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Things Past

Newsletter 23, January 2010

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

History Group meeting Tuesday 23rd February, 7.30pm Old Community Link.

History Group activity Saturday 27th March, 1pm Mt Evelyn Station House. Speaker/activity to be advised.

Hi, everyone. Hope you're all taking a relaxing break, surviving the heat and enjoying the bonus of summer rain.
Karen

Good news from the Courthouse

The Lilydale and District Historical Society (LDHS) will move into its new home in the old Courthouse in Castella Street, Lilydale, later this year.

The Shire has agreed that: 'The Lilydale & District Historical Society be endorsed as the lead tenant for the operation of the Lilydale Courthouse to share with the Yarra Ranges U3A and Lilydale Primary School.'

A recent campaign in the Leader drew a strong response from the community. Sue Thompson from the LDHS thanked everyone who supported the society's campaign to be allowed the use of the historic building. The support of the Yarra Ranges Heritage Network was also much appreciated.

'This decision will allow our society and its members to expand our activities, particularly our tours and family research facilities,' said LDHS President Sandy Ross. 'Somehow it seems fitting that the district's oldest historical society has its new home in the region's oldest civic building.'

From Sue Thompson & 'Leader' articles 17/12/2009



Lia's prizewinning painting 'Lilydale Court House'. Copyright Lia Williams.

Art prize for Courthouse painting

Congratulations to Lia Williams, who was awarded First Prize in the Lilydale Show Art Competition for her painting of the Lilydale Courthouse (above). The prize was for a painting of an historic scene in the local area. Lia's art works can be viewed and purchased at the recently opened Heart Gallery, 43 Maroondah Highway, Healesville. The Courthouse painting is one of those for sale.

Support for children's history

Our schools have shown a great interest in the Mt Evelyn's history. As reported in earlier issues, the History Group hopes to provide teaching materials on local history

suitable for use by primary school children. The preferred format is a series of short booklets on selected topics.

We were previously unsuccessful in obtaining funding. Now Cr Tim Heenan has come to the rescue with a generous donation of \$700 towards production costs. Thank you, Tim!

Discussions have already taken place with the teachers at Mt Evelyn Primary about appropriate topics and language levels. We hope to start work on the new booklets shortly.

‘The magic mountain’

I had an unexpected call the other day from someone with fond memories of Mt Evelyn from more than seventy years ago.

My aunt, Desma Woolcock, 85, had been puzzling over my letters for some time: ‘who is this Phillips person from Mt Evelyn who calls me Auntie?’ Desma’s short-term memory may be patchy but she recalled many details of her visits to Mt Evelyn as a girl in the 1930s.

Desma remembered travelling to Lilydale by steam train. She was not sure whether the family stayed on the train to Mt Evelyn – she thought they might have come up Hereford Road by horse-drawn wagon.

The house she stayed in was owned by her mother and aunts, one of many in the area to be owned by women. The three aunts were independent businesswomen who sold their needlework in shops they owned in various parts of Melbourne.

The whole extended family would come up to Mt Evelyn for holidays and would sleep out on the verandahs when the house was full. The house, if I’ve identified it correctly, still stands. I think it must be the old place at the back of the Vet’s, overlooking Heath Avenue.

In those days it was surrounded by bush. Desma remembered looking for fairies and elves among the overhanging gum leaves, and the magnificent view across the valley. Associated with those happy times, Mt Evelyn has always seemed a fairytale place to her – ‘the magic mountain’, as she called it.

Karen



**Find a shady perch, chill out with the family:
Tawny Frogmouths beside the Warburton Trail.
Photo Kevin Phillips.**

Along the trails

The brochure ***Mt Evelyn Historic Waterways Walk*** has been updated and is available from the Community Link. The brochure, a joint publication of the Friends of Water Race and Quinn Reserve and the Friends of the Aqueduct, guides the reader on a circuit walk along parts of the Aqueduct and Water Race Trails.

There is a side trip to the Puddle Dam at the end of the Water Race. You may have noticed the extensive clearing work that has been done on this site, which is now more visible from Birmingham Road.

The carved wooden seats at the Ken McIntosh memorial (beside the Warburton Trail near Birmingham Road) have turned a rather lairy shade of burnt orange. The paint may be intended to cover or resist graffiti but doesn’t blend as well with the surroundings as plain wood. The seats, featuring wildlife designs, were carved by sculptor and former Mt Evelyn resident Laszlo Biro. The late Ken McIntosh was a passionate environmentalist and supporter of the Rail Trail.

Kevin’s photo of the Tawny Frogmouth family (above) was taken near the memorial last November. One bird appeared to be keeping watch while the others snoozed; they probably took turns at guard duty. We’ve looked out for them whenever we walked past the spot, but haven’t seen them again.

Karen

From Kev's rain gauge

November and December were unusual, with Melbourne recording higher rainfall than Mt Evelyn.

Rainfall for November and December 2009 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne monthly averages:

	Mt Ev	Melb	Melb Av
Nov	69.7	100.2	59.5
Dec	48.3	55.0	59.0

Below, the 2009 rainfall totals for Mt Evelyn (Hereford Road), McKillop, the McKillop average, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Ev	McK	McK Av	Melb	Melb Av
665.3	877.25	911.0	452.8	648.1

Thanks to Jean and David Edwards for the McKillop readings. The McKillop average was calculated from their totals over the past 13 years of regular readings. Their average over the years 1981-1999 was approximately 1100 mm.

Kevin Phillips

The leeches always know

The following is an extract from an old book of household hints, *Enquire Within*,

published by Houlston and Sons, London, and dated MDCCCLXXV (1875).

Leech Barometer – Take an eight-ounce phial, and put in it three gills of water, and place in it a healthy leech, changing the water in summer once a week, and in winter once a fortnight, and it will most accurately prognosticate the weather.

If the weather is to be fine, the leech lies motionless at the bottom of the glass, and coiled together in a spiral form; if rain may be expected, it will creep up to the top of its lodgings, and remain there until the weather is settled; if we are to have wind, it will move through its habitation with amazing swiftness, and seldom goes to rest until (the wind) begins to blow hard; if a remarkable storm of thunder and rain is to succeed, (the leech) will lodge for some days before, almost continually out of the water, and discover great uneasiness in throes and convulsive-like motions; in frost as in clear summer-like weather it lies constantly at the bottom; and in snow as in rainy weather it pitches its dwelling in the very mouth of the phial.

The top should be covered over with a piece of muslin.

MOUNT EVELYN HISTORY GROUP INC MEMBERSHIP FORM 2009-2010

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The Treasurer, Mt Evelyn History Group Inc. PO Box 101, Mt Evelyn VIC 3796

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