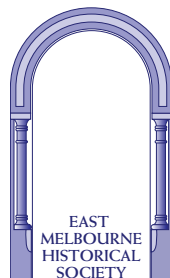


EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



June 2021

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: Tim Holland

Vice-president: Barbara Paterson

Hon. Secretary: Sylvia Black 2037

Hon. Treasurer: Malcolm Howell

Committee:

Diane Clifford

Ian Hind

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Jill Fenwick

Graham Shepherd

Gay Sussex

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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**

The Members and Committee of the East Melbourne Historical Society respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung people of the Kulin nation and pay respect to their elders past, present and to come.

President's Letter

It was great to be back again doing in-person events with the recent talk by Alicia Cerreto on the Berry Street Foundling Home. It was our first such event since 2019 due to the COVID situation, and a great together for our Society; we were restricted as to numbers, so we also had members viewing the event live online.

There is a schedule of upcoming events on the back page of this newsletter, and we hope we can keep going in full swing from now on.

Something that we are trying to do is to give members opportunities to develop their historical research skills. While our members are a talented bunch, many would not be aware of

the tools available to research the history of their residence or of their family. Di Clifford ran a session on this some weeks ago, and is willing to repeat it. It's amazing what material is out there and easily accessible in this digital age.

The committee has undertaken to provide some content for the new local paper, Inner City News. This will be editing material that we already have in our data base. We would welcome members who are able to assist with this in a small way. It is not an onerous task, and is an interesting activity. For more details see back page. If you are interested please contact us on email info@emhs.org.au

We Welcome New Members

Elizabeth Alexander
Graham Love
Bronwyn Hammond
Mary Anne Holland
Barbara Summerbell
Teresa Coates
Josie Tynan
David Hall
Irene Hall

Kristen Fitzgerald
Christopher Hermann
Simon Greenwood
Howard Smith

GS McLaren of Presbyterian Ladies College

My name is Graham Alan McLaren Sussex and the McLaren comes from my great grandfather, Samuel Gilfillan McLaren who was Principal of the Presbyterian Ladies College from 1889 until he retired in 1911. So it could be said that I have a longer connection with East Melbourne than my fourteen years residence since PLC was originally located on what is now Eastbourne – just up Albert Street.

PLC was opened in 1875. Until 1989 it was known as a Ladies College in contrast to the traditional small, private, ladies' colleges of the time. It had a grand building design by Joseph Reed on its two-acre block but the building was chopped in half (see picture) because of funding issues. Further building programs ensued to relieve overcrowding - including a 50% increase in the land in 1911 to the east - but space was at a premium until the 1950s' move to Burwood.

The first Principal was Australian Rev. George Tait but both he and his academic headmaster Professor Pearson left within four years! The replacement Principal/Headmaster, Andrew Harper, was very successful but resigned those positions in 1888 when his wife died - because the rules required a married man as Principal. He did continue teaching at PLC.

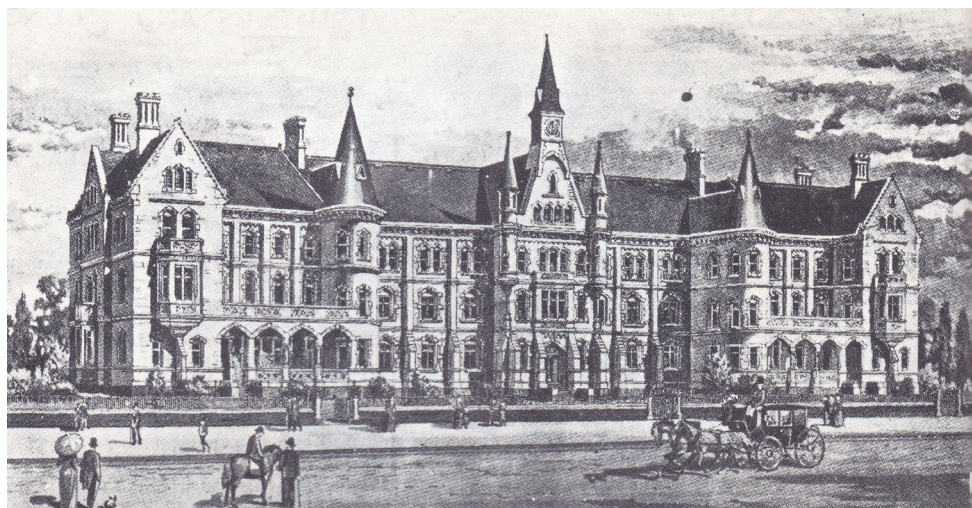
The third Principal was McLaren, another Scottish minister, who had five children, four of whom had been born during his missionary work in Japan from 1875 to 1883. Unfortunately,

