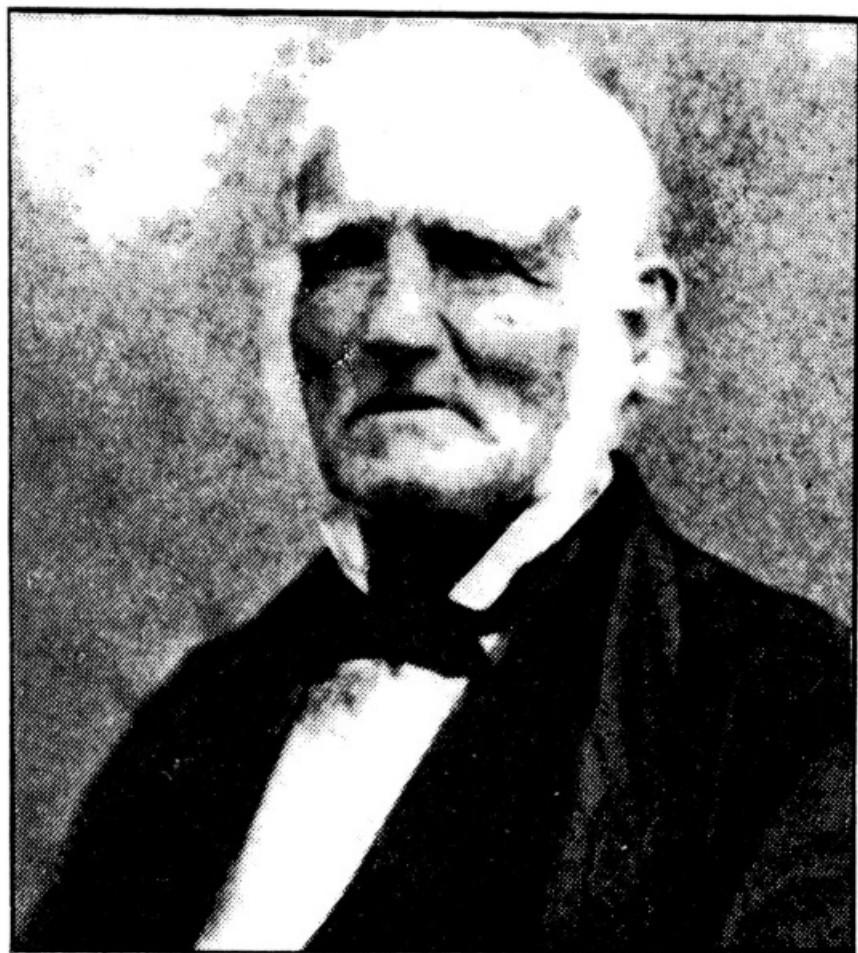


Chidlow's Well

1883 — 1983



*One Hundred Years of
Memories*

The Chidlow Centennial Committee would like to extend their thanks to Marie Pollard and Susan Nicholls for the preparation of this booklet. Whilst every care was taken to ensure accuracy, the booklet is in part based on heresy and should not be used as a concise historical reference. Many people enthusiastically contributed photos and interviews, unfortunately the limited size of this presentation prevented the inclusion of many of the excellent anecdotes and pictorials donated. Please accept our sincere thanks for your generosity.

Front Cover: Mr. William Chidlow (Photo Circa 1875). Photograph courtesy Mr. John Chidlow of Harvey.

....*“One of the young fellows of the town was a bit of a lad. The publican was fattening a turkey gobbler for his Christmas dinner. This chap was a bit short on drinking money so he took the turkey from the backyard of the Hotel, took it into the bar and asked the Publican if he wanted to buy a turkey. The Publican paid him and told him to put it into the pen with the other one.....”*

Tilson Oldmeadow Byfield Jones

William and Peter Chidlow arrived at Fremantle on 5th March, 1831 in the employ of Northam Landowner Mr. J. Morrell. Whilst managing Mr. Morrell's estate, both would frequently journey to and from the coast, trekking over the Hills with produce and supplies on a 60 mile journey lasting more than two days.

On one overnight stop, William sank a well to provide water for their teams and stock. The area became known as Chidlow's Well and was utilized as an overnight campsite by many other travellers.

