

# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

No. 30 April 1995

The year 1995 is full of prospect for the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland. The first thing to note is the new name of our newsletter, now to be known as *The Queensland Baptist Forum*. This new title is meant to reflect our aim of fostering some spirited dialogue in this publication. The attainment of this aim will, of course, be determined by our readers' response.

Already, a lot of activity has been undertaken by the Society in 1995. Our focus for the year is the contribution of individual families to the development of the Baptist work in Queensland since its beginnings in the 1840's. One of our members, the Rev Melvin Williams, has just launched his book, *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*, which presents a series of brief biographies of key lay leaders of the last century. Planning for our Annual Presentation on 8th July is well under way. The theme for the day is the ever-spreading network of families who have been active in the Baptist work since the 19th century. Their contribution to the development of our denomination has been vital. Queensland Baptists are a family of churches - they are also, historically, a church of families. In combination with the Queensland Family History Society, we plan to show people how to prepare and publish **family histories**, and we will illustrate this by reference to a number of our long-serving families. Initial response to research questionnaires gives promise of a fascinating presentation. Mark diaries now for 10 am-4 pm, 8th July, at Albion Baptist Church.

To make the year more productive, I encourage BHSQ members to make a renewed effort to join us at our meetings, to become more vigorously involved in our activities, and to invite other interested persons to enrol in BHSQ in 1995.

Les Ball

Meetings: Apr 1; Jul 8 (Annual Presentation); Jul 22; Nov 4 (AGM).

## The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (est 1984)

### Membership:

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## News and Notes

### Publications

A good deal of time has been spent over the last few weeks preparing Mel Williams' *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland* for the press. It was successfully launched at the Brisbane Half-Yearly Assemblies.

Two more projects are currently under way. One is called the **National Guide to Baptist Historical Resources and Services**. It will consist of about four pages of information from each of the states on their Archives, Historical Societies, Publications and other services. It is designed to be of use to librarians, archivists, students, researchers, media people and denominational officials, providing them with easy to locate information about materials, services and contacts regarding Baptist history in Australia. It will be published on demand using Desk Top Publishing techniques on a cost-recovery basis, and will be updated regularly.

The **second project** is the editing and publishing of some documents relating to early Queensland Baptist History. The largest of these is the original version of the material which later appeared in the *Queensland Jubilee Record Volume* of 1905. Both the final manuscript of this material, which was written by Mr E. Gregory and notes used in its preparation are in the Archives. The **Gregory document** is considerably longer than the final published version, thus providing a good deal of extra information not available elsewhere. This was probably the first full length history of Queensland Baptists. Some other material will also be published as well, including early letters and reports from Queensland to the English Baptists and a short history of Queensland Baptists by Rev. Ralph Sayce dating from the 1930s. These document will be published in the same manner as the *National Guide* using Desk Top Publishing techniques.

**Other publications** are still available - *Baptists in Queensland* which is \$3.50 posted; The two volume history of **Baptist camping** by BHSQ member Joan Maxwell is \$10 plus postage; *A Fellowship of Service*, the official history of the Baptist Union by J.E. White is \$2.50 plus postage. Some pastors have their own biographies in print including recent publications by Roy Conwell and John Knights.

### Archives

The new **shelving** in the Archives is now fully installed and all the material is stored in its final arrangement. Recent acquisitions include a large consignment of files from the Baptist Union office, additional material from Roma and records from the BTCQ Student Association. **Enquiries** for information are received at a regular rate, either by phone or letter. In comparison with some periods, the number of **visitors** to the Archives has not been great in recent months. Thanks is expressed to Rev. Keith Applegate who brought back considerable material from several UK Baptist libraries acquired during his recent visit to England.

#### BHSQ Members Aid Family History Research

BHSQ Members, Eric and Rosemary Kopittke last year added another useful resource book to their collection of materials for family history researchers. This news paper cutting (from the Sunday Mail) tells it all.

**T**HE Hamburg Passenger Lists (1850-1934) provide important genealogical information.

About one-third of the people who emigrated from Central and Eastern Europe are included on these lists, which are available on hire through any LDS Family History Library.

