

# Things Past

Newsletter 36

February 2011

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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## Dates for your diary

First business meeting of 2011: Thursday 24 February, 7.30pm Old Community Link.

Open Day at the Link: Saturday 26 March, 1-4pm Old Community Link.

Business meeting: Thursday 24 April, 7.30pm Old Community Link.

'Off the wall': art combines with family history, till 28 February at Mt Evelyn Exhibition Space.

The Yarra Ranges Regional Museum opens Saturday 14 May.

**MELBA'S 150th BIRTHDAY: 19 MAY.** We can look forward to some interesting events relating to Melba and the Mitchell family. See page 2.

'Melba' talk by Sue Thompson: Saturday 28 May, 1-4pm Mt Evelyn Station House.

## Awash!

Mt Evelyn got off lightly from one of the worst flood events in Australia's history but the wild weather from the tail end of Cyclones Anthony and Yasi still produced some unusual effects. Mt Evelyn had 124mm of rain in the first six days of February. The downpour sent local creeks over the top.

It's not often you see the Stringybark Creek even visibly flowing, much less overflowing, at Clegg Road. It made a strange sight spilling across the road. Instead of flooding where the culvert is (the lowest point), the creek poured over the road about 20 metres away.



**Water under the bridge: the swollen Stringybark Creek laps the pylons of the Rail Trail bridge at Forest Road. Photo Kevin Phillips.**



**The Clegg Road Everglades, Saturday 5 February. Photo Kevin Phillips.**

The Stringybark must have burst its banks somewhere upstream. The water then spread out across the paddocks before pouring back into the creek just above and below Clegg Road.

Wandin Yallock Creek, another sluggish stream much of the time, was over the highway at Seville and flooding low-lying businesses.

The York Road roundabout was reported to be under two feet of water. Parts of Lilydale were awash after Lilydale Lake overflowed, proving that dams are of limited use in flood mitigation. The lake may reduce flooding in Lilydale (one reason for building it) but hasn't entirely solved the problem.

## Melba's 150th birthday

Lilydale & District Historical Society has agreed to dedicate May 2011 to 'Memories of Melba'. L&DHS will be holding a series of talks on Melba and her family; cemetery tours featuring Melba; township walks of locations with connections to Melba; bus tours of Yarra Valley locations with Melba links; a schools walk. Special activities on her birthday (Thursday 19 May) are still being finalised.

To promote Melba more widely, we are using the resources of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria to invite history groups, societies, museums, libraries etc with Melba connections or material to consider putting on a display during May. There will be links to participating groups on our website:

[www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au](http://www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au)

Already we have people wanting to go on a special Melba mailing list to keep them informed of what is happening.

**Sue Thompson (from YRHN minutes)**

## First Aid Post - another account

A recent book on railway history gives a new account of the origins of the First Aid Post competition ground .

In *What a Journey; Life in the Victorian Railways 1948-1987*, author Tom Yates quotes from an interview with Keith MacKenzie in the *Victorian Railways News Letter*, April 1978. The article indicates that first aid competitions were first held in the 1930s 'at Mount Evelyn on timbered land owned by Mr Charles Mitchell, the brother of Dame Nellie Melba.' The exact location is not given.

So far so good, but it goes on to say that 'Mr Mitchell sold the land in the early 1940s'. Competitions were then held at the Lilydale oval and hall. These were unsuitable sites because they lacked timber that could be cut for stretchers.

This problem was explained to Charles Mitchell, who took two of the railway ambulance officers on a tour of his Mt Evelyn property. A seven acre site was chosen, presumably the site we now know as the First Aid Post beside the Rail Trail. Charles and Blanche Mitchell eventually donated this site to 'the Victorian Railways Ambulance Officer or his successor'.

**Continued page 4.**

## A lost piece of 'Westhill'

Robyn Taylor writes about a vanished fragment of history:

*Was saddened to see another old landmark disappear from the radar in Birmingham Road, corner Westhill Drive. On the old plan, a small building was identified as the gatekeeper's cottage [of the 'Westhill' property] which I would suspect was the house on this corner before a small subdivision just a few years ago. Another home was built directly in front of this house, very close to the front boundary.*

*Bit by bit, the evidence of the land's past began to disappear and on the occasional walks past I would think I must photograph the fence. The well had already been obliterated. However, not yet possessing a mobile phone camera I did not get to it and yesterday there was a 6 foot cream painted aluminium fence in place. The old fence was a construction of Lilydale stone pillars joined by metal rods, about 3 feet high. Whether or not it is still intact behind the fence I don't know.*

The house Robyn refers to was built c.1952 by John Jermyn, then owner of Westhill, to replace the gatekeeper's lodge on the same site. This new cottage was built from timber felled on the Westhill property and sawn at Millard's mill. Jermyn subsequently sold the cottage for £2,000.

The original lodge could have been built any time from the 1880s on. The well, and possibly the fence, may have dated from the time of the original building. There is mention of a well at Westhill; a fireman fell down it while fighting the disastrous fire that destroyed most of the house. I imagine, however, that this was a different well, closer to the main house, not near the gatekeeper's lodge.

Does anyone happen to have a photo of either the original lodge, or its replacement before the later house was built in front of it?

## Brightwell

In response to the question about the property 'Brightwell', Hereford Road, in our last issue, Sandy Ross remembered that a family named Banks owned the property in the 1950s and 1960s, before the subdivision.

Thanks to Sandy's information, we were able to put the new owners in touch with a member of the Banks family. More details to follow.

## Aboriginal heritage workshops

Paula attended a two-day workshop on researching Aboriginal history, *wilam naling* 'Know your history, preserve your culture', on 17-18 February at the Victorian Archives Centre, North Melbourne.

*Wilam naling* means 'knowing who you are' in the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung languages and expresses the objective of the Indigenous Access to Records Project; see <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/publications/wilamnaling/default.asp>.

### Day One: 'Discovering your past through records'

This day was aimed at people with Koorie heritage, or assisting others with Koorie heritage, to trace family. I found it fascinating what has been done from even the slightest initial information.

A story of interest to us in Mt Evelyn was told by Auntie Joy Murphy Wandin, whose father is from this country. Joy conducted the official opening and Welcome to Country, and told how she traced her mother's mother, then nearly 104, to a nursing home in New South Wales, and how her mother and grandmother were reunited after 67 years. From memory, her mother was not from Victoria and further was adopted by Aboriginal clergy.

I noted that Joy was using the term 'First Peoples', which is commonly used in the USA to refer to Native Americans.

### Day Two: 'Caring For Your Collections'

This day was exactly suited to the issues of a small group like ours, talking about collection policies and cataloguing (arranging and describing). It also covered how to look after fragile material such as photographs, documents and books.

I heard again about 'Victorian Collections', a free new cataloguing system from Museum Victoria that is now available to community groups to help them manage their collections. I am looking forward to it coming through the pilot stage to the point where we can start to use it.

I was invited to join the pilot program, so if anyone else is keen, I am willing, but am short of time at the moment, so won't do it alone!

**From Paula Herlihy**

## Aboriginal booklet update

The update of our booklet *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs* is progressing well (booklet previously published as *Aborigines of the Northern Dandenongs* by D. Beryl Phillips, Janice Newton & Paula Herlihy, MEEPPA, 1997). Janice, Paula, Karen and Ian are doing the revision/rewriting.

We have asked the Shire's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Garry Detez, to look at the current draft and we hope to find people from the Wurrundjeri to give it a read-through as well.

We would like to publish the booklet in a format that does justice to its subject. Fortunately a new round of Shire grants is coming up and we will be applying for a Cultural Development Grant to help with design and printing costs.

## Question of the month

**Was Mt Evelyn ever part of a pastoral run or grazing licence; if so, what was it called, who held it, and when?**

We're speaking of the period from the 1830s to the 1860s; that is, from the beginnings of European settlement in Victoria until the era of the first selectors.

A map of Victoria held by the National Library in Canberra shows districts, counties and pastoral runs corrected to 1870: see <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm3596-1>. It shows the County of Evelyn with the town of 'Lilly Dale'. A 'Wandin Yallock' run is shown as a 'new run offered for sale', roughly the area of the Parish of Wandin Yallock. Presumably this was never taken up as a run, as the time would coincide with the first selectors taking up land in Wandin in the late 1860s.

The map doesn't show the runs of an earlier period: Paul de Castella's grazing licence to the north of us (1850-1862), Gardner and Fletcher's Mooroolbark Run to the west or the various runs in the Dandenongs to the south (Corhanwarrabul, Monbolk, Glenfern, etc).

Helen Coulson's *Story of the Dandenongs* has a map of these runs as they stood in 1864. De Castella's fence, leading northeast from Olinda Creek, appears on an 1855 survey map.

It's not certain whether the area that's now Mt Evelyn was ever included in any run or grazing licence. As always, any information gratefully received.

## Update on Government Road

We reported last year on MEEPPA's proposal to name the present Government Road between Hereford Road and the Owl Land either 'Beryl's Way' or 'Beryl Phillips Way' (*Things Past* June and August 2010).

Word from the Shire is that the Office of the Registrar of Geographic Names has flagged some issues with using 'Beryl Phillips', 'Beryls' or 'Phillips' because of possible duplication with other roads in the vicinity with the same or similar names.

It was suggested that some other feature could be named in Beryl's honour.

### First Aid Post (from page 2).

This account leaves out the story of Blanche Mitchell being so impressed by the efficiency of railway first aiders who treated her niece after an accident that she persuaded her husband to donate land for the first aid competitions. The two accounts are not mutually exclusive, however. Mrs Mitchell may still have influenced her husband to donate the land permanently, it just happened over time.

Competing first aid teams had six members, one of whom played the patient in the various tests. Oral tests were conducted on the way to the competition ground. The practical tests were, first, identifying and treating an injury using only the patient's and team members' clothing; second, using a full first aid kit and third, carrying the patient out of the bush after being treated. Teams would have to get round obstacles such as pits, logs and a simulated collapsing mine or bridge.

Tom Yates regarded his first aid training, provided by the railways ambulance section, as one of the most useful courses he ever did. He treated dozens of sick and injured passengers in the course of his career.

## Clyde history online

History Group member Joan Vanderhorn has her website of the history of Clyde up and running at [www.clydehistory.comyr.com](http://www.clydehistory.comyr.com) and is continually adding to it.

The contractors who built the Great Southern Railway through Clyde were Falkingham and Sons. Alfred Falkingham, who retired to 'Bark Rest' in Mt Evelyn in the early 1900s, was a partner. Clyde school, like Mt Evelyn Primary School, celebrated its Centenary in 2010.

## Death to summer flies

Our 1875 book of household hints, *Enquire Within*, gives three anti-fly recipes.

**Mixture for destroying flies** – Infusion of quassia, one pint; brown sugar, four ounces; ground pepper, two ounces. To be well mixed together, and put in small shallow dishes when required.

**To destroy flies** in a room, take half a teaspoonful of black pepper in powder, one teaspoonful of brown sugar, and one tablespoonful of cream, mix them well together, and place them in the room on a plate, where the flies are troublesome, and they will soon disappear.

**Flies** – Cold green tea, very strong, and sweetened with sugar, will, when set about the room in saucers, attract flies and destroy them.

*Enquire Within* was published in London; its potions may work only against dainty English flies. *Things Past* makes no claims for their effectiveness against boofy Australian blowies.

## From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for January 2011 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

| Mt Evelyn | Melb   | Melb Av |
|-----------|--------|---------|
| 93.1mm    | 89.6mm | 47.7mm  |

Mt Evelyn's rainfall from 1 January to 6 February over the past 3 years makes for an interesting comparison. 6 February 2009 was the eve of the Black Saturday bushfires.

| 2009  | 2010   | 2011    |
|-------|--------|---------|
| 7.5mm | 69.3mm | 217.1mm |

**Kevin Phillips**

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Opinions expressed in *Things Past* are those of the writers, not necessarily those of Mount Evelyn History Group.