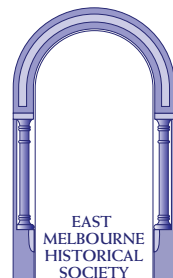


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



March 2018

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 and supported by City of Melbourne Community Services Grants Program.



**CITY OF
MELBOURNE**

Committee

President:

Jill Fenwick 9419 0437

Hon. Secretary:

Sylvia Black 9417 2037

Treasurer:

Malcolm Howell 0417 337 519

Committee:

Diane Clifford 9486 0793

Sue Hamilton 0412 880 509

Sue Larkin 9415 9771

Graham Shepherd 9486 9039

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: Diane Clifford

dianeclifford1@gmail.com

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Letter

Following the excitement of Christmas, the Boxing Day Test, the Globe Theatre and the Australian Open Tennis comes February, the month where we return reluctantly from the beach or just from holiday mode, to more serious things.

We began the year with change. Where we have had some very successful East Melbourne guided walks in the past, including the very popular Murder Walk led by Rosie Smith, we decided this year to rest our feet, head back to the past and do a virtual tour of early colonial Melbourne. Our 'tour guide' was the very knowledgeable Meyer Eidelson, who, with the help of a map and slides, guided us around 'Bearbrass', thankfully dropped as a name for the rapidly expanding colonial village.

A further change is the venue for our talks. In past years, we've used the very comfortable rooms afforded us by the Menzies Foundation. Sandra Mackenzie and Pam Shearman, and

later Sarah Hardy, welcomed us warmly and helped us with the setting up and clearing away of chairs, the AV equipment and the provision of supper. When we had a request for a lift to be installed, they investigated both the possibility of installing a lift and the possibility of attaching a motorised chair to the stair banister. However, the overall cost, some \$70,000 for the lift, was prohibitive, and the stairway proved incompatible with the present design of a chairlift.

Given this, we decided to move our lectures and meetings permanently to the East Melbourne library, which has both a lift for those who have difficulty in climbing stairs, and an improved AV system. We will continue to provide supper afterwards, and though the kitchen and landing area are less spacious, we hope you'll continue to enjoy the post lecture chance to mix with other members.

*Jill Fenwick
February 2018*

Welcome to New Members

Ken Godwell	Tania Herschberg
Fred Halliday	Siusan Mackenzie
Charles Sitch	Robert Scott
Barbara George	Rex Chadwick
John Balmford	Gary Morgan
Chris Thorn	Inge Morgan
Sue Hamilton	Elaine Sutton

Cover Image

DHARWAR

Photographer George Schutze.
Brodie Collection,
La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria,
Image No. H99.220/2569

The Residents Who Roared: A History of the East Melbourne Group 1953-2003

By Jill Fenwick

When officious bureaucrats decided that the leafy, tranquil suburb of East Melbourne could do without a few of its trees, they couldn't have guessed that the outraged response of local citizens would lead to the foundation of one of the oldest residents' action groups in Australia. Read how, for more than 60 years, the East Melbourne Group has battled to preserve the heritage of their beloved suburb. Colourful characters, ambitious developers, reckless motorists and dastardly plots abound in this comprehensive history of the group's

foundation and achievements. The book includes many photographs.

Jill Fenwick is a long-term resident of East Melbourne and believes it may well be the best place in Melbourne, if not the world. She is currently President of the East Melbourne Historical Society, a position she has held since 2007. Prior to her retirement in 2006, she was a secondary teacher of History and Literature.

Published as an e-book. To buy your copy visit <https://emhs.org.au> or go direct to Amazon.

All proceeds will to the East Melbourne Group's fighting fund.

Can you Help?

With our change of venue to the East Melbourne Library, we are looking for help from interested members in two categories:

- Someone to co-ordinate our volunteer cooks and organise the post lecture suppers in April, June, August and October.
- One or two people to help with setting up and dismantling chairs and tables prior to and after the lectures.

If you can assist, please contact Jill on jill_fenwick@yahoo.com or send a text to 0404 820 031

Recent Donations to Our Library

Australian Official War History Vol. XII Photographic Record.

Annotated by

C.E.W. Bean and H.S. Gullett.