Eric and Rosemary Kopittke, from the Queensland Family History Society (QFHS), have just released their eighth index to

the Hamburg emigrants who departed for Australia. Their latest book is for the year 1856, which also includes the ship *Helene* to Moreton Bay, for which shipping lists were previously unavailable.

The records include ships to Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand ports and are available in book form for \$20 and microfiche for \$10. They can be obtained from the QFHS, PO Box 171, Indooroopilly, 4068.

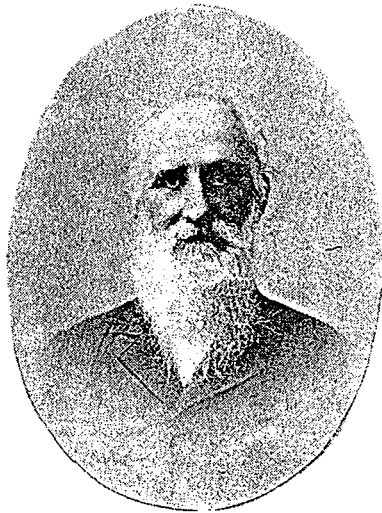
## Pastoral Profiles No 1

The first in a series reproduced from the *Queensland Baptist*

### Rev. William Poole

by William Higlett (*Old Baptist*, Jan 1898)

Rev. William Poole rightly takes the lead in our portrait gallery in this new issue of the *Queensland Baptist*, for, in respect of our denominational literature, he may be called the "father of the Press."



Born at Bristol, England, in 1829, he was educated for the Baptist Ministry at Bristol College, having for fellow students the late Revs. George Slade (Vic.), Rev. John Price (S.A.), and Rev Geo. Kerry (India). He arrived in Victoria in 1853, and as regards the commencement of his ministry, he is the senior Baptist minister in the colonies. In Victoria there is not one Baptist minister remaining of those who were his colleagues in the early days, while in Brisbane, Revs. John Kingsford, T. Keith, and D.F. Mitchell are the only pastors who were here when he arrived eighteen years ago, Rev. W. Moore having ceased active pastoral work.

Mr Poole's first pastorate in Victoria was at Caulfield Union Church, where he remained for ten years. He next became pastor of the South Melbourne Baptist Church, leaving for Vulture Street, South Brisbane, in 1880.

In press work he was for some time sub-editor of the *Melbourne Age*, and when the *Queensland Freeman* was started in January, 1881, he was appointed its first editor, which position he held till 1887, when he resigned. Unable to find a successor, the Association secretary, Mr. Buzacott, carried on the duties for a year, when issue of the paper was suspended. In 1890 it was resuscitated as the *Queensland Baptist*, Mr. Poole again accepting the editorial chair. Two years after he sought to be relieved, and Rev. W. Whale ably filled the post for three years, since which Mr. Poole has again occupied the position he now holds.

In temperance work Mr. Poole has always taken a warm interest, holding in Victoria the distinction of G.W.C.T. for two years. Among his cherished possessions are a handsome clock and an illuminated address given him for services rendered to the temperance cause.

Foreign Mission work has always had in him an ardent advocate. Our Queensland Missionary Society owes its initiation largely to his enthusiasm, and he was the first secretary of the society.

Of very genial disposition, of youthful spirit, of rare pastoral qualifications, Mr. Poole is as highly esteemed as he is widely known. May he long be spared to serve by voice and pen the churches of Queensland.

**Note:** Mr Poole served at South Brisbane until he retired in 1910 due to ill health. He died in March 1913. He served as President of the Baptist Association three times. First in 1881-2 when his theme was "Our future work." Then again in 1889-90, when spoke on "The secret of power." Finally, in 1906-7 he focused on "Our association."

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## Pastoral Profiles No 2

### Rev. Alfred George Weller

by William Higlett (*Old Baptist*, Feb 1898)

Rev. Alfred George Weller, pastor the church at Townsville, was born at Ramsgate, Kent, in 1861. Educated there at St. George's School under the late Mr. John L. Mead, he followed on leaving, the trade of our Lord and Master, for he became a carpenter. At the local Technical School, connected with the South Kensington Science and Art Department, he sought further improvement and succeeded in gaining several certificates and prizes.

Under the ministry of Rev. J. H. Bevis, of the Congregational Church, he was brought to Christ and introduced to Christian work. Leaving Ramsgate for London, he joined the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church, engaged in Ragged School and evangelistic work, and attended the training classes for Christian workers, which have been helpful to so many.

In 1887 he came to Queensland, and Rev. W. Whale, seeing in him a young man of promise, engaged him for some time as assistant. In 1888 he was sent by the Baptist Association to start a Baptist Church in Gympie, and in the following year accepted an invitation to the pastorate of the church at Hendra. There he laboured for nearly five years, and during his pastorate the present fine building was erected. Leaving Hendra he was variously engaged in evangelistic work till he settled at Toowong.

From thence he was called by the Rockhampton Church to take charge of the Lake's Creek Mission under the auspices of the Baptist Association. Here he met with much encouragement and success, but it seemed that, like Zion, he might be called "Sought out," for he received a pressing call to Townsville, which, under advice, he was led to accept, though with much regret at leaving Lake's Creek. Only a few months have passed since he went to Townsville, but cheering reports come to hand of the progress being made.

Mr. Weller has always felt a deep interest in Foreign Mission work, and first as assistant and afterwards as secretary, he served our Missionary Society for nearly four years. During his term of office he visited nearly if not quite every church in the colony on behalf of the Mission, and his lantern lectures were very popular.

Of cheerful disposition, and very pleasing address, Mr. Weller is eminently suited for "the work of an evangelist," and has been the instrument of leading many souls to the Saviour. Everywhere he has succeeded in getting hold of the young people connected with the churches, his present sphere proving no exception. Being known by face unto all the churches of Queensland which are in Christ, his portrait will be recognised and welcomed wherever the *Queensland Baptist* finds a reader.



**NOTE:** Mr Weller was president of the Baptist Association twice (1904-5 and 1928-9) and was honoured for public service with an OBE. He had a distinguished record in military chaplaincy in war and peace, being awarded the E.D. After pastoring Townsville, he moved to Toowoomba (1900-13) and then served as pastor of Nundah church for 16 years until his retirement in 1930. He lived on for another nine years remaining active in chaplaincy (military & hospital) and Baptist Union work.

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## ***Baptist Principles - Rediscovering an Identity***

by David Parker

One of the aims of the British Baptist Historical Society is to "advance awareness of Baptist principles." Since there is so much discussion about the nature and function of Baptist churches and the denomination today, this article takes a leaf out of the British Society's book, and discusses the importance and nature of Baptist distinctives in Queensland a century ago compared with the present time. Reflection on this issue is needed if the denomination is to re-discover its identity and mission.

It would be expected that when the denomination was first establishing itself as an organization with the formation of the Baptist Association (later, Union) in 1877, there would be good reason to explain why another denominational structure was needed. Hence, many of the early presidential addresses and articles in the Baptist press touched on this matter.

The same would apply to the establishment of individual churches and the opening of their buildings. Many reports indicate that on these occasions visiting ministers, frequently denominational leaders, gave forthright addresses explaining why Baptist theology was biblical.

### **Establishing Identity**

At the 1882 Assembly for example, **Rev. William Moore**, one of the founders of the first Baptist church in Brisbane in 1855, fresh from a visit to England, spoke earnestly on the topic, "How best to promote, advance, and sustain the principles we believe to be right." (see *Old Freeman* Dec 1882) He emphasised that although Baptists held "identical" interests with other Protestants in regard to the basics of their Christian faith, and they were not "opposed to any who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth", yet there were points in which they differed. He stressed that they were not merely matters "of opinion, but warranted by Scriptural authority, and which, as a matter of conscience, compel us to take the position we occupy today, not in opposition to any of our brethren, but for conscience sake."

The most obvious difference he noted was baptism, followed closely by church government, especially independence. In regard to the first, he felt there was little to discuss - the authority of Scripture left no option. He was pleased to see increasing agreement from other denominations on the biblical justification for believers' baptism and he looked forward to greater unity on this and other matters.

In regard to church government, he felt the independent system in general suited the colonial situation very well, yet he wondered if it were not just a little too free; some churches became strong and virile, but there were others that were "weak and small", which created frustration and disappointment amongst their members and difficulties for further advancement. He called for greater unity and better cooperation and assistance at the denominational level as one means of tackling the problem. Another was the provision of training for pastors and church workers.

Another prominent leader, **Rev. William Higlett**, took a somewhat similar stance in 1886 (*Old Freeman* Nov 1886). Speaking at a time when there was a strong move for the union of Protestant churches as a means of strengthening Christian witness, he too dismissed the idea that fundamental differences were "little ceremonial observances". Instead, he claimed that denominational loyalty involved "loyalty to an explicit command, it is loyalty to the truth and to Christ himself." He was quite prepared to compromise on doubtful matters and mere customs, but "we cannot be unfaithful to Christ."

He pointed to recent census figures which showed a decline in Baptist support, and explained that it was not due to lack of church planting or evangelism (which had been satisfactory, although more could have been done.) The cause in his view was that "we have been lacking in denominational loyalty." By pointing to Baptist growth in other parts of the world, he urged his listeners to see that emphasis on believers' baptism did not prevent growth. Indeed, he pointed to the laxity of the General Baptists in England and Canada on baptism and church membership and noted their decline in growth. Thus he called for greater adherence to Baptist principles, more effective training, more literature on the subject and a focusing of ministry through Baptist channels.

In his third presidential term in 1907, **Rev. William Poole** of South Brisbane Vulture Street, talked about the denomination, even though church unity was still in the air (*Year Book* 1907-8). He stressed the nature of the Baptist Association as a voluntary cooperative organization; its chief role was to enable Baptists to work together in evangelizing Queensland, strengthening churches, engaging in overseas missions, training men for the ministry and social action.

A thoughtful approach to the subject could be expected from the College principal, **Rev. T.J. Malyon**, in his retiring presidential address to the 1911 Assembly. He too stressed what was in common with other evangelical Protestants, but he suggested that Baptist congregational principles needed modifying with some "well-tested elements of Connexionalism, Presbyterianism or otherwise" because the inefficiencies of independence were a problem for progress in the 20th century. (Observing the extent of denominational growth and dominance since, it is clear that some of his ideas have certainly been adopted, but whether with the outcomes he sought is another matter!)

Yet he went on to emphasise the "distinguishing principle which inevitably leads out in various directions." He declared, "we are Baptists, not accidentally, nor of choice only, but by intelligent conviction." (Like a number of today's Baptists, many church leaders a century ago did not have a long history in Baptist churches, but had been brought up in other denominations; however, many of them made the change for strong doctrinal and spiritual reasons rather than just geographical or social convenience.)

Malyon explained how believers' baptism as the symbol of incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ is integrally related to the entire gospel and to the indwelling of the risen Lord in the believer. (Others hold to believers' baptism but only Baptististic theology integrates it so fully.)

"To these facts, and to the principles vitally and logically involved in them," Malyon said, "the Baptists are able to bear special and uncompromising testimony - the spirituality of the Church as a fellowship of regenerate person; the sufficiency of the New Testament as a rule of faith; the separation of the Church from the world; the right and duty of personal study and private judgment, and of action according to faith; the priesthood of all believers; the spirituality of individual religion and of the Church, leading up to a larger unity in Christ Jesus."

All this, he said, was represented in believers' baptism, and if it is divine truth, then we have an obligation to share it - a challenge not only to home and foreign missions but also to holy living. The other side of this conviction is that it cannot be compromised by others who hold inconsistent views, which may involve separation. Yet, for Malyon, the greater truth is that holding such a conviction is not a matter of sectarian denominationalism but promoting the wider fellowship of all who share the new life in Christ. It is important to establish close bonds within the local church and express loving pastoral care for its members, while at the same time rejecting worldliness.

Malyon reminded his listeners that these convictions which brought the Baptist movement into existence should not be compromised even in the name of charity, for "the greatest charity consists in telling the greatest amount of truth."

This kind of integrated approach to Baptist distinctives is found in the classic books on the subject that have influenced generations of Baptists. These include works by W. S. Hudson and E. Y. Mullins from the United States, and from England, H. Wheeler Robinson, E. A. Payne, and especially, Henry Cook, whose book *What Baptists Stand For*, originally published in 1947, is again in print. Cook devoted chapters to the supremacy of Scripture, the nature of the church (including particular sections on Christian unity), the place of baptism and liberty.

Australian Baptists have read **Clifford Press** booklets on the topic over many years, with contributions by E.V. Marks, B.S. Brown, E. Roberts-Thompson, A.C. Prior and T.F. Keyte to name a few. Ken Manley's *Baptists - their Faith and Heritage* is one of the most recent and comprehensive publications. He presented a historical outline of the development of Baptists before looking at their distinctive beliefs. He began the latter with attention to the gospel and the Lordship of Christ before moving into Scripture, the new birth and the fellowship of believers. Other sections dealt with the priesthood of all believers, the ministry, worship and the church meeting, baptism and church membership. A final section was devoted to relations with other Christians and liberty.

The 1994 BHSQ publication, *Baptists in Queensland* also sets out the background, beliefs and practices of local churches as an introduction to new Christians and as a study booklet for church groups.

### Seeking Identity

In recent times, the close relationships between baptism, the regenerate church and the gospel have perhaps been less emphasised. This is been attributable to developments in theology, popular trends such as church growth and renewal and to broader changes in the church and social life. Denominationalism has come under pressure due to increased mobility, the influx of new Christians and a suspicion of established authorities. Legal and property matters as well ordination remain as denominational responsibilities, but larger churches in particular take more liberties even in these matters than before, at

least in practice. But much of the initiative and responsibility for church life no longer comes from the denomination but from outside independent and commercial groups; the increasing variety amongst churches means that there is no necessary similarity between churches of the same denomination any more. These forces have affected Baptists more than many others because of their traditionally decentralised structure and keen spirit of independence. Australian Baptist churches vary too, all the way from the most traditional and conservative to the kind of social justice thinking reflected in *Faith and Freedom* magazine edited in Perth. So the question arises, "What does identify a Baptist church today, apart from organizational membership in the Baptist Union and personal and historical links with other Baptist churches?"

In Queensland, the slogan "Baptist family of churches" has been used, but any group of Christians could rightly use such a metaphor. (The proposed new slogan, "a healing empowering community", does not identify clearly a gospel-based church, and has misleading overtones.) Biblical authority and evangelism remain prominent concerns, even if sometimes in the breach rather than in reality. (Research suggests biblical literacy is at a low ebb in evangelical churches.) Believers' baptism remains strongly held as the biblical norm, but the ordinances are generally viewed in such strongly Zwinglian terms as tokens of individual faith that they are in danger of being marginalised, rather than being linked to the rest of our theology and spirituality with the Word as genuine aids to faith. What is also of importance is the trend towards open membership to accommodate those with backgrounds in other denominations, which as already noted, was regarded by some Queensland Baptist forefathers as a false alternative. However, it does at least seem consistent with the long held tradition of open communion.

Independence is all too prominent a characteristic, both in relation to the denomination and to other Christians. Religious liberty and freedom of conscience also remain as ideals, yet often without the accountability that gives meaning to these convictions; it should also be noted that in particular places rigid sub-cultures and belief systems likely exist which in practice severely restrict such liberties, although on the wider horizon, Baptists can still be found leading the way in radical discipleship. The priesthood of all believers is another traditional distinctive which is difficult to practise, especially in regard to the ministry of women and neglected minorities; furthermore, its place in relation to an increasingly professionalised clergy and the use of secular church management systems is also uncertain.

