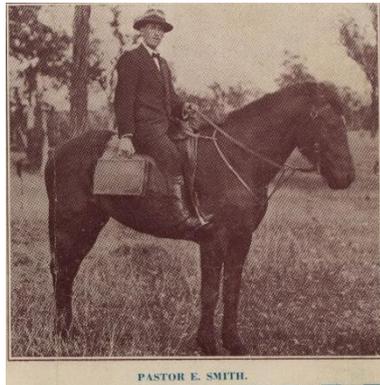


***‘Struggles, sacrifices, hopes and achievements’ - how to plant churches!
Latest research project from the Baptist Archives***

By Bill Hughes with David Parker

The Baptist Archives volunteers are continuously researching various aspects of the story of Baptists in Queensland so as to better understand how to ‘do church’ and to record the valuable lessons of the past. Currently, long-time researcher, Bill Hughes of City South Baptist Church, is working on a major history of the Home Mission which was the church planting arm of Baptists in Queensland in for nearly 90 years and was responsible for many of today’s successful churches. Dr David Parker asked Bill about his current project.

Parker: What is your latest research project for the Archives?



An early Baptist Home Missionary does his rounds!

Hughes: I am writing the history of the Queensland Baptist Home Mission 1855-1971

What is or was the ‘Queensland Baptist Home Mission’?

In 1883 the Baptist Association of Queensland passed a motion aimed at establishing Baptist churches around Queensland. Basically, the main objectives of the motion were to assist weaker churches, to establish new churches, to provide evangelists to work throughout Queensland and to educate ‘young men’ for the ministry.

When did it start and what happened to it in the end?

It did not get under way quickly. No real progress was made between 1883 and the turn of the 20th century. It was mainly after a fulltime Home Mission Superintendent was appointed in 1911 that things really got underway. It worked up to 1971 when it was closed. There was a gap of about 10 years before Mission to Queensland (MTQ) began, but of course it only worked in remote areas, not over the whole state (including urban areas) as the Home Mission had done.

A large number of Baptist churches which exist in Queensland today owe their existence to the Home Mission Service (I estimate that about half of current Queensland Baptist churches have been assisted through the Home Mission program.)

What made you interested in this?

In my work in the Archives I have discovered a lot about the work, sacrifices and hardships of the pastors and early pioneers of the Home Mission Service and have come to appreciate the great debt we owe to them. I am simply putting together their stories and I think we can be encouraged by them and learn from them.

What do you hope will be the value and outcome of your work?

The stories contained in the history of our churches define us as a body of people. They explain our struggles, sacrifices, hopes and achievements, and they paint a realistic picture of who we are. The aim is to inform people. It might even encourage people, who don't already do so, to appreciate the pivotal value of history in gaining an appreciation of what we do and why we do it.



The HM Superintendent on duty

What are some of the most valuable findings so far?

On the positive side: the dedication of church leaders and the faithfulness of the church communities over long periods, the fortitude of church members in times of trial and the way in which people prioritised God's work in those days. But not forgetting the hardships (sometimes quite extreme) and strict 'rules' the pastors worked under, the primitive nature of transport, housing and living conditions back in those days (the late 1800s and early 1900s) and the opposition they sometimes faced (eg. in mining towns like Mt Morgan).



A Home Mission church - Stanthorpe

Any disappointments?

It is sometimes difficult to get a full picture of some events. I have read numerous church histories and I am regularly surprised at the efforts that are taken to 'cover up' the little tragedies or disasters that occur in church life. We need to know about these experiences so that we can avoid them and learn from them. Nevertheless historians are too often unable to get details about negative events. Sometimes there even seems to be a ridiculous degree of secrecy about what happened. This is not to suggest that privacy must not always be taken into account and the feelings of people must always be respected.

When will the job be published?

I keep discovering new things and I don't see a need to put any deadlines on the work which might result in it being incomplete.

We invite readers of this report who are interested in contributing to the task of recording and researching Baptist history in Queensland to get in touch and to join up with Baptist Heritage Qld visit <https://www.bhsq.org/> and email us at archives@qb.org.au

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