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President 3260 7384

P.O. Box 416, Chermside Qld 4032

Secretary 3857 3195

Patrick O'Shea

Editor: Pat O'Shea 3260 7384

Gay Sparkes

ABN 15 432 826 265

INC. No. IA28320

Located in the Chermside Historical Precinct at 61 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside but DO NOT send post to this address.

December Meeting – Christmas Party

As usual there was no speaker at this meeting but we did have a party. The meeting largely dealt with our program for 2008, especially our speakers, all of which is covered in the minutes.

The party was held on the front veranda of the old school instead of on the lawn at the back. We were concerned about the showers and the grass needed cutting. But everybody picked up a chair and we all trooped out, got our cups of tea and coffee in one hand, goodies in the other and proceeded to chatter and chatter. No wonder the Uniting Church calls its coffee shop "Chatters".

Christmas Raffle

1st Prize – Hamper large – Paul Kirby

2nd Prize – Hamper small – Norm Pfingst

3rd Prize – Bottle of wine – Carol Cunningham

Questions and Answers

A feature of the meetings lately has been the editor writing a series of local history questions on the whiteboard. This is using the collective local knowledge of the meeting to gather information.

While members were able to enlighten me with information about the death of George Early in 1909, the size and location of Early's Paddock and the location of Lusk's corner store, no one could remember when the current Commonwealth Bank was built in Chermside; anybody know?

Chermside – the Changing Scene

Have you ever noticed how many business firms in Gympie Road do not display numbers? I didn't until I surveyed the main drag as part of the History of Chermside. Why is this so? A few firms

use their street number as a name for their premises so the number is very prominent. Others put the number over the front door in the traditional location. Others place it very prominently where a driver can see it from the road. Others just don't bother; life gets more complicated and interesting as time goes on.

Playfield Street is changing as fast as the grass is growing after the recent rains. Of the original 54 houses, each on its 24 perch block, that's 607m², for you 21st Century types, only 24 are left and some of them are looking decidedly weary. Of these, 4 are used as business offices and at least 2 are empty.

Most of the readers of this newsletter would remember when the street was being built in the 1950s. Now you can see it being rebuilt and all you had to do is hang around.

There are three high rise apartment blocks completed, sold, mostly before they were finished, and occupied since building started in January 2005; a total of 115 units so far.

Meanwhile another large block is well underway while the basement pits have been dug and lined for two more towers; approximately another 160 units by the end of 2008.

The latest wonder is the growing number of tower cranes; there was one, then there were two and the New Year brought a third, all in Playfield Street. Remember how Joe Bjelke Peterson used to gauge the growth of the CBD by counting the tower cranes he could see from his office window? Well, now you can do the same for Chermside,

and don't forget the one on Gympie Road at Chermide Galleria, while there are a couple more at Prince Charles.

And don't forget the big hole in the ground on the corner of Hamilton and Gympie where Focus was under way until the builders packed up and left a couple of months ago.

The Society is recording all this current data because it is history in the making; yesterday's doings are today's history.

History of the Libraries of Chermide

In March, the date to be announced, the BCC is going to have an event at Chermide library to commemorate the 110 anniversary of the founding of the library in Chermide or rather, Downfall Creek as it was then called.

The Story so far

On Thursday 13th October 1898 the Downfall Creek Recreation Club was formed by a small group of local men at a meeting in the Protestant Alliance Hall on the corner of Hall St and Gympie Rd

One of their aims was the "Diffusion of Knowledge by establishing a Library, Reading Room and, if practicable, by providing Lectures or Evening Classes."

What happened after that is unknown because the records only cover the early meetings. However, existing records show that Evening Classes were being held before the School of Arts was founded on 21st June 1909 by a second group of local men.

The two groups of men, for it was men only in those days, who met in the Protestant Alliance Hall, were far sighted, community minded people. They were people who did things for themselves and the community; they provided services that today are provided by the City but at the beginning of the 20th Century transport limitations ensured that many things had to be done locally or not at all.

Social Centre

The School of Arts, the Churches and the State School were the main social centres of the local area. The School of Arts provided many services to the local community including a lending Library, a meeting place for all the local organizations and a place of further education.

Library

At the heart of the School of Arts was the Library which would have automatically been taken over from the Downfall Creek Recreation Club. There is no record of how many books and papers there were but the new School of Arts ex-

panded the Library with continuous purchases of books, newspapers and periodicals.

The Library also acted as a Reading Room with a supply of local papers and periodicals such as The Sydney Bulletin, Life Referee, London Graphic, Scientific American, the Grazier and local papers. A dictionary was available at a time when most people had never seen one; for a time Hansard was available, and during the Depression the monthly journal of the Douglass Social Credit Association was available. These were left "on the table" for a set time and then disposed of by selling the periodicals to local people, and the papers would probably be sold to the local butchers.

