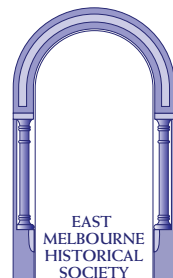


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



September 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.

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**CITY OF
MELBOURNE**

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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

C258 Melbourne Planning Scheme

On Friday 10 August, Sylvia and I made a submission to the Independent Panel assessing Amendment C258 to the Melbourne Planning Scheme. The amendment proposed that there should be a revision of local heritage planning guidelines, the introduction of new statements of significance for the different precincts and replacement of the old A - D system to a new grading system; Significant – the old A and B grades; Contributory – the old C and D grades; non-contributory – all other buildings.

As part of this change, the Council planners had engaged Lovell Chen to compile a new inventory of buildings which would reflect the new grading system.

Our representation to the Panel opposed the acceptance of C258, based on three major problems presented by the new inventory. Quite simply, it was not good enough. The inventory was the product of a 'desk survey' using the old inventory.

Simple numbering mistakes occurred, sometimes as a result of change over time.

Two examples suffice: Garden Avenue, in the old Inventory listed as a whole, is rightly listed as Significant, but now each building has a separate street number. 10 Garden Avenue, the triangular block of vacant land on the railway line between Garden Avenue and George Street would be listed as having Significant Heritage value; similarly 38-42 Grey St, which once

had stables alongside – the stables have long been replaced with modern houses numbered 38 and 40, but would be rated in the new inventory as Significant.

The second aspect is buildings which were listed in the previous inventory, but are missing from the new draft. This is due to the new system, where a number of addresses would be grouped under one. Two such houses are 125A and 125B George Street, described by Burchett as possibly the oldest extant buildings in East Melbourne. Their invisibility makes them particularly vulnerable to inappropriate development. Another example is 146 and 148 Hotham Street, listed A under the old system, but not graded in the new inventory.

Finally, we pointed to the failings of the old inventory, which should have been corrected in a new one: 10 Grey Street and 45 Albert Street were both missing; 40-42 George Street, a matched pair, but only one is listed. The same has happened in Berry Street, where one house in a terrace of three has been left off, while the others are listed.

The panel members listened with great interest to our presentation and asked relevant questions, but the greatest support came from the people representing the South Yarra and Carlton Citizens' Groups who, as part of their own presentations, re-iterated everything we had to say.

*Jill Fenwick
August 2018*

Houses with History – 106 Hotham Street

In the 1960s, 106 Hotham Street was the home and surgery of respected gynaecologist, Dr Charles Davidson. At 10.30 on 1 August 1967, acting on a tip-off, the Homicide squad mounted a raid on the premises. Davidson was a highly trained and skilful gynaecologist and had been going to perform an abortion that morning. In fact, the girl had changed her mind, so there was nothing for the police to find, but nevertheless, he was charged with four counts of unlawfully using an instrument to procure the miscarriage of a woman and one count of conspiracy. If found guilty, the penalty was up to fifteen years imprisonment.

At this time, abortion was a crime for both doctor and patient. The effect of this was to cause women to seek a skilled medical practitioner in secret if they could find one or to go to a backyard abortionist, often in unhygienic premises and without anaesthetic or even surgical instruments. As a result, many women died of septicaemia or blood loss. It also led to corruption in the police force, with high-ranking officers taking substantial hush money every month to 'protect' the doctors.

Frank Holland, then Head of the Homicide Squad, had initiated

the raid in an attempt to revive the clause in the Crimes Act that made abortion a criminal offence. However, Justice Menhennitt ruled that, before hearing the evidence, the language of the legislation must be made clear. If an action was described as 'unlawful', then the inclusion of that word implied that some abortions could be legal. In his judgement

A lawful abortion is one believed by the doctor to be necessary to preserve the woman from serious danger to her life and mental health.

Menhennitt drew on an 1938 English case, *R v Bourne*, where the trial judge had told the jury that 'no person ought to be convicted (of the crime of abortion) if the jury is satisfied that the act was done in good faith for the purpose only of preserving the life of the mother'.

Having heard the evidence, Dr. Davidson was declared not guilty on all five counts. The Menhennitt ruling was hugely significant. It opened the way for legal abortions in Victoria and putting an end to backyard butchery.