The original Chidlow's Well now lies under the Old Northam Road, just beyond the intersection of Liberton Road. Within a few years another well was sunk, close to the original and can still be seen on Lot 267 Old Northam Road.

William and Peter purchased vast amounts of land in the Avon Valley. Tragically, Peter died in 1837 after being speared by Aboriginies, but William became an influential figure, being one of Northam's most important Landowners. He built the family home of Springfield in 1853 and died on 6th June, 1879 aged 72 years.

In February, 1879 the survey of the Guildford to York railway commenced. By July of the same year it was completed. Immediately speculation took place regarding the Government's intention to gazette a townsite in the Chidlow area. On 7th June, 1882 "The Inquirer" ran the following article:

".....We understand it is the intention of the Government shortly to lay out a townsite in the vicinity of the Eastern Railway. There is excellent land there adaptable to agriculture....."

On 12th March, 1883 The Commissioner of Crown Land, Sir John Forrest wrote to Governor Broome regarding the townsite and suggested Chidlow's Well as a suitable name. On 27th November, 1883 the following notice appeared:

".....His Excellency the Governor, by virtue of the powers given him by the Land Regulations has been pleased to order that the Suburban Land included within the area hereinafter particularised be classed as Town and Suburban, to form a Townsite at the Terminus of the second section of the eastern Railway, hereafter to be known and distinguished as "Chidlow's Well", containing an area of 1,500 acres....."

The name remained until 25th November 1919 when after pressure from local residents, it was requested that the town's name be changed to Chidlows. It was decided by the Under Secretary of Lands to also delete the "S" and the name was changed to **CHIDLOW** in 1920.

Land Auctions commenced on 3rd January, 1884. Many people unable to afford land, but hoping to work with either the Railway or Timber Industry flocked to the area and a shanty town of squatters, living in tents and temporary huts, grew up around the new townsite.

One man who saw the commercial potential of Chidlow's Well was John Symonds. Mr. Symonds decided not to renew his lease of the Mahogany Inn (then called The Prince of Wales Hotel) and instead built a new Hotel on Railway land at Chidlow's Well which he called The Oxford Inn, after his birthplace in England.

The 21 Mile connection from Guildford to Chidlow's Well was opened on 11th March, 1884 and it would appear from the following advertisement in "The Inquirer" that the Oxford Inn was there to welcome the first train:

**OXFORD INN
CHIDLOW'S WELL**

John Symonds

For many years of the "Prince of Wales Hotel" Mahogany Creek, York Road, begs to announce to his patrons and the public generally that he has just opened a most commodious Inn at Chidlow's Well where travellers and others will meet with the best accommodation and cheerful attendance. WINES, BEERS and SPIRITS of the most popular brands. The HOTEL is only a few yards from the Station and visitors from the port and city have ample time to refresh themselves during the stay of the train. First-class Stabling and attentive ostlers always at hand.
April 24th, 1884.

The Oxford Inn was open 24 hours per day, not only providing refreshments to travellers whilst they waited for the train to commence its return journey but also to the many settlers and squatters now residing in the area. The families of the railway gangs working on the third section of the line to York also resided in the town and weekend business was brisk. Ken Symonds, nephew of John Symonds remembered being thrown out of his bed many a night to provide a bed for a paying customer.

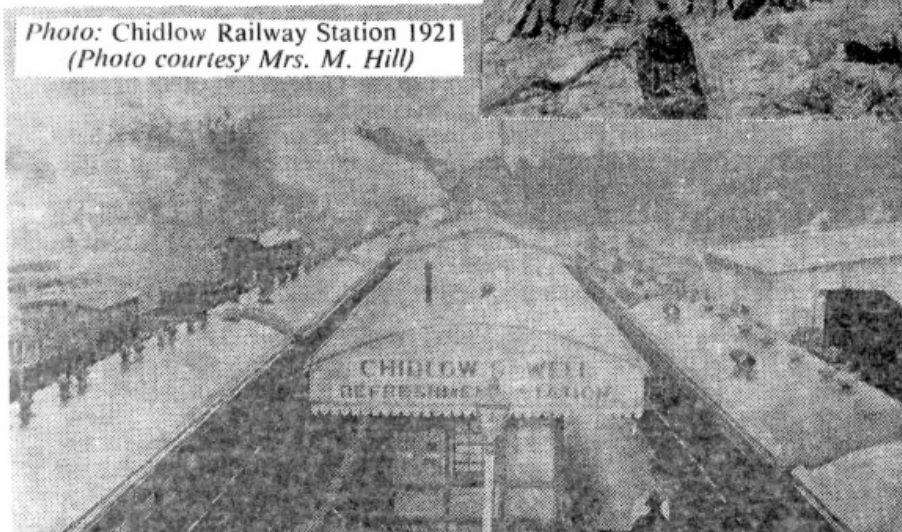
The Railway Station was very extensive with many buildings, marshalling yards and a turntable. In 1898 two water tanks were put into use, filled with water from the Chidlow Dam. The Dam (now known as Lake Leschenaultia) was built by the P.W.D. for the Railway. An earth embankment with a core of clay puddle was thrown across a gully impounding approximately 118 million gallons of spring fed water, a 5" cast iron main, capable of discharging 12,000 gallons per hour, was installed between the reservoir and Chidlow's Well station. A pumper was employed to keep the boilers fired on the steam powered pump which supplied the station's water tower.

Photo: C.(Cock) Trowbridge standing on charcoal kiln.
(Photo courtesy Mrs. D. Coombes)

Charcoal Bagging, Sleeper Cutting and Firewood were also small but important industries, especially with the Orchardists and Farmers who used these activities to provide supplementary income whilst their properties were developing. Whole families would stay out all night to ensure the Charcoal Kiln did not explode and care was also taken to bag the charcoal when cool, or many weeks' work would be lost in ash.



Photo: Chidlow Railway Station 1921
(Photo courtesy Mrs. M. Hill)



Many Saw Mills commenced operation in the vicinity of Chidlow's Well Station using its excellent facilities to transport timber to Perth, Fremantle and beyond. Most of the Mundaring Shire was classed a special timber zone and many local independant sawyers were grateful to Henry Howe, who wrote to John Forrest requesting that a vast area, north of Chidlow, be used exclusively for pit sawyers; thus excluding saw mills from the area and permitting many men in the Chidlow area to work for themselves. Henry Howe, Fred Howe and Henry (Jnr.) along with a number of other sawyers worked the area for many years. The cutting and milling of timber was rapid and indiscriminate, to such a degree that by the 1890's Forest Rangers were stationed at Chidlow's Well to patrol the forest, including the Helena River Catchment area then being set aside for the proposed Goldfields Water Supply.

One man who carted timber to the Chidlow's Well Station and who lived in town in the early days was "Moondyne Joe". Ken Symonds remembered going possum hunting with Joe on many occasions as did many of his friends.

Many Orchards flourished in the fertile soil around Chidlow, the three most renowned in the earlier days being Lillydale (Est. W.G. Clark), Sagno (Est. G. Fountain) and Rosedale (Est. C. Cook).

Rosedale was the property of Mr. Charles Cook and his wife Sara.

Charles arrived in Chidlow with two of his sons, Thomas and Alfred in 1895. They quickly commenced clearing and building a house to accommodate their large family. In June 1896 Sarah, with the other Cook children arrived. Sarah also brought with her several Queen Bees, enabling Charles to establish an apiary. The family cut sleepers and sold wildflowers at the Station until the orchard became productive. The orchard flourished within a few years and was renowned not only for the quality of its fruit, but also for grapes, rhubarb and honey.

By the early 1900's, Chidlow was known for its bountiful yields of quality fruit, attracting more Orchardists and Farmers to the area.

Richard Ham bought his property in 1904 and named it Hamsdale after his own father's original Chidlow Orchard.

Like most Orchardists, Richard supplemented his income by charcoal bagging and sleeper cutting until the orchard could return a comfortable income. His son Frank remembers going to the Oxford Inn often to clean out the stables for manure for the young trees and garden.

When Richard died in 1932, Frank took over the property. The orchard was highly productive and at one time had the largest country fruit order, once going through a complete consignment book in one day.

The property adjacent to Hamsdale was owned by John Frederick Nicholas. John F. Nicholas unloaded at Geraldton and blazed a trail to Kalgoorlie, arriving in Chidlow in 1908.

