

# EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



March 2024

## 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
Hon. Secretary	Sylvia Black
Hon. Treasurer	Malcolm Howell
Committee Members	Diane Clifford Sue Hodson Liz Rushen Marita McCabe 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**

Affiliated with  
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria

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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

A wonderful Christmas party topped off a great year of EMHS activities in 2023, with Krystyna Campbell-Pretty again generously making her home available for a very convivial evening.

With 2024 underway, our active committee has developed another interesting roster of events and activities for members over the next 12 months. Again it was Krystyna Campbell-Pretty who provided the opening event of the year, hosting an afternoon private tour at the NGV highlighting works of art and other items that she has donated to the NGV. Those who attended a similar tour in February last year were not surprised at what an enjoyable event it was. We are very appreciative of Krystyna's wonderful ongoing support of EMHS.

Our next upcoming event is a talk at our April meeting by Louise Voll Box on The Johnston Collection, further details elsewhere in the newsletter.

A matter of some significance in 2024 is that it marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of EMHS. It's been a 25 years that the members can be proud of, and we look forward to celebrating the anniversary during the year. Further details will be announced as the year progresses.

**Tim Holland**

February 2024

## Welcome to our New Members

Warwick Bisley	Esther Lewin	Karen Ferguson	Andrew Walpole
Paulette Bisley	Miriam de Bartolo	Peter Walker	Peter Hendrikson
Alan Seale	Serge de Bartolo	Marion Black	Carmel Sandiford
Robyn Seale	Deborah Browne	Marie Walpole	Doug Sandiford
Jenny Kearney	Robyn Schubert	Ian Gawler	Elizabeth Heathcote
Ruth Gawler	Peter Schubert	Suellan Downs	

*by Sue Hodson*

John E. Barry was a gentleman shaped by unusual circumstances.

His father, Sir John (Jack) Vincent Barry rose to become a Supreme Court Judge, and was known for his advocacy of social justice, and his strong opposition to capital punishment. As a young adult, John V Barry turned away from his Catholic upbringing, and his integrity was demonstrated when he married Ethel Pryor in 1930 in a civil ceremony in the registry office, a radical action at that time. Ethel was an elegant woman, and she was mother to two children, John and his older sister, Joan. Her early death from Hodgkin's disease in 1943 left John Senior caring for his young children at the same time that his career as a lawyer and a criminologist was expanding. John Edward Barry was sent to board at Koornong School at Warrandyte, set in the eucalypt scrub beside the Yarra River. This unorthodox school, founded by Clive and Janet Nield followed a liberal educational philosophy which the founders had experienced in Europe. Pupils voted for their own laws, and the curriculum was based on integrated learning. The students cared for a large menagerie of animals, including a crocodile, and John Edward Barry talked of his experience of making mud bricks to construct buildings at the school. Art and physical activity, including swimming in the Yarra, were encouraged. John retained life-long contact with his friends from Koornong.

After the school closed in 1947, because of poor financial management, John completed his secondary education at Melbourne High School, where he excelled. With his matriculation, John was accepted to study Medicine at Melbourne University. However, during his first year he realized that his interests did not lie in that vocation, so he left for an extended 'Gap year' when he explored other options, ranging from the time he spent in the army reserve, undertaking officer training, to his time spent working at Port Pirie.

When he returned to Melbourne, he commenced his career which spanned over a decade as a stockbroker.

John met his future wife, Arda (1932-2013), at the Oriental Hotel (33 Collins St) and in 1960 they married in a civil ceremony. Arda had arrived in Australia in 1949 after five years in displaced persons' camps in Germany. She had been born in Latvia, and witnessed the Russian invasion in 1940, from the relative safety of a country home. Tragically her mother died two years later. In 1944 Arda and her father, Hugo, escaped from Latvia, and commenced the slow journey which would bring them to Australia. After her arrival she caught up on her missed years of schooling and matriculated to attend Melbourne University where she obtained her degree in Architecture. As an architect, Arda worked for Myer and was involved in the design of the cross-street

elevated walkway linking the two city sites. She became known for her work in her niche area and designed several ski lodges at Falls Creek. John and Arda both loved skiing. John was a natural athlete, who played tennis at a high level, and skied proficiently. He loved swimming, and in his later years he loved his time at Portsea.

During their early married years, John and Arda lived in a number of different houses in Brighton, and their daughter, Ina, and son, Matthew, attended the local schools. Later the family lived in Armadale.

In 1983, Arda and John moved to East Melbourne, because many good friends already lived here. Their residence, Lisieux, at 100 George Street had been built in 1933 as a two-storey block of flats, in the neo-Georgian style, with five flats on each level. When it was built, it was 'set amongst poplars and Morton Bay fig trees'. Arda refurbished Lisieux, converting the upper floor into family accommodation, and included separate offices for herself and John. On the ground level, five flats were retained. A former tenant who lived at Lisieux for twenty years shared her experience of the community of 100 George Street. Gatherings for all the residents were enjoyed several times each year, and residents knew each other.

John began a new career as a vigneron in 1970 when his first vines were planted at Mount Avoca Winery. He had purchased a 400-acre property at Avoca in central Victoria, in one of the oldest wine regions in Australia. He prepared by undertaking studies at Charles Sturt University in Wagga, in their viticulture courses. In the early 1970s John copied the cutting-edge Israeli innovation of drip-irrigation but had to develop his own appliances. In the 1980s he was a pioneer in the AusVit minimal spray program, which aimed to reduce the use of fungicides and insecticides in vineyards. A natural progression from this undertaking led to the development of organic strategies being implemented on the property. Australian Organic Classification was awarded in 2013. Ownership of Mount Avoca Winery has passed to John's son Matthew.

In 2013 Arda died unexpectedly, causing stunned grief.

This was the time when I moved to East Melbourne and met John, who was a neighbour in George Street. I found a man who had a love of nature and with a sense of confidence when he was outdoors, on a beach or at a winery. His years as a stockbroker informed him but did not shape him. He matured while he nurtured his vineyard into existence, but I met him in his autumn years in East Melbourne, in the company of his second partner, Myra Sutton Anderson.

John and Myra were well known locally. They regularly joined the first Sunday lunch group, and they participated in the East Melbourne Historical Society events. John was always a generous listener who had time to talk with his neighbours. He regularly met the ladies at their George Street coffee mornings, sharing in good humour and with gentlemanly charm. He accepted the title 'Captain' when he was wearing his yachting

cap. John and Myra were often seen at the local restaurant, Geppetto's, and their warm affection for each other was evident to all their friends.

John's passing in late December 2023 was unexpected, despite his age of ninety years. Throughout his life, he had been bright and dapper. He was a true gentleman, and he was ahead of his time in the many ways that his life demonstrated. Members of the East Melbourne Historical Society extend their sympathy to Myra, Ina, Matthew and their children.

## CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to committee member and co-founder of EMHS, Liz Rushen AM, for being awarded a Commendation in the History Publication Award category of the recent Victorian Community History Awards 2023. Her book, *Garryowen Unmasked: The Life of Edmund Finn*, tells the story of this Irish immigrant, journalist, raconteur and eyewitness to the development of the Port Phillip District. He is best known as the author of *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835-1852*, a lively account of pre-separation Victoria.

Liz's book is available at the Royal Historical Society Bookshop, 239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne or online at: <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/bookshop/> .

## UNDERCOVER POLICING IN THE PUNT ROAD PRECINCT CIRCA 1916

*by Tim Holland*

Sylvia and I have been helping Ian Hind in researching biographies of the ex-students of Yarra Park State School whose names appear on the First World War Honor Roll (and yes, “Honor” is the way it is spelt on the board). This is in conjunction with Ian’s project of writing and publishing a history of the Yarra Park school. The school closed in 1987, and the site on the corner of Punt Road and Wellington Parade is now apartments.

Sifting through lots of service records and other research material throws up many interesting stories, but I was particularly taken by what I found in the service file on one of the former Yarra Park pupils, Arthur Gustave Schlippe. It is worth relating here.

Arthur was born in Albert Park in 1893, and as far as I could see had a rather uneventful life outside his war experiences, according to the public record. He did suffer gunshot wounds to his face, arm and thigh in France which hospitalised him for 6 weeks and caused his early return to Australia in mid-1918, and that’s certainly not “uneventful” in most people’s lives. On his return to Australia he lived back in Richmond, Bendigo and Richmond again as a printer and labourer before dying in 1951 aged 57 and apparently unmarried.

What caught my attention in his service file is that on enlistment in early September 1916 his name was referred to an entity known as the Richmond District Confidential Recruiting Committee (RDCRC). This was a body that consisted of the Mayor of Richmond and apparently four Richmond councillors.

In keeping with the third word of the title of this body there is no information available on its activities - its secrets have remained safe for 110 years! It seems that the purpose of the RDCDC was to make enquiries and report on the fealty to the Australian cause of particular individuals about whom there might be some uncertainty in that regard. In other words, doing due diligence on possible traitorous types who might be seeking to join the military.

It isn’t clear how the referral of Arthur Schlippe’s name to the RDCDC occurred and who did the referring, but it would seem to be a fair bet that it was the German-sounding name that triggered the interest. I am aware that during WW1 there was a lot of antipathy to things German on the Home Front, and there was

internment of “enemy aliens”, but I was unaware of the existence of bodies such as the RDCDC.

The report on Arthur Schlippe was done by Constable Thomas Lynch of Richmond Police. He said that he “made confidential enquiries in the vicinity of 9 Mulberry Street (Richmond) respecting the loyalty and integrity of Arthur Gustave Schlippe”. While Constable Lynch called them “confidential enquiries” it would be surprising if the fact of a local copper asking questions about a young resident in the back streets of Richmond would have stayed confidential for very long in the neighbourhood.

What Constable Lynch found was that Arthur “is spoken of as a quiet inoffensive young man who leads a very reserved life, attends church regularly, and altogether his general demeanour would convey the impression that he was not antagonistic to the Allies”. The report also gave quite a bit of detail about his work situation as a printer in Queen Street, including his salary, and the indefatigable Constable Lynch also provided details of the marital travails of Arthur’s mother.

Arthur Schlippe was given clearance by the RDCDC and was able to go off to the killing fields of France, where he managed to avoid losing his life but did incur injuries serious enough to have him repatriated to Australia, as mentioned in an earlier paragraph.

There were quite a few Yarra Park alumni who had German names, but there is no record in their files of the vetting that Arthur Schlippe received. One of these Yarra Park alumni, Henry Kohlmeyer, changed his name by deed poll to Cole, but waited till 1919 before he did so. Kohlmeyer was a decorated soldier, winning a Military Medal, but it is not clear why he changed his name, and why he did so in 1919 after the War had finished.

Coming from a predominantly Irish background myself I found a certain irony in the fact that Shlippe’s allegiance was being investigated by someone named Tom Lynch only weeks after the Easter Rebellion in Dublin, and in an environment where there was strong questioning in some quarters about the loyalty to the Crown of Irish Catholics in Australia.

For those interested I should say that service records are available for perusal online at the National Archives of Australia website. As the old TV line goes “there are a million stories there”.



## THE EAST MELBOURNE CELLARS

*By Jill Fenwick OAM*

Compared to other suburbs, East Melbourne has very few shops. There's the General Store in Hotham Street, a haven for coffee drinkers as well as providing a wide range of goods to the local population. Then there's the strip of shops along Wellington Parade, the 7-Eleven, the Drycleaners, the Post Offices and a number of restaurants – Il Duca and Geppetto's and The Tippler - and a small number of take away places.

In Powlett Street, however, there's a gem of a building, the East Melbourne Cellars, dating back to 17 October 1874, when Mr Thomas Boyle notified the Melbourne City Council of his intention to have William Weir of Clifton Hill build him a two storey house, with a single level cellar underneath. on the corner of Powlett and Hotham Streets. Three days later, Mr Weir advertised for tenders from rubblewallers and bricklayers. By May 1875, the house was built and Mr Boyle and family had moved in. He then gave notice that he would apply for a grocer's licence for the premises.

Thomas Boyle died eighteen months later and his widow, Hannah, took over the business. In March 1882, she applied for 'a certificate authorising the issue of a special, temporary grocer's licence.' The advertisement in the Argus listing the application came under Publicans' Licences, possibly the first time the shop became licensed to sell alcohol.



*Powlett Mansions. Photo by Graham Shepherd, 2023*

Hannah Boyle retired from the business in 1911 and it was leased by Hennessy Brothers, who also had a similar business on the corner of Bridge Road and Lennox Street, Richmond. After Hannah's death in 1913, John Hennessy bought the freehold. Hannah's probate papers described the premises as a 'Brick building, Shop, Hall, Drawing Room and Kitchen on ground floor, and five rooms – bathroom and balcony upstairs. Also (in yard) brick store, stable and loft. Known as Numbers 69 and 71 Powlett Street.'

The Hennessy Brothers kept the shop until 1917, and then in 1920 transferred the licence, to Alfred Tennyson Davidson, who then sold it to Herbert Stanley Lee in 1920. By 1923, the licence was held by Horace Hewitt and this is where major changes began. At some stage the shop was extended to include what is now the ground floor apartment in Powlett Street, and two additional cellars were added. This all sounds very peaceful, but in 1921, Herbert Lee was held up at gunpoint and robbed of the day's takings of eighty pounds. In 1933, a break-in saw the theft of 'cocktails, cigarettes and tobacco, to the total value of 36 pounds.'

In the early 1930s, the brick store, the stables and loft disappeared and a block of apartments was built around the small shop, leaving intact much of the interior shopfittings, including fine timber shelves, leadlights and arched openings. Designed by noted architect, I.G. Anderson, they were in the Art Deco style and the new building was named Powlett Mansions.

Ilfie Gordon Anderson was a prolific architect and designed many buildings around East Melbourne. Best known is the Garden Avenue complex but slightly earlier and concurrent with the construction of Powlett Mansions two other local apartment buildings were erected to his designs: Dorijo at 458 Victoria Parade and the apartments at 97 Albert Street known as Tunbridge Manor. All are quite different in appearance and together demonstrate Anderson's versatility.

In the 1990s the old stratum title, a single title for the whole building, was replaced by individual strata titles for each apartment.



## EMMELINE PRITCHARD: ARTIST OF EAST MELBOURNE

*By Sylvia Black*

Recently our neighbour, Krystyna Campbell-Pretty, bought for the National Gallery of Victoria a painting of the Botanical Gardens by Emmeline Pritchard, dated 1874. This represents the earliest painting by an Australian woman artist in the gallery's collection. It is a significant addition to the collection in redressing its historical gender imbalances. It was a focal point of our recent guided tour of the gallery's collection of paintings by women artists kindly arranged for us by Krystyna.



*Botanical Gardens, 1874. Oil painting by Emmeline Pritchard.  
National Gallery of Victoria*

Emmeline was born in England in 1849 and arrived in Melbourne in 1852 with her civil engineer father, Daniel Baddeley Pritchard, her mother, Emily and her younger sister, Laura. Daniel, almost immediately got work building the Melbourne to Hobson's Bay railway, Melbourne's first train line. He was responsible for building the road on which the tracks were eventually laid.

By 1860 the family had moved to Ballarat where Daniel worked in the mining industry. In 1867 they returned to Melbourne, and settled in East Melbourne. The family proved to be a restless one, moving to several different addresses over the time they were here. First stop was 52 Simpson Street; then 157 Gipps Street, significantly this was next door to Eugene von Guerard; then on to 57 Grey Street (dem). Emmeline's father died at this point, and the family made yet another move to No 6 Park Hill Terrace, Hoddle Street, now the site of the art deco Millhayes apartments. Emmeline was resident in this last when she painted her picture of the Botanical Gardens. Perhaps economic pressures were mounting but here she embarked on giving drawing and painting lessons.

It seems an extraordinary stroke of luck that Emmeline should be living next door to one of Melbourne's greatest ever landscape painters at exactly the same time as the National Gallery established its school of painting with von Guerard as its instructor. She was one of his first students, and her Botanical Gardens painting shows a definite influence. Another of her paintings, Landscape in the Botanical Gardens, was chosen by von Guerard to be part of an exhibition of student paintings in London in 1873. It was among works that The Age art critic in November 1872 deemed to 'possess great merit for the freedom with which the subjects are handled'

In 1875, Emmeline married Joseph Brown, an accountant, twice her age. He was also a church warden and vestryman at Trinity Church, East Melbourne, where they were married. A year later she gave birth to their first child while living at 1 Albert Terrace, Gipps Street (59 Gipps Street). From 1879 -1882 they were living at what is now 74 Simpson Street. By the end of that period they had four children and perhaps the time had come for something more spacious further from the city's heart, for at this point their movements are no longer traceable.

While it is possible that Emmeline continued to paint privately, after her marriage she dropped out of the public eye and her work was no longer mentioned in reports on the latest art exhibitions. She died of phthisis, or tuberculosis, in 1887, aged just 38.



## AN ECHO OF TWO ARTISTIC BALLETS IN AID OF CHARITY



*Miss Gertrude Dix is the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Courtney Dix, "Toorana," East Melbourne. Mr. Dix is a Director of the firm of Gordon & Gotch, his wife being formerly Miss Isabel Gotch, daughter of the late Mr. J. S. Gotch, Inglefield Station, Balmoral, Western District. Miss Dix is tall and slim, and has a flair for dancing, riding and tennis, and is very popular amongst Melbourne's younger set. She took part in the ballets organised by Mr. Frank A. Williams in aid of the Melbourne Children's Hospital.*

The Home, an Australian quarterly. Vol 2, No 3  
(1 Sep 1921)

Miss Courtney Dix made a name for herself in 1920 as the favourite dance partner of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, during his visit to Australia. Mr. Courtney Dix rented Toorana, 160 Gipps Street, from c.1905 until c.1923 when he bought it from the previous owner's estate. The family continued to live there until 1928 when it was sold to the Sisters of Mercy.

*by Gay Sussex*

One of the most loved and admired art works in Melbourne is the Fairies Tree, carved by Ola Cohn, in Fitzroy Gardens next to the Tudor Village. It is over 90 years since it was completed, and it has become a place of pilgrimage for children and their parents.

Ola Cohn was born in Bendigo in 1892, one of six children in a creative family that supported her artistic aims. She always seemed larger than life and Barbara Blackman, the well-known supporter of Australian art and artists, wrote of her friend that, “Ola was a bag of a woman, healthy as bread, strong as a millstone. Everything of Ola’s was, like her size, larger than life size.” (Barbara Blackman, *Glass after Glass*, p165 -166) She worked with formidable energy to establish her art and reputation in a male -dominated field and she was a success. She studied at Swinburne Technical College from 1920 through to 1923 and travelled to England in 1926 where she studied under Henry Moore. While in England she visited the carved Elfin Oak tree in Kensington Gardens. She was enchanted by this carving and decided to find a suitable tree in Melbourne when she returned and to dedicate a carving to local children. She started the carving in 1931 and completed in 1934. What a job!

Other Cohn carvings in East Melbourne include two wooden angels at St Peter’s Anglican Church Eastern Hill, and the font cover at Holy Trinity Church East Melbourne.

In her book *The Fairies Tree*, she wrote, “My first carving was the Koala with the baby on her back. Next came Sneaky Snake, creeping from one hole only to disappear in another. Then Stoutheart the hero.... After Stoutheart was the Thoughtful Imp, the Lizard, the Sorcerer Spider, .... the Reading Mother, bunny rabbits, bandicoots, a kangaroo, wombat, dingo, platypus, tortoise, snail, koala, eagle, opossum, mopoke, curlew, emu, owl and lyrebird.”

In 1930 she established a studio at Grosvenor Chambers 9 Collins Street, which was subsequently occupied by Georges and Mirka Mora. She moved to 43 Gipps Street East Melbourne in 1934, and Georges and Mirka settled in their iconic restaurant Balzac. She was President of the Society of Women Painters and Sculptors from 1946 to 1964 and she bequeathed her house and studio to the Council for Adult Education. Today it is known as the Ola Cohn Memorial



Centre where a range of art related classes are presented.

Cohn had always been critical of marriage believing it made difficulties for ambitious women and she wrote in her diary, "Many are content to live, to marry, to die and be forgotten but that is not my idea. What would life be if we all lived for the sake of living and died because we all must die, with no name or memory to leave? I want to leave both name and memory behind." (A way with the Fairies, p 4).

However, in 1953 she married her long-term friend Herbert Green. Perhaps he was more supportive of her art than most men of that time. Sadly, he died five years after their wedding.

She died in 1964 and her ashes are interred in the garden in Gipps Street together with her beloved cat Ginny, a huge tortoiseshell, and her pet magpie Margu. Pets, mostly cats, had always been an important part of Cohn's life.

Although The Fairies Tree would be Cohn's most famous work her sculptures are found in most of Australia's capital cities. Examples include The Pioneer Woman statue in the Pioneer Women's Garden in Adelaide and Hobart Hospital in Tasmania. Her fame centres around the modernist movement between the wars and Lemon's book listed below is perhaps the best way of gaining an understanding of her story. Your library has it.



*Ola Cohn and The Fairies' Tree, 1932.  
Postcard. EMHS VF0986*

## Bibliography

Blackman, Barbara Glass after Glass Autobiographical Reflections 1997  
p 165 – 166

Clippings file in East Melbourne Library

Cohn, Ola 'The Fairies' Tree 1932

Cohn, Ola More about the Fairies' Tree 1933

Cohn, Ola Mostly Cats 1964

Delander, Sonja Ola Cohn's Fairies' tree 1972

Fenwick, Jill Heritage Matters

### COMING EVENTS

#### **A Fresh Look at The Johnston Collection**

7:30pm Wednesday 17 April 2024

East Melbourne Library,  
122 George Street, East Melbourne



Dr Louise Voll Box was appointed as CEO of 'The Johnston Collection' in July 2023. The previous CEO, Louis Le Vaillant, led East Melbourne's own museum of fine and decorative arts for nearly fifteen years, showcasing its treasures to locals and visitors alike. Now it is Dr Voll Box's turn to bring new ideas to the management and presentation of the treasures in her care. In her talk she will tell us about her work and some of her ideas about how to keep the Collection relevant in a world of rapidly changing tastes.

*Dr Louise Voll Box  
CEO of The Johnston Collection*

*Cover Image :*

*John Barry and Myra Sutton Anderson, 2023.*

*Photo by Dr Sigrid Petautschnig (Myra's grand-daughter)*