

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 28, Issue 1
February 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

Inside this issue:

Next Society meeting	1
Heritage Centre re-opening	1
Message from the President	2
Archivist's Report	2
Cemetery tour	2
Forthcoming Society events	3
They once lived in Box Hill	4
Box Hill's female fruiterers	5/6
Vale Len Coe	6
Whitehorse Heritage Festival	7
Pre-loved Australian books	7

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 20 February, beginning at 2.00pm

Guest speaker: Lorraine Mitchell

'Box Hill Baptist Church: The first fifty years'

Established in 1900, Box Hill's Baptist Church emerged from the strong Methodist presence in the district, and had in its foundation members, some of its most notable citizens. Mirroring the suburban growth of the era, the church prospered, becoming one of Melbourne's largest Baptist Churches by mid-century.



In the interests of our members' safety, this meeting will be held by ZOOM, beginning at 2.00 p.m.

Please RSVP to boxhillhistory@gmail.com to obtain the Zoom link.

Heritage Centre re-opening

Our original intent to open at the beginning of February, has gone by the board. The level of infections within the wider community is still a cause of concern; given the demographic of our usual clientele—and many of our members—we need to be especially careful. Our current thinking is to open from the first Tuesday in March.

However, as indicated in previous Newsletters, BHHS members wishing to carry out research can meet with the archivist, **by prior arrangement**. If you wish to arrange a meeting for such purposes, please contact Helen by email (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

A [brief] message from the President

Once again, the society's customary means of operating must be Modified. Of course, we do this through necessity.

In the interests of our members, and others, we wear masks, avoid Crowded places, and have three shots in the arm. The

Result of these actions is that,

One day, Coronavirus will be nothing more than an occasional Nuisance. Now that's something to look forward to.

Archivist's report

As reported elsewhere, our premises at the Town Hall remain closed for the present, but the President and I have been busy checking the rate valuation book data entries for the West Ward streets A–G for the period 1954–1984. The entries were completed over the last year by some of our volunteers, when they were able to access the premises, and I thank Taylor Connell, Rohan Gibbs, Fiona Malcolm, Alison O'Donoghue, Ric Pawsey, Pam Millist, Caitlin Stevens and Lorraine Taylor for their efforts. The index, of around 6000 entries, will be uploaded to the website shortly. The indexing will continue once we feel it is safe to re-open.

I've also continued to answer research queries on local families and properties, explore online photos of local interest for our Facebook page, and handle online book sales. Sadly, holding our own in-person pre-loved book sale remains elusive for now.

Till next time, Helen

Cemetery tour

Monday, 14 March 2022
10.00 a.m.

A walking tour within Box Hill Cemetery is planned, to be held during Women's History Month. The tour is a joint venture of this Society and our neighbour, the Surrey Hills Historical Society.

As the focus of the tour will be on women's history, the major of the graves visited will be those of women.

The cost will be \$15 for members of either historical society or, in this case, the neighbourhood centre; and \$20 for all others. The money raised by this tour will go to the SHHS, to assist with relocations costs as they move to a new building.

There will be a limit of **25 participants**, all of whom must be **fully vaxxed**. Booking are essential and can be made through **Trybooking**, using the following link:

<<https://www.trybooking.com/BXJPF>>

Bookings will open on **14 February**.



The grave of Elizabeth Oates, horticulturalist.

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 reticent; 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, Ben nettswood and the parts of Burwood and Surrey Hills, which fall within the City of Whitehorse.

Forthcoming Society events

The following general meetings of the Society are planned for the next couple of months. This much the Committee can do. As to whether the meetings can be safely held in person, or will best be done remotely through Zoom, is largely beyond the Committee's control. We all live in hope.

Sunday, 20 March 2022

Guest Speaker: **Alison O'Donoghue**

'When Lady Godiva came to Box Hill'.

In 1960 the newly-formed Box Hill Chamber of Commerce came up with a plan to promote businesses in the area; a visit by Lady Godiva was one such idea, in conjunction with a baby show, fashion parade, and TV broadcast. Alison's presentation will cover the promotion and the various activities that were associated with it.



Sally Blake, ready for her ride through Box Hill, in the 1960 Whitehorse Festival.



During the 1960 Whitehorse Festival at the Town Hall, Suellen Donohoe was judged the Champion of the 200 children entered in the baby show.

Sunday, 10 April 2022

Guest Speaker: **Bill Sawyer**

'Growing up on a dairy in Box Hill'

From horses and milk delivery to dairy chemistry and medical science, Bill became Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Melbourne .



They once lived in Box Hill

*The following piece was written by **Graeme Roberts**, who lived in Box Hill as a child, and now lives and works in New York. The article is reproduced with permission of the author. As background to this reminisce of an event in his early life, Graeme also provided the following comments (Ed.)*

I have attached a recollection of the morning of June 27, 1961, my first, and perhaps only, experience of complete joy, as I raced around to tell our neighbors on Patrick Street of the birth of my beautiful baby sister. I think it accurately portrays the warmth and decency of our neighbors. My brother John, born in January 1956, had died about seven months later of a congenital malformation of the bile duct, and so in effect I had become an only child. The arrival of a sibling (sex unknown in those days) in 1961, when I had just turned ten, barely saved me from the odious solipsism I had developed, and drew away much of my attention.

At what times in your life were you the happiest, and why?

C. S. Lewis wrote that we can create situations in which we are happy, but cannot create joy. It just happens.

So, in response to the question 'At what times in your life were you the happiest, and why?' I am going to vault right over happiness and insist on joy, which is vastly more important and elusive.

On the morning of June 27, 1961, a ten-year-old boy had his first, ennobling experience of joy. He ran first to the red brick house opposite on Patrick Street, in the Melbourne suburb of Box Hill, to Brenda Weeks (her husband Ron had already gone to work), then next-door to Mr and Mrs Day, of course. Mr Day was a First War man who rode his bicycle to Blackburn Station every day to operate the level crossing gates. Upon his return, he collected horse manure from the street to fertilize their beautiful garden. The milky (milkman), Mr Wright, never stopped running, empties in one hand and full bottles in the other, while his big Clydesdale trotted slowly along pulling a big pneumatically-tired flatbed cart stacked with crates of bottles. The horses pulling the Home Pride and Tip Top bakers carts (we took Home Pride and the Weeks took Tip Top, each claiming obvious superiority) also contributed freely to Mr Day's treasury of poo. The boy's friend, Greg Weeks, once tried to collect some horse manure, but George Day chased him, trying to hit him with a broom. Manure is serious business for a gardener, and old George was really a kind man. Tottie (Charlotte) White, the widow on the other side of the Weeks, had been a fruit grower with her late husband, up Cobram way. She was sweet, funny, feminine, and kind with a wise and agile mind, and an ever-present smile of tolerance and acceptance, tempered by religiously reading Truth, Melbourne's lurid scandal rag. The boy's kind, country-reared Mum gave her a weekly ride to Kerrimuir shopping centre to stock up on food and buy the *Truth*. Next door to Tottie were the amiable building contractor, Guy Nicholson, and Mrs Nick, as everyone called her. Good, competent people.

He crossed back to his own side of Patrick Street to visit Hilda Astle (her husband Ken, a man of very few words, had also taken the train), in next door to see Iona and Stan Lang (she was of Scottish origin and he was an electrician), then past his own house (his Mum was in hospital of course, and Dad at work, or sleeping off the effort of waiting to hear of the baby's birth) and down to the corner to see George McLaughlin and his kind wife Olive, on the corner of Margaret Street. George had founded McLaughlin's Menswear up in Wangaratta, moved it to Box Hill in recent years, and was now co-proprietor with his son Johnny, who drove big American cars. 'I have a little sister now', the boy shouted quietly, 'her name is Suzanne Elizabeth, and she was born this morning'. So electric, all-embracing, and unselfconscious was his joyful radiance that all the women kissed and hugged him, and the men patted his back, shook his hand, or squeezed his shoulder. They all shared his joy without reservation. Olive McLaughlin probably called Johnny's wife Mavis to share the good news.

Though I had not yet seen her, I knew that my little sister Suzanne was entirely beautiful. She sucked all the love and joy out of me like deep-space vacuum atomizing a hapless astronaut, but I doubled it, squared it, gazillioned it, and still felt it growing. That joy never declined, and thinking of it sixty years later still centres me on True North, toward the tiny hamlets of Wonder and Thankfulness.

Box Hill's female fruiterers

The following account of a local business selling fruit and vegetables was published on p. 15 of *The Argus* newspaper, on Saturday 22 May 1954.

They built very well!

by Cynthia Strachan ; edited by Freda Irving

THE same lowly pumpkin that fashioned Cinderella's fairytale coach has played a large part in transporting Box Hill's famed vegetable-girl-twosome to success, independence and happiness aboard an old utility "bomb."

For those of you who haven't heard their resounding "fruito" cry as they've worked their fruit and vegetable round for nearly two years, they are the hearty, weather-beaten Mavis Jones and Joyce Robinson.

To be an all-girl fruiterers' team is distinction enough in itself, but they've reached a hard-earned goal this week that makes their smiles reflect their thoughts that the stars are shining for them alone.

On Thursday they opened, with signs of huge success, their own fruit shop and milk bar, buoyantly named Happy Hollow.

Although they've loved every minute of their round, they decided many months ago that as soon as they had enough money they would buy a shop as added security, a rescue from the furies of all weathers, and relief from their 15-hour working days.

So they bought a tumble-down shop lying in the dip of a Box Hill Road produced hammers, paint brushes and a full-measure of enthusiasm and created Happy Hollow — a gay, modern little fruit mart worthy of its name.

Curious to learn why two girls had set about to make their mark in the world of peaches and pumpkins I went to see them at work.

Their greeting was nothing if not to the point. "Say, can you stack oranges?" came the almost despairing voice of Mavis as I stepped through the door. "I've never had to do this before and it's got me beaten." Between the sunny and efficient handling of customers and arranging and rearranging the goods, they told me how they came to be there.

The girls—who think they're old enough not to want their ages mentioned—first met and became pals in 1946 when both were members of a Victorian Women's Cricket team which visited Adelaide. Both worked in offices, and cricket, their major interest outside work, kept them in touch. Then Mavis went to England. She returned just over two years ago to find Joyce convalescing from an illness.

Each was unsettled and they decided they wanted to do something completely off the beaten track and be their own bosses.

Someone said jokingly: "The only business you two could afford to set yourselves up in would be a fruit and vegetable round." To the subsequent delight of the many Box Hill housewives they've cheered on the rounds, they accepted this challenge.

Joyce, a Geelongite, came to live with the Joneses in Burwood and they started their trail in a "small utility bomb." Their first customer had to serve herself because they were so nervous. Later they bought a lorry, but it still meant getting up in the very early hours to be at the market by 6 a.m. and they usually wouldn't finish work until about 8.30 p.m. or even later.

"Actually, Happy Hollow looks like being a refuge for broken-down cricketers," said Joyce, laughingly. "We've taken Connie McBain, one of our South Hawthorn cricket colleagues, into partnership."



Strenuous? Not a bit of it, says Joyce Robinson, one of Box Hill's all-girl fruiterers' team, as she lifts a case of apples from their lorry. It's all part of an enjoyable day's work to her ... and, anyway, she finds it helps keep her in fit form for cricket.

Box Hill's female fruiterers

Vegetables and cricket apart, these two true outdoor girls—fast-bowler Mavis and all rounder Joyce—have little time for other interests, but both have an average feminine fancy in clothes and like shedding their working dungarees for something more frilly.

Their boy friends' attitudes to taking out fruiterers? "They're always slightly amused at our job, of course, but they generally, turn up trumps and help us unload potatoes and heavy stuff from the lorries after market", said Mavis.

P.S. : It seems, for a while at least, that they've left off coal to carry bricks. Last night they were in the shop until 2 a.m. making up orders. "At least on the round, our record for lateness was 11 p.m. . . . but I guess our regular hours will come," re-marked Joyce, philosophically.



Editorial notes

- 1) Though not fully identified in the newspaper article, the rate valuation books revealed that Robinson and Jones, whose address was given as c/- 8 Through Road Burwood, bought 501 Station Street in February 1954 for £1,500 from the Eastern Suburbs Co-Op Society. The property was a brick lock-up shop, on land 20ft 4" x 66 ft. They sold it in May 1961 for £2,600 to Stanislaus and Irene Gertrude Szulc-Szczygieiski, who later abbreviated their name to Schultz. But they apparently did not operate the shop themselves for all that time, as Maurice Vincent Young is given as the tenant, though with no commencement date beside his name. The site is currently a self-service laundry.
- 2) As mentioned in the article, both Mavis and Joyce represented Victoria on the cricket field. But Mavis Jones also went into bat for Australia, playing in all three tests during the Australian side's tour of England in 1951. Over the series, Mavis scored 19 runs and took one wicket.



Vale Len Coe

Leonard Coe, who died on 15 January 2022, his 98th birthday, was, with his late wife Beverley (died 2004), a long-term member of this Society, and a familiar face at our meetings until the last few years. His funeral was streamed, which enabled the following brief biographical details to be obtained.

Len was born in Kew in 1924, to English parents Rose and Leonard. His father ran a plumbing supplies business in Toorak, and Len initially attended Toorak Primary School, later transferring to Kew Central, when the family moved to Auburn. Len won a scholarship to Swinburne Tech, and there learned technical drawing and engineering. He was later employed by the State Electricity Commission as an engineer.

The family were musical, his mother Rose playing violin; Len learnt to play trumpet, and his sister Alma played cello and piano. Len later joined the Kew City Brass Band, and subsequently started his own dance band, the 'Glen Quartet'. In the 1950s Alma and he played with the Australian Symphony Orchestra in performances of Hector Crawford's 'Music for the People' concerts.

He also joined the local tennis club and there he met his future wife Beverley. They were married at Holy Trinity Church Kew in November 1950, and subsequently moved into a house they built in North Balwyn. They were to have three sons—Ashley, Peter and Geoff—and five grandchildren.

Len had wide ranging interests. As well as belonging to this Society, he was also a member of Camberwell and Coburg historical societies, the Genealogical Society of Victoria, the 4th Light Horse Association, and the Jaguar Car Club. He was especially proud of his green Mark 10 Jaguar. He was also a keen gardener, being a prize-winning member of the Pelargonium and Geranium Society.

Whitehorse Heritage Festival

Planning for the annual Heritage Festival is in hand. The theme of this year's activities and displays will be 'They came to Box Hill'. Heritage Week will be opened by Emeritus Professor Graeme Davison on **Thursday, 8 September** and will conclude on the following **Thursday, 15 September 2022**. Professor Davison AO will speak about the Windsor Park Estate, a 19th century landboomer development. Graeme has been exploring the Society's archives, as part of his research on the topic.

For the Society's part, we hope to install a digital display in the Box Hill Library, comprising interviews recorded with Chinese individuals who have settled in this area. In addition we are planning a cemetery walk, on the theme of 'They stayed in Box Hill', as well as a Trivia Quiz Night. Details of the timing of these activities will be provided in a future issue of the Newsletter.

We would like also to provide a focus on the post-WW2 Dutch immigration to the area. We have some information, but would welcome offers of help on the subject, from members.

Preloved Australian books

We are very grateful for donations of the following Australian history books, which we offer here to members on a first-come basis. They can be ordered with the secretary, and held until we re-open our premises.

A Tribute to Australian Women. John Larkins & Bruce Howard, 1980. Hardback, with dust jacket, (inscription inside front cover) **\$10**

Girt: the unauthorised history of Australia. David Hunt, 2013. Paperback, **\$10.**

True Girt: the unauthorised history of Australia, Volume 2. David Hunt, 2016. Paperback, **\$10.**

Lioness. Sue Brierley, 2020. Paperback, **\$15.**

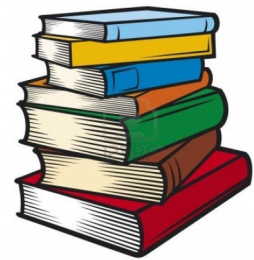
More Memories of Melbourne University: undergraduate life in the years since 1919. Edited by Hume Dow, 1985. Hardback, with dust jacket. **\$15.**

Old Melbourne Memories. Rolf Boldrewood, intro by C.E. Sayers, 1969. Hardback, with dust jacket, (slight tear). **\$20.**

The life and adventures of William Buckley. John Morgan, intro by C.E. Sayers, 1967. Hardback, with dust jacket, (slight damage). **\$10**

When grandma was just a girl. Martin McAdoo, 1983. Hardback, with dust jacket, **\$15**

With my little eye: The incredible true story of a family of spies in the suburbs. Sandra Hogan, 2021. Paperback, **\$10.**



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



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.