

Box Hill Historical Society Newsletter



**Volume 28, Issue 5
October 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, 16 October 2022, 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 on 23 October, which is the Sunday after our meeting. 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>

2022 Annual General Meeting

The election of office bearers and committee members for the 2022/23 year, kindly conducted by Whitehorse Mayor Cr Tina Liu, at the AGM in August, resulted in the following members being elected to the positions listed:

President :	Dr Gary Presland
Vic-President:	William Orange
Secretary:	Helen Harris OAM
Treasurer:	John Barnao
Committee:	Ian Broadhead
	Judith Eadon
	Ric Pawsey
	Caitlin Stevens

Regrettably, Rev'd Shane Hübner did not re-nominate because he was about to move interstate. There were no other nominees for Committee, so a vacancy was created, which has yet to be filled.

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 Society has been highly active in the period since my report in the August issue of the Newsletter. In part, this was due to our involvement in the 2022 Heritage Week programme; and in part also because of the coincidental culmination of a couple of Society projects. The Society's Heritage Week activities are reported on page 6.

Before the beginning of Heritage Week, at the Annual General Meeting, held on 21 August, the Society was pleased to welcome the Mayor, Cr Tina Liu, to launch the Jubilee history of the Society, written by me and recently published by the Society.

Copies of the book were then given to all members present, and later distributed to all other members. If there are readers who have not yet renewed their membership for the current year (2022-23), it may be that they have not received a copy. If so, receipt of your subscription will guarantee you a copy of this book.

On Thursday, 8 September, I had the great pleasure of introducing professor emeritus Graeme Davison AO, on the occasion of his giving the opening address for Heritage Week. Graeme is a Whitehorse resident, living in Mont Albert, on the Windsor Park Estate. His presentation dwelt on the circumstances around the creation of the estate and the people involved in its inception. He went on to consider the issues faced in conserving this heritage in a time of ongoing urban re-development.



BHHS president Dr Gary Presland pictured with Professor Graeme Davison AO, following Graeme's talk.

Perhaps the major event for the Society during Heritage Week was the launch, on Saturday, 10 September, of a series of recorded interviews of long-standing Chinese residents. This was a project for which we had received a grant, under the Local History Grants Scheme, and which was delayed by a number of unforeseen problems during the exercise. For this reason the successful completion of 'Chasing the Dragon's tale' was all the more pleasing. Details regarding the project are given on page 6, below.

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.

- Leah Mariani
- Margaret & Geoff Rockow
- Peter Chandler/ Sue Hopgood
- Wendy Bartlett

Forthcoming Society events

General meeting: **Sunday, 20 November 2.00 pm**

Speaker: Gary Bruce – A Pictorial History of Box Hill. Gary has spent many hours examining our vast collection of images, and has put together a wonderful collection of pictures showing the area throughout the years. We will also have a selection of short films, including an ABC clip of one of our famous Garden Shows, and a 1939 clip from a competition at Surrey Dive. Please join us for a great afternoon's viewing the old-fashioned way!

Whitehorse Spring Festival

The 2022 Whitehorse Spring Festival will be held at the Nunawading Community Hub and Tunstall Park, at 96–106 Springvale Road, Nunawading, from 10am to 4pm, on **Sunday 23 October**. The Society will be holding an information stall, so come along and learn about the Society and its activities, check out our indexes to see if you can find information about your family, house, club or community group, and peruse the history books we have on offer. We will also be holding a second-hand book sale, with all books priced at \$2. Volunteers to help with staffing the roster would be very much appreciated.

2022 Seniors Festival

The Seniors Festival is held during the month of October. Instead of our usual monthly meeting, the Society is holding a cemetery tour on Sunday, 16 October (details on page 3 of this Newsletter), and will be open every Tuesday as usual. The Society's archivist, who is an experienced genealogist and historian, will be available to help visitors research their family connections to the Box Hill area, using a variety of online sources. Anyone wishing to use this free service is urged to make a booking, via phone (9285 4808) or email (boxhillhistory@gmail.com), so as to avoid disappointment if others are there before them.

