



Things Past

Newsletter 18, July 2009

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

A0051327F

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www.mt-evelyn.net

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'Mysterious Tunnels' – talk by researcher Mark Rawson, **Saturday 25th July** 1pm, Mt Evelyn Community Room, Wray Crescent, Mt Evelyn. All welcome.

History Group AGM – Tuesday 25th August, 7.30pm Morrison House. All welcome.

Our past uncovered

The Stationmaster's house at Mt Evelyn has undergone many changes over the years. With the Library built onto one side and the Café and decking on the other, it's hard to distinguish what's left of the original building.

One feature that remains is the chimney, most easily seen from the Memorial Kinder car park on the other side of the Trail. In the recent refurbishment of the Community Room, the old brick fireplace has been uncovered (or one of the fireplaces – there was probably another in the corner of the Exhibition Space).



The Stationmaster's fireplace.

The chimney has been blocked off, so there'll be no fires lit in the hearth. Disappointingly, the clock is electrical and doesn't tick. The clock face is a reproduction.

What is pleasing is that the Station's historic function as the focus of community life in Mt Evelyn is continually being renewed.

Replacing lost memories

In June, Pam from Morrison House passed on to Paula an unusual request from a past student, Kathy Briggs.

Kathy, who is currently living in a caravan and cow shed at Buxton, having been burnt out in the disastrous February fires, is seeking to replace some of her lost treasures. She valued her copy of *Great Expectations*, the end-of-year book put out by staff and students of the Adult Education classes at Morrison House. Kathy studied at Morrison House in 1993 and 1994, remembered that she'd had several pieces of writing printed in *Great Expectations* in one of those years, and could we please find a copy for her?

Paula produced *Great Expectations* from around 2000 until she stopped teaching at Morrison House at the end of 2008, but was not teaching there in 1993-4. Fortunately she had filed all the *Great Expectations* in magazine cases and was able to locate the books for

those years. Morrison House staff were happy to copy and send them to Kathy.

We found it heart-warming that Kathy valued her education here in Mt Evelyn, that Morrison House had hung on to some of its history, and that we were able to help in a way that no cash payment could ever do. This is recent history, but it highlights some of the work historical societies do – helping to build community by conserving aspects of the past.

From Paula Herlihy

What is unique about Mt Evelyn? Mt Evelyn History Group, along with the other historical societies in the Shire, was asked to suggest 'significant events, people and places' for a core display at the renovated Yarra Ranges Regional Museum (formerly the Museum of Lillydale in Castella Street).

A NSW-based design company called BannyanWood will be creating the display. The company has worked on various high profile displays, Albury Museum and the Dome Galleries at the State Library, among others. Paula met Ms Fabri Blacklock from BannyanWood to discuss our suggestions.

Following a preliminary letter of introduction, the Mt Evelyn History Group prepared a list of the things we thought defined our Shire or might be of interest to outsiders¹. In particular we created a list of things unique to Mt Evelyn. I passed this list on to Fabri

The question 'what defines Mt Evelyn?' or 'what is unique or memorable about Mt Evelyn?' has been raised many times in the past. The now defunct Mt Evelyn Chamber of Commerce and the Mt Evelyn Primary School each selected the Helmeted Honeyeater, since the eggs of Victoria's bird emblem were first collected from the banks of Olinda Creek².

¹ Karen Phillips created the list with input from members by email and from our June meeting. The complete list is available from Karen or Paula.

² The Mt Evelyn Primary School History states that the school logo represented 'an Eastern Spinebill on Bluegum blossom', footnote p.78 (Ed.)

Mrs Ivy Arney approached us because she was creating pen and ink sketches for an historical calendar put out by the Lilydale & District Historical Society, and the best we could suggest at that time were the churches and the Forest Road bridge. MEEPPA has looked for logos to represent the town, and settled on *Grevillea alpina* Mt Evelyn form, a plant unique to Mt Evelyn. The Post Office consulted us and selected the Powerful Owl to be the design for its signature post mark. At our June meeting Anthony McAleer suggested the Station, the Zig-Zag and the connections to David Mitchell's family.

I passed this input on to Fabri, and further commented that Mt Evelyn was a 'frontier town', in contrast with a town like Lilydale. Mt Evelyn was distinguished by its poverty until the 1970s, but is now richer than the Shire average and a desirable place to live because of its indigenous vegetation.

Mt Evelyn as such did not exist until the twentieth century. Billygoat Hill, Olinda Vale and McKillop combined to create Evelyn, and then Mt Evelyn, following the construction of the railway. I also made the point that Billygoat Hill was believed to be 'a stronghold of the blacks (the Wurrundjeri)' and that we valued our Aboriginal heritage, such as we had. I referred her to *Tracks to Trails* and to Janice Newton's assertion that women had played a large part in the development of the town and that there were a large number of female landowners in the 1920s and 1930s.

When asked about defining people connected to Mt Evelyn, I emphasised Gwen Hardy's contribution to various communities, and donated a copy of our booklet on Gwen. Other names were mentioned, and some interesting or eccentric characters, such as the legendary 'Aggie'.

In conclusion I related the story of the fight to save the Illawarra Flame Tree. I believed that it was our politicisation, and our empowerment of community that distinguished us, and that this was in large part due to Morrison House and its influence. Morrison House was itself a product of that 'power to the people'

mentality that arose from women's lib and other freedoms in the 1970s.

I said I believed Jan Simmons would be remembered as a defining person in the town, but that it was not usual to make a feature of a living legend, more's the pity! I also thought it significant that we produced MPs Neil Pope and James Merlino but, again, still with us!

I also referred Fabri to a group on Facebook. One of the threads is 'Most bogan thing about Mt Evelyn...Mt Evelyn is bogan as. I lovvved it.' I find these tributes to our eccentricity and to the personalities that young people remember extremely moving, and strongly recommend you chasing them up if you are registered on Facebook! See: <http://www.facebook.com/> and search 'I grew up in Mt Evelyn'.

Paula Herlihy

Resources for historical societies

Some interesting booklets can be downloaded from the website of the **Federation of Australian Historical Societies Inc (FAHS):**

<http://www.history.org.au/>

The organisation represents the interests of historical societies throughout Australia. The booklets have been produced to further the aims of the Federation:

* to encourage the study of Australian history, the preservation and publication of historical material and to encourage public access to historical material

* to promote communication and mutual assistance within the historical society movement.

The booklets are guides to good practice for historical societies on subjects of interest to them. Titles are:

Looking to the future – a guide to the collection of cultural material by historical societies

Survey 2000 – the current state of the community history movement in Australia

FAHS Heritage Handbook

Directors' Responsibilities

Privacy Policy

Publishing History

Heritage Tourism in Australia

Another site of interest is the **History Victoria Support Group** on the mc2 website: <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/> The History Victoria Support Group aims to provide practical support for societies affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Anyone can join. mc2 (My Connected Community) is a free discussion site for community groups.

History for young readers

Jan, Paula and Karen met with Mt Evelyn Primary School teachers Vanda Camm and Maria O'Connor to discuss the writing of history booklets suitable for Primary students. Jan will seek Community Learning Partnership funding for the project from Adult, Community & Further Education (ACFE).

A walk through Olinda Vale

The section of the Olinda Creek Trail south of Hull Road is almost complete. Walking it now, you would hardly guess that this was once the place for a village.

Originally a reserve, the narrow floodplain between Swansea Road and the creek became the site of a Village Settlement during the depression of the 1890s. A dozen or so slab and bark huts stood on blocks of one or two acres, surrounded by gardens and orchards. The isolated settlement was reached from Lilydale only by a track through David Mitchell's Cave Hill Estate.

Residents gave their address as 'Olinda Creek, Lilydale', later as 'Olinda Vale'. The village pre-dated the present township of Mt Evelyn, which grew up around Olinda Vale station. Access to the station was via steep and boggy Birmingham Road or out-of-the-way York Road.

Settler names shown on the parish plans included Bedford, Carter, Cross, Hamill, Mackin, Parr, Plunkett and Winstanley. One of the Parrs' huts was rented by 'The Woodlanders' as a base for birdwatching, nature writing and photography in the early 20th century. Author Charles Barrett later idealised

the settlement as the peaceful rustic village of 'Wattle Creek' in his semi-fictional work *From a Bush Hut*. The reality was less Arcadian – some of the families were notable for their sordid domestic squabbles.

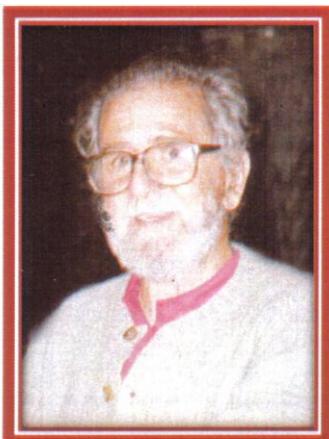
The Shire has gradually re-purchased the blocks, now considered unsuitable for housing due to the recurrent flood problem. Nothing is left of the settlement except for a few fruit trees and other exotics, some of them possibly indicating old fence lines. Jonquils and snowdrops grow wild, the remnants of long-gone gardens.

The Trail ends abruptly at a gate about 100 metres south of Hull Road. From here your options are: (1) ignore the KEEP OUT signs and trespass on private property to reach the car park of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, (2) take a flying leap across Olinda Creek or (3) squeeze between the creek and a barbed wire fence.

The Shire's map of proposed recreational trails indicates that the Trail will cross the creek about here and continue on the west side, meeting up with the track through the wetlands north of Hull Road.

It would be nice to keep the memory of the vanished village alive, perhaps with a plaque beside the Trail, or by naming this section the Olinda Vale Reserve.

**Vale Eric Sydney Tetlow
(9/10/1930 – 15/6/2009)**

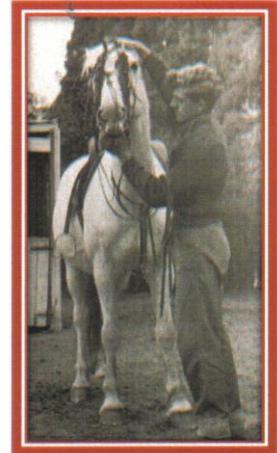


Eric Tetlow has been the lynchpin of several societies around his home in Yarra Glen, including the Yarra Glen and Healesville historical societies, where he was an office bearer. He had connections with

Steel's Creek, Dixons Creek, Gulf

Station, St Andrews, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and its eastern branch. Eric was a networker, sharing information and taking pleasure in helping others and solving problems. He created the Cole-Tetlow Index to the hotels of Melbourne as a La Trobe library volunteer – a work of ten years.

In his youth a stockman in Queensland and horseman in Victoria's high country, Eric returned from a trip to England with an early computer, and turned his quick wit and intelligence to research and organisation.



Once described in a Ringwood Historical Society newsletter as 'the iconic Eric Tetlow', and by his grandchildren at his funeral as 'a legend in his own time', Eric will be greatly missed in history and heritage circles in the Shire and beyond, and personally by many.

Paula Herlihy

From Kev's rain gauge

With Melbourne in its thirteenth year of drought, several members of the History Group have expressed interest in Mt Evelyn's rainfall figures, over time and compared with Melbourne's.

Rainfall January-June 2009 in mls

Month	Mt Ev.	Melb.
Jan	3.5	0.8
Feb	5.1	3.0
Mar	51.1	47.6
Apr	85.0	39.2
May	14.7	10.8
Jun	<u>61.0</u>	<u>25.0</u>
Totals	220.4	126.4

Melbourne's 126.4 millilitres for the first six months of 2009 was its driest reading for the first half of a year since records began. We do not have long-term records for Mt Evelyn.

Brought to you by Kevin Phillips



Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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PO Box 101, Mt Evelyn, Victoria 3796

2009 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 25th August, 7.30pm

**Morrison House
Old Hereford Road
Mt Evelyn**

All Welcome

Light supper provided

Nomination form overleaf



Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

A0051327F

PO Box 101, Mt Evelyn, Victoria 3796

Nomination of Office Bearers

I hereby nominate.....
for the position of
of Mount Evelyn History Group Inc
Name of person nominating.....
Signature.....date.....

I hereby second the above nomination
Name of person seconding.....
Signature.....date.....

I accept the nomination for the position of.....
Name of nominee.....
Signature.....date.....

Nominators, seconders and nominees must be members of Mount Evelyn History Group Inc at the time of nomination.

Please return completed nomination forms to the above address before the Annual General Meeting, 25th August 2009.

This form may be photocopied.