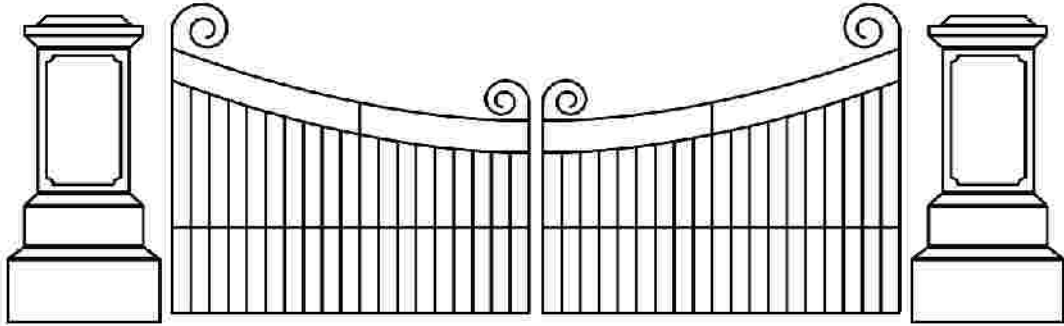


Preserving our past is our future



Chermside & Districts Historical Society Inc.

Website: <http://www.chermsidedistrict.org.au>

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NEWSLETTER

Apr - May 2013

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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.

Our speaker for March was Marilyn English from the Toowong Hist. Society and she described the Great Flood of 1893, or the Black February Flood. There were eight major floods between 1841 and 1900 but in February 1893 there were three floods. The first recorded 914mm in one 24 hour period, the second, on 11th, was much lower but the third, on 19th, was as bad as the first. These three floods caused more damage because settlement had increased greatly along with the population which was 84,000 in the 1891 census. With no dams to hold the water it rushed unchecked across the flood plain and nothing could stop it.

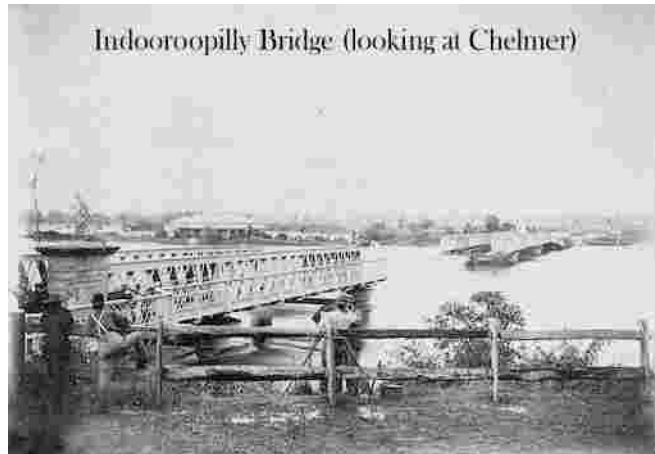
Over one hundred houses were floated down the river and smashed to pieces; many more

were completely submerged and badly damaged. Thirty five people were drowned and many more were taken to hospital; many had narrow escapes. One third of Brisbane residents were homeless, sheltering in large buildings that were on high ground such as the Castlemaine Brewery.



This photo from John Oxley Library shows the Breakfast Creek Hotel in the 1893 flood.

The River Road (Coronation Drive) was under water for its length and the Regatta Hotel was submerged above its first floor, about 5.5m (18 feet). This was higher than the 1974 flood. The road which was a major route for farm produce was so badly damaged that it took over a year to repair. And tolls were imposed to pay for the work.



Google-Wikipedia image showing the steel bridge swept away by the flood waters.

South Brisbane was badly affected with many suburbs such as West End, Long Pocket and Chelmer going under the water. Probably all suburbs adjoining the river were similarly affected. People had to walk along the railway tracks, and flat top railway trucks were placed on the lower lines for people to walk along. After that they had to take to rowing boats or go back before the water rose any higher.

The damage to roads was immense and the railway bridge at Indooroopilly lost its middle span as did the Victoria Bridge in the city. These were major disasters which impeded reconstruction for several years.

The river was submerged in a huge lake as far as could be

seen with debris of houses, trees, dead animals and other flotsam being carried to the bay. The height of the water above sea level was 8.35m (27ft) while the 1974 flood was 5.4m (18ft).

The total damage was estimated at some \$4million in 1893

Display of Society's Framed Photos on our A Frames in April and May



Our first use of the A frames was at the Burnie Brae Fair Day on Saturday 20th April. There was a large number of people there and many came to view the display. We also sold a couple of Chermide State School books. There are two A frames each holding six black and white photos.

The photos are attached to stainless steel wires which are attached to the channel at the top.

The frames have extensions on each leg giving it a height of 1800mm (6 foot). By taking off the extensions the frames can be fitted into the back of a small hatchback for easy transport. They are made from aluminium square pipes and sheeting so we need to be careful when handling them.

Our aims are to show the people some of the photographic history of the district and to advertise the Society; I think we are succeeding. We try to sell some of our books as well.

The second outing of the photos was on Saturday 18th May at the East Aspley State School which

was celebrating its 50th Anniversary. We were given an outside position on the veranda of one of the classrooms, right beside the Sausage Sizzle. Because the SS attracted lots of people it was a good spot for us.



Being located between the Sausage Sizzle and the School Archives room ensured that a lot of people saw the display of CDHS photos. Terry and Ann Hampson were on duty all day and Terry gave the opening address for the celebrations.

CDHS Inc Website – “Storm Damage in Parks of Chermshire”
The fall of a forest giant, an old growth tree, beside the footbridge over Somerset Creek in 7th Brigade Park. The Big Storm of 2013 occurred between the 24-28th January 2013 with a rainfall of 370mm or 14.5 inches in the O’Shea backyard, Virginia.

Two Eucalypts, an Ironbark and a Blue Gum (Local Name), really a Forest Red Gum, stood for about 300 years, part of a great forest area of subtropical rainforest. Long before the Whitefella arrived with his steel axe and saw to clear the land to build Brisbane Town, these trees stood tall.

The Blackbutt, which measures 37m (123 feet) to the crowns, is still standing tall while the Gum was partially demolished in the storm leaving a stump 9m tall. The tall stump, was cut down on about 15th April and the trunk cut into sections. The fallen trunk measured 9m (30feet) and, assuming the Teriticornis would have been roughly the same height as the Ironbark, it too would have been about 37m to the crown.

METHOD OF MEASURING HEIGHT

I use a 45 degree set square at my eye level holding one side of the triangle level and sight along the hypotenuse. When I reach a point away from the tree where the hypotenuse is pointing to the top crown of the tree I mark the spot and add my height to the distance. (156cm or 5ft 1inch)

The total distance to the base of the tree is the height of the tree.

METHOD OF CALCULATING AGE OF EUCALYPTS

Measure the girth of tree at my shoulder height with a tape. One centimetre equals one year.

These are both rough methods but they are the best I have when out on the bike. Any improvements would be appreciated.



Once two old growth trees, overnight it became one and a half. Why did the tree break so high up and not be uprooted like so many others in the park?

The answer lies in the weakness caused by a very large section of bark being stripped off in a storm long ago; probably when a large branch fell and

peeled the bark below off. The wood died and the elements began to rot the timber from the top.

This is shown in the following photo showing a hollowed out trunk waiting to be decapitated.



The rotten top of the tree is shown in this fallen log. Note the healthy looking branches at the top; they would have acted like a sail in the strong wind. It is a wonder the tree lasted so long.

All that is left now is a small bare patch of soil which will soon be covered by the grass and any sign of the old tree will be gone. But that is Nature's way and it works well if the wood is left to rot and return to the soil. However the park has to be mowed, or does it?

Now go to CDHS website and click on "Storm Damage in the Parks of Chermiside" for the story with a lot more pictures.



This photo culled by Trove from the pages of the Courier Mail of 1952 shows the arrival of the wives and children of the Lestani brothers. The men came to work on the Zillmere Housing Project of 1950-53 when some 800 homes were built. The family recently celebrated its 60th Anniversary of living, growing and prospering in Australia; and building Zillmere.

The Zillmere Housing Project: The above item prompted the author to delve into the Project via Trove and resulted in culling 28 pages of notes on a three year saga of high drama. It was a daring project fraught with many unforeseen problems and virtually guaranteed that no other Australian Government would go down that path again; so far anyway.



Houses - Australia needed 300,000 of them and Zillmere was chosen to have 1,000 of ones that looked like this one, La Premier on Duffy Street. And European builders were coming with tradesmen, pre-fabricated houses, finance and managerial skills for large scale building.

The French firm LeCorche Frères and Schroth signed the contract in April 1950 for 750 prefabs costing £1,934 272 (\$3,868,542)-(Vernooy p. 16.)

The homes were to be mostly clad with chamfer-board or weatherboard and some with asbestos cement sheets. The roof was to be sheeted with Super Six asbestos cement. This was before we knew just how toxic asbestos was, much to the distress of many innocent victims.



They built houses on an assembly line technique. This photo shows some seven or eight houses - multiply by about 100 and you get some idea of the size of the project. The local people had never seen anything like it, nor had any Australian Government.

On the 11th August 1951 the front page of the CM announced "Four hundred lost possessions in desperate fight - 120 MIGRANTS HOMELESS- Zillmere barracks destroyed by fire"



This is the only photo we have of the three barracks which were still under construction probably early in 1950. The three buildings around the quadrangle were destroyed and many workers were homeless. Many had to sleep up to eight on the floor in some of the houses they had just built.

The public response was immediate - people donated items of clothing, furniture, money and fund raising was organised with The Sunday Mail.

Almost £1,000 was raised. The Australian workers donated part of their overtime earnings.

Large numbers of the foreign workers, like the Lestani family mentioned above, had come to stay in Australia. They quickly learned English, Australian version, and the locals, especially the store keepers, learned a lot of French and Italian words.

The CM on 26th March 1952 announced that there was a "LITTLE United Nations AT ZILLMERE NOW" The CM noted that men from 18 countries were working on the French project and listed their nationalities: French, German, Spanish, Italian, Algerian, Hungarian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Yugoslav, Czechoslovak, Belgian, Dutch, Latvian, Greek, Rumanian, British and Australian. Then it rather dramatically announced "The men are not having language trouble."



Hidden talents of the migrant workers were becoming apparent as the CM on 15th April 1952 announced "ZILLMERE HAS ITS OWN ART COLONY" Painters, wood carvers and sculptors were mentioned but the only photos we have are of the work of Marcel Rouaen, a Belgian carpenter and wood carver. The item above is a pulpit in a local church made from silky oak.

While the above sample of the website gives a rather rosy picture of the Project, all was not well on the job. While allowance must be made for political rivalry and rhetoric the Project was in trouble.

The State Opposition, led by Mr. Nicklin, was attacking the State Government, led by Vince Gair and the Commonwealth Government, led by Robert Menzies was supporting the opposition. And it was a real 'no punches pulled' stoush in the good old democratic tradition. It resulted in the French firm packing up and going home without finishing the contract. The State Housing Commission had to finish the job.

I have been unable to find out the final financial position of the State Housing Commission and how the sub-contractors and workers fared except to say that there were some very angry and disappointed building workers around.

Alfons Vernooy wrote a book entitled "The Dutch Houses of Cooper's Plains" which he argues was the only success of the Foreign Builders. His subtitle "A Post-war Housing Debacle at Brisbane" neatly sums up the whole experiment.

Vernooy, on p.33, sums up the long term lessons for the Q'ld Housing Commission:

"QHC had already learned its lesson. Although no minutes remain, there is circumstantial evidence that the Zillmere experience contributed considerably to the internal decision of the QHC to minimise all ongoing foreign building as much as possible."

The bold experiment was over but the houses remained and people bought or rented them. And Zillmere grew dramatically.

To get the full story go to CDHS website and click on Zillmere Housing Project.

Bus Trip to City Hall – Inspect Museum of Brisbane

Saturday 22nd June 2013

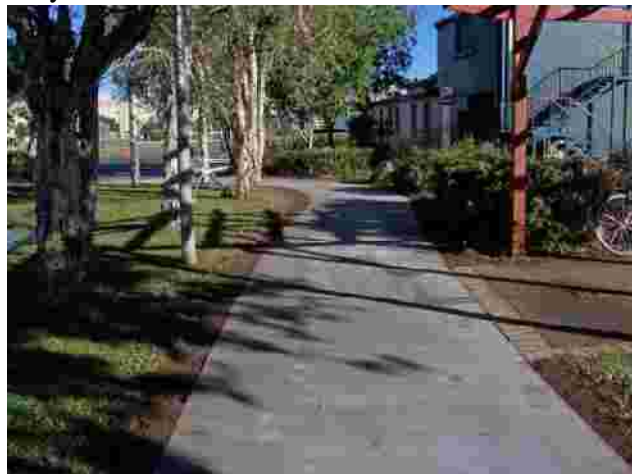
Leave Precinct at 10.30am Return 3.00pm

Cost \$25 - Clock Tower \$7 extra

Visit Shingle Inn at own cost

Those who nominated at last meeting – Please ring Terry Hampson 3261 1601 or see him at this Sunday 2nd June Meeting

New Bike Track at Precinct: the flooding of water and mud should be a thing of the past when going from the Car Park to the School. The Council ripped up the old track for recycling and laid a new track with a proper slope to run the water off into the drain beside the hockey field. I was the first bike over the new track on Wednesday 22nd May 2013.



Newly laid bike track - looking towards the car park at the Chermshire Historical Precinct



The new bike track curving around the end of the car park and out towards Kittyhawk Drive.

Website performance

19 March to 18 April 2013

Hits: 2,389

83.1% new visitors 1,985

16.9% returning visitors 404

26 Apr to 26 May 2013

Hits 2,359

82.2% New Visitors 1,940

17.8% Returning Visitors 419