

Box Hill Historical Society



Volume 25, Issue 3

June 2019

General meetings of the BHHS are held on the 3rd Sunday of each month, in the *Bert Lewis* Room 1 of Box Hill Library, 1040 Whitehorse Road, beginning at 2 pm.

Members and friends are always welcome to attend.

Enquiries are welcome, on:
03 9285 4808

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For your diary

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

Sunday 16th June 2019, 2pm

Our June function will be something completely different from our usual meetings.

The Box Hill Band is holding a 130th anniversary concert at the Box Hill Town Hall on , from 2pm, and has very kindly offered us a limited number of free tickets, and the chance to promote ourselves via a display and book sale. Since this would be our usual meeting day for June, we have taken up this offer! If you would like to attend the free concert, please email us at boxhillhistory@gmail.com and provide name and contact details.



Tickets will be distributed beforehand.

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

Founded in 1963, 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 be found on the 'Net at:

www.boxhillhistoricalsociety.com.au

(or use a search engine)

You can email us at: **boxhillhistory@gmail.com**

and follow us on **Facebook** at:

www.facebook.com/boxhillhistoricalsociety

Secretary's report – June 2019

In the absence of the President, who is hiking the Larapinta Trail in Central Australia, your Secretary can report as follows:

All historical societies received a request from the RHSV to complete a survey on local heritage matters for the Heritage Council of Victoria. The questions requested opinions on both the strengths and weaknesses of the current system for local heritage protection, opportunities to improve it and future threats etc. In all 113 societies responded, and the RHSV drew up a report from those completed surveys and submitted it to the Heritage Council. Their report can be found here:

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/heritage-matters/current-advocacy-projects/>

We highlighted the need for State/Federal funding for protection of local heritage sites and for heritage studies to be undertaken, and the political interference that can occur in decision making. It will be interesting to see whether any concrete result eventuates from the Heritage Council investigation.

Helen Harris

Open House Melbourne Weekend Activities

Saturday, 27 July

As previously mentioned we will be open for research on Saturday 27 July from 10am to 3pm, and have a small photographic display of around 100 houses from the Box Hill/Surrey Hills/Burwood area. Digital copies of the photos will be available at a cost of \$15 per image, either sent electronically, or on a provided USB. Included in the display are some from a collection of *Polaroid* photos, taken by a Box Hill Council officer in the 1970s, of houses that were to be demolished after planning applications had been approved.

The photos on display are by no means all the house photos we hold, just an interesting sample. Others are recorded in our catalogue. If you are able to help out, on either day, please email us at: boxhillhistory@gmail.com or ring on : 9285 4808, Tuesdays.

Sunday, 28 July

Together with the *Friends of Nunawading Libraries*, we will be holding a secondhand book sale, with all monies raised going towards our project to digitize issues of the *Reporter* newspaper, from 1919 onwards. The book sale will run from 11am to 2pm.

Donations of good quality books (no text books, please), can be dropped off at our rooms any Tuesday between 11 and 4pm; or after hours in the carport of 40 William Street, Box Hill. We would appreciate help in both sorting into categories in advance, and in staffing the stall. We are thrilled with the response from members and friends to

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.

our call for donations, so are excited to say that we will have books on the following subjects: Aborigines, Antiques collecting, Art, Australiana, Biographies, Birds, Children's literature, Gardening, History—Australian, British, American etc.—Humour, Military, Music, Novels, Royalty, Travel, Woodworking, and much more!

The more valuable material comes under the 'collectables' heading and includes such gems as *The story of the Fifth Australian Division* by Capt. A.D. Ellis, *Robert Prenzel 1866-1942: His life and work* by Terence Lane and the very large *Birds of Australian gardens: Paintings by Peter Trusler*. We will also have some Box Hill historical material, such as the Ivan Southall history.

Other forthcoming Society events

Sunday, 21 July 2019, 2.00 pm

Guest Speaker: **Carl Fender** — '*Growing up in Burwood and Box Hill*'

Karl Fender OAM, Founding Partner of multiple award winning Fender Katsalidis Architects will share memories from his life in Burwood and Box Hill from the 50s to the 70s, from building play huts to building houses, from driving billy carts to driving horse drawn milk carts in the new housing estates and from watching these outer suburbs starting to morph into the connected vibrant hubs of today.

Other forthcoming events

The *Wattle Park Exhibition* is now up and running at the Melbourne Tram Museum.

The museum is open on the second and fourth Saturday each month, and will also be participating in the Open House Melbourne weekend (27-28 July).

Normal opening hours are 11am to 5pm, but during Open House it will be 10am to 4pm. Special tours can be arranged on request.

At the same time, the museum has a second exhibition:

Transporting Art, which focuses attention on 40 years of art trams in Melbourne.



BHHS meeting venue

In 2019 the Society's monthly meetings will continue to be held in the upstairs meeting room in Box Hill Library, at 1040 Whitehorse Road. Members will be interested to know, however, that City of Whitehorse Council agreed late last year to honour a former Chief Librarian, Bert Lewis, by naming the meeting room in his memory.

H C (Bert) Lewis, joined Box Hill Library in March 1954 and retired in July 1981. Between those dates he was heavily involved in many cultural and social aspects of the Box Hill community. In brief, he:

- Served as secretary on Box Hill Council Centenary Committee, 1957;
- Developed the Australiana collection at Box Hill Library, 1959;
- Served on the Executive of the Library Association and was President 1961, 1962 (at least);
- Was the Rotary Club Citizen of the Year, 1965;
- Promoted and oversaw the development of a new library on the current site in 1973;
- was the founder of this Society, as well as the Box Hill Philatelic Society, and a co-founder of the Box Hill Rostrum Club;
- served for 23 years on the Box Hill Cemetery Trust;
- was a long time member of the Box Hill Businessmen's Club.

Bert Lewis died in May 2001.

Do you know.....?

Who was Miss Box Hill in 1959?

(Answer provided in next Newsletter)

The answer to the trivia question in the previous *Newsletter*: 'Which political party did Box Hill resident Barry Gratton represent in the 1987 Chisholm election?' was:

Imperial British Conservative Party

Recent Speakers

William R. Orange

Local Mont Albert resident **Bob Kerr**, a diligent researcher with a keen interest in family history, spoke to the **April general meeting** about '**the mysterious Henry Elgar**'. His interest in Henry Elgar was sparked after observing that a neighbour's block of land had been derived from Elgar's Special Survey. (Elgar's Special Survey is a block of land of 8 square miles in area bounded to the east by modern day Elgar Road purchased by Elgar as part of a consortium in 1840.). Don McLean (*Balwyn 1841 – 1941*) describes Henry Elgar as 'an English tea merchant in the West Indies of (whom) little is known'. Kerr started by looking at the usual local history references and also found some information on the internet, including 'Ancestry'. The local histories put up four main propositions: Elgar was (1) a tea merchant in the West Indies; (2) he was never in Australia; (3) he became indebted to Robert Brooks (an associate); and (4) his Port Phillip District properties were transferred to Brooks. These sources also provide no information about his early life but suggest that he died in 1872.

Working within the period 1830 – 1872 established that Henry Elgar was baptised in 1816 in Maidstone, Kent, the son of William and Harriet (Smith) Elgar and had three sisters. His father, a coal merchant when he died in 1827 (when Henry would have been 11) had previously been a grocer, banker and become bankrupt. Elgar's appearance as a witness in a Supreme Court case in 1840 -1842 establishes his presence in Australia and provides some background: he is noted as a trading merchant and ship owner (the *Anita*), much at sea and involved in the sandalwood trade. The court case involved the 1840 Special Survey purchase and a loan to another associate, Alexander Dyce. Elgar married and a daughter was born and died in 1841. He left Sydney with his wife for Wellington (NZ) in January 1842, possibly to organise a purchase of greenstone, then proceeded on to Manila where he was based until about 1851. A letter from the Rev'd Walter Lowrie writes of a passage on Elgar's ship to Hong Kong in 1843. There are also records of transactions by Dyce between 1842 and 1846 relating to settlement of his loans and the Special Survey. Elgar's sisters married in 1842 and 1844: the latter marriage was of Mary Frances Elgar to Alexander Dyce (Dyce died in 1848). Another letter relating to a court case about the conversion of a title (held by Maling) to Torrens title confirms Elgar's death in August 1852 on board ship travelling in the China Sea towards Macau. Post 1852 there are records of further land transactions relating to Dyce's interests, one of which left an entitlement to Dyce's descendants.

Returning to Kerr's propositions, it is clear that Elgar *did* come to Australia and that his land was not transferred to Brooks. The suggestion that he was in the West Indies is questionable as is any indebtedness to Brooks. It is also possible that Elgar visited Australia and New Zealand prior to 1840. Investigation into his relationship with his Australian agent Ranulph Dacre may reveal more detail of Elgar's activities.

Recent speakers (cont.)

Consultant historian **Dr. Louise Blake**, (who has also worked on some local heritage projects), spoke to the **May General Meeting** (held in the Bert Lewis theatrette) about teacher, writer and charity worker **Marion Miller Knowles**. Blake's early contact with Knowles' work was through articles in a grandmother's scrapbook. Knowles, although not as well known as women like Vida Goldstein, was a household name in the early 20th century, especially with Irish Catholics. She wrote poetry, was a contributor to *'The Advocate'* for 20 years, taught for a period at Box Hill State School, worked for St. Joseph's Children's Home in Surrey Hills, and helped make communities through school, church and at Wood's Point.

Knowles was born at Woods Point in 1865, the daughter of James and Ann Miller. Woods Point is a gold mining settlement in north-east Victoria, accessed then via a challenging journey on packhorse. Her father was a storekeeper and local councillor. She wrote about Woods Point in a novel that parallels her own life and includes the women of the village: the settlement was divided into three classes – professional, tradesmen and labourers-miners. The miners' wives were particularly resentful of cliques. By 1879 Woods Point was declining, however Knowles was able to teach there until the mid 1880's when she was transferred to Sandridge. Her parents moved on to an hotel (operated in her mother's name) in Narbethong. Between 1887 and 1892 she was a relieving teacher followed by an appointment to Box Hill in 1893 (where she boarded with a local family), survived a threat of retrenchment in 1896 but had to resign due to ill health in 1901. Her teaching colleagues thought well of her and she was also involved in running school concerts. During this latter period she also established a Catholic Sunday School for children attending St. John's Mitcham and St. Bridget's Wattle Park and gathered up the children to attend Sunday Mass in Mitcham. The Sunday School was conducted by her in the old (Sagoe) school room until 1900. Knowles married Joseph Knowles, a widower with some children, in 1901, and had two sons William (who became a barrister) and Adrian (1903 - who ran a radio and electrical repair business in Surrey Hills later conducted by the inimitable Henry Jamieson). The couple separated a year or two after Adrian's birth but did not divorce. When her husband died in 1918 a testimonial appeal enabled her to purchase a house in Kew and move from the boarding house where she was living with her two sons and a housekeeper.

Marian Knowles was an imaginative child and undertook some early writing ventures: she was fond of the works of Elizabeth Browning. While teaching at Box Hill she entered some writing competitions, and won a prize at the South Street Eisteddfod in 1896. Her poems were published in *The Australian* (1893), collections of poems and the Victorian Centenary Gift Book (1934) while her writing was published in *The Advocate* over a period of 20 years until her retirement in 1937.

Knowles major charitable work lasted from the 1890's to 1930's. A particular focus was St. Joseph's Children's Home, which opened in 1890, was run by the Josephite sisters and took in children under the Destitute Children's Act. She helped organise fundraising including working bees and appeal letters in *The Advocate* and filled an administrative role on a regular basis. Other involvements included a Catholic Women's 'Club' and fundraising during WWI.

Marion Miller Knowles is acknowledged in the Australian Women's Register and Her place Women's Museum.

Archivist's Report

Checking of the data entry for the first section of rate valuation books for the period 1954-1984 has been completed, and has now been uploaded to our website. It consists of nearly 14,000 entries of occupiers and owners of properties in streets starting with A-L in East Ward. Three books of the next section, streets M-Z in East ward, have been completed, but we have a way to go yet. If anyone with experience in using *Access* database is available to help on a Tuesday, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Recently I discovered another set of interesting records in our collection. These were copies of the yearly Health Reports submitted by the Shire of Nunawading and later the City of Box Hill, to the State Health Department. They contain quite detailed information; in particular in the 1920s when the names and addresses of people who were diagnosed with various infectious diseases were listed. The diseases listed most commonly were diphtheria, scarlet fever, pulmonary tuberculosis and infantile paralysis [polio]. In an era that predated vaccinations, deaths from these diseases were a regular occurrence, as the figures show.

Ric Pawsey has started creating an index to the named people, and it will be available for perusal during our Heritage Week exhibition in the lower town hall.

Other information provided in some of the returns include the names and locations of midwifery hospitals, noxious trades [piggeries and the like], the method of rubbish disposal, and the testing of dairy herds. [TB in cows can be transmitted to humans, so dairy testing was an important health initiative.]

Statistical data from these returns will also be available later

Another set of records that I have located at the Public Record Office are the listing of Trustees of various Friendly Societies, eg Australian Natives Association, Independent Order of Rechabites, M.U.I.O.O.F. etc. I have copied these files, and am preparing an index to the names, almost exclusively men, and the dates they served in the various Societies. Details of the role that these Societies undertook will be explained at our exhibition.

Till next time,
Helen

From a paper of the past

Eastern Times 30 January 1964:

Council shop is for sale

Box Hill Council announced yesterday that it will sell its electric trading shop premises at 973 Whitehorse Road Box Hill, by public tender. Tenders for the purchase of the brick shop and offices on the north side of Whitehorse Road, just east of Station Street, or for leasing of the premises, will close at noon Friday 14 February. ... The brick shop and offices were ideally situated in the pick of the northern section of Whitehorse Road, adjoining the large carp ark at the rear. The shop is 13 squares in area and can take a second storey. The land measures 27½ ft. by 122 ft.

Vandals strike in parklands. Water System Wrecked.

Vandals armed with sharp knives ruined almost the entire watering system in the picturesque 14 acre Box Hill Gardens last Thursday. Five long lengths of hose throughout the gardens were slashed beyond repair. A quick check showed that the vandals had mutilated nearly every hose in the gardens. ... City Curator Mr Bill Halligan said that in other recent outbreaks in vandalism: backs have been wrenched off park seats; installations have been wrecked or seriously damaged; parkland electric light lamps have been smashed; small trees have been uprooted; older trees have been ring-barked or damaged in other ways. ... Box Hill Council offers a monetary reward under its bylaws for information leading to the conviction of anyone for damaging Council or public property.



GENERAL MEETING

Box Hill Town Hall

1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill

Sunday, 16th June 2019, 2:00 pm

Join us in attending a band concert!

Celebrating the 130th anniversary of the Box Hill City Band

One of the oldest banding organisations in Victoria, the Box Hill City Band Inc. was founded as the Box Hill Temperance Band in the 1880s, first performing in 1889, and having broadened to a City band in 1894, it has continued to entertain, as an award-winning ensemble, ever since.

Visitors most welcome

Men's Health Week: Men at Risk Seminars

As a part of Men's Health Week in June, Whitehorse City Council is hosting two free seminars for men of all ages and from all walks of life. The Men at Risk seminars will cover common mental health issues and their treatment as well as help available for depression and anxiety.

While the seminars are tailored especially for men, anyone is welcome to attend. Your questions will be answered.

Key Presenter: Dr John Buchanan MBBS, DPM, M. Med, FRACP, FRANZCP

Dr Buchanan is a local, recently retired Consultant Psychiatrist who has practiced in Surrey Hills for 30 years. His clinical specialty is the management of depression and anxiety, and he is active in community education. Dr Buchanan is a former Chair of the Victorian Branch of the RANZCP.

Men at Risk Session One: Depression and Suicide in Men

Tuesday 11 June 7.30-9.30pm

Session one covers the different types of depression and how to go about getting help.

Men at Risk Session Two: Stress Management and Anxiety in men

Wednesday 19 June 7.30-9.30pm

Session Two covers stress and types of anxiety, techniques for management and how to get help. It includes resources available.

Free car parking available on site

Further information contact: CDEnquiries@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Box Hill Historical Society Inc.
No. A15258V ABN 613 34916140

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

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Box Hill Historical
Society
Newsletter



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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.