



SEPTEMBER
2002

EAST
MELBOURNE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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.

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, phone: 9417 2037 or 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.

**The EMHS
acknowledges
financial
support from
Melbourne City
Council.**



Committee

President:

Malcolm Howell

Phone: 9419 4636

Vice President:

Angela Mercer

Phone: 9415 9662

Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black

Phone: 9417 2037

Treasurer:

Alan Basham

Phone: 9421 3252

Committee:

Elizabeth Cam

Phone: 9416 2187

Faye Humphris

Phone: 9419 1640

Liz Rushen

Phone: 9419 3811

Nina Stanton

Phone: 9654 0539

Membership

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

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Column

We have several projects under way ranging from oral histories to sketches of East Melbourne buildings, and from the collection of historical materials to a booklet recording historical information about the lanes of East Melbourne. I encourage members to participate in at least one project. It is both informative and a lot of fun.

East Melbourne has many buildings and institutions of historical interest, although we tend to pass them every day without appreciating their significance. Our Society is keen to assist members to become familiar with them. Our visit in May to the College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Albert Street made some of us aware for the first time of its library and museum, and drew our attention to the wonderful old building and its sympathetic extensions. At one of our meetings next year we will visit the German Lutheran Trinity Church in Parliament Place and learn something of its history, 150 years after its foundation. Please let me know of any other opportunities of this kind, and of speakers who would be of interest to you next year.

Our next meeting on 16 October is our AGM, but don't let that put you off. Formalities will be kept to a minimum, and almost all of the evening will be devoted to a meeting showcasing the launch of our new Collections Policy. See elsewhere in this newsletter for full details.

RACOG

Our May meeting was a visit to the Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RACOG). Its premises in Albert Street have been created by joining two neighbouring houses, both seemingly designed by the same architect, William T. Gore, and constructed in 1872-73. The two houses have been renovated and extended, but by retaining the style of the original buildings.

The College collections include the Frank Forster Library and a Museum. The library, named in honour of the late Dr. Frank Forster, husband of our member Mrs. Prue Forster, contains an extensive collection of books and pamphlets of historical interest. The museum contains somewhat ancient and primitive instruments, contraceptive devices, and the like. Many items are displayed in showcases for easy viewing. Visitors are welcome to view the collections, by appointment with Mrs. Rosalind Winspear on 9412 2934.

John Lahey

Journalist and author John Lahey spoke at our August meeting on "The 19th Century Melbourne Police Force". Police at that time were a diverse group, including many ex-convicts. They were underpaid, and expected to provide their own uniforms and equipment, but early on they were entitled to share in the fines imposed for the charges they

laid. The range of their duties was extremely wide, performing many duties now carried out by public servants and private companies. Their most common vice was drunkenness, followed a long way behind by corruption. Part of this period is dealt with in John's entertaining book *Damn You John Christie*. An evening of great amusement, thanks to John.

Old Men's Shelter

The East Melbourne Historical Society at one time considered the idea of using the small brick building at the corner of Albert and Powlett Streets in Powlett Reserve as its headquarters until the new library was completed. In the end it was decided not to pursue the idea but the process brought to light what is now a little known aspect of East Melbourne's history.

The building is known as the Old Men's Shelter and is on the register of Heritage Victoria. It is Heritage Victoria's report that has provided most of the information for this article.

During the nineteenth century the elderly were largely looked after by family or friends, or failing this, by charity. It was not until 1909 that the Federal Government introduced an old age pension. This gave the elderly poor some independence and the ability to provide themselves with permanent, if cheap, accommodation.

This coincided with a time when wealthy home owners were moving out of the inner suburbs to broader acres further afield. Many family homes in East Melbourne became cheap, and increasingly run down, rooming houses providing the new pensioners with a bed for the night. Cramped rooms and lack of communal facilities meant that residents were usually discouraged, even banned, from staying inside during the daylight hours, forcing them to spend their days in local parks and other public places.

As a result, a group of elderly men, living in West Melbourne, asked the Council for permission to use a disused



children's shelter in the Flagstaff Gardens as a club house. This proved to be such a success that the idea of purpose built old men's shelters was born. From the late 1930s the Council proceeded to build a number of such shelters around the inner city. Only two of these shelters now survive: one in Curtain Square in Carlton and the other in Powlett Reserve. The latter

was built at the request of local residents, and is an indication of the extent of the social problems in the local area at the time. These problems had been increased by the preceding years of economic depression, but so also had public awareness of the problems increased, and a desire for reform.

The buildings were utilitarian in nature but solidly built and nicely designed and detailed. There was no shame in entering one of these structures. They provided welcoming meeting places, giving shelter, but more importantly, companionship and moral support. They were open from 9am to 10pm each day but there were rules: no animals, bicycles, alcohol, intoxicated persons, gambling, offensive language or the delivery of public addresses. The shelters are now regarded as the forerunners of elderly citizens' clubs.

The shelter in Powlett Reserve is typical of them all. It was built in 1939 by W.J. Newman for £610.¹ The architect is assumed to be E. Beilby as it is almost identical with the shelter in Curtain Square which is known to have been designed by him. It is a small, single storey brick building with a steep, hipped roof of terracotta shingle tiles. For such a small building its front facade exhibits particularly decorative and attractive brickwork and is regarded as a notable example of the period by Heritage Victoria.

Inside there is a small entrance foyer. On the left is a bench with a lift up lid, used for storing firewood, and on the right a store room. Beyond

is one big single room about five metres square. A bench runs around three sides, once providing seating for at least twenty men. Once there was a pot belly stove in the middle of the room. Its chimney remains intact and is a dominant feature of the little building. Wood was supplied by the council. The interior has painted brick walls and a timber ceiling.

When the Old Men's Shelter ceased operations the building became a depot for Council workers. It is now vacant,

No. 33 Grey Street

Following the article on 33 Grey Street in our last issue, Trudi McIntosh, the owner of the property, contacted us to update our information. She assures us that all the decorative finishes previously removed from the house, including cornices, ceiling roses, architraves and fireplaces, have now been replaced, and the house furnished in a style befitting its Italian heritage.

We thank Trudi for getting in touch with us, and congratulate her on helping to preserve East Melbourne's historic architecture.

RESEARCH QUERY

Ron Grainger is researching the East Melbourne Rugby Union Football Club. During the 1880s the Club's ground was in Jolimont. Ron is trying to identify the exact site. If any one can help him he can be contacted on 9877 3348.

Yahoing Milkmen

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS

Sir, – Latterly you have kindly given up some of your columns to ventilate social grievances, notably tea and ruffianism. This concession on your part cannot last, seeing how near we are to the full reports of political platform platitudes, therefore, with your leave I will proceed to lighten my bile-glands upon my great grievance. I am annoyed every morning hours before breakfast time by the wild and furious yells of a milkman.

This lacteal fiend practices his whoop under my bedroom window daily; he fetches me on end and sideways, he bathes me in cold sweats at varying early hours and he does not serve his yahoing fluid at my house. Old men and enfeebled youths tell me in argument that I ought to be up and about at this unnatural hour, telling me to go to bed earlier, and that I should rejoice at this defiant milkman's yell. I cannot for many reasons, apart from usage and custom, retire at about 9 p.m. to make up a proper rest ere this fluid vendor approaches, and I am denied, accordingly, my favourite repose, the early morning doze.

What I want to get at is this. Can one man boss the sleep of 20 or 30 rate-paying adults, men with sound ears, and not be amenable to the law? You, Sir, for instance, cannot possibly get to bed before 4 a.m., and I should like to know how you put up with a Choctaw yell hurled at your window-

panes in varying cadences of "Ilk oh oh hoon!" just as your brains are beginning to cool preparatory to the necessary hours of refreshing slumber?

I have watched the vendor of fluids closely. He has to leave his cart after his howl is over, ring at his customers' doors, and fill the proffered jug. Therefore, where is the gain to any one in his yell?

Can I summon this daily robber of my rest before Mr. Call, pans, pots, and all, for punishment, or must I shift my tent pegs and seek a spot free from the barbarism of this milky bawler? Other men can vend fluids in silence, even at ungodly hours. Men have been known to sell a rarer article, cream, in absolute humbleness of demeanour; *ergo*, will this howler of buttery yahoos pause in his superfluous gambols ere an annoyed and desperate citizen of East Melbourne contriveth at his downfall, his tins, his tubs, and his cart he yelleth from. – I am, &c.

"P"

Hotham-street, East Melbourne,
Jan, 16.
Argus, 27/1/1880

The only person living in Hotham Street with a surname starting with P in the Sands & McDougall P.O. Directories 1880-81 is William Pickersgill of 3 Anerley Terrace (now 47 Hotham Street).

A.G.M. – About Collecting

Our third Annual General Meeting will take place at 8.00 p.m., Wednesday, 16 October 2002, at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne.

Following the AGM's formal proceedings, there will be a lively and illustrated talk demonstrating the detective work involved in collecting historical material.

Nina Stanton, Director of The Johnston Collection and some of the voluntary guides including Julia Armour and Judith Hay – all East Melbourne residents – will share the journey they took in collecting information about Thomas Weldon Stanford, who at the turn of the century boasted an extensive art collection in his Clarendon Street home. Stanford introduced kerosene and kerosene lamps into Australia.

Winston Burchett in his book on East Melbourne described him as a "somewhat eccentric American businessman and spiritualist."

Thomas Weldon Stanford, like the antique dealer and collector William Robert Johnston, (1911-1986) bequeathed his collection for the benefit of others – Stanford to the university in the USA founded by his brother, and Johnston to the people of Victoria. It was the fact that William Johnston's mother was employed by Stanford that sparked the search for more information about Stanford House, Clarendon Street, and its owner. What shaped the

development of both Stanford's and Johnston's collections? The answer to this question will give an insight into collecting policies in general and how the EMHS will proceed in developing its collection.

With space allocated in the new library development in East Melbourne currently in the planning stage, the historical society is about to embark on a period of intense collecting which will be guided by The East Melbourne Historical Society Collection Policy. By presenting a real life case study this talk will demonstrate the kinds of things the society is looking for, the use that can be made of items, the reason for putting in place a Collections Policy and the care and respect that will be afforded to item accepted into the society's collection.

At the conclusion of the presentation a draft Collections Policy will be launched giving the East Melbourne community a month to comment before it is finally adopted by the EMHS Committee.

To wind up the evening East Melbourne resident and graduate of the Melba Conservatorium, Sharon Leahy,

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.

Christmas Function

Wednesday, 4 December

Our Christmas function this year will take place at Chrysalis Galleries, 179 Gipps Street, East Melbourne. It is hoped that there will be an exhibition of sketches by artist, Bill Walls, commissioned by local residents. Delwyn Freestone, director of the gallery, will talk on the history of the property, which has had a fascinating series of owners.

Notices

Lanes Project

Our lanes project is under way. As we knew from the beginning some of the names that have been given to lanes relate to people about whom we know nothing other than that they occupied houses abutting the relevant lanes.

If any of our readers know anything at all about the following people we would be delighted to hear from them:

John (Jack) Hurst Green, merchant, who lived at 92 Albert Street, 1900-1964;

William Joseph Crook, architect, who lived at 121 Simpson Street, 1880-1935;

Lady Hastings, who occupied 61 Grey Street in 1889-90.

Contact Sylvia Black on Ph: 9417 2037
or e-mail: sylvia.black@bigpond.com

Also if any one would like to contribute to our booklet by

researching a lane, your help would be much appreciated. Just let me know, as above, to avoid any duplication.

Bishopscourt

The Australian Garden History Society reports that work on the garden at Bishopscourt is progressing well with a small band of local residents lending a helping hand. Working bees are now being held on the third Wednesday of every month and anyone interested in attending would be most welcome.

The garden will be open as part of the Australia's Open Garden Scheme on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 October and it is hoped that everyone will take this opportunity to visit it. All proceeds will go towards the garden's upkeep for the next year.

The AGHS is also asking for volunteers to help serve teas on these days.

For all enquiries contact chairman, Helen Page, on 9397 2260 or helenpage@bigpond.com

Sketches by Bill Walls

There is still time for artist Bill Walls to do a sketch of your house in readiness for our Christmas Function. If you would like an accurate portrait of your house (and the artist can often see what the photographer cannot) please get in touch with Malcolm Howell on 9419 4636.