



Balwyn Historical Society

November 2024

Next Meeting – Visitors very welcome

Thursday November 14 th 2024 – 7.30 pm

at

Balwyn Evergreen Centre

45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn

Guest Speaker: Leah Mariani

Topic: Corio Bay Villa 1890, Surrey Hills

Leah Mariani is an artist and an accountant who mostly works out of her home studio. Her home, **Corio Bay Villa** has a history that fascinated her so, during the “lockdown” years, Leah decided to do a deep dive into its past of the eight previous owners and many tenants who had lived there before her and her family. Leah has also created a website which contains all the information she has uncovered.

The prime focus of her presentation will be on the man, Charles Emberson, who built the cottage, and the lives of those past owners and occupiers.

Dear Readers

This newsletter contains reports from our September and October meetings and the wonderfully successful Antiques roadshow style event.

I also note that our final meeting for the year is on King Charles birthday! As is usual we will conclude the meeting with a salute to the approaching festive season. A special thankyou to those who have contributed items or reports for the newsletter over the past year. Happy holiday reading!

September Meeting: Speaker: Dr Jarrad Paul – Archeologist Topic : Going out in the 19th Century – Entertainment, Dining out and Fashion

Introduction: The Kulin nation existed some 35,000 years ago and its culture ‘s story lines, rock art , tools relate their history. Archaeological evidence of white settlement found in Australia is revealed more in the context of rubble and refuse left behind and unearthed during later building projects. Archaeologists have pieced together their finds with documented records although they do not tell the whole story, particularly of the working class.

Around 1835, there was clearing for the settlement that became Melbourne, land was divided for sale and by the 1840s there were about 1million sheep grazing on this pastoral settlement. There were more men than women, but still social mores and fashions existed for being seen out and about. Men dressed in more austere style but with refined tailoring and light fabrics. The working class were not concerned with fancy looks, however the women were conscious of ‘dressing up’ and cotton, silk and muslin were chosen fabrics along with bonnets for sun protection. Even the newspapers of the day included detailed accounts of what was worn.



“Dressed up ladies”



“Working class dress”

In 1867, for a visit by Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, a huge banquet was organised with free food and drink, however due to seeming his late arrival, the impatient crowd stormed the food and riots ensued! The lesson was not to give free food and to steer clear of the colonies. It was during this visit that the stone was laid for the Melbourne Town Hall.

A female dress fashion for this time was bustles replacing crinolines. Style trends came from Europe. Men wore trousers and waistcoats and often clothes were bought through mail orders from overseas. The working class tended to buy their clothes from open air markets and second-hand shops. Dress was still a marker of class.



The boom years of the 1870s and 1880s still reflected a class divide. Fashion began to reflect big shoulders for both men and women. For clothing workers in the factories of Collingwood, conditions were poor. Strikes led to some improvements and Sweating shops (Sweat shops) paid by the piece



A reflection of fashionable wide shoulders

. Food markets operated at south Melbourne. Chinese market gardens flourished and subsequently Chinese eateries. Pork remains were found in areas associated with these eateries.

The boom era however came to a halt in the depression of 1893. 54 Outof 64 banks closed, there was high unemployment, and it was regarded as worse than the depression of the 1930s. Many Temperance hotels increased in the 1890s and Coffee Palaces were popular. People sat around drinking coffee and having discussions. The temperance movement lasted about ten years.



The Grand Coffee Palace – later known as The Windsor Hotel

Other dubious forms of “entertainment “emerged. There were Charlatans with their ‘science shows’, peepshows and prostitution in Lonsdale Street where chicken bones were found. This was quick food for places like Madame Brussels.

In summary, going out depended on class and gender, the wealthy promenaded in Collins Street, the less wealthy in Bourke street - the route of the Cobb and Co coaches. Presently there is a lot of evidence in the CBD for archaeologists, rubbish pits are found down 1 or 2 metres below the surface.

If one walks from Southern cross station towards the river, there is a sense of part of Batman’s Hill. The Flagstaff gardens mural shows Batman’s House and the little house on the corner of King and La trobe streets – all reminders past times of white settlement in this country and how they lived out their days.

This talk was followed by a great deal of discussion between those present who shared their knowledge and anecdotes with the speaker.

Many thanks to Judi Cleary for taking notes.

October Meeting: Speaker – Geoff Chambers

Topic: The Colours of Jazz in Melbourne

Geoff began his talk with a brief history of jazz in Melbourne and then focussed on three great legends of this musical style.

The 1920s musical scene was filled with concert orchestras and salon ensembles such as small dance bands. The players began to copy the music from the UK and the USA. Students at Melbourne University often came together to play informally.

The 1930s saw the establishment of coffee lounges especially around St Kilda and small groups of players added to the atmosphere. There was also a significant increase in the repertoire being performed.

