



MARCH 2007

**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 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.

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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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: Merrilyn Murnane: 9419 2560

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Column

In 2007, two well-known East Melbourne buildings will celebrate significant birthdays. Clarendon terrace was built in 1867 as a two storied terrace comprising three houses. It now houses the Menzies Foundation, a non-profit organization to promote excellence in health research, education and post-graduate scholarship, which coincidentally will be celebrating its 25th year in residence there. Holy Trinity Anglican Church was built in 1907 following the disastrous fire which almost completely destroyed the earlier bluestone church at the top end of George Street. Winston Burchett states that the new church was 'consecrated free of debt' in October 1907. There will be celebrations for each of these buildings during the year, which EMHS members will be able to attend. Of interest, too, is the State Library exhibition of East Melbourne paintings and artefacts, opening on Wednesday, March 7. I know many of our members will be fascinated to see how well-documented our suburb is and to recognize familiar landmarks and faces.

As for the EMHS itself, we have settled nicely into our new room at the Library. In December, we unpacked the boxes of material collected since the Society's beginnings. Over January, we installed our new computer, printer and phone, with message bank attached. Julian Callinan was extremely helpful in installing the appropriate software and organizing our file system. Since

then, we have been working to catalogue our collection for members' use. On 14 February, Vicki Court from the Royal Historical Society, came out to show us how to organize our material so that it is easily accessible on-line to the researcher.

Graham Shepherd has kindly undertaken the task of setting up an East Melbourne Historical Society web-site for us. It's early days yet but you can view it on www.emhs.org.au. We now have to decide what we want to go on the website and learn how to do it. If any member is interested in undertaking the task of helping to maintain the website and keeping it up to date, please contact Jill (9419 0437) or Sylvia (9417 2037). Graham is happy to provide training for those who would like to be involved.

After our interesting excursion to the East Melbourne Synagogue on 21 February, we are looking forward to our first guest speaker of the year, Robyn Annear. Robyn has written a history of Whelan the Wrecker and will be talking to us about the East Melbourne buildings which fell under the wrecker's ball. (See article)

Finally, the EMHS will have a tent at the East Melbourne Festa on March 25 in the Powlett Reserve. We will be showing an exhibition of photographs, selling our note cards and also cakes and biscuits. We look forward to seeing you there.

Jill Fenwick
President

New Contact Details

We now have our own telephone number with message bank, and email address at the library.

Phone: 9416 0445

Email: e.m.h.s@bigpond.com

Of course you are still welcome to contact committee members directly.

Christmas Party

Last year's Christmas party was held upstairs in the new library. It was a very successful night and afterwards there were even murmurs of "best ever". This was largely due to our team of wonderful cooks and to Alan Basham who always does such a splendid job as barman. The night was not without its difficulties. There is still no dishwasher and the refrigerator is far too small to keep platters of food chilled, but like any good historical society we looked to the past and proceeded as our ancestors would have. Marga McDonald, who has been involved in the development of the library since its inception, gave us a most informative talk about the history of the library site, and more particularly about how the new library came into being. It seemed that a certain tweaking of statistics was part of this process with it being suggested to users of the old library that if they wished to take out maybe three books, that perhaps they make three visits, even if they were all within the one half hour.

Synagogue Tour

Our first meeting for the year was a tour of the East Melbourne Synagogue. Over thirty people turned out in spite of the heat. Our original plan had been to follow the synagogue tour with a guided walk to some of the homes of past Jewish residents, but our guide withdrew at the last minute. However we were most fortunate that Elizabeth Morris, the very knowledgeable office manager at the synagogue, in conjunction with Dennis Martin, a long standing member of the congregation, and an architect who, as a student, wrote a thesis on the synagogue, was able to step into the breach.

We appreciated Elizabeth's clarity in describing the historical context in which the building sat, followed by Dennis' more specific explanation of the history of the building and its components. We learned that there are very few obligatory requirements when designing a synagogue. It must have an ark in which to keep the sacred scrolls, which should face Jerusalem, and seating for men and women must be separate. The style is usually Italianate or Neo-classical to avoid any similarity with typically gothic Christian churches. In this case the interpretation is very Australian emphasised by the decorative cast iron balustrading which runs around the ladies' gallery. Crouch and Wilson were the architects who designed the building in 1876 and which took only six months to build. Over the years it has been the chosen place of worship for many of Melbourne's best known Jews. John Monash was the first boy to have his bar mitzvah there.

Festa

The East Melbourne Festa is to take place in Powlett Reserve from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Sunday, 25 March. The historical society will have its own stall where we will be on hand to give out information about the society and promote interest in our local history. We will be displaying some of the photos from our 2004 exhibition, A Picture of Diversity, which we have had numerous requests to restage. We are very keen to acquire more photos and hope to compile a list of people who have photos of East Melbourne or Jolimont that they would be

prepared to lend us for copying. Please think about what you, your friends or relatives might have stored away in anticipation of this. We will also be selling our greeting cards which we launched at our Christmas party and which proved very popular. Last but not least, we will be selling cakes, slices, biscuits, cookies etc. and would dearly love any help you can give us, whether it be cooking or selling on the day.

If you can help please contact Sylvia either by phone, 9417 2037 or email, sylvia.black@bigpond.com

Some Recent Donations

Copland Estate

We have been lucky to receive a donation from the estate of Alexander Ewart Copland who died in July last year. Among many items of interest are two large framed photos of Eastbourne House, 62 Wellington Parade, and its attached terraces, 8-10 Simpson Street. The photos were taken by the renowned photographer, Athol Shmith, for an exhibition of Australian architecture held in London in 1956.

