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**NEWSLETTER**

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**25 Pounder Restoration** – Talk by Bob Cunningham and Don Sinclair at the October meeting.

A very graphic talk was given by these two old Bombardiers, members of A Field Battery, Royal Aust Artillery and veterans of the Malayan Emergency between 1957 & 59. Using the latest technology, in our meeting room, they used three DVDs specially made for the presentation.

Initially we had a hitch with our technology when the Data Projector refused to work and show the DVDs on the big screen so the whole lot was transferred to the widescreen TV monitor in the corner; the show went on with Bob giving the introduction.

This was followed by the first DVD which was a clip from an old newsreel of the 1950s showing the 25 Pounders in action in the Emergency. From the sound of the guns it soon became apparent that gunners from that period are notorious for deafness, they had no ear protection at all, and those guns were very loud.

Don gave a talk on the history of the 25 Pounders which were developed in England in the 1930s as part of the usual upgrading of weapons by the Army. When WWII broke out they went into full production until the Battle of Britain began when they had to switch to Anti-aircraft guns. The production of the 25's was then taken over by Canada and Australia.

These old Bombardiers swear the 25s were the best gun ever produced. They were Field Guns that could be adapted to work as Howitzers which means that they had a high trajectory, so the 25

pound shell was sent a very long way up in the air and came down like a bomb from a plane. This quality enabled the gun to fire shells over obstacles, such as hills or mountains, and drop the shell on the enemy sheltering close behind them.

He explained in great detail how the gunners aimed, loaded and fired the gun giving us all a good idea of the high level of skill needed and the amount of training that was necessary to achieve the skills. Spotters were sent up to where they could see the fall of the shells and report back to the fire base so that the gun could be adjusted to find the target. Allowance had to be made for wind, humidity, heat, air pressure as the shell went into the upper atmosphere and came down again. The shell had to travel several kilometers up into the atmosphere as well as hitting a target as far away as 12 kilometers. And the spotter, who was usually near the target, had to warn when the firing was done so he could get out of the way.

It was all rather overwhelming when one considered that all this had to be done using pencil, paper and noggin, in one and a half minutes between firings. At the same time, one had to wipe the sweat from eyes, swat mosquitoes, avoid heat exhaustion and stay sane long enough to outlast the enemy; apart from that a gunner's life was a piece of cake, or maybe dog biscuits.

All this was just the introduction because they still had to restore, not one gun but two, even though the second one was not a 25 Pounder; it wasn't even made in Australia!

The first thing in the restoration was to find a 25 Pounder to restore. It was located at Ithaca RSL where it had been out in the elements for about the last 50 years and had been welded up, rusted up, painted up, and generally mucked up; no gun deserves to be treated like that, especially a 25 Pounder.

Then the 7 months job began, and with the assistance of four other volunteers, Bob and Don had to un-weld, chisel, wrench, beat and generally tease the gun apart so that every piece could be separated, cleaned and restored to working order. Then they had to scrounge, beg, buy or borrow the parts that were missing; these had to be restored if they were not working, and cleaned if they were.

There was trouble with the wheels because the modern tyres, being metric, would not fit the old rims which were imperial. So the rims had to be made fit the tyres. This was the story throughout the restoration; just as well the gunners had learned a thing or two about metalworking - and had the assistance of the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment Workshops at Enoggera to help them.

The other gun was a 105mm Pack Howitzer which could be pulled apart and carted piecemeal to inaccessible places in mountainous terrain.

All this was shown on the second DVD accompanied with martial music and notes on screen to tell what was being done.

To round off, Don told of his visit to Vietnam and Long Tan. He was able to see the battlefield and piece together the crucial part played by the Australian artillery. It appears that a company of Australian troops were ambushed by a much larger force of North Vietnamese troops and they called for help. At first the firebase responded with only a small barrage laid down on the Viet troops as they had no idea how many there were.

Finally the message got through that unless a full barrage was opened then the Australians would be annihilated. The full barrage began and dropped shells just in front of the Australians and on to the Viet troops. The Australians kept their heads down while a New Zealand officer acted as the spotter for the firebase. This officer was too near the target and was wounded but kept on spotting. When the Viet troops moved closer he called down a closer barrage onto his position which he knew might cause his death. It did; he died so that the Australians might be saved.

The barrage continued all night with every man, cooks, clerks, old Uncle Tom Copley and all manning the guns which ran hot, blistering the

paint on their barrels. Finally the Viet troops pulled back taking their dead with them.

When the Australian troops would go out on patrol they would always stay within range of their guns so they could call for and get help immediately. The Americans were more likely to call for air support, but that took time.

The two gunners showed us a collection of instruments that were used to operate the gun, including a rammer used to ram the shell into place in the breech, a sight for aiming the gun and a level for keeping the base of the gun on a level footing.

Finally, after everybody was exhausted from the excitement of the very dramatic presentation, we boiled the billy, or the girls did.

**Kedron Street Party** – The Society sponsored an exhibition of photos of the Kedron area in the hall at The Little Flower Church on Sunday 14 Oct. It attracted a constant stream of viewers from the large crowd that attended the Party.

Beverley set up the display and members staffed the exhibition, answered questions and discussed the photos with the viewers. A pleasant day was spent stimulating the interest of many people in the story of Kedron.

Parking was a bit of a problem as cars had to be left in side streets around the party site. This was not so bad, provided you don't mind walking up and down the teeth of a saw. However, as long as one remembers where one parked it is not so bad, but the author did forget and had to walk and walk; saw a lot of houses though.

**Front Door is Prowler Proof** – we hope. The latest episode in the saga of our struggle with the demons of destruction was played out on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. A workman and a workwoman; I thought it was two men, until the boss introduced his off-sider as Teena; installed two security grills of Wentworth Mesh – Hot Galvanised – Powder coat Mountain Blue; one on each leaf of the doors.

We have been deliberating about doing something to protect the doors since some of our exuberant night visitors broke one of the door stiles when they had their last party on the veranda. This is it, so have a good look, it does look good - and enjoy, as it cost us \$675.

Isn't it interesting to see young women 'invading' the male turf these days? Certain members of the Executive will be singing "Girls can do anything" - they reckon that the Good Old Days were never as good as today.

**Vision 2020** – What do we want the Society and the Precinct to be like 12 years from now?

Kathryn Allen, Senior Planning Officer – Property, Brisbane City Council has requested that we take part in the formulation of a Master Concept Development Plan for the Chermside Historical Precinct.

She has asked us, the tenants - Society, Voyager and Drill Hall - to work out what we want to see done with the Precinct over the next decade or so. When I mentioned this at the October meeting many looked at me askance since they do not expect to be about for that long. This may be true but, hopefully others will be carrying on the work of the Society by then.

(More after the November meeting)

**Town Planning** – Stirling Hinchliffe & Faith Hopkins. This was the topic and these were the speakers; Stirling, the local member, discussed the topic from the broad state perspective and Faith the local councillor approached from the activity in Chermside and Kedron.

An introduction looked at the history of town planning and its use over thousands of years; yes, it is not something that was hatched yesterday to annoy the locals by making changes. Pharaoh designed the great temples, Napoleon designed the boulevards of Paris to look regal; they were also handy to use as a field of fire for the artillery; nobody was concerned about the houses of the citizens.

Over the millennia the focus of planning has changed from the grand design which was used to impress everybody with the dignity, power and wealth of the government to local planning in the towns and cities with regard to the welfare of all the citizens. The emphasis is on economic, environmental, socially sustainable development that the citizens want and are prepared to work towards.

The South East Regional plan drawn up by the State government aims to co-ordinate the efforts of all the local councils in the region so that they all have similar aims and can work without adversely affecting other councils. There is room for local variations within the broad principles.

The SE Qld region took about 150 years to develop a population of 1.25 million people by 1976. In the last 30 years it has risen to 3 million and by 2026 it may reach over 4 million, most of whom will be coming into the coastal areas.

Developing infrastructure such as housing, transport, sewage, water, electricity, broadband net services, food supply, hospitals, medical services,

schools and tertiary centres, factories, shops, financial services, parks, bushland, creeks, pollution eradication, etc, etc, etc, has to be started now. And it has to be done on a regional basis, not just in certain selected areas.

The SE Qld Regional plan is a statutory one which means it has to be carried out by law. It is not an agreement between councils that can be ignored when it suits one of them. It is also a plan that is being continuously upgraded and changed to meet changing circumstances. Another important feature is that it had been developed in consultation with the people who live in the area.

Each council has to draw up a Local Growth Management Strategy for its own area and each one has to fit in with the regional plan.

The local area, Chermside Kedron, was designated a Local Business Centre in the 1990s centred on the Shoppingtown. In 2005 it was chosen as one of the five Major Centres for Brisbane. This means that Chermside Kedron will become a mini Central Business District in north east Brisbane drawing people to live and work here rather than in the main CBD in the centre of Brisbane. This means that people will not have to travel so far from home to work or from home to seek specialist medical, financial, literary, artistic or any other expertise that was once found only in the CBD.

In this process the local area will have to accommodate thousands more people, to live and work here. This means that more people have to get into the area and since there is no more building land then we have to go up. Planning has already been done with the drawing of the Major Centre Local Plan, a map of which was in the April-May newsletter.

Faith spent time on explaining this plan to the meeting by distributing copies of a large map which showed the different sectors or zones around Gympie Rd and the Shoppingtown. She then explained how each section was to cater for different needs. The traditional low rise single house on a block of land is still the main form of housing and will remain so.

