

EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Report of the Committee 2025

I hereby present the 2025 Annual Report, representing the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

During this year we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of our Historical Society. This was formally commemorated at the AGM in October 2024. At the AGM much deserved Life Membership was conferred on Sylvia Black, Graham Shepherd and Jill Fenwick. This was a fitting recognition of three people who have been heavily involved in the EMHS from its earliest days, and who have been critically important in shaping the organisation to be what it is today.

We held a number of events during the year, including a couple of special events beyond our normal activities. Our regular evening events are an important aspect of our activities; not only do they give the opportunity to hear about research on interesting aspects of local history, but they also provide regular social meetings for members of our local community.

I would like to acknowledge the receipt during the year of a bequest of \$20,000 from the estate of John Barry. John was a much-loved, long-term resident of East Melbourne and regular attendee at EMHS events until his death in December 2023. It was an unexpected and much appreciated gift from John and will be put to use in furtherance of the activities that John was such a strong supporter of in his time in East Melbourne.

The Committee

We are very fortunate to have an enthusiastic and hard-working committee. There are many tasks involved in successfully running an organisation such as ours and thankfully we have many capable and willing contributors on the committee.

Sylvia Black as Secretary is a stalwart in keeping the workings of EMHS ticking over smoothly. As mentioned above, at our Annual General Meeting in October 2024 Life Membership was conferred on Sylvia, a fitting acknowledgement of her service over the decades. Sylvia has been a tower of strength in the organisation since its inception, dealing with a wide range of administrative and research tasks, including replying to regular research queries generated by our website. Sylvia also contributes a stream of interesting articles for our local newsletter and local newspapers.

Malcolm Howell has continued in the role of Treasurer. Malcolm has also been a doyen of EMHS over many years, and in a number of roles, including president. In his current role Malcolm provides a steady hand with our finances and excellent guidance in legal aspects of our activities.

Barbara Paterson has kept a close eye on developments in the heritage protection area. She has kept the committee aware of proposed changes to buildings and advised on what involvement the EMHS might take in any review of such proposals.

Diane Clifford has been our membership secretary for a number of years and has overseen the growth in member numbers over that time while keeping members informed of events and maintaining membership records; it's a great credit to Di that our numbers have continued to trend upwards.

Prof Marita McCabe has continued to be an enthusiastic and active promoter of the EMHS and strong contributor to committee deliberations, and her work in recording recollections of

older long-term residents of East Melbourne has been outstanding and important.

We welcomed new and returning committee members Jill Fenwick, Ian Hind and Lisette Malatesta. Jill has been an outstanding contributor to the work of the EMHS since its early days, including as president, and was awarded Life Membership during the year; it was great to have her back on the committee after a short absence. Ian was returning to the committee also after a short absence, and it was good to have him back. Lisette has been helping with newsletter production for some time, and has brought her characteristic energy to the committee.

Dr Liz Rushen, Gay Sussex and Dr Sue Hodson both chose to stand down from the committee at the end of last year. We thank them for their contributions to the committee.

Membership

We currently have over 204 financial members, and we extend a welcome to members who have joined during the past year. The strength and vitality of our membership base is a testament to the health of our organisation.

Website

We have an active website that is about to be upgraded. The site has 2385 catalogue items, including 805 WW1 personal records, 292 building histories, 585 gallery images and 54 maps. The website generates significant regular traffic and is a valuable research tool.

Activities July 2023-June 2024

Our first event for the year was a “one off” one, outside our usual schedule of events. On Friday morning, 5 July 2024, at the East Melbourne Library we had the book launch for two books relating to the former Yarra Park State School. These publications were *A Recovered History* by Ian Hind, a history of Yarra Park State School, and a book written by Ian Hind, Sylvia Black and Tim Holland titled *The Lost Honour Roll of Yarra Park State School*, which summarised the lives of those whose names appeared on the World War One Honour Roll at the school.

The speaker at our August event was Dr Ros Otzen, who spoke on Hester Hornbrook and the Ragged School Association, which provided free education for Melbourne’s destitute children in the 19th century.

At our October AGM meeting we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Society. Emeritus Professor Richard Broome, President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria spoke about the importance of history. Magnificent specially home-made cakes were also enjoyed at the conclusion of formalities.

Our Christmas drinks function was held at Bishops court in early December, and we are indebted to Archbishop Philip and Joy Freier for their generosity in making their home and grounds available to us.

Philip and Joy were great friends to the East Melbourne community and to the EMHS in their 19 years at Bishops court. We were very sorry to see them leave, and in January in conjunction with the East Melbourne Group we held a well-attended farewell function for Philip and Joy in Powlett Reserve.

In February we held a conducted tour of the Old Treasury Building, with its many historical displays on a range of aspects of Victorian history.

Noted historian Ross McMullin was the speaker at our April meeting. Ross talked about his latest book *Life So Full of Promise* which tells the stories of WW1 young soldiers who had showed promise in their careers before the war but lost their lives at the war; Ross's book shows the loss to Australia by the death of these young soldiers who had already shown achievement in their lives.

Heritage architect Arthur Andronas spoke at our June meeting. Arthur gave a detailed presentation about the history and architecture of St Patrick's Cathedral.

Newsletter

Our newsletter is published three times a year and goes to every member electronically, and for those who prefer a printed version one is hand delivered by Committee members to local street addresses, or posted to those with a PO box or living outside the East Melbourne area.

The newsletter is an important part of our activities, and aims to provide a range of items of local historical interest. Over the last year the content of the newsletter has maintained the high level of interesting, well-researched articles that it has consistently done over the years.

Sylvia does an outstanding job putting together material for the newsletter as well as contributing great articles on her own account.

We are very grateful for the editing and formatting skills that Lisette brings to the production of the newsletter.

In addition to our newsletter, we regularly supply articles relating to East Melbourne history to the Inner-City News newspaper, which as the name suggests circulates in the inner suburbs of East Melbourne, Carlton and Parkville.

Heritage at Risk

EMHS as a group has continued to monitor proposed planning developments within our area. This is part of EMHS's role in seeking to maintain the heritage status of East Melbourne.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our members for their continued involvement, interest and support.

Tim Holland
President