



March 2012

**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.

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Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Letter

Will we ever be without road crews and their equipment in East Melbourne? The Darling Square water conservation tanks are now in place, so both Darling Street and Grey Street are again pristine, but the crews have moved on to widening the kerbs at intersections in order to slow down through traffic and these have forced us find new ways of negotiating in and out of the suburb. The most challenging time was when the George Street and Simpson Street intersection was closed at the same time as the Powlett Street and Hotham Street precinct. Those residents foolish enough to want to get to the library had to drive up Gipps or Grey Street to Clarendon and down George or else circle the suburb using Wellington Parade and come in from the southern end of Powlett Street. The consolation is that the new kerbs are large enough to hold a dinner party on: simply put up your table, 4-6 chairs and a colourful umbrella. Why have a picnic in the Fitzroy Gardens when you can watch the passing parade from the comfort of a street corner?

On a more serious note, two conservation issues continue to concern

us. The first is the two beautiful houses in Clarendon Street, Mosspennock and Valetta. Mosspennock, owned by the the Thakral Group, on the corner of George Street, was built in 1882 for James Liddell Purves QC, a close friend of Sir William Clarke, the house, considered by the City of Melbourne as 'architecturally significant', is now dilapidated, boarded up and in a disgraceful condition.



Mosspennock, 2012. Photo: Graham Shepherd

Valetta on the corner of Albert Street, was built in 1856 and identified by the City of Melbourne's own heritage site as a 'unique building... one of East Melbourne's earliest houses'. This house is of particular significance to the history of the Chinese population of Melbourne, having been bought by the tea

importer, Lowe Kong Meng, whose leadership of the early Chinese migrant population was recognised by the Emperor T'ung Ch'ih, who awarded him the rank of Mandarin of the Blue Button in 1863. Valetta was later the home of Sir Redmond Barry, Supreme Court Justice and first Chancellor of Melbourne University. As I write, the house is boarded up, following squatter occupation and a small fire, but a set of French doors on the balcony has been smashed and left



Valetta, 2012. Photo: Graham Shepherd

hanging open in the front, while another window is open on the Albert St. frontage. Both the EMHS and the Menzies Foundation have approached the City of Melbourne Council and Heritage Victoria, but nothing appears to have been done to save this most important house from the neglect of its owners. Both houses are A listed and are part of status 1 streetscape listings. East Melbourne is promoted by the City of Melbourne as a heritage area and tourists are encouraged to walk the streets, using Nerida Samson's useful guide, yet when it comes to protecting that heritage, the Council seems apathetic.

The second issue might almost be listed under 'lost causes'. While Yarra Park has been significantly improved in some ways by the efforts of the MCC, there is no doubt that they regard it as

a car park first and a heritage park last. New hard entries have been made to facilitate cars entering the paddocks, but no answer had been received to

a letter inquiring as to whether they had a permit to put them in. The concourse has been expanded, at the expense of the grasses areas, the cricket pitch, much beloved by recreational users of the park, has been obliterated and workmen's and others' cars are permitted to park as close to the elm trees as they like all week. Residents' concerns appear to be ignored and any thought that cars might one day be removed from Yarra Park appears to be only dreaming.

Jill Fenwick
President

Charles Trethowan (1925-2011)

Charles Trethowan, who died last October, was well known to our members. With his wife, Nola, he was a regular attendee at our meetings. and, as Anne Latreille put it in writing his obituary in *The Age*, "always with a friendly smile that stayed in the hearts and minds of those with whom he came into contact. As he leant slightly forward, smiling, he made you feel you were the only person in the room."

He was born and educated in Ballarat. He left school at 14 and took a job as office boy with the State Electricity Company (SECV). In 1942 he joined the Air Training Corps as a cadet, and two years later the RAAF. After the war he resumed work with SECV and, as a returned serviceman, was admitted to University of Melbourne where he gained a bachelor of commerce degree. In 1974 he was made general-manager and chairman of SECV which position he retained until 1987. After his retirement he involved himself in a variety of academic and philanthropic organizations, and took positions on boards of several well-known companies. He was awarded several honours for his work including the Medal of the Order of Australia (1985). In his leisure moments he enjoyed golf and windsurfing, but particularly working in his garden at Mt Martha.

He was a delight to have in our midst and he will not be forgotten.

Clare Hicks (1927-2011)

Clare Hicks (1927-2011), another loyal member of our society, was the elder of two daughters of Frank Ireland Hicks, dental surgeon, and his wife, Dorothy Clare. The family moved to East Melbourne (25 Powlett Street) from Colac in 1938, and Frank commenced practice at the T & G building, 145 Collins Street, but died the following year. Clare went to Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC), then in Albert Street, East Melbourne, from 1939-1944, and after leaving school she studied pharmacy, graduating in 1948. Her grand-father, Harry William Wheeler, a chemist with a shop at 450 Bridge Road, Richmond, died in 1950 and Clare was able to take over his



Clare Hicks with her nephew and niece outside 21-27 Powlett Street, c.1962.]

business. Later she filled in at our local Pyman's Pharmacy when the current proprietor, Andrew's father died.

As a member of the Women Pharmaceutical Chemists' Association of Victoria (WPCA) Clare joined the fight for equality within the industry. The WPCA disbanded in 1979 having achieved its goals but Clare remained part of a group of Victorian women pharmacists who continued to meet

twice a year at the Hilton Hotel to catch up and reminisce.

Meanwhile Clare and her mother, who died in 1983, continued to live at 25 Powlett Street, with only a short absence when their old building was pulled down and the current one erected in the late 1960s: an almost continuous residency for over seventy years. The hole she leaves is a big one.

Memories of 106 Wellington Parade

My father was a tenant in the building when I was a child and I believe was in the last lot of people to use the building prior to it being condemned, to the best of my knowledge. My father's memory is not the best these days but I remember much of the stories and some of the people as we spent quite a lot of our childhood roaming the building.

Dad's business was JAEGER ADVERTISING PRODUCTIONS and he was on the top floor (I recall it being the third floor?). He had two suites joined together as well as another that was joined and he used that for storage. Dad was a Photographer and Commercial Artist - quite an accomplished one in

his day, doing the Hilton's brochures as well as their first logo when the Hilton opened.

I recall the wonderful old staircase, it was bright red in colour. Dad used to park in the rear, entering from George St, I believe via Mozart Pl looking at today's map. The rear stairs

were very wobbly and I remember our Dad yelling at us if we played on them. There was a fellow who rented a shack in the carpark where he dyed buttons for a living and my sister and I loved watching him work and he used to save us one of each colour, each week and we collected them in a big jar. He became a good friend of Dad's for many years and his name was Werner. I remember during the time of Dad's tenancy, the landlord's name was Norm Lewis. I also remember a lovely lady named Pat who worked in the suite opposite Dad's entrance door. Occasionally I think she even babysat us. Many years later, when we were adults my mum and dad told us that she was lovely friend and apparently a prostitute that worked from the building and sadly went missing under strange circumstances and was never seen again. Dad said there was a particular Judge and several local politicians that used to visit her that he recognised. Ahh, the good old days.

Dad's business moved out finally when there was a suspicious electrical fire in the roof above one of his suites in 1977 and much of his photography studio and art room, and dark room were damaged and as Dad was the last of three tenants in the entire building, they called it a day and moved on.

There were a variety of stories relating to ghosts in the building that my father was convinced were true. He met a man in the pub who eventually brought his elderly mother to the pub to meet Dad. She told of a story that Dad's suites apparently used to be Doctor's room (not sure if related to the Abortion clinics or not) and the story goes that the Doctor's nurse and wife both went missing within months of each other and were never found. Prior to meeting the old lady, Dad had

told Mum when he worked late (often being the only person in the building as there were no one living there - it was all commercially occupied), one night he heard unmistakable footsteps in his darkroom. Another night the tap was turned fully on in the same darkroom (which was formerly the kitchen when it was an apartment). Another hot summer night without air-conditioning Dad said the temperature dropped 5 degrees in as many minutes which sent him packing and bolting out of the building to his car. He said it continued for a long, long time and eventually he got used to 'her' and even spoke to 'her', hmmmmm, Dad's story, not mine. Who knows?!?!?!?

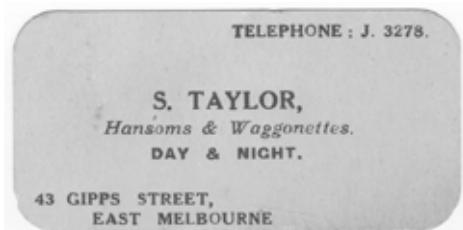
Cindy Jeffrey 2012

When there were horses

Each day, as the tourist coaches clip-clop along Simpson Street on their way to and from their workday in the city, it is like stepping out of a time machine and momentarily finding oneself not in the 21st century, but back in the nineteenth, in a time without cars and buses. Horses, hansom cabs, coaches and stable would all have been a familiar part of the suburb, now long gone. But if we look a bit deeper the moment can last longer. There are many reminders of the horse and buggy days still discernible around East Melbourne.

One of the best known horsey buildings is the Ola Cohn Centre at

43 Gipps Street. It was constructed in 1888 for William Taylor, a livery stable proprietor. Livery stables allowed people to hire a horse and/or carriage or to rent space in which to keep their own. The entrance to the stables was from Ola Cohn Place where the outline of the wide coach entrance can still be



Business card c. 1930, donated to EMHS by Elizabeth Cam

Across Darling Square at 28 Darling Street, and still standing, is the warehouse or workshop (later described as stables) built for James Peel Browne in 1885. Browne was a hansom cab proprietor and livery stable keeper, while his son of the same name was a coachbuilder. They also owned large wooden stables next door to their house at 42 Grey Street.

Green Place, running off Victoria Parade, was named for the Green family of produce merchants. The horses which pulled their delivery lorries were stabled behind their house at 92 Albert Street as late as 1949. Near by, just two doors west of Green Place, were the Surrey Livery Stables and Commission Yards. Ads in the Argus offered a wide variety of horse-drawn vehicles for sale, for instance the following:

HORSES, suit buggies. Ralli carts, jinkers, also Abbot Buggies, Phaetons, Jinkers, Alexandra, Prince George Carts, Farmers' Buggy Waggons, rubber-tired Dogcarts, 70 superior secondhand Vehicles, and 40 Sets Harness. Commission-yards, 111 Victoria-parade, East Melbourne. Tel 2861

It is hard to imagine so many vehicles crammed into the back yard of a typical terrace house.

In Albert Street, next to the Baptist Church was Liddy's coach builders. Established in Queen Street in the 1840s as Liddy and Passfield the firm operated in Albert Street in the 1860s and 1870s. They advertised "light business WAGGONS, turnover-seat Buggy, park Phaeton, Harness, secondhand Cabs."

Perhaps the most poignant reminder of the old days of horse and wagon is the old cabman's shelter. Looking totally of context, stuck as it is in Yarra Park near Brunton Avenue, is the old cabman's shelter which used to be in Carpentaria Place (now discontinued but once opposite Little Collins Street). Still surviving are the rails along its front where horses could be tethered, while their drivers relaxed inside. It was known as the Grand Rank Cabman's Shelter in reference to the days when the Windsor Hotel was known as the Grand Hotel.

Looking at the old maps prepared by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works in the 1890s reveals just how many houses had stables behind. Some of these still remain. A few of the larger ones have been converted to residential use, such as those at 28 Charles Street, Jolimont, and those behind the old George Street post office, but accessible only from Burchett Lane off Hotham Street. Another example of conversion is the big stable complex behind what was the old Yarra Park State School but is now apartments.

Dotted around the streets are smaller but still significant relics of the horse drawn era. There are two horse troughs in East Melbourne both apparently still in working order. One is in Wellington Parade South near Jolimont Terrace. It is in the form of a metal trough slung between two blue stone blocks. Another is in Lansdowne Street near Wellington Parade. It is of pre-cast concrete and has inscribed on it "Donated by Annis and George Bell



W. H. COOPER, Landscape Photographer, 21 & 23 ROYAL ARCADE, BOURKE STREET, MELBOURNE.

Photo by W.H. Cooper, c.1890. City of Melbourne Arts and Heritage Collection.

Australia". Attached on its right hand side is a small trough at ground level meant for dogs. It is one of hundreds of similar design found all around the country. George Bell was an animal lover who made a considerable amount of money manufacturing inner-spring mattresses. When he died in 1927 he left the bulk of his estate to be used to construct horse troughs all over Australasia and the British Isles.

The bollard on the corner of Wellington Parade and Powlett Street, placed to ensure that horses and vehicles went around the corner rather than through it, is yet another reminder. And so too is the stone hitching post to be found in the

Treasury Gardens on the corner of Wellington Parade and Spring Street. It was once outside 85 Spring Street (now Esanda and an entrance to Parliament Station) but was moved to its present site in 1971.

While we can still see evidence of horses in East Melbourne, the infrastructure that supported all these animals is harder to discern. Where were the blacksmiths? Where did people buy food for the horses? Did the Greens and their ilk deliver to the door? Who repaired harnesses? Where were the vets? The Veterinary College and Animal Hospital in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, only started in 1886. Was The Illustrated Horse Doctor

all the information people felt they needed? 18s 6d in 1868, not cheap! (In the same year you could rent a six roomed cottage in Simpson Street for 22s 6d. p.w.)

Did scoop boys operate in the suburbs, or only in the city? If not, who cleared the streets? A report in the Argus as late as 1907 tells us, "Wherever there was a stable the lanes were littered with its refuse and any vacant allotment handy was used as a convenient place to throw the stable sweepings." Yet there was a strong market for horse manure from gardeners all over Melbourne. In 1866 Mr. Occleston, a cork merchant, advertised his need of it. That was the same year he built Hotham House at 175 Hotham Street. In 1932 the Argus ran a long article entitled, "A Giant of Old Melbourne: The Tall Pear Tree of Hotham House". It described a pear tree in the back garden which was then said to be 45ft high, with a spread of about 50ft. It had so many pears not even the birds could eat them all, and with the help of long ladders and youthful nimbleness it supplied neighbours and friends in abundance. No doubt the result of excellent garden preparation all those years earlier. The pear tree is gone, but our parks and gardens and many streets are planted with magnificent trees that surely must have had a similar start; each one a reminder of a life before cars,

When horses ruled the streets.

Contributions to EMHS

Member, Peter Fielding, has contributed to our website a beautifully researched article on his house, 140 Jolimont Road, and its original owner, Thomas Joshua Jackson (1834-1901) of Young and Jackson fame. Enjoy reading it at: http://emhs.org.au/history/people/jackson_thomas_joshua_1834-1901

We would love more contributions of this kind from our members. Even a short paragraph can be the start of an on-going story. Once the information gets out into the Google world it allows, and stimulates, others to build on it. We often have descendants and relatives contacting us to correct what we have written, or to add an extra detail. In this way the story builds way beyond what we could have done ourselves. It just needs that small seed to get it going. In this way we can collect a really useful web library of local history. Contributions do not have to be limited to stories about people or houses. It could be a story about a shop, restaurant, school, church, or an event. Perhaps we could have a special collection of "I remember when ..." items. I would start with "Do you remember when the milk tanker drivers went on strike, and the farmers brought their milk to Yarra Park and sold it directly from the churns. We brought our own jugs and containers to be filled up." It must have been the early 1970s but I can't remember exactly. Can anyone confirm? This is how we can build stories. Email any contributions big or small to info@emhs.org.au and we will find a home for them.

Hercules: Death of a Hero

Cats, like people choose their roles in life. Some become domestic gods and goddesses, presiding over the well-being of the household; others become companions, accompanying their favourite human on the daily rounds, sitting with them to watch television, going on excursions to the garden and helping out with advice in the kitchen. Some cats, however, accept the challenges of a public life, making the street their domain, meeting and greeting, surveying the neighbourhood, and generally creating an air of calm, order and well-being.

There were three such cats in our neighbourhood, widely known and respected. I might mention Jasper, of middle Hotham Street, a tabby cat of some distinction, who takes his place on the pavement or a nearby garden, greets children and passers by, stares down dogs (noisy and untidy), and is ever-willing to help with gardening or simply take a nap in any one of ten gardens along his beat. Further down the street and opposite Norm's, is the area under the aegis of Bolly, a dignified, somewhat rotund and pleasant ginger cat, perhaps less social than Jasper, but nevertheless, a significant presence in his garden or on strolling along outside.

Alas, the third such cat, is dead. Hercules, guardian of George Street and the library precinct, will be seen no more. His virtues were numerous



and his devotion to duty impeccable. It would not be unkind to say that he was a somewhat large cat and that getting through the front fence took some strength of mind, but he never failed in what he clearly saw to be his duty. Passers by were detained by a ginger paw thrust through the fence and heartily greeted. If he rested, it was against the fence, so that children could reach out and give him a pat. When he once took time off to go on a walking tour, a notice was put on a nearby pole on his return, thanking people for their enquiries as to his well-being. Forced by ill-health to retire at the age of sixteen – eighty in human years - such was his popularity that bulletins had to be issued and his death announced via public notice to his many followers. Hercules will be sadly missed by all who knew him, especially users of the East Melbourne library and the library staff, who have organised a tribute to his life and work.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 18 April, at 8.00

The Mercy Hospital in East Melbourne

Our speaker, Helen Monkivitch, AO, started her association with the Mercy Hospital in 1965 as a religious sister at Mercy Private. She is now the Director of Mercy Health and Aged Care. She has a thorough knowledge of the hospital's history, its work, and of the life and people within it.

Wednesday, 20 June

Victorian Town House Gardens.

This talk will be presented by Helen Page OAM. Helen is a foundation member of the Australian Garden History Society since 1980 and Chair of the Victorian Branch 1994-2004. She played an important role in saving the garden at Bishopscourt from subdivision and development in 1998, and has led a team of enthusiastic volunteer workers in restoring and maintaining the garden ever since.

Wednesday, 15 August

The Vanishing Sculptures

A visitor walking through the Fitzroy Gardens in the nineteenth century would have found their lush plantings highlighted with statues in the classical and neo-classical style. Now these have disappeared. Why? What happened to them? Terence Lane, former Senior Curator, Australian Art, NGV, and author of several books on the Australian decorative arts, will give us the answers, some of them surprising.



Photo by G. Nettleton.
City of Melbourne Arts and Heritage Collection

Wednesday, 17 October

AGM

Architect, Geoffrey Borrack, who has lived and worked in East Melbourne since the early 1960s, will tell us of his memories of the suburb before gentrification took hold. Geoffrey has been instrumental in saving some of our most notable houses from demolition and has played a significant part in re-shaping the homes of East Melbourne for modern living. He has vivid memories of our area's less salubrious days.



Halloween, 99 Hotham Street under renovation, 1977. Photo by Winston Burchett.

Original held by East Melbourne Library.

All talks start at 8.00 p.m. at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne.