

Things Past

Newsletter 55 September 2012
Mount Evelyn History Group Inc
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Dates for your diary

Wayne Knoll, blogger of 'Pioneers of Silvan, South Wandin or The Mountain' will be our speaker, Saturday 22 September, 1.30pm Mt Evelyn RSL Hall.

History Group meeting, Thursday 25 October, 7.30pm Hardy House.

Commemorative Lighting Switch-on

The commemorative lighting at the Mt Evelyn RSL Memorial Garden was turned on at a ceremony on 16 August.

Protocol dictates that the Australian flag may not be flown at night unless it is illuminated. The new lighting will allow the flag to fly 24 hours a day. Mt Evelyn RSL President Roger Boness hoped that the flag would remind everyone passing by, day or night, of the sacrifices made by our service men and women to preserve our freedom.

The lighting installation was supported by Yarra Ranges Council and Lilydale Rotary.

The lighting marks the third stage of a five-stage development of the park. The paths have been resurfaced and memorial plaques installed. The RSL has acquired a Vietnam



War howitzer, which will be located in the park (date and exact site not yet certain).

The final stage will involve building up the side of the park, forming an amphitheatre to provide a better view for those attending ceremonies.

RSL members were impressed with the 'Lest We Forget' mural on the side of the Youth Enterprise Shed (Y.E.S.) that faces the garden. A presentation was made to youth worker Brad Colling and the young people from the Y.E.S. who painted the mural.



Clockwise from top right: gathering round the flag for the switch-on ceremony; the lone piper; the lights come on; detail of the mural; the Youth Enterprise Shed with mural. Photos Kevin Phillips.

'In sunny Queensland' – camels and bougainvillea

Robyn Taylor's talk 'Camels to Cars' described how her grandmother, Rachel Gwendolen Hiscock, went to live on a cattle station in outback Queensland. Below are some extracts from a newspaper article that Gwen wrote about her experiences 'In sunny Queensland'.

My first impressions of a real bush home were very different from the pictures painted or described for me by my city friends. When I beheld Norley homestead ... a well-built brick house and wide verandahs greeted my vision; no log-cabin or lean-to here A spacious bedroom with three French doors was thrown open. It was cool, large, and airy, and so like a city room that I was almost disappointed ... but, when my head touched the pillow, and I thought of the great distance we had traversed, those 700 long miles from Adelaide, the same number from Brisbane, and no railway within a hundred miles, I knew we were in the bush.

I was a new chum, but every one forgave me that, and received me as a good omen. You see, the drought broke while we were journeying, and I was therefore able to say I had brought rain from Adelaide. But the wet prevented me (like Mrs. Gunn in 'We of the Never Never') from obtaining my personal belongings, which, by the way, were left at Broken Hill to travel per camel, three months after my residence at Norley. Every morning I would sing ... 'The camels are coming, hurrah! hurrah!' and like the invariable Christmas, they did eventually come, but, in the meantime 12 weeks with two dresses and a like number of blouses would have been tragical for me, had not kind friends come to the rescue. Fortunately the camels arrived just as Mr. W., the manager, offered me some old sacks or branbags.

A huge pointsiana tree, laden with scarlet blossoms, shaded the bough shed (summer house), and here many a pleasant hour was spent. School lessons were never a success in this ideal spot, on account of beautiful butterflies and moths distracting the children's attention, so ... we older ones did sewing, and delighted in the sylvan view of vines bowed down with grapes, and glimpses of the river through the trees. Bougainvillea creepers flowered in profusion, and made a wealth of purple colour. A lady who visited us was entranced with the flower, and when this

became known every one, from the store-keeper to the smallest child, presented her every day with bouquets to wear at dinner. At that sumptuous meal she always appeared bedecked with the royal-coloured blossom, and so became known as Madame Bougainvillea.

The larder and its contents astonished me the first few weeks, but one soon becomes accustomed to the 'largeness' of things. One word here for our worthy cook. Hers is a busy life. Imagine a huge kitchen quite apart from the other buildings, two big stoves in an open fireplace, tremendous caldrons and boilers for the ever-needed hot water, and many pots besides. Here on an average a bag of flour is used in a week, eight loaves of bread baked each day, while a bag of sugar lasts barely six days. When all hands are home a bullock is killed every fourth day. So one realizes that the cook has quite a little township to cater for. It was an education to watch our cook; she never became flustered or excited, and her kitchen was spotless. She always found time, no matter how busy, to offer hot cakes, buns, or a 'dainty', at morning and afternoon teatime.

Our stores and provisions came by camel and bullock teams, and it was a gala day when a loading arrived mid a cloud of dust. One particular loading, I remember, came by a train of 70 camels, all well laden. The great and wonderful creatures moved noiselessly along the track of sand from the gate to the store. Here they were bidden to bend, or sit down, while their burdens were removed, and an excited little crowd of station folk helped or hindered. The children were granted a holiday, the cook promised goodies if she could secure certain cases, the women-folk wondered and planned where household requisites could be stowed, the blacks danced wildly for long-promised wearing apparel, the black boys waited about for pipes, while the storekeeper, the busiest and most important of all men, tried to make order out of the chaos and arrange things shop-like fashion in his store. An Afghan noticed another girl and myself watching a docile animal, and he invited us to mount and have a ride. We did so, and it was a novel experience for city-bred maids. I can only describe it as our 'half-way to Heaven for sixpence' trip, and wonder if flying in an aeroplane causes a more exalted feeling.

By R.G.H., Journal, 20/27 April 1918

Continued next month

Bali and Java

From *Things Past* 54

Rather than the rigid caste system associated with Hinduism in India, Bali has a complex system of status, not unlike those used in modern computer games, derived not only from history and birth, but linked to skills, religion and occupation. Metal workers have the highest status.

Balinese names typically consist of three elements, birth order (cycling through 1st to 4th), a title indicating 'caste' (such as priest/teacher: *brahmana*; warrior/king: *satria*, merchant/underlord: *wesya*; or commoner: *sudra*), and a personal, given name.

The Balinese are mainly Hindu, though there are Moslem, Buddhist and Christian minorities. Villages have at least three temples, each with a written charter of members' rules and obligations. The head of staff at my homestay mentioned that he had woken very early that morning in order to clean the temple in his village before coming to work. He explained that one of the guests had gone outside the homestay on Nyepi Day ('Day of Silence', New Year's Eve by the Saka calendar). He was working off their transgression for a month or more.

'Homestay' is slightly misleading, as my room was like a small motel room, with ensuite and even airconditioning. These rooms are built in people's back gardens as a source of income. You walk past the family's outdoor living areas and the buildings housing the staff, who are village people working for a low wage in return for their keep, training and learning English. Balinese people speak both Balinese and Indonesian (similar to Malaysian) but address Australians, Japanese and Europeans in their own languages. Once I was addressed in Dutch, followed by a rapid switch to English.

A fascinating aspect of Balinese life is the irrigation of rice paddies. This allows crops to be grown in cycles all year with no rest period, one of the reasons Bali was wealthier than other parts of Indonesia. The rice paddies are terraced and irrigated by water diverted from (man-made) underground tunnels in the lava to canals, ditches, tunnels and terraces. Who gets the water and when is decided by the *subak* or irrigation organisation.

Java and Bali are within sight of each other and their cultures have been mixed for at least two thousand years. Yet Java is Moslem and Bali Hindu. Bali has great numbers of Australians



Paula and sister-in-law Deb at the Buddhist temple Borobudur, Java. Every niche and stupa housed a statue of the seated Buddha. The sarongs are required attire for visitors entering temples and can be bought on site.

and Europeans living there or visiting but in Java we were such a novel sight that we were mobbed for photos and interviews by students learning English. We took a guided tour of some parts of Java, including the recently excavated Candi Sambisar, the Prambanan World Heritage Compounds, and Borobudur.

Prambanan comprises the three main temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma with the three *Wahana* (Vehicle) Temples and surrounded by 224 *Perwara* (Shrines). The temple complex was built around 900AD (Angkor Wat in Cambodia, part of the same culture, dates from the early 12th century) and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1991. The bas reliefs along the sides of the Prambanan temples depict the Hindu legends of *Ramayana* and *Krishnayana*. This is a heritage site, not an active temple.

Borobudur is the largest active Buddhist temple in South East Asia. It is built as a pyramid with three main layers – the lower Everyday level, above this the Transition level, and upper levels including the central 'Nirvana' levels. Steve and Deb had visited eighteen years before, when Borobudur was out in the middle of a paddock. They had been amazed that it wasn't better known in Australia, since it is so close.

On the second day we rose early to catch the sunrise over a volcano that had recently destroyed villages. The effects of volcanic eruptions, such as ash gathered in heaps and reused for building, and ruined villages being resurrected, were new to me. The people in Bali and Java, but especially Java, live within sight of volcanoes, which are a dangerous part of everyday life.

Paula Herlihy

Don't cut the Kurragongs!

I came across this snippet from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1883, quoting the *Government Gazette* of the previous day. See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13534730>.

The Kurragong Tree.—Under the provisions of the 34th section of the Timber Regulations of 24th September, 1878, all Kurragong trees are exempted from the operation of licenses to cut timber. Crown lessees are cautioned against cutting down the Kurragong Tree, as by so doing the young shoots being within reach of stock any new growth is destroyed, and the result is that the tree is exterminated. When in time of drought this tree is required for feed, the lighter branches only should be lopped.

The 'Kurragong' is of course the Currajong or Illawarra Flame Tree, *Brachychiton acerifolius*. Mt Evelyn's iconic specimen in Wray Crescent is thought to be nearly 90 years old. Alf Knowles remembered it as a sapling when he was a boy, so it was probably planted some time in the 1920s.

Books by Gary Harper

We have had an inquiry about books by the late Gary Harper. Gary was the author of *Memoirs of a Tram Driver*, c.1993 and *The Warburton Train, a Railway of Yesterday*, 1997. Does anyone know where to obtain copies of these books, or have contact details for Gary's family?

Furthermore ...

Mr Henderson Re the wartime letter from flower farmer Mr O. Henderson (*Things Past* 54), I should have mentioned that it was dated 21 December 1941 and addressed to a Mr Rose. Cordite Avenue passes the munitions works in Maribyrnong.

Quietways Rosemary Baker told us that the house Quietways (*Things Past* 50) was owned by Lilydale photographer Karl Mandl before the land was subdivided. The access road to the subdivision is Mandl Close.

Road name Thank you to members who suggested names for the road through Morrisons Reserve. We sent the list of your suggestions to Cr Tim Heenan and Craig Sutherland at Council. They have decided to propose 'Burdap Drive'. *Burdap* was the Woiwurrung word for 'good'.

Pre-fabs (*Things Past* 52-54) For the history of prefabricated buildings in Australia, see:

Miles Lewis, 'The Diagnosis of Prefabricated Buildings', http://www.ashadocs.org/aha/03/03_04_Lewis.pdf

- 'Prefabrication in Australasia', <http://www.mileslewis.net/lectures/10-australian-building/15-prefabrication.pdf>

- 'The Asian trade in portable buildings', http://espace.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ%3A13427/n04_031_Lewis.pdf;

- 'Jolimont in context', <http://www.mileslewis.net/lectures/11-local-history/jolimont.pdf>

Simon Reeves, 'The Walmsley House at Royal Park, La Trobe's "Other" Cottage' <http://www.builtheritage.com.au/downloads/walmsley.pdf>

'Woodlands', Heritage Council Victoria, http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/45258/Woodlands.pdf

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for August 2012 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.*

Mt Ev	Melb	Melb Av
86.2mm	52.6mm	50.0mm

* McKillop readings not available this month. Melbourne figures from Bureau of Meteorology website.



'Narcissus'

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