McLaren was not a healthy man and was plagued with various chest complaints which cut short his time in Japan. On his return to Scotland his health did not improve so he was advised to move to the healthier, warmer climate of Australia.

Family legend has it that they left England with my grandmother, the new born Marjory, who was not expected to survive the trip although a goat was taken on board to ensure a good milk supply. Perhaps owing to the goat, baby Marjory survived the trip and the family settled into Melbourne, arriving in 1886.

McLaren was immediately appointed minister of the Coburg Presbyterian Church and Chaplin of Pentridge Goal until his appointment to PLC in 1889. The PLC centenary history by Kathleen Fitzpatrick describes Samuel as a popular Principal, empathetic and handsome, loved and admired by staff and students alike. He devoted himself to the school and did much to enhance its reputation and achievements.

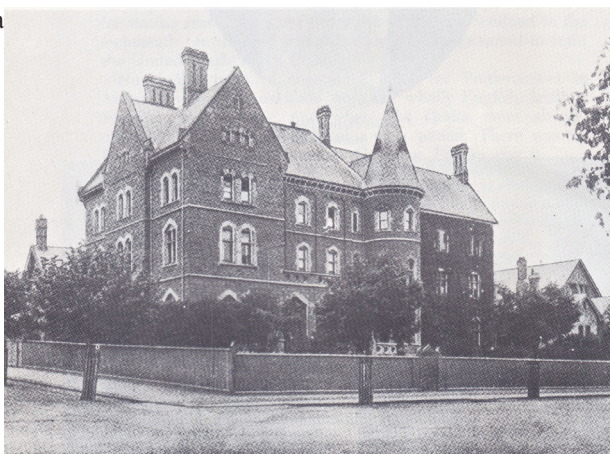
His wife was Marjory Bruce. They had four children - Bruce, Charles, Mary and Marjory – and both girls attended, and eventually taught at, PLC in East Melbourne. The PLC connection continued – my mother and sister went to PLC and except for being born a boy I would probably have given Scotch a miss and headed off to PLC. It is interesting how the names kept reoccurring – every



PLC as proposed

generation seemed to feature a Bruce, Mary, Marjory, Charles or, as in my case, a McLaren.

PLC sold the East Melbourne site to the Freemasons in 1955 and moved from East Melbourne to Burwood. That is the end of my old connection. But there is a historical question. When the Freemasons built Dallas Brooks Hall, they placed a plaque on the footpath in Albert Street – much the same as the plaques showing original sites of other large schools. During the MIRVAC building of Eastbourne the plaque was removed and no-one seems to know where it has gone. Do you?



PLC as built

Graham Alan McLaren Sussex

The Water Tank

Until the Yan Yean reservoir was built in 1857 Melbourne's early colonists had limited access to water. Certainly, many early houses were built with rain water tanks, some of them very large like the huge underground, brick-lined cistern at Bishops court, and some had wells like the house at 99 Hotham Street. But the Yarra River was the major source of supply. Several hand operated pumps were set up along the north bank where residents were able to fill their containers, or the commercial water carriers could fill their horse drawn tanks for delivery throughout Melbourne.

The swelling population soon outgrew these meagre provisions and in 1853 the Sewerage and Water Supply Commission was established. James Simpson was its president. He had arrived in Melbourne in 1836 and had held many public positions since, including magistrate. He later lived in East Melbourne, building a fledgling version of the house at 86 Wellington Parade. Simpson Street is named after him. The Commission's engineer was Matthew Bullock Jackson. The 27 year old Jackson, in contrast, had arrived from England only a few months earlier. He too later chose East Melbourne to live, at Clarendon Terrace in Clarendon Street.

The commissioners quickly made a decision to build a dam that would rely on the pristine waters of the Plenty River rather than the, by now,

soup of pollution that was the Yarra. However, it would take some years to complete, and in the short term they decided to build a huge water tank from which water could be piped to outlets around the city.

The site chosen was on Eastern Hill, near the corner of Victoria Parade and Gisborne Street, where the Eye and Ear Hospital now stands. A steam powered pumping station would be built near the Yarra opposite the eastern end of Flinders Street, on land now set aside for the new Treasury Square development. It would have a 70 horse-power engine with two double acting force pumps. Pipes would deliver water up the hill to the tank where its height would allow gravity to do the work in distributing water to the outlets.

The tank was a giant affair for its time: 40 feet (12.2 m) square and 15 feet (4.5m) deep and had a capacity of 150,000 gallons (567,810 litres). It was made in Sydney of pre-fabricated cast iron rimmed plates bolted together. It stood on an arched bluestone base built by master stonemason, John Davis. It was up and running by the end of 1854.

From 1857 the tank was switched over to receive water from Yan Yean and it continued to deliver water to public outlets until pipes could be laid to every property. Melbournians were, of course, delighted to have fresh running water to their properties, but there was one major drawback in



Water tank at Werribee. Photo: Heritage Victoria

the system. There was no provision made to get rid of the dirty water. Melbourne's gutters filled with filthy water and soon earned the city its name of Smelbourne.

It was not until 1892 that the newly established Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works began work on the Werribee Sewerage Farm, and the old water tank, together with its bluestone stand, was dismantled and re-erected at Werribee. The tank was used as a stand-by in case of mains failure up until 1925 when it ceased to provide this function. In 1929 the tank was drained. The tank still stands at Werribee and was placed on the Heritage Victoria Register in 1998.

Sylvia Black

Cutting Down City Trees

East Melbourne Streets. Central Plantations Suggested.

A proposal for the cutting down of the trees in Simpson and Powlett streets, East Melbourne, will be submitted by the parks and gardens committee to the quarterly meeting of the City Council on Monday. At present the trees are growing along each side of the streets mentioned, and it is proposed that they should be removed and central plantations established instead. The work is to be carried out from funds made available by the council for the relief of unemployment. [The Age, 7 Aug 1925, p.8]

Vernon Ransford

Vernon Ransford was an Australian Test cricketer who had a long-term connection with the East Melbourne area.

He was born Vernon Seymour Ransford in South Yarra on 20 March 1885 to Henry and Lydia Ransford. He attended Yarra Park State School, and he lived just over Punt Road at 9 Moorhouse Street, Richmond. Apparently his family had an import business, and he worked in the firm in his early working life.

Following his primary schooling at Yarra Park he attended Hawthorn College. In later years he maintained a connection with his old primary school, as he was recorded as an office-bearer of Yarra Park S.S. Old Boys' Association.

After his marriage to Ethel Colina Macrow in April 1910 Ransford and his wife lived in Vale Street, on the corner of Berry Street, overlooking the south-eastern corner of Yarra Park. His younger unmarried brother lived with them at the same address. Electoral rolls have the house being known as "Chandos".

At the time of his marriage Ransford had established himself as an opening batsman for the Melbourne Cricket Club, Victoria and Australia, and was on occasions able to ply his cricketing trade after a short stroll from his front gate to the MCG. He has been described as "the first elegant left-handed batsman", and made a strong impression on the Ashes tour of England in 1909.

Ransford was also one of the

players in the major player revolt that preceded the 1912 tour of England. Six of the leading players, including Victor Trumper, Clem Hill and Ransford clashed with the cricketing authorities about the touring arrangements, and refused to go on the tour. A highlight of the dispute was an actual fist fight between Hill and the chairman of selectors in a Test selection meeting. Gideon Haigh records that the fist fight lasted 20 minutes. The consequences of this dispute for the relationship between players and officials resonated down the decades as the fledgling national administration asserted itself; it wasn't until the Kerry Packer rebellion of 1977 that the players were able to establish some degree of stronger negotiating position with the board of Australian cricket.

This dispute together with the intervention of the First World War put an end to Ransford's career in Test cricket at a relatively young age, but he continued for some years after the war for Melbourne and Victoria, ending his first-class career with Victoria in 1925/26.

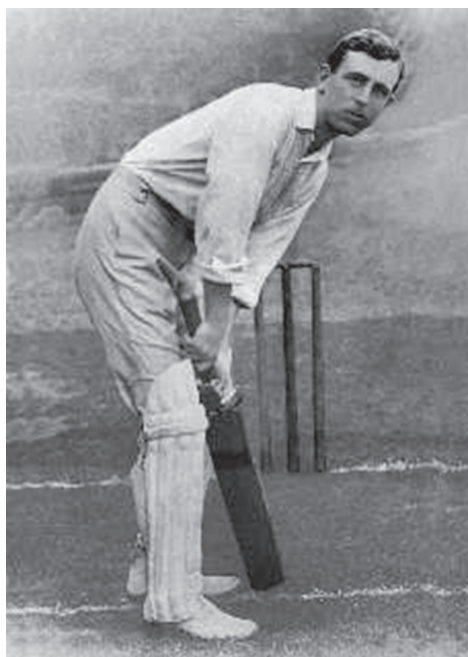
After the war Ransford continued to have a strong connection to Yarra Park in administrative capacities. When the position of secretary of the Melbourne Cricket Club came up in 1939, with the death of Hugh Trumble, Ransford was appointed out of a field of 150 candidates. He had been on the committee of the MCC since 1913. A noteworthy part of this process was that

Don Bradman was also an applicant, and it has been reported that Ransford won the position over Bradman by the narrowest of margins in the vote of the committee members; it is intriguing to wonder what might have been in Victorian cricket if the much younger Bradman had been given the nod.

Assuming the position of MCC secretary in early 1939, Ransford soon found himself dealing with the wartime use of the MCC as a base for US service personnel. According to the ADB article on him, his "courtesy and friendliness" in this role led the Americans to name the base Camp Ransford in his honour.

He held the position of MCC secretary until retiring due to ill health in 1957, shortly before his death on 19 March 1958, the day before his 73rd birthday.

Vernon Ransford was also a good footballer, but did not play at the highest level. However he was strongly connected to the Melbourne Football



Vernon Ransford

Club. He was president of the club in the 1920s and for many years was the club's delegate to the VFL.

Tim Holland

Fairies' Tree – Before and After



1872. State Library of Victoria,
Accession No. H96-160-1726.



2017.
Photo: Sylvia Black

John Glew, Brick-Maker

On 5 February 1855 the building firm of Brennand & Brooks of Collingwood notified the city council that they would build for John Glew a house in Fitzroy Street, East Melbourne. It became the house we now know as 81 Hotham Street and it is one of East Melbourne's very earliest houses.

But who was John Glew? As it turns out John Glew was a brick-maker of some note. His brick-works supplied a substantial number of Melbourne's building sites over many years of the nineteenth century.

John Glew's obituary from 1893 gives an outline of his life. He was born in Yorkshire in 1822 and arrived in Melbourne in 1849. He quickly found employment within the brick-making industry and soon was able to buy his own small patch of land in what was then known as Phillipstown, now a part of Brunswick. It was in Union Street, near the Moonee Ponds Creek, and there he started his own brick-making business. In 1860 he started a second yard in Brunswick and in 1866 bought the business of Pohlman's Paddock Brickmaking Company, also in Brunswick, then finally in 1871 he opened another business in Essendon. At the peak of his career his works were churning



81 Hotham Street (2021). Photo: Graham Shepherd

out about 4,000,000 bricks a year. He retired from business in 1884 and became a councillor for Brunswick Council and was mayor at one point.

The birth records of his eleven children reveal that only one was born in Melbourne and that the others were born in Brunswick. So possibly he only lived in East Melbourne for one or two years before moving to Brunswick where he stayed until just two years before his death. He died at Ocean Grove in 1893.

Glew sold his East Melbourne house in 1864. No doubt it was built of his own bricks and it is sad that they are now invisible under thick layers of paint. He was important in the world of brick making having been the first to produce 'fancy white bricks' and was

therefore instrumental in allowing the development of the polychrome style of architecture first seen in Melbourne at Koorine, the house designed by Joseph Reed on the corner of Powlett and George Streets, East Melbourne. Glew was said to be Joseph Reed's preferred brick maker and his bricks are also on display at the 'Gothic House' at 157 Hotham Street, another Reed house. Many of Glew's bricks are identifiable by the initials 'JG' stamped

on the frog on the underside of the brick. He won prizes for his bricks and tiles at the London Exhibition in 1850-51 and in Dublin 1863 for terra cotta ware. The Old Treasury, Parliament House, the General Post Office and the Town Hall are among the government buildings constructed of John Glew's bricks. He was the Glew that held the city together. (Sorry)

Sylvia Black

Harold Parsons – A Reprise

Keen readers may recall that I did an article in the EMHS newsletter in 2019 about Harold Parsons who was a notable figure in Melbourne in the early years of last century.

Harold lived in Hoddle Street, and attended Yarra Park State School. He achieved international fame as a motorcyclist in the early 1920s by setting a number of world records, including the world 24-hour record on a course at Sale. He died in a motorcycle crash at Epping on 15 May 1921.

His fame had certainly diminished over the decades, and I only knew of him because when I was a boy an elderly family friend who taught at Yarra Park at the time of his death used to point out the monument that was erected to him on the corner of Punt Road and Wellington Parade. It was in the form of a drinking fountain that had a tap on one side for the school pupils, and also one on the other side of the fence for thirsty members of the public passing by. When Punt Road was widened in the 1980s the monument



Harold Parsons takes a ride. PROV

was moved, minus the plumbing, about 50 metres away on to Weedon Reserve, near Tipplers.

It so happened that I was walking through there in mid-May when I was greatly surprised to see a number of wreaths at the base of the monument,



100th anniversary of Harold Parsons' death remembered (2021). Photo: Sylvia Black

including a particularly elaborate one.

On closer inspection it occurred to me that the centenary of Harold's death had just passed, and it was that which was being honoured. The Maffra Sale Motorcycle Club is named in the main wreath, and it was in the Maffra/Stratford/Sale area that Harold Parsons set a number of his records.

It was quite a remarkable thing to see the recognition in a small way of someone who had long ago disappeared from the memory of the broader public.

Tim Holland

Cover image: Yarra in flood, view from the artist's house, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne. On the right is the pumping station used to supply water to the Eastern Hill water tank. Watercolour by Charles Norton, 1862. State Library of Victoria, accession no: H88.21/59.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 16 June at 7.30.

Pre-European culture in the East Melbourne area

Gary Presland, historian and authority on Aboriginal history, will share his insights into the life and times of the Aboriginal peoples in our local area.

Wednesday, 18 August at 7.30

Cliveden Mansions – a sequel

Bruce Trethowan, heritage architect, will follow up on his earlier talk on Cliveden as the family home of Sir William Clark with the story of its conversion to luxury apartments and its new inhabitants.

Can You Contribute to Inner City News?

EMHS has agreed to contribute an article each month to our new local paper, Inner City News. This is aimed at raising awareness, knowledge and pride in our heritage with stories about people and places. Ideas and written contributions from EMHS members and others would be very welcome. If you can help please contact us on info@emhs.org.au