



Newsletter 12, December 2008

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc.

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P.O. Box 101 Mt Evelyn Vic 3796

www.mt-evelyn.net

Enquiries, membership & book sales: Paula Herlihy, herlihy@alphalink.com.au or phone 9736 2935 (leave message)

Newsletter & minutes: Karen Phillips, karen.m.l.phillips@gmail.com

Dates for your diary

1939 Black Friday Bushfires commemoration, 10th January 2009, 7.30 pm, at St Mary's Hall, Warburton. Enquiries: phone Gail Pinchbeck on 5966 2152 or Ellena Biggs on 5966 5384, or see flyer in November newsletter.

The History Group will take a break over December and January. Our **February meeting** will be on **Tuesday 17th February 2009, 7.30 pm** at Morrison House.



The History Group sponsored the Wurrundjeri panel, painted by St Mary's Primary School students.

Launch of the Timeline Fence

About 50 local residents and business people gathered on the Rail Trail on 5th December for the unveiling of the Timeline panels.

The ceremony was performed by Jan Simmons, CEO of Morrison House. Prior to uncovering and speaking about each panel, Jan told how the project had taken about four years from planning to completion. She thanked the many people and organisations who contributed to the final result, handing each a card in appreciation.

Those acknowledged included Gerran Wright from the Shire of Yarra Ranges, Mt Evelyn History Group, Russell Danby the artist, Karen Phillips for creating the text

accompanying the art work, sign writer Andrew Petrie of Pinstripes Plus, major sponsors Mt Evelyn and Districts Community Bank, David Watt, Alan Grundy, the Shire of Yarra Ranges Community Fund, METIC, Bowens Timber and Building supplies, Morrison House Men's Group, 1st Mt Evelyn Scouts and the businesses and groups who sponsored and/or worked on each of the eleven panels under the guidance of the artist.

The project, detailing significant aspects of the history of Mt Evelyn, comprises ten historical panels with printed interpretation and attributions, and an eleventh panel detailing the overall planning and sponsorship credits. The panels are secured to the west boundary of Bowens timber yard fence along the Rail Trail. They are painted in exterior-quality gloss paint with an expected life of ten years, on Weathertex external-quality sheeting and protected with a clear graffiti-resistant coating.

Commencing from the north end the panels depict: The Wurrundjeri indigenous people, who are the traditional owners of the land on which Mt Evelyn stands; bullock teams and timber; the berry farm once located on the site of Bowen's; swaggies camping beside Olinda Creek; the first train and trestle bridge; peace after war (commemorating WWI servicemen and the opening of the first church); the Scouts' 80 years in Mt Evelyn; the Aqueduct from Silvan; the WWII army camp at the Recreation Reserve, the opening of the Rail Trail and How the project came about.



Precarious but cute: the first train crosses a trestle bridge. Painted by Mt Evelyn SDS students.

The artist, Russell Danby, said that the panels are executed in the 'story-book' artistic style. The colours used are not natural to the area but are intended to bring a vibrancy to the panels, which the duller eucalyptus hues would not have done. He has achieved the desired effect admirably. We can only hope that the community and visitors will show the respect merited by this attractive and valuable art and history project.

Ian James. Photos Paula Herlihy.

Maps new and old

Check out this website for a new world atlas of place names, based on translations or etymology of names.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/picturegalleries/3547816/The-Atlas-of-True-Names.html>

Where, for example, would you find The Great Land of the Tattooed, The Home of the Devourers, The Land of the Respectables, Dominate the East! or The City of the One Who Aspires for Enlightenment?

In exciting news for map-lovers, a huge map (4m x 3m) of the Victorian goldfields in 1865 was rediscovered recently in an archive in Ireland. It has been returned to the State Library of Victoria, where it will be restored (*The Age* 12/12/08).

KYEEMA aviation disaster 70th anniversary commemoration service

The silver DC-3 aircraft, one of two intended as a poignant finale to the commemoration service, roared overhead in an almost cloudless sky. The weather was in stark contrast to that which contributed to the DC-2 *Kyeema* disaster, shortly after 1.43 pm on Tuesday 25 October 1938.

The ill-fated flight left Adelaide with 18 passengers, including Charles Hawker MHR, prominent lawyers, wine industry executives and crew, bound for Essendon. The aircraft flew in cloud over the Sunbury area, believed by the crew to be Daylesford, continuing in a straight line over Essendon and crashing into the west face of Mt Dandenong. *Kyeema* was destroyed with the loss of all passengers.

Hundreds gathered just before noon on Saturday 25th October 2008 at the memorial (approximately 50 metres east of the crash site) on the Kyeema Track, off Ridge Road, Mt Dandenong. We had come for different reasons; those who lost family members in the crash and those who were simply there out of curiosity. As a pilot, the name '*Kyeema*' had always held a fascination for me since I discovered the site, noted cryptically on a map.

The commemoration was hosted by the Lilydale Squadron of the Australian Air League, Mount Dandenong Historical Society and Kalorama CFA. It commenced with a 'Welcome to Country' recognition by indigenous elders and a very moving formal ceremony by a celebrant. The Victoria Police Pipe Band provided appropriate music.

Local politicians and descendants of those killed in the crash spoke of the significance of the disaster, especially to their families. They also referred to the resulting public uproar and enquiry, together with the major improvements to air navigation legislation and services. Young members of the Lilydale Squadron of the Australian Air League added a further touch of formality. They formed a guard of honour during the proceedings and escorted the audience members who laid wreaths at the memorial.

A second DC-3, which was intended to join the commemoration fly-over, refused to start at Essendon. More than one comment was overheard after the service regarding the ironic significance of this, an example of Australian 'black humour'.



The Timeline Fence encourages viewers to imagine Mt Evelyn at previous moments in its history. A berry farm once occupied the site of Bowens. Painted by St Mary's PS.

More details on the *Kyeema* tragedy can be found in *Disaster in the Dandenongs* by Macarthur Job OAM, available from Sierra Publishing, phone 03 9752 3948.

Ian James

Historic Courthouse gains new lease of life

Clouds over Castella Street partly obscured the sun, just as they have done since the Lilydale Courthouse was built in 1876 at a cost of £961. Even the high mesh security fence couldn't mask its rich history, evident in the style and construction of this small but grand building.

About 50 invited guests, members of local history groups, renovation contractors and suppliers had gathered at 11 am for a guided tour by staff of the Lilydale Museum, the current occupants. Welcoming us for the tour, Maggi Solly from the Museum said that the building was not open to the public. It will be used as office space, pending completion of the Museum rebuilding.

The building comprises the Courtroom with its raised magistrate's bench, an ante-room, kitchen, toilets and a rear porch. The recent renovations included creation of the kitchen behind the Courtroom. Its floor, now at the lower level of the Courtroom, required the relocation of the steps into the magistrate's bench area. The kitchen area was subject to an arson attack during the many years the building was vacant.

The original timber floors and ceiling, substantially retained and clear-finished, show beautiful pine timber grain and the effects of over 130 years use. The junction between altered and original areas is difficult to find except that the rear windows of the kitchen are strangely high, due to lowering of the floor. There are, however, obvious signs of cost cutting in the renovation, including mismatching of timber types and moulding profiles. It is hoped that these defects will be rectified during any future works.

The original Courtroom windows have been retained and give better than average natural lighting for a building of this age. The harsh acoustics created by the high-vaulted and trussed Murray pine ceiling gave a formal atmosphere despite the social nature of the occasion. It was not difficult to imagine this room as the centre of law and order in Lilydale for more than 130 years.

Externally the building is in excellent order, considering the lack of general maintenance. There are very few signs of structural damage. The north-west corner still carries traces of the arson attack (smoke staining of the face brickwork) and there are signs that essential maintenance to the timber eaves is required.

The Museum staff are justifiably proud of their temporary workplace. Hopefully, the eventual occupants of the Lilydale Courthouse will also respect the building for its history and as a valuable asset to Lilydale.

Ian James

Clarifying Newsletter 11

Jean Edwards clarifies that John Muys was a President of MEEPPA. The meeting dealing with the Aqueduct land in 1979 was a public meeting called by MEEPPA (i.e. a MEEPPA meeting, not a Friends of the Aqueduct one).

Sorry, Glenn and Maggi, for misspelling your names. A few people's emails bounced with the last edition (it was a large file). Let me know if you didn't receive your copy.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Newsletter or website, with special thanks to Ian James for his excellent reports in this issue. To all History Group members, supporters and friends, we wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and relaxing holidays. We look forward to catching up with you again in 2009.

Karen.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer(s), not necessarily those of Mt Evelyn History Group Inc.