1935. (Marion and Graham Shepherd)

Memoirs of a Rebel Journalist - The Autobiography of Wilfred Burchett. 2005. (Marion and Graham Shepherd)

Berry Street 140 Years: Restoring Trust and Hope, Alicia Cerreto. 2017. (Julian Pocock, Berry Street)

Harold Freedman: the big picture, Gavin Fry, David Freedman, David Jack. 2017. (Anita Simon)

Therèse Gesell of East Melbourne (1839-1874)

Therèse Gesell (the first name is spelt as it is on her gravestone) was born in 1839 in Düsseldorf, on the Rhine in north-western Germany, at that time part of the Kingdom of Prussia. She was the third daughter of Major J. Gesell (retired). She left Düsseldorf to develop her career as a language teacher. Her later advertisements in the Melbourne press tell us she had diplomas from both the Royal Examining Commission in Berlin and the Imperial Athenæum in Paris. She presumably had teaching jobs in Europe before joining the staff of the Ladies' Institution in Westbourne Terrace, London, where she taught English literature for two years.

At the start of 1870, aged 30, she was working as governess to the four eldest of the eight children of Samuel Smith Travers, a partner in the wholesale grocery firm of Joseph Travers & Sons, of Cannon Street, London. Smith Travers had bought a property in the Peak Downs district of Central Queensland in 1865, and decided to take his family from London to Hobart, Tasmania in 1870. He was to manage his Queensland property from there, but he is best remembered today for building the real tennis court in Davey Street in Hobart and for writing *A Treatise on Tennis*, the first Australian book on the game.



Therèse Gesell's grave in the Boroondara Cemetery, Kew (Section PRES A, plot no. 0045)]

Therèse joined the Travers family on the sailing ship *Dharwar* along with a nurse, two maids, two cows, hens, and 163 packages of furniture and general effects, sailing from London on 30 March 1870.

Louisa Travers, Smith's wife, documented the journey for the benefit of her mother in Wales. From the entry for 3 April we read:

'We have got our cabins straight and occupations and hours settled, and when I tell you of our life for one day,

you know all. The captain...has asked me to order dinner every day so that I may have what I like for the children. I sit and carve at one end of the table with all the children and Miss Gesell near me; the captain, officers and Smith at the other end, and as the table is very long we do not interfere with each other at all; we can have quite separate conversations without disturbing one another in the least... Then we go up and the children have a game together till 10 o'clock, when the four eldest retire to one part of the deck and have lessons till half-past twelve... The children have lessons again from four till five; they work and draw while Mademoiselle reads and talks to them in French.'

The ship reached in Melbourne on 3 July after a journey of 89 days. On 7 July the family continued their voyage to Hobart Town on the steam ship Southern Cross, but Therèse did not accompany them. Louisa wrote to her mother:

'As to Miss Gesell, she remains here in Melbourne. I could not take her on to Hobart after the way she has behaved latterly; it has been incomprehensible. She is to have her fare home again and a quarter's salary with her board and lodging for a month. The Captain told Pierre that the less he allowed the children to be with her the better, from what he had seen of her manners with the two First Officers.'

It is hardly surprising that the two First Officers should have their heads turned by a confident and capable young woman, and that Captain Freebody would disapprove of this distraction to their duties. Presumably Smith Travers (called here by his pet name Pierre) would have felt the same, in spite of the fact that her behaviour was probably entirely innocent.

When Therèse parted with the Travers family in Melbourne she did not return to Europe, but began teaching German, French and Italian at Grantown House, 72 Nicholson Street, a ladies' school of which Mrs James was the principal. In June 1872 she submitted a query to the Australasian in which she gave her address as 'Woodlands,' so it is possible that she was a governess for Andrew Sutherland, who at that time owned this property at Greenvale (just past what is now Tullamarine airport). In July 1872 she started giving lessons in English, French, German and Italian at her residence, 7 Cypress Terrace, (now 164) Hotham Street, East Melbourne, where she was also 'willing to receive three young ladies as boarders, to whom she offers the advantages of a comfortable home and personal superintendence of their studies.' By July 1873 she was renting Mrs Brown's house at 76 Powlett Street (now no. 127), from which she ran her own school.

Therèse died a year later. From her death certificate and the Public Record Office of Victoria we can piece together her last few months. She became ill in 1874 and, recognising the gravity of the situation, made her will on 19 August. She named as the executors and trustees her friends Alexander Morrison, Principal of the nearby Scotch College, and Robert Scott, sheep farmer, whose town house was at 19 (now 90) Gipps Street, East Melbourne (his country property was Mount Buninyong, Scotsburn). Sarah Cowie Scott, Robert's wife, witnessed Therèse's noticeably wobbly signature. In her will she left her gold watch and chain to Aurelia Greven of Crefeld, Prussia and the rest of her estate to her unmarried sisters, Lisabeth and Henrietta Gesell of Düsseldorf.

The cause of death was given as 'disease of liver and stomach – duration 3 months.' This implies aggressive abdominal cancer, developing too quickly for her to have had the chance of seeing her family once more. Morrison and Scott arranged for her personal effects to be auctioned on 17 September by Gemmell, Tuckett & Co. The auction, which included a walnut cottage piano by Bord, yielded £118/10/8. To this was added savings of £294/1/3 and some cash. There were unpaid wages for the servants, unpaid rent for Mrs Brown, and money owed for gas and

food. The latter included 4s. 4½d. owed to Robert Scott for bread, clear evidence that the Scotts had been looking after her. Second only to the unpaid rent was the expense owed for medical attention – £18/18/0 to Dr JB Motherwell; £23/2/0 to his assistant, Dr GT Teague; £3/3/0 to Mary Stuart, the nurse; and £2/17/3 to Mrs Strutt, the chemist in Powlett Street.

Therèse Gesell is buried in the Presbyterian section of Boroondara Cemetery (see photograph). The inscription on her headstone reads: Therèse Gesell. Died Sept. 7th 1874, aged 34. 'I am the Resurrection and the Lord.' Her story is worth telling because it documents a spirited, courageous and disciplined career, and gives an insight into life in this corner of East Melbourne a century and a half ago.

Richard Travers

Sources:

The shipboard journal kept by Louisa Travers (in the author's possession); advertisements in *The Argus* in 1871, 1872 and 1873;

'To Correspondents,' *Australasian* 8 June 1872;

Victorian death certificate 4897 for 1874; the Public Records Office of Victoria file no. 12/417.

I am very grateful to Sylvia Black for her help and encouragement.

Seeking: A Facebook Volunteer

Our Society receives a lot of enquiries and even new members through our website but we believe that we could reach a wider and possibly younger audience with a Facebook page. We would like a volunteer from amongst

our members to post interesting content from our website to a new facebook page. One click to post, plus a short summary. Full training provided. Work when and where it suits you. Enquiries: Graham Shepherd 0408 616 390

Invitation to Become a Friend of the History Council of Victoria

The History Council of Victoria (HCV), the peak body for history in Victoria is launching a Friends program. For the first time, this gives everyone the chance to support its work to advocate for history and to educate Victorians about the value of history.

As a Friend of the HCV you will receive a range of benefits including discounts for history events and

publications as well as access to mentoring/networking opportunities and regular news from the history and heritage community in Victoria. You'll also be eligible to attend exclusive 'Friends only' events including special behind-the-scenes tours and roadshows.

Visit www.historycouncilvic.org.au/friends for costs and information.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 18 April, at 8.00 p.m.
– Dr Adam Cairns

Max Griffiths will take us through the life of Dr Adam Cairns (1802-1881), clergyman and theologian, and founding father of the Presbyterian Church in Melbourne. He established Chalmers Church, its first place of worship, on Eastern Hill. After his death Cairns Memorial Church in Powlett Street was built in his memory.

East Melbourne Library, 122
George Street, East Melbourne

Reminder

An EMHS committee member is in attendance at the Library's Local History Room each Monday from 3.00-5.00.

If you want help with a project: perhaps you want to research the history of your house or apartment block; or are working on the life of an ancestor who once lived here; or anything else East Melbourne related, we are here to help.

NB The room is L-shaped and sometimes we are out of sight around the corner. Do check.