

Things Past

Newsletter 93

November 2015

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

Mt Evelyn Memorial Pre-school 70th Anniversary, Sunday 15 November 2015, 2pm-4pm at the Pre-school. All welcome.

Tour of Mt Evelyn YMCA Recreation Camp, Saturday 28 November. General meeting to follow.

The Happy Hermits again

Those happy campers The Hermits have come through yet again. This time we have nothing less than the original glass plates taken by Tom Miller, the photographer of the group.

Out of the blue there came a message from Richard Conn, whose hobby is restoring out of copyright old black and white images.

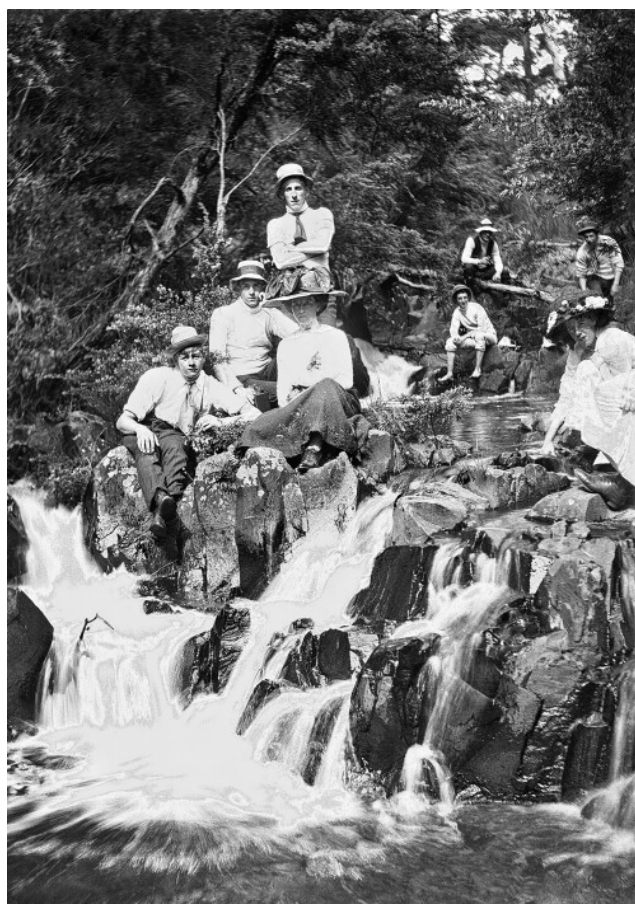
'Attached are three images of the Mt Evelyn Railway Station ca.1909-1911.... They come from a collection of glass plates that I purchased recently and have just finished editing in Photoshop. One is the image you use on your Facebook page.

There are about thirty plates in the collection, many have nothing to do with Mt Evelyn (there are two of Wilson Hall, Melbourne University), but there may be some of the "Happy Hermits" – maybe six or seven. Of the others, some are out of focus and unusable.

It's difficult to judge which are the "Happy Hermits" pictures as some seem to be from Sydney, Sorrento and maybe Walhalla.'

Asked about the source of the photos and whether all were taken by the same person, Richard replied,

Continued p.2



Above right, the Hermits and friends at the Cascades, Olinda Creek. The young men are, from left: unidentified, Fred Higgs, Roy Earle, John Martin? (barefoot), Ernest Billyeald (on fallen branch), unidentified. Most of the men are wearing the Hermit 'uniform' of dark trousers and white skivvies, some with the addition of a tie. Several have added white floppy hats with dark hatbands.

There is some resemblance between the woman in the impressive hat, centre, and Miss Emily Cottingham of Holly Lodge (cf. wedding photo, *Things Past* #70). Emily's grandson, Chris Elmore, looked long and hard but could say only: 'quite possibly but not confirmed'.

The girl at right looks about 19, the right age to be one of the two who stayed at Holly Lodge and wrote the 'Diary of a Trip to Evelyn'. Another girl is sitting beside her, out of frame – only her shoe, part of her skirt and one hand are visible. If these two girls are the diary writers, Susie Cooper and Janie Morgan, we can date this photo precisely to the early afternoon of Saturday 30 December 1911.

From p.1

'I bought the plates (the glass is nearly 5" by 7", the image a tiny bit smaller) from a stall holder at the Camberwell market. I pressed him as to the source, but he said it was a garage sale and some time ago.

They all seem to be the one lot. They were all wrapped in similar cloth and judging by the quality taken with the same camera. So more than likely, if Tom Miller took the station pictures, he took them all.'

The name 'T. Miller' appears on one of the station pictures. The photos of the Hermits' camp, which we believe were also taken by Miller, were not found among this collection.

The History Group has purchased the three glass plates of Evelyn Station, along with the edited versions and beautiful A3 prints. The photos include clearer versions of the two we already had. The third is the same scene as our Facebook cover picture but a different shot (below). Thanks to Richard's editing, we can now glean more detail than ever before about our Railway Station in 1911.

Richard very generously gave the other photos relating to the Hermits to be passed on to Bronwyn Higgs. Bronwyn originally shared the Hermits' photos from her family collection.

Karen Phillips

Photos Tom Miller, edited Richard Conn



Mount Evelyn Railway Station ca. 1909 - 11

Photographed by Tom Miller
Edit by Richard Conn and all rights are reserved

Above, Evelyn Railway Station, December 1911. So much to see!

The facing on the platform is timber; the surviving concrete wall must have come later. The wire running along the front of the platform would have worked the signal. There are overhead wires crossing the railway tracks, a lantern attached to a post and two poles with insulators. Our Technical Consultant informs us that these are electricity poles, not telegraph. Considering that parts of Mt Evelyn did not get power connected till the 1960s, it's astonishing to see the infrastructure already here in 1911.

The garden beds are well established with flowering shrubs and edged with painted bricks or pavers. A pile of these at left indicates the site of a future flower bed. What we had thought were the existing cypresses on the platform are in fact pines growing outside the fence, but there are pencil cypresses either side of the gate through the ticket office. The Station House is edged with clipped shrubs and a fern. There were three horizontal ropes with flags but the one at left has fallen and is dangling from the pole. The decorative scheme includes tree-fern fronds tied up against the fence.

The young woman at left is holding a bouquet, apparently of ferns. Even when travelling on sooty steam trains or walking in the bush, girls wore white frocks and elaborate hats.

The Station Master is holding the staff that will allow the engine driver to enter the next section of track.

More photos p.5

1950s in Mt Evelyn

I interviewed my Nanna and found that both of my great great grandparents lived in Russell St, Mt Evelyn. One house was a permanent residence and the other was a holiday shack.

In the permanent house, there was a marble clock that sat on the mantelpiece, which my Nanna still has sitting on her mantelpiece in Croydon. My Nanna's dad and her grandfather cut and collected wood for the fire, with a cross cut, which was a two man saw. This saw is in my Dad's shed today. They also used normal axes.

They had raspberry canes that they picked lots of delicious raspberries from. They buried tin around the edge of the raspberries so that the canes didn't spread. Nanna also hand fed the Kookaburras.

My Nanna took the train from Croydon to Mt Evelyn, it was a steam train and you would get soot in your eyes if you put your head out of the window. They didn't have a car but when they got one, they would have to leave it at the bottom of the hill as it was very rough.

My Nanna used to pick heath, which was a native plant of the area. This had delicate, small bell shaped flowers that sat on a stem and grew widely. The flowers' main colour was pink but she always tried to pick the white ones, which were harder to find.

My Nanna said, 'The other grandparents' house smelt like an old, locked up house'. She also told me there was a huge dining room table that was covered with a red coloured chenille type bed spread. The walls had large prints of the well known pictures of dogs playing cards.

The clothes that Nanna wore were made of material squares that she sewed together to make a skirt, under this she had heavily starched petticoats. She also wore a white blouse and a stretchy black belt. She would tease her hair until it stood up like a beehive, also she used a lot of hair spray.

That is the conclusion of the time that she spent in Mt Evelyn. (The picture below is of the original holiday shack.)

April Buttress
Writing Competition Winner, Years 7&8



Historical Writing Competition

The History Group's Writing Competition was on the theme: 'a person, place or event in the Mount Evelyn area in the 1950s'.

Years 5&6 Winner: Charlotte Lorbek, Birmingham Primary School, 'Westhill – March 1952'. A vivid and well-researched first person account of the disastrous fire at Westhill.

Commended: Chloe Anastassiou-Stein, Mt Evelyn PS, 'Mt Evelyn Primary School' & Alannah Finger, Birmingham PS, 'Letter to Mary'. Both stories are about students starting school in the 1950s.

Years 7&8 Winner: April Buttress, Lilydale Heights Secondary College, '1950s in Mt Evelyn'. Interesting oral history spanning five generations.

Years 9&10 There were no entries in this section. The prize money was re-allocated to other sections. Congratulations to all the prize winners. Winning entries published this month and next.

Cottinghams – facts and memories

The September issue of *Ancestor*, the journal of the Genealogical Society of Victoria (Volume 32 Issue 7), featured an article by History Group member Chris Elmore. Chris is the great-grandson of Samuel and Sarah Cottingham, who established Holly Lodge in 1894 (TP #70).

In his article 'Family Memories and Family Facts', Chris discusses the value and the limitations of family recollections. His research has revealed that the history of the Cottinghams did not quite match his father's memories.

'He speculated that Samuel (his grandfather) had come to Australia after a stint in the West Indies as a young man. This proved to be incorrect. He did not know that Samuel was born in the West Indies, returned as a child to the UK with his parents, then left for Australia as a young man.'

Chris's father remembered correctly that the family had a Colac connection. His uncle, Frank Cottingham, who had been running the orchard at Holly Lodge in the early 1900s, moved to Colac after his marriage.

Chris concludes that his family's handed-down history cannot be accepted at face value but has provided useful starting points for research.

Photos of the Dandenongs

Mt Dandenong & District Historical Society's photo collection has just been uploaded to Victorian Collections: <http://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/mt-dandenong>

As we all know, it takes a lot of work to digitise your collection, but the results are fantastic.

From Gabby Haynes

Letter to Mary

27th of May 1950

Dear Mary,

I miss London so very much, and am finding it difficult living in Australia and long to visit you soon. I hope you and your family are keeping well.

Father has just managed to find work at a hardware supply shop. Mother is kept busy with our small house, looking after Thomas, Milly and I, and working, part time, at the local greengrocers, just a couple of streets away. Although Father was a builder in London, he is unable to work as a builder here, because he does not have the right certificate, therefore, we don't have as much money as we used to in London.

The house where we live in Mt Evelyn is very small, only having three rooms. I get very cold at night as there is a slight breeze. Sometimes Milly, Thomas and I get into mother's and father's bed with them to keep us warm. Our house is luckily across the road from the Red Robin store. Sometimes mother gives us a penny to buy a sweet. My favourite type of sweet is a fruit twirl.*

I started school at Mt Evelyn Primary School two weeks ago, but feel that I don't fit in. The children tease me about the way I speak and it is hard to try and make friends. Mr Stuart is my teacher and he is very different to Miss Nancy at our school in London. Sometimes he yells and it makes me scared. I think I am behind with my school work and it makes it so difficult to try and keep up.

On Monday evening, just before supper, our family decided to take a short walk. We started off at a road near our house, called Birmingham Road but it used to be called The Zig Zag. It was called The Zig Zag because the road used to zig zag across the hill so that the horse and cart could get up more easily.

I hope I can hear from you soon, and I would love for you to tell me about everything that is happening back in London. How are Miss Nancy and all our friends?

Missing you terribly and longing to hear from you soon.

Your friend always

Alice.

Alannah Finger

Writing Competition Years 5&6, Commended

Mt Evelyn Primary School

Dear Nanna

I wanted to send you a letter telling you about my first day at my new school, Mount Evelyn Primary School. When I first walked into my new classroom I saw our desks lined up in rows and columns and when I went to my desk I saw that they could lift up. Inside I found some books and a fountain pen. We used both of these resources and I learnt a lot. The classes are really different to my old school: they were mixed grades 3/5/7, 4/6/8 and 4/7.

Then we went outside for recess and lunch. I saw students playing on an oval, gravel areas and in the bush. I also saw students playing with hula-hoops, yo-yos and swap cards, in cubbies and also playing football and rounders. I also found out that there are 162 children in 3 rooms, 50 in Room 1, 41 in Room 2 and 71 with two teachers in Room 3. I found out that swimming is another activity and once a week the students walk down to the National Fitness Pool. Grades 5 to 8 were taught handwork but this ended last year. The girls learn sewing and the boys learn woodwork, leatherwork and soldering skills. We even have a prized cactus garden and drawing competitions. The boys even mow the oval but only if they are responsible. On Monday mornings we have a school assembly with the children lined up to swear allegiance to the Queen and sing the National Anthem. I also learnt that there are monthly films and an annual broadcast event on Anzac Day. The whole school listens to it. It features a story of heroism, such as Simpson and his donkey and Anzac hymns.

Thank you for taking the time to read my extremely long letter. I hope you enjoyed it.

Kind regards,

Your grand-daughter, Natalie.

16 May 1953

Chloe Anastassiou-Stein

Writing Competition Years 5&6, Commended



The school was still officially 'Evelyn State School' in the early 1950s. The prefix 'Mount' was not added till 1959 – Ed.

'Memories are made of this'

Brilliant organisation and perfect weather combined to make the 2015 Mt Evelyn Street Party, on a 1950s theme, the best ever.

Those of us who remember the Fifties had the opportunity to relive old times through music, dance, costumes and vehicles. The program included 'Elvis', a street parade, dancing and martial arts performed to music. There was a 'Pin-up' competition, colouring, bike decoration and our own History Writing Competition.

Congratulations to Yolande Pickett and the Committee. Thank you for giving our community such a great day. Thanks also to History Group members who helped to run our stall. We made over \$300.



'Memories are made of this' – Left, Cr Maria McCarthy and 'Elvis' (Nick Jason) perform the Street Party theme song on stage. Above, Street Party scene with stage-truck, the Pop-up Town Square at left and Winged Lioness seat in the foreground. Photos Kevin Phillips, Brian Herlihy.

Pop-up Town Square

Former METIC Chair Daniel Meadth and the team from the Men's Shed created a 'Pop-up Town Square' with 'outdoor lounge room', games, potted plants and Project Information booth. The many uses of wooden pallets and old milk crates! Even the Winged Lionesses found themselves installed in the square, where their seat has been much sat-upon and admired. It has been a long-term project of METIC to establish a permanent Town Square. Follow 'Mount Evelyn Town Square Project' on Facebook.



From p.2. Two more 'Hermits' photos, undated. Left, one of the Hermits (probably John Martin) beside the sapling frame of a building on a steep slope. The shafts of a cart can be seen in the foreground. The older man and the dark-haired girl appear in a 1909 photo of the Hermits' friends.

Above, Hermits Ernest Billyeald (beside the cottage) and Tom Miller (on the verandah) with two unidentified women. A large white tent, of the type the Hermits used, is visible in the bush at left.

The environment in these two scenes looks typical of Mt Evelyn but it is not certain that they were taken locally.

Lion seat reproduction

Our application to YRC for funds to support reproduction of the Winged Lion seat that graced Mt Evelyn has not been successful.

Cr Maria McCarthy has suggested I re-apply, this time to her Ward funding, and Alan Price of the Men's Shed is very keen to further this project. I dashed off an application before the 1 November deadline. We now cross fingers and toes and whatever, and hope!!

The original sub-committee is likely to be split into two focus areas – one concentrating on the duplication process, headed by the Men's Shed and supported by Mt Evelyn History Group, the other continuing our primary interest in placing and protecting the original seat and researching its history. This will be on the agenda of our next business meeting, proposed for 18 January, and I'll ask members for their thoughts at the 28 November tour of the Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp. I hope to recruit a replacement Chairperson from the Men's Shed.



This has been a popular and unifying project for over three years and there is still scope to place duplicate seats in areas such as the Station platform and the Town Square.

Mt Evelyn is fortunate to have the graceful Winged Lion(ess) Seat as part of our cultural heritage. Gwenda Donaldson posted this lovely picture of the seat at the 'Pop-up'. **Paula Herlihy**

Connections of Francis Birtles

We received an email from family historian Trevor Bartlett, a relative of the famous cyclist, long-distance driver and outback adventurer Francis Birtles (1881-1941).

'My name is Trevor Bartlett and my grandfather was John Henry Bartlett. His sister Sarah married David Birtles and their second child was Francis Birtles. So Francis and I are first cousins, once removed.'

Francis Birtles grew up on a small selection on what is now Monbulk Road Mt Evelyn (*Things Past* #72). Trevor added that the Youtube film clip we mentioned in our article was a send-up produced for the launch of the book *Francis*

Birtles, Australian Adventurer by Warren Brown. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrA9P7SsZYQ>
Margaret Bartlett, another sister of John Henry and Sarah, married Jacob Clegg. Her second husband was John McKillop. The Bartletts (from the Warrnambool area) thus linked three selector families in what was then called South Wandin.

White Stringybark in Mt Evelyn

On a recent walk with MEEPPA members along the east side of the Aqueduct, we noticed a relatively level area with intact native grasses and very tall stringybark trees not branching until the crown.

I took a sample to the Council's Environment Department. Luck was in – the new Biodiversity Offsets Officer, Justin Sullivan, was just leaving the building. He recognised it as WHITE STRINGYBARK (*Eucalyptus globoidea*) – he had done his thesis on the species!

Please add it to your copy of *The Original Garden* – Mt Evelyn now has 13 indigenous eucalypts.

In the 1980s Andrew Paget had told us that White Stringybark occurred in Mt Evelyn but, because John Reid and I did not find it (as with many orchids reported to us), we did not include it.

Jean Edwards

From Kev's rain gauge

Dry month but 17mm fell in half an hour on 11 Oct. Rainfall for October 2015 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
37.0mm	28.25mm	12.2mm	66.0mm

McKillop readings courtesy Jean Edwards. Melbourne figures Bureau of Meteorology: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/data/>

Kevin Phillips

Contact us

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