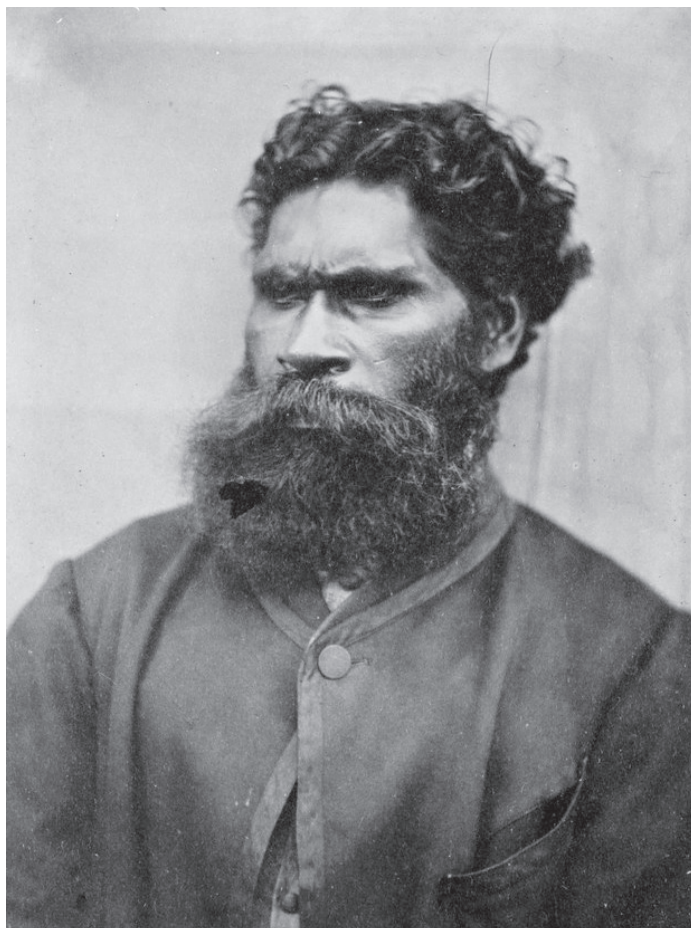
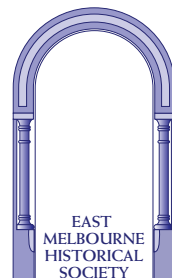


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



June 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

Hon. 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

VALETTA AGAIN

As I passed Valetta today, the workmen were busy. Windows have been replaced all round the building, the front door is open, people can be seen working busily inside and there is every sign that the long period of decrepitude is coming to an end. When I got home, I checked my email: since 2016, the East Melbourne Historical Society has sent over one hundred emails about the house, home to Redmond Barry and to Lowe Kong Meng, and the subject of a Strutt drawing of Redmond Barry's funeral cortege passing in front of the house.

There are letters of complaint to Heritage Victoria, pleading for them to intervene; warnings that windows have been left open; concerns about squatters; about graffiti and about the owner's failure to protect this house. There is correspondence between the Menzies Foundation – also a frequent complainant - the EMHS, the EMC, as well as responses to neighbours and to private citizens who cared for the old building and wanted to see it restored.

For the most part, while Heritage Victoria was also concerned, it lacked the authority to intervene until the new Heritage Act passed through State Parliament last year. This imposed substantial fines, and potential prison sentences, on owners of listed heritage buildings on the state register who failed to ensure that the buildings were

preserved in a good state. But still, nothing, it seemed would save Valetta.

You can imagine the joy for all of us who cared about heritage in East Melbourne when we read The Age of 4 May to discover that notices had been issued for work to commence immediately and that a process of restoration of the building had to be undertaken. The lesson is, that sometimes, if we try hard, and don't give up, we can help to alter the course of events and that we must keep fighting to protect this neighbourhood for the enjoyment of future generations of Melbournians and visitors to this city.

As a postscript, in an email today, 16 May, Steven Avery Executive Director of Heritage Victoria stated 'I understand that the original front door is being restored and hopefully should be installed in the coming weeks.' This is a bonus, as earlier reports had been that the door had been too badly damaged to restore.

