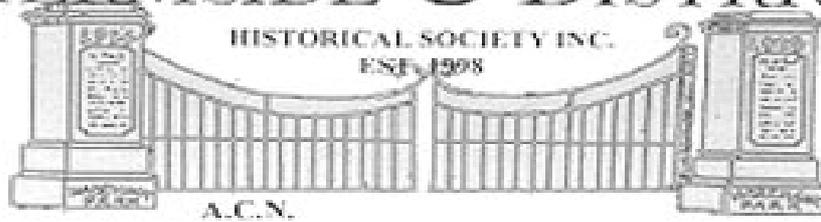


CHERMSIDE & DISTRICTS



Volume 8 No. 6

NEWSLETTER

December – January 2005

(Issued Feb. Meeting 2006)

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As I sit here composing this epistle I wonder at the changes that have taken place over my lifetime; historians seem to do this a lot. I am operating a Pentium 4 Personal Computer which can transpose my ideas into literature simply by my pressing many keys which represent letters of the alphabet. The machine operates on a sequence of the numbers 0 and 1 in almost infinite combinations. Don't ask me how, somebody told me and I'm telling you.

I press another couple of keys and a printer gurgles into life and prints the lot on sheets of A4 paper; I used foolscap for most of my life. Beside me is a scanner which will copy a document or a photo and put it on the screen.

This morning I have been for a third interview with Mick Simpson, not for a job at the sawmill, but to gather information on his life. I used a digital camera, from our super shopping centre, to photograph some of his photos which were propped up on the kitchen table.

I arranged the visit over the mobile or cell phone and went to see him driving an air conditioned, electric operated windows, battery locking doors, automatic, pollution minimized, motor car using petrol costing 116 cents a litre.

If a young person reads this they probably would react with "So what's new?" Nothing really except I remember what life was like before I had all of these things. And this is part of the wonder of studying history, to see what has changed and to find why it has changed.

Some 60 years ago, William Van Loon said "In the great laboratory of life there is one law all must obey; change or die." Well is there any other choice?

Change in our area. Well if old Van Loon is correct then the local area shows every sign of vibrant life. The new extension of Kittyhawk Drive is being pushed through right up to our doorstep; literally. The bridge over Downfall Creek is half complete and the road connecting the two is on the verge of bursting into life. Well not quite, but you get my drift.

The extension to Westfield Shopping Centre is growing by the day as about 300 men toil relentlessly, boring great holes and filling them with concrete, erecting jungles of scaffolding and pouring concrete on top of them; bull dozers doze; cranes lift loads; concrete pumps, fed by queues of agitator trucks, pump endless streams of liquid stone; steel reinforcing acts like sinews to strengthen the post-stressed concrete slabs; front end loaders load huge dump trucks and trailers, to cite just a few of the activities.

Somerset Creek has disappeared into a huge double box culvert drain running under the extensions which will increase the size of the centre by 50%, with parking for an extra 3500 cars.

A 41unit apartment block, Chermshire Central, has replaced three houses in Playfield Street and seven houses are being demolished to make way for two other similar blocks.

Next time you are in the area just go up to the roof parking of Westfield and look over the extensions, preferably on a working day, and you will see with your own eyes, the vibrant life of the changing Chermshire. For good or ill, change is the name of the era and the Society is right in the middle of it.

Chermside State School 1900-1996 is still on sale, and people are buying it. At writing we have sold four copies this week. We have printed 300 copies and, at present have about 65 copies left. We are keeping a stock of the book in the Old School for sale to visitors and those who come to our reunions.

An anonymous donor provided four copies to be given to retirement village libraries. So far copies have gone to Wheller Gardens in Chermside, John Wesley in Geebung and one will go to Holy Spirit, Aspley in February; we are still waiting for another to reply to our letter.

The acquittal has been completed and forwarded, with two copies, to the BCC Grants Committee. Provided this is accepted then we can close the books on the project.

Next: History of Chermside and the Surrounding Area which is already underway with interviews and archival searching. At present, it seems that we will go a little outside the Chermside suburb because various firms etc impacted on the local area by providing employment for local residents.

The proposed outline of the book is:

- Aboriginal culture and ecology.
- Early European settlement.
- Family farms and businesses.
- Kedron Shire organisation.
- Development of village of Downfall Creek on transport route.
- World Wars & Depression.
- Post WWII expansion.
- 1960s & rapid change – the Boomers
- Rise of Consumer Society.
- Electronic Age.
- Current situation of very rapid change.

At least that is where I think we will go, but as the data accumulates the story will take on a life of its own. So we follow where it leads; that's history. And that is the easy part, the difficulties increase when we try to explain why it all happened the way it did. Exciting isn't it?

At present information is needed on Bruce Pie Industries at Kedron.

Archives notes Feb 06 Bev Isdale

Since our last Newsletter, we have had donations of more Chermside State School class photos, mostly after the launch of the history of the school. We also were given a copy of a photo of Marchant Park, taken from Ellison Road. It shows the park in the late 1980s and we're wait-

ing for an opportunity to photograph the same scene. There are now many trees flourishing on the hillside.

We often forget the history on our doorstep. No one seemed to know anything about the history of the Voyager Centre until the archivist from the scouting association filled in some details. We now have photos to go with lots of information on the East Chermside Sea Scouts.

When the Society presented a copy of the Chermside School history to John Wesley Gardens and they gave us two issues of their *News*. It has photos as well as mini-biographies of some of the residents.

It's too late for Pat's history of All Saints Anglican Church but we now have photos and details of the carvings of the altar rail. The son of the wood carver gave us the information.

Our Current Display in the Library

The National Trust of Queensland has chosen as its theme, PEOPLE ON THE MOVE, for this year's Heritage Week. CDHS will have a display in Chermside Library in May as part of this celebration.

We're compiling some mini-biographies of people who have been in this area at some time, starting with Aboriginal people on the move. That information is fairly difficult to find but we have a couple of leads. We would also like to include the latest group of people on the move - the many African people we see in the streets and at the supermarkets. For information, organisation and offers of help please contact Bev Isdale.

Reunion in May You have all heard of Schoolies Week on the Gold Coast but don't forget that we have our own Schoolies Day when we hold our Annual Reunion of ex Chermside State Schoolies. We will have it in the cooler months of the year this time so that it will be much cooler in the Drill Hall where we have our afternoon Devonshire Tea.

This one will especially target the pupils from the later years but will also be for those from any era of the school as far back as they like. We will be publicizing the event later as we decide on definite dates and the state of the road building that is going on around us.

One of the most important means of advertising is the old one of 'word of mouth'. This manages to get past the difficulty of people who only watch the TV. So start telling people about the Chermside Schoolies Day reunion.

Mick Simpson, Sawmiller

By the time you read this Mick will be 93 years old and he still lives, on his own, in the house he built in 1939 at 18 Mermaid Street, Kedron. When he and Emelda moved in they had a double block and were beside the sawmill owned by Bob Stephenson, for whom Mick worked. They had five children.

He was born in Brisbane, although the family was living at Toogoolawah, and grew up on the family farm at Benarkin but was not much interested in farming, Mick was a born mechanic.

Leaving school as soon as he could, he was once threatened with the police if he didn't attend, his first job was on a bullock team which lasted three weeks. This was followed by a horse team where he worked as offsider for £1 a week and keep.

At age 16 he went to work at the Nestles Condensed Milk Factory at Toogoolawah and all the while read mechanics magazines to learn what he could about machines. While there he bought his first vehicle, an old single seater Chevrolet (Chev) car for £10. When the Great Depression began in 1929 the factory closed and Mick went back to the family farm at Benarkin.

He worked at any job that was available, sleeper cutting, selling fruit and fish, ran some cattle, forestry work, he even converted his car into a truck to cart sleepers. In 1932 he built a racing body on the car by studying mechanics magazines, using sulky tires for ribs and galvanized flat iron for sheeting.

His next job was driving a truck, carting logs from the bush to the railway at Yarraman even though he couldn't drive a lorry. He first had to repair the lorry and get it going by installing new valves before he had his first lesson in the five ton vehicle, on his own, with a full load of logs; he learned fast.

In 1933 he learned to drive a Caterpillar tractor by driving one, with instructions from an offsider, from the Story Bridge area to Mt. Glorious over a period of 14 hours.

In 1934 he built a winch to snig logs in the bush and bring them to a loading ramp where a truck could take them out. Financed by his employer he bought an old solid tyre, bull nosed International truck and a ship's winch along with 500 yards of steel rope. Then taking the lot to a welding works in Brunswick Street he built his first mobile winch.

That same year he came to work for Bob Stephens who owned the mill at Chermerside. Stephens went guarantor for Mick who then borrowed money to buy his first new truck which he used to haul logs for the Chermerside mill.

With the worst of the depression over, Stephens was expanding by buying mills at Dayboro and Woodford. Since Mick managed and hauled logs for both mills he bought a part share in them and Stephens and Simpson Sawmill was born. In 1945 Mick bought a half share in the Chermerside mill for £5000.

The same year Simpson & Stephenson joined with Jack Sanderson to form an Engineering firm. They went to Darwin to buy surplus army machinery consisting of 4 large trucks and a lot of other machinery which they loaded on the trucks along with 44 gallon drums of fuel and headed for Brisbane. Since Mick and Sanderson were the only drivers they hitched the trucks in tandem and each drove a pair. All went well until one of the trucks broke down so they hitched all four trucks together and took turns driving the 2,300 miles over 13 days. However, the partnership did not last and by 1947 it had been dissolved.

When Mick took full ownership of the mill in 1947 he set about modernizing the Chermerside mill by electrifying all the machinery, building new sheds, a new gantry to handle the logs into the saws, new saws, new machinery in the workshop, a new office, fuel storage for the fleet of some 14 vehicles and generally expanded the workforce. In keeping with his life long interest in mechanics he built much of the new machinery in his workshop.

By 1952 he had about 40 men working full time and several others contracting to him in the bush and at Chermerside. These numbers were maintained until 1976 when the government made changes to the timber Licencing system which reduced the flow of logs to the mills.

Finally in 1997 the mill closed down signalling an end to sawmilling in Chermerside. The land was sold to the Housing Commission and today is fully built out with many housing units occupying the once busy site. There is nothing left to show that a sawmill worked there for some 67 years.

Mick leads a quiet life with his extended family, playing bowls and watching TV. He is a quiet achiever who has contributed greatly to the development of the busy suburb of Chermerside.



Left: Kedron Shire Council in the old Council Chambers opposite Marchant Park, C 1920. The council was absorbed into Brisbane City Council when it was formed in 1925

Below: Westfield Chermside is steadily growing as the concrete slabs move closer to Banfield Street. The lower floor is for parking, the next is the shopping mall and more parking will be provided on the roof.



Above: The staff photographed on one of the logs to be sawn in Mick Simpson's Mill at Chermside in 1953.



A young Mick Simpson with Emelda, his future wife, sitting in the Chevy on which he built a racing body – The Valley 1934.

