



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

August 2011

Meetings

Thursday 11 August 2011 – 8pm

Guest Speaker: Marjorie Morgan OAM

Topic: The Prison Hulks in Port Phillip Bay in the 1850s

Thursday 8 September 2011 – 8pm

Topic: Lin Onus – Local Aboriginal Artist

David Crawford will introduce the inspirational documentary, *Bridge Between Two Cultures*. This documentary highlights the artistic achievements of the late Lin Onus, a pioneer of urban Aboriginal art who grew up in Deepdene.

Thursday 13 October 2011 – 8pm

Guest Speaker: Ross McMullin

Topic: Will Dyson - Writer, War Artist and Political Cartoonist

Historian and author, Ross McMullin, will speak about his recent biography of Will Dyson - *Will Dyson: Australia's radical genius*.

**All meetings are held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

email: bhs@balwynwelfare.org.au

website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs

Recent Speaker Gwen McWilliam

Once again Gwen astounded us with her wealth of knowledge about the history of Boroondara. Gwen began her wide-ranging talk with reference to a Frederick McCubbin painting showing a lone house among paddocks in Hawthorn. Gwen then spoke about the later movement of Hawthorn families to Camberwell and Balwyn.

A number of wealthy Hawthorn families moved to new homes in the Mont Albert road area in the 1880s. Among their new homes were Roystead, Frognall, Highton and Haslemere (later Widford) – houses which contributed towards the road being called “The Golden Mile”.

Gwen also interspersed her talk with delightful reminiscences of her own childhood growing up in the Mont Albert road area. These reminiscences included climbing the Frognall fence to play in the grounds, the occupation of Frognall during the Second World War and games played along the Outer Circle Railway cutting.

Gwen has also kindly donated to BHS three volumes of her many years of meticulous research on the Elgar Survey.

A Balwyn Survey
Balwyn Background – Streets
Balwyn Background - Pioneers,
Neighbours, Milestones

These books are available for loan from the Balwyn Library.

BHS Membership 2011-2012 - Reminder

Membership fees are now due. The fee will remain the same for the 2011-2012 financial year.

\$25 - single membership

\$35 - joint membership i.e. 2 adults at the same address.

You may renew your membership at the next meeting. Payment may be made by cash or cheque (payable to *Balwyn Historical Society*). It would be helpful if you could place your payment in an envelope marked with your name(s). Otherwise please send the completed renewal form together with a cheque to **The Treasurer, BHS, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103.**

Thanks to those members who have already renewed their membership

Balwyn Historical Society - Contact details

Balwyn Historical Society is sponsored by the Balwyn Welfare Association Phone – 9836 9681

Committee Members

President	Bill Pritchard	9857 8001	Speakers/	Robin Kelly	9836 6589
Vice-president	Peter Prideaux	9830 5019	Publicity		
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Newsletter mailout	Lynette Woolley, Deidre Woolley
Resources	Heather Alford
Photography	Steve McLean, Clive Enticott, Joe Hopwood
Supper	Dawn Pritchard
Webmaster	Neil Swansson

Balwyn's Aboriginal Connections

Balwyn is located on Wurundjeri land. Before European settlement, the Wurundjeri, a clan of the Kulin Nation, moved seasonally in small groups hunting and gathering food around their territory in the Yarra Valley. The high ground of Robert Reid's estate in Balwyn was an Aboriginal lookout and camping ground. A scar on a large old river gum in Beckett Park is believed to have been made by the Wurundjeri to indicate the site of a permanent freshwater spring and two other tree trunks in the Maranoa Gardens bear the scars where bark was removed for other purposes such as fashioning a coolamon or constructing a mia mia. Another Aboriginal scar tree can be seen in Belmore Road, Balwyn.

European settlement displaced the Wurundjeri from their traditional land and by the 1860s the remnants of the groups along the Yarra were herded with others from different tribes to Coranderrk, near Healesville.

In the twentieth century Balwyn became the home or workplace of some prominent Aboriginal identities.

Harold Blair, the famous tenor, ran a milk bar for a time in Whitehorse Road, Deepdene, in the 1950s. Sponsored by John Lloyd in Kew, he had come to Melbourne from Cherbourg in Queensland to study singing at the Melba Conservatorium in Richmond. Harold married Dorothy Eden of Camberwell, a fellow student at the Conservatorium, and went on to achieve fame on the national and international stage. Harold was also a prominent campaigner for Aboriginal rights and was involved with the Aborigines Advancement League, the Aborigines Welfare Board and the Aboriginal Arts Board. He established the Harold Blair Holiday Project which for over fifteen years brought thousands of children from Cherbourg and other settlements to stay with families in Melbourne and give them an insight into the value of education and to open their horizons.

Frances Bond was one of the Aboriginal children from Cherbourg who initially came to Melbourne with the Harold Blair Holiday Project. She worked for Holeproof in Deepdene and studied shorthand and typing at night school. She then worked in various jobs in State and Commonwealth departments, including Aboriginal Education and the Health Department. She is very active in Melbourne's Aboriginal community and was one of the founders of the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place in Croydon.

Steve Tregonning, from Lake Tyers, is another Aborigine who was billeted with a family in Melbourne under the Harold Blair Children's Holiday Project and he later moved to Hawthorn with his mother and older brother, Len. After doing an apprenticeship in Deepdene, Steve went on to become a ranger with Parks Victoria and then to work in the Indigenous Unit of the Victorian Department of Justice.

Bill Onus, one of Melbourne's best known Aboriginal identities, lived in Terry Street, Deepdene, for many years through the 1950s and 60s. He was born on Cummeragunja Mission and later settled in Balwyn with his Scottish-born wife, Mary McLintock Kelly. Bill established an Aboriginal handcrafts shop in Belgrave and was famous for his boomerang throwing ability. In 1954, Albert Namatjira visited Melbourne and Bill's shop and stayed with the family in Deepdene. Bill Onus was one of the founders of the Aboriginal Advancement League (Victoria) in 1957, served on the Aborigines Welfare Board and was a leader in the campaign for a 'Yes' vote in the 1967 Referendum.

Lin Onus, Bill's son, attended Deepdene State School and Balwyn High School. After leaving school at age 13, he worked for a panel beater in Deepdene. In his twenties, he began building a reputation as an urban Aboriginal artist. He became famous for his unique style of paintings and screen prints which combined western-realist and traditional Aboriginal techniques. He also applied welding and fibre glass skills learnt in panel beating to produce sculptures with powerful social and political messages. His arresting art works appear in major art galleries across Australia, including the NGV and National Art Gallery.

Sharon Hodgson, a Boroondara Aboriginal artist, who once lived in Balwyn, knew Lin when he was still living in Terry Street and he later taught her screen printing in his Upwey studio.

By David Crawford – (David is a member of BHS and of ANTaR Boroondara)

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More information about these Aboriginal identities can be found in *BOROONDARA CONNECTIONS: Stories of Aboriginal Connection by Residents of Boroondara*. This publication was edited by David Crawford and published by ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) Boroondara. It is available for loan from City of Boroondara libraries.

David would be most interested to hear from anyone with knowledge of other Aboriginal people connected with Balwyn or Boroondara such as Jacky, the elderly Aboriginal man who worked at the Greythorn Wild Life Sanctuary. Members may remember him leading children on donkey rides at the sanctuary.

David will be introducing the screening of *Bridge Between Two Cultures*, a documentary film about the late Lin Onus, at our meeting on September 8th.

Cold Weather Rules

(From the Box Hill Reporter - 22 August 1889)

Never omit regular bathing, for unless the skin is in active condition the cold will close the pores and favour conjection (sic) and other diseases.

After exercise of any kind never ride in an open carriage or near the window of a car for a moment, it is dangerous to health or even life.

When hoarse, speak as little as possible until the hoarseness is recovered from, else the voice may be permanently lost, or difficulties of the throat be produced.

Merely warm the back by the fire and never continue keeping the back exposed to the heat after it has been comfortably warmed. To do otherwise is debilitating.

When going from a warm atmosphere to a colder one, keep the mouth closed, so that the air may be warmed in the passage through the nose ere it reaches the lungs.

(Thanks to Ken Lyall for this article)

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Contact Mike Nolan for your real estate needs – 9830 164