*Jill Fenwick
May 2018*

We Welcome New Members

Jennifer Burger

John van den Akker

Caroline Robertson

Max Griffiths

Craig Harbeck

Servants Training Institute

Social historian Professor Shurlee Swain has written: "The main form of employment available to women in Melbourne (and Victoria generally) before 1914 was domestic service. Discussion of 'the servant problem' bemoaned both quality and quantity. While women needed to employ servants to claim bourgeois status, few could afford more than a 'general'. The Irish immigrants most willing to accept such work rarely displayed the required mix of deference and skill. Although wages for domestic and factory work were comparable, the local-born increasingly chose the latter. Inmates of orphanages and female rescue homes, conscripted to fill the gap, needed the bed and board, but were vulnerable to abuse, their future employment dependent on maintaining their 'reputation'."

There had been a Servants and Governess's home in Little Lonsdale Street and so the idea of vocational education for this sector was not new. The industrial schools where poor and neglected girls received some training were deemed by the Ladies Visiting Association insufficient to produce trained servants. The idea of the new Servants' Training Institute was to recruit promising girls from government institutions and "give them 'moral and industrial training' in the art of middle and upper-class domestic service" in an environment small enough to enable detailed supervision and individual care, but large enough to be economic in terms of enrolments." As Professor Peter Sherlock says, the aim was

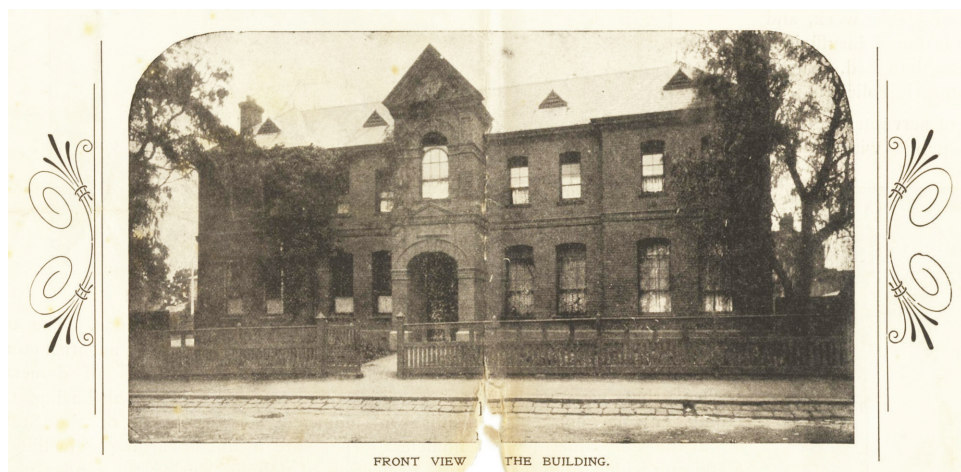
twofold: "to 'rescue' young girls from poverty or neglect, and to solve the constant colonial problem of lack of well-trained, trustworthy servants". An early supporter of the idea of servants' training had been Miss Eliza Bromby, an important figure in female education in Victoria at the time. A trained nurse, she was the daughter of Canon Dr Bromby, first headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School, and was the first woman to pass the matriculation examination with credit.

In addition to giving large sums for both the Austin Hospital and the Austin Homes in Geelong, Mrs Elizabeth Austin of Barwon Park was a benefactor to the Servants' Training Institute. The wife of the Bishop of Melbourne, Mary Moorhouse, was an advocate for the project and "had taken the unusual step of writing to the papers under her own name to solicit donations towards the new building", and the "...appeal made by the Bishop ... was responded to in a munificent manner by Mrs. Austin, of Barwon Park, who, under the name of 'Alpha' promised £700 on condition of £1400 additional being raised by the end of the year." Mrs Austin also gave £100 towards the cost of furniture. Her benefaction was worth about \$100,000 in today's dollars, but probably more in terms of its purchasing power.

