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NEWSLETTER

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send post to this address.**

Welcome to 2009 the year of you and me and everybody else. It is going to be a great year because we are going to do our best to make it a great year.

Our Christmas party went off with the usual bang with the members trying to demolish a banquet provided by the members. Because it was wet outside we stayed inside and partied. There was a double celebration because it was Keith Tune's 50th Birthday so we celebrated it by giving him a surprise. His mother Jean had a special cake made and we smuggled it into the building and kept it under cover till the appropriate time. Keith made a short speech, we all sang 'happy birthday', then tucked in and all talked with our mouths full.

The Christmas Raffle of two bulging hampers in sturdy clothes baskets was drawn and the winners were:

- 1st Prize Hamper – Brian Luke
- 2nd Prize Hamper – Janice McIntyre
- 3rd Prize Christmas Cake – Bet Weston

Our members are generous in the amount of goods they bring. Thanks to all who supported the raffle, buying tickets and contributing prize material; we raised \$360.

Raffles for 2009

This year we will be having two raffles:

- June – when we raffle the painting by Rona Arndt which is currently hanging in the Meeting Room. We are also asking for donations to make 2nd and 3rd Prizes which we will need by the March meeting as it takes several months to organise a raffle.
- The Christmas Hamper with members donating the contents.

The 1943 ChermSIDE Plane Crash

You all know about the crash and some of you were actually there when it happened. The Society has spent much time on piecing together the story over the last few years and we now believe that we have as much of the story as we are going to get.

Ron Alvisio who definitely identified the plane as a Thunderbolt and not a Kittyhawk also mentioned that it clipped a latrine as it crashed. Using our original map of the ChermSIDE camp we identified the location of two latrines beside the track that became Ballantine Street. So we now know the approximate site of the crash.

Last year one of our members, Glenys Bolland, took up the challenge to find the pilot. A seemingly simple task because all one had to do was to ask the US Air Force and they would supply the information; they keep records on everything. Glenys soon found out that the task was far from simple even with the aid of the internet and email.

It took many months of patient research, interviewing people by email, finding archives she never knew existed, following up lines of enquiry, going down blind alleys, persisting in questioning, talking to people on the other side of the world and finding a 2008 Courier Mail report of a US War Cemetery at Ipswich and the repatriation of the bodies to the USA.

It is a real detective story and I am not going to tell you the pilot's name; Glenys will do that at a meeting later in the year. However it can be mentioned that the young man, he was only 23 and was one of those who lived down the street from your place, 'the boy next door'; you would have known him. He was one of the millions who perished in the great wars of the previous century. But he is no longer nameless, thanks to Glenys.

The full story is recorded in the History of Chermside which we are currently editing prior to publication.

Websites

We are still waiting on the announcement of a grant to see if we can build our own website.

In the meantime other groups are operating their websites and we have been asked to advertise our society on them. The Marchant Ward office and Wayne Swan office have both made space on their websites for us to advertise our details. We have gratefully accepted the offers and have supplied appropriate material.

Additionally the Marchant Ward office asked for an article on George Marchant and we supplied the following item:

George & Mary Jane Marchant

The name Marchant is closely identified with Chermside through the largest cricketing park in Brisbane, the local Brisbane City Council Ward and less so the large pioneering aged care centre Wheller Gardens. The name was also well known throughout Brisbane and Australia in the latter 19th and early 20th Centuries. Usually we remember George but Mary Jane was not only his wife but his equal. But society being what it is we know more about the former than the latter. George was born in England in 1857 and arrived alone in Australia from Kent in 1873, 16 years old with 30 shillings in his pocket and a heart full of hope.

He worked in the country as a gardener and station-hand but on returning to Brisbane he worked as a carter for an aerated waters factory where he learned the essentials of the business. In 1877 he married Mary Jane Dwyer, a dressmaker, who became his life long co-worker in all he did and in 1886 they bought a ginger beer manufacturing business in Spring Hill. While gradually expanding the output, George invented and patented a bottling machine which became widely used in Australia and overseas.

