



JUNE
2004

**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.

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Valete

Len Connell

It is with great sadness that we learnt of Len Connell's death last March. Len was one of the participants in our Converzatione meeting in April last year. His observations on the social and cultural changes in East Melbourne and his stories about some of its more eccentric characters added a great deal to the night. He will be remembered with fondness by many in the community.

Noel Goss

Also with sadness we have learnt of the recent death of our number one member, Noel Goss. Noel was a tireless worker for conservation and local history and was foundation president of the East Melbourne Group and a foundation member of the National Trust.

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

I am happy to report that construction of the new East Melbourne library is about to commence, and that our Society is about to enter into an agreement with the library concerning the dedicated local history room in the new building. We will use the local history room for the storage and display of our collection, and for our committee meetings. Of course, we will be responsible for the promotion and maintenance of each display.

Our collection is steadily increasing in size, mainly by the reproduction of old photographs lent to us for that purpose. If you have any items connected historically with East Melbourne, possibly of interest to other East Melbourne residents, perhaps you could add them to our collection or make them available for reproduction. Enquiries should be directed to our secretary, Sylvia Black, on 9417 2037.

We continue to conduct our meetings at 8pm on the third Wednesdays in the evenly numbered months (except December) at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street East Melbourne. Guests are most welcome. We have a wide range of speakers on topics related to East Melbourne, usually people, places, past events or organisations.

If you are carrying out research relating to East Melbourne, even if it presently is incomplete, perhaps you could address the Society generally on your topic. It is likely that one or two of our members will have a contribution to make to your research. If you are interested, please telephone me on 9419 4636.

Kind regards,
Malcolm Howell
June 2004

Vice-Regal Pre-Fab to Move?

At our February meeting we investigated the merits of moving La Trobe's cottage to East Melbourne, nearer its original site. Nerida Samson opened the discussion. She proposed the idea as part of a submission to the Melbourne City Council to make East Melbourne and Jolimont a designated Historic Residential Precinct with a view to increasing tourism and gaining greater planning protection for the area. La Trobe's cottage is a lost

treasure in its current location in the Domain whereas if it could be brought to the Fitzroy Gardens it would be more accessible and more visited.

Sue Balderstone, for Heritage Victoria, was our next speaker. She gave us a very clear and detailed account of the process that would need to be undertaken and issues to be considered before any decision could be made by Heritage Victoria. Not only would the effect on the cultural

and heritage significance of Latrobe's Cottage have to be considered, but also that of the Fitzroy Gardens.

Miles Lewis, conservation architect, while supporting the need for greater planning protection, was of the opinion that the cottage should not be moved. He felt that the Fitzroy Gardens should not have more buildings; that the proposed old nursery depot site was unsatisfactory in that it was too dissimilar in its topography to the original site; and that the removal of buildings to another site is generally unacceptable.

AGL Shaw, past president of the La Trobe Society, agreed with the conservation arguments but thought that such an object of interest as the cottage should be where it could be seen and visited.

The National Trust was not represented on the panel, but Stephen Hare, its CEO, made comment from the floor. It was his view that to move the cottage would be to contravene the basic principles of the Trust; and that where it was, adjacent to Government House, it provided a good educational experience. He certainly did not see the move as advantageous in terms of the Trust improving its financial situation as it was currently operating in surplus.

On reflection, and having the benefit of hearing the diverse views expressed at the meeting, our society resolved to support the return of La Trobe's Cottage to the vicinity of its original location but that alternative, specific sites should be examined.

Single and Free

In April, Liz Rushen spoke on her recent book which deals with female migration in the 1830s. The book documents the arrival and experiences of nearly 3000 women to colonial Australia. Liz took us through many of the women's personal writings telling us why they chose to emigrate and what they found on their arrival. She showed that, contrary to the widely held perception, these women were not all from the lowest and most undesirable levels of society; that many of them, in fact, came from respectable

backgrounds. The scheme was not a way of unloading undesirables but of redressing the gender imbalance in the colonies. Many of the women went on to make useful contributions in their new society. Although the book concerns a period of history well before East Melbourne was settled Liz found an unexpected local connection. James Denham Pinnock, who was Agent-General for Emigration and who was in charge of the selection of the emigrants, later built a house in Wellington Parade and lived there for almost twenty years.

