

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 28, Issue 4
August 2022

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

Enquiries are welcome, on:
03 9285 4808

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

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

Next Society Meeting
Sunday, 21 August 2022, 2:00 pm

BHHS 58th Annual General Meeting

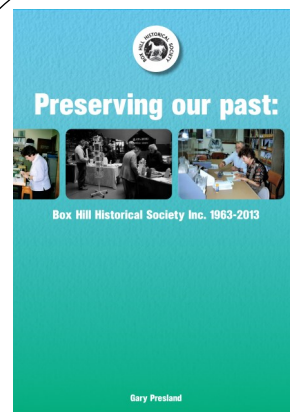
N.B. This meeting will be conducted as a hybrid event; if you wish to attend via ZOOM, please contact the secretary at boxhillhistory@gmail.com for the link.

Following the business meeting, Whitehorse Mayor, Cr **Tina Liu**, will launch a jubilee history of the Society, titled *Preserving our past*.

With the help of current and former members of the committee, the president has written this history of the Society, to celebrate its first 50 years of operation.

In lieu of a guest speaker, Dr Presland will talk briefly about the writing of the history, bringing in what he saw as the major events and significant individuals that have shaped the story of half a century of preserving the past of Box Hill.

Once it is launched, it is intended that copies of the book will be freely provided to all Society members.



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

From the President

The Committee has recently learnt that the Society has been granted a rent waiver for the 5 months in 2021, in which the Heritage Centre was closed to the public. We thank the Council for this very generous gesture on their part.

AGM and book launch

The next meeting of the Society is the 2022 AGM. Members will find a form enclosed with this newsletter, to be used in nominating for a committee position. Not all of the existing committee members can continue, so there will be a vacancy, should any member be interested in becoming involved.

Members are advised that a motion will be put at the AGM to increase membership fees of the Society. This increase is a small one—about 7%—and the first since 2014.

After the launch of the history, each member present will receive a free copy of the book; for those members who cannot attend the AGM, copies can be collected from our rooms on following Tuesdays. Those members who live interstate or away from Melbourne, will have a copy posted. A limited number of extra copies will be made available for \$10 each.

Open House weekend book sale

The book sale held on Sunday 31 July was an outstanding success, raising in excess of \$1670, and resulting in two new memberships. This success was due in large part to the many hours of work put in by Helen and her volunteers. On previous days, Town Hall staff members were on hand to set up the lower hall, with tables and display boards. The books on offer were laid out on the tables by Helen, Ian Broadhead, Ric Pawsey, Gary Presland, and John Barnao.

On the day of the sale, more volunteers assisted with the sales, at different tables, and kept an eye on proceedings. The committee is pleased to thank the following individuals who gave up their time to aid the cause:

John Barnao	Pam Millist
Ian Broadhead	Val Nixon
Judith Eadon	William Orange
Rohan Gibbs	Ric Pawsey
Helen Harris OAM	Lesley Peowrie
Kerrie McKinlay	Gary Presland

A number of council staff were involved through the day in guiding visitors around buildings, and helping to ferry the unsold books back to the Heritage Centre at the end of the day. The Society thanks them for their assistance.

Gary

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.

New members

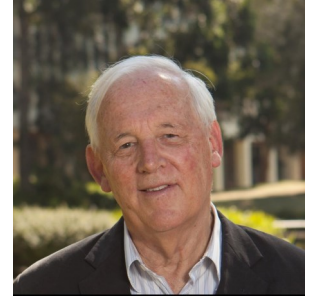
The Committee is pleased to welcome the following new members. We hope their connection to the Society will be a long and mutually beneficial one.

- Gwennyth Baker
- Courtney Mutch & Jarred Moore
- Damon Torsten Nash
- Corinna Cao & Tony Kong

Heritage Festival, 8–15 September 2022

Heritage Week Lecture — They came to Whitehorse

We are delighted to announce a talk by Emeritus Professor Graeme Davison, AO, FAHA FASSA, FFAHS, to kick off the 2022 Heritage Festival. Graeme is Australia's foremost urban historian, and the author of *The rise and fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, as well as a number of other books. He will reflect on how COVID has led us to appreciate the values in our own streets and neighbourhoods. Using the Windsor Park estate in Surrey Hills (where he lives), Graeme will discuss how our forebears thought about these questions, and the more limited sense of community that such places embodied. He will then consider what we now look for in our suburbs and what heritage contributes to it.



The lecture will be held in the Matsudo Room of Box Hill Town Hall, 1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill on **Thursday 8 September**, commencing at **10 a.m.** This is sure to be a popular event, and we suggest booking early so as not to miss out. Booking can be made through <https://www.trybooking.com/CAGWC>

Cemetery tour — They stayed in Whitehorse

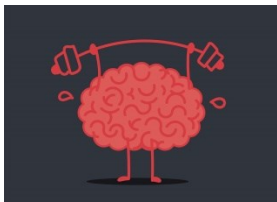
Join members of the Box Hill and Surrey Hills Historical Societies as we conduct a tour of Box Hill cemetery, visiting the graves of some of the interesting people for whom Whitehorse became a permanent home.

When: Friday 9 September 2022, 10.30-12.30

Cost: \$15

Bookings essential: <https://www.trybooking.com/CAGOO>

We came to Whitehorse to have fun



Test your brain cells and the extent of your trivia knowledge with our quiz master Rev Shane Hübner and help raise funds for the Society. Individual and team prizes to be won. Please bring your own nibbles and drinks, tea and coffee will be available. Why not make up a table of family and friends?

When: Friday 9 September 7.30pm – 10pm

Where: St Peter's Church Hall 1038 Whitehorse Road Box Hill

Cost: \$20 per person; or book a table of 8

Bookings essential: <https://www.trybooking.com/CAGNV>

We came to Whitehorse to start a new life — Chasing the Dragon's Tale

The Box Hill Historical Society received a grant from the Victorian Government Support Fund and PROV, to record on film, interviews with long-standing Chinese residents of Whitehorse. Five residents took part in the project and spoke about their experiences in moving into this area. The four short videos will be launched on **Saturday 10 September** at 11 a.m., in the Bert Lewis Room at Box Hill Library. A small exhibition of photographs will also be on display at Box Hill Library during Heritage Week.

While this event is free, bookings are essential: RSVP <boxhillhistory@gmail.com> by 3 September 2022 to attend the launch event.

We came to live in Whitehorse - Box Hill Vignettes

When: 8–15 September

Where: Online through Council's website: the link will appear from 8 September

This is a brief look at a variety of people who once called Box Hill home. Meet a proud Wakka Wakka and Waanyi woman; a conservationist; some entertainers; a police commissioner; and a field naturalist.

The full Heritage week program can be seen on the Council's website here:
<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/things-do/festivals-and-events/heritage-week>

Forthcoming Society events

The following general meetings and cemetery walk are planned for the next couple of months. This much can be done, in the belief that, in the case of meetings, they can be held safely in person. If the situation changes, the Committee will inform members of an alternative strategy.

Sunday, 18 September 2.00 pm

Guest speaker: Helen Harris OAM — ‘The amazing Mr Schifferdecker’

A brief entry in a ratebook led our secretary to research the extraordinarily varied life of Paul Schifferdecker, who arrived in Box Hill in 1923. In succeeding years, the German-born Schifferdecker engaged in a series of exploits including being a farmer, a distance swimmer, dog trainer and radio personality.

Sunday, 16 October 2.00 pm

Cemetery tour on the theme of *Medicos and Misadventures*

The October meeting usually coincides with the Spring Festival, where the Society takes a stall. This year, after a hiatus of 2 years, the Spring Festival will take place again, but will be held at the end of the month, rather than on the third Sunday. The committee has decided that we will hold a cemetery tour in lieu of a meeting. This will also coincide with the Seniors Festival, which now runs for the month of October. Come along and learn about earlier pandemics/epidemics/sudden deaths and the impact they had on people's lives.

Bookings essential, on <https://www.trybooking.com/CBBBN>

We will also take part in the Spring Festival in the usual way; details will appear in the next Newsletter.

Whitehorse Historical Society meetings

The following forthcoming WHS meetings feature members of our own society as guest speakers:

At the AGM on **Saturday 13 August**, our secretary, Helen Harris OAM, will speak on the topic of ‘A personal perspective on the Blackburn Open Air School (or how I learned to hate plum jam)’.

Later in the year, on **Saturday 10 December**, BHHS president Dr Gary Presland, will present on the topic of ‘The Aboriginal mission at Coranderrk’.

Both of these events will be held in the Local History Room, Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex, Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, beginning at 1 p.m.

Archivist's report, August 2022

It has been a mixed couple of months, as various volunteers have had to isolate because they had caught COVID themselves or were close contacts. We had to close our premises on one Tuesday because there was a chance I had inadvertently infected things when the President came down with COVID.

The main activities have been, firstly, the preparation of material for the forthcoming Heritage Week events. In this, I give a big 'thank you' to Caitlin Stevens for her help with the *Box Hill Vignettes* online production. Secondly, much time went into the sorting and pricing of some 46 boxes of donated books, and a large collection of our own ephemera. A report of the book sale is elsewhere in this Newsletter. Indexing of the rate valuation books has continued, however, with another 2 books being finished.

We were delighted to have a visit from Valerie Nixon who, as Valerie Cott, typed some of the very rate books we are indexing. Elsewhere in this Newsletter, Val has written of her memories of working at the town hall. (See below, page 7.)

New acquisition: Box Hill Senior Citizens records. This club has now closed, and we were invited to take what we thought appropriate for our archives, as they needed to vacate their building in Carrington Road. The club, first formed in 1956 as the Elderly Citizens Club, had a good collection of minute books and photographs, which we have added to our archive, ready for future cataloguing.

Till next time,

Helen

Vale Bev Hill

Former Society member Bev Hill died on 16 July 1922, after being in care for some years. This brief tribute has been compiled from the records of the Society.

Bev was born in Bendigo c.1923, and attended Bendigo High School and then MLC. She worked firstly as a government clerk, and subsequently for an advertising agency. She met Box Hill native Raymond Hill at a Methodist Church camp, and after marriage, the pair lived in Broughton Road before moving to 45 Strabane Avenue in 1974.

Bev and Ray were highly active in the Mont Albert Methodist Church, where Bev became a Sunday School teacher and later Superintendent of the Sunday School. She also had an involvement with local Girl Guides for many years. Both Bev and Ray were members of Box Hill Lions Club over a protracted period.

Ray was elected to Box Hill Council in 1971 and became Mayor in 1974, with Bev serving as Mayoress. They were both very supportive of the Matsudo Sister City relationship, made some 11 trips there, and hosted a number of Matsudo citizens in their home. Both, in turn, were named as Honorary Citizens of Matsudo.

In 2002 Bev and Ray were named joint Whitehorse Citizens of the Year, the first time the award had been made to a couple.

Bev was a member of the Society from at least 2011 to 2018, and a regular attendee at our meetings. The committee extends its condolences to her family.



Bev Hill, pictured in 1974, at the time of Ray's election as Mayor of the City of Box Hill.

Recent speakers

William R Orange

David and **Marlene Pietsch** gave a joint and illustrated presentation to the **June general meeting** about the **History of the Lutheran Church in Box Hill**. Both are long term parishioners at St. Paul's, with David a former chairman of the congregation and project manager of the relocation to and redevelopment of their new site in Riversdale Road.

Marlene began with some background to Lutheranism in Australia: Lutheranism is a small Christian denomination of German origin with pockets of members in areas including the Barossa Valley, Adelaide, parts of Queensland and the Wimmera and Western Districts of Victoria. The first Lutherans in Melbourne came here directly and settled in Waldau (Doncaster) in the mid-19th century. They were well regarded, kept the German culture and links to the homeland and saw themselves as loyal Australians.

Early services were held in the home of Gottlieb Thiele (*Friedensruh*), then in a small church built in Doncaster. (Trinity Lutheran Church in East Melbourne was built a little later.) Some division of views led to the construction of a larger church, St John's, in City Road Melbourne in 1928: St John's gathered a congregation from across Melbourne. In 1947 a survey of this congregation found a concentration of Lutherans around Box Hill: post war immigration and the movement of displaced persons had brought these people to Box Hill. The congregation initially met in a room in a grand Victorian house *Shadmani* in Nelson Road, rented for £55 per year and set up for church each Sunday.

Their first pastor was the energetic, pastorally caring and musical Ed Leske—he paid many visits to members of his congregation during his first few months. A block of land was purchased in Station Street near Medway Street for £850 then another block on the corner of Elland Avenue (from Methodist medico Judkins) for £1000 and preferred as a building site because of its proximity to the town centre. An architect was engaged and after a couple of proposals (and more land purchased) a design was approved. The government building controls at the time restricted building materials, but Pastor Leske's persistence at government achieved permission to build in the desired brick. Part of the fundraising program included a pledge of one week's wages over and above the weekly pledge until the building was paid off. A parishioner, Bill Richter, was engaged as builder, with assistance from voluntary labour and regular Saturday working bees and an on-site cement mixer.

The foundation stone was laid in November 1952 and the church opened in April 1954; 3 services were required to cater for all the attendees on the day. A hall was subsequently built on the south side of Elland Road, later occupied by the Open Book bookshop (who brought copies of Gordon Moyes' book *When Box Hill was a village* for sale in Box Hill). The hall was eventually sold and in 1980 properties to the north in Station Street were bought for the manse, and later in 1987 to build a new hall and offices adjacent to the church.

The congregation now is again more regional, with members from as far as Braybrook, Hoddle's Creek and Port Melbourne. They are attracted by the brand, with a strong musical tradition led from the 1970s by Alan Collyer, a fine musician and organist, a regular weekly choir and liturgical cantata performances. The Parish supported children's homes in Surrey Hills and Nunawading, later in Box Hill for children who were orphans or in other difficult situations in the past: a children's ministry has continued until recent times. A Chinese congregation has been established with a 'Speak English' group and a Saturday morning Mandarin service.

About seven years ago, other pressures related to the small footprint of the Elland Avenue site became more evident, as David Pietsch went on to explain. The small footprint limits on site parking and Station Street has become increasingly congested on both weekdays and Sundays. After analysis and advice from consultants, and consultation with the congregation about the possible options, an architect was engaged to prepare plans for a high rise building with parking and church facilities on the site. (Now it is possible that the SRL project with plans for the area directly to the west might compulsorily acquire the site.) At the same time about eight sites around Box Hill had been considered for possible relocation, then in 2016 St. Paul's became aware that the St. James' Wattle Park church site was likely to be sold. After 2 years of negotiation the St. James' site, including church, housing and the car park opposite, was purchased and the Elland Avenue site sold by tender to Hong Kong toy maker 'Early Light' for \$28.5M. The church, designed by Chancellor & Patrick, has a heritage overlay and is early modern in style. LAW architects were engaged to draw up plans for an extensive renovation and upgrade of the St. James' building, including relocation of St. Paul's pipe organ to the existing organ loft and original furnishings to a new chapel in the St. James building.

Recent speakers (cont.)

In February 2020 a program of activities was planned and run to farewell the Elland Avenue site. It concluded with a final service on 1 March, a bright sunny day, and a processional walk through the shops and Surrey Park, with many of the participants carrying small items from the church, to the Wattle Park site, a welcoming service and afternoon tea. Lockdowns for COVID-19 ensued, so the new St. Paul's was dedicated in May 2020 with restricted attendance. Now (in June 2022) the church is in full operation with plans in preparation for the balance of the site. The talk concluded with some questions about the financial and planning logistics in the move, and a vote of thanks from the writer, who has personally enjoyed the musical tradition and legacy of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Happy memories of working at Box Hill Town Hall

Val Nixon

Sylvia and I both commenced working at the Town Hall in 1957 on the same day, and have remained firm friends ever since.

Sylvia worked in the Rate Office as a comptomitrist with Mr Logan. In April the rates are due, so on 10 April there would be a queue out of the door and down the ramps, as people were paying on the last day they were due.

It was so busy that Mr Arrowsmith, the Cashier, had to put all the notes in a large rubbish bin so, when it was full, it was taken to the safe and another rubbish bin found.

Sylvia was always busy as the job entailed printing all the rate notices each year, and always when new properties were sold, as they were needed for conveyancing.

I commenced work with the Deputy Town Clerk, Mr Leigh with typing and administration. Those days you did not call an officer by their given name — it was always Mr Leigh.

After 2 years I worked with Mr Mitchell the valuer, which was a busy office, as each property sold had to be changed in the Valuer's records books, as well as new cards had to be typed as there were many new estates and subdivisions, particularly North and South Wards.

This office also typed up and collated all the Voters' Rolls for the 4 wards, which took many weeks. These were typed onto a stencil, which was then placed on a drum filled with ink (a Gestetner) then printed. Each page had to be done like this. They were collated in the Council Chambers and I still remember the room completely covered in piles of foolscap paper for each ward.

The Salk Vaccination program came to Box Hill and I assisted the Council's Medical Officer, Mr Scott. We travelled to all the schools and Baby Health Centres in the district to immunise all these children. I remember we also had sessions in the Supper Room, [lower town hall] where 600 children would be immunised in a morning. It could be bedlam!!

Sylvia and I wanted to travel to the UK for a holiday. We saved up for 3 years, keeping a strict budget. To save money, we would cut a lipstick in half and place it in a used lipstick holder. Winter being cold, we bought one malted milk (hot) with 2 straws! Our wages the(n) would be—Sylvia £8.00 per week and myself £7.60 .

Three years were up and we were off for the trip of a lifetime, by ship!

Five very happy years spent at the Town Hall.



Val Nixon and Ric Pawsey examining one of the Society's rate evaluation books.
Photo by Caitlin Stevens.

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
Committee: Ian Broadhead, Judith Eadon, Rev.
Shane Hübner, Ric Pawsey, Caitlin Stevens



Box Hill Historical
Society
Newsletter



PO Box 268 Box Hill 3128

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.