



# Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

October 2014

## Meetings

**Thursday 9 October – 8pm – Annual General Meeting**

**Speaker: Ralph Stavelly**

**Topic: The 1923 Police Strike**

Retired Chief Inspector Ralph Stavelly is the author of a number of publications on the history of the Victorian Police.

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**Thursday 13 November – 8pm**

**Speaker: John Howell**

**Topic: The Only Woman at Gallipoli**

Who was the woman who appeared at Gallipoli in 1915 and laid a wreath on a grave? After five years of research John Howell can reveal the story of this mystery woman.



Advertisement c. 1942

Please note our new email address which is below.

Email: [balwynhistory@gmail.com](mailto:balwynhistory@gmail.com) website: [www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs)

## Recent Speaker - Robin Grow

Robin Grow's interesting and comprehensive talk covered the journey "from cow to customer". He began by noting that among Balwyn's early dairies were those of the Bovill and Bignell families as well as those of Gordon Bird and Syd. Philpot.

Dairies played a significant role in the development of Victoria and in the early part of the 20th they were generally independent family concerns. With the development of refrigeration there had been an enormous increase in demand for dairy products, not just locally, but also for export.

The inter-war period saw an expansion of retail dairies and by 1930 many new suburban dairies were being constructed. Advertisements of the time showed milk being heavily promoted as pure and healthy – the perfect food.

Robin illustrated his talk with some wonderful photos of early dairy farms and milking sheds, and with some of the larger co-operative and commercial dairies built in the 1930s. Some of these dairy buildings with their art deco features still exist today, although they have been transformed into a variety of businesses.

He also reminded us of the school milk program which started after World War 11. Who could forget the crates of small bottles of milk delivered daily to each primary school? It was an enjoyable treat in the winter months, but not so pleasant in the hotter months when the crates were left lying in the sun and the milk turned sour.

### **BHS Annual General Meeting**

**The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 9 October.**

The President's annual report and nomination forms for office bearers were included with the September newsletter. The agenda, financial report and minutes of the 2013 AGM will accompany this newsletter.

### **Marilyn Poole**

Unfortunately Marilyn Poole will not be standing for office in the forthcoming election.

We sincerely thank Marilyn for her years of service to BHS. Marilyn is one of a small group of founding members who worked diligently to get the society up and running so successfully. Marilyn has done a wonderful job as treasurer and membership officer of BHS for the past seven years. She has also been invaluable in successfully applying for community grants for the society which have enabled us keep our computer hardware and software up-to-date, and in obtaining grants from the RHSV for promotional material.

Thankyou Marilyn.

## Isabelle Bruce (Belle) Reid – 1883-1945

This article by Hugh J Wirth was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 16, (MUP), 2002

Isabelle Bruce (Belle) Reid (1883-1945), veterinary surgeon, was born on 21 December 1883 in Melbourne, youngest of ten children of Robert Joseph Reid, a merchant from Scotland, and his Victorian-born wife Mary Jane, née Clancy. The family owned a large property at Balwyn, bounded to the north by Whitehorse Road and to the south by Mont Albert Road. Growing up in a viticultural, market-gardening and dairying district, Belle developed a passionate interest in animals, particularly horses. She was educated at Genazzano convent school, Kew, where she did well academically, became an accomplished needlewoman and showed potential as a soprano. She wanted to continue to study singing, but her parents considered a career on the stage unsuitable for a young woman of social standing. They did, however, support her decision to enter the Melbourne Veterinary College, Fitzroy, in 1902.

Completing the course in 1906, Reid was one of five final-year students who were examined, and the only one to pass. When she was registered by the Veterinary Board of Victoria on 21 November she was said to be the first formally recognized female veterinary surgeon in the world. She immediately set up practice in a house in Whitehorse Road that had formerly accommodated her family's chauffeur. Driving to her calls by pony and trap, she became a familiar sight around Balwyn. In 1923 she retired and left the practice in the hands of P. T. Kelynack, husband of her favourite niece Sylvia. The original stables and kennels, and some of her instruments, can be seen at the Balwyn Veterinary Surgery.

In 1911 Reid and her sister Mary ('May') had bought one thousand acres (405 ha) of farmland at Bundoora and named it Blossom Park. Belle moved to the farm in 1925. She engaged Edna Walling to landscape the garden of her home, had stables built to accommodate both her own horses and others on agistment, and supervised the construction of a large dairy. Belle later bought May out. A keen breeder of animals, she imported an Irish cob stallion, Hafron Sensation, which provided the main bloodline of her stud. She also bred stud Jersey cattle: their names all began with Jubilee. As a dog-breeder, she initially kept Pomeranians, but soon turned to Irish wolfhounds. A member of the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria, she regularly exhibited her cattle, dogs, pigs and harness horses with excellent results. She rode with the Findon Harriers Hunt, took part in showjumping and played polo, often at Blossom Park.

Late in life Miss Reid still managed the farm, with the help of Sylvia Kelynack. She died of coronary thrombosis on 13 December 1945 at Canterbury and was buried in Box Hill cemetery; her estate was sworn for probate at £101,603. A formidable woman, she only gained limited status in what was then a conservative, male-dominated profession, partly because she retired from practice early. In 1996 her name was included in the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

### Select Bibliography

*Sun News-Pictorial* (Melbourne), 5 Sept 1924

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Board of Victoria, records (held by Veterinary Practitioners Board of Victoria)

Melbourne Veterinary College, records (held by Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne)

Private information.

### Citation details

Hugh J. Wirth, 'Reid, Isabelle Bruce (Belle) (1883–1945)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/reid-isabelle-bruce-belle-11503/text20519>, published in hardcopy 2002, accessed online 1 October 2014.

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## History Week – 19-26 October

This History Week among other things you can...

- listen to lightening talks on women engaged, enraged and often forgotten in some of the most iconic conflicts of our past;
- take a fascinating walking tour and uncover Footscray's hidden stained glass treasures;
- bring in your favourite antique to Treasures of Docklands and find out its true value;
- uncover the history of Melbourne's first road – City Road - its importance, industrial architecture, Melbourne's tallest buildings and the current City Road Master Plan.
- explore what remains of the early 1850s Malvern Village and the early 20th Century Toorak homes built on the site of magnificent 19th century mansions;
- celebrate 100 years of the Red Cross in Australia with a stunning photographic exhibition - most on public display for the first time;
- experience the lavish interiors, enjoy a sparkling afternoon tea and learn about the history and architecture of one of Melbourne's most significant nineteenth century mansions;
- take a guided tour of La Trobe's Cottage - the home of Victoria's first Governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe;

A full list of events can be found on the History Week calendar: [www.historyweek.org.au](http://www.historyweek.org.au)

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