They expanded interstate with factories in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Newcastle. A feature of their management was their care of the employees with whom they shared the profits, and female workers were paid more than those in similar occupations. Mary Jane gave evidence to the Shops, Factories and Workshops Commission of 1891. She said that the women were paid 15 shillings (\$1.50) a week and the girls, including those just starting, 11 and 12 shillings (\$1 to \$1.20). This was at a time when it was common for young people to work their first year for nothing or, if apprentices, to pay their master to teach them the trade. The females worked eight hours a day when it was common for shop assistants to work up to twelve hours. The girls received profit bonuses of up to \$6 and \$8 for the year; these were based on attendance and wages earned.

During a shipping strike in 1890 George chaired several public meetings to raise funds for the strikers. One newspaper referred to him as a capitalist turned socialist; maybe he was a bit of both.

As life long Christians they were interested in the Swedenborg New Church to the establishment of which they contributed very generously in Australia. Both of them were committed to improving the welfare of others especially the low paid and the very young.

Chermside

In 1899 the Marchants bought the 40 hectare (100 acre) paddock that is today's Marchant Park which they used as a spelling area for their delivery wagon horses. During World War I the paddock was extensively used by the Army as a training camp and a remount centre for the Light Horse and it was returned to the Marchants in about 1919. By that time motor lorries were beginning to replace horses and the paddock was not really needed by the business.

With the end of the war the State Government was encouraging the local councils to develop land for public recreation areas so the Kedron Shire Council approached the Marchants for a 4 hectares (10 acres) section of the paddock for a park. There was some bargaining over the price but the Marchants finally offered the council the whole paddock free of charge provided they shifted the blacksmith, August Vellnagel, to the other side of Gympie Road onto the Shire paddock. August vigorously resisted but finally he agreed to go.

Then some of the Aldermen had second thoughts; they worried about the loss of rates and there was the cost of fencing and probably other problems. Finally the State Government intervened and 'persuaded' the Shire to accept and in 1921 the deal was done; Chermside gained a very large park, very cheaply.

The gates to the park, erected by public subscription, were dedicated on Saturday 3rd May 1924 to the memory and honour of the 284 Diggers, and one Nurse, who went to the First World War from Kedron Shire; 53 of them never came home.

Warehouse Cricket

A report in the Courier Mail of 8/12/1930 noted that Marchant Park was fenced and divided into fields by 1927. About that time a representative of Warehouse Cricket saw the possibilities of using the park for cricket and the Association took up the idea and set out half a dozen ovals.

It is not clear if voluntary labour was used or Council workers; maybe a combination of both. Pitches were formed and fenced in to keep the grazing animals out, top soil was carted in using horse drawn drays, grass seed spread, water was laid on and horse drawn mowers and rollers worked on the growing grass. In the following year, 1928, three more ovals were laid out; dressing rooms and a kiosk were built and playing begun.

The report continues, stating that there were 18 teams of 198 players in action simultaneously while thousands of spectators looked on. "The energy in flannels was high-powered and sparking on all cylinders. Yet with all this abundance of energy there was no overcrowding."

In 2009 there are 10 ovals and on the western end separated by a small creek is a soccer field

used by junior players. Cricket is played all year round with a break at the end of season.

Brisbane Women's Hockey Association

Beginning in 1933 the association shared some of the ovals at Marchant Park, playing during the winter months while Warehouse Cricket played during the summer time. This combination lasted for 26 years, interrupted by World War II, until 1958 when the Hockey players shifted to Downey Park which had lighting for night games.

Wheller Garden

When the Rev H M Wheller was planning a garden settlement for elderly people at Chermside, George Marchant stepped in to help by donating 25 acres and \$24,000 (the Male Average Wage Rate/week was \$8.80). His continuing interest and help was such that when the settlement was ready to open on 23rd November 1936 it was decided to name it after Marchant, but he objected to his name being used as part of the Settlement's name - "leave my name out of it just call it 'The Garden Settlement'" he commented. Later the name Chermside was added when other Garden Settlements appeared.

In 2009 Wheller Gardens, incorporating John Wesley Gardens in Geebung, is home to a supportive and close-knit community of around 600 residents. Wheller Gardens has been providing innovative and quality aged care services for 70 years. The facilities and style of care have evolved over time, but the commitment to quality of life remains unchanged.

Brisbane

Having made a large fortune they spent much of it helping others. As opponents of the liquor trade they gave the large sum of \$82,000 to build the Prohibition League's Canberra hotel in inner city Brisbane in about 1935 when the Male Average Wage Rate/week was \$8.80. They financially supported the Queensland Society for Crippled Children by donating their home, Montrose in Taringa, as a training home for crippled children. They cared for World War I ex-servicemen and established a Kindergarten for early education of young children. Large contributions were made to the establishment of churches and training institutes in Australia,

England, and America, as well as the endowment of a home for destitute children outside Boston, in America.

Death of Mary Jane Marchant

Mary Jane died unexpectedly of a brain haemorrhage on the 15th December 1925 at their home in Taringa and is buried in Toowong Cemetery. She had worked with George in all the above activities as well as on the Crèche and Kindergarten Committee which she joined in 1915, the Hospital for Sick Children, The Brisbane General Hospital, the Queensland Wattle League and the Bush Nursing Association.

Death of George Marchant

When George died in Brisbane on 5th September 1941 from a heart disease aged 84, the remainder of their fortune, some \$91,280 (Male Average Wage Rate/Week \$10) apart from some family benefices, was distributed among many charities including those mentioned in this article.

Addendum Appeal: We have several photos of George Marchant but only one very poor photocopy of Mary Jane. If anyone knows of a photo of Mary Jane would you please let us know? We want to put both pictures on the website.

The Bus Trip to the Gympie Rattler on Sunday 19th April 2009 is being organised by Terry Hampson (3261 1601). The cost is \$65 plus lunch \$10 if required catered by the Gympie Historical Society. On the return journey a visit will be made to the Kenilworth Cheese Factory.

Chermside Blood Bank

How is your blood supply these days? Got any to spare? Chermside now has its own blood bank in the brand new Chermside Galleria at 831 Gympie Road just off Hamilton Road. It is opposite Latham Street and, after the Shoppingtown, is the biggest place in town.

Correction: In the last issue I wrote that Victor Grenning went to Chermside School but Enid Brunckhorst rang me to note that he went to Zillmere School. I appreciate these corrections as

it helps me to be more accurate. Thanks Enid.

Tough Times – people sometimes talk about the “Good Old Days” but the reality is that there were very hard times as well and we tend to forget them. It is good to remind ourselves and our grandchildren about the old tough times.

ASLEEP IN CLASS

Times were tough, too tough. Rarely was a home equipped with refrigeration, some food items were bought daily. Milk and meat were two such items.

Jack was neither privileged nor a dull student. He was in fact a good scholar, and blessed with better than average learning ability; but here he was once again asleep at his desk.

The teacher, Mr Hooper, made a remark to Jack about not being permitted to sleep in class, and with a hint of sarcasm about not sleeping at home. A few days later Jack was once again asleep at his desk. Mr Hooper, the teacher, was a wise compassionate thinking man. Privately, he spoke to Jack. The next time Jack fell asleep in class, Mr Hooper said to the other students, “Let him sleep” and so we did. The reason for Mr Hooper’s change of heart was as follows:

The milk was transported to our homes, early each morning, by horse and cart. The usual procedure was for residents, nightly, to place a billycan on or near the front gate with the milk money and order form. Each household on awakening would collect their milk from the front fence, and enjoy very fresh milk. We’d paid for the milk, but without thought at the real cost of our fresh milk.

Jack’s father was the dairy farmer who supplied the milk, after milking the cows (without milking machines), harnessing the horses, the milk rounds began. Jack’s help was needed to assist his father. He would commence working about 3 a.m. each morning.

Indeed times were tough, too tough!
Valma Ross (nee Fullwood)

Thanks to Councillor Fiona King for printing this newsletter.



Bill Argo's Bicycle Shop on Gympie Road C1940 – the building is still in use – made and sold a limited variety of cycles. These were simple machines with few frills.



Action Bicycles, opposite Argo's Shop 2008 imports and sells a wide variety of bicycles and accessories. There is another room also filled with bicycles, helmets, shoes, gears, pedals, etc.



Chermside is becoming a major medical centre with Brisbane North Eye Centre on site of old Dawn Theatre.



The Medical Complex beside Wheller Gardens, opposite the Aust. Tax Office on Gympie Road, adds to Chermside's role as a medical centre.

Right: Wheller on the Park
 Gympie Road is on the far right.
 The Medical Centre, photo
 above, is in the lower right corner.
 Wheller Gardens itself is behind
 the Medical Centre. The large
 Retirement Village will surround
 the lot in a large arc.
 Stage 1 has 12 low set Villars
 and 144 apartments in multi
 story buildings.

