

The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

(formerly: Baptist Historical Society of Qld Newsletter)

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'Women who made a Difference' - End in Sight

Marking "150" with a Celebration of Queensland Women

After more than a year of activity, we hope to finalise the current project celebrating the life and work of Baptist women in the next few months so it can be ready for publication early in the new year. It is intended to launch it in association with "Q150", the state wide commemorations in 2009 to mark 150 years since the separation of Queensland from NSW as a colony (and later state) in its own right.

More than twenty women will be featured in the book which covers the entire period of time that Baptists have existed in Queensland. They include the first Baptist missionary, two World War I Nursing Sisters, the first female optometrist in Queensland, the founder of a prominent girls' school, "the Stamp Lady" who raised thousands of dollars for missionary work by processing used postage stamps, and the wife of a prominent South Brisbane bus company proprietor. There are also other missionaries, housewives, pastors' wives and a deaconess who was a former missionary to indigenous people.

The project was launched at a function on Sept 21, 2007 held at Clayfield Baptist Church which was addressed by Ros Gooden of GIA. In her address she highlighted the significant contribution made by Queensland to Baptist mission work.

We hope to publish this project in book form and are also considering some forms of electronic publishing. It will consist of short chapters on each of the women as well as photographs. It will be a companion volume to the earlier book by Rev Mel Williams, "Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland" which featured people such as James Swan, the Kingsford and Grimes families and T.B. Stevens.

We would like to add a few extra names, so we would welcome additional information. We want to make this a worthy contribution to "Q150" because of the importance that churches and Christian people, especially women have made to separation in the first place and to the on-going life of Queensland.

Essay Competition

We hope to announce the results of the 2nd Baptist Heritage Queensland Essay Competition in our next issue. The prize is \$100 and a year's complimentary membership in Baptist Heritage Queensland (the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland). The topic is: *In light of your awareness of the historical development of Baptist distinctives and current circumstances, what does it mean to be a Baptist in Queensland today?* The first competition was held in 2006 and the winner was Darren Clark. For more information, please contact BHQ.

Next meeting – Change of Date

The next meeting of Baptist Heritage Queensland, the Annual meeting, will be held at the Baptist Church Archives, QB Centre, Gaythorne on **Nov 7 at 2pm**, one week later than originally advertised.

<p>Baptist Heritage Queensland <i>The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland</i> (est. 1984)</p> <p>Membership (2008) Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p>President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au</p> <p>Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith, 110 White St, Graceville 4075 Phone 3379 6117 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com</p> <p>http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm</p> <p>BWA Baptist Heritage & Identity Commission www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org</p>	<p>CONTENTS</p> <p>Qld Baptist Forum No 70 Aug 2008</p> <p>Women who made a Difference—: Eliza Ann Fewings by Bill Hughes p 2</p> <p>Celebrating in 2009 by David Parker p 4</p> <p>Spurgeon and the South Pacific By late C P Skinner p 5</p> <p>Checking our Vital Signs by David Parker p 6</p> <p>Index for Issues 51-70 (2002-2008) p 7</p>
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Eliza Ann Fewings (1857-1940)

By Bill Hughes

Baptist Heritage Queensland is working on a project to celebrate the contribution of Queensland Baptist Women to the life of the church and the community. Women from many walks of life will be included. The founder of one of Queensland's leading girls' school and prominent educationalist is featured here in an article written by Bill Hughes, Assistant Archivist.



Eliza Ann Fewings was born on 28 December 1857 at Bristol, England. Her parents were Sarah (*nee* Twining) and Charles Fewings. She was trained as a teacher by her brother, who was Headmaster of the King Edward VI Grammar School at Southampton. She first worked as a teacher at the Roan School in Greenwich for eight years before becoming Headmistress of Dr Williams' Endowed High School for Girls in Dolgelly, North Wales from 1886 to 1896.

She came to Australia in 1896 to take up the position of Headmistress of Brisbane Girls' Grammar School. On 20 May 1896 she was proposed for membership of the Brisbane City Tabernacle Church, having previously been a church member in Bristol, England. Her membership was approved on 15 July 1896.

She was active within the church and, for example, was called upon to make a presentation to Rev William Whale when he was farewelled from the Brisbane Tabernacle in March 1899. She made a "neat little speech" and presented Rev Whale with a purse of sovereigns, collected by ladies from members of the church.

As Headmistress of Brisbane Girls' Grammar she was responsible to an all male Board of Trustees headed by Sir Samuel Griffith, Chief Justice of the Queensland Supreme Court and later the first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. In 1899 Miss Fewings' deputy, Maud Sellers, accused her of academic incompetence. The Trustees upheld the complaint and Miss Fewings was given notice that her employment was to be terminated.

The matter was reported in *The Courier Mail* which suggested that "nothing else had aroused such public interest except federation". *The Queensland Baptist* also referred to the affair as follows:

Quite a storm has been aroused in Brisbane over the Girls' Grammar School. It appears that Miss Sellers, the second mistress, found herself unable to work harmoniously with the head mistress, Miss Fewings, and approached the Trustees, desiring an altered relationship. Communications followed which ended in giving Miss Fewings six months leave of absence... The matter is by no means ended, and we are confident that the British love of fair play will see that Miss Fewings' case is thoroughly sifted. Whatever her educational attainments may or may not be, we have the fullest confidence in the personal character of Miss Fewings, who is an esteemed member of one of our churches.

The following month the matter was again reported on in the denominational newspaper:

Last month we referred to excitement in Brisbane, consequent upon the dismissal by the Trustees of the head mistress of the Girls' Grammar School. Enthusiastic meetings were held, a deputation waited upon the Minister, and questions were asked in Parliament. It appears there was no redress under existing rules, and public interest subsided when Miss Fewings opened a private school at the beginning of the quarter. More, however, will be heard upon the general question of the control of Grammar Schools.

At their meeting in September 1899 the Deacons of the Brisbane Baptist Tabernacle considered a proposal that the church's Sunday School facilities be placed at the disposal of Miss Fewings if she should decide to start a private Girls' School. The Sunday School comprised a large Assembly Hall, a drill hall and a number of well ventilated separate classrooms. In addition, the church was centrally located, being in Wickham Terrace. The deacons agreed to put the proposal before the church members.

The Church Meeting held the following night heard and approved the proposal. In addition a motion

was carried in which the Church Secretary was instructed to send a letter of sympathy and support to Miss Fewings.

On 4 October 1899 the Brisbane High School for Girls started classes in the City Tabernacle's Sunday School rooms with 31 students. It occupied these quarters until 1912 when the school moved to leased premises at "Erneton" on Wickham Terrace. The move to its present location in "Somerville House" (previously owned by the prominent Baptist family of T B Stephens) occurred in 1919. There were originally four boarders at the school and these lived with Miss Fewings at her home "Glen Olive" at Toowong. Within two years of opening the school became the largest girls' school in Queensland with 150 students, based on its reputation of sound teaching.

The School, which is now known as "Somerville House", grew to become one of the most respected schools for girls in Brisbane and it celebrated its centenary in 1999. A brass plaque marking the centenary was placed on the wall of the Brisbane City Tabernacle on 3 February 1999. The plaque is located near the Edward Street door leading to the Sunday School rooms and reads:

The Brisbane High School for Girls
(Somerville House)
Was founded by Miss Eliza Fewings
On 5th October 1899.
This building was its original home
1899-1912
Erected on 3 February 1999 to commemorate the centenary

Miss Fewings abilities were recognised in Brisbane where she became a member of the University Extension Committee, a member of the Council of the Brisbane Technical College and a member of the board of the Brisbane School of Arts.

A further reference to Miss Fewings was made two years later when *The Queensland Baptist* reported on the success of her new venture:

Miss Fewings has had a threefold vindication of her position. First, by an indignant public which only lacked the opportunity of a vote to have put the trustees out of place and out of power. Then by a successful effort to start a "High School for Girls," in which the confidence of parents has taken practical form. And more recently by a display of business energy and ability in taking a run over to England to see and secure what will be beneficial to her new venture. Miss Fewings is home again at Whytecliffe, and the school is in full working order. Indomitable courage, intelligent supervision, irrepressible energy and sterling character should secure liberal support and large success.

Miss Fewings returned to England in 1908. However, she returned to Australia later the same year to transfer the school to Miss Constance Harker who, with Miss Marjorie Jarrett as a business partner, purchased the school.

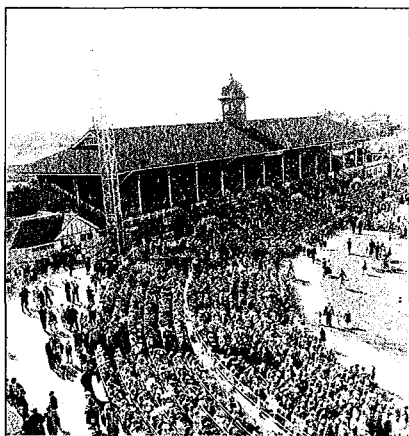
On her return to England Miss Fewings took up an appointment as warden of Alexandra Hall, a women's residential college at Aberystwyth University in Wales. She established the first Young Women's Christian Centre in Wales. Miss Fewings retired in 1914 although she remained as a Governor on the Council of the University College. She was also a Governor of Dr Williams' School at Dolgelly. She visited Brisbane in 1921 for the 21st birthday of Somerville House. In 1931 she received an honorary MA from Aberystwyth University. She died in Bristol on 11 October 1940.

Sources:

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200 Australian Women – Online Edition, by Pat Noad. (This article draws on information in P. Freeman *A History of Somerville House 1899-1949*.)
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Celebrating in 2009

By David Parker



Final Billy Graham Crusade Meeting,
Brisbane, RNA, May 1959
(Picture D. Parker)

The year 2009 is going to be a time for celebrating some important anniversaries.

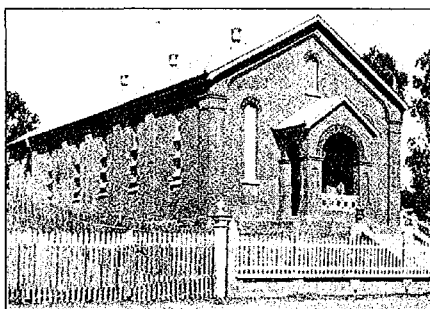
Close to home it will be the 150th anniversary of separation of Moreton Bay from New South Wales in 1859 and hence the commencement of Queensland as a separate colony (and later state). The Queensland Government is promoting a wide range of activities to mark this occasion and it is hoped that churches will also have celebrations to show their role in the community.

Ipswich Baptist Church proudly describes itself as the first Baptist church to be established in Queensland—even though Wharf Street (now City Tabernacle) was already in existence. But the secret is the word “Queensland”—Ipswich was certainly the first Baptist church to be established after separation in December 1859, while Wharf Street (1855) was established while Moreton Bay was still part of NSW. The decision to form a church and the first service occurred in June 1859 after royal assent had been given to the bill to grant separation (June 6); the official formation took place in January

1860 after the official proclamation of separation (12 Dec). Ipswich Church has planned a full year of celebrations and new history of the church to be published in association with the events. (For more information on their origins, read our book, *Thomas and William Deacon: General Baptists in Queensland*.)

More broadly speaking, Baptists in particular and evangelical Christians in general played a big role in getting Moreton Bay settlement to the point where separation could occur. Perhaps the biggest political force in this process was Rev John Dunmore Lang, Sydney’s outstanding Presbyterian minister, who was instrumental in bringing so many people to Brisbane, including considerable numbers of Baptists. Baptists who contributed to this development included James Swan (the first known Baptist) proprietor the *Moreton Bay Courier* (continues as *The Courier-Mail*) and people like T.B. Stevens, the Kingsford and Grimes families and many others. So Baptists have many good reasons to celebrate Q150 and it is to be hoped that they participate fully in the year of festivities.

2009 will also be a 50th anniversary of an influential event—the Billy Graham crusades in Australia.



Ipswich Baptist Church erected in Brisbane Street 1876 (until its recent sale, oldest existing Baptist Church in Qld)

These evangelistic meetings were held all over Australia—in Queensland in May—and resulted in a huge wave of spiritual renewal. According to some, this was closest Australia has come to revival. Certainly many people were converted and went on to serve the Lord fruitfully and joyfully, the ranks of full-time Christian service in pastoral and missionary work were swelled, churches grew and evangelistic passion reignited. The main crusades were held in the capital cities but landlines took the message literally all over the country.

Finally, 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of the beginning of the Baptist movement which took place in Holland, where English people had fled to escape religious intolerance. After some time, a number of them returned to London and so the work began there which has since spread around the world and grown so that Baptists number more than any other Protestant denomination. Although the largest proportion is in USA, there are large numbers in other countries such as Brasil, India and Nigeria. The Baptist World Alliance will hold its annual event in Amsterdam in 2009 July 27 to August 1, 2009 and will mark the occasion with special events. The BWA Heritage and Identity Commission is planning commemorative publications, conferences and tours.

