



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

Jan-Feb 2011

Meetings

Thursday 10 February 2011 – 8pm

Guest Speaker: Jenny Davies

Topic: The History of Flinders Street Station

Jenny Davies recently won the 2010 Community History Award for her publication *Beyond the Façade: Flinders Street, more than just a railway station*.

Thursday 10 March 2011 – 8pm

Guest Speaker: Dr. David Beardsell

Topic: The Outer Circle Railway

Dr. David Beardsell, co-author with Bruce Herbert, of *The Outer Circle Railway* will give an illustrated talk on the history of the Outer Circle Railway.

Thursday 14 April 2011 – 8pm

Guest Speaker: Lambis Englezos

Topic: My Discovery of the Graves at Fromelles

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

email: bhs@balwynwelfare.org.au

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

Christmas Function

Our Christmas function was once again a memorable event with approximately forty members and friends enjoying a very convivial evening.

The highlight of the night was undoubtedly Dr. Dora Scales' eloquent account of a childhood Christmas. In 1929 Dora spent Christmas with her grandmother and other relatives in the Mallee. Dora vividly recalled the long train journey from her home in Gippsland to Wycheproof. There she enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner with aunts,

uncles and cousins before the darkening sky heralded an approaching dust storm. Two days of scorching heat and swirling dust followed. New Year's Eve brought Dora the wonderful news of the birth of her twin brothers. Thank you Dora for sharing this recollection with us.

Thanks also to Clive Enticott, Martin Barrett and Bernard Neal for their contributions to the evening and to those other members who once again assisted with the evening's organization.

Glass Creek – (Editor's correction)

In our last newsletter I stated that Glass Creek had been named after Hugh Glass, a well-known early pastoralist. However, this was not so.

Gwen McWilliam has kindly informed me that when she was undertaking research with Colin Singleton they found that the creek was not named after Hugh Glass but rather after Thomas Glass. Thomas Glass is mentioned on several occasions in the Historical Records of Victoria between 1837 and 1839. An 1837 survey map by William Darke shows Glass station on the banks of Yarra in the vicinity of East Kew (east of Keystone Crescent). In June 1837 John Gardener complained about Glass's sheep being "infected with the scab". On several occasions in 1837 and 1838, Thomas Glass gave evidence in the Melbourne Court about shepherds who were insolent or who had absconded from his property.

In December 1839, the barque *Britomart* departed Melbourne for Hobart with a passenger, Glass, on board. During the voyage the barque foundered, most probably in Bass Strait. All passengers and crew were believed to have been lost.

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/ Publicity	Robin Kelly	9836 6589
Vice-president	Peter Prideaux	9830 5019	Archivist	Susan Johns	
Secretary	Pam Herrington	9018 8186	Newsletter	Pat O'Dwyer	9817 3758
Treasurer/ Membership	Marilyn Poole	9857 7565			

Non-Committee Assistants

Newsletter mailout	Lynette Woolley, Deidre Woolley
Resources	Heather Alford
Photography	Steve McLean, Clive Enticott, Joe Hopwood
Supper	Dawn Pritchard
Webmaster	Neil Swansson

The Symes of *Tourmont* (*Tour Mont*)*

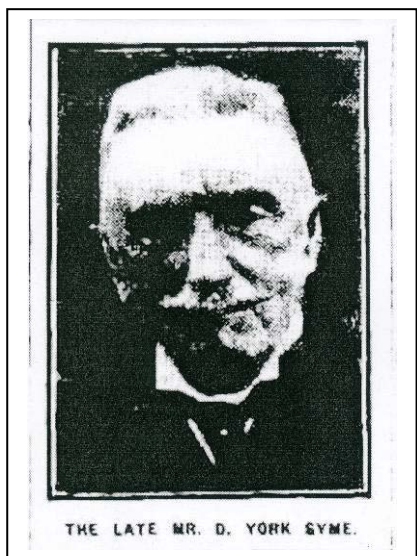


Photo: *Argus*, 19 Dec. 1932

David Yorke Syme was born in Castle Bellingham, County Louth, Ireland in 1844. As a young boy he was first apprenticed to a surgeon and apothecary. However, it appears that this career was not to his liking and he was later apprenticed to a draper in Dublin. At the age of 18 he left Ireland for Australia aboard the sailing ship, *Highflyer*. On his arrival in Sydney in February 1863, he found employment with a wholesale soft-goods firm. Some time after his arrival he also obtained a commission in the Royal Sydney Artillery and joined in the weekly field gun practice firing at Dawes point.

David York Syme married Mary Eliza Reid, daughter of Rev. John Reid in 1867. In the early 1870s when cotton was realizing a high price, David York Syme purchased a cotton plantation in Fiji. However, after trouble with labourers and a sharp decline in cotton prices, he abandoned the plantation. In 1873 the Symes left Sydney and sailed to Victoria where they settled in Williamstown. For some years David York Syme served as manager of the Floating Dock and Engineering Works at Williamstown. David York Syme, his brother-in-law Mr. Hugh Reid, and others then formed the Melbourne Steamship Company of which he was chairman of directors for over twenty years.

Throughout his long career David Yorke Syme held key positions in many business organizations and community institutions, including the Employers' Federation, the Marine Board, the Pilots' Superannuation Fund and the Provident Loan Society of Victoria, the Swinburne Technical College council and the Austin Hospital committee. He was also associated with other charitable institutions. Locally he was very involved with the Canterbury Presbyterian Church and the Canterbury Bowling Club.

Mary Eliza Syme was also engaged in charitable and political pursuits. (Her brother, Sir George Reid, served as Premier of New South Wales, and was Australia's 4th Prime Minister from 1904-5). In 1904, together with Mrs. Edward Snowdon, Mrs Syme convened a meeting at the Camberwell Grammar School to form a local branch of the Australian Women's National League. The League, a conservative organization, played a large part in achieving universal women's suffrage throughout Australia. Besides educating women in politics, it also aimed to combat socialism, support the monarchy and empire, and safeguard the interests of home, women and children. In an article in the *Hobart Mercury* (1906) it was noted that Mrs Syme's home was often the scene of brilliant gatherings for all sorts of deserving causes. On one occasion she entertained about three hundred people in the grounds of *Tourmont* so that her guests could meet the "lady doctors at the Victoria Hospital". She also served on the committee of the Women's Hospital.

Mary Eliza Syme died at *Tourmont* on November 14, 1915. David York Syme died there on 17 December 1932. Both were buried in the Boroondara Cemetery. Five adult children survived them.

Francis Mark Syme (b.1874) who married Marion Barr; David Yorke Syme jnr. (b.1876) who married Jessie Mary Laycock and who succeeded his father as chairman of the Melbourne Steamship Company; Marion Elizabeth Yorke Syme (b.1869) who married George Ernest Wiseman; Helen Isabella Syme (b.1871) who married Benjamin Bradshaw and Rona Martelli Syme (b.1885) who married James Murray. Another son, Ronald Martelli Syme died in 1884, aged 3.

***Tourmont** 79 Balwyn Road**

Tourmont was built on land which had originally been part of Andrew Murray's *Balwyn*. It is thought to have been designed by the architect John Beswicke. The Syme family moved into their newly built Balwyn Road house c 1892.

In the Camberwell Conservation Study of 1991 it is described as appearing to consist of:

“two buildings of three-colour face brick: one a two-storey, iron verandahed house; the other a French chateaux with a dash of English Tudor. This duality (being) pronounced by the central placement of a trussed gable set into the upper verandah of the northern wing which, with its sparse detail, differs markedly from the other ornate and Tudoresque half-timbered and trussed gable to the south”.



Tourmont

Photos: Steve McLean 2008



Tourmont

Following David Yorke Syme's death, *Tourmont* was advertised for sale in 1933. Interestingly the Syme family placed a covenant on the sale stipulating that the house never be used as a school, laundry or flats. At the time Margaret Cunningham, a teacher at *Fintona* which was then in Camberwell, was looking for a house in which to establish a new school. Fortunately she was able to persuade the Syme family, who were acquainted with her uncle, Sir Edward Cunningham, editor of the *Argus*, to sell her *Tourmont*. Not long afterwards Miss Hughston, owner of *Fintona*, offered to sell Margaret Cunningham the goodwill of the school. With Margaret Cunningham as headmistress, *Fintona Girls' School* moved to *Tourmont* in 1936.

* *Tourmont* frequently appears as *Tour Mont* in newspaper articles and advertisements during the Syme years

(Patricia O'Dwyer)

Sources: *Argus* 13 July, 1904, 19 December, 1932, 14 October, 1933, 13 July 1934

Butler, Graeme, *Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, Vol. 4*

Gillison, Joan, *Margaret Cunningham of Fintona*, *Fintona Girls' School*, 1982

Hobart Mercury, 10 February, 1906

NSW and Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages

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Contact Mike Nolan for your real estate needs – 9830 1644