

# LOCAL HISTORY NEWS

Malvern Historical Society Inc. *Keeping Stonnington's History Alive!* June - July 2008 Newsletter No. 13

## 29th June Malvern Scout Group 1908-2008 Sunday 29th June 2pm

**Graham Russell**, who received his 1st Malvern Certificate of Registration in 1942, will speak about the history of 1st Malvern and his memories of his time in the **1st Malvern Scout Troop**.

*"The cradle of Scouting in Victoria was the **Tooronga Rd. State School, Caulfield (East Malvern)**; where in late 1907 one of the pupils, **Roy McIndoe**, received from a friend in England, who had been a member of the experimental camp at Brownsea Island, some pamphlets which had been issued by the Chief. These he showed to his mates who immediately got red shirts, their father's old felt hats, formed 'patrols' and 'whooped round the place like Red Indians'. Later in 1908 when they received the first copies of Scouting for Boys, they settled down to genuine Scouting"* (Victorian Scout Heritage Centre)

**St Andrew's Uniting Church, Wesley Hall, Corner Burke and Malvern Roads, Glen Iris. Bookings essential. RSVP Lorraine - 9885 9082**  
Members - Gold Coin Non-members \$5 Delicious afternoon tea!



Bedding the first tree stump at 1st Malvern Scout Hall, 1953 Reg No 2159

## 20 July How to meet the famous without really trying! Sunday 20 July 2pm

The guest speaker for our July meeting will be **Immediate Past President, Bruce McBrien**. Bruce's topic will be **How to meet the famous without really trying!**  
**St Andrew's Uniting Church Wesley Hall**, Corner Burke and Malvern Roads, Glen Iris.  
**Bookings essential. RSVP Lorraine - 9885 9082**

Members - Gold Coin Non-members \$5 Delicious afternoon tea!



Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier 1948

## 27 June to 5 October 2008 Art Deco 1910-1939 Exhibition

From June to October the **National Gallery of Victoria** will be hosting a major exhibition from **London's Victoria and Albert Museum**. The exhibition will feature painting, jewellery, fashion, film, architecture, photography, cars and furniture from this period.

## Victorian Community History Awards

The Society is delighted to announce that both **Walk into History 4: Six more great walks in Stonnington** by **Di Foster, Steve Stefanopoulos** and the **Malvern Historical Society** and **Crescendo: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra - Celebrating 100 years** by **Stella Barber**, Community Representative on the Stonnington History Committee received **Commendations** at the **Victorian Community History Awards**. Members of the Committee were present at the Awards ceremony at Queen's Hall, Parliament House, Melbourne.



**Yallabee 8 Central Park Road c1890  
Reg No. 1291**

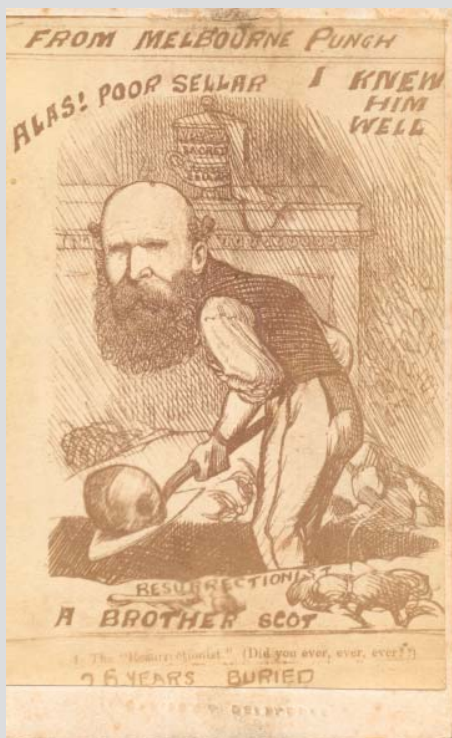
## Annual General Meeting April 2008

The **Annual General Meeting** of the **Malvern Historical Society Inc** was held in April. At the meeting **Lorraine Sage** was elected **President**. Also elected were **Jane Nigro - Vice President, Robin Brown - Secretary, Peter Frawley - Treasurer** and **Committee members Roxanne Dennis, Di Foster, Bronwyn Worrall** and **immediate Past President, Bruce McBrien**. Lorraine Sage thanked Bruce for his leadership during his time as President. Irene Jablonka was thanked for her work on the Committee. After the formal part of the meeting, **Stonnington Local Historian, Di Foster** entertained us with her stories of her research undertaken over the past twelve months and displayed a number of the recent acquisitions.

## Stonnington History Centre

During May members of the Committee accepted an invitation from **Anne Rasmussen (Stonnington Library and Information Service)** to view the recent alterations at **Northbrook** to accommodate the **Stonnington History Centre**. We were shown around by Anne and **Stonnington Local History Officer Ellen Porter**. All were most impressed by the hard work that has gone into converting **Northbrook** into very professional archives. The **Malvern Historical Society** congratulates the **Stonnington City Council** on this highly successful outcome.

## Robert Sellar



Robert Sellar - undated

A retired book seller recently approached the **Stonnington Local History Service** with a small collection of ephemera relating to Stonnington. This small illustration from **Melbourne Punch** may be of **Robert Sellar**, the first occupier of **Northbrook**. Despite further research we have been unable to make the final definite link between the illustration and **Robert Sellar**, occupier of **Northbrook**. We have discovered through a search of the Sands and McDougell Directories, that there appears to have only been one **Robert Sellar** living in Melbourne before 1900. He had lived in **St Kilda**, at **Pine Hill, Malvern** (close to the present site of **Cabrini Hospital**) and in **Malvern Road** before being listed as occupying a house in **High Street Malvern**. From a search of the **Malvern Rate Books** we know that merchant, **Robert Sellar** occupied **Northbrook** 1889-1890 before moving to Alma Road Caulfield. **Northbrook** had been built in 1888-89 for auctioneer **Donald Munro**, the son of **James Munro, Premier of Victoria**. Donald was a partner with **W L Baillieu** in a successful auctioneering business until he was financially ruined by the economic crash of the 1890s. He never lived in **Northbrook**. After discussions with the **Stonnington Local History Service**, the Society has purchased the illustration and it now forms part of the **Stonnington Local History Collection**.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Robert Sellar, who died at Malvern, on Wednesday last. The deceased was well-known in mercantile circles in Melbourne, having arrived in the colony in 1853, where he opened a branch business for Messrs. Dennistown, Wood, and Co. In 1861 he entered into partnership with Mr. M'Culloch. Mr. Sellar was actively connected with other businesses. He was a director of the Australian Mortgage and Agency Co., a member of the colonial board of directors of the Trust and Agency Co. of Australia, and chairman of the directors of Sands, M'Dougall and Co. Mr. Sellar was also adviser to the Scottish Provident Insurance Co. The deceased gentleman's health entirely failed about four months since, and his death is sincerely regretted by a large number of friends.

Malvern, Caulfield and Armadale Recorder 7th September 1900

## Steam Train Rides Sunday 29th June

The **push-pull steam** train featuring locomotives **K153** and **K190** and W type wooden carriages will operate between **Darling** and **Glen Waverley**. Picking up passengers at Darling, Mount Waverley and Glen Waverley. Tickets will be available on the train. Adult - \$10; Child u/16 - \$5; Family - \$25. (Tel: 95448792)



Darling Station 1908 Reg No. 5132

**STOP PRESS!!** The Society would like to thank the **East Malvern Community Bank, Bendigo Bank** who have agreed to fund the reprinting of **Walk into History 1: Six more great walks in Stonnington**, the first in our series of walk books.

## Former Prahran City Fire Station

The former **Prahran City Fire Station** now owned by the **City of Stonnington**, in **Macquarie Street Prahran**, the only known station in Melbourne still surviving from the pre-1891 era, has been added to the **Victorian Heritage Register**.



Prahran Fire Brigade 1870's Reg No. 8535

## Staid, Starchy and Sanctimonious

**Myoora** was a grand white stone mansion with two storeys, 11 rooms and a tower, set in spacious 7 acre grounds at the corner of **Toorak** and **Irving Roads, Toorak**. It was built in 1876 for **Robert Harper**, a pillar of church and society. **Harper** was born in **Glasgow** in 1842 and migrated to Melbourne with his parents in 1856. He found work with a firm of roasting and grinding millers and after seven years he became a partner in the firm. When the partnership was dissolved in 1865, he established **Robert Harper & Co**, importing tea, coffee and spices. The business expanded into oatmeal and flour and established a factory to process and package its goods. Later a rice dressing mill was established at Port Melbourne. His brothers, William and John, joined the business, which continued to diversify and spread into the other colonies.

(cont.)



Myoora Toorak 1904 Reg No. 7841

## Staid, Starchy and Sanctimonious (cont)

In 1868 he married **Jane Cairns**, the youngest daughter of Rev. Dr. Adam Cairns, the minister of **Chalmers' Church** in **East Melbourne**. She was said to have a keen sense of humour and a rather un-Presbyterian love of dancing. They had seven children including three sons, **Robert, William** and **Kenneth**, who eventually joined the firm.

**Robert** and **Jane Harper** were respected for their philanthropy. They supported the **Toorak Presbyterian Church**, the Central Mission, the City Newsboys' Home, the Children's Convalescent Home at Sandringham and the Cairns Memorial Church and every year a substantial cheque was sent to Hospital Sunday. In addition, the grounds of Myoora were frequently lent for charitable functions.

**Mrs. Harper** was **President of the Woman's Work Association**, an organization set up to sell anonymously the produce of needy gentlewomen - embroidery, sewing, cakes and jams. She was President of the Spinners' League, which met in different houses to make clothes for the 'deserving poor' and President of the Ministering Children's League, which ran the Cottage-by-the-Sea at Queenscliff, a convalescent home for sick children. She also initiated a move to collect money to help found kindergartens in poor areas.

A founder and an elder of the **Toorak Presbyterian Church**, **Robert Harper** was a devout Presbyterian with strong religious views. His religiosity also influenced his business practices.

A worker seeking employment was interrogated about his church attendance and whether his children went to Sunday School. The job interview included a little sermon and ended in a prayer.

He stood for parliament as a conservative against **Alfred Deakin** and was elected in 1879. Deakin described him as 'a man of keen intelligence, well-informed on political questions, of strong character, great persistency, marked resoluteness and untiring energy.'



Dining Room 1904 Reg No. 7843



Mr. Harper and his daughter, Mrs. Taylor, enjoying the sun in the company of their pet dogs. 1904 Reg No. 7840

In Parliament, he opposed secular State Schools and the opening of the National Gallery on Sundays. In the 1880s he opposed **Dr. Charles Strong**, the liberal theological teacher and social reformer who advocated reform of the Westminster Confession and condemned social evils. Harper even joined a group of men who bought the **Daily Telegraph** and the **Weekly Times** in 1883 as vehicles for their views.

But there was another side to **Robert Harper**. While a Member of Parliament, in contravention of quarantine laws, he imported some half-breed sheep from England for his property in Gippsland. He had them quietly unloaded at his sugar wharf in Port Melbourne, but his misdemeanour was discovered almost immediately. He was fined and his sheep were confiscated and killed. Robert then had the temerity to demand compensation.

Worse still, down at the **Harper Starch Factory** at **Port Melbourne**, married men were working 54 hours a week for a mere 30 shillings (about \$180 in today's currency) – barely enough to feed and house their families so that most had to rely on the support of relatives to provide clothing. Men on nightshift who worked 63 hours a week were paid time-and-a-quarter overtime for the extra 9 hours.

His men worked in appalling conditions. Rice manufacture involved the use of caustic soda solution, which slopped about the floors, and would rot a man's boots within four weeks. The workers had to supply their own boots from their meagre wages. Much of the work was extremely heavy, requiring the movement of packages weighing up to 2 cwt (100 kg). One job involved stacking blocks of starch weighing up to 7lb, sometimes having to toss them up as much as 20 feet. Another required the men to move materials from a crouching or kneeling position. Every day at one stage of the manufacture they were inhaling dust for 2½ hours. At other times they were exposed to sudden changes in temperature as they moved from the extreme heat of the stoves to the cold.

Then on payday came the ultimate insult. Every Saturday their pay packets could be sure to contain some pennies. As the men filed out the narrow wicket gate, the gatekeeper thrust the 'Hospital Box' at them, and it was a brave or foolish man who declined to put some coppers in the box. This collection was the source of the generous cheque Harper contributed to Hospital Sunday.

About 1915 **Myoora** was demolished and the land was subdivided giving birth to **Myoora Road**. The family dispersed, **Robert** senior to **Domain Road, South Yarra** where he died in 1919. **Robert Henry Harper**, the eldest son, lived at **Mayfield** in **Malvern** from about 1900 to 1912 before moving to South Yarra. **Kenneth** retired to a property near **Murchison**.

## Taking Local History to the Community.

We received excellent publicity in a recent issue of the **Royal Historical Society of Victoria's** newsletter, **History News**. An article, under the heading **Puzzling Local History!** detailed our projects aimed at increasing children's awareness of local history. A large enthusiastic crowd joined us for our walk in the **Union Street Armadale** area in April. In May **President Lorraine Sage** attended a seminar convened by the **Registrar of Geographic Names, John Tulloch**. **Lorraine, Jane Nigro, Roxanne Dennis, and Ronald Richards** attended both the ceremony to mark the **90th Anniversary of Villers Bretonneux** and the celebrations to mark the **150th Anniversary of Holy Trinity Oakleigh (East Malvern)**. **Roxanne** and **Jane** represented the Society at a recent meeting of the **South Metro history group**. Other groups represented at the meeting included the Historical Societies from Port Melbourne, St Kilda, Glen Eira and Brighton. The most recent meeting of the **Stonnington History Committee**, attended by **Lorraine** and **Roxanne**, included a tour of **Northbrook**. Work continues on all our projects with our jigsaw project continuing to attract interest from other historical societies. The Society has donated a copy of each of our jigsaw puzzles to the **Stonnington Toy Library**. **Stonnington Books** in Glenferrie Road are displaying our books on their main counter and they are attracting great interest and sales!

### Additions to the Stonnington Local History Collection

Copy of photo showing **Percy George Everist** close to his residence in **Mathoura Road Toorak**, 1911 **Percy Everist** was at one time **Manager of Dalgety Geelong and the Western District** -copying arranged by **Ian Everist** and **David Wischer**

Set of **Neighbourhood Watch** newsletters donated by **Lorraine Sage**

Digital images of the **Armadale Methodist Church** donated by **Robin Ahin**.

**Holy Trinity Oakleigh (East Malvern)** 2008 medallion.

Early photos of **Malvern** including the **Malvern Town Hall** donated by **Clive Elliott**.

**The Crittenden Approach- The story of the Crittenden** Family donated by the author **Doug Crittenden**.



Mathoura Road 1911



Crittenden's delivery truck decorated for a Glenferrie Road parade. The school boy in the photo is Doug Crittenden aged 10. 1920 Reg No. 13368



Crittenden's Store in Glenferrie Road on the corner of Edsall Street 1920 Reg No. 13573

### Welcome New Members!

We would like to welcome our latest new members **Barry and Audrey O'Sullivan, Izaak Madsen, Nancye Pearson, Marc Jay and Mark Caddey**.

### Have you enjoyed viewing the photos in this issue?

Material for the articles has been researched from the **Stonnington Local History Collection**. The database contains over 38,000 records. To view enlargements of photographs and to read more, just go to the website below.

[www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history)

### SPONSORED BY:

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**Community Bank** Branch **Bendigo Bank**



300 Waverley Road, East Malvern. Phone 9563 6044

## Malvern Historical Society Inc. (A7682)

**P.O.Box 184, Malvern Vic 3144 Telephone: 0438 515 631 malvernhistorical@yahoo.com**  
**www.vicnet.net.au/~malvern**

The Malvern Historical Society Inc is a member of the Stonnington History Committee, an affiliated member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, a member of the South Metro History Group and has been appointed by the Public Record Office of Victoria as a Place of Deposit for non-permanent public records.

### OTHER STONNINGTON HISTORY CONTACTS:

Stonnington Local History Service [www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history) • Tel: 8290 1360

Prahran Historical and Arts Society P.O.Box 8649, Armadale Vic 3143 Tel: 9509 9978 [www.vicnet.net.au/~phas](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~phas)