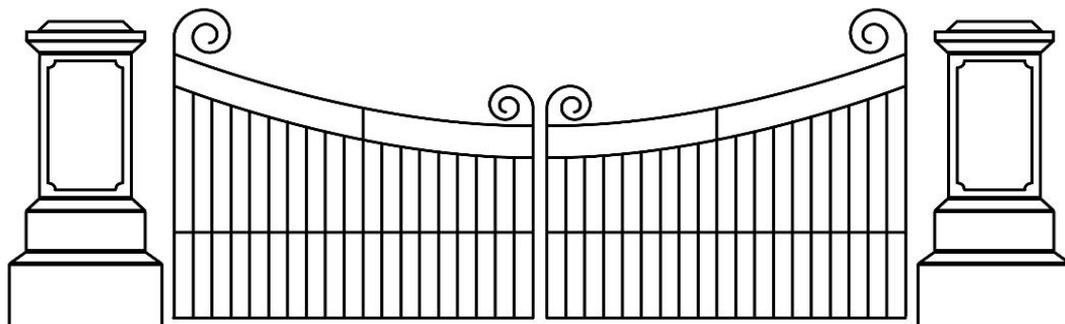


Preserving our past is our future



Chermside & Districts Historical Society Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

Feb-Mar 2011

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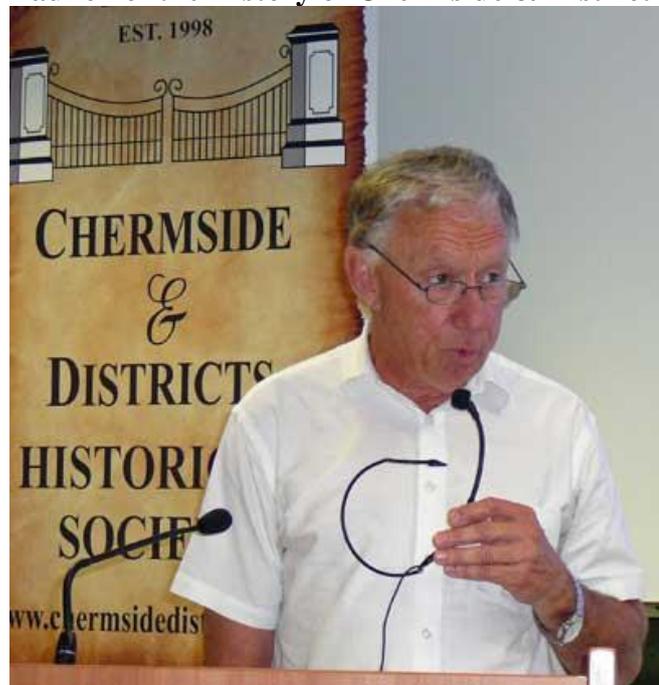
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Located in the Chermside Historical Precinct at 61 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside but DO NOT send post to this address. Printing courtesy of Cr Fiona King.

Launch of the History of Chermside & District



Professor Peter Spearritt addressing the people at the Launch. Note our new banner behind him.

On Saturday 12th February 2011 the CDHS celebrated the history of the Local Area from the Dream Time to the Consumer Society. The venue

was the Chermside Municipal Library which made its excellent facilities freely available to us.

The actual launch was done by Prof. Peter Spearritt from the University of Queensland with a spirited address which was appreciated by the 63 people present. Peter is an enthusiastic advocate of local history and is involved with the new website, Queensland Historical Atlas, which examines many different aspects of a great number of places in the State. It focuses on the local areas and was widely used during the recent floods by people to find out information about places affected by the floods.

Peter paid tribute to the CDHS for its rapid growth in such a short time and for our use of the latest technology to communicate our work to the wider world beyond our local area.

He picked up on the theme of change, which is emphasised in the book, by pointing out the major change in employment in the local area. He noted that the biggest industries of the early post World War II era, namely Hutton's at Zillmere and Pie's at Kedron were both factories. The major employ-

ers of 2011 are the Hospital complex and the Westfield Shopping Town, both being service industries.



The author, Pat, the President, Terry, the Archivist, Beverley and the Local Member, Stirling. Note the first three dressed in 'Chermside Black' our new Society T shirts.

