



Things Past

Newsletter 25, March 2010

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

Museum Memory Bank. Bring your photos & memories (1950-2010), Tuesday 23rd March 1.30pm, Mt Evelyn Station House. (NB – this event conflicts with the next.)

Ancestry & Find My Past (introduction to researching these online sources), Tuesday 23rd March 2.00pm, Lilydale Library. Bookings essential, phone 9294 3120.

'Tales of Old Mt Evelyn', Saturday 27th March 1.00pm, Mt Evelyn Station House.

History Group meeting, Tuesday 27th April 7.30pm, Old Community Link.

Historic trees at West Hill

We received the following enquiry from Mr Ross Martin, owner of West Hill.

We have four quite large trees that were originally part of the West Hill Estate. The trees I refer to are an Indian Cedar at the front of our property, a Californian Redwood and an English Oak in the back yard and an English Elm tree on our front lawn/ nature strip (photo at right).

We are very fond of each tree. The reason for this email is that we have had it suggested that the Elm tree on the front lawn may have been planted by Dame Nellie Melba on a visit to West Hill Estate in the early 1900s but we have no evidence of this.

Several years ago this Elm tree suffered greatly from Elm Beetle attack and the council suggested cutting it down, however we decided to get a tree surgeon in. They were able to save the tree and now it is going much better.

Would you be able to help us find out whether there is any information relating to Dame Nellie Melba visiting the West Hill estate and whether she took part in any tree plantings?

From Ross Martin (edited email)



English Elm at West Hill

Melba's father, David Mitchell, bought the Cave Hill estate from John Nicholson, the first owner of Temora/ Blythwood/ West Hill, in 1878. Melba returned from Europe in 1902 (so early 1900s fits) but by then William Blyth owned the house. More info, anybody?

National Trust registers Cork Oak

The Cork Oak in the bus terminal at Lilydale Station has been classified by the National Trust and added to its Significant Trees register. The tree is the only survivor of the station garden, planted in 1882. Residents are concerned for its health, as the concrete over the roots reduces the amount of rain it receives.

From The Leader 9/3/2010

On to Jordan

Continuing Paula's travel account...

We travelled by ferry across the Red Sea to the narrow port of Aqaba (of 'Lawrence of Arabia' fame) to enter Jordan. Jordan is quite unlike Egypt. Our tour leader said that Egypt is not a poor country, just mismanaged, and all the evidence points to that.

Jordan on the other hand is a poor country with few resources beyond tourism – no oil, no wealth, and its water being taken by Israel. Yet it appears to be very well organised and very well run. There are traffic rules and people follow them. That includes the highly prized horses and camels being used in the towns as well as cars, and sheep flocks being walked through towns.



Urban parking in Jordan

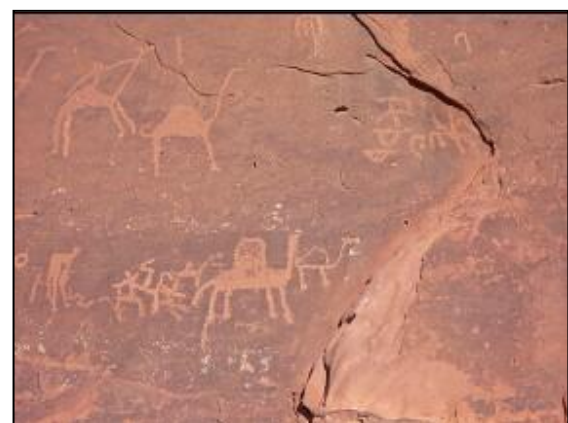
It is worth noting that 'Israel' doesn't exist on local maps and the most one guide could manage was 'so-called Israel'. Generally that area is called Palestine. The Six Day War, when Israel invaded Jordan and Sinai, is not forgotten in either country. Jordan, in particular, is militarised and on the watch.

On our first full day in Jordan we visited the World Heritage area of Wadi Rum for a 4WD desert safari driven by the local Bedouin. Many movies have been filmed in Wadi Rum, notably *Lawrence of Arabia*, since this is the actual area in which Lawrence lived and fought. It has also been used for the surface of Mars.



The otherworldly landscape of Wadi Rum

Sights included many areas connected with the Lawrence saga, as well as fascinating pre-Arabic Thamudic Rock paintings. We ate and slept that night with the Bedouin group, either in the tents or under the stars. Tim and I chose the tents, as it was very cold, and we slept in sleeping bags, dressed in hats and gloves. The black tents are made from woven goat wool and, though you can see through them, a bit like shade-cloth, they keep out the cold and wind very effectively.



Thamudic rock art

We were fortunate in being driven by the Bedouin leader and he was a very interesting man. He was highly intelligent and always one step ahead of his guests and the situation around him. His decisions were law on what to do and

when to do it, and whether we stopped and waited for cars that hadn't appeared on the horizon. We were travelling across unmarked sand a lot of the time.

At one point Tim asked him why he had the rough shaggy fake fur on the dashboard of the Land Cruiser 4WD. He said, with mock pride and a majestic wave of his hand, 'Chinese Camel'.

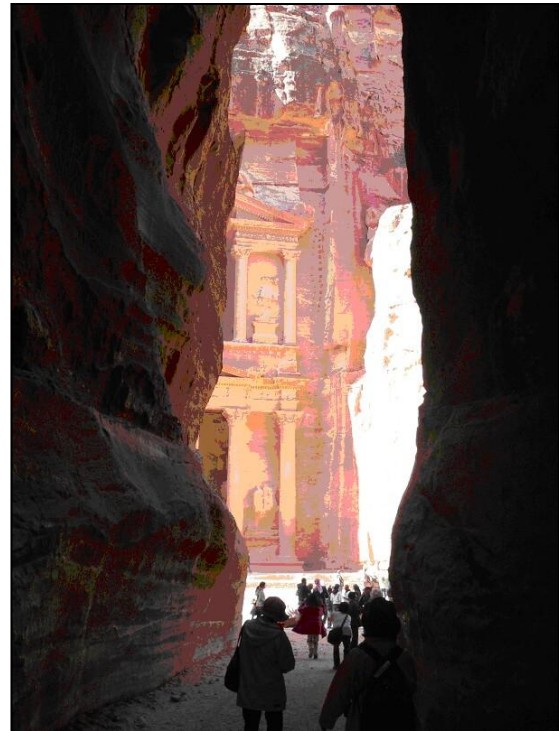
Again he was very impressive as host in his own tent, offering us spiced tea and answering our questions. A stone building here is the ruin of one of Lawrence's camps. From here there was a 270 degree view of the Wadi, so that no one could approach unseen.

After a Bedouin breakfast we left for Petra, and had the rest of that day and all the next in this amazing ancient city. Our hotel was in easy walking distance of the entrance. From the entrance it is a 2km walk to the Treasury (the impressive façade used in *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade* as the resting place of the Holy Grail) and a further 2km to the furthest point. This means an 8km round trip walk that afternoon and a further 4km round trip that night when we walked in to see *Petra By Night* at the Treasury.

Although the first kilometre by horse is paid for in the entry ticket, as everywhere in Egypt and, to a lesser extent in Jordan, the horseman expects a tip. No matter what you arrange beforehand, it is never enough, so often you walk just to avoid the hassles! Is it worth the walk? Yes!

The area was once part of the land of Edom referred to in the Old Testament (the name 'Edom' means 'red', like the rock walls of Petra and the surrounding hills). When the Edomites moved westward, the Nabataeans, an Aramaic-speaking Semitic people, moved in. Petra became their capital and the centre of their caravan trade.

The Nabataeans built dams across the ravines to control the flash floods that occur there. The water was carried in covered rock channels (covered possibly to reduce evaporation or contamination). Where the rock could not be carved, terracotta pipes and conduits were used.



'A rose-red city half as old as Time'¹: the stunning first glimpse of Petra from the Siq. The building is the Treasury.

Along the walk through the Siq (canyon), we admired the water channels in the side of the walls that carried water from a dam near the canyon entrance to the city within. It was this reliable water supply that allowed the city to flourish in the desert.

What is left of the city includes construction from many periods, including the Romans, who enlarged the amphitheatre. One building that has survived the earthquakes has wood built into the stone to absorb the tremors. There are small tombs and holes in the rock, as well as the remains of structures and temples. Bedouin live there now, in the walls, families with donkeys and other animals, and they run the horse and camel rides to and from the city. The floor levels are very high; often it is obvious that one is looking at the top of an entrance with the rest still underground.

Most of the houses have disappeared but some attempt is being made to gain an idea of how the people lived, as opposed

¹ John William Burgon, 1845. The famous line probably refers to biblical chronologies that would have dated Time at no more than 5,849 years old (since Creation) in the year Burgon was writing.

to understanding only the grander public buildings. A great deal of Petra is still unexcavated – there will be jobs for archaeologists and new things to see for a long while yet.



Rock dam in a canyon at Petra

After leaving Petra, we visited the Kerak Crusader Castle. Kerak has been held by many different groups throughout its life, including a period under the Crusaders. One thing I found fascinating was evidence of the way buildings are pulled down to build the next – in this case the builders showed some of the carving on the stones that had been worked in their previous locations.

That day we travelled on to the Dead Sea. I swam, and found out too late that we were supposed to float only and keep our heads out! I had a whistle blown at me and then was told off by others in the tour group for not reading the sign!

Edited extract from Paula's travelogue

MEPS Reminiscence Day

Paula, Tim, Joan and Rosemary attended the Reminiscence Day at Mount Evelyn Primary School on Saturday 27th February. Photos were scanned and information collected for use in the updated MEPS history.

Principal Phil Comport proudly showed visitors around the new buildings, which include many features for sustainability.

The last remnant of the 1924 classroom, which had been incorporated into the computer room, has finally gone. Sad in a way, but we can only be pleased that the children have the state-of-the-art facilities they've needed for so long.

Heritage Trail at Lilydale Cemetery

Lilydale and District Historical Society has often run tours of Lilydale Cemetery and produced four books about the individuals and families buried there.

A Heritage Trail has now been created through the Cemetery. Markers have been erected beside the graves of 26 people notable for their contributions to the arts, business, the military, farming, retail and the social life of the district.

LDHS provided the research and photographs. The Lilydale Cemetery Trust and William Matthews Funerals provided \$8,000 for the plaques, signage and a holder for the Society's brochures. Visitors can now take the self-guided tour.

From LDHS newsletter 'Now and Then' February 2010 courtesy Sue Thompson

Collections Policy

Following an address by Rhonda O'Meara to the Yarra Ranges Heritage Network on digitising collections, Mount Evelyn History Group has decided to formulate a Collections Policy. The topic was discussed at our February meeting.

Conclusions reached were that we do not collect physical artefacts and that we should concentrate on the Mt Evelyn area. We did not reach agreement on setting limits on place (e.g. adjacent areas), time or subject matter.

What do you think our Collections Policy should be? Ideas welcome.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for February 2010 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Ev	Melb	Melb Av
32.2mm	57.8mm	47.6mm

Kevin Phillips