In 1923 George Lemke, the Secretary, informed the Department of Public Instruction that they had 5 periodicals, 400 books of fiction and 185 of general literature.

The Continuation Classes

How many subjects were taught in these adult classes is unknown as the only records that survive are for Dressmaking and Bookkeeping classes. It is not known how long these classes continued as the records only cover the period from March 1909 to June 1911. This indicates that the classes were operated by the earlier Recreation Club.

Closure

The School of Arts handed over its assets, including the land, to the Brisbane City Council on 9th September 1952 and officially ceased to exist. The Committee at the time was Messrs. G. Lemke, Sam Harris (secretary for 22 years), W Hacker, W Mills, F White, Alec Hamilton, Bill Argo, Mrs J White (librarian for 30 years), Mrs J Smith and Miss Massey. The Hamilton family had been continuously associated with the institution from 1898 to 1952, a total of 54 years.

First Chermide Municipal Library

An advertisement appeared in a local paper in 1953 headed "Chermide District Municipal Library" and gave the Subscription Rates which were £1 per annum – 5 books; 10/- half year – 3 books; 5/- per quarter – 3 books; 2/6 p.a. and 3d per book; the charges were abolished in 1978.

The opening times were 7.30pm to 9.30pm on Tuesday nights and 10am to 12 noon on Friday mornings. This clearly shows that the Library carried on and was the first Municipal Library in Chermide although it was open for only 4 hours per week.

Second Chermide Municipal Library – the first purpose built library.

At the Annual Meeting of the Cherm-side School of Arts in 1944 Sam Harris, Secretary, said that he was "looking forward to the day when the Library would be in a building of its own." On Thursday night 20th March 1958 his dream was realized when the new 300 m² library complex, built on the site of the old School of Arts and costing £13,000 (\$288, 800 in 2004 values), was officially opened by the Lord Mayor, Alderman T R Groom. The old School of Arts building had been moved back to allow the new building to be sited on Gympie Road; it continued to be used by local people until it was demolished in about 1980 to make room for a parking area.

The new library contained 11,000 books of which 4,000 were for children; the old Library held only 3,000; this demonstrated the ability of the larger Brisbane City Council to provide more improved services than the older and smaller School of Arts.

Third Cherm-side Municipal Library

A newspaper report quoted Councillor David Hinchliffe, Chair of the BCC Recreation and Health Committee, "The council has the land and the RSL has the money" indicating that the building of the new library was a cooperative venture between Council and Service Club.

Costing \$2.7 million the new library, on the Corner of Kittyhawk Drive & Hamilton Rd was opened by Lord Mayor Jim Soorley on Friday 17/1/1997.

The building itself covered approximately 1,500 m², the size of a 50 perch block of land, and five times bigger than the old library.

As of 2006 the library held 85,000 items of which 80,000 are books in the reference and lending sections; the remaining 5,000 items were Audio Visual, Multi Media, Compact Disks, Video tapes, Digital Video Disks and Audio Disks. The latest addition was the facility which allowed members to download books from the BCC Library computers into their personal MP3 players.

The Cherm-side Library, the biggest in Brisbane, is a Hub library in that it is the control centre for 9 smaller libraries in the North East Region of the City of Brisbane.

The library is managed through a network of computers in all departments and connected to the internet and email system. Within the library is a system of 44 public access monitors (computers) consisting of 34 for general use, 2 for research, all of which are connected to the internet, 2 dedicated word processors and 6 for catalogue or index use.

The library is connected to the BCC city wide library system which ranks as one of the three largest city library systems in the world. It encompasses 32 suburban libraries and 1 mobile library with a total of some 1 million items all, or most of which, can be ordered by members from home via the ElibCat website and collected at the Cherm-side library.

The highly trained, specialist library staff of 22 librarians, library technicians and library assistants are led by a Hub Team Leader who supervises all the connected libraries in the North East Region. The staff, which is overwhelmingly female, contrasts strongly with the 1898 and 1909 situations when women did not rate a mention in the administration; they could only be members.

Technologically, the 21st Century Cherm-side Library contrasts strongly with the two earlier ones, in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, on the corner of Hall and Gympie. While each was or is, a product of its time and technology, each served the demands of its time and each changed with time but all adhere to the same basic ideals as set out by the Downfall Creek Recreational Club and Library of 1898; some things change but.....

The Cherm-side Hub

This addition of two fully equipped meeting rooms, a small kitchenette, a coffee shop, an open veranda dining area and library extension, costing \$2 million, was officially opened on Saturday 20/3/2004 by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Tim Quinn – an addition of 500 m² which brings the total library area up to 2,000 m²; the Coffee Shop is leased to Kedron-Wavell Services Club which works closely with the Library.

The addition of the Hub finally equipped the modern library with proper meeting hall facilities which had disappeared when the old Cherm-side School of Arts was demolished in about 1980. As there are over 150 community organisations active in the Cherm-side district, the need for a moot centre was obvious, and urgent; progress, it seems, comes in fits and starts.

In June 2005 the Brisbane City Council payment centre was opened in the library with several assistants to accept payment of most services provided by the BCC.

So the story, begun in 1898 continues, and the dream of the founders lives on. What will our dreaming find after the next 110 years?

Sources

The Minute Books of the School of Arts which were held by Sam Harris and now held by his daughter Jean Tune

Minutes of Downfall Creek Recreational Club –
held by Joan Hamilton
Local papers – Northside Chronicle
Courier Mail
BCC Archives – Annabel Lloyd

Coal in Chermside

David Teague records that in the 1870s during a search for gold some diggers stumbled on a small seam of coal on north side of Banfield Street where Westfield Shoppingtown is located with another find in Ballantine Street. The quality was not very good hence the mine was unprofitable and was abandoned. Teague notes that Alonzo Sparkes reopened the shaft in a search for water and used some of the coal in his boiler. Jim Hannah recalls that Sparkes mixed the coal with wood but it was not successful.

In December 2007 excavation for the basement of the pq Apartments building on the corner of Way and Playfield Streets uncovered several coal seams which are, in all probability part of the Banfield-Ballantine Street seams.

The 'coal' is in reality lignite or brown coal, the second stage in the formation of bituminous coal which is the hard coal that is mined extensively in Queensland and, at present, is underwater in the vast opencast mines.

Lignite is mined at Yallourn in Victoria for use in electricity production. It has to be dried out and compressed into briquettes before it will burn. But don't get hopes up about the Chermside seams they vary in size from about 50mm to one of about 400mm, of course there may be better ones deeper down.

But the gold in Chermside is in the Shoppingtown, the financial offices, banks, and other commercial outlets. So throw away your shovel and sharpen up your computer skills; there's gold in them thar computers.

Vandals

These have been active again and managed to wreck the air conditioner in the meeting room. They were under the school and pulled down a power cable. They then went on and pulled down on the air-conditioner pipes and cables that are inside a metal shaft on the outside of the building.

Result, the conditioner does not work and it is impossible to tell how much damage has been done without pulling the whole thing apart. This could run into some money and then we might find that it is impossible to get parts for the machine.

So we thought it might be necessary to buy a new one. But then on second thoughts we decided that since the problem started under the building, it would be wiser to close in the underside of the school. In the meantime we can get along with open windows and the fans going full speed.

We have been worried for some years that some of our nighttime visitors who sometimes sleep under the school might light a fire to keep warm on cold winter nights. Also there has been a series of arson fires in the neighbourhood over the last few years. Someone fired up on alcohol might light a bonfire and we could lose everything. The place is isolated and there is a constant stream of people and vandals at the Precinct.

So we decided that the latter need was more important and we are applying for a grant to close in the underside of the school. Watch this space.

Another Anniversary

Ten years ago the Chermside & Districts Historical Society was formed. Ten years ago the old Chermside State School was presented to the people of Chermside by the trustees of the Uniting Church.

Ten years ago a Public Meeting was called to form the Society. How many times in the history of Chermside has this action been taken, calling a Public Meeting to do something? Many, many times, in fact it is a tradition, if something important has to be done, then Chermsiders call a Public Meeting.

In 1898 one was called to form a Recreation Club; in 1909 another one to form a School of Arts; from then on they were regularly called in the School of Arts to form Progress Associations, welcome home celebrations for returning troops, to form Lodges, for charitable drives to help somebody somewhere; to get an Ambulance station; a Fire Brigade station; another community organisation, we already have over 150 of them. Maybe we should have an anniversary of Public Meetings.

Well now we are going to celebrate the calling of that Public Meeting of 10 years ago at the March General Meeting on Sunday 2nd which will not be a meeting. We are going to have the Birthday party instead of the meeting.

So everybody is invited and we are inviting many past and founding members as well as friends who helped the Society get started. We hope that this will be a chance to say thanks for all the work and a chance to meet and talk to the pioneers.



Two completely different life styles are signified by these photos separated by about 150 years or about six generations. Left: The growing canyon of Playfield Street, complete with tower cranes show living spaces packed on top of each other because land is in short supply. Right: Plenty of land with fuel growing wild, water supply handy and the main road at the front door. What else could a family want?



Left: The wonder of the silent screen, a magic couple of hours each Saturday. The latest and greatest in entertainment available right in the middle of town and it only cost 6 pence. And there is the latest model automobile going past the Kedron Winter Gardens Pictures. No kidding, this is really living it up in the modern world of C 1920.

Right: All that was said about the 1920 picture show applies to the Megaplex, in colour and sound. With 16 screens to view all those different 'movies' one could spend one's whole life here, just going home to sleep; the big problem is 'which one' in the modern world of 2000. But now that it is 2008 'what will they think of next?' And there is the latest model 4WD. Is it an automobile? There are even stripes on the ground and planted trees.

