



St Kilda Historical Society

No. 174 July 2005 ABN:25 188 646 275

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings and a warm welcome to all the new members who have recently joined us.

Most of you would be aware of the recent donation by the Novotel Hotel to the SKHS of the neon skating girl sign which adorned the roof of St Moritz ice-skating rink from 1939 to 1981. One of our members, Lyn Payne is attempting to arrange its exhibition at the Treasury Museum, which would give the public an opportunity to view what will no doubt become the centerpiece of our collection.

Thanks to members, John Hulskamp and Mark Barry, both computers in our St Kilda library office are now equipped with ADSL fast internet access and Filemaker Pro 6 software for the collection. And a high quality printer is also installed.

Please note that the SKHS office is not a sacrosanct place. Members should feel very welcome to access it on Saturday mornings, general meetings, planning meetings, or by arrangement **at any time**.

Planning meetings are now the **first** and **third** Tuesday of the month at 6.30 pm at the office and all members are more than welcome to participate (just confirm meetings are on by calling 9537 0951).

Two of our SKHS books, "Hotels" and "Buildings" have sold out but we have recently reprinted more copies, which can be purchased at meetings or from the front desk of the St Kilda library. John is also coordinating a new printed update of "Cinemas".

The AGM and Election will soon be upon us – on 11 September and notices for same are attached. I encourage anyone interested in being on the committee to put your name forward.

Don't forget there is a prize for the winning nomination of a banner name for our newsletter.

Our family are great fans of Sir John Monash and I recently gave my brother, Aaron, a copy of Elwood writer John Perry's wonderful biography for his birthday. I am delighted therefore that Roland has graciously agreed to speak to us on 13 November. Don't miss this!

Meyer

HERITAGE PLAQUES

– City of Port Phillip

SKHS Members are urgently invited to forward suggestions (to Peter Johnson) for additional heritage plaques to be considered by CoPP's Heritage Recognition Committee.

SKHS 2005 COMMENDATION

"Pots, Punks and Punters: A History of the Hotels of St Kilda and South Melbourne" a SKHS publication written by Becky Aizen, received a Commendation in one of six categories — *Community Research, Register and Records* — in the recent 2005 Victorian Community History Awards. The judges said the publication's illustrations make it clear that although the two suburbs are neighbours, — the style of their pubs differ markedly and South Melbourne's pubs have a unity of appearance that is probably unique in Melbourne.

And a reminder that last year, another of our SKHS publications, "The Spirit of St Kilda: Places of Worship in St Kilda" written by Janette Bomford, received a similar commendation. The judges then said that this book is an interesting guide to approx. thirty places of worship in St Kilda. It includes photographs, a glossary of architectural terms and an overview of the role of religious worship in the area's social and architectural history.

SKHS congratulates the overall Victorian Community History Award Winners for 2005 – authors Justin Corfield, Dorothy Wickham and Clare Gervasoni for their work, *The Eureka Encyclopaedia* .(FB)

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Archival team is currently working on cataloguing 3-D objects ranging from household items, such as kitchen utensils through to tools and trade equipment as well as apparel. Most items have been donated to the SKHS and are *circa* 50 to 100 years old. All have a story to tell. Also being carried out is preliminary sorting of 2-D items — original photographs, photocopies, news pics, clippings, articles, local newspapers, etc.

Cataloguing involves imaging, describing and dating each object/item — measurements, material and condition along with some educated guesswork and interpreting skills — to determine its history and original use. In the near future, catalogue information will be entered into the SKHS computer data base. This will not only help members who are interested in local history research and conserve our heritage but will also help volunteers acquire some computer and data processing skills.

Volunteers are urgently required to assist with either the cataloguing on Thursday mornings from 10-12 in the Library Basement or data entering on Saturday mornings in the SKHS office (Library) from 10-12. Email: meyereidelson@yahoo.com or call Meyer on 9690 9584, mobile 0408 894 724. (Mark)

Letters to SKHS:

from *Shirley Westaway* Research Officer
for the Foster and District Historical Society

Re: **A Place to Amble** by Patricia Convery

The story of the Blessington Street Gardens (May N/L) got me going. English migrants, Mr and Mrs Scoble lived there and their daughter, Margaret, was my school chum for many years so we were frequently in each other's homes. As I was living in a gardenless flat, it was rather special to have not only the Gardens nearby but also the private gardens around the Scoble's home.

Mrs Scoble waited until after school to feed the birds and she took special care of a kookaburra with a broken beak which would never have survived without her care. It was quite tame like others in the garden, and lived for years.

From time to time I'd be invited to see what Mr Scoble had in his glasshouse. I discovered that tuberoses were magic and really special, – like nothing our relatives grew in their gardens.

Out of the blue one day, Margaret told us that her dad was trying to grow square tomatoes. Could we believe that? There was a great area given over to these tomatoes and the trials went on for a very long time. It was true, square tomatoes designed to fit into cans. Decades later when they became a reality, I remembered that I'd had the privilege of seeing the beginnings of what eventually led to distinct varieties including the now familiar Roma and Apollo varieties.

Re: **"Poets' Corner"**

refer May N/L

As far as I can remember (ca 1938), the flats at the corner of Mitford and Southey Streets carried the name 'Poets Corner' which I always thought was clever of the builders (or developers as they would now be known). But apart from this building there was nothing else that had the name.

I'm not sure, but it is possible that the flats were built around the time we moved there as I remember going to a building site after school to collect "hoppy taws" from the builders' rubbish. Broken bits of colored tiles were highly prized as we raced home (four doors from the corner of Dickens Street) again to chalk out hopscotch games on the concrete and kick our easily identifiable tiles around.

*Whether this site was actually **Poets' Corner** or some other place close by, the flats were certainly very new at this time.*

As I've never seen any maps of early St Kilda I don't know what the original land titles were but I've always thought growing up in St Kilda meant that a good deal of general knowledge was not necessarily learned but absorbed into the brain in much the same way as Vitamin D is absorbed into the skin from the sun. So, I just knew all those streets were named for famous poets and writers long before I ever read anything they'd written: and as my father began his school days at Brighton Road SS around 1910 when his family lived at Balaclava, I also knew about those Crimean battles that are commemorated in that area. (SW)

THE ELWOOD ENTITY

by
Meyer Eidelson

This is an extract from Meyer's coming book on the History of Elwood which will be available for sale from SKHS and the Library at the end of this year.

If stately houses we erect,
And therein think to take delight,
On what a sudden we are checked,
And all our hopes made groundless quite!
One little sparks in ashes lays
What we were building half our days.
Thomas Ellwood (1639-1713)

The suburb of Elwood is located eight kilometres south of Melbourne in the City of Port Phillip, on the crescent of Hobson's Bay between the seaside suburbs of Brighton and St Kilda.

For eighty years Elwood was the south ward of St Kilda but who has ever called it South St Kilda? It has always retained a distinctive identity due to its beginnings as a suburb that no one really wanted.

Its name was chosen by Charles La Trobe, the Superintendent of Melbourne who, as well as being a poet, musician and artist, had trained to be a Moravian minister. He first found a use for Elwood when he galloped down to Point Ormond to select a quarantine site for a plague ship in the winter of 1840. Somehow he was inspired to name this isolated, windy and beautiful place after a poet and religious rebel.

Thomas Ellwood's life and times is vividly described in his autobiography "The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood, Written by his Own Hand" including descriptions of the English prisons where he was confined for following the Quaker faith. He was the educated son of a bullying Oxfordshire squire, but threw in his lot with the radical "Friends" who proclaimed the equality of all people. He was also a close friend of early Quaker, William Penn – to whom the King of England, in 1681, "granted", Pennsylvania, where Ellwood City stands today.

Ellwood's "A Collection of Poems on Various Subjects" was published in 1710. Employed as reader and assistant to the blind poet, John Milton, Thomas Ellwood inspired a group of (discerning) St Kilda Councillors, in 1857, to suggest naming local streets after other poets.

Poets' Corner

Refer: *SE Query*; May Newsletter

As far as we know, the answer to the actual location of *Poets' Corner* appears to be: The north-east corner of the Elwood swamp aka St Kilda Park, approximately at the intersection of the Broadway with Goldsmith Street. The park used to be known as the *Poets' Corner Reserve*. So, where the block of flats is situated – Southey and Mitford Streets – is not strictly correct. See also Elizabeth Parson's drawing of circa 1885 at <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/pictoria/b/2/7/doc/b27372.shtml-image.tiff>. (PRJ)

First Poets' Corner

The original Poets' Corner, in the south transept of Westminster Abbey in London, was not originally intended as a resting place or memorial to British poets. The first poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, 1342-1400, was buried there — not (reputedly) because he wrote the *Canterbury Tales*, circa 1387 — but because he had been Clerk of Works in Westminster Palace. And, after his "adventures" in Ireland, Edmund Spenser, 1553-1599, of *Faerie Queene* fame, was also laid to rest there. These two tombs begin a tradition which has evolved over the centuries.

Technically, it's not a corner, nor is it occupied exclusively by poets. Playwrights, authors, actors and musicians may also be "found" in the transept. Browning, Camden, Dickens, Dryden, Hardy, Kipling, Olivier, Sheridan and Tennyson are among the well and lesser-known figures interred within. It seems that Mitford, Southey, Goldsmith, Herbert and Blessington are not (yet) commemorated while others — such as Burns, Bronte (sisters), Byron, Keats, Marlowe, Milton, Ruskin, Shakespeare, Shelley, Scott, and Wordsworth — are buried elsewhere but are now honoured with memorials in Poets' Corner, Westminster.

Many of the above names along with a few early Australian literary figures such as Daley, Gordon and Lawson are also immortalised in the leafy suburb of Elwood. (FB)

Resource: www.victorianweb.org/authors

GRAHAM KENNEDY'S CHILDHOOD HOME

For SKHS members without access to the internet, the N/L editor has downloaded the following press release issued by CoPP www.portphillip.vic.gov.au.

Graham Kennedy's childhood home at 32 Nelson Street, Balaclava is now honoured with a plaque from the City of Port Phillip.

Mayor, Darren Ray said that "Graham Kennedy is without doubt Balaclava's most famous son. This community is saddened to learn of Graeme's death and offers its deepest condolences to his family and friends," he said. "It's just coincidence that the plaque was installed the same week as Graham Kennedy died".

The plaque to honour Australia's 'King of Comedy' is one of twenty-one being installed throughout the municipality as part of the City of Port Phillip's historical recognition strategy, adopted three years ago. Cr Ray explained that the installation of the plaque had been delayed as it couldn't fit on the narrow footpath in Nelson Street. "Fortunately, the current owners have agreed for a footing and plinth to go in the front garden for the plaque," he said.

The plaque is 20 cm in diameter and reads, 'Graham Kennedy, 'The King' of Melbourne radio and television, lived here from about 1940. As a young child, he moved with his mother into his grandparents' house at this address. He attended Euston College, on the corner of Chapel and Carlisle Streets, then Caulfield North Central School. Kennedy lived here until at least 1957, when he first appeared on *In Melbourne Tonight*."

In Graeme Blundell's 2003 biography, *King: the Life and Comedy of Graham Kennedy*, Graham Kennedy described himself in a typically self-deprecating way: "I'm just a sad little weird kid from Balaclava with funny eyes."

Other people who have already been recognised by plaques include Albert Tucker, Sidney Nolan, James Service and Walter Lindrum. Each heritage marker includes the statement: "This site is located on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung people".

