

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 22, Issue 3

June 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:

03 9285 4808

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For your diary

The year progresses well, with a round of interesting and informative speakers at our monthly meetings and an occasional cemetery tour. We are pleased to offer more of the same, in the next couple of months. Our syllabus organiser continues to devise a varied programme of speakers on subjects of relevance to our area. Details of the next meeting of the Society are as follows:

Thursday, 16 June: General Meeting: Guest Speaker – **Robyn Calder**

'Women's Cricket in Victoria – the Victorian Women's Cricket Association' A former State cricketer, now secretary and life member of Box Hill Cricket Club, Robyn is researching the history of the Victorian Women's Cricket Association, established in 1905, and now integrated with Cricket Victoria.

(For details relating to the other events confirmed to date for next 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

President's report — June 2016

The society has been treated to two excellent speakers at the April and May general meetings.

When the Burwood History Group closed in mid 2013 and their valuable archive collection was transferred to our society for safe keeping, the Committee agreed that if possible at least one general meeting each year have a guest speaker to address the history of Burwood.

Our April meeting was fortunate to have Dorothy Thorpe speak of her reminiscences of Burwood where she, husband Tom and family have lived for many years.

The May meeting was addressed by Sandy Nicholson, historian and teacher at Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill. Sandy gave a wonderful presentation on the history of this local educational facility.

The society's 52nd Annual General Meeting will be held on 18 August 2016 and a nomination form is enclosed with this newsletter; also enclosed is a form for renewal of annual subscription.

Peter and I have been travelling interstate—spectacular scenery, views and memories. We saw a number of properties, including Hume Cottage at Yass, the Everglades at Katoomba, Buda Historic Home and Garden at Castlemaine and the Mary McKillop Centre in Penola.

Janet Galley OAM
President

2016 Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 52nd Annual General Meeting of the Box Hill Historical Society Inc. will be held on **Thursday 18 August 2016**, beginning at 8 p.m., in the Strabane Avenue Hall, Mont Albert North.

Business will include –

- Acceptance of Minutes of 2015 AGM;
- Annual Reports 2016;
- Financial Statement;
- Election of Office Bearers, committee members, and the Audit Committee;
- Any other business of which written notice has been received.

A nomination form for office bearers and committee is enclosed with this newsletter.

Please give consideration to nominating for the committee of the society.

Gary Presland
Hon. Secretary/Public Officer

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

Meetings:

Thursday, 21 July: 'History between the covers'. Members are invited to bring their favourite history book—about people, places or events—to the meeting and tell the audience what they think is special about it.

Thursday, 18 August: Annual General Meeting: see details elsewhere in this newsletter

Thursday, 15 September: Guest Speaker: Graham O'Rourke
'George Coppin – founder of Australian Theatre'

City of Whitehorse events

2016 HERITAGE WEEK, Thursday 8 – Thursday 15 September

The theme of Heritage Week this year is 'Celebrating the Arts'. During the week our society will conduct a Box Hill Cemetery Tour, a Walk along the Artists' Trail in Box Hill South and our regular general meeting.

2016 Spring Festival: Sunday 16 October.
(Details to be provided soon.)

Association of Eastern Historical Societies

The April Meeting of AEHS was hosted by Eltham Historical Society in the Old Court House, Eltham. There were approximately 25 persons present, from historical societies at Box Hill, Eltham, Knox, Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Queenstown/St. Andrews, Ringwood, Upper Yarra Ranges, Warrandyte, Waverley, Whitehorse and Wonga Park. Janet Galley OAM and Peter Galley attended for our society.

General business included support for continued funding of Trove, the National Library of Australia's online information portal, with a letter to be written to the relevant federal government minister.

The guest speakers were two Eltham society members who, with the aid of PowerPoint presented 'Early Eltham Pioneers'. These included William Barak, Joseph Tice Gellibrand, Thomas Sweeney, Josiah Morris Holloway, Henry Stooke, Stuart Alexander Donaldson, Charles Symons Wingrove, Henry Dendy, George Stebbing and Andrew Ross. It appeared there were no early women pioneers known.

This meeting was the shortest AEHS meeting your President has ever attended in her time as a representative for our society. It was only 2 hours in duration, including afternoon tea.

The next AEHS meeting is at Ringwood on 25 June.

Janet Galley OAM
President

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, to the Editor at
presland.gary@gmail.com.

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

New member

The President and Committee is pleased to welcome **Lorraine Taylor** as a member of the Society, and hope that the connection will be a long and mutually beneficial one.

Congratulations

to society member Cr Helen Harris OAM on being awarded Life Membership of the Australian Local

Vale

The Society notes with sadness the passing of Sue Slonek. Sue was also an active member of Surrey Hills HS, and a regular volunteer and Hon Secretary of that society.

Recent Speakers

Dorothy Thorpe, a long time resident of Burwood, spoke to the **April meeting** on the topic **Reminiscences of Burwood and Box Hill**. Tom and Dorothy Thorpe moved into their new home in Elgar Road with their eight-month-old son on a cold wet and muddy day in July 1953. They had limited furniture, a bed, cot, table, two chairs and a kerosene heater for warmth. Elgar Road was a narrow bitumen strip. There were neighbours on each side and another house nearer Gardiner's Creek that had to use their drive to get to Elgar Road. Her grandparents' house in Huntingdale Road was visible from the laundry window: her grandfather would supply them with fresh vegetables. There were small farms around, including flower farms and the occasional wandering cow. Frogs could be heard from the creek and the dogs at the RSPCA at feeding time.

Burwood Road was a narrow unmarked road with a wooden bridge over the creek. Tom had been interested in the corner block, but the agent discouraged them because of the likelihood of future busy-ness. St. Michael's Anglican Church was built on the corner in 1954 (later moved to Station Street) to be followed by a service station, boat yard, Red Rooster and now Hungry Jacks. Across Elgar Road were the residence *Hethersett* and a row of pine trees. PLC purchased the property in 1939 when the Junior School moved in from East Melbourne, but it wasn't until 1958 that the Senior School and Boarding House followed.

The footpaths were rough, bumpy and at times muddy, although her son Tim in the big pram enjoyed the bumps, and it was a long walk to the Infant Welfare Centre in Riversdale Road. A smaller pram was needed for the bus: a nice bus driver would set her down at the gate. There was no sewer, but the grocer, greengrocer, milkman, baker and Watkins' man called and delivered. Gardiner's Creek would occasionally flood but their house was well above the flood level. When Elgar Road flooded in the dip Tom would venture out (in shorts to keep other clothing clean and dry) to clear the blocked drain.

During the fifties, sixties and seventies the State Reception Centre *Allambie* operated further north along Elgar Road. One cold wintry morning a bedraggled girl arrived on the doorstep: she had run away from *Allambie* after a court appearance. She was dried off and fed, and at her insistence an uncle contacted. In the meantime the police were scouring the area looking for her: when the matron of *Allambie* was contacted she was quite critical. The family were grateful, and later brought Dorothy flowers. Tom as a JP would be called out on occasion to sign release papers for *Allambie*. Their church group would often assist at the Orana Methodist Homes fete opposite and a little further along Elgar Road.

New houses were gradually built, but it remained a quiet neighbourhood and without a lot of traffic it was a 'Sleepy Hollow'. Their children went to Burwood Primary School (1865–1989). In 1965 the school marked its centenary, and as Tom was School Council secretary, they were given the (then) daunting task of escorting special guests Stan and Marie Dewar, the Mayor and Mayoress of Box Hill.

The Wattle Park shops were well appointed and served most needs, and they enjoyed Wattle Park itself. Initially they attended the historic Methodist Church on the corner of Ireland Street, and she and their children enjoyed playing on its tennis courts. It is now a retirement village. When that church closed in 1972 they moved to the Methodist in Warrigal Road, then after church union across the road to the former Presbyterian Church. Tom as mayor opened the former Methodist Church as a funeral parlour in 1989.

In March 1954 the Burwood Drive-In Theatre opened, and Tom and Dorothy were invited to attend – in a borrowed car. There were spaces for 743 cars, and traffic jams. They also attended the closing show in June 1983, this time in their own car. It was some distance to walk to the tram so the extension along Burwood Road was appreciated, and with Tom as ward councillor they were able ride on the first official tram on the extended line.

After primary school the children went on to Burwood High School so Tom and Dorothy were involved and busy with both schools for several years. Two of their children went on to attend Burwood Teachers' College so they didn't move far. Burwood High School closed in 1987 to make way for the expansion of the State College of Victoria, now Deakin University – Burwood. A pony club operated near Kilsyth Avenue along Gardiner's Creek: the two brick gate pillars are still there. Dorothy remembers attending a pony club function and judging the fancy dress, while Tom won a ribbon for riding the biggest horse.

Many friends have moved on or are no longer with us, but they plan to stay in their home. The present neighbours are pleasant and caring, while others are not so visible. Some memories are hazy, but she enjoyed recalling them.

Recent Speakers (cont.)

Sandy Nicholson, school archivist and librarian gave an illustrated talk to the **May general meeting** about the history of **Our Lady of Sion College for Girls** established by the sisters of the Order of Our Lady of Sion in Box Hill in 1928. The speaker's two daughters and two sisters-in-law attended the school where she has worked for the past 18 years.

The Order was established in France by Theodore Ratisbone, a Catholic convert of Jewish background. While visiting Paris in 1889 Bishop James Corbett, the Catholic bishop of Sale Gippsland, approached Sister Paul, a member of the Order about coming to teach in Sale. Initially she declined, but in 1890 Mother Mary Raphaela, accompanied by seven (religious) sisters travelled from Paris to Melbourne on the steamer *Ormuz*. Between 1890 and 1905 the sisters established schools in Bairnsdale, Sale and Warragul. Land was purchased in Sale in 1891 and by 1893 a three storey brick building to house the school had been erected to Sr Raphaela's specifications and design. (She had learnt her design and drafting skills through working with her architect father.) In 1977 St. Patrick's College and Our Lady of Sion College Sale amalgamated and the original 1893 building became the location for Years 7 and 8.

During 1928 4½ acres of land on the corner of White Horse and Doncaster (now Dorking) Road, including the former private hospital *Mt Ida*, was purchased by the Order for the price of £15,000. The former hospital became the convent for the teaching sisters and the stables were converted into classrooms for an initial enrolment in 1928 of 15 pupils at the *Notre Dame de Sion* school. There were both day pupils and boarders at primary and secondary levels, and the Parish primary school catered for both boys and girls. The Sisters insisted on silence in class, and conversation at school in French. Coloured badges (a sash) were awarded each month for good progress. Slow growth in enrolments was experienced during the depression years but in 1936 a brick addition to the west of the convent was built (still in use), and there were 20 boarders and 50 day pupils. The boarders ate meals in silence in the refectory while a Sister read aloud from a religious work: they attended daily mass, were housed in dormitories and involved in sport. The school was supported by donations of food and on one occasion the gift of a cow. The boarding house closed in 1959. The original uniform was black, to be replaced in 1964 by the cherry red uniform and the current uniform in 2004. Gloves were a compulsory part of the uniform up until the 1970s and a hat continues as a formal component. Summer uniforms were not introduced until 1954 and sports uniforms much later. An extension to the east of the 1936 building was built in 1949 and in 1951 the Chapter of the Order resolved to use the English name of their order 'Our Lady of Sion'. During the 1950s the school houses that had had Latin names were renamed Fatima, Lourdes, Carmel and Loreto after shrines associated with 'Our Lady'.

Sr Patricia Watson was appointed principal in 1963 and introduced some innovations in the curriculum. School prefects were appointed in part to exercise a disciplinary role including monitoring uniform: students at the time were also not supposed to eat in public while travelling to and from school.

Various building projects have taken place from 1980 onwards including a new art wing in 1980, an assembly hall with a stage and retractable seating during the 1990s and the *Louise Humann Centre* (named for Theodore Ratisbone's spiritual adviser and guide who introduced him to Catholicism) in 2003. Assemblies had been held outdoors because of inadequate indoor spaces. The current library dates from 1983 and replaces the original library established in 1963. By 1985 the cypress hedge had been removed. Even with the hedge, some residents in earlier years would cross to the other side of the road rather than walk directly past the convent. The *Emmanuelle Learning Centre* (named for Sr. Emmanuelle, a French educator in the Order who worked in Egypt for many years) was completed in 2010, the *Miriam Performing Arts Centre* with seating for 350 in 2015 and 'Dot's Café' and a Piazza this year. (The school did not have a canteen until the 1960s.) The *Notre Dame Centre* for Years 11 and 12 is currently under construction.

In 1998 the 70th anniversary of the school was celebrated and saw the attendance of original students Pat, Dorothy and Margaret Adams, while the 75th anniversary in 2003 had the launch of the Sion Rose and a celebratory pink cake. The seven sisters of the order awarded the medal 'Righteous among the Nations' have been honoured with markers along the Dorking Road frontage and a sculpture commissioned for the Miriam Centre was unveiled on the day of the talk, 19 May 2016. A former student, Debra Wardley (née Laurie) has had some recent publicity recalling her success in achieving the right to fly commercial passenger aeroplanes for Ansett in 1981, against the significant resistance of Reg Ansett. 2016 began with a new principal at Our Lady of Sion, Tina Apostolopoulos, and an enrolment of 930 students.

William R Orange

Archivist's update

Thank you to those members who spoke to me about the 'retired gentlemen's home' in Middleborough Road, in response to my query in the last newsletter. We have agreement that it was a forerunner of the Salvation Army's Inala village.

The requests for information continue to arrive via email and through the Local History Room door on Tuesdays. Thanks to Kathleen Newman, who always rises to a research challenge, for tracking down a 'nursery in Station Street, owned by Mr McNamara' —no time frame given! Research revealed it was the Azalea Place Nursery, located near the corner of Market and Main Streets from around 1965 to 1973. Mr McNamara hit the headlines several times in 1968, including interrupting the Moomba parade, to protest over tree removal near the Shrine. Around 1974, the Azalea Place Nursery moved to 673 Canterbury Road where the Acorn Nursery is now located.

A massive thank you to Tuesday digitising expert Brian Shields who gathered together every image we have of the brickworks (hundreds) and digitised them. Barbara Lovell assisted by cataloguing those images not yet catalogued (lots). Brian then prepared a brickworks history time line and compiled a bound document with the history and a copy of every image arranged chronologically including, of course, its catalogue number.

Changes continue unabated in Box Hill. We have taken some photographs but would like to continue to document the major changes that are occurring. If any member feels like getting their camera out and taking a stroll round Box Hill, any images donated to us would be received with appreciation. Alternatively, we have our own easy-to-use digital camera in the rooms and if any member has time on a Tuesday to come in and collect it and wander round central Box Hill for an hour or two, that would be much appreciated too.

A warm welcome to new member and Tuesday team volunteer Lorraine Taylor.

Robyn Doble
Hon. Archivist

Enquiry

There is an old church pew currently being stored in the Box Hill Library. The Library CEO, Sally Both, would like to determine the origins of this pew, as it needs to be relocated, due to space constraints and current library user needs. The Library needs to find a suitable new home for the pew.

The only information Sally has about the pew is unconfirmed suggestion that it might have come from St Andrews Church in the sixties, and that there were two pews in the old library and this one was brought over when the current library was built in 1973.

Is any member able to assist Sally? If so, she can be contacted on 9896 4310 or by email on Sally.Both@wml.vic.gov.au

Of interest

The RHSV Newsletter for February 2016 lists the 10 best sellers at RHSV Bookshop. Third on the list is *Poor souls, they perished – The Cataraqui, Australia's Worst Shipwreck*, by Andrew Lemon and our own Marjorie Morgan OAM.

Marjorie also has been a participant recently in the forthcoming TV series 'Coast Australia' which is to be shown on ABC TV in 2017. The filming was done on King Island where the wreck of the *Cataraqui* occurred in 1845.

From papers of the past

NEW POLICE STATION

A recommendation from the public works committee that the council press for the erection of a new police station at Box Hill was adopted last night by the Box Hill Council. It was decided to point out to the Chief Secretary (Mr Bailey) that Box Hill residents as taxpayers contributed directly to Government revenue, and should not be required to make any further contribution through the council. At a previous meeting the council received a letter from the Chief Secretary asking what amount it was prepared to contribute towards the cost of a new police station.

The Argus 2 August 1938.

... — — ...

Mrs Weber, MLA, informed the Box Hill Council at its last meeting that the Public Works Dept. would shortly repair and renovate the Box Hill police station. The department said that it appeared from correspondence that the Council was not prepared to contribute towards the cost of a new police station which the Council had suggested should be built.

The town clerk (Mr. Cole) said that he understood that two additional rooms and a small lobby would be built in brick.

The Argus 31 August 1938

... — — ...

Examining a gun. Young man shot.

A shooting accident which resulted in the death of William Henry Harper, a labourer, 24 years of age, occurred at Box Hill on Thursday evening. Harper, who was employed by Mr J. Fithie, Springfield Road Box Hill, was in his employer's fruit house, in company with two other men, Thomas Simpson and John Meredith. Simpson took an old muzzle-loading gun from the wall, and, after examining it, raised the hammer, but was unable to let it down again. As he was replacing the gun the hammer unexpectedly fell, and the charge exploded, striking Harper, who was in another part of the shed, in the face. Death was practically instantaneous. The body was removed to the morgue, where an inquest will be held. The Box Hill police have been unable to trace Harper's antecedents, but it is believed that he has a sister in domestic service at Hawksburn. Papers found in his possession state that Harper was born in India and that on March 1, 1911, he joined the first battalion of the 5th Australian Infantry Regiment.

The Argus 16 December 1911

[The Editor thanks Helen Harris OAM for these items]

Box Hill Historical Society Inc.

No. A15258V

ABN 613 34916140

Heritage Centre - 03 9285 4808
Suite 7, 27 Bank Street, Box Hill.
(Town Hall Hub, rear Box Hill Town Hall)
Hours: 11-4, Tuesdays; otherwise, by appointment

President: Janet Galley OAM
Vice-President: William Orange
Secretary: Dr Gary Presland
Treasurer: John Barnao
Committee: Dr Colin Barraclough, Robyn Doble,
Gill Madden, Philip Widmer



Phone: 03 9890 9288

**Box Hill Historical
Society
Newsletter**



Box Hill Historical Society Inc.
PO Box 268 Box Hill 3128

CITY OF



WHITEHORSE

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.