Authors' event last year at Aspley Hornets. It was the success of that event that confirmed that we should move our award presentation from our AGM to a separate event that showcased family history writing. Catherine's well researched story tells us of the initial desperate struggle and then snowballing success that Paul Zammit and his wife Pauline, both from Malta, had in the tropical north with their cane farming enterprise in the early twentieth century. The expanding family displayed musical talent that helped cement family ties. The story is set against the background of racism, political adversity and the ever-present Catholic Church.



Catherine Smith receiving her award from Clem Ditton



Queensland's Sugar King - The Zammit Legacy by Catherine Smith

Clem Ditton (Convenor) ■