

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 22, Issue 6

December 2016

General Meetings of the BHHS are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month, beginning at 8 pm in the Strabane Chapel Hall 29 Strabane Avenue, Mont Albert North

Members and friends are always welcome.
Enquiries:

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Inside this issue:

President's Report	2
Supper roster 2017	2
Forthcoming society events	3
Members' survey	3
Award to Society member	3
Recent speakers	4/5
Archivist's Update	6
Members of Committee	6
Report of a BH Cemetery tour	7

For your diary

Details of the next meeting of the Society are as follows:

Thursday, 16 February 2017

Guest Speakers: Sue Barnett and Greg Buchanan. '**Some architects of Surrey Hills**' The talk will include Theodore Hendy, Arthur Plaisted, Clive Lord and John Gawler, designers of several buildings in Surrey Hills.

Sue Barnett (Surrey Hills Historical Society) had an interest in architecture at a young age, briefly thinking of a career in that field. Her family's home in Victoria Crescent was designed after WW2 for the Gawler family. **Greg Buchanan** is a town planner whose focus is on Theodore Hendy. He became interested in Hendy's work when he found his home had been designed by him.

(For details relating to the other events confirmed to date for this year, and other forthcoming events, see page 3.)

Founded in 1963, the Box Hill Historical Society is affiliated with the

- * Royal Historical Society of Victoria
- * Association of Eastern Historical Societies

and is a

Place of Secondary Deposit for the Public Record Office of Victoria

The Society can now be found on the Web at:

www.vicnet.net.au/~bhhs/
(or use a search engine)

and you can now email us at:

boxhillhistory@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/boxhillhistoricalsociety

Christmas/New Year closure period

Members are advised that the Heritage Centre will be closed for the Christmas / New Year break, as follows:

Last day for 2016: 13 December, 11 a.m. — 3.00 p.m.

First day for 2017: 24 January, 11 a.m. — 4.00 p.m.

President's report — December 2016

The last two meetings of the Society for 2016 were reasonably well attended, with guest speakers providing talks on interesting subjects. In October we had the pleasure of Paul Balasonne from Melbourne Water, speaking about the history of Melbourne's water supply. For a detailed rendering by William Orange of Paul's talk, readers are referred to page 4 of this newsletter.

In November, Society Committee members Robyn Doble and Philip Widmer combined to present an illustrated account of the formation and development of what has come to be called the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This is a story that has international, Australian and local significance, the last because our local cemeteries—Boroondara, Box Hill and Burwood—collectively contain 164 graves of World War I casualties.

On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to wish all members a happy and safe Christmas/ New Year period.

Gary Presland

Supper Roster 2017

What is required is a mixture of sweet and non-sweet snacks (with at least one gluten free choice), 1 litre of milk – full cream or otherwise. **Tea, coffee & sugar will be provided by Committee.** To volunteer, send email to: philipnbw@gmail.com or phone or text message (preferably) to Philip @ 0403 419 522 – leave month etc. details.

Add your name to the roster. If unable to provide the supper on the night chosen it is your responsibility to arrange for someone else to do it. Any problems please contact: Philip Widmer Tele: 0403 419 522 (text message is acceptable if unable to get through by voice.) – Please note: You may contact Mrs & Mr Woolworths, Coles, Aldi, Box Hill Central Market or another food purveyor for assistance in providing supper.

DATE, 3RD THURS 8.00 pm	NAME - INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP	CONTACT DETAILS
February 16	Philip Widmer	
March 16	John Barnao	
April 20	Grace Swiney	
May 18		
June 15		
July 20		
August 17		
September 21		
October 19	Tony Bryer	
November 16	BHHS Committee	

Suggestions?

The Committee welcomes suggestions from members for events to be held by the Box Hill Historical Society.

If you have any ideas for topics for talks or speakers, tours, or exhibition topics, please contact a member of the Committee.

Contributions?

A newsletter like this one functions best and is of most use and interest to members when it contains a wide range of pertinent information for its readers. To assist this exercise, the Editor is always looking for contributions about the Society, from our own members. If you have something you would like to include in an issue of the Newsletter—a photograph, some information you'd like to share—don't be shy; contact the Editor.

Mission Statement

The Box Hill Historical Society seeks to collect, preserve, facilitate access, research and communicate items that reflect life in and the development of Box Hill and district.

Geographical area of interest

The Collection is relevant to the suburbs of Box Hill, Box Hill North, Box Hill South, Mont Albert, Mont Albert North, Bennettswood and the parts of Burwood and Surrey Hills, which fall within the City of Whitehorse.

Forthcoming Society events

Thursday, 16 March:

Guest Speaker: Carolyn Landon — ‘**Celia Rosser – banksia artist**’

Carolyn Landon is an oral historian with a Masters degree in biography and life writing. She has written several award-winning biographies. Her talk will be based on her recent book *Banksia Lady: Celia Rosser, Botanical Artist* which tells the story of this acclaimed botanical illustrator who, over a period of twenty-five years, painted every species of Banksia. Examples of Celia's work are held in the City of Whitehorse Art Collection.

Also coming up in 2017:

Thursday, 20 April: Guest speaker Grace Swiney – ‘Life in England during WW2’

Thursday, 18 May: Guest speaker Alan Ritter – ‘Mont Albert Primary School, 100 Years’

Members' survey

Included with this Newsletter is a brief survey form. Individual members are invited to complete the form, which is aimed at gauging the level of interest among members in a number of ideas being discussed by Committee. Completion of the form will assist in the forward planning of events in 2017. One proposed event is a visit to the Footscray Historical Society, which would include a tour of their premises and of the Footscray Town Hall. This visit could be reciprocated at a later date. Such exchanges, with other historical societies, may be a possibility — if this is something that members would enjoy.

Your responses and comments are welcomed.

Award to Society member

Well-known Society member, Tom Thorpe OAM, was honoured recently in the 2016 Victorian Senior of the Year awards. Tom was presented with a Council of the Ageing Senior Achiever Award for his numerous and longstanding achievements with many local groups. He has twice served as president of the Rotary Club of Box Hill, is a passionate member of the Wattle Park Heritage; a Meals on Wheels volunteer; and an active member of the Burwood Uniting Church. He currently chairs not-for-profit organisation Inner Eastern Group Training and the Australian Overseas Foundation. He also served for 19 years on Box Hill Council.

The Society offers its hearty congratulations to Tom.

This information was derived from *The Senior News*, November 2016. (Ed.)

Electronic copy of the Newsletter

Members are reminded that this Newsletter can be received in digital form, as an attachment to an email. When received in this way rather than through surface mail, the Society benefits by reducing the cost of both producing and posting the Newsletter. In addition, less paper will be used, which of course is good for the environment.

If you are interested in having your Newsletter mailed electronically, please send an email to that effect, addressed to the Editor at presland.gary@gmail.com.

Alternatively you can email the Society at boxhillhistory@gmail.com

Recent Speakers

Paul Balassone, heritage officer for Melbourne Water, spoke to the **October General Meeting** about the **History of Melbourne's Water Supply and the Surrey Hills Water Tower**, interspersed with some photographic images and film segments from the MMBW archives. Part of his role also includes responding to the reawakening of recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The Yan Yean water supply system was established soon after the European settlement of Melbourne while Surrey Hills Water Tower stands as a testament to the prescience of Melbourne's forefathers. Melbourne Water assumed the role of supplying water for Melbourne in 1992, and is also responsible for managing water catchments, dams, water and sewage treatment and drainage through some 8,500 km. of water ways. In 1995 three regional water authorities were established to supply water to and manage sewage collection from households and businesses.

Melbourne City Council started supplying water in 1847 and later took responsibility for sewage treatment. The Board of Works (modelled on the London Board of Works) was formed in 1891 from an earlier organisation to take on these roles for a growing metropolis following a typhoid epidemic. The earliest water storage in the system is Yan Yean (1857), with the Preston Reservoir built in 1864 to relieve pressure on the pipes – there is a 600' fall from Yan Yean to the CBD. Aqueducts were constructed in 1874/75 to South Morang to replace the pipes and increase supply capacity for a rapidly expanding population. The success of principles established for the Yan Yean System, with water distribution premised on gravity, led to similar approaches for other areas.

The first water tower in the CBD was the Eastern Hill Tank (1854) which helped raise water pressure for fire fighting and improved water quality with one of its four cast iron compartments comprising of a charcoal water filter: it was later moved to Werribee.

During the late 19th Century the water supply area expanded and a number of service reservoirs were built at high points to balance supply and regulate pressure. Amongst these was Surrey Hills No. 1 (1891) (north of Canterbury Road), with a capacity of 9 million gallons, built at a cost of £12 000 and supplied through a 32" main from Yan Yean. In 1914 Surrey Hills was connected to the O'Shannassy System. The Maroondah System began with a weir on the Watts River at Fernshaw (1891) and later Maroondah Dam (c. 1927). Surrey Hills No.2 (15 million gallons) was built in 1913 and the tower (elevated tank) in 1928/29 by the MMBW at a contract price of £15,840. The No. 2 reservoir is managed by Melbourne Water while the now decommissioned tower is managed by Yarra Valley Water with a sub-lease to Telstra for the communications antennae. Over time the water supply system has expanded with a pipeline soon to be laid to Geelong. The Board of Works also developed State Parks and Reserves.

Melbourne Water embraces heritage, noting the functional beauty of structures like the Surrey Hills Water Tower (HO34 1999) and the outlet tower at Maroondah Dam. The Mitcham Tower is more utilitarian in style. There has also been some adaptive re-use of earlier structures. The trees surrounding the reservoirs are functional, providing both a wind break and a dust filter, although most of the 38 service reservoirs were roofed during the 1980's. The talk concluded with some film showing the construction of Maroondah Dam and the aerial ropeway used to carry construction materials from the Healesville Railway Station to the dam.

William R Orange

At the November General Meeting Robyn Doble and Philip Widmer spoke on **'The foundation of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission during World War I'.**

The custom of providing the individual casualties of war with a proper burial and commemoration is a relatively recent one. In 1914 there were no procedures in place to deal with the Empire's inevitable casualties. It fell to one man, a volunteer Red Cross worker named Fabian Ware, to rectify the situation. His vision and determination led to the foundation of the Imperial War Graves Commission. At the outbreak of war he was 45 and too old to fight, but

Recent Speakers (cont.)

became the commander of a mobile ambulance unit of the British Red Cross, consisting of privately owned cars sent out to look for wounded and escaped prisoners. Ware's group began to collect evidence of British dead – who they were, and where they were buried. Appalled by the sheer number of dead and the lack of planning for their burial, Ware was driven to find a way to ensure the final resting places of the dead would not be lost forever. His vision was in mood with the times and by 1915 the work of his unit was given official recognition by the War Office and given the title Graves Registration Commission.

At that time less than 5000 graves had been marked, but with military support now available and better access, 27,000 more were registered between May and October 1915. In February 1916 the unit became the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, and Ware was promoted to Lt Colonel. The vast number killed on the Somme that year presented a new problem – the more difficult identification of many bodies which had been blown to pieces by continuous artillery fire.

As the war continued and casualties mounted, it was realised that a British-only response would not be adequate. In May 1917 the Imperial War Graves Commission was established under Royal Charter with the Prince of Wales as President and Ware as Vice President. He was knighted in 1920 and continued his work for the Commission until 1948, the year before his death.

The Commission was to care for all graves of members of the Imperial forces who died from wounds inflicted, accidents occurring, or disease contracted while on active service up to 31 August 1921. It was empowered to acquire land for cemeteries and memorials and to provide for burials and records. It also had the right to permit or prohibit the erection of permanent memorials by any other person.

In an unusually democratic move for the time, the Commission insisted that officers and men should be treated exactly the same, and that there be no demarcation based on where soldiers had come from. All creeds and religions, as well as colonial soldiers, were to be treated the same. The principal was that they all gave the ultimate sacrifice and thus should all be honoured equally.

Famous writer Rudyard Kipling was chosen to advise on inscriptions. The words he chose for inscriptions have a special meaning as his only son John was killed in France in September 1915. A tall, finely proportioned stone cross was designed by eminent architect Reginald Blomfield. This became known as the Cross of Sacrifice and was installed in any cemetery containing more than 50 graves. There are a number of these crosses in Australia including at Springvale War Cemetery.

Later, individual countries erected memorials to their own country's casualties, e.g. the Canadians at Vimy Ridge; the South Africans at Delville Wood, and of course the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux. This memorial lists 11,000 names of Australians with no known grave in France and Belgium.

Soon after war's end pilgrimages began and the Commission began a close relationship with the British Legion and travel agent, Thomas Cook, which organised trips to the battlefields and cemeteries.

In 2009 the discovery of 250 missing Australian and British soldiers from the Battle of Fromelles in a mass grave led to the construction of an entirely new cemetery. The bodies were carefully exhumed and 144 of the 250 remains were identified through DNA analysis.

The Commission maintains graves and memorials at some 23,000 locations in over 150 countries worldwide including 914 locations in Australia. There is no World War I cemetery in Australia as most of our troops died overseas. Those who died in Australia lie singly or in small groups in public cemeteries. Commonwealth war graves can be found at 173 locations in Victoria. Locally, there are 66 graves at Box Hill, 54 at Burwood and 44 at Boroondara.



The Cross of Sacrifice at Springvale Cemetery

Gary Presland

Archivist's Update

It's fantastic to see Jennifer Elder sitting at the front desk in our rooms again. We have missed her, although Janet Galley has done a wonderful job of filling in nearly every Tuesday on the front desk.

The Box Hill Bowling Club is a donation which continues to give! Since the initial donation of framed photographs, which had been taken from the walls, we have received many more framed photographs, all shapes and sizes, but mostly large. As well, we have received several boxes of minute books from the Ladies Bowling Club, which cover most of its history. For the first time in these rooms we are scratching our heads as to a suitable space to store the framed items, given their size and number.

As another year approaches its end and our annual closedown, I would like to acknowledge all of the Tuesday volunteers who continue to give their time and skills working on the Society's collection. Thank you to Colin Barraclough, Beth Davis, Peter Galley, Rohan Gibbs, Vicki Goodall, Barbara Lovell, Gill Madden, Kathleen Newman, Graeme Reynolds, Brian Shields, Grace Swiney and Lorraine Taylor.

All the best for Christmas and 2017.

Robyn Doble

Hon. Archivist

Members of Committee

This is the first in a series of brief biographical pieces that we hope will be of some interest members. From time to time the Newsletter will offer short autobiographical articles about Committee members. We begin with Judith Eadon.

I grew up on the corner of Springfield Road and Kerrimuir Street Box Hill North in the '50s to the echo of floor boards being nailed together, due to the post war housing boom. The eldest of four children, I attended Blackburn North Primary School for a year until Kerrimuir Primary School was built. My parents, Peg and Frank, were pillars of the school community, being office bearers on the school committee and mothers' club for many years. Mum became the school secretary at Kerrimuir and worked until the early '90s.

I went to Blackburn High for secondary school and then on to Burwood Teachers' College for a three year Diploma of Teaching – Primary. My first school, as was usual in the '70s, was in the Northern suburbs at Oak Park. Transferring across to Verdale, I spent 14 happy years teaching mostly Preps. Templeton, Heathmont and Wonga Park followed, and I was lucky to be a foundation staff member of Great Ryrie Primary School, where I finished full time work a few years ago. I am presently a regular relief teacher there.

Following the family tradition, my community involvement began with Brownies and Guides, progressed to Rotaract, Jaycees and now the Rotary Club of Nunawading where I am on the Board. I am on the committee of the Whitehorse Farmers' Market Committee and enjoy working at the Market each month. I am also the Youth Chair of the Rotary District looking after all the Youth Programs that Rotary run locally.

I am interested in the history of Box Hill as my mum lived in Middleborough Road from the age of 3 months. After attending Box Hill Primary School and Box Hill Girls' Technical School she worked in the office of the Box Hill Town Hall until she was co-opted to receipt the donations for the Box Hill Hospital Appeal in the office of solicitor John Fulton. Mum was the hospital's first employee and worked for the hospital until the early '50s.

Dad, originally from Wodonga, worked for the Box Hill Electric Supply for 35 years, retiring in 1988. They both were very involved in the Box Hill Community—PROBUS, St Peters Anglican Church, schools, Guiding, Elderly Citizens, Meals on Wheels, Box Hill Historical Society, to name a few.

Having a family history of such involvement in Box Hill, the city is dear to my heart!

Judith Eadon

Committee member

Report of a Box Hill Cemetery tour

I conducted a tour of Box Hill Cemetery on 29 November, for Tunstall PROBUS. The weather was ideal, sunny, warm and fine, in contrast to the unsettled weather recently. Sixteen people were sitting waiting patiently on the low wall and kerbing beside the office in the middle of the cemetery. The tour guide had to commence by apologising profusely for his lateness in arrival for the tour, which was booked for 10am; Philip arrived as quickly as he could after 11am. It was entirely his fault as he had not confirmed with the PROBUS organiser a few days earlier that the tour was going ahead.

We started off by looking at the overall map of the cemetery which shows the historical denominational layout. From this the visitor can gain a sense of the burial pattern. There are large CE (Church of England, Anglican), Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Roman Catholic sections with only one very small Lutheran area on the south-western side. The first gravesite visited was that of Jessie Lavinia Smith who died as a three-week-old infant in 1873. Jessie was the first person buried in Box Hill cemetery. It is a child-sized plot and her gravesite was unmarked until funds were made available with a Bicentennial grant in 1988, to erect a headstone and plaque. We then moved along North Drive and noted the large plots on the north side of this Drive. The size implies that people and families buried here had access to more money to be able to build larger memorials.

We moved on to the memorial of Ferdinand Gustav Kiessling. He was a Surrey Hills resident during World War 1 who enlisted in the Australian army. Kiessling was an Australian but his grandfather had come from Germany long ago. Because the British Imperial forces, including Australia, were fighting Germany, Ferdinand had to get testimony from the local policeman and others to prove that he was a loyal subject, before his application to enlist would be accepted. This happened in WW1 to many Australians with Austro-Germanic backgrounds.

Moving westward along North Drive other memorials include the Ellingworth family whose son Ralph Oswald was killed by an enemy shell in France in the winter of January 1918. Our next stop was at the grave of John Michael Higgins — chemist, metallurgist and organiser of the sale of the Australian wool clip during and after WW1. Higgins rose from humble beginnings on the Castlemaine and Bendigo goldfields, and was later knighted for his services to Australia's metal and wool industries. Further along is the nine-year-old daughter of the retailer GJ and Greta Coles. Then Harold Crofton (HC) Sleigh, the founder of Golden Fleece petrol stations in Australia, and many other business interests. Curiously, he was, himself, unable to drive, as he had lost a leg due to injury. Also in this row is Sir George Tallis who was associated with the theatrical company J C Williamson's for over 50 years, and Hoyts—Regent cinemas and the beginning of radio broadcasting with 3AR and 3LO in 1924, which later became the ABC radio stations Radio National 621 and Melbourne 774.

Towards the top of North Drive the Sidney and Merlyn Myer Memorial with its lawn, garden and trellis setting designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, looked delightful on this sunny day. Around the corner is the memorial stone laid 101 years after her death of Constance, "Connie" E R Dickens formerly Desailly who married Edward B L "Plorn" Dickens the youngest son of the famous writer Charles Dickens. And not far away is the striking white stone memorial of John Grainger, architect, who designed the new Princes Bridge in Melbourne and Nellie Melba's Coombe Cottage at Coldstream. The composer Percy Grainger was his son. We finished the tour at 12.30. The participants were appreciative despite the tour guide's late arrival, and while waiting had found gravesites in the pioneers' section themselves, including that of Schwerkolt, the founder of the farm and cottage in Nunawading.



Memorial of Harold Crofton 'HC' Sleigh, North Drive BH Cemetery

Philip Widmer
Tour Coordinator

Box Hill Historical Society Inc.

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Hours: 11–4, Tuesdays; otherwise, by appointment

President: Dr Gary Presland

Vice-President: William Orange

Secretary: Helen Harris OAM

Treasurer: John Barnao

**Committee: Dr Colin Barraclough, Robyn Doble,
Judith Eadon, Philip Widmer**



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**Box Hill Historical
Society
Newsletter**



Box Hill Historical Society Inc.

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CITY OF



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Box Hill Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the City of Whitehorse for its support with grants, discounts on hall hire, concessional use of premises in the Box Hill Town Hall and its willing assistance with our exhibitions in the Box Hill Town Hall Art Space.