



# Balwyn Historical Society

June 2022

## Newsletter - June 2022

**Next Meeting: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 2pm**

**Guest Speaker Helen Botham**

**Topic: “Thomas Johnson - Thorny Rose Grower of Hawthorn”**

The writer of the first book published on rose growing in Victoria who had an extensive rose nursery in Hawthorn. He was an interesting and controversial person as well.

**Afternoon Tea will follow**

This newsletter includes our past 3 presenters and A Tribute to a Special Lady:

**Warwick Foster**

**Topic: “The history of Colongulac, North Balwyn”**

Origins, owners, and occupiers 1841-2021.

**Judith Eadon**

**Topic: “Kerrimuir Primary School – early days”**

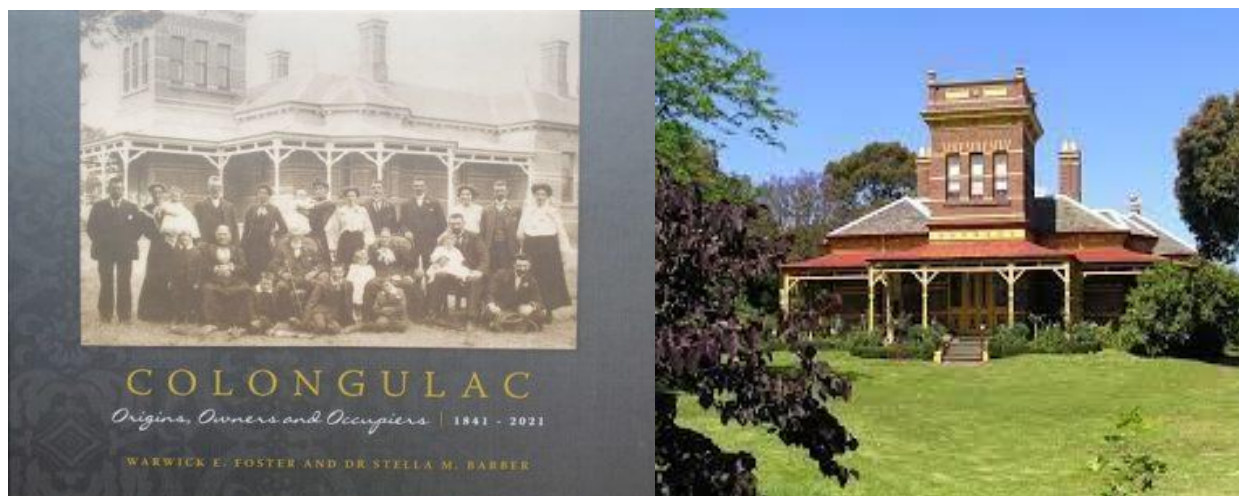
Box Hill North

**Matthew ETTY-Leal**

**Topic: “Cobb & Co”**

**Patricia O’Dwyer – A Tribute**

## Colongulac - Warwick Foster



Warwick Foster was born and raised in Geelong before moving to Melbourne to work in the embryonic days of IT. Warwick purchased Colongulac in late 1999 with his wife Bernadette. Warwick, Bernadette and their three children moved to the UK in early 2000, the family returning in late 2003 and Warwick in August 2004 when work on the Colongulac history commenced.

The Colongulac story started in 1841 with Elgar's Special Survey of 5,120 allotments. Andrew Murray (Age) purchased one allotment (which became Fintona) planting a vineyard & building a house. In 1854 Thomas Henry Power (horses) and Gideon Rutherford business partners purchased land on which Colongulac sits. They sold to Thomas Wilson who sold to brother-in-law Swen Weidemann (a Swedish tenant farmer) & Prudentia, nee Towt, in 1876.

Arthur Clark was the Architect of Colongulac from late March 1888. Swen died in 1892 gored by bull on his property, most of his estate used to pay creditors. For the next few years, the property had tenants including George and Amy Castle (a famous singer) in 1902-3. The Mummery family were the next tenants and their family photo features on the front cover of Warwick's book. Alexander Adeney, owner 1904 – 18: from 1906 – named the property after Lake Colongulac in Western District of Victoria where his parents settled after emigrating from London in 1840s.

