



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

August 2015

Meetings

Thursday 13 August 2015 – 8pm

Speaker: Gerry Robinson

Topic: Historic Canterbury Road

Gerry Robinson is a member of the Heathmont History Group which has researched and published a number of local history booklets

Thursday 10 September 2015 – 8pm

Speaker: Myra Dowling

Topic: Historic Balwyn & Boroondara: Photos from the Boroondara Library Collection

Myra Dowling is the Boroondara Local History Librarian

Thursday 8 October 2015 – 8pm

Speaker: Graham O'Rourke

Topic: George Coppin: Father of Australian Theatre

Graham O'Rourke will talk about George Coppin the world famous Melbourne theatrical entrepreneur.

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

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

Recent Speaker – A/Prof. Don Garden

Don Garden spoke very eloquently about the approach taken by the environmental historian and discussed the part the environment played in the establishment of towns. Fresh water, timber, resources for industry, undulating land and pleasing vistas all influenced the siting of settlements and communities.

He also spoke about how the environment shapes the way in which people view their world and suggested that perhaps it is now time for the environmental historian to focus also on additional issues such as how we have exploited and damaged the environment.

The land east of Melbourne (including Boroondara) with its rolling hills, rich pasture, good soil, healthy fresh air and aesthetically pleasing vistas was considered far more desirable by our earlier pioneers than the flat rather arid western plains.

One of the additional factors which affected the growth of Balwyn was the fact that Whitehorse Road (or the main Gippsland Road) passed right through the area.

In the second part of his talk, Don spoke about the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, community history and heritage, and the growth and importance of local historical societies and museums throughout Victoria.

BHS Membership 2015-2016

Thanks to those members who have already paid their 2015-16 membership.

Membership fees were due on July 1.

The fee remains the same for the 2015-2016 financial year.

\$25 - single membership

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

For those who still wish to re-join a renewal form accompanies this newsletter.

You may renew your membership at the next meeting 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). Otherwise 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

Balwyn Historical Society - Contact details

Balwyn Historical Society is a program of the Balwyn Evergreen Centre.

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Frederick Chapman 1864 – 1945



Frederick Chapman lived in Threadneedle Street, Balwyn, for over thirty years. He had a long association with the Maranoa Gardens being one of the members of the Foundation Committee as well as being Honorary Curator of the gardens for some years.

Chapman was born in Camden Town, London. His father was an assistant to the scientists Michael Faraday and John Tindall. In 1881 Chapman became assistant to Professor J. W. Judd in the geology department of the Royal College of Science, London. It was there that he undertook studies to become a teacher of geology and physiogeography. In 1890 he married Helen Mary Dancer.

It was on Professor Judd's recommendation that in 1902 Chapman was appointed by the Victorian Government to the newly created position of palaeontologist at the new National Museum, Melbourne. One of his first tasks was to describe and arrange a large collection of Australian and foreign fossils which were transferred to the Museum from the Melbourne University.

Between 1920 and 1932 Chapman was also a part-time lecturer in palaeontology at Melbourne University and honorary palaeontologist for the Geological Survey of Victoria.

After his retirement from his position at the museum in 1927 Chapman was appointed the first Commonwealth palaeontologist and worked on fossils from bore and surface material in the search for oil. Retiring from that position in 1935 he returned to the Melbourne museum as honorary palaeontologist.

Chapman was a prolific writer and a worldwide authority on fossils. His five books and five hundred scientific papers contributed greatly to Australian palaeontology. Material for examination was sent to him from all over the world including that gathered by Douglas Mawson and Sir Ernest Shackleton during their expeditions to Antarctica.

He was also a member of many distinguished scientific societies and the recipient of numerous national and international awards and medals including the David Syme prize and medal for scientific research.

In 1940 when he was awarded the Australian History Medallion he gave an address entitled *A Geologist in a Native Garden* to the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria of which he was a long-standing member. He stated that:

For the successful growing of Australian native plants an elementary knowledge of the geology of soils is eminently desirable.... In spite, however, of such preferences of native plants for particular soils, we have shown that with the variations of soils available at the Maranoa Gardens, it is possible to grow

at least 90% of the 500 species obtained from all States, including many from W.A., and these are in a generally healthy condition.

The following year it was reported in the *Cairns Post* that:

A considerable number of members of the Field Naturalists' Club assembled at the Maranoa Gardens. Balwyn (Melbourne), on April 5, when a tablet was unveiled and a section of the gardens dedicated to the memory of the late J. M. Watson. Mr. A. H. Chisholm, who unveiled the tablet at the invitation of the committee controlling the gardens, pointed out that Mr. Watson was a pioneer cultivator of Australian plants and had established a very worthy collection on the spot. The area was acquired by the Camberwell Council and the governing committee, with Mr. Frederick Chapman as honorary curator, had developed the gardens to such an extent that they now contained 530 species of Australian and New Zealand plants. Mr. Chisholm

paid a special tribute to Mr. Chapman's work, suggesting that he had in ten years built the gardens into the finest example of their kind anywhere. Such an area was the more precious because so much of our own native bushland had been destroyed.

Frederick Chapman died at his son's house in Kew in 1943. His wife Helen had predeceased him in 1940. He was survived by his son, Brigadier Wilfred Chapman, and daughter, Winifred.

Sources:

Irene Crespin, 'Chapman, Frederick (1864–1943)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chapman-frederick-5556/text9473>, published first in hardcopy 1979.
Obituary Frederick Chapman, Hon. F.R.S.N.Z. Transactions & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New Zealand, 1943
The Argus: Obituary Frederick Chapman, 13 December 1943
The Cairns Post: Maranoa Gardens, 16 May 1941
Victorian Naturalist Vol.LVIII, 1940, *A Geologist in a Native Garden*