Cr Ray said that the council is compiling a master list of other potential sites deserving of recognition. "To research and install 21 plaques costs around \$30,000, a very modest outlay for the layers of meaning that they add to our municipality. "With some of the oldest suburbs in Melbourne, the City of Port Phillip possesses an unusually rich historical heritage but most residents and visitors remain unaware of all but the obvious important locations, personalities or events. The heritage markers are one way of changing all this", he said. www.portphillip.vic.gov.au.

Seeking:- James Basil Cowan 48th Squadron RAF

You may be surprised to receive an e-mail from the other side of the globe. I am the chairman of the local historical society "Heemkring Karel Van de Poelle" in the town of Lichtervelde (province West-Flanders in Belgium).

We are currently preparing (for publication in 2008) a book about the four years of the First World War in our town — what sort of impact the German occupation had on the daily life of our people, by which events the people of Lichtervelde were confronted with the cruelty of war, etc.)

On October 3rd, 1918, a young Australian pilot crashed with his aeroplane, a few miles south of the town centre of Lichtervelde. He was initially buried near a cross surrounded by a few lime trees, in the vicinity of a farmhouse. After the war his remains were exhumed and taken to the New British Cemetery in Dadizele.

His name was James Basil Cowan. He was a 24 year old lieutenant in the 48th Squadron RAF. On his headstone in Dadizele it reads: native of St. Kilda. In the records of the British War Graves Commission, he is mentioned as: son of Mr. and Mrs. A. D. Cowan of Melbourne, Australia. We would like to include a few paragraphs about James Cowan in the book we are currently preparing.

Searching the Internet for additional information about St Kilda, I found the website of your Historical Society, and I therefore wonder if someone in your organisation could provide me with some details about James Cowan's background, his family, his career in the Air Force, perhaps a photograph or a copy of an In Memoriam card.

It goes without saying that expenses for postage of copywork will be reimbursed.

Filip Van Devyvere
Burg. Callewaertlaan, 20
B 8810 Lichtervelde, Belgium
vandevyvere.f@belgacom.net]

DIY Historical Research

As SKHS is a completely voluntary organization, we do not have the resources to carry out detailed research on individual properties or families ourselves. However, we can send a list of our members who undertake research on a professional basis.

Why not try doing some research yourself. Here is a list of references which may prove helpful:

(a) City of Port Phillip Heritage

Collection: talk to Kaye Rowan, Local History Librarian, 9209 6558

(b) **St Kilda Rate Rolls, Voter Rolls:** for the names of property owners; available on microfilm in the Local History Room at the St Kilda Library.

(c) Sands & McDougall's

Melbourne Directories: for names of property occupants; available on microfiche at St Kilda Library, the SLV and possibly your local library.

(d) **VARDY Plans:** Shows houses existing in St Kilda in 1872; allotment plans, house outlines and whether brick or timber. Available at St Kilda Library & State Library.

(e) **Melbourne Mansions Index:** Lists owners, architects & houses built prior to 1900; compiled by the Univ. of Melbourne Architecture Faculty. Search by house name or street & suburb. Web site at: <http://finpro.arbld.unimelb.edu.au:8080/melbmansions/default.htm>

(f) **MMBW Plans:** 1"= 40'; Houses existing in c1900: shows allotment plans, house & garden outlines; available at the State Library Maps Section or UM Archives.

(g) **SLV Biographical Index:** - available on microfiche at the State Library & perhaps your local library.

(h) **SLV Genealogy Search Engines:-** <http://www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au./slv/genealogy/internet/engines.html>

When you have completed your work, the SKHS would be very keen to obtain a copy of your notes and any other documents that you have found for our archives.

The SKHS is gradually building up a collection of family, house and street histories. These will improve our knowledge of the area and greatly assist researchers in the future.

For any further information, e-mail me at prj@bigpond.net.au
Peter Johnson,
SKHS Heritage Officer.



St Kilda Historical Society

Free Public Events 2005

Members' general meeting at 2.30 pm. Public speakers start at 3.00 pm approximately.

10 JULY 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.
St Kilda library
community room

14 AUGUST 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.
St Kilda library
community room

11 SEPTEMBER 2005

Room open 2.00 pm
AGM 2.30 pm
Speaker 3.00 pm
St Kilda library community room

9 OCTOBER 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.
St Kilda library community room
moving to collection room under
St Kilda library.

13 NOVEMBER 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 pm
St Kilda library community room

11 DECEMBER 2005

Sunday @ 2.30 pm
Location to be announced

Public Meetings are held at the St Kilda Library community room, 150 Carlisle Street, St Kilda, 3183, on the second Sunday of each month unless otherwise stated. Collection item of the month displayed. Public welcome. Admittance free.

GREAT ART DECO OF ST KILDA

Robin Grow, President of the Art Deco Society of St Kilda enlightens us how St Kilda came to be home to some of Australia's earliest and finest apartments, many of them stunning examples of the art deco movement.

CELEBRATING ELWOOD

Meyer Eidelson and Beverly Broadbent talk on the history of Elwood including Beverly's recently published book on her ancestors, John and Mary Broadbent, the first settlers of Elwood.

(Note the historical walk (see below) through Elwood village at 10.00 am with Elwood residents telling their stories - bookings 9209 6229.)

THE GREENING OF ST KILDA + AGM

Neil Blake OAM highlights the history of the environmental movement in St Kilda. For over two decades, Neil has been in the forefront of radical changes including Earthcare, the Ecocentre, the Penguin Sanctuary, West Beach, Albert Park Lake, indigenous plants movement and seaweed re-use.

ST MORITZ AND SKHS COLLECTION OPEN DAY

Learn about historic St Moritz and the Skating Girl neon sign recently donated by Novotel to the Society's collection.

The SKHS collection will be open to the public with a talk and tour from our archivist team.

JOHN MONASH – THE OUTSIDER WHO WON A WAR

Don't miss internationally acclaimed Elwood writer, Roland Perry, talking on his award-winning book on one of our greatest Australians.

END OF YEAR EVENT

Join SKHS as we celebrate the milestones of 2005 with food and wine including presentations. Venue to be announced.

WALKING ST KILDA 2005

Conducted Walks, courtesy of the City of Port Phillip, are free to the public. Bookings are essential.

Bkgs & Details: Phone Krys Galas; **Ph. 9209 6229**

Tuesday 19 July, 7pm

The Dark Side of St Kilda

Sunday 14 August, 10am

Explore Elwood Village

Sunday 11 September, 10am

The Fall of Sebastopol

Sunday 20 November, 10am

Grand Boulevard, St Kilda Rd

(BYO tram ticket.)

RHSV: 239 a'Beckett St, City; Ph: 9326 9288

Entry via **William Street**. Public Speakers: 2nd Tuesday each month, 5.45PM; Members Free, Non-members \$5.50;

Coffee/tea available from 5.15PM.

Tuesday 12 July @ 5.45pm: Judith Penrose: *The Rail Tale*

PORT WOMEN ON DISPLAY

A display of memorabilia, photos and documents of around thirty five Port Melbourne women is currently in preparation by the Port Melbourne historical society.

The Display will be held over a period of two weeks from the 17th October in the Port Town Hall gallery and in parts of Port Library. The front pod of the library will hold costumed figures and the video pod will be used for Gerry Mann's story, as her daughter is preparing a video of her performances.

In conjunction with the October Display, a catalogue, containing the women's life stories, will also be published by the Port Melbourne historical society. This is being written by a variety of people – friends and relations, interested parties from the historical society and the public, including those who proposed the names, researchers, quotes from those who knew or know them – as well as excerpts from various other publications. There will also be ancillary events such as book launches, lectures, etc. upstairs. [Contact patgrainger@access.net.au for details.]