The Nicholas family carted wood and bagged charcoal whilst their trees matured.

In 1926 John F. Nicholas commenced his vegetable round in a horse dray, and in 1946 he purchased a Dodge Utility. Unfortunately, the brakes were not very reliable and many times the car was quickly put into reverse gear to avert an accident with oncoming trains. Both properties have remained in their respective families.

Gerry and John Nicholas with wives Phyllis and Mary still sell vegetables outside the Chidlow General Store each Saturday.

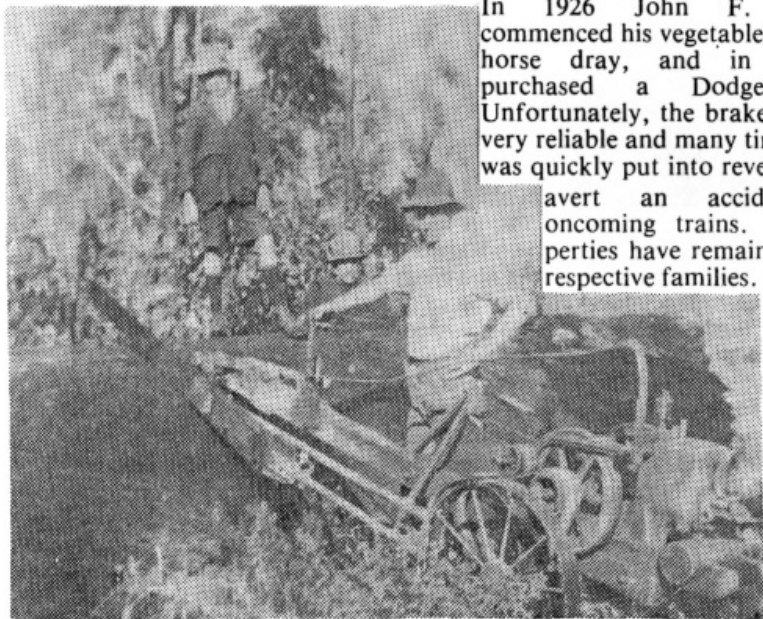


Photo: Frank Ham using a dray saw with 6ft blade on log left by millers.

(Photo courtesy F. Ham)

Two other properties worthy of note were Yetta, owned by Parick Flynn and Mal-Malling owned by Alexander Gorrie.

Sheep and cattle were run on both properties, and both experienced many problems with York Poison and Dingoes. Alex Gorrie built a large shearing shed and carted his woolclips to Chidlow's Well Station with a large 4 horse-drawn wagon. Patrick Flynn supplied much of the townsite with milk. His children would ride to Chidlow each day, deliver the milk and carry on to school.

Alex Gorrie built a Guest House and rented a paddock to Captain Le Souef, who on occasion would bring Governor Newdegate and others up for Kangaroo shoots.

In 1928 eighteen Officers from the Warship "RENOWN" caught the train and stayed at Gorrie's Guest House. Bert, Alex Gorrie's son, remembers how.....

".....the lads from Chidlow were invited with their ponies to round up the 'roos. They posted the Officers along the fences and chased the 'roos into the yard so the Officers could shoot them. Needless to say, the Officers had a very good story of how they caught all these 'roos in Australia — of course, without assistance....."

Alex Gorrie was well respected in Chidlow and presented medals to Best Boy and Girl students each year. Both Mal-Malling and Yetta were situated on the Helena River south of Chidlow and were resumed by the Crown as catchment for the Mundaring Weir.

By the turn of the century, the forest around the townsite was seriously depleted and within a few years all timber milling had ceased. The loss of the timber mills was greatly offset by the increase in Orchardists and Farmers who provided a stable growth for the area.

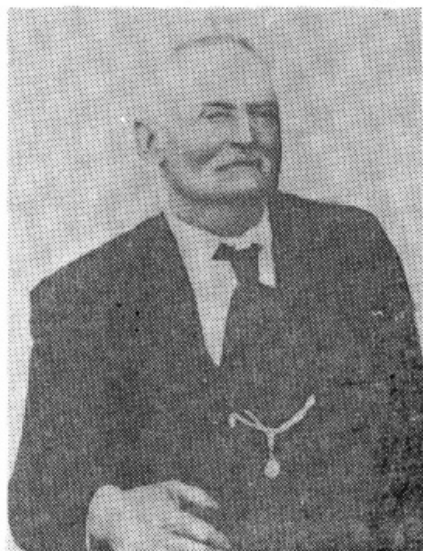


Photo: Charles Cook
(Photo courtesy D. Lloyd nee Cook)

Charles Cook of Rosedale, made a significant contribution to improving the public facilities and amenities of Chidlow's Well. He was a founder member of the Greenmount Road Board, representing the Chidlow area; was appointed Justice of the Peace for the district, which later extended Statewide. When the Honey Pool was formed in 1926 he was appointed Trustee, a position he held until 82 years of age. He chaired nearly every meeting in Chidlow over a period of twenty years and was keenly interested in sporting activities, especially Cricket and Rifle Clubs.

When the Progress Association was formed in 1897 it immediately set about securing a recreational area. The land chosen was very low-lying (Rosedale Road, opposite Gemways), but provided the town with an area suitable for a great variety of sports.

In the same year a one room school house was built at Lot 1 Thomas Street, with Mrs. Annie MacDonald as teacher, her remuneration being eighteen pounds per annum. Other teachers remembered in the early days were Messrs. Dickenson, Sheard, Bush, and Considine.

The shanty town appearance of Chidlow began to disappear, when in 1903 a local board of health was formed and much was done to remove squatters from the town centre.

Also in 1903, after agitation from the Progress Association, a footbridge was built across the railway lines to allow easier access to the Post Office and Hotel built on its south side.

By the early 1900's Chidlow had its own Butcher, Baker, Newsagent, Hairdresser, Photographer, Hotel, Post Office and five General Stores. Blacksmith shops were kept busy tending the many horses. Horse and Drays, Bullock teams, Sulkies and Teamsters turned the streets to dust in summer and mud in winter.

The Post Office was moved to Thomas Street in 1910. The Oxford Inn (also on the southside of the Railway) was destroyed by fire in 1908. John Symonds moved to The Lakes in 1891 and, after leasing the Hotel for several years, sold it to Mr. W.H. Bramwell in 1902. Mr. Bramwell leased the Hotel, first to J.E. Brown and then to Richard Mason. Luckily the Hotel was insured, but Bramwell decided against building on Railway land again, and instead built the new Oxford Hotel at Lot 4, Thomas Street. The Hotel was then leased by W.H. Fagan and by Thomas Semmens. The name of the Hotel was changed in 1973 to the Chidlow Inn.

Bramwell was very interested in sport and helped form both Cricket and Football Teams. He also assisted in the formation of the Hills Association to govern both these sports.



Early Chidlow's Well Football Team

Photo: Courtesy C. Cook

Many others were involved in sporting activities. E.F. Perham, Chidlow's Well Station Night Officer (1902-07) helped establish a Cricket Club and wielded the bat for a very successful team. Henry Stoker, First Pumper at the Chidlow Dam played Cricket and Tennis and was on the board of management for the original recreation ground. Many sports were played there, including Cricket, Football, Tennis, Rifle Shoots, Log Chops, and Horse Racing as well as many Fetes and Bazaars. Drainage was always a problem and finally in 1952 the recreation ground was transferred to its present site in Old Northam Road.



The Chidlow General Store
Photo: Courtesy Tilson Jones

The Chidlow Bakery built in 1890 (approx.) by Frederick Thomas and Jane Eliza Jones was extended to include a produce store. Mr. and Mrs. Jones lived at both Bailup (Wooroloo) and Chidlow. Their seven children were taught at the Chidlow School. The Bakery was sub-let to a Mr. Vale who was quite deaf.

Mrs. Rita Pusey still remembers the beautiful Wedding and Christmas cakes her mother was allowed to cook in the Bakery's spacious oven.

Mr. Jones had race horses and meetings were held at the Old Recreation Ground. Whippet racing also took place in Memorial Avenue. The Jones family lived in Chidlow for many years and at one time leased the Hotel. Their daughter, Anne Wilkinson was Postmistress, and another daughter, Freda, married Harry Davey and ran the Chidlow General Store during the 1930's.

