

# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland  
(formerly: *Baptist Historical of Qld Newsletter*)

No. 35 November 1996

## Review and Prospect

Another year comes to its close as our history goes on. The work of the Society has also continued, and we can report another productive time, with publications and promotions to the fore.

We began with the micro-fishing of some of our oldest documents; we continued with two more volumes of our history, based on 19th and early 20th century writings; and the ever industrious Eric and Rosemary Kopitke have issued Part 1 of the intended two part publication of Queensland German Baptist Cemetery Monumental Inscriptions. This last work has some fascinating aspects to it, not the least of which are the almost archaeological details of physically locating lost cemetery grounds, mapping of same, and the unexpected popular demand for the work once published. Two small print runs were very quickly sold out, and the third is almost gone, within two months. There is obviously a strong popular interest in family history in our community.

The Annual Convention once again gave the Society an opportunity for a good public presence, and our appreciation goes to Bob Hutton for facilitating our involvement in the Convention. Some keen interest was noted, book sales were solid, and some worthwhile contacts were made which need following up.

The one disappointment for the year was the cancellation of our Annual Presentation. It was intended to profile the history of Evangelism among Queensland Baptists, to complement the Franklin Graham visit and to feature the Gospel Wagon's Jubilee. Unfortunately, we realised the finite limitations of our active members, whose very busy-ness made the project unattainable. However, things are in hand to have a strong presentation in 1997, with the idea at this stage being to focus on a particular ministry oriented family in a major church. More specific details will be announced soon.

Once again, I want to express personal thanks to all the Society members who have worked so diligently in the cause throughout the year. **Meetings for the coming year will be held at the BG Wilson Centre at Brunswick Street, at 2.00 pm on March 1, June 14, and November 8.** Interested people are invited to join with us at the meetings, and membership is open to those who wish to continue the work of preserving, publishing and promoting our Baptist History.

We welcome Dr Ken Smith as the new Secretary of the Society and thank Pastor Rod Benson who willingly stood in as Acting Secretary during the year. We also thank Rev. Vince Chataway who continues as Treasurer.

*Les Ball, President, BHSQ*

### **The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland**

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## Pastoral Profiles No 11

### Rev. J.M. Alexander

by William Higlett

Reproduced from the *Queensland Baptist* Nov, 1898



REV. J. M. ALEXANDER.

REV. JOHN McNIGHT ALEXANDER was born in New Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1864. Shortly afterwards his parents removed to Lugar, also in Ayrshire, at which place he passed through the ordinary school curriculum, which was not, however, of a very high standard.

At the early age of eight years he lost his best earthly friend, protector, and spiritual adviser by the death of his mother. His religious training now consisted almost entirely of formal though strict attendance at church and Sunday school. Subsequently in the village of Cronberry, he was brought into contact with a new religious force. A small but godly band of people, locally known as Revivalists, but more correctly Baptists, were holding cottage meetings nightly.

Attracted to their meetings he became convinced of sin, and was ultimately led to a knowledge of the Saviour. The nearest Baptist Church was at Kilmarnock, seventeen miles distant, and thither the young convert *walked* to receive baptism, being then about nineteen years of age. Following the arduous work of a miner, his little leisure was devoted to improving his education, and to the preaching of the gospel which had won his heart.

In 1884 he sailed for Queensland, and for

two years after his arrival continued to follow his occupation as a miner, embracing every opportunity of preaching the gospel. A visit to Melbourne was made subservient to his desire for self-improvement. Returning to Queensland, he settled at Ipswich, and Rev. W.V. Young perceiving in him good promise for the future, engaged him as assistant to work at the outstations connected with the Ipswich church, and especially at Rosewood.

Meanwhile Mr Young rendered him all possible help in his education to qualify him for the work of the ministry. A revival followed at Rosewood, and after a memorable baptismal service, nineteen persons were admitted to the church in August, 1886. Steps were also taken towards the erection of a new church, which was opened the following April.

In September, 1887, Mr. Alexander resigned his connection with Rosewood. A year afterwards we find him assisting Rev. W. Whale at Wharf Street, Brisbane, and subsequently becoming assistant pastor at Petrie Terrace Church, where Rev. W. Moore was then labouring. Eventually Mr. Alexander was invited to the pastorate in November, 1890, which position he has continued to occupy until the present time. During his pastorate a new building has been erected, towards which a considerable sum had been gathered by Mr. Moore and his friends in the earlier history of the church. The old building has been turned into a manse.

Always a diligent student, he has acquired a good command of the English tongue, and an acquaintance with the classics. A year ago he was appointed vice-president of the Baptist Association. Failure of health, however, compelled him to resign the office, and we regret to learn that the same cause has now led him to tender his resignation of the pastorate of Petrie Terrace Church. We trust that complete rest may lead to a complete recovery of health for further service.

#### Note:

In 1898, Mr Alexander was granted six months' leave of absence in the hope that his health might improve, but in June of 1899, his resignation was finally accepted and he moved out of the state to a cooler climate. In 1892 he had married Miss Edith Vinter.

## Pastoral Profiles No 12

### Rev. Thomas Leitch

by William Higlett

Reproduced from the *Queensland Baptist* Dec, 1898

Rev. Thomas Leitch was born in the south of Scotland in 1849, where he received a strict and careful religious training, his parents being Presbyterians. Arriving in Queensland in 1863 his parents settled at Bald Hills, where at the age of nineteen he joined the Presbyterian Church having been converted through reading a sermon by Robert Murray McCheyne.

His first work for the Lord was in the Sunday school, where Rev. Jas. Stewart, was superintendent, and Rev. S. Brown, now of Goondiwindi, a scholar. It speaks well for that small country church, worshipping in a slab building, that no less than three members have gone forth from it into the ministry of the Gospel.

Taking occasional services for Methodist lay preachers was followed by appointment on the plan. Becoming an enquirer as to believer's baptism, a long mental and spiritual struggle resulted in his immersion by Rev. Jas. Voller in the Wharf Street Church, then under the ministry of the late Rev. B. G. Wilson.

On the removal of Rev. J. Straughen to Ipswich in 1875, Mr. Leitch was invited to become his successor as city Missionary in connection with the Jireh Church, the duties including conducting services at the outstation then known as Paddington, now the Windsor Road Church. This position he held for four years, hard work being varied by diligent reading and study. In 1887 (actually 1877 - ed.) a church of 19 members was formed. The following year an enlargement of the building became necessary and on Good Friday, 1878 the building was reopened and Mr. Leitch duly installed as pastor.

The building again proving too small a larger site was secured, and in 1888 the present fine building was opened by Rev. J. Kingsford. The cost, exclusive of site, was £1200, and the building will comfortably seat 400 persons. There was a debt of only £200, and even this is due to the misfortunes of the financial crisis of 1893. The present membership of the church is 172.

Mr. Leitch has drawn around him a prayerful and devoted band of workers. The Sunday school has over 200 scholars, and the Endeavour Society is one of the largest in Queensland. For the year 1891-2, Mr. Leitch was President of the Baptist Association, and for 1895-6, president of the Queensland C.E.



Rev. THOMAS LEITCH.

Union.

He has devoted his time and strength chiefly to pulpit preparation and pastoral visitation, but has never failed to respond to the calls of temperance work. Largely owing to his exertions, the erection of a public house on Red Hill has been successfully resisted.

With the exception of Rev. J. Kingsford he is the senior minister in the denomination, and with one other exception (Rev. D. F. Mitchell) the senior of any denomination in Brisbane. Still in the prime of life, we trust he has many years of fruitful service before him.

