



**FEBRUARY
2002**

**EAST
MELBOURNE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**

150 Years

It is 150 years since the first auction sales of crown land in East Melbourne took place. At those first three sales, held on 16 June, 18 August and 18 November 1852, 90 allotments were sold. Each one was a quarter acre and the average price was roughly £436. By the end of the year work had started on East Melbourne's first private houses. One of these was built for Henry Cooke, who with his brother, John, started *The Age*. His house was on the site of what is now the 1930s section of the Freemasons Hospital and was later owned by Thomas Welton Stanford, brother of Leland, founder of Stanford University.

Source: Burchett, Winston,
East Melbourne 1837-1977



**The EMHS
acknowledges financial support
from Melbourne City Council.**

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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.

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

Affiliated with
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria

President's Column

Having recently assumed office as President, I thank the immediate past president Judge Frank Lewis and his committee for their sterling efforts in 2001. Their efforts brought our membership up to 100, no doubt assisted by the quality of the speakers who addressed our meetings.

My aim is to continue the good work, but I will strive to have the Society commence a research project of its own this year. Several members have put forward possible projects, but if you wish to suggest a project please do not hesitate to bring your proposal to my attention.

All members of the Society presumably have an interest in Australian history, and in the history of East Melbourne in particular. However, some of our members also are historians or members of related professions. If you have research work that might be of interest to members of the Society, I would like to hear from you.

Malcolm Howell
9419 4636

MEETING DATES FOR 2002

Wednesday	20	February 2002
Wednesday	17	April 2002
Wednesday	19	June 2002
Wednesday	21	August 2002
Wednesday	16	October 2002
Wednesday	4	December 2002

December Meeting

Our Christmas function took the form of "A Musical Soiree", with wonderful performances from soprano-coloratura Jennifer Kerr, a member of the Society, and pianist Matthew Schultz. If you wish to engage Jennifer for a similar performance or function, she can be contacted on 9421 5117.

Left to right: Ted Cousens, Jennifer Kerr and Matthew Schultz at our Christmas function.

Bishopscourt

The Victorian Branch of the Australia Garden History Society has assumed responsibility for the restoration of the extensive gardens at Bishopscourt, the home of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. Working bees are being conducted on the third Wednesday of each second month, and open days are proposed for a weekend in October 2002. Members of our Society may wish to assist with the working bees, or on the open days. Please contact Malcolm Howell or Sylvia Black for more information.

East Melbourne in the Nineties:

N.K. Harvey writes about his boyhood

I lived In East Melbourne from the age of about one year in 1885 until 1914 so I should be able to give a good account of the topography and also of life in that locality during this period.

My father, born in 1854 had also lived there in his earlier days, and he has told me that in his boyhood East Melbourne was mostly paddocks. By 1888 when my first memories begin, it was already well built on, with but few vacant blocks, and only one large paddock, the Volunteer Reserve, near its centre.

I first lived in a house at the lower or eastern end of Victoria Parade [97]. I am told that during the years 1885 to 1888 while we were living there, the cable tramway line along Victoria Parade was being constructed, and I was very interested in this work and in the trams when they began to run; they were in full operation when I can first remember. I was told that I had stated that I wished to be a tram conductor when I grew up. The first tram on this line actually ran on 22nd November, 1886. Our family reached its full size of eight when my younger brother was born in this house in 1887. It will be noticed that this was before the days of maternity hospitals and humidicribs. At this time a familiar sight at dusk was the lamp-lighter on his rounds, carrying over his shoulder his six-foot pole, its brass tip pierced with small holes carrying a lighted

taper inside as Melbourne was still lit by gas.

As the family had reached its full complement of eight persons, a larger house was now necessary, and this was found at the corner of Hotham and Simpson streets [78]. This had two entrance doors, one in either street, a circumstance which gave to the house an unusual advantage. In those days a firm bringing a new product onto the market would frequently send out a person to leave samples at houses in suburbs, going from door to door, first along one street, then along another, and so on. A sample would thus be left at each door of our house, the second on the assumption that it was at a house which had not been visited before. Diagonally opposite this house was a prominent brick terrace of three houses, three stories in height. The whole terrace had the title "Queen Bess Row", and each of these houses had a separate name on the ground floor. It was so different from the surrounding houses that perhaps it had been built at the time of the Land Boom, or at the time of the great Melbourne Exhibition of 1888.

It was while living in this house that I first went to school, a small infant school conducted by a couple of ladies aged I should think somewhere in the thirties, and with about a dozen pupils. This was carried on in a small but substantial basalt building known as

Holy Trinity No.1 Sunday School, and owned by Holy Trinity parish, of which the church was situated at the other diagonal corner of East Melbourne.

I would only have been about a year at this school, and was then sent to another small private school in Hoddle Street, nearer my home. Private schools were, at that period, a well established feature of Melbourne life, although at the present day they have practically died out, although the name still incorrectly used by some people to describe all schools not operated by the government. A private school is owned and operated by a private individual as a means of livelihood, and not by any organisation.

At this period it was the custom for small groups of people to roam round on New Year's Eve at midnight and paint or otherwise mark the date of the new-born year on gates and fences. I can distinctly remember seeing on our gate (back) the date 1890; I was then six years old.

We lived three years at his [sic] house, and about the end of 1891 we moved to a larger house, 127 Gipps St. About six houses further down this street [121] there lived at this time Councillor A.H. Weedon, later Sir Henry Weedon and Mayor or Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

A Mr. Butler a solicitor, lived a little further down [111]. From somewhere further down the street [13] there used to walk up every day a very fierce looking individual, with a long whitish-grey beard and a ferocious-looking eye, carrying a very heavy

walking-stick, the largest I have ever seen, with a large egg-shaped rounded head nearly as big as a pineapple. Mr. Gibbons, as was his name, was said by my elders to be an analyst, and little did I think at the time that I was destined later to follow the same profession. On the other side of Gipps Street, almost directly facing us [88], lived a Mr. Nathan, I believe one of the well-known Furniture firm in Smith Street, Fitzroy. At the end of the century, a line of horse-cabs of the wagonette type used to run from Queen's Parade, Clifton Hill to Nathan's establishment, at regular intervals, the fare being one penny; the cabs were, it was said, subsidised by the firm.

I think it was about the time we were living in this house that the electric light came to East Melbourne in place of the former gas lamps.

In our streets, as we were in the city council area, there were arc lamps at the street intersections and incandescent ones at the center of the long sides of blocks and in the lanes. Boys used to play at nights around the arc lights.

Smith Street Collingwood, was the main shopping centre for most of East Melbourne, although from some parts it was easier to go to the city by tram. Smith Street contained the large general store of Foy and Gibson, Nathan's large furniture business, and several other good and moderately large shops. Foy's Fair, as the Firm termed its annual sale, was one of the shopping highlights for all shoppers within a radius of over a mile from the store. Large crowds assembled for the

opening of the doors on its first day, and police control was necessary. Mr. Foy was never heard of in my time, but the junior partner, "Billy" Gibson, was a very active man, with original ideas.

Just before the end of the century a butchery department, which was an innovation then among large drapery stores, was opened by Foy and Gibson's, and the regular butchers of the district were so incensed at this poaching on their preserves, that one day an order for meat was received from Government House, the order actually emanating from the rival butchers. The butcher's cart containing the order, all spick and span, with Billy's son, Sam Gibson, dressed in his Sunday best, on the box seat beside the driver, duly arrived at Government House, but nothing was known about the order, and they had to retire crestfallen. Foy's later opened Branches in Prahran (under the name of the Big Store,) Sydney, Brisbane, and Bourke Street, Melbourne.

There were some other shopping centres in suburbs surrounding East Melbourne, but they were by no means in the same category as Smith Street.

The household requirements for vegetables were well served by the Chinese market gardeners who then roamed the streets with their hand-carts. While in the Gipps Street house we were served by two of them at the same time.

The family now began to diminish by marriage, so after three years at 127 Gipps Street, we moved to a somewhat smaller house in Powlett Street, No. 134, and after living here for another three years we moved again to a house

three doors away [128]. This later residence, which was later bought by the family, became our permanent abode and the present writer lived there from about 1897 till 1914, and so came to know Powlett Street and East Melbourne generally, very well.

There was somewhat of a change in the view from the front verandah, as the vehicular traffic was more varied. The Powlett Street thoroughfare was more used than our previous streets, with more pleasure vehicles, and additional lorries from the two breweries, the Victoria at the Northern end of the street and Foster's not far off in Collingwood. It was from the latter that ice used to be obtained in those pre-refrigerator days. On some Saturdays in the winter the number of passengers along the footpaths was increased by football enthusiasts from Collingwood going to and from the Melbourne Cricket Ground, as this was the best route for that purpose. Sometimes they [sic] would be seen on the road in front of a particular house an area covered with tan bark, to dull the sound of the traffic for someone seriously ill, a practise quite desirable before the advent of pneumatic tyres and bitumen surface roads nowadays.

This article first appeared in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's newsletter of 3 May 1996 and has been reprinted here with kind permission. Some street numbers have been inserted in square brackets for clearer identification.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 20 February

The lecture previously publicised for this date has unfortunately been cancelled. Instead Mr. Alf Batchelder will speak on *The first 60 years of the Melbourne Cricket Club – 1838-1898*.

Mr. Batchelder is a historian and author with a special interest in cricket. He is a long time research volunteer with the MCC library. He has a reputation as a lively speaker and is sure to provide us with an enjoyable and informative night.

Wednesday, 17 April

Mr. Robin Grow, president of The Art Deco Society of Victoria, will speak on Art Deco architecture with special reference to East Melbourne. Our non-Victorian heritage has perhaps been under-appreciated and this will be an opportunity to learn more about this interesting period.

Both meetings will be held as usual at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, at 8.00pm.

Notices

Yarra-Melbourne Local History Forum

Member societies are joining together to host a historical display on Sunday, 17 April as part of the National Trust's Heritage Week. The theme is *Beyond the Big Smoke* and will focus on the rural landscapes of inner Melbourne. The event will take place at the Kensington Stock and Station Agent's Office, corner Racecourses and Smithfield Roads, Kensington.

After much deliberation your committee has decided against participation this year as it was felt that our current lack of resources and lack of time would prevent us from putting on a display of a suitably high standard. However we hope that some of our members will visit the event, not only for general interest, but also because next year we do intend

participating and this will be a good opportunity to gain ideas and tips on the staging of a historical display.

Accommodation sought

The Society seeks free or very cheap accommodation in East Melbourne pending the completion of the new library. This will enable us to start building a collection without further delay. If you have any ideas please contact Malcolm or Sylvia.

Can You Help?

Nigel Boundy from Western Australia is researching his family history and wants to know owners and tenants of 25 Grey Street in 1936. He can be contacted on: nigelbb@yahoo.com

Research Tips

If you have already extracted a list of people who have lived in your house from the P.O. Directories or the Rate Books you may wish to find out a little more about them. A useful place to start is the *City of Melbourne – Citizen Roll 1861-1902*. It can be found on microfilm in the Genealogy section of the State Library [IN 81-92]. The Public Record Office at 2 Casselden Place, Melbourne has some of the later years on microfiche. Before 1870 look under Latrobe Ward; 1870 onwards, look under Albert Ward. This will give the (male only) resident's occupation. If he has a common name this will help identify him in other records.

However, remember that occupations can change over a lifetime. For a later time period *Electoral Rolls* will fill the same purpose. They are also available at the SLV on fiche. Then, hoping that your occupier has left a will, check the

Probate Index [SLV and PROV]. This will give a date of death. From there you can look at the appropriate newspaper [SLV] in the hope of finding an obituary. Even a death notice can sometimes provide extra details. If the occupier does not appear in the Probate Index it is worth trying the various *Cemetery Indexes* which will also give a date of death.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS 2002

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

Complete the details below and return with your payment of \$25 to:

Hon. Secretary, PO Box 355, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002.

Receipts will be issued only on request. All members are issued with an annual membership card.

Enclosed is my cheque/cash for the amount of \$25.

TITLE: [Mr/Mrs/Ms/Prof/Dr etc] _____

SURNAME: _____

FIRST NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