After 400 years, a key issue in the current context is the meaning and significance of Baptist identity. This is a vital subject for consideration around the world, including Queensland. We hope that opportunity will be taken during 2009 to consider it.

SPURGEON AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Digest of an address given by the late Rev. Dr Craig Skinner,
at the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland Nundah Baptist Church, Monday, July 25th, 1988

[In association with the jubilee of the 1959 Billy Graham Crusades—see page 4—we reprint this article about another great Baptist evangelist who impacted Australia very strongly. {First printed Sept 1988 pp 3-4}]

C.H. Spurgeon is a well known figure, but it is vitally important for Australian Baptists to know about him because of the impact he made on Baptist life in its formative years. For example, from 1850-1950, 106 out of 437 Spurgeon's College graduates serving overseas had come to this area - about two a year at the peak of the influence. As yet, we have not calculated the impact of this movement upon our Baptist heritage - in its evangelical character, its love for Scripture.

One interesting sidelight is Spurgeon's strong preference for Greek rather than Gothic church architecture. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle was one of the first of the Protestant churches to be erected with Corinthian columns and as an amphitheatre. This had a big influence on church architecture across the world. There are many 'Tabernacle' looking buildings which were erected during that time. Many Baptists even called their buildings 'Tabernacles.' The Auckland Baptist Tabernacle is especially typical, being almost a reproduction of the London building.

Then, many great preachers were influenced by Spurgeon's methods, and many not so great preachers have used Spurgeon's published material as well.

Spurgeon's son Thomas who later succeeded his father, was perhaps better known for his ministry in Australia and New Zealand. His father had been invited to visit this area, but pressure of ministry kept him in London. However, his son who was a great support to him was unwell. It was thought that the climate here would be a help to him. He intended to pursue his craft of engraving, but when people realised who he was, doors were opened for ministry which proved to be exceedingly fruitful, even though he was only a young man. He worked in Victoria (especially Geelong where he met the girl he would later marry), Sydney, Brisbane (including Sandgate) and other places.



Perth Baptist Tabernacle,
Tasmania — one of the William
Gibson Churches

Spurgeon's influence in Tasmania was especially strong due to the influence of the Gibson family. Mary Ann Gibson read all Spurgeon's sermons and influenced her formerly Anglican husband to become Baptist. They devoted their wealth (gained from sheep farming) to erecting churches and bringing graduates of Spurgeon's College to the island to pastor the congregations. (Many of these churches were called 'Tabernacles') At one time, all the pastors in the Baptist Union of Tasmania were Spurgeon's College graduates.

Spurgeon's great art was to bring a fresh style in preaching. In his day, it was usual to have unpalatable and lengthy sermons which were more like religious essays, composed of many points and sub-points, on topics unrelated to the ordinary person's interests.

But Spurgeon's sermons were lucid, precise, zestful and sometimes highly colloquial. He used homely and powerful illustrations, and lots of humour to good effect. Preaching orthodox doctrine (from a mildly Calvinistic perspective), he based his sermons solidly on the exposition of Scripture and centred them on the exaltation of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement. The providence of God was a key theme in Spurgeon's preaching and it reflected an important element in his own life and faith.

With sermons like this, he could gather in excess of 5000 people every Sunday for over 30 years, in addition to many other occasions during the week, especially a regular weeknight prayer meeting and special gatherings at the Crystal Palace when up to 25,000 would attend. The sheer physical achievement of preaching to crowds like this without electronic amplification is a feat in itself. Not all his sermons were necessarily perfect, but it has been said "He was a great preacher of sermons before he was a preacher of great sermons!"

His sermons were published weekly in the press and translated into many languages worldwide. About 25,000 copies of these sermons were sold separately each week for a penny each. About 4,000 remain in print, with, the 63 official volumes forming the greatest body of sermons in the English language. They still outsell all other sermon volumes today. One of his previously unpublished sermons was published each week for 25 years after his death.

The quality of the content of Spurgeon's work did not suffer despite the enormous output. His kept up his reading, accumulating a 12,000 volume library in the course of his life, even though he gave many books away

to his students and pastors. He covered a variety of topics and produced interesting, arresting topics which delighted and edified his audiences.

As well as preaching up to 12 times a week, Spurgeon also had a wide and effective ministry in other areas. For example, he founded a theological college, established an orphanage, fostered hundreds of churches, supervised the operations of 21 mission halls in the city, counselled innumerable enquirers, and baptised 10,000 people in his own congregation.

Other books of his also remain popular, including "Lectures to my Students", "John Ploughman's Pictures" and "The Treasury of David" (a commentary on the Psalms). It has been calculated that he published altogether some 23 million words!

His sermons and writings reflected his own spirituality and beliefs. He was a humble man who remained authentic and full of integrity, being unaffected by his popularity. Even though he found it necessary to speak out publicly about what he believed was a serious decline from biblical orthodoxy in his day (the famous "Down-Grade" controversy), he did not resort to cheap personal abuse in the process. He refused to disclose information given in confidence, preferring rather to resign as a minister of the Baptist Union. After his resignation, he declined to commence a new denomination, but instead fellowshipped with a local association of Baptists to show his underlying loyalty.

His ministry to the socially deprived was also significant, especially because he often gave generously from his own purse for the upkeep of institutions which he commenced.

Checking our Vital Signs

By David Parker

An analysis of church membership statistics in the recently issued 2008 Queensland Baptists Handbook gives interesting results. The figures are for June 30, 2007, now a year old.

There are 179 churches listed, but of these 45 or 25% gave no figures, which is about the same percentage as 2006. Only about 10 of these are fellowships without a formal membership, the others being ordinary churches, including a number of larger ones. Total attendance at services was 24,010 adults and 5787 children, but there is no indication in the Handbook as to how these figures are calculated so their significance is problematic. Comparable figures for 2006 were 19,771 and 6,359 respectively.

There are 126 churches with usable membership figures for 2007. About half used a different figure for their 2006 membership compared with what they had reported a year before. 24 lowered it and 22 increased it, mostly by only a few members, but in the extremes, by more than 50, thus rendering the previous year's figures unreliable. 121 churches gave usable figures for both 2006 and 2007, making a comparison possible.

So what were the changes? The 2007 figures ranged from 46% to 175% of those given for 2006. About 50 churches remained more or less the same (+/- 5%) with 18 of these reporting exactly the same number. Absolute figures revealed losses of 145 members in one church and 53 at another (both roll revision) and gains of 35 and 25 (visitation) at the other end of the scale. Only 15 churches got to a double figure increase, while almost as many, 13, suffered a double figure decline. 4 churches reported less than 80% of the previous membership—3 city and one country, with two indicating the losses came about through a massive roll revision, another reported large numbers of resignations and the other involved only a very small number of people in all.

36 churches indicated a growth of up to 20% and those involving significant numbers of people were located in suburban, beachside, and regional areas. Those with larger percentage growth were located in suburban, remote and beachside areas, including an ethnic church. Reasons for growth were visitation and transfer. Overall there were only 174 additions by baptism, which is about 1.5% of the total membership, but the total number of baptisms was 495 indicating a serious lack of follow-through to membership.

The average of reported membership sizes is 89, down from a peak of 97 in 1991, but much higher than the 60 average which was common 40 years ago. However, a century ago it was well over 100. Almost half of the churches have fewer than 50 members, 20 of them less than 25 (8 in the metro area). Only 11 are greater than 200 (7 in the metro area), and 28 between 100 and 200.

It is noticeable that there is a lack of conversions (as represented by baptisms) and membership growth, with a consequent reliance on transfer and visitation. The serious losses in some places due to resignation and revision are a concern. The spectrum of sizes of churches should also be considered in relation to their viability. Further analysis of where and in what type of churches variations occurred would reply further careful study. Linking this information with National Church Life Survey and Census figures is also likely to be valuable. In the short term, better reporting by churches would mean more useful analysis.

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This picture from the Christian Endeavour magazine *The Roll Call* for Feb 1, 1926 was found in a Bible given to the Baptist Church Archives, Queensland, recently by Rev Brian Robertson, Coral Coast Church Bagara, Qld. It is a historic photo showing members of first CE society nearly 40 years on, and is described in the text as being reproduced from another photo. All the people in the picture are identified. CE was founded in Australia in 1888 at the City Tabernacle with Rev A G Weller (4th from left rear) as secretary. The pastor was Rev Wm Whale (rear right). However there is a mystery about the picture—at first sight it may be of the original members as they were in 1926 but it states that 3 of them (including W Whale) were already deceased. Perhaps it is a composite—a case of early “digital manipulation”?