

NATIONAL QUEENSLAND HISTORY

From Sir Joh's car to Lady Flo's recipes: Bjelke-Petersen estate sold off

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Items ranging from cake tins to a Jaguar that belonged to former Queensland premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and his wife, Lady Flo, are being auctioned off over the next week.

The couple's family have allowed most of the contents of the Bjelke-Petersen property "Bethany", near Kingaroy, to be sold off.



Lady Flo and Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, pictured in 1995. BRUCE MILLER

"As a family we have decided to allow the sale of Dad and Mum's collection which has been in their home at Bethany for many years. We are sure those who acquire items from this collection will honour and treasure them as much as our whole family has," the family said in a statement.

Lloyds Auctions chief operations officer Lee Hames said they often handled estate auctions, but rarely one with so much historical value.

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"Sir Joh and Lady Flo have had a significant impact on Queensland history, and there's a number of items which reflect that era," Mr Hames said.

"I've spent hours amongst that stuff. You can tell the energy coming from it, the people that are coming through.

"Good or bad, Sir Joh and Lady Flo both had an enormous impact on Queensland so it feels really important."



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Sir Joh's car, a 1982 Jaguar, is up for grabs LLOYDS AUCTIONS

Mr Hames said there were a number of beautiful items in the collection but he was drawn to the personal, everyday possessions of the man who ruled Queensland for nearly two decades.

"I personally love typewriters and Sir Joh's is a particularly fine one, not to mention the historic value - imagine the things he would have typed on it," he said.

"We also have his personal briefcase which he used for his entire time as premier, which still has



we also have his personal briefcase which he used for his chair time as premier, which still has its Ansett travel tag on it.”

The Bjelke-Petersens appear to have been heavily influenced by Asian, particularly Japanese, home decor, with numerous ornaments among the collection.

Sir Joh’s personal car, a 1982 Jaguar Sovereign, was attracting bids of more than \$6000 on Thursday.

Other prized possessions included an original Pro Hart painting and a portrait of Sir Joh himself by Archibald Prize winner William Dargie.

Mr Hame said there had already been interest from public institutions such as the Queensland Museum and the State Library of Queensland, as well as private bidders.

Sir Joh is a controversial figure in Australian politics, beloved by many for his state-building infrastructure projects but harshly criticised for his authoritarian style and the corruption of his government which later came to light.

The level of police corruption under his leadership eventually led to the Fitzgerald Inquiry and a major reform of policing in Queensland, along with the jailing of two of his ministers and his hand-picked police commissioner.

Sir Joh was tried for perjury, which resulted in a hung jury, and he was not retried.

Lady Flo was herself an impressive and controversial figure, who was famous for her pumpkin scone recipe but also served as a federal senator from 1981 to 1993.

The auction is due to conclude next Tuesday, which would have been her 100th birthday. [She died aged 97 in 2017.](#)

The items are on display at the Lloyds showroom on the Gold Coast [and can be bid for online.](#)



Sir Joh's personal typewriter. His personal writing desk is also up for sale. LLOYD'S AUCTIONS



A Japanese figurine is one of the many Asian-influenced home decorations on sale from the Bjelke-Petersen estate. LLOYD'S AUCTIONS



Stuart Layt covers health, science and technology for the Brisbane Times. He was formerly the Queensland political reporter for AAP.