Mr. Copland and his father owned these buildings during the 1950s and were therefore landlords to the many businesses housed in the premises. The major enterprise was Eastbourne House Private Hotel at 62 Wellington Parade. Among the typical accountancy

and insurance firms some of the more unusual businesses were Shmith-Masters Mannequin Services run by Bambi Shmith (wife of Athol) and Diane Masters, two well known models of the day; The Port Philip Auto Racing Club; and Plastic Pearls Pty. Ltd. More famously, Balzac Restaurant operated out of the old, converted stables in Wellington Parade.

Included in the donation are many items of ephemera relating to some of these businesses. Most importantly there is a large bundle of correspondence pertaining to George Mora's (owner of the Balzac) application for a liquor licence. The bundle includes drawings showing necessary alterations, and

some menus. When one remembers that the Balzac was the first restaurant in Melbourne to gain a 10.00 p.m. licence this bundle of correspondence assumes some historic importance above mere local interest.

Comfortably supported by his investment portfolio Mr. Copland was able to indulge to the full his passion for a wide and extended family of interests centering on antiques and decorative arts. This central core naturally included the typical household items such as furniture and porcelain, but he had a major interest in clocks which spread to early chronometers and hence to a wide variety of specialist scientific instruments, and then back to instruments and gadgets of a more domestic nature, such as pianos, sewing machines and even flat irons. He collected them all in abundance. His Victorian mansion in Toorak was full to the brim. Even his garages were full, not only of cars, but cars provided the bulk, some in going order, some in pieces.

Extending from the central core the ever outwardly reaching tentacles of his enthusiasms covered the great houses of the world, gardens, architecture, bridges, trains, ships, and aeroplanes. A vast and uncontrollable library of books, and journals of dozens of interest related societies, covered every facet of his world.

The items donated to the society emerged from beneath many years' worth of obsessive hoarding and

although the prospect of such a life is not for everyone it bears thinking about that history would be a lot poorer if there were no Mr. Coplands.

Donations from the Copland Estate have also gone to the major cultural institutions in Melbourne. The remainder of the estate will be auctioned in March – the mansion at 23 Bruce Street on 3 March by R.T. Edgar, and the contents on 4 March – see the Bonhams and Goodman website for further details.

We thank the executor of Mr. Copland's estate, Nina Stanton, for her generosity.

	<p>You are invited to a dinner of Bouillabaisse at the French Restaurant of Melbourne</p> <p>BALZAC</p> <p>62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, on Wednesday, 26th November, at 6.30 p.m.</p> <p>The Balzac will be launched on this evening by Miss Winifred Atwell. R.S.V.P. JA 2851</p>
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PLC

We wish to thank Lois Iljin who has given us a copy of an engraving of PLC done in the 1930s. PLC (Presbyterian Ladies College) started in 1875 in a building designed for it by Reed & Barnes. Over the years it acquired neighbouring properties both behind it in Victoria Parade and next door in Albert Street. This illustration shows the Albert Street frontage and it is most interesting to see the different structures in relation to one another rather than as individual buildings as they are so often depicted.

Worsley

Recently we have received a photo of the house that was once at 151 Grey Street, part of the site on which the Mercy Private Hospital now stands, along with photos and information about its first owners.

The home was designed by architects Austin and Ellis in 1866 for Henry Hall, who named it Lansdowne Villa. The photo shows it to have been a single storeyed,

double fronted villa, with a pretty arcaded verandah along the length of its front façade. It was well set back from the street with a flourishing garden in front.

Henry Hall was a chemist with premises in Bourke Street near the corner of Russell Street. He was one of Melbourne's early pioneers having arrived here in 1840 at the age of twenty-two. He married and had a son and a daughter, but when he died in 1875 he left his house and its contents to his youngest sister, Clara Ellen.

Clara was the widow of architect, Charles Swyer, and she renamed the house Worsley, after the place in England where he had died. Charles

Swyer many years earlier had made his own mark on East Melbourne when he was recorded as the person responsible for the layout of the gardens at Bishopscourt. Later, in



Worsley, which once stood on the site of the Mercy Private Hospital.

1882, Clara married her second husband, Richard Moore Treacy.

After her death Clara left the house to her unmarried daughter, also Clara (Swyer), who lived there until 1922 when she sold it to Mrs. James Wood, after fifty-six years in the ownership of one family.

In late 1929 the Sisters of Mercy bought Worsley for £4,000 and it was demolished four years later.

Many thanks to Joan Glover: another gap in the visual record of early East Melbourne is now filled.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 18 April at 8.00 p.m.
at Clarendon Terrace, 210
Clarendon Street, East Melbourne

In April we will welcome Robyn Annear as our guest speaker. Robyn's work will be well known to many members through her wonderfully evocative history of early Melbourne, *Bearbrass*, which deservedly won the 1995 A A Phillips Award for Australian Studies; and her study of the Eureka rebellion, *Fly a Rebel Flag*, which vividly re-creates the events at Ballarat for younger readers. Of most interest to East Melbourne Historical Society members, however, is *A City Lost and Found: Whelan the Wrecker's Melbourne*. She was also the curator for the State Library

exhibition 'Naked Democracy: Governing Victoria 1856-2006' which ran from June to October 2006.

Robyn was awarded a State Library Creative Fellowship from 2003-4 to research Whelan the Wrecker and was elected to the State Library Board in September 2006. She has served as a judge in the Age Book of the Year and Victorian Premier's Literary Awards since 2001.

On 18 April, she will speak about the lost landscape of East Melbourne – the buildings demolished by Whelan the Wrecker. Don't miss this opportunity to hear one of Victoria's foremost historians.

Membership Subscriptions 2007

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 8002.

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:

