

# THE EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



September 2015



## 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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**CITY OF  
MELBOURNE**

## Committee

### President:

Jill Fenwick 9419 0437

### Vice President:

Rosie Smith 0431 707 405

### Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black 9417 2037

### Treasurer:

Malcolm Howell 0417 337 519

### Committee:

Diane Clifford 9486 0793

Sue Larkin 9415 9771

Jacinta Ryan 9415 8288

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: [info@emhs.org.au](mailto:info@emhs.org.au)**

**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: Diane Clifford 9486 0793**

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome  
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

## President's Letter

On Monday, 2 November, 1868, the editor of The Illustrated Australian News for Home congratulated Mr. Hodgkinson, Assistant Commissioner of Land and Survey, on the newly planted Fitzroy Gardens, praising his 'conversion of what was not long ago a waste blank into a delightful retreat. The ground is tastefully laid out, stocked with all sorts of ornamental trees, reticulated with running water which keeps the grass evergreen, the shrubs umbrageous and is intersected with broad and well-kept avenues.'

Interestingly enough, in 1906, the then editor plagiarised much of the original article, and now today, in 2015, I'm borrowing it to comment on the improvements made more recently: the new café, with its vertical garden walls, which provides excellent coffee; the 'ever-green' grass circle in front of it, with the little stream marking its boundaries; the new shrubs and tree ferns which are growing strongly.

The borders of the beds in the main path from Hotham Street to Collins Street have always been pretty, but this month they've been utterly out-classed by the mass plantings of daffodils of many different types under the trees along the walk from Albert Street to Wellington Parade. There are the gorgeous old King Alfreds, never outclassed in their strength of colour and height, but also many newer varieties, ruffled double daffodils, a very pretty one with three flowers to

each stem, one with an apricot centre and cream petals, a 'host of golden daffodils indeed'. Don't miss them, because all too soon, the show will be over until next year.

And speaking of 'shows', thank you to all our members who came to the opening of 'Gone to War as Sister', our exhibition commemorating the service of World War 1 nurses with a local connection. Meticulously researched and curated by Dr. Janet Scarfe, the exhibition gave an insight into the dedication, courage and perseverance of these women, who worked under extremely difficult conditions to relieve the suffering of wounded soldiers over the four years of war. Thanks also to Francesca Black, who designed the panels and Sue Pike, who designed the free booklet accompanying the exhibition. If you missed it this time, we will return the exhibition in April, 2016.

*Jill Fenwick  
August, 2015*

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### **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.**

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## Once Upon a Time in Yarra Park

Thousands of years ago, as now, the waters of the Yarra Yarra, the everflowing, singing a mysterious song of time and eternity, change and unchange, took their untiring way to the sea. In some places the precipitous banks were thickly clothed with pimeleas, and the mystic like shrub sometimes called "native currant," while matting there together the pretty sarsaparilla vine showed its royal purple flowers. In other places the banks broadened into fields, succeeded by gently undulating hills. Here flourished the stringy bark and its comrade the messmate, erect and towering, while other eucalypts, as the iron bark and red and white gums, assumed the grotesquest of grotesque forms, Bending branches wildly forth on one side to balance the knotty and exposed roots on the other. Interspersed with these were an occasional lightwood, apple tree, or honeysuckle. A few sheoaks, their twig like foliage resembling nothing so much as a chimneysweep's brush in mourning, stood up stiff, black, and gloomy. The manna gum or peppermint shed its solid tears liberally, and the gentle rises or knolls were crowned with the box gum. The golden wattle mirrored its lovely flowers in the river surface, the thick strong kangaroo grass crept down to the very edge, and the great sheathed rushes shivered as the waters touched them. Under the great trees there was a wealth of flowers, strange as to form but lovely in colouring. Heaths red, white, or pink carpeted the sandy patches. The mossy flowers of the fringe lily purpled the grass in spring. The taller stem of the grass lily also bore purple flowers,

and contrasted well with the deep orange fruit of the kangaroo apple. The 'native' yam, buttercup, and wood sorrel contributed yellow, a trailing scarlet runner and a fuchsia red, to the tinting of the landscape. The native sundew made damp places glisten with the juice exuded from the hair covered leaves, and whitened the ground with its large, delicate flowers. And the great sun rose and filled the eastern sky with palest tones of lemon, rose, and green, globed itself overhead at midday, and set amid all the shades of crimson and gamboge, as it does now.

But in 50 years the change is such that the wild man, were he here, would not recognize his ancient location. A great city stands on the flats and rolling hills, and the waters of the everflowing are polluted by sewage. Supply and demand, competition, hurry and unrest have replaced the primeval peace. Wild men and beasts have fled, and you shall walk from Yarra Falls to where the river meets the tide and not find one native flower. Yarra park is one of the lungs left for the city's breathing. Here we find that all the tallest and straightest trees have disappeared, a few only of the more gnarled being left. The river's banks are lined with weeping willows, a scanty growth of wattle only surviving on the Botanic gardens' side. Not a native flower remains, the grasses, even, are foreign. A railway line cuts the park in half. A cricket ground absorbs a large space, and a fringe of houses sprinkles two sides.

*By the Matron's Assistant. Servants' Training  
Institute, Berry Street, East Melbourne  
The Argus, 17 July 1886, p.4*

## Mrs Elizabeth Tripp

We often get research enquiries that take us into all sorts of nooks and crannies of history we might never have found otherwise. Here is one of them.

A researcher writing a paper on the contribution to early female education in Melbourne by Mrs. Elizabeth Tripp and her daughters, asked if we could locate Linton House, as she had found a reference to Mrs. Tripp taking in boarders there in 1854/5. Through *The Argus* and the Rate Books we were able to pinpoint Linton House as an iron house of seven rooms plus kitchen at what is now 25-27 Powlett Street, built for Thomas Umpfelby in 1854. Curiously the school was advertised in the name of Miss Millar with no mention of Mrs. Tripp. The school at Linton House seems only to have survived the one year. Towards the end of the year a student, Mary Jane, the twelve year old daughter of George Sherwin, Esq J P, had died of 'congestion of the brain'. This sad event possibly affected enrolments for the following year. Mrs. Tripp, with her daughters, went on to run East Leigh Ladies' College in Prahran, retiring in 1880. In 1893 Margaret Tripp started her own school for boys, Rewe, and then in 1895 took over Toorak College and soon converted it from a boys' school to a girls' school. Meanwhile Mary,



Mrs Elizabeth Tripp.  
Photo from *The Echoes Fade Not: A History of Toorak College* by Jeffrey Robinson.

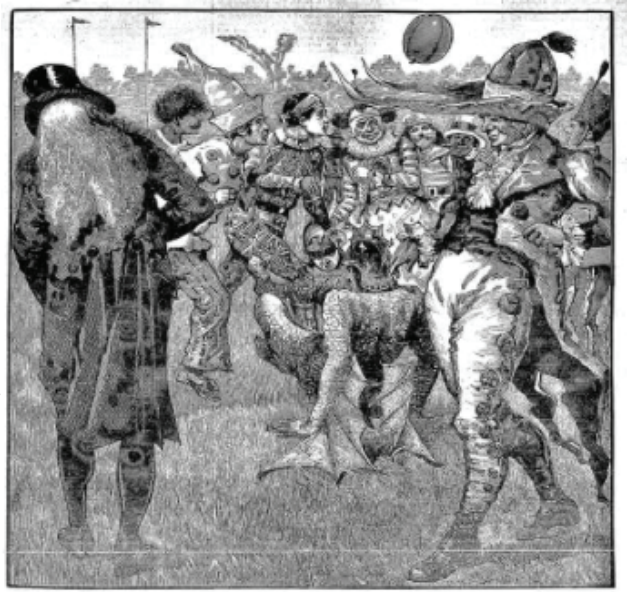
Mrs. Tripp's eldest daughter, had married the Rev Henry Handfield, minister at St. Peter's, Eastern Hill. She, along with her mother, was a member of the first ladies committee of the Lying-in Hospital, (now the Royal Women's) in Albert Street, almost opposite St. Peter's, under the presidency of Mrs. Frances Perry, wife of the Bishop of Melbourne.

*Sylvia Black*



# The Costume Football Match

The members of the theatrical profession in Melbourne, at all times liberal in the cause of charity, added to the exertions they have already made on behalf of the family of the late Mr. Marcus Clarke by producing, on Saturday, August 27, the novel spectacle of a football match, in character, on the ground of the East Melbourne Cricket Club. The interest felt in the exhibition by the general public was evinced by the presence of nearly a thousand - spectators, and it is satisfactory to know that the display realised the respectable sum of £74 1s. 6d. Some forty employees of the Melbourne theatres (chiefly the younger men, as the pastime was of an athletic character) trooped from the pavilion upon the green sward at 2 o'clock, and there disported themselves in a game at football until 4.00 o'clock. The company was divided into two equal teams, one composed chiefly of the Opera-house employees, and the other from the remaining theatres. When time was called the Opera-house team had kicked six goals and the other team one. The entertainment to the public, however, consisted not in watching the game, but the appearance of the strangely-costumed players, who in their various parti-coloured dresses tumbled about in the runs, rallies,



and rushes like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope, now in a heap, now thinly scattered, each fresh incident of the play producing new and ever-changing combinations. Heroes of familiar opera, tragedy, comedy, farce, and pantomime were banded together in strange juxtaposition. It was as if the silent figures of the 'Waxworks' exhibition had been suddenly stirred into wild life and energetic action. Towards the end of the play some of the costumes which were not adapted for football showed unmistakable marks - of wear and tear, thus adding a new element of the grotesque.

*The Australian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil,*  
10 September 1881, p.291

## The East Melbourne Ghost

A COTTAGE in East Melbourne  
For a residence I boast,  
And that's a place you'd never think  
Was haunted by a ghost.  
But there is one, a perfect fright,  
Resorting there all day,  
In the shape of a figure tall and slight  
Of a young man dressed in grey.

Chorus—  
He's a nuisance ; fol de riddle ido.  
Perfect; fol de riddle ay.

He takes his stand before your door,  
And then he'll gently raise  
His eyes aloft to the upper floor,  
And there for hours will gaze,  
Delighted with that little game,  
Then swiftly glide away,  
And serve some other place the same,  
Will that young man dressed in grey.

Chorus—  
He's a nuisance ; fol de riddle ido.  
Perfect; fol de riddle ay.

When people saw him watch, of course  
They fancied him a spy,  
Or member of the Detective force  
On duty, on the sly.  
At first they laughed, but now their mirth  
Has changed from grave to gay,  
In dread of this visitor, not of earth—  
This young man dressed in grey.

Chorus—  
He's a nuisance ; fol de riddle ido.  
Perfect; fol de riddle ay.

Could some Inspector of Police  
Curtail this boggy's pranks,  
And make his spectral visits cease,  
He'd well deserve our thanks,  
For managing, in spirit-land,  
To permanently lay  
The ghost that haunts East Melbourne,  
Of the young man dressed in grey.

Chorus—  
He's a nuisance; fol de riddle ido.  
Perfect; fol de riddle ay.

*Melbourne Punch, 18 July, 1872, p.7*  
(abridged)

## Gone to War as Sister

Our new exhibition 'Gone to War as Sister' had its opening on 19 August and attracted a crowd of over ninety people, both members of the Historical Society and descendants and relatives of the nurses whose service in World War 1 was being celebrated.

We had over thirty relatives attend, some coming from as far away as Western Australia. Each received a small sprig of rosemary, tied with

ribbon, to identify them and this made it easier for members to introduce themselves to them. It certainly helped us appreciate how very dear these women were to their families and why they had come to honour their memory.

Dr Janet Scarfe, the curator of the exhibition, recorded the exemplary service of the nurses in a series of panels which drew on family photographs and memories, service

records, photographs from different sources, particularly the Australian War Memorial.

Retired Colonel Jan McCarthy opened the exhibition and spoke about the challenges facing the nurses as they embarked for the battlefields, while our second speaker, Janet Butler, took us back to East Melbourne, to the places where the nurses had lived, travelled through and worked. Her speech included reference to every one of the nurses in the exhibition and reminded us that they were ordinary

women, trained to work in hospitals at home, whose patriotism called them to join the war effort and face the herculean task of looking after the wounded, maimed and mutilated men who, in their tens of thousands, came under their care.

Thanks go to the Anzac Centenary Community Grants (Veterans Fund); the City of Melbourne Community Grants Program and Caine Real Estate for their generous support of the project.

## Coming Events

### Wednesday

**21 October at 8.00 p.m.**

AGM – and to follow:-

Blockbuster: Fergus Hume and The Mystery of a Hansom Cab – a talk by Lucy Sussex.

The Mystery of a Hansom Cab written by Fergus Hume in 1886 was a runaway bestseller both here and in England. It is one of the earliest examples of a whodunit, predating Arthur Conan Doyle's first book by just a few months. Some of the story is set in East Melbourne. Fergus Hume was born in New Zealand but moved with his sister to Australia in 1885. The two of them rented a house in George Street, East Melbourne while he worked as an articled clerk with a law firm in the city and wrote the book in his spare time. Lucy Sussex has rigorously researched the story of the author and his famous book.

### Wednesday

**2 December at 6.30**

Christmas Drinks

Put it in your diary now.

More details later

