

LOCAL HISTORY NEWS

Malvern Historical Society Inc. *Keeping Stonnington's History Alive!* February - March 2008 Newsletter No. 11

10 February The Olives & Arama Estates, Glen Iris Walk

(bounded by High St and Burke, Wattletree and Tooronga Rds)

Sunday 10 February 2008 at 2pm

Meet at the Viva Street Reserve, Tooronga Rd

Cost: Non-Members \$5 Members: Gold Coin

(+ optional \$5 for NEW Walk Book 4)

For further information, please call Steve on 0418 546 103



Burke Road Uniting Church, corner of Payne Street, Glen Iris. 1984 Reg no 6991

15 March Pets in the Park

Can you help for an hour or two? City of Stonnington's "Pets in the Park" is held in March every year at Central Park, East Malvern. The Society will have a stall at this event on **Saturday 15 March** and will provide a large display of photographs. We would appreciate any help at our stall especially between 11am and 4pm. Our local history displays are always well received by both the adults and the children from the local community.

To find out more and to help us out on the day please call Jane on 0438 515 631



Roma, champion racing pigeon owned by Edward Staples of 931 High Street, Armadale. c1910 Reg No 8544

16 March The Gascoigne & Waverley Estates, East Malvern Walk

(bounded by Wattletree, Burke, Waverley, Dandenong and Tooronga Rds)

Sunday 16 March 2008 at 2pm

Meet at the Central Park Conservatory, Kingston St

Cost: Non-Members \$5 Members: Gold Coin

(+ optional \$5 for NEW Walk Book 4)

For further information, please call Steve on 0418 546 103



Dimoia, Wattletree Road, East Malvern c1920 Reg no 2486

What House Is That?

The **Victorian Heritage Council** has recently published the second edition of "What House Is That? A Guide to Victorian Housing Styles". The booklet is intended to inspire interest in Victoria's domestic architecture and help home owners to sensitively restore heritage houses of all eras. It includes design notes, colour swatches and illustrations explaining home styles from Victorian and Edwardian to Bungalow and Modern. Free copies of the booklet are available from **Information Victoria**, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne or 1300366 356 (local call cost). You can also download a copy from www.heritage.vic.gov.au or www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history



66 Wattletree Road Armadale c 1980 Reg no 5213

Thank you!

Thank you to the members who have already renewed their membership, purchased our books and jigsaw puzzles, and made donations towards the work of the Society. Your ongoing support is greatly appreciated.

The Lyles of Lisbuoy

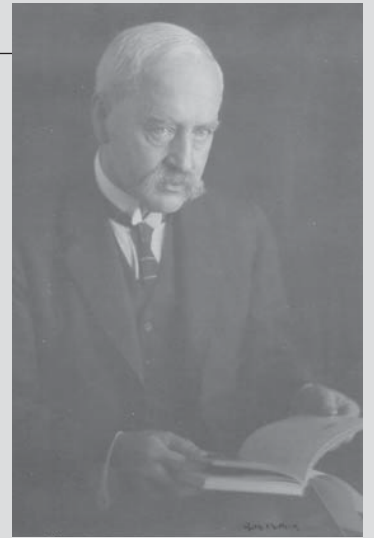
The Lyles were a family of strong, talented and original personalities. **Thomas Rankin Lyle** was gifted – academically, practically and in sport. He was born in 1860 in Londonderry, the son of a well-to-do landowner. He studied mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating with the highest honours the college could bestow and large gold medals for mathematics and experimental science. He played rugby for Ireland until he suffered an injury to his knee, which caused his later lameness. He was appointed **Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Melbourne** when he was only 29 and proceeded to overhaul the curriculum, implementing practical laboratory classes in physics for which he made much of the equipment himself (He was an accomplished glassblower). Extremely hard-working, he had a warmth, charm and gentle humour, which made him popular with his students. Soon after Röntgen discovered X-rays, he assembled his own apparatus and took what was probably Australia's first X-ray photograph of Professor Masson's foot.

In 1892 he married **Frances Isobel Clare Milllear**, the daughter of a prominent Western District grazier and lived in one of the professorial houses where their first two children were born. Then in 1901, they bought the two-storey, 20-roomed blue-stone mansion **Iona** in Irving Road Toorak standing on 4 acres, complete with tennis court. It had been built for **Frederick William Prell**, a German brewer. The Lyles renamed the house **Lisbuoy** after the home of Lyle's maternal grandparents in Ireland. The house was staffed by a gardener, groom, cook, house-maid, parlour maid, governess, chauffeur and a person to look after the cow and the fowls. Thanks to an inheritance, wise investments and his wife's money, Prof. Lyle was able to retire in 1915. By then he needed crutches but he was far from idle. He still participated in the scientific community (he was associated with the first moves to establish the CSIRO) and was a member of the university council. He became a **State Electricity Commissioner** in 1919 (an SEC worker described him as 'one of the nicest, kindest gentlemen I have every met') and held several company directorships. He also indulged his hobbies of photography, cars and billiards. His glass slides were developed in a tiny darkroom attached to the tumbledown tool shed at **Lisbuoy**. He owned a succession of cars, which he dismantled when something went wrong. Then when the car was running well he dismantled it to see why it was working well.

Lady Lyle too, was a hard worker, engaged in various philanthropic works. She was awarded a C.B.E. for her untiring work on behalf of Australian soldiers and during the First World War. A no-nonsense, practical woman of great determination, unlike many charity workers, she avoided the limelight, and, as often as not, was photographed wearing her apron. Her major work was with the **Animal Welfare League**. She began taking in a handful of lost and stray dogs, which she tried to reunite with their owners. As the numbers grew, she employed help.

She built special facilities for them on her own block of land in Maple Grove, adjoining 'Lisbuoy'. She had a lethal chamber where she gassed the worst cases – and some old, sick and injured dogs were in a parlous state. When **Lisbuoy** was sold in 1939, Lady Lyle retained her Maple Grove property for her '**Mercy Home**' for dogs. The grounds were planted with flowering trees and the five-roomed villa was mainly devoted to the painless extermination of aged and injured dogs. However, the dogs were noisy, to the chagrin of the neighbours. In 1938 Lady Lyle gave £5,000 towards the establishment of what was then initially known as the **Lort Smith-Lyle Hospital** but after an impassioned disagreement her name was expunged from the title and other records.

Thomas and Clare Lyle had four children, Mary, Nancy, Thomas and Clare. Mary was gifted in both study and sport – athletics, tennis, hockey and basketball. She wanted to be a doctor. Her parents, particularly her mother,



Sir Thomas Lyle (undated)
Reg No 12273



Clare Lyle, nee Milllear (undated)
Reg no 12274



Lisbuoy 5 Irving Road, Toorak. 1923 Reg No 12272

thought this unsuitable for a girl, however, **Mary Rankin Lyle** had inherited some of her parents' determination. She entered the Melbourne University Medical School in 1913, where she played tennis and hockey for the university. As captain she introduced short skirts for the hockey team. While involved in training rounds at Melbourne Hospital, she did rounds with the District Nurses. The living conditions she saw, the appalling state of health of many pregnant women and the lack of ante-natal care shocked her.

Mary graduated in 1921 with honours and medals and became a resident surgeon at the Melbourne Hospital, but she soon became engaged to **Ned Herring**, a young barrister she had met during the war. As was expected at the time, she abandoned medical practice before they married. After the birth of their second daughter, Dr. Mary accepted the invitation of **Dr. Fetherston, Prahran's Health Officer**, to establish an ante-natal service at the **Prahran Health Centre**. The clinic flourished and attracted patients from surrounding districts for Dr. Mary was a very pleasant and charming person who related easily with people. The fact that she was a mother also helped her to gain acceptance among her patients. But Dr. Mary was concerned that so many of these women were medically unfit to bear more children and could not afford to raise them. So, in the 1930s she joined forces with Dr. George Simpson and the District Nurses to establish Melbourne's first birth control clinic in Fitzroy.

Nancy, the second Lyle daughter, was a sculptor, painter and pioneer aviatrix. In 1933 she was the first woman to fly solo from Victoria to Tasmania and back in a Gipsy Moth. Thomas became a farmer and managed the family property of Frogmore Park, Gunnedah, NSW, which his son Tom still runs. Clare, the youngest daughter, was a competitive rally driver in her youth. She became a nursing sister and married a Royal Navy officer. They were a remarkable family



*Dame Mary Herring, nee Lyle
(undated) Reg No12275*

Diane Nicholas 2007

(Photos courtesy Lyle Family)

Lort Smith Family

The Stonnington Local History Collection contains numerous records linked to the article, including a number relating to the Lort Smith family, who also resided in Toorak.

Louisa Montgomery (Lort Smith) grew up on a farm in Gippsland, and from the age of eight, animal welfare was high on her agenda.

In December 1924, plans were submitted to Malvern Council by architect Marcus Martin for two flats at the corner of Stonnington Place and Denham Place for the Misses Montgomery and in 1925 Miss Marion Montgomery, Miss Louise(a) Eleanor Montgomery and Charles Lort Smith are rated as the owners of 2 cottages in Denham Place.

During 1926 Louisa married **Charles Lort Smith** and the couple travelled overseas where they visited a number of veterinary clinics and hospitals. They returned to Australia and in 1929 Louisa founded the **Animal Welfare League**.

In 1932 plans were submitted to Malvern Council for a 'Proposed two storey brick residence Stonnington Place for Mrs Lort-Smith' [by] **Marcus W. Martin** architect. Mrs Lort Smith's new house, later numbered 7 Stonnington Place, was occupied by director, **Sir Benjamin Fuller**, a philanthropist, theatrical entrepreneur, vaudeville entertainer, comedian, and theatre owner. In 1933 the new home was featured in Australian Home Beautiful



7 Stonnington Place 1992 Reg no 9001

Malvern Council Correspondence

The Malvern Council correspondence files include a letter received in 1930 from Lady Lyle relating to the collection of lost dogs and suggesting the installation of a lethal chamber at the City Hall, and offering to bear the cost! In 1936 an invitation was received from the **President, Lady Fairbairn** and the **Committee of the Animal Welfare League of Victoria** requesting the presence of the **Mayor and Councillors** of the City of Malvern, at the opening of the '**Lort Smith -Lyle Hospital**', North Melbourne.

Taking History into the Community

Our local history jigsaws of James and Mrs Voysey East Malvern c1900 and of an early tram in Glenferrie Road Malvern have been well received. We would like to thank both **DTA Vacuum Cleaner World, 48 Glenferrie Road Malvern** and **Boy & Girl Toy Shop 495 High St, Prahran** for selling the jigsaws on behalf of the Society. We are now planning the production of a third jigsaw, Electric Tram Terminus, Burke Road East Malvern c 1914

Information wanted!

It is thought that at one time **Langville**, 2 Langville Court, East Malvern was occupied by members of a Catholic religious order of nuns. If you have any information about this please contact **Di 82901360**

Additions to the Stonnington Local History Collection

Donation of photograph of students from Form 5C, 1966, Chadstone High School.

Donation of photograph of a family at the gate of their new house at 35 Abbotsford Avenue, Chadstone, 1955

"The Salvation Army Soldiers of the Cross 1900-2000" (Centenary of the first screening of **Soldiers of the Cross**) . In 1899 the Salvation Army film, **Soldiers of the Cross**, was made on the tennis courts at **Belgrave** on the corner of **Dandenong** and **Belgrave** Roads in East Malvern The film is thought to be the first use of motion-picture film for narrative drama.



Malvern postcard c 1910 Reg No 9799



*Ensign Black, Officers and Inmates at Belgrave c1900
Reg no 394*

Collection of postcards loaned for copying by Michael Aitken

The photograph on this postcard is taken looking east from the corner of Glenferrie Road and Wattletree Road, Malvern. The tram can be seen turning into Wattletree Road and the horse drawn bus waiting at the corner.

Welcome New Members!

James, Jane and Ben Murchie, Keith Grabau and Lyn Smart.

Have you enjoyed viewing the photos in this issue?

Photos from the Stonnington Local History Collection appear with their reference number. To view an enlargement and read more go to the website below. Material for the history articles has been researched from the Stonnington Archives.

www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/history

SPONSORED BY:

East Malvern
Community Bank Branch **Bendigo Bank**

300 Waverley Road, East Malvern. Phone 9563 6044

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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 • Tel: 8290 1360 • Tel: 8290 7160
Prahran Historical and Arts Society P.O.Box 8649, Armadale Vic 3143 Tel: 9509 9978 www.vicnet.net.au/~phas