



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

July/August 2019

Meetings

Thursday 8 August 2019 – 8 pm

Speaker: Dr Helen Doyle

Topic: The Changing Landscape of the Balwyn Area

Dr Helen Doyle is a senior heritage consultant with Context Pty. She has worked on a number of projects including the Moyne Shire Heritage Study and the City of Melbourne Heritage Study. She is also a writer and editor and two of her publications have won Victorian Community History awards.

Thursday 12 September 2019 – 8pm

Speaker: Dr Rosemary Francis

Topic: Finding the Links

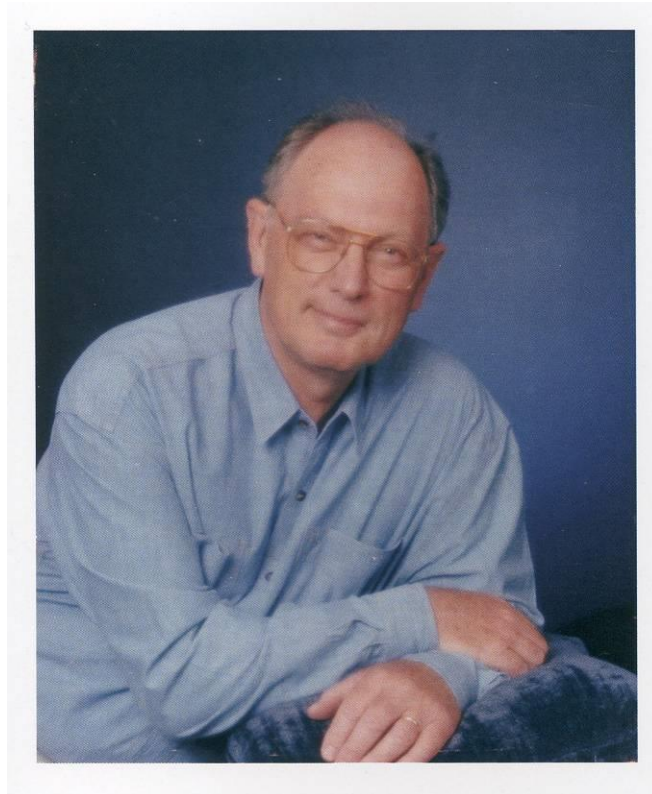
Dr Rosemary Francis, an Associate of the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, will provide an insight into Italian migration to Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century through the story of two relatives, Ferdinando and Federico Gagliardi, who arrived in Melbourne in 1877. It demonstrates the value of Trove, the National Library of Australia's website, in uncovering these family stories.

Thursday 10 October 2019 – 8pm

Speaker: Dr Ros Otzen

Topic: From Ragged School to Modern Academy: Melbourne City Mission's "Hester Hornbrook Academy"

Meetings are held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn
Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs



Vale

**William (Bill) Pritchard
(1942-2019)**

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Bill Pritchard on 25 June, 2019.

Although Bill was born in Adelaide, he grew up and went to school in Balwyn. He attended Balwyn State School and then Box Hill Technical School. Later he attended Swinburne Technical College where he studied engineering. His earliest memories were connected with Balwyn and he maintained this close relationship all his life.

Bill had a successful career as an engineer in mining and later ran his own consulting business. He was, above all, a family man – involved in the lives of his children, grandchildren and more recently his two great grandchildren. However, Bill also had a great involvement in the community. For example, when his daughters played netball he not only became team coach but was involved in administration. One of his great enthusiasms was the scouting movement and he became District Commissioner for Camberwell.

Those of us who met with Bill in more recent years recall his great interest in local history and his research into the lives of soldiers in World War I. His research into “his soldiers” lasted many years and culminated in a book “*Balwyn War Memorial*”.

Bill had a major interest in the Balwyn Evergreen Centre (BEC), formerly known as the Balwyn Welfare Association (BWA). His mother was one of a group of ladies who realised that little support was offered to elderly people in Balwyn. She, and others, initiated this project and raised the money to establish the present building which now stands at 45 Talbot

Avenue, Balwyn. They also established a range of programs for older people living in Balwyn and surroundings. Bill enthusiastically followed in her footsteps some years later and not only chaired the Board of BEC but acted as CEO for many years. On his retirement from the Board Bill continued his involvement with the Evergreen Club.

Those of us in the Balwyn Historical Society (BHS) will recall that Bill was a founder member and it was due to his drive and enthusiasm that the first working group was formed which eventuated in the formation of BHS in 2008. It was due to Bill that BHS is now one of the programs of the Balwyn Evergreen Centre. Bill was President of BHS for many years until his and Dawn's ill health precluded his active participation. Despite this, Bill continued to attend meetings and meet with his many friends.

We will miss you Bill. We will miss your friendship and wise counsel and above all your enthusiasm for history.

Marilyn Poole

BHS Membership 2019-2020

Many thanks to those members who have renewed their membership

Membership fees were due on July 1. The fee remains the same for the 2019-2020 financial year.

\$25 - single membership

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

You may renew your membership at the August meeting. Payment can 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).

Alternatively please send the completed renewal form together with a cheque to **The BHS Treasurer, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103.**

For membership enquires contact Barbara Russell – 9857-6416

St Catherine's 1 Clayton Road Balwyn

Preamble

In 1904 an eight roomed brick house was built for John Porter on the corners of Belmore and Clayton Roads. John Porter resided here until his death in 1930 when the property became vacant while owned by his executors. By 1935 the property was owned and occupied by flour miller James E Minifie. The last private owner was the Santospirito family who sold "Belmore Grange" to the Daughters of Charity in 1956 for £40,000.



St Catherine's

Daughters of Charity history

St Vincent de Paul 24 April 1581 – 27 September 1660

Vincent was ordained at 19 and completed his education in Rome. He had a spiritual change in his thirties. Working with the marginalised he was known for his compassion, generosity and humility. He met Louise de Marillac in the 1620s and together they cofounded the Daughters of Charity. St Vincent de Paul was canonised in 1737.

St Catherine 2 May 1806 – Born Zoe Laboure at Fain-les-Mountiers, a village in Burgundy, France. On 2 April 1830 she was received into the nursing order congregation of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. On 27 July 1947 she was canonised by Pope Pius XII. She truly lived as 'one who walks with God'. On 27 July 1984 Pope Leo XIII instituted 28 November as the Feast Day of Catherine Laboure.

Daughters of Charity in Melbourne

On 18 November 1926 four Sisters arrived in Orange, NSW from Great Britain. In Melbourne, Sister Cormac DC established St Catherine's House in Brunswick Street Fitzroy to accommodate 13 aged ladies in 1949. Prior to 1960 they served lunch to homeless and disadvantaged men outside St Vincent's Hall in Fitzroy. St Mary's House of Welcome was then opened on 30 May 1960 at 167 Brunswick Street.

It became evident that St Catherine's House was not suitable as many of the ladies had come only to convalesce, but could not be discharged, as they had no one to care for them at home. The Sisters started looking and purchased "Belmore Park" in 1956, using a State Government grant of £5,000 to help meet the initial cost. The Santospiritos vacated the property on 28 May 1956 and after renovations were done the house provided accommodation for 17 residents, 13 of whom were transferred from St Catherine's House in Fitzroy.

On 13 June 1956 Monsignor Fox came to offer the first mass in the chapel. In May 1959 extensions and alterations to the house basement were made, providing accommodation for eight men. A grant was obtained through the Hospital and Charities Commission and Hospital Benefits for 10 patients.

During the 1960s the sister's quarters were extended, comprising a dormitory, toilet block, office and study room at a cost of £ 17,167. In 1966 extensions were made to the kitchen and dining rooms at a cost of \$7,500 and early in 1966 installation of sewerage was completed at a cost of \$10,513.

A very strong and faithful Auxiliary was formed providing invaluable and tireless help and funds. In September 1969 accommodation and facilities for nursing care patients were completed, providing also staff dining and sitting rooms, three staff bedrooms complete with shower/toilet facilities, as well as treatment and utility rooms, kitchenette and a reception room, at a cost of \$77,661.

The new wing was blessed by Monsignor Clarke VG on 21 September 1969, bringing the total accommodation of St Catherine's to 30 patients.

In 1975 heating systems were installed in the original sections of the house and during 1975-76, extensive alterations were made to the nursing home to provide wheelchair access to the chapel etc. In 1976 the new hostel wing was opened, providing single room accommodation for 16 ladies and gentlemen, one ensuite room for staff, a flatette for the chaplain, sitting rooms, kitchenette and toilet block. This new hostel wing, a two-level building with lift and glassed-in corridors connects with the original building. It was solemnly blessed by Cardinal Knox on 10 October 1976. St Catherine's then accommodated 36 patients.

As well as the care of the elderly the Sisters found time for other activities. From 1960 Sr Julia Denton and Sr Helen Jipp went weekly to the Yooralla Centre, a mile from St Catherine's, to teach the catechism to the children there to prepare them for the sacraments. This was carried on by other sisters and finally by Sr Pauline Delaney until it was relinquished at the end of 1978.

They also visited the Mental Hospital at Kew. Sr Gabriel Rodoreda, and other sisters visited this large establishment of 800 patients regularly during the week and returned for Sunday masses there. Sisters had access to all wards and had a real apostolate amongst staff and friends of the patients. Unfortunately, due to Sr Gabriel's failing health, this work discontinued in 1973.

St Catherine's also accommodated two sisters, who were working in East Preston parish for some years after the closure of St Anne's Hall, Carlton. During 1981 the sister involved with the Apostolate to the Refugee/Migrant Community also resided in Balwyn and travelled each day to Nunawading.

Between 1959 to 1973 the sisters teaching in the local St Bridget's School in Greythorn, also resided at St Catherine's and gave time and assistance to the residents of St Catherine's.

Early in 1989 negotiations commenced regarding the relinquishing of St Catherine's by the Daughters of Charity because of shortage of community personnel. Several applications were made and after discussion with the Catholic Guild for the Housing of the Elderly (which became Catholic Homes) arrangements were made for this organisation to assume the

administration and nursing care of the residents of St Catherine's. After a gradual process of transfer of management, the Guild, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Melbourne, began a new era in the life of St Catherine's (formerly Belmore Park) on 11 December 1989.

A special mass was celebrated at St Catherine's to mark the occasion. Sr Marie O'Brien, Provincial, and Sr Loretta Sarah remained for the resident's Christmas Party on 22 December, and left St Catherine's on 25 December 1989.

Sr Loretta's July 1989 letter

Dear

It is with regret that I write to advise you that the Daughters of Charity have made a decision to withdraw from our nursing home and hostel at St Catherine's at Balwyn by the end of 1989.

This decision has only been arrived at after a great deal of consideration supported by prayer. Unfortunately, the resources of the Community are such that we will not be able to continue our work at St Catherine's.

Apart from our natural regret at the prospect of leaving Balwyn, our primary concern is for the welfare of our residents, many of whom have been with us for some time and all of whom have come to regard St Catherine's as their best alternative to home.

We are also very concerned for the welfare of our dedicated staff.

We are in the course of contacting other organisations which may be interested in acquiring St Catherine's and in continuing to operate it in the caring atmosphere which we believe has always characterised the operations to date.

To our benefactors and to those who have worked for St Catherine's we would like to offer our sincere thanks and to ensure that the proceeds of your generosity and your efforts will continue to be applied for the benefits of the residents of St Catherine's.

As mentioned, we are seeking discussions aimed at the continued operations of St Catherine's in its present form. We will advise you of any significant development in this regard and whilst we realize that you will be concerned for the welfare of your mother (father, aunt etc.) we urge you not to be unduly worried.

Yours sincerely

Sister Loretta Sarah



Fr T O'Reilly CM and Daughter of Charity at changeover function July 1989

Catholic Homes was established in 1969 by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, becoming a separately incorporated legal entity as an Archdiocesan agency in 1989.

On 22 March 1990 the Knights of the Southern Cross in North Balwyn presented St Catherine's with a mobile kiosk trolley in order to fundraise money, equipment and facilities for residents.

In the early 1990s the Archdiocese realised that approximately 60 of the 350 priests in Melbourne would reach the retirement age of 75. A Priests' Retirement Fund was set up and a special collection taken up in congregations to assist raise the \$6.5 million needed to build a priest's retirement centre at St Catherine's. The centre "Justin Villa" now faces Narrak Road, just east of St Catherine's. This meant that St Catherine's would have three sections: a 30-bed nursing home, a 30-bed hostel and 17 priests' units, with six units occupied by Sisters who look after the retired priests. Catholic Homes provided \$1 million towards the project together with Commonwealth Funding.



St Catherine's gardens later to become Minifie Park

Final Comments

On a personal note, I was fortunate enough to work for Catholic Homes from 2009 until March 2015, which included its merger with Villa Maria in the second half of 2014. It was always a pleasure to visit St Catherine's which at the time was very ably managed by Michelle Willison, and her senior staff including Noreen Evans and Sue Sammartino, (who still leads the lifestyle activities). I would also visit "Justin Villa" often in time for morning mass lead by one of the retired priests, staying for a morning tea and chatting to the priests.

'Belmore Grange' has had an interesting history over the last 120 years from a fine building of 8 rooms constructed in about 1904 with a number of private owners before being used by the Daughters of Charity and later Catholic Homes in caring for the elderly, especially retired religious.

Sources

VMCH booklet "St Catherine's celebration of the Feast of St Catherine Labouré 28th November"
Materials provided by Ruth Minifie, a descendant of the Minifie family who owned "Belmore Grange" from 1935 to the early 1950s.

Matthew ETTY-Leal

Recent Speaker: Dr. Max Lay

Roads and Streets of Balwyn: their early history

In 1835, land in Melbourne was used to run sheep as we had a poor water supply and average soil. In 1836, Governor Bourke in Sydney realised people wanted to buy land and needed surveyors who used “sectioning”, a United States practice. Grids were adopted with North South and East West lines with the origin/zero point being Docklands. Each grid was one square mile and allowed the creation of Counties (Bourke) and Parishes. A Parish was 25 sections (5 miles by 5 miles), i.e. the Parish of Boroondara (thickly wooded). Eight square miles equalled 5,120 acres.

Land was sold in sections that often was later subdivided leading to speculation. Section boundaries were usually access roads that were one chain (20 metres) wide. William Wedge-Drake surveyed land in Balwyn 1837 which was later sold for farming and timber. Section boundaries included Balwyn Road 7 miles east of the city, Warrigal Road 8 miles east of the city and Elgar Road 9 miles east. Another section boundary was Toorak Road.

Henry Elgar, in a brief period in Melbourne, conducted a special survey, including Koonung Creek, a prime asset, providing fresh water for livestock, purchasing 8 square miles in 1841. Whitehorse Road was an existing track to Healesville originally passing through Xavier. Big trees from the Dandenongs were transported along Canterbury Road.

Robert Hoddle liked wide roads, and most of Balwyn’s major roads are all four lanes. A major change occurred locally when the railway was extended to Box Hill in the 1880s. A lot of the new roads and streets were given English names. If you are interested in tracing your residential street start with the land title, trace back to the original subdivision and go to the Land data website.

Balwyn Historical Society - Contact details

Balwyn Historical Society is a program of the Balwyn Evergreen Centre. Phone – 9836 9681

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