Jill Fenwick

Melbourne Football Club to Level Yarra Park? – Surely Not!

Our members might remember an article that appeared in the Herald Sun a few months ago reporting plans by the Melbourne Football Club to develop their headquarters and training ground on Yarra Park. Many would have assumed that this was such a ridiculous proposal in the light of the heritage status of the park, that it was merely a bit of kite-flying.

However, the East Melbourne Group has now received confirmation that the Club, following a meeting with the State Government, is developing plans to consolidate their offices and facilities, as well as their main training oval, on Yarra Park.

These facilities are currently split between AAMI Park and the MCG, with the main training oval in Gosch's Paddock next to AAMI Park.

The Club's current proposal is to build a six-storey building over the railway line, between the Powlett Street footbridge and the tunnel under Wellington Parade. They also propose to level the ground of the adjacent section of Yarra Park across from the children's playground and south of Queen's Walk for their training oval. Interestingly, only the men's team would train there under this scheme. The women would stay on Gosch's Paddock.

This proposal, to appropriate heritage-listed parkland for private purposes, and to add a building of significant height which would obscure the view of that park to the streetscape of Wellington Parade, is so preposterous

that we shall be joining our colleagues in the East Melbourne Group to wage a vigorous campaign against it. Watch out for more news of this.

Meanwhile, should individual members feel moved to write to, email or phone our local member, Ellen Sandell, who has already confirmed the Green's opposition to this plan, candidates in the upcoming State election, the Lord Mayor, the Victorian Planning Minister, or the Chairman or Chief Executive of the Melbourne Football Club, we would encourage you to do so.

Sue Hamilton

A Recent Acquisition



Ellen Kellet (1837-1922),
original owner of 54 George Street. Digital copy.
Donor: Alexandra Alison Barnett

Plane Tree Walk

I was once told a story about how the Plane Tree Walk in the Fitzroy Gardens came to be planted. It was said to have started with the Scotch College students walking that way to the Cairns Memorial Church. Scotch College occupied the site of the old Peter Mac hospital in Lansdowne Street from 1853 to 1926 and after the demise of the neighbouring Chalmers Church (c.1896) the students attended Cairns Memorial Church. They were said to have walked across the grass of the Fitzroy Gardens to the little bridge leading to the Hotham Walk until they had worn a clear track which was eventually formalised with the planting of the plane trees.

The walk is now gloriously planted with daffodils, attracting my attention and making me wonder about the history of the avenue and whether the Scotch story was really true.

An 1866 map of the gardens reproduced in Winston Burchett's book, *East Melbourne 1837-1977* shows the avenue leading from the gully to Lansdowne Street opposite Gipps Street West (now St Andrews Place). Clearly this was well before the construction of Cairns Memorial Church and so knocks the Scotch connection well out of the picture. Or does it? The path could have been there but maybe not the plane trees. However the answer to this question too was easily found in the *Argus* of 30 Sep 1876. In it Clement Hodgkinson wrote a letter to the editor complaining

of changes to his work.

... I may here incidentally express regret at the recent removal from Fitzroy-gardens to a reserve near the cemetery of some of these fig trees, which, in conjunction with some plane trees, bordered the walk extending from Gipps-street gate, on the west side of the garden, to the gully. These figs were no doubt removed because they were deemed to be too near to the planes, and without having been aware that the reason for planting figs so near the planes was that I intended to ultimately clear away the latter, owing to the irregularity caused by such planes having consisted of two distinct kinds, the Oriental and the American. Perhaps I was myself to blame for not having mentioned, whilst still in office, that my intention had been to sacrifice the mixed lot of planes to the figs, and not the figs to the planes.

This helps to explain the uncharacteristic narrowness of the avenue and the tightness of the planting much criticised in later commentary. So while the Scotch boys no doubt enjoyed the benefits of the Plane Tree Walk they had nothing to do with its creation. What remains a mystery is what happened to the western end of the walk?

Sylvia Black

Cover Image
Plane Tree Walk (2018)
Photo: Jill Fenwick

J H Scheltema Writes Home

The letters of Jan Hendrik Scheltema are held in the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History) in The Hague along with transcriptions by his nephew C A W Jeeke. Peter Reynders has recently arranged to have the transcriptions scanned and lodged with the National Gallery of Victoria. He has spent the best part of a year translating them and has now lodged his work with the NGV also.

