

Coorparoo
& Heritage Group
Districts

Invites you to hear

Jordan Haimes

Speak about

The Cross River Rail

Cross River Rail is Queensland's largest infrastructure project. Once operational in 2025, journeys will be quicker, stations will be in more convenient locations and there will be capacity to increase train services as our population grows. In 2021, the project completed the excavation for the 5.9km of twin tunnels and work continues across 15 worksites to deliver the 10.2km of new rail line, four new underground stations, eight built above-ground stations, three new stations to be constructed on the Gold Coast and the introduction of new world-class signalling system to the wider SEQ rail network.

More than just a rail project, Cross River Rail is a city and region shaping investment which will also create new public spaces, community precincts and unprecedented opportunities for urban renewal and economic development.

The project is also connecting our future to our past as the project uncovers fascinating artefacts during construction works. These artefacts offer some insight into life in Brisbane at the turn of the 19th Century.

Jordan Haimes is the Acting Manager, Engagement Projects Marketing, Media and Communications for the Cross River Rail project.

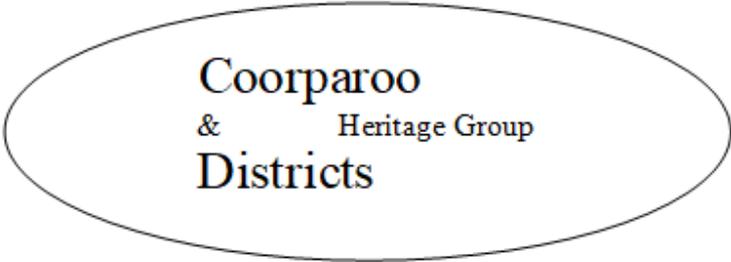
Come along and listen to Jordan speak about the Cross River Rail and the benefits it will provide

Where? **Kingsbury Room**
Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre
347 Old Cleveland Rd. Coorparoo

When? Saturday **4 June 2022** at 2.00 pm

Non-members are welcome, but why not join our group? A small donation to offset hiring charges would be appreciated. Bring a plate to share at Afternoon Tea.

Contact President Ron Baker OAM 0412 944 095 Vice President Richard Jeffreys OAM 0411 511 369
Mail: Hon. Secretary. PO Box 263 Coorparoo Q 4151



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MAY 2022 NEWSLETTER

At the February meeting Dr. Robert Ørsted-Jensen gave us an interesting and informative address about the early Scandinavian settlement in South-East Queensland. Several of our members can claim some link to Scandinavian ancestry. Unfortunately Robert's computer was not compatible with our data projector and he did not have a USB stick to use in our computer so we missed out on his images. He was however able to portray the message without images. We have now had talks on early German and Scandinavian settlers. It has been suggested that following the Russian revolution in the early part of the 20th century Russians settled in the Woolloongabba area. We are looking to get someone to speak on this later in the year.

In June Jordan Haimes will speak to us about Queensland's largest infrastructure project, the Cross River Rail. Jordan is the Acting Manager, Engagement Projects Marketing, Media and Communications. When completed in 2025 the Cross River Rail will provide quicker rail journeys and stations in more convenient locations.

At this year's Anzac Day ceremony at the Coorparoo RSL Sub Branch, our President Ron laid a wreath on behalf of our group. The ceremony was well attended by the local community even though rain tried to put a dampener on the occasion. The ceremony was again well conducted by Richard Jeffreys OAM. Guest speakers were Narinder Parmar who spoke about his father who was an Indian soldier imprisoned by the Japanese in World War II, and Sylvia Jeffreys who spoke about her grandfather Neil Hamilton Russell and his military service in Tobruk and Papua New Guinea. Neil was awarded a DCM for his war effort.

The Queensland Country Women's Association (QCWA) has agreed to provide a speaker at one of our meetings. This is hoped for at our August meeting.

The route for the October bus tour of the Sandgate/Shorncliffe area has been finalised and information on many of the places along the route is being sourced.

Continuing our articles on prominent Coorparoo identities we thank Robin Kleinschmidt OAM for his article on prominent German settler Frederick Wecker. Robin spoke to our group at the February meeting and this is an extract from his talk.

FREDERICK WECKER

Probably the best known of the early German settlers to the South-East Brisbane area was Frederick Wecker, usually known as Fritz.

A native of Baden-Württemberg (south-east Germany), he arrived in Moreton Bay in February 1856 on the *Casar Godeffroy*, aged 28 years. He had served for six years in the Prussian army, and had acquired a military presence and bearing which never left him. He lived initially on the north side of the river, and established himself as a person of significance, so much that when the ceremony was held on 6 June 1859 to celebrate the separation of Moreton Bay from New South Wales and the inauguration of the new colony of Queensland, it was the German Frederick Wecker who was given the honour of firing the

celebratory cannon. (Perhaps his military experience had some bearing on his selection. He had fired cannon before.)

In 1869 he was still on the electoral roll for North Brisbane, and was showing an interest in local politics. He remained politically active for his whole life. In about 1869-70 he moved south of the river, purchasing 46 acres on Old Cleveland Road bordering what is now Kirkland Avenue and extending to modern Pembroke Road. It included the present site of St. James' Catholic Church. He built himself a large and beautiful house with extensive gardens at the southern end of his estate near modern Pembroke Road. He engaged in mixed farming and planted an extensive vineyard. He also cleared a large portion of the land to establish pasture for a large dairy, which became known as Hill Farm.

