

Saving Our Heritage through the “Hello Girl”

The motto of the Nambour & District Historical Museum is “Saving our Heritage”. An integral part of our local heritage since the arrival of the first telephone here has been the Nambour telephone exchange.

Today, the Nambour telephone exchange is a relatively small unit of computerised equipment which is located in a rather large building and requires minimal human intervention. This is a far cry from the days well before computers when each call had to be manually connected by an operator. During the intervening period as technology advanced, the Nambour exchange became a major service centre handling business for customers throughout south-east Queensland.

The “Hello Girl”, as the local telephonist was often referred to by many of the older generation, is therefore in a unique position to share insights into our heritage which ought to be documented for present and future generations.

Times are changing quickly. Once upon a time, the sugar mill was visible from the exchange, and vice versa, but now they’re both gone after many years being an integral part of local life. To assist the Nambour Museum volunteers working on developing and preserving the history of the town and surrounding areas, its families, its businesses and its people, those who have worked as a telephonist are encouraged to provide contributions for this project.

Here’s a list of topics which might help get the memory processes in motion.

Local Calls	Switchboards	Competitions
011 Trunk lines	Public telephones	Parties
013 Directory assistance	Working conditions	Public displays
1100 Service difficulties	Rosters/shift work	Technicians
Night telephone service	Dress	Linies
App’t & reminder calls	Accommodation	Postal staff
Manual exchanges	The tin shed	Telegrams
Other local manuals	The lunch room	The male telephonist
Restricted hours of service	Standard phrases	Storms
Telephonist equipment	Examinations	Fires

If you have worked as a telephonist, please take a little time to reflect on this experience. Write a few notes about some of the more interesting events and incidents which have occurred over the years. Remember, while it might seem insignificant today, in years to come your input may provide an invaluable and irreplaceable insight into our heritage. Copies of photographs, certificates, newspaper articles and other memorabilia would also be most welcome.

The Nambour Museum is accumulating a good collection of equipment for its Telephone and Telegraph display but it will become of much more interest and value through human interest stories and recollections. Looking at our heritage through the eyes of the telephonist has tremendous potential and assistance with the project would be invaluable.

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