

# LOCAL HISTORY NEWS

Malvern Historical Society Inc.

Keeping Stonnington's History Alive!

May 2020 - Newsletter No. 85

## From the President

Thank you to all our members for your continuing support of the Malvern Historical Society. The beginning of 2020 has been a trying time for us all. The year started with bushfires and all the smoke, then the hail storm hit Stonnington. Now we are all dealing with the latest ordeal COVID-19 which is unfolding globally as the most serious world disease since the 1918 influenza pandemic. All our meetings in the foreseeable future, including our Annual General Meeting, have had to be cancelled. We look forward to letting you know when new activities are planned.

Look forward to hearing from you if you're unsure if you are a financial member for 2020. And of course, new members are always welcome!

Lorraine Sage and the Malvern Historical Society Committee [ljsage123@gmail.com](mailto:ljsage123@gmail.com) 9885 9082

## Influenza Epidemic 1918 - 1919

'A very serious epidemic of influenza made its appearance at the end of 1918 and the Government, together with the Municipalities, found it necessary to make immediate arrangements to cope vigorously with the disease. Vaccines were prepared and distributed by the Public Health Department and special arrangements made by the Health Officer, Dr. R. H. Fetherston, to vaccinate the citizens against the disease. The Town Hall was converted into a depot for this purpose and a splendid scheme was organised by the Health Officer to treat all persons desiring vaccination. Medical students from the Alfred Hospital, members of the Red Cross Society and members of the Council Staff all assisted earnestly to regulate the attendance of the public, and within a few week's time about 14,000 persons received inoculation there. A lull in the epidemic occurred for a few weeks in March of this year, but it burst out in greater virulence, which necessitated the establishment of local Emergency Hospitals in various districts.

The Education Department placed the whole of the Armadale State School at the disposal of the Council and this was immediately equipped for the treatment of bad cases, an excellent kitchen was already established at the school and the infants' rooms (separated from the main building) were converted into quarters for the Staff. An Ambulance was prepared and under the direction of the Health Officer the institution was carried on most successfully. 716 patients were admitted during a period of 5 months 28 days, and 43 deaths occurred.

Valuable work was carried out by Dr Fetherston, who organised the campaign in this City and attended on the patients who passed through the Hospital. He gave a free lecture to the citizens on the 19th May, 1919, on the treatment of the disease, including nursing demonstrations by the Staff from the Hospital. A great deal of inspectoral work was undertaken by the Council's Inspectors, who visited every case reported. The total cost, apart from ordinary salary amounted to £10,600, half of which is payable by the Government, and it is satisfactory to know that the Council's finances were able to stand the strain without calling on the ratepayers to pay an increase in the rate.

The Council acknowledges with gratitude the services rendered by Dr. Fetherston, who had just returned after long experience with a similar epidemic in England, Europe and America, and he devoted practically the whole of his time to the work, which no doubt saved the lives of many who otherwise would have succumbed to the disease. Great praise is due to the Matron, Nurse Burrows, and Staff, the Council's Officers and especially to Mr. McMicken, who regardless of the infectious nature of the epidemic, undertook duties of Secretary to the Hospital and carried them out to the entire satisfaction of the Council.'

City of Prahran Annual Report 1918-1919



Medical Superintendent (Dr Fetherston) and staff, Influenza Hospital c1919 Stonnington History Collection PH9237

## New members

The Society would like to welcome our latest new members Alan and Lorraine Adler, and David Weil.

## The Three Glens

The Society has purchased a copy of *The Three Glens Railway - a History of the Glen Waverley Railway*, Marc Fiddian Raccoon, Tail Books 2015.

State Parliament adopted the proposal for the extension of the railway from Darling to Glen Waverley in 1927. The new section of the railway from East Malvern to Glen Waverley was ready for its opening on the 5 May 1930. In 1898-99 there had been 4806 outward passenger journeys to Darling and by 1929-30 this number had grown to 554,132.

