



**SEPTEMBER
2003**

**EAST
MELBOURNE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**

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.

Contact Sylvia either by post at:
P.O. Box 355, East Melbourne,
telephone: 9417 2037
e-mail: sylvia.black@bigpond.com.

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.

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.

The EMHS
acknowledges
financial support
from Melbourne City
Council.



Committee

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Membership

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

Enquiries Jennifer Stanisich: 9417 6110

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

Affiliated with
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria

President's Column

Mirka Mora, well known artist, raconteur and one time host at the Balzac Restaurant, will be the speaker at our next meeting at 8 pm on Wednesday 15 October at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street East Melbourne.

Our annual meeting also must take place on 15 October, and I encourage members to stand for the committee. However, I guarantee that the annual meeting will be brief, and should not be seen as a reason not to come and listen to Mirka.

Trinity German Lutheran Church

For our June meeting we visited the German Lutheran Church in Parliament Place where Dr. Walter Philips spoke to us. Dr. Philips has just completed a book on the history of the church and its congregation and was able to give us a most detailed and informative account of the congregation's establishment and early history.

Afterwards the EMHS provided a special German themed supper in honour of the church's sesquicentenary year and the church organized wine for the occasion. The evening was a very happy one, and an excellent partnership of the two historical societies.

We continue to collect photographs, articles and books relating to East Melbourne. If you have any items likely to be of interest to other members, such as a photograph that could be copied for the Society's records, please telephone me on 9419 4636 or Sylvia Black on 9417 2037. Your contribution will be much appreciated.

*Kind regards,
Malcolm Howell
September 2003*

East Melbourne Cricket Ground

Professor Robert Pascoe, Dean of Arts at Victoria University, spoke at our August meeting about the East Melbourne Cricket Ground. His talk opened with a short piece of film made in 1911 showing the Geelong and Essendon football teams emerging from the pavilion and playing a match. The costumes, both of the players and the spectators, were a highlight of this snippet and set the scene for the talk.

The East Melbourne Cricket Ground was used by Scotch College when the college was based in East Melbourne. It was the home of the Essendon Football Club until 1921, and the home of the University Football Club from about 1907 to

The Life of Constance Stone – Australia’s First Woman Doctor

4.12.1856 to 9.12.1902

by Wendy Macdonald, MBBS

I consider it a privilege to give this inaugural Constance Stone Memorial Lecture and it seems only fitting that the subject should be the life of Constance herself.

In 1854 a young English couple migrated to Hobart. William Stone was an organ maker by trade and his wife Betsy had worked as a governess in England. At that time Australia was in the grip of the gold rush and people were flooding on to the gold fields of Victoria from all over the world, however the Stones had not come to look for gold or they would have gone to Victoria and not Tasmania. At that time the ability to sing and play a musical instrument was part of the social equipment of every young lady and organ building would have been at the

top end of the business of providing musical instruments for churches and homes.

The Stones had six children, four boys and two girls. The first child, Constance, was born shortly before Christmas in 1856, next came a boy, William, then another daughter Clara, then three more boys. The family lived in Hobart for eighteen years and when the children were teenagers the family decided to move to Melbourne. At the time, thanks to the effects of the gold rush, Melbourne was marvelous Melbourne, the most exciting city in Australia. It was about to be engulfed by an enormous boom in property, railways and buildings of all kinds.

William Stone set up his workshop in Patterson Street, Saint Kilda which was then a pleasant seaside suburb. The family home was in what is now Middle Park. William, the eldest boy went into

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1911 when it played in the Victorian Football League. It also was the home of the East Melbourne Cricket Club, which subsequently merged with Hawthorn to become the Hawthorn-East Melbourne Cricket Club. A successor to that Club still plays in the Melbourne District cricket competition.

The ground was taken over by the Railways in 1921 and became part of

the Jolimont Railway Yards. The Becton development now occupies a large part of the site. Robert explained how the ground played a part in local culture, and remains significant in the history of football in Victoria. The measure of interest in his talk was reflected in the number of questions asked by our members.

Constance Stone

his father's business for a time, and then made a name for himself working in the railways and in electric power, and later in the new field of X-ray technology. Constance followed her mother's example and taught school in the Stone's home while she and Clara attended art classes at the National Gallery school.

