

Things Past

Newsletter 102

August 2016

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



Dates for your diary

AGM followed by general meeting, Monday 15 August, 7.30pm at Hardy House.

Olinda Creek Tour, Saturday 17 September. Details to be advised.

The Birtles of Valinda

David Edwin Birtles (1851-1926) was one of the original selectors of Mt Evelyn.

The family migrated from England when David was about 4 years old and settled in the Sunbury area. David married Sarah Jane Bartlett in 1876.

In 1879, David Birtles, shoemaker of Lilydale, applied for a 10 acre selection in the Parish of Wandin Yallock, giving his address as both Wandin Yallock and Collingwood. In 1881 he held 72 acres but was on the point of forfeiture in 1883. Family illness and the death of his eldest child had set him back in his work and repayments. He was then living at his Collingwood house and his occupation was 'clerk'.

He survived financially by subdividing the larger of his blocks. The acreage was gradually reduced, to 47 acres plus house in 1893 and 10 acres in 1894. His name appears on the Wandin Yallock Parish Plan on two small blocks on the southwest side of Monbulk Road, between Priestley Crescent and Hunter Road.

In 1895 Birtles wrote to the Lands Department, 'I have been compelled to leave [South Wandin] due to the harsh and unjust treatment of the Colonial Bank who compelled me to sell my homestead and most of my land which I



The Birtles family circa June 1909. Photo Freeman Studios Sydney, restored copy Freeman Studios Sydney 1982.

Back row L-R: Francis Edwin Birtles (explorer), Elsie Adeline Birtles (nurse), Harold Everitt (railway auditor), Ida Victoria Birtles (housewife), Florence Amelia Birtles (housewife).

Middle row L-R: Clive Irwin David Birtles (motor mechanic), Sarah Jane Birtles nee Bartlett, David Edwin Birtles, Edith Jane Birtles, Vernon Beresford Birtles (motor mechanic NRMA).

Front row: Iris Valinda Birtles, Harold Vernon Everitt.

occupied and which I had brought almost to perfection as a raspberry and fruit garden. I had not missed paying any interest when due but when the manager visited my place and saw the good order it was in, he compelled me to realize on it, which so left debt to other parties that I have scarcely cleared myself yet.'¹ At that time he still hoped to make the South Wandin property his home.

Continued p.2

From p.1

The family kept a foot in two camps, South Wandin and the inner suburbs. Until 1900, David Birtles' address was 27 Campbell Street Collingwood – a tiny worker's cottage that must have been a squeeze for his large family. The house still stands, largely unchanged, 120 years on.

From 1901 to 1903, Birtles' address was 528 Hoddle Street Abbotsford. In 1905 he was residing at 60 Pitt Street Redfern, Sydney. Returning to Melbourne, he acquired a house in Westgarth Street South, Northcote, in 1908 (photo p.2). His occupation on the title deed was 'Factory Manager'.

Through all his difficulties, Birtles retained ownership of the 10 acres in South Wandin until 1912. The area was known by then as 'Olinda Vale' or 'Valinda'. Perhaps David and Sarah's hearts were always there. They named their youngest daughter 'Iris Valinda' and the house in Northcote, 'Valinda'. Trevor Bartlett sent us the house photo, above right, which was sent to him by a family history researcher. The picture was unidentified except for the name 'Birtles' on the back.

'I immediately recognised it as David and Sarah Birtles with daughter Iris Valinda', Trevor wrote. 'From my rates record research I knew that David lived in Westgarth Street, Northcote, but I had no house number.

I then used Google Maps street view and patiently worked my way along both sides of the whole of Westgarth Street hoping against hope that this old house still existed – and then I found it and the street number (173 Westgarth Street South). Much joy!

Next I visited the house and took pics. Everything was much the same as in 1908 except the Valinda name is missing.'

Trevor also sent the family photo of the Birtles (p.1). The 'modernity' of the photo is quite striking. The fashions and hair styles belong to the early 1900s but the faces look modern. They seem to be a progressive, forward-looking family and this is reflected in their occupations.



Above, David and Sarah Birtles and daughter Iris Valinda at the house 'Valinda' in Westgarth Street Northcote c.1908. Photo taken by 'Frank' (presumably Francis Birtles). Right, a recent photo of the entrance. The house still stands but no longer has the name 'Valinda'.



The eldest surviving son, Francis Edwin Birtles, was the famous long-distance cyclist, driver, film maker and adventurer (*Things Past #72*). He even has his bicycle with him in the photo. His two brothers became motor mechanics and one sister was a nurse.

Even David, their father, showed a willingness to try his hand at different jobs. While he was struggling to establish his farm in Valinda he practised three occupations: shoemaker, clerk and factory manager.

David Birtles sold or forfeited the property at Valinda/ South Wandin in 1912 and sold the house 'Valinda' in 1915. He lived his later years in Surrey Hills and died there in 1926, aged 75.

¹ David Birtles, Lands Department file 626 1688 10053 in Janice Newton 1996, *The First Selectors of Mt Evelyn*.

Information and photos courtesy Trevor Bartlett

'Aborigines' book revised

The authors of *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley & Northern Dandenongs* are pleased to advise that the revised edition is now in press and should be available within the week.

This edition has new sections on Plant Foods and Tools. The section on Firestick Farming has been rewritten.

Get your copy at our AGM on 15 August or email us at mtevelynhistorygroup@gmail.com The book is priced at \$20.

Dr Isabella Younger Ross and her Mt Evelyn connections

We have received a query about Dr Isabella Younger Ross (1887-1956) and her possible connections with Mt Evelyn.

Isabella Henrietta Younger was born in Warrnambool in 1887, the eldest of four daughters of John Wilson Younger and Henrietta Dawson. The family had migrated from Canada, via Yackandandah, to Warrnambool.

Isabella studied Medicine at the University of Melbourne and completed her degree at the University of Glasgow in 1914. She worked as a GP in slum areas in Scotland and became interested in the emerging field of maternal and child health. She met and married her Australian husband, John Ross, while in the UK.

Returning to Australia in 1917, Younger Ross was instrumental in establishing the first Infant Welfare Centres in Victoria. She wrote two books, *Feeding the Child – All Ages* (1929) and *The Happy Mother and Child* (1940).¹ Younger Ross was awarded an OBE in 1938 for her services as Secretary to the Baby Health Centre Association of Victoria.

One of Younger Ross's links to Mt Evelyn was her friendship with artist Ernest Buckmaster. She had a number of his paintings in her collection. She left her Buckmaster paintings to family members, friends and galleries. One was left to the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Carlton and one to the Melbourne Lyceum, of which she was President from 1938 to 1940.

Younger Ross was related to the Younger family of Mt Evelyn. Jessie Younger was listed as the owner of a property on Lot 80C, Parish



These photos from the Mab Younger Collection, above and lower left, are identified only as 'Mab Younger's aunts at the Cascades'. There were only two 'aunts'. We hope to obtain a photo of Dr Isabella Younger Ross and establish whether she is present in any of these photos.

of Wandin Yallock (part of McKillop's old selection) in the ratings year 1914-1915. Jessie and her sister (also called Isabella) lived most of their lives at this property. Jessie and Isabella were cousins to Isabella Younger Ross.

Mab Younger was their niece and Jessie's adopted daughter. Mab used to visit Mt Evelyn as a child and in later life she lived with her two aunts at their property on Monbulk Road in the Ormeau Road area.

Mab studied at Burnley Horticultural College and became known as a gardening writer. She edited *Your Garden* magazine and was the author of two gardening books. She also edited a literary anthology, *Vision*.

Gardening was an interest Mab shared with Isabella Younger Ross, who gardened at her property at Sherbrooke, convened the Lyceum garden circle and was Vice-President of the Compost Society.

Mab inherited the Mt Evelyn property from her aunt Jessie. People who visited the house said it was 'like a museum' and 'full of beautiful things'.

At her death in 1988, Mab in turn left the property to her half-brother, Cal Younger (*Things Past* 63). It then passed out of the family after more than 70 years.

¹ Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ross-isabella-henrietta-younger-isie-8272>



'Real' Australian coins

Part 2

I started collecting coins in the early 1960s at the suggestion of my Mother, who had developed an interest and had acquired a rudimentary catalogue of dates, mintages and values of Australian coins. One of the aspects which appealed to me, beyond a collector's desire to 'get all in the set', was the historical connection of coins of particular dates plus the composition of the coins themselves.

Here are some of the aspects I recall:-

The changes of the monarchs' heads on coins identified coronation dates. Commemorative florins identified the dates of key Australian events.

Changes in the composition of coins indicated that the price of copper or silver had exceeded the face value of coins.

Changes in composition during the Second World War indicated which metals had high value for the War effort.

Some of the copper coins minted in India during the 1940s contained traces of gold and were therefore melted down to recover that metal.

Once decimal currency was introduced in 1966, I felt that so much of that historical connection became lost in that it was no longer available via coins in general circulation. I particularly appreciated the opportunity to collect a set of



Above, Tim Herlihy with coins from his collection.

coins in the United States when Paula and I with sons Alan and Brian spent seven months driving 25,000 miles around the country and were once again able to experience the history of that country via coins still in general circulation.

Although I was not able to collect the most valuable Australian coins, I did at one point sell sufficient 1944 halfpennies at 10 cents each to fund the purchase of a pair of batting gloves.

Tim Herlihy

Aqueduct Heritage Overlay

Paula has put together an excellent application to Yarra Ranges Council to have the surviving structures and environment of the Mt Evelyn Aqueduct protected by a Heritage Overlay. The section between Priestley Crescent and Hunter Road is particularly rich in historic relics (concrete-lined channel, bridges) and has the most intact bushland environment. The proposed Mountain Bike trail through this section makes it especially important to protect its heritage values.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for July 2016 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
77.7mm	86.1mm	64.2mm	47.5mm

Year to date.

Mt E YTD	McK YTD	Melb YTD
525.1mm	539.35mm	316.4mm

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

Kevin Phillips

Contact us

Please address any issues with *Things Past*, or requests to reproduce material, 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:
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