In April 1857 he married Katherina Glindermenn. She and her two brothers Conrad and Andreas, were German settlers who became important dairymen. Fritz and Katerina had only one child, Maria, who died three days after her birth, Fritz Wecker had no direct family to whom to pass on the significant estate he was acquiring. Several of his ten siblings had also emigrated to Queensland, and his brother Michael in Toowoomba had a large growing family. After several years he expanded his holdings with the purchase of adjoining 98 acres, extending as far as today's Chatsworth Road Greenslopes. A newspaper article in 1908, a few years before his death, claimed, though with obvious exaggeration: At one period of his life, he owned nearly the whole of Coorparoo. He was certainly the largest landholder. His second property, largely cleared of vegetation, extended well into what became the suburb of Greenslopes. As well as having lush pastures, he grew green feed for his dairy cows, barley, oats, maize and sweet potatoes. It has been claimed that Greenslopes took its name from the green slopes of Wecker's pasture and cultivation.

He was an excellent and innovative dairyman. From 1880 on, he won prizes several times for his butter at the Brisbane Show. He pioneered the domestic delivery of milk by cart, and was the first to introduce the stall feeding of his cows to supplement pasture feeding. Still later he introduced the steaming of some of the harder feed given to his cows such as turnips, corn cobs and bush hay to make it more digestible.

In March 1875 it was at his home that the meeting was convened to decide on the name for the new government school. The government proposal to call it Stevenstown. Mr Stevens, a prominent local landholder, who had donated the land for the school, declined the honour and the meeting agreed on the name *Cooraparoo*, later shortened to Coorparoo, the aboriginal name for Norman Creek. The name of the school became the name of the suburb.

Fritz Wecker continued his interest in local affairs and politics. He was a Justice of the Peace. For many years he was a member of the Bulimba Divisional Board, and after its division, of the Belmont Divisional Board. In the 1880's he convened meetings at his home of local German settlers and electors to urge them to support "progressive conservative politics." He himself was encourage to stand for parliament, but chose not to do so.

In 1882 the Queensland newspaper, in reporting on his innovations in the dairy industry, wrote: *This is one of the many instances illustrating the perseverance, industry and enterprise of our German fellow-colonists, than whom there is no class of settlers at the present time doing more for their own and the colony's advancement and prosperity.*

In 1879 he began to dispose of some of his property, selling a 61 acre section of his farm, including 2,000 grape vines, as a going concern. In 1884 he sold the remaining 95 acres to the developer Henzell, who divided it into 220 large suburban housing lots, which were sold at a number of auctions between August 1884 and October 1885. Whereas many lots of 16 perches were sold elsewhere, there seemed to be less appreciation of the size of the 32-40 perch lots on the Wecker Estate. His large and stylish homestead with three acres was offered for sale in August 1884, and was purchased by Mr. A.M. Kirkland, who was a Councillor of the Coorparoo Shire Council.



Frederick Wecker's residence

The road leading from Old Cleveland Road to the homestead had long been known as Wecker Street. At the outbreak of World War I, Frederick Wecker had been dead for four years, when anti-German hysteria gripped large portions of the citizenry, there was a move to remove the German name from the street. It was opposed by many locally, and also by his relatives on the Darling Downs, but the change was made. It became Kirkland Avenue, to commemorate the man who was the second owner of the homestead. The change was one of the first of such changes, coming several years before government legislation removed all German place names in the state.

In November 1885 a newspaper report referred to Wecker as a farmer at Mt. Gravatt. He had purchased and developed a new farm at the junction of Newnham Road and the road which became Wecker Road, now the site of the Mt. Gravatt East State School. His name has been memorialised there, as he became as prominent a citizen there as at Coorparoo. His new home *Strassberg*, equally large and imposing as the one at Coorparoo, was a social centre in the district, the site of many meetings and social occasions.

It was claimed in the newspapers of the day that he had moved from Coorparoo because his wife was afraid of "the depredations of the aboriginies." It seems strange that such alarm should have developed after 15 years in the district, although the land beyond Hill farm was still largely undeveloped, and numbers of aborigines often gathered there. A site on the corner of Old Cleveland Road and Dorothy Street was still a popular gathering spot for them, and in 1853 there had been a major battle among aborigines, some coming from as far as Bribie Island to participate.

Katherine Wecker died in March 1888. Five years later, in April 1893, Frederick Wecker remarried. His second wife was Auguste Fredericke Emma Glindermann, the widow of one of Katherine's distant relatives. Much younger than her new husband, she outlived him by 30 years.

In addition to his property on Wecker Road, he also owned land on the lower slopes of Mt. Gravatt.

His active involvement in community affairs continued. He played a leading role in the Mt. Gravatt Progress Association, where most of the members were German settlers. There was a larger concentration of Germans in the district than had been the case in Coorparoo.

Frederick Wecker passed away in February 1910 at the age of 82. Many will be familiar with his prominent headstone in the Balmoral Cemetery, of which he was a trustee for many years.

Wecker was a loyal and long-standing member of the Lutheran Church. Most of the German settlers at Mt. Gravatt joined the Congregational church when it opened in that district, and later the Methodist church, because of the distance from the nearest Lutheran church at South Brisbane, and later at

Woolloongabba. Frederick Wecker maintained his membership in that congregation, even though distance, time and age prevented frequent attendance. When the German Lutheran Church in South Brisbane was established in 1882, he became one of the trustees. Church functions at Hill Farm at Coorparoo in the 1870's attracted hundreds of members. When letters Patent were issued in 1891, he was the only one of the original trustees to continue in the role, and he remained a trustee until his death, a period of 48 years. When his second wife Emma died at Wynnum in 1940, the Lutheran pastor at Woolloongabba was one of the executors of her estate.

Extract from an address given by Robin Kleinschmidt OAM to the Coorparoo & Districts Heritage Group on Saturday 5 February 2022 at the Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre.