

7th BRIGADE PARK

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The following is a selected history of the area now called 7th Brigade Park which is the site of Queensland Family History Society's new home.

Prior to World War I an area of land east of Murphy Road was owned by **Alonzo Sparkes**, a butcher, and the area was known locally as Sparkes' Paddock.

During the early stages of WWI, 120 members of a Light Horse section from the Northern Rivers area set up camp, known as Chermside Camp, on the northern side of Marchant Paddock (now Marchant Park) that lies on the western side of Murphy Road. From late 1914 the camp also became a Remount Depot for the Queensland-raised 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment.

Based on the number of photographs held by the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) showing the range of buildings present at the Chermside Camp, it indicates that it was a substantial camp. During WWI the Marchant Paddock camp expanded across Murphy Road into Sparkes' Paddock where the Northern Rivers Light Horse section had moved to. The main reason the two paddocks were used was that the scrub had been cleared and thus made the area suitable for the agistment of horses. The camp also included an artillery unit with 18-pounder guns, as shown by some of the SLQ photos.

Several years ago, **Norm Pfingst**, a descendent of a German immigrant family that settled in Wavell Heights and after whom Pfingst Road is named, showed me a family photo of two Light horsemen taken during WWI. The Light horsemen were in uniform on their horses on a track that is now Pfingst Road. I always wondered if they were heading to the Kedron Park Hotel as the Pfingst Road track headed in the direction of the hotel.

As an aside, Marchant Park's military history extends back to colonial times, and the Park Gates at the corner of Gympie Road and Murphy Road were opened in 1924 to commemorate WWI servicemen from the then Kedron Shire.

At the end of WWI the military camp in Marchant paddock and Sparkes' paddock closed.

In 1940, a new Chermside Camp was opened in Sparkes' Paddock, an area bounded by Murphy Road, Ellison Road, Geebung Road (now Newman Road) and Downfall Creek. The first military units to be based at the Chermside Camp were units of the 7th Brigade which was composed of the following Queensland based Battalions: the 9th, the 25th and the 61st. The 9th Battalion can trace its origins back to the Moreton Regiment based in the Brisbane area during colonial times. The 9th Battalion still exists today and is based at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera. The 25th Battalion also still exists, based in Toowoomba today, and it also can trace its origins back to the Darling Downs Regiment from colonial times. The 61st Battalion, also known as the Cameron Highlanders, was initially formed in 1917 and disbanded the same year, but was reformed in 1938 as a Militia unit.

A late resident of Wavell Heights, **Frank McCosker**, was a member of the 9th Battalion when it was based at the Chermside Camp. Frank told me that the 9th Battalion was quartered near Murphy Road. Frank said that the 9th Battalion, following training at the Chermside Camp, was sent to Rollingstone, north of Townsville, where they manned the Townsville Line in preparation for a possible Japanese attack. The reason Rollingstone was chosen was that the distance between the coast and the Great Dividing Range was the narrowest in that part of the North. The 9th Battalion was then moved to Milne Bay where the Japanese met their first defeat on land during WWII. Frank said that they travelled to Milne Bay on a Dutch trader that had escaped from Indonesia. He made a comment that not only was the crew filthy but so was the ship. Luckily they only had to put up with the poor lodgings for two nights.

During WWII the Chermside Camp expanded across Downfall Creek. The old section was labelled upper camp and the new

continued

section lower camp. The following 1946 aerial photograph shows the layout of Chermside Camp.

The location marked by the red **X** on the aerial photo approximates where QFHS's new premises are located. There were a few outliers to the camp; in the photo a small group of huts can be seen on the northern side of Ellison Road. On Kuran Street, just south of the photo, was an Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) camp. Members of the Chermside and District Historical Society interviewed a local Wavell Heights resident who told of chatting over her fence to service women in the AWAS Camp during WWII.

Bridges joined the upper and lower camps across Downfall Creek. Vegetables were grown on the banks of Downfall Creek to help feed the troops in the camp. In 1943 approval was granted for the military to use parts of Marchant Park. One of the uses for Marchant Park was driver training, which included training for service women from the AWAS camp. Scarring shown in the photo of

Marchant Park suggests where the driver training may have taken place.

An interesting incident occurred in the camp later in the war. A trainee pilot and instructor were flying near the camp when the plane experienced engine trouble. They tried to land on Hamilton Road but were unable to due to the traffic volume. The plane crashed in the lower camp hitting an officers' latrine. The instructor and trainee pilot were both killed.

A few more points of interest re Chermside Camp:

- Chermside and District Historical Society is based in the Historical Precinct at the rear of the Chermside Shopping Centre off Kittyhawk Drive, not far from QFHS's new premises.
- Also within the Historical Precinct is the old 9th Battalion's D Company Sandgate Drill Hall which was built in 1915. The drill hall was moved to its current location in 2000. The building is currently used as the 9th Battalion's War Memorial Museum.



7th BRIGADE PARK (Cont.)

- A late resident of Wavell Heights, Mr. **Peter Barfoot**, as a young lad lived in Taabinga Street during WWII. He mentioned that sometimes at night during the war, troops undertaking night exercises would pass his home. Peter also said that, to undertake rifle training, troops would march from the camp to the Zillmere Train Station to take a train to Enoggera to undertake such training.

The following comment is taken from the book, *The 61st Battalion, 1938-1945, The Queensland Cameron Highlanders' War* by James Watt.

“Cpl **Nev. Larsen** recalls his days with D-Coy:

“On arrival at Chermside Camp there were cries from the other troops of “You’ll be Sorry!” and “They must have scraped the bottom of the barrel for this lot!” At the Quarter Masters Store we were issued with “Giggle Suits” and cotton floppy hats and other necessary equipment. A large hessian bag was issued to us to fill with straw as a rough mattress, with the comment “This will be your bed on the hard wooden floors”. There was an Army routine ruled by the clock:

0605	Morning Parade
0800	General parade and inspection
1215	Mess parade
1613	Knock off
1700	Mess parade
2200	Lights out played by a piper

“We had one hurricane light, a bucket of water in case of fire, one rifle rack plus a long rope in the centre of the tent to hold our “Going Out” uniforms. We were issued with gas masks in case the Japanese used that terrible warfare. Gas drills were horrible – choking, gasping, stinging eyes – it was awful.

“Our platoon was chosen to exercise under battle conditions with live bullets overhead provided by Vickers and Bren machine-guns and mortar fire, and finally with fixed bayonets we would rush forward and attack the “enemy”.”

Sources:

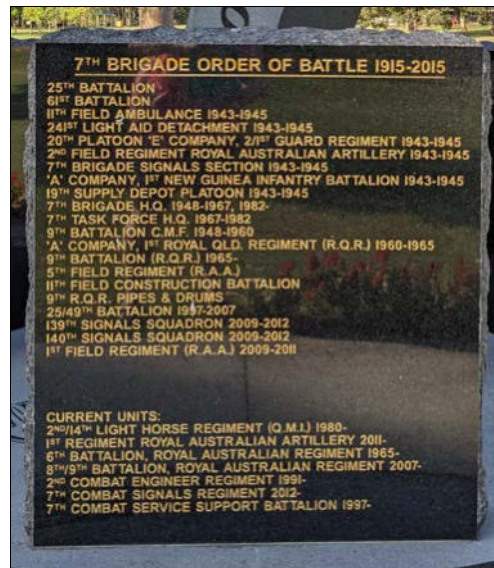
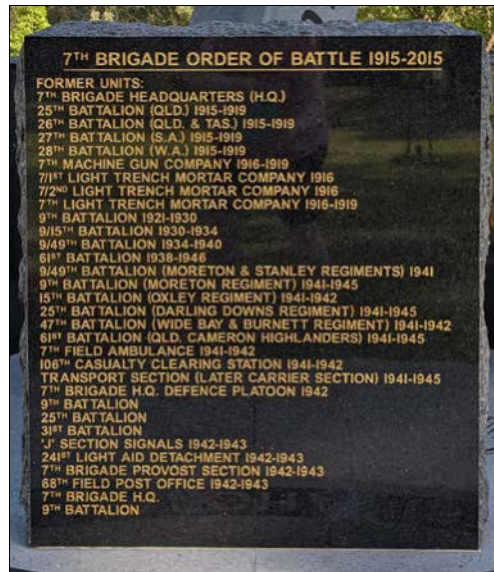
Brisbane City Council Local Heritage Places, Marchant Park.

Queensland Government's Queensland WWII Historic Places.

Trove.

Map from website ArcGIS - Aerial imagery – 1946 www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?u seExisting=1&layers=8dfoa022b7df4192849fdc72ed93bf12 [I expanded the image then did a screen dump of the Geebung area.]

For further information refer to www.qfhs.org.au/about-us/new-premises-for-qfhs/.



(map provided by the author, photos provided by the Editor) ■