

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



**Volume 28, Issue 6
December 2022**

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

Inside this issue:

Closed for Christmas/New Year	1
From the President	2
New members	2
Forthcoming Society events	2
Hamper raffle	3
Recent speakers	4/5
Chasing the dragon's tale	5
Archivist's report	6
Melbourne girl film star's "twin"	6/7

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

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

Closure for Christmas/ New year period

Our last day open to the public for 2022 will be **Tuesday, 13 December**, when we will close our rooms at 2.30pm and, weather permitting, adjourn to nearby Linsley St park. All volunteers are invited to a 'thank you' afternoon tea; members are also invited to join the group, but are asked to bring a plate of goodies to share.

It is planned to re-open the Heritage Centre on **Tuesday, 17 January 2023.**



Linsley Park, at the corner of Bank and Linsley Streets; site of the Society's picnic in the park, 13 December.

It's that time of the year, when gift giving can become a problem. Why not purchase something from your Historical Society, such as one of our variety of books, or a gift voucher for a future cemetery or walking tour? Not only would you solve your gift problem, you would also benefit the Society at the same time. Books can be purchased online and posted, or if easier, paid for by cash when collected from our premises at the Town Hall at a mutually convenient time. Vouchers can be personalised and sent electronically.

To see our collection of books go to

<https://www.boxhillhistoricalsociety.com.au/shop-02/>

– remember, the online price includes postage and packaging.

And to find out about our vouchers, go to

<https://www.boxhillhistoricalsociety.com.au/our-tours/>

Please direct any orders for cash sales and vouchers

to boxhillhistory@gmail.com

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

With another year drawing to a close, it is perhaps a fitting time to reflect on some of our Society's events and achievements over that past year.

At the beginning of 2022, COVID continued to be a restrictive agent; we had to postpone the re-opening of the Heritage Centre because of the level of infection with the Omicron variant. By March we were able to meet in person, in order to hear a magnificent presentation by Alison O'Donoghue, on the subject of 'When Lady Godiva came to Box Hill'. It was so good that the Committee decided subsequently to enter the PowerPoint presentation in the Victorian Community History Awards. We were unsuccessful in that competition, but at the least it was a means of advertising the good work the Society is doing.

In early May we narrowly averted a disaster, when our archivist discovered, purely by chance, that the humidifier in an air-conditioning unit in the Heritage Centre had malfunctioned. Condensation and humidity (later measured at 90%) was threatening our valuable collection of paper-based records. Council staff quickly leapt into action and, in the event, we were extremely lucky that nothing was lost.

We were fortunate also in receiving a grant from the Box Hill Burwood Rotary group, to provide funds for us to purchase an overhead document scanner.

Perhaps our most successful venture through this year was the secondhand booksale we staged during Open House weekend, at the end of July. It was an outstanding success, raising in excess of \$1670, and resulting in two new memberships.

At the AGM in August, we were able to launch a 50th anniversary history of the Society. This was a project that had been on our books for some years, and one that we had received a grant from Whitehorse Council. It was particularly pleasing, then to have it completed. In the following month we were able to conclude another project for which we had received funding, and which had been unavoidably delayed—the production of a series of video-ed interviews with long-standing Asian residents of Box Hill. This was launched by Whitehorse Mayor, Cr Tina Liu (as was the Society's published history, in August), during Heritage Week.

This has been a fruitful and productive year for the Society, and I look forward to building on the good work of the Committee in the New Year.

On behalf of the Committee I wish all our members the very best for the festive season, and into the New Year.

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.

- Helen Gourlay
- David Whittle.

Margaret Wood, the Society's longest standing member, has been 'in the wars' of late. The President and Committee wish her a speedy recovery.



Cr Tina Liu with Nicholas Wynn at the launch of 'Chasing the dragon's tale'.

Forthcoming Society events

Bunnings night market:

A new venture for the Society will be to staff a stall at the Night Market held at Bunnings' Middleborough Road store, on **Thursday, 8 December**, from 6–8pm. We will have a selection of our own books for sale, as well as beanies, cards and Christmas decorations, all made by hand by our indefatigable member Yvonne Fitzmaurice. This will be a chance for members and others to stock up on Christmas gifts and help the Society at the same time.

Cemetery tour

Friday, 2nd December, 10am start. This will commemorate Remembrance Day on the 11 day of the 11th month, and acknowledge some of the many servicemen and women who are buried in Box Hill Cemetery. It is being run jointly by guides from the Box Hill and Surrey Hills Historical Societies.

Cost: Society members \$15; Non members \$20, payable in cash on the day.
Bookings are essential: Please email: <boxhillhistory@gmail.com>

2023 meetings

The following general meetings of the Society have been organised for the start of next year.

February: Leah Mariani on the history of her home, Corio Villa;

March: Graham Lee on the history of the Box Hill Lacrosse Club;

*April: George Petrou OAM on his book *The art of sacrifice*.*

Hamper Raffle

We have put together a large hamper of assorted goodies, books (including the winner of the 2022 Premier's Award for History), tea, a china cup, homemade jams, wine, etc., to be raffled. Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5, and can be purchased on Tuesdays or at the Night Market (see above). Tickets can also be arranged if payment is made directly into our account at BSB 633000, Account 1531034, reference 'Raffle' and an email sent to that effect. The raffle will be drawn at the afternoon tea on 13 December.



The fabulous hamper, to be won in the Society's raffle.

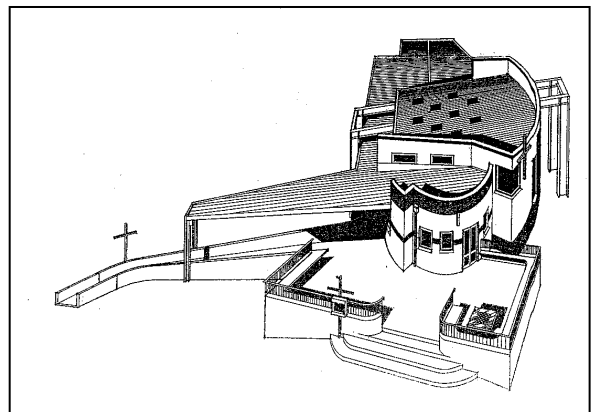
Recent speakers

William R. Orange

Conrad Hamann, architect, architectural historian, heritage architect and local resident gave an illustrated talk to the **July general meeting**. He spoke about the various **phases and movements in church design** from colonial times to the present day with particular reference to the **churches of Box Hill** and surrounding areas. There are common currents running through the design of Box Hill's many churches in spite of the range of design. Christ Church Mitcham retains its original rural style wooden church (as a hall), typical of the original church buildings of many of Box Hill's churches (although St Peter's Nunawading was a brick building, rebuilt in Box Hill in 1889, and its wooden successor (1910) was an elaborate Gothic style building with a tower and slate roof). The construction of railway stations (Box Hill 1882) produced nodal suburbs, with the development of business districts, churches and other public buildings around them. Box Hill's earliest surviving church building, the Wesleyan chapel (1856) in Woodhouse Grove was built of local stone and is of a simple design and robust construction including arched windows, not industrial. It was the first local church to attract National Trust classification, followed later by St Andrew's Presbyterian Church – heritage protection (and recognition) has been slow to expand. St Andrew's was built in a modern Gothic style and was originally the West Melbourne Presbyterian Church, relocated (and reshaped) stone by stone to Box Hill in 1935 under the supervision of Scarborough architects.

In 19th century U.K. (and Australia) Pugin headed a Gothic style revival, notable for its pointed arches and visible in the wooden St Peter's (1910), Oxford Hall, Church of Christ and original Christ Church in Mitcham (amongst others). (Pugin designed ten Australian churches.) Polychrome brickwork emphasised certain features e.g. Oxford Hall. Box Hill Baptist's interior and leadlight tracery shows an Art Nouveau influence. The Baptist and more recent Wesley show wider proportions in their naves, while the Church of Christ has distinctive steel framed windows.

Architect Louis Williams was a major influence on Anglican church design with his support of the Gothic revival (as in St Peter's, St Andrew's Brighton and St John's Camberwell) and use of new materials, including reinforced concrete. St Peter's original design included a bell tower: the interior design - open to the chancel and sanctuary, compares with the much larger St Andrew's Brighton (that was built with a needle spire). St Peter's has a distinctive (upside down) St Peter's cross on its external 'east' end while St Paul's Lutheran has a large Celtic cross on its external 'west' end, and the living room scale St Phillip's has a contrasting coloured glass cross as a sanctuary window. St Andrew's Box Hill is light filled with a hammer beam ceiling and much stained glass in its pointed arch windows, while St Peter's shows similar verticality and light but simpler segmented arch windows.



Architectural drawing of Strabane Avenue chapel

The present St Francis Xavier (Harper 1926) is built in Romanesque style with rounded arch windows, similar to the original Holy Redeemer, Surrey Hills (now much altered). St Francis has been modernised with the removal of pinnacles at its 'west' end and the addition of a new porch.

Several of Box Hill's more recent churches have been built in a modern idiom, including the Reformed Church in Watts Street with its flat roof and rectangular windows, the low profile Baptist Church in Elgar Road Surrey Hills, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour nearby and St Clare's in Woodhouse Grove, another lower profile building without a spire. The talk concluded with some comments on two modern churches of particular note, St James' Wattle Park (Chancellor & Patrick 1962 – 65, now St Paul's Lutheran. David

Recent speaker (cont.)

Chancellor was a parishioner and lived nearby) and the awarded St Joseph's Chapel Mont Albert North (Corrigan & Edmonds). St James is a high profile church with a tower and wide light-filled interior with extensive glass windows from floor level. St Joseph's is of a distinctive design with its long ramp entry and balustraded verandah reflecting the idiom of the cream brick houses nearby, and with views of the sports ground to the east, curved walls and a wide interior. It served the adjacent Vincenpaul Nursing Home and contrasts with the everyday architecture of homes nearby.

After spending nearly 12 weeks in Box Hill Hospital recovering from a life threatening perforated oesophagus and major surgery, and then surviving nearly three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Gary Bruce** presented his major opus, a **Video History of Box Hill**, to the **November general meeting**. The hour length video consists of a compilation of many images, most from the Society's collection, interspersed with film shot by the presenter and his family. It represents the result of over 12 month's work assembling the images and presenting them in a chronological sequence with some captions and commentary. Gary Bruce was born at Fairbank Private Hospital in Station Street, Box Hill and grew up in Lexton Road, Box Hill, attending local schools and Burwood Teachers' College and going on to work as a primary school teacher.

The film starts with an overview of the 19th century European history of the area, including many of its prominent citizens starting with Arundel and Fanny Wrighte, then moves on to the 20th century, showing the changes in the landscape over much of that period, and including spoken extracts from Andrew Lemon's *Box Hill*. The changes to many familiar locations are identified with past and more recent images highlighted, and some aerial views to provide context where available. The latter part of the film comprised a virtual tour of many of Box Hill's early to mid-20th century buildings and streetscapes. The background music was provided by Box Hill City Band with narration on the video by the presenter. The meeting concluded with some discussion about the film's content and production.

Gary has kindly donated the finished work to the society.

Chasing the Dragon's Tale

The interviews with our early Chinese residents, launched during Heritage Week, are still available on White-horse Council's Youtube account, and can be seen through the following URLs:

Lawrence Law <<https://youtu.be/hz1-mcPmWy0>>

Nicholas Wynn: <https://youtu.be/nXz_rltlvRU>

Gordon and Rosie low: <<https://youtu.be/oaxMM5eM5MQ>>

Betsy Louey Gung: <<https://youtu.be/ZoXjwah-jtk>>



Betsy Louey Gung.

Archivist's report, December 2022

The data entries for West Ward ratebook, streets H to Z, has been completed, thanks to the work of Rohan Gibbs, Ric Pawsey, Lesley Peowrie and Lorraine Taylor, and I have completed the final checking. The combined index for the whole of West Ward, numbering over 16,000 entries, will be uploaded to the website shortly. Examination of the listed occupations is continuing, with a view to future articles on the theme of 'they once lived in Box Hill'.

The report of my research and talk on former resident Paul Schifferdecker triggered some memories for member Frances Fiddian, who wrote:

In around 1949/50 my grandpa (Ernest Ellingworth) introduced us to his new dog 'Paul'. Paul was a black and tan male dachshund, and Papa said it was named for ... you guessed it — Paul Schifferdecker. Nana (Papa's 2nd wife and Mum's stepmother) had had a female golden/tan dachshund called 'Mitzi' who was very snappy and bad with children. I guess Paul was to replace her. Paul was apparently very well bred but could not be shown as there was something wrong with his dew-claw ... He had a lovely nature and when Papa sold William St. and moved to a flat in South Yarra, he gave Paul to us. We were told to look after him and there was some mention of the unknown Mr Schifferdecker, although the name was so fascinating to us as children, we called Paul 'Paul Schifferdecker' until we realised [it was] too long a name when we needed to call him. He lived until about 1961-2, quite a long time for dachshunds. I believe he had a cancerous growth – vet had to euthanise him. We were sad as he was a much-loved member of the family ...

Although we are closing our rooms to the public on Tuesday 13th, I will be available to assist with research on the 20th, provided bookings are made.

The article below was found by me when trawling though Trove; I hope members find it as interesting as I did. Fortunately, the photographer donated all the images to the State Library of NSW, who have digitized them and made them available online.

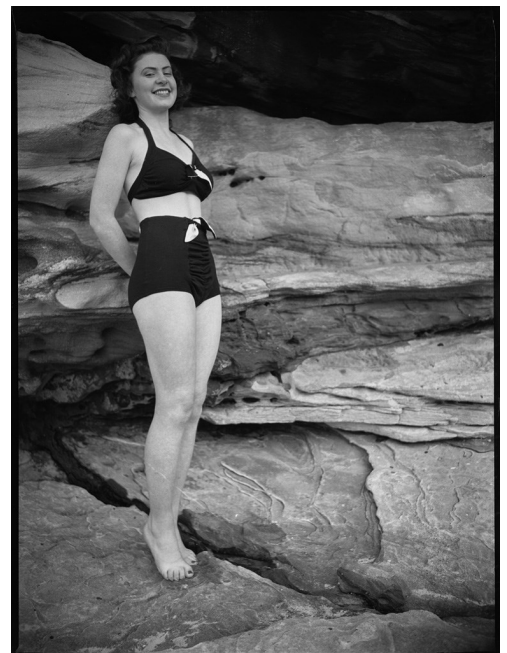
Til next time,

Helen

Melbourne girl film star's "twin"

From *Pix*, 16 June 1945

PEGGY STRATTON, 5ft 6in, brunette with laughing grey-blue eyes, added yet another star to Victoria's galaxy of beauty when she won the recent contest organized by MGM and Chelsea Lifesaving Association to find the Victorian lass most closely resembling MGM's bathing beauty star, Esther Williams. Born in Narrandera, NSW, Peggy now lives in Melbourne's Box Hill and is an experienced oxywelder in her father's works. Although she won a contest sponsored by a leading film studio she is not, in her own words, "crazy about a film career". Her burning ambition is to become a pilot. Too young yet to qualify, she already has more than 100 books on flying. Peggy spent a week in Sydney as guest of MGM and gave full rein to her passion to learn "what makes things tick" by visiting Cinesound's technical departments, seeing how a big city theatre is run, touring Mascot aerodrome and trying her hand at some welding—to see how it's done in Sydney! She made the most of her week in NSW.



All photographs used with acknowledgement to the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW; and courtesy of ACP Magazines Ltd.

Peggy is 17, weighs 9st 6 lb. She studied art and dancing at school, has one brother, Geoff, 15, and two sisters, Diana 14, and Pauline, 12. She is fond of entertaining and would like to work in show business as a night club or cabaret artiste, but is not keen on a film career.



Research note:

An initial search of the ratebooks failed to find anyone named Stratton who fitted the bill, but eventually it was established that the correct surname is Straton. Peggy's parents were Harry Redvers Straton and Marguerite Tennyson Straton nee Rigby, who were married in 1927. In January 1942 the couple paid £725 for 92 Medway Street Box Hill. This was a 1910 weatherboard house of 9 rooms and a sleep-out, on the corner of Nelson Road. They sold the property for £1400 in December 1945. Harry ran a motor engineers works at 124 South Parade, Blackburn. The parents subsequently returned to NSW and died there. Peggy's subsequent life is unknown.

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, Ric
Pawsey, Caitlin Stevens



Phone: 03 9890 9288

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.