She had lived in widowed seclusion, but through her benefactions became connected to debate about the economic and social condition of women and known to men and women of influence in

the Anglican Church and Victorian society. So far as I know there are no household records surviving showing how Mrs. Austin recruited her staff. We have no photographs of her with any of them. However, there is oral history that she looked after the interests of her female staff. Mrs. Austin's daughter Elizabeth's husband, Dr W. H. Embling MLC, medical practitioner of Fitzroy, and a legislator [like his father, Dr Thomas Embling MLC, also a liberal and conscientious professional], moved in circles where

May 1883. He praised Mrs. Austin's "extreme" generosity explaining why the institution was needed in part following the revelations of low pay and poor conditions after the tailoresses' strike. He said: "... Domestic servants needed training just as other operatives do." Development of certified skills would see promising girls qualify for better pay in domestic service. Training would also make women better wives and mothers in due course and therefore Christian principle should underpin the initial



Servants' Training Institute, Berry Street, c.1910. From brochure held by Holy Trinity Archives]

social and health policy issues of the day were debated. Mrs. Austin may have learned of conditions for young women through such networks. She was a regular churchgoer and the Reverend Freeman, Vicar of Winchelsea, was her spiritual mentor and a link in the Austin Hospital benefaction.

The foundation stone of the Servants' Training Institute at 39 Berry Street, East Melbourne was laid by the Bishop of Melbourne on 31

training and practice which would follow in the workplace. Girls were to be recruited from any Protestant denomination and the nearby Collingwood area was mentioned as a source. Training was to be in "cooking, plain sewing, laundry and housework". The higher paying jobs might earn sufficient to furnish a home after five years' saving.

The institution had been started in 1879 with fifteen pupils in a rented building in Vaucluse an area of the

Melbourne suburb of Richmond. The new building had been constructed by Nathaniel Kingston under the direction of architects Grainger and D'Ebro at 39 Berry Street, in an area once the Richmond Police Paddock but now called Yarra-park. The building's design was Queen Anne, the walls were of Hawthorn brick with moulded brick strings and cornices. Downstairs were the dining hall, class rooms, the matron's sitting room and bedroom, a sick room and a room "where girls who have been out to service may return until they are re-engaged." Upstairs there were three dormitories and rooms for the head servant and laundress and forty trainees, together with bathrooms, linen closets and stoves. There was a washhouse 50 feet to rear of the building, a coal house, and a yard and lawn used as drying areas. Girls dined communally, stood for Grace, and plain food was served. The matron presided and the clock was prominent. In the Laundry the girls learned clothes washing using a large solid wooden sink set in a cobblestoned area with duckboards to keep their shoes dry. There was space for folding and ironing. The Kitchen had a large range, a scullery, a pantry and a store. Teaching of plain sewing took place round a wooden bench.

The founding matron in 1879 was Miss Marion MacFarlane, a trained teacher and nurse "of good birth" who had been a governess in the household of an Anglican clergyman in England. Mrs Emma Banner became Matron in 1884, followed by Miss Lillian Watson in 1897. Overall direction was by the Ladies Committee: "which was dominated by

the wives and daughters of Anglican clergymen." Referees and visitors were the Reverends Handfield and Wollaston, the ministers of the nearby St Peters and Trinity Churches.

Though staff tried very hard, it was a struggle for numbers from the start. Fundraising campaigns and changes of name were tried, and free places were offered. The Institute finally closed in 1939 as: "...increasing numbers of middle-class women invested instead in domestic appliances made possible by the introduction of gas and electricity." The buildings are long gone. Today on the site of the Servants' Training Institute is the East Melbourne Childcare Cooperative.

Roger Southern

Original with footnotes at:

<https://rogersouthernresearch.wordpress.com/2018/03/15/servants-training-institute/>

New Project – Help Invited

We are about to extend our biographical database of past residents. We began with WW1 servicemen and women. Now we are going to start on Notable Women. We have drawn up a sample list and more can be added as we find them. The list of names will be available at the next meeting and we invite members to sign up to 'adopt' one. Or if you can't make the meeting please contact Jill on jill_fenwick@yahoo.com or send a text to 0404 820 031; or Sylvia on sylvia.black@bigpond.com or send a text to 0411 053 158.

We then hope to meet at the local history room in the library at 3.00 p.m. on 25 June.

William Barak

Every week hundreds of people pass over the Barak Bridge linking Yarra Park with Birrarung Marr; they drive on Wurundjeri Way; admire Bruce Armstrong's sculpture of Bunjil the Eagle at Docklands and gaze at the outline portrait so creatively depicted on the southern frontage of the 32 storey William Barak building on Swanston St. Here in East Melbourne, we are familiar with the various canoe trees of the Fitzroy Gardens and Yarra Park, all reminding us that once this land was the home of the Wurundjeri/Woiwuring people.

Who was William Barak? Born in 1824, he was a son of Bebejan, *Ngurungaeta* (clan head) of the Wurundjeri people and one of the eight Aboriginal leaders who signed John Batman's 'treaty' in 1835. Barak spent his childhood in traditional Aboriginal ways, but from 1837-1839, was a student at the Reverend Langhorne's Presbyterian Mission on the site of the present Royal Botanical Gardens. From there he became a tracker with the Native Police, then moved up country to Coranderrk, becoming a *Ngurungaeta* to his people, a prominent leader, spokesperson and ambassador for his people.

He dedicated the greater part of his life to representing his people in their struggle for self-government. Coranderrk Native Reserve was created in 1863, but not self-governed. In a petition to the Victorian Government in 1886, Barak pleaded

We should be free like the White
Population there is only few Blacks now

remaining in Victoria, we are all dying away now and we Blacks of Aboriginal Blood, wish to have now freedom for all our life time ... Why does the Board seek in these latter days more stronger authority over us Aborigines than it has yet been?"[1]

Mrs. Annie Bon, who knew him well, described Barak as 'one of nature's gentlemen, always carrying himself with dignity and having fine and intellectual features, made all the more attractive by an illuminating smile or a merry laugh.' He was also an artist, his drawings depicting the traditional life and customs of his people.

William Barak died on 15 August 1903 at Coranderrk, the last full blood Wurundjeri man and the last *Ngurungaeta* of his people. In 1924, the land at Coranderrk, successfully farmed for over forty years was subdivided for soldier settlement.

Droops the wattle's golden head,
Sigh the loft winds, Barak's dead.
River gliding to the sea,
Gum boughs whispering ghostily,
Stars that keep their watch on high,
Barak's dead.
King, and of his tribe the last,
Remnant of a vanished past.
He has seen the white man come,
Pitch his tent and build his home,
Where his tribe were wont to roam,
He that's dead.
Oft beneath the stars has stood,

In primeval solitude,
 Where a city hums today,
 Then the bush slept still and grey,
 Kookaburra laughed and jay
 Hailed the dawn.
 Swings the world, and still pass on,
 Ages, peoples, one by one.
 Gum-trees whisper secrets old,
 Wattles, shake your showers of gold,
 Life is but a tale that's told—
 Barak's dead[2]

- [1] Coranderrk Petition 1886, Original
 at Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre,
 Melbourne Museum
 [2] Sylva Barak's Requiem, *Healesville and Yarra*
Glen Guardian 13/9/1930, p.2

Work Experience Student

David Fisher from Parkdale
 Secondary College will undertake
 work experience with us from 18-22
 June. We look forward to working
 with him.

Catering Co-ordinator Required

Someone to co-ordinate our
 volunteer cooks and organise the
 post lecture suppers in April, June,
 August and October. If you can assist,
 please contact Jill on [jill_fenwick@](mailto:jill_fenwick@yahoo.com)
[yahoo.com](mailto:jill_fenwick@yahoo.com) or send a text to 0404 820
 031

Coming Events

Wednesday, 20 June, at 8.00 p.m.
 – Mirka and Georges:
 A Culinary Affair

Authors Kendrah Morgan and
 Lesley Harding, will give us a preview
 of their up-coming book about
 Georges and Mirka Mora and their
 legendary restaurant, the Balzac (now
 The Tippler) in Wellington Parade.
 There are sure to be many tales about
 a world which brought Melbourne's
 bohemia and society together.

Wednesday, 15 August, at 8.00
 p.m. - The Man Who Bore the
 Nation's Grief

Carol Rosenhain's moving book
 describes the extraordinary work
 of James Lean. During WW1 it was
 his role in Base Records to receive
 and answer the correspondence of
 distressed families seeking news of
 missing loved ones, and it was he who
 personally wrote a condolence letter
 to the family in every single instance
 where one of our service men or
 women was killed.

Both at East Melbourne Library, 122
 George Street, East Melbourne

Cover Image

William Barak - age 33 -
 Yarra Yarra Tribe, 1866.

Photo by Carl Walter.
 State Library of Victoria,
 Image No. H91.1/6