Whilst the Jones family leased the Hotel, their cow Topsy was known as a Holy Terror. She used to eat the clothes off the washing line that belonged to the staff of the Hotel! If she ever got out, the word would quickly spread up Thomas Street, and all the ladies of the town would rush outside to save their washing!



*Photo: Relaying pipes through Chidlow 1938
(Photo courtesy West Australian Newspapers)*

In 1902 the pipes were laid through Chidlow for the Eastern Goldfields Water Supply and, from 1905 all homes in the Chidlow townsite could be reticulated. Later, in 1938 the pipes were replaced with wood stave pipes. The pipes were in service for over thirty years but have now been replaced with continuous welded steel pipes.

The Chidlow Schoolhouse benefitted from the Goldfields Water Supply. Their flower garden became the pride of the town and delighted train travellers.

In 1904 land was set aside for the construction of an Agricultural Hall. Charles Cook was made Chairman of the Building Committee to organise the finance and construction of the Hall. On 26th January, 1905 the Hall was opened and has since provided great entertainment to the people of Chidlow.

Dances, Weddings and Religious Services were held there. During the first World War many fundraisers took place to help the War effort including a "Mock Wedding" held in 1918 to raise money for the Red Cross. In 1916 the Roll of Honour was unveiled by The Archbishop of Perth and the Chidlow School Choir sang beautifully!

During the Second World War a large Army Camp was located at Chidlow, constructed partly by the Chinese Labour Corp. Many dances were held at the Hall for the incoming and outgoing troops. A projection room was added and many film nights were held.

One day remembered with sadness was after the fall of Singapore when

the 2nd/11th Battalion arrived back in Chidlow in tatters. General Bennett, who also escaped from Singapore visited the camp and the troops lined up along the road near the Hall. General Bennett stood outside the Hall and took the salute in the march past.

Every New Year's Eve the Rifle Club would hold a dance - two shillings entrance fee. There was always a long queue and almost as many were turned away as could fit in the Hall. The ladies would take a plate and serve supper. Many a young larrikin remembers these famous dances and how they would go behind the girl's toilets and stick prickly bushes in the pans. These same Chidlow Lads also remember their swimming and fishing jaunts to the Chidlow Dam. Swimming was strictly forbidden, as was fishing — woe betide any lad caught by Henry Stoker or John Taylor!!!

In 1907 the dam was stocked with Redfin Perch which were sent all over the State. By 1930 the salinity of the dam had increased to such an extent that the water was unusable for Railway purposes. The Greenmount Road Board leased the reserve and developed it as a picnic area. It is uncertain when the name changed with locals, from the Chidlow Dam to Lake Leschenaultia, though it is believed to be during the 1930's. The name was officially changed to Lake Leschenaultia in 1949.



*Photo: Empire Day 1913 Teacher Miss Bush.
(Courtesy Mr. G. Briggs nee Semmens)*

On 23rd June, 1951 a plaque was unveiled attached to a wishing well at the school site to commemorate the association of the town with the family of William Chidlow. The School was transferred to its present site in Lillydale Road in 1952, but the wishing well, built by The Chidlow Progress Association still remains on the corner of Old Northam Road and Thomas Street

*Old Considine prays to the Lord on Sunday
To give strength to whip the kids on Monday
And when he does he makes them dance
Out of England and into France
Out of France and into Spain
over the Hills and back again.*
Anon

Rail Services terminated on the York line in January 1954 and on the Northam line on 13th February, 1966.

".....The steam trains would puff into the station to the cry of Chidlow's Well and Bakers 'ill, which prompted two Englishmen travelling to Northam to remark "How thoughtful of these colonials to let people know how everyone is"....."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Baytte Library of W.A. History
W.A. Newspapers
Mundaring, A History of the Shire by Ian Elliott
Mundaring Weir among the Hills by Edward Quicke
Pioneers of the Helena by Edward Quicke
Springfield by S. Chidlow
The Old York Road by Trevor Tuckfield
Mr. N.V. Chidlow of Northam
Mr. Bert Gorrie and family
Mrs. Rita Pusey
Mr. Frank Ham
Mary Cook and Dorothy Lloyd (nee Cook)
The Nicholas Family
Australia Post
Westrail Publicity Department
The Education Department