



Cambridge Parade Manly Circa 1920

Wynnum Manly Historical Society Inc

"Our aim is to gather and record local history before it is lost."

www.wmhs.org.au

ABN 49 071 835 845



NEWSLETTER

September 2023

Issue. No. 155

September General Meeting

THURSDAY 21 September 2023

7.00pm for 7.15pm start

Wynnum Ambulance Auditorium
Corner Tingal Road / Cedar Street

Speaker is

Sue Laasko

“The history of my house: land, house and people”

Sue Laakso is one of our Society’s founding members.

She worked as a librarian at TAFE for a number of years and, since retiring, has completed a number of research projects including her family tree.

Sue’s presentation will be informal and there will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions about the research process.

Our Society is receiving an increasing number of enquiries about the history of local houses so Sue’s presentation is timely.

Bring and Buy !!

Raffle

Lucky Door

Refreshments

Gold Coin Donation

News from the Committee

Special Saturday Opening of Resource Centre – more often in 2024

Our recent ‘Special Saturday Opening’ of the Resource Centre was very successful. It was wonderful to welcome Members who may not be able to make it during the week. The Committee is considering having a ‘Special Saturday Opening’ of the Resource Centre on (say) a quarterly basis in 2024. Would Members support this? Please let your Committee know!

Earlier start for monthly meetings in 2024?

Our Committee is heartened to see the camaraderie of Members at our monthly meetings. It’s one of the main benefits of being a Member! To make sure we have time for the business of the meeting and our guest speaker and a cuppa after, we would like to know if Members would support an earlier start to meetings starting in 2024. Would 6.45pm arrival for a 7pm start suit? Please let your Committee know!

Christmas Hampers

We have one more meeting to collect goodies for our Christmas Raffles.

In previous years members have contributed a little each which resulted in many exciting raffles to offer at our final November (Christmas) meeting. Please bring your donations to the **OCTOBER** meeting or drop them off at the Resource Centre.

10am - Noon Weekdays



Thank you to all our members who have helped to set up the stall, and then have made purchases

Remember

Bring and Buy on Thursday 21 September 2023



Books Swap or \$1
Preserves . . .
Cakes and Biscuits . . .



Bring some home-made items
and some cash!!!

Located in the “Old School Building” at Room 1.08, 105 Florence Street, Wynnum.

Open Monday to Friday 10.00am to Noon or by appointment. 0407 293 177)

At “Angels on the Oval”



The Society was invited by Guardian Angels School to mount a stall at the Annual School Fete on Sunday 27 August 2023.

Here we are, with two supporters and Joan Pease MP showing the wares of the Society to the pupils and friends of Guardian Angels.

Much interest was shown as a result of the sign “Where you born in St. Kilda Hospital?”

St Kilda was operating as a medical site at Kingsley Terrace and Picton Street corner from pre 1919 and closed with the sale of the building in the 1970s. Then all the medical records were destroyed.

We are slowly re-collecting the data at every opportunity.

Were you born in or visited the establishment at any time? Please let us know.

We received plenty of interest across the day! Some of the highlights included: selling a copy of founding Member Myrtle Beitz’s book – Mangroves to Moorings Revisited; and being offered early photos of the district for our collection.

The attached photo shows an enquiry even before gates opened! A member of the set-up crew said he was very interested in local history. All in all, it was a very successful day and many thanks go to Jill, Ellen, Lena and Lucy for their involvement on behalf of the Society. We look forward to attending more community events in future. Please let us know if you have any suggested events for us. And we are always happy to welcome new volunteers!



WHERE AM I ? September 2023



Where was I? August 2023



This is the top of the Wynnum Central State School WWI War Memorial, now located in front of the Wynnum Community Centre in Florence Street Wynnum.

The story of the Memorial.

In March 1918 the grounds in front of the Wynnum Central State School in Charlotte Street were developed as a Memorial for those soldiers who served in WWI. This area was to be a grand entrance to the school. A six-foot granite memorial, with drinking faucets, was built and a fish pond (which became a sand pit). Framed by camphor laurels, this courtyard remained the main focus of the school until the 1950's.



The former area on Charlotte Street where the Camphor Laurels grew



*The Memorial against Charlotte Street
Joan Ross in 1952 School Fete*

In August 1944 the Parents and Citizens Association applied for a new building. Progress was slow and in February 1945 the Association approached Mr WM Gunn MLA to see if plans for a new building could be drawn, and part of the building started, to relieve congestion in the infant classes. Mr Gunn had already approached the Minister for Public Instruction, but he agreed to have another try. Due to his persistence, approval was given on 15 March 1945 to prepare and plan for a school with 17 rooms, and a preliminary cost of 6 rooms for infant classes.



First phase completed Dec.1948

On 2nd November 1946 the Foundation stone was laid and on 5 March 1947 building of the new school commenced. The first phase was completed on 24 December 1948 and the building officially opened on 5 February 1949 by the Hon H A Bruce MLA Minister for Public Instruction assisted by Mr W M Gunn MLA, Member for Wynnum Manly.

The second phase of the building was completed and opened in 1953. Memorial gates were installed and opened on 10 October 1954 at the Florence Street entrance to honour the former pupils of the school who were killed in the wars overseas. The memorial head and plaque, previously dedicated to those who died in the 1914 -1918 war were removed from the Charlotte Street side of the school and the plaque and head stone placed at the front of the new building.



*Head of Memorial and plaque.
Moved to Florence Street
Entrance in 1955*



*The Memorial Gates and
Memorial plaque were
moved to the new
Wynnum State School in
Box grove Avenue in c.
2012.*



Here is the summary of the presentation given to the Society by speaker, Brian Rough at the Society meeting of Thursday 17 August

“Too Bloody Old: The Home Guard in WWII”

At our August 2023 meeting, we welcomed historian Brian Rough. A few weeks before our meeting, Brian had presented at the Wynnum Library. To Brian’s credit, a number of people who had heard Brian speak at the Library had come along for a repeat performance!

Brian explained that the phrase headlining his presentation – “Too Bloody Old” – had come from a song that was popular with soldiers. It was not a reference to the soldiers’ ages.

The Volunteer Defence Corps (or VDC) was formed in July 1940. ‘Australia needs you again’ was the plea from the RSL to former service personnel who had served in World War 1 (WWI). They heard the call: for example, at a recruitment meeting at Coorparoo, 100% of attendees joined up. There were multiple companies of the VDC based across Brisbane, including in Manly. ‘D’ company never moved from Manly. The Manly drill hall is now on the grounds of Iona College.

The VDC armband was khaki and a coloured ribbon was added later to denote rank. The RSL appointed individuals to leadership positions within the VDC and this was usually based on service performance in WWI.

Brian explained that VDC counterparts in the southern parts of Australia trained with sticks and tools, whereas VDC personnel in Brisbane were given old weapons for training purposes.

Eventually, the VDC recruitment pool was expanded beyond returned WWI service personal to include civilians. There was to be a ratio of 1 civilian to 2 returned service personnel. Civilians were recruited for skills such as wireless skills.

In 1941, the VDC began to take part in public events such as ANZAC Day. The first public march past for the VDC was in Brisbane on 25 May 1941; Brian showed us a photo of the event. Another photo (from the Courier Mail on 14 August 1941) was of the VDC’s first march wearing their new uniforms; this was at the Exhibition (now known as the Ekka).

In the same year, the Military Board took control of the VDC to ensure there was cooperation and coordination across the military forces. After the war with Japan was declared, some of the VDC personnel were called up for full time duty. The lack of weapons became an issue and there was a call for donation of specified guns.

In 1942, VDC training was offered every night and on weekends. VDC members were responsible for their own rations as part of training exercises. Some of the ‘learnings’ from training exercises were that public telephones shouldn’t be used for communications and also that the VDC was under-equipped. The colour patch of the VDC was approved in early 1942 and issued in Queensland around November.

In 1942, the VDC was tasked with protecting Moreton Bay for the first time. In 1943, the VDC used anti aircraft guns and this involved a steep learning curve for the personnel.

Brian showed rare moving footage of the VDC and what made it even more special was that it was in colour.

A 1944 decision placed the VDC on reserve by July, with some limited exceptions. In Nov 1944, all VDC were placed on reserve; and then they disbanded. Local VDC members gathered annually until 1950.

Brian said the photos and the video that he showed us are the only historical materials about the VDC of which he’s aware but he is certain that there must be others out there – he is keen to receive other materials and also family stories. Please contact our Society if you can contribute.

Thank you Brian for sharing your knowledge of the VDC

Lucy (President)



The occasion - “Cosplay meets Steam Punk “ - Saturday 26 August 2023

We held a ‘Special Saturday Opening’ of our Resource Centre. There was plenty of excitement surrounding the Wynnum Community Centre on the day, with the Steampunk Festival in full swing outside.

Thank you to our valued Members who came to see us on the day: the Society’s collection is ‘your’ collection so we are very happy to see you accessing the materials. We received visits from other locals who have a keen interest in local history.

Interestingly, our first visitors of the morning were from the Annerley-Stephens History Group Inc. In the near future, they will move into a Community Centre in the Yeronga area and they were interested to learn about how we operate our Resource Centre.

Our ‘Special Saturday Opening’ was a great success and many thanks to our volunteers on the day. Your Committee is interested to know whether Members would visit the Resource Centre if we were to open (say) four Saturdays each year? We are aware that not everyone can visit the Resource Centre during the week. Please let us know your feedback.

The DIXON FAMILY - Tanners and Shoemakers

Thomas Dixon, (1814 -), born in Giggleswick, Yorkshire, married Jane Chapman in Bradford, Yorkshire in 1838. There were 6 children, 5 sons and 1 daughter, all registered in Bradford. Thomas was an ironmonger, and the family were Quakers.

Two of the sons, **Joseph Chapman Dixon** (1841 -1929) and **Thomas Coer Dixon** (1845 -1909) came to Australia in 1864, leaving from Bradford in England.

In 1869, Joseph Chapman Dixon encouraged his brother **Thomas Coer Dixon** to come to Brisbane from NSW where he, Thomas, had already established a small tannery. Soon after arrival in Brisbane Thomas set up a tannery at West End. In 1878 this building was expanded to include a boot and shoe manufacturing business with boot and shoe machinery and shoe lasts bought from Sydney.

The first mention of the Dixon Shoe Factory was in the "*Queenslander*" of 6 July 1878. The business was situated in Russell St West End. Disruptions came in 1885 when fire destroyed buildings, and in 1893 the floods damaged the goods and swept away the tannery shed.

In the early 1900s, Thomas was urged by his son to expand and construct more buildings. Land was purchased in 1906 bounded by Montague, Raven and Drake Streets. Thomas visited Sydney to collect ideas of the latest innovations in the shoe industry. With the experience of well-known architect, Richard Gailey, a "magnificent building" was constructed in brick in 1908 at 406 Montague Road West End, and this building was operational until 1965.



West End 1908

Grandson Donald Coer Dixon (1915 – 1997).

Donald Coer Dixon's father, William Victor Dixon, was the third eldest son of Thomas Coer Dixon. Mother was Kathleen Eleanor Lamont. William Victor Dixon became in charge of the West End Tannery, in 1909 when his father Thomas Coer Dixon died.

Donald, one of 4 siblings of William Victor Dixon, was born in 1915. Donald married Margaret (Peg) Tilley in 1940, when aged 25 years, then, in 1941, enlisted and served in the air force until 1945. (WWII). On return to civilian life, Donald's father, William Victor Dixon, had died (1944). Donald joined the staff of his grandfather's tanning and shoemaking business (Thomas Coer Dixon, died 1909) at West End and studied Industrial Chemistry at QIT. Due to differences of opinions amongst the family on ideas of modernization, Donald left the family business to set up a business on his own.

The Donald Dixon Tannery was opened in Fleming Road, Hemmant in 1950. A fire destroyed the shed in 1958. But the shed was insured. In the 1960s there were up to 400 employees. The business was floated as a public company, with Don and Peg as major shareholders. Donald's management style was the key to his success. He was a hard man but fair. If he was wrong he apologized gracefully. He related well to those around him, and he had a good sense of humour.

Don was willing to innovate and kept up with new technology. Tannery uses technologies from all over the world and Don travelled overseas every two years to see what other tanners were doing.

Early in the 1970s, suburban housing had begun to border onto the tannery. There were many complaints about the continuous smell of hydrogen sulphide, a major chemical used in leather curing.

The smelly part of the business moved to a site outside Toowoomba.

In the 1970s the market for trading was changing. Less leather was used. There were more goods arriving from overseas. Shoe making was losing its viability. Don was ill and had to retire.

Don Dixon's Tannery became an asset of Walter Reed, Sydney. The Hemmant factory ceased production and was sold in the 1990's.

Now there is only empty land.

Douglas Leighton Kesteven, Don's son-in-law, wrote and sent the story of "Donald Dixon and the Hemmant Tannery" to us. Douglas worked for Don for ten years, from 1972. We have added an introduction exploring the Dixon family's arrival in Australia.

Ellen and Jill.

OUR LOCAL “Herald”

Another article from our volunteers searching through the “Wynnum Herald”

Merv’s background suits role as a historian

By JIM DUNN

FIFTY-FOUR years’ residence of Wynnum, man and boy, gives Mervyn Beitz a wealth of background on which to base his studies of local history. If there was an official position for “local historian”, Merv would admirably fill the bill. He has made the history of Wynnum-Manly and the Redlands an interesting personal hobby. Merv, who was born at Roma, arrived at Wynnum aged six months. Except for war time service he has never left it. In the lounge of his Carlton Terrace, Manly, home overlooking the broad sweep of the bay, Merv harked back to the old Wynnum and Manly and the rich Redlands district.

SCHOOL DAYS

Merv completed his schooling at Wynnum and then moved on to what was known as Industrial High.

“In those days there were only three State high schools in other than the G.P.S schools. The old Industrial High was situated at the rear of Parliament House in George Street,” Merv revealed.

From Industrial High, Merv entered the Teachers College in Turbot Street, where the S.G.I.O. Theatre is now situated. He began teaching in 1942 at the Lowood State Primary School. Merv also revealed that during his school years Attorney General and Justice Minister Bill Lickiss was a classmate.

WAR SERVICE

After a short spell teaching in the bush Merv entered the Royal Australian Air Force and saw service in New Guinea and the Admiralty group of islands as a radar operator. On his discharge he returned to his beloved Wynnum. In 1954 he married a local girl and they have three children, Cathy 21, Sharon 18 and Kenneth 15. They have lived at Carlton Terrace since 1955. He was transferred to the Cleveland State School in 1953 and stayed for 23 years. “I was part of the furniture at the end,” he says. During his time at Cleveland he was “requested” to research and write a history of the school for its centenary celebrations.

HISTORIAN ROLE

This led to his local historian role and to the compilation and publication of a book, The Cleveland Log. It is full of valuable and pertinent information. Merv has also been associated with Ormiston House and the Redlands Museum at Cleveland, of which he was made an honorary life member in recognition of his services. Merv is now busy on a history of Wynnum and districts and his search for old photos is a continuing one. He already has completed the story of early local government from the days of Kianawah Board to the Wynnum Town Council joining Greater Brisbane in 1924. Merv is also the proud possessor of a private collection of early photographs of the Bayside. “Look at this one. You see the cows on the Manly foreshores. When I was a lad nearly everyone had a cow or two. Later they were restricted to the western side of the railway line.”

