

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



Volume 28, Issue 3
June 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 19 June 2022, beginning at 2.00pm
in

the Bert Lewis Room in Box Hill Library, 1040 Whitehorse Road

Guest speakers: **David and Marlene Pietsch**

David and Marlene Pietsch will speak about the history of the two Lutheran churches in Box Hill, in Station Street and Riversdale Road. They will also discuss plans for the future, and the challenges and opportunities presented.

SAVE THE DATE

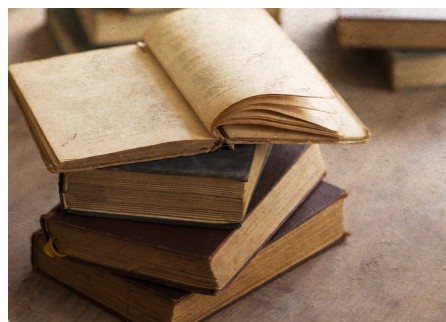
Sunday, 31 July
10.00 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.

As part of Open House Weekend, we will be conducting a 'Books, Beanies & Bargains' sale in the lower hall at Box Hill Town Hall. Come along and choose from our huge range of pre-loved books and ephemera and buy a hand-knitted beanie to keep you warm. There are books on many subjects, including Antiques collecting, Art/Craft, Australia-na, Biographies, Cooking, Gardening, History, Indigenous, Military/Naval, Novels, Poetry, Royalty, Sports, Woodworking etc. Some rare and first edition books are included in the sale. We also have a collection of Box Hill ephemera.

Please note that payment is by cash only. All proceeds go to assisting with the preservation of our unique archive of Box Hill history.

Volunteers to help staff the book sale are needed; if you can spare a couple of hours to assist, either with the set up or on the day itself, please contact

Helen on 0429 833 324, or put your name on the roster at the reception desk.



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 message from the President

Our offer to help the lead tenant of heritage-listed *Banff* raise funds to restore a damaged fireplace, culminated in the hourly tours being completely booked out, and a very happy tenant, who received almost \$1000 towards the repair cost. The offer did involve a lot of work on Helen's part, as she researched and prepared detailed notes on some of the people who had lived in the house, then mounted a display. While I staffed the kitchen, other committee members, Ian, John and Judith, helped run the tours, chatted to visitors and generally kept things running smoothly.

The Society didn't come away empty handed: we made more than \$150 from book sales, and believe that several memberships will be forthcoming. The tour may be repeated later in the year; if this happens, notification will be via this Newsletter and our Facebook page.

Gary

Secondhand books on offer to members

The following books were part of a large donation, to be included in the Society's book sale on Open House Day, in July. Before that happens, however, members are being offered a prior opportunity to purchase items from this list. If you are interested in having any of the books listed here, please contact the archivist: By email, <boxhillhistory@gmail.com>, or by phone on 0429 833 324.

A History of Horsham Agricultural Society. Ian Maroske \$20

A story of Horsham. A municipal century. Brian Brooke, Alan Finch. (First edition; signed by the authors; includes official invitation to launch). \$25

Australia on horseback: the story of the horse and the making of a nation. Cameron Forbes. \$15

Australian folklore: a dictionary of lore, legends and popular allusions. Bill Wannan. \$10

Dorothea Mackellar's My Country – a centenary celebration 1908–2008. Peter Luck. \$15

Eureka: the unfinished revolution. Peter Fitzsimons. \$15

Giants of the Mallee. The Settlers of Sea lake & Nandaly Victoria from 1890. \$35.

Having a go! Bill Boyd's Mallee. Weston Bate. \$10

History of Waikerie: Gateway to the Riverland. Jean M. Nunn \$40

Lake Eyre: a journey through the heart of the continent. Paul Lockyer. \$15

Mildura Irrigation Settlement. The Early Years. Kaye Voullaire. \$15

My country: Australian poetry & short stories two hundred years, Boxed set. \$25

North of the Netting. A history of Beulah, Rosebery & Districts \$40

Road Board to Restructure. The History of the Shire of Wimmera 1862–1995. \$50

Serviceton. A frontier town on no man's land \$20

The Inspectors. An Account of the Inspectorate of the State Schools of Victoria 1851–1983. \$35

The Ormonds of Borriyalloak. E. Stephens \$25

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, Bennettswood and the parts of Burwood and Surrey Hills, which fall within the City of Whitehorse.