We publish the following extract with the permission of Peter Reynders and the NGV.

Letter dated 13 July 1888

The first four days I have stayed in Victoria Coffee Palace, as very large and comfortable hotel. I had a small room at the third floor and for 2 sh. per night and used in this hotel also my meals, which are excellent. For 2 or 3 sh. one dines here well, breakfast and supper 1 sh. These days I used to get to know the town and its suburbs. My luggage was still in the hands of a luggage agent, who cares for it. Also, my dressed coat resides still in my suitcase, so I could not immediately make visits, which was not my plan anyway.

I was a little concerned because of my new clothes and other matters I imported that customs would get me, but they did not care it seems, and I did not need to pay any import duty. So then following the directions of my notes I have been on an excursion first in the city and thereafter in the area of the exhibition. Then to St Kilda,

(by train) located on the bay, but after I walked for about an hour in those sites through a sort of sand desert, I could not find anything that suited me. Boarding houses are there aplenty but a large room for oneself is hard to find, as boarder often sleep with two or three in a bedroom, which was not my intention. After I had roamed around in the nice large parks, my lucky star took me to the main road connecting Melbourne City with Richmond. There I found what I was looking for and have installed myself there on Wednesday. See the above address (5 Sydney Terrace, Wellington Parade, East Melbourne.*) I have what I consider, been fairly lucky. My room is quite roomy, on the first floor facing the road with a roomy balcony (where 25 people could fit on) and that is solely for my use.

The width of my room is 6.5 metres, the depth 5 metres and the height like with you downstairs, three large windows fitted with green blinds and lace curtains, overlooking the balcony. Further are there two iron beds (so I can have a friend from Holland to stay here) and a large chest of drawers with a mirror, a rest bench, two tables, a nice Japanese chamber screen. Light coloured wallpaper on the wall and the floor covered with mats. The large wall surfaces I have already covered with my studies, so the room gets already a convivial appearance. And I do feel relaxed here. The landlady, a widow

with a daughter (Scotch), appear to be very civilised people.

Further are there in the house a magnificent cat, as one only finds in English houses, a little smous (Tr.: dog) and two businessmen, also neat and quiet folk. With them I use the meals. Breakfast at half past eight, lunch at 1 and diner 6.30. The food is good and abundant. Meat with all three meals, delicious vegetables and nutritious puddings. I pay 1 pound 15 sh. (about 21.80 guilders) per week, that is rather not very expensive.

I had counted on 2 pounds (25 guilders) which is what Stuart paid. My room is actually a double bedroom and very suitable for two persons. But I am now much cheaper off as compared to having a separate workshop and ditto boarding house. And I cannot wish for a better workshop than this. In addition is the social station here very neat although I live half an hour walking from Melbourne City, is judging by the map where I live the actual centrum of this surprisingly large metropolis with her suburbs and more particular where the wealthy live. A steam-tram, which passes here brings me for 15 cents to the city. I have a very wide view from my balcony. Opposite is a nicely built yet somewhat new park. Behind that further away the Botanical Gardens and the palace of the Governor, one of the higher points. My dwelling lies also high and I can see one and a half hour far. To the right along the road, I can see in the blue distance the domes and towers of Melbourne City. Left from me the suburbs of Richmond and

Hawthorn and green hills strewn with dwellings. Altogether is the view not very picturesque, but it is wide and fresh: I can make studies of Eucalypts and pine trees from my window. In the little garden in front of the house stands a tree and in the adjoining one a few small tree ferns.

*Now 82 Wellington Parade, the site of Tadka Hut Indian Restaurant

Coming Events

Wednesday, 17 October, at 8.00 p.m. – AGM

Following the AGM Professor Geoffrey Blainey, in his inimitable way, will present us with a collage of tales from East Melbourne's past.

East Melbourne Library, 122 George Street, East Melbourne

Wednesday, 5 December, at 6.30 p.m.
Christmas Drinks

Put it in your diary now. More details later.

We Welcome New Members

Patricia McNicoll Anne Hull
Karen Boscarato Robert Boscarato
Bill Ryan

NOTICE OF AGM

Notice of Annual General Meeting and nomination form are enclosed with this newsletter. All financial members of the EMHS are eligible to nominate for the committee.