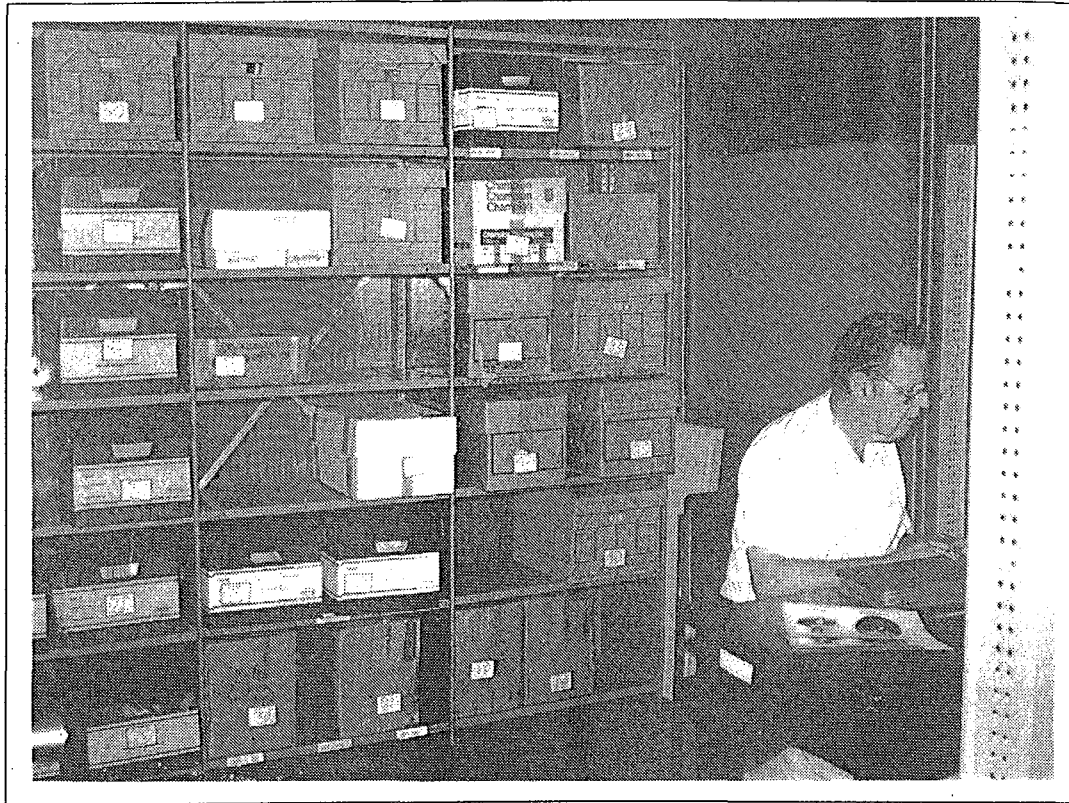
If the original principles which distinguished Baptists from other Protestant Christians are now more widely accepted than they were even a hundred years ago, there might be good reason for placing less emphasis upon Baptist principles per se. It would also mean that there is a case for extending our fellowship more widely and establishing a greater degree of Christian unity. However, there are no tangible signs of breakthrough on these issues as yet. Furthermore, at the denominational level, Baptists in Queensland have fewer formal links with other Christian groups than ever before. At the practical level, support for denominational programs seems to be waning, at least in the financial area. Many churches carry out their programs without much consciousness of other congregations, often because of the sheer pressure of activity, but . . . competition and sectarian separatism are not unknown.

### Radical Believers

All of this suggests that a fresh approach is needed to the question of Baptist identity in the 1990s. Paul Beasley-Murray has offered a possible answer in his recent attractively laid out book, *Radical Believers - the Baptist Way of Being the Church* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1992), which covers all the usual topics of Baptist principles as well as contemporary ones such as women's ministry, social justice, ecumenism and renewal. As such, it is bound to become a contemporary classic.

As the title suggests, he tackles the problem of the way Baptists, who came into existence through the application of radical Biblical principles, have often tended to become highly conformist. Therefore he urges his readers to re-discover the roots of Baptist theology and practice, remembering that "radical" comes from the Latin "radix" meaning "root". He writes, "The Baptist way of being the church is not just one of several options open to us. Our study of the God's Word leads us to believe that this is God's way of living our life together. Baptists believe in getting back to the roots of the Christian faith. We seek to root out life together in the Word of God." (p 6)

As Rev. David Coffey, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain said in his introduction to the book, "The question of identity should be on the agenda wherever Baptists gather. . . . We have been robbed of our distinctive identity and a new generation needs to restore this identity with the conviction that we are not building a Baptist empire for the twenty-first century but rather are dealing with Gospel, Church and Kingdom issues in ways which justify our description as Radical Believers." (p 4) Who knows where such a project might lead us, but we certainly need a commitment and a forum for the task if we want to retain our integrity and discover our mission as a part of the Christian family.



Author, Mel Williams checking last minute details of his *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland* in the Baptist Archives before the final editing. The picture shows some of the new shelving installed late in 1994.

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