

Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

Newsletter

No. 18 April 1991

Free to Members

Membership: Individual \$6 p.a. Family \$10 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.

PRESIDENT: Rev. Dr David Parker, 26 Hall St, Alderley, 4051 Phone 356 9331

SECRETARY: Mrs Ellen Chataway, 11 Bunda St, Slacks Creek, 4127 Phone 208 2639

Your invitation to

The 1991 Annual BHSQ Presentation

"Baptist Camping in Queensland"

Monday August 12 at 7.45pm

Greenslopes Baptist Church

39 Dunellan St, Greenslopes

Special feature:

Joan Maxwell

Author of the Official History of Baptist Camping in Queensland

Also

Interviews with some of the earliest campers

Reflections of leaders and administrators

All welcome Supper Provided Please advertise this evening as widely as possible

Enquiries 208 2639 356 9331

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Baptist Union of Queensland Archives A Guide

The Archives

As people become more conscious of the value of historical records, the archives of the Baptist Union of Queensland take on greater importance. However, like other collections, the Baptist archives have their own character. Intending users must be familiar with the nature of the collection before they can take advantage of its holdings. This brief introductory guide is meant to fill this need.

The archives are housed in the basement of the Baptist Union offices, Brunswick House, 225 Brunswick Street Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. Other material on Baptist history is to be found at the Oxley Library, South Brisbane, the Mitchell Library, Sydney and the Baptist Theological College of Queensland, Brookfield, Q.

Physical details

The archives area is limited in space, being a storage area with no reading area, except in the adjacent offices and printing department, which can be used by arrangement. The honorary Union archivist works at the archives only on a voluntary basis, but may be contacted by phone after hours. There is also some help available from the Baptist Union clerical staff. When extra help is available, it will be possible to liberalise these arrangements.

Procedures for Use

Bona fide researchers are welcome to the use the archives, after securing individual permission from the honorary Archivist or the Baptist Union office.

To use the archives, it is necessary to make an appointment through the Baptist Union office (07 - 252 9361), and in most cases, especially for serious use, it will be necessary to arrange with the honorary archivist for a personal introduction to the contents, layout and usage of the archives.

The Users' Register at the archives must be filled in for each visit. Under no circumstances may any material leave the premises. However, by arrangement with the Union office, photocopying can be done at normal charges. Sensitive material may not be used and permission must be sought beforehand for using and quoting any material from the archives.

Most material has been broadly classified and is indexed on a card system. Each item is assigned a specific location in the archives which is indicated on the card index.

No fees are charged for using the archives, but donations are welcome.

Contents

The archives are primarily the place where the historical records of the Baptist Union of Queensland are stored. Individual member churches of the Union have charge of their own material and usually store it locally. This includes the oldest churches such as City Tabernacle, Ipswich, South Brisbane and Rockhampton whose records are often in demand. There are only a few local church collections in the Union archives, and these are mostly of churches which are no longer in operation.

The major part of the archives are the publications and minutes of the Union executive, assemblies, departments and committees. However, most of the more recent records are held by the officers of the various sections of the Union, such as the Executive Secretary and departmental officers.

Documents in the archives include minutes of the executive and assemblies (including many of the earlier committees) from the establishment of the Union in 1877. There are also multiples copies of the *Yearbook* from the beginning of its publication in 1907. Also there is the earliest periodical, *The*

Queensland Freeman covering the years 1881-88. Unfortunately, there are large gaps in the holdings of its successor *The Queensland Baptist* from 1913-23 and 1925-50.

Departmental documents are mostly from the recent past, although much of the activity now covered by these groups was the responsibility of the executive or assembly in earlier times.

An important feature of the archives is the collection of local church histories. These are usually small printed booklets published at a jubilee or centenary. Some churches are now old enough to have more than one volume. Official histories of the Baptist Union were produced at the jubilee of Baptist life in 1905 and at the centenary of the Union in 1977.

Other material includes a few personal papers, books and brochures published by the Union and its personnel and some miscellaneous related and unrelated items.

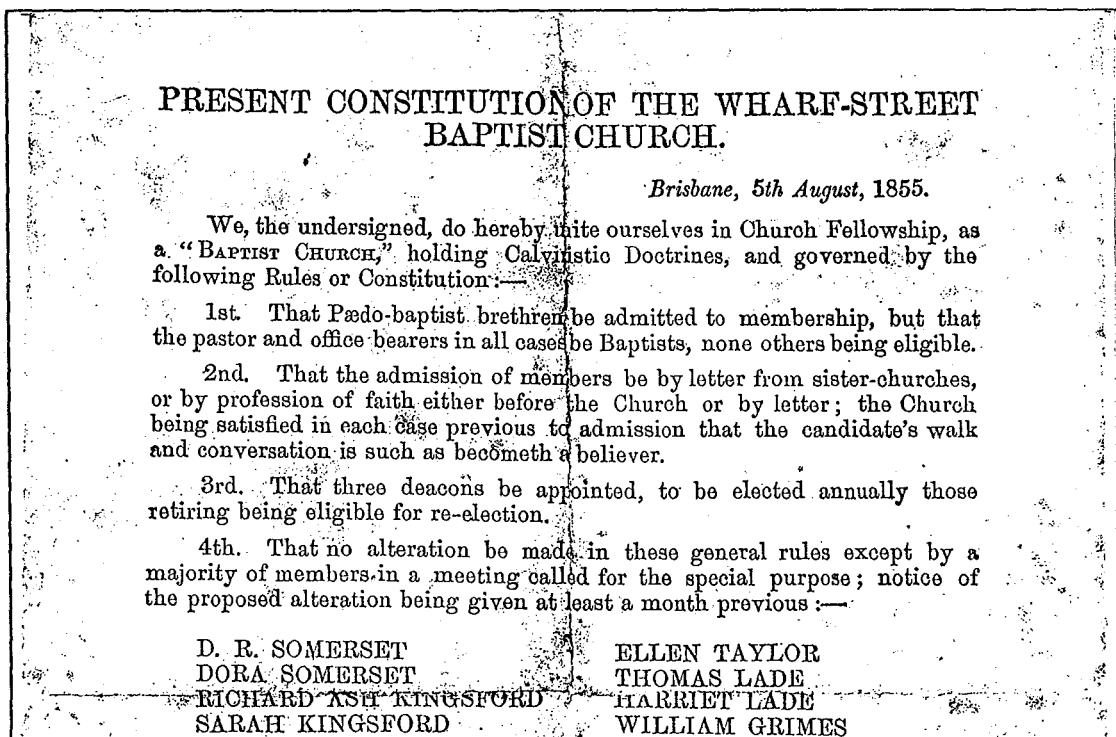
There are copies of the *Baptist Union of Australia Handbook* from 1929 onwards, but as a policy, material relating specifically to other state Baptist Unions is not collected.

Photographs and Recordings

The archives contain a large number of photographs and slides, only a few of which are identified. They include ministers, churches and various official and informal functions, both within the state and elsewhere. There is also a large number of blocks. Audio recordings (reel to reel and cassette) of some Assembly addresses also exist. Most of this material is not properly classified due to the lack of identification and space considerations.

Family History

Family history is a popular activity these days, but there is not much material in the archives that will help in this area. For one thing, researchers into family history need details of a personal nature which are related to local churches rather than denominational administration. But, as mentioned above, the archives does not contain local church records, and furthermore, even Baptist churches do not generally retain extensive baptismal, marriage and death records like other denominations do. Of course, baptismal records in the Baptist communion are of no help in providing birth details! The only records that might help would be membership lists, but they usually do not contain any personal information. So, in brief, the Baptist archives are not likely to be of much help to family historians.

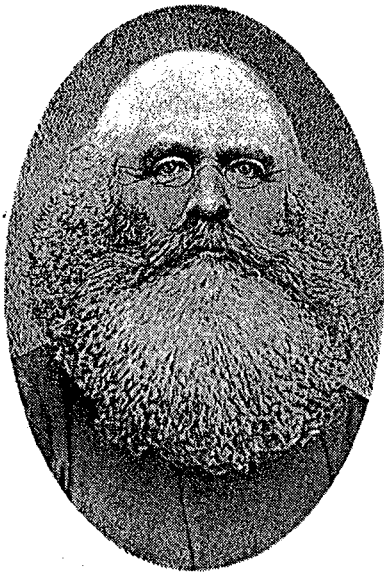


A document from the Baptist Union Archives - Wharf Street Baptist Church Constitution 1855 (portion)

Three Key Queensland Baptists

by David Parker

Rev. B.G. Wilson, Minister City Tabernacle Baptist Church 1858-1878



Benjamin Gilmore Wilson was born in Moy, County Tyrone, Ireland on March 16 1823 to a Quaker father and a Primitive Methodist mother. He spent his youth in Ireland, but after other members of his family sought relief from difficult conditions by migrating to Canada, he moved to England in about 1842. Here he continued to engage in evangelistic work by becoming a city missionary in Bradford.

After hearing a sermon on the topic, he became convinced of his need for believer's baptism. In 1854, he accepted the pastorate of the Baptist Church at Barnsley. After a short period, he devoted himself to further studies in homeopathic medicine under Dr J. Le Gay Brereton to fit himself for missionary service abroad. He also furthered his general and theological education by studying privately and by travelling in Europe. In 1854 he married Miss Mary Jane Matchett of the City of Armagh.

On 20 May 1858 the Wilsons left England for Australia on the "Tornado", having accepted an appointment to become minister of the first Baptist Church in Brisbane, Queensland.

The Wharf Street Baptist Church (from 1890, City Tabernacle Baptist Church) was formed on 5 August 1855 and the first minister, Rev. Charles Smith, served until November 1856. Wilson was to be, in effect, the pioneer pastor of Baptist work in Queensland. His appointment was made through the Baptist Missionary Society upon the request of Rev. James Voller of Sydney acting on behalf of the church.

The "Tornado" arrived in Melbourne on 20 August and after calling in Sydney where Wilson and Voller became firm friends, the Wilsons arrived in Brisbane at 2am on Sunday morning 12 September. Wilson preached his first sermon at 11am that morning on the text Isaiah 22:23-24.

For almost twenty years he devoted himself to a busy and growing ministry, ably assisted by his wife. A new church building was soon erected in Wharf Street, outstations were established at many locations and he travelled extensively throughout Queensland visiting Baptist congregations and families. His medical skills were also used frequently, providing a useful and welcome adjunct to other forms of pastoral care which he offered sacrificially to all, whether members of his flock or not.

Although known as a loyal Baptist and a zealous minister of the gospel, Wilson was also liberal in his attitudes towards other Christians, and took an active and sympathetic interest in public affairs. Possessed of a warm personality, a hearty laugh and a quick wit, he was an eloquent and thoughtful preacher. He read widely but was not attracted to the liberal theology which was coming into vogue. Nevertheless, he was not considered strict enough in his beliefs for some of his congregation who moved away to form the Jireh Particular Baptist Church in 1861 based on Calvinistic theology. He took a prominent part in denominational life and, in the year before his death, saw the formation of the Baptist Association (now Union) for which he had worked.

He lived in a house he had built on large block in Gregory Terrace and also owned a property at the beach resort of Sandgate. After a period of ill health in 1875, Wilson resigned his church in January 1878 and died on February 11, in his 55th year.

Miss Martha Plested

Pioneer Baptist missionary.

Martha Plested, the first missionary from Queensland to serve overseas with a Baptist mission was born in England in 1854. She arrived in Brisbane, Queensland from England on 7 June, 1885, aged about 31, and was received into the membership of the "Jireh" Baptist Church in Fortitude Valley. One month later she heard pioneer Baptist missionary Ellen Arnold speak about her work in Bengal, India and of her desire to return as soon as health permitted with others to work amongst the women of the "zenanas" (inner part of the home restricted to women). Martha, Ellen and three others who arrived in India in December of that year were referred to as the "Five Barley Loaves". Their pioneering work helped establish a significant ministry for Australian Baptists in East Bengal.

Even before hearing Miss Arnold's report about Bengal, Martha Plested had been anticipating a call to missionary work. While still living in England, she had done what she could to share the gospel with others. So after speaking with Ellen, she only took a day to make her decision, believing "God has chosen her for this special work" and that God "would fit me for whatever was needed."

The Queensland Baptist Missionary Society had only been formed on 5 June, 1885 as a result of the vision of Rev. Silas Mead of Adelaide. Two months after the committee received her application, Martha was farewelled from Brisbane at a commissioning service held at the Wharf Street Baptist Church. At the time, there were 15 Baptist churches, 13 pastors and 1324 members. One hundred and ten pounds was raised to cover her passage, outfit, salary and expenses. The Mission knew it was less expensive to send a single woman than a married couple, but it was hoped that others recruits would soon join Martha to staff a Queensland field. However, Kate Allenby of Windsor Road Baptist Church, who went to the field with Martha in 1890, was the only one to do so, and she only laboured with Martha for four years before working independently.

Although Martha had no formal training, she did not lack ability and spiritual qualities. She worked first at Faridpur on the Ganges with the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society and then moved to east to Comilla with the New South Wales Mission. Finally, she was asked by her committee to select a site for a Queensland field, which she did at Noakhali, on the river 12 kms from the sea, 300 kms from Calcutta.

In April 1889, Martha and her temporary associate, Marie Gilbert moved to the new base which was the centre for their work amongst the million or so inhabitants of the 6500 square kilometre district. Here she worked in what government officials regarded as "the worst district in East Bengal" for the next 29 years; she returned to Australia only in 1890 and 1910 and visited Britain in 1897. She was cut off from fellow workers for long periods, suffered threat of vermin, natural disaster and opposition from unfriendly people and wild animals. (The river ultimately engulfed her home!) Her health was often weak and lack of money was a constant problem.

At first she found the living conditions a trial, preventing her from enjoying the countryside. But she worked hard at learning the language and culture, and plunged into her main work of visiting the women with devotion and zeal. She also set up a medical ministry using homeopathic cures, schools, literacy work, Bible teaching (sometimes with the aid of magic lantern), temperance work and supervised village preaching teams. Soon she was recognized as "a very holy woman". Despite her frailty and small stature (she was only 150cms high), she was known for her warm spirit, common sense, tenacity, resourcefulness and especially for her love for people. Her life and work in Bengal is well documented in her letters and reports which often contain lengthy and colourful descriptions of her activities and life round about her.

Martha retired in 1918 and hoped to live the rest of her life in India. However, bad health forced her return to Australia in 1922. She died in Sydney 22 December 1922, aged 68 years, and was buried at the Toowong cemetery in Brisbane where an impressive monument marks her grave.

**Dr G.J. Morgans,
Minister, Albion Baptist Church
Founder, Queensland Bible Institute**

Born in Llanelly, Wales on December 12, 1904 as the son of a chemical works plumber, Gwilym J. Morgans became a steel worker and successful amateur boxer. He was influenced by the Welsh revivals, especially through his mother's family (nee Evans). After his conversion, he gave up boxing and used his promising preaching gifts in his local area. He trained for the ministry at Myrrdin College and by private study, being ordained on 18 January, 1930 at Bethania Baptist Church, Aberdare.



Taking leave from his church at Aberdare, he travelled with his mother to Brisbane Queensland, arriving 7 December, 1937, to supply the pulpit of the Baptist church at Albion in suburban Brisbane for a trial period of six months. Becoming pastor on a permanent basis soon after, he led the church throughout almost the entire period of the war. During this time it prospered, with the mid-week meeting well supported; it became a thriving centre of evangelism, resulting in a 50% increase in membership. Seeing the need of training new converts, "Morgie", (as he was affectionately known) was an active supporter of Christian Endeavour and conducted regular Bible study classes for his young people.

Early in 1943, he enlarged these classes and placed them on a systematic basis using a number of other teachers besides himself, thus establishing the "Bible Institute of Queensland". After his departure from the church in 1944, the Institute became fully interdenominational under Rev. J. Egerton Jacob (from nearby Lutwyche Methodist Church) and a Board composed of a wide cross-section of Brisbane's evangelical leadership. Classes moved to the city and then to a residential site at Toowong as the Queensland Bible Institute (known since 1984 as Bible College of Queensland).

Morgans also became widely known nationally as a popular evangelist and as a vociferous advocate of protestant principles, conducting rallies and publishing books and pamphlets exposing what he saw as the vices of Romanism and promoting the virtues of the Reformation. He also gained his D.D. degree and published his major work, *Cataracts of Revival* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1939) which reflected his distinctive emphasis and heritage.

After considering several calls, including some from the United States, Morgans moved to West Melbourne Baptist Church in May, 1944. Taking advantage of the larger population of this city and the presence there of many evangelical organizations, he continued his work as a protestant activist, founding the United Protestant Association. He also made his inner-city pastorate a base for aggressive evangelism. In 1947 he travelled overseas to attend a Baptist World Alliance congress in Denmark and to conduct preaching missions in Europe and the United States. Resigning his pastorate in 1948, he engaged in itinerant ministry overseas, and finally took up pastorates in Welsh speaking Baptist Churches in Scranton and Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He continued his pamphleteering, began a radio ministry and travelled internationally on preaching missions. He was an eloquent preacher, and read widely. He was also a patriotic son of his homeland, taking a prominent part in St David's Day and other Welsh celebrations.

Dr Morgans retired to the beautiful mountain resort area of Mt Pocono, in eastern Pennsylvania, where he was still active virtually up to his death on July 1, 1988. His library and papers were bequeathed to Bible College of Queensland.

Flashback - Queensland Baptists

A view from 1924

In 1924, Brisbane celebrated its centenary. A large commemorative volume was published with contributions from all areas of society, including the churches. The following is the section on the Baptists, slightly reduced in size. The author's name was not given.

QUEENSLAND BAPTISTS

THE first Baptists in Brisbane were not numerous enough to worship alone, consequently, for a few years, they associated themselves with Christians of other denominations. The first Baptist Church was formed on 5th August, 1855, Richard Ash Kingsford being one of its first pastors. But it was not until February, 1859, that the first Baptist Church building was opened, erected on land which had been secured in Wharf Street. The Rev. B. G. Wilson had arrived in Brisbane shortly before that time to take charge of the congregation. With Mr. Wilson's advent, the Baptist Church in Queensland may be said to have begun its history. Under his able and active ministry, which continued until 1878, the Church in Wharf Street grew in numbers, and preaching stations were opened which have since grown into flourishing suburban churches. The Rev. B. G. Wilson was succeeded by Rev. Henry Coombs, at the close of whose fruitful ministry the membership at Wharf Street



REV. A. E. BICKMORE,
President, Baptist Association of Queensland, 1923-24

stood at 400. The third minister at Wharf Street was Rev. William Whale, under whose energetic guidance the present City Tabernacle was built, with manse adjoining, at a cost of over £10,000. Mr. Whale made a deep mark on his own denomination. He was an eloquent preacher, and took a live interest in public questions affecting the welfare of the city. At his death, in September, 1903, the Baptists of Queensland lost a distinguished leader. The present pastor of the City Tabernacle is Rev. W. G. Pope.

Space will not permit us to follow the branchings out of Baptists into other localities. Suffice it to say, that at the time of the Queensland Baptist Jubilee, in 1905, Baptist Churches had been formed in twelve suburban areas, and in places more or less remote from the city, as Sandgate, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Maryborough, Rockhampton, and Townsville.

College.—The Queensland Baptist College owes its inception to the active efforts of the late Rev. T. J. Malyon, F.S.Sc., who was its first honoured principal, and many of whose students are now able pastors of churches. The object of the college is to educate for full ministerial standing men whose qualifications for the pastorate have been proved in Home Mission stations. The present principal is Rev. W. Bell, M.A., who is assisted by a competent staff of ministerial tutors. There are now fifteen students in training.

It is the custom of our associated Churches to choose their president annually, the aim being to alternate a minister with a layman. In this Centenary Year of the City of Brisbane

In 1877 the Baptist Association was formed, the first president being Rev. James Voller. The association to-day numbers 52 Churches and Mission Stations, whose main activities are the following:—

Home Missions.—The Home Mission Committee was appointed in 1900, with its first secretary, Rev. E. A. Kirwood. The general income for the first year amounted to about £200. The income for 1923 was nearly £2,300, with a staff of thirteen Home Mission pastors and two deaconesses. The committee has been instrumental in establishing and sustaining thirty-five churches, many of them now independent. These churches are now aggressive in denominational work. The aims of the Home Mission Committee are threefold:—

- (1) To meet the needs of the country districts;
- (2) To establish Baptist Churches;
- (3) To assist in the training of men for the Baptist Ministry.

The Rev. T. U. Symonds, who has been Superintendent of Home Missions for the past fifteen years, will shortly retire from that position.

Foreign Missions.—The Foreign Missionary Society commenced operations in July, 1885, its first president being Mr. George Grimes, and its first secretary Rev. William Poole. Its first missionary was Miss Martha Plested, who sailed for India in September, 1885, and after three years spent in acquiring the language, settled at Noakhali in East Bengal. Miss Plested's was a long and devoted period of service, extending to 1922. The work in Noakhali was strengthened by the arrival there of Rev. William and Mrs. Barry in 1899, and some years later by the advent of Rev. John and Mrs. Ings.

The movement for the federation of the Baptist work in India became a live question in 1912. Queensland Baptists are now associated with those in the other States, which now support forty Australian missionaries and over two hundred native workers in seven districts of East Bengal.

Sunday School Department.—In the year 1920 a Sunday School Department was formed in connection with the association. The department has carried out the following work:—

- (1) Visitation of metropolitan schools;
- (2) The arranging of conferences for teachers;
- (3) The organising of teachers' and scholars' examinations and the conducting of musical and elocutionary competitions.

The present officers are Rev. A. G. Weller, O.B.E. (chairman), Mr. A. H. Richer (vice-chairman), with Mr. S. Carey Carter as secretary.

King's Business Campaign.—The King's Business Campaign is a recent child of the association. Its object is to evangelise in new districts with a view to the formation of Baptist Churches, as well as conduct evangelistic missions in neighbourhoods where churches are already formed. Its chairman is Rev. B. Hewison, and secretary Rev. J. H. Latimer. It supports a State evangelist, Rev. T. McColl, whose labours have been productive of much spiritual result.

the president of the association is Mr. Arthur E. Bickmore, who has signalled his tenure of office by the initiation of a fund with the two-fold object:—

- (1) Of enabling our ministers to make a suitable provision for their old age;
- (2) Of putting our college work on a better basis.

The secretaryship of the association has been filled for a number of years in an honorary capacity by Mr. W. D. Grimes. The post of honorary treasurer has been held in like manner by Mr. W. R. Smith, until broken health compelled him two years ago to share the duties of the office.

News & Notes

The Baptist Recorder (NSW)

The Baptist Historical Society of NSW continues to produce much interesting material, most of which is noted in their journal, *The Baptist Recorder*, issued five times per annum. The most recent issue, dated February 1991, carried reports of two papers presented at the October 1990 meeting which reviewed the jubilees of the churches at Clempton Park and Strathfield-Homebush, both suburbs of Sydney. There was also a paper on the 75th anniversary of the church in rural Dungog.

Previous issues covered the work of itinerant evangelists and church planters in the 19th century, called "the trail blazers", biographical notes on Thomas Charles Worboys, the establishment of Baptist mission work in Zambia and the life of pioneer pastor, Rev. Sydney Hotston 1856-1928.

Each issue also carries minutes of the meeting, with reports on developments in historical matters, notices of forthcoming events and personal notes.

Essay Competition

A reminder about the Fourth Essay Competition which was advertised in the last issue of the *BHSQ Newsletter*. There is a prize of \$250, and the closing date is 1st October, 1991. Contact the secretary for more information.

Evangelical History Association

The EHA, based in Sydney, publishes the journal *Lucas*, now up to its tenth issue. A branch has just commenced in Victoria. It is hoped that others will commence in due course elsewhere. It will be holding a mini-conference in Sydney on Monday, July 8 on the theme, "The Teaching of Christian History". It is also sponsoring the production of *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* a long-awaited and valuable work, but one that entails a great deal of labour. Many authors from around the country are being enlisted. More help is needed on this project. Membership in the EHA is \$15 p.a.

Make your Mark on History!

Would you like to make your mark on history? If so, call up the secretary right away! The BHSQ has many historical projects that need assistance. Your contribution could be vital the discovery, preservation or writing of Baptist history in Queensland. Requests for information are frequently received, but often it is not possible to respond helpfully. You could make a difference. People are becoming more conscious of history, so the time is right to expand!

BHSQ Subscriptions Now Due

If you have not paid your 1991 subscription, it is now (past) time to do so. Individual membership is \$6, families may join for \$10 and churches and other corporate bodies for \$20. Subscriptions are the only source of income for the Society and they barely pay for basic costs. So you are encouraged to enlist new members. It would be good if every church in the state could join! If there was that sort of support, it would be possible to tackle some of the many tasks the Society has on its agenda. Pass the word around!

I/We wish to join the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland and support its programme.
Enclosed is our 1991 subscription: \$6 personal \$10 family \$20 churches and other groups

NAME CHURCH

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