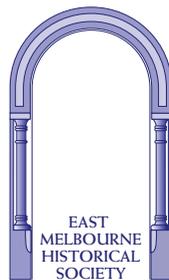


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



June 2016

Contributions and Suggestions

We invite contributions relating to the history of East Melbourne from our members. Articles of up to 1500 words will be considered for publication. Small articles and items of interest are also welcome.

We would be pleased to receive your suggestions and ideas for activities, guest speakers, excursions or anything else you might like us to organize on your behalf.

Please contact any member of our committee.

Aims

A full Statement of Purposes appears in our Documents of Incorporation but briefly the aims of the Society are as follows:

- To foster an interest in the history of East Melbourne.
- To build an archive of material relevant to the history of East Melbourne.
- To promote interchange of information through lectures and tours.
- To promote heritage preservation.

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**CITY OF
MELBOURNE**

Committee

President:

Jill Fenwick 9419 0437

Vice President:

Rosie Smith 0431 707 405

Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black 9417 2037

Treasurer:

Malcolm Howell 0417 337 519

Committee:

Diane Clifford dianeclifford1@gmail.com

Sue Larkin 9415 9771

Jacinta Ryan 9415 8288

Graham Shepherd 9486 9039

CONTACT DETAILS

**1st Floor, East Melbourne Library,
122 George Street, East Melbourne
PO Box 355, East Melbourne 8002**

Telephone: 9416 0445.

Email: info@emhs.org.au

Web: www.emhs.org.au

Membership

Membership of the East Melbourne Historical Society is open to all who are interested in the history of East Melbourne.

Enquiries: Diane Clifford

dianeclifford1@gmail.com

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

**Affiliated with
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria**

President's Letter

Creative East Melbourne

East Melbourne has always been a haven for artists. In 1862, Eugene Von Guerard built his house Little Parndon in Gipps Street. Three paintings now in the State Library collection remind us of his presence here, 'View of the Plenty Ranges from East Melbourne'; 'View of the Dandenongs from East Melbourne' and 'Dr. Howitt's Corner'. In 1892, the Victorian Artists Society moved into its building at 431 Albert Street. The first exhibition, held in 1886, featured the work of resident artists Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts. In 1937, Melbourne's foremost modernist sculptor, Ola Cohn, bought the converted stables at 41-43 Gipps Street; in 1964 after Cohn's death, it became the home of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors.

Now we have a new move to celebrate East Melbourne's talent. The energetic and creative Lisette Malatesta from the East Melbourne General Store has decided to organise and sponsor an exhibition of local artists to be called Creative East Melbourne.

Lisette has had plenty of experience with art exhibitions. Previously the business manager of the Victorian National Gallery, she had been struck with the numbers of artists practising their craft within East Melbourne, some professional artists, others keen and talented amateurs. Her goal became to set up an exhibition to

showcase the work of local artists in a variety of mediums and highlight the wealth of talent within the community; to find a suitable venue and to have a formal opening of the exhibition at which prizes would be presented.

So, out of nothing, Creative East Melbourne has been initiated and over the next few months, we will be inviting local artists to make it a success. The library will provide the venue; Lisette will contact local artists and ask them to contribute; the East Melbourne Historical Society and the East Melbourne Group will join together to help advertise and organise the event; and it will all come together during the month of August 2016.

If you're an artist and would like to show your work, please talk to Lisette at the East Melbourne General Store in Hotham Street. If you'd like to be a patron of the arts, you might contribute a prize. And if you'd like to help with the planning, then please contact us via our website and we'll pass on the message.

Jill Fenwick, May 2016

New Members

We welcome our new members:

Rosalie Bebee

Sylvia Morrissey

John Wykes

Bryan Fitt

Maria Riley

Michael Wilson

Andrew Macainsh

Pamela Wilson

Geoff Thorn

The Real Lady Hastings

Lady Hastings Lane leads off Simpson Street, opposite Darling Square. It runs through to Nunn Lane but you cannot drive from one end to the other because there is a kink in the middle which is too narrow for a car. It is a good metaphor for the story of Lady Hastings which suffers from a kink or two of its own.

When the lane was to be named staff in the Council's Land and Survey Department looked in the Rate Books for inspiration. There they found Lady Hastings living at 61 Grey Street in 1890. This, they decided, was the perfect name for a lane, and without any further research Lady Hastings was immortalized.

