

The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

No. 80 December 2011

'Something more than Gold!'

Central Queensland Project Nearing Completion

From the beginning, Central Queensland has been a region dependent on mining and the pastoral industry. Rockhampton got underway as a result of the discovery of gold nearby in the late 1850s. Further impetus was added in the following years, especially at Mount Morgan in the 1880s which became one of the richest fields in the country – and it had large deposits of copper as well!

Pastoral and agricultural industries began in the area and continued into the 20th century with ambitious programs for development based a irrigation schemes planned in the Callide Valley in the 1920s. In the 1960s, the vast coal deposits in the Bowen Basin were opened up and today there is a boom of gigantic proportions, once again spurring a “gold rush” as people seek to make their fortunes with the high wages on offer. However, all this has sometimes been at great cost to the individuals, families and communities and economic downturns and natural disasters have often taken a huge toll as well.

During all this time, Baptists, along with other Christians, have been seeking to witness to the gospel and the message that there is “something more than gold” which is worth pursuing. More than twenty churches and other forms of witness have been established (some no longer operating) in the area from the time of the first one in Rockhampton itself in 1862. Baptist Heritage Queensland is in the final stages of writing the history of these churches ready for launching at the Convention being held in Rockhampton in May 2012 to mark that church's 150th anniversary. Already separate detailed histories of Boyne Island, Mount Morgan and Gracemere churches have been produced.

The book, which will be available at a modest cost, will cover all the churches and other activities such as schools, aged care, children's home, and camping. It also includes fascinating personal stories and records of creative ministry. Due to the rapid turnover of people in the area, records and some details are often difficult to obtain, making the production of a history now all the more important. Many people have helped with information, documents and photographs. Advance orders are now open from Baptist Heritage Qld at archives@qb.com.au, BHQ Publications, 98 Yallambee Rd Jindalee 4074, phone 07-3376 4339.

Annual membership subscriptions for BHQ for 2012 are now due. You are invited to renew and use direct deposit if convenient—please be sure to advise your name and mark deposit as 'sub 2012'
Our bank details: BSB 704-913 A/c No. 001185 Account - Baptist Historical Society Qld

Please reserve these Meeting dates for 2012: Feb 25, June 16, Nov 3 (AGM) 2pm at Baptist Archives

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Membership (2011) Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a. <i>Qld Baptist Forum 3 issues p.a.</i> Free to Members Others \$2 each posted President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith, 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Phone 3892 6337 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm BWA Baptist Heritage & Identity Commission www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org	Qld Baptist Forum No 80 Dec 2011 'Something more than Gold' p 1 Making Sense of Martha By Rosalind M Gooden p 2 In memory of by Eric Kopittke p 5 Gone . . .but not forgotten by Bill Hughes p 7 27th Annual Reports p 8

Making Sense of Martha

Rosalind M Gooden

Ros Gooden is researching some of the early female Australian Baptist missionaries, with a special interest in their spiritual formation and what led them to become missionaries. Her research and that of some members of the extended family is revealing much more about Martha Plested who is well known as Queensland's first missionary. We welcome this further article by Ros who has a long record of missionary service herself and has contributed to our pages before.

“Making sense of Martha” was the title of a recent journal article¹. I was intrigued. I quite expected it to be a discussion of Biblical Martha, Mary’s sister. But rather it was the story of a single women, Martha Moore, who in the 1920s went to work in Portuguese West Africa. She was one of those enigmas, a single woman missionary. But there is another Martha, much closer to Queensland Baptists, Martha Plested, Queensland Baptists’ first missionary to East Bengal, and she is becoming less of an enigma as more of her family history is uncovered.² So let me share something more of making sense of our Martha .

Martha’s missionary career is part of the rich history of Global Interaction. She arrived from England in Brisbane in 1884, and joined Jireh Baptist Church June 7 1885. Within a month she attended a meeting addressed by Ellen Arnold, indicated her willingness to go to India, and was accepted at the first meeting of the newly formed Queensland BMS on 4 July. She joined the “five barley loaves”, was farewelled in Adelaide and had arrived in Calcutta before the end of 1885. Her missionary career is well told in David Parker’s booklet “The Martha Plested Story”³ She served in Bengal, particularly in the small town, Noakhali. She died in Sydney in 1922 on her way home. She was Queensland Baptists’ first missionary. But who was she?

