



March 2009

**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.

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Committee

President:

Jill Fenwick 9419 0437

Vice President:

Graham Shepherd 9486 9039

Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black 9417 2037

Treasurer:

Malcolm Howell 0417 337 519

Committee:

Deirdre Basham 9421 3252

Graham Riches 9419 5275

Jacinta Ryan 0408 697 108

Barbara Toone 9415 9117

CONTACT DETAILS

1st Floor, East Melbourne Library,
122 George Street, East Melbourne
PO Box 355, East Melbourne 8002

Telephone: 9416 0445.

Email: info@emhs.org.au

Web: 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: Deirdre Basham: 9421 3252

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Letter

As I write this letter, the clouds hang low over Melbourne, thick with smoke, while the sunlight is a peculiar yellow shade seen only in the bushfire season. This is the result of back-burning, not the bushfires which still burn in eastern and northern Victoria and which have brought a terrible toll of death and destruction. There are now 189 people dead who were alive and well only ten days ago; more deaths may follow. There are 1800 houses burned and around 7,000 Victorians are now homeless. Hundreds of native and domestic animals have been killed and people's livelihoods wiped out, as the fires swept through grazing and farm land, through vineyards and crops, shops and businesses, schools and public buildings. It is the worst fire disaster in Victoria's history.

The community has responded to the tragedy with a mighty fund-raising effort and countless donations of clothing and goods. Fourteen thousand people offered blood, overwhelming the Blood Bank's capability, at least temporarily. Many East Melburnians made their way down to Coles' stores on Friday 13 February, in response to Coles' promise to donate all profits on that day to the bushfire. On Sunday 22 February, Holy Trinity Church hosted a concert with all proceeds going to the bushfire appeal. In all, over \$100 million was raised in the bushfire appeal.

The drought continues to create concerns. Yarra Park is a dustbowl, having had parking on its paddocks for the cricket, the Australian Open Tennis Tournament, various concerts and other events. Cars have destroyed the grass cover and compacted the soil, so that

when water is sprayed on the tree roots, much of it runs off into gutters. Some trees have drip systems, but the plane trees on the eastern side next to the railway overpass bridge have had no water and consequently have already dropped the majority of their leaves. In spite of the accessibility of public transport – trams along Swan Street and Wellington Parade, the bus along Punt Road, train stations at Richmond, Jolimont and Flinders Streets and walking access through Birrarung Marr and the Barak bridge, even water taxis from Southbank – there seem to be increasing numbers of cars and a vastly increased number of days when they are allowed to park on public land. I am pleased to see that the East Melbourne Group is taking up this cause and hope all our members will support it.

Drought has also affected the maple tree outside the East Melbourne Library. This tree has a long history, but in spite of the library being sited to accommodate its continued presence, no watering equipment seems to be in place. As a consequence, it has been cut back and will now be removed. The proposal is to replace it with a similar tree – one hopes this time with a proper drip system to sustain it. Yet, given that the eucalyptus which the Melbourne City council planted out the front is flourishing, perhaps it would be better to replace the maple with an indigenous tree, capable of giving support to local birdlife. Questions about the maple tree can be directed to Tanya Macleod at the MCC on 03 9658 8714 or tanmac@melbourne.vic.gov.au

In spite of these challenges to our

community, the EMHS is looking forward to the year ahead. Our booklet on the lanes of East Melbourne will be on sale at all our functions (\$15) and we are busy discussing new projects to follow. Our website continues to receive many hits and we will continue to add to it; members are invited to lend us photographs or other memorabilia which we can reproduce to add to our photographic record of our suburb. We

hope our lecture program will continue to attract member support and apologise that our excursion to Bishopscourt was so quickly filled. Unfortunately, houses built in the 1850s do not usually have the room to accommodate large crowds. We thank Mrs. Joy Freier for her hospitality and her generosity in having fifty eager EMHS members to view the house and garden.

Jill Fenwick

Vale

We were all saddened by the death of Arthur Turner late last year. Arthur played a larger than life role in our community since moving into the area forty years ago. He, with Cynthia, his wife, was instigator, organiser or member of most of our local groups and institutions. The Monday Morning Group and the First Sunday Lunches were perhaps two of his favourites. He was a regular attendee, again with Cynthia, at our own meetings.

The selfless and enthusiastic contribution shown by both Arthur and Cynthia to their community was recognised by the City of Melbourne with a Community Services Award presented to them at a public ceremony in 2002.

In life before East Melbourne Arthur was appointed Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Melbourne in 1945, assisting in organising law teaching for the influx of students following the end of the Second World War.

In 1950 he became Sub-Dean of the Faculty. Except for the year 1952 when he was on leave as Bigelow Teaching Fellow at the University of Chicago Law School, he remained Sub-Dean until the

end of 1962. This meant that for a little over half his teaching career in the Law School he was the School's main contact with candidates for entry to the School and the adviser of students in relation to their courses.

In 1951, together with Norval Morris, Arthur set up a legal aid clinic. The pair initially provided legal advice by themselves at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, later being joined by Johannes (Hans) Leyser and student volunteers.

In 1956, Arthur was promoted to Reader.

His teaching extended over a wide range of the Law: at various times he lectured in Introduction to Legal Method, Criminal Law, Principles of Property in Land, Public International Law and Principles of Equity.

Arthur resigned from the Law School at the beginning of 1969.

He is still remembered fondly by many of his students who tell of his helpfulness, his friendliness and his humour; all the qualities that we in East Melbourne also recall.

Our condolences to Cynthia and Julie

Web Site

How to sign on?

All members of the East Melbourne Historical Society now have a membership account on our web site <http://emhs.org.au>.

To sign in you need to enter your Username and Password. Your Username is simply your name, just as it appears on your membership card including capital letters and spaces. Your Password is your initials, as they appear on your card, followed immediately by your 4 digit membership number, also on the card.

So Mary Smith, member number 0777, has a Username "Mary Smith" and a Password "ms0777" excluding quotation marks. If you have set up your computer to remember passwords, you only need to enter the details the first time you log in.

If you have any difficulty logging in, please don't hesitate to ring Graham Shepherd on 0408 616 390.

What's on the site?

Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers we now have on the site:

- 74 building histories
- 5 community history articles
- 5 personal histories
- 9 albums with over 250 images
- 14 EMHS newsletters dating back to 2002 (Can anyone help complete this archive?)
- Our past and future programme of activities.

Who's looking at it?

After two years, we average over 30,000 unique page views per month.

We receive about three new emails per month seeking information, most

commonly about family who once lived in the area.

Google gives us a ranking of 2 out of 10 which is a measure of our relative size and interest. In comparison, Bureau of Meteorology is 9, Telstra White Pages is 7, Collingwood Football Club is 6, Melbourne Library Service is 5.

What's next?

The Historical Society activity programme helps generate a lot of material. But it is the enthusiasms of our members which really stir up the most interest. Do you have an old family member or neighbour who has some memories or anecdotes of East Melbourne? Do you have a collection of family photos or artefacts with a local history flavour which you would like to share? Are you interested in some aspect of our community that you would be keen to research, e.g., gardens, lace-work, church, library, transportation, business, personalities, etc. Are you a photographer?

How does the site work?

Basically it's just like a word processor. If you have a computer at home, or can use a computer at the library, you can log-in as an author and away you go. Or if you have material, but aren't interested in adding it yourself, no problem, it is easy for someone else to do it.

Anyone who has a technical bent and who would like to see under the bonnet and help with the occasional grease and oil change, please give Graham a call.

East Melbourne Writer – Jean Campbell

Melbourne author Jean Campbell (1901-1984) was the writer of five novels for William Hutchinson, publishers, in London, and also produced magazine style romance novels for New Century Press, 3 North York St., Sydney. These booklets, sold for 4d, were distributed through newsagents and booksellers and boasted 'A new title every month.' So, while the novels were serious writing, 'Bitter Honeymoon', 'Passion from Peking' and 'Her Fate in the Stars' were clearly produced for light reading, though given the continuing popularity of Mills and Boon even today, may well have made their author a good deal of money. Many were published during World War 2. On the back page of 'Passion from Peking' is an inscription: 'This book has been reduced in pages to reflect the War Time Economy'.

Jean Campbell lived in East Melbourne and was clearly a member of a literary/artistic set. Her portrait, by Lina Bryans, hangs in the National Gallery at Federation Square. Titled 'The Babe is Wise', from the title of one of her most popular books, it shows a young, fashionably dressed woman who exudes independence and self assurance. The State Library has a photographic portrait of her by Wolfgang Sievers, better known for his architectural photos, especially of the ICI building. There is a third, autographed photograph held in the National Gallery of Canberra,

described as 'prepared for a luncheon given by Hutchinson representative George Sutton when 'Brass and Cymbals' was published'. Hutchinson's obviously saw her as a promising author and were prepared to spend to promote her image.

But where did she live in East Melbourne? The Sievers photograph, dated 1950, catches her in her East Melbourne flat, and the electoral roll has her living at 17 Powlett Street at that time. However this flat, tucked behind the house at that address, was quite small – a single bedroom, with bathroom attached, a small kitchen and sitting room – somewhere perhaps she moved to in her later years.

Clues may, perhaps, be found in her work. One of her greatest strengths as a writer was in the detail of landscapes and buildings that she described. She loved Melbourne, it is clear, and at least two of her novels are set there. East Melbourne, with its 'curiously mixed charm' features strongly in 'The Babe is Wise' and she writes that from the house 'you could look across to the city, and in the evenings, when the electric signs sprang into life, it was rich, not gaudy with colour.' This could be either Jolimont or East Melbourne proper, but another passage fixes her location clearly in Jolimont:

Then there was the other entrancing aspect of the locality. If it hadn't been for the electric trains and trams thundering by at intervals

East Melbourne Writer – Jean Campbell

... you might have thought you were living in a sylvan retreat ... there were the gardens over the way and the park at the back ... and a bridge over the Yarra that brought you to some more gardens, the Botanical.

So where did she live? The description of the cottage in the novel is quite specific:

She saw it for the first time cuddling in between two tall old brick houses for all the world like a small fat child toddling out between a couple of maiden aunts. She was certain that it must have been the identical cottage made by the witch to lure Hansel and Gretel.

Perhaps it wasn't her house at all, but that of a friend whom she visited often, because she describes the inside of the cottage and the layout of the rooms quite specifically. But there is something so personal about her knowledge, so loving, that she seems to be describing a house in which she lived.

Can any of our readers help us with information about Jean Campbell or about the house in which she lived. And if any of our members is visiting Canberra and has some free time, perhaps he or she could look through



the collection of Jean Campbell's papers held there and help us in our quest.

Yarra Park Heritage at Risk

All people who walk in Yarra Park will be appalled by its condition after years of drought and inadequate irrigation, compounded by cars parking there on an increasing number of days each year.

The park is now an unsightly and, on a windy day, very unpleasant dust bowl. The soil is compacted, depriving the trees of air and water. In wet weather it turns into a sea of mud.

The park is part of our heritage. Governor La Trobe set aside a swathe of parkland that stretched from East Melbourne into the city along the north bank of the river as a place of recreation and enjoyment for all Melburnians. Yarra Park and Birrarung Marr are all that remain as genuine open space.

Yarra Park is in danger of irreparable harm if the car parking is allowed to continue. With this in mind our society is preparing to nominate Yarra Park for Our Heritage at Risk. This is a program established by the Australian Council of National Trusts to raise awareness and to generate media attention about heritage sites at risk of destruction, decay or neglect.

Nomination to the list will not in itself solve anything, but would focus attention on the problem and open the way for some useful discussion.

Dates of Interest

Thursday, 19 March, 10.30 – 12.00
(see enclosed brochure)

A special offer to EMHS members from the Friends of The Johnston Collection. Members are invited to join a tour of Venice and Rome led by Sylvia Sagona. Sylvia will conduct a short presentation to whet your appetite.

Thursday, 26 March at 6.00
at the Library

John Ballard, CEO of Mercy Aged Care, will talk about the new Mercy facility which will open in mid-June. This is a special opportunity for East Melbourne residents to gain information, and discuss possible reservations, before it is advertised to the general public.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 15 April at 8.00 p.m.

Ann Blainey, author of *I am Melba*, will talk about the life of the opera singer. Melba was one of the first students at Presbyterian Ladies College, Albert Street, which was housed in a building constructed under the direction of her father, David Mitchell.

Wednesday, 17 June at 8.00 p.m.

Laurie Moore will tell us about the life and times of Rev. Dr. Adam Cairns and the history of the church named in his memory. Laurie was a member of the congregation at Cairns Memorial Church until it burnt down in 1987. He is an authority on Presbyterian Church history.

**Both meetings at Clarendon
Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East
Melbourne**