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.

- Stephanie & Robert Prowse, Canterbury
- Kerrie McKinlay, Blackburn

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, 3 July, 2.00 pm

Box Hill Cemetery 'Pioneers' tour

This tour is a joint venture between our society and the Surrey Hills Historical Society. It includes an overview of the history of the Box Hill Cemetery and a number of the interesting structures within it. The starting point is the site of the first burial, that of a 3-week old baby girl. Then, as this tour commemorates Victoria Day, it will concentrate on acknowledging the roles of some of the pioneers of the Surrey Hills, Box Hill, Doncaster and Mitcham areas. Prior to WW1, Victoria Day used to be a public holiday in Victoria, to acknowledge the date on which Victoria separated from NSW.

Cost: General public— \$20; SHNC Members and Historical Society members—\$15

Bookings are essential and can be made through Trybook, at the following URL:

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

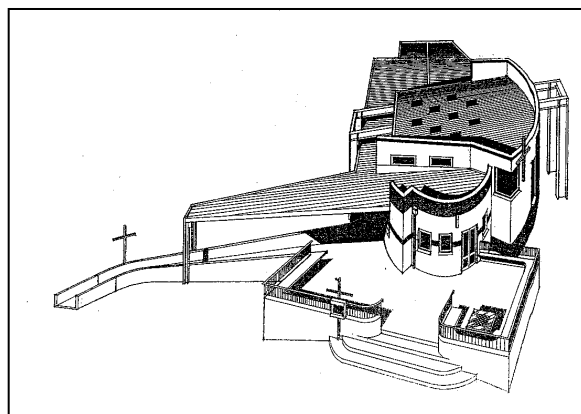
Sunday, 17 July 2022, 2.00 pm

Guest speaker: Conrad Hamann—on 'local church architecture'

Conrad Hamann is Associate Professor in Architectural History and Urban History in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design, RMIT University. He studied history with Ian Turner and Geoffrey Serle at Monash University (1971–74) and then architectural history with Patrick McCaughey (1975–78) and with Vincent Scully at Yale (1978–80).

Conrad has written several books including Part 3 of Educational Media's *History of Australian Architecture* (1985), *Cities of Hope*: two studies of Edmond and Corrigan's architecture for Oxford (1993) and Thames and Hudson (2012), and co-authored *Kevin Borland Architecture from the Heart* with Doug Evans RMIT, (2008).

He worked for Lovell Chen for nine years as a senior associate, on about 150 heritage assessments and projects.



Architectural drawing of Strabane Avenue chapel

Sunday, 21 August 2022, 2:00 pm

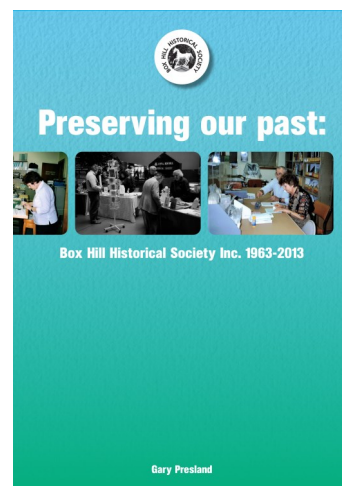
BHHS 58th Annual General Meeting.

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

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.

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



Recent speakers

William R Orange

The **April general meeting** of the society was addressed by retired Professor of Biochemistry and Microbiology (University of Melbourne) Bill Sawyer. He spoke about his family, and growing up in the family business Sawyer's Dairy from the mid 1930s in Box Hill. The meeting held in the Bert Lewis theatre was the first face to face meeting since June 2021 and included at least a couple of the speaker's former students.

Bill Sawyer's father Harry, one of six children (five boys), was born in Wigan, in Lancashire U.K. The two eldest boys, Harry and Charlie, emigrated to Melbourne in 1911, where Harry obtained a position as an orderly at the Melbourne Hospital (later Queen Victoria). In 1914/15 he enlisted in the army and served in the ANZAC corps in Gallipoli and later in France with the 5th Division at Fromelles. On return to Australia, he applied for and obtained two farming blocks in the Yarra Valley near Yarra Glen, where he established a Jersey/Guernsey dairy herd to service the metropolitan need for a milk supply.

During the 1930s his father was delegated to establish a retail dairy in Box Hill, supplied with milk by the product of his Yarra Valley farms and other sources. He built a 'state of the art' dairy on the north-west corner of Severn and Station Street (about 150 metres from where this report is being written), which included a pasteurisation plant, refrigeration, wash room for bottles, roof mounted cooling tower, hot water from a coal- (later oil) fired boiler, stables and tack room, and a two acre paddock to spell the horses. There were six delivery carts (or floats) to service an area north of Whitehorse Road between Watts Street and Union Road, to Woodhouse Grove. The 'light delivery' horses moved at a good pace for milk deliveries. The milk floats were fairly small so there was a number of depot sites for resupply. Harry was a foundation member of Legacy and instructed his staff to give free milk to the needy and widows.

At times milk carters were hard to get or unavailable, so Bill's older brother Jim had to fill in and Bill himself was taught how to harness the horses and hook up the carts. Bill did several jobs in the dairy and particularly enjoyed visiting the blacksmith and the saddler. The Sawyers' house was adjacent to the dairy but had no back yard, so Bill was able to wander; he was consequently fitted with a 'dog tag', on which engraved 'Apt to stray - ring WX 1704' to assist his return to home. The house had a 'copper' for washing, ice chest (later replaced with a kerosene, then electric, refrigerator) and a gas hot water unit.

When the Scout Jamboree was held at Wonga Park in 1948, Sawyer's Dairy provided the milk (and the truck got bogged). The Severn Street hill was a good venue for 'billy cart' races. There were annual bonfires, the biggest at Beckett Park in Balwyn, and a smaller one in the dairy's two acre horse paddock. The shops nearby in Station Street included a butcher (with cooling water running down the window), a green grocer and a general store, the latter selling butter cut from larger blocks, and biscuits in bulk tins. Post WWII there were many half-built houses around Box Hill, largely due to a shortage of building materials. At the age of 7 or 8 Bill complained to his mother that he had never been to the beach, so she took him on the Ventura bus down Warrigal Road to Mentone. He had a couple of after-school and vacation jobs including selling the *Herald* at Box Hill Railway Station for McKelvie's Newsagent, and delivering scripts for Williams' Chemist—aided in the latter case when he inherited his older brother's bicycle, with its derailleur gears and generator lights. Bill stored the bike in a workshop that he constructed against the paling fence with a sheet of corrugated iron. He also joined in the Archery Club's activities.

He attended Box Hill State School. The third grade teacher, Mrs. Scott, didn't tolerate left handers (and carried a thick ruler). There were regular Monday morning assemblies with flag-raising, National Anthem and oath of allegiance. The school caretaker had a huge job cleaning the school and cutting firewood for classroom 'heating'. Bill assisted with cutting the firewood (although frowned upon by the headmaster when it was discovered) and on one occasion sweeping the asphalt school yard, the latter to his embarrassment when it was announced at a school assembly. The school yard was also divided by a paling fence to divide the Grade 4 to 6 boys and girls. He enjoyed being a member of the Australian Boys' Choir, travelling to rehearsals on the 'red rattler' train and tram. As well as performing at the Collins Street Assembly Hall, the choir toured country regions and interstate. At high school he played violin in the school orchestra.

Recent speakers (cont.)

Bill went on to Box Hill High School where there were some particularly good teachers, including those for chemistry (Driscoll) and biology (Nunn). He remembered another teacher who used the board monitor as a human duster when the monitor forgot to clean the blackboard. The music master, Vincent Kelly, (and also the director of the Australian Boys' Choir) produced a number of the Gilbert and Sullivan light operas that all the family enjoyed (including his father who sang along). The woodwork and metalwork classes gave him a lifelong appreciation of carpentry.

His father re-enlisted for WWII and was appointed 2IC of the Batman Avenue Barracks where he had some responsibility for internees. Post war, he was a member of the Good Neighbour Council, an organisation set up to welcome migrants. In 1955 his father and father's brother Charlie went on a RSL sponsored trip lasting 9 months, including a visit to Gallipoli, during which time Jim managed the dairy. Bill was also called upon to help with deliveries and given the delivery details by the foreman driver, as they did their rounds.

Bill's mother (and sister Margot) also helped with the dairy. Margot went on to train and work as a nurse, and was actively involved with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church: there was a mandatory Sunday attendance for the family. Bill joined the YPF (Young People's Fellowship?) and helped to run the monthly Saturday night dances.

The dairy business was wound up in 1957 when the family moved to Balwyn.

The talk concluded with a brief slide show including some school, family and local landmark photos.

The **May** meeting was held in the **Wesley Church**, in order to hear Principal Organist **John Rivers** give a recital on the Oxford Street Willis. Between brackets of music in which he demonstrated some of the finer points of the historic organ, John also spoke about the history of the instrument.

The organ was built in 1877 by the major English organ builder, Henry Willis, to stand at the end of a large ballroom in 'Findon', the mansion of the parliamentarian and financier Henry 'Money' Miller, in Kew. No expense had been spared in the construction of the organ, with superlative materials and lavish finishes being freely employed. The organ is the only example of Willis' work in Victoria. In 1929 it was moved to the Methodist Church, in Oxford Street, Box Hill, where it stands today, with little alteration from the original. Restoration work was carried out in 1969 and 1983. The organ was classified by the National Trust (Victoria) in July 1983.

In demonstrating the versatility and breadth of the instrument, Mr Rivers played a range of compositions, taking in a 200-year span from the 18th to the 20th centuries. This music included JS Bach's 'Prelude and Fugue in C Minor' (BWV 546), 'Cromorne sur la Taille' by Bach's contemporary François Couperin, and 'Adagio in D' by 20th century composer Percy Whitlock.



The Willis organ. Photo by Julian Bonitz.

Vale Grace Swiney

The Society was saddened to learn of the death of a former committee member and long-term volunteer, Grace Swiney, on 13 May 2022. A memorial service was held on 23 May 2022, at which this Society was represented by Gary Presland, Helen Harris OAM, Ian Broadhead, William Orange and John Barnao. Former member, Philip Widmer was present also.

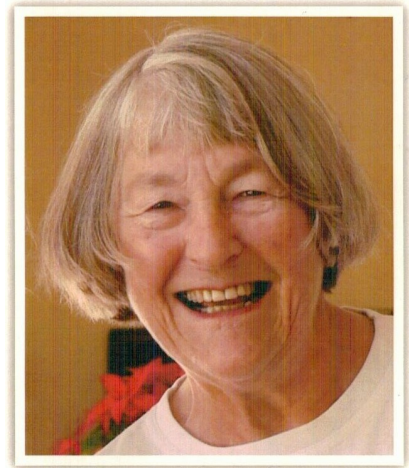
Grace was born at Eastbourne, Sussex, UK in 1933. Following WW2 her family moved to Bournemouth in Hampshire, because of her father's job with the railways. Later they returned to Eastbourne, where Grace met Ken Swiney. They married in 1959 and took up the offer of a £10 trip to Australia. In March 1959 they sailed on the *Fairsky* from Southampton, taking with them 3 large trunks of possessions and their Vespa motor scooter, for an additional £12.

Ken obtained a job as a purchasing clerk with C.I.G. in Carlton. Grace initially obtained a temporary teaching position at Mont Albert Central School, where Rob Gell was one of her pupils. A couple of years after arrival, the couple was offered the opportunity to purchase a house in Clyde Street, Box Hill, where they brought up two children.

Grace was always been interested in the history of this area and once she had the time, joined the Historical Society and enjoyed learning more about Box Hill, Whitehorse and Melbourne. She twice spoke at a general meeting of the Society: in May 2013 about her experience in coming to Australia with her husband Ken as '£10 Poms'; and in April 2017 about her 'Life in England during WWII'.

Grace was a regular volunteer in the Heritage Centre on Tuesdays, from February 2013. In addition, she was always prepared to help out during Society events, such as at the stand at Spring Festival. Grace was elected to the committee at the AGM in August 2018, and served in that capacity until June 2021.

Her cheery smile and happy manner will be greatly missed in the Heritage Centre.



Vale Peter Galley



Long-standing Society member and volunteer, Peter Galley, passed away on 27 May 22; he was 85. Peter's involvement with the Society began in 1995, when he joined, along with wife Janet. He became a Tuesday volunteer in January 2001, following his retirement from fulltime work, in the previous year. Peter was a quiet worker behind the scenes. If there was a job that needed a handyman, Peter was the go-to person—he successfully fixed wonky filing cabinets, righted lopsided photos and paintings on display, and managed to prise open tricky file holders. He also assisted on occasion during Society cemetery tours. In recent years Peter took on the task of helping to repair and sort out the Society's large map collection. In the period 2002–2017, when Janet served as a committee member, and from 2004 as President, Peter was a steady support. Together, they represented

the Society on numerous occasions at meetings of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies. They attended the quarterly meetings, and produced a report on the proceedings. Peter and Janet were made Honorary Members of the Society at the AGM in August 2017, a distinction that was richly deserved.

At Peter's request there was a private interment.

The Committee extends its heartfelt sympathy to Janet and their family.

Archivist's report June 2022

On Saturday, 1 May 2022 I visited our premises to make sure that the water leak coming from an air-conditioning duct that I had reported the day before, had been fixed. Unfortunately the situation that greeted me was the stuff of nightmares. The glass partitions were fogged up, and in the archives room itself, the humidity was extremely high, (later measured at over 90%) with condensation running down the walls, taking some of the paint with it. I rang Council's after hours number to report the situation, and found staff at the town hall, who sprang into action. Large fans were brought in to circulate the air, while they also tried to get someone to attend to the problem. Eventually an electrician did turn up, but, never having been there before, was unable to resolve the situation. The air-conditioning itself was working perfectly, it was the humidifier that was the problem. It was not until early Monday morning that the situation was rectified; along the way it was discovered that some new wiring had been wrongly installed.

In the meantime the newspaper scrapbooks, and some of the thousands of photos, had been moved out, and were spread on tables and the floor in a spare room at the Town Hall.

Council paid for a conservator to attend later in the week, and we seem to have saved the scrapbooks. But, of course, any damage, particularly to the photographs, may only show up later.

We now have an overhead document scanner (see details below), and volunteers to undertake scanning of the scrapbooks would be appreciated; while the work would normally be done on a Tuesday, another weekday can be arranged if necessary.

In the meantime, we have begun scanning some of the several thousand photographs that have never been digitized. This is a major piece of work, because some of the original photographs are not in good condition, and the resultant images will require a lot of work to make them suitable for reproduction. Fortunately, the Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA) are offering grants to local community groups, so we have applied for funds to employ a specialist to work on the poorer quality photographs. We hope to be successful in this application, given the potential risk of the situation.

This is the second, and most serious, humidity failure in the archives in the last few years. Previously we had to dispose of a lot of early Reporter newspapers, stored in acid-free plastic envelopes, which had developed mould, and we subsequently raised funds to digitize some of the missing years. Hopefully there won't be a third failure!

On a happier note, thanks to the generosity of the extended Davidson/Cameron family, we have had donated some 16 boxes of very good quality secondhand books, part of a deceased estate. The subjects include Australian, local and military histories, biographies, poetry and novels. We are in the process of sorting and pricing these books for inclusion in our July book sale.

Following an application for funds to purchase an overhead document scanner, we were delighted to receive a grant from Rotary Box Hill Burwood group. Committee members Judith Eadon and Caitlin Stevens attended a meeting of the group, at which a presentation was made. Judith spoke about the work of the Society.

The Committee thanks Rotary most sincerely for their generosity.

Till next time,

Helen



Caitlin Stevens and Judith Eadon at the Rotary presentation meeting.

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.