



ENERGY HIGHWAYS: MEMORIES OF ENERGY TRAILS

Introduction

The Memories of Energy Trails (METs) are an initiative of Queensland Energy Museum Inc. (QEM) and part of its Outreach Community Queensland Program. The first trail in the South Burnett was launched in Kilkivan on 24 June 2005. The trail includes the towns of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy, Nanango and Yarraman. More energy trails are planned throughout Queensland. The energy trails are the culmination of enthusiastic partnerships with volunteers. Without the volunteer assistance, mainly from small regional museums, the METs could not happen.

This Paper will

1. Briefly outline the initial aims of the Memories of Energy Groups (MEGs), introduced by QEM in 1999 as part of QEM's Outreach Community Queensland Program and the long-term objectives of the MEG network.
2. Explain the character of the MET and what can be seen on the first trail in the South Burnett.
3. Provide an indication of the development of the MET program in the future.
4. Highlight some of the potential problems.
5. Conclude with an overview of the benefits to communities.

1. QEM's Outreach Community Queensland Program and the MEG Initiative

Due to the restrictions faced by QEM regarding public access to its current two sites in Brisbane, the Director chose to introduce an outreach program to 'take the museum to the people', rather than expecting the people to come to the museum. The first of the outreach programs, apart from our touring exhibitions, was the Memories of Energy Groups (MEGs) initiative. The key to success includes communication and community interaction.

In late 1999, QEM began to establish MEGs in regional communities throughout Queensland. The aims of the MEG network are to identify objects, documents, photographs and buildings, which were, or are a significant part of Queensland's energy heritage and to record memories and experiences related to energy.

The idea involves communities, some in regional and remote areas of Queensland, to work together with QEM towards common objectives related to energy, including the location, identification, interpretation and preservation of *Queensland's energy history and heritage* for present and future generations, and to provide global access to the collected information. The long-term objective included the creation of 'energy trails' based on QEM's research and the MEG network discoveries. Each MEG forms a partnership with QEM and conducts joint research for projects, oral history collection, web-based news and small displays. There are currently 18 MEGs and a further 17 have expressed interest to join or are at an early stage of activating the concept. Many Shire Councils have become Community Members of QEM, which adds to community involvement with local energy history. QEM's website www.energymuseum.com.au describes the aims and objectives of the MEG network in detail and highlights some of the active groups.

People remember and learn better when they are actively involved with a project. When MEGs are established in small regional museums, the MEG members are encouraged to review their collections in a different way. What do we have in the collection related to 'energy'? Do we know who donated it? What exactly is it? Where was it made? How was it used? In short, the process provides a learning experience that links with the national 'significance' project.

Identifying collection items related to energy in some way and asking these questions, can lead to new avenues to explore in the local community, perhaps by organizing a get-together for the former employees of the local saw mill or powerhouse. The potential is there for additional oral history, assistance with the identification of an object, how it was made or the description or demonstration of how an object worked. There are many more examples of how involvement in a MEG can impact on collection issues.

As soon as there is a geographically linked network of active regional MEGs, the idea of forming a MET is broached. Each group has to be ready for the challenge. The MET does not appear just because there are a few MEGs near to each other. There is more work to be done! The MEGs would have been working in partnership with QEM's Director for some time to identify the collections' main groups of energy-related items. Research would also have taken place on the surrounding area of each MEG. What is the energy history of the area? Was there a powerhouse, saw mill, butter factory in the area and are any still existing?

2. What is a 'Memories of Energy Trail'?

A MET is formed when a number of locations can show tangible and intangible evidence of energy history and heritage within the local communities in each location. There has to be something to see, read or hear related to energy for there to be an 'energy trail'. The trail should be well-researched and any surviving buildings and objects should be of significant value to the relevant community.

Once an energy trail has been established, more in-depth research can be conducted into

various aspects of a town or locality. The information to be encountered on an energy trail is not static. It has the potential to grow as more work is completed and more exhibitions put in place. At each location, there is a folder with additional material related to the area's energy history. A comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources is being compiled for visitors to access.

The energy trail should inform the visitor about the energy history and heritage of the locality and the ways in which the towns and the industries in that area developed or declined with the introduction of new technologies. Collected oral histories, newspaper and technical reports on energy-related topics should include the current situation and sustainable energy technologies for the future.

The South Burnett Memories of Energy Trail

The South Burnett Memories of Energy Trail is the first energy trail in Queensland and was developed in partnership with QEM and six MEGs in the shires of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy, Nanango and Rosalie. The members of the MEGs are volunteers from the Kilkivan Shire Historical Museum, Murgon Dairy Industry Museum, Wondai Heritage Museum, Kingaroy Bicentennial Heritage Museum, the MEG Subcommittee of the Nanango Shire Historical Society and the Yarraman Heritage Centre in Rosalie Shire.

The South Burnett MET provides an unusual and interesting insight into the energy history of the area. By following the energy trail, the visitor can view different displays relating to the South Burnett's industrial, agricultural, medical and domestic history. Objects, photographs, documents, books, clothing, buildings and other structures linked to the theme of energy provides a stimulating journey of discovery, which is aimed at encouraging discussion on a variety of topics, including past, present and future use of energy in Queensland. However, the first trail concentrates on the past for the moment.

What can be seen on the South Burnett MET?

The energy trail starts (or ends) at Kilkivan and weaves its way through six towns to end (or start) at Yarraman. The Kilkivan Shire's Historical Museum has an extensive household collection illustrating the changes in domestic technology from the days of the early settlers to the twentieth century.

In Murgon, a comprehensive collection of photographs relating to the history of butter factories in Queensland, some documents and dairy industry objects ranging from rural lighting plants to dairy industry testing equipment can be viewed at the Murgon Dairy Industry Museum.

The original building, which housed the former operating theatre and 'scrub room' of the Wondai Hospital, has been relocated to the site of the Wondai Heritage Museum. There is an interesting collection of hospital gadgets illustrating advances in medical technology, the introduction of electric-powered implements and operating theatre equipment.

The current Kingaroy Bicentennial Museum was the former Kingaroy Powerhouse. The powerhouse was commissioned in the 1920s and decommissioned in the 1950s when Gladstone Power Station took over the generating responsibility. The architecture of the building represents the style of the larger rural powerhouses of the period. To highlight the museum's '*People, Power and Peanuts*' theme there are displays concentrating on the history of the powerhouse and the peanut industry.

Inside the Nanango Visitor Information Centre there is a large display relating to the nearby Tarong Power Station. It explains the power station's history and operation using models, text panels and photographs. Additionally, the members of the MEG Subcommittee of Nanango Shire Historical Committee plan to rebuild and preserve the old engines from the Nanango Butter Factory, which unfortunately, had to be removed from the original Nanango Butter Factory site.

The '*Lighting Up Yarraman*' exhibition can be viewed at the Yarraman Heritage Museum. The exhibition was researched and curated by QEM's Director as a commissioned project for Yarraman and the energy trail. It tells the story of the small, privately-owned Yarraman Powerhouse and its pioneers of electricity, the Budgen family who worked from 1936 to 1953 to bring electricity to Yarraman and the surrounding area. Charlie Budgen, his wife, two sons and two daughters all had roles to play in the venture. Visitors can listen to the recorded memories and experiences of Mr. Budgen's sons.

3. The Development of the MET Program and its Future

Two major developments have materialised recently.

In 2005, the Brisbane Valley Heritage Trails (BVHT) network approached QEM's Director with a view to finding out more about the MEGs and the METs. After discussing the main points and benefits of the partnership, BVHT decided to become a combined MEG for the purpose of joint research into the coming of electricity to the Brisbane Valley. The long-term objective for BVHT was an energy trail through the Brisbane Valley taking in points of interest and displays in the relevant locations, the similar to the South Burnett energy trail. It is an exciting project and one that will take a considerable length of time to cover all locations involved in BVHT network before an energy trail can exist. However, we are working together to produce our first small joint display and will move on from there to cover the valley's industries and expand on its steam railway history.

A more recent development potential appeared in March this year. The Director visited Thargomindah in Bulloo Shire, far south west Queensland for the signing of a Sister Museum Agreement with the Thargomindah Hydro Power Plant Museum and QEM. While in Thargomindah, QEM's Director met some of the members of the South West Tourism Group, who had requested information on establishing an energy trail in the surrounding shires. It was decided that, given support from the shires to be involved, a joint MEG would be formed to cover the shires of Bulloo, Quilpie, Paroo, Murweh, Diamantina, Booringa and Barcoo. The joint MEG would follow the same pattern as

BVHT, and would work in partnership with QEM's Director in preparation for a new energy trail in 2007 or 2008.

Other possible future trails linking some MEGs

- Sunshine Coast to link with Kilkivan and the South Burnett trail.
- Caboolture/Woodford to link with the South Burnett trail at Yarraman.
- Crow's Nest/Highfields/Jondaryan/Dalby to link with Chinchilla/Roma.
- Roma to link with the South West trail

Once the south west and the south east are covered, the way will be open to energise the central and north Queensland trails. That is another story!

Some Issues Encountered

Changing the names of venues when brochures are already with the printer.

Councils closing facilities or changing opening times.

Changing contact details, telephone numbers, email addresses.

Volunteers leaving and not passing on relevant information to someone else.

Lack of enthusiasm from new and/or current volunteers.

Lack of time. Volunteers are necessarily busy with their own tasks.

Lack of community participation. Few people turning up at community meetings.

High cost of brochure publication and limited finances overall.

Benefits of MEGs and METs

When assessing the benefits of MEGs and METs, these will vary according to the number of volunteers involved and the enthusiasm they show for this type of community project. Community interaction will invigorate any MEG. However, the community benefit will be reduced if there is little community participation in MEG events. The MEG can continue 'in-house' and network with other MEGs and a MET can still be established. Below is a list of some of the benefits possible for MEGs and METs.

- Provides aims, encourages participation, ensures developments so that MEGs members' can see the aims being achieved.
- Potential to create an interactive learning process for MEGs members' relating to collection management with the identification of significant objects, photographs and documents related to energy heritage and history in the local community.
- Collection of oral history, will invigorate and add interpretive value to the historical collection. Recent times and living memories are not excluded.
- Recognition and reward for MEG members', who are generally volunteers in small museums.
- Participation of the community allows for increased community awareness of its

- local history and heritage related to energy.
- Potential to increase awareness and promote discussion of future energy and sustainability issues.
 - Promotion of regional museums and regional communities.
 - Potential tourism rewards – more interest in the local communities.
 - Increased Local Government awareness of the role in the community and the services offered by its regional museum.
 - Potential to include women's stories and involve children.
 - Potential to attract joint funding for projects between MEGs and/or in partnership with QEM.

The energy is in the network.

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