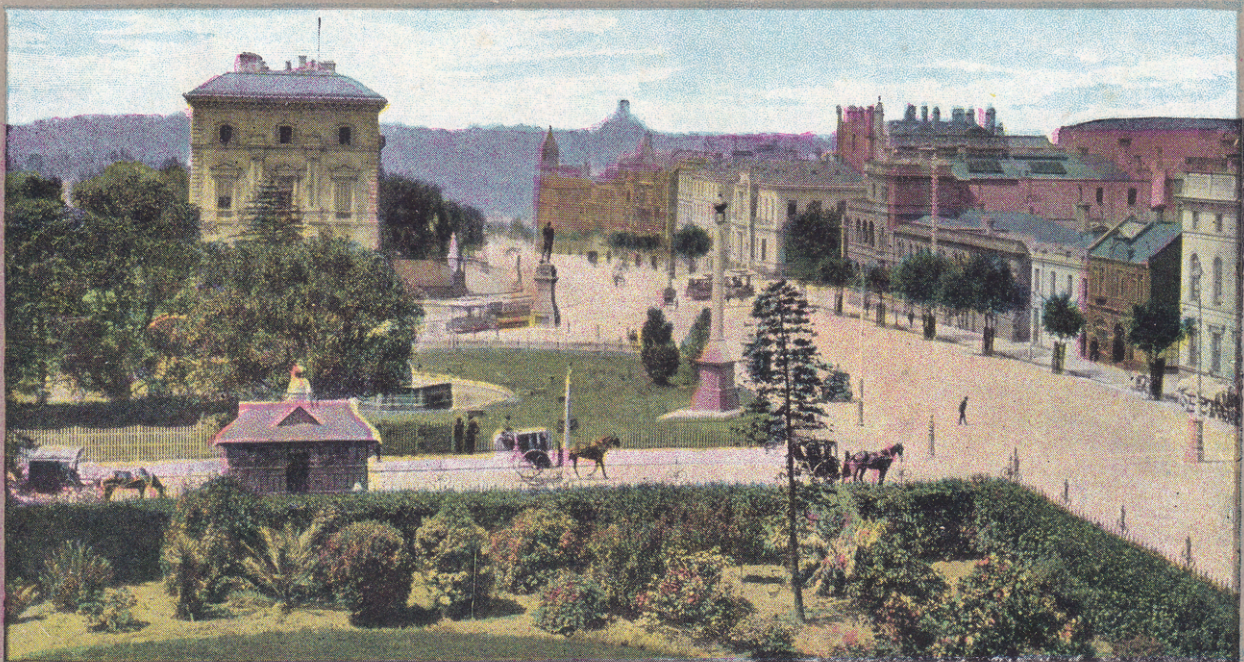


# EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Spring Street, Melbourne.

March 2023

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NEWSLETTER VOLUME TWENTY-FOUR • NUMBER ONE • ABN 61 280 547 708

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## 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.

## Committee

President	Tim Holland
Vice-president	Barbara Paterson
President	Sylvia Black
Hon.Treasurer	Malcolm Howell
Committee	Diane Clifford Jill Fenwick Ian Hind Sue Hodson Gay Sussex

## 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 organise on your behalf.

Please contact any member of our committee.

## Membership

Membership of the East Melbourne Historical Society is open to all who are interested in the history of East Melbourne.

Enquiries: [Diane Clifford](#)  
Email: [dianeclifford1@gmail.com](mailto:dianeclifford1@gmail.com)

Annual subscription **\$ 30.00**  
Guests are welcome at individual meetings, **\$ 5.00**

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**CITY OF  
MELBOURNE**

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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**

As the new year gets under way it's good to be able to look forward to a range of interesting activities ahead of us for the year as members of the East Melbourne Historical Society.

Hopefully the worst disruptive effects of COVID are behind us and we can continue the momentum as an organisation that we regained through last year. It is a tribute to the hard-working committee that we have such an engaging program of events that will be conducted throughout the year. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible as the program unfolds.

I should mention that a significant event that has occurred already this year has been the award of an OAM to Jill Fenwick in the Australia Day Honours List, in recognition of Jill's work in community history over a long period. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a more detailed report on Jill's award, but it is a recognition of an outstanding contribution down the years including her long-term role as president of our EMHS.

**Tim Holland**

February 2023

## **Welcome New Members**

Susan Phillips	Annette Allerdin
Lee Mullen	Catherine Gerrard

## JILL FENWICK AWARDED OAM - OUR CONGRATULATIONS

by Mary Ryllis Clark



Jill Fenwick OAM. Photo Graham Shepherd

Formidable Loreto Sister, Professor Margaret Manion, was a young teacher of English Literature and French at Mary's Mount Ballarat when Jill was a boarder and described her as a fine example of a Loreto education – 'a critical thinker, a great reader and articulate'.

These are qualities that have distinguished Jill throughout her working life. Jill did an Arts Degree at the University of Melbourne, a Diploma of Education at Monash University followed by a Masters at La Trobe University.

Jill taught History and English for twenty-three years in Victorian schools. During this time she wrote *South Africa from Settlement to Self-determination* with Carole Rosenhain and *Liberating France* with Judy Anderson, now in its fourth edition. Lawyer Laura Douglas, taught by Jill at St Catherine's, claims she and a friend were so inspired by their study of the history of revolutions, they joined the youth arm of the Democratic Socialist Party, went to meetings in their school uniform and sold the party newspaper to the school library.

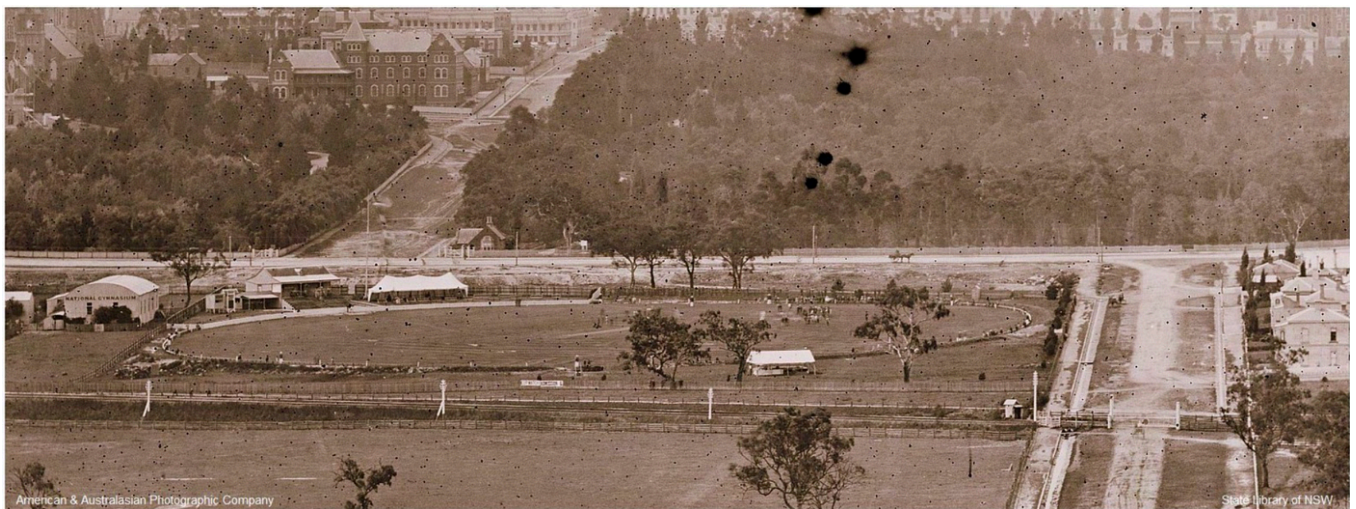
Jill made an extraordinary contribution to community life in East Melbourne, notably as President of the East Melbourne Historical Society from 2006-2019. Committee member Graham Shepherd describes Jill's emphasis was leading in the true sense of leadership – collaboratively: 'Everybody was with her, everybody was acknowledged'. Jill's most recent contribution to the cultural life of East Melbourne was to write *History Matters*, a history of the East Melbourne Group, launched on 27 February 2023. She has been given a life membership of the East Melbourne Group.

## EAST MELBOURNE CRICKET GROUND

*by Tim Holland*

It is probably not widely known that for many years there was a substantial sporting oval on the corner of Wellington Parade and Jolimont Road. This was the East Melbourne Cricket Ground (“EMCG”) which was in operation from 1860 until 1921. As can be seen from the accompanying photo the area occupied was opposite the Fitzroy Gardens, at the intersection of Lansdown Street with Wellington Parade.

These days the land that was occupied by the EMCG is built over with apartments, although for many years the land formed part of the Jolimont rail yards following the closure of the ground in 1921.



*East Melbourne Cricket Ground*  
*Photo : Beaufoy Merlin (State Library of NSW)*

With reference to the photograph of the EMCG I wondered how it had been taken, as it seems to be from a balloon, given the elevation. However, research that I did at the MCC Library showed that the photo was part of a panorama taken from atop the Government House tower in the Domain and taking in a wide sweep north of the river. There is a similar image of the MCG and Yarra Park from the same panoramic shot.

While the EMCG did not have the same prestige and storied sporting history as its more illustrious near neighbour, the MCG, it did have a very interesting history.

Opened in 1860 the oval appears to have been initially intended to be used primarily as a cricket ground. It was the home of the East Melbourne Cricket Club (EMCC) for the entire time that the oval was in operation. EMCC was a powerful club in Victorian cricket, along with its rival Melbourne, based a short walk away at the MCG. With the closure of the ground in 1921 the EMCC moved to Glenferrie Oval,

merging with Hawthorn Cricket Club to form the Hawthorn-East Melbourne club. At the time of the closure of the ground one of the grandstands was removed and relocated with the cricket club to Glenferrie Oval where it served until construction of a new grandstand in 1965.

Apart from hosting the home matches of the EMCC the ground was also the venue for four games of first-class cricket. Three of those were games that Victoria played against other colonies in the 1880s, but the fourth one was an eye-catcher to the 21st century observer.

This was a game between two entities known as the Smokers and the Non-Smokers. This was held in March 1887; as it happens, on the 10th anniversary of the very first Test, held at the MCG, and was played while an English team was here for an Ashes tour. The participants were a mixture of players from the visiting English team, the Australian team and other colonial players. Reports of the match have it that the Smokers took to the field smoking cigars!

As if the circumstances of the match were not strange enough, the contest provided a then-world record first-class score of 803 set by the Non-Smokers, seemingly providing an early unheeded clue about the effect of tobacco on sporting performance. The scoring record has since been surpassed on about 20 occasions in venues across the world; as it happens the two highest ever first-class innings scores were both set across the park at the MCG in the 1920s by Victoria, and those records still stand.

It must say something about the benefits to batters of the famed (often maligned!) Merri Creek soil that formed the basis of the batting pitches at those two neighbouring grounds.

As time went on the EMCG acquired greater spectator capacity, including grandstands, and was used for other sports. As happened at many cricket grounds in Victoria and later around the country, Australian Rules football became the main user of the EMCG, and presumably a greater source of revenue for the venue. Football games were played commencing in 1878 at the EMCG.

The first ruling body of football in Victoria was the VFA, and in 1879 they conducted the very first interstate game, a match between Victoria and South Australia. This was played at the EMCG, so the honour of being the birthplace of interstate football is another EMCG achievement.

In a further quirk in the stadium's history, EMCG became the home ground of the Essendon Football Club from 1882 till the closure of the ground in 1921. Google Maps puts the venue at around 11 kms from the heart of the suburb of Essendon. The Same Olds, as the club was then known, won 8 flags between 1891 and 1911 while EMCG was their home ground. They had a minor premiership drought from 1911, but this was fixed soon after relocating to Windy Hill, with dual premierships in 1923/24. A successful move, it would seem.

AFL records indicate that there were in total 426 matches played at the ground, including 30 VFA finals and 3 VFL finals. Apart from Essendon, the venue was the home ground of North Melbourne for a year (1897) and for University in the VFL for three years (1908-1910). It was also the home ground of three other short-lived clubs in the VFA in the years before World War I.

Crowd numbers at the ground seem to have been on a par with other venues at the time, and when more than 36,000 attended an Essendon/South Melbourne match in 1891 it was a record attendance for a football game in Victoria to that time.

One VFL Grand Final was held there, that being the 1900 edition won by Melbourne for its first premiership; this meant that when the Demons won the 2021 flag in Perth they became the third team to have won VFL/AFL premierships at 3 different venues, joining Richmond (MCG, Gabba, Junction Oval) and Essendon (MCG, Lake Oval, Princes Park).

Perhaps the most infamous event associated with the ground was the scheduled 1904 VFA Grand Final, a match that didn't actually occur. This game had quite a build up to it. Richmond had been the powerhouse club in the VFA following the split of the more powerful clubs to form the VFL in 1897. They had let North Melbourne in for their first ever premiership in 1903 and were out for revenge in 1904. Richmond finished top

of the ladder but stumbled again in the first semi-final against North. In that match Richmond were not happy with the rough tactics of the Shinboners and the performance of Umpire Allen allowing things to get out of hand as they saw it.

Accordingly, having earned the right to play off in the Grand Final against North, Richmond wrote to the VFA to say that they would boycott the match if Umpire Allen were appointed. The VFA seemingly had no option but to appoint him. Richmond proved true to their word and boycotted the game, thereby providing North Melbourne with their second flag – a win by default.

An interesting coda to this 1904 episode is that in all the tumult of that Grand Final week, Umpire Allen made a report to the VFA about the severely rough play of three of the players in the Preliminary Final between North and Footscray, which match was marked by a considerable amount of spite. According to Allen, 18yo North Melbourne centre-half forward Tom Holland's conduct was "absolutely the start of the disgraceful exhibition which followed and to that player he gave the most blame".

The outcome of this was that on the day before the Grand Final the VFA suspended Holland and two others for 12 months each, a huge penalty.

Despite this 'Tom Holland, who was my grandfather, was the recipient of a watch chain and medallion inscribed "North Melbourne, VFA Premiers 1904, won by T. Holland".

I am the current custodian of that medal; I only recently discovered this detail through Trove research and am still amazed at the whole story and particularly how he was eligible to obtain such a memento. He did at least get to play again on the EMCG during his later brief football career with Collingwood in the VFL.

*Tom Holland  
wearing his Premiership medal*



## CHRISTMAS MORNING FIRE AT MERCY HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN

*By Sue Hodson*

Nobody wants to be in hospital for Christmas, and fortunately all the patients who were fit for discharge had been sent home on Christmas Eve. However, new patients and very ill patients requiring on-going care remained at the Mercy Hospital for Women in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne. At 3am on Christmas morning, 25 December 2004, fire broke out in the hospital basement. Dense black smoke filled the basement, first floor and the eighth and ninth floors. Essential services such as medical gas, suction, and air-conditioning were unable to function after the fire spread from the switchboard to other control boards co-located in the basement.

Fires in hospitals have special difficulties, compared for instance to a fire in a school or shopping centre. Oxygen is highly flammable so it must be carefully controlled and monitored when there is a fire in its close vicinity. Some patients are able to walk, but a proportion will be bed-ridden. Some will be confused or have dementia. Medical treatment often needs to be continued during the evacuation. At the Mercy, there were women in labour, and women who hadn't recovered from the leg weakness caused by epidural anaesthetics. But there were also 44 babies in the special care nursery and the neonatal intensive care.

Babies in neonatal intensive care are the smallest, sickest babies, often on supplementary oxygen. Arrangements were made to transfer these high need babies in humidicribs with cylinders of oxygen, and escorted by their usual nurses to the other newborn intensive care units at the Royal Women's Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Hospital. Their nurses stayed with them after their transfer, working at the receiving hospitals.



*Ambulance officers remove a humidicrib.  
Sunday Herald Sun, 26 Dec 2004*

The babies in the special care nursery had moved beyond critical, intensive care. Most were premature babies who had not reached the date when their birth was expected, and because of their immaturity and small size, they needed frequent feeds, often by a tube, and small frequent doses if they were on medication. They were nursed in cribs wrapped in blankets and had graduated out of humidicribs.

For the evacuation of these small babies, the nurses donned special 'kangaroo aprons' with three large pockets in the front. Babies were tucked into each pocket, with their records and the medications required for at least the next twelve hours placed with them, so that everything needed for their on-going care was at hand. A temporary special care nursery was established at the Mercy Private Hospital, and some babies were admitted at the Royal Children's Hospital into a designated special care ward for Mercy Hospital babies with their Mercy Hospital nurses. In hospital fires, evacuation is a last resort. Hospitals are designed so that separate floors, and areas on each floor which can be isolated by fire-doors. Unfortunately at the Mercy fire, evacuation was unavoidable, because smoke circulated via the air-conditioning ducts. Sixty women in the hospital who

were able to walk were shepherded across a pedestrian bridge on the fifth floor which linked the Mercy Hospital with the adjacent Mercy Private Hospital. Because it was Christmas, there were more vacant beds than usual. Bed-bound patients were transferred to other hospitals including St Vincent's Private Hospital and Royal Women's Hospital.

A temporary delivery ward and two extra operating theatres were established within days at the Mercy Private Hospital. Ironically, the Mercy Hospital for Women was due for transfer to a new building located in Heidelberg in April 2005. Repairs were undertaken at the Clarendon St site, enabling hospital services to resume two weeks after the fire, during the interrum before services commenced at Heidelberg. The evacuation had served as a practise run for the hospital relocation!

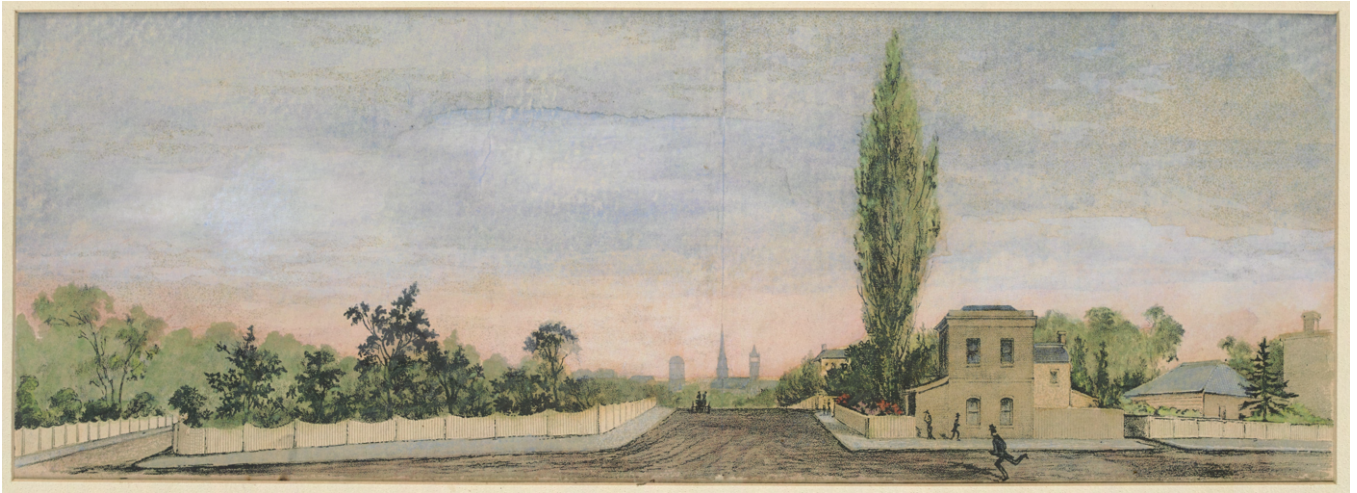
It was not anticipated that an evacuation would be required, but this fire disaster demonstrated features which had not been seen in previous hospital fires, and evacuation became necessary. Fortunately, there was spare capacity in Melbourne's hospitals because they had been emptied for Christmas, and this hospital fire and evacuation were smoothly handled. The management of this event has been studied around the world, and it has contributed a page to the history book of East Melbourne.

## **PORTABLE HOUSES**

*by Sylvia Black*

In 2021 the Portable Buildings World Heritage Nomination Task Force was established. Made up of a group of dedicated specialists devoted to the history and preservation of portable buildings the task force's aim is to have all of Australia's 100-plus known portable buildings nominated for world heritage listing. Over 60 of these buildings are in Victoria.

Portable buildings were mainly domestic, but not always, and could be anything from one room cabins up to quite substantial multi-roomed houses, some even two storied. They were prefabricated kit homes, with all components made to measure and all fastenings supplied. Usually they were made of wood, but iron was popular. Zinc and even papier maché was also used. They came from all over the world, mostly England and Scotland, but also including America, Sweden, Italy, New Zealand, India and Singapore.



*Hoddle Street, 1870s, with portable house to right.  
State Library of Victoria.*

It is a huge undertaking. While most of the buildings have been registered at State level, many have not. They must all be registered with their relevant state heritage bodies before being nominated for, and achieving, national heritage listing. Only then can they be nominated by the Federal Government for world heritage listing.

Exhaustive research must be carried out on each building. To that end the task force invited members of historical societies and heritage groups who have portable buildings within their areas to participate in the hope that local knowledge would uncover additional information.

East Melbourne, once home to many of these houses, now has none. The last to go was at 114 Grey Street, imported from New Zealand in 1853 by Henry Cooke, demolished in the 1960s and now the site of the Unitarian Church. However three houses still existing are known to have been erected originally in East Melbourne and later moved, and so the East Melbourne Historical Society was invited to assist.

One of these houses is Latrobe's Cottage, now in the Domain in South Yarra. Its history has been extensively explored and no extra information was needed. But of the other two one had been transported to Mount Macedon and although it was known to have come from East Melbourne the exact address was not known. So that was our first challenge. The second was a house that started life in Hoddle Street, near the corner of Wellington Parade, where Ascot Lodge now stands. Again the history of this house has been well explored but our task was to find a picture of it in its original setting.

By sifting through Trove, that wonderful collection of digitised newspapers available online, the first question was solved. An ad in *The Argus* of 22 July 1881 announced that an auction would be held on site in Grey Street comprising, 'The whole of the building materials comprised In a Seven roomed Wooden House, slate roof, and outhouses &c.' All building materials were to be removed within seven days from day of sale. This was the wooden house erected by merchant, James Raven, in Grey Street on the eastern corner of what is now known as Verona Lane, on part of the Mercy Private Hospital site. It was bought by Professor John Simeon Elkington, professor of history at Melbourne University, and transported by horse and dray to Mt Macedon, where it still stands and is known as Penola. It is now a large house of 20 rooms, and the extensions have largely concealed the original old house. James Raven died only three years after moving into his house and it was sold to Mrs Brentani. She was still the owner in 1881 and it was she who decided the wooden house had to go in order that she could build two up-to-date brick terraces on the site.



114 Grey Street, c.1963. Photo John T Collins.  
State Library of Victoria

The State Library was able to resolve the second challenge with a small painting of the Hoddle Street cottage in situ. This house was erected just a month prior to James Raven's house and was at the time described as a Singapore cedar house. It was smaller than the other, just four rooms. Charles Featherstone Griffiths, commission agent, was the owner. The house changed hands a few times before coming into the possession of Edward Talbot, estate and commission agent, and his wife, Sarah, about 1870. In 1899 it was among several properties



*La Trobe's cottage, 1875. WFE Liardet, artist.  
State Library Victoria*

compulsorily acquired by the Victorian Railways in preparation for the new railway line through Jolimont. The Victorian Railways then sold most of these houses as building materials for removal. John Harkins bought the timber cottage for his newly married sister and had it moved and re-erected in Mentone. It stayed in the family until 1984 when it was bought by Mentone Grammar who wanted to demolish it to make way for improvements to the school. This caused a great deal of controversy locally and a campaign was mounted to save it. Eventually it was bought by Andrew Muir, a collector of such buildings and a member of the taskforce. It was transported by him to his own property in Sackville Street, Collingwood, where it remains to this day, still in pieces.

Andrew would dearly love to find some land where he could erect the cottage once again. It has occurred to us that the old police station site on the corner of Wellington Parade and Vale Street would be perfect. With the help of the East Melbourne Group and others we are tentatively trying to find a way to make this happen. The path is full of hurdles and success is by no means certain.

## TIGER! TIGER!

by Sylvia Black

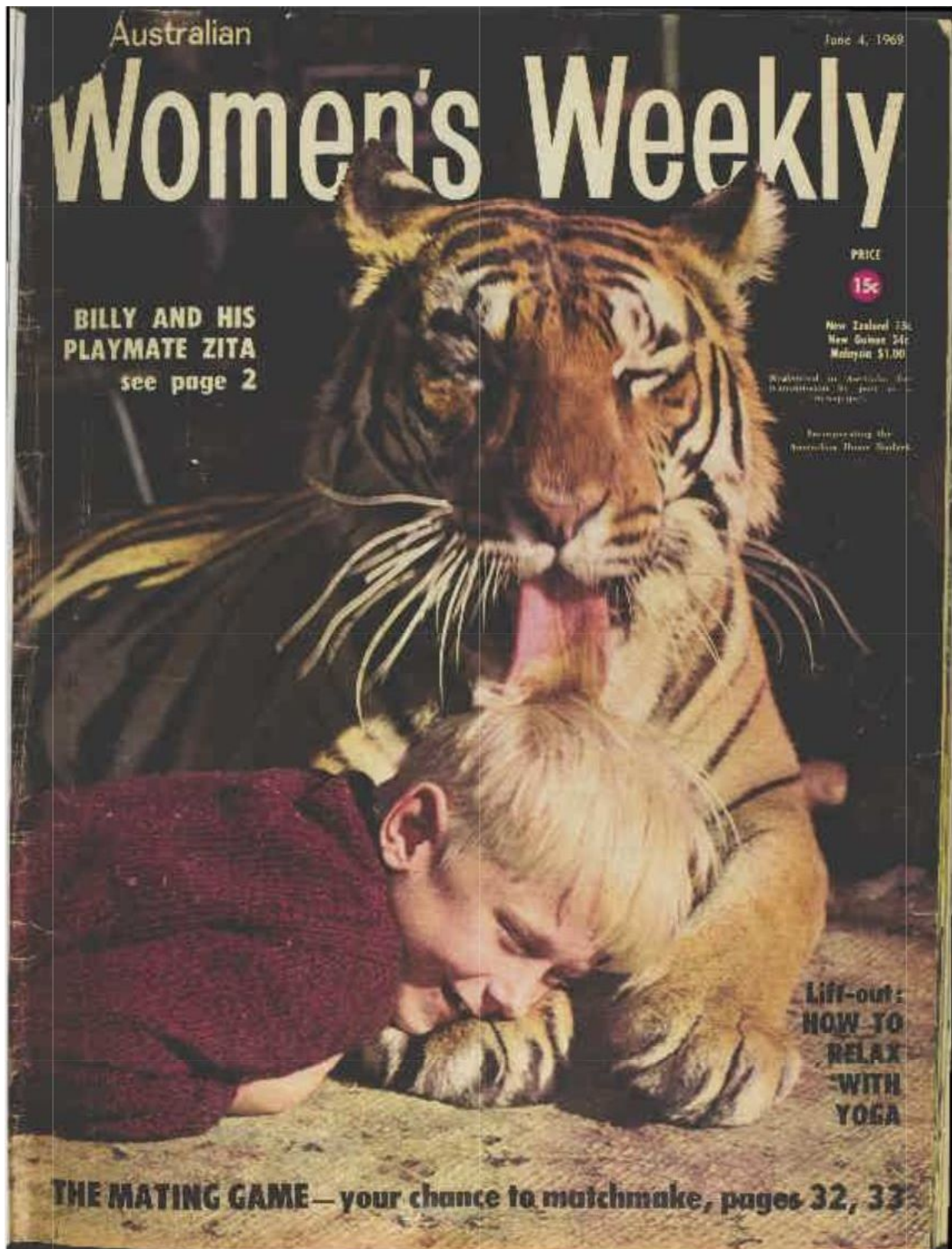
*MELBOURNE, Friday. — Two tame tigers have been ordered out of the back yard of the Balzac Restaurant, in East Melbourne, by a city health inspector. They are owned by a former circus trainer, Mr Heinz Naumann, who took them away from Ashton's circus because they had to dive into water that was "too cold". He has now arranged to rent a house with five acres of land near Warrandyte, an outer suburb. The owner of the restaurant, Mr John Kornyei, said he got on "very well indeed" with the tigers.*

*[The Canberra Times, 10 May 1969, p.1]*

This mildly alarming piece of news recently came to light and it seemed worth delving a little further into the story. In 1969 Naumann was said to have been training tigers for 25 years but it is hard to find any information about him before 1960. Then he had been working with Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus in America but there had been a falling out over ownership of some tigers. Naumann claimed that he was given four cubs and asked to destroy them but that he took them home and looked after them instead. Ringling then wanted them back. There was a court case but it seems Naumann lost. He spent the next few years as an independent performer, not associated with any particular company but employed as a guest artist by circuses in America, Europe and England. For his signature act he had trained a tiger, Zita, to jump from a tower, said to be fifty-feet (15.24m) high, into a tank of water.

This was the act he brought to Australia to perform at Ashton's Circus which had set up in Burnley Oval for the 1968-69 summer holiday season. Zita was undoubtedly the gentlest of giants, allowing Billy, Nauman's eight-year old son, to treat her just like any ordinary pet cat. How Zita and her tiger friend came to live behind the Balzac (now The Tippler) remains a mystery.

If anyone can shed any light on this story please let us know.



*Zita with Billy Naumann.  
Women's Weekly, 4 Jun 1969*

## COMING EVENTS

### The Men who went to War

7:30pm Wednesday 19 April 2023

East Melbourne Library,  
122 George Street, East Melbourne



In 2014, Major-General Mike O'Brien gave us a list of men with a connection to East Melbourne who had volunteered for the 1st World War.

As a result of enthusiastic volunteers, we now have an archive of around 600 war records, some of which we would like to share with you at our April meeting.

With Mike O'Brien as compere, five E.M.H.S. members will each tell a story drawn from our archives, of a local man who volunteered to fight and what became of him.

*Honour Roll wall plaque  
Holy Trinity Church, East Melbourne  
Photo : Rev'd Grant Edgcumbe*

*Cover Image :  
Spring Street. c.1900. Postcard.*

*Looking south from the roof of Parliament House. The Old Treasury is the most prominent building. Cable-trams trundle down Gisborne and Collins Streets. In the foreground is Carpentaria Place with the cabman's shelter, built 1898, as its main feature. Hansom cabs wait for customers nearby. Carpentaria Place has gone and the cabman's shelter has been removed to Yarra Park, near Brunton Avenue.*

*It is on the Heritage Victoria Register.*