No missionary story begins when somebody is sent out. It starts with their conversion and a call of God. It is nurtured by a church concerned for the world. My research interest in spiritual formation of missionaries was stirred by Ellen Arnold, who like Martha arrived in Australia as a young adult her missionary interest formed in Birmingham not Adelaide, but it has been fuelled more by Martha’s background before she heard Arnold on that historic night in Jireh church. What prepared her for that role with Queensland Baptists? It certainly was not Jireh and Queensland Baptists, so on whose shoulders do we stand?

Martha’s parents, Henry and Elizabeth were mar-

Entry from 1861 Census showing Plested family—
Martha in bottom row

Henry Plested	Head	32	Woolcomber	Middlesex Maryland
Elizabeth	Wife	30	Silk Weaver	Staffordshire Stafford
Emma	Daughter	12	Filler	Middlesex Maryland
Henry Plested	Son	10	Bookbinder	Staffordshire Stafford
Martha	Daughter	7	Woolcomber	Middlesex Maryland

ried in 1845 in London. They had six children between 1845 and 1858. Martha was the fifth. Sometime between 1854, when Martha was born and the birth of the sixth the family moved to Norwich in Norfolk. Six children in thirteen years would not have been uncommon at that time, nor was the losing of half of them.

The Plested family lived next door to their Plunkett relatives in Norwich, and Elizabeth died in March 1862. Henry, died later in December that same year, leaving Emma, Henry and Martha as orphans. Martha, the youngest, is Queensland’s missionary, Emma migrated to Brisbane and Henry married Elizabeth Grimes in Norwich.

Martha was eight at the time of her parents’ deaths, and it is presumed that she was cared for by her Plunkett relatives in Norwich. By the 1871 census the three surviving siblings were living in separate households, working for their living, a very different situation to Ellen Arnold, who was the daughter of a successful Birmingham jeweler. Ten years later, just prior to her move to Brisbane, Martha moved to Hinxton, in Cambridge and was in domestic service with Mrs Elizabeth Maris. This was a significant relationship for Martha went to stay with her during her enforced holiday from Bengal in England in 1894.

In regard to Christian experience when the family removed from London to Norwich the children attended the Sunday school in connection with the St Mary’s Baptist Church, then under the pastorate of Rev. G. Gould, and it was here that Martha received her first religious impressions.⁴

This church had a long and significant history with roots in the dissenting ferment of the 1600s. A group of people from Norwich moved to Rotterdam where they became part of a congregation of British residents who developed a congregational form of church life⁵ and when the congregation returned to Norwich in 1642 (under Cromwell) they formed two churches one in Norwich and another in Yarmouth and joined with likeminded churches. But in the Res-

toration of 1662 the Norwich fellowship was ejected and became an illegal body meeting for worship by stealth.

At this time the baptized members of the church drew together and the church was divided into two fellowships: those practicing infant baptism ... and those practicing believers baptism (now St Mary's) ... The dissenting churches continued to live and work as illegal bodies until 1689 when the Toleration Act suspended the legal penalties against them.⁶

Since that time they have been a continuing worshipping community.

This church, St Mary's Norwich changed from being a closed membership congregation in 1857 to open the Lord's table to all Christians and was taken to court by a trustee, who wanted it to remain closed. However the church won the legal battle when it was able to demonstrate historically that there were different Baptist views on the subject.⁷ That controversy was about the time the Plested family came from London and would certainly be known by the Plunkett relatives.

Our knowledge of the details of Martha's early Christian experiences are very dependent on an article written in the *Queensland Baptist* on Jan 1 1894. At that time Martha was living in Bengal. She only returned to Australia twice in her 33 years, in 1890 and in 1910. So it is four years since she had been in Brisbane. There is no acknowledgement of the source of information. It does mention her sister Emma, who married and was living in Brisbane. However, since Martha's date of birth and also the date the family transferred from London to Norwich are both inaccurate, it seems unlikely that it came from family sources. Genealogical researchers have suggested that the information given in 1894, when Martha was 40, might well be inaccurate an unreliable childish memories, but this does not necessarily apply for Baptists and other evangelicals where the emphasis has been to date conversion experiences, as one of the most significant events of life.

The article states:

When about ten years of age she paid a visit with a friend to Bradford, Yorkshire, and under the ministry of Rev J Holiday, of Horton Lane Church was brought to the Saviour, and was there baptised and united with the church. On returning to Norwich she was duly transferred and subsequently on the removal of the family to Cambridge she united with the Baptist Church. Her parents followed their children and attended regularly but neither joined the church or were baptised.

This could be read to mean that soon after her parents' death, when about ten years of age, and virtually a child, she paid a visit to Bradford, Yorkshire, and under the ministry of Rev. J. Holiday, of Horton Lane Church⁸, was converted there. The use of the term "with a 'friend'" is interesting. Does this mean a

friend of hers, a child of a similar age? Or do we understand it to mean an adult who was a friend of the family? Unfortunately the text is not definitive. But its meaning may well be important in determining the nature of her conversion. Similarly the word "visit" would be more usual for a limited time in Bradford, rather than a lengthy time of employment.



Martha Plested

I have been unable to trace the ministry of Rev J Holiday in Bradford at Horton Lane. The minister of the Baptist Chapel is listed as H J Betts at that period. So it could be that it was not a Baptist Church, none of which have a pastor 'Holiday'. Nor did the Bradford Central Library find any records of Martha in the baptismal records at the Horton Lane Independent Chapel.⁹

The article goes on to say she "was baptized and united with the church." What church, other than Baptist, linked conversion and baptism and therefore would have baptized a ten year old who had been "brought to the Saviour"? It was not the practice of the Congregational or Anglican churches. Does a child of ten, on a visit to a city with a friend, converted by the ministry of a visiting preacher/evangelist, stay long enough in that town for the process of baptism and church membership? Unfortunately the records of that congregation are not held by Regent's Park Archives, so the maze thus far comes to a blank wall.

If we call into question the accuracy of the age of ten years and consider the possibility based on her actual birth-date of 1854 instead of the recorded 1863, she would have been nineteen, rather than ten, and the narrative seems more feasible. She was in domestic service by that age, as she is recorded as being with Miss Hawkins and Rachel Plunkett in Norwich in the census of 1871. She was more independent and her baptism as an adult believer, seems more creditable. But whether it was a child's decision or that of a young adult the essential fact recorded is that she "was brought to the Saviour". She made a definite decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ. What that meant to her is lived out in her missionary career and what she preaches to Indian hearers.

The article states that on returning to Norwich her membership was duly transferred. I have received the following email from Regent's Park College, "I've had a quick look through some St. Mary's Nor-



Emma Plested

wich church records that we have, namely several books listing members from 1841-1868. I cannot see Martha listed unfortunately.”¹⁰ To argue from silence is dangerous, but the present evidence implies that the transfer of membership had not been made by 1868, and this may favour the idea that she was in the older age group at her conversion and we are considering an event in the 1870s rather than when she was 10 in 1865.

There is some collaborating evidence for her involvement with St Mary’s Church, Norwich. Plested wrote that she attended the Bible class run by “Mr Jewson’s father”.¹¹ The Jewson’s were stalwarts of St Mary’s Church, Norwich, and Arthur Jewson was the BMS missionary, based in Comilla when Arnold transferred there from Faridpur. So the assumption made was that the connection with the Bible Class was in Norwich. However the death of J W Jewson was in Cambridgeshire, (closer to the residence of Mrs Maris.) The brethren from St Mary’s Norwich were instructed to attend his funeral at the church at Blentisham. The Jewson family home was in Earith, even though J W Jewson had taken the family business to Norwich. So did this attendance at Jewson’s Bible class occur in the nearby Baptist Church at Bluntisham? Hinxton is in the same area, but there would be other much nearer Baptist churches.

In that same problematic article the claim is made that her “deep and abiding interest in foreign missions led her to associate much with kindred spirits both in the old country and after arrival in Queensland”¹² So again, as with Arnold, the initial interest in missions is developed in England. For Plested this was particularly in Norwich and Cambridgeshire. St Mary’s Church listed in their missionary contribution for that era the daughter of the minister, Mrs Mary Williams who went to India in 1866 at a time when Plested was an eleven year old, Rev R F Guyton for India in 1874 and Rev Arthur Jewson, 1881. They were a “BMS supporting church”. Mary Williams died the same year as she went to India, so hardly likely to engender a romantic view of missions in a teenager.¹³

Arthur Jewson was a contemporary BMS missionary of Arnold and Plested. His initial assignment in East Bengal was to Comilla, which later became the NSW BMS’s station. Before his withdrawal from ill health and assignment to Calcutta, Plested went and lived with Arnold in Comilla. So they were there at

the same time. After the disagreement between NSW and Queensland over the Comilla property she moved to establish a station for Queensland in Noakhali, and Jewson was still in touch. She occasionally referred to the work of Jewson in her letters, and called on his help with one of the converts from Noakhali when he was suffering pressure from his non-Christian family. And Jewson visited Noakhali and baptised one of her enquirers.

So in order to make sense of Martha we need to recognise the impact of family, and being orphaned, along with the influence of godly relatives. There is the shaping of the tough history of a dissenting church, linked to the industrial development of the important town of Norwich. There was an enthusiasm for missionary outreach in India through Baptist missions, and Queensland reaped the result of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of Martha. May there be plenty more Marthas from Queensland in the coming years.

Notes:

1. A.L. Arrington, “Making Sense of Martha: Single Women and Mission Work” *Social Sciences and Missions* 23 (2010), 276-300.
2. I am particularly indebted to David Sherriff, a descendant of Henry Plested, in Kent for sharing his research and knowledge of this family. There is more to explore of the history of Emma, who married Thomas Willis in Brisbane.
3. David Parker, *The Martha Plested Story: An account of the life and work of the first Queensland Baptist overseas missionary*, (1986) Baptist Union of Queensland Department of Mission, Brisbane.
4. “Martha Plested” QB Jan 1, 1894, p.4. The source of this article is being questioned and the accuracy of the detail.
5. For further detail see C B Jewson p.3-12
6. *St Mary’s in Four Centuries 1669-1969* (1969) Ter-centenary Year Committee of St Mary’s Baptist Church Soman-Wherry Press Ltd, Norwich, p.8.
7. David Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (2010), p.93.
8. Email from Regent’s Park Archives, August 24, 2011 “The 1864 edition of the Baptist Handbook lists it as being established in 1857, having 254 members and a pastor named H.J Betts. I’m afraid I can’t see Rev. Holiday listed and he doesn’t appear to be in the index of deceased ministers either. A 1927 list of churches in Bradford refers to four places of worship located on Little Horton Lane. These are; Trinity Baptist Chapel, St. John’s Church of England, Horton Lane Congregational Chapel and Annesley Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Was it definitely this Baptist Chapel? (There are seven listed in 1864; Westgate, Sion, Tetley Street, Infirmary Street, Trinity, Zoar and Hallfield).
9. Email, D Sherriff (descendant of Henry Plested) to RMG 19 June 2010.
10. Emily Burgoyne to RMG, email 28 Sept 2011.
11. “Home Proceedings – Our Annual Breakfast Meeting” in *Our Indian Sisters* No 13, July 1888, p.297.
12. “Miss Martha Plested” QB Jan 1 1894, p.2.
13. Emily Burgoyne to RMG, email 27 Oct 2011.



Have you, like me, been in a church and seen a plaque with an inscription that commenced “In Memory of ...” and wondered just who was the person named on the plaque?

Centenary Baptist Church at Middle Park in Brisbane has a number of items from the now closed Jireh Church that were acquired as part of the arrangement through which funds from the sale of the Jireh property were provided to the fledgling Centenary congregation. Amongst the items are a table and two planters with plaques in memory of Mrs Mirfin. It seemed to me that Mirfin was something of an unusual name, and so I wondered who she was, and how she had contributed to the life of Jireh.

Realising that the initials were most likely those of her husband, I searched the online index to Queensland births, deaths and marriages and found that Hephzibah Mirfin, daughter of John Chambers and Martha nee Taylor had died in 1935, and that Hephzibah Chambers had married Thomas Weller Mirfin in Brisbane on 20 April 1887. The Brisbane City Council online cemetery database revealed that Hephzibah Mirfin, aged 80, had been buried at Toowong cemetery on 29 June 1935.

Early Life

So what was Hephzibah’s early life like? She was born at Chalk in Kent, with her birth registered in the June quarter of 1855 in the North Aylesford district. Chalk is a village lying just to the east of Gravesend which in turn lies to the east of London on the River Thames. The 1861 census recorded her family as living at 6 Esther Court, Milton, Gravesend with her father, a seaman, not at home. She had an older brother, John, aged 10 and a younger sister, Ruth, aged 3. Both Hephzibah and John were recorded as scholars, so we know that they had at least a basic education.

It appears that sometime between 1861 and 1871, Hephzibah’s father died and her mother married John Price, a publican. The 1871 census recorded them at 38 Queen Street, Milton, Gravesend with Hephzibah a dressmaker. Two younger children had been added to the family, Ebenezer Chambers aged 7 and Martha A Price aged 3.

The 1881 census found Hephzibah Chambers, dressmaker aged 25, as a patient in the Queen Charlotte Hospital, Marylebone Rd, St Marylebone (one of the oldest maternity hospitals in Europe). Her mother and younger siblings were now living in Liverpool where Ebenezer

In Memory of ...

By Eric Kopittke, President BHSQ

was recorded as a grocer’s assistant and Martha was once again widowed.

Sometime after 1881, the widowed Martha, Hephzibah and Ebenezer migrated to Brisbane. It is possible that some of them migrated by the *Chyebassa* arriving in Brisbane on 4 April 1884. Martha Price 49, E. Chambers 20, and Martha Price 16, appear on the list of immigrants whereas the only plausible entry for Hephzibah is H. Chambers aged 28 on the *Nowshera* arriving in Brisbane on 14 September 1883. The ages for the children agree with those given in the British census whereas Martha should have been about 60.

Life in Brisbane

What did the family do in Brisbane? Part of the answer can be found in the members’ meeting minutes of Jireh Church on Thursday 28 July 1885 when Mrs Martha Price applied to have a transfer of membership from Waterworks Road (later Windsor Road church) and Miss Hephzibah Chambers made application for baptism and membership. It was noted as well that “She is a daughter of the friend mentioned above.” Two ladies were appointed to “wait and report”. Miss Hephzibah Chambers subsequently appeared before the church members’ meeting of Thursday 24 September and testified to her experience of the Grace of God after which Brother Hope moved and Brother Renton seconded her reception into the church following baptism. At the close of the evening service of Sunday 11 October the pastor immersed her and on Sunday 18 October, the right hand of fellowship was extended to Hephzibah and she was welcomed into membership of the Jireh church.

Thomas Weller Mirfin

Shortly under two years later on Wednesday 20 April 1887, Hephzibah Chambers married Thomas Weller Mirfin who had also been baptised and welcomed into membership at Jireh just over a year after Hephzibah. Thomas was born in Melbourne on 15 October 1860 and at the age of 13 joined the staff of the milling firm Robert Harper and Co. He came to Brisbane to participate in the opening of that company’s mill in Queen Street, becoming in time its manager. It is interesting to wonder whether the couple met at Jireh or whether they knew each other before.

It is quite possible that Martha Price was running a boarding house. Both the 1887 and 1888 post office directories have “Mrs Martha Price, boarding house,

Fairview Cottage, Jane Street, Fortitude Valley". The cottage was on the left side of Jane Street when going from Brunswick Street to James Street. The 1888 directory listed Thomas Mirfin, miller, as her next door neighbour at Delganny cottage.

Twin sons, John Chambers and Thomas Southen, were born to Thomas and Hephzibah Mirfin on 29 January 1888, and a daughter, Annie Cristabel, was born on 26 December 1889. It is easy to imagine that Hephzibah would have been kept busy as mother to three young children.

Family Life

The family moved around, particularly in the earlier years of the marriage. In the 1889 directory, Thomas Mirfin, miller, was recorded as living at Lower Clifton Terrace, Red Hill at the Kelvin Grove end. In the 1894 directory, the Mirfins were living at Merthyr Street, New Farm, on the right-hand side from Moray Street. In 1911 they were living at "Glen Iris" in Merthyr Road between Mark and Abbott Streets, on the left hand side towards Moray Street and the Ferry. The 1894 and 1911 directories probably referred to the same address. From about 1912, the family was at "Bracknell", Maryvale Street, Toowong.

The children grew up. Annie married Ernest Roberts in 1911 and the boys enlisted in the army during World War 1. When Thomas Southen Mirfin enlisted on 25 October 1915, he was described as a dentist, Methodist, with his father living at Maryvale Street, Toowong. John Chambers Mirfin enlisted soon afterwards on 21 January 1916 when he was described as a carpenter, Protestant with Baptist added in one place. Strangely, John's birth date was listed as 4 January 1890. The social pages of *The Brisbane Courier* of 31 May 1916 recorded the marriage on 26 April 1916 of Private John Mirfin to Ruth Turner at the bride's mother's residence, Clayfield. Both brothers returned from the war.

The Brisbane Courier reported on numerous occasions the activity of the Valley Benevolent Society and the Brisbane Benevolent Society, of which Hephzibah Mirfin was a part. Such a report was published on page 4, 30 January 1901:

VALLEY BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

The committee of the Fortitude Valley Benevolent Society met on Monday last, when Mrs. Sagar presided, and Mesdames Mirfin, Maynard, Knight, Cook, Allen, and Lewis, and Miss Griffith were present. Thirteen cases of distress were relieved. The sum of £1 10s was handed in by the collector.

The distress of the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s obviously led to further interest in the Brisbane Benevolent Society. *The Brisbane Courier* frequently reported their meetings, with one such report appeared on Saturday, 13 December 1930, page 7:

BRISBANE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

The fortnightly meeting of the Brisbane Benevolent Society was held on Thursday

last, in the Jireh Baptist Church, Mrs. T. W. Mirfin presiding. A large number of applicants received tickets for food, also parcels of clothing. The committee wish to thank all who have sent parcels for distribution. Sympathisers are reminded that left-off clothing is greatly in demand, and parcels may be left, c/o. G. Fleming, product merchant, Ann-street, Valley.

The minutes of the Jireh Baptist Women's Union record Mrs Mirfin as a stalwart member. Following her death 26 June 1935, the Women's Union donated two silky oak planters to the church in her memory.

A remarkable testimony to Mr Thomas Mirfin, which also refers to the role of his wife, appeared in *The Courier Mail*, Thursday, 5 December 1935, on page 23:

62 YEARS WITH ONE FIRM

Mr. T. W. Mirfin's Record

A record for long service with the one firm has been set by Mr. Thomas Weller Mirfin, now 75 years of age, who, at the end of the year, will retire from the Brisbane mill management of Robert Harper and Co., Ltd., after having been with that company for 62 years.

Mr. Mirfin was born in Melbourne on October 15, 1860, and at the age of 13 joined the staff of his present employers. He came to Brisbane to participate in opening the company's mill, when it established a house here, beginning business in Queen Street, where the premises of R. S. Exton, Pty., Ltd., now stand.

In 1887, in Brisbane, Mr. Mirfin married Miss Hephzibah Chambers. With her, he was actively associated in the work of Jireh Baptist Church, of which he was the senior deacon for more than 50 years. Mrs. Mirfin died last June after a long illness. Mr. Mirfin now lives in Sherwood Road Toowong, with his twin sons – Messrs. T. S. and J. C. Mirfin – and their families. Both sons saw service in the war. His only daughter – Mrs. E. Roberts – lives at Graceville.

So now I have something of an understanding of the respect shown by the Jireh church for Mrs Mirfin, and when I see the table and planters standing in Centenary Baptist Church, I can quietly give praise to God for a lady who "testified to her experience of the Grace of God".



Gone... but not forgotten

By Bill Hughes

Reproduced from *The QB* Aug 2011 p 19



When a relative or friend dies we often put together a few mementos of them and store them as keepsakes in a safe place. In time these items might be passed on to the next generation and perhaps further generations, but quite often they are lost or thrown out. One way to ensure that the memory of our loved ones is not lost to future generations is to pass memorabilia (or copies) to the Baptist Archives where they will be catalogued, stored and preserved.

The Archives has a Biographical Database of Queensland Baptists which currently stores information on over 500 Queensland Baptists dating back to the 1800s. We are keen to build up our collection.

Can data on any Queensland Baptist be included in the collection? The short answer is 'yes'. Biographical 'Dictionaries' usually contain the names of prominent people. The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'prominent' as meaning 'important, leading, well-known'. There are certainly those who would be regarded as leaders, well-known or important people among Baptists in Queensland. However, the Biographical Database of Queensland Baptists avoids such judgments and is open to all Queensland Baptists. The only criterion for entry is that the person is deceased. This overcomes the problem of deciding at what point a person is entered into the database.

Some of the most interesting entries in the database are of people who were not necessarily 'important, leading or well-known', except perhaps to those near and dear to them. Quite a number of the entries are of women who were little known outside their own families and local churches. Their lives as loving mothers and grandmothers who nurtured their families and loyally supported their churches over the years is the central theme of their biographies.

There are, of course, a number of prominent Baptists in the database, such as the men and women whose biographies have been the subject of books published by the historical society (e.g. *A True Pastor: The life and ministry of William Higlett*) or who were included in publications such as *Women Who Made a Difference* or *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*. We also have considerable biographical material on people such as Queensland's first missionary to India, Martha Plested and other missionaries as well, of course, as Baptist Pastors who have ministered in Queensland Churches.

To date, the biographical information we have collected comes from a variety of sources, such as: Obituaries or articles in *The Queensland Freeman*, *The Queensland Baptist*, or *The Australian Baptist*, newspaper articles, eulogies, photographs, information provided by the family, Thanksgiving Services, church histories, biographical dictionaries and several other sources.

To find out more about the Biographical Database or to submit material for inclusion in it, contact Bill Hughes, ph 07 3256 8897 or email roslynbill@bigpond.com



Laidley German Baptist Cemetery

Baptist Heritage Queensland

27th Annual Report November 2011

2011 has seen continued interest in our history by people in Baptist churches throughout Queensland. However there are still large areas of our history which have not been investigated in detail. One of these is the history and development of evangelistic work. A subsequent paragraph will mention our initial steps in this area.

We record with regret the death of a member of very long standing, Rev. Mel Williams. As well as being a respected historian, Mel was known for his interest in numismatics, and received a number of honours for his work in this area. The series of articles published under the general title of *Cameos* will remain as a lasting memorial to him. Even though ill-health precluded his active participation in later years, he maintained an interest in Baptist history, and will be missed.

In comparison with recent years 2011 has been a quiet one for new publications. Work is proceeding on two projects. Thanks to the very generous gift from Lance Hogg, mentioned in the 2010 report, we have been able to conduct research into the history of Baptist work in Central Queensland, as part of a project in connection with the 150th anniversary of work in Rockhampton. It is intended that this book will be launched at the 2012 Convention.

The other work is a long overdue revision of our popular work *Baptists in Queensland*. So many changes have taken place in the structure of Queensland Baptists since the last edition, including a new name, new motto and new logo, that although major revisions are required, it has been decided to retain the same name. The editorial work here is in the capable hands of David Parker.

One venture which has continued during 2011 has been a short item about historical matters in each issue of the *Queensland Baptist*. Various people after reading

it have commented "I didn't know that", and some have been encouraged to delve further into the history of their local church. We have noted with appreciation that our churches are taking greater interest in celebrating milestones, and would encourage other churches to follow. The collection of local church histories in the Archives is far from complete, and wish to encourage churches to make a permanent record of events. The Union Archivist, Rev. Dr David Parker, is always ready to assist with this.

One important area in which some progress has been made is arrangements for the long-term management and care of Baptist cemeteries and other historical sites with the Baptist Union taking action on these matters. There are a number of these in Queensland, and they form an important part of our heritage.

We are living in an age where much information is held, and communicated, in electronic form. We have scanned many documents and periodicals, and are considering making at least some of our publications available in electronic form.

There has been little change in the membership of the Society, but we look forward to further interest, as more and more people realise the importance of remembering our Baptist heritage. Officers elected at the Annual meeting in November, 2010 were: President: Mr Eric Kopittke; Secretary/Treasurer: Dr Ken Smith; Publications Officer: Mrs Rosemary Kopittke.

As we move forward into a new year, we look forward to continuing the work of recording and analysing our history, so that, aware of what has gone on in the past, we may take note of our errors, and preserve and remember the good things, to the glory of our Lord.

Ken Smith, Secretary

Archives Activities

It has been a busy year at the Baptist Church Archives with many enquiries, and developments. Accessions have included a large backlog of files from QB office and from other departments and some churches. We are handed some 100 year old documents saved from the Jireh church fire! The most welcome event has been the acquisition of a set of elegant glass fronted wooden storage shelves which are being used to display the most important documents.



Connect to our Website

Our team of Bill Hughes and Anne Cameron have turned out a lot of work including histories of Warwick, Gracemere and Mount Morgan churches and the Senior Girls, as well as numerous smaller projects. We have worked with friends in other locations who have worked on other projects as well. Our main focus in recent months has been the Central Queensland project which is coming to a climax.

We have had some improvements to our equipment and measures to deal with the problems of humidity, photocopying and storage. There are still many projects needing attention and hopes that we can develop the work of the Archives further in the future, if more volunteer time were available.