



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

May 2018

Meetings

Thursday 10 May 2018

7.30 pm – A conversation with Peter Binks

8 pm – Guest Speaker: Isabel Simpson

Topic: The Three Ms – Mitchell, Melba and Monash

Isabel Simpson, an accredited tour guide, will offer an illustrated peek into the lives of this fascinating trio. Isabel has designed and conducted many tours of the City of Melbourne.

Thursday 14 June 2018 – 8 pm

Speaker: Richard Peterson

Topic: Bungalows in Balwyn

Richard Peterson is an architect and conservation consultant. During his long career he has published 6 books and many articles and papers. He will speak about Balwyn's rapidly disappearing Californian bungalows.

Thursday 8 August 2018 – 8 pm

Speaker: Helen Page

Topic: Restoring the Gardens of the Boroondara Cemetery

**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 – James Nicolas

James Nicolas spoke very passionately about Grace Tabulo, her husband Jim, and their cottage at 57 Malmsbury St Kew which was known as *Fairyland* for many years.

Grace with Jim's help decorated the cottage with fairy lights turning the front and back gardens into a wonderland. Fairy tale characters and a grotto covered with ceramic pieces were but a few of the delights that graced the garden. Children were also welcomed inside the cottage with its treasure trove of antiques.

Over the years thousands of children and adults visited *Fairyland*. Many left glowing comments in the large visitors' books which Grace kept. Besides allowing the children to handle the antiques Grace also entertained the children with her story telling and her two dogs also performed for an appreciative audience.

James then explained his own family connection with the Tabulos and his mother's sad story. Finally he presented a lovely collection of photos of the Tabulos and the house.

Balwyn State School – 150th Anniversary

This year Balwyn State School celebrates its 150th birthday. Opened in 1868 the original school was a small mud brick building with a thatched roof. It was built by local volunteers under the supervision of John B Maling who had obtained the building tender. As well as being used as a school and a church, the building also served as a venue for social gatherings and meetings. Maling recalled many years later that the building was jocularly named the Athenaeum.

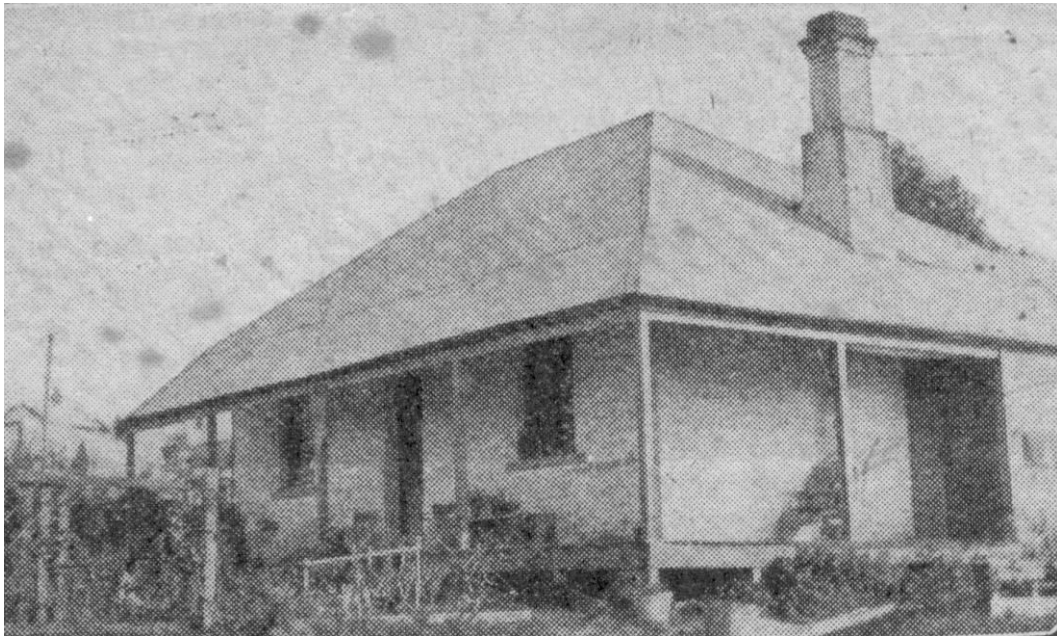


Photo - Courtesy Arthur Davey. – By the time this photo was taken the original thatched roof had been replaced.

More details about the 150th anniversary will be available later in the year.

German speaking Immigrants – the Finger family (part 2)

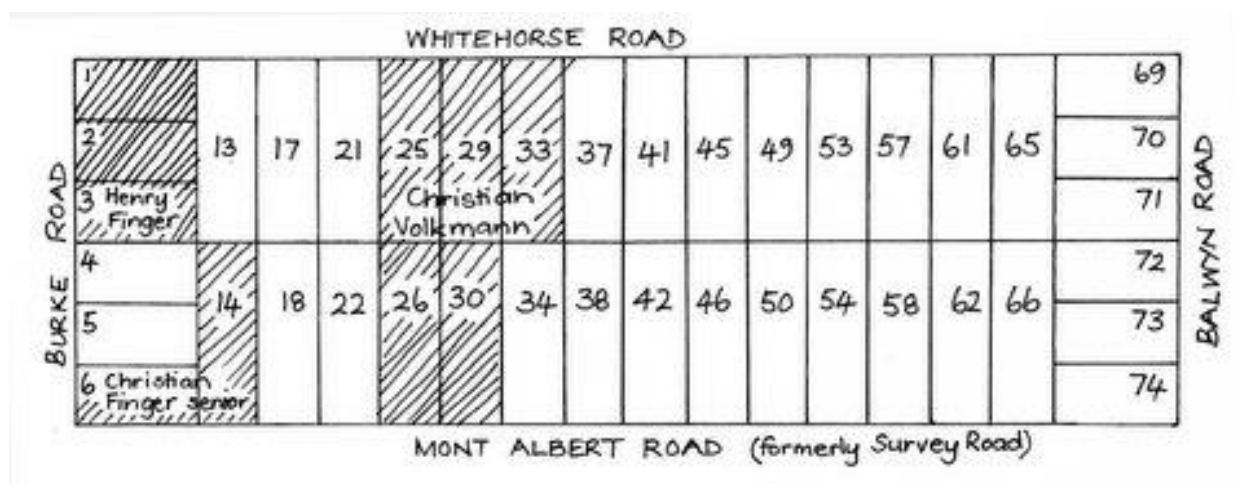
By Marilyn Poole

This is the second article in the series on German speaking immigrants who made their homes in the parish of Boroondara and nearby areas. The Finger family settled first on an allotment in Weinberg Road (now Wattle Road), Hawthorn. By 1880 most of the land along Weinberg Road had been sold to German settlers. Christian Benjamin Finger the patriarch of the family bought land in Hawthorn, Balwyn and Doncaster where he established market gardens, vineyards and orchards (Darraugh & Wuchatsch p. 132).

Carl Heinrich Finger (always known as Henry Finger)

Carl Heinrich Finger third child of Christian Benjamin Finger and his wife Caroline Friedericke Rumler was born on 21 Feb 1831 in Quirl, Silesia, Prussia. Henry was probably educated at the Buchwald Lutheran School and followed his father's footsteps in becoming an orchardist (Dovile 2003 p. 142). He travelled with the rest of his family on the barque *Pribislaw* and arrived in Port Phillip in February, 1850. Henry worked on his father's farm until he was 21 years old and then became a contractor. He purchased a horse and dray and saved enough money cutting and carting wood to buy land (Ibid). He was naturalised as a Victorian citizen in February 1852 at the same time as his father and brother Wilhelm.

Part of Elgar's Special Survey



(Research by G. Dovile and G. McWilliam) Source Glenda Dovile 2003

In 1859 Christian Finger senior purchased lot 14 (approximately 7 acres) of Elgar's Special Survey (Dovile 2003 p.517) now divided by Campbell Road. In 1860, he also purchased lots 6, 26 and 30 (Ibid). However, lots 26 and 30 were given or sold to Christian Volkman his son-in-law. Christian Finger senior established his market garden in Deepdene on his acreage and continued to take his produce to market until he was around 80 years old.

On 29 July 1859 Henry Finger purchased lot 3 consisting of 5 acres (Ibid). However, it is generally understood that Henry owned 10 acres of land near the corner of Burke and Whitehorse Roads and so it seems likely that he also owned either lots 1 or 2. The Boroondara rate books of 1857 indicate Henry had 5 cultivated acres and 3 uncultivated ones and that by 1863 there was a house and land.

Henry married Johanna Caroline Aumann on 16th December 1854 at the German Lutheran Church in East Melbourne. Johanne Caroline Aumann was born 6 February 1834 at Profen, Silesia,

Prussia. Henry and Caroline lived in the 2-room cottage Henry built on his land in Deepdene and this is where their first five children were born. Henry cleared the land, planted fruit trees, grew vegetables and started a nursery for fruit trees (Dovile 2003 p. 144). Apparently, one very hot day a north wind was blowing which wrecked the fruit trees in his orchard, burned the young plants and removed much of the top soil.

Following this disaster, Henry decided that he would do better in Doncaster for fruit growing rather than Deepdene and purchased 50 acres of land around the old Waldau church on the north side of Waldau Lane (now George Street, Doncaster) (Green 1970 DTHS). Henry was familiar with Doncaster as his elder brother Christian had been living in Church Street for 12 years (Green 1975 DTHS). The land was originally owned by Frederick Straube. From 1868 onwards Henry was rated as having a farm in Doncaster. He planted an orchard on the lower land and a vineyard on the slopes at the rear. According to Irvine Green (1970) the experience with his Deepdene property made Henry very interested in land and soil conservation. The drains and earth works he constructed around Ruffey's Creek were apparently very impressive and remained so until the land was sub-divided.



Henry Finger's Homestead, George Street, Doncaster East. Built 1870, demolished about 1972. Victorian Heritage Database B2791 <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/66509>

In 1870 Henry built a large brick homestead with clay he quarried from the land along Ruffey's Creek and burnt his own bricks (Green). As Green (1970 DTHS) points out, Henry built his house in a style that comes from central Europe with a 'high pitched shingle roof and a skillion roof on one side' (Green 1975). 'To accommodate workers for the orchard, outhouses were built and additions made to the house providing a new kitchen and men's dining room' (Ibid). Work practices were different in those days and wages were cheap, the Victorian government 'encouraged employment by offering a bonus of £3 for every acre of new orchard planted' (Green 1985 p. 21). In the larger land holdings, men lived in huts and ate in the kitchen or lunch room at the rear of the homestead. (Ibid). Many years later, Henry's son, John Traugott Finger said "he could hear his workmen talking and laughing in the lunchrooms and wished he could be with them but with the strict German tradition of the time he had to sit in formal seriousness in the family dining room. (Ibid). Green pointed out that 'There was a social distinction between owners of an orchard and those who were employed. Often, even when they sat at the same table, the family were served better food than the men (Ibid)

Henry Finger's Barn



Henry Finger's barn Victorian Heritage Database 22413. The old barn built by Henry Finger in 1870 once stood behind his homestead and is one of the earliest barns remaining in the district. Now relocated at Schramm's Cottage Precinct 62-68 Victoria Street, Doncaster.

Dovile (2003 p. 144) writes that correspondence between Henry and Caroline's five daughters indicate that by 1876 they were growing potatoes as well as grapes. *'Threshing had to be done...Fruit picking, particularly plums and grapes were mentioned and in October both strawberries and cherries were sent to the Melbourne Exhibition'* (Ibid).

Green (1985 p. 39) writes:

'during the night, carts trundled along the road to Melbourne through Kew and Richmond and on to the market. The horses walked steadily and the driver slept during the long slow drive to reach market early in the morning. The night long trips started as soon as fruit ripened and continued even after picking finished, with fruit from the cool stores' ...The long steep hill on Doncaster Road, from Koonun (sic) Creek to Balwyn Road, was tiring so the driver would stop to rest his horse, turning the cart side on so it wouldn't roll back. Soon he would fall asleep but the horse knew the way and after resting plodded on. On arrival at the market the driver backed his wagon into a stand, if he had one. Each grower that had his own stand would keep it year after year in the same spot.'

In the early 1880s Henry had stall 62B at the Victoria Fruit Market (Ibid).

Henry Finger died on 3 December 1884 at Waldau and is buried in the Waldau cemetery. His land was divided between his two sons Johan (John) Traugott Finger and Ernst Ferdinand Finger (always known as Ferdinand). Apparently, they tossed a coin and Ferdinand won the block with the house and John won the block that became the reserve. Henry's wife Caroline survived her husband by thirty-seven years. Apparently, she spoke German all her life and knew little English. Glenda Dovile writes that when English speaking visitors arrived she had a few handy English phrases on the back of the door such as 'Good morning', 'How are you?' 'Come in' and so on (Dovile 2003 p.146). Caroline had assisted her husband during her married life and continued to work in the orchard helping her two sons after his death. She continued living in the homestead until her son Ferdinand married in 1892 and then she moved to a smaller house at the back of the large family home. Her grand-daughter Emily Fankhauser lived with her and helped with the house-work (Ibid). When Ferdinand moved to North Balwyn Caroline went to live with him and his family and died there on 10 December 1921 aged 87 years. She is buried in the Boroondara cemetery



Caroline Finger in her later years (W. Drews) Source G. Dovile

Post-script

During 1883 and 1884 there were numerous advertisements in *The Argus* for the sale of the Deepdene Estate which comprised of 16 acres at the corner of Cotham and Burke Roads. Henry Finger formerly owned allotments of about 10 acres of this estate selling in the 1860s prior to his move to Doncaster. One advertisement in *The Argus* (Saturday 3 November 1883 p. 3) said:

This beautiful property (so called after the celebrated estate of Mr. Hope, near London, in consequence of the extraordinary similarity of the magnificent views from the two estates) is situated in one of the most fashionable suburbs of Melbourne....The panorama from Deepdene, combining extensive bay and inland views, extends over a distance of 50 miles, and while the several villages seen in the valley below render, the scene most diversified and cheerful, the lofty mountain range in the distance, on which the snow in winter may be seen lying for weeks together, renders the situation unequalled in Victoria'.

As land became more difficult to sell the sales pitch became ever more lyrical. *The Argus* (Saturday 29 March 1884 p.3) described the outlook from the Deepdene Estate 'combining extensive sea and inland views, forms a PANORAMA of FIFTY MILES, in which valleys and villages, snow clad mountains and verdure-clothed hills, sea and river, are so grouped as to form a picture that for variety and beauty is perhaps, unequalled in the colony'. A later advertisement in *The Argus* described the Deepdene Estate as being 'splendidly situated in one of the most charming of the Melbourne suburbs' and 'is within half an hour's ride by rail or road of the General Post-Office' and 'is the healthiest suburb of our southern metropolis' (*The Argus* Saturday 19 April 1884 p. 2).

It may interest readers regarding the origins of the name Deepdene. The Deepdene was a large country mansion with extensive grounds not far from Box Hill and near Dorking, Surrey. *The Australasian* (Saturday 23 November 1895 p. 41) described it having 'a history running back several centuries. It has some claim to celebrity as a place associated with literature'. Thomas Hope, owner of The Deepdene early in the 19th century and perhaps the richest man in England,

wrote the novel *Anastasius*. Hope was a descendent of a wealthy Scottish banking family, an amateur architect, and a man of refinement and taste who owned many paintings, antiques and sculptures. His publication '*Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*' (1807) became very influential. During the time Thomas Hope owned The Deepdene, it was known as a centre for artists, intellectuals and the celebrities of the era.



The Deepdene, near Dorking, Surrey. K360 Built in the late 18th century and demolished 1967. Source Dorking Museum and Heritage Centre.

Acknowledgements

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Sources

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The Argus Saturday, 3 November 1883, p. 3; Saturday 29 March 1884 p. 3; Saturday 19 April 1884 p.2
The Australasian Saturday 23 November 1895 p. 41

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