The author paid tribute to the earlier historians of the local area such as David Teague, Kath Ballard and Stan Eddowes all of whom collected and preserved a vast amount of data on which the new book is built. Then he paid tribute to the great number of local people who gave their stories and from these threads the whole tapestry was woven. Hopefully the picture that emerged captures the spirit of the local area as epitomised by its people and their ancestors, many of whom are buried in Lutwyche Cemetery; the book preserves their memory.

Beverley Isdale gave a biographical talk about the author which he appreciated. It is very reassuring to be told that one has done a good job; we all need that encouragement and Beverley is a good motivator. Thank you.

Finally Stirling Hinchliffe, our local member and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, moved a vote of thanks for all those involved in the launch. Stirling was our first president and guided the Society through its early years, setting up the constitution and building the framework on which we depend today; he remains a member and helps the Society in many ways.

The formal proceedings were wound up by the author who rang the Chermside State School bell which we use to tell good news and sometimes, sad news.

Then came the morning tea provided by the members using our own equipment. The cost of the food was met by Councillor King, another good friend of the Society.

Book sales for the day totalled 38 and many were signed by the author who was delighted to meet and talk to so many wonderful people. He really needed that cup of tea that one of the girls quietly put on the table while he was busy signing.

It was a really great day, thanks to everyone being themselves.

Note: Sales of the History of Chermside to date have reached **170** and are still selling.



Part of the 63 members and friends who attended the Launch. They were very well behaved until cup of tea time when the noise level rose dramatically and we got a complaint from the people in the next room.

Our Speaker for February was Grahame Jardine-Vidgen who traces his family back to the Norman Invasion of England in 1066 when the Jardines built a castle near the town of Lockerby in Scotland. In the 1660s when the monarchy was restored in England after the death of Cromwell the family decamped and went to what later became Canada.

Graham has traced his family in detail to the present extending to his children and grandchildren. He presented the story using a power point system on our monitor.



Grahame relating his family history to the meeting using the monitor in the top of the photo - he showed some 150 slides, some very old and others quite new.

The Australian segment began with the arrival of Captain John Jardine in 1840 and his settling on a Bathurst sheep property. His descendants moved northwards driving a large herd of cattle across Queensland, lost their way, lost a lot of cattle, and were attacked by the local Indigenous people. Finally, in 1865 they arrived in Somerset Bay on the tip of Cape York Peninsular.

Here they set up a cattle station and became the Administrators for the Queensland Government. The Vidgen side of the family also settled on a station nearby and both moved to Thursday Island. In 1934 they began to use air transport for which they had to build an airstrip. Grahame's mother was a nurse and became the head nurse at the Thursday Island hospital.

The family remained there till World War II began when they were evacuated to Brisbane.

Grahame has done a most comprehensive family history which he is handing on to his descendants.

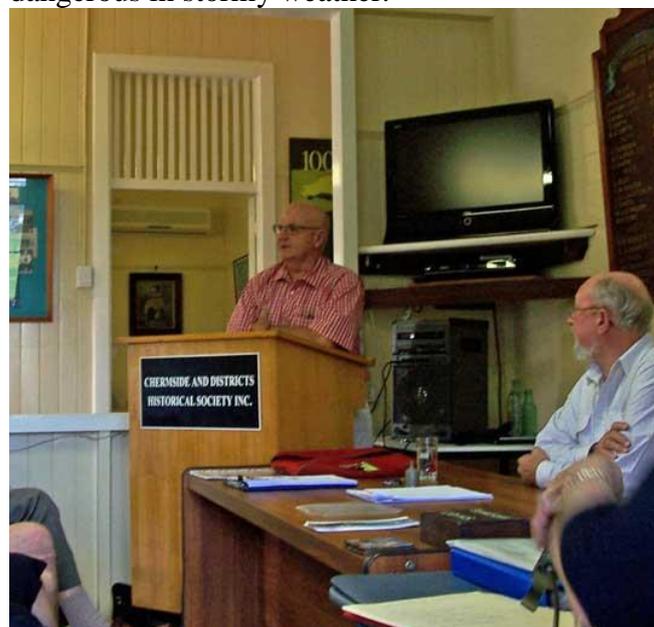
The speaker for March was Brian Hutchison who has been an enthusiastic yachtsman since he learned the art of sailing as a boy on the Bay. In fact he is such an enthusiast that he has written a book about the History of Sailing Training in Queensland.

The story starts in 1934 when an ex-digger, Egbert

Thorpe, better known as Nick, started to train young people to sail on the Brisbane River. This was no big deal at first because many families along the bayside already had fishing dinghies. Attaching a mast and sail was no trouble in the days of 'do it yourself' and the Queensland Training Squadron was born or rather, launched.

Their first races were in the Southport Regatta before World War II when Nick towed all the boats to Southport behind his own boat. After the event he towed them all back again. Nick died in 1937 but his idea took on a life of its own and eventually spread all along the Queensland coast to Cairns. At its peak there were 26 clubs in Queensland and one in Sydney.

Brian showed a model of the first boat they used and it was a very simple one. The hull was made from planks half an inch (12mm) thick and 18 inches (457mm) wide. Timber this size was common in the 1930s but would be difficult to find in any quantity today. Knees for strengthening the sides were cut from naturally bent roots of mangroves. These early boats did not have any buoyancy chambers and could sink if capsized. They didn't use life jackets either so sailing could be dangerous in stormy weather.



Brian Hutchison telling the story of how one man's dream changed the face of sailing in Queensland. Terry Hampson listens intently. A later development was the use of 3mm thick plywood sheeting to form the hull. These boats had buoyancy chambers built in and did not sink when they capsized which was a step up for safety. If they did go over the crew could stay with the

vessel till the rescue boat arrived. This model, like the previous one, could be made in a backyard workshop.

The final development took place in the late 1980s with the production of a plastic hull. This took the boats out of the 'do it yourself' range and placed it in the factory built class. The clubs were moving with the times and the times were in plastic sheeting mode.

Brian spent a great deal of time over the years culling information from newspapers about the activities of the clubs and the development of the vessels. He followed the careers of outstanding sailors who became gold medal winners at various Olympic Games and Queensland Championships.

Libraries of the 21st Century – “For the times they are a-changing”. Recently one of our members got in touch with a librarian from Q’ld University of Technology in the hope that they would buy some of our History of Chermside & District.

The following is part of the reply:

We have significantly reduced the budget we spend on prints books - as there is less and less demand from undergraduates for any books outside the set texts. A significant portion of our budget is now spent on interlibrary loans and **digital books**.

This digital option works out much cheaper as the publishers upload free records for their entire 'list' into our catalogue. We only pay for what is used. For the first 8 uses, we pay by the use. After that we buy the 'unlimited use' right for that title. This system works well for the overall budget as there is no cataloguing (we get the record for free) there is no accessioning (as we never receive a hard copy), no lending, no returns and no re-shelving (in fact we don't even need shelves).

You would not recognise the Library now. There is no lending desk – just a self-checkout machine on each floor that has books (which is not many). Just lots of 'cool' furniture, group spaces and technology!

We are looking at a library with no books, almost.

Appeals and Interviews

At the March meeting in my report I again emphasised how much I depend on the members to fill in the gaps in my knowledge of the Local Area. It resulted in two members getting active and 'tipping me off' for new resources.

Joan Hamilton introduced me to Jack McAuley who was in the Civil Construction Corps during WWII and now lives in Newcastle, NSW. Herb Carr connected me to David Pie, son of the legendary Bruce Pie of Kedron. Both men provided me with excellent data; thank you to all concerned.



A group of carpenters at Ellison Road Camp in WWII. Jack McAuley is second from left in the back row.

Jack McAuley was stationed in the Chermside Camp on the northern side of Ellison Road beside the future Geebung School site and like a lot of the young men there he was lonely and home sick.

The Civil Construction Corps was formed with tradesmen whom the armed services considered would be more useful plying their trade than fighting as soldiers. All the tradesmen of the building industry were being conscripted; carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, concreters, plasterers, electricians, painters, labourers, blacksmiths, drainers, fitters and turners, riggers, etc.

Age was not a consideration as any able bodied tradesman from 18 to 70 would be taken and sent to where they were needed and when that job was finished they were moved to the next job. Jack commented that they were moved as individuals rather than in gangs so they would often get used to working with one gang when it would be broken up and the members would have to get used to a different lot of work mates.

Conditions in the camps were more primitive than the Army camps; no medical facilities, they had to pay for their meals, provide their own work clothes, blankets, and tools but they may have been better paid than the Army?



Cairncross Dry Dock on the Brisbane River under construction by the Civil Construction Corps in 1944. Today it is the Q'ld Maritime Museum.

David Pie filled me in on many details of his father's work on the Kedron Mill where over 800 people worked. (Some excerpts follow)

David Pie, son of Bruce recalls that his father was a dynamic leader and part of his success was due to his policy of hiring the best talent available to run the various parts of the business. He let them run their section almost as if it was a separate business. Such men as Jim Cleg in the spinning section, Charlie Jarvis who came from England to run the bedding section. George Green (Sir) from Eagers, Eric Munro and Joe Power who were both accountants.

Bruce took advice from them and made the overall decisions; the system worked well and must have enabled him to play his part in state politics for over 10 years.

At the age of 60, Arthur Bruce Pie died of a heart attack on 31/7/1962 while in Sydney. It was a big shock as he was a very fit man who exercised regularly with weights. Just before his death his son, David, noticed that his father seemed to be breathing heavily when he exercised and urged him to slow down.

Bruce died in bed reading a book and the first the family knew of it was when the body was discovered next morning.

For the full reports on both of these stories go to our website at WWII and Bruce Pie Industries.

For some weeks Neil Chesney of Chesney Caravans has been exchanging emails with me which consist of me asking questions and Neil answering them.

Neil outlined the three phases of the family caravan business: The first phase was the establishment of Chesney's Corner in Chermside.



Sited on the corner of Gympie and Rode Roads the caravans replaced the earlier corner store, a bicycle shop and a blacksmith.

The second phase was the establishment of the Stafford factory:

In approximately 1960 Neil Chesney, son of Alex, started a factory to produce their own caravans on Hayward St Stafford. The original building was 100ft by 50ft (30.5m x 15.3m) and was purchased for 5000 pounds (\$108,500 in 2005 values); it was extended twice until it was 200 ft. by 50 ft. (61m x 15.3m). The first caravan took 6 weeks to complete and at the time of opening the factory on Gympie Road, Lawnton the Stafford factory was producing approximately 3 to 4 caravans per week with a maximum of 60 employees.

(Neil is searching for a photo of the Stafford factory and the following Lawnton factory.)

The third move was to larger premises on Gympie Road, Lawnton where over 450 workers were employed producing up to 22 caravans a day (110 per week). There were another 100 employees around Australia at wholesale yards etc., while approximately 80 dealers in every state of Australia sold Chesney Caravans.

At Lawnton the firm produced commercial caravans as well as domestic caravans. At that time it was the largest producer of fibreglass products in Queensland and the largest employer in the Pine

Rivers Shire. The largest caravan produced at Lawnton was 50 ft. long by 10 ft. wide (30.5m x 3m).



The Chesney family believed in advertising and used all opportunities to pursue it.

See the full story on the Chesney Caravans in the Industry section on our website.

Caveat Lector – (Let the reader beware) I have had to attach this warning to our Veterans of Other Nations in the section on Lutwyche Cemetery. It appears that Alexander Fergus Ross whom we thought was a veteran of the US Civil War 1861-1865 cannot be authenticated. He may be a genuine veteran but there is no documented information to show one way or the other.

We have been alerted by members of the American Civil War Round Table of Queensland that they have been looking for documentation on Ross. They have found a couple of men with the same name but their profiles do not fit that of the man in Lutwyche.

So we are leaving the website as it is for the moment. Till further information is found! Even if it is never found the website may remain as a warning of the pitfalls in finding accurate information.

However the Boer War Veteran George Witton has been authenticated as a real veteran and his ashes lie in his wife's grave. However his name is not inscribed on the headstone. We are investigating the possibility of rectifying this anomaly in some way. Maybe a plaque or some such naming

device but we need to contact his relatives before anything can be done.

George was a companion of Harry (Breaker) Morant and Peter Handcock who were both court martialled and shot by the British in 1902. Witton was later sent home to Australia.

Terry Hampson is following this matter up by searching for relatives. This is a formidable task as George died in 1942 and he came from Victoria.



George died in Victoria on 14-8-1942 and his ashes were interred at Lutwyche on 1-10-1942
All the details are on our Lutwyche Cemetery section of our website under the Subsection of War Cemetery. (Best use the search function and dial Witton)

Change, change - I had a great learning experience on Monday 28th March when I gave an illustrated talk to two classes of Grade 1 children at St Kevin's, Geebung. It was the first time I have ever talked to Primary pupils. They came in two separate groups and sat on the floor. I was only talking for about 20 minutes to each group and it was stretching their attention span. They were all five year olds while I am an 80 year old. I was showing still pictures to the iPod generation. Wow!!