The book includes detailed information on the establishment of the railway line and its links to the Outer Circle Railway in East Malvern. It also includes many snippets of history including mention of a train derailment at Tooronga in 1917, and a deputation from Malvern Council met the Railways' Minister Tom Tunnecliffe to seek an extra station between East Malvern and Holmesglen.

The early railway between East Malvern and Glen Waverley was only a single track. Passengers from the city had to change trains at East Malvern and catch a single carriage train. Subsequently it was referred to as the Flying Matchbox and it consisted of a first-class and a second-class compartment. In 1930 the power for the line came from Hughesdale on the Gippsland line and was conveyed along overhead wiring on wooden poles along the land previously used for the Outer Circle Railway (now the site of Stonnington's Urban Forest).



Glen Waverley Railway line 1930 Stonnington History Collection MP16

This image shows Malvern East and Chadstone looking north-west from south of the intersection of Chadstone Road and Waverley Road. The Glen Waverley railway line is visible running east west, with Malvern Road veering off to the north. Electric lines and pylons, the bridge of the former Outer Circle Railway Line and Waverley Oval can also be seen.

## Louis William Holmes Snr

Louis William Holmes was born in England in 1858 and came to Victoria in 1887 where he established a business in Glenferrie Road Malvern.

Holmes who lived at *Ronaldsay* in Winter Street Malvern, was a member of the Masonic fraternity and president of the Toorak United Temperance League. On two occasions he unsuccessfully contested the Toorak seat in the State Parliament.

Holmes was Mayor of the Town of Malvern August 1901-August 1902 and the City of Malvern 1919-1920. He was a councillor from 1898-99 to 1932-33.

In August 1902, the *Prahran Chronicle* reported on the presentation to Mayor Holmes by Malvern councillors of a silver cradle mounted on a platform of fiddle-back blackwood. The presentation marked the occasion of the birth of a daughter, Doreen to Holmes and his wife Marion.

On Friday, May 28, 1920, (a century ago this month) 'His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales visited the State Government House, [Stonnington] Glenferrie Road. A loyal welcome was offered to the Prince by the Mayor of Malvern, Councillor L. W. Holmes, and the Councillors, on behalf of the citizens of the vice regal city of Malvern. Several thousand people assembled at the intersection of Kooyong and Albany Road to cheer the Prince as he passed on his way to the State house. A decorated arch of great beauty spanned the roadway.

This was the meeting point between the civic authorities and the Prince. There, in full official uniform was the Mayor and there too the Town Clerk, Mr. B. Crosbie.' Enthusiastic cheers continued until such time as the Mayor, with all the Councillors of Malvern, stepped up to the motor car and presented to the Prince an address. The Mayor's daughter, Doreen Malvern Holmes, presented a spray of Australian wattle blossom, which the Prince accepted with evident pleasure. In a few words to the Mayor, the Prince expressed his appreciation of the welcome.'

*History of Malvern J.B.Cooper 1935*



Malvern Mayor, Cr Louis W. Holmes 1911  
Stonnington History Collection MP1057

## Advertising sign 150-152 Glenferrie Road Malvern

An amazing painted advertising sign has been revealed on the south side of the building at 150-152 Glenferrie Road, Malvern. It was revealed during the demolition of the former Commonwealth Bank building at 146-148 Glenferrie Road, on the north-east corner of Edsall Street. The Stonnington History Centre arranged for photographs of the mural to be taken by professional photographer Peter King. Peter was allowed onto the site in April 2020 to take photographs which he then had to splice together, as it was too large to be captured in a single shot.

The full text on the wall reads: L.W. HOLMES, HOUSE PAINTER & PAPERHANGER/ON SALE/GLASS FOR WINDOWS & PICTURES/ VENETIAN BLINDS RE-TAPED & PAINTED/ON SALE/CARRIAGE VARNISH/WAGGON VARNISH/COPAL VARNISH/ RUSSIAN GLUE/ENGLISH GLUE/GOLD PAINT/MACHINE OIL/PIPE CLAY/CHEAP SIGN WRITER/HOUSEHOLD/PAINTS 5D PER lb TIN/ESTIMATES FOR/GENERAL REPAIRS.

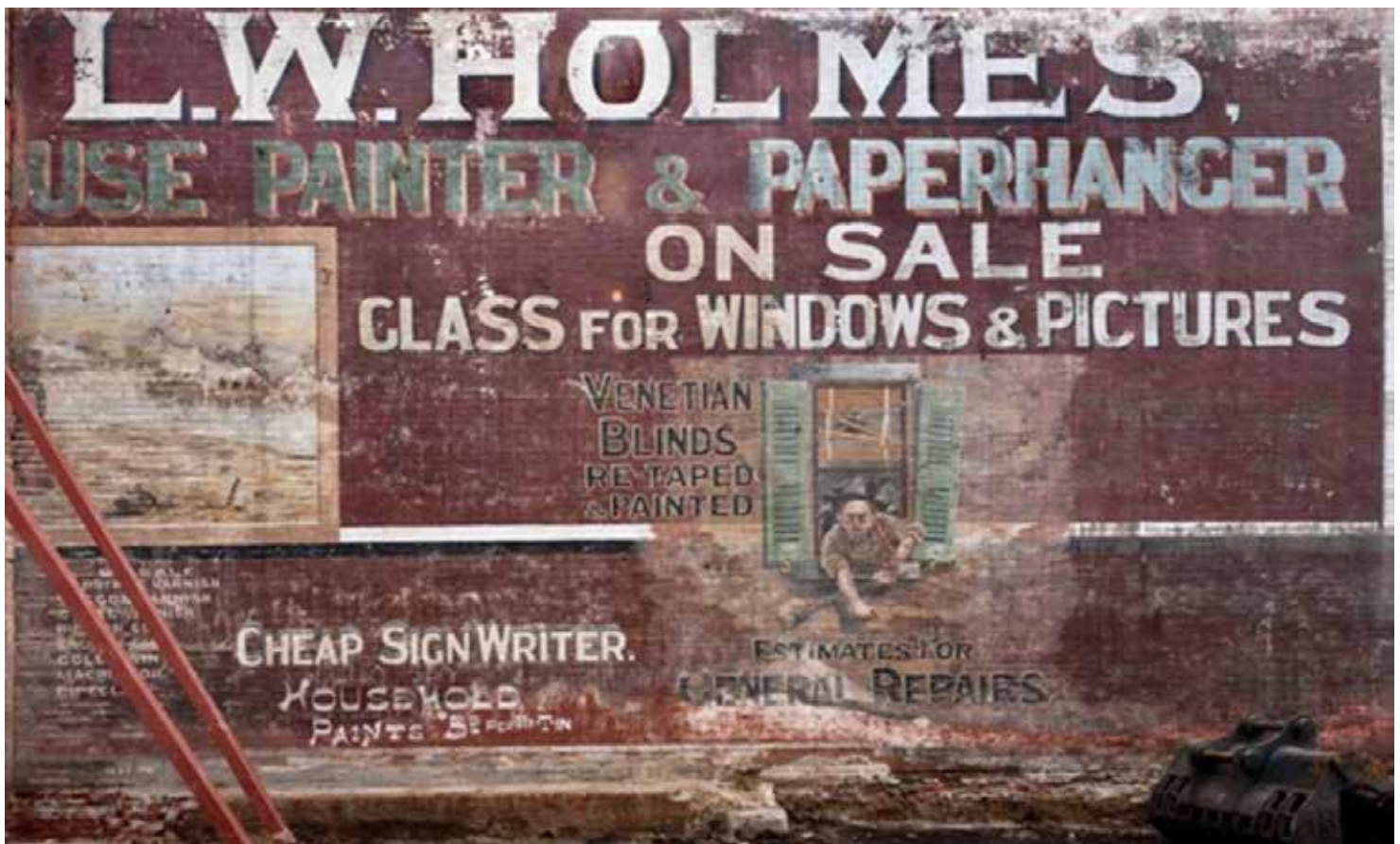
There are only a couple of times in this building's history when the sign could have been painted: between 1895-1897 during Holmes' early tenure of the building, and before the two adjacent shops were built; and in the late 1930s (c1937-1939), when the shops were demolished to make way for the Commonwealth Bank building. A photo of the shop and wall art from the late 1890s has some of the artwork but not the cartoonish character in the painted window, nor does it mention carriage varnish (in small text under the landscape painting). It is likely that the sign was added to after the first photo was taken, while the man in the window might have been added in the 1930s.

The brick shop and stables at 150-152 Glenferrie Road were built c1890 for plasterers William and Phillip Brokensha (the Brokensha Brothers). The shop was described as having two main rooms. Early occupants included: warehousemen the Nunan Brothers (1891) and auctioneer and agents Edward Vale and Charles Tucker (1893). Louis William Holmes moved in during 1895/96. Holmes has been described as a painter, a decorator, an ironmonger and a paperhanger in the rate books. The shop was originally numbered 63 Glenferrie Road, but was renumbered in 1916/17 as 150-152 Glenferrie Road.

Louis' son, Louis W. Holmes Jnr, joined him in the business in the mid-1920s. Louis Holmes Snr never owned the shop, ownership of which (along with the shops to the north) passed from the Brokensha Brothers to William Reid and Thomas Russell, then to Westmore Stephens and George Ballantyne. Later owners included Arthur and Annie Hamilton.

Louis Holmes passed away in 1933, having stepped down from the business some years earlier, but his son Kenneth continued in the business, which later became known as Holmes and White Pty Ltd, ironmongers. They were replaced as tenants by Pepperell in 1976.

Stonnington History Centre, 2020



Advertising sign 150-152 Glenferrie Road Malvern Peter King 2020 Stonnington History Collection SHC70511



## **The 60 year old mulberry tree at *Northbrook***

60 years ago this month a cutting from the mulberry tree, originally planted in Priory Park Great Malvern UK by the playwright George Bernard Shaw, was planted in front of *Northbrook* by Malvern Mayor Cr Johnson.

During the Malvern Festival of 1936, George Bernard Shaw planted a mulberry tree in Priory Park to commemorate his 80th birthday. At the planting ceremony he said that he hoped the tree would outlive him. Shaw died in 1950 aged 94 years. The 66 year old mulberry tree was blown over in a storm during the winter of the year 2000. The memorial to Shaw was thus lost forever, or so it was assumed. Dreadful storms had completely uprooted the tree and within hours Council workmen had sawn it into pieces. Research by Friends of Malvern Springs and Wells in the UK however revealed that in 1959 a cutting from the original tree had been sent to Malvern in Victoria, Australia. Further research discovered that while it had originally arrived in a poorly state in Australia it was now a massive, healthy tree behind Malvern Library in High Street. A project, launched by the Friends of Malvern Springs and Wells to return a cutting to Great Malvern, England, was made possible with the sponsorship of Coca-Cola (then bottlers of Malvern Water from the Malvern Hills), and the City of Stonnington, Via Heathrow, six healthy cuttings arrived in Malvern, Worcestershire from Malvern, Australia in August 2009. The cuttings were nurtured in different locations for several years, before the best saplings were planted.



**Cr and Mrs Johnson and Cr Firman planting the mulberry tree cutting 1960 Stonnington History Collection MP5061**

## **Robert and Jane Harper**

Robert Harper and his wife Jane lived at *Mayfield*, close to present day Mayfield Avenue Malvern, then *Myoora*, just east of the corner of Albany Road and Irving Road Toorak.

Robert was a member of the House of Representatives. His wife Jane had many interests, including the YWCA. She was also the president of the Spinners' Club for thirty-three years.

Many fetes for charitable institutions were held at *Myoora*.

The Harpers were active members of the Toorak Presbyterian Church.

They later lived at *Airlie*, Domain Road, South Yarra.



***Myoora* Toorak c1904 Stonnington History Collection PH7841`**

## Robert Harper & Co

In his book *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, historian Graeme Davison describes the changes which took place in the commercial life of Victoria between 1850 and 1880. In the beginning, the young colony had been serviced by merchants who imported directly, mostly from the mother country, and distributed locally to wholesale and retail businesses. Gradually, around the time of the Melbourne Exhibitions of 1880 and 1888, entrepreneurs established factories locally to manufacture or package basic commodities such as tea, coffee, sugar, flour, starch and rice, etc.

A very good example of all this was Robert Harper & Co. Robert Harper was a Scot, who arrived in Melbourne as a young boy in 1856, and in 1865, established his own company, initially importing food commodities such as tea, coffee, spices, oatmeal and flour. He was very successful, and gradually began to establish factories to process and package these goods. He also expanded into New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and New Zealand. By the turn of the century, Harper's had become a substantial business. There was a large sugar mill on the Sandridge Lagoon, now Port Melbourne.

Harper's used matchbox labels to advertise its products, and has the honour of being the very first company in Australia to register and trade mark a matchbox label, which it did with the blue label "A1 Brand" in 1885.

Fourteen labels have been identified that were issued by Harper's to advertise their brands, and most of these would have been issued in the period from 1885 to 1905. As well as A1 Brand, for which two labels exist, labels have been discovered for Avena Oats, Empire Cocoa and Teas, Oriental Coffee and Chicory, Star Brand Coffee Essence, Pioneer Jellies and Teas, Pearl Rice and Star Oatmeal.

The company declined somewhat as the 20th century progressed and manufacturing moved into more sophisticated products, the company lasted until 1962, when it was bought by an American Petfoods business, Ralston Purina, and later closed.

Jerry Bell 2019



## Prahran Market mural

If you've wandered through the Bracher Arcade at the Prahran Market recently you will have seen the new Market mural painted by talented painter Jay MT opposite Kevin's Farm Free Poultry and Prahran Seafoods.



## The Firestation Print Studio,

The Firestation Print Studio is a dynamic hub of arts activity, at 2 Willis Street Armadale, with printmaking at its core. It is a community based organisation. A unique element of the Firestation Print Studio, is that they provide facilities for all stages of artistic development in printmaking, from the inception and execution of artwork in their print workshop, to its display to the public in the gallery. Even if you have never printed you can take part in one of the beginners' classes and Saturday Print Clubs.

The home of the Firestation Print Studio, was originally the Malvern Fire Station from 1906 until 1988, when the Fire Brigade moved to East Malvern. The building, designed by architects Oakden & Ballantyne, was built in 1906 for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

New members welcome! <http://www.fps.org.au>



Fire Station, Willis Street Malvern 1988  
Stonnington History Collection MP7307



## Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky 21 Turner Street Malvern East

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Nisson and Vera Leonard-Kanevsky bought 21 Turner Street. in about 1921. From around 1935 the house was rented out. Nisson Kanevsky was born in Kiev in 1888, the son of Joshua Kanevsky, merchant, and Rachel Leonard Novakovsky. Towards the end of the century there had been pogroms and massive persecution of Jews in the area and in 1907 Kanevsky fled through Siberia and eventually arrived in Melbourne in 1908. He returned to Russia to rescue his sister who then settled in USA. He returned to Melbourne in 1910 where he initially worked as a construction worker at Flinders Street Station. By the time he married Vera Minerva Salome Douglas in 1916, he had become a successful clothing merchant at 241 Flinders Lane.

On his marriage certificate he gave his address as Carlyone Hotel, Melbourne. (The source of this biographical information is from the work of Jeffrey John Turnbull). In 1921 (about the time that he bought 21 Turner Street) Kanevsky asked Walter Burley Griffin to remodel two small Flinders Lane shops into one. The Walter Burley Griffin Society provides the following account of the ensuing events.

‘However, before the work could commence, Leonard-Kanevsky took out the option to buy the vacant site on the opposite corner with money borrowed from Griffin. He immediately engaged Griffin to design a five-storey warehouse for his company. Then Alexander Chambers at 46 Elizabeth Street came on the market. This was a much better site than the top end of Flinders Lane. So Leonard-Kanevsky sold the site with Griffin’s design for a five-storey warehouse, and bought the chambers. Deeply in debt to Griffin, Nisson again commissioned him to remodel and extend Alexander Chambers. Before a permit could be issued Griffin had been given a new commission to design a totally new building of seven storeys between the old bluestone rubble walls of the former building. The resulting reinforced concrete and glass curtain walled building became Leonard House (1924), a landmark building in Melbourne until it was demolished in the 1980s. Griffin’s architectural office moved there in 1925 and it is assumed that Griffin did not have to pay any rent.

Just before the stock market crash in October 1929, Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky was persuaded to become the managing director of the Reverberatory Incinerator and Engineering Company (RIECo). Its first design for a municipal garbage incinerator for the City of Essendon was unacceptable, mainly because of the ugly industrial building in which it was housed. Nisson then went to Griffin’s office and requested an aesthetically-designed building to enclose the incinerator.’ Griffin and his partner, Eric Nicholls, designed 13 of RIECo’s 18 ‘destructors’ throughout Australia.

Kanevsky showed a great readiness to move beyond the confines of the Jewish community and to assimilate into the broader Australian community. He married Vera, the daughter of a Scottish army captain, and his son, Boris, married Marie Fordham, the brother of Griffin’s principal draftsman in Melbourne. Nisson and Vera, and Boris and Marie, together with their son Peter, lived at various stages on the 1930s at Griffin’s Castlecrag Estate, NSW. The Griffin and Kanevsky families were obviously very close.

At the same time Nisson worked tirelessly for the Jewish community. His main endeavors were through the Jewish Welcome Society. He was instrumental in the establishment of a hostel at Orrvale, Shepparton, in 1928. It provided accommodation for 50 people and over the years it catered for over 1000 Jewish settlers. He also played a major role in setting up a similar scheme at Berwick. He was very actively involved in this project and although it collapsed as a result of the Great Depression, he remained in the area where he and Vera bought their own property, *Fairview* at Lardner near Warragul and raised Aberdeen Angus cattle there.

After World War 2, he still maintained an office in Melbourne and for his last three years he had rooms at the Francis Hotel for when he was in Melbourne .

He died there in 1954 and Vera died at Warragul in 1972.

Tony O’Grady 2020

## Stonnington Traffic Signal Box artwork

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Traffic signal boxes are being transformed into street art around Stonnington. Coordinated by the City of Stonnington and with support from professional artists, young people have been transforming traffic signal boxes on our busiest shopping strips from concept and design through to painting the boxes.

This community-based approach to graffiti prevention is inspired by a range of young people’s interests.

Look out for the artwork in High Street Windsor, Williams Road Prahran, along Malvern Road in Toorak, Prahran and South Yarra and in Williams Road Prahran.



## Early postal services

Postal services were initially provided by general stores. August Frederick White ran Prahran's first post office from his Chemist premises on Chapel Street from c1853 until his death in 1873.

Despite its proximity to the city of Melbourne, the area was isolated in terms of communications. The first mail runs were carried on foot from the City. Following protests over the proposed site for the construction of a post office, Prahran Council leased a portion of the Town Hall for this purpose. In exchange, the Government promised to finance the extension of the building. The new facilities opened in 1878, but the measly terms of the lease later proved to be a burden to Council, and it was not until 1909 that the arrangement was able to be amended. In the meantime a fine new post office was opened in 1890 in Toorak Road, South Yarra.

Malvern's mail was initially sent and received from the St. Kilda Post Office. Between 1863 and 1866, Burnet Patch Mudge ran postal facilities from his store in Malvern Road, Malvern. William Wilson took over duties as post-master and expanded his repertoire of services to include banking soon after. Further postal facilities were established at the Malvern Railway station in the 1880s, but Malvern remained without a dedicated post office until 1906.

Robert Lanson recently shared some memories of his time as a Malvern postie. "I was a postman at Malvern Post office from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, I remember two ice merchants living on my round, Percy Salter at 4 Ethel Street and Jack Hart at 13 Mountview Road. They were still delivering blocks of ice to their customers who had not bought a fridge. They used to get their ice supplies from Woodmasons in Glenferrie Road. I also delivered mail to some of the shops in Glenferrie Road including the likes of the Fields of Malvern dress shop at number 86, Griffen and McPaul hardware shop at 150, and Balls at 14 on the corner of Station Street. One memory is from Monday 21 July 1969, it would have been about lunchtime about 1 ish, standing outside an electrical shop in Glenferrie Road looking at a T.V. in the window watching Neil Armstrong walk on the moon, there was quite a crowd with me! I also remember seeing quite a lot of Sir Robert and Dame Pattie Menzies during my daily deliveries, and I have a special memory of one Christmas. Sir Robert came out of his gate as I arrived at his letterbox, and said "good morning postman" and then said to me "wait a minute, I would like you to have a drink on me." He reached inside his suit coat pocket and 'peeled' out 3 crisp \$2 notes, and said "Merry Christmas to you and your family." He then headed to his black Bentley car where his driver Peter stood holding the door open, and they headed off to his Collins Street office."

Robert Lanson 2020



White's post office and chemist's shop, Chapel Street Prahran c1860 Stonnington History Collection PH8649

**Malvern Historical Society Inc P O Box 184, Malvern Victoria 3144**

**I would like to**

- Join the Malvern Historical Society
- Renew Malvern Historical Society

**Annual Membership Options**

- Individual \$13
- Full time student \$9
- Family \$20

Date:

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Member information**

Name/s \_\_\_\_\_

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Email (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes I'd prefer to receive the newsletter by email only.**

**Payment options**

- Paying by Direct Transfer

Commonwealth Bank BSB No: 063187 Account No: 10104883 Account Name - Malvern Historical Society

\*\*\* Please make sure the message/reference box states your name and what the payment is for.

\*\*\*We would appreciate the return of your completed form by mail or by email.

- Paying by Cheque

Please make the cheque payable to the Malvern Historical Society Inc. Kindly forward your cheque and completed form to the Malvern Historical Society.

**I would like to assist with:**

- Committee and administration
- Newsletter
- Walks
- Talks
- Afternoon teas & suppers

\*Financial year: 1 Jan - 31 Dec

**MHS website: [www.vicnet.net.au/~malvern](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~malvern) Tel: 0438 515 631 [malvernhistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:malvernhistorical@yahoo.com)**

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The Malvern Historical Society Inc is a member of the Stonnington History Committee, an affiliated member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and a member of the South Metro History Group.

**OTHER STONNINGTON HISTORY CONTACTS**

**Stonnington History Centre, Email: [history@stonnington.vic.gov.au](mailto:history@stonnington.vic.gov.au)**

**Tel: 8290 1360 [www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Discover/History](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Discover/History)**

**Prahan Mechanics Institute Tel: 9510 3393 [www.pmi.net.au](http://www.pmi.net.au)**

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

Material for the articles has been researched from the **Stonnington History Centre Collection**. The database contains over 65,000 records. To view enlargements of photographs and to read more, just go to the website. **[www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Discover/History](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/Discover/History)**

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