SPORTSMAN

A keen cricketer in his youth, Merv played in district teams. Later he was associated with the Wynnum Tennis Association. A doubles partner of those days, Fay Muller, went on to take a Wimbledon doubles title. He still has trophies from his tennis days. Merv has also been active in schools sports and was secretary of Wynnum and Redlands Schools Sports Association for 25 years. He is also proud of the fact that he helped coach a number of children to win Queensland titles in athletics. Today Merv is attached to the staff of the Manly West State School, but goes on relieving duties. Relieving teachers allow teachers from a school to attend seminars and special courses. School kids today enjoyed a wider range of subjects and interests. They were taken on trips to State Parliament, local government bodies and even Canberra by their respective schools. But he would like to see stronger emphasis placed on the learning of the basics, the three R’s as it is commonly called. I think that this is one area where today’s learning is a little soft and I would like to see more emphasis placed on it,” he added. Merv’s pride and joy at his Carlton Terrace home is a huge coconut palm tree. Loaded with coconuts the tree stands majestic in the lower portion of the backyard. “We planted it in what was then a duck run. It takes 10 years for these trees to bear fruit.” Merv could not explain why it had done so well but had his theories.

The ducks are gone but the soil around the tree is rich in compost. The land slopes quickly away and is well drained. It gets early morning sun and is protected from cold snaps.

I promised Merv that the Herald would come back and get a picture. It was raining at the time of our inspection and fairly late in the afternoon. For Manly’s prolific coconut tree and to give the proper tropical atmosphere, a clear sunny day is required.

Wednesday June 7th 1978

What's On

Date	Event	Venue	Booking
Wednesday 13 September 12.30-1.30pm	"How Brisbane celebrated in 1923" Tamsin O'Connor	Commissariat Store 115 William Street Brisbane	Free (Members) 3221 4198 info@queenslandhistory.org.au
Saturday 23 September 1.30pm	Yeronga Heritage Bus Tour	Queen Alexandra Community Centre, 347 Old Cleaveland Road, Coorparoo.	RSVP by 18 September Brisbane History Group 0408 732 207 (Paul)
Thursday 28 September 10 – 11am	"Tourism and Recreation in Wynnum Manly from 1890 to 1930s" Ian Patterson	Wynnum Public Library 145 Florence Street Wynnum	Free Book 3403 2199
17th March to Monday 2nd October 2023	"Dinosaurs of Patagonia" See the world's biggest dinosaur.	Level 3 Qld Museum, Cnr Grey and Melbourne Sts Southbank	Concession \$23 (varies) Buy Tickets qm.t.qtix.com.au
Saturday 21 October 8.30 for 9.00 - to 4.00pm	"Memories of Stephens" Conference 12 Speakers	Our Lady's College, 15 Chester Road, Annerley	Book: 0417 770 176 (Stephen) \$40 (Incl MT and Lunch)
Fri 23 June to Sun 8 October 2023 10-4pm W- F 10-3pm S S	"From Shellgrit to Dolphins" Exhibition.	Redcliffe Museum 75 Anzac Avenue Redcliffe	Free. 3480 6700
9 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2023. 8.30 - 4.30pm	"Criminal Law. Then, Now and Tomorrow" Exhibition.	Sir Harry Gibbs Legal Centre, Ground Floor, QEII Court of Law, 415 George Street City	Free. All are welcome.
20 May to 21 Jan 2024 10 - 5.00pm	"Gon' Fishing" Indigenous Artists work that confirms this cultural, social and recreational activity.	Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) Stanley Place, South Bne.	Free

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

History of Music in Wynnum Manly 1900 - 1997	Betty Nock	\$ 5
History of Arts in the Wynnum Manly Area 1900 - 2003	Betty Nock	\$ 5
Bayside Biographies. People from Wynnum Manly. 1900 -2007	Betty Nock	\$ 5
Mangroves to Moorings re-visited	Myrtle Beitz	\$35
Lota House: Photos over 150 years	Myrtle Beitz	\$15
Story of Lota House 1867 - 2017	Myrtle Beitz	\$ 5
Church Buildings of Wynnum Manly and Lota	Coupland and Greenhill	\$10
Early Shipping in Moreton Bay 1846 - 1859	Davenport and Mottram	\$ 5
Early Shipping in Moreton Bay 1860 - 1863	Davenport and Mottram	\$ 5

Available at the
Resource Room
Weekdays 10am-Noon
Email:
jillg01@tpg.com.au

