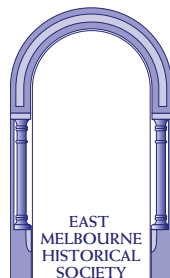


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



June 2020

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: \$30.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

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

President's Letter

Future generations looking back will see how pervasive were the effects of COVID19 on communities across the globe from the blanket coverage that will be evident from the written and electronic record. In the "real time" of living it we all know that this is the case as our daily conversations and media are dominated by it in a way that no issue has dominated peace time in living memory.

In this context it is not surprising that my message here is on the same theme. The pandemic has had its effect on most organisations, including the EMHS. We value the invariably interesting and informative evening talks from guest speakers held regularly at the East Melbourne Library, followed by coffee, cakes and conviviality; they are of course on hold, and the Committee has had to cancel the upcoming June event. This would come as no surprise, and we are subject to the same uncertainties as everyone else as to when government regulations will allow the framing of a timetable of future events for our Society.

This shows in a small way how the current virus zeitgeist has had an almost existential effect on our lives. We all know life is uncertain. Prior to this pandemic we went about our daily lives, planning this and that, but we at least did so within a framework of what we have come to know as a society with predictability of operation of businesses, infrastructure and events; we could plan our lives as best we could accordingly within this generally predictable backdrop. The pandemic has thrown this into disarray by taking away a big part of

the predictability around which we have become accustomed to structuring our lives. This has added an extra dimension to the adverse medical and economic effects that the pandemic has wrought on communities globally.

While we are not able to enjoy our regular speaker evenings, there is still activity within our group in which members can have some involvement. Ian Hind is doing some excellent work in setting up a framework for the research project that EMHS is doing on the history of the Yarra Park State School. This was mentioned in the last Newsletter, and Ian would welcome anyone wishing to join his group to help out with research. It is a rich area of history, and Ian has identified interesting material at PROV and elsewhere.

I would also recommend members peruse our website which has a wide array of historical East Melbourne material which has been built up over the years; I am sure members would find many things there that would be of interest to them.

Finally it is with great pleasure that I can report that our Secretary, Sylvia Black, has been recognised by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria with an RHSV Award of Merit. This is in recognition of Sylvia's tireless and outstanding work, and we are all grateful for Sylvia's great contribution over many years to the running of the EMHS.

In conclusion I would like to wish all members of our community and readership a safe negotiation of times ahead.

Tim Holland

Friends Remembered

East Melbourne has lost two well-known identities during a time of such contagion that we have not been able to join together to celebrate their lives. Here follow edited tributes from friends and family. Full content is on our website: <https://emhs.org.au/tributes>

In Memoriam Wynne McGrath

Di Renou

Wynne and I first met around 1975 when Meg and Shannon started kindergarten. She made friends immediately in that community even though she was busy managing John's specialist mechanics business. Soon the family moved to East Melbourne as well, and she was inspired to put her signature on their house, enjoying the challenge (including a powder blue Aga!!).

Chris Smith

When I first met Wynne in late 1977, I was slightly in awe. She had such an energy and was an indomitable spirit. She was competent and practical but also so vibrant, a little outrageous and had such a great laugh.

Our children were at Powlett Street Kindergarten together then later in the same class at Yarra Park Primary School. We were on committees together involved in fundraising, fetes and arranging parent social events. Any plans were always touched by Wynne's flair and practicality.

Pam & Michael Wilson

We have known Wynne ever since she first came to East Melbourne. She had



Wynne with daughter Shannon and grand-daughter Jos.

quite a sense of humour and loved to talk. Despite the tragedy of losing her son Peter she got on with her life and started a charity "My Room" to raise funds for The Children's Hospital.

Maureen McKeon

I met Wynne and Shannon at an early "My Room" meeting in Eaglemont following the sad passing of her son Peter. Supporting "My Room" over many years Wynne welcomed me to East Melbourne and introduced me to the delightful Church Flower Girls for which I am most grateful.

Gregory Ladner

I didn't so much meet Wynne as was ambushed by her. We had just moved into our renovation of the Lutheran church in Hotham street. I was unpacking some groceries when

she braked behind me and in frenzy of vivacity demanded to see inside. I was somewhat taken aback and as she grabbed one of the bags of groceries, I saw no escape.

Myra Anderson

Excitement for Wynne was a new frock, jumper, jacket or shoes. Wynne would pop in and show me her purchases. We would then try on... "What do you think?" We shared the love of clothes and shoes. Manolo Blahnik of course! The higher the heels the better.

Virginia Sutton

.. my dear friend's Mum ... said Wynne was the Holly Golightly of the friendship group. And that is exactly how I see Wynne and always will: super charming, a true beauty inside and out, fun-loving and mostly a huge heart.

Alison Leslie

... I was looking forward to her moving into the apartment in Darling Street but sadly that was not to be.

In Memoriam John Barrie Wykes

Boyd Wykes. John's eldest son, a retired Ornithologist residing in Margaret River.

My father John Wykes passed away on 28th April, at the height of the corona outbreak but as a result of an operation conducted shortly before the clampdown that offered hope of relief from chronically painful, crippling rheumatoid arthritis in the knees. On behalf of John's five sons, may I express to members of the East Melbourne Historical Society my family's



John and Pennie Kendall

recognition for the many close friendships that he and, until her untimely death, his dearly loved wife Norma made as long-time residents in their characterful terraced house in Albert Street. Our condolences as well to Pennie Kendall, who many will know as Dad's wonderful companion in recent years.

Born 17 March 1929, John was blessed with a long life in good health, exemplified by the pleasure for my brother Matthew and me being able to play tennis with him and his mates at Kooyong on a visit from WA last year for his 90th birthday. Raised in East Malvern and schooled at Melbourne Boys High, John's career in advertising was city based, firstly in an agency and then with Ansett Airlines at the top of Swanston Street. However, as with many young couples of the early 1950s aspiring to own a home in which to raise their family without the burden of a loan, John and his bride Elizabeth (Beth) chose the newly-subdivided paddocks of Lower Plenty to purchase a quarter acre block and self-build. Here they designed

and built a Frank-Lloyd Wright inspired butterfly roofed 'Californian bungalow', constructed of home-made cement bricks.

No doubt the bohemian artistic culture of the Heidelberg/Eltham region also had an attraction for John and fostered his later decision to pursue the practice of painting. For many of his East Melbournian friends, John will be remembered as a resident artist for whom the beauty, culture and community of historic East Melbourne was the inspiration for many of his works, including a handsome greeting card series for the East Melbourne Group. Although oils were John's medium for plein air oil painting on holidays at Wilson's Promontory with his young family, in retirement he turned to watercolours and in keeping with his character, devoted himself to fully understanding the materials and developing his skills to a professional level, seeking to sell his work to at least recoup his costs and only give away pieces to those who would truly value the gift. For John, subject matter was primarily chosen to best suit the watercolour medium and challenge his ability - waterways, seascapes, boats, reflections, cloudscapes, rain-washed streets.

John's pleasure in his art progressed in his latter years to passing on his passion and knowledge through his popular classes at Hawthorn U3A. Surprising to some was that someone of his generation should not only recognise the advantages of the iPad as a new medium for teaching art but have the courage and aptitude to embrace

that technology. This was not only testimony to John's youthful, forward-looking outlook but also an extension of his early interest in the highly technical art of early photography, and a career in airline advertising and marketing that encompassed the innovations of television, computing and the internet.

John's family and friends will miss an amiable, gifted and generous man, agile in body and mind to the last.

Pam & Michael Wilson

Our relationship with John goes back to the seventies when Norma & John moved into a little house down the lane in George Street opposite the Library. John has always been a very fit person and did a lot of running. He would run to Kooyong, play tennis, then run home again. He had a few friends he played with every week and only stopped playing last year because of his knee.

John was a very talented watercolour painter. We are lucky to have several of his works. He taught classes at U3A Hawthorn and in later years he used an iPad App to do some amazing work. He would bring his iPad with him when he came to dinner to show us what he had learned to create to teach his class. He had such a passion for painting which extended to teaching others.

Alison Leslie

John Wykes was a great member of our monthly dinner group. As our only male he looked after us and did all the driving and always had an interesting subject to talk about, chosen from his many and varied interests. A very kind man, we will miss him so much.

Number 106 Wellington Parade

This slow ramble down a very small memory pathway was set in motion by this question from Sylvia Black:

Brian Tseng of Bruce Trethowan architects is currently researching the button factory that used to be at 99 George Street, behind 106-108 Wellington Parade. I remembered you saying that you used to work in the Wellington Parade building and wondered if you had any memories, or even better, photos of the button factory.

I wasn't able to provide a lot of details but was happy to provide any recollections that might have helped his quest.

At the rear of 106 Wellington Parade was a large empty 'grey' area used for parking cars. It included the rear of 106 and most of the garden area behind the George Street house. It was accessed through the laneway adjoining the current post office and also through another temporary laneway from George Street. This access was closed when 106 was demolished.

The so-called 'button factory' was a lean-to shed at one side of the car parking space at the rear of 106 Wellington Parade. I never knew the real name of the operator, he was known to everyone as the 'button man'.

The business did not manufacture buttons. His business was involved in colouring buttons; he would dye buttons to exactly match fabrics provided, and always began with white

button 'blanks' in every size and shape available.

The Button Man was wildly eccentric. The tenants of 106 theorised that constant exposure to the chemicals in the dyes had had physical effect upon him; they certainly seemed toxic to any visitors and we tried to stay out of his shed during infrequent visits. Having said that, I am sure that he was more hippie than villain.

The shed would have been rented from Norman Lewis who had his office in the adjoining building to the East of 106. That building was a rambling old mansion hidden from Wellington Parade by a hairdressing salon, and a flower shop, in what would have been the front garden of the old mansion.

Norm liked to present himself as Sir Norman, but I think that the knighthood was purchased from Malta. He may even have acted as Consul for Malta. I am not sure. He married while I was a tenant in 106, and his wife rejoiced in calling herself Lady Telia. Norm controlled the renting of that old house and the various tenancies at 106.

I don't think that the button man's shed was a part of the George Street property, I think it was a part of Lewis's building on Wellington Parade.

106 went through many changes during my occupancy. At one time Bertie Wainer had rooms on the top floor (three floors). His rooms underwent a police raid late at night with filing cabinets being seized and removed from the building. There were

a few other straight businesses, but it was mostly a haven for 'massage parlours'. Nice bunch of ladies with the parlours mostly run by strict older 'Madams' who allowed no drugs or trouble. Retired Ladies of the Night, the ideal managers for Parlours.

On the ground floor at the rear of the building there was a strange outfit in rooms with blacked out windows. I often worked very late and I regularly saw trucks loading and unloading near midnight, but seldom saw anyone during daylight hours. I have no idea what their business involved.

106 had once been upmarket residential apartments. Ceramic parquet in the bathrooms and substantial timber doors and fittings. Leadlight bay windows at the front with small balconies overlooking Yarra Park, Wellington Parade and the railway line. The living areas were quite spacious.

106 was in a kind of genteel decay during my years of operating a photographic studio in the building. Rents were low but the old building was far from derelict. Colourful characters came and went, among them Maxwell Newton and his ex-prostitute girlfriend who were publishing small sex contacts magazines. They also raided my letterbox and removed a cheque on one occasion which was paid into their own bank account without questions being asked by the bank. The bank repaid the money after a solicitor's letter reminded them of their obligations. Other tenants reported similar losses.

Some other half-forgotten details:

The steady stream of nervous clients visiting Wainer. The tense young men unobtrusively loitering out in the Parade

and waiting anxiously for the return of their ladies and hoping for good news.

The midnight police raid on Wainer's premises and the steady stream of filing cabinets being carried out to waiting police vehicles.

The several competing massage parlours offering a variety of strange pleasures... perhaps I should have said a 'seedy' former apartment block rather than genteel.

I got on well with the working girls. I was neither critic, client nor owner which put me into a category they were unused to. They were mostly fairly young - twenties and thirties - and most had other jobs which they were supplementing with the fairly high returns from their chosen trade. Some nurses, some barmaids, a couple of bookkeepers. An English Oxford graduate and her mother. A mixture. Nice people, mostly. Some were married, some were single mothers. One parlour was owned and operated by a group of Thai girls. They recruited new girls from among their married friends who were bored at home. Their Australian husbands completely unaware of their wives' daytime frolics. A touch of the Asian exotic that was apparently popular with the marks. The Thai girls would sit on the floor of their kitchen space and cook lunches over a small gas stove each day. I often had lunch with them... good food and amusing company.

The fictitious and naughty adventures of the Television series 'Number 96' were a pale imitation of Number 106 Wellington Parade. Number 96 burst onto public broadcast television with a kind of coy 'shock/horror, aren't we naughty' acting, with nudity,

homosexuality and contrived odd relationships. 106 was all of that and more, but with the sharp edge of reality.

Good times in many ways. Sad to see the old building go... it would have renovated into fine apartments right on the edge of the city.

Sylvia Black contributed some more background from her own researches:

I have been investigating the building through old newspapers and it seems it was conceived in iniquity. Built by a man called Harry Stokes who was an ally of Squizzy Taylor and lived a similar sort of life. There is a story that Squizzy Taylor hid there for a year when it was first built, but it maybe that the two identities have been muddled.

There were peculiarities in the architecture of 106 also, which may have mysterious links to the Squizzy Taylor period.

The front apartments on the western side of the building were not obviously connected to the second doorways in the corridors. To the outsider it didn't seem possible because of the main stairwell which would have created a void between the front rooms and the bedrooms and bathrooms. From the main corridor they looked like separate apartments with separate doors.

The secret was that there was a narrow passage between the two halves of the apartments that was hidden inside the stairwell wall.

I have portrayed the inhabitants of 106 as being a sort of benevolent commune; it was far from that. For example:

The cross-dressing gay young man who flounced back into a parlour



Harry Stokes

common-room saying that his client "wanted a real girl". He was in tears at the rejection.

The underage waif who appeared at my door in fear for her life and seeking sanctuary. She was a new addition to one of the parlours and wasn't able to go through with her first appointment. She was being threatened by the parlour owner and was very frightened. I gave her money for fares and told her to go home to Kaniva. I never saw her again so maybe she did.

It was not all sweetness and light. It was not all tragedy either.

They were certainly strange times. I have to say that the period of my tenancy in 106 was a constant source of interest and delight.

Rod Goodwin

The Spanish Flu in Victoria (December 1918-March 1919)

According to Trove records, the first public mention of the 'Spanish' flu appeared in the Melbourne Leader on Saturday 5 October 1918, when a columnist wrote of developing 'a violent and unpleasant headache and my forehead was burning ... I felt moist and hot all over, my head weighed tons and ached intolerably, my eyes were on fire and I had violent pains in my back, legs and arms ... My only consolation was that, however indirectly, I might have caught the beastly illness from the King of Spain himself'.[1]

The virus may have been taken fairly lightly at first. On 26 February, 1919, the Horsham Times published this piece of doggerel:

Spanish 'flue, she shrieked just to
thrill us
Is it dangerous? Say will it kill us?
And retaining our nerve
We made haste to observe
No-one knows 'til we find the
bacillus.[2]

This followed an earlier article in the Horsham Times of 10 December 1918 that 'Spanish influenza is ordinary influenza associated with germs which cause pneumonia.'

The name 'Spanish Flu' has two origins. Some sources believe the illness originated in the German trenches and was deliberately called 'Spanish' to direct attention away

from its real source. Other sources claim that the combatant countries imposed censorship to prevent it being known to the enemy. Because Spain was a neutral country, there was no censorship of reports of the illness and thus it appeared its origins were in Spain.[3]

The first infected ship, bearing returned servicemen, arrived in October 1918, ten months after first outbreak in Europe. By early 1919, with the return of large numbers of servicemen from Europe, the illness became widespread. Weary of the long voyage, ships' captains carrying returning soldiers often ignored the virus or deliberately faked their records. Like the Ruby Princess passengers, once the soldiers disembarked, the virus spread rapidly through the community.

Spanish Flu was first detected in Victoria in December 1918. In January 1919, the state was declared infected and placed in quarantine: public meetings and travel on long distance trains were banned and public buildings shut. By Wednesday 12 February The Argus reported that there had been 17 deaths the day before, 19 on Monday and another 2 at Footscray. Overall, there had been 201 deaths since January 19 and 1072 patients hospitalised. By then, the Exhibition Building had been turned into a temporary hospital with 212 patients, 8 deaths the day before, and

10 members of the nursing staff had become infected with the illness.

The Argus of 25 January 1919 informed readers that there would be public inoculations at the Melbourne Town Hall from 10.30-12.30am over the next few weeks. The City Health Officer, Dr. Sinclair declared that '... it would be possible to inoculate a maximum of 100 people during the two hour period.' The CSL reported later that the vaccine had been 'partially effective'.[4]

According to figures from the National Museum archives, around

40% of the Australian population became infected, with 15,000 dying. Aboriginal communities were worst hit, with a mortality rate of 50%.

¹ Leader (Melbourne) Saturday 5 October 1918 p.42

² Horsham Times 28 February 1919 p.3

³ NSW State Archives and Records Pneumonic Influenza (Spanish Flu) 1919

⁴ National Museum of Australia The Spanish Flu

Jill Fenwick

Maie Hoban and the Pilgrim Theatre

It was one short sentence in an obituary for Patricia Kennedy, OBE, actor, which alerted me to another of East Melbourne's forgotten stories. It read, "After her graduation, she enrolled at Maie Hoban's school of drama in East Melbourne."

The Australian Dictionary of Biography provided further information about Maie Hoban and her school. She was born Mary Elizabeth Butler in Spring Mount, near Creswick in 1887 and was educated at Loreto Mary's Mount, Ballarat. Early on she discovered an interest in speech and drama, and became a successful teacher in Ballarat.

In November 1915 she married Daniel James Hoban, auctioneer, who four months later left for the Western Front, where he lost a leg and was consequently invalided home. He died in 1931 leaving Maie with five children



Mrs. Maie Hoban, L.A.B., L.T.C.L.

to support. She returned to teaching, first renting a studio in Elwood but in 1938 she found permanent space in what the ADB describes as "a workroom in the grounds of St Peter's Church of England, Eastern Hill, which she converted into a small theatre – the Pilgrim Theatre." The address given for the Pilgrim Theatre in newspaper advertisements was simply, Albert Street, which would point to the theatre being in the old school building behind the vicarage. Here Maie established the Australian School of Speechcraft and Drama, teaching elocution and speech therapy not only to students of drama but to people in all walks of life who simply wanted to speak better. Under her guidance members of her troupe, the Unnamed Players, held play readings every month and performed a play four times each year at the Pilgrim Theatre. Later when they began to travel interstate they were renamed the Australian Repertory Players.

Maie Hoban's entry in the ADB says, "While her own vocal delivery has been described by Patricia Kennedy as mannered, no one doubted her gifts as a teacher. Several of her students later became professional actors, Kennedy, Coral Browne, Frederick Parslow and Terry Norris among them. Others were coached in public speaking: the swimmer Dawn Fraser was 'fascinated by her poise' and inspired by her capacity to stimulate awareness of 'an inner life'."

Maie Hoban closed her school in 1968. She died on 10 September 1984.

Sylvia Black

Coming Events

Our coming events have been cancelled until further notice.

We Welcome New Members

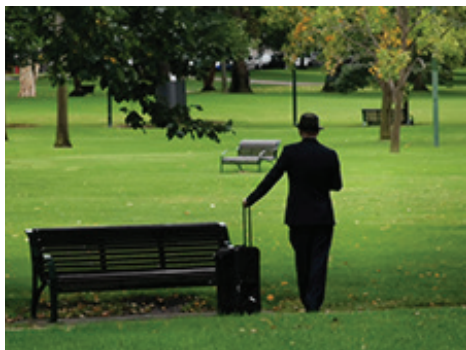
Alisa Fiddes Eileen Mina Cormick

Don Dunstan and East Melbourne

The Committee understands that Don Dunstan – political legend and super cook – lived in East Melbourne for a few years after his political career. We think it was in Gipps Street opposite Darling Square. Does anyone have any memories of his time, or any sightings? We would like to hear your stories.

Dunstan died in 1999, and there has been a recent well reviewed biography by Angela Woollacott 'Don Dunstan: the Visionary Politician who changed Australia.'

Gary Sussex



Cover Image: Self isolating in the Fitzroy Gardens, March 2020. Photo: Graham Shepherd