Later, when the East Melbourne Historical Society produced its little book, *What's in a Name: the lanes of East Melbourne* (2008) its contributors spent a great deal of time and effort attempting to find out something, anything, about Lady Hastings, with no satisfactory result. Recently, as a result of looking for answers to an entirely unrelated research query, I fell upon an advertisement in *The Argus* of 28 March 1890: there was to be a sale of furniture at 61 Grey Street, under instructions from Lady Wasteney. A cloud lifted. A search of the Rate Books confirmed that it was indeed Lady Wasteney who was, that year, renting the house, not Lady Hastings.

Lady Wasteney (nee Julia Marianne Fardell) married Sir William Wasteney in 1875. He, in Debrett's view, was

using a title which had been extinct since 1742. The marriage took place in the same year he was admitted to the Middle Temple with a law degree from Cambridge. Four children and ten years later the marriage fell apart and Sir William left for New Zealand where he continued to practise as a solicitor. Lady Wasteney followed him in 1887 where she sought and won a deed of separation with maintenance.

In New Zealand she met the manager of a travelling theatrical company who invited her to travel with him to Melbourne. She arrived in January 1888 where she performed with the St Maur Comedy Company under an assumed name. The journalist known only as 'Touchstone' writing in the *West Coast Sentinel* of 18 September 1931 recalled that 'she played my sweet heart in the comedy in which I first played in that city [Melbourne]. I had to kiss the lady rather hard, and she, being unacquainted with the way of stage kisses, and having rather prominent teeth, pecked too hard, missed her mark, and dug the said teeth into my nose.'

Her husband discovered that she had been spending a great deal of time with a man named Stephen Hutchens while in Melbourne and accused Lady Wasteney of improper conduct in terms 'of so gross a character that his counsel hesitated to file them', and had the deed of separation and maintenance order overturned. She

fired back and it was on for young and old with claims and counter-claims ringing around the various courts right up to the Privy Council for over ten years. During one of the court cases she complained that she had had to earn her own living, that she was quite destitute and had been acting as a masseuse, which she 'found to be rather a precarious means of livelihood'.

Sir William returned to England in 1899 and four years later was declared bankrupt. Not only had he squandered his sizeable inheritance even before his marriage broke down, he then had made a disastrous

investment in a New Zealand paper, the Waikato News. On top of this he had had to pay considerable litigation costs and had been unable to work as a barrister while the court cases were taking place.

Meanwhile Lady Wasteney had moved to Queensland where she stayed for about four years. It appears she then travelled through Asia, arriving back in England about 1908. In England she bought a house in Sussex called Ivy Lodge and spent a large sum of money doing it up. The 'drawing room was furnished like a temple and completed with a canopied throne

and a jewelled god'. Not content with that she built an Indian temple in her garden at the cost of £50,000. The question was: where did she get the money? Certainly not her husband, and her parents had left her a share in an estate worth only about £1500. There was talk of 'Indian supporters'. Apparently she had developed the idea that she would be reincarnated



after death, and would return to earth as an Indian. After her death at Ivy Lodge on 18 April 1931 her ashes were despatched to India where they were scattered over the Ganges.

A life of assumed names and uncertain identities is now remembered with an equally confused lane name. How very serendipitous.

Sylvia Black

The Incident at an Intersection, or The Camera Never Lies – (Sometimes Just a Little Bit)

The intersection in question was Punt Road and Wellington Parade South. The ideal spot to film the congestion of the morning peak hour. The year was 1969 – I think.

I was directing a 20 minute documentary for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board titled "Citizen Tram". The film was to show how efficient the Melbourne Trams were at moving large crowds of people to and from sporting events and at peak hour, compared of course with the motor car.

We set up the camera in the little park on Wellington Parade South opposite Bridge Road ready for the morning peak. We could see clearly the trams and motor traffic all the way up the Bridge Road hill. The idea was to show the trams moving freely down the hill and across the intersection, while the cars would be jammed up on the hill with very little movement, the usual situation. It was just a matter of waiting... we waited and waited.

The cars flowed freely across the intersection while the trams banked up the hill... We waited...frustrated, as the hour went by, it was not going to plan.

Then my young camera assistant made a suggestion "Give me 5 minutes – I think I can fix the problem". "How?" "If it works you'll see – just be ready to shoot". Ian jumped into his little red MG and with a squeal of tyres sped off down the road behind us.

By now the peak was almost over and everything was moving smoothly through the intersection. THEN, a little red MG appeared from a side street half way up the hill. It moved out into the centre of the road and stopped, completely blocking the city bound motor traffic. The driver got out and lifted the bonnet and disappeared under same for some considerable time. Finally he appeared again and replaced the bonnet, returned to the driver's seat and with some difficulty started the engine. He then drove down the now empty lane down to the intersection. Behind him bumper to bumper stationary traffic stretched back over the hill to infinity and the trams moved freely through the intersection. We got the shot.

Major General Risson was delighted with the film – and I had a great time making it.

That wonderful young man Ian Bennett went on to become a TV Film Director with Crawford Productions and showed great promise. Sadly, Ian was killed in a train accident not long after this – a young man with a great future -- his great enthusiasm and initiative is lost forever and sadly missed.

Kev Franzi

Walking in the Fitzroy Gardens in 1886

Our first meeting for the year was a most enjoyable Ramble Round the Fitzroy Gardens, led by Rosie Smith. Fergus Hume in his book, *Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, wrote of walking in the Gardens 130 years ago as detective Mr Gorby pursued his chief suspect, Brian Fitzgerald.

"Confound it," said the detective, as he got out and paid his fare, which was not by any means a light one, but over which he had no time to argue, "we've come in a circle, and I do believe he lives in Powlett Street after all." He went into the Gardens, and saw Brian some distance ahead of him, walking rapidly. It was bright moonlight, and he could easily distinguish Fitzgerald by his light coat. He went along the noble avenue of Elms, which were in their winter dress, and the moon shining through their branches wrought fantastic tracery on the smooth asphalt beneath. And on either side Gorby could see the dim white forms of the old Greek gods and goddesses—Venus Victrix, with the apple in her hand (which Mr. Gorby, in his happy ignorance of heathen mythology, took for Eve offering Adam the forbidden fruit); Diana, with the hound at her feet, and Bacchus and Ariadne (which the detective imagined were the Babes in the Wood). He knew that each of the statues had queer names, but thought that they were merely allegorical. Passing over the bridge, with the water rippling quietly underneath, Brian went up the smooth



Bacchus and Ariadne in the Fitzroy Gardens.
State Library of Victoria.

yellow path to where the statue of Hebe, holding the cup, seems instinct with life, and almost stepping off the pedestal, and turning down the path to the right, he left the garden by the end gate, near which stands the statue of the Dancing Faun, with the great bush of scarlet geranium burning like an altar before it. Then he went along the Wellington Parade, and turned up Powlett Street, where he stopped at a house near Cairns' Memorial Church, much to Mr. Gorby's relief, who, being like Hamlet, "fat and scant of breath," found himself rather exhausted. He kept well in the shadow, however, and saw Fitzgerald give one final look around before he disappeared into the house.

Coming Activities

Wednesday, 15 June, at 8.00 p.m.

The Trials of Dr Peacock

Lawyer Malcolm Howell will put the facts before us in the case of the alleged murder in 1911 of Mary Margaret Davies by Dr Samuel Peacock as the result of an illegal operation. Dr Peacock's private hospital was at 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne. Mary's body was never found and this was the first time anyone had been charged with murder where there was no proof that a death had occurred. The case went through three trials before Peacock was finally acquitted. But did he get away with murder?

At Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Terrace, East Melbourne

Wednesday, 17 August, at 8.00 p.m.

The William Johnston Story

Louis le Vaillant, director and curator of The Johnston Collection, East Melbourne, will us the story of William Johnston's life, work and travels as he amassed his large collection of antiques, now so beautifully displayed in his old home as a museum of decorative arts.

At East Melbourne Library, 122 George Street, East Melbourne

Open House

The annual Open House Melbourne will be held over the weekend of 30-31 July. It is a hugely popular event with thousands of people visiting over 100 of Melbourne's most interesting buildings. This year The Menzies Foundation at Clarendon Terrace, the East Melbourne Library and Bishops Court will all be open and will be calling on volunteers to assist. If anyone can help please let us know at info@emhs.org.au and we will forward your details on.

Library Celebrates 10 Years

The Historical Society is putting together a pictorial record of the library's history to accompany a short talk on the day of the new Library's birthday, Monday 22 August 2016. We are hoping that some of our readers may be able to help us with this. Do you have any photos of the Library, old or new, particularly, but not exclusively, internal shots with people? Would you lend them to us for scanning and return. Anything that turns up we will share with the library and the digital copies will go into both collections. Please contact us at info@emhs.org.au

Cover image:
Woman under a rain-cloud
by Zoe Fenwick, aged 4