

Things Past

Newsletter 48

February 2012

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

History Group meeting Saturday 25 February, 1pm for a 1.30 start, RSL Rooms Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road.

Bronwyn Higgs will speak on The Happy Hermits of Evelyn, Saturday 24 March, 1.15 for a 1.30 start, Mt Evelyn Station House.

The Happy Hermits

Bronwyn Higgs shares items from her family history collection relating to holidays in Evelyn in the early 1900s.

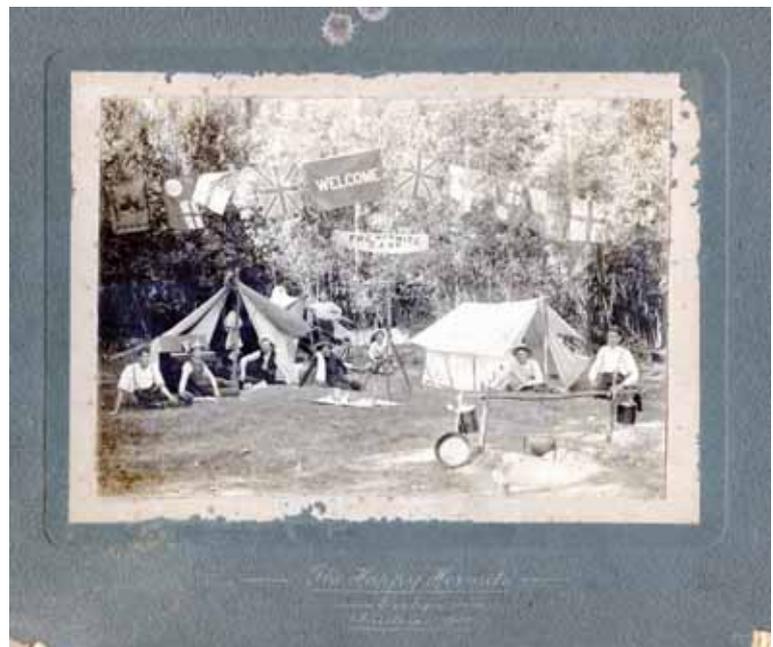
Who were the Hermits?

Most of what we know about the Hermits comes from a small holiday diary written by Susie Cooper and Janie Morgan in 1911. According to the diary, the Hermits were a group of seven young men who holidayed every summer at Evelyn. 1911 was their fourth year. This would suggest that their camping adventures began in December 1908.

Photographs of the Hermits indicate that the group varied in size and composition over the years. In 1909, they were a larger group of some nine individuals, with some faces being common to both the 1909 and 1911 series.

This suggests that it was a floating group, with a nucleus consisting of E. Billyeald, J. Martin, T. Miller and F. Higgs, who appear in both sets of photographs, and with other people being co-opted into the group at times.

As part of their holiday adventure, the boys took photographs of their campsite. In 1909 one of their group, T. Miller, was the photographer and in 1911 they arranged for a professional photographer to take photos of them, their friends and the campsite. We only



‘The Happy Hermits Evelyn Christmas 1909’. The site of the camp is not specified but it must have been on level ground, in a bush setting and probably accessible by road. The Hermits would hardly have brought their portable organ (at left) on the train! The Recreation Reserve area would be a likely site.

have photographs from 1909 and 1911. There is however an undated photo that is thought to be of an earlier camp, possibly 1908. The way the photo has been mounted is identical to the Hermits’ series of photos.

One photograph in the series includes the names of five of the Hermits. Using standard sources such as Electoral Rolls, Birth, Death & Marriage records and military records I have tried to identify these men. I have looked for men of a similar age (21-25 years in 1911),

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Aerial photography as a history tool

Following recent articles on the aerial photography resources available through the Public Records Office and online, Steve Kaylock shares some of the background to these resources and the way they can be used when the development of a site or area is important over a long period.

Scope of records

It is important in looking at these historical records to understand the development and scope of the records. Aerial photography became possible with the advent of flying, and the earliest photos of this type can probably be traced to this time. It was certainly used as a key military tool during World War I and has been developed as an aid to government for growth and infrastructure planning for most of the intervening time.

With the development of photogrammetry* and, more recently, global positioning satellites (GPS), this photographic method has increased the versatility of the aerial photography products we can utilise today. Most of the image record in Victoria will have a similar developmental history.

In terms of the images now available in the public record, many will have been undertaken for planning and infrastructure purposes. Because of the photographic technology and the flight requirements, these were often costly exercises. Coverage was often limited to major cities, towns and proposed infrastructure projects (e.g. highways and dams), and successive images may have been taken at large intervals (10 or more years).

As advances were made in this form of photography, intervals between flights became shorter, the clarity of images greater (and in colour), and the coverage more widespread. An early example, now accessible online through the University of Melbourne, is a series of somewhat grainy images of the city of Melbourne in 1945. At that time the eastern limits of metropolitan development went as far as Box Hill and the images in this series only extend to Ringwood, a few townships beyond.

* Photogrammetry is a survey method using twin images from fixed cameras (where their positions and the angle between them is known). The distance points are apart when the images are overlaid has a linear relationship to the height of the aircraft above and so can generate a ground height (or height above sea level).

Many of the images were only available for use as large format photos that were pored over with hand instruments to glean the information required. In the mid-1990s my own use of aerial photography drew on both black & white large format images (around A0 size) up to 20 years old and digitised images that were just becoming broadly available in local government bodies. Fortunately many of these older records have now been digitised and can be publicly accessed for research.

There are also many online services available today for more recent images. Many of these services can provide a sequence of images at intervals ranging from just weeks and months up to a few years. However these sequences are usually limited to just the last 1-2 years or the last 5-10 years respectively.

Another source of aerial photography are property photographs either taken and used by real estate agents in property sales or taken for posterity to record a family's links to a parcel of land or locale. These types of photos are particularly popular with owners of large rural properties and are often taken to highlight the best features. They often include some of the vertical features of a property such as facades and tree forms but are not suitable for documenting horizontal distances and spacing, due to perspective angles they often employ.

Use of photographs

In statutory planning, aerial photography has a vital role to play in both planning enforcement and establishing existing use rights. For planning enforcement, it is often used as evidence for work or development that has been undertaken without relevant permits. Building departments also use it to check if protective pool fencing has been constructed around new pools.

For existing use rights it is often used to determine the date (or period) a structure or work came into being. This then provides a timeframe to determine what the planning controls were and whether the activity fell within or outside those controls. If within the controls, then it formed a legal development or work.

In the development of townships and metropolitan areas, it can often provide a long and extensive record of the changes, and the sequence of those changes, over time. This can be quite a helpful aid in positioning

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marital status (single), with similar professional backgrounds (printing, lithography or allied trades) and/or geographic proximity (living in or around Abbotsford and Collingwood).

Based on genealogical information available, I believe the Hermits to be: Thomas Miller, Roy Earle, John Herbert Martin, Frederick Thomas Higgs and Ernest Billyeald. The other two members of the group are not known.

Frederick Thomas Higgs – We can be certain of Fred’s identity, as the Hermits’ photographs formed part of his family’s extensive collection. Fred was born in 1890 in Collingwood and grew up in Charles Street Abbotsford. He attended Vere Street State School in Abbotsford and trained as a printer and lithographer. He enlisted in 1915 and returned in 1919.

Ernest Henry Billyeald was the oldest of the Hermits, born in Collingwood in 1870. He would have been 39 years in 1909 when he holidayed at Evelyn. At the time of the Hermits’ camp, he lived at 9 Harmsworth Street Collingwood and was employed as a clerk.

T. Miller was almost certainly **Thompson ‘Tom’ Miller**, half brother to Ernest Billyeald. Despite an age difference of 20 years, the two were apparently very close. Tom and Ernest were raised in a household imbued with strong Labour values. Tom’s father, Robert Miller, had been a pioneer of the 8 Hour Movement and had been eight times President of the Trades Hall. Tom lived with his half brother Ernest and their mother in Collingwood between 1903 and 1914. He worked as an insurance clerk for his entire career.



T. Miller, R. Earle, J. Martin, F. Higgs and E. Billyeald “The Hermits”. In this photo from 1911, the men seem to have adopted a dress code. All are wearing white skivvies, dark trousers and long boots. J. Martin, centre, has added a tie. They are standing in a haze of camp fire smoke.

J. Martin – Given that he was the same age as Fred Higgs, combined with his Abbotsford address, **John Herbert Martin** is the best candidate for J. Martin. John Herbert Martin was born about 1891, resided at 17 Albert Street Abbotsford, trained as a state school teacher, enlisted in 1915 and was killed in action in France, 1917.

R. Earle was probably **Alexander Roy Hammill Earle**. Alexander was born in Maryborough in 1890 and spent his early childhood in Richmond. In 1914 he was listed as a clerk of Jackson Street, St Kilda. He shared the occupation of clerk with Billyeald and Miller, and may have had some professional association with them. He was the only one of the group not to reside in the Collingwood-Abbotsford area.

The Happy Hermits’ campsite, as they styled it, became an annual fixture at Evelyn between the years of 1908 through to around 1913-14. It appears that the outbreak of war, and the fact that at least two of the Hermits enlisted, was the major factor contributing to the demise of the group.

Bronwyn Higgs

Bronwyn, who will be our guest speaker in March, is a retired academic with a passion for history. Fred Higgs was her father’s first cousin.

Next month: Diary of a holiday at Evelyn.



‘The Hermits’ friends at dinner, Evelyn, Xmas 1909’. The Hermits were friendly and hospitable young men. The meal looks more like afternoon tea than dinner. Table and seats are built from bush poles.

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historical photos of streetscapes. Roof forms and adjacent buildings can often be cross referenced with the same features in an aerial image, at times pinpointing the position where the image was taken.

It can also be a helpful tool in documenting the infrastructure changes occurring in a township. Images of Mt Evelyn will reflect accurately the change in pavement width and street furniture in Wray Crescent that occurred around five years ago and the VicRoads changes in Hereford Road for bus stops and pedestrian safety. Over the coming months, they will reflect not only the introduction of traffic lights to York Road/ Wray Crescent, but also – with the short interval sequences – the process of how the changes occurred.

Most aerial images are provided in a scaled format and allow a reasonable degree of accuracy for measurement. This is quite helpful in determining if a building has the same footprint or has had additions. It aids planners in determining the proximity of dwellings, waterways, tree lines and other features to a new proposal.

Image sequences are often helpful in identifying usage patterns. Shadow positions provide an indicator of the time of day. This can help in revealing topography, estimating building and tree heights, and determining some tree types and characteristics (e.g. deciduous/ evergreen). It can also be helpful in road usage and parking patterns, allowing counts to be made of occupied and vacant car spaces. There are a number of other interesting uses. I recently found a sequence of images of Morrisons community garden (through *Nearmap*) that showed the full development sequence from bare earth to vibrant vegie patch.

The important thing for me in my work as a planner is to understand the limits of these images and to ensure that I draw conclusions from them accurately within those limits.

Steve Kaylock

Old brick kiln, Lilydale

On a recent visit to the Ballarat Art Gallery, we noticed a painting from this area: 'Brick kiln, Lilydale, 1876' by Elizabeth Parsons (b.1831 UK, d.1897 NSW). Parsons was a respected artist who arrived in Australia in 1870. This early brickworks, established by William Henry Mortomore in 1875, was at the

corner of Slevin Street and Cave Hill Road. It operated until 1896 and Parsons apparently painted it again in that year.

See: http://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Parsons_biography.htm and <http://marjiesgirl-myfavouritethings.blogspot.com.au/2010/10/memorial.html>

The Victorian Naturalist online

The Victorian Naturalist, the journal of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, is being digitised. You can access Vols 1 (1884) to 37 (1921) at: <http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Field+Naturalists%27+Club+of+Victoria%22>

Below are some articles of interest.

'The "Camp Out" at Olinda Creek', November 1884, Vol.1 no.11, pp.110-112.

F.G.A. Barnard, 'Excursion to Ferntree Gully', February 1897, Vol.13 no.11, pp.142-145.

C.L. Barrett, 'Bird Life on Olinda Creek', August 1906, Vol.23 no.4, pp.84-89.

E.B. Nicholls, 'Excursion to Olinda Vale', February 1907, Vol.23 no.10, pp.172-173.

C.L. Barrett, 'Lecture on wild life at home', March 1907, Vol.23 no.11, pp.212-214.

F.G.A. Barnard, 'In the valley of the upper Yarra', April 1907, Vol.23 no.12, pp.245-252.

F.G.A. Barnard, 'Over the Great Dividing Range', with a description of the stone axe-head quarry at Mt William, November 1907, Vol.24 no.7, pp.111-116.

W.B.A., 'Alfred William Howitt', portrait and obituary of the famous anthropologist, April 1908, Vol.24 no.12, pp.181-189.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for January 2012 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
32.7mm	66.75mm	29.0mm	47.7mm

Kevin Phillips

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