#### Note:

The hope that Mr Leitch would have "many years of fruitful service before him" proved to be true. Mr Leitch served the Windsor Road church for the remarkable period of 52 years, finally retiring in 1929, after having celebrated his own and the church's Jubilee in 1927. Later in 1929, he took a trip to his homeland, but took ill on his return and after a short period of hospitalization, died in Port Said, Egypt on 16 September. His body was returned to Brisbane and was buried at Toowong Cemetery on 13 November.

## **The Danish Baptists of Freestone Creek**

**By Melvin Williams**

(Reproduced from Journal of the Royal Queensland Historical Society August 1996 pp 108-112 by permission of author)

Freestone Creek is a farming area on the Darling Downs about 27 kilometres north-east of Warwick. A Danish Baptist church operated in this area for just over ten years from 1868 to 1897. This comparatively minor event is of some significance for those tracing Scandinavian history in Queensland. It was also the only ethnic Baptist church in Queensland last century apart from the German churches scattered to the west and south of Ipswich. The story of the church largely centres around three men two of whom were pastors) and their families. They were A. K. Jansen (later Jensen), J. P. Hansen and J. C. Petersen.

The main period of Danish immigration was over the thirty years 1870-1901. Most immigrants were motivated by economic factors and a desire for social betterment. For some, other reasons - political and religious - were prominent, such as the desire to escape military service and, in the case of Baptists, periodic persecution in the name of the state church.

Cumulative statistics for Danish arrivals in Queensland are: 554 (1871); 2225 (1881); 3071 (1891); and 3138 (1901). More came to Queensland than any other Australian colony because of the *Immigration Act* (1863) which provided free passage for farmers, farm labourers, artisans, domestic servants and other favoured categories. On the fertile Darling Downs blocks of 160 acres of scrubland were made available or 40 acres nearer towns. On arrival some Danes went south because of the heat. Others were landed at Maryborough, Mackay, Townsville and Bundaberg from where some, deciding against farming, went on to the goldfields. The assisted scheme concluded in 1901 after which the Danish community came more scattered. (1)

The Danish border with Germany moved frequently but after the 1864 war with Germany there was deep antagonism by Danes towards Germans which was reflected among Danes in Queensland. This militated against the interests of Lutheranism in Queensland as Danes did not join the more established German churches but endeavoured to establish their own. This proved difficult as pastors were hard to obtain and to support. Lutheran

churches at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, and at Maryborough had a fitful existence and Lutherans elsewhere tended to be lost to other denominations.

The Baptist Church in Denmark came into being through the labour of J.G. Onken in Gemini and therefore was really part of the German Baptist movement. In 1849 Danish Baptists became the fourth district of the German Union but separation after 1864 left them weak. There was no trained ministry although there were recognised preachers. Communicant membership may have been less than 2000 at that time and only reached 4000 by 1899. Emigration, particularly to the United States, sapped their numbers. Some few chose to come to Australia. (2)

### **Beginnings at Freestone Creek**

On arrival Danish migrants were usually processed at Kangaroo Point on the south side of the Brisbane River. They would then move to areas for farming development where earlier Danes had settled. One such early settler was Tinus Kierkegaard who came in 1864 and who, by virtue of his seniority, was an important figure in the community. Although he was of the national Danish church background, he was friendly towards the Methodist and Baptist work and in 1897 linked with the Methodists by becoming both a trustee and a church steward. Members of the family also belonged to the Methodist church until they moved off the land to reside in Warwick in 1936.(3)

Anders Kristian Jansen arrived in 1883, following his brother Soren who in 1878 had taken up land west of Caboolture. Anders had no interest in the land and settled in Brisbane where he became a member of the Jireh Baptist Church in Fortitude Valley. A church meeting minute of 29 May 1883 reads:

"The pastor submitted the names of Anders Kristian Hansen, Kristine Marie Jensen (husband and wife) and Anne Marie Jacobson who brought letters of dismission from a church of our order in Denmark. Bro Renton moved and Bro Pritchard seconded that the friends receive the right hand of fellowship at the next celebration of the order of

(Continued on page 5)

(Danish Baptists Continued from page 4)  
 the Lord's Supper. Carried unanimously."

In Denmark Jansen had been recognised as a lay preacher and he soon began visiting and preaching among the now considerable Danish community at Freestone Creek. A few months later J.C. Petersen, a farmer, wrote on behalf of some Danes at Freestone Creek supporting Jansen's application to the Jireh church for formal recognition as a preacher. Recognition as a preacher was taken very seriously at Jireh which was a church with a distinct Calvinistic constitution in which preaching was grouped together with baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances of the Gospel. Jansen was commissioned on 28 June 1884 and his certificate, the virtual equivalent of ordination is preserved. He continued his occasional weekend ministry, gathering a small community, while looking for a way to support himself in the Freestone Creek area. As he was not a farmer, the matter of support was to become contentious.

On 15 Oct 1886 the *Queensland Freeman* reported as follows:

"A.C. Jansen of Jireh Church has paid occasional visits to the district. The Rev William Higlett [who was there by invitation] baptised a man and his wife in Swan Creek. In the evening [14 September 1886] we formally constituted ten Danish Baptists into a Christian church. Bro Jansen is looking for work in the area so he can minister to these people."

The church was received into the Baptist Association of Queensland at its annual meeting on 3 November 1886. However, it was not until May 1888 that Jansen moved from Brisbane and became

full-time pastor but without monetary support. The *Queensland Freeman* of 15 June 1888 reported that he was ministering to 120 families residing in the neighbourhood and that he intended to secure a piece of land and erect a building. He appealed to Baptist friends for assistance.

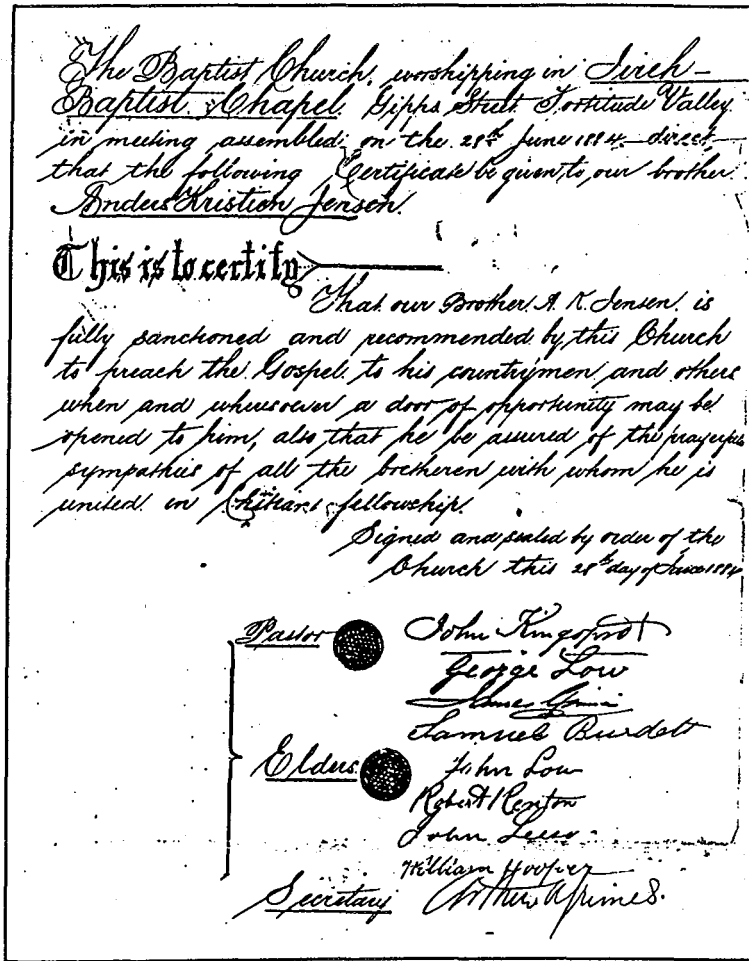
However, by September of the next year the Association had before it a letter from the Rev William Higlett who had kept in touch with the church concerning 'the affairs of the church' and the following month a deputation of the Revs W. Richer and William Higlett reported on their visit to it. Differences had arisen

because Jansen - note the change of spelling - decided to reside in Warwick, where he had found work, and minister at weekends. It was felt he could not properly work the church that way but the visitors' advice was to continue the meetings. Jansen's ministry, however, was rejected by those at Freestone Creek but continued to be supported for a time by those at Upper Swan Creek. The Association's annual report of 4 November 1890 stated that the

church was called Upper Swan Creek with a membership of 16 and no pastor.

It appears that those at Freestone Creek determined to have a full-time pastor and made inquiries through Danish Baptist churches in the United States. As a result, they sent a call to the Rev Jens Peter Hansen who arrived in October 1891 with a certificate of ordination from Scandinavian Churches, Illinois, USA. The Association minutes

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*(Danish Baptists Continued from page 5)*

of 5 January 1892 record a letter from the Lower Freestone Church secretary, J.C. Petersen, advising that Bro Hansen had arrived, settled in, and was applying for some financial assistance as was customary in the first year of a new ministry. The request came at a bad time and the Association could not assist.

Hansen's ministry continued for five years and the Hansens' story appeared in part in a Danish newspaper in 1925. On arrival in Brisbane they were welcomed by the Jensens, now living there, with whom they stayed for some months before moving to Freestone to stay with the Petersens. The article tells of Hansen's struggle to survive. Bro Petersen supplied him with such necessities as a plough, harrow and a cow with a 'pay me as you can' approach. Some farmers and even Barnes & Co., the millers, did the same but making the farm pay was difficult. Hansen's wife despaired, 'We will never get any further, it is better if we pack up and go'. However, a good crop of potatoes one year sold at a high price enabling them eventually to buy a better farm and so stay in the area.

Church membership in 1893 was 19, although the number ministered to was much larger and over subsequent years the roll was either side of 20. Occasional reports appear in the *Queensland Baptist* - usually after a Baptist Association or Preacher's Society visit. In November 1895 Stephen Glassop, secretary of the Preacher's Society, visited at the invitation of J.C. Petersen. His report is one of few giving names of families associated with the church. He describes his day thus:

"Reached Swan Creek railway station at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday night and after a drive of six miles reached Mr Petersen's home where stayed the night. After an early breakfast next morning a start was made for Mr Samuel Neilson's, ten miles distant, where service was held at 10 o'clock, the name of the place being Swanfield, Upper Swan Creek. Mr Peter Hansen was present. From Swanfield we had a nine-mile ride to Mr Rassmussen's at Mount Sturt, Yan Gan. Here the service was held at a quarter to three o'clock in a large barn which was decorated with boughs. A long table covered with a snowy-white table cloth occupied the centre of the building. After the service the use of the table was quickly revealed as Mrs Johnson had generously provided refreshments for the whole congregation. At this service were brethren who had lived in Brisbane and made inquiry concerning the churches there. From Mt Sturt we drove back to Petersens, Lower Freestone Creek, where service was held at a quarter to eight. This

was the largest congregation of the day, many not being able to get into the large room. The preacher felt quite at home with the hearty farmers of the Warwick district. It is hoped that the Rev J. Glover of Toowoomba will be able to occasionally take services in the district."

In April 1896 Stephen Glassop again visited the area for Easter Sunday following a similar pattern of visits, except that the 11 o'clock service was held at 'the residence of the Rev J. Peter Neilsen, Danish Baptist minister.' This is puzzling as previously Swanfield is described as the residence of Samuel Neilsen. The name appears nowhere else.

No further reports of the Lower Freestone church appear in the *Queensland Baptist* nor do the minutes of the Baptist Association reveal anything except that the church closed in 1897. No reason is stated. The Rev T. U. Symonds visited from Rosewood and took a continued interest. In February 1898 he moved to Beaudesert where from time to time he travelled on horseback over Spicer's Gap to conduct services in the Hansen and Petersen homes. The Rev Peter Hansen did not continue in the ministry after 1897 but continued farming to raise a family of sons and daughters. Tragedy overtook them when a week after the marriage of their eldest daughter, the eldest son, Harvey, died suddenly due to diabetes. Mrs Hansen died of cancer in June 1919 after suffering greatly for nine months, another son eventually took over the farm allowing Peter to move to Warwick.

In the interval between the closure of the Lower Freestone ministry and the beginnings of the Warwick Baptist church in 1911, some former adherents associated with the Methodist church. These included the Petersen family. E.W. Petersen was secretary of the Church Trust for many years before moving away from the district. Although not part of the Warwick Baptist church at its beginning, Peter Hansen later became a member as did his son J.C. Hansen. However, among the names of the ten founding members of the Warwick Baptist church are the names of Mr and Mrs J.C. Petersen. Mr Petersen was responsible for securing the church's first meeting place, Emmanuel Hall, which was first rented, then acquired. The Petersen family is still represented in the church membership today.

#### Endnotes

1. O. Koivulangas & J. S. Martin, *The Scandinavians in Australia*. 1986.
2. Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, London 1966.
3. Baptist Union of Queensland Archives including the *Queensland Freeman*, the *Queensland Baptist*; Minutes of Jireh Baptist Church; Minutes of the Queensland Baptist Association; and histories of the Baptist churches at Beaudesert and Warwick, have been used in this paper.

## Secretary's Annual Report 1996

Future historians looking back to 1996 will probably view the year as one of rapid change for Baptists in Queensland. Some new churches were planted; some old churches closed. Patterns of church attendance and lay ministry roles are shifting, as are the liturgies, leadership styles and organisational structures of many of our churches. The Baptist Union of Queensland underwent a major restructure; the denominational college assumed a new name to become the Queensland Baptist College of Ministries, reflecting recent developments of significance.

In all these areas, and more, the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland has an important role to play. In fulfilling its three key purposes - promotion, preservation and publication - the Society is able to inform and educate members of the Baptist family of churches as to their collective heritage, their historical distinctives, and their inherent diversity. The measure of our success in achieving these purposes will largely be determined by our ability to generate enthusiasm for Baptist history among younger people, and to effectively recruit new members. These are significant challenges for the Society as we approach the new millennium.

Through the past year the Society's activities have continued to expand. Of particular note is the ongoing microfilming project, funded by a generous Baplink grant, whereby fragile and valuable church records are being copied. To date records of the Baptist Association of Queensland (to 1927), the City Tabernacle Baptist Church (to 1927), the Ipswich Baptist Church (to 1906), the South Brisbane Baptist Church (to 1907), and the *Queensland Baptist* newspaper (to 1898) have been microfilmed. In March 1996 the Society published *The Joshua Jenyns History of the Baptist Church in Brisbane*, written by Baptist pioneer Joshua Jenyns in 1905. Another publication was launched at the September Queensland Baptist Convention, titled *Remember All the Way*. The first part of a series of Baptist cemetery records was also launched. Recently, valuable diaries written by Rev. B.G. Wilson were discovered in the possession of some of Wilson's descendants, and have become available to the Society.

During the year two members received PhD awards in History from the University of Queensland, and we congratulate Drs Pat Godman and Stan Nickerson on their achievements. There has been a slight increase in membership; Rev. Dr David Parker continues to serve as honorary archivist of the Baptist Archives; and sales of BHSQ publications continue, particularly of the booklet, *Baptists in Queensland*, which must be approaching the status of a 'Baptist bestseller.' Also in 1996 the President of the Society was appointed to the editorial team of *Tempo*, a quarterly magazine encouraging Christian leaders to become spiritually, intellectually and practically effective in ministry.

Finally, I wish to thank our President, Dr Les Ball, for his support and enthusiasm through the year, and our Treasurer, Rev. Vince Chataway, for his able service.

Rod Benson, Acting Secretary

## Financial Report 1996

General Fund		Publication Fund	
<b>Income</b>		<b>Income</b>	
Brought Forward	825.35	Brought forward	564.67
Subs and Donations	319.00	Baplink grant (microfilm)	1200.00
Bank Interest	14.24	Sale of books	1068.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>1158.59</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2833.18</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
QB Forum	153.38	Production costs of books	607.60
BAD tax	5.25	Microfiche costs*	513.10
Misc	6.00	(overpayment - to be refunded)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>164.63</b>	Microfilming project	1250.00
Carried forward	993.96	<b>Total</b>	<b>2370.70</b>
		Carried forward	462.48

## **The Baptist Archives (Qld) in 1996**

During the year there have been quite a number of family history enquiries. Accessions to the Archives have continued during the year, with new material including a large number of Baptist Union files and material from Tarampa, Gordon Park/Jireh, Clayfield, Nundah and Flinders churches. As a result of this, we have run out of shelf space, and need more shelving urgently.

The indexing of material in the Archives continues. During the year all major articles on Queensland in the *Queensland Baptist* have been indexed, a total of about 6600 entries. The indexing of the *Queensland Freeman* by Rod Benson is continuing. All other regular archival material has already been indexed. The indexing system is designed for use on a computer, but basic hard copy prints out also available. In addition to indexing of material in the Archives, there are also listings of some material from elsewhere including the Baptist College library, and the John Oxley (Qld) and Mitchell (NSW) libraries. We have just begun another major project - a computerised database of churches and ministers. Thanks is due to Rev. John Ward for assistance on this and some other projects throughout the year.

The first stage of the microfiche project has been completed. It covers the QB up to 1898, BU executive and Assembly to 1927 and 1922, and 19th century records of City Tabernacle, Ipswich and South Brisbane. We have acquired a basic fiche reader, but a more efficient unit is desirable. The next stages in the project would include 19th century records of other churches and then moving into the 20th century. The *Australian Baptist* is an urgent need and steps are being undertaken which it is hoped will see this large task begun.

During the year, the Baptist Union has distributed two items to all churches - the Church Archives Register and the leaflet, A Guide to the Management of Church Records. As a result of this and other publicity, there have been some enquiries from churches about the Archives and records management.

The printed guides to the Archives, church records management and the Church Archives Register have been updated. Others to be attended to will be the Tour of Baptist Brisbane, Archives rules and Archives policy. A guide to cemeteries for Baptist family history research is in process, the first part of which was published in *Forum* in July.

Numerous other projects could be attempted if more financial and personal assistance were available. A continuing need is the care and development of the photographic collection, while there is also opportunity for searching out new sources of records around the state. People with sign-writing and display skills could be used to develop a heritage display. Many areas of Baptist life in Queensland are awaiting research, both in the current Archives material and in other collections.

## **Book Review**

### **Mayurbhanj Messengers** by Ailsa Rolley

published by The Evangelical Missionary Society in Mayurbhanj  
1996 ISBN 0-646-27508-9

Mayurbhanj Messengers is the centenary story of a missionary society working in the northern part of Orissa State, India. The mission is based in Queensland and its first missionary was Miss Kate Allanby of Windsor Road Baptist Church. Miss Allanby accompanied Martha Plested, of Jireh Baptist Church who was Queensland's first Baptist missionary. They worked together on a Baptist field, but Miss Allanby soon moved away and a new society was begun. Never a large mission, it has been closely connected with the Beaudesert Baptist Church. Its current missionary family is Graham and Gladys Staines.

The centenary history is an anecdotal account of the missionaries and their national coworkers and converts, well illustrated and attractively presented with a striking colour cover. It is available from the author at 2 Laura Court, Beaudesert, 4285 at a cost of \$17.50 inc. postage. The Baptist Archives appreciates the copy which the author has made available.