



# CHELMER QLD



**Name: Chelmer School of Arts**

**Address: Cnr Halsbury and Queenscroft Streets, Chelmer Q 4068**

## **The Town/District:**

Chelmer is a suburb of Brisbane, Queensland's state capital. It lies approximately 8kms west of the CBD on a bend of the Brisbane River, mainly residential in character with very few shops. Chelmer is serviced by a railway line into the city which was built in the late 1800s. There was a car ferry but no road bridge. The Walter Taylor Bridge was built in 1936 using the cables from the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The area to the east of the Chelmer railway station was locally named as the swamp, or the dump. The land also had a steep incline which stretched from what is now Oxley Road to the railway station. In the 1870s the government reserved the land to study diseases in plants and animals as well as for experimentation.

## **Establishment:**

In 1915, the Chelmer Progress Association pressed for a portion of the land on the high side of the swamp to be set aside for a School of Arts building. The surrounding area was being transformed from a rural into a residential area so there was a need for a place to hold community activities.

The oversight of the building was put into the hands of trustees: Squire Hurwood and Alison Eavis Harding-Frew.



## Building:

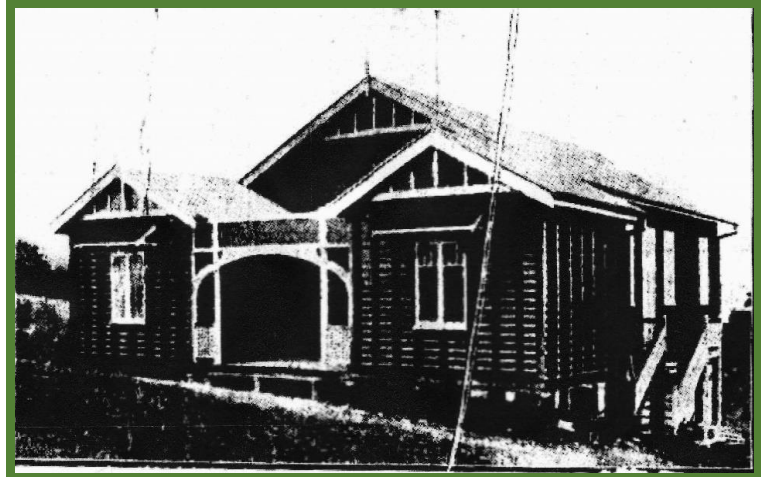
Money was raised by residents of Chelmer and its site was granted by the Sherwood Shire Council. The building was finished in 1922 and opened on 16 May 1923 by Mr AC Elphinstone MLA. It was to be of considerable value to the area. An early sketch of the front elevation shows the Chelmer School of Arts was to be built of timber with exposed frames.

### The Chelmer School of Arts 1923

This photograph appeared in  
*The Brisbane Courier*  
18 May 1923 (p.15)  
marking the opening of the  
building.

Photo : G White

Ref: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/20621812>



#### UPPER:

The photograph shows the current building from almost the same angle and not greatly changed.

An interior shot (below) shows this former entrance from which access to the library led off to the right.



#### LOWER:

This photograph shows the building from the side, with the current entrance. An interior shot (below) shows the foyer to which this entrance now leads.





After the 1974 Brisbane floods the foundations of the hall were badly damaged.

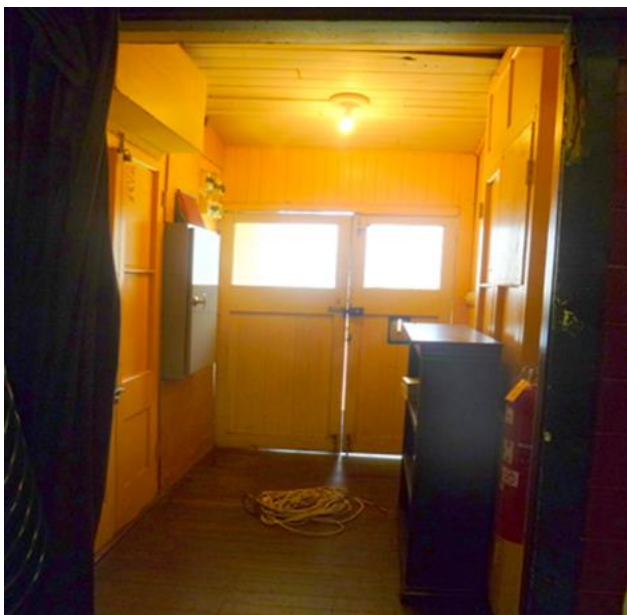
In the same year Des Cochrane, president of the Chelmer Recreation and Youth Club (CRYC) Management Committee, requested clarification of the boundaries.

He wrote to the Lands Department seeking freehold title over the land. Having gained the freehold title, the deeds were used to secure a loan of \$10,000 from the Commonwealth Bank for the necessary repairs.

A further \$10,000 was generously donated by Sir Robert Mathers, a local philanthropist and a friend of Mick Moses, also a trustee at the time.

These funds allowed for the first major renovation of the hall since its construction. The repairer, Olie Pty Ltd, was also working on Empire House in the city. From that site a large amount of second hand material was made available to the Chelmer Hall. The damaged foundations to the hall were replaced and strengthened with Besser block. A rough track beside the hall led to two outdoor toilets (thunderboxes).

In 2000 the building was heritage listed.



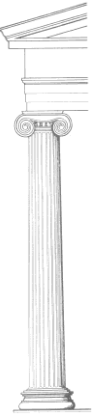
Looking towards the original entrance door which was at the front of the building

The library was in the room off to the right.

Current entrance foyer to the hall.

This entrance is at the side of the building.





### Uses for the building:

The building has had many uses in its history. When completed in 1922 the hall immediately attracted tenants who hired it for community activities, including the local flower show, and agricultural shows, lodge meetings, as well as a baby clinic.

Prior to the erection of St David's Church of England, the church services were held in the School of Arts. The first of monthly services was held on the 9 September 1923 until 1930 when they were held twice monthly until 1936, when St David's Church was completed.

There were dancing lessons of all kinds from classical and jazz ballet to square dancing and ballroom dancing. It was also used for other classes which included gymnastics, judo and nin jujitsu, and later, drama.

There were also many casual tenants. The hall was used as a voting booth from time to time.

Downstairs showing the  
Floor mats.

This area is used for  
gymnastics, judo and  
nin jujitsu



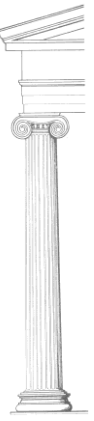
### Social history:

In the 1920s and 30s the School of Arts held pride of place in the local Community serving as the library and focus of the Chelmer Show.

In those days the region was a semi-rural community and the show was a must for residents, rivalling the Brisbane Exhibition for the local people. It was also used for anything to celebrate: weddings, parties and regular dances.

### Currently (2014):

Presently the hall is called The Chelmer Community Centre and is the home of the Centenary Theatre Group who are the present trustees of the hall. Apart from its commercial commitments the Centenary Theatre Group believe that the hall is part of the heritage of the area and work to that end.



Inside the hall showing the stage.  
The hall is used and managed by  
the Centenary Theatre Group

**Acknowledgements:** Rhyl, for access to the hall.  
Staff of the Corinda Library.

**References:** *Theatre in the Suburbs*. Gail Burke. 2008  
NLA Trove: *Brisbane Courier* 18 May 1923 p.15

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**Photos:** Ann and Lloyd Hancock and Peter Schneider