

# CHERMSIDE & DISTRICTS



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**NEWSLETTER**

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

## **Hail and Farewell**

Michael (Mick) Simpson aged 94 died on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at his home, 18 Mermaid Street, ChermSIDE. Mick had been in poor health for some time and had recently been in hospital but was relieved to be back in his old home of some 69 years.

He was born in Brisbane but grew up on the family farm at Benarkin and at an early age showed an aptitude for mechanical innovation. His first major innovation was to convert his second-hand Chevrolet into a racing car and then into a truck.

In 1935 he married Emelda Tevlin and they raised five children; Emelda died in 1968 and in 1974 Mick married Dorothy Gower who also predeceased him.

Mick's career in sawmilling started in 1933 and ended in 1997 when he retired aged 84. In that time he worked in all phases of the industry and was continually buying old machinery and altering it to suit whatever function he deemed necessary. He made a saw bench out of an old ore stamper battery, he converted a hand operated log handling gantry into an electrical one. He replaced rivets with welding in machinery.

He was one of the last hands on millers in Brisbane; his replacement is the large computer operated mills. He started when bullock teams hauled logs to the steam trains and ended in the computer age; he was successful family man, businessman, pioneer and inventor.

## **February Meeting**

As usual we had four of our members giving short talks on a topic of their choosing.

The first one was by our newest member **Melissa Tune** who usually accompanies her father, Keith and grandmother, Jean to the meetings. This was the first time she had spoken publicly and acquitted herself well; smartly dressed in her work uniform of red top and dark skirt, speaking clearly and showing no signs of nervousness, Melissa delivered her carefully prepared address accompanied by selected photographs.

Melissa was born in 1988, the Year of Expo, at the Royal Women's Hospital. Her brother, Matthew, is 3.5 years older. She attended primary at Strathpine where her uncle Colin was the Principal, and secondary at Craigslea. Since she always wanted to work with children she was able to go each Monday to the childcare centre Bright Beginnings for work experience.

Although she had her name down at several childcare centers, Melissa began working full time at Bright Beginnings in 2007. During that time she has completed Certificates 1 & II and is currently studying Certificate III in Children's Services.

The centre, which currently caters for 100 children aged from 2 weeks to 5 years and employs a staff of 35, was opened in 1993 by Janine Schokman, an Early Childhood Teacher, and her mother.

Although her roster system is variable

and she is often asked to alter her hours, Melissa 'absolutely' loves working at the centre where she knows the children well and they know her.

The staff is like a big family; they regularly dine out and, at Christmas time, give gifts to each other.

Melissa attends Chermside Kedron Uniting Church where she is an Assistant Sunday School teacher and Leader of a youth group. And now she has added membership of the Chermside Historical Society to her list.

**Paul Kirby**, who spent 30 years in the Royal Australian Navy, followed with some of his background and outlined a trip that he and Lorraine are going on to Hong Kong.

Being in the navy meant that Paul spent a lot of time in Hong Kong and Singapore where the RAN uses the dockyards, so he got to know the places well; he also went to Japan from time to time.

He and Lorraine, plus another 8 people, will fly to Sydney to join a flight to Hong Kong where they are scheduled to stay in Kowloon for 9 days. The place has changed considerably since Paul first visited, China has taken over the city, the population has risen, and tunnels have been driven under the harbor from the island of Hong Kong to the New Territories on the mainland.

While all the men have been to the east before it is a new venture for the wives and there is plenty to see. Hong Kong is one of the show places of the Orient, a city state with sky scrapers and traffic problems, and views from the mountains that are world famous.

There are temples to visit, tours around the Ocean Park and Night Tours on the harbor; they even have a Disneyland. (Is there anywhere on earth that doesn't?)

Then there is the mainland which is an extension of the island into China where one can look through the 'fence' into the vastness of the oriental giant, China. Then on to Macau, the Portuguese enclave nearby which is famous for its gambling Casino; they have had one since time began and people come from all over the world. Paul says they won't be spending much there but it is worth seeing the place.

When Lorraine and Paul return they will have some tales to tell.

**Brian Tilly** recounted his family's "15 Minutes of Fame" which grew out of a holiday cruise to

Singapore and Malaysia on the "Sun Vista" in 1999.

All went swimmingly until the last days on the return voyage to Singapore when the power failed and the vessel began to lose way and smoke began emerging from the air vents.

Officially, there was a small fire in the engine room, everybody was sent onto the decks because the air-conditioning had failed and there were no lights; people were not allowed back to their cabins to get anything ; the decks became open air confinement centres. But everybody had a good view of the smoke, and photographs were taken.

In the late afternoon "Code Bravo", or prepare to abandon ship, was issued so the Tillys collected bottled water and fruit and went to the toilet. Life jackets were issued and people were told to go to their appointed life boats where there was sufficient room for all.

At 6pm the lifeboats were swung out and were being lowered when the wire ropes began to snap threatening to dump the boat into the sea eight decks below. In the water, the engine refused to start and they were towed by another boat. There were no emergency supplies of water and food, the sea began to rise and people were sick, and it was dark.

A fire tug had been summoned by radio and was pumping water on to the now blazing ship while other vessels were, with difficulty caused by the heavy swell, taking passengers on board.

Fortunately, no one was lost although some were injured and all exhausted when they were landed in Penang at dawn. From there they were flown to Singapore and then home.

Being among the first to arrive back they were interviewed by 2UE and the ABC Morning Show; their 15 minutes of fame had begun. It became longer than that when the media realized that Leone had a camera full of photos of the disaster.

The story went overseas, the Sunday Mail published the story with photos and Leone wrote an article in the magazine "Take 5". So they had much more than 15 minutes.

The Positives: An adventure that could not be bought, and probably never chosen.

The Negatives: The loss of everything except what they had on them, difficulties with insurance companies, disturbed sleep for some time and, worst of all for Brian, failing to see the ship go down, he was asleep; silly boy! Of

course, when the movie is made he will be shown standing on deck, looking heroic watching the final, long drawn out, slow motion sinking of the 'doomed' vessel.

**Herb Carr**, a renowned raconteur, for once let his hands do the talking as he demonstrated his home made wagon 'jack'. Of course there are not many wagons around to jack up these days which make this little wooden gadget all the more important. It is an example of the old 'do it yourself' technology that existed up until the early 1950s, before the motor car age began in Australia and technology took a complicated turn.

He demonstrated the workings of that rare instrument, the Draw Knife, one of the very few, if not the only sharp tool that the user safely pulls towards him/herself; think about it.

If that wasn't enough he then produced a butter churn, not the metal one with a stainless steel bowl and gears, but a home made wooden one. He then explained, in detail, how it worked or rather how the user made it work, because it used 'elbow grease', it did not use electricity, it was human powered. He even had a couple of butter pats, little flat wooden paddles for handling the butter and making fancy pyramid patterns on the finished product.

All done by hand, and the churn made by hand in Dad's shed down the back yard; what will they think of next?

If Herb keeps up resurrecting this technology he will be arrested as a menace to our high tech society. Or is he showing us the way through the growing energy crisis that is looming as we pass the 'peak oil' mark and the burning fossil fuel crisis?

But, on the other hand, after hearing Herb's account of butter making, I think I will still toddle down to the grocers and buy butter.

Whatever, I cannot describe these gadgets in words so I will use my hi-tech digital camera and let the pictures tell the story by digitally printing them on the back page.

**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society** was celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March by a meeting in the Drill Hall with 50 members and visitors in attendance. The two Terries, Sullivan and Hampson, both ex-politicians and members addressed the meeting. **Terry Sullivan** traced the background to the changes in Chermside which led to the closure of

the old State School, the shifting of the old Uniting Church and the donation of the old school building to the people of Chermside. Being deeply involved in all these activities he was able to outline some of the involved negotiations that took place.

He started with the designation of Chermside as a Major Regional Centre in the late 1980s and the expansion of Coles-Myer northwards towards Downfall Creek in the early 1990s.

Playfield Street, between the Shoppingtown and the RSL, Library, Aquatic Centre and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade Park became an isolated enclave and the idea was to develop it as a business area to attract businesses from the inner city. That didn't happen and high rise apartments have since filled the vacuum.

Westfield bought out Coles-Myer and then bought Banfield Street so they could expand on to the Commonwealth land to Downfall Creek, which they did in 2006.

Meanwhile K/W Services Club expanded northward, building three hockey fields and the BCC established the Chermside Historical Precinct.

A long section of Westfield land on the east of Kittyhawk Drive was sold for affordable housing thus continuing the high rise unit development from Hamilton Road to Downfall Creek.

In 1996 the Chermside State School closed due to the small enrolment of only 60 children in the Primary and 25 half-time pupils in the Pre-school

Meanwhile, the Uniting Church on the corner of Hamilton and Gympie Roads, was feeling the pressure of being in the centre of all the expansion and the consequential traffic mayhem. The members decided that there was a better site available on the State School site which was unused.

Consultation and co-operation between the Labor local member, Terry Sullivan and the Coalition Treasurer, Bob Quinn, led to a decision to sell the old school site for a community, commercial development. The alternative was to sell it for commercial development and get a much bigger return for consolidated revenue.

The result was a three fold division of the site.

- The Uniting Church built a state of the art Church and Community complex on one part.

- A public housing development of 20 units took a second part.
- The third part is a commercial sector with Aldi Supermarket and several specialist shops.

The remaining area is a large shared car park. The result is a most satisfactory mixture for the local community.

The Uniting Church offered the original school building, which was in very good repair, to the people of Chermshire. The two Terries, Sullivan and Hampson, moved to form a Historical Society, the BCC set aside the Chermshire Historical Precinct and one night the old school began its journey to a new life on a new site.

There followed a long period of renovating the old school and landscaping the site, along with the rescue and relocation of the Sandgate Drill Hall to the site.

**Terry Hampson** continued with a summary of the achievements of the Society and thanked the many people who helped.

- He began with the cutting of the school in two and transporting it to the new site, the placing it on high stumps and the lowering it to short stumps to allow disability access.
- The calling of public meetings to form a Historical Society, the early officials and meetings in the RSL building.
- Documenting the changes that have taken place, and are still taking place, in the local area along with the recording of people's memories and family histories.
- Scanning, indexing and storing of over 1,000 photographs, many of which are used in displays or on the data projector in talks.
- Reunion of some 400 ex-pupils to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the old school, even though it closed some four years earlier, and several smaller reunions of individual years.
- Publishing the History of the Chermshire State School.
- Launching Dr. Jack Ford's history of the military camps of Chermshire during the three wars of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- The restoration of the Marchant Park Memorial Gates commemorating the soldiers of the Great War.

- The photographing of the Diaries of Thomas Hamilton which covered the period of 1890 to 1951.
- The naming of some 10 parks in memory of distinguished local people or to commemorate important milestones in the History of Chermshire. Each name is accompanied by a summary of the person or the incident.
- Annual bus trips to areas of historic interest in the Brisbane hinterland.
- A regular series of guest speakers addressing the monthly meetings on topics of historical or topical interest.
- Setting up the machinery of the Archive with: Computer, scanner, printer, photocopier, filing cabinets, framed photos, restored Honour Boards, about 20 displays and miles of shelving and air conditioner. This enables the storing, indexing and easy retrieval of documents and information.
- The meeting room is equipped with a large retractable screen, a computer operated data projector, a microphone and speaker system and a wide screen TV with CD and Tape recorder and player, curtains and air conditioner.
- A fully equipped kitchenette.
- The equipment has been mainly paid for by grants from all levels of government and private firms. Also the Society has raised thousands of dollars through fees, raffles and bus trips.
- The next job is to close in the underside of the old school to prevent vandals from getting under and wrecking the electrical cables or lighting fires. Their latest act was to wreck the air conditioner unit in the meeting room.
- The job after that is to build a Web site so we can go on the Net and communicate with the wide world.

**Latest News** – We have received a grant from the Marchant Ward BCC Livability Fund to pay for the closing in of the underside of the school. It will be a curtain wall made up of a series of vertical hardwood batons on timber rails bolted to the concrete piers; it will be clear of the ground and the floor bearers. The timber will be painted a flat black to resemble the old creosote, or coal oil, which was used in the early days.

**Blackberry Bush** – Recently a thorny creeper was noticed in the hedge on the south side of the school beside the bicycle track. When the Council found out they were not happy, and demanded its instant removal as it is a noxious weed. The trouble was it was growing throughout the hedge, and to dig the BB out we had to cut about three metres of hedge down to the ground. The Kedron/Wavell Services Club gardener, clad in leather chaps and wearing heavy welder’s gloves, waded in and secured the beast after a hard and bloody fight.



Middle Left: New Precinct sign and bollards.  
 Middle R: Buggy Jack made by Herb Carr.  
 Bottom: Two views of Mrs. Carr’s 1890 butter churn, hand powered, all wood, non polluting with butter pats

