



Balwyn Historical Society

December 2022

Dear Members and Friends

As 2022 draws to a close, we can reflect on the positives: times that brought us back together at family visits, shared meals and cuppas with friends, films, concerts, church, and many community events. Our Balwyn Historical Society reestablished meetings and together we enjoyed a great range of topics from our speakers. Next year promises to be just as interesting.

Our meetings continue to be held at Balwyn Evergreen Centre on the 2nd Thursday of each month for February, March, April, and May commencing at 7.30 PM.

This newsletter includes Graham O'Rourke's historical 'tour' of the development of our wonderful State Library, a report and reflection by Philip Mallis on the 90th anniversary of Balwyn's St Columba's church, and also, its closing in 2014 and conversely, the celebration of Balwyn's St Barnabas 150 years.

December is a season for celebration, Happy Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and simply happy holidays and celebrations of connection to family and friends both old and new. There will be cards, emails, telephone calls and even more special, letters penned and sent through the post. How exciting it was to discover a letter in the mailbox, to open up the envelope and sit down to read pages of "news". Perhaps there will be a time when this will be only an historical fact told to future generations!



The committee of BHS wish you all a festive happy time and may 2023 fulfil all your hopes and dreams. Be safe and healthy.

**Our first meeting for 2023 will be on:
Thursday 9th February 2023 – 7:30 pm**

at

**Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

**Guest Speaker: Martin Semken of Semken Landscaping
Topic: The Chelsea Flower Show**

Martin Semken will speak about the major commitment his company made in preparing for, and participating in, the Chelsea Flower Show

Redmond Barry and the State Library of Victoria.

Guest Speaker: Graham O' Rourke

Mid C19th Melbourne set the scene for the establishment of a wonderful institution for Victoria because of the vision of Redmond Barry and others.

From 1835, various institutions were springing up. Separation from NSW and the discovery of gold and its riches gave Melbourne a new complexion. Thousands had flocked to Victoria in search of gold and the Lieutenant Governor, Charles LaTrobe took the helm to develop the now independent Colony. Cultured gentlemen looked for the cultured life which mainly took place in private homes and clubs like the Atheneum. Sophie LaTrobe with her Swiss/French background and Georgina MacCrae were known for organising the cultural entertainment to suit an amazing mix of culture cultures.

Redmond Barry was born in the UK and in 1813 was sent to a military academy. He did not get a military posting so spent some time on the family estates before going to study Arts and then Law at Trinity College in Dublin. He was also a keen reader and had quickly mastered Greek and Latin using this skill to translate works into English.

Now as a barrister in Dublin he was 'sent' to the NSW colony where he was admitted to the NSW Bar but only stayed 2 years in Sydney. He moved on to Melbourne as a barrister, becoming the Solicitor General in 1851 and acting as the Chief Justice and government administrator. He was regarded as a very hard judge. Later in 1880, he presided at Ned Kelly's trial and sentenced him to death.

On the other hand, he had defended indigenous peoples with compassion and fostered a keeping of their languages.

He and his partner Louise Barrow had four children, a situation that was frowned upon by the Archbishop, however Louise is acknowledged on his burial plaque. One of his properties, now the Riversdale golf club, showed his enthusiasm as a gardener. He also operated a dairy farm with one of his three sons.

Barry was a force behind establishing a library, The Melbourne Public Library, emphasising the need for it to be a democratic institution. In 1851, public libraries were rare, one in Manchester UK and one in the USA. Under La Trobe's direction, £ 10,000 was set aside for this Library. Joseph Reid, an architect, originally from Cornwall, arrived in Melbourne in 1853. He won the design competition and Barry found that he worked well with him. Many of Melbourne's notable buildings were of Reid's design.

The building was proposed to cost £50,000 and in 1854 the first sod was turned. For Barry, it was important that the use of the library was for business, industry and creativity and not just intellectual pursuits. A board of trustees was set up chaired by Redmond Barry and they were keen to drive the project. They began to order books.

In the design, the central area was flanked by two wings - built in 1859 and 1864. A dome was mooted in 1864, but it was not until 1907 that plans by Bates, Smart, McCutchen were formulated. This was the same company that Joseph Reid had established. The dome was built between 1909 and 1913 and its height and width were 35 metres in an octagon shape. At the time, the dome was the biggest reinforced concrete roof in the world.

The Supreme Court and the Parliamentary Library were in operation, both due Barry. his vision for the public library was to have more general books, best editions and best translated books all bound with the seal of the library on the outside. Quality was the aim. Categories such as Natural History, Classics, Biography, Politics, History, Botany, Art, and Religion were desirable. The library was to be open to all people "believers and non-believers" - secular as was the University of Melbourne Library.

"The best book in the library is too good for nobody". A place for self-improvement, not entertainment so therefore not much fiction! It was to open from 10 am - 10pm in the early days except for Sundays. (however, in 1904, it was open on Sundays). There were tables for 350 readers and books were loaned to country and regional libraries.

The library expanded rapidly. By 1862, acquisitions amounted to 28,000 volumes and later by 1890 there were 107,000 volumes making it one of the great libraries of the world. The levels of the library were set out in similar fashion to that of Dublin's Trinity library. The vision of Redmond Barry who had died in 1880 was truly vindicated.

Significant donations came from Charles La Trobe, the French Consul who donated 100 rare volumes from Napoleon 3rd, the King of Prussia and The Learned Denmark Society. Purchases included Goulds Birds Set and 4 volumes of Birds of North America with 435 drawings bought for £100. Art works were added such as Greek and Roman plaster cast statues (the plaster was cheaper for the money to be spent) 'Old Masters' such as Buvelot's " Sunday Morning near Templestowe" was the beginning of better works.

These books and artefacts sat in an interior of beautiful decoration completed by a Edward Latrobe Bateman and more recently, Queens Hall had \$10 million spent on restoration where scraping back of the surfaces revealed the original decoration.

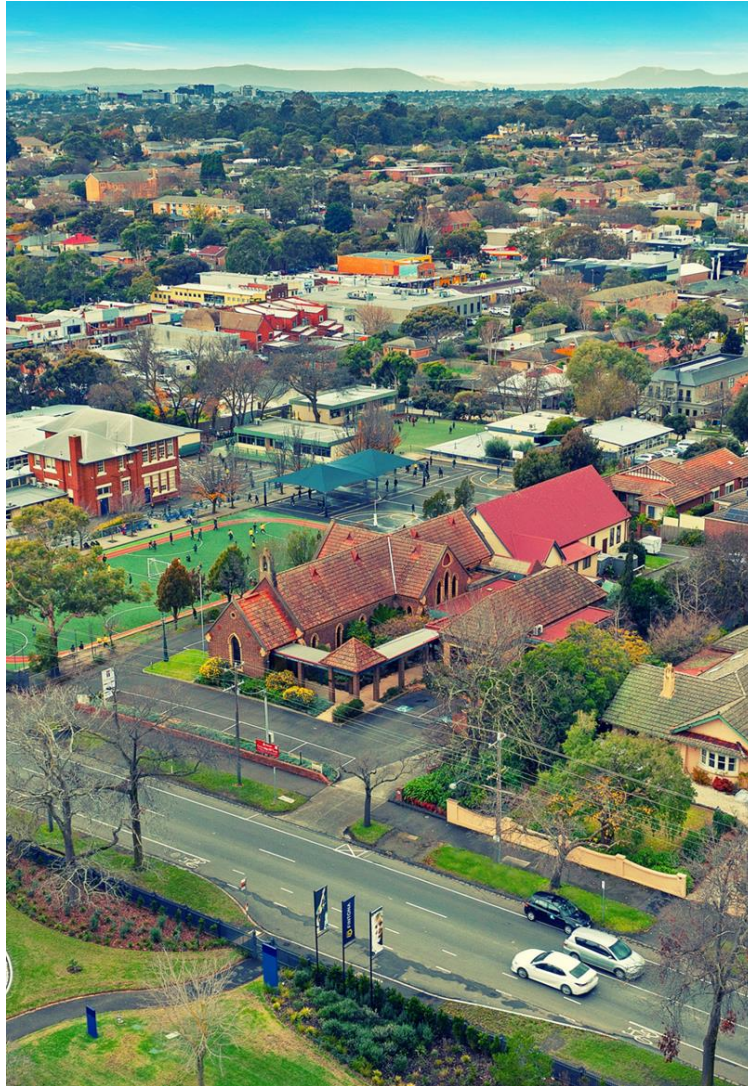
An event such as "The International Exhibition" in 1866 highlighted the building's significance. The exhibition was a huge success for 5 months. Based on the South Kensington model in the UK, it included Art, Technology, Mathematics, Literature and Museum offerings. By 1873, the MacArthur Gallery for paintings was added where art and design were interlocked.

Finally, Redmond Barry made sure that all the land back to Russell Street was purchased. The State Library of Victoria owes its development to the vision of Redmond Barry, a central figure who made things happen.

He is remembered by a reading room named after him and a statue placed in 1887 in front of the library.

St Barnabas - Celebrating 150 Years

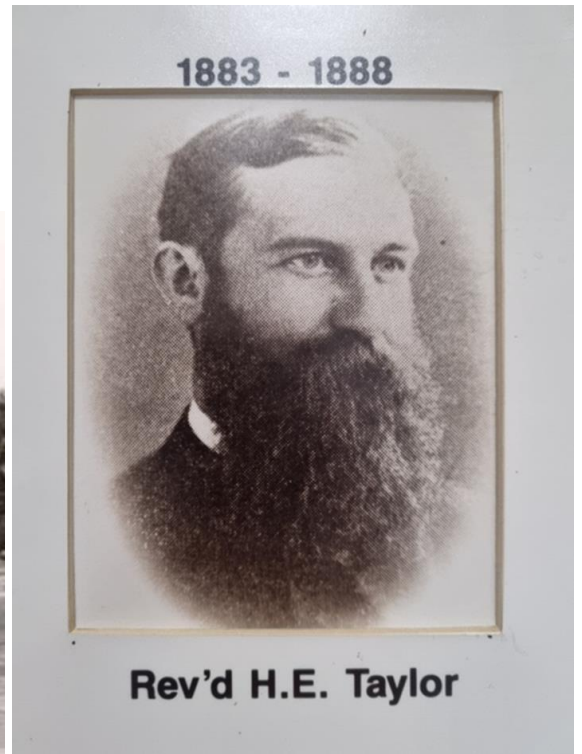
On the afternoon of the 9th of October 2022, the Vicar, Randle Bond launched the St Barnabas 150 Years History Book. Matthew ETTY-Leal introduced Philip Barton, great grandson of John Butler Maling, who spoke of the historical connections of his family with the church.



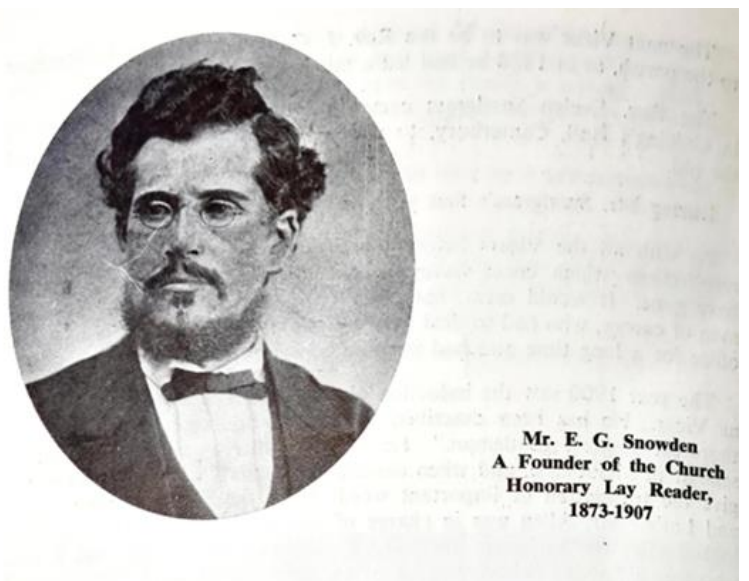
Gin Boxes and Faith, St Barnabas Balwyn - Hilary Blakeman

Starting the church

European settlers wanted a local school and church in Balwyn. In May 1868 the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church Kew, Rev Roland Hayward, rode his horse on Sunday afternoons to the **Athenaeum Hall** to conduct services. He did this for two years accompanied by a young woman who played the harmonium. A change in parish for Rev Hayward meant that St John's Camberwell began supporting the church we know as St Barnabas. A lay preacher, **Mr Herbert E Taylor**, took over the services.



The early parishioners & Board of Governors of St Barnabas' included men from a wide range of employments & means. Some of them were **John Butler Maling (carpenter)**, **Edward Green Snowden** (Solicitor & 'Chief Examiner of Titles for the State of Victoria'), Harry M Perry, William Sewell (Civil Servant), V Kofod (a Danish settler), **John Day** (who built/occupied the Survey Hotel), **H W C Smith**, (the first Balwyn blacksmith), **Frederick T Fankhauser** (a local nurseryman), **Frank Rennick** (Gentleman, Civil engineer/ Chief engineer of Victorian railways) & D Smith (an early treasurer). **John Buter Maling**, *pictured left*.



John Butler Maling

In 1922 Mr William Maling spoke to school children about early settlement. The early settlers were poor and worked hard. Initially tents or bark huts served as homes. Cutting and carting wood was essential for domestic and building use. The homes had little furniture. Seats were a luxury, with most people sitting on **gin boxes** (it is not recorded whether these boxes were full or empty)!

John Butler Maling & 7 other settlers discussed building a church **sitting on their gin boxes**. It cost £350 to build the church. **The Rae family sold some land for the building and area**. Mr **Herbert Taylor** raised £200 & other locals raised the remaining £150. An article in the Church of England Messenger January 2nd, 1873 reads, '*A new church, dedicated to God, by the name of St Barnabas, has been opened in the district of Camberwell. The building is on a very good site, built on high ground, about 6 miles from Melbourne on the Lilydale Road*'. **John Butler Maling** was responsible for actual erection of church. *Below his tools and tool chest.*



It is thought our church has the name, St Barnabas, due to the similarity with St Barnabas selling his land to give to the church, & the Rae family selling land for the church.

Sunday 22nd December 1872 was St Barnabas' first public worship service. **Andrew Murray**

In 1883, **Bishop Dr James Moorhouse**, Melbourne Diocese, constituted the parish of Balwyn. St Barnabas reopened temporarily for worship. A memorial stone was laid by **Mrs. Maria Snowden** to commemorate this reopening on May 15, 1883. The church was still too small & closed until 1884 to increase the size **of the nave which allowed 140 seats, plus a wooden chancel**.

The early Vicarage was Taylor House, the private residence of Rev Herbert Taylor. After he left for another parish in 1888, the church bought his residence for future Vicars & families to live in.

Maling Hall, (formerly the Sunday School Hall), was designed by John's son, **William Maling** in 1896 & built by available parishioners & friends. In the early 20th century, a pulpit was built & carved by **William Maling, then Church Secretary**. A separate kindergarten was erected in 1912.

The church was completed in 1930. Over half the money for the extensions came from an anonymous gift, & the balance by parishioner subscriptions. One of the conditions of the gift was that the work be carried out by the **Maling family. Charles Maling**

In Mar 1930 the anonymous offer was made via **Mr Charles Maling (another of John's sons)** to build a **chancel and 2 vestries** for **£1,250**. He drew up plans. Work was completed by **Charles, his sons & co-workers** in December 1930.



Left Photograph: Cr John Butler Maling, Mayor.

Right Photograph: Charles Henry and Katherine Maling and family at 'The Willows', Shepreth Street, Surrey Hills. Charles and Katherine are the older man and woman centre back with daughter Ellen Grace, known as Nell (1882-1960) in front of them. Right front seated on the pillar is daughter Jane Emma (1872-1980) with her baby.



Photograph of Philip Barton, great grandson of John Mailing Buter, courtesy of Margaret Williamson

St Columba's Church 90th anniversary and closing service

Philip Mallis 27 April, 2014 News

“Today I had the privilege of attending the final service and 90th anniversary celebrations at St. Columba's Uniting Church in Balwyn. The turnout was fantastic, with people packing the church for the service and the rear hall afterwards for morning tea.

St. Columba's is one of six Uniting Church properties in Boroondara that have been sold, with five out of the total six being in my ward (Maranoa Ward). These are:

St Columba's church, hall, tennis courts & kindergarten (37 Banool Road, Balwyn VIC 3103)

St Columba's adjacent dwelling (25 Banool Road, Balwyn VIC 3103)

Trinity Uniting Church, hall & dwelling (172 Doncaster Road, 47 Sutton Street & 49 Sutton Street, Balwyn North VIC 3104)

The other Uniting Church property in Boroondara that has been sold are the tennis courts at 20A Broughton Road. A full list may be obtained on the Uniting Church website here.

It was a joyous occasion to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the congregation, but also a melancholy one for the closure of the church. Many people of all ages and locations attended, including past ministers, congregation members and Sunday school students. St Columba's has a rich and vibrant history, including being the first in its parish to appoint a female minister, the operation of a hugely popular Sunday school and the St Columba's Kindergarten.

Afterwards I spoke with committee members, ministers, and other attendees, with some having travelled long distances to be there today. While there was understandable grief and anger with what has occurred, many were looking forward to the future and its opportunities for positive change and renewal.

There was discussion about the future of the many community groups who have used the church facilities for many years. The sale of the church and its buildings is not just a loss for the congregation, but a loss for the wider community. The benefit to the local area was translated through the provision of valuable space for groups to be able to carry out their work, from Scottish dancing to a women's choir. The benefits from these activities extended far beyond the immediate congregation, and the church's loss will be felt by many.

Thanks must go to the church's committee members, ministers and congregation members for their hard work and dedication over the years to provide such valuable services to the community. While I am not religious nor a churchgoer myself, it is easy to see how much this hidden suburban church has meant to people and what a difference it has made to hundreds of people's lives. I wish all the very best for the future”.



Semken Landscaping Pty Ltd was formed in 1987 and grown to become one of the largest landscaping companies in Australia. Semken Landscaping has won numerous awards at various flower and garden shows including the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, Sydney in Bloom and the biggest horticultural show in the world - **the Chelsea Flower Show**.



Membership Renewal for 2023:

You may renew your membership fees for this year by the February or March meeting, 2023.
Fees will remain the same as prior years.

Single: \$25

Joint: \$35 (2 members at the same address)

Payment can be made by Cash, Cheque (payable to Balwyn Historical Society)
or by **EFT transfer:**

Account Name: Balwyn Historical Society

BSB: 633-000

Account Number: 133477380

(Please reference your surname)

It would be helpful if you could place your payment in an envelope marked with your name(s) at the meetings or delivered to **reception, Balwyn Evergreen Centre**.
Cheque may be posted to **The BHS Treasurer, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103**.

Renewal forms will be emailed and available at the meeting/s.

Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com **Website:** www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs