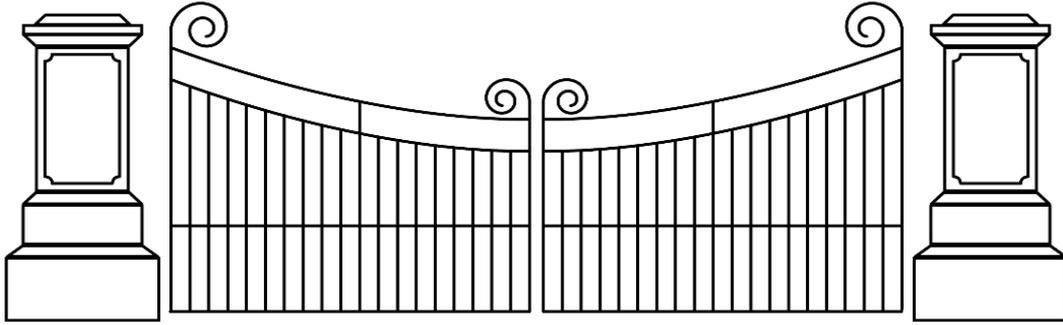


Preserving our past is our future



Chermside & Districts Historical Society Inc.

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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. Printing by courtesy of Cr Fiona King.

Our guest speaker for the June meeting was John Donaldson who comes from a long line of travellers. All but one of his grandparents immigrated to Australia from Europe. He continued the custom by travelling around the world several times. In between these trips he travels around Brisbane, driving a bus and talking to the passengers.

He talks very well, ABC English, taught him by his mother using a ruler, wooden variety. He learned to communicate by being the middle child of eight very talkative children. Today he uses both of these skills to earn his living, speaking clearly, gesticulating wildly, using correct grammar and telling the people in his bus very interesting things that are found right under their noses. Then he shows them the things they have been looking at all their lives without really seeing them.

Like a lot of talented people, and we have a lot of them in the society, he did not find his niche until he was in his fifties. Before that he had a steady, secure job on the waterfront where he worked for P & O (Peninsular and Orient

Shipping Line) but a visit by friends from England changed all that. They wanted to see Brisbane but they only had three days, so John took them around and about the town telling them where to look, what it was all about and the history behind it.

His friends were so impressed by John's tour that they told him he should do this for a living. Since they were very successful business people, and urged on by his wife, he took notice of their advice and sought further advice from people in the tourist trade. This brought him to Elvis, not "The Elvis", but the concierge at one of the solid gold watering holes down near the river among the skyscrapers. Elvis was impressed and John began conducting tours for the well heeled tourists staying at the local version of Shangrila.

The business prospered and he met many very prominent, and rich, people such as the Crown Prince of Dubai who gave his bodyguard the night off because "he was safe with John for the night", Mrs Bucket of "Keeping Up Appearances" fame who is really a very nice lady. Then there was Mandy Moore who was told by a

stranger on a tour that “she looked just like Mandy Moore” so Mandy replied that “people are always telling me that.” Then came 9/11 and as John sat watching the Twin Towers crumpling into dust on TV, he realised that his business might face a similar fate; it did when tourists, afraid of terrorism, stayed at home so John also spent more time at home, but not for long.



John Donaldson thinking about what he is about to say. He uses his hands a lot which adds to his presentation

Fortunately, he knew that the person who had been conducting the Art Tours for Brisbane City Council Gold Tours wanted to move on. So John moved in and kept on touring in the Art world where the Art Galleries are constantly changing their collections giving John a virtually endless supply of subjects. He not only takes people to look at pictures but conducts them around the exhibitions and discusses the individual items and the artists with them.

The tours are conducted from the inner city taking all morning till lunch time. Morning tea is held on the tour at a handy coffee shop to refresh the folks and allow them a chance to discuss what they have seen so far: the discussions are very lively and tend to go on and on.

He also conducts History Tours around the Brisbane City Municipal Area and is quite miffed that he cannot extend them to Redcliffe where the white settlement of Brisbane began. He looks at the obvious features, the old buildings, when and why they were built, who owned them and what they did. One such is the Mayne tour which looks at the family of John Mayne who made a fortune in butchering and other activities while leaving behind a mystery death in which he may have been implicated. Very intriguing, the “Mayne Inheritance” also tells the story in print.

Why do the north-south roads on the Northside wobble around so much while the east-west roads are mainly straight? The wobbly ones followed the Aboriginal pathways that were thousands of years old and showed the easiest path to anywhere. The bullock wagons followed them and widened them, the automobiles followed and the Council sealed them and behold a four lane speedway; from a bare foot track to a multi-wheel oil burning highway; that’s progress?



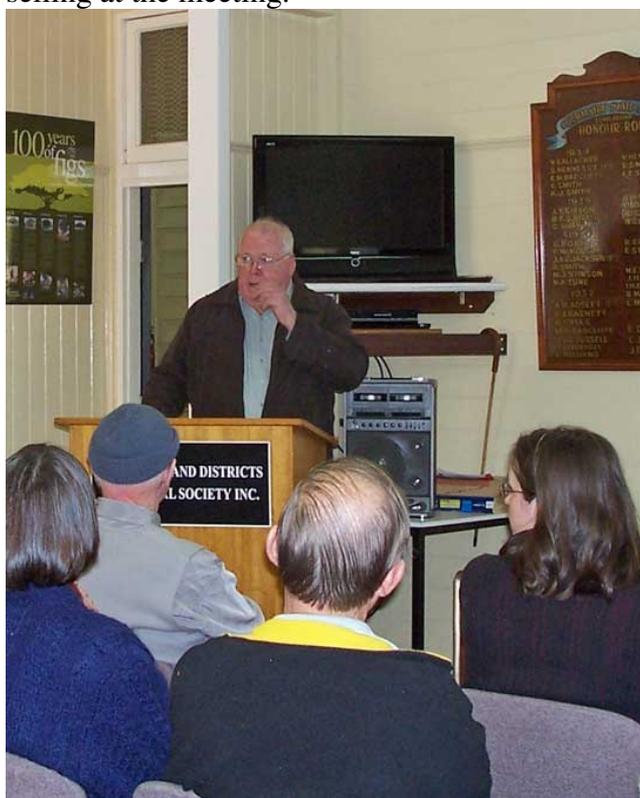
Some of the audience listening to John Donaldson’s presentation.

Then there is the Brisbane Point of View where he takes people to the lookouts around the town so they get different ‘points of view’, literally. One particular point of view is when one looks west and sees Cunningham’s Gap through which the intrepid explorer found his way through the trackless bush from the dry west to the verdant east and the mighty Brisbane River. Believe it if you like but the reality is that Cunningham followed the ancient Aboriginal track that had been in use for thousands of years. Our early explorers would have saved themselves so much time and trouble if they had only asked for directions from the locals. Isn’t hindsight grand?

Then he has the Fort Lytton tour (the Rooshans are coming!), the Nundah tour (first free white settlement), Nudgee Beach tour (the Bee Gees lived there) and there are others. If there isn't one to suit a group, John will manage to find it.

It was quite a job to stop John from talking as he is a one man band, talking with his body language as much as with his tongue. If his tours are half as good as his talk then you better join the queue to get on board; several of our members think so as they've been there and done that.

The July meeting speaker was John (Beating Around the Bush) Morris, author and raconteur. John has written a book entitled "The Fair Dinkum Queensland Exposed!" which he was selling at the meeting.



John Morris telling some of his tall and short tales that sum up the meaning of Queensland.

The book contains stories (true), stories (tall), bush ballads, jokes, photos, sketches, historical material and much more.

John entertained us with stories from the book and from his extensive travels around the Sunshine State. He told us that Queensland had the first Labor Government in the world even though it only lasted a week. Have you ever wondered why the ALP spells Labor like that and not la-

bour? Well John said that after the 1908 ALP Conference the report was printed and the word was incorrectly spelt Labor. Since the ALP didn't have the money to do the printing again the name stuck.

There was a lot of fuss about Council amalgamations in Queensland a couple of years ago? There were quite few usually involving only two at a time. Have you heard of the big amalgamation of 1925 in which two cities, six towns and ten shires were amalgamated? That was when Brisbane City Council was formed with William Jolly as mayor. (William Jolly bridge!)

On one of John's travels he visited an Indigenous centre in one of the far north coast towns where he met the curator who was a young indigenous man. John was very impressed with the display which showed something of Aboriginal life before the White intruders arrived and something of what the area is today.

John, who is very much on the side of the Indigenous people, asked the curator how he felt about losing the traditional lands. The young man took John to a place in the building where there was a line drawn across the floor. He explained that when young indigenous people come to town from the bush he brings them to see the line. He then explains to them that one side represented the past and added that all the people who lived there are now dead. Then he said the other side represents today, the present situation in Australia.

He then challenges his young listeners to face the reality of the present time. If they want to live in the present then they have to work hard, complete their education, learn a trade or profession and get on with their lives. If, on the other hand, they want to go back from where they came then now is the time to choose.

For him he has crossed the line into the present and intends to stay there while never denying his indigenous nature.

You know that the Heritage Building Society is our Society's bank? Well it is and the branch we use is in Westfield. Did you know it is Australia's largest building society? Well it is and it began in Toowoomba; John comes from Toowoomba and he thinks it a pretty cool place.

It appears that some time ago, Crow's Nest, the Queensland one not the NSW one, was told that the local branch of the ANZ was closing. The locals were horrified, so the Council bought the building it vacated and asked Heritage to set up shop there. They did, and so began the expansion of the Heritage as other towns wanted it to come. Heritage works with the local people and ploughs the profits back into the community.

Then there was Cobb & Co when "the knights of the long ribbons" drove the coaches from Victoria to far north Queensland. They covered some 11,000 km of tracks and roads and as long as the horses could pull up the grades and through the sand or swamp, Cobb & Co went through. They harnessed thousands of horses each day and their factories produced coaches especially for the rugged conditions of the Australian outback.

And they made money in great style. Freeman Cobb who brought the business from California in 1854 was able to sell out in 1856 with a profit of £16,000, that's pounds not dollars; it made him a rich man.

As the railways moved into the outback, Cobb & Co retreated north and west, finishing their last run in 1924 on the track from Yeulba to Surat. And so an Australian legend ended.

John has a new book to be published. In it he tells of the unfortunate fellow who had Yellow 24 and the Polish husband who was sure his wife was going to poison him.

The Chermside – Bracken Ridge Busway is being planned and some of our members who live on the proposed route are becoming apprehensive. The main problem at the moment is that nobody, including the planners, knows where the Busway will go.

At present we have a representative, Brian Tilly, who attends meetings called by the planners but very little information as to the route is available. The last meeting was on Tuesday 6th July at Chermside Uniting Church. Since the meeting was held at tea time, a major feature was the arrival of a stack of pizzas, which were much appreciated by the toiling thinkers.

The purpose of the meeting was to set up the volunteer committee and put in place the structure of the future meetings. The volunteers are expected to put forward the points of view of the residents and businesses which will be affected by the new Busway.

The Busway will go through but it will be varied as far as possible to suit the needs of the local people. One woman present was concerned because she had already been relocated due to the Kedron section which is now underway.

Two things are certain: the start of this section will be sometime before 2026 because it has to be finished by 2026. So it could be some time before something happens.

News as soon as it happens will be posted here.

The website is continuing to be uploaded and work is being done on Lutwyche Cemetery as it could be affected by the Busway.

Among the 27,000 persons buried there are many prominent Chermiders and Kedronites as well as people who lived further in towards the city. The site has been used since Walter Silcock, aged 5, was buried there on 4/8/1878. Three weeks later on 28/8/1878 Annie Tipping aged under one year, was buried in the same grave.

Even with the aid of very helpful staff at Pinaroo we have been unable to locate the grave even though we know the Section and Portion in which it is located. All the plots in that area have been identified; maybe a later burial took place in the original grave. Maybe something will be found in the newspapers of that time which are now on the net.

Burials are still taking place at Lutwyche mainly in family plots that have been owned for many years. After 30 years a plot can be reused but only by someone in the immediate family; some plots have been in use for a century and are very well kept. Others have fallen into disuse and have suffered from the attention of vandals. It is a fascinating exercise to wander through the rows of memorials and think that behind every one of them is the life story of a person who came from a family. Most of the stories will never be told, they died with the person. On the

other hand we know quite a lot about some others and we are searching for some more.



One such person is James Milne (1856-1925) who attracted our attention by his memorial. It is in the form of a Celtic cross and stands two and a half metres tall being carved from an extremely hard igneous rock, probably Trachyte. This would make the monument rather expensive while the carving of the weaving pattern would take a lot of highly skilled time.

The monument stands on a large base block of stone set in the double plot which is surrounded by more large blocks of stone kerbing. Everything about the grave site is massive, heavy, built for eternity. Although the stone work is now 87 years old there is no sign of weathering; the edges and corners are still sharp. The kerbing is not displaced as it is set on still lower layers of stone.

The monument is in the traditional mode of the Celtic cross which is used in the Celtic nations of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany and Cornwall in England. There are many interpretations as to its symbolism. On many of the Irish crosses the panels on the stock show scenes from the Gospels and are very definitely religious in intent. This cross has the Celtic endless weaving art on its panels which is often seen as denoting eternity, while the cross is the Cross of Christ surrounded by the stone circle of eternity. Whether the above meaning was that of the grave's occupants is unknown.

The inscription on the plinth simply notes his name, James Milne with his birth and death dates of 1865 and 1925. Brief and unemotional!

On the left side of the plinth is inscribed:

Beetha Milne aged 4 years.

Bertha, the Beetha is an incorrect spelling, died, according to the Birth Death and Marriage records, in 1884. Brisbane City Council records do not contain an entry for her so she must be buried elsewhere.

The Brisbane City Council records show that a Hendra Milne, 24 hours old was buried in the plot on 20/10/1888. Her name is not recorded on the stones of the grave.

Thus it seems that the first death in the family was that of Bertha in 1884 but the plot must not have been purchased till at least 1888 when Hendra died in infancy.

Another source of information about James is the frequent mention of him in the old Brisbane Courier which is on the net at the National Archives.

Born in Glasgow, he was eight years old when his family migrated to Brisbane in about 1872.

He completed his education at the Normal School and on leaving he joined Robert R. Smellie and Co, a hardware firm, as a junior clerk. Because of his talent, hard work and attention to detail he rose to the position of Chairman of Directors. He occupied directorship in several other prominent firms including the Queensland National Bank.

He was survived by Mary (nee McLennan), his wife, six daughters and two sons. Mary died in about 1932 while overseas and was buried on the Channel Island of Jersey.

So this is one story that is being slowly spelt out, now about the other 26,999 stories..... Can you help?

Fire and Safety at Chermiside School – a couple of visits by officers of the Fire and Rescue Service has enabled us to upgrade our safety precautions. This is another one of the many new learning situations that we have experienced since the old school was relocated to the Historical Precinct.



The Fire officers inspected the premises, checked what we had done and made several further suggestions. Consequently we got rid of our old fire extinguishers and installed a new one in the kitchen. It will have a series of diagrams to show how to use it and demonstrations will be given at meetings from time to time.

They installed two battery operated smoke alarms, one on the ceiling of the archives room and one in the meeting room. They are quite easy to install on the ceiling, as long as you have a very long ladder; the ceilings are 4.5 metres (15 foot) high. The fire officers will come and replace the batteries when necessary.



The ladder they used is in four sections and folds up for easy carrying. They rested it on the tie rods that hold the walls together, climbed up and simply stuck the smoke alarms on the ceiling

We have installed “You are Here” signs in each room showing the escape route to be followed in an emergency; each room has a different plan. Instructions as to the evacuation procedure are posted beside the above plan. The idea is that the members become used to this seemingly complicated situation by regular instruction and practice.

No smoking signs are being installed even though none of our members smoke, but visitors might.