



September 2011

**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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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

We are in Spring again and what better way to celebrate this most beautiful of seasons than at the East Melbourne Group dinner at the Windsor Hotel. On Wednesday 10 August, 160 people gathered to support the EMG, with a superb dinner, plentiful wine, a generous raffle and an auction. It was a great opportunity to raise money for a worthy cause and to celebrate the neighbourliness of our suburb.

That same spirit was demonstrated at the two Open Days at Bishopscourt on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 July. Volunteers from the Johnston Collection, the East Melbourne Historical Society, the garden group at Bishopscourt, and members of the Anglican community acted as guides, door openers and room 'guards' while over 1,100 people moved through the house over a period of twelve hours over both days. The gardens had been brought to their winter peak, while Murray Hohnen ran a slide show in the gardening shed to show people how it looked in other seasons of the year. It was an amazing experience, which went off faultlessly due to the planning beforehand and a good time was had by all.

This leads me to tell you of the generosity of Joy and Philip Freier, who have offered us Bishopscourt for our annual Christmas party. This event is undoubtedly the most popular in our calendar, giving our members an opportunity to get together with their

friends and neighbours. The catering and serving is done by Committee members and volunteers, so we can keep prices down, but the biggest saving is undoubtedly on venue. Over the years, we have been very grateful to the owners of large private homes and apartments who have offered to host the party, and again this year, we thank Joy and Philip.

Meanwhile, development continues apace. The extensions to the Melbourne Tennis Centre are under construction, with a new retail plaza, a large under-cover public space with a big screen for off-court viewing, and new tennis courts. Three issues of public concern are the loss of parkland along Swan St/Olympic Way, for which there has been no compensation of alternate land; the loss of the bus parking station, with no new public parking being provided; and therefore, the impact on Yarra Park, which is already severely degraded due to the frequency of parking and the numbers of cars permitted in Yarra Park. In the Fitzroy Gardens, the old glasshouses adjacent to Wellington Parade will be removed to make way for a new visitor centre and underground tanks to 'climate-proof' this wonderful asset, as has already been done in Darling Square.

*Jill Fenwick
President*

Using our website to research your house

Architectural Detective Miles Lewis gave us many clues in his presentation this month on how to solve the mysteries of our own house. He suggested that an important first step is a study of the documentation both general and particular which can reveal many details.

You can't go past our own web site, <http://emhs.org.au>, as a starting point. Our catalogue can be accessed directly from the front page. Winston Burchett's index cards were digitised last year as were the MMBW maps. We now have important maps from 1837, 1855, 1864 and later, each with more and more detail up to the MMBW maps of the 1890s which show building outlines and even paving, chook houses and drainage. There are also many aerial views dating from the 1866 de Gruchy and Leigh isometrical plan of

Melbourne up to the 1945 and 1972 aerial surveys plus many more.

All images are now presented so that you can display them on the full screen and zoom and pan to explore the minutest details. We are also progressively digitising photos and documents which show individual buildings and events either in image format or pdf documents which you can explore on the site or download for your own records.

More and more detectives investigating their own family histories are finding this material on our web site and are pursuing their enquires through our contact form. You can too.

Of course all this takes effort on the part of members of our society. If you are interested in helping please don't hesitate to contact Sylvia or Graham.

To Market, To Market... or not

On 14 April 1921 "Health" wrote to the Editor of The Argus warning that a "petition will shortly be presented to the City Council, signed by a few short sighted ratepayers of East Melbourne asking for permission to hold a Friday night fruit and vegetable market in one of the public reserves of that electorate." The reserve in question was Powlett Reserve and "Health" was firmly against the proposal saying that there were plenty of other markets within easy distance of East Melbourne, and that we must

preserve the lungs of the city.

The Town Clerk, Mr. Ellery, the following day, made it quite clear that there would be no alienation of the park, "The council could not grant consent in this instance, even if it desired to," he said, "as it was a joint trustee of the area with the Lands department." Alderman Sir David Hennessy, chairman of the markets committee said, "Our policy is to conserve the holdings of the corporation intact in the interests of the citizens."

However exactly a week later the market had opened. The Argus reported that, "After keen expectation, the residents of East Melbourne have now been able to secure an open-air market for the supply of fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, &c. This is at the corner of Albert and Powlett streets, and has been organised by Mr. Farthing, M.L.A., in accordance with his election promise."

Just over a year later the Friday market, open from 7.00 a.m. till noon, was flourishing and said to be well patronised. 300 residents of East Melbourne and neighbouring districts signed a petition and presented it to the City Council asking for suitable accommodation for the stall holders. The Council appointed a sub-committee to report upon the proposal. After inspection of the site and with the agreement of Mr. Everard, M.L.A., the chairman of the sub-committee said that he would submit a proposal to the council that a shed should be erected at an estimated cost of £2,000, "which would benefit children playing in the reserve, and at the same time shelter market stallholders". The State Treasurer, Mr Mcpherson, promised to confer with officers of the City Council, and to present the matter to the Cabinet. Mr. Ellery warned of opposition.

And he was right. "Old Resident" wrote to The Argus, claiming that, "The residents of East Melbourne do not require or desire a market. Should such a project be carried out on the proposed site it will be most

convenient for the housewives of the adjoining districts, viz. Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy. The effect on East Melbourne will be to lower the value of property."

Some months later Sir James Barrett, president of the Playgrounds Association of Victoria, wrote that, "if public reserves are resumed for such purposes, an equal area must be provided to make good the loss." Mr. Ellery denied that the suggestion had ever been considered by the Council, and that the markets committee had postponed the idea of a market indefinitely.

The matter seemed to fizzle out completely. The Argus reported on 28 March 1925 that, "The Minister for Lands (Mr. Downward) said that the attempt to pass a bill through the State Parliament to alienate part of the Powlett street reserve for market purposes had not been made during his regime as Minister."

Ninety-odd years later most of us are no doubt thankful that the sheds were never built, but it is interesting to note that there was obviously no difficulty alienating parkland for the less contentious issue of building, in 1924, four tennis courts with electric lighting, and a brick pavilion.

More about the Hunters

Sometimes a sad story has a happy ending. So it was with Janet Hunter, estranged wife of Dr. Alexander Hunter, who died in Hokitika, New Zealand on 6 April, 1867. On his death, Janet Hunter came into a pension of £200 paid by the Royal College of Edinburgh as a result of Hunter's time teaching there. It must have been a great relief to a woman who had had to fight her husband in the courts for every penny of maintenance over many years. Then, on 20 June, 1868, Janet married again.

Her husband was the Reverend James Gilbertson, curate of St. Peter's, Eastern Hill. She was then 53 years old. The couple moved first to NSW, perhaps to get away from any remnant of Janet's past life, and then to Wedderburn, Victoria. Janet died at Wedderburn on 7 December, 1889, 'in the faith and hope of the Gospel... the patient and true-hearted wife of the Reverend James'. Gilbertson later married again and died in 1902 at Carlton. He is buried in Boorondara Cemetery, Kew.

Rotters and Rogues

MADAME VALLANCE. — Hours: 2 to 8 daily, Fridays excepted. 125 Grey st., East Melbourne.

1. Most Subtle Craft

Mary Vallance, a domestic, aged 48 years, was charged at the Collingwood Court on Wednesday with having most subtle craft to impose on plain-clothes detective Joseph Crawford. The case was heard in the City Court, on Tuesday, but the Bench had not made a decision as to the penalty.

Constable Crawford described a reading he had at Vallance's premises in East Melbourne on July 24. Vallance cut a pack of cards three times and told him several things about himself. Persons which she described he either could not place or they did not answer to the descriptions given by Vallance.

Mr. J. Barnett who appeared for Vallance, said that there was no case to answer. Vallance had not attempted to adopt a supernatural attitude, or predict events.

Vallance was fined £10, with £1 costs.

From The Argus, 9 Aug 1923, p.14

2. Fatuous Falsehoods

A story of a varied career was related in the Bankruptcy Court today, when Isaac Crawford Bradley was examined by the official assignee. The bankrupt stated that returning to England from the Ashanti war he was drafted to Australia to join the flagship Pearl, under Commodore Goodenough. Seven years later he

left the navy and went to England, where he decided to take up one of his hobbies – healing – and make a profession of it. America saw him for some years, and there he received a certificate from a doctor that he was entitled to call himself a medical electrician. Coming to Sydney in 1880, he visited several of the capitals. He made £300 as a canvasser in Melbourne, and started as a magnetic healer or psychotherapist. Later he went to New Zealand, and having returned to Sydney, opened an office. One of his creditors, he said, had obtained an order on the ground that he had obtained money from her by hypnotic influence, and had also sworn that by his influence over her she had been made to sign a cheque. This he denied.

The Register (Adelaide) 27 May 1910, p.6

[...] In answer to further questions, the bankrupt admitted that he did not go to England. It was absolutely untrue what he swore about going

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The Coburg Leader, 21 Sept 1891, p.4

and studying in America. He was in America when he was about 16 and had never been there since. What he swore the other day was a deliberate lie. It was not true that he had stayed at Dr Buchanan's college for three years. It was also untrue when he said he went to San Francisco and practised for 18 months. From the time he left the navy in Sydney, in 1878, he had never been out of Australasia. The examination closed.

The Mercury (Hobart) 24 Jun 1910, p.6

Betty's Books

The late Betty Hall was a great reader and a lover, particularly, of Australian poetry. Her friends remember that she could recite by heart the poems of Banjo Paterson and others when she was called upon and that Betty's house had long run out of bookshelves to house her collection, so it was stacked up on every stair. When she died, the East Melbourne librarians kindly agreed to sell her collection,

with the proceeds going to the charity Betty served so well, the Cottage by the Sea. In spite of incredibly cheap prices, Betty's books raised over \$1000, and those which remained were sent on to the Holy Trinity sale, another good cause.

Change and Continuity

A centenary history of the Catalysts club, by Anne Longmire

A women's club based on the sharing of a meal and discussion paper once a month, the Catalysts was formed in 1910, 'at a time when women were breaking free from expected patterns, speaking out, driving their own motorcar... riding bicycles or taking up rifle shooting'. Early members included doctors, scientists, historians and Victoria's first woman lawyer; one of them was a daughter of Alfred Deakin. Anne Longmire's fascinating history sketches the lives of some extraordinary women as well as tracing their passions and concerns through the monthly discussion papers. It is at once an encounter with some of Melbourne's most influential women, and a marker of social change in the years 1910-2010. An absorbing read.

It was the idea of Dr. Lotte Mulligan, a member of the Catalysts and EMHS, that a history should be published to celebrate the centenary of the club. She has been the driving force behind the production of this book.

The book is available from the Victorian Women's Trust,
Level 9/313 La Trobe Street
Melbourne, 3000;

Phone 9642 0422,

Email women@vwt.org.au.

Price: \$20.00

Coming Events

Wednesday, 19 October, at 8.00 p.m.
– AGM

Following our AGM Dr. Michael Buxton will talk on Heritage versus Development. Dr. Buxton is Associate Professor, Environment and Planning with the School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University. He has almost 25 years experience in environment and planning in Victoria at local government, regional authority and state government levels, and at RMIT University. He has extensive experience in policy development at international, national, state and local levels.

He will discuss the often fraught question of preserving our old and historic buildings while accommodating a rapidly growing population.

Wednesday, 7 December, at 6.30 p.m.
– Christmas Drinks

Keep this evening free. Once again we are able to offer a superb venue for the night. We will reveal full details nearer the time.

Notice of Annual General Meeting and nomination form are enclosed with this newsletter.

All financial members of the EMHS are eligible to be nominated for the committee.

The committee needs new members – please think about it.