



JUNE 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.

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.

Please contact any member of our committee.

## 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:

Jill Fenwick 9419 0437

### Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black 9417 2037

### Treasurer:

Merrilyn Murnane 9419 2560

### Committee:

Deirdre Basham 9421 3252

Elizabeth Cam 9416 2187

Nina Crone 9417 0493

Malcolm Howell 0417 337 519

Graham Shepherd 9486 9039

### CONTACT DETAILS

**1<sup>st</sup> Floor, East Melbourne Library,  
122 George Street, East Melbourne  
PO Box 355, East Melbourne 8002  
Telephone: 9416 0445.**

**Email: [e.m.h.s@bigpond.com](mailto:e.m.h.s@bigpond.com)**

**Web: [www.emhs.org.au](http://www.emhs.org.au)**

## 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

May has proved to be a busy month for East Melbourne Historical Society members. Firstly we are delighted to welcome Graham Shepherd to our committee. Graham has been busy setting up our new website on [emhs.org.au](http://emhs.org.au), and teaching some of us how to post information on it. It continues to grow and if you access it, you will find our new calendar of events, information about our speakers for the rest of the year, a picture gallery, our newsletters, a register of East Melbourne buildings and a short history of the suburb. Contributions, in the form of information about people, buildings, plans and stories are very welcome. In time, we hope to have many contributions from people accessing the site, as well as lots of information on the history and infrastructure of our suburb. So, if you have some historic photographs or documents or any other material you think would add to what is there already, please let us know. We will happily copy and return any item.

We also need some volunteers to transfer information and pictures onto the website. If you have some spare time, like working in the library and want to learn about websites and how to access and maintain them, please contact Graham (9486 9039), Jill (9419 0437) or Sylvia (9417 2037). We really need some help to move a lot of material from print medium to the internet.

The Festa on 24 March was a great success, thanks to the organisation of Faye Humphris and the East Melbourne Group. Our stall attracted many visitors. While access was a bit difficult, many people looked at our photographic display and we sold more of our note cards and one copy of the isometrical map. Our cooks, including Elizabeth Cam, Deidre Basham, Nina Crone, Julie Gaffney, Carly Black, Libby Callinan and Marian Shepherd, provided a large number of biscuits for the event. These sold with great ease. We made over \$1,000 dollars on the day, so that even when we take out expenses, there was a significant contribution to our funds.

The next few months sees the continuation of our lecture series for this year. In June, Caroline Clemente will introduce us to 'Dr Howitt's Circle', the group of friends and associates of physician Godfrey Howitt, whose house on the corner of Collins and Spring Sts. features in the painting by Eugene Von Guerard. In August, Ruth Pullin will give a lecture on the work of that famous East Melbourne resident, Eugène Von Guerard, whose house still stands in Gipps St. In October, in conjunction with the Menzies Foundation's celebration of Clarendon Terrace's 150th birthday, Miles Lewis will recreate Melbourne in the 1850s for us. All EMHS members will receive a printed invitation to this special event.

*Jill Fenwick*  
President

## Robyn Annear and Whelan the Wrecker

The desire to modernize, to create a city which is at the forefront of architectural design, is related very strongly to the population's self-image. The old buildings become an embarrassment, the new a symbol of prosperity, progress and engagement with the world. In April, Robyn Annear demonstrated how the face of colonial Melbourne changed to make way for the new city. The men who demolished them were almost always employed by 'Whelan the Wrecker'.

The 1950s were a decade of considerable 'progress' in this regard. First, there was the visit of the new Queen, Elizabeth II. Then, Melbourne was preparing to host the Olympic Games.

Melbournians were horrified that international visitors should see their city as old-fashioned and generally supported the replacement of the old, no matter how solid or attractive. Robin Boyd and other leading architects worked to create new and modern buildings at the expense of the 19<sup>th</sup> century past.

East Melbourne did not escape.

St. Patrick's College, Cliveden, PLC, all fell under the Wrecker's hammer. In central Melbourne, Robyn showed us a plan of the city blocks, each of which was marked by multiple crosses to show buildings which had been replaced. However, in spite of Whelan's thriving demolition business, the brothers were not untouched by the buildings they destroyed. All over Melbourne, there are pieces Whelan's saved from the



Remnant of St Patrick's College. Photo: Darryl Stanisch

wreckage: the fittings which now make up the Cliveden Room at the Hilton hotel, the statues which decorate the entrance to Melbourne University's underground car park, the tower of St. Patrick's college. We thank Robyn for her most informative talk, which in spite of three other meetings held on the same night, was very well attended.

## Introductory talk given by Dr. E.S. Esnouf at a General Meeting of the East Melbourne Group. November 1972.

As an introduction to the Lord Mayor, it is my intention to give a brief history of the changes in East Melbourne in the past forty years, and to try to define the factors that caused those changes.

As a boy I remember East Melbourne as a residential suburb. The families in most of the homes knew each other through the schools, meeting in the gardens around the band stand, at the kid' birthday parties and church socials. There were no flats, no offices, very few cars, and no parking problems or parking meters. The streets seemed wide and uncluttered, you could see the gardens without a frame of vehicles, and walk to the parks without waiting for the green light.

Families lived in the terrace houses and villas built in the 90s. Queen Bess Row in Hotham Street was built by the father of Dame Nellie Melba for the Hon. William Clarke to house the domestics of Cliveden – their home.

In East Melbourne there were only two small Hospitals – Mena House and Crathy [sic] House.

As the families in the terraces grew up and moved on or the father died, the widow lived on and let the beautiful airy rooms to business

couples or genteel ladies. As these owners passed away, the homes lost the pride of ownership and deteriorated into boarding houses. The owners had no real interest in maintaining the properties and with the accommodation shortage in the mid forties, verandahs were boarded in, rooms partitioned and gas stoves occupied any suitable space.

Although I was born in East Melbourne and lived there until 1938, when I returned in 1947, the decline and decay was unbelievable. Where once a stable community lived, now a transient almost one night stand population existed.

The flats built at this time had no site ratio applied, almost every square foot was built on, and off street parking was not allowed for. When we see "To Let" notices today, it is hard to remember that in the shortage then, a small flat would command key money of \$300 – of course, for this, you got a few square feet of moth eaten carpet and an ice chest.

A factor creating the need for accommodation was the demolition of Rosebank, Verona and a number of homes to make way for the Mercy in 1934, and Freemasons in 1936. The many occupants of these buildings

were moved out, and added to this, was the staff for the hospitals. The cars of these staff plus those of the visitors, began the first car parking problems in the area.

During the early fifties, rents and shortage of office space in the city caused the far sighted Architects to move into East Melbourne. With their professional eye they could see the potential in restoration of the dilapidated terraces. Their efforts, in my opinion, stopped the rot in East Melbourne, and drew in their wake, the re-entry of families to restore and live in these old homes. I can think of three Lord Mayors who have done this, and the trend is increasing. In 1953, the East Melbourne Group grew out of a protest against the destruction of the George Street trees. By the time their voice was heard only the east end of George Street survived, and these trees remain today, as a reminder of the beauty that once graced that street. I can recall an earlier protest in the 1930s when the cable trams were converted to electric, and a scheme aimed to put trams up the centre of Hoddle Street. Matt Hunt and my father took part in that, and the median strip and its trees remain as a testimony to their success.

During the late fifties and early sixties, the Melbourne City Council passed special by-laws to try to clean up the remaining sub-standard apartment houses, unfortunately, these

by-laws were bent by investment developers to create a new type of apartment which housed the maximum number of people in the minimum space; almost no car parking, and of course, a high return to the investor.

This proved unpopular with residents not only belonging to the Group, but all the others covered by our survey of 2,000 people. The Melbourne City Council by this year applying equal standards for flats and apartments, has certainly sealed the fate of this type of development.