A Grand Vision: Henry Philip Harris and the History of Burlington Terrace

by Giselle Roberts

PART 1

In September 1866, Henry Philip Harris purchased a large tract of land in the county of Bourke in the parish of North Melbourne at Melbourne East. The land was 'L' shaped, stretching from Albert Street to Lansdowne Street. From its corner location, it had optimum views of the newly established Fitzroy Gardens and the City of Melbourne. On 13 September, Harris purchased allotments ten and eleven for four hundred and fifty pounds and ten shillings each.

Born in London in 1831, Harris migrated to Australia some time before his marriage to Elizabeth Ackman in 1858.

By 1881, Elizabeth Harris had given birth to eight children: Philip in 1860, Rachel (named after Elizabeth's mother) in 1862, Isabella in 1863, Frederick William in 1865, Ernest Nathaniel in 1872, Ida Catherine in 1874, Evelyn May in 1876 and Vivian Reginald in 1881. Six children survived: Rachel and Ernest Nathaniel died in infancy.

A history of the Harris family is inextricably linked to Burlington Terrace, which became Henry and Elizabeth's home and their livelihood. Yet the nature of Henry's investment also tied Burlington Terrace to Melbourne's influential Jewish community. Indeed, Harris leased

fifteen of the sixteen terrace apartments to prominent Jews such as Reverend A.F. Ornstien, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Abrahams, Philip Blashki and Maurice Brodzky. The history of the Terrace encompasses their lives and myriad others. In the late nineteenth century, Burlington Terrace became a home, and investment and a centre of Jewish community life.

Burlington Terrace was built on what was originally known as Eastern Hill. This part of Melbourne was always recognized as important land, only a short distance from the city centre. Despite its prime location, Crown land sales in East Melbourne were not held until 1852. Unlike Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond, (which were offered for sale in 1839), East Melbourne was completely planned before the first release of quarter-acre blocks in 1852

When Henry P. Harris chose allotments ten and eleven upon which to build Burlington Terrace, he knew that his home would be situated in a suburb that attracted Melbourne's business and professional elite, from merchants to politicians to public servants.

Burlington Terrace was built in stages between 1866 and 1871. Like most terrace houses in East Melbourne, it was constructed during a period when the terrace design

Continued

enjoyed immense popularity amongst investors. At this time, most terraces were built from 'sets of identical plans' often 'readily available to the builder.' The utilization of the terrace house for investment purposes rendered architecturally designed buildings both costly and unnecessary.

Yet Burlington Terrace was not just a speculative venture. It was also built as a family residence. It is possible that for this reason, Harris chose to employ Charles Webb to design his future home. By the early 1860s, Webb had established himself as one of the leading architects of the colony. Born in 1821 to the son of a builder, he was an apprentice to a London architect before following his brother, James, to Melbourne in 1849. After a brief stint on the Bendigo goldfields, Webb returned to Melbourne to design shops, warehouses, churches and private residences in Melbourne and Brighton. 'He designed Wesley College in 1864, the Alfred Hospital and the Royal Arcade in 1869, the South Melbourne Town Hall and the Melbourne Orphan Asylum in 1878 and the Grand Hotel (now the Windsor) in 1884.' Webb was also employed to design plans for the enlargement of the Bourke Street synagogue: a building that his brother, James, had completed years earlier.(1)

During this period, Webb also designed Burlington Terrace, which became known as an 'outstanding feature of the Eastern Hill precinct.' The building comprised sixteen terrace houses. 'Designed in the transition classical style, [Burlington Terrace]

heralds the boom classical period with its highly decorative mouldings,' states the National Trust, 'the extensive scale, the complex composition, the unusual timber veranda posts and the delightful balustrade panels are greatly significant features.'(2)

On 3 September 1866, just 10 days before he 'officially' purchased the land, Henry Philip Harris notified the Melbourne City Council of his intent to build 'Burlington Terrace', originally a set of fourteen houses in Albert and Lansdowne Streets. Harris listed himself as the owner and builder.(3) Building was a painstaking process and continued well into 1867. The Melbourne City Council Rates Book for that year described Burlington Terrace as a series of 'brick houses,' each containing 'eight rooms and a kitchen.'(4) At the time this information was collected, the Harris family had not yet occupied the elegant terrace that was soon to become their new home.

By 1868, Henry Harris moved his wife and family into the Terrace. In that year he was listed in the Sands and McDougall Directory as one of the occupants of Burlington Terrace. During the next twenty years, Henry and Elizabeth Harris and their six children made this corner of Eastern Hill their home. They observed the slow transformation as the Fitzroy Gardens grew and established itself as one of the most popular parks in Melbourne. And they saw the first cable trams travel down Victoria Parade to Richmond.(5)

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Searle and Russell Ward, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1976, p. 370. See also Granville Wilson and Peter Sands, *Building a City: 100 Years of Melbourne Architecture*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 57-8; Joseph Aron and Judy Arndt, *The Enduring Remnant: The First 150 Years of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, 1844-1994*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992, p. 14.
2. National Trust of Victoria, 'Burlington Terrace'
3. Intent to Build Notices, Melbourne City Council, State Library of Victoria
4. Melbourne City Council Rates Book, 1867, State Library of Victoria.
5. Newnham, *Melbourne: Biography of a City*, p. 161. On the introduction of trams see Miles Lewis, *Melbourne: The City's History and Development for the City of Melbourne*, 1994, p. 72; Burchett, *East Melbourne, 1837-1977*, p. 134.

This is an edited extract of the article that appeared in the Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society 15(1) 1999. The article will be continued in our next issue with information on some of the tenants who occupied Burlington Terrace, and their importance in the Jewish Community. With permission.

Naming of Lane

Recently the lane running behind Rand through Burlington Terrace has been named – Bionic Ear Lane. Needless to say, many members of the historical society and others were disappointed by this decision. It is awkward to say and does not fit well with the surrounding Victorian architecture. The society was given the opportunity to put forward a name and Burlington Lane was our choice. In its favour at least – there will be only the one Bionic Ear Lane in the Melways.

Research Enquiry

This year is the 100th anniversary of the first Labour Government in Australia (and in the world), led by Prime Minister, John Christian Watson. Watson lived in New South Wales, but it is believed that he boarded in East Melbourne during parliamentary sessions at Melbourne's Parliament House, then the seat of the Federal Government. Senator John Faulkner has written to us to ask if we could identify the building. We have been unable to do so but, although it is now too late to be of use to the Canberra research team, if there is anyone who has any knowledge about this intriguing question the historical society would still be most interested to hear. Contact Sylvia Black on 9417 2037 or email: sylvia.black@bigpond.com

A Picture of Diversity – photographic exhibition

Firm dates have now been set for this photographic exhibition. Mark them in your diary now:

Friday 8 October 12.00 - 4.00 pm

Saturday 9 October 12.00 - 4.00 pm

Sunday 10 October 12.00.00 - 4.00 pm.

Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon St., East Melbourne.

As you will recall this exhibition is being put on by the EMHS as part of the celebrations for the EMG's fiftieth

year. The photos will show some of the many changes that have taken place in East Melbourne and Jolimont over the last fifty years, and at the same time represent an extraordinary cross section of architectural styles and the diverse taste and economic background of the area's 19th century residents.

Seeing these changes will reinforce just how much we need and rely on the EMG to protect this valuable architectural and historic precinct.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 16 June, 8.00 p.m., at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon St.

Fitzroy Gardens – Georgina Whitehead will talk on the history of the Fitzroy Gardens. Georgina practises in the field of landscape history and conservation and is the author of *Civilising the City: A History of Melbourne's Public Gardens*.

Wednesday, 18 August, 8.00 p.m., at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon St.

Dr Samuel Peacock of Eastbourne House: his conviction and acquittal of murder. Our president, lawyer Malcolm Howell, will re-examine the evidence in East Melbourne's famous murder investigation.

Membership Subscriptions 2004

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:

