



JUNE  
2005

**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](mailto: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.

Published by EMHS with funds provided by the City of Melbourne through a Community Information and Support Grant.



## Committee

### President:

Malcolm Howell

Phone: 9419 4636

### Vice President:

Jill Fenwick

Phone: 9419 0437

### Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black

Phone: 9417 2037

### Treasurer:

Merrilyn Murnane

Phone: 9419 2560

### Committee:

Deirdre Basham

Phone: 9421 3252

Elizabeth Cam

Phone: 9416 2187

Jennifer Stanisich

Phone: 9417 6110

Margaret Wood

Phone: 9415 1159

## 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

Our Think and Drink Night in February proved a valuable exercise in harnessing the help of our members, many of whom offered suggestions for future activities as well as assistance in completing planned projects, and I thank them all for their support. Some of these suggestions we have already put into action and there will be details nearer to the relevant dates.

The lanes project has been revitalised, and a new project compiling historical information on all the churches in the area is underway. Filming for a new video, updating the one made by Winston Burchett in the 1970s, will begin soon

and we are particularly grateful to Bridget Basham, the daughter of one of our committee members, who has volunteered to take on this important project for us.

The night was an enjoyable start our new year, but as well as that I believe that it has given the society added momentum and again I would like to thank you all for your part in this. Any further suggestions and contributions are, of course, always welcome and can be made by contacting any one of our committee members.

Kind regards  
MALCOLM HOWELL  
President

## Berry Street Victoria

At our April meeting Sandie de Wolf, CEO of Berry Street Victoria spoke to us on the history and work of this long standing organization. Originally known as Berry Street Foundling Home it was renamed after merging with Sutherland Homes. With foundlings now in short supply the focus of Berry Street has changed considerably and it was a revelation to many of us to learn of the diversity and depth of its involvement in the welfare of at risk children and their families. Berry Street here in East Melbourne is the administrative headquarters and cares for only a small number of clients while the major part

of the work takes place in regional centres all over Victoria.

# Herschell's Films of Jolimont: A Memoir

By Kev Franzi

At the age of 13 I became the proud owner of my first camera, Dad's old Vest Pocket Kodak. However, there was one big problem – I couldn't get any film for it. It was 1944 and the big event was still World War Two. So all the film in Australia was going to the armed services or essential industries and there was nothing left for civilian use. If you knew someone in the services you could perhaps get the odd roll or two, but with all my contacts serving overseas my photographic career was definitely "on hold".

Some months went by, then one day Mr. Williams, the local Chemist, called me over – "Kev, are you still after a roll of film for that little camera of yours?" "Yes, Mr. Williams, I am!" "Well, on Monday I'm getting my first shipment of film from Kodak for four years and there might be just one roll of 127 film in it for you. Remember, it's first come, first served, so best be on the doorstep when we open Tuesday morning."

I was very late for school that day but I had in my pocket one very precious roll of 127 Verichrome film. It cost me 2 shillings (20c) and some of the eight photographs I took on that roll would get me my first job in the Australian Film Industry. That little Vest Pocket Kodak became my key to a lifetime of adventure.

It was late afternoon by the time I arrived home on that wonderful

Tuesday, and having carefully loaded the camera, I just had to take a picture! Long deep shadows already filled our back yard so that was no good, I needed sunlight. I looked up – the sun was still shining on the roof of our high two storey house. That's where I needed to be. How the heck I got up on to the roof I haven't a clue. But I remember nervously bracing myself between the main roof and the slate tiles on our front turret. Yes, across the park the sun was still shining on the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Government House over in the Botanical Gardens. Quickly, line the shot up, hold my breath and press the trigger – click! Gee, hope I wasn't shaking too much. One down and seven picture to go.

I left school the day I turned 14 in October 1945, and I had recently discovered a film factory over in East Jolimont just across the railway line from our place. It was called Herschell's Films Pty Ltd at 31 Agnes Street, East Melbourne. Now, they must have something to do with photography, so I fronted up to their office and nervously asked if they had any positions available for a young lad. "No", said the lady, "I'm afraid you're two weeks too soon." "Oh!" I said, "Why am I two weeks too soon?" "Well, our General Manager hasn't come back from the war yet – he's still on leave and won't be back for another

two weeks – so you'll have to wait and see him. Would you like to make an appointment?" That sounded good to me, having an appointment to see the General Manager – I was half way there.

At 9 o'clock on the appointed day, dressed in my "Sunday best" I was ushered into the office of Mr. Roy Driver, the General Manager. Roy, - Mr. Driver, had been a war correspondent (a Newsreel Cameraman) and had just returned from filming the Australian Army at war in battle zones all over the world. Now, his first task as a civilian on that fateful Monday morning was to interview me for a job.

What an anticlimax after four years of war! Well, it went like this – he asked where I lived and did I keep good health? "Yes sir". Did I have an interest in photography? "Oh yes!" Did I own my own camera? "Yes sir, a Vest Pocket Kodak!" Did I develop and print my own films? "Yes sir, my Uncle showed me how to do that." Then he asked if I could show him any of my work. I produced a number of small 6 x 4.5 cm contact prints from my coat pocket, mostly the results of my first roll, and passed them across the table. Mr. Driver looked at each of the prints for some time, then looked up. "You have a good eye", he said. That worried me a bit; I thought I had two good eyes. Then came the tough question. "What religion are

you?" Tough, because my father's family was Church of England. My mother was a Methodist and I had always gone to Sunday School at the Salvation Army hall. Then I remembered Dad saying that many businesses would not employ you unless you were Roman Catholic. Oh hell, I thought – that's



The house at 166 Wellington Parade where Kev Franzi lived. His father's car, a 1931 Graham Paige, is parked on the right.

Photo: Kev Franzi (1946)

the end of the interview. Well, I'll go down fighting. "Salvation Army" I said, "but my Dad's Church of England and my Mum's a Methodist." Mr. Driver smiled, "Good", he said, "I thought with a name like Kevin Franzi you might be a Roman Catholic..."

"Your job will be Junior Laboratory Assistant. When can you start?" We agreed I would start at 8.30 am the following morning.

Mr. Driver shook my hand "-Oh, by the way Kevin, can you ride a push bike?" This ominous question later revealed that the Junior Lab Assistant was also the Message Boy – most of the time.

The push bike in question was

actually a large three wheeled affair, a trike with a big square box at the front low slung between the two front wheels. You steered the box using a long straight handle attached to the rear. The third wheel was the usual pedal and chain driven arrangement behind the seat. I was introduced to "the beast" on my first day and some kind person had already filled the box to the top with numerous reels of 35mm film. I was to deliver them to Spencer Street Railway Station (on the other side of Melbourne) for despatch to country Picture Theatres, then pick up any films that had been returned and bring them back. "The paper work is all done", said the kind person.

There is a deep gully between Herschells and Spencer Street. I am, and always was, a lightweight model so, in spite of all my best efforts of standing and jumping on the pedals, "the beast" would not go up the hill in either direction. It had to be dragged like some recalcitrant animal slowly up the hill, much to the amusement of the many passers-by. My greatest joy was when "the beast" blew a tyre – usually in the middle of a busy intersection. This was a frequent occurrence as the tyres and tubes were badly perished, being old pre-war stock. After a 'phone call and a long wait sitting on the kerb, the Herschells van would eventually arrive to rescue both "the beast and me and return us, in great comfort, happily back to Agnes Street, just in time to go home.

When I was not in transit, I worked in the laboratory darkrooms – "the



The old Herschell's building in Agnes Street, now derelict.

Photo: Kev Franzi (1999)

dungeons" - below street level, learning about rack and tank processing of motion picture films, an old system still being used by Herschells at that time. This was an experience I did not fully appreciate until some time later. A rare opportunity to understand and use a 50 year old procedure (from the 1890s) which was soon to be replaced by modern continuous processing machines.

*This is an edited extract of an article which first appeared under the title, "Kev Franzi's Journeys in Time: The VPK – My Key to Adventure" in Photographic Trader, Number 109*

Used with permission.

## Video

Those of us who have seen Winston Burchett's film of East Melbourne will recognise what an important historical record it has become. There have been many changes since it was made and now Bridget Basham, a local resident and architecture student, is about to begin making for us a new film featuring the buildings and streetscapes of East Melbourne and Jolimont. The eventual video will serve as a time capsule and will provide invaluable documentation for the future. We are very grateful to Bridget for taking on this task, and if you see her loitering with a camera it is with the best of intentions.

## Do You Know?

As a child in the 1940s John Fleming lived with his parents in one of the apartments in Koorine, on the corner of George and Powlett Streets. He tells us that the house was then nick-named McCackie's Mansion, after Roy Rene's popular radio show, and as an allusion to its eccentric landlady, Miss Maconachie, who was known as Miss Mac. He has sent us a copy of a newspaper clipping (c. 1972) which claims that Roy Rene used to stay at Koorine in the 1930s when performing in Melbourne. Other show business personalities, including Dick Bentley and Gus Bluett, are also said to have stayed there. Can anyone confirm this? If so please contact Sylvia on 9417 2037 or [sylvia.black@bigpond.com](mailto:sylvia.black@bigpond.com)

## Coming Events

**Wednesday, 15 June at 8.00 p.m.**  
Bruce Trethowan, architect, will tell us about some of his recent projects in East Melbourne, among them the house at 86 Wellington Parade.

**Wednesday, 17 August at 8.00 p.m.**  
Prof. David Aspin will talk on the history of Holy Trinity Church. It is 125 years ago that the first Holy Trinity was built.

**Wednesday, 19 October at 8.00 p.m.**  
Our sixth AGM. Meredith Gould, conservation architect, will explain the process of researching the history of a house.

All at Clarendon Terrace, 210  
Clarendon Street, East Melbourne

## EMHS and the Internet

Remember our catalogue is available on-line. Go to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria web-site: [www.historyvictoria.org.au](http://www.historyvictoria.org.au) and follow the link to the Victorian Local History Database.

Starting with this issue our newsletter will be on-line via the local history pages of the Yarra Melbourne Regional Libraries website: [www.ymrl.org.au](http://www.ymrl.org.au) This will help introduce the EMHS into a wider local history network and increase our public interface. It will make joining the society easier as it will be possible to print out the subscription form which appears on the back of the newsletter.

## 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:

