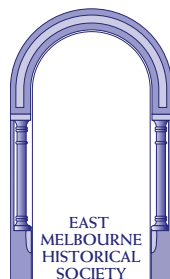


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Yarra Park School, Richmond.



September 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.

Published by EMHS and supported by City of Melbourne Community Services Grants Program.



**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.

Enquiries: Diane Clifford

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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

Once again my contribution here as President is COVID-related, like so much in our lives at the moment. Our existence is in a sort of stasis and as in the wider community EMHS has had to have rolling cancellations of coming events that we had planned through the year. In the current environment it is the dismantling of pending events that has become the hallmark of our activities.

We are currently in the process of making alternative arrangements for the holding of our Annual General Meeting by remote platform, and those details will be forwarded to members in due course. It is a challenge for us all in this new territory of lockdown, but many of you will be aware of similar arrangements being put in place for other organisations of which you may be members. It looks like we are in some ways transcending the age demographic delineations often talked about as we all become part of Gen Zoom.

It is a time that is putting all organisations in the community under stress, apart from the personal stress that it is also putting on all of us individually. It is at times like this that we realise how important social interaction and community involvement are to us in our daily lives. At the same time keeping the organisations ticking over is a challenge to all involved, and the understanding of members in relation to this is appreciated.

In this environment your Committee is trying to find ways to encourage involvement of members. The Yarra

Park School project is moving along, although the current lockdown has put the Public Record Office out of bounds again for examining documents at the Reading Room in North Melbourne. At least there are still resources available to be sifted through on the online Trove site. It is an exciting project, and the team is unearthing some intriguing material about our old local school.

As I look out the window at the large magnolia tree laden with buds about to bloom, I recall the edition of this newsletter from 12 months ago and its capturing of the first flowering magnolia tree in East Melbourne. Our lives have certainly changed hugely since then in an unexpected way.

Finally, one observation that I have made recently relates to the wearing of face masks. I can now see why footpads and bandits in the old westerns wore bandanas over their noses and mouths, as they would have made themselves difficult to recognise. If I happen to be walking down the street and encounter another walker wearing a face mask it is often quite difficult to work out whether or not it is someone that I know. I have also come to appreciate how much the reading of the facial expressions of others relies on seeing the expression in their mouths. In that context let me take this opportunity to apologise to anyone I may have seen on the streets recently and unwittingly not recognised behind their face mask!

*Tim Holland,
August 2020*

Reg Kavanagh - Dare Devil

East Melbourne has had many famous citizens, artists, politicians, public servants, lawyers, doctors and founders of significant businesses. For some, however, the fame they achieved in their early years had faded and, by the time of their death, they were barely remembered.

This was the story of Reg Kavanagh, once a legendary stunt performer widely admired for his daring feats, famous for crashing cars through flaming hoops and doing wing walks on aeroplanes in flight. In 1974, the year he died, he was living in a single room in a boarding house in Hoddle Street, with five cases and one sea chest filled with clippings and scrap books recording what had once been a fabulous life.

Reg Kavanagh was probably born in Dublin, but the family moved to the USA. Reg ran away from home at the age of twelve. He went to sea for some years, before returning to England in the 1920s, earning money as a boxer in a travelling circus. When the owner went broke, he moved to motor racing, first as a mechanic and then as a driver. From there he tried speedway racing, competing on a Douglas motorcycle. Here he met Col. Stewart, the motorcycling legend from Birregurra, Victoria, and father to EMHS member, Gay Sussex.



Reproduced in *Col Stewart Australia's Speedway King 1926-31*
by Barbara Batistich (2011)

Gay's father, Col Stewart, who was a dirt track racing champion during the Thirties, was a good friend of Reg Kavanagh's. Gay's sister Barbara Batistich has written a book about their father *Col Stewart Australia's Speedway King* which includes some of Kavanagh's life.

From speedway racing, Reg moved on in the 1930's, setting up a successful stunt company, the so-called 'Death Squad', later 'Reg. Kavanagh's Film Crash Squadron'. In addition to motorcycle and car stunts, in the later 1920s, he had become fascinated with air travel and with stunts involving aeroplanes. In 1956, he told a newspaper reporter that 'A few years ago he crawled across 13 planes in 'mid-air, wing tip' to wingtip - without a safety line.' (*Argus* 20/9/1956 p.28)

Kavanagh travelled extensively, doing shows in England, the United States, South Africa, South America,

Germany, France, and Canada. He toured Australia ten times.

The *Brisbane Telegraph* of 21st September 1931 recorded '... the plane, car and motorcycle crasher Reg Kavanagh has a regular charge list for various types of hair raising stunts. For £25 he will stage a 60 m.p.h. head on car crash. Other charges are: aerial battle £1,500; mid-air crash £125; crashing plane on land or water £50, parachute drop £25.'

According to Reg, 'the major rule of the Crash Squad prohibited members from getting engaged or married. Mr Kavanagh broke it and forfeited his membership when he met Miss Joy McKinnon, of the Switzerland Ice Follies, in New Zealand this year ...

the marriage was to have taken place this year, but the event has now been postponed because of his decision to join the R.A.F.' (*Sunday Times* 29/9/1940, p.3). True? Or just a bit of good advertising? By now, the Second World War had begun and Reg returned to England, with the stated intention to join the RAF.

By the 1950s, his activities had waned, probably due to the range of injuries he had sustained during his career. He received some income from doing advertisements, one for Holden Tyres, another for the Ford Falcon. By the 1960s other daredevils like 'Evil' Knievil had taken his place. He died in 1974, aged 69.

Gay Sussex

Yarra Park School (1874–1987)

Despite the difficulties of working in the current COVID environment, a good start has been made by a group of EMHS members in researching the history of the former Yarra Park State School #1406. The group comprises Ian Hind, Marie Fels and Ian and Patrizia Kelly. We are also receiving some assistance from Ingrid Stephen who was a student at Yarra Park in the late 1940s. With very limited access to local libraries, the State Library of Victoria and the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), the team has been able to gather considerable material relating to the school's history from on line resources such as TROVE.

Yarra Park School, on the corner of Punt Road and Wellington Parade,

was built on a parcel of two acres of land of the old Police Barracks reserve that was transferred to the Education Ministry in 1873. The school was designed in the Tudor style by the prominent colonial architect Charles Webb whose other designs included the Royal Arcade, the Windsor Hotel, the South Melbourne Town Hall, the Alfred Hospital and in East Melbourne, the Tasma Terrace and Mosslenoch in Clarendon Street. The only other State School designed by Webb was in Dorcas Street, South Melbourne.

The school, opened in July 1874, was one of the first large urban state schools constructed after the passing of the Education Act 1872 which established free, compulsory and secular education in Victoria. Under

the initial headmaster, Joseph Frederick Walker, the school very quickly gained an excellent reputation for its educational results, firm discipline and sporting achievements. Although located in the City of Melbourne, Yarra Park school was built primarily in response to the growing school aged population in the City of Richmond. Up until its centenary in 1974 Yarra Park was nearly always the largest of the Richmond schools. Its enrolment in the initial years was in excess of 1700 students and average daily attendance was 900 to 1000 students.

As there was virtually no state provided secondary education in Victoria until the early 1900s, the Government of Victoria offered a small number of competitive scholarships or 'exhibitions' to students in the state schools who were unable to afford the fees of the private and church operated grammar schools and colleges. Students from all over the State of Victoria sat a competitive examination for these exhibitions and we have found from our research that in almost every year from 1874 to the early 1890s when the scholarships were abolished, that one or more students from Yarra Park was awarded a scholarship. Yarra Park State school has produced an impressive list of alumni in a wide range of fields including public administration, the armed services, medicine, the clergy, the arts and the sporting arena. Perhaps the best-known alumnus was Sir John Monash who was a student in 1877 before he attended Scotch College. Another famous alumnus is the sculptor Sir Bertram Mackennal who has a work in National Gallery of Victoria and

also the Tate Gallery in London. In cricket we know of at least six ex-students who played Test Cricket for Australia including Sam Loxton who was a member of Don Bradman's 1948 'Invincibles'. Many Australian Rules footballers also attended Yarra Park.

During the 1970s and 1980s the demographic changes in Melbourne's inner suburbs brought a sharp downturn in the enrolments of Richmond's schools leading to a number of school closures in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yarra Park enrolled its last students in 1987 and closed at the end of that year. By this time the site had become very cramped as a result of the widening of Punt Road in the early 1980s. In July 1986 the school was classified by the National Trust of Victoria. The school building was converted in to residential apartments in the early 1990s.

Any members who would like to know more or become involved in the project can contact Ian Hind, EMHS committee member on hindrutherford@netspace.net.au. Once the COVID restrictions are eased we are hoping to delve more into the early historical documents located at PROV in North Melbourne and also conduct interviews with a number of former teachers/principals, students and parents. Subsequent newsletter articles will focus on the Police Barracks land on which the school was built, the official opening of the school, the part played by the school during two world wars and brief biographies of some of the notable but less well known and interesting alumni.

Ian Hind

James Gall (1828–1895) Architect

James Gall has come to our attention as the architect of Eblana, 140 Jolimont Road, the home of Thomas Jackson of Young and Jackson's Hotel. The house was built in 1883 and was the latest of the several houses Gall designed in East Melbourne and Jolimont. Five are still standing, including Eblana. For more about Thomas Jackson and his house see our website: https://emhs.org.au/history/people/jackson_thomas_joshua_1834-1901

Gall designed numerous buildings, most of them large, many with a tower, and some of them listed in the Victorian Heritage Register, but nothing has been written about him or his work.

He was born in Old Deer, Aberdeenshire, Scotland in 1828. His father, Andrew, was a 'house carpenter' and James followed him in that trade. He arrived in Victoria in November 1851 aboard the *Tasmania*, the first emigrant ship to sail direct to Portland. He was one of 196 assisted passengers, 'chiefly tradesmen and agricultural laborers with their families, the remaining portion being composed of single males and females'.

By 1854 he was working in the firm of Thomson & Robertson, 'accountants, average adjusters, estate, house, and general agents, Collins-lane, 11 Collins-street west, Melbourne'. He used this address for his first advertisements as a builder under his own name. The following year he gave the Duke of Wellington Hotel, Flinders-street as his

address.

In 1856 he married Ann Fulton and they moved to new premises at Oliver's Cottages, 116 Flinders Lane east. One of Gall's earliest buildings was a two roomed brick cottage in Simpson Street, East Melbourne for George Murdison, a painter and glazier. George had married Jane Fulton in Scotland and the Murdisons and Jane's family, including her sister Ann, all travelled out together on the same ship in 1854. The cottage, built in 1859, has long gone.

The next house Gall built in East Melbourne was a timber one in Wellington Parade, one in from the Powlett Street on the western side. This house was for himself. He moved in in 1864 and was there for about ten years. He found plenty of work locally with tender notices appearing regularly in the *Argus*. Many of these houses have not been identified and have no doubt been demolished. But one of his earlier works is 32 Jolimont Terrace built in 1868. It is now listed on the Heritage Victoria Register as 'distinctive as a rare and early single fronted town house of polychromatic brick'.

In 1877 he designed Inveresk on the corner of Jolimont Terrace and Wellington Parade South. This seems to have been a template for some of his later and much grander country mansions such as Noorilim (1879) and Mintaro (1881), both on the Victorian Heritage Register. The Statement of Significance for Noorilim says of it: 'The two-storey brick structure has



Eblana, 140 Jolimont Road. Photo, Graham Shepherd

rendered facades and is composed of an asymmetrical towered entrance facade and a garden front comprising a two-tiered arcade with centrally located pediment.' Exactly the same could be said of Inveresk.

The two houses together named Coningsby at 40-42 Jolimont Terrace and built in 1882 make up the total of Gall's five house still standing in Jolimont.

In 1870 Gall was one of the residents who fought the government over its proposal to resume the land in the middle of Wellington Parade for housing. Even then East Melbourne was at risk of inappropriate development. The land is now largely taken up by the railway line.

Two years later Gall's parents and sister arrived in Melbourne and came to stay with him. Soon after he advertised, 'WANDERED from residence of Mr. James Gall, architect, corner Wellington-parade and Powlett street, Mrs. GALL. Age about 68 years.' Possibly Mrs Gall was suffering from dementia and, along with the increased pressure on accommodation, this gave him reason to move to larger premises in Burke Road, Hawthorn where he lived for the rest of his life.

He soon made his mark in the area buying land on the corner of Camberwell and Burwood Roads, where he engaged James Hurley to build the old Tower Hotel. James Hurley's sister, Annie, became the licensee.

Alongside his architectural work Gall regularly advertised houses and land for sale or rent. It is not clear whether he was acting as agent or speculating on his own behalf, maybe a bit of both. He was obviously quite entrepreneurial and financially very successful and he generously contributed to various, local fund-raising drives. A man of varied interests he kept a colourful menagerie including an emu, a kangaroo, a peacock and three Shetland ponies. After his death the inventory of his chattels listed a violin and two kettle drums.

But in 1891 his wife, Ann, died and from there on his life turned upside down as the land boom collapsed and the depression set in. The following year Annie Hurley, the long-time licensee of his Tower Hotel was declared insolvent. Instead of finding a new licensee he put the hotel on the market. It didn't sell. The Boroondara Shire Council refused to pay him outstanding fees for its new shire hall (now the Camberwell Town Hall). He sued and was awarded part of the money. He followed up by bursting into a Council meeting in an intoxicated state and abusing the members. He was given a chance to apologise but refused and was fined three guineas. In 1895 he died. For probate purposes all his real estate was valued as Nil and his personal estate was in deficit. He died insolvent. His only bequest was £60 worth of furniture to go to Annie Hurley. While much of his work survives and is lauded, the man himself is forgotten.

Sylvia Black



32 Jolimont Terrace. Photo, Graham Shepherd

Skittles

East Melbourne v. Melbourne, played at East Melbourne last Thursday, East winning by 11 horses to 4.

W. W. Gaggin, B. Davies and J. Harry tied for best average, scoring 33 each for 15 frames. East Melbourne win the premiership for 1895.

[*The Age*, 9 Sep 1895, p.3]

Baseball

The East Melbourne Baseball Club have won the baseball premiership for the season 1895, and have secured a leg in for the challenge trophy presented by Mr. J. C. Williamson

[*Mornington Standard*, 26 Sep 1895, p.3]

Maie Hoban – Further Information

The June edition of the newsletter had an interesting article by Sylvia about Maie Hoban, who was an identity in the performing arts community in mid 20th century Melbourne, and who operated a school of drama in East Melbourne. Maie's reputation was such as to get her an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Out of interest I did a little digging myself about her and her husband. She had married Daniel James Hoban in 1915 shortly before he went to the Western Front as a 2nd Lieutenant with the AIF. He was severely injured at Pozieres receiving gun shot wounds to both legs. Biographical studies of Maie indicate that he lost a leg, but his service record indicates both legs were amputated; a very confronting outcome either way.

When Hoban enlisted he was an auctioneer and he continued this line of work after the war, particularly in the development of the Springvale area.

What particularly caught my attention was material in his service record relating to him standing as a candidate for the Victorian Parliament in the seat of Brighton in the 1928 election. There are a number of aspects of this which seem a little quirky to the 21st century reader.

Firstly, there was quite a fuss in the press about Hoban launching legal proceedings for libel against the *Herald and Weekly Times* seeking damages of 5000 pounds. The basis appears to be that the *Herald* wrote that "some of the votes that might have been cast for the Labor candidate... may go to Mr D J Hoban who represents the Catholic following".

Hoban stood as a Liberal candidate.

The News Editor of the *Herald* then wrote a handwritten letter to Capt McIntosh of Army Records asking him to look up Hoban's enlistment papers to see whether he gave his religion as Roman Catholic – "it is entirely a private inquiry" he wrote, adding "you will remember that I used to see you daily during the war". The Captain at least referred the request to his superior, who approved the information being supplied. Modern principles of privacy protection of information were a long way off, while the Old Comrades Code seemed to be very much to the fore.

Maie also appears in the story, as the *Herald* said that the allegedly libellous statement "was based on facts supplied by Mr Hoban's wife who called at the *Herald* Office... seeking publicity for her husband's candidature. She supplied Mr Hoban's picture for publication and volunteered information that he was the only Catholic candidate and therefore hoped to get about 4000 Catholic votes, some of which might otherwise go to Labor".

It's not clear what statement by the *Herald* Mr Hoban particularised in his libel suit as amounting to a libel, but in the end he polled only about 800 votes (approx. 4% of the vote) and then withdrew his legal action. It was all perhaps part of an "any publicity is good publicity" approach, as he certainly put his name in the spotlight but to no great effect.

Tim Holland

The Use and Abuse of Heritage by Developers in East Melbourne

We have observed an increase in large-scale developments in East Melbourne recently. These developments apparently rely on the manipulation of heritage houses for their viability. Legislation this year has seen houses graded C under the Melbourne Planning Scheme reclassified as Contributory to the streetscape. The translation does not appear to be exact however and we are concerned that these buildings will fare badly under the new system.

These are some of the developments which cause us concern -

86-94 Jolimont St - A recent VCAT decision granted a permit for a development which involved the demolition of the C-grade/Contributory house at 88 Jolimont St, a place, we argued, of heritage character that has enhancement potential.

364-366 & 368-370 Albert St - A permit has been lodged seeking demolition and works for construction of a multi-level mixed use development. The application involves substantial alteration to 364 Albert, a Significant house in heritage terms, and total demolition of 366 Albert, a Contributory building. This matter is at VCAT.

204-208 Albert St – An application to demolish all but the façade and return walls of the existing D graded building and to construct a 10-storey building behind this. We support the proposal to carry out conservation works on the façade of the existing building. But this comes at a high price as it could be seen

as a 'pay off' in expectation of approval for an otherwise egregious development.

1071-1081 Hoddle St (Ascot Lodge)

- A permit application has been lodged seeking demolition of the existing buildings on site and construction of a multi-storey, mixed-use development. Ascot Lodge is an Art Deco Moderne building which has strategically been left to deteriorate. Several years ago a permit, which included façade preservation, was granted for the site. These plans were abandoned and the site was sold to a new developer who has even more ambitious plans which entail the complete demolition of Ascot Lodge.

140-142 Jolimont St (Eblana) - This Italianate-style villa built in the late 1880s, graded C and now designated Contributory, was marketed as suitable for an office or multi-level apartment development. Eblana was recently sold and we await future plans.

All these buildings have heritage characteristics that are typical of the precinct and contribute to it. The suburb will be diminished without them

One final matter. If you see a yellow notice advertising a permit application on a building please let someone on EMHS know. Such applications are usually included in the Melbourne Council's weekly permit list but not always and if one is missed it could mean that we are excluded from any further input should the matter proceed to VCAT. More on this aspect in a later edition.

Barbara Paterson

Lowling Herds Wind Loudly over Street

The noises of Melbourne have many sources. Wireless sets, motor-horns, tramcars, and motor-cycles contribute their quota to It, but in East Melbourne the chief nuisance is none of these. It is cattle. This has been revealed to the City Council by complaints received recently from private hospitals in East Melbourne. Every night, it is said, patients are robbed of their sleep by the noises of trotting hoofs, the cracking of stockwhips, the barking of dogs, and the lowing of cattle. The council has been asked to stop the nuisance. Drovers will be warned that they must take a different route to the Richmond abattoirs. [*Argus*, 28 Jan 1938, p.3]

Correspondence

Cotswold, 40 Berry-street, Yarra Park, East Melbourne.

Dear Cinderella, —

Are you a real ferry have you got wings I got a little cat with all white over her with black tail and a black spot on her back I have a big sister she is twelve I have a little brother he will strike six next friday we have a bird he whishels so pretty we call him joe are you pretty have you got goldden haier have you got blow eyes I go to school I wawuld like you to come to see me this letter has maid me very tired good-by

IRIS BOWEN.

Age, 7 years 8 months.

[*Leader*, 28 Sep 1895, p.34]

Coming Events

Wednesday, 21 October, at 5.00 p.m.
– AGM by Zoom

Your invitation to join the meeting will be sent out in the week prior.

Assistance will be available if needed.

Wednesday, 2 December at 6.30 –
Christmas Drinks

Put it in your diary now. More details later. We live in hope.

Notice of AGM

Notice of Annual General Meeting, nomination form and proxy form are enclosed with this newsletter.

Also enclosed are our annual report, treasurer's report and minutes of the previous meeting in preparation for this year's AGM by Zoom.

All financial members of the EMHS are eligible to nominate for the committee.

We Welcome New Member

Nesha Naidoo



Cover image: Yarra Park School.

Postcard c.1907.

State Library of Victoria,
Accession no: H2008.12/49