Fifteen years after the architects moved, Collins and Spring Streets began to crumble; the Eye and Ear and Mercy expanded, and the Doctors spread their suites into East Melbourne, creating 9.00 to 5.00 parking problems and empty lifeless premises during nights and weekends. Again the Melbourne City Council has produced laws to restrict this erosion of the area.

The East Melbourne Group over nearly twenty years, has been the voice of the residents. We have had close co-operation from the Ward Councillors who, with their wives, mingle with us and sense the feelings of the residents, and convey these back to Council. A different cry from the early days when you saw your Councillor once in three years, and only if he were opposed.

Most recently, we have seen the demise of the F1 which threatened our gardens for thirteen years, but along its route we have the 12 storey

Mercy Maternity and the two high rise projects just outside this Hall. At least these will not bring the added burden of visitors' cars and fears of expansion into the adjoining area. Clarendon Street, Wellington Parade, Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade are permitted high rise, but you residents have made it very clear that the residential core of East Melbourne remain free of multi storey projects, Hospital extensions or commercialisation.

Your wishes were channelled into the Loder Baily Report and will be fed into the data for the Strategy Plan. Here we see the Melbourne City Council not waiting for problems to occur and then producing a by-law, but trying to predict a pattern and legislate ahead.

I hope their plan caters for a growing community spirit, for a place where one can live and feel some one cares. Where there are homes lit up at night. Where in the shops, library, health centre, park or street, people say hello – and the street doesn't die at night and the weekends. The core of a community spirit is here now, at the Tennis Courts, Health Centre, Kindergarten, the East Towners and your East Melbourne Group. We all must try not only to restore an architecturally desirable place for tourist buses to drive through and artists to paint, but people too, with a real live community that I remember.

Apart from people, concrete things like the Loop, all day parkers, the Brewery site, amalgamation, the big F2, and the redevelopment of Jolimont Terrace will influence your East Melbourne in the future.

I hope that the Lord Mayor with more experience in Local Government than any other Councillor or Lord Mayor I have known – will be able to forecast the influences of Federal and State Government, the Melbourne City Council and the East Melbourne Group on what East Melbourne may be by the year 2,000.

*A copy of this talk was recently donated to our archives. There is much we can relate to 35 years on.*

## East Melbourne Walk

You will already have seen mention of Clarendon terrace's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. Another aspect of these celebrations will be a guided walk of East Melbourne led by National Trust guide, Celestina Sagazio. The walks are to take place at 11.30 a.m. on Friday, 19 October and Saturday, 20 October followed by a boxed lunch in the Fitzroy Gardens provided by The Menzies Foundation. In the afternoon you may wish to visit the historical society's display of early photographs at Clarendon Terrace. Bookings for the walk are essential. Please contact The Menzies Foundation on 9419 5699 or [menzies@vicnet.net.au](mailto:menzies@vicnet.net.au)

## Coming Events

### Dr. Howitt's Circle

**Wednesday, 20 June 2007 at 8.00 p.m.**

Dr. Howitt, physician and amateur scientist, lived in Spring Street, and counted many of Melbourne's most eminent citizens amongst his friends. Caroline Clemente will introduce us to members of his social circle and their common interests.

### Eugene von Guerard

**Wednesday, 15 August 2007 at 8.00 p.m.**

Ruth Pullin, who has recently completed a Ph.D. on von Guerard, will tell us something of the life and work of this famous artist and local resident.

AGM followed by

**Inner Melbourne in the 1850s**

**Wednesday, 17 October 2007 at 8.00 p.m.**

This event will be held in conjunction with The Menzies Foundation as part of the celebrations marking the 150<sup>th</sup> year of Clarendon Terrace.

Well known architectural historian, Dr. Miles Lewis, will take us back to the time of Clarendon Terrace's construction and place it in the context of its period.

All events at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne

## 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:

