



# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of Baptist Heritage Queensland

## ***30 Years of Change Featured at Archives' Open Day*** ***Tracks - Trends - Trophies***



Some of the most important treasures of the Baptist Church Archives Qld attracted the interest of those who attended the Open Day at the Archives on Saturday afternoon, 31 May (see picture). The event marked 30 years of operation of the Archives and Baptist Heritage Queensland. Included in the display was a hand corrected manuscript of one of CH Spurgeon's sermons, a copy of the first report of the Brisbane Baptist Church (now City Tabernacle) dating from 1859 (the original is rather fragile and was not put on display), and a colourful 'illuminated address' in appreciation of a pastor concluding his ministry at Sandgate Baptist Church in 1914.

Other items in the display included the records of Petrie Terrace Baptist Church (established in 1870), examples of the Archives' growing collection of digital records, and many contemporary and historic photographs, including some which are yet to be identified. The Archives' artefact collection was also on display, containing many medals, badges, trophies, legal seals, a hand made wooden writing desk, communion tokens and even some individualised crockery from a former church. Each of the Archives main document collections were available for visitors to view, such as official publications, records of the Baptist Union and churches, audio-visuals, maps and plans, music books, and its small specialist library. There were also many information posters giving details of archiving and local church history operations.

The Open Day program also included a panel of four senior Queensland Baptists who reflected on trends and developments in the last 30 years. They were Mrs Ruth Elvery, Mrs Lorraine Walker, Rev Peter Bernas and Rev Dr Stan Nickerson. Each one was asked to comment on significant trends they had observed, their most significant ministries and people who were their heroes and mentors.

The Archivist, Rev Dr David Parker, gave an overview of the period around 1984 when the Archives and Baptist Heritage commenced, observing that it was the time of colourful politicians such as Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Bob Hawke and Ronald Reagan, the introduction of Medicare, the one dollar coin and the Apple Mac computer. At the time, there were about 10,000 Baptist members, 113 ordained ministers and about 120 churches in Queensland; there were more than 250 people involved in Baptist Union activities as well as

*(Continued on page 6)*

**2014 Meeting Dates — 8 Nov (AGM) 2pm @ Archives! Come with your friends!**

| <b><i>Baptist Heritage Queensland</i></b><br>(est. 1984)   | <b><i>CONTENTS</i></b>  |
|--|---|
| <b>Membership (2014)</b>   | <b><i>Qld Baptist Forum No 88 August 2014</i></b>               |
| Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.<br><i>Qld Baptist Forum 3 issues p.a.</i>          | Trends—Tracks—Trophies: 30 years<br>of the Archives and BHQ p 1 |
| Free to Members Others \$2 each posted   | 'Preserve, Promote, & Publish our Heritage'                     |
| <b>President:</b> Mr Eric W. Kopittke  | 30 Year History of BHSQ Part 2                                  |
| 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Ph 3376 4339<br><a href="mailto:kopittke@tpg.com.au">kopittke@tpg.com.au</a> | by David Parker p 2   |
| <b>Secretary:</b> Dr Ken G. Smith,   | A Picnic Today—sponsored by the                                 |
| 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104   | Baptist Men's Society p 6                                       |
| Ph 3892 6337 <a href="mailto:tizzardsmith@hotmail.com">tizzardsmith@hotmail.com</a>                          | Churches with Dementia  |
|  | by Bill Hughes p 8  |
| <a href="http://parker.org.au/bhsq.htm">http://parker.org.au/bhsq.htm</a>                                    | NSW Baptist Historical Society 40 years p 8                     |
| <a href="mailto:archives@qb.com.au">archives@qb.com.au</a> Ph 07-3354 5642                                   |   |

# **'Preserve, Promote, & Publish our Heritage'**

## **A 30 Year History of The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland**

### **Part 2**

**by David Parker**

*Baptist Heritage Qld celebrates 30 years of activity in 2014; this is the second part of the story of the organisation. See our last issue, April 2014 for the first part. A history of the Archives was published in Dec 2012.*

#### **On-line**

1997 was also the year when the Society gained a web page. For convenience, it was attached to Dr David Parker's personal site and carried details of activities and publications. It has continued to be expanded over the years and now has links from the Queensland Baptists website. A major website was also established as part of the Heritage Display at the Baptist World Alliance Congress held in Melbourne in January 2000; this is also linked to the main website, and has extensive information on Queensland as well as the other Australian States.

#### **Publications**

The publication program begun with the successful launch of *Baptists in Queensland* in 1994 expanded rapidly. The next book was a collection of cameos of Baptist men in 19th century Queensland written by Rev Melvin C Williams, MA, BD, BSc, published in 1995, followed in the same year by a guide on Baptist family history by Eric and Rosemary Kopittke which was used at the basis of a workshop on this topic. In 1997, David Parker's biography of Rev James Voller, known as 'The father of Queensland Baptists', was launched at the Taringa Baptist Church, a church established largely by the work of Mr Voller; this church was also celebrating its anniversary and Eric Kopittke's history was published at the same time.

Next Rev Melvin Williams wrote the history of Mission to Queensland, the church planting arm of the Baptist Union, which was published in 1998. In the same year, the life of one-time Home Mission Superintendent, Rev AH Brooks was celebrated at Toowong church by the family and BHSQ. The biography, *Vision and Courage*, authored by Rev John Brooks and published by BHSQ, was launched at this event. Dr Stan W Nickerson, Principal of Queensland Baptist College of Ministries, had been working on personal material and other sources dealing with the first successful pastor of Wharf Street Baptist Church for several years; BHSQ agreed to publish his biography of Rev Benjamin Gilmore Wilson in 1999, under the title, *Queensland Baptist Founding Father*.

Mr Richard Scanlan completed his research on the Marburg church and the Tarampa church (formerly the first of the German Baptist Churches, Vernor). BHSQ published his two books in 2000. In the meantime, the family of Rev William Higlett approached BHSQ about compiling his biography. Mr Higlett had served at Toowoomba in the 1880s and then Albion before moving to NSW; he was also deeply involved in Baptist Union work in both States. His extensive and detailed diaries, scrapbooks and photograph collection had been lodged with the John Oxley Library in 1984, so the resources were easily accessible. His biography, *A True*

*Pastor*, was launched in Brisbane and Toowoomba in 2002 with financial assistance from the family.

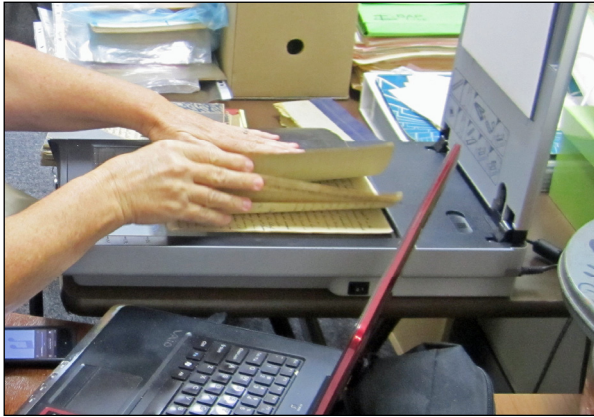
This collection of books formed the 'Baptist Historical Series', totalling 13 titles by 2002. Most of them were printed by Toowoomba Education Centre (TEC) which was experienced in low run, economy priced books of this kind – most of them sold for under \$10 each. At first, TEC carried out most of the layout and graphics work, but as desktop publishing software for PCs improved, BHSQ took over more of this role, making the publications even more affordable.

Another series of publications was also established using a simple photocopy 'print on demand' process. These were more specialised with a lower number of sales anticipated. They formed the series, 'Documents of Queensland Baptist History'. The first was a transcript of Edmund Gregory's initial draft of the 1905 Jubilee history, published in 1995 as *The Gregory History of Queensland Baptists*. The second was a transcript of Joshua Jenyns's personal reflections on early Queensland Baptist history, which appeared in 1996. The third was a collection of otherwise unpublished documents from the first century of Baptist life in Queensland, issued in 1996 as *Remember all the way*; documents included letters connected with the call of BG Wilson to Wharf Street church, William Moore's early history, the text of the 1905 Jubilee history and some short historical outlines from the 1920s to 1940s.

Other publications in 1997 were two volumes of Monumental Inscriptions from the German Baptist Cemeteries produced by Eric and Rosemary Kopittke; they were available in both print on demand format and in microfiche for the family history market. Another specialised publication was a compilation by Rev Keith Applegate and Dr David Parker of information about Baptist archives, historical societies and other institutions around Australia, with bibliographies and listings of Baptist periodicals in Australian libraries. *This National Guide to Australian Baptist Resources and Services* was first published in 1995, revised in 1998 and again in 2012; it also went on-line in 1999 and updated in 2013.

This large number of publications was supplemented by the earlier two-volume history of Baptist camping in Queensland written by Mrs Joan Maxwell under commission of the Camping Ministries department of the Baptist Union (1991 and 1993), and Rev John White's history of Baptists up to 1997, *A Fellowship of Service*. BHSQ members and friends also published some of their own work, including Rev John Lane, Mr Peter Whitehead (on Gordon Park church) and Laurie Wolter (Kalbar Church).

Mr RW (Bill) Hughes, who had become part of the Archives team in 2008, used his excellent research and writing skills to add to the BHSQ publications. He had



Digitisation of existing paper records has become a vital part of Archives' activities and resources. The Archives now has a equipment and a growing collection of material.

already written about the Canberra church of which he had been a member for many years. In 2009, he also published a biography of the distinguished Baptist minister and Chaplain, Rev Harold George Hackworthy, which became a part of the BHSQ catalogue. Turning his attention to Queensland interests, Bill produced a number of monographs which focused on little known features of Baptist life. These included the history of the Senior Girls' Missionary Union, Deagon Mission Church, and especially the Edward Street Church, formed in 1864, and developments within the Wharf Street church. He also contributed sections to other BHSQ publications at the time, especially the Central Queensland project, and wrote the centenary history of the Warwick church in 2012, and the history of City Tabernacle's women's hostel, Willara House, in 2013, both under assignment.

A specialist topic was tackled with the launch in 2009 of the small volume, *Women who made a Difference*. Ever since Rev M Williams's book, *Cameos of Baptist Men* had appeared, the question of the role of women in Queensland Baptist life had arisen. The problem was that information about women in the 19th century was often difficult to find. Eventually, it was decided to cover the entire period and short biographies of 24 women who had made a significant contribution to the church locally and elsewhere were compiled. The project was launched at Clayfield Baptist Church in September 2007 by Miss Rosalind Gooden, a veteran Baptist missionary who was researching the role of women in the early life of the Australian Baptist Mission; she was supported by Mrs Lorraine Walker, the first and only female President of the Baptist Union of Queensland. The 80-page book was launched at a function at Brookfield Village on 2 May 2009, by Ruth Elvery, wife of the President of the Baptist Union and daughter of one of the subjects in the book.

Together with other books to be mentioned later, BHSQ has produced 23 publications, some of which are also available in e-pub format on-line. Editing and for most of the later ones, formatting and layout has been done in-house, without the benefit of qualified graphics designers. Some have sold well, including the German church histories, *Baptists in Queensland* and the Higlett book, but there has been a disappointing response to others. The Society has never been able to attract expert

help with marketing of its books and has relied on promotion through Baptist Union publications, Assemblies and the Society's webpage, as well as word of mouth.

## Celebrations

### *United Evangelical Church*

The BHSQ was occupied in the late 1990s and into the new century with a series of significant celebrations. The first of these was 150th anniversary of the arrival of the three migrant ships organised by Dr John Dunmore Lang – the *Fortitude*, *Chaseley* and *Lima*. Many of the passengers on these ships were Baptists, and they with other devout evangelical Christians made a strong positive contribution to Queensland's public and church life. Rev Charles Stewart, the chaplain on the first of the ships, *Fortitude*, was a Baptist and he became the minister of the United Evangelical Church (UEC) which was formed by the Baptist, Congregational and some of the Presbyterians upon arrival. This church was the forerunner of these three denominations. As such, its crucial role had been warmly acknowledged but there had not been much detailed knowledge of its life or of the contribution of its minister, who was in fact, the first Baptist minister in Queensland. (Mr and Mrs James Swan, proprietor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, were the first known Baptists, arriving in 1846.)

In the late 1990s, it was decided to approach the other denominations to arrange a celebration marking the sesquicentenary of the arrival of the Lang ships. Dr David Parker also began to research the story of the UEC and Rev Charles Stewart. The celebration was held on 1 May 1999 consisting of a dinner and commemorative service at Ann Street Presbyterian Church. Dr Parker's research uncovered fascinating details about the important ministry of Charles Stewart and others connected with the church. This information was published in a detailed study, *Strange Bedfellows: Rev. Charles Stewart Brisbane's First Baptist Minister and the United Evangelical Church* (1998). A shorter version of this story was also published as *Fortitude*, and included one of the presentations at the celebration focusing on the vision of Rev Dr J D Lang for Moreton Bay. An offshoot of the research on the UEC was more information about the founder of the Ipswich Baptist church, Rev Thomas Deacon and his son, William; this story was published in 'print on demand' format.

Part of the UEC celebration was the erection of a plaque on the site of the church in William Street to mark the 148th anniversary of its opening 13 April 1851, timed to the same date and hour. Another plaque was erected at the site of the first German Baptist Church at Verner in 2004, thanks to the energetic work of Mr RA Scanlan, OAM, who researched the site and made arrangements for the provision of the plaque itself. Marking of historic sites was part of the aims of the BHSQ, but so far no other plaques have been erected, although extensive work has been done in locating and recording other sites, such as the Edward Street Church in Brisbane and many sites in Rockhampton and other places around the State.

### *Queensland Baptist College*

Another significant celebration was the centenary of the founding of the Queensland Baptist College which took place in 2004, although the BHSQ was not directly

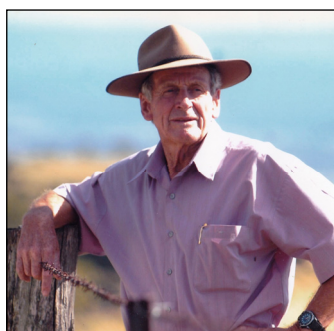


involved. A history was produced by Dr Les Ball and Dr Stan Nickerson.

### **Baptists in Queensland**

The most significant year for celebrations was 2005 which marked the sesquicentenary of the first Baptist church, now known as the City Tabernacle. This church held its own celebrations and Dr Les Ball, a member of the church, wrote its history for the occasion. However, as this was also beginning of Baptist work in the Colony, it was appropriate for the whole denomination to mark the occasion. In response to a request from the Baptist Union for ideas on projects which could be supported by a special sesquicentenary fund, BHSQ suggested a Baptist Studies Centre or scholarships for theological students from non-European backgrounds or for those wanting to work amongst marginalised groups. There was no progress on these ideas, but the Baptist Union arranged some celebrations of the event. The BHSQ decided that its project would be the publication of a new history. The previous one, *A Fellowship of Service*, had been published almost 30 years previously and marked the centenary of the formation of the Union (then known as the Baptist Association).

Work began early and the project was divided into three sections – the 19th century, the 20th century up to the end of World War II, and the current period. Dr Les Ball, the acknowledged authority on the first period, agreed to work on that section, Dr Stan Nickerson put his PhD research on the College to good effect with the second section; Dr David Parker wrote the final section, as well as being general editor. A grant of \$2000 was obtained from Baplink and work on the 200-page book



Mr R A Scanlan, OAM  
1924-2010

A keen BHQ member &  
prolific author

proceeded. It was the largest of the BHSQ books to date and the first with a full colour cover; there were dozens of black and white illustrations and many feature pages with additional information. Titled, *Pressing on with the Gospel*, it was launched at the Convention on 2 September 2005 by Mrs Gwen Milne, President of the Baptist Union of Australia (her late husband had launched the first BHSQ book in 1994). The book was well received, but sales were very disappointing.

### **Other churches – Ipswich, Rockhampton**

With 2005 marking the beginning of Baptist work in Queensland, the next stage was the celebration of the origins of the churches which began in the years following. The next was Ipswich; BHSQ participated in the launch of its history, written by long time member, Dr Les Sands and descendant of one of the Lang ships' pioneers. Jireh (Gipps St, Fortitude Valley) was the next church but it ceased to operate in 1978, so the next one due for a 150th celebration was Rockhampton, in 2012. The Baptist Union held its annual convention there to mark the occasion. BHSQ decided to publish a history

of all the churches that had existed over the years in Rockhampton, and to cover the entire central Queensland region extending south to Gladstone and Boyne Island and west to Longreach. This 200-page book, *Something more than Gold* (No 17 in the Baptist Historical Series, the latest), also with an attractive colour cover, and many photographs and maps, was launched at the 2012 Convention. Once again, sales were not up to expectations. The next church to reach 150 years of life is Annerley, which commenced in 1865 as the Fairfield Baptist Church, a project of the Grimes family who lived in the area and later associated with the Vulture Street South Brisbane church (now Church@TheGabba).

### **Current programs**

Over its 30-year history to date, BHQ has handled hundreds of enquiries and embarked on a wide range of projects. In serving the denomination in this way, it has benefitted from its dedicated membership, some of whom have maintained their support for most of the years of the Society's history; some worked in the background, while others have been faithful in providing financial and moral support. Sadly some of the most active have died, including Rev V Chataway, BD; Rev M C Williams, BSc, BD, MA; Dick Scanlan, OAM, and his wife Doris; and DJ Adam, MBE. Others have ceased active involvement due to age, or have moved away.

Sales of books have sometimes been encouraging with *Baptists in Queensland* the best of all, and volumes on the German churches of Tarampa and Marburg, *Women who made a Difference* and the Higlett biography also being strong sellers; others have been disappointing, failing to pay their way.

The Society has also benefitted from some outside financial support. Baplink's assistance for microfilming of records in the 1990s provided significant encouragement, while its help with the sesquicentenary history was also important. One member also made a generous donation which enabled the Central Queensland history to appear. With its full establishment as an integral part of the Baptist Union of Queensland administration after the move to Gaythorne in 2005, some of the most important funding and organisational arrangements of the Baptist Church Archives were assured. Similarly, with the development of a small but enthusiastic team of volunteers working in the Archives, regular queries and projects can be handled effectively and promptly, thus cementing the link between BHQ and the Archives.

Membership of BHQ has not been large, never exceeding about 20 active members (although there were more on the mailing list), but as Rev John E White stated at the beginning, the aim should not be large numbers but dedicated members. Nevertheless, as the generations move on, there is an urgent need for renewal if the challenges of the future are to be met and the charter of the Society is to be fulfilled. Without any marketing expertise available to the Society, promotion of its work has not been easy. It has mainly been restricted to internal avenues such as the *Queensland Baptist* magazine and official mail-outs. Displays and sales tables, with occasional book launches at the annual Assemblies or Conventions, provided some good contacts, but now that these events do not attract the

attendance or interest they once enjoyed, this valuable opportunity for meeting church members and leaders has practically vanished. Good responses are often obtained from the regular column in the 'qb magazine'.

One initiative taken in 2004 to maintain the relevance of the Society was to adopt a new 'trading name' – 'Baptist Heritage Queensland'. Then in 2006, an essay competition was established in conjunction with the biennial Baptist History course at Malyon College; the student submitting the essay judged by the course lecturer to be the best is awarded a sum of \$100, some books from the BHQ list and complimentary membership for a year. So far the following were the winners: Darren Clark, Faith Giovas, Anne Klose, and Matthew Littlefield and Tim Lucas (joint). Their essays have been published in *Forum*.

Significant changes are also taking place in the heritage and historical records environment which present further challenges for historical societies and Archives. One of these is the need for more record keeping because of governmental legislation, or the need to manage risk in the context of legal responsibilities. The most challenging, however, is the transition to digital records. Thanks to good links with Archive Digital Books, BHQ has taken substantial steps in this process. For example, starting from 2005, it has digitised large runs of the *Queensland Baptist* magazine and the Baptist Union of Queensland Yearbooks, with plans to bring these collections right up to date. Minutes, previously microfilmed, have also been digitised, while strong efforts have been undertaken through the Baptist Archives to acquire digital versions of many other records and publications, and also to establish a full digital archival system for current Baptist Union of Queensland records such as emails, minutes and reports; the official Baptist Union promotional publication, 'qb magazine', has been archived in digital form since 2006. The BHQ Guide Sheets have been expanded to cover relevant aspects of digital archiving.

BHQ has also continued to assist some churches with their historical projects. These consist mainly of anniversary celebrations which may call for information, documents or photographs for displays and sometimes assistance with writing and publishing a history. However, there has not been as much development in this area as anticipated. Some years earlier there had been a small but noticeable trend for churches to seek assistance with historical aspects of their church when undergoing a consultancy with the Baptist Union team; unfortunately, some of the histories produced in that context were superficial and hasty, and there has been little if any follow on since.

BHQ however has continued to take the initiative by preparing regional histories. The notion for these was one result of the sesquicentenary history when it was not possible to cover individual churches or areas, mainly due to lack of researchers and resources. The Central Queensland project, published in 2012, was the first of these; it is expected to be followed later by a book on the Darling Downs and the south-west Queensland region. Earlier projects which fall into this category include the coverage of the German churches carried out in 1986, and Rev John Lane's work on the South Burnett churches in 2004 (both being published in *QB Forum*). Rev M Williams's *Mission to Queensland*

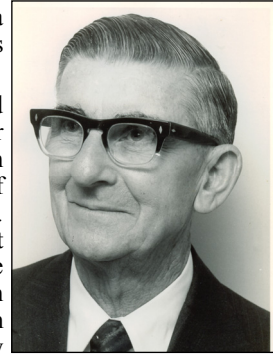
(published 1998) covers a large number of churches covered by this ministry.

BHQ has also benefitted from its links with other similar bodies, made much easier with the advent of electronic communications. The digitisation project extended in 2013 to include the *Australian Baptist* which ran from 1913 to 1991. In 1997 efforts were begun by BHQ to have this national Australian newspaper microfilmed by seeking the cooperation of the Baptist Historical Societies in the other states. This was a particularly important project for Queensland because of serious gaps in the state newspaper (1913–23 when it was not published, and 1931–51 when copies are missing) and because there were no copies of the *Australian Baptist* in Queensland earlier than about 1960. However, before this project was even started, microfilming took place by the Mitchell Library in Sydney, but the cost of buying the product was prohibitive. In 2013, successful efforts were made to gain the support of other states and work began on digitally scanning the paper instead. The project was taken on by Archive Digital Books Australia, based in South Australia, of which Rosemary Kopitke was the Queensland representative. The first batch was available by the end of the year and initial use showed its great potential.

Links between the states have also been important. There is regular contact between societies when seeking operational advice, or information in response to queries or research projects; one of the early Guide Sheets, *Your local church history* (1990) was a joint publication of four State Societies. There was also significant contact when Whitley College, Melbourne sponsored a conference of interested people in 1998 in connection with the development of its library. Planning also began at this gathering for a combined presentation and display at the BWA Congress held in Melbourne, January 2000. Again, BHQ took the initiative for archivists from all of the states to gather in Melbourne in November 2013 as part of the normal meeting of national Baptist leaders. Dr David Parker's membership of the BWA Heritage and Identity Commission also provided contact with a wide range of overseas people and organisations and opened the way for involvement in such important events as the 400th anniversary of Baptist witness in 2009 and the Centenary of the Baptist World Alliance in 2005.

## The vision

With such great transitions taking place in Baptist life in Queensland as well as in the broader church world, there is an increasing need for an understanding of the path that Baptists have taken. There are many important issues to study, and documents and information to be collected. So BHQ stands ready at this point in its history to maintain its traditional aim of preserving, promoting and publishing our heritage.



Rev JE White,  
OBE, MA 1909-93  
Noted Queensland  
pastor and historian

*Cont. from Page 1*



many church Assembly delegates. By contrast, 100 years earlier in 1884, there were 1324 members, 12 pastors and 12 churches plus several outstations and preaching places.

Dr Parker then gave a background of the origins of both the Archives and Baptist Historical Society (as it was known at first) with some of their highlights. The Archives had occupied 5 different sites and worked with 6 different BUQ administrators. The most successful public BHQ public functions had been the William Carey bi-centenary and the festival of German Baptist life. BHQ has published more than 20 books, including some e-books, to fulfil its aim of 'preserving, promoting and publishing' the heritage of Baptists in Queensland.

The many changes that had taken place over 30 years or so were highlights of the panellists' remarks. One of these was music which was now mostly contemporary, using many different instruments (even drums!) and performed a different function in the worship service. The services themselves were much more informal in style and the dress of leaders and people relaxed. The buildings had also changed to allow for the different forms of worship and other ministries. Home groups had replaced the traditional mid-week Prayer Meeting. Ministers now tended to stay in their pastorates for longer periods of time, while often it was the people who were transient, and were prepared to travel much further; attendance is less regular with up to 40% of the regular congregation being absent on any given Sunday – meaning that church was still important but not central in people's lives. People were also better informed and also in much closer contact with the increased use of social media.

Work is more important, which means that outreach needs to be informal and personal, rather than left to the professional evangelist. However, people are now under more stress with their work and there has been a very sharp decline in the availability of volunteers for church work, meaning that many more paid staff are employed to keep the church functioning. The expectations on the pastor's spouse had also changed markedly.

Panellists also pointed out that there have been many changes in spiritual values. There were also changes from a rigid approach to Christian life towards more relaxation and informality – with more emphasis on grace than legalism, although it was also suggested that this trend might be in danger of going too far, with the attitudes to holiness of God and spiritual discipline especially being affected. Controversial issues such as the inerrancy of Scripture, Calvinism and the charismatic movement had now been largely forgotten.

A key question was also raised – the reasons for and the timing of these changes. Answers included the changing social context, especially family and work, and the media and the consumerist mentality that had become the norm. Once people and leaders started asking why the traditional patterns existed, the way was opened up for rapid change. Many of these changes were succinctly summarised (using adroit alliteration!) in a chart prepared by Ruth Elvery which could not be displayed on the day, but is presented on page 7.

After a brief Q&A session involving both the audience and the panellists, the Open Day program came to an end with refreshments which included the cutting of an anniversary cake (picture).

Attendance at the Open Day included representatives from some of the other denominational Archives in Brisbane, while apologies were received from others. Many of the BHQ's books were on sale, and free copies of the Archives' guide sheets and histories of the Archives and BHQ were available.

## ***A Picnic Today—sponsored by the Baptist Men's Society!***



This delightful photo is a recent donation to the Baptist Archives Qld. Dated 26 May, 1962, it shows some happy men from the then Baptist Aged Persons' Home, Clifford House, enjoying a picnic put on for them by the Baptist Men's Society (BMS). (Who are they?)

Over the years, many churches had developed ministries of different types to involve their men and to reach out to others. However, there was no state-wide organisation to assist or encourage them. So in September 1955, the President of the Baptist Union, Rev W K Holmans called a gathering of representatives of these local ministries and the Queensland Baptist Men's Society was formed with the aim: 'To unite the men of our churches.' A badge was also produced.

Over the next few decades, a wide range of activities were conducted including quarterly combined rallies, annual dinners, and an annual camp. Through the work of the local and state bodies, residents of Aged Persons' homes and children's homes received regular Christmas and other gifts; families of prisoners also received Christmas parcels, and services were held at special hospitals, and there were occasional combined communion services for men. There were lots of working bees to help develop and maintain various Baptist properties. An annual prize was awarded to the Baptist College student for biblical exegesis.

The Queensland BMS worked closely with its counterparts in other states and many projects were undertaken cooperatively. Many talented and dedicated men served within the ranks of the BMS to witness to other men and to harness their energy and talent for worthwhile projects, including Les Beasley, Alf Ingham, Reg Morris, Tom Pryce-Davies. Over these years, there were significant changes in church life and society, which led to the closure of the BMS at state level in 2001. Men's work remains a crucial but demanding ministry, and is being continued today in a variety of ways, including many informal activities and the growing Men's Shed movement.



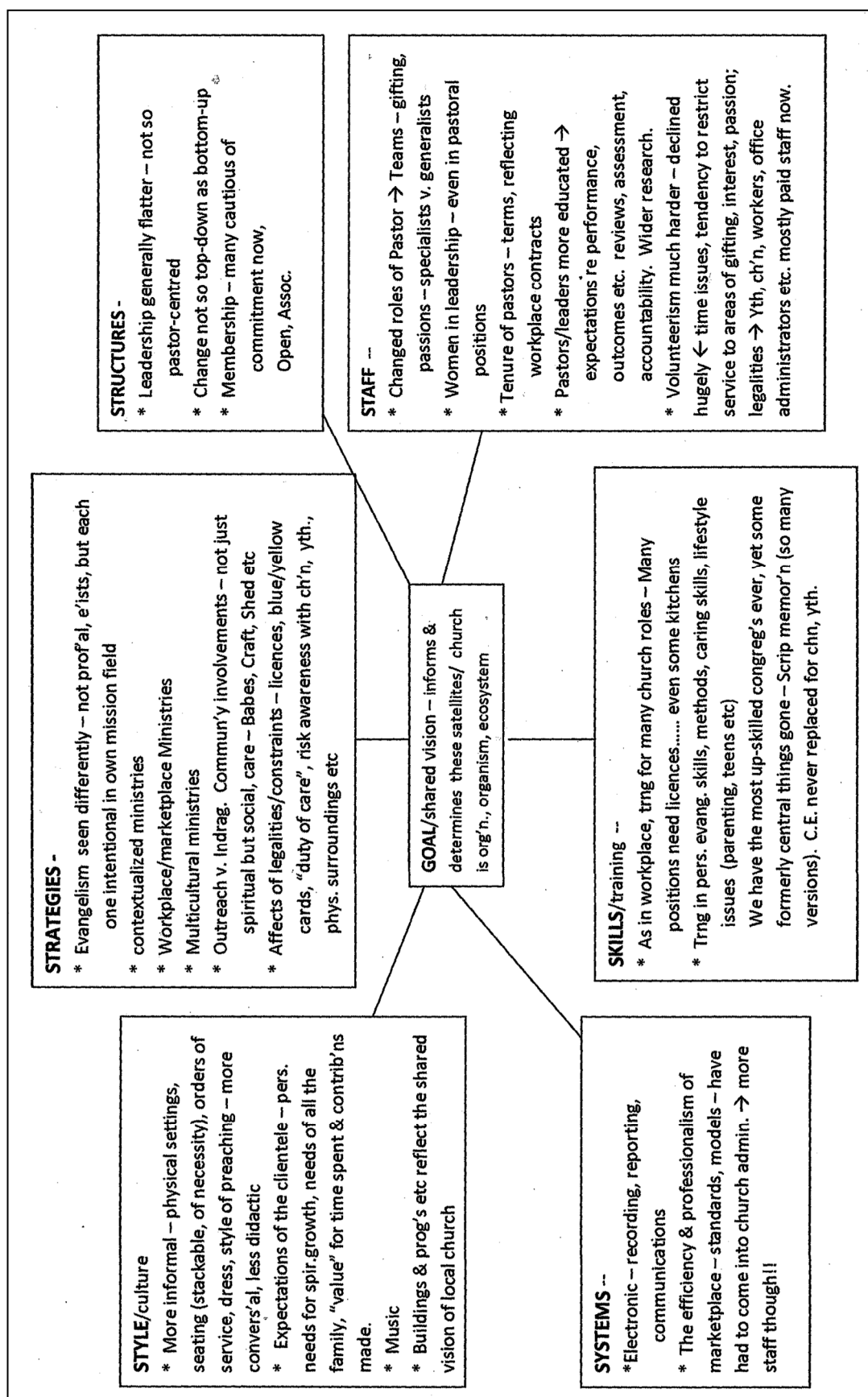


Chart showing changes in Baptist life in Queensland by Ruth Elvery

## ***Churches with Dementia***

***By Bill Hughes***

In August 2006 I was in my then local church congregation when Rev Dr Ken Manley visited us to launch his two volume work: *From Woolloomooloo to Eternity: A History of Australian Baptists*. In his sermon Dr Manley posed the question: ‘How can we understand our present or glimpse our future if we cannot understand our past?’ He went on to say: “the past is a golden gift – not a golden chain to bind us but a valuable treasure to be passed around and to enrich our lives”.

Dr Manley’s words always come back to me when I hear people, especially leaders of local churches, say: “Our church doesn’t live in the past; we are firmly focussed on the future”. I think people who make such statements do not know what a church is. They are talking about the church as an organisation and they want you to know that their church is a progressive organisation, and progressive organisations don’t look back, they look forward. But the church is its people. And church history is about its people – past and present. When we look back at the former members of our local church we discover so much about the church.

I was once a member of a church which was full of memorials to deceased members. When I asked about the various names appearing on the stained glass windows, on plaques on the pews and on the walls, on the communion table and chairs, and even on the communion trays, very few people knew about any of them, and those that did only knew about their own relatives. They were surrounded by dead people.

So over the next couple of years I collected and wrote up the stories that were behind the memorials. As I wrote those stories I discovered that the term “the communion of saints” was particularly relevant to what I was doing. The workers who established the church and nurtured it through its early years by contributing their time, resources and dedication, and the story of their struggles and their triumphs is now a highly valued part of the church’s story. The lives of some of the people I was writing about were unremarkable by worldly standards, but the light of their faith came through as bright and strong. And some of their stories were tragic – young lives of great promise cut short by accident, illness or in the service of their country. But the sacrifices that those early pioneers of the church made in the service of their Lord gave us much to think about and much to be grateful for.

When the stories *from the past* were published, the book was well received by the congregation and the general view was that when they were in the church they were in fact “surrounded by a cloud of witnesses” as they embraced their fellow members from the past and received them into the life of their fellowship. That is why historians do what they do and love what they are doing!

A few years back one of the oldest and most significant churches in the history of another state was taken over by a new “progressive” pastor, and one of his first acts was to throw out the old church records and with those records went a significant part of the early history in that state and the memory of some of the church’s great pioneers. He didn’t own those records. The church did. But he was a forward-looking man who was focussed on the future, not the past. He could have made a few inquiries and realised that his state church archives would value those records highly, preserve them for future generations and make them available to researchers and others, such as people wanting information for their family histories. A church which does not have a memory of its church’s history is a church with dementia. I challenge those who do not value their church’s history to reconsider their position and to fully embrace both the past and present living testimonies within their church.

---

## ***NSW Baptist Historical Society Celebrates 40 Years***

The Baptist Historical Society of NSW celebrated 40 years of activity on 24 May, 2014 with a function at the Eternity Playhouse, the former Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle. According to the BHS NSW, this church was founded in 1871 with its building opened in 1891 and later extended. Many famous ministers were pastors of the church, the most well known probably being Rev William Lamb who attracted capacity crowds (up to 400) with his strong second-coming preaching. One of his greatest supporters was the evangelist, Rev John Ridley, who preached the famous “Eternity” sermon, which motivated Arthur Stace to chalk that word on the pavements of Sydney.

Changing demographics and heritage listing meant that the deteriorating building became a burden for the Baptist denomination in NSW. The Sydney City Council took it over, renovating it (at a cost of about \$10 million) as a live arts performance centre which is leased long term to the Darlinghurst Theatre Company. The structure is now appropriately called, The Eternity Playhouse ([www.darlinghursttheatre.com/eternity-playhouse](http://www.darlinghursttheatre.com/eternity-playhouse)). Many of the original fittings have been retained, including the baptistery. One of the most prominent features is the ‘glorious ceiling’ ‘incredible inlaid woodwork mosaic’ which had been painted over and forgotten many years ago (see website).

The BHS NSW anniversary function focused on a lecture by the founding president of the Society, Dr Ken Manley of Melbourne, titled “After forty years—another look at John Saunders’ pleas for justice for Aborigines.” BHS NSW will be publishing a new book on John Saunders later in the year edited by Dr Manley and Mrs Barbara J Coe (Canberra) containing edited versions of this pioneer pastor’s letter and papers, revealing many important insights into his life, the Baptists, and Sydney in the 1880s. Saunders was minister of the Bathurst Street church, 1834-48 and was a leading figure in the religious, social and political life of the colony, speaking out on issues relating to the abuse of alcohol and bad treatment of Aborigines (especially in relation to the infamous Myall Creek murders).

---