



Waverley Historical Society Inc Newsletter

October 2011

Issue No197

WAVERLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established in 1970

Incorporated in Victoria

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Extant Pre-suburban Buildings: Reminders of Waverley's rural days

From 1899 till 1981 Plas Yollen was the home and orchard of the Peck family. The house was built for Dr Thomas Hewlett, Fitzroy surgeon, and his son Joseph, farmer, in 1880 as a country retreat. The next owner, George Blackburne, architect, named it after a Welsh castle. At least three generations of the Peck family farmed there and also used the beautiful gardens for fetes and garden parties to raise funds for the Red Cross during WWII.



Editorial

In the last edition there was a story of Betty [Lechte] Adamsthwaite from New Zealand and Muriel Williams, old friends, arriving in the rooms, to surprise us*. Friends from childhood and meeting then each Sunday at the Methodist Church on High Street Road for Sunday school or church, they represent the second hub of worship in Mt. Waverley.

The next week Muriel kindly invited me to tea in her unit on Stephensons Rd. and showed me many photos of how things were in those far off days. There is a photo of her on her pony, rows of cabbages at her feet and behind the big, open land at the top of Alvie Rd. In another, most interesting photo, looking east, my eye was drawn to old St. Stephens, the only object on the tree covered escarpment – while the land sloped down below her to the family dam on Damper Creek.

On Muriel's wall there was also a strikingly surreal impressionist painting of her grandfather's property called St. John's Wood: now the Riversdale Golf Links. It was in the new large pond constructed in the foreground that her grandmother's siblings, in their teens, were drowned just before Christmas Day. [While earlier, in 1868, the property had been bought by the Chief Justice, Sir Redmond Barry. It became his weekend retreat and entertainment centre, while he planted the large conifers that grace the landscape today. In c. 1960 the property became the Riversdale Golf Links Estate, and is so today.]

I was surprised to learn that in her teens Muriel had gone to MLC Hawthorn – and

recalled that Margery Brown's brothers went to Scotch College and also alighted at Kooyong Station. The coming of the railway in 1930 certainly made a difference! [While Margery herself became Almoner at the Womens' Hospital [as recorded in an interview by Stewart Bradley in 1998, speaking with Margery and the Dillon sisters.]) Yet Waverley remained largely rural until the 1950's, and its pretty waterways and overlay of native trees are cherished and protected still. May that remain so.

Judy Borg

*My apologies to Betty and Muriel for some small errors in reporting Betty's visit in the July Newsletter – and to Norma, who pointed them out.

A Story From My Family's Past: Celebration of WHS's 41st Birthday.

Members are asked to bring an item from your family's past (not necessarily from Waverley) and tell a short story about it. If you are not confident to talk to the meeting then write a paragraph about it and a committee member will read it for you.

Please, everyone bring an item,

Don't leave it to others to supply the items
for the presentation!

At St. Philip's, Sunday, October 23, 2pm.

Also, please bring a plate.

Taped Interview Series no.2: **Miriam Porter speaks with** **President Ray Price, 2007**

Miriam and Bob married in 1948, when they bought a block for sale in Virginia St. by contacting a Mr. Carmichael in Oakleigh. Miriam decided on Mt. Waverley because it was "half-way between" Murrumbeena and Canterbury, where their respective families lived. Bob built the house himself, over six years. (Meanwhile they lived with friends near Toorak Rd. in Sth. Camberwell) There was no water 'til '51, when they moved in. The road was "terrible and boggy in winter", Bob frequently towing people out with his '39 Pontiac. One Sunday morning Bob decided to help himself to some aggregate left by the side of High Street Rd. near St. Stephens. A councilor in the congregation came down and when Bob explained said "Oh. Carry on".

The house was built in stages. With baby son Graham just two weeks old, Miriam was visited by the local Dr.Tait, who'd been visiting sick children further down Virginia St. and called "Every thing all right?" from the front door. ["Otherwise", Miriam explained, "He would have had to charge a fee".] Their house was half-way down Virginia St. [where the Safeway rear car park is today]. The butcher "came up" and later, the newsagent. Crofts [the grocer] delivered Thursday or Friday with a Tuesday order, when she would push the pram up. Bob worked in the city and would put good shoes on at the station [platform only on the south side] and buy a ticket from the guard of the "dog box train" [that ran a shuttle between East Malvern and Glen Waverley]. Bob returned about 5.30pm: Miriam could see the train from the kitchen window across bare paddocks and would start dishing up. She added "There were

a lot of copper heads [snakes] around, specially on the other side of Sherwood Drive.

Mrs. Porter would wheel her younger child down in a pusher to attend old St. Stephen's. The vicar, Edmund Lever, came out from St. Matthews, Ashburton, only on Sundays. Miriam enjoyed the break and speaks of people in the congregation, specially "old Miss Carmichael and the Hores". Meanwhile her husband was minding Graham, the lounge room his workshop. She added "He'd painted it with kalsomine to make it look finished, to their later regret". There was no sewerage 'til 1964. But they'd "been told it would come in 10 years, and it did". Meanwhile, they had an outhouse.

The Progress Hall had a kinder that Graham attended, while Miriam's daughter went to the new kinder next to the Health Centre in Sherwood Drive. Later, she was in the first intake for Mt.Waverley High School, the first two years in rooms at Glen Waverley. In 1966 she began third form at Mt. Waverley [Lechte Rd.] When asked to recall her early days, Miriam's daughter said "Playing on vacant blocks and in [part-built?] houses - and bonfires on Guy Fawkes' Day!" Mrs. Porter said the children couldn't get in for guides or cubs. Earlier she'd stated that "In 1962 St. John's [Virginia St.] had the biggest Sunday School in the whole of Australia!"

Virginia St: looking West, c. 1952



WHS Speakers

Michael Howe spoke on the popular topic of the school readers at our July meeting. Committee member Geoff Brown has written this account:

Victorian Grade Readers

For most of those who attended Victorian state and independent schools in the 1930s and 40s, mention of the *Victorian Readers* brings back memories. Do you remember the poetry learned by rote, the stories of Australia and the Empire, the story of the Lost Children – and, of course, the Hobyahs?

At our July meeting, guest speaker Michael Howes took members on a nostalgic and informative journey back to these earlier years. The *Readers* were a series of eight books, one for each grade level, commissioned by the Victorian Education Department in the late 1920s. As editor, the Department appointed the accomplished educator and school inspector, Charles Long, who had also edited the *School Papers* for 30 years. (One of our society members as a schoolboy in Warrandyte had met Charles Long and was able to attest to his great interest in Australia's history and heritage.)

The *Readers*, more durable and less expensive for parents than the *School Papers*, were a collection of works of "literary merit, information and interest." The series was designed so that young students could begin with topics about home then "be taken in imagination to various parts of the Empire, Europe and the U.S.A, thus gaining knowledge of their rich heritage and acquiring a well founded pride of race" (Book 8).

Michael entertained the audience with his recitation of two poems from the *Readers* and an extract from Thomas Mitchell's historic account of his ascent of Pyramid Hill. All texts included in the *Readers* were to promote values such as respect, hard work, thrift, honour, self-sacrifice and duty. As Michael illustrated with Thomas Mitchell's original text, the editor sometimes altered the wording to better support such desirable values – some of which would now be considered less desirable. For example, that Aboriginal people had died out in Victoria and that Australia was 'terra nullius', or a land belonging to no one, before Europeans came. However, the *Readers* also truthfully reflected some of the tensions within Australia, such as the anti-war sentiment of the 1920s on the one hand and our celebration of heroic deeds during war on the other.

From the late 1940s, the *Readers* were replaced with more contemporary materials such as the *John and Betty* series, but for some forty years the *Grade Readers* played an important part in the education of generations of Victorians.

The Society is grateful to Michael Howes for his entertaining and informative presentation. A set of the *Readers* is held at the Society's rooms and members and visitors are welcome to drop by to reacquaint themselves with these notable texts.

Geoff Brown

Coming WHS Speaker:

Our first speaker for 2012 is the author of the moment: Jenny Davies, to speak about her book "Beyond the Façade – Flinders Street, more than just a Railway Station".

New Life Members: August Meeting [photos by Chris Norton]



A record four Life Members were created at the August Meeting. Our Patron, Dr. Morna Sturrock AM, conferred the honour on four most worthy members: MarJo Angelico, Jean Walkerden, Beverley Delaney and Philip Johnstone, who have worked hard over many years. Their audience at the August Meeting were delighted and applauded warmly.

Book Revue

One of our newer members, Margaret Boyes – who has several “hats”, including Safety Officer, has written the following revue of the new book ***Beyond the Façade – Flinders Street, more than just a Railway Station*** (2009), with the central importance of the railway to Waverley residents since 1930, in mind. The author, Jenny Davies, felt passionate about recording the hundreds of stories she had heard and the history she had researched. Margaret writes:

“Flinders Street Station has the longest façade in Australia, stretching more than a city block from Swanston Street past Elizabeth Street. The current station was designed a hundred years ago with the specific intention of providing significant retail and commercial space. An additional floor was added to house the newly created Victorian Railways Institute which provided educational, social and recreational

opportunities to railway workers and their families. The Victorian Railways remained the largest single employer in the State for many decades...and was self-sufficient, encompassing activities as diverse as pie making to boiler making, from egg production to posters, and Morse code to the Man in Grey". Margaret adds that copies are available at Matilda's Books in Hamilton Place. It sounds fascinating, Margaret.

Thank you. [While this might be an appropriate moment to add that our book **Then and Now** was the most popular book sold at Matilda's in the past six months! Congratulations again to the authors, photographers and all involved!]

Did you know that Mt.Waverley had its own helpful Man in Grey - from Spencer Street Station? This was Mr. Carmichael, who retired here with his daughter Muriel. Gretchen Philip, who together with another mother, Mrs. Kloster, ran the first kindergarten in Mt. Waverley in the Progress Hall, states in a letter "The play centre had very good neighbours – Mr. Carmichael and his daughter...Both were quiet, constant supporters of the play centre".

Show and Tell

What are **you** bringing to show at the Birthday party? I'd better tell you what I'm bringing now-for I can be a little nervous about public speaking – and besides, it's a long story. As a child I grew up in Gardiner, on the flat near the oval on Clarke St. My grandmother lived with my aunt and uncle in a fine house with a balcony overlooking another large oval on the opposite side of the gum tree lined creek. [And so it is still in the Gardiner Creek valley: ovals on the flat for many kilometers.] My grandmother, widowed early, would walk down six days a week, crossing on the Burke Rd. bridge, to help my mother with her chores, often returning in

the dark. Sometimes at Christmas or other occasion when we were invited up to MacDonald St., Grandma would take me aside and show me the inside of the back linen cupboard, where her precious household belongings were stored on the top shelves, a silver tea service among them. "One day", she promised, "This will all be yours". I nodded happily (without thinking of the consequences) my eyes fixed on a little coffee cup/children's cup in purple and gold, with a pink flower.

My grandmother's family, I think, must have brought it from England when they migrated from London in a sailing ship in 1895. She was the eldest of five children: seven really, for her two younger siblings were scalded in the bath. The tragedy left her with permanent "temperament". [On our summer holidays Grandma would never cross the track to view the beach – and shrieked when, by necessity, we had to cross the bridge to Phillip Island!] The voyage in a sailing ship took a whole six months, while her mother, my great grandmother, was pregnant with the last child, born here... Yes, I did inherit all the nice things from Grandma's home in Moreland – for she'd married the foreman at work. But the thing I most treasure is the little coffee/children's cup from "home".

Judy Borg



Grandma [above right], my mother, a school girl in black hose [front], my aunt beside her.

Calendar:

For your diary: **Sunday, October 23, 2011** The annual Birthday Party will be held at **St. Philip's hall**, 2pm. Please bring an heirloom! Also, kindly, some afternoon tea.

Thursday, November 24, 2011, 7.30pm. This will be an ordinary meeting, with a **Christmas Theme**.

The rooms will be shut from December 7, but open on **Australia Day, January 26** from 10am.to 2pm.

The rooms will be open on Wednesday afternoons as usual [1pm to 5pm] or by appointment, from Wed. **February 1**. Please note that our latest publications: **Once There Was Jordanville \$30** and **Then and Now \$20** are

available for sale in the rooms on Wednesdays.

How Many Readers Have We? Philip states our Newsletter pages are accessed by computer 150 times per month!



An Apron for the Christmas Feast?

Committee Member, Diane Ward, who worked cheerfully in the kitchen for us last year at the Christmas Party at Mount Street [above right], has sent us this apron pattern that many of us will remember from the fifties! Thank you for the memory, Diane.



Gretchen Philip and the Tally Ho Boys' Home

From my earliest years I remember the name of the Tally Ho Boys' Home, for we were threatened with it when we had been especially naughty. Poor Boys!

Gretchen Philip, with Mrs. Closter, started the first kindergarten in Mt.Waverley in a shed, and then the shaky Progress Hall, built by fathers, where the Safeway front car park is now. They had been quoted 250 pounds for some play boxes [equipment] from a Glenferrie Rd. supplier! So they contacted Ron Mosman, principal of the Tally Ho Boys' Village, who said "It will be a change from dog kennels and milk bottle carriers". The boys produced a full set for 10 pounds, the cost of the materials!

Mrs. Philip said that "After some discussion we paid for two footballs for the school. Ron insisted they be formally presented, so one lovely autumn day, Glad and I went to the school, glad rags and high heels, ladies about to "do the right thing". Glad's kick was good. Mine proved for all time that football was never going to be my game"!

And a Happy Christmas to All! Ed

Dates for Diaries

Sunday, Oct. 23, 2011, 2pm: 41st Birthday Party

Thursday, Nov. 24, 2011, 8pm: Xmas Meeting

Australia Day, Thurs. Jan. 26: open 10am – 2pm

Thursday, Feb.23, 8pm: Meeting: Jenny Davies

Thursday, March 29, 8pm: Meeting

Sunday, April 15: Bus Trip [with Marie Cooper]

Waverley Historical Society Inc.

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A very Happy New Year to all our members!