

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 22, Issue 5

October 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

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

Thursday, 20 October: Guest Speaker: Paul Balassone '**Melbourne's Water Supply and the Surrey Hills Water Tower**'

Paul Balassone is Heritage Services Coordinator with Melbourne Water. His talk will include reference to the water tower in Surrey Hills, in the context of the historical development of Melbourne's water supply system.

(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

President's report — October 2016

As I was elected as president only a few weeks ago, I have little to offer, in this my first report. Little, that is, other than to propose a sincere vote of thanks to my predecessor, Janet Galley OAM.

As some readers would know, when she took on the role of president of this society, Janet was relatively new to the ways in which historical societies operate. It is to her great credit—and the benefit of this Society—that she continued in that role, providing stable leadership over a period of 13 years. The Committee thanks her sincerely for this dedication to the cause.

Perhaps a little information about the new president would not be out of place at this time. My interest in history goes back to my childhood, although it took quite a few years to develop as an influence in my life. After leaving school, I spent ten years working in a variety of situations, mostly in sea-going environments. (Students today often have a gap year; I took a gap decade!) In my mid-20s I studied history at La Trobe University and then undertook an MA in archaeology at London University. For 20 years between 1980 and 2000 I worked in the Victorian Public Service in various positions related to historical/heritage/archival matters.

I am a relative newcomer to Box Hill, moving to the area in 1993, when Helen and I bought a house here. Even so, because I had a transient childhood and ran away to sea at 16, my time in Box Hill is, by a great margin, the longest I have lived in one place in my life.

You may think that I am an historical society junkie, when I say that I belong to four such groups. In addition to my membership of this society, I am a Fellow of the RHSV and a member of both the Footscray and Police Historical Societies.

Through this long exposure to historical societies I have become familiar with the two major problems commonly faced by such community groups. The first of these is that membership tends to be in the older demographic. This is probably not surprising, because in the main it is as we get older that we develop more interest in history; retired people also have more time to indulge these interests. This skewed membership is not good, however, because in order to survive any group needs to recruit new members from as wide an age range as possible.

The second problem lies in attracting members to serve on the committee. Many members want simply to attend the society's monthly meetings and to receive and read the newsletter. But neither of these things would happen were it not for the efforts of members who have volunteered to do the necessary work. Unfortunately, too few members are willing to take a role in helping the society operate.

I don't have any special insights into how these matters might be solved. But I do think that they should be discussed both at committee level, and amongst members, in order to help this society prosper in the long term.

Gary Presland
President

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, 17 November: Guest Speakers: Robyn Doble and Philip Widmer **'Known Unto God'**

Robyn Doble, the Society's Archivist, and Philip Widmer, the Cemetery Tour Coordinator, will speak about the foundation and work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission during WW1.

Thursday, 16 February, 2017: Guest Speakers: Sue Barnett & Greg Buchanan - Architects of Surrey Hills

Other Societies

Surrey Hills History Group - Tuesday, 18 October 8 p.m.: Ken James: Surrey Hills' non-government schools.

A.I.G.S. Blackburn - Thursday, 27 October 7.30 p.m.: Robert Nash: The Huguenots: an almost forgotten people.

Whitehorse (Mitcham) - Saturday, 10 December 1.00 p.m.: Bob Gardiner: Olympic Experiences.

City of Whitehorse events

2016 Spring Festival: Sunday 16 October. Nunawading Centre
The Society will have an Information and Bookstall at this annual Whitehorse Council event.

A volunteer roster is being arranged and your assistance as a volunteer for our society will be much appreciated.

The two-hour shifts to be filled are 10.00 – 12.00; 12.00 – 2.00; 2.00 – 4.00. **12 noon to 2 p.m. slot still to be filled at time of publication**

Please contact the Heritage Centre or email to place your name on the roster with your preferred time.

Members of Committee

At the AGM held on Thursday 18 August 2016, the following members were elected to the Committee in the positions indicated:

President	Dr Gary Presland
Vice President	William Orange
Secretary	Helen Harris OAM
Treasurer	John Barnao

Committee members:	Dr Colin Barraclough
	Robyn Doble
	Judith Eadon
	Philip Widmer

At the first meeting of the new committee on Monday 5 September, the following members were appointed to the positions indicated:

Archivist	Robyn Doble
Newsletter Editor	Gary Presland
Tour coordinator	Philip Widmer

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 at boxhillhistory@gmail.com

Recent Speakers

Helen Page, cemetery trustee and horticulturist, gave an illustrated talk to the **August general meeting** about the **Restoration of the Gardens (and trees) at Boroondara Cemetery** in Kew. She opened her talk by providing some illustrations of overseas garden cemeteries including Pere Lachaise (Paris 1810), Sheffield (1836) – a listed landscape, Brompton (London 1840) – currently being restored using funds from the U.K. Heritage Lottery, and Hollywood Forever (Los Angeles 1899).

Boroondara Cemetery was established in 1859: it is located on a 31 acre triangular block and was planted and developed with sweeping drives and curving paths over a period of 30 years to a plan drawn up by J.B. Higgins. The clock tower and office block were designed by long serving trustee Albert Purchas in about 1900. When Helen Page was invited to join the cemetery trust in 2011, she had known of the trees, but wasn't aware that little tree management had taken place over many decades, no new trees had been planted and many had been lost. The cemetery hosts several significant trees, including Bhutan cypress, two Bunya pines, a sequoia, a Kauri (*Agathis robusta*) and a Golden Funeral Cypress. A pair of weeping elms provides a sheltered space beneath them. The entire site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register and eight trees are listed on the Heritage Citation. Heritage Alliance prepared a Conservation Management Plan in 2007 which has enabled the production of a master plan for the maintenance and renewal of the cemetery trees: this year 64 new trees are being planted to replace losses. Remedial works to protect memorials is ongoing, including removal of suckers, ivy, overhanging branches and feral trees. Pittosporums were removed from the southern boundary to open up the view to the plane trees behind and new roses propagated from existing bushes (some up to 100 years old). Other existing plantings included wisteria, citrus, camellias, succulents and geraniums.

Boroondara cemetery has no new earth graves left and the mausoleum is nearly full so garden crypts have been constructed between the boundary trees, however there was limited interest in these crypts until a redesign of their garden settings. A critical component of running a garden cemetery is having horticultural direction. The paupers' graves area has been refreshed and Friends of the Cemetery have been cleaning up graves, removing ivy and planting some iris and other hardy plants into neglected graves. Naturalised poppies (seed collected from a 19th Century garden) have been planted and Peruvian bluebells and grape hyacinths grow well. The Memorial Rose beds had declined but now are better managed and replacements planted where required. A policy is being developed for the appropriate use of glyphosphate (*Roundup*) which had been indiscriminately used and an 'ecological weeder' employed one day a fortnight to train other staff and produce an instruction manual. Native plants are now returning.

The rotunda has been restored but the 'Springthorpe Memorial' (Melbourne's '*Taj Mahal*') needs restoration: the original garden setting for the Springthorpe Memorial was designed by William Guilfoyle and a conservation study is required to support the restoration of the garden.

Friends of the Cemetery conduct tours (and working bees). Amongst those interred at Boroondara are Box Hill pioneers William and Rose Ellingworth and their young son Joseph. At the time of Joseph's death there was no cemetery in Box Hill which prompted William Ellingworth and others to successfully petition the government to allocate land for Box Hill Cemetery which opened in 1873.

Graham O'Rourke gave an illustrated talk to the **September general meeting** about the **theatrical entrepreneur George Coppin and his legacy**. Coppin was born in England in 1819, a younger son in a family of travelling players. A permanent troupe formed the core of the group and other players were recruited as required. George became the troupe's fiddle player at the age of six.

Recent Speakers (cont.)

As a young man he went out on his own to play comedic roles including 'Paul Pry' and 'Billy Barlow'. In about 1841 he met Edmund Keen and Gustav von Brook, and played against experienced actress Maria Watkins-Burroughs who, although 9 years older, he was soon to 'marry'. In 1842 they travelled to Sydney where Coppin became manager of the Royal Victorian Theatre and ran the Clown Tavern nearby, and Maria was well regarded as a performer. During 1845 they spent time in Hobart and Launceston, recruiting other performers on the way. Later that year they were in Melbourne where a new theatre had been built (on the site of the Comedy Theatre) and Coppin became manager. Another venture was the boat *Apollo* (hence Apollo Bay) under the charge of Captain Louttit. They moved on to Adelaide where Coppin converted an existing hall into a new 900 seat theatre in about three weeks, successfully invested in hotels and copper mining, as well as importing ice from Massachusetts. He later built another theatre in Port Adelaide. Maria died suddenly in 1848, aged 38.

The discovery of gold in Victoria and New South Wales in 1850/1851 led to a change in fortunes and the accumulation of debts. Coppin went to the diggings in Castlemaine for a short time then returned to Melbourne and Geelong. He became manager of the Geelong Theatre and assembled a cast to entertain the diggers so that by the end of 1853 he had repaid his debts and returned to England. While there he performed as 'Billy Barlow', promoted the fortunes to be found in Australia, and signed up von Brook for 400 performances in Australia for a fee of £10,000. A prefabricated theatre and steam operated printing press were also purchased. He returned to Melbourne via Sydney where he met von Brook and von Brook's sister-in-law Harriet Hilsden, a widow. The prefabricated theatre was assembled to become the Olympic Theatre, and Coppin purchased the Royal Theatre where there were performances by von Brook (in *Othello*) and Lola Montez. He was joined by Harriet Hilsden and her four children: together they had another two children before Hilsden died in childbirth with a third in 1859. Cremorne Gardens was set up as an amusement park with mock battles, pyrotechnics and later balloon flights, as well as a zoo with English song birds and white swans. It was the destination for the 8 Hour Day procession and steam excursion boats.

Coppin joined Richmond Council and was elected member for Geelong: in Parliament he raised expectations of the quality of school education and was instrumental in introducing the Real Property Act. In 1861 he married Lucy a step-daughter (daughter of Harriet) and had six more children. Financial difficulties forced him to have to sell Cremorne Gardens and return to acting. By 1865 he was again involved in many enterprises in Victoria: he imported roller skates from America (seen on a trip there) and converted the Apollo Theatre to a skating rink, built a new house in Richmond, and helped set up the Old Colonists' Association village in Rushall Park. Housing was sponsored by citizens of the time for the use of retired ('decayed') actors and original colonists. He promoted the idea for compulsory life insurance and post offices as agencies for the State Savings Bank of Victoria, helped set up the Victorian Humane Society (life buoys were placed on piers and bridges and a son and daughter received awards for rescues) and the St. John Ambulance in Victoria. Coppin also supported the building of Gordon House (a refuge for homeless men) and was president of Carlton Football Club.

He had a house in Sorrento where he built facilities for the bay paddle steamers and a tramway to the back beach. Coppin invited J.C. Williamson to come to Australia and in 1881 Williamson took over his lease on the Royal Theatre. In 1895 he retired from Parliament. He was proud that his daughters could cook, make their own dresses, swim and dive, and drive a motor car. Coppin was a man of many ideas, remarkable energy, prepared to take risks and made several fortunes. He died in 1906.

William R. Orange

Archivist's Update & **Additions to the collection**

Recently we have been fortunate to acquire photographs and records from the Box Hill Bowling Club which is vacating the clubhouse in Whitehorse Road. We have received a wonderful collection of photographs, and in particular, those featuring the early women bowlers show an aspect of local history not well represented – women and sport. As well as the photos there are several boxes of Club minute books. Thank you to Margaret Wood who alerted us to the Club's imminent move, and who is putting together a short history of the Club. Thank you also to Philip Widmer for picking up much of the material and Brian Shields who has been to the club to photograph the extensive series of honour boards mounted on its walls.

During Heritage Week, I assisted Jacquie Nichols-Reeves, Senior Arts Officer with the Whitehorse Council, on the Artists Trail Walk. This delightful walk along Gardiner's Creek and the Box Hill Golf Club visited a number of sites and interpretative boards associated with the artists McCubbin, Streeton, Roberts, Abrahams, Condor and Sutherland who camped and painted in the area in the 1880s. It is a tour we hope to continue to run in the future.

Robyn Doble
Hon. Archivist

Association of Eastern Historical Societies

The Annual General Meeting and General Meeting of AEHS was a marathon meeting taking 3 hours on 3rd September at Warrandyte (after which an over indulgent afternoon teas was partaken of by all present). Warrandyte Historical Society were the host society when 22 persons were present representing Box Hill, Eltham, Knox, Lilydale, Mooroolbark, Mt. Evelyn, Ringwood, Sherbrooke-Foothills, Upper Yarra Valley, Warrandyte, Waverley, Yarra Glen and Whitehorse. Your society was represented by Janet Galley OAM and Peter Galley.

It was reported that a letter had been forwarded to the Commonwealth Minister for the Arts re funding for TROVE and an acknowledgement had been received. The bi annual conference to be held in June 2017 will have the theme 'DISASTER PLANNING'.

Annual Elections were held for 2016-2017, the following were elected to office –

President – Tom O'Meara (Upper Yarra Ranges HS)

Vice President – Graeme Hansen (Knox)

Hon. Secretary – Paula Herlihy (Mt. Evelyn History Group)

Hon. Treasurer – Lorraine Smith (Lilydale).

The guest speaker, Willys Keble, a Heritage Architect, gave a power point presentation which in the main concentrated on the City of Manningham.

Next Meetings –

Saturday 18th February 2017 – Upper Yarra Valley HS 1.30 pm.

Saturday 29th April, 2017 – Waverley HS. 1.30 pm.

Saturday 24th June 2017 – Ringwood HS – CONFERENCE 'Disaster Planning'. 9.30am-4 pm.

Saturday 9th September 2017 – Sherbrooke Foothills HS (Upwey) 1.30 pm.

Janet Galley OAM.

Box Hill Cemetery Tour Sunday, 9th September 2016 City of Whitehorse, Heritage Week, 'Celebrating the Arts'

The weather was looking threatening. There was dark cloud in the west when we started but the rain held off and the afternoon had improved by the time we finished the tour at 4.30 pm. At 2 pm outside the cemetery office 23 people assembled for this year's Heritage Week tour. The theme this year was 'Celebrating the Arts'. The tour was led jointly by Euan and Karen Walmsley from Surrey Hills Historical Society and Philip Widmer from Box Hill Historical Society. The pace was quite fast as we had to visit 14 sites. We started in the north east section of the cemetery near the railway with Theo Brooke Hansen, artist, and finished on the western side with two men involved with publishing, journalism, literature and drama, Edward Alexander Vidler and Garnet Walch. Along the way we visited the memorials of Victorian Railways signaller and painter Arthur Edgar Jones, the founders of Australian ballet Edouard and Xenia Borovansky and the artists Joy Hester who was connected with the Heide artists and Jane Sutherland who visited the artists Tom Roberts, Fred McCubbin at the Box Hill artists camp on Houston's farm along Gardiner's Creek at Box Hill South.

Some of the other memorials visited were Myer; Sir George Tallis theatrical producer associated with J C Williamson's for over 50 years; daughter-in-law of Charles Dickens, Connie Dickens (Desailly); Amy Castles, singer, later contemporary of Madame Melba; Leandro and Guilia Coy of Surrey Hills, opera singers; and of course C J Dennis, of Toolangi off the Melba highway past Yarra Glen, poet.

Images L to R: Euan Walmsley reading. Borovansky memorial. Interested participants.



Philip Widmer – BHHS Tour Co-ordinator

From The Argus, 12 September, 1927

Horse bolts with trap - Constable's timely rescue dash through crowded traffic

Defying the efforts of the driver, a woman, to stop it, a horse attached to a trap bolted along White Horse Road, Box Hill, yesterday afternoon, narrowly missing traffic and pedestrians. It was pursued by a constable on a bicycle and in a motor-car, and was eventually brought to a standstill.

The vehicle was being driven by Mrs. M.H. Stuhr, aged 69 years, of Lorne Parade, Mont Albert, and contained also a girl aged 13 years. When the horse bolted Mrs. Stuhr made courageous efforts to regain control, but the strain caused her to collapse. The noise of the hoofs was heard by Constable H.L. Ross, who was on duty in the Box Hill police station. Jumping onto his bicycle, Constable Ross set off in pursuit. His attempts to overtake the vehicle would have been useless had not Mr. D. O'Regan of Pendle Street, Box Hill, signalled him to enter his motor-car. After a pursuit of about half a mile, the car overtook the horse. Jumping from the car, the constable succeeded in grasping the reins and bringing the horse to a standstill. Constable Ross took charge of the trap and drove Mrs. Stuhr home.

Considering the amount of traffic on the road at the time, and the fact the horse bolted for a mile and a half, from Middleborough Road to Kingsley Crescent, it was remarkable that a serious accident did not occur. Skilful driving by Mr. O'Regan enabled the constable to jump safely from the car. He found Mrs. Stuhr huddled on the seat of the trap, with the reins hanging over the horse's back. The speed at which the horse was travelling may be gathered from the fact that it passed several motor-cars travelling in the same direction.

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: Dr Gary Presland
Vice-President: William Orange
Secretary: Helen Harris OAM
Treasurer: John Barnao**



Phone: 03 9890 9288

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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.