The plan allows high rise only in the area adjacent to Gympie Rd and Westfield. Buildings - up to 10 stories are allowed. Some will be for unit accommodation but many will be for commercial enterprises on the ground floor with accommodation on the floors above. People will be able to live over the shop as in the Thomas St block and in the Focus block on the corner of Hamilton & Gympie. The Chermside Galleria of five floors which fronts

Gympie Rd near Hamilton Rd will be wholly commercial.

Aged accommodation is growing with the development of Wheller on the Park, an appendage of Wheller Gardens which will eventually build some 350 units behind the new Medical Complex being erected opposite the Tax Office.

While the Major Centre Local Plan has been drawn up and is operational, the local community is being consulted about the way in which they want the plan to develop. This is being done by a Community Planning Team of about 20 local members working in conjunction with a large group of BCC experts. They meet for two hours each month for as long as it takes, thought to be about 6 months.

These sessions are highly organised and intensive where the members, in small groups, discuss ideas to make the plan work for the people. Such topics as Public Transport, the Natural Environment, Suitable Housing for different budgets, Safer roads, Community Services and many others.

The talk made clear to the listeners the incredible complexity of Town Planning and the fact there are no free meals or quick fixes.

**Chermside Historic Precinct** – Representatives from the Society, Drill Hall and Voyager Centre met with Kathryn Allen, the Senior Planning Officer BCC, on Monday 12/11/2007 to begin planning the future of the Precinct.

The BCC is coordinating the development of the Precinct with that of the park, Chermside Hub (Library, RSL and Aquatic Centre), the Shoppingtown, Playfield Street and the Chermside Kedron Major Centre. We are not just a little area all on our own; a lot of planning for traffic flows, parking, water way issues, safety issues, etc, etc. is involved.

Those who heard the talk on Town Planning will realize just how complicated a development plan can be.

However the development of the extension to the Voyager Centre and the provision of a four seat toilet block should be approved as it is an internal matter.

Another meeting will take place after a report is prepared on discussions now taking place.

**Contemporary History** – The development of the local area is continuing and tracking it is part of the study of history. What happens today is history tomorrow, so we have to keep part of our attention on the changing face of Chermside and environs.

History is too often seen as a series of stages or periods eg., the Colonial Period, the Age of Exploration, the Empire Stage, whereas there are no breaks, the story is continuous, like our lives. This is a theme that I am trying to implement in the current history of Chermside and environs which goes back to sometime in the Dreamtime and continues into the current time of Global Warming and Climate Change.

To illustrate this process I am using the Society's photographs along with contemporary photos to show how parts of the local scene have changed over time. A sample of this technique is shown on the following page of this edition.

The photos are of buildings that have occupied the site along Gympie Road, but rarely do we have a complete sequence, so like all history, there are a lot of gaps; but we are doing our best.

### **Notices for 2008**

February meeting in 2008 will be a do it yourself when we turn the speaking over to the members. They do plenty of talking when the President is talking, so now is your big chance, you do the talking and the Pres will listen, and record. Choose your own topic – something of your life – One of the milestones in you life – School, Marriage, First Job, Last Job, Latest Job, Children, Holidays, etc. These sessions always produce good stories.

March Meeting 2008 – the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society will be celebrated and we will invite some of the foundation members to the meeting. There will be a speaker, an afternoon tea and a display of what has been accomplished over the decade. Any ideas?

May 2008 we will be participating in the annual National Trust Theme which, will be "Coming to Queensland". This will be based on the immigrants, ideas, industries, cultures and other items which have been brought in over the last couple of centuries. We need some ideas so please tell us your ideas and maybe lend some of your articles.

Working Bee will be held next year for the Annual clean up of the premises. The old school accumulates dust and dirt like any other place and needs a clean up. Date to be announced and volunteers wanted for a couple of hours one morning.

The Executive wishes all members and their families to have a happy and memorable Christmas.

## Bernie Bray



This photo of Janie Hamilton and Silver was taken from Bernie Bray in about 1904 and shows the central part of the village of Downfall Creek clustered along Gympie Road; it is the basis for Stan Eddowes' map. It clearly shows the scattered nature of the settlement which would have had a population of about 200. (Hamilton Family CHE 032)

Bernie Bray, the home of Andrew & Margaret Hamilton, was where the above photo was taken. Built from pit sawn local timbers and cedar bought from the passing bullock wagons. Hand split shingles on the roof and sawn weatherboards; it was what a prosperous, hard working tradesman could own in the new colony. (CHE 047)



Bernie Bray today is the Senior Citizen's Centre for a large area centred on Chermside. It is too large to photograph in one scene. Only the south side is visible from the corner of Kuran and Kingsmill Streets. On the far right is the Respite Centre which is almost as big as the main building.