Return of steam trains

We have received the following notice from the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association, for the interest of readers:

To acknowledge the closing of the 132 year old Mont Albert Station, the Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association has been working with the Rotary Club of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills and Bread Street to bring the steam train to Mont Albert.

Tickets are now available to purchase for steam train rides to and from Mont Albert station on **Sunday 23 October**.

Please visit www.trybooking.com/CCREO for details.

MONT ALBERT

RAILWAY STATION

Celebrating
THE END OF AN ERA




Book a Steam Train ride now from the soon
to be closed historic Mont Albert Station

Sunday 23rd October

DON'T MISS OUT
BOOK ON LINE with QR Code or
<https://www.trybooking.com/CCREO>



Proudly brought to you by Surrey Hills and Mont Albert Progress Association, Bread Street and MASH Rotary



Recent speaker

Helen Harris OAM

A brief entry in a rate valuation was the beginning of what became a quite detailed search and subsequent presentation on the mysterious Paul Schifferdecker.

He first arrived in Melbourne in February 1910, travelling steerage class on the ship *Bremen*. In December that year SA newspapers reported on a swim he undertook, from Tailem Bend to Wellington, a distance of 9 miles, which took him 5½ hours. 'He was an enthusiast' wrote one reporter, '... was accomplished in the love of the game, had a fine physique, and weighed 16 stone 4 lbs.' There were a number of newspaper reports on other long distance swims that he completed over the next twenty or so years, including the annual Twickenham Ferry (Burnley) to Princes Bridge.

In July 1911 he obtained a grant of 640 acres of land in the newly opened subdivision of Cow Plain, now Cowangie, in the Parish of Tutye. He stated that he had been fruit growing and mixed farming in Germany for 10 years, had £50 cash at home, that he had an orchard of 73 acres valued at over £2,250, and that his brother and he intended working up an export trade between the two countries. He also wanted to make a home as he intended marrying about September.

In 1912 he successfully applied to become naturalized. The paperwork reveals that he was born 4 August 1877 at Elberfeld, a small town, and now a suburb of Wuppertal in Germany, about 35 km from Dusseldorf. He was 6ft tall, had fair hair and blue eyes. Despite an extensive search, no record of him or his family at Elberfeld has been located.

In the same year he helped establish a local Progress Association, became its first President, and was subsequently elected to the initial Walpeup Council, serving for a year; a re-election bid was unsuccessful.

Having secured land, he sent for his fiancée, Hanny Wilfan, and the pair were married in Adelaide in November 1912. They worked the land until early 1922, when it was put up for sale and the pair sailed to London. They returned in January 1923, and while temporarily staying at Box Hill (exact address unknown) Paul applied for another land grant, in an area close to his previous location. This land grant was not taken up however, instead they bought 6 allotments on the south eastern corner of Middleborough and Canterbury Roads, and initially established a poultry farm.

Getting involved with the local community was a natural for Paul, so, keeping up his swimming interests, he joined the Surrey Park Swim Club, and served as vice president and secretary of the club in 1926 and 1927. Sadly there is nothing about him in the club's published history.

In October 1925 Paul unsuccessfully applied to the Federal government, for permission for 2 people to visit – his sister in law Rosy Kraft, and a friend, Gus Froelich, described as a dog breeder.

In January 1928, his friend Gus Froelich arrived. As well as being a dog breeder, of Alsations, (German Shepherds) Froelich was the European champion backstroke swimmer, and the tour was one of a number of international tours he had undertaken. He commenced by giving demonstrations, then later took up coaching and decided to remain permanently in Australia.

In July 1929 newspapers announced the arrival of Froelich's Alsation dog champion, Armin Von Haus Nebel, known as Ali. Ali was also one of the last Alsations allowed in, as the breed was banned later that year, because of fears that they would breed with dingoes and attack sheep, even tho they had been bred originally to herd sheep. The dog was placed in Paul's Box Hill training kennel, Von Harpa, and newspapers extolled Paul's expertise in training dogs, while Hanny began breeding Alsations.



Paul Schifferdecker and his German shepherd dog provide a broadcast for 3AR. Mr. Schifferdecker's monthly talks on dogs are greatly appreciated.

Recent speaker (cont.)

In the same year, 1929, the Victorian Alsation Club was formed; Paul was an early member, and served on the committee from at least 1932. In 1934 he began regular monthly broadcasts 'From one dog lover to another' on 3AR; these continued until 1940.

He also served as a judge at various shows, including in Qld in 1937, where a newspaper reported that:

Mr. Schifferdecker has a 'guest house' for dogs, within two miles of Box Hill, where dogs are bred, trained, and boarded. The original intention was to train German shepherd dogs under Australian conditions as leads and guides to the blind. Such an institution was originally started at Nuremberg, and when Herr Hitler came into power was keenly supported by him, as he had been blind for several months during the war, and was naturally sympathetic ...

In 1938, newspapers reported that:

A movement which we warmly recommend has been started in Melbourne to enable sightless people to obtain the aid of a trained dog. The Guide Dog Training School has for its president Sir Stanley Argyle; for treasurer, the Mayor of Box Hill, [John Archer] and for secretary, Mr. P. Schifferdecker. This school will not only train dogs, but will, when properly established, invite successful applicants for a dog guide to stay at the school for a time free of charge, in order to become used to the dog allotted to them. Information on this most commendable movement may be obtained from the secretary, Box Hill, E.11, Victoria.

Several newspaper reports publicized the endeavour, and fundraising began. After several months however, news of the proposal disappeared. Later it was revealed that the outbreak of hostilities and the continued banning of the importation of Alsations, had killed it.

The outbreak of war saw the Australian government interning Germans, and, although the Schifferdeckers were exempt because of Paul's naturalization, their friend Gus Froelich was not. He was taken to Tatura prison camp, and not finally released from internment until 1945. He immediately returned to coaching swimmers and reinvented himself, setting up the Olympic swimming clubs in Melbourne. He trained a number of Olympians, his most famous being Lorraine Crapp and Faith Leech. He died in Sydney in 1968, and his life really deserves a full biography.

Although the rate books show that the Middleborough Road property, valued at over £900, was sold to Alice Wright of Eley Road around 1936, the Schifferdeckers may have stayed on for a few years. In 1945 Paul applied to the Federal government for permission to buy 436 Belmore Road, where he had been renting for the past 5 years. Like the earlier property, this one was fairly isolated. It consisted of an 1895 wooden house and stables, set in around 2½ acres and had been the property of the late Mrs Eliza Cleveland. There was no mention of dog training or kennels, rather it was to be a poultry farm, specifically raising ducks for the table.

There are brief newspaper references to his radio talks in 1949, but newspaper coverage concluded in that year. The dog training may have continued, but probably at a reduced rate, as by now the heart condition that would kill him had developed. He died at his home on 12 April 1956, aged 78. His will, made in 1947, left everything to Hanny, and directed that he be cremated. Probate documents show that the land was valued at £5,700, the only other asset was some furniture worth £72.

Hanny, with the aid of on-site nursing help, lived on at the property until her death on 22 October 1968. The house had been replaced by 2 flats, in one of which she lived, while the second held 2 single beds. Two nursing sisters, Rosemary Dickman De Vos and Wendy Elizabeth Theobald, both of the same address, were witnesses to the will. Her will directed that her body be cremated and 'scattered to the four winds', and that her 'beloved Gretyl' was to be euthanized by local vet John D. Arnott, 433 Mont Albert Road, and buried in her garden. Her main beneficiaries were her sister Rosy Kraft and brother Gustav, both of Vienna, while Thelma Robertson, 9 Oxford St Nunawading and her family were to receive the bulk of the estate if her sister Rosy predeceased her. Minor beneficiaries were neighbours Nancy and Eric Stevens, 444 Belmore Road who were left \$600 each and Nancy Godfrey, of 5 Benbrook Avenue Box Hill, who received \$200.

The estate was worth just over \$16,000, with the main asset being the land, which was quickly sold and subdivided. Today, nothing remains of the house, and the only signs of the Schifferdeckers are the entries in the rate book.

Archivist's report, October 2022

The President and I took a break mid-September to undertake a tour of some gardens in the high country of NSW and the ACT. Despite dire weather predictions for the areas we visited, we saw very little rain or bad weather. I'm very grateful to Caitlin Stevens for holding the fort on the two Tuesdays I was away, backed up by Ian Broadhead and John Barnao; I hope the experience was an enjoyable one for all concerned.

Pam Millist has commenced the very large task of preparing our catalogue for transfer to the Victoria Collections site. We have discovered anomalies and duplicate entries already, and are working through them.

Indexing of the rate valuation books continues, with West Ward 1954–1984 almost complete. While I have checked some of the entries so far, there were still be around 8 books to be checked once the data have been compiled. After the data input and checking has been completed, the index will be added to the existing indexes on our website. That will leave only South Ward to complete the coverage for this period.

Scanning of the Scrapbooks also continues, thanks to Kevin Peowrie. We are still waiting to hear whether our SRL grant application has been successful.

'til next time,

Helen

Heritage Week Report

Heritage Week was held 8–15 September, and we took the opportunity, fitting in with the theme of 'They came to Whitehorse', to launch our Chinese Oral histories videos. The videos were online on the Council's website for the week; we are investigating making them permanently available on our own website in the future via a link to Youtube. A series of coreflute panels featuring the interviewees was also prepared and were on display at Box Hill Library. These can be reused, perhaps for the next Chinese New Year Festival.

Professor Graeme Davison's talk on the history of the Windsor Park estate, and comments on future urban planning in the area, proved of great interest to all who attended. We are grateful to Graeme for giving of his valuable time.

In addition, the Society produced a brief PowerPoint display titled 'Box Hill Vignettes', which focused on 5 individuals who lived a part of their life in this area. This presentation was also placed on the Council's website.

We combined with Surrey Hills Historical Society to conduct a cemetery tour on the theme of 'They stayed in Whitehorse', which was quite successful.

Lastly, our retiring committee member Shane Hübner conducted another Trivia Night for us. This event netted \$1,115 for the Society. As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, Shane has stepped down from the committee and moved to Queensland. We will greatly miss his practical assistance, but have to agree with him that it is a bit far to travel from Brisbane for committee meetings!



Interviewees pictured with the BHHS president: (Back row, L-R) Rosie Low, Dr Gary Presland, Nicholas Wynn; (Front row, L-R) Gordon Low and Betsy Louey Gung. (Lawrence Law, another individual who was interviewed, was unable to attend the launch.)

Readers are notified of an impending public meeting to discuss a range of issue arising from the planned construction of the Suburban Rail Loop. These include the likely impacts on local built environments, significant changes to current planning procedures, and possible higher density in housing. Details of the meeting are given in the brochure reproduced here.

Surrey Hills & Mont Albert Planning Forum

Suburban Rail Loop

How it will impact you

**20 October
7:30pm**

**Surrey Hills
Uniting Church
Hall**

**681
Canterbury
Road**

**Cnr. Valonia
Avenue**

**Join us in
person or
via Zoom**

**Booking link
below**



Join us for an in-depth discussion between planning experts Michael Buxton and Marianne Richards on the challenges and impacts of the Suburban Rail Loop on the Surrey Hills & Mont Albert communities. A Q&A with members of the audience will follow and is encouraged. Local MPs and candidates have been invited to attend.

- Projects such as the Suburban Rail Loop give unprecedented planning powers to the state government with councils and residents sidelined.
- What would ordinarily be a council planning control will now pass to a single state government authority.
- Developments in precincts extending 1.6km from SRL stations such as Box Hill, each covering 8 sq. km, will affect the amenity and heritage of suburbs such as Mont Albert and Surrey Hills
- Densification of our neighbourhood with more high rise developments is likely.
- The state government does not need to advise communities of the size and height of these developments.
- Planning controls and processes will be simplified to favour fast tracking of medium and high density development.

For more information or to register your attendance for either the in-person event or Zoom please enter the following TryBooking link into your browser or use the QR code.

www.trybooking.com/CCWSE



Panellists:

Box Hill



Michael Buxton

Emeritus Professor
Environment and Planning
at RMIT University



Marianne Richards

President of Town and
Country Planning
Association Inc

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.