The 1940s especially during the WW 2 years, included the presence of the US forces on leave many of them musicians. This further enhanced the infiltration of the US style of jazz which continued after the end of WW2 and especially with the visit of the Artie Shaw Big Band. This was a major inspiration and influence to one particular Melbourne musician.

Graeme Bell and Traditional Jazz -Trad Jazz, were synonymous. Jazz for players like Graeme was a hobby and one earned a living in other ways, but times were changing. In 1949, the Graeme Bell band went to Prague and played to may listeners who were rapturous in what they heard. After the success of the European gigs, they played in the UK due to growing interest. They had become well known due to this ABC sponsored tour. On their return, they began to record on the SWAGGIE label, and the band played at clubs thus creating more work for more musicians.

In the 1950s, the NSW clubs were a destination for these jazz musos as they were well paid. Victoria was left behind for a time. Toward the end of the 50s and into the 60s, there was a Big Band revival and singers like Judy Jacques were popular additions around many new venues called Jazz Clubs- Powerhouse at Albert Park, 431 in St Kilda Road, Esquire in Glen Iris and Coppin Hall in Prahran. For a short time, there was one in North Balwyn at the RSL hall called 'The Jazz Hut'. Coffee was the fashionable refreshment although soft drinks were also available.

The musicians were engaged and known for their abilities as patrons stopped to listen to and admire the solo breaks in the music being danced to- hardly described as Ballroom style in these popular crowded venues.

In 1964 the advent of the Beatles tour turned the tide however there were still those fans who loved their jazz. People had substantial collections and much improved record players and radiograms in their homes to entertain friends and to simply enjoy their music at any time.

The three legends that Geoff discussed had to include **Graeme Bell**.



He was born in 1914 and lived a to a great age of 88. His musical influences initially came from his parents who performed in Vaudeville shows at the Tivoli theatre. He played piano and was joined by his brother Roger, who also played keyboard. Max Kaminsky, the famous US trumpeter, heard them and Graeme was invited to work with American bands. He played at the Uptown Club and at the Eureka Youth League- a communist organisation who saw music as an attraction to their cause.

On the first trip to Prague Graeme and his band, it was a way to pay for the one-way fare. The language was a barrier, but the music spoke all languages, and they were extremely successful. They had played 58 concerts across Europe and the money flowed in which of course meant the fare home and more! It opened the way to the UK and there, they played at the Leicester Square Club and revolutionised jazz in London through the danceability appeal. While there, his musos formed connections with London musicians. Humphrey Lyttelton was a 'bigtime' entrepreneur and many visiting musicians stayed in his house and Australian musicians were more than welcome.

Graeme Bell's legacy was 'The most influential person in Australian Jazz'

Another member of Bell's band was **Abe Monsborough**, who was born in 1917. He had met Roger Bell, Graeme's brother, at school where he and Roger both played in the school bands. Abe studied science at Melbourne University and there he began the Melbourne University Band. He initially played the Banjo, then turned to other instruments like the Trombone and then particularly the Saxophone and Clarinet.

Abe was very supportive of other musicians and was part of Graeme Bell's tour group of 1949/50. He was offered a UK position by the inimitable Humphrey Lyttelton but turned it down. About that time there were three unique white plastic saxophones produced which had a special sound. The players entrusted with them were the famous Charlie Parker, Jethro Tull and..... Abe Monsborough!



Abe pursued jazz in many groups but only recorded with a few- Lazy Ade's Backroom Joys and the Swaggie label. He played at the Down beat Club run by John Clements (of the well-known record shop in Collins Street) and occasionally played with the Len Barnard Jazz Band.

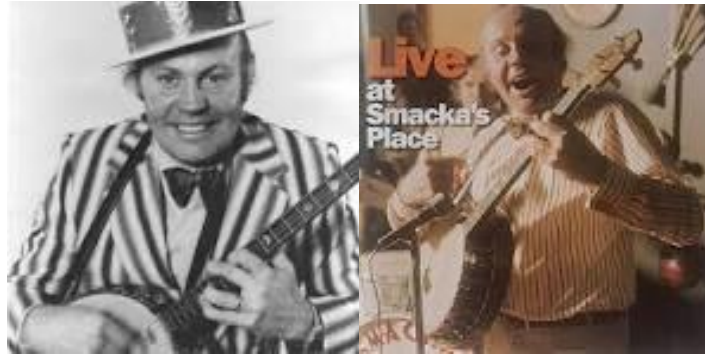
We watched an archival clip of his performance in "Don't Monkey with it" which displayed his saxophone superiority.

Another band that Abe supported was "The Red Onion Band". Students at Melbourne University were often entertained by Abe and his fellow musicians at Lunchtime concerts. Abe's players were an educated group- they had 29 degrees between them with Abe accounting for 4 of them.

Another talent of Abe's was playing the recorder, that little Renaissance instrument that made its way into primary school programs and denigrated by listeners because it was rarely taught by accomplished musicians to produce a good tone and to attain a common pitch!

The final legend was '**Smacka' Fitzgibbon** whose Banjo playing and singing brought him fame in places of entertainment and on our TV screens. He was born in 1930 and sadly died at the young age of 49. His parents were in the entertainment industry and hotels. Graeme Bell played in many of these hotels particularly in Warrigal and other places in the Latrobe Valley. Smacka was known as the singing barman.

He was a great friend of Graham Kennedy and frequently appeared on Kennedy's TV show as well as another show 'The Penthouse Club' with Mary Hardy. The restaurant 'La Brochette' was extremely popular and successful where his jazz was heard. 'Smacka's Place' in North Melbourne was his next venture very much known for his music but less for the food!



Many US entertainers visited Smackas to jam with the band and to entertain informally. The amazing jazz violinist, Stephan Grappelli was one of them and even the ‘Two Ronnies’ added impromptu fun. Smacka recorded all the AFL theme songs of his time. Two of Smacka’s children, Mark a pianist, and Nichaud a singer, have both continued his musical legacy.

The Melbourne Jazz ‘flavour’ was a happy fun sound. It was distinct and grew out of keen amateur musicians who could play at a professional level. They had met up at university and stuck together. As the other states began to hire these musicians, ‘The Melbourne Sound’ began to spread throughout the other states of Australia.

Geoff’s presentation was thoroughly enjoyable, interesting and entertaining. It evoked a plethora of memories for those present especially of the jazz clubs of our youth! How fortunate we were to hear these great Australian Jazz musicians either in the flesh or through their recordings. BR

~~~~~

### **Balwyn’s Antique ‘Roadshow Style’ Event on October 24th**

First, our thanks to all involved in this event to support the plans for our historical society’s archives. Importantly, Aveo was fully behind all expenses associated with running this event as well as engaging the valuer. Marika of Aveo worked closely with our president, Matthew Etty -Leal, who spent tireless weeks promoting and encouraging participation and attendees and responding to enquiries. We are also grateful to the assistance of Balwyn Evergreen Centre under whose “umbrella” we hold our meetings and operate. Thanks are due to Tina Hogarth – Clarke, the CEO, Erika and Bo- especially on the day.

Members are already aware of the wonderful outcomes, but I share the following with our wider circle of readers.

It was a beautiful day weatherwise and the audience of nearly 100 eagerly filed in, well ahead of time, including those who brought their items. All items could be viewed on the big screen from photographs submitted.

I recall a wonderful pen and watercolour work from 1902 of a theatre backstage filled with ‘important’ persons including ‘a Royal’ according to its title, and numerous limbering ballerinas. There were beautifully crafted silver pieces, ornately decorated porcelain and Murano glass, jewellery including a lovely Cameo brooch, treasured teacups and tea sets, an historical book of Sir John Monash letters, an 1869 Clipper ship lamp- hopefully the real thing- and finally a French copy of the magnificent Rosemount dish which is the trophy for the Wimbledon Ladies Singles title. The value had increased astronomically from its original purchase cost some 40 odd years ago- however too lovely to part with despite the current value. Total valuation of the 40 items came to \$51,000!

The afternoon concluded with an Aveo Devonshire tea (no tea sets though) and delectable slices provided by Elizabeth ETTY- Leal. The stragglers reluctantly departed at 4 pm.

It had been a most enjoyable afternoon for which all involved in its creation will be well pleased: Aveo, BEC and Mathew. We offer a grateful thankyou for the nearly \$800 raised to assist with archival assistance and the digitising of items that can be added to Victorian Collections website for the history buffs of the future. BR

~~~~~

FINALLY - Thankyou to our loyal members and visitors who have come to hear our speakers throughout the year. To our readers from near and far, we hope you have enjoyed the interesting topics of our guest speakers. On behalf of the Balwyn Historical Society, we wish you all many joys over the festive season and a happy and healthy New Year of 2025 making history of your own! Matthew, Barbara, Philip and Heather.



NOTICE BOARD

Event of Lilydale and District Historical Society

Inspired by Melba – Celebrating Lilydale's History!

Book Now

<https://www.trybooking.com/CWNGF>

About

Come together with us for a guided tour of Melba Park, where you'll discover fascinating stories about the origins of Melba Park and all that it contains, from its rich history to its hidden gems. Date: Sunday, 8th December Tour Times: 10:45 AM, 12:45 PM, and 2:45 PM Starting Point: Main Stage at Goodes Reserve Tickets: \$5 per adult, children under 18 free Join us as we spark your imagination by uncovering the history of Lilydale's beloved park!

Date

Sunday 8th December 2024

Location

Main Stage - Ralph Goodes Reserve Main Street , LILYDALE VIC 3140

Contact Event Organiser