The Australian Pensioners League became owners using Colongulac as a place of healing: Penquite Private Hospital & Convalescent Home – occupiers from 1936-1953: opened by James Scullin in 1938 Feb with Robert Menzies attending. The Allison family involved in the Oriental Missionary Society were owners from 1953 – 1973. John Allison Snr helped establish World Vision. Future owners included Ken (who worked for John Elliott) & Carolyn Jarrett, Marlene & Geoffrey Cohen 1986 – 1999.

Since the Foster family purchased the property, they have made extensive renovations gaining Heritage Protection in 2007.

Current photo of Colongulac, 11 Luena Street, courtesy of Steve McLean

## Early days of Kerrimuir Primary School - Judith Eadon

**As you, our readers, enjoy reading Judith's presentation, we would welcome written anecdotes of your own primary and/or secondary school days.**

Judith gave an entertaining insight into the early days of Kerrimuir Primary School, 4816 in Box Hill North, the site purchased from W D Pitts, an orchardist for £19,230. The school's inception in 1959 was a feature of the then outer suburban new housing developments, surrounded by small orchards, poultry farms and the like. The construction of new schools was a result of the Baby Boomer period. Parents threw themselves into fundraising to provide more than the basics, as children walked or rode bicycles to school on unmade roads and footpaths. The early total enrolments numbered well over 700; nowadays it is 340.

The school caretaker was the gardener, handyman and everyone's friend, especially for the children. School photos revealed classes often numbering in the 40s. A class in the 30s was a teachers dream! Judith's Grade 2 had 37 students, the beginner's class 44!



The class photo above had a canine member in the middle of the front row! A local Border Collie visited the school daily and loved the company of the children and they of him. Students often walked to the local shops to buy their lunch. Boys climbed on school roofs to retrieve balls! Unwell children were escorted home by two older girls from grades 5 and 6 levels. What responsibility, and so unthinkable in current times! Boys had the 'important' monitor roles of ringing the bell for classes to begin and end, requiring the monitor to have a reliable watch. Refilling of ink wells was another role for the boys. Classrooms were beautified by the girls, who in the absence of flowers from their own gardens, collected a bunch along the way to school. A status symbol was having a box of 72 Derwent pencils!

The school's first principal had the foresight to plant rows of native trees now visible as tall strong trees shading the grounds. Eventually the playground and gardens took shape. Teachers were dedicated to providing the best possible education with limited facilities and equipment. One of the teachers was determined that his students should learn beyond the classroom, often driving groups to art shows and events in the city. Parents raised funds for the additions of a library and art room. Judith's own mother was a volunteer administration assistant to the principal, eventually becoming officially employed for ten years.

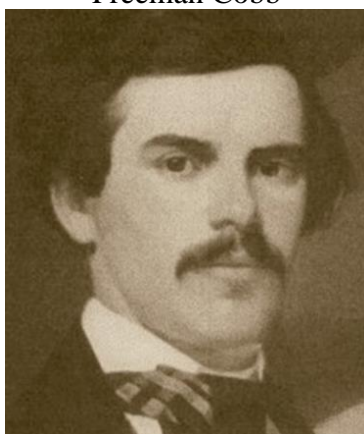
From Kerrimuir, Judith and her brother, Mark, moved on to newly established secondary schools in Blackburn or to other schools further afield. Boys had the option of Blackburn Boys Technical school, Blackburn High School and Box Hill Boys High School, while girls mainly went to Blackburn High School or Box Hill Girls Technical school, then in Whitehorse Rd. Judith's presentation included reminders of the Recess milk, not always a favourite, the Monday morning Oath and the singing of God Save the Queen. It jogged memories of our own experiences and brought shared laughter of how we accepted the "rules" and took on amazing responsibilities as we embraced the adventure of our Primary school days.

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## Cobb & Co - Matthew ETTY-Leal

Cobb & Co was established in 1853 by American Freeman Cobb and his partners, **John Murray Peck, James Swanton & John B. Lamber**, financially supported by US businessman George Train.

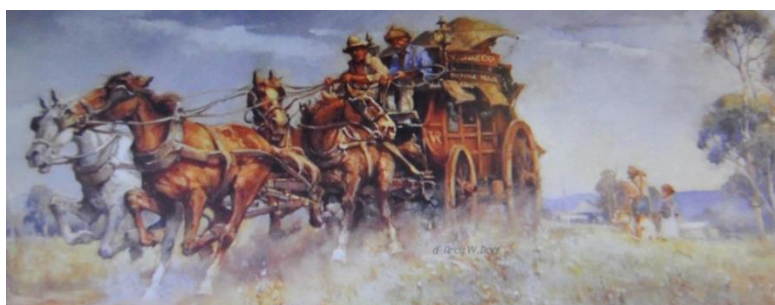
Freeman Cobb



In May 1856, the 4 partners sold out for **£16,000**. Passing through a number of owners, Cobb & Co rose to greater prominence after 1861 when bought for **£23,000** by a consortium led by another American, **James Rutherford**. His partners included **Alexander William Robertson, John Wagner, Walter (& Eliza) Hall, William Franklin Whitney and Walter Bradley**. Rutherford re-organised and extended Victorian services and won a monopoly on major mail contracts. In the 1860s the company expanded to NSW and Queensland, Rutherford running the business until his passing in 1911.

US born **Francis Boardman Clapp** also arrived during the Victorian gold rush to set up a stagecoach company called FB Clapp that competed with Cobb & Co. He later established the Melbourne Omnibus Company with horse-drawn buses, and in 1877, launched the **Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company**, his cable trams still operating in Melbourne until the 1940s. Coaches were constructed in Concord, New Hampshire, for **£3,000 each** used thorough-brace technology whereby thick straps of leather suspended the vehicle body providing the passenger with considerable comfort on the rough roads to the goldfields when compared to coaches with traditional steel-springs. Coaches were later built locally in Bathurst and Charleville.

Darcy Doyle's famous Cobb & Co painting



The fare was about **£1 per day for a 1-day journey** in 1860 with 2s/6d for each meal & bed. At its peak in the 1870s, Cobb & Co. coaches were travelling nearly 45,000 km a week over 11,200 km of routes from the Gulf of Carpentaria & Cooktown in Queensland to S Victoria. Coach companies were also established in South Australia, New Zealand and even Japan. Freeman Cobb established a coach service in South Africa in 1871.

When Henry Lawson wrote his famous poem forewarning of its demise; ***The Lights of Cobb & Co*** in 1897, the days of coaching were already coming to an end. Australia's last horse-drawn stagecoach mail service No. 177 service was run by Cobb & Co from Yuleba to Surat in Queensland on 14 August 1924.

**A research request for information on a church site:**

It was located on the south side of Koonung Creek, just to the west of Bulleen Road in North Balwyn / Bulleen shown on a map as "New Congregational(?) Church" from 1887.

**Additional information already gratefully received is as follows:**

“It appears that the church in question was a brick church erected in 1864 as a missionary offshoot of the Kew Congregational Church, close to the banks of the Koonung Creek

Its predecessor was an outpost, also Congregationalist, established in December 1857 in what was described by James Bonwick in "A Sketch of Boroondara" as 'East Boroondara'. It was on the west side of the far northern end of Bulleen Road”.

Maybe there is more to add? Please forward any information to the Balwyn Historical Society email and we will gladly pass it on

## Patricia O'Dwyer – A Tribute

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our dedicated member and friend, Patricia O'Dwyer in May 2022.

Pat, as she was known to us, was a child of the war years, daughter of Mavis and Edmund (Ted) and older sister to Christine. In one of the many articles\* that Pat wrote, she reflected on a happy carefree childhood, dressing up in fur coats and elderly aunts clothing of a different era, and collecting and swapping prized marbles and swap cards. Street games of cricket and football with homemade equipment and the drawing of hopscotch squares on footpaths and roads with coloured clay from building sites filled many other play hours.

Pat noted the great sense of freedom the neighbourhood children enjoyed; wandering the nearby paddocks to fish for yabbies or to catch tadpoles or packing a picnic lunch and cycling to the Burke Rd bridge and the Yarra river. Her list of memories in this article \* were endless and refreshed similar childhood memories of her readers.

School days in later years at Balwyn High School left more indelible memories for Pat. For the occasion of the schools 60th anniversary, Pat produced an article outlining the school's history. \*\* Pat was a proud member of the 1954-year 7 class, 30 of whom were in the school's first Matriculation class (yr 12). She was a diligent, excellent student, always engaged in her studies and a school Prefect. Pat acknowledged the dedication of the staff and the cheerful adjustment of her fellow students to the most creative and limiting of areas where their matriculation lessons took place.

An anecdote that made us smile at Pats service told of her dislike for sport and a negotiation to tend to the schools gardens instead - a pre-emptor to Pats love of creating gardens in her own homes.



Post school, Pat thought nursing was her calling and she also worked part time in a library. One year later, the library work continued but not the nursing. Travels with a childhood friend followed, working in both Europe and the UK. On her return, Pat began university studies for a teacher / librarian career. Banyule and Kew High schools, and Our Lady of Sion in Box Hill were fortunate to have this fine teacher on their staffs.

It was timely in Pat's retirement, that a history society for Balwyn was mooted by the late Bill Pritchard in 2008 to operate under the umbrella of the Balwyn Evergreen Centre. Bill became the foundation President and was enthusiastically supported by a committee consisting of Pat who became Secretary and newsletter editor, Marilyn Poole as Treasurer, Robin Kelly, publicity, and organisation of speakers for meetings and the late Neil Swansson as web manager.

Pat served as Secretary of Balwyn Historical Society (BHS) and as newsletter editor from 2008-2021. She was literally the engine room of the Society supporting and guiding all its three Presidents in her time. She was very passionate about preserving history and particularly of Balwyn, the suburb in which she grew up, went to school, and lived throughout her life, except for her fabulous travels about the world. For many years, the BHS monthly Newsletter included an item of interest or research written by Pat. However, she encouraged others to write and research for it as well, often gathering resources of interest to be included in the newsletter.

Pat was very conscious of the demise of original Balwyn houses and business premises that reflected the architecture of a unique era. She took many photographs for posterity. Pat attended to a myriad of enquires that came via the email or website and went to great lengths to provide satisfactory answers. Especially in the early years of the BHS, Pat fulfilled many requests to speak on the history of Balwyn to various organisations. She set up the annual History week displays in the Balwyn Library, using archival material, photos, and resources, often a one-person effort. Pat was the 'go to' person for advice on what to do with collected items of relevant Balwyn interest.

Since the inception of BHS in 2008, Pat was involved in, and later co-ordinated the set up for the monthly meetings ensuring that the equipment was working for our visiting speakers. Pat was a great organiser; efficient, thorough, and forward looking. Her record keeping and year collections of newsletters are a testament to the time she gave to her duties as she saw them.

In the early days many Newsletters were mailed, which involved copying and collating them. Her love of walking also saw many of them hand delivered to members' mailboxes! AGMs were prepared with careful detail and committee meetings were conducted within designated time frames. Together with Marilyn Poole, Pat regularly liaised with the management of Balwyn Evergreen and at one time was a member of their board.

When Dawn Pritchard, could not continue as supper co-ordinator, Pat and Marilyn took on the responsibility of making sure supper supplies and kitchen set ups were ready to go. She also assisted at the many Christmas dinners held at Balwyn Evergreen. Later, when these dinners no longer continued, Pat organised some end of year lunches at local restaurants.

Utmost detail was always Pats watchword. We who knew her before BHS understood that the skills that had made her a fine teacher, a lover of history, writer and school librarian were a natural flow on for all that she achieved for our history society.

Above all, we will remember Pat's thoughtful, caring, and modest personality. She sent cards adorned with her beautiful flower photographs to unwell members or those who had been hospitalised. Ongoing telephone calls followed re their progress. Bereaved families received carefully chosen plants on behalf us, the members, as a living memory of their loved ones. We propose to do the same for Pat's family of which she was very fond and who will miss her dearly. We too will miss a wonderful friend and keep close, memories of a passionate and valued Balwyn History Society stalwart.

VALE Pat and coffee cheers 🌻

Barbara Russell and Marilyn Poole

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Editor's note. You may wish to enjoy the full articles indicated with the Asterix's

\* October 2020 Newsletter Balwyn Historical Society Website

\*\* August 2014 Newsletter Balwyn Historical Society Website

Another interesting article by Pat: "Deepdene Shops" (both sides of Whitehorse Rd).

October 24<sup>th</sup> 2020 Newsletter no 2 (with the Presidents report) - Balwyn Historical Society Website

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**Next meeting reminder Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at 2pm  
Balwyn Evergreen Centre,  
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

We look forward to seeing members and friends for the next presentation by Ann Hawker –  
archivist for Fintona Girls School followed by afternoon tea.

Please note this is a Tuesday afternoon meeting