

Things Past

Newsletter 94 December 2015
Mount Evelyn History Group Inc
PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year To all History Group Members and Friends

Dates for your diary

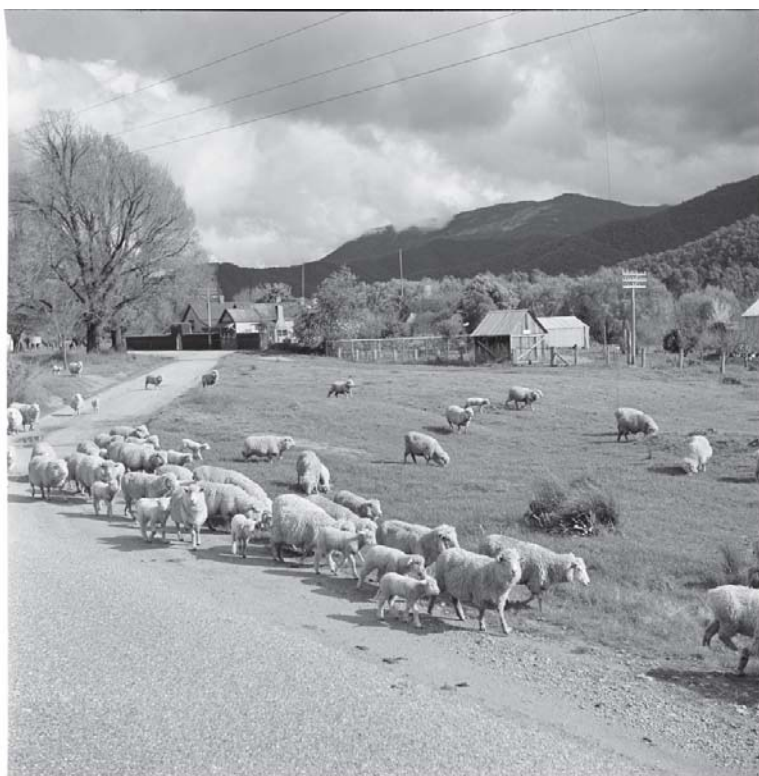
AOEHS meeting Saturday 20 February, 1.30pm Hardy House. Bronwyn Higgs will speak about *The Happy Hermits* and information that has come to light since the book was published.

Rural Mt Evelyn in the 1950s

The State Library has some interesting photos of rural scenes in Mt Evelyn in the late 1940s to early 1950s. The photos, from the Victorian Railways, show paddocks, crops and orchards, with patches of remnant bush on the hills and in the gullies. The landscape appears sparsely settled but, for the most part, cleared and farmed.

Coincidentally we found physical evidence of Mt Evelyn's orcharding history, thanks to a query on Facebook about an old building. The rectangular building on the high side of Marshall Street has a door but no window in the end facing the road. It seems to be a dwelling now but looks as if it might once have been a hall.

We asked the Macdonald family, who used to walk to school along Marshall Street (then part of 'Spring Road'). The



Brains Trust (Isabel Martini, Katharine and Alister Macdonald and friend Allan Stroud) soon came up with an answer.

'I google earthed the shed and I reckon it looks like an old fruit packing shed – there were

Sheep may safely graze and amble across roads. Above, 'Mt Evelyn', Victorian Railways RESO tours, 1950. Can anyone identify the location? The whole scene looks too neat for Mt Evelyn – even the sheep look well-groomed.

Left, 'Farms on hillside, Mt Evelyn', Victorian Railways c.1945 – c.1954. Photos State Library Victoria.

Continued p.4

Memories of the Depression and World War II

Eleanor Phillips wrote the following account in the 1980s to help a granddaughter with a school project. It surfaced again recently, when a great-grandson interviewed her on a similar topic.

To understand how the war affected us on the home front it is necessary to know what life was like before war broke out. Things were very different to now.

Only materials for clothing were wool, cotton, silk and rayon. Household items were made of wood, metal, glass and pottery. Things like plastics and man-made materials were unheard of, with the exception of Bakelite.

Life moved at a much slower pace, no TV. Radio was in its infancy, only large valve sets and crystal sets. Picture theatres were popular, always newsreels were shown with the main picture, in black and white. Picnics, hikes, community singing and dances were the main entertainment. Fridges were not in homes, instead we had ice chests or Coolgardie safes. The ice man would come and deliver ice three times a week. Very few cars, most things like milk and bread deliveries were done by horse and cart. Children would rush out to see a car go past, it was a novelty.

Women did not go to work as they do now, a large number stayed home till they married. Those that did work mostly did nursing, teaching, office work or dressmaking.

With the war all that changed. Young men 18 or over were called up for military service, for about the first two years on a voluntary basis. Your grandfather joined the Air Force at 18 but after that it was conscription and you had no say if it was Army or not. Only those in what were called essential services were exempt. Women suddenly had to do everything on the home front. Man the factories, make ammunition, grow the food, in fact keep the homes alive for the men to come back to.

There were women in the armed forces too, but they were volunteers. The Land Army was formed of young women to go and work the farms the men had been called up from. Food still had to be produced, and wool for clothing. At home we were expected to grow what we could as the Army, Navy and Air Force had first priority on the farm produce. Also a lot was sent overseas to the allied forces.

No one was allowed to be idle, manpower regulations were in force, you had to carry an



Fuel and Clothing ration cards, 1945; Identity Certificate, RAAF, 1942.

identity card everywhere. If the work you were doing was not considered essential you would be sent to do something that was. A person could not leave their employment.

I was given three choices, munitions, or two places in the clothing trade. I took the clothing trade as it would be kinder to my hands for music when the war ended.

In Melbourne the different buildings were assessed for safety in case of air raid. The air raid sirens were installed and drills carried out. No one could stay put when the siren sounded, and the wardens made sure. We were on the fourth floor of a building near the Post Office in Elizabeth Street. It was an old building, a real fire trap, we had to go down the backstairs, no lifts operating, along a lane and into a bluestone building that was thought to be much safer. There we would have to stay till the All Clear sounded. Sometimes only a matter of half an hour, sometimes hours on end. Although we had no air raid, we did have some unidentified planes, spying on the countryside.

At night every place had to have heavy blackout curtains. No chink of light was allowed to show outside to let the enemy know where the cities and towns were.

Rationing was quite severe. Tea, sugar, butter, meat, clothing and petrol were all rationed. These days we would use in a day a whole family's ration of these goods for a week. Household items such as sheets and towels had to be bought with the clothing coupons. To make things stretch further, old clothes would be cut down to make smaller garments from the sound pieces. Knitted jumpers and other woollen things were undone and re-knitted into what was needed. Wool, and materials, shoes, everything was rationed.

To make do in cooking, no butter available, we didn't have margarine or cooking oil, so dripping with a squeeze of lemon juice was used for biscuits and cakes.

Continued p.4

Westhill – March 1952

RINNNNG!

Everyone looked up in alarm

RINNNNG!

This time there was complete silence, not even a bird chirped.

RINNNNG, RINNNNG, RINNNNG!

Shoppers outside the Post office started to turn their heads towards the fire station on Birmingham rd, expecting to hear another. It had stopped.

FIRE IN THE WEST!

Westhill's house alarm wailed as the 4 families ran out of their flats. No one could do anything but watch, because pumping the water from the channel would take too long. Fire brigades from Lilydale and Mt Evelyn started arriving with their sirens blaring over the roaring fire; by then the flame had flown out from the boiler room into the kitchen and choked it to the extreme.

'Szybko, Szybko!' The Polish man was shouting. 'Wees snel!' The Dutch family screeched, but I couldn't understand them. I could see the depressed faces of my fellow firemen, gripping the hose and letting the water gush onto the fire. This fire was going to test our skills and strength as fire fighters.

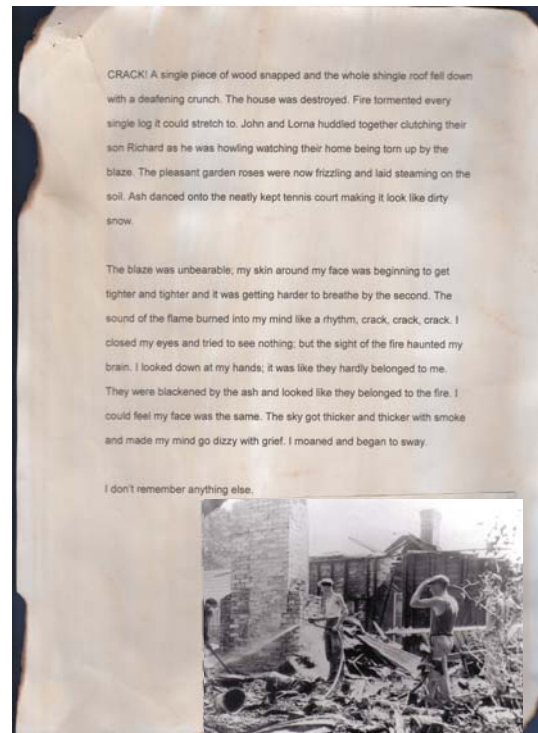
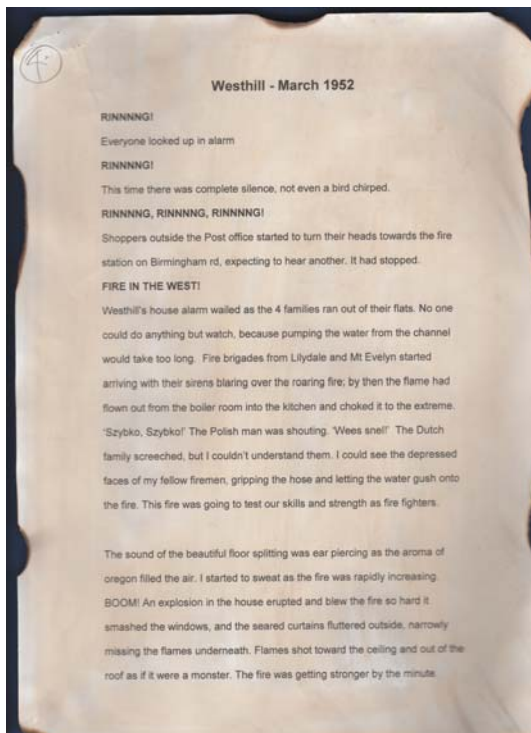
The sound of the beautiful floor splitting was ear piercing as the aroma of oregon filled the air. I started to sweat as the fire was rapidly increasing.

BOOM! An explosion in the house erupted and blew the fire so hard it smashed the windows, and the seared curtains fluttered outside, narrowly missing the flames underneath. Flames shot toward the ceiling and out of the roof as if it were a monster. The fire was getting stronger by the minute.

CRACK! A single piece of wood snapped and the whole shingle roof fell down with a deafening crunch. The house was destroyed. Fire tormented every single log it could stretch to. John and Lorna huddled together clutching their son Richard as he was howling watching their home being torn up by the blaze. The pleasant garden roses were now frizzling and lay steaming on the soil. Ash danced onto the neatly kept tennis court making it look like dirty snow.

The blaze was unbearable; my skin around my face was beginning to get tighter and tighter and it was getting harder to breathe by the second. The sound of the flame burned into my mind like a rhythm, crack, crack, crack. I closed my eyes and tried to see nothing; but the sight of the fire haunted my brain. I looked down at my hands; it was like they hardly belonged to me. They were blackened by the ash and looked like they belonged to the fire. I could feel my face was the same. The sky got thicker and thicker with smoke and made my mind go dizzy with grief. I moaned and began to sway.

I don't remember anything else.



Charlotte Lorbek, Writing Competition Winner Years 5 & 6
Above: Charlotte's manuscript, scorched by the blaze!

The Depression & WWII, from p.2

All letters were censored. The boys on the front could not say where they were or what they were doing. If anything was said that part of the letter would be cut out. The same from home, nothing that could be of value to the other side got through.

Apart from the Army, Navy and Air Force, older men with special skills such as in the building trade were conscripted too. Your great grandfather was called up in the C.C.C. (Civil Construction Corps). He was sent to Queensland, building hospitals near Cairns, Townsville and up on the tablelands. Both for us and the Americans. Badly injured men from the war in New Guinea were sent back to the mainland to these hospitals. With the shortages of materials and men to do the work, home building came to a standstill. A survey was done on existing buildings and if you had more rooms than was thought needed you had to take whoever the government sent you to live in your house. We didn't have to take anyone as we had four children in the house, but many did.

When the war ended I was at work in Melbourne, it was incredible, people flooded the streets, singing, hugging each one and looking forward to the return of the men at the front.

But things would never be the same. Many men were badly hurt and all carried emotional scars. Women had learnt they could do many things custom had denied them. They had found they could manage their own affairs and money.

And we were no longer isolated from the rest of the world. People started coming from many other lands. The old Australia had gone.

With the war, scientists had had many breakthroughs and things that we now take for granted were discovered, some for our benefit, others we could have done without. **Eleanor Phillips**

Rural Mt Evelyn, from p.1



Above, packing shed in Marshall St, Google Maps.

orchards along "Spring Road" and I think it was the packing shed for one or more of them. It was on the right hand side as we walked to school, almost directly opposite a street/track that ran slightly downhill', Alister recalled. Allan also remembered orchards there.



Above, Mt Evelyn scenes of farms and orchards. The pine trees on the distant ridge are probably those along the Aqueduct near Channel Road. Photos Victorian Railways c.1945 – c.1954, SLV.

Katharine remembered the walk to school in some detail: 'Houses, then that terraced bit, with at the top of the slope the one-man taxi service, then a cottage where there lived an old lady we used to visit (dolls clothes, embroidery, knitting), then vaguely trees then as we got to the end, more space and big trees from where we got cicada cases, then along a bit, cross the railway line, a bare muddy "expanse" then a path through the trees to school.'

The Marshall Street area has since been subdivided and the orchards are long gone.

Karen Phillips

Reburial of artefacts

History Group members attended a ceremony of reburial of Wurundjeri artefacts beside the Olinda Creek Trail on 16 November. Wurundjeri Elders, Cr Maria McCarthy, Indigenous Liaison Officer Garry Detez, YRC Bushland Management Officer Jess Baillie, other environmental staff and community representatives were present.

Describing the original environment of Olinda Creek, Jess referred to our book *Aborigines of the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs*. The Senior Elders, representing the Wandin, Nevin and Terrick families of the Wurundjeri clan, welcomed guests with a smoking ceremony. Its purpose was to ward off evil spirits. A fire of dry grass and twigs was kindled in a cooking pot, with green gum leaves added to produce smoke. Strangely for a still day, the smoke gradually shifted round the circle of onlookers.

The Elders described the extent of the Wurundjeri lands and spoke of their people's past experiences at Coranderrk. They praised Yarra Ranges Council for making the effort to consult the traditional owners. The Wurundjeri work team



Above, Jess Baillie addresses the gathering. Below, senior Elder Ron Jones, accompanied by other Elders, welcomes the guests to Wurundjeri country during the smoking ceremony.



and Council environment officers work together, an ongoing learning experience for both sides.

The stone tools, which were uncovered during construction of the Olinda Creek Trail and bridge, were reburied close to the scar tree. David Wandin said the tools were being returned to the rightful owners, the Wurundjeri ancestors.

As Jess said after the event, 'it was truly unique and a welcome promise of how we can all continue managing the environment and share Indigenous culture in the future'.



Above, Elders David Wandin and Ron Jones supervise burial of the container of stone tools (held by Cr McCarthy). Photos Kevin Phillips.

Visit to the Recreation Camp

The History Group's final activity for 2015 was a tour of the Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp. Frank showed us round the camp, which is situated on a levelled area in the Olinda Creek 'gorge', surrounded by beautiful bush. We saw a wallaby, crimson rosellas, kookaburras and willy-wagtails. Three camps are held each week; all begin or end with a walk to or from Silvan along the Pipeline Track. The camp is booking now for 2018!

One building survives from before the 1962 bushfires and there are relics of the Cave Hill Tramway on the slope above. A brief history of the site is available from Paula or Karen; more on the history in a future issue. Photos on Facebook.

The tour was followed by a brief meeting at the Paperbark Café (Kuranga nursery).

Lion Seat duplication – it's on!

Cr Maria McCarthy has provided \$2,500 from Ward funds towards duplication of the Lion Seat. The Men's Shed is providing an additional \$1,000 (also from Maria, transferred from another project).

Gwenda Donaldson has located a mould maker in Ballarat. Once the mould has been made, we expect the replica seats to be produced locally.

Marker from an unknown grave

Art Stewart is mapping historic sites in the Yarra Valley. He sent us this photo of a wooden grave marker he found among some rubbish near the Warburton Highway at Wesburn.

The upright is inscribed 'RIP'. The surname appears to be 'Young', the given name looks like 'Rosa' in the photo (Art says it's 'Rosemary') and the date, if it is a date, 1890-something. Art thought the grave ought to be traced and properly marked.

The Upper Yarra Cemetery, not far away at Yarra Junction, seemed a likely connection. The cemetery opened in 1896; 'Youngs' were buried there from 1902 onwards. The only Rosemary Young on the cemetery database was buried in plot no. 82 in the Presbyterian section on 14/8/1980, reg. no. 1259, age not listed.

The Deaths Index does not list a Rosemary Young who died in 1980. A Rose Mary Young died that year but the death registration number is different.

Was this marker from the grave of Rosemary Young? How did it end up on a rubbish heap beside the highway? A visit to the cemetery would confirm whether the grave is currently marked.



Above, the mystery marker. Photo Art Stewart.

Births Deaths Marriages online

The Victorian Historical Birth Death Marriage Indexes are now online to search for free. The date range for deaths has been extended to 1988.

The Historical Index has entries relating to: births in Victoria from 1853 to 1914, marriages in Victoria from 1853 to 1942, deaths in Victoria from 1853 to 1988, church baptisms, marriages and burials in Victoria from 1836 to 1853.

<http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/home/family+history/>

Kathy Smalley

Family & Local History Librarian, ERL

Sun Cycling Tour

Cliff Skinner writes, 'I have in my possession two photographs of the Junior Sun Cycling Tour of around 1954. One photograph shows a large crowd assembled outside the hotel in Lilydale ready for the ride to what I have always remembered as being the Mt Evelyn Reserve. I joined them on the day and I am in both photographs.'

The one taken at Mt Evelyn shows a group of children and some adults standing by a low fence, in front of a heavily wooded area, enjoying watching an adult rider passing in front of them, riding a mini bike! I have a feeling that he was a well known cyclist at that time.'

Cliff adds that the recently rediscovered photos seem to be official ones from the event. We have no records of the Junior Sun Cycling Tour but Wikipedia states that it started in 1952 and provides a list of the winners.

MUFTI online

Here's something of interest if you enjoy reading the Victorian RSL's magazine MUFTI – the State Library of Victoria has recently put online all the copies of MUFTI from 1934 to 2000.

Go to: <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au> Key 'MUFTI' into the search box. Click on 'View online'.

Mt Evelyn RSL

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for November 2015 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
56.2mm	51.0mm	43.0mm	60.3mm

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

Contact us

Kevin Phillips

As a courtesy, please address any issues with the content of *Things Past* to the Editor.

Editor: Karen Phillips

karen.m.l.phillips@gmail.com

President: Paula Herlihy

herlihy@alphalink.com.au or

telephone 9736 2935 and leave message

Memberships & newsletter distribution:

Kevin Phillips, kev.phillips@bigpond.com

General enquiries:

mtevelynhistorygroup@gmail.com

Postal address: Mount Evelyn History Group Inc.,

PO Box 289, Mt Evelyn, VIC 3796, Australia.

Website: www.mt-evelyn.net/historygroup

Archived newsletters:

<http://www.mt-evelyn.net/thingspast>

Mt Evelyn History Tools Blog:

<http://mtevelynhistorytools.blogspot.com.au/>

Facebook: [on.fb.me/](https://www.facebook.com/mtevelynhistorytools)

