

HISTORY HERE 204

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NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES AND 1973 WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

■ MarJo Angelico

Did you know that our first Neighbourhood House (above at 8 Fleet Street, Mt Waverley) – now called Waverley Community Learning Centre Inc - turns 40 this year? In fact, the whole community house movement can be dated to exactly that time. In Carlton, Nunawading, Sunshine, Newport, Coburg, Frankston, Waverley/Monash, and countless other places, here and overseas, neighbourhood houses sprang up, starting in 1973. The movement continued apace for about fifteen years before dwindling. These houses are all still serving the community now, but only a handful began life after 1988, and those mainly in new suburbs ¹. Before we investigate the timing of this meteoric rise, let's remind ourselves what we are talking about.

What is a Neighbourhood House?

They might be called neighbourhood centres, or community houses, or learning centres, but the functions are the same. Coburg's Nicholson Street Community House (<http://www.nsch.hypno-relax.com>) has a typical definition. It says, "Neighbourhood Houses are not-for-profit local organisations that provide social, educational and recreational activities for their communities, in a welcoming, supportive environment. They are man-

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COMING EVENTS

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Wednesday 17 July: Afternoon tea at the rooms, at 2.30 pm – for members only. Come, see and hear about the Society's current research and activities. Remember we now have access to the first floor via a lift.

Wednesday 7 August: An Open Day will be at the rooms for National History Week, from noon to 4pm. Discover the past – see displays of artefacts, photographs and aerial maps. All welcome. Bring your friends.

Thursday 22 August: General Meeting and AGM will commence at 7.30 pm, followed by a Movie-tone newsreel. Please bring a plate for supper.

Sunday 8 September: Our next Historical Walk will be the 'Oswego' walk in Syndal. Never heard of Oswego? Here is your chance to learn more about Waverley's history. Enjoy a guided walk of about 3 kilometres, led by MarJo Angelico and Bev Anderson. This walk will be in a slightly hilly area so be prepared by wearing walking shoes and bringing water. We will meet at 1.30pm in the Holmesglen TAFE car park in Waverley Road. Parking is available there for \$2. Bookings required: contact Margaret Boyes on 9807 3408 or email: boyesm@ozemail.com.au by 31 August.

Sunday 6th October: Celebrate the 43rd birthday of the Waverley Historical Society at St Philips, Stephensons Road, Mt Waverley at 1.30pm. Please bring afternoon tea.

aged by volunteer committees and paid staff, and operate with the assistance of volunteers across all areas."

This site further explains

"The Neighbourhood House movement began to evolve in Victoria in 1973. The main aim of the movement was to offer people supportive, non-threatening environments where they could share their skills and interact socially within their local community. Neighbourhood Houses represent the community in which they are located: the impetus to develop a Community House generally comes from the people who live/work within the local area, and management and direction is generally dictated by the local community and their needs. Accordingly, each House is unique. Many Houses started with specific groups in mind - most had strongly feminist beginnings, for example - and some Houses still reflect this. Generally, Houses will focus on specific local community needs such as disability, domestic violence, multi-cultural or Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander programmes, but all people are treated equally regardless of race, religion, gender or ability."

There is that date again. I remember the time well. As part of a university sociology course I was sent to "volunteer" at a newly opened Nunawading Neighbourhood House (in other words, to observe from the inside). I am not sure I adequately appreciated the importance of that moment in history, but I was part of it. But why was their establishment limited to that short window of recent history?

Why 1973?

To understand the mindset of the House founders in the 1970s, we must first look at what had been happening in their lives up till then.

The 1950s – Labour-saving devices

The baby-boomer generation, born in the years after World War II, grew up without any of the stresses and strains of the previous generations.

During their childhood, vacuum cleaners, automatic washing machines, etc were easing the load on their mothers, who found their sense of purpose in their children, neighbours, wider family, the church, and charities. Homes, and wants, were simple. Then, as the variety of labour-sav-

Street Name Origins

Many streets in the Monash area follow a theme. Here is a group in Ashwood that was created with a Victorian Reservoir theme. These names were initiated by Sir Ronald East of the former Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works:

Maroondah Rd, Rocklands Rd, Eildon Rd, Kiewa St, Hume Crt, Sylvan Cr. Note the spelling of Sylvan rather than Silvan which is the actual name of the reservoir.

Philip Johnstone

ing devices increased, and at the same time family size started falling² plus the church's role lessening, and compulsory school years increasing, THAT was the time for women to begin looking elsewhere for their *raison d'être*.

The 1960s – Build Your Own Community

Young-married baby-boomers were builders. They were keen to establish homes of their own, and moved in droves to new estates where they busied themselves building their homes (often with their own hands) and then everything else - schools, churches, libraries, play centres, scout and guide groups, sporting teams and all the rest. They were establishing new communities by sheer grit. And, of course, much of the hard slog was put in by women. Though unpaid, women were unashamedly capable, and very much needed in the broader community. Their husbands earned a third more than women could, to pay for this contribution their wives were making. It was called Family Support, and was the reason women could not earn more than 75% of a man's wage.

The 1970s – Social Isolation, Social Change

New estates meant unmade roads and isolation from wider family. As the history of our first such House put it:

“Low-cost land and housing was acting like a magnet to newly-weds and other prospective home buyers. What hadn't been taken into consideration in many cases was the effect of isolation on young wives and mothers.”³

This House is now in Fleet St, in the House of the supervisor of the reservoir building, but it started life in a disused petrol station, located where the Masonic temple now stands in Stephensons Rd. The service station had the flamboyant name: Vereena Auto Port (shown below).



Typical of many of those first learning centres, enthusiasm for the task overcame discomforts of various sorts. Waverley at the time was in a state

Timeline of relevant events

1957: Family size peaked

1960: the idea of equal pay for work of equal value (excluding “specifically female work”) was awarded

1961: The Pill – oral contraceptives became available.

1966: Ban on married women in the public service was lifted. Teachers and flight attendants gradually also were allowed to continue work after marriage.

1969: ACTU won equal pay for equal work case for women. Women would now get 85% of men's wages (previously 75%).

1971: The first woman to head an Australian diplomatic post was appointed.

1972: Equal work was defined in court and women would now get 100% men's rates.

1973: Minimum wage set for all adults.

1973: Family size troughed.

1973: Neighbourhood Houses sprang up.

1973: University fees were abolished.

1974: Concept of male wage including “Family Support” was dropped.

1974: Four weeks annual leave becomes standard.

1977: First work-related child care centre since World War II opens.

1979: 12 months maternity leave was introduced for women.

1987: Female students outnumbered male students at university for the first time.

1992: Unemployment peaked at 10.9 per cent.

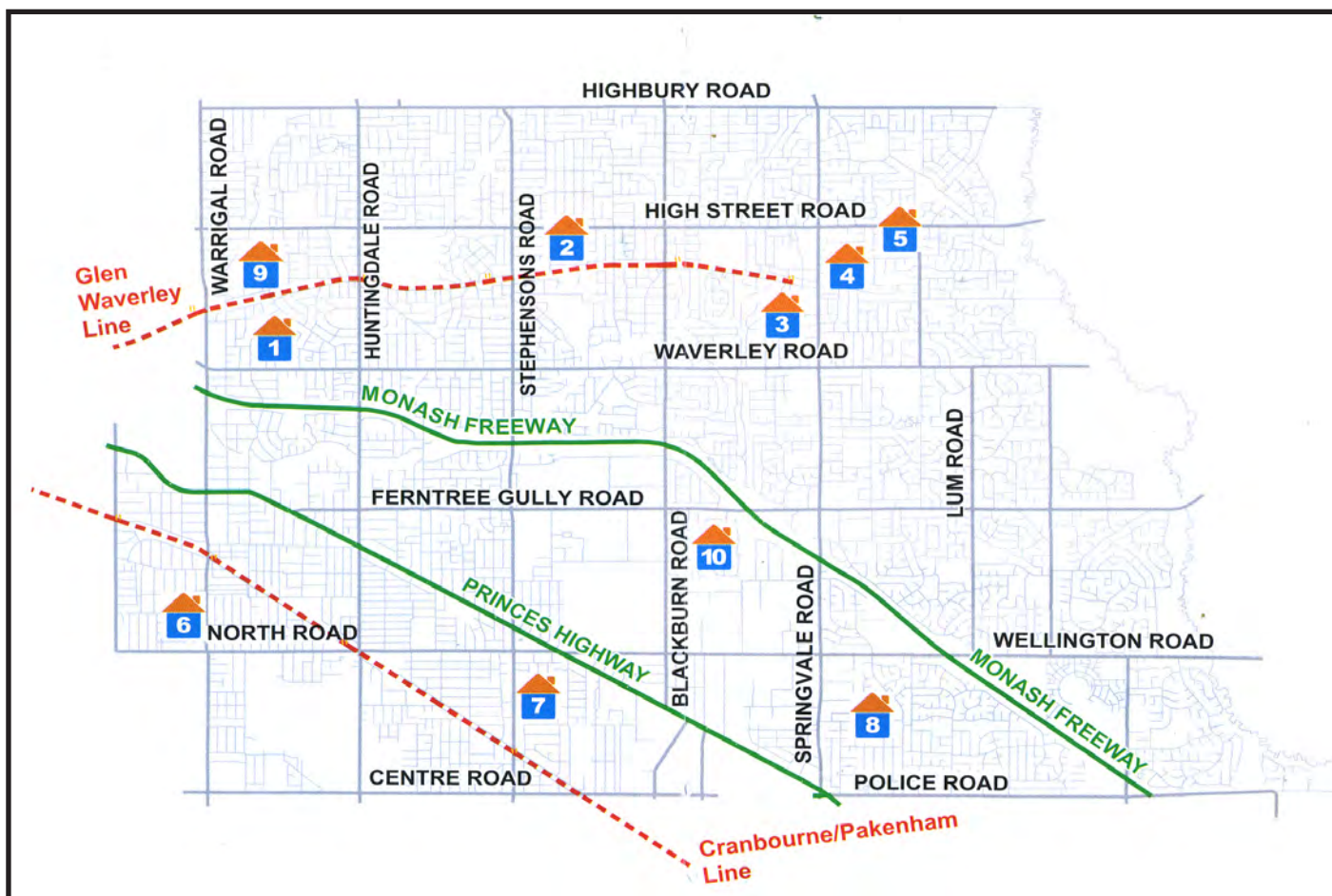
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics in

<http://career-advice.careerone.com.au/job-hunting-strategy/employment-news/how-workchanged-since-1960s/article.aspx>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/departement/120629-ceda.html> and

<http://www.worksite.actu.org.au/fact-sheets/history-equal-pay-for-work-of-equal-value.aspx>

of massive development in super quick time. Then, like a Coming of Age, twenty-one years after the war came an array of huge changes. The ban on married women being permanently



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1 Amaroo Neighbourhood Centre
35 Amaroo Street
CHADSTONE 3158
9807 0570</p> | <p>4 Mount Street Neighbourhood House
6 Mount Street
GLEN WAVERLEY 3150
9803 8706</p> | <p>7 Anglicare Victoria – Dixon House
2 Dixon Street
CLAYTON 3168
9543 8911</p> |
| <p>2 Waverley Community Learning Ctr
5 Fleet Street
MOUNT WAVERLEY 3149
9807 6011</p> | <p>5 Kerry Neighbourhood House
36 Kincumber Drive
GLEN WAVERLEY 3150
9887 6226</p> | <p>8 Mulgrave Neighbourhood House
18 Suva Street
MULGRAVE 3170
9548 3311</p> |
| <p>3 Wavlink
36 Myrtle St.,
GLEN WAVERLEY 3150
9561 7104</p> | <p>6 Fusion Oakleigh Community Centre
229 Huntingdale Road
OAKLEIGH 3166
9543 5388</p> | <p>9 Power Neighbourhood Centre
54 Power Avenue
ASHWOOD 3147
9807 3589</p> |
| <p>10 Notting Hill Neighbourhood Centre
37 Westerfield Drive
NOTTING HILL 3168
9561 0114</p> | | |

employed in the public service was abolished. Three years later, equal pay for equal work was introduced, and later defined to stop employers re-classifying women's tasks. (This is an over-simplified statement, but basically "Family Support" was no longer to be part of men's wages). Then in the following crucial year, 1973, university fees were abolished. It was easier than ever to qualify for good jobs, and workers enjoyed shorter hours and longer leave times than ever before. A whole new world was opening up.

The Way Forward

Suddenly, not only was there no reason to spend all her time at home with chores and children, there also seemed to be many good reasons for a woman to put her time to new and productive uses. Some, of course, found employment or went to university and to a good job from there, but for others, this was too drastic a step. Maybe

they had never completed secondary education or maybe the lack of child care was an issue. They wanted to grow and develop, but not necessarily in academia just yet. Short inexpensive courses in a non-threatening home-like place exactly filled the felt need of the time.

Not that it is only women who use neighbourhood house courses. Men and children are regular users too. However women are the most numerous and persevering students and tutors. This need for further education was very much the thrust of Waverley Community Learning Centre, when it began in 1973. Many young mothers wanted to do Year 12 subjects in order to enter university, but understandably did not wish to attend an ordinary secondary school. Later Houses, like Mount Street, have focussed more on self-expression through creative pursuits, and self-improvement through exercise, new skills, friendships, and serving. However the principle still stands.

Future Challenges – Volunteerism!

There has always been a steady stream of House users through a continuum of steps – from a student at one of the House courses, through volunteering, maybe to a paid role in tutoring, child care, fundraising, or administration, and from there out to university or employment. Indeed the formation of this bridge from home duties to paid work is seen as one of the services Houses provide for the wider community.⁴

However according to the State of Volunteering report of 2012,⁵ volunteerism depends on role models in early life, starting young, and positive experiences. According to youth surveys, “Young people see volunteering as inappropriate to their work and not a label they would place on themselves” (ibid). Currently, volunteers are most likely to be aged 35 to 74 – that is, born during or after the second World War, or the children of those. If neighbourhood houses are to continue, the stream of volunteers must not die out.

The rise of Men’s Sheds five years ago is a positive development if it does not put more strain on the same few volunteers. Neighbourhood houses will still be part of the next stage of history if they keep meeting the changing needs of the community they are in – if they stay true to their statement of purpose.

Why 1973?

It was inevitable, really. It could not have come at any other time. 1973 was THE time for the explosive emergence of the Neighbourhood House movement. In 1963 women were too busy with home and community for neighbourhood houses to emerge; in 1983 there was more employment and a more consumeristic lifestyle. It had to be 1973 when women were freer than ever before or after, and had both the time and the need. Community houses came at a time of great change, especially but not only for women, and stayed to continue to be a caring and friendly arm of the community. We hope their adaptability will keep them fulfilling this role into the decades to come.

NOTES

1. In Waverley, Houses opened in 1973, 1977 and 1979; Nunawading, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1982, 1983 and 1987; Surrey Hills, 1978; Camberwell, 1976 and 1983; Canterbury, 1981; Box Hill, 1983, 1985, 1987; Alamein, 1984 and Burwood, 1981. Sources include all these Houses’ websites, eg -

<http://www.nsch.hypno-relax.com/>

<http://archive.vicnet.net.au/community/Community/>

<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Community/Neighbourhood-houses/Carlton-Neighbourhood-Learning-Centre/http://outletsco-op.com.au/home/history.html>

Also, “The Australian University Student Financing System” by B. Chapman and Michelle Tan econrsss.anu.edu.au/Staff/gregory/pdf/HECSMalaysiaMishAug232007.pdf and <http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/women.html> - Key Milestones. [See p.3]

2. Family size, according to

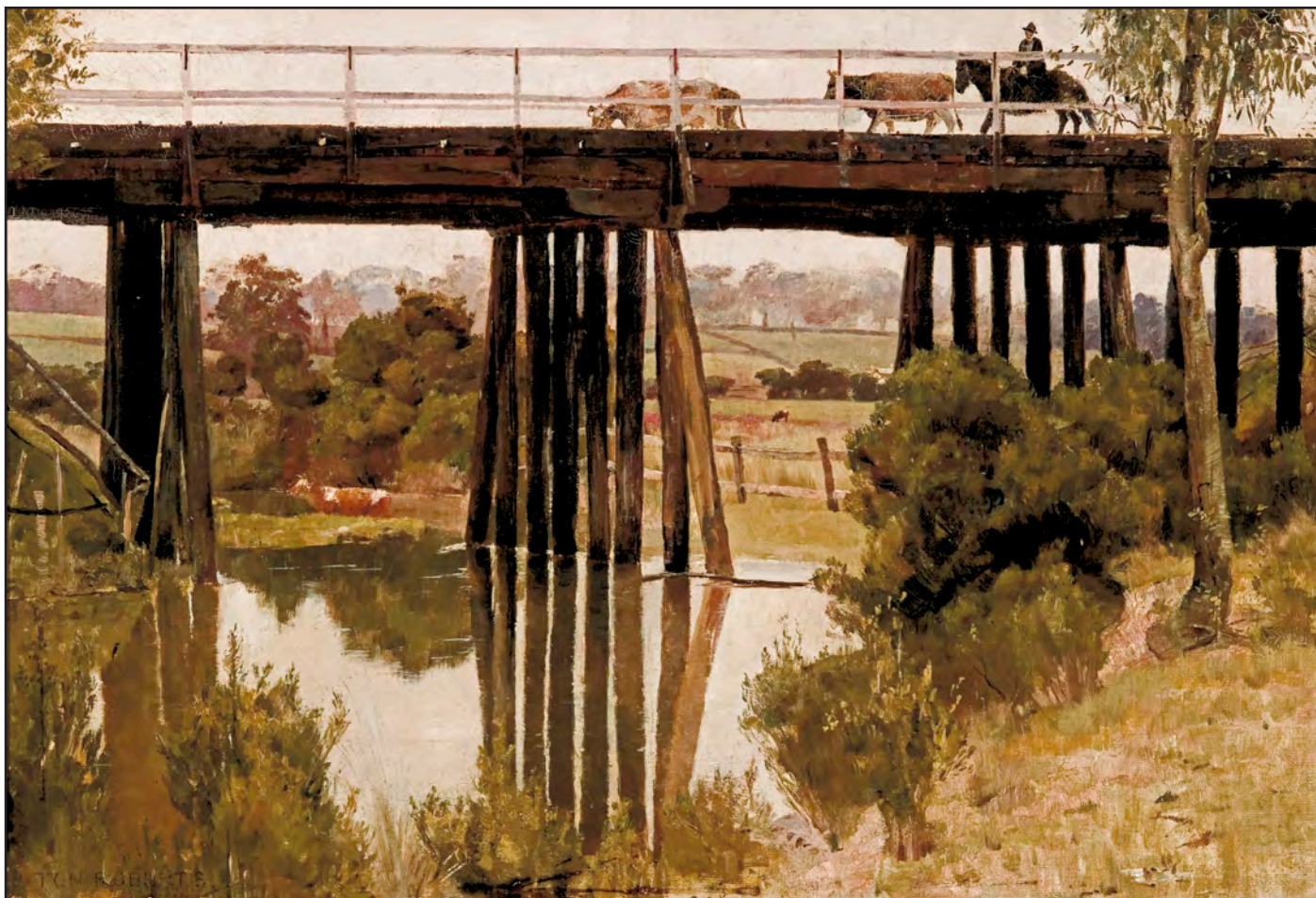
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4847a1.htm>, peaked in 1957 and troughed in 1973.

3. “The Open Door – a history of the first twenty years of Waverley Community Learning Centre Inc” p. 2. This Neighbourhood Centre was one of the first, established in 1973.

4. See ANHLC Members Survey 2011 Key Findings on the website of The Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres. <http://www.anhlc.asn.au/>

5. http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/files/P6L97HMOMF/VA_State_of_Volunteering_in_Australia_2012_FINAL.pdf

Tom Roberts – also a photographer?



Tom Roberts, Australia, 1856-1931, *Winter morning after rain, Gardiner's Creek*

1885, Melbourne. Oil on canvas. 47.0 x 66.0 cm

I first saw this painting when I visited SA Gallery on 12 October 2011 and at once felt that it is an exceptional work. Here I cannot do better than quote from the notice of its acquisition that now appears on the wall beside the painting.

“This quiet rural scene, painted at Gardiners Creek in Hawthorn, is pivotal in the development of *plein-air* painting in Australian Impressionism. Painted upon Roberts’s return from Europe, the painting distils many of the ideas and influences he gained abroad. The unusual composition, dominated by the dark vertical and horizontal lines of the wooden bridge, is indebted to James McNeil Whistler’s Battersea Bridge works, while the subdued colour scheme and high horizon are reminiscent of the work of French painter Jules Bastien-Lepage. Roberts’s painting influenced Charles Conder, who, on seeing it in Roberts’s studio in 1888 painted *A holiday at Mentone*, a composition of similar size dominated by the flat wooden structure of a footbridge.”



his sketch of one of Whistler’s Battersea Bridge series shows the kind of view that Roberts translated into his painting. Recently I came across a photograph (shown on p.7 opposite) of ‘our’ bridge. At least I thought it was. Actually it seems to be a photograph made by Roberts of an earlier version of his painting, because it shows half of a horse, as arrowed, on the bridge! Indeed the whole photo has a paint-like quality. The red rectangle shows the boundaries of the final painting and how he has ‘stretched’ the lower part to get the Battersea look. The photo is in the Stonnington History Centre and the archivist told me that they had received it from the old Country Roads Board many years ago. If so, it is surprising that the CRB would have taken a picture of the bridge before handrails were installed. Whatever explanation is true it should not detract from our enjoyment of Roberts’s painting especially that expanded and beautiful reflecting pool in the foreground.

Laurie Burchell

Speaker at April meeting

On 24 April our members and visitors were privileged to hear a remarkable speaker.

Lambis Englezos has become widely known as one of the foremost experts on Australia's Great War experience. In 1996 he developed a theory that up to 200 Australian diggers, killed at the Battle of Fromelles on the Western Front in July 1916, were still lying in unmarked mass burial pits at a wood on the outskirts of Fromelles since being buried there by the victorious Germans. Lambis described his 'magnificent obsession' to prove his theory with a view to seeing the bodies of the missing diggers discovered and honoured properly. He was met by a wall of discouragement, disbelief and official contempt but he persisted and was finally vindicated.



He has now seen dignity and honour brought to the diggers who disappeared in one horrible night in July 1916. Lambis has been awarded the Order of Australia for his Fromelles work.

MB

Histriolics*

There are some people who attend the historical society meeting in the home suburb where they used to live! as well as nearby in a different/adjacent area. In addition, some even go to the nearest Historical Society which brings together those from adjacent areas.

Keen? or bordering on Mad? Or simply willing to work hard on what the youngies have not yet found to be important for future purposes?

We know several people who attend several Societies. And we have to confess a bit of involvement that way ourselves!

Sure – the local Historical Society claims the greatest share of our interest. Why did this happen? Indeed, to quote Professor Julian Sumner-Miller, why is it so?

If you go to a new (for you) Historical Society, look around. Who might you know there?

We reckon our story takes the cake! While in the process of looking around for a house in Mt Waverley in 2006, we travelled back to Coburg on the train from Mt Waverley, and who should we meet up with on the train? Doug Gunn! He was going to the same meeting as we were. We had tea together in Coburg before attending the Historical Society meeting there.

Doug, of course, was involved with Waverley Historical Society, with Coburg, Brunswick, the Royal Historical Society, and now in his new home Society, Upper Yarra Valley.

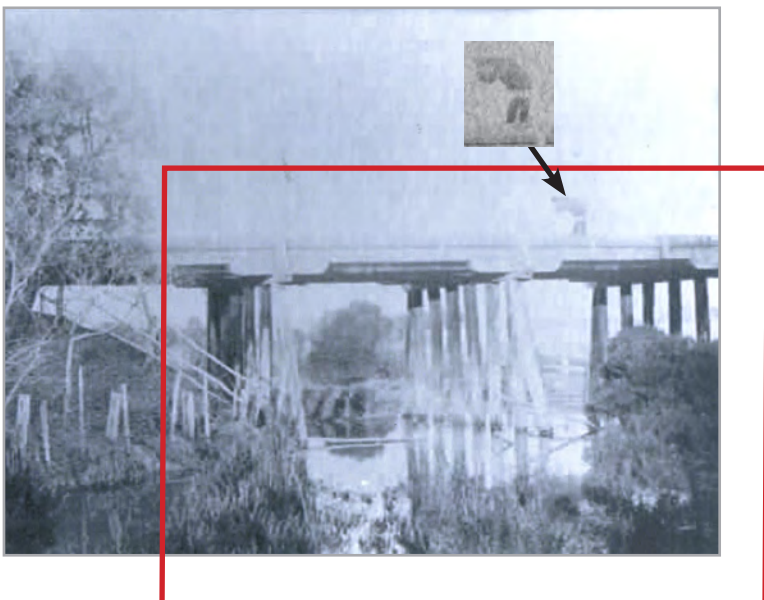
And, for goodness sake, where would we be without this “addiction” or “cross fertilisation”. (Whatever you call it).

Are we/they ‘itinerants’ or just plain mad!

Pat Burchell



Strictly speaking, this newly-coined word should read ‘Historiolics’ but this doesn’t scan as well, so I’m sticking with my version. Perhaps people like myself and my husband who regularly attend more than one Historical Society meeting should set up an HA – along the lines of AA : Alcoholics Anonymous (Pat)



WHERE TO FIND US

Our rooms, which are located above the Mt Waverley library in Miller Crescent, are open each Wednesday (except over the Christmas break), from 1pm to 5pm, or by appointment, for individual research and working discussion groups.

When the library entrance door is locked at meetings, use the doorbell at the far left to gain entry.

Members are asked to bring a plate of supper to general meetings which this year are every second month.

Anzac Commemoration

as held at the City of Monash War Memorial, Sunday April 2, 2013 at 10.15am. A big crowd of defence and civilian personnel and children observed the pageantry attached to the very moving Anzac Service.

Ten Society members attended this event. President Ed Hore laid a colourful wreath on behalf of Waverley Historical Society.

We hope many others will join with us in the 2014 Anzac ceremony.

Bev Delaney



Historical Society members after Anzac commemoration



Bev Delaney

Historical Society Wreath

Visit to Immigration Museum

Sunday 26 May.

Nine of our members travelled on train and tram to the Immigration Museum in the city. Public transport was something of a novelty for a number of us and all enjoyed the opportunity to chat on the way without distraction of road traffic.

Everyone knew that there was a special event, the celebration of countries' cuisines based on chocolate. But, we were all surprised that we were given free admission, whereas we only expected a concession because most of us were seniors!

In spite of the crowds we managed a self-guided tour of exhibits and also enjoyed some chocolate dishes.

It was agreed that the star attraction was the recreation of ships' passenger accommodation in three different eras.

Laurie Burchell



Chris Norton

Waiting for a tram to the Museum - Chris needs a longer camera arm



Chris Norton

Sampling various chocolate goodies