In 1882 when Constance was 26 she met a young Welsh clergyman who had emigrated to Australia for his health. On his arrival, he obtained a post at the Collins Street Independent Church. David Egryn Jones was a fiery preacher and it was through this that he met the Stone family.

At this time, perhaps for reasons connected with his own health, Egryn Jones decided that it would be a good thing if he could minister to the bodies as well as the souls of his congregation and he decided to study medicine. Constance Stone decided to study medicine too.

We do not know just how she first evolved this astonishing idea. Perhaps it had been developing for some time although there was nothing in her family background to suggest it and at the time it was a most outlandish, almost an offensive ambition for a young woman.

Victorian prudery was at its height. Bulls were referred to as gentlemen cows and pianos had their legs covered. Knowledge of her own anatomy was considered almost shocking for a young woman. Perhaps Egryn Jones' decision fired Constance, but whatever the cause she made the choice and prepared to follow it through.

For Egryn Jones to study medicine was relatively easy.

Melbourne

University was founded in 1853

and its medical school opened in 1863. Egryn Jones could study there.

The university was open to women too.

In 1879 women

students were admitted to matriculation and to all courses – but medicine.

Constance therefore had to go abroad to study and in 1884 she left Australia for America and enrolled in the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. This institution had been founded in 1850 and was the first medical school for women in the English-speaking world. The following year David Egryn Jones came to Philadelphia also. In 1887 Constance graduated. For a time after that she worked in a New York hospital and she then went to Toronto because Canada could provide her with a British



Constance Stone

qualification, whereas an American qualification might not be accepted in Australia.

In Toronto she graduated MD CM with first class honours. David Egryn Jones, who had also come to Toronto for the same reason, qualified in the same year. Constance then went to London and in 1888 she became a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries which was the only British qualification open to women at the time. The dates concerned seem rather close together but I assume that as a graduate Constance may have been able to sit her examination without having to do the full course of lectures.

The Society of Apothecaries was an interesting body. It had descended from the grocers in much the same way as the surgeons have descended from the barbers and occupied a position half way between druggists or dispensing chemists and physicians. In 1868 it was described as 'an inferior branch of the medical profession' but its members were legally entitled to attend the sick, diagnose and prescribe for them and to compound and administer medicines. They were not however, allowed to charge for both services but only for either the medicine or the attendance.

In London Constance worked at the New London Hospital for Women which had been founded about seventeen years earlier by Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, an English pioneer woman doctor. This was an institution for women and was staffed entirely by women. It had out-grown its original site and needed larger buildings. Constance

would have been aware of all the discussions and decisions which this involved.

In 1889 Constance left England and returned to Australia and in February 1890 she became the first woman to be registered as a medical practitioner in this country. She was written up by the magazine *Table Talk*, which gave her a most favourable press. It described her as being of medium height with a trim figure, dark hair and eyes. She was later described as an efficient practitioner and ultra-conservative in her views. Presumably this meant medical views because it is impossible to see how a woman with her ideas could be described as ultra-conservative. Her ideas on education and women's suffrage were progressive to the point of radicalism.

While Constance was away the walls of Melbourne University had been breached and her younger sister Clara and six other women were studying medicine. Clara and Margaret Whyte graduated in 1891 and in that year also David Egryn Jones, now a member of the College of Surgeons, returned to Australia.

In the five years that Constance had been away conditions in Melbourne had changed dramatically. Not only were women admitted to medicine but the land boom had burst. Banks and companies had gone broke. Property values had collapsed. Bankrupt financiers were nearly as common as they are now. Thousands were out of work and there were no social services to provide for them.

Constance Stone

Constance began practice in Collins Street and she and her sister Clara also went to work at the Free Medical Mission in Collingwood, a charitable service run by an Irishman, Dr. John Singleton. Constance also became an honorary medical officer at a girls home. Medicine was not her only interest. Her struggles to qualify and the difficulty she had found in being accepted made her a firm advocate of improved education and votes for women, both of which were hot topics at the time.

In 1892 Constance and David Egryn Jones became engaged and in 1893 they married. David Jones was appointed pastor of the Welsh church in Latrobe Street, a position which he held for many years.

At first the couple lived in [179] **Gipps Street East Melbourne** and they shared professional rooms in Collins Street. About 18 months after her marriage, on March 22, 1895 Constance invited Victoria's new women doctors to a meeting at her home. She realized that the women doctors needed to support each other if they were to make headway against the wall of male resistance. At this meeting they formed themselves into a society for the purpose of mutual professional support. This was the first meeting of the Medical Women's Society and Constance was its first president.

In the meantime Dr. Singleton had died and the clinic at Collingwood was carried on by his three sons none of whom was medically trained. Constance and Clara did not like the change of management and resigned, but

continued to provide a similar service one day a week at St. David's Hall behind the Welsh Church.

On Sept 5, 1896 the Medical Women's Society met again. They all knew from bitter experience that it was not enough to qualify. Women might, like Margaret Whyte, have done brilliantly, or be at the top of the list like the Greig sisters, but they could not get jobs. What to do? Should they continue to fight the hospitals and try to establish themselves there, or should they follow the English model and set up a facility for themselves. After a great deal of anxious discussion they chose to go out on their own. They had no money and no general acceptance. But they were motivated by that splendid Australian principle, 'Have a go!'

David Egryn Jones persuaded the Welsh Church to let them use St. David's Hall three days a week and there they opened the outpatient department of the grandly named Victoria Hospital. This name was chosen, not in honour of Queen Victoria but because it was intended to serve the whole state.

The Society of Apothecaries must have been proud of its licentiate because she certainly needed all her dispensing skills. At the Victoria Hospital there were no toilets and no taps. The women doctors made up all the medicines they prescribed and washed the bottles too. There were no inpatient beds. Cash flow consisted of patient contributions which were dropped into a saucer on a table. The venture was a rousing success. Women and children flocked to the new

Constance Stone

clinic. Here at last were kindly well-educated members of their own sex who were ready, willing and able to help them.

In 1897 Queen Victoria had been on the throne for 60 years and great celebrations were in train for her golden jubilee. The women doctors felt confident enough to go ahead with the next step of their plan. They began to raise money to buy an empty building, formerly the Governesses Institute. A committee of helpers and fund-raisers was appointed, headed by Mrs. Annette Bear-Crawford. Coles Book Arcade, of Coles Funny Picture Book fame, agreed to act as campaign headquarters and the Queens Shilling Fund was launched. Every woman in Victoria was asked to contribute a shilling towards what was now to be called the Queen Victoria Hospital.

The fund soon raised £3,000. The Governesses Institute was bought and renovated. It had eight in-patient beds, an operating theatre and Melbourne's first ante-natal clinic. Melbourne's other hospitals, the Melbourne, the Alfred and the Homeopathic (later Prince Henrys) must have shivered in their shoes. As all the women doctors were young and relatively inexperienced, a panel of male consultants was set up to advise on difficult situations.

In July 1899 the Queen Victoria Hospital was opened with much fanfare by Lady Brassey, the wife of the then governor, and one week later Constance gave birth to a daughter. Two years later, in 1901, another of her ambitions was

realized. Women achieved the vote. The progress of the new hospital exceeded all expectations but Constance had contracted tuberculosis and her health failed rapidly. In December 1902 she died, just a month after her 46th birthday.

William Stone and Betsy, David Egryn Jones and Constance are buried beside each other in Kew cemetery. There is a handsome polished granite monument to Constance the inscription of which reads:

*The Pioneer Woman Physician of Australasia
A Gentle Wife And Mother
A Skilful And Beloved Physician
Servant Of God. Well Done.*

Constance's daughter Bronwen was left motherless, but David Jones married again, a lady named Charlotte. In 1923 Bronwen graduated MBBS and in 1928 she was a member of the staff of the Queen Victoria Hospital. In 1935 she went to England where she married and practised medicine in Cambridgeshire. Mr. Evan Hughes, my informant, met Bronwen when she was a teenager and greatly admired her long, auburn hair, which seems to have been a family trait. David Jones liked fishing and shooting and made trips to Tasmania. There he met his third wife, a lady called Westaway. Clara Stone, Constance's sister, did not marry and lived into her nineties.

Text of the speech made to the Victorian Medical Women's Society on the occasion of its centenary.

Photograph of Constance Stone courtesy of Delwyn Freestone.

Pictorial Exhibition

As part of the celebration of the East Melbourne Group's jubilee year the East Melbourne Historical Society is to mount an exhibition in the latter part of 2004 at Clarendon Terrace. In the process of curating this exhibition the society will also put into good order the East Melbourne Group's archives as a lasting contribution to the preservation of its history.

This historical exhibition, to be entitled *East Melbourne: a picture of diversity*, will explore a number of themes which will show the enormous variety of life in East Melbourne and Jolimont, much of which continues to this day. In particular it will look at the variety of architecture in the area and it will be a reminder of what has been lost and what might have been lost if not for the dedication and perseverance of East Melbourne Group members over the past fifty years.

“*East Melbourne:
a picture of
diversity*”

The work of sourcing photos and other works for the exhibition is well under way. Organisations and institutions in the area have been very generous in allowing the EMHS to borrow or copy photos from their

collections. A bonus will be that the EMHS will be able to retain copy photos for its own collection. Some institutions have also donated copies of their published histories to the society. All this new archival material will be housed in the EMHS's room when the new library is completed. It has been a most valuable experience exploring local archives, meeting their curators, and discovering the wealth of material that is available.

Whilst we have been generously supported by the many institutions in the area, the EMHS would also like to seek out any photographs or pictorial records of East Melbourne that residents might hold. If anyone has anything do please contact Sylvia Black, Secretary, EMHS, Telephone 9417 2037

Congratulations I

Congratulations to EMHS member, Ann Galbally, on winning *The Age* Non-fiction Book of the Year award for her biography of painter **Charles Conder: The Last Bohemian** (Melbourne University Press). The book aims for the first time to put together the two quite distinct parts of Conder's life and career: his early Australian life where he was part of the Heidelberg School; and his later, less well known, European life where he went from painting landscapes and seascapes to decorative silk fans and panels for private homes.

Congratulations II

Members will be interested to hear of the publication of Liz Rushen's book **Single & free: Female Migration to Australia, 1833-1837** (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2003). The book deals with the first scheme for female migration to Australia from Britain and Ireland in the 1830s. Liz was very actively involved in the establishment of the EMHS, and remains a member of our committee. She also is the Executive Director of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

Liz's research brings to light primary sources previously unexamined. Her analysis of London Emigration Committee (LEC) records, as well as a variety of other primary sources, papers and letter-books, presents a varied and interesting picture of the 2,700 women who were carefully selected by the LEC to come to Sydney, Hobart and Launceston between 1833 and 1837. They were a diverse group drawn from cities, towns and villages. They were chosen for their skills in agricultural work, specific domestic tasks as well as general household work. Some were educated and employed as governesses; some were semi-literate.

The scheme was administered for the colonial office by the LEC, a committee comprising evangelicals,

philanthropists and merchants, whose main concern was the welfare of the women chosen for emigration. The conditions of the women's three month journey to Australia, their reception and employment opportunities are well illustrated from diaries and letters and their positive contribution to early Australian society is evaluated.

This is a fascinating story which tells us a great deal about the calibre of the women who came here, as well as something of the LEC and the values which motivated their scheme. You can learn more about this book and order a copy (\$39.95) on Liz's homepage: <http://www.rushen.com.au>, or by contacting her by phone or fax on 9419 3811. It is also available at all good book stores.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 15 October AGM

The necessary formalities of our fourth Annual General Meeting will be short and well worth sitting through for they will be followed by what promises to be a most entertaining and light hearted look at a special slice of East Melbourne's history.

Mirka Mora, celebrated artist, restaurateur and raconteur will talk to us about her time as owner of the Balzac restaurant, a meeting place for many of Melbourne's artists and bohemians. For those whose memories do not stretch that far back Balzac was in Wellington Parade, where Toey's now is.

Wednesday, 3 December Christmas Function

Our Christmas function this year is to be held at Bishopscourt. Exact details have not yet been finalized but put the date in your diary now. This will be a wonderful venue for our end of year festivities, and a chance to learn more about the history of this important property.

Notice of Annual General Meeting and nomination form are enclosed with this newsletter.

All financial members of the EMHS are eligible to be nominated for the committee

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003

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

Complete the details below and return with your payment of \$25 to:

Membership Secretary, PO Box 355, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002.

Receipts will be issued only on request. All members are issued with an annual membership card.

Enclosed is my cheque/cash for the amount of \$25.

TITLE: [Mr/Mrs/Ms/Prof/Dr etc] _____

SURNAME: _____

FIRST NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____



