



Newsletter 7, June 2008

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc.

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Dates for your diary

June meeting: Tuesday 24th June, 7.30 pm at Morrison House.

Phil Garland will speak on Victorian, pre-Federation and Boer War military history up to 1902, illustrated with his collection of weapons and live ammunition. Saturday 26th July, 1 pm in the Mt Evelyn Community Room.

Is this the most interesting house in Mt Evelyn?

Mt Evelyn identity Cedric Louis Hordern had connections with two interesting houses in Mt Evelyn. The first is *Cirdec* (*Cedric* reversed, now *Dalmeny*), an architect designed house built in Johns Crescent about 1923 by his grandmother Mrs Harriet Hordern. This house was nominated to be included in the Yarra Ranges Shire Heritage Study by the Mt Evelyn History Group, as the first brick house constructed in Mt Evelyn, so some of its story is known.

Cedric met his future wife, Olive, in 1936 when he was living at *Cirdec* and she was holidaying at Mt Evelyn with her family in Spring Road (now Marshall Street). They were married on August 21st 1937 at Scotch College (Cedric's school) and honeymooned at Mount Evelyn.

Cedric built the second house, assisted by Olive and their three young sons, at 16 Hordern Road. They were unable to get a permit for the full house because of restrictions due to the War, but the excavations were commenced in 1948. Ced used a 1926 Essex with a piece of wood clamped across the front plus a towing ball in the middle, to move earth in a trailer being either towed or pushed by the car. Earth was shovelled into the trailer, the car was backed to the road then driven forward, pushing the trailer forward to dump the soil at the front to build up as the existing terrace. This mechanical ingenuity was typical of Cedric.



1951 view of house prior to moving in.

A 1½ cubic ft concrete mixer was used to pave the foundations. The frame was put up, roof tiles put on, and the main plastering was done inside. At that point Ced and his family moved in, two years after starting. The rest of the house was built later. Some window frames were done by then, and some were done later, but the window sashes came up in the move with them. Ced had a circular saw in the lounge and a buzzer in the hall for the long pieces of wood. It was a few years more before even this first part of the house was complete, with Ced working weeknights after work as well as weekends.

The weatherboards are of Piranha Pine, 11½ inches wide out of 12-inch timber, so that only 9 weatherboards are required for the height of the house. Only 1,340 foot of weatherboards were used in the whole house.

Considerable thought was given to convenience in the design of the electric light switches. For example the lights in the kitchen can be switched from 3 points using Intermediate switches 2-way at each end. The switches for the lower hall are 4-way to fit the fact that there are four possible points of entry to the hall. In several of the built-in wardrobes, an interior light comes on when the door is opened, as in a refrigerator. The lighting in the main room is via concealed fluorescent tubes, plus two incandescent downlights built into the ceiling. There is an intercom system built into the house, but unused now. The mains wires coming in are capable of 30 amps and the 3 phase was added later.

The house feature never forgotten is the sight of the 14' by 6' 8" wall between the main lounge and the outside patio, gracefully descending into the floor at the flick of a switch, to create a large inside/outside entertaining area. The wall is controlled by mains pressure water, and supported by two hydraulic cylinders. A solenoid valve is used to switch the water on or to drain the water. The solenoid has a wire that works a wooden latch that latches into place when the wall is up so that no mechanism is needed to keep the wall in place. This feature was planned from the start, but could not be built until building permits were obtained for the second part of the house, so at first the wall was built as a separate piece and fixed in place.

As for other fixtures Ced put in, the floor of the main room was of sanded and sealed wood covered with pinned carpet. The carpet could be lifted and rolled up if a dance floor was needed. The windows had rolling flyscreens, somewhat like a garage rollerdoor, a patent purchase by Cedric rather than his own invention. There was a gate at the top of the stairs built in which could be closed when children were present. The breakfast table was attached by a hinge at the wall so that it could be folded up out of the way if necessary. The large walk-in shower recess had an array of handles suitable for assisting an invalid, including a low 'handle' mounted as a foot support to make cleaning the feet easier.

In 2000 the home had gas fired central heating, and before that, oil fired, but in the days of wood burning, Cedric had created a wood box hydraulically lifted through about 7 foot from the wood storage area below the house into the main room with its wood fire. This is now dismantled.

The passage of time had made other features obsolete also. In the kitchen the Fowler preserving outfit (sterilizer) had been built into the bench, but was not used by 2000, because

Louise decided the freezer was so much better. Many of the deep metal lined drawers designed for loose flour and sugar, and drawers and cupboards designed for specific items were then less useful than they were when the house was built. Not so the top cupboard doors, which had narrow shelves built into the full area of the back of each door for herbs, spices, and other small, easily lost items. These remained in use until Louise's death in 2000. Sadly for historians, after Louise's death the new owners renovated much of the house, particularly the kitchen area. The current owners, Yvonne and Philip McMillan and family, are greatly interested in the house as it was originally built.

Incidentally, for other 86 year-olds wanting hints about meals, Louise cooked in quantity and froze single serves of main course and dessert items in the china in which they would be served. They were re-heated using a microwave.

For the main room, Cedric devised and built a dining setting. A basic round table could be extended using one leaf (22 inches), two leaves (44 inches), or four leaves (88 inches) to a maximum of six leaves, or 11 feet. To match this table Cedric built and upholstered 12 folding chairs. Leaves, chairs, bottom strut and top hook and all items required except the 6 ft spacer were stored in a small sized wall cupboard in the main room built in for the purpose. Unfortunately all this disappeared in the renovations.

From 1987, at the age of seventy-three, Cedric dressed as a woman full time and was known as Louise, from her middle name. Louise worked tapestry upholstery for much of the furniture in the main room, using a rose design for the chairs. In 2000, aged eighty-six, when providing information for this article, Louise looked back and said she thought much of her interest in the home and building was due to the feminine side of her nature. Louise read the early drafts of this article and agreed it was easier and more accurate to use 'Cedric' for the early days.

Certainly 16 Hordern Road reflects the individuality of its creator.

Paula Herlihy



Workbench in lounge, looking East.

Lilydale Icon

Anthony McAleer (with technical assistance from daughter Georgia) gave a fascinating presentation on the Lilydale Athenaeum at the Community Room on 24th May.

Almost every long-term resident of the area has some fond memories of the Athenaeum. Intimately bound up with the social and cultural life of Lilydale and the surrounding district, the Athenaeum has been adapted for multiple uses: lecture room, concert hall, ballroom, dance venue, military drill hall, cinema, school hall, political forum, polling booth, roller-skating rink, rifle range and theatre. It has been ignored, neglected, condemned, rescued and rejuvenated. Anthony regards the Athenaeum as the 'jewel in Lilydale's crown' and the most significant heritage building in the Shire.



Anthony in the opulent setting of the Athenaeum Theatre

The Athenaeum opened in 1888 as a Mechanics Institute, consisting of a lecture theatre, a library of over 1000 volumes and a reading room. It remained the only public library in the Shire until as recently as 1981. The building has associations with Dame Nellie Melba, who first performed there in 1909 and campaigned in favour of the Yes vote to the conscription referendum during WWI (Lilydale did vote Yes).

Mt Evelyn's Barn Theatre Group performed at the Athenaeum. Anthony urged the audience to attend (and perhaps subscribe to) the current excellent theatrical performances, meet the performers and enjoy the collection of Melba photos.

Thank you to Anthony and Georgia for a most enjoyable the presentation and to Rusty Gray for the use of his data projector. Thanks also to Alan Quantrell and Dr Bill Hardy from the Athenaeum Board of Management for donating part of the sale proceeds of Anthony's 3-volume work on the Athenaeum to the History Group.

Our website

Many thanks to Joy Carrick for setting up the History Group page of the Mt Evelyn Community Website. Go to www.mt-evelyn.net then click on Groups>Adult>Mount Evelyn History Group. Current newsletters and flyers for talks will be available on the site. We hope to add more material later, possibly a photo gallery.

World Environment Day - Reconciliation Week display

Our display on Wurrundjeri history, 'Mt Evelyn Dreaming' opened on 6th June at the Exhibition Space. Appropriately, it coincided with National Reconciliation Week. The display has aroused considerable interest. Several people have requested copies of the information.

Paula and Karen have been collecting material for this exhibition since last year, egged on by Exhibition Space Coordinator Gil Bosaid. We were not sure whether it would work or not until we actually got it up. Thanks to Gil for her help in setting up and for a very successful launch.

Thanks also to Jean Edwards for the loan of a wonderful book, *Koorie Plants, Koorie People:*

Traditional Aboriginal Food, Fibre and Healing Plants of Victoria by Nelly Zola & Beth Gott, 1992. Published by Koorie Heritage Trust, now located at 295 King St (cnr. Little Lonsdale), telephone 8622 2600. Cost \$24.95, current stocks low but a reprint likely.



Kevin and Tim view the History Group display 'Mt Evelyn Dreaming'

Broken taboo I: plagued by the lyrebird

We had a vase of beautiful lyrebird tail feathers arranged with the Aboriginal display to illustrate the Battle of Yering story (some Wurrundjeri had been provided with firearms by dealers in lyrebird tails, which was how they came to be armed at the battle).

Two Aboriginal women who saw the display told us that lyrebird feathers were taboo. Shortly afterwards one of our stands crashed to the floor, narrowly missing the vase of feathers. We removed them, reluctantly. Not that we thought them unlucky, we just didn't want to cause offence to people whose culture we were celebrating.

Kevin disagreed. He pointed out that the feathers had been traded in the 1840s, so they couldn't have been very taboo at all. Then again, lyrebird feathers are never seen in contemporary drawings of corroborees, where they would seem an obvious choice. Perhaps there really was some ban on using them for decoration. Lots of people are spooked by peacock feathers too (the 'Evil Eye') and refuse to allow them in the house.



Weaving from plant fibres, part of 'Mt Evelyn Dreaming' display

Broken taboo II: ancient curse blamed for soaring divorce rate

Another story that emerged from the display was that Wurrundjeri initiation ceremonies were conducted on the top of Mt Clear. The site was strictly blokes-only. The supposedly high rate of marriage breakdown in the area has been blamed on the fact that women can now visit the site.

A glimpse of the elusive Evelyn

While looking up Raymond Henderson's book *From Jolimont to Yering* in search of Aboriginal material, we found a reference we hadn't come across before. A pastoral run held by Paul de Castella from 1850 to 1862, which seems to have included the site of Lilydale and the northern part of the present Mt Evelyn was apparently called the 'Mt Evelyn Run'. If that was indeed its name at the time, it sheds a whole new light on the naming of our town.

It seems that the names 'Evelyn' and 'Mt Evelyn' have repeatedly attached themselves to this general area but not always for the same reasons. We also have the County of Evelyn (namesake unknown; Victoria was divided into counties for survey purposes from 1837 on), the electorate of Evelyn (named after a British MP of the 1850s), and our township, 'Evelyn' 1907-1920 and then 'Mt Evelyn'. The prefix was added to emphasise the attractions of the 'mountain' township.

Interesting questions for further research: who was the County of Evelyn named for? was de Castella's pastoral run named after the county or for some other reason? and did either or both names influence the change of our station name from 'Olinda Vale' to 'Evelyn' nearly 60 years later?

Correction

Robyn Taylor informs us that the real estate plan of Montrose mentioned in our last newsletter was not her donation but had been donated previously to the History Group. Robyn had long-term custody of it, along with other material, while she was working on a way to catalogue it. Apologies for the error.

We are fortunate to have an extensive archive including books, maps, photos, diaries, family histories, videos, tape recordings and art works. Donations of historical material (originals or copies) are always welcome.